

Part 4: You can't always bid what you want

There will be hands where you have the right strength and suit complement for a reverse by opener, but you can't because your partner bids the "wrong" suit. There will be other hands where you have the right strength for a reverse by opener, but you can't because you don't have the right suit complement. Following is a list of times when you can't (or at least you shouldn't) reverse:

- 1. You can't reverse if your long suit is Spades.** If your long suit is Spades, you should open 1S. And if you open 1S, you can't possibly have a second, higher-ranked suit. (And don't even THINK about opening your shorter suit and reversing into your longer suit.)
- 2. You should never, EVER, reverse if you don't have a 5-card (or longer) suit.** In order to reverse, your first-bid suit MUST be 5+ cards. What do you do with 16 – 17 HCP and no 5-card suit? If your hand is balanced, you open 1NT. (Duh!) If your hand is unbalanced and you don't have a 5-card suit, then your distribution must be 4-4-4-1. In this case, you open 1C if you have a singleton diamond; otherwise, you open 1D.
- 3. You should never, EVER, reverse if you're 5-5 (or 6-6).** In order to reverse, your first suit MUST be longer than your second suit. No exceptions. If you're 5-5 or 6-6, you should open your higher-ranked suit. This is true regardless of the strength of your hand, and regardless of the quality of your suits.
- 4. You can't reverse if partner bids the next-higher ranked suit.** If partner bids the next-higher ranked suit, then you can't possibly bid a different, higher-ranked suit at the two-level, without jumping. So if you bid 1C, you can't reverse if partner bids 1D. If you bid 1D, you can't reverse if partner bids 1H. If you bid 1H, you can't reverse if partner bids 1S. (And if you bid 1S, you just can't reverse. See #1.)
- 5. You can't reverse if partner supports your first suit.** You can certainly show your strength in this case by inviting to game, or even bidding game, but you can't reverse.

6. You can't reverse if partner bids your second suit. In order to reverse, your second bid must be a suit that no one has bid. This can't happen if your partner bids your second suit before you have a chance to bid it. Again you can show your strength by inviting to game or bidding game, but you can't reverse.

7. You should never, EVER, reverse if you have 5 Clubs, 4 Diamonds, and a minimum hand. In other words, if you open 1C and partner bids 1H, 1S or 1NT, do NOT bid 2D if you have a minimum hand! If necessary, just rebid 2C. Yes, ideally you should have six Clubs for this bid. But better to lie a little bit about your suit length than to lie a lot about the strength of your hand.