

Question from J.G.

With all this knowledge from your books, there is still one thing (right now, just one thing!) we still can't seem to agree on, and we need you to help us with this burning issue:

If the bidding has gone either (bracketed item is opponent's bid)

1C (1D) DBL

OR

1D (2C) DBL

We do know that the point count for the negative double by Responder to the opening bid needs to be more points at the 2-level (we think 8+ points).

But, we have conflicting ideas about whether, in either bidding sequence above, the Responder to the opening bid needs to have one or both 4-card majors in order to bid a negative double.

Could you please confirm when/if you need only one or both 4-card majors, and what the point count should be for the Responder's negative double in either scenario.

ANSWER:

1C (1D) Dbl...guarantees BOTH 4-card majors BECAUSE you are allowed to bid 1H or 1S here with ONLY FOUR CARDS in the suit. You promise 6 or more points.

Try not to confuse this with if partner opens 1D and your RHO overcalls 1H. NOW, if you, as Responder, bid 1S, you are guaranteeing five cards in the Spade suit. That is because if you only had FOUR Spades, you would make a negative double. BUT after 1C (1D) overcall, the bid of 1H or 1S only guarantees at least four cards in that suit.

1D (2C) Dbl guarantees one major ...preferably two but you are not guaranteeing it. Yes, 8 or more pts. Because opener now has to bid at the 2-level and she needs a bit more meat from you.

After 1D (2C) Dbl ... if partner picks the wrong major, you should now be able to return to her first bid suit OR be able to now bid NT.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE OPPONENTS INTERFERE IN YOUR AUCTION?

by Barbara & Alex

When I first started to play bridge in April, 1975, it was a whole different era. The opponents did not jump into the bidding nearly as much.

1D (2S) by the opponent promised 13-15 points, so it happened far less frequently. When you opened the bidding with 1NT, a respectful silence would wash over the table and the opponents hardly ever bid, allowing you the freedom to bid intelligently, without annoying interference.

BUT, sadly (!!) those days have gone. The opponents now get in there like a dirty shirt and make your life difficult. The respect and the fear have long gone!

Check out the following situations:

	North 1N	
		East 2D
	South S K65 H Q65 D A1087 C 876	

North-South is not vulnerable and East-West is vulnerable. What should South do? Some of you may decide to bid 2N. It goes pass-pass-pass and you make plus 120 on the score sheet.

What is a better bid? Many of you play stolen bids so if you say Double here, you would be promising a five-card or longer Heart suit. So you decide to pass and East goes down 2 in 2D, giving you a paltry 100 points on the score sheet.

What would an expert do? Experts do not play stolen bids, except over 2C or Double by their RHO (Right Hand Opponent) as 2C does not interfere with Transfers. Most experts would say DOUBLE in the South hand. This should show 8 or more HCP. They call it "showing values." Opener can now pass, turning your double into a penalty double OR opener can bid again.

On the above hand, declarer went down two tricks doubled for minus 500 and NS got a top board.

We strongly recommend that you NOT play stolen bids. Here is a chart of what we recommend. This chart assumes that you are not playing Lebensohl. Click on this and print it.

<https://upload23.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/nt-interference-how-to-cope-pdf.pdf>

Here is another one that came up the next day:

	S A1098 H QJ D AK3 C J764	
S 76 H K8543 D J1087 C 32		S KQ543 H 10972 D 54 C AQ
North South NOT VUL East West VULNERABLE	S J2 H A6 D Q962 C K10985	N E S 1N 2S ?

So, what should South do? If NS were vulnerable and East-West NOT Vulnerable, NS would want to collect the game bonus and score plus 600. But with favourable vulnerability (EW Vul and NS Not Vul), South should be eager to show 8 or more HCP. North, looking at his A1098 of Spades, passes and the score for NS is Plus 500 when East goes down 2. If you had bid 3NT, you would have scored plus 400. Yes, many East's may have found another bid, showing both majors but this pair were not playing any special conventions over the opponent's 1NT opening bid.

Note: We also recommend that you learn either DONT or MECKWELL. Our preference is MECKWELL. I can send you a write-up on Meckwell and/or on DONT if you wish.

