

Responding to a “Balancing” 1-No-Trump Overcall

A “**Balancing**,” “**Pass-Out 4th Seat**,” 1-NT bid shows a lower range of HCP’s than does either an opening 1-NT, or a direct (2nd Seat) overcall of 1-NT, both of which traditionally show a generally-accepted 15-17 HCP range in the “**Standard American**” bidding system.

A **Balancing (4th Seat) 1-NT**, however, shows a HCP range of 10-14 HCP’s.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT (10-14 HCP’s)

Responder to a **Balancing 1-NT** call, identical to the situation of responding to a Direct (2nd Seat) overcall of 1-NT, or an opening bid of 1-NT, is always the “**Captain**” of any subsequent bidding since the HCP count of the No-Trump bidder is known within a few points and Responder’s hand is less limited. Indeed, Responder to a Balancing 1-NT, seated in the direct (2nd Seat), having previously “*passed*,” could, under some circumstances, even hold opening count or greater and might not have been able to bid because his/her requirements for any correct overcall were so rigidly structured (see below). Because of this, and notwithstanding the fact that Responder has previously, “*passed*,” a game-level contract might still be available, even though the bidding has been opened by the No-Trump bidder’s right-hand Opponent (RHO).

Structured Requirements for a Direct (2nd Seat) Overcall

A Simple Overcall of Any New Suit: Shows 5-pieces or more with 8-15 HCP’s at the 1-level, and 10 -15 HCP’s at the 2-level

An Overcall of 1-No-Trump: Shows an evenly-balanced hand, with 15-17 HCP’s, and at least one stopper in the suit bid by the opening Opponent

A Take-Out Double: Shows **opening count, its equivalent, or better**, with the correct shape, defined as fewer than 3-pieces in the suit bid by the Opener, i.e., tolerance or support for any of the three, as-yet, un-bid suits

Each Partnership must decide whether Partner’s responses to a “**Balancing NT**” are either “**natural**,” or whether they conform to all of the “**systems-on**,” “**front-of-card**,” (“**FOC**”) conventional bids; i.e., that all of the conventional bids (Stayman and Jacoby Transfers) are in play. Both methods are acceptable, but, necessarily, mutually exclusive!

Responses to a “Balancing NT”

Assuming that Opener “*Passes*,” i.e., there is no further bidding advancement by the opening bidder, there are generally-accepted responses available to the responding Partner to a “**Balancing 1-NT**.”

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT
Pass	????		

Responder’s Responses

1. “**Pass**” with most balanced hands holding up to 10-11 HCP’s. Game under these conditions, with the No-Trump bidder’s HCP range capped at 14, remains highly unlikely
2. “**2 of Any New Suit**,” if playing “*systems off*,” is **to play** and requests Partner to “**Pass**.”
3. “**2-NT**,” is an invitation to game, showing a balanced hand holding of 12-14 HCP’s
4. “**3 of Any New Suit**” is forcing to game, and shows 5-pieces of either Major suit or 6 or more pieces of either Minor suit, with 15{+} HCP’s
5. “**3-NT**” with a balanced hand (or “**4H**” or “**4S**,” with a 6-card or longer Major,) if playing “*systems off*,” shows a holding of 15{+} HCP’s
6. “**A “2C”** bid is Stayman, if playing “*systems on*.” Partner must respond as usual
7. “**Jacoby Transfers**” are also available, if playing “*systems on*.” Partner must, likewise, respond