

## Bidding Conceptions

### Opening the bidding

Before opening the bidding, you must think what your rebid is going to be. If you have no logical rebid perhaps you should be considering no-trumps, either as an opening bid or as a rebid.

You will need 13 points, HCP + distributional points, to open the bidding in a suit or a 7 loser hand. You can use the 'Rule of 20' to check if you should open. For example:

**The Rule of 20**

states that you can open the bidding when your high-card points added to the number of cards in your two longest suits equals at least 20.

♠ A Q 7 4  
♥ K 4 3  
♦ 6  
♣ Q 10 9 6 3

11 HCPs + 9 cards = 20

If partner is not a passed hand and you open a **suit**, you must remember that you guarantee a rebid. However, when you open **1NT** you do not guarantee a rebid. Partner needs to force you to bid, with Stayman, a transfer or a jump bid. Partner may also invite you to bid, for example with an invitational 2NT raise. If partner is a passed hand, it is permissible for opener to pass the first response.

The following list of considerations should be taken into account before opening the bidding:

- What rebid will you make?

Before making your first and subsequent bids, you must think of your next bid. This is a most important rule which many people, new to bridge, forget. You must also consider the most awkward bid that your partner is likely to make

- With two touching 5 card (or 6 card) suits, open the higher ranking first
- With two non-touching 5 card (or 6 card) suits, open the major suit first
- With 4-4-3-2 shape outside the No-Trump range, open the lowest 4-card suit.

This method allows:

- ⇒ Partner to raise your suit, or
- ⇒ Partner to bid your other 4 card suit at the one level, or
- ⇒ For you to show both your 4 card suits at the one level, else you may rebid the required number of no-trumps

- With 4-4-4-1 shape

Always open diamonds if you have them else open 1♣ if there is a disparity in suit quality

### Strategic bidding

- Opening good suits

If you open with a good suit, for example AK1086, and the opposition buy the contract, your partner will have had some guidance as what to lead

- It is safer to get into the bidding sooner than later

If you make a bid before the opposition have spoken, it is difficult for them to double you even if you are in a bad contract. However, once the opposition have spoken, they are in a better position to know what is right to do. They know whether they have a fit or misfit. If it appears that they have a misfit, they will want to defend and perhaps double.

Rule: If your hand is one which is borderline for an opening bid and you defer opening, you should generally later refrain from overcalling if your partner passes.

However, if you have a good suit which you would like your partner to lead and the vulnerability is suitable, then it may be worth taking the chance. The **general** rule for opening hands is the Rule of 20 (HCPs + length of two longest suits). But we have to be sensible, c.p.

♠ 6	♠ AQ
♥ AQ1063	♥ J7542
♦ AJ72	♦ Q
♣ 1086	♣ Q976

I would always open the 1<sup>st</sup> hand, but never the 2<sup>nd</sup> hand. The 1<sup>st</sup> hand tells Pard the main feature of your hand, but if you open 1♥ on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hand and Pard is on lead against the Oppo's contract do you want him leading from a K high holding? And your high cards are in the short suits.

- Pre-emptive bids in third position

If there has been two passes and you hold a weakish hand but have a good suit of KQJ76 of ♠s, a bid of 1♠ puts a lot of pressure on the fourth player. If the fourth player has a good hand, he will not like to jump to the three level to show his values, so he may make a takeout-double. This allows your partner scope for a further pre-emptive raise. If the fourth player just overcalls at the two level (understates his hand), his partner may not realise the value of his hand and so the opposition may play in a part-score instead of a game or may play in the wrong denomination.

### Example 1:

*N/S NV*

North	East	South	West
-	-	1♠	X
?			
		♠ 1043	
		♥ 75	
		♦ J986	
		♣ A542	
♠ A			♠ 9852
♥ AQ1063			♥ KJ42
♦ AK72			♦ Q5
♣ J108			♣ Q76
		♠ KQJ76	
		♥ 98	
		♦ 1043	
		♣ K93	

11 tricks are easy for East/West but will they always get to game following a 2♠ response from North?

### Hand valuation

What kind of hand determines whether it has trick taking potential?

To answer this question, you first need to know whether the hand is to be played in a suit or no-trumps.

In a suit you need:

- High cards
- Plenty of trumps (8+ between your hand and partner's)
- Short side suits for ruffing purposes
- Long side suits for suit establishment

In no-trumps you need:

- High cards
- Long suits to establish tricks

So, what do you look for when you sort your cards and want to decide whether to open the bidding?

If your hand is distributional, has a 5-4-2-2 shape or better, you should first consider a suit. When your high cards are in your long suits, you should strive to find a suit fit (8+ cards) with partner. However, if your high cards are in the short suits, perhaps no-trumps may be better!

When you are balanced (4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2), then playing in no-trumps is often the best contract. If your high cards are distributed across your suits and you have a 5-card suit, then you will have time to set up your long suit. One point worth considering is that if you have a poor 4-card suit and you know that partner also has some cards in that suit, then the opposition will not be running too many tricks.

### High card points

The top cards of a suit are the ones which are needed to win tricks, so they are given value. The value is known as high card points (HCPs).

