

# The Joys & Perils of Preempting (Part 1)

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## 1 Definitions and Goals:

- 1.1 A preemptive opening bid shows a hand that is too weak to open at the one-level but has playing strength based on the length of at least one suit. Preempts can be made at the two, three, four, five, or even higher levels.
- 1.2 The purpose is to use up the opponents' bidding space without subjecting your side to undue risk.
- 1.3 The best time to preempt is when not vulnerable.
- 1.4 The best seats for preempts are the first (two opponents, one partner) and third (one opponent, no partner).

## 2 Every pair should agree on a style of preempting.

- 2.1 The 2-3-4 style uses Losing Trick Count to try to reach safe contracts.
  - 2.1.1 Opener determines the level to bid based on the vulnerability and number of likely winners (13 minus the number of losers).
    - 2.1.1.1 At favorable vulnerability bid four plus the number of winners. Thus, a nine-loser hand can open at the two level.
    - 2.1.1.2 At equal vulnerability bid three plus the number of winners.
    - 2.1.1.3 At unfavorable vulnerability bid two plus the number of winners.
  - 2.1.2 Responder raises or passes depending on the number of winners he/she holds. Example: Opener bids 2♠ at unfavorable vulnerability; you can count four winners; raise to 4♠.
  - 2.1.3 Advantage: Often reaches solid contracts.
  - 2.1.4 Disadvantages:
    - 2.1.4.1 Responder cannot use the LAW.
    - 2.1.4.2 Often misses some good preempts.
- 2.2 Disciplined preempts emphasize suit quality.
  - 2.2.1 Requires two of top three honors in the suit. Some have other requirements such as no four-card major side suit, no void, etc.
  - 2.2.2 Advantages:
    - 2.2.2.1 Makes it easier to find 3NT.
    - 2.2.2.2 Less chance of horrific penalty.
  - 2.2.3 Disadvantage: Misses some good preempts.
- 2.3 Undisciplined preempts are now used by most top players.
  - 2.3.1 Users respect the LAW, but responder knows that opener may have less than the usually prescribed length.
  - 2.3.2 Advantage: Maximizes the disruption of the opponents' bidding.
  - 2.3.3 Disadvantage: More difficult to find a good contract if opponents do not compete.