



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(154) More Balancing**

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Level: 2

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#### **General**

Balancing is the act of stretching to keep the auction open; to keep the opponents from winning the contract at a low level. This can be done by different players in many different auctions. Let's look at some more of these common balancing situations.

#### **Opener Balances by Reopening**

Opener can balance in an auction by reopening the bidding when LHO makes an overcall and that is passed back around the Opener.

#### *Example*

1♠    2♦    P    P  
\_\_\_?

In this auction, Opener should strive to compete in the bidding.

- With shortness in the opponent's suit and not a tremendous amount of distribution, Opener should balance with a takeout double. This is to protect the situations where partner has made a "trap pass" with extreme length in the opponent's suit and is hoping to defend.
- Common distributions to reopen with a double are:
  - 5-4-1-3
  - 5-3-1-4
  - 5-4-0-4
  - 6-4-0-3
  - 6-3-0-4
- With more distribution, even with minimum values, opener should strive to bid another suit – showing unwillingness to sell out to a 2♦ final contract or to defend 2♦ doubled if partner has a "trap pass."



## Responder Balances

The Responder often is in the balancing seat when the opponents have found a fit at a low level and Opener has passed.

### Example

1♥    1♠    X    2♠  
P    P    \_\_\_?

When the opponents have found a fit at a low level, then in the balancing seat you should strive to compete in the bidding with any excuse at all. With any extra values, more than about 8 points, you should strive to not sell out to 2♠. With 2-2-5/4 shape you can stretch to make a second double and see what partner does.

Responder can also balance with 2NT to show both of the unbid suits, commonly both minors, without having shown other values.

### Example

1♥    1♠    P    2♠  
P    P    \_\_\_?

♠ 8

♥ 76

♦ QT954

♣ QJ973

2NT in this auction is just a desire to compete in the bidding, showing the other two suits – both minors.

## Other Balancing

Balancing can be done by an Interferer as well, especially when the other side has found a fit at a low level. A common balancing position is to make an overcall, have LHO raise Opener's suit, and then have that fit passed back around to us.

### Example

1♠    2♦    2♠    P  
P    \_\_\_?

In this position the Interferer can stretch (balance) to:

- Rebid a good 6-card ♦ suit.
- Reopen with a takeout double with 4-5 or 4-6 distribution – with 4-card ♥ and longer ♦.
- Bid 2NT with both minors, usually 6♦ and 4♣.
- Make other natural bids with more distribution.



## Conclusion

Balancing is an important part of low-level competitive bidding. You do not want to allow the opponents to win the contract at a low level. This is especially true when you have a distributional hand with shortness in the opponent's suit. Consider stretching to bid when you have a distributional hand and the opponents are going to win the auction at a low level.