



Shark System Notes

Version 1.1

Updated Jan 24th 2007

Although our system is made up of both of our names, it is actually just a merger of aspects from many other systems. The system revolves mainly around opening almost any hand, as well as limiting every opening bid that we make. This makes it easier to find out where we should end up and, more importantly, where we shouldn't.

Overview:

The most drastic part of our system are the 1 /1 opening bids. Any hand that contains 8-12 points and a four card (or longer) major is opened at the 1-level. This helps us to find a fit very early and also helps us to avoid bidding to a level that is too high. Similarly, it takes room away from the opponents.

For example: 1 -P-2 makes it difficult for a person with a reasonably good hand to come into the auction, especially when vulnerable. Would you really want to come in with 3 vulnerable, even with a decent 13 count?

Similarly, we open 1 with any hand that has 16 points or more. This limits every other hand to 15 or less points. That leaves 1 for most other hands. Any hand that has 11-15 points (ie. a Bergen 20), no 6 card suit, and is unbalanced, is opened with 1. This part of the system has its good points and bad. The contract is sometimes played by the wrong hand or the opponents might interfere before the major fit is discovered. However, we feel that the advantages of the other bids far outweigh the disadvantages of this bid.

We also play 1NT as 13-15 (12-15 in third/fourth seat). 2NT is a 7 card pre-empt in an undisclosed minor. We open 3NT as an 8 card pre-empt in a minor suit. In fourth seat we revert back to Goren Precision. Opening a major shows 11-15 and opening 2 is the standard 5 card club suit with a 4 card major, or 6+ clubs.

Surprisingly, the 4th seat treatments don't come up very often; maybe because your partner has already opened their 8 count.

Finally, we open all hands that contain 11-15 points and a 6+ card suit at the two level. ie. 2 shows 11-15 points and 6 or more hearts. This takes away weak two bids, but allows us to find 6-2 fits easily. Weak hands can be opened at the 1 or 3 level. Over these 2 bids we play inverted Bergen Raises. 3 shows an invitational or better hand (at least 10 points) and 3 card support. 3 shows a constructive hand (6-9 points) and 3 card support.

We have found this system of aggressive majors to be very beneficial, especially once we made some changes to our initial agreements. It can be played with Standard Precision, which is better than Standard American, but still includes many misunderstandings and wrong-sided contracts.

System in a nutshell:

1st & 2nd seat:	
1	= 16+
1	= 11-15 unbalanced, no 6+ card suit
1 / 1	= 8-12, 4+ card suit
1NT	= 13-15
2 / 2 / 2 / 2	= 11-15 6+ card suit
2NT	= Broken 3 level minor pre-empt in undisclosed suit
3 / 3	= Stronger suit than 2NT, suggesting opener bid 3NT
3NT	= Broken 4 level minor pre-empt in undisclosed suit
4	= A hand that can make 4
4	= A hand that can make 4
4	= A pre-empt
4	= A pre-empt
Higher bids are standard	

3rd seat:	
1	= 16+
1	= 10-15, 4+ s
1 / 1	= 8-15, 4+ card suit
1NT	= 12-15
2 / 2 / 2 / 2	= 11-15 6+ card suit
2NT	= Broken 3 level minor pre-empt in undisclosed suit
3 / 3	= Stronger suit than 2NT, suggesting opener bid 3NT
3NT	= Broken 4 level minor pre-empt in undisclosed suit
4	= A hand that can make 4
4	= A hand that can make 4
4	= A pre-empt - suggests partner sacrifice
4	= A pre-empt - suggests partner sacrifice

4th seat:

1 = 16+
1 /1 /1 = 11-15, 5+ card suit
2 = 11-15, 5+ & 4 card major, or 6+ s.
2 /2 /2 = 11-15 6+ card suit
2NT = 20-21
3NT = 24-26 or gambling

1 /1 0 pen ings:

