

Responder's Second Bid

13/5/15

After our partner has opened the bidding and we have responded, there are a variety of bids the opener could make.

These are:

Opener rebids in no trumps	}	(limit bids)
Opener raises responder's suit		
Opener rebids his own suit		
Opener rebids in a new suit		(usually not limited)

How do we (as responder) then continue the bidding?

When opener has had a chance to clarify his strength and distribution by rebidding, the responder will often be in a good position to determine the way in which any further bidding should proceed.

When opener's rebid is, for example, in no trumps, then responder has a fairly accurate picture of the partnership's combined strength. This will allow him to:

- decide to terminate the bidding in a part-score
- invite opener to go on, or
- force the bidding towards game (or higher).

When opener has rebid his suit, or bid a new suit on the second round of bidding, then responder must decide whether to bid on, or, if the rebid was forcing, how to bid on.

Remember that the bidding will become easier once a player has made a limit bid. Partner then has a fair idea of the combined strength.

Responder's Second Bid when opener has rebid in NT

This is usually straightforward. Responder knows to within a point or so how strong opener is, and passes or raises accordingly:

West	East	♠ K J 9 4
1♦	1♠	♥ 7 3 2
1NT	?	♦ Q T
		♣ J T 6 4

Partner has a balanced 15-16 points, so your combined values are about 22-23 points. There is no reason to suppose that there is a better denomination than no trumps, and you are short of the values needed for game. Pass.

West	East	♠ K J 9 4
1♦	1♠	♥ 7 3 2
2NT	?	♦ Q T
		♣ J T 6 4

Now you have a combined 24-25 points. This is borderline, so it is a time to exercise some judgement.

You have useful intermediates in both black suits and two good cards in partner's suit which may help him to establish tricks in diamonds. These factors should tip the balance in favour of bidding the game. Raise partner to 3NT.

West	East	♠ Q 8 7 5 3
1♥	1♠	♥ K Q 4
1NT	?	♦ K J 5
		♣ T 2

Here the natural bid is 3NT, but it is possible the opposition could cash a lot of clubs against you when 4♥ would make. How do you find out if partner has 4 or 5 hearts?

East, on his second turn, bids 3♥ (forcing). This must show 3 hearts, as he would have raised opener's heart suit immediately with 4-card support. Opener can now bid game in the 8-card trump fit.

If you have a long suit you can rebid it. With little you can rebid at the minimum level, expecting partner to pass. With rather more you can invite game or (with extra values) bid the game yourself.

West	East	♠ K J 7 6 4 2
1♥	1♠	♥ 3 2
1NT	?	♦ Q T 8
		♣ J 9

Sign off in 2♠. Opener will pass.

West	East	♠ K J 7 6 4 2
1♥	1♠	♥ 3 2
1NT	?	♦ A T 8
		♣ 9 4

Invite game with a bid of 3♠

West	East	♠ K J 7 6 4 2
1♥	1♠	♥ 3 2
1NT	?	♦ A Q T 8
		♣ 9 4

Now go straight to game. Bid 4♠

West	East	♠ K J 9 8 5 2
1♦	1♠	♥ J 2
2NT	?	♦ 7 6
		♣ T 8 2

With a pretty minimum response of 1♠, you should discourage partner by simply rebidding 3♠.

This bid is non-forcing, although partner may go on to game with some support for spades and values made up of aces and kings (always useful) rather than minor honours.

West	East	♠ K Q T 6 3
1♦	1♠	♥ A 7 2
2NT	?	♦ K 7
		♣ Q T 2

Now you are thinking of a possible slam, especially if partner can show 3-card spade support.

You cannot bid 3♠ which would be non-forcing, and you have to invent a bid: 3♣ is the best bet. This gives partner the chance to show if he has 3-card spade support.

Responder's Second Bid when opener raises responder's suit

When opener has raised your suit, you should have a fair idea of his strength. It is usually a case of assessing the combined values and bidding accordingly.

