

REOPENING THE BIDDING

When an opening bid is followed by two passes:

South	West	North
1♣	Pass	Pass

South	West	North
1♠	Pass	Pass

-- A takeout double shows at least two defensive tricks. A cue bid response to the double is at least a game try, as usual.

-- Double and then bid a suit shows an opening bid or better (but you don't have to double with an opening bid).

-- A minimum overcall in a suit can be quite weak, but can be more than an opening bid if the suit is not strong or for some reason the hand is unsuitable for a stronger bid or takeout double.

-- A jump overcall in a suit is lighter than an immediate strong jump overcall. In a major, it shows a good suit and a good hand, perhaps a two-suiter. The jumper fears that a minimum overcall might be passed out and a game missed. A jump to the three-level in a minor strongly invites 3NT, so should be based on a solid six-card suit and perhaps an ace or king outside.

-- A jump overcall in notrump is a natural bid, showing a solid minor and a stopper in the opposing suit (or semi-solid suit with a double stopper). Bid 3NT if all you need is an ace or king in partner's hand, because he needs the equivalent of an ace *and* a king to bid 3NT.

-- A cue bid reopening is discussed in section 10-5, Reopening Cue Bid Overcalls. A jump cue bid asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the opposing suit.

-- A reopening bid of 1NT varies in strength, depending on which suit was opened. As the likelihood of a two-level response increases, the HCP requirement increases accordingly:

Over 1♣, shows a light-to-fair opening bid, 11-14 HCP

Over 1♦, shows a fair-to-good opening bid, 12-15 HCP

Over 1♥, shows a sound opening bid, 13-16 HCP

Over 1♠, shows a very sound opening bid, 14-17 HCP

To remember these four-point ranges, you start with 11 for 1♣ and add 1 HCP for each step higher. A double stopper, or a good suit, can count as a point or two. All bids in response have the same meaning as over a 1NT opening: Stayman, Jacoby, Texas, etc., are all applicable, even a transfer into opener's major. If opener rebids over the notrump bid, 2NT by advancer is a natural invitational raise and a double is for penalties. Rumpelsohl and negative doubles are not appropriate to this situation.

A simulation by Rene Vernes showed that if you have a single range for a 1NT bid over all suits, it should be 13-16. However, the variations shown here are easy to remember and must be better than a single range. At the very least, bidding 1NT over minor and major suits should have different ranges. On the other hand, bidding 1NT with 11-12 HCP will often save opener from an embarrassing contract and perhaps get him into a good contract. With length in opener's minor, a pass may well be the best call. When that happens, the opening lead should generally be a trump.

-- To reopen with a double and then bid notrump after a minimum response requires more strength than a notrump overcall:

After doubling 1♣, a light opening 1NT hand, 15-17 HCP

After doubling 1♦, a strong opening NT hand, 16-18 HCP

After doubling 1♥, a point more: 17-19 HCP

After doubling 1♠, yet another point: 18-20 HCP

Each 3-HCP range is just above the HCP requirement for a double. The reason for the difference between a minor and a major is this: When you double a minor and then bid notrump, you are probably bidding 1NT. When you double a major and then bid notrump, you are probably bidding 2NT. It takes more points to make 2NT than to make 1NT, hence the difference in HCP requirements.

All subsequent bidding is the same as if the takeout double had been directly over the opening bid.

Since there is no overlap between a 1NT overcall and a double followed by a notrump bid, you must look ahead. When a 1♦ bid is passed around and you hold ♠42 ♥AJ93 ♦KQ5 ♣Q983, you must reopen with 1NT and not with a takeout double. A double is the instinctive action, planning to bid 1NT if partner responds 1♠, but that sequence shows a stronger hand. Yes, you may miss a heart fit by bidding 1NT, but you can't do everything in bridge. Your first duty is to describe your hand in general. If you double and then bid 1NT with everything from 10 to 17 HCP, your partner will never know what to do.

-- To reopen with a double, then jump in notrump, requires even more. As might be expected, the minimum is a hand that is too good for doubling and bidding notrump at the minimum level:

After doubling 1♣, 18-20 HCP

After doubling 1♦, 19-21 HCP

After doubling 1♥, 20-22 HCP

After doubling 1♠, 21 HCP or more

Note that each 3-HCP range starts at 7 HCP above a minimum double. After a cue bid response to the double, these requirements change:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT - not enough to reopen 1NT (not forcing) 3NT - a hand too good to reopen 1NT 2♦/2♥/2♠ - forcing for one round

With a hand that lies within the range of a 1NT reopening, East would not have doubled unless he had at least one major. His failure to bid a major in response to the cue bid therefore marks him as not having values for a 1NT overcall, or having too much. The cue bid response promises another bid if the doubler bids a suit, but a 2NT bid can be passed because East limits his hand by this call. (A 2NT response to a cue bid by a person who has not previously acted is forcing, but a double is an "act".)

A notrump rebid after a jump response to the double has similar implications.

-- To reopen with a double, then raise the response one level, shows at least 4 HCP more than a minimum double. A free raise (i.e., over an intervening bid) might be justified with four trumps and only a king extra. Any raise strongly implies at least four-card trump support, although a raise with strong three-card support is sometimes necessary when opener's partner throws in a bid. A three-card raise requires more HCP than a four-card raise, however.

An alternative approach over a major opening is to bid 1NT with 11-17 HCP. Partner bids 2♣ to show game interest and ask range, and then 2♦ shows 11-12 HCP, a bid in either major (one natural, one artificial), shows 13-15 HCP, and 2NT (forcing to game) shows 16-17 HCP. This suggests that advancer should have at least 8 HCP to make the 2♣ query. An honor in opener's suit is a plus, especially in a major.

Following the 2♣ query, the continuation bidding depends on the response:

After 2♦, a bid in opener's suit is Stayman, all other bids are signoffs.

After 2♥/2♠, all bids are signoffs (no need for Stayman)

After 2NT, all bids are forcing to game, but 3♣ is a signoff (use opener's major for Stayman).

If opener rebids over 1NT, the next hand has no idea of partner's range and may go wrong. Should he bid minimally with a good hand, or jump? Probably a rebid by the 1NT bidder should then imply 16-17 HCP, whether partner has passed or bid naturally.

For reopening actions by a passed hand, see section 8-5, Defensive Bidding by a Passed Hand. For cue bid reopenings, see section 10-5, Reopening Cue Bid Overcalls. For reopening when a 1NT bid is passed around, see section 12-2, Marvin vs Strong Notrump Openings, and section 12-3, Marvin vs Weak Notrump Openings.