

RECOMMENDED SYSTEM FOR BEGINNERS AND NOVICES

Hand assessment: Milton Work point-count, Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1

1NT = 12 to 14, balanced

Balanced is defined as 4333, 4432 or 5332 shape. **When the 5-card suit is a major, then it is acceptable to either open 1 of the relevant major or to open 1NT. Some open 1 of the major with a good quality suit and open 1NT with a poor quality major. Apart from this consideration, always open 1NT with the appropriate point-count and shape.**

Responses to 1NT

2♣ = Stayman, used with (a) game-going, (b) invitational or (c) weak hands.

The aim, when using Stayman, (as in all other bidding sequences), is to get to the best possible contract with the cards you have been dealt.

2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ = weak-take-out, 5-card or longer suit, not more than 10 high-card points.

Note: Transfer responses: 2♦ and 2♥, asking opener to bid 2♥ and 2♠ respectively are an acceptable alternative to the weak-take-out. However it is recommended that conventional bids be kept to the minimum for beginners. Therefore the natural use of 2♦ is preferred in the early stages.

2NT = good 10 (with intermediate values, 10s and/or 9s supporting higher honours or decent 5-card minor) **to bad 12 points.**

3♣/3♦ = Slam try in the suit bid

3♥/3♠ = 5-card suit, game force (opener must bid four of the major with **3+** card support).

Responder, with 5/5 in the majors and a game-going hand, should bid 3♠ first, then 4♥ if opener rebids 3NT. (The 1NT opener will have **3 cards or more** in one or both majors and the 5/3 fit will be found)

3NT = good 12 to 18 points balanced, 4333 with 4 of a major acceptable.

4♣ = Gerber, showing slam prospects and asking for Aces (see below)

4♥/4♠ = 6-card or longer suit, shut out. (i.e. finishing the auction)

4NT = Quantitative, good 18 high-card points (including a 5-card Minor, or supporting intermediates) to bad 20 points.

Opener's rebids: Pass = 12 or bad 13 points.

5NT = Average 13, inviting responder to bid 6 with maximum.

6NT = Good 13 or 14.

One-Level Suit Opening Bids:

A One-Level opening in any suit promises four or more cards in the suit.

Add points for length, one for every card in excess of the fourth in the longest suit or suits.

The normal minimum point-count requirement for an opening bid is 12.

The normal maximum point-count for a One-Level opening bid is 19, although some 20 and 21-point hands may be judged to be worth only a One-Level opening bid.

Light Opening Bids: Opening bids at the One-Level on hands in the 9 to 11 points range with a six card or longer suit or two suits, 5/5 or better shape, are acceptable. The important criterion is a safe rebid.

Longest Suit First: When opening with a One-Level suit bid, begin with your longest suit.

Equal Length Suits: Open the higher-ranking of two equal length suits, except open 1♥ with four-four in ♥ + ♠. It is also acceptable to open the lower ranking of two four-card suits.

4441 Shape: Open 1♦, unless your singleton is a diamond. In that case open 1♣

Responses to One-Level Suit Openings:

Limit Bids:

1. Raises of Opener's Suit:

When a fit is found points are added for shortage in another suit:

- With (a) a void: add 5 points
(b) a singleton: add 3 points
(c) a doubleton: add 1 point

3, 2 and 1 point respectively for void, singleton and doubleton, are also acceptable

1♥: 2♥ A single raise shows 6 to 9 points (even a bad 10), not forcing.

1♥: 3♥ A jump or double raise shows 10/11 points (or a bad 12) not forcing.

1♥: 4♥ A jump to game is made on shape, often quite light in terms of high-card points.

1♣/1♦ : 5♣/5♦ A jump to game in a minor shows exceptional trump support and shape.
Denies a biddable major.
Responder has judged that 3NT is out of the question.
Tends to be preemptive.

1♣: 2♣ 6/7 points and four clubs, 3334 shape (see 1♣ : 1NT below)

2. No Trump Responses:

1♦ : 1NT 6 to 9 points, denies a four-card major

1♥ : 1NT 6 to 9, denies four spades or primary heart support

1♠ : 1NT 6 to 9, any shape, denies primary spade support

1♣ : 1NT 8/9 points and four clubs, 3334 shape. (see 1♣ : 2♣ above)

1X : 2NT good 10 to bad 12 points, denies a major biddable at the one-level

1X : 3NT good 12 to 15 points, denies a major biddable at the one-level.
If a major has been opened it should show a doubleton or three small in that suit.

New Suit Responses:

1. One-over-One Response:

1♣ : 1♦ or any one-level new suit response shows 4-card or longer suit with 6 or more points, Forcing

2. Two-over-One Response:

1♥ : 2♣ or any simple two-level response shows 10 or more points, Forcing.

3. Jump Shift:

1♥ : 2♠ or 1♠ : 3♣ etc.
16 or more points, Forcing to game, with 6-card good quality suit

The balanced hand ladder

Balanced hands of any strength can be shown as follows:

12 - 14	Open 1NT
15 - 16	Open one-level suit; rebid NT at lowest permissible level
17 - 18	Open one-level suit; rebid NT and jump one level
19	Open one-level suit; rebid 3NT
20-22	Open 2NT
23-24	Open 2♣; rebid 2NT
25-27	Open 2♣; rebid 3NT

Strong-Two Opening Bids

2♦, 2♥, 2♠: 8 playing tricks, the tricks either mainly, but not exclusively, in one suit or a two-suiter
Not Forcing, (acceptable to play as forcing for one round)

2NT: 20 to 22, balanced

2♣: 23 high-card points or stronger

Responses to 2♣:

2♦ = Negative Response, less than 8 points **or an Ace and a King**

Alternatively, 2♦ may be used as a relay or waiting bid asking the opening bidder to further describe his strong hand. When used this way, 2♦ does not limit the responder's hand in any way.

