

## COMMENTARY ON PRE-EMPTIVE BIDDING

It is fair to say that pre-emptive bidding is frequently misunderstood as a cursory analysis of many clubs' results shows. It is a highly targeted bid, not something that can just fire off and hope for the best. Remember it is a bid designed to fail; if it succeeds, as in the last example, so much the better but that is just a bonus. Pre-empts are designed to **REDUCE OUR LOSS** – damage limitation.

Just to give some idea of the scale of the problem, a correct pre-empt will be made on about 1 in 150 hands. A biddable slam occurs in about 1 in 25 hands. But how many more times do you see an opening pre-empt compared with bidding a slam contract? The evidence shows far more. To put it another way, contracts designed to fail are bid more frequent than contracts designed to give you a much higher score! Bit weird really.

Here are some common misconceptions:

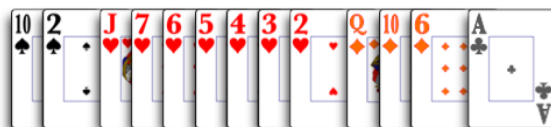
- A pre-empt always starts with a 3-level bid.  
False. The minimum is the 3-level but may be 4- or 5- level but not past game. So 3♥, 4♠ and 5♣ openings are all pre-empts.
- A higher level pre-empt shows extra length in the suit, e.g. 4♠ shows 8 spades.  
False. A higher level shows extra playing strength. This is often extra length but could be a long second suit.
- Vulnerability is irrelevant.  
False. You plan on going 3-off not vulnerable and 2-off vulnerable as you must guard against an opponent's penalty double.
- The suit opened can be any old 7+ card suit.  
False. The suit must be strong with at least two honours including the queen or higher. You have to have trump control. Examples:



Ideal clubs for possible pre-empt.  
Note no outside strength necessary.

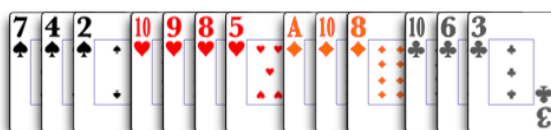


Bare minimum diamonds



Totally unsuitable hearts

- And lastly, responder does not recognise your bid is designed to fail, bids on and leaves you in a worse position than when you started – and almost invites an opposition penalty double. Example: after partner has opened 3♥, does responder contemplate 4♥?



**NO!** You only have one more trick. Opener is already going 2- or 3-off. Having a good heart fit cannot compensate.