

BRIDGE FOR BEGINNERS
NOTES ON CONTRACT BRIDGE

BRIDGE

Ranking of the Suits

Highest Ranking	No Trumps	
Majors	Spades) Referred to as the majors
	Hearts)
Minors	Diamonds) Referred to as the minors
	Clubs)

In Bridge you score points by bidding and making either a game or a part score and you also score points when the opposition fail to make their contract.

Game in NT requires 25 pts between the two hands (3NT is game –9 tricks)

Game in Spades or Hearts requires 26 pts between the two hands (4S or 4H is game – 10 tricks)

Game in Diamonds or Clubs requires 29 pts between the two hands (5D or 5C is game – 11 tricks)

Note there are no bowers – Ace is high

Note also that the number of tricks contracted for is that number plus six – so a contract of 2H requires you to make 8 tricks

Contract bridge consists of two phases – the auction and the play

First – count your cards face down as you take them from the board

Auction

Each board is marked with the compass directions. One of them will say “Dealer”. That person always has the first opportunity to bid. If they have 12 or more points they make the appropriate bid and the bidding then continues in a clockwise direction until there have been three passes. Once there have been three passes, the last bid becomes the final contract and the person who bid that suit first becomes the **declarer**. If the dealer does not have an opening bid (12 or more points) then they pass and the next person in rotation has the next opportunity to bid and so on.

Note that unlike 500, the person who bid the suit first plays the hand (**Declarer**) and their partner is the **Dummy** – Dummy’s cards go on the table face up once the opening lead has been made.

To open the bidding – you need

12 or more High Card Points – Ace 4, King 3, Queen 2, Jack 1.

With 12-19 you open at the one level – 20 or more (later lesson)

WHAT TO OPEN

With 12-14 (and a balanced hand) open 1NT

Otherwise – with 12-19 pts

With two four card suits, open the lowest ranking

With two five card or longer suits, open the higher ranking

With a five and a four, open the longer

With a four, four, four, one – open the one below the singleton

When you open the bidding with anything **except** 1NT, you promise a rebid unless your partner (Responder) makes a bid that you can pass.

When your partner makes the opening bid, you are now the **Responder**

OPENING THE BIDDING WITH 1NT

1NT is the most common opening bid in Acol. However, there are certain criteria which **must** be met before you can open the bidding with 1NT.

They are:

1. 12, 13 or 14 HCP - exactly - not 11 and not 15
2. **No** five card major (hearts or spades) but you can have a five card minor (diamonds or clubs)
3. Not two doubletons
4. No singleton and no void.

There are only three hand shapes that qualify for an opening bid of 1NT:

4,4,3,2 4,3,3,3 or 3,3,5,2. (the 5 card suit being diamonds or clubs)

The benefit of opening 1NT is that you **do not** now have to make a rebid - 1NT describes your hand and you do not need to describe it further. In fact, you **don't** bid again unless partner forces you to - i.e. partner makes a bid that you cannot pass.

You as Responder - when your partner opens 1NT

1. **When you have a balanced hand**

When your partner opens 1NT and you have a **balanced** hand (no five card or longer major, no singleton) you just add your points. If you have 13 there is game on so you bid 3NT. If you have 11 or 12 you invite with 2NT, with less than 11 you pass.

2. **When you have an unbalanced hand**

- (a) When your partner opens 1NT and you have an unbalanced hand (a five card or longer suit **[not clubs***]**) and up to 10/11 points you bid 2 of your longest suit. This is called a **weakness takeout** and partner **must** pass. You do this on hands where there is no game and where you have some "shape" i.e. at least a five card suit. For partner to make 1NT they will need entries to your hand, if your hand is weak there won't be entries. Partner will always have at least two cards of your long suit, he could have 3 or 4, but you **know** he will always have two.

****2C in response to 1NT has a special meaning which we will learn later.

- (b) When you have an unbalanced hand, a five card major and 11+ points you bid 3 of your own suit. This asks partner to choose game in NT (3NT) or game in your major (4H or 4S). Partner will bid 3NT if she has only two of your suit or 4H/S if she holds three or four - e.g. 1NT from partner - 3H or 3S from you - partner will now bid either 3NT or 4H/4S.
- (c) When you have a **six** card major and an opening hand, bid game in that suit yourself e.g. 1NT from partner - 4H or 4S from you. You know when partner opens 1NT that you have an 8 card fit - the NT opener will always have at least 2 of your suit.

