

Hi & welcome to the Toowoomba Bridge Club's Information Bulletin

Our aim here is for this content to evolve and to point you to interesting Bridge topics during our enforced break.

As new content is added we will highlight  it so that it is easier to find.

Please feel free to send anything you have that you feel your fellow members would appreciate to secretary@toowoombabridgeclub.com.au

& we'll review & add as appropriate.

More content to come, last updated 1/4/2020

Navigation Tips :-

Feel free to scroll through all of this document or

use the [links](#) below to go straight to the page you are interested in thanks.

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Extract from ABF Bulletin (March 2020)

Barbara Travis, one of Australia's leading players for many years and a bridge journalist, has also contributed a guide on how to set up 'pre-set' matches on BBO where you can compare yourself with the world's best. She has also started a paid weekly bridge column which can be found at <http://www.bridgewithbarbara.com> which is excellent for club players as well as experts.

[Home](#)

Stepbridge.com.au is an Australian NFP online bridge site that is affiliated with the South Australian Bridge Federation. It usually has one competition session a day at 8.00pm AEST or 4.00pm on Weekends with ABF Masterpoints just like any other bridge club in Australia. The current playing fees are basically \$3 a tournament game and once a month they hold a red masterpoint game. You can also play social bridge with no fees. Now they have added a second session each day at

1.00pm AEST.



The screenshot shows the homepage of Stepbridge Australia Bridge Club Inc. The header includes the club's logo and name, along with a navigation menu with links for Home, Get Started, Payment & Fees, Members Area, Contact Us, and Admin Functions. The main banner features the text "Get 5 free tournaments" and "Masterpoints awarded with ABF" alongside an illustration of hands playing bridge. Below the banner, there are several orange buttons for "Tournament Results", "Check Participant Points", "Club Masterpoints", "Weekly Masterpoints", and "ABF Masterpoint Centre". A section titled "IMPACT OF COVID 19 AND THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF BRIDGE CLUBS IN AUSTRALIA" contains a paragraph explaining the club's continued operations and the addition of a new weekday daytime session starting on Thursday 19th March 2020 at 1.00pm Australian Eastern Daylight time.

[Bridgebase.com](#) or **BBO** is the biggest online bridge site in the world where you can play bridge, practice with partners or robots, test your play, challenge your friends and watch (kibitz) the best players in the world playing in tournaments. One can organise a game with friends or play anonymously for free with strangers or robots which you may find to be more friendly.



The screenshot shows the BBO website home page. At the top, there are navigation links: HOME, VIGGRAPH, HAND RECORDS, BBO POINTS, and a user profile icon. The main heading is "BBO" in large white letters. Below it, the text reads "Social play, ACBL Games, Tournaments, Solitaire." and "11,831 players online now, at 3,972 tables". A red button says "Play bridge now". Below this, it says "More games, free, anonymous". There are eight game mode cards arranged in two rows of four. Each card has an icon, a title, and a brief description. The first row includes "Just Play Bridge" (3,506), "Bridge 4" (3,209), "Just Declare" (1,318), and "Bridge Master". The second row includes "Matchpoints", "IMP", "Video Bridge", and "Enjoy the full experience" (11,831).

Game Mode	Player Count	Description
Just Play Bridge	3,506	An info-the-draw-of-hands Leaderboard
Bridge 4	3,209	Set of 4 cards Leaderboard
Just Declare	1,318	No bidding Leaderboard
Bridge Master		Test your play Difficulty levels
Matchpoints		Duplicate MP's Score comparison
IMP		Duplicate MP's Score comparison
Video Bridge		Video poker style Not real money
Enjoy the full experience	11,831	Play with humans Multiples

Funbridge.com has 400,000 members from 190 countries who play more than 800,000 deals a day. You can play at Funbridge.com even on your phone 24/7 at your own pace and pause a deal and resume it later. I am trying to organise a Funbridge Australia club that may be more suitable for many club players.



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Logos: NBF, SVENSKA BRIDGEFÖRBUNDET, Bf bridge.uk, ABF Australian Bridge Federation

ABF Masterpoints - we are currently negotiating with BBO and Funbridge to establish Australian clubs that would hopefully offer ABF Masterpoints. I will keep you informed on the progress.

[English Bridge Union \(EBU\)](#) has regular daily games on Funbridge and BBO and [Bridge Club Live](#) has over 500 people playing a day now.

Social Distancing? Here's a Digital Care Package

Nick Fahrer has put together the following:

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/social-distancing-heres-a-digital-care-package/>

Reference Books

'2 Over 1 Game Force' Grant and Rodwell
'Larry Teaches 2/1 Game Forcing' Larry Cohen

INTRODUCTION

- Over the decades, experts have continued to adjust and improve their bidding systems.** It was once fashionable to open four-card major suits, whereas most players today open five-card majors. Similarly, opening two-level bids were once strong but the modern trend is to open these bids as weak.
- This lesson will introduce the basics of the 2 over 1 Game Force (2/1 GF) bidding system. **2/1 GF is not a new bidding system but merely an adaptation of Standard American bidding.** It is designed to give the partnership more bidding room to find the best game contract and to explore slam possibilities.
- A major weakness in standard bidding is that a two-level response to partner's opening is natural and promises 10+ high card points (HCP). Say you open 1♠ and partner responds 2♦. This can leave the partnership in no-man's land if opener has 12 high card points (HCP) and responder 10 HCP. **In the superior system of 2/1 GF, this bidding sequence initiates 2/1 GF.** Responder's 2♦ bid promises 13+ total points, the partnership has two opening bids facing each other, and the **bidding will not stop short of game (or slam).**

