

The Foundation System

Part II. System Practice: Opening Bids

INTRODUCTION

Now at last it's time to go to work! Part I merely described the Foundation System. Here in Part II we begin to learn how to apply it. Much, perhaps most, of what you learn here will still be useful later if you should decide to try other systems, because my goal in Part II is to teach you what you should be thinking about during the auction as you try to judge whether to play partscore, game, or slam in partner's suit, your suit, or notrump. What we'll be talking about is hand evaluation: judging how good (or bad) your hand is, which of course depends on what you have learned so far about partner's hand. In **this** chapter, you know nothing about partner's hand, unless he has passed and you know he does not have an opening bid. The real fun begins in the next chapter. But first, somebody has to open the bidding, so let's get on with it.

The Opening Bid requirements listed in Part I are essentially independent of vulnerability and your position at the table. Nevertheless, those factors may have an influence on the choices you make. Vulnerability is a key factor in deciding whether to make a preemptive bid or not, and if so, whether to open at the two-level, three-level, or higher. Your position at the table will often be important in deciding whether to open or not, or whether to open at the one-level or make a preemptive bid. The Discussion following each Quiz will attempt to bring out these distinctions.

The most important principle in choosing **any** action is: **PLAN YOUR REBID!!** This applies not only to choosing an opening bid, but also throughout the auction. Before choosing any bid, consider what rebid (possibly including pass) you will make after each likely response from partner. When considering a 1D opening bid, know what you will rebid if partner responds 1H, 1S, 1NT, 2C, 2D, or 3D. Don't worry too much about any other responses from partner; if he jumps, **he** must be prepared to handle **your** rebids. This principle also applies in competitive auctions; try to anticipate the most likely responses from the opponents. Naturally, these planned rebids will frequently be featured in the Discussions. Two other principles which can be useful in deciding whether or not to open the bidding are usually described as the *Rule of Fifteen* and the *Rule of Twenty*.

The *Rule of Fifteen* offers guidance when deciding whether to open in fourth seat or to pass the hand out. It suggests that you add your HCP to your length in the spade suit and open if the total is fifteen or more, and pass otherwise. The theory is that if the high-card strength is evenly divided around the table (as it appears to be after three passes), then no one is likely to be able to make more than eight tricks, so the side which holds the spade suit will have the advantage. This suggests that you will open a fourth seat hand with 11 HCP only if you have at least four spades. This is sound advice, but other applications of this rule have less validity. With three spades and 12 HCP, I would open only with a good 12, typically one with two aces. With 5 and 10 or 6 and 9, I would usually pass unless I chose to open with a weak two bid.

The *Rule of Twenty* is not confined to fourth seat decisions, but has wider applicability. It is aimed at deciding whether to open light distributional hands. It suggests adding the length of your two longest suits to your HCP total, and opening the bidding if the sum is twenty or more. This usually works well with hands containing two 5+card suits, but with 64 hands some discretion is required; some 64s might be too weak to open at the one-level and too strong for a weak two bid.

The Losing Trick Count is a vital component of the Foundation System. In the first three chapters of Part II, these quizzes include a space for recording the HCP and LTC for each hand. This is to emphasize that you should **always** count both your HCP and your LTC before the auction begins, and provides a way for you to practice this until it becomes second nature.

I'm sure you've noticed that Axx and Qxx both have a LTC of 2, yet Axx is obviously more valuable. The LTC is primarily a measure of distributional strength, and manages to combine the effects of short suits and of long suits into a single number, but the LTC must never be interpreted in isolation. It is the interplay between the LTC and the HCP which determines the value of each hand. The Discussion which follows each Quiz, and especially the Discussions in the chapters on Major Suit Bidding and Minor Suit Bidding, will attempt to show how a consideration of that interplay will lead to proper evaluation of your partnership's combined assets. This is the essence of good bidding, yet is rarely considered in elementary texts. I think you're smart enough to handle it.

