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This series is all about opening the bidding and responding with 1NT - the catchall response. ACOL version. Part 2 of 2. Updated winter 2015.

VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2S By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 1
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ 82	
	♥ 97	
	♦ QJT73	
	♣ A984	
West		East
♠ QJT9		♠ 75
♥ QT3		♥ KJ65
♦ 982		♦ A65
♣ KQ3		♣ JT75
	South	
	♠ AK643	
	♥ A842	
	♦ K4	
	♣ 62	

This series of six deals continues the theme of the 1NT response to an opening bid. However, we are also introducing the very powerful idea of *giving preference* into some of these deals.

When you bid two suits you are asking partner to choose which one he likes best (or dislikes the least). This raises the issue, sometimes, of which suit you should bid first (such as Hand 3).

We want to make it clear that a *preference bid* is a clear sign of weakness. Short of hoisting the white flag there are few other ways of partner yelling at you "Stop the world, I want to get off".

You have been warned...

Hand 1 illustrates this very powerful principle.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♥
P	2♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♠, naturally enough, and partner responds with a disheartening 1NT to show 6 to 9 points.

Now, with a *semi-balanced* hand (5-4-2-2 shape) and 14 points we might just Pass this and let partner stew in his own juice. However, it is usually right to bid our second suit if we have one – provided we can show the suit **below the level** of our first suit.

Why this proviso? Well, we must leave partner a bolt-hole if he hates our second suit. By bidding 2♥ we are offering partner a choice between Hearts and Spades. If partner hates Hearts (something that is entirely possible) then he can *give preference* to Spades by bidding 2♠ – this bid would not raise the level of the auction.

[Some bidding theory. Ignore it if you like....]

Contrast 1♠ – 1NT – 2♥ with the auction 1♥ – 1NT – 2♠. The latter is a different (a very different) scenario. Firstly, responder has denied four Spades when he responds 1NT (1♠ would be a much cheaper response and would be preferable to 1NT). So opener cannot realistically expect to locate a 4-4 Spade fit.

Secondly, if responder hated Spades (quite likely) he might be obliged to bid 3♥ and drag the bidding, willy-nilly, up to the dangerous heights of the three-level.

That's why we feel safe in bid suits **downwards** (as in 1♠ – 1NT – 2♥) but should be very wary about reversing that order and bidding them **upwards**. It's all to do with **giving preference**].

Here, on this deal, we open 1♠, partner responds 1NT and we show our second suit *cheaply*. Partner shows his distaste for Hearts by putting us back to Spades with a *preference bid* of 2♠. Such a bid is a "Thank you, but no thank you" type of call and invites us to shut up. Duly cautioned, we Pass.

Play.

West leads a trump. This is a good shot from his cards – on other leads we'd maybe be able to trump a Heart loser on table. However, what we can do instead is to set up dummy's Diamonds so we win the trump lead and play the ♦K.

The defence meanly allow that to win (this is good play on East-West's part) so we play another Diamond and East wins his ♦A to play another trump. We try a third round (maybe they break 3-3?) only to find West with four.

West now switches to the ♣K. We take the ♣A and, with Diamonds threatening to be isolated, we cash the ♦Q (at least that suit breaks 3-3!) and play another winning Diamond. We know that's going to be ruffed, but forcing out an opponent's winning trump with one of our winners is good business as it promotes the small Spades in our own hand into winning rank.


We end up making one Club, two Diamonds, one Heart and four trumps for a total of eight – and that's all we need.



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VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2D By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 2
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ Q62		
	♥ 5		
	♦ 7642		
	♣ A9642		
West		East	
♠ JT953		♠ K874	
♥ QJ8		♥ T942	
♦ AQT		♦ J5	
♣ 85		♣ KQJ	
	South		
	♠ A		
	♥ AK763		
	♦ K983		
	♣ T73		

Some contracts are reached very quickly, although that doesn't make them easy to play.

Sometimes you just have to scramble as many tricks as you can – as here.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	1NT	P	2♦
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

The opening bid of 1♥ is obvious on our cards and North depresses us with a 1NT response, showing a miserable 6 to 9 points. As we can show Diamonds comfortably (because they rank **below** Hearts) we rebid 2♦, offering North a choice between the red suits.

