

PowerShark Tips

General

Background

SharkBridge was developed by Mr John Norris in the 1990s and has twice been World Champion for robots. In 2022, Norris and the SharkBridge software became part of the WBT team, and since then SharkBridge has improved extensively into the PowerShark.

Our goal is to provide the best possible robot for you to play your favourite game with, so you feel like playing real bridge, not just robot bridge! If we are there yet, would be up to you to decide.

The software has implemented bridge logic from top players. We are not pre-selecting deals, allowing the variety of boards to be the same as you would have in your own club or in serious tournaments.

How to best play with the PowerShark

PowerShark is based on logic and is not allowed to peek in the cards – eh well, that would be cheating and is not in the spirit of the WBT. To make the most of your time with PowerShark, you can be certain that the more logically you play, the better PowerShark will play. If you want to go ballistic, you are welcome to do so, but don't expect PowerShark to draw the right conclusions of your actions.

PowerShark System

PowerShark plays an expert 2/1 system with a lot of gadgets. You may be familiar with some of the conventions, and some may be new to you. Our ambition is to set a PowerShark System which functions well and at the same time is competitive on a national level.

Unless we have introduced something that could be of interest to play for you and your regular partner, we have not succeeded in our work. We have entered a lot of detailed explanations and possible responses for the most common bidding sequences, trying to make it easier for you to quickly understand and enjoy the PowerShark System.

PowerShark tempo

PowerShark plays rather quickly, but not as instant as many other robot software's do. Sometimes there is a need to consider major decisions, such as different lines of play, to double or not to double, bidding a slam, to mention a few. Unless you got unlucky with your connection, PS has something to "think" about when there is a break of tempo.

PowerShark Claims

Playing with PowerShark you may claim at any time when it is your turn to play a card. If you claim out of turn, your claim will be rejected. Claims can only be accepted when the positioning of the cards is irrelevant to your claim. You may need to play on for a couple of tricks to clarify the situation before the claim will be accepted. We have made this setting in order to avoid users misusing the claim button to figure out any potential bad breaks.

Card evaluation

PowerShark does much more than just counting high-card points (HCP). Like real humans there are other considerations like suit lengths, fits, short suits and more to consider. When we display HCP, it fits the description well for NT bids. For suit bids it is expected that you find results outside the expected values.

Cardplay

Card play

PowerShark is set to play IMPs and should not take unreasonable risks which could lead to going down in safe contracts, or let contracts make on defence to get extra undertricks. PowerShark's card play is very reasonable, still there is a long way to go to match the best human players in the world.

Opening leads

PowerShark leads 3rd/5th versus suit, and 4th best versus NT. From xxx the bot will lead the middle card (MUD). The opening lead quality is like most top players, so you will very often get the expected lead. Supported by bridge theory PowerShark occasionally will lead an unsupported ace. It may look strange (and can be wrong) at first, but there is almost always logic behind the lead.

Defensive methods

PowerShark (PS) plays reverse attitude and standard count. Do notice that PS is careful with it's carding. If you are careful with your own carding, you will soon notice that PS will make less errors. You need to help PS making the right decisions, just as you have to do with your regular bridge partner.

Attitude has priority when partner leads an honour, same goes with discarding. If PS wants a ruff from doubleton, it will play low-high. Playing through declarer the bot is strictly playing count (3rd/5th).

Suit preference is quite complicated in the robot's world as it needs to detect the position. In general, you can't trust the bots with 100 % confidence, as it may not think it is a suit preference situation. However, when it is absolute clear that there will be a ruff, you can be confident that PS gives you the right suit preference signal.

Bidding

Overcalls

PowerShark is generally active with overcalls, especially non-vulnerable. A half-decent suit and about 8 HCP is normally sufficient to bid non-vulnerable on the 1-level. Overcalls at the 2-level are more sound, but can be made with limited values and a good suit, especially if you are a passed hand. The bot frequently cuebids the opponent's suit to show a good raise with support, allowing you some space to overcall light without getting too high.

Pre-empting style

PS carefully looks at the vulnerabilities and position. With a passed partner, the range of possible hands for PS widens up. In general, the pre-emptive style is fairly solid as PS doesn't fancy going for a big number.

Competitive bidding

PS is super-active on the lower levels as it doesn't want to sell out cheaply. It fights hard for the part scores. Don't expect many points from a balancing PS, as the bid is more based on shape than HCP.

If you are balancing on limited values, you don't have to be afraid of PS going nuts. PS is able to identify situations where balancing on limited values is acceptable, and it will not destroy your balance with a crazy bid. But be warned – you may run into bad breaks and your PS opponents will hit you with the hammer!

Game bidding

PS fancies playing in game and will push hard for it using the losing trick count and aggressive invites. Many thin games on 5-4 fit should be found.

High-level competitive bidding

Sometimes your heart jumps when PS yet again makes another bid despite seeming out of the auction. Not saying PS is always right, but it chases cheap sacrifices. Sometimes you will experience that these cheap sacrifices will lead to making contracts. High-level competitive auctions are one of the toughest parts of bridge to deal with. With PS you are allowed to practice on these situations and become a better player.

Slam bidding

PS has plenty of tools to reach good slams. The PowerShark 2/1 version allows you to set a trump suit at a reasonable level and follow up with control bids and RKCB. The Jacoby 2NT convention is another great tool to find major slams on slim values, and the same goes for certain jumps showing a void and good trump support. PS uses most bids of 4 of a minor as a slam try, setting up cuebids and RKCB.

Slam bidding is hard, and for robots even harder. PS has a long way to go before being an expert slam bidder, so we suggest you try to make the decision about pushing for a slam or not.

Conventions

Conventions

PowerShark 2 over 1	4 th suit Game Force	Jacoby 2NT
Splinter	Void Jump	Transfers 2-3-4 level
Michaels Cuebid	Leaping Michaels	Non-leaping Michaels
Unusual 2NT	Landy	Italian Cue bids
RKCB (0314)	Exclusion Blackwood	Pick a Slam 5NT
Stayman	Smolen	Minor Transfers
Negative Doubles	Support Doubles	Support Redoubles
Puppet Stayman	Lebensohl	Transfer Lebensohl
Two-way Checkback (XY)	Near-Far	Puppet Stayman over 1NT
Quantitative 4NT	Killer NT Double	Simple Raise
Drury	Reversed Drury	Limit Raise
Unusual NT		

General:

Convention Card

PowerShark 2 over 1

4th suit Game Force

Negative Double

Two-way Checkback (XY)

Simple Raise

Limit Raise

NT System:

Stayman

Puppet Stayman 1NT

Transfers

Minor transfer

Puppet Stayman

Smolen

Transfer Lebensohl

Lebensohl

Major supports:

Jacoby 2NT

Drury

Reversed Drury

Void Jump

Support Doubles

Support Redoubles

Slam conventions:

Quantitative 4NT

Italian Cue bids

RKCB

Exclusion Blackwood

5NT Pick a Slam

Splinter

Competitive auctions:

Unusual 2NT

Michaels Cue Bid

Leaping Michaels

Non-leaping Michaels

Landy

Killer NT Double

Near-Far

Lebensohl

Unusual NT