



Opening 1 of a Minor

When you have 12 or more total points, you have an opening bid. There is a priority order in your opening bids:

1. If you have a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP you open 1NT.
2. If you have a balanced hand with 20-21 HCP you open 2NT.
3. If you have a 5+ card major you will open that major suit.
4. As a last option you will open your longest minor suit.

Minor Suit Opener

When your opening bid is a minor suit, you are telling partner:

1. I have 12+ points
2. I do not have a 5+ card major
3. My hand does not meet the requirements for opening 1NT or 2NT

You can have an extremely wide range of hand types! Your hand could be balanced or unbalanced. You could have as few as 3 cards in the minor suit that you open. You have started a conversation with your partner, and you still hope to find a major suit fit (frequently a 4-4 fit).

Which minor to open?

You will always open your longest minor. When your minor suits are equal in length:

- When you hold 5 clubs and 5 diamonds always open 1♦
- When you hold 4 clubs and 4 diamonds always open 1♦
- When you hold 3 clubs and 3 diamonds always open 1♣

Opening 1♣ when you are 3-3 in the minors means that your 1♦ opener will show a 4 card diamond suit 97% of the time. The only time where you must open 1♦ with a three card suit is when you have exactly 4 spades, 4 hearts, 3 diamonds and 2 clubs.

Responder

When your partner opens the bidding, you make a responding bid when you hold 6+ points:

- A small responder hand is 6-9 total points
- A medium responder hand is 10-12 total points
- A large responder hand is 13+ total points

Responses to a 1♦ Opening Bid

As responder to a 1♦ opening bid, you are trying to find a major suit fit if one exists, so if you hold a 4+ card major suit, you will bid your major at the one level, regardless of the strength of your hand. You will show your strength with your second bid. Remember opener can not pass your responding bid. If you are lucky enough to have both majors, you will bid your longest major, but if they are of equal length:

- When you hold 5-5 in the majors, bid 1♠
- When you hold 4-4 in the majors, bid 1♥

If you respond 1♠ and then bid hearts at your second opportunity, partner will know you must have 5 spades, because if you were 4-4 you would have started by bidding 1♥.

When you don't have a major suit, you should try to bid notrump, showing a balanced hand. When you respond in notrump, you can show the strength of your hand:

- 1NT shows a balanced small responder hand (6-9 points)
- 2NT shows a balanced medium responder hand (10-12 points)
- 3NT shows a balanced large responder hand (13-15 points). When you bid 3NT you should ideally have high cards (or stoppers) in the major suits.

If you have 4+ card support for opener's diamond suit, you can raise partner's suit. The level of your bid shows the size of your hand:

- 2♦ shows a small responder hand (6-9 points)
- Jumping to 3♦ shows a medium responder hand (10-12 points)

When you hold a large responder hand with diamond support, if your hand is balanced or nearly balanced, you should try to get to a notrump contract. If you are unbalanced, you can bid the diamond game, but remember that 5♦ will require some extra values since you can only afford two losers.

If you don't have the majors, support for diamonds, or a balanced hand, then you will have a club suit. Respond 2♣ with a medium or large responder hand with 5+ clubs. If you have a small responder hand with clubs, then you will need to respond 1NT. This is the "least lie", as bidding 2♣ shows partner 10+ total points.

Examples of responder's hand after partner opens 1♦:

♠ J 8 5 2

♥ K 6 3 You only have 5 points, so you have nothing to say.

♦ 7 6 3 You pass.

♣ J 5 2

- ♠ Q 10 8 5 With 7 points you must make a response.
 ♥ K 6 3 With a 4-card ♠ suit you respond 1♠
 ♦ 7 6 3 Your first priority as responder is to try to find a major suit fit.
 ♣ Q 5 2
- ♠ A 8 5 This time you have 8 points, balanced.
 ♥ K 6 3 With no 4-card major to show, you respond 1NT.
 ♦ 10 7 6 This is a step toward the second priority of responder,
 ♣ J 8 7 2 trying to play in notrump when there is no major suit fit.
- ♠ J 8 2 With this 7-point hand, respond 2♦.
 ♥ 6 3 Playing in a minor suit isn't high on the priority list,
 ♦ A J 10 7 4 but with 5-card support and a doubleton this bid
 ♣ 9 6 2 is preferred over the other possibility, 1NT.
- ♠ J 10 8 With this 11-point hand, respond 2♣.
 ♥ K 6 3 You don't really expect to end up in clubs,
 ♦ 6 but showing partner you have 10+ points and identifying
 ♣ A Q 7 3 2 where you have strength may enable them to bid notrump.
- ♠ A 8 5 You have 14 points and balanced distribution.
 ♥ K 6 3 This is a perfect hand to respond 3NT.
 ♦ A 7 6 Partner should be in good position to place the final contract.
 ♣ K 8 7 2
- ♠ A 10 8 5 You have 7 points and 4 cards in each major suit.
 ♥ J 10 6 3 You should bid 1♥ (up the line) even though the
 ♦ 7 6 2 ♠ suit is stronger. Partner will bid 1♠ when they have 4 of them.
 ♣ Q 2
- ♠ A 10 8 7 5 You have 11 points and two 5-card suits.
 ♥ K Q 7 6 2 You should bid 1♠ (the higher-ranking suit), then
 ♦ 6 3 if partner should bid 1NT you would bid 2♥. Partner
 ♣ 2 will then know you have 5 spades and 4+ hearts.
- ♠ 10 8 You have 8 total points, not enough to bid 2 clubs. You
 ♥ T 6 3 need to find the “least lie”, which here will be responding
 ♦ Q 7 1NT. You should not bid 2 clubs, as partner will expect
 ♣ A T 7 6 5 3 a stronger hand.

