

STEP 1 - COUNT YOUR POINTS

Counting points is never going to be totally done away with, at least until some new millennium genius invents a superior method that at least seems as easy. However, the pre-auction phase of counting points doesn't have to be so complicated as to require a pocket calculator or, for the traditionalists, an abacus. Let's not wear ourselves out before the bidding even starts!

For now, just do it this way:

For each Ace = count 4 points

For each King = count 3 points

For each Queen = count 2 points

For each Jack = count 1 point.

This is the way real bridge players count points. It's easier! It's faster! It won't create distortions in the bidding! No, you won't be a bad person if you discard the baggage handed down by generations of actuaries who've masqueraded as bridge players. It will truly be as easy as 4-3-2-1 ! (Well, for now, anyway!)

25 STEPS TO LEARNING 2/1

Summary

STEP 2 - OPENING THE BIDDING

- ✓ 1-bids promise 12 HCP (occasional exceptions with 11 HCP).
- ✓ 1♣ or 1♦ promises 3 cards in the bid suit, with 1♦ usually delivering 4.
- ✓ 1♥ or 1♠ promises 5 cards in the bid suit.
- ✓ 1NT promises 15-17 HCP — may have a 5-card major and may have an unstopped suit or weak doubleton.
- ✓ Holding 4-4 in the minors, usually open 1♦.
- ✓ Holding 5-5 in any two suits (except spades and clubs), open the higher-ranked; with spades and clubs, normally open 1♣.
- ✓ Exercise discipline with your weak two-bids!

STEP 3 - THE TWO-OVER-ONE RESPONSE TO 1♥ OR 1♠

- ✓ I recommend you play that a Two-over-One response to an opening bid by an unpassed hand is 100% forcing to game.
- ✓ In order to make a Two-over-One response, you must have at least an opening bid of your own, but your hand may also be extremely strong.
- ✓ A Two-over-One response promises at least a good quality 4-card suit, except for 2♥ over 1♠, which promises at least five hearts.
- ✓ A Two-over-One response may include 3-card support for partner's major.
- ✓ A Two-over-One response will only include 4-card support for partner's major if you have an exceptional source of tricks of your own that you wish to show.

STEP 4 - BERGEN AND BEYOND: DIRECT MAJOR-SUIT RAISES

After an opening bid of one of a major, an unpassed hand responder has the following direct raises available:

- ✓ 2 Major = 7-10 HCP, 3-card support (Constructive Single Raise).
- ✓ 3 Major = less than 7 HCP, 4- or 5-card support (Preemptive Raise).
- ✓ 4 Major = less than 10 HCP, at least 5-card support, some distributional help, usually a side-suit singleton or void or two doubletons.
- ✓ 3♦ = 10-12 HCP, 4-card support (Limit Raise — Bergen).
- ✓ 3♣ = 7-10 HCP, 4-card support (4-card Constructive Raise — Bergen).
- ✓ 2NT = Jacoby Game-Forcing Raise, at least 4-card support, 12+HCP, no singleton or void on the side, no 'source of tricks'.
- ✓ Double jumps in a new suit = Splinter Bids showing a singleton or void in the suit bid, with at least 4-card support and 12+HCP.

STEP 5 - THE FORCING 1NT RESPONSE

- ✓ A 1NT response to 1♥ or 1♠ by an unpassed hand promises 5-12 HCP and is absolutely forcing for 1 round – opener must find a rebid!
- ✓ Without support for opener's major, you may be either unbalanced or balanced and are simply showing enough strength for a response but not enough to force to game.
- ✓ You also respond 1NT on some hands with support for opener's major: those with 5-7 HCP and 3- or 4-card support and those with 10-12 HCP and precisely 3-card support.
- ✓ Remember: since opener must rebid, you are going to get a second chance to complete the description of your hand.

