

Karate

Introduction

Karate is a system for bidding in competition, based on some of the pioneering ideas in my 1981 book, *3D and the MAFIA Club*. *3D* proposed for the first time the use of 3 different defensive bidding systems, depending on the number of specific suits previously shown by the opponents. *Karate* can be used no matter which side has opened the bidding, and is based on two distinct bidding structures designed on the premise that there is a distinct advantage in being able to show two different suits with a single bid.

The key concept is to have a firm agreement with partner about which suits are available as potential trump suits. This, in turn, depends upon agreeing upon whether all four suits are available or whether a suit should be treated as unavailable because it has been specifically shown by the opponents. Each partnership must be in agreement about when an opponent's suit has been specifically shown. For instance, should a 1C opening bid in Standard American or 2/1 be treated as showing a suit or a non-suit? In this document, the Default Agreement will be that in order for an opponent's suit to be treated as having been shown specifically it must be at least a 5+ card suit, and thus not a candidate trump suit for our side. We will use the term semi-suit to describe any suit bid naturally by an opponent that could be shorter than a 5-card suit. Such semi-suits of only 2-4 cards can thus be considered potential trump suits for both sides. Other private agreements can be easily accommodated by *Karate*. For example, *3D* suggested treating a 1C opening on 3+ cards as not shown specifically, but treating a 1D opening (that is made only rarely with 3 cards) as having been shown specifically.

The dominant theme in *Karate* is that showing two suits with a single bid is likely to be more effective than traditional methods that show only one suit (overcalls and jump overcalls) or three suits (takeout doubles) or no suits (a 1NT overcall). Showing two suits when no suit has been yet ruled out as a potential trump suit requires using six different bids to show all possible two-suit combinations (CD, CH, CS, DH, DS, HS). With only four possible suit bids available without jumping, we can include Double (or Redouble) to handle a fifth combination and aNT overcall for the sixth combination. We'll call this system **Hex** (short for hexagon, a six-sided figure). When the opponents have shown one specific suit, and thus ruled it out as a potential trump suit for our side, only three bids are needed to show the three possible combinations of potential trump suits. We'll call that system **Tri** (short for triangle). Both partners must be in firm agreement concerning which structure to apply, depending on the length of the opponent's suit

The Tri Structure

In *Karate*, as in *3D*, any non-jump bid in a new suit shows that suit and the next higher unbid suit. Thus, over a 1H opening, 1S shows spades and clubs, 2C shows clubs and diamonds, and 2D shows diamonds and spades. Two biddable four-card suits (Q10xx or better) are permissible, so long as overall strength is adequate, and of course extra length can at least partially compensate for lack of defensive strength. The overall HCP requirement depends on vulnerability and the ratio of offensive to defensive strength (the OD Ratio). These non-jump bids are not forcing, so with strong game interest a traditional takeout double must be used in order to be assured of an opportunity for a second bid. A jump overcall shows a one-suited hand, denying Qxx or xxxx support for another suit, again with the HCP requirement depending on vulnerability and the OD Ratio. A 1NT overcall shows a balanced 15+ to 17+ HCP with a stopper, and ideally a second stopper (or at least Axx, to permit a holdup). A takeout double can be used for any hand

with a good reason to compete that is not suitable for either a two-suited overcall, a jump overcall, or a NT overcall. In addition to very strong 2-suited hands, this would typically include either the usual 4441, 4432, 5332, or 5431 shapes, or perhaps a 5-card suit with Qxx or xxxx support for another suit, but with no second 4-card suit as strong as Q10xx. The takeout double response structure will be described later. This leaves the cue-bid so far unused. I suggest that it be used to show a double stopper plus two of the three unbid suits (a hand that would have been a sound Standard American takeout double of a different suit). In 3D this bid was called the 2+2 Q.

The Hex Structure

This structure covers all six two-suit combinations. Each non-jump suit bid denies that suit and shows the next two suits. Double and a NT overcall show the two non-touching suit combinations (C+H and D+S), with NT showing the combination that includes Opener's semi-suit. Again, suit jumps show a 6+ card suit without a second biddable (Q10xx) side suit. Since our structure assumes that their bid is a semi-suit, a "cue" bid is merely a bid in one of the two suits we wish to deny.

A key difference between Hex and Tri lies in the forcing nature of a non-jump overcall in a new suit. In Tri, such a bid is descriptive but non-forcing, since the bid is made in one of the two suits actually held. In Hex such a bid is forcing, since it denies the suit bid and shows the next two suits (always touching suits, since spades and clubs are considered touching). In Tri, a takeout double can always be used to ensure a response from partner, but in Hex there is no takeout double, so it was necessary to depart from the Tri structure in order to ensure that the overcaller has a chance to make a second bid when he holds a strong hand.

A problem can arise in Hex when you hold a very strong hand with only one biddable suit. A typical example would be a 4333 hand with 18-20 HCP. The best approach in such a case is to show the 4-card suit and the better of the two suits it touches, and then to follow up on the next round with a jump to the appropriate level in NT or in your 4-card suit.

Responding to a Takeout Double (only available in Tri)

All suit bids are 5-suit conditional transfers. Doubler will accept the transfer to a new suit with Qxx or better; jump acceptance is permissible with sufficient extra strength (about an ace above a minimum). If he declines the transfer, a NT bid shows 18-20 HCP (too strong for a 1NT overcall), a new suit shows a 5+ card suit with weak 3-4 card support for the 4th suit, and a jump in a new suit shows a strong hand with a 6+ card suit. A transfer to NT shows a partial stopper, so Doubler will accept only if he holds at least a partial stopper himself. A transfer to Opener's suit asks Doubler for a full stopper. Holding such, Opener can accept the transfer if he feels partner should be declarer in NT, or can bid NT at the appropriate level to become declarer himself.

