

## BRIDGE PHILOSOPHY 101 ♠♥♦♣

Here we consider concepts that apply to multiple conventions and agreements.

### GRANULARITY

This refers to the principle of narrowing the range of existing bids by adding new bids

Example 1 - Before the **forcing NT**, we showed 3-card support for partner's major suit and about 6-9 points with a simple raise of 1M-2M. Now, we have 2 ways to raise partner to the 2-level in his/her major (1M-2M and 1M-1NT-2any-2M), so we divide the 6-9 range into two pieces and use that first path with 6-7 pts (minimal raise) and the second for 8-9 pts (constructive raise).

Example 2 - With **Inverted Minors**, a 2m response to 1m shows a limit raise or better (10+ pts). If we repurpose jump-shifts into the other minor - so-called criss-cross raises (1♣-2♦ or 1♦-3♣) - to show game forcing hands, we can break up that 10+ range into 10-12 and 13+ ranges.

Example 3 - **Impossible 2♠**: After 1♥-1NT-2♣. We can raise partners clubs two ways if we make a 2♠ call, an otherwise idle bid, a club raise

Example 4 - **Fast vs slow arrival**: 1♠-2♣-2♦-2♠ shows a better hand for responder than 1♠-2♣-2♦-4♠

Example 5 - **Jacoby vs Texas transfer**: 1NT-2♥-2♠-4♠ shows a better hand for responder than 1♠-2♣-2♦-4♠

Example 6 - If we don't use **negative doubles**, 1♠ after partner's 1m and RHO's 1♥ overcall shows 4+ spades. If we play this convention, we can divide the range of 4+ into exactly 4 with a double and 5+ with a 1♠ call.

### CHEAPER IS STRONGER

There is a principle in bidding that better hands should be shown with cheaper bids, since better hands are more likely to produce games and slams and therefore more room for exploration may be needed.

As a result, a fair number of bridge conventions come in reverse or inverted forms, where the meanings of two bids are exchanged.

#### Example 1 Inverted Minors

In Standard American, we are taught that 1m-2m (1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦) is a minimal raise showing about 6-9 pts, and 1m-3m shows the same hand but with 10-12 points. When we play Inverted Minors, we reverse the meaning of these raises:

*Original*

*Inverted*

1m-2m - minimal raise (6-9)  
1m-3m - limit raise (10-12)

1m-2m - limit raise (10-12) or better (10+)  
1m-3m - minimal raise (6-9)

We are generally forsaking finding a major suit fit in auctions where opener and responder bid and raise the same minor, but we are still looking to see if a NT part score, game, or slam is a possibility.

When playing inverted minors, after 1m-2m, we begin showing stoppers in search of a NT contract.

The payoff comes when we stop at 2NT with say 13 pts opposite 10 pts: 1♦-2♦-2♠-2NT-p:

♠AQ84-♥73-♦KJ98-♣A65

♠97-♥QJ4-♦AQ843♣J987

1♦ - 12-21 pts  
2♠ - ♠ stop, no ♥ stop  
Pass - I have a min, too

2♦ - 10+ pts, 4+ Ds, no 4CM  
2NT - ♥ stop and a min

### Example 2 Inverted (or Reverse) Bergen

*Original*

*Inverted*

1M-3♣ - constructive raise (8-9)  
1M-3♦ - limit raise (10-12)  
1M-3M - weak raise (0-7)

1M-3♣ - limit raise (10-12)  
1M-3♦ - constructive raise (8-9)  
1M-3M - weak raise (0-7)

Opener might want to make a game try after 1M-3m. He has a little more room if the response is 3♣ than if it is 3♦.

### Example 3 Reverse Drury

This is how responder shows partner a limit raise of partner's major suit after already passing. Partner may have opened light (10-11 pts) in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> seat, so 2M might be high enough with 10-11 opposite 10-12.

*Original*

*Inverted (or reversed)*

Pass-1M-2♣-2M - full opener  
Pass-1M-2♣-2♦ - opened light

Pass-1M-2♣-2M - opened light  
Pass-1M-2♣-2♦ - full opener

### Example 4 Roman Keycard Blackwood

*Original* (3014)

*Inverted* (1430)

4NT-5♣ - 0 or 3 keycards  
4NT-5♦ - 1 or 4 Keycards

4NT-5♣ - 1 or 4 Keycards  
4NT-5♦ 0 or 3 keycards

## LEARNING AFTER AGE 60

When we were younger, we learned passively. Just being there was enough. It's how we learned to speak. As we age, our minds transform from "knows very little but can learn easily" to "knows a lot but must work to learn now." What this means is that to grow in bridge as a senior, we have to engage in active learning, which means studying.

