

# *Etobicoke Bridge Centre*



## Preempts – Lessons



*(Last revised May 14/2016)*

Location: Etobicoke Olympium Lounge (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

Starts: Monday April 20, 2015 12:30 – 3:00

Duration: 5 lessons; last class May 25 (Victoria day: closed)

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## What is a preempt?

Pre-empts are bids made with the hope of preempting or interfering with the opponent's bidding. By doing so, the hope is that the opponents will not arrive at their optimum contract, or a worthwhile sacrifice will be achieved by your side. The easiest bidding is when the opponents do not enter the auction. When you preempt, you not only interfere with their conversation, but cut their bidding space way down.

As south you hold S xx H AKxxx D AKxx C xx. You look forward to opening 1 Heart and probably rebidding 2D to perfectly describe your hand. Right-hand RH opponent, however, opens 3 Spades first. Now what ?? If you very boldly bid 4H, you could find your Left-hand (LHO) opponent with ....

S x H QJ109x D xxx C AKxx and somehow, LHO will bid \_\_\_\_\_

So best to pass, right? But when you do, another time, your partner has S x H QJxx D QJxx C xxxx. Partner will pass, and you will defend 3S making 3 when you are frigid for 4Hts.

A preemptor hopes that he finds the opponents with majority of the HCPs. However, if one plays fairly disciplined preempts, you are in good shape even when partner has a strong hand, as he has a very accurate picture of your hand. Many modern players play undisciplined preempts, which cause lots of opponent grief but leave partner guessing a lot. As newer players, I recommend you generally play sound (disciplined) preempts. The assumption for these initial notes is that you are in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> seat, as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> seat offer their own set of guidelines, given partner is a passed hand.

Preempts are effective due to the bidding space they steal and because having a hand with ....

- a good long suit provides safety in going down too much
- it is hard for the opps to double without a trump stack
- an otherwise weak hand makes it likely that the opponents can make something
- specific description makes it easy for partner to do the right thing

## What does a good preempt consist of?

Preempt (PR) bids are heavy on offense, assuming your suit is trumps, and light on defense. We will look at vulnerability in detail later, but in general, you expect to make enough tricks that if doubled, your penalty will not exceed the game the opponents can likely make. You get to add one trick from your partner. For example, everyone is not vulnerable, you hold  
S xx H x D KQJ10xxx C Jxx.

In general, You have a v gd long suit but less than (13) opening total pts.

holding a good 6-card suit, preempt at the 2-level; shows 5-10 HCPs  
holding a good 7-card suit, preempt at the 3-level; shows 5-9 HCPs  
holding a good 8-card suit, preempt at the 4-level; shows 5-8 HCPs

With the above hand, you expect to make 6 diamond tricks, and go down 3. Do not worry that down 3 doubled is more than their game. Partner can be expected to have one trick, and if he does not, the opponents are probably good for a slam, not just a game.

### Other facts about good preempts

- Suit should contain 2 of top 3 or 3 of top 5 honours. When not vulnerable this guideline can be loosened, especially white vs red.
- Should not have a side 4-card major.
  - Consider having S KQxx H xx D Kxx C AJxx.
  - Your partner opens 3D. A new suit is forcing and shows a v gd 5+ card suit and good points so that is not your bid. You pass or bid 4D.
  - Your partner plays 4D holding S J10xx H x D AQJxxxx C x. You make 4D for plus 130 but you are cold for 4 Spades.
- Rarely contain a void.
  - The general concept is that you shouldn't have a dummy that is too good in which case you have preempted your partner instead of the opps. Holding 4-card majors and voids adds to your dummy power, if you find partner with a good hand and a good suit.
  - Holding S void H xxx D AQJxxx C Kxx you may have a great dummy if partner has a medium hand with a good heart suit. Better to pass or open a light 1D. If partner has a good 5 card Ht suit and a high diamond or club, you are on for 4Hts.
- Should have more HCPs in your trump suit than outside.
  - Two reasons 1) more chance of going down big doubled 2) less chance opps can make something, ie S AK H xx D Qxxxxx C xxx = Pass
- Should have very little offense, typically zero or one defensive trick.
  - This allows your partner to accurately judge what to do later in the auction. He can sacrifice, double the opps or let them play undoubled, but will do so knowing you have lots of offense, not much defense.
  - Do not preempt with S A109xxx H Axx D xxx C x. You have a weak suit and two likely tricks on defense. Similarly do not preempt on S Q109xxxx H Ax D Kx C xx
- Are being made on far less than the good old days.
  - Some top players will make a 2-preempt on a 5-card suit. Aiding this weak trend is the fact that doubles are played as takeout through 4Hearts and at least 3S by almost everyone, greatly decreasing the chance of a penalty double.

