



Bridge
NSW

Beginner Lessons

8 week course

These notes are in large part derived from
the online lesson materials generously
made available by New Zealand Bridge
and the Scottish Bridge Union

LESSON 1: STUDENT NOTES

Introduction to Bridge

Bridge is a partnership game, which is both its challenge and its fascination. It is a trick-taking game: a **TRICK** is a collection of four cards, one played by each player in turn. Thus in each deal of bridge, there are 13 tricks.

The game of Contract Bridge – to give it its full and proper name – is played in two distinct phases:

The Auction	The partnerships compete to win the contract to make a certain number of tricks
The Play	The winning partnership must now attempt to fulfil the contract

The Auction

- We use compass directions (N/S/E/W) for the four players
- The **DEALER** is the first player to call. A player may **PASS** or make a positive bid
- A positive bid suggests the intention to make at least 7 tricks in a contract (you need 6 tricks before you start to score, so a 1-level contract must make 1+6 tricks etc.)
- A positive bid **must** be higher than the previous bid – see below for ranking of suits
- The auction continues in a **clockwise** direction until there are 3 consecutive passes
- The **CONTRACT** becomes the last bid made before those passes.

Ranking of the suits

Spades	♠	}	Spades and Hearts are also called the MAJOR suits
Hearts	♥		
Diamonds	♦	}	Diamonds and Clubs are also called the MINOR suits
Clubs	♣		

The ranking of the suits determines what bid is higher e.g. 2♠ is higher than 2♥.

Naming a suit

- Naming a suit suggests that suit to be **TRUMPS** (the dominant suit)
- A card from the trump suit is more powerful than cards from any other suit
- **NOTRUMPS** means that there is **no** dominant (trump) suit
- A bid of **NOTRUMPS** ranks above any suit bid at the same level.

Ranking of cards in a suit

(high) A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 (low)

Value of the honour cards (HCP – High Card Points)

A = 4	
K = 3	Total in each suit = 10 HCP
Q = 2	Total in the pack = 40 HCP
J = 1	

What is the partnership looking for in a contract?

The aim is to find the best contract at the correct level. There are 3 levels to which the partnership may bid. For a simple starting point, let's say that the HCP requirements are:

Partscore	combined points less than 25
Game	combined points typically 25-32
Slam	combined points typically 33+

What is a Game contract?

You get a large bonus score when you make a Game contract, but you must make a certain number of tricks to succeed. The number of tricks varies according to the trump suit or notrumps: 3NT = 9 tricks, 4♥/♠ = 10 tricks, 5♣/♦ = 11 tricks.

The Play of the Hand

- The **DECLARER** is the player who plays the contract: this is the player who first bids the denomination (suit or notrumps) in which the contract is to be played.
- **DUMMY** (the declarer's partner) places their cards face up on the table
- The faced cards on the table are also referred to as the "**DUMMY**"
- The **OPENING LEADER** is the opponent on declarer's left
- Declarer makes **all** decisions in the play of the hand; **both their own and DUMMY's cards**
- Dummy cannot suggest a play to declarer
- A player must follow suit if possible
- If a player can't follow suit, she/he can play any other card
- Highest card of the suit led wins the trick (unless a **TRUMP** is played)
- The next trick must be played from the hand which won the previous trick.

How the cards are placed

- The cards are placed individually in front of each player
- The cards are placed vertically (towards us) if we win the trick
- The cards are placed horizontally (towards opponents) if we lose



We thank New Zealand Bridge for the use of their materials and Rakesh Kumar for editing of the original text. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 2: STUDENT NOTES

Declarer Play in a Notrump Contract

In notrumps, only a card of the **suit led** can win the trick. Every player must follow suit if they can. If a player is unable to follow suit, they discard from another suit.

Apart from taking tricks with the highest cards, there are **three ways to establish extra tricks** in a suit.

- **Force** out defenders' high cards
- Use the power of the **Length** of a suit
- Use the position of a defender's high card(s) via a **Finesse**

First things first, though – when you are the declarer, you need to make a plan before you play.

Making a Plan in Notrumps

When you are declarer in a notrump contract the first thing you do is to count how many **top tricks** you have available between the two hands – your own and dummy's. Top tricks are tricks that you can win **without losing the lead**.

Example 1:

♠ K752	♠ 984
♥ K73	♥ Q1082
♦ AQ	♦ KJ
♣ KJ5	♣ AQ65
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

Your top tricks are 0 spades, 0 hearts, 2 diamonds and 4 clubs for a total of only **6** top tricks. Note that in diamonds, even though you hold A K Q and J, with only 2 cards in the suit in both hands you can only win 2 tricks – your HCP values are wasted through duplication.

Example 2:

♠ AK7	♠ Q63
♥ K7	♥ AQ82
♦ KQJ	♦ A765
♣ KJ432	♣ Q6
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

Your top tricks are 3 spades, 3 hearts, 4 diamonds and 0 clubs for a total of **10** top tricks. Assuming you are in 6NT, you will need to generate extra tricks from lower ranking cards to make your contract.

Establishing extra tricks

Force out the defenders' high cards

If you hold $\spadesuit K Q J$ it is only possible to win 2 tricks (assuming that your partner does not hold the $\spadesuit A$). When you play the suit you can force out the enemy $\spadesuit A$ and are now guaranteed 2 tricks in the suit.

