

A Beginner's Guide to Bridge

Geoffrey Ellis Ostrin

Leeds University Union Bridge Club

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others

Acknowledgements

Little did the great man himself, Nobby, realise what he was doing when he introduced the game of bridge to me. Apparently it ranks as his second biggest mistake of his career. Surely his first was “passing” my forcing 2NT response to his 1♠ open, while on top table in the Malton Swiss Teams.

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Abstract

When I learnt bridge I was told by many a fine player that the best way to improve is to read, read, read. Eventually, this is what I did. But in my eyes, when you are just starting to learn this game would you risk a few quid in buying a book, and besides which book should you buy? Hence I decided to write my own notes and hand them out for free to our bridge club members. Over the years, these notes were adapted and improved and grew into this guide. The idea is to introduce the game to a beginner, step by step, where the golden rule is, *no exceptions*. In other words, as long as there are no exceptions the intuition of the game will be easier to understand, easier to remember, learn and eventually play. This is why I do not distinguish between majors and minors, slams don't exist, we ignore overcalling. Reading through the chapters, all the time we will be making little adjustments to what has previously been explained, so that by the end the reader should have, I hope, a clear understanding of the game. This guide does not aim to teach everything, but essentially the *thought processes* behind the game. Therefore there is plenty that this guide misses out but if the reader is motivated enough to buy a proper book, the guide has served its purpose and we will have one more bridge player in the world.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Hand Evaluation	2
1.2	Mini-Bridge	2
1.3	Mini-Bridge Scoring	4
2	Card-Play	6
2.1	Counting Winners and Losers	6
2.2	Establishing a Suit	9
2.3	Finesses	13
2.4	Ruffing with the Short Suit	18
3	Defending	22
3.1	Opening Leads	28
3.2	Discards	30
4	Bidding	33
4.1	The Open and the Rebid	36
4.2	The Response	42
4.3	Further Bidding	44
5	Bidding part 2	55
5.1	Improved Opens and Rebids	56
5.2	Improved Responses	56
5.3	Improved Hand Evaluation	60

6	The 1NT Open	62
6.1	Responses With Weak Hands	62
6.2	Responses With Game-Going Hands	63
6.3	Stayman	63
7	Slam Bidding	70
7.1	Strong Responses	71
7.2	Blackwood	73
7.3	Demand Openings	74
7.3.1	2♣ Open and Responses	75
7.3.2	Other Strong 2 Opens and Responses	77
8	The Competitive Auction	80
8.1	Simple Overcalls	80
8.2	Responding to an Overcall	83
8.3	Doubles and Responses	87
8.4	Responding to Opener After an Overcall	90
8.5	Responding to Opener After a Double	94
8.6	1NT Overcall and Responses	96

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is widely believed that bridge is the world's most popular card game, where the rules are identical throughout. It is played with a standard pack of 52 cards, between four players. You play as a partnership with your partner sitting opposite you at the table. For convenience, we say that the four players sit at the points of a compass, so that one pair sit North/South against those sitting East/West. It is thought that the origins of bridge come from whist, in that it is a trick-taking game, but bridge has since evolved in its own right.

A hand of bridge is played as follows: The entire pack of cards are dealt between the four players, so that each player receives a hand of 13 cards. Starting with the dealer, everyone has a turn to bid. A bid tells everyone your preference for a trump suit, and the minimum number of tricks you hope to make. Like an auction the bidding continues clockwise until everyone has had enough and the highest bidder now tries to make his tricks in the suit he has declared as trumps. The defence lead off, and the hand is played out. If the attack make the tricks they were supposed to, they score points, but if they were to fail, then it is the defence who score points.

To play bridge well, you need to master both the bidding and the card-play side of the game. The two are inter-linked, so that to fully master one, you need to have a good understanding of the other. But we have to start somewhere, so we will start with the card-play side only, before tackling the bidding.

1.1 Hand Evaluation

The idea of bridge is to make the greatest number of tricks. A **Trick** is a group of four cards, one from each player played clockwise, and it is the highest card that wins the trick. If it is your card that wins the trick, it is you that starts the next trick, and everyone follows clockwise. The only rule is that you must *follow suit*, that is to say, that if hearts are led, then you must play a heart if you have one. If you cannot follow suit then you can play any card you like. The trump suit is the *power* suit, so that a trump card beats any non-trump card in a trick. That is why the bidding is so important, in the choosing of the best trump suit.

But what we need is a way to evaluate the strength of a hand, an estimate to the number of tricks a hand can potentially make, and we use The **High Card Point Count**. Each of the honour cards are given a value, based on how likely they are in winning a trick. This is given as follows,

Ace	=	4pts
King	=	3pts
Queen	=	2pts
Jack	=	1pt

Thus 10 points per suit, 4 suits in the pack, therefore there are 40 points in all. in the total pack there are 40 points. It is expected that the pair who get dealt the majority of the points, would make the majority of the tricks, and hence we would expect them to be the pair playing the hand as the attack.

1.2 Mini-Bridge

We avoid the complications of bidding and go straight to the card-play side of the game. This is what we call **Mini-Bridge**. This allows us to learn the basics of card-play in both attack and in defence, without having to remember all the rules of the bidding. A hand of mini-bridge goes as follows:

1. The whole pack gets dealt out between the four players, so that each player gets 13 cards.
2. Everyone evaluates their hand, and going clockwise, starting with the dealer, announces how many points they have.
3. The partnership which has the majority becomes the attacking side. Now the player who holds the majority of the points on the attacking side becomes what we call the **Declarer**, and his partner, the **Dummy**.
4. The dummy puts his hand down on the table, face up, so that everyone can see his cards. Declarer who can see both the hands of his side, now chooses the trump suit, which should be the suit where he holds the greatest number of cards. The trump suit should be the *longest* suit, not necessarily the strongest, and we would want this suit to be of at least 8 cards between the two hands and when we have this we say that we have a **Fit** in that suit. If we do not have a fit in any suit, i.e. we do not have a suit of at least 8 cards then the hand is to be played in **No-Trumps**. When playing in **NT** the first card played to each trick is the trump suit for that trick alone, in other words, there is no overall trump suit for the hand. Tradition says that dummy's trumps get placed on the left from declarer's point of view.
5. Declarer now estimates the number of tricks he expects/hopes to make. Now since it is expected that declarer is to make more tricks than the opposition, instead of saying, "I hope to make 8 tricks with hearts as trump", he says "2♥". Since there are 13 tricks to be won, there will be one side that will win at least 6 tricks. To gain a majority, we must win at least 7 tricks, i.e. 1 more trick than the 6. So the bid of 2♥ is to mean, 2 more tricks than the 6 needed to gain a majority in the first place. And so this call, of say 1♣, 2♥ or 7NT, is what is called the **Contract**.
6. Now the defender sitting before dummy leads a card. Declarer plays both his cards and dummy's cards, whereas dummy just sits there, and plays no part in the game. *Dummy by name, dummy by nature*. The hand is now played out and we score up at the end.

1.3 Mini-Bridge Scoring

Okay, so let us look into how we do the scoring. We'll make the scoring simple to start with, but as we learn, and move up from mini-bridge, we will use more subtle scoring methods, which will in fact be the real scoring for bridge.

You score points depending on what the contract was, and whether you made it or not. Points are awarded for the total number, above the six, of tricks that you made plus a bonus, which depends on how high your contract was. Generally speaking, the higher the contract, the more points you get for the bonus.

In all suit contracts, each trick made, is worth 30. This is true for **NT** as well, except that the first trick alone, is worth 40. If your contract scores at least 100 in one go, then you have made what we call **Game**. If your contract scores less than 100, then you have made what we call a **Part-Score**. Thus for the time being, the game contracts are **4-of-any-suit**, and **3NT**. The bonus for a game contract is 300, whereas you only get 50 for a part-score.

For all contracts which do not make, the opposition score 50 points per trick that you go down by. Thus for example,

contract	no. of tricks	trick pts	bonus	total
2♥	9	90	50	140
3♥	9	90	50	140
3♥	10	120	50	170
4♥	10	120	300	420
4♥	11	150	300	450
5♥	10	0	0	-50

Notice that the scores for 2♥+1 is the same as 3♥, and the same is be true for 4♥+1 and 5♥. It should also be clear that 3♥+1 does not score the same as 4♥, since you need to bid the game and make it, to get the game bonus.

Over time, experience will show that to bid and make a game contract, you would need at least 26 pts between the two hands. We will increase our rules to mini-bridge, so that once the declarer has chosen trumps, the contract will be decided for him, such that if his side hold 26 or more points, the hand must be played in a game contract.

Chapter 2

Card-Play

We now turn our attentions to improving our card play, firstly when you are declarer and also when you are in defence. Most of the techniques are useful, regardless of whether you are playing in a suit contract or whether you are playing in **NT**. It will be obvious which techniques are relevant to certain types of contract.

2.1 Counting Winners and Losers

Before we look into special techniques on how to play the cards better, we need to look at general card play. We start by counting our winners, or losers, depending on the situation. Both of these are approximations, which give you an idea of how many tricks you should be making, and helps you plan your play in making these tricks and more if necessary. You start counting once you can see dummy, and you count with respect to both hands.

- **Counting Winners.** You count winners when you are playing in **NT** contracts only. The idea is that it tells you how many tricks you can win directly in one go. We count winners per suit, and add all these up to give the number of winners for the whole hand. An Ace counts as one winner. A King is not a winner, unless you hold the Ace as well, in which case this counts as two. The Queen is not a winner unless you hold both the Ace and King, where now we count this as three winners. Let us consider the following hand

♠ A x x x	♠ K Q x x
♥ Q x x x	♥ K x x
♦ J x x	♦ A x x
♣ 10 x	♣ K x x

Counting winners in each suit we have, three in spades, (the Ace, King and Queen), none in hearts, (since we are missing the Ace), one in diamonds and none in clubs. Thus in all we have four winners.

- **Counting Losers.** You only count losers when you are playing in a suit contract. The way losers are counted, assumes the worst case scenario. That is to say that only in the extreme cases of bad luck you will lose this number of tricks. In practise, some of these losers don't lose, just by the law of averages. We count losers by suits as well, and sum these up to give an overall total. We have to be accurate when counting losers in the trump suit in comparison to how we count in the other suits.

- Let's consider how we count losers in trumps. Take the top three cards from both hands. The number of losers that you have is as follows.

A K Q	0 losers
K Q J	1 loser
K Q x	1 loser
A K x	1 loser
A Q x	2 losers
A x x	2 losers
K x x	2 losers
Q J x	2 losers
J x x	3 losers
x x x	3 losers

Generally speaking, you count one loser for every card of the Ace, King and Queen, that you are missing.

- When counting in the *non-trump suits*, the formula is exactly the same as above, except that, once you have a **Void**, i.e. no cards, in one of the hands, the theory is that you can now ruff with a trump, and hence you expect not to lose the trick, and so is not counted as a loser. So holding a void in either of the hands counts as no losers for that suit. If you hold a **Singleton** in either hand, one card, then you have at most one loser, unless it happens to be the Ace. And so on, just adapting the table above, depending on whether you hold a short suit in either of the hands. Just to complete the terminology, when holding two cards of a suit, then we call this a, **Doubleton**.

Example 1

♠ A x x x x	♠ K Q x x
♥ Q x x x	♥ K x x
♦ A x	♦ Q J x
♣ 10 x	♣ K x x

1. If this was being played in **NT** 's. Then we want to count winners. In spades we hold the top three honours, Ace, King and Queen. In hearts we are missing the Ace so we have 0 winners. In diamonds we have 1 winner, because we have the Ace but not the King and in clubs we have no winners. So we have 4 winners in all.
2. If this was being played in spades as trumps then we would count losers. We have none in spades since we hold the top three tricks, A K Q. In hearts we have K Q x, and so this is 1 loser. In diamonds we hold A Q doubleton, and so this is also one loser. In clubs we have K 10, and this is also 1 loser. So you have 3 losers in all.

Once we have counted our winners/losers, we now have some idea of where our tricks will come from and how to produce more winners. To do this we look at three techniques on card play.

2.2 Establishing a Suit

Okay, so we now look into the most common way to win tricks. This isn't anything special, and all it requires you to do is to be able to count to 13. This is the magic number since it is the number of cards in each suit. The idea is that if you hold a long suit, then the opposition hold few cards of that suit, thus you continue to play that suit until the opposition hold no more of them, and so you establish your little cards. Let's look at some examples.

Example 2

♥ A K Q 3 2

♥ 8 7

♥ J 9 6

♥ 10 5 4

On the face of it you hold the top three cards in hearts, so you know that you will make at least 3 tricks. We say a suit **Splits** 3-2 if either of the opposition holds exactly three cards of this suit, and the other holds two and it makes no difference which defender it is who holds three of them. So, in this case if the suit splits no worse than 3-2, then after you have played 3 rounds with the Ace, King and Queen you **Drop** all their hearts and your little 2 and 3 now become **Established Winners**.

Your first thought would be, "But what if the suit breaks worse than 3-2, say 4-1 or even 5-0?" Well, this is the key to bridge, **Percentages**. I don't want to labour on this yet, but you will soon realise that splits like 3-2 are almost twice as likely to occur than any of the others, *put together*. Thus you will have to play to the best probabilities. All the same, if this suit were to split 4-1, then you would still be able to establish one more winner. A rule of thumb for percentages splits.

Suits where there are an ODD number of cards out, are most likely to split as even as possible. Suits where there are an EVEN number of cards out, are most likely to split unevenly, with a two card difference.

As an example, if you are missing 5 cards then 3-2 is the most likely split whereas if you are missing 6 cards, 4-2 would be the most likely split.

Example 3

♠ K Q J 10 3

♠ A 9 6

♠ 4 5

♠ 8 7 2

With a suit combination like this, you do not have any winners, until the Ace is played by the opposition. Once this is done, then you have now established the rest of the suit. The best way to force the opposition in playing their Ace, is to play the King, then Queen, Jack etc. until they eventually take the trick with the Ace. So you sacrifice a high card to push out their higher card, to establish more tricks in your hands. Again as in the example above, your 3 of spades becomes established once the opposition are clear of spades.

Another way to establish a suit is by **Ruffing**. Ruffing is a bridge word for trumping, so that when you can no longer follow suit, you can win the trick by playing a trump card. When playing in **NT** 's there aren't any trumps, therefore you cannot ruff. Look at the following example.

Example 4

♠ A 3 2
♥ A K 10 9 8 7
♦
♣

♠ K Q J 6 5
♥ 3 2
♦
♣

The trump suit is spades, and you want to establish hearts. You have 8 hearts, therefore the opposition hold 5 of them, and they are most likely to split 3-2. So you need to play 3 rounds of hearts. You hold the Ace and King of hearts, and once these are played you can now ruff the third heart with a trump from the south hand, which establishes the rest of the heart suit. In this example, you have to be careful that the opposition do not over-ruff you, since one defender also holds just two hearts, so ruff high, i.e. with the Jack - or better still, play spades first until they are *out*, now you can ruff in peace.

Example 5 Play a hand, by establishing winners

Now we sitting as declarer at South, playing in **NT** 's. West leads a small club. Now it is over to us.

♠ 7 5 3
 ♥ A J
 ♦ Q J 10 7 6 5
 ♣ K 7

N
 W E
 S

♠ A Q 6
 ♥ K 9 8 3
 ♦ 8 4 2
 ♣ A 8 3

Let's count winners: 1 in spades, 2 in hearts, 2 in clubs and none in diamonds, a total of 5. But we have a long diamond suit, which so far have counted for nothing. We need to establish them to be winners. How? Well we have 9 of them, so the opposition hold 4, including the Ace and King. So we want to play a small diamond to the Queen, to force out either the Ace or King. Then when we get in again, we play diamonds again. So we lose 2 diamond tricks, but we have then established 4 winners. A good exchange. Are there any problems though?

Well, yes. Let's think through the hand before we play anything. Say we win the first trick with the Ace of clubs, play our diamonds, to the opposition's Ace. They then continue clubs, forcing you to play your now singleton King. A further diamond from you, to there King. Now they run 3 club tricks. So they win 5 tricks, (2 diamonds and 3 clubs), before you can win your 9 tricks, (5 initial winners, plus the now established 4 diamonds). Is there anything we can do? Yes! It is subtle, and it happens at trick 1! Instead of winning the club trick, let them win it. Simple, counter-intuitive, but it works!! Here is the full deal, see for yourself that the initial ducking at trick 1 secures

your contract of making 9 tricks.

	♠ 7 5 3		
	♥ A J		
	♦ Q J 10 7 6 5		
	♣ K 7		
♠ K J 10 4	N	♠ 9 8 2	
♥ 10 6 2	W E	♥ Q 7 5 4	
♦ 9	S	♦ A K 3	
♣ Q 10 9 4 2		♣ J 6 5	
	♠ A Q 6		
	♥ K 9 8 3		
	♦ 8 4 2		
	♣ A 8 3		

2.3 Finesses

Finesses are at first difficult to understand. When they work, (and when they don't work), again depends on probabilities. Let's look at an example to demonstrate what goes on. For the sake of convenience, we will give each player exactly 3 cards of each suit, and we will discard the 2.

Example 6

	♣ A Q J	
♣ K 6 4		♣ 8 7 5
	♣ 10 9 3	

You are playing from South, and the plan is to make all three tricks. We assume that we can see all four hands. At first it appears that you can possibly lose a trick to the King, but since we can see all the cards, we know that it is West who holds the King. So the idea is that we make West play from his King before you choose to play

your Ace or Queen. So the idea is for you to lead from South and wait to see which card West chooses to play. If he plays the King, you cover with your Ace, and now your Queen and Jack are now established as winners; if West had decided to play low, then you would play your Queen, which naturally will win the trick. Then we repeat this procedure, by again leading towards the now Ace-Jack **Tenace** on table. This technique of *trapping* West's King is called a **Finesse**.

On the other hand if we swapped over the hands of East and West, so that East now held the King, whatever you do you will never be able to avoid losing a trick to the King. In real bridge, of course, you cannot see the cards of the defence and so, for this example, you cannot know who holds the King. In fact 50% of the time it will be with East and 50% with West, i.e. 50% of the time we can do nothing, but the other 50% at least we have a chance to do something about it. So let us see a similar situation from declarer's eyes.