This is by far the most controversial part of the system. Anyone who has expressed concern about the system has suggested that an 8 count is just not good enough to open. First of all, we don't open all 8 counts. Originally, we only opened hands that we would overcall with (that is, if we played 4 card overcalls). For example, we wouldn't open this hand: Qxxx-Qxx-Qxx-Qxxx. That would just be asking to get doubled and go for a large number. But what about a hand like this: Axxx-xx-xx-Axxxx. Our points, such as they are, are in our long suits. Also, if our partner happens to have four spades, he can respond, possibly stealing the opponents' heart contract. Summarily, judgement must be used to distinguish a good 8 or 9 count from a bad one. Recently, we've relaxed our criteria and started opening hands that we wouldn't normally overcall with. Example: xx-KJ9x-KJ9x-Qxx. We wouldn't overcall with this hand in standard, but we would open it, since it contains 1.5 defensive tricks.

In first, second, and third seat, opening 1 /1 promises at least a four card suit. In first and second it shows 8-12 points, while it shows 8-15 in third seat. With 4-4 in hearts and spades, we open 1 . We also open canapé style, meaning we would always open 1 /1 within the 8-12 range with a longer minor.

As mentioned above, we revert to Goren Precision in 4th seat, where opening 1 of a major shows 11-15 points and at least a 5 card suit. The only exception to promising a five-card suit is with a 4-4-1-4 hand. We would open this 1 .

Responses to 1 /1 :**1NT:**

When we first started playing Shark, we responded 1NT with 6 or more points. We learned the hard way (going for -1100) that this probably wasn't a good idea. We amended this so that a 1NT response over 1 /1 shows 9-13 points. This way, our combined hands have somewhere from 17-24 points, making 1NT a fairly safe place to play. Similarly, the responder is not always balanced. If my partner opens 1 and I have x-Axxx-KQxx-JTxx, I will respond 1NT. Bidding 2-

over-1 would show at least a 14 count and would be forcing. Both the opening bid and the 1NT response must be alerted (as must most of our bids).

After a third seat opener, a 1NT response shows 8-12 points and denies a 4-card major.

1 over 1 :

Responding 1 to an opening bid of 1 simply shows a hand with 4 or more spades. It is also forcing for one round. It doesn't promise a lot of points, although it is not limited. Responder can show a good hand on their second bid by jumping.

Example: AKQx-xx-AKxxx-xx

This hand responds 1 to opener's 1 bid. If opener bids 1NT, we can jump to 3, hoping they will have a club stopper. If they rebid their heart suit, we can bid 3 (a new suit is forcing). This way they can bid 3NT with a club stopper, or bid hearts or spades without one. If opener bids 2 over your 1 response, you can jump to 3NT.

2 over 1 and 2 over 1 :

If partner opens 1 (or 1) and we respond 2 (or 2), we have found our fit at a low level; possibly with very few points. The 2-level support response promises 4 card support (sometimes 3 when not vulnerable) and 0-13 points. This allows both partners to know that we do not have a game. This must be alerted. We've found this extremely useful in the past. Often, the opponents won't have room to come into the auction. The only disadvantage we have seen is that it might alert them to stay away from no trump if they don't have a stopper in our suit. I.e. it might keep them out of an unmakeable NT contract.

3 over 1 and 3 over 1 :

Bidding 3 of a major over your partner's 1-level opening is always pre-emptive. This doesn't mean that you don't have a good hand, but you don't have a game-going hand. For example: KQx-AQxxx-Jxx-xx

If your partner opens 1, you would respond with 3. This must be alerted as you could have anywhere from 0-13 points. You're also promising 5 card support. Non-vulnerable, you might have 4 card support, which is also alertable. So, in this auction, your partner could have as much as 12, but since you have 12, you don't want to be in game, especially in Match Points. You would make the same bid, non-vulnerable, with: xxx-Axxxx-xxx-xx.

This is especially useful since we know what we have, but the range is so great that the opponents have no idea. Often, the opponents will come in at the 3-level, as they feel they need to show their opening hand. Since opener has described his hand so well, responder can tell right away what kind of strength the opponents have (or don't have).

