

# Supporting Partner's Major

## *Opening One of a Major*

Open one of a major with 12 or more high card points (hcp) and five or more cards in the suit. The upper limit for the bid is 19 hcp since stronger hands will open 2♣.

- With two five card majors, open 1♠.
- With 6-5 in the majors, bid the longer suit.

## *Total Points*

When you have three or more cards in support of opener's major, evaluate your hand using total points (tp). Total points = high card points + shortage points + bonus points.

## Shortage Points

Count one for a singleton.

Count three for a doubleton.

Count five for a void.

## Bonus Points

When you have four or more cards in opener's major AND you have a shortage (so not 4333 shape) add two more points.

## *Hand Types*

If partner opens one of a major, classify your hand as follows:

<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Action</b>
0 to 5	Very weak	Usually pass. However, with a five card suit, bid four of the major. This is a <b>pre-emptive</b> bid aimed at disrupting the opposition. Opener will pass.
6 to 9	Weak	Bid two of the major
10 to 12	Intermediate	An <b>invitational</b> hand. Bid three of the major.
13 to 15	Strong.	A <b>game forcing</b> hand. Do <b>NOT</b> bid four of the major. Instead, make a temporising bid. Bid a new suit. This will probably be a minor suit at the two level. The new suit will normally contain at least four cards. After opener's rebid, bid four of the major.
16 or more	Very strong	A <b>game forcing</b> hand with <b>slam interest</b> . Bid a new suit. After opener's minimum rebid, bid four of the major. If opener makes a jump rebid, look for slam.

## *When Responder Supports Opener's Major*

Opener revalues hand to include shortage points on this scale.

- Count one for a doubleton.
- Count two for a singleton.
- Count three for a void.

Opener's shortage points are on a reduced scale because:

- Dummy uses trumps to generate extra tricks.
- Trumps in declarer's hand do not generate extra tricks.  
Most often, they are used to stop the defence running long suits.

### After responder showed a weak hand

Responder has 6 to 9 points. 26 points are needed for game. Therefore:

- With 19 or more points, opener bids game.
- With 16 or less points, opener passes
- With 17 to 18 points, opener bids three of the major (invitational).  
Responder will accept the invitation with 8 or 9 points.

Note that occasionally, game will be reached with only 25 points. This is a consequence of the relatively wide range of responder's weak response.

### After responder showed an invitational hand

Responder has 10 to 12 points.

With 15 or more points, opener bids game. Otherwise, opener passes.

## *Supporting Responder's Major*

Let's say opener bids 1♦ and responder bids 1♠. Now what?

Responder has shown four spades and at least 6 hcp. If opener has four spades, opener counts shortage points using the 1-3-5 scale. 26 points are needed for game. So:

- With 12 to 16 points, bid 2♠.
- With 17 to 19 points, bid 3♠ (invitational).  
Opener will raise to game with 8 or more points.
- With 20 or more points, bid game.

## *Too Many Numbers*

All these numbers can be quite bewildering. No one remembers them all. The important numbers are 25 hcp for game in no trumps and 26 total points for game in a major.

Whenever your partner has bid, you will know the point range. For example, a 1NT opening shows 15 to 17; one of a major shows 12 to 19. Now:

1. Count your points and add them to partner's minimum. If that is enough for game, bid game or make a game forcing bid.
2. If the total is within two or three points of game, make an invitational bid.
3. If neither of those apply, add your points to opener's maximum. If that is not enough for game, pass (or after 1NT maybe transfer and then pass).
4. If none of these apply, make a minimum bid and see what partner does.



## Example 1

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	3♥ <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	4♥ <sup>(3)</sup>	Pass	Pass
Pass			

- 15 HCP and five hearts.
- 8 hcp, 1 shortage point and 2 points for the extra heart makes 11 total points.
- Partner has 11-12. I have 15 hcp plus 1 shortage point. More than the 26 total points needed for game.

Most likely, East will lead a diamond. Play two rounds of trumps. When the queen falls, there are seven top tricks – five hearts and two diamonds. Play clubs to force out the ace and king. Now there are two club tricks. Finally, force out the ace of spades to pick up a spade trick.

## Example 2

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		1♠	Pass
4♠ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass		

- Weak, pre-emptive bid.
- North is very strong but 4♠ makes life difficult. Some norths will double and South will end up playing in 5♥. That contract will fail. If West had passed or bid 2♠, north-south may well have got to a successful 4♥ contract.

South will start with the ♣Q or ♥Q. It makes little difference. Declarer will lose two hearts, one diamond and one club. Nine tricks and down one.

Still, minus 50 or minus 100 is far better for east-west than north-south making a game and scoring 420 or 620. Furthermore, if north-south do try 5♥, east-west will end up with plus 50 or plus 100.

## Example 3

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♦	Pass	1♥ <sup>(1)</sup>
Pass	2♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	4♥ <sup>(3)</sup>
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. Bid four card suits up the line.
2. 12 hcp plus 1 shortage point.
3. 13 hcp plus 1 shortage point along with partner's count of at least 12. That is 26 points and enough for game.

