

*Adventures in Bridge* Lesson Series

# *This Week in Bridge*

Learn Bidding Basics

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## ***This Week in Bridge***

### **(0) Learn Bidding Basics**

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Level: 0

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## **Introduction to *This Week in Bridge (TWiB)***

This *Learn Bridge Bidding* document is an introduction to bridge bidding for players who have been exposed to the game but have not played it before or have not played it in a long time. We do not cover the basics of trick taking, scoring, or other mechanics of the game here. That information can be found in many other publications.

## **Table of Contents: TWiB (0) Learn Bidding Basics**

### **Getting Started and 1-level Opening Bids**

1. Hand Evaluation and Counting Points
2. Hand Type
3. Buckets for Opening Bidder's Strength
4. Which Suit to Open
5. Differences in Notrump, Major Suits, and Minor Suits
6. Balanced Hand Bidding
7. Why We Open the Bidding 1NT
8. Unbalanced Hand Bidding
9. Goals After Opening the Bidding

### **Responding to Partner's 1-level Opening Bids**

10. Responding to 1-minor Opening Bids
  - a. Responder's Buckets
  - b. Responding 1-Major, New Suit Forcing
  - c. Raising Opener's Minor Suit, Non-Forcing
  - d. Notrump Responses, Non-Forcing
  - e. Responder's Priorities After a Minor Suit Opening



11. Responding to 1-Major Opening Bids
  - a. Responder's Buckets
  - b. Raising Partner with a Fit
  - c. Notrump Responses to Major Suit Opening – 1NT Semi-Forcing, 2NT, 3NT
  - d. 2-Level Responses to 1-Major Openings – “2-Over-1 Game Forcing”
  - e. 1♠ Response to a 1♥ Opening Bid
  - f. Responder's Priorities After a Major Suit Opening
12. Responding to 1NT Opening Bids
  - a. Responder's Buckets
  - b. Types of Major Suit Fits
  - c. Stayman Response of 2♣
  - d. Jacoby Transfer Responses of 2♦ and 2♥
  - e. Texas Transfer Responses of 4♦ and 4♥
  - f. Responding to 1NT without a Major Suit – Exploring Notrump
  - g. Responding to 1NT without a Major Suit – Long Minor Suits, “3-Suited Transfers”

## Other Common Bids

13. Conventional Bids
14. 2NT Opening Bids
15. 2♣ Opening Bids
  - a. Balanced Hands that Open 2♣
  - b. Unbalanced Hands that Open 2♣
16. Preemptive Opening Bids
  - a. 2-level Preempts - 2♦, 2♥, 2♠
  - b. 3-level Preempts
  - c. 4-level Preempts
  - d. Responder Extends Opener's Preempt – “*The Law of Total Tricks*”
17. Overcalls
18. Jump Overcalls
19. Raising Partner's Primary Suit After an Opponent Overcalls
  - a. Preemptive Raises After an Opponent Overcalls
  - b. Limit Raises After an Opponent Overcalls – “Q=LR+”
20. Conclusion and Summary Tables
  - a. Opening Bids Summary Table
  - b. Responding to 1-Level Opening Bids Summary Table



# Getting Started and 1-level Opening Bids

## 1. Hand Evaluation and Counting Points

We open the bidding with a hand that has 12 *Total Points* of playing strength. For opening bids, total points are calculated by first counting *High-Card Points (HCP)* and then making adjustments to these values. Adding *Length Points* is the primary adjustment made before opening the bidding.

HCP are values given to a hand for honor cards. These honor cards are valuable because they are likely to take tricks.

- Ace = 4 HCP.
- King = 3 HCP.
- Queen = 2 HCP.
- Jack = 1 HCP.

A length point is an “upgrade” to a hand for a decent-quality long suit. Long suits are useful for producing extra tricks and are thus given additional values.

- 1 length point for a *decent* 5-card suit.
- 2 length points for a *decent* 6-card suit.
- 3 length points for a *decent* 7-card suit.
- Etc.

*Note: Other types of adjustments can be made to further refine your hand evaluation. See TWiB #54 for more information on this topic.*

## 2. Hand Type

When analyzing our hand for opening the bidding we count total points but we also classify our hand by its distribution. This classification is called *Hand Type*. There are 3 different hand types:

- *Balanced Hand* – A hand with no singleton or void AND at most one doubleton. There are only 3 possible distributions for a balanced hand:
  - 4333
  - 4432
  - 5332
- *Unbalanced Hand* – A hand with a singleton or void. Many possible distributions.
- *Semi-Balanced Hand* – Two or more doubletons. These are the hands “in between” balanced and unbalanced hands. We often must choose between bidding a semi-balanced hand as if it were a balanced hand or unbalanced hand.
  - 5422
  - 6322
  - 7222 (Not common semi-balanced hand).

