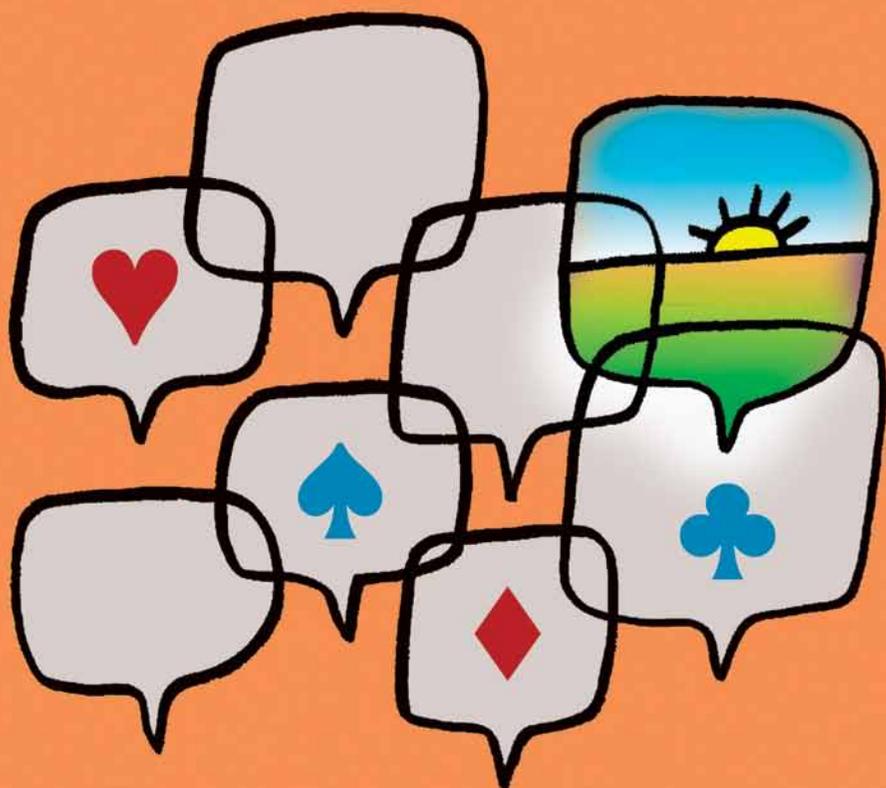


BIDDING AT BRIDGE

A QUIZBOOK

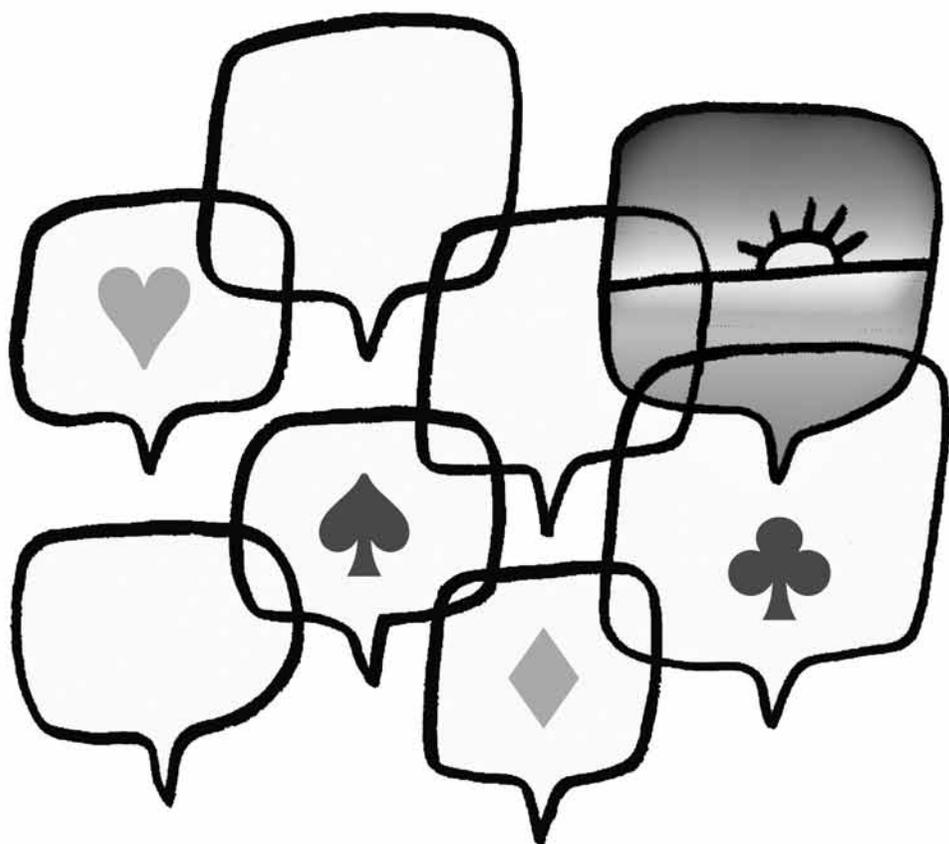


BARBARA SEAGRAM • DAVID BIRD

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A QUIZBOOK

BARBARA SEAGRAM • DAVID BIRD



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FOREWORD

Is this book packed with all the best bidding conventions and instruction on how to apply them? Not at all! There are plenty of good books to assist you in that regard, including *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* and *25 More Bridge Conventions You Should Know*, both from Master Point Press. Instead, we explain the sound natural bidding methods that will allow you to play in the right suit (or notrump) at the correct level.

You probably know that there are many different bidding methods, or ‘systems’ — Standard, Two-over-One, Acol, Precision, and a host of others. This book is based on one of the most popular around the world: so-called Standard bidding. You have probably also learned that certain bids mean that your hand falls into a certain range of points. Remember, though, that bidding is an art not a science, and that counting points can