Lesson Summary for U3ABDa17: Strong Hands

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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.

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Advanced topics & background information

Anything in green is background information or more advanced than you need right now. But if you're keen, it's worth knowing.

Weekly Summary

Here's a brief overview of the course so far, week by week:

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
4. Open a 15-19 point balanced hand with one of a suit, planning to rebid 1NT (15-16 points), 2NT (17-18 points) or 3NT (19 points). But if partner raises your suit or bids a suit that's a fit you may change your plan – especially if it's a major suit
5. Open a 12-19 point unbalanced hand with one of your longest suit:
   With a 6-card suit, plan to bid it again (twice).
   With a 5-card suit, plan to bid your second (4+) suit next **if you can**.
   With 12-15 points, your second bid should not be a jump or reverse.
   With 16-19 points, your second bid should be a jump or reverse.
   I say **plan** because partner might pass, or raise your first suit, or bid your second suit, or bid NT giving a point count, or change suit with a jump to show length and strength.
6. When partner opens one of a suit and rebids a second suit without jumping or reversing (showing 12-15 points), you have 4 main options:
   ONE: With an 8-card fit in either suit: raise that suit
   TWO: Without a fit, but stops in the unbid suits: bid NT
   THREE: Without a fit or stops, but your own 6-card suit: bid your suit again
   FOUR: Without a fit, stops or 6-card suit: make a preference bid, choose the better fit
   Base your response (pass, single raise, jump raise or game) on total points, assuming partner has the minimum 12
7. When partner opens 1NT and you have a 4-card major (or two) and 11+ HCP, bid 2C (Stayman) to ask them to bid their 4-card major or 2D response if they don't have one. With a 4:4 fit, bid a Game Invitation or Game, based on total points; with no fit, bid 2NT or 3NT based on total points. Assume partner has 12.
8. Overcalling (1): When an opponent opens one-of-a-suit:
   With 8-15 points, a 5-card suit and (ideally) 2 Honours, make a **Suit Overcall** at the one-level. If you need to overcall at the two-level, you need 11-15 points. These are constructive bids, aiming to make a contract.
   With a longer suit you can make a **Jump Overcall**, an obstructive (weak) bid aiming to stop your opponents.

   Raise partner's suit overcall to the **LEVEL OF FIT** regardless of your points!
   With 3 trumps, raise to 2 (5+3 = 8). With 4 trumps, raise to 3 (5+4 = 9). With 5 trumps, raise to 4 (5+5 = 10).
   You CAN bid your own 5+ suit, but this isn't forcing. If you're strong, **Jump** to force partner to bid.

9. Overcalling (2):
   With 16+ points and a stop in the opponent suit: **Overcall with 1NT or Double Then Bid 2NT or 3NT**
   With 12+ HCP and 3-card support for the unbid suits: **Double for Takeout**
   With 16+ HCP and a long suit, Double and then bid your suit: **Double Then Bid** (a strong overcall)

10. Overcalling (3):
    If your opponent opens 1NT:
    - With 0-10 HCP: PASS
    - With 11-15 HCP and a good 5+ card suit: overcall
    - With 11-15 HCP but no good 5+ card suit: PASS
    - With 16+ HCP: **ALWAYS DOUBLE FOR PENALTIES**

    If partner's 1NT is doubled:
    - With 0-10 points: RESCUE 1NT DOUBLED into your 5-card suit if you have one, PASS if you don't
    - With 11+ points: REDOUBLE to reassure partner and score even more

    If partner doubles 1NT, it's for penalties:
    - With 0-4 points: RESCUE THE DOUBLE into your 5-card suit if you have one, PASS if you don't
    - With 5+ points: PASS

    If your opponents bid up to the 3-level or higher, you can Double for Penalties
    If your opponents open a Weak Two or a 3-level pre-empt, you can Double for Takeout
    If your opponents open a 4-level pre-empt, you can Double for Penalties
    But we haven't taught you about Weak Twos or pre-empts yet!

