

## Reverses

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As my friend Marty Bergen says, he prays that reverses don't come up. Not only for when he plays, but for when he teaches.

Basically, a "reverse" is when opener's rebid (2nd bid of the auction) meet both A & B:

A) The rebid is in a HIGHER ranking suit than his first suit

B) The rebid is at a HIGHER level than responder's response

So, these are reverses:

1♣-1♥- 2♦  
1♣-1♠- 2♦  
1♣-1♠- 2♥  
1♣-1NT- 2♦  
1♣-1NT- 2♥  
1♣-1NT- 2♠  
1♦-1♠- 2♥  
1♦-1NT- 2♥  
1♦-1NT- 2♠  
1♥-1NT- 2♠

In all auctions above, the last bid is natural and promises extra values (approximately 16/17+). Reverses are forcing one round--the responder can not pass. However, reverses are not forcing to game. Opener's jumpshift (a different topic) however, is game forcing.

Contrast these two auctions:

1♦-1♥  
2♠

versus

1♦-1♠  
2♥.

On the first auction, opener (who jumped and changed suit) has to have 19+ -- his jump-shift is game forcing.

On the second auction, opener (who reversed) has to have 16/17+ -- his reverse shows extra values, is forcing one round, but not forcing to game.

All reverses should show unbalanced hands. With balanced hands, the opening is 1NT or 2NT, or the rebid is 1NT or 2NT. Reverses show that the first-bid suit is longer than the suit reversed into. So, 1♦-1♠-2♥ would show not only 16/17+, but would indicate 5+♦ and 4♥.

After Opener's Reverse:

As to the follow-ups, after, say 1♦-1♠-2♥, I recommend:

2♠= 5+ spades, 1-round force

2NT=Forcing, but could be a weak hand (responder can pass opener's next bid). Denies 5+♠

3♣=Natural, Forcing

3♦=Natural, [GF](#) (some decent values)

3♥=Natural, [GF](#) 4 hearts

3♠=Natural, good suit, forcing

3NT=Natural, some extras, but no real slam interest.

The generic summary of the above treatment would be as follows:

After opener's reverse, Responder's repeat of his suit=5+, one-round force

2NT=Potentially a weak sign-off type of hand

3-level=values, [GF](#)

I don't advocate "reverses" after a 2/1 auction -- so there is no such thing as opener promising extras (1♥-2♣-2♠ can be bid with a dead minimum). I prefer to think of reverses only when the auction starts 1-1 (any 1 opening and any 1-level response, including 1NT).

Reverses after [negative doubles](#) are a tricky topic. For example, is this a reverse?

WestNorthEastSouth

-- 1♣ 1♠ Dbl

Pass 2♦?

This, and other similar auctions have confounded bridge players and teachers for decades. If I had the perfect answer for you, I'd tell you--but I don't. My best suggestion is to consider these auctions as not promising extras. Certainly, if North's rebid was 2♥ (the suit that South surely has), it wouldn't be considered a reverse showing extras.

If you're a new player, be prepared to struggle with the concept of reverses. Consider them your enemy. 😊

Further Reading: [What Should we Play](#)