

## **OPENING THE BIDDING - WEAK HANDS**

A WEAK hand has less than 12 points.

With a balanced weak hand PASS

### **UNBALANCED - 1X**

Open 1X with one or two long suits under THE RULE OF TWENTY:

1: Add the length of your two longest suits

2: Add your High Card Points

With 20 or more, open 1 of your longer suit. On the next round, if partner has limit-raised you (1S 2S), pass. Over 1NT or a change of suit (forcing), rebid your longer suit (to show you have 5+) or bid your shorter suit if it's lower-ranked and decent (to show you have 5 and 4).

The longer your suits, the fewer point you need to open e.g. with 6 + 5, you only need 9 points.

### **UNBALANCED - PRE-EMPTS**

Open a WEAK TWO if you have SIX trumps

Open a WEAK THREE if you have SEVEN trumps

Open a WEAK FOUR if you have EIGHT trumps

Open a WEAK FIVE if you have NINE trumps in a minor

If your suit is very long you MIGHT have a STRONG TWO opening even in a weak hand (see below).

### **POINTS vs NO POINTS**

How many points do you need for a PRE-EMPT? 0-10! But typically 4-10, mostly in your trump suit(s).

The point of a pre-empt is to stop the opposition making a game contract, so the weaker you are, the more likely they are to have game. Pre-empts are more attractive if:

- \* You are not vulnerable (so your penalties for failing are less)
- \* The opposition is vulnerable (so their game bonus is 500, not 300)
- \* Partner has already passed (so you aren't messing up their bidding!)
- \* The bidding has NOT gone PASS PASS PASS

## **REPLYING TO A WEAK TWO**

You know a lot about partner's hand already (exactly 6 trumps and 5-10 points) so YOU must take charge; partner will pass unless forced.

If you are weak, extend the pre-empt by raising to the level of fit: with 3 trumps, raise to 3; with 4 trumps, raise to 4. Partner will pass.

If you are strong (16+) with 2+ trumps raise to game expecting to make it.

If you are strong (16+) with a good 6+ suit, bid your own suit to FORCE partner to raise if they have Qx or better - or pass.

If you need more information, bid 2NT to FORCE partner to bid:

\* With 5-7 points: rebid trump suit (2H 2NT 3H)

\* With 8+ and an Ace, Kx, QJx, or Qxxxx: bid that suit (2H 2NT 3C)

\* With 8+ and AK, KQ, or AQ in trump suit: bid 3NT (2S 2NT 3NT)

## **REPLYING TO A PRE-EMPT**

In general, pass or raise. Remember how weak partner is, promising lots of trumps but not much else.

Partner will not bid again unless you force them to (e.g. bid 4NT).

Raise to game if you're really strong (expecting to make it) or really weak (to make the opposition struggle even more to find their contract). It's OK to bluff in this situation! All the way to a slam if need be; bidding when you're certain you'll fail is called a SACRIFICE.

Be prepared to go down. Be prepared to be doubled. Don't panic.

Sacrificing is safer when you are NOT VULNERABLE. And even better when the opposition IS VULNERABLE.

## **AND FINALLY --- HOW MANY POINTS FOR GAME?**

Conventional wisdom is 25+, but really long suits change the rules. You could open this weak hand with a pre-emptive 4S, but it's strong enough to 2C:

Spades: AKQx xxxx xx

Hearts: x

Diamonds: x

Clubs: x

A weak hand with good shape is strong, but only when played in the right suit.