

A Simple Strong Pass System ♠♥♦♣ George Cuppaidge Sept 2012 jori41@hotmail.com

It is such a simple concept, use the cheapest action of all to show a good hand. Give your side as much room as possible to find the ideal spot. You can play it at world championship level but you must practice it in a vacuum as many sponsoring organizations worldwide have, effectively, banned it. Strange! It has so many, self-evident advantages. Here are some.

- Pass, unlike a strong 1C or 2C, does not supplant a natural bid, so those vital bids are free to use in a natural sense.
- Knowing when your side holds the balance of power is fundamental. In this system, or any system, you must be able to announce that you hold the magic number, 10 points, or more. The system strong pass does just this.
- Presently pass shows say 0-9 points, an opening bid 10+ points (My own preference, see immediately above.) Why not take the opportunity, and the bidding space, to announce the same point range but your longest suit as well?
- Fit is important, sometimes it is all important. Knowing that you are facing length in a particular suit can often allow instant re-evaluation upwards. Sometimes, simply by showing a suit you will find a game when other players were never in the bidding.
- When the longest suit in any hand is made trumps, value is added to that hand.
- Often, your first chance will be your only chance to describe your hand.
- There is no need to alter your preemptive bidding structure, usually the bids from 2D upwards. A scheme is proposed.
- The “standard” bids of 1NT, 2C and 2NT come under the umbrella of strong pass, so these bids become free for other purposes.
- Assuming you, very reasonably, use 1C as your negative reply to “pass,” you have the extremely powerful situation that both partners know that a game force has been created at the level of 1D! You have a lot of room. Use it effectively and out-bid everyone.
- Bidding opposite a weak one-bid is akin to bidding opposite a passed-hand response, you don’t disturb it unless game is at least a reasonable possibility.
- It is an easy concept to grasp, that an opening one-bidder does not rebid, unless forced, with a hand in the 0-5 point range. It follows that responder must make a bid which forces a rebid with a hand which has game prospects opposite 0-5 points.
- Your opponents can, and will, try to be a nuisance, but they have their own agenda to deal with. If you can make them change system, just by passing, you have indeed done well! As long as you have the means of announcing to partner that you know the hand, point-wise, belongs to you, let them. That number is 12 points. Your side will always know what is going on, they will be guessing. When partner makes a 10+ point pass, and there is intervention, your first move on all 12+ hands is to double. New suits are natural and not forcing and pass will often be for penalty, awaiting a re-opening double.

Table of opening bids in first or second position.

- 1C 0-9 points, 5+ clubs with no higher ranking 5+ card suit. All 4333 or 4432.
- 1D 0-9 points, 5+ diamonds unless precisely 4441. No higher ranking 5+ card suit. When balanced, 5332.

- 1H/S 0-9 points, 5+ cards. 1H denies 5+ spades. A weak-two is the choice with a good 5- or 6-card suit and no second suit.
- 1NT 6-9 points, diamonds and a major or both majors, 5+ cards in each. 2C asks which major, 2D both, and is game forcing, other bids are correctable.
- 2C 6-9 points, clubs and a major, 5+5+. 2D is the strong reply.
- 2D/H/S/NT 6-9 points, weak two, 2NT clubs.
- 3C/D/H Transfer preempts.
- 3S Any solid suit, nothing outside
- 3NT A four-level preempt in either minor.
- 4C/D Good major preempts.
- 4H/S Regular preempts.
- 4NT Specific ace ask

Replying to a strong pass. (Third and fourth seat “opening bids.”)

- 1C 0-5 points, no ace.
- 1D All 12+ points. Over rho action, double with 12+, pass 0-5 or penalty pass, bid 6-11.
- 1H/S 6-11 points, a five-card or longer suit. 1H denies five spades.
- 1NT 6-11 points, balanced.
- 2C/D 6-11 points, five-card or longer suit, not 5332, no higher ranking five-card suit.
- 2H 6-11 points, three-suiter, both majors.
- 2S 6-11 points, three-suiter, with hearts, 1444 etc.
- 2NT 6-9 points, 4144 etc
- 3C 10-11 points, 4144
- 3D 10-11 points, 4045

After 1C, negative, opener can bid 1D, creating a near game-force. Responder shows his hand using the bids of 1H and upwards in the same way. Other rebids by strong passer are natural, not forcing.

After 1D, full positive, strong passer describes his hand, again using the same meanings for 1H and upwards. A huge amount of information has exchanged, all at the one-level.