With both hearts and diamonds bid by the opponents, a spade looks the best lead. Most likely, east will win with the ace. When declarer eventually gets the lead, take two rounds of trumps. There is no need for a third round. The defence can take their heart trick sooner or later. Cash South's spade winners, discarding the ♣3 from dummy. Now declarer's problems are over. Lose one spade, one heart and one diamond.

## Example 4

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		1♣	Pass
1♦ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	1♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass
1♠	Pass	4♠ <sup>(3)</sup>	All Pass

1. Some players would skip the diamonds to bid the major. It would go 1♣-1♠-4♠ or maybe 1♣-1♠-3♠-4♠
2. Bid four card suits up the line.
3. 14 hcp plus 5 points for the void. 19 in total. Partner has 6 and has shown two suits; so must have at least a doubleton. That makes 26 points.

North will probably lead the ♥Q. The play needs some thought. There are four top tricks. Seven more must be found. The club finesse might provide one but the best chance is to ruff four diamonds in dummy. This is why a void is worth five points! In order to ruff diamonds, declarer will need entries in West's hand. These entries will come by ruffing clubs. Ruffing in both hands like this is called a **cross-ruff**. [continued on next page.]

## Example 4 (continued)

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

The cross-ruff is not without danger. After several rounds of a suit, the defenders may be in a position to over-ruff.

Even if they can't over-ruff, they will discard from other suits. They may then be able to ruff your side suit winners. That means it is essential to cash side suit winners at the start.

Start by cashing the ace and king of hearts and the ace of clubs.

Now, ruff a club, ruff a diamond, ruff a club and ruff another diamond. That has got us to seven tricks but on the last club ruff, north played the ♣K. This almost certainly means that north is now in a position to over-ruff. [continued below.]

## Example 4 (continued)

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

As the cards lay, this won't matter because North's spades are too small to over-ruff. Still, declarer does not know this.

If North were to have the ♠K, north would over-ruff the queen and lead a spade back. That would break the cross ruff and declarer would go down.

To safeguard against this possibility, declarer should ruff the ♣6 with the ♠A. Then ruff another diamond. That is nine tricks. Declarer now plays the last club and ruffs with the ♠Q. Even if North were able to over-ruff, it would not matter. The ♠J remains as the tenth trick.

## Example 5 (Board 25)

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

West	North	East	South
	1♠ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	2♣ <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	2NT <sup>(3)</sup>	Pass	4♠ <sup>(4)</sup>
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- 13 hcp and 5 spades.
- Spade support and 14 total points. Game values. Too strong for an immediate 4♠.
- Balanced, less than 15 hcp.
- Since opener is minimum, there is no chance of slam.

East doesn't have a great lead. The ♦3 might be best. As the cards lay, that works out well because it sets up a diamond winner for the defence. Declarer draws trumps and then starts on the clubs. Eventually, the ♥2 will be discarded on the ♣J. Declarer will lose just one heart, one diamond and one club.

## Example 6 (Board 28)

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

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	4♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	All Pass

- 15 hcp plus three shortage points. Not quite enough to bid game.
- 8 hcp + 1 shortage point. Enough for game opposite partner's 17 to 19.

Most Souths will lead the ♣Q. Whatever happens next, declarer will win the second trick in dummy. There are most likely three heart tricks, two spades and two diamonds. The diamond suit will yield one more (after losing a trick to the queen) and club ruffs will provide the ninth and tenth.

## Example 7 (Board 30)

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
			Pass
1♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	3♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass
Pass <sup>(3)</sup>	Pass		

- 12 hcp, five hearts.
- 8 hcp plus 1 shortage point plus 2 points for extra heart makes 11 total points
- 13 total points. Not quite enough to accept the invitation

There is no stand out lead. Diamonds look as good as any. East-west have done well to stay out of game. The trumps break kindly but there are two spade losers along with a diamond and a club. Of course, it is possible that north-south don't play spades. In that case, declarer can get rid of one spade loser on East's fourth club

## Example 8 (Board 33)

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
Pass	1♣ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	1♦ <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	1♥ <sup>(3)</sup>	Pass	1♠ <sup>(4)</sup>
Pass	2♠ <sup>(5)</sup>	Pass	3♠ <sup>(6)</sup>
Pass	4♠ <sup>(7)</sup>	All Pass	

- 13 HCP, no five card major
- Four diamonds. Some players bypass diamonds and bid 1♠.
- Four hearts. Bid up the line.
- Four spades
- Support. 16 total points. That's not enough to invite (17-19).
- 11 total points is enough for South to invite.
- And North can accept.

The ♦ K looks a decent lead. That holds the trick and west will probably switch to a club. There are 3 trump tricks, 1 heart and 4 clubs. That makes 8. If both the heart and spade finesses work there are 2 more. That is unlikely. A better option is to ruff 2 diamonds in dummy. Win the club in hand and ruff a diamond. Take the losing spade finesse. Win the return. If not a club, return to hand with a trump. Ruff another diamond and return to hand with the ♣ Q. Draw the last trump. Take two more clubs and a trump for ten tricks.