Exercises

Would you open the bidding with 1NT on the following hands? If not why not?

? Spades	1. AKx	2. Ax	3. Axxxx
? Hearts	Qxxx	KQx	KQx
? Diamonds	Kxx	xxx	xxx
? Clubs	Qxx	Axxxx	Ax
? Spades	4. AKx	5. KQxx	6. KQJx
? Hearts	Jxxx	xxx	Ax
? Diamonds	Kxx	AQx	Qxxx
? Clubs	xxx	Jxx	Kxx

Answers:

1. Yes 12 - 14 High Card Points and a balanced hand.
2. Yes 12 - 14 High Card Points and a balanced hand.
3. No 12 - 14 H C P and 5/3/3/2, BUT the 5 card suit is spades.
4. No Although the hand is balanced there are only 11 H C P.
5. Yes 12 - 14 H C P and balanced.
6. No The hand is balanced but there are too many H C P.

Lay out these cards and bid and play the following hand.

		North		
		? xx		
		? Jxx		
		? AQJxx		
		? Jxx		
	West		East	
? QJTxx			? xx	
? Kxx			? Axxx	
? xx			? xxxx	
? Axx			? KQx	
		South		
		? AKxx		
		? Qxx		
		? Kx		
		? xxxx		
		Dealer		

Bidding: South is the dealer and opens the bidding with 1NT (12–14 HCP and a balanced hand.) All No Bid.

Opening Lead: Queen Spades - top of a sequence of 3 or more touching honours.

Play: South counts tricks - 2 spades and 5 diamonds = 7 tricks - making 1NT.
 Take first trick with the Ace of spades and then play diamonds
 Play King of diamonds first and then the small one over to the Ace. If you don't play diamonds this way you will not make 7 tricks. Try it!

RESPONDING TO 1NT WITH A BALANCED HAND

In Contract Bridge you score points when you bid and make any contract. You gain a bonus score if you bid and make GAME.

Game 3NT (9 tricks)
Requirements: 25 -26 HCP between the 2 hands

Responder with a balanced hand

Partner opens 1NT 12-14 HCP

You as responder count your points and see whether GAME is possible.

Less than 11 HCP No bid. There cannot be 26 HCP between the hands.

11 or 12 HCP Bid 2NT - Opener will bid 3NT with more than minimum

13 or more HCP Bid 3NT – you have at least 25 HCP

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
? AQx	Kx	AQx	Kxx	AKx	QJx
? KQxx	xxx	Kxx	Qxxxx	Kx	AJx
? Kx	Qxxx	Kx	QJx	Qxxx	Kxx
? xxxx	Qxxxx	xxxxx	Axx	Qxxx	Kxxx
1NT	No Bid	1NT	2NT	1NT	3NT

Exercises:

1. Your partner opens 1NT - what do you bid?

? (a) KJx	(b) AQxx	(c) Kxxx	(d) Kx	(e) AQx
? Axxx	Kxx	AQx	xxx	Kxx
? xxx	Qxxx	Kx	KQJx	KQxx
? xxx	Kx	xxxx	AJx	Jxx

2. Bid these hands

? (a) KQx	Axxx	(b) AQx	Kxx
? Ax	Kxx	KQx	xxxx
? Kxxxx	Qxx	Qxx	AKx
? xxx	Kxx	Jxx	Qxx

Answers:

1 (a) No Bid
(b) 3NT
(c) 2NT
(d) 3NT
(e) 3NT

2 (a) 1NT 2NT
No bid (b) 1NT 2NT
3NT

RESPONDING TO INT WITH AN UNBALANCED HAND

Sometimes after an opening bid of 1NT responder has a good major suit - 5 cards or better. The hand may gain more tricks played in the suit by being able to trump opponent's cards. Unbalanced hands almost always play better with the long suit as trumps.

After partner's opening bid of 1NT

With 12+ HCP and

1. A six card major - bid GAME in the suit. You know your partner has at least 2 of your suit so you have at least 8 trumps.
2. A five card major - Jump in the major - 3 H or 3S.
You cannot bid Game direct as partner may only have a doubleton of your suit, so you bid at the 3 level and partner will then bid 3NT with 2 of your suit but with 3 or more partner will bid game in your suit.

With a range 0-11 HCP and a 5 card or longer major:

Bid 2 of the major (called a "weakness take out"). Partner now knows there is no Game and must say No Bid. Hands of this type usually play better in a suit than in NT.

