

ALEX SETTLES THE BRIDGE ARGUMENTS

Alex gets one or two bridge questions every day. Sometimes he gets deals with 15 cards and sometimes only 11 cards. By the way, a deal is when you provide all four hands. A hand is when you provide only one hand.

Sometimes he gets questions like:

"Is 4 Diamonds the correct bid?" NO other info provided!

Or

"The bidding went:

1C - 1H

2S - ? What should I do next?" No hand provided!

But most of the time, the questions are excellent. We thought you might learn from seeing some of the Questions and Answers:

Question # 1: from R.

After opponent (RHO) opens 1NT and if I have a NT hand I double. If opponent's partner passes then my partner can bid otherwise they pass.

From Alex:

We do not like this approach at all. Let's say you have 16 HCP and your partner has:

S Q32

H 543

D 9765

C 1098

What is she supposed to do ?

If she passes, they will make it and you will be Minus 180 or Minus 380 and get a bottom. If she bids (what?), the opponents will double (they have the majority of the points) and your side gets Minus 300 or worse.

None of the top bridge players use the double of a 15-17 HCP No Trump bid to show the same range.

I feel strongly about this. DO NOT PLAY DOUBLE OVER THEIR 1NT (15-17) OPENING BID to show equal points (16 or more). EVER !!

Suggest you learn to play DONT or MECKWELL. Barbara can send a write-up if you need one.

Question # 2 from S.

Hi, Alex,

Yesterday I opened a 20 HCP 3 suit hand, 1444, with 3 honors in diamond suit.

The singleton spade was a 6.

I opened 1 diamond and my partner responded 1 spade, of course!

What now?

If I reverse I show first suit longer than second suit, right?

Should I jump shift!

Help!

From Alex:

4-4-4-1 hands are always a challenge to bid. If your hand was:

S A
H AK64
D KQ72
C KJ87

We suggest you open 2NT and get it off your chest. ACBL mandates that if you are going to open NT with a singleton that it should be an Ace, King or Queen. (Rules keep changing and we may not be up to date.)

But with the hand you describe which is similar to below:

S 6
H AK64
D AKQ7
C KJ87

Because of the Spade 6, you will have to open 1D. You are correct in that you must not now reverse or it will show more of the first bid suit than the second. So, I suggest this:

1D - 1S
3C

Remember that if partner held five Spades and four Hearts that she would now show her Hearts. So you will never miss your 4-4 Heart fit.

I think that this is better than

1D - 1S
2NT which guarantees two or three Spades and 18-19 HCP. You have lied about your HCP (you have 20) and partner with a six-card Spade suit will always bid on in Spades because she knows you have at least an eight-card Spade fit.

Question # 3 from B.

Auction.

1C -P -1H -P

2NT

Are systems on to the 2NT bid meaning stayman & transfers ?

From Alex:

Many partnerships use slightly different methods to find out more about the opening hand. After the auction:

1C or 1D by opener - 1H or 1S by responder.

The jump to 2NT shows a flat hand with 18-19 HCP and no 4 card support for partner's major suit.

Enter Checkback Stayman, which is what Barb and I play.

3C asks whether opener has the other 4 card major or three-card support for partner's major.

1C - 1H

2N - 3C

To use this convention, you, as responder, must have one of the following: both 4 card majors, or 5-4 in majors or a hand with one five card major. You are trying to find an 8 card major fit which always plays better than 3NT.

(With a 6 card major you already know you have an 8 card fit.)

The responses we use for Checkback Stayman are:

1C (or 1D)-1S

2N - 3C is Checkback Stayman

(Some call it New Minor but this is a bit different)

Rebids by opener after Checkback when Spades were bid by responder:

3D = no 3 card Spade support, no 4 card Heart

3H = no 3 card Spade support, I do have a 4-card Heart suit

3S = I have 3 card Spade support, I do not have a 4-card H suit

3N - I have both 3 card Spade support AND I have a 4-card H suit

Same structure for auction starting:

1C (or 1D) -1H

2N - 3C is Checkback Stayman

Rebids by opener after Checkback when Hearts were bid by Responder:

3D = no 3-card H support, no 4-card S suit

3H = I have 3-card H support, I do not have a 4-card S suit
 3S = I have no 3-card H support, I do have a 4-card S suit
 3N - I have both 3-card H support AND I have a 4-card S suit

Some players always use the other minor to inquire. Our method gives you more information, in our opinion.