Similarly, with this holding

Dummy	$\diamond J T 9 8$
Declarer	$\diamond 7 6 5 4$

If you have time (before the opposition takes too many high cards in other suits) you can force out the $\diamond A$, $\diamond K$ and $\diamond Q$ and will eventually establish one trick in the suit. Now suppose you had another small diamond.

Dummy	$\diamond J T 9 8 3$
Declarer	$\diamond 7 6 5 4$

With 9 cards between your two hands, the enemy only holds $\diamond A K Q 2$. Even if one defender holds all 4 of those cards you are still guaranteed 2 diamond tricks. However, if those 4 enemy cards are divided equally between the defenders' hands i.e. each defender holding two of them, then some high cards will crash together and you will make 3 diamond tricks. The point is: long suits are powerful.

You need to practise **counting** how many cards in a suit have been played, noticing if a player fails to follow suit. You also need to **keep track of which high cards** have been played so you know whether your cards are "good" i.e. are now the highest cards outstanding in the suit. In fact when playing in notrumps you are often in **a race** with your opponents to **establish** your long suit and then to be able to regain the lead in order to cash winners, before they do the same with their long suit.

Example:

$\spadesuit A 6$	$\spadesuit K 5 3$
$\heartsuit K 4 2$	$\heartsuit A 5 3$
$\diamond Q 9 7$	$\diamond K J 10 8 3$
$\clubsuit A J 8 4 2$	$\clubsuit 5 3$
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

You are playing in game in notrumps i.e. a 3NT contract where you need to take 9 tricks.

Start by making a **plan**. Count your top tricks – you have 2 spades, 2 hearts, 0 diamonds and 1 club for a total of only **5** top tricks.

- You need 4 additional tricks and the obvious source for these is the long diamond suit, which you need to **establish**.
- Therefore, get to work playing your long suit immediately. **Do not cash your top tricks in outside suits** until you have established the extra tricks you need.
- You need to force out the ace of your long suit. Once $\spadesuit A$ has been played you will have 4 extra tricks in diamonds, which is the number that you need.
- So then you can cash all your winners and make your contract!

Establish tricks using the power of length in a suit

Look at this Diamond suit:

\spadesuit K 8 5 4 3

You

\spadesuit A 9 7

Dummy

You have a total of 8 cards in the suit so the defenders hold 5. If those 5 cards are distributed 3 in one defender's hand and 2 in the other (3-2), you only have to lose one trick and then you can take a total of 4 tricks in the suit. The defenders' cards in the diamond suit will be exhausted. You will be able to win tricks with those tiny cards because the defenders have no diamonds left after the third round.

Example:

\spadesuit 97

\heartsuit J65

\diamondsuit AK8

\clubsuit A7532

Declarer (West)

\spadesuit AJ53

\heartsuit Q43

\diamondsuit 943

\clubsuit K86

Dummy (East)

You are playing in 1NT by West and need to take 7 tricks. North leads $\spadesuit Q$. If clubs divide 3-2 you can generate 4 winners in that suit. Either play $\clubsuit K$, $\clubsuit A$ and a third club or (better) first play a small club from both hands.

To make full use of the power of length in a suit, it is important to cash your established winners in a suit **in the correct order**. Play the high cards from your **short** hand (the hand in which you hold the fewer number of cards) first and then go to the hand in which you have a greater number of cards (the **long** hand).

West

\spadesuit Q J T 7

\spadesuit A Q J T 5 4

\spadesuit Q J T 7 6 3

East

\spadesuit A K 3 2

\spadesuit K 8

\spadesuit A K 2

With these holdings the order in which you cash your winners does not matter

Cash the $\spadesuit K$ first, then $\spadesuit 8$ to the West hand.

Cash $\spadesuit A$ and K then play $\spadesuit 2$ to get to the hand in which you have the remaining high cards.

In both the second and third cases, if you cash cards in the wrong order you will be stuck in the wrong hand.

Finesse

Look at this suit

♦ A Q 8 7 4 2

? ♦ K West East ? ♦ K

♦ 9 6 3

You, North or South, are declaring. You don't know whether ♦ K is in the East or the West hand. If you play a small card from South and play ♦ Q from North (assuming West has not played the king) you have a 50% chance of winning the trick, depending on the location of the king. If West has ♦ K the queen will win, but if East has it your queen will be beaten.

Here are some other examples of finesse positions:

1 ♥ A K J 5 (West) ♥ 7 4 3 (East)

Lead a small card from East. Here you are looking for the queen, so if no queen appears from the South hand, play the jack from West hoping that the queen is in the South hand.

2 ♥ A J 9 (West) ♥ K T 8 (East)

Here you could take the finesse either way, looking for the queen.

3 ♥ K 6 5 (West) ♥ 7 4 (East)

This position is slightly different, but the principle is the same. Lead a small card from East towards your king. If the ace is in the South hand you will be able to make a trick with your King. So once again, you have a 50 % chance of success depending on the location of the ace. Of course if you just lead out your king, you will lose it 100% of the time

4 ♥ K Q 5 (West) ♥ 7 4 (East)

This is the same idea: if you have a holding like this, try to lead towards your high cards twice. If the ace is in the South hand you can make **both** your king and your queen. If North holds the ace you will only make one of your top cards. The important point of examples 3 and 4 is that you **lead towards your honours** and don't just lead them out.

5 ♥ A 6 5 (West) ♥ Q 7 4 (East)

In this final example, there is no point in leading the Queen. Lead from West towards your Queen hoping that the King is in the North hand. You could cash the Ace first if you wished.

We thank New Zealand Bridge and the Scottish Bridge Union for the use of their materials.

