

LESSON 5

Minor-Suit Openings and Responses



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Minor-Suit Openings and Responses

This lesson covers minor-suit openings and responses. There aren't many popular conventions associated with minor-suit openings, so this lesson focuses on clearing up a number of areas from which the partnership can benefit. For more experienced players, this lesson may be more of a review than the introduction of new conventions. You might want to focus on completing the appropriate area of the convention card, as you are discussing the various topics in this lesson.

Bidding

There are many misconceptions regarding minor-suit openings and responses. The material on bidding covers such concepts as the short club, counting dummy points when raising a minor suit and handling limit and forcing raises.

With an experienced group, you may want to add some material on the subject of inverted minor raises. There are some examples in the textbook. While this isn't one of the standard conventions covered in this series, it is popular in many areas and eliminates some problems associated with minor-suit raises. However, it isn't an approach recommended for casual players.

Here are the topics covered:

Opening Bids of 1♣ and 1♦

This is a basic review of minor-suit opening bids with an emphasis on clearing up misunderstandings about the *short club*.

Third and Fourth Positions

This section covers the effect of the position at the table on opening bids of 1♣ and 1♦. The *Rule of 15*, introduced in an earlier lesson, is applied to opening minor-suit bids in fourth position.

Limit versus Forcing Raises

While this material may seem like a review to the more experienced students, there are likely to be enough points of interest to make going over these examples worthwhile. A key element is that there is no forcing raise of a minor suit using standard methods. This can lead to some complications. With an experienced group, you can branch out into a discussion of the merits of inverted minor-suit raises.

Suit Responses to 1♣ and 1♦

This basic material serves as an excellent review for a more experienced group.

Notrump Responses to 1♣ and 1♦

There is confusion about the different meanings assigned to notrump bids in various auctions, especially 2NT. Over a major-suit opening, 2NT is a conventional bid showing a forcing raise. Over a minor-suit opening, 2NT shows a balanced hand limited to 13 to 15 points. After an overcall, 2NT is a natural invitational bid with 11 or 12 points. After a takeout double, 2NT is a conventional bid showing a limit raise. This section should be used to clarify the natural use of notrump responses over a minor-suit opening.

Handling Interference

This section includes the use of a cuebid as a forcing raise after an overcall and the use of 2NT as a limit raise or better after a takeout double. This will be a review of these concepts if they were covered in a previous lesson. Otherwise, it's important to introduce them at this point. With a more experienced group, you can expand the topic to include the use of the cuebid as a limit raise or better — probably an improvement over the standard approach.

Play & Defense

Since the practice deals involve minor-suit openings and responses, it can be expected that there will be some deviation from the recommended auction. Let the players bid the hands in their own fashion and play the resulting contracts. There are several interesting play concepts in the deals, however, so you should discuss the play and defense after a discussion of the bidding puts everyone in the recommended contract.

The deals involve some challenging play and defense concepts:

- Safety play.
- Uppercut.
- Avoidance (several variations).

The first deal has a potential uppercut for the defenders if declarer doesn't handle the trump suit correctly. There are a number of variations, so you might want to skip most of the discussion with a basic group — saving time for other deals. With an experienced group, go through some of the possibilities.

The second deal is very interesting for students at all levels. Knowing when to play second hand high on the opening lead is a difficult concept. You could spend some time discussing the difference between Q-x opposite J-x-x and Q-x opposite K-x-x. Even after handling this combination correctly, it's quite likely that most declarers will be defeated when they don't guard against the unexpected division of the cards.

The third deal provides a chance to discuss the *Rule of Eleven* from declarer's perspective. Again, most declarers will go down when they don't take into consideration an unlucky lie of the defenders' cards.

The fourth deal contains an interesting defensive possibility which declarer can counter through good technique. This is a useful type of practice deal — with opportunities for both sides to shine. It may be a bit much for a basic group, but there's lots to discuss with a more advanced class.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Minor-suit opening bids can be unclear when the partnership uses a five-card major style. There's often a feeling that an opening bid in a minor suit isn't a natural bid. That's not the case. There may be times when system dictates a minor-suit opening on a three-card suit, but the bidding is still natural. There is also uncertainty when raising a minor suit: How many trumps do you need to support? Do you count dummy points? Should you play in notrump rather than the minor suit? The objective of this lesson is to put the students more at ease handling minor-suit openings and responses.

You might start like this:

“In this lesson, we will look at the minor suits, which tend to get ignored because of the emphasis on major suits and notrump contracts. Handling minor suits effectively, however, can often be the stepping stone to reaching the best contract, even if that is a major suit or notrump. The partnership needs to exchange information effectively after a minor-suit opening, and that will be the focus of this lesson.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Opening Bids of 1♣ and 1♦

Introduction

“Opening bids of 1♣ and 1♦ cover a wide range of hands. They can be used when:

- You have an unbalanced hand with a long minor suit;
- You have a balanced hand that falls outside the 15 to 17 point range; or
- You can’t open 1♥ or 1♠ because you don’t have a five-card suit.

“There are a lot of misconceptions about an opening bid of 1♣. Because you often hear terms such as ‘better minor,’ ‘convenient club’ and ‘short club,’ you might be under the impression that partner usually holds a three-card suit for an opening bid of 1♣. Nothing could be further from the truth.

“**What do you think is the most likely number of cards partner holds in the suit for an opening bid of 1♣?** (Four.) The most common number is four.

“**What do you think is the next most likely number?** (Five.) The next most likely number is five.

“**What do you think is the next most frequent holding in the club suit?** (Six.) Partner is more likely to hold four, five or six clubs than three clubs. It’s important to keep that in mind.

“Let’s get started by looking at the types of hands you would open with a minor suit.”

Instructions

“The cards are sorted into suits. Give each player one suit and construct the following hand for South.

“In spades: the king and a low card.

“In hearts: the king and three low cards.

“In diamonds: the ace, the queen, the jack and two low cards.

“In clubs: two low cards.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1♦

SOUTH
 ♠ K x
 ♥ K x x x
 ♦ A Q J x x
 ♣ x x

“Remember, we want the cards in neat straight lines, with the high cards toward the edge of the table.”

Check that each table has the correct starting hand set up dummy style in front of South.

“**What would the opening bid be?** (1 ♦.) This is a typical minor-suit opening bid of 1 ♦. With an unbalanced hand, you open the longest suit.

“Change the South hand.

“In diamonds: take away the ace.

“In clubs: add the ace.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1 ♦

SOUTH
 ♠ K x
 ♥ K x x x
 ♦ Q J x x
 ♣ A x x

“**What’s the opening bid?** (1 ♦.) A balanced hand with 13 high-card points is too weak to open 1NT when your range is 15 to 17 points. This is the type of hand that would be opened 1NT if the partnership played a weak notrump style. With no five-card or longer major-suit, open the longer minor suit, 1 ♦. Playing a four-card major-suit style, this hand might be opened 1 ♥. However, even partnerships playing four-card majors sometimes prefer that the major suit contain at least 4 points. So, they might also open 1 ♦.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the king.

“In clubs: add the king.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1 ♦

SOUTH
 ♠ x
 ♥ K x x x
 ♦ Q J x x
 ♣ A K x x

“**Now what?** (1 ♦/1 ♣.) When you have a choice of four-card minor suits, the standard agreement is to open 1 ♦. However, some partnerships prefer to open the ‘better minor’ in this situation and would start with 1 ♣. It doesn’t matter too much which style you adopt. The important thing is for you and your partner to agree on which suit you would open with this hand. We will recommend 1 ♦ with four cards in both minors.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the king and two low cards.

“In diamonds: take away a low card.

“In clubs: take away the king and a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1 ♦

SOUTH
 ♠ K x x x
 ♥ K x x x
 ♦ Q J x
 ♣ A x

“**What’s your choice of opening bid?** (1♦.) With no five-card major suit, open the longer minor suit. That sometimes leads to an opening bid on a three-card suit. You’re not planning to play in the minor suit. Maybe partner will bid a major suit and you can show support on the next round — or you might play in a notrump contract. Nonetheless, this hand might be played with diamonds as trumps — if partner passes or raises the suit. That’s fine.

“Some partnerships playing five-card majors also prefer that an opening bid of 1♦ shows at least a four-card suit. In that case, they would open 1♣ with this hand. That is the actual short club convention, but it’s not standard practice. An opening bid in a minor usually is assumed to be a three-card or longer suit.”

For any students who do play the short club, you can point out that it requires an Announcement.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away a low card.

“In clubs: add a low card.

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NORTH	SOUTH				
	1♣				

“**What’s the opening bid?** (1♣.) The standard guideline is to open 1♣ with three cards in each minor. Some partnerships prefer to open the ‘better’ minor suit, but it would be difficult to say which is the better minor in this hand. It’s easier to stick with the guideline.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ace and add a low card.

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NORTH	SOUTH				
	1♣				

“**What do you open?** (1♣.) With no five-card major, open the longer minor. You’re stuck with 1♣ here — the worse case scenario. You hope you won’t have to play with clubs as trumps, but you might. You also hope partner won’t be on opening lead and lead your ‘suit’ — but that might happen also. This is the type of hand that delights partnerships using a four-card major style.

- “Change the South hand.
 “In spades: take away a low card.
 “In hearts: take away a low card.
 “In clubs: add the king and a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1NT

SOUTH
 ♠ A K x
 ♥ K x x
 ♦ Q J
 ♣ K x x x x

“**Now what’s the opening bid?** (1NT.) Not all hands that have a minor suit are opened 1♣ or 1♦. With a balanced hand and 15 to 17 points, open 1NT.

- “Change the South hand.
 “In spades: take away a low card.
 “In hearts: add two low cards.
 “In diamonds: take away the queen.
 “In clubs: add the queen and take away a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1♥

SOUTH
 ♠ A K
 ♥ K x x x x
 ♦ J
 ♣ K Q x x x

“**What do you open with this hand?** (1♥.) With two five-card suits, the guideline is to open the higher-ranking suit, no matter the strength in the suit.

- “Change the South hand.
 “In spades: add three low cards.
 “In hearts: take away three low cards.