Minor suit – with a 5 card minor and 11 pts:

Prefer to bid in No Trump (2NT). If the hand is very unbalanced but JUMP in the minor and let partner decide whether to pass, bid 3NT or 5 of your minor which is usually based on his own holding in your suit.

Examples

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | AKx
xxx
KQJx
xx | Jxxxx
KQJ
Ax
Jx | 2. | AKx
xxx
KQJx
xx | QJxxx
AKx
xxx
Kx | 3. | AK
xxx
KQJx
xxx | QJxxx
AKx
xxx
Kx |
| | 1NT
No Bid | 4S | | 1NT
4S | 3S | | 1NT
3NT | 3S |
| 4. | AKx
xxx
KQJx
xx | Jxxxx
Kxx
xxxx
x | 5. | AKx
xxx
KJxx
Qx | Qx
Kx
xxx
AKxxxx | 6. | AKx
xxx
xx
KQxx | Qxx
x
Axxxxx
xxx |
| | 1NT
No Bid | 2S | | 1NT
3NT | 3C | | 1NT
No Bid | 2D |

LEADS

Finding the correct lead is one of the hardest parts of the game. Often the right lead will beat a contract, a wrong one will let it make.

When Opposition are in a suit contract:

If your partner has bid, lead his/her suit: (unless you have a very good suit of your own)

- (a) Highest from two – Qx, 96
- (b) Middle from three small – 976, 542, (and play the higher one next time)
- (c) Small from three to an honour – Axx, Kxx, Qxx,
- (d) Fourth highest from four or more – Kxxx, Qxxx

If partner hasn't bid:

Lead top of a solid sequence (QJ109 or KQJx or 9876) or almost a solid sequence

Lead an Ace only if you also have the King, otherwise find something else.

Note: Try not to give cheap tricks away – this is why you don't lead from a holding of AQ98 or similar against a suit – you want declarer to lead that suit to you.

When Opposition are in No Trumps:

If your partner has bid, lead his/her suit as above.

If your partner hasn't bid, lead:

Top of a solid sequence if you have one OR fourth highest from your longest suit.

When you lead against NT, you are trying to establish your own suit so you can beat the contract. Sometimes you have to give a trick away to establish your own suit. When your partner gets the lead, they will play back the suit you have led to help you get it set up.

Summary

When partner bids or overcalls and you are on lead, lead his/her suit unless you have a very good suit of your own, e.g. Partner has overcalled in spades and you are on lead with:

x
xxx
KQJ109
xxxx

If the opponents are in a suit contract, lead your spade (if your partner wins, they can send one back for you to trump). **But** if opponents end up in NT, lead King of Diamonds – set up your own suit.

Top of a solid sequence is the best lead as it gives nothing away.

PARTNER OPENS 1NT

Partner has a balanced hand

(no singleton or void, not two doubletons)

(No 5 card major)

Note: A 5 card minor is counted as a balanced hand

YOU AS RESPONDER: WITH A BALANCED HAND FIRST COUNT YOUR POINTS

YOUR POINTS	ACTION	MEANING
0-10	Pass	There is unlikely to be a game
11-12	Bid 2NT (invitation)	There may be a game
13+	Bid 3NT	You know there is a game, so bid it

YOU AS RESPONDER: WITH AN UNBALANCED HAND

YOUR POINTS	ACTION	MEANING
0-11	Bid 2 of your longest suit (at least a 5 card suit) (not clubs)	Weak take out - NT opener must pass
11+ & 5 card major	Bid 3 of your major	NT opener will bid either 3NT or 4 of your major depending on how many cards he has in your major (with 2 - 3NT, with 3 or 4, 4 of the major)
10-11 & 6 card minor	Bid 3 of your minor (invitation)	1NT opener can bid 3NT with 3-4 of your minor or can pass
12+ & 5-6 card minor	Bid 3NT	
12+ & 6 card major	Bid game in your major	

OPENING 1 OF A SUIT (MAJORS)

Requirements for opening bid of 1 Spade

12 or more HCP and at least **5** cards of the suit. When playing in a suit contract it is preferable to have at least 8 cards of the trump suit between the 2 hands. Partner needs at least 3 spades to support an opening bid of 1S.

Requirements for opening bid of 1 Heart

12 or more HCP and at least **4** cards of the suit. When playing in a suit contract it is preferable to have at least 8 cards of the trump suit between the 2 hands. Partner needs at least 4 hearts to support an opening bid of 1H.

