

Opener's Second Bid

When we open the bidding we have seized the initiative; we have a head start on the opponents in the competition to see if we can bid game and to find the best game. In general, once we have heard a response from our partner, our second bid should express the rest of our hand. Responder will usually be the one to decide what contract we play in. We should be sure to make our second bid as expressive as possible – both in terms of *strength* and *shape*.

If we have a fit for our partner's suit (especially a major)

Winning bridge involves bidding and making game as often as possible. Discovering fits (especially in a *major suit*) is likely to maximise our chances of finding game. If we discover a fit with responder, we should make sure to show that by raising them. The level we raise to will express our strength. A simple raise shows 12-14, a jump raise shows 15-17 and a raise to game shows 18-20. Consider the following hands assuming we open One Club and our partner responds One Spade.

♠ 9732	♠ AJ32	♠ AK82	♠ AK842
♥ KQ	♥ AJ5	♥ KQ	♥ void
♦ QJ	♦ 2	♦ 923	♦ 8
♣ KJ542	♣ QJT94	♣ AQJ5	♣ AKT7632
Bid Two Spades	Bid Three Spades	Bid Four Spades	Bid Six Spades (!)

Now that your partner knows you have a fit and knows your strength, she will be able to bid a sensible contract.

If we don't have a fit and we have a balanced hand

If we don't have a fit for responder's suit and we have a balanced hand, we should express that by rebidding No Trumps. The level of No Trumps we bid will be determined by our points (remembering that with 15-17 HCP we would have opened One No Trump).

With 12-14 HCP, having opened One of a Suit, we should rebid No Trumps at the cheapest level.

With 18-19 HCP, having opened One of a Suit, we should rebid No Trumps and make a *jump* rebid to show our strength.

Our partner will now know exactly how strong we are and that we don't have four card support for their suit.

If we don't have a fit and we have an unbalanced hand

If we don't uncover a fit, a minimum bid shows 12-14 HCP. A jump rebid shows 15-17 HCP and if our rebid is at game level we are showing 18-19 HCP. She also knows we don't have a fit for her suit and will be able to determine if we should play in one of our suits or in No Trumps.

Suppose we open One Heart with the following and we hear a One Spade response from our partner. We aren't balanced, so we can't bid No Trumps. What should we bid?

♠ 9	♠ Q2	♠ void	♠ K
♥ AKQ84	♥ KT9864	♥ AKQT8	♥ KQJ8753
♦ QJ3	♦ AJ4	♦ Q92	♦ AQ
♣ QT52	♣ Q96	♣ AQJ98	♣ K83
Bid Two Clubs	Bid Two Hearts	Bid Three Clubs	Bid Three Hearts

Our partner will now know a huge amount about our hand and will usually be able to set the contract on her second bid. Remember the old bridge adage "She who knows, goes." Once you know if you can bid game or not (and which game is likely to be the best) there's no need to continue discussion during the auction. Resist the temptation to keep bidding when you don't need any further information from your partner – bid what you know is right!