NORTH	SOUTH
	1♠

SOUTH
 ♠ A K x x x
 ♥ K x
 ♦ J
 ♣ K Q x x x

“**So, what do you bid?** (1♠/1♣.) There isn’t universal agreement on the best opening bid with five spades and five clubs. The guideline is to open the higher-ranking suit, 1♠. That’s consistent, and you’ll have an easy time if partner responds 1NT. You can show the second suit by bidding 2♣.

“It won’t be so easy if partner responds 2♦ or 2♥. To show the second suit, you would have to bid 3♣, and that might get the partnership too high if no fit can be found. If partner does respond 2♦ or 2♥, you might settle for a rebid of 2♠, even though partner will expect a six-card suit.

“Some partnerships prefer to open 1♣ with this distribution. If partner responds 1♦ or 1♥, then the spades can be shown at the one level. Of course, if partner responds 1NT, you will have to bid 2♠ to show the second suit, and

the auction may get out of control. It's really a matter of partnership style. Opening either 1♠ or 1♣ could work, depending on what responder has to say. For consistency, we suggest opening 1♠, the higher-ranking suit."

There's no need to get into too much discussion of reverses at this point. That subject will be covered in the next lesson.

"Change the South hand.

"In spades: take away the king and a low card.

"In clubs: take away the king and add the jack, the ten and a low card.

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NORTH	SOUTH				
	1♣				
	♠ A x x				
	♥ K x				
	♦ J				
	♣ Q J 10 x x x x				

"**What's the opening bid?** (1♣.) Now you are back to a standard 1♣ opening bid. With 11 high-card points plus 3 length points for the seven-card suit, this hand is too strong for a preemptive opening bid of 3♣.

"After seeing what opening bids in a minor suit look like, let's turn our attention to responder. Turn the cards in the South hand face down, and construct a hand for North, as responder.

"In spades: the jack and three low cards.

"In hearts: the queen and four low cards.

"In diamonds: three low cards.

"In clubs: one low card.

NORTH ♠ J x x x ♥ Q x x x x ♦ x x x ♣ x	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♣</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Pass	1♣	SOUTH ♠ A x x ♥ K x ♦ J ♣ Q J 10 x x x x
NORTH	SOUTH					
Pass	1♣					

"**Imagine now that you hold the North hand. I'm your partner as South and I open the bidding 1♣. What will you bid?** (Pass/1♥.) With 3 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, you don't have enough to make a bid as responder. The general guideline is that a new suit response at the one level shows 6 or more points.

"**What's the reason you don't want to pass partner's 1♣ opening bid?** (Short clubs; better contract.)

"As mentioned earlier, just because the 1♣ opening bid is sometimes made on a three-card suit is no reason to drastically modify your bidding to allow for that possibility. Opener figures to have four or more clubs for an opening bid of 1♣. The fewer clubs you have, the more likely that opener has more than four. By bidding, you overstate your values and also risk getting the partnership into trouble. A new-suit response is forcing, so partner must bid again, even with minimum values.

“The 1♣ bid is not forcing. If partner insists that you respond holding this type of hand, you should change to a forcing club system where the 1♣ bid can’t be passed. Systems of this type, such as Precision Club, use the 1♣ opening as a conventional bid on strong hands, replacing the standard strong bids, such as the 2♣ opening.

“To see what might happen if you respond, turn opener’s cards — the South hand — face up.

“**What would happen if you passed South’s opening bid of 1♣?** (Seven tricks.) If left to play there, partner probably would take seven tricks and make the 1♣ contract, taking five club tricks, one heart and the ♠A. If the opponents competed in a major suit, you would also be happy defending.

“**What would happen if you bid over 1♣?** (Get too high.) If you responded 1♥, partner would have to make a rebid and would bid 2♣. Now the partnership is too high. In fact, if the opponents competed, partner might bid to 3♣ or higher, expecting some strength in your hand. Had you passed, partner would not get too excited about the hand. By bidding, you take the partnership out of a good contract and into trouble.

“Of course, opener’s hand doesn’t have to be so well arranged to make clubs the best trump suit.

“Change the South hand.

“In diamonds: add the queen and a low card.

“In clubs: take away two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ J x x x</p> <p>♥ Q x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x x</p> <p>♣ x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♣</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Pass	1♣	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A x x</p> <p>♥ K x</p> <p>♦ Q J x</p> <p>♣ Q J 10 x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH					
Pass	1♣					

“These could be the combined hands. Now 1♣ isn’t an attractive contract. If North responds, however, the partnership isn’t going to reach a better spot. 1NT or 2♥ may fare worse than 1♣. Also, the partnership has only 16 high-card points between the combined hands. If North is silent, the opponents are very likely to come into the bidding and play the hand. North doesn’t mind defending.”

Summary

“Opening bids of 1♣ and 1♦:

- Usually show a four-card or longer suit.
- Can occasionally be made on a three-card suit when opener has no five-card major and no four-card or longer minor.

“Responder shouldn’t be overly concerned with opener holding a three-card suit. With a choice of four-card minor suits, open 1♦. With a choice of three-card minor suits, open 1♣.”

Third and Fourth-Position Openings

Introduction

“In the discussion of opening bids of 1♥ and 1♠, light opening bids in third and fourth position were considered. Drury is a conventional method for keeping the partnership at a reasonable level after a major-suit opening bid in third or fourth position. After a minor-suit opening bid, there’s no convention comparable to Drury, but that doesn’t mean that you can’t occasionally open light in third or fourth position.”

Instructions

“Pick up all of the cards in the North hand and put them back into suits.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away the king and add two low cards.

“In diamonds: take away the queen and add a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ten and a low card and add the king.

NORTH	SOUTH
Pass	1♣

SOUTH
 ♠ A x x
 ♥ x x x
 ♦ J x x
 ♣ K Q J x

“**Suppose North is the dealer and North passes. East also passes. South is in third position. Would you open?** (Yes.) There are 11 high-card points. That’s not quite enough for an opening bid in first or second position, but it’s quite reasonable to open 1♣ in third position.

“**What are some advantages of opening?** (Buy contract/lead/disturb opponents.) It’s possible that your side can make a plus score. Partner could have 10 or 11 points and not have opened the bidding. Since partner didn’t open the bidding, it’s more likely that the deal belongs to the opponents. Your bid, however, may cause them to bid too little or too much. If you do defend, the 1♣ bid may get the partnership off to the best defense if North is on lead.

“**Are there any disadvantages to opening the bidding?** (Yes.) It’s possible to get too high. Partner won’t know that the opening is a little light and may compete for the contract to too high a level. Also, you may run into difficulty finding a suitable rebid. There is the advantage that partner is a passed hand, so a new-suit bid is no longer forcing. If you decide to open light in third position, you should feel comfortable passing whatever partner bids. If you open light with an unbalanced hand and partner bids your short suit, you will be poorly placed if you bid again.

“Most competitive players would open this hand in third position, since the potential advantages outweigh the disadvantages. However ...

“What if West is the dealer and there are three passes to the South hand?”

(Pass.) With a borderline hand in fourth position, you have the choice of bidding and trying for a small plus score or passing the deal out. You can apply the Rule of 15. Add the number of spades you hold to the high-card points. If the total is 15 or more, open the bidding; otherwise, pass. On this hand, you have three spades and 11 high-card points — a total of 14. The guideline recommends passing.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card and add the ace and the king.

“In clubs: take away the king and the queen and add a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
Pass	1 ♥ (?)	♠ A x x
		♥ A K x x
		♦ J x x
		♣ J x x

“This hand has a full 13 high-card points. What would you open in first or second position? (1 ♣.) Playing five-card majors, open the longer minor. With a choice of three-card suits, open 1 ♣.

“What if you are in third position? (1 ♣/1 ♥.) You could make the standard opening bid of 1 ♣, but many players might prefer an opening bid of 1 ♥. Partner is a passed hand, so it’s unlikely that your side can make game. It’s probably going to be a partscore battle between the two sides. If East–West buy the contract, you would prefer that partner lead a heart rather than a club. The 1 ♥ opening bid should get partner off to the best lead. If partner raises with only three-card support, you don’t plan to go any higher anyway, and your side’s bidding may push the opponents higher than they would like to be.

“Although it is usual to open the longest suit, there are always exceptions.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace.

“In hearts: take away the ace and the king.

“In diamonds: take away two low cards and add the ace, the king and the queen.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
Pass	1 ♦ (?)	♠ x x
		♥ x x
		♦ A K Q J
		♣ J x x x x

“With 11 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit, there’s nothing wrong with passing in first position. If North and East both pass, however, what might you do in third position? (1 ♦.) If you do decide to open this hand, 1 ♦ makes more sense than 1 ♣. You would definitely prefer a diamond lead if you are defending, and it also leaves you better placed for a suitable rebid if partner responds 1 ♥ or 1 ♠. You can bid 2 ♣ to show the second suit. If you open 1 ♣, the situation is awkward if partner responds 1 ♥ or 1 ♠. Bidding 2 ♦ at this point would force partner to bid 3 ♣ with equal preference for the two suits. Now you would be much too high.”

If the students are already familiar with the concept of reverses, this last point will be obvious. If not, this is a topic that will be discussed further in the next lesson.

“What would you do in fourth position? (Pass.) 11 high-card points plus two spades leaves this hand well short of satisfying the Rule of 15. Opening it in fourth position will give the opponents an opportunity to back into the auction in one of the major suits. Some things are best left alone.”

Summary

“You can open light in third or fourth position, but your hand should satisfy the Rule of 15 to open in fourth position. With fewer than 13 points, you are probably competing for partscore at best. For tactical reasons, therefore, you might choose to open a four-card major or a suit which you want partner to lead if you defend.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 1 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise One — Opening Minor Suits

What is your opening call with each of the following hands in first or second position? What would you call with the same hands if you have an opportunity to open in third or fourth position?

