

The Bridge Booklet

(BB06)

Tips for the Advancing Player



NoTrump Ranges and How to Respond

Help Suit Game Try

(Medium Opener - Minimum Responder)

Limit Raises

(Minimum Opener - Medium Responder)

Strong 2♣ Openings

Modern Notrump Ranges and How to Respond

A 1NT opening bid shows 15-17 points and Balanced Distribution. A 2NT opening bid shows 20-21 points and Balanced Distribution. The 3 balanced hand shapes have the suits distributed 4,3,3,3 or 4,4,3,2 or 5,3,3,2 (suits in no particular order)

When the Opening NoTrump bidder and the Responder both have balanced hands, the Game and Slam possibilities rely mostly on total points. It takes 25 combined points to make Game. It takes 33 combined points to make a Small Slam. It takes 37 combined points for a Grand Slam

The following examples have the suits in order of Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs

#1 Opener - ♠KQ7, ♥A643, ♦A43, ♣Q74

Responder - ♠A10, ♥987, ♦8765, ♣KJ103

Auction: Opener 1NT - Responder 2NT- Opener Pass

The responder has 8 points across from a hand of 15-17. She totals the points. Is there enough for game? Maybe.

Responder invites game by bidding 2NT. Opener has 15, the bottom of his 1NT range and should Pass. If Opener had 17, he should bid 3NT.

#2 Opener - ♠AQ64, ♥A76, ♦J96, ♣A95

Responder - ♠KJ2, ♥953, ♦AQ103, ♣763.

Auction: Opener 1NT - Responder 3NT- Opener Pass

The responder has 10 points across from a hand of 15-17. She totals the points. Is there enough for Game? YES. If she has 10 points she should always go to game. She knows there is a total of 25-27 combined points. Enough for game but not enough for slam. Responder bids 3NT a sign off bid. Opener passes because the Captain Has Spoken.

#3 Opener - ♠AQJ10, ♥Q1095, ♦K104, ♣K5

Responder - ♠65, ♥AKJ, ♦QJ53, ♣AQJ4

Auction: Opener 1NT- Responder 6NT - Opener Pass

The responder has 18 points across from a hand of 15-17 points. She totals the points. She knows there is a total of 33-35 combined points. Enough for a Small Slam but not enough for a Grand Slam. When you know you have enough for Slam then Bid It.

#4 Opener - ♠AQJ10, ♥Q1095, ♦K104, ♣K5
Responder - ♠65, ♥AKJ, ♦J653, ♣AQJ4

Auction: Opener 1NT - Responder 4NT - Opener Pass

The responder has 16 points across from a hand of 15-17. She totals the points. 31-33 combined points. Responder doesn't know if Opener has 15 or 17. To find out Responder INVITES SLAM by bidding 4NT. (This is NOT an Ace asking bid when the last bid was Notrump). Opener has 15, the bottom of her 1NT range and should Pass.

#5 Opener - ♠AQJ10, ♥Q1095, ♦KQ10, ♣K5
Responder - ♠65, ♥AKJ, ♦J653, ♣AQJ4

Auction: Opener 1NT - Responder 4NT - Opener 6NT

The responder has the same hand as example #4 so Invites Slam as before. This time Opener has 17, the top of her 1NT range and should accept the invitation. Opener bids 6NT.

#6 Opener - ♠A954, ♥AKQ, ♦AK73, ♣107
Responder - ♠762, ♥84, ♦952, ♣AQJ43

Auction: Opener 2NT Responder 3NT Opener Pass

Responder has 8 points across from 20-21 points. Enough for Game but not for Slam. Bid 3NT. Captain has spoken.

#7 Opener - ♠AQJ, ♥A652, ♦K32, ♣AQ6
Responder - ♠K53, ♥1074, ♦AJ6, ♣KJ102

Auction: Opener 2NT Responder 4NT Opener Pass

Responder has 12 points across from a hand of either 20 or 21 points. Is there enough for slam? Maybe. Responder can find out by INVITING slam by bidding 4NT. Opener has 20 points, the bottom of the 2NT opening range. South should Pass the invitation.

