



## Partnership Agreement

The opening bid is the first bid in an auction that isn't a PASS.

The rules of bridge say that a bid of 1NT says: "As declarer I will win  $(6+1=)$  7 tricks using my hand and my partner's hand and there will be no trump suit".

However, we have an agreement with our partner that if one of us opens the auction with a bid of 1NT our hand has:

**Limited** Point Range: 12; or 13; or 14 High Card Points; It doesn't matter where the High Card Points are shared amongst the suits.

**Balanced** Shape: 4:3:3:3 OR 4:4:3:2 OR 5:3:3:2 (BUT NOT A FIVE CARD MAJOR) Put another way: No voids; No singletons; at most one doubleton; no five-card major suit.

This agreement is part of a set of tactics for playing the game. Other players may use different tactics. You may use different tactics when you know more about the game. However, this agreement is a very good place to start. It:

1. Gives our partner a lot of information about our hand
2. Shuts out the opposition
3. Must be disclosed to the opponents. This is done by "Announcement". As soon as the opening bid of 1NT is made, before the next player calls, the opener's partner must say "Twelve to Fourteen".



## When you can't open One No Trump

You may have 12 or more high card points, or 12-14 high card points, but the shape doesn't fit the above rules. Open the bidding with 1 of your longest suit.

## More Bridge Words and Terms

The 1NT opening is a limit bid: Partner knows the point count within a narrow range. There aren't enough bids to be this precise all the time!

A Wide-Ranging Bid shows a high card point count anywhere in a relatively wide range. For example, an opening bid of 1 of any suit shows a range from 12 to 19 points.

The 1NT opening bid is not forcing: Partner does not have to reply with a bid, he/she may pass. Some other bids are agreed to be forcing, that is partner must reply with a bid.

The 1NT is slightly pre-emptive: the bid is quite high for the strength of the hand. However, it gives responder a precise description of the hand and it makes it hard for opponents to enter the auction. Responder makes all the decisions from now on. Replies to 1NT also carry precise meanings.

Often the partnership looks for a No Trump Contract, because these score well. When partner opens 1NT, the responder knows they have a balanced hand. If the responder has a balanced hand, the number of tricks in a No Trump contract can be predicted fairly safely from the joint point count (check your table of HCPs and winnable tricks).



## Playing No Trump Contracts

No Trump contracts can be the most interesting to play. When the opening lead is turned over, and dummy is put down on the table, declarer should spend a minute or so planning.

1. Sources of Tricks are suits with many cards, at least seven, between the two hands, even if not all the high ones are present. These are suits to play early. Try to count the cards in at least one of them.
2. Often the result of a no trumps contract depends on being able to lead the last few, often lowly, cards in a suit. These cards are said to be established by playing the higher ones.
3. Suits with few cards, even high ones, are suits you stay away from. The defence want to establish their cards.

For example: Declarer holds:

♠ Q J 10

♥ A 2

♦ K Q 6

♣ J 10 9 8 7

Dummy holds:

♠ 4 3 2

♥ K 4 3

♦ 10 9 8 7

♣ Q 6 2

Diamonds and Clubs are the sources of tricks. Some tricks will be lost, but you can win three club tricks after the Ace and King are played! One trick must be lost in Diamonds, but two or three more can be won. Avoid Hearts and Spades. When you lose tricks in Clubs and Diamonds, the defence will return Hearts or Spades to you, and you get the lead, and control, back.



## Opening leads in No Trumps

The declarer and defenders are both looking to establish tricks as soon as possible. Opening leads will therefore usually be from long suits.

It is usual to lead the fourth highest of your longest and strongest suit, e.g. with K 10 8 7 6, lead the seven.

However, if you have a sequence of at least three high cards lead the highest card, e.g. holding J 10 9 8 6, lead the Jack; your partner can then deduce that you have no higher card in that suit.

Avoid leading out your winners immediately as this may establish tricks for declarer. For instance, with

♠ 8 3 2

♥ A 4 3

♦ 10 9 8 7 6

♣ A 6

Do not lead out your aces – this does not help establish tricks. Lead the ♦ 10.