



How to Play

***Expert
Bridge***



Byron Lund

From the Author

*My books, How to play **Winning Intermediate Bridge**, How to play **Winning Advanced Bridge** and How to play **Expert Bridge**, are dedicated to competitive bridge players which wish to quickly and significantly improve their games and that will implement the necessary changes to do so.*

In this book, I am providing current and future highly competitive players with the research and development that I've done in this area. This will provide them with the tools which they need to become a top upper echelon player.

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April 21, 2026

Table of Contents

Hand Valuation.....	7
1. High Card Point Count Adjustments.....	7
<i>a. Unprotected Honors</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>b. Hands with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 Pattern</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>c. Imbalance of Honor Cards</i>	<i>9</i>
2. Minimum Response Points.....	15
3. Short Suit Points.....	18
4. Double of an Opening Bid	21
5. Suit Overcalls at the One-Level	23
6. Modern Losing Trick Count.....	25
7. Offensive vs. Defensive Hand.....	27
<i>a. Aces.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>b. Other Honors.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>c. Honors in the Opponent’s Suit.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>d. Shortness in the Defenders’ Suit(s).....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>e. Double Fits</i>	<i>28</i>
8. Value of Face Cards.....	30
<i>a. Placement</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>b. Unbalanced Hands</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>c. In a Long Suit.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>d. Accompanied by an Adjoining Higher Honor</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>e. Partnership Strength.....</i>	<i>31</i>
9. Situational Bidding Decisions	33
<i>a. Positive Factors:.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>b. Negative Factors:</i>	<i>34</i>

Bidding: Conventions	37
1. Suit Opening and Responses	37
<i>1.a. Montreal Relay</i>	37
<i>1.b. Reverse Major Suit Responses</i>	41
<i>1.c. Short Club Opening Bids</i>	43
<i>1.d. Double Major Notrump Response</i>	46
<i>1.e. Wolff Signoff</i>	49
<i>1.f. XYZ</i>	52
<i>1.g. Bourke Relay</i>	56
<i>1.h. Kokish Help Suit Game Try</i>	59
<i>1.i. Jump Shift Response by a Passed Hand</i>	65
<i>1.j. Mini-Splinter Bid by the Responder</i>	67
<i>1.k. Mini-Splinter Bid by the Opener</i>	70
<i>1.l. Reverse Bergen Raises</i>	73
2. Notrump Openings and Responses	76
<i>2.a. Retransfers</i>	76
<i>2.b. More Precise Major Suit Superaccept Bids</i>	81
<i>2.c. Responses Showing Length in Both Minor Suits</i>	93
<i>2.d. Expanded Range of Two Notrump Opening Bid</i>	98
<i>2.e. Transfer Lebensohl</i>	100
<i>2.f. Baze</i>	107
3. Two-Level Suit Opening Bids and Responses	112
<i>3.a. Revised Two Hearts Negative Convention</i>	112
<i>3.b. McCabe</i>	115
<i>3.c. Transfer McCabe</i>	118
4. Special Doubles, Redoubles and Responses	122
<i>4.a. Responsive Double</i>	122
<i>4.b. Equal Level Conversion Double</i>	123
<i>4.c. Snapdragon Double</i>	125
<i>4.d. Double of a Bergen Raise</i>	126

4.e. <i>Lightner Double</i>	127
4.f. <i>Scrambling Two Notrump</i>	128
4.g. <i>SOS Redouble</i>	130
5. Overcalls and Reponses	132
5.a. <i>Mixed Raises</i>	132
5.b. <i>Leaping Michaels</i>	133
5.c. <i>Cuebid Overcall of a Weak Two-Level Bid</i>	135
5.d. <i>OBAR bids</i>	136
6. Notrump Overcalls and Responses	138
6.a. <i>Two Clubs Game Try</i>	138
7. Defensive Bids	144
7.a. <i>Anti-Flannery</i>	144
7.b. <i>Unusual-Over-Unusual</i>	146
7.c. <i>Bidding Against a Strong One Club Opening Bid</i>	148
7.d. <i>Meckwell</i>	155
7.e. <i>Robson-Segal Over a One Notrump Overcall</i>	159
7.f. <i>Forcing Pass</i>	162
7.g. <i>Defensive Bidding Against a Texas Transfer</i>	164
8. Bidding Over the Opponents' Takeout Double	168
8.a. <i>Lead Directing Transfer Bids</i>	168
9. Slam Bidding	175
9.a. <i>Exclusion Blackwood</i>	175
9.b. <i>Five Notrump Pick-a-Slam</i>	177
9.c. <i>Soloway Jump Shift</i>	179
9.d. <i>Min-Max Gerber</i>	181
10. Other Conventions	183
10.a. <i>NAMYATS</i>	183
10.b. <i>Modified NAMYATS</i>	186

Bidding: Other	190
1. Using the Soloway Jump Shift.....	190
2. Using Maximal Doubles	197
3. Game and Slam Tries After a Bergen Raise.....	200
4. Overcalls and Responses	203
<i>4.a. The Overcaller.....</i>	<i>203</i>
<i>4.b. Bidding After the Responder Passes the Overcall.....</i>	<i>206</i>
<i>4.c. Bidding After the Responder Bids Over the Overcall.....</i>	<i>209</i>
<i>4.d. Rosenkranz Double.....</i>	<i>210</i>
<i>4.e. Lead Directing Transfer Responses to an Overcall.....</i>	<i>212</i>
5. Strong Siding Contracts	215
6. Rule of 2, 3, 4.....	217
7. OBAR Bids	220
Declarer Play.....	223
1. Dummy Reversal.....	223
2. Intra-finesse.....	227
3. Scissors Coup.....	230
4. Developing a Winner in the Right Order	233
5. Elimination and Endplay	236
6. Partial Elimination and Endplay	240
7. Squeeze Play	242
8. Falsecards by the Declarer.....	246
9. Stealing a Trick.....	248
10. Counting	251
11. Discovery Play	254
12. Law of Vacant Spaces.....	257

13. Law of Missing Points.....	260
14. Determining Which Counting Law to Use.....	262
Defense.....	267
1. Opening Leads of a King.....	267
<i>1.a. In a Notrump Contract</i>	<i>267</i>
<i>1.b. In a Suit Contract</i>	<i>268</i>
2. Third Highest Leads in Suit Contracts	272
3. Signalling to an Ace Lead.....	275
4. Smith Echo.....	278
5. Trump Suit Preference Signal	280
6. Preserving Partner's Entry in a Notrump Contract.....	282
<i>a. As the Weak Hand on the Opening Lead.....</i>	<i>282</i>
<i>b. As the Weak Hand Not on the Opening Lead.....</i>	<i>283</i>
7. Obligatory Falsecards.....	286
8. Surround Play and Power Shift.....	288
9. Double of a Splinter Bid	291
10. Forcing the Declarer to Make an Early Decision.....	292
11. Preventing an Endplay	294
12. Counting.....	296

Hand Valuation

1. High Card Point Count Adjustments

Most bidding decisions are based on the estimated value of the hand. These estimates are originally based on the high card point (HCP) count of the hand.

Having a correct assessment of the value of the hand is critical to making a correct bid. If that assessment is incorrect it may result in a poor bidding decision and a poor score.

Most players use the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system. That system values each ace as 4 points, king as 3 points, queen as 2 points and jack as 1 point. It is easy to use and usually provides a good assessment of the value of a hand.

The following hand is an example of its use:

♠ KQJ
♥ QJ5
♦ QJ6
♣ QJ65

Based on holding one king, four queens and four jacks, most players would assess this hand as having a value of 15 high card points (HCP). Most would open the hand with a 1 NT bid. Some may open with only a 1 ♣ bid. On this hand, an incorrect bid opening bid would have been made because of an incorrect assessment of the hand's value.

This chapter details a method for determining what the correct value of the hand is and what, if any, adjustments need to be made.

On some hands, such as the one above, the Works 4-3-2-1 count needs to be adjusted to provide a better assessment of the hand's value. In order to

Hand Valuation

arrive at a correct value of the hand, a player should develop an understanding of situations when an adjustment is needed and the amount of adjustment to make.

Three situations where the high card points should be adjusted are:

a. Unprotected Honors

Unprotected honors are those that are situated in a suit with either a singleton face card or a doubleton containing a jack or queen. The honor is likely to drop in the first or second round played in the suit. The points assigned to the unprotected honors should be reduced.

In a suit contract, when the honor in the short side suit does promote an honour in their partner's hand, it is redundant unless a loser may be tossed instead of trumping. In order to toss a loser from the hand with the unprotected honor, that hand would also need to hold a three cards side suit which does not contain the queen. If the three cards side suit contains a queen, a discard in the suit will likely not create a future trick.

One point should be deducted for a holding of singleton king or jack or a doubleton queen or jack.

Two points should be deducted for a singleton queen.

Once a suit fit of at least eight cards is confirmed, shortness points may be assigned for the singleton or doubleton. However, the points for the honor cards should still remain discounted.

b. Hands with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 Pattern

Hands with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 pattern should have their initial value reduced by one point.

In a suit contract, this hand pattern lacks a short suit. This limits their ability to provide an extra trick through a ruff.

Hand Valuation

The 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand pattern has less of an impact in a notrump contract, but is less successful than either the 4 – 4 – 3 – 2 or the 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 hand patterns.

In an IMP game, a player should gamble on making the bonus points for bidding a game contract. In deciding on whether to accept an invitation to a notrump game contract, the potential game bonus outweighs the disadvantage of the 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand pattern. In those circumstances, the player should disregard the deduction for that hand pattern.

c. Imbalance of Honor Cards

The 4-3-2-1 point count undervalues aces. It also overvalues queens and jacks. If the hand contains more than one of a specific honor, an adjustment to the high card point count may be needed to provide a better assessment of the value of the hand.

There are more accurate point count systems. They are seldom used because the 4-3-2-1 point count is much easier to use. Most of those alternate counting systems do not total to 10 points per suit. As such, they would require a major change to the number of points required for different bids, responses and ability to open or bid a game or slam contract.

When converted to a 10 point scale, however, the more accurate point count systems all¹ value the honors at, or close to:

- Aces at 4.5 points each
- Queens at 1.5 points each
- Jacks, if unaccompanied by tens, at .75 points each

The Works 4-3-2-1 count can easily be adjusted to those more accurate values if and when needed. These adjustments are simple.

Hand Valuation

The amount of the undervaluation of aces is the same as the amount of the overvaluation of queens. The amount of the overvaluation of jacks is offset by the undervaluation of tens.

To correct any imbalances, a player should;

- i. add 1 point if the hand contains two or three more aces than queens,
- ii. add 2 points if the hand contains four more aces than queens,
- iii. subtract 1 point if the hand contains two or three more queens than aces,
- iv. subtract 2 points if the hand contains four more queens than aces, and
- v. subtract 1 point if the hand contains three or four more jacks than tens.

Players may choose to have an even more accurate count for hands where there is an odd number difference between the number of queens and aces by using counting half points such as;

- i. adding 1 ½ points for three more aces than queens,
- ii. adding ½ point for one more ace than the number of queens,
- iii. subtracting ½ point for a hand having one more queen than ace, or

Hand Valuation

- iv. subtracting $1\frac{1}{2}$ points for a hand having three more queens than aces.

If the adjustment leads to a remainder of a half point, a player should then either round their count;

- i. up to the nearest whole number if the hand contains more tens than jacks, or
- ii. down to the nearest whole number if the number of jacks exceeds the number of tens.

An illustration of the effect of a high card imbalance is shown in these two hands:

(a) ♠ KQJ	(b) ♠ QJ52	(c) ♠ AJ52
♥ QJ5	♥ KQ	♥ AK
♦ QJ5	♦ Q1054	♦ A1054
♣ QJ65	♣ QJ7	♣ A107

On hand (a) the original count is 15 HCP. There is a 1 point initial deduction for the flat 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution. Since there are four more queens than aces, there is a further 2 point deduction. There are four more jacks than aces which warrants another 1 point reduction.

Once those adjustments are made, this hand has an adjusted value of 11 HCP.

This is the hand shown in the example at the beginning of this chapter.

On hand (b), the original HCP count is 14 HCP. There aren't any point deductions for a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution or unprotected honors. There are four more queens than aces so the hand should have a 2 point deduction. The final adjusted value of the hand is slightly under 12 HCP since the hand contains more jacks than tens.

Hand Valuation

On hand (c) the original HCP count is 20 HCP. There aren't any point deductions for a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution or unprotected honors. The hand contains four more aces than queens so should be adjusted up to 22 HCP.

Once the adjustments are made, the corrected high card point (HCP) values are used for opening bids, responses, games, slams, conventions, etc. to provide a more accurate value.

In summary, a player should continue using their 4-3-2-1 point count method. It is easy to use and provides the correct assessment most of the time. When needed, the following adjustments should be made to that number;

- a. if the hand contains an unprotected face card, deduct 2 points for a singleton queen (Q) or 1 point for a singleton king or doubleton queen or jack (K, Qx, or Jx),
- b. if the hand has a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 pattern, subtract 1 point, and
- c. if the hand contains an imbalance of honor cards;
 - i. subtract 1 point if the hand contains two or three more queens than aces,
 - ii. subtract 2 points if the hand contains all four queens and no aces,
 - iii. add 2 points if the hand contains all four aces and no queens,
 - iv. add 1 point if the hand contains two or three more aces than queens, and

Hand Valuation

- v. subtract 1 point if the hand contains three or four more jacks than tens.

The benefit of making these adjustments to the high card point count is that more hands will be played at the appropriate level.

If a player realizes that a situation requires an adjustment but cannot remember if the adjustment is one or two points, they should make a one point adjustment. It is the most likely of the adjustments. After the game, they should review this chapter to ensure that they make the correct adjustment the next time.

¹ *Alex Martelli is credited with the 4 ½, 3, 1 ½, ¾, ¼ point count, which values the hand to within one eighth of a point and is considered the most accurate point count. He did so by multiplying the Four Aces (3,2,1, ½) point count by 1.5 and adding a ¼ point for the ten, bringing the total to 10 points.*

When converted to a 10 point scale, the Kleinman Point count, or the Little Jack Points from which it is derived, closely resemble Martelli's figures. So does Zar Points.

Quiz Questions – High Card Point Count Adjustments

1. *What are the four possible hands which should be adjusted after Works 4-3-2-1 point count is made?*
2. *What adjustment should be made for a hand with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution pattern?*
3. *What point adjustment is made for:*
 - a) *a singleton king?*
 - b) *a singleton queen?*
 - c) *a singleton jack?*
 - d) *a doubleton queen (Qx)?*

Hand Valuation

4. Using the Works Point Count (4-3-2-1) method, what is the point count of the following hands?

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>
♠ AK103	♠ KQ53
♥ A105	♥ Q94
♦ AJ53	♦ QJ53
♣ A106	♣ Q7

5. What is the adjusted point count of those hands ?

6. Should shortness points be counted in the original assessment of the value of the hand?

Answers:

1. A hand with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution pattern, a hand containing an unprotected honor and a hand containing an imbalance in the honor cards.

2. One point deduction.

3.a. One point deduction.

3.b. Two point deduction.

3.c. One point deduction.

3.d. One point deduction.

4.a. 15

4.b. 12

5.a. 20. From the 18 points, 2 points are added for the four aces with no queens.

5.b. 10. From the 12 points, one point is deducted for the doubleton queen. There are then three more queens than aces for a 1 point reduction.

6. No. Shortness points should not be counted until there is a known fit.

2. Minimum Response Points

Introductory bridge lessons taught students that when a opening bid is made, the minimum strength that a hand needs to respond at the one-level is 6 HCP.

While the 6 HCP is a good, simple rule, it does not consider the inaccuracy of the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system or that all 6 HCP hands are not equal.

At the higher levels in their development, a player should adjust the 6 HCP minimum number to one which more accurately reflects a hand's value.

Below are suggestions for a more accurate assessment of whether a hand contains sufficient value to respond to a suit opening bid made at the one-level.

Even though, excluding length points, the hand only contains **4 HCP**, a five cards major suit headed by the ace is sufficient to respond if the suit can be bid at the one-level.

The contract will play well if the opener raises the suit.

If the suit is raised by the opener and the pair is not vulnerable, the hand is strong enough for a three-level sacrifice bid if necessary. This is because of the ace and the nine cards fit.

If the opener replies with a notrump bid, the responder should pass and allow the hand to be played in a notrump contract. The opener's points will likely provide stoppers in the other suits. The ace and length in the responder's suit should provide the declarer with sufficient stoppers.

When the opener has three cards support in a notrump contract, they will likely be able to set up the responder's suit by playing the ace on the third round. That will place them in the responder's hand where they can play the two established tricks and toss losers from the declarer's hand.

Hand Valuation

When the response is made and the opponents win the contract, the bid has provided a good suit lead indicator for the opener.

A four cards major suit headed by either the KQ or the AJ10 are sufficient to respond even though the hand only contains **5 HCP**, when the bid can be made at that one-level.

The suit will play reasonably well if raised by the opener.

In a notrump contract, the king and queen provide reasonable stoppers. With their opening points, the opener is likely to hold either the ace or jack to compliment the responder's KQxx holding, or the king or queen to compliment the AJ10x holding. The opener will hold both of the missing honors in the responder's suit about one-sixth of the time.

If the suit splits 4 – 3 – 3 – 3, there is a chance that the suit will provide an extra trick.

When the opponents win the contract, the bid provided the opener with a good lead indicator.

Unless they also have suit with at least five cards in length, the only hands containing **6 HCP** that the responder should bid are those which contain either two kings, or an ace and a queen.

Any hand opening with **7 HCP** should contain either an ace or a king.

Any other 7 HCP holding does not contain enough stoppers to warrant a response.

At **8 HCP**, a hand containing three queens and two jacks may respond. In those cases, the opener's points will be in high honors and will likely promote the honors in the responder's hand.

Hand Valuation

Quiz Questions – Minimum Response Points

1. Does the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system always provide an accurate assessment of a hand's value?
2. Do all of the hands counted as 6 HCP under the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system contain equal value?
3. If a suit opening bid is made at the one-level, which hands are suggested as suitable to respond which contain:
 - a. 4 HCP?
 - b. 5 HCP?
 - c. 6 HCP?
 - d. 7 HCP?
 - e. 8 HCP?

Answers:

1. No. There are more accurate point count systems.
2. No.
 - 3.a. Hands which contain a five cards suit which is headed by an ace and can be bid at the one-level.
 - 3.b. Hands which contain a four cards suit headed by either the king and queen, or by the ace, jack and ten if that suit may be bid at the one-level.
 - 3.c. The only hands containing exactly 6 HCP are those which contain two kings or one ace and one queen.
 - 3.d. As long as they contain either an ace or a king, all 7 HCP hands can be responded at the one-level.
 - 3.e. The only hand which contains 8 HCP which is strong enough to respond is one that contains three queens and two jacks.

3. Short Suit Points

Shortness in one suit is only helpful if it is helpful in making the contract.

Points should be only be counted for shortness in a suit if;

- a. the pair has established a suit fit of at least eight cards in length,
- b. the contract is likely to played in the suit with the long fit, and
- c. the shortness is not in the trump suit.

Points should not be counted for doubletons, singletons or voids in the trump suit.

When counting points for a short suit, any high card points relating to length should be removed from the high card point count. Counting points for both shortness and length is double-counting since any suit with at least five cards length in one suit will always contain one or more doubleton, singleton or void (i.e., a hand containing a five cards suit will contain at least one other suit which contains two or fewer cards. When counting the points for the side suit, the point originally assigned for the fifth card should be removed.).

The value of the shortness in a side suit is usually dependent on the number of rounds that the hand may trump that suit. Points assigned for shortness in a suit are suggested to not exceed the number of cards held in the suit fit.

Once a suit fit is found, each of the two hands should count;

- a. 5 points for each side suit void,
- b. 3 points for each singleton in a side suit, and
- c. 1 point for each doubleton in a side suit.

Hand Valuation

The restrictions on the short suit count are:

- a. With five or greater cards in the trump suit, voids are worth five points, singletons are worth three points and doubletons are worth one point.
- b. With four cards in the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a void is four.
- c. With three cards support for the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a singleton or void is three.
- d. With two cards support for the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a singleton or void is two.

Placing short suit point restrictions based on the number of trump cards held in that hand provided a better assessment of the hand's ability to provide tricks through ruffs in the short suit.

Quiz Questions – Short Suit Points

1. *What are the three requirements needed for counting points for a short suit?*
2. *If the hand containing the short suit(s) had previously counted points for length in a suit, should the length points and points for the short suits both be counted when counting the hand's strength?*
3. *How many points are side suit doubletons, singletons and voids counted for in a hand that contains:*
 - a. *five trump cards?*
 - b. *four trump cards?*
 - c. *three trump cards?*
 - d. *two trump cards?*

Hand Valuation

Answers:

1. A fit of at least eight cards, the contract is likely to be played in the long card fit, and the shortness is not in that suit.

2. No.

3.a. doubleton – 1 point, singleton – 3 points, void – 5 points

3.a. doubleton – 1 point, singleton – 3 points, void – 4 points

3.a. doubleton – 1 point, singleton – 3 points, void – 3 points

3.a. doubleton – 1 point, singleton – 2 points, void – 2 points

4. Double of an Opening Bid

A double of an opening bid implies a desire to compete in the bidding. It usually* indicates shortness in the suit opened and at least three cards in each of the other suits.

- * A double followed by a bid is also used with a hand that is too strong for an overcall

The double requests their partner to bid their longest unbid suit unless they hold six or more cards in the opened suit.

The minimal requirement for a double in the direct seat is at least 10 HCP greater than the length of their holding in the opened suit. These are;

10 HCP with 0 cards in the opened suit *

11 HCP with 1 card in the opened suit **

12 HCP with 2 cards in the opened suit ***, or

13 HCP with 3 cards in the opened suit ****

* The void will count for at least 4 points once a (likely) eight or nine cards fit is found

** The singleton will count for 4 points once a (likely) eight cards fit is found, bringing the total to 14

*** The doubleton will add 1 point if an eight cards fit is found

**** This is usually a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand so needs 14 honor points

In the fourth seat, three fewer points are required to make a double.

Quiz Questions – Double of an Opening Bid

1. *When they have doubled an opening bid, what is the minimum number of cards which the doubler usually has in each of the other suits?*
2. *In the direct seat, how many HCP are required if the hand contains:*
 - a. *no cards in the opened suit?*
 - b. *one card in the opened suit?*
 - c. *two cards in the opened suit?*
3. *How many honor points are usually required for a direct seat double of an opening bid if the doubler holds three cards in the opened suit?*

Answers:

1. Three 2.a. 10 2.b. 11 2.c. 12

3. Fourteen. The hold usually has a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 pattern, so requires an extra honor point.

5. Suit Overcalls at the One-Level

An overcall made at the one-level is usually made with a suit of at least five cards in length.

The overcall should be either, or both, a lead directing bid or a desire to compete for the contract.

If the hand was strong enough to open, it is strong enough to overcall because it is competing for the contract. It does not require any honors in the overcalled suit.

At the low end of the range (6 to 8 points not-vulnerable, or 8 to 9 points vulnerable), the suit overcall is mainly a lead directing bid and should contain either the ace or the king and queen. In the direct seat following an opening bid the king is usually a sufficient stopper because the opener has indicated that they hold a significant portion of the points that are not held by the overcaller. The opener is likely to hold the ace in the overcaller's suit.

For an overcall made with a hand containing 10 or 11 honor points, the suit bid should contain either the ace or two of the top four honors. Those hands are good for lead directing and for sacrifice bids.

The advantages of following these suggestions are that they often prevent poor leads, contracts and sacrifice bids.

Quiz Questions – Suit Overcalls at the One-Level

- 1. What are the two reasons for making an overcall at the one-level?*
- 2. How much strength is needed to make a lead directing overcall?*
- 3. How much strength is needed when the suit bid is not made to direct the lead?*

Hand Valuation

Answers:

- 1. Either lead directing or a desire to compete for the contract*
- 2. If not vulnerable, the overcall may be made with a hand as weak as 6 to 8 HCP. If vulnerable, the hand should contain 8 or 9 HCP.*
- 3. The hand should be of sufficient value that it could have opened the bidding.*

6. Modern Losing Trick Count

The modern losing trick count method, made popular by Australian bridge book author and bridge expert Ron Klinger, is an advancement to the losing trick count.

In this method, Klinger revises the values of queens and jacks in side suits, so that the queen has a maximum value of 0.5 of a loser. He also reduces the losers by 0.5 points in side suits with holdings of AQ, AQJ, AJ10(x) or KJ10(x) as the lower honor may be promoted through a finesse.

The modern losing trick count now becomes:

- a. Zero losers – a void, A or AK
- b. Half a loser – AQ, AKQ, AQJ
- c. One loser – AKx, KQ, Kx, K, Q, J, x
- d. One and a half losers – AQx, AJ10, KJ10
- e. Two losers – Axx, AJx, KJx, Kxx, QJx, Qx, Jx, xx
- f. Two and a half losers – Qxx
- g. Three losers – Jxx, xxx

When using either losing trick count or modern losing trick count, a player should avoid counting losers in suits where some, or all, of the rounds may be ruffed because of shortness in their partner's hand (i.e., holding three small cards, the suit should be counted for at most one loser if their partner has a singleton in that suit or for at most two losers if their partner has indicated that they have a doubleton).

The advantage of upgrading to the modern losing trick count is that it is more accurate at predicting the correct number of tricks that will be taken by a contract played in that suit.

Hand Valuation

Quiz Questions – Modern Losing Trick Count

1. Having found a fit in the spade suit, how many losers are there in the following hands?

a. ♠ Q9732
♥ AQ
♦ 96
♣ J532

b. ♠ AJ973
♥ Q5
♦ AJ10
♣ Q83

c. ♠ AJ1073
♥ Q5
♦ Q64
♣ Q83

2. If their partner is indicated as holding a doubleton in the club suit, does that change the losing trick count in any of the above hands?

Answers:

1.a. $7\frac{1}{2}$; 2 losers in the spade suit, $\frac{1}{2}$ a loser in hearts, 2 losers in diamonds and 3 in the club suit.

1.b. 8 ; 2 losers in the spade suit, 2 in hearts, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in diamonds and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in the club suit.

1.c. $8\frac{1}{2}$; $1\frac{1}{2}$ losers in the spade suit, 2 in hearts, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in diamonds and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in the club suit.

2. Yes. In hand a., their partner's doubleton in the club suit reduces the losers in that suit to 2. The hand then becomes a $6\frac{1}{2}$ loser hand.

In hands b. and c., the $2\frac{1}{2}$ losers in the club suit is reduced to 2 losers.

7. Offensive vs. Defensive Hand

In competitive bidding, a player is often forced to decide whether they want to play the contract or to defend it. Some factors used in making this choice are:

a. Aces

Aces are neutral.

They hold the same value whether defending or declaring. They are likely to take a trick when either playing or defending the hand.

b. Other Honors

Kings in side suits are likely to take a trick in defense unless the opponents have indicated shortness in the suit.

The queen and lower honors are more offensive oriented. They will likely require that the honor is not trumped. On offense, the declarer may be able to remove trumps from the opponents hand and time the playing of the suit to when the honor may take a trick without it being trumped by one of the opponents.

c. Honors in the Opponent's Suit

The queen and lower honors in the opponent's suit are helpful when defending. They will likely not add any tricks if playing the contract. They are usually wasted or redundant when playing the hand because that round could usually be trumped by their partner's hand.

Hand Valuation

d. Shortness in the Defenders' Suit(s)

Shortness in the defenders' suit(s) are helpful when playing the contract, but not if defending.

e. Double Fits

Fits in two suits are better when playing the contract than defending.

Double fits also indicate that the opponents have a double fit in the other two suits. Honors are more likely to be in each pair's long suits than in their short ones. Those two factors weaken the prospects of setting the opponents' contract and increase the prospect of making the bid contract.

Quiz Questions – Offensive vs. Defensive Hand

1. *Are the following suit holdings more valuable for gaining the contract or defending:?*

- a. *Aces in side suits?*
- b. *Qxx in the opponent's long suit?*
- c. *Qxx in the long suit fit of the partnership?*
- d. *Qxx in a suit which is not likely to become the trump suit?*
- e. *Double fits?*

Answers:

- 1.a. *They are good in either playing the contract or defending.*
- 1.b. *They are more valuable on defense.*
- 1.c. *More valuable on offense (gaining the contract).*

Hand Valuation

1.d. They are more valuable if playing the contract. Once the opponents' trumps are removed the queen may win a trick on the third round of the suit.

1.e. They are more valuable when declaring the contract. When one side has a double fit, their opponents usually have a double fit in the other two suits.

8. Value of Face Cards

Face cards are kings, queens and jacks. Their value may change depending on other factors in the hand such as:

a. Placement

When the preceding opponent has a longer holding in the suit which contains a certain honor, that honor is more likely to take a trick.

The same holds true when the preceding opponent has more HCP than their partner does. In both cases, one or more higher honors are likely in the hand preceding the face card.

Face cards in the hand preceding the stronger opponent or the opponent with the longer holding in the suit have less value than their HCP count indicates.

b. Unbalanced Hands

Unbalanced hands are more likely to have one or more short suits.

The *Law of Symmetry* states that if any player has an unbalanced hand, the suits are more likely to split unevenly. If any of the players has an unbalanced hand, the face card is more likely to be trumped by an opponent.

If their partner has an unbalanced hand, the face card is more likely to be redundant.

If their partner has shown a two-suited hand, face cards are more valuable when they are in that player's long suits and of less value if in the other suits.

Hand Valuation

c. In a Long Suit

If the face cards are in a long suit, they may be of more value if that suit can be set up future tricks.

d. Accompanied by an Adjoining Higher Honor

Any honor gets promoted in value when it is accompanied by an adjoining higher honor in the suit. (i.e., the king in an AK(x)(x)(x) holding will be promoted to the value of the ace).

These promoted honors are usually partially offset by the shortage of honors in other suits.

The rule of thumb is to add $\frac{1}{2}$ point for adjoining honors in a suit.

e. Partnership Strength

If the partnership holds most of the high card points, the face cards are more likely to either;

- i. win a trick, or
- ii. promote a trick in their partner's hand.

When the opponents hold most of the HCP, the opposite is true.

Quiz Questions – Value of Face Cards

1. *Is a face card more likely to take a trick if:*
 - a. *The LHO is indicated as having a hand with length in the suit?*
 - b. *The RHO is indicated having a stronger hand than the LHO?*
 - c. *The opening bid was a minor suit and it was doubled?*

Hand Valuation

d. The face card is in a long suit which is likely in the hand of a 11 HCP dummy?

e. The opponents hold more of the remaining HCP?

f. They are in one of long suits indicated by your partner, who is likely to become the declarer?

g. Accompanied by an adjoining honor in the suit?

Answers:

1.a. Yes 1.b. No

1.c. This indicates a balanced hand. The face cards are less likely to be trumped on the third round.

1.d. Yes 1.e. No 1.f. Yes 1.g. Yes

9. Situational Bidding Decisions

At this point of development, a player should be fine-tuning their decisions on whether or not to risk bidding a game or slam contract.

A player should have already made some point count adjustments in the previous steps, but should still consider the positive and negative factors prior to confirming their decision using Losing Trick Count or Modern Losing Trick Count.

Some of these factors are:

a. Positive Factors:

i. Playing against lower level opponents who likely have less developed defensive skills.

ii. Playing in an IMP game.

The 600 or 620 points scored for making a vulnerable game greatly outweighs the loss of 220 (120 that they would have made for making 2 NT plus the 100 points for the loss) or 240 (140 plus 100) for a major suit game.

In non-vulnerable games the 400 or 420 points outweighs the 170 point loss.

A player should weigh the vulnerable game a bit higher than the non-vulnerable one.

iii. Broken honors in a suit either sitting after the opponent with either the stronger hand or length in the suit with the broken honors.

iv. Adjoining honors such as ace and king or king and queen.

v. Points concentrated in their longest suits.

Hand Valuation

vi. Holding four cards in the opponents' suit.

There is a reasonable chance of extra tricks through a cross-ruff because their partner is likely to have shortness in the suit.

b. Negative Factors:

i. Playing against higher level opponents.

They likely have better defensive skills.

ii. Having less developed declarer play skills than most advanced players.

iii. Broken honors in a suit sitting in front of the opponent with the stronger hand or length in your suit with the broken honors.

iv. Scattered honors.

These are less likely to get tricks than concentrated ones.

v. Three cards in opponents' suit.

This is known as the "death holding".

vi. Partner having 10 or less HCP in their hand.

This may indicate possible transportation problems between dummy and declarer's hands.

If a player has more positive factors than negative factors, they should consider taking the risk of bidding a game or slam contract.

Quiz Questions – Situational Bidding Decisions

1. In a close decision between passing a three-level major suit contract or raising the suit to game level, how will the following situations affect the decision:

- a. Playing in an IMP game vs. a Matchpoint one?
- b. Having adjoining honors?
- c. The declarer having great declarer play skills?
- d. Weak opponents?
- e. One of the hands having ten or fewer HCP?
- f. Three cards holding in the opponent's suit?

Answers:

1.a. IMP scoring favors a lower success rate, than the 50 percent required for Matchpoints games, at making game contracts.

1.b. The hand is more valuable. It should be adjusted up by $\frac{1}{2}$ of a point.

1.c. This is a positive factor. The declarer is more likely to make the contract than the weaker declarers would be.

1.d. This is a positive factor as the opponents are more likely to make a mistake that could have set the contract.

1.e. This is a negative factor. There may be transportation problems.

1.f. This is a negative factor. This holding is often referred to as the "death holding".

Hand Valuation

Bidding: Conventions and Agreements

1. Suit Opening and Responses

1.a. Montreal Relay

Montreal relay is a convention used in response to a 1 ♣ opening bid. It was developed by Eric Kokish, former Canadian bridge expert and coach.

The two main features of this convention are that, after a 1 ♣ opening bid, the responder may bid either;

- i. 1 ♥ or 1 ♠ to show at least a five cards holding in that suit, or

Once the 1 ♥ or 1 ♠ bid is made, the opener may raise the suit with as few as three cards support.

