Bridge 101 – Lesson 2

Opening Bids

Hand evaluation for openers:

Unless a deal is "passed out" (all four players pass), one player opens the bidding.
> This bid is called the opening bid. The player who makes the bid is called the **opener.**

Today we are going to talk about how to decide whether your hand is worth an opening bid.
> This is just the first step in the bidding process.
> The purpose of the bidding process is to describe the contents of your hand to your partner.
> This dialog will allow you and your partner to decide in which suit and at what level you should
>> be playing the hand.

When you are dealt a hand, count your high card points (HCP's).
> In addition to counting the HCP's, we are going to add "distributional" points.
> The distribution, also called the shape, of a hand is the number of cards you have been dealt in
>> each of the suits.
> If you have a hand with 4 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond and 3 clubs, we say your hand has the
>> shape: 4 5 1 3

> If you have a hand with shape 3 5 2 3,
>> You have 3 ♠'s.
>> Your longest suit is ♥.
>> Your shortest suit is ♦.

> We value long suits as they are useful in both trump and no-trump contracts.

> You get one distributional point for each card in a suit that is over 4 cards.
>> If you have a five card suit you get one distributional point.
>> For a six card suit you get two distributional points. And so on.
>> How many distributional points do you get for an eight card suit? (4)

> There are different ways to evaluate the strength of a hand.
>> The approach we are using now is for OPENERS.
>> If your partner has opened, we have a different way of evaluating our hand.
>>> This involves "shortages".
>> If you and your partner have a decided on a trump suit then it is good to have "short"
>>> suits to allow a ruff (to play a trump on a trick when a plain suit is led.)

> **Shortage terminology**:
>> If you have zero cards in a given suit you are said to be "void" in that suit.
>> If you have one card in a given suit you have a "singleton" in that suit.
>> If you have two cards in a given suit you have a "doubleton" in that suit.

> We assign point values for these shortages but not when we are deciding whether to open.

Opening Bids:

We are going to start with what to do when you have a point range of 13-21 total points because most of the opening bids you will make are in this range.

We are talking total points here so HCP's plus distributional points.

Within this point range there are six opening bids you consider making. 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, 1♠, 1NT and 2NT.

Now ask yourself. Do I have a hand with no singleton or void and at most one doubleton? Such a hand is said to be "balanced". So the shape is (order doesn't count here), 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2.

If you have a balanced hand and 15-17 HCP's open 1NT.

This is a very specific bid. You are telling you partner you have exactly 15-17 hand card points and at least two cards in every suit.

Do you bid 1NT with ♠ AT83 ♥ KJ94 ♦ A ♣ KJ94?
    No, we do not open 1NT because we have a singleton.

What about: ♠ AKJ5 ♥ KQ ♦ A94 ♣ T874?
    Yes, we do open 1NT because our hand has 17 hcp's and is balanced.

How about: ♠ KQ73 ♥ AQ8 ♦ AJ6 ♣ Q54?
    No, our hand has 18 hcp's.

Note: the point value (15-17) for a 1NT opener is HCP's – don't count for distribution. 1NT shows 15-17 HCP's and a balanced hand.

If your hand is balanced and you have 20-21 hcp's you open 2NT.

If your hand does not qualify for a NT opener but has 13 -21 TOTAL points (so we are counting distributional points here), you will be opening one of a suit:
    1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠.

Look for your longest suit. If your hand contains a five-card or longer suit, bid one of that longest suit.

If you have two longest suits containing five or more cards (two five card suits or two six card suits) bid the higher ranking suit first.

Consider the hand: ♠QJ9 ♥AQ732 ♦T8 ♣K64
    With 12hcp's plus 1 for 13 total points we open with 1♥

If your longest suit does not have five cards in it you must open one of a minor suit.
Do not open one of a major unless you have at least five cards in that major!

If you are in this situation, open the minor which has the most number of cards.

Consider the hand: ♠43 ♥AKT2 ♦AQ74 ♣953
      With 13 total points we open 1♦

If both of your minor suits are of equal length open the bidding with 1♦ if you are 4-4, 5-5, or
      6-6 in the minors.

If you are 3-3 in the minors, bid 1♣

Summary:

Count your high card points – if you have 15-17 and are balanced, open 1NT
If you have 20-21 and are balanced, open 2 NT.
Now add your distribution points. If you have 13– 21 points you should open one of a suit.
Look for your longest suit. If your hand contains a five-card or longer suit, bid one of that
      longest suit.
If you have two longest suits containing five or more cards (two five card suits or two six card
      suits) bid the higher ranking suit first.
If your hand does not contain a five-card or longer suit, open the longer of your minor suits.
If your minors are of equal length open 1♦ if you are 4-4, 5-5, or 6-6 and open 1♣ if
      you are 3-3.

There are other conventions about what minor to open but we're going to play this one.
      Some folks play "better" minor (the one with more points).
      Some play "short club" which means with a shape of 4 4 3 2, open one club.

Examples:

♠ AJT6 ♥ KJ3 ♦ 986 ♣ AK2
      16 HCP's and balanced so open 1NT

♠ AJ975 ♥ 32 ♦ KQ75 ♣ 42
      10 HCP's plus 1 for 11 total points so pass

♠ K9 ♥ KQ754 ♦ AT95 ♣ Q9
      14 HCP's plus 1 for 1 for 15 total points so 1♥

♠ AK43 ♥ KJ92 ♦ 62 ♣ Q97
      13 HCP's plus 0 for 13 total points so 1♣

♠ QT ♥ 3 ♦ QJ865 ♣ AKJ82
      13 HCP's plus 2 for 15 total points so 1♦, (higher ranking)

♠ K2 ♥ AQ3 ♦ A8653 ♣ KJ3
      17 HCP's, balanced so open 1NT (that's a tricky one)

♠ AJ975 ♥ KJT7 ♦ A3 ♣ K2
      16 HCP's not balanced add 1 for distribution for 17 total points so 1♠

♠ AK43 ♥ AKJ2 ♦ 2 ♣ K982
      18 HCP's plus 0 for 18 total points so 1♣

♠ AK543 ♥ J2 ♦ AJ9754 ♣
      13 HCP's plus 3 for 16 total points so 1♦(six ♦ 's verses five ♠'s bid the ♦'s first)

♠ AK63 ♥ KJ8 ♦ AK6 ♣ JT9
      19 HCP's plus 0 for 19 total points so 1♣ (no five card major and 3-3 in the minors)

♠ K9876 ♥ AQJ95 ♦ T75 ♣
      10 HCP's plus 2 for 12 total points so pass

♠ AQ8 ♥ J8764 ♦ A ♣ KJ63
      15 HCP's, not balanced, plus 1 for 16 total points so 1♥

♠ J97 ♥ J ♦ AQ87632 ♣ QT
      10 HCP's plus 3 for distribution for 13 total points but I would have you pass (more
          about this in a later course).

You see, there are always exceptions to rules.
You should really have at least 12 HCP's to open at the one level.

Not only are there exceptions to rules but there are lots of rules!

You might hear about opening a hand with the "rule of 20" or the "rule of 15"

But in here were are going to KISS (keep it simple, sweetheart).

See you all next Tuesday. E-mail me if you have questions: SueFettes@gmail.com

New Material:

With 22 or more total points one makes an "artificial bid" of 2♣. An artificial bid is a bid that is not natural, one that carries a coded message not necessarily related to the bid's denomination. This bid and the subsequent responses is covered in Bridge 201.