

TIPS FROM ALEX & BARBARA

Hi everyone,

Alex and I are on a cruise ship: A Sectional Bridge Tournament at Sea. Playing lots of bridge and having fun. Internet is very slow hence the very late newsletter. We return to Florida soon for the rest of the winter, except for 3 weeks in Barbados.

The ship stopped in Cayman Islands and our wonderful friends (Thank you to Cliff Shaw!) there arranged to have an extra game at the club that day so we could play.

Alex picked up this hand:

S KJ10974

H K4

D 973

C 63

His RHO opened 2C and he bid 2S. To make a long story short, they got to 6H. Alex felt convinced they could make 6H and, spurred on by me raising his Spades along the way, he bid 6S. We were not vulnerable and they were vulnerable. He was down 7 for minus 1700, to the delight of our opponents who hope we will be back soon with more gifts!!! The fact is that they defended well. If Alex had been only down 6, he would have been minus 1400 only and the opponents could have made 1430 so this would have been a good sacrifice!!! Bridge is always here to keep us humble.

This hand came up back in Toronto:

North

S ---

H Q2

D 987

C AKQJ10963

South (me)

S AQ106

H AJ1094

D AKQ6

C ---

Partner opened 1C. I responded 1H and my LHO bid 2S. Partner now bid 3C and I bid 6NT. A Diamond was led and I can never get to the Clubs in Dummy. I tried leading to the H Q in Dummy but RHO had the H King. Somehow I was only down one. 7C makes but Opener does not know if we are missing an Ace and really should not now bid 7C in case. SO sad.

Here is one that someone wrote in to "Dear Alex"...

North

S Axx
H AKQJxxxx
D ----
C Kx

Alex and I would open 2C. You will hear 2D (Waiting) from partner. If you now bid 2H (Alex and I would), you will now hear 3H from partner.

What do you now bid?

Does this sound like slam? Yes, it does. If you bid Key Card Blackwood (or any Blackwood) and you hear that partner has one Key Card, now what? Do you bid 6H or 7H?

If you bid 6H, partner will have the Club Ace for you. If you bid 7H, partner will have the Diamond Ace for you instead and the opponents will lead the Ace of Clubs for down one. What to do?

We know you have heard that you are not supposed to use Blackwood when you have a void. Because it is not how many Aces partner has that you want to know. You want to know WHICH Aces partner has.

Once you have agreed on a trump suit, you can now show your first round controls up the ladder (cheapest one first). Note that some show first and second round controls but we think it is easier to show first round controls first.

2C - 2D
2H - 3H
3S - 4C

Yeah!!! You showed her your first round control of Spades and now she reciprocates by showing her Club Ace. (I show you mine, you show me yours!)

Now that you are not worried about Clubs, you can now bid 4NT in case partner has the Diamond Ace. Yippee! She bids 5H showing TWO key cards. What is your bid now?

7H. Here is partner's hand:

S Kxx
H 109x
D Axxxx
C Ax

It makes 7NT but 7H is safer in case you had needed to ruff a loser.

The Most Beautiful Game in the World

by Patricia Herrera

District 16 ACBL Education Coordinator

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Bridge is the most beautiful game in the world and the ultimate social sport. For many reasons it is the most popular card game on the planet. It's beauty comes from different places, one being that it has its own language. Yes, we are talking about bidding and therefore, conventions.

Conventions. Oops! I feel like I said a bad word. And this is because bridge conventions are one of the most controversial aspects of the game. We all feel and think differently about them. As a good friend, great teacher and fantastic player once told me: "Conventions are a whole philosophy on their own."

There are two main questions for which players need answers:

1. How many conventions should I use?
2. Which ones should I choose?

Neither question is easy to answer.

First of all being an, "I know all the conventions," kind of player does not guarantee being a good player.

Although there is no formal study, most players at the top level agree that playing a sophisticated system with lots of conventions would give you a 5% advantage more or less, and this is when playing at the top level.

So if you are just starting to play bridge, have played in just a few tournaments and don't have an established partnership, odds are you probably need only a few conventions to get through.

Most of the great players agree that successful bridge is a game about:

- Counting
- Tempo
- Paying attention
- Taking the most tricks

Not using many conventions will allow you to focus on these things and not like trying to remember the system or the many steps of many conventions.

So yes, less is more.

At the World Championships in Orlando in 2018, I was able to see the convention card of one of the partnerships that won the Open Teams. It was crossed on both sides with the word Standard. If a team can win with that system, the rest of us mere bridge mortals can survive with just a few conventions.