25 STEPS TO LEARNING 2/1

Summary

STEP 6 - OTHER RESPONSES TO 1♥ OR 1♠

UNPASSED HAND RESPONSES

	1♥ OPENING	1♠ OPENING
1♠	4+ spades; 6+HCP/forcing 1 rd	not available
1NT	5-12 HCP (rarely more) forcing 1 round	same
2♣/2♦	natural, opening bid+ forcing to game	same
2♥	constructive raise 8-10 HCP; 3-card support	natural, opening bid+ forcing to game; 5+ hearts
2♠	Weak Jump Shift 3-7 HCP; two or fewer hearts 6 (rarely 7) spades	constructive raise 8-10 HCP 3-card support
2NT	Jacoby Game Forcing Raise 4+ trumps Opening Bid+ Usually no singleton or void No side-suit source of tricks	same
3♣	constructive raise; 7-10 HCP 4-card support (occasionally 5)	same
3♦	limit raise; 10-12 HCP 4-card support (occasionally 5)	same
3♥	preemptive raise; 0-6 HCP 4-card support (occasionally 5)	natural and invitational 9-11 HCP; 6- or 7-card suit
3♠	splinter raise of hearts singleton or void in spades at least 4-card support 12+HCP; game-forcing	preemptive raise 0-6 HCP, 4-card support (occasionally 5)
3NT	natural; 15-17 HCP 3-3-3-4 or 3-3-4-3 shape unbid suits stopped	same
4♣/4♦	splinter raise	same
4♥	direct game raise 5+ hearts less than 10 HCP	splinter raise
4♠	to play!	direct game raise 5+spades less than 10 HCP



STEP 7 - AFTER A TWO-OVER-ONE RESPONSE

Opener's possible rebids after a game-forcing Two-over-One response to his 1♥ or 1♠ opening are:

- ✓ 2NT = either 12-14 HCP, balanced hand, unbid suits stopped or 18-19 HCP, balanced hand, unbid suits stopped.
- ✓ New suit (not a reverse) = at least four cards with or without extra values
- ✓ A reverse promises extra values (16+ HCP) with the second suit shorter than the first.
- ✓ Raise of responder's suit = at least 3 cards (with an honor if only three); 'fast arrival' applies if a 1♠ opener is raising hearts.
- ✓ Jump in new suit = splinter raise of responder with 4+ trumps, shortness in bid suit.
- ✓ Jump rebid of opener's own suit = solid suit, at least six long; invites responder to take over and place the contract.

Simple rebid of opener's major = usually a 6-card suit in a hand that doesn't fit any of above categories but may be a 'bid of convenience' with only a 5-card suit.

STEP 8 - AFTER A MAJOR-SUIT RAISE

- ✓ After auctions that start one of a major followed by an immediate raise, you are almost always going to play in that major.
- ✓ After a single raise, opener may sign off, bid game directly, or try for game by bidding a new suit in which he needs help (HSGT).
- ✓ After a Bergen limit raise (3♦) opener should bid at least game unless he is 5-3-3-2 with a bad minimum.
- ✓ After a Bergen 4-card constructive raise (3♣) sign off at three of the major with a minimum hand, otherwise bid game directly.
- ✓ A very strong hand in HCP or distributional playing strength is needed to bid a game opposite a preemptive raise — if you're intending to make it!
- ✓ Stop! — usually, after a direct game raise.
- ✓ Opener's rebids show strength and/or shape after a Jacoby 2NT raise.
- ✓ After Jacoby raises and splinter bids, use the 30-point deck concept to help evaluate slam prospects.

STEP 9 - AFTER A FORCING 1NT

After partner replies to one of a major opening with a Forcing 1NT, your possible rebids are:

- ✓ Two of your major with 6+ cards and 12-15 HCP.
- ✓ Three of your major with 6+ cards and 16-18 HCP in an unbalanced hand.
- ✓ Four of your major with 7½-8½ playing tricks.
- ✓ Two of a new suit — 4+ cards if a major and 3+ if a minor. This normally shows 12-17 HCP. However, 1♥-1NT-2♠ is a reverse, and promises 16+ HCP.
- ✓ A jump shift — 18+ HCP and enough overall playing strength to force to game.
- ✓ 2NT with 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand.
- ✓ 3NT with a 'source of tricks' in a semi-balanced hand and some outside stoppers.