Replying to a weak one bid.

Most commonly opener will be in his upper range and for part-score purposes, assume he is. It is rarely wrong to play weak hands in a fit, at the two-level. The first two levels are there for the side that makes first use of them.

- A simple raise of 1D, 1H or 1S shows three-card support and 12-14 points. A fifth club is needed for a raise of 1C, but a 4-card simple raise is often right.
- Opener can show the 15-17 point three-card raise of 1D, 1H, or 1S, at the two-level, via 2C. See below.

- 1NT shows 15-17 points, balanced, and denies support. After a 1NT response, minimum rebids by opener promise shape only. 2NT, by opener, shows strength and shape and asks responder to further describe.
- The 2NT response shows the same point range, balanced, but with four-card or better support.
- With a big fit, a shortage and nothing else, it is rarely wrong to jump to game in a major. Let them begin their grand slam exploration at the five-level.
- The jump raise is pre-emptive, balanced, with at least one extra trump. It shows a maximum of 14 points.
- Holding 18+ points, responder will not want to launch into game without being sure that opener has some values.
- The bid used to find out is 1D over 1C, and 2C over 1D, 1H or 1S. In all cases, opener makes the cheapest rebid to show 0-5 points. The auction can subside in a part-score. All other rebids show 6-9 points, are natural and create a game force. The auction 1C-1D; 1H-1S; 1NT can be passed. Opener's 1H showed 0-5 points, 1S asked opener to further describe and 1NT showed balanced. To keep it going, responder must bid 2C asking opener to further describe his balanced hand. Other bids from responder are not forcing.
- Relay enthusiasts should note that, when the 1C opener is forced to show his shape, bids in the first five denominations have their natural meaning, the next steps show
 - 4414
 - 4144
 - 1444
 - 0445 etc (showing sub-range, 0-3 or 4-5 is an option, 6-9 is never broken up)
- A new suit at the one-level is natural, shows 4+ cards in the suit and a maximum of 17 points. Opener replies only when 6-9 and he rebids along natural lines. Because it is not forcing, responder should avoid responding one over one, holding just four-cards in the suit and very good support for partner. He should prefer a raise.
- To bid two over one (not 2C) is natural, shows a 5+ card suit, denies primary support for partner, is limited to 17 points and is not forcing. Do not bid a four-card major ahead of a longer minor. With no fit, generally pass without 14+ points or a good suit to show.

The 2C response to 1D/H/S.

Following a 2D reply to the 2C enquiry, the other major, or 2H when the opening bid was 1D, is a forcing relay.

- Opener replies naturally, now limited to 0-5 points.
- A retreat to opener's suit shows the 15-17 point three-card raise. It may be the safest way out with a doubleton, 18 points only and know to be facing 0-5 points.
- 2NT over 2D is used to get out. After a 1S/H opening it shows four cards in the other major and a long minor. After a 1D opening and a 2D rebid, 2S shows 4 spades, long clubs, 2NT shows 4 hearts, long clubs. There may yet be game in a 4-4 major fit.

Opener's descriptive rebids have these meanings both in the 6-9 point and the 0-5 point range.

- Un-bid major (6-9 points only) 4 card suit (with 5+5+ majors we open 1NT)

- Suit rebid 6+ cards, no four-card suit.
- 2NT Balanced, 5332
- 3C/D 4+ card suit

Double or redouble of intervention shows all 18+. Opener, holding 0-5 points, must make the cheapest bid, or pass or rho action.

Auctions following a weak one bid are remarkably accurate. To most people it is an unfamiliar way to bid. Set a hand generator to deal 0-9 opposite random, or 12+ random and do some bidding practice. Practice here does indeed make perfect. It will not take long to notice that 25 points combined, with both hands balanced, offers a good play for game less than half the time and that many good games can be bid, largely on shape. Do not worry about the dangers of opening a one-bid with a Yarborough, opponents, who must also follow their own bidding agenda will only rarely be able to double, effectively, for penalty.

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| ♠865 | ♠4 |
| ♥K754 | ♥QJ32 |
| ♦98743 | ♦AK |
| ♣6 | ♣AKJ752 |

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|----------|----------------------------|
| 1D | 2C (18+ points, any shape) |
| 2D (0-5) | 2NT (4 hearts and 5+clubs) |
| 4H | |

For relay enthusiasts.

