Opening 1♥ or 1♠

Opening one of a major tells partner you have an opening hand and at least five cards in hearts or spades. The whole auction that follows tries to answer two questions: do we have a fit? Do we have enough points for game?

When to open 1♥ or 1♠?

- 12-21 HCP and at least 5 cards in the major.
- With 5 spades and 5 hearts, open 1♠.
- Balanced, 15-17 HCP: 1NT, even with a five-card major.
- Balanced, 20-21 HCP: 2NT; 22+ points: 2♣.

How to read the decision tree

The tree reads from left to right: opening, response, opener's rebid, responder's next bid. The shaded columns are responder's. Responder stops at the first "yes": fewer than 6 points? A fit? Balanced 15-17 HCP (3NT)? A new suit you can bid? Otherwise, 1NT. Raises are counted in support points (HCP + shortness). With support, raise first: over 1♥, a 1♠ response tends to deny three hearts. Opener's rebid ranges (13-16, 17-18, 19-21) are SAYC's general strength bands: a balanced hand in the 1NT or 2NT range is normally opened 1NT or 2NT. A balanced 18-19 with no five-card major opens a minor, planning to rebid 2NT.

Three traps to avoid

- **The jump to 4♥ or 4♠ is not strong.** It is preemptive: many trumps, few points.
- **With a fit and 13+ support points,** do not raise directly: bid Jacoby 2NT with 4 trumps, or a new suit first and support next.
- **A new suit is forcing:** opener may not pass. A jump in a new suit (jump shift) is strong and invites slam.

Conventions after a major opening

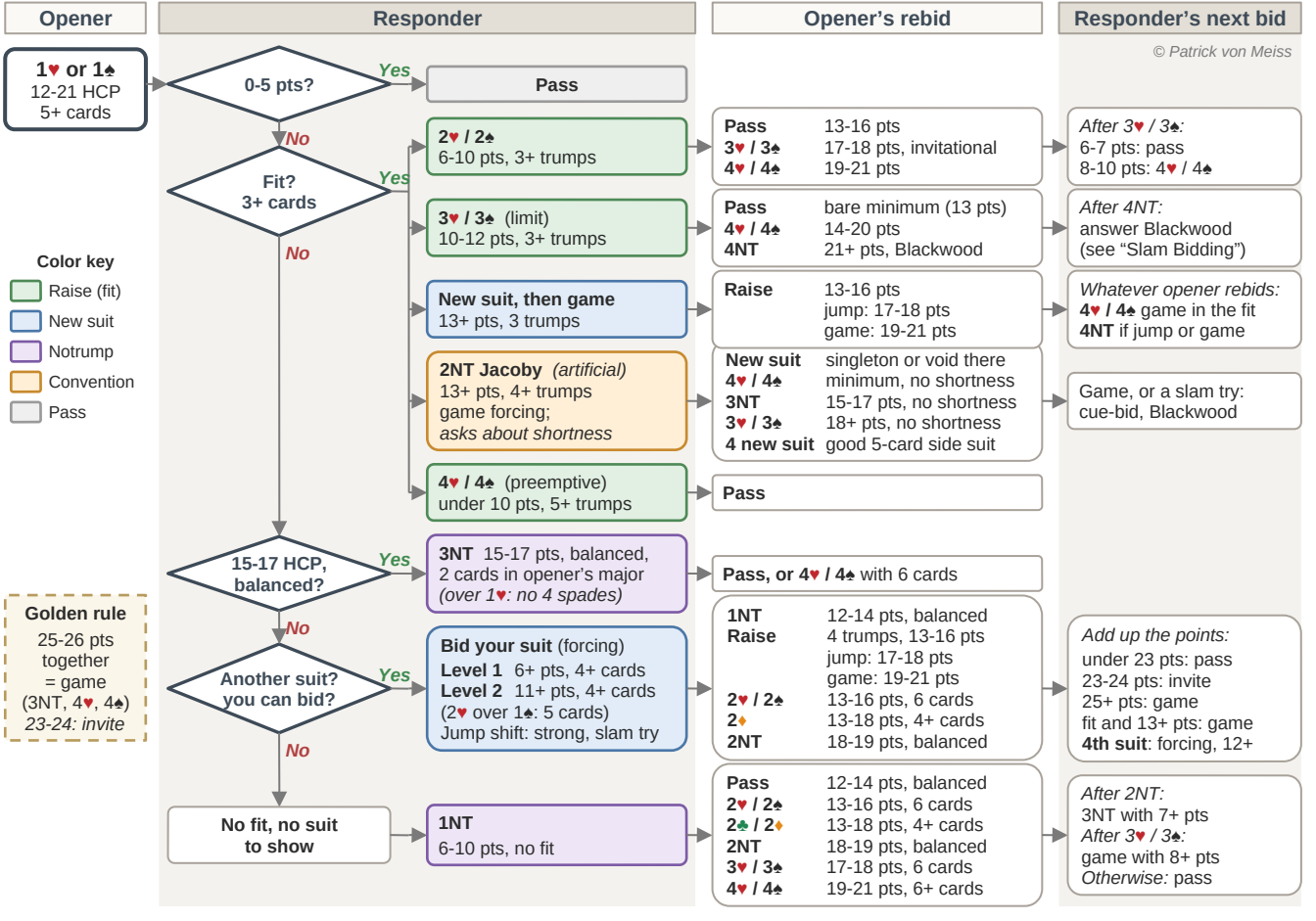
Apart from Jacoby 2NT, they are not shown on the decision tree; they are described in the chapter "Conventions."

