

BRIDGE TIPS

STAYMAN CONVENTION

The Stayman Convention is used by the responder to ask the opener if they have a four-card major suit. The bid of 2 clubs asks this question. It allows the partnership to find a 4-4 fit in a major suit. **Reminder:** It is usually better to play in a major suit fit than in no trump.

Responder must have

- ◇ eight+ HCP
- ◇ at least one four-card major
- ◇ a hand that is not balanced

Opener's second bid:

- 2 diamonds denies a four-card major.
- 2 hearts shows a four-card heart suit, but may have a four-card spade suit.
- 2 spades denies hearts.

Playing in No Trump:

- Count winners, not losers. Count sure winners.
- Pick a suit and promote extra tricks.
- Hold up a winner to prevent the opponents from running the suit

Leads:

- Lead longest suit or the strongest of equal suits.**
- Top of a sequence
- BOSTON - bottom of something, top of nothing

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

OVERCALLS

An overcall is a bid made after one team has already opened the bidding. Anytime you bid after your opponents have already opened the bidding, you are making an overcall—a "call" over the opponents' bid. You have now started a bidding war to win the final contract.

Example of bidding: North: 1 heart, East: 2 diamonds (East has made an overcall)

The rules for making an overcall are different than an opening bid. You must have:

- ◇ Five cards or more in the suit you bid (better to have six if you are bidding on the 2 level).
- ◇ 8 – 10 high-card points (HCP) if you are making the overcall at the 1 level. Remember, your partner does not assume you have an opening hand.
- ◇ 11+ HCP if you overcall on the 2 level.
- ◇ If you overcall 1NT, you must have a balanced hand, 15 – 17 points, and a stopper in opponents' suit.

TAKE-OUT DOUBLES

Doubling:

A double can be for penalty.

Take-out double:

You need support for all of the unbid suits, ideally four-card support, especially in the unbid major suits.

You need at least the strength for an opening bid.

The take-out doubler can also have a hand with 18+ points, too strong for an overcall.

Responder:

With 0 – 8 points,

bid a four-card suit at the cheapest level.

With 9 – 11 points, jump in a four-card or longer suit.

With 12+ points,

jump to game in a four-card or longer unbid major suit.

Notrump advances after a take-out double.

1NT 8 – 10 HCP and at least one stopper in the opponent's suit.

2NT 11 – 12 HCP and at least one stopper in opponents suit.

3NT 13 HCP or more and at least one stopper in opponents suit.

PREEMPTIVE BIDDING

To Open a Weak 2 Bid:

- ◇ 6 – 10 HCP and less than an opening bid with distribution
- ◇ Exactly six cards in hearts, diamonds, or spades
- ◇ Two of the top three honors or three of the top five honors in your six-card suit
- ◇ No four-card major suit

If Partner Opens a Weak 2 Bid:

- ◇ With a weak hand and three trump, raise to the 3 level.
- ◇ With a weak hand and four trump, raise to the 4 level.
- ◇ With a good hand and at least three trump, raise a major to game.
- ◇ With a good hand, no fit for partner's major, and a good five-card suit, bid your own suit.
- ◇ With a fit for partner's minor, bid a good five-card major of our own.
- ◇ With an invitational hand and a trump fit, bid 2NT, asking partner for a feature (ace or king in a side suit).
- ◇ Never open 2 clubs with a weak hand. The 2 club bid is reserved for a strong hand.
- ◇ Open 3 clubs with six+ clubs and three of the top five honors and 6 – 10 points.

HAND EVALUATION

Tricks are taken with high cards and low cards. The value of your hand takes both into consideration. The features of your hands are assigned points. They are totaled together to give an estimate of the strength of your hand.

Honor cards:

- Ace 4 points
- King 3 points
- Queen 2 points
- Jack 1 point

Distribution Points

- ◇ Points are assigned for each suit of five cards or longer. One point is added for every card over four.
- Examples:
 - Five-card suit: 1 point;
 - Six-card suit: 2 points
- ◇ You may count points for the number of cards in a suit.
 - VOID 5 points
 - SINGLETON 2 points
 - DOUBLETON 1 point
- ◇ Do not assign value for shortness in your partner's suit. Continue to revalue your hand.

The shape of your hand is important.

There are two general shapes: balanced and unbalanced.

A balanced hand has equal distribution of all suits:

no voids, no singletons, and no more than one doubleton.

Points for Game Contract

Approximate requirements for a game contract

- 5 in minor suits (♦ ♣) 29 combined points
- 4 in major suits (♠ ♡) 25 combined points
- 3 NT



OPENING THE BIDDING

Roles of the Partners

- Opener – the describer
- Responder – the captain
- Opening bid – first call or bid announced
- Ask: What level? What strain?

