

Responses to 1NT

The 1NT Opening

Open 1NT with 15-17 high card points (hcp) and a balanced hand.

- A balanced hand is one that contains no more than one doubleton. Possible shapes are 4333, 4432 and 5332.
- With a 5332 shape, open 1NT if the five card suit is a minor. If a major is the five card suit, open one of that major.
- Do not be put off if the hand contains a weak doubleton. With the right hcp and the right shape, it is best to open 1NT.

The 1NT Overcall

If the opponents open one of a suit, make a 1NT overcall with 15-17 hcp, a balanced hand and a **stopper in the opponent's suit**. The stopper should be no worse than Kxx.

After a 1NT overcall, bid in the same way that you do after a 1NT opening.

Hand Types

If partner opens or overcalls 1NT, classify your hand as follows:

0 to 7 hcp	Weak.	A part score hand.
8 to 9 hcp	Intermediate.	An invitational hand,
10 or more hcp	Strong.	A game forcing hand.

Stayman

If partner opens 1NT, a bid of 2♣ is a conventional bid called **Simple Stayman**. It asks partner to show a four card major. Use Stayman if you have both of:

- A four card major
- An invitational or game forcing hand

Responses to Stayman

After 1NT – 2♣, opener has three possible bids:

- 2♦ Denies a four card major.
- 2♥ Shows four hearts. The hand may also have four spades.
- 2♠ Shows four spades and denies four hearts.

What happens next?

In the following table, "Maximum" means either (a) 17 hcp or (b) 16 hcp and not 4333 shape.

After	If responder has...	bid...	Then, opener does...
2♦	Invitational	2NT	Bid 3NT with maximum. Otherwise, pass.
	Game Forcing	3NT	Pass

After	If <u>responder</u> has...	bid...	Then, <u>opener</u> does...
2♥	4 Hearts, Invitational	3♥	Bid 4♥ with maximum. Otherwise, pass.
	4 Hearts, Game Forcing	4♥	Pass
	4 Spades, Invitational	2NT	With 4 Spades and maximum, bid 4♠. With 4 Spades, not maximum, bid 3♠. With 2 or 3 Spades and max, bid 3NT. With 2 or 3 Spades, not maximum, Pass. With 2 or 3 Spades, bid 4♠. Else, Pass.
	4 Spades, Game Forcing	3NT	
2♠	4 Spades, Invitational	3♠	Bid 4♠ with maximum. Otherwise, Pass.
	4 Spades, Game Forcing	4♠	Pass
	< 4 Spades, Invitational	2NT	Bid 3NT with maximum. Otherwise, Pass.
	< 4 Spades, Game Forcing	3NT	Pass

Transfers

Whenever partner opens 1NT and you have a five card major, you should make a **transfer** bid. If you have five hearts, bid 2♦; if you have five spades, bid 2♥.

It does not matter how many hcp you have. Anything from zero upwards is fine! With a five card major, it is nearly always best to transfer.

In the following, I will talk about the 2♦ transfer to hearts. The 2♥ transfer to spades works in exactly the same way.

What does opener do, when you make a transfer?

With one fairly rare exception, opener accepts the transfer. After a transfer bid of 2♦, opener bids 2♥. This is called “accepting the transfer”.

The exception: With the best possible support for responder’s suit, opener makes a **super-accept**. This is done by bidding 3♥ instead of 2♥. To make a super-accept, opener needs (a) 17 hcp, (b) four cards in responder’s suit and (c) a doubleton. This combination is worth an effective 19 or 20 points. That means responder can now raise to game even if with only six points.

What do I do after opener accepts the transfer?

The auction so far is 1NT-2♦-2♥.

What happens next depends on your strength and the number of hearts you have:

Strength	Number of Hearts	Bid	Notes
Part Score	Five or more	Pass	At worst, you have a 5-2 fit
Invitational	Five	2NT	You have already shown five hearts
Invitational	Six or more	3♥	The partnership has at least eight hearts
Game forcing	Five	3NT	
Game forcing	Six or more	4♥	

- After the NT bids, opener should convert to hearts with three or more cards in support.
- After the invitational bids, opener should raise to game with a maximum.

