



DISTRICT 16 LECTURE SERIES



**Balancing 101
Nancy Joe
February 24, 2024**

Balancing Seat



Consider this auction:

West	Partner	East	You
1C	Pass	Pass	?

You are in the balancing seat. If you pass, the auction is over. What do you do? These are the things to consider in your decision:

If I reopen the auction, will I get a better score?

Can I trust my partner that his/her pass was correct?

Should I reopen the auction when Partner could not make a call over 1C?

Can I trust the opponents that they have bid correctly?

Can the opponents find a better spot? Who has the Spade suit?

How many points do I need?

What does Partner expect if I overcall or double?



Why Balance?

The opponents have stopped at a low level. Left Hand Opponent may have opened with 11 points. Right Hand Opponent does not have 6 points. Partner has values, but may not have had a descriptive bid available in direct seat. Partner knows that you are “protecting his hand and “borrowing 3 points from him.” Each side has 17-23 points, so it is generally possible for each side to take 8 tricks. Going down 1 or 2 may give you a better score (minus 50 or minus 100) than allowing opponents to play in their 8 card fit (minus 90 or minus 110). You can make a lead directing bid by balancing. You may possibly push the opponents too high and they go down! If you are short in Opener’s suit, you and your partner probably have a fit. If the opponents have a fit, you and Partner have a fit. Bridge is a bidder’s game. Stretch to keep the auction alive.

Make the opponents earn the auction!



BORROW A KING

In direct seat, you need 12+ HCP to make a takeout double. In the balancing seat, the requirements for a takeout X are lowered by 3 points. Think of this as “borrowing a king” from Partner’s hand. Strive to compete for the contract, especially if you are short in opponent’s suit. You can X with 9+HCP. You still must have support (3+cards)for the unbid suits. Partner may have made a “trap pass” with extreme length in opponent’s suit and is hoping to defend.

Guideline: Most of your balancing bids promise about a King fewer than you would need to make the same bid in direct seat.



Example 1

(1C) P (P) ?

♠ KQ86
♥ K942
♦ J976
♣ 5

What's your call?



(1C) P (P) X

♠ KQ86
♥ K942
♦ J976
♣ 5

We don't have enough for a direct seat double (12+ points) if RHO had opened 1C, but we don't want to defend 1C, so we "borrow a King" from Partner's hand and make a take out double. There is a good chance that our side has a Major suit fit and we may be able to push the opponents up to the 3 level, possibly going down!

Make the opponents EARN the auction!



Example 2

(1D) P (P) ?

♠ KJT86
♥ 972
♦ A9
♣ J54

What's your call?



(1D) P (P) 1S

♠ KJT86
♥ 972
♦ A9
♣ J54

Don't double if your hand is more suited to an overcall. Overcalls in balancing seat can also be light. Prefer to overcall 1S here. A minimum suit bid typically shows 8-13 points, usually a 5+ card suit (but may be a good 4 card suit at the 1 level). The better your suit, the fewer points you need to bid.



Example 3

(1D) P (P) ?

♠ AQT872

♥ T54

♦ AQ

♣ Q2

What's your call?



(1D) P (P) 2S

♠ K943

♥ Q763

♦ T2

♣ AJT

♠ J

♥ AKJ9

♦ K97

♣ K7543

♠ 65

♥ 82

♦ J86543

♣ 986

♠ AQT872

♥ T54

♦ AQ

♣ Q2

We do not preempt in the balancing seat.

A jump in the pass-out seat is intermediate and shows a decent hand (6 or 7 losers) with a decent 6 card or longer suit and invitational values. Let Partner know that you are not borrowing a King. Game might be possible if Partner has the right 9-11 points!



Example 4

(1D) P (P) ?

♠ QJT8

♥ K97

♦ AT5

♣ K98

What's your call?



(1D) P (P) 1N

♠ QJT8

♥ K97

♦ AT5

♣ K98

Balance with 1NT showing 11-14 and stoppers (or moderate length) in Opener's suit. A direct NT overcall shows 15-18, but in balancing seat, we “borrow a king” from Partner's hand. Be sure to discuss continuations after a balancing NT. Suggestion: **Play Systems on.**



Advanced Treatment after Balancing No Trump



(1 minor) P (P) 1N = 11-14

(1 minor) P (P) X followed by 1N = 15-16

(1 minor) P (P) X followed by 2N = 17-18

(1 minor) P (P) 2N = 19-21

Systems are on by Advancer.