be done in more than one way. So don’t worry if we tell you that a certain bid means you have 6-9 points, when you have learned it as 6-10, for example; it’s close enough. When we introduce technical bridge terms for the first time, they appear in bold type, like **this**. The Glossary at the end of the book has a list of these terms for easy reference.

Once your basic bidding is sound and accurately describes the hands that you hold, then you can begin to add special conventions that are designed to cope with specific circumstances. No one becomes a great bidder merely by adding conventions to their card. If you were building a house, you would start by constructing a solid foundation, not by buying a brightly-painted weather vane for the roof!

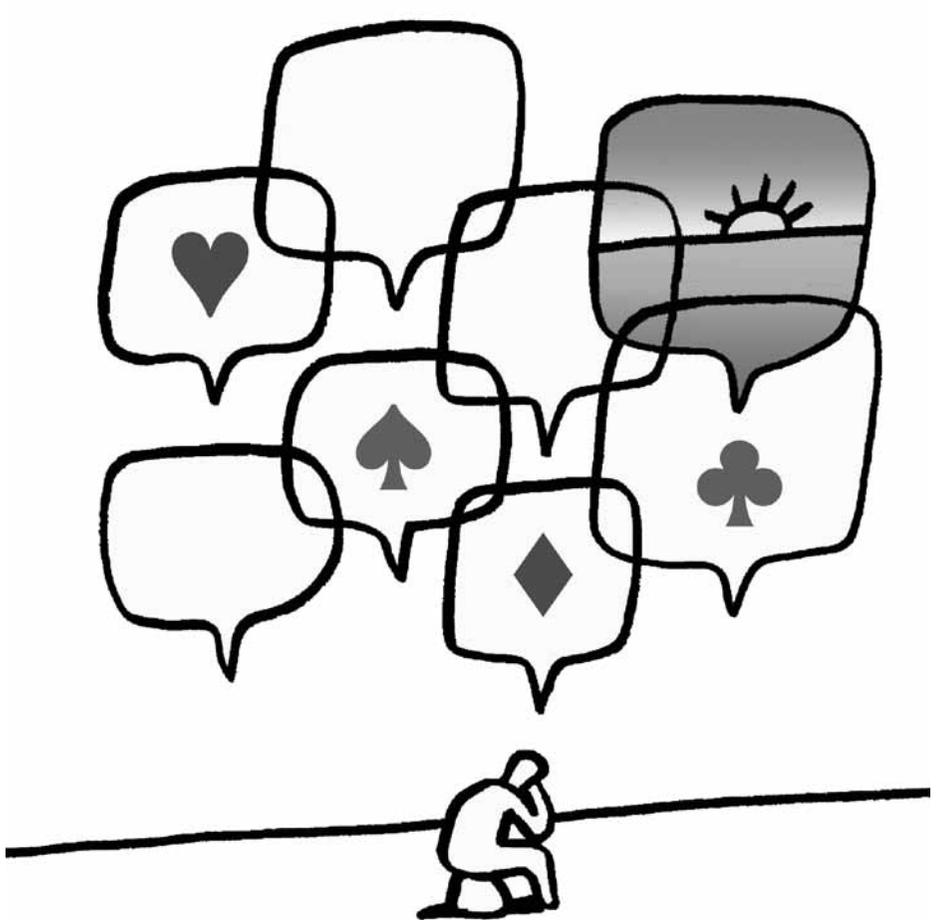
Each of the fourteen chapters begins with three or four pages of instruction. These are followed by several pages of multiple-choice bidding problems, illustrating everyday situations you will face countless times at the table. For each problem, choose the bid that seems to best describe your hand. You can then turn the page to see which bid we rate as best and an explanation of why.

