

Responding to Partner's Opening Bid of One-of-a-Suit with fewer than 6 HCPs - to Bid or Not to Bid? ♠♥♦♣

When dealing with this issue, there is no right or wrong answer in making this decision as to whether or not to respond to partner's opening bid of one-of-a-suit; because the required minimum number of high card points, that is acceptable, is simply dictated by both circumstances and partnership agreement.

It's a fact of life that *no two bridge players bid alike*. This is just as true among experts as it is among average players — indeed, it is one of the factors that keep the game exciting. While playing bridge, remember that **FINS Are Not Just for Fish!** So, if you want to be swift like a fish at the bridge table, you better have your *FINS*. Every bid in bridge can be described as one of the following:



F = Forcing: Partner must bid again.

I = Invitational: Partner is urged to bid again if his strength is not minimum.

N = Non-forcing: Partner may bid again only if his strength or distribution warrants.

S = Sign-off (closing): Partner must 'pass'.

Following 'narrative' by no means meant to be a 'gospel' of any sort in bidding. It is meant instead, to be a helping hand for bridge partnerships to reach a consensus on the common arrangement. However, *there is an uncodified 'Helpful (?) Partner Rule' that says, it is permissible to injure a Partner who 'passes' your bid despite having a biddable hand or overtakes your trick (as a choice) and then starts thinking.*



Some partnerships agree to allow for the use of a **pre-emptive jump-response** which evidences a bid showing a six card or longer suit with a **very weak** 3-5 high card points. Alternatively, other partnerships reserve a jump-shift response by responder to indicate a **very strong** 19+ high card points guaranteeing at least a game-level contract with, a likelihood of a possible Slam. These later two options are obviously mutually exclusive.

The consensus is that the standard minimum requirement necessary for a simple response to partner's opening bid of one-of-a-suit is 6+ HCPs or sometimes its equivalent as ascertained by agreement. Some flexibility to this minimum HCPs requirement seems however, to be prudent.

e.g. Partner opens 1C. With ♠J84 ♥J62 ♦Q983 ♣J32 holding, appropriate option is 'passing'; but consider bidding 1H with ♠8 ♥AJ983 ♦10732 ♣1064

Suggested guidelines while considering flexibility for minimum HCPs requirement –

- i. length and quality of the potential suit for bidding in response;
- ii. consideration as to the specific suit chosen (e.g. with ♠ suit, pre-emptive value is maximised due to its ranking, not so with other suits);
- iii. vulnerability should be taken into account consider 'pass' if vulnerable and respond if not vulnerable;
- iv. if HCPs are Quacks (Queens and/or Jacks), consider 'passing'; if Aces and/or Kings, contemplate bidding *note that 6 HCPs consisting of three Queens or 1 Queen & 4 Jacks or 2 Queens & 2 Jacks might not take any tricks, while a hand holding a single Ace or 1 Ace & 1 Jack (even though only 5 HCPs) will almost guarantee at least one trick the quality of HCPs held is therefore, very relevant;*

- v. presence of **spot cards** and **intermediaries** (10s & 9s) are relevant while evaluating trick-taking capacity; especially, if **spot cards** are present in combination with other cards in the same suit that is being considered for potential response bid.

Partner opens 1C in 1st seat and your right-hand Opponent ‘passes’ –

1. ♠6532 ♥9875 ♦10864 ♣4 - to ‘pass’ here, is tempting, but to bid might be help transforming one un-makeable contract to another. In addition, one would hope that a ‘pass’ here, might discourage Partner from advancing the bidding any further, while encouraging the left-hand Opponent to enter the auction in the balancing (4th) seat a ‘pass’ here appears to be a prudent option.
2. ♠Q6532 ♥J75 ♦J86 ♣74 – to ‘pass’ here, would be a sensible choice; given the Quacks holding, even with their HCPs, has least trick-taking potential.
3. ♠J9853 ♥76 ♦A86 ♣853 – ‘1S’ response would be worth a try Despite holding 5 HCPs, this hand has some trick-taking potential due to positioning of HCPs.
4. ♠9 ♥AJ953 ♦87532 ♣84 – surely, can’t let it go; respond ‘1H’ considering HCPs positioning and suits composition.
5. ♠Q10743 ♥K964 ♦653 ♣2 – ‘1S’ is worth a response, and ‘passing’ Opener’s 1C bid doesn’t seem prudent with the composition of hand.

Partner opens ‘1D’ in 1st Seat and right-hand Opponent ‘Passes’ –

1. ♠QJ1087 ♥4 ♦J76 ♣8754 – ‘1S’ is instinctive response (*despite not holding generally followed practice of minimum 6 HCPs*), and rightly so this suit is a rather nice 5-card holding and notwithstanding its 4 HCPs count, it holds some pre-emptive value over the Opponents’ holding due to length in ♠. ‘Passing’ here, might @###@ off your Partner risk though, is that Partner might ‘reverse’, make a jump-shift or a 2NT jump re-bid; any one of which might place your Partnership into an unsound/precarious situation.
2. ♠Q87 ♥Q75 ♦6 ♣J97542 – tempting hand, but let the wisdom prevail and ‘pass’ to bid here, with the collection of Quacks, is likely to be inviting more trouble moreover, Opponents are very likely to have overcall-holdings for 1C opening bid.

All these above examples are based on the premise that Partner has opened in the **1st Seat**; if he/she were to have opened in 2nd, 3rd, or 4th seat, both Opponents would have ‘passed’.

Strategy under these scenarios will be a bit different, for the following reason:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YOU LHO Partner RHO Pass 1C/1D/1H/1S Pass ??? 2. YOU LHO Partner RHO Pass Pass 1C/1D/1H/1S Pass ??? 3. YOU LHO Partner RHO -- -- -- Pass Pass Pass 1C/1D/1H/1S Pass ??? 	<p>Since in all these bidding sequences, both the Opponents have already ‘Passed’, this significantly increases the odds that the Partner has a good hand and is about to jump-bid, should he/she be afforded an opportunity. There isn’t as much reason to respond under these circumstances in order to preempt the Opponents who most likely don’t have very much, anyhow. Accordingly, when Partner opens in the 2nd, 3rd or 4th Seat, do not be anxious to respond with other than full 6 HCPs, it’s equivalent or more; unless, Partner was to have</p>
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opened with a strong, artificial and forcing ‘2C’ bid. A game-level contract is not likely to be available to your Partnership anyway.