

Keeping It Simple – How to Open

If You Have a 5-Card Major

12-19 HCP's

Bid 1 ♠ or 1 ♥

If you have a Balanced Hand

15-17 HCP

Bid 1 No Trump

If You Have 12-19 HCP

No 5-Card Major

UnBalanced Hand

Bid 1 ♣ or 1 ♦

More on Responding – Responding with a Big Response Hand

We have seen how the Opener shows a bigger than minimum hand – by reversing and jump-shifts. And we have seen how the Responder shows no and minimum support and medium support even differentiating between 3- and 4-Card support. We also saw that the Opener can show an additional Card in a bid suit.

At one time jumping your partners Opening bid indicated a big hand (and some players continue using the Responder jump to show a big hand). But most modern players find the Jump more effective as a means of showing a weak hand, e.g.: Your partner opens at the 1-level with anything other than ♥ or NT and you are holding: ♠83 ♥KQT983 ♦954 ♣J7. You have 6 HCP and as dummy your hand is probably worth less than that unless ♥'s are Trump. If your Partner holds 2♥'s your best contract is probably 2♥. So unless Partners opening bid was 1♠, you could bid 2♥ effectively saying “My hand is weak and I can only help if ♥'s are Trump”. It is called the 'weak jump shift'. Thus if you change suits and jump a level you are showing a weak 1-suited hand! It is equivalent to the weak-two bid we will see later.

So as Responder how do I show a strong hand? Answer: The same way the Opener does: by jumping yourself or by using the reverse.

This discussion leads to a mantra “Jump your Partner → WEAK; Jump your S*elf → S*TRONG”.

Quite often it take two bids in order to better describe your hand and this observation fits well with the notion that a strong hand not only requires but should use multiple bids to show that strength. Why, because strength affords the ability to bid higher, to utilize the bidding space more appropriately in describing hands. That gives us a second adage: “The bigger the hand – the slower you go”. So weak → jump; strong → crawl! Here is are typical bidding sequences announcing a stronger hands by Responder:

1♦ – P – 1♥ – P; The 1♥ response appears to be (and is) a normal response showing at least (4♥'s & 6 HCP) in the next round of bidding

1NT – P – 2♣ – P; The 2♣ shows a medium (10+ HCP) response hand and denies a 5th ♥. Responder has changed suit a second time, Opener is required to bid again. Choose one of Partners suits ♥'s or ♣'s (you can choose ♣'s by Passing) or bid 2NT. Or starting differently.

1♣ – P – 1♠ – P; The 1♠ response appears to be (and is) a normal response showing at least (4♠'s & 6 HCP)

1NT – P – 3♠ – P; The jump to 3♠ shows a medium to big (10-13+ HCP) hand and a 6th ♠. Or differently.

1♣ – P – 1♠ – P; The 1♠ response appears to be (and is) a normal response showing at least (4♠'s & 6 HCP)

1NT – P – 3♥ – P; The jump to 3♥ shows a big (13+ HCP) hand and a 5th ♠ and 4♥'s. Why 5♠'s? If you had had 4♠'s and 4♥'s or 4♠'s and 5♥'s you would have bid up-the -line. So the order of the bids shows the relative number in each suit while the jump shows the bigger point count.

Note that a big response hand (13+ HCP) combined with the 12+ HCP promised by Opener is what is required for Game. That is the rational behind delaying the jump by the responder to the second bid. In this last example the jump is semi-Forcing, but some judgment is required before the Pass-Card is pulled out. Most likely you should-not Pass!

In the first example a jump was not necessary! The change of suits by the Responder is a sufficient sign that he holds enough HCP to extend the bidding to at least 1NT. **Anytime the Responder changes suits it is absolutely Forcing.** The only reason for Responder to make a Forcing bid is that he anticipates a game contract. It is similar to the **limit-raise** in that it suggests game; but it

* Note to coresponding S's

is more than that because the Opener can pass a **limit-raise**, but can't pass a Forcing bid. Partner is thus asking for more information about your hand – you can-not Pass! 1NT may be all it takes if you don't have a fit it may be the only reasonable contract available.

What bids by Responder are not Forcing? In the first example 2♦, 2♥, 2NT are non-Forcing: i.e. delayed support, showing an extra-Card without jumping, and 2NT are the only non-forcing bids. Note 2NT is always passable – rarely Forcing. Likewise in the 2nd example 2♣, 2♠ and 2NT are non-Forcing bids. Non-Forcing doesn't mean you can't bid – It's just that you don't have to.

Let's summarize. It is easier to delineate non-forcing bids and assume that all others are forcing

- Non-forcing:
1. Any Opening or OverCall bid
 2. Any natural NT bid
 3. Any bid repeating a suit by either Opener or Responder.

Examples: 1♦(NF) – P – 1♥(F) – P;
 2♦(NF)...

 1♦(NF) – P – 1♥(F) – P;
 2♦(NF) – P – 2♥(NF)...

Rule of 23

We have Mel Colchamiro to thank for this Rule! We quite often find ourselves in a bidding situation similar to the following: 1♠ – P – 1N* – P; 2♦ – P – 2♥ – ? If Partner's 2♥ bid seems to plug a hole in our hand we might be tempted to bid a non-forcing 2N. The Rule of 23 tells us that – in situations like this, i.e. later in the bidding sequence – we shouldn't bid 2N unless we are sure our side has 23 HCP. Our partner has promised no more than 10, but it could be only 6 with no tolerance for either of our suits (e.g. ♠4 ♥A76532 ♦T95 ♣Q63). How would we feel if we bid 2N with the following hand ♠AKJ84 ♥9 ♦AQ84 ♣T2? We have a complete mismatch, no developable suits and 4 sure sure tricks when we need 8 total. In situations where Partner tells you he has < 10HCP and bids a suit out of seeming desperation we should not bid NoTrump. So if we can't rebid our suits, can't support our Partner's and we can't bid 2N what do we do. You guessed it: PASS!! In these situations the rebid by Partner is generally a 6+Card suit – a weak one at that – one that might 'steal' a few tricks by trumping our long suits.

Part 2

Let's now say the bidding is at the two-level, it's your turn to bid and the opponents presently own the contract. Should you Pass or bid something else? If you know, through the bidding and your hand that your side has 23 HCP you have little choice. If you don't want a bottom or at best low-mediocre score you can't Pass; You must Double or bid on. Example, Partner Opens (indicating 12+ HCP) with 1♦

1♦ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥; P – P – P – ? The opponents have a ♥ fit, but you, holding 11HCP, know your side has what is called the Balance of Power (BOP). You can't stop the 2♥ bid, and Partner doesn't know you have 11 HCP and BOP. If you don't do something the opponents are going to likely steal the contract just because they found a fit – and they might make the contract. The BOP situation demands that you do something but, say, you can't rebid your ♠ and you can't support Partners ♦'s. Mel's rule of 23 says you can't Pass! You Double, it's a BOP Double saying “Partner do something intelligent - the bid belongs to Us”! With a ♥ stopper Partner could bid 2N satisfied that you are telling him your side has 23 HCP; whatever he must do something because 2♥-

* Forcing or not

Doubled is a Game contract. You might go down 1 maybe 2 that's a -50 or -100 score but its better than the -110 you'll get if they make their contract. And since you have BOP the danger of them doubling you is slight.