When you have mastered all the topics described in this book, you can be confident that your standard of bidding will be well above average at your local club or in your social bridge games.

Barbara Seagram and David Bird

PART I

ONE-LEVEL OPENING BIDS AND RESPONSES



1

THE OPENING BID

There are 40 **high card points** (HCP) in the deck. Since there are four players sharing these between them, an average hand will contain 10 HCP.

There are two basic types of opening bid. When you begin with one of a suit (1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠), 1NT, 2NT or the artificial strong bid of 2♣, you tell partner that you hold a better than average hand. You hope that your side can win the auction and reach a good contract. When instead you open with a weak two-bid (2♦, 2♥ or 2♠) or three of a suit, you tell partner that you have a good suit but less than an average hand. Your intention then is different. You want to take away bidding space from the opponents, who are likely to hold the majority of the points. Such openings are known as **preemptive bids**.

In this chapter we will look at the first type of opening bid. You hold above-average values, usually 12 HCP or more, and must think how best to describe your hand. A full description of your shape and strength may take two or three bids, sometimes even more.

Opening with a balanced hand

When your hand is **balanced** (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2), an important rule of good bidding is to let partner know this as soon as possible. Around 80% of the world's players use the **strong notrump**, with an opening 1NT showing 15-17 HCP. This method, almost universal in North America, is the one we will follow in this book. If you happen to prefer a weak 1NT of 12-14 HCP, this does not affect the meaning of any bidding following a 1NT opening; it just means that the responder will need around 3 points more to bid a game or slam.

This is how you show a balanced hand, when your HCP fall into a particular range:

12-14	open one of a suit and rebid notrump at the lowest level
15-17	open 1NT
18-19	open one of a suit and jump rebid in notrump
20-21	open 2NT
22-23	open 2♣ and rebid 2NT
24-25	open 2♣ and rebid 3NT
26-27	open 3NT
28-30	open 2♣ and rebid 4NT

When two balanced hands face each other, a combined total of around 25 points will usually give you a good play for the game contract of 3NT.

Five-card majors

When you hold an unbalanced hand, or a balanced hand of 12-14 or 18-19 points, you will open one of a suit. A great majority of the world's players require five cards in their suit to open 1♠ or 1♥. This is the method we will use in this book. (If you happen to like opening on four-card majors, this will only affect a few of the quiz problems, so don't worry about it.)

Playing five-card majors affects your opening bid on a hand such as:

♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ A 10 5 4 ♣ 9 7 4

There's no problem on that one; you open 1♦, bidding your longer minor suit. An opening bid in a minor does not promise five cards and is frequently made on a four-card suit. Somewhat awkward are hands such as:

♠ A 9 6 2 ♥ K Q 10 5 ♦ J 8 4 ♣ K 2

You have to open 1♦, showing your longer minor despite the fact that it contains only three cards.

What if your minor suits are of equal length? With:

♠ A 4 3 ♥ A J 7 2 ♦ K J 3 ♣ J 6 5

you open 1♣ — the *lower of two three-card minors*. Suppose instead you pick up:

♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ 6 ♦ K Q 5 4 ♣ A 8 6 3

Now you would open 1♦ — the *higher of two four-card minors*.

Opening on a hand with two long suits

You thought this was meant to be a quiz book and you are itching to try the first problem? We understand, but let's first address the question of which suit you should bid first when you have two suits.

With a five-card suit and a four-card suit, *open the longer suit*.

♠ 9 5 ♥ 10 9 ♦ Q 8 5 4 2 ♣ A K Q J

Open 1♦. Do not think of opening 1♣. Note that the quality of your suit is immaterial — quantity is what matters. You plan to bid clubs at your next turn. When you bid two suits, the first one you bid always contains more cards, unless they are the same length.

With two five-card suits, *open the higher-ranking suit*.

♠ K Q 8 7 2 ♥ A 9 8 3 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ 7

Open 1♠. Plan to bid 2♥ next, allowing partner to choose between your suits.