USING JUDGEMENT

When it comes to Inviting Game, Responder should be conservative with some 8 point hands. After Opener bids 1NT, Responder has to use JUDGEMENT to decide whether to pass or invite. All 8 point hands are not equal.

Tips to tell a Good 8 from a Bad 8 point hand.

- 1 - The distribution that offers the LEAST hope of developing extra tricks is 4,3,3,3. In this distribution there is only one 4 card suit so less hope of fitting with partner and developing tricks through length. This distribution is a MINUS. Distributions like 5,3,3,2 or 4,4,3,2 are PLUS. More chances of fitting with partner and developing tricks through length.
- 2 - If your hand has only low spot cards make this a MINUS.
- 3 - If your hand includes high spot cards it rates better. 9's and 10's are not assigned point value but they are a PLUS ..
- 4 - Having your High honor cards clustered in the same suit works better than scattered high cards. High Cards TOGETHER are a PLUS.
- 5 - The Best situation is when your High Honor cards are clustered in a 4 card suit rather than a 3 card suit. PLUS

Consider this Auction.

Opener 1NT - Responder 2NT

Responder has an 8-9 point hand across from 15-17 points. He invites by bidding 2NT. Opener is to pass if she has 15 points and to bid 3NT if she has 17 points. What to do if Opener has the middle range of 16?

With 16 points Opener can use Judgement by looking at the tips in the above list. If her 16 point hand has lots of GOOD qualities she can accept the invitation. If her 16 point hand has more BAD qualities she can pass the invitation.

Tip: When you use 15-17 point notrumps, both opener and responder have to tread cautiously on invitational auctions.

There is a possibility of reaching game on only 24 points. It can be done though if the 24 points are of good quality.

With 8 points responder only invites when he likes his hand, and with 16 points opener only accepts when she likes her hand.

Think of the Pluses and Minuses

Major Suit Raises - Inviting Game Help Suit Game Try

Opener bids 1♠ and Responder bids 2♠ (1♥ - 2♥ would be the same) is referred to as a SINGLE RAISE~

A Single Raise to two of opener's major shows about 6 to 10 points and at least three card trump support

What should Opener do after a Single Raise?

Minimum Opener (13-15) should Pass a Single Raise.

Medium Opener (16-18) should Invite Game.

Maximum Opener (19-21) should Bid Game

Why does a Medium Opener Invite responder to go to game?

Having 16-18 points opposite a 6-10 point single raise, the opener knows that there is a possibility that together they MIGHT have enough for game in the major suit. Not a guarantee, but worth an investigation.

How does the Medium Opener Invite Game? The Medium Opener can invite game by making a General Invitation. She can bid three of the agreed major.

Opener 1♠

Responder 2♠

Opener 3♠ (3♠ by Opener says: I have 16-18, together have we got enough points?)

Responder?

After a General Invitation the responder's decision to pass or bid 4 spades is often based solely on point count. A 6 or 7 point hand will sign off in a partscore; a 9 or 10 point hand will bid game in 4 of the major.

Another way that the Medium Opener can Invite Game is to make a HELP SUIT GAME TRY. What is this? After a single raise the opener can bid a new suit. This new suit is referred to as the Help Suit. The Help Suit contains Losers and length (usually 3 or 4 cards). Opener is not suggesting that this new suit should be trump! They have already agreed that their Major Suit fit will be trump. The Opener tells

responder that she needs HELP with this new suit and to check to see if her hand can help with the losers in this second suit. eg Opener 1♠ Responder 2♠ Opener 3♦ (I have losers in diamonds, can you help with the diamond losers partner?) If you can help then bid 4♠. Game in our already agreed suit. If you have no help with my diamond losers then bid 3♠ a partscore in our agreed suit.