- ii. 1 ♦ as an artificial bid. It must be alerted.

Aside from usually denying a five cards holding in a major suit, the 1 ♦ response does not promise any length in the diamond or any other suit.

The 1 ♦ response asks the opener to bid their lowest ranking major suit containing four cards.

If the opener does not hold four cards in a major suit, they either;

- a) bid notrump,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

*b) rebid their club suit if it contains at least six cards,
or*

c) bid 2 \diamond as a reverse bid showing a hand with at least 17 HCP, four or more cards in the diamond suit and more clubs than diamonds.

Once the opener bids their four cards major suit, a contract in that suit will be played with the opener as the declarer if the responder has four cards support. The opener is usually the stronger hand, and having the contract played with the stronger hand as the declarer often gains a trick.

The 1 \diamond response should also be used when the responder does not hold a major suit with four cards length. If neither the opener nor the responder holds a four cards major suit, a notrump contract will be played with the opener as the declarer. This usually places the stronger hand as the declarer.

An additional benefit of the 1 \diamond response is that it creates difficulties for the responder's RHO to show a hand which contains at only one four cards major suit. If the responder had bid their four cards major suit, the next seat would have been able to double to show four cards in the other major suit. The Montreal relay system and use of the 1 \diamond response prevents this.

The benefits of using the Montreal relay convention are;

i. when the responder bids a major suit, it contains at least five cards in length,

This enables the opener to raise the suit with only three cards support. This increases the chance of finding a 5 – 3 suit fit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

When the opener has four cards support, they are aware of the nine cards suit fit. This may be an important factor in determining the level which the suit may be played in.

Knowledge about whether there is an eight or a nine cards fit is a factor in considering game or slam contracts and when in a competitive auction.

ii. the opener knows whether the responder holds four or five cards in the major suit,

This eliminates the need for the opener to use a support double or redouble. Support doubles and redoubles often results in a Moysian (4 – 3) fit and a bad split.

iii. when there is a 4 – 4 major suit fit, it is more likely to be played with the stronger hand as the declarer,

iv. notrump contracts are more likely to be played with the stronger hand as the defender, and

v. the 1 \diamond bid makes it more difficult for the declarer's RHO to show four cards length in a major suit.

Quiz Questions – Montreal Relay

1. *What are the two main benefits of the Montreal Relay convention?*

2. *Playing Montreal Relay, how should a player respond to a 1 \clubsuit opening bid with the following hands?*

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>c</u>
♠ Q9763	♠ Q973	♠ Q97
♥ A5	♥ A5	♥ A53
♦ 964	♦ 964	♦ 964
♣ J32	♣ J832	♣ J832

Answers:

1. Major suit responses to a 1 ♣ opening bid show at least five cards in the suit. This allows the opener to raise the suit with only three cards support and reduces risk of playing in a Moysian (4 – 3) fit.

If they do not hold five cards in a major suit, the responder bids 1 ♦. This asks the opener to bid a four cards major suit. When a 4 – 4 major suit fit exists, it is usually played with the stronger hand as the declarer. This often gains an extra trick.

2.a. 1 ♠

2.b. 1 ♦

2.c. 1 ♦. If the opener holds three cards in each of the major suits, they will bid 1 NT. This would place the stronger hand as the declarer in a 1 NT contract..

1.b. Reverse Major Suit Responses

Reverse major suit responses are only used after a 1 ♣ opening bid and the partnership is playing the Montreal relay. It is used to place the stronger hand as the declarer.

This technique reverses the responder's bids when holding a five cards major suit, such that;

- i. a 1 ♥ response shows a five cards or longer spade suit, and
- ii. a 1 ♠ response shows a five cards or longer heart suit.

After the reverse major suit response, the opener bids the responder's long major suit when they have either three or four cards support.

The benefits of this convention are that;

- i. the opener will become the declarer if the contract is played in the responder's long major suit, and

The opener is usually the strong hand. They usually have three or four cards support for the responder's major suit. There is a reasonable chance they will be placed as the declarer which may gain a trick.

- ii. it makes it difficult for the responder's LHO to show a four cards major suit holding.

If the responder bids 1 ♠ to show five cards in the heart suit, their spade bid may be doubled as lead directing. However, the advancer is likely to be uncertain about whether the double was made with a four or a five card holding in the suit. This may create uncertainty for the advancer about the level which they can compete in the spade suit

When used, the reverse major suit response must be announced.

Quiz Questions – Reverse Major Suit Responses

1. *What are the benefits of using reverse major suit responses?*
2. *Playing Montreal relay and reverse major suit responses, what should the responder bid with the following hands if their partner opens with a 1 ♣ bid?*

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>c</u>
♠ Q9763	♠ K7	♠ Q972
♥ A5	♥ A7542	♥ A543
♦ 964	♦ 964	♦ 964
♣ J32	♣ J82	♣ J532

Answers:

1. *The main benefit is playing the contract with the stronger hand as the declarer. Another benefit is that it makes it difficult for the opponents to show their major suit holding.*

2. a. 1 ♥ 2.b. 1 ♠

2.c. 1 ♦. *This is a Montreal relay bid asking the opener to bid their lowest ranking major suit which contains four cards.*

1.c. Short Club Opening Bids

Using a short club opening bid means that a 1 ♣ opening bid may be made with as few as two cards in the club suit. If being used, it must be announced that it may be as short as two cards.

The main reason for using short club opening bids is that they increase the hands that open with a 1 ♣ bid while decreasing those that open with 1 ♦. This increases the frequency of using the Montreal relay and reverse major suit responses. Those two conventions provide benefits that are not available when the opening bid was 1 ♦.

Using short club opening bids, the hands which switch from a 1 ♦ opening bid to 1 ♣ include those which have either a 4 = 4 = 3 = 2, a 4 = 3 = 4 = 2, a 3 = 4 = 4 = 2 or a 3 = 3 = 4 = 3 pattern.

Switching the opening bid on these patterns increases the frequency of hands opening with a 1 ♣ opening bid by around 20 percent while decreasing those opened with a 1 ♦ opening bid by a similar amount. Since over 60 percent of the one-level suit opening bids are made in a minor suit, when using Montreal relay and reverse major suit responses, the change to a short club opening bid may have a material effect on a player's results.

Another benefit of the short club opening is that the 1 ♦ opening bid promises at least four, and will likely contain five or more, cards in the diamond suit. This promised length allows;

- i. inverted minor bids in the diamond suit may be made with only four cards support, and
- ii. better decisions made on whether the contract is best played in the diamond suit.

Quiz Questions – Short Club Opening Bids

1. What is the benefit of the short club opening bids?
2. How much does the short club opening bid effect the number of times that a one-level suit opening bid will be made in the club suit?
3. Playing short club opening bids, what bid should the player open these hands with?

a
♠ 10976
♥ AQ5
♦ AK6
♣ J53

b
♠ 97
♥ AQ3
♦ AK64
♣ J832

c
♠ 1097
♥ AQ53
♦ AK64
♣ J8

- 4.a. When using short club opening bids, what is the minimum and the expected length of the opener's diamond suit when they open with a 1 ♦ bid?
- 4.b. How does the 1 ♦ opening bid effect bidding decisions?

Answers:

1. Some hands that were formerly opened with a 1 ♦ opening bid are opened with a 1 ♣ bid. This increases the use of the Montreal relay and reverse major suit responses and the benefits which derive associated from their use.

2. It results with around a 20 percent increase.

3.a. 1 ♣

3.b. 1 ♣

3.c. 1 ♣

4.a. The minimum length is a four cards suit. The expected length is five or more cards in the diamond suit.

4.b. When the opener starts with a 1 ♦ bid, the responder can make an inverted minor bid with only four cards in the diamond suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

When the bidding starts with a 1♦ opening bid, the increased expected length results in better decisions about whether the final contract should be played in the diamond suit.

1.d. Double Major Notrump Response

When using the Montreal relay, a 1 NT response to a 1 ♣ opening bid may be used to show a hand which contains five cards in each of the major suits. No honor points are required for this bid.

When responding to a 1 ♣ opening bid, flat hands should first go through the 1 ♦ response when playing the Montreal relay. Going through the 1 ♦ response increases the chance of a notrump contract being played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

The delay in notrump bidding allows the notrump bids to be used for other purposes. The double major notrump response should be considered as a use of the 1 NT response bid.

The double major notrump response should be used to prevent having the weaker hand play the contract.

If a partnership is not playing the double major notrump response and the responder holds five cards in both major suits they will usually begin with a 1 ♥ bid to show length in the spade suit. If the opener holds less than three cards in the spade suit, the contract will likely be played in the heart suit with the weaker hand as the declarer.

In response to the responder's 1 NT bid, the opener should bid either;

- i. their longest major suit which contains at least three cards,

After this bid, the responder may raise the suit to invitation or game level. This will occur often as the hand has only nine losers based on the responder's distribution.

With a sure five loser hand, the opener should bid the major suit at game level.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Caution should be used when the opener only holds three cards in the suit. A trump card may be led and create problems with cross-ruffing or setting up the responder's other major suit.

If the opener requires one honor point trick from the responder to make game, they may bid the major suit at the three-level. This asks the responder to raise the suit to game or slam level.

ii. 2 ♣ with less than three cards support for both major suits and at least six cards in the club suit, or

iii. 2 ♦ as a reverse bid with less than three cards support for both major suits.

This is a hand with at least 17 honor points and either a 2 – 2 – 4 – 5, or x – x – 5 – 6 distribution.

With less than 17 HCP, the opener would have opened hands with this pattern with a 1 ♦ opening bid.

The double major notrump response provides an advantage of placing the strong hand as the declarer when the opener has at least three cards in the heart suit and less than three cards in the spade suit. It also places more contracts in a nine cards major suit fit when the pair also has an eight cards fit in the other major suit.

Quiz Questions – Double Major Suit Notrump Response

- 1. When should the double major notrump response convention be used?*
- 2. What is the main advantage of the convention?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

3. *How many HCP must the responder have to make the 1 NT response?*
- 4.a *After the 1 NT response, how does the opener invite a game contract in a major suit?*
- 4.b. *How strong should their hand be for the opener to invite a game contract?*

Answers:

1. *When the responder holds five cards in each of the two major suits, the partnership is playing the Montreal relay convention and their partner opened with 1 ♣.*
2. *It places the stronger hand as the declarer when they hold less than three cards in the spade suit and at least three cards in the heart suit.*
3. *The 1 NT bid does not require that the responder hold any points.*
- 4.a. *Bid a major suit at the three-level*
- 4.b. *If they are within one honor card of making game.*

1.e. Wolff Signoff

The Wolff Signoff is a convention used after the opener shows a game invitational hand through a 2 NT rebid (i.e., 1 ♣, 1 ♦, 2 NT). The purpose of the Wolff signoff is for the responder to state whether their hand is strong enough to accept the game invitation.

Using the Wolff Signoff, after the opener's 2 NT rebid, the responder bids either;

- i. 3 ♣ to show that their hand is not strong enough to play at the game level, or

The bid is a relay to 3 ♦. After the relay the responder may either;

a) pass and play the contract in 3 ♦, or

b) rebid their originally bid or raise the opener's suit, which are requests for the opener to pass.

- ii. 3 ♦ to show a that their hand is strong enough to accept game.

The 3 ♦ bid is a checkback for the major suits.

After the 3 ♦ bid, the opener's first responsibility is to whether they have support for the heart suit. If the responder's first bid was 1 ♥, the opener bids 3 ♥ to show three cards support. If responder's first bid was 1 ♠, the opener bids 3 ♥ to show a four cards holding in the suit.

The opener's second priority is to show whether they have support for the spade suit. If the responder's first bid was 1 ♠, the opener should bid 3 ♠ if they have three cards support. If the

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

responder's first bid was not the spade suit, the opener needs four cards in the suit to bid 3 ♠.

If neither of those major suit bids is appropriate for the opener, they bid 3 NT.

The benefits of using the Wolff signoff bid are that it enables;

- i. signing off at the three-level when bidding a game contract is not feasible,
- ii. finding an eight cards major suit fit after the 2 NT rebid by the opener, and
- iii. finding a game contract when the responder has a weak hand with one five cards and one four cards major suit.

Quiz Questions – Wolff Signoff

1. *After a 1 ♠, pass, 1 NT, pass, 2NT, pass sequence, how should the responder continue the bidding with the following hands:*

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>
♠ 87	♠ 87
♥ A954	♥ AQ9542
♦ Q832	♦ 1032
♣ 1095	♣ 1085

2. *After a 1 ♣, pass, 1 ♥, pass, 2NT, pass sequence, how should the responder continue the bidding with the following hand:*

♠ KQ32
♥ A9542
♦ 83
♣ 108

Answers:

1.a. Pass. The best contract is likely in notrump and the pair should be playing at below game level.

1.b. 3 ♣ as a relay to 3 ♦. After the 3 ♦ bid, the responder should bid 3 ♥.

2. 3 ♦ showing a game forcing hand. The opener will bid either 3 ♥ with three cards support, 3 ♠ with a four cards spade suit or 3 NT.

1.f. XYZ

XYZ is a convention used after the partnership has made three bids at the one-level. It is used to distinguish the responder's hand as either minimum, invitational or game forcing.

Playing XYZ, after three bids at the one-level, the responder's bids are;

- i. 2 ♣ is a relay to 2 ♦.

The 2 ♦ bid allows the responder to either;

- a) *pass and signoff in 2 ♦, or*
- b) *show a game invitation (11 or 12 HCP) hand.*

With the invitational hand, the responder either;

- 1) *rebids their suit showing at least five cards length, or*
- 2) *bids the unbid suit asking the opener to bid notrump, at the appropriate level, if they hold stoppers in that suit. This is similar to a Western cue bid.*

- ii. 2 ♦ is game forcing.

It is used similar to New Minor Forcing and asks the opener to bid;

- a) *2 ♥ if the responder's first bid was;*

- 1) *1 ♥ and the opener has three cards support for the suit, or*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2) *1 ♠ and the opener holds four cards in the heart suit.,*

b) *2 ♠ if responder's first bid was 1 ♠ and the opener;*

1) *holds three cards support for the spade suit, and*

2) *does not hold four cards in the heart suit., or*

c) *if neither of these apply, bid 2 NT with stoppers in the unbid suits,*

iii. *2 ♥ or 2 ♠ to show a weak, 6 to 10 HCP, hand,*

If the suit bid is one that the responder has previously promised length in, it shows that the responder holds six or more cards in the suit.

If the responder's first bid was 1 ♠, the 2 ♥ bid shows that the responder holds at least five spades and at least four hearts.

If the responder's first bid was 1 ♥, a 2 ♠ bid would be a reverse bid shows that the responder has a strong two suited hand with more length in the first bid suit than the second.

If the opener has stoppers in the other two suits, the responder has sufficient HCP that a mismatch notrump contract should not present problems transporting between the two hands.

iv. *2 NT as transfer to 3 ♣, or*

After the transfer, the responder plans on passing the transfer bid.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- v. suit bids at the three-level are game forcing slam tries.

If their partnership is also playing Soloway jump shifts, these hands will likely be in the 15 to 16 HCP range.

The advantages of this convention are that they;

- i. provide specific information about the level that the hand should be played in,
- ii. preserve bidding space to further explore game or slam possibilities,
- iii. allow the partnership to sign off in either a $2\ \diamond$, $2\ \heartsuit$, $2\ \spadesuit$ or $3\ \clubsuit$, and
- iv. preserve the responder's ability to make reverse bids.

The responses after the three one-level bids must be alerted.

Quiz Questions – XYZ

Assuming that the partnership is not playing the Montreal Relay convention:

1. *What is the differences between these responses after a $1\ \clubsuit - 1\ \heartsuit - 1\ NT$ bidding sequence by the partnership?:*

a. $2\ \heartsuit$ b. $2\ \clubsuit - 2\ \diamond - 2\ \heartsuit$ c. $2\ \spadesuit$

d. $2\ \diamond - 2\ \heartsuit - 2\ \spadesuit$ e. $2\ \diamond - 2\ NT - 3\ \heartsuit$.

2. *After a $1\ \clubsuit - 1\ \heartsuit - 1\ NT$ bidding sequence by the partnership, how does the responder?:*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- a) *sign off below game in the diamond suit?*
- b) *sign off below game in the club suit?*
- c) *show a strong, single suited, slam invitational hand?*

Answers:

1.a. This hand shows a 5 to 10 point hand containing a six or greater cards holding in the heart suit. It requests that the opener pass.

1.b. This shows an invitational hand with at least five cards in the heart suit.

1.c. This is a reverse bid since the responder bid hearts, which is a lower ranking suit, first. The responder has sufficient points for game and is showing at least five hearts and four spades.

1.d. The 2 \diamond bid shows sufficient HCP for game. The 2 \heartsuit bid by the opener showed three cards support for the heart suit. The 2 \spadesuit bid shows that the responder only has four cards in the heart suit and is asking the opener to bid 3 NT if they have stoppers in the spade suit.

1.e. Since the opener has denied three cards support for the heart suit, the 3 \heartsuit bid shows at least six cards in the heart suit.

The opener should raise the suit to game level unless they have a void in the suit.

2.a. 2 \spadesuit transfers to 2 \diamond , which they pass.

2.b. 2 NT transfers to 3 \clubsuit which they pass.

3.c. They bid their long suit at the three-level.

1.g. Bourke Relay

Bourke Relay is similar to fourth suit forcing, except that it is used in cases where the opener has rebid the suit which they opened (i.e., 1 ♣, p, 1 ♥, p, 2 ♣).

After the opener rebids their suit, a bid of the next unbid suit (i.e., 1 ♣, p, 1 ♥, p, 2 ♣, p, 2 ♦, or 1 ♦, p, 1 ♥, p, 2 ♦, p, 2 ♠) is a Bourke Relay. It is forcing to game. The bid is artificial, so must be alerted.

After the Bourke Relay, the opener further describes their hand by bidding their next available longest suit.

An example of this is:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1 ♣	1 ♥
2 ♣	2 ♦* ¹
2 ♥ ²	4 ♥ ³

¹ Bourke Relay, artificial game force bid

² Three cards holding in the heart suit

³ Signoff. The responder holds a five cards heart suit, so has found an eight cards fit

Another example of its use is:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1 ♣	1 ♥
2 ♣	2 ♦* ¹
2 ♥ ²	3 ♣ ³
3 ♠ ⁴	4 ♦ ⁵
4 ♥ ⁶	5 ♣ ⁷

¹ Bourke relay, artificial game force bid

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

² Three cards holding in the heart suit (the opener has shown either an $x = 3 = x = 6$ or a $2 = 4 = 3 = 3$ distribution)

³ Support for the club suit. (Clubs are longer than spades. Since the responder did not bid notrump or confirm a heart fit, they likely have either a $2 = 4 = 3 = 3$ or $3 = 4 = 2 = 4$ distribution)

⁴ Spades are longer than diamonds. The opener's distribution is revealed as $3 = 3 = 1 = 6$.

⁵ Minorwood keycard ask

⁶ One keycard. (1430 Minorwood)

⁷ Signoff. Missing two keycards.

The advantage of the Bourke relay is that it provides a game forcing bid after the opener rebids their suit. This allows the partnership to provide more information about their hand patterns while searching for the best game or slam contract.

Quiz Questions – Bourke Relay

Using the Bourke Relay, how should the responder bid the following hands after a $1 \diamond, p, 1 \heartsuit, p, 2 \diamond, p$ sequence?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
♠ AK8	♠ AK87
♥ QJ542	♥ QJ42
♦ 87	♦ A87
♣ AJ3	♣ Q3

Answers:

1. They should first bid $2 \spadesuit$, which is the next unbid suit, to start to show a hand forcing to game. The opener may bid $3 \heartsuit$ showing three cards support, which the responder will raise to game level. With any other bid, the responder will sign off in 3 NT.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2. They should first bid 2 ♠, which is the next unbid suit, to start to show a hand forcing to game. If the opener bids 3 ♣, the responder will bid 3 NT.

With any other bid, the responder will place the contract into the diamond suit as there is a good probability that the opponents will set a 3 NT contract through tricks in the club suit.

Note that the opener has already denied a four card spade suit, so if the opener responds with a 3 ♠ bid, it will only show three cards length with less than three cards in the heart suit (i.e., a 3 = 2 = 6 = 2 hand pattern).

1.h. Kokish Help Suit Game Try

A help suit game try, known by its acronym HSGT, is usually used by the opener after the responder makes a single level raise of the opener's major suit opening bid.

The HSGT is used when the opener's hand contains sufficient extra points, through a combination of their HCP and shortness points, that a game contract in their suit is likely to make. Usually they are used when the opener has a five loser hand and only requires two tricks from the responder's hand to make a game contract.

These hands are usually either;

- a. one with either a 5 – 4 – 3 – 1, a 5 – 4 – 4 – 0 or a 6 – 3 – 3 – 1 distribution,

On these hands, game is likely to make if the responder's points lie outside of the opener's short suit and a short suit game try is needed to verify such.

- b. a 5 – 4 – 2 – 2 hand where the four cards suit is capable of taking tricks if the responder can provide an honor in the suit,

These are holdings such as KJ10x.

On those hands, a long suit game try is helpful in determining whether game is likely to make.

- c. a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 or 6 – 3 – 2 – 2 distribution where the trump suit lacks the top honors, or

A trump suit game try is helpful to determine the likelihood of a game contract making.

- d. a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 hand pattern that contains 18 HCP.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

On these hands an invitational game try is usually used to request the responder to raise the suit to game level if they have more a minimum hand for their single level raise.

Kokish is the preferred help suit game try convention since it is structured to provide;

- a. a short suit game try,
- b. a long suit game try,
- c. a trump suit game try, and
- d. an invitational game try.

The Kokish game tries that the opener may use after a single level raise of their 1 ♠ opening bid are;

- a. 2 NT as either a long suit game try or an invitational game try,

This requests the responder to bid the lowest ranking suit which contains the queen or higher honor card.

After that bid, the opener will either;

- i. bid their long suit at game level if the responder can provide help for their long side suit,*
- ii. bid their long suit at the three-level requesting an invitational game try, or*

This may be because the opener's four cards side suit ranked lower than the responder's bid (i.e., after a 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♥ sequence, the responder denied

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

help for a minor suit. The opener would bid 3 ♠ if they required help in a minor suit.).

Once this bid is made, the responder should raise their suit to game if they can provide two tricks.

iii. *bid a suit above the response asking the responder to bid game if they have the queen or higher honor in that suit or if they can provide two tricks.*

The responder raises the opener's spade suit to the three-level if they cannot provide what the opener requested. In this circumstance, a queen in a side suit is likely a wasted honor so should not be counted as a winner.

b. 3 ♣, 3 ♦ or 3 ♥ as short suit game try, or

This requests the responder to bid 4 ♠ if they can provide two tricks. Those two tricks should not include the king in the opener's short suit unless that king is accompanied by the ace or queen in that suit.

c. 3 ♠ as trump suit game try.

This requests the responder to raise the spade suit to game level if they can provide help in the trump suit, such as Axx, AKx, AQx, AJx, or KQx.

The Kokish game tries that the opener may use after a single level raise of their 1 ♥ opening bid are;

a. 2 ♠ as either a long suit game try or an invitational game try.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This requests the responder to bid the next ranking suit which contains the queen or higher honor card. The 2 NT bid is used to show that the honor is in the spade suit.

After that bid, the opener will either;

i. bid their long suit at game level if the responder has shown that they can provide help for their long side suit,

ii. bid their long suit at the three-level requesting an invitational game try, or

This may be because the opener's four cards side suit ranked lower than the responder's bid.

Once this bid is made, the responder should raise their suit to game if they can provide two tricks.

iii. bid a suit above the response asking the responder to bid game if they have the queen of higher honor in that suit or can provide two tricks.

The responder raises the opener's spade suit to the three-level if they cannot provide what was requested. In this circumstance, a queen in a side suit is likely a wasted honor so should not be counted as a winner.

b. 2 NT, 3 ♣, 3 ♦ is short suit game try, with the 2 NT bid indicating the spades is the opener's short suit, or

This requests the responder to bid 4 ♥ if they can provide two tricks, which may not include the king, unless accompanied by the ace, the queen or the jack of the opener's short suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

c. 3 ♥ as trump suit game try.

This requests the responder to raise the heart suit to game level if they can provide help in the trump suit, such as Axx, AKx, AQx, AJx, or KQx.

Help suit game tries are used less frequently when the partnership uses constructive raises, as recommended in the author's previous book. The constructive raise narrows the single level raise response for 6 to 10 points to a narrower 8 to 10 points*. It also narrows the points required to accept a help suit game try from 9 or 10 points to 10 points.

- * When using constructive raises, hands which have three cards support for the opener's major suit but only 6 or 7 points first bid a forcing 1 NT and follow with a second-level raise of the opener's suit

While used less frequently, help suit game tries may also be used when the opener raises the responder's suit. The same sequences apply and the opener should raise the suit to game level when they hold 14 points.

The advantage of the Kokish help suit game try is that it incorporates three different game tries into one system. This enables the partnership to make better decisions on the likelihood of a game contract making.

Quiz Questions – Kokish Help Suit Game Try

1. After opening 1 ♥ and the responder's raise to 2 ♥, which Kokish game try bid would you make with the following hands?

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>c</u>
♠ AQ10	♠ K7	♠ AKQ5
♥ AQ6532	♥ AQ532	♥ J9852

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

◇ 8 ◇ KJ95 ◇ A2
♣ A108 ♣ A5 ♣ A5

2. *On hand b, above, what should the opener bid if the responder replies with a 3 ♣ bid?*

Answers:

1.a. 3 ◇ – *short suit game try.*

1.b. 2 ♠ – *long suit game try*

1.c. 3 ♥ – *trump suit game try*

2. 3 ◇. This asks the responder to bid 4 ♥ if they have the ace or queen of diamonds or may provide two tricks.

1.i. Jump Shift Response by a Passed Hand

A jump shift should carry a different meaning than the one used if the opening was made in the first or second seat. Since at least one of the opponents has passed, a jump response is not needed to show a weak hand with a six-card major suit. The responder's previous pass had also denied sufficient strength to use a Soloway jump shift.

When a responder has previously passed, their jump shift response should be used to show a hand containing five cards in the suit that they bid, 11 HCP and support for the opener's suit.

Some of the advantages of this use of a jump shift are;

- i. it allows the opener to play in their suit if they do not have support for the responder's suit,
- ii. it announces not only an invitational hand, but a potential fit in either, or both, of the two suits,
- iii. if the opening bid was made in the third seat with one or two points below what would have been opened in the first or second seat, the opener is in a better position to make a decision, and

These decisions are;

- a) knowing that they hold the balance of points the opener can elect to double, for penalties, any overcall by the opponents if there is not a suit fit,*
- b) knowing the length of the responder's suits allows the opener to compete in a likely makeable suit at a higher level should an opponent overcall,*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

c) if there is a double fit, the partnership can bid game with less points if their points are concentrated in the two suits which they have a fit in, or

With a double fit the opener is aware of a double fit in the opponents' hands.

If the opponents overcall, this enables the partnership to make a sacrifice bid rather than doubling the opponents bid. There is a reasonable chance of the opponents either making their contract. Forcing them to bid their suit at a higher level increases the chance that the contract will be set.

iv. If the opening bid was made in fourth seat, it informs the opener of a possibility of making a game contract.

Without this meaning, the opener would be inclined to pass the responder's bid when they have a 14 HCP opening hand.

Quiz Questions – Jump Shift by a Passed Hand

1. *After two passes, you open with a 1 \diamond bid. Your partner responds with a 2 \spadesuit bid.*

a. *What is the responder's likely hand pattern?*

b. *How many HCP does your partner have?*

Answers:

1.a. *Likely $5 = x = 4 = x$, but may be $5 = x = 5 = x$ or even $5 = x = 6 = x$.*

1.b. *Likely 11 HCP. Many players prefer not to use the Rule of 20, especially in matchpoint games.*

1.j. Mini-Splinter Bid by the Responder

Mini-splinter bids are used by the responder when a major suit is opened and the responder has;

- i. four cards support for the opener's suit,
- ii. a singleton or void in a side suit, and
- iii. sufficient points to invite game should the opener's points be in suits other than the responder's short suit.

The jump shifts used to show a mini-splinter are either;

- i. over a 1 ♠ opening bid, a 3 ♥ bid is usually used as a mini-splinter bid with shortness in the heart suit, or

With spades as the opening bid, it is difficult to show a similar hand if the shortness is in the responder's minor suit. The 3 ♣ and 3 ♦ bids are already used as Bergen raises..

Some partnerships use the 3 ♥ bid to show a shortness in any of the side suits. That treatment is not recommended. When used as such, the opener will be forced to make a decision on whether to bid game without knowing which suit the responder holds their void or singleton in. The opener has only a one chance in three of correctly guessing the responder's short suit.

- ii. over a 1 ♥ opening bid, a 2 ♠ bid is used by the responder to show a mini-splinter hand.

In this sequence, any of the three side suits may contain the singleton or void.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

After the 2 ♠ bid, the opener bids 2 NT asking the responder which suit their singleton of void is in. The responses to the ask are;

- a) 3 ♣ shows shortness in the club suit,*
- b) 3 ♦ shows shortness in the diamond suit, or*
- c) 3 ♥ shows shortness in the spade suit.*

From this information, the opener may either;

- i. sign off in their suit at the three-level if they have a minimal opening bid and some of their points lie in wasted face cards in the responder's short suit, or
- ii. bid game when the responder's short suit reduces their loser count to six.

The advantage of using a mini-splinter bid is that it;

- i. specifically describes the responder's hand pattern, and
- ii. invites a game contract if the opener's points are situated responder's side suit.

Quiz Questions – Mini-Splinter Bid by the Responder

- 1. What are the three requirements for a mini-splinter bid?*
- 2. What mini-splinter bid is made in response to a 1 ♥ opening bid?*
- 3. Following that bid, what bid does the opener use to ask which suit?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- 4. What does the responder bid to show shortness in the spade suit, if asked?*
- 5. What mini-splinter bid is made in response to a 1 ♠ opening bid?*
- 6. Can it show shortness in any of the side suits?*

Answers:

- 1. Four cards support for the opener's suit,*

A singleton or void in a side suit, and

Sufficient points to invite game should the opener's points be in suits other than the responder's short suit.

- 2. 2 ♠*
- 3. 2 NT*
- 4. 3 ♥*
- 5. 3 ♥*
- 6. No, only hearts, unless the partnership agrees otherwise.*

1.k. Mini-Splinter Bid by the Opener

After the responder makes a major suit response to an opening bid, the opener may use a jump shift (i.e., 1 ♣, 1 ♥, 3 ♦) as a mini-splinter bid to show that the opener has;

- i. a singleton or void in the bid suit,
- ii. four cards support for the responder's major suit, and
- iii. sufficient points to invite game if either;
 - a) the responder has more than the minimum points for their response, or
 - b) the responder's points are outside of the opener's short suit.

To invite game the opener should have a five loser hand.

After a 1 ♠ response to the opener's 1 ♣ opening bid;

- i. a 3 ♦ or a 3 ♥ response is a mini-splinter bid (invitation to game),
- ii. a 2 ♦ or 2 ♥ rebid, by the opener, is a reverse bid since it bypasses the opener's lower ranking opened (club) suit, and
- iii. a 4 ♦ or 4 ♥ response is a full splinter (game force) bid.

After a 1 ♥ response to the opener's 1 ♣ opening bid;

- i. a 2 ♠ or 3 ♦ response is a mini-splinter bid (invitation to game),

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ii. a 1 ♠ or 2 ♦ response is simply a third suit bid since the opener did not bypass their opened suit, or

The 1 ♠ or 2 ♦ response is forcing for one round.

- iii. a 3 ♠ or 4 ♦ response is a full splinter (game force) bid.

After the 1 ♠ response to a 1 ♦ opening bid, the mini-splinter bids are either 3 ♣ or 3 ♥.

Similarly after a 1 ♥ response to a 1 ♦ opening bid, the mini-splinter bids are either 3 ♣ or 2 ♠.

After the opener's mini-splinter bid, the responder may either;

- i. sign off in the agreed major suit at the three-level,

The responder should make this bid when their hand contains less than two honors in the ten key spots (ace in the opener's short suit, and the top three honors in the other three suits).

- ii. bid game if their hand contains two or three honors in the ten key spots, or

- iii. cue bid another suit to invite slam.

This is done when the responder holds more than three honors in the ten key spots.

The benefit of using mini-splinters is that they allow the partnership to bid or avoid a game contract depending on the placement or the responder's honors.

Quiz Questions – Mini-Splinter Bid by the Opener

1. For each of the following bidding sequences, state the two possible mini-splinter bids by the opener?:

a
1 ♣ – 1 ♥

b
1 ♦ – 1 ♥

c
1 ♣ – 1 ♠

d
1 ♦ – 1 ♠

2. What do these responses mean?
3. What are the ten key spots?
4. What should the responder bid with the following number of honors in the ten key spots?:

a. 1

b. 2

c. 4

Answers:

1.a. 2 ♠ or 3 ♦

1.b. 2 ♠ or 3 ♣

1.c. 3 ♦ or 3 ♥

1.d. 3 ♣ or 3 ♥

2. The opener has a void or singleton in that suit and a five loser hand.
3. The top card (ace) in the opener's short suit and the top three honors in the other three suits.
 - 4.a. Sign off in the agreed suit at the three-level.
 - 4.b. Bid game in the agreed suit.
 - 4.c. Cue bid another suit and look for a slam contract.

1.1. Reverse Bergen Raises

If the opening bid was 1 ♠ opening bid and the responses was either 3 ♣ showing minimal support or 3 ♦ as an invitational response, a 3 ♥ bid may be used to fine tune the game decision.

Using this fine tuning, the 3 ♥ bid asks the responder to either;

- i. raise the suit to game level if they are at the top of their invitational points, or
- ii. sign off at the three-level if their hand is at the bottom of their invitational point range.

