

A Basic Modern Acol Bidding System

LESSON 2: BIDDING AS OPENER with UNBALANCED HANDS

It is winning Bridge to consider opening with slightly less than 12 points, the shape of the hand compensating for a high-card deficiency. Consider this long accepted guideline:

THE RULE of 20: open the bidding when the number of high-card points in your hand added to the number of cards in your 2 longest suits reaches 20. (Like any guideline many players will shade this and reduce 20 to 19!)

| | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) |
| ♠4 | ♠Q63 | ♠AJ642 | ♠KJ1084 | ♠J1084 | ♠K |
| ♥AJ752 | ♥K5 | ♥7 | ♥AQ532 | ♥2 | ♥8652 |
| ♦KJ52 | ♦AQ10862 | ♦AJ642 | ♦74 | ♦Q107 | ♦KJ742 |
| ♣Q106 | ♣85 | ♣105 | ♣3 | ♣AKJ86 | ♣KJ4 |
| Open 1♥ | Open 1♦ | Open 1♠ | Open 1♠ | Open 1♣ | ? |
| 11 points 5/4 | 11 points 6/3 | 10 points 5/5 | 10 points 5/5 | 11 points 5/4 | |

BUT there are dangers in opening light, so take care and use hand evaluation

- i. Do you have an easy PLANNED REBID?
- ii. Are your points in your long suits (good) or short suits (bad)?
- iii. Do you have an ace?
- iv. Do you have good intermediates (tens and nines)?
- v. Are your high cards sequential?

Hand (f) above comes up short in all 5 issues and you therefore you must disregard the Rule of 20 and PASS!

Whatever the strength of your 1 level opener, you have to make a rebid over a change of suit response from partner. (Your preference is to hear of support for your suit!)

Your two most likely rebids are:

- (i) Bidding a second suit with a 5/4 shape
- (ii) Repeating a six card suit

Consider these hands:

| | | |
|--------|--------|--------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) |
| ♠AQ96 | ♠AQ96 | ♠AQ96 |
| ♥4 | ♥4 | ♥4 |
| ♦J62 | ♦AK10 | ♦AKQ |
| ♣KJ852 | ♣KJ852 | ♣KJ852 |

After opening 1♣ and hearing a 1♥ response (remember this could be a mediocre 5/6 point hand) hands (a) and (b) should rebid 1♠ but hand (c) should make a jump rebid of 2♠. This is forcing to game and shows either 19 or a very good 18 points.

If partner responds 1♠, which could be 5/6 points, then you have found your fit and with

- a) up to 15 points you raise to 2♠
- b) 16-18 - Jump to 3♠
- c) 19+ - Jump to 4♠

(Use this method of hand evaluation rather than the Losing Trick Count which will be covered in a later lesson)

Your rebid of a suit does not guarantee 6 cards, but as ALL balanced hands 12-14 points, 5332 MUST open 1NT, a sequence such as 1♠-2♣-2♠ does. If that 6 card suit rebid has 16+ points then the opening bidder should jump to 3♠. Otherwise with 5/4 distribution you bid your 4 card ♥ or ♦ suit. But with:

♠AKQ86
♥43
♦J962
♣K2

1♠-2♥ you should rebid 2♠ rather than an unwieldy 3♦ with only 13 points.

BUT NOTE: this sequence 1♥-1♠-3♥ (6 card suit and 16+points) is NOT FORCING and does not require responder to bid again. They may have a mediocre 5/6/7 points.

Whereas 1♥-2♦-3♥ is FORCING to GAME because the 2 over 1 bid has guaranteed extra values about 9 points and a 5 card suit or 10 points and a 4 card suit (The RULE of 14)

With a more unusual 6/4 shape, you can repeat the six-card suit or introduce the four card suit. There are two factors to consider: which is the cheaper suit to rebid and the relative suit quality. Repeating a suit at the 2 level does limit the hand to 15 points and might be preferable to bidding a weak 4 card suit.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES:

- (1) If you open or rebid NT, you will normally have a balanced hand (4432, 4333, 5332)
- (2) If you bid 2 suits, you should be (at least) 5/4
- (3) If you repeat a suit, it will normally contain 6+ cards