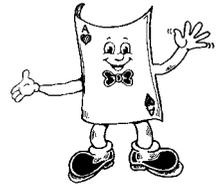


# NOTRUMP AND BALANCED DISTRIBUTION

When we think notrump, we think balanced. While it is true that many notrump bids do show balanced distribution, it is possible to bid notrump with an unbalanced hand. To prevent an unbalanced hand from keeping you out of 3NT when it is the right contract, it is a good idea to know which notrump bids promise balanced distribution and which notrump bids do not specify balanced distribution.



## OPENER'S BALANCED BIDS

For opener, the only bids that guarantee balanced distribution are:

- **Notrump opening bids**

- A 1NT opening bid (15-17 HCP)

- A 2NT opening bid (20-21 HCP)

- **Opener's first rebid of 1NT or 2NT**

- Opener's 1NT rebid shows a balanced hand that was too weak to open 1NT (12-14 HCP.)

- Opener's 2NT rebid shows a balanced hand that was too strong to open 1NT but not strong enough to open 2NT (18 or 19 HCP.)

- **Opener's first bid of 2♣**

- Opener's 2NT rebid shows a balanced hand (22-24 HCP)

- Opener's 3NT rebid shows a balanced hand (25-27 HCP)

## OPENER'S DECISION --- SHOW A MAJOR OR BID NOTRUMP?

Notrump opening bids are so descriptive that they are our first priority. That includes opening 1NT or 2NT holding a five-card major. Failing to open a hand that meets the requirements for a 1NT opening bid with 1NT often makes opener's rebid awkward.

What about opener's first rebid in notrump? Could opener have an unbid major? Here's our advice. **Don't skip over a major to rebid 1NT.** Opener's 1NT rebid denies support for the major shown by responder and also denies a four-card major that opener could have shown on the one level. This guideline maximizes our chance of finding the important major suit fit.

However, **opener can and should skip over a major to rebid 2NT.** *Opener must show a fit for responder's major rather than rebid 2NT* but, when it comes to showing a new four-card major, opener prefers bidding 2NT. It is more descriptive and does not usually cause you to miss a major suit fit. Responder seldom passes opener's highly invitational 2NT rebid and responder can continue to explore for a major suit fit when that possibility exists.

## RESPONDER'S BALANCED BIDS

There are only two instances where responder's notrump bid promises a balanced hand:

- A first response of 2NT (we suggest this shows 11-12 points.)
- A first response of 3NT (we suggest this shows 13-16 points)

**MAJORS FIRST** --- Both notrump responses above deny a four-card major that responder could have shown on the one level. After an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠, a 3NT response also denies a fit for opener's major.

**Any notrump bid NOT mentioned above does NOT promise a balanced hand** for either opener or responder. It is possible to end up in a notrump contract with neither partner having balanced distribution.