

Part 10: High Reverses

A high reverse is a bid with which opener can show extra values. For a high reverse, opener bids one of a major (One Heart or One Spade), responder bids a different suit at the two-level, and then opener bids a third, different suit at the three-level. This shows a hand with at least 16 – 17 HCP, about the same strength as a regular reverse by opener. Here are some examples of bidding sequences:

| Opener's First Bid | Responder's First Bid | Opener's Second Bid |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1S | 2H | 3D |
| 1H | 2D | 3C |

Playing Standard American, responder's bid at the two-level shows a "good" 10+ HCP. The high reverse by opener shows at least 16 – 17 HCP. Therefore, opener and responder together have at least 26 HCP. Clearly, this should be enough for game. Therefore, a high reverse is forcing to game. This has nothing to do with partnership agreement: It's just about the math.

The suit requirements for a high reverse are less strict than for a standard reverse. Opener's first suit should be at least as long as his second suit, but the two suits can be the same length. So responder should be at least 5-4 but could be 5-5 or better. Here are some hands that are suitable for a high reverse: (Of course, responder must "cooperate" in order for opener to be able to show the high reverse!)

| | | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. S: AJ642 | 2. S: A | 3. S: KQJ65 | 4. S: 75 |
| H: 4 | H: KJ986 | H: 8 | H: AQJ108 |
| D: AKJ9 | D: K64 | D: K8 | D: A |
| C: A54 | C: AQ86 | C: AK965 | C: KQ754 |

1. Opener bids 1S. If responder bids 2H, opener should bid 3D.
2. Opener bids 1H. If responder bids 2D, opener should bid 3C.
3. Opener bids 1S. If responder bids 2D or 2H, opener should bid 3C.
4. Opener bids 1H. If responder bids 2D, opener should bid 3C.

If opener bids a new suit at the 3-level, it shows more than a minimum opening hand. Therefore, if opener has a minimum opening hand, he should NOT bid a new suit at the 3-level. What should opener do instead? There are several possibilities but the fallback position is always for opener to rebid his major. And no, this does NOT guarantee a 6-card suit! It shows a minimum opening hand, probably unbalanced (with a balanced hand, opener would probably rebid 2NT), and it says that there is no other bid that correctly shows the shape and strength of the hand.

Here are some examples of two-suited minimum opening hands and what opener should bid over a two-level response. (Opener bids 1S, of course.)

5. Opener

S: AK765
H: 84
D: KQ63
C: 95

1. If responder bids 2C, opener bids 2D.
2. If responder bids 2D, opener raises to 3D.
3. If responder bids 2H, opener bids 2S. Opener isn't strong enough to bid 3D, a high reverse. And 2NT isn't attractive with the small doubleton club. (You may end up in No Trump, but given your hand it's probably better for partner to be declarer and have the lead come up to his/her hand.)

6. Opener

S: Q10987
H: AQ8
D: 5
C: AJ74

1. If responder bids 2C, opener raises to 3C.
2. If responder bids 2D, opener bids 2NT. It's not a balanced hand, but with a heart lead, opener has a double heart stopper. Opener isn't strong enough to bid 3C.
3. If responder bids 2H, opener raises to 3H.

NOTE: You may not remember the name "high reverse". But it is critical to remember that opener shows extra values by bidding a new suit at the three-level. This is just basic, standard bridge. .