QUIZ 1 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(1) ♠KQ43 ♥AQ52 ♦7 ♣QJ65	___/___	?	___
(2) ♠J1072 ♥AJ53 ♦6 ♣KJ84	___/___	P/P/?	___
(3) ♠J1053 ♥AJ85 ♦92 ♣KJ2	___/___	P/P/?	___
(4) ♠AQ4 ♥KQ6 ♦62 ♣QJ753	___/___	?	___
(5) ♠K1074 ♥AK983 ♦AQ ♣Q10	___/___	?	___
(6) ♠62 ♥6 ♦K872 ♣AKJ986	___/___	?	___
(7) ♠Q104 ♥KQ102 ♦J642 ♣AK	___/___	?	___
(8) ♠AK ♥AJ85 ♦KQ109 ♣QJ3	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 1 DISCUSSION

(1) ♠KQ43 ♥AQ52 ♦7 ♣QJ65 (14/5) This looks like a routine 1C bid. You'll raise 1H or 1S, or bid 1H over 1D. But what if partner bids 1NT? You could pass, but the opponents rate to have at least 9 diamonds, so rebidding 2C might be prudent, since partner should have at least 4 clubs, having failed to bid 1D, 1H, or 1S.

(2) ♠J1072 ♥AJ53 ♦6 ♣KJ84 (10/8) This is barely worth a 1C opening in third seat, but should clearly be passed in first or second seat. In fourth seat, I'd pass, but if partner has at least 3 spades, I might wish I'd opened. If I do open this hand in fourth seat, my choice would be 1H, to try to prevent the opponents from finding a diamond fit.

(3) ♠J1053 ♥AJ85 ♦92 ♣KJ2 (10/9) Pass. Opening 1C here, even in third seat, is risky, because of the poor LTC. Partner is too apt to get over-enthusiastic.

(4) ♠AQ4 ♥KQ6 ♦62 ♣QJ753 (14/6) You'll open 1C, of course, but over partner's 1H or 1S, you'll have to decide whether to raise or to rebid 1NT. Most experts would raise (their partners are comfortable playing in a 43 trump fit), since that's a lesser evil than rebidding such a poor club suit, or rebidding 1NT with no diamond stopper.

(5) ♠K1074 ♥AK983 ♦AQ ♣Q10 (18/6) You'll open 1H, of course, and rebid 2S over 2C or 2D, but over 1S you'll have to settle for 3S despite your 18 HCP, since the LTC says that this hand isn't as good as it looks. Over 1NT, a raise to 2NT is best.

(6) ♠62 ♥6 ♦K872 ♣AKJ986 (11/6) After your 1C opening, you'll raise 1D to 2D, and rebid clubs over just about any other response except 3NT.

(7) ♠Q104 ♥KQ102 ♦J642 ♣AK (15/6) Even with two tens, this is a minimum 1NT opening, because the AK of clubs is not pulling its full weight. Any club honors in partner's hand will be wasted.

(8) ♠AK ♥AJ85 ♦KQ109 ♣QJ3 (20/5) The system bid is 2NT, but if partner raises to 3NT (no 4-card major), don't be surprised if you go down. If you need a swing, you might want to try opening 1D instead.

QUIZ 2 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(9) ♠ AK3 ♥ A975 ♦ 54 ♣ K1032	___/___	?	___
(10) ♠ 843 ♥ KQ65 ♦ KQ84 ♣ Q4	___/___	?	___
(11) ♠ 732 ♥ Q1054 ♦ AK4 ♣ A53	___/___	?	___
(12) ♠ K1084 ♥ AJ8 ♦ Q76 ♣ KQ4	___/___	?	___
(13) ♠ Q74 ♥ 7 ♦ KJ98643 ♣ K4	___/___	?	___
(14) ♠ Q97 ♥ K642 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ1086	___/___	?	___
(15) ♠ K83 ♥ Q3 ♦ AK83 ♣ 10962	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 2 DISCUSSION

(9) ♠ AK3 ♥ A975 ♦ 54 ♣ K1032 (14/7) After opening 1C, you can bid 1H over 1D, or raise 1H to 2H. Over a 1S response, go ahead and raise to 2S. Partner would rather play in a 43 fit than watch you struggle in 1NT with no diamond stopper.

