ONE-OVER-ONE RESPONSES

The One Notrump Response

A 1NT response requires at least 6 HCP, with a maximum of 9. Occasionally there is no alternative with a poor-looking 10 HCP, especially in a passed hand.

There is no need to stretch for a 1NT response in a matchpoint game when partner opens in a major suit in which you have three cards or a good doubleton. You would not be "improving" the contract by bidding, since you are already in an acceptable matchpoint contract. Pass a 1♠ opening with ♠873 ♥762 ♦A32 ♣Q643. At IMP scoring you might respond 1NT in case partner has a huge hand. At matchpoints the primary aim is to obtain a good part score, not to seek an unlikely game.

Goren's rule that a 1NT response to a 1♣ opening should show 8-10 HCP has very little merit. Holding 6-9 HCP and less than four cards in either major, prefer a 1NT response to 1♣ instead of a pointless 1♦ with a hand such as ♠Q87 ♥Q63 ♦K976 ♣964. The 1NT bid has preemptive value and describes the hand perfectly. Besides, you're going to rebid 1NT if partner rebids in a major. Why not bid it right away?

Avoid the 1NT response with a void or small singleton in partner's suit, and never bid 1NT with such a holding in a side suit. Better to pass or bid a weakish two-over-one.

A free 1NT response must be a little healthier than 6-7 HCP, but a double stopper in the opposing suit is worth an extra point or two.

Response of One of a Suit

A suit response might contain less than 6 HCP. How much less depends on several factors. A good major suit like KJ987 is usually sufficient in itself for a response. Avoid bidding bad suits with bad hands. Partner may be leading your suit against an opposing contract, and it is important for partner to judge the partnership assets accurately when you are weak. He is likely to go wrong when you bid a bad suit with a bad hand.

Another consideration is the preemptive value of the response. At matchpoints a 1♠ response to 1♣ is often made with very weak hands when the vulnerability is favorable. The 1♠ response makes it more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction accurately, if they enter at all.

A free one-over-one response in a suit does not show extra values. It only implies that the hand is not sub-minimum, as it may be when bidding just to give partner a chance or to improve the contract.

Biddable Suits

A biddable four-card suit is one headed by Q10 or better. Any five-card or longer suit is biddable. "Unbiddable" suits may be bid when there is no reasonable alternative. Avoid responding in an unbiddable heart suit when partner opens 1♦. He is unlikely to have four hearts unless he plans to reverse. You don't

want to play a trump suit of J654 opposite K32, or have partner lead from Kx into your Jxxx against an opposing contract.

The same reasoning holds for a 1♠ response to 1♥. Prefer a 1NT response with ♠J873 ♥983 ♦K86 ♣A84. If the alternative to bidding a weak suit is to bid 1NT with a short suit, however, prefer the suit response. If partner raises with three trumps you may be able to get a cross-ruff going. With a singleton honor in partner's suit the 1NT response is more acceptable. Respond 1NT to a 1♦ opening when you hold ♠K65 ♥8762 ♦Q ♣A7532.

With a good hand the dangers of bidding weak suits are somewhat lessened. You can investigate other denominations if partner raises, and he probably won't be on lead. Nevertheless, weak suits should still be avoided. Bidding a poor suit is a bad start for slam bidding, and is never helpful in assisting partner to judge his hand properly. He will downgrade a hand that includes a singleton in your suit, and will upgrade it with Qxx, neither of which is valid opposite 9632.

Choice of Suit

When faced with a choice of suits at the one level, the classic rules are:

-- Bid the longest suit first

-- With two or more suits, bid the highest-ranking suit

The second rule is not in line with current "up-the-line" bidding practices. Too bad. And these rules are not absolute. The best course in bidding is not to follow some arbitrary rule religiously, but to just make the best bid. Lead direction will often play a part, as will preemptive considerations, when the hand is weak enough to suggest that the opponents may buy the hand.

A very strong four-card suit may be bid before a lower ranking five-card suit that is very weak, when they are touching suits and the hand is not worth a reverse. With ♠AKJ2 ♥108754 ♦3 ♣762 respond 1♠ to a 1♣ opening. If you bid 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT, you won't know what to do. After a 1♦ opening, a 1♥ response would not be so bad, since you could pass a 1NT rebid with less worry about the short suit.

Partner opens with 1♣ and you hold either of these hands:

1) ♠432 ♥Q543 ♦AKQ5 ♣84

2) ♠432 ♥Q543 ♦AK52 ♣Q4

Respond 1♥ with hand 1) and 1♦ with hand 2). If you bid 1♦ with hand 1) you will have no good continuation if opener rebids 2♣--a reverse would imply 4=5 distribution. Delete the queen of diamonds and the response is 1♦, planning to pass a 2♣ rebid. With hand 2) you can respond 1♦ because a 2♣ rebid can be raised to 3♣. The idea is that you must sometimes consider your next call as well as the current bid when choosing between four-card suits.