11. With 20-22 HCP and a balanced hand: **OPEN 2NT**. This bid is NOT forcing.
    Responding to 2NT:
    - With 0-3 HCP: pass (or transfer to a 6-card major and pass)
    - With 4+ HCP and a major: use Stayman or a Red Suit Transfer to try for a fit
    - With 4+ HCP and no major: 3NT.

    With a really strong hand: **OPEN 2C**. This is a Game Force, mostly:
    - With 23-24 HCP and a balanced hand: open 2C and rebid 2NT
    - With 25-28 HCP and a balanced hand: open 2C and rebid 3NT
    - With 21+ HCP and a good 5+ Major: open 2C and rebid 2H/2S
    - With a hand that will make 9+ tricks in a Major or Minor: open 2C and rebid your suit
    - With 21-22 HCP and a good 5+ Minor: **OPEN 1C/D**. You need partner's help to make Game!

    Responding to 2C:
    - With 0-1 HCP, bid TWO negative responses: 2D and then 2NT
    - With 2-7 HCP, bid ONE negative response: 2D and then anything other than 2NT
    - With 8+ HCP, bid a positive response: bid a 5-card suit or 2NT if you have none

    The 2D negative response indicates that Slam is unlikely but Game is still probable; a second negative response (2NT) indicates that Game might not be possible - opener will decide.

    Exceptions to the Game Force:
    - Responder can pass after 2C 2D 2NT if they have just 0-1 HCP
    - Opener can tell partner to stop bidding by rebidding their suit after two negative responses (2D and then 2NT) if they needed more points for game. For example: 2C 2D 2H 2S 3S or 2C 2D 3C 3NT 4C.

This Week's Lessons – Bidding Strong Hands

In previous modules you learned how to bid NORMAL (12-19 HCP) hands, by opening with 1NT or one of a suit.

In this week's module you learned how to bid STRONG (20+ HCP) hands:

- Opening 2NT
- Responding to 2NT
- Opening 2C
- Responding to 2C

Opening 2NT

An opening bid of 2NT shows partner you have a balanced hand and 20-22 HCP. Your balanced hand may include five cards in a Major or Minor: 5332. This bid is NOT forcing, although partner doesn't need much to respond.

Responding to 2NT

The 2NT opening is so strong, you bid to game unless very weak:

- With 0-3 HCP and a 6+ Major: Transfer to your Major and PASS, so partner plays in 3H/S
- With 0-3 HCP and no 6+ Major: PASS
- With 4+ HCP and a 6+ Major: Transfer to your Major and then raise to 4H/S
- With 4+ HCP and a 5-card Major: Transfer to your Major and then raise to 3NT. Partner will pass with two trumps, or raise to 4H/S with three or more
- With 4+ HCP and a 4-card Major: Use Stayman. If you find a fit, raise to 4H/S, otherwise bid 3NT.
- With 4+ HCP and no 4-card Major (a balanced hand or long Minor):
    - 4-10 HCP: bid 3NT
    - 11-12 HCP: bid 4NT as a Slam Invitation; partner will raise to 6NT with 22 HCP
    - 13-14 HCP: bid 6NT, a Small Slam

With a long suit (Major or Minor) and 10+ HCP, a Slam is very likely in that suit. We'll describe Slam bidding in detail in a later module.

Opening 2C

The 2C opening bid is used for very strong hands that should make game even if partner is so weak that they would pass a 1-level opening bid. 2C forces your partner to bid.

You can open 2C with three main types of hand:

- A balanced or unbalanced hand with 23+ HCP
- An unbalanced hand with 21-22 HCP and a good 5+ Major
- An unbalanced hand with less than 21 HCP that can take NINE tricks in your suit (Minor or Major) without any help from partner

In the second and third cases, your long suit makes up for your points. If you have 21-22 HCP and a 5+ Minor, open 1C/D – you haven't got a Game Force hand, so can only expect to make game if partner responds, showing 6+ HCP.