PART ONE - 2/1 GF BASICS

When 2/1 GF Applies

- 2/1 GF applies** when **all** of the **following conditions are met:**
 - Opener, in first or second seat, bids 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠
 - The next player passes
 - Responder bids a new suit at the two-level without jumping
 - Responder is an unpassed hand
- 2/1 GF refers to the following six bidding sequences only:**

Opening Bid	2/1 GF Response
1♠	2♣, 2♦, 2♥
1♥	2♣, 2♦ (2♠ skips a level)
1♦	2♣ (2♥/2♠ skips a level)
1♣	None (2♦/2♥/2♠ skip a level)

6. Note that our partner opens one of the above bids, our righthand opponent (RHO) must pass or the system is off. Further, the opening bid must be in the first or second seat. **2/1 GF does not apply to third or fourth seat opening bids.**

The Bidding Messages

7. Every bid sends a message to partner and it's important that this message is clearly understood. Each bid carries four possible meanings:

- Sign-off
- Invitational
- Forcing
- Marathon

Sign-off Bids

8. North opens with an invitation 1NT showing a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP and South raises to 3NT with 10 HCP with a sign-off bid. **North is the describer and South is the decider.**

Invitational Bids

9. North opens with an invitational bid of 1♥ and South responds with a weak but still invitational bid of 2♥. North now has the opportunity to sign-off, to further invite with a bid of 3♥ or to bid game in hearts.

Forcing Bids

10. North opens with an invitational bid of 1♦ and South responds 1♠. A new suit at the one level is forcing and opener must make a further descriptive bid. South's hand is unlimited in strength so the partnership could belong in game, or even slam.

Marathon Bids

11. A forcing bid tells partner to bid again but is not game-forcing. **The term 'marathon bid' was introduced by Eric Rodwell to describe a game-forcing bid.** Here is an example:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣ (Marathon Bid)	

12. Opener's jump shift to 3♣ is a marathon bid. Even with minimum values, responder is expected to bid again and neither partner can pass until a game contract is reached.

Power of 2/1 GF

13. The power of playing 2/1 GF is that the **bidding messages are crystal clear** in some key situations when the partnership is looking for the best game or possible slam.

2/1 GF Examples

14. **Playing 2/1 GF, a two-level response is a marathon bid** and is forcing to at least game.

15. A **non-jump, new suit by responder at the two-level is GF** and shows:

- 13 or more total points (HCP plus length points)
- 5+ cards for a 2♥ response
- 4+ cards (rarely 3) for a 2♣ or 2♦ response

16. Here is an example of a 2/1 response:

North (Opener – 1♥)

West

East (Pass)

South (Responder 2♦)

South's Hand

♠ Q 4

♥ 9 5

♦ A K J 8 6

♣ K 7 5 3

(14 total points – 13 HCP plus 1 length point for 5 diamonds)

17. Playing 2/1 GF, **South's 2♦ response is forcing to game.**

18. Here is another example:

North (Opener – 1♠)

West

East (Pass)

South (Responder 2♥)

South's Hand

♠ A 4

♥ K J 9 7 3

♦ 6

♣ A Q 8 5 2

19. With two five-card suits, as in standard methods, bid the higher-ranking suit (hearts) first.

Responder 2♥ bid is GF.

20. Here is another example:

North (Opener – 1♥)

West

East (Pass)

South (Responder – 2♦)

South's Hand

♠ 9 4

♥ Q 4

♦ A K Q 8 7

♣ A K J 8

21. South has 19 HCP plus 1 length point for 20 total points. Playing 2/1 GF, **there is no need for a jump shift to 3♦ because 2♦ is game forcing.**

22. In this next example, responder is forced to bid a three-card minor:

North (Opener – 1♥)

West

East (Pass)

South (Responder – 2♣)

South's Hand

♠ Q J 5

♥ A J 6 2

♦ 9 7 3

♣ K Q 5

23. South has 13 HCP, enough for a 2/1 GF response. With only three spades, South cannot make an immediate forcing raise and 2♥ would promise a five-card suit. **South is forced to make a temporising bid of 2♣** before next showing three-card spade support.

24. The next example involves a 2♣ GF response to a 1♦ opening bid:

	North (Opener – 1♦)
West	East (Pass)
South (Responder – 2♣)	
South's Hand	
♠ 5	
♥ A 8 3	
♦ 9 7 5	
♣ A Q J 8 5 2	

25. **South's 2♣ response** shows 11 HCP plus two length points for the six-card club suit, **enough to commit to game using 2/1 GF.**

Advantages of 2/1 GF

26. **Finding the Best Game.** Let's consider the following partnership hand:

Opener	Responder
♠ K J 7 5 3	♠ Q 2
♥ A K 9 7 2	♥ Q 8 3
♦ 8 4	♦ A J 3
♣ 6	♣ A 10 9 5 4

27. Using standard methods, the auction would begin:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	?

28. This is where the standard auction becomes fuzzy. Responder may elect to bid 3NT and Opener is now faced with a dilemma. He is unsure whether 3NT or 4♥ is the right contract.

29. **Playing 2/1 GF, the auction would be a lot crisper:**

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	2NT
3♥	4♥

30. Responder's 2♣ is a marathon bid (GF). Opener's 2♥ rebid is also GF. Responder can bide time by bidding only 2NT because it is still forcing. This enables Opener to rebid the heart suit comfortably at the three level and responder finds the best contract (4♥).