What does Responder do after a Help Suit Game Try? Responder looks at the cards she holds in the Help Suit. She is looking for High Cards in the help suit that will help the opener avoid losers here. Sometimes, where the responder's points are can be more important than how many points the responder has.

There is another way that the responder could offer help. After a Help Suit Game Try the responder can look for shortness (singleton or void) in the help suit. Having shortness in the help suit offers assistance by allowing the opener to trump those losers in the dummy.

When the responder has help she can often accept the game try and bid Game in the major. With a good fitting hand with partner, she can often bid game even if her point count is weak.

When the responder has no help for her partner's help suit request (no high cards, no shortness), she can sign off by bidding 3 of the agreed major. Example of a Help Suit Game Try Auction

Opener 1♠

Responder 2♠ (a single raise showing 6-10 points and spade support)

Opener Rebids 3♦ {Help Suit Game Try} (I have length and losers in diamonds. HELP?)

Responder Rebids 3♠ (sorry partner, no help for those diamonds losers OR Responder might bid 4♠ yeah, I can help you with your losing Diamonds)

RESPONDER'S HAND EVALUATION AFTER A HELP SUIT GAME TRY

After a help Suit Game Try, responder looks at two suits, the trump suit and the suit where help was requested.

Responder should like:

- High cards in the agreed major suit
- High cards in the help suit
- Shortness in the help suit (losers can be trumped)
- Extra trump support (having 3 card support for partners' major is good, having 4 card support is GREAT)
- ACES anywhere in the hand

Responder should dislike:

- Secondary high cards like Kings, Queens or Jacks that are scattered in the suits outside the trump suit or the help suit
- Having three or four small cards in the help suit are useless. No help at all.

It's not JUST how many points that you and partner have together. It's WHERE those points are that determines how many tricks that you can take. Points don't take tricks Fits take tricks.

ABOUT COUNTING POINTS

Point count helps you value your hand. As you will discover, how well your hand fits with partner's hand also plays a role in judging the value of your hand.

When the word "points" is used in these lessons, it means total points: high card points (HCP) plus distribution points.

Generally, distribution points are length points. In any suit having more than four cards, add one point for each extra card beyond the fourth card.

Exception: Once you have found a fit with partner's suit and plan to support him, you will become the Dummy. Instead of length distribution points you can add DUMMY POINTS (shortness points). A short suit in dummy is valuable when declarer can gain extra tricks by trumping losers in the dummy. You can add points for short suits only when you will be the DUMMY in a major suit contract.

Suggested short suit points: void = 5 points, singleton = 3 points, doubleton = 1 point

LIMIT RAISES

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN A LIMIT RAISE WITH 4 TRUMP AND A LIMIT RAISE WITH 3 TRUMP

A Direct Limit Raise - A jump raise of opener's major suit (1♥ to 3♥ or from 1♠ to 3♠) is a limit raise showing:

- a medium strength response with 11-12 total points
- four-card or longer support for opener's major

Responder's hand ♠A76, ♥Q642, ♦A62, ♣J75

To show a Limit raise with only THREE card support, responder does the TWO-STEP (1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♥). He:

- first makes a forcing bid (usually a new suit)
- then raises opener's major on the rebid

Responder's hand ♠A762, ♥Q64, ♦A62, ♣J75

An extra trump in dummy often means an extra trick. When responder has four-card support for opener's major, opener can bid more aggressively. Any UNBALANCED opener - even a Dead Minimum, has a good chance for game opposite a four-card limit raise. This works ONLY with a four-card limit raise, not a three-card.

In order to reach these good games, both opener and responder must be able to differentiate between a major-suit limit raise having only three trumps and a major-suit limit raise having more trump. The suggested method is for an immediate jump raise of opener's major (1H-3H) to promise four-card trump support. With only three-card support and a limit raise, responder takes two bids.

