

OPENING BIDS AT THE ONE LEVEL (ACOL – 5-CARD MAJORS)

A hand which you should consider opening at the one level, usually contains 12–20 high-card points.

Adjustments should be made to the hand evaluation as follows:

- a) Points should be added for additional suit lengths – add 1 point for each additional card over five in any suit.
- b) An additional point can also be added for a second suit of five or more cards.
- c) Beware of ‘hanging jacks’ – i.e. jacks in a suit which doesn’t have any other honours. With too many of these in a particular hand you should down-value it (see exercise).
- d) Also as you become more experienced, consider opening ‘third in hand’ with a point less.

Some opening bids within this point range should be opened at a higher level, but these will be identified later.

We shall consider the one level opening bids in the context of a **five-card major system**, with a weak no-trump.

1NT

A ‘balanced’ hand in the **12–14 point** range. A balanced hand normally has a 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 distribution, but certain hands with a 5-3-3-2 distribution should also be considered if the five card suit is weak (i.e. you don’t really want to rebid the suit – particularly if it is a minor).

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ A97
♥ K942
♦ A86
♣ K87 | b) | ♠ A972
♥ K94
♦ A862
♣ Q8 | c) | ♠ Q7
♥ K87
♦ KJ3
♣ K9532 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- a) 3-4-3-3 shape, 14 points – ideal 1NT.
- b) 4-3-4-2 shape, 13 points – ideal 1NT.
- c) 12 points, not the ideal shape for 1NT, but with the poor five card club suit, best to open 1NT.

Suit Bids

The **guidelines** summarising these are (in order):

Always open the longest suit.

If opening a major, it must contain five or more cards.

With two five card suits, open the higher ranking one, except when clubs and spades, in which case open 1♣ (not universally agreed).

Without a five card major and two four-card minors, and outside the no-trump range, open 1♦.

Without a five card major and without a four card diamond suit, and outside the no-trump range, always open 1♣. Sometimes known as a ‘short’ club.

Exercises:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) ♠ KJ752
♥ 7
♦ AQ9632
♣ 4 | b) ♠ KQ753
♥ Q4
♦ AQJ84
♣ 7 | c) ♠ Q6432
♥ 6
♦ K7
♣ AKJ97 | d) ♠ AK75
♥ AJ9
♦ AJ63
♣ 97 | e) ♠ AK82
♥ AJ95
♦ Q8
♣ Q74 |
| f) ♠ KJ72
♥ 653
♦ AK8
♣ Q85 | g) ♠ 4
♥ A8632
♦ KQ752
♣ K6 | h) ♠ 4
♥ AJ743
♦ 8
♣ AK7432 | i) ♠ 98763
♥ AKQ76
♦ AK9
♣ - | j) ♠ KQ73
♥ 7
♦ A952
♣ KJ94 |
| k) ♠ KQ7
♥ AQ752
♦ AJ6
♣ K3 | l) ♠ AQ742
♥ J4
♦ 9
♣ K8532 | m) ♠ 7
♥ 73
♦ AK98763
♣ A86 | n) ♠ 8
♥ A7532
♦ K8743
♣ Q8 | o) ♠ J8742
♥ J7
♦ AKQ
♣ J63 |

- a) 1♦ - diamonds are the longest suit. Only 10 high-card points, but add points for suit(s) length.
- b) 1♠ - two equal length five card suits: spades are higher ranking.
- c) 1♣ - two equal length five card suits. Spades and clubs.
- d) 1♦ - no five card major, outside the no-trump range (17 points whereas 1NT is 12–14 points), but a four card diamond suit.
- e) 1♣ - no five card major, outside the no-trump range (16 points whereas 1NT is 12–14 points), no four-card diamond suit. If the hand had three diamonds and two clubs you would still open 1♣.
- f) 1NT - 4-3-3-3, 13 points.
- g) 1♥ - diamonds and hearts, but hearts higher ranking.
- h) 1♣ - even though you have five hearts, the six card club suit takes preference.
- i) 1♠ - five hearts and five spades. Even though the hearts are much better, you must open the higher ranking.
- j) 1♦ - not the shape for 1NT. Four diamonds and four clubs, open 1♦.
- k) 1♥ - 19 points, but still open at the one level.
- l) **PASS** - only 10 points, but add one for the extra length. Still out of the prescribed opening range so (for now) PASS. (However, many players would still open 1♣ particularly in third position.)
- m) 1♦ - 11 points, but add for the extra length..
- n) **PASS** - only 9 points, and even by adding for the extra length, not quite enough to open.
- o) **PASS** - 12 points but three ‘hanging jacks’. I would certainly devalue the hand by at least one point.

Note: given the above, playing five-card majors, the difficult hand to bid is a 4-4-4-1 hand (singleton club) and 12-14 points. If you systemically open 1♦, what do you rebid if partner responds 2♣. So with 12 or (poor)13 points it's probably best to pass this type of hand (note that the same problem doesn't arise if playing 4-card majors). With 14 points, I would open 1♦ preparing to rebid 2NT over responder's 2♣.