1) ♠ 4
♥ J 4
♦ K J 8 7 3
♣ A K 9 6 3

2) ♠ 7 5 4
♥ A Q 6
♦ K 3
♣ A Q J 8 5

3) ♠ 2
♥ A K J 3
♦ Q 9 7 4
♣ K 8 6 2

4) ♠ Q 8 7 3
♥ A 8 4
♦ A 9 6
♣ K 10 7

5) ♠ Q J 7 6
♥ K J 6 3
♦ Q 8 4
♣ A 7

6) ♠ A J 8 7 3
♥ A
♦ K J 9 6 5 3
♣ 3

Exercise One Answer — Opening Minor Suits

- 1) 1st/2nd: 1♦. Open the higher-ranking of two five-card suits.
3rd: 1♦. Normal opening bid.
4th: Pass. The Rule of 15 — 12 high-card points plus one spade.
- 2) 1st/2nd: 1NT. With a balanced hand, open 1NT even with a five-card suit.
3rd/4th: 1NT. No reason to change the opening bid.
- 3) 1st/2nd: 1♦. Open the higher ranking of two four-card minor suits.
3rd: 1♥ or 1♦. You can open a good four-card major suit occasionally in third position.
4th: Pass or 1♥ or 1♦. The Rule of 15 suggests passing — 13 high-card points plus one spade. If you do open, 1♥ might be the best choice.
- 4) 1st/2nd: 1♣. With a choice between three-card minor suits, open 1♣.
3rd: 1♣. Still open 1♣. The spades aren't robust enough to warrant opening the four-card suit.
4th: 1♣. The Rule of 15 — 13 high-card points plus four spades.
- 5) 1st/2nd: 1♦. Open the longer minor suit.
3rd: 1♥ or 1♦. It might be more effective to open a four-card major suit. Opening 1♥ gives you the best chance of finding a major-suit fit.
4th: 1♥ or 1♦. The Rule of 15 — 13 high-card points plus four spades.
- 6) 1st/2nd: 1♦. Open the longest suit, even with a five-card major.
3rd/4th: 1♦. Nothing has changed.

Limit Versus Forcing Raises

Introduction

“The partnership must decide how to treat a jump raise to the three level over a minor-suit opening. The style we will recommend is to treat the jump raise as a limit raise — an invitational bid showing 10 or 11 points. That leaves you with the dilemma of what to do when you hold a forcing raise, so let’s look at some ways to handle those hands.

“Before getting to that subject, however, let’s review some issues related to raising opener’s minor suit.”

Instructions

“Pick up all of the cards in the South hand and put them back into suits. Construct a hand for North.

“In spades: two low cards.

“In hearts: two low cards.

“In diamonds: the ace, the jack and two low cards.

“In clubs: the jack and four low cards.

NORTH
 ♠ x x
 ♥ x x
 ♦ A J x x
 ♣ J x x x x

NORTH	SOUTH
2♣	1♣

“**Suppose South is the dealer and opens 1♣. If West passes, what do you respond?** (2♣.) With support for partner’s suit and enough strength to raise to the two level, bid 2♣. There’s no need to mention the diamond suit. You’ve already found a fit.

“**Is there an eight-card fit?** (Yes.) Even if partner opened with a three-card club suit, you have an eight-card fit.

“**What if partner opened 1♦, rather than 1♣?** (2♦.) With this hand, raise to 2♦.

“**Are you guaranteed an eight-card diamond fit?** (No.) Opener may have three, but will usually have four or more diamonds.

“**What’s the only exception?** (Exactly 4–4–3–2.) With four cards in both minors, opener bids 1♦. With three cards in both minors, opener bids 1♣. Only if opener has precisely four spades, four hearts, three diamonds and two clubs, would you be in a seven-card fit. Partner starts with the longer minor. This situation is not worth worrying about. Besides, there’s no reason that 2♦ couldn’t be a better contract than 1NT, even if it is a seven-card fit. So, the guideline for raising partner’s minor suit is that you should have at least five-card support for clubs and four-card support for diamonds.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In clubs: take away two low cards and add the queen.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ x x x	1 ♦	1 ♣
♥ x x		
♦ A J x x		
♣ Q J x x		

“**What would you bid if partner opened 1♣?** (1♦.) Rather than raise clubs on only four-card support, you have the alternative of bidding 1♦, showing the four-card diamond suit. You shouldn’t be afraid to raise partner’s club suit with four-card support, but here there is another option.

“**There are actually some advantages to raising directly to 2♣.** **What might they be?** (Limit strength; harder for opponents to compete.) By raising to 2♣, you immediately limit the strength of the hand to 6 to 9 points, so opener is in a good position to judge the level of the contract. If you respond 1♦, that’s a forcing bid and your hand is unlimited. Opener has to bid again, and you may never get an opportunity to show your exact strength or club support — especially if the opponents interfere. That’s another reason for raising to 2♣ right away. If you respond 1♦, East has a chance to enter the bidding at the one level — overcalling 1♥ or 1♠, for example. If you raise immediately to 2♣, West may not be as eager to enter the auction at the two level. There’s not much danger in raising to 2♣ with only four-card support. Remember. The most common number of clubs for opener to hold is four, and opener is more likely to have five or six clubs than three.

“**In competitive auctions, be even more ready to raise opener’s minor with less than ideal support. If partner opens 1♣ and West overcalls 1♥, for example, what should North bid?** (2♣.) North doesn’t have to bid over the overcall, but it would be very timid not to compete for the contract. Most players would raise to 2♣ with this hand. If opener has a three-card suit, tough luck, but the auction isn’t over. A raise may push the opponents too high. In addition, when West overcalls in a major suit, it reduces the likelihood that partner has four cards in that major and, therefore, increases the probability that partner has four or more clubs.

“The same would be true if partner opened 1♦ and West overcalled 1♥. You would certainly raise to 2♦ with this hand and, if one of the low diamonds were a low club, you might raise on three-card support as well. You might land in a 3–3 fit, but that just makes for an interesting play problem for partner. You can’t be perfect in competitive situations.

“Enough about the trump support needed to raise opener right away. Let’s look at the strength required.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ x x x	2♣/3♣	1♣
♥ x		
♦ A J x x		
♣ Q J x x x		

“A raise to the two level shows 6 to 9 points. Since we’re using limit raises, a raise to the three level shows 10 or 11 points.

“**What do you bid if partner opens the bidding 1♣? (2♣/3♣.)** It all depends on what is meant by ‘points.’ When planning to raise opener’s major suit, you count dummy points — points for shortness instead of length. You usually use a scale of 5 points for a void, 3 points for a singleton, and 1 point for a doubleton.

“**If you count dummy points, how much is the hand worth in response to the 1♣ bid?** (11 points.) There are 8 high-card points plus 3 dummy points for the singleton. That’s 11 points, enough to put the hand into the category for a limit raise to 3♣.

“**Can anyone see a problem with that?** (Opener might expect more high-card strength.) Provided the partnership plays with clubs as trumps, the singleton heart is likely to be of value, but what if the partnership finishes in notrump? That rarely happens when the partnership has found a major-suit fit, but it is quite common when the partnership doesn’t have a major-suit fit. If North makes a limit raise showing 10 or 11 points, South is likely to accept the invitation with a little extra strength — 14 or 15 points perhaps. With a reasonably balanced hand, however, South is likely to choose the nine-trick contract of 3NT rather than the 11-trick contract of 5♣. In that case, North’s lack of high-card strength will be a disappointment, and the singleton heart will be a liability instead of an asset.

“There’s no perfect solution to this dilemma. Most players do count dummy points when deciding between a single raise and a jump raise, but prefer to be on the high side on the range, rather than the low side. It never hurts to have a little in reserve. If opener does decide to play game in the minor suit, the partnership will need about 28 or 29 combined points anyway.

“This hand would be borderline for a limit raise to 3♣. With 8 high-card points, many players would pull back a little and raise to only 2♣, planning to compete further if the opposition gets into the auction. However, there are advantages to jumping to 3♣ with this hand. It makes it difficult for the opponents to get into the auction. A raise to 2♣ gives them more room. There’s no right answer, but if you raise to 3♣ with this hand, don’t be surprised when partner bids 3NT and struggles to make the contract.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away a low card.

“In hearts: add the jack.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ x x</td> <td>1 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ J x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ A J x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ Q J x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ x x	1 ♣	♥ J x		♦ A J x x		♣ Q J x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ x x	1 ♣										
♥ J x											
♦ A J x x											
♣ Q J x x x											

“**South opens 1 ♣. What do you bid? (3 ♣.)** This is more like a sound limit raise to 3 ♣. There are 9 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit. If partner bids 3NT, this should be an excellent dummy. If you count dummy points, you would come to a similar conclusion. The hand is worth 11 points — 9 high-card points plus 1 for each doubleton — the right sort of strength for a limit raise. If partner can’t make a move over an invitational raise, you’re probably high enough.

“**What if partner opened 1 ♦, instead of 1 ♣? (2 ♣/3 ♦.)** It would be reasonable to make an immediate limit raise to 3 ♦. However, there’s enough strength to bid a new suit at the two level, 2 ♣, planning to show the diamond support on the next round. That will be more descriptive, but it may lead to a more complicated auction. If partner raises to 3 ♣ or rebids 2NT, for example, many partnerships would treat a 3 ♦ bid as forcing. If the partnership hasn’t discussed sequences like this, the straightforward approach of treating this hand as a limit raise in diamonds may be best.

“Minor suits present more of a challenge than major suits because of the notrump aspect. If you stop in a partscore, there’s nothing much wrong with playing in a good minor-suit fit. If you’re going to the game level, you prefer to play in 3NT rather than 5 ♣ or 5 ♦ whenever possible. Nine tricks are easier than 11 unless you have a lot of extra strength or some suitable distribution.

“The difficulty with minor suits is even more apparent when you have enough strength for a forcing raise.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card and add the ace.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ x x</td> <td>1 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ A J</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ A J x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ Q J x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ x x	1 ♣	♥ A J		♦ A J x x		♣ Q J x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ x x	1 ♣										
♥ A J											
♦ A J x x											
♣ Q J x x x											

“**If partner opens 1 ♣, what will you respond? (1 ♦.)** With 13 high-card points and 1 point for the five-card suit, you are too strong to make a limit

raise to 3♣, showing 10 or 11 points. Over a major suit, you can use 2NT as a forcing raise — the Jacoby 2NT convention — because you never intend to play in notrump after finding a major-suit fit. The same isn't true over a minor suit. Most partnerships prefer to use the jump to 2NT or 3NT as a natural bid — showing a desire to play in notrump — over a minor suit. We'll talk more about that later. You don't want to immediately suggest notrump, since you have nothing in the spade suit. You want to tell partner about the club fit and your strength.

