

Responding when partner opens one of a suit - January 22nd 2025

This document applies fully when you are playing standard Acol. If you are playing five card majors the same principles apply but you only need three cards to support the major suit bid by your partner.

With or without a fit - five points or fewer

Pass.

With a fit - four or more cards in partner's suit- six points or more

If the suit is a major raise to the 2-level with 6-9 points, the three level with 10-12 points and game with 13-18 points. With 19 points or more you should investigate a slam.

If the suit is a minor you can make the same raises but with 13-14 points raise to the 4-level and with 15-18 points bid game. You need more points for game in a minor. You must bid a major with 4+ cards rather than support a minor. Even if you do have a minor fit, it may score better if you bid a different suit and explore no-trumps - each trick (apart from the first one) is 30 points in no trumps and only 20 if you play in a minor.

If you are playing five card majors and partner opens 1♣, as this could be a short suit then bid 1NT with four clubs and 2♣ with five or more.

Without a fit - six to nine points

You can bid a different suit where you have 4+ cards but only if it is possible to do this at the one level. If partner has bid 1♥ you can bid 1♠ but not 2♣ or 2♦. If you can't bid a suit you bid 1NT showing 6-9 points, no other suit that can be bid at the one level and fewer than four cards in partner's suit. If there has been an overcall then 1NT also shows a stop in the suit bid by the opponents. (An overcall is a bid made by the opponents after the bidding has been opened - for example North bids 1♥ and East bids 1♠).

If you want to be competitive you can raise to the two level with three cards in partner's suit and 6-9 points if there has been an overcall. (Two cards if playing five card majors)

Without a fit - ten to twelve points

You can bid any different suit where you have 4+ cards at the one level and you should still do this if possible. You can bid 2♣ or 2♦ with four in the suit but if partner has bid 1♠ and you bid 2♥ you are guaranteeing 5+ hearts.

The other possible bid is 2NT. This shows a hand with a shortage in partners suit but which is otherwise balanced. It is an invitation to play in 3NT. Partner is given two main options - pass or 3NT depending on how many points they have. With 13+ points they will bid 3NT. The main problem is that you prevent partner from making their second bid which describes their hand more fully. I recommend bidding 2NT only if you have no other credible alternative. It also promises a stop in any suit bid by the opponents.

Without a fit - thirteen to eighteen points

With partner having an opening hand when you have one as well you know you should be in game. You don't need to rush. You can bid any different suit where you have 4+ cards at the one level and you should still do this if possible. You can bid 2♣ or 2♦ with four in the suit but if partner has bid 1♠ and you bid 2♥ you are guaranteeing 5+ hearts. Yes, this is the same as if you have 10-12 points - or even 6-9 if you are bidding at the one level. If you change suits partner must bid again and you will then learn more information about their hand. You can use this to decide which game contract will be best.

Without a fit - nineteen points or more

With this number of points you should be thinking about a slam. How to do this is beyond the scope of this document.