

BOSS

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Boss makes a number of claims...

- (i) In his first two bids, Opener gives responder his point count within a narrow range of 2 or 3 points and also at the same time, in some cases, the precise number of cards in his best suit.
- (ii) With a single exception, he does this using natural bids.
- (iii) He has no difficulty in bidding an unbalanced, 15 or 16 point hand.
- (iv) His second bid is usually low enough for further information to be exchanged before settling upon the final contract.
- (v) The system is comprehensive, unambiguous and quite easy to learn. It is fully explained in just 6 pages.

Boss is an acronym for " Bidding Order Shows Strength ". Before proceeding a few explanations are necessary.

Biddable Suits and Long Suits.

A biddable suit is a suit with 4 or more cards. A long suit is a suit with 5 or more cards.

Distribution.

The distribution of the cards in a hand is shown in ranking order; so 5 4 3 1 means 5 spades, 4 hearts, 3 diamonds and a singleton club.

Touching Suits and Non-Touching Suits.

Touching suits are two suits where one of the suits has a ranking order immediately above or below that of the other suit. There are three pairs of touching suits: Spades and Hearts, Hearts and Diamonds, Diamonds and Clubs. There are just two pairs of non-touching suits: Spades and Diamonds, Hearts and Clubs. The only remaining pair is Spades and Clubs, which is not classed for our purposes either as touching or non-touching.

No - Trumps

An opening bid of 1NT shows 12 to 14 points and a balanced hand, vulnerable or non-vulnerable. A bid of a suit followed by minimum no-trumps shows 15 or 16 points and a bid of a suit followed by a jump in no-trumps shows 17 or 18 points. With 19 points, Opener goes straight to 3 NT which sometimes requires a double jump.

Losing Trick Count.

The losing trick count is not an essential part of Boss but it can usefully be used in conjunction with it. For the benefit of those who know about it and wish to use it, the number of losers is given from time to time along with the number of points.

OPENER'S BIDS and REBIDS

An opening bid of a suit at the 1 level represents a point count of anything from 12 to 19 points. The second bid fixes the range within a narrow limit. The bids on this page and pages 2 and 3 are not applicable if either Opener or responder agrees the first suit bid by his partner. If either player agrees his partner's first suit, then please see the appropriate section on page 4 or 5. Responder's bids are shown in brackets.

1. Opener has 12 to 14 high card points.

The hand The bid Examples

(i) 2 touching suits with both suits Bid down the suits. 1H (2C) 2D
the same length or the higher With 4 4 4 1 bid the hearts first. 1S (2C) 2H
ranking suit containing more With 1 4 4 4 bid the diamonds first.
cards than the other suit.
(eg 5 4 2 2, 2 5 5 1)

(ii) Exactly 4 spades and at 1 club followed by minimum spades. 1C (1H) 1S
least 4 clubs. (eg 4 2 2 5,
4 1 2 6, 4 1 4 4, 4 4 1 4)
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(iii) 6 or more cards in a major in Bid the major twice and bid it at the 1H (2C) 3H
a hand with 6 or fewer losers. 3 level with a jump the second time. 1S (2D) 3S
(eg 6 4 2 1). If unfamiliar with
the losing trick count, use (iv).

(iv) At least 5 cards in a suit when Bid the suit and bid it again at the 2 1H (2C) 2H
none of the above apply. level. With two 5 card non-touching 1D (1H) 2D
(eg 5 3 4 1, 2 3 2 6, 4 5 2 2, suits, bid the major suit twice.
2 4 5 2, 5 2 5 1).

With two 4 card suits and a balanced hand (such as 4 4 3 2) open 1NT.

2. Opener has 15 or 16 high card points and at least one long suit. With no long suit, please see the appropriate section on page 4.

The hand The bid Examples

(i) 4 or 5 spades and 3 or 1 club followed by a jump bid in 1C (1D) 2S
more clubs (eg 5 3 2 3, spades at the 2 level. The club
4 2 2 5). bid should be alerted.

(ii) 4 or 5 cards in a major and Bid the minor first and then the major 1C (1D) 1H
3 or more cards in a minor. at the minimum level. The first bid 1D (1H) 1S
Not clubs and spades. should be alerted. 1D (1S) 2H
(eg 5 3 3 2, 3 5 3 2, 2 5 2 4,
2 4 2 5)

(iii) Two biddable majors with 1 heart followed by spades at the 1H (2C) 2S
5 cards in one or both majors. minimum level. Sometimes the heart 1H (2D) 2S
(eg 4 5 2 2, 5 4 3 1, 5 5 1 2) suit will be the shorter of the two suits.
Responder should alert these bids.

(iv) 6 cards in a major. Bid the major and bid it again with 1S (2C) 3S
(eg 6 3 2 2, 6 4 2 1, 4 6 2 2) a jump. With 7 cards, 16 points and 1H (1S) 3H
5 or fewer losers, Opener's second
bid is game in the major.

