Improver 1 – Raising partner's opener – teacher's notes.

Context

Note that this is specific to partner's opening bid. It does not apply when partner's bid was an overcall.

Support or new suit?

When partner opens one of a minor responder's first priority with a hand strong enough to respond is to search for an 8-card major suit fit or a contract in no trumps. He will usually do this with a lowest level forcing change of suit, even if a minor suit fit has been located.

When partner opens one of a major then the priority with 4-card support is to show the degree of support for that major.

With 3-card support, a maximum of nine points, and no alternative other than 1NT it may on occasion be best to raise partner's major to the two-level (unless 4-3-3-3), but any legitimate change of suit is to be preferred and higher raises must promise 4-card support.

Revaluing the hand

If the choice is to raise partner's suit with 4-card support then it may be appropriate to revalue the hand. There are various rules of thumb for this. My preference is for 'The Losing Trick Count' which you may choose to introduce now.

Alternatively, a common scheme is to add 1 point for a doubleton, 3 points for a singleton and 5 points for a void. You might also choose to subtract a point for 4-3-3-3 shape.

You may also choose to apply such a re-evaluation at a later point in the auction, particularly if your choice is then to raise a minor suit.

Types of raise

In the first place the only raises available are to some number of the agreed suit.

Note that raises to the two- and three-levels are closely defined. A raise to the four-level may however be strong on 12+ points or weak with 5-card support (possibly with an eye on the vulnerability).

Note that an immediate 4NT would agree the suit but it is not to be encouraged – if you can count 12 or 13 tricks it may well be best just to bid the slam, and if you can't then 4NT is the wrong bid.

Other forms of raise which are far more informative will be introduced as part of this improver course.