Quiz on Defensive Planning by Larry Cohen

Introduction: You should always make a plan as declarer and as defender it's no different. Defensive planning is a little like Ginger Rogers doing everything Fred Astaire did backwards and in heels. It's the same idea, but harder.

As a defender, you don't see all the values for your side and so your plan is going to need to be flexible.

Here's how you go about planning:

1. What information do we have from the auction?
2. How many points can partner have?
3. What does the lead mean?
4. What is declarer going to try to do, looking at the dummy?
5. What should I do to stop declarer from succeeding?

That's a lot of work, but if you put in the work, you will be able to consistently prevent declarer from making or from taking extra tricks on your watch.

Question 1 Scenario: You are East.

Auction: South 1NT – North 3NT – All Pass

The Lead: Partner (West) leads the Spade 6. You play 4th best leads.

The Hands:

Dummy (North):

S AQ2
H J103
D Q532
C Q106

South North

1NT 3NT

You (East):

S J84
H 9876
D 64
C J872

Op. lead by West: Spade 6

Question 1: Roughly how many points does partner have?

1. 0 -5
2. 6 - 9
3. 10 - 12
4. 13 +

Answer: 3) 10-12 **Explanation:** Declarer has 16 +/-1, dummy has 11 and we have 2. That means partner has $40 - 16 - 11 - 2 = 11 +/- 1$.

Question 2

(Scenario, Auction, and Hands remain the same as Question 1)

Question: Looking at the lead, how many spades does partner have?

1. 0 or 1
2. 2 or 3
3. 4 or 5
4. Can't know

Answer: 3) 4 or 5 **Explanation:** Declarer must have at least 2 to open 1NT. It's unlikely partner would lead from a short suit on this auction, so we assume this is fourth best.

Question 3

(Scenario, Auction, and Hands remain the same)

Question: Are there any threats in dummy?

1. Spades
2. Hearts
3. Diamonds
4. Clubs
5. No threat

Answer: 5) No threat **Explanation:** Maybe the opponents have 8 diamonds, but that doesn't exactly strike fear in your heart. Other than that, the dummy isn't clearly worth much in terms of length. Don't guess which suits declarer might have.

Question 4

(Scenario, Auction, and Hands remain the same)

Question: What suit do we think declarer will work on?

1. Spade
2. Heart
3. Diamond
4. Club
5. Impossible to know

Answer: 5) Impossible to know **Explanation:** For declarer's 1NT call, he could have a five-card suit somewhere (or even a six-card suit), but we don't know where.

Question 5

(Scenario, Auction, and Hands remain the same)

Action: Dummy plays small and the S J wins the trick.

Question: What should we play next?

1. Spade
2. Heart
3. Diamond
4. Club

Answer: 1) Spade **Explanation:** It's unusual to lead into the AQ, but less so when we know that this is partner's preferred suit. Declarer can always take this finesse himself so we're not giving away anything. This might have been an easier problem if dummy had the AK. A spade forces declarer to play all the other suits himself.

Question 6: Take a look at the full deal below:

South Deals	♠ A Q 2		
None Vul	♥ J 10 3		
	♦ Q 5 3 2		
	♣ Q 10 6		
♠ K 9 7 6 3	♠ J 8 4		
♥ K 5 4	♥ 9 8 7 6		
♦ K 8 7	♦ 6 4		
♣ K 4	♣ J 8 7 2		
	♠ 10 5		
	♥ A Q 2		
	♦ A J 10 9		
	♣ A 9 5 3		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	
Lead: ♠ 6			

Question: Can declarer make it if you switch suits at trick two? Yes or No?

Answer: 1) Yes **Explanation:** You may need to deal it out to see, but any switch allows declarer to make. On a club or diamond, it's easy. Declarer loses that minor trick and another minor trick later, but has spades protected for each of those attempts and winds up with two spades, three diamonds, three clubs, and a heart. On a heart switch, declarer would need to guess well, but could still potentially make. That's not the important concept. The important part is that partner is the one with the entries and we want to set up partner's best suit.

