

RESPONDING TO ONE-LEVEL OPENING BIDS (5-CARD MAJORS)

Over a minor suit opening, the emphasis should be to introduce an alternative suit in preference to merely supporting the opening minor (majors and no-trumps score more).

Conversely, over a major suit opening, the emphasis should be to give support for the opening major at the appropriate level.

When supporting partner's opening suit, you should take account of distribution, by adding say 4 points for a void and 2 points for a singleton. Also add 1 point for extra length in the supported suit (i.e. with five cards in a minor, or four cards in a major).

There are five basic principles in responding:

- any hand of less than 6 points should be passed (in the absence of any opposition interference bidding).

- supporting partner's suit (at any level), or bidding no-trumps, are known as **limit bids**, and opener is **not** obliged to make a further bid.

- a change of suit in response is an **un-limited bid**, and opener **must bid again**.

- to change the suit at the two-level requires a minimum of **9 points**.

- with a choice of bidding a four card suit at the one-level or a five card suit at the two level, give preference to the four card suit with 9–11 points, but bid the five card suit with 12+ points.

Responding To Opening Bid Of 1♣ or 1♦

Since the opening 1♣ can be a short suit, you should initially show any other four or more card suit. Also in supporting clubs at whatever level, you need extra length in the club suit. So:

1♣/1♦ - (1♦/)/1♥/1♠: - 6+ points with at least four cards in the new suit. In response always bid the longest suit first. With two suits 5-5, bid the higher ranking first. With two suits 4-4, bid the lower ranking first (except over 1♣, with diamonds and a major, bid the major).

But, 1♦ - 2♣: - 9+ points with probably five clubs (this bid would deny a reasonable four card major in the 9–11 point range). With exactly 9 points and four clubs, it is preferable to respond 1NT.

1♣ - 2♣: - 6–9 points without an alternative four or more card suit, and a *five* or more card club suit.

1♦ - 2♦: - 6–9 points without an alternative four or more card suit, and a *four* or more card diamond suit.

1♣ - 3♣: - 10–12 points without an alternative four or more card suit, and a *five* or more card club suit.

1♦ - 3♦: - 10–12 points without an alternative four or more card suit, and a *four* or more card diamond suit.

1♣/1♦ - 1NT: - 6–9 points without any of the above.

1♣/1♦ - 2NT: - 11–12 points without any of the above.

(for the 1NT and 2NT bids, consider a 10 point hand as a good '9' or bad '11' and bid accordingly)

1♣/1♦ - 3NT: - 13+ points without any of the above (a bid to be avoided if possible).

1♣/1♦ - 2♦/2♥/2♠: - (a 'jump' shift response) - 16+ points with a good six-card suit - forcing to game.

Responding To Opening Bids Of 1♥ or 1♠

In response to 1♥ or 1♠ you should immediately support the suit with three or more cards. The level of support is shown by 'limit bids' as follows (**remember to add distributional points**):

6–9 points - 2♥ or 2♠

10–12 points - 3♥ or 3♠

13+ points change the suit and then support the major. With even a little experience you should start to play a conventional bid of 2NT (Jacoby) - this is now game forcing – the opener's responses to which are covered separately.

7–10 points with five card support – 4♥ or 4♠ (this is known as a 'pre-emptive response'). Ideally it should contain a singleton or void for maximum ruffing potential.

Without three card support for partner's major suit opening, you can bid any four or more card suit at the one level (i.e. 1♥ - 1♠). To bid a new suit at *the two level requires at least 9 points* (with exactly a 9 count and only 4 cards in your best suit, or a singleton or void in partner's suit, choose 1NT rather than 2♣/2♦ - partner is less tempted to rebid his suit). *To bid 2♥ over 1♠ requires a five card heart suit*. With a choice of suits, bid the lower ranking first (e.g. over 1♥, with four clubs and four diamonds, bid 2♣)

Other hands with 6 - 9 points – bid 1NT.

Jump shift response (e.g. 1♠ - 3♦, or 1♥ - 2♠) - 16+ points with a good six card suit – *forcing to game*.

So over 1♥ with no support for hearts (i.e. less than three cards):

- 1♠: - 6+ points four or more spades.
- 1NT: - 6–9 points, no four card spade suit
- 1NT: - 9 points, no five card suit
- 2♣/2♦: - 9 points and a five card suit, or 10+ cards and a four card suit (these bids would also deny a reasonable four-card spade suit in the 9–11 point range).

