

DEFENSES TO 1 NT OPENINGS by Expert - Larry Cohen.

The system I prefer and have used for more than 25 years is DONT. It was developed by my former partner, Marty Bergen. The system was initially called Bergen over Notrump but Marty also coined the acronym DONT (Disturbing Opponents No Trump), which caught on.

DONT is a simple method for getting into the bidding when an opponent opens 1NT, and it is popular with many players. I used it with Marty and now with David Berkowitz. There are variations that have been invented, possibly improvements, but we prefer to keep it simple.

2♣ = clubs plus a higher-ranked suit

2♦ = diamonds and a higher-ranked suit (a major)

2♥ = hearts and spades

2♠ = spades

2NT = any strong two-suiter

3 level = natural, preemptive

We use this system in the direct seat and in the balancing seat. Typically, the two suits are 5-4 or 4-5 or longer either way.

I like DONT because it allows you to show all one- and two-suited hands without having to bid at the three level. You always find your fit (if you have one) on the two level, which is important for following the law of total tricks.

The method is very effective at matchpoints, letting you get in and disturb, safely, on many hands. The downside is that the system is not great for identifying which of your two suits is the fivecarder, so you sometimes miss a major-suit contract, but the goal is to just get in. It also isn't great for game bidding.

I have had enough good results with DON'T over the years that I wouldn't consider changing.

Some additional points:

- Suit quality and length depend on vulnerability and position. In the balancing seat, a DONT bidder can have a pretty weak hand.
- We presume there is no game, but if we want to ask, 2NT by advancer (the DONT bidder's partner) asks for more information (minimum, maximum, etc.).
- After a double, showing one suit, if you show spades, it is a good hand (no direct 2♠ overcall).
- After 2♣, partner bids 2♦ to play in the other suit.
- After 2♦, partner bid 2♥ to play in the major.
- It is important for your partnership to discuss what happens in competition, for example, if they double the DONT bid.

It is my opinion that penalty doubles of 1NT are not great. It is very hard to defend against 1NT – and the double lets the opponents run to 2♣ or 2♦ contracts they can't reach without the penalty double.

That said, we do not use DONT against weak 1NT openings. You do need a penalty double in that situation. Against weak 1NTs we use the following, but have no strong feelings about the best method:

Dbl = Penalty (at least equal strength)

2♣ = majors

2♦ = one major

2 of major = that major and either minor suit.

Mid-Chart conventions are not permitted in events that are restricted to the General Convention Chart. Players should check the director-in-charge for details.

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