

# *Balancing: Why and How*

Hank Eng 11 June 2016

*“Bridge is a 52-card game. This simple statement is overlooked by bridge players. All too often the bridge player thinks of the game as a 13-card game – the hand he holds.”*

*Ira Corn, founder of the Dallas Aces*

Do you like defending 2-level, or even 1-level, bids? I do not. Here are four reasons why you should balance when the opponents have stayed low.

1. You may push them up one-level, and they go down.
2. Your side might make a partial or even a game, or you might go down cheaply.
3. Your bidding may help partner with the lead.
4. You may get a lucrative penalty double of the opponent.

Here are two guidelines to balancing:

- If you are short in their suit, do not sellout to low bidding. A doubleton is shortness.
- Balancing in a suit does NOT promise any suit quality – just length.

## **Balancing at the one-level, after (1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠) – p – (p)**

*Transferring a king*

- The player in the balancing seat “borrows” a king from partner.
- The advancer (partner of the balancer) deducts a king from her holding.

*The balancing 1N shows 11-15 hcp, with length in the opponent’s suit. Double with more hcp.*

*Jumps in 4<sup>th</sup> seat are not weak.*

- Because you can pass or bid at a low level, jumps in fourth seat are not weak.
- A jump overcall shows an intermediate hand: a good six card suit & about 12-15 hcp.
- A jump to 2N shows roughly 19-21 hcp – and not necessarily a perfect balanced hand.

*Takeout double in 4<sup>th</sup> seat.*

It may just have a minimum, but it may also be the first step to showing a great hand.

## **Balancing at the two-level, after they raise a suit bid (1x) – p – (2x) – p; (p) –**

*If they have a fit, so do we.*

If the opponents have a real 8-card fit, then there is a strong probability that your side also has an 8-card fit. Do not sell out unless you know their suits lie poorly for them.

*If you could have acted earlier, but didn’t, then you don’t have many points, a great suit, or even perfect distribution.*

- Here, a balancing DBL doesn’t show opening values, just the ability to play in multiple suits.
- If partner balances with a double, search for the safest place to play – even if it’s a minor.
- A balancing 2N shows two places to play – and you do not have to be 5-5 in those suits.

# **DO NOT PUNISH PARTNER for balancing.**

Note: I am not covering balancing after they have preempted.