

# EGCC Bidding Primer

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## Purpose

The purpose of Bidding is **to arrive at the optimum (best scoring) contract.**

This involves answering two questions:

**Part Score or Game?** Determined by the combined High Card Point Count

**Denomination?** Determined by the shape of the hands. Do the combined hands have 8 cards in any suit?

## How it Works

Partner's hand starts out as a complete unknown. The bidding process offers information about your hand and receives information about your partner's hand. Every bid narrows down the possible hands your partner might have. Once you have enough information you can decide the contract.

## Bidding Rules

You can't just bid what you want – there are rules.

As we have seen, a bid designates a number of odd tricks (tricks in excess of six), from one to seven, and a denomination. E.g. 4♥, 3♠, 2NT.

The denominations have a ranking order. The rank of the denominations in descending order is: No Trumps (NT), Spades (♠), Hearts(♥), Diamonds(♦), Clubs(♣).

Players take it in turns to bid or pass, starting with the dealer and going clockwise.

If no bid has yet been made, a player can make any bid or pass.

If a bid has already been made, each subsequent bid must supersede the previous. It does this if it designates either the same number of odd tricks in a higher-ranking denomination, or a greater number of odd tricks in any denomination.

So for example after a bid of 2♥, bids of 2♠ (same number, higher ranking denomination) and 3♣ (higher number) could be made, but not 2♦ (same number, lower ranking denomination) or 1♠ (lower number).

When there have been three passes in a row, the bidding (Auction) has ended. The contract is the last bid made, and the declarer is the first person on the declaring side to have bid the denomination.

## Benji Acol

The bidding system we will be looking at is called Benji Acol. It is a set of agreements about what bids mean that allow you and your partner to describe your hand. Whilst each bid is technically a proposed contract, in reality the first few bids are describing your hand.

Here are some of the agreements:

### Showing your Point Count

- You need 12+ points to open (be the first to bid).
- You need 6+ points to respond to your partner's opening bid by bidding at the 1 level.
- You need 10+ points to respond to your partner's opening bid by bidding at the 2 level.
- If raising your partners opening bid (bidding the same denomination but a higher level), then raise 1 level with 6-9 points, 2 levels with 10-12 points, and 3 levels with 13+ points.
- If you opened with 16+ points make a strong rebid (your second bid) - either a jump (a level one higher than it has to be) or a new suit at the 3 level. Otherwise bid at the lowest possible level.

### Showing your Shape

- A bid of a suit shows at least 4 cards in that suit
- A rebid (second bid) of a suit shows at least 5 cards in that suit
- A bid of a second suit shows at least 4 cards in that suit and 5+ in the first suit

## Balanced and Unbalanced hands

Hands are balanced or unbalanced based on their shape. **Balanced** hands have shape 4333, 4432 or 5332 (the suits are irrelevant). Any other shape is **Unbalanced**. With one exception (4441), unbalanced hands have a 5 card suit.

Benji Acol, has different approaches to balanced and to unbalanced hands. We're going to start by looking at unbalanced hands, excluding 4441 (these are very difficult to bid and are dealt with separately).

## Opening Bid

The opening bid is the first bid made. You need 12+ points to open.

If you can open, bid one of your longest suit. If you have two longest suits, pick the Major (♠, ♥) over the Minor (♦, ♣). If they are both majors or both minors, pick the higher ranking one (♠ or ♦).

## Responding to Partner's Opening Bid

With less than 6 points, pass.

With 4 of partner's suit, you have found a fit. Raise (make a higher level bid in) the suit according to

how many points you have. This will agree the trump suit.

With less than 4 of partner's suit, bid the lowest 4+ card suit you can, providing you have enough points (you must have 10+ points to bid at the 2 level).

With no possible suit bid, bid 1NT.

## Opener's Next Bid

If partner has raised your suit, find the optimum contract in that suit.

If partner has bid a new suit, and you have 4+ of them, raise that suit (agreeing it as trumps).

If partner has bid a new suit, and you do not have 4+ of them, bid a second 4 card suit if you have one, otherwise rebid your first suit (you must have 5 at this point). The level of the bid should be determined by whether or not you have 16+ points.

## After That...

At this point, responder has a pretty good idea what opener has in their hand. Bid the optimum contract.

## Glossary

### Forcing bid

A forcing bid is one which partner cannot pass. The forcing bids you will meet first are:

- A bid of a different suit in response to an opening bid
- A jump rebid by opener (a bid one level higher than it has to be)
- A new suit at the 3 level.

### Limit Bid

A Limit Bid is one which has an upper limit on the points it will contain as well as a lower one.

### Dealer

The first person to have the opportunity to bid

### Opener

The first person to bid

### Responder

The second person to bid in a partnership (partner of opener)

### Raise

To bid the same denomination as the previous bid, but at a higher level.

### Rebid

To bid your own suit a second time.

## Some Examples (showing only NS bids - EW pass throughout)

### Simple Raises

Consider these hands:

North	South
♠ AKJ53	♠ Q974
♥ QT8	♥ A732
♦ KQ5	♦ 963
♣ Q4	♣ KT

Bidding:

N	S
1♠	2♠
3♠	4♠

The 1♠ bid shows 4+ spades and 12+ points.

The 2♠ bid shows 4+ spades and 6-9 points. Both players now know they have a fit (8+ cards) in spades, so the denomination is agreed.

The 3♠ bid shows 16-18 points ("Partner we have enough points for game if you are at the top of your range of 6-9")

The 4♠ bid shows 8-9 points ("Yes partner I am at the top of my range")

Compare this to:

North	South
♠ AKJ53	♠ Q974
♥ QT8	♥ A732
♦ KQ5	♦ 963
♣ Q4	♣ 32

Bidding:

N	S
1♠	2♠
3♠	Pass

Where South's pass says "Sorry partner I have 7 or less points so we do not have enough for game"

And:

North	South
♠ AKJ53	♠ Q974
♥ QT8	♥ A732
♦ Q75	♦ 963
♣ Q4	♣ K3

Bidding:

N	S
1♠	2♠
Pass	

Where North's pass says "Sorry partner I only have 12-15 points so even if you are maximum for your bid we do not have enough for game".

### Change of suit responses

North	South
♠ QT2	♠ Q974
♥ AKJ53	♥ 963
♦ 5	♦ A732
♣ QJT4	♣ K3

Bidding:

N	S
1♥	1♠
2♣	...?

The 1♥ bid shows 4+ Hearts and 12+ points.

The 1♠ bid shows a 4+ spades, 6+ points, and denies having 4 hearts (otherwise South would have raised hearts). This bid is forcing (A bid of a different suit in response to an opening bid) - North cannot pass. The reason it is forcing is that South's bid is unlimited - he could have 28 points!

The 2♣ bid shows a hand with 12-15 points, 5+ hearts, 4+ clubs and denies having 4 spades. Can you see why?

Firstly, a bid of a second suit shows at least 4 cards in that suit and 5+ in the first suit, so North must have 5+ hearts and 4+ clubs. If North had 4+ spades he would have raised spades - bidding 2♠ or 3♠ according to his point count. Finally, if he had 16+ points he would have bid higher - probably 3♣.

What should South bid next?

You can see from this example how much information you can get about partner's hand from just a few bids.