Bridge Bidding Cheat Sheet (SAYC)

Standard American Yellow Card, five-card majors, 15 to 17 notrump. A beginner's one-page guide.

1. Count your points

A	K	Q	J
4	3	2	1

- High card points (HCP): 40 in the deck, 10 in an average hand.
- Length points when you open: add 1 for each card beyond four in a suit.
- Dummy points, only after a trump fit: with four trumps count void 5, singleton 3, doubleton 1 (with three trumps: 3, 2, 1).
- Count nothing for shape in notrump.
- Balanced: no void, no singleton, at most one doubleton.

2. Game and slam targets

CONTRACT	TRICKS	COMBINED POINTS
Part score	7 to 10	About 20 to 24
3NT	9	About 25
4♥ or 4♠	10	About 25, with an 8-card fit
5♣ or 5♦	11	About 28 or 29
Small slam	12	About 33
Grand slam	13	About 37

Tricks promised = level + 6. Look for an eight-card fit in a major first.

3. Opening bids

BID	POINTS	WHAT IT SHOWS	PARTNER USUALLY
1♣ / 1♦	12 to 21	No five-card major. Open the longer minor: 3-3 open 1♣, 4-4 open 1♦.	Responds with 6 or more
1♥ / 1♠	12 to 21	Five or more cards in the suit. Two five-card suits: bid the higher first.	Raises with 3-card support
1NT	15 to 17	Balanced hand.	Stayman, transfer or notrump
2♣	22 or more	Strong, artificial, says nothing about clubs, or a hand that can nearly make game alone.	2♦ waiting, must not pass
2♦ / 2♥ / 2♠	5 to 11	Weak two: a six-card suit.	Pass or raise; 2NT asks
2NT	20 to 21	Balanced hand.	Stayman, transfers 1 level up
3 of a suit	Below 12	Preempt: a long, strong suit in a hand too weak to open at the one level.	Usually passes
3NT	25 to 27	Balanced hand.	Passes or looks for slam
Pass	Under 12	No weak two or preempt, and the Rule of 20 says pass.	May still open

Rule of 20 for borderline hands: HCP + cards in your two longest suits. 20 or more, open at the one level.

4. Responding to 1♥ or 1♠

YOU HOLD	BID	MEANING
0 to 5	**Pass**	Too weak
6 to 10, 3+ trumps	**2 of major**	Simple raise
6+, 4 cards in a higher suit	**1♠ over 1♥**	New suit, forcing
6 to 9, nothing else fits	**1NT**	Catch-all, NOT forcing
10+, a good suit	**New suit at 2**	Forcing
10 or 11, 3+ trumps	**3 of major**	Limit raise, invites game
13 or more	**New suit**	Keep bidding to game

Raise ranges are in dummy points.

5. Responding to 1♣ or 1♦

YOU HOLD	BID	MEANING
0 to 5	**Pass**	Too weak
6+, four-card major	**1♥ / 1♠**	New suit at 1, forcing
6 to 9, nothing else fits	**1NT**	Catch-all, NOT forcing
10+, a good suit	**New suit at 2**	Forcing
13 or more	**New suit**	Keep bidding to game

With a major and a fit for partner's minor, show the major first: a major-suit game needs fewer points than a minor one.

6. Responding to 1NT (15 to 17)

YOU HOLD	BID	MEANING
0 to 7, balanced	**Pass**	No game possible
8+, a four-card major	**2♣**	Stayman, asks for a major
5+ hearts, any strength	**2♦**	Transfer, opener bids 2♥
5+ spades, any strength	**2♥**	Transfer, opener bids 2♠
8 or 9, no 4-card major	**2NT**	Invites 3NT
10 to 15, no 4-card major	**3NT**	To play

Over 2NT, opener passes with 15 and bids 3NT with 16 or 17.

7. Opener's rebid: how strong am I?

OPENER HAS	REBID
Minimum about 13 to 15	As cheaply as possible: simple raise, rebid your suit, or the cheapest notrump.
Medium about 16 to 18	Jump raise, jump rebid of your own suit, or a reverse.
Maximum about 19 to 21	Jump in notrump, double jump, or jump shift into a new suit.

Balanced 12 to 14: open a suit, rebid 1NT. Balanced 18 to 19: open a suit, jump to 2NT.