

MALENY CONTRACT BRIDGE CLUB

This is the eighth bridge article for members of our club.

Discussion of last week's bidding questions

Last week, you were asked to find a bid on 9 different hands. The first hand was chosen because it is an example of a distribution of the opener's hand where there is no rebid that does not misrepresent the hand. The next 4 hands illustrate two situations where there is value in giving useful meaning to bids that are often unused. The remaining 4 hands are examples of hands where it is important to have partnership agreements. These agreements are often lacking, however.

The aim of considering these hands is not to look for right or wrong answers, but rather to encourage you to be forewarned so that your partnership understandings are improved and your bidding may be able to take advantage of additional information not previously available. Whether you agree or not with the ideas presented, it is a useful exercise to investigate them and make your own decisions on how your partnership should function.

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A Q 9
♥ 5
♦ K Q J 5
♣ J 9 8 6 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	?		

This hand has 5 clubs and 4 diamonds and is known to give a problem finding a rebid that describes your hand following certain responses from your partner. What are your choices?

1 NT: This bid should show a balanced hand and 12-14 HCP. You have the right number of HCP, but your hand is not balanced.

2♣: This bid should show 6 clubs or at least 5 good clubs and a minimum opening. Your clubs are very weak; your partner may pass with a singleton club and 2♣ will be a poor contract.

2♦: This bid shows at least 5 clubs and 4 diamonds with at least 16 HCP and you are too weak. With a weak hand, your partner would have to go to the 3 level with a slight preference for clubs and you probably too high.

1♠: This shows 4 spades and you only have 3.

The point is that, in most natural bidding systems, with 5-4 in clubs and diamonds, you may have to lie with your rebid. Whichever bid you choose, you do not have what your partner expects. This means that, whenever you make a rebid in this sequence, your partner can't be sure that you have what he expects, but your partner will continue bidding with the expectation you have what you claim and only sometimes will that matter.

On this hand, you would probably bid 1 NT as the least of all evils and hope your partner doesn't get carried away thinking you have 2 or 3 hearts.

Now consider what you would bid if your partner responded 1♠ instead of 1♥. Now 1 NT is out but perhaps you could raise 2♠, even though you have only 3 spades. In spades, your singleton heart is likely to be an asset rather than a liability. However, if you bid 2♠ on this hand, your partner can never be sure that you have 4 spades.

Another alternative with the above hand is to open the bidding with 1♦ instead of 1♣, intending to rebid 2♣. This is again a misrepresentation of your hand because that bidding sequence shows at least as many diamonds as clubs and you could find yourself in 2♦ with a 4-2 fit.

South Deals
None Vul

♠ A Q J 7 5 3
♥ A Q 4
♦ 6 5 2
♣ 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	2 ♥ ¹	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	?		

1. Transfer to spades

Here you are in the delightful position of having a very good hand opposite South's 1 NT opening. Game is pretty certain and slam may or may not be on. You make the normal 2 ♥ transfer bid and North bids 2 ♠ as he must. Perhaps you bid 4 ♠ and take a plus score. This is a good option if you have no slam bidding tools. Or maybe you take a gamble and bid 6 ♠. If you play Blackwood or Gerber, you could bid 4 NT or 4 ♣ respectively to ask for aces. With no aces, you would know to stay out of slam, but whenever your partner showed at least one ace, you wouldn't know whether a slam is on. He could have ♠K6 ♥J85 ♦A9843 ♣AQJ with two aces and the king of spades and you need luck to make 11 tricks. Or he might have ♠K64 ♥KJ76 ♦AKJ ♣987 and 12 tricks are certain and 13 should make if they don't lead clubs and the diamond finesse works.

North must make a decision about slam. North does not have any bid available to tell South he has a good hand with 6 good spades and slam interest and would like to get some information from South. Does he think his hand will play well in a slam? Where are his high honour cards? Fewer high cards in clubs means more high cards in productive suits.

