

RESPONDING WHEN PARTNER BIDS IN THE BALANCING SEAT by Maritha Pottenger

Mike Lawrence's general guidelines for balancer's partner:

- 1) Compete fiercely at the 1-level and 2-level. Show partner support even with minimum values.
- 2) If your 1st bid must be made at the 3-level, stretch to show partner something.
- 3) If you have already bid at the 1-level or 2-level, be very wary of bidding at the 3-level.

Partner Makes Balancing Double and Opener Passes

1. Jump to two of a major shows 11-13 HCP and (almost always) a poor suit (or you would have bid earlier). Suit might be only 4 cards.
2. Jump to 2D shows 5-card suit and no 4-card major. Again 10/11-13 HCP.
3. Jump to 3H (over 1S) shows 5-card suit (or excellent 4) and could be up to 15-16 HCP.
4. Jump to 3 of a minor shows good 5 or 6-card suit and 11-13 HCP. Looking for 3NT.
5. Jump to 2NT shows 12-14 HCP (and guarantees stopper). Partner is expected to bid on with a decent 12 HCP or more. (Game is often possible with 24 or 25 HCP when you know where all the strength is.)
6. Jump to 3NT should be exactly 15 HCP or a super 14. Didn't want to overcall NT directly.
7. Cue bid is forcing. Partner is either showing a good or extra good hand and wants to confirm that you have a 4-card major (e.g., 1D-p-p-Dbl-P-2D-p-); wants you to pick a major because s/he is 4-4 in the majors; or is looking for NT and hopes you can show a stopper (e.g., 1S-P-P-Dbl-P-2S-P).
8. 1NT usually shows 7-11 HCP, with a stopper over 1H/1S and a semi-stopper or length (9xxx) over 1C/1D
9. Pass (converting double to penalty). You must have lots of trump and **good spots** in the trump suit. Should also feel that game your way is unlikely. (Remember Rules of 10 and 12 for penalty doubles.)

Partner Makes Balancing Double and Opener Rebids

1. If you can bid at the 1-level with a decent 6 HCP, do so. If you can bid at the 2-level with a decent 6-10 HCP and a 5-card suit, do so. **Compete!**
2. If Opener rebids same suit and you have to bid at 3 level, probably still right to get your suit in with 9+ HCP and at least 5 reasonable cards. Compete!
3. If you bid NT at one-level, should have maximum values (9-11 HCP). If you bid NT at 2 level, will usually have 12-15 HCP.
4. You may elect to make a penalty double. Consider rules of 10 and 12. How light would partner reopen? (Do not "hang" partner with a close double.) Consider vulnerability. When opponents are vulnerable, double is more attractive. +200 is often a matchpoint top. Remember that it is easier to play a hand than to defend. If it is close, should probably prefer to declare.

Partner Bids a Suit in Balancing Seat & Opener Passes

1. Simple raise shows about 8-12 HCP. (Your range is wide because partner's range is wide.)
2. 1NT shows 9-12 HCP.
3. Non-jump to 2NT shows 11-12 HCP.
4. Jump to 2NT shows 12-14 HCP.
5. Bid of a new suit should show good suit of your own at 2 and 3-level and deny a fit for partner. Bid of a new suit at 1-level should deny a fit. Your suit may or may not be that good.
6. Cue bid should show either good fit with partner or good hand with no fit, looking for a NT stopper. (Some people play that the cue bid of a minor is natural, to play, with a good 6-card suit.)

Partner Bids a Suit in Balancing Seat & Opener Rebids.

1. Simple raise shows 7-11/12. Important to tell partner you have a fit.
2. NT bids same ranges as when Opener passes. Must have 2 stoppers if opener shows 2nd suit.
3. New suit by you as above (when Opener passes).
4. Cue bids either good fit or looking for a NT stopper.
5. Penalty double still an option. Consider vulnerability and what you think your side can make.

Partner bids a (Balancing) NT and Opener Passes.

1. Pass with most balanced hands up to 10 or 11 HCP.
2. 2NT invites game. You'll have about 11-13 HCP.
3. Bidding game (3NT or 4 of major) shows 14+ HCP.
4. If playing "systems off," 2 of a new suit is to play. Jump in a new suit is forcing; cue-bid of opponent's suit is Stayman.
5. If playing "systems on," 2C is Stayman. Transfers apply along with usual no trump agreements.