

## ALEX'S BRIDGE TIPS

1. You open the bidding with 1 Diamond and your LHO (Left Hand Opponent) bids 1S. The auction proceeds Pass-Pass back to you as opening bidder. You now bid 1NT. What does your bid promise?

Answer: You cannot have a minimum 12-14 HCP or you would pass, being as how partner took no action over the 1S overcall and could have nothing.

You must have a reasonably balanced hand because you are bidding No Trumps but it cannot be 15-17 HCP balanced or you would have opened 1NT.

Therefore this bid (after partner has passed) GUARANTEES 18 to 19 HCP and at least one Spade stopper.

2. This is your hand: You are the Dealer and you open 1D.

S AQ87  
H 6  
D AJ765  
C Q65

Your LHO bids 1H and it goes Pass-Pass back to you. What should you now bid, if anything?

ANSWER: The correct rebid for Opener is Double. This is a re-opening takeout double. You have support for all the unbid suits (at least Jxx in all unbid suits) and you want your partner to bid. Here's the deal...partner may have had:

S K5  
H AQ976  
D 87  
C KJ86

Partner (Responder) is forced to pass with this hand. She could not make a negative double and we do not bid NT when we have five good cards in opponent's suit. We make what is called a Trap Pass in hopes that Opener now re-opens with a Double. Responder will now pass this takeout double and convert it to a penalty double. Opponents are vulnerable, you are not. They are minus 500 at least.

3. You are the Opener with this hand and you open 1C

S K54  
H AK76  
D 87  
C QJ65

The opponents pass throughout and partner responds 1H. What is your rebid?

Answer: 2H. This shows 13-15 points. A minimum hand. It could be even only three-card Heart support, although four-card support is preferred. The truth of the matter is that, while you would like to brag about the quality of your Hearts, you may still only bid 2H. Smile when you bid 2H but only bid 2H (Just kidding about the smiling part!)

If you bid 3H here instead, partner will know you have something like:

S K54  
H AK76  
D 8  
C A6543

Here you open

1C- 1H

3H showing 16-18 points and four-card support for partner's Hearts.

And with the following hand

S AQ4  
H AK76  
D 8  
C A6543

1C - 1H

4H showing 19 or more points and four-card support for partner's Hearts.

By the way, this 4H bid is NOT a drop-dead bid. Because Responder COULD have only 6 points when he bid 1H, the 4H bid says "I have around 20 points (including dummy points)." Thus, Responder, if he has 13 or more points, should continue on towards slam, not just pass in a hurry, forgetting to process the implications of partner's jump to game.

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## CLEAR YOUR MIND

From IBPA

by Brad Coles: International Bridge Press Association

A few months ago I wrote about a deal where I made a foolish and expensive mistake, and, instead of putting it out of my mind, I let it affect my bidding on the next board. This "dwelling on the past" has been a reasonably common theme in my life, in and out of bridge, but I like to think I'm getting better at recognizing these lapses and dealing with them.

Since putting that confession in print, I've become much more aware of other players when I see them suffering from a similar affliction. In many cases, rather than waiting for

the next board, the fatal distraction can occur on the same board as the original error. And even more often, the distraction is caused not by one's own error, but by partner's error.

Bridge players have a strange relationship with blame-allocation. Many years ago, I was playing in a first-time partnership with an expert partner, and he made what I still consider to be the single worst bid I have ever seen. The auction was discussed over lunch, and our captain told me in no uncertain terms that the result was my fault, because I had made a non-systemic bid earlier in the auction, and the blame should always go to the person who makes the first mistake.

Some players give up too easily after a poor start. Say the bidding goes 1C - 1S  
2S - 3NT  
4S

Dummy comes down with a flat mirrored hand and there are nine top tricks. Try as you might, you can't possibly comprehend what partner was thinking when he bid 4S. "Did he think that 3NT was artificial? Did he forget that we play 2NT as an enquiry to ask if he has four trumps? Sometimes it seems like he just doesn't trust me. Maybe I should have just concealed the spades and responded 3NT on the first round, so that he wouldn't have to make a decision."