An approach some partnerships follow is to use a 3 level response (in a suit) to 1 NT to show a hand with a good six card suit (two of the top three honours) and slam interest. If using this approach, then South would not have bid 2 ♥ as a transfer, but bid 3 ♠ immediately:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	3 ♠		

Nothing is lost by giving a useful meaning to a bid that otherwise has no meaning. The value of a transfer is that it normally means that the opening lead comes up to the strong hand. In this case, North may be just as strong as South so that doesn't apply here.

In response to the 3 ♠ bid, South would try to judge whether his hand was better than minimum, both in HCP and in trick potential given the information from the 3 ♠ bid. South would bid 3 NT or 4 ♠ if he felt his hand was below average. He would bid a new suit, where he had high cards, to signal he felt his hand was above average for his 1 NT bid and give to information about his high cards.

The subtleties of the subsequent bidding are quite advanced and require some experience, but the principle of finding a use for a bid that otherwise does not exist in your partnership agreements is sound. It can only help.

South Deals
None Vul

♠ A 9 5
♥ A 5 2
♦ 8
♣ A K 8 7 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	?		

This hand is like the previous one. There may be a slam or there may not be a slam. A difference is that here, it is not obvious whether we should be playing in clubs or no trumps as well as at what level. If you can, bid 3♣ to show a hand with a good 6 card suit and slam interest. If your partner bids 3 NT, pass and hope no suit, especially diamonds is a problem. If your partner bids 3, bid 3 NT. Having diamond honours is good in no trumps but possibly wasted if playing in clubs. If your partner bypasses 3♦ and bids 3♥ or 3♠, this increases the chances for 6♣. If your partner has no honours in diamonds, he must have all the missing high cards in the other suits (to make up his 15 HCP).

North Deals		♠ A Q 7 4 2		
None Vul		♥ A 9 5		
		♦ A K 3		
		♣ 3 2		
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠
	Pass	?		

With 17 HCP, most players would bid 3♠, inviting game. If South has a maximum for his 2♠ bid, he bids 4♠ and otherwise he passes. This is simple and tries to ensure you bid game with at least 25 HCP in the combined hands and stay out of game with fewer than 25 HCP.

Suppose North bids 3♥. What would this mean? Would it mean that he meant to open 1♥ and is trying to salvage some points? Without any partnership agreement to the contrary, this would be a reasonable assumption. There is no reason to look for a second trump fit.

A strategy followed by many partnerships is to use a new suit bid by North to be a game try, with spades as trumps, but highlighting a suit where shortage or high cards would be well regarded. This approach is called a "long suit game try" and uses an otherwise wasted bid to help South judge whether they should bid 4♠ (accepting the game try) or just bid 3♠. It is commonly used, because close games are won and lost by how the hands fit together rather than simply HCP

After North bids 3♥, suppose South holds ♠ 965 ♥ 1082 ♦ QJ65 ♣ KQ87. Despite having a near maximum 8 HCP for the 2♥ bid, South would be well advised to bid 3♠. Holding 3 small hearts opposite a game try in hearts and nothing good to compensate (like trump honours, aces), South's hand is worth less than his points suggest. 4♠ is almost certain to fail and even 3♠ isn't certain. Suppose, instead, South has ♠ K65 ♥ K8 ♦ 8765 ♣ 9876. Now our 6 HCP and 1 distributional point is looking really good. 4♠ is a very good contract, making if spades are 3-2 and you can safely trump the third round of hearts in dummy before drawing the third round of trumps.

South Deals		♠ A Q 7 3		
None Vul		♥ Q J 8 6		
		♦ 7 5 4 2		
		♣ 8		
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		?		1 NT
	2 ♣ ¹	?		
		1. Natural		

When the opponents interfere over your 1 NT opening, any bid you make is ambiguous unless you have some partnership agreements.

You could pass, but you are unlikely to do well defending 2♣ when you have support for any other suit and 9 HCP.

What does a double mean? Does it suggest you want to play in 2♣ doubled? Is it like a takeout double

asking your partner to bid another suit? Does it mean that you wanted to bid 2 ♣, Stayman, yourself? Or does it imply something else? How strong are you likely to be to double?