(v) Two biddable minors with 5 1 club followed by diamonds at the 1C (1H) 2D
cards in one or both minors. minimum level. Sometimes the shorter 1C (1S) 2D
(eg 2 2 5 4, 3 1 4 5, 1 2 5 5) suit will be clubs. Responder should
alert these bids.

(vi) 5 or more cards in a minor Opener bids the minor first and then 1C (1H) 1NT
and fewer than 4 cards in any bids no-trumps at the minimum level. 1D (2C) 2NT
other suit. (eg 2 3 3 5, With 6 cards in the minor and a 1D (1H) 3D
2 2 6 3, 4 2 5 2) singleton suit bypassed by responder,
Opener makes a jump bid in the minor
to the 3 level.

With the right bid from responder, Opener's second bid will sometimes be a minimum no-trumps
(showing 15 or 16 points) in preference to some of the above second bids. It is only in this range
(15 or 16 points) that Opener sometimes bids the shorter of two suits first.

3. Opener has 17 to 19 high card points.

The hand The bid Examples

(i) 4 spades and 5 or 6 clubs. 1 club followed by a double 1C (1D) 3S
(eg 4 2 2 5, 4 2 1 6) jump in spades to the 3 level. 1C (1H) 3S

(ii) 5 spades and 3 or more clubs 1 spade followed by a club at 1S (2D) 3C
but fewer than 4 hearts. the minimum level. 1S (2H) 3C
(eg 5 3 2 3, 5 2 1 5)

(iii) 4 cards in a major and 5 or 6 Bid the minor first and then the 1C (1D) 2H
in a minor. Not clubs and major with a jump. 1D (1H) 2S
spades. (eg 4 2 5 2, 2 4 1 6) 1D (1S) 3H

(iv) 5 cards in a major and fewer Bid down non-touching suits without 1S (2C) 2D
than 4 cards in the other major. a jump. Opener's second bid must be 1S (2H) 3D
(eg 5 3 2 3, 3 5 4 1, 5 2 1 5) alerted. The second suit may contain 1S (2D) 3D
fewer than 4 cards. 1H (1S) 2C

(v) 6 cards in a major or 8 Opener makes a jump bid in the suit 2S (pass)
playing tricks. With 8 at the 2 level. Responder, with 2 cards in 2S (4S) pass
playing tricks Opener may the suit, bids to tell Opener how many 2H(3H) 4H
have less than 17 points. extra tricks he expects to make. With 2H (3H) pass
(eg 6 2 3 2, 2 6 3 2, 2 2 7 2) less than 2 cards in the suit but with a
strong hand, responder bids no-trumps or
a new suit. If weak, he passes.

(vi) 7 or more cards in a major 1 of the suit followed by game in the 1S (2H) 4S
(eg 7 1 1 4) major.

(vii) 2 biddable majors with at Bid one of the majors and then the 1S (2D) 3H
least 5 cards in one of the second major with a jump. Bid the 1H (2C) 3S
suits. (eg 6 4 2 1, 5 4 3 1, longer suit first if there is one.
5 5 1 2)

(viii) 5 or more cards in a minor Opener bids the minor first followed 1C (1D) 4C
and fewer than 4 cards in by no-trumps at the appropriate level. 1C (1S) 5C
any other suit (eg 3 2 2 6, However, with 6 cards in the minor and 1D (2C) 3NT
3 3 5 2) a singleton bypassed by responder, Opener
goes to 4 of the minor unless the singleton
is an ace. With 7 cards in the minor he bids
game in the minor if responder bypasses a
non-ace singleton.

2 biddable minor suits with Bid one of the minors. Choose the longer 1C (1S) 3D
at least 5 cards in one of the suit if there is one. If responder's reply is 1D (1S) 3C
suits and fewer than 4 cards helpful, Opener makes the appropriate bid 1C (1S) 2NT
in a major. (eg 1 2 5 5, in no-trumps. Otherwise, he bids the second
2 2 5 4) minor with a jump.

With the right bid from responder, Opener's second bid will sometimes be the appropriate strong
bid in no-trumps in preference to some of the above second bids. With 18 or 19 points Opener is able
to bid a second time after a response of 1NT showing 6 or 7 points. With no long suit, please see the
appropriate section on page 4.

15 to 19 POINTS AND NO LONG SUIT

With 15 to 19 points and three 4 card suits, Opener's first bid is 1C except when holding 4 4 4 1 in which case
he opens 1D. Importantly, Opener waits to hear his partner's bid before deciding on his own second bid. eg.
with 4 4 1 4, 15 points and 6 losers, the bidding would vary as follows: 1C (1D) 1NT, or 1C (1H) 3H,
or 1C (1S) 3S, or 1C (1NT) pass or, 1C (2C) pass.

