

## Modern Notrump Bidding Uncontested Auctions

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Introduction: In A Helicopter

- I will cover Modern NT bidding for casual partnerships
- NT bidding is a gold mine, but you can't invest all of your time on NT
- I will cover:
  - some 1-line systems you can discuss quickly
  - some areas a more-than-casual partnership can explore
- You can still be a casual partnership after playing for 8 months
- Do you fill out a new Convention Card every time you play?

The Modern NT Ladder

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 12-14 | Open a suit, pursue 4-4 major fit, rebid NT otherwise <sup>†*</sup>   |
| 15-17 | Open 1NT <sup>†</sup>   |
| 18-19 | Open a suit, pursue 4-4 major fit, jump in NT if no fit <sup>**</sup> |
| 20-21 | Open 2NT <sup>*</sup>   |
| 22-23 | Open 2C, followed by 2NT <sup>*</sup>                                 |
| 24+   | Open 2C and force game  |

<sup>†</sup> Weak NT systems, such as K/S invert the first two ranges

<sup>\*</sup> A rebid of 1NT shows 18-19 points if your partner passes your opening.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Avoid 3-point ranges above 1NT; partner has one bid and shouldn't need to guess

The Strong 1NT bid:

- A solid solution to a very old bidding problem
- Makes it easy (instead of clumsy) to find game when partner has 10+
- Chance to find slams with 15+ points and a good fit
- Locate thin games with 8+ points a good fit
- Has many ways to find good fits
- Even when you open "weak" 1NTs

The Old Bidding Problem: How to rebid an intermediate hand with 16 points

- 1NT rebid is an underbid
- 2NT rebid is an overbid

The Strong 1NT clearly handles the hand without serious distributional value, and partner "knows" exactly how high a contract the partnership can play.

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Exercise 1: How would you bid these hands opposite a 1NT opener?

| (1)      | (2)     | (3)     | (4)        | (5)     |
|----------|---------|---------|------------|---------|
| S-9      | S-72    | S-KJ87  | S- AK10984 | S-106   |
| H-J73    | H-K1085 | H-1093  | H- 5       | H-KJ754 |
| D-K10985 | D-A973  | D-K     | D- AQ42    | D-J9    |
| C-QJ94   | C-A85   | C-KQ863 | C- 85      | C-K1052 |

*Note: these are randomly-generated hands, not pre-constructed "textbook" hands. I don't get to play bridge in a textbook, and neither do you.*

Modern NT systems allow great flexibility by reusing bids

- 2C stayman used to promise invitational values **and** a major.
  - Today most 2C bids have one or the other.
  - Even that may become nostalgic.
  - With both majors, you respond 2H, always
  - 2NT response to stayman ***does not exist***
- Some follow-ups to Jacoby transfers "cancel" the transfer (e.g. Walsh)

Four-way Transfers

- You should play 4-way transfers
- This handles minor suited hands with weak hands, game-invitational, and slam-invitational values
- 1NT -- 2S shows clubs
- 1NT -- 2NT shows diamonds
- 1NT opener bids 1 step if they would ***accept*** an invitation to 3NT in the minor
- 1NT bids minor suit (2 steps) if they would not accept an invitation
- Super-accept bids can be reversed (with partnership discussion)
- Problem: How to invite NT game with no major?
- Solution: Bid 2C stayman, and then bid 2NT. 2NT must be alerted, as it is "invitational values without promising 4 card major".
- If you actually have 4 spades and an invitation, the auction may go 1NT -- 2C, 2H - - 2S, where 2S is at least an invitation. NT opener cannot infer you have spades when you rebid 2NT or 3NT.

Three-level Responses cover some clumsy 2-suiters

- 3C = 5-5 minors, weak
- 3D = 5-5 minors, strong (game, maybe slam)
- 3H = 5-5 majors, invitational to game
- 3S = 5-5 majors, strong

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Exercise 2: How do these Possible Opener's Hands:

| NT-1    | NT-2   | NT-3   |  |  |
|---------|--------|--------|--|--|
| S-AK854 | S-AJ8  | S-K865 |  |  |
| H-Q62   | H-KQ94 | H-K9   |  |  |
| D-K5    | D-K53  | D-KJ3  |  |  |
| C-A93   | C-A97  | C-AJ72 |  |  |

