

LEARN TO PLAY BRIDGE

Lesson 10

BIDDING 1 **The Auction**
The Opener Bids 1NT (1): the responder has a balanced hand

The Auction

It is time to say goodbye to Minibridge and to play by the full rules of Contract Bridge. This means that each deal will start with an **auction**.

1. After the cards have been dealt and each player has looked at their own cards, the dealer speaks first, then the player on her left, and so on in a clockwise direction.
2. Each player must say *pass* (or *no bid*) or make a valid bid. A valid bid must:
 - be a proposed contract*, such as 2♥ or 4NT
e.g. a bid of 2♥ means "If no one bids higher than this, our pair will declare a contract of 2♥."
 - and be 'higher' than the last bid. A 'higher' bid is one that is either:
 - > at the same level as the last bid, but in a higher-ranking **denomination**
e.g. if the last bid was 2♥, then 2♠ and 2NT are both valid bids
 - > or at a higher level in any **denomination**
e.g. if the last bid was 2♥, then any bid of 3 or more is also valid
3. The auction ends when there are three consecutive passes after a valid bid.
 - or if all four players *pass* at start of the auction, then the deal has been *passed out* with no contract and no score.
4. The last bid becomes **the contract** and the pair who made it becomes the declaring pair.
5. The player in this pair who was the first one to make a bid in the denomination of the contract becomes **the declarer**.

A bidding system

During the auction, you and your partner must decide:

- Are we strong enough to declare a contract?
- If so, are we strong enough for game?
- Do we have a Golden Fit?
- So what is our best contract?

Auction

The first stage of a game, in which the players bid for the right to declare a contract.

Contract Denominations

NT highest rank
 ♠
 ♥
 ♦ lowest rank
 ♣

An Example of an Auction

South <i>Dealer</i>	West	North	East
pass	pass	1 ♠	pass
2 ♣	2 ♦	2 ♥	3 ♦
4 ♥	pass	pass	pass
Contract: 4 ♥		Declarer: North	
<i>Although South made the final bid of 4 ♥, North will be the declarer because she bid hearts first, before South.</i>			

* For now, we will ignore another option, which is to "double" an opponent's bid.

You can't see each other's cards and the only way that you are allowed to communicate is by bidding when it is your turn. Somehow, you have to use your bids to paint pictures of your hands for each other and to arrive at a decision about the best contract. You can only use a few words in a bid – *one, two, three . . . clubs, diamonds, hearts . . . pass . . . etc.*, so it's not easy!

The solution is to use a **bidding system**, in which every bid that you make does two jobs:

1. It announces a contract that you will declare if no other player makes a higher bid.
2. It sends a message to your partner, which may be about one or more of:
 - how many points you have (the **strength** of your hand)
 - how many cards you have in certain suits (the **shape** of your hand)
 - what you want your partner to do next

We will use the **Acol** bidding system, which is the standard system in the UK and many other countries and is recommended by the English Bridge Union. It helps you to declare good contracts after exchanging messages like these with your partner:

♠ A 7 3
♥ 8 6
♦ A 10 8 4 2
♣ K J 2
North
South
♠ K Q 10
♥ A J 5
♦ Q 9 3
♣ Q 10 6 5

Player	Bid	Message
South	1NT	<i>I have between 12 and 14 points and a balanced hand with at least 2 cards in every suit. You can pass if you want to.</i>
North	2NT	<i>I also have a balanced hand, and I have 11 or 12 points. I think that we can make game (3NT) if you have 14 points, but not if you have only 12. Which is it?</i>
South	3NT	<i>I've got 14 points, so I'm taking your word for it and bidding game.</i>
North	pass	<i>That'll do nicely, partner. Over and out</i>

The Opener Bids 1 No Trump

In an auction, the first player who makes a bid other than *pass* is called the **opener**, and her bid is called the **opening bid**. We will start by learning about the most common opening bid: 1 No Trump (1NT). You should bid 1NT when you have:

- 12-14 points
*If you have fewer than 12 points, **pass**. We'll look in Lesson 12 at what to bid if you have more than 14 points.*
- and a 'balanced hand'. This means a hand with:
 - no void or singleton (0 or 1 cards in a suit)
 - at most one doubleton (2 cards in a suit)
 - no five-card major suit (♠ or ♥ - a five-card minor suit is OK)