♣ A 9 3

♣ ? ? ?

♣ ? ? ?

♣ Q J 10

Again we want to try to make all three tricks, but as we have just said if the missing King is at West, we can capture it with the finesse, but if it lies at East then we will always lose a trick. So we have to *hope* that West holds the King and so we play the Queen, and attempt the finesse. If West covers with the King, the job is done, otherwise, we play low and with fingers crossed, we hope that West still has the King, but just didn't play it. In that case the Queen will hold the trick and you repeat the process.

Example 7

♦ A 9 3

♦ ? ? ?

♦ ? ? ?

♦ Q 8 4

Here we want to win two tricks in diamonds. Notice that it is the king that we are missing, but this time we are also missing the Jack. If we were to play the Queen, and West covers with the King, then we will win with the Ace. But this will be our only trick, since the defence now hold the remaining two remaining highest cards, the Jack and the 10. So this *direct* use of the finesse doesn't gain us anything. *Indirectly* though there is still a finesse of the King but we need to play it slightly differently. What we want to do, is play a small card towards the Queen and *hope* that now East holds the King. Again the principle of the finesse is there; **You force the opposition to play their high card before you have to play yours.** So in this situation, if East plays the King, you don't play the Queen, and now you hold the two top cards, and so you'll win two tricks. If West has the King, you lose your Queen, and win only one trick in all, but at least you gave yourself the *chance* to win a second trick.

A final example.

Example 8

♥ A Q 10

♥ ? ? ?

♥ ? ? ?

♥ 6 4 3

Now the aim is to make as many tricks in hearts as you can. A lot depends on where the King and the Jack lie. What you need to do is to play two finesses, one of the King and one of the Jack. You do this by playing low towards your **Tenace**, and assuming that West plays low, you play either your Queen, (hoping that East holds the King) or the 10, (hoping that East does not hold the Jack). Your best bet is to play the 10 on the first round assuming that West plays low. Then play the finesse for a second time towards your Ace/Queen. For a finesse we need a tenace, that is the cards above and

below the card we are finessing. If we are finessing the King, then the tenace is the holding of the Ace and Queen.

If you really understand what is going on in the finesse, then you will see that if East holds both the King and the Jack then you will always lose two tricks. If the two outstanding honour cards are split between the defenders, then one of the finesses will work, and you will win two tricks, whereas if West holds both honours then you will win all three tricks.

Example 9 Play a hand, by finessing

You are declarer and as usual for these examples, you are sitting South. You are playing in hearts as a trump suit. West has made the opening lead of the $\diamond A$. Over to us.

♠ K 7 4 3

♥ K J 7 5

♦ 9 6

♣ Q J 6

N

W E

S

♠ Q J

♥ A 10 6 2

♦ J 8

♣ A 10 9 4 3

We have a combined total of 22 points. Counting losers we have 1 in spades, 2 in diamonds, and *maybe* one each in hearts and clubs, but these depend on where the outstanding high cards lie. So what's our plan?

We want to establish clubs. How? Well by finessing the King. If it is in East's hand then the finesse will work and we will end up winning 5 club tricks. But first we need to take out our trumps. Why? Well if not, while you start playing your winning clubs, if

any defender still has a trump out, he will ruff in. So let's look at trumps. You have 8, thus the defence have 5, including the Queen. They are most likely to break 3-2. So by playing the Ace of trumps followed by the King, is unlikely to capture the Queen, since it is more likely that the Queen is in the hand of the defender who holds 3 trumps. So we play for the finesse. Since we have both the 10 and the Jack we can finesse either player. It is pretty much a guess who to finesse. So let's say that we decide to finesse West. Thus we play the Ace from hand, (just in case it happened to be that East had a singleton Queen, not likely but costs you nothing in trying), then play your 10. If West covers with the Queen, well done, you've captured it. Otherwise, if he plays low, you play low. If the 10 wins the trick, then you can continue by playing a small heart towards your King Jack tenace on table.

Now that's trumps taken care of, onto the clubs. Now we have no choice of who to finesse, we have to hope that East holds the King. So now that we are on table, play the Queen. If it holds the trick, continue with the Jack. In the end you will win 10 tricks if both finesses work, 9 if one finesse fails and 8 if they both fail. Here is the complete deal.

		♠ K 7 4 3		
		♥ K J 7 5		
		♦ 9 6		
		♣ Q J 6		
♠ A 10 6 2		N		♠ 9 8 5
♥ Q 8 3		W		♥ 9 4
♦ A K Q 5		E		♦ 10 7 4 3 2
♣ 8 7		S		♣ K 5 2
		♠ Q J		
		♥ A 10 6 2		
		♦ J 8		
		♣ A 10 9 4 3		

2.4 Ruffing with the Short Suit

This section is only useful when you are playing in a trump suit contract. Consider the following example, where the trumps are spades.

Example 10

♠ x x x
 ♥ A J x x
 ♦ x
 ♣ K J x x x

♠ A K Q x x
 ♥ Q x
 ♦ A x x x
 ♣ x x

We have already seen in section 2.2 that we can try to establish spades. If we were to play out the spades, then we will win 5 spades in all. Not bad, but we can win *more* spade tricks, if we are patient with our trumps.

Before we attack spades look at the diamonds. You have a singleton diamond on table, with the Ace opposite. If you were to play the ♦A, you would have created a void on table. Now play a small diamond and ruff it. This trick is another spade trick, since you won it with a spade. Now, if you run spades, you will still win the same other 5 spade tricks as before, plus this 6th spade trick via the ruff. But we could do better still, by ruffing a second diamond with the trumps on table, and that way you win 7 trump tricks.

Now let us consider the situation where we still have the same cards as before, except that we have interchanged the clubs and diamonds from both hands.

♠ x x x
 ♥ A J x x
 ♦ A x x x
 ♣ x x

♠ A K Q x x
 ♥ Q x
 ♦ x
 ♣ K J x x x

Now we have the singleton diamond in declarer's hand. If we were to win our spades we win 5 tricks. As before, let us now ruff a diamond, and cash the remaining 4 spades, thus we *still* win 5 spade tricks. Why don't we win any more tricks like we did before? Well, the key to it, is that you need to ruff with the trumps that are in the *short* hand, i.e. the hand which contains the smaller number of trumps. **Thus to win extra trump tricks, we need to ruff in the short suit.**

Example 11 Play a hand, by ruffing in the short suit

Again, we are South, the contract is 4♠. West has lead the ♥J. Time to think.

♠ 10 8 4
 ♥ Q
 ♦ K Q 6 5 4
 ♣ A 9 4 2

N
 W E
 S

♠ A Q J 7 3
 ♥ A 6 3
 ♦ 10 3
 ♣ K 7 6

Let's count losers: None in hearts, 1 in diamonds, 1 in clubs and maybe one in spades. That's a maximum of 3. So we *should* make 4♠. Are there any problems? Well counting winners: we have 1 in hearts, 1 (to be established) in diamonds, 2 in clubs and 4, maybe 5, spades. That's still a maximum of 9. But one of the hand's strengths is the singleton heart on table. We can potentially ruff the 2 small hearts from hand and then win the other tricks that we had counted for. Not bad. But another question, can we take out our trumps? Clearly we would like to try the finesse of the King, but not so quick. Why? Well, if the finesse fails and then the defence play another spade, how many hearts can you now ruff? Well, you have played two already, so that leaves only one on table. So you can only ruff one heart.

So the correct line of play is as follows: A small heart has been lead from the defence, cover with your Queen. East plays the King and so you complete the trick with the Ace. Now play a small heart and ruff on table. Get back into hand by playing a small club to the King in hand. Play your final heart and ruff again. Now play your final spade from table, letting it run. Unfortunately the finesse fails, (well it would do, this is an example for ruffing in the short suit, not finessing!). In the end you will win, 4 spade

tricks, the Ace of hearts and two heart ruffs, the diamond King and the Ace/King of clubs. 10 tricks, contract made. Here is the complete deal.

		♠ 10 8 4		
		♥ Q		
		♦ K Q 6 5 4		
		♣ A 9 4 2		
♠ K 9 6				♠ 5 2
♥ J 10 9 7 5		N		♥ K 8 4 2
♦ 8 7	W		E	♦ A J 9 2
♣ J 8 5		S		♣ Q 10 3
		♠ A Q J 7 3		
		♥ A 6 3		
		♦ 10 3		
		♣ K 7 6		

Chapter 3

Defending

Many bridge players say that the hardest part of the game is to defend. There are many reasons why defending is harder than being declarer. For a start declarer gets to see both hands on his side, whereas in defence you cannot see your partner's hand. Secondly the side which are declaring, generally hold a majority of the points, and so making tricks should be easier. But bridge has a way to even things out.

Although declarer can see his dummy's cards so can the defence, and it is important that the defenders should also use dummy to gain information. For the defence to bring a contract down, they only need to take a few tricks in comparison to declarer for making his contract. Finally, the defence start the play of the cards, which allows them a foot in the door. Many a time the defence can bring a contract down, before declarer has even made a trick. We'll keep things simple, so that the main principles are understood, before we start looking into the exceptions. Here are a few rules of thumb:

- **Lead through strength, lead to weakness.**

	♠ K Q x x	
	♥ 10 x x	
	♦	
	♣	
♠ 10 x x		N
♥ K x x	W	E
♦		S
♣		

You're lead and you have the choice of leading spades or hearts, where neither suit has been played. Which suit is the best one to play? Which one will win you tricks? Which one will not give anything away to declarer? Using the principle above, we want to lead spades, *lead through strength*. If partner has the Ace, you'll be trapping one of declarer's King or Queen. Notice that this is similar to the principle of the finesse, making the opposition play their high cards before your side does. If declarer has the Ace, although you haven't won anything, you haven't given anything away. If on the other hand you had played a small heart, you are getting your partner to play one of his high cards before declarer, thus helping declarer. You might also lose the opportunity to win your King. If it was in fact partner to lead a card instead of you, you would expect him to lead hearts, *lead to weakness*, since he'll be using the same logic as you.

- **Third or fourth in hand, try to win the trick with your cheapest card.** This seems quite obvious, why win a trick with a big card if we can get away with it with a smaller card. But this principle actually helps partner understand about what cards you hold in your hand. Imagine that partner has just won the last trick with the Queen. Since this is his cheapest card, it is clear that he cannot be holding the Jack. If you don't hold it and you can see that dummy does not have it, then you know that declarer has it. The principle applies equally when

you are third in hand. Consider the following:

♠ 10

♠ 3 2

♠ A

♠ K Q 6 4

Against a **NT** contract you decide to open the lead with the ♠4. You see the two smaller cards, 3 and 2 go down in dummy. Partner attempts to win the trick with the 10, but it is in fact declarer who wins the trick with the Ace. What can we deduce? Well firstly partner has not got the 9, otherwise he would have played it, so we can place it with declarer. Secondly why did declarer win the trick with the Ace, not the Jack? Because he doesn't have it, so we can place that card with partner. So the situation that we now know is:

♠ J 10

♠ 3 2

♠ ~~A~~ 9

♠ K Q 6 ~~4~~

where the cards played are crossed out and the cards deduced are underlined. Let's say that later on in the hand it is your lead again and the situation is as it is above. Do you play out the King then Queen hoping to establish your 6? No. Instead you play the 6 to the Jack that you *know* partner has. Notice that if declarer has two of the remaining three cards which we cannot account for, then playing the King then Queen, will drop partner's Jack and establish Declarer's 9.

- **Second in hand, play low.**

Why? As a defender one of your jobs is to make life difficult for declarer. If declarer leads a small card, don't help him by playing a high card too quickly. Maybe he had a guess to make and was going to make the wrong choice. Similarly if you do hold a high card a hesitation by you is as good as a finesse for declarer.

♦

♦ A 9 7 3 ♦ 2

♦ Q 8 6

In this case declarer as East has lead ♦2, towards his cards in dummy. Maybe he is going to play his Ace, maybe he'll play his 9. If you play your Queen you are sacrificing it, since declarer will only then win the trick with the Ace. Instead, be cool and play *small*. If the whole suit had been divided as follows;

♦ 10

♦ A 9 7 3 ♦ K J 5 4 2

♦ Q 8 6

playing small will always eventually win your side a trick, whereas playing the Queen wins you nothing but a hard stare from partner.

- **Cover an honour card with an honour card.**

Now it seems as though we are contradicting the above piece of advice, but there is a difference. Consider the following;

♣

♣ A J 8 6 ♣ Q

♣ K 5 2

Declarer is on lead and plays his ♣Q. This is an honour card and you have an honour card in your hand, the King. You can see that if you play it, declarer will win the trick with his Ace, but if you don't play it declarer will play low, since he is trying to finesse your King. At the moment you are in a no win situation. But covering his queen means declarer can only win one trick with his Ace-Queen combination, whereas if you duck he will win both the Ace and Queen separately.

Further though, if the complete deal for this suit was as follows;

♣ 10 9 4

♣ A J 8 6

♣ Q 7 3

♣ K 5 2

then by initially playing the King over declarer's Ace, you help establish partner's 10, but had you not covered the Queen, your side will not win any club trick, and again you gain a cold glare from partner. Note that the difference between this situation and that given above is that here declarer has played an honour card, whereas above you play low if declarer had lead low. Let us look at one more common situation, where we use the same thinking as above.

♥ A 10 8

♥ K 9 6 4

♥

♥ 5

Now we are sitting at North, and our partner has lead the ♥5. Declarer decides to play small, ♥4 from table. Do you play your Ace or not? Well you are in third hand, thus we want to try to win the trick as cheaply as possible. If you play the Ace, yes, you win the trick, but later on declarer wins a trick with the King. Remember, that Aces are there to capture kings, queens and other high cards, not 2's and 3's. So playing the Ace here is not advised. Naturally then you play the 8. Note that playing the 10 denies the 9, but since dummy has it, and it was not played, you now *falsely* deny holding the 8. So the ♥8 is the correct card.

- **Keep length with dummy**

As we have seen in the card-play, one way for declarer to win tricks is by establishing long suits. You as a defender have the task of trying to stop declarer doing

what he wants to do. Consider the following.

♣ 9 6 4 3

♣ A Q 5 2 ♣

♣

Declarer, East, is playing in hearts as trumps and he is in the process of taking out trumps. You, sitting in North, only have one trump so you have to find suitable cards to throw away. the first card you throw will have a message attached to it, but we will look into this in more detail later. What about the rest though. You can see that you have a long club suit. There is a tendency to think that you will not win any of these club tricks. You may well be right, but since dummy has also got 4 clubs, if you discard a club, he may well now win his fourth club. If the full layout of the suit was as follows:

♣ 9 6 4 3

♣ A Q 5 2 ♣ K 8 7

♣ J 10

If declarer cashes his top three clubs, your 9 is bigger than his 2. But had you previously discarded one of your clubs, declarer's 2 becomes established. So the moral, keep length with dummy and throw away another suit.

- **Always trust partner**

Good declarers will try their best to disturb any communication and understanding between you and partner, by playing his cards deceptively. You will always do better, if you play as a *partnership* of two defenders, against one declarer. If declarer plays something which could be throwing you off the scent of a signal that partner has made to you, trust partner. How many cold stares can you take from partner.

3.1 Opening Leads

A **Lead** is the first card played to start any trick. The **opening Lead** is the very first card to be played in a hand. There are whole books written about opening leads, as well as subsequent leads during the play, but here we just give a few ideas on what you should be doing. The aim is to start a way of establishing enough tricks for you to bring a contract down, before the declarer can establish enough tricks to make his contract. It becomes a sort of race, where the defence have a slight head start, so we must use this wisely. Your choice of opening lead will take into account many factors. The type of contract, the level of the contract, and how the bidding went to get to the contract. Of course if partner has bid something, use that information. You need a good reason *not* to lead towards your partner's suit.

- **Honour Card Leads.** Leading honour cards, can be done against any contract, and are probably the *safest* leads to make.

- **Always lead the highest card of a touching sequence of honour cards.**

Thus if your partner leads the Ace, he is promising the King. If he leads the King, he promises the Queen and denies the Ace. Note when leading, lead from the top, but when 3rd or 4th in hand, you would play the smallest of a touching sequence.

- **Never lead an unsupported honour card.**

This is rather risky, since you have more to lose than to gain. For a lead like this to be a gain, you are expecting a lot, probably too much, from partner.

- **Long Suit Leads.** You will normally make a lead of a long suit against **NT** contracts. The rule is, *Lead you fourth highest card of your longest and strongest suit.* The lead of the fourth highest is just convention, but it allows partner to know in one card where the strength of your hand lies. The idea is that you are trying to establish your long suit. Similar as it is for declarer, your defensive tricks will come from your long suits.

- **Short Suit Leads.** Generally you lead a short suit against suit contracts. The idea is that you hope to produce a void in your hand, so that you can get in a ruff, before declarer can take out your trumps.
 - Lead of a **Singleton.** This produces a void conveniently in your hand straight away.
 - Lead of a **Doubleton.** Always lead the highest card of a doubleton. Remember though, if you hold honour doubleton, leading from this combination you are asking for trouble, since you either lead the unsupported honour or you lead the smaller of the two. Either way you are giving false information to partner. Prefer to lead another suit.
 - Lead of a **Tripleton.**
 - * If your tripleton contains an honour card, then lead with your smallest card.
 - * If your tripleton contains no honour, three rags, then start with your **Middle** card. On the next round you play your **Upper** card, and finish with the **Down** card. This is called playing **M.U.D.** Don't forget that if you do lead from the middle card, to continue later by playing the upper card. If you forget, then you will be falsely showing partner that you had started with a doubleton.

Let's look at a few hands to see what the opening lead should be.

Example 1

♠ K Q J 3
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ 9 8 6
 ♣ A 5 4

Let us say that the contract is in Hearts and it is you who has to make the opening lead. If you want to lead spades, you lead with the King, the highest card of a sequence of honours; promising the Queen. Spades would be the best lead, since

it establishes the Queen and Jack as winners. Had you wanted to lead diamonds though, then from 3 cards with no honour, lead the ♦8, the middle card. If you prefer clubs, then holding three to an honour, lead the smallest card, ♣4.