This is a poor way to approach the 4S contract that you are currently declaring. The better strategy is to double your efforts and be the best that you can be for the next five minutes, while you try to find a way to rescue the situation. If you go down in 4S when you could have made it, then you have no right to criticize partner's 4S bid.

Another example: you open 1S, the opponents end up in 3NT, and partner leads a diamond. Looking at your hand, you can see that a spade lead would have beaten the contract quickly. "Actually, he does this kind of thing quite a lot. He hardly ever leads my suit. This game would be so much easier if partner would just do what I tell him to do."

The reality of bridge is that when something goes wrong, that is the moment when you need to concentrate even harder. One error might not have been enough to let them make the contract. If you get distracted and offer up a second error to give them a ninth trick, then this poor result is on you.

The board is not over until the last card is played, and in many cases the match is not over until the last board is played. Only one error puts the match out of reach – until that moment, all of your earlier errors are just part of the journey.

*Ed Note: Get the negative, wandering thoughts out of your head as you play a new hand. If you dwell on what just happened, you cannot channel your mental energies into the new challenge ahead of you and something bad will happen on the next hand also.*

## Augie's advice August Boehm, New York City [ From IBPA]

### Defensive signals

Defenders are in the communication business, and it takes two to tango: one to transmit, and a partner to receive. Try your hand as East in the first example:

#### North (Dummy)

**S K 6 3**  
**H 8 5 2**  
**D A Q 9 7 3**  
**C J 3**

#### East (You)

**S 9 8 7 5 4**  
**H K 9**  
**D K**  
**C T 9 8 6**

South opened 1NT (15-17) and North raised to 3NT. Partner leads a standard queen of hearts – over to you.

Versus notrump, the lead promises queen-jack-ten, so it's imperative to overtake in case declarer holds HAx.

If you duck and are allowed to win the heart continuation while declarer withholds his ace, the defenders' communications are blown. you have no heart to lead back.

But if you overtake, and your heart king holds, you return hearts and declarer wins the ace. Declarer runs the diamond jack and you're in. What do you return?

This is a trick question because I have withheld an important piece of information: what heart did partner play at trick two? You are hoping to find him with a quick entry to run the hearts; on the bidding it could be either black ace. If partner played a low heart, he is signaling suit preference for clubs, the lower possible shift; a high heart asks for spades. In fact, partner played the heart jack at the second trick, so you should shift to spades. *(This asks for the higher of the remaining suits)*

The full deal:

	<b>North (Dummy)</b>	
	S K 6 3 H 8 5 2 D A Q 9 7 3 C J 3	
<b>West</b>		<b>East (You)</b>
S A 2 H Q J T 7 4 3 D 6 4 C 7 5 2		S 9 8 7 5 4 H K 9 D K C T 9 8 6
	<b>South</b>	
	S Q J T H A 6 D J T 5 2 C A K Q 4	

All of partner's remaining hearts have the same trick-taking value, and he knows you are void in hearts, so his job is to show the location of his re-entry, and yours is to notice it. In most signalling situations, tell partner what he needs to know.

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### **PUT UP OR SHUT UP** **by Andrew Robson**

If partner bids preemptively, showing a weak hand with a very long suit, you should put up (i.e. raise his suit) or shut up. Mostly shut up. Say partner has opened 3 H, or similarly has bid 3 H over an opposing 1 Club or 1 Diamond opening (a double-jump). You would expect him to have something like this:

<b>Hand a)</b>	<b>Hand b)</b>	<b>North (Dummy)</b>
S 2 H K Q 10 9 7 4 2 D J 4 2 C 6 3	S 6 2 H Q J 10 6 4 3 2 D 4 C K 6 3	S K 6 3 H 8 5 2 D A Q 9 7 3 C J 3

As you can imagine, the last thing partner wants you to do is bid another suit, or try notrumps. So either put up (to 4 H) or shut up.