West	East	♠ Q T 8 6 3
1♦	1♠	♥ A 7 2
2♣	?	♦ 5 2
		♣ Q T 2

No problem here. Partner has shown a limited hand with his single raise of your suit, and with this hand you have no reason to proceed. Pass.

West	East	♠ Q T 8 6 3
1♦	1♠	♥ A 7 2
2♣	?	♦ 5 2
		♣ A T 2

Now your hand is a little stronger, and you are worth an invitation to game. Raise to 3♣. If your clubs were A Q 2 (giving you 12 pts) you would be worth a bid of 4♣.

Remember: with a reasonable fit

An opening bid opposite an opening bid = game

Responder's Second Bid when opener rebids his own suit

West	East	♠ K J 9 4
1♦	1♠	♥ 7 3 2
2♦	?	♦ Q T
		♣ J T 6 4

This is easy! Opener has a limited opening bid together with a 5-card or longer diamond suit. Your side's combined values are well short of enough for game - indeed, you may find that the opponents have the balance of points. You have at least seven, and possibly more, diamonds between you. There is no reason to bid again. Pass.

West	East	♠ K J 9 4 3
1♦	1♠	♥ 7 3 2
2♦	?	♦ Q
		♣ J T 6 4

Not quite so easy. You do not really like diamonds, and opener may have some tolerance for spades. However, your spades are not good enough to insist that they will be a better trump suit than partner's diamonds. If you bid again you may make things better, but you are just as likely to make things worse. Pass.

West	East	♠ K J T 9 4 3
1♦	1♠	♥ 7 3 2
2♦	?	♦ Q
		♣ J T 6

Now your spades are rather stronger than before, and it is right to try to improve the contract. Bid 2♠. This shows a weak hand (no ambitions to go any higher) but a decent suit that requires little or no support from partner. If partner does decide to bid again (and his only likely bid is 3♦) give up and let him play it.

West	East	♠ A Q T 8 7 6
1♦	1♠	♥ A 2
2♦	?	♦ T 8 3
		♣ J 4

You are not quite strong enough to insist on being in game, but you certainly want to invite partner to go on if he has a suitable hand. Jump to 3♠, non-forcing but showing a good 6-card suit and decent values just short of an opening bid.

West	East	♠ A Q T 4 3
1♦	1♠	♥ K J 7 2
2♦	?	♦ 8 3
		♣ T 6

Here you have a fair hand, and game is not impossible. Partner may even have a 4-card heart suit himself if he lacks the strength for a reverse. Bid 2♥. This is non-forcing, but with a suitable hand partner is invited to proceed. Note that, as you would have responded 1♥ with 4-4 in the majors, this sequence (i.e. responding in spades, then bidding hearts) promises at least 5 spades.

West	East	♠ K Q T 4
1♦	1♠	♥ J 7 2
2♦	?	♦ 8 3
		♣ A J 9 4

You have the strength to invite game, and with your balanced hand you make the natural call of 2NT. This bid on the second round shows similar values to an immediate response of 2NT to the opening bid.

Remember that a limit bid retains its original meaning even if it has not been made immediately.

West	East	♠ T 4 2
1♠	1NT	♥ A J 7 2
3♠	?	♦ K 8
		♣ T 9 6 4

3♠ is not forcing and with a weaker hand you would pass. Here you should raise to 4♠. You have just about a maximum response of 1NT, and the ace and king are good cards. You also have a ruffing value.

West	East	♠ 4
1♠	2♦	♥ A J 3
3♠	?	♦ K 9 7 6 2
		♣ J 9 6 4

Bid 3NT. Partner's bid, after your response at the 2-level, is forcing. With two spades you would bid 4♠ (partner has a 6-card suit).

Responder's Second Bid when opener rebids in a new suit

West	East	♠ A J 8 7
1♥	1♠	♥ 6 3 2
2♦	?	♦ J 8
		♣ Q 4 3 2

With this hand you would simply return to opener's first suit. Such a call, known as "giving preference", promises no extra strength at all. It simply says that, of the two suits bid by partner, you would prefer that the first suit (which in this sequence should be longer than the second) should be trumps. On this hand, you know that the partnership has more hearts than diamonds. Bid 2♥.