*Note: See TWiB #1 for more information on this topic.*



### 3. Buckets for the Opening Bidder

Categorizing the strength of our hand into ranges helps make it easier to describe the hand to partner. We refer to these categories as *Buckets*. The buckets for opening the bidding are:

1. 12-14 total points      Minimum Opening
2. 15-17 total points      Extra Values Opening
3. 18-19 total points      Strong Opening
4. 20-21 total points      Very Strong Opening
5. 22+ total points      Forcing 2♣ Opening

We will look at these buckets in more detail when we consider balanced and unbalanced opening bids. *Note: See TWiB #3 for more information on this topic.*

### 4. Which Suit to Open the Bidding

When opening the bidding, 1NT is the preferred opening bid. But this bid shows a specific hand type and strength: a balanced hand with 15-17 total points. *There will be more discussion on this below.*

When opening the bidding with a suit at the 1-level, Opener's priority is generally to open the longest suit. The priorities for opening the bidding with 12+ total points are as follows:

- Opening a Major suit shows 5+cards in that suit. With a 5+card Major suit, open that Major.
- Opening 1♦ shows a 4+card ♦ suit. With no 5-card Major suit, open 1♦ with a 4+card ♦ suit.
- Opening 1♣ shows a 3+card ♣ suit. With neither of the above open a 3+card ♣ suit.

The suit opened is called the opening bidder's *Primary Suit*.

There can be some confusion about which suit to open when you have no long suit. With no 5-card suit and a minimum opening hand, then:

1. With 3-3 in the minors, open 1♣. 4/3-3-3 distribution.
2. With 4/3 in the minors, open your longer minor.
3. With 4-4 in the minors, open 1♦.

*Example*

♠ AQ94  
♥ K2  
♦ K932  
♣ 873

With 12 HCP and 4-2-4-3 distribution, open the bidding with 1♦. (See TWiB #2 for more on this topic.)

You may have noticed that there is one problem hand not covered in the lists above: 4-4-3-2 (4♠, 4♥, 3♦, and 2♣), in which case you have no good opening bid. In this case, either open 1♣ showing a 3-card ♣ suit OR 1♦ showing a 4-card ♦ suit, whichever lie seems better. *As a general rule when faced with a bidding problem it is best to lie in a minor.*



## 5. Differences in Notrump, Major Suits, and Minor Suits

When choosing an opening bid, part of the reason that we give Notrump our first priority, Major suits second priority, and minor suits the lowest priority comes from the scoring system in bridge. A *Game Bonus* is given in the scoring for bidding and making a *Game Contract*. This game bonus level varies for different strains of contracts:

- 9 Tricks in Notrump for game (3NT).
- 10 Tricks in a Major suit for game (4♥ or 4♠).
- 11 Tricks in a minor suit for game (5♣ or 5♦).

The lower number of tricks needed for a game bonus gives us an incentive to look for Major suit fits over minor suit fits. A *fit* is when our side has at least 8-cards in a suit, leaving the opponents with at most 5-cards in that suit, and making this suit a good candidate for trump. We have structured our bidding, “5-card Majors”, to help us find Major suit fits. Finding Major suit fits will be discussed more in *Responding to a 1-level Opening Bid*.

Another bonus, called a *Slam Bonus*, is also given for bidding and making a 12- or even 13-trick contract. These bonuses are the same regardless of the strain played in – Notrump, Majors, or minors. A 12-trick slam is called a *Small Slam* and a 13-trick slam is called a *Grand Slam*.

## 6. Balanced Hand Bidding

It is often easier to describe a balanced opening hand than an unbalanced opening hand. Balanced opening hands have two pieces of information to communicate to partner early in the auction – their bucket (strength) and their primary suit. Opener shows a balanced hand of different strengths with:

- 12-14 points    Open primary suit and rebid 1NT (“Half-Notrump” or “Weak Notrump”).
  - Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT.
- 15-17 points    Open 1NT.
- 18-19 points    Open primary suit and rebid 2NT (“1.5-NT “Opener”).
  - Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - 2NT.
- 20-21 points    Open 2NT.
- 22+ points      Open 2♣ -- *more on this auction later*.

*Note: Opener only rebids 1NT/2NT without a fit for Responder’s suit, as without ♠ in example above.*

## 7. Why We Open the Bidding 1NT

A 1NT opening bid is a “better opening bid” than opening 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ because it more precisely defines the Opener’s hand both in terms of strength and distribution. Compare:

- 1NT                    15-17 points and a balanced hand.
- 1-Suit                12-21 points and almost any distribution.

Since a 1NT opening bid communicates so much more about Opener’s hand we strive to make this bid as often as possible.



## 8. Unbalanced Hand Bidding

With an unbalanced hand, Opener has more information to communicate in order to describe their hand. Opener must show:

- Bucket (strength of the hand),
- Primary Suit, and
- Secondary Suit
  - With a hand that has only one long suit the “secondary suit” information is replaced by showing “extra length” in the Opener’s primary suit.

With an unbalanced hand it is important for the opening bidder to think about what they are going to rebid before opening the bidding. This is true in all auctions, but particularly with unbalanced hands.

