



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(154) More Balancing

© AiB

Level: 2

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

Balancing is the act of stretching to keep the auction open; to keep the opponents from winning the contract at a low level. This can be done by different players in many different auctions. Let's look at some more of these common balancing situations.

Opener Balances by Reopening

Opener can balance in an auction by reopening the bidding when LHO makes an overcall and that is passed back around the Opener.

Example

1♠ 2♦ P P
—?

In this auction, Opener should strive to compete in the bidding.

- With shortness in the opponent's suit and not a tremendous amount of distribution, Opener should balance with a takeout double. This is to protect the situations where partner has made a "trap pass" with extreme length in the opponent's suit and is hoping to defend.
- Common distributions to reopen with a double are:
 - 5-4-1-3
 - 5-3-1-4
 - 5-4-0-4
 - 6-4-0-3
 - 6-3-0-4
- With more distribution, even with minimum values, opener should strive to bid another suit – showing unwillingness to sell out to a 2♦ final contract or to defend 2♦ doubled if partner has a "trap pass."

Responder Balances

The Responder often is in the balancing seat when the opponents have found a fit at a low level and Opener has passed.

Example

1♥ 1♠ X 2♠
P P __?

When the opponents have found a fit at a low level, then in the balancing seat you should strive to compete in the bidding with any excuse at all. With any extra values, more than about 8 points, you should strive to not sell out to 2♠. With 2-2-5/4 shape you can stretch to make a second double and see what partner does.

Responder can also balance with 2NT to show both of the unbid suits, commonly both minors, without having shown other values.

Example

1♥ 1♠ P 2♠
P P __?

♠ 8

♥ 76

♦ QT954

♣ QJ973

2NT in this auction is just a desire to compete in the bidding, showing the other two suits – both minors.

Other Balancing

Balancing can be done by an Interferer as well, especially when the other side has found a fit at a low level. A common balancing position is to make an overcall, have LHO raise Opener's suit, and then have that fit passed back around to us.

Example

1♠ 2♦ 2♠ P
P __?

In this position the Interferer can stretch (balance) to:

- Rebid a good 6-card ♦ suit.
- Reopen with a takeout double with 4-5 or 4-6 distribution – with 4-card ♥ and longer ♦.
- Bid 2NT with both minors, usually 6♦ and 4♣.
- Make other natural bids with more distribution.



Conclusion

Balancing is an important part of low-level competitive bidding. You do not want to allow the opponents to win the contract at a low level. This is especially true when you have a distributional hand with shortness in the opponent's suit. Consider stretching to bid when you have a distributional hand and the opponents are going to win the auction at a low level.