If Opener has 15 to 19 points and two 4 card suits, he bids the lower ranking 4 card suit first. If responder bids
Opener's 2 card suit, Opener bids no-trumps at the appropriate level. If responder's bid shows a fit in a major,
Opener continues in that suit. If responder bids Opener's 3 card suit, Opener bids his second 4 card suit at the
appropriate level to show his point count. If responder's bid shows a fit in a minor, Opener must choose between
supporting the minor or bidding no trumps at the appropriate level.

With one 4 card suit, Opener's second bid is no-trumps at the appropriate level.

RESPONDER AGREES OPENER'S SUIT.

If Opener bids 1 of a major and responder has 4 or more cards in the suit, he bids as follows:

If responder has: He bids at:

9 losers or 6 to 10 points, the 2 level.

8 losers or 11 or 12 points, the 3 level.

7 losers or 13 or 14 points, the 4 level.

If responder has 6 or fewer losers or 15 or more points, he bids a minor suit at the minimum level and waits to hear Opener's second bid before deciding whether or not to try for a slam. There may be fewer than 4 cards in responder's minor.

If Opener bids 1 of a minor responder needs 5 cards in that suit to be sure of a fit. However, even with 5 cards he avoids bidding that suit if at all possible. If he has an alternative biddable suit, he bids it. Failing that, if he has a balanced hand, he bids no-trumps. He bids 2NT with 11 or 12 points or 3NT with 13 or 14 points. As a last resort he supports Opener's minor in the same way as he would if the suit were a major. With 6 losers or 15 or 16 points he is strong enough to bid at the 5 level.

Let us suppose that responder agrees Opener's second suit. Because Opener has bid twice, responder knows the strength of his partner's hand and can bid accordingly. For example, if the bidding goes 1C (1D) 1H, Opener is showing 15 or 16 points and at least 4 hearts. If responder has 4 or more hearts and 10 to 15 points, he bids 4H. If he has 9 points, he bids 3H asking Opener to go to 4H if he is maximum. If the agreed suit is a minor and responder has a stop in the fourth suit, he may try for a no-trump contract by bidding that suit to show a stop.

If responder agrees Opener's major or minor suit and has 15 or more high card points and a void or a singleton ace in one of the other suits, responder makes a first time jump bid in that suit. If Opener is minimum, he bids game. If Opener has 15 or more points, he asks for aces with a slam in view. Responder shows only aces in the 3 suits he has not bid. Opener will not switch from a slam in the agreed suit to a slam in no-trumps unless he has the right cards in the suit bid by responder (i.e. the suit with the void or singleton ace). At no other time does responder make a jump bid in a new suit. The jump bid should be alerted. This particular bid is not an essential part of Boss. Responder's first time jump bid in a new suit can be used in other ways and is primarily a matter of partnership agreement.

RESPONDER LACKS SUIT AGREEMENT.

When responder makes his first bid and bids a new suit at the minimum level, he requires 6 or more points to bid at the 1 level but 8 or more points, if forced by the bidding, to bid at the 2 level. With 6 or 7 points but no more and either 2 or 3 cards in Opener's suit, he may bid 1NT. With less than 6 points responder passes.

When Opener bids 1S, responder requires 5 or more hearts and 8 or more points in order to bid 2H. With no spade fit and only 4 hearts he bids a minor instead and occasionally this has to be a 3 card minor.

Responder's second bid is weak if he repeats Opener's first suit at the minimum level. Such a bid is called a preference bid. Responder keeps in mind that Opener's second bid may occasionally contain more cards than the first and that, if Opener's first bid is a minor, it may be a 3 card suit. If the preference bid necessitates moving up 1 level, he must consider whether the change of suit will yield at least 1 extra trick.

Responder bids as economically as possible unless he has 5 or more cards in a major. If Opener bids 1C and responder has 4 diamonds and 4 cards in a major, he bids 1D. With 5 cards in a major he bids the major. If Opener bids 1H and responder has 4 spades and 5 cards in a minor, he bids 1S. If Opener bids 1S and responder has 5 hearts and 4 or 5 cards in a minor, he bids 2H.

Responder's second bid is forcing to game if he bids a new suit at the minimum level. He is showing points for anything from a slightly risky game to a slam contract. Even when the bidding is kept at the 1 level as in 1C (1D) 1H (1S), responder's second bid is game forcing.

After 3 suits have been mentioned, the bid of a fourth suit by either partner represents a suit with just one stop. If the other partner also has a stop in the fourth suit, a no-trump game contract has a good chance of success. Without a stop, a safer contract is a suit contract. Sometimes the contract will be 4 of a minor because neither 3NT or 5 of the minor looks like being successful.

OPENER AGREES RESPONDER'S SUIT.

