

Steve's Bridge Cheat Sheet

No trump:

Can be used only for the following distributions:

5-3-3-2

4-3-3-3

4-4-3-2

If you have 5 of a major, respond 1 in that major rather than no-trump. With 5 in a minor and a 5-3-3-2 distribution, use no-trump.

The following points are used in no-trump:

13-14: Open 1 of anything, in response respond 1NT, or 2NT if your partner has responded at the 2 level

Examples:

1C – 1S – 1NT

1D – 2C – 2NT

15-17: Open 1NT

18-19: Open 1 of anything, jump in no-trump as a response.

Examples:

1C – 1S – 2NT

1D – 2C – 3NT

20-21: Open 2NT

22-23: Open 2 clubs, go to 2NT as second bid

24-25: Open 3NT

26+: Open 2 clubs, go to 3NT as second bid

Opening a suit:

13-20 points: open in 1 level

You can only open a major with 5 cards in that major.

You can (and often will) open with a 3 card minor if you are planning on using it to bid no-trump

Points in the suit bid do not matter. I would open a major with 6-5-4-3-2 in the suit as long as I had 5 cards and 13+ points overall.

21+ points: open 2 clubs

This guarantees game so your partner cannot stop bidding even with 0 points until you get to game. As such, be careful with this bid. Sometimes I will bid at the 1 level with 21 or 22 points if my hand is not good enough to guarantee game.

Responding to One No-trump:

With an even distribution and no 4-card major:

0-7 points: Pass

8-9 points: 2NT (inviting game) – Opener will respond 3NT with 17 and pass with 15. With 16 points, opener can choose to pass or say 3NT

10-16 points: 3NT

17-19 points: 6NT (or 4NT to ask for aces)

20+ points: 7NT (or 4NT to ask for aces)

With a 5+ card major:

Regardless of points, bid one suit below your desired suit at the two-level. So for spades, bid hearts and for hearts, bid diamonds. Opener is required to bid the next suit, so the bidding will be either:

1NT – 2D – 2H

1NT – 2H – 2S

After opener bids, the following bids are made:

0-7 points: Pass

8-9 points:

With a 5-card major, bid 2NT.

Opener then makes the following bids in response to 2NT:

If opener has only 2 cards in the major, he will either bid 3NT (with 17 points) or pass (with 15-16 points). If opener has 3+ cards in the major, he will either bid 4 of the major (with 17 points) or bid 3 of the major (with 15-16 points).

With a 6 card major, bid 3 of the major. Opener will either bid 4 of the major (with 17 points) or pass (with 15-16 points).

Examples:

1NT – 2D – 2H – 2NT – 4H (Responder has 5 spades, opener has 17 points and 3+ hearts)

1NT – 2H – 2S – 3S – Pass (Responder has 6 spades, opener has 15-16 points)

10-13 points:

With 5 card major, bid 3NT. Opener will either pass if they have 2 cards in the major or bid 4 of the major. Thus, the bidding is likely to go:

1NT – 2D – 2H – 3NT – 4H

14+ points:

Bid any other suit at the 3 level (or 2 spades, if suit is hearts). This indicates an ace in that suit and is game-forcing and looking for slam. You are asking the opener to bid a suit that they have an ace in. Alternatively, you could jump straight to 4NT to ask for aces. Likely bidding would be:

1NT – 2D – 2H – 3C – 3D – 4NT – 5D – 6H

With a 4 card major:

0-7 points: Pass – You are likely better off in 1NT than in a suit.

8+ points:

Bid 2 clubs – You are asking opener to bid a 4 card major if he has it, otherwise to bid 2 diamonds. If opener has both 4 card majors they should bid their better major.

Based on opener's response, if you have an 8-card major fit you are better off in that major than in no-trump. Without an 8-card fit, you are likely better off in no-trump.

With 8-9 points, you can respond at 2NT or 3 of the major to indicate interest in game. With 17 points, opener will bid 3NT or 4 of the major. With 15-16 points, opener will pass.

