BIDDING AND PLAYING HANDS IN NO TRUMPS

Open 1 No Trump on balanced or semi-balanced hands with 12 – 14 points. A balanced hand is one with a shape of 4,3,3,3; semi-balanced 5,3,3,2, where the 5 card suit is either clubs or diamonds. With five spades or five hearts it is standard practice to open one spade or one heart. If your hand is any other shape (5,4,2,2 for example) do not open 1 No Trump.

Examples of hands when you would open 1 No Trump

(a) ♠ A J 4 3 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ A 2 5 ♣ 10 9 7
(b) ♠ 10 9 8 ♥ A J 7 ♦ K Q 10 9 8 ♣ A 6
(c) ♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ K 10 6
(d) ♠ Q J 5 ♥ K Q ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ A J 10 8 7

Partner's response to 1 No Trump

In general, to make 3 No Trumps you need a minimum of 25 – 26 points. This is only a rough guide, and there will be many hands with 25, 26 or even more points which do not make 3 No Trumps, and other hands with 23 or 24 points which do make 3 No Trumps. However, the above is true on average.

Your partner opens 1 No Trump, and you have a balanced or semi-balanced hand (see above for a description of this) then you should add your points to your partner's minimum points (12) and if the total is 23 – 26, you should bid 2 No Trumps. That means that opposite a bid of 1 No Trump you should bid 2 No Trumps with 11 or 12 points. If you have ten points or less, you should pass. If however you have 13 or more, making the total 25 or above, you should bid 3 No Trumps.

2. As the opening bidder, if you bid 1 No Trump (12 – 14 balanced) and your partner bids 2 No Trumps (11 – 12 balanced or semi-balanced) you should pass if you have 12 points and bid 3 No Trumps if you have 14 points. The problem comes when you have 13 points. In this case you have to decide whether it is a good thirteen points or a poor thirteen. This is a matter of judgement, but things that would make it a good thirteen points would be if it included a five card suit, since this often produces extra tricks, or if it had good texture (two or perhaps three tens as well as thirteen points, or a sequence such as Q 10 9 8 would help the texture).

Examples:

(a) ♠ A J 4 3 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ A 2 5 ♣ 10 9 7

You open 1 No Trump. Partner replies 2 No Trumps. You should pass. You have twelve points, and the hand is poor.
(b) ♠ 10 9 8 ♥ A J 7 ♦ K Q 10 9 8 ♣ A 6

You open 1 No Trump. Partner replies 2 No Trumps. You should bid 3 No Trumps. You have 14 points and a five card suit.

(c) ♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ K 10 6

You open 1 No Trump. Partner replies 2 No Trumps. You should pass Two No Trumps. You have 13 points, but the hand has no additional good features.

(d) ♠ K 8 5 ♥ K Q ♦ A J 10 9 7 ♣ 10 9 8

You open 1 No Trump. Partner replies 2 No Trumps. You should bid Three No Trumps. You have 13 points, a five card suit and two tens.

SUMMARY

Opening One No Trump 12 – 14 balanced

Responding 0 – 10 PASS

11 – 12 BID TWO NO TRUMPS

13+ BID THREE NO TRUMPS

PLAYING A HAND IN NO-TRUMPS

When the bidding has ended, and you have become the declarer in 1 No Trump, 2 No Trumps, or 3 No Trumps, your left hand opponent leads and you have to decide on the best way to make your contract. It will hardly ever happen that you can see the number of tricks you need (7, 8 or 9) off the top, so usually you will have to set about developing extra tricks. The first thing you have do, therefore, after the opening lead is to look at your hand and at the Dummy to see where those extra tricks can come from. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North</th>
<th>West</th>
<th>East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ A 4 2</td>
<td>Board No 1</td>
<td>♣ K 7 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ 7 4</td>
<td>♦ A Q J 8 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K Q 9 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>♥ A 8 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ 10 9 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>♣ A 8 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You have become declarer as South in 3 No Trumps, after a normal auction of 1 No Trump from you followed by 3 No Trumps from your partner. (you have thirteen points, your partner also has thirteen points) You have received the lead of the Q♠.

You can count seven top tricks, 3 spades, one heart, one diamond, and two clubs. Extra tricks are going to have to come from the diamond suit. You play the 2♥, keeping the K♠ as an entry to the diamonds if required. East plays the 9♦ and you play the A♦. With all suits stopped, you now need to take the diamond finesse. The best way of doing this is by leading the 10♦ to ensure the lead stays with South. If West plays the K♦ take it with the A♦ and you now come to 11 tricks. If West plays low, you play the 6♦ from dummy, If the 10♦ holds, repeat the finesse by playing the 9♦, once again coming to 11 tricks. If East takes the K♦ your contract is still safe, and you now come to 10 tricks.

What about the Defence?

A hand being played in a No Trump contract becomes a race between the declarer and the defence to set up tricks in their long suit(s).

The Opening Lead by the defence indicates a suit that the defence should concentrate on to provide them with tricks.

- The opposition are in 3 No Trumps and you are on initial lead with the hand below.
  
  ♠️ A 4 2  
  ♥️ 7 4  
  ♦️ Q J 8 6 3  
  ♣️ 8 7 2

- The Diamond suit gives you the best chance of extra tricks
- You lead a diamond. The card you choose is the 4th Highest Diamond i.e the 6
- This tells your partner he should lead a diamond every time he gains the lead.
- NB Your A♠️ should not be cashed as it is an entry to your Diamonds.

Further examples of opening leads from your chosen suit. Hearts are used to illustrate each case.

The card to lead is shown in **BOLD**.

| 1. ▼ A K 7 4 | lead the 4 |
| 2. ▼ K 9 7 3 | lead the 3 |
| 3. ▼ K Q 8 5 4 | lead the 5 |
| 4. ▼ J 10 8 7 4 | lead the 7 |

However, if you hold a **solid suit with at least three touching honours** then lead the top honour.

Examples:

| 1. ▼ K Q J 7 4 | lead the K |
| 2. ▼ Q J 10 5 3 | lead the Q |
| 3. ▼ J 10 9 7 4 | lead the J |