31. **Slight Variation to Opener's Hand.** Let's change Opener's hand slightly:

Opener	Responder
♠ K J 10 7 5 3	♠ Q 2
♥ A K 7 2	♥ Q 8 3
♦ 8 4	♦ A J 3
♣ 6	♣ A 10 9 5 4

32. Playing standard methods, the auction would again start:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	?

33. If Responder were to jump to 4♥, the partnership would miss the spade fit and land in a precarious 4-3 heart fit. If Responder were to jump to 3NT, Opener would be unsure whether to bid 4♠; Responder could have a singleton or void in spades.

34. Using 2/1 GF, the auction would proceed very smoothly:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	2NT
3♠	4♠

35. Since Responder's 2NT rebid is still forcing, Opener can complete the exact description of his hand by rebidding spades showing six spades and four hearts. Responder now finds the best contract (4♠).

36. **Exploring Slam Possibilities.** 2/1 GF leaves more room for the partnership to explore slam opportunities. Both partners can show extra strength and interest in slam without getting the bidding too high when there is a critical weakness in one of the suits. The partnership can exchange information about the controls that are important when considering a slam – aces, kings, singletons and voids.

37. Let's consider a couple of partnership hands:

Opener	Responder
♠ K J 9 7 5 2	♠ A Q 10
♥ A 4	♥ K Q 8 7 3

♦ 7 5 2
♣ A 3

♦ A 6
♣ J 6 4

38. Playing standard methods, the auction is likely to go:

Opener

Responder

1 ♠

2 ♥

2 ♠

4 ♠

39. Responder has some interest in slam but there is no straightforward way to show the extra values. A raise to 3 ♠ would be invitational not forcing. So, Responder would probably settle for a game contract (4 ♠).

40. Playing 2/1 GF, the partnership can comfortably explore for slam:

Opener

Responder

♠ K J 9 7 5 2

♠ A Q 10

♥ A 4

♥ K Q 8 7 3

♦ 7 5 2

♦ A 6

♣ A 3

♣ J 6 4

41. Under 2/1 GF, the bidding will proceed as follows:

Opener

Responder

1 ♠

2 ♥

2 ♠

3 ♠ (Key Bid – spades agreed suit)

4 ♣ (1)

4 ♦ (2)

4 ♥ (3)

4NT (4)

5 ♥

5NT (5)

6 ♦

6 ♠ (6)

Notes:

1. First round control in clubs
2. First round control in diamonds
3. First round control in hearts
4. Blackwood for aces
5. Blackwood for kings
6. Sign-off in 6 ♠

42. What if Opener didn't have the ♣A?

Opener

Responder

♠ K J 9 7 5 2

♠ A Q 10

♥ A 4	♥ K Q 8 7 3
♦ K J	♦ A 6
♣ 7 5 2	♣ J 6 4

Opener

1 ♠

2 ♠

4 ♥

Responder

2 ♥

3 ♠ (Key Bid – spades agreed suit)

4 ♠

43. Now when Opener shows the ♥ A, but denies the ♣ A, **Responder elects to settle for game in spades.**

44. **2/1 GF Basics – Summary.** 2/1 GF applies when:

- First or Second Seat Opener bids 1 ♦, 1 ♥ or 1 ♠
- RHO passes
- Responder bids a new suit at the two level without jumping
- Responder is an unpassed hand

45. A non-jump, new suit by responder at the two level is GF and shows:

- 13 + total points (HCP and length points)
- 5+ cards for a 2 ♥ response
- 4+ cards (rarely 3) for a 2 ♣ or 2 ♦ response

46. 2/1 GF has the following advantages:

- Clarifies the bidding messages after a 2/1 response
- Conserves bidding room to allow the partnership to:
 - Get to best game
 - Explore slam possibilities (including control-showing cue bids)

47. 2/1 GF does not apply if:

- Responder's RHO overcalls or doubles
- Responder is a passed hand

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PART 2 – FORCING 1NT RESPONSE

48. Playing 2/1 GF, a non-jump two-level bid by Responder is a marathon (GF) bid showing 13+ total points. This creates a challenge for Responder with 11 or 12 total point hands after partner opens one of a major in first or second seat.

49. Here is an example hand:

North (Opener – 1 ♠)

West

East (Pass)

South (Responder –?)

South's Hand

♠ 8 4

♥ A J 4

♦ K Q 10 7 4

♣ 8 5 2

50. Here, South's hand is worth 11 total points (10 HCP plus one length point for the five-card diamond suit). Playing 2/1 GF, a **1NT bid by Responder over Opener's opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ promises 6-12 total points and is forcing for one round**. The use of the forcing 1NT bid is not a big change from standard methods.

51. Let's look at some example hands:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q 8 7 3	♠ K 4
♥ K 6 4	♥ Q 8 7 3
♦ K J 6 3	♦ Q 5
♣ 5	♣ 9 7 6 4 2

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT (forcing and alertable)
2♦	2♠
Pass	

52. This 2♠ contract would most likely be reached using a variety of bidding methods including standard. 2♠ is a good spot and is probably better than 1NT or 2♥ on the 4-3 fit.

Opener	Responder
♠ K J 3	♠ A 5 2
♥ A K J 10 7 5	♥ 6 2
♦ 3	♦ 10 7 4
♣ A 9 3	♣ K J 6 5 2

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT (forcing and alertable)
3♥	4♥
Pass	

53. After the forcing 1NT response, Opener shows a strong hand of about 17-18 total points and six hearts with a jump rebid in hearts. With 8 HCP plus a length point in clubs, Responder accepts the invitation and bids game.