Opening on a very strong hand

An opening bid at the one-level is not forcing. If your partner holds a weak hand, around 0-5 points with no particular fit for your suit, he will generally pass. When your own hand is so strong that you might make game opposite such a weak responding hand, you may open 2NT, showing a balanced hand of 20-21 HCP. Another option is the strongest opening bid in bridge: an artificial 2♣ (it says nothing about your club suit, merely indicating the power of your hand). This opening will always result in a game contract unless opener rebids 2NT, showing 22-23 points. The responder may then pass on a complete bust.

Measuring the strength of your hand

There are two important measures of the power of a bridge hand. The first is the number of HCP. This basic measure is fine on its own for assessing the strength of balanced hands. When you open 1NT, showing 15-17 HCP, your partner will immediately have a clear idea of what your hand looks like.

When you hold an unbalanced hand, the length of the suits is also important. Look at these two hands:

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A 5	♠ 10 7 2	1♥	2♥
♥ A Q 8 7 4	♥ K J 3		
♦ 10 8 3	♦ J 9 6		
♣ Q J 4	♣ K 10 7 6		

West holds 13 HCP and opens 1♥. East responds 2♥. West has a minimum opening and passes. If a spade is led, the defenders will score one spade, three diamonds and one club. Declarer will make eight tricks for his contract.

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A 5	♠ 10 7 2	1♥	2♥
♥ A Q 8 7 4 2	♥ K J 3		
♦ 10 8	♦ J 9 6		
♣ Q J 4	♣ K 10 7 6		

Here West holds the same 13 HCP but he has slightly better shape. He holds six hearts rather than five. Consequently he has one diamond fewer. If a spade is led now, declarer will make nine tricks. He makes one more trick because he has *better shape*. Since he holds only two diamonds instead of three, he will lose only two diamond tricks.

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A 5	♠ 10 7 2	1♥	2♥
♥ A Q 8 7 4 2	♥ K J 3	3♣	4♥
♦ 10	♦ J 9 6		
♣ Q J 8 4	♣ K 10 7 6		

West still holds the same 13 HCP but he has even better shape than on the previous hand: four clubs and one diamond instead of three clubs and two diamonds. He now thinks that he can make a **game try** of 3♣. East accepts, bidding 4♥, and the game will probably be made.

The value of these three West hands was made up of two different factors: HCP and shape. Some teachers say you should add points for extra length in a suit, others add points for singletons and voids. Both methods work, so don't worry about which one you use (but remember that distributional values are only counted if you are playing in a suit contract, not in notrump). Simply stated, the more shapely your hand is, the more useful it is likely to be in the play, particularly if you find a satisfactory trump fit.

Opening Bid — Problems A

1. ♠ A 2 ♥ J 9 8 6 2 ♦ A Q J 7 3 ♣ 10

What is your choice from these options?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♦ (c) 1♥

2. ♠ 9 8 5 ♥ K 10 7 6 ♦ A 3 ♣ A K 7 4

Which opening bid is best from these possibilities?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♥ (c) 1NT

3. ♠ A Q J 8 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ A 9 5

What bid is right here?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♠ (c) 1NT

4. ♠ 10 9 7 3 ♥ A J 4 ♦ 7 5 ♣ A Q 9 4

Which of these three choices appeals?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♣ (c) 1♠

5. ♠ 4 3 2 ♥ 3 2 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ A K Q 3

Which of these two bids would you choose?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♦

(The answers are overleaf.)

Opening Bid — Solutions A

1. ♠ A 2 ♥ J 9 8 6 2 ♦ A Q J 7 3 ♣ 10

With 12 HCP and two five-card suits, there is no temptation whatsoever to pass. Should you open 1♥ or 1♦? The diamonds are much stronger but remember the rule that you should open the *higher-ranking of two five-card suits*. When you choose a trump suit, it is often important to choose the suit where you have the greatest combined length. Suppose you have eight or nine hearts between you. That will make a fine trump suit even if you are missing, say, the ♥A and ♥K. Also, it is important to seek a fit in a major suit rather than a minor suit. That's because you will need only ten tricks to make game in a major. **Answer:** (c) 1♥.

2. ♠ 9 8 5 ♥ K 10 7 6 ♦ A 3 ♣ A K 7 4

Your hand is balanced and you therefore want to show this by bidding notrump as soon as possible. Should you open 1NT? No, because you don't hold 15-17 HCP. You should therefore plan to open one of a suit and to bid notrump at your next turn. You cannot open 1♥ because that would promise at least a five-card suit. Here you are happy to open in clubs. **Answer:** (a) 1♣.

