

Who's in Charge?

In bridge, the purpose of the auction (bidding) is to communicate information about your hand to your partner. At any point you know what you have in your hand, plus what your partner has told you about theirs through the bidding.

Who's in Charge?

The principle of "who's in charge" states that the person with the most information about the combined hands is the best person to take charge of the bidding and determine the final contract. This is of course the person who has been told most about their partner's hand.

A corollary of this is that once you have bid your hand (comprehensively described your hand through the bidding), it is your partner who is in charge and will thus decide the final contract.

A Simple Example – Opening 1NT

You open 1NT (12-14). You have now bid your hand. Partner knows you have 12-14 points, a balanced hand, and no 5 card major. Anything else they want to know (have we got a 4-4 or 5-3 fit in a major? Is it 12 or 14 points?) they can find out through Stayman, Transfers and Invitational bids.

Let partner decide the contract.

Moreover, if opponents compete, don't bid your 5 card minor. Sometimes you get lucky, but mostly you don't. Leave it up to partner – if they pass respect that decision.

Opening Weak 2H (2S)

Similarly an opening hand that narrowly defines the shape, major position and point count of your hand. If partner bids another suit, bear in mind they KNOW that you have 6 in your suit, and you may have a void in theirs, but they still bid it.

Unusual NT

Another bid that comprehensively describes your hand. If partner bids a major, bear in mind they KNOW that you are 5-5 in the minors, and will have no more than 3 cards (if any) in their suit, but they still bid it.

More Complicated

Normally after an opening bid, response and rebid, opener has described their hand quite well, and so responder is in charge (even though they probably have less points). For example, after

N	S
1C	1H
1S	

South now knows that North has 12-15 points, 5+clubs, 4+spades (probably exactly 4), < 4 hearts and is unbalanced. South is now in charge.

Similarly:

N	S
1C	1D
1NT	

South now knows that North has 15-16 points, 4+clubs, <4 spades, < 4 hearts, and is unbalanced. South is now in charge.