Example 2

♠ Q J 10 5 4
 ♥ 9 8
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ J 9 5 2

Let the contract be in clubs and again it is all eyes on you for the opening lead. If you want to lead your long suit, spades, you have a sequence of touching honours, so lead the top card, ♠Q. If you fancy leading one of your short suits, then in hearts, lead the top card, i.e. ♥9. Now in diamonds you hold an unsupported honour, so prefer not to lead it.

Example 3

♠ A Q 9 7
 ♥ K 9 6 4 3
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ J 4

If the contract was in **NT**, then you would want to lead your long suit, which is hearts. The convention is to play the 4th highest, which would be the ♥4. If you held only 4 hearts, then you could lead either hearts or spades. Since both suits would be of 4 card length, then the 4th highest in both cases would be the smallest card.

3.2 Discards

Throughout the play of the hand, you give information to partner about what you hold in your hand. A system of signalling is very useful but needs both defenders to be paying full attention at all times. So we won't bother with this yet, but we will look at the obvious times when partner can signal to you. We have already looked at the opening lead, that itself should give you some idea of what partner holds.

What we look into now is the first **Discard**. When you cannot follow suit, you are allowed to play any card. If you play a trump card, then this is ruffing, but if you play anything else, then this is called discarding. It is a very useful thing to give a

meaning to the first discard made by partner. This is what we will do, and the system of discarding that we will use is called **Revolving**. The suits are given an ordering, which we will look at in more detail when we start with the bidding, chap 4. The lowest are Clubs, then Diamonds, Hearts and Spades at the top. We revolve it round so that the clubs are above the spades, and so we have a cyclic order. Every suit has a suit above and a suit below it. When you discard a *low* card, i.e. the 2,3 or 4, you are showing something in the suit *below* the discarded suit. When you discard a *high* card, 8,9 or 10, you indicate the suit *above*. Your discard should indicate to partner a suit where you hold a possible winning trick, like the Ace or King. If you do not hold a feature, and in effect don't want to signal a suit, then play a middle card, 5,6 or 7. Note, that they come in groups of three, low (2,3,4), middle (5,6,7) and high (8,9,10).

There are two big advantages to a system like this. Firstly you throw away a suit you do not want. Secondly, you always have two ways to show one suit. i.e. to show hearts, you can discard either a high diamond or a low spade. It is only the first discard which has this meaning, all further discards are cards which you find convenient to throw away. Let's look at some examples.

Example 4

♠ 9 7 4

♥ -

♦ A K 6 2

♣ 9 7

The trumps are hearts and after a few rounds have been played, you hold this hand. A heart is now played and since you now have a void in hearts, you must discard. You want to indicate diamonds to partner, so you can play either a high club or a low spade. Don't worry about the low spade, partner knows that you cannot be indicating hearts, so he revolves down to the next available suit, diamonds.

Example 5♠ 6 4 2

♥ -

♦ 9 8 5♣ K Q 6

Again you do not hold any hearts and so you must discard. You want to show clubs. Unluckily, you do not have either a low diamond or a high spade, so what do you do? Firstly play a middle card, ♠6 or ♦5 or ♣6, which says that you have nothing to show. If another heart is played straight away, then you get the chance to discard again. If you now played the ♠2, what does partner think? Well, had you played this card as a first discard it means that you would want diamonds, so clearly playing it as a second discard means that you do *not* want diamonds. So at least partner has a better idea, that if you do hold something then it is either in spades or clubs.

Chapter 4

Bidding

We start to look at the bidding, and will begin with learning a very basic system of bidding. Now this system is valid, but it is very weak, but with it we will learn the basics behind the bidding, and all the time we will continue to change it and update it, so that in not such a long time we will be playing a much more accurate and powerful system. We all learn to drive in a battered Escort, before we get our hands on a Ferrari.

Firstly we need to introduce the **Ranking** of the suits, the reason for why we have this will become clear. **C**lubs are the lowest ranked suit, followed in increasing order, by **D**iamonds, **H**earts and **S**pades, so that spades are the highest ranked suit.

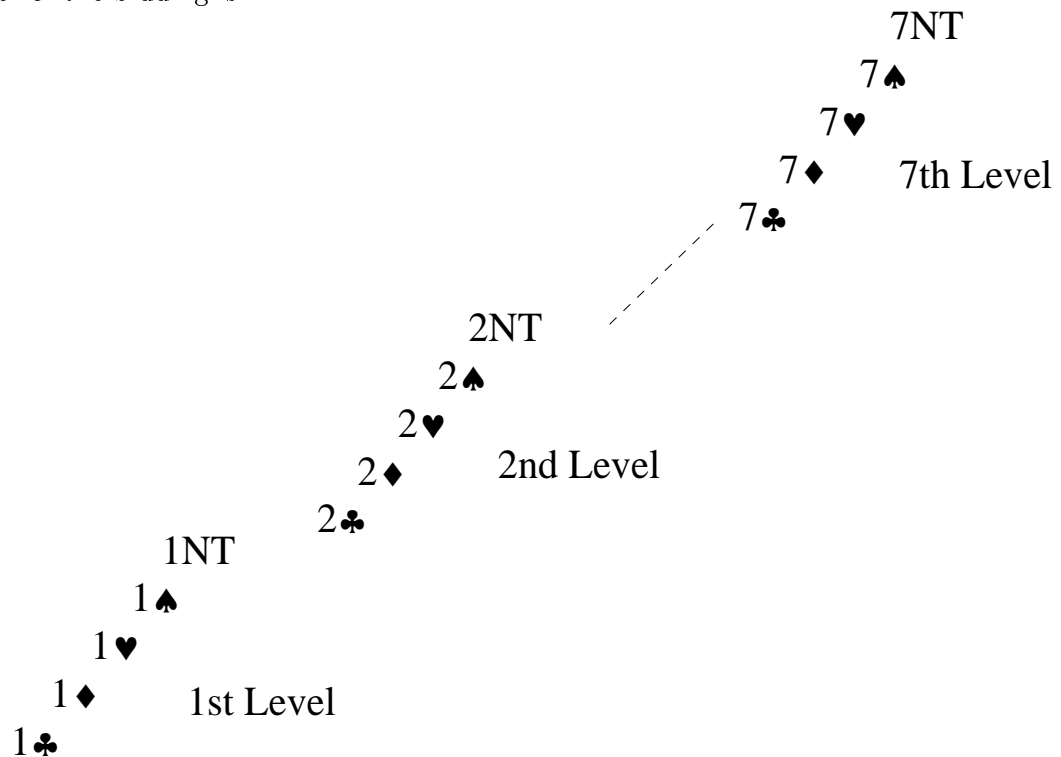
The Ranking is alphabetical, $C < D < H < S$.

A bid is supposed to tell everyone at the table what you think you can make with your hand. That is to say, you declare the number of tricks you think you can make with a specific suit as trumps. So to say that you will make 8 tricks with hearts as trumps, you make the valid bid of $2\heartsuit$, just like we learnt with the declaration of the contract in mini-bridge. Of course if you have nothing to say, you bid with a **Pass** or **No Bid**. The bidding starts with the dealer and continues around the table clockwise. If you want to bid something then it must be higher than the present contracted bid. It becomes an auction, and ends once everyone has passed, and it is the highest bidder who *buys the contract*.

There are two things to point out. Firstly, everyone has a chance to bid at least once,

and if no-one wants to say anything, then the hand is passed out and the cards are not played. Secondly, it is not necessarily the highest bidder who becomes declarer. The declarer is the *first* partner who bid the suit that the final contract is to be played in¹.

Now this is where the ranking of the suits come into play. Obviously $2\heartsuit$ is a higher bid than $1\spadesuit$, but since hearts are lower ranked than spades then $1\heartsuit$ is a lower bid than $1\spadesuit$. But where does **NT** come into the ranking? Well the way it is, is that for each level of bids, **NT** are the highest ranked, thus 1NT is greater than $1\spadesuit$. So a complete order of the bidding is:



Bridge is a partnership game, and so you bid with your partner. In fact, bidding becomes a way of communicating information about your hand to your partner. Thus bidding is like a conversation, where the language to describe your hand is called the bidding system. There are many bidding systems, the more powerful the bidding system, and therefore more complicated and difficult to learn, the more accurately you can describe your hand.

¹e.g. Let us say that East opens $1\heartsuit$ and partner at West bids $4\heartsuit$, which is then passed out. Then since the final contract is in hearts, the declarer would be East since he bid them first

To understand how bidding works, let us consider declarer's situation from mini-bridge. When the dummy goes down, declarer can see completely both hands on his side, so he can see exactly how many points he's got and which suit would be the best for playing as trumps. Thus declarer has the ability to choose the best contract. The structure of our bidding system is to allow one player to describe fully his hand so that his partner can *see* it, and so he can then choose the best contract. The important general factors in describing a hand are therefore the number of points and the lengths of the suits.

So that is the *thinking* behind how the bidding works, what we now need to look at is where the bidding taking us. The emphasis on bidding is to reach a Game contract, which can be seen in section 1.3, due to the scoring. As we saw with mini-bridge, a combined total of 26 points, should be sufficient to make game. So our bidding must convey to partner both the strength of your hand and the distribution of the suits in your hand. So not only do we want to see if we have enough strength to be in game, but we hope to locate a fit in a suit, which can then be used as trumps. Thus if you want to open the bidding, logically, you would be expected to be holding at least half of what your side needs, to be bidding and making game. Thus to open the bidding with, say $1\heartsuit$, you would need at least 13 points and at least 4 hearts. The person who opens the bidding is the **Opener** and his partner is the **Responder**. Of course, to respond to your partner's open, you would not be expected to hold much, but if you can bid, then you do so. And so the bidding continues between the players, until a contract is decided.

Of course all the players can bid. It is clear to see that the bidding can become very complicated and difficult if all players did bid. It would be like trying to learn French on the telephone with a crossed line. So as a start, to make things easier we consider bidding where the opposition say *nothing*.

In this way it should take opener two bids to describe his hand exactly to partner. In other words after the relay of bidding, of the first three bids, **Open - Response - Rebid**, responder should have a fair idea of where the final contract should lie. So we will look at these three bids in detail, and it is the rules of these three bidding situations, which define a bidding system.

4.1 The Open and the Rebid

We will start by looking at the open, but opener's rebid is intrinsically tied in with it, so that we have to consider them both together.

The **Shape** or **Distribution** of your hand depends on the number of cards of each suit that you hold.

- A **Balanced** hand, is one where you hold a bit of something in every suit. Formally speaking, you have at least 2 cards in every suit, and at *most* one suit with exactly 2 cards. Thus *all* balanced hands are of the form, any 4333, 4432 or 5332 patterns.²
- An **Unbalanced** hand, is one where you hold 2 suits, one suit of at least 5 cards, and a second suit, of at least 4 cards. Thus, any 54xx, 55xx, 64xx, 65xx etc.
- A **Very Unbalanced** hand is one where you hold one long suit, of at least 6 cards, and where you do *not* have another suit of at least 4 cards.

The **Strength** of your hand obviously depends on the number of points you hold.

As opener,

- a **Weak** hand lies in the range of 13 to 15 points.
- a **Strong** hand lies in the range of 16 to 19 points.
- a **Very Strong** hand lies in the range of 20+ points.

So as opener you can have any one of 3 hand shapes and any one of 3 hand strengths, thus you have any one of 9 types of hand. As was said above, it only takes opener two bids to describe his hand, i.e. to tell partner which one of the 9 hand categories his hand falls into.

²We write 4333 to mean that the hand contains one suit of length 4, and three suits of length 3. we use x's to mean anything, so that 54xx can be 5422 or 5431 or 5440 etc.

STRENGTH SHAPE	WEAK 13-15	STRONG 16-19	VERY STRONG 20+
<p>BALANCED</p> <p>All hands which are 4333, 4432, and 5332</p>	<p>12-14 OPEN 1NT</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>15-16 REBID NT 's at lowest level</p> <p>17-18 REBID NT 's at the next lowest level</p> <p>19 REBID 3NT</p>	<p>OPEN 2NT</p>
<p>UNBALANCED</p> <p>All hands which contain two biddable suits, one with at least 5 cards and the other of at least 4. i.e. 54xx, 55xx</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID 2-of-other-suit if below barrier</p> <p>otherwise</p> <p>repeat first suit with 2-of-first-suit</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID 2-of-other-suit if above barrier</p> <p>otherwise</p> <p>jump rebid in second suit with 3-of-other-suit</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID 3-of-other-suit if 2-of-other-suit is above barrier</p> <p>otherwise</p> <p>jump rebid in second suit with 4-of-other-suit</p>
<p>V.UNBALANCED</p> <p>All hands which contain only one suit, of at least 6 cards. i.e. 6322, 7xxx</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID the same suit with 2-of-first-suit</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID the same suit with a jump 3-of-first-suit</p>	<p>OPEN 1-of-a-suit</p> <p>REBID the same suit with a jump 4-of-first-suit</p>

There are many things that still need to be explained. The most obvious is when the diagram says, open **1-of-a-suit**, which suit does this mean? This is answered simply, you open with your *longest* suit. If you hold more than one suit of equal length, then you can choose which suit to open. Later we will add more precision to this, but for the time being, let's not over-complicate the situation. If you have a second suit, i.e. you hold an unbalanced hand, it is this suit which we mean by **other-suit**, e.g. **2-of-other-suit**, **3-of-other-suit** and **4-of-other-suit**

The **Barrier** is defined as 2-of-the-opening-suit. So, for example, if the opening bid was $1\heartsuit$, then the barrier would be $2\heartsuit$. Now let us say that your partner responds **1NT**, (you do not need to understand what the **1NT** response means yet, we just want to demonstrate the point from opener's point of view alone). Now if you had an unbalanced hand, where your second suit was say diamonds, then you want to rebid them. Thus if you rebid $2\diamondsuit$, which is less than the barrier, then you have shown a weak hand. On the other hand, if you rebid $3\diamondsuit$ then you have shown a strong hand since $3\diamondsuit$ is greater than the barrier. Similarly, had your second suit been spades, by rebidding $2\spadesuit$, which is greater than the barrier, you promise a strong hand. If you held a weak hand and wanted to rebid spades, then you cannot, and you must rebid with your first suit, i.e. $2\heartsuit$. Let's give some commentary on the diagram, to point out some of the patterns which exist, so that learning it will be easier, once you understand it.

For balanced hands

- If you have a balanced hand, then either you open with **NT**'s or you rebid **NT**'s.
- If you open or rebid in **NT**'s, then you must have a balanced hand.
- Thus **NT**'s and balanced hands for *opener* go together.

For all other hands

- If you bid two suits then you must have an unbalanced hand.
- If you have an unbalanced hand, you *try* to bid both of your biddable suits. This is not always possible, since it depends on the strength of you hand.

- The rebid of 2-of-your-first-suit is the **Denial Rebid**. It doesn't show anything positive; it denies the ability to rebid **NT** 's, because you don't have a balanced hand; it denies the ability to rebid a second suit, because either you don't have one or else you do not have the strength to bid your second suit over the barrier.
- If you have a weak opening hand your rebid should take up the least bidding space possible.
- If you have a strong hand your rebid must be higher than your barrier.
- If you have a very strong hand, then your rebid would be the same rebid as in the strong case except you would bid with a jump.

The one thing to notice is that before you make your opening bid you *must* have an idea of what your **Prepared Rebid** is going to be. This doesn't mean that you will make that rebid, you only do this if the other priorities, which we have not yet mentioned, are not satisfied. First let's look at some examples. We'll assume that whatever the open is, the response from partner will be $1\spadesuit$.

Example 1

\spadesuit K 5

\heartsuit A K Q 10 8 6

\diamondsuit 7 5

\clubsuit Q J 4

This hand is very unbalanced with 15 points. Our suit is hearts, so our open would be $1\heartsuit$ and with the prepared rebid of $2\heartsuit$. Notice how the rebid of $2\heartsuit$ has denied the ability of bidding $2\clubsuit$ or $2\diamondsuit$, since in both of these cases you do not hold either suit as biddable; and further we could not rebid 1NT since we do not hold a balanced hand.

Example 2

♠ K 5
 ♥ K 10 5
 ♦ K Q 10 7
 ♣ K J 8 2

This is balanced with 15 points. With two 4 card suits we can open with either $1\clubsuit$ or $1\diamondsuit$ and after the response of $1\spadesuit$, our prepared rebid would be 1NT , Remember that an open or rebid of NT 's guarantees a balanced hand.

Example 3

♠ Q J 9
 ♥ Q 2
 ♦ K Q 6
 ♣ A K 9 7 4

The hand is balanced with 17 points, and so open with $1\clubsuit$ and rebid 2NT after the response from partner. Note that if you had rebid 1NT , then this would have been a gross underbid, since you would be showing just 15-16 points.

Example 4

♠ 8
 ♥ K J 8 4 2
 ♦ K Q 6
 ♣ A K 9 7

This is unbalanced, and strong, 16 points, so open our longest suit, $1\heartsuit$ and rebid clubs above the barrier, i.e. $3\clubsuit$. Again had you rebid just $2\clubsuit$, this would have only shown 13-15 points, completely mis-informing partner of the real strength of your hand.

Example 5

♠ 10 6
 ♥ A Q 7 6 5
 ♦ K Q J 10
 ♣ J 4

This is a weak opening unbalanced hand. With 5 cards in hearts and 4 in diamonds, open with $1♥$ and rebid $2♦$. Note that $2♦$ is less than the barrier of $2♥$.

Example 6

♠ A
 ♥ K Q 8 5 3
 ♦ A K J 5 4
 ♣ 10 7

This is an unbalanced strong opening hand. You can open in either hearts or diamonds, and you rebid the other, above the barrier. So if you open $1♥$, you must rebid $3♦$, whereas had you opened $1♦$, your rebid would have been $2♥$.

So far we have looked at opener's open and the tied in prepared rebid. Generally speaking you make this rebid, once your partner has responded, but there are two obvious situations where you do not.