Responding to a 2-Suit Overcall

The UTR Structure applies. All non-jump responses by Advancer are 5-suit conditional transfers. See the full description in the UTR.PDF. document.

In Hex a non-jump bid in Opener's suit is natural, and the meaning of a jump "cue" in Opener's semi-suit depends on whether partner has shown that suit or not. If the suit is one of partner's two suits, the jump

cue is an absolute transfer to 3NT; if not, it asks partner to bid 3NT with a full stopper, and a transfer to NT shows only a partial stopper; bidding 3NT directly shows a full stopper..

Using *Karate* in Various Situations

When *Karate* was developed, the intent was to use it only when the opponents open the bidding. It can also be used effectively after we open the bidding, but each partnership must decide whether to do so or not. Possible cases are listed in the table below, but if you choose not to use *Karate* when your side opens the bidding, only the first two rows of the table are pertinent.

Situation	System
They Open with a Semi-Suit (e.g., SA 1C/?	Hex
They Open with a 5+ Card Suit (e.g., SA 1H/?	Tri
We Open, They Double or Bid 1NT	Hex
We Open, They Overcall at 1- or 2-Level	Tri

Karate In Action

Here are a few example hands, so you can get a feel for the way *Karate* works. Assume that the opponents are playing Standard American, and you have agreed to treat their 1C or 1D openings as semi-suits.

(1) ♠9 ♥AKJ107 ♦1032 ♣Q1054 1D/? This is a **Hex** Double, showing hearts and clubs. Partner holds ♠AQ872 ♥63 ♦K6 ♣9732 and will bid 1NT→2C.

(2) ♠AQ1087 ♥87543 ♦-- ♣AK5 1D/? This is a **Hex** 2C bid, showing both majors, but over a Weak 2D opening it would be a **Tri** Double. Partner holds ♠J62 ♥K1062 ♦A6 ♣7642 and will bid 2D → 2H, with 4H as the ultimate destination, since both partners have extra strength.

(3) ♠3 ♥Q1065 ♦KQ10532 ♣K2 1S/P/1NT/? This is a **Tri** 2D bid, showing the red suits. Partner holds ♠KJ965 ♥A983 ♦6 ♣1083 and will bid 2H.

(4) ♠A10654 ♥7 ♦KQ107 ♣QJ10 1C/? This is a **Hex** Double to show D+S. Partner holds ♠KJ98 ♥A1096 ♦842 ♣98 and will bid 2S, and then compete up to 3S if necessary.

(5) ♠J2 ♥83 ♦Q8 ♣AQJ9632 1S/? This is a **Tri** 3C bid. Partner holds ♠4 ♥KQ1054 ♦97654 ♣104 and will not be tempted to pursue a red-suit contract.

(6) ♠AK65 ♥J5 ♦K642 ♣J76 1H/? This is about a minimum for a **Tri** 1S bid, showing S+D. Partner holds ♠104 ♥872 ♦AQ98 ♣K932 and will bid 3D. A takeout double would be acceptable, and would be the normal action with Qxx in clubs.

(7) ♠72 ♥AJ10643 ♦A4 ♣K95 2S/? This is a **Tri** Double. If partner bids 3C→3D you will bid 3H and he'll know you have club support. Actually he holds ♠KQ3 ♥Q98 ♦1087 ♣Q742 and will bid 2NT→3C, which may not make, but if doubled you can retreat to 3H.

(8) ♠AK932 ♥QJ94 ♦1063 ♣9 1C/? This is a **Hex** 1D bid, showing H+S. Partner holds ♠764 ♥1082 ♦AQ82 ♣AQ8 and will probably bid 1NT.

(9) ♠AQ872 ♥A43 ♦A ♣KQ42 2D/? This is a **Tri** Double. If Partner bids 3D→3H you will bid 3S to encourage him to show a black suit, and support hearts if he does not. Partner holds

♠K9 ♥1092 ♦9753 ♣10986 and will bid 2N→3C, and 130 in clubs is your limit.

(10) ♠KJ10985 ♥9 ♦K5 ♣K1084 2D/? This is a **Tri** 2H bid showing S+ C. Partner holds

♠A6 ♥AKJ10643 ♦64 ♣52 and will bid and probably make 4H.

(11) ♠A ♥AQJ10 ♦AJ6 ♣A10954 1C/? This is a **Hex** 1NT bid, showing clubs and hearts. Partner holds ♠1075 ♥965 ♦Q1094 ♣732 and will probably pass. Your 1NT may have preempted them out of their 9-card spade fit.

(12) ♠AK4 ♥AK8 ♦A942 ♣765 1C/? This is awkward with no takeout double available in **Hex**. Double showing D+S is the system bid, but passing now in hopes of competing or making a penalty double later could be the winning action. Partner holds ♠109653 ♥J106 ♦QJ73 ♣J and Opener is void in spades, so the pass would have worked well.

(13) ♠K10943 ♥A65 ♦QJ42 ♣4 1H/? This is a **Tri** 2D bid. Partner holds

♠AQ65 ♥7 ♦K10865 ♣843 and will bid 4S before the opponents discover that they also have a double 9-card fit.

(14) ♠KQJ4 ♥QJ10 ♦A94 ♣AK10 1C/? Another awkward hand for Hex. Possible approaches are Double showing D+S, or 1D showing H+S, or 1NT showing S+ C. We can rule out 1NT since partner is likely to pass with a game available. Double seems safer than 1D, since it's better to lie about length in a minor than in a major. Still, showing hearts could make it easier to locate the HK or HA and thus reach a close slam. Partner holds ♠A9764 ♥K975 ♦4 ♣J65 so in this case all roads lead to the good slam, but 1D makes the auction easier than Double.