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The Two-Over One Game Force bidding system is an improvement over the Standard American System that has been in effect and played by bridge players for many years. The advantage of the 2/1 system is that it allows the partnership to know that game is possible with only a single bid. In this book, I have tried to present the fundamental aspects of the bidding structure for playing a pure two-over-one game force system of bidding.

While many players claim they play 2/1, this is not the case. They have allowed the bidding structure of Standard American to prevail, like bidding suits up the line or ignoring the Walsh club.

In this book, I have tried to change behavior by presenting a series of bids geared toward the 2/1 bidding structure where simply stated means that any auction that starts with an opening one-bid that is followed with a response at the two level of a lower-ranking suit represents a game forcing bidding sequence. Also included in the book are Bergen, Reverse Bergen, and Combined Bergen raises, inverted minor suit raises with crisscross and flip-flop, cue bidding, modified scroll bids, and many more methods In the third edition, the chapter on Slam bidding has been expanded to include asking for aces and kings simultaneously, the Baron 4NT convention, and more. New material on Roman Jump overcalls, the Mc Cabe Adjunct and the Reverse Mc Cabe Adjunct, Bergen’s Jacoby 2NT bids, Meckwell major suit bids and Meckwell responses to minor suit openings, more on interference over strong notrump, minor suit Stayman, Kokish Relays and several other conventions have been added to this latest edition. Several new bidding systems have been added to this final fifth edition; they include Tartan Weak Two Bids, The Walsh Club Convention, the Principle of Restricted Choice, additional methods for interfering over the strong precision club bid, Variable Roman Keycard Blackwood, Spiral Scan bids, the Swedish 2NT bid, and more on interference over strong notrump bids.

Also included is an update of the Minorwood and the Roman Keycard Blackwood Conventions, Two-Way New Minor Forcing with modified Wolff Signoff bids and new bidding sequences using Mini/Weak Notrump. The topic of Offense to Defense Ratio (ODR) is included in this revision as well as expanded bidding sequences when opening and responding to the bid of two playing the 2/1 Game Force System and several new Bridge Rules have been added to chapter 10. You may find Timm’s Bridge Bits, several duplicate bridge lessons, and a free pdf copy of this book on the website [www.bridgewebs.com/ocala](http://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala).

Neil H. Timm is professor emeritus from the University of Pittsburgh, where he taught statistics for thirty-five years. He has written books on multivariate analysis and linear models.

This is the revised edition of his book, 2/1 Game Force a Modern Approach - Fourth Edition. He has developed new bidding systems called Modified Scroll Bids, the Montreal Relay System, a new 1430 bidding system that replaces Jacoby 2NT for major suit agreements and bidding strategies when hands have voids to reach slams.



Two-Over-One Game Force System Fifth Edition  
NEIL H. TIMM, Ph.D.  
Trafford

# Two-Over-One Game Force System

For Beginners or Intermediate Players  
The Final Word with Chapters on Precision

Fifth Edition

NEIL H. TIMM, Ph.D.

2016







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**Fifth Edition**

**2016**



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## **Acknowledgments to the first edition**

First, I must thank my bridge partner, Lucy Tillman, who suggested I write this book. Without her encouragement, it would not have been written. I must also thank my other partners, Dave Stentz, Mary Belle Thimgan, Bob Ellis, and Donna Ziemann, for their critical reviews and comments, which helped with the presentation and organization of the material.

Finally, I must thank my wife, Verena, who supported me as I sat for many hours in front of my computer, typing the material for the book, and Marielle Marne for proofreading. However, I am responsible for any errors.

The book, to a large extent, reflects our approach to playing the 2/1 game force system. I hope the methods I have presented help to improve your game.

Sincerely,  
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## **Acknowledgments for the second edition**

I have had the good fortune of having responses from numerous proofreaders. Many read the first edition and provided me with invaluable feedback. I have tried to incorporate all of their suggestions and corrections into this second edition. Thank you all for your constructive and informative input. I want to extend special thanks to Brendon Conlon, who provided me with numerous detailed suggestions for this second edition.

## **Changes for the second edition**

In this second edition, I have included additional bridge rules, expanded and added material in several sections, and many more conventions common to the 2/1 game force system. This edition includes the Montreal club and diamond relay bids, the Kennedy club, the Kaplan Interchange



bid, the Ekren two diamond convention, picture bids, the forcing pass, masked mini-splinters, the Ingberman and Ping Pong conventions, and the Marvin two spades convention, among others.

Finally, a new chapter on Precision called Simplified Precision has been added.

## **Acknowledgments for the third edition**

I have had the good fortune of again having responses from several proofreaders. Thank you for bringing to my attention some of the remaining errors in the text. I have incorporated their suggestions and corrections into this third and final edition. Thank you all for your constructive and informative input. I want to extend special thanks to Charlene Young, Bev McMullen, and Ed Schusler, who provided me with numerous detailed suggestions for this third edition.

## **Changes in the third edition**

I have made corrections brought to my attention by several readers. The chapter on slam bidding has been expanded to include asking for aces and kings simultaneously, the Baron 4NT convention, and more. New material on Roman jump overcalls, the McCabe Adjunct and the Reverse McCabe Adjunct, Bergen's Jacoby 2NT bids, Meckwell major suit bids and Meckwell responses to minor suit openings, more on interference over strong notrump, Minor Suit Stayman, Kokish relays, and several other conventions have been added to this latest edition.

Finally, new chapters on Transfer Precision, the Meckwell Precision (Meckwell Lite) bids, are also included in this issue. The Meckwell Lite material (chapter 18) was developed by Luke Gillespie and Jim Streisand and is included in the book with their kind permission.