Partner's follow-up responsibilities will include:

- ✓ Showing a fit for your major whenever possible.
- ✓ Ensuring the partnership gets to the appropriate level in light of what he knows about your strength.

25 STEPS TO LEARNING 2/1

Summary

STEP 10 - OTHER AUCTIONS STARTING 1♥ OR 1♠

- ✓ After 1♥-1♠, opener rebids much the same as he would after a 1NT forcing response — remembering, of course, to raise spades if he can.
- ✓ After 1♥-1♠, opener's 1NT rebid shows a 12-14 HCP balanced hand but doesn't promise a stopper in all unbid suits.
- ✓ If you decide to play 1♠-3♥ to show an invitational hand with long hearts and no spade fit, opener should almost always focus on playing in hearts.
- ✓ After a response of 3NT to an opening 1♥ or 1♠, opener should be well placed to guide the partnership towards proper level and/or strain because of the very specific requirements (15-17 HCP in a balanced hand) for the 3NT response.

STEP 11 - THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

- ✓ A third seat $1\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit$ opening may be made with shaded values as long as the suit is decent and the hand has $1\frac{1}{2}$ defensive tricks. The suit itself may be only four cards long.
- ✓ A light fourth seat opening should only be contemplated if the hand has at least 15 Cansino Count points.
- ✓ A passed-hand responder cannot make forcing-to-game responses since he can't have opening bid values.

25 STEPS TO LEARNING 2/1

Summary

STEP 12 - AFTER A 3RD OR 4TH SEAT 1♥ OR 1♠

When responding to partner's third- or fourth-seat major seat opening you can:

- ✓ Use exactly the same system with no changes.
- ✓ Use the Drury 2♣ convention to show a limit raise.
- ✓ Treat the 1NT response as only semi-forcing.

STEP 13 - IN A MINOR KEY

- ✓ After a 1♦ opening, a response of 2♣ by an unpassed hand is natural and 100% forcing to game.
- ✓ The 2♣ bidder may have a 4-card (or longer) major as long as his club suit is longer than the major. With a major suit the same length as your clubs, the correct response is to bid your major.
- ✓ After 1♦, responder should bid 1♥ with 4-4 in the majors, regardless of relative suit or hand strength, and bid 1♠ with 5-5 in the majors, regardless of suit or hand strength.
- ✓ There are two possible styles of suit responses to 1♣, up the line, or Walsh, which tends to bypass diamonds if you have a 4-card major. My preference is to bid up the line except when you are quite weak with all your values in a decent 4-card major.

STEP 14 - NOTRUMP RESPONSES TO MINORS

- ✓ All notrump responses to minor suit openings deny a 4-card or longer major suit.
- ✓ 1NT shows 6-10 HCP and is not forcing.
- ✓ 2NT shows 10-12 HCP and invites game. Ideally, all unbid suits will be stopped, but (sadly) this is not guaranteed.
- ✓ 3NT shows 15-17 HCP in a balanced hand with all unbid suits stopped and no great 'source of tricks' minor suit.
- ✓ 2NT and 3NT deny 5-card support for partner's minor.

STEP 15 - RAISING PARTNER'S MINOR

- ✓ All immediate raises of opener's minor suit deny a 4-card or longer major suit.
- ✓ A single raise shows 6-9 HCP and almost always at least 5-card support.
- ✓ A double raise is a limit raise, inviting game, with 10-12 HCP and at least 5-card support.
- ✓ The Criss-Cross minor-suit jump shift responses (1♣-2♦ and 1♦-3♣) show a game-forcing raise of opener's minor with at least 5-card support and 12+ HCP.
- ✓ You can also play that a jump to the 3-level in a new suit (but not 1♦-3♣) is a 'splinter raise' with 12+ HCP, at least 5-card support for opener's minor and shortness in the bid suit. If you play this, your Criss-Cross bids deny side-suit shortness.

