

LESSON 2

Objectives



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Bidding

The purpose of opener's bid

Opener is the describer and tries to paint a clear picture of the cards in opener's hand for the responder, the captain. The opener describes the point value and the distribution of the hand. The 1NT opening bid is the first priority since it is so specific — 15, 16 or 17 HCP and a balanced hand. If the opener doesn't have the requirements for a 1NT opening, opener bids a suit, following a few simple rules for opening the bidding.

The purpose of responder's bid

Responder is the captain whose role is to listen to opener's bid and decide on the contract. Sometimes responder has to hear two bids from the opener before making a decision. When the opening bid is 1NT, responder usually can decide right away, because the 1NT opening bid gives so much information about opener's hand.

The aims of the game

The partnership wants to bid and make one of the games, preferably a Golden Game of 4♠, 4♥ or 3NT. To decide on the correct level, responder ascertains whether there are 25 combined points. If there are fewer than 25 combined points, the partnership plays in a partscore. When deciding on the strain, responder is looking for at least eight cards in a suit between the two hands, a Golden Fit.

The Play

Declarer's objective

When playing, declarer's objective is to fulfill the contract.

Declarer's assets

Declarer counts sure tricks to determine how close declarer is in reaching the objective.

Declarer's plan

When declarer has all of the sure tricks necessary to fulfill the contract, declarer takes them — *take your tricks and run*. In such a situation, there are two considerations:

“In a trump contract, play the trump suit first (draw trumps) to keep the opponents from ruffing one of the other sure tricks.

“When a suit is unevenly divided between declarer's hand and dummy, play the high card(s) from the shorter hand first when taking your sure tricks.”

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“In the previous lesson, we discussed the general concept of the auction. Starting with the dealer, the players take turns bidding in a clockwise direction until three passes end the auction. Today we’ll look at how a partnership exchanges information during the auction so it can reach a reasonable contract.

“For this part of the course, we’ll assume that the opponents pass throughout the auction. Later we will see what happens when both sides are bidding.

“If the partnership is going to try to buy the contract, one of the partners must start off by making a bid. This player is called the opening bidder. The partner of the opening bidder becomes the responder. Generally, the opening bidder tries to describe that hand, and the responder uses this information to steer the partnership into an appropriate contract. In this respect, the responder becomes the captain.

“How does a player decide whether to open the bidding? How does that player’s partner decide what contract to steer the partnership toward? Let’s take a look at how this is done.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Hand Valuation

Introduction

“The bidding is an auction. When you go to an auction, you need to know what you can afford to bid. In bridge you also need to know what you can afford, and you do this by valuing your hand. We do this using a point-count method popularized by Charles Goren. You already have seen that tricks can be won with high cards and cards from long suits. Let’s see how we use this to determine the value of a hand.

“Each player take one suit. Put the aces face up in front of you on the table. Since this is the most powerful card in a suit, it is given the most points. Four (4) points are given for an ace. Turn up the kings. What do you think would be given for the king? (3.) Next, the queens. How many points would be assigned to the queen? (2.) Finally, the jacks. What would they be worth? (1.) How many points are available in each suit? (10.) How many points are available in the whole deck? (40.) These are called high-card points.

“Put another card, any card, with your ace, king, queen and jack. Now you have a five-card suit. One (1) point is given for the fifth card in a suit. Add another card. Now you have a six-card suit. A six-card suit is worth two (2) points. Give yourself a seven-card suit. What would this be worth? (3.) You won’t see many eight-card suits, but if you do, they are worth four (4) points. The points assigned for long suits are called distribution points. They are added to the high-card points to give the total value of a hand.”

Instructions

“Add up the high-card points (HCPs) and distribution points on each of the hands in the first exercise. What is the total value for each hand?”

1) ♠ 10 9 8 6 5 3
♥ A K Q
♦ 9 8
♣ Q J

HCP: 12

Distr. Points: 2

Total Points: 14

2) ♠ A Q J
♥ 9 6 4 3 2
♦ J 9 4 3
♣ 9

HCP: 8

Distr. Points: 1

Total Points: 9

3) ♠ 8 6 3
♥ A Q J 9
♦ K 9 8
♣ A K Q

HCP: 19

Distr. Points: 0

Total Points: 19

Follow-up

Discuss the answers.

Conclusion

“When you add your high-card points and distribution points together, you come to the total point value for the hand. This gives you an estimate of the hand’s value.”

