



Bidding Basics

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After 1♠: two level and higher responses

In this installment, we look at the auction where partner has responded at the two level or higher to 1♠. We are assuming that a 2/1 response is natural and game forcing. Disclaimer: There are some topics in this installment where no 100% agreed method exists. My suggestions, however, are based on the way the majority plays in the 21st century.

After 1♠-2♣

Opener should show shape. With a flat hand (5-3-3-2 distribution), rebid 2NT. With six or more spades and no other four-card or longer suit, repeat them with a 2♠ bid. With a decent hand and self-sufficient spades such as K-Q-J-10-x-x or A-K-Q-J-x-x, jump to 3♠. With a second suit (four cards or longer in a red suit), bid it on the two level regardless of strength. Raising to 3♣ usually shows four-card support, but it could be three cards if it seems like the best description.

For example, rebid 2♦ (not 3♦) with:

♠K Q 10 8 2 ♥A K 2 ♦A Q 10 3 ♣7.

Rebid 2♥ with:

♠A Q 8 7 2 ♥K Q 8 7 ♦Q 2 ♣8 3.

Rebid 2♠ with:

♠K Q 10 7 6 2 ♥A J 5 ♦Q 3 2 ♣2.

Rebid 2NT with:

♠Q J 8 7 6 ♥Q 6 5 ♦K Q 2 ♣K 2.

Raise to 3♣ with these:

♠K Q 8 7 2 ♥K 5 4 ♦2 ♣A J 7 6

♠J 8 5 4 3 ♥A K 2 ♦3 2 ♣K Q 2.

With the latter example, 2NT would show a 5-3-3-2 hand, but with good three-card club support and two low cards in an unbid suit, raising feels like a better description.

After 1♠-2♦

All the same principles as 1♠-2♣ apply.

Rebid 2♥ with:

♠K Q J 8 7 ♥Q 10 7 6 ♦K J 3 ♣8.

Rebid 2♠ with:

♠A Q 8 7 6 5 ♥Q 9 2 ♦J 4 ♣A 5.

Rebid 2NT with:

♠A 8 7 6 2 ♥Q 8 5 ♦Q 2 ♣K Q 10.

Rebid 3♣ with:

♠K J 8 7 2 ♥K 2 ♦2 ♣A Q 7 6 2

(or even with, say, a 5=3=1=4 pattern).

Raise to 3♦ with these:

♠A J 8 7 6 ♥3 ♦K J 7 6 ♣K 10 2

♠Q 8 7 6 2 ♥5 4 ♦A K 10 ♣A 3 2.

After 1♠-2♥

Bid 2♠ with a six-card or longer spade suit, but rebid 2NT with exactly 5=2=3=3 shape. Responder promises five or more hearts (as opposed to a 2♣ or 2♦ response which promises only four). Accordingly, opener should be happy to raise hearts with three (confirming an eight-card major-suit fit). Opener's jump raise to 4♥ shows support (three or more cards) and a dead minimum (no slam interest). Correspondingly, raising to only 3♥ (leaving more room) shows a better hand.

Rebid 2♠ with:

♠K 10 8 7 5 3 ♥Q 2 ♦A J 2 ♣K 3.

Rebid 2NT with:

♠Q 8 7 6 5 ♥K J ♦K J 2 ♣K 10 3.

Rebid three of a minor with four or more cards in the minor (denying six spades or three hearts).

Raise to 3♥ with:

♠A K 8 7 6 ♥K 10 2 ♦3 ♣A Q 10 2,

but raise to 4♥ (weaker) with:

♠K Q 8 7 6 ♥K Q 2 ♦Q 3 2 ♣3 2.

After 1♠-2♠

Responder is showing approximately 6-10 points in support. Opener will pass with most minimum hands (no game interest). Bidding a new suit is a try for game, showing a good hand, natural, with cards in the new suit. Bidding 2NT is natural, inviting 3NT or 4♠. Bidding 3♠ is preemptive (extra shape, but a minimum hand). 3NT offers a choice of games (strong balanced hand with stoppers). 4♠, of course, shows a very good hand that wants to be in game.

Pass with:

♠Q J 7 6 5 ♥J 10 7 ♦K Q ♣A 3 2.