“Playing standard methods with limit raises, there is no easy way to show a forcing raise in a minor suit. Start by bidding a new suit. Here, you can bid 1♦. Opener's rebid may make the next bid easier.

“Suppose North responds 1♦ and opener rebids 1NT. What now? (3NT.)

If opener has a minimum balanced hand, it sounds as though 3NT will be the best spot. You don't have to mention your clubs at all. They'll come as a surprise for partner — and the opponents.

“Unfortunately, the auction may not proceed comfortably at all.

“Suppose opener rebids 1♠ instead of 1NT. Now what? (3NT.) You still can't conveniently show club support. A jump to 3♣ at this point — an old suit at the three level — would be invitational, showing 10 or 11 points. So would a jump to 2NT. Probably the best choice is to jump to 3NT and hope that works out. You do have all of the suits stopped, and there's no reason to believe that 5♣ would be any better, or that you have a slam.

“It would be even more difficult if partner rebid 1♥ over 1♦. Now it would be dangerous to jump to 3NT with no expectation that your side has any length or strength in spades. You could jump to 4♣ — that would be forcing — but you would miss any chance of playing in 3NT. To keep the bidding going, you might have to resort to the ploy of bidding a new suit, 1♠, as a forcing bid. We're going to discuss the bid of the fourth suit as a forcing bid in the next lesson. The point here, however, is that the auction can become complex when the partnership has no immediate forcing raise of a minor suit.

“There are some conventional ways around this dilemma, however, most partnerships usually manage quite well without a forcing raise. It won't be that often that you are stuck for a bid. We'll look at some other options for responding to 1♣ and 1♦ in a moment.”

You may want to skip the next example with a basic class. Even a more experienced group may have some difficulty with the concepts involved.

“Sometimes you have to be a little inventive when responding to a minor suit with a game-going hand.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away the jack.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ x x	1 ♦ (?)	1 ♣
♥ A Q		
♦ A x x		
♣ Q J x x x		

“If partner, South, opens 1 ♣, you don’t have a good first response. Bidding notrump with no stopper in spades is taking a big risk.

“**What might you respond if partner opens 1 ♣?** (1 ♦.) You can manufacture a response of 1 ♦ and wait to see what opener does next. Hopefully, you’ll then be in a better position to know what to do. You don’t intend to play in diamonds. You’re using the 1 ♦ response as a forcing bid. If partner raises to 2 ♦, you plan to show club support — probably by jumping to 4 ♣ to make sure that partner doesn’t pass. You don’t mind playing with clubs as trumps if partner has an unbalanced hand with clubs and diamonds. There might even be a slam.”

With an experienced group you can discuss whether 3 ♣ in this sequence would be forcing (1 ♣–1 ♦–2 ♦–3 ♣). Without a specific agreement, most partnerships would play it as non-forcing, but the partnership should discuss such sequences.

Summary

“Over a minor-suit opening:

- You should ideally have four-card or longer support to raise diamonds and five-card or longer support to raise clubs.
- When deciding how high to raise, be cautious about using dummy points. If opener chooses a notrump contract, your short suits won’t be of any value.
- Most partnerships use a single raise to show 6 to 9 points and a jump raise as a limit raise showing 10 or 11 points. In this style, there is no immediate forcing raise.
- You usually start by making a forcing bid, by bidding a new suit, hoping to be able to determine the best contract after hearing opener’s rebid.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 2 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Two — Raising Opener's Minor

Partner opens the bidding 1♣, and the next player passes. What do you respond with the following hands?

1) ♠ 10 8 2
♥ Q 9 3
♦ J 8 7 5 2
♣ 4 2

2) ♠ 9 5
♥ 7 4 3
♦ A 8 2
♣ K J 6 5 3

3) ♠ K 8 5
♥ Q 6 2
♦ J 9 5
♣ K 8 4 2

4) ♠ 10 4
♥ K Q 9
♦ 6 5 3
♣ A J 8 7 5

5) ♠ 9 6
♥ J 9 8 2
♦ K 5
♣ A Q 8 6 3

6) ♠ 7 6
♥ A 8
♦ A 9 6 3
♣ K Q 10 8 2

Exercise Two Answer— Raising Opener's Minor

- 1) Pass. You don't have enough strength to respond. Don't be afraid that partner is short in clubs.
- 2) 2♣. With no major to bid, show the club support.
- 3) 1NT. With only four-card support for clubs and a balanced hand, 1NT is probably a better choice than 2♣.
- 4) 3♣. A jump raise is invitational, showing 10 or 11 points.
- 5) 1♥. Despite the good club fit, look for the major-suit fit first.
- 6) 1♦. You are too strong to make a limit raise of 3♣. Start with a new suit, intending to show the club support later.

Suit Responses to 1♣ and 1♦

Introduction

“Having discussed the challenges associated with raising opener’s minor suit, it’s fortunate that you usually have other options. When the partnership uses a style of five-card major-suit openings, opener often will have a four-card major suit when the opening bid is 1♣ or 1♦. Before raising opener’s minor or bidding notrump, responder’s priority is to look for a major-suit fit. A new suit response is forcing — unless responder has already passed.

“If responder has a choice of suits to bid at the one level, the guidelines are to bid the longest suit first, to bid the higher-ranking of two five- or six-card suits and to bid the lowest-ranking of four card suits. Bidding the lowest-ranking of four-card suits is called bidding suits *up the line*. Let’s look at some examples.”

Instructions *(If last example on pg.232 wasn’t used, make changes in parentheses.)*

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: add two low cards. (Add two low cards.)

“In diamonds: add a low card. (Take away the jack and add a low card.)

“In clubs: take away the queen, the jack, and a low card. (Take away the jack and the queen.)

NORTH
 ♠ x x
 ♥ A Q x x
 ♦ A x x x
 ♣ x x x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♥	1♦

“**Your partner, South, opens the bidding 1♦. What do you respond?** (1♥.) Although you have support for diamonds, the priority is to look for the major suit. Respond 1♥. If you can’t find a fit in hearts, you can always show diamond support later. If you were to raise diamonds first, the partnership might never find a fit in hearts.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH
 ♠ x x
 ♥ A Q x x
 ♦ A x x x x
 ♣ x x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♥	1♦

“**Does this make any difference if partner opens 1♦?** (No.) You still want to look for a major-suit fit, so respond 1♥.

“**What if partner opens 1♣?** (1♦.) Now the situation is a little different. With a choice of suits to bid at the one level, bid the longest first, 1♦. There’s not much danger of missing a heart fit. With a four-card heart suit, partner can rebid 1♥ over the 1♦ response, and the fit will be found.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: add a low card.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH
 ♠ x x
 ♥ A Q x x x
 ♦ A x x x x
 ♣ x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♥	1♣

“**What does North respond if partner opens 1♣?** (1♥.) With a choice of five-card suits, bid the higher-ranking, 1♥. It’s similar to opening the bidding in the higher-ranking of two five-card suits.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add the ace and a low card.

“In hearts: take away the ace.

“In diamonds: take away the ace.

NORTH
 ♠ A x x x
 ♥ Q x x x
 ♦ x x x x
 ♣ x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♥	1♦

“**What does North respond if partner opens 1♦?** (1♥.) With a choice of four-card suits, bid the suits *up the line*. The idea is that, if you bid 1♥, you’ll immediately find the heart fit if partner has four hearts. Partner will raise hearts. If partner doesn’t have four hearts, partner can bid 1♠ to show a four-card spade suit. The partnership has then found the spade fit. By bidding the four-card suits up the line, you’ll eventually find a fit if there is one.

“If you were to bid 1♠, that would be fine if partner has four spades, but you might miss a heart fit if partner doesn’t have four spades. With a balanced hand, partner will rebid 1NT over 1♠. Now you don’t know whether there is a heart fit. You can’t afford to bid 2♥ to find out. That will get you too high if partner has neither four spades nor four hearts.

“**Let’s change the situation slightly. Suppose partner opens the bidding 1♣, rather than 1♦. What do you respond?** (1♦/1♥.) Technically, you should respond 1♦, bidding the four-card suits up the line. In practice, many players bypass the diamond suit in this situation, since finding a major-suit fit is such a priority. This is technically unsound because a diamond fit might be lost if, for example, partner has five clubs and four diamonds. In practical terms, however, it will be better to bid 1♥ immediately to show

one of the major suits. If you don't, the suit might get lost if the opponents interfere in the auction. If you respond 1♦ and East overcalls 1♠ or 2♠, for example, neither opener nor responder may be strong enough to introduce the heart suit.

“You should only consider bypassing the diamond suit when you have a weak hand. With a hand like this, you may get to make only one bid. With a stronger hand, you can afford to bid the diamonds first. If necessary, you can probably show the major suit later, even if the opponents interfere.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add the king, the queen and the jack.

“In hearts: take away two low cards and add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away two low cards.

NORTH	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♠ A K Q J x x x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♥ A Q x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♦ x x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♣ x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ A K Q J x x x	1♦	♥ A Q x	2♠	♦ x x		♣ x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ A K Q J x x x	1♦										
♥ A Q x	2♠										
♦ x x											
♣ x											

“**What would you respond if partner opened the bidding 1♣ or 1♦? (2♠.)** With a very strong hand, responder can jump shift. The jump shift by responder is forcing to game and shows strong interest in reaching a slam contract.

“**That's fine, but what would a jump to 3♠ show?** (Preemptive.) The standard approach is that a jump response that skips two or more levels is preemptive, showing a weak hand with a long suit.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the ace and add a low card.