Opener's rebid with Minimum Balanced Hand

54. Playing 2/1 GF, Opener is forced to bid again with minimum balanced hand:

West (Opener)	North	East (Responder)	South
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
?			

55. Opener's hand is:

♠ A Q 8 7 3
 ♥ K 6 4
 ♦ K J 6
 ♣ 5 3

56. **Opener's Minor Rebid.** After a forcing 1NT response, with a minimum balanced hand, Opener bids:

- His longer minor suit, or
- 2♣ with equal length in the minors

57. In this example, Opener would rebid 2♦ because 2♠ would show a six-card spade suit.

58. Here is another example:

West (Opener)	North	East (Responder)	South
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass

59. Opener's hand is:

♠ 9 8
 ♥ A K 8 7 5
 ♦ A J 4
 ♣ J 9 3

60. **With a choice of three-card minors**, standard 2/1GF practice is to bid 2♣. Responder will be aware that you **may be forced to bid a weak three-card suit**.

Advantages of Forcing 1NT

61. It may seem to be a disadvantage for opener to have to bid again after a forcing 1NT response when 1NT could be the best spot. However, the partnership will often find a better contract than by using standard methods. Here is an example:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q 8 7 3	♠ K 2
♥ K 6 4	♥ Q 8 3
♦ K J 6	♦ Q 10 7 5 3
♣ 5 3	♣ 9 6 4

62. Using standard methods, the bidding would go:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
Pass	

63. Playing 2/1, with a forcing 1NT response, the auction would go:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q 8 7 3	♠ K 2
♥ K 6 4	♥ Q 8 3
♦ K J 6	♦ Q 10 7 5 3
♣ 5 3	♣ 9 6 4

64. Using 2/1 GF, the bidding would go:

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	1NT (forcing)
2 ♦	Pass

65. 2 ♦ is actually a better contract than 1NT.

66. Let's change responder's hand:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q 8 7 3	♠ 6 2
♥ K 6 4	♥ Q J 9 8 7 3
♦ K J 6	♦ Q 3
♣ 5 3	♣ 9 6 4

67. Using standard methods, the bidding would go:

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	1NT
Pass	

68. Using 2/1 GF, the bidding would go:

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	1NT (forcing)
2 ♦	2 ♥
Pass	

69. Responder doesn't have enough strength to bid 2 ♥ directly over Opener's 1 ♠ bid. However, when Opener rebids 2 ♦, **Responder now has the opportunity to show the heart suit.** Even though it is a new suit by responder, it is not forcing. 2 ♥ is a much better contract than 1NT

Responder's Rebids with 6-10 Total Points

70. Responder's rebids with about 6-10 total points essentially follows along the lines of standard methods. For example, if Opener shows no additional strength by simply rebidding the major at the two level, or bidding a lower-ranking suit at the two level, Responder can:

- Pass if Responder prefers the lower- ranking second suit
- Give preference back to Opener's original suit
- Raise Opener's second suit with 8-10 total points
- Bid a new suit with a good five-card or longer suit and little interest in Opener's suits.

71. The **only impact of the forcing 1NT** is that **Responder should be cautious about passing Opener's minor-suit rebid, since it might be a three-card suit.**

72. **Passing.** When Opener rebids the major suit, showing a six-card or longer suit but a minimum opening bid of about 13-16 total points, Responder usually passes.

73. **Giving Preference.** When Opener shows a second suit (especially a minor, which could be a three-card suit), Responder should **always give preference to the first suit with equal length, and usually give preference to the first suit with one or even two more cards in the second suit.**

74. **Raising Partner's Second Suit.** With 6-10 total points, Responder usually settles for a part-score when Opener doesn't promise more than a minimum hand. Still, Opener's bid of a new suit at the two level covers a wide range of 13-18 total points, so game may still be possible when Responder is top of the range.

75. Here is an example:

Opener	Responder
♠ K Q 10 7 5	♠ J 4
♥ A J 8 5	♥ K Q 7 3
♦ A 7	♦ 6 4 3
♣ Q 4	♣ K J 7 2

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	1NT (forcing)
2 ♥	3 ♥ (invitational)
4 ♥	Pass

76. **Bidding a New Suit.** Since Responder's 1NT response has denied enough strength to make a 2/1 GF bid, Responder can now bid a new suit without committing the partnership to game. Responder should use this prudently as Opener is unlikely to have a fit with Responder's suit when Opener has rebid his initial suit or introduced a second suit at the two level.

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77. Let's look at an example:

Opener	Responder
♠ A 8 3	♠ K 9 5
♥ K J 9 7 5	♥ 4
♦ 8	♦ Q 10 9 7 6 5 3
♣ A J 6 4	♣ Q 2

Opener	Responder
1 ♥	1NT (forcing)
2 ♣	2 ♦
Pass	

78. **Showing Weak Raise of Opener's Major.** Experienced partnerships might want to **use the forcing 1NT to differentiate between a sound and a weak raise of Opener's major.**

79. With about 8-10 points, responder raises to the two level right away

Opener	Responder
♠ A 4	♠ Q 6 5
♥ K Q 8 7 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ 7 3	♦ 9 8 5 2
♣ A Q J 5	♣ K 9 4

Opener	Responder
1 ♥	2 ♥
3 ♥	4 ♥
Pass	

80. With a weak raise, about 5-7 points, Responder bids 1NT, and then gives preference to the major suit.

Opener	Responder
♠ A 4	♠ Q 6 5
♥ K Q 8 7 2	♥ 9 6 4
♦ 7 3	♦ J 8 5 2
♣ A Q J 5	♣ K 9 4

