

## Constructive Auctions After a Major Suit Opening Bid - Part 2 of 2

This is the fourth tutorial of a 5 lesson series on the Fundamentals of Constructive Bidding. Constructive bidding is defined as auctions with no interference by the opponents.

The purpose of these lessons is for students to learn the concepts behind constructive bidding. I have found that, although many students understand the (often complicated) rules about bidding, they do not understand the reasoning behind these rules. By learning the fundamentals rather than just the rules, a student will be able to more intuitively and comfortably bid, without being confused by the many (sometimes conflicting) rules that may or may not apply. Note that these lessons will not teach any particular system. It will simply teach the fundamentals upon which most bidding systems are built. A student should therefore be able to more comfortably play any of the popular systems.

The series consists of 5 lessons;

- Introduction to Constructive Bidding
- No Trump Auctions
- Major Suit Auctions Part 1
- Major Suit Auctions Part 2 (this lesson)
- Minor Suit Auctions

In the last lesson, you learned how to bid when partner opens 1 of a major and you have support (3 or more cards). In this lesson, I will discuss how to bid when you do not have support.

In all of these lessons, I will assume the reader uses basic hand evaluation techniques. That is, he or she uses the standard 4-3-2-1 method for counting HCP and makes small adjustments for either shortness or length. I now teach, and prefer, the more accurate Bergen methodology, but, because it is not familiar to everyone, I will not use it in these lessons.

### Responding With A Minimum Hand (6-8 points)

Most of the time, you will bid 1NT. This simply announces you have 6-8 points and fewer than 3 cards in opener's suit. It does not promise NT distribution.

Note that you cannot bid 2 of a new suit, because that promises a medium or maximum hand.

If opener has a balanced hand (5-3-3-2, or 5-4-2-2 with scattered honors) and a minimum or medium hand, he should pass. With a 6-card major, opener should rebid it. With an unbalanced hand, partner should bid the second suit, asking you to pass with 3-card support. The one exception is that with 5 hearts and 4 spades and a minimum, opener should pass, because the auction 1♥-1NT-2♠ is a reverse, showing a medium or maximum hand.

There is one other auction of interest. If the opening bid is 1♥, and you have 4 or more spades, you should bid 1♠. I hope you recall from the last lesson that, with a minimum hand and heart support, you should raise hearts and not bid 1♠. Therefore, if you have a minimum hand, you should only bid 1♠ with 2 of fewer hearts.

Some people play what is known as a "Forcing 1NT". If you play that, then opener is not allowed to pass 1NT. However, describing that convention is beyond the scope of this tutorial.

### Responding With a Medium Hand (9-11 points)

These are the most complicated auctions, because you, as captain, need to determine both the best strain (which suit or NT), and whether or not your side has game (if partner has a medium hand, 15-17, or maximum hand, 18+).

The basic approach is for you to bid a new suit (forcing another bid from partner), and then invite or bid game based on partner's next bid. Let's look at some specific cases:

1. If partner opens 1♠ and you have 5 cards in hearts, bid 2♥. Note that the auction 1♠-2♥ promises 5 hearts. Hopefully, after you read the rest of this section, you will see why.
2. If partner opens 1♥ and you have 4 or more spades, bid 1♠. Note that when we get to the discussion of maximum hands, you sometimes bypass a 4 card spade suit if you have a 5 card minor. But if you have a medium (or minimum) hand, you always bid 1♠ rather than 2 of your minor.
3. If you have a 5-card minor and no 5-card major, bid the minor. With both diamonds and clubs, bid diamonds. This preserves bidding room by allowing you to bid clubs later, and allows partner to show a diamond preference at the same level.
4. Otherwise, bid your 4-card minor (even if you have 4 hearts and partner opens 1♠).

What are partner's possible rebids and what do they mean?

1. If partner rebids the major (e.g., 1♠-2♣-2♠), that promises a 6-card suit and minimum opening hand (no more than 14 or 15 points). You should invite with a honor doubleton and a good medium responder hand. Otherwise, you should pass, since it is unlikely your side has game.
2. If partner jumps in the major (e.g., 1♥-2♣-3♥), that shows a medium opening hand with a 6-card suit, so your side has game (since you also have a medium hand). It is your responsibility to make sure you get there. Because partner can jump with a six card suit and a medium hand, a simple non-jump rebid of opener's suit shows a minimum hand. Therefore, when partner rebids their suit, you have a very good idea of opener's hand strength. This is not always true with other auctions.
3. If partner rebids the cheapest NT (e.g., 1♠-2♣-2NT or 1♥-1♠-1NT), that shows a 5-card major and a minimum. Your side probably does not have game.
4. If partner reverses (e.g., 1♥-2♦-3♣), your side has game (partner has shown a medium or maximum hand). Again, it is your responsibility to bid game.
5. Similarly, if partner jump shifts (partner has a maximum opener), your side has game. However, in this case, the jump shift establishes a game force (because your side has enough to bid game even if you had a minimum response). Therefore, both partners are forced to bid until a game contract is reached.
6. If partner bids a non-reverse new suit (e.g., 1♥-2♣-2♦), you should either pass or correct to 2 of the opener's major (showing only 2-card support). With good support of opener's 2<sup>nd</sup> suit, you can raise to 3. Your side often does not have game. Most often partner has a minimum opener. However, on occasion partner can have a medium opener, but is unable to show it because he or she cannot jump in their suit or jump shift (not strong enough). Fortunately, the times when partner has a medium hand are somewhat rare, because partner will open 1NT with many medium hands.