There are two things that we also need to do:

1. If you play a convention, know it well. This includes all steps, answers and scenarios like vulnerability, interference etc.

2. Choose wisely.

If you don't feel like you can choose which conventions to use, here are a few of the most popular and useful ones.

Stayman: Used after partner opens 1NT to ask for a 4-card major suit. Probably the most known and most popular bridge convention.

Blackwood: A bid of 4NT asks for aces followed by 5NT for kings when bidding or exploring a slam.

After Stayman, probably the second most popular convention.

Negative Doubles: Shows a competitive hand with support for the unbid suits after partner opens and the opponents interfere. A beauty.

Two Club Opening Bid: This bid announces a very strong hand. Its magnificence lies in the fact that partner can't pass it.

Limit Raises: These are bids that show a limit to the strength of the hand. They include cue bids and using Drury.

Weak Two Bids: These are opening bids that show a weak to intermediate hand with a six card suit. Probably my favorite tool.

Splinters: Splinter bids are game forcing showing both a 4+ card fit and shortness in the splintered suit. They are a great way to get into the mysterious ways of slam bidding.

What else do we need? The list can go on forever.

Each of the conventions I mentioned has different responses, ways of using them, and several steps.

Before anything else you need to master their uses and steps.

I won't bet even two tacos on whether this is the perfect list or some conventions should be added, removed or are even not considered.

Its purpose is to give you some food for thought to develop.

Patricia is a bridge teacher in Mexico and is President of the Mexico Bridge Federation. District 16 is part of ACBL.

When Can you Rebid a 5-Card Suit? Excerpts from Tony Jackson Commentary by Tony and Barbara

Opener Rebids Their Suit

Here are three auctions where opener opens 1 of a suit and rebids it at the 2-level. Does opener promise 6 cards for their rebid?

Auction #1

1S - (P) - 1NT - (P)
2S

Auction #2

1S - (P) - 2C - (P)
2S

Auction # 3

1C - (P) - 1S - (P)
2C

Auction 1: After 1NT Forcing Response

1S - (P) - 1NT - (P)
2S

or

1H - (P) - 1NT - (P)
2H

This 100% promises a 6 card or longer spade suit. This is the case whether or not you play 2/1.

Auction 2: Rebid Major Suit After a 2/1 Bid

1S - (P) - 2C - (P)
2S

This is quite different. Partner has made a 2/1 bid. If you play Standard American, then it's not game forcing but it's still showing 10 or more points.

Is 2S showing a 6 card suit? 95% of the time, on THIS auction, you will have a six-card suit. Because, with an unbalanced hand and another four-card suit, you would now show that suit. e.g.

1S – 2C

2D

or

1S – 2C

2H

And with a balanced hand, you would most often now bid 2NT, showing 12-14 HCP. If you were unable to bid 2NT now, because you have let's say two small Hearts, then you can always raise Clubs.

1S – 2C

3C

BUT how about this auction?

1S – 2D

2S can be done with only a five-card Spade suit. Here's why.

This is all according to a partnership agreement and you must discuss this with partner.

1S – 2D

3C really should not be done with a minimum hand. It is a new suit by opener at the 3 level. For many partnerships, this should show 16 or more points.

So if opener held this hand:

S AQ765

H 54

D 76

C AQ87

Opener is unable to rebid 2NT and does not wish to go to the three-level when a suit has not even been agreed upon. So many openers will now rebid 2S here. But it is all about partnership agreement.

How about this?

1H - 2C

2H

Opener may have had

S AK65

H AQ876

D 76

C43

Playing Standard, Opener cannot rebid 2S, as that us a reverse showing 17 or more points. Playing 2/1, some partnerships agree that they can reverse with a minimum hand. Alex and I like this auction to always show 17 + points, even playing 2/1.

So we would have to rebid 2H. The alternative to this is to learn Flannery where an opening bid of 2D shows 11-15 HCP and five Hearts and four Spades.

Auction 3: Rebid a Minor Suit after a 1-level Response

1C - (P) - 1S - (P)
2C

Consider this hand:

S 8
H AJ5
D KQ73
C QJ852

13 points, what do you do now? This hand illustrates why you need to plan your rebid before you even make your opening bid. Holding this hand, you fully expect your partner to respond 1 spade, and then what are you going to do?

Choice 1: you could have opened with a bid of 1 Diamond, planning to rebid 2 Clubs. Alex and I strongly prefer this choice, when you have precisely 4 Diamonds and 5 Clubs and a minimum hand.

Choice 2: Open 1C and now you rebid your bad 5-card club suit.

Choice 3: No, you cannot open 1 Club and rebid 2 Diamonds. This would be a reverse and would promise 17 or more points.