Using traditional Bergen raises, when hearts are the opened suit, the 3 ♥ bid cannot be used as a second invitation. The opener may use the 3 ♦ bid as a game invitation if the responder shows minimum support with a 3 ♣ bid. However, game contracts are more frequently bid and made when the responder has an invitational hand.

The frequency of bidding and making game contracts may be increased by reversing the Bergen raises. These responses are changed to;

3 ♣ to show 10 to 11 points with four cards support for the major suit opened, and

3 ♦ to show 6 to 9 points with four card support for the major suit opened.

With the Bergen responses reversed, the 3 ♦ bid may be used by the opener as a second invitational bid when either the hearts or spades suit is opened. The 3 ♦ bid asks the responder to bid the opener's major suit either at the three-level if they hold 10 points, or game level if they hold 11 points.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This change has the advantage in that it provides a second invitation when either of the major suits is opened. The traditional Bergen raises restrict the opener's invitations to those opened in the spade suit.

Another benefit is that if the opened suit is spades, the 3 ♥ bid may be used for a different purpose. One suggestion is that it suggests a doubleton in the heart suit and asks the responder to only raise the spade suit to game level if;

- i. they are at the top of their game invitation range, and
- ii. they have not included the queen or jack of hearts in calculating their invitational point count.

Quiz Questions – Reverse Bergen Raises

1. *Playing reverse Bergen raises, what should the responder bid with four cards support for the opener's major suit and?:*

a. *6 to 9 points*

b. *10 to 11 points*

2. *Why are these changes from the original Bergen raises a benefit?*

3. *What does the 3 ♦ response to the 3 ♣ game invitational bid mean?*

Answers:

1.a. *3 ♦*

1.b. *3 ♣*

2. *It allows the responder more room after the 10 – 11 point response to invite game.*

3. *The 3 ♦ bid asks the responder to either;*

- i. *Raise the suit to game level if they are at the top of their invitational points, or*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

ii. *Sign off at the three-level if their hand is at the bottom of their invitational point range.*

2. Notrump Openings and Responses

2.a. Retransfers

Retransfers are a treatment used when a Jacoby transfer is doubled.

Using retransfers, if a transfer bid is doubled (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 \diamond , dbl [requesting a diamond suit lead]), the opener accepts the transfer with three or more cards support for the responder's long suit. When they only have two cards support, the opener passes and leaves the bidding decision to the responder.

When the opener passes the doubled, transfer bid, the responder may bid either;

- i. redouble,

The redouble asks the opener to bid the responder's long suit. This is known as a retransfer.

After the retransfer to the responder's long suit, the responder may bid either;

- a) *pass,*

The pass allows the contract to be played in the responder's long suit at the two-level. This places the opener, which is the stronger hand, as the declarer.

- b) *2 NT,*

This is as an invitational raise of the notrump suit.

The responder makes this bid when they have;

- 1) invitational points,
- 2) only five cards in their long suit, and

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

3) stoppers in the doubled suit.

c) a new suit showing five or more cards in that suit,

This bid is forcing to game.

d) the doubled suit, at the three-level,

This is a western cue bid. It shows sufficient points for game, but denies having stoppers in the doubled suit.

This provides the opener with the option of playing in the responder's long suit at the three-level or in 3 NT.

e) raise the retransferred suit to the three-level,

This is used to show a six cards holding in the suit and invitational points.

f) raise the retransferred suit to the four-level with a six card suit and sufficient points for game., or

g) 3 NT with game points and stoppers in the doubled suit.

ii. their long suit,

This bid shows a preference to play the hand from the responder's side. It is may be because the responder holds the Kx of the doubler's suit.

iii. 2 NT as an invitational raise with a hand that does not contain a stopper in the doubled suit,

Note that the direct 2 NT bid denies stoppers in the doubled suit while the indirect route through the retransfer shows one

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

or more stoppers (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 ♠, double, p, p, 2 NT denies stoppers in the diamond suit, while 1 NT, p, 2 ♠, dbl, p, p, redouble [retransfer], p, 2 ♥, p, 2 NT shows stoppers in the diamond suit).

iii. a new suit showing five or more cards in that suit but with insufficient points to invite a game contract, or

Having already showing either a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 or a 4 – 4 – 3 – 2 pattern, the opener will hold at least three cards, and frequently more, support of the responder's second suit.

Playing in the second suit may enable the declarer to set up tricks in the first suit.

This bid is to play. It is neither invitational nor game forcing. With a game forcing hand, the responder would go through the retransfer first.

iv. three of the doubled suit (i.e., diamonds are the doubled suit if diamonds were bid as a transfer to hearts),

This bid is used with a half stopper (Jxx or Qx) in the doubled suit and sufficient points for game.

This is a Western Cuebid. It asks the opener to bid game with a stopper and a half in the doubled suit. Without stoppers in the doubled suit, the opener has the option of playing in a 5 – 2 fit of the responder's long suit.

Since the responder may always use the double to retransfer to their long suit, nothing is lost by using this convention. However, the advantages of the retransfer are that it;

i. provides more bidding options, and

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ii. better informs the responder whether the opener has three or more cards support.

With this information, the responder is better informed about where to place the final contract for the likely most successful result.

Quiz Questions – Retransfers

After a 2 \diamond Jacoby transfer response to a 1 NT opening bid, the next player doubles and the opener passed.

1. *What does the opener's pass indicate?*
2. *What should the responder bid on the following hands?*

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>c</u>
♠ 852	♠ 9	♠ 9
♥ A10842	♥ A10842	♥ A10842
♦ 875	♦ 4	♦ 42
♣ 62	♣ J98532	♣ AQ653

d

♠ -
♥ A10842
♦ QJ953
♣ 742

Answers:

1. *The opener has a doubleton in the heart suit, which is the suit which the responder requested a transfer to. The opener passed to leave the decision to their partner.*

2.a. *Redouble as a transfer to 2 ♥.*

This places the stronger hand as the declarer.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Playing in a heart contract, after pulling the opponents trumps, the declarer may take a trick in the heart suit in the likely 4 – 2 split among the opponents. If it splits 3 – 3, the declarer can take two tricks in the heart suit.

In any other contract, if the heart suit is developed, the declarer will likely not be able to get to the hand to take the developed heart tricks.

Playing in a heart suit will also increase the transportation to the weaker hand for finesses towards the stronger hand.

2.b. Bid 3 ♣.

The opener has a doubleton in the heart suit, so will have at least three cards support for the club suit.

In a club contract, the opponents' trump cards are likely to be removed in two rounds, compared to four rounds in the heart suit.

In a heart contract, trump control may be lost if the declarer trumps a spade or diamond in the weaker hand.

2.c. Start with a redouble as a retransfer to hearts. After the 2 ♥ bid by the opener, the responder should bid 3 ♣. This is a forcing bid.

If the opener has control of the spade suit and stoppers in the diamond suit, they will bid 3 NT.

If the opener bids 4 ♣, raise the contract to game level. The heart suit counts for one loser because the opener can trump the third round of the suit. This makes the hand a five loser hand. There is a fit in the suit and the opener should have a seven loser hand.

2.d. Pass and play for penalty.

The opener has at least three cards in the suit, so the partnership has an eight cards fit in the suit as well as holding the majority of points. There may be a cross-ruff available in the heart and spade suits.

2.b. More Precise Major Suit Superaccept Bids

When the responder to a 1 NT opening bid transfers to a major suit, the opener may make a superaccept bid when they hold;

- i. 17 HCP,
- ii. four cards support for the transferred suit, and
- iii. a doubleton in a side suit.

This is either a hand with a 4 – 4 – 3 – 2 suit distribution pattern or one with a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 pattern.

The traditional superaccept bid is a jump raise of the transferred suit (i.e., 1 NT – 2 \diamond [transfer to hearts] – 3 \heartsuit [superaccept bid of the heart suit]). It shows an 18 point hand (17 HCP plus a doubleton) if played in the responder's long suit.

The jump raise wastes bidding space that can be used to provide additional information about which suit the opener's doubleton is held in. That additional information may affect the responder's decision on whether to accept the invitation and raise their long suit to game level.

A queen in the responder's hand is potentially a wasted honor if it is the opener's doubleton suit. The opener is able to trump the third round of that suit. If the responder's queen is in a different side suit, it has a greater chance of taking a trick or promoting the opener's jack in that suit.

The following hands show the effect that the opener's placement of their doubleton when the opener has made a superaccept bid showing a doubleton in the diamond suit:

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ Kxxxx	♠ Kxxxx	♠ Kxxxx

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

♥ Kxx	♥ Kxx	♥ Qxx
♦ Qxx	♦ xx	♦ xxx
♣ xx	♣ Qxx	♣ Kx

(d)

♠ Kxxxx
♥ xx
♦ Kxxx
♣ xx

(e)

♠ Kxxxx
♥ Kxxx
♦ xx
♣ xx

On hand (a), the queen is a redundant honor. The opener has the ability to trump the third round of the suit. While the hand contains 9 points (two kings, a queen and a doubleton) the value of the queen should be reduced as it is a wasted honor. The hand contains eight losers.

On hand (b), the hands have offsetting doubletons. This hand has 8 useful points. No point should be added for the doubleton. It is also an eight loser hand.

On hand (c), none of the points are wasted. The hand has 9 useful points (two kings, a queen and a doubleton) and is a seven loser hand because the opener can trump the third round of the diamond suit.

Hand (d) has only two honors and only 6 HCP, but eight total points (two kings and two doubletons). It is a seven loser hand.

Hand (e) has only 6 HCP and also has two doubletons. It only counts for seven total points and eight losers because the doubleton in the diamond suit is redundant.

The point of the above is to show that there may be a difference in the hand count and the losing trick count based on which suit holds the opener's doubleton.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

To show which suit contains their doubleton, preserve bidding space and enable the opener to become the declarer;

- i. a suit bid below the three-level of the Jacoby bid should be used to convey that the suit is the one which contains a doubleton (i.e., at least two suits below the responder's long suit such as in a 1 NT – 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] sequence, the opener's 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ bid conveys shortness in that suit), and
- ii. a 2 NT rebid by the opener should be used to convey that the opener's doubleton is in the suit which ranks immediately below the responder's long suit.

The use of the 2 NT bid in this manner allows the responder to bid the suit below their long suit as a retransfer to their long suit (i.e., after a 1 NT – 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 2 NT [superaccept bid with a doubleton in the heart suit, a 3 ♡ bid is used to retransfer to 3 ♠). This places the opener as the declarer.

After the opener bids the responder's long suit at the three-level, the responder may raise the suit to game level if appropriate.

If the responder holds a doubleton, singleton, or void in a suit which is both above the opener's superaccept bid and below the three-level retransfer bid, they may invite a game contract by bidding that doubleton suit (i.e., after a 1 NT - 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 2 NT [showing a superaccept bid with a doubleton in the heart suit], the responder may bid either 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ to show that they hold a doubleton in that suit and invite a game contract).

To invite a game contract when the responder's short suit is in the suit immediately below their long suit, the responder may bid their long suit at the three-level (i.e., after a 1 NT - 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 3 ♣ [showing a superaccept bid with a doubleton in the club suit], the

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

responder may bid 3 ♠ to invite a game contract and show that they hold either a doubleton, singleton or void in the heart suit).

If the responder invites a game contract and opener does not hold the queen in that suit, they should bid the responder's suit at game level. If the opener holds the queen in the responder's short suit, it is a redundant honor and the opener should sign off in the responder's suit at the three-level.

With a strong hand, the responder may also search for a slam after the opener's superaccept bid by either;

- i. bidding a suit above the three-level of their long suit as a splinter bid (i.e., after a 1 NT – 2 ♥ [transfer to spades] – 2 NT [showing a superaccept bid with a doubleton in the heart suit], the responder may bid either 4 ♣ or 4 ♦ to show that they have either a singleton or void and are exploring a possible slam contract)., or
- ii. retransferring to their long suit followed by a suit bid to show their doubleton holding (i.e., after a 1 NT – 2 ♥ [transfer to spades] – 2 NT [showing a superaccept bid with a doubleton in the heart suit], the responder may bid either 4 ♣ or 4 ♦ to show that they hold a doubleton in that suit and exploring a possible slam contract).

If the responder shows that they are considering a slam contract, the opener should either;

- i. sign off in game in the responder's long suit when they hold one or more redundant honors in the responder's short suit, or
- ii. explore a slam contract by either a direct keycard ask or by cue bidding.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Unless a slam contract is contemplated, after the superaccept bid, the responder bids the suit below their long suit to retransfer (i.e., 1 NT – 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 3 ♣ [superaccept with a doubleton in the club suit] – 3 ♥ is a retransfer to 3 ♠). This places the opener as the declarer.

If contemplating a slam contract, the responder may be able to invite the slam by making a retransfer followed by a bid of their doubleton suit (i.e., 1 NT – 2 ♦ [transfer to hearts] – 2 ♠ [showing a superaccept bid with a doubleton spade suit] – 2 ♡ [transfer to 3 ♥] – 4 ♣ [slam invitational bid with a doubleton in the club suit]).

Using this method, the responder's bids after a heart transfer and superaccept bid are:

2 NT (if available) is an eight or fewer loser hand with shortness in the diamond suit.

This is an invitation to a game contract in the heart suit.

3 ♣ (if available) is an eight or fewer loser hand with shortness in the club suit.

This is an invitation to a game contract in the heart suit.

3 ♦ as a retransfer to hearts.

This places the opener as the declarer.

After the retransfer, the responder may either;

a) pass,

b) raise the contract to game, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

c) bid their doubleton suit as an invitation to a slam contract.

3 ♠* is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the spade suit and seven or fewer losers.

3 NT* is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the diamond suit and seven or fewer losers.

The 3 NT bid is used to show the diamond suit to conserve space and allow the opener to cue bid prior to a keycard ask.

4 ♣* is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the club suit and seven or fewer losers.

The responder's bids after a spade transfer and supperaccept bid are:

2 ♣ (if available) is an eight or fewer loser hand with a doubleton club.

2 ♦ (if available) is an eight or fewer loser hand with a doubleton diamond.

3 ♥ is a retransfer to spades.

This places the opener as the declarer.

After the retransfer, the responder may either;

a) pass,

b) raise the contract to game or slam,

c) with interest in investigating a slam contract, cue bid a first or second round control, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

d) *bid 4 NT as a keycard ask.*

3* NT is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the heart suit and seven or fewer losers.

The 3 NT bid is used to show the heart suit to conserve space and allow the opener to cue bid prior to a keycard ask.

4 ♣* is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the club suit and seven or fewer losers

4 ♦* is a splinter bid, slam invitational with a singleton or void in the diamond suit and seven or fewer losers.

* *Note that the splinter bids bypass using the retransfer suits first.*

The game invitation bid may also be used to determine the number of losers in the opener's hand prior to making a slam inquiry. An example of this is:

Responder's hand ♠ 873
 ♡ A9753
 ♦ A3
 ♣ AQ4

Bidding:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Opp1</u>	<u>responder</u>	<u>Opp2</u>
1 NT	pass	2 ♦ ¹	pass
2 ♠ ²	pass	2 NT ³	pass
4 ♡ ⁴	pass	4 NT ⁵	pass
5 ♠ ⁶	pass	6 ♡ ⁷	pass
pass	pass		

¹ Jacoby transfer to hearts

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ² Superaccept bid with a doubleton spade
- ³ Game invitation bid. Shortness in the diamond suit, eight or less loser hand
- ⁴ Six loser hand
- ⁵ Keycard ask
- ⁶ Two keycards and queen of hearts
- ⁷ The opener has either the king of clubs, where the contract makes, or the king of spades where making the contract requires the club finesse to make.

A partnership may elect to implement the enhanced major suit superaccept bids in three steps:

- i. Step 1 – a) Opener’s superaccept bids stating which suit their doubleton resides in, and

b) Retransfer bids,

- ii. Step 2 – Add the game invitation bids,

These occur more often than hands which have slam possibilities.

- iii. Step 3 – Add the slam invitation bids.

If using the enhanced major suit superaccept bids and responses;

- i. the opener’s superaccept bid must be alerted,
- ii. the responder’s doubleton and splinter bids must be alerted., and
- iii. the responder’s retransfer bid must be announced.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The benefit of using the enhanced major suit acceptance bids is that it allows the responder, and sometimes the opener, to fine tune the decision about which level the major suit should be played in.

The advantage of showing the opener's doubleton is that the responder can adjust their point count, or losing trick count, to reflect that the third card in the opener's doubleton is no longer a loser as the opener will be able to trump it in their hand. A queen in that suit should be downgraded slightly in value as it may be a wasted honor.

When using enhanced major suit superaccept bids, the jump transfer response (i.e., 1 NT – 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 3 ♠) may be used for another purpose. The suggested use of the jump transfer response is to show;

- i. four cards support for the transferred suit,
- ii. a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand pattern, and
- iii. 18 honor points.

With the 1 point deduction for the hand pattern, the hand counts for 17 points and should be opened with a 1 NT bid.

Quiz Questions – Enhanced Major Suit Superaccept Bids

1. *What does the opener need in their hand to make an expanded superaccept bid after the Jacoby transfer in a major suit?*
2. *What is the advantage of the expanded superaccept bid?*
3. *After a Jacoby transfer to hearts, with four cards support and 17 HCP, which does not contain the queen or jack of their short suit, what should the opener bid if they hold a doubleton in:*
 - a. *the club suit?*
 - b. *the diamond suit?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

4. Why is the 2 NT response used to show a doubleton in the suit below the responder's long suit?

5. After a (i.e., 1 NT – 2 ♡ [transfer to spades] – 2 NT [superaccept bid of the spade suit with a doubleton in the heart suit]) sequence, what should the responder bid with the following hands?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. ♠ K9854
 ♡ 872
 ♢ J53
 ♣ 96</p> | <p>b. ♠ K9854
 ♡ 872
 ♢ K53
 ♣ 96</p> |
| <p>c. ♠ K9854
 ♡ K72
 ♢ K53
 ♣ 96</p> | <p>d. ♠ K9854
 ♡ Q72
 ♢ K53
 ♣ 96</p> |

6. Explain what each bid means in the following sequences:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <u>Opener</u> <u>Responder</u></p> <p>1 NT 2 ♢</p> <p>3 ♣ 3 ♢</p> <p>3 ♡ 4 ♡</p> | <p>b. <u>Opener</u> <u>Responder</u></p> <p>1 NT 2 ♡</p> <p>2 NT 3 ♣</p> <p>3 ♡</p> |
| <p>c. <u>Opener</u> <u>Responder</u></p> <p>1 NT 2 ♢</p> <p>2 ♠ 3 ♢</p> <p>3 ♡ 4 ♣</p> <p>4 ♡</p> | <p>d. <u>Opener</u> <u>Responder</u></p> <p>1 NT 2 ♢</p> <p>2 ♠ 4 ♣</p> <p>4 ♢ 4 ♠</p> <p>4 NT 6 ♡</p> <p>7 ♡</p> |

Answers:

1. Four cards support for the responder's suit, 17 HCP and a doubleton which does not contain either the queen or jack.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2. *It makes the decision on whether to raise the responder's suit to game more precise by determining if the placement of a queen or jack in the responder's side suit is helpful or a wasted honor.*

3.a. 3 ♣ 3.b. 2 NT

4. *This allows the responder to bid that suit as a retransfer to their suit.*

5.a. 3 ♦ as a retransfer to 3 ♥ after which the responder will pass.

5.b. 3 ♣ showing a doubleton in the club suit. If the opener's points are outside of the club suit game in the spade suit is feasible.

5.c. 3 ♦ as a retransfer to 3 ♥. This will place the contract with the stronger hand as the declarer.

After the 3 ♥ bid, the responder should raise the suit to game level.

5.d. 3 ♣ showing a doubleton in the club suit. If the opener's points are outside of the club suit game is feasible. If the opener bids 3 ♠, the responder should pass as their queen of hearts is a redundant honor.

6.a. 1 NT – 15 to 17 HCP, balanced

2 ♦ – transfer to hearts

3 ♣ – superaccept (s/a) – 17 HCP, four cards support for hearts, doubleton club

3 ♦ – retransfer to hearts

3 ♥ – completing the retransfer to responder's suit

4 ♥ – game contract, no interest in slam

6.b. 1 NT – 15 to 17 HCP, balanced

2 ♥ – transfer to spades

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2 NT – superaccept (s/a) – 17 HCP, four cards support for the spade suits, doubleton heart

3 ♥ – retransfer to spades

3 ♠ – completing the retransfer to responder's suit, no interest in game. Likely has queen in the heart suit

6.c. 1 NT – 15 to 17 HCP, balanced

2 ♦ – transfer to hearts

2 ♠ – superaccept (s/a) – 17 HCP, four cards support for hearts, doubleton spades

3 ♦ – retransfer to hearts

3 ♥ – completing the retransfer to responder's suit

4 ♣ – slam interest, doubleton club

4 ♥ – likely holds queen of clubs

6.d. 1 NT – 15 to 17 HCP, balanced

2 ♦ – transfer to hearts

2 ♠ – superaccept (s/a) – 17 HCP, four cards support for hearts, doubleton spades

4 ♣ – slam interest, singleton or void in the club suit

4 ♦ – cue bid showing interest in slam, ace or king in the diamond suit

4 ♠ – cue bid, ace or king in the spade suit

4 NT – keycard ask (1430)

6 ♥ – odd (likely three based on bidding) number of keycards, void in clubs, no side suit kings

2.c. Responses Showing Length in Both Minor Suits

After a 1 NT opening bid, a 3 ♣ response should be used to show five or more cards in each of the minor suits and a hand which is likely too weak to make a game contract. This response requests the opener to either pass or correct to 3 ♦.

Along with the weak 3 ♣ response, a 3 ♦ response to a 1 NT opening bid should show a hand with at least five cards in each of the minor suits and at least sufficient strength (i.e., 10 or more HCP, including points for shortness) to invite a game or slam contract.

In order to reach the optimal contract, a convention or agreement should be used following the strong 3 ♦ bid. The responder's hand is strong enough to reduce the concern regarding which side the contract is played from.

Holding at least five cards in each of the minor suits, the responder's main concern is about eight critical cards; the aces of the two major suits and the top three honors (ace, king and queen) in both minor suits.

The opener's holding of a king in a major suit is of secondary concern. At this point, the responder may have a singleton or void in the suit in which the opener holds the king. If seeking a slam contract and the king is necessary, the responder may inquire about it later in the bidding process.

After the 3 ♦ bid by the responder, the suggested replies by the opener are either;

- i. 3 ♥, which is a bid of the lower ranking major suit showing a preference to play the contract in clubs, the lower ranking minor suit,

This bid shows that the opener holds at least three of the eight critical cards. It requests the responder to bid 3 NT so that the

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

opener can provide an exact count on the number of critical cards that the opener holds. Once the 3 NT bid is made, the opener's responses are;

- a) 4 ♣ to show that the opener holds three of the eight critical cards,*
- b) 4 ♦ to show a holding of four critical cards,*
- c) 4 ♥ to show a holding of five critical cards, and*
- d) 4 ♠ to show that the opener holds six of the eight critical cards.*

The likelihood of the opener being able to provide a trick with a major suit king is lower when they hold three critical cards than when they hold two, and much lower when the opener holds four or five critical cards.

If the responder wishes to know about whether the opener also holds a major suit king, they may ask by bidding 4 NT. The opener's responses to the ask are either;

- a) 5 ♣ showing no kings of the major suits, or*
- b) 5 ♦ showing at least one major suit king.*

When the king ask occurs, the responder often will hold 6 – 5 in the minor suits or will be looking looking to see whether a grand slam contract can be made.

ii. 3 ♠, which is a bid of the higher ranking major suit showing a preference to play the contract in the higher ranking minor suit – diamonds,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This bid also shows that the opener holds at least three of the critical cards and requests the responder to bid 3 NT so that the opener can provide an exact number of critical cards that the opener holds.

The answers are the same as those used after the 3 ♣ bid.

iii. 3 NT to show stoppers in both major suits,

This is a non-forcing game bid.

iv. 4 ♣ to show that the opener holds two critical cards and wishes to play in a club contract, or

When placing the contract, the responder should consider that the opener is likely to provide one more trick through either;

a) a free finesse off the opening lead,

b) the king of one of the major suits,

c) a finesse later in the play of the hand,

d) a third round trump of the responder's other long minor suit, or

e) trumping a major suit. This is possible if the opener removes the opponents' trump cards and discards losers in a major suit on the responder's established other minor suit.

v. 4 ♦ to show that the opener holds two critical cards and wishes to play in the diamond suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The benefits of having a system for finding the opener's preferred minor suit and the number of the critical cards that the opener holds is that it provides the responder with the information that they need to either;

- i. place the minor suit contract in the correct suit and at the optimal level, or
- ii. consider whether a slam contract should be investigated.

Quiz Questions – Responses Showing Length in Both Minor Suits

1.a. What does a 3 ♣ response to a 1 NT opening bid show?

1.b. What should the opener bid after the 3 ♣ response to their 1 NT opening bid?

2.a. What does a 3 ♦ response to a 1 NT opening bid show?

2.b. When making a 3 ♦ response to a 1 NT opening bid, what are the eight critical cards that the responder may be concerned about?

2.c. After a 3 ♠ reply by the opener, how does the responder inquire about the number of critical cards that the opener holds?

2.d. What should the opener bid after the 3 ♦ response to their 1 NT opening bid?

2.e. What bids does the opener make to show the number of critical cards that they hold?

2.e. If, after the opener's critical card response, the responder wishes to explore a slam contract, how do they ask the opener whether the opener can supply one or more tricks with a king in one of the major suits?

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2.f. How does the opener show whether they hold a king in one of the major suits?

Answers:

1.a. It shows at least five cards in both minor suits with insufficient points for a game contract.

1.b. The opener should either pass, with a preference to play in 3 ♣, or bid 3 ♦ if they prefer to play the contract in the diamond suit.

2.a. The 3 ♦ response shows at least five cards in each of the minor suits and sufficient strength to make a game contract.

2.b. The eight critical cards are the aces of the major suits and the top three cards (ace, king and queen) of the minor suits.

2.c. The responder bids 3 NT to ask about how many critical cards the opener holds.

2.d. 4 ♣ shows three critical cards; 4 ♦ shows four ; 4 ♥ shows five or 4 ♠ shows six critical cards.

2.e. The responder bids 4 NT.

2.f. A 5 ♣ bid shows no major suit kings. 5 ♦ shows at least one major suit king.

2.d. Expanded Range of Two Notrump Opening Bid

With 19 HCP and a balanced hand containing a five cards suit (i.e., 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 distribution), a hand should be opened with a 2 NT bid.

The convention card may be changed to state 19+ to 22 HCP. It may also be left as 20 to 22 HCP with an explanation, if asked, that the hand was upgraded because of the five cards suit.

The five cards suit often takes at least one extra trick either as a side suit or in a notrump contract.

If they hold sufficient points for a game contract, the responder should be using a Puppet Stayman 3 ♣ inquiry if they hold three or four cards in either of the major suits. At that point, the opener's five cards holding in a major suit will be revealed and if the responder has three cards support, a major suit contract will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

The 2 NT opening bid will increase the chance that the contract will be played with the opener as the declarer. Since there is likely a significant difference in the point split, any notrump game has an increased likelihood of gaining an extra trick if played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

The benefits of this treatment are that opening those hands with a 2 NT bid places any notrump contract, or one in the opener's long suit, with the stronger hand as the declarer.

This upgrading of hands with a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 pattern may also be applied to hands with a strong 14 HCP. When the five cards holding is in the diamond suit, a 5 – 3 major suit fit is more likely to be found.

This upgrade is more beneficial when playing in a game with IMP scoring. In those games, a lower success rate is needed to justify the game bid.

Quiz Questions – Expanded Range of Two Notrump Opening Bid

1. *What is the expanded 2 NT range?*
2. *Why is the range expanded?*
3. *How does this not hinder a five cards major suit opening bid?*
4. *What are the other benefits of this change?*

Answers:

1. *The 2 NT opening bid includes balanced 19 HCP hands that contain a five cards suit.*
2. *The range is expanded to reflect that hand which contain a five cards suit often take at least one extra trick.*
3. *The five cards major suit will be revealed if the responder bids Puppet Stayman.*
4. *It more clearly defines the point range of a 2 NT rebid after a major suit opening bid, reducing the chance of not bidding a makeable come contract.*

It increases the probability of a notrump contract being played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

2.e. Transfer Lebensohl

Transfer Lebensohl, also referred to as Rubinsohl or Rubensohl, is used after the opener's 1 NT opening bid is overcalled. It is a replacement for the Lebensohl convention, which is usually used in those situations.

The main advantage of Transfer Lebensohl is that it uses a transfer bid at the three-level. If the contract is played in the responder's long suit, it will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

The responder's Transfer Lebensohl bids after the overcall are;

- i. a double,

The double is used to show a balanced, almost invitational hand which may contain a major suit containing four cards.

The double requests that the opener pass and leave the double in for penalty.

Even without a stopper in the overcaller's suit, the overcaller is unlikely to make their contract unless their long suit contains more than six cards.

- ii. a cuebid of the overcaller's suit,

This is a Western cue bid used with a game force hand. The bid requests that the opener bid 3 NT if they hold a stopper in the overcaller's suit. Otherwise, the opener should bid their four cards major suit.

If the overcall shows a two suited hand which has one specified suit (i.e., an overcall showing spades and an unspecified minor suit), the specified suit is considered the overcaller's suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

iii. 3 NT,

The 3 NT bid is used to show a hand with maximum points and a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

iv. a new suit at the two-level,

This bid is natural and competitive.

It is used with a hand with insufficient points to invite game and holding at least five cards in the bid suit.

v. 2 NT,

The 2 NT bid is as a relay to 3 ♣ and has the same meaning as a typical Lebensohl bid.

After the 3 ♣ bid, the responder either;

a) passes,

This is done when the responder holds a long club suit and less than game invitational points.

b) bids a suit below the overcaller's suit,

This bid shows length in that suit with less than invitational points.

c) cuebids the overcaller's suit,

The cuebid is a Stayman bid with game points and a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

c) bids 3 NT, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The 3 NT bid shows game points and a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

e) bids 3 ♠.

The 3 ♠ bid shows a game force hand without a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

It requests opener to bid 3 NT if they have one or more stoppers in the overcaller's suit.

vi. 3 ♠,

This bid is a game forcing transfer to 4 ♣.

It shows 10 or more HCP and a club suit which is at least six cards in length. The responder's club suit should contain also one or more of the top three honors.

With stoppers in the overcaller's suit, the opener may reject the transfer and bid 3 NT.

vii. A three-level bid of the suit immediately below the overcaller's suit,

This bid is a transfer to the suit above the overcaller's suit (i.e., if the overcaller's suit was hearts, a 3 ♠ bid is used to transfer to 3 ♣.)

This allows the responder to either pass, or raise the suit to game level.

The contract will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer).

viii. A three-level bid of any other suit,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This is a transfer to the next higher suit.,

The transfer may be made when the responder holds either an invitational or a game forcing hand.

With a minimum hand, the opener bids the transferred suit at the three-level.

If the opener has a maximum hand for their notrump opening, they have sufficient points to make a game contract, in which case, the opener either;

a) bids above the transferred suit, or

This may be either a raise to game in the responder's long suit, or a long suit of their own seeking an alternate game (i.e., if the responder transfers to heart, a 3 ♠ response by the opener would show that the opener has a hand with maximum points with a holding five spades and only two hearts).

b) with a game forcing hand, the responder either;

1) bids 3 NT, or

The 3 NT bid is done to show only five cards in their long suit and a stopper in the overcaller's suit, or.

After the 3 NT bid, the opener may decide whether to play the contract in 3 NT or the responder's long suit.

2) bids a new suit at the three-level.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This denies a six cards holding in their long suit. It also denies stoppers in the overcaller's suit.

It requests that the opener either;

a) place the contract in the responder's long suit, or,

b) bid 3 NT if they have only two cards support for the responder's suit, but stoppers in the overcaller's suit.

ix. 3 NT,

The 3 NT bid is used to show 10 to 15 HCP without a stopper in the transferred suit.

x. 4 ♣,

The 4 ♣ bid is a Gerber bid asking for aces.

xi. 4 ♦, and

This is a Texas transfer to hearts.

xii. 4 ♥, which is a Texas transfer to 4 ♠.

The advantages of using the Transfer Lebensohl convention are;

i. when the responder holds a long suit, a contract in that suit will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer, and

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ii. it contains mechanisms for the responder to show that they have sufficient points for game but lack stoppers in the overcaller's suit.

Quiz Questions – Transfer Lebensohl

1. *What is the main advantage of upgrading from Lebensohl to Transfer Lebensohl?*
2. *After a 2 \diamond overcall, what should the responder bid to show a five cards heart suit with:*
 - a. *Less than invitational points?*
 - b. *Invitational points?*
 - c. *Game points with a stopper in the overcaller's suit?*
 - d. *Game points without a stopper in the overcaller's suit?*
3. *After a transfer to the heart suit, how does the opener show that they have a maximum hand with a five cards spade suit and only two cards support for the hearts suit?*
4. *With game points, how does the responder make a Stayman bid:*
 - a. *With a stopper in the overcaller's suit?*
 - b. *Without a stopper in the overcaller's suit?*

Answers:

1. *The transfer part on Transfer Lebensohl places the stronger hand as the declarer. This often gains an extra trick.*
- 2.a. 2 \heartsuit 2.b. 3 \clubsuit
- 2.c. 3 \clubsuit . *Once the transfer is made, the responder bids 3 NT to show that they have the overcaller's suit stopped.*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2.d. 3 ♣. Once the transfer is made, the responder bids 3 ♠ to show that they have five cards length in their suit and do not have the overcaller's suit stopped.

3. They bid 3 ♠. If the responder has three cards support, they will raise the spade suit to game level. If they do not have extra length in the heart suit or three cards supports for the spade suit, they will bid 3 NT.

4.a. They start with a 2 NT bid to transfer to 3 ♣. After that, they cue bid the overcaller's suit.

