

**OPENING NOTRUMP
INSTRUCTOR NOTES
PATTY TUCKER
bridgewithpatty.com
patty@bridgewithpatty.com**

PLACE a deck of cards at each table. **ASK** the students to sort the cards into suits.

REMINDE the students of the hand they played earlier in the course when there was no trump suit. When high card in the suit played won the trick.

DISCUSS how they won tricks. **ASK** What cards did your partnership win tricks with? If not mentioned by them **ASK** did you win tricks with small cards in a suit?

EXPLAIN that two factors influence whether or not they should open Notrump. Distribution and Strength.

DISTRIBUTION. ASK what do you think Distribution means in the context of bridge? If needed **DEFINE** distribution. As the students to **DEFINE** the distribution vocabulary void, singleton and doubleton. **HELP** define the vocabulary as needed. **EXPLAIN** how bridge players write distribution.

ASK the students to take the cards on the table and as a group, see how many different distributions they can discover that have no singletons, no voids, only one doubleton and no six-card or longer suits. Allow 5 to 10 minutes. **ASK** the room to tell you their answers. If the class size allows, let the students come write a distribution on the board. **LEAD** them to other distributions if they did not find them at their table.

STRENGTH. ASK the students why strength is important. If necessary **REMINDE** them that Aces and Kings usually win tricks, sometimes Queens and Jacks as well. **EXPLAIN** that 10's, 9's and 8's can also help them win tricks, by helping to force out higher cards so that small cards might win tricks.

TELL them the requirements to open 1NT. **ASK** them to take their deck of cards and create a 1NT opening bid on their table.

Opening the Bidding in Notrump

Two factors influence your decision in choosing to open notrump.

Distribution and Strength

Distribution is a key word used in describing notrump hands. Distribution is a description of the number of cards a hand holds in each of the four suits. The thirteen cards are written as four numbers which, when totaled, equal thirteen. An example would be: 4-3-3-3, meaning four cards in any one suit and three cards each of the other three suits. Specific words are used to describe holding some numbers of cards in a suit.

- A Void is zero cards in a suit (i.e. you are 'missing' one of the suits).
- A Singleton is only one card in a suit.
- A Doubleton is only two cards in a suit.

The three distributions that are considered balanced hands are:

- 4-4-3-2,
- 4-3-3-3, and
- 5-3-3-2.

Strength is the word used to describe how many of the forty high card points (HCP) in the deck are held in the hand. Unlike an opening a suit bid which usually promises 12 HCP, a stronger hand is needed to open notrump. This is due to the fact that, in notrump, only the highest card in the suit led can win the trick.

Opening the bidding one notrump (1N) shows:

- A balanced hand (no singletons or voids),
- No five-card or longer major and
- 15-17 HCP.

Typically it will also be a hand that holds:

- No more than one doubleton and
- No six-card (or longer) suit.