Partner led his best suit! Your job is to try to keep playing partner's preferred suit even if it may take time to set up. If you play a spade, though, partner can knock out the last spade stopper when he gets in with a diamond and then take two more spades when he gets in later with a heart. A total of three spades, a heart, and a diamond for the defense while declarer has only wound up with two spades, three diamonds a club, and two hearts.

Responsive doubles By Stephen W. Bartlett

Helping partner find a fit (or have a fit).

A responsive double is used under the following circumstances:

1. Your left-hand opponent opens one of a suit.
2. Your partner makes a takeout double.
3. Your right-hand opponent raises his partner's suit.

Your responsive double (a "response" to partner's takeout double) shows two things:

1. At least 8 points, depending on the level to which your right-hand opponent has raised.
2. A choice of two suits for partner. The specific suits depend on whether the opponents are bidding a minor suit or a major suit.

Responsive doubles must be alerted.

Note: Most players also use responsive doubles when partner has made a simple overcall. This extension of responsive doubles will **not** be covered in this article.

Examples

The following examples show responsive doubles:

Example 1

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1H DBL 2H **DBL**

West's double is responsive.

Example 2

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1C DBL 2C **DBL**

West's double is responsive.

Example 3

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1H DBL 3H **DBL**

West's double is responsive.

How High To Go

Players who use responsive doubles generally play them up to the same level as they play negative doubles. (Ed: We recommend through 3S.)

Point Count

Use the same point count requirement that you would use for negative doubles. A good guideline is:

- 6 points at the two-level
- 8 points at the three-level
- 10 points at the four-level

There is no upper limit for responsive doubles.

What Suits Does It Show?

Opponents Are Bidding A Minor Suit

When the opponents are bidding a minor suit, a responsive double typically shows **both majors**. Generally you will have four cards in each.

Example 4

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1C DBL 2C **DBL**

West's responsive double shows both majors, and asks East to pick the suit.

Opponents Are Bidding A Major Suit

When the opponents are bidding a major suit, a responsive double typically shows **both minors**. Generally you will have four cards in each. If you hold the unbid major and a minor suit, do not use a responsive double. Respond in the unbid major suit instead.

Example 5

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1H DBL 2H **DBL**

West's double is responsive.

West's responsive double shows both minors, and asks East to pick the suit. West does not have four or more spades. West should bid spades if he holds four or more.

Responsive Doubles In Action

Example 6

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1C DBL 2C **???**

West's double is responsive.

You're sitting West with each of the following hands:

S Q 8 7 3
H K J 9 3
D 10 8
C 9 6 4

Action on above hand: Make a responsive double to show both majors.

North East South West

1C DBL 2C ???

West's double is responsive.

S Q 8 7 3
H 9 6 4
D 10 8
C K J 9 3

Action: Respond 2S. You cannot make a responsive double without four or more cards in both major suits.

Example 7

North dealer, neither side vulnerable

North East South West

1S DBL 2S ???

You're sitting West with each of the following hands:

S 9 6 4
H 10 8
D K Q 9 3
C A 10 9 3

Action: Make a responsive double to show both minors.

North East South West

1S DBL 2S ???

S 10 8
H K Q 9 3
D 9 6 4
C K J 9 3

Action: Respond 3H. Always respond in the unbid major when you can.

Larry Cohen and Marty Bergen came up with an acronym to help us to remember when a double is responsive. The acronym is called OBAR.

It stands for Opening Bid And Raise.

Your opponents must have made an **Opening bid and Raised** for your double to be classified as a responsive double.

ARTICLE BY PHILLIP ALDER.

South Deals	♠ 8 7 6 3		
E-W VUL	♥ 4 2		
	♦ 7 4		
	♣ A J 5 3 2		
♠ 5 4	♠ K Q J 10		
♥ Q J 10 9 8	♥ 6 3		
♦ 6 3	♦ Q J 10 9 5 2		
♣ Q 10 9 8	♣ 7		
	♠ A 9 2		
	♥ A K 7 5		
	♦ A K 8		
	♣ K 6 4		
West	North	East	South
			2 NT
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	3 NT	All pass	
Lead: ♥ Q			

Oscar Wilde was a somewhat cynical cove. For example, he said, “Everyone who is incapable of learning has taken to teaching.”

