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| **Openings And Continuations**  **With**  **Distributional Hands** |

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| **Section 3**  **Openings And Continuations With Distributional Hands** | **3.1 Making An Opening Bid Of One Of A Suit** |

A distributional hand is one where the two longest suits, together, contain at least 9 cards.

With balanced hands it is relatively easy for opener to define the strength and shape of his hand.

You either:

open with a bid in no trumps

or you open one of a suit and rebid in no trumps.

Either action quickly defines your hand within narrow limits.

With one-suited hands it is often possible to show strength and shape with your opening bid and rebid.

With two suited-hands you need bidding space to investigate whether there is a fit.

The bidding may need to progress gently until a fit is located.

**3.1.1 Principles**

**1.** If you open with a bid of one of a suit…

you promise you will make a second bid if partner responds in a new suit.

**2.** If, as opener, you open one of a suit and rebid in a second suit…

your first suit is defined as 5+ cards.

But see 3.1.4 below.

**3.1.2 Hand Evaluation**

Count high card points.

Do not add points for distribution (length or shortages) until you know there is a fit.

Once you know there is a fit, shortages assume a value.

You can open any hand of 12 HCP.

In deciding whether to open the bidding with hands of less than 12 HCP apply the **Rule Of Twenty (q.v.)**

**3.1.3 Choosing The Suit To O*p*en**

Open your longest suit

With two suits of the same length:

Open the higher ranking suit

except

when holding 4-4 in the majors, open 1♥. But see note under 2.4.1

A consequence of the above is:

If you open one of a suit and subsequently rebid in a second suit, the fact that you have bid two suits defines your first suit as at least 5 cards…..

….there are exceptions but that’s a topic for another lesson

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| **Section 3**  **Openings And Continuations With Distributional Hands** | **3.2 Responding To An Opening Bid**  **Of One Of A Suit** |

**3.2.1 Overview**

When partner opens the bidding with a bid of one of a suit this places you on the Responder Strength Scale.

There are 3 important numbers for responder.

**6** If partner has opened with 19 points game is possible if you have 6 points.

You must respond.

You will respond and then, after opener’s rebid, determine if game is possible and in which denomination.

**10** You need 10+ points to bid a new suit at the 2-level.

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| **W** | **E** |  | **W** | **E** |
| 1♠ | 2♣ | or | 1♥ | 2♦ |

If you do not have the requisite 10 points for this action, but you have at least 6 points, you should respond 1NT.

You should not break the 10 point rule.

Note:

With one exception, a new suit at the 2-level need be no more than 4 cards.

The exception is : 1♠ - 2♥ shows 5+ hearts.

A 5-card suit has some extra value.

With 9 points and a decent 5-card suit you can show it at the 2-level.

**13** If, as responder, you have 13 points you know there are sufficient points for game.

Your aim is to determine the best denomination.

**Responder’s order of priorities:**

I Show 4+ card support for opener’s major.

ii Show your own 4+ card major.

iii Show your own 4+ card minor.

iv Respond in no trumps.

Do not respond in no trumps simply to show a point count.

If you have an alternative bid in a suit then make it.

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**3.2.2 Responder Raises Opener’s Major**

The primary aim in the bidding is to locate an 8-card major fit.

If you have 4+ card support for opener’s major show it immediately by making a limit raise according to:

**The Responder Strength Scale**

You can include points for shortages which will be described later.

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| **HCP** | **0-5** | **6-9** | **10-12** | **13-15** |
|  | Pass | Single  raise | Jump Raise | Double Jump Raise |
| **e.g.** |  | 1♠ - 2♠ | 1♠ - 3♠ | 1♠ - 4♠ |

**3.2.3 Responder Raises Opener’s Minor**

Show your own 4+ card major in preference to supporting opener’s minor.

If you choose to support opener’s minor, use the **Responder Strength Scale as** above.

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**3.2.4 Responder Replies In A New Suit**

Show your own 4+ card major in preference to supporting opener’s minor.

**Responder’s new suit at the 1-level**

This shows 6+ points and a suit of 4+ cards.

Show a 4-card major regardless of suit quality.

**Responder’s new suit at the 2-level**

This shows 10+ points and a suit of 4+ cards – with one exception:

To bid 2♥ over 1♠ shows a 5+card suit.

You can show a new suit at the 2-level with 9 points if your suit is 5+ cards.

**With A Choice Of Suits To Show**

With a choice of 4-card suits bid the one you can bid most economically.

Work your way up the bidding ladder from opener’s suit until you reach one of your suits.

This is referred to as bidding 4-card suits “on the up”

With a choice of 5-card suits, initially bid the higher ranking.

You may then get the opportunity to show your second suit later and you leave opener room to return to your first suit in an economical fashion.

But do not ignore the 10 points rule.

Broadly speaking this summarises as:

As Responder:

Bid the lower of 4-card suits

Bid the higher of 5-card suits.

With 6+ points but not strong enough to show your suit at the 2-level bid 1NT.

See below.

**3.2.5 Responder Replies No Trumps**

This is the least desirable action.

Do not respond in no trumps simply to show a point count.

If you have a 4-card major which you can bid then bid it – regardless of quality.

If you are strong enough to respond in a minor at the 2-level then do so.

Avoid jumps to 2NT and 3NT - they use up too much bidding space.

A response of 1NT shows 6-9 points.

It says “I have at least 6 points but not enough to show my suit at the 2-level“

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| **Section 3**  **Openings And Continuations With Distributional Hands** | **3.2 Responding To An Opening Bid**  **Of One Of A Suit** |

**3.2.6 More On Responding To An Opening Bid Of One Of A Suit**

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| **1.** |  |  |  |  | **2.** |  |  |  |
| **W** | **N** | **E** | **S** |  | **W** | **N** | **E** | **S** |
| pass | pass | 1♥ | pass |  | pass | pass | 1♥ | pass |
| 1♠ | pass | ? |  |  | 2♦ | pass | ? |  |

In bidding sequence 1. west’s hand is limited by the fact that he is a passed hand.

His response of 1♠ shows 6-11 points and is not forcing.

With a minimum hand with nothing better to bid east can pass.

In bidding sequence 2. west’s hand is limited by the fact that he is a passed hand.

But, in this sequence, he has responded at the 2-level.

His response of 2♦ shows 9-11 points and, because his hand is limited is still not forcing.

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| **3.** |  |  |  |  | **4.** |  |  |  |
| **W** | **N** | **E** | **S** |  | **W** | **N** | **E** | **S** |
|  |  | 1♥ | pass |  |  |  | 1♥ | pass |
| 1♠ | pass | ? |  |  | 2♦ | pass | ? |  |

In bidding sequence 3. west’s hand is unlimited.

His response of 1♠ shows 6+ points and is unlimited.

He could have a very strong hand and his bid is 100% forcing.

This follows the principle:

If you open with a bid of one of a suit…

and partner responds in a new suit….

you promise a 2nd bid.

In bidding sequence 4. west’s hand is unlimited.

His response of 2♦ shows 10+ points (or 9 and a 5-card suit) and is unlimited.

He could have a very strong hand and his bid is 100% forcing.

The principle above applies again.