

LESSON 4

Responses to an Opening Bid of One in a Suit



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

The Bidding

The purpose of responder's bid

Responder can't make an immediate decision about the level and strain of the contract after an opening bid of one in a suit. Responder needs more information from the opener. Responder makes a bid and waits to hear a further description of opener's hand.

The messages of responder's bid

Responder can't sign off (except by passing) since responder doesn't know enough about opener's hand to make a final decision. Much of the time, responder makes a forcing bid by bidding a new suit and then waits to get a clearer description from the opener. Sometimes, though, responder makes an invitational bid, giving opener the opportunity to either bid again or pass. This is done with a hand of 6 to 9 total points.

Responder classifies strength

Responder puts the hand into one of four categories:

- 0 to 5
- 6 to 9
- 10 or 11
- 12 to 16 (or more — very strong hands are not treated separately at this point)

With a weak hand of 0 to 5 total points, the students won't need you to tell them what to do — they'll be happy to pass.

With a minimum hand of 6 to 9 total points, responder bids in a way that sounds minimum. Responder can't afford to get too high on the Bidding Scale.

With a medium hand of 10 or 11 total points, responder bids in a way that sounds medium, moving a little higher on the Bidding Scale if necessary.

With a maximum hand of 12 or more total points, responder bids in a way that indicates maximum strength, moving even higher on the Bidding Scale if necessary.

Raise by responder

The focus of a raise by the responder is on the limit raise. With 10 or 11 total points and support for opener's major suit, responder jumps the bidding one level, from 1♥ to 3♥ or from 1♠ to 3♠. If the opening bid is in a minor suit, 1♣ for example, and responder does not have a new suit to bid, responder jumps from 1♣ to 3♣.

With 12 or more total points and support, responder first bids a new suit and then supports partner.

The forcing raise is discussed in *The Finer Points*. With support for partner's suit and 12 or more total points, playing forcing raises, responder would jump one level on the Bidding Scale. Since this is a forcing bid, opener is expected to bid again. With 10 or 11 total points and support, responder would bid a new suit and show support on the rebid.

The Play

Suit establishment through length

There are many times when declarer needs to develop additional tricks to make the contract. In Lesson 3, we discussed developing extra tricks through the promotion of high cards. In this lesson, students see the advantage of the power of long suits and look at developing tricks through length.

Giving up the lead

Students are shown that you often must give up one or more tricks to the opponents when developing additional tricks through length. Sure tricks in other suits are retained, whenever possible, while developing the extra tricks. The guideline, as in building tricks through promotion, is *take your losses early*.

Distribution of the opponents' cards

An odd number of missing cards will tend to divide as evenly as possible; an even number of missing cards will tend to divide slightly unevenly.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“When the opening bid is 1NT, opener paints a clear picture of a balanced hand with 15, 16 or 17 HCP. When the opening bid is one of a suit, opener could have a balanced or unbalanced hand with as few as 13 or as many as 21 total points. Before deciding on the level and strain for the contract, responder needs more information. Most of the bids that responder makes are forcing, waiting for a further description of opener's hand. Some of responder's bids are invitational, giving opener a chance to bid again or pass.

“To help responder choose an appropriate response, responder’s hand is classified into one of four categories, depending on the strength:

0 to 5
6 to 9
10 or 11
12 or more

“What do you think responder would do with a hand in the 0 to 5 range? (Pass.) There is virtually no chance for game, and responder may get the partnership too high by bidding.

“Before looking in more detail at hands in the other ranges, we need to discuss how responder values a hand when it is known that there is a Golden Fit in a major suit.

“Each player take a suit. Construct the following hand in the middle of the table:

♠ Q J 10 9
♥ —
♦ K 8 7 6 5
♣ J 4 3 2

“I’d like you to consider how you would feel about two different opening bids that I make as your partner. How would you feel about the hand if I open 1 ♠? How does that compare with your feelings if I open 1 ♥?”

The students will prefer the 1 ♠ opening bid since they can see that there is a Golden Fit.

“The happiness you feel about the spade opening has to be translated into the point-count value for your hand. How valuable is the void in hearts when you and I can agree that spades will be trump? Is it as valuable as an ace? (Maybe.) Is it even more valuable than an ace? (Maybe.)”

The students will usually say that the void could be more valuable than an ace. Before they get too carried away, point out that opener might have high cards in hearts, in which case responder’s void loses some of its value.