2 over 1:

Anytime your partner opens 1 / 1 , a two level bid is forcing and at least invitational (ie. somewhere around 14 points or more). Opener can rebid their suit (shows 5 or more cards in the suit) or bid 2NT with a minimum (8-10 points), but must jump with a maximum (11-12 points). If opener has a 6 card suit and a maximum, they can rebid it at the 3 level. With a 4 card suit and a maximum, opener should bid 3NT.

After a third seat opening of 1 / 1 , a simple raise shows 0-7 points and 4-card support. 1NT shows 8-12. 2 shows 8-12 with 3-card support and 2 shows 0-7 with 3-card support, sort of like a Mini-Bergen raise.

2NT:

A bid of 2NT over 1 or 1 shows a balanced invitational hand. It tends to deny 3 card support, so opener should bid 3 / 3 with a 6 card minimum hand and 4 / 4 with a 6 card maximum hand. With only a four card major and a maximum, opener would just raise to 3NT. With a minimum, opener should pass. This is not a forcing bid.

3NT:

A bid of 3NT over 1 or 1 shows a balanced hand that has no interest in playing in a major. With a 6 card major, opener can rebid it at the 4 level. Otherwise, they should pass 3NT.

Jump Shifts:

Over 1 or 1 a jump in new suit is always pre-emptive and promises at least a 6 card suit, but should be a 7 card suit. This must be alerted as it shows 0-13 points.

For example: xx-xxx-AKxxxxx-x

If partner opens one of a major, this hand would respond 3D. This is always to play, and is neither forcing nor invitational.

Some hands that qualify for a jump shift could also be shown by bidding 1NT.

This is up to the responders discretion of what would be a better contract.

After a double:

A double gives us a bit more room to pre-empt. It is also less likely we want to show an invitational hand with the other major.

1 - (X) - 1 : Exactly 3 card support. Any number of points

1 - (X) - 2 : Exactly 3 card support. Any number of points

Note: This is only played in response to a 1st or 2nd seat major opener

Responding to 3rd seat 1 / 1

Opener now has a larger range, while responder will either have a hand with less than eight points and a 4 card major, or 0-12.

We play any response at the 2 level shows 8-12 HCP, 4+ card suit and 3 card major support, while 1NT shows any 8-12 (excluding hands with 3 card support)

Responses to 3rd seat 1 (8-12) 4+:
1 = 0-8, 4+
1NT = any 8-12, no 3 card support
2 /2 = 8-12, 4+ minor and 3 card support
2 = 0-8, 3/4 card support
2 = Weak 6+

Responses to 3rd seat 1 (8-12) 4+:
1NT = any 8-12, no 3 card support
2 /2 = 8-12, 4+ minor and 3 card support
2 = 0-8, 5+ hearts
2 = 0-8, 3/4 card support

After the opponents double our third seat opener, we have the option of a redouble.

Pass – (Pass) - 1 /1 - (X): Responder can now redouble 8-12 with 3 card support

All bids are moved down 1. 1NT = 2 , 2 = 2 , etc

After a X of 3rd seat opener
XX = 8-12
1 = 0-8, 4+
1NT = 8-12, 4+ , 3 card support
2 = 8-12, 4+ , 3 card support
2 = 0-8, 3 card support
2 = 0-8, 4 card support

1 Openings:

This bid at first seems to be a catch-all for hands that don't fit into other categories. But after one rebid most hands become very narrowly defined. An opening of 1 shows a hand that contains 11-15 points and is unbalanced. It says nothing about diamonds. It could contain a 5 card major, but will not contain a 6 card suit, as that is what we have 2 level openings for. Similarly, this is not just any 11 count. It is a hand that would be considered "openable" under Standard American, or a Bergen 20. For example: Axxx-QJxx-Q-Qxxx is not an 11 count that many would open under Standard American. We are fairly disciplined in this respect. However, we would open this 1 under our system.

Whenever a 1 opening hand rebids a suit, it promises exactly a 5 card suit.

Responses to 1 :

1 ♠ :

This is similar to Standard, as it promises at least a 4 card suit and is forcing for one round. Since opening 1 says nothing about diamonds, opener could have a void in this suit. Therefore, we stretch to bid, but we still pass if we have nothing. As in Standard, a hand with 4-4 in the majors would respond a heart first.