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT (forcing)
2♣	2♥
Pass	

Responder's Rebid with 11-12 Points

81. With 11 or 12 points, Responder must make a move towards game after a forcing 1NT response by:

- Rebidding 2NT to show 11-12 HCP
- Making a three-card limit raise of Opener's major
- Jumping in a new suit to show a good six-card or longer suit
- Raising Opener's second suit

When 1NT Forcing Doesn't Apply

82. 1NT forcing doesn't apply:

- After an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦
- If Responder's RHO overcalls or doubles
- If Responder is a passed hand

83. **Over an Opening Bid of 1♣ or 1♦.** When Opener bids 1♣ or 1♦, Responder can usually bid another suit at the one level. With a balanced hand of about 11-12 points and no major, Responder can jump to 2NT. With a balanced hand of about 13-15 points and no major, Responder can jump to 3NT. So there is little need to use a 1NT as forcing.

84. **So, after an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦, a response of 1NT shows about 6-10 points and is non-forcing.**

Forcing 1NT Response – Summary

85. When the opening bid is 1♥ or 1♠ in first or second position, and the next player passes, a response of 1NT shows about 6-12 points and is forcing.

86. **Opener's rebids after a forcing 1NT** are the same as after a non-forcing 1NT except that with a minimum balanced hand of 12-14 points Opener bids:

- the longer minor suit, or
- 2♣ with equal length in the minors

87. **Responder's Rebid After a Forcing 1NT Response.** After Opener makes a minimum-strength rebid:

- **with 6-10 points:**
 - Pass
 - Give preference to opener's first suit
 - Bid a new suit
 - Raise to the three level with top of the range
- **with 11-12 points**
 - Bid 2NT

- Jump in a new suit to the three level (if possible)
- Make a three-card limit raise of opener's major
- Raise Opener's second suit
-

88. 1NT Forcing doesn't apply:
- After an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦
 - If Responder's RHO overcalls or doubles
 - If Responder is a passed hand

PART 3 - HOW HIGH: GAME OR SLAM

89. Once the partnership has agreed **Where** the contract is to be played, it can focus on **How High**. Three factors to bear in mind when considering a slam are:
- **Combined Strength** – the partnership needs about 33 points, or a reasonable expectation of taking 12 tricks for a small slam, and 37 points for a grand slam.
 - **Fit** – only with a suitable trump fit can distributional features such as singletons and voids come into play.
 - **Controls** - First-round control in three suits and, at least, second-round control in the fourth suit are needed for a small slam. A grand slam requires first-round control in every suit.
90. **Finding Out About Controls.** Blackwood (or other ace-asking conventions) is used to discover how many aces and/or kings partner holds. However, control bidding should be used when:
- Holding only low cards in an unbid suit
 - Holding a void
 - Inviting slam
91. **Control Bidding.** Once the trump suit has been agreed, the bid of another suit is a control-showing bid, showing interest in slam:
- The control-showing process rarely continues beyond game
 - **Both first-round controls** (aces and voids) **and second-round controls** (kings and singletons) can be shown
 - With a choice of controls to show, **bid 'up the line'**
 - Controls are not shown in the trump suit itself
 - The partnership can stop the control-showing process by:
 - returning to the agreed trump suit,
 - jumping to slam, or
 - ace asking (Blackwood or RKCB)
92. **Principle of Fast Arrival.** When the partnership has found a fit and is committed to the game level:
- bidding **quickly** to game shows **no interest in slam**
 - bidding **slowly** to game **shows interest in slam**

PART 4 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
Semi-Forcing 1NT

93. Some partnerships agree to play the **1NT response** to an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ in first or second position **as semi-forcing** meaning that **opener can pass with a very minimum balanced opening hand.**

94. Here is an example hand:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q 10	♠ K 7 3
♥ J 9 7 6 2	♥ 4 3
♦ J 8	♦ K Q 10 5
♣ A 5 3	♣ 9 7 6 2

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT (semi-forcing)
Pass (1)	
Note: 1 Minimum balanced hand with no attractive rebid	

Jump Rebids after 2/1

95. Experienced 2/1 GF partnerships assign two specific meanings to jump rebids. These are:
- **Opener's jump rebid of the original suit shows a solid 7+ card suit with no more than one loser.**
 - **A jump rebid in a new suit is a splinter bid showing support for partner's suit and a singleton or void in the suit bid.**

96. Let's look at some example hands:

Opener	Responder
♠ A 8	♠ 9 4 2
♥ K Q J 10 9 7 5	♥ 4
♦ 8 4 2	♦ K Q 7 3
♣ 5	♣ A K J 8 3

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
3♥	4♥
Pass	

97. Opener's jump rebid of 3♥ shows a solid seven-card suit. Responder has no concern about raising to 4♥ with a singleton heart.

Opener

♠ A Q 8 5 3
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A J 9 3
 ♣ K 6 5

Responder

♠ K 4
 ♥ 9 5 3
 ♦ K Q 10 8 5
 ♣ A Q 2

Opener

1 ♠
 3 ♥ (1)
 5 ♥ (3)

Responder

2 ♦
 4NT (2)
 6 ♦

Notes:

1. Splinter showing diamond support and heart shortage
2. Blackwood
3. Two aces

98. Splinter bids are a valuable tool in reaching slams on fewer than usual HCP. Here the partnership has only 28 HCP but 6♦ is a rock-solid slam.

Other Conventions

99. You can continue to use other useful conventions such as Inverted Minors, Drury (or one of the Drury variations), Jacoby 2NT, limit raises and splinter bids while playing 2/1 GF.

