

## The Beginner's Page - 1

One of my critics has repeatedly said that the news sheets are too advanced. Perhaps so, and so I propose to have a new regular page for beginners/improvers. Now a couple of people have asked me to recommend a good Standard American book for beginners. Unfortunately I don't know of one! I have a couple of good books, but they are Acol and the best American book I know (Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – Max Hardy) is a bit too advanced. If anybody has a good beginner's book, then lend it to me please.

Anyway, I'll bring out a page each week and who knows, by the end of the year I may have enough material for a small beginner's book? Let me know what you think, and if there is a topic that you would like me to cover.

### Standard American

I'll start this week by explaining what Standard American is. There are a number of different bidding systems around but the most popular worldwide is Standard American. The basis of this system is that a 1NT opening is balanced in the 15-17 point range and a one level major suit opening must be a five (or longer) card suit. That means that when you do not have a 5-card major and cannot open 1NT (incorrect point range) then you sometimes have to open a minor suit with less than four cards.

Let's consider these six hands. You are dealer and you must decide what your opening bid should be.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ 98764	♠ K876	♠ K876	♠ K876	♠ J10964	♠ 64
♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ8	♥ KJ1064	♥ 8
♦ A6	♦ A6	♦ A96	♦ AJ9	♦ A6	♦ AQ942
♣ KQ5	♣ Q876	♣ Q87	♣ KJ7	♣ A	♣ AK764

Hand 1: 1♠. With 13 points it is a clear opener. A 1NT opening is not possible because that would promise 15-17 points. You have a 5 card major so open it! It would be nice to have a few points in the major suit, but this is what you were dealt. Any opening bid other than 1♠ would be a distortion of the hand.

Hand 2: 1♣. A fairly flat 13 points but too weak for 1NT. You cannot open 1♠ as that promises a 5 card suit, so bid your best minor.

Hand 3: 1♣. Now this is perhaps personal preference and many people would open 1♦ as it is a better suit. My advice is to always open 1♣ when equal length (3-3 or 4-4) in the minors. I will explain why in later episodes.

Hand 4: 1NT. Similar to Hand 3 but this time you have enough points to open 1NT (15-17). Always open 1NT with a suitable hand.

Hand 5: 1♠. You have two 5-card majors, so which should you open? It is not a matter of choosing the better one, you always open 1♠ with 5♠'s and 5♥'s. Partner will usually respond and you then bid your ♥'s next go. I will come onto responder's bids and opener's rebids in future exciting episodes.

Hand 6: 1♦. I said that when equal length (3-3 or 4-4) in the minors then open 1♣, but when 5-5 you always open the higher ranking suit – you can rebid the lower ranking next go without raising the level of the bidding too much.