

HSOG Bridge

Competitive Bidding

A competitive auction is one where both sides are bidding. In these situations you should raise aggressively when you have a good fit with partner, even if your hand is weak. This will lead to making contracts when your side has good hands, and good sacrifices when your side has weak hands.

In competition, did to the level of the fit

A simple rule is to raise to the level of the trump fit. That means

- if you know your side has eight trumps, bid for eight tricks (the two level)
- if you know your side has nine trumps, bid for nine tricks (the three level)
- if you know your side has ten trumps, bid for ten tricks (the four level)

If your side is vulnerable, or you have a very balanced hand (no singletons) you might be more cautious.

Examples of Weak Raises

Opposition bids are in brackets

- 2D-(2S)-4D the 4D raise can be made on any hand with four Diamonds
- 1H-(1S)-4H the 4H raise is a weak hand with six Hearts (or often only five Hearts and some shape)
- (1C)-1S-(2C)-3S the 3S raise is any hand with four Spades

Cuebidding

All this weak raising means you need something else to bid when you actually have a good hand.

The answer is a cuebid. That means bidding the opponent's suit. This is forcing (partner can't pass). It normally shows trump support, but when the trump suit is a minor is also looking to try and play 3NT.

- 1H-(1S)-2S the 2S bid shows a good Heart raise. Partner then chooses 3H or 4H
- (1C)-1S-(2C)-3C the 3C bid shows a good Spade raise. Partner then chooses 3S or 4S
- 2D-(2S)-3S the 3S bid shows a good hand, probably with Diamonds. Partner chooses 4D, 5D or 3NT

Responding to an Opening Bid

Suppose partner opens 1♥ showing 4+ Hearts, and they overcall 1♠. Here are some hands and what you should bid:

1	♠874 ♥Q53 ♦AT654 ♣J2	Only three trumps	Bid 1NT (6-9) or 2♥
2	♠874 ♥QT53 ♦AT54 ♣J2	Only four trumps	Bid 2♥ as usual
3	♠874 ♥Q7543 ♦AT542 ♣J	Five trumps	Bid 4♥
4	♠J74 ♥AJ2 ♦AT542 ♣52	Good hand	Cuebid 2♠ (their suit)

In Example 1 you can't be sure of Heart fit, but in competitive auctions it pays to support and you could try 2♥

In Example 2 you make your usual 2♥ raise. With more shape you might try 3♥

In Example 3 you are worth an extra raise. This hand is normally worth a 3♥ response, so in competition it's worth 4♥.

Note it's much more effective for you to bid 4♥ immediately, rather than raising a bit at a time. The immediate raise makes it hard for the opponents.

In Example 4 you have a proper raise to 3♥ and want to invite partner to bid game with a good hand. If you bid an immediate 3♥ that looks like a weak hand and will be passed. You must cuebid their suit (2♠)

Responding to an Overcall

Suppose they open 1♣ and partner overcalls 1♥, which shows 8+ and at least five Hearts

1	♠874 ♥Q53 ♦AT654 ♣J2	Weak hand with three trumps	Bid 2♥ as your side has 8+ total trumps
2	♠874 ♥Q543 ♦AT654 ♣J	Weak hand with four trumps	Bid 3♥ as your side has 9+ total trumps
3	♠84 ♥K6543 ♦AT654 ♣J	Weak hand with five trumps	Bid 4♥ as your side has 10+ total trumps
4	♠AQ874 ♥K5 ♦AT6 ♣J42	OK hand, no trump fit yet	Start with 1♠
5	♠AT4 ♥52 ♦QJ54 ♣KJ42	OK hand, good stop in their suit	Bid 1NT (10-12)
6	♠AQ4 ♥KQ4 ♦54 ♣QJ42	Good hand with trump support	Bid their suit (2♣)

In the first three examples you put the pressure on opponents by immediately raising to the max level

Note that you don't bother mentioning your Diamonds, they don't matter.

The 1♥ overcaller will normally pass your bid, unless they are very strong / have extra trumps

In Example 4 you make a new suit response. This is forcing (partner can't pass).

The 1♥ overcaller will bid 2♥ with a minimum, else show a stronger hand with something else.

In Example 5 you need more than the usual 6-9 to respond 1NT, as your partner has only overcalled, not opened

In Example 6 you can't bid 3♥ as that will look weak. You start with 2♣ which is their suit. Bidding their suit is always forcing. Opener will bid just 2♥ with a minimum, else show a stronger hand with something else.

Responding to a Weak Two

Suppose partner opens 2♥, showing a weak hand with six Hearts.

This is considered a competitive auction (even though opponents haven't bid yet) and you should raise aggressively.

1	♠84 ♥K53 ♦JT654 ♣J32	Weak hand with three trumps	Bid 3♥ as your side has 9 total trumps
2	♠84 ♥K543 ♦JT654 ♣J2	Weak hand with four trumps	Bid 4♥ as your side has 10 total trumps
3	♠AQ4 ♥K5 ♦AT654 ♣J42	Decent hand, but no chance of game	Pass
4	♠AQ4 ♥K5 ♦AK654 ♣J42	Decent hand, good chance of game	Bid 4♥, this time expecting to make it
5	♠AQ4 ♥5 ♦AKJ5 ♣QJ942	Decent hand, no trump support	Bid 2NT (invitational) Opener will Pass, bid 3♥, 3NT or 4♥.
6	♠AQ4 ♥5 ♦AKJT54 ♣A42	Good hand, no trump support	Bid 3♦(forcing) Opener will bid 3♥, 3NT, 4♦, or 4♥.

In both Example 2 and Example 4 you bid 4♥, once with a weak hand once with a strong hand. When you jump to 4♥ partner won't know which hand you have, but he doesn't need to know, as after he opens 2♥ he has described his hand well and leaves it up to you, only bidding again if he has to (Example 5).

Summary

- In a competitive auction support partner more aggressively
If partner opens a weak two or three that counts as a competitive auction too
- Work out how many trumps partner has and raise to the level of the fit
- Be more aggressive with a shapely hand or non-vulnerable
Be more cautious if your hand is flat or you are vulnerable
- With a good raise you must instead cuebid, else partner will think you are weak