



The Two Goals of Bidding

There are two goals in bidding:

1. The first goal is to find the proper place to play the contract. The priority is to find an 8+ card fit in Spades(♠) or Hearts(♥) also known as the *major suits*.

4 – 4 5 – 3 6 – 2 7 – 1 8 – 0

If you have a major suit fit, you will play in that major suit. If you lack a major suit fit, then if you have stoppers in all four suits you will play in a notrump contract. Lacking stoppers, you will play in your minor suit fit.

2. Deciding how high to bid depends on the strength of the combined hands. Your bids help define the strength of your hand to partner.

What are our Resources?

The first step in deciding if your hand is worth a bid or not is to evaluate how strong your hand is. To do this we start by evaluating our resources. Our resources are:

- Honor cards, the higher the honor card the more valuable
- Length in a suit.
- Short suits (but only in a trump contract)

Long suits are valuable at both trump and Notrump contracts. In a trump contract, a long suit makes a great trump suit. In a Notrump contract you can setup a long suit and take tricks with the small cards. Short suits are only valuable in a trump contract, when you are out of the short suit, you can trump your opponent's winners in that suit!

Valuing Honor Cards

We use high card points (HCP) to give a valuation to the honors that you hold:

Ace = 4 points
King = 3 points
Queen = 2 points
Jack = 1 point

Valuing Long Suits

Length in a suit is also an important factor in evaluating your hand. The longer a suit you have, the better it is as a trump suit, and even if it is not the trump suit, the suit can be established to take tricks. You add one point for each card over 4 in a suit:

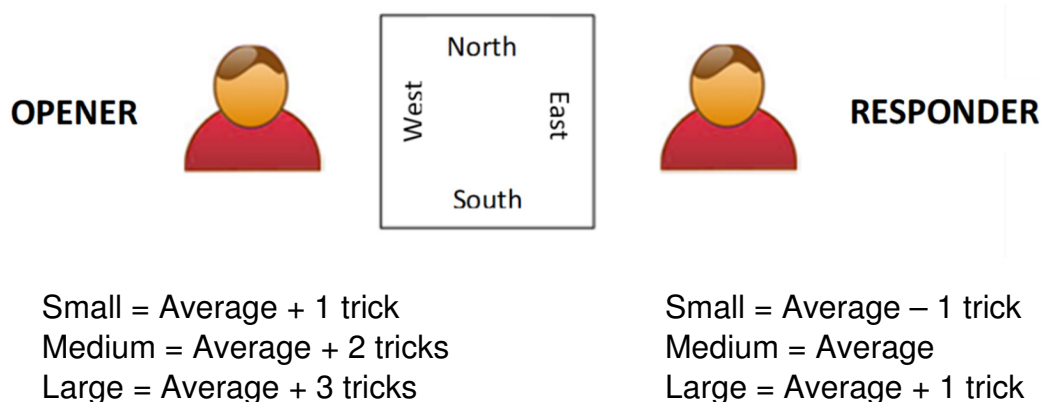
- 5 card suit = 1 point
- 6 card suit = 2 points
- 7 card suit = 3 points

Using hand evaluation

Hand evaluation is used during the bidding to reach the proper contract level. There are 10 HCP per suit, so 40 total HCP, so an average hand is 10HCP. There are 13 tricks, so it takes 3 points or the equivalent of a King on average to win a trick. Our total hand evaluation or total points is found by adding our length points and high card points.

Total Point Valuation

We use our total point valuations to classify our hand as a small, medium or large hand. The meanings of small, medium and large differ depending on if you are opener or responder. Note that difference of each range is 3 points, or about the value of a King:



Example Hand Evaluation

To get your total hand evaluation, you add your HCP to your length points. Every hand of bridge you will count your HCP points and length points to come up with your hand evaluation. You will then use your hand evaluation to determine what bids you will make. Here is an example:

♠ A K J T 3

♥ 6 2

♦ K 6 5

♣ Q J 4

In this hand we have 8 HCP in spades, none in hearts, 3 HCP in diamonds and 3 HCP in clubs for a total of 14HCP. In addition, we have 1 length point in spades so our total hand evaluation is 15 points.

