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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF SPECIFIED COLOR

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There's no valid reasoning if the evaluation doesn't precisely measure the different elements or define them systematically. Once we know what we're talking about, we can begin to conduct a critical analysis based on the objectives we're trying to achieve.

The concept of a Specified suit is a concrete notion whose purpose is to streamline hand evaluation in order to further reduce the intuitive element of bridge play.

The concept of a *Specified color* (or *suit*) consists of establishing a determined value

- for the score,
 - for the quality of the honors,
 - and the length of the suit,
- in relation to a specific bidding context.

First, to be clear, let's define the different types of honors so we have the same vocabulary.

PRINCIPLE 1.2:1 DEFINITION OF HONORS

- ▶ **True Honors, or Honors, are the Ace, King, Queen, and Jack;**
- ▶ **Great Honors, or "GH," are the Ace, King, and Queen;**
- ▶ **Small Honors, or "sH," are the Jack, 10, and 9 with the 8 of the same color.**

This notion of *specified suit* aims to make the evaluation of the hand held less subjective, regardless of the declaring position or the numerous bidding contexts in which any player may find themselves. Importantly, the concept of specified color constitutes a value that applies equally to a contract in trump and no-trump, as do the points HL and the Complement.

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PRINCIPLE 1.2:2 GENERAL DEFINITION OF A SPECIFIED COLOR

This is a bid made in a specific context and guaranteeing determined values, in the announced suit, on the plan of:

- **Honors,**
- **Score, and**
- **Number of cards.**

For example, a fifth suit specified in the context of an Opening or Opening Overbid lowers the normally required score by 1 HL point, from 13 HL to 12 HL.

When a color, or suit, is not specified, this color is said to be anonymous.

The best example of a situation in which to declare an anonymous color is the **Standard Opening at level 1** to a suit. The *1 Heart* or *1 Spade* opening guarantees 13 to 21 points and at least 5 cards in that suit, which may be very low in value. The Level 1 Minor Opening guarantees the same score and as few as three cards, which can also be very low in value.

There's no point in requiring the Level 1 Standard Opening to systematically contain Specified suits because this bid provides sufficient information, taking into account that it's the first bid and there's still SPACE in the bidding scale. As the saying goes: *"There's no point in running, you have to start on time."*

On the other hand, CERTAIN INTERESTING OR SPECIAL HANDS ALLOW, AND EVEN REQUIRE, BEING ANNOUNCED VERY PRECISELY WITHOUT DELAY.

Why might specific hands qualify for preferential treatment?

It boils down to optimizing space by producing a more complete message without further delay. There are two logical poles that meet this criterion.

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Indeed, it is sometimes important not to exaggerate the height of the bids by declaring earlier when the score is rather borderline, thereby causing a certain obstruction to the opponent's communications more quickly.

Conversely, it is sometimes necessary to conserve space in the bidding scale to be able to conclude a contract without risking raising the bids too high.

In clearer terms, a more complete message is often essential in two types of circumstances.

In the case of **borderline and weak hands**, the concept of the specified suit allows for a precise description in a single bid of a hand that is normally invalid according to the usual rules but has interesting potential. This can be done without the risk of inflating the bidding while still competing strongly for space given the hand's value.

In the other category, **promising hands**, the concept of the specified suit allows for the exchange of more information and thus achieves a higher degree of precision without causing excessively high bidding levels. This concept then makes it possible to stop the bidding at a reasonable level if it turns out that the two combined hands lack the necessary strength to reach the levels offering a game or slam bonus.

For pedagogical reasons, this new concept, which is somewhat revolutionary in its novelty and versatility, will be introduced gradually.

As this Chapter focuses on the "First Bid," this concept will be explained in this guideline. Throughout the various Chapters, other examples and explanations will be provided at appropriate times.

Ex. 1.2:1 Three Academic Examples

a)	J 9 4	b)	Q J 4	c)	Q 10 4
	A K 8 6 4 2		K 10 5 4 3 2		A K 10 9 8 6 2
	10 7 6		Q 7 6		10 7 6
	5		5		5

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The first two examples contain 8 PH and 2 PL, but their hands should not be declared in the same way, as you will readily agree. Hand **a)** can only be announced with a ***weak 2-Heart Opening***. Such a declaration, however, would be dangerous for hand **b)**, which simply requires a ***Pass***.

On the other hand, hand **c)** is worth **12 HL!** There are 9 PH and 2 LP, including presence of the Complement; the hand therefore has 10 HCP and 2 LP. **One Heart** must be declared given the presence also of a specified color at least fifth.

These three examples aim to demonstrate that it is necessary to clearly determine OBJECTIVE CRITERIA for deciding in order to avoid falling in love with one's hand or saying anything.

The concept of a *specified suit* is one of these criteria that allows one to avoid a subjective evaluation of the hand while stimulating the search for the best possible contract.

PRINCIPLE 1.2:3 REQUIREMENTS OF A SPECIFIED COLOR

Any bid declared in a context where the concept of a Specified color applies must meet the following requirements:

- **always the presence of at least two Great Honors (Ace, King, or Queen), or their equivalent***,
- **the minimum number of cards required according to the context,**
- **the required score according to the context.**

This concept constitutes both a qualitative and quantitative value. It is an integral part of the requirements for declaring certain types of bids. Therefore, a point is officially added only when there is a Full Revaluation.

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A Specified color (or suit) that has replacement values is called an **Equivalent specified color**, or simply an **Equivalent color**.

PRINCIPLE 1.2:4 DEFINITION OF AN EQUIVALENT SPECIFIED COLOR

This is a *Specified color* that does not have two Great Honors but contains an EQUIVALENCE.

The criteria for compensating for the lack of a second Great Honor for the purpose of declaring a bid using the specified color concept are as follows.

PRINCIPLE 1.2:5 REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EQUALITY IF 1 GH IS MISSING

The lack of a second Great Honor may be compensated by holding:

- a single Great Honor*, either the Ace or the King, combined
- with a small Honor, AND
- one additional card beyond the required number of cards.

* **If the Great Honor is the Queen, two small Honors are required instead of one AND a second additional card to justify an Equivalence.**

Thus, an Equivalent Suit with the Ace or King has one more card than the corresponding Specified Suit. And if the Great Honor is the Queen, there must be two additional cards and two sH.

Let's take the example of a specified fifth suit, consisting of five cards with two Great Honors. Then, an Equivalent Specified Fifth Color must contain at least six cards associated with a Great Honor (Ace or King) and at least one small Honor. But if the GH is the Queen, then two sH and a seven-card run are required.

Here is an example of a "good suit" opening that could lead to several differences of opinion if the criteria (or requirements) are left to individual discretion.