Auction #1

Opener	Opp	Responder	Opp
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
?			

(responder guarantees 4-card trump support and 11-12 points)

Opener's hand is:

♠94, ♥AK753, ♦KQ75, ♣63

What should opener rebid?

Point wise, opener's hand is a bare minimum with 12 + 1 total points. By the auction she knows that there is not only a fit but a NINE card fit. Here's the secret of the experts: When responder makes a direct limit raise, opener usually goes to game if she has an UNBLANCED SHAPE. This Opener has a 5,4,2,2, unbalanced distribution and will bid game even though she has only 13 total points. THIS ONLY WORKS IF YOU CAN BE SURE THAT PARTNER HAS FOUR TRUMP. Opposite a limit raise with 4 trump (extra trump = extra trick) she should follow the secret of the experts and BID GAME.

Auction #2

Opener	Opp	Responder	Opp
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
?			

(responder made a Delayed jump raise, he bid a different suit first, and then followed with a rebid of 3H, a 2-STEP process).

Opener will recognize this as a limit raise 11-12 points but only 3-card trump support.

Opener's hand is:

♠94, ♥AK753, ♦KQ75, ♣63 (same as Auction #1)

What should opener rebid?

Opposite a 3-card limit raise opener resorts back to adding the known points. No extra trump = No extra trick. If the total point count does not add up to 26 then opener should pass. Opener's 13 points added to responders 11-12 does not add up to 26. Open should rebid PASS.

Auction #3

Opener	Opp	Responder	Opp
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass

(Responder has again made a direct limit raise promising 4-card trump support.) You can check the expert's secret.

Opener's hand is:

♠943, ♥AK753, ♦KQ7, ♣63

What should opener rebid?

This time opener's hand is a BALANCED 13 point hand.

The expert's secret suggests that after a 4-card limit raise, a weak opener passes with a Balanced hand and bids game ONLY if her hand is unbalanced and only if she knows partner has 4 trump. With this hand opener should rebid PASS because her hand is a balanced 5,3,3,2 distribution.

The Experts know that Judgement is part of the game. Opposite a limit raise promising four trumps, opener often bids game based only on extra shape. ♠A63, ♥AKJ74, ♦10942, ♣3 bids as: 1♥-3♥- FOUR HEARTS. You now know the secret. Don't tell.

THE STRONG 2 CLUB OPENING BID using KISS

(keep it simple sweetie)

A 2♣ opening bid shows 22 or more points or 9 tricks in your own hand. It is an artificial bid that says nothing about clubs. It just shows strength. We know nothing about opener's distribution until the rebid. The 2♣ bid is forcing. There will definitely be a rebid.

Open 2♣ on any hand where you'd be sick if partner passed.

An opening of 2♣ says "I am a gorilla. Don't pass me until we get to at least game. Do ya' hear me?!"

Responder most often respectfully bids 2♦ getting out of partner's way at the lowest possible bid so he can hear more about partner's wonderful hand.

2♦ is a totally artificial bid. It is a waiting bid. It does not promise or deny points.

The 2♣ opener now has to make a rebid to tell partner what his distribution is.

When opener rebids in a suit, it always promises at least a 5 card suit. HIS STRENGTH IS UNLIMITED. Could be 22 ... 26 30 ? Unlimited bids are forcing.

It is my suggestion that you should play that all bids are forcing once opener starts 2♣ and rebids a suit ... period. You might get to a few bad games but at least you will maintain partnership trust. There is nothing more disappointing than having the best hand of your entire bridge career passed out at a low level because you had a partnership misunderstanding about what bids are forcing. Keeping things simple, and making all bids forcing until you get to game, allows you to have an orderly auction with neither partner feeling compelled to jump in the bidding until a fit has been found. The bidding already started at the two level. If you had to jump later to make a forcing bid, you would often get too high before you knew what should be trump.