We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 3: STUDENT NOTES

Declarer Play in a Suit Contract

In a suit contract, not only can high cards of the suit led win the trick but also a player who has no cards in that suit can play a trump. Any trump card overtakes a high card in a plain suit (this is the term for any suit other than the trump suit). Trumping to win a trick is also referred to as **ruffing**. If more than one player ruffs on a single trick, the highest trump card played wins.

Counting winners and losers

As is the case when playing notrumps, declarer's first task on seeing dummy is to make a plan. The approach is slightly different when playing in a trump contract. The starting point is to count winners and losers.

- Are there enough winners for you to fulfil the contract? If not you need to set about establishing extra tricks.
- Are there too many losers – if so then do you need to deal with those losers straight away or can you/should you wait?

There is then a decision to be made about how to use the trump suit to greatest advantage. Because you do not want the opponents to ruff your winning cards in other suits, sometimes your priority is to use your top cards in trumps to draw all their trumps. At other times you need to be able to ruff your losers to fulfil your contract, so drawing trumps has to be postponed.

Count winners

Example 1: In a spade contract, how many winners are there between these two hands?

♠ KJT832

♥ A53

♦ K53

♣ 5

Declarer (West)

♠ AQ7

♥ K42

♦ A62

♣ JT98

Dummy (East)

spades	6
hearts	2, the ace and king
diamonds	2, the ace and king
clubs	0
Total	10

Example 2: In a spade contract, how many winners are there here?

♠ AKQ32	♠ 654
♥ 98	♥ KQJ
♦ AQ	♦ 983
♣ K843	♣ AQ52
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

spades	this depends on the distribution of the cards in the defenders' hands: if they are divided 3-2, then there are 5 winners, but if you are unlucky and one defender holds all 5 outstanding cards then there will only be 3 winners
hearts	0 at the moment but 2 after the ace has been knocked out
diamonds	1 or 2 depending on the finesse: if North has the King, then there is only one winner
clubs	3 at least, perhaps 4 if they are divided 3-2
Total	12 as a maximum but in the worst case only 9

It is easy to understand why it is necessary to count winners. Enough winners are needed if the contract is to succeed. It is not so easy to understand why declarer should count losers. The count of losers highlights dangers and pitfalls.

Count losers

Example 1: In a spade contract, how many losers are there here?

♠ KQJ98	♠ T765
♥ 985	♥ KQJ
♦ K	♦ 983
♣ K832	♣ AQ5
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

spades	– 1, the ace
hearts	– 1, the ace
diamonds	– 1, because while there are 3 low cards in the East hand, West can ruff the second and third rounds
clubs	– 1, unless there is still a trump in the East hand to ruff the fourth round
Total	= 4

Example 2: In a spade contract, how many losers are there here?

♠ AKQ32	♠ 654
♥ 98	♥ KQJ
♦ AQ6	♦ 983
♣ K83	♣ AQ52
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

spades	possibly 0 if the defenders' trumps are divided 3:2 between the two hands, but 1 if an opponent holds 4 trumps and 2 if an opponent holds all 5 (!)
hearts	1, the ace
diamonds	possibly 1 if the finesse is successful, otherwise 2 – but note that after the heart ace is knocked out, you can discard one loser on a top heart
clubs	1, but West should be able to ruff the fourth round
Total	could be only 1 but in the worst case could be 6

The count of losers helps you to think about the possible pitfalls in a hand – hope for the best but prepare for the worst!

Playing to maximise the number of tricks

Draw trumps

When playing in a suit contract, declarer's first aim is often to draw the opponents' trump cards if possible. Once this is achieved, declarer's winning cards in plain suits will not be lost to defenders' ruffs.

Contract 4♠ by East - Lead ♥K

♠ 1098	♠ AKQ76	Win with ♥A and draw trumps first by playing ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, hoping that they divide 3-2 between the opponents' hands. If you play a diamond first, an opponent might be able to ruff with a small trump. Play diamonds when you have drawn trumps.
♥ A74	♥ 63	
♦ AK6	♦ Q532	
♣ A652	♣ J3	

Take ruffs before drawing trumps

Don't draw trumps if you need to ruff losing cards in dummy.

Contract 4♠ by East - Lead ♥K

♠ 1098	♠ AKQ76	Win with ♥A and play another heart so that dummy has no more hearts. Win any return and come to hand with a top trump (assuming opponents return a minor suit). Ruff your losing heart in dummy. Only now should you draw trumps, again hoping that they divide 3-2.
♥ A7	♥ 643	
♦ AK6	♦ J53	
♣ A9652	♣ Q3	

Stop drawing trumps when your opponents have none left

Contract 4♠ by East - Lead ♥K

♠ 8642	♠ AKQJ	Win with ♥A and draw trumps first by playing ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, hoping that they divide 3-2 between the opponents' hands.
♥ A4	♥ 632	
♦ AK6	♦ J532	
♣ A652	♣ K3	

At that point, these will be the cards you have left:

♠ 8	♠ J	If you play the ♠J, you will have none left. Now you will lose two more heart tricks because you can't ruff the second one.
♥ 4	♥ 63	
♦ AK6	♦ J532	
♣ A652	♣ K3	