1. When you partner's response is in support of your opened suit. Now you have located your fit. All you need to do is to see if game is there or not, which we will look at in detail later.
2. When *you* can support your partner's responded suit. Now you need to tell partner that you hold his suit so that he now knows that a fit has been found. If this is the case there is no need to make your prepared rebid, instead give a **Support Rebid** as follows,

Weak	13-15 points,	Simple Raise,	so rebid 2-of-his-suit.
Strong	16-19 points,	Jump Raise,	so rebid 3-of-his-suit.
V. Strong	20+ points,	Game Raise,	so rebid 4-of-his-suit.

4.2 The Response

Let's now consider that our partner has opened the bidding and has bid 1-of-a-suit, which initially shows anything between 13 and 19 points. You respond to this open, in order of priority. Remember one of the ideas behind the bidding is to find a fit, so your first priority is to support partner, if you can. Since partner has promised at least 4 cards in his suit, you need at least 4 so that you have the 8 card fit that you are looking for. If you cannot support then you generally bid your own suit, and hope that partner might then be able to support you.

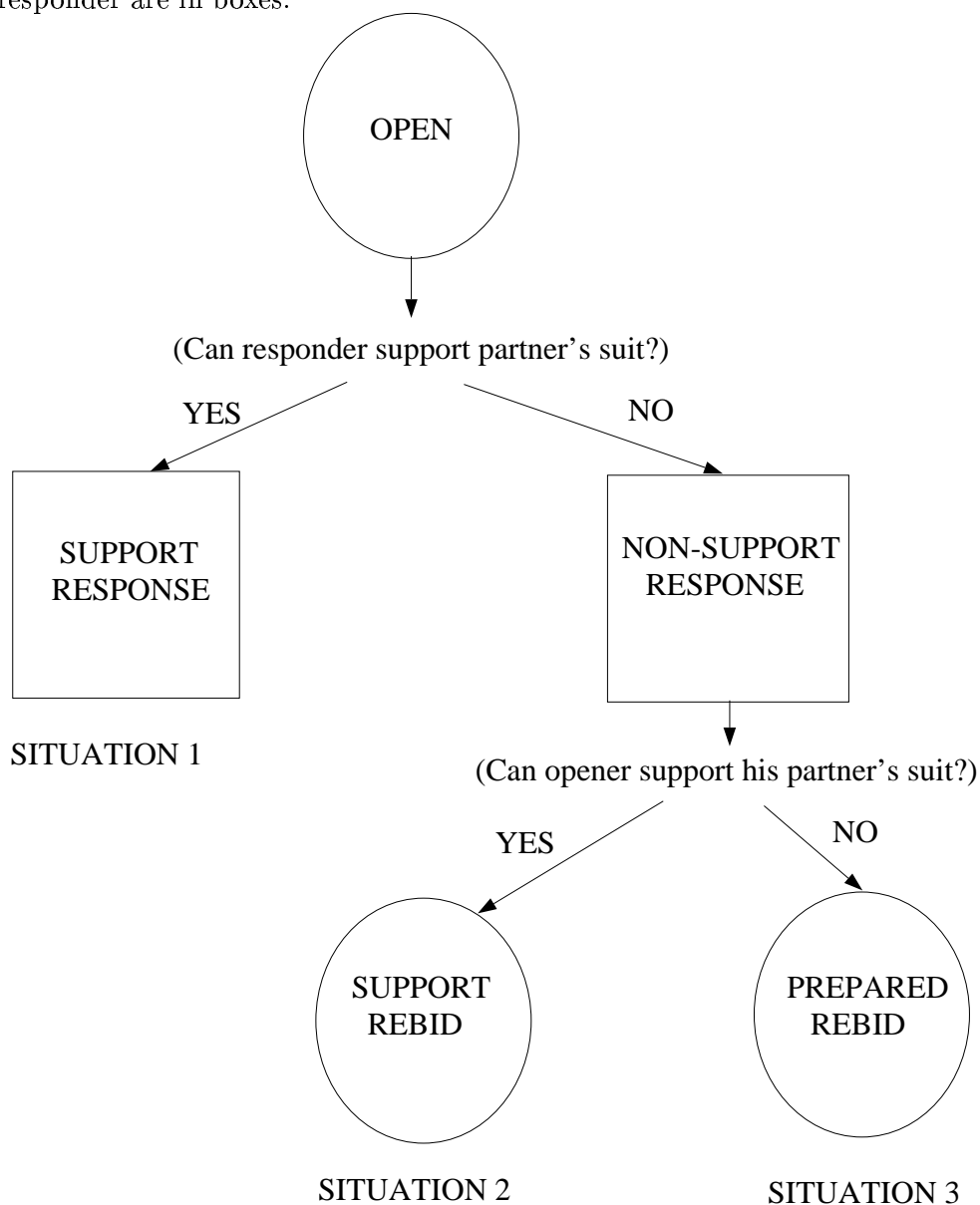
Okay, so let's write this out formally. If you have 5 or less points then with a maximum of 19 opposite you in partner's hand, game looks a bit too far away to be bid safely, since you have a combined maximum of 24. Since you are going nowhere fast, tell partner this by passing. With at least 6 points you *must* say something.

1. If you can support partner.
 - 6-9 pts: Give partner a **Simple Raise**, so bid 2-of-his-suit.
 - 10-12 pts: Give partner a **Jump Raise**, so bid 3-of-his-suit.
 - 13+pts: Raise partner directly to Game, so bid 4-of-his-suit.
2. If you cannot support partner.
 - You bid your own suit at the cheapest level. If this means you bid at the 2 level, then you need at least 10 points. So if you cannot bid a suit at the 1 level and you do not have more than the ten points required, then you bid 1NT . This is known as the **Denial Response**, since you *deny* holding 4 card support for partner, you *deny* holding a biddable 4 card suit at the 1 level and you *deny* holding 10 or more points, otherwise you would have responded at the 2-level. Note that it *does not* guarantee a balanced hand.

	Support Responses	No Support Responses
6-9	Simple Raise	Bid your suit at the one level, if you can, otherwise respond 1NT .
10-12	Jump Raise	Bid your suit. If it means responding at the two level, then do so.
13+	Game Raise	

4.3 Further Bidding

So let us recap on what we know so far. Partner opens the bidding. as responder you want to support if you can, otherwise you give your suit back as a response. now opener has a priority to support your given suit, otherwise he'll give his prepared rebid, which will fully describe his hand. So we have the following 3 situations given in a flow chart. Note that all the bids made by opener are enclosed in a circle, whereas all bids made by responder are in boxes.



- **SITUATION 1: OPEN - SUPPORT RESPONSE**

As opener, what do we now do? Well we know that we have a fit. We also know that partner has a range of points depending on whether the response was a simple response, 6-9, a jump response 10-12, or a game raise 13+. Our thought process are as follows:

$$\text{Your Points} + (\text{Partner's Range}) = (\text{Combined Range})$$

Question: Where is 26, the number of points required to make game, within this combined range?

- If the maximum of this CR is less than 26 then you know that there is NO GAME - so **PASS**.
- If the minimum of this CR is greater than 26, then you know that GAME is there - so bid **GAME**.
- If 26 lies somewhere in the range, then we want to **INVITE GAME**.

An example: You hold 18 points and your partner has responded 2♠ to your open of 1♠. Thus the thought process is as follows:

$$18 + (6-9) = 24-27$$

Question: Where is 26?

Answer: Somewhere in the range, thus you invite game and bid 3♠. This asks partner to bid 4♠ if he is at the maximum end of his range, i.e. 8/9 points, otherwise pass.

- **SITUATION 2:** OPEN - NON SUPPORT RESPONSE - SUPPORT REBID

Now we are responder. Again we have a fit found and we know partner's range, simple raise 13-15, jump raise 15-16, game raise 20+. Same thought process as before:

$$\mathbf{Your\ Points + (Partner's\ Range) = (Combined\ Range)}$$

Question: Where is 26?

Again we have the three zones, NO GAME, GAME and MAYBE GAME, and the three respective actions that we can do, PASS, BID GAME, INVITE GAME. An example: Bidding has gone $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-2\spadesuit$. Thus we have a spade fit and partner has shown 13-15 points. You have 10 points. Thus,

$$\mathbf{10 + (13-15) = 23-25}$$

Question: Where is 26?

Answer: Not there, NO GAME, so PASS.

- **SITUATION 3:** OPEN - NON SUPPORT RESPONSE - PREPARED REBID

So here we have the most ambiguity since the bidding has not yet shown a fit. But still the same thought process applies, since partner has still shown a narrow point range.

$$\mathbf{Your\ Points + (Partner's\ Range) = (Combined\ Range)}$$

Question: Where is 26?

Again we know whether we should be going to game or not, but now we have a second question: Which suit should be trumps, or even play the contract in NT 's? Again there are more questions we need to ask ourselves. Can we *now*

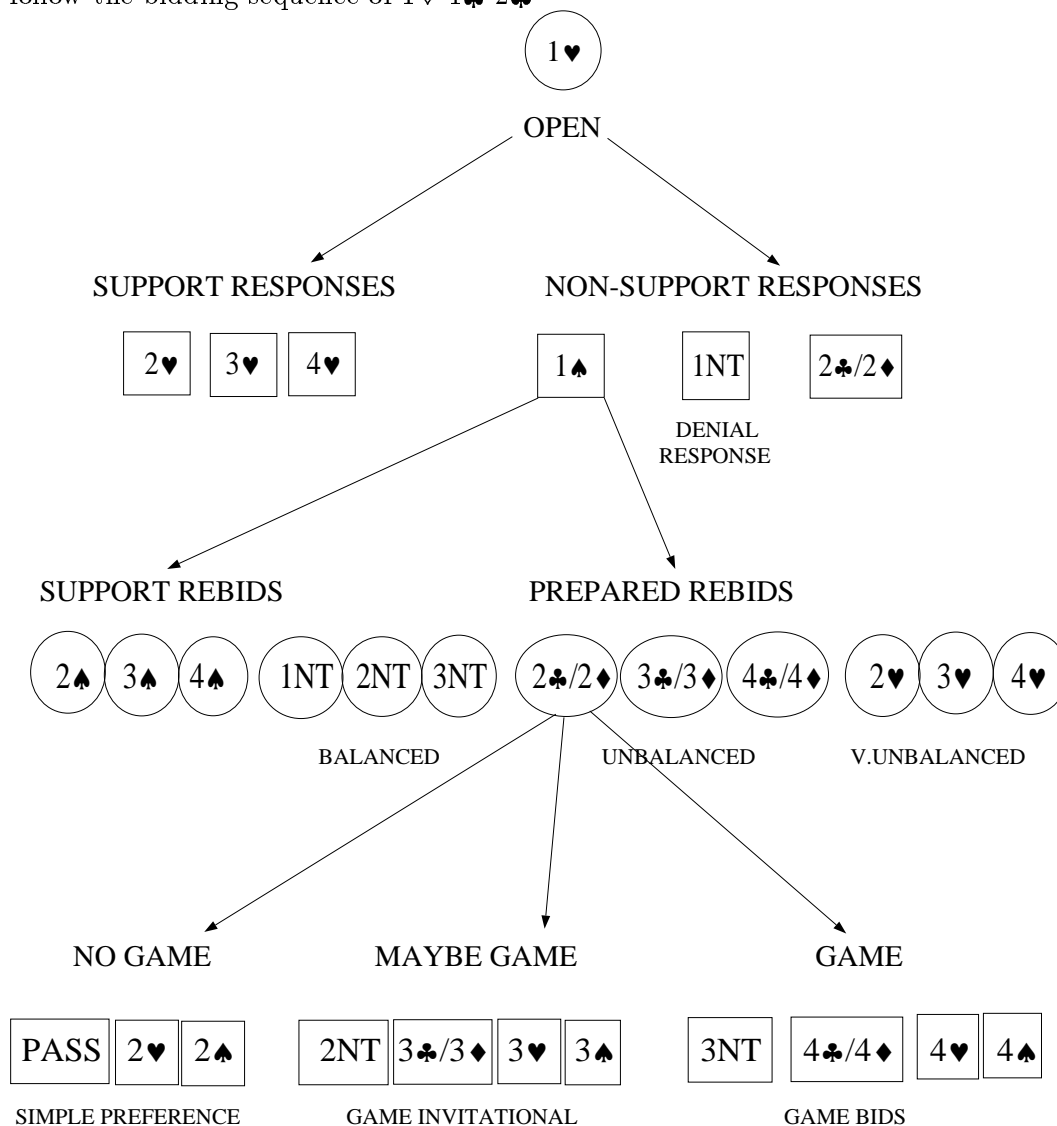
support partner in either of his suits? If not, do we have our own long suit of at least 6 cards in length? Consider the following table, which will help you in how to continue the bidding, depending on the answers to those questions:

	I can NOW support partner?.	I have no support but I do have my own long suit.	I have no support nor long suit.
No Game	Simple Preference to the suit you can support	Simple Preference to your suit	Simple Preference to one of partner's two suits
Maybe Game	Invite to game in the suit that you can support	Jump bid your own suit	2NT
Game	Bid game	Game bid your own suit	3NT

It appears that when game is not there, we make a **Simple Preference** of some kind. What does this mean? When you can see that there is no possible game, a natural instinct is to pass. This is not always correct. Say the bidding has gone as follows, $1\spadesuit-1\text{NT}-2\diamondsuit$, over to you. We'll assume that we already know that game is not there. So we want to make a simple preference bid.

- If you can support partner's diamonds, pass.
- If you can support partner's spades, bid $2\spadesuit$.
- Otherwise, have you a long heart suit of your own? If so bid $2\heartsuit$.
- If none of the above, then you must bid one of the suits of partner, (in this case pass or $2\spadesuit$), depending on which one you think will have a greater chance of making. Remember that partner's first suit is normally *longer* than his second suit.

The diagram below, gives some idea on how a whole bidding structure can look like, and gives an idea of how all the thought processes click together. The arrows go down follow the bidding sequence of 1♥-1♠-2♣



The following examples should make things clearer. West will be the opener and East will be the responder.

Example 7

♠ Q 4	♠ 10 7
♥ A 9 8 7 3	♥ J 10 4
♦ 9 8	♦ A J 7 5 4
♣ A K 8 3	♣ 10 9 7
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♥

1. West has 13 points, and an unbalanced hand. Thus the opening suit should be the longest suit, which is hearts, and so West opens 1♥, and the *prepared* rebid would be 2♣.
2. Now, East has 6 points, and so must say something. He does not hold 4 card support for partners hearts, and cannot bid spades for the same reason. He cannot bid his diamonds as this would mean bidding at the 2 level, and East does not have 10+ points so he must bid the denial response of 1NT.
3. Now West can give his rebid of 2♣.
4. From East's point of view, his partner has shown, 5 hearts, 4 clubs and 13-15 points. So now East can support Hearts, as he holds 3 of them, but with a combined *maximum* of 21 points, game is not on, and so East bids 2♥. This is called **Simple Preference**. If East had a preference for partners clubs then he would have passed partners bid of 2♣.
5. When responder knows that game is never on, the idea is that responder is to bid the *safest* part-score. Simple preference for one of openers suits is one way to do this. If responder holds enough cards so that they hold at least 7 cards between them, then this should be a priority. If responder has a 6 card suit, then rebidding this simply also shows weakness and that there is no nice simple preference to make.

Example 8

♠ 10 6	♠ K 8 3
♥ A K 5 2	♥ Q 6 3
♦ Q 5	♦ A 10 9 8
♣ A K Q 7 2	♣ J 4 3
1♣	1♦
2♥	4♣

1. Opener has 18 points and an unbalanced hand, and so opens with 1♣ , and *prepares* a rebid of 2♥ . Remember a rebid of 1♥ would show 13-15 points, whereas a bid above the barrier (2♣) shows a strong hand of 16-19 points.
2. Responder, does not hold 4 clubs and so cannot support. So responder bids 1♦ , to show that he has 4 diamonds and 6+ points. Note that there is no need to say 2♦ even if responder does hold 10+ points, a simple bid of 1♦ suffices.
3. Now opener makes his rebid of 2♥ , since he does not hold 4 card support for partners diamonds.
4. Responder now knows that partner has 5 clubs 4 hearts and 16-19 points. So there is a fit in clubs, and with a combined *minimum* of 26 points game is definitely biddable, and so bids directly to game with 4♣ .

Example 9

♠ A 5	♠ Q J 8 4
♥ A J 10 8 2	♥ Q 6
♦ K Q 4 2	♦ A 9 7 6
♣ J 6	♣ Q 9 3
1♥	1♠
2♦	3♦
4♦	

1. The first three bids should now be clear.
2. Now for the fourth bid what does responder do. So far, he knows that opener has 5 hearts, 4 diamonds and 13-15 points. So a diamond fit is there. With 11 points in responders hand, the combined strength is in the range of 24-26 points. So game *could* be there, if opener has a *maximum* for his range, i.e 15 points or a good 14. So responder bids $3\spadesuit$, which **Invites** partner to bid game if he has a maximum.
3. This he does have, and so bids $4\spadesuit$.

Example 10

\spadesuit A 2	\spadesuit J 8 6
\heartsuit A Q 10 9	\heartsuit K 8 5 2
\diamondsuit 6 5 3	\diamondsuit K Q 4
\clubsuit A J 5 2	\clubsuit Q 10 9
1 \heartsuit	3 \heartsuit
4 \heartsuit	

1. Opener has 15 points and a balanced hand, and so must bid **NT** 's at some stage. He cannot open 1**NT** , as this would show strictly 12-14 points, and so opens 1-of-a-suit, and prepares a rebid of **NT** 's at the lowest available level. The opener has a choice, he could say either clubs or hearts, but decides to open with the hearts.
2. Well now there is a fit found straight away, since responder also has 4 hearts, and so supports. Holding 10 points, jump response to 3 \heartsuit .
3. Now this is a situation, when there is no need to come back with your original prepared rebid, since a fit has been found. Your partner has jump supported and so shows 10-12 points, and so there is a combined strength of 25-27 points. Hence opener plumps for the game contract.

