

Learning Points – Responding to Partner’s Preempts

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Bidding Level: BASIC

Responding to partner’s preempt *Things to ask yourself before you bid...*

1. How many HCP does your side have? How many HCP do your opponents have?
2. How many trumps do you have in the preempt suit?
3. How many playing tricks do you have between the 2 hands (Rule 2-3-4)? Any short suits to offer?

Opponent’s HCP - Give partner about 8 HCP (± 2), add your HCP, then subtract from 40 to get the opponent’s estimated strength.

Trump Fit – Pass with most misfits below game strength in your hand. A **raise** is to play & shows a fit (3+ cards, and some useful shortness). Avoid raising partner with 2 or fewer support cards (Ax, Kx, Qx, are ok). **How high** depends on vulnerability, trump length, side shortness, & opponent’s strength.

Playing tricks - Maximize score and minimize risk. The rule of 2-3-4 tells you # tricks partner has (for 4-bids we use the Rule of 2-3). Responder estimates # tricks between **both** hands. Outside shortness eliminates losers. Better to **act early** than bid low and await developments. Letting opponents exchange information helps them not you. **Pick the level from Rule 2-3-4 and bid there immediately.** Passing, then supporting the preempter later, shows ability to defend! Avoid raising partner several times – you’re helping opponents. Never bid higher than you were originally prepared to do.

When Vulnerable, keep the level safe. Raise by the Rule of 2-3. When opponents are short of game think 3 level contract. Responder passes if opponents can double and get a higher score than their partial. If opponents are NV and can make game, going down 2 doubled is a bottom score. If the opponent’s are V, then going down 2 doubled is the most you can give up. If they can make a partial, going down 1 doubled is a bottom score. Often you pass with a weak to moderate hand when V. Playing disciplined weak 2s (4-6 tricks), responder needs 4-6 winners for game. Beware Qx, Jx, QJ. They are not winners.

When **Nonvulnerable** and you offer a 3+ card fit, **if opponents have enough for game, think sacrifice.** Look to raise the bidding to the number of trumps your side owns: **9 trumps raise to the 3 level, 10 raise to the 4 level.** You’ll take more tricks with a side suit singleton or void. (Beware 5332 and 4333 hands). Responder can be very weak NV. If opponents have enough for slam (you have 0 HPC), think 5 level with **enough trumps** & outside shortness. Against V opponents with a cold game, down 3 doubled is a good score. Against NV opponents down 2 doubled is a good sacrifice. Down 1 doubled against most partials will be ok. Opponents will often score 110+. Remember opponents can be short in your suit.

Responder Bids

Once partner preempts, partner passes unless RESPONDER forces them to bid. All **raises** are preemptive and to play. **New suits** are forcing 1 round (Nonforcing in competition). **Game-bids** are to play. **Cue bids** are forcing to game. 3NT & game bids are to play. 4NT asks aces. Jump Shifts are GF big hands and might have support (Invitational in competition).

Raises – TO PLAY. Opener should not bid again (unless looking for another partner). Shows 3+ Cards. Law of Total Tricks: with a fit and favorable vulnerability, **bid to the level of the number of trumps your side holds.** If you have no shortness for partner in an outside suit, temper your raise.

New Suits – FORCING 1 ROUND. Good suit, ~ 6 + cards (might be a 5 card major if 2 or 3 level) and 16+ HCP over a weak 2 or 3 bid, w/safety at the next level. Opener raises responder with 3+ cards. Opener bids an outside feature (A, K, short suit) with a good hand (Rule 2-3) and a fit. Opener’s Kx, Ax,

xxx in responder's suit is good fit. Opener rebids their suit with nothing else to say. Opener avoids bidding NT. Responder's new suit **not forcing** over their takeout double.

Jumps in New Suit – TO PLAY if game. FORCING if not game, and about the same as a **strong** jump shift. Respond as to a new suit bid. Opener avoids bidding NT. Do not play weak jump shifts after partner preempts (**Never preempt the preempter**).

3NT – to play. Always. Shows stopper in opponent's suit if they compete.

4NT – Asks Aces, even over interference. Assume the preempt suit is trumps. If responder wants to make another suit trumps, bid it first then bid 4NT.

2NT over Partner's Weak 2 (ON in Competition).

Shows a good hand by responder, typically 16+ HCP or a highly distributional hand, usually with a fit. Partner only promises 4-6 tricks, so game require 5-6 tricks in responder's hand. Shorts suits and long trumps in responder's hand mean extra tricks. Be aggressive with useful shortness.

