

The Balancing Seat (part 1)

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1 The situation: Some bidding has occurred followed by two passes. If you pass, the auction is over.

- 1.1 General principle: Add a king (i.e., 3 hcp) and bid as usual.
- 1.2 The partner of the balancer must subtract 3 hcp before advancing.

2 The simplest variant: LHO opens one of a suit. Partner and RHO pass.

- 2.1 Take stock of the situation. What do you know?
 - 2.1.1 LHO has an opening bid.
 - 2.1.2 LHO's bid may have handcuffed partner.
 - 2.1.3 RHO is certainly weak, but LHO could have half the deck.
 - 2.1.4 OTOH, If LHO opened a minor, he/she may be grateful to shift to 1NT.
 - 2.1.5 Consider the vulnerability.
- 2.2 If you have at least ten support points and at least three pieces in each unbid suit:
 - 2.2.1 You can double for takeout.
 - 2.2.2 There is no upper limit on the double.
- 2.3 If you have a balanced hand with a stopper in the opponent's suit:
 - 2.3.1 With less than twelve hcp, just pass.
 - 2.3.2 With 12-14 points, bid 1NT.
 - 2.3.3 With more than 14 points, double. Then on your next turn:
 - 2.3.3.1 With 15-17 hcp, bid 1NT (if possible).
 - 2.3.3.2 With 18-19 hcp, bid 2NT (if possible).
- 2.4 If you have a suit of your own with five or more pieces.
 - 2.4.1 If you have 14 or more points (not counting shortness), double and then bid your suit (if possible).
 - 2.4.2 If you have enough hcp (+3, no shortness points) to overcall, you can.
- 2.5 Top players have agreements for handling strong two-suiters.
 - 2.5.1 Three bids are available for this purpose: cue bid, 2NT, and jump shift.
 - 2.5.2 One player's method of dealing with all the options is written up at <http://bridgewinners.com/article/view/balancing-michaels/>.

Next week: More balancing situations.