

## Bidding no trumps

### 1. Why open 1 no trump instead of 1 of a suit?

The main reason is that it describes the hand within narrow limits. Opening 1NT is also pre-emptive. If you open with a suit, there is *always* a requirement to make a second bid if partner responds in a suit, unless opponents intervene. The responses to 1NT openings follow different paths than to a suit opening.

### The problem of weak 5 card suits

5 card minors suits should be opened 1 NT where possible. A weak 5-card major suit causes problems for opener and a rebid in no trumps may be better than rebidding the suit. This problem is partially resolved if you are playing a 5 card major system.

### 2. Opening 1 no-trump

To open 1 NT the hand should not contain a void, singleton, or 6-card suit. Preferably it should not contain a 5 card major suit or two doubletons. Hand patterns of the type 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2 are preferred.

A points range between 10-19 hcps is normal, with at most a 3 point spread between the minimum and maximum. The commonest range played in the UK is 12-14 (the so called weak no trump). 15-17 is popular in Europe. Some players choose a different hcp range depending on vulnerability i.e. 12-14 non-vulnerable and 15-17 vulnerable. If you elect to open 1NT with 15-17 hcps then reduce this to 12-14 after 3 passes because partner is likely to hold 8+hcps as the opponents did not open. Watchpoint: *to reduce the risk of conceding a large penalty, do not open 1NT with 12 or less hcps when vulnerable.*

### 3. Opening 2 no trumps

The hand patterns are those for opening 1 NT with the addition that a hand with 2 doubletons is acceptable provided they contain a guard, and the hand may also contain a 5-card major. Again the hand should not contain a void, singleton or 6 card suit. The points range is normally 20-22 but can be 21-22.

### 4. Opening 3 no trumps

This is a rare hand type. The bid is usually reserved for an solid 8 card minor with an outside ace, being pre-emptive in nature. Partnerships vary on the strength and the need for an outside ace, so agree with partner your style.

### 5. Opener's second bid: in no trumps

(All bidding schemes assume that a 1 NT opening bid is 12-14 hcps)

Having opened the bidding in a suit and received a response from partner in a suit, opener now considers the re-bid. With no very long suits, and with the partnership holding guards in the 4 suits, a bid in no trumps is desirable. The scheme of re-bidding, for an opening bid at the 1 level, and a response at the 1 level, is as follows:

- re-bid 1 NT with 15-16 hcps (or even with a poor 17 hcps)
- re-bid 2 NT with 17-18 hcps
- re-bid 3 NT with 19-20 hcps

If instead, the first response *has to be at the 2 level*, (showing 8+hcps), then a re-bid of 2 NT shows 15-16, and 3NT shows 17-18

Hands of 16+hcps with a 6-card suit, or two good biddable suits, should show the suit values (i.e. rebid the 6 card suit) rather than bidding no trumps.

### 6. Responder's first bid: in no trumps

- responding 1 NT shows 6-9 hcps, *and no biddable suit at the 1 level*
- responding 2 NT shows 16+ hcps, with values for a jump shift without a long suit, i.e. 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 shapes
- responding 3 NT shows 12-15 hcps, with *no 4 card major*

Rather than bid 2 NT with 10-12 hcps, first bid a suit, then later bid 2NT. Having *already passed*, you may revert to the popular 10-12 hcps for a 2NT response with no 4 card major.

### 7. Overcalling with 1 no trump

When the opponents open the bidding at the 1 level, the bid may deprive you of a natural suit opening. If you are *unable* to double for take-out, you may have to pass with up to 14 hcps. Stronger hands should take action. Therefore a 1NT overcall

- shows a hand of 15-17 hcps
- with preferably two guards in the suit opened by opponents
- no available 5 card major suit for overcalling

If the opponents have bid 2 suits then 17 hcps are required and both suits need to be guarded.

## Specialised uses of no trump bids

### 8. Overcalling opponent's suit with 2 no trumps ("unusual")

*A jump overcall in a suit normally shows a single suited hand with a 6 card suit, with 12-16 hcps, and at least two of the top 3 honour cards. Traditionally a 2NT overcall shows 2 suits of 5 cards each in an opposing rank to the opening bid. If your opponents for example open a major suit, then a 2NT overcall would show 2 minor suits of 5 cards. The overcalling hand needs from 10-15 hcps. Any stronger and a double may be more appropriate. Alert the 2NT overcall*

### 9. Bidding 2 no trumps after partner's major suit bid is doubled

After partner's opening major suit bid is doubled (for take-out), it is good tactics to raise the suit if you can, to make it difficult for your opponents to find a suit fit. Such raises may be weaker in high card strength than normal especially with extra cards in partner's suit

Bidding 2 NT (*alertable*) is used to show a value raise to 3 of the suit (with high card strength). Both bids require you to have a minimum four card fit with the opener's suit.

If the opening one no trump is doubled

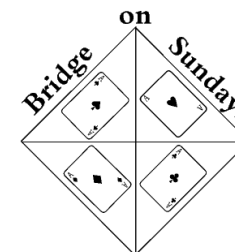
### 10. Action after partner's 1 no trump(12-14) is doubled for penalties

Partner has opened the bidding with 1 NT and the left hand opponent doubles the bid for penalties. Then action you can take is:

- *pass* with less than 8 hcps and 'flat' hand or:
- make a weakness take-out into a long suit.
- redouble with 9+ hcps especially with a well balanced hand with no unguarded suits. Double any new bid by opponents.
- redouble first with any hand that has a 5 card suit, and you would have responded at the 3 level, provided there is no unguarded suit.
- jump to the 3 or 4 levels with a 6 card major suit and a doubleton or singleton, and 12+hcps.
- use Stayman with a weak hand if you can tolerate any response from partner to find a 7 or 8 card fit.

If the fourth player doubles, in general the penalties are less likely to be so severe, so you can leave the double in with 5 hcps, even with a 5 card suit.

## Bridge on Sundays



No-trumps