

Standard English article for English Bridge – Limit Bids on Balanced hands

Standard English was designed for beginners, so where else to turn when we want to see how well it works but the people it was designed for. Our beginners class at Aylesbury has just completed their first term. Here are the hands they bid at their last class, admittedly after a load of sausage rolls, mince pies and several bottles of wine!

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">West</th></tr> <tr><td>♠ A O 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ K Q 7</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ A Q J 10 5</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ 7 2</td></tr> </table>	West	♠ A O 3	♥ K Q 7	♦ A Q J 10 5	♣ 7 2	<p>HAND 1 Dealer West Love All</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;">East</th></tr> <tr><td>♠ K 5</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ 10 3 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ K 9 4</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ A J 9 6 3</td></tr> </table>	East	♠ K 5	♥ 10 3 2	♦ K 9 4	♣ A J 9 6 3
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At all the tables the bidding went the same

West	East
Janice	Jill
1♦	2♣
3NT	pass

Not a hard hand to bid, you say, but we had only just covered strong no trump rebids and it was pleasing to see everybody remember that they had to jump to 3NT to show 17-18 points. I've noticed some club players think that 2NT after a two-level reply shows 17-18, but they are wrong, it is 15-16.

The spade jack was led and I will tell you something odd about beginners – with a choice, they always win with the ace and they all want to continue playing the suit led by the defence! At tables one and two, it was a spade won by the ace, a spade to the king and it would have been a third spade to the queen but there were no spades left in dummy. However they did, in the end, manage three spades, five diamonds and the club ace. Table three with Janice at the helm did better. She won the spade king and played a heart. When the king held she went back to dummy with a diamond and tried another heart. Now eleven tricks were certain and a twelfth emerged when the defence threw all their clubs away. A top anywhere in England I'd guess.

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This hand produced three different auctions, all of which had merit.

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The duo of Margaret and Ann, a combined effort as flu had knocked out our fourth table, felt that a 2♥ rebid understated the hand after a two-level response, so they rebid 3♥ and after a bit of persuasion Lucy raised to four. 'Can I really support with only two cards' she whispered to me and reassured by the thumbs up, she bid game. Deidre, my most optimistic bidder, thought she was far too good for a simple 2♥ rebid and made the imaginative choice of 2NT, to show her 15-16 points. After checking the addition several times, Marion raised to 3NT. The contract made easily after a club lead, but I think 4♥ is the sounder contract.

At the third table, Barbara remembered a bid from three weeks ago, the limit bid of 2NT showing a balanced 11-12 points. Mike, knowing his partner had at least two hearts, was able to jump to game. Whilst all three auctions are possible in Standard English, my vote for the best bidding must go to Mike and Barbara. How many of you in these days of Baron or game forcing raises can bid so simply?

\*\*\*\*\*OMIT THIS HAND if you need a shorter ARTICLE\*\*\*\*\*

West	HAND 3	East
♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ A Q 4 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ K 6 3	Dealer West E/W Vul	♠ 4 ♥ 9 6 2 ♦ A J 10 ♣ A Q 9 8 7

West	East	West	East	West	East
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♣	1♠	2♣
2NT	3NT	3♣	pass	3NT	pass

You think they've got it and then a hand like this comes along. Only one table made the full-blooded 3NT bid. The timid 2NT succeeded when partner raised to 3NT but, why oh why, did the lady at table two think of a 3♣ rebid with 17 points. Sometimes it is all quite beyond me.

\*\*\*\*\*CUT TO HERE\*\*\*\*\*change number on next hand to 3

West	HAND 4	East
♠ J 7 5 3 2 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ K 2 ♣ Q 5 2	Dealer East Game All	♠ K O 9 4 ♥ A 6 ♦ A Q 9 8 5 ♣ K 3

West	East	West	East	West	East
Janice	Jill	Len	Audrey	Linda	Dee
	1♦		1♦		1♦
pass		1♠	3♠	1♠	4♠
		pass		pass	

Nothing would persuade Janice to respond on the West hand, so Jill had to play 1♦ and struggle to make seven tricks. When she had made 1♦, we had another go at the bidding and reached 4♠ on the second occasion via auction three. At table two, Audrey decided she was only worth a raise to 3♠, when her partner responded. Not wrong but perhaps over-cautious. However Dee had no such inhibitions and jumped straight to game. Linda took forever to count the trumps, which broke 3-1. By using all her fingers and three she borrowed, she got it right in the end and scrambled ten tricks.

What Standard English auction do I recommend? Well the jump to 4♠ gets my vote. We teach that with four card support and a strong balancedish hand you should raise to 3♠ with 15-17 and 4♠ with 18-19. Unless East has a 4144 or 1444 hand (in both cases 1♦ is the recommended opening) the spade raise will show at least five diamonds and at least four spades.

Summary of some limit bids in a little table or boxes?

If you open the bidding and partner bids a major for which you have four card support Raise to two with 12-14 Raise to three with 15-17 Raise to four with 18-20
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If partner opens the bidding with one of a suit 1NT shows 6-9 (not necessarily balanced) 2NT shows a balanced 10-12 3NT shows a balanced 13-15
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If you open one of a suit and partner responds at the one level 1NT rebid is 15-16 2NT rebid is 17-18 3NT rebid is 19-20 After a two-level response make the no trump rebid one level higher
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