Different partnerships have different agreements and you should have some agreement yourself. A simple option is that a double of a two level overcall of 1 NT implies enough HCP to invite game and no other convenient bid. It does not imply a 4 card major, but your partner would bid one if he had it. A double then takes care of a lot of different hands you may have (like this one) and, with the right hand, your partner can pass and defend 2 ♣ doubled. With this agreement, you may miss out on playing in 2 ♣ doubled if you have lots of clubs and this would be the price you pay for the convenience of being able to show a hand with some vales and no clear cut bid.

What does 2 NT by North mean? Is it invitational with a stopper in the opponent's suit or might you not have a stopper? Or might it mean something else? You need an agreement.

What would a bid of 2 ♥ by North mean? Would it imply 5 hearts, or might it be a transfer to spades? How strong would North be? What about 3 ♥? A simple agreement is that you do not use transfers if the opponents compete and any 2 level suit bid is to play (i.e. at least a 5 card suit and less than game values). South would be expected to pass or possibly compete to the 3 level if the opponents continued bidding. Any suit bid at the 3 level shows 5+ cards in that suit and is forcing to game.

South Deals None Vul		♠ 8 6 4 ♥ K J 6 ♦ K 9 6 4 ♣ Q 6 3		
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	2 ♠ ¹	?		1 NT
	1. Natural			

This hand is similar in a way to the previous one. However, the hand does not have as good support for the unbid suits. We are no longer able to play at the 2 level in a suit contract. If a double shows this sort of hand (invitational or stronger with no obvious alternative bid), we have that hand, but we would be lucky to land into a makeable contract opposite any but the right 1 NT opening. South needs a fairly specific hand to have a good play for 3 NT (something like ♠ AQ ♥ A98 ♦ AQ752 ♣ J72). Having the option to double to show this type of hand would be useful and may enable you to reach 3 NT opposite the right hand. However, bidding is probably a lot riskier than passing and hoping to defeat 2 ♠. It would be wise to only double with a good invitational hand.

South Deals None Vul		♠ 6 4 2 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ 9 ♣ K Q J 5 4 3		
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	2 ♠ ¹	?		1 NT
	1. Natural			

We would like to be able to play in 3 ♣ on this hand. However, we may have decided that 3 ♣ is forcing so we can't do that. Lebensohl is a bridge convention designed for hands like this. If your partner's 1 NT opening is overcalled by 2 of a suit, a bid of 2 NT is not an invitation to 3 NT but an artificial bid asking your partner to bid 3 ♣ which you would pass. Unlike the other bids with new meanings from the earlier hands, this convention takes a bid that has a natural meaning and replaces it with a conventional meaning. If you use this convention, which is ideal on this hand, you lose the


ability to use 2 NT as invitational to 3 NT. This is a useful convention, but only if your partner is going to remember it and only if you think (as many experts do) that you will gain more often with the artificial meaning than you lose with the natural meaning.

South Deals None Vul		♠ 3 ♥ 8 7 5 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ A Q J 8 7 5			
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	
	2 ♠ ¹	?		1 NT	
		1. Natural			

Provided 3 ♣ by North is forcing with your partnership agreement, that is an ideal bid here. South will usually bid 3 NT with a spade stop and that is a sensible contract. Without a spade stop, your partner will bid something else. If North really has no HCP in spades, you will have a combined 28-30 HCP all in hearts, diamonds and clubs (missing at most Q♥ or the two red jacks) and 6 ♣ is likely to be on.

Problem for next week

We are now going to change the subject back to declarer play.

West Deals None Vul		♠ A 9 ♥ A K 9 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ A K 10 6			
					
		♠ 8 3 ♥ Q J 7 6 4 ♦ A Q 10 2 ♣ 9 7			
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	
	2 ♠ ¹	Dbl	Pass	4 ♥	
	Pass	4 NT ²	Pass	5 ♦ ³	
	Pass	7 ♥	All pass		
		1. Weak, 6 spades, 6-10 HCP			
		2. Blackwood, asking for number of aces			
		3. One (or four) aces			
		Lead: ♠ K			

After South jumps to 4 ♥ in response to North's double and has the missing ace, North takes a slight gamble and bids 7 ♥.

At trick 1, North South wins the A♠. You win the next two tricks with A♥ and Q♥, both opponents following. What is your plan now to justify your partner's confidence in your play?