

BRIDGE – INTERMEDIATE LESSONS II – 12

Bidding 2-Suited & 3-Suited Hands

Statistically, there are many more two-suited hands (holding a minimum shape of five cards, or more, in one suit and four cards, or more, in a second suit) than there are balanced or single-suited hands. Two-suited hands include five-fours, five-fives, six-fours, six-fives, six-sixes, seven-fours, seven-fives, and, very infrequently, even seven-sixes.

- 1. The Minimum Point Count for Opening Two-Suited Hands:** Many two-suited hands, even with fewer than 12 HCP's, have strong trick-taking potential (“*playing strength*”) as a result of their distributions, if a “**Golden Fit**” is uncovered, and should, therefore, be opened. *Add the high-card points) HCP's to the number of cards in the two longest suits (“The Rule of 20”).* If the numerical result is 20 or more, open the bidding.

a. With: A65 K843 A8762 3: (Open 1D)

b. With: AJ7532 KJ10753 6: (Open 1S)

“*The Rule of 20*” should not be applied to hands containing a singleton or doubleton losing honor such as **K, Q, J, QX, or JX**. Honor cards in short suits must be devalued when applying “*The Rule of 20*.”

With: Q6 K7642 Q9653 K: (“Pass”)

Very strong two-suited hands should open at the 1-level, not “2C.” If the bidding is begun at the 2-level, the auction often escalates too high, too quickly, and, as a result, the two-suited shape remains un-disclosed, and a “*Golden Fit*” might be missed.

WITH: 6 AKQ5 AKJ643 K5: (Open 1D – If you open “2C,” you might have to bid to the 4-level in order to show your length in your two suits.)

- 2. Re-bidding Two-Suited Hands:** On many occasions, it takes more than two bids to describe a two-suited hand. The more extreme the distribution, the more bids it may take to describe the hand's shape. In general, however, **after opening with a 1-level suit bid, and a re-bid at the 2-level or higher in a new suit, one has shown a two-suited, unbalanced hand.**

- a. **Five-fours (Bid 5-4):** When holding one suit with 5-cards and one with 4-cards, Opener first bids his/her 5-card suit and then re-bids his/her 4-card suit. If the second suit bid is of lower rank than the first-bid suit, Opener's HCP range is 11-18 HCP's (Examples 1 & 2), and is not forcing. If the second suit is higher ranking than the first then Opener is said to have “*Reversed*,” and this shows 17 or more HCP's and is forcing for 1-round (Example 3).

When Opener re-bids a new suit at the 2-level or higher, he/she has shown a minimum of 4-cards in the second suit, and no fewer than 5-cards in the first bid suit.

(1) With: AK876 KQ84 A9 J4: (Open 1S and re-bid 2H)

(2) With: A76 8 KQ654 A642: (Open 1D and re-bid 2C)

(3) With: AQ87 AKQ76 K65 3: (Open 1H and re-bid 2S)

- b. **Six-fours (Bid 6-4-6):** In order to show a 6-4 distribution, Opener must first open the 6-card suit, then re-bid his/her 4-card suit, assuming the second suit is lower-ranking than the first, and lastly, with his/her third bid, re-bid the 6-card suit (Example 1). Because Opener requires three bids to show a 6-4 shape, it frequently takes the bidding to the 3-level to accomplish this.

(1) With: AK7532 Q964 A7 9: (Open 1S. If Responder were to bid 2C, Opener should re-bid 2H. If given the opportunity to bid yet again, Opener should re-bid Spades, now evidencing the 6-4 shape.)

- c. **Five-fives (Bid 5{Higher-Ranking}-5{Lower-Ranking}-5{Lower-Ranking}):** With two suits of 5-cards each, it also may take three bids to describe this distribution as in the 6-4 hand described above. Opener first bids his/her higher-ranking (HR) suit, and then re-bids the lower-ranking (LR) suit on his/her first re-bid. With Opener's third bid the lower-ranking (LR) suit is then bid once again (Example 1). **Bidding a second suit twice shows a minimum of 5-cards in that suit.**

(1) With: QJ732 KQ954 7 K5: (Open 1S, prepared to re-bid 2H. On Opener's third bid, Opener must re-bid the Heart suit (3H).)