EXERCISE TWO: Hand Shapes

Introduction

“In addition to knowing the value of your hand, you need to consider the shape of your hand — the distribution of the various suits — when you are deciding what to bid.

“North, please take the 13 cards that you have in your hand and divide them **face down** as evenly as possible into four columns. What is this distribution? (4–3–3–3.) This hand is as evenly balanced as possible. Please take one card from one of the columns containing three cards and move it to the four-card column. The distribution is now 5–3–3–2. Take this same card and now move it to a column containing three cards. The distribution is now 4–4–3–2. These are the only three possible distributions of the cards that constitute balanced hand shapes. All other hand shapes are unbalanced.”

Instructions

“A balanced hand has no voids, no singletons and no more than one doubleton. Which of the following hands are balanced?”

1) ♠ K J 7 3
♥ A 9 5
♦ Q J 6
♣ A J 10

2) ♠ J 7
♥ K 9 7 4
♦ K Q 10 5
♣ A J 8

3) ♠ K Q 3
♥ A
♦ Q 8 6 4 2
♣ K J 6 5

4) ♠ K 8
♥ A K 8 6 2
♦ K Q 7 3
♣ 9 5

5) ♠ K 8
♥ 9 5 2
♦ A Q 8
♣ K Q J 7 3

6) ♠ Q 6
♥ K 4 2
♦ A J 8 7 5 2
♣ K 3

Follow-up

The circled hands are balanced.

Conclusion

“Balanced hands have no voids, no singletons and no more than one doubleton. The three balanced hand patterns are referred to as 4–3–3–3, 4–4–3–2 and 5–3–3–2.”

EXERCISE THREE: What Level?

Introduction

“You know the value of your hand. If you and your partner had all of the points, you could win all of the tricks. This almost never happens. The key is to know how many combined points you and your partner have, and how many you need to have a reasonable chance of bidding and making one of the bonus (game) contracts. You need 25 combined points to bid 3NT, 4♠ or 4♥. You need 29 combined points to bid 5♦ or 5♣.”

Instructions

“How many points would you need in the combined hands to make the following contracts?”

- | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|
| 1) 3NT | 2) 4♥ | 3) 4♠ |
| 25 | 25 | 25 |
| 4) 5♣ | 5) 5♦ | |
| 29 | 29 | |

Follow-up

This is a difficult exercise for your students. In fact, many players may still insist 26 combined points are required for game even though experience has shown that 25 total points will do the trick. It is extremely important for the students to grasp the concept that making nine tricks in 3NT takes as many points as making 10 tricks in a major suit game. In other words, it is just as easy to score 10 tricks in a suit contract as it is to score nine tricks with a balanced notrump hand. Notrump contracts require *more high-card points* per trick to be successful.

Conclusion

“You need 25 combined points to bid 3NT, 4♠ or 4♥. You need 29 combined points to bid 5♦ or 5♣. Because 3NT, 4♠ and 4♥ require fewer combined points, they are referred to as the Golden Games. Generally, the partnership will strive to play in one of the Golden Games whenever it has 25 or more combined points.”

EXERCISE FOUR: What Strain?

Introduction

“Knowing the value of your combined hands will help you and your partner arrive at the best level for your contract. There is another consideration. You need to decide whether to play in a trump suit or in notrump.”

Instructions

“Take the cards in a single suit (*e.g.*, hearts) and spread them face down on the table.

“By separating the cards into various groupings, discuss the following questions:

- How many cards must a partnership hold to have a majority of the cards in the suit? (Seven.)
- Would a minimum majority of cards in a suit be adequate as a trump suit? (No.) If not, why not? (Opponents have nearly as many, etc.)
- How many cards of a suit should a partnership hold to be comfortable making it the trump suit? (Eight.)
- In how many ways can eight cards in a suit be divided between the partnership hands? (8–0, 7–1, 6–2, 5–3, 4–4.)
- Are the specific high cards you hold in a suit important when choosing the trump suit? (No.) You might try turning the cards face up when answering this question.”

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. It’s wise to emphasize that the value of the cards held in the suit are not as important as the number of cards in the combined hands. That’s why the students turned the cards face down and decided that eight cards in the combined hands would make a reasonable trump suit.