4.b. They make a Western cue bid of the overcaller's suit at the three-level.

While not strictly a Stayman bid, the opener will bid their lowest four cards major suit if they do not have a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

2.f. Baze

Baze is a slam invitation convention used after a major suit response to a Stayman ask.

Using Baze, a three-level response of the other major suit (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 ♣ [Stayman], p, 2 ♥, p, 3 ♠ or 1 NT, p, 2 ♣ [Stayman], p, 2 ♠, p, 3 ♥) needs to be alerted and shows;

- i. four cards support for the opener's major suit,
- ii. 13 or more HCP, and
- iii. a singleton or void in a side suit.

The opener should enquire about a slam possibility when they hold;

- i. five cards in their major suit,

A nine cards fit is suggested for a contract at the six-level.

- ii. maximum points for their 1 NT opening bid, and
- iii. concerns about one of the side suits.

This may be a three cards suit which does not contain any face cards.

To enquire about slam possibilities, the opener bids the next highest response (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 ♣ [Stayman], p, 2 ♥, p, 3 ♠, p, 3 NT).

Once the opener makes the ask through a bid of the next highest response, the responder's replies are;

- i. the first available bid to show that they hold a void,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

To find out which suit the responder's void is in, the opener makes the next available bid.

If the responder bid 3 NT, a 4 ♣ bid would be used to ask which suit the void is in. If the responder bid 3 ♠, a 3 NT bid would be used to ask which suit the void is in.

In response to the inquiry, the responder states the suit by bidding the next suit for clubs and the next suit higher for diamonds.

- ii. the second available bid, if available, to show a singleton club,
- iii. the third available bid, if available, to show a singleton diamond, or
- iv. the fourth available bid, if available, to show a singleton in the other major suit.

In the above sequence (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 ♣ [Stayman], p, 2 ♥, p, 3 ♠, p, 3 NT), the responses would be;

- i. 4 ♣ to show an undisclosed void, or

The opener may use a 4 ♦ bid to ask the responder which suit the void is in, after which the responder bids either;

- a) 4 ♥ to show a void in the club suit,
- b) 4 ♠ to show a void in spades, or
- c) 4 NT to show a void in diamonds.

- ii. 4 ♦ to show a singleton club.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

While the 4 ♥ bid does not distinguish which of the two suits the singleton is in, the Baze convention does make a distinction when spades is the agreed trump suit.

After the Baze bid with spades as the agreed suit (i.e., 1 NT, p, 2 ♣ [Stayman], p, 2 ♠, p, 3 ♥), the opener asks about the shortness with a 3 ♠ bid. In response to the 3 ♠ bid, the responder's bids are;

- i. 3 NT to show a void in an unspecified suit,

After the 3 NT bid, the opener may ask which suit the void is in with a 4 ♣ bid, which is the next available bid. The responder then bids;

a) 4 ♦ to show a void in the club suit,

b) 4 ♥ to show a void in the diamond suit, or

c) 4 ♠ to show a void in another suit, which must be hearts.

- ii. 4 ♣ to show a singleton club,

iii. 4 ♦ to show a singleton diamond, or

iv. 4 ♥ to show a singleton heart.

An example of the use of the Baze convention is:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1 NT	2 ♣ ¹
2 ♠ ²	3 ♥ ³
3 ♠ ⁴	3 NT ⁵

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

4 ♣ ⁶	4 ♠ ⁷
4 NT ⁸	5 ♠ ⁹
5 NT ¹⁰	6 ♣ ¹¹
6 ♦ ¹²	7 ♠ ¹³

¹ Stayman

² Four or five spades. Does not have four hearts

³ Baze – has four cards support for the spade suit, and at least 13 HCP and a singleton or void

⁴ Asking about shortness. The opener has 17 HCP, five cards in the spade suit and concerns about a side suit

⁵ A void in a side suit

⁶ Which suit?

⁷ Hearts

⁸ Keycard ask

⁹ Two keycards and queen of spades

¹⁰ King ask

¹¹ King of clubs

¹² Asking responder to bid 7 ♠ if they have the king of diamonds

¹³ Has the king of diamonds

The advantage of the Baze convention is that it allows the partnership to convey important information about the possibility of a major suit slam in situations where the responder has;

- i. 13 or more HCP,
- ii. four cards support for the opener's long major suit, and

- iii. a singleton or void.

Quiz Questions – Baze

1. *After a Stayman ask and a major suit response, what does the responder need to use the Baze convention?*
2. *What does the responder bid to show this type of hand?*
3. *What does the opener need for them to ask about the possibility of a slam in their major suit?*
4. *If interested in exploring a possible slam, what does the opener bid?*
5. *With an interest in a possible slam in the heart suit, what does the responder bid in response to the opener's 3 NT ask to show:*
 - a. *a singleton club?*
 - b. *a singleton diamond?*
 - c. *a singleton spade?*
 - d. *a void?*

Answers:

1. *Four cards support for the opener's major suit, at least 13 HCP and a singleton or void in another suit.*
2. *The other major suit at the three-level.*
3. *Five cards in the suit, maximum points for their notrump opening bid and concerns about one of the outside suits.*
4. *The next available bid*
- 5.a. 4 \diamond 5.b. 4 \heartsuit 5.c. 4 \spadesuit 5.d. 4 \clubsuit

3. Two-Level Suit Opening Bids and Responses

3.a. Revised Two Hearts Negative Convention

The Two Heart Negative convention is used to respond to a strong 2 ♣ opening bid. It uses a 2 ♦ response to show a hand which contains one or more aces or kings and a 2 ♥ bid to show a weaker hand.

Part of that convention uses a 2 ♠ bid to show a slam invitational hand with at least five cards in the spade suit and at least 8 HCP. The spade suit should contain two of the top three honors.

Another part of the convention is that a 2 NT response is used to show a slam invitational hand with at least five cards in the heart suit and at least 8 HCP. The heart suit should contain two of the top three honors.

The Revised Two Hearts Negative Convention reverses the 2 ♠ and 2 NT responses. This places the stronger hand as the declarer if the contract is played in the responder's long suit.

The revised responses are;

- i. 2 ♠, and

The 2 ♠ bid shows five or more cards in the heart suit, at least two of the top three honors in the heart suit and at least 8 HCP.

- ii. 2 NT.

The 2 NT bid shows a five or more cards in the spade suit, at least two of the top three honors in the spade suit and at least 8 HCP.

The revised convention should also be extended to show interest in a minor suit slam by the responder bidding;

- i. 3 ♣, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

In response to the 1 NT opening bid, the 3 ♣ bid shows at least six cards in the diamond suit, two of the top three honors in that suit and at least 8 HCP.

ii. 3 ♦.

In response to the 1 NT opening bid, the 3 ♦ bid shows at least six cards in the club suit, two of the top three honors in that suit and at least 8 HCP.

The advantages of these change are;

- i. there is a convention for finding a possible minor suit slam, and
- ii. if the contract is played in the responder's long suit, it is played with the stronger suit as the declarer.

Since there is a great difference between the points of the opener and those of the responder, these revisions increase chance of making a slam contract or of gaining an overtrick.

Quiz Questions – Revised Two Hearts Negative Convention

1. Under the revised Two Hearts Negative Convention, what is the meaning of the following responses to the opener's 2 ♣ opening bid:

- a. 2 ♠? b. 2 NT? c. 3 ♣? d. 3 ♦?

2. Why are these responses better than their original meaning?

Answers:

1.a. A five cards, or longer, heart suit, headed by at least two of the top three honors in the suit and at least 8 HCP.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

1.b. A five cards, or longer, spade suit headed by two of the top three honors in the suit and at least 8 HCP.

1.c. A six cards or longer long diamond suit containing at least two of the top three honors and at least 8 HCP.

1.d. A long club suit containing at least two of the top three honors and 8 or more HCP.

2. If played in the responder's suit, they place the stronger hand as the declarer. This change provides a possibly of gaining a trick.

3.b. McCabe

McCabe is used by a responder after their partner's weak two-level major suit opening bid is doubled in the direct seat.

The main purpose of the McCabe convention is to direct the opener's lead. Since the doubler has indicated shortness in the opener's suit, the advancer, who is likely to bid and become the declarer, is the more likely of the opponents to hold missing honors in that suit. The lead directing bid enables the opener to place the responder on lead. The subsequent lead of the opener's suit will likely result in a successful finesse through the declarer's hand.

When the responder bids, the opener may consider competing at the three-level.

Playing McCabe, the responder uses the following bids after their partner's major suit pre-emptive opening bid is doubled.;

- i. a redouble, which is similar to Lebensohl,

The responder uses the redouble when they have a long suit of their own but they lack support for the opener's suit.

The redouble is a relay to 3 ♣. After the relay the responder will either pass or correct to their long, weak suit.

- ii. 2 NT as a game try,

This uses the same responses as the 2 NT bid would have been if the double not occurred. It asks the opener to respond with the same system bid (i.e., feature or Ogust).

- iii. A new suit as a lead directing bid with support for the opener's suit, or

- iv. A raise of the opener's suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The raise indicates that they have support for the suit, headed by either the ace or the king of the suit.

It also denies a better suit lead.

If defending, the opener should lead a card in their long suit indicating which suit they want returned – low for the lower ranking side suit, high for the higher ranking side suit, or middle for no preference.

When having support for the opener's suit but lacking the ace or king in the suit or a bid to suggest a lead in another suit, the responder passes. After the advancer bids, it will likely be followed by two passes. The responder may raise the opener's suit if they can do so at the appropriate level. This may be done to make the contract or as a sacrifice bid.

The advantage of using McCabe is that it informs the opener;

- i. which suit they should lead, and

This is significant because;

- a) *the opener is likely on lead, and*
- b) *it provided a likely entry to the responder's hand.*

This places the responder in a position to lead either the opener's suit.

- ii. whether there is a nine cards fit in the opener's suit.

The presence of the ninth card in the trump suits enables the players to determine whether to make a sacrifice bid.

Quiz Questions – McCabe

Playing McCabe, what do the following responder bids mean after a 2 ♠ opening bid is doubled?

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|---------|
| 1. Redouble? | 2. 2 NT? | 3. 3 ♣? |
| 4. 3 ♦? | 5. 3 ♥? | 6. 3 ♠? |

Answers:

1. *A transfer to 3 ♣. The responder has a long suit without three cards support for the opener's suit and will either pass or correct the bid to their long suit.*

2. *It carries the same meaning as it would have had the opening bid not been doubled. It is a game try and asking more about the opener's hand, usually either Ogust or asking for a feature.*

3. *The responder has support for the opener's suit and is requesting the lead of a club should the opponents win the bidding auction.*

4. *The responder has support for the opener's suit and is requesting the lead of a diamond should the opponents win the bidding auction.*

5. *The responder has support for the opener's suit and is requesting the lead of a heart should the opponents win the bidding auction.*

6. *The responder has support for the opener's spade suit headed by either the ace or the king. It requests the opener to lead their suit and indicate which suit to return.*

3.c. Transfer McCabe

Transfer McCabe combines the features and benefits of both the McCabe and the Transfer Lebensohl conventions.

After the direct seat doubles a pre-emptive opening bid, the Transfer McCabe bid is a lead directing transfer made by the responder. The responder may use it with either support for the opener's suit or with length in the suit being transferred to.

When using Transfer McCabe, after a double of the opener's two-level pre-emptive bid;

- i. a redouble,

The redouble is a transfer to clubs.

The redouble may be either;

- a) *a long club suit, or*

- b) *a hand with support for the opener's suit and a preference for a club lead by the opener.*

This is similar to a lead directing transfer bid.

- ii. a two-level bid,

This is a competitive bid made with a six cards holding in the suit bid.

- iii. a 2 NT bid,

The 2 NT bid is a game try.

The bid carries the same meaning as the 2 NT bid would have been if the double not have occurred.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

iv. a three-level suit bid,

This bid is similar to Transfer Lebensohl.

It is a transfer to the next ranking suit, which may be either;

a) directing the lead of that suit, with support for the opener's suit, or

b) the suit which the responder transferred to is a long suit in the responder's hand.

v. a transfer to the opener's suit, and

The transfer is a raise of the opener's suit with either the ace or king of the opener's long suit.

It informs the opener that it is safe to lead their suit.

If on lead, the opener should lead a card in their suit which indicates which suit the opener prefers the responder to return.

vi. a three-level bid of the opener's suit.

The raise indicates that the responder does not hold the ace or king in the suit.

Since the responder had an opportunity to indicate a preference for a lead or the opener's long suit or one or more other suits, the likely best lead is a suit which the responder did not have an opportunity to indicate a lead of.

This convention works well when the partnership is also using Transfer Lebensohl, transfers after doubles and transfers after doubles of an overcall. They all use transfer bids after a double, which makes the conventions easier to remember.

The benefit from upgrading from McCabe to Transfer McCabe is that it retains the benefits of the McCabe convention and adds the benefits associated with lead directing transfer bids either after a double or through the Transfer Lebensohl convention.

Unlike McCabe, the lead directing bid may be made without support for the opener's long suit if the responder has length in the suit which they transferred to.

Quiz Questions – Transfer McCabe

Playing Transfer McCabe, what do the following responder bids mean after a 2 ♠ opening bid is doubled:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|---------|
| 1. Redouble? | 2. 2 NT? | 3. 3 ♣? |
| 4. 3 ♦? | 5. 3 ♥? | 6. 3 ♠? |

Answers:

- 1. A transfer to 3 ♣. The responder either has a long suit or it is a lead directing bid with three cards support for the opener's suit.*
- 2. It carries the same meaning as it would have had the opening bid not been doubled. It is a game try and asking more about the opener's hand. It is usually either an Ogust bid or asking for a feature.*
- 3. The responder has support for the opener's suit and is requesting the lead of a club should the opponents win the bidding auction.*
- 4. The responder has support for the opener's suit and is requesting the lead of a diamond should the opponents win the bidding auction.*
- 5. The responder has support for the opener's suit, headed by either the ace or king. It is requesting the lead of a heart should the opponents win the bidding auction.*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

6. *The responder has support for the opener's spade suit, but is not headed by either the ace or the king. Unless they have both the ace and king of their long suit, the opener should lead their short suit.*

4. Special Doubles, Redoubles and Responses

4.a. Responsive Double

A responsive double is used after the opening bid is either doubled or overcalled and the responder raises the opener's suit. The double shows at least four cards length in either both of the minor suits or in both of the major suits. The responsive double is used.

Examples of responsive doubles are;

1 ♣, Dbl, 2 ♣, Dbl

1 ♣, 1 ♦, 2 ♣, Dbl,

1 ♠, 2 ♥, 2 ♠, Dbl, and

1 ♠, Dbl, 3 ♠, Dbl

The responsive doubles show;

- i. both major suits if the opponent's suit is a minor suit, or
- ii. both minor suits if the opponent's suit is a major suit.

Quiz Questions – Responsive Double

1. *What does a double mean after the following sequences:*

- a. *1 ♦, pass, 3 ♦ ?* b.. *1 ♥, 1 ♠, 2 ♥ ?*

Answers:

1.a. The doubler has at least four cards in both major suits.

1.b. The doubler has at least four cards in both minor suits.

4.b. Equal Level Conversion Double

The equal level conversion double, allows a double of a major suit opening bid to be made with a hand containing a two cards club suit, a five cards diamond suit and a four cards major suit. Without this convention, that specific hand pattern would often restrict the overcaller's use of the double.

An example of the equal level conversion double is when the opening bid was 1 ♥. A double can be made with a 4 = 2 = 5 = 2 hand. If the advancer bids 2 ♣, the overcaller may bid 2 ♦ to show this hand pattern.

When using this agreement, a bid of 2 ♦ after a 2 ♣ response does not indicate extra points. It only shows a shortness in the club suit, a five cards diamond suit and a four cards major suit. It requests the advancer to select the best contract to play in.

If using the equal level conversion double, when holding a strong hand with a long diamond suit, the likelihood of a game in the diamond suit is low. As such, an overcall with a 2 ♦ bid may be made with a hand as strong as 17 to 19 points.

The benefit of using the equal level conversion double is that it allows the opener's LHO to double when they have shortness in the club suit if they hold at least four cards in the other major suit and five cards in the diamond suit.

Quiz Questions – Equal Level Conversion Double

1. A 1 ♠ bid is doubled. The advancer bids 2 ♣. The doubler responds with a 2 ♦ bid.

a. *How strong is the doubler's hand?*

b. *What is their likely distribution?*

Answers:

1.a. They have not indicated any extra points. They may be as weak as 12 HCP.

1.b. $4 = 2 = 5 = 2$

4.c. Snapdragon Double

A snapdragon double is used by the fourth hand when the first three players have each bid a different suit. The snapdragon double shows;

- i. five or more cards in the unbid suit,
- ii. at least three cards support for partner's overcall suit, and
- iii. including points for shortness, 6 to 10 points.

The advantages of the snapdragon double is that it helps the overcaller decide;

- i. whether to make a sacrifice bid,
- ii. which suit to play the contract in, and
- iii. which suit to lead.

Quiz Questions – Snapdragon Double

1. A 1 ♣, 1 ♦, 1 ♥ sequence is doubled.

- a. What is the advancer's likely distribution?
- b. How many points does the advancer partner have?

Answers:

1.a. Five cards in the unbid suit and three cards in the overcalled suit.

1.b. 6 to 10 points.

4.d. Double of a Bergen Raise

A partnership should have an agreement about the meaning of their double of a Bergen raise or a reverse Bergen raise.

Over the 6 to 9 point bid (3 ♣ in Bergen raises or 3 ♦ in reverse Bergen raises), the double should be used for takeout with four cards in the unbid major suit. Since their partner is likely to lead that suit if the opener becomes the declarer, the overcaller should prefer a lead of that suit.

Over the game invitation bid (3 ♦ in Bergen raises or 3 ♣ in reverse Bergen raises), a double should be a lead directing bid. This shows a desire for their partner to lead the suit bid by the responder.

The advantages of using doubles of Bergen raises are that they provide information regarding hand shape, a possible major suit fit and for directing the lead.

Quiz Questions – Double of a Bergen Raise

1. *What does a double of the 6 to 9 point Bergen raise mean?*
2. *What does the double of the game invitation Bergen raise mean when the doubler is vulnerable?*
3. *What are the advantages of using doubles of Bergen raises?*

Answers:

1. *It is for takeout with a shortness in the club and opened suit.*
2. *It is a lead directing double. It requests a lead of the suit bid by the responder.*
3. *They provide information regarding hand shape, a possible major suit fit and for directing the lead.*

4.e. Lightner Double

The Lightner double is a lead directing double. It is usually used over a slam or a notrump contract.

The double asks for an unusual lead.

If the doubler has previously bid a suit, the double requests the lead of a different suit. This is usually used when the doubler has a void in an outside suit. That void is usually in the longest suit of the player on lead. Without the request for an unusual lead, their partner would likely lead their partner's long suit.

When used over a notrump contract, it usually asks their partner to lead the first suit bid by dummy.

Quiz Questions – Lightner Double

1. A 6 ♠ contract is doubled by the declarer's RHO, who opened with a 2 ♥ bid. Should a heart be lead?

Answer:

1. No. The double calls for an unusual lead. They likely have a void in a side suit. The player should lead their longest unbid suit, which is the most likely to be the doubler's void.

4.f. Scrambling Two Notrump

The Scrambling 2 NT bid is used by the advancer when the advancer does not have a clear bid after the opener's suit is raised one level and doubled.

The advancer uses the Scrambling 2 NT bid when they have more than one suit which contains four cards. This use avoids playing in a suit which the doubler has only three cards support for. It increases the chance of finding and playing in a suit in which the defenders have an eight cards fit.

Scrambling 2 NT is usually used when either;

- i. the spade suit is opened, doubled and raised one level (i.e., 1 ♠ , double, 2 ♠), or

In this case, four cards may be in any two or three of the unbid suits.

- ii. the heart suit is opened, doubled, and raised one level (i.e., 1 ♥ , double, 2 ♥) and the advancer does not hold four cards in the spade suit, but holds four cards in both of the minor suits.

The Scrambling 2 NT bid asks the doubler to bid their next ranking four cards suit. If the advancer does not hold four cards in that suit, they will bid the next ranking suit in which they hold four cards in. After the change of suits, the doubler may either pass and accept that suit or bid their next higher ranking suit which contains four cards. If they win the contract, they will be playing in an eight cards fit.

A sample sequence is:

1 ♠	pass	2 ♠	double
Pass	2 NT ¹	pass	3 ♣ ²

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Pass 3 \diamond^2 pass 3 \heartsuit^3

¹ Scrambling 2 NT bid asking doubler to bid their lowest four cards suit

² Four cards club suit

³ Denies four clubs, but has four cards in the other two suits

⁴ Four cards heart suit. May have a three cards diamond suit but prefers to play in a heart contract which scores higher if it makes.

Using this convention has an advantage because it often prevents playing in a 4 – 3 fit at the three-level.

Quiz Questions – Scrambling Two Notrump

1. *When is the Scrambling 2 NT bid used?*
2. *What is its advantage?*

Answers:

1. *When the opener bids a suit, the responder raises the bid and it is doubled and the advancer has more than one four cards suit without a clear idea of which one to bid..*
2. *It usually prevents playing in a 4 – 3 fit.*

4.g. SOS Redouble

The SOS redouble is a rescue bid.

It is usually used by the responder after the opener's 1 NT opening bid is doubled for penalty. In those cases, the redouble shows that the responder holds a long minor suit and less than invitational points. The redouble asks the opener to bid 2 ♣, after which the responder will either pass or correct to diamonds.

The SOS redouble may also be used when the opening bid is a short club. If the contract is doubled, and the responder passes or has passed, a redouble by the opener is used to show that they have a two cards holding in the club suit. It asks the responder to rescue the opener by bidding their longest suit unless they have length in the club suit.

The advantages of the SOS redouble are that;

- i. it provides a method for the contract to be played in a minor suit at the two-level, and
- ii. if the responder does not double or transfer to a major, the opener can assume that they have a balanced hand and that a game contract is unlikely to make.

This allows the opener to decide whether to pass or, if they have a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 or a 6 – 3 – 2 – 2 hand pattern, bid their long suit.

Quiz Questions – SOS Redouble

1. *When is an SOS redouble used?*
2. *What is the redouble used for?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

3. If the responder redoubles their 1 NT opening bid, what should the opener do?

Answers:

1. Usually after a 1 NT opening bid is doubled. It also may be used when opening a short club and the opening bid is doubled and passed around to the opener.

2. It is an escape bid, to avoid the double being used as a penalty.

3. The opener should bid 2 ♣. The responder has a weak hand with a long suit. They will either pass or correct to their long suit.

5. Overcalls and Reponses

5.a. Mixed Raises

Mixed raises are pre-emptive competitive raises based on the Law of Total Tricks. That law suggests bidding to the length of the suit fit (i.e., with a nine cards fit bidding to the three-level).

After an overcall, their partner's jump in the opponents' suit, shows four cards support for the overcaller's suit and 6 to 9 points. The cuebid is a jump bid of the LHO's suit at the three-level (i.e., after a 1 \diamond , 1 \heartsuit , 1 \spadesuit sequence, a 3 \diamond bid is a mixed raise).

The benefits of using mixed raises are that they;

- i. interfere with the opponents bidding,
- ii. inform the overcaller to make a three-level rebid of their suit, and
- iii. provide the overcaller with information which will help them to consider making a sacrificial overcall if the opponents bid at the four-level.

Quiz Questions – Mixed Raises

1. *After a 1 \clubsuit , 1 \heartsuit , 1 \spadesuit sequence, what bid is used to show a mixed raise?*
2. *What does a mixed raise show?*

Answers:

1. *3 \clubsuit . A 2 \clubsuit bid would show a stronger hand.*
2. *Four cards support for the overcaller's suit and 6 to 9 points. It is a pre-emptive bid.*

5.b. Leaping Michaels

Leaping Michaels is a convention used over a weak two or three-level pre-emptive opening. A leaping Michaels bid is used to show a strong (18+ HCP) two suited hand. It is a non-forcing bid.

The hands which use a Leaping Michaels bid are strong if played in one of the overcaller's suits, but likely fairly weak defensive hands.

Over a 2 \diamond or 3 \diamond opening bid:

- i. 4 \clubsuit – shows at least five cards in both the club suit and one of the major suits.
- ii. 4 \diamond – shows at least five cards in each of the two major suits.

Over a 2 \heartsuit or 3 \heartsuit opening bid:

- i. 4 \clubsuit – shows at least five cards in each the clubs and spades suits.
- ii. 4 \diamond – shows at least five cards in each the diamonds and spades suits.

Over a 2 \spadesuit or 3 \spadesuit opening bid:

- i. 4 \clubsuit – shows at least five cards in each the clubs and hearts suits.
- ii. 4 \diamond – shows at least five cards in each the diamonds and hearts suits.

Over a 3 \clubsuit opening bid:

- i. 4 \clubsuit – shows at least five cards in each the both major suits

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ii. 4 \diamond – shows at least five cards in the diamond suits and in an undisclosed major suit.

All of these bids are made with a hand that contains at least one long major suit.

When a 4 \clubsuit overcall is made over a 2 \diamond opening bid, or a 4 \diamond overcall is made over a 3 \clubsuit opening bid, they show five cards in the suit bid and in one of the major suits. If the advancer wants to play in a major suit game, they should bid 4 \heartsuit to allow the overcaller to either pass or correct to spades.

Quiz Questions – Leaping Michaels

1. The opponents open with a pre-emptive 2 \spadesuit bid. What do the following bids show?

- a. 4 \clubsuit
- b. 4 \diamond

2. Is the Leaping Michaels bid forcing?

Answers:

1.a. A strong two suited hand with 18 or more HCP and at least five cards in both the club and heart suits.

1.b. A strong two suited hand with 18 or more HCP and at least five cards in both the diamond and heart suits.

2. No.

5.c. Cuebid Overcall of a Weak Two-Level Bid

A three-level overcall of a major suit pre-emptive opening bid (i.e., 2 ♠, 3 ♠) is a cuebid asking the advancer to bid 3 NT if they have a stopper in the opener's suit. This is similar to a Western cuebid.

This bid is used with a hand with a long, running minor suit and control of the other two suits.

If their partner does not have the opponents pre-emptive suit stopped, they should bid 4 ♣. After the 4 ♣ bid, the overcaller either passes or corrects to the diamond suit.

This bid, together with Leaping Michaels, are often referred to as Roman Jump Overcalls of Pre-emptive Openings.

The benefit is that it allows playing in a makeable 3 NT contract if the advancer possesses a stopper in the opener's pre-emptive suit.

Quiz Questions – Cuebid Overcall of a Weak Two-Level Bid

- 1. The opponents open with a pre-emptive 2 ♠ bid which is overcalled by a 3 ♠ bid. What does that bid mean?*
- 2. What kind of hand is usually used for this bid?*

Answers:

- 1. The bid asks their partner to bid 3 NT if you have a spade stopper, or 4 ♣ if they do not have a spade stopper.*
- 2. It is usually used with a hand that has a long, running minor suit as control of the two other suits.*

5.d. OBAR bids

OBAR is an acronym for “Opponents Bid And Raise.”

When the opponents have opened with a major suit and the responder has raised the suit to the two-level, the opponents usually hold half of the high card points. If each side holds around half of the HCP, it is unlikely that either side will make a game contract.

After the single level raise, a sacrifice bid should be considered if the opener’s RHO holds at least 4 HCP. If the opener passes the single level raise, their LHO should consider making a sacrifice bid.

A sacrifice will likely score better than allowing the opener to play a two-level contract in their long major suit.

An overcall is unlikely to be doubled for penalty.

The overcall or double will usually;

- i. provide a good sacrifice,

Since the opener’s side has a fit, there is a strong possibility that their opponents also have one.

- ii. force the opener to bid and play at a higher level,

With the same holding, a three-level contract is easier to set than a two-level one.

- iii. provide their partner directions of which suit to lead, or

- iv. provide their partner with information regarding their distribution.

Quiz Questions – OBAR bids

1. *What are OBAR bids?*
2. *Why are they useful?*

Answers:

1. *When an opponent has opened and their partner raises the suit to the two-level, it is usually best to bid, even with less points than usual.*
2. *They are unlikely to be doubled. They provide a good sacrifice and may force the opponents to bid and play at the three-level.*

They also provide their partner with information about the hand distribution and on which suit to lead.

6. Notrump Overcalls and Responses

6.a. Two Clubs Game Try

This game try is suggested by Danny Roth in his 1999 book *Focus on Bidding*. It is used when;

- i. an opening bid is made at the one-level,
- ii. the direct seat passes with 11 or 12 HCP,
- iii. the responder passes,
- iv. the opener's RHO overcalls with a 1 NT overcall showing 12 to 16 HCP, and
- v. the opener passes.

This leaves the bidding as a 1x, pass, pass, 1 NT, pass sequence.

With the advancer's 11 or 12 HCP combined with the overcaller's 12 to 16 HCP, a two-level major suit or notrump contract is likely to make. A game contract is possible and should be explored.

Using the game try, the advancer can ask about the overcaller's strength and distribution by bidding 2 ♣.

The overcaller's responses to the 2 ♣ ask are;

- i. 2 ♦ – 13 or less HCP,

This bid shows that a game contract is unlikely to make and that the pair should be looking for the best contract to play at the two-level.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

After the 2 \diamond response, the partnership will then attempt to place the contract in either a major suit with an eight cards fit or in 2 NT.

The advancer starts the process of placing the contract by bidding either;

a) their lowest ranking four cards major suit, or

With a five cards major suit and 11 or 12 HCP, the advancer would have overcalled the opening bid.

After the advancer bids their lowest ranking four cards major suit, the overcaller may either;

1) pass with a four cards holding in the suit,

2) bid 2 \spadesuit over a 2 \heartsuit bid to show a four cards holding in the spade suit and less than four cards in the heart suit, or

This asks the advancer to either pass with four spades or bid 2 NT.

3) bid 2 NT if they do not have either four cards support for the advancers' major suit or a higher ranking four cards major suit.

b) 2 NT if the advancer does not hold four cards in either major suit.

An example is:

<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1D	p	p	1 NT
P	2 \clubsuit ¹	p	2 \diamond ²

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

<i>P</i>	2 ♡ ³	<i>p</i>	2 ♠ ⁴
<i>P</i>	<i>p</i> ⁵	<i>p</i>	

¹ – 2 Club Game Try

² – less than 14 HCP

³ – four cards heart suit

⁴ – less than four hearts, four spades

⁵ – four spades

ii. 2 ♡ – 14 to 16 HCP with a four cards heart,

This is an invitation to a game contract. It is also exploring whether there is an eight cards major suit fit or whether it is best to play in a notrump contest.

After the 2 ♡ response (showing 14 to 16 HCP and a four cards heart suit) to the 2 ♣ inquiry, the advancer's replies would be;

a) 2 ♠ – four spades, less than four hearts.

The overcaller's responses to this bid are either;

1) 2 NT – 14 HCP, less than four spades,

2) 3 ♠ – 14 HCP, four cards spade suit,

3) 3 NT – 15 or 16 HCP, less than four spades,
or

4) 4 ♠ – 15 or 16 HCP, four spades.

b) 2 NT – 11 HCP without a four cards major suit,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- c) 3 ♥ – 11 HCP with a four cards hearts suit,
 - d). 3 NT – 12 HCP without a four cards major, or
 - e) 4 ♥ – 12 HCP with a four card hearts suit
-
- iii. 2 ♠ – 14 to 16 HCP with four spades and less than four hearts,
 - iv. 2 NT – 14 HCP without a four cards major suit, or
 - v. 3 NT – 15 to 16 HCP without a four cards major suit.

The advantage of this convention is that it enables a partnership to determine, find, and bid, a game when there is a 1 NT overcall after two passes and their partner has game invitational points.

Of note: In these situations, where one player has opened and both players have at least 10 HCP, the opener's opponents are often able to make a game contract with as little as 24 HCP among them. This is because;

- i. any outstanding honors are known to likely be in the opener's hand,

This allows finesses to be made with more certainty about what which hand contains the missing honor.

- ii. the opener will have problems transporting to their partner's hand and may be forced to lead away from their honor holding,
- iii. the declarer will have increased ability to transport between the declarer's hand and dummy,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This is because both hands contain more possible entries because of their HCP.

iv. there is an increased chance of gaining a trick through endplaying the opener, and

If placed on lead, the opener will often be forced to lead away from their known tenaces.

v. squeeze plays are more likely to succeed.

Both threat cards are likely to be in the opener's hand and forced to discard one of them if squeezed.

Because of the increased possibility of making a game contract with only 24 HCP among the hands, the following adjustments to this convention are suggested, especially in IMP games which require a lower frequency of game bids being successful:

i. the advancer's 2 ♣ response should be made with 10 to 12 HCP, and

ii. after the overcaller's 2 ♦ response, the advancer should reply at the three-level if they hold 12 HCP.

Similarly, the overcaller should raise the advancer's response to the three-level if they hold 13 HCP.

Quiz Questions – Two Clubs Game Try

1. *When is the Two Clubs game try used?*
2. *After a 1 ♣ opening bid and two passes, it is overcalled with a 1 NT bid. Their partner, who had previously passed bids 2 ♣. What does that bid mean?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

3. *What should the overcaller respond to the 2 ♣ bid with:*
- a. *Less than 14 HCP?*
 - b. *15 HCP and a four cards major suit?*
 - c. *14 HCP without a four cards major suit?*
 - d. *15 HCP without a four cards major suit?*
4. *If the overcaller responds 2 ♦ to the 2 ♣ game try bid, what should the advancer do?*

Answers:

1. *When holding 11 or 12 HCP and, after two passes an opening bid is overcalled with a 1 NT bid..*
2. *That they have 11 or 12 HCP and are exploring a possible game contract.*
- 3.a. 2 ♦ 3.b. *bid the major suit at the two-level.*
- 3.c. 2 NT 3.d. 3 NT
4. *Bid their lowest ranking four cards major suit at the two-level. If you do not have one, sign off with a 2 NT bid. If playing the suggested change, the advancer should make a game forcing reply at the three-level if they hold 12 HCP.*

7. Defensive Bids

7.a. Anti-Flannery

Anti-Flannery is a defensive convention used in the direct seat after an opponent opens the bidding with a 2 \diamond bid and it is announced as a Flannery bid showing a hand which contains five hearts, four spades and 11 to 15 HCP.