“This void is given 5 points. Count the value of the hand if I, as your partner, were to open 1 ♠ — high-card points: 7; distributional points: 5 for the heart void — a total of 12 points. Notice that when you give points for the void, you don’t also give points for length. Valuing for shortness is called giving dummy points because you have agreed to have your partner’s *major* suit as trump. Your hand will be dummy when the deal is played.

“Let’s change the hand a little. Take away a low diamond and add a heart.

♠ Q J 10 9
♥ 2
♦ K 8 7 6
♣ J 4 3 2

“A singleton isn’t as valuable as a void when you have a Golden Fit. It’s worth 3 dummy points. If I open 1 ♠, your hand would be worth 10 points: 7 HCPs and 3 points for the singleton heart.

“Now take away a low club and add another heart.

♠ Q J 10 9
♥ 3 2
♦ K 8 7 6
♣ J 4 3

“A doubleton has some value if you have a Golden Fit in a major suit and is valued at 1 point. If I open 1 ♠, you would have 8 points: 7 HCPs and 1 point for the doubleton heart.

“Incidentally, how many spades would you need to support my suit? (Three.) How many cards would you need to support a minor suit? (Five — remind the students that opener could have a three-card minor suit.)

“Let’s consider what you would do if I open 1 ♥. Now you have 7 HCPs and no distributional points. You have both diamonds and spades. However, if you bid diamonds, it would have to be at the two level. Your hand isn’t strong enough to take the partnership that high on the Bidding Scale when you may have no Golden Fit. What might be an alternative? (1 ♠.) You can bid a new suit at the one level to keep things going and hear what partner has to say. Unlike an opening bid in a major suit, you need only four cards to respond in a suit — partner may also have four, and one of you needs to mention the suit to uncover your Golden Fit.

“Take away the ♠9 and replace it with the ♣9.

♠ Q J 10
♥ 3 2
♦ K 8 7 6
♣ J 9 4 3

“You still don’t like my heart suit and you don’t have enough strength to go venturing to the two level. You don’t respond in a three-card suit at the one level, so you can’t bid spades. You can’t pass because opener might have a very strong hand of about 20 points and you’d miss the opportunity for a game bonus. What could you bid at the one level that would solve the problem? (1NT.)

“Let’s see some examples of the responses to a major suit when responder has a hand in the 6 to 9 total point range.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Responding to a Major Suit Opening with 6 to 9 Total Points

Introduction

“When your partner opens with one of a major suit, you may be on your way to finding a Golden Fit. Opener has at least five cards in the suit. If you have three or more, you know the strain that you want to play. With a minimum hand of 6 to 9 total points, support the major suit right away by raising to the two level. If you can’t support your partner’s major, don’t give up. You might be able to bid a spade suit at the one level if partner opens 1♥. If you can’t do this, keep the bidding low (but still moving) by responding 1NT. This bid doesn’t have the same meaning as an opening bid of 1NT. It’s a catch-all bid when you aren’t strong enough to go higher on the Bidding Scale.”

Instructions

“Partner opens the bidding 1♥. Add the high-card points and the distributional points on the following hands and decide what you would respond.

1) ♠ 3
♥ Q J 10
♦ Q 8 7 6 2
♣ J 10 9 8

2) ♠ J 10 7 6
♥ Q 3
♦ K Q 8 7 4
♣ 9 6

3) ♠ K 3 2
♥ J 10
♦ Q J 9 6 4
♣ 5 3 2

HCPs 6

HCPs 8

HCPs 7

Distr. points 3

Distr. points 1

Distr. points 1

Total points 9

Total points 9

Total points 8

Response 2♥

Response 1♠

Response 1NT

“What do all three hands have in common? (6 to 9 total points.) For which of the three hands do you count dummy points? (First hand.)”

Follow-up

Students should be comfortable raising to 2♥ with the first hand. They may want to bid diamonds with the second hand. Develop the idea that the diamonds would have to be bid at the two level. Since responder’s strength is limited, a new suit can’t be bid at the two level. Point out the value of bidding 1♠ — responder is still looking for a Golden Fit. In the third example, point out that 1NT keeps the bidding at the one level and is a bid that responder can make with a minimum hand and nothing else to bid.