3. ♠ A Q J 8 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ A 9 5

Your hand is balanced and you hold 15-17 HCP. End of discussion! You will open 1NT, giving an excellent description of your hand. When your hand is balanced, aim to bid notrump as soon as possible. **Answer:** (c) 1NT.

4. ♠ 10 9 7 3 ♥ A J 4 ♦ 7 5 ♣ A Q 9 4

Once again you hold a balanced hand. It is nowhere near strong enough to open 1NT. Should you open 1♣? No, because you have only 11 HCP and you are not worth opening the bidding at all. Some 11-point hands are worth an opening bid but only when they are shapely and contain a good suit or two. **Answer:** (a) Pass

5. ♠ 4 3 2 ♥ 3 2 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ A K Q 3

Open 1♦. If partner responds 1♥, you can now rebid 2♣. If you were to choose your 'better minor' instead (a common myth in the world of social players) and open 1♣, then you would be stuck for a rebid over 1♥. Bidding 2♣ at this point would promise more than four of them, and you cannot bid 1NT without a spade stopper. Bidding 2♦ would promise a very different hand (see p. 34). **Answer:** (b) 1♦.

Opening Bid — Problems B

6. ♠ 2 ♥ A K 9 3 ♦ Q J 7 6 3 ♣ K 8 4

You pick up this hand. What action will you choose?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♦ (c) 1♥

7. ♠ A Q 5 ♥ K 7 ♦ A K 10 6 ♣ Q 9 8 2

Which bid is right from these four possibilities?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♦ (c) 1NT (d) 2NT

8. ♠ A J 8 6 ♥ K 10 8 3 ♦ 7 2 ♣ A J 4

What will you choose now?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♥ (c) 1♠ (d) 1NT

9. ♠ 4 2 ♥ A K J 9 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K 10 7 4 2

Which of these three choices do you like best?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♣ (c) 1♥

10. ♠ K ♥ J 8 7 5 4 ♦ A 10 5 3 2 ♣ Q J

What action will you take here?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♦ (c) 1♥

(The answers are overleaf.)

Opening Bid — Solutions B

6. ♠ 2 ♥ A K 9 3 ♦ Q J 7 6 3 ♣ K 8 4

You will nearly always open when you hold only 12 HCP, so of course you are happy to open here with 13 HCP. Will you open 1♥ or 1♦? There are two good reasons not to open 1♥. Firstly, such an opening bid would promise at least a five-card suit. Secondly, when you hold five cards in one suit and four in another, you open in the five-card suit. **Answer:** (b) 1♦.

7. ♠ A Q 5 ♥ K 7 ♦ A K 10 6 ♣ Q 9 8 2

Since you hold a balanced hand, you should aim to bid notrump as soon as possible. Should you open 1NT? No, because that would show 15-17 HCP and you hold 18 HCP. How about 2NT? No, that would show 20-21 points, so you are not strong enough. You should open one of a suit, intending to rebid 2NT if partner responds at the one-level. With four cards in each minor, you start with 1♦. **Answer:** (b) 1♦.

8. ♠ A J 8 6 ♥ K 10 8 3 ♦ 7 2 ♣ A J 4

Once again you hold a balanced hand but cannot open 1NT because you do not have 15-17 HCP. Nor can you open 1♠ or 1♥ because these bids promise a five-card suit. You will have to open a three-card minor instead. **Answer:** (a) 1♣.

9. ♠ 4 2 ♥ A K J 9 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K 10 7 4 2

Always consider your distribution on unbalanced hands. Not only do you have a splendid five-card heart suit, you also have a second five-card suit. Shapely hands like these will provide plenty of tricks if you end as declarer. When you open the bidding on this type of hand do not think: 'I'm being a bit bold, opening on just 11 points'. You have an excellent hand and it would be a big mistake not to open the bidding. With two five-card suits you will open the higher one, as usual. **Answer:** (c) 1♥.

10. ♠ K ♥ J 8 7 5 4 ♦ A 10 5 3 2 ♣ Q J

You have 11 HCP and some shape but there are two reasons why you should choose to pass on this hand. Firstly, you would have to open 1♥ and your hearts are weak. You would not want partner to lead a heart if the opponents played in a spade contract. Secondly, if the opponents hold the ace and king, your bare ♣QJ will be worth almost nothing. The same applies to the ♠K. High cards are at their most valuable when they are in your long suits. **Answer:** (a) Pass.