- **Jacoby 2NT:** 4+ trumps, 13+ support points, game forcing (on the tree). Opener bids a short suit if there is one, or jumps to four of a new suit with a good five-card side suit.
- **Fourth suit forcing:** forcing; game-forcing by agreement.
- **Negative double:** after an overcall.
- **Splinter:** 4-card support, singleton or void in the suit bid; optional, not part of SAYC.
- **Blackwood, cue-bids:** chapter "Slam Bidding."

The golden rule

With 25-26 points together, bid game (3NT, 4♥ or 4♠). With 23-24, invite; with less, stop at the lowest possible level.

Opening 1♥ or 1♠ (conventions: Jacoby 2NT, fourth suit forcing)



Exercises – Responses to 1♥ or 1♠

For each hand, find responder's bid, from easiest to hardest. Shaded: the trickiest.

#	Spades	Hearts	Diamonds	Clubs	Opener	Your answer
1	8 3 2	9 5 4	J 7 3	Q 8 6 2	**1♥**	
2	K 6 5	A Q 7	7 6 2	9 8 5 3	**1♠**	
3	Q J 7 5 4	K 4 2	7 5	J 9 6	**1♥**	
4	Q 10 7 4	7 2	A K 4	J 8 6 3	**1♠**	
5	A 8 5	K J 8 6 5	6	K J 6 5	**1♥**	
6	K 8 6 4 3	7	Q 10 6 4 3	8 6	**1♠**	
7	K 10 8 3	6	A Q 6 3	Q 9 8 3	**1♥**	
8	Q 5	K 10 6 3	A 10 5 3	K 4 2	**1♠**	
9	Q 6	K 7 4	A 10 8 3	K J 9 2	**1♠**	
10	6	A 9 7 4 3	J 8 3	K J 6 4	**1♠**	
11	5	K 4 3	A J 10 8 6 2	9 8 4	**1♠**	
12	Q 5	K 10 4	A Q 6 3	K J 7 2	**1♠**	
13	K 8 4	A 6	K Q 10 7 3	J 5 2	**1♠**	
14	7	A Q 9 6 3	K 8 4	Q 10 5 2	**1♠**	

Solutions – Responses to 1♥ or 1♠

Points: HCP first, then support points (HCP + shortness) when there is a fit. Shaded: the trickiest.

#	Answer	Points	Explanation
1	**Pass**	3 HCP	Fewer than 6 points: responder passes, even with 3 hearts.
2	**2♠**	9 HCP = 9 support pts	3-card fit and 6-10 support points: simple raise. No doubleton, so no shortness points.
3	**2♥**	7 HCP + 1 = 8 support pts	3-card fit and 6-10 support points: simple raise. In SAYC, support comes first: 1♠ would tend to deny three hearts.
4	**3♠**	10 HCP + 1 = 11 support pts	4 trumps and 10-12 support points: limit raise, 3♠. Opener passes only with a bare minimum and bids 4♠ with 14+.
5	**2NT**	12 HCP + 3 = 15 support pts	Jacoby 2NT: 4+ trumps and 13+ support points, game forcing. Opener will show a short suit or describe the hand.
6	**4♠**	5 HCP, 5 trumps	Fewer than 10 HCP, 5 trumps and a singleton: jump to 4♠. It is preemptive, not strong.
7	**1♠**	11 HCP	No fit. Four spades: show them at the one level, 1♠. Forcing.
8	**2♦**	12 HCP	No fit; 4 hearts are not enough for 2♥ over 1♠ (5 needed). New suit at the two level: 2♦ (11+ points, 4+ cards). Forcing.
9	**2♣**	13 HCP	No fit, balanced, 13 HCP: not enough for 3NT (15-17). With two four-card minors, bid the cheaper, 2♣. Forcing.
10	**1NT**	9 HCP	No fit. 2♥ over 1♠ needs 11+ points and 5 hearts: too weak. With 6-10 points and no fit, bid 1NT.
11	**1NT**	8 HCP	Trap: a six-card suit, but a new suit at the two level needs 11+ points. With 6-10 points and no fit, bid 1NT.
12	**3NT**	15 HCP, balanced	Balanced 15-17, two spades: 3NT. The tree asks this before “Another suit?”, so 3NT even with 4-4 in the minors.
13	**2♦**	13 HCP + 1 = 14 support pts	Fit and 13+ points but only three trumps: no Jacoby 2NT (4 trumps needed). Bid a new suit first, 2♦, then jump to 4♠.
14	**2♥**	11 HCP, 5 hearts	No fit. 2♥ over 1♠ promises five hearts and 11+ points: both conditions are met. Forcing.