

**Thinking in Parallel. (not Serial)**  
**Part II Competitive Auctions**

First things first. Hopefully you've picked up your hand and classified it as one of the following before the auction begins:

- Opening or better
- Preempt

If you have the time and you're in 3rd or 4th seat it often behooves you to evaluate it in terms of response strength. We'll deal with that next.

But now that the opponent's have entered the auction first, we need to **reevaluate** our hand in light of the new information. Hopefully this is a simple matter of just adjusting our original strength estimate in light of the opponent's bid.

The single most important thing to do when reevaluating is to consider your holding in their suit. The more you want to make that suit trump, the less you should consider entering the auction and vice versa. Hands can go from less than opening to opening strength in light of this. A classic example is the following hand: Axxx x Axxx Qxxx

You wouldn't open that 10 count, but if the opponents open 1H then your hand improves due to your likely useful shortness and the fact that you can describe the 3 suited nature of your hand in just one bid with a double. Recognizing that you are close to opening before they bid can make your decision faster when they do bid.

Similarly, you can keep this handy guideline in mind for thinking about bidding over the opponent's suit.

Overcalling 1N requires 15-18 HCP

Overcalling or doubling at the 2 level requires an opening hand

Overcalling 2N (without jumping) requires 15-18 HCP

Overcalling or doubling at the 3 level requires an opening NT strength hand. (Some of this strength can come from the assumed value of the shortness) So 15 HCP when balanced, but only 13 when you have a singleton

You should use whatever values make sense to you, those are merely suggestions.

I hope you can see that if you've already evaluated your hand before the opponent's bid you won't need to take as long to react to their interference.

I see a lot of players during the auction simply waiting for their turn to bid. Then when it gets to their turn they often have to pause and think before they know what to do. This happens to everyone, because auctions arise all the time that you may never have seen before, or are unsure what you and your partner are playing<sup>1</sup>. When something unusual happens in the auction please feel free to take

## Evaluating your hand as a responder in a competitive auction

If your partner has already acted and shown an opening hand, it's time for you to have categorized your hand in terms of responder strength. Hopefully one of the following:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Goal in a non-competitive auction</b>	<b>HCP Strength</b>
Subminimum	Pass	0-5
Minimum	Stop in 1N or 2 of a suit	6-10
Invitational	Stop in 2N or 3 of a suit	11-12
Game forcing	Stop in 3N or 4 of a suit	13+

We still need to reevaluate to take into account both partner's bid and the interference, and with 2 pieces of information there are of course 2 important factors to consider. Of these, support for partner is more important than strength in the opponent's suit.

In a nutshell, with support for partner be aggressive about raising and with shortness for partner's suit be aggressive about defending. The opposite is true for your holding in your opponent's suit

One of the key things to discard in a competitive auction is the rule of 23 HCP for getting to the 3 level in a fit. That's a great rule if you are competing with yourself and you can choose to stop in 2 or risk competing to 3. When the opponents are bidding, the less you feel like you have a plus score in their suit, the more you should be willing to get a minus score by competing. So you can risk getting higher with one fewer trick and still expect to get a decent score. Down 1 undoubled is still better than the opponents making +110 in 2 of a major or 3 of a minor.

With a fit:

Compete vigorously. Raise 1 level with a trick, consider raising 2 levels with 2 tricks. I.e. after 1H-1S raise to 2H with 1 trick and after 1H-2S raise to 3H with 2 tricks

Without a known or likely fit, you should be more conservative about getting involved in the auction. However, keep in mind your goal when you saw that your partner opened. If you wanted to invite or be in game before there was interference make sure that you manage to still do that after the interference.