

The Exciting World of Bridge – Lesson 5

After Opener has made two bids, Responder usually knows enough to decide on the contract. On the second bid, Opener puts the hand into one of the three ranges: 13 to 15 total points, 16 to 18 total points or 19 to 21 total points. Sometimes Opener's rebid shows a bit wider range (possibly two of the aforementioned ranges), but in those cases Responder at least knows more about Opener's hand than they did after the opening bid. Opener may describe the hand further with a third bid, if necessary.

Responder is in a position similar to the one in which Opener bids 1NT. Responder can look at the combined strength and distribution, ask "What level?" and "What strain?" and place the contract.

Responder puts their hand in one of three categories according to its strength:

- Minimum - 6 to 9 total points
- Medium - 10 to 12 total points
- Maximum - 13 or more total points

Responder's bid depends on whether Opener has shown a minimum, medium or maximum hand. Let's see how it all works.

Responder's Rebid Decides What Level

The first thing Responder must do is recognize the strength shown by Opener's rebid. Does Opener have a minimum, medium or maximum hand? Let's see how responder can tell.

Let's say that partner has opened 1♦ and you've responded 1♥. What three rebids can Opener make that *specifically* show a minimum opening hand? The answer is 1NT, 2♦ and 2♥. What range does Opener show if their rebid is 1♠ or 2♣? In this case they've shown either a minimum (13-15) or medium (16-18) opening hand.

At this point we just need to do some math. With the range that Opener has shown do we know we should stop in part-score, do we know we should be in game or are we still not sure?

If we know we should be in part-score our options are:

- Pass
- Bid 1NT
- Bid an old suit (a suit that one of us has already bid) at the 2 level.
- Bid a new suit at the two level that's lower than our first suit bid

If game is still possible but we're not sure yet, we can:

- Bid 2NT
- Bid an old suit at the three level
- Bid a new suit

If we know we have enough for game (DON'T PASS ☺):

- Bid game
- Bid a new suit

This last option is an important concept. As a general guideline, when Responder bids a new suit it is forcing. There are a few exceptions to this (hence it's not a rule) but for the most-part it's true.

Let's look at some examples of this when Opener has shown a minimum opener. Our auction has started 1♥ by partner and we have responded 1♠. Partner has now rebid 2♠.

1) ♠9876	2) ♠A876	3) ♠A876
♥A5	♥A5	♥A5
♦Q7432	♦Q7432	♦Q7432
♣93	♣93	♣K3

In the first example we have 7 total points. We would therefore pass 2♠ as we know we don't have values for game. In the second example we have 11 total points. Since Opener has 13-15, we know we're close to having enough but we're not sure. Therefore we would bid 3♠ to pass the decision back to them. In the final example, since we know we have game values we would bid 4♠.

Now let's look at some examples when Opener bids a new suit. In these examples the auction has started 1♦ by partner, we've responded 1♥ and they have rebid 1♠.

1) ♠987	2) ♠A87	3) ♠A87
♥A865	♥A865	♥A865
♦Q32	♦QJ2	♦QJ2
♣973	♣973	♣K73

With the first hand with our 6 points we would rebid 1NT. This shows 6-9 points just like it would have shown if we had initially responded 1NT. All we've done is made a little detour on the way there to tell partner that we have 4 hearts. In the second example our hand is a bit too good to just bid 1NT. Here we would be 2NT to show partner that we have a medium hand. In the third example, our rebid would be 3NT. We know we want to be in game but we've given up on our quest to find a fit in a major suit.

The above examples were with balanced hands. Let's look at what we'd do with unbalanced hands. Same auction as before (1♦-1♥-1♠).

1) ♠87	2) ♠87	3) ♠87	4) ♠87
♥A98653	♥AK8653	♥A653	♥A653
♦Q2	♦Q2	♦Q2	♦Q2
♣973	♣973	♣98763	♣KJ763

With the first two hands we would want to rebid our 6 card suit. The first one is only good enough to rebid 2♥ (6-9 points), the second one we would rebid 3♥ (10-12 points).