OPENING 1 OF A SUIT (MINORS)

Note: With the right shape and points to open 1NT that is always the first option. So assuming that is not the case, then with:

12 or more HCP and at least four cards of the suit, open 1 of your minor. Note an opening bid of 1C **MAY** be a three card suit. When the hand is balanced with only one four card suit and that suit is spades (and the hand has more than 14 points) then the opening bid is 1C (**because** an opening bid of 1S must be a five card suit).

Which suit to open depends on both the points in the hand and the shape of the hand i.e.

With four diamonds, four hearts, two spades and three clubs and 15 points the opening bid is 1D (lower of two four card suits – diamonds and hearts).

Note: With the same hand and 12-14 points the opening bid is 1NT.

RESPONDER (i.e. the partner of the opening bidder)

Responding to 1 of a Suit - You must reply with 6+ points

If partner opens 1S and you have **three** or more of that suit, you respond as follows:

2S	shows 6-9 pts
3S	shows 10-11(12) pts
4S	shows 13+pts

If you have 6+ pts and partner opens 1S and you don't have three of that suit, you bid according to your point count – i.e. with 6-9 you respond 1NT and with 10+ you bid your own suit at the 2 level (remembering that to respond 2H to 1S shows a **five** card heart suit).

If partner opens 1H and you have **four** or more of that suit, you respond as follows:

2H	shows 6-9 pts
3H	shows 10-11(12) pts
4H	shows 13+pts

If you have 6+ pts and partner opens 1H and you don't have four of that suit, you bid 1S (if you have 4 or more) or with 6-9 pts, not four hearts and not four spades you bid 1NT - 1NT over 1H denies four spades **and** is limited to 6-9 pts.

To bid a different suit at the 2 level over a one level bid from partner promises 10+ points, i.e. 1H from partner and 2C from you shows 10+ HCP and at least four clubs.. You **cannot** bid at the 2 level without 10+ points - you must bid 1NT **regardless of your hand shape**.

If partner opens 1C or 1D, you bid a four (or longer) major before you support the minor i.e. Partner opens 1D and this is your hand:

QJxx
xx
AJxxx
xx

Your first bid is 1S (not 1NT - 1NT would deny four hearts and deny four spades) not 2D. Bridge is very much major suit orientated so you always show a major suit first even when you have support for partner's minor. Depending on partner's rebid, you can show diamond support at your next bid.

Opener's Rebids

As mentioned above when you open the bidding with anything except 1NT you **must** bid again **unless** your partner makes a bid that you can pass – there are only a few bids that you can pass. They are:

A simple raise in your suit	1H from you	2H from partner	you can pass
A double raise in your suit	1H from you	3H from partner	you can pass
A response of 1NT	1H from you	1NT from partner	you can pass

A change of suit from partner forces the opener to bid again. **Note that 1NT is not a change of suit.**

You can rebid a five card suit, but not a four card suit (unless partner supports it).

You can rebid a suit lower ranking than the suit you opened e.g. 1H (you) – 1S (partner) – 2C (you). This will show at least five hearts and at least four clubs, definitely not four of each as then the opening bid would have been 1C.

You can rebid 1NT to show 15-16 points, 2NT to show 17-18 points and 3NT to show 19 points.

OPENING BID OF 1 OF A SUIT BY YOUR PARTNER - SUMMARY

PARTNER OPENS 1S

FIRST , count your points - do you have 6+? If so, you must bid.		
SECOND , how many cards in partners suit do you have?		
No of cards in partner's suit	No of points	You Bid
3+	6-9	2 of partner's suit
3+	10-11	3 of partner's suit
3+	13+	4 of partner's suit (Game)
When you don't have three card support for your partner's suit then		
0-2	6+	Bid 1NT with 6-9 or only with 10+ bid a lower ranking suit at the 2 level

PARTNER OPENS 1H

FIRST , count your points - do you have 6+? If so, you must bid.		
SECOND , how many cards in partners suit do you have?		
No of cards in partner's suit	No of points	You Bid
4+	6-9	2 of partner's suit
4+	10-11	3 of partner's suit
4+	13+	4 of partner's suit (Game)
When you don't have four card support for your partner's suit then		
0-3	6+	Bid 1S (if you have 4+ spades) or bid 1NT with 6-9 or only with 10+ bid a lower ranking suit at the 2 level Note: 1NT over 1H from partner would deny 4 hearts and also deny 4 spades

