

REVERSE BIDDING

(The word 'reverse' can be very misleading. The only explanation for this terminology is that it 'reverses' or 'turns upside-down' basic bidding practices).

The 'reverse' is just one of several strong opener's re-bids. It shows extra strength without the need to 'jump bid', specifically a distributional (two suited) strong hand.

Either opener or responder can make a reverse bid.

Opener's Reverse

Two separate situations can arise (we shall assume no interference bidding – it can become more complicated in these situations):

Low (or 2) Level Reverse

- this is a bid by opener at the two-level of a second suit, which is higher ranking than his first suit bid. e.g. $1\clubsuit - 1\heartsuit - 2\diamonds$; $1\heartsuit - 2\diamonds - 2\spadesuits$; $1\clubsuit - 1\heartsuit - 2\spadesuits$; $1\heartsuit - 1NT - 2\spadesuits$.
(but $1\heartsuit - 2\clubsuits - 2\diamonds$ is *not* a reverse, since $2\diamonds$ is below $2\heartsuits$. Nor is $1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuits - 2\spadesuits$ - this is merely showing support for partner's suit).
- the opening bidder must have at least a good 16 points (ideally 17+ points).
- if responder has bid at the **one-level**, the reverse bid is **forcing for one round only** (opener could have 16 points and responder 6 points, whereby game is improbable).
- if responder has bid at the **two-level**, the reverse bid is **forcing to game** (opener will have at least 16 points, and responder will have at least 9 points, whereby game is highly probable).
- the first suit bid by opener should have at least 5 cards (i.e. the reverse should imply a distributional hand). This is not guaranteed, but responder should bid on that basis. For example opener could have:

♠ 87
♥ 962
♦ AKJ8
♣ AKQ5

and after $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuits$, he has to bid $2\diamonds$ without the heart stop necessary for no-trumps.

A number of examples should clarify the above points (West is the opening bidder):

			(bidding)
a)	♠ K76	♠ A10843	$1\diamonds - 1\spadesuits$
	♥ AK54	♥ Q872	$2\heartsuits - 4\heartsuits$
	♦ AK852	♦ 9	
	♣ 8	♣ Q74	

Opener reverses into $2\heartsuits$ (17 points and hearts higher ranking than diamonds), and responder with better than minimum and good heart support is happy to bid four.

b)	♠ K7	♠ QJ843	1♦ - 1♠
	♥ AK54	♥ 9872	2♥ - 3♥
	♦ AK852	♦ 9	
	♣ 85	♣ Q74	

Similar to a), except that responder with only a minimum and good heart support is only able to bid 3♥ (remember he is forced to bid for one round). Also opener with the minimum for the reverse, cannot bid 4♥. With say, a 19 point hand he would bid 4♥ over partner's 3♥ (this is why the reverse is forcing for one round in this situation, to give opener a chance to bid game on say 19+ points).

c)	♠ AK63	♠ 842	1♥ - 2♦
	♥ KQJ42	♥ 65	2♠ - 3NT
	♦ A7	♦ K10843	
	♣ 64	♣ AQ8	

Over opener's reverse bid of 2♠ (which is now forcing to game over responder's original bid at the two-level), responder with good stops in the un-bid suit is happy to bid 3NT.

d)	♠ KQ93	♠ A876	1♣ - 1♥
	♥ K6	♥ A10843	2♠ - 4♠
	♦ 93	♦ 75	
	♣ AKQ85	♣ 97	

In order to show his 17 point hand, opener has to **jump-bid** in spades (higher ranking than his original club bid). Responder with good spade support and better than a minimum, is able to bid four.

e)	♠ 3	opposite:	f)	♠ QJ9742	g)	♠ AJ97	h)	♠ AJ97
	♥ AK65			♥ 73		♥ 73		♥ 73
	♦ AQJ75			♦ 2		♦ 2		♦ 642
	♣ K93			♣ QJ54		♣ J108542		♣ Q854
		Or:	i)	♠ KQ9742	j)	♠ AK97	k)	♠ AK97
				♥ 73		♥ 73		♥ 73
				♦ 2		♦ 2		♦ 642
				♣ A854		♣ QJ10854		♣ Q854

e) 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - ?

