

♠♥♦♣ Learning Points – Competitive Bidding – Intervening 1

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Bidding Level: Basic

Tuesday Night Lecture Series

Competitive Bidding

- 1) We compete to get a better result – so scoring matters – MPs are different than IMPs. In pairs our score is based on the **number of pairs** we beat or tie. Predicting the field is very difficult. In IMPs, the score is based on a **payoff table** that influences what odds we need to compensate for risk.
- 2) Competitive bidding has **3 objectives**. If you are not meeting at least 1 objective, **do not bid**. (*Telling the table you hold HCPs is NOT an objective*).
- 3) Getting the best score means choosing the best strain and level for our side accurately. **Finding our best fit is paramount**. In addition we want to obstruct information exchange between our opponents. All is fair in War and Bridge – *leave Love out of it...*
- 4) About 50% of all hands involve competitive bidding. We define 2 competitive bidding situations: a) We open the bidding and they intrude, or b) They open the bidding & we intrude. *They're NOT equal*.
- 5) Experts consider competitive bidding the most difficult auction! Choose your initial action with subsequent rounds in mind. Choose the more flexible call. Make the least-worst bid all else equal.

Competitive bidding 3 OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Find our fit (strain and level)
- 2) Interfere with opponents' bidding – remove bidding space.
- 3) Suggest a defense

Bridge is a thinking game. Good thinking needs good information. Good competitive bidding tools:

- 1) Work seamlessly together,
- 2) Are easy to remember and use, and
- 3) Generate positive results.

Tools NEVER substitute for THINKING. Define partnership agreements **AND INFERENCES** (critical for duplicate success). A bid says both what partner could have, and what partner does NOT have. For example a simple overcall implies values and shape according to the agreed range, defensive tricks according to the level bid, the absence of a hand worth a pass or a preempt, and some direction for defense (if we do not win the contract).

Many newer players are keen to learn a new bidding tool. While this is important to learn a new tool well, it is more than just how to apply it. It is how this tool affects everything else:

- 1) How the new tool integrates with existing bidding,
- 2) What partner's (advancer's) responsibilities are using the new tool
- 3) When partner's responsibilities apply
- 4) What happens when opponents continue getting in the way,
- 5) What your agreed approach is so that if you find yourself in strange situations you have a better than even chance of communicating accurately.

For partnership success you should explore and understand about 3 rounds of bidding with and without opponent interference when you adopt a new tool. Less leaves you at risk of being on a different page in an unfamiliar situation.

Thinking about Takeout Doubles (**TODs**), what do the following doubles mean? (☼ = Double)

1♣ – ☼	1♠♥ – ☼	2♦ – ☼	3♠♥♦♣ – ☼	4♠ – ☼	Doubles of
1♣–P–P–☼	1N – ☼	2♠♥ – ☼	3N – ☼	4N – ☼	Slams
1♦ – ☼	2♣ – ☼	2N – ☼	4♥♦♣ – ☼	5♠♥♦♣ – ☼	

The meaning of the double depends on the meaning of the bid being doubled, the treatments you have chosen (including your overcall HCP range), and the position from which you make your double.

1♣ – ☀ 10+ HCP w/3 suits. Any 17+ overcall or 18/9+ Balanced hand.

1♦ – ☀

1♠♥ – ☀

1♣/♦/♥-P-P-☀ 8+ HCP and 3 Suits. Maybe even a good 7 HCP with great shape. Any 15+HCP balanced hand w/stopper over 1 minor. 17+ over 1 major.

1♠ – ☀ Partner must now bid at the 2-level. Good 8-9 HCP with great shape. Any 15+HCP balanced hand w/stopper over 1 minor. 17+ over 1 major.

1N – ☀ Typically conventional (Ask). Might be penalty (Equal hand or Single suit source of tricks and 1 side entry).

2♣ – ☀ Shows ♣s if 2♣ strong/forcing/artificial. Takeout if 2♣ is weak (rare).