CONCLUSION

100. 2/1 GF doesn't require any major change to your current standard methods. However, it provides the partnership with greater clarity and more opportunity to find the best game contracts (and explore slam opportunities). Furthermore, it facilitates control bidding at a low level once the trump suit has been agreed upon.

101. 2/1 GF is easier and more effective than standard methods and it is relatively simple to learn.

102. Good luck and happy 2/1 Game Forcing!

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HAND EVALUATION AND NOTRUMP BIDDING**PRESENTER – IAN JESSER****References**

'Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21st Century' Max Hardy
Various Marty Bergen Interactive Bridge Lessons on Hand Evaluation and Notrump Bidding

HAND EVALUATION**Introduction**

1. **Proper evaluation of the trick-taking potential of a bridge hand is a complex issue** involving far more than simply counting high card points (HCP). Other important considerations include shape, suit fits with partner, location of honours in long or short suits and inferences drawn from the bidding.

Background

2. The earliest guideline on hand evaluation was Ely Culbertson's system of **honour count** in the 1930s. Honour points were assigned as follows:

A = 1

K = ½

A K = 2

A Q = 1 ½

K Q = 1

3. The term 'honour points' is no longer in use. However, this assessment of hand evaluation remains valid and is **now known as 'quick tricks' or 'defensive tricks'**. You should open most hands containing 2 ½ or more quick tricks (QTs).

4. The 4-3-2-1 HCP system rose to prominence in the late 1940s when it was adopted and promoted by Fred Karpin and Charles Goren. HCP were assigned as follows:

A = 4

K = 3

Q = 2

J = 1

HCP Considerations

5. Evaluating a hand on HCP takes due account of the fact that there are 10 HCP in each suit and therefore 40 in the complete deck of cards. An average hand contains one quarter of the total, i.e. 10 HCP. The method has the **dual benefits of simplicity and practicality**, especially in notrump contracts. Most bidding systems are based upon the premise that a better than average hand is required to open the bidding; **hands with 12 HCP are generally considered the minimum for most opening bids at the one-level.**

6. The **major weakness with HCP** count is that **aces are undervalued**, and **queens and jacks are overvalued**. Additionally, **no value is assigned to intermediate cards** (10s 9s and 8s). These cards greatly increase the trick-taking potential of a hand especially when located in long suits headed up by honour cards.

7. Each suit comprises honour cards (ace, king, queen, jack and 10), intermediate cards (10, 9, and 8) and spot cards (7 down to 2). **The 10 sits in two camps as both an honour and an intermediate card.**

Further Refinements

8. Hand evaluation can be further refined by taking into consideration that:

- a. **Honour cards are worth more when combined** than when isolated,
- b. **Honour cards are more valuable in long suits** rather than short ones,
- c. **Intermediate cards in long suits enhance trick-taking potential,**
- d. **Fits, not HCP, take tricks,**
- e. **Inference from the bidding may lead to an upgrade or a downgrade** of your hand's true value,
- f. **splinter bids** are useful in showing a **game-force fit with partner** and **shortage in the splinter suit** all in one bid.

9. Initially, count HCP and length points to determine whether or not to open the bidding. Add an additional point for a five-card suit, two for a six-card suit or 3+ for a seven-card suit. You can later add shortage points once a fit has been found with partner. Shortage points can be assessed as 5 for a void, 3 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton.

10. Here is an example:

♠ A J 10 9 8 3
♥ A Q 9 7 5
♦ 8
♣ 5

11. This is a very strong hand despite having only 11 HCP. You could add an extra 3 length points (2 for 6 spades and 1 for 5 hearts). You could further upgrade the hand in view of the very strong intermediate cards held in the quality spade suit and the wonderful 6-5-1-1 distribution. Played in a major fit with partner, the true value of this hand is probably 20 total points.

Other Methods of Hand Evaluation

12. Use other methods to assess the real value of your hand. These include:
- Quick Tricks.** Open most hands with 2 ½ or more QTs,
 - Losing Trick Count (LTC).** Use LTC to determine whether or not to open your hand (open hands with seven, or fewer, losers at the one level), and
 - Law of Total Tricks (LTT).** Use LTT to determine the level of support you can provide after partner opens (with a nine-card fit, bid immediately to the three-level; with a ten-card fit, bid immediately to the four-level).

Evaluating Your Offence to Defence Ratio

13. The challenge with playing Duplicate Match-Point Pairs is to accurately evaluate how many tricks you and the opponents can possibly make. Remember that the **aim of competitive bidding** in regular match-point pairs **is to strive for the best-possible score on the board**, even if it means going down rather than let the opponents play in a makeable contract.

14. The **Offence to Defence Ratio (ODR)** concept involves the **strength, shape, and distribution of HCP values and suit quality**. The higher your ODR, the more you should compete to win the contract. With a low ODR, it is better to defend.

15. Let's look at some hands:

Example 1

♠ K Q J 10 9 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ Q 5

Example 2

♠ A 8 7 3 2 ♥ Q 5 3 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ Q 5

16. Both hands have 12 HCP, and eight losers under LTC, but should be bid quite differently.

17. **Example 1** has five tricks played in spades, but defensively it might only take two tricks. You would **prefer to be declarer in spades because of the high ODR of this hand**.

18. **Example 2** has only three or four tricks if played in spades and probably has three tricks in defence. **This hand has a low ODR and will play well on defence** if your partner cannot support spades. Note that any intermediate honour in a short suit (such as the ♣ Q 5 in Example 2) is more likely to take a trick on defence rather than as declarer.