Conclusion

“Responder’s hand is classified into one of four categories after an opening bid of one in a major suit. With a minimum range, 6 to 9 total points, responder chooses one of three bids: raising partner’s major to the two level with three or more cards, bidding a new suit at the one level or bidding 1NT.”

EXERCISE TWO: Priorities when Responding with 6 to 9 Total Points

Introduction

“Responder can choose one of three bids with a minimum hand worth 6 to 9 total points. These choices can be prioritized. The priorities are not the same after a major-suit opening bid as they are after a minor-suit opening bid, because one of responder’s aims is to uncover a major-suit fit.”

Instructions

“If partner opens the bidding with 1♥ or 1♠, you have three choices with a hand worth 6 to 10 points. Rank the choices in order of priority.

1. a) Bid 1NT. (3.)
b) Bid a new suit at the one level. (2.)
c) Raise partner’s major suit to the two level. (1.)

“If partner opens the bidding with one of a minor suit, your priorities change. Again rank your choices.

2. a) Raise partner’s minor suit. (3.)
b) Bid a new suit at the one level. (1.)
c) Bid 1NT. (2.)”

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“With a minimum hand of 6 to 9 total points, you have three choices after a major-suit opening bid in the following order of priority:

- Raise the major suit with three-card or longer support.
- Bid a new suit as long as it is at the one level.
- Bid 1NT.

“After a minor-suit opening, the priority of your choices with 6 to 10 total points is:

- Bid a new suit as long as it is at the one level.
- Bid 1NT.
- Raise the minor suit with preferably five-card or longer support.”

EXERCISE THREE: Responding to a Minor-Suit Opening with 6 to 9 Total Points

Introduction

“The aim of the partnership is to find a major-suit Golden Fit. Minor-suit fits aren’t as important because the contract may still be played in notrump. Responder thinks about this when responding to a minor-suit opening bid.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1♦. What would you respond on each of the following hands?”

1) ♠ 9 8 4 2
♥ Q 8 7
♦ K J 4 3
♣ J 3

2) ♠ J 10
♥ J 4 3
♦ Q 9 8
♣ K 9 7 5 3

3) ♠ 9 5 3
♥ Q J 10 8 7
♦ Q 6
♣ J 5 3

Response 1♠

Response 1NT

Response 1♥

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusions

“If you have only 6 to 9 total points and partner opens a minor suit, first look for another suit at the one level. If there isn’t one, you can bid 1NT or support partner’s minor suits.”

EXERCISE FOUR: Responding with 10 or 11 Total Points

Introduction

“With a medium hand, 10 or 11 total points, responder has two choices — to support partner’s suit or bid a new suit. With support for partner’s major, responder jumps the bidding one level (a limit raise). This is not a forcing bid and opener can pass. With no support for partner’s major suit, responder bids a new suit, which is forcing.”

Instructions

“What would responder bid with each of the following hands after partner starts the bidding with 1 ♠?”

1) ♠ 10 9
♥ A Q J 6 5
♦ K 4
♣ 8 6 4 3

2) ♠ J 9 8 4
♥ K Q
♦ J 6 3
♣ K 10 7 5

3) ♠ 8
♥ 10 6 3
♦ Q J 10 8 6
♣ A Q J 9

Response 2♥

Response 3♠

Response 2♦

Follow-up

“In the first example, how can responder be sure that opener will not pass and leave the partnership to play in hearts? (A new suit bid by responder is forcing.)”

Conclusion

“If opener bids one of a major suit and responder has support with 10 or 11 total points, responder jumps the bidding one level, from 1♥ to 3♥ for example.

“If opener bids one of a minor suit and responder has support with 10 or 11 total points, responder first looks for a new suit to bid. Without a new suit, responder raises opener’s minor by jumping one level, from 1♣ to 3♣ for example.

“If opener bids 1♠ and responder does not have support, but has 10 or 11 total points, responder looks for a new suit to bid at the two level.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Responding with 12 or More Total Points

Introduction

“With 12 or more total points, responder bids a new suit even with support for partner’s suit. Responder will have to show this support later when rebidding. With a balanced hand and at least one high card in each unbid suit, responder can choose to bid 2NT on the first bid.”

Instructions

“If responder has 12 or more total points, what will the level of the contract be? (Game.) What bidding message will responder give with all responses? (Responder will force opener to bid until game is reached.) Your partner opens the bidding 1♠. What would you respond on each of the following hands?”

