



Myths, Misconceptions, and Mistakes in Bridge

These are actually things I have seen or heard at the bridge table. Some come from party bridge players, and some come from good players who should know better.

1. You must respond if partner opens 1C.

I know there are advanced systems out there that use 1C as a forcing opening, but I'm talking about standard bridge here. I actually play with a group of ladies in my neighborhood who believe this. I have never found any documentation from any bridge source that said this should be a forcing bid in standard bidding.

2. Only 13 point hands should open.

Who wouldn't open a hand that has 6 spades to the AKQ and an outside K or Q? There are numerous other examples, but the rule of 20 usually works for doubtful hands.

3. An opening bid of 1C is frequently based on a 3-card suit.

Rarely, actually! Most frequent holding for a 1C opener is 4 cards. After that it is 5, 6, 3, 7. A 3-card suit is only more prevalent than a 7-card suit.

4. If you open a 5-card club suit, you should rebid it to let your partner know you have 5.

No, rebidding a club suit shows 6+.

5. With a 15-17 hcp balanced hand with a 5-card major, open the major.

No, open 1NT. Think about the rebid problems. Always plan a rebid.

6. Open in 4th position only with a very good hand.

No, use the rule of 15 for doubtful hands (points + spades). So an 11 point hand with 4 spades should be opened.

7. All Stayman bids (2C over 1NT) promise 8+ points.

No way. Picture a hand with 4 of everything and 1C. Now think of that hand with about 4 hcp. Wouldn't partner be better off in any suit rather than NT? How is he going to get to your hand? Just bid 2C and then pass whatever he says. This is not a convention. It is part of Stayman.

8. If your partner misplays a hand or misdefends, tell him/her what he/she should have done.

Don't teach. Assume partner is smart enough to see exactly what should have been done. Don't add insult to injury. The next hand is more important than the last one.

9. Discuss the hand just played when you sit down at the next table.

Isn't that irritating?

10. When you and your partner do not have a fit, play in NT.

A recipe for disaster.

11. Double with an opening hand behind the opener.

This was probably picked up from party bridge players who misinterpreted the meaning of a double. Double only if you have support for the other 3 suits or a terrific suit of your own that you plan to bid after partner bids because you are way too strong to just make an overcall. If you have the opponent's suit, consider overcalling 1NT or even passing if you don't have the required point count for 1NT. Opponent just bid a suit you would be happy to have as trumps. Don't rescue him.

12. Jump bids are always strong.

This is arguably by partnership agreement, but we all know that pre-empts are not strong. An opening bid at the 2 (except 2C) or 3 level is weak. (If you play either as strong, you must alert nowadays.) If you overcall one level higher than necessary, that's also weak. Most duplicate players also play that an immediate jump in response to an opening is also weak (and alertable). It follows the same theory that the sooner you make a jump, the more you are trying to interfere with the opponents' ability to communicate. On the other hand, if you bid normally and then jump, that does show strength.

13. A new suit by an unpassed responder is always forcing.

Not if the opener's rebid is 1NT! If the auction goes (opponents passing) 1C-1S-1NT-2H, the 2H bid is NOT forcing. It is asking partner (opener) to choose between 2 suits. Passing is a preference for hearts. If the responder with spades and hearts has a good hand (11+), he/she must jump. (See 12 above.)

14. If partner balances in the dying seat, and bids your suit, give him/her a raise.

No, your partner is already bidding your hand. Balancing means figuring out what you and your partner have together before you bid.

15. When defending against NT, keep switching suits to find out what suit your partner has.

No, give them what they have, especially short winners on the board. Let the declarer lead to you. The person who plays last has an advantage.

16. When you have Qxx looking at Axx, lead the Q toward the A to try for 2 tricks.

This only works against opponents who are taking a nap.

17. Play your highest card in 3rd seat.

No, play the lowest card in a sequence to give your partner a hint you might have something above it. If you have QJ in 3rd seat, play the J to force declarer to take the trick with A or K.

18. Lead your highest card in partner's suit.

No, only if you have a doubleton. With 3, lead the lowest. This will help your partner to figure out the count on the suit.

19. Don't lead away from a K.

Of course you can. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. If you don't have anything better to do, do it. However, the same is not true of an A in a suit contract.

20. If you have a bidding or play problem, sigh or make a face.

You want to show the opponents your hand, too?