

NO-TRUMP BIDDING

Requirements For Bidding No-Trump

Three requirements are necessary for a hand to qualify as appropriate for No-Trump consideration by an Opening Bidder: (1), a relatively even distribution of cards (by length) amongst the four suits; (2), a specific HCP count, dependent upon whether the Partnership is using the “**Standard American**” system of bidding (requiring **15-17** HCP’s), or the “**British ACOL**” system of bidding (requiring **12-14** HCP’s); and, (3), a roughly even distribution of honor cards among the four suits. This last requirement, although desirable, is not considered mandatory. When contemplating a No-Trump contract, it is especially important to note that **only High-Card Points** (HCP’s) are considered. **Distributional points** are not counted because it is never advantageous to hold shortness in any suit when playing the hand in a No-Trump contract.

Until recently, in order to qualify as an **evenly-balanced hand**, there had to be an absence of any voids *or* singletons. The three distributions which met these old standards were hands constructed with a **4-3-3-3**, a **4-4-3-2**, or a **5-3-3-2** shape, with the 5-card suit, customarily, not a Major suit. In addition, several years ago, hands with a distribution containing two doubletons; i.e., hands with a **5-4-2-2** distribution, were added as being acceptable.

In 2016, three distributions, **semi-balanced in** shape, now deemed to be acceptable, were added to the above-listed four. It is now acceptable for Players to open **1-NT** with hands that contain a singleton **Ace, King, or Queen, as long as the hand is without an outside doubleton**. This, therefore, includes the following distributions: **5-4-3-1**, **6-3-3-1**, and **4-4-4-1**. More shapely hands, such as ones with a **5-5-2-1**, a **6-4-2-1**, or a **7-2-2-2** distribution are, therefore, disallowed.

When holding a balanced or semi-balanced hand, as any described above, an Opening Bidder will show his/her point count as follows:

Point Count Holdings for No Trump Bidding

0-11 HCP's - Pass

Standard American

ACOL System

12-14 HCP's - **Open** one of a Suit and then Re-bid **1-NT**

Open **1-NT**

15-17 HCP's - **Open 1-NT**

Open one of a Suit and then Re-bid 1-NT

Both Standard American and ACOL Systems

18-20 HCP's - **Open One of a Suit, then Re-bid 2-NT** with 18-19 HCP’s, or
3-NT with 20 HCP’s

21-22 HCP's - **Open 2-NT**

(This HCP count range is by Partnership agreement – Some prefer 20-22 HCP’s, while others prefer 20-21 HCP’s)

23-24 HCP's - **Open "2C" and then Re-bid 2-NT**

25-26 HCP's - **Open "2C" and then Re-bid 3-NT**

Responses to 1-NT Opening Bids

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The Opening Bidder, having opened **1-NT**, has fully described his/her hand; i.e., one having **15-17 HCP's** in the **Standard American System** or **12-14 HCP's** in the **British ACOL System**, an evenly-balanced distribution, and the likely absence in the **Standard American** (5-card Major) System of any 5-card Major suit holding. Responder, knowing more about the Opener's hand than Opener knows about the Responder's hand, must take control, acting as the “**Captain**” of the team, steering the Partnership into the best contract as to both level and denomination.

Level: The Responder (Partner of the **1-NT** Opening Bidder, becomes the “**Captain**” of any furtherance of the bidding) knowing the HCP count of Opener's hand (**15-17** in the Standard American System and **12-14** in the British ACOL System) must determine the level to which the Partnership should commit: **A Part Score** (Game not Possible), **An Invitation to Game** (Game possible, but not certain), **A Game-Level Contract** (Game a certainty), or **Slam** (Bonus Levels above and beyond Game). His/her basis for this decision is the combined High-Card Point Count of the Partnership as it relates to the 26 Point Count holding which usually produces a Game in No-Trump and the Major suits, 28 Point Count holding for a Game in the Minor suits, and the 33 and 37 Point Count holdings for **Small Slams** and **Grand Slams**, respectively.

Denomination: If a **Golden Fit** (an 8-card or better combined suit holding) is present, especially if it is in one of the Major suits, the hand will then usually play best in a suit contract rather than in No Trump, regardless of which of the above-listed levels is chosen. Here too, however, just as with the level of the final contract, the Responder acts as the ultimate “**Captain**” of the team with respect to the eventual choice as to the denomination of the final contract.

