



Bidding Cheat Sheet Five-Card Majors

Points are high card points unless it says otherwise — length and shortage points count only once you have a fit. Game needs 25 between you.

1 Opening bids

YOUR HAND	OPEN
0–11	Pass
15–17 balanced	1NT — a poor five-card major (at most one honour) may be included. Exactly 15–17: a good 14 is still not a 1NT opening
12–19, five-card or longer major	1♥ / 1♠ — the major always has five. Bid your longest suit first; with 5-5 or 6-6, the higher-ranking first (spades)
12–19, no five-card major	A minor. 1♦ with four+ diamonds; otherwise 1♣ — which may be as short as two (the short club). A five-card minor is opened naturally
20–22 balanced	2NT
23+ balanced, or 9+ playing tricks	2♣ — artificial, forcing to game (only 2♣–2♦–2NT may be passed)
~8 playing tricks in a long strong suit	2♦ / 2♥ / 2♠ — the strong two, forcing one round

Balanced hands, the ladder:

12–14 → a minor, then 1NT
 15–17 → 1NT
 18–19 → a minor, then jump 2NT
 20–22 → 2NT
 23+ → 2♣

2 Responding bids

2a · Responding to 1NT

YOU HOLD	BID
0–7 balanced	Pass
0–7, five-card ♦ ♥ or ♠	2♦ / 2♥ / 2♠ — weak take-out. Opener passes
8+ with a four-card major	2♣ Stayman — see next column
8–9 balanced	2NT — invites. Opener passes with 15, bids 3NT with 16–17
10+ balanced	3NT
10+, five-card major	3♥ / 3♠ — forcing. Opener raises with three of the suit, else 3NT
8+, six-card major	4♥ / 4♠

Never respond in a four-card suit.

2b · Responding to one of a suit

YOU HOLD	BID
0–5	Pass
6–9 with support	Raise one level. A major promised five, so three-card support is enough (four for 1♦, five for 1♣). Shortage points, and 1 for each trump over four, count now
10–12 with support	Jump raise (1♠–3♠) — invitational
13+ with support	Raise to game (1♠–4♠)
6+, a suit at the one level	Bid it — a four-card major first. Forcing one round
10+, a suit at the two level	Bid it — 2♥ over 1♠ promises five. Forcing one round
6–9, no fit, no one-level suit	1NT
10–12 balanced, no fit	2NT
13–16 balanced, no fit	3NT — or a forcing suit bid first

Over 1♣, remember it may be as short as two: a club raise needs five clubs, and a four-card major comes first.

2A · STAYMAN — 2♣ OVER 1NT

“Do you have a four-card major?” You need **8+ and a four-card major**. Opener replies **2♦** = none · **2♥** = four hearts (hearts first with both) · **2♠** = four spades. Fit and 10+ → **game**. Fit and 8–9 → **raise to the three level** to invite. No fit → **2NT** (8–9) or **3NT** (10+). Never bid no-trumps once a 4-4 major fit is agreed. Over 2NT the enquiry is **3♣**.

2D · BLACKWOOD — 4NT ONCE TRUMPS ARE AGREED

REPLY	ACES	
5♣	0 or 4	Use it after a suit is agreed — a raise, or a fit found after a strong opening — when slam is in sight. With all four aces between you, 5NT asks for kings on the same ladder (6♣ = 0 or 4). The 4NT bidder places the contract. Small slam about 33 combined points; grand slam 37 .
5♦	1	
5♥	2	
5♠	3	

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Opener's second bid, and what to do when the opponents get into the auction.

2c · Responding to the strong openings

AUCTION	MEANING
2NT – Pass	0–3 only
2NT – 3NT	4–12 balanced, no four-card major · 13–15: 6NT
2NT – 3♣	Stayman: 4+ with a four-card major
2♣ – 2♦	Negative, under 8 — the default reply
2♣ – a suit	Positive: 8+ with a good five-card suit (2NT: 8+ balanced)
2♠ – 2NT	Negative to a strong two: 0–7 — even with trump support (the raise needs 8+)
2♠ – 3♠	8+ with three-card support
2♠ – 3NT	8–11 balanced, no support, no suit

3 Opener's rebids

SITUATION	REBID
Balanced, too weak for 1NT (12–14)	Opened a minor → rebid 1NT
Balanced, too strong for 1NT (18–19)	Opened a minor → jump to 2NT
Your own suit again	Always six+ cards. Minimum level 12–15 ; jump 16–18
A new suit	Shows 5–4. A reverse (a higher suit at the two level) needs 16+
Raise partner's suit	Four-card support (three for a two-level response). Single 12–15 · jump 16–18 · game 19+
Partner raised your major (1♠–2♠)	Pass a minimum; 3♠ invites with 16–18 ; game with 19+
Partner jump-raised (1♠–3♠)	4♠ with 13+ total (shortages count); pass with 12
After 2♣ – 2♦	2NT 23–24 (may be passed) · 3NT 25+ · a suit is natural, game-forcing

FORCING OR NOT?

Forcing (partner must bid): a new suit by an unpassed responder · 2♣ and the strong twos · 3♥ / 3♠ over 1NT · after a two-level response, a reverse or a jump rebid by opener (both to game) · a take-out double when the next hand passes · 4NT Blackwood.

Not forcing (partner may pass): every other no-trump bid · every raise · the weak take-out · a simple rebid of opener's suit · a reverse after a one-level response · 2NT after 2♣ – 2♦.

4 When the opponents bid

4a · Overcalling — coming in over their opening

YOUR ACTION	YOU NEED
Overcall, one level	8–16 with a good five+ card suit
Overcall, two level	12–15 with a six-card suit (or a strong five)
Jump overcall (1♦ – 2♠)	Strong: 15–16, good six-card suit. Not forcing
1NT overcall	16–18 balanced, a stopper in their suit
Take-out double	12+ , at most two of their suit, support for the other three — asks partner to choose
Double of their 1NT	Penalty, 17+ with a good long suit to lead. Their no-trump is strong, so the bar is higher

4b · Responding to overcalls and doubles

PARTNER...	YOU HOLD	BID
Doubled for take-out (next hand passed)	0–8	Your cheapest suit — never pass. Four-card major before a longer minor
	9–11	Jump in your suit
	12+	Bid game in your best suit — or 3NT with the opponent's suit stopped
Overcalled	under 3 of partner's suit	Pass — support or stay quiet
	3–11 with support	Raise to the level of the fit: 8 trumps → two level, 9 → three
	12+ with support	Raise to game in partner's suit
Opened, and the next hand doubled	2–5 with support	Single raise
	6–9 with support	Jump raise
	10–12 with support	Raise to game
	10+, no support	Redouble

Intervening call? “Never pass” applies only when the next hand passes. If they bid, double or redouble, you are no longer forced — bid with something to say, otherwise pass.