Example 1

	North	
	♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ A Q J 2 ♣ 7 6	
West		East
♠ Q 7 4 ♥ Q 7 4 2 ♦ T 7 6 ♣ A T 4		♠ 9 2 ♥ J 5 3 ♦ 9 5 3 ♣ K Q J 9 3
	South	
	♠ K T 6 3 ♥ A T 8 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 8 5 2	

West	North	East	South
	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass ⁽²⁾	2♣ ⁽³⁾
Pass	2♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽⁵⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- 15 HCP and balanced. Bid 1NT despite the rotten clubs.
- East is not strong enough to overcall 2♣.
- With 10 HCP and a four card major, use Stayman.
- Shows four spades, denies four hearts.
- South has a game forcing hand.

East will start with clubs and North will ruff the third round. Perhaps declarer will take a losing spade finesse towards West. No matter. North wins the return and draws the remaining trumps. Four rounds of diamonds follow and South can get rid of the losing ♥8.

3NT would be doomed as east-west take the first five tricks in clubs. Despite South's 4333 shape, Stayman is the way to go.

Example 2

	North	
	♠ J 8 6 ♥ Q T 5 3 2 ♦ J 5 ♣ K 9 5	
West		East
♠ 5 4 3 2 ♥ A 7 ♦ K 8 7 2 ♣ A 7 3		♠ A Q T 9 ♥ K 9 6 4 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ 6 2
	South	
	♠ K 7 ♥ J 8 ♦ T 9 6 3 ♣ Q J T 8 4	

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass
3NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

- Spades could not be worse but still use Stayman.
- With both majors, bid the hearts.
- Game forcing hand. Partner knows you have four spades because you used Stayman and don't have four hearts.
- I trust you, partner!

South will start with the ♣Q. West wins and works on trumps. The best play is a low spade to the ten. That knocks out South's king and now it is plain sailing. If south has the jack and north the king, a second spade finesse catches the king. If north has both jack and king, you make an over-trick. If south has both jack and king, it is not your lucky day. Note that 3NT by east fails on a club lead.

Example 3

	North	
	♠ A T ♥ K J T 7 6 4 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ 4 2	
West		East
♠ 8 5 4 2 ♥ 5 ♦ K 9 7 6 ♣ A T 6 5		♠ Q J 7 ♥ A 9 8 3 ♦ T 3 ♣ J 8 7 3
	South	
	♠ K 9 6 3 ♥ Q 2 ♦ A J 5 4 ♣ K Q 9	

West	North	East	South
			1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽³⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁵⁾
Pass			

1. 15 hcp, balanced.
2. With a long major, always transfer.
3. Accept the transfer.
4. Shows six or more hearts and a game forcing hand.
5. Trust partner!

West's best lead is probably a spade. The worst lead is a club. It is seldom a good idea to lead an unsupported ace. Here, it gives away a trick. Declarer should win the spade lead and start playing hearts. Sooner or later, east will take the ace. When back on lead, declarer clears out the remaining trumps. Even though the diamond finesse fails, declarer can make the tenth trick by forcing out the ♣A with ♣KQ. Without transfers, North plays the contract and goes down on a ♦T lead by east. Eventually, east will ruff a diamond.

Example 4

	North	
	♠ Q 4 ♥ J T 8 3 ♦ A T 7 ♣ J 8 7 5	
West		East
♠ A J T 6 ♥ K 5 ♦ K Q 4 3 ♣ A 9 3		♠ K 9 7 5 3 ♥ Q 9 6 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ T 2
	South	
	♠ 8 2 ♥ A 7 4 2 ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ K Q 6 4	

West	North	East	South
1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass
3♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

1. 17 HCP, balanced.
2. Transfer to spades.
3. Four spades, 17 hcp and a doubleton. This qualifies for a super-accept.
4. With partner's effective 20 points, 6 hcp is good enough for game.

North will probably lead a club or a heart. NOT a diamond! When declarer gets the lead, the main problem is to catch the queen of spades. With nine cards in the trump suit and lacking any information from the auction, the best bet is to play the ace of spades and next trick, the king. When the queen comes crashing down, declarer should make ten or eleven tricks, losing a heart, a diamond and maybe a club.

