

BRIDGE - BEGINNER'S LESSONS I – 03

Opener's Description

THE ROLE OF THE PARTNERS: - You and your Partner, working together, via the bidding, attempt to discover the relative combined strengths as to HCP's, distribution, and the relative presence or absence of a **Golden Fit** (eight or more cards in any suit), so as to determine the level, denomination, and whether or not a Game or Slam bonus contract can be attempted. Opener's first bid, if it is one of any suit (**1C, 1D, 1H, or 1S**), or **1-No-Trump**, paints a broad indeterminate picture both as to distributional pattern; i.e., balanced or unbalanced, as well as strength, which can fall anywhere between approximately 12 and 21(+) points. Responder's bids, likewise, may also vary as to both strength and distribution. Responder's point count can range between 6-18 HCP's with a simple response at the 1-level, and 11-18 HCP's, if his/her suit is higher-ranking than Opener's, with a simple response at the 2-level. With fewer high-card points Responder would have "**Passed,**" and with 19 or more HCP's Responder would have made a "**jump-shift**" evidencing a Slam probability. As long as either the Opener or the Responder has not yet limited his/her hand, both **must** keep the bidding open by re-bidding. When finally one of the two has limited his/her hand, the other Partner becomes the "**Captain**" thereby taking the responsibility of placing the contract, or at the very least, making an on-going bid seeking a Game or Slam-level contract. Until that point, both members of the team continue to describe their holdings to each other. There must **never** be two Captains. The Player to take control is the first to know all about his/her Partner's hand, whereas the Partner knows only partially about the Captain's holdings.

THE OPENER: - Each Player has a role to play. The Partner who opens the bidding and who gets the first opportunity to provide information to the Partnership is called the **Opener**. The Opening Bidder starts to paint a picture of his/her hand to Partner. The Responder then responds to Opener's opening bid.

GUIDELINES WITH RESPECT TO SHAPE

Which suit to bid varies according to whether a team is using the **Standard American System (S.A.)** of bidding or the British **ACOL System** of bidding, but whether or not to bid in either system, at all, as opposed to just "**Passing,**" is dependent upon a combination of both distribution **and** high-card strength. In S.A.:

- a. With fewer than 12 HCP's (high-card points) + Distribution = "**Pass**" (Usually)
- b. With 12-21 HCP's + Distribution = Make one of the bids described below:
 - (1) With a 5-card or longer suit = Bid that suit
 - (2) With two 5-card or longer suits = (a) Bid the longer suit if they are unequal in length (Usually, one bids "**Length before Strength**"), or (b) Bid the higher ranking of two equally-long 5-card or 6-card suits

Standard American (S.A.) (5-Card or longer Majors - only) ACOL System (4-Card or longer Majors)

- (a) Bid the Major suit or "**1S**" if holding both Majors
- (b) Bid the longer Minor suit, "**1C**" or "**1D**" if one is discernibly longer than the other
- (c) Bid "**1D**" if holding two equally long 4-card, 5-card, or 6-card Minor suits
- (d) Absent a 5-card or longer Major suit, bid "**1C**" if holding two 3-card Minor suits (**Note:** The "**Short Club**" system differs, if played)

Because any new suit response by the Responder could show as much as 18 high-card points, Game is always presumed possible until proven otherwise. Thus, Responder may be depending upon a re-bid by the Opener to further describe Opener's hand, both as to count and distribution, so that the Responder can best place the contract as to both suit and level. Therefore, **the Opening Bidder must make a re-bid to any response made by the Responder except to a limited bid of two of Opener's suit or to a 1-NT bid** (both of which are limited to 6-10 HCP, and do **not** require a re-bid by the Opening Bidder). The more combined high-card and distributional points Opener has for his/her opening bid, the higher he/she can go when re-bidding, but in every instance, both Opener and Responder are obligated to fully describe and further identify the quality and type of his/her hand held.

