

Opening 1NT with a 5-Card Major

Many people try to remember rules, but it is easy to make your decision when you pick up your hand if you just ask yourself “if I open 1 of a major, what am I going to rebid when partner bids the following?”

1S – 1NT	1H - 1NT	1H – 1S
?	?	?

You will find that you are more likely to open 1NT when (a) you hold 5 hearts, (2) you a very weak or very strong hand that could open 1NT and/or (3) you have a very weak or very strong suit, but **there is no need to remember any of this**. You just need to think about the above 3 sequences.

This means that you have to be able to do is look at 15, 16 and 17 point hands and decide how good they really are? Anyone can say I had 16 points, but experts often add such adjectives as “good,” “great,” “bad,” or “awful.” Do you have 10s and 9s, concentrated honors in 4-card suit (KQ5 QJ94 K6 AJ74) , and/or a good 5-card suit? This is a good hand for the point count. Or do you have aces and spaces, overly concentrated holdings (AKQ, AKQx) soft holdings (Qxx, Jxx), points in short suits (AK 8543 AK5 J86) or 4333 distribution? These are signs of bad hands.

The other thing you need to know is what you are showing point wise with different sequences

1M	1NT	<u>great</u> 17 to 19	1H	1S	<u>great</u> 17 to 19
2NT			2NT		

1M	1NT	11 to good 17	1H	1S	11 to good 17
2m			2m		

Why are these relevant to this discussion?

1M	1NT	good 16 to good 17	1H	1S	good 16 to good 17
2m	any		2m	any	
2NT			2NT		

So if I open 1M and rebid 2m, and partner doesn't pass, I can show my good 16 to good 17 by now bidding 2NT. Oh my God, what if partner passes? Well, remember that partner will struggle to keep the bidding open with a great 8 to 10, as he/she knows you can have 17.

Q84 106 K85 KJ983

Q84 106 K853 KJ98

A84 106 K85 KJ983

If you open 1H and rebid 2C, partner should raise to 3C with the first hand and bid 2H with the second. You, being brilliant, will bid 3NT in the first case and invite with 2NT in the second. What does partner bid with the 3rd hand?

If partner passes 2C, you are likely to be in the right contract:

Q84 10 K85(3) J9854(3) Congratulations, you're getting a top.

OK, let's look at some hands

KQJ107 AK 842 KJ10 great 17

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KQ987 AK J42 QJ0 16. Open 1NT

AK KQ987 J42 QJ0 16

KQJ87 AK 842 QJ10 great 16. 1S followed by 2C followed by 2NT.

KQJ87 AKJ 84 Q107

After 1S – 1NT (Forcing), 2NT shows 18-19. You can rebid 2C here. If partner passes, you hope 2C scores better than 1NT. If partner corrects to 2D or 2S, you can bid 2NT showing a good 16 or 17. If partner corrects to 2H, you can raise to 3H. Note that NT probably plays better from partner's hand to protect their presumed diamond honor(s).

AJ4 KJ542 A73 Q7

This is a bad 15 HCP, with 8 losers, no spot cards. You can open 1NT as it meets the HCP criteria. The Qx is a reason to open 1NT, as if partner holds Axx or Kxx, you want to be playing the hand. For the same reason, your diamond holding is bad for your playing 1NT (you'd rather have your partner be declarer on a diamond lead).

A note on follow-up bidding:

If you open 1NT with a 5-card major and a "maximum," you should be able to get to the right contract when responder has an invitational hand

1NT 2NT (inv) FORCING, showing a maximum and a 5-card suit Bid 3NT or 4M.
3M

Lesson: If you invite game and partner then offers a contract that can be terribly wrong, partner is accepting your game offer.

1NT 2C
2H 2NT (or 2S)
3H FORCING, showing a maximum and a 5-card heart suit

1NT 2D
2H 2NT
3S FORCING, showing a maximum, 5 spades and 2 hearts

1NT 2H
2S 2NT
3H Forcing, showing a maximum, 5 hearts and 2 spades

1S 1NT
2C 2NT
3H ? Opener has 3 hearts and wants to play 3NT if you don't have 5 hearts.

Finally, let's try this one

1H 1S
2D 2H
2S 2S always shows extras (16-18 HCP).

In the above sequence, if I had a minimum hand with 3 spades, I should have raised to 2S immediately. This above sequence highlights short or weak doubleton in diamonds.

A106 KQ1043 5 AK104
A106 KQ1043 54 AK10

I could have opened the second hand 1NT. But H10 makes it strong enough to invite game over 1NT. And I don't have any tenaces to protect so I'd rather partner bid the NT. If I only had 2 spades the auction would go differently

106 KQ943 A54 AK10 1NT or 1H...2C..2NT? Close, I'd like the H9 and D10 for the latter