19. **ODR General Guidelines.** Here are a few general ODR guidelines:
- Queens and jacks in long suits are offensive, but in short suits are defensive,
 - Honour sequences in long suits are offensive, and
 - Concentrated HCP are offensive while dispersed HCP are defensive.
20. **Shape.** A nine or 10-card trump suit contributes significantly to your offensive values. **Highly distributional hands have a high ODR** and conversely, **more balanced hands have a lower ODR.**
21. **Suit Quality.** When assessing suit quality, consider the following:
- Honours in your trump suit (A K Q J 10) are offensive,
 - Top honours (A K Q) in a five-card side suit are offensive,
 - In short suits, As and Ks are both offensive and defensive, and
 - In short suits, Qs and Js tend to be more defensive, especially if partner did not support your short suit.

Splinter Bids

22. **Splinter bids are special raises of partner's suit.** The message that you are conveying to partner is that you have:
- at least four-card trump support for partner,
 - a singleton or void in the splinter suit, and
 - game-going values.
23. If you are splintering over partner's major-suit opening, you are showing 13 to 15 dummy points – never more than 15. The splinter is a double jump bid in the splinter suit.
24. Examples of splinter bids by responder are as follows:

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	4 ♣
1 ♠	4 ♦
1 ♥	3 ♠

Upgradable Hands

25. The following hands are upgradable:
- a. **hands containing three or more underrated honours**, that is aces and tens,
 - b. **hands containing one or more quality suits**, that is a 4+ card suit with 3+ honour cards,
 - c. **hands that are shapely**, that is 6 - 6, 6 - 5, 6 - 4 or 5 - 5 in any two suits,
 - d. **hands that have honour cards combined in long suits**,
 - e. **hands that have intermediate cards in long suits headed by two or more honours**,
 - f. **hands with values in suits bid by your right-hand opponent (RHO)**,
 - g. **hands with a nine-card or better trump fit**, and
 - h. **hands with a double fit (1)**

Note: 1. With a 4 – 4 fit in one major and a 5 – 3 fit in the other major, **prefer to play in the 4 – 4 fit** as the 5 – 3 suit will facilitate the discard of losers in other side suits.

Downgradable Hands

26. The following hands are down gradable:
- a. **flat hands** with 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 or 4 – 4 - 3 - 2 distribution,
 - b. **hands with honours dispersed over the four suits**,
 - c. **hands with dubious doubletons** such as K Q, K J, Q J or J x,
 - d. **hands with a singleton K, Q or J** (unless that suit has been bid by your partner),
 - e. **hands with values in suits bid by your left-hand opponent (LHO)**,
and
 - f. **hands with a major imbalance in strength** (entries to the weak hand are likely to be problematic).

Example Hands

27. Let's look at a couple of example hands:

♠ A 10 7 3 2 ♥ A K 10 8 ♦ J 2 ♣ 8 2

28. This hand has 12 HCP plus one length point for the five-card spade suit plus one point for the quality heart suit plus one point for two aces and tens. One point should be deducted for the dubious diamond doubleton making this hand worth 14 total points.

♠ 9 ♥ A Q J 7 5 4 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ 7 5

29. This hand has 15 HCP plus two length points plus two points for the two quality suits in spades and diamonds. The total value of the hand is 19 points.

Fits Take Tricks

30. Don't become overly concerned with HCP. **The true secret of bidding is finding fits.** Here is an extreme example. With spades as trumps, these two hands can make 13 tricks on a cross-ruff, despite holding only 10 HCP between them.

Declarer

♠ A Q 10 8 6 4 2

♥ 8 5 3

♦ Nil

♣ 7 6 2

Dummy

♠ K J 9 7 5 3

♥ Nil

♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

♣ Nil

Opening Marginal Hands

31. In first and second seat, you require a normal hand of 12 HCP or so to open. You can also apply the '**Rule of Twenty**' which means that you **add your HCP to the length of your two longer suits**. If this adds up to 20 or more, you open.

32. Here is an example hand:

♠ A Q 9 8 5 ♥ K Q 7 4 ♦ 6 5 ♣ 4 3

33. Add 11 HCP + 5 (spade length) + 4 (heart length) = 20

34. **In third seat, you should open light** to protect partner who may have passed in first seat with 10 or 11 HCP. **A reasonable 10 HCP is OK to open in third seat.**

35. **In fourth seat with a marginal opening hand**, you should **apply the 'Rule of 15'** which means you add your HCP to your spade length and if the result is 15+, you should open the bidding. Control of the spade suit is very important when HCP values are evenly distributed between both pairs of players.

36. Here is an example hand:

♠ QJ 10 7 5 ♥ K 2 ♦ KJ 7 2 ♣ 8 7

37. Add your 10 HCP to your number of spades (5) for a total of 15. You should open this hand 1♠ in fourth seat.

38. When you are in the first seat with a good passed hand, and support for partner's major suit opening, **use the Drury Convention** (or one of its derivatives) to assess the strength of partner's third seat opening. You must be strong enough to invite game, if partner has a normal opening bid.

Re-evaluation by Dummy

39. When you have support for partner's major suit, you expect to be dummy. Here is the correct way to add your total points.

40. **Shortage Points.** Count your shortage points as follows:

- a. Doubleton – add one point for each doubleton,
- b. Singleton – add two points but three points with four or more trumps, and
- c. Void – add points equal to your trump holding (1).

Note: 1. Don't count five points for a void unless you hold five trumps.