2♦/♥ – ☀ 12+ HCP w/3 suits. Any 17+ overcall or 18/9+ Balanced hand.

2♠ – ☀ 12-13+HCP w/3 suits.

2N – ☀ Who knows. Likely penalty. But why? 1NT conventions do NOT apply. With a penalty hand it is often better to wait for opponents to arrive at their final contract. Early action could induce a successful scramble. Most opponents do not have scramble agreements over intervention in this auction.

3♠♥♦♣ – ☀ 14+ HCP w/3 suits. Any 17+ overcall or 20+ Balanced hand. With 18-19 HCP and stopper in opener's suit bid 3N – assume partner has 7 HCP.

3N – ☀ If 3N= Gambling, then penalty. Usually 4+ tricks in hand.
If 3N strong then 5 tricks in a running suit.
If 3N = single suit preempt, then sound hand with 3 suits...partner will know what to do.

4♥♦♣ – ☀ 15 + HCP w/3 suits. Any 20+ overcall or 20+ Balanced hand. With playing strength for the 4-level (5 losers) or 17-19 HCP overcall, make the overcall! With 18-19 HCP and stopper in opener's suit bid 4N – assume partner has 7 HCP.

4♠ – ☀ Some play this as penalty, with 4N as a 3-suit takeout (playing strength or points for 5-level opposite 7 HCP). Many experts play this as takeout, with 4N reserved for 2-suit hands with great playing strength. Ask!

4N – ☀ General desire to penalize opponents in their slam or 5-level game. With playing strength, overcall.

5♠♥♦♣ – ☀ Generally penalty. Likely 2-3 cards in opener's suit. No desire for doubler's side to declare.

Doubles of Slams Many possible meanings. Be sure you and your partner are on the same page. Doubling their slam because you have 2 winners is often a losing choice.

We double in **DIRECT** position or **BALANCING** position. The concept of balancing comes from duplicate bridge and in particular Match Point Pairs. Unlike Rubber Bridge where we allow opponents to

make a partial and hope the next hand gets us to game before they do, Match Point scoring requires we beat the rest of the pairs in our direction. Balancing allows us more than one way to improve our score: we might make our contract, the opponents might go down in theirs, and we've shared some information useful on defense. Balancing happens specifically after 2 passes. The name comes from "Balance of Power". We balance because we infer we have a fit and strength to compete in our suit - the opponents stopped at the 1 or 2 level. Balancing is a risk we take to raise the stakes of an auction to improve our score.

At duplicate we rarely want the opponents to play at the 1-level, often we strain to reopen the auction so that they have to bid to the 3-level. Balancing and Direct competitive bidding are **NOT** the same thing. Balancing requires much more judgment and awareness of the inferences from the auction. Balancing bids take on very different (weaker) ranges than their DIRECT counterparts. A direct **TOD** is **10+** HCP with 3 suits supported. A Balancing double might be made with **7** HCP and 3 suits supported. A Direct Overcall might be **8-16** HCP with a 5 card suit. A balancing overcall might be **7-14** HCP with a 4 – card suit. A direct 1NT overcall is usually **15-18** while a balancing 1N might be **11-14** or **16** and might not promise a stopper! Yes, there is much to explore about balancing. Balancing position actions compete. Balancer bids combined values. Defer to partner unless you have surprising useful SHAPE for your previous bidding.

Why is balancing important? If you are disciplined about balancing and you reopen the bidding when the auction and your hand suggest you have values and a potential fit in one of 2 or 3 suits, then you no longer have to force a poor takeout double or overcall on unsuitable hands. That's right, good discipline in intervening means relying on balancing skills. Good discipline means better communication.

There is no single approach to intervening. Discipline matters. **We NEED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS.** To help get to a workable set of agreements with your partner you might want to keep things very simple, or you might want to discuss where things should be different and why. Here is a basic framework. The idea is that any framework should be easy and efficient. No confusion please!

