

Partnership Agreements About Opening One No Trump With Odd Distributions

With a Singleton

With a Five-Card Major Suit

Opening One No Trump The Old Fashioned Way

- When I learned to play bridge, my teachers drummed into my head, that a no trump opening bid had the following characteristics:
 - No voids
 - No singletons
 - No more than one doubleton
 - No five-card major suit.
- Bridge players today have stretched those guidelines, almost to the breaking point.

Opening One No Trump -

- In today's bridge we open one no trump:
 - Regularly with a five-card major suit.
 - Occasionally with a singleton.
- The ACBL rule on opening one no trump with a singleton is..

"A notrump opening or overcall is natural if, by agreement, it contains no void, at most one singleton which must be the A, K or Q and no more than two doubletons. If the hand contains a singleton, it may have no doubleton."

One Question People Ask

- What if partner transfers into my singleton?
 - That can happen and sometimes it will be difficult.
 - No system is perfect and can deal with every hand you might be dealt.
 - If this happens, you will have an honor and it might not be too bad.
 - Suppose partner has something like K J 10 8 5 3 and you have either the ace or the queen.

Two Reasons for Opening One No Trump With a Singleton

- Reason 1: You should open one no trump with a singleton on hands where opening a suit might make rebid problems.
- For example:

♠ K
♥ K Q 6 3
♦ A Q 2
♣ Q 8 5 4 3

If you opened this hand 1 ♣, you can see partner responding 1 ♠. What would your rebid be?

After 1 ♣ ... 1 ♠, there is no good rebid. Anything you bid is a lie.

A Few More Examples

- Open these hands 1 nt, because of rebid problems:

Hand 1

♠ K Q 6 2
♥ A
♦ A 10 5 2
♣ Q 8 5 4

Hand 2

♠ A
♥ A Q 6
♦ Q J 8 7 3 2
♣ K 8 5

Hand 3

♠ A K 6
♥ Q
♦ A Q 5 2
♣ Q 8 5 3 2

A Few Examples Where You Should Not Open One No Trump

- Do not open these hands 1 nt:

Hand 4

♠ Q
♥ Q J 8 7
♦ K Q 2
♣ A J 8 5 4

Too weak:
open 1 ♣, if
partner bids
♠, rebid 1 nt.

Hand 5

♠ A
♥ A J 10 3
♦ A Q J 8 7
♣ K 8 5

Too strong:
open 1 ♦, if
partner bids ♠,
rebid 2 ♥.

Hand 6

♠ A K 6
♥ Q
♦ A Q 5 2
♣ K 10 9 3 2

Too strong:
open 1 ♣, if
partner bids
1 ♥, rebid 2nt.

One More Example Where You Should Not Open One No Trump

Hand 7

♠ K Q 9

♥ A

♦ K Q J 9 5 3

♣ J 5 4

Too weak: open

1 ♦ , and rebid

3 ♦

Opening One No Trump With a Singleton

- Reason 2: You should open one no trump with a singleton when most of your points are in your short suits.
- For example:

Ex 8

♠ Q 5 4 3

♥ A K Q

♦ A

♣ Q 8 5 4 3

- You could open this hand 1 club, and if partner bids 1 no trump, reverse with 2 spades. That's not the best description of this hand.
- Better to open 1nt.

More Reason 2 Examples

Ex 9

♠ A K J
♥ K
♦ J 7 6 4 2
♣ K 5 4 3

Ex 10

♠ A K 4
♥ A K 5
♦ Q
♣ J 9 7 5 4 3

Ex 11

♠ A K J 3
♥ J 8 5 4 2
♦ K
♣ A 4 3

Ex 12

♠ A
♥ K 10 8 5
♦ K Q J 7 3
♣ K 4 3

Opening One No Trump With a Five-Card Major Suit

- Most modern bridge players do open 1 no trump with balanced hands of 15-17 points even if they contain a 5-card major suit.
- Bridge teachers that I've read disagree.
 - Some say never.
 - Some say sometimes.
 - Some say always.
- My advice is: Yes, most of the time.

