

# **Weak, Invitational, Forcing General Principles to Make Bridge Easier**

Presented by Thomas Rush  
for ACBL District 16  
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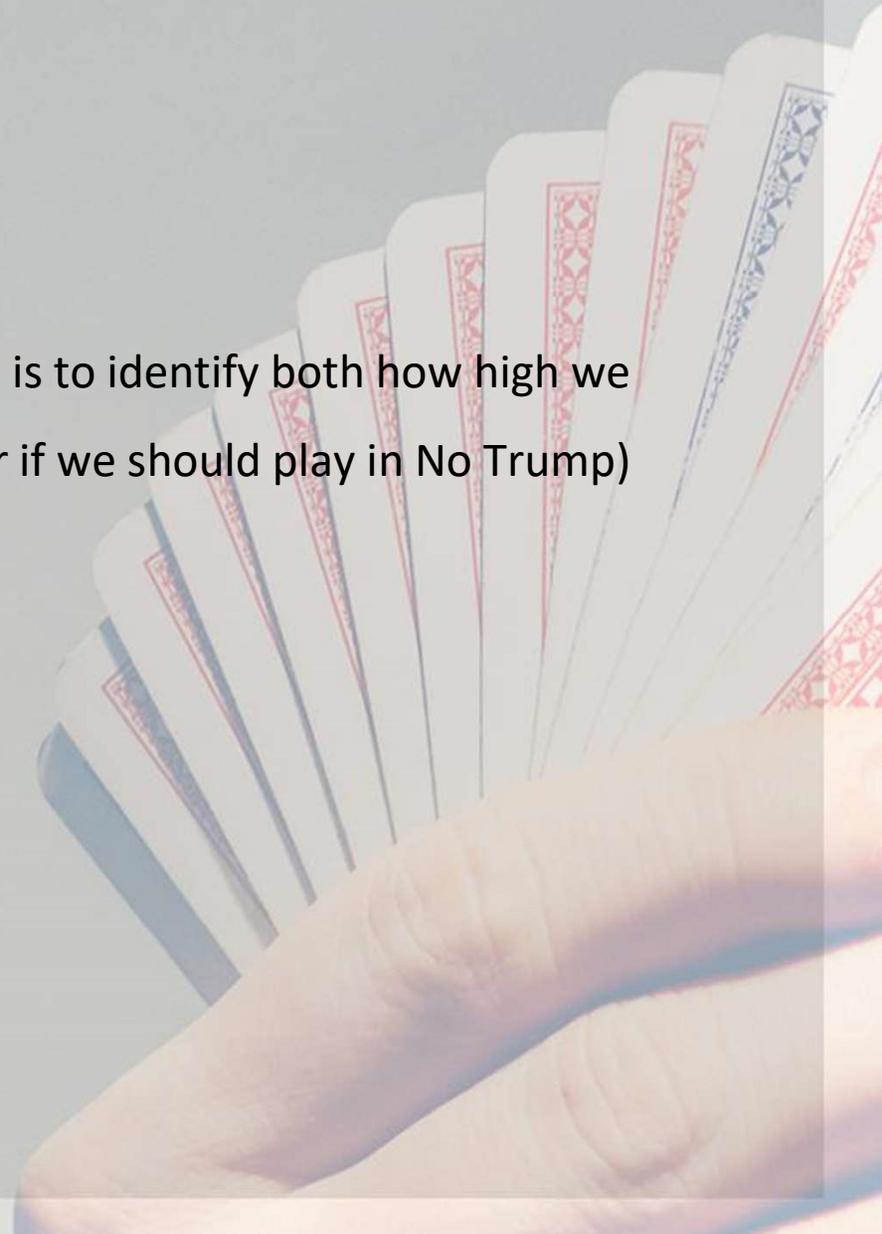
# Agenda

- **The most basic of basics**
- **Warning: Standard American vs. 2/1 (and Precision!)**
- **Classifying hands**
  - **“One bid” hands**
  - **Invitational hands**
  - **Game Forcing hands**
- **Summary**
- **Q&A**



# The Most Basic of Basics

- Why are we here?
- What is the purpose of the auction?
  - The purpose of the auction in Contract Bridge is to identify both how high we should be, and which suit should be trump (or if we should play in No Trump)



# Be Aware

- We play different systems
- I must account for that in this presentation
- This presentation will cover the most common Standard American and 2/1 ranges. If you play something different (Precision, 12-14 NT, etc.), you'll have to work out the details, but the principles are still just as important



# Classifying Hands I -- As Responder

Since one of our two primary goals is to establish “how high?”, it is useful for you to form an estimate of your minimum “safe” level as soon as you hear your partner’s first call

As Responder these are the common ‘buckets’:

- Game Forcing (“opening hand vs opening hand”, 10+ opposite 1NT, a couple of kings opposite a 2♣ opening)
- Invitational -- game is likely with a great fit or if P has extras: (11 HCP opposite an opening, 9 vs. 15-17 NT opener, 10 to 12 support points with a major-suit fit)
- “One Bid” hands are 6-9 HCP (or 6-9 support points with a known fit)
- “Other” (so bad you hope the opponents don’t have a slam! 0-5 HCP)

# Classifying Hands II -- As Opener (suit)

While “how high?” is often pretty clear for responder after hearing the opening bid, it can be much more difficult for opener after hearing responder’s first bid. Which of these auctions give clarity on strain? Level?

Your Hand

♠	K973
♥	AJT
♦	KQ87
♣	42

Auction 1 1♦ - (P) - 1♥ - (P); ??

Auction 2 1♦ - (P) - 1♠ - (P); ??

Auction 3 1♦ - (P) - 1NT - (P); ??

Auction 4 1♦ - (P) - 2♣ - (P); ??

