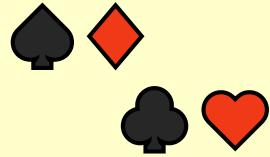


Bridge on Sundays



1 Spade Opening

There are many advantages in always having a 5 card suit when you open 1♠. When you open 1♠, partner is frequently forced to respond 1NT because he does not have sufficient points to respond at the 2 level and the weaker hand becomes declarer.

Hands when you only hold 4 cards in ♠s and wish to open at the 1 level.

- If you have a longer suit you will open that suit.
- With balanced hands in your agreed no-trump range you can open 1NT.
- With 4-4-4-1 hands (4 spades), the *rules* are as follows:
 - With a singleton ♣, open 1♥ (the middle suit of the three remaining suits).
 - With a singleton ♦ or ♡, open 1♠.Both these give you the best chance of finding a fit.
- The only other hand type to consider is 4-3-3-3, with 4 cards in ♠s and more points than your no-trump range. In this case open 1♠ and re-bid 1NT etc over partner's response. Occasionally you will play at the 1 level with only 3 trumps. Acol bidders should be familiar with the *prepared club* opening; it's been around for years.
- When you have a 4-3-3-3 hand of 16 points or more, with 4 spades including three of the top four cards, and third or fourth in hand, open 1♠ to get a better score if it is passed out.

What are the advantages of knowing partner has 5 cards in the opening spades suit?

- With a singleton and 5 points, you do not need to strain to bid 1NT to *keep the bidding open*. It's unlikely you will miss game. Of course if you can bid 1NT, then the opener should always bid a second suit if he has one.
- Should you need to give preference, then a 5-2 fit usually plays better than a 4-3 fit, so knowing partner's spades are at least 5, enables you to make a better choice.