

Summary of Important Concepts from Lessons 2-6

Bidding

Finding a Major suit fit after partner opens 1NT:

use Stayman if you have a 4 card Major and an invitational (8-9+ points) hand:

1NT – 2♣ asks if opener has a 4-card Major.

Opener bids his 4 cards major (up the line) else bids 2♦ to deny

Use Jacoby transfer if you have a 5+ card Major – even with 0 points

1NT - 2♦ orders opener to bid 2♥

1NT - 2♥ orders opener to bid 2♠

Responder then passes, invites, or bids game, in NT with 5 of the Major or in the Major if he has 6+

Opener corrects from NT back to the Major if he has 3+ of the Major

Weak 2 bids

6-10 points and a 6 card suit with 2 honors, can open at the 2 level

Partner raises with support to the appropriate level

If partner is strong, can bid game (NT or suit)

Can also do a 'weak jump overcall' with the same type of hand

With 7 card suit, can open at 3 level, with 8 card suit, the 4 level

Competitive Bidding

Can open light (a King less) in 3rd seat, or 4th seat (rule of 15: if points plus ♠s >= 15)

Partner must take this into account

If both sides are bidding, generally safe to compete to the level of the combined fit (8 card combined fit, to the 2 level = 8 tricks. 9 card combined fit, to the 3 level = 9 tricks, etc.).

If the bidding is about to die out at a low level (e.g. 1♥ P P), can bid with a King less (balancing)

Reverses:

Your second bid forces partner to the 3 level in order to take a preference back to your first suit. In other words, a non-jump suit bid at the 2 level that is a higher ranking suit than your first bid. Shows 17+ points.

e.g. 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦

1♥ - 1NT - 2♠

Strong 2♣ opening

22+ points

Partner bids 2♦ (waiting) and opener further describes his hand (usually NT or a 5 card major)

Partner bids something else if 8+ points (NT or his suit)

Stayman and Jacoby transfers can be used after either side bids NT

3♣ second bid by responder is '2nd negative', warning opener of a very weak hand (0-2 points), allowing sign off below game level. Since anything but a 2nd negative guarantees the pair will go to game, "slow shows" (jumping right to game shows no slam interest, raising only 1 level shows slam interest).

Slam Bidding

About 31-33 points needed for small slam (6 level). About 37 points needed for Grand Slam. (Less with good distribution).

Since you can only lose one trick, even if you have enough combined points, if you could lose the first 2 tricks (off 2 Aces, off AK in a suit) (assuming you can't ruff these), then slam shouldn't be bid

Blackwood (4NT after a suit is agreed) asks for Aces. Responses are

5♣ 0 or 4

5♦ 1

5♥ 2

5♠ 3

Do not use with a void or 2 fast losers in a suit.

After an agreed suit, a 4-level non-jump bid (or 3 ♠) shows first or second round control in that suit. Partner may cooperate by doing the same, up the line. Skipping a suit denies control in that suit.

Overcalling

10 points (sometimes less), 5 card suit with 2 honors

NT overcall shows about the same points as a 1NT opening, plus guarantees a stopper in opponent's suit(s)

Too strong to overcall a suit (>16 points): double and originate

Takeout Double

Shortness in opponents' suit(s) and near an opening count. Partner normally 'takes out' this double by bidding his best suit at the appropriate level

Negative double

Both partner and opponent have bid... double says 'negative partner, I don't have your suit or opponent's suit' (suggesting pick one of the other 2 suits)

2 suited overcalls (5-5)

Michael's Cuebid: direct cuebid of opponents' suit:

Of a minor suit shows the Majors

Of a major suit shows the other Major and an unspecified minor

2NT overcall of a 1-level bid shows the 2 lowest unbid suits

Cuebidding Opponents Suit(s)

If not Michael's Cuebid (in other words if your side has already started bidding and opponents have interfered), cuebidding opponents suit(s) may have different meanings depending on context. Might be Stayman, a "limit raise or better" (invitation or better), or asking for a stopper in hopes of ending up in NT. If unsure what partner's cuebid means, never pass but make a natural bid that describes your hand further.

Play of the Hand

Pay attention to entries. If one hand has few winners then you will have to be careful that you don't become unable to get to that hand to take winners. Generally play winners from the hand shorter in that suit first. 'Unblock' (play or discard winners in short hand to prevent being unable to get to other hand with more winners in that suit).

