

This week, let's have a summary of how opener should bid balanced hands. We have already seen that an opening 1NT is 15-17 points. So first of all, let's clarify what we do when our balanced hand is outside this range: -

- 12-14 points open 1 of a suit and rebid NT at the lowest level.
- 15-17 points open 1NT
- 18-19 points open 1 of a suit and jump rebid in NT.
- 20-21 points open 2NT
- 22-24 points open 2♣ and rebid 2NT

..... there are various schemes as to what to do with more than 24 points. In simple Standard American you open 2♣ and then jump to an appropriate number of NT's. All of today's hands are balanced and will normally open or rebid in NT: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ Q65	♠ K98	♠ KJ9
♥ J105	♥ KJ5	♥ AQ5	♥ AQ10	♥ AQ10
♦ A875	♦ A875	♦ AJ75	♦ AK75	♦ AKJ5
♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7	♣ AQ7

1. 14 points. Open 1♦. If partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 1NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you pass. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is 2NT – this still shows 12-14 points, it is partner who has pushed the bidding up to the two level and he has a good hand (a *good* 10 or more points, usually 11+).
2. 16 points. So open 1NT.
3. 19 points. Too good for a 1NT opener but not good enough for 2NT. So with this hand you open 1♦ and then jump in NT. Thus if partner bids 1♥ or 1♠ then your rebid is 2NT. If partner bids 1NT or 2♦ (6-9) then you raise to 3NT. If partner bids 2♣ then your rebid is a jump in NT, so 3NT.
4. 22 points. Open 2NT.
5. 24 points. Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♦ response.

A couple of points to note. With 12-14 points we rebid 1NT, but if partner has replied at the 2 level, then the rebid is 2NT. And what do we do if partner replies 1NT or 2♦ (our suit)? With 12-14 points we pass, with 18 points we rebid 2NT and with 19 points we rebid 3NT.

Your point count ↓	Your rebid if partner responds at the 1 level	Your rebid if partner responds at the 2 level	Your rebid if partner responds 1NT or 2♦
12-14 points	1NT	2NT	pass
18 points	2NT	3NT	2NT
19 points	2NT	3NT	3NT

And there is one very important point concerning the NT rebids – and that is when the opponents intervene. Consider these two sequences (playing a strong NT): -

Sequence A:

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	2♣	pass
2NT			

Sequence B:

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♠	2♣
2NT			

Sequence C:

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	2♦	pass
2NT			

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- Sequence A: 2NT is the cheapest NT bid and promises just 12-14 points.
- Sequence B: But here it's different. It is not partner but RHO who has prevented you from rebidding 1NT (if you had 12-14 points). So 2NT here is the same as if RHO were silent, i.e. 18-19 points. If South has a balanced 12-14 points then he should pass, he is not forced to bid as partner gets another go.
- Sequence C: This is again different. There has been a 2 level overcall but partner has bid at the two level (thus promising 11+ points) and 2NT here is again 12-14. West cannot pass with a minimal hand here as partner does not get another go. Note that some players play 'negative free bids', but that is best left to experienced pairs and the 2♦ bid here promise full two-level values (11+).
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