The anti-Flannery bids are;

- i. double – showing notrump values (15 to 17 HCP) with stoppers in the heart and spade suits,
- ii. 2 \heartsuit – a three suited takeout with a void or singleton in the heart suit,
- iii. 2 \spadesuit – showing a six cards, or good five cards, spade suit, or
- iv. 2 NT – takeout bid for the minor suits.

The overcaller should have at least four cards in each suit and at least nine minor suit cards.

The benefits of this, and other defensive conventions, is that they;

- i. enable bidding contracts that are either makeable or good sacrifice bids,
- ii. reduce the impact of the opponent's two-suited bidding conventions as a bidding interference technique, and
- iii. interfere with the opponents bidding.

Except for the 2 ♠ bid, all of the anti-Flannery bids must be alerted.

Quiz Questions – Anti-Flannery

1. After the opponents open with a 2 ♦ Flannery opening bid, which they announce as five hearts and four spades, what do the following bids mean in the direct seat:

- a. Double? b. 2 ♥? c. 2 ♠? d. 2 NT?*

Answers:

1.a. The overcaller has notrump values (15 to 17 HCP) and stoppers in the hearts and spades suits.

1.b. A three suited hand with a singleton or void in the heart suit

1.c. A good (either six cards in length or five cards in length with at least three honors in the suit) spade suit.

1.d. Takeout for the minor suits. They should be at least 4 – 5 in the two minor suits.

7.b. Unusual-Over-Unusual

Unusual-Over-Unusual, also called Anti-Unusual, is a convention used by the responder after an opponent has made an Unusual 2 NT overcall over the opener's major suit opening. The opponent's Unusual 2 NT overcall shows at least five cards in each of the two lowest unbid suits.

The Unusual-Over-Unusual bids are;

- i. double* – showing an interest in penalizing one, or both, of the opponent's suits,

Once the advancer bids, the opener either;

a) doubles for penalty, or

b) passes and leaves the decision to the responder.

- ii. 3 ♣* – showing a game force hand with five or more cards in the other major suit,

- iii. 3 ♦* – an invitational raise, or better, in partner's major suit,

- iv. a three-level bid of the opener's suit as a constructive raise (8 to 10 points) in opener's suit, or

- iv. a three-level bid of the major suit not opened to show five or more cards in that major suit and 11 to 12 HCP.

* The double, 3 ♣ and 3 ♦ bids must be alerted.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The advantages of the defensive convention are that, when an opponent overcalls the opener with an Unusual 2 NT bid, there is a mechanism to show;

- i. either a constructive or invitational raise of their partner's suit,

This is important since the 2 NT bid otherwise took away the constructive raise.

- ii. an invitational or game forcing hand containing five or more cards in the unopened major suit, and

Without this, the 2 NT overcall took away the two-level bid to show a game force hand containing five or more cards in the unopened major suit.

- iii. a hand interested in penalizing the opponents.

Quiz Questions – Unusual-Over-Unusual

1. A 1 ♠ opening bid was overcalled an Unusual 2 NT bid, which was announced as showing both minor suits. What do the following bids by the responder mean:

- a. Double? b. 3 ♣? c. 3 ♦?
- d. 3 ♥? e. 3 ♠?

Answers:

1.a. They have stoppers in one of the opponent's suits.

1.b. Game force points with at least five cards in the heart suit.

1.c. Invitational points with support for the spade suit.

1.d. Invitational points and at least five cards in the heart suit.

1.e. At least three cards support for the spade suit and 8 to 10 points.

7.c. Bidding Against a Strong One Club Opening Bid

Most players have a convention for bidding over the opponents' 1 NT opening bids. Few players have a convention to use when an opponent opens with a strong 1 ♣ bid.

In higher level games, there is often a greater proportion of the opponents which play a strong 1 ♣ system such as Precision or Polish Club.

The strong 1 ♣ opening bid is often the same 16 or 17 HCP hand that those playing either Standard American or 2/1 Game Force would have opened with a strong 1 NT bid.*

With the auction starting at 1 ♣ rather than at 1 NT, the overcall may be done one level lower. The lower level required for an overcall is a good additional reason for players to have a system for bidding over the opponent's strong 1 ♣ opening bid.

Most hands opened with a strong 1 ♣ bid are unbalanced*. In those cases, the opener's opponents will often hold unbalanced hands. Usually more tricks are taken with unbalanced hands than with balanced ones. The positive result of playing the contract with an unbalanced hand increases the benefit of the opponents entering the bidding. The contract is more likely to make. The unbalanced hand also makes a sacrifice bid more likely to produce a positive result.

A good, simple system to use over a strong 1 ♣ opening bid is Mathe. It uses the double to show length in the two major suits and a 1 NT bid to show length in both minor suits. A suit overcall is also used with a good five cards suit or any six cards suit.

A more complex, but much better, system to use over a strong 1 ♣ opening bid is Suction. It provides low level bids to describe all six two suited hands and lower level bids for single suited hands.

* 58 percent of the hands with over 16 HCP are in the 16 to 17 HCP range. 47.6 percent of the hands opened with a strong 1 ♣ bid have either a 4 – 4 – 3 – 2, 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 or 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 distribution pattern.

Mathe

Mathe is a convention used against the opener's strong 1 ♣ opening bid.

A defense against the strong 1 ♣ opening bids often allows the opener's opponents to either;

- i. disrupt the bidding,

This makes it more difficult for the opening side to find their best fit and contract level.

- ii. provide the advancer with information on the overcaller's suit distribution and likely location of their honors, and

This information will help in the overcaller and advancer's interference bidding. It will also help the advancer defend the contract.

- iii. possibly steal the contract.

Whether making or set, playing a contract will likely score better than allowing the opponents to play the contract in their suit.

The bids directly after the opponents' strong 1 ♣ opening are;

- i. double – both major suits, usually 5 – 5 vulnerable, but may be 5 – 4 not vulnerable,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- ii. 1 NT – both minor suits, 5 – 5 or better, or
- iii. suit bids show a six cards holding in that suit.

Suction

Suction is more complex than Mathe, but provides bids for all six of the two suit combinations, whereas Mathe covers only two of the combinations.

Suction is structured to;

- i. obstruct the opponent's bidding,
- ii. keep the bidding at a low level, and
- iii. seek a contract in either;
 - a) the overcaller's six cards suit, or
 - b) one of the overcaller's two five cards suits.

In order to keep the bidding low and provide their partner with information on either the specific six cards suit or the two specific five cards suits, Suction uses a relay system.

Over the opponent's strong 1 ♣ opening bid, the Suction bids in the direct seat are;

- i. double is a relay to 1 ♦.

After the relay, the doubler either;

- a) passes, with a six or greater cards diamond suit, or*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

b) bids 1 ♥ to show five, or more cards in both the hearts and spades suits (next two highest suits).

ii. 1 ♦ is a relay to 1 ♥,

After the relay, the overcaller either;

a) passes, with a six or greater cards heart suit, or

b) bids 1 ♠ with five, or more, cards in the both the spades and clubs suits (next two highest suits).

iii. 1 ♥ is a relay to 1 ♠,

After the relay, the overcaller either;

a) passes, with a six or greater cards spades suit, or

b) bids 2 ♣ with five, or more, cards in the both the clubs and diamonds suits (next two highest suits).

iv. 1 ♠ is a relay to 2 ♣.

After the relay, the overcaller either;

a) passes, with a six or greater cards clubs suit, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

b) bids 2 \diamond with five, or more, cards in the both the diamonds and hearts suits (next two highest suits).

v. 1 NT to show five or more cards in both the clubs and hearts suits, or

vi. 2 \clubsuit to show five or more cards in both the diamonds and spades suits.

If the responder bids after the overcall, the advancer should overbid when they have support in both the transferred suit and one of the two other possible suits (i.e., if the overcall is a 1 \spadesuit bid, the advancer should have support in both the clubs and either the diamond or heart suit). That pattern of hand guarantees that the partnership has at least an eight cards fit.

Note that the overcaller's long suit will not be the suit that they have bid (i.e., a 1 \spadesuit bid will show length in either clubs or in both the diamonds and hearts suits, but not spades). The suit bid shows either six cards in the next ranking suit or five cards in each of the other two suits.

All bids must be alerted.

This may also be used over a strong, artificial 2 \clubsuit opening bid, except all bids are one level higher.

Under the General Convention Card rules, ACBL (American Contract Bridge Association) restricts the use of Suction to a defense against an artificial opening bid, such as the Strong 1 \clubsuit and 2 \clubsuit opening bids. In a higher level tournament game, if contemplating using it against the opponent's notrump opening bids, a player should check the convention card rules that currently apply.

The advantages of the Suction convention are that it;

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- i. facilitates showing either a single suited hand or a two suited hand without taking up much bidding space,
- ii. allows the bids to be made with hands that have the shape but may lack the points to otherwise bid, and

This is due to its ability to bid at a low level.

- iii. provides more opportunities to either seek a contract or interfere with the opponents bidding.

Quiz Questions - Bidding Against a Strong One Club Opening Bid

1. A 1 ♣ bid is opened and announced as strong, artificial and forcing. Playing Suction, what should the advancer bid if the following overcall is made:

- a. Double? b. 1 ♥ ? c. 1 ♠ ?
d. 1 NT ? e. 2 ♣ ?

2. Playing Suction, what should the advancer bid if the following overcall is made:

- a. Double? b. 1 NT ?

3. A strong, artificial and forcing 1 ♣ bid opens the bidding and is doubled, showing either a long diamond suit or length in both of the major suits. If the responder bids, what should the advancer do if they have 6 HCP and a 4 = 2 = 3 = 4 distribution hand?

Answers:

1.a. 1 ♦

1.b. 1 ♠

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

1.c 2 ♣

1.d. Either 2 ♣ or 2 ♥.

1.e. Either 2 ♦ or 2 ♠.

2. If the responder passes, the advancer should pass if they hold three or more clubs. If the responder passes and they hold less than three clubs and more diamonds than clubs, they should bid 1 ♦.

If the responder bids, they may bid their longest minor suit at the appropriate level if they hold at least two three cards in the suit.

3. Bid either 1♥ or 2 ♣. The partnership has an eight cards fit in the diamond suit or a nine cards fit in hearts.

7.d. Meckwell

Meckwell is a defensive convention used in the direct seat after an opponent opens the bidding with a strong 1 NT bid. It replaces whichever convention, such as DONT, that the pair was previously playing.

The Meckwell overcalls are;

- i. double – relay to clubs,

After the relay, the overcaller bids;

- a) pass, with a long club suit,*

- b) 2 ♠ to show both major suits, or*

- c) a major suit to show that they have a strong hand with at least five cards in the suit bid.*

This is an invitation to game. With an eight cards fit in the major suit bid, the hand contains only four losers.

- ii. 2 ♣ – at least five cards in the club suit and a long major suit,

When vulnerable, the major suit should be five cards in length.

Not-vulnerable, it may be only four.

It requests the advancer, if the responder passes, to either;

- a) bid 2 ♠ if they hold a six cards spade suit and two, or fewer, cards in both the heart and club suits,*

- b) bid 2 ♥ if both of their major suits are as long, or longer, than their holding in the club suit, or*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

c) *pass.*

iii. 2 \diamond – at least five cards holding in the diamonds suit and a long major suit,

When vulnerable, the major suit should be five cards in length. Not-vulnerable, it may be only four.

Similar to the 2 \clubsuit overcall, it requests the advancer, if the responder passes, to either;

a) *bid 2 \spadesuit if they hold a six cards spade suit and two, or fewer, cards in both the heart and diamond suits,*

b) *bid 2 \heartsuit if both of their major suits are as long, or longer, than their holding in the diamond suit, or*

c) *pass.*

iv. 2 \heartsuit – six cards heart suit,

v. 2 \spadesuit – six cards spade suit, or

iv. 2 NT – a hand that has either;

a) length in both minor suits, or

b) a strong hand with at least five cards in both of the major suits.

With an eight cards fit, the hand contains only four losers.

The advancer is requested to respond with a bid of their longest minor suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

After the response, the overcaller either;

a) passes with length in that suit, or

b) bids 3 ♡ showing a strong hand with both major suits.

The advantages of using Mechwell, instead of the other defensive conventions against a strong 1 NT opening bid are;

i. Mechwell allows the defenders to potentially play in the club suit at the two-level,

Some of the other conventions do not.

ii. Mechwell provides provisions to show potential game contracts in a major suit, and

iii. Mechwell contains more ways in which to find the optimal contract.

All Mechwell bids must be alerted.

Note: Conventions used over 1 NT opening bids can also be used over 1 NT responses (i.e., after a 1x, pass 1 NT sequence the same convention may be used as the one where the opening bid was 1 NT). When used, they provide the defenders an opportunity to show single suited and double suited hands.

Quiz Questions – Meckwell

1. *Playing Meckwell, a 1 NT bid opening bid is overcalled with a 2 ♣ bid and the responder passed. What should the advancer bid with a 4 = 3 = 4 = 2 distribution?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2. *Playing Meckwell, a 1 NT opening bid is doubled and the responder passes. The advancer bids 2 ♣. What does it mean if the overcaller follows with a bid of:*

- a. 2 ♦? b. 2 ♠?

3. *Playing Meckwell, a 1 NT opening bid is overcalled with a 2 NT bid and the responder passes. The advancer bids 3 ♣, since that is their longer minor suit, and the overcaller bids 3 ♥. What does that bid mean?*

Answers:

1. 2 ♥. *The overcaller will correct to 2 ♠ if that is their long major suit.*

2.a. *They have length in both major suits.*

2.b. *They have a six or more cards in the spades suit with a four loser hand.*

3. *The overcaller has a strong hand with both major suits.*

7.e. Robson-Segal Over a One Notrump Overcall

In *Partnership Bidding at Bridge*, Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal explain a convention for the responder to use after their partner's opening bid is overcalled with a 1 NT bid. The responder's bids have slightly different meanings if the opening bid was a minor or a major suit.

After a 1 NT overcall of a minor suit, the responder's bids, other than pass, are;

- i. double – penalty, balanced hand with 10, or more, HCP,
- ii. 2 ♣ – length in both major suits,
- iii. 2 ♦ – relay to 2 ♥,

The responder uses this with a hand with one six cards major suit. If their length is in the spades suit, the responder will correct the opener's 2 ♥ response.

- iv. 2 ♥ – a five cards heart suit with either;
 - a) four cards support for partner's minor suit, or
 - b) five cards in the other minor suit,
- v. 2 ♠ – a five cards spade suit with either four cards support for partner's minor suit or five cards in the other minor suit,
- vi. 2 NT – limit raise of the opened minor suit, or
- vii. the opener's minor suit at the three-level – weak raise with at least five cards support.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

After a 1 NT overcall of a major suit opening, the responder's bids are;

- i. double – penalty, balanced hand with ten or more HCP,
- ii. 2 ♣ – three cards support for the opener's major suit and five cards in the other major suit,
- iii. 2 ♦ – a constructive (8 to 10 HCP) raise of the opener's major suit,
- iv. a two-level bid of the opener's major suit is a weak (6 or 7 HCP) raise, or
- v. a two-level bid of the opposite major suit is made with six or more cards in the that major suit.

This bid is not forcing.

The advantages of this convention are;

- i. with a long major suit, there are separate bids to show whether the hand contains five or six cards in length, and
- ii. there are separate bids to show a weak and a constructive raise of the opener's suit.

Quiz Questions – Robson-Segal Over a One Notrump Overcall

1. A 1 ♣ opening bid is overcalled with a 1 NT bid. What do the following bids from the responder mean:

- a. double? b. 2 ♣? c. 2 ♦? d. 2 ♠?

2. 1 ♠ opening bid is overcalled with a 1 NT bid. What do the following bids from the responder mean:

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- a. double? b. 2 ♣?
c. 2 ♦?
d. 2 ♥? e. 2 ♠?

Answers:

1.a. The double is for penalty. The responder has a balanced hand with at least 10 HCP.

1.b. Length in both major suits.

1.c. It is a relay to 2 ♥ . The responder holds six cards length in one of the major suits. If the responder's long suit is the spade suit, they will correct the opener's 2 ♥ bid with a 2 ♠ bid.

1.d. A five cards spade suit plus four clubs.

2.a. The double is for penalty. The responder has a balanced hand with at least 10 HCP.

2.b. Three cards support for spades plus a five cards heart suit.

2.c. Three or more cards support and 8 to 10 HCP.

2.d. A six cards or longer heart suit.

2.e. Three or more cards support and 6 or 7 HCP.

7.f. Forcing Pass

The forcing pass is a defensive technique used in a competitive auction situation. It is used when one pair has bid a slam and the other is in a position of either doubling for penalties or making a sacrifice bid. The forcing pass is usually used where the penalty of the double is less than the loss of the opponents making their slam contract.

Using a forcing pass, once a slam is bid a double by the first seat after the slam bid is for penalty. The double shows that the player can take two tricks and set the contract. If they cannot take two defensive tricks and set the contract, the player passes and leaves the decision to their partner.

The fourth seat knows that their partner does not have two defensive tricks, but may have one. Knowing this the player either;

- i. passes with two defensive tricks and accept the positive score of setting the opponents,
- ii. bids with no defensive tricks, knowing that the opponents slam contract will likely make, or
- iii. doubles with one defensive trick.

This leaves the decision to their partner who either;

- a) passes with one defensive trick, or*
- b) bids with no defensive tricks.*

The advantage of the forcing pass is that it provides information on whether to make a sacrifice bid or to penalize the slam bid.

Quiz Questions – Forcing Pass

1. *In a competitive auction, having pushed the opponents to bid their suit at the six-level, what bid should be made in the direct seat after their six-level bid with:*

- a. *two defensive tricks?*
- b. *one defensive trick?*
- c. *no defensive tricks?*

2. *In the above situation, you partner passed. What do you bid with:*

- a. *two defensive tricks?*
- b. *one defensive trick?*
- c. *no defensive tricks?*

3. *In the above situation, you have passed the opponent's six-level contract and your partner doubled. What do you bid with:*

- a. *one defensive trick?*
- b. *no defensive tricks?*

Answers:

1.a. *Double for penalty*

1.b. *Pass* 1.c. *Pass*

2.a. *Pass. Accept the positive score. The opponents were successfully pushed beyond what they are capable of making.*

2.b. *Double. Allow the partner to decide whether to leave the double in or make a sacrifice bid.*

2.c. *Make a sacrifice bid.*

3.a. *Pass. The contract should be set.*

3.b. *Make a sacrifice bid. The opponents are likely to make their contract.*

7.g. Defensive Bidding Against a Texas Transfer

Texas transfers are game forcing bids by the responder of a 1 NT opening bid. They are used with hands containing a six or more cards in a specified major suit and sufficient points to make a game contract.

Once the Texas transfer bid is made, the opener's RHO may consider making either a lead directing double or a sacrifice bid.

The defensive bids used after a Texas transfer bid are;

- i. a double is a lead directing bid of the artificial suit bid,

It is also for penalty in cases where the opener passes instead of completing the transfer.

The double should only be made if a doubled contract of the artificial bid is likely to be defeated. This prevents the opener from obtaining a better score by passing the double (i.e., a 710 score from making 4 \diamond doubled or 790 score for making 4 \heartsuit doubled, compared to the 620 score for making an undoubled major suit game).

- ii. a bid of the responder's long suit shows a two suited hand which contains at least five cards in the other major suit and in one of the minor suits,

That bid requests their partner to either;

a) bid their partner's major suit if they have three or more cards in that suit, or

b) bid 4 NT requesting their partner to bid their long minor suit.

- iii. a 4 NT bid shows at least five cards in both of the minor suits, and

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This requests the advancer to make a five-level sacrifice bid in their longest minor suit.

iv. any other suit bid is a sacrifice bid with at least six cards length in the bid suit.

A sacrifice bid should usually only be made if the opener's side is vulnerable and their opponents are not. Down three doubled would yield the opening side only 500 points. That is less than the 620 they would score for bidding and making their game.

If in a favorable vulnerability position and considering a sacrifice bid, the player should take into consideration that;

i. the opener and the responder likely have 25 to 29 points between them,

ii. high honors in the responder's long suit are more likely to be in the responder's hand,

The high cards in the other suits are more likely to be in the opener's hand.

Because of this, any face card outside of the responder's long suit are less likely to take a trick if they are held by the opener's RHO. They are more likely to take a trick if held by the opener's LHO.

iii. suits are unlikely to split evenly because of the responder's unbalanced hand,

This increases the likelihood of a suit being trumped before the trump cards are removed from the opener's side.

vi. if holding the queen in the responder's long suit, the hand is likely better suited for defending than declaring,

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

vi. if the opener can make a 4 ♡ contract, a 4 ♠ sacrifice bid will be successful if the declarer can take seven or more tricks,

This requires either;

a) a five loser hand,

*b) a six loser hand and one trick from their partner,
or*

c) a seven loser hand with two tricks from their partner.

vii. if the opener can make their major suit contract, a sacrifice bid at the five-level will require eight or more tricks to be successful., and

viii. while a sacrifice bid may be made with either one six cards suit or two five cards suits, extra length in a long suit may be required for success.

The longer suit holdings are more likely to occur because of the responder's long suit holding.

While these opportunities do not occur very often, it is best that the partnership has an understanding of what these bids mean should the circumstance to use them arise.

Quiz Questions – Defensive Bidding Against a Texas Transfer

- 1. After a Texas transfer bid, what does a double mean?*
- 2. Under what vulnerability may the double be made?*
- 3. What vulnerability is required for a sacrificial bid over a Texas transfer bid?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

4. *What distribution should the player hold in order to make a sacrifice bid over a Texas transfer?*

5. *When a Texas transfer bid is made, what do the following bids mean?:*

a. *A four-level bid of the responder's long suit*

b. *2 NT*

c. *Any suit bid (other than the responder's long suit)*

Answers:

1. *It is a lead directing bid and also for penalty.*

2. *Any vulnerability of both sides.*

3. *A sacrifice bid should only be made when the opener is vulnerable and the opponents are not.*

4. *While they may be made with either a six cards suit or two five cards suits, extra length is probably required. The sacrifice bid is best made with a seven cards, or longer, suit or with eleven or more cards (i.e., 6 – 5 – 1 – 1 or better) in two suits.*

5.a. *This shows a two-suited hand with one of the long suits a major suit.*

5.b. *This shows a two-suited hand with length in both minor suits.*

5.c. *This shows a single suited hand with length in the suit bid.*

8. Bidding Over the Opponents' Takeout Double

8.a. Lead Directing Transfer Bids

Lead directing transfers are used by the responder after their partner's opening bid is doubled. They are used in place of a two-level bid on hands where the responder has less than the 10 HCP required for a redouble.

The main purpose of this bid is to direct the lead. The advancer is more likely to be the declarer. When the advancer becomes the declarer, the opener is placed on lead for the first trick.

The use of the transfer allows the responder to use the bid with either;

- i. a long holding in the suit being transferred to, or
- ii. three cards support for the opener's suit and a desire for the opener to lead the transferred suit if the opener be on lead (i.e., a 1 NT overcall being a transfer to clubs, asking for a club suit lead).

With three cards support, the transfer bid keeps the bidding active. This may allow the responder to later raise the opener's suit if they are able to do so at a safe level.

Having these two possible holdings, if the advancer passes and the transfer is made, the responder may either;

- i. pass,

They do so when either;

- a) *the overcaller passes and the responder has length in the suit which they transferred to,*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

This places the opener, which is the stronger hand, as the declarer.

b) the overcaller bids and the responder can bid either;

1. their long suit, or the opener's suit, at a safe level,

2. bid the opener's suit with three cards support.,

Without the transfer, the bid would be restricted to only one of the uses.

ii. convert the contract to their partner's long suit.

The lead directing transfer informs the opener;

i. which suit to lead should the advancer bid, and

The contract is likely to be played in the advancer's long suit with the opener on lead. This allows the responder to obtain the lead and lead the opener's suit through the declarer.

Since the doubler is short in the opener's suit, the declarer will likely hold one or more honors in the opener's suit. This increases the chance of a successful finesse of the opener's suit through the declarer.

ii. to bid the responder's suit if the advancer passes.

If the contract is played in the responder's suit it will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

If the responder made a lead directing bid with three card support for the opener's suit, which is a transfer to the opener's suit.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Using this system, since a redouble would be used by the responder with at least 10 HCP, any bid other than the redouble shows less than 10 HCP.

Transfer bids start with a 1 NT bid, transferring to clubs, and continue up to the suit below the opener's suit, which would be used to show three cards support for the opener's suit and either the king or ace of that suit.

All transfer bids must be alerted. If asked they must be explained as either a long suit or a lead directing bid with at least three cards support for the opener's suit.

A review of the options will illustrate this convention better.

After a 1 ♥ opening bid, which is doubled by their LHO, the responder's options are;

- i. redouble – 10 or more HCP,
- ii. 1 ♠ – non-forcing bid with five or more spades and less than 10 points,

This requests a spade lead.

- iii. 1 NT* – transfer to 2 ♣, less than 10 HCP with either a long club suit or a likely club entry with three cards support for the heart suit,

This requests a club lead.

- iv. 2 ♣* – transfer to 2 ♦, less than 10 HCP and either a long diamond suit or a likely diamond entry with three cards support for the heart suit,

This requests a diamond lead.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

v. 2 \diamond^* – transfer to 2 \heartsuit , less than 10 high card points, at least two card support for the heart suit including the ace or the king,

This requests a heart lead.

vi. 2 \heartsuit – less than 10 HCP, three cards support, without the king or ace, for the heart suit,

It denies a likely entry to the advancer's hand.

Often, the best lead for the opener is the spade suit since the responder has denied high honors in the other suits.

vii. 3 \heartsuit – four cards heart support, less than 10 HCP, preemptive, or

viii. pass – the responder holds none of the above.

* alertable

After a 1 \spadesuit opening, which is doubled by their LHO, the responder's options are;

i. redouble – 10 or more high card points,

ii. 1 NT* – transfer to 2 \clubsuit , less than 10 HCP with either a long club suit or a likely club entry with three cards support for spades,

This requests a club lead.

iii. 2 \clubsuit^* – transfer to 2 \diamond , less than 10 HCP with either a long diamond suit or a likely diamond entry with three cards support for spades,

This requests a diamond lead.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

iv. 2 \diamond^* – transfer to 2 \heartsuit , less than 10 HCP with either a long heart suit or a likely heart entry with three cards support for spades,

This requests a heart lead.

vi. 2 \heartsuit^* – transfer to 2 \spadesuit , three cards support for the spade suit with the ace, king or both and less than 10 HCP,

This requests a spade lead.

vii. 2 \spadesuit – less than 10 HCP, three cards support, without the ace or king, for the spade suit,

It denies a likely entry to their hand in another suit.

vii. 3 \spadesuit – four card spade support, less than 10 high card points, pre-emptive, or

viii. pass – the responder holds none of the above.

* alertable

After the lead directing transfer:

- i. if the advancer passes, the opener may either;
 - a) rebid their opening suit if it contains at least six cards, or
 - b) complete the transfer.
- ii. if the advancer doubles or bids a new suit, the opener's options are;
 - a) rebid their opening suit if it contains at least six cards, or

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- b) pass and leave any bidding decision to their partner.

Usually the suit being transferred to should be headed by the ace or king and queen. However, if the responder is near the top of their points range it could be made with only the king, since the ace is more likely to be in the doubler's hand.

The advantages of using lead directing transfer bids are:

- i. it advises the opener which suit to lead,

If the contract is played by the opener's opponents it will likely be in the advancer's suit, placing the opener on lead.

The lead directing bid increases the chances of transferring the lead. This allows the responder to return the opener's suit through the declarer's hand. Since the declarer is likely to have a longer holding than dummy in that suit, they are likely to hold an honor in the opener's suit allowing for a successful finesse.

- ii. if the responder has a long suit and the advancer passes, the contract may be played in the responder's long with the stronger hand as the declarer,

- iii. because of the transfer, the responder retains another bid, and

They may use it to raise the opener's suit if they have three cards support.

- iv. it may provide interference with the opponents' bidding.

Quiz Questions – Lead Directing Transfer Bids

1. *What are the advantages of the lead directing transfer bids?*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

2. When a 1 ♠ opening bid is doubled, what do the following bids by the responder mean:

a. Redouble?

b. 1 NT?

c. 2 ♥?

d. 2 ♠?

Answers:

1. It informs the opener which suit to lead. If played in the responder's long suit, the contract will be played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

2.a. The responder has 10 or more HCP.

2.b. It requests a club lead. If the advancer passes, the opener should bid the club suit.

2.c. The responder has three cards support for the spade suit, including either the ace or king. If on lead, the opener should lead their long suit.

2.d. The responder had three cards support for the spade suit but does not have the ace of the suit or any lead preference.

9. Slam Bidding

9.a. Exclusion Blackwood

Exclusion Blackwood is a keycard ask used when the inquirer holds a void in a side suit. It's purpose is to ask about the keycards which reside in the other three suits.

Once a suit fit has been agreed upon, a suit bid above game level is an Exclusion Blackwood bid. The bid is usually a jump bid to the four or five-level. The Exclusion Blackwood bid asks their partner about their keycard holding excluding the ace of the bid suit.

The keycard responses are adjusted to start at the next available bid (i.e., after a 5 ♣ exclusion ask, a 5 ♦ bid shows the lowest response [either zero or three if playing RKC, or either one or four playing 1430]).

Examples of this are:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Responder</u>	<u>LHO</u>
1 ♥ 4 ♠*	pass	3 ♥	pass
1 ♠ 5 ♣*	pass	3 ♠	pass
1 ♥ 4 ♠*	1 ♠	2 ♠ ¹	pass

*Exclusion Blackwood

¹ invitational raise in hearts

The advantage of Exclusion Blackwood is that the keycard inquirer can determine the specific number of first round losers when they have a void in a side suit and are seek either a small or grand slam contract.

Quiz Questions – Exclusion Blackwood

- 1. After a 1 ♡ , 1 ♠ , 2 ♥ , 3 ♠ bidding sequence, with a strong hand and a void in the spade suit, what bid does the opener make to ask for keycards excluding the spade suit?*
- 2. After the 4 ♠ inquiry, what bid does the responder make to show two keycards without the queen of hearts?*

Answers:

- 1. 4 ♠*
- 2. 5 ♦*

9.b. Five Notrump Pick-a-Slam

After searching for a fit and final contract, a 5 NT bid is used to ask their partner to pick a small slam contract. The 5 NT Pick-a-Slam is used when the bidder;

- i. has confidence that a small slam will make and a grand slam will not, and
- ii. is uncertain as to what strain the slam should be played in.

In response to the 5 NT bid, the responder may bid 6 NT if they are certain that they have first and second round control of all suits. Otherwise, the responder should opt to play in a suit contract.

A good example was posted by Andrew Gumperz's May 1, 2013 article on www.bridgewinners.com. In his example, opposite a 1 NT opening bid, the responder held:

♠ AK10x
♥ xx
♦ KJ10x
♣ AQx

With their 17 HCP, the responder could have bid 6 NT and ended the auction. Instead, they considered that a suit slam with an eight cards fit may be safer.

The responder bid 2 ♣ Stayman searching for a possible eight cards fit in spades. The opener responded with a 2 ♥ bid.

After the 2 ♥ bid, there was still a reasonable chance that the opener held four cards in either the diamond or spade suit, so the responder bid 5 NT as a pick-a-slam bid.

There was a reasonable chance of playing in an eight cards fit if the opener bids either their diamond or spade suit showing length in that

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

suit. If the opener bid 6 ♣, the responder would convert the contract to 6 NT.

While not frequently used, this convention is helpful when faced with uncertainty about which suit a small slam should be played in.

Quiz Questions – Five Notrump Pick-a-Slam

1. *When is the 5 NT pick-a-slam bid used?*

Answers:

1. *When there are sufficient points for a slam contract, but uncertainty of which strain is best to play in.*

9.c. Soloway Jump Shift

A Soloway jump shift replaces the responder's weak major suit jump shift responses to a minor suit opening bid.

Using Soloway, the jump shift is used to show that the responder has a strong hand with more than sufficient points for a game contract. This announces that a slam contract is possible and should be considered.

After a minor suit opening bid, a jump shift to a major suit shows at least four cards in the jumped suit (i.e., 1 ♣ – pass – 2 ♠ shows at least four spades). It is a relay to the next highest bid after which the responder describes which of three different hand types they hold;

- i. a notrump bid shows a balanced hand with 18 to 19 HCP,
- ii. a rebid of their jumped major suit shows a hand with 15 to 19 points and at least six cards in that suit,
- iii. bidding the opener's suit shows a 15 to 18 point hand with five cards in the responder's first suit bid, support for opener's suit and no singleton or void in the other two suits, or
- iv. bidding a new suit shows a 15 to 18 point hand with singleton or void in that suit, five cards in their first bid suit and support for partner's suit.

The advantages of the Soloway jump shift are that;

- i. it informs the opener that a slam contract should be considered,
- ii. it allows the responder, on their second bid, to show which or the four types of strong hands they hold, and
- iii. it conserves bidding space.

See further explanations under the Bidding: Other section.