Choice 4: Rebid 1NT? Well, that's certainly better than reversing. But. ugh, what if partner rebids 4 Spades (assuming you have a doubleton) and you put down this specimen? I can already imagine their look of disappointment.

So do choose Choice 1. Distort your shape a little bit by opening 1 Diamond and planning to rebid 2 Clubs.

Responder Rebids Their Suit

Here are three auctions where Responder rebids their suit at the 2-level.

Example 1:

1C - (P) - 1H - (P)
1S - (P) - 2H

Example 2:

1D - (P) - 1S - (P)
1NT - (P) - 2S

Example 3:

1D - (P) - 1S - (P)
2C - (P) - 2S

Let's discuss each one.

Example 1: Responder has to have six hearts to rebid 2H. And he also has only 6-9 points. This is a very weak bid and shows dislike of both Clubs and Spades. If Responder is weak and has only five Hearts, he should choose one of Opener's suits or bid 1NT next. If he only has five Hearts, they have to be very good ones. This would be very unusual.

Example 2: 2 Spades is a signoff bid, and a five-card suit is sufficient. Opener has shown either two or three Spades, so you know that your side has at least a seven-card Spade fit.

Example 3: Responder should have six Spades to rebid them. Why can't 2 Spades show 5? Because in that example, what if your partner has a singleton Spade? Do you really want to play in 2 Spades if the opponents have more spades than you do? Your partner bid 2 suits, they didn't rebid 1NT, so they rate to have a more distributional hand than if they had rebid 1NT.

BID THESE HANDS WITH ME by BARBARA

And is each bid Forcing (F) or Non-Forcing (NF).
You are playing Standard (Not 2/1) and fairly simple.

1.

S 63
H AQ109
D AKJ103
C 87

S 542
H K8765
D Q52
C 32

2.

S AQ10765
H 8
D AK5
C A65

S K2
H AQJ42
D 876
C 432

3.

S 32
H AKJ3
D AQ42
C AJ4

S AQ54
H 542
D 63
C 9876

4.

S 5432
H AQ
D AK64
C AQ3

S AQJ9
H K32
D 532
C K52

5.

S 42
H AKJ2
D AKQ32
C 32

S KQJ1065
H 43
D 54
C AQ4

6.

S 32
H 32
D AKJ32
C K1032

S AK7654
H A54
D 654
C 4

7.

S 5
H AQ765
D AK2
C 10432

S A64
H KJ432
D 54
C 987

ANSWERS:

1.

WEST
1 D
3 H NF

EAST
1H F
Pass

16-18 + 4H

2.

WEST
1S
3S F

EAST
2H F
4S

Forcing because Responder promised 10 or more points & Opening Bidder promised 16-18 and a six-card (or longer) Spade suit.

3.

WEST	EAST
1D	1S F
2NT NF	Pass

2NT shows 18-19 HCP
Balanced hand
Stoppers in unbid suits

4.

WEST	EAST
1D	1S F
4S * NF	4NT (Keycard Blackwood)
	6S
5D (3 or no KC)	

5.

WEST	EAST
1D	1S F
2H* F	3S F
4S	4NT
5H	6S

2H is a reverse (always forcing) = 17 + pts & more of first bid suit than second.
3S is Forcing = 10+ pts + long Spades (not playing Ingberman)

6.

WEST	EAST
1D	1S F
2C NF	3S
Pass	

= 13 or more pts. (unlimited)

Responder must choose 1 of Opening Bidder's suits

Responder can choose by passing. So when he jumps in his own suit, he has 10-12 and six of them.

3S Invitational = 10-12 pts + six Spades

7.

WEST EAST
1H - 4H NF*

* 2-9 points + five of opener's major.
THE WEAK FREAK

Eddie Kantar

How would you handle this fairly common sequence in the South seat with neither side vulnerable playing matchpoints?

South (you)	West	North	East
1S	Pass	Pass	Dbl.
?			

You hold:

1. S. AJ1087 H. KQ876 D. K2 C. 3
2. S. AQ976 H. AK3 D. AQ3 C. 108
3. S. AKJ986 H. 3 D. QJ84 C. K5
4. S. KQ1096 H. AKJ103 D. A2 C. 3
5. S. AK109865 H. 2 D. AJ10 C. K5
6. S. AJ876 H. KQ92 D. 43 C. QJ

SOLUTIONS

1. 2H You have enough strength and distribution to bid your second suit. If not now, when?
2. Redouble. This lets partner know you have the best hand at the table at the same time encouraging him to join the party.
3. 2S You have the strength and distribution to bid again, but you must have a strong suit to rebid it in this sequence. Remember partner passed your opening bid so she has 0-5 points.
4. 3H Not forcing but highly invitational. You don't need much for game facing this monster.

