

BIDDING TIPS FROM BARBARA & ALEX

North

S 3
H KJ874
D QJ103
C 972

South

S AKJ42
H A92
D AK4
C 42

South is Dealer and opens 1S. West overcalls 2C. What should North bid?

North is not strong enough to bid 2H. His hand is flawed because he is short in partner's suit so he must devalue this hand. The correct bid is Double. A negative double, guaranteeing at least 4 cards in the other major (Hearts). We never make a negative double when we have a fit with partner's major so North promises two or fewer Spades.

If South HAS four Hearts, he would now bid Hearts. But South does not. When you cannot find a fit in a major, what do we aim for? South has a very nice hand! South cannot bid 3NT in spite of having 19 HCP as he does not have a Club stopper.

BUT maybe North has a Club stopper? How can South find out?

South's next bid should be 3C. This cue bid asks North to bid 3NT if he has a Club stopper. North does not but he does have a five-card Heart suit that he has not yet bragged about. So he bids 3H and South happily raises to 4H. A good contract.

Here's another interesting hand:

North

S A9842
H KJ102
D A9
C K5

South

S KJ10
H Q864
D J10862
C A

South is Dealer. Should he open? He has 11 HCP. And one length point. When in doubt about whether to open in 1st or 2nd seat, use the Rule of 40. Add the # of HCP to the number of cards held in the two longest suits. 11 HCP plus a 5 card suit and a 4 card suit. If it adds up to 20, do open.

South opens 1D. Partner responds 1S. (Opponents do not bid.) What is South's rebid?

This is a hard one.

2D? Diamonds are pretty pathetic.

1NT? We really should not rebid NT with a singleton as it promises a balanced hand.

South cannot rebid 2H as this is a reverse and we do not have enough points for this bid.

We would bid 2S. This does not guarantee 4-card support, although we will often have 4-card support when we make this bid.

If South bids 2S, North will now bid 4S.

If South rebids 1NT instead, North has to now bid New Minor Forcing (2C). This is a special convention used to find out if partner has three-card support for Spades or a side four-card Heart suit or both or neither.

1D - 1S

1N - 2H shows **6-9 points** and five Spades and maybe only four Hearts (could be five).

It is the 6-9 points that many are not aware of. This bid is the exception to the rule that new suits by Responder are always forcing. After opener rebids 1NT after

1D - 1S

1N - 2H shows a weak hand and this is **not forcing**.

On this hand, South bids 2H in response to New Minor Forcing. (He has both 3-card support and 4-card H suit so he bids up the ladder.)

North will now bid 4H. We prefer to be on a 4-4 fit than on a 5-3 fit if given a choice as then we can pull trump and make discards using the long suit.

The above two hands are from Rob Drummond of Toronto Bridge. Analysis by Barbara and Alex.

MORE BIDDING TIPS FROM BARBARA & ALEX

The player on your right (East) preempts: He opens with 3S. You are South and you bid 4H. Pass-Pass-Pass.

Your partner presents this dummy:

S xxx

H K10x

D xxxx

C AQx

You are Declarer with this hand:

S 3
H AJxxxx
D Axx
C KJx

E S N E
3S 4H P P
P

You have two Diamond losers, one Spade loser and a potential Heart loser. How will you play the H suit. Who do you think has the missing Queen of Hearts?

Or do you simply use the nursery rhyme? "Eight ever, nine never?" and play for the Q to fall when you play the Ace and King.

You have what we call a two way finesse in Hearts. Who rates to have the Queen?

Answer: East has SEVEN cards in the Spade suit. He has only SIX "empty spots" to be occupied by other cards.

He has had fewer chances to be dealt the Queen Hearts. In other words, he has fewer Hearts. West has more Hearts.

If East has only one Heart and West has three Hearts, then West has had THREE chances to be dealt the Q Hearts and East only had ONE chance to be dealt the Q Hearts. Thus the odds are with West having the Q Hearts.

You lead the Ace Hearts (in case a singleton Q drops) and now lead towards the Heart 10, finessing N for the Q Hearts.

SUMMARY: When missing the Queen in a long suit, it is usually right to play the partner of the preempter to hold the missing Queen.

STILL MORE BIDDING PRACTICE WITH BARBARA & ALEX

♠ AQ873	South	West	North	East
♥ KQT52	1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
♦ K2	2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
♣ 3	??			