PLANNING AT TRICK ONE by BARBARA SEAGRAM

We've all been told, hundreds of times, to plan the play of the hand at trick one. Why then do less experienced players often fail to do this? Novice declarers, adrenaline flowing at an alarming pace, feel their brain going to mush. They are so busy being nervous and feeling the pressure that as normally intelligent people, they cannot remember a thing about what they have learned to date. Their opponents and partner (dummy) may be at exactly the same level of ability but they aren't feeling the pressure; so they all become Einstein for now. They look impatiently as declarer counts his losers in a trump suit contract (and winners in No Trump), and sometimes, these trembling declarers let it all get away and play without further thought.

Get a grip on yourself! You can do this. I've been playing for 49 years and I still take at least one to two full minutes at the start of every hand to make a plan. (Time it, that's quite a long time!) If you just jump in now and think later, you're toast. Make a plan or you won't make your contract!

Here's a hand:

	North S Q73 H 864 D KJ C A8754	
West S 1096 H J109 D 963 C KQ109		East S 5 H Q732 D 1087542 C J3
	South S AKJ842 H AK5 D AQ C 62	

South is declarer in 6S. EW did not bid. North bid Clubs along the way, thus west chose to lead J H. Plan your play.

South has no losers in Spades, one loser in Hearts, no losers in Diamonds and one loser in Clubs.

Have a look at that Diamond suit. Such a waste. This is called duplication of values. NS has 10 HCP wrapped up in the D suit but they are all going to die under each other. Such a shame. Whenever we have this duplication, we will always have problems on the road ahead. You would like to turn the Diamond Q into the Heart Q. Or turn one of dummy's little Hearts into a small Diamond. Now you could ruff a Heart in dummy and discard a small Club from declarer's hand on dummy's extra Diamond winner.

Summary: These are the normal ways to eliminate losers:

- Ruff losers from declarer's hand with dummy's trump
- Look for extra winners in declarer's hand and make a useful discard from dummy
- Look for extra winners in dummy on which to discard a loser(s) from declarer's hand
- Finessing

Too bad, none of these will work on this hand. BUT: Enter another way of eliminating losers: Long suit establishment: Have a look at that long Club suit in dummy. Five Clubs in dummy and two Clubs in your hand. You are missing six Clubs. They rate (most of the time) to divide 4-2 in opponents' hands. Perhaps you can develop the Club suit and pray that they divide 3-3 this once.

You win the Heart Jack in declarer's hand. If you now play Club 2 to dummy's Club Ace and now concede a Club; back will come another Heart. You can cross to dummy's Spade Q and ruff another Club. Lo and behold, East does not follow suit. If you now cross to dummy's Diamond King and ruff another Club, the good news is that the small Club in dummy will now be high; the bad news is that you will never be able to get there. You will now have lost 1 Club and 1 Heart. Down one.

Let's go back. Since you were prepared to lose a Club at some point, how about if we lose it first. Keep the Club Ace in dummy as a later badly needed entry to dummy. Note that you cannot afford to pull trumps first as we need the Spade Q as an entry to dummy to keep attacking Clubs.

Win Heart Ace. Play Spade Ace, drawing one round of trump. Then lead a C, ducking it in dummy. East wins and returns a Heart. You win it and keep attacking Clubs by crossing to dummy's Club Ace. Ruff a Club in your hand. (East fails to follow.) Back to dummy with the Spade Q and ruff another Club. The Club in dummy is now high. You now draw two more rounds of trump and now cross to dummy's Diamond K and play the 13th. Club. On this wonderful card, you pitch your losing Heart.

The order in which you played these cards was important. You had to recognize that you could not draw all the trump first because the Queen of trump was a critical entry to dummy. If West had led a Diamond to start with, the contract would likely have been

doomed. When you conceded a Club at trick 2, East would have led back a Diamond, knocking out your important entry (Diamond K) in dummy.

