



Bidding Basics

BY LARRY COHEN larryco.com

After 37 installments in this series, we now move to the fourth call of the auction. Put another way, we are discussing responder's second bid. For now, there is still no bidding by the opponents. This month, we focus on the auction where the first three bids were all one of a suit.

Unfortunately, there is an underlying issue here of "old way" versus "modern way." It involves a principle called Walsh style. This can be confusing. Actually, let me fess up: It is confusing!

I'll try to explain the gist of it. In the old days, we were taught to bid up the line. This meant that if partner opened 1♣, and responder had four diamonds and four hearts, he would respond 1♦. Opener also would bid up the line. This meant that if you opened 1♣ and partner responded 1♦, opener would next show a four-card major if he had one.

In modern style (Walsh), it is different. That is the style I prefer to play and to teach. This style "disrespects" minors. The focus is on reaching majors or notrump. Bottom line: After 1♣-1♦, opener rebids 1NT with any balanced 12-14. If opener's second bid is a major, he is not balanced.

After 1♣-1♦; 1♥

Opener has shown an unbalanced hand (usually with five-plus clubs and four hearts; if he had a flat/balanced hand, he would have rebid 1NT). Responder bids as follows:

1♠: Will be discussed at the very end of this article (it can be confusing).

1NT: A notrump hand, typically with spades stopped and about 8-10 HCP.

For example:

♠K J x ♥x x x ♦Q 10 x x x ♣K x.

2♣: A preference to clubs (at least three-card support) and up to about 10 points, e.g.,

♠x x x ♥x x ♦K Q x x x ♣K x x.

2♦: Natural, six-plus diamonds, up to about 10 points, such as:

♠x x x ♥A x ♦K J 10 8 x x ♣x x.

2♥: Not a likely call (such a hand would have responded 1♥).

2♠: Discussed at the end of this article (related to 1♠ and also a bit confusing).

2NT: Same as 1NT but with a little more (11-12, invitational). Example:

♠K J x ♥A 10 x ♦Q 10 x x x ♣J x.

3♣: Four-plus clubs, invitational. Example:

♠x x x ♥x ♦A Q x x x ♣A 10 x x.

3♦: Six-plus diamonds, invitational. Example:

♠x x ♥x x ♦A K J 10 x x ♣Q x x.

3♥/3♠: Unlikely (such a hand would have responded in the major).

3NT: To play. 13-15 HCP, spades stopped. Example:

♠A Q x ♥x x ♦A Q 10 x x ♣J x x.

Don't make the common mistake of bidding 2NT (non-forcing) with this hand.

After 1♣-1♦; 1♠

Mostly as above:

1NT: A notrump hand, typically with hearts stopped and about 8-10.

Example:

♠x x x ♥K J x ♦K 10 x x x ♣Q x.

2♣: A preference to clubs (at least three-card support) and up to about 10 points. Example:

♠x x ♥x x x ♦K J x x x ♣A x x.

2♦: Natural, six-plus diamonds, up to about 10 points. Example:

♠x x ♥K x x ♦A J 10 9 x x ♣x x.

2♥: Fourth suit forcing. Responder's bid in the fourth suit is artificial and game forcing. It says nothing about hearts. It could be the prelude to many things (including slam tries in any of the first three bid suits). It may or may not contain a heart stopper. Examples:

♠A Q x x ♥x x ♦A K Q x x ♣x x,

♠A x ♥A x ♦K Q J 10 x x ♣Q x x.

2♠: Not a likely call (such a hand would have responded 1♠).

2NT: Same as 1NT, but with a little more (11-12, invitational). Example:

♠K x ♥A J 9 ♦10 9 x x x x ♣K x.

3♣: Four-plus clubs, invitational. Example:

♠x ♥x x x ♦A K x x x ♣K 10 x x.

3♦: Six-plus diamonds, invitational. Example:

♠x x ♥x x ♦A Q J 10 x x ♣A x x.

3♥: Don't try such a bid (a jump in the fourth suit). ➤

3♠: Unlikely (such a hand would have responded 1♠).

3NT: To play. 13–15 HCP, hearts stopped. Example:

♠ x x ♥ K Q 9 ♦ A Q J x x ♣ J x x.

Don't make the common mistake of bidding 2NT (non-forcing) with this hand.

