

**BRIDGE – INTERMEDIATE LESSONS I – 34**  
**RESPONDING TO PARTNER’S ONE-OF-A-SUIT OPENING**  
**WITHOUT SUPPORT**

Responder to Partner’s opening of one of a suit customarily attempts to bid with 6 or more HCP’s, and is governed by the following maxims:

1. **When at the 1-level, Responder must bid “Up the Ladder,” without regard for a suit’s strength, promising never to by-pass a 4-card suit.** This is especially important in the “Standard American” bidding system where the Opener cannot open a Major without holding at least 5-pieces.

**Ex:** AKJX XXXX QXX XX (Partner opens 1C, Respond 1H not 1S)

2. **Assuming no overcall by Responder’s RHO, Responder may bid any new suit provided it has at least four or more pieces and Responder holds 6 or more HCP’s at the 1-level, and 11 or more HCP’s at the 2-level.** The only exception to this is a response of 2H following Opener’s opening bid of 1S which guarantees 5 or more Hearts.

**Ex:** QX AXX XXXX AQXX (Partner opens 1S, Respond 2D)  
 AX KXXXX XX KQXX (Partner opens 1S, Respond 2H)  
 AX AXXX XXX AXXX (Partner opens 1S, Respond 2C, not 2H)

3. **Since Responder must respond with 6 or more HCP’s, but cannot show a new suit at the 2-level with fewer than 11 HCP’s, a 1-NT “default” bid is sometimes necessary to satisfy the obligation to bid.** Such responses do not necessarily guarantee either a balanced distribution or stoppers in any of the un-bid suits.

**Ex:** JXX XXX --- AKXXXXX (Partner opens 1D, Respond 1-NT not 2C)

4. **A response of 1-NT opposite Partner’s opening of any suit shows 6-10 HCP’s, a 2-NT response customarily shows 11-12 HCP’s opposite Opener’s Minor opening of 1C or 1D, and 13-15 HCP’s opposite Opener’s Major suit opening of 1H or 1S.** All guarantee evenly-balanced hands and tend to deny the presence of either 4-card Major suits.

**Ex:** AX KXX QXX XXXXX (Partner opens 1D, Respond 1-NT)  
 QXX AXX AQX XXXX (Partner opens 1C, Respond 2-NT)  
 AXX KQX XXX KQXX (Partner opens 1D, Respond 3-NT)

5. **With 4-4 in the Majors, respond in the lower-ranking suit (Hearts) first to a Minor Suit (Club or Diamond) opening bid (“Up-the-Ladder”). With 5-5, or 5-4 respond in the higher-ranking (Spades) first.**

**Ex:** (a) AJXX QXXX XX QXX (Partner opens 1C, respond 1H)  
 (b) KJXXX KQXX(X) XX X(x) (Partner opens 1D, respond 1S)

6. **With a 5-card Major suit and 5 HCP’s or a 6-card Major suit with 4 HCP’s, do not “Pass” a Minor suit opening bid by Partner if your RHO (the second hand) “Passes.”**

**Ex:** (a) QXXXX KXX XXX XX (Partner opens 1C, Respond 1S)  
 (b) QXX QXXXXX XX XX (Partner opens 1D, Respond 1H)

7. **With a 5-4 distribution in the Major suits, and less than opening count, if Responder’s 5-card suit is Spades, Responder should bid the Spade suit first. If the 5-card suit is Hearts, then bid the Heart suit first.**

**Ex:** AKXXX AXXX XX XX (Partner opens 1D, Respond 1S)  
 AXXX AKXXX XX XX (Partner opens 1C, Respond 1H)

8. With a 5-4 distribution in the Major suits, and opening count or better, Responder should always bid the 5-card suit before the 4-card suit, irrespective of which one holds the 5-cards.

Ex: (a) A Q X X X A K J X X X X (Partner opens 1C, Respond 1S)  
(b) A Q X X A K X X X X X (Partner opens 1C, Respond 1H)

9. A Jump-shift is, by Partnership agreement, either very weak {3-5 HCP's with a 6-card suit} Example (a), or very strong {19 or more HCP's without regard as to length} as seen in Example (b). These responses are mutually exclusive.

Ex: (a) X X K X X X X Q X X X X (Partner opens 1D, Respond 2H)  
(b) A K J X A K X K Q X X X X (Partner opens 1C, Respond 2S)

10. In competition, any response by Opener's Partner (Responder) promises at least a 5-card suit due to the presence of an overcall by Responder's RHO. With only a 4-card suit and/or less than 11 HCP's, Responder must use the "Negative Double" in lieu of an inadequate response with either a 4-card suit, or fewer than 11 HCP's, or both. In the following examples, Partner has opened 1S and your RHO has overcalled 2D:

Ex: (a) X X A Q X X X X X K Q X X (Respond 2H, You have a 5-card suit and the requisite 11 or more HCP's.)  
(b) X X K Q X X X X X A K X X ("Double" (Negative) - You have the requisite 11 or more HCP's but only a 4-card Heart suit.)  
(c) X X K Q X X X X X K X X X ("Double" (Negative) - You have the requisite 5-card suit but not the required 11 or more HCP's.)  
(d) X X K Q X X X X X K X X X ("Double" (Negative) - You have neither the requisite 5-card suit nor the required 11 or more HCP's.)

11. Under usual circumstances, when Partner opens a Minor suit, and you, as Responder, are faced with an overcall of a Major suit (Hearts or Spades) by your RHO, a "Double" (Negative) by you evidences a 4-card holding in the alternate Major suit.

Ex. Bidding has proceeded: a) 1C --- 1H --- Db1. (Shows 4 Spades)  
or: b) 1D --- 1S --- Db1. (Shows 4 Hearts)

12. When Partner opens 1C, and you, as Responder, are faced with an overcall of 1D by your RHO, a "Double" (Negative) by you, evidences a 4-card holding in both Major suits, or, at the very least, 4 pieces of one, and 3 pieces; i.e., tolerance, for the other. The point count for a "Negative Double" is unlimited.

Ex. Bidding has proceeded: 1C --- 1D --- Db1. You should have:  
(A Q X X X X X X X X J X X) or (X X X X A Q X X X Q X X X) or (Q X X A X X X K X X X X X)

13. When Partner opens one of a suit followed by a "Take-Out Double" by your RHO, a "Re-Double" by you, as Responder, evidences 9 or more HCP's and tends to deny support for Opener's suit. A response of any new suit evidences fewer than 9 HCP's.

Ex. Bidding has proceeded: 1H --- Db1. --- Re-Db1.  
(You hold: A X X X X A K X X X X X X)

Ex. Bidding has proceeded: 1H --- Db1. --- 2C  
(You hold: X X X X X X X X A Q X X X X)