



# The Opening Bid

When should we open the bidding? And how?

**Rule 1** A hand with 12, 13 or 14 points (*neither more nor less*) and a balanced distribution is opened 1NT

eg	♠ A85	4	
	♥ Q984	+ 2	
	♦ KQ7	+ 5	Open 1NT
	♣ Q63	+ 2	
		= 13 points (balanced)	

**Rule 2** A hand with 12 or more points (up to about 20) *which is unsuitable for 1NT* is opened 1♣/1♦/1♥/1♠  
 We bid our **longest** suit first, the one in which we have most cards.  
 With two suits of the same length we bid the **higher** first

eg	♠ QJ1072	3		♠ AQ94	6	
	♥ AK92	+ 7	Open 1♠,	♥ K5	+ 3	Open 1♠,
	♦ 102	+ 0	the longest suit	♦ K86	+ 3	the higher suit
	♣ A4	+ 4		♣ K1073	+ 3	
		= 14 points			= 15 points	
		(unbalanced)			(balanced too many points for 1NT)	

When we have two suits of the same length they will often both be 4 cards long - we call these **4-card suits**  
 With two 5-card or 6-card suits we always open the higher.  
 With two 4-card suits we usually open the higher. (We will look at some exceptions later)

Some more examples of opening bids

1)	♠ K532	2)	♠ 4	3)	♠ 862	4)	♠ QJ4	5)	♠ A103
	♥ A7		♥ AKJ7		♥ KJ6		♥ KJ7		♥ AQJ7
	♦ AQ94		♦ Q9764		♦ AQ94		♦ K432		♦ KQ52
	♣ 1097		♣ AQ8		♣ AJ5		♣ Q98		♣ Q9
	13 points		16 points		15 points		12 points		18 points
	We open 1NT		We open 1♦, our longest suit		A balanced hand too strong for 1NT We open 1♦		We open 1NT (It is all right to Pass)		We open 1♥, our higher 4-card suit



## When should we bid Game

Game is a contract that scores 100 points or more in trick points but is lower than a slam.  
The minimum game contracts in the various denominations are:

3 No-trump (3NT) = 9 tricks	$40+2 \times 30 = 100$
4 of a major (4♥ and 4♠) = 10 tricks	$4 \times 30 = 120$
5 of a minor (5♦ and 5♣) = 11 tricks	$5 \times 20 = 100$

We call spades and hearts the *major suits*, clubs and diamonds the *minor suits*.

Contracts of 5♥ and 5♠ are also games, since  $5 \times 30 = 150$

But when we play in 3♥ or 3♠ ( $3 \times 30 = 90$  trick points) we have not reached game level.

Since the bonus for bidding and making game is so much higher than the part-score bonus we try to reach game whenever it is sensible to do so. One of the main aims of bidding is to reach games when there is a chance of making them.

### Points to remember

- **The lowest game contract** (and thus the easiest to make) **is 3NT**
- Good bidding advice is **With less than 25 total points - stay in a partscore**  
**With 25 or more total points - bid game (or slam)**

Of course this total of 25 points is approximate, not absolute.

You may make 9 tricks in no-trump with fewer than 25 points if you have a long suit you can run.

Or you may have 30 points between you and go down in 3NT when the defence cash 5 tricks in one suit.  
It follows logically that to make game in no-trump you need a *stopper* in every suit.

Also, to make 5♣ or 5♦ you need more than 25 points, because you have to make 11 tricks.

It follows that 5♣ and 5♦ are games that we rarely bid. We only bid 5♣ or 5♦ (11 tricks) in preference to 3NT (9 tricks) if we have a lot of cards in our minor, or a short suit that is *unstopped* for no-trump.

### Eight trump

It is possible to make 4♥ or 4♠ with less than 25 points when the cards are distributed in certain ways.

The missing points are compensated for by extra length in trump.

For example, if one partner has a void (no cards) in clubs he can trump the defence's ♣A.

In a trump contract a void can be as valuable as an ace, provided you have plenty of trump

Declarer and dummy should have *at least eight trump* between the two hands to play in a trump contract.

We summarise the points needed for the various contracts like this:

<b>Partscore</b>	1♣ thru 3♠, 4♣ and 4♦	Less than 25 points
<b>Game</b>	3NT	25 points
	4♥ and 4♠	25 points
	5♣ and 5♦	27 points
<b>Small slam</b>	6♣ thru 6NT	33 points
<b>Grand Slam</b>	7♣ thru 7NT	37 points

- Trump contracts may be made with fewer points when there is extra trump length (many more than 8) and good distribution (shortages in side suits)
- When the bidding reveals that we do not have enough points for game we stop bidding as quickly as possible. It is easier to make 1NT than 2NT, or 1♠ than 3♠.