

MINOR SUIT OPENINGS

ABOUT THE DEALS

You may be either Opener or Responder, but you will always be in the South position. It is assumed that you are NOT playing the 2-Over-1 Game Force methods.

The first page or two of each Deal shows only your hand. The initial bidding is given and you are asked to decide what you would bid, then click **BID**. The subsequent page will then appear telling you what you should have bid and continuing the auction. On the final page of each Deal partner's hand will be shown.

Although it is not included in the Deals you might wish to examine your and dummy's hand and make a Plan of how you would play the contract.

MINOR SUIT OPENINGS LESSON

It takes 11 tricks to make game in a Minor suit: 5♦ or 5♣.

And to make those 11 tricks you will need about 29 points between you and partner. Since it only takes about 26 points to make game in a Major suit or in notrump there is a tendency to avoid bidding games in the Minor suits. A lot of Minor suit bidding is actually aimed toward finding a Major fit or finding out if the partnership can play notrump.

To open a Major suit you are required to have 13-21 points and at least a 5-card suit. To open a Minor suit only the 13-21 point requirement applies. It would be nice if you had at least 4 cards in the Minor suit you open, but sometimes even that is not possible and you must open with a 3-card suit. You can see why Minor suit bidding is usually directed toward the Majors or Notrump!

You can probably tell from the above that opening 1♦ or 1♣ is sort of secondary. When you pick up a hand that looks pretty good you should first check to see if it qualifies to open 1♠ or 1♥ (5-card suit, 13-21 points). If not, then see if you have the requirements to open 1NT (balanced, 15-17 points). If neither of these two options apply, then with 13-21 points you open 1♦ or 1♣.

Here is how you decide which Minor suit to open:

With Minors of different length open the longest one.

♠ 10 6 2 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A K 6 ♣ A J 6 5 2	This hand has 13 points so you must open. It is too weak to open 1NT and does not have a 5-card Major. Since there is a 5-card and a 3-card Minor, you open the 5-card. Bid 1♣.
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With only one 4-card minor open in that suit:

♠ Q J 5 2 ♥ K 6 3 ♦ A 6 ♣ K J 9 2	Here you have 14 points so you must open. Again the hand does not qualify to open 1NT or 1♠. Open one of your 4-card Minor, 1♣.
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With two 4-card Minors, open 1♦:

♠ K 5 2
♥ K 3
♦ A 7 6 4
♣ K J 9 2

There are 14 points and 4 cards in both ♣s and ♦s.
In this case you open 1♦.

With two 3-card Minors, open 1♣:

♠ A J 2
♥ 9 8 7 6
♦ A Q 6
♣ Q 10 2

There are 13 points so you must open.
You have no 5-card Major and no 4-card Minor.
With two 3-card minors you open 1♣.

With one 3-card Minor and one 2-card Minor, open the 3-card Minor:

♠ A J 4 2
♥ 9 8 7 6
♦ A Q 6
♣ K 2

This only happens when you are 4-4 in the Majors.
You have 3 of one Minor and 2 of the other Minor.
Always open with the 3-card Minor.
With this hand you would open 1♦

This last hand illustrates a very important principle:

NEVER OPEN IN A 2-CARD SUIT

Responder's bid:

Responding to partner's 1♦ or 1♣ opening is different from responding to a Major suit opening in one **HUGE** respect. The first priority in responding to 1 of a Major is telling partner if you have an 8 card fit in her suit. The first priority in responding to 1 of a Minor is to **try to find** an 8 card Major suit fit.

If it turns out there is not a Major suit fit, then the second priority is to try to discover if the hands can be played at notrump.

Only after giving up on these first two priorities should you think about playing in a Minor suit.

There are several bidding rules to follow when responding to partner's Minor suit opening bid.

RESPONDING TO OPENER'S 1 OF A MINOR SUIT	
0 - 5 pts	pass
6 - 10 pts	1) bid a new 4+ card suit at the 1-level 2) bid 1NT (even without a balanced hand) 3) raise partner's suit to the 2-level with 4+ cards
11+ pts	bid a new 4+ card suit at the 1 or 2-level
13 - 16 pts	1) bid 2NT with a balanced hand 2) raise partner's suit to the 3-level with 4+ trumps

Examples of responder's hand after partner opens 1♦:

♠ J 8 5 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ 7 6 3
♣ J 5 2

You only have 5 points, so you have nothing to say.
You pass.

♠ Q 10 8 5
♥ K 6 3
♦ 7 6 3
♣ Q 5 2

With 7 points you must make a response.
With a 4-card ♠ suit you respond 1♠
A response of 1NT is another possibility, but your first priority as responder is to try to find a Major suit fit.

♠ A 8 5
♥ K 6 3
♦ 10 7 6
♣ J 8 7 2

This time you have 8 points, balanced.
With no 4-card Major to show, you answer 1NT.
This is a step toward the second priority of responder, trying to play notrump when there is no Major suit fit.

♠ J 8 2
♥ 6 3
♦ A J 10 7 4
♣ 9 6 2

With this 8-point hand, respond 2♦.
Playing in a Minor suit isn't high on the priority list, but with 5-card support and a doubleton this bid is preferred over the other possibility, 1NT.

♠ J 10 8
♥ K 6 3
♦ 6
♣ A Q 7 3 2

With this 11-point hand, respond 2♣.
You don't really expect to end up in ♣s, but showing partner you have 11+ points and identifying where you have strength may enable him to bid notrump.

