

Part 11: Reverses by Responder

Opener is not the only one who can reverse: Responder can reverse as well. A reverse by responder is similar to a reverse by opener – except that responder bids it, of course. For a reverse by responder, responder's first two calls must be two different suits, two suits that no one else has bid. The second suit must be higher-ranked than the first suit and it must be bid at the two-level (or higher). And responder's first suit **MUST** be longer than his second suit. Here are some examples of reverses by responder:

<u>Opener's First Bid</u>	<u>Responder's First Bid</u>	<u>Opener's Second Bid</u>	<u>Responder's Second Bid</u>
1C	1H	1N	2S
1D	2C	2D	2H
1H	2D	2NT	3S

The following is **NOT** a reverse by responder: 1C – 1D – 1H – 1S. Yes, responder has bid two different suits and the second suit is higher-ranked than the first. However, responder bid his second suit at the one-level, not the two-level, so it's not a reverse.

A reverse by responder is forcing to game. Therefore, in order to reverse responder should have an opening hand or better. In other words, it should be a hand that can make a game opposite a minimum opening hand.

Also for a reverse, responder's first suit must 5+ cards and it must be longer than his second suit. If you are 5-5 or 6-6, responder or opener, you always bid the higher-ranked suit first, regardless of the strength of your hand. .

Here are some examples of hands that are suitable for a reverse by responder. (These hands correspond to the three bidding sequences shown above.)

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. S: AJ64 | 2. S: A52 | 3. S: AQJ9 |
| H: QJ1074 | H: KJ98 | H: A5 |
| D: AK | D: 6 | D: KJ987 |
| C: 54 | C: AQ863 | C: 75 |

Now let's consider the following question: Partner opens 1H. You have a 5-card (or longer) minor and four spades. What do you bid? Do you show your long minor and hope to show your spades later? Or do you ignore your minor (for now, at least) and just bid 1S? The answer is simple and has to do with the requirements for a reverse by responder.

If you know that you're going to game, then you can bid your minor suit first and then bid spades over whatever opener bids next. As in the third bidding example from today's lesson, this may mean bidding spades at the 3-level. This is not something you want to do unless you belong in game!

If you don't have enough to force to game, then bid your spades, rather than the minor, over the 1H opening bid. As always, your first priority is to find an 8-card major suit fit, if one exists. If you bid your minor first, and if neither you nor your partner is strong enough to reverse, then you risk losing your potential spade fit. And if you're not strong enough to reverse but you do it anyway, then you'll find your spade fit but you'll probably end up too high.

One caveat: When responder reverses, there will be at most one unbid suit. The opponents are likely to lead that suit, of course, especially if you're in a No Trump game. So even if responder is strong enough to force to game, if No Trump looks to be the likely contract, then responder may choose to suppress a 5-card minor in order to give less information to the opponents.

For example, if the bidding goes 1H – 1S – 1NT – 3NT, then the opening lead will likely be anything other than a heart. But if the bidding goes 1H – 2C – 2NT – 3S – 3NT, you will almost definitely get a diamond lead. This isn't necessarily a problem, but it's certainly something to consider when bidding.