2♥, 2♠, 3♣, 3♦ = **Positive response, 8+ pts or an Ace and a King, 5-card or longer suit.**

2NT = Positive response, **8+ pts or an Ace and a King**, denying 5-card **or longer suit.**

Slam Investigation:

Gerber 4♣: In response to an Opening 1NT or 2NT or when opener rebids 2NT after opening 2♣
Asks for Aces

Responses to Gerber 4♣:

4♦ = 0 or 4 Aces

4♥, 4♠, 4NT = 1, 2, 3 Aces respectively

5♣ continuation asks for Kings: 5♦ shows 0 or 4, 5♥ shows 1 etc.

Blackwood 4NT: asks for Aces

Responses to Blackwood 4NT:

5♣ = **0 or 4 Aces**

5♦, 5♥, 5♠ = 1, 2, 3 Aces respectively

5NT continuation asks for Kings: 6♣, 6♦, 6♥ = 0/4, 1, 2 etc.

Note: To ask for Kings, the partnership must have all 4 Aces

Three-Level or Higher Opening Bids:

All 3-Level Openings

Not more than 9 high-card points with 7-card suit

All 4-Level Opening Bids:

Same criteria as 3-Level but usually an 8-card suit

5♣, 5♦: Same criteria but exceptional length

3NT Opening:

Long solid minor suit, AKQxxxx or better; may have an outside stopper.

4NT Opening:

Asks for specific Aces

Responses to 4NT Opening:

5♣ = no Ace; 5♦, 5♥, 5♠, 6♣ = the Ace of the bid suit; 5NT = 2 Aces

The Take-Out-Double:

When right-hand-opponent opens with a one-level suit bid

Double shows (a) Opening hand values

(b) Shortage in the suit opened (but see 1NT overcall etc. below)

(c) Tolerance (at least 3 cards) for each of the other three suits

(d) Denies 5-card major (except when very strong or suit too weak to show)

(e) Forcing, except as indicated below.

Responding to Take-Out-Double:

Except with exceptional strength in Opener's suit, the take-out-doubler's partner must bid.

One-Level Suit bid (or **forced Two-over-One**, e.g. 1♠ Dbl Pass 2♣) shows

0 to poor 8 points, Not Forcing, 4-card suit (occasionally even 3 cards)

Jump bid in a Suit:

e.g. 1♦ : Dbl : Pass : 2♥

Good 8 to 11 points, Not Forcing, 4-card suit or better

Double Jump in Suit:

e.g. 1♦ : Dbl : Pass 3♥

Similar to a Jump bid only closer to game

10 to 12 points, Not Forcing, 4 card suit or better

1NT: 5 to 9 points, with Stopper in suit opened

2NT: 11 or 12 points, with Stopper in suit opened

3NT: 13 + points, with Stopper in suit opened

Jump to Game in a Suit:

Sufficient strength and/or shape for Game

5-card or longer suit usually; could be 4-card major suit occasionally

The Cue-Bid:

i.e. 1♦ : Dbl : Pass : 2♦

Game-going or invitational

Choice of two trump suits; both majors after a minor suit is opened

Pass: Exceptionally strong holding in the suit opened

or

Long, good holding in suit opened plus outside strength.

Take-Out-Doubler's Rebids:

Pass: When your TOD showed minimum values and partner makes a non forcing bid.

Raise of Partner's Suit

Since partner's bid was forced, Doubler should raise one level lower than if partner had made a voluntary response

e.g. 1♦ : Dbl : Pass : 1♥

Pass : 2♥

Doubler has 16 to 18 points

1♦ : Dbl : Pass : 1♥

Pass : 3♥

Doubler has 19/20 points

Bid a New Suit:

Good 16 to 18 points, 5-card or longer suit, Not Forcing

Jump in a new Suit (Jump Shift)

19 + points, 5-card or longer suit, Not Forcing but Highly Invitational

1NT: good 18 to 20 points, with Opener's suit stopped

2NT: 21 to 23 Points, with Opener's suit stopped

One-Level Overcall:

5-card or longer biddable suit

8 to 15 points, Non Vul

Opening hand values, Vul

Simple Two-Level Overcall:

5-card or longer, good, biddable suit

Decent opening hand values, Non Vul

Better than an opening hand, Vul

Responses to Simple Overcalls:

Natural; Change of Suit Not Forcing

Jump Overcalls:

16 to 18 points, Solid or semi-solid 6-card or longer suit

Double Jump or Higher Overcalls:

e.g. 1♦ : 3♥ or 1♦ : 4♥

Preemptive, similar to opening preempts

1NT Overcall:

15 to 17 (or bad 18) points, balanced, with Opener's suit stopped

Protective 1NT, i.e. 1NT after 2 Passes. e.g. 1♦ Pass Pass 1NT

11 to 14 points, balanced

Responses to 1NT Overcall or to Protective 1NT

Natural; Use of Stayman acceptable

Note: After two Passes, as a general principle, bid with lower values than you would in other positions. The aim is not to allow opponents to play at the one-level but to keep the auction open.