With the third and fourth examples we would bid a new suit (clubs). Example 3 would be a 2♣ rebid, example 4 would be a 3♣ rebid.

And lastly, we of course want to raise Opener's second suit if it's a major and we have a fit.

1) ♠8753	2) ♠KQ53	3) ♠KQ53
♥A986	♥A986	♥A986
♦Q2	♦Q2	♦Q2
♣973	♣973	♣K73

Much like if we were raising an opening bid of 1 of a major we raise to the appropriate level. The only difference is that since Opener's rebid only promises a 4 card suit, we need four to support them. With these examples Responder would rebid 2♠, 3♠ or 4♠.

Responder's Rebid when Opener Shows a Medium Opener

When Opener specifically shows a medium opener (by jumping in their own suit or in Responder's suit), Responder should pass with 6 or 7 points but bid game with 8 or more points.

Let's look at three examples and for now let's assume the auction has started 1♥-1♠-3♥.

1) ♠8753	2) ♠K753	3) ♠K753
♥A9	♥A9	♥9
♦Q952	♦Q952	♦Q952
♣973	♣973	♣A973

Since Opener's rebid of 3♥ has promised at least a 6 card heart suit, in the first two examples we know we have a Golden Fit in hearts. With example one we would pass 3♥, with example two we would raise to 4♥. In the third example, we know we have values for game but as we only have one heart we don't want to raise hearts – bid 3NT.

After Opener describes a medium hand, Responder asks two questions: "What level?" and "What strain?". These questions are answered by combining what Responder knows about Opener's hand with what is known about their own hand. With 6 or 7 total points, Responder signs off in a partscore. With 8 or more total points, Responder bids game.

Responder's Rebid when Opener Shows a Maximum Opener

When Opener shows a maximum hand of 19 to 21 total points by jumping to game or jumping in a second suit (jump shift), there should always be enough strength for game. Responder can pass if the partnership is already in game or bid a Golden Game if it isn't. If Responder is unsure of the proper strain for the contract, Responder can bid a suit. Since Opener knows that the partnership has enough combined strength for game, neither partner will pass until game is reached. When the jump shift is into notrump, however, the point count is slightly different. The opener is showing 18-19 HCP. This is logical since we know that we open 1NT with a balanced 15-17 HCP. The 18-19 HCP balanced hand is shown by opening one of a suit and then making a jump bid in notrump.

Here are some example auctions:

Opener	Responder	Opener's Rebid
1♣	1♥	2♠

Here Opener has promised a maximum by jumping to 2♠. If they had a minimum or medium opening hand then they would simply have rebid 1♠.

Opener	Responder	Opener's Rebid
1♠	1NT	3♦

Again Opener has promised a maximum. Opener doesn't care that Responder might only have 6 points, they have decided to force to game.

The great news about either of these auctions is that since Opener has forced to game, Responder need not worry too much about their next bid. Both members of the partnership KNOW that this auction is going to continue until game is reached.

One last case that also shows a maximum (sort of):

Opener	Responder	Opener's Rebid
1♣	1♥	2NT

This time Opener has shown 18 or 19 points and a balanced hand. It's a hand that was too good to open 1NT but not good enough to open 2NT. This bid is virtually game forcing but if Responder happens to have just a 6 point hand they can pass it. If Responder chooses not to pass 2NT then the partnership is forced to game.

Trumping Losers

When we are playing a trump contract, one of the best ways to get rid of losers is to ruff them. The important thing to understand is that in general, ruffing losers with the hand that has longer trumps does not actually gain you any tricks. Let's look at an example:

North: ♠8642	South: ♠AKQJT9
♥53	♥AK6
♦J73	♦942
♣A942	♣5

On this hand we look at the South hand as the Captain. We have no spade losers, one heart loser, 3 diamond losers and no club losers. It's easy to see that the only loser we can avoid is the heart loser and that would be by trumping it. Would it do us any good to ruff North's small clubs with South's trumps? No it wouldn't. This is why it's important to focus on one hand being the "Captain" and it is usually going to be the hand with longer trumps.