

NOTRUMP OPENINGS

ABOUT THE DEALS

You may be either Opener or Responder, but you will always be in the South position.

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.

NOTRUMP OPENINGS

This lesson is about hands which are opened 1NT or 2NT.

In fact, those two are just part of the Balanced Hand opening hierarchy:

| Points | Opening Bid |
|--------|--|
| 12-14 | Open 1 of a suit, then rebid 1NT |
| 15-17 | Open 1NT |
| 18-19 | Open 1 of a suit, then jump in notrump |
| 20-21 | Open 2NT |
| 22-24 | Open 2♣, then rebid 2NT. |
| 25-27 | Open 2♣, then rebid 3NT. |

The reason that the openings other than 1NT and 2NT are excluded from the lesson is nothing sinister, but is just so we won't have to deal with the first response to those bids at this time.

A Balanced Hand is usually defined as one which has no singleton or void, and no more than one doubleton.

Thus you only open 1NT or 2NT if your hand has one of these three distribution patterns:

4 - 3 - 3 - 3 4 - 4 - 3 - 2 5 - 3 - 3 - 2

There is one more restriction that may or may not be applied.

If your hand has the 5-3-3-2 pattern some insist that the 5-card suit not be a Major suit. This is strictly a partnership agreement about which many Bridge experts disagree. For this lesson we have avoided the controversy by never having an example where Opener holds a 5-card Major suit.

Bidding after a notrump opening is probably the easiest and most accurate in all of Bridge. The reason for this is that the Opener has described his hand within such narrow borders it is usually easy for Responder to determine what the final contract should be. Therefore it is logical that the Responder becomes Captain and Chief Decision-maker.

The final contract has two parts; What suit (or NT), and How High. The How High part is decided by Responder adding the two sets of points together and seeing where the total partnership assets fit - keeping in mind that it takes 26 points to make game in a Major suit or in Notrump, that it takes 33 points to make a small slam and that it takes 37 points to make a Grand slam.

Here is a table showing how that plays out for a 1NT opening.

| Resp Points | Opener Points | | | Bidding |
|----------------|---------------|----|----|-----------|
| | 15 | 16 | 17 | Target |
| 8 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Partscore |
| 9 | 24 | 25 | 26 | |
| 10 | 25 | 26 | 27 | |
| 11 | 26 | 27 | 28 | |
| 12 | 27 | 28 | 29 | Game |
| 13 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| 14 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |
| 15 | 30 | 31 | 32 | |
| 16 | 31 | 32 | 33 | |
| 17 | 32 | 33 | 34 | Slam |
| 18 | 33 | 34 | 35 | |
| 19 | 34 | 35 | 36 | |
| 20 | 35 | 36 | 37 | Grand |
| 21 | 36 | 37 | 38 | Slam |
| 22 | 37 | 38 | 39 | |

Suppose Responder has a balanced hand and wants to keep the contract in notrump. Responder's strategy:

- 0-8 points - pass and play 1NT since there is no game
- 9 points - invite game by bidding 2NT since game may be available
- 10 points - either invite game by bidding 2NT or bid 3NT - your judgement
- 11-15 points - bid 3NT since game should be pretty sure and there is no slam
- 16 points - invite slam by bidding 4NT since slam may be available
- 17 points - either invite slam by bidding 4NT or bid 6NT - your judgement
- 18-19 points - bid 6NT since slam should be pretty sure and there is no Grand

Opener's strategy following the response:

- 15 points - decline any invitation by passing
- 16 points - either accept or decline using best judgement
- 17 points - accept any invitation

Of course if partner opens 2NT then those numbers don't work. You have to have another pretty table to look at and another set of invite/force instructions. OR, you just have to do the math in your head right there at the Bridge table. The good news is that it's easier to do the math than to memorize the table.

That takes care of How High. Next responder has to start thinking about what suit.

The bidding priority for all bidding, not just Notrump, is:

- Best - play in a Major suit with an 8-card fit or better
- Next best - play in Notrump
- Last - play in a Minor suit

The reason that a Major fit is better than Notrump is that the suit contract will usually play one trick better for about the same number of points. Not always, but usually.

The reasons that Minor suits are last is that it takes 29 points to make the 11 trick game, and that they only count 20 points per trick anyway.

For a responder to try to find a Major suit fit, his first priority, he needs help from artificial conventions. Every Bridge player should use the Stayman convention, which is designed to locate 4-4 Major suit fits. The truth is that it is difficult to discover these 4-4 fits after a 1NT opening **UNLESS** you use Stayman. There is a lesson on the Stayman convention on BakerBridge.

Another valuable aid for Major suit fits after a 1NT opening is the Jacoby Transfer. Perhaps not absolutely necessary like Stayman, Transfers certainly make a big improvement in your bidding. There is a Jacoby Transfer lesson on BakerBridge also.

Since you may not yet play Stayman or Transfers, neither of them are used in any of the example Deals.

Stayman is avoided simply by never giving Responder a 4-card Major suit. Jacoby Transfers are avoided by providing a workaround (inferior) method for Responder to handle 5-card Majors.

25 examples will be worth more than another 1000 words.

Deal 1