

Opening 3 Bids

Any opening bid in 3 of a suit shows a seven card suit and a hand that is too weak to open at the one level.

The same point count considerations apply to an opening 3 bid as a weak 2 opening.

A subtle point about opening 3 level bids is that you should take greater risks with a minor suit than with a major. If you have a long minor suit, chances are the opponents will have at least one major suit. If you don't preempt, they will usually find their suit easily and know how high to bid their hands. Preempting will make their auction much more difficult, since they have to start at the 3 level rather than the 1 level.

The same consideration doesn't apply to preempts in major suits. With a borderline preempt in hearts or spades (especially spades), you should often pass and wait (especially in first or second seat). You can usually bid your long suit on the next round, generally at a safe level.

A simple guideline when thinking of over bidding with a preempt is; over bid by 2 tricks if vulnerable or by 3 tricks if not vulnerable.

Responding to a 3 level bid

If partner opens a Three-Bid, it's up to you to place the contract. With a weak hand and no fit, you pass. With a stronger hand, don't count just points -- what's important is the **number of tricks** you can take. Consider the vulnerability and try to visualize partner's hand, then count your potential tricks.

- **A bid of game in partner's suit or notrump** (3H-4H or 3D-3NT) shows a strong playing hand with a fit and quick tricks (aces and kings).
- **A new suit response** (3C-3S) shows a strong hand and a good, usually 6+-card suit. Partner won't have 4-card support (even 3-card support is unlikely), so don't suggest a new suit unless you have a very good one.
- **A simple raise below game** (3C-4C) shows a trump fit, but no interest in game. You may raise to put pressure on the opponents, to compete for the contract or to sacrifice. A raise does **not** invite partner to bid again.

The Overriding Principle: Be Direct

The most important principle in responding to a preempt is to decide straight away how high you want to compete then bid to that level **immediately**. Here's an example of a bad auction:

Auction 1

North	East	South	West
2♥	Double	3♥	3♠
Pass	Pass	4♥	??

Both West and East have had the opportunity to exchange some information about their hands, and will be more likely to do the right thing.

Contrast that with this auction:

Auction 2

North	East	South	West
2♥	Double	4♥	??

West and East now have more of a problem. They pretty much have to guess, and will be less likely to do the right thing.

It is very important if you are going to pass to do it in tempo, that is do not pause. If you have points but no fit with partner, and can't bid no trump, pass immediately then your left hand opponent will bid or double and frequently get themselves into trouble.

AT THE TABLE

You are not vulnerable. Partner opens 3S and the opponent on your right passes. What is your bid?

♠J87 ♥9 ♦AK72 ♣AJ1054

4S. Your spade support will help partner take at least 5 (or as many as 7) trump tricks, plus your three top tricks in the minor suits. It's also likely that he can score one or two more tricks by trumping hearts in your hand or setting up your clubs.

♠86 ♥KQJ5 ♦KJ65 ♣AJ3

Pass. This hand has more points than the previous example, but much less playing strength. You know partner has no outside aces or kings, so you may have at least three side-suit losers (or perhaps five!), as well as a possible spade loser or two.

♠J982 ♥4 ♦A10432 ♣876

4S. You have no real hopes of making this contract, but your excellent spade support and singleton heart guarantee that partner won't go down very many tricks. You know the opponents are short in spades and that they can surely make at least 4H or 5C (or even 3NT) if you let them bid it. Your 4S bid is an "advance" sacrifice -- it uses up

bidding space before the opponents can find their contract. And if partner holds a hand such as ♠AKxxxxx ♥xxx ♦xx ♣x , you'll even make your game.

You are vulnerable. Partner opens 3C and the opponent on your right passes. What is your bid?

♠AJ8 ♥A53 ♦Q1054 ♣A92

3NT. Partner is vulnerable, so he should have a good 7-card suit (you have the ace and jack, so he must have at least the ♣KQ). You can therefore count 9 tricks -- 7 clubs and 2 aces -- and you have a "stopper" in diamonds if the opponents lead that suit.

♠5 ♥A94 ♦AKQ1076 ♣A53

6C. You know the opponents have the ace of spades, but you can be almost sure that this is the only trick partner will lose. Count your possible tricks. Partner will take at least 6 or 7 club tricks (he should have the ♣KQ of clubs), 1 heart and 3 diamonds right off the top. He should be able to find 2 or 3 more tricks by trumping his spades in your hand or by running your diamonds.

Conclusion Responding to partner's preempt can be a challenge.

First, we must evaluate the quality of our cards. A large part of that is our fit for partner's suit. Remember to count tricks, not points.

Most of the time we will either pass or raise partners suit – do not bid 3NT with a singleton or void in partners suit unless you have 9 tricks in your hand (chances are you will not be able to access partners hand to run the long suit)

Generally ,the larger our fit, the easier our bidding will be. When we have a fit we know at least one safe place to play.