West	East	♠ K T 9 3
1♥	1♠	♥ 6 3
2♦	?	♦ Q 8
		♣ Q T 6 5 2

Again you must give preference to partner's first suit by bidding 2♥. It would be a mistake to pass his 2♦ bid because you have a high card there. Always remember that partner should have more hearts than diamonds, so this should be your preferred trump suit. Partner has no reason to place you with "support" for hearts. Preference is not the same as enthusiasm!

West	East	♠ K T 9 3
1♥	1♠	♥ A 3
2♦	?	♦ Q 8 3 2
		♣ Q T 6

With a weaker hand you could pass as you have genuine support for opener's second suit, and you would prefer diamonds to be trumps rather than hearts. However, you are rather stronger, and game is not out of the question. With about 10 or 11 points, you raise to 3♦ (a limit bid), and partner may bid on if he is not minimum.

West	East	♠ A J T 9 6 3
1♥	1♠	♥ 6
2♦	?	♦ K 4 3
		♣ J 9 8

This time, your spades are quite good, and it is correct to rebid them. This does not promise any more than a minimum response, but does promise a decent (almost certainly 6-card) suit. Bid 2♠. Partner will not bid on unless the repetition of the spade suit improves his hand.

West	East	♠ K T 9
1♦	1♥	♥ J T 6 3
1♠	?	♦ Q 8
		♣ Q T 9 2

When partner has bid a new suit at the 1-level, then you would not normally pass the new suit bid unless you would have passed an opening bid in that suit. In other words, your first response was sub-minimum and simply an attempt to improve the contract. Responder's rebid in no trumps is like an initial response in no trumps. Bid 1NT (6-9 points).

West	East	♠ K T 9 6
1♦	1♥	♥ A J T 6
1♠	?	♦ Q 9 3
		♣ J 2

No problem here. You have support for partner's second suit and should show this by raising him. You would have raised an opening bid of 1♠ to 3♠, so this is the bid you must make now. This bid is non-forcing, just as would be an immediate raise of an opening bid to the 3-level.

West	East	♠ K T 9
1♠	2♣	♥ K 6 3
2♦	?	♦ 6 3
		♣ A J 9 6 2

Your first thought is probably 2NT. However, opener, by not rebidding in no trumps, has shown an unbalanced hand. This will be based on a 5-card (or longer) spade suit. You would have raised an opening bid of 1♠ to 3♠ with 4-card support; now that opener has shown at least 5 spades your 3-card support is enough. Bid 3♠, an invitational raise (like 1♠ - 3♠).

West	East	♠ J 6
1♦	1♥	♥ K Q T 6 3
1♠	?	♦ 6 3
		♣ A J 9 2

You have enough to invite game, and the most descriptive bid is 2NT. This shows about 11-12 points (the same as a response of 2NT to an opening bid) and here will also show a secure stop in the unbid suit (clubs). Partner may pass, or bid one of his suits again if he does not wish to go on to game. Note that if partner now bids 3♥ (showing 3-card support for your suit) it is forcing.

West	East	♠ K 6
1♦	1♥	♥ K Q J 9 6 3
1♠	?	♦ Q 5
		♣ T 6 2

Once more you have enough to make an invitational bid, and the right bid is 3♥. This shows about 10-11 points together with a good 6-card suit. Partner now has a good picture of your hand and can bid on, or pass, accordingly.

This jump rebid of responder's suit retains exactly the same meaning if opener rebids at the 2-level (e.g. 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣)

West	East	♠ J 6
1♦	1♥	♥ A Q J 9 6 3 2
1♠	?	♦ 6
		♣ K 6 2

Now you have a self-sufficient suit and, taking into account your distributional strength, enough for game. Bid 4♥.

Opener will expect your suit to have no more than one loser, and may bid on with strong controls and minimal support.