

Competitive Decisions at the Three-Level

Every time you play you will be faced with a decision about whether to compete to the three-level or allow the opponents to win the auction. How do you decide? Do you guess? Do you ALWAYS bid to the three-level? (I hope not!) Let's take a look at the types of auctions we are thinking about.

An example of this type of auction would be:

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♣	2♥	3♣

OR

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠		

OR

North	East	South	West
P	P	1♦	2♣
2♦	3♣		

OR

North	East	South	West
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
3♥			

Notice in some auctions it is Opener and Responder choosing whether to 'bid on'. It can also be Overcaller and Advancer who have the choice to make.

What these auctions have in common is:

- 1) Both your partnership and the opponents are bidding.
- 2) You are not interested in bidding game, only in winning the contract for your partnership.
- 3) Typically, either you (or both you and partner) have limited the strength of your hand(s).
- 4) The opponents have bid above your suit at the two- or three-level.

How do you decide? Each hand and situation is different. Vulnerability does affect your decision.

Below are some very straightforward and easy guidelines that will work for you in most situations.

The player that 'bids-on' in a competitive auction should have either:

- Shortness (0 or 1 card) in the opponent's suit, **OR**
- Extra trump length (if you promised a five-card suit, do you have 6+? If you promised a three-card raise, do you have 4+?), **OR**
- A second suit which might be a source of tricks (Did your partner open 1 originally and you hold \spadesuit KQx? Did you raise hearts, but also hold \clubsuit AKxxxx?).

Yes, each hand and situation is different. Many players get swayed by their HCP (which is probably the LEAST important consideration). Vulnerability does affect your decision. Some players have a built in default to NEVER let the opponents play at the two-level. Just remember that very few bridge ideas, mantras and policies are written in stone. It **IS** ok (sometimes) to let the opponents play a hand....even at the two-level.