Why Open With a Five-Card Major?

- Once again, it saves rebid problems.
- Consider the following hands:

Hand 13

♠ K Q 9
♥ A K 9 6 3
♦ K 8 5
♣ Q 5

Hand 14

♠ K Q 9 7 6
♥ A Q 9 6
♦ K 8
♣ Q 5

Hand 15

♠ A J 6
♥ A Q 9 6 3
♦ K Q
♣ 9 5 3

- If you open 1 of the major with any of these hands, what would you rebid?
 - Rebid 1nt (hand 13) 12-14 points
 - Rebid 2 ♥ (hand 14) does not describe your hand.

Most But Not All

- Some experts say that there are some hands with 15-17 points and a 5-card major that should not be opened with 1 no trump.
- Consider these hands:

Hand 16

♠ 9 2
♥ A K Q 6 3
♦ A K 5
♣ 8 5 2

Hand 17

♠ 9 2
♥ A K Q 6 3
♦ A K 8 5
♣ 8 5

You still have rebid problems with these hands, but with 2 unguarded suits, 1 nt is not a good idea.

Puppet Stayman

- You don't need any special conventions to play 1 nt with 5-card majors.
 - Sometimes you'll miss a 5-3 major suit fit.
 - But often it does not matter.
 - However, sometimes it does matter, so...
- Most players who open 1 nt with a 5-card major play puppet Stayman, in order to find a 5-3 major suit fit, if they have one.
- Here's how puppet Stayman works.



Puppet Stayman: How It Works

- Puppet Stayman has no effect on regular Stayman. You can play all the things you normally play after 1 no trump.
 - Garbage Stayman
 - Crawling Stayman
 - Smolen
- Everything you normally do at the two level after 1 no trump (including transfers) stays the same.


3 initiates the convention.


- You start puppet Stayman only when you have:
 - Game going (9 or 10+ points) values.
 - A 3-card major suit.
- If your hand does not have both of these characteristics, you do not initiate puppet Stayman.




The Basic Convention

- When you want to start puppet Stayman, you bid 3  . Partner responds in the following manner:
 - If you have no 5-card major and no 4-card major, bid 3 no trump
 - With a 5-card major suit, bid it.
 - With a 4 card major, bid 3  .

Let's Look at Some Examples

Opener	Responder
1nt	3 
3 nt	Pass

Opener
 K 8 2
 A Q 5
 A Q 5 4
 J 9 2

Responder
 A Q 2
 3 5
 Q 10 7 5
 K 10 4

Example Ex 2

Opener

1nt


3 

Responder

3 

4 

Opener

 K J 10 9 6

 A Q


 A J 4


 Q 5 2

Responder

 A Q 2

 J 5

 Q 10 7 5

 K 10 4 2

Example Ex 3

Opener

1nt

3 ♠

Responder

3 ♣

3 nt

Opener

♠ K J 10 9 6

♥ A Q

♦ A J 4

♣ Q 5 2

Responder

♠ A 2

♥ J 5 4

♦ K 10 7 2

♣ K 10 4 2

Example Ex 4

Opener

1nt

3 

3 nt

Responder

3 

3 

Opener

 K J 10 9


 A Q 4


 A J 4

 Q 5 2

Responder

 A 7 2

 J 3 5 2

 Q 10 7 3

 K 10

Example Ex 5

Opener

1nt

3 

Responder

3 

3 nt

Opener

 K J 10 9

 A Q 4


 A J 4


 Q 5 2

Responder

 A 7 2

 J 3 5

 Q 10 7 3

 K 10 5

Example Ex 6

Opener

1nt

3 

4 

Responder

3 


3 

Opener

 K J 10 9

 A Q


 A J 4

 Q 9 5 2

Responder

 A 7 5 2

 K 7 2

 Q 10 7 5

 K 10

That Covers It

- If you lock this information in your system, you have all you need to know to open 1nt with a singleton or a 5-card major suit.