

## Making "*Balancing*" Bidding Decisions

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### Definition

"*Balancing*" refers to sitting in the position in which if you **PASS**, the Opponents will play their last declared contract. The present discussion focuses on Opponents opening a **Suit bid**, where these bids show 13 or so HCPs, while a **1NT** open for most Opponents shows 15-17 HCPs.

### Principle

*Many experienced players will **NEVER** let the Opponents play a 1-level suit contract!!!!* [Indeed, some very experienced players will never let Opponents play a 2-level contract, if the bid is in a Major!]

### Examples

1. West: 1C/1D/1H/1S; N: PASS; E: PASS; S: **BALANCE**
2. West: 1C; N: PASS; E: 1H; S: PASS; WEST: PASS; N: **BALANCE**

### Explanation

An **Overcall** of Opponents opening bid at the 1 level claims at least **11 HCPs**. A "**balancing**" bid sitting 4<sup>th</sup> claims, instead, **ONLY 10 HCPs**, or "a King less." When your Partner makes a "balancing" bid, you **MUST take this lower point count into account** when you respond, *just as you assume your Partner may have only 11 HCPs if Partner opens sitting in 3<sup>rd</sup> chair.*

### Three "Balancing" Bidding Options

1. **W: 1C/D/H/S; N: PASS; EAST: PASS.** An Overall suit bid by **SOUTH** is **balancing** and shows at least **5 cards** with at least **11 (not 12-13+) points**.
2. **W: 1C/D/H/S; N: PASS; EAST: PASS.** A **DOUBLE** by **SOUTH** shows (1) 2 or fewer in the Opponent's bid suit, (2) at least 3 cards in all 3 unbid suits, and (3) at least 12+ points. Also, many Partners play that a Double of a Minor suit opening shows at least 1 **4-card Major**, and almost always 2 Majors both with **exactly 4 cards**, with honors in the Majors (otherwise, with 5+ cards the Major would have been bid).
3. **W: 1C/D/H/S; N: PASS; EAST: PASS.** A **1NT** bid by **SOUTH** shows (1) 13-15 (**not** 15-17) HCPs and (2) a **Stopper** (e.g., an Ace, or a King, small) in the Opponent's bid suit.