

Balancing in Bridge



Why Do We Balance

- To fight for a share of a partscore, if it is available.
- You may go down less than the opponents can make if you allowed them to take the contract.
- You may push the opponents to a level that they cannot make.
- You can balance by bidding a suit (usually 5 cards) or by doubling, which asks partner to choose the suit.

Some Auctions Where Balancing Might Be Appropriate

North	east	south	west
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1 ♥	pass	pass	??
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North	east	south	west
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1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
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2 ♥	pass	pass	??
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North	east	south	west
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1 ♥	pass	2 ♥	pass
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pass	??		
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Consider This Auction

North	east	south	west
1 ♥	pass	pass	??

- What does north have?
 - 12 to 21 points
 - 5+ hearts
- What does south have?
 - 5 or fewer points.
 - A reasonably balanced hand
- Give north an average of 15 points and south 4 points, for a total of 19 or 20 points.

1 ♥ pass pass ??

Hand 1

♠ K J 4 2

♥ 3 2

♦ A 10 5

♣ Q 9 4 3

- You could not make a takeout double in the direct seat, but now you know partner has about 10 points.
- You double and pass whatever partner bids.

1 ♥ pass pass ??

Hand 2

♠ K 9 7 4 2

♥ 3 2

♦ Q 10 5 3

♣ A 3

- If you have a 5-card suit and 9 or 10 points, make an overcall.
- 1 ♠ would not be a very good overcall is the direct seat, but in the pass-out seat, you should make it.

1 ♥ pass pass ??

Hand 3

♠ 9 8 7 4 2

♥ 3 2

♦ A 10 5 3

♣ A Q

- If you have a 5-card suit and 9 or 10 points, make an overcall.
- 1 ♠ would not be a very good overcall is the direct seat, but in the pass-out seat, you should make it.

1 ♦ pass

pass

??

Hand 4

♠ 2

♥ Q 9 7 3 2

♦ A 10 9 3

♣ A 8 3

- Where is the spade suit?
- That should give you some pause for thought.
- Partner may have around 10 points and did not overcall 1 ♠.
- South has a bust hand, but might have 4 or 5 spades.
- Don't let them find spades. Pass!

1 ♦ pass pass ??

Hand 5

♠ K 7 2

♥ Q 9 7

♦ A J 9

♣ J 8 6 3

- 1 no trump in the pass-out seat is 11-14 points.
- If you have a regular no trump overcall, you will double first then bid no trump after partner bids.

1 ♦ pass

pass

??

Hand 6

♠ A K J 7

♥ 9 7

♦ Q 9 7

♣ 10 8 6 3

- If you bid a suit, you'd rather have 5 cards.
- Sometime reopening with a 4-card suit – at the 1-level– is best.
- With this good suit bid 1 ♠.

1 ♣

pass

pass

??

Hand 7

♠ K 7

♥ 9 7

♦ A J 9 7 3

♣ Q 10 8 6 3

- This hand is easily worth a 1 bid, but your major suit holding should give you pause for thought.
- Surely, the opponents will have a fit in one of the majors.
- If you bid one diamond, you give them a chance to find it.

1 ♣

pass

pass

??

Hand 7

♠ 9 7

♥ K J 8 7 5

♦ A J 9 7 3

♣ 3

- You can still use the unusual no trump, if you have the right hand for it.
- With this hand, you have diamonds and hearts (the lower unbid suits). Bid 2 no trump.
- Note, their side probably has a spade fit, but you will make them find it at the 3-level.

1 ♠ pass

pass

??

Hand 8

♠ 9 7 5 3

♥ 7 5

♦ K O J 9 3

♣ A 3

- When you balance at the two level with a suit bid, you will almost always have a 5-card or better suit.
- Here your aim is to push the opponents one level higher, where you have a chance to defeat their contract.
- Also to give partner a good opening lead.

1 ♠

pass

pass

??

Hand 9

♠ 7 5

♥ J 9 8 7 5 3

♦ A 3

♣ A 3

- This hand does not give partner a good opening lead, but two defensive tricks and a 6-card suit are a plus.
- 2 ♥ is the right bid, even with the drawbacks.

1 ♥ pass
pass ??

2 ♥ pass

Hand 10 east

♠ K Q 9

♥ 9 7 2

♦ A 9 6

♣ Q 8 6 3

Partner's hand

♠ J 8 7 5 2

♥ 7 2

♦ K 10

♣ A 7 4 2

- North has 12 to 14 points.
- South has 6-10 points.
- Give them an average 13 and 7 or 8 = a total of 20 or 21
- Your side has 19 or 20
- You have 11 points.
- Give your partner 8 or 9.
- You have enough to compete.
- Double.

1 ♥ pass
pass ??

2 ♥ pass

Hand 11 east

♠ K Q 8 5 2

♥ 7 2

♦ A 10 9 6

♣ 6 3

- You have 10 points.
- Partner has 8 to 10.
- You can compete at the two level.
- Bid 2 ♠,
-

1 ♥ pass
pass ??

2 ♥ pass

Hand 12 east

♠ K Q 8 5

♥ 7 2

♦ A 10 9 6 7

♣ 6 3

- You have 10 points.
- You might overcall diamonds, but you will have to bid at the 3-level.
- It would be very risky if you are vulnerable.
- 3 ♦ when not vulnerable,
- Pass when vulnerable.

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1 ♥ pass
pass ??

2 ♥ pass

Hand 13 east

♠ J 8

♥ 7 5 2

♦ A J 10 9

♣ K Q 9 8

- This is a very difficult hand.
- You cannot double because partner might bid spades.
- Overcalling at the 3-level with a 4-card suit is dangerous.
- Note your 3 hearts. Partner has 1 or 2, which means partner probably has a fit with your minor suits.
- Bidding 3 ♣ is risky, but might work out.

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1 ♣ pass

2 ♥ pass

1 ♥ pass

pass ??

Hand 14 west

♠ K 8 6 4

♥ Q 5 2

♦ K Q 10 7

♣ 9 8

- You have four cards in both of the unbid suits.
- A reopening double is the correct bid. .

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1 ♣ pass

2 ♥ pass

1 ♥ pass

pass ??

Hand 15 west

♠ K Q 6 4

♥ 8 6 5 2

♦ A J 7

♣ 9 8

- If you double with this hand, partner may end up playing diamonds in a 4-3 fit.
- That could turn out badly for your side.
- A double here is not completely wrong, but it is dangerous.
- Pass may be your best bid. .

1 ♣ pass
2 ♠ pass

1 ♠ pass
??

Hand 16 west

♠ Q 6

♥ K 6 5 2

♦ Q J 7 3

♣ K 8 6

- This hand can mislead you.
- You have 11 points, but your black honors are poorly placed, likely to be worthless.
- A pass is best with this hand.

Final Thoughts

- When opponents open the bidding and then elect to stop at the one or two level, they have about half the points in the deck.
- If they had 26 points, they would be at game.
- If they had close to 26, they would have tried for game.
- If they willingly stop at the one or two level, they probably have between 18 and 22 points.