



Adventures in Bridge, Inc.

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

PO Box 14915 ♠ Tallahassee, FL 32317

www.advinbridge.com

(46) Advanced Notrump: 14-16 Point 1-Notrump

Date: Feb 2013 ©

Level: Intermediate/Advanced

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

The best auction in all of bridge is 1N – 3N. And the best Opening Bid in all of bridge is 1N. 1N is a great opening bid for both *constructive* and *destructive* reasons. A 1N Opening Bid is an excellent start to a constructive auction because we get to make use of our best bidding tools: Stayman, Transfers, etc... A 1N Opening Bid is also a powerful destructive bidding weapon because it simultaneously preempts the bidding and conceals information from the opponents.

Bridge players love to open 1N. And if we love to open 1N and it is an effective opening then we should strive to do so as often as possible. By defining our 1N Opening Bid to show 14-16 points with a balanced hand we maintain the general strength of the opening bid while allowing ourselves to open the bidding with it more often.

Modern Style of Bidding

Another reason to adjust our Opening 1N Bid to 14-16 points is that in the *modern style* of bidding we want to bid game with a combined 24 points - we generally open the bidding with 12 points and force to game with 12 points. Traditionally, when we play a 15-17 point 1N Opening Bid, Responder drives to game if they have 10 plus points. That requires a minimum of 25 combined points. To be in line with modern bidding style of having 24 combined points for game, if we have 14-16 points for our 1N Opening Bid we can still force to game with 10 points as Responder. This turns out to be a very effective way of bidding.

Let's look in more detail at how we respond to a 14-16 1N Opening Bid:

- We still use Stayman and Transfers to look for Major suit fits.
- We invite game with 9 points.
- We force to game with 10-16 points.
- We invite slam with 17-18 points.
- We bid slam with 19+ points.



Opening 1-Suit Inferences

Now that we are opening 1N with our 14-16 point balanced hand we need to consider how this changes our 1-Suit opening bids. In general, this does not affect our bidding with unbalanced hands. We still open our primary suit with those hands, no matter the strength (*Bucket*) of the hand. But if we have a balanced hand our bidding will change.

Let's look at how we now bid our balanced hands:

1X-1Y-1N	11-13 points (or 12-13 points)
1N	14-16 points
1X-1Y-2N	17 to 19- points
2N	19+ to 21 points

Aggressive Options

In order to open a 14-16 point 1N Opening Bid you do not need to agree to open all balanced 11 HCP hands. You can agree to still open only your balanced 12 HCP hands, thus defining:

1X-1Y-1N 12-13 points

But one of the advantages of playing a 14-16 NT is that you get to open bidding more aggressively if you choose to. This is up to your partnership and your style, but is something that is becoming more and more popular each year.

Opposite a Positive Freebid

When partner invites game by showing 10+ points and a 5-card suit, which is what a new suit in competition shows, we have to decide if we are going to accept the invitation or not. When we play a traditional 15-17 point 1N Opening, then the minimum balanced hand shows 12-14 points (open 1X and rebid 1N.) In this case, we accept a game at the top of range and decline at the bottom:

- Accept the invite with a good 13 or 14 points,
- Decline the invite with 12 or most 13.

When we play a 14-16 point NT then we will have opened 1N with almost all of the balanced hands that would accept an invitation. Since we won't be bidding game with most of our balanced hands unless partner has a game forcing hand it is going to make it much easier to judge what to do in many competitive auctions.

2N Openings

Traditionally, a 2N opening bids have shown 20 to 21 points. But in the *modern game* players have learned to upgrade more and more of their 19-point hands to be 2N Opening Bids. If you look at most advanced/expert tournament players' convention cards (even those playing a 15-17 1N Openers) you will see that their 2N opening range is 19+ to 21. This works nicely with the fact that when we play a 1N Opening as 14-16 points then we play a 2N Opening as 19-21 points.



2N Rebids (1X-1Y-2N)

Another benefit of improving our 1N and 2N opening bids is the 1.5 NT opening bid (1X-1Y-2N auctions.) When we have a traditional 1X-1Y-2N we are showing 18-19 points opposite 6+ points. In this case the Responder almost always bids game. We have a combined 24+ points, so we only pass 2N when we really didn't have a response the first time. In this case 2N is *virtually forcing!* When we play a 14-16 1N Opening then the 2N *Rebid* shows 17 to a bad 19. That means that we have a combined 23+ points when partner has responded. This makes a lot more sense for our combined values to be "inviting" with 2N. It will still be extremely rare to pass 2N, but it makes more sense that we will use 2N to strive to get to 3N and not have it be *virtually forcing*.

Conclusion

You can see that this small change to our 1N Opening range has ripple effects through our entire balanced hand bidding system. And this is what makes the 14-16 point 1NT so valuable – it's a simple change resulting in improvements across many parts of our constructive and competitive bidding system. Give the 14-16 point 1N Opening bid a try; you will be happy with what you find!