PARTNER OPENS 1 OF A MINOR

FIRST , count your points - do you have 6+? If so, you must bid.	
6+	<p>Bid five card suits down from the top ranking and four card suits up from the lowest ranking, so if partner opens 1D and you have five spades and four hearts and 8 pts, your first bid is 1S (length first)</p> <p>Bid a five or a four card major even when you have four card support for partner's minor - you can show support for the minor next bid. If partner opens 1D and you have four hearts and four diamonds, your first bid is 1H (major first). When you change the suit partner will bid again.</p>
6-9	With no five or four card major but four card support for partner's minor bid 2 of the minor.
6-9	With no five or four card major and not four card support for partner's minor bid 1NT
<p>IMPORTANT:</p> <p>Show a major before you support partner's minor regardless of how many cards in that minor you have.</p> <p>When your partner opens the bidding and you also have an opening hand it is your responsibility to make sure that the partnership gets to game – you know how many points the partnership has, your partner does not, so don't stop bidding until game is reached – every time one of you changes the suit, the other must bid again.</p>	

OPENER'S REBID

When you open the bidding with anything except 1NT you promise a rebid **unless** your partner makes a bid that you can pass. This is the reason you always open 1NT when you can as you are not obliged to make a rebid - you have already described your hand with 1NT.

There are only three bids you can pass as opener -

1. A simple raise in your suit e.g. 1S from you 2S from partner - you can pass
2. A double raise in your suit e.g. 1S from you 3S from partner - you can pass
3. 1NT response e.g. 1S from you 1NT from partner - you can pass

Therefore when partner responds with a new suit, you must bid again (rebid).

It is important that the opener **describes with the rebid** what sort of hand he has:

A. A **minimum** hand – simple rebid – either another suit lower than the first bid suit as 1H-1S from partner – 2C (rebid) – shows a 12-15(16) point hand with 5+ hearts and 4+ clubs

Or 1H-1S from partner – 2H (rebid) – shows at least five hearts and denies four cards in spades, clubs or diamonds.

B. A **good** hand – jump rebid – another suit at the 3 level as 1H-1S from partner – 3C (rebid) – shows 17+ (partner **cannot** pass). Responder can correct back to 3H with a minimum hand (sometimes with only two hearts if stuck for a bid), bid 4H with three of them or bid 3NT – note it is unusual to support the minor – if you have a fit in the minor, you tend to bid 3NT – 9 tricks is easier than 11. This is where judgment comes in, obviously if you have game points, a fit in the minor and a singleton in another suit you would bid game in the minor.

C. A rebid in NT – as 1H-1S from partner – 1NT (rebid)
Shows 15-16 with at least four hearts and **not** four spades – note responder with enough points for game can bid 3H with three of them – opener will bid 4H with five or 3NT with only four.

A rebid of 2NT – as 1H-1S from partner – 2NT (rebid) – shows 17-18

A rebid of 3NT – as 1H-1S from partner – 3NT (rebid) – shows 19

Note that 1H-2C from partner – 2NT (rebid) shows 15-16 – partner has bid at the 2 level so 2NT is not a jump.

OVERCALLS

After the opposition have opened the bidding, you can bid (now referred to as an "overcall") when you have the following:

- A good five card or better suit
- An opening hand with shortage in the suit opened
- A good hand (15-18) with the opener's suit stopped
- Any hand with 19+ points

1. Simple (or Jump Overcall)

This is when the opposition open the bidding and you simply call your suit e.g.

Opener	You	
1D	1H	(simple overcall) 1H here always shows at least 5 and 9+ points
1D	2H	(jump overcall) 2H here shows a 6 card suit and 11-15 pts
1S	2C	2C shows at least a good 5 card suit and 11+ (you are now at the 2 level)

Your partner should raise you one level with three cards in your suit (6-9 pts), raise two levels with an opening hand with shortage in the opening bid suit and support for your suit, bid 2NT as a game try with an opening hand opposite yours or bid their own suit with shortage in your overcalled suit and a good suit of their own or bid 1NT with opener's suit stopped and 9-11 pts.

2. Take Out Double

A take out double is where the opposition open the bidding and you have an opening hand with shortage in their suit and support for the other three suits. A double from you asks your partner to bid her best suit. **Note:** a double of 1NT shows 15+ points and is penalty.

