

Kennedy Method - Kennedy Convention

This system was devised and developed by Mr. George Kennedy, of Brooklyn, New York, United States. His home bridge club was the Gotham Club at 25 West 72nd Street in Brooklyn, New York.

Mr. Alan Truscott, the bridge columnist for The New York Times, devoted an article to him on January 6, 1983, and described how Mr. George Kennedy, at that time 81 years old, attended almost regularly the rubber bridge games play at the Gotham Club. [Source](#).

Mr. George Kennedy compiled his style of bidding and published them in a book titled *The Kennedy System of Bridge* in the year 1965. As Mr. Alan Truscott mentioned in his article (quoted): *There was at one time a considerable following for Kennedy's unusual bidding methods, and there are still some disciples. Not only did a major-suit opening promise a five-card suit but also a bid of one diamond promised five. One club was a catch-all for other opening hands, and a major-suit response to that promised five cards.*

Mr. Alan Truscott also mentions in his bridge column dated December 31, 1992, that Mr. George Kennedy partnered with Mr. Seymour Garton Churchill, who was also played many times on a regular basis in New York. [Source](#).

The Kennedy Club is not a bidding system, nor is it strictly a defined convention, but rather an approach, a method, a style of bidding.

Many mathematicians were engaged in discovering the probabilities and percentages in the game of bridge since the game itself, consisting of 52 cards, offered a numerical vastness heretofore unimagined. Hence the immense interest since the game could be broken down into levels of skill, calculated risks, and other logical features. The Kennedy Method is based on these factors, but contained a certain flaw which prevented its popularity.

It was proven on the chalk board that most bridge auctions begin with a Minor suit opening and the players were attempting to differentiate between a 4-card Major suit and a 5-card Major suit held by responder, and which information could be communicated to partner on the first response. This is the original concept of the Kennedy Method, of which there are no known versions or variants.

Compare the following two auctions:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Meaning
1 ♣	1 ♦		Any overall promises at least a 5-card suit.
		1 ♥	Always promises at least a 5-card Heart suit.

If the partnership employed the Kennedy Method, then a first response of a Major suit promised a 5-card suit, *even without competition*, as in:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Meaning
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥	Promises at least a 5-card Heart suit.

Therefore, following a pass by the immediate opponent, then the bid of a Major suit promises, per partnership agreement, a 5-card Major suit. This approach would allow the opening bidder to then support with only 3-card support, as in:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Opponent	Meaning
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥	Pass	Promises at least a 5-card Heart suit.
2 ♥				Shows a minimum of 3-card support in Hearts.

Conversely, and logically, if the responder only has a 4-card Major suit, then the responder must be able to deny holding a 5-card Major suit. This would be accomplished in the following manner:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Meaning
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦	This first response denies the possession of a 5-card Major suit, but it does not deny the possession of a 4-card Major suit.

In order to discover the 4-card Major suit the opener bids *up the line*. The following two auctions will show how this is accomplished:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Opponent	Meaning
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦	Pass	This first response denies the

1 ♥

possession of a 5-card Major suit, but it does not deny the possession of a 4-card Major suit.

The opener bids up the line to discover the 4-card Major suit. This demands that the opener must hold a 4-card Heart suit, as in this example. If the responder holds a 4-card Heart suit, then the responder raises Hearts according to the number of values held.

Pass 1 ♠

If the responder, for example, does not hold a 4-card Heart suit to support, but rather a 4-card Spade suit, then the responder will also bid *up the line*, and bid Spades.

Examples are not provided since the approach, the method is self-explanatory.

The Kennedy Method deals with the possibility that the responder holds either a 4-card Major suit or a 5-card Major suit. *There is a third possibility: the responder could hold neither a 4-card Major suit nor a 5-card Major suit.* The Kennedy Method allows also for this possibility, as in the following example:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Meaning
1 ♣	Pass	1 NT	Denies either a 4-card Major suit or a 5-card Major suit. The first response of 1 No Trump limits the holding of the responder to the general 5/6 to 9 points.
			♠K52
			♥AQ4
			♦976

The responder, holding neither a 4-card Major suit nor a 5-card Major suit, *and no 5-card support for opener's Minor suit*, will bid No Trump on the appropriate level according to the number of working values: 2 No Trump with values of 9/10 to 12, and 3 No Trump with game values

Note: The partnership must decide whether a first bid of 4 No Trump by the responder equals the initiation of any Ace-asking Blackwood conventional method or whether the bid is quantitative in nature. The partnership may also decide to employ Gerber as a first response, but this must be discussed by the partnership since such a bid is also ambiguous in nature and can mean a raise in partner's opening suit.

The flaw by this method or approach is whether the partnership can decide to open all auctions with 1 Club or whether the partnership agreement allows also the opening bid of 1 Diamond. If the agreement is that the partnership can also open the auction with 1 Diamond, then the responder is unable to show a 5-card Major suit with the first response. *And conversely*, If the agreement is that the partnership can open the auction with 1 Diamond, then the responder is unable to deny a 5-card Major suit with the first response.

Therefore, by partnership agreement, if the opening is 1 Diamond and the responder bids a Major suit, then the partnership agreement is that the bid by responder may show only a 4-card suit and does not promise a 5-card Major suit.

The following auctions are illustrative of this particular flaw:

Opener	Opponent	Responder	Opponent	Meaning
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	Pass	Promises at least a 4-card Heart suit.
1 ♠				Promises a 4-card Spade suit. Denies a 4-card Heart suit.

All continuances are per partnership agreement.

Opener Opponent Responder Opponent Meaning

1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	Promises at least a 4-card Spade suit.
1 NT				Denies a 4-card Spade suit, but does not deny a 4-card Heart suit.

All continuances are per partnership agreement.