Let us discuss the auction 1♠-2♥ and see why it promises 5 hearts. If you, as responder, only have 4 hearts, you virtually always have a 4 card minor. You don't have 4 spades (you would have raised), so unless you are exactly 3-4-3-3, you have to have a 4 card minor. Therefore, you bid your 4 card minor. Opener now has the opportunity to bid 2♥ over your minor. Therefore, requiring responder to have a 5 card heart suit in order to bid 2♥ makes it easier for your side to determine how many hearts there are between the two hands.

## Responding With a Maximum Hand (12+ points)

Your choice of first response is usually identical to what you would do with a medium hand. However, the auction is less complicated from your perspective, because you know your side has game. You can keep making forcing bids (e.g., another new suit) until you determine what the best strain is.

One special circumstance is if partner opens 1♥ and you have 4 spades and a 5 card minor. You should bid your minor first. You will then bid your spades over opener's rebid. Since spades are a new suit, partner is forced to bid again. Bidding this way describes your distribution more precisely and makes it easier for your side to find the correct strain.

### Quiz

Your partner opens 1♥. For each hand below:

- Do you have a minimum, medium, or maximum hand?
- What is your plan regarding deciding the contract strain and level?
- What is your next bid to help you achieve your plan?

1. ♠ xxx

♥ xx

♦ AKxxx

♣ xxx

- Minimum
- No game possible unless partner has maximum
- 1NT

2. ♠ Qxxx

♥ xx

♦ KQxx

♣ xxx

- Minimum
- No game possible unless partner has maximum; spades is a possible strain.
- 1♠

3. ♠ xxxx

♥ xx

♦ KQxx

♣ Qxx

- Minimum
- No game possible unless partner has maximum; spades not as likely because of weak suit
- 1NT or 1♠

4. ♠ xxxxx

♥ xx

♦ AKx

♣ xxx

- a) Minimum
- b) No game possible unless partner has maximum;  
spades is a possible strain; 5 card length overcomes weak spots
- c) 1♠

5. ♠ AQxx

♥ xx

♦ xx

♣ Axxxx

- a) Medium
- b) Game possible if partner has medium or maximum
- c) 1♠ You are not strong enough to bid 2♣ followed by 2♠

6. ♠ AQxx

♥ xx

♦ xx

♣ AKxxx

- a) Maximum
- b) must force to game  
spades possible  
bid 2♣ followed by showing your spades  
partner will assume 5+ card club suit and 4 spades
- c) 2♣  
if partner bids 2♦ or 2♥, bid 2♠  
if partner bids 2NT, bid 3♠  
if partner bids 2♠, that is a reverse and establishes a game force. Bid 3♠ and is a slam try  
(partner cannot pass as you are in a game forcing auction). That is stronger than 4♠.

7. ♠ AQxx

♥ xx

♦ xxx

♣ AKxx

- d) Maximum
- e) must force to game  
spades possible  
cannot bid 2♣ first --  
partner will assume five card club suit if you then rebid 2♠
- f) 1♠  
if partner bids 2♦, bid 3NT  
if partner bids 2♥, bid 3♣  
if partner bids 2♠, bid 3♣ (partner may only have 3 spades)  
if partner bids 2NT, bid 3NT

8. ♠ Axx

♥ xx

♦ Kxxx

♣ Kxxx

a) Medium

b) Game possible if partner has medium or maximum

c) bid 2♣

if partner bids 2♦, bid 2NT

if partner bids 2♥, pass

if partner bids 2NT, pass

if partner bids suit past 2♥ (reverse showing medium/maximum) --

force to game

9. ♠ Axx

♥ xx

♦ Axxx

♣ AKxx

a) Maximum

b) Must force to game

c) bid 2♣

if partner bids 2♦, 2♥, or 2NT, bid 3NT

if partner bids suit past 2♥ (reverse showing medium/maximum) --

slam is possible