

Lesson 2 – Part 2 - Responding to 1NT Opening Bid An Easy System for Beginners.

Important: These rules apply when your partner **opened** the bidding with 1NT. This lesson explains how the **responder** should bid.

Responder should count points as HCP (High Card Points), for now.

Points	Analysis:
0-7	Partscore. You and partner do not have game level.
8-9	Invitational hand. Game level is possible with 16 or 17 points by opener.
10+	Game Level. You and partner have game level points (in 3NT or 4♥ or 4♠) because partner has shown a minimum of 15 pts.

This analysis is based on your hand, put together with partner's opening bid of 1NT. The responder to a 1NT opening bid is designated the "*Captain*." The responder is steering this ship, so to speak. The responder is the one with the most responsibility to ensure the partnership gets to the best level that is attainable.

Category 1 (0-7 HCP) – keep the bidding low:

Pass, unless you have a 5-card major (or longer).

With a 5-card major, bid the major, **2♠** or **2♥**. That is usually the end of the bidding and the final contract. (See note* below for one exception.)

Please note that the Opener may have a doubleton in your 5-card major suit, which gives your partnership only 7 trump. It is preferable to have 8 trump, but sometimes you are not able to find that fit easily. This is one of those times. You take what you get! The reasoning behind this is: With Responder having fewer than 8 points, it is advisable to be in a trump contract with only 7 trump together, rather than in a 1NT contract with such few points. Little trump cards are stoppers and can take tricks! Therefore, your weak hand may be more useful for taking tricks in a trump suit even though you have only 7 trump. Your hope is that your partner has 3 or 4 in that suit, but there is no guarantee of that. Your partner can open 1NT with a useless doubleton.

Opener's Rebid: **Pass**, except for this one situation, which is rare*.

Super-Accepting! *If Opener has the maximum number of points allowed to open 1NT (17) and the maximum number of cards (4) in the same major suit bid by the Responder, s/he should bid **3♠** or **3♥** to show this maximum and the 9-card fit in trump. Then Responder can decide whether to bid to game level (**4♠** or **4♥**) or pass. With 9 trump together, your hands have more strength than just points can show you. However, with very few points, it could still be difficult to take 10 tricks. Opener is inviting you to consider game level. Opener is showing his maximum strength hand and the 9-card fit in trump. If Responder has a singleton or a void and has points in the higher range of that lowest category (say, 6-7 pts), game level could be there. Judgment is needed by responder to pass or raise to game.

Category 2 (8-9 HCP) - invite to game:

With 8-9 points and a balanced hand (no 5-card major), bid **2NT**. If Opener has 17 pts, they should raise it to 3NT. Otherwise, Opener should pass. (With more experience, Opener may choose to bid 3NT with 16 pts, using judgment.)

With a 5-card major, bid the major at the 2 level (**2♠** or **2♥**). Opener should pass unless they can Super-Accept. See Page 1. You may take 10 tricks and make game, but it's better to be cautious for now. It is less confusing for beginners to learn simple bids to start.

Category 3 (10+ HCPs) - take it to game:

With 10+ pts and a balanced hand, raise the bid to game level, 3NT.

With a 5-card major, bid the major at the 3 level (**3♠** or **3♥**). Opener should consider this "forcing." Opener has a choice whether to bid 3NT or **4♠** or **4♥**. Knowing that Responder has 5 of the major, Opener should choose the trump suit with 3 or 4 in Responder's major, or 3NT with only 2 in Responder's major (no 8-card fit).

With 10+ pts and a 6-card major, Responder should bid to game immediately (**4♠** or **4♥**). Responder knows that Opener has at least 2 of every suit to open 1NT, so they have a minimum 8-card fit in a major guaranteed. Responder should not give Opener a choice for 3NT.

Minor suits: As responder, with 6 cards or more in a minor suit and 10+ pts, jump to 3 of the minor. Opener can then decide to bid 3NT with stoppers in the other three suits or pass. There are some hands that are very difficult to bid and it is impossible to show a sample of every hand you will ever get. Sometimes you must rely on your own judgment and take a chance. Experience in bidding and playing will give you more skill in making those difficult judgments.

Note: As soon as you feel comfortable enough with bidding and playing and have some experience and confidence, your next goal should be to incorporate Stayman and Jacoby transfers into your bridge bidding "toolkit." Using Stayman & Jacoby is a more accurate way of bidding and allows the Opener to become the declarer more often. It's usually an advantage to keep the stronger hand (the Opener's hand) hidden with the weaker (Responder's) hand in view to the opponents as dummy. Also, the Stayman convention will help to find an 8-card fit in a major when the suit is split with four cards in one hand and four in the other. This Beginner system should be used only temporarily.