



# Bidding Basics

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## Opening bids at the four level or higher

A four-level preempt uses all the same principles as a two- or three-level preempt. The main difference is that an eight-card suit is expected. So an opening of 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ or 4♠ typically shows a decent eight-card suit, but not enough strength for a one-level opening. Here are some examples:

♠65 ♥— ♦J76 ♣AQ1087532

♠KQJ107643 ♥2 ♦432 ♣2.

Don't preempt with a strong hand. A common mistake made by inexperienced players is to open four of a major on hands such as:

♠AKQJ10765 ♥AQJ ♥— ♣32

or

♠2 ♥KQJ109876 ♦AKQ ♣2.

This makes it too likely you will miss a slam because your partner won't expect you to have game in your own hand.

The Rule of 2, 3 and 4 is a reasonable guideline for evaluating if you should preempt. This refers to how many tricks you think you have in your hand. When vulnerable against not ("unfavorable"), be within two tricks of your four-level preempt. So a probable eight-trick hand such as either of these would be representative:

♠54 ♥KQJ96542 ♦KQ ♣2

♠AKJ109654 ♥765 ♦32 ♣—.

If the vulnerability is "equal" (neither side vul or both sides vul), be within three tricks of your bid:

♠54 ♥KQJ96542 ♦J4 ♣2  
or

♠3 ♥65 ♦43 ♣AQJ108754.

At favorable vulnerability (white versus red), be aggressive. Either of these hands, within about four tricks of your bid, would be about right:

♠KJ1096542 ♥— ♦2 ♣8732

♠— ♥72 ♦J95 ♣QJ1086532.

All the same thinking as in the previous articles (on two- and three-level preempts) applies. Try to have most of the points in your long suit, but there is no exact rule. Be more disciplined when vulnerable. Pay attention to position. In second seat, be sound. In third seat, especially at favorable vulnerability, be more aggressive. In fourth seat, pass the hand out if you have lots of garbage.

Is an eight-card suit required? No. It is the norm, but it is more than acceptable to try a 4♠ opening on either of these hands:

♠KQJ10873 ♥3 ♦2 ♣QJ108

or

♠QJ109876 ♥— ♦2 ♣KQJ32.

### Opening 4NT

Don't try this at home. Your partner won't know if it is (a) Blackwood, (b) natural, or (c) something else. Even if you agree to one of these choices, will you and your partner both remember what you agreed to when it actually comes up two years later?

### Opening on the five level

A five-of-a-minor opening is also "preemptive" in nature, but shows quite a few tricks. After all, nobody wants to go for 800. You can apply the same Rule of 2, 3 and 4 as a guideline. So with nobody vulnerable, I'd expect to have about eight tricks. For example:

♠7 ♥5 ♦KQ10 ♣KQJ97654

or

♠— ♥Q43 ♦KQJ1097654 ♣2.

### Five of a major

According to "the book," this isn't a preempt. It shows 11 tricks, missing only the ace-king of trumps. Something like:

♠QJ1098764 ♥— ♦— ♣AKQJ2.

Don't hold your breath waiting for this. (I did actually open 5♠ on a similar hand in 1980. That was a long time ago!)

### Six- or seven-level openings

I'm still waiting for one. ➤

## BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

You deal with nobody vulnerable.  
What is your action with:

1. ♠AKQJ10976 ♥AJ76 ♦— ♣2
2. ♠54 ♥3 ♦2 ♣KQJ1098762
3. ♠— ♥QJ1098762 ♦K10972 ♣—
4. ♠5 ♥KQ108652 ♦J32 ♣32

You are in second seat, vulnerable  
against not. What is your action with:

5. ♠54 ♥62 ♦KJ976543 ♣2
6. ♠— ♥KQJ97652 ♦QJ102 ♣2
7. ♠765 ♥2 ♦K2 ♣KQJ10765
8. ♠— ♥QJ1098765 ♦AKQ107 ♣—

### Answers

1. 1♠. Way too strong for a preempt (2♣ is also possible).
2. 5♣.
3. 4♥.
4. 3♥. No reason to preempt on the four level with only a seven-card suit and nothing extraordinary.
5. Pass (or an aggressive 3♦). Not enough strength for a four-level vulnerable preempt.
6. 4♥.
7. 3♣.
8. 5♥. The once-in-a-lifetime hand, asking partner to raise one level for each top heart.



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Questions may be directed to Richard Braunstein at [LoveMyTeacher@outlook.com](mailto:LoveMyTeacher@outlook.com).

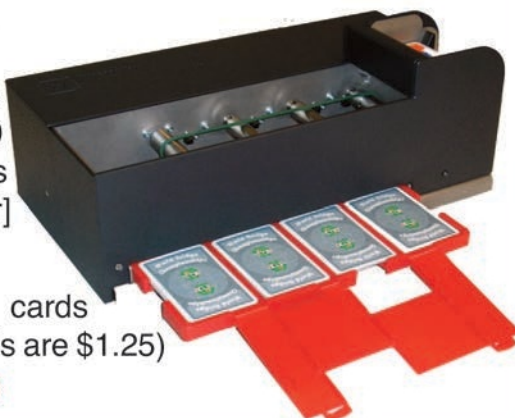
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