

## WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we, present a copy from their 2012 Nov -Dec bulletin on **MINOR SUIT AUCTIONS** by columnists > Ron Zucker and Shawn Stringer. Read original - [Here](#)

### Minor suit auctions

**“I don’t think anyone in this tournament can bid diamonds to show diamonds. We lost the club suit in the 1950s. Now diamonds are gone and hearts are sinking fast.”**— Bridge Hall of Famer and 23 time National Champion Edgar Kaplan When Edgar Kaplan famously noted the decline of the minor suits at the 1980 World Team Olympiad, he was commenting on the tendency of modern bridge to emphasize major suits and No Trump over the minor suits. And there is valid reason for that emphasis. The game bonus in No Trump requires taking only nine tricks, while a major requires ten. Minor suit games, where declarer must take eleven tricks to make his contract, require hands close to slam strength but score no better, and often worse, than game contracts that take fewer tricks.

Despite the bias toward major suits and No Trump, a large percentage of hands are opened in one of the minor suits. In the next few months, we’ll be examining how the auction develops after an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦.

First, let’s discuss the opening bid.

When dealer opens 1 of a minor, everyone at the table should recognize two likely facts:

- 1) Opener does not have a five card major; and
- 2) Opener, if balanced, does not have either 15-17 HCP or 20-21 HCP, because otherwise he would have opener 1NT or 2NT.

Another characteristic of minor suit openings is that when you open 1♦, for example, diamonds may not be your longest suit. That is usually not true with a major suit opening.

In most partnerships, players will open 1♦ when holding four clubs and four diamonds. But they will open 1♣ when holding three in each minor even if the diamonds are significantly better than the clubs. This ensures that they will open 1♦ with only three diamonds only if they have specifically four spades, four hearts, three diamonds and two clubs(4432 shape),so partner can be confident raising with only four diamonds.

With these guidelines in mind, let’s look at a few hands. What would you open holding:

♠ AT7 ♥ KJ83 ♦ AJ4 ♣ 964	Open 1♣. Even though the diamonds honors make for a much better suit, most partnerships do not open 1♦ with 3-3 in the minors.
♠ A8 ♥ AJ3 ♦ JT75 ♣ K983	Open 1♦ With four diamonds and four clubs, open 1♦. This makes it easier for partner to raise diamonds if the opponents overcall. Also, if your shape is 4144 and you open 1♦, then you can bid 2♣ at your second turn. If you had opened 1♣, then rebidding 2♦ would show Reverse strength (16+) and shape (five+ clubs and four+ diamonds), which your hand does not have.
♠ KT63 ♥ J ♦ KJ4 ♣ AT953	Open 1♣. Although only 12 high card points (including the likely worthless singleton ♥J,) this is a good hand. If partner has support in either black suit, you expect to play in one of those suits.

Remember that a large percentage of the time that the bidding is opened in a minorsuit, the hand is not played in that suit. After a minor opening, partner has room at the one level to respond thatshe has a four card major. When opener has the same major, the hand is likely to be played in some number of that major. With no fit, the hand is likely to be played in No Trump. So the first goal in the auction is to find a major suit fit, making it responder’sresponsibility to show or deny a four card or longer major at her first chance. Remember that, as a general rule, if responder does not bid a major after partner opens 1 of a minor, then there is a reasonable presumption that responder does not have a four card major.

For the next three hands, assume that partner opened 1♣ and right hand opponent passed. You hold:

♠ 8 ♥ Q984 ♦ A43 ♣ AQ863	Bid 1♥. You can support partner’s clubs later if appropriate, but if partner has four hearts, and if the partnership only has the values for game rather than slam, you prefer to play in 4♥, the 10 trick game, rather than 5♣, the 11 trick game
♠ J73 ♥ J753 ♦ J93 ♣ JT2	Pass. Yes, partner may have only three clubs and partner may have four hearts. You may not end up in the best contract. But if you respond, partner will expect more and may bid too high. This collection of jacks is not worth a response even though you have a four card major. Do not look for a major suit fit when you hold a piece of junk
♠ KQ64 ♥ T654 ♦ K7 ♣ J95	Bid 1♥. Your spades are much better than your hearts, but bidding 1♠ would tend to deny four hearts. If partner has the first hand in the table above, you prefer to play in hearts rather than NT,since your club holding is so bad. In hearts, you have at most three club losers. In NT, there are at least four club losers

In our next article, we will continue our discussion of minor suit openings, responses, and opener’s rebids. Please contact Ron or Shawn with any questions. Enjoy the game and we will see you at the table!