STEP 16 - REBIDS AFTER MINOR-SUIT OPENINGS

OPENER'S POSSIBLE REBIDS AFTER 1♦-2♣

- 2NT= 12-14 HCP, balanced or 18-19 HCP balanced, all unbid suits stopped
- 2♦ = 5+ diamonds, usually a minimum hand
- 3♦ = 6+ quality diamonds, 16+ HCP
- 3NT= 'source of tricks' — 6+ solid (or very nearly solid) diamonds — with stoppers in all unbid suits
- 3♣ = fit for clubs with at least three to an honor; may have extra values
- 2♥ or 2♠ = reverse, 16+ HCP, at least four cards in the major, longer diamonds

AFTER A ONE-LEVEL RESPONSE TO 1♣ OR 1♦

- ✓ Show a fit if one's been found (4-card support):
 - Single raise = 12-15 HCP
 - Double raise = 15-18 HCP
 - Direct game raise = 18+ HCP, no shortness
 - Splinter raise = 18+ HCP, show shortness by unusual jump
- ✓ Rebid notrump:
 - 1NT= 12-14 HCP
 - 2NT = 18-19 HCP
 - 3NT= source of tricks with stoppers
- ✓ Rebid own suit:
 - Simple rebid = 5+ cards but almost always 6, minimum hand
 - Jump rebid= 6+ cards, 16+ HCP, but invitational only
- ✓ Rebid new suit:
 - Up the line = 12+ HCP
 - Reverse=16+ HCP, forcing one round
 - Jump Shift =18+ HCP, forcing to game

STEP 17 - AFTER NOTRUMP RESPONSES TO MINORS

- ✓ After auctions that start with a 1♣ or 1♦ opening and a notrump response the partnership will usually play in notrump, somewhat less frequently in opener's minor and even less frequently in a new suit introduced by opener. Any chance responder might have had to introduce a suit as a potential trump suit is gone!
- ✓ Stopper showing and seeking will usually be a prime concern of the follow-up auction.
- ✓ Opener's non-jump rebid of his opened minor after a 1NT or 2NT response is a sign-off – Stop, partner! After 3NT, a rebid of the minor is a try for slam.

STEP 18 - AFTER A MINOR SUIT IS RAISED

- ✓ After a direct raise of a minor-suit opening, the order of priority is 'game first' and 'notrump before the minor'.
- ✓ New suit bids below game by both players are stopper-showing tries for notrump – at least until proven otherwise!
- ✓ By bidding a new suit beyond three notrump, either partner will normally be making a slam try and showing a control in the bid suit.
- ✓ After a Criss-Cross forcing raise, the rebid of the agreed suit is a useful temporizing move that allows efficient use of auction space.

STEP 19 - FOURTH SUIT FORCING (FSF)

While some confusion will be inevitable in your initial gropings with FSF, just keep these guidelines in mind:

- ✓ FSF is a warm, happy bid that says ‘We’re going to game, at least, partner, now let’s try to figure out which game and whether we’re on for slam.’
- ✓ You want to find an eight-card major suit fit if it’s there to be found.
- ✓ You don’t want to be in 3NT with an unstopped suit, especially the ‘unbid’ suit if you can help it because that’s the lead they always make!
- ✓ Bidding space is precious and any below-game slam exploration you can accomplish is a good use of that space.

STEP 20 - WEAK JUMP SHIFTS

- ✓ A WJS in a major suit shows a 6-card suit (occasionally 7, but never 5) in a hand with 2-6 HCP.
- ✓ Suit quality is not an issue!
- ✓ Almost always, the partnership will play in the suit of the WJS, occasionally in notrump, rarely in opener's suit or a new suit.
- ✓ You can play that opener's 2NT rebid asks for a high-card feature in a side suit although responder might show the best of all possible suits for his WJS by rebidding 3NT.
- ✓ Opener's 3♣ rebid – regardless of what his opening bid was — can be used (recommended!) as a way to ask for possible side-suit shortness.

STEP 21 - NEW MINOR FORCING

- ✓ Bidding an unbid minor after a 1NT rebid is artificial and guarantees at least enough strength to invite to game (11 HCP).
- ✓ Over NMF, opener must show 3-card support for responder's major if he can do so.
- ✓ If he cannot do that, he shows an unbid 4-card major of his own.
- ✓ Third choice is to rebid his good (two of the top three honors) 5-card minor.
- ✓ Finally, he can rebid 2NT, or, with a maximum, rebid 3NT or show a stopper.