If the only trump outstanding is the best one – don't try to draw it

Contract 4♠ by East - Lead ♣A

♠ A963	♠ K742	South leads the ♣A and then ♣K. Trump that and play ♠A and ♠K, again hoping they divide 3-2. Let's say opponents follow with ♠5, 8, 10 and J. Leave ♠Q outstanding Start playing your longest suit, which is hearts (remember to play the ♥K first to get back and forth more easily). Now the player with ♠Q can trump at any time but you are safe.
♥ AQJ42	♥ K5	
♦ KJ3	♦ Q942	
♣ 3	♣ 1062	

If you had played a third round of trumps this would have been the position:

♠ –	♠ 7	Now, you will lose another club and you will go one down by losing a trump, the ♦A, ♣A and another ♣. If you had left the last trump out when you started playing hearts, you wouldn't lose another ♣ trick as there would have been a trump left in dummy.
♥ AQJ42	♥ K5	
♦ KJ3	♦ Q942	
♣ –	♣ 10	

Discard losers on winners

In a suit contract you may be able to discard a loser or losers from dummy on your other winners or *vice versa*, so that you can then ruff a loser in that suit in the opposite hand. Usually, you would do this after you have drawn trumps.

Contract 4♠ by East - Lead ♥K

♠ 9842	♠ AKQ76	Win with ♥A and draw trumps first by playing ♠A and ♠K (and ♠Q if they divide 3-1; life is awkward if they divide 4-0!). Then play ♦AK (starting high from the <i>short</i> hand) and a diamond to your queen. Now play ♦J and discard the low heart from dummy – you can then ruff your heart loser and make 11 tricks.
♥ A7	♥ 63	
♦ AK6	♦ QJ32	
♣ Q652	♣ J3	

We thank New Zealand Bridge and the Scottish Bridge Union for the use of their materials.

We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material.

You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 4: STUDENT NOTES

One-Level Opening Bids

The Auction Revisited

Each suit has a ranking order. When you make a bid during the auction, you must ensure that it is higher than the previous bid, just as you would in any auction. You are now trying to reach a contract at the best level for your side. The first person to make a bid (not pass) becomes the **OPENER**. Opener's partner is called the **RESPONDER**.

Ranking of suits

Notrumps	NT		
Spades	♠	}	Spades and Hearts are also called the MAJOR suits
Hearts	♥		
Diamonds	♦	}	Diamonds and Clubs are also called the MINOR suits
Clubs	♣		

The levels of bidding

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1♠ 1NT 2♣ 2♦ 2♥ 2♠ 2NT 7NT

You must make 6 tricks before you start to score in bridge – therefore:

1-level contracts must make 1+6 tricks = 7 tricks

2-level contracts must make 2+6 tricks = 8 tricks ... and so on

The lowest bid you can make is 1♣ = 7 tricks

The highest bid you can make is 7NT = 13 tricks

Opener's First Bid

Every opening bid has a specific meaning. It tells partner about your minimum strength, plus a suit opening indicates whether or not you hold five or more cards in a **major suit** (hearts or spades). Your opening one-bids – listed in the order in which you should consider them – and their basic meanings are:

<i>Bid</i>	<i>HCP</i>	<i>Shape</i>
1NT	15-17	balanced hand
1♠	12-19	5+ spades
1♥	12-19	5+ hearts
1♦	12-19	3+ diamonds and <i>no</i> 5+ major
1♣	12-19	3+ clubs and <i>no</i> 5+ major

Basic rules for suit opening bids

The order in which you bid your suits is very important. Here are some simple rules to remember:

- Bid your longest suit first (must be 5+ cards for a major suit bid, otherwise bid a minor suit)
- Bid the higher ranking of two 5-card suits
- With two 4-card minor suits, bid the higher ranking i.e. 1♦

Opening 1♠/♥/♦/♣

Because you require 5 or more cards in a major suit to open 1♥ or 1♠, opening bids of 1♣ or 1♦ may be "bids of convenience". They deny a 5+ major suit or a hand suitable for a 1NT opening.

So with 13 HCP, you would open 1♣ if you had 4=3=2=4 shape (the notation refers to spades=hearts=diamonds=clubs in that order) and you would also open 1♣ with 4=4=2=3 shape (because clubs is the longer minor suit).

What about something like 4=3=3=3 shape? Then you should open 1♣. The effect of this is that a 1♦ opening almost always has 4+ cards, the exception being when opener has 4=4=3=2 shape.

Note that while 1♣ and 1♦ do not *promise* length in the bid suit, of course opener may in fact have a long minor suit.

Opening with fewer than 12 HCP

Although the suggested range for an opening of one-of-a-suit is 12-19 HCP, there are many hands which have more playing strength than their HCP would suggest. Often this is because of length in one or two suits. Some suggest adjusting the HCP by adding points for extra length e.g. add one point for a 5 card suit, two points for a 6 card suit etc.

A simple approach to hand evaluation that effectively incorporates length points is the Rule of 20, which states: "Add the total of your HCP to the number of cards in your two longest suits. If this is 20 or greater then you can (should) open the bidding."

We thank New Zealand Bridge for the use of their materials and Rakesh Kumar for editing of the original text. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 5: STUDENT NOTES

Responder's Limited Bids and Opener's Rebids

Responder has choices:

After a suit opening bid, responder needs only 6 HCP to enter the auction. Some of responder's available bids are limited i.e. they describe her/his HCP strength reasonably accurately, while others are unlimited i.e. they require opener to bid again, on the way to finding the most appropriate contract. Broadly speaking, responder has 3 choices:

- Support partner's major suit – a raise to the 2-, 3- or 4-level (limited)
- Bid some number of notrump – these bids deny 3+ support for opener's major suit (limited)
- Bid a new suit – these bids always promise 4+ cards (or 5+ in some auctions) and are **forcing** for one further round of bidding (unlimited)

Limited bids (also called limit bids) are useful after an opening of 1♥ or 1♠, because they are relatively specific in terms of strength and number of cards in partner's major suit.