It is worth noting how the bidding would have gone if opener decided to open with $1\clubsuit$. Well responder would have said $1\heartsuit$, and now opener would ignore his prepared rebid, and support responders hearts. With a weak opening hand he would say $2\heartsuit$. Now responder would invite with $3\heartsuit$, to which opener would accept and bid the game contract of $4\heartsuit$. So either way, the fit is not missed, and the game is bid. The bidding would have been, $1\clubsuit - 1\heartsuit - 2\heartsuit - 3\heartsuit - 4\heartsuit$

Example 11

\spadesuit 10 5	\spadesuit A Q J 9 6 3
\heartsuit A K Q 6 2	\heartsuit 7 4
\diamondsuit 8 4 2	\diamondsuit 6 5 3
\clubsuit A K 4	\clubsuit 8 3
1 \heartsuit	1 \spadesuit
1 NT	2 \spadesuit

1. Opener has a balanced hand and 16 points, so as above opens with a suit, and so bids $1\heartsuit$, and expects to rebid with **NT**'s.
2. Responder comes back $2\spadesuit$, since does not hold 4 hearts.
3. With 16 points, the rebid should be **NT**'s at the lowest level, which in this case is **1NT**.
4. Responder now knows that game is not. He also knows that opener must hold at least 2 spades, since a balanced hand guarantees at least 2 cards in every suit. So responder can take the initiative and bid $2\spadesuit$. This is to be passed, and opener does so. Had responder had more points and wanted to invite game he could have bid $3\spadesuit$, or if game was there, could have bid $4\spadesuit$. It is the same logic as before.

Now to explain better, what we mean by *rebidding NT 's at lowest level* and *rebidding NT 's at next lowest level*, let us consider the following bidding scenarios, which will both be based on the example above.

- If on the hand above opener had, say, 17 points, then he would have rebid with 2NT . i.e. If 1NT is the lowest level available to bid NT 's, then 2NT is the *next* lowest level available.
- If on the hand above responder had responded, say, 2♣ after the 1♥ open. Now the lowest level for NT 's is 2NT , and the next lowest would be 3NT .

In all the above examples a fit has been found, but often, there isn't any fit. Normally, the contract would then be played in NT . Consider the following.

Example 12

♠ K 4	♠ A Q 6 5
♥ A K 10 7 2	♥ J 9
♦ 8 3	♦ Q J 6 2
♣ K 10 9 4	♣ Q J 5
1♥	1♠
2♣	3NT

1. The first three bids are clear cut.
2. Now responder knows that his partner holds 5 hearts and 4 clubs. But still there is no fit there. If opener had 4 spades then he would have supported the response, so there is also no spade fit. So responder bids NT 's, and with 13 points can bid straight to game. If he would have wanted to invite game in NT 's he would have said 2NT , as you would expect.

Example 13

♠ Q 7 6 4	♠ A K 3 2
♥ Q J 10 7 4	♥ 8 5
♦ K J 5	♦ Q 3
♣ A	♣ K Q 9 8 4
1♥	2♣
2♥	2♠
3♠	4♠

1. The open is clear.
2. The responder comes back his longest suit, and since he holds more than 10 points can bid at the two level, i.e. 2♣.
3. The rebid should also be clear, since being weak, opener cannot show his 4 spades, since to do so would mean saying 2♠, and that is above the barrier, so opener rebids his first suit.
4. Responder still cannot support partners' hearts, but is himself strong enough to bid his spades. He has now shown, 5 clubs and 4 spades and strong points, for responder.
5. Now opener can support his partners' spades, and invites game with 3♠.
6. A fit has been found, and with a minimum combined strength of 26 points, game is easily bid.

Chapter 5

Bidding part 2

We will now do one simple change to the scoring, but this will affect a lot on how we will approach things, especially in the bidding. Now, we know the ranking of the suits, we will call the two lowest ranking suits, ♣ and ♦, the **Minors** and the two highest ranked suits, ♥ and ♠, the **Majors**. Beforehand each trick in all suit contracts, were worth 30, but in real bridge the majors are worth 30 per trick whereas, as their name suggests, the minors are only worth 20 per trick. Hence the game contracts, where you need to score 100 in one go are **3NT** or 4-of-a-Major (4M), or 5-of-a-minor (5m). This obviously changes many things. For a start to make game in a minor you need to make 11 tricks, surely it is easier to try for a major game, or even **3NT**. So our bidding needs to be tightened, since beforehand we had made no emphasis between the suits, now it is clear that if we have game values between our hands, our priority would be towards finding a possible major game, otherwise **3NT** and as a last resort, game in the minors. We said earlier that we need 26 points to make game, but that was under the assumption that we needed 10 tricks for game. So for 4M we still need 26 points, but this can be shaded a little to 25 for 3nt, but increased to 28 for 5m, since then we need to make more tricks. So let us now improve our bidding. The only change that is in fact taking place is our priorities.

5.1 Improved Opens and Rebids

Now, if we consider the table for the opens and rebids in chapter 4, the only change is that we strictly define what our opening suit should be. Now we open as follows:

1. Your *longest* suit
2. If equality in lengths between your longest suits, then
 - If 5-5, or even 6-6, then open with the *higher* ranked suit.
 - If 4-4, then open with the Major suit in preference over the minor. If you hold just 4-4 in the Majors then open the lower, $1\heartsuit$, and if you hold both minors alone then also open with the lower, $1\clubsuit$.

The hand shape 4441 does not fall nicely into any of the categories. This wasn't mentioned earlier, so that there was no unnecessary confusion. The hand is not balanced since it contains a singleton. It is not strictly unbalanced since there is no 5 card suit, but we have to treat it as an unbalanced shape. Opening with a 4441 hand, a good policy would be to open the suit *below* the singleton, since this is the suit you expect partner to respond with. If your partner responds with another suit, then you have found a fit directly, but if the response is the singleton suit, then you must bid a second suit. Doing this though, you would have shown 5 cards in your first suit.

5.2 Improved Responses

We must also improve our responses, but again it is just our priority towards the major which is the change. Again refer to subsection 4. We have to consider the two cases, on whether partner's open was a major or a minor.

- If the open was a major, then in fact there is no change to what we had before, since your priority is still to support if you can.
- If the open was a minor though, then your priority is to firstly bid a 4-card major, if you have one. This allows partner to support you in your major. Remember, just because he has opened a minor, does not mean that he does not

hold a 4-card major as well. If he did, then it would mean that his minor is of at least 5 cards in length, otherwise he would have opened with the major, as we have just said in the new openings. If you cannot bid a major of your own, then now bid as you would have done before, supporting partner's minor if you can. Remember though, even if you have game points and if you have a minor suit fit, then **3NT** is probably a far superior and safer contract to play in than 5m.

How does this little adaptation change things? Well, it allows us to find directly the major fit and if we also have game values, then **4M** is a better contract than **3NT**. Consider the following hands.

Example 1

	♠ K J 7 5	♠ Q 10 9 3
	♥ Q 8	♥ A 10 9 7
	♦ A K 9 6	♦ Q J 4
	♣ A 5 4	♣ 8 2
wrong bidding	1♦	1♥
	2NT	3NT
correct bidding	1♠	3♠
	4♠	

Notice that if you were to bid incorrectly you will find yourself playing in **3NT**, which has no chance if the defence lead a club, since you have 6 top tricks. You need to establish 3 spade tricks, but it is more likely that the defence will get their 5 tricks before you get your 9. On the other hand, if you bid correctly, you find directly the major game fit. With three losers, you make 10 tricks, 3 spade tricks, one heart, one heart ruff, 4 diamonds and a club.

Example 2

♠ Q 8	♠ A 10 9 7
♥ K J 7 5	♥ Q 10 9 3
♦ A K 9 6	♦ Q J 4
♣ A 5 4	♣ 8 2

wrong bidding	1♦	1♠
	2NT	3NT
correct bidding	1♥	3♥
	4♥	

Here the hands are exactly the same as before except the hearts and spades have been swapped over. Although the opening bid was wrong, the response was also wrong, in bidding the 4 card spade suit over the 4 card heart suit. So again you go steaming into the 3NT iceberg, whereas you could have steered clear and found yourself in the safe cruise of 4♥.

Example 3

♠ A 2	♠ J 8 6
♥ A Q 10 9	♥ K 8 5 2
♦ 6 5 3	♦ K Q 4
♣ A J 5 2	♣ Q 10 9
1♥	3♥
4♥	

1. This is from section 4.3, hand number 4. The opener has two 4 card suits, and so has the priority of opening with the major. Although this heart fit was not missed with the old bidding, at least this allows opener the comfort of knowing that on other hands, a major fit might be missed, whereas now it won't be.

Example 4

♠ Q 7 6	♠ A 5
♥ K Q 6 3	♥ J 10 7 2
♦ 5	♦ K Q 9
♣ A Q 9 7 5	♣ K 8 4 3
1♣	1♥
2♥	4♥

1. Opener has a clear open, clubs since they are the longest suit.
2. Instead of supporting clubs, responder bids hearts, to see if there is also a heart fit as well.
3. Opener supports responders hearts. The 2♥ rebid shows a weak opening hand, even though it is above the barrier of 2♣, but don't forget, 2♥ is *supporting* partner, which is far more important. Had opener had a strong hand, the rebid would have been 3♥.

Example 5

♠ 6 2	♠ K J 10 7
♥ K 9	♥ A 5 2
♦ A J 9 5 4	♦ Q 8
♣ K Q 6 3	♣ A 10 5 2
1♦	1♠
2♣	3NT

1. The first three bids should be clear, since they are the same as what would have been bid beforehand.
2. The fourth bid, responder can support openers second suit, clubs. Clubs being a minor, would need to be in 5♣, to make game. Responder decides that 3NT is

the better contract, especially since responder holds something useful, i.e. the Ace, in the unbid suit of hearts.

3. Notice that in $5\clubsuit$, there are 3 possibly 4 losers. In 3NT , there are 6 winners, and diamonds are easily established to make 9 tricks, showing the preference for the NT game over the game in the minors.

5.3 Improved Hand Evaluation

Beforehand we evaluated a hand purely on the number of high card points, that were held. This method assigned a value to a card depending on how likely it was in winning a trick. Hopefully by now you would have realised, through the card play techniques, that there are many other factors which allow tricks to be made. Consider the following hand, which may look a bit extreme, but gets over the point.

\spadesuit 3
 \heartsuit A K Q 9 8 7 5 4 3 2
 \diamondsuit 4
 \clubsuit 7

With 10 hearts, and 3 singletons, this hand cannot fail to make at least 10 tricks in hearts. That is game, and there are only 9 points. Partner need not hold a single point opposite this hand and so a combined strength of 9 points makes game. So we need to start re-evaluating hands. The strength of this hand is in the extra length of the heart suit. Once the opposition's hearts have been taken out, each of those little hearts can win a trick as easily as the Ace.

This is what we call **Length** points. When you hold a long decent suit, where there is a good chance that it can be easily established then you can add a point for every card above the fourth. Hence you can add 1 length point for a five card suit, 2 length points for a six card suit, etc. In the above hand we can add 6 length points.

The other strength that the hand above has is that in the other suits, there is a shortage, so that once the suit is void, the hearts can be used to ruff. Thus a shortage in a suit can also be powerful, and so we add **Distribution** points. A void is worth 3 points, a singleton 2 points and a doubleton 1 point. We will stick with this for the

time being, but we can still further improve our methods of evaluation.

Now it must be stressed that when you pick up a hand *before* you automatically add up all your honour, length and distribution points. There are a few things that need to be considered.

- Only count length points when you have a semi-solid suit, a suit which does not need much to establish it.
- You can count length points in a weak suit, if partner bids it.
- Never count distribution points until you have a *trump suit fit*. Don't forget that if you finish up in **NT**, then you cannot ruff anything, so do not over evaluate your hand before you know where the contract should be.
- A singleton King is worth as much as a singleton 2, when considered as an honour card. In other words, it will only win the trick if partner holds the Ace. So don't necessarily count 3 points for it. If partner bids that suit, then maybe you could consider it as a value, although not as a singleton.
- The strength of your hand will change as the bidding proceeds. When you find a trump fit, your hand can increase in value through distribution points.

Thus the hand above has a strength of $9+6+6=21$ points. We can count distribution points since automatically there is a trump fit, hearts.

Chapter 6

The 1NT Open

A 1NT open shows a balanced hand and 12-14 points. It is a very descriptive bid, and achieves in one bid opener's hand shape and strength, whereas as we have already seen, it would take two bids. The responses to an open of 1NT follow the same thought processes as the further bidding in subsection 4.3, after opener has opened and rebid. Responder knows whether game is certainly on, possibly on, or not at all, and so these are the three areas to look into.

6.1 Responses With Weak Hands

The first responses we talk about have natural meanings. Clearly a Pass says that you have nothing to say, and that you hope that 1NT will make. Even with a hand of up to 11 points can pass. This gives you a combined maximum of 25 points, so game is not on. A response directly to 3NT, game, must show a hand of at least 14 points. 2NT obviously is game invitational, i.e. if opener has a maximum, 14 or a good 13, opener should raise to 3NT, otherwise pass. You would respond 2NT when you hold 12 or 13 points.

What if you want to bid a suit as a response to 1NT? If you hold a suit of at least 5 cards, then you can bid it. You *must not* bid 4 card suits directly. if you did it would be expecting a lot from partner to hold 4 card support, and if opener does not hold support, you can find yourself in a lot of trouble. There are ways around this though,

especially for the major suits, so if there is a 4-4 major fit it can be found. We will look into this later. A response of a suit at the 2-level, $2\heartsuit$, $2\spadesuit$ and $2\clubsuit$ *must* be passed by opener. A response like this says that this contract will probably play better than 1NT. These three bids, along with the Pass, are the bids you make when game is not on, and you are in effect bidding to the safest part-score.

6.2 Responses With Game-Going Hands

Responses of a suit at the 3-level, i.e. $3\heartsuit$, $3\spadesuit$, $3\clubsuit$ and $3\spadesuit$, are all game forcing, and show at least 5 cards in the suit. Opener must bid on. With 3 card support to a major, opener bids the major game. With support for a minor, opener can bid the minor game, but don't forget, it is normally better to be playing in 3NT instead.

6.3 Stayman

This leaves us the game invitational bids. But first we need to look at what we call **Stayman**, by responding with the bid $2\clubsuit$. The bid here, of $2\clubsuit$, is an **Artificial** bid. That is to say that it does *not* show anything to do with holding any clubs, and instead we attach a different meaning to it. A **Convention** is a subsystem of bidding, built from artificial bids. Stayman is the first convention we are meeting. Later on we will introduce more conventions. If you can imagine that the system of natural bidding that we started with as a tree trunk, then all the branches are the conventions.

So the response, to a 1NT open, of $2\clubsuit$ is Stayman, and asks opener the question, "*Which 4 card majors do you hold?*". So the bid says nothing about clubs, and in fact is asking for some specific information about openers hand, which opener must reply to. This is the way responder tries to locate a possible 4-4 game fit in the majors. It is at least game invitational by responder, to bid Stayman. Now if opener does not hold 4 cards in either major, opener replies with $2\heartsuit$, which is also an artificial bid. If opener holds 4 cards in hearts, he bids $2\heartsuit$, and $2\spadesuit$ if he holds 4 spades. If he holds 4 cards in both majors, then he responds with the lower ranking of the two, i.e.

2♥ . Responder now bids on. If a fit is there, responder can bid straight to game or invite with 3-of-the-major, depending on responder's strength. If there is no fit, then NT would be the best contract, responder can bid either 3NT , or invite with 2NT , depending on strength.

Note that if opener replies 2♥ to the Stayman enquiry of 2♣ , then opener holds 4 hearts, and could still hold 4 spades, and if responder had bid 2♣ to see if opener has 4 spades, then responder continues the bidding with 2♠ . Opener now takes the initiative, and bids, or invites, game in spades if the fit is there otherwise in NT , depending on strength.

Now we are still left with the game invitational bids. Now that we have the disposal of the Stayman convention, we use it to do *all* invitational bids. If you want to invite in a suit, of which you must have at least 5 cards, as before, then bid 2♣ . Opener takes this to be Stayman, and responds accordingly. Now you bid your own suit at the 3-level, and opener will understand what is going on, that in fact all you wanted to do was invite in that suit.

Let's look at some examples.

Example 1

♠ A K 6 5	♠ 3
♥ 3 2	♥ Q J 10 9 6 4
♦ Q 10 9	♦ J 7 6
♣ A 10 8 7	♣ 9 6 2
1NT	2♥
Pass	

1. 12-14 points, balanced, so the only open is 1NT .
2. With only 4 points you would normally pass, but here responder knows that with

a combined maximum of 18 points, 1NT sounds difficult to make, and so bids his 5 card suit, hearts. Even 2♥ looks a difficult proposition, but when the points are against you playing in a suit offers you better chances than 1NT .

Example 2

♠ 8 6 5	♠ K Q 3
♥ A K Q 10	♥ 8 6 3
♦ 9 8	♦ K J 2
♣ Q J 7 3	♣ K 10 9 6
1NT	2NT
Pass	

1. The responder has 12 points, and so game is only on if opener has maximum points for his range, thus responder invites with 2NT , which opener passes on the hand of just 12 points.

Example 3

♠ 10 6 5 2	♠ K Q 4
♥ K 6 3	♥ A Q J 5 4
♦ A J 3	♦ K 9 4
♣ K J 9	♣ 6 4
1NT	3♥
4♥	

1. Responder holds 15 points, so knows that game is there. A direct jump to the 3-level with the bid of 3♥ , shows at least 5 hearts and enough strength to make game, hence opener must say something.
2. With 3 card heart support opener bids the game in hearts. had opener not had heart support, then the bid would have been 3NT .

Example 4

♠ A Q 7	♠ J 10 8
♥ A 10 5 3	♥ K 6
♦ 9 8 7	♦ A Q 5 3 2
♣ K 5 2	♣ A 8 6
1NT	3♦
3NT	

1. After 3♦ by responder opener has support, but with strength in all the other suits, decides that 3NT would be the safer contract than 5♦ .