“In hearts: take away the ace and the queen.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

NORTH	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♠ K Q J x x x x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♥ x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">3♠ (1♠)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♦ x x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">♣ x x x</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ K Q J x x x x	1♦	♥ x	3♠ (1♠)	♦ x x		♣ x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ K Q J x x x x	1♦										
♥ x	3♠ (1♠)										
♦ x x											
♣ x x x											

“**What would you respond if partner opened the bidding 1♣ or 1♦? (3♠.)**

Over an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦, this is the type of hand with which you might respond 3♠. It's a hand that would have been opened with a preemptive bid of 3♠, if partner had passed — a good seven-card suit with no outside strength. You could respond 1♠ with this hand, but a jump to 3♠ is more descriptive. It's not forcing, but partner can raise with the same kind of hand that partner would have to raise an opening preempt to game.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♠ K Q J x x x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">1 ♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♥ x</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">4 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♦ x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♣ x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ K Q J x x x x x	1 ♦	♥ x	4 ♠	♦ x x		♣ x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ K Q J x x x x x	1 ♦										
♥ x	4 ♠										
♦ x x											
♣ x x											

“**What would North respond over 1♣ or 1♦? (4♠.)** With a good eight-card suit and nothing outside, you can jump to the four level. Opener won’t expect a strong hand, since you could have started with 1♠ or made a jump shift to 2♠.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the king, the queen and three low cards.

“In diamonds: add the queen and four low cards.

NORTH	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♠ J x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">1 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♥ x</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♦ Q x x x x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♣ x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ J x x	1 ♣	♥ x	Pass	♦ Q x x x x x x		♣ x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ J x x	1 ♣										
♥ x	Pass										
♦ Q x x x x x x											
♣ x x											

“**If partner opened 1♣, what would North respond? (Pass/1♦/3♦.)** With only 3 high-card points, it’s probably best to pass. If you respond 1♦, partner may expect a little more in the way of high cards. If you jump to 3♦, partner will expect a better suit. Pass for now. You may get a chance to show the diamonds if East comes into the auction.

“**What if partner opens 1♦? (4♦.)** A jump to 4♦ is a preemptive raise. A raise to 2♦ shows 6 to 9 points and a raise to 3♦ shows 10 or 11, but a double jump shows a very weak hand with six-card or longer support. Since it takes the partnership past 3NT, you make this bid only when the tactical advantage of keeping the opponents out of the auction outweighs the likelihood that your side can make 3NT. Like the other double jumps, 4♦ isn’t forcing. Opener should bid again only with a strong hand, since responder will hold little in the way of high cards.”

Summary

“When responding to 1♣ or 1♦:

- The search for a major suit takes priority.
- With a choice of suits, bid the longer suit first.
- Bid the higher-ranking of two five-card or six-card suits.
- Bid the lowest-ranking of four-card suits.
- When responding to 1♣ with a weak hand, you can consider bypassing diamonds to give priority to bidding a four-card major suit.
- Responder can jump shift with a strong hand and slam interest.
- A jump response that skips two or more levels — either a raise or a new suit — is a preemptive bid with a weak hand and a long suit.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 3 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Three — Bidding Up the Line

Partner opens the bidding 1♦, and the next player passes. What do you respond with the following hands?

1) ♠ Q 7 4 2
♥ 8 4
♦ A J 8 6 3
♣ 7 6

2) ♠ A K 9 4
♥ J 6 5 2
♦ 9 7 3
♣ Q 2

3) ♠ K 10 8 7 3
♥ Q J 9 4 2
♦ 8
♣ 10 5

4) ♠ 10 7 3
♥ K 9 4
♦ J 2
♣ A 10 8 7 4

5) ♠ Q 8 7 4
♥ Q 3 2
♦ 2
♣ K 10 7 6 2

6) ♠ K Q 6 3
♥ Q 4
♦ 8 7
♣ A Q 9 6 4

Exercise Three Answer — Bidding Up the Line

- 1) 1♠. Showing the four-card major takes priority over raising diamonds.
- 2) 1♥. Bid four-card suits up the line. The quality of the suits is not important.
- 3) 1♠. With a choice of five-card suits, bid the higher-ranking.
- 4) 1NT. Not strong enough to bid a new suit at the two level.
- 5) 1♠. Although you aren't strong enough to bid 2♣, you can still show the four-card major.
- 6) 2♣. With enough strength to bid a new suit at the two level, bid the longer suit first; you can show the spades later.

Notrump Responses to 1♣ and 1♦

Introduction

“The priority is to look for a major-suit fit when partner opens 1♣ or 1♦, but you won’t always have a four-card or longer major suit to bid. Your attention should then turn to bidding notrump.”

Instructions

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the jack and add the ace.

“In hearts: add the queen and a low card.

“In diamonds: take away the queen and four low cards and add the king.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

NORTH
 ♠ A x x
 ♥ Q x x
 ♦ K x x
 ♣ x x x x

NORTH	SOUTH
1NT	1♦

“**South is the dealer and opens the bidding 1♦. What do you respond?** (1NT.) A response of 1NT shows 6 to 9 points.

“**What else does the 1NT response imply?** (No major.) The 1NT response to a minor suit denies a four-card or longer major suit. If responder has a major suit, showing the major suit takes priority over bidding 1NT.

“**Does the 1NT bid promise a balanced hand?** (No.) Responder isn’t necessarily balanced for a response of 1NT to a 1♦ opening bid. Responder could have an unbalanced hand with a long club suit, too weak to bid 2♣.

“**Suppose partner opens 1♣ instead of 1♦. What does South respond?** (1NT.) You still respond 1NT with 6 to 9 points.

“**What does South know about your hand when you respond 1NT?** (No major; balanced; club support.) Partner knows you have no four-card major, since you would have bid 1♥ or 1♠. Also, partner can expect that you have at least four-card support for clubs. You could have bid 1♦ with a four-card suit. That implies that you have a balanced hand. With an unbalanced hand and support for clubs, you would raise clubs.”

The class might find the above point a bit difficult to follow.

“When partner opens 1♣ and you have no four-card or longer suit other than clubs, you will have a choice between bidding notrump and supporting clubs. You usually bid notrump with a balanced hand, since you prefer to have five or more clubs to raise partner’s club suit.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the ace.

“In clubs: add the queen.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ x x</td> <td>1 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ Q x x</td> <td>2 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ K x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ Q x x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ x x	1 ♣	♥ Q x x	2 ♣	♦ K x x		♣ Q x x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ x x	1 ♣										
♥ Q x x	2 ♣										
♦ K x x											
♣ Q x x x x											

“**What would North respond with this hand over 1♣? (2♣.)** Although the hand is balanced, a raise to 2♣ seems more descriptive than a response of 1NT with no stopper in spades.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add the king.

“In hearts: take away a low card and add the ace.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ K x x</td> <td>1 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ A Q x</td> <td>2NT (3NT)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ K x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ Q x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ K x x	1 ♣	♥ A Q x	2NT (3NT)	♦ K x x		♣ Q x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ K x x	1 ♣										
♥ A Q x	2NT (3NT)										
♦ K x x											
♣ Q x x x											

“**Before you can open the bidding, partner beats you to the punch and opens 1♣. What now? (2NT/3NT.)** What you respond with this hand is a matter of partnership style.

“**The standard response is 2NT, showing a balanced hand with 13 to 15 points. Would that be a forcing bid? (Yes.)** Logically, opener must bid again, since the partnership has at least 26 combined points.

“We will use the standard approach that a jump to 2NT over a minor suit shows a balanced hand of 13 to 15 points and a jump to 3NT shows a balanced hand of 16 to 18 points. Some partnerships prefer to treat the jump to 2NT as an invitational bid, showing 11 or 12 points. In duplicate, a bid of 2NT as an invitational response is very popular.

“The jump to 2NT also denies a four-card or longer major suit. Some players occasionally ignore this guideline and bypass a four-card major suit, showing balanced pattern and strength instead. That’s not standard practice, however, and opener will usually assume that there’s no eight-card major-suit fit. Over the 2NT response, opener will generally raise to 3NT, except with a very unbalanced hand or interest in slam.

“The jump to 2NT doesn’t deny four, or sometimes five, cards in either minor suit. If partner were to open 1♦, rather than 1♣, you would still jump to 2NT. You could respond 2♣ over 1♦, but the 2NT response paints a better picture of the hand. With a balanced hand, you don’t want to play in a minor suit unless partner has a very unbalanced hand.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♠ K x x</td> <td>1♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ A Q</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦ K x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣ Q x x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding-top: 10px;">2NT</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ K x x	1♦	♥ A Q		♦ K x x		♣ Q x x x x		2NT	
NORTH	SOUTH												
♠ K x x	1♦												
♥ A Q													
♦ K x x													
♣ Q x x x x													
2NT													

“**What would North respond if partner opened the bidding 1♦? (2NT.)**

You could respond 2♣, but a response of 2NT is probably a better choice. A contract of 3NT is likely to be safer than 5♣ unless partner has an unbalanced hand. With an unbalanced hand, opener can rebid something other than 3NT.

“The 2NT response can sometimes resolve the earlier dilemma when you have a forcing raise of opener’s minor suit.

“**Suppose partner opened 1♣, rather than 1♦. What would North respond? (1♦/2NT.)** Since North is too strong for a limit raise to 3♣, the practical choice is to respond 2NT. Otherwise, North would have to manufacture a forcing response such as 1♦.

“**What if the opening bid were 1♥? (2♣.)** Careful. If the partnership is using 2NT as a forcing major-suit raise — Jacoby 2NT — then you can’t bid 2NT. You would have to respond 2♣. If you aren’t using 2NT as a conventional bid in response to a major suit, you could respond 2NT.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: add the queen.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♠ K x x</td> <td>1♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ A Q</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦ K Q x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣ Q x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding-top: 10px;">3NT</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ K x x	1♣	♥ A Q		♦ K Q x x		♣ Q x x x		3NT	
NORTH	SOUTH												
♠ K x x	1♣												
♥ A Q													
♦ K Q x x													
♣ Q x x x													
3NT													

“**What would you respond over an opening bid of 1♣? (3NT.)** A jump to 3NT shows a balanced hand of 16 to 18 points. Again, it tends to deny a four-card major suit, but not a four-card or five-card minor suit.

“**Is 3NT forcing?** (No.) Since the partnership is already in a game contract, there’s no need for opener to bid again with a minimum balanced hand. Opener might choose to bid again with an unbalanced hand or interest in reaching a slam contract, but the 3NT response is not forcing. It’s descriptive.

“**Would it make any difference if the opening bid were 1♦, rather than 1♣?** (No.) The most descriptive response would still be a jump to 3NT. That is likely to be the best contract unless opener has other ideas. Again, this solves the problem of what to do with a hand worth a forcing raise in diamonds.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In diamonds: take away the queen.