Responder Should Place his/her Hand into Three Categories:

0-8 HCP's in “Standard American” (0-11 HCP's in “ACOL”)

Possibly bid a 2-Level bid – a “**Shut-Out**” bid with a 5-card or longer suit - Bid **2D**, **2H** or **2S** – Otherwise, “**Pass**”

(An artificial bid of “**2C**” is reserved for the “**Stayman**” Convention, and “**Jacoby Transfer**” **Bids** are also available for use here, but are not discussed within this lesson).

9-10 HCP's in “Standard American” (12-13 HCP's in “ACOL”)

Invite Opener to Game by bidding **2-NT**, inviting Opener to **3-NT** if he/she holds a maximum Point Count.

11-15 HCP's in “Standard American” (14-18 HCP's in “ACOL”)

Force to Game:

- (1) With a 6-card or longer Major suit - Bid **4H** or **4S**
- (2) With a 5-card Major Suit - Bid **3H** or **3S**, otherwise bid **3-NT**
- (3) **5C** or **5D**, with a 6-card Minor suit holding, is rarely bid)

(**Note**) (Holdings, such as these, usually produce a **3-NT** makeable contract)

NO-TRUMP BIDDING

1. A **Stopper** is an honor with enough protecting spot-cards (e.g., **K2**, **Q32**, or **J432**) so as to prevent the Opponents from winning all the tricks in that suit simply by cashing the top cards. One should have this in at least *three of the four suits* in order to consider an opening **1-NT** bid.
2. A **Balanced or Semi-Balanced Hand** is one that has a relatively even distribution of the cards by length. Today, seven hand-patterns qualify as being balanced or semi-balanced.
(4-3-3-3) (4-4-3-2) (5-3-3-2) (5-4-2-2)
(5-4-3-1) (6-3-3-1) (4-4-4-1) (as long as the Singleton is an A, K, or Q)

3. The Opener shows a balanced hand in one or two bids, according to the number of high-card point's (HCP's), as follows:

Standard American

ACOL System

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) With 12-14 HCP's - Open one of a suit and re-bid 1-NT | Open 1-NT |
| b) With 15-17 - Open 1-NT | Open one of a suit and re-bid 1-NT |
| c) With 18-19 HCP's - Open one of a suit and then re-bid 2-NT | |
| d) With 20 HCP's - Open one of a suit and then re-bid 3-NT | |
| e) With 21-22 HCP's - Open 2-NT (This range is by Partnership agreement) | |
| f) With 23-24 HCP's - Open " 2C " and then re-bid 2-NT | |
| g) With 25-26 HCP's - Open " 2C " and then re-bid 3-NT | |

4. The basic responses to a **1-NT** opening bid depend on the Responder's hand as to both size and shape, and which of the systems, **Standard American** or **ACOL**, is used by the Partnership.

a) **"Pass"**: This shows 0-8 HCP's in Standard American and 0-11 HCP's in ACOL, usually **without** a long suit. Or: **A 2-bid in a suit**: These are very weak ("Sign-Off Bids"), showing five or more cards in the suit bid. (Jacoby Transfers and Stayman "2C" are also used here, by Partnership agreement)

b) **Raising the No-Trump: "2-NT" (Invitational to Game)** shows 9-10 high-card points in Standard American and 12-13 HCP's in ACOL, and **"3-NT" (Game)** shows 11-15 in Standard American and 14-18 HCP's in ACOL, both **without** a major suit interest.

c) **"2C"**: This is a special bid that is helpful in exploring for a 4-4 major suit fit (the Stayman Convention – Not herein discussed).

d) **3-Bids in a Suit**: These are strong and forcing, showing 11 or more high-card points (HCP's) in Standard American and 14 or more in ACOL, and five cards in the sui bid, in both systems. These are Game-Forcing Bids used in the absence of Jacoby Transfer Bids – Not herein discussed.

e) **Game Bids in a Major Suit**: These show 11 or more total points in Standard American and 14 or more in ACOL, including distribution, and six or more cards in the suit bid, in both systems.

