

Bridge 101 - Lesson 3

How to Respond to Partner's Opening Bid of One of a Major

Responder:

Through bidding you tell your partner about the points and distribution of your hand.

You exchange this information so that you can determine if your partnership has combined points to play in a part-score, game or slam.

Your objectives when bidding are to:

Find the best trump fit which may not be the suit your partner opened with especially if she opened 1♣ or 1♦.

Find the correct level. You need to determine if your partnership has sufficient points for game or slam or whether you need to remain in a part-score.

Make it more difficult for the opponents to bid.

Points Needed:

For 2NT or the three level in a suit you want at least 22 pts.

For 3NT you want at least 25 pts

For 4 of a Major you want at least 25 pts

For 5 of a Minor you want at least 29 pts

For a Small Slam you want at least 33 pts

For a Grand Slam you want at least 37 pts

At the end of your bidding conversation, you want to determine what your strain (suit or NT) should be and at what level.

When your partner is the opener (makes the first bid that is not a pass) you are then the **responder**.

As a responder you get to make a legal bid, including pass.

When your partner opens, your response is the first opportunity for you to tell your partner about your hand.

Situation One, 3+ card support for partners major suit opener:

If you have 3+ cards in your partner's opening suit, you have what is called a **“golden fit”**.

A **Golden Fit** occurs when a partnership has at least eight cards in one suit.

Here is how to count your points as responder in this golden fit situation.

Count your high card points (HCP's).

Add on points based on shortness (doubleton, singleton and void).

Each doubleton (2 cards in a suit) is worth 1 point.

Each singleton (1 card in a suit) is worth 2 points.

Each void (no cards in a suit) is worth 3 points.

No distribution points are counted for length. A responder counts HCP's and adds for shortness.

Bidding in this situation: 3+ card support for partners major:

With 0 – 5 total points, pass.

Without an intervening bid from your opponent and with 6 or more total points.

YOU OWE YOUR PARTNER A BID.

With **6 – 9 total points (a minimum hand) and 3+ cards** in your partners major suit, raise to the two level, that is, bid two of partners suit, a **simple raise**.

Examples:

Partner opens 1 ♠. You hold: ♠972 ♥AK3 ♦J742 ♣JT9
You have three card support, 9 HCP's and no shortage points.
Your response is 2♠.

Partner opens 1 ♠. You hold: ♠KQ9 ♥73 ♦T874 ♣9832
You have three card support, 5 HCP's and 1 shortage point.
Your response is 2♠.

The conversation so far is:

Partner: “Hi, I have at least 13 total points and at least five ♠'s what do you think about that?”

You: “Hey, I have 6-9 total points and at least 3 ♠'s, what do you think about that?”

With **10 – 11 total points (an invitational hand) and 3+ cards** in your partners major suit, raise to the three level, that is, bid three of your partners suit, an **invitational raise**.

With **12+ points (a game forcing hand) and 3+ cards** in your partners major suit, we don't just bid game because we do not know our partners's points and we don't want to miss slam.

There is a situation when your partner opens 1♠ or 1♥ and you jump to four.

This shows minimum point-count and great playing strength (usually 5 trumps and a singleton). You need less than 10pts to make this bid.

With **12+ points and 3+ cards** in you partners's suit you know your combined strength is a least 25 total points. So make sure partner does not pass before game level. Introduce a new suit which forces your partner to keep bidding.

Situation Two, less than 3 cards in partners opening major suit opener:

Count your HCP's and your points for distributional length, not shortness.

In this situation the point ranges have the same names:

Minimum Hand is 6 – 9 points
Invitational Hand is 10 – 11 points
Game Forcing Hand is 12+ points

Bidding in this situation: less than 3 card support for partners major suit opener:

With **0 – 5 total points pass.**

Without an intervening bid from your opponent and with 6 or more total points you?

OWE YOUR PARTNER A BID

With **6 – 9 points (a minimum hand) and two or less cards** in your partners's major suit, bid a four card or longer major at the one level if you are able. This can only happen if you partner opens 1♥.

Example: Partner's opens 1♥. You hold: ♠A842 ♥63 ♦K743 ♣754
You have 7 hcp's plus 0 for length and a four card major to bid.
Your response is 1♠.