Over weak 2s, responder's 2NT asks partner for a feature – an outside Ace or King. Since you are disciplined, you show your feature only with a maximum. Bid the suit with this feature at the 3 level, even if you go past 3 of your suit. Since partner knows you are disciplined, partner knows you have 9-11 HCP and the King or Ace in the suit you bid. Pretty neat stuff! What do you bid with an outside Ace and 5-8 HCP? Rebid your suit. You aren't strong enough to show an outside feature. (Other conventions for 2NT are available but are not BASIC).

Bidding 2NT then a Major at the 3 level shows 5 cards and a willingness to play 3NT without a fit (opener needs to be a maximum). Opener is expected to correct to 4 of responder's major with fit and a maximum. Bidding the major directly shows 6+ cards. If you have 5 card major and want to play 3N opposite a 3 card fit by partner, bid 3NT directly. New suits and Jump Shifts are as above.

Auction	Responder's Hand	Responder's Action
2♥ - Dbl - ???	<p>♠ J876 ♥K10 ♦KQ ♣KQ1096</p> <p>♠ J876 ♥K106 ♦Kx ♣J10962</p> <p>♠ 8 ♥K1076 ♦KQ ♣KQ J 1096</p> <p>♠ - ♥K1076 ♦AKx ♣KQ J 109</p> <p>♠ J87 ♥- ♦Q9 ♣KQJ1096xx</p>	<p>NV - Pass –14 HCP & ♥K is working. The ♦KQ is worth 1 trick (3 HCP) and the ♣KQ is 1 trick. Partner doesn't have much outside ♥. Your long ♠ and outside strength suggest defending.</p> <p>V - 2NT Asks Feature – if partner has none or a ♦/♠ feature you'll play at 3♥ likely down 1. If partner has a ♣ feature bid 4♥. Opponents will have a tough time deciding what to do. Partner will have at worst ♠52 ♥QJ9843♦xxx ♣Ax</p> <p>Check Rule 2-3-4 1st then pass/3♥ - a calculated gamble. 14 - 19 HCP. Interrupt opponents. 3 is a sacrifice.</p> <p>4♥ – With a disciplined Weak 2 in any vulnerability, you have 10 trumps and 3 losers, even if partner has only 6-7 HCP (all in ♥s).</p> <p>2NT – yes 6♥ is in our sight, but let's see if partner has the right feature for us. Bid 4N asking for aces if partner shows ♣ or ♠ feature. You need 2 to make 6♥. Bid 4♥ if partner shows no feature – and you'll beat all pairs that blasted their way to slam.</p> <p>3♣. A new suit after their takeout double is not forcing.</p>
2♥ - 2♠ - ???	<p>♠ KQ J8 ♥76 ♦ K10 ♣KQ1096</p> <p>♠ KQ J8 ♥76 ♦ A10 ♣A10986</p> <p>♠ - ♥K1076 ♦AKx ♣KQ J 109</p>	<p>Pass. 2NT is conventional. You lack strength and tricks for 3NT. A double here would be penalty and you don't have enough. (They might keep bidding. Double them later!) You need a 6 card suit and 15+ HCP to make a forcing freebid.</p> <p>Double – just enough as long as partner has one heart trick.</p> <p>2NT – yes, just because RHO bid, we can still use our feature ask.</p> <p>Slam is a lively possibility. 4NT would ask Aces/RKB</p>