Opening Bid
the first bid
that is not **pass**

Opener
the player who
makes the
opening bid

♠ Q 10 5
♥ K 7 6
♦ A 9 3
♣ K J 10 4

*13 pts, balanced.
Bid 1NT.*

♠ Q J 10 5 2
♥ K 7 6
♦ A 9 3
♣ K 10

*13 pts but 5 spades.
Don't bid 1NT.*

♠ A 10 5
♥ K 7 6
♦ A 9 3
♣ K J 10 4

*15 pts. Don't bid
1NT.*

♠ Q 10 5
♥ K 7
♦ A 9 3
♣ K J 10 6 4

*13 points & 5 clubs
– OK. Bid 1NT.*

♠ Q 10 5 3
♥ K 9 7 6
♦ A
♣ K J 10 4

*13 pts but a single-
ton. Don't bid 1NT.*

RESPONDING TO AN OPENING BID OF 1 NO TRUMP

If your partner bids 1NT, you know a lot about the strength and shape of her hand as well as your own. So you become the **captain** of the auction – it is your job to decide on the best contract and send a clear message about this to your partner by making a suitable bid.

As captain, you have two decisions to make:

- Shall we play in a game contract or a part score?
Do we have at least 25 points?
- Shall we play with a trump suit or in no trumps?
Do we have a Golden Fit?
(We'll look at this in the next lesson.)

Responder
the opener's
partner



Captain
a player who takes
charge of the auction
and tells her partner
what to do

Sometimes you will know the answers immediately, while at others you will need to converse with your partner – exchanging messages through your bids until you're ready to decide.

Responding to 1NT when you have a balanced hand

Remember that a 'balanced hand' is one with

- no void or singleton (0 or 1 cards in a suit)
- at most one doubleton (2 cards in a suit)
- no five-card major suit (♠ or ♥)
a five-card minor suit is OK, but if you have a long major suit you might want it to be trumps

If your and your partner's hands are both balanced, then the best contract will normally be in no trumps and you will just have one question left: *Do we have the 25 points needed for game?* You know that partner has 12-14 points, so you can add your own points to hers and work out whether your pair has enough to bid game. Then make a bid that tells partner what you have decided, as follows:

If you have a balanced hand and 0-10 points

Your pair does not have enough points for game. Your partner has at most 14, so your total cannot be more than 24. **Pass.**

- This says to your partner: *We're not strong enough for game. I don't think there is a better contract, so I'll stop now.*

♠ A 9 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ 8 6 4 3 ♣ Q 10 6 3	Partner	You
	1NT	pass

If you have a balanced hand and 11-12 points

Your pair might have enough points for game, but you can't be sure. If partner has the minimum number of points for her bid (12), then your total cannot be more than 24, but if she has maximum points (14) then you must have at least 25 between you. So you need to ask her whether she has minimum or maximum points, and you can do this by bidding **2NT**.

♠ J 9 7 ♥ A Q 6 5 ♦ K J 4 ♣ J 10 3	Partner	You
	1NT	2NT

You can make this bid with or without a five-card minor suit. It is called an **invitational bid** and it sends your partner a message.

I've responded 2NT, so:

- I'm **inviting** you to bid 3NT.
- I have 11 or 12 points in a balanced hand.
- If you have 14, we have enough for game, so bid **3NT**.
- If you only have 12, we don't, so **pass**.
- If you have 13, choose!



To:
My Partner

Invitational Bid
a bid that invites your partner to bid higher if she has extra strength

Rebid
a player's second or subsequent bid

THE OPENER'S REBID AFTER PARTNER HAS RESPONDED 2NT

If you open 1NT and your partner bids 2NT to ask just how strong your hand is, then:

- If you have 12 points, your hand is a **minimum**, so **pass**.
- If you have 13 points, it is mid-range, so:
 - > if you have a good 5-card minor suit or plenty of 10s and 9s, then call it a **maximum** and bid **3NT**;
 - > if not, call it a **minimum** and **pass**.
- If you have 14 points, it is a **maximum**, so bid **3NT**.

♠ K Q 7 5 ♥ A 8 ♦ Q J 7 4 ♣ J 9 5	You	Partner
	1NT	2NT
	pass	

You have 13 points with no 5-card suit, no 10s and only one 9. It's not good enough to be called a maximum 1NT opening, so pass.

If you have a balanced hand and 13+ points

Your pair has enough points for game. Even if partner has only 12 points, your total will be at least 25. So bid **3NT** to send your partner a message. You can make this bid with or without a five-card minor suit.

♠ A 7 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ A Q 10 9 3	Partner	You
	1NT	3NT

I've responded 3NT, so:

- I have 13+ points in a balanced hand.
- I've decided that 3NT is the best contract.
- I want you to **pass**.
- Remember – you opened 1NT so I am the captain!



To:
My Partner

THE OPENER'S REBID AFTER PARTNER HAS RESPONDED 3NT

Pass.