Opening Bid — Problems C

11. ♠ K J 8 ♥ A Q ♦ A Q 10 8 3 ♣ K Q 9

You pick up this hand (yes, lucky you!). What opening bid will you choose?

- (a) 1♦ (b) 1NT (c) 2♣ (d) 2NT

12. ♠ Q 9 8 5 4 ♥ A J 10 7 6 3 ♦ A 10 ♣ —

Which action will you select?

- (a) Pass (b) 1♥ (c) 1♠

13. ♠ 8 ♥ A K J 9 8 2 ♦ A K Q 7 ♣ A 5

Which of these bids is your choice?

- (a) 1♥ (b) 2♣ (c) 2♥

14. ♠ 10 7 ♥ A J 5 4 2 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ A J 8

Which of these bids do you prefer?

- (a) 1♥ (b) 1NT

15. ♠ A J 7 6 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ A Q ♣ 10 7 6

Which of these bids do you prefer?

- (a) 1♣ (b) 1♥ (c) 1♠ (d) 1NT

(The answers are overleaf.)

Opening Bid — Solutions C

11. ♠ K J 8 ♥ A Q ♦ A Q 10 8 3 ♣ K Q 9

You have a balanced hand of 21 HCP. All balanced hands containing 20 or 21 points are opened 2NT, giving an excellent description of your hand immediately. **Answer:** (d) 2NT.

12. ♠ Q 9 8 5 4 ♥ A J 10 7 6 3 ♦ A 10 ♣ —

Only 11 HCP but remember that to assess the strength of a hand you must look at both the HCP and the shape. With two long major suits and the consequent shortness in the minors, this hand has excellent 'playing strength'. What does that mean? It means that if you end up playing the hand, particularly if partner has a fit for one of your suits, you can expect to make plenty of tricks. As always, you will open in your longer suit, bidding 1♥ rather than 1♠. **Answer:** (b) 1♥.

13. ♠ 8 ♥ A K J 9 8 2 ♦ A K Q 7 ♣ A 5

Suppose you open 1♥ on this hand and this is followed by three passes. What would your reaction be? You would surely be worried that you had missed a game in hearts! If partner holds as little as three low hearts and no HCP at all, you would have a great chance of scoring at least ten tricks. On hands like these, where you fear missing a game if partner passes a one-bid, you should choose bridge's strongest opening bid: 2♣. Partner will then have to bid, even if he has no points at all. An opening bid of 2♥ would be no good. We will see in a later chapter that this is a weak opening bid, showing a six-card suit and 6-10 points. **Answer:** (b) 2♣.

14. ♠ 10 7 ♥ A J 5 4 2 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ A J 8

It seems here that you have two satisfactory opening bids: 1♥ and 1NT. Suppose you open 1♥, though, and partner responds 1♠. What will you bid next? It's a problem. You cannot rebid 1NT, showing 12-14 points. Nor should you rebid 2♥. That would suggest a minimum hand with 13-15 points only, and you have a bit more than that. Simply open 1NT, even though you hold a five-card major. **Answer:** (b) 1NT.

15. ♠ A J 7 6 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ A Q ♣ 10 7 6

Opening 1♥ or 1♠ promises at least five cards in your suit, so you cannot do that. 1NT shows 15-17 points and you are too strong for that. You must open 1♣, intending to bid strongly thereafter. If partner responds 1♦, you will jump to 2NT. If partner responds 1♥ or 1♠, you will raise him to the three-level. **Answer:** (a) 1♣.

BASIC BIDDING MADE EASY

Declarer Play at Bridge: a Quizbook, by the same author team, was named the 2013 Book of the Year by the American Bridge Teachers' Association. Building on the success of that title, this book gives the improving player a chance to practice the principles on which sound bidding is based, from the opening bid onward.

Is this book packed with all the best bidding conventions and instruction on how to apply them? Not at all! Instead, it explains the sound natural bidding methods that will allow you to play in the right suit (or notrump) at the correct level. Each of the fourteen chapters begins with three or four pages of instruction, followed by several pages of multiple-choice bidding problems, illustrating everyday situations you will face countless times at the table.



BARBARA SEAGRAM (Toronto, Canada) is one of North America's leading bridge teachers. Her *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* (with Marc Smith) is the bestselling bridge book of the last fifty years.



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) may be the most prolific bridge author of all time, with more than 100 books published. His most recent book for MPP was *Defensive Play at Bridge: a Quizbook* (with Barbara Seagram).

