

Lesson #12 – No Trump Bids and Strategies

Note: **The Pocket Guide for Beginner Bridge** gives a summary of Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, Blackwood and Gerber. Please refer to it and review it, if necessary.

Review Points:

1. When you overcall opponent's bid of a suit with a NT bid (e.g., 1NT or 2NT), you should have stoppers in opponent's suit. Otherwise, use another bid, perhaps a Double.
2. When responding 2♦ "waiting" to a 2♣ opening bid (meaning a very strong hand), trust each other to continue bidding until game level is reached in a major or 3NT. A total of 25+ pts should be guaranteed by responding 2♦. There is no need to jump in the 2nd round to show points, as points have already been shown to be at 25+. Game level may not be reachable in a minor suit as that requires the equivalent of 29+ pts.
3. An opening bid of 1NT shows a balanced hand in the range of 15-17 pts. An opening bid of 2NT shows 20-21 pts. To show a balanced hand with 18-19 pts, open in a minor suit first, then jump to 2NT. To show a balanced hand with 22-24 pts, open 2♣ first, then bid 2NT. To show a balanced hand with 25-27 pts, bid 2♣ and then bid 3NT.
4. When a player opens with 1NT and partner transfers into a major, super-accept when having the maximum number of points in that range (17) and four cards in the major. Super-accepting means jumping a level.
5. Once a player knows there is a fit in a suit and that suit will be the final contract, re-evaluate the hand and count dummy pts. Bid accordingly to show accurate point count.
6. When your partner opens 1NT and there is an intervening bid by your RHO, the responder (you) can use the double to show "stole my bid." See Lesson #11 for more information on that.

Please note that there are different ways of responding to a NT opening bid to show 5-4 in the majors and 5-5 in the majors. This is the method I teach as it is simple and easy to learn, compared to many other systems.

As you advance more, you may prefer to use the Smolen convention which is more accurate and helps to make the 1NT opener become the declarer. However, you must have at least game points to use Smolen.

Sometimes it's difficult to assess exact point count because, with 5-4 in the majors, you often have a better chance at reaching game level because you have additional dummy points for shortness in the other two suits, once you've found a fit in one of the majors. Good judgment helps!

Note: Responding hands of 5-5 and 5-4 in the majors do not come up very often after a 1NT opening bid. That's one reason why it's difficult to remember how to bid them. I've tried to make this as easy as possible and I've given hints so it will be more likely that both partners will remember the sequence.

Responding to 1NT or 2NT when having 5-4 in the majors.

Use Stayman to begin. If an 8-card fit in a major suit is found, support the suit and bid to the level based on point count.

If Opener rebids 2♦ showing no 4-card major, bid the 5-card suit next.

Summary: Responding to 1NT with Stayman, then bidding another suit (the 5-card suit) shows that you have 5-4 in the majors.

Responding to 1NT or 2NT when having 5-5 in the majors.

Use Jacoby Transfer to transfer partner into hearts. (Opener bids 2♥.)

Next, bid 2♠. Opener can choose between the two suits. Adjust the level to show points.

Summary: Responding with a Jacoby transfer and then bidding the other major shows 5-5 in the majors. Partner can choose the suit, as he has at least 3 cards in one of those suits, so there is a guaranteed fit in one of the two suits.

With very few points, transfer to the better major and pass. There may be a fit in the other major, but you don't have enough points to bid too high.

To summarize this (so it's easier to remember):

1. Using Stayman and then bidding the other major shows 5-4 in the majors.
2. Using Jacoby transfer and then bidding the other major shows 5-5 in the majors.
3. Always think carefully before you bid!

Responding to 1NT or 2NT when having 6 cards in a major suit:

A simple way is to use Jacoby transfer to transfer to the major, then bid the suit at the appropriate level. Count dummy points because you have a fit in the suit guaranteed and your hand will be the dummy.

The Opener should know that responder must have 6 cards in that suit to command the bid to be in the major.

No matter what, there is no substitute for good bidding and good judgment. You might not always find the perfect bid, but in those cases, try to bid the best you can. Always remember that bridge is a partnership game. Not only will your success depend on what you bid, but also, how your partner interprets your bid. Together, you should find the best contract based on the descriptions of your hands to each other. Bridge is like a puzzle. You're trying to fit the pieces together.