Conclusion

“You need eight cards in a suit to have a comfortable majority. Eight or more combined cards in a suit is referred to as a Golden Fit.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Opening the Bidding

Introduction

“Since the partnership requires 25 points to reach a Golden Game contract, you should open the bidding with 13, about half the required number. If neither you nor your partner opens the bidding when you have 13 points, you won’t get into the auction even though you have enough combined strength for a Golden Game! Since there are 40 high-card points in the deck, a hand with 13 points is slightly stronger than average (10 points). 13 is also a magic number — the number of cards in a hand and the number of cards in a suit. That makes it easy to remember.

“With 13 or more total points, you open the bidding by making a bid at the one level. Actually, there is a ceiling of 21 total points for opening at the one level, but hands of 22 or more total points are rare. We won’t worry about them for now.

“However, to start at the very top of the one level, 1NT, you need a few extra points. An opening bid of 1NT is very descriptive — it shows a balanced hand with 15, 16 or 17 HCP.

“As we discussed in Exercise 3, when considering a notrump contract, we need high-card points to be successful. Therefore, when opening the bidding in notrump, we will count high-card points only. If we have an additional point for a five-card suit, that will be a plus for our hand, but not a consideration as to whether or not to open notrump.

“Each player take a suit and construct the following hand in the middle of the table:

♠ A K 6
♥ Q 8 6
♦ Q J 10 6
♣ A 3 2

“This is a balanced hand with 16 HCP. What would your opening bid be? (1NT.) Now take away the ♣2 and add another low diamond.

♠ A K 6
♥ Q 8 6
♦ Q J 10 6 5
♣ A 3

“Is the hand still balanced? (Yes.) How many high card points are there? (16.) How many total points are there? (17) What would you open? (1NT.) Remember the main consideration for opening 1NT is a balanced hand with 15, 16 or 17 HCP. Now take away the ♣3 and add another low diamond.

♠ A K 6
 ♥ Q 8 6
 ♦ Q J 10 6 5 4
 ♣ A

“Is the hand balanced? (No.) How many total points are there? (18.) What opening bid would you like to make? (1 ♦.)

“Take away the ♠ A and ♠ K and replace them with two low spades.

♠ 6 5 4
 ♥ Q 8 6
 ♦ Q J 10 6 5 4
 ♣ A

“How many points are there? (11.) Since you don’t have 13 points, what would you do? (Pass.)

“You know the first rules for opening the bidding. With fewer than 13 total points, pass. With a balanced hand and 15, 16 or 17 HCP, bid 1NT. Otherwise, with 13 or more points, bid your longest suit. Sometimes there is a tie in the length of your longest suit. Construct the following hand:

♠ A K 8 7 6
 ♥ A K 8 7 6
 ♦ 3
 ♣ J 10

“This is a dilemma. Would you start with 1 ♠ or 1 ♥? There’s a rule: open the higher-ranking of your two five-card (or six-card) suits. So which would you open? (1 ♠.)

“So far, you have always had a five-card suit or longer. Take away the low heart and low spade and replace them with two low clubs.

♠ A K 8 7
 ♥ A K 8 7
 ♦ 3
 ♣ J 10 5 4

“Again, we have a rule to help us out. To bid 1 ♠ or 1 ♥, the major suits, you need at least a five-card suit. If you don’t have five cards in a major suit, you open the longer minor suit. What would you bid? (1 ♣.) Now replace the ♥ A K 8 with the ♦ A K 8.

♠ A K 8 7
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A K 8 3
 ♣ J 10 5 4

“With two four-card minor suits, you open the higher-ranking suit. What would you bid? (1 ♦.)

“On rare occasions, you have to bid a three-card suit. Take away the \spadesuit A and \clubsuit 10 and replace them with the \heartsuit A and \heartsuit 10. Replace the \spadesuit K with the \spadesuit Q.

\spadesuit A K 8 7
 \heartsuit A 10 7
 \diamondsuit Q 8 3
 \clubsuit J 5 4

“With a balanced hand, you might want to open 1NT. 1NT, however, shows 15, 16 or 17 HCP, and you have only 14. You might want to bid your longest suit, spades. However, the rule for the bidding style we are using is that you need a five-card suit to open the bidding in a major suit. That means you have to look to either clubs or diamonds. Now, don’t be too upset with the rule makers, but they have decided that when you have to choose between two three-card minor suits, you bid the lower-ranking — clubs.

“At first all of these rules may seem too much to remember, so when you do forget, just bid what seems right. If you’re curious, you can refer to the textbook.”

Instructions

“Determine the total number of points on each of the following hands and decide on the proper opening bid.”

