

OPENING THE BIDDING - NORMAL HANDS

A NORMAL hand has 12-15 points. If partner has 6-9 points, game is unlikely (unless you have excellent shape - long suits, short suits). So if they respond with 6-9 point limit bid (e.g. 1H 1NT or a simple raise such as 1S 2S) subside gracefully - pass 1NT or 2S or rebid your suit over 1NT, if your hand is unsuitable for NT.

*** BACKGROUND BEGINS ***

There's only one opening bid in any auction - everything else is an overcall, a response, or a rebid.

Most of the time you open ONE OF A SUIT (1x) or ONE NO TRUMP (1NT)

If you open with 1x, you MUST have a second, legal, bid because partner can FORCE you to bid by changing suit. If partner passes, replies NT or raises your suit you're off the hook!

You need to bid fairly quickly. If you pause too long (more than 30 seconds) and then pass, you have told partner "I have nearly enough points to open". This is a bit cheeky - the EBU says it's an OFFENSE and may be penalised.

*** BACKGROUND ENDS ***

BALANCED: 4333, 4432, 5332

With 12-15 points and a BALANCED hand, bid it as a balanced (NT) hand. Even if you have a 5-card major:

* 12-14: 1NT then probably pass

* 15-16: 1x then 1NT (no jump)

With ONE 4-card suit (a 4333 hand), you must NOT bid that suit twice, as that shows 5 cards. So it's only safe to open a single 4-card suit if you've got 15+ points, as you can rebid NT on the next round. With 12-14, do not open 1x, open 1NT.

With TWO 4-card suits (a 4432 hand), you CAN bid them both (open the higher ranked suit first) but it's usually better to bid it as a balanced hand. Partner can find a 4-4 fit in a major via Stayman.

If you have a 5-card major, open 1NT as you can show it later if there's room (e.g. 1NT 2NT 3H or 1H 1S 1NT 2C 2H)

HINT: With a balanced hand, NT is likely. You don't want to reveal your weak suits!

UNBALANCED: a void, a singleton, 2 doubletons

With 12-15 points, an unbalanced hand and...

* One, two, or three 4-card suits: your hand must be BALANCED (see above) or 4441 (see below)

* One 5 or 6-card suit: open 1x and rebid it (do not jump)

* Two 5-card suits: bid the higher suit first and then the lower suit (do not reverse, do not jump)

* One 5 or 6-card suit and a 4-card suit: bid the long suit first and only bid the short suit if it's lower (do not reverse, do not jump)

If you bid two suits, partner will usually expect you to have 5 in your first suit; another reason to open NT or rebid NT, ignoring that second suit. (There is an argument that by showing your partner two suits, they may be happier bidding NT as they assume you have stops in those suits. This is a bit old-fashioned, it reveals your weak suit(s); if you're heading for NT, bid NT!)

OPENING 4441 HANDS - Andrew Robson (TAPS)

With 4441 hands I sometimes bid them as 2-suited, ignoring the weakest suit. Anyway... here's what Andrew Robson suggests:

* With a black singleton: 1H

* With a red singleton: 1S

Single Club: 1H

Single Diamond: 1S

Single Heart: 1S

Single Spade: 1H

This favours the MAJORS: Good, who wants to play in a minor?

OPENING 4441 HANDS - NFB

* Red singleton: bid suit below it

* Black singleton: bid middle of other 3 suits

Single Club: 1H

Single Diamond: 1C

Single Heart: 1D

Single Spade: 1D

This favours the MINORS: Bad, who wants to play in a minor?

OPENING 4441 HANDS - EBU

The EBU is equivocal:

* TAPS (Anrew Robson)

* Suit below

* Suit below if black, middle if red (NFB)

* Red below, black middle

Good grief.

REBIDDING 4441 HANDS

If partner supports your suit or bids one of your other 4-card suits, you have a fit, raise.

If partner bids your singleton:

- * With 12-14 points, bid your next suit
- * With 15 points, rebid NT (1H 1S 1NT)

If partner bids NT:

- * Bid your next suit. NT is uncomfortable with a singleton!