Unbalanced hands are classified based by how many suits they have (4-card or longer suits):

- One-Suited Hands – Hands with a 6-card or longer suit (no other 4-card suit). *Ex. 6331.*
- Two-Suited Hands – Many unbalanced hand distributions are two-suited hands.
- Three-Suited Hands (rare) -- 4441 or 4450 distribution.

### *Examples*

♠ AQ9432

♥ A42

♦ Q32

♣ 3

With a one-suited unbalanced hand with a 6-card ♠ suit, Opener starts the bidding with 1♠ and plans to rebid ♠ later in the auction.

♠ AQ943

♥ AQ842

♦ 83

♣ 3

With a two-suited hand that has both a 5-card ♠ suit and a 5-card ♥ suit, Opener starts the bidding with 1♠ and plans to bid ♥ later in the auction.

♠ 83

♥ 3

♦ AQ943

♣ AQ842

With a two-suited hand that has both a 5-card ♦ suit and a 5-card ♣ suit, Opener starts the bidding with 1♦ and plans to bid ♣ later in the auction.



## 9. Goals After Opening the Bidding

After a player opens the bidding the partnership has two main objectives:

- Look for a fit (a suit in which the partnership has at least 8-cards).
- Determine how high to play the final contract – part score, game, or slam.

In order to determine in which strain to play the final contract (a Major suit, Notrump, or a minor suit), the partnership must determine if there is a fit, and this begins by looking for a Major suit fit. In order to determine how high the final contract should be played, the players must determine the combined values (total points) of their two hands. All of this must be done while keeping the auction at a relatively low level, so as not to bid to a contract that the partnership cannot make.

The primary objective on most hands is to look for a Major suit fit, either ♥ or ♠, and then the partnership determines if they have enough combined values to bid game – usually about 24 combined points for a 3NT, 4♥, or 4♠ contract. Responder's tools for finding a Major suit fit and exploring game differ based on partner's opening bid. These tools are discussed in more detail in the upcoming *Responding to Partner's 1-level Opening Bids* section.





## Responding to Partner's 1-level Opening Bid

After partner opens the bidding with a minor-suit, a Major-suit, or 1NT, Responder has the responsibility of searching for a fit, primarily a Major suit fit. Responder also is best positioned to know the combined values of the partnership and is generally responsible for exploring game or bidding even higher if the partnership has enough values.

### 10. Responding to 1-Minor Opening Bids

When Opener starts the bidding with a minor suit opening bid then they usually do not have a 5-card Major suit, but could still have a 4-card Major suit. Responder's first priority is to look for a Major suit fit. These Major suit fits can be 4-4, 5-3, 6-2, or larger fits. Responder starts the process of looking for this Major suit fit by bidding a 4-card or longer Major suit at the 1-level.

New suits by Responder are forcing for at least 1-round, while Notrump bids and raises of Opener's primary suit are non-forcing bids. A bidding rule that applies to most auctions is that bids by Responder that are unlimited in values are forcing bids, and bids that are limited in values are non-forcing bids.

#### a. Responder's Buckets

We classify Responder's hand into buckets similarly to the way we did for opening bidder's hand:

- 0-5 points      Weak Hand (usually does not respond)
- 6-9 points      Minimum Hand
- 10-11 points    Invitational Hand (sometimes a bad 12 points)
- 12+ points      Game Forcing

#### b. Responding 1-Major, New Suits Forcing

Responder frequently does not narrow their hand or place it into a bucket on the first round of the bidding. When Responder has a 4-card or longer Major suit, then bidding that suit is Responder's first priority.

*Example*

1♣      1♠

This shows a 4+card ♠ suit, 6+ points, and is a forcing bid, meaning Opener may not pass because Responder's hand is unlimited. This response is forcing for 1-round.



### c. Raising Opener's Minor-Suit Opening, Non-Forcing

When Responder has no 4-card or longer Major suit then they are not interested in exploring a Major suit fit after a minor suit opening by partner. With a fit for Opener's primary minor suit, Responder's priority is to raise Opener's suit.

When Opener starts the bidding with 1♣, Responder needs 5-card ♣ support to have a likely fit. When Opener starts the bidding with 1♦, Responder needs 4-card ♦ support to have a likely fit.

#### Raising Partner's 1♣ Opening Bid

- 2♣ Simple Raise, 5+card ♣ suit, 6-9 points, non-forcing
- 3♣ Limit Raise, 5+card ♣ suit, 10-11 points, non-forcing

#### Raising Partner's 1♦ Opening Bid

- 2♦ Simple Raise, 4+card ♦ suit, 6-9 points, non-forcing
- 3♦ Limit Raise, 4+card ♦ suit, 10-11 points, non-forcing

### d. Notrump Responses, Non-Forcing

When Responder has no 4-card or longer Major suit and no fit for Opener's minor suit, then Responder usually settles for bidding Notrump to show the value of the hand.

#### Example

1♣ \_\_\_?