Responder with 3+ card support for opener's major suit should re-assess his/her hand based on shortage in other suits. With exactly 3-card support, add 1 point for a doubleton, 2 for a singleton (but not a singleton honour) and 3 for a void; with 4+ support, add 1 point for a doubleton, 3 for a singleton and 5 for a void. These shortages make it possible to ruff losers in responder's hand and the adjusted count is referred to as "total points" (TP as distinct from HCP). With a fit and a shortage, responder uses TP rather than HCP to determine how high to bid.

Responder's Limit Raises

1♥ – 2♥	6-10 TP	3+ card support
3♥	(10)11-12 TP	3+ card support
4♥	up to 12 TP	5+ support

Note the 1♥ – 4♥ raise. It does *not* show extra values but instead shows a limited hand which has extra playing strength because of extra trumps. Hands with 13+ TP and 3+ card support for opener's major are bid differently to at least reach game – see below.

Opener's Rebid after a Limit Raise

After 1♥ – 2♥	
Pass	12-15 HCP
3♥	16-17 HCP
4♥	18-19 HCP
After 1♥ – 3♥	
Pass	12-13 HCP
4♥	14+ HCP

These HCP ranges are an over-simplification and do not take account of opener's playing strength based on extra length in the suit opened, a second suit or a singleton/void.

How does responder get to game with support and a strong hand? Typically by first making an unlimited bid of a new suit, then either jumping to game (with say 13-15 TP) or making another forcing bid with a very strong hand.

Responder's Limit NT Bids

1♥ – 1NT	6-10 HCP	denies 3+ support
2NT	11-12 HCP	denies 3+ support
3NT	13-15 HCP	denies 3+ support

Opener's Rebid after a NT Limit Response

After 1♥ – 1NT		
Pass/rebid suit at min level	12-15 HCP	2♥ shows a 6+ suit
New suit	12-17 HCP	Shows 5(+) hearts and a 4+ new suit
2NT/3♥	16-17 HCP	3♥ shows a 6+ suit
3NT/4♥	18-19 HCP	4♥ shows a 6+ suit
After 1♥ – 2NT		
Pass/rebid suit at min level	12-13 HCP	3♥ shows a 6+ suit
New suit	14+ HCP	Shows 5(+) hearts and a 4+ new suit
3NT/4♥	14+ HCP	4♥ shows a 6+ suit

Once again, these ranges are just a guide as there will be hands with extra playing strength that can make game with fewer HCP.

We thank New Zealand Bridge for the use of their materials.

We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 6: STUDENT NOTES

Responder's New Suit Bids and Opener's Rebids

Responder's new suit bids

If a limit bid is not possible or appropriate, responder can bid a new suit, looking for an alternative fit. A **major** suit fit is by far the best. Note that if opener starts with 1♣ or 1♦, responder must show a major suit even with a balanced hand – a response in notrump *denies* holding a 4+ major suit.

It is important to bid your suits in the correct order. Do you remember these rules about opening bids?

- Bid your longest suit first
- Bid the higher ranking of two 5-card suits

In addition to those two, responder needs to remember one more:

- Bid the lower ranking of two 4-card suits (*this is different to the approach recommended for opening when you have two 4-card minor suits!*)

Your goal is to keep the bidding as low as possible to give you room to find a **fit**, or else to play in notrumps. Note that opener can't pass your bid – in reply to opener's bid of a suit, a new suit by responder is a **forcing** bid. Such bids, which are **unlimited**, can have a wide range of high card points – in theory, from 6 up to say 28 HCP!

When opener has started with 1♥ or 1♠, a bid of a new suit by responder usually implies there is no fit – unless of course responder later jumps to game in opener's suit.

What minimum strength does a new suit bid show?

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Bid and change suit at 1-level | 6+ HCP, 4+ suit |
| • Bid and change suit at 2-level | 10+ HCP, 4+ minor/5+ hearts over 1♠ |
| • Bid and change suit with a jump
e.g. 1♣-2♠ or 1♥-3♦ | meaning depends on partnership agreements – often played as weak |

For the moment it's probably a good idea to completely avoid changing suit with a jump bid.

Examples (note the last two, which illustrate the use of 1NT to cover all sorts of 6-10 HCP hands where responder cannot bid her/his long suit at the 2-level)

Opener		Responder	Opener		Responder	Opener		Responder
♠ 95		♠ J8764	♠ 8		♠ AK54	♠ 8		♠ A43
♥ AQ854		♥ K2	♥ AQJ5		♥ 9876	♥ AQJ53		♥ 98
♦ A954		♦ KQJ32	♦ KJ542		♦ AQ3	♦ KJ52		♦ AQ643
♣ K8		♣ 6	♣ K87		♣ 54	♣ K87		♣ Q32
1♥	-	1♠	1♦	-	1♥	1♥	-	2♦

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>	<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>	<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
♠ 85	♠ AK43	♠ 8	♠ J76	♠ 8	♠ A43
♥ AQ854	♥ K2	♥ AQJ5	♥ 98	♥ AQJ53	♥ 9
♦ A954	♦ 3	♦ KJ542	♦ AQ	♦ KJ52	♦ Q8643
♣ K8	♣ AJ9432	♣ K87	♣ J95432	♣ K87	♣ Q942
1♥	-	2♣		1♥	-
		1♦	-	1NT	
				1♥	-
				1NT	

Opener's rebids after a new suit response

Support partner's suit	4+ in that suit (3+ if responder has bid 2♥ over 1♠)
Bid NT	Balanced, no fit with responder's suit
Bid a new suit	4+ in the new suit
Rebid own suit	Usually 6+ cards

Supporting responder's suit

It is important to support partner's suit if possible, particularly in a major. With 4-card support, you should re-assess your hand based on shortage in other suits – add 1 point for a doubleton, 2 for a singleton and 3 for a void, then rebid based on "total points".