Excellent advice: If you want to know things about bridge next year that you don't know now, make one fact a week your goal, write it down somewhere you'll see it perhaps on a 3x5 index card, and go over it a few times during the week.

### **WHICH DENOMINATION: MAJOR > No Trump > minor**

When we have the choice, we prefer major suit contracts over notrump contracts over minor suit contracts. This is because of the way bridge is scored and the fact that if we can ruff a trick, we can make one more trick than playing in NT.

If a hand can make ten tricks in a major or minor suit and only nine in NT, 4M (4♠♥) scores better than 3NT scores better than 4m (4♦♣).

If it can make nine tricks in a suit and eight in NT, 3M (3♠♥) scores better than 2NT scores better than 3m (3♦♣):

**♠AK84-♥73-♦KQ98-♣85 opp ♠QJ96-♥AJ4-♦AJ74-♣742**

This makes 9 tricks in NT (if you don't lose 5 club tricks on the opening lead) and ten in spades or diamonds barring lopsided suit breaks.

### **CAPTAINCY**

A partnership's goal in bidding is to determine its optimal contract, which is done by communicating information about each hand's strength and shape. Exchanging information is both partner's responsibility, but only one will eventually decide for the partnership what the contract should be.

That will be the one who first knows the combined assets of the partnership, which will be the partner of the one who first limits his hand into a narrow range. As soon as one partner does this, the other one becomes the captain and decides how high the partnership should bid, although the captain's last bid might be an invitation.

Consider this auction: 1♣-1♠-1NT. Captaincy is decided with opener's 1NT bid, and it is responder who is captain. Why? The opening bid, 1♣, shows a huge range, 12-21 HCPs. The response, promises 6+ points, but there is no upper limit. Onlookers couldn't tell yet if this hand is headed for part score or a slam.

But when opener rebids 1NT, he has narrowed his range from 12-21 down to 12-14, and his partner knows if this will be a part score, slam, or something in between (game) contract. Responder just became captain and will either set the final contract or invite partner to choose between part score and game or game and slam depending on whether he's near the top or the bottom of the range he has already announced.

## INVITATIONAL BIDS

These always mean one thing and one thing only: Partner, if you are at the bottom of the narrow range you've indicated to date, we're high enough, so let's play at this level (1NT-2NT-p, 1NT-4NT-p, or 1♠-3♣[Bergen limit raise]-3♠) or bid the game or slam if you have extras (1NT-2NT-3NT, 1NT-4NT-6NT, 1♠-3♣-4♠).

## GAME FORCING BIDS

That phrase says that we will pass no bid under 3NT. We can pass below game only in a minor, i.e., pass 4m. This is because we've got 12+ pts opposite 13+, which is enough for game in NT or a major, but often won't make the 11 tricks necessary for 5m unless one partner has more than a minimum.

Game forcing auctions:

- 2/1 (1♠-2♣)
- Jacoby 2NT (1♠-2NT)
- Jump shift by opener (1♠-1NT-3♦)
- Fourth Suit Forcing (1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦)
- Simple splinters (1♠-4♣)
- Texas transfers (1NT-4♦)
- Many 2♣ auctions (2♣-2NT)
- Reverses where Lebensohl option declined if used (1♣-1♥-2♦-2♥)

## 4-4 FITS ARE BETTER THAN 5-3 FITS

♠KQ96-♥AQJ74-♦962-♣T opposite ♠AJ32-♥K98-♦7-♣AJ53

1♥-1♠-2♣-3♥-? (4♠) [K♣ opening lead]. Assuming that trumps break 3-2, in spades, declare discards the singleton diamond in hand on the long hearts and eventually ruffs a diamond making 5♠. We make one trick fewer in hearts, where there is no ruffing in dummy after pulling trump.

## NO-NOs

- Underleading an A against a suit contract
- Opening NT when 2-2 in the majors
- Opening 1NT with a weak singleton
- Rebidding 1NT with a singleton in responder's suit
- Rebidding after preempting unless forced
- Opening a Weak Two with a void or a 4-card major
- Splintering with a singleton ace