Responses to 1♣

As responder to a 1♣ opening bid, you are still trying to find a major suit fit if one exists, however you have a 1♦ bid available. If you have a small responder hand, you will bypass a 4 or 5 card diamond suit to bid a 4 card major suit. The reason is that with a small responder hand, you will only show one suit, and major suit fits are more important. If responder bids 1♦, then opener knows that either:

- Responder holds a small responder hand with no 4+ card major
- Responder has a medium or large responding hand. In this case responder may have a 4 card major, which they will bid later, showing opener the strength of their hand.

Responder's future bids will clarify which kind of hand they have.

If you don't have a diamond suit, then when you hold a 4+ card major suit, you will bid your major at the one level, regardless of the strength of your hand. You will show your strength with your second bid. If you are lucky enough to have both majors, you will bid your longest major, but if they are of equal length:

- When you hold 5-5 in the majors, bid 1♠
- When you hold 4-4 in the majors, bid 1♥

If you respond 1♠ and then bid hearts at your second opportunity, partner will know you must have 5 spades, because if you were 4-4 you would have started by bidding 1♥.

When you don't have a major suit, you should try to bid notrump, showing a balanced hand. When you respond in notrump, you can show the strength of your hand:

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- 2NT shows a balanced medium responder hand (10-12 points)
- 3NT shows a balanced large responder hand (13-15 points). When you bid 3NT you should ideally have high cards (or stoppers) in the major suits.

If you have 4+ card support for opener's club suit, you can raise partner's suit. The level of your bid shows the size of your hand:

- 2♣ shows a small responder hand (6-9 points)
- Jumping to 3♣ shows a medium responder hand (10-12 points)

When you hold a large responder hand with club support, if your hand is balanced or nearly balanced, you should try to get to a notrump contract. If you are unbalanced, you can bid the club game, but remember that 5♣ will require some extra values since you can only afford two losers.

Examples of responder's hand after partner opens 1♣:

♠ A Q 8 2

♥ 6 3

♦ J 9 7 6 3

♣ 8 7

You have a small responder hand (8 total points).

Bypass the diamond suit, and respond with 1♠

♠ A Q 8 5

♥ 6 3

♦ A Q J 7 3

♣ 5 2

With 14 points you have a large responder hand, so

bid 1♦. You can show the 4-card ♠ suit later.

♠ A 8 5

♥ K 6 3

♦ 10 7 6

♣ J 8 7 2

This time you have 8 points, balanced.

With no 4-card major to show, you respond 1NT.

This is a step toward the second priority of responder, trying to play in notrump when there is no major suit fit.

♠ J 8 2

♥ 6 3

♦ 10 7 4

♣ A J 9 6 2

With this 7-point hand, respond 2♣.

Playing in a minor suit isn't high on the priority list,

but with 5-card support and a doubleton this bid

is preferred over the other possibility, 1NT.

♠ J 10 8

♥ K 6

♦ 6 3

♣ A Q 7 3 2

With this 11-point hand, respond 3♣.

Showing partner you have 10-12 points and club support.

♠ A 8 5

♥ K 6 3

♦ A 7 6

♣ K 8 7 2

You have 14 points and balanced distribution.

This is a perfect hand to respond 3NT.

Partner should be in good position to place the final contract.

♠ A 10 8 5

♥ J 10 6 3

♦ 7 6 2

♣ Q 2

You have 7 points and 4 cards in each major suit.

You should bid 1♥ (up the line) even though the spade suit is stronger. Partner will bid 1♠ if they hold 4 of them.

♠ A 10 8 7 5

♥ K Q 7 6 2

♦ 6 3

♣ 2

You have 11 points and two 5-card suits.

You should bid 1♠ (the higher-ranking suit), then

if partner should bid 1NT you can bid 2♥.