Partner prefers Diamonds to Hearts and indicates this by Passing, leaving us in 2♦.

Play.

When dummy appears we can see that 2♦ is our best spot (it is a 4-4 fit, after all) although the trumps are very ropey. On this type of hand we figure to try and make as many tricks as we can by ruffing – we are going to get nowhere fast by trying to draw trumps.

So we take the ♠A, performe, and cash the ♥A K. Now we ruff a Heart on table, ruff a Spade and try another Heart. Shaking his head, West ruffs in front of dummy with the ♦10 and plays a Club.


We take the ♣A, ruff another Spade to hand and – for want of anything better to do, play the last Heart, throwing yet another Club. East ruffs that, cashes a Club and plays a trump but we have just enough battery life to claim eight tricks.



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VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 3
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ 2	
	♥ KJ52	
	♦ T875	
	♣ A963	
West		East
♠ KJ94		♠ T53
♥ T4		♥ 87
♦ J92		♦ KQ63
♣ KQJT		♣ 8754
	South	
	♠ AQ876	
	♥ AQ963	
	♦ A4	
	♣ 2	

Here you have to decide what to bid and what to rebid.

Even then the bidding isn't over...

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

With two five-card suits it is normal to open the higher ranking – and with two “touching” suits (Spades and Hearts, Hearts and Diamonds, Diamonds and Clubs) it is mandatory.

The reason is that we can conveniently offer partner both suits, allowing *preference* to be given without raising the level of the auction. Here we simply have to open 1♠ and the wisdom of that approach becomes apparent when partner responds 1NT. Now we can test partner out by rebidding 2♥, knowing that he can put us back to 2♠ should he have little interest in either major.

Although (with 16 points) we can't write game off on this hand we would probably Pass if partner bid 2♠ as there would be little indication of a decent fit and our hand has more holes than a warehouse full of Swiss cheeses.

As it is, though, partner raises 2♥ to 3♥. With a minimum 1NT response and a few Hearts partner would Pass 2♥ (cf Hand 2) so this raise shows four trumps and a maximum (8 to 9 points). Armed with that knowledge we are happy to push on to game.

Play.

This hand isn't difficult at all. Taking the ♣K lead with the ♣A on the table we draw trumps in two rounds and then trump Spades in dummy. This has the effect both of making extra tricks and of getting the long Spades set up as tricks.


In the end all we lose is a Diamond and the ♠K, making an overtrick. We shall take a deeper look at this idea of ruffing in dummy in the next edition of VBlue.



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VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 4
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ AQ953		
	♥ J		
	♦ A975		
	♣ K42		
West		East	
♠ T76		♠ KJ82	
♥ AK7		♥ 842	
♦ QJ32		♦ T86	
♣ T98		♣ AQ5	
	South		
	♠ 4		
	♥ QT9653		
	♦ K4		
	♣ J763		

Misfits are the bane of bridge players' lives.

How can you avoid playing in bad contracts?

West	North	East	South
P	1♠	P	1NT
P	2♦	P	2♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

We now enter the murky world of misfits. When the hand is a misfit then we want to get out of the auction as quickly as we can. Sometimes it means that we play in a poor contract but often there are no better, higher contracts.

Here, partner opens 1♠ and we respond with an uneasy 1NT. Partner now rebids 2♦ solicitously asking us which of Diamonds and Spades we prefer. Oh, terrific (!) Thank you, partner.

We loathe Spades but Passing 2♦ is liable to get the hand played in a 4-2 "fit" (leaving East-West with more trumps than we have). With little choice, we have to show our own suit and bid 2♥. That ends the auction and we await dummy with interest.

Play.

Partner has been brilliant! His Pass of 2♥ is the bid of a genius (well, an expert, anyway). Remember this deal the next time a similar auction occurs at your table. If you offer partner two suits and he bids his own he is not wanting you to bid our own suit again nor to retreat to No-trumps. He is showing a long suit and a positive hatred of your suits. Get the dummy down as soon as you can and pray that the contract scrapes enough tricks together.