Here West reverses into 2♥ after partner's 1♠ response. If partner bids 2♠ (f), or 2NT (g), or 3♦ (h), opener must pass. Both of you have bid your hand to the limit, so trust partner.

Partner would have made a more progressive bid on hands i), j), k).

- i) Partner bids 3♠, and you now have a choice - 3NT or 4♠. You probably bid 3NT, but as the cards lie, 4♠ is probably a safer contract.
- j) With the good club suit, partner bids 3NT himself.

- k) Partner bids 3♣ (fourth-suit forcing – asking you to say a little more about your hand). You bid 3NT.

But

l)	♠ Q4	♠ A8762	1♦ - 1♠
	♥ K986	♥ Q3	1NT – 3NT
	♦ AQ754	♦ 96	
	♣ AJ	♣ Q952	

The West hand is too flat and the heart suit too poor for a reverse, and there is cover in both the un-bid suits. A 4-4 heart fit is unlikely to be missed - if partner had four hearts he could bid 3♥ over 1NT.

High (or 3) Level Reverse

- this is a **non-jump** bid by opener at the three-level e.g. 1♥ - 2♦ - 3♣ ; 1♠ - 2♥ - 3♦.
- the opening bidder must have at least 16 points.
- the bid is **forcing to game**. This greatly assists the partnership in exploring all game possibilities.
- (the suit bid at the three-level may contain only three cards).

Examples to clarify the above points:

m)	♠ AK1072	♠ Q4	(bidding)
	♥ Q4	♥ AKJ73	1♠ - 2♥
	♦ J73	♦ 85	3♣ - 3♠
	♣ AK9	♣ 7643	4♠

Opener reverses into 3♣, leaving the way open to 4♥, 4♠, or 3NT (he hasn't got any better bid – no-trumps is unsuitable because of the weak diamond suit). Responder shows some weak support for spades (which also implies he also has no diamond stop for no-trumps). Opener raises to four (not guaranteed to make – but you have to be in it).

n)	♠ AKQ62	♠ J8	1♠ - 2♥
	♥ 7	♥ AQ1063	3♦ - 3♠
	♦ K983	♦ Q72	3NT
	♣ A84	♣ Q105	

Opener reverses into 3♦ (this hand is probably the minimum requirement for a reverse). Responder shows some weak support for spades (simple preference from responder is still forcing to game after the original two-level response). Opener bids 3NT with the club stop. Responder also with a club stop is content.

o)	♠ AKQ62	♠ J8	1♠ - 2♥
	♥ 7	♥ AQ1063	3♦ - 3♠
	♦ AK983	♦ Q72	4♦ - 4♠
	♣ 84	♣ Q105	

Similar to f), but without the club stop, opener cannot bid 3NT. He repeats the diamond (now showing five), and leaves the game choice to responder (- a close decision between 4♠ and 5♦ - but 10 tricks are easier to make than 11).

Responder's Reverse

Responder's reverse bid can occur at either the two- or three-level, and the definition is similar to that for the opener's reverse:

- a bid by responder at the two-level of a second suit, which is higher ranking than his first suit,
- or a new suit at the three-level.

In both these situations it is assumed that opener has not introduced a new suit (if this was the case, responder's bid would be the 'fourth-suit' and this is handled differently).

Examples of a two-level responder reverse are:

1♣ - 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♠;
 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠;
 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♠;

Examples of three-level reverses are:

1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦;
 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♣;
 1♥ - 2♣ - 2NT - 3♠

(these three-level responder reverses are usually followed by a 'fourth-suit forcing' bid from opener).

Responder's reverse would normally show 12+ points. The bid is forcing for one round. It is not entirely forcing to game, for example in the rare situation that opener repeats his opening bid for a third time this could be passed (see example (e)).

