



## Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

**My partner and I are having a dispute. We play 2/1.**

**I opened 1♥ in first seat with the following hand:**

♠ Q J 4 ♥ Q J 10 7 6 2 ♦ K ♣ Q J 2.

**After reaching a slam with no play, she questioned my opening bid! We routinely open 12-point hands and I objected to her criticism. Your thoughts?**

**Maxine**

Hi Maxine,

Normally I would ask about your partner's hand before rendering an opinion on a final contract. In this case, although your partner's bidding could be suspect, I think the root of the problem was likely your first action.

Your hand contains 12 HCP made up of three queens, three jacks, and a singleton king – zero quick tricks. While I totally agree that you should not pass as dealer, I would choose a different option.

An old partner of mine, who was a very good player, once said: "If, as dealer, you hold a decent six-card major, pass is never an option." I repeat this because I often hear comments like, "my hand was not good enough to open one, but was too good, or too flawed, to open a weak two-bid."

I am on record many times touting my Suggestion of 22 as it relates to opening bids. Total points, plus length of two longest suits, equaling at least

20, and then, if you have two or more quick tricks, you have a clear opening bid. Although there is certainly room to fudge a little, this hand does not remotely resemble a one-level opening bid. A weak 2♥ bid most closely resembles the cards you actually held. The naysayers: "But you have good support for the other major," "We open 12-point hands," "Our weak two-bids are marked 5–10!" Yada, yada, yada! My guess is that any problems you had in the bidding would have been lessened by choosing a better opening action.

Dear Jerry,

**My partner and I need some help bidding the following hand.**

♠ K Q 10 9 5 ♥ K J 10 9 8 ♦ – ♣ A Q 9.

**I opened 1♥, planning to reverse in spades to show the strength of my hand. Following your advice, I thought I was planning my second bid, before choosing my first. Partner insisted this was not the way to open this hand.**

**Barbara**

Hi Barbara,

As is often the case, if we get off to a bad start, it's often impossible to recover. After a 1♥ opening bid, the partnership is in trouble! As a general rule, holding equal-length suits of four, five or six cards, open the higher ranking of those two, irrespective of the quality of the suits.

I understand, although I don't agree

with, your plan to reverse into spades to confirm your extra values. Just for a review: Opener reverses by bidding a suit at the two level that is higher in rank than the suit he originally opened at the one level. Virtually always (a term I generally avoid), opener's first suit is longer than his second suit. The values confirmed suggest a minimum of the upper end of a strong notrump with two good suits. Since a balanced 17 points would start with 1NT, a reverse usually shows a singleton or a void somewhere. You have enough strength for a reverse, you have an unbalanced hand, and you have two good suits. However, you do not have the right shape. Open 1♠, planning to bid, and hopefully rebid, your hearts at some point, to show your distribution.

If the auction started:

1♠	1NT
2♥	

it is frequently misunderstood that auctions such as this show a minimum opening bid. *Not true!* A 2♥ rebid here would simply define values somewhere between the worst hand you have ever opened the bidding on, up to not quite enough for a game-forcing jumpshift. Ergo, something like 12–18 HCP. Exactly what you have. The same values would hold true if your partner responded in a new suit at the two level.

Whatever happened on your actual deal, would likely have been better with a better choice of opening bids. ■