



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(18) Finding Fits

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Level: 2

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General

The most important part of constructive bidding (and many times of competitive bidding) is finding fits with your partner. Specifically, the game of bridge is built around Major suit fits. There are many tools that we use to help us find fits with our partner, and we will review these tools below, but the most important tool for finding good fits with your partner is to use what you know from the auction to help you visualize the hand.

We define a “fit” to be 8-cards or more between both our and partner’s hand. The larger the fit (9-card, 10-card, 11-card, etc.), the easier it is to find that fit. 8-card fits are the most common and are also the most difficult to find. In our constructive auctions, we will generally be looking for 4-4, 5-3, and 6-2 fits.

Major Suit Fits: Opener has a Balanced Hand

Notrump Openers: 1NT (15-17 HCP) and 2NT (20-21 HCP)

When partner opens the bidding with 1NT we have an excellent set of tools that are designed to help us find our Major suit fits. The fact that these tools are so complete and precise is part of why responding to Notrump is one of the easiest parts of constructive bidding (See *Responding to 1NT with the Majors.*) The tools that we use for finding these Major suit fits are *Stayman* (4-4 fits), *Jacoby Transfers* (5-3 fits), and *Texas Transfers* (6-2 fits.)

These tools are used in similar fashion when partner opens either 1NT or 2NT.

Minor Suit Openings with Balanced Hand (rebid Notrump)

When partner opens the bidding with a minor suit, we use a different set of tools to look for our Major suit fits. When Opener has a balanced hand, he can plan to open with a minor and rebid Notrump at his second opportunity (1NT with 12-14 pts or 2NT with 18-19 pts.)

In this case, finding our 4-4 fits are the easiest. Responder bids his 4-card Major and Opener raises with 4-card support.

Example

1♣ 1♠
2♠

Finding our 6-2 fits does not require much effort either. When Opener rebids 1NT (or 2NT), Responder knows that Opener has a balanced hand – with either 2-card or 3-card support for Responder’s suit. Thus, we know that we have at least a 6-2 fit if we have a 6-card suit.

Example

1♣ 1♠
1NT 4♠

Finding a 5-3 Major suit fit requires a bit more work by the Responder. If the auction begins

1♣ 1♠
1NT

and Responder has a 5-card ♠ suit, we need to use a “gadget” to look for a 5-3 fit. This gadget is *New Minor Forcing*, in this case 2♦*.

Example

1♣ 1♠
1NT 2♦*
2♠ 4♠

Note: New Minor Forcing requires invitational or better values.

Major Suit Fits: Opener has an Unbalanced Hand

When Opener opens the bidding with one suit and rebids another suit, he generally has an unbalanced hand. This makes it more difficult to find our fits, because we don’t know if partner has any cards in our suit.

In the case of finding a 4-4 fit, it is still easy – Opener will raise Responder at his first rebid. In the case of 5-3 or 6-2 fits, we need to find out more information about partner’s hand to determine if we have a fit. The way that we do this is by using another “gadget” - *4th Suit Forcing*.

Example

1♦ 1♠
2♣ 2♥*

After making the 4th Suit Forcing bid we will find our 5-3 fit when Opener shows his 3-card support.

Example

1♦ 1♠
2♣ 2♥*
2♠ 4♠

If Opener does not have 3-card support for Responder, he bids as naturally as possible. Responder can then look for a 6-2 fit by rebidding his suit (showing 6-cards) and allowing Opener raise to game with 2-card support.

Example

1♦ 1♠
2♣ 2♥*
2NT 3♠
4♠

Note: 4th Suit Forcing is forcing to game. (Often called 4th Suit Game Forcing.)

Conclusion

Many players get bogged down in trying to memorize many conventions and when they apply. If you keep in mind what our goals are (finding fits) and why conventions can help us do that, then these auctions become much simpler. Remember that *New Minor Forcing* is your gadget for finding out more when Opener has shown a balanced hand and *4th Suit Forcing* is your gadget for finding out more when Opener has shown an unbalanced hand.