Example 5

♠ K 10 6 5	♠ 9 3
♥ A 10 7	♥ K Q 9 6 3
♦ J 5 2	♦ A
♣ A 7 2	♣ Q J 10 5 4
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥

1. Responder has 12 points and wants to invite game in hearts. Responder cannot bid 2♥ , as that would have to be passed by opener, and cannot bid 3♥ , since that forces opener to bid game, so the response is 2♣ , Stayman.
2. Opener holds 4 spades and not 4 hearts, so bids 2♠ .
3. Responder now bids 3♥ , which opener knows is now invitational, and opener who holds a minimum hand of 12 points, refuses the invitation and passes.

Example 6

♠ K 10 9	♠ 7 6 5 2
♥ J 7 5	♥ K 3
♦ K Q 9 2	♦ A J
♣ K J 3	♣ A 10 8 5 4
1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣
3NT	

1. Now responder wants to invite in clubs, so goes through Stayman first. After 2♦, showing no 4 card major, responder comes back 3♣.
2. With a good 13 points, opener accepts the invitation and puts it into game.
3. Note that a hand with a good 13 points, is one where there is that little something extra, to differentiate from a bad 13 points. These extras could be a 5 card suit, or even holding some 10's. Experience will tell soon you the difference.

Example 7

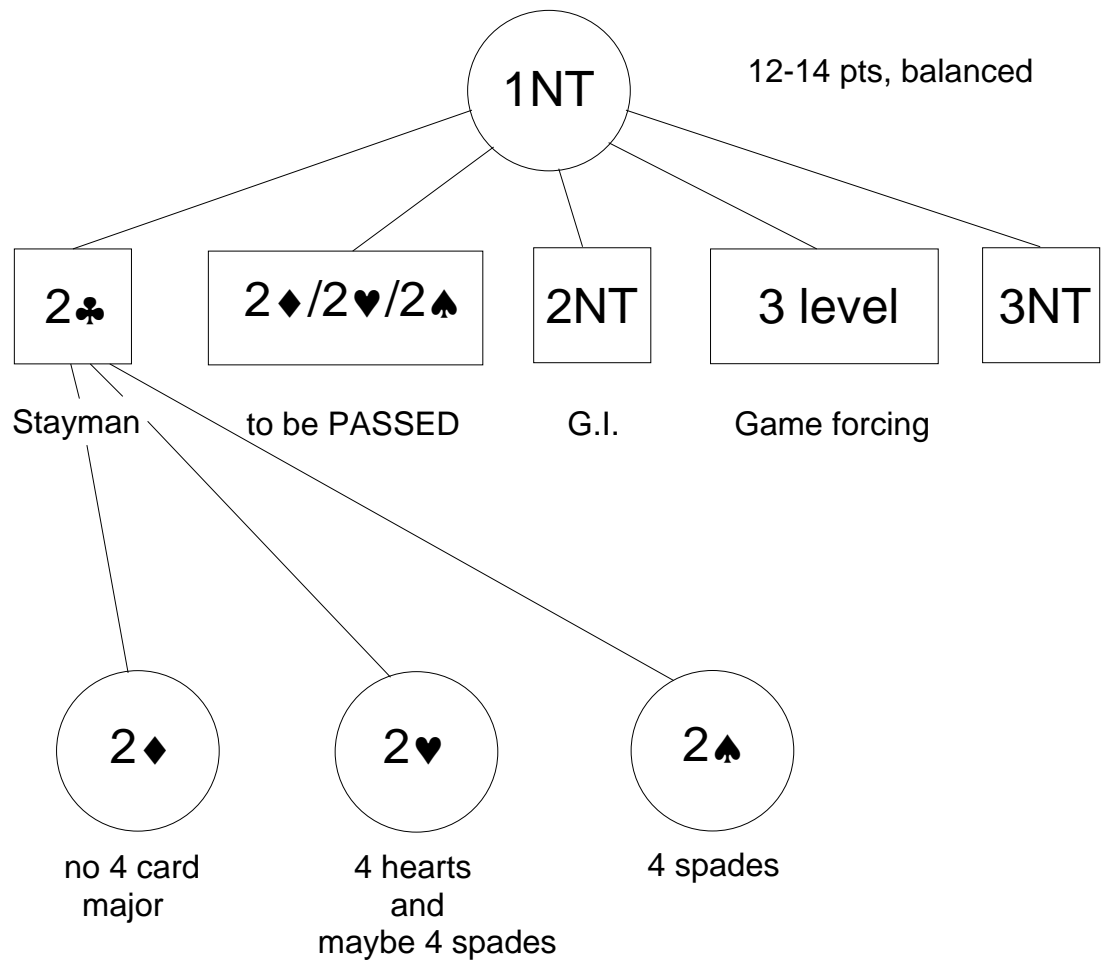
♠ 10 6 4 2	♠ A K J 8
♥ 10 5	♥ J 9 7 2
♦ A K 7 4	♦ Q J 5
♣ A K 5	♣ 10 8
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♠
4♠	

1. Responder holds 12 points, and both 4 card majors, perfect for using Stayman.
2. Opener comes back spades, and so responder supports them, and with only 12 points responder invites with 3♠.
3. Opener puts it into game, with a maximum hand.

Example 8

♠ A 9 4	♠ K Q 3 2
♥ Q 10 3 2	♥ J 8 7
♦ Q 10 7 4	♦ A J 9
♣ A 8	♣ K 9 6
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠
2NT	3NT

1. With definite game, responder tries to locate a 4-4 fit in spades and so bids Stayman.
2. Opener shows hearts, but has not yet denied spades, so responder acknowledges this by bidding spades based on the spades on his hand.
3. Opener comes back 2NT, denying holding spades as well. Opener has only 12 points as well, with 14, or a good 13, opener would have said 3NT directly.
4. Responder now knows that there is no major fit on, and so bids the game in NT.



Chapter 7

Slam Bidding

We now introduce **Slams** and how to bid them. A **Small Slam** is a contract of anything at the six level. That is that you hope to make at least 12 tricks. If you bid and make a small slam you gain a bonus of 800. This is a lot compared to the bonus of making game, just 300. A **Grand Slam** is a contract of anything at the seven level, where you hope to make *all* the tricks. The bonus for a grand is 1300.

Thus it is clear that bidding and making slams can gain hefty scores, so to be able to bid them well is important. You need at least 33 points to bid a small slam, and at least 37 points to bid a grand. Obviously, slams do not come around often, but when they do, you will want to know what to do so that you do not muck it up.

Now at present our bidding has been constructed only around bidding the game contracts, if the strength is there. Now we need to adapt our system so that we get the maximum out of it. That is to say, we want to bid our games if we have at least 26 points. If there is a possibility that a slam might be on, then you would need to investigate it, but if you then find it isn't, then you would have to stop, preferably not going above the game level. There is no need to bid to the 5 level, (unless you want to play in the minor game), since the bonus for making it is still the game bonus. There are two areas we need to look at, that is when opener has a very strong hand and then the situation when responder holds a strong hand, which we will look at first.

7.1 Strong Responses

Let us remind ourselves of what our bidding system at present says, when concerned with the response, see chaps 4.2 and 5.2. What we want to eliminate are the responses which take up a lot of bidding space before opener has had a chance to fully describe his hand. In fact this only needs one change. Before hand when you held 13+ points and support for the open, you bid game directly, especially if it was a major suit. Now we do not want this, we want it so that opener can then describe his hand before you take any real action, so you make a *waiting* bid first, and then bid game after the rebid.

To understand this fully let's analyse the system of bidding. In response there are limit bids and non-limit bids. A **Limit Bid** is one where there is an upper bound to the strength shown. Thus after an open of 1-of-some-suit, all the limit bids in response are, 2-of-that-suit, (6-9 pts), 3-of-that-suit, (10-12 pts) and 1NT, (6-9 pts). Now all responses which are not limit bids are **Non-Limit** bids. When responder makes a non-limit bid, opener is *forced* to say something as a rebid. This allows responder to make another bid if he desires, as the fourth bid in the sequence. Let's look at a few bidding examples.

Example 1

♠ A K 9 6	♠ J 10 7 2
♥ Q 6 3	♥ K J
♦ K 9 4	♦ A J 6 2
♣ Q J 7	♣ K 10 2
1♠	2♦
2NT	4♠

1. The open of 1♠ should be clear
2. Now responder has 13 points, and so knows that game is there, especially since he holds 4 card support for opener's major. Originally, the response would have

been 4♠ straight away, but now responder makes the waiting bid of 2♦ .

3. Opener makes his standard rebid of 2NT .
4. Responder now knows that opener has 15-16 points, and so the combined strength is 29-30 points, with the one extra point for the doubleton, and so a slam is not worth considering. So now responder bids game. Bidding like this is called a **Delayed Game Raise**, for what now should be obvious.

Example 2

♠ A K 9 6	♠ J 10 7 2
♥ Q 6 3	♥ K J
♦ K 9	♦ A J 6 2
♣ Q J 7 4	♣ A K 10
1♠	2♦
2NT	??

1. Again the open, response and rebid are as above, since it is only the strength of responders hand, which has changed.
2. After openers rebid, responder knows that a slam could be on since there is a combined strength of 32-33 points. So instead of bidding game directly, can now slam investigate. We still need to look into how we go about this.

The two examples above show how responder gets as much information from opener before bidding to game, so that a slam could still be investigated. if responder does not use waiting bids, slams would either not be bid when they should, or be bid when they shouldn't. We continue by looking at how a slam is investigated.

7.2 Blackwood

There are many ways to investigate slam, but we will start with the simplest one. This is by using a convention called **Blackwood**. When either player in a bidding auction, makes the bid **4NT**, then this is Blackwood. It *does not* show a desire to be playing in **NT** at the four level. That would be pointless since **3NT** is game. Thus a special meaning is given to this bid. **4NT** asks the question, “*How many Aces do you hold?*”. The responses are as follows,

5♣ 0 or 4 Aces

5♦ 1 Ace

5♥ 2 Aces

5♠ 3 Aces

The player who bids Blackwood, is the one who is taking control. The trump suit, is the last suit to have been bid naturally, before the call of **4NT**. If you are missing two, or more, Aces then you can never expect a slam to make, and so you bid your agreed suit at the lowest level available. You can still bid a small slam, even if you are missing one Ace. Note also, that if the response was 5♣, it should be clear how many Aces he holds. The reason why we do not use **5NT** to show all 4 Aces is that we reserve that bid to ask for Kings. You only ask for Kings if you are trying for the grand slam, and you must know that your side holds all the Aces first. If you then find that you hold all the Kings as well, then your intention is to bid the grand. So **5NT** asks partner, “*How many Kings do you hold?*”. The responses are,

6♣ 0 Kings

6♦ 1 King

6♥ 2 Kings

6♠ 3 Kings

6NT All 4 Kings

The responses are pretty much the same, except for the 0 and 4 Kings. **6NT** has no special meaning attached, i.e. we do not ask for Queens. Also if partner comes back **6NT**, then you hold all the Kings and you are happy to now bid 7-of-your-suit.

Let's look again at the hand in example 2, to see Blackwood in action.

♠ A K 9 6	♠ J 10 7 2
♥ Q 6 3	♥ K J
♦ K 9	♦ A J 6 2
♣ Q J 7 4	♣ A K 10
1♠	2♦
2NT	4NT
5♦	6♠

1. So we answer our question from before, with responder bidding Blackwood.
2. Opener comes back 5♦ , one Ace.
3. Responder now knows that only one Ace is missing, and with 33 points minimum, bids the small slam in spades.
4. Counting losers, there are 2, the ♥A and the ♠Q. To make 12 tricks, we need to hope that the trump Queen is at South. Still, the risk is worth taking since the slam has better than 50% chances of making.

7.3 Demand Openings

So far the impetus was on the responder to consider slam when he held a strong responding hand. Now we turn our attentions to the opener. Again let's refresh our memories of what we have so far in chap 4.1. We want to improve the opening bids for when opener holds a very strong hand, 20+ points. Instead of opening 1-of-a-suit, we want opener to open 2-of-a-suit. In fact we will make it better still. If opener holds 20-22 points then open 2-of-a-suit. This is called a **Strong 2 Open**. If opener holds 23+ points, then open 2♣ , regardless of the preferred suit. This is called the **Game Force Open**. Both of these openings are forcing, and we will look at each one separately.

7.3.1 2♣ Open and Responses

We'll start with the stronger of the two situations, in fact the 2♣ open is the strongest available bid that we have to open with. It is forcing to game, so no bid below game can be passed. It is a slam invitational bid as an open, so the first response, tells opener whether slam is worth considering or not. If responder has more than 8 points, then he gives a positive reply, otherwise he bids 2♦. This bid is the **Slam Denial Bid**, and the bidding will continue until the best game contract is found. If opener still has a hand where a slam is possible, he can still continue anyway. Any bid apart from 2♦ as a response is a positive reply, and shows a natural 5 carded suit. If he does not hold a 5 carded suit, then he bids 2NT. Let's look at some examples.

Example 3

♠ A	♠ 10 7 4 3
♥ A K 6	♥ J 10 8 3
♦ A 7 6 2	♦ Q 5
♣ A K Q 3 2	♣ 7 6 4
2♣	2♦
3♣	3NT

1. 24 points, 2♣ open is clear.
2. With 3 points, responder gives the slam denial bid of 2♦.
3. Opener shows his club suit.
4. Responder has club support, and since the bidding must go to game, prefers NT to the minor game in clubs.

Example 4

♠ K J 5	♠ A Q 6 2
♥ A K	♥ 9 6 4 3
♦ A K J 9 2	♦ 8 7 5
♣ A 4 2	♣ K 8
2♣	2NT
4NT	5♦
6NT	

1. 23 points, 2♣ open.
2. 9 points in response, a slam looks possible, so a positive reply is given. 2NT shows a balanced hand without a 5 card suit.
3. NT is agreed and Blackwood is bid
4. After the response of one Ace, the small slam is easily bid. With 10 winners, diamonds are easy to establish to make the 12.
5. Note that there is no point asking for Kings, since to make all 13 tricks depends on who has the ♦Q, a card you cannot ask about in the bidding.

Example 5

♠ A K 10 8	♠ Q 7
♥ A 7	♥ K J 9
♦ K Q 5	♦ A 10 8 7 3 2
♣ A K 9 4	♣ 10 3
2♣	3♦
4♦	4NT
5♠	5NT
6♠	7NT

1. Now responder has 10 points, so gives a positive reply, and shows his diamond suit. He bids 3♦ since 2♦ is a denial to slam and says nothing of diamonds.

2. With diamond support, opener bids $4\heartsuit$, allowing responder to take control.
3. Blackwood and 3 Aces in response. Now responder can count that if between them, they hold all the Kings then 13 tricks can be counted, and the grand slam can be bid. This is the case, and chooses **NT** since this scores better.

7.3.2 Other Strong 2 Opens and Responses

The opening bids of $2\heartsuit$, $2\spadesuit$, $2\clubsuit$ and **2NT** all show 20-22 points. If a suit is expressed then it is of at least 5 cards, otherwise, open with **2NT** , which shows a balanced hand. We consider the **2NT** open as we would for the **1NT** open. If your suit happens to be clubs, then you either lie, and firstly show that you have 23+ points, otherwise open with $1\clubsuit$. All the above suit opens, i.e. not **2NT** , are forcing for *one round*. The denial bid is **2NT** . All other bids show 5 carded suits. A rebid of **2NT** shows a 5332 hand shape.

Example 6

\spadesuit K J	\spadesuit Q 10 9 6
\heartsuit A 10 4	\heartsuit J 5 2
\diamondsuit A K 5 3 2	\diamondsuit 10 7 6
\clubsuit A K 5	\clubsuit J 4 3
2 \heartsuit	2NT
3NT	

1. With 22 points and 5 diamonds open $2\heartsuit$.
2. With just 4 points in response, responder makes the denial bid of **2NT** .
3. Opener takes a chance and bids **3NT** , since holding a maximum hand. With 5 winners, declarer would need to establish both diamonds and spades.

Example 7

♠ K J 4 2	♠ 10 8 5
♥ Q 8	♥ K J 2
♦ A K Q 7 2	♦ 10 9 6 5
♣ A Q	♣ K 10 4
2♦	3♦
3♠	3NT

1. 21 honour points and a 5 card diamond suit, so the open is 2♦ .
2. With diamond support and nothing in the majors, a raise in diamonds is made.
3. Now opener bids spades, to show 4 of them.
4. Responder bids 3NT , since he holds cover in the two other suits, clubs and hearts.

Example 8

♠ A	♠ K Q J 9 6
♥ K Q J 8	♥ 10 5 4 2
♦ K Q J 7 6 4	♦ A 8
♣ A J	♣ 6 5
2♦	2♠
3♥	4NT
5♥	6♥

1. The open and response should be clear.
2. The rebid shows a 4 card heart suit.
3. Now responder can investigate slam, since his hand can be upgraded from simply 10 points, to 13, one for the extra length, and one each for the doubletons. Once it is known that only one ace is missing, the small slam can be easily bid. Counting losers, there are two, the ♥A and one in clubs. The club loser can be thrown on the spades though, so 12 tricks should be made.

STRENGTH SHAPE	WEAK 13-15	STRONG 16-19	VERY STRONG 20-22	GAME-FORCING 23+
BALANCED All hands which are 4333, 4432, and 5332 where the 5 card suit is normally a minor suit.	12-14 OPEN 1NT and see section 6 for the responses	OPEN 1-of-a-suit 15-16 REBID NT's at lowest level 17-18 REBID NT's at the next lowest level 19 REBID 3NT	OPEN 2NT and see section 7.3.2 for the responses	OPEN 2♣ and see section 7.3 for the responses
UNBALANCED All hands which contain two biddable suits, one with at least 5 cards and the other of at least 4. i.e. 54xx, 55xx	OPEN 1-of-a-suit REBID 2-of-other-suit if below barrier otherwise repeat first suit with 2-of-first-suit	OPEN 1-of-a-suit REBID 2-of-other-suit if above barrier otherwise jump rebid in second suit with 3-of-other-suit	OPEN 2-of-a-suit and see section 7.3.2 for the responses	OPEN 2♣ and see section 7.3 for the responses
V. UNBALANCED All hands which contain only one suit, of at least 6 cards. i.e. 6322, 7xxx	OPEN 1-of-a-suit REBID the same suit with 2-of-first-suit	OPEN 1-of-a-suit REBID the same suit with a jump 3-of-first-suit	OPEN 2-of-a-suit and see section 7.3.2 for the responses	OPEN 2♣ and see section 7.3 for the responses

Chapter 8

The Competitive Auction

So far we have only considered the bidding between opener and responder, and we have assumed that the opposition have not said anything. We call this type of bidding **Constructive**. In reality the opposition are allowed to interrupt the bidding, and start there own constructive bidding, whereas at the same time it can be **Destructive** to the original bidders. There are four main reasons to overcall:-

1. To lay a basis for bidding and making a game.
2. To compete for a part-score.
3. To give a good lead indication to partner.
4. Simply to put a spanner in the works for the opposition.