Bid 2NT with:

♠K 9 8 3 2 ♥K Q 10 ♦K Q 2 ♣A J.

Bid three of a minor with game interest and a decent minor-suit holding such as K-J-x-x or K-Q-x.

Bid 3♠ with:

♠A Q 8 7 6 5 ♥2 ♦K Q 6 ♣J 10 8.

Bid 4♠ with:

♠A Q 10 7 6 ♥A K J ♦2 ♣A J 6 5.

After 1♠-3♣/3♦/3♥

You must know what responder is showing. Most play responder's jump shifts as weak. If responder is weak, opener usually passes. Opener can raise with support (preemptively), bid a new suit (forcing and looking for game), or bid game. Some might use a convention such as Bergen raises, which changes everything. Also, if you play strong jump shift responses, that also changes everything written above. My personal preference is to play these jumps to a lower-ranking suit on the three level as showing six or more cards, natural and invitational.

After 1♠-2NT

You must know what responder is showing. Many players (even newer ones) use 2NT as a conventional response. If it shows a four-card game-forcing raise (Jacoby 2NT), then you must study the follow-ups to that convention (typically three of a new suit is shortness; jumps to 4♠ are flat minimums). If you play the 2NT response as natural, all follow-ups are natural.

After 1♠-3♠

Responder shows 11-12 points in support and usually a four-card raise (unless you play a special convention). With a minimum, opener will likely pass (though with a singleton or void, he should go to game).

Pass with these:

♠A 6 5 3 2 ♥Q 8 3 ♦A J 2 ♣J 2

♠A Q J 6 5 ♥K 8 2 ♦J 3 2 ♣Q 4.

A bid of a new suit would show slam interest (and typically the ace or king in that suit). A raise to 4♠ is a signoff.

Bid 4♠ with these:

♠A Q 8 7 5 ♥7 ♦K Q 7 6 ♣J 10 2

♠A K J 8 7 ♥A Q J 2 ♦3 2 ♣3 2.

After 1♠-3NT

Assuming this shows 13-15 balanced, opener will usually pass. However, don't think of 3NT as a "closeout bid." It simply shows 13-15 points. If opener has slam interest, he shouldn't pass. If the bid conventionally shows a 4-3-3-3 pattern, opener would go back to spades if he has a singleton or void.

After 1♠-4♣/4♦/4♥

If both partners know this is a splinter bid (showing shortness in the suit jumped into, at least four trumps and enough values for game), opener can either sign off in 4♠ or look for slam. Be especially careful here about 1♠-4♥. If one of you thinks this is a splinter bid, but the other thinks it is natural, the result could be catastrophic.

After 1♠-4♠

This is a weak bid typically showing a five-card raise with less than invitational values, so opener will almost always pass.

What is opener's rebid after 1♠-2♣ with:

① ♠A Q 10 6 5 ♥3 2 ♦A 2 ♣Q 6 5 4

② ♠K J 8 7 6 ♥Q 10 3 ♦K J 2 ♣K 3

What is opener's rebid after 1♠-2♥ with:

③ ♠A 7 6 5 4 ♥K Q 2 ♦K 2 ♣Q 10 4

④ ♠K Q 7 6 5 ♥J 2 ♦Q J 2 ♣K J 2

What is opener's rebid after 1♠-2♠ with:

⑤ ♠K Q 10 7 6 ♥A 2 ♦K J 8 3 ♣J 5

What is opener's rebid after 1♠-2NT (Jacoby) with:

⑥ ♠K 10 8 7 3 ♥K Q J 2 ♦Q 2 ♣Q 2

What is opener's rebid after 1♠-3♠ with:

⑦ ♠J 10 9 7 6 ♥2 ♦A Q 10 2 ♣K Q 2

⑧ ♠A K Q J 5 ♥Q 5 4 ♦10 6 5 ♣7 2

1. 3♣. Support with support.
2. 2NT. Balanced hand, not 15-17.
3. 3♥. Establishing the eight-card or longer fit.
4. 2NT. Same as No. 2.
5. Pass. No reason to go higher.
6. 4♠. A minimum (with no singletons or voids).
7. 4♠. A minimum, but always go to game with a singleton or void facing a four-card limit raise.
8. Pass. Be happy if you make three.