



Top Priority - NOTRUMP OPENINGS

When you open the bidding you first look to see if your hand fits the requirements to open 1NT or 2NT.

NT Opening Requirements

To open with either 1NT or 2NT your hand must meet the following requirements:

1. A balanced hand, no singleton, no void and no more than 1 doubleton.

If your hand qualifies, then use the following HCP requirement:

1. 1NT = 15-17 HCP
2. 2NT = 20-21 HCP

You only open 1NT or 2NT if your hand has one of these three distribution patterns:

4 - 3 - 3 - 3	4 - 4 - 3 - 2	5 - 3 - 3 - 2
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What is your Opening Bid?

1. ♠AQJxx ♥KJx ♦Ax ♣xxx _____
2. ♠AQJx ♥Kxx ♦xx ♣AJxx _____
3. ♠Ax ♥xx ♦KQxx ♣AQJxx _____
4. ♠KQx ♥QJx ♦Qxx ♣KQxx _____
5. ♠Jx ♥xxx ♦AKQx ♣KQJx _____
6. ♠AJx ♥Axx ♦AQx ♣Kxxx _____
7. ♠KQxxx ♥AJ ♦Kxx ♣Jxx _____
8. ♠AJx ♥KQxx ♦Kxx ♣Kxx _____

Answers:

1. This hand fits the requirements, open 1NT.
2. This hand has 15 HCP, no singleton or void, only one doubleton. This meets the requirements to open 1NT.
3. This hand has 16HCP, but has two doubletons, so it is not balanced. Open your longest minor, 1♣.
4. This hand has 15HCP, and is balanced. Open 1NT.
5. This hand has 16HCP, and is balanced. Open 1NT.
6. This hand has 18HCP, and is balanced. It doesn't meet the HCP requirements to open 1NT or 2NT. Instead open your best minor, planning to jump shift in NT on your second bid. Open 1♣.
7. This hand is balanced, but only has 14HCP, open 1♠.
8. This hand has 16HCP and is balanced. Open 1NT.

NT Opening Bidding Ladder with balanced hand

When you hold a balanced hand, you want to describe your hand to your partner as a notrump type of hand. How you do this is based on the high card point range of your hand:

HCP	Opening Bid
12-14	Open 1 of a suit, then rebid 1NT
15-17	Open 1NT
18-19	Open a 5-card major, then raise 1NT to 2NT or Open 1 of a minor, then jump to 2NT
20-21	Open 2NT
22-24	Discussed in a future lesson
25-27	Discussed in a future lesson

How High to Bid Over 1NT Opening. Responder is Captain and Chief Decision-maker.

Once you open 1NT, you have described your hand very concisely to partner, and have limited your hand strength. Partner now knows how to continue in the auction, and so is the “captain” of the auction. The final contract has two parts, what suit (or no trump) and how high.

Responder looks at shape and strength of their hand to determine action. The following table shows how responder decides how high to place the contract based on their point count.

Responder gets to count HCP and length points to come up with their “points”:

Responder Points	1NT Opener HCP			Bidding Target
	15	16	17	
0 - 7	22	23	24	Partscore
8	23	24	25	Invitation
9	24	25	26	Invitation
10-15	25	to	32	Game
16	31	32	33	Small Slam Invite
17	32	33	34	Small Slam Invite
18	33	34	35	Small Slam
19	34	35	36	Small Slam
20	35	36	37	Grand Slam Invite
21	36	37	38	Grand Slam Invite
22	37	38	39	Grand Slam

Responding to a 1NT or 2NT opener without a 4+ card major

When responder does not hold a 4 card or longer major suit, responder should be trying to place the contract in a notrump contract at the appropriate level based on total points

Responder Bid	Points opposite 1NT Opener	Points opposite 2NT Opener
PASS	0-7 points	0-4 points
Bid 2NT Game Invite	8-9 points	No room to invite
Bid 3NT	10-15 points	5 -11 points
Bid 4NT Slam invite	16-17 points	12 points
Bid 6NT	18-19 points	13 points

Opener's Rebid strategy following Invitation.

Opener will only have a choice in responses when responder makes an invitational bid of 2NT or 4NT. In those cases, opener should evaluate their hand to decide whether to accept the invitation or not:

- With Minimum (1NT = 15; 2NT = 20) decline any invitation by passing
- With Maximum (1NT = 17; 2NT = 21) accept any invitation

What to do with 18-19 HCP - Balanced

- Open a 5-card major, then raise 1NT to 2NT
- Open 1 of a minor, then jump to 2NT (Jump Shift)

Next Lesson: How to find a Major Fit

In our next 2 lessons will discuss two bidding conventions. A convention is simply assigning an artificial meaning to a bid. These two conventions are used when partner opens 1NT or 2NT and responder has a 4 card or longer major suit:

Stayman Convention – How to find a 4-4 major suit fit.

Jacoby Transfer Convention - How to find 5-3 major fits or invite with 6 card major.