NORTH
 ♠ K x x x
 ♥ A Q
 ♦ K x x
 ♣ Q x x x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♠	1♦

“**What does North respond with this hand over 1♦? (1♠.)** The priority is to look for the major-suit fit ahead of showing the balanced hand. Respond 1♠. If you don’t find a spade fit, you can bid notrump at the next opportunity.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away a low card.

“In hearts: take away the queen and add the jack and a low card.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

“In clubs: take away the queen.

NORTH
 ♠ K x x
 ♥ A J x
 ♦ K x x x
 ♣ x x x

NORTH	SOUTH
1♦	1♣

“**What will you bid if partner opens 1♣? (1♦.)** A response of 1NT would show 6 to 9 points and a response of 2NT would show 13 to 15. With 10 to 12 HCP, start with a new suit, planning to make an invitational rebid of 2NT at the next opportunity. If you respond 1♦ and partner rebids 1♥ or 1♠, for example, you can jump to 2NT. If partner responds 1NT, you can raise to 2NT. If partner rebids 2♣ or raises to 2♦, you can rebid 2NT, inviting partner to game.

“**What if partner opened 1♦? (3♦/2♣.)** With four-card support for diamonds and 12 high-card points, you can make a limit raise to 3♦. That’s not ideal with such a balanced hand and so much strength in hearts and spades. Nevertheless, there’s no attractive alternative.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the jack and add the queen.

“In diamonds: take away a low card.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ K x x		1 ♦
♥ A Q x		
♦ K x x	2 ♣	
♣ x x x x		

“There are often hands where nothing is ideal. Suppose you hold this hand and partner opens 1 ♦. With 12 high-card points, you could respond in a new suit, 2 ♣. That overstates the club suit somewhat, but you don’t plan to play there anyway. If partner raises to 3 ♣, for example, you’ll probably take a chance in 3NT. Some players might overbid a little and respond 2NT right away with this hand.

“**What if partner opens 1 ♣?** (1 ♦/2NT/3 ♣.) The hand is too strong for a limit raise to 3 ♣. A jump to 2NT is an overbid, although it may work out well. Perhaps the best choice is to respond 1 ♦, treating the diamonds as a four-card suit. You plan to bid notrump next anyway, so it won’t matter if partner raises diamonds. Incidentally, if you’re going to manufacture a bid, it’s better to pick a minor than a major. With a fit for the major suit, partner is likely to insist on playing with that suit as trump. With the minor suits, there’s less danger of that happening.”

Summary

“Over a minor suit:

- A response of 1NT shows 6 to 9 points.
- A response of 2NT shows 13 to 15 points.
- A response of 3NT shows 16 to 18 points.

“All of these responses deny a four-card major suit. With 10 to 12 points, responder can bid a new suit, planning to invite with a 2NT rebid at the next opportunity.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 4 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Four — Responding in Notrump

Partner opens the bidding 1♦, and the next player passes. What do you respond with the following hands?

1) ♠ K J 9
♥ Q 10 4
♦ K 8 3
♣ A J 8 3

2) ♠ A Q
♥ K 10 5
♦ K 9 7 3
♣ K Q 6 5

3) ♠ Q J 7
♥ A J 5
♦ Q 6 3
♣ J 10 8 4

Exercise Four Answer — Responding in Notrump

- 1) 2NT. In response to a minor suit, 2NT is a forcing bid showing 13 to 15 points and a balanced hand.
- 2) 3NT. This shows a balanced hand with 16 to 18 points; it's more descriptive than starting with 1♦.
- 3) 2♣. With 11 points and a balanced hand, start by bidding a new suit, intending to make an invitational bid of 2NT at your next opportunity.

Handling Interference

Introduction

“If the opponents come into the auction with an overcall or takeout double after the opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦, the methods for handling interference are similar to those used when the opening bid is a major suit.”

Instructions

After an Overcall

“If there is an overcall after a 1♣ or 1♦ opening:

- Responder’s 2NT bid is only invitational, showing 11 or 12 points.
- Responder can cuebid the opponent’s suit to force to game when holding a fit with opener’s suit.

“Keep the North hand as it is.

NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K x x				1♦
♥ A Q x	1♥	2NT		
♦ K x x				
♣ x x x x				

“Suppose partner, South, opens 1♦, and West overcalls 1♥. What do you bid? (2NT.) With 12 high-card points and strength in the opponent’s suit, jump to 2NT. *In a competitive situation, 2NT is not forcing.* 2NT is more descriptive than bidding a new suit, 2♣.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the ace and the queen and add a low card.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K x x				1♦
♥ x x	1♥	2♦		
♦ K x x x				
♣ x x x x				

“If partner opens 1♦ and West overcalls 1♥, what do you bid? (2♦.) The overcall doesn’t prevent a normal raise to 2♦.

“What if South opens 1♣ and West overcalls 1♥? (2♣/Pass.) If West had passed, you would have responded 1♦. You can no longer do that and don’t have enough strength to bid 2♦. You don’t have to bid, but you don’t want to give up too easily in a competitive situation. You want to avoid bid-

ding 1NT with no strength in hearts, but could try raising to 2♣. You would prefer to have five-card support, but four-card support will have to do.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: add the ace.

“In clubs: take away two low cards and add the ace.

NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K x x				
♥ x x	1♥	2♦		1♣
♦ A K x x x				
♣ A x x				

“If partner opens 1♣ and West overcalls 1♥, what does North bid? (2♦.) North would have bid 1♦ if West had passed. With 14 high-card points, there is more than enough to bid 2♦ after the overcall.

“What if partner opened 1♦ and West overcalled 1♥? (2♥.) This hand is too strong for a limit raise to 3♦. The standard approach is to cuebid the opponent’s suit in this situation. The cuebid is forcing to game and implies a fit with partner’s suit, since you didn’t take some other action such as bidding a new suit. You hope partner can bid notrump with some strength in hearts. If not, you can show diamond support at the next opportunity.

“However, many experienced players use the cuebid to show a limit raise or better in opener’s suit. This frees up the immediate jump raise as a preemptive bid. This is a popular style among competitive players, but it’s not the standard approach.

“Also, many of you use negative doubles, and they should be included in your bidding arsenal.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 5 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Five — Responding after an Overcall

As East, what do you bid with each of the following hands after the auction starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	1♥	?	
1) ♠ J 8 5 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A Q 6 2 ♣ K J 8 3 _____	2) ♠ Q 10 8 ♥ K J 7 ♦ K Q 8 ♣ 10 8 4 2 _____	3) ♠ A 8 2 ♥ 9 4 ♦ K 10 9 7 4 ♣ A Q 6 _____	

Exercise Five Answer — Responding after an Overcall

- 1) 3♦. The opponent's interference doesn't prevent you from making a limit raise. A 2♥ cuebid is appropriate if the partnership plays that cuebids show a limit raise or better.
- 2) 2NT. After the overcall, this is an invitational bid showing a balanced hand with 10 to 12 points and strength in the suit overcalled.
- 3) 2♥. The cuebid shows a game-forcing hand, usually with support for opener's suit.

After a Takeout Double

“When the opponent doubles for takeout, instead of overcalling, the partnership can use the same methods used after a double of a major suit:

- A new suit is still forcing.
- A single raise of opener’s minor shows 6 to 9 points.
- A jump raise of opener’s minor is (usually) treated as a preemptive raise rather than a limit raise.
- A jump to 2NT in competition is used to show 11 or 12 points instead of a balanced hand of 13 to 15 points. This is the *Jordan* convention.”

Use of the redouble is left for the next course. With an experienced class, you can mention that responder can redouble with 10 or more high-card points and a hand unsuitable for any of the above actions.

“Let’s see some examples.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add two low cards.

“In diamonds: take away the king.

“In clubs: take away the ace.

NORTH ♠ K x x x x ♥ x x ♦ A x x x ♣ x x	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Double</td> <td>1 ♠</td> <td></td> <td>1 ♦</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Double	1 ♠		1 ♦
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
Double	1 ♠		1 ♦						

“**What would you do if partner, South, opened the bidding 1♦ and West doubled?** (1♠.) The double hasn’t taken away any bidding room, so you can make the same response as if there were no double. A new suit by responder is still forcing. If partner doesn’t have a fit for spades, you can show diamond support at the next opportunity.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away two low cards.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

NORTH ♠ K x x ♥ x x ♦ A x x x ♣ x x x x	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Double</td> <td>2♦</td> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Double	2♦		1♦
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
Double	2♦		1♦						

“**South opens 1♦, and West doubles. What do you bid?** (2♦.) Make a normal raise to 2♦, showing 6 to 9 points.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the king.

“In diamonds: add the jack.

NORTH ♠ x x ♥ x x ♦ A J x x x ♣ x x x x	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Double</td> <td>3 ♦</td> <td></td> <td>1 ♦</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Double	3 ♦		1 ♦
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
Double	3 ♦		1 ♦						

“**How about this hand after partner, South, opens the bidding 1 ♦ and West doubles?** (2 ♦/3 ♦.) You could just raise to 2 ♦ but most competitive players prefer a preemptive jump to 3 ♦ with this sort of hand. It’s more likely to keep the opponents out of the auction or make it difficult for them to find their best contract. You can do this if you play the Jordan 2NT convention. Partner won’t expect you to have too much for this bid. With 10 or more points and diamond support, you would jump to 2NT.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: add the king.

“In diamonds: take away two low cards.

“In clubs: add the king.

NORTH ♠ x x ♥ K x x ♦ A J x ♣ K x x x x	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Double</td> <td>2NT</td> <td></td> <td>1 ♣</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Double	2NT		1 ♣
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
Double	2NT		1 ♣						

“**Suppose partner, South, opens 1 ♣ and West doubles. What would you respond?** (2NT.) Playing the Jordan 2NT convention, a jump to 2NT shows 11 or 12 points or better in opener’s suit over the takeout double. It doesn’t show a balanced hand with 13 to 15 points. With that type of hand, you would redouble.

