



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(77) Planning as Responder

© AiB

Level: 2

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

When partner opens the bidding, we want to make a plan for how we are going to describe our hand. To effectively plan the bidding, we want to think about what kind of hand partner is likely to have as well as what information about our hand we want to show to partner. (We also want to think about what information we want to get from partner – what questions we want to ask them.)

As part of making this plan we will want to keep in mind who is the Captain of the auction – who should be giving information and who should be seeking information.

Now, let's make a plan for each of the 1-level openings that partner might make – 1-minor, 1-Major, 1NT.

Partner Opens 1-minor

When partner opens the bidding with 1-minor we want to try to visualize the hand.

Hand Types and Bucket (Values) that Partner (Opener) might have:

- Balanced, 12-14 points,
- Balanced, 18-19 points,
- Unbalanced 12+ points (12-17 or 18-21 points) – This could be a 1-, 2-, or 3-suited hand.

Note: If partner is semi-balanced they must choose to show it as balanced or unbalanced.

We next want to focus on finding Major suit fits:

- When partner opens a minor it is our (Responder's) responsibility to start the process of looking for a Major suit fit.
- If we have no 4-card Major we have no interest in a Major (we will only play in a Major if Opener is 5-6 and plans to reverse and show their shape – in that case, they will tell us about this during the auction.)
- If we have a 4-card Major we will bid it and find our 4-4 fit if Opener has a matching 4-card Major – they will raise (we will usually do this on the first round of the bidding, but we may find ourselves looking for another 4-4 fit on the second round of the bidding.)



- If we have a 5-card Major we will bid it (respond, showing 4+ cards) and then use tools to look for a 5-3 fit if we do not immediately find a 5-4 fit. We want to have these tools in mind (New Minor Forcing, 4th Suit Forcing, Support Doubles) before we make any initial response.
- If we have a 6-card minor we will plan to bid and then rebid our suit. The level at which we will rebid our suit will depend on the strength of our hand as well as the type of hand partner shows (and values.)

We won't continue into all the technical details of every auction that is possible, but the examples we have discussed above paint a good picture of what we should be considering (focusing on) as Responder. Making a simple plan before we make our first call will help us manage the auction as it progresses – or if help us be prepared if something unexpected happens.

Note: When partner opens the bidding with a minor we will frequently be the Captain of the auction (partner will often have a balanced hand and/or we will not be in a 2/1 GF very often.) This means Responder will be the Captain most of the time.

Partner Opens 1-Major

When partner opens the bidding with 1-Major it is somewhat easier to visualize their hand than when they open 1-minor.

Hand Types and Bucket (Values) that Partner (Opener) might have:

- Balanced, 12-14 points (5332)
- (Rare) Balanced 15-17 is possible for some partnerships, though it is better to open 1NT.
- Balanced, 18-19 points (5332)
- Unbalanced, 12+ points (usually 12-17 or 18-21)

Note: If partner is semi-balanced they must choose to show it as balanced or unbalanced.

Raising Partner's Major & Finding Other Major Suit Fits:

Raising Partner – immediately or delayed.

- Jacoby 2NT – Game Forcing with 9+card fit
- Splinter – Game Forcing with 9+card fit
- 3-card Game Forcing – 2/1 Game Forcing
- 4-card Limit Raise – Jump Raise or Conventional (Bergen, etc)
- 3-card Limit Raise – Using 1NT Forcing (or Semi-Forcing)
- Constructive Raise
- Limping Raise – Bidding to 2M by going through 1NT.



Looking for fit in the other Major suit:

- We look for a fit in the other Major by responding cheaply: 1♥ - 1♠.
- Making a 2/1 Game Force: 1♠ - 2♥.
- Making a 2/1 Game Force: 1♠ - 2-minor. (To see if Opener can rebid 2♥ and find a 4-4♥ fit.)
- Making a 1NT Forcing (Semi-Forcing) 1♠ - 1NT. (To see if Opener can rebid 2♥ and find a 4-4♥ fit.)
- Other hands may start with 1NT Semi-Forcing well.
- 3/1 Invitational: 1♠ - 3♥.

With hands that do not have interest in a primary Major suit fit then we show our values: by bidding 2/1 with a game forcing hand (into a minor) or 1NT Semi-Forcing (Forcing) with an invitational or minimum hand. This allows Opener to further describe their hand.

Note: Often there will be joint Captaincy, depending on how the auction proceeds.

Opener Opens 1NT

When partner opens 1NT we already know their hand type and values (bucket) – balanced with 15-17 points.

Finding Major Suit Fits

- Stayman
- Jacoby Transfers
- Texas Transfers
- Smolen

When we do not have interest in a Major we have some ways to show our values and some other methods for showing minor suit length.

Note: As the Responder we are the Captain when partner opens 1NT.

Conclusion

When partner opens the bidding, we should take a moment to think about what partner has shown (hand type, values, Major suit holdings) and what our goals are for the auction. We can then use our tools to explore Major suit fits and whether to bid game or not. Thinking ahead and making a plan will help us be prepared to have a good constructive auction.