Opener's rebid will often be a 5 card suit.

Opener's Rebids to 1 ♠

Examples: assume no interference	
1 - 1 2	Opener will have 4 hearts.
1 - 1 3	Opener will have 5 hearts and a minimum.
1 - 1 2NT	Opener will have 5 hearts and a maximum.
1 - 1 1	Opener will have 5 spades; forcing for one round, denies 4 s.
1 - 1 2 /2	Opener has 5 card minor and a maximum (14-15 points)
1 - 1 3 /3 /3 /4 /4	Splinter in support of hearts; must have maximum, 4/5 card support, and a distributional hand (ie. Ax-AKxxx-Axxxx-x)
1 - 1 2 - 3 /4 /4	Splinter by responder.
1 - 1 2 - 2 /3 /3	Help suit game try
1 - 1 2	Opener has 5 hearts and a maximum (14-15 points)
1 - 1 1NT	Opener could have 5 /5 /5 , but only a minimum (denies 4)

1NT:

A bid of 1NT over 1 is similar to Standard American. It shows 6-9 points and denies a 4 card major. With a minimum, opener would pass. With a maximum, they could bid their five card suit.

2 ♠ :

This shows a hand that is invitational and contains at least four of the bid suit. We don't play this as game forcing, but it is forcing for one round. It also denies a

4 card major. Opener can now bid their 5 card suit. Any bid of a major by opener guarantees a five card suit, as responder has already denied a 4 card major.

2 / 2 :

All jumps (except for 2NT) over 1♦ are pre-emptive. They show a hand that will not have interest in game, even if opener has a maximum. Usually this will be a hand that is too weak to respond 1 of a major.

2NT:

This shows an invitational hand that is semi-balanced and does not contain a 4 card major. Opener can bid a 5 card major if they accept the invitation and then responder can choose between 3NT and the major.

3NT:

Again, this is similar to Standard American. It shows 13-15 points and a hand that does not have tolerance for the majors (ie. 2-2 in the majors).

After Interference:

Doubles are negative. New suits are forcing. Jumps are weak.

New Minor Forcing:

After the auction 1 - 1 - 1NT - 2 is artificial and forcing to 2NT. Opener can now show a 4 card spade suit, or 3 card heart support

1 - 1 - 1NT - 2 is artificial and forcing to 2NT.

1NT Openings:

We open 1NT with 13-15 points (12-15 in third seat). This is similar to Goren Precision and you can use any treatments that you like over this. Most of ours are somewhat standard.

2 :

Stayman.

2 / 2 :

Transfer. Transfer and rebid 2NT shows a 5 card major and a 4 card minor and is forcing to game. Transfer and jump to a major game is a slam try.

2 :

We play this as an invitational-plus hand. Simply put, a hand that wants to go to game with most decent 1NT openers. This also denies a 4 card major. Opener will pass with an absolute minimum.

Taking another bid after this forcing bid, is a slam try

4 = 5 and 3 slam invitational

4 = 5 and 3 slam invitational

4 = 5 and 3 slam forcing
4 = 5 and 3 slam forcing

2NT:

This is an invitational-minus hand. Opener will go to game with a maximum (ie. 15 points). We use our discretion in these bids, but have found them useful for showing a very specific type of hand.

3 :

Puppet Stayman.

3 :

This shows a hand with 5 and 3 . We have found this makes it much easier to find a fit, rather than just transferring to our 5 card heart suit. Opener could have 5 spades or 4/5 hearts.

3 :

Similarly, this shows a hand with 5 and 3 . These are generally difficult hands to bid, as you don't just want to transfer to spades in case your partner has 5 hearts.

3 :

We play this as a minor suit slam try. Opener bids a minor with slam interest and 3NT without.

3NT:

A hand with no interest in a major. Often we will not bid Puppet Stayman with just a 3 card major if our hand is very flat, or if we don't want to give anything away, and feel that 3NT is a better contract.