Auction	Responder's Hand	Responder's Action
3♠ - P - ???	♠ J876 ♥K10 ♦KQ ♣KQ1096 ♠ J876 ♥102 ♦96 ♣J10963 ♠ K3 ♥K10 ♦A43 ♣A10965	Pass and take your plus score. If you go minus, they will have missed a bigger score in their suit! Partner has no outside HCP. Opponents might have 31 HCP...Rule 2-3-4 Bid 4♠ (Vul) or 5♠ (NV) to get in their way. Bidding to the level of your trump fit is tempered by your lack of singletons. Consider 3NT! If partner has the ♠AQ you roll 9 tricks before the opponents find out. If partner rebids 4♠, pass and be happy down 2.
3♠ - 4♥ - ???	♠ J876 ♥102 ♦96 ♣J10963 ♠ - ♥K1076 ♦AKx ♣KQ J 109 ♠ 76 ♥KQ J8 ♦A10 ♣A10986 ♠107 ♥ - ♦AK98 ♣AKQJ1092	Bid 4 or 5♠. Partner's playing strength = 5-6-7 tricks. You add 1 or 2 tricks (1 ruff in ♥ and 1 in ♦). The weaker partner is, the more likely they can make a slam. A singleton would make 5♠ more attractive. Double. Expect a big plus. Double. Ditto. Do not be tempted to bid 4NT - that asks for aces. Depends (Rule 2-3-4). You might set ♥s 2-3 tricks. Partner might have sound ♠s, making slam (in ♠s please) a possibility. You might have a ♦ loser and 1-2 ♠ losers if partner is 4 below level. If you double, and opponents are short in ♠s you won't get all the ♣ tricks you expected.
4♠ - P - ???	♠ KQ J8 ♥76 ♦A10 ♣A10986 ♠ J876 ♥K106 ♦Kx ♣J10962 ♠ - ♥K1076 ♦AKx ♣KQ J 109 ♠ - ♥AK1076 ♦AKx ♣AKxxx ♠xxxxx ♥ - ♦Qxx ♣xxxxx	Declare a misdeal. There is no way partner can bid 4♠ with you holding that many ♠ honors. There must be 16 ♠s in this deck. Pass. Yes you have 11 trumps, but why not try to make this bid? Pass. Partner cannot possibly have enough outside spades to make 6. You have 3 ½ tricks. Partner promises 7-8. 12 is not in the cards. Since you can count on partner for only one ♠ loser bid 4N to check aces or key cards. V - 5♠, NV 6♠. Opponents have game for sure and might have slam. Where are the ♥s? On your left. Shut them out now once and for all.
4♥ - 4♠ - ???	♠ KQ J8 ♥76 ♦A10 ♣A10986 ♠ - ♥1076 ♦AKxx ♣AKxxxx ♠ - ♥x ♦A10xx ♣AKQxxxxx ♠ Qx ♥K104 ♦Axx ♣AKxxx ♠ - ♥10762 ♦Jxxxx ♣10xxxx ♠ - ♥10762 ♦x ♣AKQ10xxxx	Double/4N/5♥. Hard to see not taking 5 tricks on defense. Think 5♥ Vul vs NV. Resist any temptation to play NT. 4NT asks aces/RKB. A monster hand. 4N for the scientist. 6♥ for the pragmatist. RKB would help determine if 7♥ is possible. 6♥ might be right (you have 5 tricks for partner unless they lead ♥s). Any ♣ bid by you is to play. Discipline figures heavily - your call. Nice hand but you might or might not take 4 defensive tricks. Double, 5♥ and pass are all lively possibilities. Banish 5♣. Rule 2-3-4 6♥!! You have 3 tricks for partner (3 trumps on spades). Your side rates to have 12 trumps and 10-11 tricks in ♥. Block opponents from finding their slam. Bidding 7♥ might work, or might push them into 7♠ when they might not bid it on their own. Somebody's void in ♥. 6♥!! Known fit and a surprise for opponents! If partner rolls 7, apologize for not knowing he held the ♦A and ♥AK/Q.

A preempt at the 4 level gives up on 3 NT as the final contract. Make sure that's what you want to do.

Keywords: Fit, Total Trumps, HCP, Sacrifice, Vulnerability, Raises, New Suits, Jump Shifts, 2NT Ask over Weak 2.

Preempt	Vulnerability	Rule 2-3-4	Tricks Needed for Game	Our HCP	Suggested Action
Weak 2	NV vs Vul	4	6	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level sacrifice 3 Level Game or Slam our way
	Equal	3	5	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level NV / 3 Level V 3 Level NV / 2 Level V Game or Slam our way
	Vul vs. NV	2	4	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 3 Level 2 Level Game or Slam our way
3 Minor	NV vs Vul	4	6	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 5 Level sacrifice 3 Level Game or Slam our way
	Equal	3	5	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 5 Level NV / 3 Level V 4 Level NV / 2 Level V Game or Slam our way
	Vul vs. NV	2	4	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 3 Level 3 Level Game or Slam our way
3 Major	NV vs Vul	4	5	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level sacrifice 3 Level Game or Slam our way
	Equal	3	4	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level NV / 3 Level V 3 Level NV / 2 Level V Game or Slam our way
	Vul vs. NV	2	3	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 3 Level 2 Level Game or Slam our way
4 Minor	NV	3	4	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 5 Level sacrifice 4 Level Game or Slam our way
	Vul	2	3	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 5 Level 4 Level Game or Slam our way
4 Major	NV	3	3	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level + 4 Level Game or Slam your way
	Vul	2	2	8 or less 9-16 17-23 24+	Sacrifice* 4 Level 4 Level Game or Slam our way

OUR HCP:
8 or less: They are slammish
9-16: They are game-ish
17-23: Partials
24+ Our Game / Slam.

Great distribution can change these estimates greatly.

*Consistent with Rule 2-3-4, number of trumps and outside short suits.