Quiz Questions – Soloway Jump Shift

1. *What are the three types of hands which can use a Soloway jump shift bid?*
2. *After a minor suit opening bid, what are the two available Soloway jump shift bids?*
3. *After a 1 ♣, pass, 2 ♠, pass sequence, what is the opener's response to ask which hand the responder has?*
4. *In response to the 2 NT bid, what does the responder bid to show:*
 - a. *A six cards spade suit with 19 HCP?*
 - b. *A balanced 18 HCP hand?*
 - c. *A 16 HCP hand with 5 = 2 = 2 = 4 distribution?*
 - d. *A 17 HCP hand with 5 = 1 = 3 = 4 distribution?*

Answers:

1. *A balanced hand with 18 to 19 HCP, a 15 to 19 HCP with a six cards suit, or a 15 to 19 points hand which has a five cards major suit and support for the opened suit..*
2. *2 ♥ or 2 ♠*
3. *2 NT*
- 4.a. *3 ♠*
- 4.b. *3 NT*
- 4.c. *3 ♣*
- 4.d. *4 ♥*

9.d. Min-Max Gerber

Min-Max Gerber is an ace ask alternative to Gerber. It is used in response to a notrump bid in the same manner as the Gerber convention. However, when holding two aces, the Min-Max Gerber bids shows whether the opener was at the top or the bottom of their range for their 1 NT opening bid.

The difference between Min-Max Gerber and Gerber responses are that when playing Min-Max Gerber with two aces the responses are;

- i. 4 ♠ – two aces and a minimum notrump hand, or
- ii. 4 NT – two aces with a maximum notrump hand.

When holding two aces and being in the middle of the honor point range, the opener's hand should be treated as minimum unless it contains a five cards suit. Hands that contain a five cards suit and are in the middle of the honor point range should be treated as being a maximum point hand. The extra length in a suit will usually take one or more extra tricks.

Using RKC Blackwood, the other two bids are;

- i. 4 ♦ – zero or three aces, or
- ii. 4 ♥ – one or four aces.

Using 1430, the other two bids are;

- i. 4 ♦ – one or four aces, or
- ii. 4 ♥ – zero or three aces.

The benefits of using Min-Max Gerber are;

- i. it conserves bidding space,
- ii. it's sequences match those of the other keycard bids, making them easier to remember, and
- iii. with two aces, the opener can convey whether they are at the top of the bottom of their notrump range.

Quiz Questions – Min-Max Gerber

1. *What are the benefits of changing to Min-Max Gerber?*
2. *Under 1430 Min-Max Gerber, what do the following responses show:*
 - a. 4 \diamond ?
 - b. 4 \heartsuit ?
 - c. 4 \spadesuit ?
 - d. 4 NT?

Answers:

1. *All keycard asks follow the same pattern, conserves bidding space, and may provide information about whether the opening bid was made with a minimum or maximum hand which may influence a slam decision.*
- 2.a. *One or four aces*
- 2.b. *Zero or three aces*
- 2.c. *Two aces and a minimum points for their 1 NT opening bid*
- 2.d. *Two aces with maximum points for their 1 NT opening bid*

10. Other Conventions

10.a. NAMYATS

The NAMYATS convention uses a four-level opening bid of a minor suit to show a five loser hand which contains at least seven cards in a major suit which is usually headed by the ace and king or ace and queen.

These hands have great value as declarer, but have few defensive tricks. If the responder does not have sufficient support for the opener to make game, the four-level contract is usually a good sacrifice.

The NAMYATS opening bids are;

4 ♣ – shows a long heart suit, or

4 ♦ – shows a long spade suit.

The replies to the 4 ♣ opening bid are;

4 ♦ – shows slam interest in the heart suit,

This bid asks the opener to bid either;

a) 4 ♥ to show that they do not hold a side suit which contains three losers, or

b) a side suit showing a weak suit containing three losers,

4 ♥ – to play,

4 NT – keycard ask, or

6 ♥ – to play.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

The replies to the 4 \diamond opening bid are;

4 \heartsuit – shows slam interest in the spade suit,

This bid asks the opener to bid either;

a) 4 \spadesuit to show that they do not hold a side suit which contains three losers, or

b) a side suit showing a weak suit containing three losers,

4 \spadesuit – to play,

4 NT – keycard ask, or

6 \spadesuit – to play.

The benefits of the NAMYATS convention are that it;

i. conveys a specific hand pattern and trick taking potential,

This allows the responder place the hand directly, or though further investigation, into the appropriate contract.

ii. pre-empts the opponents bidding making it more difficult for them to find a suit for either a contract or sacrifice bid, and

The hands which fit the NAMYATS opening conditions are strong when played in their suit, yet have limited defensive value.

iii. distinguishes the hand from the other hands with a long major suit.

A weaker hand would be opened with a preemptive bid of the major suit at the three or four-level.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

A stronger hand would be opened with a 2 ♣ opening bid followed by a bid of the long major suit showing a four or fewer loser hand.

Quiz Questions – NAMYATS

- 1. What does a NAMYATS bid show?*
- 2. Which bid is used to show the hand when the long major suit is:
a. spades ? b. hearts ?*
- 3. What does the response below the opener's suit (i.e. a 4 ♦ response to the 1 ♣ bid) show and ask?*

Answers:

- 1. A solid seven cards, or greater, major suit with a five loser hand*
- 2.a. 4 ♣*
2.b. 4 ♦
- 3. Slam interest. It asks the opener to either bid a side suit which contains three losers, or bid their long major suit.*

10.b. Modified NAMYATS

The modifications to the NAMYATS convention are the responses to the opening bid. The modified responses often gain an extra trick by placing the stronger hand as the declarer.

The replies to the 4 ♣ opening bid, showing a five loser hand which contains at least seven hearts, are;

4 ♦ – transfer to 4 ♥,

This shows no interest in a slam contract and places the contract in game with the stronger hand as the declarer.

4 ♥ – shows slam interest,

This bid asks the opener to bid either;

a) 4 NT as a keycard ask with a hand that does not hold a side suit which contains three losers, or

b) A side suit showing a weak suit containing three losers.

4 ♠ – to play,

4 NT – keycard ask, or

6 ♥ – to play

The replies to the 4 ♦ opening bid, showing a five loser hand which contains at least seven spades. are;

4 ♥ – transfer to 4 ♠,

This shows no interest in a slam contract and places the contract in game with the stronger hand as the declarer.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

4 ♠ – shows slam interest,

This bid asks the opener to bid either;

a) 4 NT as a keycard ask with a hand that does not hold a side suit which contains three losers, or

b) A side suit showing a weak suit containing three losers.

4 NT – keycard ask, or

6 ♠ – to play

The benefits of the Modified NAMYATS convention are that it;

i. conveys a specific hand pattern and trick taking potential,

This allows the responder place the hand directly, or though further investigation, into the appropriate contract.

ii. Pre-empts the opponents bidding making it more difficult for them to find a suit for either a contract or sacrifice bid,

The hands which fit the NAMYATS opening conditions are strong when played in their suit, yet have limited defensive value.

iii. Distinguishes the hand from the other hands with a long major suit, and

A weaker hand would be opened with a pre-emptive bid of the major suit at the three or four-level.

A stronger hand would be opened with a 2 ♣ opening bid followed by a bid of the long major suit showing a four or fewer loser hand.

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

- iv. Contains a mechanism to place the stronger hand as the declarer.

A game contract is much more likely than a slam contract, so this often provided a benefit.

The responder already knows the opener's specific losing trick count and has other mechanisms to bid or seek slam.

When a slam contract is possible, the responder will usually have a hand which is close to the same strength as the opening hand. The contract will likely take the same number of tricks with the responder as the declarer.

Quiz Questions – Modified NAMYATS

1. *Playing Modified NAMYATS, what does the response below the opener's suit (i.e. a 4 ♠ response to the 1 ♣ bid) show and ask?*
2. *Why is this a benefit?*
3. *What does a four-level response of the opener's long suit show and ask?*

Answers:

1. *It asks the opener to bid their long suit at the four-level, placing it in a game contract.*
2. *It places the stronger hand as the declarer in a game contract. This often gains an extra trick.*
3. *Slam interest. It asks the opener to either bid a side suit which contains three losers, or bid their long major suit.*

Bidding Conventions and Agreements

Bidding: Other

1. Using the Soloway Jump Shift

Soloway jump shifts are a convention used when a minor suit is opened and the responder has a hand that is stronger than game forcing. The jump shift signifies that the responder is seeking a possible slam contract.

The Soloway jump shift prevents difficulties which may occur when the responder has a very powerful hand. Slams are more difficult to find when that strong hand contains a major suit which is at least five cards in length.

When contemplating a slam contract, it may be difficult for the responder to find a fit and keep the bidding going.

The Soloway jump shift announces a potential slam early in the bidding. This early announcement usually provides the partnership with sufficient space to agree on the strain (a specific suit or notrump) and cuebid controls prior to the decision on whether to pursue a slam contract.

After a minor suit opening bid, a Soloway jump major suit response (i.e., 1 ♣, p, 2 ♠) is used to show five or more cards in the suit bid and a hand with slam potential. The bid requests the opener to make the *next available bid* so that the responder can further describe their hand.

After the puppet bid by the opener, the responder either bids;

- a. the next available notrump bid to show a balanced hand which contains 18 or 19 HCP,

After the notrump bid, the opener may either;

Bidding: Other

i. bid the unbid minor suit,

The bid shows that the responder has stoppers in that suit. It also denies stoppers in the unbid major suit.

The bid asks the responder to bid notrump with stoppers in the other major suit.

ii. bid the responder's major suit at the three-level showing three or four cards support,

After this, the responder should either;

- a) bid 3 NT if their holding is only four cards in that suit, or
- b) raise the suit to game if they hold at least five cards holding in the suit.

After this, the opener may either;

1) pass, if they are holding only three cards in the suit, and have no desire to seek slam,

2) seek a slam contract if they hold 13 or more points and a four cards holding in the suit, or

A nine cards fit is recommended for a slam contract.

The opener may seek a slam contract by asking for keycards, or by bidding controls if there is a side suit where they do not hold at least one of the top three cards.

Bidding: Other

3) with more than 13 points, or where their points are such that they want to pursue slam in the suit with only an eight cards fit, they can seek a slam in the agreed suit,

iii. bid the other major suit with stoppers in that suit but not in the unbid minor suit,

(i.e., a 1 ♣ – 2 ♥ [Soloway jump shift – relay to 2 ♠] – 2 ♠ – 2 NT – 3 ♠ sequence shows stoppers in the spade suit, but not the diamond suit]),

This asks the responder to bid 3 NT with stoppers in the unbid minor suit.

iv. bid 3 NT with a minimum hand as a signoff,

v. bid 4 NT with 14 HCP,

This bid asks the responder to raise to the six-level if they hold 19 HCP,

vi. bid 6 NT with fifteen HCP,

vii. bid 5 NT with 16 HCP, or

This bid ask the responder to raise to the six-level with 18 HCP or the seven-level with 19 HCP.

viii. bid 7 NT with 17 HCP.

Note that many of these NT bids are consistent with those used by the responder when their partner has opened with a 1 NT bid. This consistency makes it easier to remember.

Bidding: Other

- b. the major suit in which the responder had previously made the jump shift in,

The rebid of the major suit shows a 15 to 19 point hand with at least six cards length in that suit. The responder's long suit should be headed with two of the top three honors.

With a holding as low as Qx in the suit, the opener can either bid game in the long suit or pursue a slam in it. They may do so by cuebidding first or second round controls in a side suit.

- c. the opened suit showing five cards in the responder's first (jumped) suit and four cards in the opener's suit, or

This is used when the responder has a 5 – 4 – 2 – 2 hand pattern.

When the responder holds that hand pattern, there will always be fit of at least eight cards fit in one of those two suits. The opener will either have a three or more cards support for the responder's suit or will have opened with a minor suit which contains at least four cards.

- d. a new suit.

This bid shows five cards in the responder's first suit and four cards in the opener's suit and a 5 – 4 – 3 – 1 or 5 – 4 – 4 – 0 hand pattern with shortness in the new suit bid (i.e., a 1 ♣ - 2 ♠ [Soloway] – 2 NT [completing the relay] – 3 sequence shows either a 5 = 3 = 1 = 3 or a 5 = 4 = 0 = 1 hand pattern.

Again, there will always be an eight cards fit.

Using the Soloway jump shift requires that the jump shift is no longer used to show a six card or longer major suit in a hand containing less than six HCP. To facilitate that weak hand that contains a six cards

Bidding: Other

major suit, the responder can bid their long major suit at the one-level and rebid that suit on the next bid.

The benefits of using the Soloway jump shift are;

- a. the responder shows a hand capable of inviting slam,

This forces the bidding to at least the game level.

- b. it provides the responder with a method to show one of three different hands, and

Those hands are;

- i. *a balanced 18 or 19 HCP hand,*

- ii. *a 15 to 19 HCP hand with a six, or greater, cards holding in a major suit, or*

- iii. *a 15 to 19 HCP hand with a five cards major and four cards support for the opener's minor suit.*

- c. it keeps the bidding at a low level.

This enables both;

- i. *The showing of which holding the responder has, and*

- ii. *Cue bidding controls at a lower level.*

Quiz Questions – Using the Soloway Jump Shift

A 2 ♠ Soloway jump shift is responded to a 1 ♣ opening bid. In response to the opener's 2 NT inquiry for more information, the responder bids 3 NT.

Bidding: Other

1. *What does that bid indicate?*
2. *What should the opener bid with a 2 = 4 = 3 = 4 distribution hand and:*
 - a. 13 HCP?
 - b. 14 HCP?
 - c. 15 HCP?
 - d. 16 HCP?
 - e. 17 HCP?
3. *After a 2 ♠ Soloway jump shift is responded to a 1 ♣ opening bid, the responder rebids their spade suit.*
 - a. *What does the bid mean?*
 - b. *How does the opener show interest in look for a slam in the spade suit?*

Answers:

1. *An 18 or 19 HCP hand with a five cards spade suit and a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 distribution.*
- 2.a. *Pass*
- 2.b. *4 NT inviting the responder to bid 6 NT if they hold 19 HCP*
- 2.c. *6 NT*
- 2.d. *5 NT. This asks the responder to raise to 6 NT if they hold an 18 HCP hand or to 7 NT if they hold a 19 HCP hand.*
- 2.e. *7 NT*
- 3.a. *The responder's spade suit is at least six cards in length and they have a 15 to 19 point hand.*

Bidding: Other

3.b. They bid a suit, other than the spade suit, to show either first or second round control in that suit and an interest in slam in the responder's suit.

2. Using Maximal Doubles

Maximal doubles are used when a major suit opening bid is overcalled in the direct seat, the responder makes a single level raise of the opener's suit and the opener's RHO raises the overcalled suit to the three-level (i.e., 1 ♠, 2 ♣, 2 ♠, 3 ♣).

If the opener's suit ranks two suits higher than the opponents, such as spades over diamonds or hearts over clubs, a maximum double is used as a penalty double. If the penalty double is not used, a bid of the suit immediately below the agreed upon suit is used as a game invitational bid.

In such case:

<u>RHO</u>	<u>Opener</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>Responder</u>
	1 ♠	2 ♦	2 ♠
3 ♦	?		

- A double must be alerted. It shows extra points and a willingness to either compete at the three-level or to have the double left in for penalties.
- A pass is used when the opener has already described their hand and has no more information to give.
- A bid of 3 ♥ must be alerted. It shows extra points and is game invitational.
- A bid of 3 ♠ shows a hand that does not want to defend.

If the opened suit is spades, and the opponents' suit is clubs, the opener's spade suit ranks three suits higher than theirs. In that case, the bids are the same as above and a 3 ♦ bid would be used to show a five cards diamond suit and at least 13 HCP. After the 3 ♦ bid, the responder should bid game in the spade suit if they hold at least three

Bidding: Other

cards in the diamond suit and their honor points are either aces or in the diamonds and spades suits.

With the club overcall of the spade suit, the bids become:

<u>RHO</u>	<u>Opener</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>Responder</u>
	1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♠
3 ♣	?		

- A double must be alerted. It shows extra points and a willingness to either compete at the three-level or to have the double left in for penalties.
- A pass is used when the opener has already described their hand and has no more information to give, allowing the responder to decide on whether to make a bid.
- A bid of 3 ♦ is used to show a five cards diamond suit and at least 13 HCP. This provides the responder further information about where the opener's shortness and long suit are and enables the responder to make a reasoned decision on whether to raise the spade suit to game level.
- A bid of 3 ♥ must be alerted. It shows extra points and is game invitational.
- A bid of 3 ♠ shows a hand that does not want to defend.

When used, maximum doubles can serve as a good way to find games and to penalize opponents.

Quiz Questions – Using Maximal Doubles

- If the opponents' suit is not the suit immediate below the opener's suit:*
 - What does the double mean?*

Bidding: Other

b. What does the opener's bid of the suit immediately below their suit mean?

c. If available, what does the opener's three-level bid of the suit immediately above the opponents' suit, but not immediately below the opener's suit mean?

Answers:

1.a. It shows extra points and a willingness to either compete or to double the opponents' bid.

1.b. It shows extra points and is game invitational. It denies a willingness to allow the opponents to play in their suit at the three-level.

1.c. It shows a 13 HCP hand with a five cards holding in the second bid suit.

3. Game and Slam Tries After a Bergen Raise

Game tries and slam tries can be made after a Bergen raise response. They are easy to distinguish.

If, after the Bergen raise, the opener bids a side suit at the three-level and that suit is **below** their opening major suit (i.e., 1 ♡, p, 3 ♣, p, 3 ◇), it is a game try.

The game or slam tries may be used after the responder shows either a simple or invitational raise of the opened suit.

The side suit bid asks the responder for help in that suit. The responder should raise the opener's major suit to game with either;

- a. a singleton or void in the intermediate ranked bid suit,

The opener's losers in that suit can likely be trumped in dummy's hand.

- b. honors in the intermediate bid suit, or

Any holes that the opener has in that suit are likely filled.

- c. the top of their point range.

The partnership will likely have enough winners among the trump and other suits to make game.

If the opener makes a help suit game try after a Bergen raise and the responder is not at the top of their point range, or cannot provide help in the desired suit, they should sign off with a three-level response of the opener's major suit.

If the opener responds to the Bergen raise with a suit bid **above** their opening major suit, it is a splinter bid seeking a slam contract in the original opened suit. This may be either a four-level bid of a minor suit or a 3 ♠ bid if the opened suit was hearts.

If the splinter bid is made and the responder would still make the same Bergen response after subtracting the honor points for the jack, queen and king of the opener's short suit, they should indicate their interest in slam.

The responder may indicate their interest in a slam contract by either making a cue bid, if one is available below 4 NT, or by bidding 4 NT to start the keycard ask.

If the responder's hand contains face cards in the opener's short suit, they sign off in the opener's major suit at the four-level.

Quiz Questions – Game and Slam Tries After a Bergen Raise

1. *If the responder makes a Bergen raise and the opener bids a suit below their opened suit:*

- a. *What does the bid mean?*
- b. *What should the responder bid?*
- c. *Can it be used if the responder makes a simple (minimum) raise?*

2. *If, after the Bergen raise bid, the opener bids a suit above their suit:*

- a. *What does the bid mean?*
- b. *What should the responder bid?*

Answers:

1.a. *It is a help suit game try seeking help in that suit.*

1.b. *If the responder has either an honor or shortness in that suit, or if they have a maximum hand for their bid, they should raise the opener's suit to game. If not, they bid the opener's suit at the three-level*

Bidding: Other

1.c. Yes

2.a. It is a splinter bid showing a singleton or void in the suit and inquiring about the possibility of a slam making.

2.b. The responder should recount their hand omitting the king, queen and jack in the opener's short suit.

If they would still have made the same bid, they should either make a cue bid, if available, or a keycard ask bid.

If the points in their hand were reduced after the deduction of face cards in the opener's short suit to the point that they would not have made that Bergen raise bid, the responder should bid the opener's suit at game level. This shows that they do not have an interest in bidding a slam.

4. Overcalls and Responses

4.a. The Overcaller

The overcaller's hand is limited to no more than 15 HCP. With a stronger hand, the overcaller would have either;

- i. doubled and bid with a hand that contains one long suit,
- ii. with a hand that contains two long suits, make either a Michael's Cue Bid or an Unusual 2 NT bid,
- iii. bid 1 NT with a balanced hand that contains 16 to 18 HCP, or
- iv. doubled and bid notrump with a balanced hand that contains more than 18 HCP.

A one-level overcall may be made with a hand that has either;

- i. a five cards suit which was strong enough to open at the one-level,
- ii. an 8 HCP or stronger hand which contains a five cards suit, or

The hand should contain either the ace or the king and queen in the suit.

In those cases, the overcall was mainly made as a lead directing bid.

- iii. a six cards suit which does not contain more than one of the top three honor cards in the suit and is not strong enough to open at the one-level.

Bidding: Other

This suit may be as weak as 5 HCP when not vulnerable or 8 HCP when vulnerable.

A two-level non-jump overcall may be made with a hand that is strong enough to open at the one-level and contains a long suit that is either;

- i. six or more cards in length, or
- ii. five cards in length containing at least two of the top three honor cards in the suit.

When the advancer holds one or more top honours in the overcaller's suit, the overcall was likely made with either;

- i. a full opening hand, or
- ii. a six cards suit.

Overcalls usually have either;

- i. a hand pattern of 5 – 3 – 3 – 2, or
- ii. a hand pattern of 6 – 3 – 2 – 2.

If the advancer holds an unbid suit of five or more cards in length, the overcaller is likely to have three cards support with a five cards suit, or two cards support if they overcalled with a six cards suit.

Quiz Questions – The Overcaller

1. *What is the maximum HCP that an overcall is made with?*
2. *What is required for a non-jump two-level overcall?*
3. *What are the most likely hand patterns used for an overcall?*

Answers:

1. 15

2. *A suit of either six or more cards in length or a five cards suit which contains at least two of the top three honors.*

3. 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 and 6 – 3 – 2 – 2

4.b. Bidding After the Responder Passes the Overcall

After an opening bid, it is doubtful that the overcaller can make a game contract when the advancer has less than 11 support points. The advancer's goal becomes placing the contract in the partnership's best fit at the lowest level. This is likely to either;

- i. make and provide a good score,
- ii. provide a good sacrifice bid which will usually score better than one where their opponents play the contract, or
- iii. push their opponents to bid and play at a higher level.

The higher level makes it easier to set the opponent's contract.

With less than 11 points and support for the overcaller's suit, the advancer should raise the suit one level with three or more cards support. They may raise it two levels with four cards support providing;

- i. a raise is not to the four-level, and
- ii. a raise to the three-level is done only if;
 - a) not vulnerable, or
 - b) holding 9 or 10 HCP.

With this holding, the opponents likely do not have sufficient HCP to double the contract and risk added points for the penalty or a game contract.

Without three cards support for the overcaller's suit, and having less than 11 HCP, the advancer may bid a new suit provided that;

Bidding: Other

- i. at the one-level the suit is either;
 - a) five, or more, cards in length with two cards support for the overcaller's suit, or

If the overcaller has a six cards suit and only two cards support for the advancer's suit, they can safely bid their six cards suit which will have an eight cards fit.

- b) if not-vulnerable and without two cards support for the overcaller's suit, a six cards or longer suit.

If the overcaller rebids their long suit denying three cards support for the advancer's suit, the overcaller will likely have two cards support for the advancer's suit and the advancer may, if necessary, rebid their six cards suit at the three-level.

- ii. at the two-level, or

This is made with either;

a) a five cards suit with two cards support for the overcaller's suit, or

b) a six cards suit.

- iii. at the three-level if not vulnerable and holding either;

a) a five cards suit with two cards support for the overcaller's suit, or

b) a six cards, or longer suit, if the overcaller cannot rebid their long suit at the two-level.

Bidding: Other

With this arrangement, if a three-level contract is bid, it is more likely to be with an eight cards fit.

Quiz Questions. – Bidding After the Responder Passes the Overcall

1. If the opening bid is overcalled and the responder passes:

a. How many HCP would the advancer usually need to make a game contract?

b. What is the goal of the advancer if they hold 8 HCP?

c. With 8 HCP and four cards support for the overcalled suit, should the advancer raise the overcaller's suit? If so, how high?

d. With only two cards support for the overcaller's suit, what does the advancer need to hold to bid their own suit?

Answers:

1.a. 11 HCP

1.b. To place the contract in the best strain.

1.c. Yes, but only to the two-level. If the opener rebids their suit, the advancer should consider either raising the overcaller's suit to the three-level or doubling.

1.d. A five cards suit for a two-level bid if vulnerable or the three-level if not vulnerable.

4.c. Bidding After the Responder Bids Over the Overcall

Since the responder will likely have at least 6 HCP, a game will not likely make for the overcaller's side. Therefore, any bid at the two-level is not forcing.

If the responder makes a limit raise of the opener's suit, a double by the advancer is used as a takeout bid showing length in both of the other suits.

When both of the suits can be bid at the two-level, the responder may make a takeout double with only four cards in each suit. If a three-level bid is required for at least one of the suits, that suit may be either six cards in length or five cards in length if it also contains two of the top honors.

Quiz Question – Bidding After the Responder Bids Over the Overcall

1. *If the responder bids, what does a double mean?*

Answer:

1. *It is takeout for the other two suits.*

4.d. Rosenkranz Double

A better use of the double after the responder bids is the Rosenkranz Double. Using this, the advancer may show three cards support for the overcaller's suit by bidding either;

- i. a double or redouble when the advancer's support contains either the king or the ace, or
- ii. a bid of the overcaller's suit when the advancer's hand does not contain either the ace or the king in the overcaller's suit.

The main reason for using a Rosenkranz double is to signal to the overcaller whether they should lead their long suit.

When the advancer has doubled or redoubled, showing a holding of the ace or the king of the overcaller's suit, the overcaller should lead either;

- i. a singleton in a side suit if they are also holding a stopper in the opener's suit, or

The hand should be one where they will still hold a trump card after acquiring the lead in the trump suit, such as Ax or Kx(x).

This allows the side suit to be set up for a ruff while preserving an entry to the advancer's hand.

- ii. their long suit.

The lead should signal which suit the overcaller prefers to be returned. An intermediate card should signal a request to return the higher ranking suit. A low card should signal a request to return the lower ranking suit.

When playing a Rosenkranz Double, a bid of one of the other suits should follow the same meaning as those made if the responder had passed.

Quiz Question – Rosenkranz Doubles

1. Using Rosenkranz doubles, what does a double or redouble signify?
2. What should the overcaller lead if their partner has made a Rosenkranz double or redouble?

Answer:

1. It signifies that the advancer has support for the overcaller's suit with at least the ace or king. It directs the overcaller to either rebid their suit, or if on lead, to lead that suit.
2. Either:
 - Their long suit, or
 - If holding either the ace, or KQx, orf the opener's suit, a singleton, promoting a ruff and preserving the entry to their partner's hand

4.e. Lead Directing Transfer Responses to an Overcall

Lead directing transfer responses are a more advanced technique that signals the preferred suit lead. Using them, the advancer transfers, or puppets, to a suit below the advancer's desired suit. The suit which is transferred to is either;

- i. a long suit which will likely find an eight cards fit, or

It is preferable that this suit is headed by some top honors since it may become lead directing.

- ii. a lead directing bid where the advancer has support for the overcaller's suit.

With these hands, if the overcaller accepts the transfer and the responder passes, the advancer may correct the contract to the overcaller's suit.

Using this method, a double or redouble is a puppet to the next available suit (i.e., a double of a 1 ♠ overcall is a transfer to the club suit).

A transfer to the overcaller's suit shows support for the overcaller's suit and a desire for the overcaller to lead that suit when defending the opponents' contract. An advancer's transfer to the overcaller's suit should only be made when the advancer holds the king or ace in the overcaller's suit.

The advancer's raise of the suit which the overcaller bid shows support for that suit. The raise usually denies that the advancer holds the ace or king in that suit. In these circumstances, the overcaller should try to reach the advancer's hand in a different suit. The preferred lead is frequently a suit which the overcaller was unable to transfer to at that level.

Bidding: Other

After the lead directing transfer, the overcaller accepts the transfer if the opener passes. This allows the advancer to correct to the overcaller's suit if they have support for it.

The advantage of the lead directing transfer bid is that it enables the overcaller to reach the advancer's hand. This allows the advancer to return the overcaller's suit. The lead from the advancer will be through the opener's hand. In most cases, the opener will hold a missing honor in the overcaller's suit. The transfer of the lead, therefore, increases the chance of a successful finesse through the opener's hand.

An example of how the lead directing transfers are used is:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Overcaller</u>	<u>Responder</u>	<u>Advancer</u>
1 ♠	1 ♣	2 ♠	?

Possible Responses:

Double – transfer to 2 ♥. The hand may be either a long heart suit or a hand with support for the spade suit and a request for a heart lead.

2 ♥ – transfer to 2 ♣. The hand contains either the ace or king of spades. It requests a spade lead.

2 ♣ – support for the spade suit. The hand does not contain the ace or king of spades. When on lead, the overcaller should consider leading a club.

Lead directing transfers bids are best used when they are also used by the responder after the opener's LHO overcalls with a suit bid. This makes the bidding agreements easier to remember as they are both used after a suit overcall is made.

Quiz Questions – Lead Directing Transfer Responses to an Overcall

1. After a 1 ♣, 1 ♥, 2 ♣ bidding sequence. What do the following bids mean:

- a. double? b. 2 ♦? c. 2 ♥?

2. What lead should be considered if the advancer raises the overcaller's bid?

Answers:

1.a. Transfer to 2 ♦. The advancer asks for a lead of the diamond suit. They either have a long diamond suit, or support for the overcaller's suit.

1.b. Transfer to 2 ♥. The advancer has asked for a lead of the heart suit. They have support for the overcaller's suit including the king, ace or both.

1.c. The advancer has support for the overcaller's suit but does not have the ace or king of the suit.

2. If there is a suit that would have required a transfer above the overcaller's suit, a lead of that suit should be considered.

5. Strong Siding Contracts

It is preferable that bridge contracts are played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

The difference between which hand plays the contract may be one or two tricks favoring the stronger hand as the declarer. The reasons for this discrepancy are;

- a. the lead, which comes from the declarer's LHO, goes through dummy and the declarer's RHO before the declarer plays the last card, and

This is an advantage since the stronger hand is the one which is more likely hold tenaces to capitalize on the lead.

- b. the opponents are only shown the weaker hand in dummy.

There is less probability that the exposed hand, being the weaker one, will provide the defenders with information about the location of the declarer's vulnerabilities.

An extra trick provides a major benefit in a Matchpoint game. It usually increases the session results by one or two percentage points (i.e., raising a 53 percent result to 54 or 55 percent). That often increases the player's game placement by one or two places (i.e., from fourth position to second or third). Unless the player is already at the top of their strata, that improvement often results in a 49 to 100 percent gain in the masterpoints assigned for the game.

The opener's hand is presumed to be the stronger holding of the partnership. Usually, hands which open the bidding at the one-level are at least 40 percent stronger than the responder's hand. Strong 1 NT opening hands are usually twice as strong as the responder's hand.

In the less frequent cases where the responder has greater strength than the opener, those two hands are usually close to equal strength. The near equality of strength reduces any the loss of playing the contract with the weaker hand as the declarer.

Quiz Questions: – Strong Siding Contracts

- 1. Why does having the stronger hand play the contract often gain an extra trick?*
- 2. What effect does the extra trick have on the overall percent, ranking and points allocated in a Matchpoint game?*

Answers:

- 1. The opening lead goes through dummy's hand and is a free finesse for the declarer. Having the stronger hand as declarer increases the chance of a successful finesse.*

The opponents will be unable to see where most of the weakness lies because they are seeing the hand with less honors. This makes a successful defense more difficult.

- 2. One extra trick will often increase a Matchpoint game result by 1 or 2 percent. That will using increase the placement up by one or two positions. Those increased positions will usually obtain 49 percent more masterpoints for the one extra placement or double the masterpoints earned if the increase is two positions.*

6. Rule of 2, 3, 4

The *Rule of 2, 3, 4* is a guide for three-level pre-emptive bids.

Using the *Rule of 2, 3, 4*:

- a. maximizes the pre-emptive bid's interference in the opponent's bidding,
- b. minimizes the potential loss if the pre-emptive bid is doubled, and
- c. tells the responder how many tricks the suit is likely to take.

After a weak two-level opening bid, a rule is not needed to guide the responder. Most players use the 2 NT bid to ask the responder to further describe their hand using conventions such as a feature bid or Ogust. Those conventions contain bids to show the strength of the opener's hand.

Using the *Rule of 2, 3, 4*, any pre-emptive bids made at the three-level should be made with the following;

- a. at unfavorable vulnerability (vulnerable versus not-vulnerable), the opening bid should require two tricks from their partner to make a game contract,
- b. at even vulnerability it should require three tricks to make a game contract, and
- c. at favorable vulnerability (not-vulnerable versus vulnerable), it should require four tricks from their partner to make a game contract.

Bidding: Other

After the three-level pre-emptive bid, the responder may;

- a. raise the bid to game level if they have the indicated number of winners needed to make, or
- b. make a sacrifice bid that will likely produce a better score than allowing to opponents to play the hand.

The benefits of using the Rule of 2,3,4 are that it provides;

- a. the pre-emptor's partner, with information regarding the level the suit should be played in, and
- b. maximum interference from the pre-emptive bid while incurring minimal risk.

Quiz Questions – Rule of 2, 3, 4

1. *Sitting in the first seat, what should the player bid with the following hands if:*

- a. *vulnerable and the opponents are not vulnerable?*
- b. *both sides are vulnerable?*
- c. *not vulnerable and the opponents are vulnerable?*

x. ♠ 98	y. ♠ 98
♥ AQ98632	♥ AQ98632
♦ 107	♦ 107
♣ J6	♣ A6

z. ♠ 98
♥ QJ1087542
♦ 7
♣ A6

2. After a pre-emptive 3 ♥ opening bid is doubled, what should the responder bid with the following hand if:

- a. vulnerable and the opponents are not vulnerable?
- b. both sides are vulnerable?
- c. not vulnerable and the opponents are vulnerable?

♠ A53
♥ A852
♦ KQ3
♣ K1064

Answers:

1.a. On hand x, the player should open with a 2 ♥ bid. This hand is too weak to open at the three-level at this vulnerability.

1.b. On hand y the player should open with 3 ♥ bid.. This makes it harder for the opponents to find their fit and level which the suit should be played. If doubled, it will likely be treated as a takeout bid.

Playing the Rule of 2, 3, 4, their partner will only raise to game if they can provide four winners, which should make the contract.

