

The Foundation System

Opening Bids

We start the description of the Foundation System with a listing of the requirements for the various opening bids permitted by the system. Responder's action following each type of opening bid, and the further development of the bidding, will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

1C or 1D:

- (a) A balanced hand with 12-14 HCP and a Losing Trick Count (LTC) of 7 or less. A LTC of 8 with 12 HCP is permissible if you have no weak doubleton, so that you will be able to rebid in NT or raise partner over any response. Any 13 HCP hand may be opened, except for an aceless hand with an LTC of 9. A 12 HCP hand with an LTC of 9 may be opened with 1C or 1D if it has two aces and a doubleton. A 12 HCP hand with 4333 shape and an LTC of 9 may only be opened if it has three bare aces.

<p>Note: This definition assumes a 15-17 HCP 1NT opening. Many players not using the Foundation System now use a weaker 1NT opening of 12-14 HCP or even 10-12 HCP. For those players, a 1C or 1D opening with a balanced hand shows 15-19 HCP.</p>

- b) A balanced hand with 18-19 HCP.
- c) An unbalanced hand with 12+ HCP, a LTC of 7 or less and 4441 shape. With a LTC of or less, 11 HCP will suffice.
- d) An unbalanced hand with 11+ HCP, a LTC of 7 or less, and a 5+card minor suit. This category includes 5422, 6322 and 7222 shapes, as well as 5440, 5431, 6430 and 6421 shapes. If the hand also contains a 5-card major suit, the major should normally be opened unless the hand is strong enough (16+ HCP or a LTC of 5) that you expect to be able to bid the major twice during the subsequent auction.
- e) A freak hand with 65 or better shape, 10+ HCP, and a LTC of 5 or less.

Note: With two minor suits of equal length, open 1C if 33 regardless of suit quality Open 1D if 55 or 66. If 44, open 1D if 4441 or 4432 with a weak doubleton or if diamonds are **much** stronger (AKxx vs Jxxx, for instance), but open the better minor if you plan to rebid 1NT over any 1-level response.

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Some partnerships will open their better minor with 33. Some partnerships will always have a 4-card suit when they open 1D, and will open 1C on a 2-card suit if they have two 4-card majors.

1H or 1S:

- (a) A balanced hand (5332, 5422, or 6322) with a 5+card major, 12+ HCP and a LTC of 7 or less.
- (b) An unbalanced hand with a 5+card major, 12+ HCP and an LTC of 7 or less (or with 11+ HCP and a LTC of 6 or less). A longer minor side suit is possible if the hand is of minimum strength.
- (c) A freak hand with 65 or better shape, 10+ HCP, and a LTC of 5 or less.

Note: With two major suits of equal length (55 or 66), open 1S.

1NT:

A balanced hand (4333, 4432, or 5332 with a 5-card minor) , 15-17 HCP, and stoppers in at least 3 suits. The world will not come to an end if you have a 5-card major, but you risk missing a 53, or even a 54, major suit fit.

Partnerships who regularly open 1NT with a 5-card major frequently use a variation of the Stayman convention called Puppet Stayman to locate Opener's 5-card or 4-card major. This is not part of the Foundation System.

2C:

- a) A balanced hand with 22+ HCP.
- (b) An unbalanced hand with 9+ winners and only one 5+card suit.
- (c) A strong 2-suiter or 3-suiter with a LTC of 3 or less or 23+ HCP.

2D, 2H or 2S:

A Weak Two Bid with 7 to a bad 11 HCP and a 6-card suit. The LTC should be 7 if vulnerable and 7-8 if not vulnerable. In first or second seat, the suit should be headed by the A or K

There is a strong modern tendency to ignore the suit quality requirements for a Weak Two Bid when not vulnerable, especially in third seat. While not recommended, at least by me, you will frequently encounter a Weak Two Bid based on a suit such as Q109xx in a 5332 shape with a scattered 8 HCP.

Many partnerships assign a special meaning to a 2D opening. The most popular are:

Flannery: 11-15 HCP with 5 hearts and 4 spades.

Mini-Roman: 11-15 HCP with any 4441 shape. Some partnerships guarantee 4 diamonds (my preference) or 4 spades.

2NT:

A balanced hand (4333, 4432 or 5332) with 20-21 HCP. A 5-card major is permissible here, since there is little possibility of partner passing when a 53 or 54 major suit game is available. Puppet Stayman (see 1NT) can be profitably used here to learn whether Opener has a 5-card major, but is not part of the Foundation System.

3C, 3D, 3H or 3S:

These show a 7-card suit with less than 11 HCP and a LTC of 6-7 if vulnerable or 7-8 if not vulnerable. The minimum expected suit quality is Q10xxxx.

There modern tendency toward relaxing the requirements for Weak Two Bids extends to 3-level preemptive openings as well. Though not recommended, you will encounter 3-level openings based on a weak 6-card minor. If you choose to indulge in one of these, it is important to have good suit texture. With a suit such as Q1098xx you may escape with a -500 or -800 score, while Q765xx could easily lead to -1400.

3NT:

This bid is not defined in the Foundation System.

Most established partnerships assign some sort of special meaning to this bid. The most common are:

Gambling 3NT: Showing a solid 7-card minor AKQxxxx. Some partnerships require a side stopper or two ; others do not.

Good Minor Suit Preempt: Usually a 7+card suit (often 8) KJ10xxxx or better with enough side strength that a minor suit slam might be possible.

4C, 4D, 4H or 4S:

These show a 7-8 card suit with less than 11 HCP and a LTC of 5-6 if vulnerable or 6-7 if not vulnerable.