

Symmetric Relay Simplified © George Cuppaidge April 2020

The simplest scheme of all, as accurate as any other with comprehensive treatment of intervention.

The opening bids.

1C 14½+ any shape

Higher bids 10-14

1D Balanced including 2335 either minor.

1H 4+ ♥. Over 1S relay; 1NT ♠ (includes three-suiter short minor), 2C ♣, 2D ♥ single-suiter, 2H 5+4 ♥ and ♦, 2S 5+5+ ♥ and ♦, 2NT 4-5+ ♥ and ♦ low shortage, roll on to 3C 2425 etc. After 1NT (♠)-2C; 2D three-suiter short minor, 2H 5+4 ♠ and ♥, 2S 5+5+ ♠ and ♥, 2NT 4-5+ ♠ and ♥ low shortage, roll on to 3C 4522 etc. After 2C-2D; 2H 5+4 ♥ and ♣, 2S 5+5+ ♥ and ♣, 2NT 4-5+ ♥ and ♣ low shortage, roll on to 3C 4522 roll etc.

1S 4+ ♠ not 4 ♥ Over 1NT relay; 2C ♣, 2D ♠ single-suiter, 2H 5+4 ♠ and ♦, 2S 5+5+ ♠ and ♦, 2NT 4-5+ ♠ and ♦ low shortage, 3C 4225, roll on. After 2C-2D; 2H 5+4 ♠ and ♣, 2S 5+5 ♠ and ♣, 2NT 45+ ♠ and ♣ low shortage, roll on to 3C 4225 roll etc.

Notice how, in an uncontested auction, all 5422's come out at 3C, 5431's at 3D and so on.

1NT Three-suiter short major. 2C asks which, 2D ♥ shortage, 2H ♠ singleton 1444, 2S 0445, 2NT 0454 etc. The three-suiter short minor is treated similarly

2C 6+ ♣ single-suiter. Relay for shortage, first step low

2D 6+ ♦ single-suiter. Relay for shortage, first step low

2H 5+4 ♦ and ♣ either way. Over 2S relay; 5+4, 4513, 4522, rolling on. 2NT says choose minor.

2S 5+5+ ♦ and ♣. 2NT relay for shortage.

2NT/3C/3D/3H transfer pre-empts

3S Any solid suit. 4C seeks shortage first step low or no. 4D correctable.

3NT Pre-empt in a minor

4C/D Very good ♥/♠ pre-empt. Good suit with outside A or K

4H/S Pre-empt.

Responses to 1C

1D 0-8. All else 9+

1H 4+ ♥. Over 1S relay; 1NT ♠, 2C ♣, 2D ♥ single-suiter, 2H 5+4 ♥ and ♦, 2S 5+5+ ♥ and ♦, 2NT 45+ ♥ and ♦ low shortage, 3C 4522 etc.

1S 4+ ♠ not 4 ♥. Over 1NT relay; 2C ♣, 2D ♠ single-suiter, 2H 5+4 ♠ and ♦, 2S 5+5+ ♠ and ♦, 2NT 45+ low shortage, 3C and ♦ 4252 etc.

1NT Balanced. Includes five cards in a minor. Over 2C, 2D all 10-12, 2H 4 ♥, 2S 4 ♠ not 4 ♥. 2NT ♦ and ♣, 3C ♣ only, 3D ♦ only low shortage (3352, 3H 3253, 3S 2353, 3NT 3343 0-3 controls etc.

2C 6+ ♣ single-suiter, includes three-suiter short major. Over 2C-2D; 2H three-suiter short ♥, 2S single-suiter low shortage, 2NT middle shortage etc.

2D 6+ ♦ single-suiter. Over 2H; 2S low shortage, 2NT middle shortage, 3C equal shortage 2263 etc or 2272, 3D high singleton 1363 etc. (When used to describe a major suit single-suiter, 3D will show 2533, 3H will show 6133 etc.).

2H 5+4 minors

2S 5+5+ minors

2NT 4-5+ minors low shortage.

3C 2245

3D 1345

3H 1246

3S 0346

3NT 1147

4C 0247

Note that we put all the extreme shapes at the end of the line to leave more bidding room for describing the common shapes and for simplicity. This is the trade-off for ambiguity in long-suit lengths of extreme shapes. We will usually have settled on a trump suit and shortages become all-important.

With 5+5+ the residual shape steps are

1255, 0355, 11, 02, 01, 00

Single-suiters

With one shortage

2335 (only possible when a major), 1336 etc., 1237, etc., 02, 01

With two shortages 6233 etc

223, 232, 322, 222

Dealing with Intervention.

There are four situations to consider.

- Intervention directly over 1C
- Intervention over a positive response to 1C
- Intervention directly over an opening bid of 1D or higher
- Intervention over a relay response to 1D or higher.

Once the partnership is in relay the auction continues until the captain passes out, steps out of relay or doubles for penalty. 3NT is never a relay.

Any intervention over 1C.

- Pass, penalty pass, 0-5 any shape, or 6-9 flat 1NT not available or not suitable.
- Double or redouble, 10+ relay asks the 1C opener to describe.
- Bids, 6-9 natural not forcing, we are now in a Standard auction. Use 2NT always forcing to distinguish between forcing non-forcing sequences.
- When opener re-opens with a double it is simplest to revert to natural bidding. 1H is the forcing, 20+ relay, over 1D in an uncontested auction, that method can be applied here.

A positive response to 1C is overcalled.

- Pass is relay. Describer's further actions are explained below.
- Double is penalty
- Bids are natural not forcing.