The Opening Bidder places the hand into one of three categories **according to point count**;

- a. **Minimum Count** - 12-15 HCP's
- b. **Intermediate (Medium) Count** - 16-18 HCP's
- c. **Strong (Maximum) Count** - 19 or More HCP's

The Opening Bidder also describes his/her hand **according to the shape**.

a. **Balanced** (A hand containing no voids, no singletons, or not more than one doubleton; i.e., a **5-3-3-2**, **4-4-3-2**, or a **4-3-3-3** distribution) - When holding a balanced hand, it would seem that Opener should re-bid No-Trump. However, because the Partnership is usually interested in uncovering any Golden fit, both Opener and Responder will bid a new suit of at least four cards or more at the one level ("**Up-the-Ladder**") as an alternative to re-bidding No-Trump. Otherwise, if no 4-card or longer second suit is available, Opener will re-bid No-Trump and let the Responder "**captain**" the team forward.

b. **Unbalanced** (A hand containing a void, a singleton, or more than one doubleton) - With an unbalanced hand, if a Golden fit has not yet been found, Opener will either re-bid his/her opening suit (holding 6 Pieces or more), or show a second suit of four or more cards if one exists, and if it can be shown without getting the Partnership to an excessively high, un-makeable bidding level.

The Opening Bidder thus becomes the Describer. An opening bid of one of a suit is made with so many different kinds of hands as to shape and count that Responder needs more information before making any decisions. Opener is, thus, obligated, in all situations other than when Responder has made a limited response, to re-bid so as to evidence both the strength and the distribution of Opener's holding. Thus, **unless Responder has made a limited bid of 1-No Trump or a raise of one level of Opener's suit (both bids evidencing a rigid and limited 6-10 HCP count), the Opener is NEVER in the position to "Pass" on his/her second opportunity to bid, his/her "re-bid."** The only exception to this would be if there had been an overcall by the RHO (Right-hand Opponent) of the Opening Bidder. Since this Overcall would guarantee the Responder to Opener an opportunity to bid once more, if he/she elects to do so, a "**Pass**" by the Opener, in this single instance, would be permissible, and would likewise represent a minimum opening count.

Alternatively, Opener might show a larger than minimum opening hand by jumping a level in his/her opening suit or that of Responder's suit. This would evidence 16-18 HCP's. If Opener were to make a "**Reverse Bid**" to a higher ranking second suit than Opener's first bid suit, this would show a 17+ HCP count; i.e., a stronger than minimum opening hand. A jump to **2-NT** would show an 18-19 HCP count, and an even stronger re-bid by Opener, by means of a jump-shift to a new suit, would exhibit a holding of 19 or more HCP's.

In all of these instances, Responder can then be in a position to "**Captain**" the team; i.e., sign-off the bidding, invite to Game, or even force to Game. The information that Opener gives, through his/her re-bid, provides the Responder with the necessary information to captain the team to the proper contract as to both denomination and level.

If the Responder wants still more information from the Opening Bidder, the Responder can continue to force the Opener to re-bid by responding in an as-yet-unmentioned, new suit. Under, all but one circumstance, **ANY NEW SUIT BID BY A RESPONDER IS FORCING FOR ONE ROUND.** In these instances, Responder's hand is no longer limited to 6-10 points. Holding more than 10 HCP's he/she has taken control of the bidding and is forcing the bidding by pursuing an even further description of Opener's hand. Opener is obliged to comply and await Responder's decision to sign-off, to invite to Game, to force to Game, or to proceed to a Small Slam, or even to a Grand Slam.

OPENER'S DESCRIPTION

1. The Opener's first bid offers only a general description of size and shape. Subsequent bids narrow the range of points and indicate a more specific distribution.

2. An opening bid at the one level promises 13-21 points. Later bids try to clarify whether the actual range is 13-15 (minimum), 16-18 (intermediate), or 19-21 (strong). In the **Standard American** bidding system, a **1H 1S** opening bid usually guarantees at least five cards, while, in the **Preferred or Better Minor** system of bidding, a **1C** or **1D** as an opening bid can be made with as few as three cards, absent a 5-card Major suit. (Utilizing the "**Short Club**" System, a **1D** opening bid promises at least 4-cards in the suit, and a **1C** opening bid can evidence as few as a 2-card suit.)

In the British **ACOL System** of bidding, a **1H** or **1S** opening bid usually guarantees at least four cards in the suit, five are not required.

3. Second suits bid by an Opener tend to promise at least four or more cards.

4. The Opener shows a one-suited hand (with six or more cards) by bidding and repeating the same suit with the higher the level of the re-bid, the stronger the hand.
 - a) With 13-15 points = repeat the suit at the 2-level.
 - b) With 16-18 points = repeat the suit at the 3-level.

