

What Type of Bridge Hand Have
You Been Dealt?

**Competitive Bidding
Decisions**

Many Bidding Auctions are Competitive

- Both sides are bidding.
- At some point we are faced with a decision:
 - Try to out bid our opponents
 - Play defense
- What we decide here is based on certain characteristics of the hand we have been dealt.
 - Our high-card strength, of course.
 - Balanced hands are generally good for defense.
 - Unbalanced hands are better for offense.

Consider This Hand- Example 1

♠ Q J 10 8 6 3

♥ 2

♦ A K 5

♣ A 4 3

north east south west

1♠

2♥

2♠

3♥

- Is this hand better for offense or defense?
- We have not heard anything from the opponents or partner.
- At the moment it seems offensive.
- Suppose the bidding goes:
- The hand looks much more offensive than defensive. Bid 3♠

Example 2

South's hand

♠ A 10 8 6 4

♥ 5 3 2

♦ K Q J 5

♣ 3

north	east	south	west
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1♦	1♥	1♠	2♥
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2♠	4♥	??	
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- Listen carefully to the bidding.
- Partner opened the bidding.
- Do you want to bid on or double?
- You have a double fit.
- Both spades and diamonds are working on offense, but not good on defense.
- Bid 4♠

Example 3 Using the “Law”

North's hand

♠ A 4

♥ A J 8 6 5 3 2

♦ 5

♣ Q 10 3

north east south west

1♥ dble 2♥ 3♦

??

- Use the law with a bid of common sense.
- Your 7 hearts and partner's 3+ gives you a 10 card fit.
- Bid 4♥.
- Don't waste time with 3♥.

Example 4

South's hand

♠ 8 7

♥ 9 5 2

♦ 9 8 6 5 3

♣ A Q 6

north east south west

3♥ pass ??

- You have a 10 card fit.
- Use the Law and bid 4♥.
- Believe me, if you pass, West is coming in.
- So make him come in at the 10 trick level if he wants to do so.

Example 5

North's hand

♠ K 8 7 4 2



♦ K J 6 5 3

♣ A J 6

north east south west

1♠ dble 2♠ 4♥

??

- Pass is best.
- You have only an 8 card fit. Not enough to get to the 10 trick level.
- Play defense. Maybe you can beat 4♥ .
- How do you know you have an 8-card fit?

Commandments of the “Law”

From Marty Bergen

- It is reasonably safe to bid to the level of your total number of trumps.
- Accurately define your trump length to your partner.
- If the opponents have a fit and stop at the 2- level you should balance to the 3-level with 8 or 9 total trumps.
- Occasionally, you may get a bad result using the law, but in the long run, using the law is good bridge.

Some Hands are Defensively Oriented

- Hands are more defensive in nature when:
 - Your side has a smaller trump fit.
 - You and your partner have a misfit.
 - When you have a misfit, it is likely that the opponents also have a misfit.
 - When you have a fit, the opponents also have a fit.
 - Most of your points are in your short suits.

A Defensive Hand Example 6

North's hand

♠ 10 8 7 5 4 2

♥ A Q J

♦ 3

♣ A K 6

- This hand has defensive values, unless partner has 4 or more spades
- Or opponents have shortness in hearts or clubs.
- If you are dealer, you open 1 spade. If partner bids diamonds, you probably have a misfit.
- If the opponents get into the bidding with hearts or clubs, at anything past the two level you may want to double.

A Defensive Hand Example 6

North's hand

♠ A K 10 8 7 5

♥ A Q J

♦ 3

♣ 9 7 6

- I changed the last hand a bit, but same points and distribution.
- This is still a defensive hand, unless your partner has 3 or more spades.

A Defensive Hand Example 7

South's hand

♠ A 10 8 6 4

♥ K Q J 4

♦ 5

♣ 9 7 3

north east south west

1♦ 1♥ 1♠ 2♥

2♠ 4♥ ??

- This hand and the auction is similar to one we saw earlier.
- Except I have changed hearts and diamonds.
- This time you have a defensive hand.
- Instead of 4♠, you should probably double.

A Defensive Hand Example 8

South's hand

♠ A 8

♥ K Q J

♦ 8 7 4 2

♣ 9 7 5 3

- Here's another example of a defensive hand.
- This hand will take 3 or 4 defensive tricks.
- On offense, it will still take 3 or 4 tricks.

Hands With Offensive Potential

Example 9

South's hand

♠ A Q 8 6 4

♥ K Q J 7 5

♦ 4 2

♣ 5

- This hand is an offensive hand.
- On defense this hand might take 2 or maybe 3 tricks.
- If partner has just a moderate fit with one of the suits, this hand will take 8 or maybe 9 tricks on offense.

Offensive Hand Example 10

South's hand

♠ A Q 8 6 4 3

♥ K Q J 7 5 2

♦

♣ 5

- This hand is an offensive hand.
- On defense this hand might take 2 or maybe 3 tricks.
- If partner has just a moderate fit with one of the suits, this hand will take 10 or maybe 11 tricks on offense.

Conventional or Judgmental

- Some hands require the use of conventional tools to communicate with partner.
- Some other hands require you to make a judgment, then bid accordingly.

Example 9

North's hand

♠ A 8 2

♥ A J 10 9 6

♦ A J 10 2

♣ 3

North east south west

1♥ pass 2♥ pass

3♦

- You have a nice playing hand. If partner has a club honor you might well have a game.
- You use a convention called “help-suit game try.”

Example 12

North's hand

♠ A 8 2 (14 points)

♥ A J 10 9 6

♦ A J 10 9 2

♣

North east south west

1♥ pass 2♥ pass

4♥

- With this hand, your 5-5 distribution and strong middle cards mean you may will have game whether or not partner has help in the diamond suit.
- Just bid the game.

Example 13

North's hand

♠ K Q 8 (13 points)

♥ Q 9 6 4

♦ A 8 2

♣ Q 10 2

North east south west

1nt pass ??

- You can take a conventional approach and bid 2♣.
- With this perfectly balanced hand and 13 good points, just bid 3nt.

Example 14

North's hand

♠ Q 10 8 4 (14 points)

♥ K J 9

♦ A 10 2

♣ K J 10

North east south west

1♦ pass ??

- This is another example.
- You can bid 1♠, taking the scientific approach.
- Or you can just bid 3nt (13-15 points)
- One drawback. Partner might have a distributional hand

When Slam Bidding Example 15

North's hand

♠ A K 10 6 4

♥ K Q 10 9 5

♦ A Q 2 (18 points)

♣

North east south west

1♠ pass 4♠

- You could take a conventional approach and bid 5♣.
- But partner's response is unlikely to be helpful.
- So, it might be best to just bid 6♠.

Final Thoughts

- Give a thought to the kind of hand you have been dealt.
- Is it an offensive hand? If so, perhaps you should take another bid.
- Is it a defensive hand? If so, perhaps you should pass or maybe double.
- Is it a conventional hand or a judgmental hand?
- Let the kind of hand you have inform your bidding.