With 10-13 points, you can respond 3NT or 4 of the major. Opener will pass.

With 14+ points, you are best off jumping straight to 4NT to ask for aces. Any other bid will be confusing here.

With a long (6+ card) minor suit:

0-7 points: You need to make a decision as to whether your hand will play better in 3 of the minor or 1 no-trump. Often, even with a 6-card minor suit, it's better to pass and take your chances in 1 no-trump rather than playing in 3 of the minor. With 7+ cards, however, or a void in one suit, it can be better to play in 3 of the minor even with a small number of points.

If you want to play in 3 of the minor, you bid 2S. Opener is required to bid 3C, which responder either passes or bids 3D, asking opener to pass.

Thus, the two bidding possibilities here are:

1NT – 2S – 3C – pass

1NT – 2S – 3C – 3D – pass

8-11 points: Bid 3 of the minor. This indicates a hand that has game-potential but has potentially problematic features for no-trump. Keep in mind that game in a minor usually requires 28 points. With 10-11 points, you may want to bid 3NT instead of 3 of your minor if your other suits break 2-2-3 or 2-2-2. Opener can decide whether to bid 3NT (if he has stoppers in the other suits), 5 of the minor (with 17 points and 4 cards in the minor suit), or 4 of the minor, asking responder to bid 5 with 10-11 points.

12+ points: Bid 2 clubs.

This is also used above to ask for a 4-card major. Opener will either bid 2D, 2H, or 2S. In response, you bid 3 of your minor. This will tell opener that rather than asking for a 4-card major you are instead indicating strength in a minor suit and a game-forcing hand with potential interest in slam.

Note that this is game-forcing and indicates a strong hand with slam interest. With 12-14 points you may be better off bidding 3NT if you don't have a void somewhere as that will often be easier to make than 5 of a minor.

Bidding becomes natural after the 3-minor bid. Note that neither partner can pass until a game is reached.

Responding to Two No-trump:

Responses are the same as above with different point totals. Two no-trump indicates 20-21 points, so all point totals are decreased by 4 points.

Responding to one of a suit:

A few guidelines keep in mind. These are not mandatory but useful to keep in mind:

It generally takes 25 points to be in a game of 3NT or 4 of a major. It takes 28 points to be in a game of 5 of a minor.

With an 8-card major fit, it is better to be in that major than in no-trump.

If you find an 8-card major fit, it is almost always correct to stay in that suit rather than looking for a better-fit elsewhere, which will seldom exist.

The responder usually has much more information about the hand than the opener does. As such, the responder can be thought of as in control of the bidding, asking questions of the opener to get to the right fit in the hand.

When acting as the responder, always keep in mind that new suits are forcing and opener generally has very little idea what your hand looks like. In general, 6-7 point hands are usually only good for 1 bid unless you are forced to bid again or are going back to opener's suit. 8-10 point hands can be good for 2 bids sometimes. 11+ point hands can usually bid at least twice.

The following are rules that can never be violated:

New suits by the responder are forcing for 1 round. Thus the responder can always keep the bidding going by mentioning new suits.

As responder, you should not jump-shift to indicated strength as your first bid. First-bid jump-shifts should be avoided or used (as later described) in times of extreme weakness.

As an opener, jumps indicate strength and always require at least 16 points. Jump-shifts to new suits are forcing for 1 round.

Responding in the 2-level over a 1-opening (example 1S – 2C) is game-forcing and should only be made with 13+ points.

A response of 1NT to a major bid requires opener to bid again, either re-bidding his major suit (with 6 cards) or bidding another suit (this may have to be a 3-card suit).

Responding to 1 of a major with 3+ cards in that major:

0-5 points: pass

6-9 points: 2 of the major. Opener will pass with <16 points, bid 3 of the major with 16-18 points (asking responder to say 4 of the major with 8-9 points), or bid 4 of the major with 18-20 points. Note that slam interest here is unlikely since opener had at most 20 points. 4NT would indicate slam interest with an unusual hand, however.

