

## Responding to Partner's Opening Bid of One-of-a-Suit with Fewer than Six High-Card Points - To Bid or Not to Bid?

When dealing with this issue, there is no right or wrong answer in making the decision as to whether or not to respond to Partner's opening bid of one-of-a-suit, because the required, minimum number of HCP's that is acceptable is simply dictated by both circumstance and Partnership agreement.

Some Partnerships agree to allow for the use of a *pre-emptive jump-response* which evidences a bid showing a six-card or longer suit with a *very weak* 3-5 high-card points. Alternatively, other Partnerships reserve a *jump-shift response* by Responder to indicate a *very strong* 19 (+) HCP's, guaranteeing at least a game-level contract, with a likelihood of a possible Slam. These latter two options are obviously mutually exclusive.

The consensus is that the standard, minimum requirement necessary for a *simple response* to Partner's opening bid of one-of-a-suit, is six or more HCP's, or sometimes its equivalent as enumerated herein. Some flexibility to this minimum HCP requirement seems, however, prudent!

**For example:** Partner opens with **1C**. Consider "*Passing*" with: **J84 J62 Q983 J32**, but think about responding **1H** with: **8 AJ983 T732 T64**.

What factors might need to be considered when dealing with a possible flexibility for this minimum HCP requirement? The following considerations are of relevant import impacting Responder's decision to attempt to respond to Opener's bid of one-of-a-suit or, alternatively, simply not to respond, at least initially:

- (a) The length and quality of the suit potentially chosen to be bid need to be considered.
- (b) Consideration as to the specific suit chosen (if one's suit is Spades, the preemptive value is maximized, not so with the other suits).
- (c) Consideration as to the vulnerability - if other factors are borderline, respond if *not vulnerable* and, alternatively, "*Pass*" if *vulnerable*.
- (d) If one's HCP's are "**Quacks**" (Queens and/or Jacks), consider "*Passing*;" if Aces and/or Kings, consider bidding. Note that a hand holding (6-HCP's), (three Queens, one Queen and four Jacks,) or (two Queens and two Jacks,) might not take any tricks, but a hand holding a single Ace, or one holding an Ace and a Jack (4 or 5-HCP's, respectively) will almost assuredly take at least one trick. The quality of the HCP's held is, thus, relevant.
- (e) The presence or absence of "**Spot Cards**," "**Intermediaries**," -- **10's** and **9's**, are also of import in assessing the trick-taking capacity of a Player's holdings, especially if the "*spot cards*" are present in combination with other cards in the same suit that one is considering bidding as his/her response!

### Partner opens 1C in the 1<sup>st</sup> seat, and your right-hand Opponent "Passes"

1. **6532 9875 T864 4** - To "*Pass*" here is frightening, but to bid might be jumping from one unmakeable contract to another. In addition, you would hope that a "*Pass*," here, might discourage Partner from advancing the bidding any further, while encouraging your left-hand Opponent to enter the auction in the balancing seat. A "*Pass*," here, seems the better alternative!

2. **Q6532 J75 J86 74** - "*Pass*" with this junky holding! "**Quacks**" (Queens and Jacks) are, oft times, not worth their HCP count with respect to their trick-taking potential.

3. **J9853 76 A86 853** - Respond **1S** with this hand which shows some trick-taking potential with respect to the positioning of the few high-card points present.
4. **9 AJ953 87532 84** - Respond **1H**, same reason as with the previous hand.
5. **QT743 K964 653 2** - Respond **1S** - This hand is not that bad and “*Passing*” Opener’s opening bid of **1C** does not, here, seem prudent.

**Partner opens 1D in the 1<sup>st</sup> seat, and your right-hand Opponent “Passes”**

6. **QJ1087 4 J76 8754** - Respond **1S!** This suit is a rather nice 5-card holding and notwithstanding its 4 HCP count, it holds some pre-emptive value over the Opponent’s presumed, likely, Heart fit. Be content to potentially risk a minus match-point score, offset by not affording the Opponents a free run if, alternatively, you were to simply “*Pass.*” Just hope that Partner does not “*Reverse,*” make a jump-shift or a **2-NT** jump re-bid, any one of which might place your Partnership into an unsound contract!

7. **Q87 Q75 6 J97542** - “*Pass!*” - You are not pleased to leave Partner in a **1D** contract, but it is *not likely* that your LHO will “*Pass,*” and to bid, here, with this collection of “*Quacks,*” is likely to be asking for even more trouble than is reasonably, likely to occur by simply “*Passing!*”

All of the above listed examples assume that Partner has opened in the **1<sup>st</sup>** seat. If he/she were to have opened in the **2<sup>nd</sup>**, **3<sup>rd</sup>** or **4<sup>th</sup>** seat, however, both Opponent Partners would already have “*Passed,*” and the strategy is a bit different, for the following reason:

YOU	LHO	PARTNER	RHO
???	Pass	1C, 1D, 1H, 1S	Pass
YOU	LHO	PARTNER	RHO
Pass ???	Pass	1C, 1D, 1H, 1S	Pass
YOU	LHO	PARTNER	RHO
-- Pass ???	-- Pass	-- 1C, 1D, 1H, 1S	Pass Pass

Since in all of the above-referenced bidding sequences, *both Opponents have already “Passed,”* this greatly increases the odds that your Partner has a big hand and is about to jump the bidding were he/she afforded the opportunity to do so. There is not as much reason to respond under these circumstances in order to preempt the Opponents, who, most likely, don’t have very much, anyhow. Accordingly, when Partner has opened in the **2<sup>nd</sup>**, **3<sup>rd</sup>**, or **4<sup>th</sup>** seat, do *not* be anxious to respond with other than a full six

HCP's, its equivalent, or more. Unless Partner were to have opened with a strong, artificial, and forcing "2C" bid, a game-level contract is not likely to be available to your Partnership, in any event!