(10) ♠ 843 ♥ KQ65 ♦ KQ84 ♣ Q4 (12/7) Pass. The system permits a 1D opening with 12 HCP and a LTC of 7, but don't do it here. The absence of aces, doubleton queen, and three small spades make this a terrible hand.

(11) ♠ 732 ♥ Q1054 ♦ AK4 ♣ A53 (13/8) Despite the LTC of 8, this is much better than the previous hand. Don't make the mistake of opening 1D instead of 1C because your diamonds are better. If partner bids 1S and you rebid 1NT, he will expect you to hold 4 diamonds, since you only open 1D with a 3-card suit when holding two 4-card majors.

(12) ♠ K1084 ♥ AJ8 ♦ Q76 ♣ KQ4 (15/7) This is a typical 15HCP 1NT opening, with stoppers in all suits, and playable in either major if partner holds 4 spades or 5 hearts.

(13) ♠ Q74 ♥ 7 ♦ KJ98643 ♣ K4 (9/6) This is a typical modern 3D opening. This is safer than passing, and then making an overcall later.

(14) ♠ Q97 ♥ K642 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ1086 (11/6) This is about a minimum for an 11HCP 1C opening. If partner responds 1S, you'll have to raise to 2S, but that ought to play fairly well because you'll be ruffing diamonds in your hand, not in partner's. I'd be happier if my hearts were K1042; then if we play in 43 spades, partner may not have to ruff a heart.

(15) ♠ K83 ♥ Q3 ♦ AK83 ♣ 10962 (12/8) Pass this one, since you really don't want to raise 1S to 2S, and a 1NT rebid without stoppers in either unbid suit does not appeal, nor does rebidding 2C on a 10-high suit.

QUIZ 3 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(16) ♠ A10542 ♥ A6 ♦ Q102 ♣ QJ5	___/___	?	___
(17) ♠ AJ6 ♥ 843 ♦ AQJ542 ♣ 7	___/___	?	___
(18) ♠ K54 ♥ K4 ♦ K32 ♣ K10932	___/___	?	___
(19) ♠ A54 ♥ 1054 ♦ A862 ♣ A72	___/___	?	___
(20) ♠ 53 ♥ A53 ♦ KJ765 ♣ AQJ	___/___	?	___
(21) ♠ A9862 ♥ 6 ♦ K7 ♣ A9643	___/___	?	___
(22) ♠ AQ1086 ♥ KQ7 ♦ 652 ♣ 42	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 3 DISCUSSION

(16) ♠ A10542 ♥ A6 ♦ Q102 ♣ QJ5 (13/7) This is about a minimum 1S opening. Over 1NT you'll rebid 2C. Over a 2C or 2D response, you can raise, and over 2H you'll have to rebid 2NT.

(17) ♠ AJ6 ♥ 843 ♦ AQJ542 ♣ 7 (12/7) This is a comfortable 1D opening because you can rebid the diamonds over just about any response (although I'd pass a 3NT response).

(18) ♠ K54 ♥ K4 ♦ K32 ♣ K10932 (12/7) Go ahead and open 1C. You'd like to have 13-14 HCP to rebid 1NT, but it's OK with **this** 12, to make sure LHO is the opening leader.

(19) ♠ A54 ♥ 1054 ♦ A862 ♣ A72 (12/9) Open 1D, since with three aces you must open despite the LTC of 9. But don't be surprised if you have a real struggle to make 3NT.

(20) ♠ 53 ♥ A53 ♦ KJ765 ♣ AQJ (15/7) This is a bad 15HCP for a 1NT opening because of the weak spades and poorly placed club honors. I'd treat it as 14HCP and open 1D.

(21) ♠ A9862 ♥ 6 ♦ K7 ♣ A9643 (11/6) With two aces and LTC=6, this 11HCP hand is worth opening 1S (not 1C because you're not strong enough to then bid and rebid spades to show the fifth spade. If partner rebids 2D or 2H, whether you rebid 2S or 3C depends on whether your partner thinks 3C shows extra strength. In our System it does not, but you will find many partners who like to play that it does, so this is one area where prior discussion with partner is helpful.

