SYSTEM SUMMARY - BEGINNERS

Note that the methods below will be both added to, and in some cases, changed as we progress beyond a beginner stage.

Opening balanced hands

(balanced hands will have one of 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2 shapes.)

With 12 - 14 points open 1NT.
With 15-19 points
open one of a suit and rebid in no trumps.
with Hearts and Spades open 1♥;
with a major and a minor open 1 major;
with both minors open the better suit;
with 20-22 points open 2NT;
with 23+points open 2♣ (artificial and forcing).

Responding to 1NT

0 to 10 points	bid a five-card or longer suit at the two-level (weak-take out in all four suits), otherwise pass;
11 or 12 points	bid 2NT (inviting partner to bid 3NT with a maximum);
13 or more points	bid 3 of a five-card major (forcing - partner will choose between 3NT and 4 of the major), bid 3NT or higher quantitative raises in no trumps if no five-card major.

Opener's rebid with 15-19 points on a balanced hand

1x - 1y - 1NT is 15 - 17 (the modern standard - recommended).
1x - 1y - 2NT is 18,19
1x - 1y - 3NT is decent six-card minor in a good hand (typically 17,18).

Opening one of a suit

Minimum strength required is 'Rule of 20' (e.g. 11 points and 5-4 shape).
Always have a rebid planned before you make the first bid.

Responding to one of a suit

Priorities are:-

1. raise partner's major with four-card support;
2. make a lowest-level change of suit if partner opens one minor or you have less than four-card support for his major;
3. raise partner's major to the two-level with three-card support and 5 to 9 points;
4. raise partner's minor suit or bid 1NT (the dustbin bid) with any other hand of 6 to 9 points, or (very occasionally in the absence of anything better) 3NT.

(Note that an immediate response of 2NT does not appear as an option.)

Raise partner's major to the two-level on 3- or 4-card support and 5-9 points;
raise partner's major to the three-level on four-card support and 10-12 point;
raise partner's major the four-level on four-card support and 13+ point.

Change suit at the one-level on 5-9 points;
change suit at the two-level on 'rule of 14' (10 points and a four-card suit or 9 points and a five-card suit;
never jump in a new suit as your first response - change of suit is forcing.

Which suit?
provided your hand is strong enough to make the bid indicated:-

bid your longest suit if you have one;
with two five-card suits bid the higher-ranking first (spades is the highest ranking suit, then hearts, diamonds, clubs - reverse alphabetical order);
with two four-card suits bid the lower-ranking first.

Opening at the two-level

Three weak and one strong.
2♦/2♥/2♠ promise six-card suits and 5 to 9 points.
Direct raises to 'the level of the fit'.

2♣ is artificial and game-forcing (except for 2♣-2♦-2NT (23,24)

Open 2♣ on all balanced hands of 23+ and all unbalanced hands of 22+.

Responder always relays with 2♦ - just a waiting bid.

Opening at the three-level

preemptive - seven-card suit and less than 10 points.

Slam-bidding

Two balanced hands should be bid quantitatively.

With a suit fit bid first or second-round controls in side-suits - Blackwood and Gerber should not be taught as the primary means of searching for a slam.

Overcalling

is not the same as opening the bidding.

1NT is 15 to 17 **(not 12 to 14)**, with good stops in the opponents' suit.

Double is for take-out - no more than two cards in the opponents' suit and at least three cards in each of the other suits.

12 to 17 points	double, then pass any response from partner;
18 or more points	double, then bid again.

Lowest-level suit overcall

overcall at the one-level	a good five-card suit - can be quite weak;
overcall at the two-level	twelve points and a good six-card suit.

Jump overcall

is weak (6-card suit and 5 to 10 points at the two-level)

Note - you will frequently not have a bid as overcaller, even on an opening hand.
Don't worry - just pass - the opponents might be in trouble in their contract.

Play

Declarer - always pause following the opening lead to plan the play.

Opening Lead against suit contracts

1. Listen to the bidding;
2. partner's suit if he bid one is usually good;
3. side-suit singleton (but not a singleton trump);
4. top of a two-card honours sequence - e.g. Q from QJx;
5. second from a string of small cards - e.g.7 from 874;
6. small from an honour - e.g.3 from Q73 (but don't underlead the ace in a suit contract).

Opening lead against no trumps

1. Listen to the bidding - plan to set up a long suit in either your hand or partner's hand.
2. partner's suit if he bid one is usually good;
3. top of a thee-card honours sequence, broken sequence, or interior sequence ideally in a four-card suit or longer - e.g. K from KQJx, Q from QJ9x, J from AJTx.
4. fourth highest in a 5-card suit or longer lacking an honours sequence is also good.