We'll see how each of the above is achieved in the following sections.

8.1 Simple Overcalls

We will say that the opener is sitting in the first seat. The player who is on the left of opener, is in the second seat, and the responder to opener in the third seat, etc. This should make things clearer, now that we will be talking about all the players. If we look back at chapter 4, when we open a suit, we need at least 13 points and a four card suit. The strength is an overall strength for the hand. When we overcall we put ourselves in a very susceptible position. This is because, the responder of the opener knows, clearer

than most, who holds the balance of the points. So care must be taken when overcalling.

An overcall in a suit, must be of at least 5 cards in length, with at least 2 honour cards in the suit. Never overcall with a balanced hand of distribution 4333 or 4432, unless your hand meets the requirement of a 1NT overcall, which we will discuss later in subsection 8.6. Hence it is the quality and the strength of the suit which are of importance whereas the overall strength of the hand is not so. We are only considering **Simple Overcalls**, which are bids made at the lowest available level, for the suit bid. e.g. If the open was 1♥, and the player in the second seat overcalled 1♠, this would be a simple overcall, whereas an overcall of 2♠ would be a jump overcall. We are not considering at all, for the time being, jump overcalls. So when you make an overcall, what do you show?

A simple overcall at the 1 level shows 8-15 points.

A simple overcall at the 2 level shows 10-15 points.

A simple overcall at the 3 level shows 12-15 points.

So a simple overcall shows a maximum of 15 points. With 16+ points we **Double**, but we will consider this later in section 8.3

Now that we have introduced overcalling into our bidding, the auctions become more complicated. Two natural questions arise: 1) How do we respond to partner's overcall? and 2) How do we respond to partner's open, now that the opponents have overcalled? We'll approach the answers to these in turn, but first let's look at some examples of simple overcalls.

We will assume that the open in the first seat was 1♦, for all the following examples.

Example 1

♠ 8 7 4
 ♥ A K J 6 3
 ♦ J 5
 ♣ 10 8 2

With 9 points and a good heart suit of 5 cards, an overcall of 1♥ would be safe. If you get left in that contract, then with hearts as good as that, it should not be too difficult to make, even on weak points. If the opposition buy the contract, then at least your partner knows that you hold a good heart suit, and can lead it to you in safety.

Example 2

♠ 8 7 4
 ♥ A K J 6 3
 ♦ K 5
 ♣ 10 8 2

This hand is almost identical to the one above, except for a few card changes, so that you now hold 11 points. Here still you overcall with 1♥ . There is no need to say 2♥ even though you have 11 points, your overcall of 1♥ shows 8-15 points. We are not considering jump overcalls, so for now do not make them.

Example 3

♠ 10 8 5
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ A Q J 10 6 3

Now you can make the perfect overcall of 2♣ , since you hold at least 10 points. If you had held less then you would have had to have passed.

Example 4

For this final example we are sitting in the fourth seat and the bidding has gone, (1♠)-**Pass**-(2♦) - to us.¹

♠ K 8 5

♥ K 6

♦ 9 2

♣ A Q J 10 6 3

Note that it is almost the same hand as above, but now with the ♠K you now have 13 points. So you can overcall in your club suit, which must be done at the 3 level, so bid 3♣ . If you held the hand above it is wiser to say nothing, than to stick your neck out at the three level.

8.2 Responding to an Overcall

As I have already mentioned there are 4 reasons to overcall, but it is through the response of partner to know which one it is. So let us assume, as an example, that partner has overcalled 1♠ to the open of 1♦, and that the third player has passed. So now it is over to you.

If you are weak but have some spades to go with your partner's then by bidding 2♠ or even 3♠ you are taking up a lot of bidding space for opener. In fact you might shut them out of the bidding altogether and you would have bought the contract at a low level. So supporting partner shows weakness and is preemptive in nature, reason 4, since you are doing it to make life difficult. Note that if you are the overcaller and partner supports you then this is **not** a sign of strength, and could have been bid on a two card suit with as little as 6 points.

Generally speaking you only need a few cards to support partner, but there are times when you have a suit of your own. It needs to be something a bit special for you to ignore partner's suit. Thus a change of suit by you, i.e. for the example above, say you bid 2♥, would show that you would have a good heart suit and that you don't like

¹Bids made by the opposition are contained in brackets.

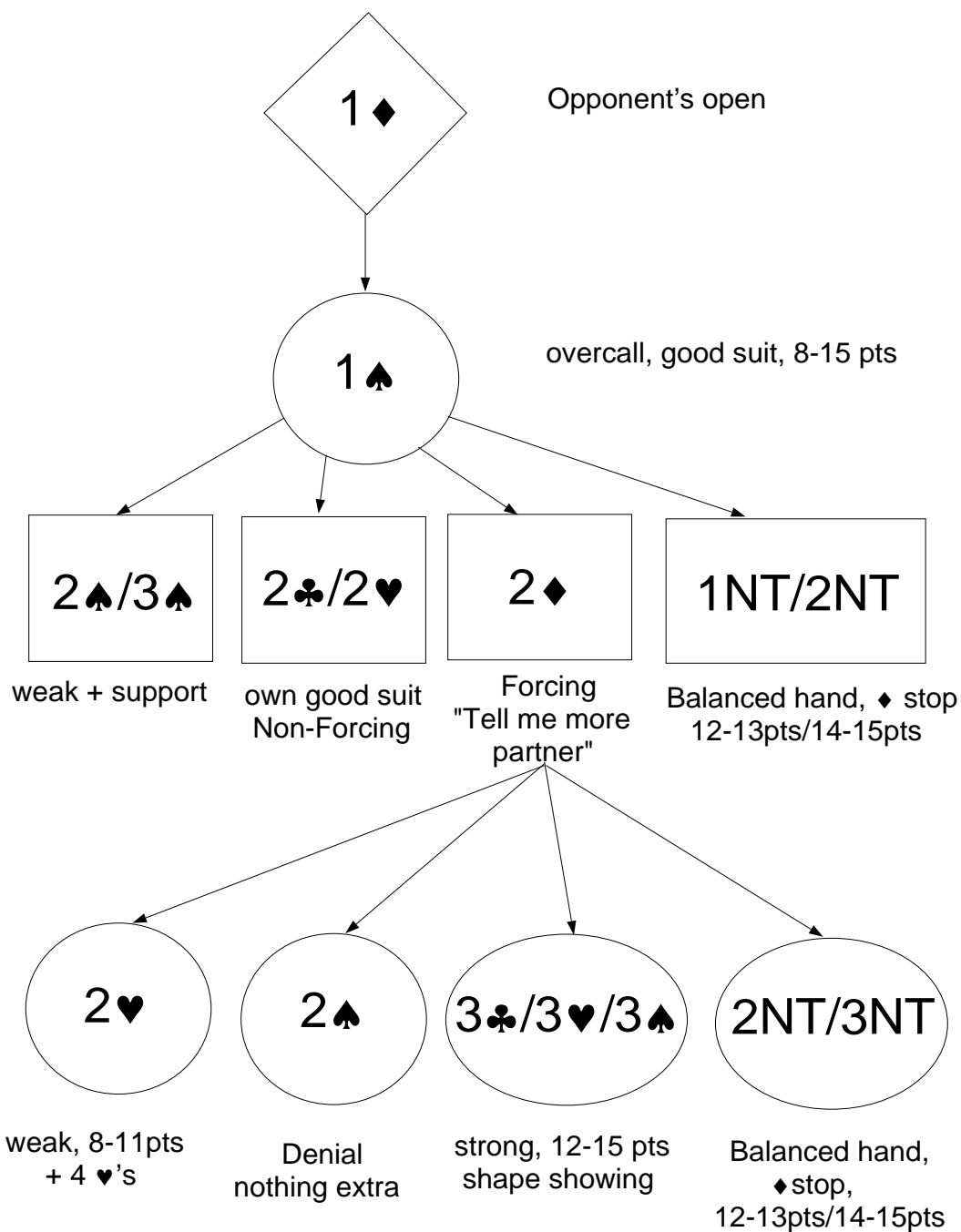
spades. In fact a bid like this is equivalent to saying that you *would* have overcalled hearts in you were sitting in partner's seat. So we take this kind of bid to be **Non-Forcing**, in the same way that partner's overcall isn't forcing you to say something. So what can this mean? Well your partner is showing good spades and you are showing good hearts, so in fact you are forming a good defensive strategy, in other words, partner you lead to my hearts and I'll lead back to your spades, reason 3.

What now if you have a little bit of everything, with some points thrown in. Your partner's overcall has promised anywhere from 8-15 points and this combined with your own strength tells you that you hold a balance of the power. Thus you feel as though you should be playing in something but what can you say. Well if your hand is balanced and you hold something, i.e. a **stopper**, in the opposition's suit, then you can say **NT**'s. This says to partner that you hold a specific strength and you wouldn't mind playing in **NT**'s. But what is this specific strength? A simple rule of thumb will help. To make 7 tricks in **NT**'s you need at least 20/21 points between the two hands. To make 2**NT**'s you need at least 22/23. Well using the example above, your partner's overcall of 1♠ shows 8-15 points. Thus you need at least 12 to break even. Thus a simple response of 1**NT** would show 12-13 points. If you have 14 points then plus the minimum 8 from partner, gives at least 22 points, thus you can say 2**NT**, which thus shows 14-15 points. The logic is the same when you partner overcalls simply at the 2 level, showing 10-15 points. Now for you to say 2**NT**, you still need a combined total of at least 22/23, thus 2**NT** now would show 12/13 points. Now that you have given a very precise point count your partner now knows where the contract should be heading, on whether you should be in part-score or in game, reason 2.

Finally, what if you have been dealt a hand where you think that there is a good shout for a game contract, reason 1? If you need to know more about your partner's hand then you can use an **Unassuming Cue Bid**. Basically this means that you bid the opposition's suit! Hopefully partner will be awake when you do this. When this kind of nonsensical bidding happens it normally always means, "Partner, tell me more about your hand". In fact bidding the opposition's suits is a very useful tool for a bridge players. So once partner has awoken, he will duly tell you more about his hand, whether

it is weak, 8-10 points, or strong 11-15, and whether he has a second suit. In fact in describing his hand to you, partner uses the same logic as when he would be opener, whether to bid above his barrier or not. Thus as above let the bidding have been, (1♦) - 1♠ - (Pass) - 2♦ - Pass: 2♥, below barrier, weak but shows a second suit, whereas 3♥ is the same shape but stronger. 3♠ is strong showing a 6th spade, whereas 2♠ is bidding the barrier and is thus weak. Bidding **NT** 's would show a stopper in diamonds. 2**NT** would be similar as before, 12/13 points whereas to bid directly 3**NT** would need the full strength of 14/15 points.

Responding to an Overcall

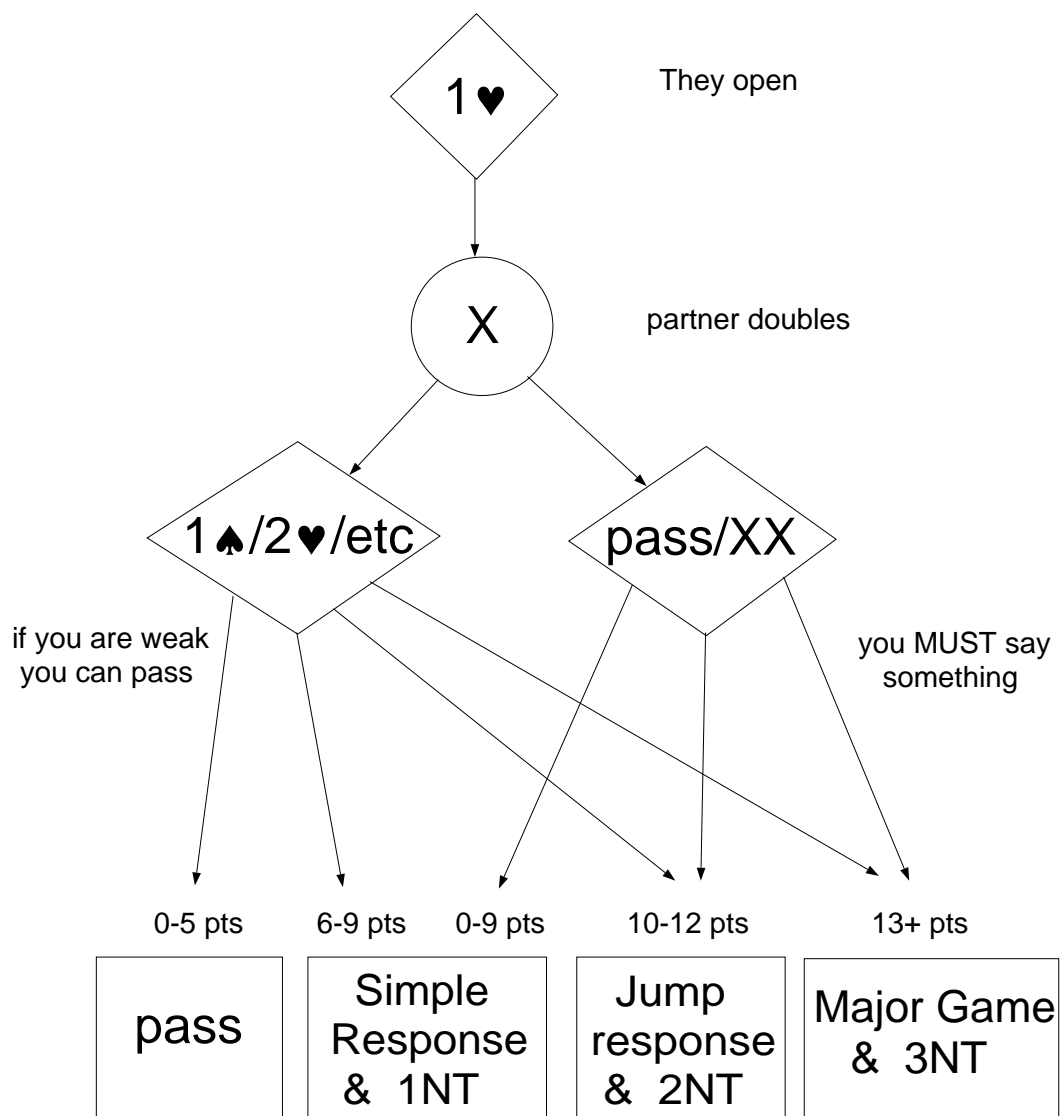


8.3 Doubles and Responses

Now essentially a double means “double points”, i.e. if the contract makes then double points are won whereas if not then double points are given away. This is what we mean by a **Penalty Double**. For the double to hold though, it needs to be passed out by all. If anyone bids on then the double has been removed, or as we say, taken-out. Now it does not seem logical that to double a low level contract would be for penalties, since you would need a lot of points and a lot of the opposition’s trump suit, which doesn’t happen all that often. Still, can you be sure that the opposition are not going to make their 7/8 tricks? Even if you bring a one level contract down, the chances are that you could have made a better score had you been declarer, i.e. a game or even a slam. Thus generally a double of a low level contract is *not* for penalties, but is a far more useful for **Take-Out**. In other words you are asking you partner to bid on and *take out* the double. Although there are different names for different doubles, (e.g. Sputnik, Lightener, Lead Indication, Unassuming, Negative ...), they are all either penalty or take-out. It is important to know which one though as a misunderstanding can be quite costly!!

The first double we look at is the standard **Take-Out Double**. So far, all the overcalls we have looked at have an upper limit of 15 points, so what do we do with more than this? We double, **X**, for take-out and you are saying to partner, “bid something”. Partner must now bid something even when holding a hand of 0 points. We respond to a take-out double, by bidding our longest suit, with preference given, as always, to unbid majors. There are three point ranges for the responder of a double, 0-5, 6-8 and 9+. With 9+ points, game is a near certainty, (since opener has promised at least 16), so we make our bid with a jump. With 0-5 points we must say something if the third player passes, (or redoubles, but more of this later), but pass to show your weakness if the third player bids something. If third player bids and we hold 6-8 points then we still make a bid since we know, and we want partner to know as well, that our side holds the majority of the points. Finally if you hand suits that of a **1NT** overcall, then prefer that to a double, but this will be explained fully in section 8.6

Responding to a Take-Out Double



Example 5

♠ A 7 6	♠ K J 10 8 4
♥ A	♥ Q 4 2
♦ Q 9 4 2	♦ J 8 6
♣ A K 8 6 4	♣ 10 9

	N	E	S	W
			1♥	X
	Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
	Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠

1. With 17 honour points and 2 extra points for the singleton in hearts, opensers suit, West can double.
2. Now that North has passed, East with 8 points in all, including distribution, bids simply his longest suit, spades.
3. West with only 3 spades bids his clubs.
4. Had East been weak, 0-5 points, he would have passed 2♣, but with 8 points and 5 spades, 2♠ is a fair bid.
5. West can now see a spade fit and feels that there are good chances for game, and so bids game.
6. Note that in 4♠, there are 2 possibly 3 losers, depending on the queen of trumps. With ruffs available in the short suit and a good club suit to establish, this contract looks good.

