
OBAR-BIDS

<i>West</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	???		

Everyone knows how critical it is to “push ‘em up” when the opponents are about to play at the two level with a fit. In the *pass-out* seat, it is quite safe for you to balance. E-W have a fit, so your side almost certainly does also. They have limited strength, so your side has roughly half the deck. Whatever strength you don’t have *must* be in partner’s hand.

However, “because they have a fit, we have a fit.” I’ve always believed that the player in the *direct seat* should also be eager and free to compete with less than traditional values if he has something worth saying. In the auction above, your partner is said to be in the direct seat because his RHO bid.

Another reason for partner to strive to bid in the direct seat is to help *you* on opening lead. West is likely to become declarer; so if partner has a strong suit, you’d *love* to hear about it.

Many years ago, I invented an acronym to describe this philosophy of “pre-balancing.” I call the technique “OBAR-BIDS.” It stands for: **O**pponents **B**id **A**nd **R**aise, **B**alance **I**n **D**irect **S**eat.

OBAR-BIDS

Question 1: In addition to 1♥ – Pass – 2♥, on what other auctions do OBAR-BIDS apply?

Answer: Any auction when an opponent opens 1 of a suit and his partner raises to 2.

Question 2: Does it matter if the opponents are playing Inverted Minors, which means that responder's raise is strong and forcing?

Answer: Yes and no. Because you don't need to be concerned about the opponents *stealing* the contract at the two level, you are less likely to double "light." However, if you have a long strong suit, you should be even more eager to make a lead-directing overcall to help partner find the best lead.

Question 3: Does anything change if your side is vulnerable?

Answer: No. The philosophy of OBAR-BIDS is unchanged, although you should be careful.

Question 4: When partner OBAR-BIDS, what must I keep in mind?

Answer: Don't *bury* him. Remember that partner did not promise a strong hand. If the opposition bids on, go quietly unless you have exceptional distribution – and be grateful that partner balanced.

OBAR-BIDS

On each of the hands below, the auction has begun:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	???

Assume that you've agreed, at least for the time being, to play OBAR-BIDS. As South, in the direct seat, evaluate each hand and decide what to do.

The opponents are vulnerable, your side is not.

1. ♠ K 9 8 5 ♥ 6 ♦ A 10 6 4 ♣ Q 10 8 6
2. ♠ K J 5 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ K J 6 3 ♣ K Q 6
3. ♠ K Q J 9 6 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 9 8 5 ♣ 7 4 2
4. ♠ 8 6 4 ♥ 9 5 ♦ A Q J 10 7 6 ♣ 6 3
5. ♠ 10 7 6 4 3 ♥ K J 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ K Q 4
6. ♠ 7 4 ♥ 2 ♦ K J 6 5 3 ♣ A 10 9 5 2
7. ♠ Q J 7 6 5 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A ♣ K 9 5 3 2
8. ♠ K Q J 9 6 4 2 ♥ 9 4 ♦ 7 ♣ 8 4 2
9. ♠ A K Q 9 ♥ 8 6 5 2 ♦ 5 ♣ A 10 9 2
10. ♠ A 7 3 2 ♥ A 5 ♦ J 9 8 7 5 ♣ A 3

OBAR-BIDS

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	???

1. ♠ K 9 8 5 ♥ 6 ♦ A 10 6 4 ♣ Q 10 8 6
Double. With your singleton, this hand is ideal for a light OBAR-BIDS takeout double despite having only 9 HCP. If you pass, you run the risk that 2♥ will be passed out when partner has too many hearts to balance. **When short in the opponent's suit, be very aggressive.**

2. ♠ K J 5 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ K J 6 3 ♣ K Q 6
Pass. Points, Schmoints! You may be impressed with these 15 HCP, but I am not. Why do I hate this hand?

- 4-3-3-3 is the worst possible distribution.
- Too many jacks, and no aces or intermediates.
- Your queen in their suit is probably useless.

If West bids, you'll be happy that you didn't broadcast your HCP. If West passes and partner balances, that's okay. If 2♥ is passed out – no regrets. **Be cautious with balanced hands in competitive auctions.**

3. ♠ K Q J 9 6 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 9 8 5 ♣ 7 4 2
Bid 2♠. A minimum but ideal hand for OBAR-BIDS. You'd love to get a spade lead, and don't want to risk defending 2♥. You have more offense than defense, so if partner wants to raise spades, that's okay.

OBAR-BIDS

4. ♠ 8 6 4 ♥ 9 5 ♦ A Q J 10 7 6 ♣ 6 3

Bid 3♦. You prefer having a 6-card suit for a light overcall, especially at the three level with no short suit.

If you would pass because you had *only* 7 HCP,

Marty Sez: Any player unwilling to bid 3♦ and help partner on opening lead should be condemned to a lifetime of opening leads without any sequences!

