

BRIDGE - BEGINNER'S LESSONS I - 04

Responder's Description

THE RESPONDER - The Partner of the Opening Bidder is called the **Responder**, who, having the advantage of having heard the opening Partner describe his/her hand, can assume partial responsibility for guiding the Partnership to the best contract as to both level and denomination. Remember, the level of the final contract is decided by the **combined strengths** of the Partnership; and the denomination is determined by the presence or absence of a **golden fit**; i.e., 8 cards or more in any of the four suits. In this manner, through communication via the bidding process, the Partnership can determine whether the team belongs in a **Part Score**, in a **Game**, or in a **Slam**, and in which of the four suits as trump, or in No-Trump.

GENERAL APPROACH OF THE RESPONDER'S RESPONSES TO OPENING SUIT BIDS:

When the opening bid is one of a suit, the Opener has not yet given a well-defined picture of his/her hand. He/she could have anywhere from 12-21 high-card points (or more), and the hand could be balanced **or** unbalanced. Before deciding the best place to play the contract, Responder, therefore, needs further information from the Opener. Most of Responder's bids, therefore, are **forcing**, because the Responder, with a two exceptions (a simple raise of Opener's suit and a response of **1-NT**), has not yet shown an upper limit to his/her High-Card Points. Opener, therefore, **guarantees** a re-bid to give a more specific description of his/her hand so that Responder can then captain the team to both the level and denomination of the final contract. Responses to an opening bid of one of a suit can be grouped into one of four categories according to high-card point value, and since the Responder usually begins with fewer points than the Opener, the relevant ranges are necessarily different. A Responder is cautioned to initially to count **only** HCP's and not to count distributional points until and unless a "**Golden Fit**" of 8 or more cards is discovered in an agreed-upon suit.

Responses by the Responder

1. 0-5 High-Card Points (**Too Few HCP's to respond**) = "**Pass**"
2. 6-10 High-Card Points (**Minimum Count**) = A single raise in Opener's suit, a new suit at the 1-Level, or a **1-NT** "**default**" bid
3. 11-12 High-Card Points (**Invitational Count**) = A new suit at the 1-Level, or at the 2-Level if Responder's suit is lower-ranking, a jump raise in Opener's suit, or a **2-NT** bid
4. 13 High-Card Points or more (**Game-Going Count**) = A new sit bid which is forcing, and eventually a game-level contract is bid either by Opener or by Responder.

Once there is an agreed-upon Trump suit, **but never before**, both Players may add **additional** points for distributional shortness. Now, under these circumstances when a "**Golden Fit**" has been discovered, shortness in outside suits becomes even more valuable and a Void now becomes worth 5 Points, a Singleton becomes valued at 3 Points, and a Doubleton remains at 1 Point..

Note: The level of Responder's second bid is determined by the size of Responder's hand. Also, whenever either Opener or Responder supports the same suit bid by the other Partner, he/she exhibits, at the very least, the number of pieces of that supported suit which coupled with the **minimum** number of pieces shown by the other Partner, confirms a "**Golden Fit**" in that suit.

RESPONDER'S DESCRIPTION

1. The Responder must answer a one-level opening bid in a suit with **6 or more high-card points**.

This creates the following ranges for describing size:

- a) 6-10 HCP's (minimum)
- b) 11-12 HCP's (invitational)
- c) 13-15 HCP's (game-going).
- d) 19 (+) HCP's

(Extra-strong = Make a "Jump-Shift" into another suit by skipping one level of bidding)

2. There are five common bids for Responder's first response.

- a) **Pass**, which promises 0-5 high-card points.
- b) **Single raise** (e.g., 1S - 2S), which promises 6-10 points, including distribution (*), and ordinarily at least four cards in the suit (sometimes, three will do for a major suit).
- c) **New suit at the one level**, which promises six or more high-card points and four or more cards. This is also a forcing call, meaning that the Opener must bid again. **A new suit, bid by Responder, is usually forcing for 1-round!**
- d) **New suit at the 2-level**, which promises 11 or more high-card points, four or more cards, and is also forcing. This is necessitated if Responder's suit is lower-ranking than Opener's suit.
- e) **One No-Trump ("Default Bid")**, which promises 6-10 high-card points but not necessarily a balanced hand. One should **only** make this bid when none of the other above-referenced bids apply.

3. The size of the Responder's hand determines the level for his/her second bid.

- a) **With 6-10 high-card points** the second response (unless forced) never goes beyond the 2-level in a suit, and is usually just a preference among the previously mentioned suits.
- b) **With 11-12 high-card points** the second response is usually 2-NT or three of a previously mentioned suit, both of which are invitational to game.
- c) **With 13-15 high-card points** the second response is either in a new suit (forcing) or a direct jump to game.

