

Responding To Preempts VI - Furthering The Preempt

So we've spent a lot of lessons talking about what to do when you have a big hand and your partner has preempted. We've seen using 2N to look for game. What it means to bid a new suit and how to ask for keycards. Let's go back to the primary purpose of a preempt, which was a bet that the opponents had a plus score and that we could go less minus by interfering with their auction. What should we do if we agree with that sentiment? Or in other words, how should we think about raising partner's preempt when we aren't expecting to make the contract?

Let's go back to the tricks that we are expecting partner to take.

Level	Not Vul	Vul
2	4-5	5-6
3	5-6	6-7
4	6-7	7-8

Now we can add in the number of tricks that we expect to take and do the math to see how expensive it will be if the opponents double us.

Let's assume that partner opened 2H NV vs NV in 1st seat. So we expect partner to take 4-5 tricks.

Our Tricks	Total Tricks	Value of their Game NV	Tricks we can afford to go down	Level we can safely preempt to
2	6-7	400	2	2-3
3	7-8	400	2	3-4
4	8-9	400	2	4-5

If you look closely at that table, you'll see that the value of their game and the tricks we can afford to go down never changes. In, fact we can see that if we can only take 2 tricks, it's not safe to raise the preempt *unless partner can take the extra trick*

Let's take the same table and make partner vulnerable

Our Tricks	Total Tricks	Value of their Game NV	Tricks we can afford to go down	Level we can safely preempt to
2	7-8	400	1	2-3
3	8-9	400	1	3-4
4	9-10	400	1	4-5

While our total tricks value went up, the tricks we can afford to go down went down and so the safe level to raise partner has stayed the same.

What if it were at the 3 level when vulnerable?

Our Tricks	Total Tricks	Value of their Game NV	Tricks we can afford to go down	Level we can safely preempt to
2	8-9	400	1	3-4
3	9-10	400	1	4-5
4	10-11	400	1	5-6

It's only if the opponents are vulnerable that the level changes.

Our Tricks	Total Tricks	Value of their Vul Game	Tricks we can afford to go down	Level we can safely preempt to
2	6-7	600	3	3-4
3	7-8	600	3	4-5
4	8-9	600	3	5-6

So in summary, using a tricks based approach to preempting yields the following principle:

If the opponents are vulnerable you can raise 1 level for every trick over 1 that you can take.

If the opponents are not vulnerable you can raise 1 level for every trick over 2 that you can take.

So, how to count how many tricks you can take?

A simple approach is:

Count the A and K of trump

Count the Queen of trump in a 9 card fit or less

If you have shortness, count your trump length - shortness as tricks

So with 3 trump and a singleton count $3-1=2$ tricks. Max this out at 2 tricks.

Count aces on the side as one trick

Count kings on the side as one trick

At the same time, you need to be betting that the opponent's are making their game. So the more tricks you can take on defense, the less likely that they can make their game and so going down becomes a bad bet. If you assume your preempting partner can take at most 1 trick outside of their suit, then you have some idea of how many defensive tricks your side might have.

Defensive potential is much harder to evaluate, but non trump queens are far more likely to take tricks on defense than on offence. The more defensive potential you have, the less likely your preempt will be successful.