# OPENING UNBALANCED HANDS AT THE ONE-LEVEL - BASIC

(Note that this sheet assumes that you are playing four-card majors, non-strong reverses, and with all hand evaluation based on point-count.)

**First**

Look at the shape of the hand - i.e. count the lengths of the suits - and determine the hand-type.
With a six-card (or longer) suit and no other five-card suit the hand is single-suited;
with 5-5 shape (or longer) the hand is two-suited;
other unbalanced hands hands will be either 5-4 shape or 4-4-4-1.

Provided that the strength of the hand is appropriate you will open each of these with one of a suit, but before you make your opening bid you should have your rebid prepared in the event of a simple change of suit from partner.

## Single-suited hands

You can open a hand with a good six-card suit on as few as ten points (depending on suit quality and vulnerability).

With no secondary four-card suit you will plan to rebid in your suit.

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|---|---|
| 10 to 15 points | rebid two of your suit; |
| 16 to 18 points | rebid three of your suit; |
| nineteen points | rebid four of your suit; |

(many single-suited hands of nineteen or more points will qualify for a strong opening bid at the two-level.)

With 6-4 shape your rebid will depend on the quality of your two suits.

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 to 18 points | rebid in your second suit; |
| 19 points | jump rebid in your second suit (game-forcing); |
| | in any of the above sequences you may prefer to rebid a good quality six-card major (as above) in preference to a rather feeble four-card minor. |

## Two-suited hands

You can open a 5-5 shape at the one-level on as few as nine points provided that the points are mostly in your long suits - particularly when not vulnerable.

Open one of the higher-ranking suit.

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|---|---|
| 10 to 18 points | rebid in your second suit; |
| 19 points | jump rebid in your second suit (game-forcing). |

## 5-4 shape

The usual guideline for minimum strength is ‘rule of twenty’ - i.e eleven points.

Plan to open one of your five-card suit and rebid in your second suit.

If either one or both of your suits are of feeble quality you may choose to pass on eleven and occasionally even twelve points.
If your four-card suit is feeble and your five-card suit is good-quality you will occasionally choose to rebid in your five-card suit, particularly if the new suit rebid takes the bidding up a level.

You will sometimes prefer to raise partner’s three-card major response rather than make your planned rebid.

Some 5-4-2-2 hands of 12 to 14 points with points in the short suits are better opened 1NT.

## 4-4-4-1 shape

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 points | pass; | |
| 15+ points | open a major (hearts if you have both). If partner responds in your short suit you will rebid in no trumps; | |
| 13 or 14 points | TAPS (H & C) | with a black singleton open 1♥; |
| | | with a red singleton open 1♣. |

Note that an alternative set of rules using a version of strong reverses will be found on the sheet ‘Opening unbalanced hands at the one-level - improvers’.)