This series is based on Grant Standard, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 1NT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of Grant Standard and the corresponding convention card can be found at www.AudreyGrant.com. The site also has Grant Basic, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the Bridge Bulletin and can also be found under ‘Articles’ at www.AudreyGrant.com.

In Grant Standard, there are no conventions directly associated with minor suit openings. The opening bids and responses are all “natural.” That doesn’t mean there’s nothing to consider. We still have to discuss our “treatments” to make sure we are in agreement with partner on the meaning of certain bids.

Minor Suit Openings
When opening a minor suit, we use the following guidelines:

**Minor Suit Openings**
- Open the longer minor.
- With two four-card or five-card minors, open 1♣.
- With two three-card minors, open 1♥.

![Hand example](image)

1♣. With no five-card major suit and a hand too weak to open 1NT, we open the longer minor.

1♦. One consequence of requiring a five-card major to open 1♥ or 1♠ is that we sometimes have to open with a three-card minor suit. We still open the longer minor. This is considered a standard bid and is not alertable.

Some players prefer to open 1♠ with this type of hand, so that an opening bid of 1♥ always promises a four-card or longer suit. This style — where 1♥ could be a two-card suit — is alertable since it is not standard.

Opening a three-card minor suit is sometimes referred to as the “short club.” This is a misnomer. We actually open the longer minor, which could be a “short” diamond suit. It’s best to eradicate the term “short club” from our vocabulary. It creates too many problems in our thinking.

With two four-card minors, the popular practice is to open 1♦, although opening 1♠ is also acceptable.

1♥. This hand is too strong to open 1NT. With a choice between three-card minors, it’s standard to open 1♠.

1NT. Opening 1NT takes priority over opening a minor when we have a balanced hand of 15-17 points.

1♥. With two five-card suits, we open the higher-ranking. This will usually make it easier to show both suits. If we are West, for example, the bidding might go like this:

**West**  | **North**  | **East**  | **South**
---|---|---|---
1♥ Pass | 1♥ Pass | 1NT Pass | 2♠

By bidding and rebidding spades, partner will assume we have five of them. However, since we opened 1♥, partner can infer that we must have six clubs. With five spades and five clubs, we would have opened the higher-ranking suit, 1♠. Partner should be well placed to decide the best contract.

Being Prepared
Having said that we generally open the longer suit, there are exceptions. With a minimum opening bid, we want to avoid reversing: bidding a second suit at the two level that is higher-ranking than our first suit.

If we open 1♠, we will be awkwardly placed if partner responds 1♣. We don’t want to rebid 1NT with an unbalanced hand and we don’t want to rebid 2♠ with such a weak five-card suit.

A bid of 2♥ would be a reverse — a bid at the two level in a higher-ranking suit. The trouble with reversing with a minimum hand is that it may leave responder poorly placed. If responder has only 6 or 7 points, we may get the partnership much too high. Responder would now have to bid 3♠, for example, if responder prefers clubs to diamonds. So, we should reverse only with a medium strength or stronger hand.

With this hand, we can avoid the problem by opening 1♦. If partner responds 1♠, we are now prepared to rebid 2♠, a lower-ranking suit at the two level. We won’t have reversed and partner won’t expect us to have extra strength. Of course, partner will assume our diamonds are as long or longer than our clubs. But that’s the small price we pay for avoiding an awkward rebid problem if we open 1♠.
♠ A This hand presents a similar dilemma. In ♥ K J 8 6 3 theory, we’d like to ♦ Q J 7 6 5 2 open 1♥ and then bid ♣ 2 ♦ and rebid hearts to show six diamonds and five hearts. However, we don’t want to reverse with a minimum hand. The practical solution is to open 1♥, leaving us with a convenient rebid of 2♦ if partner responds 1♣ or 1NT.

So, even with the straightforward guidelines for opening a minor suit, there is still some room left for judgment if we want to be prepared for our rebid.

**Responder’s First Priority**

When partner opens 1♣ or 1♦, our priority is to bid a four-card or longer major suit. Major suits get a higher trick score than minor suits and it’s easier to make game in a ten-trick contract of 4♥ or 4♠ than an eleven-trick contract of 5♥ or 5♠.

If partner opens ♠ J 10 5 3 1♥, we respond 1♣ 4♥ with this hand rather ♠ K Q 10 7 2 than raising to 2♥. If ♠ 8 6 2 partner has support for spades, we’ve found a major suit fit. If partner doesn’t have support for spades, we can always return to diamonds.

For example, consider how the auction might go if these are the combined East-West hands:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ K 9 4</td>
<td>♠ J 10 5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ Q</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ A J 9 3</td>
<td>♦ K Q 10 7 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ K Q</td>
<td>8 6 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 4♠, we’ll make ten tricks, losing a spade, a heart, and a club. 3♠ has no chance, since we have to lose the same three tricks. If we were to raise diamonds right away, partner would likely try 3NT, which will be defeated three or more tricks.

**Responder’s Second Priority**

With no four-card or longer major to bid, responder’s next priority is to bid notrump with a balanced hand.

If the partnership has enough combined strength for game, it will usually be easier to take nine tricks in 3NT than eleven tricks in 5♣ or 5♦. Even if the partnership stops in partscore, notrump contracts score better than minor suit contracts.

In Grant Standard, we use the most straightforward set of ranges for notrump responses:

| **Notrump Responses to 1♣ or 1♦** |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1NT                           | 6-10 points    |
| 2NT                           | 11-12 points   |
| 3NT                           | 13-15 points   |

**Responder’s Second Priority**

With no four-card or longer major suit to bid and a hand unsuitable for notrump, responder’s next option is to raise opener’s minor suit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Raising Opener’s Minor Suit</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise to the two level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise to the three level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**West North East South**

1♠ Pass ?

This hand has ♠ 8 4 high-card points plus ♥ Q 3 1 length point for the ♦ Q 9 8 5 2 five-card suit. With no ♠ K J 7 6 3 major suit to bid and an unbalanced hand, raise to 2♣.

A jump raise to 3♠ ♠ K 8 4 is an invitational — ♥ 4 limit — raise showing about 11-12 points.

When raising a minor suit, responder usually does not count dummy points. The heart shortness will be useful if the partnership plays with clubs as trumps. However, if opener chooses to play in 3NT, the heart shortness will be a liability, not an asset. Since game is more likely to be played in notrump than a minor suit, it is usually best to err on the side of caution ... but it’s a judgment call.

Responder will tend to have five-card or longer support for opener’s minor suit when raising. After all, opener could have a three-card suit. Responder will usually have other options with only four-card support. Still, if nothing else seems suitable, a raise with four-card support is fine. Opener is more likely to have four, five, or six cards in the minor suit than three cards.

**A Forcing Raise**

In Grant Standard, there is no artificial forcing raise of opener’s minor suit when responder has 13 or more points. There are methods available (such as inverted minor suit raises), but they involve complexities outside our current scope.

This doesn’t usually present a problem since responder has other options. A new suit response is forcing, so responder can start by bidding the other minor suit and show the support later.

**West North East South**

1♠ Pass ?

With this hand, we ♠ 8 7 2 simply respond 1♥ ♥ 6 4 and wait to hear ♦ A J 3 opener’s rebid. We’ll ♠ A K J 7 5 then take the partnership to game. ♦