When opener rebids notrump it is a different story. After opening 2♣ and rebidding in notrump, responder will know opener's exact point count. (see chart). Responder can add. She can pass if the numbers don't add up to game. Notrump rebids are Not Forcing.

Responding to a 2♣ opening with KISS

To keep things simple, I prefer the 2♦ waiting bid for most responses to 2♣. This keeps the bidding low allowing lots of room for the Big Hand to speak. The 2♦ waiting bid says nothing about diamonds. It says

nothing about responder's point count or shape. The 2♦ waiting bid allows responder to keep out of the way so that Opener can describe her hand. Let's find out if her hand is balanced or unbalanced. Her rebid will tell us. Keep out of her way. Respond 2♦.

Considerations

Generally open 2♣ if any of the following apply:

- your hand contains 22+ HCP
- your hand has 9 playing tricks (but less than 22 HCP)
- you don't want partner to pass

Remember also that not all 22+ hands should be opened with 2♣. For example, if your shape is 4 4 4 1 and you open 2♣, what is your rebid over 2♦?

AN OPENING BID FOR ALL BALANCED HANDS

12-14 points - Open one of a suit, intending to rebid notrump as cheaply as possible.

15-17 points - Open 1NT

18-19 points - Open one of a suit intending to jump in notrump on your rebid

20-21 points - Open 2NT

22-24 points - Open 2♣ intending to rebid 2NT

25-27 points - Open 2♣ intending to rebid 3NT

28-30 points - Open 2♣ intending to rebid 4NT

31-33 points - Open 2♣ intending to rebid 5NT

34-36 points - Open 2♣ intending to rebid 6NT

Deal #1

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

♠ AJ9
♥ 85
♦ J10763
♣ 742

N
W E
S

♠ Q87
♥ 9742
♦ Q8
♣ Q985

Opening Lead: 6♦

♠ K1043
♥ AQ63
♦ AK5
♣ AK

♠ 652
♥ KJ10
♦ 942
♣ J1063

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

West starts with 8 sure tricks and has to establish his 9th trick by promoting another club. He must cash his A♣ and K♣ first. Go to the dummy with a heart. Finish his house work by playing the J♣. South will win his Q♣ and probably return a diamond. West wins, leads a heart to the dummy. First things first. cash your beautifully promoted 10♣.

Take your tricks and run

Deal #2

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

♠ 10863
♥ J1098
♦ Q86
♣ 94

N
W E
S

♠ 92
♥ 7532
♦ 105
♣ A8652

Opening Lead: 5♣

♠ A54
♥ K64
♦ 97432
♣ J3

♠ KQJ7
♥ AQ
♦ AKJ
♣ KQ107

West	North	East	South
		2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
6NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

West has 8 points but a weak suit, so he makes a waiting bid of 2♦. (Does not mean diamonds) East rebids 3NT to show a balanced hand with 25-27 points. West knows what to do. East counts 9 sure winners (4 spades, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds). House work first. Promote clubs and knock out the Ace. You have entry problems if you want to collect all 3 hearts. Cash the A♥ and Q♥ next. Then over to dummy with A♠. Cash the K♥ Now back to hand with spades.

Deal #3

♠ KJ84	♠ Q3
♥ AK8	♥ J94
♦ KQ4	♦ A87
♣ AKJ	♣ Q10652

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
6NT	Pass	Pass	

With a balanced hand and 24 high-card points, West opens 2♣. East doesn't have a good enough suit to make a positive response of 3♣. Instead East makes a waiting bid of 2♦. West completes the description of the hand with a 2NT rebid. East has 9 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit. East knows the partnership has a total of about 32-34 points.

To invite slam, East raises to 4NT. This isn't the Blackwood convention since no suit has been agreed. It is a *quantitative* raise. With a maximum, West accepts the invitation and the excellent slam is reached. West can promote two spade tricks to go with the two heart tricks, three diamond tricks, and five club tricks.

