



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(143) 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠*

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Level: 2

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General

When the auction begins with our side making the three cheapest bids, 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ -, then we need to have agreements about what Responder's rebids mean. But before we define these rebids for Responder it is a good idea to stop and think about what we know about Opener's hand - both in terms of shape and strength.

This may seem like a simple auction for us to examine in such detail, but there is long history of many partnership mix-ups and disasters after this seemingly simple start to the auction.

What We Know About Opener's Hand

Playing the modern standard Walsh style, Opener would rebid 1NT or 2NT with a balanced hand. Thus, when Opener rebids 1♥ they show an unbalanced hand with 12-17 points, and with 18+ points Opener would have made a jump shift into 2♥. Opener must either have 5+ card ♣ and 4-card ♥ or be 4-4-1-4.

Responder Bidding the Fourth Suit -- 1♠*

A rebid of 1♠ should be *4th Suit Forcing to Game* - an artificial and game forcing bid. It creates a game forcing auction and asks Opener to further describe their hand.

Note: Some partnerships play that both 1♠ and 2♠ are artificial and game forcing, where 1♠ denies a ♠ suit and 2♠ promises a 4-card ♠ suit. We are NOT going to adopt this old-fashioned approach (see Advanced Note below if you want to understand why.)

Responder's Rebid Options After 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - ?

- 1♠* 4th Suit Game Forcing, Artificial
- 1NT 6-10 points, usually a ♠ stopper, not a 4-card ♠ suit.
- 2♣ 6-9 points, 3+card ♣
- 2♦ 6-9 points, 6+card ♦
- 2♥ 10 points, 4-card ♥, 5+card ♦, light invitational
- 2♠* 10-11 points, 4-card ♠, 5+card ♦, invitational, Non-Forcing
- 2NT Natural and Invitational, 10-11 points, ♠ stopper, usually not 4-card ♠
- 3♣ Natural and Invitational, 3+card ♣, no 4-card Major
- 3♦ 10-11 points, 6+card ♦
- 3♥ 11-12 points, 4-card ♥, 5+card ♦, heavy invite
- 3♠* *Splinter*, 0-1♠, 4-card ♥, Slam Try
- 3NT To Play
- 4NT Quantitative, Invites Slam
- 5♣ To Play
- 5♦ To Play

Advanced Note: When the original Walsh style was adopted, Responder would only bid 1♦ with a 5+card ♦ suit and 4-card Major if they had a game-forcing hand. Thus, Responder would never have an invitational hand with a 4-card ♠ suit when the auction started 1♣ -1♦ -1♥ -, so the agreements did not need to handle this possibility.

The modern style, Bridge World Standard, is for Responder to bid 1♦ with a 5+card ♦ and a 4-card Major if they have invitational or better values. Thus, the modern approach is to give Responder a bid to show this hand - thus the modern use of the 2♠ bid as natural, invitational, and non-forcing.

Opener's Bid After 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠*

After Responder creates a game-forcing auction with a 1♠ rebid, Opener needs to describe their hand and shape out for a possible slam!

- 1NT 4-card ♥, 5-card ♣, ♠ stopper, usually 12-15 points
- 2♣ 4-card ♥, 6+card ♣, usually not 3-card ♦, 12-15 points (could be only 5-card ♣ if no ♠ stopper)
- 2♦ 1-4-3-5, 12-17 points
- 2♥ Unusual Rebid, 5c♥-6+♣, 12-15 points
- 2♠ Usually 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5, 12-17 points
- 2NT 4-card ♥, 5-card ♣, ♠ stopper, usually 15-17 points

- 3♣ 4-card ♥, 6+card ♣, 15-17 points

Conclusion

As you can see, the bidding by Responder is relatively straightforward once you understand the differences between a 1♠ and 2♠ bid – 4th Suit Forcing is a valuable tool when both you and partner are on the same page about what it means. The rebids by Opener are relatively natural and straightforward as well. When the 4th suit is bid, Opener and Responder need to work out if they have a stopper in that 4th suit, allowing 3NT to be the final contract!