Even if 3♣ is the convention: Fourth Suit Forcing, You should now bid 3H. Not 3 NT. Responder may have had:

♠ 6	The safest and thus best contract is 4H. Partner will now raise to 4H because you have found your 5-3 fit in H. When you rebid your Heart suit, partner knows you have five Hearts.
♥ 743	
♦ AQJ76	
♣ AQJ8	

One more:

♠ KQ9864	South	West	North	East
♥ J832	1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
♦ AQ	??			
♣ 3				

So many players are in a hurry to rebid their spades in this scenario. You really ought to bid 2H next. Partner may have had

♠ 3	She can now pass your 2H rebid and you have landed in your 4-4 heart fit
♥ A975	
♦ 6432	
♣ Q876	


This time, partner opens 1H and you have this hand: You bid 1S. Partner now bids 2C. What will you now bid with the following hand?

♠ A8763
♥ 75
♦ K432
♣ 876

You must now bid 2H. Your partner has at least 5 H and maybe only 4C. When you are a 6-9 point responder, you must choose one of her suits. You now bid 2H. The 5-2 major suit fit is a better choice than the maybe 4-3 fit in a minor. If you had only one Heart and three Clubs, you say Pass.

This hand was presented by Mike Kenny and Julie Berdock and was in our last newsletter but had no answers. The commentary is by Alex and Barbara

West opened 1H, North overcalled 1S. East bid 2C. Pass by South, West passed and North bid 2D. East now bid 3H and everyone passed.

Board 8					
	N North ♠ K9854 ♥ J105 ♦ KQJ9 ♣ 10				E East ♠ J2 ♥ AQ83 ♦ A3 ♣ QJ873
	W West ♠ AQ7 ♥ K9642 ♦ 84 ♣ K95	W N E S			
	S South ♠ 1063 ♥ 7 ♦ 107652 ♣ A642				

There is a lot to talk about on this hand. Sitting North, I would not have overcalled 1S. A one-level overcall, holding only 8-12 points should have two of the top 3 honours or three of the top 5 honours IN THAT SUIT. The Heart Jack is a useless card when opponents have bid the suit.

However, let us assume that North did indeed bid 1S. What should East bid? When this hand was played, East bid 2C. We do not like this bid BUT it is a forcing bid as East was not a passed hand. New suits by Responder are forcing.

What would West bid next then? West did not know what to do so he passed but that is not acceptable. West can bid 3C but we prefer 2NT because of the stoppers in Spades and besides, the lead in NT will be coming from West's LHO (Left Hand Opponent), North. If a Spade is led by North, West can handle this well.

East-West got lucky and North entered the bidding again!!! North had his bidding shoes on that day! 2D by North. East now bid 3H and West passed.

East should have bid 4H after the 2D bid by North. East has 15 points (dummy points) after partner opens 1H and thus he has an obligation to get to game. ALWAYS count distribution, unless you are bidding NT.

East actually made an error on his very first bid. He failed to show his Heart support. Suppose South had now bid 4S (not on these cards but with different cards)? Now how would East later show support? At the 5-level?

East should have bid 2S immediately after the 1S overcall, showing a limit raise or better with Heart support: 3 or 4 cards and 10 or more points. West will bid only 3H, saying "I have a dead minimum, partner" and after Pass by North, East will now bid 4H.

East is the captain of the bidding on this hand, once West shows her minimum opener by bidding 3H only. East must get to game.

Thank you to Mike and Julie who teach at Richmond Hill Bridge Club.

NO TRUMP BIDDING

by Marty Bergen and modified a bit by Richard Ross and by Barbara

Richard is Manager & Director at Stephen's Bridge Club

How come some of my partners open 1NT with a 5-card major and some of them say they never would? Who is right? asked SL this week.

Whenever you have a balanced hand and the appropriate point count, open 1NT. **There are absolutely no exceptions. Do not be distracted by a five-card major.**

Life will be much easier when you open 1NT with a five-card major and a balanced hand. You will not have a rebid problem and your partner will immediately know about your strength and balanced distribution. If you open your five-card major, partner will not know about your strength now, and there will be no way to tell him later! Bridge can be a very unforgiving game:

Either you open 1NT, or forget about showing your 15-17 HCP.

Although many regard the above as heresy, please read on. What would you open with this hand?

S 873
H KJ865
D AQ10
C AQ

If you open 1H, your partner will often respond 1S. The opponents are silent. It is time for your rebid; decide before continuing.

