

♠ K Q J 9 7 6 5      Look at that hand with seven spades, every student in my class wanted to bid something.  
 ♥ 3      But what? Not 1♠; it doesn't have enough points. Not 2♠; not enough points or playing  
 ♦ 5 4 3      tricks. But it can be opened at the three level with a pre-emptive (or shutout) bid. Opener  
 ♣ 8 4      is hoping that opponents with strong hands will find it difficult to bid accurately when the  
                  auction starts at such a high level. Pre-empt rules are:

**The opening bid is usually a seven-card suit** – occasionally a strong six-card suit will do.

**The Rule of 500 is used to judge the strength needed.** 500 is the penalty we would expect to lose if we played 3♠ doubled. Vulnerable we hope not to go more than two down, or three down not vulnerable. The hand above should make six tricks – it's definitely is a 3♠ opener not vulnerable but a bit light for a vulnerable 3♠, though many players nowadays would open 3♠ at all vulnerabilities.

**A pre-empt will have the strength concentrated in the suit bid**, not in isolated honour cards in other suits.

♠ Q 10 9 7 6 5 2      This hand has eight HCP and might seem better than the first hand but those queen  
 ♥ Q 3      doubletons will be of little value when playing the hand though they could all take  
 ♦ Q 3      tricks in defence. Brenda wanted to open 3♠, the new toy, but she should have  
 ♣ Q 4      passed when she could only count four tricks in hand.

**Position at the table can affect the bid.** Third hand is best as partner has passed and cannot be shut out by your bid. Break the rules third in hand by being either a bit weaker or a bit stronger. Pre-empts as dealer are useful as they shut out both opponents but you do run the risk of finding partner with a strong hand.

**How to respond to a not vulnerable 3♠ pre-empt**

3NT	Either nine tricks in hand without the spades OR a spade fit and hoping nine tricks are easier than ten.
4♠	Either any hand good or bad with lots of spades or poor spade support but four extra tricks in high cards.
4♣/4♦	Natural and forcing, usually looking for a slam and agreeing spades
4♥	To play and telling partner to pass whatever his heart holding.
4NT	Blackwood. Knowing about long spades can help bid a slam.
Pass	Don't rescue partner with shortage in his suit.

**What should you bid when your partner opens 3♥, not vulnerable first in hand?**

♠ A K J 10 8 6      **Four Hearts** Michael chose 3♠ but there is no need to bid spades when you have such  
 ♥ Q 3 2      good heart support. Should opponents unwisely enter the auction with 5♣, as they did  
 ♦ A Q 3      at one table, you must remember to double.  
 ♣ 4

♠ K Q 10 9 6 5 4      **Pass.** No doubt partner hoped to shut out opponent's spades not yours. Robert bid 3♠  
 ♥ 3 2      which was forcing. His wife dutifully raised to 4♠ but the opposition had all four aces  
 ♦ Q 3      and a king to take. Luckily the values were split and nobody doubled.  
 ♣ 4 2

♠ A Q 2      **3NT.** Nearly everybody raised to 4♥ but all the finesses were wrong and 4♥ went  
 ♥ K 5 4      down. Doreen remembered what I had said and bid 3NT. On a diamond lead she made  
 ♦ K J 3      seven hearts, one spade and one diamond trick.  
 ♣ O 10 4 2

♠ A K Q      **Four Hearts.** More than one student tried to pull out the 3NT card with this excellent  
 ♥ 2      18 HCP hand. When I quietly asked which nine tricks they hoped to make when  
 ♦ A J 6 4 3      partner had nothing but ♥ K Q J 10 7 6 3, two of them realised that the right bid was  
 ♣ A J 4 2      4♥. When hearts are trumps, partner has an entry.

♠ A K J 10 9 6 5 4      **Four Spades.** Most students tried 3♠ but 4♠ is a much better bid. Over 3♠ the next  
 ♥ 3 2      hand bid 4♦ and opponents reached an unbeatable 5♦. With luck, partner may have a  
 ♦      couple of heart tricks to allow 4♠ to make and opponents will probably pass.  
 ♣ J 4 2