

Part 1: Introduction

This is the first installment of a multi-week series on **reverses**. While most players are familiar with the term, there is much confusion about what they show and what one needs for them.

Some players say that they don't "play" reverses. This is an unfortunate decision, for two reasons:

1. Reverses are standard bids. As such, they are not alertable. They are NOT specific to any particular bidding system.
2. Reverses provide a means to describe a particular type of hand. If you don't "play" reverses, you won't have a way of describing these hands to your partner. This will make it difficult to reach your optimum contract.

Even if you don't "play" reverses, it is important for you to recognize reverses when they occur and to understand what they show. Because even if you don't "play" reverses, your opponents will. And if your opponents reverse, they won't alert – because reverses are not alertable. If you don't recognize your opponent's reverse, or if you don't know what it shows, you won't be able to defend properly.

There are three types of reverses:

1. Reverses by opener
2. High reverses (by opener)
3. Reverses by responder

The three are different but they have two things in common:

1. The player who reverses (opener or responder) must bid two **suits** for his first two bids. (Suits, not No Trump. If one of your first two bids is some number of No Trump, then you can't reverse.) They must be two different suits, two suits that no one else has bid. (NOTE: As a corollary to this, a reverse tends to show an unbalanced hand.)

2. The reverse bid (the second bid by opener or responder) shows more points than the first bid promised:

- An opening one-level suit bid may show as few as 12 HCP. However, a reverse by opener or a high reverse shows about 17+ HCP (maybe a “good” 16 HCP or even a bit less with really good distribution and prime values). If you use losing trick count, then a reverse by opener shows a 5- or 6-loser hand. This is referred to as a ***second bracket hand***.
- A suit bid by responder may show as few as 6 HCP (at the one-level) or 10 HCP (at the two-level). However, a reverse by responder is forcing to game.

NOTE: For these lessons, we will assume that we're playing Standard American, if only to convince you that reverses really ARE a basic, standard bid.