4 /4 :

Texas Transfers. 6+ card suits with no interest in slam. With slam interest we transfer and then jump to game.

1 Openings:

We open 1 with any hand that has 16 or more high card points (with the exception of 22-23 balanced). This is the only bid where we don't upgrade our hands for distribution. We must have at least 16 points.

Responses to 1 :

1 :

We play this as showing 4-7 points, meaning nothing about diamonds. Hands of this type will not want to go to game if opener has a minimum.

Over 1, opener has many options. A bid of 1 forces responder to bid 1 so opener can show a variety of hands. The absence of this puppet shows a separate set of hands. Let's start with balanced hands:

Balanced Hands Summary	
1 - 1 - 1NT	Shows 16-17 balanced.
1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1NT	Shows 18-19 balanced
1 - 1 - 2NT	Shows 20-21 balanced.
1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 2NT	Shows 22-23 balanced.

This pattern continues for hands with more than 23 points, we carry on bidding 3NT, etc. It is important to alert all of these bids, especially 1 as a puppet to 1, meaning nothing about hearts.

We also use the puppet 1 - 1 to show unbalanced hands:

1 - 1 - 1 : shows 16-19 with at least 5 spades

1 - 1 - 2 : shows 20-21 with at least 5 spades

1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 : shows 22 or more with at least 5 spades

In general, the puppet bid always show a better hand with a stronger suit.

This is a bit different for hearts, as one of the bids is no longer available because of the puppet:

1 - 1 - 2 : shows 16-19 with at least 5 hearts

1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 : shows 20-21 with at least 5 hearts

1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 3 : shows 22 or more with at least 5 hearts

Most other bids are natural:

1 - 1 - 2 / 2 : shows 16-19 with at least 5 /

1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 / 2 : shows 20 or more with at least 5 /

These are, of course, unbalanced hands.

1 :

Over a strong club opener, bidding 1 shows a hand with no aces or kings, and 0-4 points. This allows opener to sign off at a low level. Only jump rebids by the 1 opener are forcing.

1 :

Shows a balanced hand with 8-10 points

In the auction 1 - 1 - 1NT, opener has not limited their hand, but shows a hand willing to explore a major fit. A 2 bid by responder is regular Stayman, forcing to at least 2NT, while 3 is game forcing puppet Stayman. This allows the partnership to avoid game when both hands are balanced combined 24 HCP.

2 :

Shows a balanced hand with 11-12 points
Opener will bid NT with a balanced or semi-balanced hand. Now a club bid by responder is Puppet Stayman. Similarly, responder can transfer to a major, but will have exactly 5 of the suit, since they are balanced.

2NT:

Shows a balanced hand with 13.

3 :

All bids increase in 1 HCP intervals. 3 = 14, 3 = 15 etc..

1NT:

Shows a positive response (8+ HCP) with at least five clubs

2 :

Shows a positive response with at least five diamonds

2 :

Shows a positive response with at least five hearts (unbalanced). If you are passed hand, this bid shows 0-8.

2 :

Shows a positive response with at least five spades (unbalanced). If you are passed hand, this bid shows 0-8.

*Note: for these "transfers" opener does not accept the transfer if they have less than three cards in the suit.

Once we have agreed on a fit, all bids are controls, starting with the first round. Bidding NT shows a trump control. A jump to 4NT is 1430 when bid by the 1 opener. When bid by the "weaker" hand, it is 3014. A voluntary jump to the 5-level is Exclusion Blackwood. It asks for controls, excluding the suit bid. The person bidding will have a void in that suit.

This differs slightly from other strong club systems. We do not play any asking bids. Any jump bids are splinters (and usually a minimum). Jumping to game in the agreed trump suit shows a weaker hand than making the cheapest bid.

2-Level Openings:

As previously mentioned, opening a suit at the 2-level shows 11-15 points and at least a 6 card suit (all seats).

Responses to 2 /2 :

2NT:

Forcing. Opener can rebid their major with an extra card in the suit or a solid suit. They can also bid a 4 card minor, or just raise to 3NT.

