

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 ^{†*}
15-17	Open 1NT [†]
18-19	Open a suit, pursue 4-4 major fit, jump in NT if no fit ^{**}
20-21	Open 2NT [*]
22-23	Open 2C, followed by 2NT [*]
24+	Open 2C and force game

[†] Weak NT systems, such as K/S invert the first two ranges

^{*} A rebid of 1NT shows 18-19 points if your partner passes your opening.

^{**} 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