

Bidding Unbalanced hands with 12-20 points

Unbalanced hands are defined as having:

- One or more voids
- One or more singletons.
- Two or more doubletons

General Principles

- **Opener**
 - a. Open the longest suit
 - b. With **two 5-card suits**, open the higher ranking suit.
 - c. With **two 6-card suits**, open the higher ranking suit.
- **Responder needs 6+ points**
 - a. with 4-card suits bid them "up the line". It is important to show a **major** even if it is such as **8,6,5,2**.
 - b. with a 5-card or 6-card suit bid that first unless you have a 4-card major.
- **Unbalanced hands 12 - 15 points and "The Barrier"**

When you (opener) open an unbalanced hand you would choose to open your longest suit.

If partner responds by **changing the suit** you **MUST** respond.

You may repeat your suit if you have 5+ cards in the suit or you may introduce a new suit (which must have at least 4 cards in the suit).

However, **when you only have 12-15 points** your response is governed by "The Barrier"

What is "The Barrier"

When planning your **opener's rebid**, imagine a 'barrier' just above your first suit **at the next level up**. A new suit rebid **below the barrier** shows **12-15 points**.

Thus,

If you open 1♣ then "The Barrier" is 2♣ and **opener's rebid** cannot pass 2♣.

If you open 1♦ then "The Barrier" is 2♦ and **opener's rebid** cannot pass 2♦.

If you open 1♥ then "The Barrier" is 2♥ and **opener's rebid** cannot pass 2♥.

And likewise for a 1♠ opening bid. "The Barrier" is 2♠ and **opener's rebid** cannot pass 2♠.

In this way you can tell partner clearly that you hold 12 - 15 points.

For example, if this is your hand as opener:

Opener

♠ 6 2
♥ K Q J 3
♦ A K 7 6 4
♣ J 10

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>	
1♦	1♣	You open 1♦ as it is your longest suit. Partner responds by bidding 1♣
2♦	P	"The Barrier" for opener is 2♦ so he may not bid his Hearts at the two level. Thus, he must simply repeat his diamond suit and bid 2♦.

Further examples

1.

Opener

♠ 6 2
♥ K Q J 3
♦ J 10
♣ A K 7 6 4

Responder

♠ A K 7 8
♥ 9 8
♦ 9 8 3
♣ Q 8 3

Opener bids 1♣ setting "The Barrier" as 2♣. Responder bids 1♠. This means opener, with his 14 points, cannot bid his Hearts as this would break through "The Barrier". It means he must bid 2♣. The bidding ends there.

2.

Opener
♠ 6 2
♥ K Q J 3
♦ A K 7 6 4
♣ J 10

Responder
♠ K Q 8 5
♥ J 3
♦ Q 5 3
♣ 9 8 6 2

Opener bids 1♦ setting "The Barrier" as 2♦. Responder bids 1♠. This means opener, with his 14 points, cannot bid his Hearts as this would break through "The Barrier". It means he must bid 2♦ which ends the bidding

3.

Opener
♠ K Q 5 3
♥ 9 8
♦ A K 7 6 4
♣ J 10

Responder
♠ 8 7 6 2
♥ K Q J 3
♦ 5 3
♣ 9 7 5

Opener bids 1♦ setting "The Barrier" as 2♦. Responder bids 1♥. Opener, with his 13 points, bids 1♠. Responder knows Opener has 15 points at most so they have 21 points at most between them. **Not enough for game.** A Spade fit has been found so responder **passes**.

• Unbalanced hands 16 - 20 and "The Reverse"

As before, when you (opener) open an unbalanced hand you would choose to open your longest suit.

If partner responds by **changing the suit** you **MUST** respond.

You may repeat your suit if you have 5+ cards in the suit or you may introduce a new suit (which must have at least 4 cards in the suit).

However, when you have 16-20 points your response is governed by "The Barrier"

How is "The Barrier" used with hands of 16-20 points

In this case, with 16-20 points you should break through "The Barrier".

This will immediately show your partner that you have 16+ points.

When you break through "The Barrier" it is known as a "Reverse Bid"

For example,

Opener

1♦

2♥

Respond

1♠

Opener bids 1♦ which sets "The Barrier" as 2♦ .
Responder bids 1♠ .

Opener now bids 2♥ . This shows responder that he, opener, has more Diamonds than Hearts and more than 16 points since he has **broken through** "The Barrier"

Further examples:

1.

Opener

♠ K Q 5 3
♥ A 2
♦ K Q J 9 4
♣ Q 10

Responder

♠ 8 7 6 2
♥ K Q J 3
♦ 5 3
♣ A 7 5

Opener bids 1♦ which sets "The Barrier" as 2♦ .
Responder bids 1♥ .

Opener now bids 2♠ **not** 1♠ . This shows responder that he, opener, has more than 16 points since he has **broken through** "The Barrier".
With 4 Spades and 10 points responder knows they have enough points for game and bids directly to 4♠ .

2.

<u>Opener</u>
♠ K 8 5
♥ 9 8
♦ A K Q 7 6 4
♣ A Q

<u>Responder</u>
♠ Q J 6
♥ K Q 10 3
♦ 5 3
♣ K 9 5

Opener bids 1♦ which sets "The Barrier" as 2♦ .
Responder bids 1♥ .

Opener now bids 3♦ **not** 2♦ . This shows responder that he, opener, has **more than 16 points** since he has **broken through** "The Barrier". With 11 points and cover for Spades and Clubs responder knows they have enough points for game and bids 3NT.

3.

<u>Opener</u>
♠ A K Q 5 3
♥ A K 9 8
♦ Q 8
♣ 10 7

<u>Responder</u>
♠ J 8 7
♥ Q 7 3
♦ J 3 2
♣ K Q 9 5

Opener bids 1♠ which sets "The Barrier" as 2♠ .
Responder bids 1NT showing 6-9 points.

Opener now bids 3♥ **not** 2♥ . This shows responder that he, opener, has **more than 16 points** since he has **broken through** "The Barrier". Responder now knows opener has 5+ Spades so with 3 spades, help with opener's Hearts and 9 points, responder bids directly to 4♠ .

Summary for bidding Unbalanced Hands

- Open the bidding with your longest suit.
With two 5-card suits open the **higher ranking suit**.
With two 6-card suits open the **higher ranking suit**.
- With 12-15 points **do not break through "The Barrier"**
- With 16-20 points **you should break through "The Barrier" and "Reverse" the bidding.**