STEP 22 - INGBERMAN OVER REVERSES

- ✓ Responder can use an Ingberman 2NT bid after opener's reverse to 'slow down' the auction. This bid asks opener to bid 3♣ unless he has extra HCP or shape for his reverse.
- ✓ Opener may 'disobey' (and should disobey!) the 2NT relay order if he has values in the form of either HCP and/or distribution beyond the minimum he has promised.
- ✓ Any bid other than 2NT by responder over the reverse creates a game force.

25 STEPS TO LEARNING 2/1

Summary

STEP 23 - OVER A TAKEOUT DOUBLE

	NO DOUBLE	OVER A TAKEOUT DOUBLE
AFTER MAJOR OPENINGS		
<i>single raise</i>	7-10 HCP, 3-card support	6-9 HCP, 3- or 4-card support
<i>dbl raise</i>	preemptive	unchanged
3♣, 3♦	Bergen raises	unchanged
2NT	Jacoby forcing raise	unchanged
1NT	5-12 HCP forcing 1 round may have support for opener	6-9 HCP non-forcing no support
2♣, 2♦ and 2♥ (over 1♠)	natural, game forcing opening bid+	natural, nonforcing 9 HCP or less
<i>redouble</i>	not available	10+ HCP except as above (3♦ or 2NT types)
AFTER MINOR OPENINGS		
<i>1-over-1</i>	4+cards, 6+ HCP forcing one round	unchanged, except should be reluctant to bid with minimum
WJS	6+ cards, 6 HCP or less	unchanged
1NT	6-9 HCP, no major	unchanged non-forcing
2NT	11-12 HCP, game-invitational	preemptive raise of opener's minor
<i>dbl raise</i>	limit raise, 10-12 HCP, 5+card support	unchanged
3♣ over 1♦ 2♦ over 1♣	Criss-Cross artificial forcing raise	natural, less than 10 HCP, non-forcing
2♣ over 1♦	natural Two-over-One Game Force	natural, non-forcing more balanced than 3♣
<i>single raise</i>	6-9 HCP 5+ card support	same but not enough shape to preempt



STEP 24 - THE OPPONENTS OVERCALL

- ✓ The most dramatic condition we must accommodate after an overcall is the loss of auction space. Keep in mind that the partner of the overcaller may be about to diminish our supply of space even further!
- ✓ We do recover some of the lost space by having negative doubles and direct cuebids made available by the overcall.
- ✓ Notrump bids should always show stopper(s) in the overcaller's suit.

STEP 25 - IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

I know you're eager to put into practice all we've discussed in the previous 24 Steps but let me leave you with two last *caveat emptors*.

Consumer advisory 1

Don't think you have to memorize or immediately activate all that's gone before to improve your bidding.

- *Applying arcane formulae requiring point-counting processes is not the ticket to being a better bidder.*
- *Taking tricks in the bidding is almost as important as taking them in the play.*

Understanding these two principles will carry you a long way.

Furthermore, don't expect immediate results, at least of a totally positive nature! There is an adjustment period while taking on any new bidding system during which you shouldn't be at all surprised to find your performance deteriorating from what you've been used to. Think of it in terms of a dance metaphor: if all you've ever done is a Viennese waltz (get a grandparent to explain this to you if you're under forty) and you're about to step out for your first tango, you shouldn't be too surprised by a few stumbles or bruising of your partner's toes!

Consumer advisory 2

Ah, yes! Your partner! A common complaint I hear from students is 'There's no one I can play Two-over-One with now that I've learned it.' Answer: look harder! At clubs and social games everywhere Two-over-One is fast becoming the bidding system and replacing classic Standard American much the same way Goren's Standard American bidding supplanted Culbertson (again, ask your grandparents or look it up in *The Bridge Encyclopedia*).

When you do hook up with a partner — full-time or casual — don't spring your new bidding ideas on them unannounced or undiscussed. One partner waltzing and the other tangoing is not a good mix! Further to that, create your own supply of partners by (ideally) studying the system with someone.

Good luck!