

1957-1958 BIDDING CHANGES

As a player's skill increases, he becomes capable of using more and more delicate bidding tools. The general standard of play in the United States has improved so remarkably in the past five years that most bridge players are now ready for some refinements in their bidding methods.

AUTOBRIDGE has recognized this for some years and has used such delicate weapons as the Stayman Convention in Advanced Deals for a long time. AUTOBRIDGE therefore applauds the recent decision of leading bridge authorities to introduce minor changes into the bidding system generally played in this country.

As other changes take place in the methods of the leading players, from year to year, AUTOBRIDGE will keep pace and will introduce the best new wrinkles for the entertainment and instruction of its fans. After this sort of pioneering by the best players and by AUTOBRIDGE, the authorities of the future will once more announce progress so that the general public can enjoy what the top players and AUTOBRIDGE fans have been using.

Ten changes have been made in the methods now in general use. In general, the requirements have been ever so slightly raised for such bids as the opening bid of one in a suit and the raise of partner's suit. The change amounts to only 1 point, but even that is worth knowing about.

There is no change in the way you count points: Each ace is still 4 points, each king is 3, each queen is 2, and each jack is 1 point. You still need 26 points for game, 33 points for a small slam, and 37 points for a grand slam.

Some interesting new conventions have been approved. One of these is the Stayman Convention, used for finding a major-suit fit after an opening bid in notrump. Another is the Jump Overcall, used now as a shutout bid rather than as a way to show great strength. Still another is the "unusual notrump," used to induce partner to bid a minor suit.

For the next year or two, it must be expected that some players will use the old methods instead of changing over to the new. For this reason we advise our fans to be cautious in employing the new conventions. Be sure that your partner knows what your bid means. If you're not sure, look for a *simple* bid instead of using one of these new artificial bids.

With this word of warning, we now present the recent changes in bidding methods:

1. Sketchy opening bids are out. No more opening bids with 12-point hands. You open the bidding with 13 points if you have a comfortable rebid. Otherwise, you need 14 points for an opening bid. (You count high cards and distribution as well.)

2. Biddable suits are stronger. You need 4 points in your major suit for an opening bid in a four-card suit. For example, your suit should be A-x-x or K-J-x-x or better. Do not open a suit such as K-x-x-x. The only exception is Q-J-10-x, which is comfortably solid even though headed by only 3 points.

It is still all right to bid weaker *minor* suits. Any *fewer* card suit is biddable.

3. No more skimpy raises for partner's suit. You need at least 7 points (up to 10 points) for a raise of partner's suit. With only 6 points, respond one notrump.

For example, suppose partner opens with 1 ♠. The next player passes, and you hold:

♠ x x x x ♥ x x
 ♦ Q J x x ♣ K x x

Bid two spades. You have 6 points in high cards and 1 point for the doubleton. With a total of 7 points you can afford the raise. *But*

♠ x x x x ♥ x x
 ♦ Q x x x ♣ K x x

Bid 1 NT. You have only 6 points in all (5 in high cards, and 1 for the doubleton). This is not quite enough for a raise. You can just afford to keep the bidding open with a bid of 1 NT.

4. A response of 1 NT may show as much as 10 points.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 ♠ Pass 1 NT

North may have from 6 to 10 points. (Maximum used to be 9 points).

5. You need less for game after partner has raised. Remember that partner's raise in your suit now guarantees at least 7 points. You can jump to game in a major if you have 19 points. (Minimum used to be 20.) The total will be at least 26 points, and there will usually be a sound play for game.

6. You may rebid 2 NT with 15 to 18 points.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 ♠ Pass 2 ♦
 2 NT Pass

South's bid of 2 NT may be made on 15 points. (Minimum used to be 16.) Partner will not bid at the level of two unless he has 11 points, since he can bid 1 NT with 10 points on a doubtful hand.

7. The Jump Overall is now a shutout bid; does not show great strength.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 ♦ 2 ♥

West's jump to two hearts (a jump overall) shows enough playing tricks for safety, but 9 high-card points at most. For example, a jump to 2 ♥ would be made with

♠ x x ♥ K J 10 x x x
 ♦ x ♣ Q J x x

8. The Stayman Convention is now used in response to 1 NT.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 NT Pass 2 ♣

This response does not show a club suit, but asks the opener to show a major suit if he has one. If the opener has both majors, he bids spades and may bid hearts later if it seems wise to

do so. If the opener has no major suit, he bids 2 ♦.

Responder may have such a hand as:

♠ Q J x x ♥ A x x x
 ♦ x x x ♣ K x

He wants to get to four of a major if the opener has a four-card major suit. Otherwise, the responder will settle for 3 NT.

9. A jump to 4 ♣ over partner's bid in notrump is the Gerber Slam Convention.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 NT Pass 4 ♣

This bid asks the opener to show how many aces he holds:

Number of Aces Response
 none or all four 4
 one 4
 two 4
 three 4 NT

After this response, a further bid of 5 ♣ asks for kings. Responses follow the same scheme, except that they are at the level of five (5 ♦, 5 ♠, etc.).

This serves the same general purpose as the Blackwood Convention (4 NT to ask for aces). Blackwood is still used when the partnership has not bid notrump. Gerber is used when the partnership has bid notrump. Confusion with an ordinary raise in notrump is thus avoided.

10. The "unusual" notrump overall asks partner to bid a minor suit.

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠

or

1 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ 3 NT
 East's bid of notrump is a sort of takeout double, asking West to respond in clubs or diamonds — *not* the unbid major suit.

East should have excellent support for both minor suits (usually at least 5 cards in each) and enough strength to avoid a disastrous penalty even if partner has a worthless hand.