

WEEK 4: HOW TO BID

WHAT A HAND IS WORTH

To help decide what your hand is worth and how much to bid, there is a way to assign a “point value” to any hand. Here is a basic (simplified) guideline. When you pick up your hand count for each:

Ace = 4 points

King = 3 points

Queen = 2 points

Jack = 1 point

For any suit of five cards (if headed by an ace, king or queen) add one point. For six cards (headed by an ace, king or queen) add another point (and for seven, add another and so on). As you gain more experience, you will be able to further fine-tune from this basic starting method.

Using this system, what is each hand below worth?

(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
♠AK76 ♥QJ3 ♦K53 ♣542	♠AKJ76 ♥Q3 ♦A10853 ♣3	♠-- ♥QJ83 ♦KQ53 ♣KJ1087	♠K3 ♥AJ873 ♦KJ753 ♣2	♠3 ♥KQ10876 ♦AK765 ♣2

A) 13.

B) 16 (14 in “high card points” and two more for the long suits).

C) 13 (12 in HCP and one for the five-card club suit).

D) 14 (12 in HCP and two for the five-card suits).

E) 15 (12 in HCP and two for the heart suit and one for the diamond suit).

With this point-count system, you will have a point value for every hand. You can use the guideline below when it is your turn to bid. It looks daunting, but becomes routine pretty quickly. If nobody has bid yet (you are first to bid, or the

players before you have passed), the meanings of each opening bid are shown below.

OPENING BIDS

1NT = 15-17 points and “balanced” distribution*

Example: ♠KJ7 ♥J765 ♦AK7 ♣KJ7

2NT = 20-21 points and “balanced” distribution*

Example: ♠K87 ♥AQJ ♦KQJ76 ♣A7

1♠ = 12-21 points and five or more spades (but not suitable for 1NT or 2NT)

Example: ♠J87652 ♥765 ♦AK ♣AQ

1♥ = 12-21 points and five or more hearts (but not suitable for 1NT or 2NT)

Example: ♠7 ♥AK765 ♦Q765 ♣AJ2

1♦ = 12-21 points and four or more diamonds** (no suit longer than diamonds) -- (but not suitable for any openings above) Example: ♠A832 ♥AJ63 ♦KJ76 ♣2

1♣ = 12-21 points and three or more clubs -- (but not suitable for any openings above) Example: ♠KQ65 ♥A2 ♦J76 ♣K765

2♣ = 22 or more points (but says nothing about clubs)

Example: ♠AKQJ87 ♥AK7 ♦AQ7 ♣2

2♦/2♥/2♠ = 5-11 points and six “decent” cards in the suit bid***

Example: ♠76 ♥54 ♦KQJ987 ♣Q32 (2♦ Opening)

3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ = 5-11 points and seven cards in the suit bid***

Example: ♠QJ108762 ♥5 ♦K105 ♣32 (3♠ Opening)

3NT and higher – for now, don’t make these bids

*Balanced means a distribution of the four suits (in any order) of either 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2.

**If you have exactly four spades, four hearts, three diamonds and two clubs, the opening bid is 1♦ (the only time you open 1♦ with only three diamonds).

***It is best to have some high cards in the suit—not a suit such as 1087542.

Because the scoring table (see Appendix A next week) rewards notrump and the major suits (hearts and spades), the focus in bidding is to reach a contract in one of those denominations. Minor suits (clubs and diamonds) don’t pay as much, so

their role in bidding is deemphasized. Starting the bidding with 1♠ or 1♥ shows five or more cards in the suit. Starting with a minor suit doesn't indicate as many.

Note: Everything here is a simplification for the purpose of getting started. I don't want bridge teachers writing letters to the editor with complaints/suggestions/modifications.

If you meet the requirements for 1NT or 2NT, that is the first priority. Barring that, your next priority is to open 1♥ or 1♠ if you have five or more cards in that major suit. Lastly, if you can't open 1NT or one of a major, but have enough points to open the bidding, you will choose between 1♣ or 1♦ according to the guidelines above. With two five-card suits, open in the one that is higher ranking (so, with: ♠KJ872 ♥AQJ65 ♦K6 ♣7, open 1♠).

Using the rules above, what would the opening bid be with each hand below?