1.c. On hand z, the player should open with a 2 ♥ bid. It is unlikely to be doubled for penalty.

2.a. 4 ♥. The opener has indicated that they need two tricks to make their 3 ♥ opening bid. Since this hand can provide four tricks, it should raise the suit to game level.

2.b. Pass. The contract should make or push the opponents to bid above their makeable contract level.

2.c. Pass. The opener has a weak hand that will require more tricks to make game.

7. OBAR Bids

OBAR is an acronym for Opponents Bid and Raise.

When the opponents have made or passed a single level raise (i.e., a 1 ♡, p, 2 ♡ or 1 ♡, p, 2 ♡, p, p sequence) they have shown an eight cards fit and have only indicated holding around half of the HCP. With an eight cards fit, their opponents will hold one or more eight cards fits 83 percent of the time. They will also hold around half of the HCP.

Since both sides are indicated as having an eight cards fit and around half of the points, either side is equally likely to make a contract at that level and should consider making a bid to either play, sacrifice or push the opener one level higher.

Unless they have unfavorable vulnerability, the opener's opponents have met the three qualifications for the *Law of Total Tricks*;

- a. equal or favourable vulnerability,
- b. holding more than 14 HCP among the two opponents' hands, and
- c. a combined sixteen tricks between themselves and their opponents.

If either of the opponents hold a five cards suit, they should bid it after the raise to the two-level. Their partner is likely to have three cards support for the suit. That suit should either make or be a good sacrifice.

After the bid and single level raise, either opponent should make a takeout double if they are not at unfavorable vulnerability and they hold four cards in two other suits. This may be done on fewer points than would be required for the first takeout double opportunity since

their combined hands will meet the point requirements for *Law of Total Tricks*.

The advancer is likely to bid a four cards suit which matches one of the doubler's four cards suit.

If sitting in the seat immediately after the raise, a player should anticipate that the bid will be passed. If they are not vulnerable and have four cards in two other suits, they should make a takeout double without hesitation. This saves their partner from passing if they only hold one outside suit containing four cards, which may have been the reason for the direct seat passing.

Quiz Question – OBAR Bids

1. When one opponent raises the opener's major suit to the two-level, what are the Law of Total Tricks' three qualifications needed to either double or overcall?

Answer:

1. The three qualifications are;

- a. equal or favorable vulnerability,*
- b. between the two opponents, holding more than 14 HCP (which is assumed), and*
- c. a combined sixteen tricks between themselves and their opponents. If one side has an eight cards fit, the other usually has an eight cards fit.*

Bidding: Other

Declarer Play

1. Dummy Reversal

Dummy reversal is a technique used when the declarer has a 5 – 3 trump fit and there is a singleton or void in the hand with the longer trump holding.

Using the dummy reversal technique, the declarer trumps at least three rounds of losers in the hand which originally contained the longer trump holding. This shortens the trump holding in that hand to less than the number of trumps held in the other hand. The declarer then draws the opponents' remaining trump cards with the hand which originally held the shorter trump holding.

What is required for a dummy reversal is;

- a. a long suit on one side,
- b. shortness, usually a singleton, in dummy's long suit, in the hand holding the longer trump holding,
- c. the longer trump holding containing three of the top five trump,
- d. the shorter trump holding containing two of the top five trump cards, and
- e. two or three entries to the side which started with the shorter trump holding.

An example of a dummy reversal is:

Dummy	♠ KQ4
	♥ 753
	♦ AKJ

Declarer Play

♣ 9743

Declarer ♠ AJ1093
 ♡ AK8
 ♢ Q1098
 ♣ J

The declarer ended in a 6 ♠ contract. The ace of clubs was led, followed by another club. The declarer counted their hand and noticed that they had already lost a club and still have a heart loser.

The declarer should, in this order:

- a. Trump high, preserving their low spade as an entry to dummy's hand.
- b. Play a high spade, then cross to dummy with the ace of diamonds.
- c. Trump another club with a high spade.
- d. Cross to dummy's king of diamonds.
- e. Trump another club with a high spade. The plays of the high trump both unblock the suit and prevent having the declarer's LHO overtrump.
- f. The declarer is now left with a low spade to lead to the king in dummy.
- g. They play dummy's queen of spades and toss a heart from their hand.
- h. With all the trump gone the remaining diamonds and hearts in the declarer's hand are good.

The benefit of using dummy reversal is that it gains a trick through trumping.

Quiz Questions – Dummy Reversal

1. What is a dummy reversal?
2. What is required for this play?
3. Playing in a 4 ♠ contract in a Matchpoints game, list the sequence of plays in this hand after a diamond lead.

Dummy ♠ AJ10
 ♥ A73
 ♦ 9854
 ♣ KQ5

Declarer ♠ KQ953
 ♥ 108
 ♦ A
 ♣ AJ1043

Answers:

1. Using the long trump holding to trump three rounds with high honors. Then removing the opponents' trumps by ending in the hand with the originally shorter trump holding to drop the opponents' last trump card.
2. What is required are;
 - a) a long suit on one side,
 - b) shortness, usually a singleton, in dummy's long suit, in the hand holding the longer trump holding,
 - c) the longer trump holding containing three of the top five trump,
 - d) the shorter trump holding containing two of the top five trump cards, and

Declarer Play

e) two or three entries to the side with the shorter trump holding.

3. By round number:

- 1) The ace in declarer's hand wins.*
- 2) A low club is led and the king in dummy wins.*
- 3) A diamond is trumped by the king.*
- 4) If a low club is led, there is an a priori 28 percent chance of a 4 – 1 split. Therefor, a low heart is led and won by the ace (This would likely not be the best play in an IMP game where the safest way is used).*
- 5) Another diamond is led and trumped by the queen.*
- 6) The three of trump is led and won in dummy.*
- 7) Dummy's last diamond is led and trumped by the nine.*
- 8) The five of trump is led and won in dummy.*
- 9) Dummy's last trump is played pulling the opponents' last trump card. (Remember, this is a Matchpoint game where the goal is the most likely way to win the most tricks, not necessarily the safest way. Therefor, the trumps are played to split 3 – 2, which has an a priori 68 percent chance of occurring). The declarer discards their heart card on dummy's last trump card.*
- 10) to 13) With all of the opponents trumps removed, the king of clubs is played from dummy, followed by the five and two club tricks taken in the declarer's hand.*

All thirteen tricks were taken, which scores higher than eleven or twelve tricks by playing for the less likely (28 percent a priori) 4 – 1 split.

2. Intra-finesse

The intra-finesse is a technique used by the declarer when the five cards that the opponents hold in a suit are the king, ten, two small cards and either the queen or jack (i.e., either KJ10xx or KQ10xx).

Playing the intra-finesse technique limits the defenders to one trick if the hand following the declarer's ace holds either a singleton ten or a doubleton 10x.

An example of an intra-finesse is:

Dummy	Q983
Declarer	A762

The declarer started by leading a low card towards the queen. If the declarer's LHO;

- a. held the Kx, they are likely to play the king,
- b. played the jack or ten, it is likely from Jx or 10x, or

In that case, the declarer would play the queen. When they regain the lead, the declarer would return to dummy and finesse the outstanding honor.

- c. played low to the initial lead of the suit, the declarer would play the eight or nine.

Once they regain the lead, the declarer would lead the queen. If the queen is not covered by the king, the declarer would let it run and capture the outstanding ten or jack the next round.

Declarer Play

Another example is:

Dummy	J83
Declarer	A9652

The correct way is to lead the two from the declarer's hand. If the RHO does not play an honor, the declarer would play the eight.

On the next round, the jack or eight would be led from dummy. This may capture a high honor and have the ten drop on the same trick.

The benefit of the intra-finesse technique is that it gains a trick when;

- a. the opponents hold either the KJ10xx or KQ10xx,
- b. the declarer's jack or queen is in the hand opposing their ace, and
- c. the hand preceding the declarer's jack or queen contains a doubleton which contains either the jack or ten.

Quiz Questions – Intra-finesse

1. *What cards must be outstanding to attempt an intra-finesse?*
2. *How should the following hand be played?*

Dummy	A93
Declarer	Q8762

Answers:

1. *Five cards including the king, ten, two small and either the queen or jack (KQ10xx or KJ10xx).*

Declarer Play

2. *The declarer should start by leading the three from dummy.*

If the king is not played by the declarer's RHO, the declarer covers the card played.

Later, the declarer leads the highest card in the suit from their hand and lets it ride if it is not covered.

3. Scissors Coup

The scissors coup is a technique used by the declarer to cut the transportation (often referred to as communication) to the dangerous opponent.

The coup is a loser-on-loser play which involves conceding a loser while tossing a card to prevent an entry to the danger hand.

An example, from Henry Jackson, which was displayed on Bridgewebs.com.:

♠ A10
♥ J873
♦ J7
♣ KQ1076

♠ 8753
♥ 65
♦ Q64
♣ 9852

♠ QJ42
♥ A8
♦ AK10853
♣ 3

♠ K96
♥ KQ1042
♦ 92
♣ AJ4

The declarer's RHO opened 1 ♦. Bidding continued and ended with a ended in a 4 ♥ contract.

A small diamond was led. Their partner won the trick and returned the three of clubs.

The declarer counted only three losers – one heart and two diamonds. However, the RHO's return of the club indicates that it is a singleton.

Declarer Play

To avoid a club ruff, the declarer needed to cut the transportation into their LHO's hand.

In order to cut the transportation the declarer played a small spade to the ace. They then played a spade back to their king and tossed a diamond on their remaining spade.

This loser-on-loser play cut their losers to one spade, one heart and one diamond trick. Now, their opponents could not get to the declarer's LHO's hand for a club ruff.

The advantage of the scissors coup is that, through a loser-on-loser play, it blocks the danger hand from gaining the lead.

Quiz Questions – Scissors Coup

1. *What is the scissors coup?*
2. *Using this example from Brian Gunnell, published by ACBL, how can the declarer use the scissors coup to make the contract with the ten of hearts lead, which they believed to be a singleton?*

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Doubler</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Advancer</u>
1 ♠	double	4 ♠	4 ♠
5 ♠	pass	pass	5 ♠
Pass	pass	pass	

Dummy

♠ J95
♥ AKJ7
♦ 43
♣ A1087

Declarer

♠ KQ108763
♥ Q952
♦ 2
♣ 9

Declarer Play

Answers:

- 1. The scissors coup is a loser-on-loser play which is used to sever the transportation to a dangerous player's hand.*
- 2. After winning the lead, the declarer should play the ace of clubs and toss a diamond on a club.*

Now, if their RHO holds a doubleton Ax of trump, once they gain the lead with the ace, they will be unable to ruff a heart by transporting to their partner's hand in the diamond suit.

4. Developing a Winner in the Right Order

When the opponents have two stoppers that the declarer wants to remove, they may need to be removed in the right order. Removing one of the stoppers may be accomplished by removing an entry to a dangerous hand prior to playing another suit. It may also be done by ensuring that the contract will make if a bad split occurs.

An example of a hand where developing a winner in the right order is shown in *How the Experts Do It: Improving your Bridge* by Terrence Reese and David Bird:

♠ 64
♥ A853
♦ J75
♣ A972

♠ QJ1082
♥ J102
♦ A1083
♣ 5

♠ 975
♥ Q974
♦ 642
♣ K83

♠ AK3
♥ K6
♦ KQ9
♣ QJ1064

In a 3 NT contract the queen of spades was led.

If the opponents switch to hearts, the declarer would lose two heart tricks, a diamond trick and potentially a club trick.

Allowing the opponents to win the opening lead would set the contract if the club finesse doesn't work. Therefore, the declarer decided to win the opening lead.

Declarer Play

The declarer counted two spades, two hearts and one club trick.

Four more tricks were needed to be set up by the declarer. This could be done if either the club finesse works or by developing a trick in the diamond suit. However, if the club finesse was taken first and it lost, the opponents can run their remaining spades to set the contract if the declarer's LHO holds the ace of diamonds.

The declarer decided to lead a high diamond first. The diamonds were a potential entry for the LHO. The clubs were not.

If the high diamond held, the declarer would try the club finesse. If the club finesse then lost, the declarer would still make their contract. Once they regained the lead, the declarer would have two spade tricks, two heart tricks and four club tricks to go along with their winning diamond to make the contract.

Quiz Questions – Developing Winners in the Right Order

1. *In a Matchpoint game, the declarer elected to play in a 3 NT contract rather than in 5 ♣.*

A low diamond was led and the declarer's RHO played the ten, forcing the declarer to play their jack.

What sequence should the declarer play the next tricks?

Dummy	♠ K875
	♥ A10973
	♦ 43
	♣ A97
Declarer	♠ A
	♥ K8
	♦ KJ5
	♣ KJ108632

Declarer Play

Answer:

1. The declarer must ensure that their RHO does not gain the lead. If they do, the RHO will lead a diamond, their finesse will capture the king and the opponents will run the diamond suit.

The first move is setting up the club suit. The declarer should not count on a 2 – 1 split. They should play in a way that a 3 – 0 split does not defeat the contract. The declarer must lead to the ace in dummy and lead towards their hand.

The declarer should then play their ace of spades to unblock the suit.

The declarer should then play off their remaining clubs retaining the ace and small heart and the king of spades in dummy's hand.

During this process, the declarer should first discard a heart, then two spades and another heart, counting the heart discards while attempting to squeeze the heart suit. On the last club, they can discard the diamond.

The declarer should then play their king of hearts followed by a low heart to the ace. If the ace of diamonds was squeezed out of an opponent, the declarer would take their king of diamonds loser before leading a low heart to dummy.

The declarer can then toss a diamond on the king of spades.

5. Elimination and Endplay

The elimination and endplay technique where is used by the declarer by placing one of the opponents on lead after the declarer has eliminated the declarer and dummy's holding in one of the side suits.

After the side suit is removed from the declarer's hands, one of the opponents is placed on lead. Once on lead, the opponent is forced to provide the declarer with either a free finesse or with an opportunity to ruff in one hand while discarding a loser in the other.

The elimination and endplay technique requires;

- a. after the opponents trumps are removed, both dummy and the declarer remain with trumps,

This condition usually requires that both opponents started with fewer cards in the trump suit than both the declarer and dummy did.

- b. at least one suit that can be eliminated from both the declarer and dummy's hands,

- c. one opponent to be placed on lead, and

This may be done on either the eliminating round of the suit or on a subsequent play.

- d. the remaining side suits in both the declarer and dummy's hands are either;

- i. Qxx facing Jxx,

- ii. three cards suits where both contain either the king or ace plus the ten or jack, or

- ii. a void.

Declarer Play

In those three cases, a lead from either side will gain a trick through endplaying either of the opponents.

An example of an elimination and endplay is:

Dummy	♠ AQ76
	♥ Q54
	♦ A853
	♣ 76
Declarer	♠ K10943
	♥ J62
	♦ KQ6
	♣ A3

The declarer opened with a 1 ♠ bid. The bidding ended in a 4 ♠ contract.

The king of clubs was led.

Counting their tricks, the declarer realized that either diamonds must break 3 – 3 (a 36 percent *a priori* chance) or they must get a trick in hearts.

After eliminating opponents trumps, the declarer discovered that the diamonds break 4 – 2.

The declarer trumped the last diamond and exited in clubs.

The contract was now made. The opponent who won the trick must either lead the heart suit or a minor suit. A heart lead would promote a heart winner for the declarer. A minor suit lead would allow the declarer to trump in one hand and discard a heart in the other one.

Another example of an elimination and endplay is:

Declarer Play

Dummy	♠ KQ76
	♥ K104
	♦ A752
	♣ 54
Declarer	♠ A10943
	♥ AJ5
	♦ KQ6
	♣ A2

The declarer opened with a 1 ♠ bid. Their partner responded with 2 NT (Jacoby – showing four spades and opening points). The declarer then bid 3 ♠, showing 18 or more points. The bidding ended in a 6 ♠ contract.

The king of clubs was led.

After winning the club lead, the declarer eliminated trumps from the opponents' hands and played four rounds of diamonds. When the diamonds split unevenly, the declarer ruffed the fourth round in their hand.

When the declarer exited with a club, whichever opponent won must either lead a club, in which the declarer would ruff on one side and toss a low heart on the other, or a heart for a winning finesse.

Quiz Question – Elimination and Endplay

1. In a 6 ♠ contract, a low club is led and the declarer captured their RHO's queen with the declarer's ace. What sequence should the declarer play the rest of the cards?

Dummy	♠ K942
	♥ AQ85
	♦ AJ4
	♣ 83

Declarer Play

Declarer ♠ AQJ75
 ♥ K92
 ♦ K102
 ♣ AJ

Answer:

1. The declarer should start by drawing the opponents trump cards. They should then play three rounds of hearts ending in dummy.

If the hearts split 3 – 3, the declarer can discard a club on the remaining heart, then select which way to finesse the diamond for an overtrick. towards the hand with the shorter heart holding.

If the hearts do not split 3 – 3, the declarer should trump the fourth round of the heart suit and exit in the club suit.

6. Partial Elimination and Endplay

The partial elimination and endplay technique involves stripping only one of the defenders of safe exit cards prior to them being placed on lead. This is done through eliminating one of their suits.

An example of a partial elimination in the trump suit was shown by Bernard Magee on his website *bernardmageebridge.com*:

Dummy	♠ KQ82
	♥ 76532
	♦ K7
	♣ J6
Declarer	♠ AJ10975
	♥ AQ9
	♦ –
	♣ AK83

In a 6 ♠ contract, the jack of diamonds was led and trumped by the declarer.

The declarer pulled one round of trump. They next played the ace and king of clubs followed by cross-ruffing the remaining clubs and diamonds ending in dummy's hand.

With the minor suits removed, the declarer led a heart and finessed the nine.

Their LHO did not hold the remaining spade. They were left with the option of either leading a heart and providing the declarer with a free finesse or leading a minor suit and allow the declarer to toss a heart in their hand while trumping in dummy's hand.

Quiz Question – Partial Elimination and Endplay

1. In this hand from *Test Your Bridge Play – Volume 2* by Edwin B. Cantor, the declarer's LHO started by playing the ace, king and queen of diamonds and the declarer trumped the third round. Both opponents played to two rounds of the trump suit. How should the declarer continue?

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Declarer</u>
1 \diamond	pass	pass	1 \heartsuit
1 \spadesuit	3 \heartsuit	pass	4 \heartsuit
pass	pass	pass	

Dummy \spadesuit A63
 \heartsuit KJ53
 \diamond 1098
 \clubsuit K82

Declarer \spadesuit K102
 \heartsuit AQ872
 \diamond 63
 \clubsuit A93

Answer:

1. The declarer's LHO likely holds a five cards diamond suit and a four cards spade suit. They played on two rounds of trump, so likely have a 4 = 2 = 5 = 2 distribution. Because of the rebid, they likely also hold honors in the spade suit.

The declarer should win two rounds of the club suit, eliminating their LHO's holding in that suit.

Next they should play the king, ace and a small spade. placing the declarer's LHO on lead where they must either lead a spade or a diamond allowing the declarer to trump in one hand and toss a club in the other.

7. Squeeze Play

The squeeze play is used to force at least one defender to discard a card and promote a trick for the declarer.

To execute a squeeze, the declarer needs the following elements:

- a. They can run all but the last remaining trick,

Sometimes, they will need to lose a trick earlier in the hand in order to be able to reach this position in the end.

That early loss is known as “rectifying the count”

- b. A winning card, often a trump, where one or both of the opponents will be forced to discard,

This is referred to as the “squeeze card”.

- c. The second highest of the outstanding cards in one suit, and

This card is called a “threat card”, since it is a threat to win a trick should one opponent discard their higher card in that suit.

This position is known as a “one card menace”.

- d. A doubleton where the top card is a winner and the second will be promoted if the opponents make a discard in that suit.

This is known as a “two card menace”.

For the squeeze to work, an opponent must be forced to discard either;

- a. the high card in the suit that contains the declarer’s one suit menace card, or

Declarer Play

- b. one of the two cards remaining in the suit which contains the declarer's two card menace.

An example of a simple squeeze is:

♠ -
♥ AJ
♦ -
♣ Q2

♠ -
♥ KQ
♦ -
♣ KJ

♠ -
♥ -
♦ 1095
♣ 3

♠ A
♥ 2
♦ 3
♣ A

In a 4 ♠ contract, having already lost three tricks and having pulled all of opponents' trump cards, the declarer ended with the lead in their hand with these last four cards outstanding.

The ace of hearts is an entry to dummy. The jack of hearts is a threat card in the two card menace.

Once the declarer played the ace of clubs, the queen of clubs became a threat card.

Now, when the declarer played their ace of spades, their LHO was squeezed.

If that opponent tossed a heart, the declarer would toss the queen of clubs and the jack of hearts would become a winner.

Declarer Play

If their LHO tossed the king of clubs, the declarer would toss the jack of hearts and the ace of hearts and queen of clubs would become winners.

The squeeze play does not sacrifice losing any tricks. It gains a trick where the two key cards are beneficially placed among the two defenders.

There are several names for specific squeeze plays. Most rely on the same principal and the name simply refers to the placement of the one and two card menaces.

A squeeze play is usually used when a declarer needs the extra trick to make their contract. It can also be used to gain an overtrick when making the contract is certain. The overtrick may offer a small benefit in an IMP game, but a substantial benefit when the game is played in Matchpoint scoring.

Quiz Questions – Squeeze Play

- 1. What elements must be present for a declarer to consider using a squeeze play?*
- 2. What is required for the squeeze play to work?*

Answers:

1. The declarer is in a position to win all but one of the remaining tricks.

One, or both, of the opponents will be forced to discard on a winning card played by the declarer.

A remaining two card suit which contains the top card remaining in the suit.

A card which is the second highest remaining card in the suit.

Declarer Play

2. *An opponent must be forced to discard either the top card in a suit where the declarer holds the next highest remaining card or one of their two cards in the suit where the declarer holds the top card and one other card.*

8. Falsecards by the Declarer

The declarer may play a falsecard in order to make it more difficult for their opponents to defeat a contract. The falsecard may create these difficulties for their opponents by;

- a. confusing at least one opponent about the distribution of the suit,
- b. confusing at least one of the opponents about the placement of high cards and length in the suit, and
- c. making it harder for an opponent to read their partner's signals.

Many of these false cards are the same, or similar to obligatory false cards used in defense. This makes it easier to remember.

Some of these false cards are:

- a. When holding two touching honors, win with the highest one.

This can create some confusion about the RHO's holding in the suit such as;

- i. *when a queen is led from QJx(x), and the declarer wins with the ace, from their AK(x)(x) holding, the declarer's LHO is unsure about whether their partner, the declarer's RHO, holds the king., and*
- ii. *when a low card is led and the declarer's RHO plays the queen, if the declarer covers with the ace, from their AK(x)(x) holding, the declarer's LHO will be unsure if their partner, the declarer's RHO, holds the king,*

Declarer Play

b. With a three cards holding in the hidden hand and the middle card is a seven, eight or nine, and it clearly will neither become nor promote a winner, it is often best for the declarer to play the middle card.

The opponents will often place the declarer as having a two card holding in the suit.

c. When their RHO signals with the three spot card, the declarer should play their second lowest card when they hold the two spot card.

This may confuse the opponents about where the two is. They may incorrectly interpret the signal given or miscount the distribution of the suit.

Quiz Questions – Falsecards by the Declarer

1. Name three methods that the declarer may use to falsecard in their hand.

Answer:

1. Win with the higher of two touching honors. An opponent may be unsure where the second honor lies.

With a three cards suit and the top card cannot win, play the middle card if it is a seven, eight or nine. The opponents will often mistake the holding as a doubleton.

When the RHO signals with the three, playing a card other than their two may cause their LHO to incorrectly interpret the signal or count.

9. Stealing a Trick

If the declarer can “steal a trick” the extra trick may allow them to score better, whether making a contract or an overtrick.

The best time to steal a trick is early in the play. The early move stands a better chance of succeeding if it is taken before the opponents can;

- i. set up their tricks, or
- ii. determine;
 - a) the distribution,
 - b) where the points lie,
 - c) the declarer’s plan, or
 - d) whether taking a trick will;
 - 1) set the contract, or
 - 2) help the declarer set up a side suit.

An example of this is:

Dummy	♠ 952
	♥ 97
	♦ 85
	♣ J10863
Declarer	♠ AKQ643
	♥ 85
	♦ A743
	♣ K

Declarer Play

The declarer's LHO opened 1 ♥ and the responder bid 3 ♦. This was a Bergen raise showing four cards heart support and invitational points.

Not vulnerable, the declarer made a sacrifice bid of 3 ♠, which was followed by three passes.

The king of hearts was led and held the first trick.

To reduce the number of times that the declarer may be able to ruff diamonds in dummy's hand, the declarer's LHO next led a trump card.

The declarer recognized that if the opponents were playing in a 4 ♥ contract, they could take five hearts, three clubs, the ace of clubs and some diamond tricks and make their game. The declarer's sacrifice will score well. If spades fall in two rounds, they can ruff one or two diamonds in dummy for down one.

The declarer could try to set up two diamond ruffs hoping that the spade suit breaks 3 – 1 and the winner of the second diamond trick cannot return a trump. However, in that case, the opponents could cross to their partner's hand to lead a trump, which would result in the same score.

Realizing that they could make their sacrifice bid, and obtain a top score, if they stole a club trick, the declarer led the king of clubs first. The opponent with the ace ducked the trick thinking that the declarer held either the KQ or KQx and was attempting to set up one or more tricks in the club suit.

The king held. The declarer played the ace of diamonds followed by a small one.

The declarer was then held to two heart losers and one or two diamond losers. They made their contract with the possibility of making an overtrick due to the declarer stealing a trick with the king of clubs.

Quiz Question – Stealing a Trick

1. In a 3 NT contract in a Matchpoint game, a spade was led and won with the ace. How should the hand be played?

Dummy ♠ 102
 ♥ 8762
 ♦ KJ3
 ♣ KQ73

Declarer ♠ AQ3
 ♥ A53
 ♦ AQ952
 ♣ 86

Answer:

1. The declarer should lead a low club, which the opponents are likely to duck.

If the king of clubs wins, they should play a low diamond to their ace and lead another club. If the ace is held by the declarer's LHO, the declarer can make five diamond tricks, two spade tricks, a heart trick and two club tricks for an overtrick.

10. Counting

The purpose of counting is to obtain information about the remaining outstanding cards. This is done so that a better decision is made which may gain a trick.

Counting both distribution and points are often not necessary. A player should focus on counting the one which is the most likely to yield helpful information.

Usually counting usually starts with a general assumption of the distribution and points among the opponents hands. The count becomes more specific as information is revealed during the play of the hand.

Initially, it is usually easier to count the total number of cards outstanding in each suit than to assign them to a particular opponent.

Using the same counting order for all hands makes the task easier. That may be by counting in suit rank order or in the order of the suits tabled in dummy's hand.

Remembering the distribution of cards in chunks (i.e., 43-32 instead of four, three, three, two) makes the counting task easier.

The lead often provides information on which side is more likely to hold a doubleton in a certain suit (i.e., with five cards including the queen outstanding in a suit, a lead of a low card indicates a three cards holding including the queen).

If an opponent has either overcalled or opened in a major suit, they are assumed to hold five cards in that suit. A double of a major suit indicates that the player holds four cards in the other major suit.

If the opening lead is not a side suit, and the LHO is known to hold a doubleton in the trump suit, that opponent is unlikely to hold a

Declarer Play

doubleton in either of the other two suits. In those cases, the LHO's hand distribution is likely $5 = 2 = 3 = 3$.

Once one of the opponents have bid, the counting task becomes much easier. The opponent has provided information about their likely distribution and points. Simple subtraction will determine the likely distribution or points of their partner's hand.

When the length of one suit is known the likely pattern of the hand can be assumed.

The three most frequently occurring hand patterns, ranked from most likely to least likely are:

<u>7 cards suit</u>	<u>6 cards suit</u>	<u>5 cards suit</u>
7-3-2-1	6-3-2-2	5-3-3-2
7-2-2-2	6-4-2-1	5-4-3-1
7-4-1-1	6-3-3-1	5-4-2-2
<u>4 cards suit</u>	<u>3 cards suit</u>	
4-4-3-2	4-4-3-2	
4-3-3-3	5-3-3-2	
4-4-4-1	5-4-3-1	
<u>doubleton</u>	<u>singleton</u>	<u>void</u>
4-4-3-2	5-4-3-1	6-4-3-0
5-3-3-2	6-4-2-1	5-4-4-0
5-4-2-2	5-5-2-1	5-5-3-0

Quiz Questions – Counting

1. The declarer opened with 1 ♥ and ended in a 4♥ game contract. What initial assumption should they make about their LHO's hand if, after the opening bid that player:

- a. doubled? b. overcalled 1 ♠?

Answers:

1.a. The LHO likely has a 4 = 3 = 4 = 3 or 4 = 2 = 3 = 4 pattern and 12 or more HCP.

1.b. Their more likely holding is a 5 = 2 = 3 = 3 pattern. Their next most likely hand patterns are either a 5 = 1 = 4 = 3 or 5 = 1 = 3 = 4 pattern. If not, it is likely either a 5 = 2 = 4 = 2 or a 5 = 2 = 2 = 4 hand pattern.

11. Discovery Play

Discovery play is a counting tool. It involves obtaining count information through the play of one or more suits prior to making a decision on how to play another suit.

An example of the discovery play comes from an *Easybridge!* hand:

Dummy ♠ 108432
 ♥ KQ7
 ♦ AQ43
 ♣ 9

Declarer ♠ AQJ975
 ♥ –
 ♦ 652
 ♣ AQ74

In a 6 ♠ contract, the deuce of clubs was led and the king was covered by the declarer's ace. With eleven spades, the declarer faced a tough decision of whether to finesse for the king, since the chance of an offside king was high¹.

Prior to the decision, the declarer made some discovery plays. They started with a ruff of a club and followed by playing the king of hearts. The declarer's RHO played the ace and the declarer ruffed.

Next, the declarer took the diamond finesse, which would guarantee the contract if successful. It lost to the declarer's RHO.

Since the declarer's RHO has already played the ace of hearts, the king of clubs and the king of diamonds, they were highly unlikely to also hold the king of spades since they had not bid. If the declarer's RHO held that card, they would likely have opened the bidding.

After the discovery play, the declarer led a trump from dummy's hand. Their RHO followed suit by playing the six of spades. The

Declarer Play

declarer rose with the ace and captured their LHO's singleton king to make the contract.

¹ *When missing the king in a suit, there is a higher probability of it being a singleton in an offside (following the ace) position if;*

a) there are few cards outstanding in the suit,

With two outstanding cards, the a priori chance of a singleton offside king are 26 percent; with three outstanding cards 13 percent; with four 6.2 percent and 2.8 percent with five outstanding cards in the suit.

If a card is led towards the ace and the king does not appear, the odds of the offside opponent holding a singleton king are roughly double the odds stated above.

b) the bidding has revealed that the hand following the ace has a likely shortage in the suit, and

This often occurs when that hand has indicated holding length in one, two or all three of the side suits.

c) the hand following the ace is indicated as holding most of the opponent's HCP.

Quiz Question – Discovery Play

In this example hand from Karen Walker Bridge, the declarer is playing in a 4 ♠ contract after their RHO opened with a 1 ♥ bid.

After playing three rounds of hearts and spades, the declarer discovered that their RHO started with three small spades and the AKJ1093 of hearts.

Declarer Play

How can the declarer use a discovery play to ensure the contract?

<i>Dummy</i>	♠ AQ102 ♥ 765 ♦ A43 ♣ K103
<i>Declarer</i>	♠ K9873 ♥ 842 ♦ K7 ♣ AJ5

Answer:

In this order, the declarer should:

- *Cash the king of diamonds*
- *Play to the ace of diamonds*
- *Trump a diamond*
- *Play to the ace of clubs*
- *If the queen of clubs does not drop, take the club finesse*

12. Law of Vacant Spaces

The *Law of Vacant Spaces* is a simple method for determining which opponent is the most likely to hold a particular card.

Each opponent begins with thirteen vacant spaces, or unknown cards, in the four suits. As the bidding and play continues, each opponent reveals their length in one or two of the suits. By eliminating the suits which have a known length, the declarer can determine the combined number of cards, known as “vacant spaces”, which each opponent holds in the remaining suits. (i.e., if a player is known to hold five cards in one suit and two in another, that player is considered to hold six (13 – (5 + 2)) vacant spaces.

If the declarer determines the number of cards that one of the opponents holds in one or two suits, they can determine the number of cards which the other opponent holds in those suits. Therefore, the vacant spaces are always contained in the same suits.

The opponent with the greater number of vacant spaces is favored to hold a specific card if that card is located one of the suits with unknown length.

An example of the use of vacant spaces is:

<u>Declarer</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>RHO</u>
1 ♡	1 ♠	2 ♠ ¹	pass
4 ♡	pass	pass	pass

¹ *game invitation in the heart suit*

Dummy	♠ 863
	♡ A1095
	◇ Q8
	♣ K1082

Declarer Play

Declarer ♠ J2
 ♡ KQ872
 ♦ K3
 ♣ AJ93

The declarer's LHO led the ace of spades followed by the king and queen. On the third round, the RHO discarded a small diamond and the declarer trumped small in their hand.

The declarer pulled trump in two rounds and ended in dummy's hand. They then led a small diamond from dummy. The declarer's LHO covered the declarer's king with their ace and returned a diamond.

Having lost three tricks, the declarer needed to make the best play to capture the queen of clubs in order to make the contract.

Since the LHO opponent started with five spades and two hearts, they had six remaining cards, or vacant spaces, in the minor suits.

The declarer's RHO started with two spades and two hearts. That player started with nine cards, or vacant spaces, in the minor suits. The declarer's RHO was favoured to hold the queen of clubs by a factor of their nine vacant spaces to the LHO's six.

The advantage of using the *Law of Vacant Spaces* is that it increases the chance of correctly determining which opponent holds a specific card.

