Reverse bidding - Summary Sheet

Background

Suppose you have 5 clubs, 4 spades, and 12 points.
You will open 1♣ and if partner changes suit with 1♦ or 1♥ you will rebid 1♠ – a perfect description of your hand. If partner prefers clubs to spades, he will show preference to 2♣ and that will end the auction.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	A Q 7 6 Q 8 6 5 K J T 5 4	5-4 shape and 12 points - open 1♣ - your 5-card suit. If partner responds 1♦ or 1♥ you will rebid 1♠ – your natural shape-showing rebid.

The Problem

Now suppose you have the same hand with 5 clubs and 4 hearts.
You will open 1♣ and if partner changes suit with 1♦ you will rebid 1♠ – a perfect description of your hand.
But if partner responds 1♠ and you rebid 2♥ partner would have to rebid 3♣ just to show preference.
You could find yourself at the 3-level with no more than 12 points facing 6 points – not good.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	Q 8 A Q 7 6 6 5 K J T 5 4	5-4 shape - open 1♣ - your 5-card suit. If partner responds 1♦ you will rebid 1♥ – your natural shape-showing rebid, but if partner responds 1♠ what then?

Any rebid by opener which is higher than 2 of his first suit is a reverse

2♥ in the example above would be a reverse bid.

Strong reverses

It is recommended that you play 'strong reverses'.
i.e. such a bid requires extra strength.

How strong?

Facing a change of suit response at the 1-level you should hold 16+ points.
Such a bid is forcing for one round.
Facing a change of suit response at the 2-level you should hold 15+ points.
Such a bid is forcing to game.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	K Q T 5 4 6 5 A Q 7 6 A 8	5-4 shape and 15 points - open 1♠ - your 5-card suit. If partner responds 2♣ you will rebid 2♦ – your natural shape-showing rebid, If partner responds 2♥ you are strong enough to reverse over the 2-level response. Bid 3♦, forcing to game.

And if you aren't strong enough to reverse?

Then you will usually just have to rebid your 5-card suit.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	K J T 5 4 6 5 A Q 7 6 Q 8	5-4 shape and 12 points - open 1♠ - your 5-card suit. If partner responds 2♣ you will rebid 2♦ – your natural shape-showing rebid, If partner responds 2♥ you are not strong enough to reverse. Bid 2♠.

Note – never lie about the shape

Never make a reverse bid just to show the strength.
The priority is to show the shape, provided that you are strong enough.
So with 4 spades, 5 diamonds and 17 points start with 1♦ and rebid 1♠ over a 1♥ response promising anything from about 11 to 18 points, then it is up to partner.