After 1♦ – 1♠			
2♠	12-15 TP	4-card support	single raise
3♠	16-17 TP	4-card support	invitational raise
4♠	18-19 TP	4-card support	game raise

Opener rebids a new suit – showing an unbalanced hand

After 1♥ – 1♠		
new suit below "the barrier"	12-15 HCP	
new suit above "the barrier"	16-19 HCP	
<i>("the barrier" is explained below)</i>		

Opener rebids their own suit – showing an unbalanced hand

After 1♥ – 1♠		
2♥	12-15 HCP	6+ suit
3♥	16-17 HCP	6+ suit
4♥	18-19 HCP	6+ suit

Opener rebids notrumps – showing a balanced hand

After 1♥ – 1♠		
1NT	12-14 HCP	
2NT	18-19 HCP	
After 1♥ – 2♣		
2NT	12-14 HCP	
3NT	18-19 HCP	

Note that while a rebid of notrumps denies support for responder's suit and denies extra length in opener's suit, it does not *guarantee* a balanced hand. Most bidding "rules" have exceptions!

The concept of "the barrier"



The barrier applies to the opener and is their original suit at the 2-level. e.g. if the opener bids 1♣ the barrier is 2♣. If opener bids 1♥ the barrier is 2♥ etc. For the opener to **rebid a suit** above the barrier, they must have *at least* 16 HCP.

A few examples should help to illustrate the point:

- 1) You hold ♠A1052 ♥K7 ♦K10984 ♣K9 and open 1♦. Partner responds 1♥. Your barrier is 2♦. That means you can rebid 1♠ to show your second suit, as you are still below the barrier and are not promising more than 15 HCP.
- 2) You hold ♠52 ♥KQ ♦K10984 ♣AJ97 and open 1♦. Partner responds 1♠. Your barrier is 2♦. However, you can rebid 2♣ to show your second suit, as you are still below the barrier even though this rebid is at the 2-level.
- 3) Similarly if you hold ♠AQ1062 ♥K1098 ♦K4 ♣Q4, open 1♠ and see partner respond 2♣, you can rebid 2♥ to show your second suit, because you are below the barrier of 2♠.
- 4) You hold ♠K7 ♥A1052 ♦K10984 ♣K9 and open 1♦. Partner responds 1♠. Your barrier is 2♦. Now you cannot show your heart suit via your rebid, because you would be breaking the barrier. So you must rebid 2♦.
- 5) You hold ♠A7 ♥AQ52 ♦KJ1084 ♣K9 and open 1♦. Partner responds 1♠. Your barrier is 2♦. However, this time you have 17 HCP so you *can* break the barrier and show your second suit, via a rebid of 2♥. A 2-level rebid in a higher-ranking suit that forces the bidding to the 3-level is called a *reverse bid*.
- 6) You hold ♠AQ1062 ♥10 ♦KQ8 ♣AK109 and open 1♠. Partner responds 2♥. Your barrier is 2♠ but with 18 HCP you are able to bid 3♣ to show both your second suit and your strength. A 3-level bid in a lower ranking suit isn't a reverse bid but does show similar shape and strength, except that the *higher-ranking* suit is longer (or both are 5-card suits).

Note that while a rebid of 2NT is apparently past "the barrier" this restriction doesn't apply to notrump rebids, because of their known HCP range. So if you open 1♠ holding ♠AQ1074 ♥K62 ♦K4 ♣Q109 and see partner respond 2♦, you can safely rebid 2NT as you are only promising 12-14 HCP. The "barrier" applies to **suit rebids**.

We thank New Zealand Bridge for the use of their materials.

We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 7: STUDENT NOTES

Bidding Balanced Hands

Opening 1NT – 15-17 HCP Balanced

You must always check if you have a 1NT opener before you open 1 of a suit.

Open 1NT on all balanced 15-17 HCP hands, no matter where your honours are placed.

A balanced hand contains:

- **no** void or singleton
- **one** doubleton at most

Examples of balanced hand shapes are:

- 4333
- 4432
- 5332

1NT is a **limit bid**. Its shape and strength are known – a limit bid is **not** forcing.

This means that responder is usually in charge and opener does not have to bid again unless the auction develops in a way that requires a further bid.

NB: If you hold a balanced hand with 12-14 or 18-19 HCP, open your longest suit or a "convenient" minor suit at the 1-level, **not** 1NT.

Responding to a 1NT Opening

Pass	0-7	denies a 5+ major suit
2♣	8+	Stayman – asks partner for a 4-card major (<i>an artificial forcing bid!</i>)
2♦/2♥	0+	Transfers – promise 5+ cards in ♥/♠ respectively (<i>both artificial forcing bids!</i>)
2NT	8-9	invites game in notrump, denies a 4-card major suit
3NT	10-15	to play in game, no 4+ major suit, may have length in one or both minor suits
4NT	16-17	invitational to slam, no 4+ major suit
6NT	18+	to play in slam, no 4+ major suit

The Stayman 2♣ Convention

This is an artificial bid (a.k.a. a "convention") that says nothing about clubs but asks opener if s/he holds a 4-card major. This bid allows you to find a 4-4 major suit fit if it exists.

