THE OPENING BID - EARLY STAGES

SHAPE

First look at the shape of the hand - length of suits.

Hands with at least 5-4 shape or a 6-card suit are unbalanced.

Hands without 5-4 shape, or a 6-card suit, or a singleton or void are balanced.

STRENGTH

Then add up the points.

Count 4 for an ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a queen, and 1 for a jack.

The total will give you an idea of the strength of the hand.

(There are 40 points altogether in the pack - any total over 10 means that your hand is better than average.)

Opening balanced hands

You should have at least 12 points to open the bidding on a balanced hand.

12 - 14 points	open 1NT
15 - 19 points	open one of a suit and rebid in no trumps
20 - 22 points	open 2NT

What does your bid mean?

The number says how many tricks you plan to make over six.

A bid in no trumps says that you plan to make that many tricks without a trump suit.

A bid of a suit says that you plan to make that many tricks with that suit as trumps.

Thus

1♥ means that you plan to make seven tricks with hearts as trumps;

2NT means that you plan to make 8 tricks without a trump suit.

Opening unbalanced hands

5-4 shape	11 points are enough to open on 5-4 shape. Open one of your 5-card suit, planning to rebid in your 4-card suit.
6-card suit	10 points are enough to open on a six-card suit. Open one of the suit, planning to rebid the suit.

When you open one of a suit partner will make a bid in response with 6 or more points (sometimes just 5) - you will then have the chance to bid again.

Always plan your next bid when opening one of a suit.