

OPENING BIDS AT THE ONE LEVEL (ACOL – 4-CARD MAJORS)

A hand which you should consider opening at the one level, usually contains 12–20 high-card points.

Adjustments should be made to the hand evaluation as follows:

- a) Points should be added for additional suit lengths – add 1 point for each additional card over five in any suit.
- b) An additional point can also be added for a second suit of five or more cards.
- c) Beware of ‘hanging jacks’ – i.e. jacks in a suit which doesn’t have any other honours. With too many of these in a particular hand you should down-value it (see exercise).
- d) Also as you become more experienced, consider opening ‘third in hand’ with a point less.

Some opening bids within this point range should be opened at a higher level, but these will be identified later.

We shall consider the one level opening bids in the context of a **four-card major system**, with a weak no-trump.

1NT

A ‘balanced’ hand in the **12–14 point** range. A balanced hand normally has a 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 distribution, but certain hands with a 5-3-3-2 distribution should also be considered if the five card suit is weak (i.e. you don’t really want to rebid the suit – particularly if it is a minor).

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|----|--------|----|--------|----|---------|
| a) | ♠ A97 | b) | ♠ A972 | c) | ♠ Q7 |
| | ♥ K942 | | ♥ K94 | | ♥ K87 |
| | ♦ A86 | | ♦ A862 | | ♦ KJ3 |
| | ♣ K87 | | ♣ Q8 | | ♣ K9532 |

- a) 3-4-3-3 shape, 14 points – ideal 1NT.
- b) 4-3-4-2 shape, 13 points – ideal 1NT.
- c) 12 points, not the ideal shape for 1NT, but with the poor five card club suit, best to open 1NT.

Suit Bids

The **guidelines** summarising these are (in order):

Always open the longest suit.

With two four-card suits, standard procedure is always open the higher ranking, but...

- Exceptions - with hearts and spades open 1♥.
- with clubs and diamonds open 1♣.

With three four-card suits initially adopt the style of opening 1♣ with a singleton ‘red’, and 1♥ with a singleton ‘black’.

With two five card suits, open the higher ranking one, except when clubs and spades, in which case open 1♣.

Exercises:

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| a) ♠ KJ752
♥ 7
♦ AQ9632
♣ 4 | b) ♠ KQ753
♥ Q4
♦ AQJ84
♣ 7 | c) ♠ Q6432
♥ 6
♦ K7
♣ AKJ97 | d) ♠ AK75
♥ AJ9
♦ AJ63
♣ 97 | e) ♠ AK82
♥ AJ95
♦ Q8
♣ Q74 |
| f) ♠ KJ72
♥ 653
♦ AK8
♣ Q85 | g) ♠ 4
♥ A8632
♦ KQ752
♣ K6 | h) ♠ 4
♥ AJ743
♦ 8
♣ AK7432 | i) ♠ 98763
♥ AKQ76
♦ AK9
n ♣ - | j) ♠ KQ73
♥ 7
♦ A952
♣ KJ94 |
| k) ♠ KQ7
♥ AQ752
♦ AJ6
♣ K3 | l) ♠ AQ742
♥ J4
♦ 9
♣ K8532 | m) ♠ 7
♥ 73
♦ AK98763
♣ A86 | n) ♠ KQ74
♥ AQ63
♦ K874
♣ 8 | o) ♠ J8742
♥ J7
♦ AKQ
♣ J63 |

- 1♦ - diamonds are the longest suit. Only 10 high-card points, but add points for suit(s) length.
- 1♠ - two equal length five card suits: spades are higher ranking.
- 1♣ - two equal length five card suits. Spades and clubs.
- 1♠ - no five card suit, outside the no-trump range (17 points whereas 1NT is 12–14 points), open 1♠ (the higher ranking)..
- 1♥ - no five card major, outside the no-trump range (16 points whereas 1NT is 12–14 points), with hearts and spades open 1♥.
- 1NT - 4-3-3-3, 13 points.
- 1♥ - diamonds and hearts, but hearts higher ranking.
- 1♣ - even though you have five hearts, the six card club suit takes preference.
- 1♠ - five hearts and five spades. Even though the hearts are much better, you must open the higher ranking.
- 1♦ - not the shape for 1NT. Open the suit below the singleton.
- 1♥ - 19 points, but still open at the one level.
- PASS** - only 10 points, but add one for the extra length. Still out of the prescribed opening range so (for now) PASS. (However, many players would still open 1♣ particularly in third position.)
- 1♦ - 11 points, but add for the extra length..
- 1♥ - not the shape for 1NT. With 4-4-4-1 with a singleton club (black), open 1♥.
- PASS** - 12 points but three ‘hanging jacks’. I would certainly devalue the hand by at least one point.