I teach a lot of bridge classes, especially during the winter, but I still learn from my classes — often not to make the deals too difficult! For example, I was wishing I had omitted this deal from a class last month when suddenly it became all worthwhile!

How should South play in three no-trump after West leads the heart queen?

North used Stayman in an unsuccessful attempt to uncover a 4-4 spade fit. East was tempted to throw in a three-diamond overcall but realized that it would serve little purpose unless that was the killing lead against whatever contract North-South settled into. Also, because the vulnerability was unfavorable, three diamonds doubled could — and would — have proved expensive, going down two, minus 500.

South starts with five top tricks outside clubs.

So, he needs only four club tricks, not five. Since he has no side entry to the board, he should cash the king and completely duck the second round, not play dummy's ace or jack. (Yes, he could instead completely duck the first round.) Here, East shows out on the second round, so a marked finesse of dummy's jack on the third round brings home the contract.

"Kantar Bridge Lessons I"
By Edwin B. Kantar,
Revised by Barbara Seagram
Here is a hand from the book: (a new hand this month)

S A 9 5	N	S J 6
H A K J 7 5	W - E	H Q 10 8 4 3
D 8 7 6	S	D A 10 9 5
C Q 3		C 8 4
S Q 10 8		
H 9 6		
D K J 5 3		
C J 6 5 2		
	S K 7 4 3 2	
	H 2	
	D Q 2	
	C A K 10 9 7	

North East South West

1S	Pass	
2H	Pass	2S Pass
3S Pass	4C Pass	
4S		

Contract: 4S by South

Opening Lead: **♦3**

BIDDING COMMENTARY: South rebid 2S with only five spades because he and his partner had agreed that bidding 3C next would show extra points. Many people, playing Two Over One, agree to just bid out their shape and those people consider that the rebid of 3C by opener does not show extras. All that matters is that you and partner are on the same page. So, it must be discussed.

DEFENSIVE COMMENTARY: Leading the unbid suit is often a good idea. Partner wins the ace and returns the suit. West plays a third diamond, forcing declarer to ruff.

PLAY COMMENTARY: After ruffing the third diamond, lead a club to CQ, then play S A and back to hand with S K and now ruff a club in dummy. If you try to ruff a club in dummy before playing the S AK, East overtrumps dummy and down you go.

Balancing Quiz by Dr. Bob Vollbracht

Balancing after 1X – P – P - ?

In the balancing seat add 3 points to your hand ("add a King"). A 10-hcp hand is treated as 13 points. Partner can have a good hand unable to bid after opponents open.

Advancer (responder) to this balance bid needs to subtract 3 points ("subtract a King"). For example, an 11-hcp hand is treated as an 8-point hand and will make a simple raise with support.

Great partnerships learn to think alike. Take these quizzes with your partner and agree on your answers. A bidding summary will follow. Let's get started.

Group A: 1D – P – P - ? What is your bid in the balancing position?

1. **S J876 H K87 D K1072 C A9 (11 hcp)**
2. **S KQ76 H KJ7 D K1072 C A9 (16 hcp)**
3. **S KQ76 H AQ7 D KQ72 C A9 (20 hcp)**
4. **S KJ8 H A7 D 8752 C K987 (11 hcp)**

A1 - Bid 1NT. 1NT in the balancing position shows 10-14 hcp.

Most partnerships play systems on over the 1NT balance with 2C as Stayman, Jacoby transfers, etc. Discuss your response structure.

Remember bids in the balancing seat are lighter than in the direct seat and notrump bids are no exception.

A2 - Double. If you were in direct seat, you would overcall 1NT with 15-18 hcp. In the balancing seat you double and bid NT with this 15-18 hcp balanced hand. Bidding might progress as: 1D-P-P-DBL; P-1H-P-1NT showing a hand of 15-18 hcp in the balancing seat.