Opener

- With 12 – 21 points, open a 5+ card suit major suit.
- With two equal-length five- or six-card suits, open the higher ranking suit.
- With no five-card or longer suit, bid your longer minor.
- With two four-card minors, open 1♦
- With two three-card minors, open 1♣

With 15-17 HCP and a balanced hand open 1NT

Responder

Responses to Opening Bids of One of a Suit

- With 0 – 5 points**, pass.
- With 6 – 9 points** (minimum hand)
 - Responding to a major suit:
 - Raise to the 2 level with three-card or longer support.
 - Bid a new suit at the 1 level.
 - Bid 1NT
 - Responding to a minor suit:
 - Bid a new suit at the 1 level.
 - Bid 1 NT.
 - Raise to the 2 level with five-card or longer support.
- With 10 – 12 points** (medium hand)
 - Responding to a major suit:
 - Raise to the 3 level with three+ card support. Bid a new suit.
 - Responding to a minor suit:
 - Bid a new suit.
 - Raise to the 3 level with five-card or longer support.
- With 13+ points** (maximum hand)
 - Responding to a major suit:
 - With three+ support, bid a new suit then jump to game in partner's major.
 - With two or more suits of equal length:
 - five+ card suits, bid your higher-ranking suit.
 - four+ card suits, bid your cheapest suit; can be at the 2 level.
 - With no support for opener's major, bid 2NT.
 - Responding to a minor suit:
 - Bid a new suit, preferably a four-card major, you are looking for a fit in the major suits – bid up the ladder.
 - Bid 2NT with a balanced hand.
 - Bid 3NT with a balanced hand.

KEEP BIDDING UNTIL YOU GET TO GAME.

Keep in mind: When responder changes suit, the opener is forced to bid for one round.

Bidding Messages:

SIGN-OFF - asks opener to pass

INVITATIONAL - gives opener opportunity to pass or bid

FORCING - requires opener to bid again

Opener's Rebid after Responder Raises

Opener's Major Suit to the 2 level:

- With 13 – 15 points, pass.
- With 16 – 18 points, raise to the 3 level (invitational).
- With 19 – 21 points, raise to 4 level, game (sign-off).

Opener's minor suit to the 2 level:

- With 13 – 15 points, pass.
- With 16 – 18 points, raise to 3 level.
- With 16+ points and a balanced hand, bid 2 NT.
- With 19+ points and a balanced hand, bid 3 NT.

Opener's Rebid after Responder bids 1NT

- With 13 – 15 points** – minimum
 - Pass with a balanced hand of 12 – 14 points.
 - Bid second suit of four+ cards if lower ranking than first.
 - Rebid the original suit with six+ cards at the 2 level.
- With 16 – 18 total points** - medium - invitational
 - Rebid original suit with six+ card support at the 3 level.
 - With a balanced hand, bid 2NT.
 - Bid a new suit.
- With 19 or more**, you have enough for game.
 - With six+ card major, bid game in the major.
 - Jump shift in a new suit. This is forcing to game.
 - With a balanced hand bid 3NT.

After a New Suit by Responder

- With 13 – 15 points**
 - With four+ card support, raise partner's suit one level.
 - With stoppers in unbid suits, bid NT.
 - Bid a new suit at 1 level.
 - Bid 2 of a suit if it is lower ranking than your first suit.
- With 16 – 18 points:**
 - Jump-raise partner's suit with four+ card support.
 - With a six-card suit, jump in your suit.
 - Bid a new suit at the cheapest level; it is allowed to be higher ranking than your first-bid suit.
- With 19+ points**
 - With four+ card, raise partner's suit to game.
 - With a balanced hand and stoppers, jump in no trump.
 - Bid game in your suit.

OPENING LEAD

This is the defender's job! Listen carefully to the bidding. Many contracts are won or lost on the opening lead.



HINTS:

- ◇ Top of a sequence: (Ex. Lead K when you have KQ.) This promises your partner the next honor.
- ◇ Lead your partner's suit, if partner bid or overcalled.
- ◇ Play A when you hold the AK.
- ◇ A singleton or a doubleton if you have trump holdings. Lead high then low with a doubleton to signal your partner.
- ◇ Fourth highest of a suit headed by an honor.
- ◇ BOSTON (Bottom of something, top of nothing): Bottom of something: (ex. Qxx) lead the lowest card. Top of nothing: (ex. 7 4 2) lead the highest card.

NO TRUMP CONTRACT

With 15 – 17 points (HCP) and a balanced hand, open 1 NT.

Responder

- With a balanced hand and
 - 0 – 7 points, pass.
 - 8 – 9 points, bid 2NT.
 - 10 – 15 points, bid 3NT.
 - 16 – 17 points, bid 4NT, partner can pass or bid 6NT.
 - 18 – 19 points, bid 6NT.
 - 20 – 21 points, bid 5NT; asks partner, 6NT or 7NT?
 - 22+, bid 7NT.

JACOBY TRANSFER

First bid on your side is 1NT.

Responder must have five+ cards in a major suit. Point count can be 0+ points.

No-trump bidder is forced to bid next higher ranking suit. **With 0 – 7 points**, play in a part score, transfer to major and then pass.

With 8 – 9 points invites to game:

With five-card major, transfer, then bid 2NT.

With a minimum: opener passes with two cards in the major and bids 3 of the major with three or more cards.

With a maximum: opener bids 3NT with two cards in the major and 4 of the major with three or more cards.

With six-card major, transfer, then bid 3 of major.

Opener raises to 4 with a maximum or passes.

With no five-card major, bid 2NT.

Opener bids 3NT with a maximum or passes.

With 10 – 15 points, responder bids game:

Transfer with a five-card major, then bid 3NT.

Opener passes with two cards in the major or bids 4 of the major with three+ support.

With a six-card major, transfer then bid 4 of major.

With no five-card major, bid 3NT.