

Balanced Hands

Opening 1NT – 12-14 Balanced

You must always check if you have a 1NT opener, before you open 1 of a suit.

Open 1NT on all balanced 12-14 HCP hands no matter where your honours are placed.

A balanced hand contains:

- no void or singleton
- one doubleton at most
- no 5-card major
- may have a 5-card minor

Examples of balanced hands are:

- 4333
- 4432
- 3325 the 5-card suit **must** be a **MINOR** suit

1NT is a **limit bid**. Its shape and strength are known – a limit bid is **not** forcing. This means that the responder is usually in charge and Opener may not bid again.

Responses to 1NT Opening

Balanced hands

| | | |
|------|-------|------------------|
| Pass | 0-10 | no Game possible |
| 2NT | 11-12 | invite to 3NT |
| 3NT | 13+ | bid Game |

Unbalanced hands

| | | |
|-------------|------|--|
| 2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠ | 0-10 | 5+ card suit – called a weakness take-out * |
| 2NT | 11 | invite to 3NT |
| 3♥/3♠ | 12+ | game forcing with 5-card suit |
| 3NT | 12+ | game values with 5+ minor and no 5 card major |
| 4♥/4♠ | 12+ | game values with 6+ suit |
| 5♣/5♦ | 16+ | game values with 6+ good suit |

* Responder does not have interest in game or any wish to play in notrumps. Opener **must pass**, even with support.

Stronger Balanced Hands

If you have a balanced hand with more than 14 **hcp**, what should you bid?

It is a 2-step process:

- Open your lower 4-card suit (or) your 5 card minor suit in a 3325 hand
- Rebid NT – the level shows the **HCPs**

| | | |
|-----------|---------|-------|
| After | 1♥ – 1♠ | |
| | 1NT | 15-17 |
| or | | |
| | 2NT | 18-19 |

| | | |
|-----------|---------|-------|
| After | 1♥ – 2♣ | |
| | 2NT | 15-17 |
| or | | |
| | 3NT | 18-19 |

Responder is still in charge as you have described your hand's shape and strength accurately. Responder should apply the same principles as above but adjust for the new point counts shown by opener.

PLAY & DEFENCE TIP

Play of the hand: Playing a Long suit

Declarer Play – Finding those tricks

Count how many sure tricks you have and work out how many more you need.
 Try and work out how to establish the extra tricks needed.
 Establishing your longest and/or strongest suit is the most common approach.

Establish your longest/strongest suit

Contract 1NT by EAST – lead ♦Q by SOUTH

| WEST | EAST |
|--------|---------|
| ♠ AJ53 | ♠ 97 |
| ♥ Q43 | ♥ J65 |
| ♦ 943 | ♦ AK8 |
| ♣ K76 | ♣ A9843 |

Win ♦A and then play on your longest/strongest suit (clubs)
 You will need to lose a club to establish the suit and generate 4 winners

Establish a side suit

Contract 4♥ by EAST – lead ♠K by SOUTH

| WEST | EAST |
|---------|----------|
| ♠ 832 | ♠ A96 |
| ♥ A3 | ♥ KQJ642 |
| ♦ A65 | ♦ J4 |
| ♣ KJ843 | ♣ Q2 |

Win ♠A, draw trumps and then play on your longest/strongest suit (clubs)
 Playing the club suit allows you to discard a diamond loser

Play the honour from the short hand first

Does it matter how you play the honours as you establish a suit – answer is **yes**
 In the example below – you **must** play ♣Q first, then cross over to the ♣K

Contract 3NT by EAST – lead ♠K by SOUTH

| WEST | EAST |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ 832 | ♠ A76 |
| ♥ 93 | ♥ AK72 |
| ♦ 865 | ♦ A1097 |
| ♣ AKJ43 | ♣ Q2 |

If you play ♣A or ♣K first, then cross back to the ♣Q, you will be cut off from dummy and will not be able to enjoy the club winners