

## OPENING THE BIDDING WITH 1 NT

### FOR BEGINNING PLAYERS

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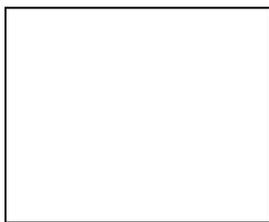
#### Materials needed:

One deck of cards sorted into suits at each table. Every student grabs a suit.

Four students at each table.

Directional guide card at each table (Table mat NS / EW)

Optional: White board with markers (While I use this very little, I find it convenient to have this handy in case I want to draw a diagram on the board)



This is the commonest diagram that I will put on the white board. I find that, if I can reinforce my words with a diagram, then the students “get it” more readily.

#### Assume:

Students have played a little. i.e. this is not their very first bridge lesson and they have already learned the concept of following suit, tricks and trumps. They have also played a hand in a trump suit contract prior to this lesson.

Students already know some hand evaluation techniques:

A = 4

K = 3

Q = 2

J = 1

#### Lesson:

Good morning, everyone. Today, we are going to be learning something new!  
Have a look at the white board.



I have drawn a square on the board. This is a card table.

**1H**

This person is the dealer and has opened with 1Heart.

What do we know about what he has in his hand from this bid of 1 Heart?

Students reply...

What you want to hear is

*At least five Hearts and 13 or more points*

So, we know that he has **at least** 13 points, but he could have 15, he could have 18 or he could 20. Do you agree?

So you see, this is called an UNLIMITED BID. I prefer to call it an "AT LEAST BID". At least 13. We know the bottom, but we don't know the top.

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So now, I would like you to grab your suit from your deck of cards on each table and give some cards to the WEST player as I call them out.

Spades: K52  
Hearts: AQ85  
Diamonds: KJ6  
Clubs K92

Now, on this hand, there is nothing that is really screaming out to be called a trump suit. This hand is very balanced or flat. It is divided into four suits as evenly as it possibly could be.

4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hands are always called Balanced hands

So are

4 – 4 – 3 – 2 hands

Take away the Club 2 from West and give West the Diamond 3.

Spades K52  
Hearts: AQ85  
Diamonds: KJ63  
Clubs K9

This is also balanced.

And, while they may surprise you, this hand is also called a balanced hand:

Take away the Diamond 3 from west and give west the Heart 3. This hand is 5 – 3 – 3 - 2

Spades K52  
Hearts: AQ853  
Diamonds: KJ6  
Clubs K9

What these hands all have in common is that they all have 15, 16 or 17 HCP and they do not have a singleton or a void and when they do have a doubleton, there is only one doubleton. That is what makes these hands balanced.

So, when you are the dealer and you pick up a hand with 15-17 HCP and it is balanced, there is a way to tell partner immediately what you have.

[Do not count distribution points when bidding No Trumps.]

You open the bidding with 1 No Trump.

And now partner knows EXACTLY how many high card points you have and that you have a very balanced hand. This is called a LIMITED bid. I prefer to call it an EXACT bid.

So, when you open 1 No Trump, it is like putting a big sign on your forehead advertising immediately that you have 15-17 HCP and a balanced hand...you have made a very precise description of your hand. It sort of says: "Partner, just this once, let there not be any trump suit." AND, you have told your story.

Unlike when you open with 1 C, 1D, 1H or 1S where you could have 13 or 15 or 17 or 20 and you could have a void or a singleton.

So now you see the difference between an **AT LEAST BID** and an **EXACT BID**.

Let's return to that last example for a moment as you may be wondering about it.

Spades        K52  
Hearts:        AQ853  
Diamonds:    KJ6  
Clubs         K9

You may be asking yourself: "Why did we not open with 1H on this hand?"

Well, in bridge, it is all about your rebid. If you open with any other bid, other than 1NT, then partner knows that **you do not have 15-17 HCP and a balanced hand** and later, when it is your turn to bid again, no matter what you say next, you will never be able to describe your hand properly...or, as one of my students once put it: *"You mean once I've done wrong, I can't fix it."*

If you start off with

1H and your partner now responds 1S

What bid will you now make to tell partner what you have?

2H    will promise a minimum hand 13-15  
1NT   will show 12-14 (cannot be 15-17 HCP as you did not open 1NT)  
2S    will promise a minimum hand 13-15  
2N    will promise 18-19 HCP balanced  
3S    will promise 16-18 HCP but guarantees 4 card Spade support.

It is too early in your bridge careers for you to know the meaning of all these rebids but suffice to say that there is no way to show your 15-17 HCP and your balanced hand if you do not start off with 1NT.

So, when we open with 1 NT, you have told your story. It is now up to your partner to take charge and decide how high to go.

**Teach students that they get a prize (extra bonus points) for bidding**

**3NT (this is called game)**

or

**6NT (called a Small Slam)**

or

**7NT (called a Grand Slam)**

To make the contract of

3NT We need 25 HCP in the combined hands of you and partner

6NT We need 33 HCP in the combined hands of you and partner

7NT We need 37 HCP in the combined hands of you and partner

So bidding NT is much easier because responder to 1NT knows EXACTLY what opener has and can quickly decide how high to go.

**Give these cards to East now.**

Responder has

AJ5  
K4  
QJ52  
9754

Add that to partner's 15 HCP = 26 HCP. What should East now bid?

3NT

Change East's Clubs 5 and 4 for the Clubs Ace and King.

AJ5  
K4  
QJ52  
AK97

Now you have 18 HCP. Add that to opener's 15-17 HCP and what do you get? 33 HCP!  
That is the **SOUND OF SLAM!!!**

Bid 6 NT immediately. You don't even need to worry about it because you see, add up all the HCP in the whole deck...

A = 4  
K = 3  
Q = 2  
J = 1

This is the Royal family. It totals up to 10 HCP and there are 4 Royal families in the deck.

So, now we see that there are 40 HCP in the deck.

If your side has 33 HCP, subtract from 40, you are missing only 7 HCP. Can you be missing two aces?

No, because two Aces would tally up to 8 HCP. So you just bid it! (Remember, you don't have to play it, so YOU can relax...partner is on the hook!!!)

So, now take away the Diamond 2 and give East the Diamond Ace

AJ5  
K4  
AQJ5  
AK97

15 + 22 HCP = 37 HCP. East just bids 7NT right away. Can your side be missing an Ace? No, because subtract 37 HCP from 40 HCP = 3 points missing...ONLY missing 3 HCP. An Ace is worth 4 and you cannot be missing an Ace.

Piece of cake, just bid 7NT right away.

***I would have drawn the card table on the board for these exercises also:***

***1NT***



***3NT with 10 or more***

***6NT with 18 HCP***

***7NT with 22 HCP***

***Make sure that you make the class interactive all the way, asking questions and having the students lay out the cards on the table. They learn so well that way.***

***Stayman and Transfers are for a later lesson.***

***I would recommend that you give students some hands to play at this point, teaching them how to count winners in No Trump.***