5. 3S Facing a passed partner this rebid shows a hand that can take about 8-9 tricks and doesn't need much for game.

6. Pass. This is not your hand, stay out of trouble.

REVERSES by KAREN WALKER

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1C	1H	1H	1NT	1H	2D
2D		2S		3C	

A two-level reverse (where you must go to the 2-level to show your second suit) shows a distributional hand with extra strength, and it forces partner to bid again. Specifically, it promises:

- 1 - At least 16-17+ high-card points.;
- 2 - At least 5-4 distribution in your two suits;
- 3 - Your first suit must be longer than your second suit;
- 4 - Your second suit must be **higher in rank** than your first suit; **and**
- 5 - Partner must have bypassed your second suit with his response.

Note that opener's one-level rebid (1C-1H-**1S**) is **not** a reverse.

Your rebid is a reverse **only** if you must go to a higher level to show the suit (1C-1NT-**2S**).

A three-level reverse is made when partner's response forces you to the 3-level to show your second suit (for example, 1S-2H-**3D**). Like a two-level reverse, this is forcing and shows extra values. The only differences are that your second suit will usually be **lower in rank** than your first suit, and you may have equal length in your two suits (5-5 distribution).

Example hands

S J107 H 3 D AQJ7 C AKQ102

You open 1C and partner responds 1S. You can now reverse with a rebid of 2D. This forces partner to bid again and give you more information. If he rebids a long spade suit, you'll raise to 4S. If he bids anything else, you can further describe your hand by bidding spades next. Note that since you didn't raise spades right away, you denied holding 4-card support. Your belated raise shows 3-card spade support **and**, by inference, tells partner you have a singleton heart (since you've shown 9 cards in clubs and diamonds and 3 cards in spades).

S AQJ106 H J D KQ1076 C A5

You open 1S and partner bids 2H, showing 10+ pts. and at least 5 hearts. Since you must go to the next highest level to show your diamond suit, a 3D bid here is a **3-level reverse** (often called a **high-level reverse**). With a weaker hand (12-14 pts.), you would rebid 2S to show a minimum and keep the bidding low.

S **AK1054** H **KQ9862** D **A4** C **Void**

You can also use a reverse bid when your suits are longer than 5-4. Here, you open 1H, partner responds 1NT, and you make a reverse bid of 2S to force. Over whatever partner bids, you'll bid your spades again to show extra length. Partner will know that you must hold 5 spades (because you bid them twice) and 6 hearts (because your hearts must be longer than your spades). Partner can now decide what the trump suit should be.

S **K7** H **AQ62** D **AQ** C **KJ754**

You open 1C and partner bids 1S. This hand qualifies as a reverse to 2H, but a 2NT rebid is a better description of your strength and distribution. Your hand is fairly balanced, your suits are not robust, and you have almost half your points in your doubletons. If you instead bid 2H here, you promise only about 17+ pts., and you tend to show a hand that's more suitable for a trump contract than for 3NT.

Responding to a reverse

Opener's reverse is forcing for one round -- you must bid again, even if you have a very weak response. In general, you should base your rebid on your picture of partner's hand (he's shown at least 5-4 in his suits) and try to support one of his suits if possible. Here are some simple meanings for your second bid, in the general order of preference you should consider them:

- **Raise of partner's second suit** (1C-1S-2H-**3H**) = 4-card support
- **Bid of partner's first suit** (1C-1S-2H-**3C**) = 3+-card support
- **Jump in partner's first suit** (1C-1S-2H-**4C**) = a strong, distributional hand with 4+ cards in partner's suit and slam-try values (12+ playing pts.)
- **Rebid of your own long suit** (1C-1S-2H-**2S**) = very weak hand (5-7 pts.) with 5+ (preferably 6) cards in your suit and no fit for partner's suits.
- **2NT** = weak hand (5-7 pts.) with a stopper in the unbid suit. You can also choose to use 2NT here as the Lebensohl 2NT Convention (see below).
- **3NT** = good values (8-11 pts.) with stoppers in the unbid suit.

The unbid suit (1C-1S-2H-**3D**) = forcing and could be artificial, usually without support for partner's suits. Like "New Minor Forcing", a bid of the fourth suit can be used when you have values for game (8-9+ pts. after opener's reverse) and want to find out if opener has 3-card support for your major.

If you'd like a more accurate way to rebid after a reverse, you can use a popular convention called Lebensohl 2NT.