(22) ♠ AQ1086 ♥ KQ7 ♦ 652 ♣ 42 (11/7) This is a bare minimum 1S opening, but I would seriously consider a weak 2S opening in third seat, in order to keep partner from competing too vigorously for the partscore. This might even goad the opponents into competing at the three-level where your better than expected defense might defeat them.

QUIZ 4 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(23) ♠ 84 ♥ - ♦ AK1062 ♣ KQJ872	___/___	?	___
(24) ♠ KQ108532 ♥ 872 ♦ 107 ♣ K	___/___	?	___
(25) ♠ A32 ♥ A105 ♦ AQ1054 ♣ AK	___/___	?	___
(26) ♠ KQJ9652 ♥ 32 ♦ 3 ♣ A86	___/___	?	___
(27) ♠ KJ102 ♥ 87 ♦ 1062 ♣ AKJ6	___/___	?	___
(28) ♠ K105432 ♥ A4 ♦ J6 ♣ J76	___/___	?	___
(29) ♠ 987 ♥ AQ1094 ♦ Q94 ♣ A3	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 4 DISCUSSION

(23) ♠ 84 ♥ - ♦ AK1062 ♣ KQJ872 (13/4) Here you want to open 1C, hoping to be able to rebid diamonds twice to show your 65 shape. But expect enough competitive bidding to disrupt your plan. It might even be good tactics to pass originally and bid an unusual NT (even at the four-level) later. Do not open 1D! Never distort your shape when holding a strong distributional hand.

(24) ♠ KQ108532 ♥ 872 ♦ 107 ♣ K (8/7) This is a good 3S opening, vulnerable or not. If the suit were hearts instead of spades, a 4H opening would be reasonable when not vulnerable.

(25) ♠ A32 ♥ A105 ♦ AQ1054 ♣ AK (21/5) With 4 aces, 21HCP, and a 5-card suit, you could consider a 2C opening, treating it as a balanced 22HCP. But a conservative 2NT is probably best because of the doubleton AK of clubs.

(26) ♠ KQJ9652 ♥ 32 ♦ 3 ♣ A86 (10/6) The best approach with this sort of hand is to open 1S, and keep rebidding spades at every opportunity. If the suit were hearts, you might consider a 4H opening, but with the boss suit you should not be that afraid of competition. Do not open 3S! This is too strong for a preemptive bid.

(27) ♠ KJ102 ♥ 87 ♦ 1062 ♣ AKJ6 (12/8) This is the kind of 12/8 hand that's worth opening 1C, because you can safely rebid spades over just about any response.

(28) ♠ K105432 ♥ A4 ♦ J6 ♣ J76 (9/8) Pass. Do not open a weak 2S, except perhaps in third seat when not vulnerable, because of the poor texture of the spade suit. With K109432, or better K109832, 2S would be fine, but with **this** suit there is too much potential for disaster.

(29) ♠ 987 ♥ AQ1094 ♦ Q94 ♣ A3 (12/7) This is a minimum 1H opening. Like hand (22), a weak 2H opening in third seat might keep partner from competing too vigorously.

QUIZ 5 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(30) ♠ 63 ♥ KQ10763 ♦ A63 ♣ 76	___/___	?	___
(31) ♠ J10 ♥ AJ942 ♦ 7 ♣ KQ762	___/___	?	___
(32) ♠ A3 ♥ 107 ♦ KJ63 ♣ A9873	___/___	?	___
(33) ♠ J94 ♥ AKJ93 ♦ - ♣ 109762	___/___	?	___
(34) ♠ AK82 ♥ AK7 ♦ KJ43 ♣ A5	___/___	?	___
(35) ♠ AJ64 ♥ K753 ♦ 542 ♣ A8	___/___	?	___
(36) ♠ AQ ♥ KQJ3 ♦ 8 ♣ KQJ962	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 5 DISCUSSION

(30) ♠ 63 ♥ KQ10763 ♦ A63 ♣ 76 (9/7) This is a classical weak 2H opening, although these days an aggressive player might open 3H in third seat if not vulnerable.