- 1NT Minimum values, no 4-card Major, 6 to 9 points (or a bad 10 points).
- 2NT Invitational values, no 4-card Major, 10+ to 11 points (or a bad 12 points).
- 3NT Game Forcing values, no 4-card Major, 12-15 points.

*Note: With 16+ points Responder may be interested in bidding a slam (12 or 13 tricks).*

### e. Responder's Priorities After a Minor-Suit Opening

When responding to a minor suit opening bid, Responder's priorities are as follows:

- Bid a 4-card or longer Major suit.
- Raise partner's minor suit with a fit and no 4-card Major.
- Otherwise, bid Notrump to show their values.



## 11. Responding to 1-Major Opening Bids

When partner opens the bidding with a Major suit, Responder's goal of finding a Major suit fit starts with raising Opener with 3-card or more support. When Responder does not have a fit for Opener's Major suit then they instead focus on showing the values of their hand.

### a. Responder's Buckets

We classify Responder's hand into the same buckets as when partner opened 1-minor suit.

- 0-5 points      Weak Hand (usually does not respond)
- 6-9 points      Minimum Hand
- 10-11 points    Invitational Hand (sometimes a bad 12 points)
- 12+ points      Game Forcing

### b. Raise Partner with a Fit

With a fit for partner's Major suit opening bid, Responder's first priority is to show that fit as quickly as possible, by raising Opener's primary suit. In addition to a *Simple Raise* and a *Limit Raise*, Responder has a *Preemptive Raise* and a *Game Forcing Raise – Jacoby 2NT* (a special conventional bid discussed below).

#### Raising Partner's 1♥ Opening Bid

- 2♥      *Simple Raise*, 3-4 card ♥ support, 6-9 points, non-forcing
- 3♥      *Limit Raise*, 3-4 card ♥ support, 10-11 points, non-forcing (usually 4-card support)
- 4♥      *Preemptive Raise*, 5+card ♥ support, 0-8 points, non-forcing.
- 2NT\*    *Jacoby 2NT*, 4+card ♥ support, 12+ points, GF values (special conventional bid)

#### Raising Partner's 1♠ Opening Bid

- 2♠      *Simple Raise*, 3-4 card ♠ support, 6-9 points, non-forcing
- 3♠      *Limit Raise*, 3-4 card ♠ support, 10-11 points, non-forcing (usually 4-card support)
- 4♠      *Preemptive Raise*, 5+card ♠ support, 0-8 points, non-forcing
- 2NT\*    *Jacoby 2NT*, 4+card ♠ support, 12+ points, GF values (special conventional bid)

*Note: The preemptive raise to 4-Major is usually a weak bid, but it can be a bit stronger (has a wider range than 0-5 points) because it is a jump to game.*



### c. Notrump Responses to Major Suit Openings – 1NT Semi-Forcing, 2NT, 3NT

Notrump bids in response to a Major suit opening can be used in similar way as responding to a minor suit opening. Remember, when responding to minor-suit opening bid:

1. 1NT Minimum Hand, 6-9 points
2. 2NT Invitational Hand, 10-11 points
3. 3NT Game Forcing Hand, 12-15 points.

But when Responding to a Major suit opening bid the modern style is to use 2NT for a conventional bid called *Jacoby 2NT*. Let's not focus on the details of *Jacoby 2NT* at this moment, instead let's examine how not having a natural 2NT bid affects the meaning of our other bids.

If we allocate 2NT to be used as this conventional bid then we can no longer use it for our invitational hands, 10-11 points, with no fit. We must determine what to do with those hands now. The best solution is to expand our 1NT response to a Major suit opening from 6-9 points (minimum hands) to a larger range, 6-11 points (both minimum hands and invitational hands). This expanded range for a 1NT response to a Major suit opening has a special name, called *1NT Semi-Forcing*, but is not that different from a normal 1NT response. This change actually improves our bidding because it allows Opener to pass 1NT and play at a low level with a minimum opening hand.

The modern style is to use Notrump responses to a Major suit as:

- 1NT *1NT Semi-Forcing*, 6-11 points, often no fit for Opener's Major suit.  
2NT\* *Jacoby 2NT*, a special convention raise (12+ points, 4+card support, Game Forcing)  
3NT Game Forcing Hand, 12-15 points (unchanged)

### d. 2-level Responses to 1-Major Openings – “2-Over-1 Game Forcing”

Since we now respond 1NT (1NT Semi-Forcing) with most hands that do not have a fit for Opener's Major suit and have minimum or invitational values (6-11 points), a new suit bid at the 2-level (NOT a jump, simply a new suit) is left as a natural bid showing game forcing values (12+ points). We call these strong 2-level responses to a Major suit opening “Two-Over-One Game Forcing” bids, often denoted “2/1 GF”.

#### 2/1 GF Responses to 1♥ or 1♠ Opening Bids

When we bid a new suit at the 2-level, it shows at least an opening hand, 12+ points, and similar length in that suit as opening the bidding at the 1-level.

