

When to Open 1NT (and when not to!)

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Agenda

- Main Objective
- Defining 1NT Openings
- When is 15 not 15?
- When is 17 not 17?
- 5-card majors in a 1NT Opener
- Bigger Hands
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The Main Objective

Bridge is a game of Majors, so why open 1NT?

- Preference for contracts is Majors, then NT, then Minors
- Points and tricks needed for game:
 - Majors: 25 points, 10 tricks
 - NT: 25 points, 9 tricks
 - Minors: 29 points, 11 tricks

The Point Ranges and their Meanings

Opener's points Bidding sequence with a balanced hand

12-14	Open 1 of a suit, rebid 1NT
15-17	Open 1NT
18-19	Open 1 of a suit, rebid with a jump in NT
20-21	Open 2NT
22-24	Open 2C, rebid 2NT

Not All Hands Are Created Equal -- I

- Use judgement!
- In general, open 1NT with 4333, 4432, 5332 distribution and 15-17
- What do we open with the following hands:
 - KQx, Qxxx, QJxx, AJ _____
 - KQ, AQT, Txx, KJxxx _____
 - QJxx, QJx, QJx, KQJ _____

Not All Hands Are Created Equal -- II

QJxx, QJx, QJx, KQJ is called a “quacky” hand

Other considerations:

- Are the honors spread out or grouped together?
- What is the quick trick structure?
- Primarily aces and kings or queens and jacks?



Why is this even a question? Bad 15 counts

- We open 5332 hands 1NT because it solves a rebid problem
- When we open 1NT, we're able to differentiate between 15 and 16-17
- Some 15 point hands can be *devalued* (Quacks, no aces, no 10/9, Hx)
- Examples of "bad" 15-counts:
 - Qxxx, Axx, AQxx, QJ
 - KJx, Axxx, Qxxx, KQ

Why is this even a question? 16 counts

Here are some 16-point hands

- ATx, QJxx, KQx, KJx
- KQJx, QJTxx, AKx xx

Open 1NT.



Why is this even a question? 16 counts

Is this hand too good to open 1NT?

- KQJxx, KQx, AJT, Jx

Open 1S, rebid 2N. The 5th spade is worth a point.

- QTxxx, AKQ, xx, AQT

Also too good for 1NT (17HCP with a 5-card suit)

Should I open 1NT with a 5-card major?

Considerations:

- Do I have a rebid?

Bridge is a partnership game; consider what partner might bid and what your rebid will be

- Qx, AQJxx, JTx, AQx

If you open 1H, what is P likely to bid?

What is your rebid over partner's 1S or 1N?

- Concealing the 5-card Major can be an advantage in the play, and may protect tenaces



Considerations

Do we need to think about these?

- Do I have a rebid?
- Trump quality?
- Stoppers in all suits?
- A worthless doubleton?

Opening 1NT shows 15-17 HCP in a balanced hand. It is a wonderfully descriptive bid.



Q

&A

Example 1

What should we open with

- Qx, KJxxx, AJx, KJx

Opener can best describe the hand with 1NT

- Avoids a potential rebid problem
- Some preemptive value
- Makes opener the likely declarer, meaning the lead is up to your tenaces
- Makes the defense more difficult

Example 2

Would you open 1S or 1N with this 16 HCP hand?

- AKJxx, xxxx, Ax, KJ
- Could open 1S, rebid 2H

What if we switch the major suit holdings?

- xxxx, AKJxx, Ax, KJ
- We could open 1H and reverse over 1N - but responder has denied four spades by responding 1NT

Example 3 – A 2/1 Auction

Consider this hand when playing 2/1:

- QJx, AKTxx, AJx, Jx
- If you open 1H, how will you later show partner that you have this strength of hand?
- After 1H - 2D, what is your rebid? 3D?
- 2H?
- 2N? (shows 12-14 or 18-19 HCP)

Better Bidders Benefit

Open 1NT with 15-17 and a balanced shape



Show your hand in
one fell swoop!

Bigger Hands

Consider a hand with 17 HCP and a 5-card Major:

- Axx, AKTxx, Qx, KJx
 - Too good for 1NT
 - 1H - (P) - 1S - (P);
 - 2N* * 18-19
- Also works with a 2/1 auction:
 - 1H - (P) - 1N* - (P); * forcing
 - 2N** ** 18-19

Example 4

- QJ, KJTxx, AQx, KTx
- What would you open with this 16 HCP hand?
 - What would my rebid be?
 - What is the true value of my hand?
- Avoid nasty rebid problems where you can!

Example 5

- QT, AQTxx, KJx, KTx

Recommendation: Open 1NT.

- Risk:
 - Might miss a 5-3 or even 5-4 major fit.
- Benefit:
 - Solves rebid problem
 - Tells partner shape and strength in one call.

Example 6

- AKJx, Ax, Jxx, AKT
- Far too good to open 1NT
- When adding knowledge to your toolset, don't forget old knowledge: Open 2NT (20 - 21)

Example 7

- xx, AKQJT, AJT, xxx

Reasons to open 1NT:

- Best description of opener's hand
- Avoids a potential rebid problem
- Some preemptive value from 1NT opening
- Concealing the 5-card major may be an advantage in the play

Reasons to not open 1NT:

- Two worthless suits

After you open 1NT

Bidding tools by responder come into play after an opening 1NT

- Stayman
- Jacoby Transfers
- Minor-suit transfers
- Puppet Stayman (used to find 4- or 5-card majors in opener's hand)

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Advanced Considerations

This is mentioned for Advanced players

Another consideration: Are you playing IMPs (teams) or MP (pairs)?

- At IMPs (teams), the difference between 3NT and 4H/S is minor
- At Matchpoints (pairs) the difference between 400 and 420 (or 420 and 430) can be a disaster
- At Matchpoints, NT is better only if you take at least as many tricks as the major makes