## Vulnerability

Equal vulnerability means both not vul. or both vulnerable – overbid by 3 tricks

Favourable vul means you are not vul, your opps are vul – overbid by 4 tricks

Unfavourable vul means you are vul, your opps are not – overbid by 2 tricks

Note that a 4+ card side minor suit helps your preempt, as it is highly likely that you can establish long cards in this suit, given your lengthy trump control.

What would you bid with each of the following, at equal vulnerability, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> seat

1. S KQJ10xxx H xx D Axx C x \_\_\_\_\_
2. S xx H KJ8xxxx D Jxx C x \_\_\_\_\_
3. S x H xx D AJ109xxx C xxx \_\_\_\_\_
4. S Jxxx H xx D x C AKxxxxx \_\_\_\_\_
5. S AQJxxxxx H xx D x C xx \_\_\_\_\_
6. S KQ10xxx H xx D Ax C xxx \_\_\_\_\_
7. S K H xxx D KJ9xxx C Kxx \_\_\_\_\_
8. S xx H KQJ9xxx D A10xx C void \_\_\_\_\_

## Preempting in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat

In 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> seat, you have no idea what partner has, so it makes sense to keep disciplined, so partner has a good idea of your hand, and how to proceed. In 3<sup>rd</sup> seat, guidelines change dramatically as you know partner has less than an opening bid. This means partner will not “go crazy”, bidding a close game, taking a bad sacrifice, etc and you therefore can be much more flexible in your preempts. Experts today, in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat and at favourable vulnerability, will make preempts on “fumes”, and partner is not to bid too high knowing the preemptor could have very little compared to a disciplined preempt. Also, your opponent in 4<sup>th</sup> seat is very likely to have a good hand, ergo blast away!

What one would not preempt on in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> seat are clear 3<sup>rd</sup> seat preempts. For example, non-vul, in third seat holding ....

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| S K10xxxx H xx D Qx C xxx | bid 2S.   |
| S xx H QJxxxxxx D x C Kxx | bid 4H  |
| S xx H x D KQJxxx C xxxx  | bid 3D (yes, this is a 2D bid in 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> position<br>w a good 6-card suit) |
| S x H AJxxxxx D QJxx C x  | bid 4H  |

And to give you an idea on how little experts will have, many would open 3<sup>rd</sup> seat, not-vul vs vul on S J10xxxx H xx D Qxx C xx Not for me or you, but 3S by

many pros !! (however, consider what 4<sup>th</sup> hand looks like, the less you have, the more 4<sup>th</sup> seat has.)

You may also preempt game on an opening hand (too much in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> seat) because there is almost no chance for a slam opposite a passed hand. For example, with

S KQJxxxxx H AQx D x C xx                    open 4Hts

### 4<sup>th</sup> Seat Preempts

Since you can pass for a “non plus/minus” score, you do not want to bid if the likely result is a minus score. With a weak hand and a good suit, best to pass as you are probably going down in 2 or 3 of your suit. Partner is known to have about 10 points. Thus, if you do preempt in 4<sup>th</sup> seat, you are showing a “chunky” preempt, with 10 HCPs to 15ish and a good suit. You expect to make the bid.

So with S AQJxxx H xx D xx C xxx, bid Pass. Look at it this way, give your partner the perfect passed hand, K S, and 2 Aces, and you will make 2 Spades. How often would partner have this perfect hand?