Responder is Captain

Responder is the captain of the bidding. Responder will most likely bid a new suit on the 1-level. In doing so partner is asking you the following questions which opener is expected to answer in this order:

1. Do you have 4 card support of my suit?
2. Do you have a 6+ card minor suit?
3. Do you have another 4-card suit to show me?

If the answers to all these questions is no and you do not have a singleton or void, then bid NT.

Strength Matters

When opener makes their second bid, not only are they trying to show a fit, but they are also trying to show the strength of their opening hand. Remember a small opening hand is 12-14 total points, a medium opening hand is 15-17 total points and a large opening hand is 18-21 total points.

- Supporting responder's suit
Supporting responder's suit shows four cards in the suit. You will always support responder's major suit if you can. You also show your strength:
 - Make a single raise of responder's suit with a small opening hand.
 - Make a jump raise of responder's suit with a medium opening hand.
 - Bid game with a large opening handIf partner responded 1♦ to your 1♣ opener, then you should bid a 4 card major at the one level in preference to raising the diamond suit.
- Rebidding your minor suit
Rebidding your minor suit shows 6+ cards. In addition, you can show your strength:
 - Bid your minor at the 2-level with a small opening hand.
 - Bid your minor at the 3-level with the top of a medium opening bid (16-17).
 - Bid 2NT with a large opening hand.
- Bidding a new 4 card suit
When you open one of a minor, there is an imaginary barrier at two of your minor. Do not bid a new 4 card suit above the barrier unless you have a large opening hand.
 - Bid a new four card suit below the barrier with a small or medium opening hand.
 - Bid a new four card suit above the barrier, or jump bid your new suit with a large opening hand.
- Rebidding notrump
Rebidding notrump shows a balanced hand.
 - Rebid 1NT with a small opening hand
 - Jump rebid NT with a large opening hand

Sometimes you will get stuck for a second bid

Sometimes you will have a hand that does not fit any of the guidelines listed above. If this is the case, no matter what we bid, partner will be misled. We try to make the bid that makes the “least lie”. For example, you hold:

♠654 ♥A987 ♦6 ♣AKQ65

| You | LHO | Partner | RHO |
|-----|------|---------|------|
| 1♣ | pass | 1♠ | pass |
| ?? | | | |

Your choices of second bids:

- Pass. A very poor choice, you must bid as partner’s hand is unlimited.
- 2♥. A very poor choice as it is above the 2♣ barrier, so it shows a large opening hand.
- 1NT. Not a good choice with a singleton diamond.
- 2♠. A possible choice, but partner will think you have 4 card support.
- 2♣. A possible choice, but it does promise a 6 card club suit.

Of all the choices, 2♣ would be the bid least likely to mislead partner, and is the bid to choose.

Play of the hand in a suit contract - Discard losers on extra winners

When you have extra winners in the short-hand, you can discard losers from the master hand using these extra winners. An example shows this technique:

| Your Hand | Dummy Hand | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ♠ AKJ ♥ QJT963 ♦ 953 ♣ 3 | ♠ Q43 ♥ 8752 ♦ A64 ♣ AK7 | Your hand is the long-trump hand Count 4 losers total: 2 ♥(fast), 2 ♦(slow) |

In a contract of 4♥, you have one loser too many. What’s your plan?

The opponents lead the ♦K. Your 2 slow losers have now become fast losers, the opponents can cash them as soon as they gain the lead. *If you play trumps first*, the opponents will gain the lead and take two more diamond tricks.

Instead, *before drawing trumps*, play the ♣A and put the ♣3 on the trick. Then play the ♣K and discard a small diamond. Now you have only one diamond loser along with the two heart losers. It is now safe to draw trump.

Plan: I will win the ♦K. I will delay drawing trump, and instead will play dummy’s two top clubs discarding a diamond loser from my hand. Only then is it safe to draw trump. I will lose 2 trump tricks and 1 diamond trick taking 10 tricks in all.

To discard losers on extra winners, look for these conditions:

- You have a suit with multiple winners, and more cards of that suit in the short-hand than in the master hand
- You have a different suit with a loser that needs to be eliminated.

Some examples (Declarer is the master hand in all of these):

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dummy Declarer | AKQ 3 | Declarer's loser is covered by the Ace; then there are two more winners in the dummy hand that can cover losers in other suits in declarer's hand |
| Dummy Declarer | AQ3 K4 | The dummy hand has an extra winner here. Win the first trick with the K (high card on the short side), then cross to the Ace. Now the Queen can allow you to discard a loser in some other suit from declarer's hand |
| Dummy Declarer | AQ3 K42 | The dummy hand has no extra winners in this suit. You'll have to find other ways to cover losers in other suits in declarer's hand. |

As with ruffing, you gain an extra trick when the discarded loser comes from the long-trump hand.