



Play & Learn

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How the auction affects your bid

Some of my students have trouble realizing that the meaning of some bids change depending on the auction. Let's look at some examples.

① ♠A 9 6 ♥Q 9 6 ♦10 8 2 ♣J 6 5 2

What will you bid with this after:

- a) Partner opens 1NT and right-hand opponent passes?
- b) Partner opens 2NT and your RHO passes?

- a) Pass. The 1NT opening bid limits partner's hand to 15 to 17 points. You don't have enough strength for game and 1NT is your best partscore contract. If partner had opened one of a suit, you would not have passed. Game would still be possible opposite a maximum 19 to 21 points.

- b) Bid 3NT. Partner has shown a balanced 20–21 points, enough for game opposite your 7.

② ♠A 9 ♥A Q J 6 5 ♦7 5 2 ♣Q 6 5

What will you bid with this after:

- a) Partner opens 1♦ as dealer and RHO passes?
- b) Partner opens 1♠ as dealer and RHO passes?
- c) Partner opens 1♣ as dealer and RHO overcalls 1♠?

- a) Bid 1♥. You have shown four or more hearts and 6 or more points. A new suit bid by an unpassed responder is forcing, so you will get another chance to describe your hand.

- b & c) You have enough points and enough hearts to respond 2♥. Assuming you use Standard American bidding, a 2♥ response would show five or more hearts and a medium hand (a good 10 or 11 HCP) or better. Playing 2/1, a 2♥ response shows an opening hand with at least five hearts. This hand qualifies for a 2♥ response using either approach.

③ ♠A 9 2 ♥A Q J 6 ♦7 5 2 ♣Q 6 5

What will you bid with this after:

- a) Partner opens 1♦ and RHO passes?
- b) Partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠?
- a) Bid 1♥. Your new-suit bid is forcing and you will have another chance to show a game-going hand.
- b) You have enough points – but not enough hearts – to bid 2♥, which would show five hearts.

With a spade stopper, you can bid notrump, but be careful. After an opponent overcalls, 2NT by responder is merely invitational and could be passed, so you'll have to go all the way to 3NT. Unfortunately, you could miss a 4–4 heart fit, in which case we'd prefer 4♥ to 3NT. We'll revisit this example for a better solution next time when we discuss negative doubles, a convention that is extremely important for competitive duplicate players.

④ ♠9 2 ♥A J 6 2 ♦7 5 2 ♣K 6 5 2

What will you bid with this after:

- a) Partner opens 1♦; RHO passes?
- b) Partner opens 1♠; RHO passes?
- c) Partner opens 1♦; RHO overcalls 1♠?
- a) You can still afford to respond 1♥.
- b) You don't have enough points or enough hearts to bid 2♥. Make a 1NT response. If you have a heart fit, it isn't lost. Partner will rebid 2♥ if he has four of them.
- c) There is no bid that is right for this hand. You don't have enough hearts or enough points to bid 2♥, you don't have the required strength for a 2♣ response, and you lack the spade stopper needed to respond 1NT. I hope that you would be really unhappy having to pass this 8-point hand knowing that partner opened. Your side has at least half the points, so you should want to fight for a partscore. Happily, adopting negative doubles give you a chance to compete. We'll see this hand again, too.

⑤ ♠A 9 2 ♥K J 6 2 ♦7 5 2 ♣K 6 5

What will you bid with this after:

- a) Partner opens 1♦ and RHO passes?
- b) Partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠?

► Play and Learn *continued*

- a) Your plan is to respond 1♥, searching for the all-important major-suit fit. If partner can't support hearts, you can rebid 2NT to invite game.
- b) You have enough points but not enough hearts to bid 2♥ after RHO's 1♠ overcall. At least you have a spade stopper and can bid 2NT (invitational in competition). If you wish you could show your hearts, you're not alone. Next time, we'll see how using negative doubles lets you do that. ■