



Bidding Basics

BY LARRY COHEN larryco.com

Responding to 3♣ and higher

When partner preempts on the three level, expect a seven-card suit. On the four level, an eight-card suit. Partner has a weak hand (less than opening bid strength), typically with most of his points in his long suit. If vulnerable, expect a sounder preempt.

Given these parameters, game is unlikely. If you respond 3NT to a three-level preempt, you are not asking partner's opinion; you are saying you want to play there. Such a bid is rare. You would need close to nine tricks in your own hand and all suits stopped. Here are some possible 3NT responses:

♠5 ♥K2 ♦AKQJ876 ♣AJ2

Respond 3NT to 3♠ by partner.

♠KQJ ♥— ♦KQ109 ♣AQJ1098

Respond 3NT to 3♥.

Also, if you have stoppers and some honors suggesting partner's suit will run, bid 3NT:

♠K4 ♥AQ7 ♦AJ2 ♣QJ832

Respond 3NT to 3♦.

If you are interested in game opposite a high-level preempt (usually it will be in partner's long suit), you can put partner in game. Base this not on high-card strength (queens and jacks aren't typically worth much); try to have aces and kings. Put partner in game with each of these hands:

♠Q ♥A2 ♦AK765 ♣A10872

Raise 3♠ to 4♠.

♠AKQJ ♥A2 ♦KQ7654 ♣2

Raise 3♥ to 4♥.

If you respond in a new suit, it is forcing one round (unless your response happens to be a bid of game, such as 4♣–Pass–4♠). This new-suit response is rare, but here are some examples:

♠AQJ8765 ♥32 ♦AJ32 ♣—

Respond 3♠ to partner's 3♥.

♠2 ♥AKQJ1076 ♦2 ♣AK32

Respond 4♥ to partner's 4♦.

With many good hands, you will pass partner's preempt. Without a fit and without expectation of making a game, just pass. For example:

♠AQ765 ♥— ♦A654 ♣Q876

Pass partner's opening 3♥ and hope for the best.

♠2 ♥KQ82 ♦KQ65 ♣KJ102

Pass partner's opening 3♠. (If you bid 3NT and go down five, you'll never try that again.)

♠— ♥AQ7654 ♦A6542 ♣K2

Pass partner's 4♠ opening.

Will you pass with all bad hands? No. Just as after partner's weak two-bids, support with support. Raise to the four level if your side has 10 trumps (and sometimes raise a minor-suit preempt to five with lots of shape). Don't blindly follow this rule (if vulnerable, flat, and/or loaded with cards in the other suits, go cautiously). Here are some weak hands where you would raise partner's

preempt to make things more difficult for the opponents:

♠K32 ♥2 ♦J10765 ♣10876

Raise partner's 3♠ to 4♠ whether or not RHO has acted.

♠— ♥J76 ♦A76542 ♣Q765

Raise partner's 3♥ to 4♥ whether or not RHO has acted.

♠Q7654 ♥3 ♦Q765 ♣532

Raise partner's 3♦ to 5♦. (If vulnerable, maybe only to 4♦.)

BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

For the first four questions, nobody is vulnerable, and partner deals and opens 3♥. What is your response?

1. ♠AQ765 ♥6 ♦AQ7 ♣Q732
2. ♠4 ♥Q32 ♦KQJ82 ♣J1082
3. ♠A2 ♥A ♦AJ10876 ♣KQ42
4. ♠KQ4 ♥8 ♦AK2 ♣AKQJ32

For the next three questions, both sides are vulnerable, and LHO passes, followed by partner's 3♠. RHO passes. What is your response?

5. ♠K ♥KQ2 ♦A7654 ♣A765
6. ♠— ♥KJ7654 ♦KQ765 ♣A2
7. ♠J1076 ♥3 ♦A76542 ♣32

Both sides are vulnerable, partner opens 3♦, and RHO doubles. What is your response?

8. ♠A2 ♥J7654 ♦KJ2 ♣1076

See next page for answers

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Pass. Don't try to improve an already poor situation.
 2. 4♥. To further the preempt.
 3. 4♥. Expecting it to be a good contract.
 4. 3NT. This is to play. Partner should not go back to hearts.
 5. 4♠. Vulnerable in second seat, partner should have the goods.
 6. Pass. Same explanation as No. 1.
 7. 4♠. Same explanation as No. 2.
 8. 4♦. Same explanation as No. 2.
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