WARNING: You will read descriptions of 2C that say it promises 23+ HCP or 10 tricks, but we're teaching a newer version of 2C that's been tweaked to work with Weak Twos rather than Strong Twos; it's a bit weaker.

Responding to 2C

The 2C bid is a Game Force, meaning you have to respond and keep bidding until you have reached game – with two EXCEPTIONS explained below.

When partner opens 2C:

- With 0-7 HCP: bid 2D. This is a negative response, indicating that a Slam is unlikely. Any other bid suggests a Slam is likely - depending on Opener's hand of course
- With 8+ HCP and a good 5+ suit, bid your suit: 2H, 2S, 3C or 3D. This is a positive response
- With 8+ HCP and no good 5+ suit: bid 2NT. This is a positive response

Opener's Second Bid

If Responder makes a negative response of 2D (indicating 0-7 HCP):

- With a balanced hand and 23-24 HCP: Rebid 2NT.
- With a balanced hand and 25-28 HCP: Rebid 3NT.
- Otherwise, you must have game-in-hand in a suit and will usually bid your game as partner is too weak to reach a slam.

If Responder makes a positive response (anything other than 2D) to 2C, this promises 8+ HCP:

- This is a SLAM FORCE, bidding must continue until you reach a slam.
- BUT we will ignore slam bidding for now. None of today's practice hands are slam hands - so there aren't any positive responses!

Responder's Second Bid & EXCEPTION ONE

After Opener's second bid, Responder is often in the best position to decide whether to settle for Game, or try for a Slam. Slam bidding is described in detail in a later module. So for now, just remember that all bidding sequences other than 2C 2D 2NT are Game Forcing, so as Responder you must not pass, must keep on bidding until you reach game. (Although Opener may apply the brakes!)

If you made a negative (2D) response to the 2C opening, showing 0-7 points:

- If Opener rebid 2NT (2C 2D 2NT):
  With 0-1 HCP you must PASS. This is EXCEPTION ONE to the "2C is a Game Force" rule
  With 2+ points you must BID: you can raise to 3NT, or use a Transfer if you have a 5+ Major, or use Stayman if you have one or two 4-card Majors
- If Opener rebid 3NT (2C 2D 3NT) you will usually pass, but can use a Transfer if you have a 5+ Major
- If Opener rebid a Major (2C 2D 2H/S) and you have just 0-3 HCP, your second bid should be 2NT, as a warning, a second negative. See EXCEPTION TWO below
- If Opener rebid a Minor (2C 2D 3C/D) and you have just 0-3 HCP, your second bid should be 3NT, as a warning, a second negative. See EXCEPTION TWO below
- Otherwise, with 4-7 HCP, raise partner's suit with 3+, bid your own 5+ card suit, or bid NT - do not pass

Using Transfers over 2C 2D 2NT:

- With 2+ HCP and a 6+ Major: Transfer to your Major then raise to 4H/S
- With 2+ HCP and a 5-card Major: Transfer to your Major and then raise to 3NT. Partner should pass with two trumps, or raise to 4H/S with three or more

Using Stayman over 2C 2D 2NT:

- With 2+ HCP and a 4-card Major: Use Stayman. If you find a fit, raise to 4H/S, otherwise rebid 3NT.

If you made a positive response to the 2C opening, showing 8+ points:

- This is a SLAM FORCE, bidding must continue until you reach a slam.
- We will ignore slam bidding for now, that's in a later module. None of today's practice hands are slam hands!

Opener's Third Bid & EXCEPTION TWO

Opener's third bid will usually be to bid game, unless partner made a positive response to your 2C opening, when you will investigate bidding a Slam - but Slams are covered in the next module.

However, if you opened 2C with less than 23 HCP (sometimes you just have to) and partner responded with TWO negative bids (2D and then 2NT) showing 0-3 points, you may decide to stop short of game. For example: after 2C 2D 2S 2NT you might bid 3S. Partner will pass. This is EXCEPTION TWO to the “2C is a Game Force” rule.