With a **minimum hand of 6 – 9 HCP's**, partner opening 1♠ and you having no 3 + card support, there is exactly one bid you can make and that is 1NT.

With an **invitational hand of 10 – 11 total points and two or less cards** in your partners's major suit:

Bid a four card or longer major at the one level if you are able.

If no bid at the one level is available you can introduce a new suit at the 2 level.

You must have 5 cards in the suit and 10 + points to introduce a new suit at the two level.

Examples:

Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠K75 ♥942 ♦A87 ♣J876
You have the Golden fit and a minimum hand with 8 total points.
Your response is 2♥.

Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠KQ82 ♥A53 ♦9876 ♣J6
You have the Golden Fit, and an invitational hand with 11 total points.
Your response is 3♥,

I Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠KQ825 ♥K53 ♦J987 ♣3
You have the Golden Fit, and an invitational hand with 11 total points
Your response is 3♥.

Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠KQ85 ♥75 ♦9874 ♣J32
You have no 3+ ♥ support with a minimum hand of 6 total points
Your response is 1♠

Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠T98 ♥T7 ♦QJ9 ♣KQ763
You have no 3+ ♥ support with a minimum hand of 8 hcp's.
Your response is 1NT (can't go to the two level with 9 total points)

Partner opens 1♠. You hold: ♠84 ♥K43 ♦AK432 ♣643
You have no 3+ spade support with an invitational hand of 11 total points.
Your response is 2♦.

If you have an invitational hand (10 – 11 points), no 3+ support and no five card suit then you are probably balanced so bid 2NT. Which says:

“Partner, with your major, I have the other suits covered and I also have 10 – 11 HCP's, would you like to go to game?”

There is an advanced convention you will see with a major opening and a 2NT response which is called Jacoby 2NT which means something very different.
Jacoby 2nt is a convention that will be covered in Bridge 201. Stay tuned.

With a **game forcing hand (12+ points) hand and two or less cards** in your partners's major suit:

You know you have combined strength of at least 25 points.
Introduce a new suit which forces your partner to keep bidding.

Examples:

Partner opens 1♥. You hold: ♠AK742 ♥63 ♦K74 ♣K83
You have no 3+ ♥ support with a game forcing hand of 14 total points.
Your response is 1♠.

Partner opens 1♠. You hold: ♠84 ♥K7 ♦AKQ64 ♣6542
You have no 3+ ♠ support with a game forcing hand of 13 total points.
Your response is 2♦.

Summary:

Your partner opens one of a major. This makes you the responder.

Evaluate your hand in one of three ways:

Count hcp's plus shortages if you can support your partners's major with 3+ cards in that suit.

Count just high card points if you are planning on bidding NT

Count hcp's plus length points if you are planning on bidding a new suit.

With 0-5 points, pass.

With a minimum hand (6-9 points)

and 3+ card support bid two of partners's major (partner 1♥ – you 2♥ or partner 1♠ – you 2♠)

and no 3+ support bid a four-card or longer major at the one level if you are able to do so.

(partner 1♥ – you 1♠)

and no 3+ support, no major suit of four or more cards that can be bid at the one level, bid 1NT.

With an invitational hand (10-11 points)

and 3+ card support bid three of partners's major (partner 1♥ – you 3♥ or partner 1♠ – you 3♠).

and no 3+ card support bid a four-card or longer major at the one level if you are able to do so.

(partner 1♥ – you 1♠).

and no 3+ card support bid and not the case above, bid your longest suit at the two level

provided you have five or more cards in it. If you have two suits of equal length (5-5 or

6-6) bid the higher suit first.

that does not fall into any of the these, bid 2NT provided you are balanced.

With a game forcing hand of 12+ points even with 3+ support make one of the other bids.

Bid a four-card or longer major at the one level if you are able to do so (partner 1♥ – you 1♠).

If you can't do that, bid your longest suit at the two level provided you have five or more cards in it. If necessary, you can “lie” here and bid a four card suit as your intent is to rebid your partner's suit at the next opportunity.

If you know your combined strength is at least 25-26 pts., don't give partner a chance to pass below game level. It's your responsibility to get your partnership to a game contract.