



Bidding with No HCPs! (Bungee jumping for bridge players!)



Let's say you pick up a hand that looks like this:

- ♠ 7 6 4 2
- ♥ 9 8 4 3 2
- ♦ 7
- ♣ K 8 4

Do you start looking out the window? Thinking about tomorrow's dinner plans? Making a mental list of what you need to pack for your trip to the summer bridge nationals?

Even with very bad hands, you should always look for opportunities to bid. Here are some examples of when to bid with no points with the above hand:

Incredible!

1. When Partner Opens 1NT.

You could use a Jacoby transfer to hearts (2♦). After partner completes the transfer, you would pass and leave him there! If you don't play transfers you can just bid 2♥, which tells the 1NT opener to pass.



2. When Partner opens your long suit.

If partner opens 1♥, I will give him a "weak freak" raise to 4♥. It promises less than 7 points, five-card trump support, and a singleton or void somewhere in the hand.

3. When Partner opens a strong artificial 2♣ bid.

Here's a possible auction with you as the responder. You just love his hearts! In addition, you have a singleton and a side King. I would consider inviting to slam with this hand!

Pard	You
2♣	2♦
2♥	3♥ ...

4. Opening in third seat (not vulnerable).

What if the bidding goes: Pass — Pass — to you? This is a perfect time to bid with no points. The opponents have either game or slam and will get to it very easily if you just pass. Considering preempting a weak 2♥ if you're not vulnerable.

Filling in at the club recently, I had a chance to play with one of my students. The hand —

Me		Partner
♠ 10 5	Auction:	♠ 7 6 2
♥ A J 6		♥ 8 4 3 2
♦ A J 8 4 3	1♦ — 1NT	♦ 10 7
♣ A 9 2	All Pass	♣ K 8 5 4

Needless to say we did not make our contract. I told him, "John, you need to be conservative when you don't have a fit for me. Also, you have unexciting distribution, which is another negative. Two negatives = pass."

Three hands later we were dealt this —

Me		Partner
♠ A 6	Auction:	♠ 3
♥ A K Q 9 7 2		♥ 10 6 5 4
♦ K J 4	1♥ — 2♥	♦ 5 3 2
♣ Q 8	4♥ All Pass	♣ K 10 7 3 2

Ahhh ... much better. Not only does John have four trump for me but a singleton to go with those three points. We made four hearts, losing only two diamonds and a club.

The power of an excellent trump fit cannot be underestimated! In both hands John only had three HCP, yet the difference in the quality of the hands in general was momentous. Look for excuses to bid, just make sure that they're good excuses.

Be conservative when you're weak and there is no fit.

Drop out of the bidding and hope the opponents drop in.

Be aggressive when you have a nice trump fit and shortness, too!

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The key is to fantasize about possible bids you can make with your hand *before* partner bids. This way (1) your decision making is in tempo; and (2) you'll have more time to come up with some creative possibilities. Let's try some —

1. ♠ 9 8 4 3 2
♥ 7 2
♦ 7
♣ 9 7 5 4 3
- If this were your hand, what would you like to hear your partner open?
- A. What if he opened 1♠? With a huge fit, bid as high as you dare. Not vulnerable, I would certainly consider jumping to 4♠ right away.
 - B. What if he opened 1♣? I'd start out with a Pass but definitely compete with a preempt if the opponents come in. Again, bid as high as you dare.
 - C. What if he opened 1♦? I think I'd just start looking out the window.

2. ♠ 6 4 3 2
♥ 9 8 7 2
♦ 9 7 5 4
♣ 8
- If this were your hand, what could your partner bid that would make you want to bid?
- A. I'd like it if he opened 1NT (or even 2NT). Then I could use Stayman and pass any of his possible responses —



<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
1NT	2♣
2♦	Pass

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
1NT	2♣
2♥	Pass

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
1NT	2♣
2♠	Pass

Same thing would apply if he opened 2NT! This is called "Fake Stayman."

- B. And if Partner opened a strong and artificial 2♣ bid I would be able to bid twice with this hand! WoooooHooooo!!

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
2♣	2♦ (1)
2NT	3♣* (2)
3(any)	Pass

(1) Waiting.
(2) Fake Stayman. A pass would've been the 2nd negative here.

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
2♣	2♦ (1)
2♥	3♣ (2)
3♥(3)	4♥ (4)

(1) Waiting.
(2) 2nd negative.
(3) Non-forcing.
(4) Here's your stinkin' game and I'm not interested in anything higher. Hope you make it!

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
2♣	2♦ (1)
3♣	3♦ (2) . . .

(1) Waiting.
(2) 2nd negative (cheaper minor). Says "I'm completely broke — be careful!"

3. ♠ 9 8 4 3 2
♥ 7 2
♦ 7
♣ 9 7 5 4 3
- What if you were responding to a takeout double with this hand?
- Takeout doubles are meant to be "taken out," so you must bid something. Bid 1♠ and say it like you mean it. Timid bids attract penalty doubles. Not vulnerable, you might even compete to 2♠ if the opponents push you.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	Double	Pass	??