2C is Stayman.

2D and 2H are Jacoby Transfers.

Note: The balancing 2N is not “Unusual.” Make sure your partnership clarifies that Unusual 2N bids showing the 2 lower unbid suits apply only in the direct seat.



Advanced Treatment after Balancing No Trump



Range Stayman after 1 Major Opening

(1 Major) P (P) 1N = 11-16

(1 Major) P (P) X followed by cheapest NT bid = 17-18

(1 Major) P (P) 2N = 19-21

When LHO opens a Major, a wider range is needed for the balancing NT b/c there is less room to operate. Systems are on. 2C is Stayman. 2D and 2H are Jacoby Transfers. If balancer is 11-13, he bids normally at the 2 level. If balancer is 14-16, he bids 2N, delaying his normal Stayman response. Advancer can continue with 3C as re-Stayman.



Example 5

(1C) P (P) ?

♠ KQT98

♥ AJT92

♦ A9

♣ 5

What's your call?



(1C) P (P) 2C

♠ KQT98

♥ AJT92

♦ A9

♣ 5

Michaels Cue Bid is ON in balancing seat.

Balancing cuebid of Opener's minor shows 5-5 in
Majors and strong 16+HCP (after borrowing a king).



Example 6

(1H) P (P) ?

♠ AQT98

♥ 84

♦ KT

♣ KQ753

What's your call?





(1H) P (P) 2H

♠ AQT98

♥ 84

♦ KT

♣ KQ753

Michaels Cue Bid is ON in balancing seat.

Balancing cuebid of Opener's Major shows 5-5 in the unbid Major and undisclosed minor and a strong 16+HCP (after borrowing a king).

Advancer bids 2N to ask what minor Balancer holds.



When NOT to Balance

- When you have fewer than 8 points.
- When you have shortage in a Major, the opponents might find a better spot to play if you reopen the auction.
- If you have length in their suit, the hand Opener is most likely to have is the big balanced hand of 18-19 points. Do you really want to give them the opportunity to find their Major suit fit when they could be playing in a silly 1 of a minor? Who has the Spade suit?
- Be cautious if you are Vulnerable. Be careful if you have length in their suit.
- Be wary if you are playing against astute, expert players.




Test Yourself



1. (1H) P (P) ? ♠AQ ♥KQT ♦KJ87 ♣AJ92
2. (1C) P (P) ? ♠Q54 ♥Q54 ♦QJ4 ♣J765
3. (1D) P (P) ? ♠8 ♥AQJT96 ♦752 ♣K5
4. (1S) P (P) ? ♠3 ♥K4 ♦QT964 ♣AQT72
5. (1H) P (P) ? ♠984 ♥QJ6 ♦AQT32 ♣KT
6. (1H) P (P) ? ♠53 ♥J973 ♦KQT32 ♣Q9
7. (1H) P (P) ? ♠QJ93 ♥2 ♦A874 ♣KT32
8. (1C) P (P) ? ♠Q75 ♥AT2 ♦KQJ ♣AJ94
♠♥♦♣

Answers



1. 2N. A jump to 2N in balancing seat shows 19-21 with a stopper(s) in Opponent's suit.
2. Pass. Sometimes you defend a 1 level contract.
3. 2H. By bidding for 8 tricks, you show the ability to win 7 by yourself. This is NOT a weak bid, as it would be in direct seat.
4. 2D. Since you cannot bid the Unusual 2NT, it make sense to bid diamonds first. This is unlikely to be passed out. Then you will bid 3C next.
5. 1N. 2D is a possibility, but with your balanced shape and heart stopper, 1N is a better description.
6. Pass. You have a good suit, but you are very weak. Partner's failure to bid suggests that Opener has a powerhouse, or that the opponents have a better fit somewhere.
7. Double. You have minimum points but the right distribution. Borrow a King!
8. Double. In direct seat, you would overcall 1N. In balancing seat, over 1 minor opening,  first and rebid NT to show 15-17.



Questions?

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Thank you!

