

REVERSE BIDS

What is a Reverse Bid?

A reverse bid is a second bid in a new suit at the two level by opener in a higher ranking suit than opener's first bid suit. Thus responder has to bid at the three level to support opener's first bid suit. It shows more cards in the first bid suit than in the second suit and is forcing for one round. Opener should have more than an opening hand, usually 17 or more HCPs and an unbalanced hand, such as 5/4, 6/4, 6/5, or 7/6 (most often 5/4).

Auctions when Opener has a Minimum

Let's review the rebids of a minimum opener after a response that promises no more than minimum strength when there is no interference (other than a double) by the opponents.

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1. 1♦	1♥	2. 1♥	1♠	3. 1♥	1♠
1♠		2♣		2♠	
4. 1♣	1♠	5. 1♦	1♥		
1NT		2♦			

In auctions 1, 2 and 4, opener's rebid was in a new suit (or strain). In auction 3 opener bids in a higher ranking suit than his first suit, but it is NOT a new suit, it is a raise of responder's suit. We know that a rebid of opener's first bid suit in auction 5 most likely shows a 6 card suit. All of these rebids by opener could be made with a minimum opening bid of 12- 15 HCPs. Opener's rebids in auctions 1, 2, and 5 could also be made with a medium hand (16-18 HCPs). But in auction 3, Opener should bid 3♠ to invite game because a good fit has been found, while in auction 5 Opener should not bid 1NT with 16-18 HCPs because that's too strong for the limited bid of 1NT.

Auctions when Opener has more than a Minimum

The following rebids by Opener show more than a minimum hand.

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
6. 1♦	1♥	7. 1♣	1♥	8. 1♣	1♠
2NT		2♠		2♥	

We should know that Opener's bid of 2NT in auction 6 shows a balanced 18 or 19 points. Note that Opener can skip over a four card major with this bid (it's more important to show the balanced hand, so that 3NT is a suggested game). Auctions 2 and 3 are used by Opener to show strong, unbalanced hands. In 2, Opener is showing 19-21 HCPs, so the bid is FORCING to GAME. (See auction 1 above to show 16-18 HCPs). Auction 8 shows a classic REVERSE bid. Do NOT confuse it with an auction like 2 above. Even though we always try to show 4 card major suits, we can't bid 2♥ in auction 8 with a minimum opening bid. Remember that Responder's bid might only show 5-7 HCPs, so if Responder needs to show a preference for Opener's first (lower ranking) suit the partnership could find itself at the 3 level with 20 or less HCPs. Two minimum hands should never get above 2NT. And even if Opener has 17 HCPs, but Responder has a minimum response, we need a method to keep the partnership from getting too high

Responding to a Reverse with a Minimum

Look at auction 8 where Opener had made a Reverse bid. It shows a medium or maximum opening hand - usually 17 or more HCPs. Opener's hand is also unbalanced - usually 5 cards in the first bid suit and 4 cards in the higher ranking second suit. It is also a FORCING bid. Possible hands for Opener in Auction 8 are:

- A. ♠ 9 5 ♥ A K 8 4 ♦ A J ♣ K Q 9 8 2
- B. ♠ 6 ♥ K Q 10 3 ♦ K Q 9 5 ♣ A K 7 5 2
- C. ♠ A ♥ A Q J 4 ♦ K 8 3 ♣ K Q J 10 8

Note that Opener has shown a real ♣ club suit without rebidding them. Since Opener has made a forcing bid, Responder must bid again even with a minimum response but can't encourage Opener to bid game since the partnership doesn't have enough HCPs. A Responder with 5 or 6 ♠s in Auction 8 and a weak hand can bid 2 ♠s, but how can Responder differentiate a weak preference for one of Opener's suits from a response good enough for game? One method suggested by the ACBL Bridge Series Text, Commonly Used Conventions, is to use 2NT as a warning to Opener that Responder is weak.

Using this method, an Opener who reversed with hands A or B above must bid 3 ♣s. Responder can pass with ♣ support, or bid 3 ♥s to show a preference for that suit. If Responder has enough for game, a strong preference can be made by directly bidding 3 of one of Opener's suits or an appropriate bid other than 2NT should be made. How would you respond to Opener's Reverse in Auction 8 holding the following hands?

1. ♠ A 8 6 3 ♥ 9 5 ♦ J 8 7 5 ♣ J 7 2
2. ♠ K 10 8 4 3 2 ♥ Q 6 ♦ J 9 5 4 ♣ J
3. ♠ K J 6 3 ♥ Q 2 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ A 7 5 3
4. ♠ K Q 8 4 3 ♥ K J 8 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ 6 5
5. ♠ Q J 9 8 6 ♥ J 5 4 2 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 5 3
6. ♠ K Q 10 7 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ A J 9 5 ♣ 9 8

(Answers on back of this page)

An Opening bidder holding more than a minimum reverse such as hand C above can make a game forcing bid by making any other bid than 3 of the first bid suit. For instance hand C could bid 3 ♦s to show the diamond stopper to invite 3 NT or perhaps bid 3 NT directly.

Answers to What to Bid

Bid 2 NT with hands 1 and 5. With hand 1 pass partner's 3 ♣ bid and with hand 5 correct 3 ♣s to 3 ♠s. With hand 2 bid 2 ♠s. Bid 3 ♣s with hand 3 and 3 ♠s with hand 4. Hand 6 is worth a try for 3 NT.