

Rationale

• When we first learn to play, it is common to learn **four card suits up-the line**. i.e. When we plan to open with a four card suit, we always open with the *lower* suit. With only four card suits, partner is then obliged to bid the one closest to opener's suit. This will work fine so long as (a) you don't get dealt a 1444 hand with 15 + HCP and (b) the opponents remain quiet.

♠7 If we open 1C and partner responds
♥AQ76 1S, we are not well placed. A 2NT
♦A543 rebid shows 18–20 HCP balanced.

♣AQ92 See *Lesson 11*. A rebid of 2D or 2H grossly distorts the hand. See *Lesson 7*. While no system hands this well, the mild underbid of 1D and rebid 2C is considered the most prudent action.

♠J74 If we open 1C & it goes 1C–(1S)–X,
♥Q9 we are not well placed. Personally,
♦AK87 I don't mind rebidding 1NT! without a
♣K743 stopper. However, it is not popular. Here, the alternatives are terrible. Most would agree that a simple one level overcall should not send our bidding system into chaos. An opening bid of 1D leaves us much better placed. We simply rebid 2C and partner can decide further action.

• The **Better Minor** convention is popular because it focuses on the majors. It is a misnomer since the *quality* of the minor is not relevant. It would be better-named as "*Longer Minor*". Here are the main features:

- 1.. With 4-4 in the minors, open 1D
- 2.. In response to 1C, prefer to show a major rather than diamonds unless having five diamonds, a four card major and enough strength to show the major on the next round. Responder will need an opening hand and 5-4.
- 3.. 1C – 1D! denies a 4 card major unless strong enough to show it on the next round. Opener will *not* rebid 1M unless holding 5 clubs and a 4 card major. This convention is commonly called *Walsh*. However, after 1C – 1H, open will show a spade suit.
- 4.. Many pairs continue by playing that 1D and a rebid of 2C! is a minimum and can be 5–4 either way. Responder is expected to pass or correct with 3–2 in the minors.
- 5.. It follows that:- When opening 1C, diamonds will rarely be held unless opener is prepared to rebid them on the next round. Of course, open 1C and rebid 2D is a reverse. See *Lesson 7*.

• BOTH systems have the following features:-

- 1.. With 3 – 3 in the minors, open 1C
- 2.. With 3 – 2 in the minors, open the 3 card suit.
- 3.. It follows that 1D will be a *four* card suit except when 4432 shape. If opener fails to support 1M from responder, the diamond suit must be genuine.
- 4.. Most pairs show the diamond length as "3" on their system card. It should probably show "4(3)" since it is almost always 4.
- 5.. The 1C opening will be 3 whenever the shape is 4333, 3433 or 4423 shape.

6.. What can we conclude about opener's hand after 1C – 1H and a rebid of 1NT?

- (a) Opener must hold 4 clubs. He doesn't hold hearts, he doesn't hold spades and he opened 1C.
(b) Opener is either 3334 or 3235 shape.

• Check with your partner about your bidding styles
"With 3–3 in the minors, which suit do we open?"

"With 4–4 in the minors, which suit do we open?"

That should help sort it out.

Try bidding these hands in your system. The auctions provided here will be under Better Minor. Dlr: West

♠Q83	♠6	1C	1D
♥A95	♥KQ87	1NT	2H
♦K74	♦AQ753	3D	3S ¹ !
♣AT43	♣K43	4D	5D

¹4th Suit Forcing highlights the headache in spades. If there wasn't a problem, responder would just rebid 3NT. 3NT may not make. 5D will make if hearts or clubs are 3–3 or the same player is 4–4 in clubs and hearts. Draw trumps and duck a club.

Bidding up-the-line should be the same.

♠AQ75	♠32	1D	2C
♥KQ87	♥54	2NT	P ¹
♦K87	♦AQ74		
♣32	♣KQ876		

¹This is not an easy pass for responder. Opener probably has 4 or even 5 diamonds. Not this time! Responder concludes "*I showed opener 10+ HCP and he couldn't make a forcing bid*"

♠A87	♠QT32	1C	1S
♥K987	♥32	1NT	P
♦AK7	♦QJ76		
♣T54	♣J76		

Despite having much better diamonds than clubs, open 1C with 3–3 in the minors. Unlikely to make any contract.

♠A65	♠KQ8	1C	1D ¹
♥Q87	♥A9	1NT	3NT
♦A98	♦K76		
♣K852	♣AT654		

¹Occasionally, you have to respond with a "prepared 1D" and await developments. It is not alerted because it is expected to be natural and opener will raise with 4! Responder has that covered and will retreat to 3NT or 5C. A 3NT response would be reasonable but occupies too much bidding space. Keep that response for 3334 shape and 12–14 HCP. Notice that NT plays better by west with the hearts better stopped.

♠AK97	♠432	1H	P
♥AK62	♥J84	Don't open a short	
♦Q86	♦T2	suit with 18+. There	
♣K7	♣A5432	is too big a chance	
		that you will be passed out in 1D. 1H has chances.	