4 – Responder's First Bid

Partner opened one of a major

First look to see if you have 4-card support.
If you do then you will raise partner's suit – how high will be the subject of another lesson.

The rest of this sheet assumes that you do not have 4-card for support for partner's major.

Partner opened one of a suit

(either you do not have 4-card support for his major, or he opened one of a minor).

Your first priority should be to bid in a new suit. Such a bid is forcing – partner must bid again – then you can decide whether you want to stop or bid on.

How strong must I be?

To bid a new suit at the 1-level you should have five or more points and at least a 4-card suit.

To bid a new suit at the 2-level you should have '**Rule of 14**'. That is – 10 points and a 4-card suit or 9 points and a 5-card suit.

There is no upper limit – your change of suit is forcing after which you will get a further chance.

So

With 0 to 4 points you will pass (sometimes you will pass with 5).

With 5 points you will bid a new suit at the 1-level if available – otherwise pass.

With 6 or more points you should find a bid.

What if I have a choice of bids?

Assuming that you have sufficient strength:-

with a clear longest suit you will bid it;
with 2 equal suits of 5 or more cards bid the higher-ranking;
and with two or three 4-card suits bid the lowest-ranking - (leave partner space to show his hand with his second bid).

Note that suit quality is hardly a consideration – it's all about showing the length and finding a possible fit.

A response of 2♥ to an opening bid of 1♠ requires at least a 5-card suit.

What if I have 6 or more points and no biddable suit?

You are too good to pass, but no change of suit bid is available - this will usually be when you have 6 to 9 points but no suit which can be bid at the 1-level.
In this situation you bid 1NT – it says nothing about wanting to play in no trumps – just that you have too much to pass and no other bid.
Not for nothing is it known as 'the dustbin bid'.
As a general rule you should avoid 1NT as a first response if you have any reasonable alternative.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	K T 4 Q 4 Q J 5 3 7 6 4 2	Partner opened 1♥. You do not have 4 hearts – you do not have 4 spades – you are not strong enough to bid a minor suit at the 2-level – you are too good to pass. Bid 1NT.