

B is for BALANCING

Hopefully, you're all practicing what I teach, and that is "Never leave the opponents playing in their fit at the 2 level". Let's recap our thinking behind this. When the opponents have found a fit and yet neither of them even invites going to game, it means that they have no more than about 22 HCP between them. They may even have as few as 18 HCP with the opener having 12 HCP and the responder having 6. So, if the opponents have 18-22 HCP then our side also has 22-18 HCP. In addition, if the opponents have 8 or more cards in their fit, then we have no more than 5 in their suit, which leaves us with at least 21 cards between us in the other 3 suits. Most of the time we will also have an 8 card fit, as well as having the same number of points as the opponents. We should not allow them to play at the 2 level in their fit, we should find our fit and either play in it or force the opponents to go up to the 3 level. Here are 2 auctions where, as South, you should balance rather than leave the opponents to play a 2-level contract in their fit:

1)	N	E	S	W	2)	N	E	S	W
		1H	Pass	2H					1D
	Pass	Pass	?			Pass	1S		2S
						Pass	Pass	?	

On example 1, if you pass, then EW get to play in their 8 card fit at the 2 level
On example 2, if you pass, then EW get to play in their 8 card fit at the 2 level

When you are in the balancing (or Passout) seat, you may have 10, 11 pts, and partner probably has about 8-11. If you have 7 or 8 or 9, partner is likely to have as many as 12, 13, 14 but just couldn't bid. You should balance by bidding a 5 card suit or longer if you have one. If you don't, but have support for the other 3 suits then you can double and let partner pick the suit. Hand below, "Balancer" is South who didn't have a long suit to bid and didn't want to make a Takeout Double.

N	E	S	W	
	1H	Pass	2H	
Pass	Pass	?		You're South holding 83 J93 AQ105 KJ87

South wants to balance but doesn't have a 5 card suit to bid and doesn't want to make a Takeout Double because partner's almost sure to bid spades and South only has 2. South would love to get North to choose one of the Minor suits and there's a way he can do that, South can bid 2 NT to ask partner to pick his better minor. Don't get Confused with the Unusual 2NT where you have to be 5-5. This 2NT can't be a natural Bid, it simply asks partner to bid 3 or 3 D. North bids 3D, East with 14, bids on to 3H. When you balance and the opponents bid one higher, don't bid again, however a good fit you have found, you've done your job in competing and making them play 1 level higher than they wanted to

		J1074		
		102	Pass	
		K9762	3 Diamonds	
		A9		
K962				AQ5 DEALER- 1 Heart
K75				AQ854 Pass
J4	2 Hearts			83 3 Hearts
!0532	Pass			Q64
		83		
		J93	Pass	
		AQ105	2 NT	
		KJ87	All Pass	

South leads the A of diamonds, and a diamond to North's K. How do you defend? Because you balanced you turned a score of -110 into a score of +100.

		Q	DEALER – 1 Heart
		KQJ32	Pass
		AQ52	
		984	
AK10954			J876
A4	2 Spades		10965 PASS
983			VOID your bid?
A5			KQJ63
		32	
		87	PASS
		KJ10764	PASS
		1072	

2 Spades in balancing seat shows a good hand, 15-17 HCP's and a 6 card suit. Partner should bid 4 spades.

		43	
		AK7432	1 Heart
		AQ3	Pass
		54	
KJ109			Q875
Q1086	Pass		5 DEALER - Pass
42	1 spade		KJ95 Double
Q93	Pass		A1072
		A62	
		J9	Pass
		10876	Pass
		KJ86	Pass

This is a pre-balance double, East is a passed hand, west is marked with hearts.