

## 1NT OPENING

When you have a balanced hand with 15- 17 points it is better to open 1NT.

A balanced hand has no singletons, no voids and no more than 1 doubleton.

There are only three hand shapes that meet these criteria; 4333, 4432 and 5432 but they are the most commonly occurring. You will get one of these three hands almost 50% of the time.

Notice that this bid limits the point range to within 3 points and the shape to one of these three. It is very descriptive. Opening 1NT is very powerful, because it stops the other side from bidding at the one-level, and partner knows a lot about your hand from the first bid. If they assume you have 16 points, they can't be wrong by more than one point.

You should be bidding 1NT as often as possible because it is so descriptive. Do not be put off by a useless doubleton. You may not stay in NT anyway. With a 5332 shape with a 5 card major bid NT unless the suit is really weak.

This means that you partner becomes the "*Captain*" of the hand whenever you bid 1 NT.

After you've opened 1NT, responder will decide how high and where to play the hand. If responder's hand is also balanced, stay in no trumps. If not, try to find a fit, and make that trumps. After all, partner will have at least two cards in that suit.

### Balanced Responses to 1NT

- **0 – 7 points, pass.** No point in going higher as you have no chance of game (7+17<25)
- **8 – 9 points, raise to 2NT,** invitational, (1NT / 2NT) asking partner if they are maximum. If partner has 16 or 17 then we have the magic 25 and can bid game
- **10+ points, raise to 3NT** (1NT / 3NT) even if partner has the bare 15 we still have enough for game (10+15=25).

## Declarer Play Tip

Both the defenders and the declarer are in a race to establish their long suits. The defenders have an advantage as they get to lead the suit first but the declarer can see all their assets in dummy and hand. To establish your suit you need to flush out any missing honours that the defenders may have you might need to sacrifice an honour to do this. For example:

<b>Declarer</b>	<b>Dummy</b>
Q2	KJT4

Play the Q (honours from the short hand) hopefully this will drag out the A but in any case you should still make 3 tricks from this suit. This will mean losing the lead but you have to in order to get the trick to which you are entitled. It is best to do this early in the hand while you have control in the other suits.

## Defenders Tip

Opening Leads against no trumps. You also are trying to establish your longest suit so it is usually a good idea to start off leading it. Leading the 4<sup>th</sup> highest from an honour is a good plan. It tells partner you have an honour in it and often tells them how many cards in that suit you have. By leading the 6 and later playing the 2 partner knows you started with 5 cards in that suit. A lead of the 2 will promise 4 cards in that suit. Partner can now start to build a picture of your hand and hence declarer's hand.

- Q8763 lead 6
- KJ82 lead 2
- AKQ5 lead A top of a sequence in NT sequence must be three
- KQT32 Lead K top of an incomplete sequence
- KJT3 lead J top of broken sequence
- 6532 lead 6 top of nothing partner should be able to distinguish between the first example by looking at his and dummy's hand.

## More Responses to 1NT

With balanced hands and less than 8 points we pass, we bid 2NT with 8-9, and 3NT with more but with unbalanced hands we should explore the possibility of a major fit. If responder has a 5-card major or even a 4 card major it is possible that a fit in this suit will yield 10 tricks. So we need to tell declarer about our Major holding. "Stayman" and "Transfers" do just this.

### ▪ Stayman

**If you have a 4 card major and** at least 8 points and have at least a doubleton then you should bid 2♣ after opener's 1NT. This asks your partner if partner has a 4 card major. You would do this with the following hands:

♠ AK92	♠ 82	♠ AK93
♥ 54	♥ 8632	♥ AK92
♦ Q753	♦ KQJ3	♦ 4
♣ 654	♣ A54	♣ AT92

But not with:

♠ 942	♠ K92	♠ 92
♥ K4	♥ A54	♥ 54
♦ Q753	♦ Q753	♦ AKQ753
♣ Q54	♣ Q54	♣ 654
Pass - not enough points	No 4 card major. Bid 3NT	No 4 card major. Bid 3NT Those diamonds will be worth a lot in NT

Opener will bid 2♦ if they don't have a 4 card major, 2♥ if they have 4 Hearts and 2♠ if they have 4 Spades.

Remember that you are **Captain of the hand** (because 1NT **limits** opener's hand). You will then decide the correct place to be.

### ▪ Transfers

**If you have a 5 card major** it would make sense to bid it but if this suit became trumps then you would be playing the hand and partner's beautiful hand would be dummy for all the world to see and the defence would have a better understanding on how to defeat the contract. So we will bid the suit below our 5 card major.

2♦ would therefore promise a 5-card Heart suit and **REQUIRES** the 1NT opener to bid 2♥ (no buts; after all he must have at least 2 Hearts).

2♥ would therefore promise a 5-card Spade suit and **REQUIRES** the 1NT opener to bid 2♠ (no buts; after all he must have at least 2 Spades).