

20 Questions

(Assume playing 2/1)

1) Does a 3 level rebid show extras, or can it be made on 5-5 minimum, or can it be a garbage 4 card suit with a minimum? Does 2NT show a minimum balanced hand with stoppers or is it the default bid? Does opener's 2M rebid show 6 or can it be on an awkward 5-1-3-4 hand after 1S-2H?

My preferences are 3 level rebid promises extras or a good 5-5. A rebid of 2 of my suit can be a nothing bid. 2NT is 12-14 or 18-19 balanced with stoppers.

2) After a 2/1 in competition does responder promise a rebid?

I prefer to distinguish between a 2/1 higher than partner's suit and 1 lower.
1S-2D-2H does not promise a rebid, 1H-2D-2S does promise one.

3) Do we play picture jumps or fast arrival? Fast arrival is a jump to game in a game forcing auction, usually used to show a minimum. Picture jumps are used to show specific hand types. In either case I prefer jumps in NT in game forcing hands to show extras.

1S - P - 2D - P; 3NT shows 15-17
1D - P - 1H - P;
1S - P - 2C - P;
3NT shows 15-17

Conventions

4) How do you play 1M - P - 3m? Bergen is fine, Strong Jump shifts are fine. Invitational Jump shifts are fine. But do they apply in competition and over doubles and by passed hands?

5) Make sure your agreements don't conflict. I played with one partner "jump fits by passed hands" and "weak jump shifts in competition". We had this auction: P - P - 1H - X; 2S. Well, is 2S a fit or weak? One agreement says one thing; the other agreement says something else.

6) You play new minor forcing (or 2-way checkback). Does it apply by a passed hand? What about in competition? 1D - P - 1H - 1S; 1NT - P - 2C

No-Trump Overcalls

7) I have seen lots of errors (many that result in director calls), that stem from poorly defined auctions over notrump overcalls. Many people put systems on over notrump overcalls and yet forget that agreement in the heat of battle.

1C - 1NT - 2C - X penalty or Stayman?
1C - 1NT - 2C - 2NT Lebensohl or natural or transfer to diamonds?

8) Most people like to play systems on over NT overcalls. What do you do with

K
AJT
AQ43
K6732

when RHO opens 1D? I feel 1NT is my only option but its ok if you feel differently. Be careful, if you do overcall 1NT, make sure that when partner transfers to Spades and you try 2NT (in tempo please) that he doesn't alert and say that shows 3 card support and a maximum.

Responder's Rebids

9) Second round jumps by responder can be undiscussed.

1D – P – 1H – P

1S – P – 3C Is that forcing, invitational or weak?

10) Are new suits by responder always forcing?

1C – P – 1S – P

Reasonable to play either forcing or nonforcing

2C – P – 2H

(2D = New minor)

1D – P – 1S – P

Even if you play above nonforcing, this could be 1 rd force

2D – P – 2H

Defensive Signaling

11) Carding can be confusing. General rules on opening lead include: attitude is first priority; count is shown when attitude is known. In practice what this means is when 3rd hand can't beat dummy, they give attitude if dummy plays a K or A, count otherwise. Nowadays many people change this by including suit preference if dummy has complete control of suit. Partner leads the A, dummy has Kx, or KQ, or KQJ. In the old days you gave count, many people now give suit preference.

12) On lead of an Ace when dummy has Q and length. Be sure you and your partner agree whether to give count or attitude. They are usually the same except when you have 4. The expert community is pretty much split down the middle here.

13) Dummy has a singleton. Many people play suit preference here. A slightly more sophisticated treatment is to use obvious shift type signals. If you want partner to shift to the "obvious" suit, you discourage. An encouraging signal warns partner to either continue or be careful about making their normal shift.

Double Trouble

14) High level doubles: are they penalty, takeout or transferable values?

1D – 4H – X Penalty, negative or transferable values.

15) Is 4NT a three suited or two suited takeout over 4S? I prefer to play takeout/cooperative doubles of 4S, partner generally passes unless he has at least 9+ cards in two suits.

Slam Auctions

16) Be careful of Exclusion Keycard in competition. I once had my exclusion bid doubled. I assumed we were playing ROPI (which we played over regular RKB); partner disagreed.

17) Is it Minorwood or natural?

1D – 2D

4D RKCB

1D – 1S

2C – 2H

2S – 3D

3NT – 4D should be a slam try, not keycard. There are many hands you want to make a slam try and knowing the number of keycards will not help.

General Techniques

18) As much as I like conventions, I have a suggestion. Conventions should come up relatively frequently or they should be so unusual that the bid itself will help you remember it. Exclusion is a bid that hardly ever comes up; however it is an unusual jump that will usually wake you up. Smolen is an example of a bid that comes up frequently enough to make it easy to remember.

19) Unless you are building a partnership like Meckwell, stay away from bids that are very likely disasters. 2NT – P – 3NT (alert: shows 4-5 in the majors) is a good example.

20) What is your partnership philosophy when you run into unusual treatments you may not have had a chance to discuss? Some people use 1NT overcalls as a light takeout double. If you haven't discussed with partner what your bids mean over 1NT, you may be in trouble. I prefer to treat the 1NT as a TO double and my bids mean exactly what they would have meant over a TO double.