

## Basic Bidding 102 with Paul Soloway

## Lesson Four

## FINDING THE BEST CONTRACT

SAMPLE

First 6 pages of 15 pages

## Fits

Most hands will be played in notrump or in a major suit fit. We like to have at least an eight-card fit in our suit, although a seven-card fit will do in a pinch if there's no better place to play. To review, the preference for fits is:

## (1) The 4-4 fit:

dummy  
A K x x

declarer  
Q J x x

## (2) The 5-3 fit:

dummy  
A K x

declarer  
Q J x x x

## (3) The 6-2 fit:

dummy  
A x

declarer  
K Q x x x x

## (4) The 4-3 fit:

dummy  
A K x

declarer  
Q J x x

## (5) The 5-2 fit:

dummy  
A x

declarer  
K Q J x x

The 5-2 fit is usually not a good fit. In this case the suit is strong, so it's OK.

In this lesson, we're going to look at some auctions and analyze how we can find the right fit. We also need to know when to play in notrump, so before we begin let's discuss notrump responses and rebids.

1) When we respond 1NT to an opening bid, this shows a weak hand of 6-10 points. This is a "forced" bid and does NOT promise stoppers in the unbid suits (this is logical, because stoppers in the three unbid suits would take you over 10 points) and it does NOT promise a balanced hand. For example:

Opener	Responder
A x x x x	x x
K x x	A Q J x x
K Q x	x x x x x
J x	x
1 S	1 NT
pass	

Responder was "forced" to respond with 1NT because he is not strong enough to respond at the two level with 2H, and he has only two-card support for his partner so he can't raise spades. He can't pass, because he has 7 HCP and a fairly good hand. Thus, by the process of elimination, he must bid 1NT, which hardly describes his hand. However, the 1NT response is perfectly in keeping with basic bidding, and Responder has nothing to be ashamed of even though 1NT is a poor contract with these cards. Sometimes the opponents help us out:

Opener	Opp	Responder	Opp
1 S	pass	1 NT	pass
pass	2 C	2 H	3C
3 H	(all pass)		

Having "limited" his hand (in other words, he already denied more than ten points with his 1NT response), Responder later bid his heart suit. In the 3H contract, declarer lost one spade, two diamonds and one club, making 3!

2) Just as Responder must bid notrump without having the perfect hand, so, too, must Opener sometimes rebid notrump without having all the suits stopped. For example, suppose you hold:

```

x x x
A K x
x x
A Q x x x

```

You	Partner
1 C	1 D
?	

You cannot raise diamonds; you cannot bid a major suit; and you cannot rebid 2C (which shows a six-card suit). You are "stuck" with a 1NT rebid. I have seen people rebid 2C only to encounter this

awful scenario:

Partner  
 Q J x  
 x x x x  
 A J x x x  
 x

You  
 x x x  
 A K x  
 x x  
 A Q x x x

While it's true that 1NT isn't a great contract, it's far superior to 2C, which you might have to play doubled! In fact, the whole hand was:

Partner  
 Q J x  
 x x x x  
 A J x x x  
 x

West	East
A x x	K T x x
J T 9	Q x x
K x	Q T x x
J T 9 x x	K x

You  
 x x x  
 A K x  
 x x  
 A Q x x x

Against 1NT, West led the HJ. Declarer was very fortunate and eked out seven tricks by taking one spade, three hearts, one diamond and two clubs. At the other table, the 2C contract failed when declarer lost two spades tricks, a heart, a diamond, and three club tricks, down two!

So the bottom line is that the 1NT rebid, like the 1NT response to an opening bid, does not absolutely guarantee stoppers in the unbid suits.

3) With game-going hands, however, we have the luxury of bidding "scientifically." Therefore, when we respond with 2NT or 3NT, we absolutely promise stoppers in the unbid suits AND a balanced hand. With game-going hands, there is plenty of room for investigation, and no need to jump in notrump just to describe the point count. Suppose, for example, you pick up:

You  
 x x  
 A K J x  
 A Q J x  
 x x x

Partner	You
1 S	?

Good bidders are patient bidders. What's the big hurry to bid game?

Partner	You
1 S	2 D
3 D	?

You still cannot bid notrump because you have no club stopper, so you bid hearts next (where your strength lies). The whole hand and auction:

You	Partner	You
x x	1 S	2 D
A K J x	3 D	3 H *
A Q J x	3 S **	4 S ***
x x x		

\* I have a heart stopper.

\*\* Well, I can't bid notrump, but I do have a nice spade suit.

\*\*\* I can't bid notrump either, and I can't rebid my diamonds because I have only four. Let's hope for the best in 4S!

West	East
x x	J T x x
x x x	x x x
x x x	x x x
A K x x x	Q J T

Partner  
 A K Q x x  
 Q x x  
 K T x  
 x x

Partner loses one spade and two clubs, making four. Against 3NT, the opponents can take the first five club tricks. Notice that if you respond with 2NT, your partner has no reason in the world not to raise to 3NT.

Bidding is like having a conversation. It's a fine-tuned language, where "words" that are chosen with care can make bridge an art instead of a mere game.

Let's look at some auctions together.

(1)

Opener	Responder
A 8 7 6 3	5
A Q T 2	K J 9 8 4
A 2	K 9 8 4
7 2	T 8 5
1 S	1 NT
2 H	3 H
4 H	pass

Responder's 1NT response is "forced." Opener still hopes to find a major-suit fit, so he rebids his four-card heart suit. This 2H-bid is not "forcing," but Responder's hand has now become very good, and he is charmed to raise to 3H. Opener carries on to the good 4H game.

This idea works the other way around as well:

Opener	Responder
A 8	K J 9 8 4
A Q T 2	K 9 8 4
A 2	T 8 5
T 9 8 6 4	5
1 C	1 S
1 NT	2 H (not forcing)
4 H	pass

This time it's the Responder who bids a second suit. Opener's 1NT rebid does not deny a four-card heart suit (because Opener cannot rebid 2H, which is a reverse bid, unless he has 17 or more HCP). Responder may bid a second suit in a minor as well. This time he is not searching for a major-suit contract, but is simply attempting to improve the part-score contract. For example:

Opener	Responder
A 8	Q J T 8 4
A Q T 2	4 3
A 2	Q J T 6
T 9 8 6 4	K 5
1 C	1 S
1 NT	2 D (not forcing)
2 S	pass

This time Responder did not have the good fortune to find four-card support for his second suit. 2S, a five-two fit, is nevertheless a better contract than 1NT.

(2)

Opener	Responder
A Q J T 7 4	2
K 9 8	Q 5 4 2
8	A 9 7 5
A 6 3	8 7 5 4
1 S	1 NT
2 S	pass

Opener's rebid of 2S shows a six-card suit. Responder passes 2S because he has a weak hand and no fit for spades. It's obligatory to pass when you know you have no fit anywhere, and no chance for game. On this hand, the six-one fit is the best spot.

(3)

Opener	Responder
A T 9	K Q J 5 3
7 6	A 8
9 6 4	8 2
A K Q J 3	9 6 4 2
1 C	1 S
2 S	4 S
pass	

Notice Opener's good 2S rebid. A 1NT rebid is silly with two suits wide open. A 2C rebid is tempting, but the object here is to get to game in a major, so showing support is paramount. Notice, too, that Responder goes right to game; his "ten-count" (i.e., ten HCP), is worth more because most of his points are in his long suit and he's located a fit.