- 2♣ 3+card ♣ suit, 12+ points
- 2♦ 4+card ♦ suit, 12+ points
- 2♥ 5+card ♥ suit, 12+ points (only in response to a 1♠ opening bid)



### e. 1♠ Response to a 1♥ Opening Bid

When partner opens the bidding with 1♥ (instead of 1♠) we have an additional response available at the 1-level, a 1♠ bid. This 1♠ response after a 1♥ opening bid is similar to a 1♠ response after a 1-minor opening bid.

1♥      1♠                      4+card ♠ suit, 6+ points, Forcing for one-round.

Responder should show a 4-card spade suit, to look for a Major suit fit, instead of bidding 1NT with 6-11 points. *With 12+ points and a 4-card ♠ suit some other Responder may choose to make a 2/1 GF bid .*

### f. Responder's Priorities after a Major Suit Opening

When responding to a Major suit opening bid, Responder's priorities are as follows:

- Raise Opener's Major suit with a fit.
- Make a 2/1 GF bid with 12+ points.
- Bid 1♠ over a 1♥ opening bid with a 4+card ♠ suit and 6-11 points.
- Bid 1NT (called 1NT Semi-Forcing) without a fit and 6-11 points.

## 12. Responding to 1NT Opening Bids

When partner opens the bidding with 1NT, their hand is much better defined in terms of both shape and strength than when partner opens a suit at the 1-level. We know partner has 15-17 points (a nice small range) and a balanced hand (at least 2-cards in each suit). This means that Responder knows a lot about the combined strength of the partnership's hands and is well positioned to determine the final contact. Here, Responder is the *Captain of the Auction*, making Responder responsible for ensuring the partnership gets to the best final contact.

### a. Responder's Buckets

Since a 1NT opening bid shows more values than 1-Suit opening bid Responder's buckets for evaluating their hand strength are different opposite a 1NT-opening bid.

- 0-7 points                      *Minimum Values*, not interested in game.
- 8-9 points                      *Invitational Values*, planning to invite game in some way.
- 10 to 16- points              *Game Forcing Values*, strong enough to bid game but no slam interest.
- 16+ to 17 points              *Quantitative Values*, strong enough to invite a small slam.

*Note: With more values Responder bids at least a small slam.*



## b. Types of Major Suit Fits

Responder's primary objective is to look for a Major suit fit. Since the Opener has promised at least 2-cards in every suit, by opening 1NT, then Responder is looking for fits at least as large as:

1. 4-4 Major suit fit. Where both Responder and Opener have a 4-card Major.
2. 5-3 Major suit fit. Where Responder has a 5-card Major suit and Opener has 3-card support.
3. 6-2 Major suit fit. When Responder has a 6-card Major suit, then Opener must have a fit.

In order to continue to auction, Responder needs tools to describe their hand and ask Opener questions about their hand – to ask about Opener's Major suit shape and overcall strength.

Since the opening bidder has a stronger than normal opening hand, 15-17 points, then we want this hand to be the declarer in most of the final contracts. (The first player on our side to bid a suit becomes the declarer if that suit becomes the strain of our final contract.) It is generally better to have the stronger of the partnership's two hands as the declaring hand. Responder's bidding tools after a 1NT-opening bid are designed to accomplish this.

*Note: We use similar bidding tools when partner opens the bidding with 2NT for similar reasons.*

## c. Stayman Response of 2♣

After a 1NT opening bid, a 2♣ response is an artificial bid, called *Stayman*, that asks Opener if they have a 4-card Major. This bid usually shows invitational or better values, 8+ points, and Opener further describe their hand as follows:

1NT    2♣

\_\_\_?

- 2♦    no 4-card Major
- 2♥    4+card ♥ suit
- 2♠    4+card ♠ suit

After exploring for a 4-4 Major suit fit by bidding Stayman, Responder shows the value of their hand, invite game with only 8-9 points, and bidding at least game with 10+ points.

### Examples

1NT    2♣

2♥    \_\_\_?

- 3♥    Invitational Values with a fit, 4+card ♥ support, 8-9 points.
- 4♥    Game Forcing Values with a fit, 4+card ♥ support, 10 to 16- points.

1NT    2♣

2♥    \_\_\_?

- 2NT    Invitational Values with no fit, 4-card ♠ suit, 8-9 points.
- 3NT    Game Forcing Values with no fit, 4-card ♠ suit, 10 to 16- points.



#### d. Jacoby Transfer Responses of 2♦ and 2♥

After a 1NT opening bid, Responder uses artificial bids of 2♦ and 2♥, called *Jacoby Transfers*, to show a 5-card Major suit and to look for a 5-3 Major suit fit.

1NT \_\_\_?

- 2♦ Jacoby Transfer, 5+card ♥ suit, 0+ points
- 2♥ Jacoby Transfer, 5+card ♠ suit, 0+ points

After using a Jacoby Transfer to show a 5-card Major suit, Responder shows Opener the value of their hand – minimum, invitational, Game-Forcing, or more values.

#### *Example*

1NT 2♦ Jacoby Transfer, showing a 5+card ♥ suit

2♥ \_\_\_?