An important consideration is in responder's initial bid. If he assesses that his hand will be worth two bids - i.e. 12+ points - he should always bid his longer suit first and then if necessary 'reverse' bid into the shorter suit. This could involve bidding a minor at the two-level before a major at the one-level. The hand is accurately described by 'reversing' into the major on the second bid (see examples).

Responder reverses can sometimes be made on a three-card suits to show where values lie

A number of examples should clarify the above points.

p)	♠ 873 ♥ AQ865 ♦ K6 ♣ KQ5	q)	♠ 873 ♥ AQ865 ♦ K6 ♣ KQ5	r)	♠ 973 ♥ 74 ♦ AQ10873 ♣ AK	s)	♠ K964 ♥ AKJ742 ♦ 86 ♣ 9	t)	♠ K94 ♥ AKJ752 ♦ 86 ♣ 97
	♠ AJ64 ♥ 94 ♦ AQJ54 ♣ 108		♠ A964 ♥ 94 ♦ AJ542 ♣ 108		♠ AJ52 ♥ A10865 ♦ K4 ♣ 97		♠ AQ85 ♥ Q3 ♦ 975 ♣ KQ854		♠ AQ85 ♥ 94 ♦ Q75 ♣ KJ854

u)	♠ 73 ♥ AKJ752 ♦ 6 ♣ AJ64	v)	♠ Q7 ♥ AKJ84 ♦ 64 ♣ K542	w)	♠ 9843 ♥ K ♦ AK986 ♣ KQ4	x)	♠ AQ ♥ KQ763 ♦ Q64 ♣ 873
	♠ AQ85 ♥ 94 ♦ Q75 ♣ KQ852		♠ KJ106 ♥ Q7 ♦ AQJ1073 ♣ 8		♠ AK75 ♥ AQ76 ♦ 72 ♣ 763		♠ 95 ♥ J5 ♦ AK87 ♣ AJ542

- p) 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3NT When South hears his partner's 1♥ opener, he realises that he will be in a position to make two bids on the hand (12+ points). So he initially bids his five-card suit, and then 'reverses' into his four-card suit. This tells partner he is 5-4 with 12+ points.
- q) 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♥ - pass Similar to (h) but only 9 points. The hand is not worth two bids (less than 12 points), so it's best to just show the major at the one-level.
- r) 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♠ - 3NT South bids 2♠ (reverse) knowing that his partner is unlikely to have a four-card spade suit (he would have bid 1♠ instead of 2♦). However this indicates where his values lie, enabling North to bid no-trumps.
- s) 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 4♣ South knows the hand is worth two bids (12+ points), so bids his five-card suit first and then reverses into his four-card spade suit. With the singleton, North is just worth 4♣ directly.
- t) 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ - pass Similar to (k) but North doesn't have the spade support. Nor does South have heart support. With North showing an absolute minimum opening hand, get out at the lowest level with the misfit. If South had ♥Q instead of ♦Q he would probably raise to 4♥.
- u) 1♥ - 2♣ - 3♣ - 3♠ - 5♣ After North supports the clubs (3♣), South should still reverse into 3♠ in case North wishes to settle for 3NT with diamonds guarded. North rejects the offer and settles for the minor suit game.
- v) 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♥ - 4♥ Knowing that he will have two bids, South bids his diamonds and then reverses into 2♠. North doesn't really know where the hand is going but he can safely bid 3♣ creating a definite game forcing situation. South shows delayed heart support, inviting North to bid 4♥, 3NT or possibly 5♦. This hand is a good illustration of each partner relaying as much information as possible about their respective hands, enabling the most sensible game contract to be reached.
- w) 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♠ - 3♠ - 4♠ North decides not to bid his poor four-card spade suit, with all his values being in the other suits. However when partner reverses into 2♠ he is willing to support.
- x) 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ - 3NT South has sufficient points to reverse into 3♦ on his second bid, leaving North with the decision as to the best game. (If North just bids 3♥ with worse spades, South would probably bid 4♥).