Example 6

♠ A Q 8 3	♠ K 8
♥ 10 6	♥ A J 5
♦ A K	♦ 10 9 4 2
♣ K 8 6 4 3	♣ J 10 9 2

N	E	S	W
		1♥	X
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT

1. West has 16 points so the double is fine.
2. After the pass of North, East responds with **1NT**. I haven't said it above but we can never respond **1NT** to a double unless we have at least 6 points, and a stopper in the opposition's suit, hearts. This response is far superior than bidding either of the minors which we hold, since it denies holding a four spades, which would have been our preference.
3. Had West had 5 spades, he would have bid them, to see if East held three of them, but in this case West puts the contract into game. Counting winners we have 6, with great prospects in establishing clubs.

8.4 Responding to Opener After an Overcall

Let us assume that our partner has opened the bidding, then the scenario that we are now looking at is how we respond given that the opposition have had the nerve to overcall. as above there is a nice underlying logic and we'll go through the situations with an example. So partner has opened $1\diamond$ and your right hand opponent has interjected with $1\spadesuit$. How do we continue?

Firstly we think on what we would have done had there not been any overcall. Can we still make that bid? In other words if we would have said $2\clubsuit$ as a response, then the

opposition's overcall of spades has done us no harm at all. So you make your response and everything continues as normal, i.e. partner continues to explain his hand fully to you.

What if though you wanted to say $1\heartsuit$ as a response? The overcall of $1\spadesuit$ means that you can no longer say $1\heartsuit$. You do not want to say $2\heartsuit$ since this is over your partner's barrier of $2\diamondsuit$, and so you will be making partner's rebid ambiguous to you. So what can we do? Well it seems as though the opposition have a weapon and so to compete we have a counter defence in our own armoury, the **Sputnik Double**. So the solution to this problem is to double. This is a take-out double, and says to partner that, in this particular case, you would have responded $1\heartsuit$. In other words you hold at least 6 points and at least 4 hearts exactly what you would have had, had the opposition said nothing and you would have responded $1\heartsuit$ directly. But this is a particular situation, in general then, a sputnik double says that you would have responded simply in any of the *unbid* majors. Thus had the bidding gone, $1\clubsuit$ - ($1\spadesuit$) - Double says "I would have said $1\heartsuit$ " , or, $1\heartsuit$ - ($2\diamondsuit$) - Double says "I would have said $1\spadesuit$ ". Note the special cases: $1\clubsuit$ - ($1\diamondsuit$) - **X** says *both majors*, otherwise you would have bid one of them naturally. $1\clubsuit$ - ($1\heartsuit$) - **X** shows *exactly 4 spades*, thus bidding $1\spadesuit$ now will show at least 5. Both these cases are *bonus extras*

On all other hands then do not be afraid to pass, your partner will still bid on and you will get a second chance to speak later. Let us look into this a little bit more. Taking the bidding as above, but now $1\spadesuit$ is passed back through to you. Do you really want to allow such a pathetic low level contract to be played? At least make them compete. So continue by giving your hand description to your partner, as you normally would, a second suit shows unbalanced etc. We have to take some care though, since partner has passed maybe he has nothing, so don't be too tempestuous to jump. If you do have a strong hand then Double to show your strength, removing the need to bid too high. So again opener does not lose any of his ways to detail his hand to his partner.

The above three situations, bidding normally, doubling or passing, are sufficient, but we can add one more arrow to our quiver, **Disturbed Bids**. Again, taking the bidding

as above, $1\heartsuit$ - ($1\spadesuit$), what would a bid of $2\heartsuit$ now mean? This bid is disturbed, because the natural bid by you would have been $1\heartsuit$ but the overcall has forced you to the 2 level. Notice how a bid of $2\clubsuit$ is not disturbed. Notice that a disturbed bid is a response greater than partner's barrier, so he loses the ability to define his hand clearly to you. If you take up his bidding space like that, you must have some kind of justification. Thus a disturbed bid is weak, and says to partner, "I'm not too bothered about what you've got, I'm bidding what I've got". You would typically have a single suited hand, of at least 6 cards in length, since you are saying that even if you partner has an unbalanced hand you prefer you suit. You would have around 8-10 points. These bids are *non-forcing*, and are designed to get to your contract quick to shut out the opposition. If you had a hand which isn't suited for a disturbed bid, then one of the three situations above will work.

Example 7

♠ Q J	♠ K 9 2
♥ K Q 7 4	♥ A J 10 3
♦ A Q 10 7 2	♦ J 4
♣ K 3	♣ 10 8 7 6

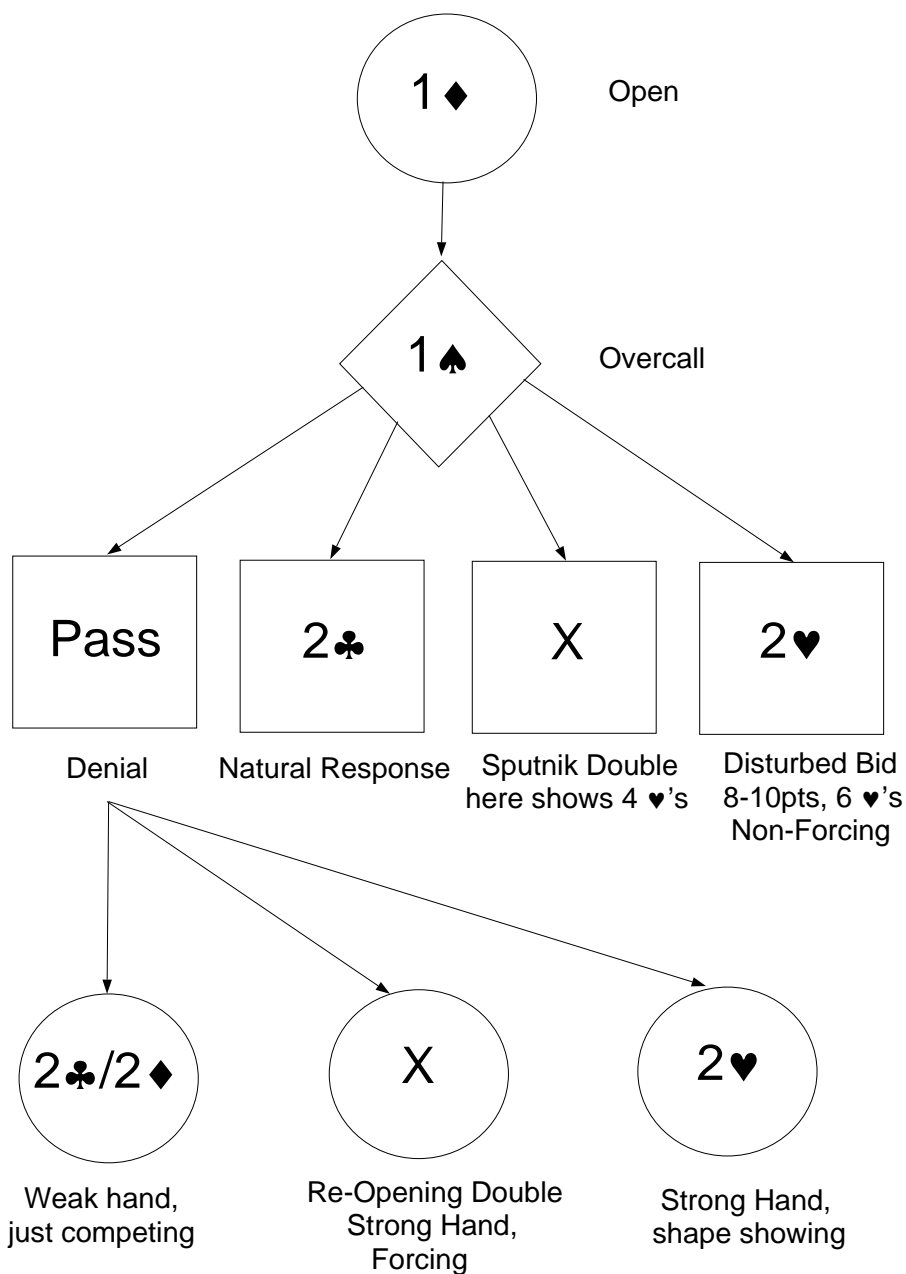
N	E	S	W
			$1\heartsuit$
$1\spadesuit$	X	Pass	$2\heartsuit$
Pass	$3\heartsuit$	Pass	$4\heartsuit$

- The $1\heartsuit$ open is fine, but once North says $1\spadesuit$, things could become very difficult for East/West if they were not playing Sputnik doubles, since finding a heart fit would otherwise be difficult, because East is not strong enough to respond at the two level.
- East though doubles, which guarantees 4 hearts.
- West now bids as if East had responded $1\heartsuit$, and with this hand bids jump

support, 3♥.

- East likes it and so punts game.
- Counting losers there are 3/4, depending on where the ♣A is. With the diamonds easily establishable, 4♥ looks good.

Responding to Opener after an Overcall

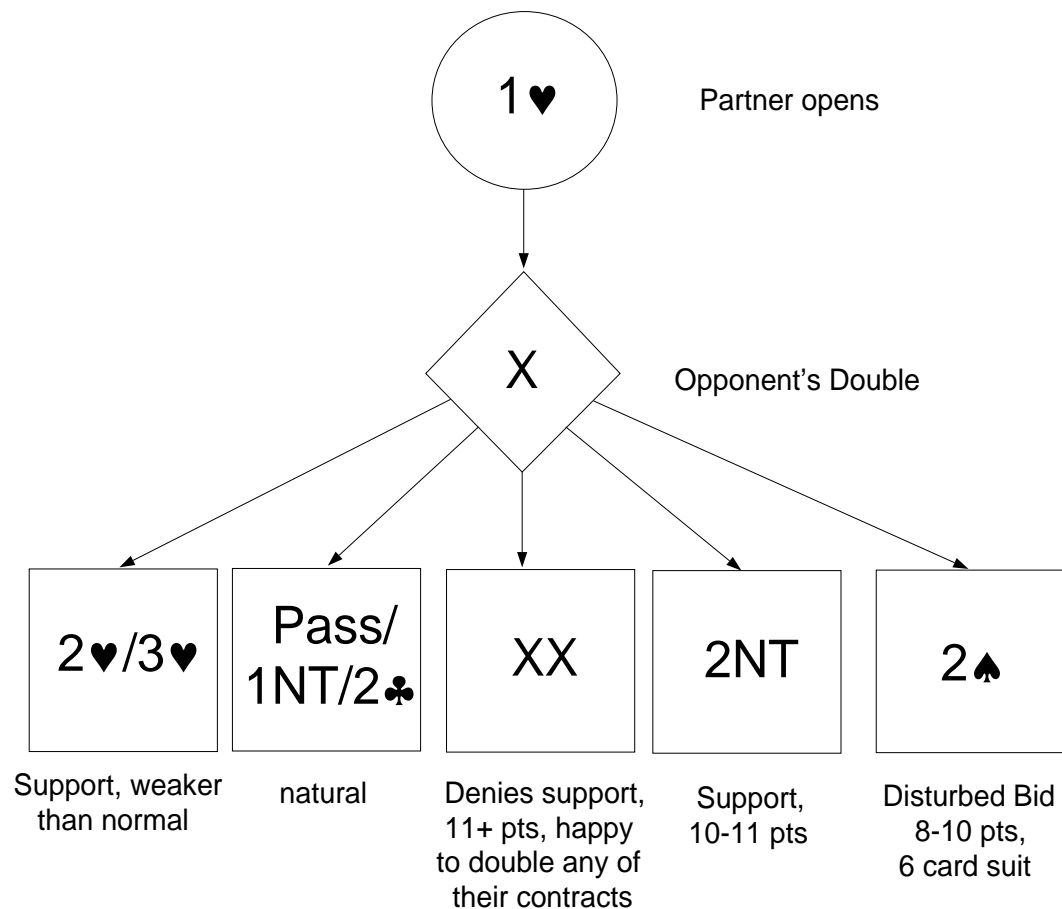


8.5 Responding to Opener After a Double

So now we look into the situation of when the opposition double your partner's open for take-out. Their double indicates that it might be quite easy for them to find a fit, and then they might outbid you for the partscore, so one of our jobs then is to stop them when this is possible.

The less points you have, the more they probably have and so the more urgent that you try to make life hard for them. Thus if you have any kind of support, (even 3 cards might well work), and not many points, 4/5, then support your partner simply and jump support with 6-9. Notice that this weaker than normal, since we are in a more competitive environment. This is similar to the logic behind responding to partner's overcall, section 8.2, in that supporting partner is pre-emptive in nature. Similarly, if you can make you normal response then do so. Also if your hand warrants a disturbed bid then do this. This could well make things difficult for the opposition. If you do have strong and genuine support, i.e. you would have normally have supported with a jump, (remember that this action is now considered weak), then we bid **2NT**. Finally we have the **Redouble**. As you could have guessed, this means, if passed out, that all points are doubled *again*. It shows strength but no particular support and that you are happy to *penalty* double them whatever contract they finish up in. They must bid something since to leave a one level contract in redoubled, is asking for trouble!!

Responding to Opener after an Double



Example 8

We'll assume that the bidding has gone:- (1♠) -1♥ -(**Pass**)- to us. So we are responding to partners overcall.

♠ A Q 6 2
 ♥ J 10 5
 ♦ Q 10 7 2
 ♣ Q 3

We have 11 points and 3 card support for partner's hearts, so a simple raise of 2♥ will do. If we consider that partner holds the hand as given in example 1 above, then he will pass this. Counting losers we get 6 in all, although two of these are if two finesses fail, and so 2♥ looks like a good contract. If partner overcalled with hand 2 from above, then he could raise your support to 3♥, to show his extra strength.

Example 9

If the bidding had gone $1\heartsuit - (1\heartsuit) -$ to us, and now we are sitting in the third seat, and so we are responding to partners open.

♠ A 10 8 7 2
 ♥ Q 10 2
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ K J 7

Now we have 10 points and so we clearly have the balance of power. We cannot support partner, but we do have an unbid four card major. Our normal response would have been $1\spadesuit$, had second seat passed, and so we still respond with $1\spadesuit$.

8.6 1NT Overcall and Responses

The 1NT overcall is very much like a 1NT open, *except* that it is a much stronger bid. It shows 15-17 points, balanced hand and a stopper in the opposition's suit.

The responses to a 1NT overcall are exactly the same in meaning as the 1NT open, see subsection 6. So $2\clubsuit$ is Stayman and asks for 4 card majors. It is again a game invitational bid, and so requires now only a minimum of 8 or so points. Other bids at the 2 level are to play in that contract, whereas bids at the 3 level are game forcing, 10+ points, and show 5 carded suits.

A few things that we can now say where everything can be considered, when talking about the 1NT overcall with respect to normal overcalling, doubling and Sputnik.

- With a balanced hand, without a 5 card suit, i.e. 4333 and 4432 hands, you *cannot* overcall with less than 15 points. With 15-17 points you can overcall 1NT, with 18+ points, double first, then rebid in NT's.
- Do *not* jump overcall in NT's, i.e. 2NT. With strong balanced hands do as above, and double first. We reserve a special meaning to the 2NT overcall, which we will learn later.

- Sputnik doubles are *not* used over a 1NT overcall. A double now used in third seat would be for penalties, since you know who has the balance of the power.

Example 10

♠ K Q 9 2	♠ J 10 7 5
♥ K Q 4	♥ 9
♦ K 10 9 4	♦ A J 5
♣ A 6	♣ K 10 8 7 5

	N	E	S	W
			1♥	1NT
	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
	Pass	4♠		

1. 17 points, balanced hand and a stop in the oppositions suit, the overcall of 1NT cannot be faulted.
2. Holding 9 points and four cards in the unbid major, East bids Stayman.
3. After the Stayman response showing spades, East bids directly to game, since his hand can be upgraded due to the singleton. Had the Stayman response been negative then East could not count any distribution points and would invite game in NT's, with a bid of 2NT.
4. Counting losers, there are 3, so game should make.

Index

- 1NT Open, 62
- 1NT Overcall, 96
- 1NT Response, 42
- 2♣ Open, 74
- 2♣ Stayman, 63
- 2NT Open, 77
- 4NT Blackwood, 73

- Balanced, 36
- Barrier, 38
- Blackwood, 73

- Constructive Bidding, 80
- Contract, 3
- Convention, 63

- Declarer, 3
- Delayed Game Raise, 72
- Demand Openings, 74
- Denial Rebid, 39
- Denial Response, 42
- Destructive Bidding, 80
- Discard, 30
- Distribution, 36
- Distribution Points, 60
- Disturbed Bids, 91
- Doubleton, 8
- Drop, 9
- Dummy, 3

- Established Winners, 9

- Finesse, 13, 14
- Fit, 3

- Game, 4, 55
- Game Force Open, 74
- Grand Slam, 70

- Hand Evaluation, 2, 60
- High Card Points, 2
- Honour Card Leads, 28

- Invites, 51

- Jump Raise, 42

- Lead, 28
- Length Points, 60
- Limit Bid, 71
- Long Suit Leads, 28
- Losers, 7

- M.U.D., 29
- Majors, 55
- Mini-Bridge, 2
- Minors, 55

- No-Trumps, 3

- Open, 36, 56
- Opener, 35

- Opening Lead, 28
- Part-Score, 4
- Penalty Double, 87
- Percentages, 9
- Prepared Rebid, 39
- Ranking, 33
- Redouble, 94
- Responder, 35
- Response, 42, 56
- Revolving, 31
- Ruffing, 10
- Shape, 36
- Short Suit Leads, 29
- Simple Overcalls, 80
- Simple Preference, 47
- Simple Raise, 42
- Singleton, 8
- Slam Denial Bid, 75
- Slams, 70
- Small Slams, 70
- Splits, 9
- Sputnik Double, 91
- Stayman, 63
- Stopper, 84
- Strength, 36
- Strong, 36
- Strong 2 Open, 74
- Take-Out Double, 87
- Trick, 2
- Trump Suit, 2
- Unassuming Cue Bid, 84
- Unbalanced, 36
- Very Strong, 36
- Very Unbalanced, 36
- Void, 8
- Weak, 36
- Winners, 6