5. The Opener shows a two-suited hand by bidding both suits. This tends to suggest at least five cards in the first one and five or four in the second.
 - a) With 13-15 or 16-18 points, make a non-jump re-bid, intending to clarify which one later.
 - b) With 19-21 points make a jump-shift re-bid by skipping one level.

6. The Opener shows a balanced hand by bidding in No-Trump at either his/her first or second turn to bid, depending upon his/her point count. Only the following hand patterns are considered to be balanced:

4-3-3-3
4-4-3-2
5-3-3-2

When is a Hand Good Enough to Open? 1st (Dealer) or 2nd Position

THE RULE OF 20: This states that a hand qualifies for an opening bid of one of a suit if the summation of HCP's plus the total number of cards in the two longest suits equals, or exceeds, the number 20. The "Rule of 20" is only applicable for use in the first seat, the Dealer, or in the second seat, the Player to the immediate left of the Dealer, should the Dealer have "*Passed*." It should never be used in the third or fourth seat, under any circumstance.

Examples: KXXXX JXX AKXX X (11+9=20) – (Open 1S)
XX AJXXX AKX XXX (12+8=20) – (Open 1H)
KXXX AXX QXXX QX (11+8=19) – (Do not open)

Note: All Hands having 13 HCP's or more *will automatically satisfy* the "Rule of 20" since they can have no fewer than 7 additional points resulting from seven (7) cards in two of the suits held if the hand (worse case scenario) were evenly divided 4-3-3-3. Additionally, *almost all* hands holding 12 HCP's (exclusive of a 4-3-3-3 distribution) *will also qualify* under the "Rule of 20" since, exclusive of this holding, there will be at least two 4-card or longer suits present. All 11 HCP hands which have a 6-card suit *will also satisfy both* the ability to open under the "Rule of 20" calculation, but, they will also qualify as to the requirements necessary to open a weak 2-bid. In this instance it is recommended that if the 6-card suit is Spades, one would fare best, since Spades is the controlling suit, to open 1 Spade; and, alternatively, if the 6-card suit is Diamonds or Hearts, one might consider opening a weak 2-bid (2D or 2H), rather than 1D or 1H, as the former bids act preemptively.

4th Position - Opening Criteria

THE RULE OF 15: When in the 4th position relative to the Dealer, the so-called "Pass-Out" seat; i.e., there has already been three successive "*Passes*" by the Dealer and the next two Players, this Player is in a unique scenario. He/She holds within his/her power as to whether or not the hand gets "*Passed Out*," and, thus, whether or not any score, plus or minus, by either side, is scored. "The Rule of 15" states that a hand qualifies for an opening bid of one of a suit, in the fourth ("Pass-Out" seat) position, if the summation of HCP's plus the total number of cards in the Spade suit equals, or exceeds, the number "15". Since Spades is the controlling suit, the more actual Spades one possesses, the less likely the Opponents can enter the same auction competitively at the same level Opener's team would be willing to bid. The "Rule of 15" is applicable only for use in the last (4th) seat. It should never be used in the first, second, or third seat for decision-making as to whether or not to open the bidding.

Examples: XX QXXX AQXX AXX (14 Points) (Do not open! - "*Pass*")
XXX QXX AQXX AXX (15 Points) (Do open! - 1D in this instance)

PLAYER NOMENCLATURE AND GENERAL BIDDER REQUIREMENTS

OPENER

With 12 High-Card Points and a good 5-Card suit (May Open)
13 or more HCP's (Must Open)
(Should usually open any point count holding if one's Hand satisfies the "Rule of 20")

RESPONDER TO THE OPENER

Must attempt to respond with 6 HCP's or more
Should support Partner's Major suit if possible
Must Bid "Up the Ladder" and never by-pass a 4-card Major suit
Must have four or more cards to mention a new suit and at least 11 HCP's necessary if forced to the 2-level
Bid 1-NT in lieu of any of the above (a Default bid option)

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON THREE

OPENER'S DESCRIPTION

- A. Per usual, start with a review of the previous lesson.
- B. The new material will focus on the actual bidding rules for the Opener. Explain how the Opener's first bid ordinarily gives a very broad description of size and shape, while the subsequent bids try to define a narrower range of points and a more specific distribution.
- C. Discuss the following guidelines with respect to size.
1. An opening bid at the one level promises a minimum of 13 points and a maximum of 21.
 2. The second bid attempts to break that down into a 3-point range:
13 – 15 = minimum count
16 – 18 = intermediate count
19 – 21 = strong count

Sometimes, however, it takes three bids to be so specific.

