

The Next Level

1. Basic opener strategy

(ii) Modern Notrump rebid ranges

(A). One-over-One. The unopposed auction has begun (say) 1♥-1♠. Traditionally, the notrump rebid point ranges have been 1NT 15-16, 2NT 17-18 and 3NT 19. There are several good reasons for preferring the 1NT rebid to be 15-17 and the 2NT rebid to be 18-19 (you can upgrade a good 17).

In modern bridge, responses are frequently made with fewer than the traditional six points — to keep the bidding open for partner and to steal from the opponents. Jumping to 2NT with 17 points often takes the partnership overboard.

The lower the notrump rebid, the more room there is for meaningful conversation to find the correct contract. In particular, 1♥-1♠-3NT is extremely unwieldy (with a balanced 19-count).

Playing the 1NT rebid as 15-17 and 2NT as 18-19 frees up the jump to 3NT to mean something completely different. Best is a gambling hand, based on a trick source.

Exercise: What do you rebid with these, after opening 1♦ and hearing a 1♠ response?

♠ J2	♠ AJ3	♠ Q
♥ K63	♥ K2	♥ K10
♦ AQ82	♦ AKJ42	♦ AKJ9532
♣ AK32	♣ K62	♣ AJ7

With the first, rebid 1NT, showing 15-17. Why struggle in 2NT, facing a five or six-count?

With the second, rebid 2NT. Now partner has the room to investigate for a 5-3 spade fit.

With the third, rebid 3NT, the perfect bid for the hand. If 3NT is

the old-fashioned flat 19, you'd have to rebid 3♦, worried partner will pass with 3NT makeable.

(B). Two-over-One. To respond in a new suit at the two-level, partner has a minimum of about ten points (perhaps a tad less with a longish suit); if you are rebidding notrumps, you have at least 15.

With 25 combined points, it makes sense to play (say) 1♥-2♣-2NT as forcing to game. You do not need to restrict the point count of 2NT and can make it 15-19 — to allow room for exploration. You can play the jump to 3NT as anything you want, my suggestion being a balanced hand with a fit for partner.

Dealer: North	♠ A42	
	♥ AJ	
Vul: Neither	♦ AQ642	
	♣ KJ2	
♠ K9		♠ Q108
♥ 10865		♥ 973
♦ 1095		♦ KJ87
♣ Q1098		♣ A74
	♠ J7653	
	♥ KQ42	
	♦ 3	
	♣ 653	

S	W	N	E
1♠	Pass	1♦	Pass
3♥(2)	Pass	2NT(1)	Pass
		4♠	End

(1) 18-19 in the modern style. After an old-fashioned jump to 3NT, South would be stymied into passing. Even 2NT would go down on a recommended passive heart lead. (2) 5♠-4♥.

West led ♣10, covered by ♣J and ♣A. Declarer won ♣7 return with ♣K. He cashed ♥AJ and ♦A, ruffed ♦2, cashed ♥K throwing ♣2 and ruffed ♣6. He cashed ♠A and led ♠4. The defence could win ♠KQ but that was ten tricks and game made. andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk