

THE OPENING ROUND OF BIDDING

The first person to bid anything other than a pass is called the **opener** and their partner becomes the **responder**.

Unless you have an exceptionally strong hand or a massively distributional hand it is unlikely that the opener will know what the right contract will be. Consequently, we must enter into a conversation, with bids only please (no table talk), with partner to explore all the options.

But first what do you need to open? 12 points using our High Card Point Count (HCP) is generally regarded as enough to “Open” the bidding. Please note that this is a partnership agreement and there is nowhere in the Rules of Bridge that even talks about HCP. Indeed, there are some partnerships that do not use the HCP to evaluate their hand. There are some who use the losing trick count instead. More later. However, everybody knows the HCP count, and if you do too you will be able to play with anybody else.

OK. So you have added up your HCP's and have come to 12 or more. If it is between 12 and 21 and you are unbalanced then you should open a suit at the 1 level, ie 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠. You should not bid anything higher as you or your partner may need as much bidding space as you can to fully describe your hands.

Opening 1 of a Major

Five or more cards in a major (♥ or ♦ ♠) suit is going to get you off to a good start. The majors score much more than the minors(♣ or ♦). So it is a good idea to tell partner the good news as quickly as possible.

You would open 1♠ with all these hands:

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. ♠ AKQJ2 | 2. ♠ AKQJ2 | 3. ♠ 65432 |
| ♥ Q53 | ♥ AK83 | ♥ AKQ5 |
| ♦ 432 | ♦ 2 | ♦ KQ6 |
| ♣ 432 | ♣ Q32 | ♣ 86 |

In Bridge the length of the suit is more important than the quality of the suit when deciding on the opening bid.

Partner, as responder, **must** bid your suit again if they have ≥ 6 Points and more than two Spades. Responder knows that you have a fit; by that we mean at least 8 cards in that suit (5 + 3). This means that the opposition will have 5 or less in spades and this is an admirable suit to become trumps. A 7 card suit is also more than the opposition but only by one and this is risky to become trumps but may be necessary as a last resort.

You will have noticed I hope that I gave responder >6 points and not >6HCP. This is because if we are going to play in a suit contract Responder's hand becomes stronger if it is distributional, ie it has a doubleton, singleton or a void. So we give them extra distributional points. You can add 1 extra for a doubleton, three for a singleton and 5 for a void. The total of the HCP + the distributional points becomes "Total Points (TP)". Surprise, surprise!

Responder would support partner by bidding some number of spades after the opener bid 1♠ with any of the following hands:

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| 1. ♠ 1098 | 2. ♠ 543 | 3. ♠ 987 |
| ♥ K842 | ♥ AKQ42 | ♥ - |
| ♦ Q865 | ♦ 87 | ♦ Q8642 |
| ♣ 86 | ♣ 987 | ♣ 98765 |

Opening 1 of a Minor

As much as we would like to have the majors and spades in particular, this will not happen most of the time. So if you can't open a major because you do not have 5 cards then you have to open a minor, but which one?

The current way considered to be the best is opening your longest suit. If both the minors have the same number of cards then if you are 4-4 open 1♦ and if you are 3-3 open a Club.

Opening Bid	Hand
1♣	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 74 ♦ 764 ♣ KQ53
1♦	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 74 ♦ KQ53 ♣ 764
1♦	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 7 ♦ KQ53 ♣ 7643
1♣	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 742 ♦ KQ5 ♣ 764

In all of these hands we are hoping that partner has 4 spades. This would give us the comfortable 8 card fit. Consequently partner as responder has an obligation to bid their 4 card major at the earliest opportunity **IF THEY HAVE 6 OR MORE HCP** (they must **PASS** if they have less than 6 HCP and **MUST** bid if they have 6+.) If responder has 4 Hearts and 4 Spades they should bid Hearts and let opener bid Spades if opener has them.

1st Response from partner (Responder)

If you have a fit you can show this by raising partners suit.

After 1 ♥/♠

2♥/♠ shows 6-9 TPs

3♥/♠ shows 10-12 TPs

Another suit followed by 4♥/♠ shows 12+ TPs

After 1 ♣/♦

2♣/♦ shows 6-9 TPs 5 clubs or 4 diamonds

3♣/♦ shows 10-12 TPs and a fit

3 NT shows 12+ HCPs

But what if you do not have a fit?

- You can bid a new suit at the 1 level which shows 6+ HCPs and 4 cards in that suit
- You can bid 1NT which shows 6-9 HCPs and may be unbalanced
- You can bid a new suit at the 2 level which shows 10+ pts and a 5 card suit
- You can bid 2NT which shows balanced hand 10 -11 HCP
- You can bid 3NT which shows balanced hand and 12-15 HCP.

Supporting partner's suit or bidding NT are called "**Limit Bids**". You have cut the range of your hand to 3 or 4 pts.

Because partner know more about your hand now than you know about partner's, partner becomes the "**Captain of the hand**". Partner will set the level and denomination of the hand. They may require more information from you but it is their decision.

Some examples:

Openers Bid	meaning	Responders Bid	Meaning
1♥	12+ HCPs, 5+ Hearts	1♠	<3 Hearts 4 Spades 6+ HCPs
1♥	12+ HCPs, 5+ Hearts	1NT	<3 Hearts, <4 Spades 6-10 HCPs
1♠	12+ HCPs, 5+ Spades	1NT	<3 Spades 6-10 HCPs
1♠	12+ HCPs, 5+ Spades	2♦	<3 Spades, 5 Diamonds, 10+ HCPs
1♣	12+ HCPs, 3+ Clubs	1♥	4+ Hearts, 6+ HCPs
1♣	12+ HCPs, 3+ Clubs	1♦	4+ Diamonds, <4 Hearts and spades, 6+ HCPs
1♦	12+ HCPs, 3+ Diamonds	1♠	4+ Spades, 6+ HCPs
1♣	12+ HCPs, 3+ Clubs	1NT	<4 Diamonds, Hearts and Spades 6-9 HCPs

A new suit by responder is unlimited unless they had a chance to open the bidding but could not, ie they have already passed. Opener does **NOT** know how many points responder has and therefore **MUST bid again**.

No one is **Captain** yet and so opener must continue to describe his hand.