

LESSON 1

'BACK TO BASICS'

Balanced Hands

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The aim of the next two weeks of lessons is to solidify your basic knowledge to date and streamline your bidding to aid memory.

What are the Balanced shapes?

Balanced shapes are **4333**, **4432** & **5332**. With each of the above shapes you will either open with a **no-trump** bid or rebid no-trumps. You will note that none of these shapes include a single suited hand (6+ cards) and rarely include hands with two suits (5/4) that would make them more suitable for a trump contract. It will not be possible to cover all of the suits with honour cards every single time you have a balanced hand, so don't concern if you bid no-trumps with a weak suit (two small) as it is more important to show shape than it is to worry about individual suits. Anyway, good partners always cover your bad suits!

The cornerstone of all bidding systems is the 1NT and 2NT opening bids. Following is an outline on all of the balanced shapes and how to deal with there opening and subsequent rebid. You will note that all of them fall into 2 or 3 HCP point ranges. This way partner is in the best position to place the contract accurately. Make sure the bid matches the points as all no-trump bids (except one) are non-forcing which means partner may pass.

12 -14 High Card Points

Minimum hands require minimum rebids. In this point range you must open with 1-suit and **rebid no-trumps at the same level as partner's response**. If they respond at the 1-level bid rebid 1NT, if they respond at the 2-level, 2NT.

Example

♠A8

♥AJ964

♦KJ2

♣765

If West opens 1♥ with this hand and hears a 1♠ response, rebid 1NT.

If partner responds 2♣, rebid 2NT.

If you open with 1-minor and partner responds low enough for you to bid a major at the one level, do so in preference to rebidding 1NT (unless 4333).

15 -17 High Card Points

Open 1NT. All hands that are balanced **even those with a 5-card major** should be opened 1NT. Do not be concerned about weak suits as the most important

thing for partner is to know your strength and shape. It is also interesting to note any hand that contains a 5-card suit should be upgraded by one point.

Example	♠82 ♥KQ953 ♦QJ2 ♣AK5	This hand contains a 5-card major, a poor doubleton in spades and only 15 HCP. Open 1NT.
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18 -19 High Card Points

This point range fits perfectly between a 1NT and a 2NT opening bid. You will note that this range is exactly the same as that of a jump shift (19+), therefore treat it as such. Open 1-suit and **jump shift into no-trumps.**

Example	♠KQ2 ♥A98 ♦KQ74 ♣AJ2	Open 1♦ and if partner responds one of a major, jump shift to 2NT. If partner responds 2♣, jump shift to 3NT. Do not open 2♣.
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The term to 'jump shift' means to **jump** an entire level of bidding and to **shift** to a different suit or no-trumps.

20-22 High Card Points

Open 2NT with any 5-card suit (even a major). Remember to upgrade your hand one point if you hold a 5-card suit. Because of the delicacy needed with hands in this point range, it is acceptable to open 2NT with any 5422 shape.

23-24 High Card Points

Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT.

25-27 High Card Points

Open 2♣ and this time jump rebid to 3NT.

Responding with Balanced hands

Whilst NT bids are synonymous with balanced hands for the opener, this is not the case for responder. With balanced hands it is important for responder to bid their suits. If a trump fit proves elusive, responder may bid NT subsequently.

Responding with lower of 4's

Many of you are familiar with the term 'lower of 4's'. This is slightly ambiguous and should probably be referred to as 'cheaper of 4's'.

Example	♠K872 ♥98 ♦K74 ♣AJ102	Partner opens 1♥. Despite clubs being the lower ranking suit & responder holding sufficient HCP to respond 2♣, the correct response is 1♠.
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THE GOLDEN RULE OF BIDDING

There are two types of bids in bridge. One type that forces partner to call again and one that allows partner to pass;

NEW SUIT - a suit bid that has never been called by either player in your partnership

OLD SUIT - a suit bid previously by your partnership

When a player shifts to a NEW suit, partner must bid again regardless of HCP strength. If a player bids an OLD suit, whether as a raise of partner's suit or a repeat of their own suit, partner is allowed to pass at their next turn.

No-trump bids are another example of a non-forcing bid (partner is allowed to pass).

EXAMPLES OF OLD SUITS & NEW SUITS

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥ (new suit)
2♣ (old suit)	No

Responder's 1♥ bid is an example of a NEW suit (not been called before). Opener must bid again. Opener's 2♣ bid is an example of an OLD suit. This allowed responder to pass (no bid) at their 2nd call.

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥ (old suit)
No	

Despite responder's jump to 3♥, as this was an example of OLD suit, therefore opener was not forced to bid again.

Both opener and responder can call a NEW suit.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥ (new suit)
1♠ (new suit)	2♠ (old suit)
No	

NEW SUIT BY RESPONDER AT THE 1-LEVEL

We have discussed the basic concept that responder requires only 6+ HCP to respond. You will note that as a NEW suit is forcing upon partner, there is no upper limit on responder's strength. The aim is to search for a trump fit by bidding a NEW suit.