2♥ is a frustratingly difficult hand to defend. West innocently (and naturally) leads a Club to East's ♣Q and East – with nothing better to do – gets off lead with a trump. West switches to a Spade but we have all the time in the world. We take the ♠A, cross to the ♦K and knock out the ♥A. Ruffing the Spade return we draw trumps and drive out the ♣A.

When Clubs are 3-3 we have an overtrick.



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VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3D By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 5
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ AQ863	
	♥ AK876	
	♦ 3	
	♣ 74	
West		East
♠ 954		♠ KJT2
♥ QJ42		♥ T9
♦ A7		♦ K64
♣ QJT3		♣ A852
	South	
	♠ 7	
	♥ 53	
	♦ QJT9852	
	♣ K96	

Sometimes you have to bid your (weak) hand in such a way that partner

- (a) understands what you have and
- (b) knows what to do with the information.

We all need understanding partners in this game...

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	P	1NT
P	2♥	P	3♦
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

More misfits... and another example of killing the auction at the right level.

Partner opens 1♠ and – with a heavy Heart – we respond 1NT. 2♦ is taboo with just 6 points and Pass would be something of a double-cross. Partner now delights us by rebidding 2♥. Lovely! Just what we wanted to hear (!)

Well, we might Pass and watch partner struggle in that but we simply have to bid our seven-card suit now. 3♦ is not going to be misinterpreted by North – he has seen us bid 1NT, remember. We are showing long Diamonds (they have to be long to bid them at the three-level) and a weak hand and we are inviting partner to shut up and display the dummy.

A little to our surprise, partner gets the message and 3♦ ends the auction.

Play.

We see the dummy and note with approval that partner *listens* to the bidding. That Pass of 3♦ was a good bid. Partners who listen (as distinct from "hear") are worth keeping. Believe us. There are many who would press on with 3♥ on those North cards; far too many.


3♦ is not a difficult contract to make in practice. West leads the ♣Q (so we know we have a Club trick) and East takes his ♣A. Any possibility we might have of a Club ruff on table vanishes when East returns a trump to West's ♦A. No matter, we have five Diamond tricks, one Club and three fairly obvious tricks on table in the guise of the ♠A and the ♥A K.

That totals nine so 3♦ makes on the nose.



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VB Y1 #9 One-level opening bids and the 1NT response Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 6
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠	
	♥ JT9763	
	♦ A762	
	♣ Q62	
West		East
♠ AQJ8		♠ T542
♥ 8		♥ Q2
♦ QJ854		♦ T
♣ JT9		♣ AK8754
	South	
	♠ K9763	
	♥ AK54	
	♦ K93	
	♣ 3	

In some hands partner can make a most unexpected bid.

Don't instantly assume he's a lunatic – he might actually know what he's doing.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

We open 1♠ on a workaday hand and partner responds 1NT. Well, it's normally right to show the second suit in these positions so we rebid 2♥, hoping that partner might like these.

Like them? Partner startles us with an exuberant leap to 4♥ – and this on a hand limited by 6 to 9 points. Wow! We are playing in a game contract with a combined total of (at most) 22 points. We await dummy with some trepidation.

Play.

Ah! So that's what partner has! He was depressed when we bid 1♠ (a probable misfit was on the cards) but cheered up when we bid 2♥ on the second time around. With six trumps and an Ace partner thought he had enough for a shot at game. One thing's for sure – had he bid 3♥ we'd have Passed. Quickly.

Counting winners we see that we have six Hearts (assuming trumps break 2-1) and the ♦A K. That's eight. We can also trump two Clubs in the closed hand – and that would give us eight trump tricks and two Diamonds. Wow, on a combined 20 points, we are going to score a game...

West leads the ♣J and continues the suit. We ruff and draw trumps in two rounds. We cross to the ♦A to ruff the last Club and then try for an overtrick by playing on Diamonds. If they were 3-3 we'd only lose one Diamond and one Club. Not today José, but we still have ten tricks and game.

It seems that partner was right to bid 4♥...