



*Jerry Helms*

[www.jerryhelms.com](http://www.jerryhelms.com)

## Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,

One of my partners insists when holding minimum values with four diamonds and five clubs, that the proper opening bid is 1♦ to prepare a rebid. I prefer to open my longest suit. I guess asking if you have an opinion is a fairly stupid question, so could you provide advice?

Carolina Sam

Dear Sam,

I am somewhat flattered at how readily you recognize the fact that I absolutely will have an opinion. Two comments preface my remarks. The great Alvin Roth said, "Always plan a second bid before you choose a first." I say, "A good sequence of bids should resemble the cards you hold." By considering these, my answer to your question should be more easily understood.

Example 1:

♠3 ♥AK6 ♦KQJ5 ♣98642

With this minimum, unbalanced hand, I would choose to open 1♦ anticipating a likely 1♠ response from partner. Over this, I can rebid 2♣, suggesting anywhere from 12–18 points and a likely unbalanced distribution, usually including nine or more minor-suit cards. These inferences are available because, holding a balanced minimum, I would rebid 1NT. True, partner may expect more diamonds than clubs, but the

disparity in suit quality makes me think I almost have more diamonds than clubs. In addition, if partner is called upon to make an opening lead, diamonds seem a better choice than clubs. If partner takes preference to diamonds with a doubleton, play really hard!

Example 2:

♠3 ♥A65 ♦J754 ♣AKJ83

Same shape, and still an unbalanced minimum, yet this time 1♣ seems clear. I am aware there are some players who would choose 1♦, but using part of the logic in example 1, this makes no sense to me. Although opening 1♣ and rebidding 2♣ (over a 1♠ response) tends to show a six-card or longer suit, perhaps my understanding of the words "tends" versus "always" is an asset in this situation. For at least two reasons, 1♣ stands out as the only real choice: It's obviously a superior lead suggestion and it avoids a nauseating preference back to diamonds when responder is 2–2 or 3–3 in the minors.

On a related issue, Example 3:

♠3 ♥AKQ6 ♦98542 ♣A74

In first position, playing five-card majors, I would open 1♥. Yes, I have a four-card suit, but what a *great* four-card suit! Also, this opening better prepares me for how the auction is likely to continue. Over responder's expected 1♠ reply, consider your options over a 1♦ opening:

You	Partner
1♦	1♠
?	

1NT: This rebid strongly suggests balanced distribution. If my hand had been:

♠Q ♥KQ65 ♦J8763 ♣KQ7,

1NT would be imperfect, but clearly reasonable, although not very desirable on this suit-oriented hand.

2♦: Something about rebidding and emphasizing such an emaciated five-card suit lacks appeal.

2♥: A "reverse," suggesting at least 16 or more points ... argh!

For these reasons, I personally would choose an opening bid of 1♥ intending to follow with a 2♦ rebid. Partner would expect me to hold at least nine red cards, with more hearts than diamonds — which is almost what I have!

A bridge acquaintance once advised, "Bid where you live." On the above hands, and in choosing actions in general, try to decide where your primary residence is and how you intend to convey this to partner. □