

LESSON 5: TEACHER NOTES

Balanced Hands**Lesson Content**

1NT – a special case.

Limited to 12-14 and for the first time, opener's bid shows defined shape and strength Responder's bids are quite different; for example the weakness takeout

Stronger balanced hands of 15-19

Play Tip 2 – Establishing a side/long suit

This lesson (and Lesson 6) are probably the most difficult lessons to absorb. If you have extra weeks available, you may like to take an extra week or two to teach these 2 lessons.

Main Points to Emphasise

Explain the concept of a balanced hand

1NT is limited and the shape is known, therefore the responder is usually in charge.

Stress that opener's first priority is to open 1NT if possible.

It's the cornerstone of the Acol system and is the most common 1-level opening bid. After a weakness takeout, opener **must** not bid again

Lesson Progression

Revise 1 of a suit opening – 12-19 and could be any shape and strength at all 1NT is totally different – 12-14 and balanced shape

What is balanced? – elicit this from the class as much as possible

- No singleton/void
- Only one doubleton
- No 5-card major
- May have a 5-card minor

Responder's actions - 2 decisions to make

- Are you happy to play in notrumps or want to play in a suit?
- Have you enough to bid or invite game?

NOTE: Because we do not teach Stayman and transfers at this stage, it is difficult for Responder to show an unbalanced hand with 11 points. Explain that for now, if the Responder wants to invite, they use 2NT. We feel it is too complex for beginners to learn Stayman and transfers, but tell them they will learn about how to handle this hand better in future. If it's a bad hand they can just downgrade and bid 2 of their long suit.

Play hands 1-4 Drinks break

Bidding Stronger Balanced hands

Put a hand on the board which is too strong for 1NT. What to do? Discuss that it is too strong to open 1NT so must revert to the old rules of choosing a suit to open.

It is a 2-step process:

- Bid lowest 4-card suit first
- Then rebid NT at appropriate level

Again responder is in charge and applies the same principles as over a 1NT opening

Tip 3: Play of the Hand: Establishing a side/long suit

Use Boards 1, 5 and 8 to illustrate these concepts:

- You may have to lose a trick to establish extra winners
- You need to play the honour(s) from the short suit first

Play the remaining hands