

1-Level Opening Bids

The Auction

In our previous lessons we have played Mini-Bridge, a form of bridge where the auction phase is greatly simplified to enable beginners to get into playing the hands and winning tricks without having to learn all the rules for bidding. Now it's time to start learning the Acoll bidding system.

Each suit has a ranking order. When you make a bid during the auction, you must ensure that it is higher than the previous bid, just as you would in any auction. You are now trying to reach a contract at the best level for your side. The first person to make a bid (not pass) becomes the **OPENER**. Opener's partner is called the **RESPONDER**.

Ranking of Suits

| | | | |
|----------|----|---|---|
| Notrumps | NT | | |
| Spades | ♠ | } | Spades and Hearts are also called the MAJOR suits |
| Hearts | ♥ | | |
| Diamonds | ♦ | } | Diamonds and Clubs are also called the MINOR suits |
| Clubs | ♣ | | |

The Levels of Bidding

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1♠ 1NT 2♣ 2♦ 2♥ 2♠ 2NT 7NT

You must make 6 tricks before you start to score in bridge – therefore:

1- level contracts must make 1+6 tricks = 7 tricks

2- level contracts must make 2+6 tricks = 8 tricks ... and so on

The lowest bid you can make is 1♣ = 7 tricks

The highest bid you can make is 7NT = 13 tricks

What is the Partnership looking for in a Contract?

Their aim is to find the best contract at the correct level. There are 3 levels to bid to:

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Partscore | combined points less than 25 |
| Game | combined points 25-32 |
| Slam | combined points 33+ |

What is Game?

You get a large bonus when you make a Game, but you must make a certain number of tricks to succeed. The number of tricks varies according to the trump suit or NT.

Game is: 3NT – 9 tricks 4♥/♠ – 10 tricks 5♣/♦ – 11 tricks

Opener's 1st Bid

| | | |
|-----|-------|---|
| 1♣ | 12-19 | 4+ clubs |
| 1♦ | 12-19 | 4+ diamonds |
| 1♥ | 12-19 | 4+ hearts |
| 1♠ | 12-19 | 4+ spades |
| 1NT | 12-14 | Balanced Hand (special case – see below) |

Basic Suit Opening Bid Rules

The order in which you bid your suits is very important. Here are the rules:

- Open your longest suit, even if it has no honour cards
- With two four card suits, open the higher ranked suit, but hearts before spades

4-4 hearts-spades: open 1♥; 4-4 clubs-hearts: open 1♥; 4-4 clubs-diamonds: open 1♦

- With two 5 card suits, open the higher ranking suit

Rule of 20 (*a 'guide' rather than a 'rule' really*)

You can open the bidding with slightly fewer than 12 points when you have a shapely hand.

Use the Rule of 20 – which states that you can open the bidding when your high-card point-count added to the number of cards in your two longest suits gets to 20.

| Hand A | Hand B | Hand C | Hand D |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|
| ♠ A Q 7 4 | ♠ Q 3 2 | ♠ 4 | ♠ J 8 5 3 |
| ♥ K 4 3 | ♥ K J 7 4 2 | ♥ Q 9 7 4 | ♥ 6 |
| ♦ 6 | ♦ A J 7 | ♦ 7 5 | ♦ Q 9 6 3 |
| ♣ Q 10 9 6 3 | ♣ 9 8 | ♣ A K J 10 6 2 | ♣ A K J 5 |

(a) You should open 1♣ (satisfying the Rule of 20), planning to rebid 1♠ over a 1♦ / ♥ response.

(b) You should pass. Balanced hands with fewer than 12 points should not open – they will never satisfy the Rule of 20.

(c) 1♣ (satisfying the Rule of 20), planning to rebid 1♥ over 1♦ but 2♣ over 1♠.

(d) Pass. 4441s are notoriously awkward shapes, for reasons that will become clear in later lessons. It is recommended that you only open a 4441 hand if you have 13 points!

Opening 1NT

There is one hand type where we do not open in a suit when we have 12-19 points. When we have 12-14 points and what is known as a **BALANCED HAND**, we open 1NT.

A balanced hand contains:

- **no** void or singleton
- **one** doubleton at most