We Hold:	Direct Position		Balancing	
	HCP	Action	HCP	Action
Their 1 Suit	12-14 15+	Pass. A double is for takeout not penalty. Pass. Penalty Pass. Plan to double at next turn. (Others prefer Double then NT – PA)	Pass	Think about it....
Our 1- suit	8-16 17-19 20-21 22+	Simple overcall 1L=8+, 2L=10+, 3L=14+; 4L=16+ New Suit Constructive; Cue Bid >> Limit Raise; J/S Weak Double then new suit/raise (<i>Overcall then Dbl or Cue bid</i>) Double then Jump New Suit Double then Cue Bid	8-14 14-16 17-19 20-21 22+	Suit Bid Intermediate Jump Shift Double then new suit/raise Double then Jump New Suit Double then Cue Bid
Preempt	Rule of 2345/23 Not HCP	2-level ~ 6 cards (might be 5). 3-level ~ 7 cards (mb6) Rule of 2-3-4-5 (Unfav, =Vul, =NV, Fav) 2&3-level Rule of 2-3 at 4+ Level		No balancing preempts!! Why risk a negative – let opponents play at the 1 or 2-level.
Our 2-Suit	8-16*	Michaels (Both Majors or Major Minor). Unusual NT 2 Lowest	7-14 15+	Overcall (Michaels/Unusual NT by agreement) Double then overcall (cue bid by agreement)
Our 3-Suit	10-14 15-17 17-19 20-21 22+	Takeout Double Repeat Takeout Double Double then Simple new suit/raise (Yes, on 4 cards) Double then Jump New Suit (Yes, on 4 cards) Double then cur bid	7-14 14-16 17-19 20-21 22+	Double, then pass (competing OK) Double, then Double Double then New Suit/Raise Double then Jump Double then Cue bid
Our 4-suit or NT hands	15-18 19-20 21-22 23+	Simple NT overcall Double then rebid NT Double then Jump NT Double then Cue bid	10-14 10-16 15-17 18-19 20-21 22 +	1m-P-P (Not promise stopper if 12-14) 1M-P-P(Not promise stopper if 13-16) Double then 1N 2N (Standard – some play this as unusual) Double then 2N Double then Cue bid

Experts don't agree how best to manage 2-suited hands. Some cue w/ Overcall HCP, but double with strong hands. Others cue dividing the range **0-10** and **16+** HCP, while overcalling with **11-15** HCP.

Takeout Doubles, Overcalls, Cue Bids (2-Suited Overcalls), Preempts and Balancing Bids are part of ONE competitive bidding tool kit. Know how they fit together. Get rid of tools that confuse, are hard to remember, or interfere with other tools.

Takeout Doubles (TODs)

Min 10-13 HCP. Sound 14-16. Strong 17-19. Very Strong 20-21 Powerful 22+

The **TOD** Promises 3 suits (at least 3 cards) if minimum range. 4441 shape if **10-11** HCP. Strong or very strong hands include 1-suited and balanced hands. **TOD** of a minor suit promises at least 4-3 in Majors or a strong+ hand. Over 1 Major **TOD** promises 4 cards in other Major or a Strong+ hand. **TOD** can be right with 4=5 Majors when the 5 card suit is weak. A repeat TOD promises a hand equivalent to at least one King more than a standard opening bid.

The advancer always assumes partner has a minimum (perfect shape) holding. As doubler's strength grows past minimum, the perfect shape requirement relaxes. True 11-12 HCP works with 4432 (short in their suit please). Some experts advocate a takeout double of 1♥ holding 4=3=3=3 and 14 + HCP. Likewise Doublers always assume advancer has a minimum for the advance until more is known.

TOD strength requirement rises with level: 1-level=**10+** HCP; 2=**12+**; 3=**14+**, 4-level=**16+**. At the 3-level and above, **intervener** and **advancer** both bid as if advancer has 7 HCP already. Advancer therefore needs a King or more tricks to raise.

Responder's bids: **Treat Partner's TOD as a minimum until you know more.**

New suit	0-8 HCP. Might be 3-card major at 1-level. Doubler assumes 0 HCP. Responder can bid twice with 7-8 HCP and 2 4-card suits. With 4♠+4♥ & 7-8 HCP bid ♠ 1 st then show ♥s next.
1x Jump new suit	9-11 HCP and 4 cards in suit.
Cue bid	12 + Working HCP (Game likely) at 2 level or 7 losers or better. Intruder bids best major. 3-level cue where 2 level cue available is Western Cue bid looking for NT stopper. 2-level Cue then 3 level cue is Western Cue/Partial Stopper search – GF.
2x Jump new suit	6+ Cards Preemptive (Weak Jump Shift)
Game bids	3M, 4 Major or 5 Minor – To Play
1NT	8+-11 HCP Balanced w/stopper for opener's suit. <i>Denies major suit interest.</i>
2NT	12-14 HCP Balanced w/stopper for opener's suit. <i>Denies major suit interest.</i>
3NT	15-17 HCP Balanced w/stopper for opener's suit. <i>Denies major suit interest.</i>
4NT	RKB for unbid major(s).

LHO: 1♥-♠-P. You hold:	Your Call & Bid Plan	Comments
♠Q1098 ♥32 ♦J432 ♣KQ3	1♠	You are max for this bid.
♠Q1098 ♥3 ♦K1043 ♣KQ32	2♠	You are a max for this bid too. All HCP working. Do not overestimate the value of your ♥ shortness.
♠Q10 ♥A983 ♦Q743 ♣Q83	3♦	Bid your values. Axx(x) is a poor stopper for NT
♠Q10 ♥QJ83 ♦A743 ♣J83	1N	NT more attractive, and ♦s still in the picture.
♠Q10 ♥AK83 ♦K743 ♣Q83	2N	Bid your values.
♠Q1083 ♥AK8 ♦K743 ♣Q3	2♥	Partner bid spades you can force to game. Offer 3N as a place to stop.

♠Q10 ♥AK83 ♦K743 ♣QJ3	3N	Now you have 15 HCP.
♠Q10 ♥AKJ83 ♦K73 ♣QJ3	3N or Pass	Depends on vulnerability.
♠Q109 ♥8 ♦AK743 ♣ KQ83	2♥ then 3♦	Pass if partner bids 3N.
♠KQ9 ♥8 ♦AK743 ♣ KQ83	2♥ then 3♦	Seek slam, even if partner bids 3N.
♠AKQ10 ♥83 ♦KJ43 ♣QJ3	2♥	Close to perfect shape and extra values. Bid out your pattern
♠AKQ10 ♥8 ♦AK43 ♣AQ83	2♥	Powerful hand. 6 or maybe 7 in your best fit. The
♠KQ10 ♥8 ♦AKJ10843 ♣AQ	2♥ then jump ♦s	2 to 4-losers. Tell partner we might have a slam.

Doubler's rebids: Treat Advancer's first bid as a minimum until more is known.

- Pass **10-14** HCP Nothing more to mention.
- Repeat TOD **15+** HCP **TOD** shape. Intruder's 2nd double of same suit is still takeout, showing **15+** HCP (*a King more than before*) and support for 3 suits. If Doubler doubles a 2nd or new suit bid by the opponents, that double is penalty. With **18-20** HCP hands, Doubler will bid a suit at 2nd or 3rd turn. With **22+** HCP Doubler will cue bid at 2nd turn.
- Simple raise **17-19** HCP and 3-card fit, *even in competition!*
- Jump Raise **20-21** HCP 4-card fit
- New Suit **17-19** HCP, implies no fit for advancer
- Jump New Suit **20-21** HCP, implies no fit for advancer.
- Cue bid **GF** – either great fit for advancer or 22+ hand with overall shape. Intruder bids suit next chance.
- Simple NT **18-19** HCP (*Assumes 15-17 is simple NT overcall*).
- Jump NT **20-21** HCP
- Cue then NT **22-23** HCP

Avoid doubling with off-shape hands, even if 14-16 HCP. Find the least worst alternative (4-card suit overcall or NT overcall or pass). Know a **trap pass** when you see one. Balancing doubles and takeout doubles are similar but not the same. Treat the balancing auction gingerly.