Quiz Question – Law of Vacant Spaces

1. In a 4 ♠ contract, the king of clubs is led and the LHO overtakes with their ace and returns a club. The declarer's RHO won with the queen and led a third round which the declarer's LHO trumped and returned a diamond. The declarer won the diamond trick in their hand.

Declarer Play

When trumps were pulled, the declarer's RHO showed out on the second round.

Making the contract depended on a successful heart finesse. Which opponent was favored to hold the queen?

Dummy	♠ AJ42
	♥ A107
	♦ K96
	♣ J83
Declarer	♠ KQ1053
	♥ KJ5
	♦ A3
	♣ 1062

Answer:

1. First, the declarer should check to see if there is a 5 – 2 diamond split, which would change their calculation. After winning a diamond trick with the king and trumping the third round of diamonds with a high trump card, the declarer can proceed with determining the best play.

Once it is confirmed that a 5 – 2 diamond split does not occur, the vacant spaces are known.

The declarer's RHO started with five clubs and one spade, so had six known spaces and seven unknown (vacant) spaces. The LHO started with two clubs and three spades, so had five known spaces and eight unknown (vacant) spaces. Therefore, the declarer's LHO is favored to hold more cards in the other two suits by a factor of eight to seven.

The declarer's LHO is slightly favored to hold the queen of hearts.

13. Law of Missing Points

The same rationale as the *Law of Vacant Spaces* applies to missing HCP .

Using the *Law of Missing Points*, the opponent holding the greater number of points is more likely to hold a key missing honor.

When the high card point holdings among the opponents are greatly unbalanced, the *Law of Missing Points* is usually the preferred method

The advantage of using the *Law of Missing Points* is that it increases the chance of correctly determining which of the opponents is more likely to hold a key missing card.

Quiz Question – Law of Missing Points

A 1 ♠ opening bid is overcalled by 1 ♣. The responder raised the contract to 4 ♠.

The ace of spades was led, followed by the king and a low heart.

The trumps split 3 – 1 with the overcaller tossing spades on the second and third rounds.

How should the declarer play the hand after pulling the trump cards?

Dummy ♠ 42
 ♡ KJ107
 ♦ KJ2
 ♣ AJ83

Declarer ♠ 53
 ♡ AK953
 ♦ A104
 ♣ K102

Declarer Play

Answer:

The overcaller, which is the declarer's LHO, is indicated as having most, if not all, of the missing points, so the finesses should go towards dummy's hand.

The declarer should play the king of clubs, then finesse the queen.

If the finesse loses, the RHO will need to return a club in order to prevent a free finesse in the diamond suit or provide the declarer an opportunity to trump in one hand and toss a diamond in the other.

The club return should be won in the declarer's hand. It will also reveal whether the clubs split evenly among the opponents, which would allow the declarer to toss a diamond loser on the remaining club. If the club suit does not split 3 – 3 among the opponents, the declarer will likely be successful with the diamond finesse.

14. Determining Which Counting Law to Use

Usually the choice between using the *Law of Vacant Spaces* or the *Law of Missing Points* is clear. There is a clear choice of which law to use when the information available allows only one of them to be used (i.e., if there is information regarding the suit distribution, but not the distribution of points, then the *Law of Vacant Spaces* is the only law that can be applied).

When the declarer has sufficient information to use either law, they should use the one which contains the greater imbalance in the opponents' holdings.

An example of selecting which law to use is:

Assuming that:

- a) The HCP are known to split 12 to 6, and

The opponent with the greater number of HCP, at that point, has 66.7 percent of the HCP among the two opponents' hands.

- b) One opponent has indicated a five cards suit and their partner has shown three cards support.

At that point, the opponent with the longer suit holding has ten vacant spaces and their partner eight vacant spaces at that point, yielding one opponent with five ninths or 55.6 percent of the vacant spaces.

Prior to the opening lead, the player with the five cards suit is favored to hold a certain card since their proportion of the missing points (66.7 percent) is greater than their partner's proportion of the vacant spaces (55.6 percent).

Declarer Play

Once play begins, those proportions usually change. If the opponent which started with the five cards suit begins by playing their ace and king, and neither opponent has indicated that they hold the queen, the number of missing points is reduced by the seven points played, from 18 to 11.

Since the opponent which held the ace and king started with 12 HCP, their missing points has been reduced to 5, which is five elevenths, or 45.5 percent of the missing points.

Their partner is favored to hold a certain card because of both their 55.6 percent portion of the vacant spaces and their 54.5 percent (six elevenths) portion of the missing points. Therefore, the opponent which had not held the ace and king is favored to hold the missing card.

By determining whether the *Law of Vacant Spaces* or the *Law of Missing Points* contains the greater imbalance, the declarer is more likely to make the correct decision regarding the placement of a key missing card.

Quiz Question – Determining Which Counting Law to Use

The declarer's LHO opened with a 1♥ bid, which was doubled and followed by a raise to 2♥ by the responder.

The declarer bid 2♠. Applying the Law of Total Tricks, the declarer's LHO raised their hearts to the three level. The declarer applied the same law and, with a nine cards fit, bid 3♠ which won the contract.

Dummy ♠ AJ95
 ♥ J3
 ♦ AJ82
 ♣ A102

Declarer ♠ K10642

Declarer Play

♥ 982

◇ 94

♣ KJ5

The ace of hearts was led, followed by the king and a low heart to the queen, which was trumped in dummy's hand.

- 1. Using the Law of Vacant Spaces, which opponent is favored to hold the queen of spades?*
- 2. Using the Law of Missing Points, which opponent is favored to hold the queen of spades?*
- 3. Should the declarer play for the queen to drop? If not, which direction should the finesse be taken in?*

Answers:

- 1. Using the Law of Vacant Spaces, the declarer's RHO is favored to hold the queen by a factor of ten (13 – 3) to eight (13 – 5).*
- 2. Using the Law of Missing Points, the declarer's LHO is favored to hold the queen of spades.*

The opener started with 12 HCP and the responder 6. Subtracting the points known for their heart holdings, the declarer's LHO, who opened the bidding, has either five (12 – 7) remaining points to their partner's four, (6 – 2).

- 3. Under the Law of Missing Points, the declarer's LHO is favored to hold the queen by 55.6 percent (five ninths). This is the same probability as the RHO's ten eighteenth advantage under the Law of Vacant Spaces.*

Under these circumstances, there isn't a clear indication of which of the opponents is more likely to hold the queen of spades. Since a 2 – 2 fit occurs 52 percent of the time, the declarer should play for the queen to drop in two rounds.

Declarer Play

However, in this particular hand, the outstanding cards are three queens and one king. The declarer's RHO is known to hold two of the queens, so will hold the queen of spades 66.7 percent (two thirds) of the time. As such, the declarer should first play the ace of spades, then finesse for the queen.

Declarer Play

Defense

1. Opening Leads of a King

A useful and easy practice for opening leads is to provide a special meaning when the king is led.

1.a. In a Notrump Contract

The king opening lead requests that their partner unblock the suit.

This request is usually made when;

- i. leading from a four or greater cards holding of three honors headed by the king and queen, or

This requests their partner to play their ace to unblock the suit and lead back into the KQJx(x) or KQ10x(x) holding.

- ii. leading from either;

- a) a five or greater cards suit headed by the ace, king and jack, or

- b) a four cards suit headed by the ace, king, jack and ten.

In these circumstances, the king lead requests that their partner drop the queen to unblock. The play of their partner informs the defender on lead whether they can continue running the suit.

If the queen is not dropped or it is not visible in dummy's hand, the defender should switch to another suit and wait for their partner to gain the lead and finesse the suit through the

Defense

declarer's hand. This usually results in the declarer's LHO running the remaining cards in the suit.

In a notrump contract, if the king is led and their partner cannot unblock the suit, that defender should provide a count response. That information on the count will usually provide their partner information on whether the suit will run. This is helpful in cases where the king was led from a AKQx(x) holding.

1.b. In a Suit Contract

The opening lead of a king in a suit contract should ask their partner to provide a count signal. Leading the ace or the queen should ask for an attitude signal. This technique is often remembered by phrases such as “King – Count, Ace – Attitude”, “A/Q for Attitude, King for Count” or simply as “King – Count”.

Using different responses to the lead of a king than the one used for the lead of an ace or queen enables the defender to obtain the relevant information when leading from;

- i. an AKQx(x) holding, or

On this type of hand, the count information obtained from the lead of the king may enable the defender to determine which round their partner may trump in.

When the dummy holds only two cards in the suit, they can determine whether the third round of the suit will provide the declarer with a ruff and discard or will allow their partner to over-ruff dummy's trump card.

- ii. an AKxx(x) holding.

The count information enables the defender to determine whether the third round of the suit will be trumped by their

Defense

partner or if continuing with the ace will set up a trick for the declarer.

In a suit contract, if the defender plays the king, followed by the ace and a switch to another suit, it is often from an AK doubleton. Playing the suit in this manner provides their partner with the advice to return the suit so that it may be trumped.

The advantages of having a special meaning for an opening lead of the king are;

- i. in a notrump contract, the king is the only card which requests an unblock, and

This creates less problems in remembering whether to unblock when a high honor is led.

- ii. on certain holdings, it enables the player on lead to select whether an attitude or a count signal will provide them with the more helpful information.

Quiz Questions – Opening Leads of a King

1. In a 4 ♠ contract, the ace of diamonds is led. How should the defender continue if their partner plays:

a. the ten ?

b. the three ?

(dummy)

♠ K983

♥ AQ42

♦ J75

♣ J9

♠ QJ

♥ 974

Defense

◇ AK962

♣ K83

2. In a notrump contract, what should the defender lead from:

a. KQ103 ?

b. AKJ9 ?

Answers:

1.a. The ten indicates that the player holds a doubleton in the suit. The defender on lead should play the king, then lead a low diamond.

The declarer's RHO should ruff high. That could potentially promote the queen or jack for their partner. If they win the trick, the declarer's RHO should lead a club since their partner has indicated a desire to have the lower ranking side suit returned.

1.b. The three indicates a holding of three cards which does not include the queen.

The defender should retain their king so that it does not set up a trick for the declarer. They should play a small club hoping that their partner plays either the ace or the queen. Either of those two cards will develop the player on lead's club king for a trick.

2.a. The queen should be led asking for an attitude signal. If their partner gives a positive response, they return a small card to their partner's honor.

If that honor is the ace, their partner may then return the suit for a finesse through the declarer's hand.

If their partner gives a negative attitude response, they can wait for their partner to gain the lead and return the suit for a finesse through the declarer's hand.

2.b. The ace should be led to determine whether their partner holds the queen. If they do, they can play the nine to the queen and allow

Defense

their partner to lead the suit back for a finesse through the declarer's hand.

If their partner gives a negative attitude response, they can wait for their partner to gain the lead and return the suit for a finesse through the declarer's hand.

2. Third Highest Leads in Suit Contracts

Leads of the fourth highest card work best in notrump contracts, where the defenders are trying to establish tricks in their long suits.

Eliminating the declarer's length or stoppers in the suit early may establish tricks for the defenders in a notrump contract since the declarer will be unable to prevent the defenders from running their long suit later in the play of the hand.

In suit contracts, the opposite is true. Defenders and the declarer are both trying to take additional tricks by trumping losers in their short suits. Good leads for the defense are usually one of the defenders' short suits. Once one of the defenders no longer holds a card in the suit, they may win a trick in the suit through trumping.

When short suits are not available to lead in a suit contract, the objective becomes trying to set up a trick for an honor card. This is usually done by leading a side suit in which they hold an honor. If their partner is able to play an honor in the suit, it will promote a trick.

When the lead is to set up a trick in a side suit, that suit often contains less than four cards. Leads of either the third or fifth highest card in that suit are better. This usually helps their partner determine the length of the suit led.

When using third and fifth highest card leads, unless there is an indication of the length of the suit led, their partner should assume that it is the third highest card and apply the *Rule of 12*. Using that rule, subtracting the spot card number of the suit from twelve determines the number of higher cards outstanding in the suit.

If leading third highest from a four cards suit, a later play of the fourth card, often as an expendable discard, provides their partner with a better count of the distribution.

When the declarer is indicated as holding four or more cards, and the defender also holds four cards in the suit, the lead of the lowest card may be necessary when the third highest card is an intermediate card.

Defense

This may preserve that intermediate card as a potential winner later in the hand.

When leading from a five cards or longer suit, that length is often revealed during the bidding or can be determined from the holdings in dummy and their partner's hand. In those cases, the fifth highest card is usually the preferred lead. Often that change provides their partner with better information regarding the distribution.

When the lead is likely the fifth highest, their partner should change from the *Rule of 12* to the *Rule of 10* to determine the number of higher outstanding cards in that suit. This is done by subtracting the spot card number from ten.

The advantages of leading the thirds highest card in suit contracts are:

- a. They usually provide less ambiguity about the length of the suit led,

The lead from a three cards suit is more common than from a four cards suit. The size of the card led may also confirm whether it may be from a four cards suit (i.e., a lead of the deuce must be from a three cards suit.

- b. It is more likely to provide the correct information on the hand distribution than assuming a fourth highest lead, and

- c. The suit which contains four cards may not be the best suit to lead.

This frequently occurs when;

- i. *the suit containing four cards does not contain a high honor to promote,*

The lead of that suit is more likely to be detrimental be finessing a potential winner from their partner's hand.

Defense

ii. the player holds a high honor in a three cards suit which may be promoted if that suit is led, or

iii. a tenace is contained in the suit containing four cards.

A lead of that suit would provide the declarer with a free finesse.

Quiz Questions – Third Highest Leads in Suit Contracts

1. In a suit contract, which side suit card should be led from:

- a. K85 ? b. K852 ? c. K872 ? d. K8752 ?*

2. In a suit contract, the five spot card in a side suit is led. The declarer plays the dummy's six from their Q86 holding. The declarer's RHO holds AJ94 in the suit.

- a. What is the declarer's likely holding in the suit?*
b. Which card should the declarer's RHO play?

Answers:

1.a. 5 1.b. 5 1.c. 2 1.d. 2

2.a. The five cards in the suit which are not visible to the declarer's RHO are the king, ten, seven, three and two. Of these, two are located in the declarer's LHO hand. Those two are most likely to be either the king and seven or the king and ten. This leaves the declarer holding either 1032 or 732.

2.b. The jack should be played since the declarer may hold the ten.

3. Signalling to an Ace Lead

There are times when the opening lead is an ace. When that occurs, their partner should consider the circumstances and make the appropriate signal. Some examples are:

a. In a notrump contract

The card played depends on the partnership agreement.

If the king requests the unblock of the ace or queen, the ace asks for an attitude signal.

If the partnership agreement is that the ace asks for an unblock of the queen, usually from an AKJ10(x) holding, the queen should be dropped. When the defender cannot drop the queen, they should give count. The declarer's LHO will be able to determine whether to they can run their suit or need to await a lead through the declarer's hand.

b. When the declarer has opened with a Gambling 3 NT bid and their partner passed

The ace lead is often made to examine dummy's hand before the player decides on whether to continue with the suit or which suit they should switch the lead to.

If the king is visible in dummy's hand, their partner should assist the decision by making a suit preference signal.

If the king is not visible in dummy's hand, an attitude signal should be given.

c. From an AKx(x) holding where the ace is their standard lead from this combination

The lead is asking whether to continue the suit.

Defense

The queen should be played when in a doubleton or when holding both the queen and jack,. If holding the queen and two or more other cards, the second highest card should be played.

d. Holding AK when their standard lead from AKx(x) is the king

The person on lead will want to get to their partner's hand after the second honor is led. That will enable them to ruff the third round of the suit.

A suit preference signal should be made.

e. A singleton ace

The person on lead is looking to get to their partner's hand so that they can ruff. A suit preference signal should be made.

Having a reasonable count of the hand, the declarer's RHO should be able to determine which of the above cases is most likely.

Quiz Questions – Signalling to an Ace Lead

1. *Holding the hand shown below, which card should the defender play when the ace of diamonds is led in:*

a. *A 3 NT contract?*

b. *A Gambling 3 NT contract?*

c. *A suit contract when dummy holds three cards in the diamond suit?*

d. *A suit contract when dummy holds a long diamond suit headed by the king?:*

Defense

♥ Q73

♦ Q942

♣ 10873

Answers:

1.a. This depends on the partnership agreement.

If the king asks for the unblock of the ace or queen, an attitude signal should be played in response to the ace.

If the agreement is that the ace requests the drop of the queen, as with a lead from an AKJ10(x), the queen should be played. If their partner does not hold the queen, they should provide a count signal.

1.b. The seven. The player on lead may hold the king of diamonds. The opener appears to have a long club suit. The seven indicates a desire for the middle of the remaining suits, which would be hearts.

On leading the heart, the defender should lead a card indicating which suit to return – low for a diamond, middle for a heart and high for a spade.

1.c. The seven. The lead is likely from AKx(x). The seven shows a desire to have the suit continued. The defender will then play the king and then small, taking three tricks in the suit.

1.d. The seven. The lead is likely from a singleton ace holding. The seven indicates a preference for the heart suit.

If the lead is from a singleton, a diamond return will allow for a ruff.

If a doubleton, they will continue the suit and another card will be continued when the declarer's RHO gets in with the ace of hearts, either directly or through a subsequent lead from their partner.

4. Smith Echo

The Smith Echo is a signal, given on the first suit led by the declarer, which indicates whether the first suit led by the defence should be continued.

It is only used if the declarer wins the first round of the hand.

On the second and third rounds, discarding a high card prior to discarding a lower card denotes a preference for the suit led on the first round of the hand. Playing a low card followed by a higher card to the second and third round signals discouragement of returning the first suit led.

The Smith Echo may be used by both defenders.

The declarer's LHO may use it if they want the suit return (i.e., when they led a singleton or when the play of the first round promoted their top card to the highest outstanding card in the suit).

The declarer's RHO may use it to signify that they hold the highest remaining card in the suit (i.e., they played the queen from an AQx or KQx holding and the declarer won the first round).

Pairs which use upside-down attitude signalling often keep their signalling consistent by playing Reverse Smith Echo. The Reverse Smith Echo uses a low, then high, signal to encourage the return of the originally led suit.

Whether playing Smith Echoes or Reverse Smith Echoes, each player should attempt to make their preference clear on the second round of the hand. A clear signal helps their partner determine whether they should win that round or they will need to hold up a round to determine their partner's preference.

Quiz Questions – Smith Echo

1. *When is the Smith Echo used?*
2. *Which suit(s) can the Smith Echo be used on?*
3. *What are two common reasons for the declarer's LHO to signal for a return of the suit?*
4. *What is a common reason for the declarer's RHO to signal for a return of the suit?*

Answers:

1. *On the second round of the hand when the declarer won the first round.*
2. *Other than the original led suit, any suit led from the declarer.*
3. *The play of the first round promoted their honor to becoming the top outstanding card in the suit, or that the lead was a singleton.*
4. *When the declarer's RHO plays a queen, from either KQx or AQx, and the declarer won the trick.*

5. Trump Suit Preference Signal

If the declarer does not win the first round, then the Smith Echo is usually no longer needed in the hand. Usually the first two rounds were in the same suit. Communication about each defender's length and preference for that suit is usually provided during those two rounds.

On the third and subsequent rounds of the hand the trump suit preference signal is used when the declarer starts drawing trumps.

The trump suit preference signals work by discarding either;

- a. a high then a lower card to suggest a preference of a lead of the higher of the remaining suits (excluding the trump suit and the suit originally led), or
- b. a low card followed by a higher card to suggest a return of the lower remaining suit is preferred.

Both defenders may use the trump suit preference signals.

Quiz Questions – Trump Suit Preference Signal

In a 4 ♠ contract, a low diamond is led and won by their partner. The declarer's king wins the diamond return and starts drawing trumps.

1. *How does a defender show a suit preference for:*
 - a. *the heart suit?*
 - b. *the club suit?*
 - c. *the diamond suit?*
2. *Which defender may signal for a preferred suit lead?*

Defense

3. *What other information does the declarer's LHO have regarding their partner's suit preference?*

Answers:

1.a. The card played on the first round of trump is higher than the one played on the second round.

1.b. The card played on the first round of trump is lower than the one played on the second round.

1.c. There isn't a signal to return the original suit led.

Two rounds have already been played and there is an increased likelihood that the third round will be trumped by one of the defenders or in the declarer's or dummy's hand.

2. Both defenders may signal.

3. The first two rounds of the suit usually provide information through the sequence of the cards played (i.e., a high card lead followed by a lower card usually indicates that the LHO holds a doubleton in the suit) or the size of the card returned.

6. Preserving Partner's Entry in a Notrump Contract

In a notrump contract, the defender with the weaker hand may need to sacrifice at least one of their honors. This is done to both promote the cards in the stronger defender's long suit and to preserve the stronger players entries. The sacrifice often helps the stronger hand acquire the lead and run tricks once their long suit is set up.

In a 3 NT contract, the defenders usually have around 14 HCP among them. The weaker hand is the one which contains less than 7 (half of 14) HCP.

a. As the Weak Hand on the Opening Lead

If the defender with the weaker hand is on lead in a notrump contract it is usually best to make a sacrificial lead of an honor from a doubleton in a major suit.

Unless the declarer or responder have indicated that they have length in a specific major suit, the lead of the weak hand's shorter major suit holding is usually the most likely to find their partner's longest suit holding.

The declarer's RHO is likely to have more than three and may have as many as seven cards in that suit. The lead has a good potential of setting up the stronger hand's suit while preserving that defender's hand's entries that they may need to further establish and eventually run the suit.

If they hold an honor in their partner's likely long suit, it is a good card to read. This may;

- i. unblock the suit,
- ii. establish, or to help establish, their partner's long suit, and/or

Defense

- iii. enable their partner to make a decision about whether the suit may be run.

b. As the Weak Hand Not on the Opening Lead

The weaker hand should gain an entry as quickly as possible and lead their partner's long suit. The early entry may prevent the declarer from running their tricks and making their contract prior to the defenders gaining a lead that could have defeated the contract.

The return of their partner's long suit, which may either;

- i. enable a finesse through the declarer's hand,

This may allow the suit to be run even if their partner's hand lacks an entry in another suit.

- ii. preserve a later entry to the hand with the long suit, or

- iii. create an entry by promoting either a queen or jack in the stronger player's hand.

If a card other than the ace is led from dummy, the weaker hand should play either the king or the queen if they hold it. This may unblock the suit, gain a lead needed to return their partner's long suit, preserve an entry to their partner's hand, or prevent their partner from gaining the lead early and being forced to lead their long suit instead of having it finessed through the declarer's hand.

In another situation, if a queen is led from the stronger hand in a notrump contract, it is likely from a QJ10x(x)(x) holding. In such case that suit is likely the best source for future tricks once it is set up.

Defense

The weaker hand likely started with at least two cards in their partner's long suit. Once they gain the lead, they should return that suit.

If the weaker hand holds either the ace or king of that suit, they should play it and continue playing the suit.

Without a top honor in their partner's long suit the weaker hand should return their partner's suit as soon as they gain the lead.

The king of a side suit may be a key card for gaining the lead. If the suit is led from dummy and the declarer's RHO is both the weaker hand and holds the king, they should play it on the first round. This may promote and unblock the queen of that suit for a later entry for their partner.

Quiz Questions – Preserving Partner's Entry in a Notrump Contract

1. *The RHO opens 1 NT and their partner raises it to 3 NT. Which card should be led from?:*

- ♠ J108
- ♥ Q7
- ♦ Q942
- ♣ 9832

2. *In a 3 NT contract, the opening lead is the queen of hearts. With the hand below:*

- a. *Which card should be played?*
- b. *What card should be returned?*

- ♠ J1085
- ♥ A7
- ♦ Q942
- ♣ 983

Defense

3. In a 3 NT contract, the king of spades is led and with the hand below, the defender signals count by playing the five. On the next trick a club is led and won in dummy. When dummy's jack is led:

a. Which card should the defender play?

b. Which card should they return?

♠ 1085

♥ Q73

♦ Q942

♣ 10873

Answers:

1. While the jack of spades is tempting, the queen of hearts is a better lead. Dummy is indicated as having three or fewer cards in the suit, so the declarer's RHO likely has a five card holding in the suit.

The queen lead may help to develop the suit. Having around 9 HCP, the declarer's RHO may be able to gain the lead once the suit has been established.

2.a. The ace should be played to unblock and help develop the suit.

2.b. The seven of hearts should be returned. This will help develop the suit for the declarer's LHO, who should be able to gain the lead since they are estimated to hold around 9 HCP, of which 6 HCP are outside of the heart suit.

3.a. The defender should play the queen to preserve a possible king entry in their partner's hand.

3.b. The ten of spades should be returned. This should set up their partner's suit and unblock it.

7. Obligatory Falsecards

The play of a falsecard is used as an attempt to confuse the declarer about one of the defender's suit holdings. The declarer's uncertainty may result in them making a losing option.

The obligatory falsecard play will rarely, if ever, cost the defenders a trick.

Whether the declarer leads from their hand or from dummy's, some of these techniques are:

- i. Holding 109x, playing the nine or ten. A player should play the nine about half the time and the ten the other half so that the opponents do not see a pattern.
- ii. Holding the 108x, playing the eight.
- iii. Holding Q108x or K108x, it is usually better to play the eight. and
- iv. The lower of two adjoining honor cards (i.e, Q from KQx(x)).

Quiz Questions – Obligatory Falsecards

1. When the declarer leads a low card from 752 in dummy, which card should the declarer's RHO play holding:

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| a. 1083 ? | b. Q1083 ? |
| c. 1093 ? | d. KQ3 ? |

Defense

Answers:

1.a. The eight

1.b. The eight

1.c. Half the time play the nine. The other half the time play the ten. This prevents an opponent from determining a pattern of play.

1.d. The queen. The declarer will be uncertain about which player holds the king. This may affect their counting and play of the hand.

8. Surround Play and Power Shift

The surround play and power shifts are defensive techniques used by the declarer's RHO when they hold two honors in one suit which are both higher than the honor visible in dummy's hand.

If the declarer's RHO also holds the card immediately below dummy's honor card, it is termed a surround play. If the RHO's third highest card is two cards below dummy's honor, it is termed a partial surround play. Otherwise, it is termed a power shift.

The RHO begins their surround play or power shift by playing their second highest card in the suit. That card is usually the one immediately above the dummy's honor card.

The lead of a cover card signals that the lead was the second highest card in the suit. It requests a return in that suit. Aside from the lead indication, the cover card helps the declarer's LHO count the points in their partner's hand and determine where the honors in the RHO's hand are most likely located.

The surround play and cover card techniques are shown in the following examples:

Example 1

Dummy

Jxx

Declarer's RHO

AQ10(x)

This situation is a surround play. The RHO has two cards higher than dummy's honor card and the card immediately below it.

When on lead, the declarer's RHO will lead the queen.

Defense

If the declarer covers the queen, the declarer's LHO will lead the suit whenever possible and finesse the queen for their partner.

Example 2

Dummy

Jxx

Declarer's RHO

AQ9(x)

This is an example of a partial surround play. The RHO has two cards higher than dummy's honor card and the card which is two cards below dummy's honor card.

If the declarer covers the queen, the declarer's LHO will lead their high card in the suit whenever possible. If that high card is the ten, it will finesse the jack for their partner.

It is important that the declarer's LHO leads their high card in the suit. If that card is the ten and it is not led, their partner will be forced to rise with the queen, which will promote dummy's jack.

Example 3

Dummy

Jxx

Declarer's RHO

KQx(x)

This is an example of a power shift. The RHO has two cards higher than dummy's honor card but does not hold a card which is immediately below or two cards below dummy's honor card.

When the declarer's LHO gains the lead, and holds both the ten and nine in the suit, their lead of the ten will finesse the jack for their partner and promote the LHO's nine.

Quiz Questions – Surround Play and Power Shift

1. *What are the similarities and differences between a surround play, a partial surround play and a power shift?*
2. *What does the declarer's RHO's lead of a card higher than dummy's honor card signal to their partner?*
3. *Dummy's holding in a side suit is 1073. Which card should the declarer's RHO lead from:*
 - a. *KJ9 ?*
 - b. *QJ9 ?*

Answers:

1. *The similarities are is that the declarer's RHO holds two cards which are higher than the honor displayed in dummy's hand and that they lead the second highest one.*
2. *The declarer's LHO is informed that their partner holds a higher honor in the suit, which will help them determine the count and distribution of the high cards. They are also informed that their partner wishes them to return the suit by leading their highest card.*
- 3.a. *The jack*
- 3.b. *The jack*

9. Double of a Splinter Bid

A double of a splinter bid should have a specific meaning.

Many advanced players use the double to indicate a preference for a lead of the side suit ranking below the splinter suit bid. If the splinter bid is made in the club suit, a double would indicate a desire for a lead of the highest ranking major side suit.

This lead preference double should indicate a suit headed by either the ace or the king and queen.

If the splinter bid is not doubled, it does not promise anything in the suit higher than the splintered suit. However, it is usually the better option for the person on lead.

Quiz Questions – Double of a Splinter Suit

1. The declarer opened the bidding with a 1 ♠ bid and the responder made a 4 ♣ splinter bid, which the direct seat doubled.

a. What does the double indicate?

b. Which suit should the defender lead if the splinter bid was not doubled?

Answers:

1.a. It indicates a desire for a heart suit lead. The doubler likely holds either the ace or the king and queen of hearts.

1.b. While the pass does not suggest a lead of the diamond suit, with no better option it is likely the best lead.

10. Forcing the Declarer to Make an Early Decision

The declarer is often in a position where they may make their contract without needing to take the chance of a certain finesse.

The finesse may not be required if the success of a different finesse would provide them with a discarding opportunity. It may not be required if the contract will make because of a favorable split of the trump holdings among the opponents' hands.

If the defenders lead forces the declarer to make a decision on that certain prior to confirming whether the finesse is needed to make the contract, the declarer may make a decision which will set the contract.

The advantage of making the declarer make an early decision is that they may lose which they would not have lost if other play would have determined that the finesse was not needed.

Quiz Question – Forcing the Declarer to Make an Early Decision

1. In a 4 ♠ contract, the declarer won the club lead in dummy's hand. The declarer then lead the ace of spades and took a spade finesse which lost to the declarer's LHO. Which card should that player lead?

- ♠ A103
- ♥ AQ42
- ♦ Q975
- ♣ A73

- ♠ Q82
- ♥ KJ5
- ♦ 642
- ♣ J1092

Answer:

1. *The jack of hearts.*

If the heart finesse is needed, the declarer will win two rounds or hearts, so nothing is lost through the lead.

The declarer is forced to make a decision about whether to play the ace or play the queen and risk losing to the king.

If they take the finesse and lose the heart finesse and two more tricks, the contract will be defeated. However, if they play the ace and the diamond finesses are successful, and the diamonds split 3 – 3, the declarer can toss their heart loser on the fourth round of diamonds.

11. Preventing an Endplay

If a defender is in a position where they may be endplayed, they should retain an exit card. The exit card is one which is a card which will not win a trick. If placed in their hand the lead of the exit card provides a safe way for that defender to escape from being endplayed.

The endplay prevention requires some foresight of how the hand is likely to be played. An endplay is commonly preceded by the declarer eliminating (stripping) one or more suits. When the stripping of a suit occurs defenders should be prepared for a possible endplay situation.

Sometimes retaining an exit card requires tossing a potential winner hoping that tossing the card promotes the next higher card in their partner's hand. This is a winning play if their partner can win that suit and lead through the declarer's tenace to their partner's hand.

Quiz Questions – Preventing an Endplay

1. In a Matchpoint game, where overtricks may have a significant impact on the final game result, the RHO opened with a 1 ♣ bid. Their partner responded with 1 ♠ and ended in a 4 ♠ contract.

A small heart was led, which was run to the declarer's queen. The declarer stripped the heart suit, discarding a club on the last round.

A small spade was led from dummy. How should the defender play the hand?

♠ Q765
♥ AJ4
♦ AQ10
♣ AQ9

♠ A8
♥ 852

Defense

◇ K873

♣ K1052

Answer:

1. If the defender holds up, they will be endplayed on the next round of spades.

To prevent this, the defender must win with the ace and exit with the eight of spades.

The declarer must now finesse a minor suit. When the defender wins the finesse, the defender should lead that minor suit back in order to gain a trick in the other minor suit.

12. Counting

Counting is usually easier when defending than when playing the hand.

Much of the declarer's information is usually revealed during the bidding. Since the declarer has bid, their point count is usually known within one point. They have usually indicated their likely length in one or both of the major suits.

The opening lead and signals are an important element of determining that player's strength or distribution. While useful in counting, it may also be sufficient information that a count is not needed to determine which suit to return.

During play, more reliance should be placed on the partner's signals, cards played and discards than those which the declarer plays. The declarer may play a falsecard to deceive the count.

Using the most likely distribution patterns, a defender should be able to determine the declarer's probable hand pattern. From this assumption and the opening lead, a defender can determine their partner's likely hand pattern. This provides information on potential ruffs and which suits are most likely to contain honors in their partner's hand.

The likely distribution patterns, based on the known length of one suit, are started in Chapter 10 of the Declarer Play section of this book.

Quiz Questions – Counting

1. *The responder raises the declarer's 1 ♠ opening bid to the two level, which became the final contract. Playing third highest leads, the two of clubs is led.*

Dummy has 7 HCP and a 3 = 4 = 2 = 4 pattern. Holding a 9 HCP hand with a 2 = 4 = 3 = 4 pattern, what is:

Defense

- a. The declarer's likely hand pattern?*
- b. The hand pattern of the declarer's LHO?*
- c. The declarer's likely point count?*
- d. The point count of the declarer's LHO?*

Answers:

1.a. $5 = 3 = 3 = 2$

1.b. $3 = 2 = 5 = 3$

1.c. 12 to 14 HCP. With 15 to 17 HCP they would have opened 1 NT with that hand pattern. With more HCP, they would have either invited or bid game.

1.d. 10 to 12 HCP

If this book improved your bridge game knowledge or results, please show your appreciation by recommending this book and forwarding the PDF to others.

Enjoy the game!