10-12 points: 3 of the major: Opener will pass with <15 points, bid 4 of the major with 15-17 points and may look for slam with >17 points.

13+ points: 2 bids are possible here, described below.

One is called a splinter bid, where a jump to the 4 level in any other suit (or 3 spades if the suit is hearts) indicates a singleton or void in that suit and slam-interest.

The bidding here would be:

1S – 4C

With 13-15 points, opener bids 4 of the major to indicate relative weakness. With 16+ points, opener bids any other suit that he has an ace in.

The second bid possibility is 2NT. This asks opener for singletons/voids or, absent this, to describe the point total of opener's hand.

A response in the 3-level indicates void in that suit. A response in the 4-level indicates a singleton in that suit.

If opener does not have any singletons/voids, the bids are as follows: with 13-14 points, bid 4 of the agreed-upon major. With 15-16 points, bid 3NT, with 17+ points, bid 3 of the agreed-upon major.

Two examples of this bidding are:

1S - 2NT – 4C – 4NT..... (indicating a singleton club by opener, responder wanting to explore a spade slam)

1S – 2NT – 3NT – 4S (indicating 15-16 points by opener with no singletons or voids, responder signing off in 4 spades)

Responding to 1 of a major with < 3 cards in that major:

0-6 points: pass

6-12 points: bid 1NT – this is forcing for opener for 1 round. With 13-15 points, opener can re-bid the major in the 2-level with 6+ cards in the major, or bid a second-suit if the major is only 5-cards. Note that sometimes this will require opener to bid a 3-card minor suit. That is fine. With 16-18 points, the bids by opener are the same but at the 3-level. With 19-20 points, the bids are the same but at the 4-level.

13+ points: respond with your best suit in the 2-level. This is forcing to game and neither partner can pass until game is achieved.

Responding to 1 of a minor with a 4+ card major suit:

0-5 points: pass

6+ points: bid the major suit. Opener's next bid will indicate hand strength and distribution. Thus, if the bidding is:

1D – 1S

Opener has many options off of this bidding.

A 1NT bid indicates an even distribution, no 4-card spade fit, and 13-14 points. A 2NT bid indicates the same thing with 18-19 points.

A 2 spade bid indicates 4 cards in spades and 13-15 points. 3 spades is 16-18 points, and 4 spades is 19+ points.

With a 5 card diamond suit, opener can respond in diamonds at the 2, 3, or 4 level based on the points above.

Opener can also indicate a new suit if they have 4 clubs or 4 hearts. Note that 2 hearts here is a relatively strong bid as it does not leave responder with a lot of choices if they don't like hearts. A 2 heart bid would require 16+ points. 2 clubs can be said with 13 points as it leaves responder more options. 3 clubs or 3 hearts are both jump-shifts indicating strength by opener (17+ points) and are forcing for 1 round.

By the third-bid, responder should have a general idea on the strength of opener's hand and know something about distribution. They can then respond based on the rules and guidelines laid out above. As an example, say the bidding goes:

1D – 1S – 2C

Responder knows that opener has 4+ clubs, 4+ diamonds, lacks 4 spades, and has 13-16 points. Opener also likely has more diamonds than clubs (otherwise, opener would have bid 1 club) and does not have a no-trump hand (or would have bid 1NT, or responded 1NT to the spade bid). In just 3 bids, responder knows the point total of opener within 4 points, and likely knows 10 of opener's cards (5 diamonds, 4 clubs, 1 heart).

Also note here that opener knows almost nothing about responder's hand. All he knows is that responder has 4 spades and 6+ points. Thus, responder is in control.

With this information, responder can make any number of bids asking for more information or signing off in a set bid.

Responding to 1 of a minor without a 4 card major:

0-5 points: pass

6-9 points and an even distribution (no singletons/voids): 1NT

10-12 points and an even distribution: 2NT

13-16 points and an even distribution: 3NT

17+ points and an even distribution: You are likely better here with a fake major bid to get opener to indicate more about his hand. You can then go from there. Slam is likely.

