

## Standard American Bidding (5-Card Major System)

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**Point Count:** Ace = 4 points King = 3 points Queen = 2 points Jack = 1 point Total points in the deck = 40

**Suit Rank** (lowest to highest): *Minors:* ♣ Clubs ♦ Diamonds *Majors:* ♥ Hearts ♠ Spades *Notrump*

**A good trump suit:** A "fit" of 8 or more cards in one suit, combined in your two hands in any way (4-4, 5-3, 6-2, etc.).

*First choice:* A major (hearts or spades) if you have at least an 8-card fit.

*Second choice:* Notrump if you have balanced strength and **no** fit in a major suit.

*Third choice:* A minor (clubs or diamonds) if you have at least an 8-card fit and unbalanced strength.

**Contract requirements** -- What you and your partner need in your two hands to make these contracts:

**Suit partscore** (bid of 1, 2 or 3 in any suit) -- 18-24 points **and** at least an 8-card trump fit.

**Notrump partscore** (bid of 1NT or 2NT) -- 20-24 points **and** preferably **no** 8-card major-suit fit.

**Major-suit game** (4H, 4S) -- 25+ points **and** at least an 8-card fit. (Game and slam contracts pay a scoring bonus.)

**Minor-suit game** (5C, 5D) -- 29+ points **and** at least an 8-card fit.

**Notrump game** (3NT) -- 25+ points **and** preferably **no** 8-card major-suit fit.

**Small slam** (any bid of 6) -- 33+ points

**Grand slam** (any bid of 7) -- 36+ points **and** all four aces.

These contract guidelines apply when you have relatively balanced hands. If you have a strong trump fit, long side suits and/or unusual distribution, you'll need fewer points to make these contracts.

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**Rules for Opener** (the first player to make a bid other than Pass)

**Your first bid:** Always open the bidding at the 1-level if you have at least 13 points You may open a hand of 11 or 12 points if you have a long suit, distributional strength and/or good quick tricks.

*The meanings of your opening bids are:*

**1NT** = Exactly 15-17 points and balanced distribution (at least 2-3 cards in every suit). Balanced distributions are 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2.

**1H or 1S** = 13-21 points and at least 5 cards in your suit.

**1C or 1D** = 13-21 points and at least 3 cards in your suit. Choose your **longer** minor. If you have two 3-card minors, open 1C to keep the bidding low.

This is called a **convenient minor** -- it tells partner you have opening points, but your hand doesn't meet the requirements for an opening bid of 1H, 1S or 1NT.

**2NT** = Exactly 20-22 points and balanced distribution.

**2C** = Artificial bid that starts the description of a very strong hand (22-23+ points). Partner must respond.

**2D, 2H or 2S** = A **weak two-bid** -- 5-9 points with a good 6-card suit.

**3 of a suit** = A weak hand (5-9 points) with a long, strong suit (7 cards).

If you have two 5-card suits, open the **higher-ranking** suit, then rebid the lower-ranking suit (if you have 5 clubs and 5 diamonds, open 1D and bid clubs at your next turn). This allows partner to choose between your two suits without raising the level of the bidding.

**Your second bid** (called a **rebid**), A rebid is made after partner responds to your opening bid.

**A new suit** (1C - 1H - 1S) -- At least 4 cards in the suit, 13+ points.

**Simple rebid of your first suit** (1C - 1H - 2C) -- Extra length (usually a 6+ cards) and a minimum (13-15 points). To show a stronger hand with a long suit, you can jump-rebid your suit -- 1C - 1H - 3C.

**Single raise of partner's suit** (1C - 1H - 2H) -- 4 cards in the suit partner responded and a minimum (13-15 points). To show a stronger hand with a fit, you can jump-raise his suit -- 1C - 1H - 3H or 4H.

**Notrump** (1C - 1H - 1NT) -- A balanced minimum opener (13-14 points) WITHOUT 4 cards in partner's suit and without a new 4-card suit you could bid at the 1-level. To show a stronger balanced hand, you can open 1NT (with 15-17 points). To show a **very strong** balanced hand (19 points), open a suit bid and then jump in notrump -- 1C - 1H - 2NT.

**As Opener, if you have fewer than 16 points, DON'T go to the 2-level unless:**

- 1 - You're raising partner's suit (to confirm a trump fit (1D - 1S - 2S); **or**
- 2 - You're rebidding your own extra-long suit (1D - 1S - 2D); **or**
- 3 - You're showing a second suit (4 cards or longer) that is **lower** in rank than your first suit (1D - 1S - 2C).

**Rules for Responder** (after your partner opens the bidding):

Respond to partner's opening bid if you have **6 points** or more.

**If partner opens 1H or 1S** and you have 3-card support -- Always raise to confirm the 8-card trump fit.

**If partner opens 1C or 1D** and you have a 4+-card major -- Always respond 1 of your major.  
If you have two 4-card majors, respond the **cheaper** major to keep the bidding low.

**If you have fewer than 10 points, DON'T** go to the 2-level unless you're raising partner's suit (to confirm a trump fit) **or** rebidding your own extra-long suit.  
With some unbalanced hands, you'll have to respond 1NT to keep the bidding low.

**Your first response (after partner opens one of a suit):**

**1 of a new suit** (1C by partner - 1H by you) = At least 4 cards in your suit and at least 6 points.

**2 of a new minor** (non-jump) (1H - 2D) = A 4+-card suit and at least 10-11 points.

**2 of a new major** (non-jump: the auction 1S - 2H) = A **5+-card suit** and at least 10-11 points.

**Single raise of partner's major** (1S - 2S) = At least 3 cards in partner's suit and 6-10 playing points To show a stronger hand with support, make a jump-raise -- 1S - 3S or 1S - 4S.

**Single raise of partner's minor** (1D - 2D) = At least 4-5 cards in partner's suit, 6-10 points **and** no 4+-card major suit. To show a stronger hand with support, make a jump-raise -- 1D - 3D.

**Notrump** (1S - 1NT) = Weak (6-10 points) with no support for partner's suit **and** no suit you can bid at the 1-level. To show a stronger balanced hand, jump in notrump -- 1S - 2NT or 1S - 3NT.

**Jump in a new suit** (1S- 3C) = Very strong (18-19+ points) and a long, strong suit. This is a **jump-shift**.

**As Opener OR Responder, you are showing your point-count range any time you:**

- 1 - Open or rebid notrump -- 1C - 1NT    1C - 1S - 1NT    1S - 2H - 2NT
- 2 - Raise partner's suit (to confirm that you have an 8-card fit) -- 1H - 2H    1C - 1H - 2H    1C - 1H - 1S - 2S
- 3 - Rebid your own long suit -- 1D - 1S - 2D    1H - 1S - 1NT - 3S

The **level** you choose for these bids shows whether you have a minimum, invitational or forcing point-count range.

**Rules for Overcaller** (after an opponent opens the bidding)

**1-level suit overcall** (1H by left-hand opponent - 1S by you) = 10+ points with a good 5+-card suit.

**2-level, non-jump suit overcall** (1H - 2D) = 12+ points with a strong suit

**Jump overcall** (1H - 3C) = Weak hand (5-9 points) with a long, strong suit (6+ cards).

**1NT** (1H - 1NT) = 15-17 points (some play 15-18) with balanced distribution and stoppers in the opponent's suit.

**Double** (1H - DBL) = 12+ points, shortness in the opponent's suit, 3+ cards in all unbid suits. This is called a **takeout double** because it asks partner to take it out of the auction by bidding his longest suit.