3. An opening bid at the two-level promises 22 points or more.
- D. Discuss the following guidelines with respect to shape:
1. An opening bid in a Major suit generally promises at least five cards.
 2. With only four cards in a Major it is necessary to open in a Minor suit, sometimes with as few as three cards. Be sure to explain the terms "*convenient minor*" and "*short club*."
 3. Opener usually defines shape as balanced or unbalanced in the first two bids.
 - a) By bidding and repeating the same suit, the Opener shows a one-suited hand, usually with six or more cards.
 - b) By bidding in two separate suits, the Opener shows a two-suited hand, typically with at least five cards in the first and four in the second. (You might note the exception when the first suit is a Minor, but do not get too theoretical here.)

c) By bidding in No-Trump at the first or second turn, the Opener shows a balanced hand with one of three patterns:

4-3-3-3

4-4-3-2

5-3-3-2

E. You might incorporate the following examples into the previous material or leave them for the end the lesson. In either event the discussion of these hands will probably require a large part of the time for your lecture.

1. Comparison of one-suited hands:

x	x	x
AQJxxx	AQJxxx	AQJxxxx
KQx	KQx	KQx
Qxx	KQx	AK

- a) Discuss the proper opening bid (and why) with each of these hands.
- b) Discuss the proper re-bid, assuming the Responder answers with **1S**. Be sure to emphasize how it takes exactly two bids to get this information across.

2. Comparison of two-suited hands:

x	x	x
AQJxx	AQJxx	AQJxx
KQx	KQx	KQx
Qxxx	KQxx	AKxx

- a) Discuss the proper opening bid and the planned re-bid with each of these hands, again assuming that partner responds **1S**. Explain why it is permissible to bid poor suits, like **Qxxx**.
- b) Stress the fact that the **2C** re-bid promises 13-15 or 16-18 points and that it will take a third bid to clarify which one.
- c) Explain that a jump-shift by the Opener always shows 19-21 points and is forcing to Game.

3. Comparison of balanced hands (optional: if you still have time left over).

xx	xx
AQJxx	AQJxx
KQx	KQx
Qxx	AKx

After a **1H** opening bid and a **1S** response, discuss the re-bids of **1-NT** and **2-NT**, respectively.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON THREE

1. Tell your students to bid the first hand. Prior to the play have them check with you to make sure they have chosen the correct Trump suit.
2. When every table has finished, demonstrate the proper bidding and play, before they move on to the second hand.

HAND - 5

	2		
	KJ10987		
	AK2		
	AJ2		
A1098		Q76	Dealer: North
2		A43	Declarer: North
Q54		109876	Contract: 4H
K10987		65	Lead: D10
	KJ543		
	Q65		
	J3		
	Q43		

a) The correct bidding is:

1H —P— 1S —P
3H — P -- 4H

Be sure to explain each call.

b) The play: since there is a certain loser in Hearts and Spades and a possible one in Clubs, the object is to avoid losing a Diamond, too. Cover the D10 with the DJ. When that does not win, play the DAK and trump the third one. Note that if Declarer attempts to draw three rounds of Trumps right away, there is no escaping the Diamond loser.

HAND - 6

	109		
	Q32		
	5432		
	KQJ10		
6		KJ5432	Dealer: East
AK876		J109	Declarer: West
AKJ		Q	Contract: 4H
A432		765	Lead: CK
	AQ87		
	54		
	109876		
	98		

a) The correct bidding is:

P—P -- 1H -- P
IS—P—3C -- P
3H—P—4H

Be sure to explain each call.

b) Explain as well why North leads a Club and more specifically why the K.

c) Potentially, Declarer can lose three Club tricks, a Heart, and a Spade. To avoid some Club losers, again it is important to delay drawing Trumps. Win the CA, cash the DAKJ (dropping the Q under the A), and discard two Clubs from the Dummy. Trump a Club, return to the HA, and trump a second Club.