Example 5 (Board 25)

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ K J T 2 ♣ A J 5 3	
West		East
♠ 9 8 7 4 ♥ A 7 4 ♦ 9 8 5 4 ♣ K 6		♠ A 2 ♥ J T 5 3 ♦ Q 7 3 ♣ 9 7 4 2
	South	
	♠ Q J T 6 3 ♥ 9 8 2 ♦ A 6 ♣ Q T 8	

West	North	East	South
	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	2♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	3NT ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	

- 17 HCP and balanced.
- Transfer to spades.
- Accept the transfer.
- 9 hcp, so an invitational hand. With only 5 spades, bid 2NT rather than 3♠.
- A maximum with only two card support. 3NT is the contract.

East's most likely lead is the ♥3. "Fourth highest of the longest and strongest" even though hearts are not all that strong. West should win with the ace and play back another heart. Declarer now counts the sure tricks. Two hearts, two diamonds and a club. That is five. Spades will provide four more once the opponent's ace has been forced out. So, play spades! East will win the ace and play a heart back. Declarer can cash nine tricks and try a finesse in either diamonds or clubs, looking for over-tricks.

Example 6 (Board 30)

	North	
	♠ J 9 8 2 ♥ J 4 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ Q 7 5 3	
West		East
♠ Q 6 ♥ K Q T 9 2 ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ K J 4		♠ K 7 5 4 ♥ A 8 3 ♦ K J T 7 ♣ A 9
	South	
	♠ A T 3 ♥ 7 6 5 ♦ Q 8 3 ♣ T 8 6 2	

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass
3NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♥ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

- Transfer to hearts.
- Accept the transfer.
- A game forcing hand with only five hearts.
- Three card support so convert to 4♥.

South has no great lead. A club is as good as any. Declarer hopefully plays the jack but north has the queen and east wins with the ace. Declarer counts tricks: probably five hearts, definitely two clubs and the king and queen of spades guarantee a spade trick. That's eight. It looks like two diamond tricks are needed. But wait! Before drawing trumps, cash the ♣K and ruff a club in dummy. Now just one diamond trick is needed. Declarer can try to finesse the ♦Q. It fails but there is still one diamond trick and ten in total.

Example 7 (Board 31)

	North	
	♠ A Q T 6 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ T 9 6	
West		East
♠ 8 3 2 ♥ A 8 6 4 ♦ 8 7 6 5 ♣ K 5		♠ 9 7 ♥ Q J T 3 ♦ A 3 ♣ Q 7 4 3 2
	South	
	♠ K J 5 4 ♥ K 2 ♦ Q J T 4 ♣ A J 8	

West	North	East	South
			1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	2♠ ⁽³⁾
Pass	3♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁵⁾
Pass			

- 15 hcp, balanced.
- Stayman.
- Four spades but not four hearts.
- 9 hcp is game invitational.
- A minimum hand. Pass.

There is no appealing lead. Best may be diamonds. That works out very well when east wins with the ace and plays back the ♥Q. The defence quickly grabs two heart tricks. Declarer ruffs the third heart and is very happy that ten tricks are not required. As it is, one trick is in the bank. There are four spades to come plus three diamonds and a club. No worries! Note that a lead of the ♥A gives declarer an extra trick.

Example 8 (Board 36)

	North	
	♠ A 9 8 3 ♥ J 8 7 ♦ Q J T 7 ♣ T 7	
West		East
♠ Q J T 6 ♥ A Q T 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ K 8 6		♠ K 4 2 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 9 4 2 ♣ Q J 4 2
	South	
	♠ 7 5 ♥ K 6 5 4 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ A 9 5 3	

West	North	East	South
1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass
3NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass	Pass

- 16 HCP, balanced.
- What? No major? This hand has 9 hcp and is therefore invitational.
- With 16 hcp and a hand that is not 4333, accept the invitation.

The ♦Q is the obvious lead from the top of a sequence. Once declarer sees this, dummy's ♦9 becomes a valuable card. Declarer has three top tricks, two diamonds and heart. The spades should provide three more and clubs two. It seems a heart finesse will be needed for the ninth trick. Lead a spade. North wins and returns a diamond. Win with the king and play a club. South wins and returns another diamond. That establishes the ♦9 as a winner and declarer can finesse the ♥K for a tenth trick.