A3 - Bid 2NT. 2NT in the balancing seat shows a 19-20 hcp balanced hand. Be sure you discuss the balancing 2NT with your partner. This is not the Unusual 2NT in the balancing seat.

Most play Systems ON over a 2NT balance with 3C as Stayman and Jacoby Transfer bids.

A4 - Bid 1NT. A balancing 1NT can be bid without a minor suit stopper with a hand unable to make a take-out double or overcall.(Ed. note. You have 4 cards in Diamond suit which helps.)

Group B: 1D – P – P - ? What is your bid in the balancing position?

1. **S AJ876 H 75 D 64 C J1087 (6 hcp)**
2. **S A82 H AQJ97 D 73 C AJ10 (16 hcp)**
3. **S AQ10873 H A6 D QJ7 C 96 (13 hcp)**
4. **S AJ987 H KQ873 D 2 C 97 (10 hcp)**
5. **S AJ98 H KJ87 D 42 C 973 (9 hcp)**

B1 - Bid 1S. This hand is too weak to overall directly but in the balancing seat we add three points (add a King). This 6-hcp hand is treated as 9 points and overcall your 5-card spade suit.

A simple overall in the direct seat is around 8-17 points, in the balancing seat a simple overall is around 6-14 points about 3 points lighter.

The reason we bid with lighter hands in the balancing seat is partner can have a strong hand forced to pass. Over 1D partner has to pass with this 16-hcp hand of **S K942 H A6 D 532 C AKQ3.**

B2 - Double. This 16-hcp hand is a near maximum 1H overcall in the direct seat.

However, in the balance seat we will treat this as a 19-point hand (add a King) and double then bid the heart suit showing extra values.

B3 - Bid 2S. Jump shifts in the balancing seat are not preemptive. It shows a 6-card suit with opening values called an Intermediate Jump Shift.

There is no need to preempt in the balancing seat after responder has passed. Discuss the balancing Jump Shift with partner.

B4 - Bid 2D. Most play Michaels cue bids are on in the balancing seat showing 5-5 in the major suits. Do not bid Michaels with 5-4 in the majors

B5 - Double. This 9-hcp hand is treated as a 12-point hand (add a King) and is enough for a take-out double in the balancing seat.

You would have passed this hand in the direct seat.

Group C: How to respond to partners balancing 1 spade overcall: 1D-P-P-1S; P-?

1. **S K87 H Q6 D 642 C J8752** (6 hcp)
2. **S K87 H AQJ D 73 C J9763** (11 hcp)
3. **S KQ4 H A6 D 9832 C KQ65** (14 hcp)

C1 - Pass. Since partner added 3 points in the balancing seat, as responder you must subtract 3 points when responding (subtract a King).

In the direct seat you would raise to 2S with this 6-point hand with 3 spades. In the balancing seat treat this as a 3-point hand and pass.

If there is further bidding you may raise spades.

C2 - 2S. In the balancing seat we subtract 3 points when responding and treat this 11-hcp hand as an 8-point hand and raise to 2S.

Over a 1S bid in the direct position this 11-hcp hand is a limit raise and you would make a cue bid raise of 2D.

C3 - 2D. This nice 14-hcp hand is treated as an 11-point invitational hand (subtract a King). Start with a 2D cue bid raise. Partner will bid game or invite game unless holding a minimum balancing overall.

Over this balancing hand **S AJ876 H 75 D 64 C J1087** (B1) you do not have game with 4 losers.

Summary modified from the St. Pete Bridge Club Deck Series

When the opponents have stopped bidding at the one level you need to get into the bidding by making a Balancing (or “Reopening”) bid with less than normal values.

Balancing at cheapest level (for example: 1H – P – P – balancing bidder)

- ✓ Balancer should add 3 points (add a King) to the hand and bid normally.
- ✓ Balancing Jump Shift (1D–P–P–2S) is not weak; shows an opening hand with 6+ card suit.
- ✓ Strong hands of 16+ points can be started with a double, followed by a suit bid.
- ✓ Beware of balancing with a minimum hand with length in opponent’s suit.
- ✓ Advancer takes away 3 points (subtract a King) and bids normally. Support if possible.
- ✓ Be kind to partner. Don’t punish partner for balancing!