Let's look at your options:

1. Can you pass? Absolutely not! Partner's 1S response did not deny a good hand. It promised 6-20+ points and was 100% forcing.
2. Can you rebid 1NT? No, this shows a balanced minimum; less than a 1NT opening. 12-14 HCP only. Obviously, a 1NT rebid misrepresents your strength.
3. Can you rebid 2C? No. A 2C bid would promise a four-card suit at least. You are asking for trouble if you lie about your distribution.
4. Can you raise to 2S? No. This shows a minimum hand (13-15) with good spade support. Partner's response promises only a four-card suit.
5. Can you rebid 2NT? No. This shows more points than an opening 1NT bid. You would need 18-19 HCP to make this bid.

Give up? You certainly do not need this aggravation – life is too short. Ignore your major and open 1NT. Get it off your chest now!

It is true that partner will not know that you have a five-card major when you open 1NT with hands like these. That is not the end of the world. (A convention called Puppet Stayman allows responder to discover if opener has a five-card major after opening 1NT.

It will be beneficial for you to declare a notrump contract. You would prefer to play last at trick one so that the lead does not come through your honors.

Here is a recap:

1. Should you still open 1NT if the major is strong? yes, Yes, **YES**.
2. Is this true regardless of which major is involved? yes, Yes, **YES**.
3. Should you open 1NT with *all* balanced hands that include a five-card major and have the appropriate strength? yes, Yes, **YES**

Congratulations – you are on your way to becoming a practical, non-stubborn bridge player.

DON'T TAP THE TABLE; USE THE PASS CARD

by Jack Brawner: St Petersburg Bridge Club

The act of tapping the table is not a bid. We all understand that it is intended to mean "pass", but it is not a legal bid. And it's not just being fussy -- imagine this auction (you are north):

North: 1S
East: 2H
South: 2S
West: 4H
North: taps table

There are still two more bids to go, including your partner's. Now you may *expect* partner to pass, but might they reevaluate and bid 4S? Might they double? Your pass is a potentially unethical attempt to coach your partner into passing when you indicated that you believed the auction should be over.

Was it intentionally unethical? Probably not. But even if it was innocent, could it be viewed as poor ethics? Definitely yes.

-- BUT --

Since "table thumping" is definitely not legal and potentially unethical (or interpreted as such), why not just pick up the pass card and put it on the table? (They aren't heavy -- grin!)

It could save a lot of problems and hard feelings. Thanks.

((The example may seem extreme, but I witnessed this exact auction and some other equally poor "table tapping" habits recently.))

Can we all make New Year's resolutions, perhaps?

WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR BRIDGE GAME

by Marilyn Hemenway

Bridge is such a hard game.....there are so many things to learn, to remember and to put into practice. Once you become semi-proficient at bidding, declarer play and defense, there are lots of little things that you can do that will help you to continue to improve your game. These are just a few of them.

During the bidding:

(1) Avoid opening bad hands.... for example 4-3-3-3 hands with 12 HCP's unless there's a couple of Aces

(2) Be very careful in competitive auctions when you are bidding ahead of partner. It's quite possible that partner does NOT have a fit with you and would like to be penalizing the opponents for getting in your way.

(3) Avoid like the plague using Blackwood or RKC Blackwood with two or three cards or a void in an unbid suit.

When you are declarer:

(1) Draw trumps at once if you can...especially if you think that the opponents will be ruffing your winners in side-suits. However, if you need to ruff some losers in the hand with the fewer trumps, postpone drawing the trumps. Instead embark upon a method to ruff some of your losers with the short trumps.

(2) If you decide the best way to make a contract is to crossruff the hand, remember to cash out your side suit winners first.

(3) Know the "hold-up" rule, i.e. the Rule of 7. (A guideline for the declarer in holding up an Ace when declaring a NT contract is to subtract from 7 the total number of cards in the suit in his own hand and in the dummy....the answer is the number of times the declarer should hold up before playing the Ace.) But beware of holding up at all if there is extreme danger in another suit.!

(4) At times it may be wise to refuse to ruff in order to keep from losing control of the trump suit.

(5) Read about and practice safety plays.

(6) Make a habit of trying to picture one or both of the opponents' hands. This is done by taking inferences from their bidding, their leads, their carding and their discards. So pay attention to all the spot cards etc.!!

(7) False card when appropriate but do NOT do it all the time. Do it when you think it is appropriate only.

(8) Consider eliminating side suits and then throwing an opponent in so that they have to lead into your tenace. (Ed. Note: Otherwise known as an end play or a Strip & Throw-In)