



# Bidding Basics

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## A tour of the bidding box for newer players

### Responding to 1♣

In the first nine months of this series we've examined opening bids, but now we move into responding to partner's opening bid. There will be no interference from the opponents. Down the road, we will discuss what changes if the opponents come in with an overcall or a double.

For this month, there is only one auction to examine:

| Partner | Opponent | You |
|---------|----------|-----|
| 1♣      | Pass     | ?   |

### 1♦ response

1♦ shows four-plus diamonds and 6-plus points. Note the "plus," especially next to the points. 1♦ can be bid with 10 points, 15 points, 20 points, etc. It is forcing – meaning the opening bidder must bid again – even with a dead minimum. The response to 1♣ would be 1♦ with any of these hands:

♠6 5 ♥7 6 5 ♦A Q 7 6 5 ♣4 3 2  
 ♠A 5 4 ♥A Q 2 ♦A K J 7 6 ♣3 2  
 ♠4 3 2 ♥4 3 2 ♦K J 7 6 ♣Q 5 2

### 1♥ or 1♠ response

A 1♥ or 1♠ response shows four or more cards in that suit and at least 6 points. All of the same explanations as in the 1♦ response apply. The responder is unlimited in high-card points; the opener must bid again. With 4-4 in the majors, respond 1♥ (even if the spades are better). With 5-5 in the majors, respond 1♠ (even if the hearts are better).

The intriguing question, though, is what should the responder do with a choice between 1♦ and one of a major? For example, what do you respond to 1♣ holding:

♠A J 7 6 ♥4 2 ♦A J 9 2 ♣5 4 2  
 or  
 ♠K 7 6 5 ♥5 4 ♦K 8 7 6 5 ♣4 2  
 or  
 ♠A 4 2 ♥K 8 7 6 ♦A K Q 7 6 ♣3?

There are several theories (and the thinking has changed over the years). I recommend this modern approach:

- With only four cards in the major and four or more diamonds, skip ("bypass") the diamonds if you have less than 13 HCP.
- With only four cards in the major and four or more decent diamonds, show the diamonds if you have 13 or more HCP.
- With five or more cards in the major, always show the major first.

Using those rules, the response to 1♣ on the three hands above would be 1♠, 1♠ and 1♦ respectively.

### 1NT response

The 1NT response shows 6-10 HCP and a balanced hand with no four-card major.

Many players/teachers recommend 8-10 HCP, but it is a complex issue. For simplicity, I'm OK with 6-10. What if you have this 7-point responding hand to 1♣:

♠Q 9 3 ♥Q 10 2 ♦Q J 2 ♣8 7 6 5?

You have too much to pass. You have no four-card suit in which to respond. Raising to 2♣ doesn't feel great. So I'm OK with defining 1NT as 6-10 balanced. It does not promise a stopper in all four suits. Respond 1NT to 1♣ with each of these hands:

♠Q J 7 ♥8 7 2 ♦K 5 4 ♣Q 8 7 6  
 ♠J 9 7 ♥Q 7 6 ♦J 7 6 5 ♣K J 2

### 2♣ raise

A raise to 2♣ shows 6-10 points in support and usually five or more clubs (remember that the 1♣ opener can have as few as three). It denies a four-card major. Don't raise clubs if you have a four-card or longer major to bid. If you are stuck, you might raise with only four clubs. Raise 1♣ to 2♣ with each hand below:

♠K 7 6 ♥3 2 ♦7 6 5 ♣K 6 5 4 3  
 ♠6 5 2 ♥5 4 ♦6 4 3 2 ♣A Q J 9

### 2♦/2♥/2♠ responses

Most players today use these jump bids as weak (old-fashioned would be very strong). Don't make such a bid if you aren't 100% sure your partner knows what it means. Assuming it is weak, I recommend playing it as very weak (approximately 2-6 HCP). Here are some examples of the weak jump-shift response to 1♣:

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

### 2NT response

This shows a natural, balanced hand, typically with stoppers in the unbid suits. It denies a four-card major. Regarding high-card strength, there are two mainstream ways to play this bid. I recommend 11–12 (invitational). The opener can pass with a minimum. There are some people who prefer to play this as showing 13–15 HCP (game forcing). Make sure you and your partner agree on the range. Here are some examples:

♠ Q J 6 ♥ K Q 7 ♦ Q 10 7 ♣ Q 7 6 5  
 ♠ K 3 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ J 10 7 6

### 3♣ raise

3♣ is a limit raise (10–12 in support) and five-card or better support. Opener can pass with a minimum. Here are some examples:

♠ 7 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ K J 7 6 5 4  
 ♠ 4 3 ♥ 4 3 ♦ K 6 5 4 ♣ A Q J 5 4

### 3♦/3♥/3♠ responses

These are the same as 2♦/2♥/2♠, but with a seventh card in the suit. This is another bid you shouldn't make unless you are 100% sure your partner will know what it means.

### 3NT response

Assuming 2NT is 11–12, this shows 13–15 HCP with all of the same qualifications.

### 4♥ or 4♠ responses

This shows a very long suit without a lot of high cards. It denies real slam interest. With a good hand and lots of high-card points, just respond one of the major and later drive to game or higher. Some examples:

♠ Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 ♥ 4 3 ♦ K 2 ♣ 2  
 ♠ — ♥ K J 10 9 8 6 5 4 ♦ Q 10 7 6 ♣ 2

Any responses not listed above are likely to never occur and not worth the memory.

## BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

What is your response to partner's 1♣ opening with each hand below?

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

1. 1♠. Bypass the diamonds with a "one-bid" hand. Don't raise clubs when you have a four-card major.
- 1♠. This is worth more than just the 5 HCP with the ace, good suit, good spots and the singleton. Too much to pass.
- 1♦. Go in order when you know you will get to show the major later.
- 1NT. Too spread-out/balanced to raise with only four-card support.
- 3NT, assuming you are playing this as 13–15 HCP (and 2NT as 11–12). No need to show the diamonds.
- 4♥. This doesn't show a strong hand.
- 1♥. Way too strong for 4♥. (If playing strong jump-shift responses, you could start with 2♥, but only if you are absolutely sure your partner is on the same page.)
- 2♠, assuming weak jump-shift responses. Just as in No. 7, if your partner and you don't know what these jump shifts show, expect a train wreck. ■



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### Jane Segal 1931–2017

By Marc Labovitz

Jane Segal of Bala Cynwyd PA died following a long and difficult illness. Jane's accomplishments as a bridge player are well documented, but her contributions to our game are immense. Jane was the quintessential ambassador for bridge. She served as Unit 141 president, District 4 president, member of the Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Committee and supervised hospitality for all the sectional and regional tournaments in our area.

I will remember her for the decades of running the largest and strongest club game in the Philadelphia area; for hosting dinner and bridge every Saturday night at her home; for the once-a-month invitational game at her home featuring the area's finest players; for helping bridge players who were down on their luck.

Perhaps Jane's greatest contribution was as a teacher. For more than five decades she funneled countless hundreds of new bridge players into club and tournament bridge, a function vital to our very existence. She was the most sought-after and respected teacher in Philadelphia and its suburbs.