What would you respond to partner's 3 S opening bid with these (across)?

<b>Hand i)</b>	<b>Hand ii)</b>	<b>Hand iii)</b>
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S 6 2  
 H K Q J 7  
 D Q J 4 2  
 C K Q J

S J  
 H A 9 6 2  
 D A 9 7 4  
 C A Q 8 2

S Q 10 2  
 H 8 4  
 D A 9 7 4 2  
 C 9 7 5

(i). Pass. Shut up. A veritable picture gallery, but those queens and jacks (“quacks”) will not be much use to partner – who is hoping for aces (and to a lesser extent kings) facing his shortage. Don’t even think of bidding 3 NT – how would you reach partner’s spades?

(ii) 4 S. Put up – with three-and-a-half quick tricks (H A, D A, C AQ). A rough rule of thumb is to put up to Four when you have opening points counting aces, kings and all trump honours (ignoring side quacks). [Better is to count two for an ace and one for a king – upgrading the king of trumps to two and the queen of trumps to one – and bid Four when you have six+ such Preempt Points (“PEPs”).]

(iii) 4 S. You have ten spades so should bid 4 S as the level of the fit, more to be difficult than to expect to make.

South Deals  
 None Vul

S K  
 H A Q J 2  
 D A 8 7 5 3 2  
 C 3 2

S 6 5  
 H K 8 7 5  
 D K 4  
 C K Q 9 8 7

N  
 W ----- E  
 S

S Q 7 2  
 H 9 6 3  
 D J 10 9  
 C A J 6 4

S A J 10 9 8 4 3  
 H 10 4  
 D Q 6  
 C 10 5

**West North East South**

3 S

Pass 4 S\* Pass Pass

Pass

\* Four possible quick tricks (H AQJ and D A) plus the huge S K [and six PEPs]. I would mark the alternatives (out of 10) 4 S 10; Pass 8; 3 NT 1 (generous); 4 D 0 (even 0 is too high!).

**4 S by South**

**Lead: C K**

West led C K v 4 S, then C 8 to C A. East switched to D J (best), covered by D Q, D K and D A. Declarer needed West to hold H K and the only way to reach hand to take the heart finesse was in trumps.

At trick four declarer overtook S K with S A (this is a key play) to lead H 10 (winning) then H 4 to H J. He cashed H A discarding D 6 and later conceded to S Q. 10 tricks and game made.

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## **REBIDDING A FIVE-CARD MAJOR SUIT** **by Tony Jackson**

Let's have a look at this auction (playing 2/1):

**1S - 2D**

**2S - 3S**

The question was: does the 3 spade bid by responder promise 2 spades, or does it promise 3 spades? (It can't be 4 or more spades since responder made a game forcing bid but did NOT bid Jacoby 2NT.)

Answer? It depends! It's partnership agreement. You can play it the way Mike Lawrence recommends or the way Larry Cohen recommends. It all depends on whether the 2 spade rebid promises a 6-card suit or if opener can rebid 2 spades with only 5 of them.

What if you have this hand:

**S: AJT72**

**H: 82**

**D: K5**

**C: KQ84**

13 points, 5-2-2-4 distribution. You open 1 spade, of course. What do you rebid if partner responds with a game-forcing bid of 2 diamonds? You do not want to rebid 2NT with your bad heart holding. So you really have 2 choices: you can rebid 2 spades or you can rebid 3 clubs.

Mike Lawrence says that the 3 club rebid shows extra values and therefore you should rebid 2 spades.

