

OPENING MINOR SUITS

By Maritha Pottenger

When you open a minor suit, you only promise 3 cards in the suit.

Never open a minor when you have a semi-balanced hand (3-3-2-5; 4-4-3-2; 4-3-3-3) **and 15-17 HCP**. One *no trump* is a much more descriptive bid. Open 1NT whenever you have the appropriate hand for it! (Do NOT open 1NT when you are 2-2 in the majors.)

You will usually have 4 diamonds when you open 1D. (The exception is the hand that is 4-4-3-2 which must be opened 1D.) You will more often have only 3 clubs when you open 1C (but still 4 or more 85% of time)..

If you have **4 clubs and 4 diamonds, open 1D** (even if that suit is 2345 and the clubs are AKQJ). You avoid rebid problems by opening one diamond. (Same is true if you are 5/5 or 6/6 in the minors.) *Note that some people open the BETTER minor in 4-4-3-2 hands because they expect to rebid 1NT. Can become a problem if opponent overcalls 1S and Responder negative doubles. You don't have 4 hearts & don't have a spade stopper. If you opened clubs because they were better, 2D is now a reverse. That's why you open 1D originally!*

If you are **3/3 in the minors** (and do NOT have a 5-card major), **open 1 club**.

If you have 5 diamonds and 4 clubs, open 1 diamond.

If you have **5 clubs and 4 diamonds**, open **1 diamond** UNLESS YOU ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO REVERSE (17+ HCP). If you bid clubs first and then diamonds, you guarantee more clubs than diamonds, and you guarantee a big hand (17+ HCP).

If you rebid a minor, you will almost always have six cards in it. Otherwise, you should be able to bid a different suit, support partner, or bid NT. Exception, with 4 diamonds and 5 clubs, open 1D and rebid clubs UNLESS you diamonds are AWFUL & Club WONDERFUL. Then open 1C and rebid clubs w/ only 5. If you **jump-rebid in a minor suit**, you promise 6 good cards and 16+ HCP. (That is highly invitational to 3NT if partner has other suits stopped.)

RESPONDING TO THE OPENING OF ONE OF A MINOR

- 1) Your **first duty** as Responder is to **bid any 4-card major suits** up the line (hearts first).
If you have **4 hearts and 5 spades, bid the spades first** (and hearts later if you get a chance and it is not 4th-suit forcing when you have a weak hand).
- 2) If you have a relatively balanced hand and no 4-card major, bid NT (6-10, bid 1NT; 11-12, bid 2NT; 13-15 with reasonable stoppers in other 3 suits, bid 3NT).
- 3) If you have an unbalanced hand and 5-card support, raise the minor suit (6-10, bid 2 of minor; 11-12, bid 3 of minor; more explore for 3NT).
- 4) In a pinch, you can raise a minor with only 4 cards (no other good bid).
- 5) When you have a big, unbalanced hand with support for partner's minor, think about slam. In some cases, you can ask for Aces. In some cases, you may have to take a chance and just "blast" into slam (just bid it and hope it makes).

RESPONDING TO TWO DIAMONDS

You probably aren't bidding unless you are very strong (looking for 3NT with around 16 HCP) or very weak (raise preemptively to get in the way of your opponents).

RESPONDING TO THREE OF A MINOR

If you have good controls (Aces and Kings), you should be trying 3NT or (really good hands) looking for slam in the minor.