

Lesson Summary for U3ABDa08: Opening One of a Suit and Responding

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Welcome!

To help clarify some points in this week's lesson, we're giving you this Lesson Summary. It describes the same topics from a slightly different angle and is more portable than videos. We've also included some additional detail where it seems needed.

I hope it helps!

-Ed

Bidding Principles

A VERY brief overview of each week so far:

1. Open a 12-14 point balanced hand with 1NT. Respond according to your points if you don't have a long (5+) major
2. Respond to partner's 1NT opening bid if you have a long major by using a Red Suit Transfer, then rebid according to your length and strength
3. Open a 12-19 point unbalanced hand with one of your longest suit: 1C, 1D, 1H or 1S. Respond to partner's bid according to your points and shape: support a major if you have 4+, bid your own suit or 1NT or pass

Lesson Summary

In previous weeks you learnt how to open a balanced hand and how to respond with a balanced hand or a 5-card or 6-card major suit.

This week was about opening the bidding with an **unbalanced** hand – and how to respond. An unbalanced has a void, or a singleton, or two doubletons; it has shape! An unbalanced hand will usually have one or more long suits (5 cards or more); the only exception is the rather awkward 4441 hand, which has its own rules.

An unbalanced hand is usually better played in a suit contract, not NT. Remember that you need 25 points for 3NT, 4H or 4S, but a few more (around 27) for a 5C or 5D. So with an unbalanced hand you're usually aiming for a major suit game, which needs 8+ trumps and 25+ points.

There are lots of numbers this week, but they're all derived from these few magic numbers. For example: when you open one of a suit, your point range is very wide (12-19), unlike a 1NT opening (12-14); you clarify with your second bid. That's why partner must respond with as little as 6 points, to give you a chance to bid again. You MIGHT have as much as 19; even if partner has as little as 6 then $19+6 = 25$, you have enough for game.

A change of suit response like 1H 1S is forcing for the same reason; that 1S bid shows 6-15, so responder needs the chance to bid again in case they're hiding a powerhouse.

Some terminology!

Whoever bids first - makes a bid other than PASS - is called the **Opener**. There's only one **Opening Bid**: that first bid.

The Opener's partner is called the **Responder**; when they bid they are responding to their partner's opening bid. Their response may be to raise partner's opening bid, bid another suit, bid NT, or PASS. For example, after a 1S opening bid:

- 1S **2S** The 2S response is a raise
- 1S **2C** The 2C response is a change of suit
- 1S **1NT** The NT response is a NT bid (not a change of suit)
- 1S **PASS** The PASS is a pass

If Opener or Responder bids again, we call that their **Rebid**.

Putting it all together you can say things like "Opener rebids 2S over partner's 1NT response to their 1S opening bid". Single Dutch!

In a later lesson we will get to competitive bidding, where your opponents make overcalls. But not yet!

Opening one of a suit

You should remember from previous lessons that with a balanced hand and 12-14 HCP, you open 1NT; with a balanced hand and 15-19 HCP you open one of your longest suit intending to rebid 1NT, 2NT or 3NT.

Open your longest suit

With an unbalanced hand and 12-19 points, you open one of your longest suit, intending to rebid it. Notice that at this stage, partner does not know if you've got a balanced hand and intend to rebid NT.

With an unbalanced hand and two suits of equal length, open the higher ranked suit, intending to rebid the other suit. For example, if you have five Clubs and five Hearts, open 1H planning to rebid 2C.

There's one important exception: if you have four Hearts and four Spades, open 1H rather than 1S to make it easier to find a fit if partner has four Spades.

Notice that we say **Longest Suit** and **NOT** best suit. While you'd like your longest suit to be your best suit too (with several Honours), you must open based on length, not strength. For example, with:

- Spades: 98654
- Diamonds: AKJ4

Open 1S, not 1D! Why? If Diamonds are trumps, those 5 little Spades won't make any tricks but you'll make 2-3 Diamond tricks. If Spades are trumps, you make 1-2 Spade tricks (maybe by ruffing) and still make those 2-3 Diamond tricks, because Aces and Kings usually make even if they're not trumps.

Opening a 4441 hand

If you have 12-19 points and three 4-card suits, which suit should you open? It depends on the singleton:

- If the singleton is RED (Diamonds or Hearts), open the suit below the singleton (Clubs or Diamonds)
- If the singleton is BLACK (Clubs or Spades), open the suit in the middle of the other three suits (Hearts or Diamonds)

Opening under Rule of 20

If you have a long suit but less than 12 points, you can still open if your hand passes the **Rule of 20**: add the length of your two longest suits to your points. If the total is 20 or more, you can open your longest suit. For example:

- With 11 points, five Hearts and four Spades, you can open 1H
- With 10 points, five Spades and five Diamonds, you can open 1S

You may not be able to bid your second suit, but it's enough to make your hand more likely to find a fit.

