

## How do you respond to a pre-empt bid?

*An opening bid at the three level shows a weak hand with a good 7-card suit that has at least two honours.*

*The hand should be too weak to open at the one level – including hands you would open using the rule of twenty.*

*You should not have a side 4-card major suit because of the risk of missing a better contract.*

*You should have few defensive tricks.*

*You need 6 playing tricks if you are non-vulnerable and 7 playing tricks if you are vulnerable.*

*To assess your playing tricks, allocate partner one card in the trump suit and imagine the opposition's trump cards divide as expected: five missing cards will usually divide 3-2, four missing cards 3-1.*

*An opening bid at the 4 level shows a weak hand with a good 8-card suit: you have one more trick so you can pre-empt at one higher level.*

*An opening bid of 3NT shows a long solid minor suit with no more than a queen in the side suits.*

*To show a pre-empt overcall you need to bid a double jump over opener's bid. For example: 1♠ - 4♣ or 1♦ - 3♥*

Responder is in charge following a pre-empt opening or overcall. This is because the pre-empter has clearly defined his or her hand (see sidebar). Responding is therefore fairly straightforward.

### If partner pre-empts: 3 of a suit....

Don't worry about your trump suit cards even if you have a void, because partner has a long holding in the suit. **Simply count the playing tricks in your hand and add them to the number you know partner has. Partner has 6 if not vulnerable and 7 if vulnerable. If your tricks plus partner's tricks equals enough for game, then bid game. If not, pass.**

There are a couple of things to note about your strategy regarding a minor suit contract versus a no trumps contract. Normally we would prefer to be in NTs rather than a minor suit because NTs scores more. However:

- (i) After a minor suit pre-empt, if you want to respond "3NT" you must have either 9 tricks in your own hand without using partner's hand, or cards in partner's suit and stoppers in the other suits.
- (ii) A raise of a minor suit pre-empt (e.g. 3♣ - 4♣) is not invitational. It is just raising the level of the pre-empt to stop the opposition bidding.

**If partner pre-empts: 3NT (see sidebar This really is an 'improvers' topic so don't use it just yet.)**

To leave partner in the 3NT contract by passing you need to have stoppers in the other suits AND cards in partner's suit. (Or 9 tricks in your own hand without using partner's suit including stoppers for whatever the opposition might lead.)

If you haven't, bid 4♣ and partner will either pass or correct to 4♦

Finally....competing over a pre-empt opening is just like competing over a 1-level suit opening. We'll look at competing over a pre-empt opening next.