When there is intervention over a natural bid

- Pass 0-11 penalty pass or no suitable bid.
- Double 12+ relay
- Bids, 6-11 natural non-forcing.

Bidding with intervention by the partner who has been asked to describe

A specific meaning is attached to each of the five denominations on the first round of bidding in contested auctions. The last, fifth, denomination to come out will depend on the denomination of the intervention. We roll on from the fifth denomination. That means, if we stop at that denomination, our hand corresponds to that which would be shown by the first step response to a relay over that bid. The next highest bid corresponds to the second step response etc.

When there is intervention on describer's right,

- Pass shows the denomination below
- Double or redouble shows the last bid denomination
- The next three denominations follow, rolling on from the fifth.

When there is intervention on describer's left and partner passes, relay

- Double or redouble shows the denomination last bid.
- The next four denominations follow, rolling on from the fifth.

When there is intervention over a natural opening bid and partner doubles, relay, opener can pass for penalty should do so only with great caution. The cheapest bid is the first denomination out. The opponents' suit is the fifth, so roll on.

There are situations where describer's first step is not used as one of the five denominations. It may be used to show "balanced" or "all minimums" for example. The five denominations follow this step and have their systemic meaning at that point in the auction. Those situations will become clear as examples of auctions using it follow, including immediately below.

First round description when the 1C opener is asked to describe

See the section above. We use the natural meaning of each denomination to show the hand type. This is much easier to handle than counting steps; you bid what you see in front of you. We use step replies to show residual shapes later on.

Opener's 1C is overcalled and partner makes a game-forcing double. The 1C opener must describe his hand, whether or not the next player bids.

- First step. Not a denomination. Balanced, includes 2335 minor

The five denominations follow with these meanings. Roll on from the fifth.

- ♣ 6+ ♣ single-suiter or three-suiter short major
- ♦ 6+ ♦ single-suiter.
- ♥ 4+ ♥
- ♠ 4+ ♠ not 4 ♥
- NT ♦ and ♣ 5+4+ either way.

The resolution of the ♣ and ♦ single-suiters and two-suiters is set out above. The same resolution is used when ♠ and ♥ hands are found to be single-suiters or two-suiters. The major suit single-suiter may be a five-card suit. The resolution of the ♥ hands and ♠ hands is a little more complicated. It is explained in **1H and 1S opening bids and intervention**, below.

The 1D, balanced, bid and intervention

Identical methods are used to resolve the 1NT, balanced, response to 1C, or the first step by a 1C opener, showing balanced.

Over intervention

First step. All minimums, 10-12 in the case of a 1D opening, 9-11 following a balanced positive reply to 1C, and 14½ -17 by the 1C opener self-describing.

Minimum bids in each of the five denominations show

- ♣ ♣ only. Relay for residual shape. 3325, 3235, 2335, 3334
- ♦ ♦ only. Relay for residual shape
- ♥ 4 ♥. Relay for second suit, ♠, ♣, ♦, 3433
- ♠ 4 ♠ not 4 ♥ Relay for second suit, ♣, ♦, 4333*
- NT 4-4 minors. Relay for the doubleton.

*When ♠ is the first suit out, e.g. double of lho interference in ♠, or pass of rho interference in NT, it does not deny 4 ♥.

1H and 1S opening bids and intervention

By using the first step over intervention over ♥ so show spades, bids in the next five denominations conveniently show all possible hand shapes. ♠ shows the 5+5+ two suiter, it is not needed to show 4 ♠. We need also, ♣ to show clubs, ♦ to show single-suiter, ♥ to show 5+4 and NT to show 45+

After 1H-1S relay and (say) 2NT intervention

- Pass first step, not a denomination, shows ♠, so ♠ and ♥. Over a relay, Three-suiter short minor, 5+4, 5+5+, 45+ low shortage rolling on.
- Double, the last bid denomination, NT, 45+ ♥ and ♦
- 3C ♣ so ♥ and ♣
- 3D ♥ single-suiter
- 3H 5+4 ♥ and ♦
- 3S 5+5+ ♥ and ♦ low shortage. Roll on from the fifth denomination
- 3NT 1561 or 1651
- 4C 1255
- 4D 0355 etc.

After 1S-1NT relay and (say) 2NT intervention

- Pass, denomination below NT, ♠, 5+5+ ♠ and ♦
- Double, last bid denomination, NT, 45+ ♠ and ♦
- 3C ♣ so ♠ and ♣
- 3D ♠ single-suiter
- 3H (Fifth) 5+4 ♠ and ♦ low shortage, rolling on to
- 3S Equal shortage, 5242 etc.

Examples.

To show a 6214. Bid ♠ to show ♠. Over relay or intervention, bid ♣ to show ♣. Over relay or intervention, bid ♥ to show 5+4. Over relay or intervention, bid 1st step to show low shortage. Over relay intervention, bid 2nd step to show 21

To show a 4612. Bid ♥ to show ♥. Over relay or intervention, bid first step to show ♠. Over relay or intervention, bid 7th step to show 12 residual so 4612. (three-suiter, 5+4, 5+5+, 45+ low shortage, 4522, 4513, 4612. The fifth step is in the denomination of the relay bid.)

Continuation.

The when the exact shape is known, the next relay is for controls, first step usually 0-3 but will vary according to the known strength of the hand asked. 9-11 or 10-12, 10-14 with a singleton or void 0-2. 15-17 0-4, 18+ 0-5

When the hand being asked is weak or very weak, 6-9, or 0-5, not discussed above, the relay is for cards. When 6-9, OK, K, KK, A. When 0-5, 0Q, Q, QQ, KQ. (0-5 containing A is treated as 6-9)

Relay for where those controls/cards are.