



LESSON 5

Balanced Hands

Opening 1NT – 12-14 Balanced (Special Case)

Before you open 1 of a suit ... **You must check that you do not have a 1NT opener!**

A balanced hand contains:

- **no** void or singleton
- **one** doubleton at most
- **no** 5-card major
- may have a 5-card minor

Examples of balanced hands are:

- 4333
- 4432
- 3325 the 5-card suit **must** be a **MINOR** suit

1NT is a **limit bid**. Its shape and strength are known – a limit bid is **not** forcing. This means that the responder is usually in charge. Opener rarely bids again.

Responses to 1NT Opening

Balanced hands

Pass	0-10	no Game possible
2NT	11-12	invite to 3NT
3NT	13+	bid Game

Unbalanced hands

2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠	0-10	5+ card suit – opener must not bid again
3♥/3♠	13+	game forcing with 5-card suit
4♥/4♠	13+	game with 6+ suit
5♣/5♦	16+	game with 6+ suit

Stronger Balanced Hands

If you have a balanced hand with more than 14 **hcp**, what should you bid?

It is a 2-step process:

- Open your lower 4-card suit (or) your 5 card minor suit in a 3325 hand
- Rebid NT – the level shows the **HCPS**

After 1♥ – 1♠	After 1♥ – 2♣
1NT 15-17	2NT 15-17
or	or
2NT 18-19	3NT 18-19

Responder is still in charge as you have described your hand's shape and strength accurately. Responder should apply the same principles as above but adjust for the new point counts shown by opener.

TIP 3: PLAY & DEFENCE

Play of the Hand: Playing a Side Suit

Declarer Play – Finding those Tricks

Count how many sure tricks you have and work out how many more you need.
Try and work out how to establish the extra tricks needed.
Establishing your longest and/or strongest suit is the most common approach.

Establish your Longest / Strongest Suit

Contract 1NT by EAST – lead ♦ Q by SOUTH

WEST	EAST
♠ AJ53	♠ 97
♥ Q43	♥ J65
♦ 943	♦ AK8
♣ K76	♣ A9843

Win ♦ A and then play on your longest/strongest suit (clubs)
You will need to lose a club to establish the suit and generate 4 winners

Establish a Side Suit

Contract 4♥ by EAST – lead ♠ K by SOUTH

WEST	EAST
♠ 832	♠ A96
♥ A3	♥ KQJ642
♦ A65	♦ J4
♣ KJ843	♣ Q2

Win ♠ A, draw trumps and then play on your longest/strongest suit (clubs)
Playing the club suit allows you to discard a diamond loser

Play the honour from the short hand first

Does it matter how you play the honours as you establish a suit – answer is **yes!**
In the example below – you **must** play ♣ Q first, then cross over to the ♠ K

Contract 3NT by EAST – lead ♠ K by SOUTH

WEST	EAST
♠ 832	♠ A76
♥ 93	♥ AK72
♦ 865	♦ A1097
♣ AKJ43	♣ Q2

If you play ♣ A or ♣ K first, then cross back to the ♠ Q, you will be cut off from dummy and will not be able to enjoy the club winners