

### Opening Bid Judgment in 1st Seat

**Board 1**

North Deals

None Vul

♠ J	♠ K 9 7 5 2	♠ Q 10 3			
♥ K 7 5 2	♥ Q 6	♥ J 10 9 3			
♦ 10 5 2	♦ K Q 9 6 4	♦ A 7 3			
♣ A Q 7 5 4	♣ 10	♣ K 8 6			
<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W      E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>			N	W      E	S
N					
W      E					
S					
♠ A 8 6 4	♠ A 8 6 4	♠ A 8 6 4			
♥ A 8 4	♥ A 8 4	♥ A 8 4			
♦ J 8	♦ J 8	♦ J 8			
♣ J 9 3 2	♣ J 9 3 2	♣ J 9 3 2			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠?
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. If North doesn't open the hand using the Rule of 20, the hand may be passed out, and N/S will miss a profitable part score. Shapely hands need upgrades! Shape is more important than points!
  
2. You need to talk about limit raises -- a jump in partner's suit, showing 10 or 11 points and support. A limit raise in a Major either promises 3 or 4 pieces in the Major, according to partnership agreement. (If we're playing a style where 3 ♠ promises 4 pieces, North should consider bidding a game. North has six losers, and limit raises usually cover three losers. Sometimes single raises cover three losers, which is why we invite with six losers over a single raise.)
  
3. Opening lead will be the ♥ J (top of a sequence). When Dummy hits the table, Declarer in a suit contract must start to make a plan by counting the losers: 1 ♥ loser, 1 ♦ loser, 1 ♣ loser, and the trump losers depend on how the suit splits. Missing 4 pieces like this, the most likely division of the missing ♠s is 3-1. If that's the case, you'll lose 1 ♠. If they split 4-0, you'll lose 2.
  
4. If we get lucky enough to have the ♦ suit break 3/3, we'll have 3 good ♦s to use to toss away losers.
  
5. The only loser we can get rid of from our hand is the ♣T, if we can convince the defense to let us. DO NOT win the ♥ A at trick 1! First of all, East could be leading from KJT, eliminating the heart loser right away. Secondly, if West has the ♥ K, the defense still has to get its ♣ trick before letting declarer in or they won't get it. West knows that North has the ♥ Q, because partner led the ♥ J, denying the ♥ Q. Suppose they return a ♦. Whichever card declarer plays, when East wins the ♦ A, and they have to now shift to a club, or they won't get it.


**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

	♠ J 6		
	♥ Q 9 6		
	♦ A 9 4 2		
	♣ K 7 4 3		
♠ 10 2	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	♠ A K 7 3	
♥ J 7 4		♥ A K 5 2	
♦ Q 8 6 5 3		♦ K 7	
♣ J 9 2		♣ Q 10 5	
	♠ Q 9 8 5 4		
	♥ 10 8 3		
	♦ J 10		
	♣ A 8 6		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	
Pass	Pass		Pass

Just because 1 ♣ seems like a horrible contract, it doesn't mean it's not your best one. Point, open a convenient minor! (Avoiding doing this with a doubleton club suit.)

**Board 3**

South Deals  
E-W Vul

<p>♠ A 9 6 3 ♥ K 9 4 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ A 9 7</p>		<p>♠ Q J 4 ♥ 10 8 5 3 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ 6 5 3</p>	<p>♠ 10 5 2 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ J 3 ♣ K 10 8 4</p>
	<p>♠ K 8 7 ♥ A Q ♦ K Q 10 9 5 ♣ Q J 2</p>		

West	North	East	South
			1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

1. Yes, South has 17 HCP, and yes the distribution is a balanced 5-3-3-2. So yes, technically you could open this 1 NT. Consider how great that ♦ suit is, and upgrade the hand to 18. What happens when you open 1 ♦ and rebid 2 NT? You get to 3 NT and make the game bonus!

2. Count your winners in NT. We start with (we hope) 5 ♦s. We have 1 ♥ for sure. We also have 2 ♠ stoppers. We probably have a ♣ trick coming. We could also take the ♥ finesse. What's the best chance?

3. West will lead the ♠ 3, and we should play an honor from the dummy. Why? If we intend to take 1 ♣ trick to make our total of nine, we need to lead ♣s twice from the dummy. We want to start that as soon as possible, before the defenders (East in particular) have had time to figure things out. We're also hoping to find out whether or not the ♠s are splitting 4-3 or 5-2. How does that work? When we play an honor from dummy, East will likely give West count, because East's attitude is known (if they liked that suit, they would have covered dummy's honor). In this case, East will play the 2, and South will "know" that the ♠s are splitting 4-3.

Why is that important? If spades are 5-2, then E/W will eventually get 3 ♠ tricks to go with the ♣ AK. We wouldn't have time to set up a ♣ trick, and must rely on the ♥ finesse. But if the ♠s are 4-3, then we still have our choice working on ♣s or taking the ♥ finesse.

4. So, we play the ♠ honor, we get the good news that ♠s are 4-3, and we play a ♣. So long as East ducks, we will be safe. If East can see all of the cards, they will jump up with the ♣ K and play back a ♥, but even Ted will have trouble finding that play. West will likely win and continue ♠s, but if they duck, we will continue ♠s ourselves. We will eventually make 2 ♠ tricks, 1 ♥, 5 ♦s and 1 ♣. If we try the ♥ finesse instead, the defense makes 2 ♠s, 1 ♥ and 2 ♣s, taking 5 tricks before we can get our 9. Finding either the Ace or King of ♣s with East is a 75% chance, and finding just the ♥ K with East is a 50% chance. 75% is better than 50%!

**Board 4**

West Deals  
Both Vul

	♠ Q 5 2		
	♥ K 10 8 2		
	♦ 7 6 4 3		
	♣ K J		
♠ K 7		♠ A 8 3	
♥ A J 9 5 4		♥ Q 3	
♦ A Q 9		♦ K 10 5	
♣ Q 8 5		♣ 9 7 6 3 2	
	♠ J 10 9 6 4		
	♥ 7 6		
	♦ J 8 2		
	♣ A 10 4		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. Opening this hand 1 NT instead of 1 ♥ saves the awkward rebid and immediately finds the right contract. Having masterfully found the right contract, now we have to play it well.

2. North, not having been clued in about the ♥s, leads the ♥ 2. Counting winners in a NT contract, West sees 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s for sure, and 3 ♦s. We need to find two additional tricks in either ♣s or ♥s.

3. We often advise playing the honor when dummy has a doubleton, but here it would be a mistake: in addition to the ♥ J, we also have the ♥ 9. We will play low from dummy, winning cheaply in our hand, and immediately play another ♥ back to the now bare ♥ Q. When North goes up with the ♥ K, we have set up our two extra tricks in ♥s, as our ♥ AJx are all now winners in addition to the ♥ 9 that we won on the first round.

4. If we had played the ♥ Q from the dummy on the first round, we would be in trouble, because now we can only set up one additional ♥ trick and would have to rely on ♣s. But while we were trying to set up our ♣s, the defenders could set up their ♠s. They will win that race!