Remember that in a major suit contract you have potential to win extra tricks by ruffing.

By bidding 2♣ you guarantee 8+ HCP and possession of at least one 4-card major suit.

Opener rebids a major suit with 4 cards (bidding 2♥ with both majors, to keep the auction low) or else bids 2♦ (*also artificial!*) to deny a major suit.

If the 1NT opener rebids your 4-card major:

- Raise to 4 of that suit if you have game values (at least 10 HCP)
- Raise to 3 of that suit if you have invitational values (8-9 HCP)

If the 1NT opener rebids a major you don't have:

- After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥, if you hold 4 spades, bid 2NT with 8-9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP. Partner will know that you have 4 spades and if s/he has 4 cards in both major suits, can correct the contract to spades.
- Similarly after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠, if you hold 4 hearts, bid 2NT with 8-9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP.

If the 1NT opener rebids 2♦ (denying a major):

- Bid 2NT with 8-9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP. There is no need to bid your major suit(s) as you know there is no fit.

Example:

♠ A87
♥ AJ98
♦ KQ6
♣ J74
Opener (West)

♠ K106
♥ K754
♦ AJ84
♣ 105
Responder (East)

Auction:
1NT – 2♣ (Stayman, 8+ HCP)
2♥ – 4♥
(this makes if hearts are 3-2; 3NT fails if clubs are 5-3 and North leads a club)

Transfers

These are artificial bids ("conventional") that change the meanings of 2♦/2♥ to show 5+ cards in the suit *above* the bid suit i.e. 2♦ shows hearts and 2♥ shows spades. Opener **must** rebid in the suit *shown*.

Transfer bids do not promise any specific strength. With a weak hand, responder can now pass and her/his hand will almost certainly be worth more tricks in a suit contract than in notrump. With a stronger hand, responder has choices:

- a bid of 2NT or 3NT promises a more-or-less balanced hand with exactly 5 cards in the shown suit and 8-9 HCP or 10+ HCP respectively – opener should always correct to responder's suit with 3+ cards in that suit and should raise 2NT to game with a maximum opening
- a bid of 3 or 4 of the shown suit promises 6+ cards and 8-9 HCP or 10+ HCP respectively – opener should raise 3 of the suit to game with a maximum opening
- a bid of a new suit promises 5 cards in the shown suit and 4+ cards in the second suit – this bid is forcing to game and opener should decide whether to play in 3NT or one of responder's suits.

Examples:

♠ A87
♥ AJ98
♦ KQ6
♣ J74
Opener (West)

♠ K10643
♥ 74
♦ J1084
♣ 52
Responder (East)

Auction:
1NT – 2♥ (transfer)
2♠ (opener must bid this) – Pass
(2♠ is likely to make whereas 1NT is hopeless)

♠ A87
♥ AJ98
♦ KQ96
♣ K7
Opener (West)

♠ K10643
♥ K74
♦ A108
♣ 52
Responder (East)

Auction:
1NT – 2♥ (transfer)
2♠ – 3NT (balanced, 5 spades, 10+ HCP) – 4♠ (holding 3 spades, opener corrects – to a much better contract!)

Weaker and Stronger Balanced Hands

With 12-14 or 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand, you need two bids to show your shape and strength. You open one of a suit (often one of a minor suit) and then if you don't find a 5-3 or 4-4 major suit fit, you rebid notrumps.

A rebid of notrumps at the cheapest level shows 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand without 4 cards in any major suit responder might have shown. A jump rebid in notrumps shows 18-19 HCP.

Note that after you have described your shape and strength with your rebid, responder is once again in charge.

Examples:

♠ A87
♥ AJ98
♦ K63
♣ J74
Opener (West)

♠ KQJ6
♥ 74
♦ Q84
♣ AQ52
Responder (East)

Auction:
1♦ (better minor) – 1♠ (6+ HCP)
1NT (12-14 HCP) – 3NT (more than enough to bid game)

♠ AKJ82
♥ K98
♦ Q63
♣ 43
Opener (West)

♠ 64
♥ QJ64
♦ A84
♣ AQJ2
Responder (East)

Auction:
1♠ – 2♣ (10+ HCP but can't bid 2♥)
2NT (12-14 HCP) – 3NT

♠ KQ8
 ♥ A98
 ♦ AQ
 ♣ K10943
 Opener (West)

♠ 64
 ♥ K764
 ♦ K84
 ♣ A852
 Responder (East)

Auction:
 1♣ – 1♥ (6+ HCP)
 2NT (18-19 HCP) – 3NT (more than
 enough to bid game)

♠ K72
 ♥ AJ5
 ♦ KJ642
 ♣ AQ
 Opener (West)

♠ Q4
 ♥ 1076
 ♦ A84
 ♣ KJ1052
 Responder (East)

Auction:
 1♦ – 2♣ (10+ HCP)
 3NT (18-19 HCP)

We thank New Zealand Bridge and the Scottish Bridge Union for the use of their materials.
 We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material.
 You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.