5. ♠ 10 7 6 4 3 ♥ K J 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ K Q 4

Pass. Although I love to make OBAR-BIDS, I'm not even tempted here. Why? I have a flat hand with terrible spades and questionable heart honors. The fact that I would have opened the bidding is *not* relevant.

6. ♠ 7 4 ♥ 2 ♦ K J 6 5 3 ♣ A 10 9 5 2

Bid 2NT (Unusual NT) to show the minors. It is silly to treat 2NT as a natural notrump bid *here*. Even if you have enough points to bid 2NT (natural), partner must be broke, and down you'll go. Your 5-5 shape justifies competing to the three level in partner's longer minor. Also, if opener jumps to 4♥, your bid may enable partner to sacrifice based on the favorable vulnerability.

7. ♠ Q J 7 6 5 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A ♣ K 9 5 3 2

Bid 2♠. A 3♥ Michaels Cue-Bid is out of the question with this modest hand. If partner hates spades, you'd be at the four level! On an auction like this, you would need a terrific hand to cue-bid. Content yourself by bidding your major suit.

OBAR-BIDS

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	???

8. ♠ K Q J 9 6 4 2 ♥ 9 4 ♦ 7 ♣ 8 4 2

Bid 3♠ with this textbook preempt. If West bids 4♥, your descriptive bid should make it easy for partner to decide whether or not to sacrifice.

9. ♠ A K Q 9 ♥ 8 6 5 2 ♦ 5 ♣ A 10 9 2

Bid 2♠, your 4-card suit notwithstanding. E-W must have 8-9 hearts, and with your four cards, partner can't have more than one. If he happens to have *good* support, you could even have a game.

10. ♠ A 7 3 2 ♥ A 5 ♦ J 9 8 7 5 ♣ A 3

Here are your choices, each of which is greatly flawed:

- Pass: not very ambitious with a promising hand.
- Double: you have only two clubs.
- 2♠: Overcalling this suit is going too far.
- 3♦: The suit is weak, and you could miss a spade fit.

What's the answer? I would double, based on agreeing to play Equal Level Conversion Doubles (ELCD).

When playing ELCD, if you double 2♥ and partner bids 3♣, you can bid 3♦ without showing extra values! Of course, on a good day, partner will bid spades or diamonds.

OBAR-BIDS

Contract: 4♠	<i>North</i> ♠ 10 6 5
Lead: ♢9	♥ 10 3
	♦ 7 4 2
	♣ A Q J 5 3

East (You)
 ♠ 8
 ♥ 9 8 6 5
 ♦ A K Q 8 6
 ♣ 7 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East (You)</i>	<i>South</i>
—	—	—	1♠
Pass	2♠	3♦	4♠
All Pass			

After your helpful lead-directing 3♦ overcall, partner obediently leads the ♢9. You win the first three tricks with high diamonds. On the third round, partner discards the discouraging ♥2.

Question 1: What suit might provide the setting trick?

Question 2: What would you lead at trick 4?

By the way: What holding in West's hand will ensure defeating the contract?

OBAR-BIDS

Question 1: What suit might provide the setting trick?

Answer: Spades. Very often, the way to solve bridge problems is the process of elimination. Regardless of who has the ♣K, that suit offers no hope. Partner's ♥2 said that he didn't like hearts. Therefore, your only hope is to try to promote a trump trick for your partner.

Question 2: What would you lead at trick 4?

Answer: You should lead a diamond. Once you do, whether South ruffs high or low, he can't shut out partner's ♠J 7 2. If you were reluctant to lead a fourth diamond because you'd be giving a ruff-sluff, Marty Sez: **When declarer's side has no losers in any side suit, be eager to give a ruff-sluff.**

By the way: What holding in West's hand will ensure defeating the contract?

Answer: In addition to the actual ♠Jxx, your defense would have been equally successful if West had the ♠Qx or ♠K. Whether or not you knew this answer, if you led a diamond, well done!

Also worth noting: If you had held West's cards, would you have made the well-thought-out discard of the ♥2? As long as East could be persuaded that hearts were hopeless, he should lead a diamond, and the ♠J was as good as gold.

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Here is the entire deal:

	<i>North</i>	
Contract: 4♠	♠ 10 6 5	
Lead: ♦9	♥ 10 3	
	♦ 7 4 2	
	♣ A Q J 5 3	
	<i>West</i>	<i>East (You)</i>
	♠ J 7 2	♠ 8
	♥ K Q 7 4 2	♥ 9 8 6 5
	♦ 9 3	♦ A K Q 8 6
	♣ 10 8 6	♣ 7 4 2
	<i>South</i>	
	♠ A K Q 9 4 3	
	♥ A J	
	♦ J 10 5	
	♣ K 9	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East (You)</i>	<i>South</i>
—	—	—	1♠
Pass	2♠	3♦	4♠
All Pass			