

Opener's rebids on stronger hands

One area where all my beginners had problems was the choice of rebid by opener to show stronger unbalanced hands. Everybody mastered the no trump ranges for opener's rebids but they found it harder to cope with unbalanced hands.

3♦
3♣
2NT
2♠
2♥
2♦
2♣
1NT
1♠
1♥
1♦

When you open the bidding, you must have a suitable rebid prepared. If partner makes a limit raise of your suit or bids no trumps, a pass is permissible. But if partner bids a new suit, you have to find a descriptive rebid. In fact it is usually this second bid that really paints a picture of your hand.

Imagine a ladder which starts with your opening bid. Suppose it is 1♦. There is a big barrier on the ladder over the bid one level higher than your opening. In this case the barrier is placed over 2♦, as you opened 1♦. You may not make a rebid over this barrier unless you have a good hand. The only exception is when you raise your partner's suit.

Armed with this information, let's try some hands where you open 1♦ and partner responds with 1♠. What should you rebid?

A	♠ K 7 6 ♥ A 4 ♦ A K J 5 ♣ Q 9 8 7	B	♠ K 7 ♥ Q 9 8 4 ♦ A K J 5 3 2 ♣ 4	C	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 4 ♦ A K J 5 3 2 ♣ A Q 9	D	♠ K 7 6 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ 9
E	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 9 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ A K 5 4	F	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 9 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ A J 5 4	G	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 9 8 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ Q 9 8	H	♠ K 7 6 5 ♥ 4 ♦ A K J 3 2 ♣ Q 9 8

- 2NT – to show a balanced 17 – 18 points. Always rebid no trumps with a balanced hand.
- 2♦ – to show a minimum opener with a long suit. You are not strong enough to bid your second suit as it would be over the barrier and you do not have enough points.
- 3♦ – jump rebid over the barrier with a good suit and good points.
- 2♥ – bid your second suit over the barrier with a good hand. This is called a reverse – not a very good name as it suggests some sort of setback, whereas really it's a good news bid. As it forces partner to give preference to your first bid suit at the three level, you need extra strength to make this bid. A reverse is not just used to show extra strength, it also shows that the first suit you bid is your longest suit – at least five cards and maybe even longer.
- 3♣ – a bid of 2♣ would show your second suit but does not get across the strength of the hand. When your second suit is below the barrier, you make a jump bid to show both length and strength.
- 2♣ – whilst this is a promising hand, it does not have enough points for a 3♣ rebid. If partner gives preference to 2♦, you can now bid 2♠ to show your shape and extra values.
- This is a trick question because you should have opened 1NT in the first place to show a balanced hand and 12 – 14 points. With a five card minor, it is right to open 1NT – it solves all your rebid problems. If by mistake you did open 1♦, you must now rebid 2♦ or 2♠.
- 2♠ – to show four cards support and a minimum opening. It is quite all right to bid over the barrier with support for partner.

Having understood the principles, try these four other examples to check you've really got it.

I	♠ K 7 6 ♥ A J 8 7 ♦ A K Q J ♣ 9 8	J	♠ 7 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ A K J 5 3 2 ♣ Q 9	K	♠ 7 ♥ A 10 ♦ A K Q J 5 3 2 ♣ Q J 10	L	♠ J 8 7 6 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ A K Q J 2 ♣ 9
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- I. Another trick question. You would open 1♥ with this hand. Although you have the values for a reverse, you do not have the right shape. Open 1♥, if partner bids 1♠ rebid 2NT. You hope that with five spades partner will not just raise to 3NT but explore suit contracts, letting you show your three card spade support.
- J 2♥ – even though partner’s bid has not improved your hand, it is still fully worth a reverse. Partner may be able to bid no trumps now, knowing you have heart stops and good diamonds.
- K 3NT – a very awkward hand which doesn’t fit our theme too well, but with eight tricks 3NT looks the best shot. 3♦ is a less adventurous alternative. It might have been better to open 2♦ but my students haven’t got to two bids yet!
- L 3♠ – limit raise with four card support. Nothing to do with barriers, far too good to bid only 2♠ and a bit thin for 4♠.