LESSON 8: STUDENT NOTES

Contesting the Auction: Overcalls and Doubles

If opponents open the bidding and you then bid, you have **overcalled**. You are referred to as the **overcaller** – your partner, who may bid some more, is the **advancer**. When you overcall, your aims are different. You may be trying to:

- Win the contract (with both sides bidding, this will often be a part score contract)
- Obstruct the opponents (by consuming bidding space)
- Suggest a lead to partner (which may be critical to successful defence).

Suit Overcalls

- The basic requirement is a **good** 5+ card suit (generally a minimum of 2 honours, preferably at least one of ace and king)
- At the 1-level it is acceptable to overcall with 8+ HCP, with most of the points in the suit if minimum, whereas at the 2-level you need 10+ HCP
- Keep the vulnerability in mind – you need a good hand to overcall when vulnerable and an even better hand when you are vulnerable but they are not, because of the risk of a significant penalty if you don't find a fit
- Overcalling when sitting over the opening bidder is safer than overcalling after responder has also bid – then you need more (HCP, aces, suit length).

Suit Quality Test

- This is an easy way of assessing whether or not you have a **good** 5+ card suit
- Add the number of cards in your suit to the number of honour cards in that suit
- Although the honour cards are A, K, Q, J and 10, you can only count the last two if you also have one of the A, K or Q
- If the total is at least equal to the number of tricks you are trying to take, then it is reasonable to overcall.

Examples

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D
♠987	♠Q5	♠KQ642	♠A765
♥AK983	♥J10984	♥85	♥J5
♦J72	♦63	♦96	♦AJ
♣87	♣AK32	♣AQ83	♣Q7542

If your right-hand opponent opens 1♣ or 1♦, hand A is a minimum 1♥ overcall – it has useful lead-directing value and (just) satisfies the suit quality test (5+2 = 7 tricks needed for a 1-level overcall). In contrast, hand B is quite unsuitable even though it has more HCP. It might get partner off to a poor opening lead and it utterly fails the suit quality test.

Hand C is a sound 1♠ overcall of any other 1-level suit opening. However, don't even think about overcalling 2♣ with hand D, even though it contains the same number of HCP. That is **not** a good suit and certainly does not satisfy the suit quality test.

Bidding after Partner has made a Suit Overcall

As advancer, if you have support for partner's suit, you should raise to the "level of the fit" i.e. with 3-card support and limited values (say 6-9 TP) you raise to the 2-level (partner's known 5 cards + your 3 cards = 8 card trump fit so hoping to win 8 tricks [the 2-level] is reasonable). However, with 4-card support you should raise to the 3-level. This makes life difficult for your opponents but does not promise any extra values.

What about if you don't have a fit? You should usually pass, although with extra HCP you might show your own 5+ card suit, or perhaps bid notrumps.

1NT Overcall

In the direct position i.e. when you bid over the opening bidder, this is really not that different to a 1NT opening. However, the HCP range is usually extended to 15-18 HCP. Importantly, though, you also need to have control in the suit bid by your opponent (i.e. a top card or two) so that you can stop the opposition from running too many tricks in their suit. Such top cards are also referred to as **stoppers**.

Partner's responses can be exactly what you play after a 1NT opening.

Takeout Doubles

Your right-hand hand opponent (RHO) opens the bidding with 1♣. You hold:

♠K76
♥KQ54
♦A962
♣J6

What are you going to do? Although you have 13 HCP and want to get into the auction, you don't have a 5-card suit and can't overcall 1NT as you are not strong enough, nor do you have a stopper in clubs. The solution to this problem is what is known as a takeout double. Unlike a double of a higher-level contract, which often indicates you believe you can defeat the opponents and want to maximise the penalty, partner is expected to "take out" this low-level double and offer her/his suggestion about the contract in which your side should play.

What sort of hand is suitable for a takeout double?

- A takeout double is typically made with 11+ HCP
- The hand should have support for the unbid suits and shortage in the enemy suit
- However, the double is major suit-oriented so over a minor suit opening should have at least 4-3 in the majors, while over a major suit should have 4 cards in the other major.
- With very strong hands (16+ HCP) the shape is less important.

What should advancer do now?

That depends on shape and strength. Advancer should always show a 4+ major suit and should make an invitational bid with a sufficiently strong hand (some 9+ HCP). With that in mind, what would you do with the following hands after your left-hand hand opponent (LHO) opens 1♦ and partner doubles?

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠9874	♠Q874	♠9874	♠A74	♠A765
♥AQ3	♥AQ3	♥J85	♥J103	♥95
♦87	♦K632	♦9642	♦K106	♦A10
♣J1087	♣107	♣87	♣QJ54	♣QJ542

With hand A, you bid 1♠ – this minimum response promises 4+ cards in the suit and 0-8(9) HCP. With hand B, you jump to 2♠ to show about 9-12 HCP – even though you have a stopper in diamonds you do not bid notrumps. With hand C you again respond 1♠ – if third hand passes, advancer **must** bid, even with zero points (with a very weak hand, you are allowed to pass if third hand bids, so if you bid you now promise at least 7 or 8 HCP).

Hand D is different – it does not contain a 4+ major suit but as it does have a stopper in diamonds, you can bid 1NT to show this and around 7-11 HCP (you would bid 2NT with 12-14 HCP). With hand E you again jump to 2♠ – remember that your priority is to bid a major suit, so you do **not** bid 3♣.

We thank New Zealand Bridge and the Scottish Bridge Union for the use of their materials.

We also thank Rakesh Kumar for substantial editing of the original text and contribution of additional material. You may freely republish these materials, online or in print, under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 Licence.