NB 1: In the next lesson, we'll look at how to respond to an opening 1NT bid when you have an unbalanced hand.

NB 2: In the example auction on p. 1, all four players made a bid. In the rest of this lesson, though, only one pair made a bid: the opening bidder and her partner. We will continue to have only one pair bidding for most of Part 2 of the course, in order to make it easier for you to learn the bidding system, but we will eventually return to situations where both pairs bid.

BIDDING PRACTICE - we will use this page during the lesson.

WEST	DEAL	BIDDING	EAST						
♠ 8 4 ♥ K Q 6 3 ♦ 10 7 6 5 ♣ A K 2 12	1 Dealer: W	<table><tr><td>W</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>1NT</td><td>2NT</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td></td></tr></table>	W	E	1NT	2NT	pass		♠ J 10 6 ♥ A J 5 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ Q J 7 12
W	E								
1NT	2NT								
pass									

East has a balanced 12 points, so invites West to bid game. West has a minimum hand for her 1NT bid, so she declines.

♠ A J 10 7 ♥ Q 7 2 ♦ A 8 2 ♣ Q 6 3 13	2 Dealer: E	<table><tr><td>W</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>3NT</td><td>1NT</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>pass</td></tr></table>	W	E	3NT	1NT		pass	♠ Q 3 ♥ A J 9 4 ♦ K J 7 5 ♣ J 10 8 12
W	E								
3NT	1NT								
	pass								

West has a balanced 13 points and knows that their pair has at least 25 points, enough for game. So she bids it and East must pass.

♠ K Q 3 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ K 10 9 4 10	3 Dealer: W	<table><tr><td>W</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>1NT</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td></td></tr></table>	W	E	pass	1NT	pass		♠ A J 10 7 ♥ J 7 3 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ Q J 6 12
W	E								
pass	1NT								
pass									

West is too weak to open the bidding or to respond to East's bid. Their pair has at most 24 points, so game is not on.

♠ 8 4 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ A Q 10 5 3 ♣ J 5 2 12	4 Dealer: E	<table><tr><td>W</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>1NT</td><td>pass</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>2NT</td></tr></table>	W	E	1NT	pass	pass	2NT	♠ J 10 6 ♥ A J 5 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ Q 8 7 11
W	E								
1NT	pass								
pass	2NT								

E is too weak to open the bidding but her 11 points are enough to respond 2NT, inviting W to bid game. With only 12, W declines.

♠ 7 5 2 ♥ Q 9 4 ♦ K Q 10 4 3 ♣ A 6 11	5 Dealer: W	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>E</th></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>1NT</td></tr><tr><td>2NT</td><td>3NT</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td></td></tr></table>	W	E	pass	1NT	2NT	3NT	pass		♠ A Q 10 ♥ J 7 3 ♦ A 8 6 2 ♣ K 9 5 14
W	E										
pass	1NT										
2NT	3NT										
pass											

W didn't open the bidding, so E knows she doesn't have 12 points but must have 11. So their pair has 25 points, enough for game.

♠ A 9 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ K 10 8 4 2 ♣ Q J 6 14	6 Dealer: E	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>E</th></tr><tr><td>1NT</td><td>pass</td></tr><tr><td>3NT</td><td>2NT</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>pass</td></tr></table>	W	E	1NT	pass	3NT	2NT		pass	♠ K Q 5 3 ♥ K 2 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ 10 9 5 4 11
W	E										
1NT	pass										
3NT	2NT										
	pass										

The mirror image of number 5.

QUIZ

1. Will you open 1NT with these hands?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ K 7 ♥ Q J 10 2 ♦ A J 6 ♣ K J 9 4	♠ K 7 ♥ Q J 10 2 ♦ A 6 ♣ Q J 9 4 3	♠ Q J 4 3 2 ♥ K 9 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ A Q 3	♠ K 10 4 ♥ Q 9 6 ♦ A Q J 7 5 ♣ Q 3

2. Your partner has opened 1NT.
What will you respond with these hands?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ K 10 4 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ Q 9 5 3 ♣ A 7 2	♠ K 10 4 3 ♥ Q 10 9 8 ♦ Q 5 ♣ J 7 2	♠ K 10 4 ♥ Q 10 8 ♦ A Q 9 8 2 ♣ 7 2	♠ K 10 4 3 ♥ Q 10 9 8 ♦ A 5 ♣ A J 2

3. You have opened 1NT and your partner has responded as shown.
What will you rebid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ K 7 4 ♥ A Q 8 ♦ 9 6 ♣ K Q 10 7 3	♠ K Q 6 5 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A J 4 2 ♣ Q 9 3	♠ K Q 9 ♥ 10 3 ♦ A J 10 4 2 ♣ K 9 3	♠ K Q 9 ♥ 10 3 ♦ A J 10 4 2 ♣ K 9 3
<i>You</i> <i>Partner</i> 1NT 2NT	<i>You</i> <i>Partner</i> 1NT 2NT	<i>You</i> <i>Partner</i> 1NT 2NT	<i>You</i> <i>Partner</i> 1NT 3NT
?	?	?	?