Responding to one of a suit

If partner opens one of a suit:

- With 0-5 points, pass
- With 6+ points, respond as follows

Responding with a major fit

If partner opens a major and you have 4-card support:

- With 6-9 points, raise e.g. 1H 2H
- With 10-12 points, jump raise e.g. 1S 3S This is a Game Invitation
- With 13+ points, raise to game e.g. 1H 4H

With 4-card support for partner's major, raise partner's suit rather than bidding your own.

Shortage Points

When responding to partner's suit bid, you can add Shortage Points (SPs) to your HCP but only if:

- You expect to play in partner's suit (you're going to raise it)
- You have a fit with partner's suit i.e. you have 4+ trumps

(If partner rebids their suit later, showing 5+, you can add shortage points if you have 3+ trumps.)

You can add:

- 3 Shortage Points for a void
- 2 Shortage Points for a singleton
- 1 Shortage Point for a doubleton

(Some people value shortages higher than this, but for now, please use these values.)

Responding without a major fit

If partner opened a minor or you can't support their major (don't have 4 of them):

- With 6-15 points and a 4-card suit: bid your new suit at the 1-level
- With 6-9 points and a suit you cannot bid at the 1-level: bid 1NT
- With 10-15 points and a 4-card suit, you can bid your new suit at the 2-level, but bid it at the 1-level if you can. Also see **Rule of 14**

BUT if partner opened 1S, you need five Hearts to bid 2H (because they probably don't have 4 Hearts).

If you have a 4-card major, bid it in preference to a longer minor.

Rule of 14

You can bid your new suit at the 2-level with less than 10 points, if your points plus your suit length = 14 or more.

Supporting a minor

If partner opened a minor and you don't have another suit, you can raise it:

- With 6-9 points and 4-card support: raise the minor to 2x
- With 10-12 points and 4-card support: jump raise the minor to 3x
- With 13+ points and 4-card support and stops in the other 3 suits: bid 3NT
- With 13+ points and 4-card support but not stops in the other 3 suits: raise to 5x

Responding in NT

If you can't support partner's suit or bid a new suit, you can bid NT:

- With 6-9 points, bid 1NT, the Dustbin Bid
- With 11-12 points you could bid 2NT but it's better to bid your 4-card suit (forcing)
- With 13+ points you could bid 3NT but it's better to bid your 4-card suit (forcing)

If you change suit, this **forces** partner to bid again! Opener must make another bid, which should help describe their hand – and you will be much better placed to choose your next bid. For example:

- 1H 1S **1NT**: Opener has 4 (or maybe 5 Hearts), does not have 4 Spades, but has 15-16 points in a balanced hand
- 1H 1S **2H**: Opener has at least 5 Hearts (usually 6), does not have 4 Spades, and has 12-15 points

Responding with a strong hand

If you're lucky enough to have 16+ points and a 6-card suit (or a good 5-card suit, say AKJxx), you JUMP SHIFT i.e. you bid your new suit one level higher than necessary. For example: 1H 2S. A jump shift is FORCING TO GAME: you and partner must keep bidding until game is reached.

However, if you have a decent second suit (say, 6 Clubs and 5 Hearts) then you should bid your first suit without jumping. The change of suit is forcing for one round, and leaves you space to bid that second suit, if appropriate.

Responding with a choice of suit

If you have two suits to choose between:

- With two 5-card suits: bid the higher-ranked suit first e.g. with Hearts and Spades, 1D 1S... 2H
- With two 4-card suits: bid the "cheapest" suit first e.g. with Hearts and Spades, 1D 1H... 2S
- If partner opened a minor, bid your 4-card major in preference to raising partner or bidding a longer minor
- If partner opened a minor, bid your 4-card minor in preference to raising partner
- If you have less than 12 points, you're not strong enough to bid twice, so bid your major at the 1-level rather than a longer minor
- If you have 12+ points, you're strong enough to bid twice, so bid your longer minor first, you can bid your shorter major later

Bear in mind that without a fit in a major, your main chance of game is 3NT. If you (or partner) can show stops (or at least length) in two suits by bidding them, that may allow you to bid 3NT with confidence.