If Opener bids a major and then supports responder's non-touching minor, the artificial bid as explained in 3 (iv) retains its meaning. So, if the bidding goes 1S (2D) 3D or 1H (2C) 3C, Opener is showing a 5 card major, 17 to 19 points and probably fewer than 4 cards in the minor. At other times, if Opener repeats responder's suit, he is showing support for that suit. For example, if the bidding goes 1D (1H) 2H, Opener is agreeing hearts but has only 12 to 14 points. If the bidding goes 1D (1H) 3H, Opener has 4 or more hearts and 15 to 16 points. With 4 hearts and 17 to 19 points, Opener bids game.

If the bidding goes 1S (2H) 3H, Opener has 3 or more hearts and 12 to 14 points. With exactly 3 hearts and 15 or 16 points, Opener bids 2NT.

GENERAL

Boss readily accommodates such bids as pre-emptive bids, strong 2NT opening bids as well as such artificial bids as Stayman, transfer bids, strong 2C opening bids and Gerber and Blackwood. Boss is not keen on light opening bids but this need not deter anyone from using them if they so wish. The sort of hand suitable for a light opening bid is also frequently suitable for an overcall based on losers. Boss recommends the use of the bids 4D and 5D to replace the Gerber 4C and 5C when clubs have been bid naturally during the auction. The responses, of course move up a level as well so that 4S means 1 ace, 4NT means 2 aces and 5C means 3 aces.

ALERTING

An opening bid of 1H or 1C should be alerted because it may represent a shorter suit than Opener's second suit. The opening bids of 1D or 1S should be alerted because they may represent 3 card suits. Also the words ' Possible Canape ' should be written on the convention card.

SOME EXAMPLES

(S) A K J 10 x Opener bids 1S. If he hears 2C, he bids 3NT. If he hears 2D or 2H, he bids

(H) K x x 3D to show 5 spades and 17 to 19 points. If he hears 2S, he bids 4S.

(D) A K x

(C) x x

(18 pts)

(S) A K Q x x Opener says 1S. If he hears 2C, he bids 2S. If he hears 2D, he must not bid

(H) x x x 3D because this is an artificial bid showing 6 cards in spades as well as

(D) K x x x 17 to 19 points. Instead he says 2S. If he hears 2H, he bids 3H, because he

(C) x has 6 losers and responder is promising 5 hearts. If he hears 2S, he passes

(12 pts) though he is likely to make 3S.

(S) x If the bidding goes 1C (1D) 1H (1S), responder has sufficient points for

(H) A K x x x game (10 points or more), less than 3 hearts and a stop in spades. Responder's

(D) x x second bid of 1S is game forcing. He hopes Opener also has a stop in spades

(C) A K J 10 x and that he will bid 3NT. Opener does not have a stop in spades so he bids 2C

(15 pts) which says that his opening bid of 1C represents a decent club suit.

(S) A K J x x x The opening bid can be 1S or 2S. Let us assume that Opener bids 1S. If he

(H) A Q x x hears 2C or 2D, he bids 3H. If he hears 2H, he bids 4C asking for aces with a

(D) A x slam in view. If responder bids both minors, a slam is no-trumps looks possible.

(C) x

(18 pts)

(S) A K x x x This is one of those occasional hands where Opener bids the short suit first.

(H) A K J x He bids 1H. If he hears 2C or 2D, he knows that responder has neither

(D) x x 4 hearts or 4 spades. Opener bids 2S in a try for no-trumps. If Opener hears

(C) x x 2H, he passes. If he hears 3H, he goes to 4H. If he hears 1S, he jumps to 3S.

(15 pts)

(S) x x This is the other type of hand where Opener bids the shorter suit first.

(H) x x Opener bids 1C. If he hears 1H or 1S, he bids 2D in a try for no-trumps.

(D) A K x x x If responder bids 1D, Opener bids 3D. If responder bids 2C, Opener passes.

(C) A K J x With 5 clubs and 4 diamonds, Opener also opens the bidding with 1C and

(15 pts) also bids 2D if responder bids 1H or 1S.

(S) K x x x This time we show responder's hand. The bidding has gone 1C (1H)

(H) A K x x x 2C (2S). Opener is forced to bid. If he says 3D, responder says 3NT. If

(D) K x Opener says 3C, he has 6 or more clubs and 7 or fewer losers. Responder

(C) x x has a club fit and 6 losers and so he bids 5C

(13 pts)

(S) A K x x x This too is responder's hand. Opener has diamonds and clubs and the bidding

(H) K x has gone 1C (1S) 2D (2S). If Opener has 3 spades, he will bid 4S. If Opener

(D) K x x says 3D, he has 5 or more diamonds and responder says 5D or 3NT. Responder

(C) x x has 6 losers. If Opener says 3C, he has 5 or more clubs and responder either

(13 pts) bids 3H to encourage Opener to go to 3NT or he bids 3S to show his 6 spades