

Always Open 1NT — Even With a Five-Card Major

Whenever you have a balanced hand and the appropriate point count, open 1NT. **Do not be distracted by a five-card major. There are absolutely no exceptions.** Life will be much easier when you open 1NT with a five-card major and a balanced hand. You will not have a rebid problem, and your partner will immediately know about your strength and balanced distribution. If you open your five-card major, partner will not know about your strength now, and there will be no way to tell him later! Bridge can be a very unforgiving game: Either you open 1NT, or you forget about showing your 16–18 (or 15–17) HCP.

Although many regard the above as heresy, please read on. What would you open with this hand?

♠ 873	If you open 1♥, your partner will often respond 1♠. The opponents are silent. It is time for your rebid; decide before continuing.
♥ KJ865	
♦ AQ10	
♣ AQ	

Let's round up the usual suspects, *oops*, I mean rebids:

1. Can you pass? Absolutely not! **Partner's 1♠ response did not deny a good hand.** It promised 6–16 points and was 100% forcing.
2. Can you rebid 1NT? No, this shows a balanced minimum; less than a 1NT opening. Obviously, a 1NT rebid misrepresents your strength.
3. Can you rebid 2♦? No. A 2♦ bid would promise a four-card suit. You are asking for trouble if you lie about your distribution.
4. Can you raise to 2♠? No. This shows a minimum hand with good spade support. Partner's response promises only a four-card suit.
5. Can you rebid 2NT? No. This shows more points than an opening 1NT bid. You would need about 19 points to make this bid.

Give up? You certainly do not need this aggravation — life is too short. Ignore your major and open 1NT.

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