To Open or Not to Open

The first decision to make is whether to open a hand. Average is expected, so this is not an opening bid. To open the bidding, you need 1 trick more than average. **Opener** should take the following steps on **every hand**:

1. Count your cards to make sure you have 13 (done for you online).
2. Sort your cards into suits (done for you online).
3. Count your points (HCP and length points) to get the total value of your hand.
4. Mentally categorize the strength of your hand
 - Average or smaller – pass
 - Small opener 1 trick better than average (12 - 14 points)
 - Medium opener 2 tricks better than average (15 - 17 points)
 - Large opener 3 tricks better than average (18+ points)

Note: the difference between small, medium, and large is 1 king or 1 trick

Every call you make has a meaning, even when that call is pass! When you pass you are telling partner that none of the other bids you could make would describe your hand. When all the calls before you have been pass, and you have 12 total points or more, you will make an opening bid.

What are the priorities for opening bids?

1. Open 1NT (if you have 15-17 HCP) and a balanced hand.
2. Open 2NT (if you have 20-21 HCP) and a balanced hand.
3. Open 1 of a major suit (hearts or spades) with a 5 card or longer suit.
4. Open 1 of your best minor.

Since we must open all hands with 12 total points or more, opening one of a minor is a catch-all bid. Since you must open something, you may open one of a minor with a 3 card suit.

We will cover the details of all these opening bids in future lessons.

Responding to an opening bid

When your partner opens the bidding, you are called the **responder**. Since your partner has opened the bidding, partner has a better than average hand. That means that you usually will have less than partner has; in fact, you will typically have less than an average hand. So, you may respond to their bid even with less than an opening hand. Responder should take the following steps on **every hand**:

1. Count your cards to make sure you have 13 (done for you online).
2. Sort your cards into suits (done for you online).
3. Count your points (HCP and length points) to get the total value of your hand.
4. Mentally categorize the strength of your hand
 - Passing hand (no response), 2 tricks less than average (5 points or fewer)
 - Small responder hand, 1 trick less than average (6-9 points)
 - Medium responder hand, an average hand (10-12 points)
 - Large responder hand 1 tricks better than average (13+ points)

Note: the steps opener takes and that responder takes are *identical*, EXCEPT, the size of hand that is considered small, medium, and large is quite a bit lower for responder than for opener.

Determining Total Partnership Points

Bidding accurately to the proper level is very challenging. You can see only one of the partnership hands, so the bids partner makes describe partner's hand - how strong it is (their total points), and their hand shape (where their long suits are, and how long they are). This requires discipline; you need to do the same thing with the same hand every time. Good bidding also requires judgment; many situations have no set rules. This makes bidding prone to error and misunderstandings. There are partnership agreements which make it easier, but you and partner must have the same ideas! Bidding is a language, if you are speaking English and your partner is speaking French, you will not communicate. Both English and French are legitimate languages, but successful partnership bidding requires using the same language as partner.

It is very important to bid your hand as accurately as possible. You are using a very limited bidding language. The information you give to your partner will help them to determine where and how high your partnership should play. The two most important questions you and partner answer with the bidding is where you should play (in a trump suit or notrump) and how high your partnership belongs (part score, game, or slam).

Use Hand Strength Categories to Determine Level

Opening bids and responding bids have been divided into ranges to help in describing your hand to partner. The level the partnership can safely bid up to is determined by these ranges.

	Small Opener Hand	Medium Opener Hand	Large Opener Hand
Small Responder Hand	Part Score	Maybe Game	Game
Medium Responder Hand	Maybe Game	Game	Game
Large Responder Hand	Game	Game	Slam