Here is a good weak 2 bid in 4<sup>th</sup> seat; S AKJ10xx H xx D Kxx C x

Note also that opening hands like this at the 2-level vs 1-level makes it harder for opps to enter the auction.

### Scoring: (Using Majors)

	Game	Good Sac of.....		Game		Slam	
	Game	Slam	Down 1 Dbld	Down 2 Dbld	Down 3 Dbld	Down 4 Dbld	Down 5 Dbld
Non-Vul	300+120=420	300+500+180=980	100	300	500	800	1100
Vul	500+120=620	500+750+180=1430	200	500	800	1100	1400
		Good Sac of .....		Game			Slam

Your Non-Vul opponents bid freely to 4S. You (Vulnerable) can make 9 tricks in Clubs . Should you sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_

Your opponents bid freely to 6D Vulnerable. Your side is Not Vulnerable, you can make 7 tricks in hearts, should you sacrifice?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Four seats preemptive summary

Seat	Gd Hand Preempted ratio	Style	Example: 3S
First	2 opps to 1 partner	Disciplined but a bit aggressive	S KQ9xxxx H xx D x C xxx
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 opp to 1 partner	Disciplined	S KQJ10xxx H xx D x C xxx
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Partner has passed, LH opp does have good hand,	Aggressive, very much so non-vul	S K9xxxx H xx D Q10xx C x
4th	Can pass for "zero" result	Strong; expect to make contract	S AQJxxxx H x D QJ10x C x

## Responding to Partner's Preemptive Opening

Objectives in responding

- To bid and make a contract
- To further the preempt to make it even harder for the opponents to find their optimal contract; opps may underbid, overbid, very easy to guess wrong
- To find a worthwhile sacrifice

General guidelines (assume partner has opened 2Hts)

- While point guidelines help, more useful are **tricks** that you can provide to your partner. If partner opens 3Hts vul vs not, should have 7 tricks (2 overbid). If you have 3 pretty sure tricks, raise to 4Hts, expecting to make it.
- With trumps to make 9 (3+6) for your side, and not enough for game, further the preempt (NOT an invitation) by raising one or two  
S Kx H Qxx D Axxxx C xx bid \_\_\_\_\_
- With lots of dummy pts and needed tricks, (typically 16+Pts), raise to major game or bid 3NT
  - S Axx H Kxx D KQxx C Ax bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S AQx H Qxx D KQJ C KJxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - Remember controls (Aces, Ks) are much more valuable than Quacks, as partner has only 7 cards in 3 side suits. The point count system is less accurate with preempts as Qs and Js are way overvalued
- With a weak hand but shapely support, jump raise to game (opps are cold for game)
  - S x H Qxxx D QJxxx C xxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
- With no fit but a good hand and a strong suit (v gd 5 or more), bid a forcing new suit. Partner must raise with Honour-spot or 3 or more, otherwise rebids his suit
  - S AQJxxx H x D KQx C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_

- With an invitational hand, needing partner to have a maximum or a specific honour, bid 2NT. This is an artificial bid which asks partner to bid an A or K, otherwise rebid his suit. With AKQ6th opener bids 3NT. Responder may sign off at 3 level or bid game
  - S Ax H Kxx D AQJxx C xx bid 2NT. If partner bids 3D, bid 4H. Otherwise sign off in 3H. Bidding 2NT typically shows between 13 and 16 dummy pts.
- With a monster and 2<sup>nd</sup> rd control of all suits, bid 4NT Blackwood
  - S Ax H AQxx D x C AKQJ10x bid 4NT. If partner shows 2 key cards, bid 7NT. With 1 key card, bid 6 Hts.
- With any hand with 0 or 1 trump and 0-16 (no play for 3NT), Pass. If you are at the high end, hope opponents get into the auction and you can put them down, perhaps double them.
  - S KJxx H x D AKxx C A10xx. If your opponents bid 4 anything, double them. Note that your heart shortness is a defensive plus, as partner's high hearts will be working, either as winners, or to force declarer's trumps.
  - Do not consider 3NT on hands like this as your major source of tricks must be partner's hearts but they are probably high and dry in dummy. Notice here, you have about 4 tricks w/o partners hearts, ughh. To bid 3NT, you need a fit with partner, ie Kx or you need a source of 8ish tricks on your own. With S Axx H x x D AKQJxx C AKx, you can bid 3NT as you have 9 tricks in your own hand.
  - In general, the better the fit with partners long suit, the less points needed to make contracts (ruffing ability in dummy, no trump losers, more entries to dummy)
  - When partner opens with a 3-bid and you are trying to decide whether to take him to game, visualize him holding this very hand:  
KQJ10xxx of trumps and 2-3-2 spots in the other suits.  
Then base your decision on that.
- Both sides Non-Vul, partner opens 3 Spades (2<sup>nd</sup> seat), next player passes, your bid with ....
  1. S Kx H Kxx D KQJ10x C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  2. S x H Axxx D KQxx C KQJx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  3. S xxx H x D Axxx C Kxxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  4. S - H AKQJ10x D KQJ C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  5. S KJ H x D AKQJxx C Axxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  6. S Qxxxx H xx D KQJ10x C J bid \_\_\_\_\_ or bid \_\_\_\_\_