Match up with these Possible Responder's Hands?

| (A)       | (B)       | (C)       | (D)      | (E)      |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| S-62      | S-Q6      | S-Q9      | S-Q10732 | S-96     |
| H-J53     | H-J85     | H-A83     | H-AJ853  | H-8      |
| D-Q108764 | D-A108642 | D-A108642 | D-A      | D-AQ874  |
| C-84      | C-86      | C-94      | C-K9     | C-KQ1064 |

Smolen (Transfers) – dealing with hands that are 5-4 in the majors

- If partner knows Smolen, you should play it
- Game forcing hand with 5-4 majors
- Start with 2C stayman
- If partner responds 2D (how rude), bid your 4-card major at the 3-level
- This pushes partner to bid 3NT or 4 of your 5-card major (hence transfer)
- Some people play "smolen" at the 2-level
  - This could be meant as an invitation or it could be meant weak (garbage)
  - It's logical to bid your 5 card suit at the 2-level
  - I don't recommend either unless you can discuss fully
- In a casual partnership, just bid 2C with an invitational 5-4 major
  - If partner bids 2D, he will have 7 cards in the minors
  - Usually 1NT--2D, 2H--2S is considered an invitation (correctly)
  - Usually 1NT--2H, 2S--3H is considered forcing (correctly)

Garbage Stayman

- You should play the first part, even if partner doesn't know it
- Classic hand is 4-4-4-1. Bid 2C and pass forever after.
- Other garbage bids that require discussion with partner:
  - Bid 2C and then your 5 card suit with 4-5-x-x or 5-4-x-x. The Baron plays this as garbage, but some pairs use this for the 5-4 invitational hands.
  - Bid 2C and then bid 2H with any hand with 4-4 or 5-4 majors. Partner must "wiggle" into spades if he has 3. This is called "crawling" Stayman.
  - Bid 2C and then 3 of your 5-6 card minor if partner doesn't bid your 4-card major. (Many people treat this as a forcing hand with a major and a longer minor, and some treat this as invitational. This requires a longer discussion.)

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Exercise 3: How do you respond with these hands against 1NT?

| (6)      | (7)     | (8)     | (9)      | (10)    |
|----------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| S-98654  | S-73    | S-984   | S-6      | S-92    |
| H-876    | H-1092  | H-A876  | H-9874   | H-96432 |
| D-void   | D-86532 | D-10532 | D- AQ984 | D-KJ74  |
| C-109862 | C-J63   | C-94    | C-1074   | C-85    |

Opening NT with a 5 card major

- You should do this more often
  - Because 1NT bid helps you find a good contract with a lot of hands
  - Because playing the weak hand (partner's) suit is more important
  - Because it is more useful to describe “notrump-ish” hands
- There are dozens of rules of thumb (some eccentric) “when to open” and “when not to open” 1NT with a 5 card major
  - "Don't bid 1NT if you have 2 cards in the other major"
  - "Don't bid 1NT when the suit is strong"
  - "Don't bid 1NT when the suit is weak"
  - "Bid 1NT when you hand is tenacious"
  - "Bid 1NT when you hand has a weak spot." It's a lot easier for RHO to bid 2 of the other major if you open 1 of your major and partner bids 1NT forcing. Also, RHO often has trouble showing his suit when you bid 1NT.
    - S - J x
    - H - A K x x x
    - D - K x x
    - C - A x x
  - My rule: Bid 1NT unless it will drive partner (or you) crazy
- Some partnerships handle this by playing "Puppet" stayman
  - Usually Puppet is only played after 2NT opening
  - You can play this if partner knows it, but I am now ambivalent
  - Playing Smolen transfers over 2NT can be at least as useful
  - Puppet is a complicated discussion, not for casual partnerships

Opening NT with 5-4 hands or 6 card minors:

- You can experiment with this, but the rules are more logical:
  - You have to have an understanding partner
  - Your 2-card suits need to be tenacious (values “wasted” at a suit contract)
  - Your longest suit must be a minor
  - Your hand cannot be stronger than 17 with distribution. The following hand is no-trumpish, but is too strong for 1NT. Just open 1D and rebid 2NT:
    - S – A 10
    - H – K 8 3
    - D – K Q J 10 7 6
    - C – K 9