

English Bridge – June 1998
Standard English by Sandra Landy
Responder's second bid

When an opening bid of one of a suit is made, the range of possible hands that opener can hold is enormous. It may be a miserable 10 count with a 6-card suit or a super-strong 19. My last article looked at how opener can show hand type and strength with the rebid.

Balanced hands rebid in no trumps.
 Weaker unbalanced hands raise partner or rebid below the barrier created by the opening bid.
 Strong unbalanced hands bid above the barrier by reversing or jump bidding.

By the time responder comes to make her second bid, she should have a pretty good idea about the suit to be played and whether this is a part score, game or slam hand. If responder knows the final contract then it should be bid directly, no messing around. The following hands came up in my students' mini-duplicate and practice sessions. Would you have found the best bid?

<p>A K 4 2 1♠ A Q 7 6 3 2♥ 2♠ K 8 7 6 ? 2</p>	<p>B Q 10 4 1♠ 4 2 2♦ 2♥ A K 10 5 3 ? A 9 8</p>
<p>C 9 8 7 6 5 1♥ 3 2 1♠ 2♦ Q J ? K Q 10 2</p>	<p>D K Q J 10 9 8 7 1♥ 2 1♠ 2♣ A 3 ? 9 8 6</p>

On the first hand Margaret knew her partner had at least five spades. So she knows they have an 8-card or better fit, at least 24 high card points and her singleton should be worth a couple of extra points. She bid 3♠. Margaret knew she should have bid game but thought partner would anyhow. Sadly partner didn't and game was missed.

Hand B is similar. You really must have the confidence that, although spades have not been rebid, partner has shown at least five spades. With four spades and four hearts partner would open 1♥ or 1NT depending on point count. You have 13 points and know your side should be in game. Bid 4♠ directly, no half hearted measures.

Hand C is one where you know you want to get out of the auction as fast as possible. Pass is the quickest way out, but giving partner preference to 2♥ is right. Partner must have at least five hearts and maybe four maybe five diamonds. Preference doesn't mean you like hearts just that it's the lesser evil. Two tables got this right, but I gave a black look at the student who chose 2♠, which certainly should be a better suit than five to the nine.

The universal choice on hand D was rightly to make a further bid in spades. One chose 2♠, another 3♠ but by far the best was Mike's full blooded 4♠. **You** know you have solid spades which cannot lose more than one trick even if partner is void. **You** know you want to be in game. **You** must be the one to bid 4♠.

Here are a couple of slightly harder examples.

<p>E J 1♠ A K Q 10 2 2♥ 3NT A 9 8 ? K Q J 10</p>	<p>F 3 2 1♣ 3 2 1♦ 1NT A K J 10 5 4 ? 9 8 5</p>
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On hand E you might have forced with 3♥ over 1♠ but this rather crowds the bidding on a two-suited hand and I prefer 2♥. Partner rebids 3NT showing 17–19 points. Now you could mess around for several rounds of bidding and finish up none the wiser. You know the combined count is at least 37. Bid 7NT and hope partner can cope with the play. My students have not yet learned proper slam bidding.

On hand F, the no trump rebid showed 15–16 points, so your side should have a combined 23–24 count. It is not the magic 25, but hands with long suits may not need as many points to make nine tricks. Audrey chose 3♦, Marion passed, Dee bid 2NT and Janice bid 3NT. Which bid do you think is best? Well my money is on 3NT. Partner had ♠ A K 4 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ Q 6 2 ♣ Q 7 6 3, so nine tricks were unstoppable.

Of course there are some hands where responder cannot place the final contract with the second bid. I'll look at those next time. Just remember though, most players make bidding too complicated. Standard English tries to keep things simple. In any case, bidding round the houses gives valuable information to the defence and usually confuses partner.