1) \spadesuit 9 6 4
 \heartsuit Q J 9 8
 \diamondsuit A K 4
 \clubsuit A Q J

2) \spadesuit A J 9 8 7
 \heartsuit K 7
 \diamondsuit K J 8 2
 \clubsuit 9 8

3) \spadesuit 10 9 8
 \heartsuit Q 9 8 7 6
 \diamondsuit A Q J
 \clubsuit 8 5

HCP 17

Distr. Points 0

Total Points 17

Opening Bid 1NT*

HCP 12

Distr. Points 1

Total Points 13

Opening Bid 1 \spadesuit

HCP 9

Distr. Points 1

Total Points 10

Opening Bid Pass

* Remember the decision on whether to open 1NT should be based on high-card points and not total points.

4) ♠ 3
♥ A J 8 6 5
♦ K 4
♣ A K J 7 3

HCP 16

Distr. Points 2

Total Points 18

Opening Bid 1♥

5) ♠ A Q 7 3
♥ A 9 5
♦ 7 6
♣ K J 6 2

HCP 14

Distr. Points 0

Total Points 14

Opening Bid 1♣

6) ♠ A J 6 3
♥ 5
♦ K J 9 4
♣ A 8 6 2

HCP 13

Distr. Points 0

Total Points 13

Opening Bid 1♦

7) ♠ K 4 3
♥ A K 8 6
♦ A J 5
♣ K J 2

HCP 19

Distr. Points 0

Total Points 19

Opening Bid 1♣

8) ♠ Q 8 5 3
♥ Q 9 6 3
♦ A J 10
♣ A 6

HCP 13

Distr. Points 0

Total Points 13

Opening Bid 1♦

9) ♠ 4
♥ A Q 9 6 3
♦ 5
♣ A K 10 7 5 2

HCP 13

Distr. Points 3

Total Points 16

Opening Bid 1♣

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the students. Note that the next-to-last example (8) covers a situation you have not actually discussed. The students should be able to work it out from the rules they have.

Conclusion

“You need at least 13 total points to open the bidding. The most descriptive opening bid is 1NT, which requires 15, 16 or 17 HCP and a balanced hand. If you don’t have the right type of hand to open 1NT, open your longest suit if it is five cards or longer. With two five-card suits, open the higher-ranking. If you have only four-card suits, open the longer minor suit in your hand. Open the higher-ranking of two four-card minor suits. If you have two three-card minor suits, open the lower-ranking, clubs.”

EXERCISE SIX: Responder, the Captain, Decides What Level and What Strain

Introduction

“The opener starts to describe the hand with the opening bid. The responder considers what picture opener has painted. The responder decides whether there are enough combined points to go for one of the bonus levels (Golden Games) and what strain the partnership should play in. This makes responder the captain.

“If the opening bid is one of a suit, responder can’t make these decisions right away because opener has a wide range of possible strengths (13 to 21 total points) and distribution (balanced or unbalanced). However, responder usually has enough information when partner opens 1NT. This shows a narrow range of points — 15, 16 or 17 — and a balanced distribution (4–3–3–3, 4–4–3–2 or 5–3–3–2).

“The responder’s bids will fall into one of three categories to help responder decide on the level and strain of the final contract. These categories are essentially bidding messages to the opener. They are called *signoff*, *invitational* and *forcing* bids.

- A signoff bid is a response that asks the opener to pass.
- An invitational bid gives the opener the opportunity to pass or bid again.
- A forcing bid requires the opener to bid again.

“You will learn more about how these three types of bids help you decide on the level and strain of the final contract throughout the course. For now, just recognize that each bid sends a message.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1♥. You, as responder, decide at what level and strain to play the contract. On the following hands, would you play at a partscore, a game or possibly a game? What strain would you choose? What type of bidding message do you want to convey to opener?”

1) ♠ K 9 8
♥ 10 7 2
♦ 10 8 7 6
♣ J 9 4

Partscore in hearts.
Bidding message
is signoff.

2) ♠ Q J 9
♥ K 5 3 2
♦ 9 7 5
♣ 8 3 2

Possibly game in hearts.
Bidding message
is invitational.

3) ♠ A 7 5
♥ K J
♦ A 8 6 2
♣ J 9 6 3

Game most likely in
notrump unless opener
has six hearts.
Bidding message is forcing.

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“When partner opens the bidding, responder will try to determine the level and strain of the final contract using the various bidding messages available to help make the decision.

