

The Barrier Principle

Rationale

When you open the bidding with one of a suit, always have an idea of the rebid which you plan to make. You are more likely to make the right opening bid if you have thought about your possible rebids. Your goal will be to describe your hand as accurately as possible in terms of HCP and shape by using your opening bid and rebid.

The Barrier Principle states that:-

After an opening bid of 1B, opener may not make a rebid in a new suit above 2B unless extra values are held. e.g

1NT	2NT	3NT	After an opening bid of 1H,
1S	2S	3S	opener's barrier is 2H
1H-----2H		3H	He may not rebid a new suit
1D	2D	3D	above 2H unless extra
1C	2C	3C	values are held.

Say responder answers 2C to opener's 1H bid.

- With a minimum hand, opener may show a diamond suit by bidding 2D. It is below the *barrier*. Many pairs play that a *response of a new suit at the two level is forcing to 2NT unless opener simply rebids his suit*. So, after the 2D rebid, opener can expect to get another bid.
- With a minimum hand, opener may rebid 2H to show 6 hearts – usually!
- With a minimum hand, opener may rebid 2NT since this is not a suit. The rebid is consistent with the axiom: *A minimum NT rebid implies a minimum hand*
- With a minimum hand, opener may give a single raise of responder's suit. i.e. rebid 3C does not show extra values because it is not a *new* suit above 2H.
- With a minimum hand, opener may NOT rebid 2S. This is a new suit above the barrier, 2H.

Opener can breach the barrier in several ways, all of which show extra values:-

- Jump rebid in NT. This shows a hand 1D 1H too strong to open 1NT 2NT
- Jump Rebid own suit e.g 1H 2C shows 16-18 HCP, 6 card suit 3H
- Jump Rebid partner's suit e.g 1H 2C Forcing after a 2 level response 4C
- Bidding a higher suit above the barrier. Called a *reverse* Here, 1D 1S 2H it shows 16 – 18 HCP and extra values, 5 -4 in reds
- Making a *Jump Shift*. i.e. Skip one 1H 1S level of bidding 3C

This shows 5 -4 in the bid suits and values agreed by the partnership (at least 16 HCP or great shape). After a one level response, it is forcing for one round.

- If you play Benjamin Twos, you have two very strong bids available, 2C and 2D. That means that the *reverse* and the *jump shift* don't have to carry so much load and can therefore be made on 16 – 18 HCP. If you have only one big bid, say 2C, the reverse and jump shift must carry a larger burden and need to be made on 17 - 20 HCP. Under such circumstances, they must be forcing for one round, at least.

- Many partnerships have the additional agreement:- *New 3 over 2 over 1 is forcing*

1S 2D 3C here is forcing. i.e. You need 3C ? 15HCP to make this rebid. Since you can't bid like this with a minimum opening, weak hands 5-5 in the black suits can be a headache. You may have to open 1S and rebid 2S promising a 6th spade which you don't have and losing the club suit!

- Try coming up with good bidding sequences for these hands with a favourite partner. Dealer West:-

♠AKT42	♠97	1S	2D
♥J2	♥KT53	2NT	Pass
♦74	♦KQT6	West has insufficient values	
♣A963	♣K42	to bid 3C, which would drive the partnership too high. West takes a chance on East having hearts when bidding 2NT. Poor options.	

♠K942	♠A876	1H	1S
♥AKT42	♥3	2S	4S
♦K6	♦J54	all pass	
♣94	♣KQ875		

Although responder has more clubs than spades, he is not strong enough to show them at the three level. If responder starts with 2C.....

1H 2C The spades have been lost. Opener 2NT pass is not strong enough to reverse in 2S

The guide is :-
Respond in the major rather than the minor unless you are strong enough to show it on the next round.

♠7	♠AJ632	1D	1S
♥AQ64	♥J5	2H	3NT
♦AKT94	♦Q6	all pass	
♣KQ9	♣J873		

When opener shows 9 red cards, responder, with the clubs covered, gives up on a spade contract and places the contract. 2NT would be non-forcing and a 2S rebid would show six opposite so many known red cards. Note opener's reverse promised exactly this sort of hand.

♠A9873	♠2	1C ¹	1D ²
♥4	♥KQ97	1S ³	1NT ⁴
♦J	♦Q842	2S ⁵	3C ⁶
♣AQ6432	♣T987	enough!	

¹With 6-5 in the blacks and minimum, choose 1C and rebid the spades *twice* to show this hand. Most pairs open with 11 HCP and a six card suit. This hand is better than that!

⁵After the 2S rebid, responder thinks "*Why did partner open 1C when he had 5 spades? Ah – because he has 6 clubs!*"

³Note that 1S is forcing, unless you responded with 5 HCP because you hated clubs. Open would still rebid 1S with 19 or 20 balanced.

²Respond up-the-line depending on agreement

⁵Opener's rebid of 2S is non-forcing.

⁶3C is *simple preference* and is weak. You gave me a choice of black suits and I prefer clubs.