The article can be read and considered without becoming involved in this section. This section demonstrates just how comprehensive and powerful, yet still relatively simple, you can make this system if you wish. This is how the exact shape and point range of the hand which is being described can be found and then the number and placement of aces, kings and queens.

It is more space efficient to reserve the first descriptive step to show the balanced hand. This is only done, in auction beginning with a strong pass. With that proviso, minimum bids in each of the five denominations have their natural meanings. They retain these same meanings over intervention.

- 1H (first step) Balanced, including 5332 with a minor.
- 1S (denomination) Spades
- 1NT (denomination) Hearts (minimum NT replaces the suit used to show the balanced hand.)
- 2C (denomination) Clubs, but not 5332
- 2D (denomination) Diamonds, but not 5332

When there is intervention, suppose there is a 2H bid immediately over a strong pass, and responder doubles, he is showing 12+. He has made himself captain and seeks full description from the strong passer. The strong passer's first step is 2S, which shows balanced. 2NT replaces 2S and shows spades, 3C and 3D are natural. Opener can pass for penalty with five hearts. 3H shows the least described three-suiter, the three-suiter with hearts. 3S shows the three-suiter with a singleton or

void in hearts, 10-14 points, 3NT same shape 15+ points. With four hearts, strong passer must consider carefully before making a penalty pass.

When there has been a game-forcing reply of 1D to the strong pass and the next hand intervenes with, say, 2S the strong passer's first step is to pass, which shows all balanced.

- Pass Balanced
- Double Shows five cards in the bid suit.
- 2NT Replaces the suit below the intervention suit, hearts.
- 3C Clubs
- 3D Diamonds. (denomination)
- 3H Three-suiter with spades. (1st step)
- 3S Three-suiter without spades, 10-14 points.
- 3NT Three-suiter without spades, 15+ points, 1444
- 4C 15+ points, 0445
- 4D 15+ points, 0454
- 4H 15+ points, 0544 etc.

This is the more comprehensive scheme, without intervention.

After Pass-1D; 1H (bal.)-1S (range?)

After Pass-1H (6-11 balanced); 1S (range?)

| | | |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1NT | 10-12 (step) | 6-9 (step) |
| 2C | 13-14 | 10-11, clubs only, 3334 or any 2335 (denomination) |
| 2D | 15-17 | 10-11, diamonds only. 3343 or any 2353 |
| 2H | 18-19 | 10-11, four hearts |
| 2S | 20-22 | 10-11, four spades, not four hearts. |
| 2NT | 23-25 | 10-11, 4-4 minors, low doubleton |
| 3C | 26+ | 10-11, 4-4 minors, high doubleton, 0-2 controls. |

In both cases, the partnership can stop in 1NT, 2D, 2H or 2S. The same treatment is available after Pass-1C (0-5); 1D-1H; 1S. Now 1NT shows 0-3 points, higher bids show 4-5 points and actual shape.

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|-------|-------|
| ♠KQJ7 | ♠8654 |
| ♥AK43 | ♥Q7 |
| ♦A6 | ♦K753 |
| ♣AKQ | ♣982 |

| | |
|--------|-------|
| Pass | 1C(1) |
| 1D(2) | 1H(3) |
| 1S(2) | 2S(4) |
| 2NT(2) | 3D(5) |
| 3H(2) | 4S(6) |
| 6S(6) | |

- (1) 0-5 points, no ace
- (2) Forcing
- (3) Balanced

- (4) 4-5 points, four spades, not four hearts.
- (5) Four diamonds.
- (6) High doubleton, 1Q and 1K, neither or both in spades. The steps are low doubleton, high doubleton with 0Q, 1Q, 2Q, K, KQ with neither or both in spades, KQ, one in spades none in diamonds etc. We know partner must hold the DK. If it were important, we could locate the queen.
- (7) No matter where the queen is, it will be working, but we will need a ruff for twelve tricks and there is no room for a jack. Without both the king and the queen, we would play in 4S or 4NT.

When the strong passer shows, say, hearts, over the captain's next relay the first step shows all hands in the minimum, 10-14 point, range, higher bids describe, naturally, the 15+ hands with hearts. So after a 1NT, bid showing hearts, and a 2C relay.

- 2D All 10-14 points. (step)
- 2H Long, 6+, hearts. (denomination)
- 2S 4 spades.
- 2NT Balanced, 5332
- 3C 4+ clubs.
- 3D 4+ diamonds, low shortage or 5+5+ in hearts and diamonds.
- 3H 2542 (step)
- 3S 1543
- 3NT 1642 or more extreme.