Timing is everything. The order of playing the cards is important but also take the time to make a plan. You'll be a star in no time.

Cuebids



by Tony Jackson

A cuebid occurs when you bid a suit that the opponents previously bid. This document does not cover control bids, which are bids to show suit controls while exploring for slam. There are many different cuebids: the context determines the meaning.

Cuebids do not show the bid suit, so they are 100% forcing. In general, a good rule to remember is:

All strange bids are forcing.

1. Michaels Cuebid

Op1	You	Op2	Pard	Op1	You	Op2	Pard
(1♦)	2♦			(1♥)	2♥		

A direct cuebid of an opening bid shows a two-suited (5-5) hand.

If the suit bid is a minor, it shows both majors. If the suit is a major suit, it shows the other major suit and an unspecified minor suit. (2NT by partner asks you to bid your minor suit.)

Important: When you bid Michaels, each suit must be at least 5 cards long. You should never make a Michaels cuebid when you are 5-4 in the two suits: the power of two-suited bids comes from the distribution. There is a huge difference between a 5-5 hand and a 5-4 hand.

Examples		
♠ K J 7 6 3 ♥ Q T 9 8 4 ♦ 4 ♣ 7 3	♠ A K 7 6 3 ♥ 5 ♦ K Q J 6 4 ♣ 8 3	♠ Q J 7 6 4 3 ♥ K T 9 8 4 ♦ 4 ♣ 3
Only 6 HCP, but your points are concentrated in your long suits	Stronger example, might not take much to make game	With 6-5 hand, even more important to get in the way

How strong do you need to be for a Michaels cuebid? With a 2-suited hand, high card points do not accurately reflect its power. The strength and texture of your two long suits are what matters. Any points in your two short suits are not pulling their weight, so those points are almost irrelevant.

Some writers recommend you do not play Michaels with an intermediate hand: you should play it only when weak or strong. I don't agree with that approach. One reason is that it can be hard to decide exactly what is intermediate. More important, if you take that approach you often will not get a chance to show both suits since the opponents will frequently raise.

2. Cuebid After Partner Opens Major Suit and Opponents Overcall: LR+

Bidding opp's suit is strong:				Jump raise is preemptive:			
Pard	Op1	You	Op2	Pard	Op1	You	Op2
1♠	(2♥)	3♥		1♠	(2♥)	3♠	
♠ J T 8 4				♠ Q T 8 4			
♥ 7 3				♥ 7			
♦ A J 4				♦ 8 5 2			
♣ K Q 6 4				♣ T 9 4 3 2			

After an overcall, a cuebid shows a limit raise or better (3+ card support and 10+ points). If your partner has a minimum opening hand, they will stop short of game. If you have values for game, you can continue on. Your cuebid promises 3+ card support.

The hand on the left (above) has spade support, 11 hcp and a doubleton. This hand values at about 12 points, so it's at the top end of a limit raise.

The hand on the right (above) is weak. A jump raise of your partner's suit shows a weak hand with 4 card support, some distribution and no interest in game.

When your partner's suit is spades:

After the opponents interfere	Pard	Op1	You	Op2
	1♠	(2♥)	?	
2♠: 6-9 points, 3+ card support				
3♠: preemptive, 4+ card support				
4♠: "weak freak": preemptive, 5+ card support				
3♥: Limit raise or better: 3+ card support, 10+ points				

When your partner's suit is hearts:

After the opponents interfere	<u>Pard</u>	<u>Op1</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Op2</u>
	1♥	(1♠)	?	
2♥: 6-9 points, 3+ card support 3♥: preemptive, 4+ card support 4♥: "weak freak": preemptive, 5+ card support 2♠: Limit raise or better: 3+ card support, 10+ points				

3. Cuebid After Partner Overcalls: Support for Partner (LR+)

<u>Op1</u>	<u>Pard</u>	<u>Op2</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Op1</u>	<u>Pard</u>	<u>Op2</u>	<u>You</u>
(1♣)	1♥	(P)	2♣	(1♥)	2♣	(P)	2♥

When your partner overcalls, especially at the 1-level, they may not have a full opening hand. If that's the case, you don't want to get too high. If your partner has a poor overcall they should rebid their suit as cheaply as possible. Otherwise they can bid more strongly.

