



Intermediate- Lesson 7

Opener's rebids after opening 1 of a suit

In Lesson 5 we discussed opening 1 of a suit- choice of suit, reversing, and the “barrier”. In Lesson 6, we went on to look at how to respond to partner's 1 of a suit opening bid.

This time we are going to explore what you as opener should do next, once partner has had a chance to respond to your opening bid of 1-of-a-suit. This is called **Opener's Rebid**.

When you've opened 1-of-a-suit, you await partner's bid to give you more information. If partner passes, you know they are weak, less than 6 high card points (HCP). You don't HAVE to bid again, even if you get the chance to, though if you have a strong hand, or two good suits and you want to see which one fits best with partner, you can choose to.

If partner supports your suit, or bids NT, those are limit bids, which tell you partner's strength within a fairly narrow range, and something about their shape. Such bids are non-forcing, and you can pass if you want to.

However, if partner responds to your 1-of-a-suit opening bid by **bidding a new suit at the lowest level**, their strength could be anything from 6HCP (or even fewer with a good shape), up to 19+, if it's at the 1 level, or “Rule of 14” up to 19+, if it's at the 2 level (see Lesson 6). As we saw, a change of suit response at the lowest available level is **forcing** for 1 round – your partner must be guaranteed the opportunity to bid again. If the opposition pass, you **must** bid again.

Look at it from partner's point of view. All she knows about your hand is that you have opening strength – anything from a light opener based on, say, rule of 20, up to 19 HCP or maybe more, and that you have at least 4 cards in the suit you opened. You do not know the limit of each other's hands. She has changed suit at the lowest level, and is expecting you to describe your hand further with your rebid. Therefore you must bid again, to give partner more information and to give her the chance to bid again.

It is your second bid (opener's rebid), which gives partner more information about the strength and shape of your hand. It is a **critical step** of the bidding process.

You will need to assess whether to count your hand as **weak or strong**. Typically, a hand of up to 14 HCP will be counted as a weak opener, and a hand of 18+ HCP will be counted as strong, though hand evaluation (which we'll cover in detail later in the course) might suggest that you need to upgrade or downgrade. Shape, length of long suit(s), intermediates, and sequences will guide you. However, if your hand is in the middle range, 15-17 HCP, it will be slightly more awkward to bid, and to decide whether to treat it as weak or strong you will need to use the usual tools of hand evaluation, together with other factors: vulnerability, bidding by opponents, and partner's response to your opening bid.

Note that you, by opening 1-of-a-suit, have already guaranteed you will rebid if partner responds with a change of suit, before you know anything about partner's hand. Therefore, the key consideration before opening 1 of a suit is to have first thought through what you will rebid, for any possible response by partner, ie **“think rebid”**.

Guidelines for opener's rebid when you've opened 1-of-a-suit

There are 5 scenarios to consider:

- (1) Partner passes
- (2) Partner supports your major suit opener
- (3) Partner supports your minor suit opener
- (4) Partner bids a new suit at the lowest level
- (5) Partner bids NT.

Let's look at each in turn.

- (1) If **partner passes**, but the opposition bid, you have a judgement to make whether to bid on. You know your partner is weak (less than 6HCP). Your strength and shape will guide you. If you have a good suit (say 6+ cards), it's often wise to rebid it. You might win the contract, or push opponents up to a level where they can't make their contract. If you have a decent second suit, and can bid it without going through the barrier, consider bidding it. Partner can still show a preference for your first-bid suit at the 2 level.
- (2) If partner **supports your 1-of-a-suit major** suit opening bid (eg 1♥ - 2♥, or 1♠ - 3♠, etc), she has made a limit bid, defining her hand as having support for your suit and strength within a range of 3 or 4 points. Now that a fit has been found, you can reassess the strength of your hand, if you have some shape, ie if your hand is unbalanced. Rather than adding points for singletons, voids, etc, it's better to use Losing Trick Count (LTC)- which we will describe in detail in Lesson 17. Allocate partner a LTC of 9 for a raise to the 2 level, and 8 for a raise to the 3 level. Work out the LTC for your own hand, and add it to partner's. Subtract the total from 18, and if it comes to 4 or more, bid game in the major. If it comes to 6 or more, consider exploring for slam. [If you're wondering where all these mysterious numbers come from, don't worry- it will all become clear when we cover Losing Trick Count].

However, if you're balanced, LTC won't be any help, so rely on HCP count. If you have 12-15 HCP, you should pass in response to 2♥/2♠ (6-9HCP); if you have 16-17 HCP, you can invite partner to raise to game by bidding the major again at the 3 level – if they are top of their range, they'll bid game. If you are strong (18+ HCP) you can bid game yourself, or even, if very strong, consider exploring for slam. If partner supports at the 3-level they are indicating 10-12 HCP. Bid game with 14+ HCP. With a strong hand (18+ HCP) consider exploring for slam.

If partner responds by bidding straight to game themselves, it is quite possible that they will not have a high point count, as they'd have tried to find a different bid rather than a limit bid.

[In the Advanced Lesson Series, but not in this course, we will come to a very useful convention called the Jacoby 2NT, to cater for the situation where partner opens 1 of a major, and you have an opening strength hand and support for partner's major, and you want to agree partner's major but don't want to make a limit bid]

If partner bids straight to game (1♥ – 4♥ or 1♠ - 4♠) you should assume they have a shapely supporting hand with no worse than 7 losing tricks (LTC). If you are considering bidding on beyond game, when your own hand is balanced, you will need a strong hand to make slam.

