

## Thinking in Parallel. (not Serial)

### Part I Non-Competitive Auctions

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 some time to figure it out. That's normal. Bridge is a game of inferences and deductions and I (for one) revel in the opportunity to solve a logic problem with my friend.

You can be ahead of the game by categorizing your hand from the moment you pick it up. Then adjust your thinking as the auction progresses so that you are often in a position to make your decision in a timely manner. Here's a framework to help you out with this process.

#### **Evaluating your hand as the opener**

Ask yourself questions about taking an initial action for your side. The basic ways in which you might act initially are: Opening and Preempting. So the first 2 questions are:

1. Am I strong enough to open the bidding?
2. Do I have a preemptable suit?

If your answer to either of these questions is yes, then you should be primed to act even if the opponents bid in front of you. Sometimes you won't have a good action to take and will end up passing, but this is adjusting to the fluid circumstances of an auction.

If I answer Yes to opening the bidding, I then try to go further and categorize my hand's strength as an opener:

<b>Strength</b>	<b>If partner bids at the 1 level</b>	<b>Balanced</b>	<b>Unbalanced</b>
Minimum	Stop in 1N or 2 of a suit	12-14	12-15 (16)
1NT		15-17	N/A
Invitational	Stop in 2N or 3 of a suit	18-19 (no fit)	(16) 17-18
Maximum	Stop in 3N or 4 of a suit	19 with fit	19-21
2N		20-21	N/A
Strong		22+	22+

#### **Evaluating your hand as a responder.**

If you are in 3rd or 4th seat or simply aren't strong enough to open, evaluate your hand as a responder. Some general categories in this situation are:

<b>Strength</b>	<b>If partner bids at the 1 level</b>	<b>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+

\*Strength after your partner has opened is based on support points should you have a fit and should be adjusted for any opposition bidding. The nice thing is that you are merely adjusting your strength rather than calculating it all anew.

<sup>1</sup>Take this auction:           P-P-P-2S  
  3C-X-3H-X

What is double by the 2S opener?