



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(42) Around the Table: Opener

©AiB

Level: 1

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

It is important to have a good understanding of the bidding tools available to us in each of the different positions at the bridge table. When we decide to open the bidding, we have a specific set of tools and goals for describing our hand. We will take a detailed look at the way we describe our hand if we are the *opening bidder*.

Getting Started First

Opener has the advantage of starting to describe their hand before anyone else. When we open the bidding, we strive to tell partner many things about our hand:

- Hand type
 - Balanced – no singleton or void
 - Unbalanced – singleton or void
 - Semi-Balanced – 5422 or 6322
- Strength of our hand - Range (or “Bucket”)
 - 12-14 points
 - 15-17 points
 - 18-19 points
 - 20-21 points
 - 22+ points
- Specific shape information about our hand
 - Primary Suit
 - Secondary Suit
 - More Shape

Our general rules for the way we start the bidding are understood, but it is good to think about the details for how we open the bidding the way we do. It is also

info@advinbridge.com

PO Box 14915 ♠ Tallahassee, FL 32317
850 570 6459

important to think about what our priorities are in describing our hand to our partner. In order as appropriate, our preferred opening bids are:

- 1NT Opening
 - 15-17 points and a balanced hand, 5-card Majors common
 - Some semi-balanced hands (5422 or 6322) are possible. These usually are hands that have problem rebids and usually not a Major as our longest suit.
- 2NT Opening
 - 20-21 points and a balanced hand, 5-card Majors common
- 5-card Majors
 - 12-21 points
- Better minor
 - 12-21 points
 - 3+♣ or 4+♦
 - What to do with 4-4-3-2?
 - Generally, we open 1♦ as we prefer to “lie in a minor.”
- 2♣ Opening
 - 22+ points if balanced,
 - 20+ points if unbalanced with one suit OR one trick short of game in our hand.
- Preempts

Opener's Rebids

Now that we have thoroughly discussed Opener's first bid, let us look specifically at how Opener further describes their hand (type, strength, etc...) by examining Opener's rebids:

- Balanced Hands
 - 12-14 points: Rebid 1NT
 - (15-17 points: Open 1NT)
 - 18-19 points: Rebid 2NT
 - (20-21 points: Open 2NT)
 - 22+ points: Open 2♣, Rebid 2NT, 3NT, 4NT...
- Unbalanced Hands
 - Single-Suited Hands
 - 12-14 points: Rebid our suit
 - 15-17 points: Jump rebid our suit

- 18-19 points: Jump shift into a minor to show strength (“Lie in a minor.”)
- 20+ points: Open 2♣, then bid our suit
- Two-Suited Hands
 - 12-17 points: Rebid our second suit (no reverse)
 - 18+ points: Jump shift or reverse into our second suit to show our strength
- Semi-Balanced Hands
 - These are the hardest hands to bid. We should decide to treat them as either balanced or unbalanced before we open the bidding.

Note: This brings up an even more important concept called a Prepared Rebid. We need to plan our rebid before we open the bidding.

Finding Fits

Having a *prepared rebid* is very useful, but sometimes partner gets in the way of our best laid plans. We need to adjust our prepared rebid when partner bids a suit in which we have a fit. When we have a fit for partner we will usually raise partner, but sometimes this will not be the case.

Let’s look at the fits we have to consider and how we generally handle them:

- *Major Suit Fits*
 - 4-4 fits
 - Raise (to a level showing our points) when Responder bids our 4-card Major
 - Stayman
 - 5-3 fits:
 - *Support Doubles*
 - Transfers
 - *New Minor Forcing* and *4th Suit Game Forcing* can also be involved in these auctions.
 - 6-2 or larger fits usually are found differently
 - Responder finds these fits later in the auction by rebidding their suit.
- *Minor Suit Fits*
 - Notrump contracts
 - We will usually play in notrump when we have a minor suit fit.

- Raising Responder's minor suit is usually a large fit and will often lead to minor suit slam exploration.

Opener's Doubles

One other topic of bidding related to opening bidder (and all players) that we should discuss is doubles. Doubles are an important part of modern bridge for all players at the table.

- Takeout Doubles
 - These are general doubles that ask partner to further compete in the bidding. Opener makes a takeout double to say they have enough points to compete in the bidding, but aren't sure what to do.
 - Value-showing Doubles - Direct action
 - Reopening Doubles - Balancing seat
- Support Doubles
 - A way of finding a 5-3 fit in competition.

Conclusion

When we open the bidding, partner (the Responder) will usually be the captain of the auction. It is primarily our job to describe our hand the best we can and let partner drive the auction to its final destination. Hopefully this overview of what to think about and what tools are available to us as the opening bidder helps us all focus on how best to describe our hand and have a good cooperative auction with partner.