*Table 1*

#### *High card points*

<b>Card</b>	<b>HCP</b>
Ace	4
King	3
Queen	2
Jack	1

Therefore, a full deal contains a total of 40 HCPs.

This seems very simple, but points are no use if the distribution is such that your aces get ruffed. We have to give value to distribution.

### Distributional values

Making extra tricks from a long suit must be a bonus, so we allow for this 'goodness' when we open the bidding. For any 5-card suit, we can add an extra point towards our Total Points (TPs).

We can extend this scenario to one of a very distributional hand, say a 6+ card suit or a 5-5 distribution. So, to open the bidding, we use the following formula:

Total Points (TPs) = High Card Points (HCPs)+Length Points (LPs)

An example to appreciate distribution.

### Example:

A 3-3-3-4 hand (3 ♠s, 3 ♥s, 3 ♦s and 4 ♣s) containing 14 HCPs may not be worth as much in playing strength as an 11 HCP distributional hand. Compare these two hands:

♠ Q97	♠ 5
♥ K73	♥ AQ7542
♦ A52	♦ KQ963
♣ AJ85	♣ 7

Table 2 contains the value that you should put on distributional short suit values when a **fit**: suit contract has been decided upon.

*Table 2*

<i>Short points (SPs)</i>	
<b>Length</b>	<b>Value</b>
Void	3
Singleton	2
Doubleton	1

### Wasted distributional values

Both you and your partner will be allowing for distribution when assessing values for bids. There is no problem if you are both allowing for distribution in different suits. However, a problem arises if you are both adding a point for the same suit doubleton. Similarly, a void (worth 3 points) is not worth that amount opposite partner's AK doubleton. On each round of the bidding, you should reassess your values.

### General values for game

The following table should be used as a guideline to the values required for game and slam. Please note however that the higher the contract the more playing tricks and losers come into the equation.

<b>Contract</b>	<b>HCPs</b>	<b>TPs</b>
3NT	26	
4♥/4♠		26
5♣/5♦		28
6♣/6♦/6♥/6♠		32
6NT	33	

Often it is worth considering 3NT instead of a minor game if a long suit can be established. It is when you have good cross ruffing potential or a second suit to set up that the minor suit game becomes a good shot.

### Valuation of hands to explain the principle.

(a) ♠ KQJ765	(b) ♠ KQ973	(c) ♠ AQ762
♥ 983	♥ QJ3	♥ 983
♦ K3	♦ KJ632	♦ -
♣ A3	♣ -	♣ A9863

(a) 13 HCPs + 2 LPs = 15 TPs (the 6-card suit giving 2 LPs)

(b) 12 HCPs + 2 LPs = 14 TPs (2 @ 5-card suits giving 1+1 = 2 LPs)

(c) 10 HCPs + 2 LPs = 12 TPs (2 @ 5-card suits giving 1+1 = 2 LPs)

All the above hands (a-c) are worth opening, that is, they contain a minimum of 12 TPs and fit the Rule of 20.

### Total Point valuation for responding

The same Total Point valuation can be used when responding to partner. In the following three examples, partner opens with 1♥.

(d) ♠ KQ73	(e) ♠ KQ973	(f) ♠ 97
♥ 73	♥ 853	♥ 85
♦ J1093	♦ AJ7	♦ AKJ832
♣ A86	♣ 108	♣ Q93

With (d) you have 10 TPs (10 HCPs) and a 4-card ♠ suit, so you make the normal reply of 1♠ (6+ TPs with a minimum of 4 ♠s).

With (e) you have 11 TPs (10 HCPs + 1 LP) and a 5-card ♠ suit, so you make the normal reply of 1♠.

With (f) you have 12 TPs (10 HCPs + 2 LPs) so you make a two-level bid of 2♦ (10+ TPs with 4+ ♦s).

On the previous three examples, a trump fit was not instantly found. However, the next three examples find a fit immediately. You will now see that a shortage in a side suit becomes a definite advantage. Again, partner opens 1♥.

(g) ♠ J93	(h) ♠ 9	(i) ♠ -
♥ QJ73	♥ QJ73	♥ QJ73
♦ KQ7	♦ KQ73	♦ KQ973
♣ 943	♣ J943	♣ J943

When a trump fit of at least 8 trumps has been discovered, you should modify your Total Point formula to take account of a shortage in a side suit. Therefore:

$TPs = HCPs + \text{Shortage Points (SPs)}$

where SPs are:

Void = 3

Singleton = 2

Doubleton = 1

Note: Length Points are no longer used when a suit fit has been found. Shortage Points take care of the value of resultant long suits.

With (g) you have a ♥ fit but your hand is very balanced. You have 9 HCPs but are only worth a raise to 2♥.

With (h) you have the same 9 HCPs, but your singleton improves your hand. Your 11 TPs (9 HCPs + 2 SPs) gives sufficient values for a raise to 3♥.

With (i) you have the same 9 HCPs but now have 12 TPs (9 HCPs + 3 SPs). You have a minimum raise to 4♥. Partner will not always make these 'thin' contracts, but the opposition will be kept out of their makeable contracts (♠s in this case).