

Competitive Bidding

Competitive Bidding is where both sides are bidding in an attempt to win the contract (be declarer). It is usually where both sides have a fit in their suit. As general rule, if both sides have a fit and the points are evenly split between the sides, then both can make 8 tricks in their suit. Even if you can't, going 1 down will be a better score than them making 2 of their suit.

If opponents have opened then you have less bidding space in which to find a fit, so you need to have either length or strength to enter the bidding.

Objective

There are two goals with competitive bidding:

- Get into a contract that you can make, or at least only go one down in, or
- Force the opponents into a contract that they cannot make.

Opponents open 1 of a Suit

So how do you tell your partner you want to compete? Two ways: Overcalls and Doubles.

Overcalls

An overcall is where you make a bid over an opponent's bid.

Let's assume opponents open 1C. The following are possible competitive bids:

1D/1H/1S	Shows 11-15+ points and 5+ cards in the suit bid
1NT	Shows 16+ points, a balanced hand and a stop in their suit.

If you need to go to the two level to show your suit (say 2D over a 1S opener) your hand needs to be a little better, either having 6 in the suit or 13+ points.

What if you have their suit but not enough points to bid 1NT? Just pass, and let them get into a pickle.

Doubles

A double is where you double an opponent's bid (double is the red X card in the bidding box). It is known as a takeout double because you want your partner to take it out (bid something else).

X (Double)	Shows an opening hand, with support for at least two of the other three suits, and a shortage in their suit. The bid is asking Partner to bid their best suit.
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You can also compete after both opponents have bid. If they have bid different suits, a double guarantees support in the other two suits.

Opponents open 1NT

If opponents open 1NT, overcalls work the same way as with a suit bid, remembering the higher point / length requirement because you will be bidding at the 2 level.

A double of 1NT is for penalties. It is NOT asking partner for their best suit, but shows a hand with 16+ points and an intention to get a positive score by opponents not making their 1NT contract.

Responding to a competitive bid

If your partner overcalls a suit, treat it like an opening bid, but with the knowledge that it is a 5 card suit and has a point range of 11-15. In particular you can raise the bid even if you only have 3 in partner's suit, as they have already shown 5.

If partner overcalls 1NT, Pass unless you have a long suit. Game is unlikely, so if you're going to play in NT you want to be at the lowest possible level, i.e. 1NT.

Responding to a takeout double (of a suit bid)

Bid your longest suit at the lowest level, preferring majors to minors. If you have the opponents' suit and no suit of your own, bid 1NT.

Responding to a penalty double (of 1NT)

Your partner probably has 16-19. If you have very few points (so the 1NT is likely to make) and a 5+ card suit, then bid it. Otherwise, Pass.

Should we go for game?

Generally, no.

If opponents have opened, you are unlikely to be looking for a game contract.

Opener has at least 12 points, and if you are to have 25-26, opener must have only 12-13 and his partner only 1 or 2 points. This is possible but unlikely.