Examples			
<u>Op1</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Op2</u>	<u>Pard</u>
(1♣)	1♥	(P)	2♣
(P)	?		
♠ A 3 ♥ K Q T 4 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ 8 7 3		♠ K Q 8 ♥ K Q 9 8 4 ♦ 9 4 ♣ A Q 3	
You have a minimum overcall and no club stopper. Just rebid 2 hearts to tell your partner you are minimum.		With your 16 points, rebid 4 hearts.	

11. DRURY

YOUR HAND

The Bidding

PARTNER	OPP	YOU	OPP
PASS	P	1S	P
2C	P	?	

What do you bid?

THE DRURY CONVENTION by KAREN WALKER
www.kwbridge.com

The Drury Convention is an artificial 2C response that's used by a passed hand after partner opens 1H or 1S in third or fourth seat. It shows 3+ card trump support and maximum playing values (10 or more support points).

Drury is a very valuable convention that comes up frequently, is easy to remember and can dramatically improve your bidding accuracy. Here's the type of problem it solves:

S J43
 H A75
 D KQ532
 C 64

You pass and partner opens 1S in third seat. Without Drury, you have a choice of four possibly disastrous responses:

1. You make a limit-raise to 3S and go down because partner opened light.
2. You raise conservatively to 2S, partner passes, and you make 10 tricks because he had a full opener.
3. You bid 1NT (forcing or standard), partner passes, and you get a poor score because the rest of the field is playing in their 8-card spade fit.
4. You bid 2D, partner passes (because a passed hand cannot force) and you get an even worse score.

A Drury 2C response shows your support and strength right away, allowing you to bid your hand's full value without getting too high. It gives you a built-in safety valve if partner has opened light and it helps opener evaluate chances for game.

Drury is used only when you're a passed hand and partner has opened 1H or 1S in third or fourth seat. If you have 6-9 points, you make your normal raise to 2 of the major. If you're stronger, you use the Drury 2C response, which always shows:

1. At least 3-card support for partner's major.
2. A maximum passed hand (10+ support points).

Two-Way Drury

Some pairs use a modification called **Two-Way Drury**, where a 2C response shows exactly 3-card support and a 2D response promises 4+ card support.

This takes away your ability to make a natural 2C **or** 2D response, but the information about the extra trump can often improve opener's ability to evaluate game chances.

Evaluating your hand

A Drury 2C response is encouraging, but it doesn't promise a strong game invitation. To use Drury, you should have something better than just a maximum single raise, and you'll often have to come up with a descriptive rebid to pinpoint your strength. Here are some examples of responding hands after partner opens 1H:

S AK43 H 1097 D 5 C J10864

Bid 2C. This is only 8 high-card points, but it evaluates to 10 support points.

S 963 H Q102 D KJ84 C KJ4

Bid 2C. This is a dead-minimum Drury bid, and you'll show it by making a minimum rebid in hearts at your next turn (or by passing if partner rebids 2H).

S 3 H Q874 D K62 C AJ954

Bid 2C (or 2D if you play Two-Way Drury). This is a fairly strong Drury hand, and you plan to bid 4H if partner's rebid shows he has a full opener. But if partner rebids 2H to show a sub-minimum, you should pass.

Ed. note; You have 13 dummy pts (or support pts) after opener bids Hearts.

S KJ3 H 842 D Q754 C QJ4

Bid 2H. This is a flat 9 points with poor trumps, so just make a simple raise.

Opener's Rebids

Opener's rebid over 2C shows whether or not he has a "full" opening bid. A popular treatment (called "Reverse Drury") uses the rebid of his suit to show the bad hand. Most other bids are natural and show at least a full opener. The meanings are:

- 2 of your major (1S-2C-2S) = bare minimum or sub-opener. The Drury bidder can now pass safely at the 2-level.
- 2H (after 1S-2C) = Full opener with four hearts. This allows you to find a 4-4 fit, which will often play better than a 5-3.
- 3 of your major (1S-2C-3S) = invitational to game. The Drury bidder can pass with bare-minimum values for his call.
- 4 of your major = any hand that wants to play game opposite 10 support points.