Larry Cohen says that you should NOT rebid a 5 card major suit, so you should rebid 3 clubs. In other words, the 3 clubs bid does NOT promise extra values. (*Ed. Note: Extra values means 16 or more points*)

Neither approach is right or wrong. It's up to partnership agreement. There are many things like this in bridge where you really do need to iron out your agreements. If you are wondering "which way do you play it, Tony?", the answer is: However my partners want. Two of my partners want me to rebid 2 spades because they follow the Mike Lawrence approach. But my other partners want me to rebid 3 clubs because they prefer the Larry Cohen approach.

By the way, if you are thinking "why not rebid 2NT?", let me change the hand slightly:

**S: AJT72**  
**H: 8**  
**D: K5**  
**C: KQ842**

Now what do you rebid? Do you really want to rebid 2NT with a singleton heart? That sounds terrible. So now you really do have to choose: do you rebid 2 spades holding only 5, or do you rebid 3 clubs even though you do not have extras? And please do NOT count your singleton as extras: for one thing, you don't have suit agreement yet, so you don't know if your singleton is a plus or a minus! And even if you end up playing it in spades or clubs, shortness in the long-trump hand is not nearly as useful as in the short-trump hand.

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So how do you play this? And more importantly, how do your partners play it? Do you play it the same way as your partners do, or is this yet one more disaster waiting to happen?

*Ed note: Alex and Barbara like the 3C bid to show extras: 16 or more, so we would rebid 2S with only five Spades in this scenario. Some people call the 3C bid "a high level reverse, because you have bid a new suit, as responder, at the three-level, even though you have not yet agreed on a trump suit.*

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What about rebidding a 5-card minor suit?  
Consider this auction:

**1D - 1S**  
**2D**

This time, the 2D rebid should promise a 6-card suit. You might be thinking "but Tony, the 1D bid could be as few as a 3 card suit, and it is quite often just 4 cards. Why not rebid 2 diamonds with 5 of them?" The answer is: you almost always have a better bid available. Can you rebid 1NT? Can you raise your partner? It is much better to rebid 2S with only 3 card support than to rebid 2D with only 5 of them. Can I construct a hand where I rebid 2 diamonds with only 5 of them? Very rarely. I can't really think of a hand on the spot: If I don't have a singleton, I can rebid 1NT. If I have 3 spades, I can raise partner. If I have 4 clubs, I can rebid 2 clubs. So I would need to have 1-4-5-3 distribution to rebid a 5-card diamond suit. That's pretty rare. And if the diamond suit isn't great, I would probably opt to rebid 1NT even though I only have one spade. Don't strive to rebid your 5 card minor suits! Try to find another bid.

In other words, if I rebid my minor suit, my partner is going to assume I have 6 (or more) of them. Only once in a great while will have a 5 card suit, very rarely.

It might sound counter-intuitive that you can rebid a 5-card major suit (if you follow the Mike Lawrence approach) but you cannot rebid a 5-card minor suit. Bridge is funny.



## Marti's Mutterings by Marti Ronemus

My goodness, there's nothing like starting the morning with an opportunity to save the day for a fellow bridge player. This is abridged from a phone call from a long-time Faithful Reader and friend that I had over morning coffee. (No. I am ABSOLUTELY NOT giving you guys my phone number. It's bad enough being barraged with emails!)

**Her: My partner opened 1Heart and I held**

**S AKx H Qx D AKx C KQxxx. Should I have bid 3C or 3NT?**

Me: Honey, do the math. Pard opens and you have 21+ pts. That spells slam to me. If you bid 3NT you are precluding any chance at slam, since that shows 13-15 pt and no interest in a major.

All you need to do is bid **2C**. A new suit by you will force Pard to bid again, and you'll find out a little more about her hand. Next you can make a slam attempt. Does this make sense?

**Her: Huh. I meant 3C to show a jump shift. Why wouldn't I use a Jump Shift?**

Me: First of all, almost NO ONE uses strong jump shifts any more. A jump to **3C** in modern bridge is WEAK. Why gobble up all that bidding space when a simple change of suit is all you need. After hearing Pard's rebid, you can move forward.

