

Opening 15+ Balanced Hands

♠ KJ963
 ♥ AKJ
 ♦ A104
 ♣ J7
 ♠ 84
 ♥ 107653
 ♦ K93
 ♣ K54
 ♠ A72
 ♥ 92
 ♦ QJ862
 ♣ 983
 ♠ Q105
 ♥ Q84
 ♦ 75
 ♣ AQ1062

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠ ⁽²⁾
1 15-18	2 3card spade support	3 4♦ is an ace-showing cue bid	

Pass
 Pass
 1 15-18
 2 3card spade support
 3 4♦ is an ace-showing cue bid

If North were to bid 3N on the second round to show 17-18, South would indubitably pass and the wrong contract would have been reached. East would lead a diamond and, with the club finesse failing, declarer would be two off.

With North rebidding 2N South has sufficient space to show the spade support and the major suit game is found. That contract should make ten/eleven ticks depending on whether East leads a normal diamond. That holds it to ten when the club finesse loses.

In the illustrative auction North may cue bid the ace of diamonds. **We** know that South is only interested in reaching the right game but, for North, South is unlimited and may have slam ambitions. 4♦ is the co-operative bid but does give away information when South, as here, has no plans for slam.

♠ Q93
 ♥ QJ985
 ♦ 105
 ♣ K106
 ♠ 642
 ♥ 1073
 ♦ K87
 ♣ AQ82
 ♠ AK75
 ♥ AK4
 ♦ Q932
 ♣ J5
 ♠ J108
 ♥ 62
 ♦ AJ64
 ♣ 9743

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1N	Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass
3N	All pass		

1N
 3N
 Pass
 All pass
 2N⁽¹⁾

East would not want to bid game if West were minimum and contents himself with an invitational raise in no trumps. West, with his nine count, is happy to accept.

The contract is touch and go. After such an auction, where the bidding to game has been tentative, it's best to start with a passive lead. After a spade lead nine tricks may prove elusive though the diamond pips are helpful (moral: watch the small cards). After a 4th best diamond from South, declarer can come more readily to two clubs, two diamonds, two hearts and three spades. Contract made.

♠ A8
 ♥ AQ3
 ♦ K10943
 ♣ KQ3
 ♠ 93
 ♥ 10874
 ♦ 65
 ♣ 109754
 ♠ Q10654
 ♥ K62
 ♦ J72
 ♣ J8
 ♠ KJ72
 ♥ J95
 ♦ AQ8
 ♣ A62

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	6N	All pass	2N ⁽¹⁾

Pass
 Pass
 1 15-18
 2♦
 6N
 All pass
 2N⁽¹⁾

North has an eighteen count so, after South's rebid, knows the partnership has between thirty three and thirty six high card points. Thirty three points is the magic number for underwriting a small slam. As the partnership is missing between four and seven points North shouldn't consider the possibility of a grand slam. Blasting 6N is apt.

There's little to the play. Declarer can take a losing heart finesse but that builds a second heart. Along with two spades, five diamonds and three clubs, that's twelve tricks.

♠ 865
 ♥ 85
 ♦ 1062
 ♣ A9763
 ♠ AK4
 ♥ KJ107
 ♦ AJ98
 ♣ 105
 ♠ QJ2
 ♥ AQ93
 ♦ KQ3
 ♣ Q82
 ♠ 10973
 ♥ 642
 ♦ 754
 ♣ KJ4

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
4♠ ⁽²⁾	Pass	5♦ ⁽³⁾	Pass

1♦
 3♥
 4♠⁽²⁾
 5♥
 Pass
 Pass
 Pass
 All pass
 1♥
 4♦⁽¹⁾
 5♦⁽³⁾

1 Inventive – wants to make a slam try but has no side-suit ace to show. Cues ♦K to set things in motion. The other option is to jump to 5♥ to show slam interest but to deny a side-suit ace
 2 Ace-showing cue bid
 3 King-showing cue bid

Here West has extra values including four card support for partner's major. This type of balanced hand is shown by jumping to the three level, a bid that shows 15-17 HCPs. When East cue bids the king of diamonds, West knows that there are two club losers (else a 5♣ bid from East). 5♥ will lose two club tricks, irrespective of whether the defence leads the suit (declarer has no useful discards).

