

Difficult Minor-Suit Openings

You Have a Choice of Bids, None
of Which Are Absolutely Correct

A Minor Quandary

- I heard a person describing his bidding style to a new partner.
- He said, “When I have... I ***always*** , but when I have... I ***never***...
- Whenever someone uses the words “always” and “never” describing anything about bridge, it should raise a flag of caution.
- There are always exceptions.

What Do You Do With Exceptions?

- The trick here is to find a bid that best, even though not perfectly, describes your hand.
- In other words... What is the best lie?
- Suppose you have a hand with 13 hcps and the following distribution.
 - x, xxx, xxxx, xxxxx
- Do you always open this hand 1♣? Your longest suit?
- Or do you always open it 1♦, so you have a sensible rebid?
- I will try to show you that neither of those answers is always right or always wrong.

Consider This Hand – ex. 1

Your hand:

♠ 2
♥ K 7 3
♦ A K J 10
♣ Q 9 7 4 3

Open 1♦

Rebid 2♣

You distort your distribution a bit, but not your point count.

- 13 points, 3 quick tricks, you're the dealer.
- How would you open this hand? 1♣?
- Did you plan your rebid, after partner makes the expected response of 1♠?
 - 1nt, with a singleton in partner's suit. Not good.
 - 2♦. A reverse requires 17 points.
- Best Choice 1♦

Consider This Hand – ex. 2

Your hand:

♠ 2
♥ K 7 3
♦ Q 9 7 5
♣ A K J 10 3

- The same count.
- Same distribution.
- This time the strength is in the club suit.
- Open 1 ♣

Open 1♣

Rebid 2♣

Partner will take you for 6 clubs and that might lead to difficulties.

Another Difficult Hand

Your hand:

♠ A K J 6

♥ Q 10 7 3

♦ Q 9 7 5

♣ A

- 16 points.
- If you open one of a minor, you can never communicate your strength.

Open 1nt

Show partner your strength.

If you open 1♦, there's no bid available to show partner your strength.

One More Difficult Hand

Your hand:

♠ 2

♥ K J 7 3

♦ Q 9 7 5

♣ A K 10 4

Open 1 ♦

Responder 1 ♠

Rebid 2♣

This gives partner a
choice of your minors.

- With 4-4 in the minors open 1♦.
- This suggests an unbalanced hand.
- Partner should understand you might have a singleton in his suit.

With this Hand

Your hand:

♠ 7 2

♥ K J 7

♦ Q 9 7 5

♣ A K 10 4

Open 1♣

Responder 1♥ or 1♠

Rebid 1nt

Shows balance

- With a balanced hand, open 1♣.
- Gives responder more options.
- Your rebid is 1nt.
- Allows partner the option of using the new minor forcing.

I Want You to Get the Logic

- With 4-4 in the minors and a singleton in one major, you open diamonds and rebid clubs.
- With 4-4 in the minors and 3-2 in the majors, open a minor and rebid no trump.
- Even when you are 2-2 in the majors, no trump might be better.

For Example

Your hand:

♠ 7 2

♥ K J

♦ Q 9 7 5

♣ A K 10 4 3

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Rebid 1nt

- With a balanced hand, open 1♣.
- Gives responder more options.
- Your rebid is 1nt.
- Allows partner the option of using the new minor forcing.

Opening a Minor When You Have a 5-Card Major

Your hand:

♠ Q 10 9 7 2

♥ 6

♦ A 4

♣ A K 10 8 4 3

- With 6 clubs and 5 spades, this bidding sequence works pretty well.
- It shows your distribution and your strength.

Open 1♣

Responder 1♥

Rebid 1♠

Then 2♠ to show your distribution.

Suppose You Have this Hand

Your hand:

♠ 2

♥ Q 10 9 6 2

♦ A 4

♣ A K 10 8 4 3

Best Lie: open 1♥

Responder 1♠

Then 2♣.

Distorts your distribution
but not point count.

- If you open 1♣ and partner bids 1♠, you simply do not have enough strength to reverse.
- Best open 1♥ instead.
- Probably the best lie.

When Your Hand is a Little Stronger

Your hand:

♠ 2

♥ A J 10 9 6

♦ K 4

♣ A K 10 8 4 3

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♥ shows a reverse (17+ points).

- You might give yourself a point or two for your 6-5 distribution.
- This is still borderline.
- Remember a reverse is forcing on partner for one round.
- Partner will bid again.

Since We are Talking About Reverses

- You don't need wild distribution.
- You do need a good hand.
- 17+ points, strong game interest, but not absolutely forcing to game.
- Forcing for at least one round.

A Reverse Hand Looks Like This

Your hand:

♠ 5

♥ A J 10

♦ K Q 4 2

♣ A K 10 8 3

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♦ shows a
reverse (17+ points).

- After opening at the 1-level, a non-jump 2-level rebid is a reverse.
- Forcing on responder for one round.
- Responder's weak bids:
 - 2 no trump
 - Responder's suit.
 - Raise opener's second suit.

Responder's Strong Responses to a Reverse

Your Hand:

♠ 5

♥ A J 10

♦ K Q 4 2

♣ A K 10 8 3

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♦ shows a reverse (17+ points).

- When you have 8+ points and partner reverses, show a strong response.
 - Jump raise opener's second suit.
 - Jump raise opener's first suit
 - Bid 3 no trump.
 - Bid the 4th suit.

Responder's Strong Responses to a Reverse

Responder's Hand:

♠ K Q 7 5

♥ 10 4

♦ K 5 2

♣ Q 10 8 3

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♦ shows a reverse (17+ points).

- Bid 4♣.
- You have 10 points and partner reversed.
- No trump does not look good.
- You know you need to be in game.

Responder's Strong Responses to a Reverse

Responder's Hand:

♠ K 10 7 5

♥ A J 10

♦ 9 5 2

♣ Q 10 8

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♦ shows a reverse (17+ points).

- Bid 3 nt.
- You have 10 points and partner reversed.
- You know you should be in game.
- No trump seems like the best place to play it.

Responder's Strong Responses to a Reverse

Responder's Hand:

♠ K 10 7 5 3

♥ A J 10

♦ 5

♣ Q 10 8 6

Open 1♣

Responder 1♠

Then 2♦ shows a reverse (17+ points).

- Bid 2♥.
- You have 10 points and partner reversed.
- You know you should be in game.
- Show partner your stopper in the unbid suit.
- Let partner decide on no trump.

Final Thought

- Not every hand fits your bidding system.
- Indeed, there is no bidding system that handles every hand you might be dealt equally well.
- That's why top-level players have so many conventions.
- Those of us who don't play in top-level competition, need not learn every convention.
- We must, however, be aware that our partner may be faced with a difficult hand to bid.
- Be understanding.