

# Pre-emptive Openers

by Dave Riseborough

The purpose of a pre-emptive opener is that you use up a lot of bidding space to make it more difficult for the opponents to explore the possibilities of the hands and at the same time give your partner an accurate description of your hand.

That description looks like this:

- a) The suit is at least seven cards long  
(some partners have reduced this to six cards if the suit is a minor)
- b) You have less than an opening-strength hand
- c) You do not have an outside four-card major
- d) If doubled, you hopefully will not be more than two tricks short at equal vulnerability, or three tricks short not vulnerable against vulnerable:

**This is called the rule of 2 & 3!**

**Don't** pre-empt if you are vulnerable against non-vulnerable!

- e) You have very little defensive strength.

A few examples:

S 975	You should have six tricks so not vulnerable bid 3C;
H 10	vulnerable you pass.
D Q3	
C A1086432	

S	You have seven “optimistic” tricks so not vulnerable
H A1075432	you open 4H; at equal vulnerability 3H
D K83	
C Q97	

S K	You have at the most five “optimistic” tricks so
H Q8	you pass.
D Q1086542	You may be able to respond to partner later.
C J97	

Remember that in first or second hand you are pre-empting your partner as well as the opposition, so it is important you give partner an accurate description of your hand.

Third in hand, you can be a little more liberal as your partner has already passed, so you are not pre-empting them. Fourth in hand, why pre-empt – there is no opposition left to make it difficult for!

One more example:       S 73  
                                  H Q86  
                                  D AKJ975  
                                  C 963

The jury is out on this one!

I would open it 3D at favourable vulnerability (expecting to go three light without support) but some would open it 1D, only a 10-count but a solid suit. If your partner bids another suit, keep bidding diamonds hoping they will get the message!

*See also Dave's follow-up article, **Responses To Pre-emptive Openers.***

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