

U3A Bridge

Lesson 17: Pre-emptive Bidding

A pre-emptive bid promises a long, strong suit (7+) with very little outside strength – normally at most a K or Q in another suit. You should expect to go 3 down when not vulnerable and 2 down vulnerable opposite a partner with nothing.

(a) ♠ KQJ10 8762	(b) ♠ K6	(c) ♠ 98765432	(d) ♠ A74
♥ 54	♥ 765	♥ A65	♥ AQJ10763
♦ 73	♦ QJ109765	♦ A7	♦ Q4
♣ 9	♣ 6	♣ 10	♣ 6

Here Hand (a) is a good 4 level opening or overcall non-vulnerable, or 3 level vulnerable. (b) is a good 3 level opening or overcall non-vulnerable (c) has very good defensive possibilities and a lousy suit, pass. (d) is too strong, bid 1♥ and see what occurs.

When making a pre-emptive bid think about (1) the vulnerability. (2) Position at the table.

Partner's Response

The rule is, **once you have made a pre-empt partner is in charge. You have said your piece.** In general partner should bid only if their hand is weak or strong. If weak, with support for your suit, they should consider raising you one or two levels, this could scupper the opposition's decision-making. They clearly have a game or better – but what is it?

On hand (b) You hold ♠ J987 ♥ QJ10 ♦ 842 ♣ 832. Partner opens 3♦, Double, ? – a bid of 4♦ or even 5♦ could make them miss their game or slam or make them pick ♠, which may be tricky.

If you hold something like ♠ QJ10 ♥ K842 ♦ AK2 ♣ KJ2 bid 3NT.

With ♠ 2 ♥ AKQ842 ♦ A2 ♣ KJ32 bid 3♥, this is **forcing** – partner MUST bid again, here partner will raise to 4♥ – the singleton club and doubleton spade plus 3 trumps give 4♥ a good shot.

Without help for partner's suit, rebid your suit or – if it is very good think about 3NT.

Defence to Pre-empts

You need to be reasonably strong (15+pts) or to have a long, strong suit yourself to take action.

You hold ♠ 2 ♥ AQ84 ♦ AQ102 ♣ KJ32. LHO bids 3♠. Your hand is ideal for a **Take Out Double** asking partner to bid (or, exceptionally, if they have a trump stack, to pass, converting it to a penalty double). **Double is for Take Out.**

A suit bid will show a good hand with 5+ cards in a good suit, ♠ 2 ♥ AKQ82 ♦ A102 ♣ KJ32 partner can support, bid their own suit (which will be good and 5+), bid NT or pass.

Double followed by a new suit after partner has responded shows a very strong hand.