



Ask Jerry

Jerry Helms

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Dear Jerry,

What does it mean when partner opens 2♥ or 2♠ in fourth seat?

Susan

Dear Susan,

Even though this sounds like a broken record, partnership agreement is key! One thing that you should always keep in mind in constructing a bidding system is that you do not need two ways to bid an identical hand. What follows is my preference, the agreement I have in regular partnerships and, perhaps more important, the logic.

In fourth position, you should not open the bidding unless you have a reasonable expectancy of a plus score. This should eliminate for consideration any minimal weak two-bids that you might have opted for in first, second or third position. With this understanding, I play a fourth-seat weak two-bid to suggest 10–13 high-card points and a good six-card suit with values that would not accept a Drury game invitation from responder. The following hands are good examples:

♠KQJ1053 ♥J6 ♦QJ8 ♣Q3 ♠7 ♥A864 ♦A9873 ♣K85
 ♠Q7 ♥AQJ852 ♦J1043 ♣K

Note that each of these hands have excellent playing strength, but lack quick tricks. In fourth seat, left-hand opponent's pass coupled with RHO's failure to open in third seat where light actions are common, marks partner with a fair share of outstanding values. You want to be in the auction in a manner that is constructively obstructive! Constructively, responder will be forewarned that opener may possess a lot of "quacks" (queens and jacks) and not go overboard with his near-opening bid. The obstructed opponents must choose whether to enter the auction at the two or three level.

Incidentally, note that both examples fit the Rule of 15 that historically has provided assistance for fourth-seat actions. As a review, the Rule of 15 — sometimes called the Pearson Point Count — is a guideline that works phenomenally well when deciding whether to open the bidding or pass the deal out. The Rule: In fourth seat, count your high-card points and add to this the number of spades held. If the sum of these equals 15 or more, open the bidding. If not, pass. Examples:

♠A654 ♥9 ♦A7653 ♣K84

Eleven HCP plus four spades equals 15, so open the bidding 1♦.

Still 11 HCP, but only one spade, therefore 12 Pearson Points. Mr. Pearson would tell you to pass.

The logic behind this guideline: When values are evenly divided as they seem to be after three passes, the side with spades holds advantage. If your side has a spade fit, the opponents must always push to a higher level if they wish to compete. If you hold spade length and the opponents declare a spade contract, you have defense and a better chance of going plus. □