If the partner of the opener bids, then your partner can pass. So a bid from your partner shows some points (referred to as a "free bid").

If you change the suit after your partner has responded to your take out double you show a very good six card suit and about 16+ pts.

3. 1NT Overcall

An overcall of 1NT shows 15-18 pts with the opener's suit stopped (AQxx or KJ10 etc). You don't double for take out on a hand when you have the opener's suit **unless** you have more than 19 pts in which case you bid the appropriate number of NT after partner has bid. Partner will know you have 19+ pts as you would have overcalled 1NT at your first turn to bid with 15-18 e.g.

Opener	You	Responder	Your Partner
1H	X	2H	2S (free bid)
Pass	2NT		

When you bid 2NT you are showing that you have hearts stopped. You must have more than 18 points because you could have bid 1NT the first time to show 15-18.

When you overcall 1NT partner makes the normal NT responses – just as if you had opened 1NT. So, a bid of 2D, 2H or 2S is a weak take out. A bid of any of those suits at the 3 level is forcing to game in either that suit or 3NT (depending on how many cards the NT overcaller has in that suit)

WEAK TWOS

Opening 2H or 2S shows a six card suit with 6-9 (bad 10) points. If you are vulnerable and the opponents are not then your hand should be near the upper limit (9-10). If you are not vulnerable and the opponents are, then you can open with a much weaker hand (6 pts)

Responses:

1. A single raise in the same suit is pre-emptive and **NOT** invitational.

2S	P	3S	Partner is trying to take up bidding space and stop the opponents finding their fit (they will have one) – he could bid 2NT if he wanted more information about the 2S hand
2S	P	4S	When you as responder have a weak hand with 4+ trumps then jump to game (especially with shortage in the other major and especially when you are not vulnerable) – it is very difficult for the next hand to bid 5H on a 4 card suit regardless of how many points they have – they are more inclined to double and you will almost always get a good board (when you are non vulnerable or you are all vulnerable) as they will have game on.

2. Another suit is natural and to play – partner must **not** rebid their suit i.e.

2H	P	3C	3C is natural and to play – not interested in hearts or any other suit.
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3. The **only forcing response** is 2NT – an enquiry asking for more information. Answers are:

3C	6-7 and a bad suit
3D	6-7 and a good suit
3H	8-9 and a bad suit
3S	8-9 and a good suit
3NT	maximum and AKQxxx of the suit

WHEN OPPOSITION OPEN A WEAK 2 IN FRONT OF YOU

1. 2NT is (15)16-18 and their suit stopped twice. Weak take outs and Stayman⁽¹⁾ still apply.

e.g. 2H (by them) 2NT (by you) Pass (by them) 3C (by your partner) is Stayman checking whether you have a 4-4 spade fit. 3C bidder needs to have about 10 hcp – enough to bid 3NT (or game in a minor) over a 3D response to 3C.

2. X is take out (**short** (2 at the most) in the major suit opened) **OR** 19+ any shape. Follow x with 2NT to show a hand better than a direct 2NT overcall.

3. Overcall is natural – If you overcall at the 3 level make sure your suit is good and/or that you have at least six of them. You have already been warned by the opening bid that the suits are likely to be breaking badly.

¹ See Page 17

STRONG HANDS

OPENING 2NT AND 2C

1. **2NT (NOT FORCING – Partner can pass)**

The simplest way to play this is to use 2NT to show any balanced or semi balanced hand with 20-22 pts. It can therefore have any five card suit.

Responder can bid 3C to ask if there is a five card suit. Opener bids the five card suit if it is spades hearts or diamonds and bids 3NT if it is clubs or if there is no 5 card suit.

Weak take outs can still be used – but remember how many points are opposite. A weak take out of 2NT should be a hand with less than 3 pts.

With a balanced hand, just count the points – so with 6 pts bid 3NT.

OPENING THE BIDDING WITH 2C (FORCING – PARTNER CANNOT PASS)

This is the strongest possible bid. It shows either 23+ points or 8 playing tricks in any suit. The rebid tells which hand type it is.

The responses are:

2D	Less than 8 pts (any shape – nothing to do with diamonds)
2H/2S/3C/3D	Five+ card suits and more than 8 pts
2NT	No five card suit but more than 8 pts

The rebids from Opener over 2D are:

2NT	shows 23-24 balanced (or semi balanced but no singleton and not two five card suits)
3NT	shows 25+
2H, 2S, 3C, 3D	shows nine playing tricks with that suit as trumps

NOTE: Responder's second bid of 2NT is second negative – ie partner opens 2C and responder bids 2D (negative). Partner now shows their hand with (say)

2C – 2D - 2H (9 playing tricks in hearts) – 2NT from responder is second negative.