- Your side Non-Vul, opps Vul, partner opens 2 Hearts (1<sup>st</sup> seat), next player passes, your bid with ...
  - S xx H AJx D KQxx C Kxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S Jxx H xx D AKxx C KQJxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S KQx H Axx D Axxx C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S AJ10xxx H x D Ax C KQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S 10xx H xx D KQxx C Axxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S KQx H x D AKxx C AKxxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have preempted, keep quiet, unless your partner has forced you to bid again, ie, partner has bid a new suit. The logic is that you have described your hand quite specifically and partner becomes the captain, making the final decision about whether to bid to make the contract, sacrifice, double the opponents, or pass.

If you find yourself wanting to preempt a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, you did not preempt high enough the first time.

Exception (rare!) You have S KQJ10..9th H x D xx C x favourable vul;  
You open 4S, opps bid 5C P P to you, bid 5S (unless you think they will bid 6C ??)

Homework:

- Excel Quiz; Rest of questions (9-16)
- <http://bakerbridge.coffeecup.com/Preempt/Start.html>, Do all 12 interactive quizzes

### When opponents bid after your side's Preempt

When your partner's preempt is followed by a bid by the opps, your bids include to raise the preempt, bid a new suit, bid 3NT, Double or Pass. In general, bid as before but with consideration of the opps bid.

- Partner opens 3H Not vul vs Not Vul.  
Next hand bids 3S, what would you now bid?
  - S x H Qxx D Axxxx C xxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S AQx H Kx D KJxx C Axxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S AQ109x H x D Axx C xxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S xxx H xx D KQxx C Axxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
  - S x H x D AKQJxxx C 10xxx bid \_\_\_\_\_

6. S Kx H xx D AKQx C Axxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_; if opps bid 4S then \_\_\_\_\_

Next hand bids Double, what would you bid now?

1. S A10xx H x D KQxx C AQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_

2. S x H Kxxxx D QJ10xx C xx bid \_\_\_\_\_

Next hand bids 3NT, what would you bid now?

1. S Kxx H xxx D QJ109xx C x bid \_\_\_\_\_

2. S KQJ10xxx H x D Jxxx C x bid \_\_\_\_\_

3. S Axxx H xx D QJx C KQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_

### Bidding OVER Opponent's Preemptive Opening

Bidding over a preempt is much harder than uninterrupted auctions; that is why they have become so popular. You must tread a fine line of being too aggressive and going down doubled too often, and being too timid and missing out on contracts.

