

# Competitive Bidding

By Ed Rawlinson

## Effective Strategies

1. Use bidding systems which emphasize preemptive tactics (Bergen raises, inverted minor raises, weak jump shifts, weak NT).
2. Preempt liberally (weak two's, higher level preempts, preemptive overcalls). Use discretion when vulnerable, particularly in IMP games. Second seat preempts following an opening pass should be sound.
3. Open light when the hand has "redeeming features": good suit quality, length in one or both majors, good distribution. Ex.: KQxxx/KQxxx/xx/x or 109xx/AQx/Axxxx/x
4. Don't open 12-point dogs in first or second seat: Kxx/Kxx/Kxxx/QJx
5. Make light third seat openings with a good major suit: xxx/AQJxx/x/J10xx
6. Make preemptive openings with good minor suit hands in third or fourth seat. If you open at the one level, the opponents have a better opportunity to find a major fit and determine their combined strength. Examples: Open 3♦ in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat with xx/xx/AKQxxx/Kx or open 3♣ in 4<sup>th</sup> seat with xxx/Ax/xx/AQJxxx.
7. Don't open a one bid in fourth seat unless it meets the Rule of 15 (hcp + spades).
8. "Weak twos" in fourth seat are not weak. An opening of 2♥ in fourth seat shows a solid opening bid (13-14 pts.) and a good six-card suit.
9. Don't preempt with a long, solid minor suit opposite an unpassed partner. With x/xx/AKQxxxx/xx, open 1♦ and keep rebidding diamonds. Opening 5♦ at favorable or equal vulnerability is OK.
10. Make light, "shape" takeout doubles opposite a passed partner.
11. Be more aggressive with highly distributional hands.
12. Be willing to overcall with a four-card suit to indicate a lead when there are no good bidding alternatives. Partner Opp. You Opp.  
P 1♣ ?  
Bid 1♥ with xx/AKQx/xxx/Kxxx. You can't double (because you can't handle a spade response by partner), and you may never get to bid if you don't do so immediately.
13. At matchpoints, try to find a way not to let the opponents play two of a major.
14. Become familiar with the Law of Total Tricks.
15. Use support doubles and responsive doubles
16. When you know the opponents have a game and that you are going to sacrifice, do so immediately. Opp. Partner Opp. You  
1♠ 3♦ 3♠ ?  
With x/J10xxx/Qxxxx/xx, bid 5♦. Don't give the opponents room to exchange information about their hands.
17. When partner opens a weak 2, raise to 3 with just about any non-game hand with 3-card support. A variation of this is to bid a lower-ranking suit for lead purposes when you have 3-card support. Partner Opp. You Opp.  
2♥ X ?  
Bid 3♣ with xx/xx/xxxxx/KQJ. Note: There's an excellent convention (Modified McCabe) which can be used in these auctions.

## Competitive Bidding Hands

The hands shown are for South.

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|--|--|--|--|
| 1. A9xx<br>x<br>KQxxxx<br>Ax                   | N E S W<br>P P 1♦ P<br>1♠ P ?  | 7. xxx<br>Jx<br>KQx<br>Axxxx   | N E S W<br>P P P<br>P 1♥ P 2♦*<br>P 2♥ ?<br>*Drury, 3 trumps |
| 2. K98xxx<br>QJxxx<br>----<br>xx<br><br>NS Vul | In this hand, you have four scenarios:<br>(a) what do you bid in first seat?<br>(b) what do you bid in third seat after 2 passes?<br>© N E S W<br>P 1♦<br>P 3♦* ?<br>*limit<br>(d) P 1♦<br>X 3♦* ?<br>*limit | In hands 8-11, you have two scenarios:<br>(a) N E S W<br>P P ?<br>(b) P 3♥ ? | 8. North South<br>Axx xxx<br>x Kxx<br>AKQxxx Jx<br>Axx Kxxxx |
| 3. 1098x<br>Kx<br>AJxxxx<br>x                  | N E S W<br>1♠ 2♣ ?   | 9. Axx<br>x<br>AKQxxx<br>Axx   | Kxxxx<br>xxx<br>xx<br>Kxx                                    |
| 4. 108xxx<br>---<br>A9xx<br>Jxxx               | N E S W<br>1♣ 1♥ 1♠ 2♥<br>2♠ 3♥ ?  | 10. xx<br>x<br>AKQxxx<br>Kxxx  | KQxx<br>xx<br>x<br>AJxxxx                                    |
| 5. Kx<br>10x<br>xxxx<br>QJ10xx                 | N E S W<br>1N P P 2♦*<br>P 2♥ ?<br>*Majors   | 11. Kx<br>x<br>AJ9xxx<br>Kxxx  | Qxx<br>xx<br>Kxx<br>Axxxx                                    |
| 6. AJ10xx<br>Ax<br>Q<br>AQ10xx                 | N E S W<br>1♦ X P<br>1♠ P ?  |  |  |

