

Asking Bids

Asking bids apply only after a positive response to 1 . For a conceptual overview, see *Precision Bridge* by Eric Jannersten.

Alpha

Asks responder for support and controls by steps. Support is Qxx or xxxx. Strong support is Qxxx.

Step	Controls	Support
1	0-3	No
2	4+	No
3	0-3	Yes
4	4+	Yes
5	4+	Strong
6+ jump in new suit	6-5 or 6-6 two-suiter, 2-4 top honors in the two suits	
6+ double jump in new suit	6-5 or 6-6 two-suiter, 5-6 top honors in the two suits	
4NT	Blackwood (0,1,2,3,4)	

The first two steps (no support) are negative responses that cancel the asking sequence and return to natural bidding unless opener makes an immediate Gamma, which can then be followed by Epsilon or 4 /4 Beta.

Example:

1		1	
2	Alpha	2NT	No support, 4+ controls
3	Gamma	4	Five with two top honors
5	Epsilon	5	No control

A natural rebid of 2NT by opener allows responder to show extra length or a second suit and is not necessarily a balanced hand. Opener's third round bid is natural but can be an advance cue bid in support of responder's second suit. Example:

1		1	
2	Alpha	2	No support, 0-3 controls
2NT	natural	3	second suit
4	cue bid		

Repeat Alpha

Deleted.

1NT Beta¹

Asks for total controls by steps. Responder is allowed to bypass the total control response in order to show a 6-5 or 6-6 two-suiter or a hand strong enough to take over the auction with straight Blackwood.

Bid	Controls	Exception
2	0-2	
2	3	
2	4	
2	5	
2NT	6	
3 3 3 3		6-5 or 6-6 two-suiter, 2-4 top honors in the two suits , then 4 Beta asks for exact number of honors
3NT	7-10	
4 4 4 4		6-5 or 6-6 two-suiter, 5-6 top honors in the two suits
4NT		Blackwood (0,1,2,3,4)

After a 1NT Beta and control response:

- An immediate new suit by opener is Delta and can be followed by Epsilon. Use this sequence with a very strong suit, or a solid suit in order to set trumps.
- An immediate bid of responder's suit is Gamma and can be followed by Epsilon.
- A rebid of 2NT cancels the asking sequence and allows responder to show shape. Opener's third round bid can be an advance cue bid in support of responder's second suit. Example:

1		1	
1NT	Beta	2	3 controls
2NT	natural	3	natural
4	cue bid		

Examples

♠ A 8 6 5 ♠ K 9
 ♥ 10 ♥ A K J 9 6
 ♦ A K J 10 8 5 ♦ Q 9 6
 ♣ A 8 ♣ Q 6 2



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1♥ ¹	Pass
1NT ¹	Pass	2♥ ²	Pass
3♦ ³	Pass	4♣ ⁴	Pass
4♠ ⁵	Pass	5♦ ⁶	Pass
7♦	All pass		

1. Beta
2. 4 controls
3. Delta
4. Three to one honor
5. Epsilon
6. Second round control

4 and 4 Beta

4 and 4 are Beta only when 1NT Beta was not used or not available. 4 is Beta only when opener or responder has bid clubs naturally.

Step	Controls
1	0-2
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6+

If responder has already shown 0-3 controls:

Step	Controls
1	0-1
2	2
3	3

If responder has already shown 4+ controls:

Step	Controls
1	4
2	5
3	6
4	7
5	8

After a 4 or 4 Beta, new suits are Epsilon or Eta, depending on the original response.

Rules are needed to disambiguate 4 and 4 Beta from Epsilon or Eta. Case in point:

West Deals
None Vul

♠ K Q ♠ 10 9 6 4
♥ A Q 8 7 5 ♥ K 10 3
♦ — ♦ A Q 5
♣ A K J 9 8 7 ♣ Q 4 2



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥ ¹	Pass	3♣ ²	Pass
3♠ ³	Pass	3NT ⁴	Pass
4♣ ⁵	Pass	??	

1. Alpha
2. At least Qxx or xxx and 0-3 controls
3. Eta
4. No honors
5. 4♣ Beta or Eta?

I made the Alpha in hearts because it was matchpoints and Kxx in support would be very valuable information. I made the Eta in spades first because it was the most efficient and would (hopefully) allow me to follow with an Eta in clubs. Six hearts could have been defeated with a spade to the ace and a club ruff but we made it.

Gamma

Asks for responder's suit quality and sets the trump suit.

Step	Top Honors	Suit Length	Minimum
1	0	any	xxxxx
2	1	5	Qxxxx
3	2	5	KQxxx
4	1	6	Qxxxxxx
5	2	6	KQxxxxxx
6	3	any	AKQxx

Repeat Gamma

Responder has no top honor, length unknown:

1	Minimum Length
2	Minimum Length + 1
3	Minimum Length + 2 ...etc

Responder has one top honor:

1	Queen
2	King
3	Ace

Responder has two top honors:

1	King - Queen
2	Ace - Queen
3	Ace - King

Delta (aka Zeta)

Shows a powerful one-suiter, sets the trump suit (opener can correct to notrump), and asks for responder's holding. (The original Delta shows the same type of hand but is actually a Beta and rather useless.)

Step	Holding	Minimum
1	Singleton or void	x or --
2	Singleton honor or two small	Q or xx
3	Doubleton honor or three small	Qx or xxx
4	Three to one honor	Qxx
5	Four or five small	xxxx or xxxxx

6	Four to one honor	Qxxx
7	Two honors doubleton or third	KQ or KQx
8	Two honors fourth	KQxx

If the Delta is made over a 1NT response, the first step shows a small doubleton and the remaining steps are the same.

Opener's rebids in a new suit are Epsilon or Eta depending on the response.

Repeat Delta

If responder has shown two alternatives:

Step	Type of Control
1	Length
2	Honor
3	Honor plus jack

Epsilon

Asks for control of a specific suit.

Step	Control	Holding
1	None	xxx...
2	Third	Q or xx
3	Second	K or x
4	First	A or --
5	Extra	AK or AQ
6	Extra	AKQ

Repeat Epsilon

Asks what type of control is held: length or honor. Applies only when responder has at least second-round control.

Step	Type of Control
1	Length
2	Honor
3	Both

Return Epsilon

Asks for additional control. Applies only when responder has at least second-round control.

Step	Extra Control
1	None
2	Third
3	Second

Eta

Asks for number of honors held in a suit. Applies when responder is known to have at least two cards in a suit. When responder has shown a four-card suit, Eta sets the trump suit.

Step	Top Honors	Minimum (in four-card suit)
1	0	xxxx
2	1	Qxxx
3	2	KQxx
4	3	AKQx
5	3 + J	AKQJ

Relays

The relays over 1NT and 2m positives all have the same three responses:

Step 1	4 hearts, may have 4 spades
Step 2	4 spades, denies 4 hearts
Step 3	No 4 card major

Zeta

See Delta.