(*) **As soon as there is an agreed-upon trump suit, but not before, both Players can add in extra points for distribution. A void is now worth 5 extra points, a singleton is worth 2, and a doubleton just 1.**

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON FOUR

RESPONDER'S DESCRIPTION

A. Following a review of the opener's description, explain that the responder proceeds similarly, defining size and shape, except for two basic differences.

1. Since the responder begins with fewer points than the opener, the relevant ranges are necessarily different.

6-10	=	minimum count
11-12	=	invitational count
13-15	=	game-going count

2. Also, since the responder is obliged to bid with as little as six points, it isn't always practical to show the true shape without getting too high in the bidding.

B. For the first call, there are five common responses that you will need to discuss.

1. **Pass.** This shows 0-5 points and can be based on any kind of distribution. A new suit by the opener is not forcing, so the pass is a perfectly acceptable call. Note: this would be a good time to discuss *forcing* and *non-forcing* bids.

2. **Single raise.** This shows 6-10 points and enough cards to support the opener's suit. Explain why it takes four or more cards to raise a minor suit but only three for a major. Note: this would be a good time to discuss distributional points for evaluating a hand. * It is strongly recommended that students be advised *not* to count distributional points ahead of time but only if they discover a fit with eight or more cards in the agreed-upon suit.

3. **New suit at the one-level.** This promises six or more points and four or more cards. The important issue to discuss is why a new suit by the responder is in fact forcing (because the responder has not shown an upper limit on points).

Note: It is best to keep evaluation at the simplest possible level for beginners. The easiest approach is to teach them that both players get to count extra points for shortness, according to the normal 3-2-1 scale, once they discover a fit. Do not raise the issues of long-suit points, dummy points, unprotected honors, etc., as this will only confuse them.

4. *New suit at the two-level.* This promises exactly the same thing as a new suit at the one level but with extra points, 11 or more. *

5. *1-NT.* This is the catch-all bid, when the previous four common responses do not apply. Thus, in the auction 1H – 1-NT, the 1-NT response shows at least six points (because of the failure to pass), fewer than four hearts (because of the failure to raise), fewer than four spades (for failure to bid the suit), and no more than 10 points (for failure to bid a new suit at the two level). The INT response shows 6-10 points, but it does *not* guarantee a balanced hand.

C. The next item to discuss is how the responder bids at the second turn. The basic strategy depends on the strength of the responder's hand. **

1. With 6-10 points, the second bid is usually just a simple preference among the previous offerings without going beyond the two-level in a suit. In the auction,

1 H - IS
2C

The responder with minimum values can pass (to prefer clubs), return to 2H, or repeat the spades (with 6 or more cards). Nothing else is permitted.

2. With 11-12 points, the second bid usually invites a game by going beyond the two level in a suit, either to 2-NT or to three of a previously mentioned suit. In the auction above 2-NT, 3C, 3H, and 3S are all invitational bids which can be passed.

3. With 13-15 points, the second bid must either be forcing (e.g., a new suit) or it must occur at the game level.

* If you are more comfortable using 10 or more, be sure to stress that it is a very good 10 or more. Technically, a 2-over-1 response should always be worth at least an invitation to game.

** This section can become long and involved. Be prepared to offer a simple outline, since you probably will not have sufficient time to cover all the details.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON FOUR

1. Use the same format that you followed for the last lesson. After they bid the first hand and you “correct” their contract, have them play it.
2. When all the tables are finished and you have discussed the hand, tell them to proceed to the second one.

HAND -7

	4		
	Q876		
	A5432		
	Q65		
8765		J109	Dealer: North
32		A54	Declarer: South
Q7		KJ1098	Contract: 3H
AK987		J10	Lead: CA (or CK)
	AKQ32		
	KJ109		
	6		
	432		

- a) Give instructions that East and West are not to bid. Then, the recommended auction would be:

P -- P – 1S —P
1NT - P - 2H - P
P or 3H - P - P- P

Be sure to explain why North’s first bid is 1NT and why South should pass 3H. If North mistakenly starts with 2D, South will be in game.

- b) The defense should start with CA, CK, and club ruff, which together with the HA will hold declarer to nine tricks.
- c) After declarer draws the trumps, the spade suit is easily established.

HAND - 8

	KJI09		
	432		
	876		
	QJ10		
AQ876		2	Dealer: East
A109		KQJ87	Declarer: East
J52		Q43	Contract: 4H
54		AK32	Lead: DA (or DK)
	543		
	65		
	AK109		
	9876		

a) The recommended auction is:

1H—P— 1S—P
2C - P - 3H — P
4H

Be sure to explain the bidding, especially the 3H call.

b) After the opponents take the DAK, declarer can make 11 tricks by cashing the CAK and then ruffing two long clubs. Declarer needs to do this, however, before leading trumps. The entries back to declarer's hand are by ruffing spades.