



Bidding Basics

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Responding to 1♠

Last month, partner opened 1♥. This month, there will be lots of similarities. Our auction to examine is:

Partner	Opponent	You
1♠	Pass	?

1NT response

This shows at least 6 HCP, and it usually denies three-card spade support.

The upper limit of the range depends on system. I recommend 6 to 12 HCP as part of the two-over-one (2/1) game-forcing system. If you want to play the old way (“standard”), then 1NT is limited to 6–10 HCP. If you have heard the term “1NT forcing,” I suggest it simplest to ignore that for now.

Does 1NT show a balanced hand? Stoppers? No and no. Think of 1NT as a catchall response. You have enough to respond, usually fewer than three spades (more on this below), and not enough to go to the two level in a new suit. With each hand below, you would respond 1NT:

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

2♣/2♦ response

This shows four-plus cards in the suit bid. The strength required depends on what system you play. If you wish to play old-fashioned standard, only 10 HCP are required. I strongly recommend the modern way, however, where opening-bid strength is prom-

ised and the partnership is forced to game. Again, this modern way is called 2/1 game forcing.

Assuming you opt for 2/1 GF, respond to 1♠ with 2♣ or 2♦ (whichever is longer; if 4–4, tend to bid 2♣) with the hands below.

♠K Q	♥A 9 8 2	♦6 5	♣A K 6 4 3
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Respond 2♣.

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

♠K 4	♥K J 3	♦K 3 2	♣K 10 6 5 4
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Respond 2♣.

2♥ response

This shows the same strength as 2♣ or 2♦, but guarantees at least five hearts. Respond 2♥ with any of these hands:

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

2♠ response

This shows three-plus spades and 6 to a bad 10 points in support, counting useful distribution. Raise to 2♠ with:

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

2NT response

This used to be a natural bid, and if you are allergic to conventions, you can use it as such. However, almost all

duplicate players use this as a conventional response, the Jacoby 2NT. It promises four or more trumps and enough for at least game. The follow-ups will be covered in a future article. Here are some examples of a Jacoby 2NT response to 1♠:

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

3♣/3♦/3♥ response

These can be played in many ways. They could be natural (very strong or very weak). They can be conventional (Bergen raises are popular). I recommend intermediate/invitational with a good six-card or longer suit. This is a matter of partnership agreement. If you aren’t 100% sure that you and your partner know what the bid means, don’t make it. If playing it as invitational, here are some examples:

♠7 6	♥4 3	♦K 6 5	♣A Q J 10 8 7
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Respond 3♣.

♠4	♥A 3	♦K J 10 8 7 6 5	♣Q 7 6
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Respond 3♦.

♠—	♥K Q J 10 8 7 6	♦Q J 7 6	♣3 2
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Respond 3♥.

3♠ response

This is a limit raise (a good 10 to 12 points in support) with four-card or longer support. Opener can pass with a minimum. Here are some examples:

♠A 8 7 6 ♥7 2 ♦K J 4 ♣Q 10 3 2

♠K 7 3 2 ♥4 3 ♦A J 10 4 2 ♣10 2

What if you have 10–12 points in support, but only three-card spade support? You are too strong for a raise to only 2♠, and you don't have the required four trumps for 3♠. If you are playing 2/1 GF, you might need to respond 1NT even with the three-card spade support. This is confusing for now, but will be further explained in a future installment when we deal with responder's second bid.

3NT response

This can be played in many ways, but to keep things simple, I recommend 13–15 HCP, balanced, with all unbid suits stopped. Typically, it should show 4–3–3–3 distribution.

4♣/4♦ response

Experienced players use this as a “splinter” bid. Don't try this until you and your partner have studied the topic. The gist of it is that the response shows four-plus trumps and a game force (same as Jacoby 2NT), but also indicates a singleton or void in the suit

double-jumped into. The range is approximately 13–16 points in support. Either hand below would qualify:

♠K 6 5 2 ♥K Q 7 ♦A 8 7 6 5 ♣2

Respond 4♣.

♠Q 7 6 2 ♥A Q 6 5 ♦2 ♣K J 4 3

Respond 4♦.

4♥ response

Really, this should also be a splinter bid showing something like:

♠K J 7 6 ♥2 ♦K Q 4 3 ♣K 10 7 6.

However, it is a really dangerous bid to make. If your partner forgets your agreement and thinks it is natural, you could wind up playing in a 2–1 trump fit!

4♠ response

This does not show a strong hand (you would have used Jacoby 2NT). It is a semi-preemptive bid showing five or more trumps and at most 10–11 points in support counting distribution. Either hand below would qualify:

♠K Q 7 6 5 ♥3 ♦Q 6 5 4 ♣4 3 2

♠Q J 10 9 8 ♥3 2 ♦K Q 3 2 ♣3 2

BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

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

1. ♠— ♥6 5 ♦Q 10 8 7 3 2 ♣A 8 7 6 3

2. ♠K 9 8 ♥K 10 8 7 6 5 ♦8 7 6 ♣2

3. ♠K Q J 8 7 ♥A Q 4 3 ♦K 2 ♣4 3

4. ♠Q J 10 4 ♥5 ♦A Q 8 7 6 ♣10 7 6

5. ♠K J 3 ♥K Q 3 ♦Q 10 8 7 2 ♣6 5

6. ♠K J 8 7 6 ♥2 ♦J 9 8 7 6 ♣5 4

7. ♠A 7 6 ♥K J 8 7 ♦K 10 7 ♣Q J 8

8. ♠A K 2 ♥A 2 ♦J 10 9 8 7 ♣K 3 2

Answers

- 1NT. You have too much to pass, but not enough to respond on the two level.
- 2♠. Support with support. Even if you wanted to show hearts, you are too weak.
- 2NT. Game-forcing raise (Jacoby 2NT).
- 3♠. Limit raise. This hand is not strong enough for a splinter bid.
- 1NT. If “forcing,” you'd bid 3♠ next. I recommend 1NT as “6–12, not forcing.”
- 4♠. Typically five trumps and a weak hand.
- 3NT. Assuming your partnership has agreed to play this as 13–15 HCP with a flat hand, all side suits stopped.
- 2♦. For now, planning to raise spades later. Simplest/easiest if 2♦ creates a game force.

Stop card tossed from bidding boxes

In 2017, the ACBL Board of Directors voted to eliminate the Stop card for any sanctioned tournament that starts after Jan. 1, 2018. ACBL-affiliated clubs are encouraged to do the same to provide players a consistent experience at both tournaments and clubs.

With this change, the onus is on players to develop the good habit of pausing after their right-hand opponent has made a skip bid. The pause should be about 10 seconds, but strict observance of this duration is less important than making sure that there is a clear break in the tempo of the auction.

While pausing, players should give the appearance of studying their hand – even if those players have a clear-cut pass. Players should not exhibit lack of interest, for example, by keeping their hand folded or verbally counting off the seconds of the required pause. Likewise, if those players have an “automatic” bid or double after the skip bid, they should wait approximately 10 seconds before making that call.

Slowing down after jumps helps prevent the skip-bidder's right-hand opponent from receiving unauthorized information via LHO's tempo.

