

Responding In Misfits

When we find a fit, everything is great. When we don't have a fit, we need to be very careful not to get the bidding too high. It is usually responder's job to identify that we are in a misfit and to bail into a sensible part-score as soon as possible. Remember that we know an awful lot about opener's hand after two bids:

They will bid No Trumps with a balanced hand

They will open their longest suit (but if it's a four card major they might open a 3-card minor)

They will rebid in as descriptive way as possible – if they don't jump, they have at most 15/16 HCPs.

We will usually know what to respond on our first bid – with a fit we show it. Without a fit we will show our longest suit and try to bid any four card majors we have. It is our second bid that usually requires judgement. Now we will usually be in a position to know if we have a chance of making game (and will probably have a good idea of the best suit to play in or whether we will be better off in No Trumps).

The next topic is one of the most important topics in uncontested auctions and nearly everybody gets it wrong!

Giving Preference

When your partner opens one-of-a-suit, your reply one-of-another-suit and then opener rebids a third suit at the cheapest level (without reversing*) they are showing a weak, unbalanced hand. For example:

1C:1H	1D:1S	1C:1D	1H:1S	1C:1D	1D:1H	1H:1S
1S: ?	2C: ?	1H: ?	2C: ?	1S: ?	2C: ?	2D: ?
C5+/S4+	D5+/C4+	C5+/H4+	H5+/C4+	C5+/S4+	D5+/C4+	H5+/D4+
12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP	12-15 HCP

Can you see why we know this? (They will raise our suit with a fit, they will bid No Trumps with a balanced hand, therefore they are unbalanced with no fit for us..... they will jump with a strong hand, therefore they are 12-15 HCP)

Having identified we are in a misfit, we should now bail into the most sensible part-score. Usually, this will mean going back to Opener's first suit – **even if we don't have a fit**. We don't have any good spot to play, we aren't going to make game. Let's just play in the least bad spot we can find.

The other option in a misfit is to *pass* Opener's second bid. Note that this is a conscious choice. It says "I know you've got more trumps in the first suit, so I must have *at least two more cards in this suit than your first one*."

A rare option (chosen far too often in regular club play) is to give preference to your own suit. (That is, for responder to repeat their suit). This should mean "I have a good, six card suit and a weak hand".

Some Example Hands. The auction is given below each hand. What should we bid next as responder?

♠ KQJ3	♠ QJT3	♠ AQJT9	♠ KQ9542
♥ 42	♥ KJ954	♥ 2	♥ 2
♦ T964	♦ 43	♦ 9862	♦ JT9
♣ 652	♣ 32	♣ 764	♣ 652
1H:1S	1D:1H	1H:1S	1H:1S
2C: ?	2C: ?	2C: ?	2C: ?

What about No Trumps?

Why don't we bid No Trumps if we have a weak misfit? The reason is that 2NT should be a genuine, invitational hand (11-12 HCPs) we shouldn't "scramble" to find 2NT – it is more valuable to leave that as a genuine try for game.

If We want the auction 1H:1S:2C:2NT to mean "We don't have a fit but we might still be able to make game. Do you have a good opening hand or a bad one?" some of the time (and we do!) we can't now use it to mean "I hate your suits, you hate my suits. How about we play here?" It will **always** be invitational.