Suit Quality Test

41. **The Suit Quality (SQ) Test guide is useful for pre-empts, weak twos and overcalls.** The SQ Test also determines whether you can afford to insist on your suit as trumps.

42. **Count the number of honours in the long suit and then add the total number of cards in the long suit.** The answer is the SQ of that suit.

43. The SQ Test number should equal or exceed the number of tricks for which you are bidding as an overcall. **Count the J or 10 as an honour card for the SQ Test only if you also hold a higher honour in the long suit.** Here is an example:

K-J-8-4-3-2

44. This suit has a SQ of 8. **The jack is given full value as an honour because the king is also present.** This suit could be overcalled at the two-level with some extra values in outside suits.

45. The **Rule of 10** is a useful product of the SQ Test. **You may insist on that suit as trumps if you have a suit with a SQ of 10.** For example, suppose you hold:

♠ A 3

♥ K Q J 10 6 4

♦ 8 7

♣ Q 3 2

Partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♥ and partner rebids 2♦. What now?

46. The **heart suit has a SQ of 10** (4 honours + 6 cards). Therefore, **you should insist on hearts as trumps** and jump to 4♥. Even if partner is void in hearts, chances are you will lose only one trump trick.

47. **Vulnerability and level are key considerations when making an overcall.** A one-level overcall can be made at any vulnerability on light values (7-8 HCP) with reasonable SQ such as a 5+ card suit headed by A K, A Q or K Q. You need to be much stronger for two-level (or higher) overcalls especially when vulnerable. **A very good 10 HCP hand is an absolute minimum.**

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NOTRUMP BIDDING

General

48. **When you open the bidding in one of a suit, partner has little idea of your overall shape and strength.** You may have a shapely 10 HCP hand, or you may be balanced with 20 HCP. Conversely, when you open 1NT, you have accurately described your hand as balanced or semi-balanced within a narrow HCP range, usually 15 to 17 HCPs.

49. **1NT openings are limit bids.** When you open 1NT, **you are the describer and your partner is the decider.** Generally, **partner must take control** and decide whether to use Stayman, initiate a transfer sequence, or bid or invite game or even slam.

Principles Favouring 1NT Opening

50. Marty Bergen identifies a number of principles favouring 1NT opening bids:

- Partner will bid much more accurately
- You are less likely to make a bidding error
- You are more likely to get to the correct contract
- Defensive errors by opponents are more likely
- It is more difficult for opponents to compete
- When in doubt, open 1NT
- When you have likely rebid problems, open 1NT (even with a 5-card major)

Importance of Intermediate Cards

51. We have already stressed the importance of intermediate cards (10s, 9s and 8s)

52. Let's look at two examples:

Example 1 - ♠ A 3 2 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ A 4 3 2

Example 2 - ♠ A 10 9 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ A 10 9 ♣ A 10 9 8

53. Example 2 has 9 intermediate cards and is worth two total points more than Example 1. **Example 2 has far greater trick-taking potential** especially in combination with partner's likely honour card holdings.

Importance of Tenaces

54. Tenaces are honour card holdings such as A Q, K J or K x. Even Q x opposite A x x is a tenace of sorts.

55. It is **important that the player with tenaces is declarer** and has the opening lead coming up to (and not through) the tenace holdings.

Soft Hands

56. Here is an example of a downgradable (soft) hand:

♠ Q J 2 ♥ Q J 4 3 ♦ Q J 4 ♣ K Q J

57. Don't be a victim of '**point-countitis**'. **This soft hand** with no aces, eight queens and jacks, one QT and no intermediates **should be downgraded**. Despite containing 15 HCP, it doesn't warrant a 1NT opening (open 1♣ instead).

Strong Hands

58. Here is an example of a hand too strong to open a 15-17 range 1NT:

♠ 6 5 ♥ A K 10 6 ♦ A Q 10 8 ♣ A 7 5

59. **This 17 HCP hand contains 2 quality suits and 4 quick tricks**. You should open 1♦ and rebid 2NT.

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Quick Tricks

60. The average number of QTs for a 1NT opening is between 3 and 3.5. Here is an example hand:

♠ A J 3 ♥ K 7 5 3 ♦ A 6 5 3 ♣ K 10

61. This hand has three QTs and 15 HCP and represents a minimum opening in terms of QTs and HCP.

62. Here is another 15 HCP hand:

♠ 7 6 4 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ A K J 3 ♣ 7 6

63. **This hand is substantially stronger than the previous example.** Note that the hand contains **two quality suits with four QTs** and the strength is concentrated in hearts and diamonds. Don't be overly concerned about the two unguarded suits.

Distribution

64. We normally open 1NT with a balanced distribution, i.e. a hand with no void or singleton and at most one doubleton. However, **you should be practical and sometimes open 1NT with a semi-balanced hand with two doubletons.** Hands with 5-4-2-2 or 6-3-2-2 distribution would qualify. **Ensure that the six-card suit is always a minor.**

Judgement

65. **Use your own judgement** to upgrade or downgrade your 1NT opening bids. Playing 15-17 1NT range, **consider opening 1NT with a strong 14 HCP hand or a soft 18 HCP hand.**

CONCLUSION

66. The importance of proper hand evaluation in suit or notrump contracts cannot be overstated. **You need to apply far more intellectual rigour than simply counting HCP.** You should be keen to use other mechanisms such as Losing Trick Count, the Law of Total Tricks or Offence Defence Ratio to accurately assess the trick-taking potential of your hand. As in all decisions at the bridge table, you need to **apply your own judgement** in hand evaluation and notrump bidding.

67. Good luck and happy bridging!

Email: ianjesser@westnet.com.au

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