“**What will opener do over the 2NT bid?** (Depends.) Once you have described the hand, opener can decide what to do. With a minimum hand, opener can retreat to 3 ♣, or jump to 4 ♣ or 5 ♣ with long clubs. Opener can raise to 3NT or bid a new suit to search for the best contract.”

Summary

“If there is an overcall after a 1 ♣ or 1 ♦ opening:

- Responder’s 2NT bid is not forcing, showing 10 to 12 points.
- Responder can cuebid the opponent’s suit to force to game when holding a fit with opener’s suit.

“If opener’s 1♣ or 1♦ bid is doubled for takeout:

- A jump raise is preemptive.
- A jump to 2NT is a conventional bid and shows the strength for a limit raise of 11 or 12 points or better.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 6 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Six — Responding after a Takeout Double

As East, what do you do with each of these hands after the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Double	?	
1) ♠ 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 8 6 3 2 ♣ K J 8 7 5 _____	2) ♠ A Q 8 ♥ 10 2 ♦ 8 4 3 ♣ A 10 8 7 6 _____	3) ♠ 7 6 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ 8 5 4 3 ♣ K J 10 8 _____	

Exercise Six Answer — Responding after a Takeout Double

- 1) 3♣. After the takeout double, this is a preemptive (weak) raise. With a stronger hand, you would redouble or bid 2NT. A 2 cuebid is appropriate if the partnership plays that cuebids show a limit raise or better.
- 2) 2NT (Jordan). After the takeout double, this shows a limit raise in partner’s minor suit.
- 3) 2♣. This is likely to be a better choice than 1NT when you have so little strength in two suits. You’d prefer to have five-card support, but nothing’s perfect.

NOTE: Sample Deals Review the instructions on page 44.

SAMPLE DEALS – LESSON 5

Guidelines for Teachers: Since these four deals focus on minor-suit openings and responses, it can be expected that there will be some deviation from the recommended auction. Let the students bid their hands in their own fashion and play the resulting contracts. There are several interesting play concepts (*i.e.*, safety play, uppercut, avoidance) to discuss after you review the bidding and get everyone in the recommended contract.

Bid and Play – Deal 1 Minor Suit Openings

Guidelines for Teachers: On this first deal, opener has a minimum hand without a five-card major and starts by bidding a minor suit. The auction should end at 3♠, but some students will probably overbid. Let them play the contract they reach and then put them in the recommended contract. There is a potential uppercut situation for the defenders if declarer doesn't handle the trump suit correctly. There are a number of variations in the play of this deal that you might want to discuss only if your students are an experienced group.

Introduction

“Let's play a deal where opener starts with a minor, holding a minimum hand.”

Instructions

“North is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #5, Deal 1 — Dealer, North)

Dealer: North	♠ A 7 5 4	
Vul: None	♥ 6 2	
	♦ A K 6 5	
	♣ Q 5 4	
♠ Q 10 2		♠ 9 8
♥ Q J 7 4		♥ 10 9 8
♦ J 10 8		♦ Q 9 4 2
♣ 9 7 2		♣ A K J 6
	♠ K J 6 3	
	♥ A K 5 3	
	♦ 7 3	
	♣ 10 8 3	

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

“With a hand too weak to open 1NT and with no five-card major suit, North opens 1 ♦. With a choice of four-card suits to bid at the one level, South responds *up the line* by bidding the lower-ranking suit, 1 ♥. North continues bidding *up the line* by showing the four-card spade suit. South has uncovered an eight-card spade fit and has a hand of invitational-strength — 10 or 11 points. To invite opener to game, South jumps to 3 ♠. South makes a judgment decision not to count a distribution point for the doubleton diamond, since 1 ♦ was partner’s opening bid. With a minimum for the opening bid, North declines the invitation, and the partnership rests in partscore.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3 ♠ by North, let’s review the play and defense.

“East is on lead and should select the ♣A, top of a broken sequence.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer has two diamond losers, three club losers and at least one potential spade loser. There’s not much that can be done about the club losers if the defenders are careful, but declarer can plan to ruff two diamond losers in the dummy.

“In the spade suit, with eight cards in the combined hands, the percentage play to avoid a spade loser is to play the ♠A and then take the spade finesse if the ♠Q doesn’t appear — following the guideline “eight ever, nine never.” On this deal, however, declarer can afford a spade loser, and declarer has another use for dummy’s spades — ruffing diamond losers. After winning a trick, North should play the ♠A and ♠K. When the spades divide 3–2, declarer can go about ruffing the two diamond losers in the dummy — ruffing dummy’s hearts to get entries back to North’s hand. Declarer loses one spade trick and three club tricks.

“If the missing trumps were divided 4–1, declarer still would have a chance after taking the ♠A and ♠K. With two diamond tricks and two heart tricks to go along with the two top spades, declarer would have to hope to get three more spade tricks through ruffing diamonds and hearts.

“On the actual deal, the defenders can defeat the contract if declarer tries the spade finesse. Taking the ♠A and ♠K is a form of safety play in a contract of 3 ♠. If North–South reach a contract of 4 ♠, declarer has little choice but to try the spade finesse and will likely be defeated two tricks.”

Suggested Defense

“The defenders must be careful to avoid letting declarer make 10 tricks in a spade contract. If East takes the first two tricks with the ♣A and ♣K, North’s ♣Q will be established, and the defenders will end with only one more trick, West’s ♠Q. To prevent this, West should play the ♣2 on the first club trick — a discouraging signal — and East should respect West’s signal and switch to another suit. The ♥10, leading through dummy’s strength, would be a good choice for East.

“After the heart switch, the defender’s can’t defeat the contract if declarer simply takes the ♠A and ♠K. West eventually will get a trick with the ♠Q and can lead a club to give the defenders the tricks they are entitled to in that suit. If declarer takes the ♠A and then tries the spade finesse by playing a low spade to dummy’s ♠J, the defenders can defeat the contract. For example, West can return a third round of spades to prevent declarer from getting enough tricks by ruffing losers. West also can lead back a club to defeat the contract. After the defenders win two more club tricks, East can lead the fourth round of clubs to promote West’s ♠10 — if declarer doesn’t ruff with dummy’s ♠K, West can win the trick by ruffing with the ♠10; if declarer ruffs with dummy’s ♠K, West gets the ♠10 later. Even if East returns a diamond, rather than the fourth round of clubs, the defenders will get another trick. (If East leads a heart after taking the club tricks, declarer can take the remainder of the tricks by ruffing a heart, ruffing a diamond, ruffing a heart and taking the last trick with dummy’s ♠K.)”

Bid and Play — Deal 2: When It Looks Too Easy

Guidelines for Teachers: On this second deal, explore the idea that when a hand looks easy to make, you might want to use a safety play to ensure against a possible (even if not probable) holding. Most students will be defeated in 3NT for failure to ensure against the unexpected division of the diamonds. The play should be interesting for students at all levels. Knowing when to play second hand high on the opening lead is a difficult concept. Take some time to discuss the difference between Q-x opposite J-x-x and Q-x opposite K-x-x.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where it looks like it will be easy to make the contract, but looks may be deceiving.”

Instructions

“East is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #5, Deal 2 — Dealer, East)

Dealer: East	♠ Q J 9 5	
Vul: N–S	♥ K Q 9	
	♦ Q 9 6	
	♣ J 9 4	
♠ K 6	♠ A 10 3	
♥ 6 4 2	♥ A 10 5	
♦ K J 10 7 5 2	♦ A 8 4 3	
♣ K 3	♣ Q 7 2	
	♠ 8 7 4 2	
	♥ J 8 7 3	
	♦ —	
	♣ A 10 8 6 5	

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

“After East’s opening bid of 1♦, West has a hand worth about 12 points — 10 high-card points plus 2 for distribution. Technically this hand is too strong for a limit raise, but not strong enough to bid 3NT, especially without a heart stopper. West makes the best of the situation by bidding 3♦. With 14 points and high cards in all of the other suits, East accepts the invitation by bidding 3NT. It should be easier to take nine tricks in notrump than 11 tricks in diamonds.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3NT by East, let’s review the play and defense. South is on lead and should lead the ♣6, fourth highest from the longest and strongest suit.”

Suggested Play

“The opening lead will establish a club trick for declarer and there should be nine more winners to take — two spades, one heart, and six diamonds — if the diamonds break 2–1, as one would normally expect. When the contract looks easy, however, declarer should be careful to guard against bad breaks. After winning the first club trick, if declarer leads the ♦A, the contract can no longer be made. With the diamonds dividing 3–0, North will get a trick with the ♦Q and can lead back a club. South will take four club tricks to defeat the contract.

“East’s first challenge comes at trick one. On the lead of the ♣6, declarer should play West’s ♣K. This wins the trick and leaves East with the guarded ♣Q. It will now be safe to lose a trick to South, because South can’t lead clubs again without giving East a trick with the queen. North has become the dangerous opponent, because if North gets the lead, East’s ♣Q can be trapped. Since the only real danger now is that one of the opponents holds all three of the missing diamonds, declarer should start the diamond suit by playing dummy’s ♦K. On the actual hand, South discards on the first round of diamonds and declarer can take a finesse against North’s ♦Q. East ends up with 10 tricks.

“If both opponents had followed suit to the first round of diamonds, taking 10 tricks would be easy, since the diamonds would have divided 2–1. What if South had all three of the missing diamonds? After winning the first trick with dummy’s ♦K, East would now have to lose a trick to South’s ♦Q. But

that would be okay, since South isn't the dangerous opponent. South can't effectively lead clubs after winning the trick. The contract is still secure. Playing the $\spadesuit K$ first is a safety play, since it guarantees the contract.

“If declarer had played the $\clubsuit 3$ from dummy on the first trick, North would play the $\clubsuit J$ to force East to win the trick with the $\clubsuit Q$. With only the singleton $\clubsuit K$ left in dummy, now both opponents would be dangerous. If declarer loses a diamond trick to either opponent, the defenders are in a position to take all of their club tricks.

“What if North held the $\clubsuit A$ rather than South? Dummy's $\clubsuit K$ would be taken by North's ace, and North would lead another club. Now East would have to hold up with the $\clubsuit Q$ until the third round of the suit. South would now become the dangerous opponent, so declarer should start diamonds by leading the $\spadesuit A$ to guard against South holding all three diamonds. If North has all three diamonds, there's no harm in losing a trick to North's $\spadesuit Q$. North will probably have no clubs left to lead. If North did have a fourth club, the clubs would have divided 4–4, so the contract would still be safe.”