EXAMPLES:

- A) ♠A8732 ♥AJ6 ♦AJ762 ♣--
- B) ♠AQ32 ♥AKQJ63 ♦A ♣A2
- C) ♠82 ♥AQJ632 ♦KJ76 ♣K
- D) ♠KQ92 ♥KJ63 ♦QJ6 ♣J3
- E) ♠-- ♥KJ10963 ♦QJ76 ♣432
- F) ♠2 ♥AJ63 ♦K76 ♣J7654
- G) ♠K4 ♥AQ63 ♦KJ6 ♣J872
- H) ♠J32 ♥AQ63 ♦KJ7 ♣KQ5

Answers:

- A) Open 1♠ (the higher ranking suit when 5-5).
- B) Open 2♣ (showing a very strong hand, saying nothing about clubs).
- C) Open 1♥.
- D) Open 1♦ (You don't have a five-card major, nor enough clubs—so that leaves 1♦—the only distribution where you will open 1♦ with only three diamonds).
- E) Open 2♥ (Showing a weak hand and a decent six-card suit).
- F) Pass (You don't have enough points to open the bidding).
- G) Open 1♣ (You would need five hearts to open 1♥).
- H) Open 1NT (15-17 "balanced").

Responding to an Opening 1♣/1♦/1♥/1♠ Bid

After the the opening bid, the partner (“responder”) should bid as follows (also overwhelming at first, but quickly learnable):

Pass: 0-5 points

1 of a suit (for example, 1♥ after partner opens 1♣): 6 or more points and 4 or more cards in the suit bid

1NT: 6-10 points after 1♣ or 1♦ (and not 4 cards in hearts or spades)

1NT after 1♥: 6-12 points (not 4+ spades and not 3+ hearts)

1NT after 1♠: 6-12 points (not 3+ spades)

2 of a new suit: 13+ points and at least 4 cards in the suit bid (at least five if it is 2♥ after 1♠)*

Raise on the two level (such as 1♥-2♥): 6-10 points and at least 3 cards if raising hearts or spades (at least 4 cards if raising clubs or diamonds)

Responses of 2NT or 3NT: to be learned at a later date

Raise on the 3-level (such as 1♥-3♥): 11-12 points and at least 4 cards if raising hearts or spades (at least 5 cards if raising clubs or diamonds)

*This assumes we are not “jumping.” A jump is a bid a level(s) higher than is legally necessary. For example, if the previous bid is 1♠, a bid of 2♣ is the cheapest way to bid clubs. A bid of 3♣ would be unnecessary and thus considered a jump. So, a response of 2♠ to 1♦ is a jump (not even discussed in this basic guide for beginners). “2 of a new suit” means without a jump, so 1♠-2♦ would qualify.

Responding to 1NT and higher opening bids requires more study and memorization. When you are ready to try it out, see Appendix B (next week).

After your partner opens 1♥, what would your response be with each hand below?

Partner	Opponent	You
1♥	Pass	??

- A) ♠762 ♥J87 ♦Q765 ♣432
- B) ♠1087 ♥Q102 ♦KJ432 ♣J3
- C) ♠76 ♥87 ♦K10876 ♣KJ76
- D) ♠KJ876 ♥2 ♦KQ76 ♣Q32
- E) ♠KJ3 ♥Q2 ♦AQJ107 ♣J107
- F) ♠A2 ♥K1076 ♦754 ♣KJ76

Answers:

- A) Pass (0-5 points).
- B) 2♥ (6-10 and heart support).
- C) 1NT (6-12 and no suit to bid on the one level and not enough hearts to raise).
- D) 1♠ (6 or more points and 4 or more spades).
- E) 2♦ (13+ points with diamonds).
- F) 3♥ (11-12 points and at least 4 hearts with partner).

After the opening and the response, the goal for the partnership is to determine not only the trump suit (or notrump), but the level. Reaching game or slam (as discussed in Appendix A next week) is a desirable goal. There are nice bonuses for reaching 3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ or 5♦ (all are considered “game”). Big bonuses are awarded for bidding six or seven (slam). The general guideline is that your partnership should have about 25-26 points for game and 32 points for a small slam (12 tricks) and 35 points for a grand slam (13 tricks).

DOUBLE

Aside from Pass and the bids (1♣ through 7NT) there is another option. When it is his turn to bid, a player can say “Double” (as long as an opponent had already bid – you can’t double to start the auction and you can’t double your partner’s bid). When bridge was first invented, double was used to say that you want the score

for that deal to be doubled. Nowadays, it usually means something else. It is a way to tell your partner you have the “other suits.” So, if your opponent opens the bidding with, say, 1♣, and you double, it is like you are bidding “one diamond/heart/spade.” It is a way to tell your partner you have some length (typically three or four cards) in each of the other suits. This is called a “takeout double.” It doesn’t mean you want the contract to be 1♣ with the score doubled, but that you want your partner to choose one of the other three suits.

In Appendix C (next week), is a summary of what happens after the opening bid and the response.

In Appendix D (next week), is a discussion of other bids and auctions to get you started.