After 1♣–1♥; 1♠

Opener has spades and a wide range (and could be balanced or unbalanced). This is a little different than a 1♣–1♦ start. Nothing fancy here; natural bids, mostly as above. Responder shows shape and strength as follows:

1NT: A notrump hand, typically with diamonds stopped and about 8–10 HCP. Example:

♠ x x x ♥ K J x x ♦ K 10 x x ♣ Q x.

2♣: A preference to clubs (at least four-card support, because opener could be, say, 4=3=3=3) and up to about 10 points. Example:

♠ x ♥ Q x x x ♦ J x x ♣ A x x x x.

2♦: Fourth-suit forcing. Responder's bid in the fourth suit is artificial and game forcing. It says nothing about diamonds. It could be the prelude to many things (including slam tries in any of the first three bid suits). It may or may not contain a diamond stopper. Examples:

♠ A ♥ A K Q J 10 x x ♦ x x ♣ A x x,

♠ x x x x ♥ A K x x ♦ A Q J ♣ A x,

♠ A x x ♥ A x x x x ♦ x x x ♣ A J.

2♥: Six-plus hearts, weak. Example:

♠ x x ♥ K Q J x x x ♦ Q x x ♣ x x.

2♠: Four spades, about 7–10 HCP (you could pass 1♠ with less). Example:

♠ A x x x ♥ K x x x ♦ J x ♣ x x x.

2NT: Same as 1NT, but with a little

more (11–12, invitational).

3♣: Four-plus clubs, invitational.

3♦: Don't make such a bid (a jump in the fourth suit).

3♥: Six-plus hearts, invitational.

3♠: Same as 2♠, but a little more (invitational).

3NT: To play. 13–15 HCP, diamonds stopped.

4♣/4♦: Don't make such bids (although they should be splinter raises).

4♥: To play, showing lots of hearts.

Example:

♠ x x ♥ A K Q J x x x ♦ x ♣ Q x x.

4♠: Enough for game and four spades (but usually such a hand would start with fourth-suit forcing).

After 1♦–1♥; 1♠

Pretty much as above. All the same principles apply.

1♣–1♦; 1♥–1♠ (or 2♠)

After 1♣–1♦; 1♥, there is a bit of a problem. A spade bid would be the "fourth suit." In all of the fourth-suit auctions above, the fourth suit was an artificial game force. But, when it starts 1♣–1♦; 1♥, the opener could easily have four spades (the fourth suit). We might want to play in the fourth suit! Opener might have been dealt:

♠ A x x x ♥ A x x x ♦ x ♣ A x x x.

So should 1♣–1♦; 1♥–1♠ show spades (there is potentially a 4–4 fit) or should it be fourth-suit forcing? This is something a partnership has to decide and hope to remember if it occurs. It rarely comes up, so it isn't a big deal. 1♣–1♦; 1♥–1♠ can be natural and 1♣–1♦; 1♥–2♠ can be fourth-suit forcing. Or vice versa. I hate to bring up any of this in this series. I can live just fine if you ignore the entire issue.

What is your call after 1♣–1♦; 1♥ with:

1. ♠ K Q 2 ♥ K J 2 ♦ 10 6 5 4 2 ♣ 3 2

2. ♠ A Q J ♥ J 2 ♦ K Q 10 7 6 ♣ J 8 2

What is your call after: 1♣–1♦; 1♠ with:

3. ♠ A 2 ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ K Q J 10 8 7 6 ♣ 3

4. ♠ A Q 3 2 ♥ A ♦ A K 8 7 6 5 ♣ 3 2

5. ♠ 2 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ K 10 8 7 6 ♣ Q J 4 3

What is your call after 1♣–1♥; 1♠ with:

6. ♠ A Q 4 2 ♥ K Q 3 2 ♦ Q 2 ♣ A 3 2

7. ♠ A ♥ K Q 10 7 6 ♦ A 8 3 2 ♣ Q 7 5

8. ♠ J 7 6 5 ♥ Q 7 6 5 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ J 2

Answers

1. 1NT. Spades stopped, balanced, about 8–10 HCP.
2. 3NT. Same as No. 1, but 13–15, enough for game.
3. 3♦. Six-plus diamonds, invitational.
4. 2♥. Fourth-suit forcing to game, followed by a spade raise.
5. 3♣. Natural limit (invitational) club raise.
6. 2♦. Fourth-suit forcing to game, followed by a spade raise.
7. 2♦. Fourth-suit forcing to game. Not clear what will be next.
8. Pass. This is allowed. 1♠ is wide-ranging, but non-forcing. If ever there were a hand for it, you have it. ■