Over 1♠ with no support for spades, as above plus

2♥: - 9+ points and a five card suit

Exercises:

Over partner's 1♣:

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|----|---------|----|--------|----|---------|----|---------|----|--------|
| a) | ♠ KJ752 | b) | ♠ KJ73 | c) | ♠ Q64 | d) | ♠ Q8753 | e) | ♠ AK8 |
| | ♥ 762 | | ♥ A964 | | ♥ K96 | | ♥ AQ843 | | ♥ Q83 |
| | ♦ A986 | | ♦ 107 | | ♦ A7 | | ♦ J9 | | ♦ 852 |
| | ♣ 4 | | ♣ 743 | | ♣ Q8742 | | ♣ 9 | | ♣ 9742 |

- a) 1♠ - 8 points, spades the longest suit.
- b) 1♥ - 8 points – two equal length four card suits – bid the lower first.
- c) 3♣ - 10 points – no other four card suit – five clubs.
- d) 1♠ - 9 points – two equal length five card suits – bid the higher ranking first.
- e) 1NT - no biddable suit in the 6–9 point range.

Over partner's 1♦:

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| f) | ♠ KJ7 ♥ 653 ♦ A8 ♣ QJ853 | g) | ♠ 4 ♥ AKJ863 ♦ AQ2 ♣ Q86 | h) | ♠ 4 ♥ A109743 ♦ AQ8 ♣ A74 | i) | ♠ 9 ♥ 76 ♦ AQ952 ♣ Q8732 | j) | ♠ K76 ♥ 732 ♦ A95 ♣ KJ94 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- f) 2♣ - 11 points and no biddable major – five clubs.
 g) 2♥ - with 16 points, the heart suit is solid enough to jump the bidding.
 h) 1♥ - only 14 points, and the heart suit is not solid enough to jump bid. Temporise with 1♥ and then show the extra points next time.
 i) 3♦ (2♦) - diamond support, 8 points + an extra two points for the singleton + an extra point for the fifth diamond, - just worth a 3♦ bid (but I wouldn't argue if you chose 2♦).
 j) 2NT - 11 points, no diamond support. You should bid 2NT rather than 3♣ (1♦ - 3♣ would imply a five card club suit – remember that opener's club suit could be a short suit).

Over partner's 1♥:

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| k) | ♠ K7 ♥ 653 ♦ Q953 ♣ K762 | l) | ♠ K107 ♥ K6 ♦ J952 ♣ 10862 | m) | ♠ 42 ♥ K952 ♦ K83 ♣ A1074 | n) | ♠ 9 ♥ K10763 ♦ KQ92 ♣ 872 | o) | ♠ K76 ♥ AQ72 ♦ A953 ♣ J9 |
| p) | ♠ KJ76 ♥ 63 ♦ K9 ♣ J8532 | q) | ♠ K1072 ♥ A109 ♦ 9752 ♣ 108 | r) | ♠ 842 ♥ 76 ♦ AQ85 ♣ K974 | s) | ♠ K764 ♥ 76 ♦ Q9 ♣ AJ872 | t) | ♠ K764 ♥ 74 ♦ Q9 ♣ AK742 |

- k) 2♥ - 8 points – a simple response.
 l) 1NT - not good enough to support hearts, nor to bid at the two level.
 m) 3♥ - 10 points + 1 point for the fourth heart.
 n) 4♥ - five trumps in support, 8 points – bid 4♥ (pre-emptive response). This will make it difficult for the opposition to find their possible spade fit.
 o) 2♦ - 14 points + 1 point for the fourth heart. You want to be in at least a game. Bid 2♦ and then give jump support for hearts. A better method with a little more experience is to bid 2NT (Jacoby - the opener's responses to this will be considered later).
 p) 1♠ - no other bid
 q) 2♥ - your hand is weak. Show the fit first and forget the four card spade suit.
 r) 2♣ - no heart support, and just good enough to bid at the two-level. Bid 2♣ (but not 2♦). 1NT is a reasonable alternative
 s) 1♠ - you have five clubs and a 9 count, but give preference to the four card spade suit at the lower level - bid 1♠.
 t) 2♣ - similar to (s) but 13 points. This time bid 2♣, you will get another chance to show the spades if necessary (via what is known as a 'responder's reverse')

Over partner's 1♠:

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| u) | ♠ 96 ♥ AK95 ♦ QJ7 ♣ 5432 | v) | ♠ 96 ♥ AK952 ♦ QJ7 ♣ 862 | w) | ♠ Q9853 ♥ Q7 ♦ J83 ♣ 1085 | x) | ♠ K852 ♥ 3 ♦ A963 ♣ J1082 | y) | ♠ Q74 ♥ 10873 ♦ J5 ♣ Q863 |
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- u) 2♣? - a very awkward hand to bid. 2♥ would show a five card suit. I would reluctantly bid 2♣ despite the very bad suit. (An alternative would be 1NT with a 10 count)
 v) 2♥ - 10 points, no spade support, a five-card heart suit.

- w) 2♠ - weak as regards points and distribution. 5 points + 2 points for length (but the jack is probably useless). Not quite good enough for 4♠ (but close). Content yourself with 2♠ and await developments.
- x) 3♠ - 8 points + 1 point for extra trump length + 2 for singleton = 11 points. Just good enough for 3♠ (but I wouldn't argue with 2♠).
- y) **PASS** - a reasonable spade fit, but only 5 (poor) points, nothing extra.