And another thing, all notrump bids show specific point counts. After you limit your hand like that (bidding 3NT), you have given up the right to place the contract!

Remember, the better your hand, the slower you want to tippy toe up the bidding ladder until you have enough info to place the contract.

**Her: But doesn't bidding 2C show 10 pts?**

Me: (Banging my head on the table) It shows a minimum of 10 pts. That's why it is forcing.

**That bid has a floor, but no ceiling.** It is unlimited.

**Her: (long pause) Aha. The light dawns.**

Ed. note: I sure do love that description of an unlimited bid. It has a floor but no ceiling.

## 20% is better than 0%

*From Richard Ross's newsletter . Richard runs games at St. John's Church on Monday afternoons and online games every day.*

*St. John's York Mills Church  
19 Don Ridge Drive*

This is an excerpt from the excellent essay entitled “*Life Lessons from the Bridge Table*”, by **Tihana Brkljačić**. She writes “that there are many valuable lessons we learn by playing bridge, that we can apply to our regular lives.”

This week we look at how being risk averse can be risky; not discriminating; taking one for the team; not giving up, and how to analyze carefully.

On some boards we just don't have a chance to make a decent result. We have to accept the fact that our opponents reached the best spot and the most we can hope for are a few matchpoints.

But every board counts, and a handful of matchpoints might be all we need to win the tournament. So, when things don't look bright, in both bridge and life, we have to accept that obstacles are part of life, and that on bad days (hands), even little increments count.

### **Don't discriminate.**

Bridge tournaments have that special power to remove all the differences that exist among players except for the skill itself. If Mr. Doe is known to be the best player in the room, once the tournament starts we don't care less if he is 18 or 80, married or not, a lawyer or a scavenger, a Buddhist or a Christian.

Age may be the most obvious, but it also applies to differences in social background, education, culture and so on. Therefore, we can find some very amusing partnerships or teams consisting of seemingly mismatched people who join together in the game.

Bridge has taught me that people engaged in an all-consuming activity will disregard the differences, and concentrate on what is important. Therefore, in work, or my private life, I am less concerned about how people who have nothing in common will function. I just try to make the task engaging and challenging, and so far I can confirm that once they really get involved, the differences become irrelevant.

### **Take one for the team (partner).**

We have all been in situations when partner or team-mates compensated for our mistakes, and when we did the same for them. Bridge teaches us to trust, to rely on others, to be responsible and to put the common goal in front of personal wishes. If you keep your partner happy you will be happy too. Playing competitive team bridge develops a team player mindset that is so needed and appreciated in both private and professional domains.

### **Being risk averse can be risky.**

A beginner will sometimes refuse to bid (e.g. overcall, preempt) because they “don't want to risk”. Very soon, when opponents land at the best contract and/or partner fails to lead their suit they will realize that passing is at least as risky as bidding. In the same manner, people may be reluctant to invest, to change jobs, to leave a relationship, because taking this action may be risky. It is in human nature to believe that being passive and maintaining the status quo is safer than taking action. But, simple, every-day examples from the bridge table teach us that there is no safety in being passive.

### **Analyze carefully.**

In my opinion, there are three main techniques that need to be developed to play bridge reasonably well: visualization, judging possibility, and stepping into someone else's shoes.

Visualization involves imagining the various layouts possible during bidding and play. Judging possibility is necessary to take the correct view of the hand and choose the best line, while stepping into partner's and opponents' shoes may answer the question of why they made a particular bid, or chose this card instead of another one.

Carefully analyzing moves and thinking about motives gives us deeper insight into circumstances, and it is equally useful in real life as it is in bridge.

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## **MURPHY'S OTHER LAWS**

1. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
2. A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.
3. He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
4. A day without sunshine is like, well, night.
5. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
6. The 50-50-90 rule: Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you'll get it wrong.
7. Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.
8. God gave you toes as a device for finding furniture in the dark.
9. When you go into court, you are putting yourself in the hands of twelve people, who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty.