
Duncan says . . .

Tips from Duncan Smith contributed to Unit 431 *Bridge Buzz* (2013-2016)

Bridge has been Duncan's passion from the time he caddied at a tournament in his teens and found the game fascinating.

Over many years, he has shared this fascination through his thoughtful lessons and willingness to answer any questions. Duncan is very approachable and answers what must seem like very simple questions clearly and logically without ever making one feel foolish for asking.

It's not unusual to hear a bridge debate end with the words "Duncan says. . ."

BIDDING

1. Responding to partner's 1 of a minor bid.

When does responding 1 of a major to partner's 1 of a minor promise 5 cards?

Look at the following sequences:

- a. 1♣/♦ p 1♥/♠
b. 1♣/♦ X 1♥/♠
c. 1♣ 1♦ 1♥/♠

In each of these sequences, responder promises **4 or more** cards in the bid major.

The **only** exception (promising 5 cards) is:

1♣/♦ 1♥ 1♠

Because a double of 1♥ shows specifically 4 spades, 1♠ guarantees 5.

2. When not to respond 1♠ to partner's 1♥ bid.

When partner opens 1♥ & you have 6-9 points with 3 or 4 hearts, **don't** bid 1♠.

e.g. 1♥ p ?

With ♠AJxx ♥Jxx ♦Jxxx ♣xx

Bid 2♥ **not** 1♠

If you bid 1♠ & next give preference to hearts, you show specifically 2 hearts, not 3.

e.g. 1♥ p 1♠ p
2♣ p ?

With ♠AKxx ♥Jx ♦xxxxx ♣xx

Bid 2♥ showing preference, not support.

3. Responding to partner's 1NT bid with less than 8 points.

My advice is to **never** put down the dummy in 1NT after partner has opened 1NT **when you hold a 5-card major or a 6-card minor**.

e.g. 1NT p ?

♠xxxxx ♥Kx ♦Qxx ♣Qxx

OR

♠xxxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣xxx

Transfer to spades, then pass.

e.g. 1NT p ?

♠Kx ♥Qxx ♦Qx ♣xxxxxx

OR

♠xx ♥xxx ♦xx ♣KJxxxx

Whatever your methods, make sure your side plays in 3♣ **not** 1NT.

4. When 2NT is balancing NOT unusual.

A direct 2NT overcall of 1 of a major is commonly played as “Unusual” for the minors.

When in balancing seat, this bid is much less useful (because you’re not looking for a “sacrifice”).

After 1Major passed around to us, with ♠xx ♥x ♦AQ10xx ♣KQJxx we can bid 2♦ introducing clubs later, if appropriate.

A better use of a balancing 2NT bid is to use it to show a hand with which you would have opened 2NT.

e.g. 1 of any suit p p 2NT

♠AQx ♥KQJ ♦AJx ♣QJ10x

2NT balance with this shows a 2NT opening bid (20-21).

1x p p 2NT
p ?

Responder bids as though partner had opened 2NT.
Systems on: Stayman, Transfers, etc.

5. Takeout Doubles

- There are two basic requirements for a direct takeout double:

1. Opening bid values

and

2. Support for each of the unbid suits

e.g. 1♠ ?

a) ♠x ♥Axxx ♦AKxx ♣Qxxx

This is an example that fits both criteria. Double 1♠

b) ♠xx ♥AQxx ♦Kxxx ♣Axx

A good double. 4 cards in unbid major & at least 3 cards in each unbid suit.

c) ♠AQJx ♥AJ10x ♦x ♣Axxx

Pass. Too many spades and unprepared for a response in diamonds.

- A takeout double of a major usually has 4 cards in the other major.

e.g. 1♠ ?

a) ♠x ♥Axxx ♦KJxx ♣Qxxx

Pass. Shape perfect but doesn’t meet criterion.

b) ♠xx ♥Ajxx ♦AQxx ♣Kxx

A good double.

c) ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦AKxx ♣AKx

Pass. Partner will strain to bid hearts, and this heart suit is inadequate.

6. Lead directing doubles.

Be eager to make lead directing doubles of artificial bids when you know you want partner to lead that suit.

e.g. 1NT p 2♣ ?

♠xx ♥xxx ♦xxx ♣KJ109x

Double As you know a club lead is good for your side.

e.g. 1NT p 2♣ ?

♠Q10x ♥Kx ♦xxx ♣Q10xxx

Pass Your clubs are too weak, and you have help in 2 other suits.

e.g. 1♥ p 3♥ p

4NT p 5♦ ?

♠xxx ♥Qx ♦KQ109x ♣xxx

Double A diamond lead must be best.

e.g. 1♥ p 3♥ p

4NT p 5♦ ?

♠xxx ♥Qx ♦Q10xxx ♣xxx

Pass Your diamonds are far too weak to suggest a lead.

7. Handling a splinter raise signoff by partner.

If you make a splinter raise, and don't feel comfortable passing partner's signoff, then look for an alternative to splintering.

a) ♠KQ109 ♥KQJx ♦KQJx ♣x
After 1♦ p 1♥ p
?

A splinter bid of 4♣ is fine. If partner bids 4♥, you have a comfortable pass.

b) ♠KQ109 ♥Axxx ♦AQxx ♣A
After 1♦ p 1♥ p
?

To bid 4♣ with this hand is not a good idea, as partner will bid 4♥ with many hands that will produce a slam. With this hand, bid 2♠ (game forcing) over 1♥. When you bid 4♥ at your next turn, you have implied at most 1 club and a hand too big to splinter. My advice is to reject a splinter bid if respecting partner's signoff is difficult. To splinter and bid over a signoff is bulky and ineffective.

8. JACOBY 2NT

Opener: 1♠ You: 2NT Meaning you have at least **13**pts and **four** or more spades (a must have).

Opener's possible rebids: (all bids past 2NT are Alertable)

Assume Opposition passes Throughout the Bidding

3♠ (showing the strongest of the following three bids)

3♣ (meaning I have a singleton club)

4♣ (meaning I have a void in clubs)

4♥ (meaning I have a second 5-card suit) I don't recommend using this.

3NT (showing the middle of the three bids above—the contract is **never** played in NT)

4♠ (showing the weakest of the bids)

Note:

If partner's opening of 1 of a major is doubled, then 2NT is **not** Jacoby NT but rather Jordan (also known by other names).

9. Blackwood or Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)?

The vast majority of experts use some form of Key Card Blackwood (KCB), **but not until establishing the fit.**

- An immediate 4NT bid over 1 of any suit is used as straight Blackwood, **not** RKCB.

The old schedule of responses is used:

5♣=0 or 4 aces, 5♦=1 ace, 5♥=2 aces, 5♠=3 aces.

After partner opens 1♠ & we hold ♠x ♥AKQJxxxx ♦KQJ10 ♣x, we need to know how many aces partner has, **not** key cards.

We bid 4NT over 1♠ and then bid to the appropriate contract on hearing partner's response. If 4NT were RKCB, we wouldn't know whether partner's response included the ♠K in the number of "aces" shown.

- On a hand that we want to use **RKCB** (e.g. ♠Qxxx ♥x ♦AKQJx ♣KQJ), we first establish that spades are agreed by using Jacoby 2NT or something like making a spade bid that is forcing, then bidding 4NT (RKCB).

10. Asking for Kings (5NT).

The bidding:

1 ♠ p 2 ♣ p
2 ♠ p 3 ♠ p
4NT p 5♥ p
5NT p ?

Your hand:

♠Kxx ♥Axx ♦xx ♣KQJ10x

Over 5NT you can bid 7NT.

You can count at least 6 spades, a heart, a diamond, & 5 club tricks.

The reason we are able to make this bid is as follows:

When 4NT is followed by 5NT, the 5NT bidder **guarantees** the partnership holds all of the key cards & the trump Queen (or all 4 Aces if playing straight Blackwood).

This makes it wrong to ask for Kings if missing an Ace or a Key Card.

Therefore, asking for Kings (Missing an Ace or Key Card) to try for 6NT instead of 6 of a suit, is **not** an option.

11. Show the trump queen with a 10+ trump fit.

When partner asks for Key Cards, show the trump Queen when you know your side has 10+ trumps, whether you actually hold it or not.

- a) 1 ♠ p 3 ♠ p With ♠xxxxx ♥Ax ♦Jx ♣Axxx
4NT p ? Bid 5 ♠, showing 2 key cards plus the trump Queen. The trump Queen is not really “missing” when your side has 10 trumps.
- b) 1 ♠ p 2NT p With ♠Jxxxx ♥AQJx ♦KQxx
4NT p 5 ♣(1KC) p Bid 6 ♦, showing the trump Queen & ♦K
5 ♦ (?TQ) p ?

12. Responding to partner's 2♣ bid.

playing Victoria Standard, where a 2♦ response to 2♣ is “waiting” (at least a king) and 2♥ shows a “bust” (no Aces, no Kings), the question arises: When is responder allowed to pass?

- After a 2♦ response, responder must **not** pass until game (at least) has been bid.
- After a 2♥ response, there are only **two sequences** where responder may pass:

a) 2 ♣ p 2 ♥ p
2NT p ? Responder is allowed to pass.

b) 2 ♣ p 2 ♥ p
2♥/♠ p anything p
3♥/♠ p ? 3 of the same major may be passed.

- After 2 ♣ p 2 ♥ p
2/3 any suit p 2 or 3 of any suit **cannot** ever be passed.

e.g. 2 ♣ p 2 ♥ p Responder is **forced** to keep the bidding open,
2 ♣ p ? even with (x xxxx xxxx xxxx). Pass is **not** an option.

13. What to do when they Interfere over our 2♣ auction.

After partner opens 2♣ clubs, we differentiate a positive hand (typically 2♦) from a bust hand (typically 2♥). When the 2♣ bidder's LHO enters the auction, we can still show which hand type we hold. To ease the memory, “pass is always positive”. This leaves double or redouble to show the bust.

e.g.. 2 ♣ 2 ♠ ? pass=waiting (would have bid 2♦ had they passed)
X=bust (would have bid 2♥ had they passed)

e.g.. 2 ♣ X ? pass= waiting (same as 2♦), XX redouble = bust. (same as 2♥)

DEFENCE

1. Cover those tens.

A situation that arises frequently is declarer's playing of a suit, such as 10xx (10x) opposite AJxx (AJx) or KJxx (KJx).

When declarer plays the 10 (either from hand or dummy), we must cover with Kxx (Kx) Qxx (Qx). If declarer's side owns the 9, we break even by covering. If our side owns the 9, we lose a trick by not covering.

e.g.

10xx
K9x Qxx
AJx

If we cover the ten with the queen,
declarer takes one trick in the suit, 2 tricks if we don't.

2. Lead aggressively vs. 3NT, passively vs. 6NT & 7NT.

Sample Hand

♠ KJxxx ♥ xxx ♦ xx ♣ Jxx
♠ xx ♥ Q1098 ♦ xxx ♣ Jxx
♠ KJ1098 ♥ xx ♦ J109 ♣ xxx
♠ xxx ♥ QJ109 ♦ xxx ♣ xxx

Lead against 3NT

4th best spade
♥ 10
♠ J
♥ Q

Lead against 6 or 7NT

A heart
A diamond
A diamond
♥ Q

3. Leading the ace.

When we lead Ace from Ace King, this applies to only the opening lead. Anytime after trick one, the King is the correct card to lead, holding AKx (xx etc.).

- Partner will encourage holding the Queen.
- Leading the Ace (after trick one) denies the King. In this situation, partner will encourage when holding the King.

4. Cover the second honour.

When holding 3 cards to the King or Queen, cover the second honour played by declarer's side, **not** the first. The following examples will show why this is correct.

Examples

a) J10x
Q9x Kxx
Axxx
b) QJxx
10xx Kxx
A98

If the first honour (Q or J) is covered, declarer will score 4 tricks in the suit, but waiting and covering the second honour will ensure a trick for your side.

In this example, it is irrelevant what you do if declarer has all the spots, so waiting to cover the second honour either gains a trick, or breaks even, never losing a trick.

DECLARER PLAY

When declaring vs. an opponent who has used the UNT (Unusual No-trump), pay close attention to his/her opening lead.

You are playing 4♠ after 1♠ 2NT(unusual) 4♠ with ♠Axxx (trump) in dummy and ♠KJxxx in hand.

- If opening lead is a heart, it is probably a singleton, so UNT is likely 2-1-5-5. play for 2-2 trump break.
- If opening lead is a minor, UNT is likely 1-2-5-5. With spades 3-1, play ♠A, then Spade to J.