

Intermediate- Lesson 2

Refresher- Opening the bidding

Have a look at each of the following 10 hands. You are dealer, no-one is vulnerable.

Please consider each hand in turn, without checking the answers below, and write down what, if anything, you would bid.

Only then compare your answers with the answers and explanations given.

This should provide you with a very good check of how well your bidding knowledge lines up with Modern Acol – the system we are going to be using throughout this course and beyond.

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

ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

Hand 1 ♠ A 8 7 3 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q 8 6 ♣ K 8 3 2

4-4-3-2 shape, 13 HCP 1NT

In Modern Acol, we are going to be playing a “weak no trump”, 12-14 points balanced. That means no void or singleton, and (ideally) no more than 1 doubleton.

(Though very occasionally, we will choose 1NT over 1-of-a-suit to open, if we are 5-4-2-2, and our 5-card suit is too poor to rebid)

Remember, if we open 1 of a suit, **we MUST have a suitable rebid in mind, for whatever partner responds with!**

Hand 2 ♠ A K 7 3 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 9 8 6 2 ♣ A 8 2

5-4-3-1 shape, 13 HCP 1♦

We have an opening hand. We can't open 1NT as we have a singleton.

We ALWAYS open our **longest** suit first, irrespective of the strength of the suit.

Hand 3 ♠ 6 3 ♥ A Q 6 3 ♦ K Q 8 6 ♣ K Q 2

4-4-3-2 shape, 16 HCP 1♥

We have an opening hand. We have a NT shape, but too strong to open 1NT.

We need to choose between our two 4-card suits to open.

In modern Acol, we will always open the **higher ranking** of two 4-card suits, except if we have both majors, when we open 1♥.

Our thinking is to rebid 1NT, showing our balanced 15-16 points, but we don't want to miss a major suit fit if it's there.

Hand 4 ♠ A K 8 7 5 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 8 ♣ 10 9 3 2

5-4-3-1 shape, 11 HCP 1♠

We don't have opening points, but nearly. We do have a nice shape.

We are going to use “**rule of 20**” to decide whether to open, or Pass.

Add the number of HCP to the number of cards in our two longest suits, and if it comes to at least 20, we can open. Here we have 11 HCP and 9 cards in our two longest suits, so we choose to open 1♠.

This one is even more of an excellent “light opener” as spades is the boss suit, and our two short suits are 3-1, which is a better holding than 2-2.

Opening 1♠ makes our opponents' job that much harder to enter the bidding.

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

6-3-3-1 shape, only 7 HCP 2 ♥

This is the sort of hand which would be a no-brainer Pass, playing old fashioned Acol. Our opponents would bid, and have plenty of space to find their fit and their contract.

But in modern Acol, we play WEAK TWOs. It uses up opponents' bidding space, and is a very powerful weapon. It crops up far more often than the old fashioned strong two hand, and we have other ways of bidding those when they do occur.

In this course, we are going to be teaching and playing weak twos in 3 suits, ♦ ♥ and ♠

We can't use it in ♣, because a 2♣ opener is reserved to show very strong hands.

Hand 6 ♠ A 8 4 2 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 8 6 ♣ K 6 3 2

4-4-3-2 shape, 11 HCP **PASS**

We don't have opening points, but nearly.

We are going to use "rule of 20" to decide whether to open, or Pass.

Add the number of HCP to the number of cards in our two longest suits, and if it comes to at least 20, we can open. Here it comes to 19.

It's also an unattractive shape – too balanced to play well in a suit contract – best just to pass.

Hand 7 ♠ A K J 5 ♥ A 9 7 3 ♦ Q 9 6 ♣ Q 6

4-4-3-2 shape, 16 HCP 1 ♥

We have a NT shape, but too strong for 1NT. We need to open 1 of a suit, but which suit, hearts or spades?

We open the higher ranking of two 4-card suits, EXCEPT if they're ♥ and ♠, when we open 1♥. We are intending to rebid 1NT, to show a balanced 15-16 points, but if we open 1♠, we might miss a heart fit.

A "fit" is a suit where we hold at least **8 cards** between our own hand and partner's, and one of key objectives in bidding is to locate a fit, and a major suit fit is the "holy grail" in bidding.

As we'll see later in our course, to respond 2♥, we need at least 5 hearts, so partner can't show a 4-card heart suit if we open 1♠.

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

4-4-3-2 shape, 20 HCP 2NT

We have a NT shape, and a lovely 20 HCP. We will open 2NT on hands like this, when our point count is in the range 20-22.

Don't worry about the weak Club suit. It's rare to pick up a hand with all 4 suits stopped. The number of times you will do well by opening 2NT far outweighs the few occasions when it comes unstuck.

Hand 9 ♠ A J 9 7 6 5 2 ♥ 6 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ 8 2

7-3-2-1 shape, 7 HCP 3♠

A 7-card suit, and the hand is too weak to open at the 1 level.

A classic pre-emptive hand- made even more attractive as our suit is spades.

Chances are the opposition will have more of the points on this deal, so we want to make their task to find their best contract as difficult as we can.

Hand 10 ♠ A 6 5 3 2 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ 8 5

5-3-3-2 shape, 13 HCP 1NT

We have opening points and a 5-card major. So why not open 1♠?

Think about your rebid. Say you open 1♠ and partner responds 2♣? What's your rebid? Would you really want to rebid that anaemic spade suit?

Hands like this, with 12-14 HCP and a NT shape, are best opened 1NT, even with a 5-card major.