Balancing with a no-trump bid promises a balanced hand with an implied stopper in opponent’s suit. Most players agree to play Systems ON over a balancing 1NT or 2NT bid. (Stayman and Jacoby Transfer, etc.)

- ✓ 11-14 points = balancing 1NT bid (1H–P–P–1NT)
- ✓ 15-18 points = double and bid NT at next opportunity. (1H–P–P–X; P–1S–P–1NT)
- ✓ 19-20 points = make balancing 2NT bid. (1H–P–P–2NT) 2NT is not Unusual No Trump in balancing seat.

Open 1C, not 2NT by Andrew Robson

A 2 NT opener shows 20–22 balanced (4333, 4432, 5332). Occasionally the distribution will be ‘semi-balanced’ (5422, 6322 with a six-card minor, even 4441 with a singleton honour). But it should not be more unbalanced than that.

South Deals ♠ 10 8 5
E-W Vul ♥ J 8 3
 ♦ K 7 4 2
 ♣ Q 3 2

♠ K 9 7 6 2
♥ K 9 6 4
♦ Q 9
♣ 9 4

N
W ↓ E
S

♠ A Q 4 3
♥ 10 7
♦ 10 8 6 5 3
♣ 10 6

♠ J
♥ A Q 5 2
♦ A J
♣ A K J 8 7 5

West	North	East	South
			2 NT(1)

Pass 3 NT All Pass

(1) South's hand is not even 'semi-balanced'. To open with a bid that shows a notrump hand was a costly mistake.

Contract: 3 NT by South

Lead: S 6

South would have liked to open 2 C, but he did not have quite enough. Instead South unwisely tried opening 2 NT. He was to regret it.

In 3 NT, declarer received S 6 lead. East won S A and returned S 3. West won S K (declarer sheepishly discarding), returned S 2 to East's S Q, won S 4 with S 7 and cashed S 9. Declarer took the rest with his clubs and red suit top-tricks but was down one.

What should have happened:

West	North	East	South
			1 C (1)
Pass	1 D	Pass	2 H (2)
Pass	3 C	Pass	5 C
All Pass			

(1) Unable to open 2 C (or 2 NT), South has no choice but to open 1 C. If partner cannot respond, there may not be a making game.

(2) A jump shift, showing 18+ points and an unbalanced hand. A jump rebid in a new suit by opener is forcing to game.

Lead: S 6

Had South opened the recommended 1 C, he would have reached 5 C. Game in a minor is generally undesirable, but his singleton spade – facing a partner that can neither bid spades nor notrumps – is a sufficient disincentive to try notrumps.

Defending 5 C, West would lead S 6 (the unbid suit) to East's S A and declarer would trump S 3 return. Declarer cashes C AK, pleased to observe the 2-2 split, then leads D J to D Q and D K, followed by H 3 to H Q. West takes H K and leads S K, but declarer can trump, lead H 2 to H J, H 8 to H A (East discarding), then trump H 5 with dummy's C Q. He crosses back to D A and takes the last two tricks with his last two trumps. 11 tricks and game made.

Tip: Open 1C – not 2NT – holding a profoundly unbalanced 20–22 point hand with strong clubs.

Dummy and Dummier

by Malkin Howes - Grand River Bridge Club - Kitchener, ON

From time to time, dummy plays to a trick without instruction from declarer. This is usually when dummy has a singleton in the led suit or it seems clear to play a low card to the trick. But this practice, innocuous though it seems, is contrary to the laws of bridge, and for good reason.

Obviously, there is no problem most of the time, but this is a very slippery slope. What about the case, for example, where declarer hasn't noticed that his left-hand opponent has played the ace and is planning to play the king from the dummy? If dummy puts his hand on a low card, his action may wake declarer up. The laws are clear: no matter how much dummy would like to help his partner, he is not allowed to participate in the play in any way. When dummy suggests that his partner play a particular card - not to put too fine a point on it - he is cheating. Don't do it!