



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(339) Unbalanced 1-Suited Opening Hands

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Level: 1

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General

A 1-suited hand has a 6+card suit and no other 4+card suit. This means that when we hold a 1-suiter we usually have an unbalanced hand (one with a singleton or a void). The only 1-suited hands without a singleton or void are 6322 or 7222 semi-balanced hands. When we are the opening bidder and have enough values to open the bidding, then we must describe our hand to partner. Let's take a look at how we best do so when we hold a 1-suited hand.

1-Suited Major Suit Hands

When we open the bidding with a 1-suited hand that has a 6+card Major suit, then we start by bidding our long suit (showing partner at least a 5-card Major suit) and plan to later further describe our shape (additional distribution) and strength.

"Buckets" (Strength)

- 12-14 points Small (S)
- 15-17 points Medium (M)
- 18-19 points Large (L)
- 20-21 points Extra-Large (XL)

Example 1

♠ KQT873

♥ AJ9

♦ 5

♣ K43

1♠ 1NT

___?

Here we rebid 2♠, showing a 6-card ♠ suit and minimum opening bid values. This 2♠ rebid usually shows a 1-suited hand (no other 4-card suit).



Example 2

♠ 9
♥ AKJ843
♦ AQ9
♣ QT9
1♥ 1♠
___?

Here we rebid 3♥, showing a 1-suited hand with a 6-card ♥ suit and extra values (about 15-17 HCP).

Example 3

♠ 9
♥ AKJT843
♦ AQ9
♣ T9
1♥ 1♠
___?

Here we only have 14 HCP, but with an excellent suit and a 7th ♥ we jump to 3♥. This hand has about the same playing strength as one with a 6-card suit and an extra King.

Example 4

♠ 9
♥ AKT98743
♦ AQ9
♣ T
1♥ 1♠
___?

With this hand we jump to 4♥. This shows an 8-card ♥ suit and about minimum opening values.

Example 5

♠ AKT743
♥ 9
♦ A97
♣ AKT
1♠ 1NT
___?

Here we are too strong to rebid 3♠ and we need to make a game forcing bid. So we make a jump shift by bidding 3♣, pretending like we have a 4-card ♣ suit.



Example 6

♠ AKQT743

♥ J

♦ A9

♣ QT7

1♠ 1NT

___?

Here we rebid 3NT to show a solid 7+card ♠ suit and an outside Ace or King. This gives partner a choice of games between 3NT or 4♠. With about 8 tricks in our hand, we just need partner to produce 1 trick to make 3NT.

Summary of Rebids

1M 1NT

___?

If we have a 1-suiter in a Major, we start by opening the bidding with 1-Major (1M), hear partner respond 1NT, and have the following rebid options:

- (S) 2M 11-14 HCP with a 6-card suit
- (M) 3M 15-17 HCP with a 6-card suit (with a longer suit we may stretch with fewer HCP)
- (S+) 4M 11-15 HCP with a good 7-card or 8-card suit (4-level shape + 1-level strength)

Hard Hands

- (L) 3-minor Open 1-Major and jump shift into 3-card minor (“lie in a minor”) – Game Force!
- (XL+) Here we usually do not start with a 1M opening; we probably open 2♣.
- (M+) 3NT “Tricks” This rebid shows a solid suit, 6+card Major, with outside winners.

1-Suited Minor Suit Hands

When we hold a 1-suited hand with a long minor suit, hand type becomes a more important factor for us to consider. With an unbalanced hand, we will show our long suit and strength to partner (similar to a Major suit auction), but with a semi-balanced hand, we should consider bidding notrump (the appropriate amount) to describe our hand.

The location of our honors also helps us determine which rebid we should make – whether to treat the hand as unbalanced or balanced.



Example 7

1♦ 1♠
___?

Values	Bidding Options
12-14 points	Rebid 2♦ or rebid 1NT
15-17 points	Rebid 3♦ or Open 1NT
18-19 points	Jump shift into a 3-card minor or rebid 2NT
20-21 points	Jump shift into a 3-card minor or open 2NT

Solid Suits

When we have a 6+card solid suit (either Major or a minor), like AKQxxx+, then we can show a hand with this trick-taking strength by opening our long suit and rebidding 3NT.

Example 8 - Solid Suit Auctions

1♠ 1NT
3NT

1♥ 1NT
3NT

1♦ 1♠
3NT

Each of these auctions shows a long solid suit with enough outside values to open the bidding at the 1-level (usually at least one outside Ace or King).

Conclusion

When we have a 1-suited hand (a 6+card suit and no other 4+card suit), we need to make a rebid to show our long suit and our strength. This is not quite as simple as describing a balanced hand, but if you focus on communicating both these factors then you can usually effectively describe your opening hand to partner with your rebid.