

Opening bids at the one level

When you open the bidding, in a suit, at the one level, it may be any one of a large range of hands, varied in both strength and distribution. So, what kind of hand do you need to open the bidding?

The minimum strength hand that you require is one which meets the following *general* limitations:

- A hand which contains a rebid
- A hand which meets the 'Rule of 19' (many play RO20)
- *7-loser hand* or better
- 12+ TPs (occasionally 11 TPs)

The minimum strength hand is depicted in Example 1:

Example 1:

♠ AQJ976
♥ Q7
♦ 10962
♣ 3

This hand has only 11 TPs (9 HCPs + 2 LPs) but it only has 7-losers and meets the Rule of 19 (if that is what you use). That spade suit is worth more than any old 9TPs. That ♠ suit is so strong that there is no embarrassment if you have to rebid ♠s. Therefore, it is quite correct to open 1♠.

The maximum strength hand is one in which there is:

- Insufficient playing tricks to open with either a 2♣ game call, or an Acol 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ bid, or
- Insufficient strength or too much distribution for a balanced 2NT bid

A typical hand is shown in Example 2:

Example 2:

♠ AJ73
♥ 6
♦ AKQ6
♣ KQJ6

This 20 HCPs hand does not fit into any of the strong Acol bid categories. Therefore, you should open it with 1♦, planning to make a game forcing rebid (2♠) rebid.

Example 3:

♠ AQ65
♥ AK852
♦ -
♣ AK75

Open 1♥ and if partner bids 2♦ you can make a GF reverse of 2♣. If partner bids 1NT you can make a GF bid of 3♣ (inferring 5-♥s). Any black suit bid, by Partner, and the sky is the limit.

The paired hand with Example 3 was:

♠ J874
♥ QJ
♦ KJ5
♣ 6432

And slam was available in ♠s.

Minimum opening hands

Because Responder knows that a minimum rebid, by opener, of his first suit may be showing a minimum hand, there should be no reason why the partnership should get too high. In fact, it is a good manoeuvre to open with these weak hands. Opening a major has a pre-emptive effect causing difficulties to the opposition. Using the hand from Example 1, we can see how bidding these weak hands can be advantageous.

Dealer East; North-South vulnerable.

♠ 2
♥ AJ543
♦ K8
♣ KJ954

♠ K853 ♠ AQJ976
♥ 9 ♥ Q7
♦ AQ753 ♦ 10962
♣ 876 ♣ 3

♠ 104
♥ K10862
♦ J4
♣ AQ102

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

North South can make 11 tricks in ♥s but how do they get into the bidding?