3 :

This shows 3 card support and at least an invitational hand.

3 :

This shows 3 card support and a constructive hand (6-10 points).

2 - 3 :

This just shows 3 card support and less than 6 points or 2 card support with 6-10 points. This is the same for 2 - 3 .

3NT:

This is natural and to play. Denies support for opener's major.

2 - 3 /4 /4 :

Splinter. Shows a singleton or void and at least 3 card support for partner's major.

2 - 4 /4 /4 :

Splinter

2 / - 5 / :

Voluntary 5-level raise. This asks for the quality of opener's trump. With good trump, opener will bid 6. Otherwise, they'll pass.

After interference:

All penalties are for penalty. Opener can pull the double if they have a 'freak' hand eg. - K QJxxx KQJxxx

Responses to 2 /2 :

2NT:

Invitational to 3NT. Opener can pass or raise. If opener rebids their minor, it tends to show a 2 suited hand, or shapely unfit for NT, not extra values.

3 B :

Forcing with at least 6 of a major. This doesn't come up very often, but is useful when it does. Opener can raise the major or bid 3NT. With very distributional hands, opener can rebid their suit.

3 - 2 :

Artificial and forcing. Opener will bid 3 card majors up the line. Without a 3 card major, opener can bid 2NT or 3NT with a good suit/hand or rebid clubs with a bad suit/hand. This is similar to Goren Precision, although it is unlikely that opener has a 4 card major.

2 - 3 :

Same as above. Artificial and forcing.

After Interference:

Doubles are negative up to 4

Other Treatments:

Raptor:

This is used, when the opponents open, to show hands that contain a 4 card major and a longer minor. It's a hand that can't be shown with a takeout double, as it's usually missing one of the unbid suits. When the opponents open a major bidding 1NT shows exactly 4 cards in the other major and a longer minor. When they open a minor it shows at least 5 cards in the other minor and a 4 card major. If partner wants to find out what the unknown suit is, they can either cuebid (to ask which major you have) or bid 2 (to ask about the minors).

If the opponents open 1 , an overcall of 1NT shows exactly 4 hearts and a longer minor. If partner wants to know which minor, they will bid 2 and you can either pass or correct to 2 . If the opponents open 1 , an overcall of 1NT shows at least 5 clubs and a 4 card major. If partner wants to know which major, they can bid 2 . We bid Raptor with any hand that we would overcall with. We also play that it is unlimited. This takes away a natural 1NT overcall, so with this hand we would double first and then rebid NT. We've found this very useful in showing hands like these: AKxx - x - xxx - AQxxx

When the opponents open 1 , we can't make a takeout double, as we only have one heart. We aren't strong enough to overcall 2 , and we'd like to show our spade suit. Now we can bid 1NT. Our partner can bid 2 , to play in clubs, or 2 to ask which major we have. A bid of 2 here will show a 5+ card suit and ask us to bid our major with no tolerance for hearts. Partner can still correct to 3 if necessary.

If you are a passed hand, and make a 1NT overcall, we play this shows at least 44 in the minors with 8-12 (Because you cannot have a 4 card major).

Carding:

For completeness, we play upside down count and attitude and suit preference. Regular suit preference in the trump suit. 3rd / 5th leads. Rusinow. Coded 9s and 10s with reverse Lavanthal against NT.

Forcing Passes:

Our style for most auctions at low level differs then many other approaches. Most doubles show takeout, while passing when wanting to penalize the

opponents. This puts great pressure on partner to reopen consistently and frequently. One negative of this approach, is that it makes it impossible for balancing seat to double 100% for penalty. This approach is most prevalent after a 1 opening.

Example

1 - P - 1 - 1 - ?

We would double with Jx AQxx AQxx KQx showing takeout shape. While passing with AJ9xx AKx K QJxx, expecting partner to reopen with a double.

Since we play negative doubles, the auction 1 - 2 - P - P - ?. Opener re-opens 90% of the time, even though they have already shown their hand (8-12).

Our general style is to re-open with a suit when you are shapely, but with a double when balanced.