

Responding to 1NT With Both Majors (2)

With Five Cards in Both Majors

So far, we have seen what to do (a) if you have four cards in both majors and (b) if you have four cards in one and five cards in the other. What if you have five cards in both majors?

That is really good news. Since partner must have a balanced hand, the hand cannot contain more than one doubleton. This means that partner has a guaranteed fit with at least one of your suits. Consequently, you can count your chickens before they hatch. In other words, you can count your shortage points when assessing the value of your hand.

With 5-5 in the majors, count points as usual but **if you have no ace or king, subtract one**. Then, you classify your hand as:

Weak	4 or less high card points
Invitational	5 to 6 high card points (8 to 9 points including shortage points)
Game Forcing	7 or more high card points (10 or more points with shortage points)

Weak Hands

Partner opened 1NT and this is your hand.

Your Hand
♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

What do you do? You could transfer to one of the majors, knowing that partner has at least two cards in every suit.

But, you will be very disappointed if partner turns up with four cards in the other major as in this example.

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9 5
♦ A K 8
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 2♥ to transfer to spades.

West duly bids 2♠ and East passes.

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

This is very sad. You are playing in 2♠ when ten tricks can be made in hearts. So a transfer is not the best way. Instead, use good old Garbage Stayman.

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9 5
♦ A K 8
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 2♣ (Garbage Stayman). West bids 2♥ and now, East reassesses. Four high card points plus three points for shortage plus two points for the extra trump.

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

That is nine points in total, enough to invite to game. East bids 3♥ and West takes it to game. Much, much better.

Of course, things will not always work out so well.

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9
♦ A K 8 7
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 2♣ (Garbage Stayman). West bids 2♦ and now East has to pick one of the majors.

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

It is just the luck of the draw. As it happens, hearts would be much better. If you pick spades, you are no worse off than if you had transferred to spades in the first place.

Game Forcing and Invitational Hands

To deal with stronger hands with five cards in each major, I will introduce two new bids. They are artificial bids (gulp!) which means they have to be alerted. At first, they may seem difficult to remember and use but they make the bidding really, really simple.

After 1NT by partner:

- 3♥ shows invitational values, five hearts and five spades.
 - If weak with three hearts, partner passes.
 - If weak with three spades, partner bids 3♠.
 - If strong with three hearts, partner bids 4♥.
 - If strong with three spades, partner bids 4♠.
- 3♠ shows a game forcing (or better) hand with five hearts and five spades.
 - With three hearts, partner bids 4♥.
 - With three spades, partner bids 4♠.

That's it. Nothing more to remember.

Examples

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9
♦ A J 8 7
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 3♥. This shows invitational values and five cards in each major.

With a minimum and three hearts, West passes.

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ A 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

♠ A T 3
♥ Q 9
♦ A K 8 7
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 3♥. Again, invitational values and five cards in each major.

With a maximum and three spades, West bids 4♠.

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ A 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9
♦ A J 8 7
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 3♠. This shows values for game and five cards in each major.

With three hearts, West bids 4♥.

♠ K 9 6 4 2
♥ A 8 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

♠ A 3
♥ Q T 9
♦ A J 8 7
♣ A T 6 4

West opens 1NT and East bids 3♠. With three hearts, West bids 4♥. East is strong enough (5 losers) to investigate slam. There are no missing key cards and the final contract should be 6♥.

♠ K Q 6 4 2
♥ A K 7 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 7

Example 1

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

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥ or 2♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South has to guess the best major. As it happens spades works out much better than hearts but both are heaps better than the hopeless 1NT.

In 2♥, it will be a struggle for declarer to make more than seven tricks. 2♠ fares much better as declarer can draw trumps and then cash all those lovely hearts.

Example 2

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

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

West shows invitational values and 5-5 in the majors.

East has a maximum with three hearts and bids 4♥.

A great game contract with just 22 combined high card points.

If declarer ruffs a spade or two before drawing trumps, eleven tricks are possible.

Example 3

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

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This time, North has a game forcing hand and North-South quickly find their way to 4♥.

Ruff the third spade before drawing trumps. That turns the fourth and fifth spades into winners. There are eleven tricks despite the losing club finesse.

Example 4

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

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♥	All Pass

East has only five losers and goes looking for slam after West picks hearts as the suit.

West shows two keycards plus the queen of trumps and East bids the slam.

Only 29 high card points but an easy slam for East-West. There is no need even to take the heart finesse. Cash the ace first and then a low heart towards the queen. Getting two rounds of trumps out of the way quickly reduces the chance of an opposition ruff.

On regaining the lead draw the last trump and cash the winners.