

STANDARD AMERICAN SYSTEM / FIVE CARD MAJORS

OPENING BIDS

Bidding systems change over time, and “point” requirements may vary slightly, but the opening bids as listed below are generally used in bridge groups which play the Standard American System/Five Card Major.

Variations occur with more experienced players who use the “Rule of 20” to assess an opening hand or take in to consideration that they are opening in “Third Seat”.

STANDARD OPENING BIDS

1. **1 of a Major** (Hearts or Spades)

12-19 High Card Points (HCPs) and at least 5 cards in a major suit – bid the 5 card suit (1H or 1S). If you have 5 cards in both majors bid spades first.

2. **1 of a Minor** (Clubs or Diamonds)

12-19 High Card Points (HCPs) and no five card major and not suited to 1NT opening. There are 2 options

a) **“Better Minor” method** – bid 1C or 1D - whichever is stronger of the minor suits; **or**

b) **“Short Club” method** – a bid of 1D promises 4 diamonds.

With no 4 diamonds and no 5 card major the only bid is 1C. Thus a 1C promises opening points; could be as few as 2 carder club, but does give information about what it DOESN'T have.

Choice between these two methods is by partnership agreement. When a 1C opening bid is made, opener's partner should announce (alert) the method being used.

3. **1NT** : 15-17 or 16-18 or 15-18 High Card Points – balanced hand. *Opener's partner should announce (alert) the method being used.*

Balanced being having at least 3 protected suits, no more than one doubleton and no void or singleton.

Most people open in the major suit **if they have a 5 card major** included in their 15-18 High Card Points. With partnership agreement you can open NT when holding a 5 card major, but must announce this possibility to the opposition.

4. **“Weak Two” Bids** (2D/2H/2S, not 2C) : show a **6 card suit** containing at least 2 of the top 3 honours and low point count i.e. 6-10 points when not vulnerable; 8-10 points when vulnerable.

5. **“Pre-emptive” Bids** (3C/3D/3H/3S) : show **7 card suit** and a low point count i.e. 6-10 points when not vulnerable and 8-10 points when vulnerable.

Preemptive Bids at **4H or 4S level** show **8 card major suit** with points not suitable for a **2C** opening

6. **2NT** : 20-22 High Card Points and a reasonably balanced hand – if not balanced the hand may be suitable for a **2C** opening

7. **2C** : 23+ High Cards Points **or** a hand with **fewer than 4 losers** (e.g. it could be a very strong long one-suited hand). Partner is forced to respond. It is likely that you will bid to game level or possibly a slam.