- Pass Minimum, 5+card ♥ suit, 0-7 points
- 2NT Invitational Values, 5-card ♥ suit, 8-9 points
- 3NT Game Forcing Values, 5-card ♥ suit, 10 to 16- points

After Responder's rebid Opener now has the information needed to place the contract in Notrump or ♥, depending on if Opener has a heart fit or not. Opener generally chooses to play in Notrump with a 2-card ♥ suit and play in ♥ with a 3+card ♥ suit (when the partnership has at least an 8-card ♥ fit).

*Note: Responder uses Jacoby Transfers with most hands that contain a 5-card Major.*

#### e. Texas Transfer Responses of 4♦ and 4♠

After a 1NT opening bid, Responder uses artificial bids of 4♦ and 4♥, called *Texas Transfers*, to show a 6+card suit and play a Major suit game, either 4♥ or 4♠, in the known 6-2 or larger Major suit fit. With a 6-card Major suit, Responder knows that the partnership has a Major suit fit since Opener has a balanced hand for their 1NT opening bid.

1NT \_\_\_?

- 4♦ Texas Transfer, 6+card ♥ suit, 10+ points
- 4♥ Texas Transfer, 6+card ♠ suit, 10+ points

Responder's Texas Transfer shows a 6+card Major suit and Game Forcing values. With enough values to be interested in slam, Responder can bid more on the next round of the bidding.

#### *Example*

1NT 4♦ Texas Transfer, showing a 6+card ♥ suit

4♥ \_\_\_?

- Pass *To Play*, 6+card ♥ suit, 10 to 16- total points
- Any other Bid *Slam Try*, 6+card ♥ suit, 16+ total points



### f. Responding to 1NT without a Major Suit – Exploring Notrump

When Responder does not have a 4-card or longer Major, then they are primarily focused on playing the proper level of Notrump. Responder's options are:

- Pass 0-7 points
- 2NT Invite Game, 8-9 points
  - This invites Opener to bid 3NT with a maximum, good 16-17 points, for opening 1NT.
- 3NT To Play, 10 to a bad 16 points
- 4NT Quantitative, Good 16 or 17 points
  - This invites Opener to bid Slam with a maximum, good 16-17 points, for opening 1NT.

*Note: With more values Responder bids at least a Small slam.*

### g. Responding to 1NT without a Major Suit – Long Minor Suits, “3-Suited Transfers”

When Responder has a long minor suit, at least 6+cards, then the way Responder shows this suit depends on the strength (bucket) of their hand:

- 10+ Points, Game Forcing Values
  - With enough values to bid game and no Major suit interest, no 4-card or 5-card Major suit, Responder usually just bids 3NT.
- 8-9 Points, Invitational Values
  - With no 4+card Major and invitational values, Responder makes a natural and invitational jump to 3♣ or 3♦.
- 0-7 Points, Weak Values (“3-Suited” Transfers)
  - With a weak hand, Responder wants to signoff in their long minor suit, even if they have a 4-card Major. With a long Major suit this can be done at the 2-level, by making a Jacoby Transfer and passing, but with a minor it must be done at the 3-level. Responder bids 2♠ as a relay to 3♣ (similar to a Jacoby Transfer bid). Responder can either pass 3♣ or correct to 3♦ to play there.

#### Examples

1NT 2♠

3♣ \_\_\_?

- Pass With a weak hand, 0-7 points, and a long ♣ suit, Responder wants to play 3♣ and passes Opener's forced 3♣ bid.
- 3♦ With a weak hand, 0-7 points, and a long ♦ suit, Responder wants to play 3♦. This correction to 3♦ is not invitational and should end the auction.

1NT \_\_\_?

- 3♣ Invitational, 8-9 points, 6+card ♣ suit, no 4-card Major
- 3♦ Invitational, 8-9 points, 6+card ♦ suit, no 4-card Major





## Other Common Bidding

This section is an introduction to other common situations in bridge, basic ones that are an everyday part of playing the game.

### 13. Conventional Bids

All of these artificial bids, *Stayman*, *Jacoby Transfers*, *Texas Transfers*, and *Jacoby 2NT* are examples of *Conventional Bids*. These are bids that do not promise the same suit that is actually bid. Conventional bids are a valuable part of modern bridge bidding, think of these as your extra tools for describing your hand and communicating with partner.

### 14. 2NT Opening Bids

An opening bid of 2NT shows a balanced hand with 20-21 total points and Responder uses tools similar to responding to 1NT to describe their hand, just at a level higher than in response to a 1NT-opening bid.

- 3♣ Stayman
- 3♦, 3♥ Jacoby Transfers
- 4♦, 4♥ Texas Transfers

### 15. 2♣ Opening Bids

A 2♣ opening bid is a strong, artificial, and forcing bid showing a hand too strong to open at the 1-level.

A 2♣ opening bid shows enough values to be close to making game Opener's hand. This usually shows:

- A balanced hand with 22+ total points.
- An unbalanced hand that is within one trick of game (or better) in Opener's hand.
  - That is, 9 winners with a long Major suit or 10 winners with a long minor suit.