“When your partner opens the bidding 1NT, you know partner has 15, 16, or 17 HCP. Since you know that 25 or more total points are required for a Golden Game, you can add your points to partner’s to determine whether the partnership belongs in a partscore or game. With most hands, you know the answer to *What Level?* right away. With some hands (8 or 9 points), you aren’t quite sure and will need further help from partner.

“When partner opens the bidding with one of a suit, the answers aren’t quite so easy.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Responder, the Captain, Decides What Strain and What Level

Introduction

“When your partner opens 1NT, you know partner has at least two cards in each suit. As responder, you usually can determine whether there is a Golden Fit in one of the suits. Responder is especially interested in finding a Golden Fit in a major suit.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1NT. You, as responder, decide the level and strain. What type of bidding message do you want to convey to the opener with your bid?”

1) ♠ 8 2
♥ 10 9
♦ A K 8 7 6
♣ Q J 9 8

Game in Notrump.
Bidding message is signoff.

2) ♠ 9 8 3
♥ K Q 10 7 6 2
♦ 6 3
♣ K 4

Game in hearts since opener must have at least two hearts. Bidding message is signoff.

3) ♠ A K 9 7 4
♥ Q 7
♦ J 7 6
♣ Q 9 8

Game in either spades or notrump. Bidding message is forcing.

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“When partner opens 1NT, you, as responder (the captain), can often decide what strain the partnership belongs in. Sometimes you may need additional help from partner. In the sample deals, we’ll see how responder can put *What Level?* and *What Strain?* together to decide on the contract.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Counting Winners

Introduction

“When you play, you need to know your objective — how many tricks you must win to make your contract. That is fairly simple: add six to the level of your contract. For example, how many tricks do you need to win in 3NT? (Nine.)

“The next thing you should do is take a look at how many tricks you have. Tricks you can take right away are called sure tricks. You can decide how many sure tricks you have by adding up the sure tricks in each suit. Counting winners (sure tricks) helps you focus on your assets.”

Instructions

“Take one suit and arrange the cards as I call them. How many *sure tricks* can you take with each of the following suit combinations?”

DUMMY:	1) A 7 2	2) K 6 4	3) A 4	4) Q 5
DECLARER:	9 6 3	A Q 5	K Q	A K 6
	One sure trick.	Three sure tricks.	Two sure tricks.	Three sure tricks.

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“Sure tricks are those which you can take without giving up the lead. We’ll see how counting sure tricks helps us during the practice hands.”

All four of the pre-dealt deals have the number of tricks that the students need to make the contract. Students need to learn to *take their tricks and run* when they have enough. They must remember that when the suit is unevenly divided, they play the high card from the short side first (Exercise Ten). They also must remember to draw trumps first in a suit contract (Exercise Twelve).

Remember to have the students take the cards out of the board and turn them face up on the table before they actually play them. For each board, go over the questions outlined in the Group Activities.

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Taking Tricks

(E-Z Deal Cards: #2, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ A 7 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ A K Q J ♣ 6 5 4 2				
♠ 8 4 3 2 ♥ Q J 10 4 ♦ 10 8 4 ♣ 10 8	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K Q J 10 9 ♥ A 9 6 ♦ 5 3 ♣ 9 7 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 6 5 ♥ 8 7 3 ♦ 9 7 6 2 ♣ A K Q J				

The Bidding

“How many combined points are there in each partnership? (N–S have 27 combined points; E–W have 14 combined points.) Does one partnership have enough combined strength for a Golden Game? (Yes, N–S.) Does the partnership have a Golden Fit in a major suit? (No.)

“North is the dealer. Which player would open the bidding? (North.) What would the opening bid be? (1NT.) Which player would be the describer? (North.) Which player would be the responder? (South.) Which player would be the captain? (South.) What should the contract be? (3NT.) Which player would be the declarer? (North.)”

The Play

“Suppose that North is the declarer in a contract of 3NT. Which player would make the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♠K.) How many tricks must declarer take to fulfill the contract? (Nine.)

“Look at each combined suit in the North and South hands and determine how many sure tricks there are. (Nine.) There is a bridge saying, *take your tricks and run*, that applies to this hand. Why would this be good advice? (Because declarer can be assured of making the contract by taking the nine winners.) What might happen if you don’t take your tricks when you have the opportunity? (If the defenders get the lead, they could take four spades and the ♥A — more tricks than declarer can afford to lose.)”

The key for the students is to consider that their aim as declarer is to win nine tricks. When they look at their assets and see that they have nine tricks, they should opt to *take their tricks and run*.