The minimum requirement for a NEW suit by responder at the 1-level is;

- 6+ HCP
- 4+ cards in the suit bid (major or minor suit)

The minimum requirement for a NEW suit by responder at the 2-level is;

- 10+ HCP
- 4+ cards in the suit bid

Note: The only time either opener or responder is required to hold a minimum of 5 cards in a major suit (♥/♠) is as the opening bidder. Responder's bid may show only a 4-card suit as may opener's 2nd bid.

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE AFTER PARTNER OPENS 1♦?

(1)	♠AJ96 ♥Q832 ♦87 ♣432	(2)	♠AJ754 ♥AQ863 ♦3 ♣A4	(3)	♠Q10952 ♥AQ72 ♦953 ♣4	(4)	♠A2 ♥QJ952 ♦AQ9 ♣874
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- (1) You hold 7 HCP. Enough to respond 1♥ (lower of 4's)
- (2) You hold 15 HCP. Enough HCP to bid game, but stay low. Bid only 1♠ (higher of 5's)
- (3) You hold 8 HCP. You have two possible suits to bid. Choose the longer suit. 1♠
- (4) You hold 13 HCP. You could bid 2♥ but best to conserve space. Bid 1♥ - forcing.

What is your response after partner opens 1♥?

(1)	♠J96 ♥32 ♦KQJ87 ♣A32	(2)	♠AK75 ♥63 ♦KJ5 ♣A432	(3)	♠Q976 ♥2 ♦KJ953 ♣874	(4)	♠AQJ92 ♥Q2 ♦AQJ109 ♣4
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- (1) You hold 11 HCP. Sufficient HCP to bid a NEW suit at the 2-level. Bid 2♦.
- (2) You hold 15 HCP. As a NEW suit is forcing there is no purpose to jump. 1♠.
- (3) You hold 6 HCP. With only 6 HCP, you cannot bid 2♦. Bid 1♠.
- (4) You hold 15 HCP. Holding two 5-card suits you choose the higher-ranking. 1♠

The 1NT response

A 1NT response promises 6-9 HCP and is a catch-all bid used when all of responder's other options are not satisfied. A 1NT response denies the following;

- No trump fit with opener
- Insufficient HCP (10+) to respond a NEW suit at the 2-level
- No 4 card suit biddable at the 1-level

Responding to Opener's 1NT & 2NT rebids

When opener rebids 1NT or 2NT following a 1-of-a-suit opening and a 1-of-a-major response they will normally have 2 or 3 cards in responders major. If responder has a 6-card suit they are confident of a trump fit so they can choose the appropriate level.

On the other hand, when responder holds a 5-card major they aren't sure if opener holds 2 or 3 cards. Repeats of the major usually show 6 cards. How do they find a 5-3 fit?

One of the answers would be to play 2♣checkback but that would require learning some new system. Quite a good method, if you don't want to learn complicated system, is a completely natural method:

- non-jump repeats show 5 cards suits and are non-forcing
- non-jumps in a new suit show 5/4 and are non-forcing
- all jumps show forcing and show 5 cards or 5/4 shape

Example

♠82
♥QJ953
♦QJ2
♣AK5

Following your response of 1♥ to partner's 1♦ opening you hear a rebid of 1NT showing 12-14 bal. Your rebid of 3♥ shows 5 cards GF.

Example

♠KJ982
♥Q953
♦2
♣Q85

You respond 1♠ to 1♦. Opener rebids 1NT. Your next bid of 2♥ is not forcing and shows 5♠ & 4♥


Example

♠82
♥KQ953
♦92
♣AKJ5

You reply 1♥ to 1♦. Partner rebids 1NT. To show a game-forcing (GF) hand with 5♥/4♣ you must jump to 3♣.

D 1	N undefined ♠ AK4 ♥ AKQ ♦ 953 ♣ K942	W N E S 1♣ P 1♦ P 2NT P 3NT P P P
W undefined ♠ QJ97 ♥ 108 ♦ K872 ♣ J106		E undefined ♠ 852 ♥ J9543 ♦ 6 ♣ AQ73
	S undefined ♠ 1063 ♥ 762 ♦ AQJ104 ♣ 85	
		3NT N NS: 0 EW: 0

2 D	N undefined ♠ J10764 ♥ Q962 ♦ AK3 ♣ K	W N E S P 1♠ P 1♦ P 3♥ P 3NT P P P
W undefined ♠ 98532 ♥ 107 ♦ J ♣ A9852		E undefined ♠ A ♥ KJ54 ♦ 10875 ♣ J643
	S undefined ♠ KQ ♥ A83 ♦ Q9642 ♣ Q107	
		3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

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