
BIDDING OVER THEIR NOTRUMP

1. Competing over 1NT only requires weak 2-bid strength

What are your side's chances of making a game when an opponent opens 1NT? Well, there are only 24 high card points left, so even if your side has all of them, which is unlikely, some distribution points will be required to get your side up to the 26 points needed for game.

So if you bid over their 1NT, it is because you want to contest the part-score.

When the opponents open 1NT and everyone passes, your chances of getting a good score are not likely. If you can make 110 your way in a major and they go down one or make it, then you are wrong to let them play it. If they are making and you are down one non-vulnerable, you are also wrong to pass it out.

When it is their hand for game, you take away their ability to bid Stayman or transfer by bidding. Also if they double you, frequently the penalty they collect is smaller than the plus score they would get for their game.

How can you tell when to bid? Well, you should always bid with a hand that would open a weak two-bid. Your suit quality should be good vulnerable. If your hand is marginal, then if you hold a singleton, bid, otherwise pass. The odds that your partner has 2 or more cards in your suit are quite high; therefore if you have a 6 card suit you will usually have an 8 card fit, so bidding has some safety. What about a 5 card suit? This is more dangerous, but with a good suit go ahead.

Is it different in pass-out seat? Yes, strain to bid with a long suit in pass-out seat no matter how weak your hand is. After all, partner is never going to lead it if you pass. A reasonable 5 card suit is a more likely bid in pass-out than in direct chair.

Is jumping to the 3 level still preemptive? Yes, but it is important to have a decent suit since it is easy for them to double for penalties.

What about Mel's rule of 8? If you are unsure whether to bid or not then by all means use Mel Colchamiro's rule of 8. See his book “How You Can Play Like An Expert” for the details. The rule, in summary, is as follows: when you have 6 or more points, subtract your losing tricks from the total number of cards contained in the two longest suits. If the result is a number of 2 or more, then the player should compete with a bid. Personally I don't always wait for six points, with a major that is KJ10987 I would bid no matter what the rest of the hand was. If you are unfamiliar with losing trick count see our *ScoreCard* article on the subject (August 2011) now posted at <http://d17acbl.org> – or read Ron Klinger's book on that subject or even look it up in the Bridge Encyclopedia.

Exercise 1. Left hand opponent opens 1NT, 16-18, and you hold the following hands, non-vulnerable versus vulnerable:

Would you bid in direct seat ? Would you bid in pass-out seat ? Would you bid vulnerable ?

543	K76	AKQJ1074	9	KJ9873
J10987	KQ542	87	QJ10765	84
32	K532	3	K72	96
K54	7	J98	J87	965
Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___
Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__
Vul _____				

II. Conventional Bids over their 1NT: Landy and Capelletti

Major suits, as usual, are more important than minor suits, when competing over the opponents 1NT. The reason for this is that often when you are making, they would have been going down and +110 is better than +100 or + 50. If they are vulnerable, down one is plus 100 for your side; but making 2♣ is only plus 90; so when you hold a minor, often defending is the better proposition.

When you have 5-4 distribution, the chance that your side has an 8 card fit is quite high, but if you bid your 5 card suit you will lose the 4-4 fit. It clearly would be nice to have a way to indicate this hand type to partner.

The first convention devised for this purpose was Landy; that's Stayman for the opposition. If your right-hand opponent opens 1NT a bid of 2♣ asks partner to bid a major; it usually shows a hand that is 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors.

A better convention however is Cappelletti, which lets you show all your 5-4 hands which include a 5 card major. Thus allowing you to take a bid whenever you have a reasonable 5 card major with the safety of escaping to your other suit. This is done as follows:

- 2♣ a 1 suited hand (usually ♦, ♥, or ♠ with a 6 card suit)
- 2♦ both majors: 5-5, 5-4, or 4-5
- 2♥ a 5 card ♥ suit with a 4 card minor
- 2♠ a 5 card ♠ suit with a 4 card minor
- 2NT both minors 5-5+ (still the unusual NT)

The main problem with this convention is remembering that 2 of a major shows a 2 suited hand. Partner bids 2NT to ask for the minor.

Some other popular methods that people play over the opponent's One Notrump are DONT, Hello, Meckwell, and Woolsey. One problem with many of these is losing the penalty double, which is particularly uncomfortable against a weak notrump. Some people resolve that by playing differently against weak or strong notrumps. Then the issue becomes which is which. Is 12-15 weak? Is 14-16 strong? In my own partnerships I define strong as any range that includes 16.

Here is a quick summary of some of these conventions:

DONT:

- Dbl Any 1 suited hand
- 2♣ 4+ clubs and a higher suit
- 2♦ 4+ diamonds and a higher suit
- 2♥ both majors
- 2♠ A Spade suit with a worse hand than if you start with double (or a better hand, up to your partnership to decide)
- 2NT both minors 5-5+ (still the unusual NT)

HELLO

- 2♣ Either Diamonds or one minor and one major
- 2♦ Hearts
- 2♥ both majors: 5-5, 5-4, or 4-5
- 2♠ Spades
- 2NT Clubs
- 3♣ both minors 5-5+
- 3♦ both majors 5+5+ with enough playing strength to invite game

Newer popular conventions are Meckwell and Woolsey. <http://www.bridgeguys.com> is a good source for finding how these conventions are played.

Exercise 2. Right hand opponent opens 1NT, 16-18, and you hold the following hands, non-vulnerable, make a bid playing the Capelletti system over 1NT.

543	K762	AQ674	98	KJ9873
J10987	KQ543	8	QJ10765	84
32	K5	K432	K7	96
K54	75	J98	J87	J65
Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___
Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__
Vul _____				
K854	73	AK674	AJ1098	K9873
J10987	KQ743	87	QJ1076	AQ54
2	K534	743	K7	96
KQ4	75	J98	7	J6
Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___	Direct___
Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__	Pass-out__
Vul _____				

III. Responding to Partner's Cappelletti bid

Unless you have an enormous distributional fit, game is just not in the picture. Say you have a balanced 18 count, that just means that partner has bid on 6 points. In the rare case where your hand is worth a game try you bid 2NT, just as you would over a weak 2 bid.

Normal responses are:

to 2♣ showing a 1 suited hand (usually D,H, or S, usually 6 cards)

2♦ asks partner to bid their suit (or pass with ♦s)

other bids are natural and non-forcing except 2NT, game try

to 2♦ both majors: 5-5, 5-4, or 4-5

2♥/♠ responder normally bids their better major (jumping to 3 is pre-emptive with 4 trump and a singleton)

other bids are natural and non-forcing except 2NT, game try

to 2♥ or 2♠ a 5 card major suit with a 4 card minor

2NT asks which minor suit (return to major next is a game try)

other bids are natural and non-forcing

2NT both minors 5-5+ (still the unusual NT)

responder bids their better minor at the appropriate level

other bids are natural and non-forcing

Answers:

1.	N	N	N	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	N	same	same	Y	not direct
2.	P	2D	2S	2C	2C
	2C	2D	2S	2C	2C
	P	P	P	P/2C in P.O.	P/2C in P.O.
	2D	P	2C	2D	2D
	2D	2H	2C	2D	2D
	P/2D in P.O	P/2H in P.O	P	2D	P/2D in P.O.