- d. **Six-fives (Bid 6-5-5-6):** Most 6-5's are shown as 5-5's, and then, if needed, a fourth bid is made to show the 6-card suit (Example 1). **With a 6-5 distribution, one usually opens the higher-ranking suit first, even if this means bidding your 5-card suit before your 6-card suit** (Example 2).

(1) With: 9 AQJ752 AK763 8: (Open 1S. After Partner responds 2C, Opener's second bid is 2D. When Partner then re-bids 2-NT, Opener follows with a 3D bid. At this point, Opener has shown a 5-5. If Partner's next bid is 3-NT, Opener's fourth bid should be 4H to complete the showing of this 6-5 shape.)

(2) With: 9 AQJ75 AK7632 8: (Opener's bids should still be H - D - D - H, as above.)

3. Re-bidding with Minimum Two-Suited Hands:

- a. When Opener holds minimum HCP values, he/she must be careful not to push the auction up too high without sufficient HCP strength to play in a No-Trump contract at that level if No-Trump ends up being the best contract.

With: A KQ843 85 Q9865: (After you open 1H and Partner responds 1S, you re-bid 2C. When Partner then responds 2S you must "Pass." You do not have sufficient strength to re-bid 3C, which you would normally do with a 5-5 distribution, but here, it might result in Responder bidding 3-NT, likely to be an un-makeable contract.)

- b. When you have opened with a 5-4 distribution, and Partner responds to your opening bid with a suit which is higher ranking than your second suit, you should *not* bid your second suit at the 2-level with minimum values as this would constitute a "**Reverse**." Alternatively, Opener must choose either to re-bid his/her 5-card suit (Example 1), as if it held 6-pieces; or re-bid 1-NT (Example 2), even if holding an unbalanced hand.

- (1) With: 8 AQ87 AQJ76 876: (You open 1D. Partner responds 1S. Your re-bid should be 2D, not 2H which would be a "Reverse.")
- (2) With: K5 A765 AQJ43 J2: (You open 1D. Partner responds 1S. Your re-bid should be 1-NT, not 2H which, once again, would be a "Reverse," showing 17 or more HCP's.

One of the most common errors inexperienced Players make is to re-bid a new suit at the 2-level with minimum HCP values when they should re-bid in the opened suit or in No-Trump instead. To "Reverse" with too few HCP's is an inexcusable bidding error.

c. When you open with minimum HCP values, and Partner responds in a new suit at the 2-level, your second bid is allowed to be 2-NT.

With: 8 AK64 J8765 Q3: (You open 1D and Partner responds 2C. Your second bid should be 2-NT. Do not re-bid 2H as Partner has, most likely, denied a 4-card Heart suit having bypassed the Heart suit with his/her 2C first response. (Note: If the Partnership is using the "Two-Over-One" bidding system, 2H would be an acceptable bid here as in this system of bidding, since the Partnership is already in a game-forcing auction, anyhow, bidding 2H, here, would not be considered a "Reverse.")

4. Responding to Two-Suited Hands Bid By Opener: A non-jump, non-reverse, new suit, bid by Opener is not forcing on his/her responding Partner (Example 1). Opener has limited his/her HCP count from 11-18 HCP's and if Responder holds a mere 5-7 HCP's, he/she need not make a re-bid. Only if Opener had made a "**Jump-Shift**" (Example 2) or a "**Reverse**" (Example 3) call, would Opener's re-bid have been forcing.

- (1) 1H - 1S - 2D (A non-jump, non-reverse re-bid by Opener = Not forcing)
- (2) 1H - 1S - 3D (A jump-shift by Opener = Forcing to Game)
- (3) 1D - 1S - 2H (A "Reverse" by Opener = Forcing for 1-round)

5. Three-Suited Hands: When Opener holds a (4-4-4-1) or a (5-4-4-0) shape, he/she is said to have a three-suited hand. Although these hands are rare on most deals, when holding such shapes the Partnership will, most likely, have an 8-card, or better, suit fit.

a. **A 4-4-4-1 Shape:** With opening strength, one must open at the 1-level with one's lowest-ranking suit, prepared to bid "**Up-the-Ladder**," until a fit is found, if possible.

