



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(519) Trick-Showing Notrump Bids – Gambling 3NT and More**

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Level: 6 of 10

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#### **General**

3NT opening bids or rebids are not generally used to show any of the balanced hands.

- With 20-21 points and a balanced hand, we open 2NT;
- With 22+ points and a balanced hand, we open 2♣.

So, what does an opening 3NT bid show? Most 3NT bids show unbalanced hands with lots of tricks. This may seem a bid counterintuitive, but let's examine the contract of 3NT to help us understand these 3NT bids better.

When we bid and play 3NT there are two ways to make our contract: we can have lots of HCP that we use to take 9+ tricks, or we can have a long suit that we can use to produce 9+ tricks. These 3NT opening bids are how we show the hands with lots of tricks, but not lots of points.

#### **Hands with Tricks – Long Suits**

Hands with lots of tricks usually contain long, strong suits. Learning how to show them is an important part of single-suited-hand bidding. If we have a 6+card suit (weak or strong) then we generally already have ways to show it:

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • 6+card suit, 5-10 points  | Open a 2-level preempt.      |
| • 6+card suit, 12-14 points | Open 1-suit and rebid 2-suit |
| • 6+card suit, 15-17 points | Open 1-suit and rebid 3-suit |

#### **Difficult Hands for Opening the Bidding**

Some difficult hands to describe are the hands that play much better than just the number of HCP they have in them. These hands contain long strong suits that can produce a large number of tricks for our side.



### ***Difficult Hands – 18-19 points***

These difficult types of hands are the ones with 6+card suits and 18+ points.

- 6+card suit, 18-19 points                      Open 1-suit and make up a bid!?!)

When we have 18-19 points and an unbalanced hand, we make up a bid to describe our hand. We need to show our strength so we usually either jump shift or reverse. But if we don't have another suit to jump shift or reverse into then we must lie in a suit to communicate our strength to partner. Generally speaking, we do so by lying in a 3-card minor (showing it as a 4-card suit.)

#### *Example 1*

1♦     1♠  
3♣

With 1-3-6-3 and 18 points, we have a game forcing hand once partner can respond, so we need to create a game forcing auction; we do so by making a jump shift.

### ***Difficult Hands – 20+ point Hands***

For the strongest hands we also have problems in the bidding.

- 6+card suit, 20+ points                      Open 2♣ and rebid our suit.

These 20+ point hands can get us too high (especially in a minor) and make it difficult for us to find a fit in another suit. This is especially true if we have the ♦ suit – we are at 3♦ before we get to show anything about our hand.

### ***Difficult Hands – Long Solid Suits***

Hands that have a long, strong suit have much more playing strength than their number of HCP would suggest, so we need a way to bid them strongly without overstating our high-card strength. In particular, the hands with solid suits have a tremendous amount of playing strength, since we don't have to develop the suit at all to run it. We want to bid them very aggressively.

- AKQJxx
- AKQxxxx
- AKQxxxxx, etc.

With only a 6-card solid suit we will bid naturally (just upgrading the strength of our hand a bit for our length points.) But with a 7+card solid minor we almost have 3NT made in our hand. We need to make sure that we show the playing strength of our hand to our partner. Let's break down these types of hands and figure out the best way to describe them to partner.

If we have a way to show a 7+card solid (minor) suit then the main other thing we need to describe is our outside suit holdings. Outside Queens and Jacks can be useful cards for stoppers, but we are generally going to ignore them and focus on our quick tricks – outside Aces and Kings.



Let's examine these hands more specifically.

- 7+card solid minor suit with no outside A/K: Open 3NT\* – *Gambling 3NT*
- 7+card solid minor suit with 1 outside A/K: Open 1m and jump to 3NT – this shows tricks!
- 7+card solid minor suit with 2 outside A/K: Open 2♣ - we have about 9 tricks in our hand.

*Note: If we have 7-4 shape with a solid suit (especially with a 4-card Major) we are 2-suited and thus bid our suits naturally.*

*Mistake to avoid:* Many players get excited when they have a balanced 19-count and partner responds to their opening bid. 'Surely there's game here,' they think, so they bid 3NT. The proper rebid to describe this hand is 2NT – showing a balanced hand too strong to open 1NT and not strong enough to open 2NT. The 3NT rebid shows a very different hand type: a decent hand with a solid suit. With balanced hands, we need to describe our shape and strength to partner. We don't worry that we might miss a game; if we rebid 2NT and partner passes, it's probably the right choice.

### **Gambling 3NT Opening Bid and Responses**

Gambling 3NT is a powerful tool. It serves as a mix of a preempt and an attempt to make a game based on our running suit. Our partner will generally pass with stoppers in three suits (knowing we are solid in the other suit.) With a suit unstopped, partner can get us to play in our suit by bidding ♣ - asking us to pass or correct to ♦.

A Gambling 3NT opening (in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Seat) shows a solid 7+card minor and no outside Ace or King.

Here are the responses to a Gambling 3NT opening bid in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> seat:

- |       |                       |                                     |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • 4♣* | Pass or correct to 4♦ | Weak hand w/o stoppers              |
| • 4♦* | Game Forcing Slam Try | Asks for shortness in Opener's hand |
| • 4♥  | To Play               | Lots of ♥ and a good hand           |
| • 4♠  | To Play               | Lots of ♠ and a good hand           |
| • 4NT | Slam Try, length ask  | 5♣ = 7, 5♦ = 8, 5♥ = 9, etc.        |
| • 5♣  | Pass or correct to 5♦ | Preemptive or to make!?!            |
| • 6♣  | Pass or correct to 6♦ | A good hand                         |

*Note: A 3NT opening in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> seat is not Gambling - it is to play. It can be almost any hand with which partner hopes they can make 3NT opposite a passed hand!*

### **Conclusion**

Now we can see how 3NT bids and rebids are used to show hands with lots of tricks, not lots of points. These hands with long, solid suits play well in 3NT. By jumping to this contract, we can often play 3NT and produce a lot of tricks quickly. Make sure to give it a try!