♠ A 8 5
♥ K 6 3
♦ A 7 6
♣ K 8 7 2

You have 14 points and balanced distribution.
This is a perfect hand to respond 2NT.
Partner should be in good position to place the final contract.

♠ 6 5
♥ K 6 3
♦ A Q 7 6
♣ K Q 7 2

You have 15 points and 4 cards in partner's suit.
A response of 3♦ is probably called for here.
You hope the partner can bid 3NT, or perhaps he will bid 3♠ and you can then bid 3NT. Or, it may turn out that partner has the type of hand he can bid 5♦ with.

Sometimes it will happen that responder has a choice of two suits.

With two 4-card suits, bid the lower one first, “up-the-line”.

Suppose partner opens 1♣ and you hold:

♠ A 10 8 5
♥ J 10 6 3
♦ 7 6 2
♣ Q 2

You have 7 points and 4 cards in each Major suit.
You should bid 1♥ (up the line) even though the ♠ suit is stronger.
The reason for this is that partner still has room to bid 1♣ if he holds 4 of them.

With two 5-card suits, bid the higher one first.

Suppose partner opens 1♣ and you hold:

♠ A 10 8 7 5
♥ K Q 7 6 2
♦ 6 3
♣ 2

You have 11 points and two 5-card suits.
You should bid 1♣ (the higher ranking suit).
Then, if partner should bid 1NT you would say 2♥.

With one 5-card and one 4-card suit, bid the longer one first.

Suppose partner opens 1♣ and you hold:

♠ A 10 8 7 5
♥ Q 6 3
♦ K 7 6 2
♣ 2

You have 10 points, a 5-card and a 4-card suit.
You should bid 1♣ (the 5-card suit).

Opener's rebid:

As the partnership gains information in the bidding there will come a time when one of them figures out where the best final contract should be. When that happens, that partner should go ahead and put the contract there, perhaps by bidding game, perhaps by just passing. There is a good saying in bridge that makes this point:

HE WHO KNOWS, GOES

Look at this example:

Opener's hand: ♠ A K J 2 ♥ K 10 8 3 ♦ A K J 6 ♣ 2

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♣
?	

Here is what Opener knows:

She knows that she has 19 points (plus 2 more for the singleton ♣).

She knows that Partner has at least 6 points and at least 4 ♠s.

Putting this information together she knows that together the partnership holds at least

27 points and at least 8 ♠s. Since that is enough points for game and since they have an 8-card (or more) fit in ♠s, she bids 4♠.

SHE WHO KNOWS, GOES.

Another example:

Opener's hand: ♠ A K J 2 ♥ Q J 8 3 ♦ A 10 7 6 ♣ 2

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
?	

Here is what Opener knows:

She knows that she has 15 points (plus 2 more for the singleton ♣).

She knows that Partner has at least 6 points and at least 4 ♠s.

Putting this information together she knows that together the partnership holds at least 23 points and a least 8 ♠s. They **may** have enough points to bid game in ♠s, but since opener doesn't know for sure she just describes her hand further. She bids 3♠ which lets partner know that they have a ♠ fit, and that her opening hand strength is in the middle of the 13-21 point range, either 16, 17 or 18. The 3♠ bid is called an **invitational** bid. It **invites** partner to bid game if he has more than just a minimum response. Responder will pass if he has 6 or 7 points, but will bid 4♠ if he has 9 or more.

A final example:

Opener's hand: ♠ A K J 2 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ A 10 7 6 ♣ 9 2

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
?	

Here is what Opener knows:

She knows that she has 13 points (plus 1 more for the doubleton ♣).

She knows that Partner has at least 6 points and at least 4 ♠s.

Putting this information together she knows that together the partnership holds at least 20 points and a least 8 ♠s. They may have enough points to bid game in ♠s, but since opener doesn't know for sure she just describes her hand further. She bids 2♠ which lets partner know that they have a ♠ fit, and that her opening hand strength is in the bottom of the 13-21 point range, either 13, 14 or 15. Responder will then pass if he has 6-11 points, but will bid 4♠ if he has 12 or more.

Notice that in all three of these examples both partners kept thinking about the 26 point requirement for bidding a Major suit game. All their bids were made to describe their hands as accurately as possible so they could reach the best contract without bidding too much.

Summing up:

There are many more bidding situations than could ever be put in a lesson.

That's why Bridge is such a wonderful game! So you bid in a way that sticks to the guidelines, and describes your hand as well as you can.

Both partners should be constantly rechecking their hands to see how their cards fit in with their partner's bidding. When it is your turn to bid, if you know enough to place the final contract then you should do so; perhaps by bidding a game or slam, perhaps by merely passing. If you cannot place the final contract then you should make a bid that gives partner more information in the hope that he will be able to place the contract.

Always keep these in the back of your mind:

It takes 26 points for game in Notrump or a Major, 29 points for game in a Minor.

It takes 33 points for slam.

You need an 8-card fit to play a suit contract.

You must have at least 13 points to open with 1 of a suit.

You must have at least 6 points to make any response.

You must have at least 11 points to bid a new suit at the 2-level.

You must have at least 5 cards to open a Major suit.

You must have at least 3 cards to open a Minor suit.

You must have at least 4 cards to bid a suit as responder.

You must have at least 4 cards to bid a second suit as opener.

20 examples will be worth more than another 1000 words.

Deal 1