

THE “DONT” CONVENTION

Overcalling subsequent to an Opponent’s opening bid of 1-NT is oft times misunderstood and, therefore, not frequently utilized by most beginning bridge Players. The novice Player becomes afraid to bid owing to the strength expressed by his/her Opponent’s 1-NT opening bid, and is frightened, even intimidated, by the prospect of being set should he/she stoop to venture forth with any form of interference. Eventually the more experienced Player, however, comes to realize that there is a legitimate need to find the inner fortitude to venture forth with such an overcall, and ultimately, the realization that the Partnership need have some understanding as to which convention they wish to adopt in order to best accomplish this form of overcall interference. As one gains experience with bidding it soon becomes evident that although one can use natural bids in these instances, it is usually far better to have some conventional understanding with your Partner.

The “DONT” Convention (**D**isturbing the **O**pponent’s **N**o **T**ump), is, today, oft times, used with great success. It is simple in its set-up and makes available the capability of dealing with a hand as shown above, as you will soon see. The realities that exist which make the “DONT” Convention the success that it has become are as follows:

1. Two-suited hands occur more frequently than their one-suited counterparts. One needs the capacity to show these two-suited circumstances.
2. Because this particular convention allows you to show both two-suited hands as well as one-suited hands, one can disturb the Opponent’s more frequently --- Fun! Fun! Fun!
3. The alternative; i.e., to remain silent defending against the opponent’s 1-NT, is usually not a fruitful one.
4. Although this convention eliminates the “*double*” as a means of evidencing an equivalent or better hand, it is infrequently necessary to do so, and if seemingly appropriate, seldom productive, for the Opponents then seek, and oft times, secure a better alternative contract.
5. *Points schmoints!* The key to successful interferences over an opponent’s 1-NT opening bid is not high-card points, rather vulnerability and distribution.
6. You are infrequently attempting to seek game. Rather you are venturing to enter the auction and, at the very least, trying to interfere with the Opponent’s capacity to communicate successfully.
7. This Convention is used in both the direct (2nd) seat, as well as in the balancing (4th) seat, although, as with all balancing bids, the HCP strength required is more relaxed.
8. With strong balanced hands, the type with which, beforehand, one “*doubled*” to show equivalence, “*Pass, Pass, PASS!*” You are more likely to get a better score in duplicate competition than if you would enter the auction as you had been accustomed to doing previously.

“DONT” Bids

With One-suited Hands (Usually 6-cards or better)

“*Double*” = A One-suited Club, Diamond, Heart, or Spade Hand

“*2S*” = A One-suited Spade hand with a weaker HCP holding than the “*double*” above

With A Two-suited Hand (5-4 or better) Bid the Cheaper of Your Two Suits

“*2C*” = A Club suit and a higher-ranking suit as well

“*2D*” = A Diamond suit and a higher-ranking one as well (Obviously a Major suit)

“*2H*” = Shows Hearts and Spades

Responses to the “DONT” Convention

If Partner “*Doubles*”, puppet “*2C*” so that Partner can identify his/her suit.

If Partner overcalls “*2C*” or “*2D*” showing the lower-ranking of a two-suited hand,

- a. “*Pass*” with 3 or more cards in Partner’s bid suit
 - b. Bid your own 6-card or better suit
 - c. Otherwise, make the cheapest bid (alertable) asking Partner to bid his/her second suit.
- If Partner overcalls “*2H*” showing both Majors, select your choice of the two.

If Partner overcalls “*2S*”, “*Pass.*”

The question as to whether or not to enter the auction after one's RHO has opened 1-NT is, to some Players, a frightening contemplation. Mel's "Rule of 8," if satisfied offers the likelihood, under most circumstances, that one, indeed, should choose to compete and to enter the auction, rather than to stay silent.

Overcalling in the Direct (2nd) Seat after a 1-NT Opening by your RHO
"Mel's Rule of 8"

1. Add the number of cards in your two longest suits.
2. Compute your Losing-Trick-Count (LTC), having assumed that a fit with Partner is present.
3. Subtract your LTC from the number of cards in your two longest suits.
4. If the number is one or less, then "Pass!" If the number is two or more, consider overcalling, but,
5. Lastly, one must hold at least six (6) HCP's – Therefore, the "Rule of 8" (2+6=8).

<u>North</u>	<u>East (You)</u>
1-NT	????
Q9842, Q7652, 5, 32 ("Pass")	
10 cards - 8 Losers = 2	
2 + 4 HCP's = 6 (Insufficient to satisfy the "Rule of 8")	
A7532, K743, K2, 74 (Using "DONT," bid "2H")	
9 cards - 7 Losers = 2	
2 + 10 = 12 (The "Rule of 8" is satisfied)	

Balancing After a 1-NT Opening – "The Balancing Rule of 2"

The question as to whether or not to balance; i.e., to reopen the auction when the bidding has proceeded, (1-NT – Pass – Pass –?), is always a challenging, and to some, a daunting issue. Multiple conventions have been compiled, the more popular of which, among others, include, "Natural," "Brozel," "Cappelletti," "Twerb," "DONT," and "Meckwell." A rule as to whether or not to invoke your Partnership's favorite, chosen convention, amongst these or any other, is herein offered as Mel's "Balancing Rule of 2."

The conditions here are simply that Opener holds 15-17 HCP's, (an average of 16), and Responder 0-8 HCP's, (an average of 4). Each side, therefore, holds, on average, 20, and, as a result, your side holds as much a right to the contract as do the Opponents. Partner probably holds a balanced hand as he/she had not chosen to enter the auction. *High-card points and vulnerability are essentially irrelevant – the controlling factor, here, is distribution.*

In the balancing seat, one should enter the auction after a (1-NT – Pass – Pass –?) auction whenever that Player, the one in the 4th seat, holds at least 2 shortness points, defined as either a void, a singleton, or two doubletons, irrespective of one's HCP's. Remember, under these circumstances, the HCP's, on average, are equally distributed. If you hold 6, Partner, on average, holds 14. If you hold 10, Partner will also have 10, etc., etc. In the pass-out (4th) seat, bid if you have two or more shortness points, regardless of HCP and vulnerability!