(31) ♠ J10 ♥ AJ942 ♦ 7 ♣ KQ762 (11/6) You have to open this sort of hand 1H, although as in hand (21) there is potential for partnership misunderstanding if partner responds 2D and you have to choose whether to rebid 2H or 3C. Again, my vote goes to 3C, but make sure you and partner are on the same wavelength in this situation.

(32) ♠ A3 ♥ 107 ♦ KJ63 ♣ A9873 (12/7) Open 1D. If you open 1C and partner responds 1S, you'll either have to rebid 1NT with no heart stopper or rebid 2C with a poor suit. A 1D opening lets you rebid 2C and show both minors.

(33) ♠ J94 ♥ AKJ93 ♦ - ♣ 109762 (9/7) Pass. A weak 2H opening is possible here, since the fifth club can often compensate for the lack of a sixth heart. But passing is best, since this hand will be a good dummy if partner can bid either black suit.

(34) ♠ AK82 ♥ AK7 ♦ KJ43 ♣ A5 (22/5) This is a typical minimum for a 2C opening with a balanced hand. If partner shows any interest in a potential slam, you will tend to cooperate, since so much of your strength is in aces and kings.

(35) ♠ AJ64 ♥ K753 ♦ 542 ♣ A8 (12/8) If you open 1D, you will raise 1H or 1S to the two-level. But a 2C response could be embarrassing; you can't rebid 2NT with no diamond stopper, and a major suit rebid would imply extra strength. I'd risk opening 1D anyway, and raise 2C to 3C. If partner then bids 3NT, he may make it.

(36) ♠ AQ ♥ KQJ3 ♦ 8 ♣ KQJ962 (18/4) After opening 1C, you will rebid 2H over either 1D, 1S, 1NT, or 2C. Over a 2NT response, you can rebid 3H, since 6C is possible if partner has a concealed club fit. Over a 1H response, 4H is permissible, but a jump to 4D is best. This shows good 4-card heart support and a singleton diamond.

QUIZ 6 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(37) ♠ AKJ ♥ 5 ♦ J542 ♣ AJ975	___/___	?	___
(38) ♠ 1072 ♥ K109843 ♦ K106 ♣ Q	___/___	?	___
(39) ♠ A872 ♥ AKQ2 ♦ 102 ♣ A53	___/___	?	___
(40) ♠ 96 ♥ A74 ♦ AKJ6 ♣ K743	___/___	?	___
(41) ♠ KJ43 ♥ J752 ♦ AK ♣ K106	___/___	?	___
(42) ♠ AQ876 ♥ 109 ♦ 3 ♣ A8743	___/___	?	___
(43) ♠ KQ3 ♥ AQ ♦ AJ4 ♣ QJ1085	___/___	?	___
(44) ♠ 92 ♥ J10 ♦ A ♣ A10876542	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 6 DISCUSSION

(37) ♠ AKJ ♥ 5 ♦ J542 ♣ AJ975 (14/7) Here you can open 1C and raise a 1S response to 2S. Over a 1H response, 1S is correct, so that responder can become declarer if we play in NT.

(38) ♠ 1072 ♥ K109843 ♦ K106 ♣ Q (8/8) A 2H opening is reasonable here because of the good suit texture.

(39) ♠ A872 ♥ AKQ2 ♦ 102 ♣ A53 (17/6) After opening 1C, you can raise either major to the three-level, or bid 1H over a 1D response.

(40) ♠ 96 ♥ A74 ♦ AKJ6 ♣ K743 (15/7) This is a minimum 1NT opening, but in view of the weakness in the majors, a 1D opening might work better, planning to rebid 2C over 1H or 1NT over 1S.

