

Defining Jump Bids

One of the most difficult concepts in bridge is remembering whether a jump in the bidding is strong, weak, invitational, or even natural! It gets even harder because a lot of modern bridge players are changing the meaning of some of the strength showing jumps in Standard American. We'll go through which jumps show which hands, and try to explain why.

1. JUMPS WHEN YOU ARE FIRST TO BID (OPENER)

2NT = strong (20-21 balanced)

2♣ = strong (22+ balanced, or 9.5 trick hands with a suit)

2♦, ♥, ♠ = weak 2, 5-10 HCP, 6 card suits

3♣, ♦, ♥, ♠ = weak, 3-9 HCP, 7 card suits

4♣, ♦ = preemptive, 8 card suits (or at least 7-4 shape), 2-8 HCP not-vul, and 5-9 HCP vul

- Remember, opening 4 of a minor gives up on 3NT for your side. The suit should not look great for 3NT.

None Vul:

♠ 8 ♥ 5 ♦ KJ976432 ♣ Q83 – I would open 4D in first chair. Shortness in the majors and 8 cards make the 4 level bid attractive. They are more likely to get to the wrong major when it is their hand if I open 4D versus 3D, because I take away their cue bid.

4♥, 4♠, 5♣, 5♦ -- these opening show 8+ card suits – they aren't strictly preempts, but partner is expected to pass.

Opening 3NT -- Gambling 3NT (must be alerted)

Because we play 2♣ as the first bid for all 22+ balanced hands, this frees up 3NT to mean something else. The best agreement to have in my opinion is to play 3NT as "gambling." This means you have a very specific hand:

- A solid minor suit with at least AKQJxxx (clubs or diamonds)
- No other outside strength higher than a jack. With more than that, you can open at the 1 level and bid the hand constructively.

♠ J ♥T5 ♦983 ♣AKQJT63

This is the perfect hand. Too good for 3♣; not good enough for 1♣. As responder, you have an exact picture of partner's hand. You are allowed to pass 3NT, but only if you have all three suits stopped.

♠ K72 ♥A9632 ♦A542 ♣4 -- you know partner has 7 club tricks for you most of the time, so passing 3NT is reasonable and you're in a great 22 HCP game. A spade lead may still beat it but make them find it!

♠ T63 ♥AK64 ♦AK652 ♣4 – this time you have no spade stopper, so 3NT isn't good, but bidding 5♣ looks right.

♠ Q82 ♥AK642 ♦T72 ♣ 92 -- you can't be sure which minor partner has but game isn't in the cards here. Bid 4♣; partner will correct to 4♦ with diamonds.

♠ AK62 ♥ KQ832 ♦A642 ♣__ -----3NT would be easy, except you can't get to partner's hand to run the club suit!! Remember, partner has no outside aces, kings or queens. Bid 5♣ which should have excellent play.

♠ KT72 ♥ KJ63 ♦ 4 ♣ QT63 ---partner has diamonds. Because partner's hand is so well defined, it is best put in the dummy so your meager values can remain hidden. Bid 4♦.

The final note on gambling 3NT is that when leading against 3NT passed out, experts advise this is a good time for leading a dry ace or a high honor. If they've left one suit open, you'll find it right away. Declarer's hand is usually an open book. Don't lead passively here.

Opening 4NT

A 4NT opening is straight Blackwood – even if you are playing some form of Roman Keycard with your partner. You answer 5♣ with 0, 5♦ with 1, and 5♥ with 2.

(If you have 3, you bid 5♠ but it might be time to find a new partner!)

This is appropriate for a complete monster hand that only cares about aces. It may never happen to you in your bridge career.

♠ KQJT7642 ♥A ♦A ♣KQ9

You can open 4NT, bid 5S if partner has 0, 6S if partner has one, and 7NT if partner has two.

Jumps by Responder

♠QT653 ♥AK4 ♦A5 ♣863

Partner opens 1♠. What should you bid? What bids shouldn't you make?

In standard American 1x-3x shows a limit raise in the suit partner opened. This means 4 card trump support, and 8-11 HCP. Any stronger than that with 4 card support in a major definitely forces to game.

- If you play inverted minors, 3 level bids are preemptive in a minor. Less than a limit raise, but not disgraceful. 4-7 HCP or so. Partner is supposed to bid 3NT with 18-19 balanced; that is my standard for bidding 3 of a minor.
- 1x -4x in a major is 5 card trump support, <7 points, usually a singleton or a void, no slam interest!
 - Don't just jump to 4 at matchpoints with a flat hand. Something like ♠QT653 ♥Q5 ♦J72 ♣J43 is only worth 2S.
 - A singleton or a void though makes the jump clear.
 - ♠T7642 ♥3 ♦9 ♣J97532 -- only 1 HCP, but I can ruff partner's red cards, and we have no defense against a red suit contract. This hand bids 4♠ for sure.

- Jumps to 4NT are Blackwood/RKCB for the suit opened. Make sure the hand is appropriate!
- Jump shifts in standard American with no interference are strong!!
 - ♠K2 ♥AJ7 ♦9 ♣AKJ8743 – this hand is an easy game force with slam interest. Jump to 3♣ over 1♠ and partner should start cue bidding.
 - If you play weak jump shifts always, now 3♣ is ♠7 ♥82 ♦J42 ♣KJT9843. This is an important thing to remember in a partnership!
- What about the jump to 3NT over 1 of a major?
 - I recommend playing this as a very specific point range and shape. No ruffing value, but 3 card support for partner.
 - 3343 or 3334 shape (always 3 card support for partner!)
 - 13-15 HCP if you play 1♠-2NT as Jacoby or invitational
 - 16-18 HCP if you play 1♠-2NT as natural and forcing
 - Opener can pass 3NT with a flat hand, bid 4S with a shapely minimum or two suiter, and cuebid with extras toward slam.
- Double jump shifts should be played as splinters (I will teach them someday soon)
 - 1♠-(p)-4♣ = game forcing hand, 4+ spades, 0-1 clubs, interest in slam
 - If you're not playing splinters, assume natural
 - 1♠-4♥ is one that creates a lot of havoc!