RHO opens 1♥. You hold:	Your Call & Bid Plan	Comments
♠Q1098 ♥32 ♦QJ43 ♣KQ3	Pass. Plan to balance later	Might consider a double opposite a passed partner NV vs. V. 3Q's and 1J this hand is worth 8¼ HCP.
♠Q1098 ♥3 ♦K1043 ♣KQ32	Dbl & Pass	Bare minimum. 9½ HCP and perfect shape w/ ♠ texture.
♠Q10 ♥AK83 ♦K743 ♣Q83	Pass	Nowhere to go right now. 14 HCP does not justify a poor bid. This is an off-shape hand. You need 4 ♠s to double.
♠Q10 ♥AK83 ♦K743 ♣QJ3	1N	Now you have 15 HCP.
♠Q10 ♥AKJ83 ♦K73 ♣QJ3	Pass (Trap)/ 1N	Partnership agreement needed. Pass then double = penalty
♠Q109 ♥8 ♦AK743 ♣ KQ83 ♠KQ9 ♥8 ♦AK743 ♣ KQ83	2♦, Then Dbl♥	Partner will expect 4♠s if you double. The postponed ♥ double shows at least 3 in the other 2 suits and more than a minimum. Perfect!
♠AKQ10 ♥83 ♦KJ43 ♣QJ3	Double	Close to perfect shape and extra values. 1NT overcall needs♥ stoppers.
♠AKQ10 ♥8 ♦AK43 ♣AQ83	Double then cue ♥ cheaply	Powerful hand. LHO and Advancer have 6 HCP between them. Game NOT likely unless partner goes there. Advancer's suit bids are 0 HCP until you know otherwise.
♠KQ10 ♥8 ♦AKJ10843 ♣AQ	Double, then Jump♦. If Adv bids 4♠ - RKC.	2 to 4-losers. Tell partner we might have a game somewhere. If partner rebids same suit meekly, set the strain and level – s/he's passing your next bid.

If responder's LHO competes, doubler's raise of advancer's suit **shows extra values 17+**. Doubler passes 1st w/all **10-14** HCP hands and doubles again with **15+** HCP. If both opponents continue bidding, then doubler's simple raise competes and does not show extra values.

Whether doubling or overcalling, a delay (passing then acting) indicates a flaw for an action that you or partner would have taken earlier.

1♦-P-1N-P-P-Double	Penalty. Dbl 1♦ for TO Weak TO . Dbl 1♦ for TO	1♦-Double-1♠-Double	Penalty!
1♦-Dbl-1N-P-P-Double	TO of 1♦ + 1 King	1♥-P-1♠-P-2♥-Double	TO of ♠. Bid 2N for min.
1♣-P-1♦-P-1N-Double	TO for majors.	1♥-P-1♠-P-2♠-Double	TO of ♠. Bid 2N for min.
1♣-Dbl-1♦-P-1N-Dbl	TO of 1♣ + 1 King	1♦-P-1♥-P-2♥-Double	♣s & ♠s.
1M-P-2M-P-P-Dbl	Balancing. Shows OM	1♦-P-1♥-P-2♥-2N	Minors!
1M-P-2M-P-P-2N	Balancing. Shows minors	1♥-P-1♠-P-2♣-P-2♥-P-P-Dbl	Penalty!
1M-P-1N-Double	TO of M	1♥-2♦-P-P-Dbl-P-2♠-Dbl	Penalty!
1M-P-2M-Double	TO of M	1♠-P-3♠-P-6♠-P-P-Dbl	Lead longest suit (void)
		1N-P-2♦-Double	♦ suit (or TO of ♥)

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