

Responder's Bidding – Initial Hand Assessment

Partner has opened the bidding. What should you respond and rebid to get to the best part score, game or slam? Your initial hand assessment can help you get to the best contract:

Responsive Bid Requirements – Typically 6 or more High Card Points (HCP), sometimes 5 good HCP (AJ, KQ, not QQJ) or 5 HCP with support or shape in the majors for partner. A response, even with a bare 6 points, will help you:

- Find the best trump suit
- Find the right level (if partner has a very strong hand, you may be able to make a game).
- Make it more difficult for the opponents to bid.

Strength Assessment for Suits

0-4 HCP – Bust hand, pass

5-9 HCP – Minimum: you are looking to stop in part score unless partner shows extra values.

10-12 HCP – Intermediate: looking to make an invite to game once the best strain (suit or NT) is found.

13-16 HCP – Strong: You need to push for game.

17+ HCP – Very Strong: Often, you will want to investigate slam once the best strain is found (suit or NT)

Supporting Partner's Major Opening - If partner opens 1♥ and you have 3+ card support:

- Bid 2♥ with 6-9 support points (HCP and distributional points)
- Bid 3♥ with 10-12 support points
- Bid a new suit and then jump to 4♥ with 12-16 support points. Do not bid 4♥ directly. We save the 4♥ direct bid for preemptive heart raises (5+ card support and minimal points).

Responding to Partner's Major without Support

- Show the other major: If partner opens 1♥ and you have 4+ spades and 6+ HCP bid 1♠.
- Bid NT: A notrump bid tells partner that you don't have support for their suit and that you have no 4+-card major you can bid at the 1-level. Notrump bids also show points – 6-9 (1NT), 10-12 (2NT, invitational), 13-16 (3NT)
- Bid a new suit at a higher level. If you make a non-jump bid of a new suit at the two-level (1♠ by partner, 2♣ by you), you promise at least 10 HCP and at typically 5 cards in your suit (always if your suit is hearts). This option is suggested when your suit is hearts (1♠-2♥). When you have a minor suit look to bid NT instead unless you have an unbalanced hand.

When Partner Opens a Minor

- If you have two or more 4+ card suits you can show at the one-level, always bid the longer suit.
- If you have two or three 4-card suits — bid the cheaper major. If partner opens 1♣ and you hold 4 hearts and 4 spades, bid 1♥. If you hold 4 diamonds and one or two 4-card majors, skip the diamonds to bid the cheaper major.
- If you have two 5-card suits — bid the higher-ranking suit. With 5 hearts and 5 spades, bid 1♠ first, then 2♥ at your next turn.
- Raise partner's minor suit. If you do not a 4-card major to show and your hand is not suitable for NT you can raise partners opening minor bid with 5+ cards. In rare cases you can raise a 1♦ opener with 4 cards.

Responders Bidding – Initial Hand Assessment Worksheet

What would you respond with these hands?

Partners Opening Bid	Your Hand (Responder)	HCP?	Strength? (Min, Int, Strong)	Your Bid
1♠	1. ♠Q87, ♥A432, ♦J982, ♣96			
1♣	2. ♠Q87, ♥A432, ♦J982, ♣96			
1♠	3. ♠Q87, ♥A432, ♦A1082, ♣J6			
1♠	4. ♠K9, ♥94, ♦AJ1053, ♣9752			
1♦	5. ♠K9, ♥84, ♦AKJ53, ♣9752			
1♦	6. ♠AK87, ♥J1043, ♦982, ♣107			
1♣	7. ♠K8743, ♥AQ1043, ♦98, ♣7			
1♣	8. ♠A87, ♥K43, ♦A2, ♣A97			