NOTE: When you have strong hands, you don't need to jump during the bidding. Just go slowly and bid the shape of your hand.

PRE-EMPTIVE BIDS

Opening 3's

Pre-emptive bids are used to jump the bidding to a high level quickly. They are used on hands with low points, but good shape i.e. long suits. They can be used when you are dealer or when you overcall.

The general guidelines are:

Dealer

When you are dealer and have a seven card suit with less than 10 points, open **3** of that suit.

i.e. any of the hands below would qualify for an opening 3 bid:

QJxxxxx	xx	xx
xx	Kxxxxxx	x
Kxx	xxxx	KQJxxxx
x	-	xxx

As a general rule you don't pre-empt in a minor when you hold a four card major – the reason being that if your partner also holds four cards in that major, you are unlikely to find the major fit. It is also much easier if your partner knows when you pre-empt that you won't hold a four card major.

Overcaller – Note vulnerability is always a factor

When the opposition open the bidding in front of you, and you have a weak hand with a seven card suit you should take some action (watch the vulnerability though – always be more careful when you are vulnerable and the opponents are not). Any time you can take some bidding space away, you should do so e.g.

Opponents open 1D and this is your hand:

QJ97654
x
xx
xxx

If you are not vulnerable (and opponents are) then you should bid 3S.

Responding to a Pre-empt

When your partner opens the bidding with a pre-emptive bid (or overcalls with a pre-empt), you need about 3 quick tricks to raise to game, or about 17 points to bid 3NT. With a big fit you should also bid game – i.e. if partner opens 3H and you have a weak hand with 4 hearts, you should bid game (you know you have an 11 card fit). If you haven't got any of those types of hands then just pass. When partner opens with a pre-empt a change of suit from you is forcing for one round (i.e. the opening bidder can't pass). If they can't support your suit, they can rebid their own suit or bid 3NT to let you have another bid.

THE STAYMAN CONVENTION

(Responder needs at least one four card major to use the Stayman Convention)

(Note: Not used with 4-3-3-3 hands)

The Stayman convention is used when partner opens (or overcalls) 1NT. Its purpose is to check whether you have a four/four fit in one of the majors. It is used like this:

Your Partner opens the bidding with 1NT (and you have **11+ points with at least one four card major**)

You bid 2C (stayman) - this has **nothing** to do with clubs. It just asks the question "do you have a four card major". The NT opener **must** answer - he cannot pass or raise clubs or do anything else. The answers are:

2D No four card major (**nothing** to do with diamonds)
 2H four hearts and could also have four spades (as four card suits are bid upwards)
 2S four spades and not four hearts

If the NT opener responds with the major that you are also holding then you have a fit and now just add points - if there could be a game, you can invite e.g.

Your Hand as responder:

Jxx
KQxx
AJxx
xx

Partner opens 1NT - your first bid is 2C checking to see whether you have a heart fit. If partner bids 2H, you raise to 3H (invitational). If partner bids 2D (no major) you bid 2NT (11-12). If partner bids 2S you also bid 2NT.

With a couple more points e.g.

Axx
KQxx
AJxx
xx

Your first bid is still 2C checking to see if there is a heart fit. If partner bids 2H you bid 4H. If partner bids 2S you bid 3NT. If partner bids 2D you bid 3NT - you know there is game on so bid it.

When you have an opening hand and partner opens 1NT, you are going to bid game so when you have a four card major as part of your opening hand, you check whether there is a major suit fit first. If there isn't then you bid 3NT.

Note that on the sequence: 1NT - 2C - 2H - 3NT opener (the NT bidder) knows responder has a four card major (otherwise he would not have bid 2C, so therefore when responder bids 3NT it means he has a spade suit). Should the NT opener have four hearts and four spades he can bid 4S over 3NT - 95% of the time it is better to play in your 4/4 major fit than in NT.

This would be the sequence:

1NT	2C	(must have a 4 card major to bid 2C)
2H	3NT	(hasn't got four hearts so has four spades)

The NT opener can bid 4S. He could have a hand like this:

AQxx
J10xx
Kxx
Kx