



**Jerry Helms**  
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## Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,

I would like some clarification on minor-suit bidding. I used to open 1♦ with four diamonds and five clubs and less than 17 points in order to have an easy rebid. Just recently, an expert player told me he always opens clubs with that sort of hand because if he opens the shorter suit first, it is difficult to convince his partner that his clubs are longer than his diamonds. Do you have any guidelines for those sorts of hands?

Thanks, I always read your column first in the Bridge Bulletin.  
**Minor Suited and Booted**

Hi Booted,

Despite being swamped at times, anyone who confesses to reading my column first moves toward the head of the line for a reply! Although I have addressed this issue in a previous article, I think it is worth revisiting.

First, consider a Roth-Stone-ism: "Plan your second bid before making your first bid."

Second, a Jerry-ism: "A good bid is one that most resembles the cards held."

Third, "Bid where you live." The original author is unknown, although a friend, Ed Schulte, often quotes this.

Fourth, another Jerry-ism: "The best available bid is often the least bad alternative."

Apply the above to each of the following hands:

♠8 ♥A75 ♦J643 ♣AKJ104

With this minimum 13-HCP hand, I would open 1♣, planning to rebid 2♣ after the anticipated spade response. Although this implies six or more clubs, the club suit is certainly "where I live."

♠8 ♥A75 ♦AKJ10 ♣J8654

Although this hand has exactly the same number of HCP and exactly the same shape, I would open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣. Partner may get my shape wrong, but he should certainly play me to have diamonds, clubs and somewhere between 12–18 HCP.

♠K ♥AQJ ♦QJ43 ♣QJ654

16 HCP, soft values, and suit qualities not worthy of a strength-showing reverse: Despite flawed shape, I would open INT. Surely the singleton ♠K is as valuable as two low spades. If the auction developed in a fashion that required me to table my hand, I would simply take one of my clubs, which is black, and place it along side my ♠K, which is also black. This way partner would think my decision was a function of my failing eyesight rather than my overactive imagination!

♠8 ♥K75 ♦AK64 ♣AQ1054

Also 16 HCP, but clearly stronger than the previous hand because of concentration and quality of values. The perfect shape and structure for a reverse. I would open 1♣, planning to rebid 2♦. This action should suggest longer clubs than diamonds, extra values, but shape unacceptable to open INT. In addition, it promises strength in the suits bid. Truly, an action that resembles my cards!

I hope this helps you reboot! □

**"The best available bid is often the least bad alternative."**

### East hands for the October Bidding Box

*Bid these hands with a partner. The West hands are on page 61. The N-S players are silent unless otherwise noted. Scores on page 31–33.*

**Problem 1.** North deals. None vul. North opens 1♠ and rebids 2♠ if possible.

♠4 ♥732 ♦AQ7 ♣Q108752

**Problem 2.** East deals. N-S vul.

♠AKQ86 ♥3 ♦AKQ2 ♣A107

**Problem 3.** South deals. E-W vul. South opens 1♦. North bids 3♦ (preemptive).

♠J92 ♥J76 ♦1062 ♣AKQ3

**Problem 4.** West deals. Both vul.

♠A10 ♥A53 ♦J86 ♣AK652

**Problem 5.** North deals. None vul. North opens 1NT (13–15 HCP). South bids 2♥ (transfer). North bids 2♠ if possible.

♠J94 ♥KJ7 ♦AKQ2 ♣865

**Problem 6.** East deals. E-W vul.

♠AK85 ♥AK ♦Q74 ♣10965

**Problem 7.** South deals. N-S vul.

♠K10932 ♥Q ♦KQ82 ♣875

**Problem 8.** West deals. Both vul. North bids 4♠.

♠3 ♥A75 ♦KQ10762 ♣K74