- (3) If partner **supports your 1-of-a-suit minor** suit opening bid (eg 1♣ - 2♣, 1♦ - 3♦, etc), she has made a limit bid, just as in the case of supporting a major. The issue here is that requirements for a game in 5♣ or 5♦ are greater than for a major suit game, needing to make 11 tricks: you'll usually need 28+ HCP between you, especially if you have little shape to provide ruffing chances. Both you and your partner know you have a fit, but in a minor – so, unless you're both weak, you'll be searching to see if a NT contract is a possibility instead of a minor suit contract.

If partner supports your 1-of-a-minor opening suit at the 2 level, ie 1♣ - 2♣, 1♦ - 2♦, they are showing 6-9 HCP (or a 9-loser unbalanced hand, based on LTC).

- If you have weak opening hand, even up to 15 points, pass.
- If you have stops in the other 3 suits, and 16-17 HCP, you can invite by bidding 2NT. If partner is towards the top of the range for her response, she will raise to 3NT.
- If you have stops in the other 3 suits, and 18-19 HCP, you can bid 3NT directly. In the sequence 1♣ - 2♣ - 3NT, or 1♦ - 2♦ - 3NT, partner can pass with a reasonably balanced hand, or convert to game in the minor (5♣ or 5♦) if they have a very distributional hand which looks unsuitable for NT.
- If you as opener have 16-19HCP, and at least one unstopped suit, bid 3♣/ 3♦. Partner can pass, bid 3NT (with the other 3 suits stopped), or bid 5♣ /5♦ (with a distributional hand).

[You will find that it's difficult to find a NT contract, as it's unusual for one hand to have stops in all the other suits- you might have all the other suits stopped between you, but how to find that out? You will probably end up playing the contract in the minor suit, or taking a hopeful guess at NT which will sometimes come unstuck. There is an excellent way to avoid this problem, which requires use of two useful conventions: inverted minors, and trial bids in a minor. Using these, you will be able to find whether you have all suits stopped between you, and bid and make 3NT contracts while others end up in a part score in a minor, or go off in 5♣ or 5♦. However, these are quite advanced conventions, and we don't cover them in this course. To learn about these, you will need to attend the Advanced Series].

If partner supports your 1-of-a-minor opening suit at the 3 level, ie 1♣ - 3♣, 1♦ - 3♦, they are showing 10-12 HCP (or an 8-loser unbalanced hand, based on LTC). If you have a minimum opening hand (up to 13HCP), just pass. With 14-17HCP, it's possible a 3NT game might be on, or 5♣ /5♦ if partner is very distributional. You have a difficult call (*without the option of trial bids in a minor*): make a judgement based on your own hand strength and shape, to pass, or if you are balanced, bid 3NT, which partner can pass or convert to 5♣ /5♦ with a distributional hand. With 18+ HCP, you can choose to explore for slam.

It is unusual for partner to respond at the 4 level to your 1-of-a suit minor opening bid, ie 1♣ - 4♣, 1♦ - 4♦, because they are bypassing the possibility of 3NT. They will have a very distributional hand, unsuitable for 3NT; the bid is invitational – if you are a minimum opener for your 1♣ or 1♦, pass. If better than a minimum opener, bid 5♣ /5♦. If you are strong, explore for slam.

- (4) **If partner bids a new suit at the lowest available level:** this is a non-limit bid, and you MUST bid again.

(Note: if partner bids a new suit at one level higher than the lowest available level, I'm recommending you keep that for a Weak Jump Shift – a hand too weak for a 1NT response, with one long suit – NOT a strong bid. See Lesson 6)

Your priorities should be as follows:

- a. If partner's suit is a major, support it at the appropriate level. This can also be correct with a 3-card suit and two of the top three honours, if you have no other reasonable alternative.
- b. If balanced with stops in the un-bid suits, bid no-trumps at the appropriate level:
If partner has bid at the 1-level (eg 1♦ - 1♠):
 - with 15-16 points balanced, bid 1NT.
 - with 17-18 points balanced, bid 2NT.
 - with 19+ points balanced, bid 3NTIf partner has bid at the 2-level, (eg 1♥ - 2♣) she has guaranteed a Rule of 14 value hand (eg 10+ HCP and 4 cards)
 - with 13-14 points, bid 2NT
 - with 15+ points bid 3NT
- c. In the 12-16 HCP range, either bid a second suit, provided you can do so without going through the "barrier" (see Lesson 5), or re-bid your first suit (ideally with extra length).
- d. With a strong hand (17+ HCP), bid a second suit; if bidding it at the lowest level requires you to go through the barrier, bid it at the lowest level (ie reverse). If bidding your second suit at the lowest level would not mean going through the barrier, bid your second suit at one level higher than the lowest available. Either a reverse, or a jump rebid, shows a strong hand.

(5) If Partner **bids No Trumps**: this is a limit bid, and non-forcing. Partner's strength is 6-9HCP for 1NT, or 11-12HCP for 2NT if you have bid a minor. Partner is denying a 4-card major, and is not able to support your suit.

You should only re-bid your opening suit if you have extra length; remember a 1NT response doesn't guarantee a balanced hand, and might be very poor in the suit you've opened. Only with a highly distributional hand would you bid a second suit; obey the guideline about going through the barrier with a second suit- you should not do so without a strong (16+) hand: partner might well want to put you back into your first (and presumed longer) suit. If you are not highly distributional, aim to play in no-trumps at the appropriate level.

If partner has bid 1NT, only bid an invitational 2NT with 17-18 points (partner will bid 3NT if at the high end of her 1NT response range). Bid a direct 3NT with 19+ points.

If partner has bid 2NT over your minor opening (11-12HCP), raise to 3NT with 14+ points, though with a decent 5-card suit you can shade this to 13HCP.

Remember, hand evaluation is usually very important. Frequently your high card point count alone will not be an accurate basis of the value of your hand. Get used to upgrading and downgrading your hand. We will have a whole lesson on hand evaluation later in the course.