(1) If Responder shows a suit in which you, with minimum opening values, hold a Trump fit, add another 3 points and make a jump-raise.

With: 9753 KQ84 5 AKJ3: (Open 1C. If Partner responds 1H or 1S, jump to 3H or 3S, respectively.)

(2) When opening with minimum values (11-14 HCP's), and Partner has responded in your singleton, do not bid one of your other 4-card suits if Partner has "Passed" over your other two suits. Alternatively, re-bid 1-NT even though your hand is unbalanced. With: 6 KQ74 J763 AQ32: (Open 1C. If Partner responds 1S, your correct re-bid is to bid 1-NT. Responder has "Passed" over your Diamonds and Hearts and your Partnership will, most likely, not have a fit of 8-cards in either of these two suits.)

(3) Do not re-bid No-Trump if you have an unbalanced 3-suited hand and there is still some chance of finding a Trump fit in one of your suits.

With: A874 4 AQ32 K653: (Open 1D. If Partner responds 1H, re-bid 1S,) "**Up-the-Ladder**"

b. **A 5-4-4-0 Shape:** With opening values, one must open at the 1-level in his/her 5-card suit.

(1) If Partner shows a suit in which you have a Trump fit, you should bid aggressively with your second bid. Your void is worth an additional 5-points, and so, you should usually bid directly to a game-level contract with your second bid. With: 8654 KQ75 - AKJ86: (Open 1C. After Partner responds 1S, you should re-bid 4S.)

(2) If Partner responds with a bid in your void suit, you should re-bid at the lowest level in one of your other 4-card suits, but only if Partner has not "Passed over" showing that suit.

With: 9653 -- AK743 AJ83: (Open 1D. After Partner responds 1H, re-bid 1S)

With: 8743 AQ764 AJ76 --: (Open 1H. After Partner responds 2C, re-bid 2D)

(3) When you hold minimum opening values (11-14 HCP's), and Partner has bid your void, do not re-bid one of your other 4-card suits if Responder has "Passed over" these suits. Prefer instead to re-bid your 5-card suit and do not make a second bid in No-Trump with your void.

With: -- 9853 AK74 AJ753: (Open 1C. After Partner responds 1S your re-bid should be 2C. Partner has "Passed over" both Diamonds and Hearts and your Partnership will, most likely, not have an 8-card fit in either of these suits.)

(4) With a 5-4-4-0 or a 5-4-3-1 shape; i.e., holding either a singleton or a void, your hand is more often suited to a Trump contract. This is reinforced if Partner has not bid the suit in which you have shortage.

(a) With a 5-4-4-0 shape you may, on occasion, in order for Partner to judge your Partnership's best contract, choose to bid your third suit of 4-cards with a third bid. You have already shown a 5-4 hand with your first two bids, and this third bid shows the three suits held with a void in the fourth, un-bid suit. With: AK643 KQ65 -- AJ63: (Open 1S. After Partner responds 1-NT, your first re-bid should be 2C in order to show a 5-4 or 5-5 in Spades and Clubs. If Partner re-bids 2-NT you should now make a third bid of 3H to show your 5-4-4-0 shape.)

(b) With a 5-4-3-1 shape, and your 3-card suit is in support of a suit Partner has shown with his/her first response, you should delay raising Partner's suit immediately as Partner may hold only 4-cards in that suit. Instead you may choose to show your 5-4 shape first, and then, raise Partner's suit with your third bid, now showing 3-card support. With: 854 AKQ64 4 AJ82: (Open 1H. After Partner responds 1S, you should re-bid 2C in order to first show your 5-4 Hearts and Clubs. If Partner now re-bids 2-NT, you should now bid 3S to show your 3-5-1-4 shape.)