

How often to do bid when you have no high-card points at all ? Surprisingly, there are quite a few situations you can find yourself in when you either have to bid, or might want to bid.

The first hand (from Shoreham, December) offers possibilities if partner opens the bidding. At the table, the player Passed his partner's opening 1NT bid, explaining "I couldn't bid anything because I didn't have any points" :

♠62
♥1087642
♦9
♣8653

1) Partner opens 1NT. Your hand is unlikely to win a single trick in no-trumps but you are sure to win a few with hearts as trumps, so it's clear you want to play in Two Hearts rather than 1NT. Respond Two Hearts, or a transfer bid of Two Diamonds.

2) Partner opens One Heart. Whether the next hand bids or Passes, you'd want to support hearts at some level and might jump to Four Hearts right away. You hope that partner will make it, or else your preemptive jump will cause the opponents to do the wrong thing, bidding on when they shouldn't or vice versa.

3) Partner opens Three Clubs. You can be certain that the opponents have a game (or slam) contract somewhere. Depending on the vulnerability, you might feel like jumping to Five Clubs or even Six Clubs to make things harder for the opponents. A simple raise to Four Clubs might work out better. You hope to persuade them to subside in a game contract rather than allow them a lucky guess at the slam level.

North took the opportunity to get involved on the hand below, also from Shoreham in December :

	10842	
	73	
	9853	
	876	
K3		J
AQ9		KJ652
K764		J10
AQ104		KJ532
	AQ9765	
	1084	
	AQ2	
	9	

E/W were vulnerable. South opened One Spade and West Doubled. Despite having no high cards, North decided to raise to Two Spades. East jumped to Four Hearts and South, at the favourable vulnerability, bid Four Spades. West was confident of beating this contract but not sure about making eleven tricks in hearts, so West Doubled. South finished two down but minus 300 was a good score because E/W had an easy game available in hearts (and in clubs and in no-trumps !)

Responding to partner's conventional bid, often a strong 2 opening bid or a conventional overcall, can also mean having to bid with no points :

1) Partner opens a strong 2 opening bid. For some players, the 'eight playing trick' definition can be interpreted by partner as meaning "I can Pass if I've got nothing." Unfortunately, it can be hard to know what "nothing" is. For example, if partner opens Two Spades and you have this hand :

♠76
♥107643
♦54
♣10962

- you don't want to Pass with this "nothing" hand and find partner has opened Two Spades with this :

♠AKQ105
♥AKQ2
♦1063
♣8

Four Hearts is a great contract and Four Spades is not bad either. It's better to make the opening bid forcing for at least one round of bidding. This gives partner the chance to bid a second suit if he has one.

2) Partner makes a conventional overcall. One Heart is opened on your left and partner overcalls an Unusual 2NT (showing both minor suits). The next hand Passes and you are looking at this hand :

♠87542
♥96432
♦64
♣5

You didn't expect your first bid with this hand to be Three Diamonds but that is what it has to be. It was my last bid of 2011 !

Best of luck with your bridge in the New Year.