#### a. Balanced Hands that Open 2♣

With a balanced hand that is too strong to open 2NT, 22+ total points, Opener starts the bidding with 2♣ and rebids the appropriate level of Notrump.

*Example*

2♣ 2♦

- 2NT 22 to 24- points.
  - Responder uses Stayman (3♣) and transfer bids (3♦, 3♥) to describe their hand.
- 3NT 24+ to 26 points
  - Responder uses Stayman (4♣) and transfer bids (4♦, 4♥) to describe their hand.

*Note: 2♦ bid by Responder, artificial waiting bid, leaving room for Opener to describe their hand.*



### **b. Unbalanced Hands that Open 2♣**

With an unbalanced hand that is too strong to open the bidding at the 1-level, Opener starts the auction with 2♣. This shows a hand that expects to take at least 9 tricks if their long suit is a Major or 10 tricks if their long suit is a minor. The idea is that if partner can produce one trick, then the partnership is likely to make game.

Opener's hand strength is generally more trick-based than HCP-based, but when estimating the playing strength of the hand, Opener generally has:

- At least 20 HCP with an unbalanced hand that is 1-suited, at least a 6-card suit.
- A least 22+ HCP with an unbalanced hand that is two-suited, at least 9-cards in two suits.

## **16. Preemptive Opening Bids**

Since we use a 2♣ opening bid for all strong hands, then we are free to use the other 2-level suit opening bids, 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠, and other high-level suit bids, for destructive bidding. These are called preemptive opening bids and show hands with a long suit and not enough points to open the bidding at the 1-level. We use preemptive bids to get in the way of the opponents and take away their bidding space to make it more difficult for them to communicate with each other.

### **a. 2-level Preempts - 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠**

These 2-level opening bids show 6-card suits and less than opening bid values.

- 2♦ 6-card ♦ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 2♥ 6-card ♥ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 2♠ 6-card ♠ suit, 5-10 HCP

### **b. 3-level Preempts**

3-level opening bids are similar to 2-level openings, generally showing 7-card suits and less than opening bid values.

- 3♣ 6-7 card ♣ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 3♦ 7-card ♦ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 3♥ 7-card ♥ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 3♠ 7-card ♠ suit, 5-10 HCP



### c. 4-level and Higher Preempts

Opening bids at the 4-level show similar hands to other preempts, with even longer suits. Preempts that are actually game, 4♥ and higher, can be made with a few more values than other preempts.

- 4♣ 7+card ♣ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 4♦ 7+card ♦ suit, 5-10 HCP
- 4♥ 7+card ♥ suit, 5-12 HCP
- 4♠ 7+card ♠ suit, 5-12 HCP
- 5♣ 8-card ♣ suit, 5-12 HCP
- 5♦ 8-card ♦ suit, 5-12 HCP

### d. Responder Extends Opener's Preempt – “The Law of Total Tricks”

There is a general idea in competitive or preemptive bidding called *The Law of Total Tricks (LOTT)*. This idea is “We should compete (or preempt) to a level equal to the size of our fit.” That means:

- With an 8-card fit we compete to the 8-trick level, the 2-level.
- With a 9-card fit we compete to the 9-trick level, the 3-level.
- With a 10-card fit we compete to the 10-trick level, the 4-level.

Responder uses this strategy to further extend Opener's preemptive bids.

#### *Example*

If Opener starts the bidding with a preemptive 2♠ bid, Responder can extend Opener's preempt by applying the LOTT:

- Bidding 3♠ with 3-card support and any values less than game interest.
- Bidding 4♠ with 4-card support and any hand not interested in slam.

## 17. Overcalls

When the opponents open the bidding then we need a way to enter the auction and compete for the contract. The most common way we compete in these auctions is by bidding a long suit, called making a *Simple Overcall*.

A low-level simple overcall does not promise as many values as an opening bid. The values that an overcall promises increase the higher the level of the bidding.

- 1-level Simple Overcalls 5+card suit, 8-17 points
- 2-level Simple Overcalls Good 5+card suit, 12-17 points

Making an overcall allows our side to start searching for a fit and compete in the bidding even when the opponent's have opened the bidding in front of us.

*Note: The LOTT will often be applied to these competitive auctions as well.*



## 18. Jump Overcalls

After the opponents open the bidding then a jump in a new suit is called a *Jump Overcall*. This bid is similar to an opening preempt, showing a long strong suit but limited values.

- 2-level Jump Overcalls                      6-card suit, 5-10 points
- 3-level Jump Overcalls                      7-card suit, 5-10 points
- 4-level Jump Overcalls                      8-card suit, 5-12 points (jumps to game can be a bit stronger).

These jump overcalls are destructive bids, aimed at taking bidding space away from the opponents. Partner applies the LOTT and extends our Preempt as if we had opened with a preemptive bid.