Opener's rebids modified & simplified by Barbara.

DON'T SPILL THE BEANS

**Bridge Etiquette: from "Alert" newsletter:
Grand River Bridge Club. Kitchener, Ontario.**

Just as Alex Trebek wouldn't allow shouted-out answers from the Jeopardy audience (he would stop the tape, go back, and start the game over), so too in duplicate bridge are players forbidden to help the other contestants.

There are a number of ways that players can advertently or inadvertently spill the beans about deals that they have already played. They can:

Tell their partner they missed a slam in diamonds on Board 6 – in a loud voice that can be heard three tables away;

Leave their private score card open so that others may readily see what they did on every board;

Forget to shuffle their cards before they put them back in the board (the order that the cards were played can speak volumes); and/or

Leave the Bridgemate recap up on the screen at the end of the round – North must be careful to hit OKAY an extra time at the end of each round.

Most bridge players are extremely ethical and work hard to forget gratuitous information about unplayed deals – meaning that any bean spillage will probably not skew the game – but it is obviously better not to give them that problem in the first place.

ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME?

**Bridge Etiquette: from "Alert" newsletter:
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The opening lead has been made, dummy has come down, and declarer starts thinking. Sometimes, when declarer thinks for longer than usual, the opponents get restless and start staring directly at declarer, sometimes quite pointedly. This is unacceptable however, because being scrutinized can be very unnerving for declarer and puts pressure on him to DO SOMETHING before he's ready. In fact, the same thing goes for any player who is slow to bid or play. Whenever there is a break in tempo, considerate table-mates give no evidence of boredom or irritation or impatience, but rather continue to study the dummy and their own hand in the hopes of finding further enlightenment there.

NO FONDLING

Courtesy of Bridgematters, the newsletter of the Naples Bridge Centre.

Lately there has been an epidemic of fondling – fondling the bidding box, that is. Players touch cards in the box, fondle them, start to pull them out, put them back, etc. Proper bidding box conduct is to NOT TOUCH THE BOX until you have decided what you are going to bid. When you fondle the box, you convey unauthorized information regarding your hand. You inadvertently tell partner that you are not sure this is the right bid or whether you should be bidding at all. It is particularly problematic to fondle the bidding part of the box and then pass! Don't fondle.

GET YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT! **by Barbara**

You open 1C with this hand (below) and partner responds 1D. What will you bid next? You are North.

North

S J876
H AQ6
D Qx
C KJxx

Some of you now bid 1NT because you mistakenly believe that 1D by responder is denying ownership of a major. Thus, you believe you have no reason to show your Spades. Others rebid 1NT because you do not like your Spades.

This was partner's hand:

South

S AKxx

H Jxx

D Kxxxx

C x

IF North bid 1NT as her rebid, South would now bid 2NT showing 11-12 HCP. You have successfully missed your eight-card fit in Spades which would have been a much safer spot.

1C - 1D

1S - 2S

is a much safer spot.

LEADING PARTNER'S SUIT & SHOWING YOUR ATTITUDE

When partner leads a high card against a suit contract, let's say the Ace. Whether it is her suit that she bid or not, you are giving attitude. If you have a doubleton, play high low. That, by the way, is NOT giving count. It is giving attitude. You are playing high low because you can win the third round of the suit by ruffing. To prove to you that this is NOT count, you would not play high low if you had 9642...you would play low if partner led the Ace. This is because you cannot help with the suit...you cannot win the third round of the suit.

If partner bids a suit but the opponents get the contract, your opening lead of pard's suit depends on whether or not you supported pard's suit.

Thus, if you have 952 and you have NOT supported partner's suit and you are leading her suit, you lead small. It is not called giving count, it is showing her that you have three OR FOUR in suit. This is so that she does not think you could have a doubleton. But if you HAVE supported, lead the 9. This is top of nothing. BUT she knows it is not a doubleton because you raised and would never raise with just a doubleton.