When the opening bid is 1♣, it is usually better to respond 1♥ than 1♠ with 4-4 in the majors. A 1♠ response could cause a 4-4 fit to be lost. This is certainly not an absolute rule. If the spades are very strong and the hearts very weak, it is better to bid 1♠. Remember that it is also possible to miss a 4-4 spade fit when opener raises a 1♥ response with three trumps. It is not correct for him to rebid 1♠ after a 1♥ response when he holds ♠Q963 ♥KJ7 ♦2 ♣AQ876. He will raise hearts because a spade bid followed by a heart raise on the next round would suggest a better hand, or stronger spades and weaker hearts.

When the opening bid is 1♦, lean toward bidding 1♠ with 4-4 in the majors and 10 HCP or less. Opener is unlikely to have four hearts unless he is planning to reverse, and you don't want him to give a three-card heart raise when he has four spades (often the correct rebid). If the spades are weak and the hearts strong, a 1♥ response may work out better.

With four spades and four diamonds respond 1♠ to a 1♣ opening if you won't mind being raised with three trumps. The 1♠ response is better with a hand such as ♠AQ103 ♥92 ♦Q1086 ♣742, because it is lead directing, preemptive (shutting out a 1♥ overcall), and shows the best feature of the hand at once--a strong major suit. Besides, opener might bypass a four-card spade holding and rebid 1NT with a 4=3=3=3 hand.

Raise Partner or Bid Something Else?

The choice will often arise among raising partner's suit, bidding 1NT, or bidding one-over-one in a new suit. The 1NT response is preferable to a minor suit raise if the hand is suitable for notrump play. The raise of a major, on the other hand, is usually better than a 1NT response. With a "square" 4-3-3-3 hand the 1NT response may be preferred if the hand is weak, 6-7 HCP. With 8-9 HCP go ahead and raise with a square hand and adequate trump support. A 1NT response could result in a lost game if opener must rebid two of his suit but would have bid game opposite a raise. Also, a major suit raise is more preemptive than a 1NT response. When in doubt, rebid 1NT after opening a red suit, because responder could be 4=6 in major-clubs. If so, she can use Checkback Stayman (section 4-9) to avoid playing a Moysian (4-3) fit instead of a 6-3 or 6-2 club fit.

In general it is better to respond in a major rather than raise a minor, but there are many exceptions. With a weak hand, don't bid a four-card heart suit with good support for partner's diamonds: ♠83 ♥Q973 ♦KJ53 ♣652. Bid 2♦ in response to 1♦. Partner is unlikely to have four hearts, and you are going to bid 2♦ on the next round anyway. An immediate diamond raise will put partner in a better position to go to the three level if the opponents come in, something you could not do with this weak hand. Also, if partner ends up on lead you want diamonds led, not hearts. Lastly, the 2♦ raise may keep the opponents out of the bidding. Even if it doesn't, they will have to bid one level higher to come in, with a possible loss of bidding accuracy.

To a lesser extent, the same principle applies to a 1♦ opening when you have spades and diamonds, or to a 1♣ opening: With a weak hand, and especially with a weak major, generally prefer a four-card raise to a bid of the major.

When partner opens 1♥ there is often a problem of whether to raise hearts or show a spade suit. With 8-9 points, prefer the raise--even with five spades and three hearts: ♠A9873 ♥Q84 ♦62 ♣Q64. If you respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣, you would have to make a weak preference bid of 2♥ (which is not a raise). Opener would place you with a hand of this sort: ♠QJ653 ♥J4 ♦K874 ♣83 and might pass 2♥ when game could be made. He would pass, for instance, with ♠3 ♥A10876 ♦109 ♣AKJ75. With four spades and three-

card heart support, the 2♥ response is preferable even with 6-7 HCP, because a 1♠ response could lead to a 4-3 fit instead of a 5-3 fit when partner raises with three spades and five hearts. Besides, the 2♥ response has more preemptive value. These two factors just barely make up for the possible loss of a 4-4 spade fit.

All this leads to the following rebid meanings:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♥ is weak, five spades and three poor hearts
	3♥ is forcing, probably with three-card support
	4♥ implies four strong hearts, slam interest
	2♣ is Checkback Stayman (see section 4-9)

The 2♥ preference bid shows a hand like ♠Q8743 ♥986 ♦3 ♣K853. Opener can count on five spades, three poor hearts, and a weak hand. The jump to 4♥ implies strong hearts and spades, weakness in the minors: ♠AKQJx ♥KJxx ♦xx ♣xx. It shows mild interest in slam, so opener can bid six hearts with the right cards. Checkback Stayman is used prior to raising hearts with a game-invitational hand, while the jump raise is forcing to game.