4. South's bidding has given her partner a message about the strength of her hand. How many points does she have?
e.g. *less than 12* or *12-14*

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
<i>South</i> <i>North</i> 1NT 2NT pass	<i>South</i> <i>North</i> 1NT 2NT 3NT	<i>South</i> <i>North</i> pass 1NT pass	<i>South</i> <i>North</i> pass 1NT 2NT

Quiz Answers

1. (a) No *Your hand is balanced, but you have 15 points – too strong for 1NT. Later, you’ll learn that the correct bid is 1♥.*
(b) No *You have 13 points, but your hand is not balanced – you have two doubletons. Later, you’ll learn that the correct bid is 1♣.*
(c) No *You have 12 points, but your hand is not balanced – you have a five-card major suit. Later, you’ll learn that the correct bid is 1♠.*
(d) Yes *You have 14 points and a balanced hand – a five-card minor suit is OK. So bid 1NT.*

2. (a) 2NT *With 12 points, you want to be in game if partner is a maximum. Bid 2NT to invite her.*
(b) pass *You have a balanced hand without enough points to be interested in game. So settle for 1NT.*
(c) 2NT *With 11 points, you want to be in game if partner is a maximum. A 5-card minor suit is OK. Bid 2NT to invite partner.*
(d) 3NT *You have 14 points in a balanced hand. That’s enough for game, even if partner has only 12 points. You’re the captain, so bid it.*

3. (a) 3NT *Partner has asked you to bid 3NT if you are at the top of the range for your 1NT bid. You are, so bid it. Don’t worry too much about the diamonds – you have to take risks in bridge.*
(b) pass *Partner has asked you to bid 3NT if you are at the top of the range for your 1NT bid. You are not – you have only 12 points. So pass.*
(c) 3NT *Partner has asked you to bid 3NT if you are at the top of the range for your 1NT bid. With 13 points, you are mid-range. But you have a 5-card diamond suit and plenty of 10s and 9s. Go for it!*
(d) Pass *Partner has bid game, so that’ll do. Her bid tells you that she wants you to pass, so do so.*

4. (a) 12-13 *South’s 1NT bid indicates 12-14 points, and her refusal of North’s invitation to game means that she has a minimum hand.*
(b) 13-14 *South’s 1NT bid indicates 12-14 points, and her acceptance of North’s invitation to game means that she has a maximum hand.*
(c) less than 11 *South’s initial pass indicates less than 12 points. She has not invited North to bid game, so she has less than 11 points.*
(d) 11 *South’s initial pass indicates less than 12 points. Her 2NT invitation normally indicates 11-12 points, but we already know that she does not have 12.*



Bidding 1 - The Opener Bids 1NT (1) the responder has a balanced hand

During the auction, you and your partner must decide:

- Are we strong enough to declare a contract?
- If so, are we strong enough for game?
- Do we have a Golden Fit?
- So what is our best contract?

The first player to make a bid other than **pass** is the **opener**. Her partner becomes the **responder**.

Every bid that you make sends a message to your partner, which may be about one or more of:

- how many points you have (the **strength** of your hand)
- how many cards you have in certain suits (the **shape** of your hand)
- what you want your partner to do next

Opening 1NT

I've opened 1NT, so:

- I have 12-14 points
- My hand is balanced with:
 - no void or singleton
 - at most one doubleton
 - no five-card major suit
 - maybe a five-card minor suit



To:
My Partner

Responding to 1NT when you have a balanced hand

I've responded 'pass', so:

- I have 0-10 points
- I don't have a long suit.
- That's all I can tell you.
- It looks like you'll be the declarer in 1NT. Good luck!



To:
My Partner

I've responded 2NT, so:

- I'm **inviting** you to bid 3NT.
- I have 11 or 12 points in a balanced hand.
- If you have 14, we have enough for game, so bid **3NT**.
- If you only have 12, we don't, so **pass**.
- If you have 13, choose!



To:
My Partner

I've responded 3NT, so:

- I have 13+ points in a balanced hand.
- I've decided that 3NT is the best contract.
- I want you to **pass**.
- Remember - you opened 1NT so I am the captain!



To:
My Partner