

The No Trump Ladder

We have just learnt that to bid 1NT you need 15-17 HCPs and a balanced hand but what if you have more than 17 pts. How do you show this?

It turns out that there is a No Trump Ladder each rung on the ladder shows a slightly stronger hand.

Opening 1 NT is the first rung on the ladder showing 15-17 pts. Each step up the ladder shows a stronger hand by two points. The next rung shows 18-19 points and the following shows 20-21 pts and the next rung shows 22-23 etc; all of which should be balanced. No greater shape than 1 doubleton.

2NT shows 20-21 pts. Responder can use Stayman (3C) with 4+ points to ask for a 4-card major and 3♦ and 3♥ to transfer to Hearts and Spades respectively. This promises 5+ cards in the major.

Opener	Bid	Responder	Bid
♠ AK43 ♥ A53 ♦ AK3 ♣ KJ83	2NT	♠ Q972 ♥ QJ72 ♦ 8652 ♣ 9	3♣ Do you have a 4 card major?
♠ AK43 ♥ A53 ♦ AK3 ♣ KJ83	2NT	♠ Q9782 ♥ QJ2 ♦ 8652 ♣ 9	3♥ Opener must bid 3♠

To show the 19-20 point range opener first open one of a suit and then bids 2NT.

If responder passes then they will have less than 6 points and therefore not enough for game. If the do bid opener rebids 2NT if there is no major fit. This gives responder an opportunity to rebid his suit showing 5 cards or bid the other major showing 4-cards in that major this means that Stayman and Transfers are not needed.

Opener	Bid	Responder	Bid
♠ AK43 ♥ K53 ♦ KQ3 ♣ KJ83	1♣	♠ Q97 ♥ J72 ♦ 8652 ♣ 92	Pass Awful I know but usually better than going off in 3NT
♠ AK43 ♥ K53 ♦ KQ3 ♣ KJ83	1♣	♠ Q972 ♥ AJ72 ♦ 8652 ♣ 9	1♥
	2NT 4♠		3♠ Pass

♠ AK3 ♥ K543 ♦ KQ3 ♣ KJ83	1 ♣	♠ Q9782 ♥ AJ2 ♦ 8652 ♣ 9	1 ♠
	2NT 4 ♠		3 ♠ Pass

Sometimes, this means the good hand is Dummy but you can't have everything all the time.