

PREEMPTIVE BIDDING

PURPOSE--Primary: To disrupt the opponents bidding. Secondary: Describe hand to partner.

RULES/GUIDELINES—

1. Length of Suit: Generally, seven or more cards for 3 level opener and six or more cards for 2 level opening or jump overcall of opponent's opener. (4 level usually has eight cards and 5 level has nine)
2. Strength of Hand: Weak. If you have a regular opening point count, it is best to open at the one level and rebid the suit. Vulnerability plays a role in "how weak" you can go.
3. Strength of Suit: The experts recommend two of the top four honors. Another guide is, "Do you want partner to lead the suit on defense?"
4. Outside Honors: No more than one ace or king. Part of the message you are telling partner is that you do not have defense outside of the bid suit.
5. Vulnerability: Favorable vulnerability gives you leeway to bid weak hands. Unfavorable vulnerability should have a better suit.
6. Playing tricks (winners): More important than point count to determine whether to preempt. One expert suggests being within 3 winners of your bid if not vulnerable and 2 winners of your bid if vulnerable.
7. Table position: It is important to stay within the guidelines for a first and second seat preempt. Your partner has not bid, and he may have the stronger hand (1 in 3 odds). Partner will bid based on your hand being within the guideline. A third seat preempt can be more flexible. Here partner has already passed, and the hand probably belongs to the opponents. Get in the way! Nothing is more frustrating than sitting with 20 points in fourth seat and hearing that 3 level preempt to your right. Fourth seat jump openers are not preempts, as everyone else has already passed. Here you are bidding to make the bid and should be closer to an opening hand.
8. No support for other major: Especially in first or second seat it is important not to have 3 or 4 cards in the other major. This is because partner has not bid and could support in the other major with a stronger hand for game in that suit. Third and fourth seat has more leeway, as partner has already passed.
9. Your partner is captain: After a preempt, your partner is "in charge" of placing the contract. Partner has heard your bid and you should never rebid your suit. He may have AKQJ in the opponent's suit. If he doubles, leave it. If he raises you, do not re-raise. If he bids game, do not go looking for slam! Let partner make that choice.

Sources: Kitty Cooper, Larry Cohen, The Bridge Guys

Later Lunch and Learn: What to do when your partner preempts? What to do when the opponents preempt?