Always keep in mind the advantage of playing last to a trick. Try to play towards your high cards if there is not a solid sequence (or better yet, wait for opponents to play so you will play last from the hand with the high cards).

Do not lay down bare Aces without reason... Aces are meant to capture Kings.

Do not randomly take all your high cards without first making a plan. Players at other tables with the same hand will have the same high cards and take those tricks too... to beat them you must do more than that (develop more tricks). Those high cards let you maintain control of those suits while you develop extra tricks.

Planning the Play at No Trump

After the opening lead, count the winners you can take right away. If that would make your contract, then generally take them.

If you are short tricks then develop a plan to develop more tricks:

- promoting high cards in a suit by forcing out higher cards
- establish little cards in a long suit by playing it until opponents are out
- finessing

Note what opponents are doing (usually they have their own long suit that they are trying to establish). See how many stoppers you have in that suit. Use Rule of 7 to see how many times to hold up (7 minus number of cards you have in that suit between Dummy and hand) = number of times to hold up. See if you have enough stoppers in their suit. If you have one more stopper than the number of times you have to lose the lead before your suit is developed, then you're fine. If not, then you may have to hold up (refuse to win) to exhaust one hand of that suit, so if that hand gets on lead, that opponent can't return the suit.

Planning the Play in Suit Contract

Determine how many losers you can afford to make your contract. Count your losers from the standpoint of the hand with the most trump. If you don't have too many losers then draw trump and play out the hand. If you have too many losers, make a plan of how to get rid of losers (ruff them in Dummy, discard them on a long suit in Dummy, finessing). Decide whether you have to delay drawing

trump (trump needed in Dummy for ruffs, fast losers in trump mean opponents will take their fast winners in side suits before you can get rid of them). Generally draw trump unless there is a specific reason not to. Work on developing extra tricks in a long side suit if appropriate. Do not play off sure winners in side suits until other matters are taken care of. Count trumps remaining so you know when opponents are out. Do not play any more trumps after that (keep control).

Defense

Do not go to sleep when defending a hand! Pay attention to what cards have been played, what signals are given, try to make inferences and deductions, try to see what declarer's plan is and see how you could thwart it, try to figure out how your side can maximize the tricks you take. Figure out how many high card points partner must have and how many trumps he has. Try to place high cards based on which cards are played. Recall the bidding to give clues on how many of each suit declarer may have.

Opening Leads

Against No Trump, you want to develop extra winners in a long combined suit. Thus if partner bids a suit that is usually a good suit to lead. Else an unbid suit is usually best.

Top of sequence of three, otherwise 4th best or 'top of nothing'

If opening lead looks like 4th best, other defender uses Rule of 11: 11 minus card played = # of cards between Dummy, other defender and Declarer which will beat that card.

Prefer to avoid leading away from tenaces (sometimes has to be done)

In a suit contract, consider leading partner's suit, top of a sequence of 2, singleton, top of a doubleton; particularly bad to lead away from a doubleton, almost never underlead an Ace, don't lead a bare Ace except if partner bid suit or against a high level contract (slam). Sometimes trump (no other safe lead, the bidding indicates declarer will be ruffing losers, declarer is sacrificing or partner doubled with a trump stack).

Signals

When partner is on opening lead, if you can't try to win the trick (lowest of touching honors) then signal whether you want the suit continued or not (low=discouraging, high spot card=encouraging).

When you have to discard, throw away a low spot card from a suit you don't like, or a high spot card from a suit you'd like partner to play.

Watch partner's signals!

Unblocking

Especially in No Trump, if your side is trying to establish a suit that you are short in, get rid of high cards in that suit so you don't get stuck in your hand with no way to get back to partner.

Generally play high-low with a doubleton

Holding Up

If declarer has no outside entries to a long suit in Dummy, hold up winning that suit until declarer is out of the suit in his hand so he can never get to Dummy to play them. When this is happening, the defender without the stopper in the suit can give count so partner can figure out when to take the winner in the suit

Try to play 'through strength and toward weakness'

Try to give partner ruffing tricks or to develop ways to ruff in your hand

With 3-4 trumps and a long strong side suit, consider forcing declarer to keep ruffing until he runs out of trumps and loses control