

## Errors in bidding – misusing reverses

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Although bidding suits up the line is common practice, whether you can show your suit holdings depends on partner's response and your strength.

As dealer, you will of course open the hand below with 1D. If partner responds 1S, what will you rebid now?

♠ K105  
♥ AQ82  
♦ KJ983  
♣ 2

No, you will not bid 2H. The reason is that if partner wants to give preference to diamonds, s/he will have to do so at the 3-level. You just don't have the high-card strength for that!

Although you can raise to 2S if you and your partner have agreements for 3-card raises, your best rebid is simply 2D. If partner has 5 spades and 4 hearts, she can show the hearts now. If she has long spades, she will rebid them. But if she has the hand below, she will be very glad to pass!

♠ AQ96  
♥ 95  
♦ Q10  
♣ 109875

As you can see, 2D is fairly cold and may even make an overtrick if the heart finesse succeeds.

When opener makes a rebid that forces partner to give preference at the 3-level (e.g. 1C-1H-2D or 1C-1S-2H) this is called a *reverse*.

Because the bid has the potential to push the auction up to the 3-level, opener should promise 16+ hcp. A reverse also shows an unbalanced hand with a longer first-bid suit.

The hand at the top of the next page is a good example of one that is suitable for a reverse.

♠ K105  
♥ AK82  
♦ AKJ982  
♣

With this hand, if the auction commences 1D-1S, you can quite justifiably rebid 2H.

What does responder now do? Well, that depends on her hand. However, opener's reverse is *forcing* for one round, so she cannot pass.

With only 6-7 hcp, responder should rebid her suit, raise either of partner's suits, or bid 2NT.

With 8+ hcp responder should jump rebid her suit, jump raise either of partner's suits, bid fourth suit forcing, or jump to 3NT.

So with a hand such as this one:

♠ Q986  
♥ 953  
♦ Q10  
♣ K1098

after 1D-1S-2H, responder bids 2NT, having at least one stopper in the fourth suit.

If opener's hand was something like the one below, she can now raise to 3NT:

♠ K10  
♥ AQ82  
♦ AJ932  
♣ A6

But with a more distributional hand such as the one at the top of this page, opener will rebid 3D and now a weak responder can pass.

However, if responder's holding is a bit stronger, such as the hand over the page which has 9 hcp but lacks a convincing stopper in clubs, she can bid 3C which is *fourth suit forcing* and now opener can bid 3NT with a hand such as the one above, or 3D with a hand such as the one at the top of the page (the partnership then plays in 5D, or perhaps even 6D).

♠ AQ96  
 ♥ 95  
 ♦ Q10  
 ♣ J9875

What about reverses by responder? Yes, these exist too, and are always forcing to game. If responder first bids a minor and then reverses into a major suit (e.g. 1C-1D-2C-2H) then the minor suit will be longer. However, in an auction such as 1D-1H-2D-2S, the reverse does not guarantee longer hearts.

A reverse by responder enables opener to belatedly show 3-card support for responder's first suit. It often allows 3NT to be right-sided and may even facilitate more enterprising bidding such as this:

♠ A43	1C	1H	♠ KQJ8
♥ 843	2C	2S	♥ AQJ62
♦ 4	3H	4NT	♦ A96
♣ AQ9842	5H	6H	♣ K

Note West's aggressive 1C opening – but he has 2 aces, 2.5 quick tricks, only 7 losers and an easy rebid, so why wouldn't you? Having limited his hand, he can now show 3-card support for responder's hearts ... and we're off to the races!