

COMPETITIVE BIDDING by Maritha Pottenger

BALANCING

1. We do not let them play 2 of a major when they want to stop at 2 of a major.
2. We balance when the opponents have found a fit (so we are likely to have a fit). We **defend on misfit hands**.
3. After an auction of 1 banana-Pass-2 bananas-Pass-Pass, DOUBLE should show 3 places to play and 2NT should show 2 places to play. Partner bids lowest 4 card suit (or 3 card if desperate).
4. The shorter you are in the opponents' suit, the more you should “stretch” to balance.

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

1. When your side has about ½ the deck in high cards, compete fiercely to the 2 level and try to force the opponents to the 3 level.
2. Use law of total tricks in debating whether to push to 3 level (with an extra trump, take the push, unless your hand is awful).
3. With singleton or void in opponents' suit, often right to push to 3 level.
4. With honors that should be well placed from auction, usually right to go to 3 level.
5. With honors that are probably badly placed from the auction, be willing to give up at 2 level.
6. Be more cautious when you are vulnerable.
7. Be more aggressive against opponents who never double; be cautious against aggressive doublers.
8. Make aggressive matchpoint doubles: if you have pushed them to the 3 level and you expected to make your 2-level bid, double to protect your score (unless a highly distributional hand).
9. Be wary of doubling hands with lots of distribution, including 2-suited bids and hands where both sides have a double fit. May be better to pass or “bid one more for the road.”
10. When you are bidding spades & opponents are bidding hearts, **do NOT bid 3S unless you are willing to defend (i.e., double) 4H by opponents**.
11. When you are bidding hearts and opponents are bidding spades, **do NOT bid 4H unless you are willing to defend (i.e., double) 4S by opponents**.
12. If either partner has a “trump stack” (4 decent, e.g., QJ10x) in the opponents' suit, DOUBLE before your partner (who has shortness) can take the push up a level. **You must protect your partner!**
13. Upgrade hands with good intermediate spot cards (8's, 9's, 10's). Downgrade hands with lots of low spot cards.

SACRIFICING

1. First law of sacrificing: Do NOT sacrifice unless you are 90% sure opponents are making their bid.
2. Second law of sacrificing: See Law #1.
3. Easiest to judge opponents' likely tricks and your side's likely tricks when partner makes a Weak 2 or a 3-level preempt—if you are disciplined bidders. Assume partner will take 5 tricks in Weak Two suit and 6 tricks in Weak 3 suit. Assume no more than one outside defensive card.
4. If partner of preempter “extends the preempt” by bidding, that is NEVER an invitation for preempter to bid on. Partner is captain. She may be pushing opponents up just so she can double them off. Preempter has said his/her whole piece when s/he preempts. Partner makes all subsequent decisions. Only exception would be if preempter made a very non-standard preempt (e.g., 6-5 Weak Two bid) and your hand is NOT what partner will be expecting.
5. Do NOT let the opponents push you around. Double them when they sacrifice.
6. Principles of forcing pass apply when you and your partner freely bid game. If opponents sacrifice at 5 level, person in direct seat must DOUBLE with two quick losers in their suit and PASS with first or second round control of their suit. Pass is FORCING. Person in indirect seat must leave in double unless they have lots of extra values and 0 or 1 loser in opponents' suit. When forcing pass comes around to person in indirect seat, she must either bid on (with offensively oriented hand) or double (with more defensive values or just a hand that she doesn't think is good enough for 5 level).