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON FIVE

NOTRUMP BIDDING

- A. Briefly review the preceding lesson.
- B. Explain the two principal characteristics of a balanced hand:
1. A roughly even distribution of the cards (by length) among the four suits: one doubleton at most for the shortest suit, five cards allowable for the longest.
 2. A roughly even distribution of the high-card points or honors among the four suits. (Be sure to define and explain what a *stopper* is.)
- C. Discuss how the opener bids balanced hands according to the number of points. Emphasize the notion that NT bids are based purely on high-card points with no adjustment for distribution.
1. With 0-11 HC points and a balanced hand the opener will pass.
 2. With 12-14 HC points (in S.A.) the opener bids in a suit at the one level and re-bids in NT at the lowest available level, e.g., In ACOL, opener opens 1-NT.
 3. With 15-17 HC points in S.A. the opening bid is 1NT. In ACOL, opener opens one-of-a-suit, and re-bids 1-NT.
 4. With 18-20 HC points the opener bids in a suit at the one level and re-bids by jump-shifting in NT, e.g.,
 5. With 21-22 HC points and a balanced hand the opening bid is 2NT.
 6. With 23-24 points the opening bid is “2C” with a re-bid of 2-NT.

D. Discuss the 1NT opening and how the responder reacts to it.

1. The specific requirements for 1NT are 15-17 high-card points (12-14 in ACOL) and a balanced hand with full stoppers in at least three suits.
2. The responder, now armed with the knowledge of two hands, takes charge of the bidding.
3. The specific responses are as follows (you might have to skip through some parts of this section relatively quickly):
 - a) “**Pass**” shows a weak hand, usually with 0-7 points and no 5-card or longer suit.
 - b) **Raises of NT** tend to show a balanced hand (or a long minor suit) with a specific count:

2NT = 8-9 HC points, inviting game
3NT = 10-15 HC points
4NT = 16-17 HC points, inviting slam

(These ranges are correspondingly variant in ACOL)

- c) **Two-level bids in a suit** (other than clubs) are shutout, showing 0-7 points and a 5-card or longer suit. Explain what a shutout bid is and why the responder is allowed to answer with zero points.
- d) **Three-level bids in a suit, usually a major**, are forcing, showing 10 or more HC points and a 5-card or longer suit. The opener is asked to raise the suit with three or more cards or to bid 3NT with exactly two.
- e) **Game bids in a major suit** are shutout, usually showing 10 or more total points, including distribution, and a 6-card or longer suit.
- f) **Two clubs** is the Stayman Convention. It is best to mention it only in passing as an attempt to locate a 4-4 fit in a major. Any further discussion at this stage would be overwhelming. Alternatively, you could simply ignore the subject.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON FIVE

HAND - 9

	KQ3			
	AK5			
	A54			
	5432			
10987		654	Dealer:	North
Q876		J109	Declarer:	North
876		KQJ109	Contract:	3NT
A8		76	Lead:	DK
	AJ2			
	432			
	32			
	KQJ109			

- a) The recommended auction is:

1NT—P---3NT

Be sure to explain why North opens INT and why South does not bid the clubs (2C is Stayman, and 3C will encourage North to raise the Suit).

- b) Explain how declarer counts the winners as three spades, two hearts, one diamond, and four clubs (once the CA is driven out).
- c) With the DK lead show what happens if declarer wins the DA right away, cashes all the top cards, and then starts the clubs.
- d) Explain the holdup play and demonstrate how declarer can succeed simply by refusing to win the DA until the third round and then driving out the CA, before cashing the other winners.

HAND – 10

	76			
	J1098			
	765			
	QJ109			
QJ1098		K32	Dealer:	East
A32		KQ54	Declarer:	West
432		AJ	Contract	4S
K5		A432	Lead:	CQ
	A54			
	76			
	KQ1098			
	876			

- a) The recommended auction is:

INT —P---3S ---P
4S

Explain all the bids, especially why East should raise to 4S and not re-bid 3NT.

- b) Demonstrate what would have happened if the contract had been 3NT and South had led the DK (down one).
- c) In 4S declarer has only three possible losers, the SA and two diamonds. The hand will make 11 tricks, provided declarer gives up one diamond loser and ruffs the other, prior to drawing trumps.