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Bridge Bidding Made Simple · Acol edition



CHAPTER 3

Responding to 1NT

Pass, invite or bid game;
Stayman and transfers

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1. Adding up the points

When partner opens 1NT you know a great deal: a balanced hand with **12–14 points**. Add your own points and you know the partnership total within three points. Two guidelines tell you where you belong:

Combined points	Usually enough for
25 or more	game in no-trumps (3NT) or a major suit (4♥, 4♠)
33 or more	a small slam (a later chapter)

The responder's question: can we have 25 points between us? Partner has at most 14, so you need **11** to think about game and **13** to be sure of it.

2. Balanced hands: pass, 2NT or 3NT

Your points	Bid	Meaning
0–10	**Pass**	at most 24 between you
11–12	**2NT**	"Bid 3NT with 14, pass with 12"
13–18	**3NT**	enough for game

After your 2NT, opener passes with 12, bids 3NT with 14, and uses judgement with 13: a five-card suit or plenty of tens and nines says bid on.

♠ Q 7 3 ♥ K 8 2 ♦ J 9 6 4 ♣ Q 7 5	**8 points**. Even with partner's maximum, 22 is not enough for game: **pass**.

♠ K 10 5 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ Q 8 6 4 ♣ Q 9 2	**11 points**. Game is possible if partner has a maximum: invite with **2NT**.

♠ A J 4 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ K Q 5 3 ♣ 10 7 4	**13 points**: at least 25 between you. Bid **3NT**.

3. Stayman: looking for a 4-4 major fit

A contract in 4♥ or 4♠ with eight trumps between you is often safer than 3NT. To find out whether partner has a four-card major, bid **2♣**. This is the **Stayman** convention: it says nothing about clubs.

Stayman. With a four-card major and **11 or more points**, respond **2♣**. Opener replies:
2♦ no four-card major · **2♥** four hearts (may also have four spades) · **2♠** four spades, not four hearts

Opener's reply	With 11–12 points	With 13 or more
Your major (a fit)	Raise to 3 of the major (invite)	Raise to 4 of the major
Anything else	2NT (invite)	3NT

♠ K J 7 5
♥ Q 8 6 2
♦ A 4
♣ J 8 3

11 points and both majors. Bid **2♣**. If partner replies 2♥ or 2♠, raise to three; if 2♦, bid 2NT. Each invites game.

♠ A Q 8 4
♥ K 5
♦ Q 10 6 2
♣ K 9 7

14 points and four spades. Bid **2♣**. Over 2♠, bid **4♠**; over 2♦ or 2♥, bid **3NT**.

4. Transfers: showing a five-card major

With five or more cards in a major, ask partner to bid it for you by bidding the suit **just below**. Then the strong hand, the 1NT opener, becomes declarer, and the opening lead comes up to it.

Transfers. 2♦ shows five or more **hearts**; **2♥** shows five or more **spades**. Opener simply bids your suit (2♥ or 2♠), whatever their hand.

Transfers work with **any strength**, because you have another bid to come:

Your hand	After opener completes the transfer
Weak (0–10)	**Pass**: you play in two of your major
Five cards, 11–12	**2NT** invites game; opener chooses
Six cards, 11–12	Raise to **3** of your major (invite)
Five cards, 13+	**3NT**: opener chooses 4 of your major (with three or more cards) or 3NT
Six cards, 13+	Bid **4** of your major

♠ J 9 7 6 4 3
♥ 8
♦ Q 10 5
♣ 8 4 2

Only **3 points**, but six spades. 1NT could be a disaster; two spades will play much better. Bid **2♥** (transfer), then **pass** partner's 2♠.

♠ K Q 10 6 3 ♥ J 4 ♦ A 8 2 ♣ Q 7 3	**12 points** and five spades. Bid **2♥**, then **2NT** over 2♠: "I have five spades and an invitational hand."

♠ K 4 ♥ A J 8 5 2 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ Q 6 2	**13 points** and five hearts. Bid **2♦**, then **3NT**. With three hearts, partner will bid 4♥.

Stayman or transfer? With a five-card major, use a transfer. With only four-card majors, use Stayman. (Hands with five cards in one major and four in the other come later.)

5. Summary

After partner's 1NT (12–14)	Bid
Balanced, 0–10	Pass
Balanced, 11–12	2NT
Balanced, 13–18	3NT
A four-card major, 11+	2♣ (Stayman)
Five or more hearts	2♦ (transfer)
Five or more spades	2♥ (transfer)

6. Test yourself

Partner opens **1NT** (12–14). What do you bid?

1. ♠ A 8 2
♥ Q 9 5
♦ K 7 4 3
♣ J 6 2

2. ♠ Q 10 7 4 2
♥ 9 5 3
♦ J 6
♣ 10 8 4

3. ♠ K 8 6 3
♥ A J 7 4
♦ Q 2
♣ K 9 5

4. ♠ A J 5
♥ K 10 4
♦ Q 8 7 2
♣ Q 6 3

5. ♠ 9 4
♥ K Q J 10 8 6
♦ A 7 3
♣ 8 2

6. ♠ K Q 5
♥ A 6 3
♦ K J 10 4
♣ Q 8 2

Answers

1. Pass. 10 points: at most 24 between you.

2. 2♥, then pass. A transfer to spades. Two spades is safer than 1NT with this weak hand.

3. 2♣ (Stayman). 13 points and both majors. Over 2♥ or 2♠, bid four of that major; over 2♦, bid 3NT.

4. 2NT. 12 points and balanced: invite game.

5. 2♦, then 3♥. A transfer to hearts, then an invitation showing six cards. Partner bids 4♥ with a maximum (14, or a good 13).

6. 3NT. 15 points and balanced, with no four-card major.

Next: Chapter 4, Responding to One of a Suit. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

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