1) ♠ A Q 8 3
♥ A 5
♦ Q J 10 6
♣ 7 6 4

2) ♠ J 7
♥ K Q 10
♦ A J 8 4
♣ K J 6 3

3) ♠ 8
♥ K 5 3
♦ A Q 10 8 6
♣ K 9 6 3

Response 2♦
(Support)

Response 2NT
(No support;
no five-card suit)

Response 2♦
(No support;
unbalanced)

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. You may be asked why responder doesn’t raise directly to game with the first hand. Again, explain it’s part of the bidding framework (it gives responder room to explore slam possibilities). On the second hand, responder has a choice. Refer the students to *The Finer Points* in the text to explain why 2NT is chosen rather than 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥.

Conclusion

“With 12 or more total points, responder first bids a new suit, even with support for partner’s major or minor suit. With a balanced hand and at least one high card in each unbid suit, responder can jump to 2NT.”

EXERCISE SIX: Developing Tricks through Length

Introduction

“There are many times when the declarer needs to develop additional tricks to make the contract. In Lesson 3, one method for developing extra tricks was through promotion of high cards. In this lesson, you will see the advantage of the power of a long suit and look at developing extra tricks through suit establishment.”

Instructions

“Take one suit and put the following cards in the dummy and in declarer’s hand. How many tricks can be developed with each of the following combinations if the opponents’ cards are divided as favorably as possible?”

DUMMY:	1) A 9 6 3	2) A 7 6 4 2	3) K 7 4	4) 7 4
DECLARER:	K 8 4 2	9 5 3	A Q 6 3	A K 8 6 5 2
	Three.	Three.	Four.	Five.

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. It may be helpful to have the students take the remaining cards in the suit and divide them in various ways between the opponents.

Conclusion

“Long suits provide a good source of extra tricks. If the opponents have an odd number of cards, you can expect that they will break favorably, *i.e.*, as evenly as possible. If you have an eight-card suit, you can expect the opponents’ cards to break 3–2. If the opponents have an even number of cards, you can expect that they will break slightly unevenly.”

Each of the pre-dealt deals gives the students a chance to develop extra tricks through establishment of a long suit. The students need to be reminded that this is another good time to apply the saying *take your losses early*. When you need to develop extra tricks, you should do it as soon as possible.

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE SEVEN: Developing Winners in Notrump

(E–Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ 8 5 4 ♥ A 10 5 ♦ 9 7 4 ♣ A 9 5 2										
♠ 7 6 2 ♥ K Q 9 7 ♦ Q J 10 8 ♣ Q 10	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 10 9 ♥ J 8 4 3 ♦ K 3 ♣ J 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 3 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A 6 5 2 ♣ K 7 6 3										

The Bidding

“North is the dealer. Which player would open the bidding. (South.) What would be the opening bid? (1♦.)

“Look at responder’s hand. Can responder support opener’s suit? (No.) Can responder bid a new suit? (No.) What would responder bid? (1NT.) What is the bidding message given by responder’s bid? (6 to 9 total points and no four-card major.) Does opener have to bid again? (No.) If opener doesn’t bid again, what will the contract be? (1NT.) Who’ll be the declarer? (North.)”

The Play

“Suppose that North is declarer in a contract of 1NT. Which player would make the opening lead? (East.) What would be the opening lead? (♠Q.)

“How many tricks must declarer take to fulfill the contract? (Seven.) How many sure tricks does declarer have? (Six.) Which suit provides declarer with the opportunity to develop the additional tricks needed to make the contract? (Clubs.) Which suit should declarer play after winning the first trick? (Clubs.) Why? (Responder needs to develop a club trick while holding winners in the other suits, and responder can prevent the opponents from taking tricks.)

“Pick up your cards and bid and play the deal. Did declarer make the contract? (Declarer should.)”

Remind students to consider their aim — to win seven tricks. There are six sure tricks in the combined hands, so declarer must develop an extra trick. There is no possibility for promotion, but there is a possibility to develop extra tricks in clubs or even diamonds. If the students miss the possibility in diamonds, don’t worry about it. If they do see it, make sure they understand why the club suit offers better chances (a 3–2 break is more probable than a 3–3 break). Students should be reminded to *take their losses early*, playing the ♣A K and losing a club before taking their other sure tricks.