## 19. Raising Partner's Preempt Suit After the Opponent's Overcall

When we open the bidding and the opponent makes a simple overcall, the opponents have interfered in our auction and have changed the nature of the auction from *constructive bidding* to *competitive bidding*. In competitive bidding auctions, we change our approach to bidding to allow Responder more options for raising Opener's primary suit and to give Responder more destructive (preemptive) bidding options.

### a. Preemptive Raises After the Opponent's Overcall

The primary way that we change our bidding agreements in competitive auctions is to make jump raises by Responder weak bids instead of invitational bids. This allows Responder to apply the Law of Total Tricks and take away as much bidding space from the opponents as possible (by preempting the bidding.) This type of competitive bidding applies whether Opener began the auction with a Major suit or minor suit opening bid.

*Example*

1♠     (2♣)    \_\_?

- 3♠     4-card ♠ support, 0-6 points.
- 4♠     5-card ♠ support, 0-8 points (jumps to game can be a bit stronger than other actions.)

### b. Limit Raises After the Opponents Overcall – "Q=LR+"

Since jump raises in competition apply the LOTT and are weak bids, Responder now needs a way to show a good hand with invitational or better values and a fit for Opener's suit. This type of hand is shown by Responder bidding the opponent's suit, a special bid called a *Cuebid*.

*Example*

1♠     (2♣)    \_\_?

- 3♣     3+card ♠ support, 10+ points (showing at least an 8-card fit)

3♣ is an artificial bid, a *Limit Raise or better* in Opener's suit and is often denoted "Q=LR+", short for "A Cuebid equals a Limit Raise or Better." This applies when responding to a minor or Major suit opening.



## 20. Conclusion and Summary Tables

This concludes our introduction to bridge bidding. There are a large number of topics covered in this small document, and many other fundamental topics are not discussed or only briefly touched upon. I hope that reading this has given you some insight into how to communicate with your partner at the bridge table and how the fundamentals of modern bridge bidding work.

Here are some *Summary Tables* of what has been discussed in this *Learn Bridge Bidding* document:

- a. Opening Bids Summary Table
- b. Responding to 1-Level Opening Bids Summary Table

### ***a. Opening Bids Summary Table***

Bid	Description
1♣	3+♣, 12-21 points
1♦	4+♦, 12-21 points
1♥	5+♥ 12-21 points
1♠	5+♠, 12-21 points
1NT	15-17 points, balanced hand
2♣	<i>Strong, Artificial, and Forcing.</i> 22+ points if balanced OR "Game-1" or stronger if unbalanced
2♦	5-10 HCP, usually 6-card ♦
2♥	5-10 HCP, usually 6-card ♥
2♠	5-10 HCP, usually 6-card ♠
2NT	20-21 points, balanced hand
3♣	5-10 HCP, 6+card ♣
3♦	5-10 HCP, usually 7-card ♦
3♥	5-10 HCP, usually 7-card ♥
3♠	5-10 HCP, usually 7-card ♠
3NT	(Not Discussed)
4♣	5-10 HCP, usually 8-card ♣
4♦	5-10 HCP, usually 8-card ♦
4♥	5-11 HCP, usually 8-card ♥
4♠	5-11 HCP, usually 8-card ♠



**b. Responding to 1-Level Opening Bids Summary Table**

Responses	1♣ Opening	1♦ Opening	1♥ Opening	1♠ Opening	1NT Opening
1♦	4+♦, 6+ pts.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1♥	4+♥, 6+ pts.	4+♥, 6+ pts.	N/A	N/A	N/A
1♠	4+♠, 6+ pts.	4+♠, 6+ pts.	4+♠, 6+ pts.	N/A	N/A
1NT	6-9 pts, no M	6-9 pts, no M	SF, 6-11 pts.	SF, 6-11 pts.	N/A
2♣	5+♣, 6-9 pts	3+♣, 12+ pts	3+♣, 12+ pts.	3+♣, 12+ pts.	Stayman, 8+ pts.
2♦		4+♦, 6-9 pts	4+♦, 12+ pts.	4+♦, 12+ pts.	Jac Trs, 5+♥, 0+ pts
2♥			3+♥, 6-9 pts.	5+♥, 12+ pts.	Jac Trs, 5+♠, 0+ pts
2♠				3+♠, 6-9 pts.	3♣ relay, 6+minor
2NT	10-11 pts	10-11 pts	*4+♥, 12+ pts.	*4+♠, 12+ pts.	8-9 pts., no M
3♣	5+♣, 10-11 pts				6+♣, 8-9 pts.
3♦		4+♦, 10-11 pts			6+♦, 8-9 pts.
3♥			3+♥, 10-11 pts		
3♠				3+♠, 10-11 pts	
3NT	Play, 12-15 pts	Play, 12-15 pts	Play, 12-15 pts	Play, 12-15 pts	Play, 10-16 pts.
4♣					
4♦					Tx Trs, 6+♥, 10+ pts
4♥					Tx Trs, 6+♠, 10+ pts
4♠					
4NT					Quant, 16+/17 pts.