Auction 5 1♦ - (P) - 2♦ - (P); ??

Auction 6 1♦ - (P) - 2NT - (P); ??

Clarity on strain: 2, 3, 6

Clarity on level: 3, 5 (if 2♦ is 6-9), 6

Opener’s rebid will clarify “how high?” for responder on 2, 3, 5, 6 – how?

Why not on 1 and 4? (Ans: Opener’s rebid on 1 and 4 will not limit his hand)

# Classifying Hands III -- As Opener (1NT)

When you open 1NT, you help clarify the situation for your partner.

Who is captain? What are responder's responsibilities?

Which of these auctions give you clarity on strain? Level?

Your Hand

♠	KQT3
♥	AT2
♦	KQ87
♣	Q2

Auction 1	1NT - (P) - 2 ♣ - (P);	??	
Auction 2	1NT - (P) - 2 ♥ * - (P);	??	(*spades)
Auction 3	1NT - (P) - 2 ♠ * - (P);	??	(*clubs)
Auction 4	1NT - (P) - 2NT - (P);	??	(invite)
Auction 5	1NT - (P) - 3NT - (P);	??	
Auction 6	1NT - (P) - 4 ♥ * - (P);	??	(*spades)

Clarity on strain: 2, 4, 5, 6

Clarity on level: 4, 5

# Classifying Hands: Min, Med, Max

This chart sets the basic framework of “how high”

- Min opener, min responder: First playable spot
- Min opener, med responder: Game invite
- Min opener, max responder: Get to game
- Med opener, med responder: Get to game
- Med opener, max responder: Game assured; slam possible?
- Max opener, max responder: Game assured, slam likely

	OPENER		RESPONDER
<b>MAXIMUM</b>	18+ HCP	<b>STRONG</b>	13+ HCP
<b>MEDIUM</b>	15-18 HCP	<b>INVITATIONAL</b>	10-12 HCP
<b>MINIMUM</b>	12-15 HCP	<b>WEAK</b>	6-10 HCP

This chart courtesy of Jeanne Phelps  
houstonschoolofbridge@gmail.com

NOTE: With a fit, we start to consider distribution points, not just HCP!

NOTE: Slam may be possible with less than 33 HCP with “magic fits”

# Context is Everything

- Responder's hand can be weak, invitational, or game forcing *depending on what partner opens and how the auction develops:*

Opener 1

♠ AJT  
♥ K973  
♦ KQ87  
♣ 42

Auction 1:

1♦ - 1♠  
1N - ??

Opener 2

♠ KQ73  
♥ AT5  
♦ KQ87  
♣ Q2

Auction 2:

1NT - ??

Opener 3

♠ AK93  
♥ AJT  
♦ KQ87  
♣ A4

Auction 3:

2N - ??

Responder

♠ K984  
♥ J8  
♦ J653  
♣ KJ6



# Completing Your Objective: Which Strain?

Remember your goal: establish “Which strain, and how high?”

Strain Priority is:

1. Either major (8 (or more) card fit)
2. If no major fit, explore for NT
3. If NT is unlikely to make, “settle for” a minor-suit contract

**If you know you have a major-suit fit, *show it*** (within your system constraints)

- a. If you have an invitational or game-forcing hand but only three in partner’s major, you may need to make a temporizing bid (2C or 2D in std, 1NT in 2/1)

b. A real hand:

Opener

♠ AKT843

♥ 7

♦ Q65

♣ KQ7

Responder

♠ Q76

♥ 92

♦ AK84

♣ A832

Auction

1 ♠ -- ??

With only 3 trump,  
cannot use Jacoby 2NT

# Completing Your Objective: How High? I

Remember your goal: “Which strain, how high?”

- How High Priority is:
  - Limit your hand early in the auction if possible, OR, set a game force if indicated!
  - Two unlimited hands can't stop bidding!
- Examples of limiting your hand:
  - Non-jump rebid by opener after a one-over-one response (1 ♦ - 1 ♠ ; 2 ♦ )
  - Fit-showing bids often limit your hand
    - 1 ♠ -- 3 ♣ (Bergen)                      - 1 ♠ -- 3 ♠ (limit or preemptive)
  - Opener jumps
    - Jump shift: Game Forcing                      - Jump rebid: 16-18, 6-cards(+), **not forcing** after 1/1
  - First bid or rebid in NT
    - 1NT                      - 1H - 1N (Standard 6-9; 2/1 6-12)                      - 1C - 1H; 2NT
  - 2 ♣ opener 1) rebids in NT, or, 2) rebids his suit

Note: I like 4<sup>th</sup> suit and New Minor as GF because it clarifies many auctions  
Discuss with your partner!

# Completing Your Objective: How High? II

These points are the most important of the presentation:

- If one person has limited their hand, their *partner* is captain
- If the captain knows the limit of the hands (“How High”) they **MUST**
  - Set the contract, or
  - Make an invitation (to game or slam), or
  - Make forcing bids to gain further knowledge
    - Cuebid to identify controls for slam
    - Establish a trump suit
    - Make a help-suit game try
    - etc.
- If you are captain and partner has limited her hand, *she may pass any non-forcing bid!*



# Summary

To be an effective bidder, you must:

- Strive to set the strain as soon as possible
- Either limit your hand as soon as possible\*, or, listen for the auctions where partner has limited their hand

To do those things, get in the habit of evaluating your hand (min/mid/max) with what you know about partner's hand (min/mid/max) to set a game force, invite to game, or bow out as soon as a playable contract is found

- On hands where slam is possible, **set trump** and **establish a game force** as early in the auction as possible

Q & A



# Thomas Rush

Available for individual and group lessons

“The most fun you can have at the bridge table”

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