

# Four Bridge Windows & Steps

BY KEN MONZINGO

## Windows of Strength

1. *How strong is my hand? How strong does partner show?* Think of your bridge hands in four windows: decide what each rebid or new bid should show – from either partner. Count in 4-3-2-1 high card points *and* distribution values to decide your window.

1. Is mine a **Minimum** window? For Opener, 12-14, and for Responder, 6-9.

*With a minimum hand 12-14, opener's second bid, if any, can only be:*

- A. Simple rebid of his suit at cheapest level (shows six or more)
- B. With four cards in partner's response suit, raise to lowest level
- C. Bid new suit at the 1-level, or lower ranking suit at 2-level.
- D. Bid 1NT, showing balanced hand and 12-14

2. Is mine a **Good** window? For the Opener, 16-18, and for the Responder, 10-12.

*With 15-17 open 1NT, or a good hand of 16-18 other options are:*

- A. Reverse in a new suit: 1♣ - P - 1♠ - 2♦, this is forcing.
- B. Bid new suit at same level: 1♣ - P - 1♥ - P, 1♠
- C. Bid new suit at two level: 1♦ - P - 1♠ - P, 2♣
- D. Jump raise in partner's 6-card suit: 1♣ - P - 1♥ - P, - 3♣
- E. Jump raise in responder's suit: 1♣ - P - 1♥ - P, 3♥
- F. Jump to 2NT, showing more than 17: 1♣ - P - 1♥ - P, 2NT

3. Is mine a **Strong** window? For Opener, 19-21, and for the Responder, 13-16.

*With a strong window 19+ hand opener's second bid, if any, must:*

- A. Reach a game in major suit with fit of 8 or more
- B. Reach a game in three notrump with 26 or more.
- C. Jump shift in a new suit is forcing and usually unbalanced hand.

4. Is mine an **Animal** hand? For Opener 22+, for the Responder 17+.

*With an animal window any small offering by partner should produce game*

- A. Open 2♣, and respond to 2♦ waiting with your suit oriented hand.
- B. Assuming partner responds 2♦ waiting, rebid 2NT with 22-24
- C. Assuming partner responds 2♦ waiting, rebid 3NT with 25-27

Find a final contract at the level of your *combined* total points, not too high, or too low.

- a. If both *your* window and *partner's* window are minimum, play for a part score.
- b. If *your* window and *partner's* window *might* total 26, invite a good game.
- c. If *your* window plus *partner's* window equals 26+, bid the best game.
- d. If the two windows equal 33, try for a small slam. With 37 try for Grand Slam.

3. Opening Bidder is often the “describer.” The Responder is often the captain - *trust him!*

- a. Ask yourself if the bid (*his or yours*) is forcing, if so bid!
- b. Ask yourself if the bid (*his or yours*) is invitational, if so, think about it.
- c. Ask yourself if the bid (*his or yours*) is to play (closeout), if so, pass with min!

## Four Steps to Successful Auctions

*The Simplest Bidding is a **Four Step** Communication*

- 1. **The Opening Bid**, which could be Minimum, Good, Strong or Animal.
- 2. **The Response** to Opening Bids, could be Minimum, Good, Strong or Animal.
- 3. **The Description** by the Opener as to his length of suits *and* window of strength.
- 4. **The Placement**, adding the two hands together and finding a suitable contract

So, *Responder* often makes the final decision, however – **“He who knows, goes!”**

## Partnership Harmony

1. *Avoid Disasters*. Play only conventions you and your partner are comfortable with.
2. Try to look at the bidding through your partner's eyes - *your only friend at the table!*
3. Do not bid the same values twice, either in suit length or hand strength.
4. Partners love to have their suit raised, especially if you have four or more.
5. Partners usually love to have their opening leads returned.

## The Golden Rules

1. Search for the "Golden" 8-card *major suit* fit – 4-4 or 5-3 (the 4-4 often superior)
2. Bid a "Golden Game" with eight of a major suit or 3NT with a combined 26 HCP.
3.  Bidding is more fun than passing. If in doubt, bid again, but watch vulnerability.
4. *Trust Partner* - a novel approach!  
Remember Those Windows of Strength: *Minimum - Good - Strong - Animal*  
& Those Four Bidding Steps: *Opening - Response - Description - Placement*

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FORT WORTH

## Thoughts on Competing

1. Find reasons to open the bidding, not for reasons to pass.
  - a. Any decent 12-point hand, especially with a 5-card major, is an opener.
  - b. Stretch a little to open distributional hands, they require *immediate* attention.
  - c. If you can't *open* in a your long suit (6-7-8 cards long), maybe *preempt* in it.
  - d. Length is equally as important as strength: *open & respond in your longest suit.*
2. Bridge is a *bidder's* game – be competitive, but watch the vulnerability!
  - a. Use Overcalls, Takeout Doubles and Preempts to obstruct the opponents.
  - b. There are no set rules for 8-9 card suits ... if you get one, *bid it!*
  - c. When the opponents open 1NT, try to compete with long suits and values.
  - d. After making your competitive bids, let your partner make the decisions.

## Some Advanced Thoughts

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### ♥ My Few Choice Tips

- Bypass a 4 or 5-card minor to *respond* in a 4-card major, you may not get another chance to find your "golden" fit in 4-4 majors.
- Make competitive bids (overcalls, doubles) early, don't be a "Late Bloomer"
- Rarely double the opponents *before* raising partner (*you often get another chance*)
- As declarer, do most of your thinking *before* playing the first card from dummy
- There are only two kinds of hands:  
*Balanced hands (4-4-3-2, 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2) (occasionally 2-2-4-5)*  
*Unbalanced (5-4-3-1, 5-5-2-1, 6-4-2-1, 6-3-3-1, 6-4-3-0, 5-4-4-0, 7-3-2-1,*

etc)

- The most common hand patterns are 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, 5-4-3-1, 4-3-3-3, & 5-4-2-2
- When discarding, *hold your winners* ☺ and *throw your losers* ☹

### ♠ Deductions & Observations

- Declarer has the advantage because he sees all *his* cards (his hand plus dummy).
- Defenders, at a disadvantage, see only half of their cards and half of declarer's.
- When partner opens 1♦, he always has 4+ except with ♠xxxx ♥xxxx ♦xxx ♣xx
- When partner opens 1♣/1♦, don't raise in that suit with less than five-card support.
- When opener jumps in *your* suit or *his* (invitational) he is often unbalanced.
- An *overcaller* has shortness somewhere, often a singleton or void - *use caution*.
- A defender, looking at KJxxx in the dummy, *rarely* underleads the queen, but *often* underleads the ace - but an *Opening Leader* rarely underleads the ace, often the queen.

### ♦ Give It A Try

1. You may overcall light hands (8-10 points) *with good suits* at the 1-level
2. Overcall only *good hands with good suits* at the two or three-level
3. If the opponents preempt in front of you, bid immediately only with *very good* hands
4. When an opponent opens 1NT, don't pass automatically, try to compete
5. Have the *correct* distribution when making a Takeout Double, or a *very big* hand
6. If possible, don't let the opponents play low-level contracts (2♥) - learn to "balance"
7. The three key words to good bridge: 1. *Partnership* 2. *Counting* 3. *See 1 & 2*

### ♠ Post Graduation

Attend expert lectures, take lessons, read bridge books, daily news bridge columns, and online teaching. There's a wealth of knowledge there. Whatever you do, keep studying the game, you'll never learn it all – *it gets better and better!*