OPENING WITH A BALANCED HAND

You will be dealt a BALANCED HAND (4,3,3,3 or 4,4,3,2 or 5,3,3,2) almost 50% of the time.

It is your turn to open the bidding; with…

- Less than 13 pts: Pass
- 13-14 pts: bid 1 of a suit preparing to rebid 1NT (*)
- **15-17 pts**: bid 1NT
- 18-19 pts: bid 1 of a suit preparing to rebid 2NT (*)
- **20-21 pts**: bid 2NT
- 22-24 pts: bid (2C) preparing to rebid 2NT (*)
- **25-26 pts**: bid 3NT
- 27+ pts: bid (2C) preparing to rebid 3NT (*)

(*) Here are examples where you WOULD NOT blindly rebid NT.
Remember your hand is BALANCED.

- You have 18-19 pts and the bidding goes 1S (you) : Pass : 2S : Pass
  - Your partner has raised your suit, a major, showing a fit and 6+ pts; even if you are minimum (18 pts) you do have a shortage (5,3,3,2 hand) and you would bid 4S, not 2NT (18 HCP + 1 SP + 6 pts minimum from partner)
- You have 13-14 pts and the bidding goes 1H (you) : Pass : 1NT : Pass
  - Your partner has bid 1NT before you could do so… you pass (you certainly cannot bid 1NT), especially with a 5,3,3,2 hand (as you cannot change suit).
- You have 13-14 pts and the bidding goes 1D (you) : Pass : 1H : Pass
  - If you have 4 hearts, you will not bid 1NT but support your partner's hearts. Your hand is of the 4,4,3,2 type (4 diamonds and 4 hearts) so you have and extra shortage point too. Anyway, with up to 15 total pts, bid 2H
- You have 18-19 pts and the bidding goes 1C (you) : Pass : 1H : 1S
  - If you do not have stoppers in S, the opposition's suit, do not bid 2NT!

Notes

When overcalling in NT, you must have 2-3 stoppers in the opposition suit(s). And it is the same when deciding to go NT during the bidding, after the opposition has bid a given suit (or suits).

After the following sequence: (2C) : Pass : (2D) : Pass : 2NT : Pass, Responder can use Stayman (with 3+ pts) and Transfers (with 0+ pts).

For those of you who practice reverse bidding, bidding 1 of a suit and rebidding 1NT may show 13-15 pts and inability to reverse; and the hand may be unbalanced (but could also be balanced e.g. 3 spades, 4 hearts, 4 diamonds, 2 clubs – opens 1D but cannot rebid 2H with less than 15 pts, if partner responds 1S)