## Competitive Bidding Analysis

1. Bid 3♠. The quality points and distribution make this worth 16+. Partner, with 10xxxx/Kxxx/---/KQxx, will bid 4. If you bid 2♠, partner will assume a minimum hand with wasted values in diamonds and will pass.
2. (a) Don't open this hand 2♠ in first seat. You would hate to play it there with a dummy with spade shortness and length in hearts.  
(b) Open 1♠ in third seat.  
© Pass. You don't have the values to come in at the 3 level, vulnerable, uninvited.  
(d) Bid 4♠. You were invited to bid by partner. All you need are two major suit honors.

The North hand was Q10x/K9x/xxx/AKJ10. Cases C & D illustrate the value of doubling on this type hand. Purists would insist on shortness in diamonds. Purists miss out on many things, including this 19-point game.

3. Bid 3♣. This typically shows a limit raise in partner's suit, but could be any good hand. A reasonable alternative is 2♦ (forcing one round). You plan to bid 4♠ in any case, but it's better to show partner some values along the way. Bidding 4♠ immediately could be a weak distributional hand such as xxxxx/xx/Kxxxx/x.
- 4.

♠-AQxx	
♥-J10x	
♦-Kxx	
♣-Q9x	
♠-Jx	♠-K9
♥-AQxx	♥-K98xxx
♦-J10xx	♦-Qx
♣-xxx	♣-AK10
	♠-108xxx
	♥----
	♦-A9xx
	♣-Jxxx

Bid 4♠. Try visualizing partner's hand. He doesn't need much to make this a success (e.g., KQxx/xxx/xx/AQ10x). Also note EW could make 4♥ with this layout. Bidding 4♠ immediately makes it harder for EW to judge whether to pass, double, or bid 5♥. NS can make 4♠ (EW can't cash their diamond winner). EW will make 4♥ unless NS has their defensive radar working.

5.

♠-Axx	
♥-KQx	
♦-KQJxx	
♣-xx	
♠-Q108xx	♠-Jxx
♥-Axxx	♥-J9xx
♦-10x	♦-Ax
♣-Kx	♣-Axxx
	♠-Kx
	♥-10x

♦-xxxx ♣-QJ10xx
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Bid 2N. It's rare that NS would ever want to play 2NT after the opponents get in the bidding over an opening 1NT. So just agree that it will never to be

play. It can't be Lebensohl (for those who play that), since responder already showed the strength of his hand (less than 8 hcp) by his original pass. If North had a long minor with a weak hand, he could have shown that originally by the partnership methods and can show that in this auction by bidding his suit. Bidding 2N shows both minors. NS make 3♦. If North bids 3♣ instead of 2N, that will be set with repeated spade leads.

6. Bid 4♦. Partner may make 4♠ with (a) 4 small spades and a doubleton ♦ or (b) either black king. If you bid 3♠ rather than 4, partner will not accept the invitation with these hands. If you are going to commit to 4♠, why not show your singleton diamond along the way. Suppose partner has Kxxxx/Kx/xxxx/xx. If he make a "courtesy" cue bid of 4♥, you can bid 6♠ with confidence. The ♣K is sure to be onside.
7. Pass in an IMPS game. In matchpoints, bid 3♣ if NV. You might bid 3♣ vulnerable if you are not playing against sharks.
8. (a) Bid 3H, asking partner to bid 3N with a heart stop. Partner will bid 3N.  
(b) Double. Partner will bid 4♣. If you pass, 4♣ may make despite a spade lead. If you bid 4♦ over 4♣ (as you should), you can no longer get a plus (if they lead spades).
9. (a) Bid 3♥. Partner will bid 3♠, and you should get to 4♠.  
(b) Double. Partner will bid 3♠, you bid 4♦, and partner should bid 4♠ (assuming that you showed spade tolerance by doubling rather than bidding 4♦ immediately).
10. (a) Bid 3♦. Partner should either bid 3♥ (asking you to bid something else) or 4♣. Either way, you should get to 5♣.  
(b) Pass. Your hand is not good enough for a 4-level bid. If you bid 4♦, partner may be unwilling to risk a 5-level contract on the chance that you have a club fit.
- 11.(a) Bid 3♦. Partner may pass or raise (you have no reason to bid more). You make 3, 4, or 5, depending on your luck in the minors.  
(b) Pass. You don't have the strength to come in at the 4 level.