With a singleton or void, you can start to think about responding in a minor.

With 4+ cards in the minor suit, you can respond to that minor with the same point totals as a major. 1C – 2C is 6-9 points. 1C – 3C is 10-12 points. 1C – 4C is 13-15 points. 1C – 5C is rarely used but indicates 16-18 points. 4NT is the likely bid with more than 18 points.

1C – 1D indicates 4+ diamonds, non-even distribution, no 4-card major and 6+ points. Like all new suit bids by responder, it is forcing for 1 round.

1D – 2C is forcing to game and should only be used with 13+ points. With a long-club suit and 6-12 points, you are better off responding in no-trump even with an uneven distribution.

Responding to 2-club opening:

2-club opening guarantees game. The responses are as follows:

0-7 points: respond 2-diamonds

8+ points: respond your best suit (3 diamonds if diamonds)

With 0-3 points, a follow-on response of 3-clubs is required to show extreme weakness. The bidding would be:

2C – 2D – 2S – 3C

After the first bids, all other bids are natural. Responder cannot pass until game is reached.

Tricks:

Weak 2s (and 3s, 4s, 5s):

With 6-10 points and at least 6 cards in a suit, you can think about opening the suit in the 2-level or higher. Note that you should have high cards in the suit that you open. The purpose of this bid is to disrupt the bidding of the other side and minimize losses if you wind up in the bid suit. This second purpose is not ensured if you open a 6-card suit with a jack as the highest card. You should have no less than a queen as the highest card in the suit.

All of these bids require 6-10 points. With a 6-card suit, bid in the 2-level. With 7 cards, the 3-level, ect... Note that you cannot bid clubs in the 2-level as 2-clubs is left for strong bids.

Reverse minors:

Because most responses to an opening minor suit bid are either to say a major or to indicate no-trump, bids responding in that minor can be used more creatively.

One trick is to reverse the point-totals of bidding 2 of a minor and 3 of a minor. Thus, responding 3 of the minor, as in 1C – 3C, indicates 6-9 points and at least 5 clubs. 1C – 2C then indicates 10+ points and at least 4 clubs. The 2 club bid is forcing for one round, forcing opener to further describe his hand.

If opener were trying to bid no-trump (with 13-14 or 18-19 points), opener can continue with that bid one-level up. Thus, the bidding would go 1C – 2C – 2NT, or 1C – 2C – 3NT.

If opener were truly bidding clubs with 4+ clubs, he can respond with either 3C (with 13-15 points), 4 clubs (with 16-18 points), or 5C (with 19-20 points).

It is important to note that responder has already indicated the lack of a 4-card major suit, opener bidding a major to indicate a 4-card suit is not very helpful. Those, the responses to 1C – 2C are almost always going to be to continue in clubs or bid no-trump. I would also note that 2C here can be used even with a very good hand, because it is forcing for one round. As responder, you could feel comfortable bidding 2C with 20 points knowing that opener will describe his hand and you can then make an appropriate bid.

Weak jump-shifts:

After your partner opens, a jump-shift into the 2 or 3-level indicates 6+ cards in the suit and extreme weakness (0-3 points). The purpose of this bid is to disrupt the bidding of the other side and to indicate the strength and distribution of your hand to your partner. The bidding could go either:

1C – pass (by opponent) – 2S

Or:

1H – 1S (by opponent) – 3C

Notice how in either case the 4th bidder has a very difficult task of responding in the 3-level.

Roman Key-card Blackwood:

If a suit is agreed upon beforehand (this can be open to interpretation, which is tricky), a modified blackwood convention can be used to further describe a hand. Under this convention, there are 5 key cards in the deck: the four aces and the king of trump, which often is just as important as the ace. The queen can also be described here.

The responses to 4 no-trump are as follows:

5C (0 or 3 key-cards)

5D (1 or 4 key-cards)

5H (2 or 5 key-cards, without the queen of trump)

5S (2 or 5 key-cards, with the queen of trump)