

The Opening Bid

The first person to bid anything other than a pass is called the opener and their partner becomes the responder.

Unless you have an exceptionally strong hand or a massively distributional hand it is unlikely that the opener will know what the right contract will be. Consequently, we must enter into a conversation (with bids only please – no table talk) with partner to explore all the options.

But first what do you need to open? 12 points using our High Card Point Count (HCP) is generally regarded as enough to “Open” the bidding. Please note that this is a partnership agreement and there is no-where in the Rules of Bridge that even talks about HCP. Indeed, there are some partnerships that do not use the HCP to evaluate their hand. There are some who use the losing trick count instead, more later. However, everybody knows the HCP count and if you do too then you will be able to play with anybody else.

OK. So you have added up your HCP's and have come to more than 12. If it is between 12 and 21 and you are unbalanced then you should open a suit at the 1 level ie 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠. You should not bid anything higher as you or your partner may need as much bidding space as you can to fully describe your hands.

Opening 1 of a Major

Five or more cards in a major (♥ or ♠) suit is going to get you off to a good start. As these score much more than the minors(♣ or ♦). So it is a good idea to tell partner the good news as quickly as possible.

You would open 1♠ with all of these hands;

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| a) ♠ AKQJ2 | b) ♠ AKQJ2 | c) ♠ 65432 |
| ♥ Q53 | ♥ AK83 | ♥ AKQ5 |
| ♦ 432 | ♦ 2 | ♦ KQ6 |
| ♣ 432 | ♣ Q32 | ♣ 86 |

In Bridge the length of the suit is more important than the quality of the suit when deciding on the opening bid.

Partner must, as responder bid your suit again if he has ≥ 6 Points and more than three Spades. Responder knows that between you have a fit, by that we mean at least 8 cards in that suit (5 + 3). This means that the opposition will have 5 or less in spades and this is an admirable suit to become trumps. A 7 card suit is also more than the

opposition but only by one and this is risky to become trumps but may be necessary as a last resort.

You will have noticed I hope that I gave responder >6 points and not >6HCP. This is because if we are going to play in a suit contract Responder's hand becomes stronger if it is distributional ie has a doubleton, singleton or a void. So we give them extra distributional points. You can add 1 extra for a doubleton, three for a singleton and 5 for a void. The total of the HCP + the distributional points becomes "Total Points (TP)". Surprise surprise!

Responder would support partner by bidding some number of spades after the opener bid 1♠ with any of the following hands;

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| a) ♠ 1098 | b) ♠ 543 | c) ♠ 987 |
| ♥ K842 | ♥ AKQ42 | ♥ - |
| ♦ Q865 | ♦ 87 | ♦ Q8642 |
| ♣ 86 | ♣ 987 | ♣ 98765 |

Opening 1 of a minor

As much as we would like to have the majors and spades in particular, this will not happen most of the time. So if you can't open a major because you do not have 5 cards then you have to open a minor but which one?

The current way considered to be the best is opening your longest suit. If both the minors have the same number of cards then if you are 4-4 open 1♦ and if you are 3-3 open a Club.

Opening Bid	Hand
1♣	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 74 ♦ 764 ♣ KQ53
1♦	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 74 ♦ KQ53 ♣ 764
1♦	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 7 ♦ KQ53 ♣ 7643
1♣	♠ AKQ3 ♥ 742 ♦ KQ5 ♣ 764

In all of these hands we are hoping that partner has 4 spades. This would give us the comfortable 8 card fit. Consequently partner as responder has an obligation to bid his 4 card major at the earliest opportunity. **IF HE HAS MORE THAN 6 HCP** (They must **PASS** if they have less than 6 HCP and **MUST** bid if they have 6+.) If responder has 4 Hearts and 4 Spades they should bid Hearts and let opener bid Spades if he has them.