

Which Suit To Open?

By Henry Jackson

Based on “Better Bridge with Bergen”
article in Bridge Bulletin Nov 2016

Background

- Most of the time it's obvious to bid NT or your one long suit, but two-suited hands and present some problems.
- In the November 2016 Bridge Bulletin, Marty Bergen wrote an excellent article explaining which suit is best to open in a variety of situations.

Special 6-5 Situations

- Note with 6-5 and Rule of 20, you only need 9 hcp **mostly in your suits** to open.
- **Principle 1.** If your 6-card suit is higher ranking, OPEN IT!
- **Principle 2.** With 6 clubs and 5 spades, OPEN 1 CLUB.
- Remaining discussion will be about hands where your 5 card suit is higher ranking.

Principle 3

- **Principle 3.** If one suit is much, much better than the other, OPEN IT.
- With : ♠ – ♥87543 ♦AKQ1097 ♣Q2 open 1 diamond because this feels more like 7-4 than 6-5. I hate to lose the 5-card major!!!
- With : ♠ – ♥AKQJ4 ♦987632 ♣AQ open 1 heart even though you are strong enough to reverse. Emphasize hearts. Principle 3 takes priority over 4 and 5.

Principle 4

If you are not strong enough to reverse, open your higher ranking suit.

With ♠A Q 9 7 2 ♥A 9 7 5 4 2 ♦6 ♣3

Open 1 Spade with this minimum.

With ♠7 ♥A K 9 6 4 ♦Q ♣K 10 8 7 6 3

Open 1 Heart and have an easy rebid of 2C over 1 Spade or 1NT. If you open 1C and Partner bids 1S, you are not strong enough to reverse.

Principle 5

- If you are strong enough to reverse, open the longer suit.
- Note that you need 17+ HCP to reverse with a 5-4 hand, but with 6-4 you don't need 17, and with 6-5 you can reverse with a lot less than 17 HCP!

Principle 5 Continued

With ♠ 74 ♥ — ♦ AQ942 ♣ AK10986

Open 1 Club. This hand is much better than the obvious 13 HCP! When you reverse into diamonds and then rebid that suit, Partner will know you have 6+ clubs and a big hand.

Five-Five Hands

- This one is easy!
- Just open the higher ranking suit!
- Don't unnecessarily reverse. Partner may not notice!

Four-Four Minors

- Many players always open 1 diamond to avoid a possible reverse.
- But with a balance minimum hand, you simply plan on rebidding 1NT regardless of which minor you opened.
- Other players open the stronger suit for the lead.

Al Roth and Marty Bergen

- Roth and Bergen disagreed on the strength required for an opening bid, but they both agreed on always opening 1 Club with a balanced 4-4 hand.
- How would you respond to 1 Diamond with

♠7 ♥653 ♦Q65 ♣A85432

Would you be happy responding 1NT?

Three-Card Major Raises

- If you've open 1 of a minor and Partner bids 1 Spade

♠ K Q 10 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 8 6 4 2 ♣ A K 9 8

- Just bid 2 Spades. This is less of a lie than 1NT and with 3 honors, even a 4-3 fit can work well.

Another Argument for One Club

- How about ♠ J 3 ♥ 9 6 5 ♦ A K 5 ♣ K 7 5 4 2
- If playing 2/1, what would you bid over Partner's 1 Diamond Opening?
- If you always open 1 club with this type of hand Partner will have easy responses even if he raises diamonds with only 3.