(41) ♠ KJ43 ♥ J752 ♦ AK ♣ K106 (15/7) Are you getting tired of doubleton AKs? It's probably best to open 1NT here, but a conservative 1C might be the winner, treating it as a good 14 HCP instead of a bad 15.

(42) ♠ AQ876 ♥ 109 ♦ 3 ♣ A8743 (10/6) Pass. A 1S opening is possible here, because of two aces and LTC=6, but I prefer a tactical pass here, since the opponent's bidding may help you decide whether to compete. If your spades were hearts, a 1H opening would be preferred, since otherwise the heart suit might be shut out.

(43) ♠ KQ3 ♥ AQ ♦ AJ4 ♣ QJ1085 (19/6) The decent club suit makes it reasonable to upgrade this hand to 20HCP and open 2NT.

(44) ♠ 92 ♥ J10 ♦ A ♣ A10876542 (9/6) Game in NT seems unlikely to be the best spot here, so it makes sense to open 4C in case the opponents have a major suit game.

QUIZ 7 ON OPENING BIDS

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(45) ♠ AJ2 ♥ Q107 ♦ AQJ109 ♣ KQ	___/___	?	___
(46) ♠ Q9 ♥ AKQ94 ♦ K82 ♣ QJ9	___/___	?	___
(47) ♠ AK8 ♥ KJ6 ♦ K963 ♣ AQ9	___/___	?	___
(48) ♠ 72 ♥ AJ9752 ♦ 1062 ♣ 62	___/___	?	___
(49) ♠ K4 ♥ J ♦ AKQ10975 ♣ A43	___/___	?	___
(50) ♠ 4 ♥ KQJ1064 ♦ AKQJ9 ♣ 8	___/___	?	___
(51) ♠ AQ ♥ AQJ9864 ♦ AK2 ♣ 4	___/___	?	___
(52) ♠ KJ10854 ♥ 10865 ♦ 3 ♣ A4	___/___	?	___

QUIZ 7 DISCUSSION

(45) ♠ AJ2 ♥ Q107 ♦ AQJ109 ♣ KQ (19/6) A 1D opening will surely steer the opening leader to our weak suit if we end in 3NT, so it is better to open 2NT and hope they find the wrong lead when partner doesn't have a 5-card major and we end in 3NT.

(46) ♠ Q9 ♥ AKQ94 ♦ K82 ♣ QJ9 (17/6) If we have a game, 3NT is more likely than 4H to be the best spot, so go ahead and open 1NT here. The good hearts may make up for a spade weakness.

(47) ♠ AK8 ♥ KJ6 ♦ K963 ♣ AQ9 (20/6) This is a classical 2NT opening. But if partner passes, we may not make it.

(48) ♠ 72 ♥ AJ9752 ♦ 1062 ♣ 62 (5/9) Pass. Don't even think about a weak 2H opening. If the opponents play it, your bid will help them guess the distribution, and if partner has heart support and takes a sacrifice, you're likely to go down 800 or more.

(49) ♠ K4 ♥ J ♦ AKQ10975 ♣ A43 (17/4) Some people like to open 3NT with this sort of hand (the so-called Gambling 3NT), but that's not part of the Foundation System, so we open 1D here, and rebid 3D or 3NT depending on partner's response.

(50) ♠ 4 ♥ KQJ1064 ♦ AKQJ9 ♣ 8 (16/3) Open 1H. The LTC says to consider a 2C opening here, despite only 16HCP, but if the opponents compete, or if partner has a lot of black cards and insists on bidding them, then you may have trouble showing both your suits. So with most strong two-suiters it is best to open at the one-level and jump in your second suit on the next round.

(51) ♠ AQ ♥ AQJ9864 ♦ AK2 ♣ 4 (20/4) This is more typical of an unbalanced 2C opening. You will usually make 4H if partner has as little as the diamond queen.

(52) ♠ KJ10854 ♥ 10865 ♦ 3 ♣ A4 (8/7) Opening a weak 2S here runs the risk of missing a game in hearts, but 2S would be my choice anyway, since 4H may not make if partner is short in spades, and if he has two or three spades, 4S may play just as well as 4H.