If West mistakenly rebids 1N, showing 15-16 HCPs, East, rightly believing there is no eight card heart fit, will jump to 3N (trying for slam is pushy with such a flat hand and a known 31-32 HCPs between the hands). North leads a low club and the defence take the first five tricks.

<p>♠Q842 ♥AQ ♦Q72 ♣KQ82</p> <p>♠J76 ♥J873 ♦A1054 ♣A4</p> <p>♠A109 ♥K9542 ♦KJ9 ♣J9</p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1♣</td><td>Pass</td><td>1♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>1N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♦⁽²⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♥</td><td>Pass</td><td>3N</td></tr></table> <p>All pass</p> <p>1 15-16 2 Usually 4+diamonds – if we're going to lie better it be in a minor (most bridge concentrates on majors and no trumps)</p> <p>It's a principle of modern bidding that balanced hands are treated as balanced, hence North's rebid of 1N. If North rebid 1♠ that would show an unbalanced hand with either 5+clubs and 4spades or a 4441 hand with a singleton heart. Rebidding 1♠ is OK but some assumptions are no longer readily available.</p> <p>With his good intermediates (knaves, tens and nines) there's something to be said for South jumping directly to 3N over 1N. If South, however, is interested in finding a heart fit he'll have to be imaginative. To keep the ball rolling he bids 2♦, ostensibly natural. More to the point, it's forcing and confirms that South holds five or more hearts (with 4-4 in the red suits, South would have bid 1♦ first). North gives (false) preference to the major and partner jumps to 3N to offer North a choice between playing 3N and 4♥. With just a doubleton heart North has an easy pass.</p> <p>The defence cannot do any real damage to this contract, being at most only able to take one trick in each suit, so declarer will be successful. Declarer will play on hearts, giving up one trick in the suit when the suit breaks 4-2.</p>	West	North	East	South		1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	2♥	Pass	3N
West	North	East	South														
	1♣	Pass	1♥														
Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾														
Pass	2♥	Pass	3N														

<p>♠95 ♥K106 ♦QJ8 ♣K8653</p> <p>♠AJ1064 ♠KQ7 ♥J73 ♥A98 ♦10754 ♦K32 ♣Q ♣A1074</p> <p>♠832 ♥Q542 ♦A96 ♣J92</p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>1♣</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>1♠</td><td>Pass</td><td>1N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>2♦</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♠</td><td>All pass</td></tr></table> <p>1 15-16</p> <p>We have a similar start to the last hand in that responder bids two suits to confirm 5+cards in the first and 4+cards in the second (yes, a real second suit this time). This time responder has no game ambitions and passes the opener's preference bid of 2♠ (another route would see West rebidding spades, though that tends to show at least six cards).</p> <p>Declarer should prevail by setting up a long diamond trick. There will be five spade, one heart, one diamond and one club tricks for eight in total.</p>	West	North	East	South			1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠	All pass																
West	North	East	South																														
		1♣	Pass																														
1♠	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass																														
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<p>♠7 ♥A43 ♦AK985 ♣AQ63</p> <p>♠J8652 ♠Q1094 ♥9752 ♥K ♦42 ♦10763 ♣98 ♣J1052</p> <p>♠AK3 ♥QJ1086 ♦QJ ♣K74</p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♦</td><td>Pass</td><td>2N⁽¹⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>3♥</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♠⁽²⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>4♣⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>4♠⁽³⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>4N⁽⁴⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>5♣⁽⁵⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>5♦⁽⁶⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>6♣⁽⁷⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>6♥/N</td><td>All pass</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>1 15-18 2 Ace-showing cue bid 3 King-showing cue bid 4 Roman Key Card Blackwood 5 One of the five "aces" 6 Do you have the queen of trumps? 7 Yes and ♣K</p> <p>And now an altogether more meaty prospect. North can eventually use Roman key Card Blackwood. When one key card is found to be missing North checks whether the queen of trumps is present. It is and North can safely bid the slam, perhaps preferring the higher-scoring no trump spot. When South bids 6♣ it seems that he has forgotten to show the king of spades (else a 5♠ bid). Not so since that card has already been shown with the 4♠ cue bid.</p> <p>All declarers will surely take the heart finesse. When that loses to the (irritatingly singleton) king there are just the twelve tricks.</p>	West	North	East	South				1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4N ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	5♣ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	5♦ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass	6♣ ⁽⁷⁾	Pass	6♥/N	All pass	
West	North	East	South																														
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Pass	2♦	Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾																														
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠ ⁽²⁾																														
Pass	4♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽³⁾																														
Pass	4N ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	5♣ ⁽⁵⁾																														
Pass	5♦ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass	6♣ ⁽⁷⁾																														
Pass	6♥/N	All pass																															