- In general, the higher the preempt, the more points, better suits, you need to enter the bidding.
- As always, vulnerability affects your decisions. You need more to enter the auction if vulnerable, less if not vulnerable.
- Best to keep your bids to good quality suits, these being more significant than number of HCPs. A double from the opps is more likely done with a trump stack, vs high card points.
- Also, allow that you, on occasion, have to “give in” to a pre-empt. If you bid on too little, not only will you end up down doubled, or too high, but your partner’s future expectations will be lowered, and you will then miss good contracts. Keep your discipline and be willing to “lose” to the pre-empt on occasion
- Bidding directly over a **3-level** contract requires a minimum of approximately **15** total points as the overcaller, and 15 dummy pts when doubling.
- 7-Point Rule (3-level preempt, not two): This rule states that, due to the space lost, you can bid a direct game if counting partner for 7 pts gets you to 25 pts (for 3NT, 4M). So if you have 18 pts and a balanced hand w stopper in opps suit, bid 3NT (18 + 7 = 25).

Right hand Opponent opens 3D vul vs vul; What do you bid?

1. S AKJxxx H xx D x C KQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
2. S xx H K9xxx D Ax C AQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
3. S Qxx H AKx D AQx C KJxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
4. S x H KQJ109xx D AQx C Ax bid \_\_\_\_\_
5. S AKx H Axx D QJ98x C xx bid \_\_\_\_\_
6. S AJxx H KQxx D x C A10xx bid \_\_\_\_\_
7. S AJxx H xxx D x C KQJxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
8. S KQx H Axx D Kxx C Qxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
9. S AKQJxxx H x D A C KQJ10 bid \_\_\_\_\_

Bidding over a **2-level** preempt requires an **opening bid**. Similar logic to above and ...

- A jump bid shows a very big overcall, says partner bid game with a trick
- 2NT shows a stopper and a 1NT overcall, 15+ to 18
- Double, NT shows a stopper and 19-21HCPs
- 3NT shows a balanced 22+ or a good shot at 9 tricks by yourself (typically a running minor)

Right hand opponent opens 2H white vs red; What do you bid?

1. S K8xxx H xx D Axx C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_
2. S KQJxx H xx D Kxx C Axx bid \_\_\_\_\_
3. S KQx H AQxx D KJ10 C xxx bid \_\_\_\_\_ (This bid shows \_\_\_\_\_)
4. S AQJxxx H Ax D KQx C Ax bid \_\_\_\_\_
5. S K10 H AQ D Kx C AKQJxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
6. S KQJxxxx H -- D KQJ10 C Ax bid \_\_\_\_\_

## Bidding in response to partner, who has bid directly over a 3-level preempt

Given that partner needs to have a minimum of 15 points to enter the auction, you should take him to game with a 10 count or better. Also....

- Raise partner to game with 10 – 15 dummy pts
- Bid 3NT with 2 (preferable), possibly 1 cards in partners suit, stopper, and 10-15 HCPs
- Raises one level but not game are invitational
- Jumps to game are usually to make, or on occasion, an advanced sacrifice (partner does not usually need to know which)
- New suits are forcing for one round, hoping partner can raise on 3+ or doubleton honour

Left-hand opp opens 3C red vs white; Partner bids 3H; Rightie passes. What do you bid?

1. S xx H Qxx D AKxxx C xxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
2. S Kxx H xx D AQxx C Q10xx bid \_\_\_\_\_
3. S xx H xxx D Axxx C Kxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
4. S x H Kxxx D xxx C KQxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
5. S KQ109x H x D AKxx C Jxx bid \_\_\_\_\_

## Bidding in response to partner, who has bid directly over a 2-level preempt

Note that your bidding is about finding the right contract, not sacrificing, that is for the other side. Once RHO passes, you know the opps have no good higher contract, nor do they wish to sacrifice. RHO is marked with shortness in partner's suit, but may have a good hand, ie up to 15ish HCPs, unable to make a bid due to shortness in partner's suit.

Left-hand opp opens 2H red vs red; Partner bids 2S; RHO passes. What do you bid?

1. S Jx H KJ10 D Axxx C KQxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
2. S xx H AJx D Kxxx C QJxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
3. S xxx H Kx D AQ10x C Kxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
4. S Kxxx H x D AQ10xx C xxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
5. S x H KJxx D Axxx C Qxxx bid \_\_\_\_\_
6. S K10xx H Axx D AKQx C xx bid \_\_\_\_\_

HAPPY  
PREEMPTING