

LIMIT Bids

Shows a specific type of shape and guarantees a certain number of points.

There are only 2 types of bids,

- Open Bid (generally forcing)
- Limit Bid (usually not forcing)

Understanding the limit bid is a CRITICALLY IMPORTANT concept to grasp for any bridge player.

If everyone at a table bids to the optimum contract then every pair will score 50%. This is the key feature of Duplicate Bridge. You can win both with bad hands and with good hands by judicious bidding and play of the cards.

The objective of bidding is to find the optimum contract between you and your partner, it is not to win the auction. Over-bidding to win the auction is a losing strategy.

When we over-bid, under-bid, play or defend poorly, that 50% par result varies. Limit bids are one strategy to protect you from over-bidding.

Limit bids are the key to proper bidding and finding the correct level for your final bid, but you should recalculate the value of your hand after every bid by your partner and the opposition.

Most natural notrump calls are limit bids. Pass is a limit bid. Raising partner's suit is a limit bid. Rebidding your own suit is a limit bid.

When you make a limit bid you hand control to your partner to decide the final contract.

Bidding a new suit, or making an artificial call is an open bid and obliges partner to call again.

If it is your turn to open the bidding, a call of a suit is an open bid but it only obliges partner to call if they have 6 or more high card points.

If you open the bidding with a notrump call then that is a limit bid unless you play an artificial and forcing notrump opening.

If partner opens the bidding with a notrump call (limit bid) most partnerships use artificial calls (such as Stayman and Transfers) to arrive at an optimum contract which are not covered here.

If partner opens the bidding with a suit call then you are obliged to bid with 6 or more points. Opener shows their strength on the second bid, by a limit bid of notrump (balanced) or a suit. If the opener has fewer than 16 high card points they must limit their hand by bidding a suit ranked the same or lower than the opening suit, unless responder has bid at the next level. This is often called the BARRIER PRINCIPLE. If opener repeats their suit it shows extra length of at least 1 card.

The question is what does responder bid? Do you limit the bidding, or force partner to bid again?

Minimum hand (6-9 points limited to 1 of suit, 1NT of 2 of partner's suit)

Partner Opens	Partner Overcalls	I Overcall
I want to make a limit bid as soon as possible.	Pass or minimum limit bid only with support for partner's suit.	Pass or limit bid at cheapest level.

Medium hand (10-12 points bid to 2 level or jump raise partner's suit)

Partner Opens	Partner Overcalls	I Overcall
I want to invite game so make an invitational limit bid with a fit, or keep the bidding open for 1 round so partner can show the strength of their hand. Then decide if game is on.	Pass or limit bid with support for partner's suit. Only call a new suit with good points and a void in partner's suit. The best option is a cue raise with a fit or pass without a fit.	8+ HCP 5 card suit at 1 level; 10+ HCP 5 card suit at 2 level, or jump shows a pre-emptive hand (limit bid) with long suit.

Strong hand (12-15, 16-18 or 18+ points) There are many artificial system calls intended to force game or show slam interest in this situation when partner opens or overcalls.

Partner Opens	Partner Overcalls	I Open
I want to find a game contract so keep the bidding open until partner limits their hand and then choose which game unless bad misfit. I normally won't settle for any contract below game unless the opposition show unusual strength or partner opened light.	Make an open bid of new suit, limit or game bid. The cue raise (with a fit) is a good option to force partner to show the strength of their hand.	Assess partners bid (limit or open) and either pass, bid game, make an invitational limit bid or force with a new suit only when very strong.

Examples of limit bids

Dealer	N	E (you)	S	W	Comment
North	Pass	Pass	?		<12+ points; balanced to semi-balanced
North	Pass Pass	Pass Pass	Pass ?	1C	0-5 points
North	Pass Pass	Pass 2C	Pass ?	1C	6-9 points; 5 card club suit (if playing std with 3 club openings), no 4 card major.
North	Pass Pass	Pass 1NT	Pass ?	1C	6-9 points, balanced no 4 card major.
North	Pass	1NT	?		15-17 points; balanced hand.
North	Pass	2NT	?		20-22 points; balanced hand.
North	Pass Pass	Pass Pass	Pass ?	1NT	0-7 points, balanced.
North	Pass Pass	Pass 2NT	Pass ?	1NT	8-9 points; no 4 card major.
North	Pass Pass	Pass 3NT	Pass ?	1NT	10-15 points; Balanced and/or no 4 card major.

North	Pass Pass	Pass 4NT	Pass ?	1NT	16-17 points; minor slam invitational call.
North	Pass Pass	Pass 2H	Pass ?	1H	6-9 points; 3+ card heart fit.
North	Pass Pass	Pass 3H	Pass ?	1H	10-11+ points; 3+ card heart fit.
North	Pass Pass	1H 1NT	Pass	1S	12-14 points; 5 card heart suit. No 4 card spade suit.
North	1H 2H	Pass 2S	Pass ?	1S	7-11 points; 3+ card spade fit.

The option below demonstrates using a cue raise instead of a medium strength limit bid.

North	Pass 2D	Pass 2H	1H ?	1S	10+ points; 3+card spade fit. Called a Cue raise and particularly powerful with overcalls by your side.
North	Pass 2D	Pass 2D	Pass ?	1S	A cue raise is also used when partner opens 10+ points, 3+ card spade fit.