Suggested Defense

“South gets the defenders off to the best start by leading a low club. If declarer subsequently loses a trick to North's $\spadesuit Q$, North can return a club to defeat the contract. If declarer plays the hand correctly, there's nothing the defenders can do except be careful to hold on to the right cards to prevent East from taking more than 10 tricks.”

Bid and Play — Deal 3: Beware the Dangerous Opponent

Guidelines for Teachers: South opens with a minor and most tables will get to a contract of 3NT. This deal provides a chance to discuss the *Rule of Eleven* from declarer’s perspective. Depending on the heart selected as the lead by West, you might be able to discuss second hand high on the opening lead and/or the hold-up play. In the play, declarer needs to consider what could go wrong in establishing the club suit to prevent the contract from making and then take precautions against that probability. If declarer handles both the heart suit and the club suit correctly, the contract will be made.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where declarer needs to be aware at all times of the dangerous opponent in order to make the contract..”

Instructions

“South is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #5, Deal 3 — Dealer, South)

Dealer: South	♠ K 9 4				
Vul: E–W	♥ J 4				
	♦ A 8 3				
	♣ A J 10 8 4				
♠ Q 8	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 10 6 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A Q 10 8 5 2		♥ 9 6			
♦ Q J 7 2		♦ 10 6 4			
♣ 7		♣ Q 5 3 2			
	♠ A 7 5 3				
	♥ K 7 3				
	♦ K 9 5				
	♣ K 9 6				

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.”

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
1♥	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“Playing five-card majors, South has to open the longer minor suit. With a choice between two three-card minor suits, South bids 1♣. West has a good six-card suit which can be overcalled at the one level. North has a fit with partner and enough strength to take the partnership to game. This can be shown by cuebidding the opponent’s suit. North’s cuebid shows the strength for a limit raise or more in opener’s suit.

“With a minimum-strength balanced hand and a stopper in the opponent’s suit, South rebids notrump at the cheapest available level. North now raises to game in notrump. It should be easier for the partnership to take nine tricks than 11.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3NT by South, let’s review the play and defense.

“West is on lead and would lead the ♥8, fourth from the longest and strongest suit.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer has two sure tricks in spades, two in diamonds and two in clubs. With the heart lead, declarer is certain of a trick in that suit. Two more tricks are needed. The obvious source of the additional tricks is the club suit. It may be possible to take all five tricks in the club suit with the help of a successful finesse. Even if a trick is lost to the ♣Q, two additional tricks will be established in the suit.

“There’s the danger, however, that if a trick is lost to the ♣Q, the opponents can take enough heart tricks to defeat the contract. On the surface, it looks as though South will have to play the club suit by guessing which opponent has the ♣Q.

“In situations like this, declarer should plan the play carefully before playing to the first trick. It may not appear to matter which heart is played from dummy — since declarer is sure to get one trick with the ♥K — but it makes all the difference to the play. Declarer should play dummy’s ♥J on the first trick, with every expectation that it will win the trick! West has led the ♥8, fourth highest. With a holding such as ♥A 10 9 8 x or ♥Q 10 9 8 x, West would lead the ♥10, top of an interior sequence. Declarer can expect that the lead is from some holding such as ♥A Q 10 8 x or ♥A Q 9 8 x. If East doesn’t have the ♥A or ♥Q, dummy’s ♥J will win the first trick. This doesn’t gain anything directly — declarer was always entitled to

one, and only one, heart trick — but it secures the contract.

“When the ♥J wins the first trick, East — not West — becomes the dangerous opponent. If East gets the lead, East can lead a heart, trapping declarer’s remaining ♥K. West is no longer dangerous. If West gets the lead, West can’t lead hearts without giving declarer a trick with the ♥K. That determines how declarer handles the club suit. After winning the ♥J, declarer should lead the ♣J from dummy. When East produces a low club, declarer should play a low club from the South hand, taking the finesse. On the actual layout, the finesse succeeds. Declarer now can play a low club to the ♣9, repeating the finesse. The ♣K is played, and South can cross to one of dummy’s winners to take the ♣A and remaining club winner. South finishes with 10 tricks.

“If the ♣Q had been in the West hand, the finesse would have lost but the contract would have been safe. West can’t lead hearts without giving South a trick with the ♥K. If West leads something else, declarer has four club winners to go with the other five winners, and South makes at least nine tricks.

“The finesse should be taken on the first round of the suit. If the ♣A is taken before finessing, declarer gets only three club tricks because of the unfortunate break in the suit. Declarer will have a difficult time taking nine tricks without giving East the lead.”

Suggested Defense

“After an opening lead of the ♥8, the defense can’t defeat the contract if declarer handles both the heart and club suits correctly. If East does get a trick with the ♣Q, a heart return will defeat the contract two tricks.

“It may be interesting to speculate what would happen if West led a different heart at trick one. If West leads the ♥A and continues with the ♥Q after seeing dummy, declarer can make the contract with the hold up play. Now West becomes the dangerous opponent, and a club trick can safely be lost to East’s ♣Q. More spectacular is the imaginative opening lead of the ♥Q. Declarer can still hold up on the first trick and make the contract, or declarer can make the contract by guessing where the ♣Q lies. If West is up to making such a sensational lead, then declarer may be up to finding an appropriate reply.”

Bid and Play — Deal 4: Variety is the Spice of Life

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal will probably result in a variety of final contracts as the students compete in the auction. This is an interesting hand with opportunities for both sides to shine. There is a lot to discuss with an advanced class. It may be difficult for a basic class.

Introduction

“Let’s play another deal where all of the players may have something to say during the auction.”

Instructions

“West is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #5, Deal 4 — Dealer, West)

Dealer: West																
Vul: Both																
		♠ A J 7														
		♥ K 9 6 2														
		♦ K Q 8 5														
		♣ 7 3														
♠ K 6 3			<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S					
	N															
W		E														
	S															
♥ A J 8 5						♠ 8 4 2										
♦ 4 3 2						♥ Q 10 7										
♣ K Q 8						♦ A 7										
						♣ A 10 9 6 4										
						♠ Q 10 9 5										
						♥ 4 3										
						♦ J 10 9 6										
						♣ J 5 2										

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♣	Double	2NT	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

“West has enough to open the bidding but no five-card major suit. With a choice of three-card minor suits, West opens 1 ♣. After West’s opening bid, North has a reasonable hand for a takeout double — a hand worth an open-

ing bid with support for all of the unbid suits. With 10 high-card points, East can redouble, but that may give North–South room to find their best contract. With five-card support for opener’s minor and a hand worth a limit raise, East can make a conventional jump to 2NT — a jump to 3♣ over the takeout double would be preemptive.

“South, who would have responded 1♠ to the takeout double if East had passed or redoubled, doesn’t have enough to come into the auction at the three level. West has a minimum-strength hand for the opening bid and returns to the agreed trump suit by bidding 3♣. Even with a balanced hand, West shouldn’t pass partner’s 2NT bid, since it’s a conventional bid and doesn’t guarantee stoppers in the other suits.

“North has nothing further to say, and East respects partner’s decision to stop in partscore. The final decision is with South. Having passed over 2NT, South might consider competing at this point, but will probably be dissuaded by the vulnerability. If South guesses to compete with 3♦, North–South will land on their feet, since that contract can be made. If South tries 3♠, the result will not be as cheerful, since East–West can defeat that contract at least one trick, and likely two tricks or more. North–South might have an easier time finding their best contract if the auction had proceeded a little differently. For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Double	Redouble	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♣	2♦
Pass	Pass	3♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	?	

“Aggressive bidding by North–South, but now East–West are likely to end with a poor result.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3♣ by West, let’s review the play and defense.

“North doesn’t have a particularly attractive choice of leads, but will probably start with the ♦K, top of touching honors.”

Suggested Play

“In 3♣, West has three potential spade losers, one heart loser and two diamond losers — assuming the club suit behaves reasonably. One of the diamond losers can be ruffed in dummy, and one of East’s spade losers can be discarded on West’s extra heart winner after the ♥K has been driven out. In effect, West hopes to take five club tricks, a diamond trick and three heart tricks. There’s also the possibility that South holds the ♠A, but that’s unlikely in light of North’s takeout double.

“There is a danger. If South can gain the lead, the defenders may be able to take three spade tricks — by trapping West’s ♠K — to go along with a heart trick and a diamond trick. The only suit in which South might get the lead is diamonds. To prevent this, West should duck the opening lead of the ♦K, letting North win the trick. Now the contract is safe, since North can’t profitably attack spades. Assuming North leads another diamond, West wins with dummy’s ♦A, draws trumps and leads the ♥Q. If North doesn’t win the first heart trick with the ♥K, declarer continues with the ♥10. North must take the ♥K on the first or second round of the suit, or the defenders won’t get a heart trick. After winning the ♥K, North still can’t play spades without giving West a trick with the ♠K. Whether North leads a diamond or a heart, declarer wins the trick and discards one of dummy’s spades on the fourth round of hearts. Declarer’s only losers are two spade tricks, one heart trick and one diamond trick.”

Suggested Defense

“If North leads the ♦K against West’s 3♣ contract, the defenders have a chance if declarer takes the first trick with East’s ♦A. On this trick, South should play the ♦J. Signaling with an honor in this situation tells partner that you don’t have the next higher-ranking card — the ♦Q — but do hold the next lower-ranking card — the ♦10. This is valuable information for North. Suppose declarer now draws trumps and takes the heart finesse. North wins the ♥K and, with the knowledge that South holds the ♦10, leads a low diamond. South wins this trick and can lead a spade — the ♠10, top of an interior sequence — trapping West’s ♠K. The defenders get three spade tricks, a heart trick and one diamond trick.

“If declarer ducks North’s ♦K, the best North–South can do is defend carefully to hold declarer to nine tricks. If East–West end in a notrump contract, the defenders can hold declarer to seven tricks by leading a diamond. If declarer tries to develop an extra trick, the defenders can trap West’s ♠K after taking their diamond winners.”

