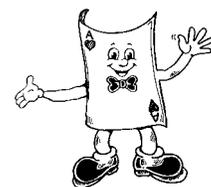


NOTRUMP AND STOPPERS



Sometimes, it is important to have specific suits stopped in order to bid notrump. At other times, we are not concerned with stoppers at all. The bottom line is that your opponents will listen to your bidding to choose a good opening lead (often an unbid suit or a suit bid by their side). If the auction has strongly suggested an opening lead, don't offer to declare notrump unless you have a stopper in that suit.

THERE ARE NOT STOPPER REQUIREMENTS FOR THESE BIDS

- **A 1NT opening bid** — Use this wonderfully descriptive opening bid any time you have a balanced hand with the required number of points (16-18 or 15-17 by partnership agreement). An opening bid in notrump does NOT promise "stoppers" in all suits.
- **Strong notrump opening bids** — Opening 2NT, or even a 2NT rebid following a 2C opening bid still do not promise to have all suits stopped.
- **Opener's 1NT or 2NT rebid in a non-competitive auction** — A 1NT rebid by opener describes a hand too weak to have opened 1NT. Opener should not bypass a major to rebid 1NT but frequently will do so to make a 2NT jump rebid.
- **A 1NT response in a non-competitive auction** — When only you and partner are bidding, a 1NT response shows a minimum hand with no better bid. It does not guarantee stoppers. It doesn't even show a balanced hand.
- **Raises of partner's notrump bid** — Once partner suggests playing in notrump, you can raise higher without any specific stoppers. Stoppers are partner's worry in that case.

THERE ARE STOPPER REQUIREMENTS FOR THESE NOTRUMP BIDS

- **A notrump bid after your side has bid three suits** — When the opponents are silent but you and partner have bid three suits, don't offer to declare notrump unless you have a stopper in the fourth (unbid) suit. There aren't many forcing bids left. To make a forcing bid with a game-going hand that lacks a stopper, many partnerships agree to bid that fourth (unstopped) suit to see if partner can bid notrump or provide three-card support for responder's first suit (called Fourth Suit Forcing).
- **A 1NT overcall** — A 1NT overcall promises at least one stopper in any suit bid by the opponents. Without stoppers, your alternatives are: overcall a five-card or longer suit, make a takeout double with support for the unbid suits, or even pass.
- **A 1NT response in competition** — In a competitive auction, a 1NT response should feel good. It shows a decent minimum responding hand and guarantees a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. The same rule also applies to a 1NT bid by advancer, the partner of the player who overcalls or doubles.
- **Any time you INTRODUCE notrump after your opponents have bid you show at least one stopper in any suit(s) bid by the opponents.** — This is true for notrump bids and rebids by anyone: opener, responder, overcaller or advancer.