<p>♠ 105 ♥ QJ64 ♦ K74 ♣ K1075</p> <p>♠ AKQ8 ♥ K92 ♦ A9 ♣ QJ86</p> <p>♠ 9632 ♥ A105 ♦ J853 ♣ A2</p> <p>♠ J74 ♥ 873 ♦ Q1062 ♣ 943</p>	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td>2N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♣⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>3♠</td><td>Pass</td><td>4♠</td><td>All pass</td></tr></table> <p>1 19-20, balanced 2 Stayman</p> <p>No matter how we get to 2N, with our big balanced hands, we still play so-called SYSTEM ON whereby our systemic responses are all the same. Here Stayman reveals the 4-4 spade fit and game is quickly reached, East not having quite enough to try for slam.</p> <p>The contract is assured but may make an overtrick* if North leads ♥Q (now ♥10 becomes finessable). The only possible losers are a heart, a diamond and a club. <i>*it's also possible to squeeze North in clubs and hearts to make the eleventh trick</i></p>	West	North	East	South	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠	All pass				
West	North	East	South														
2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass														
3♠	Pass	4♠	All pass														
<p>♠ K86 ♥ KQJ65 ♦ A3 ♣ KJ3</p> <p>♠ J973 ♥ 7 ♦ QJ954 ♣ 1052</p> <p>♠ Q102 ♥ 10432 ♦ K1062 ♣ A4</p> <p>♠ A54 ♥ A98 ♦ 87 ♣ Q9876</p>	<p>Board 1 (Talk) : Dealer North : Love All</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1♥</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>2N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>4♥/4♦⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>Pass/4♥</td></tr></table> <p>All pass 1 15-18 2 Ace-showing cue bid</p> <p>If North jumps to 3N on the second round of bidding, South cannot possibly guess that partner has five hearts and that bid will be passed out. East leads a diamond and the contract has no chance. It loses four diamonds and a club.</p> <p>With the recommended space-saving auction shown, South is able to show three card heart support and the better spot is now attainable. North may cue bid 4♦ in case partner is interested in slam. South only wanted to put the contract into the correct denomination. He hastily retreats to 4♥. The diamond lead, being dangerous (away from the king), is not obvious and declarer will emerge with twelve tricks on any other lead (the fourth and fifth clubs disposing of the diamond and spade losers).</p>	West	North	East	South		1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥/4♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	Pass/4♥
West	North	East	South														
	1♥	Pass	2♣														
Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥														
Pass	4♥/4♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	Pass/4♥														

<p>♠ 10987 ♥ 5 ♦ 832 ♣ Q9763</p> <p>♠ Q654 ♠ AKJ2 ♥ A1098 ♥ KQ7 ♦ A65 ♦ QJ109 ♣ K2 ♣ AJ</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ J6432 ♦ K74 ♣ 10854</p>	<p>Board 2 (Talk) : Dealer East : North South vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>2♣⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>2♦⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>2N⁽³⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>3♣⁽⁴⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♠</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>4♦⁽⁵⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>5♠⁽⁵⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>5♥⁽⁵⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>6♥⁽⁶⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr></table> <p>6♠/N All pass 1 21-22 balanced; or 8 playing tricks 2 Relay 3 21-22, balanced 4 Stayman 5 Ace-showing cue bid 6 King-showing cue bid</p> <p>West looks for a major suit fit and once that comes to light is able to make a slam try by cue bidding the ace of diamonds (always denying 1st round control of clubs, else a 4♣ bid). This is an advance cue bid, so called when we agree the suit by inference rather than after a direct raise. East cooperates by showing the ace of clubs (simultaneously denying the ace of hearts – no 4♥ bid). When West shows the ace of hearts he also denies ♦K (else a 5♦ bid). East, unsure of West's intentions, makes a further move by showing the king of hearts. West has heard enough and signs off, with 6N being a better-scoring contract.</p> <p>There's nothing to the play. Declarer will take a diamond finesse and, as the king of diamonds is well placed, will make all thirteen tricks.</p>	West	North	East	South			2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	2N ⁽³⁾	Pass	3♣ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	5♠ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	5♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6♥ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass
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5♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6♥ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass																						