

Sometimes Any Bid You Make is a “Lie” By Maritha Pottenger

No bidding system is perfect, so there are times when you are forced to bid, and any bid you make will distort your hand—conveying either an incorrect picture of your distribution or an incorrect idea of the high card strength of your hand. The key is to “lie” as little as possible, and in ways that are least likely to cause problems for you and your partner.

Here are some “lies” that are OK in certain circumstances:

- 1) Overcalling a strong 4-card suit (e.g., AKQJ or AKQx) at the one-level because you really, really want the lead. Do NOT do this at the 2 level and above!!
- 2) Opening a 4-card major in 3rd or 4th seat (after partner has passed) because the suit is so good; you know game is unlikely; and—if the opponents get the bid—you really want that suit led. Example would be AQJ10 or AKQx in hearts or spades.
- 3) Making a no-trump rebid (NOT immediate overcall) when opponents have opened a minor. Example would be when you hold QJ KQx KQ432 xxx. RHO opens one club and you overcall one diamond. Partner now bids one spade. You obviously cannot support spades and cannot bid hearts. So, you can rebid your diamonds (a lie, implying 6) or bid 1NT (which implies a club stopper). Because your diamond spots are so bad, I would prefer to rebid 1NT. Because you did not overcall NT immediately, it is not absolutely imperative that you have a stopper. Particularly when a minor suit is opened, that individual may have only 3 or 4 cards in the minor, so your “lie” is not so bad. Occasionally, you and your partner can even make 3 no trump, losing the first 4 tricks in that minor suit. However, some partnerships agree that—in this sort of situation—a rebid of the suit you overcalled does NOT promise extra length. It only says that you have nothing else to bid. If that is your agreement, your proper bid is 2D.
- 4) Occasionally, you may prefer to rebid NT with a singleton (usually an honor) in partner’s suit, rather than rebidding a long, weak suit of your own. An example would be-- You open 1C holding:
A KQx KQx 1087652 and your partner (of course!) bids 1S. You could rebid 2C (and some people will regardless), but some people will rebid 1NT because the clubs are so bad. Partner will think you have at least two spades (and may rebid his/her spades), but that’s luck.
- 5) Sometimes you are forced to bid a three-card suit in response to a take-out double. Partner will tend to assume that you have 4, but should cut you some slack—just in case. An example would be when you have 1098 1087 1076 10852. LHO opens 1C; your partner makes a take-out double and RHO passes. Bid either your 3-card heart suit or your 3-card spade suit. Do NOT bid 1NT. (1NT would guarantee a club stopper and also promises real HCP in your hand—usually at least 8.) When both your 3-card suits are so similar, it is usually best to bid the lower one first (hearts in this case) just in case you get doubled, you can run to the 2nd suit.
- 6) You may have to make a negative double when you have MORE than 4 cards in the unbid major. At those times, it is better to “hide” your extra length than to lie about your HCP strength. As an example, you hold:
xx KQxxx Qxx xxx and partner opens 1C. RHO overcalls 1S. You should make a negative double. It is true that partner will think you have “only” 4 hearts, but that is less of a lie than promising 10 HCP by bidding 2H. You may be able to clarify your distribution later.
- 7) Sometimes you don’t have a good, forcing bid available, so you have to make a bid that implies length you do not have. If you are going to lie about a suit, make sure that it is LOWER in denomination than the suit in which you know you have a fit. For example, you hold: Axx AK10 Qxxx xxx and your partner opens 1S. A Jacoby 2NT response promises 4 trump, so you cannot bid that. An immediate jump to 4S says you have 5 trump, a singleton or void somewhere, and less than 10 HCP. So, you must temporize with a forcing bid (any 2 over 1 call at this point). You can bid 2C or 2D or 2H and partner will think that you have 5 of them, but even if s/he tries to get you to play in one of those suits, you’ll keep going back to spades. Some people prefer to bid diamonds (because it is the longest of your suits). Others prefer to bid hearts (because that is where your greatest strength lies). Others bid clubs (where your weakness is) hoping to deter opponents from leading that suit. Choose your style.