

THE REVERSE BID

By Spike Lay

If you, the opener, after a one-over-one bid by partner, bid a new suit at the two level that forces partner to bid at the three level in order to take you back to your original suit, you have “**reversed.**” The following are examples of reverses:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠	1♣	1♥
2♥		2♦	

What does it mean when opener reverses? He must have a good hand, i.e. 17 or more points, 5 or more cards in his first suit, usually at least 4 cards in his second suit and his first suit **must** be longer than his second.

How about the following hands?

(1) AJx AKxx AQxxx x (2) x AKJxx AQJxxx x

(3) x KQxx AKQxx Axx (4) x AJxx AKQxxx Kx

All of the above hands are good enough to open 1♦ and rebid 2♥ over a 1♠ response by partner.

Now for some hands that aren't quite good enough for a reverse.

(1) AJx AKxx J10xxx x (2) x AJ10xx KQ10xxx x

(3) x KQxx AKxxx xxx (4) x AJxx KQxxxx Qx

What do you do with these hands after opening 1♦ and hearing the dreaded 1♠ response? I would bid 2♠ with hand 1, 2♦ with hand 2, 1NT with 3 and 2♦ with 4. You might open 1♥ with hand 2.

What do you do with hands that have the strength for a reverse but lack the proper distribution, e.g. AJx AKxxx AQxx x? Open your longest suit and then jump shift into your second suit.

Remember the rule: **OPENER SHOULD NEVER FORCE A REVERSE BY OPENING HIS SHORTER SUIT.**

Also remember, if you can reverse you don't need to and should not jump shift. For example, with x AKJx Ax AK109xx open 1♣ and rebid 2♥ over a 1♠. Don't jump to 3♥.

Responding to a Reverse

There are different ideas about how to respond to a reverse. My methods are an amalgam of methods collected from different sources. In general, since a reverse usually promises a minimum of 17 or 18 points, if you as responder have 8 or more there probably is a game somewhere. With an opening hand – less if you have a good fit for one of opener's suits – slam may be in the picture. Finally, if you have dredged up a response on 6 or 7 points (or less), and there is no fit there may be no game.

My preference is to have one - and only one - way to show the bad hands and possibly stop below game. All other bids after the reverse are game-forcing. Responder starts a weak sequence via the fourth suit if it is available **at the two level**; otherwise he uses 2NT. Let's look at some examples:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠	1♣	1♥
2♥	2NT	2♦	2♠

In the first example, 2NT starts a weak sequence and asks opener to rebid his first suit. Notice that the fourth suit (3♣) would have to be bid at the three level; therefore we use 2NT to start the weak sequence. Opener will dutifully rebid 3♦ unless (1) he has extra strength, (2) has 3-card spade support or (3) has 5 hearts. Responder might have any of the following hands for his 2NT bid:

- (a) Kxxx xxx Kxx xxx He will pass 3♦.
- (b) Jxxxx Kxxx xx Jx He will bid 3♥ over 3♦.
- (c) KJ9xxx xx Qx 10xx He will bid 3♠ over 3♦.
- (d) A9xx Qxx xx Kxxx He will bid 3NT over 3♦.

Note that 2NT (see example d above) doesn't have to be a really bad hand; 2NT just announces weakness.

In the second example where the fourth suit is available at the two level responder uses it to show weak hands:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♦	2♠

The system works about the same. Opener now has the option of bidding 2NT or 3♣ - either of which may be passed.

Responder with a good hand, i.e. game forcing or better makes his most descriptive bid – all of which are game forcing.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♦	2♥, 2NT, 3♣, 3♦, 3♥ etc.

Anything is forcing except 2♠ - the fourth suit.

Getting into a game-forcing auction early allows the partnership to explore for the best game or slam.

Here are a few example hands and suggested sequences.

(1) KJx x AKxx AJ10xx Q98xx Kxx Jxx xx

1♣	1♠
2♦(a)	2♥ (4 th suit; artificial)
2♠(b)	Pass

- (a) a little light for a reverse; looks better now that partner has responded 1♠.
- (b) Opener doesn't have to bid 3♦ here with 3-card support for responder's major.

(2) AJx xx AKx AK10xx Q98xx Kxx Jxx xx

1♣	1♠
2♦	2♥ (4 th suit; artificial)
3♠ (a)	4♠ (b)

- (a) Too good to just bid 2♠.
- (b) The fifth spade is enough; opener is showing a big hand with 3 spades.

(1) KJx x AKJx AKJxx AQ97xx 109x Qx 9x

1♣	1♠
2♦	2♠ (forcing to game)
4♥ (Splinter Bid)	4NT
5♦ (3 key cards)	6♠

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