## **Acknowledgments for the fourth edition**

I have again had the good fortune of again having responses from several proofreaders. Thank you for bringing to my attention some of the remaining errors in the text. I have incorporated their suggestions and corrections into this fourth edition. I want to acknowledge the suggestions made by Mary Gavaghan, who provided a detailed reading of the material and made many suggestions to improve the text.

## **Changes in the fourth edition**

The Minorwood convention has been expanded, and several variations of the Flannery convention are included in this edition. I have added the Hello and SCUM conventions used to interfere over strong notrumps and a modified Landy convention designed to compete over partnerships that employ a weak notrump bid. The Equal Level Conversion (ELC) double is discussed in chapter 6, and additional material on slam bidding has been added to chapter 3. The material on Two-Way New Minor Forcing and the Gazilli convention has been expanded upon in chapter 1, and Jacoby transfers with a super-accept structure has been added to chapter 2.

Finally, a new chapter that reviews the new Italian system of bids called Fantunes has been included in this edition. The system has been modified to be in compliance with the ACBL General Convention Chart (GCC). Without the modification, it is a Mid-Chart convention.

## **Changes in the fifth edition**

Errors in the fourth edition have been corrected, and several new bidding systems have been added; they include Tartan weak two-bids, the Walsh club convention, and the principle of restricted choice, additional methods for interfering over the strong Precision club bid, Variable Roman Key Card Blackwood, Spiral Scan bids, the Swedish 2NT bid, and more on interference over notrump.

Also included is an update of Minorwood, the RKCB convention, Two-Way New Minor Forcing with modified Wolff Sign-Off bids, and new bidding sequences using Mini/Weak Notrump. The topic of offense-to-defense ratio (ODR) is included in this revision as well as expanded bids when opening and responding to the bid of 2♣ playing the 2/1 game force system, and several new bridge rules have been added to chapter 10. Finally, you may find Timm's Bridge Bits and several duplicate bridge lessons on the website [www.bridgewebs.com/ocala](http://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala).

Many of the concerns raised by Larry Cohen in the October 2015 issue of the *Bridge World*, page 41, have been addressed in this final edition.





# INTRODUCTION

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The two-over-one (2/1) game force bidding system is an improvement over the Standard American system that has been in effect and played by bridge players for many years. The advantage of the 2/1 system is that it allows the partnership to know that game is possible with only a single bid. In this book, I have tried to present the fundamental aspects of the bidding structure for playing a “pure” 2/1 game force system of bidding.

While many players “claim” they play 2/1, this is not the case. They have allowed the bidding structure of Standard American to prevail, like bidding suits up the line or ignoring the Walsh club.

In this book, I have tried to change behavior by presenting a series of bids geared toward the 2/1 bidding structure where, simply stated, means that any auction that starts with an opening one-bid that is followed with a response at the two-level of a lower-ranking suit represents a game forcing bidding sequence. Also included in the book are Bergen, Reverse Bergen, and Combined Bergen raises, inverted minor suit raises with crisscross and flip-flop, cue bidding, modified scroll bids, and many more methods not used in Standard American or Precision.

This is not a book on conventions; it is a book about bridge that incorporates conventions that allow partnerships to reach game or slam. In this regard, I have incorporated modern methods for hand evaluation developed by Marty Bergen. New bidding conventions like SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman), Quest transfers, and an overview of “Bridge Rules and Laws” that I hope will improve your approach to the bidding structure you may use today.

My goal in writing this book is to provide a careful organization of topics so that one may easily follow the concepts unique to the 2/1 game force bidding system.

The material is divided into chapters that illustrate bids by the opener, responder, and rebids by both. In addition, numerous bidding schedules are provided that summarizes standard responses and rebids with or without interference.

While many conventions are presented, those selected were chosen because they are designed to form a basic bidding structure that enhances the 2/1 game force bidding system.

Bridge is a complicated game. I hope the approach I have taken is useful in the improvement of your game whether you play Standard American, Precision, or the 2/1 game force bidding systems.



# CHAPTER 1

## HAND EVALUATION, OPENING BIDS, AND REBIDS

### Hand evaluation—starter points

The standard deck of cards for the game of bridge contains fifty-two cards. The cards are organized into suits—spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), and clubs (♣). The sequence spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs represents the rank order of the suits within the deck. Thus, spades is higher ranking than hearts; hearts is higher ranking than diamonds, etc. The major suits are spades and hearts, and the minor suits are diamonds and clubs.

Each suit contains thirteen cards as follows:

A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

The ace (A), king (K), queen (Q), jack (J), and 10 are called honor cards.

A bridge hand is created by dealing the fifty-two cards to four players, one at a time, so that each player has a total of thirteen cards. Partnerships at the game are the two persons sitting north-south and those sitting east-west. To evaluate the value of your hand, independent of rank, the standard/traditional method promoted by Charles Goren in the late 1940s is to assign values to the honor cards:

Honor	Value
Ace	4
King	3
Queen	2
Jack	1
Ten	0

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10

The evaluation method is referred to as 4-3-2-1-0 point count system. Using this method, one observes that a bridge deck contains a total of 40 high card points (HCP). Hence, an “average” hand consists of 10 HCP. While the method of assignment is accurate, a computer analysis of bridge hands shows that the point count system (4-3-2-1-0) tends to undervalue aces and tens and

to overvalue queens and jacks. Only kings are correctly valued. Using only HCP, a hand with at least 12 HCP is usually opened. More later!

To compensate for the over and undervaluation using the Charles Goren's "standard/traditional" method, Marty Bergen, ten-time national champion, developed the Adjust-3 method. His 2008 book, *Slam Bidding Made Easier*, published by Bergen Books, devotes the first one hundred pages to his proposed method. Why adjust three? Because the accuracy of the HCP in a hand depends on the difference of overvalued and undervalued honors by the value of three.

Let's see how the process works. With a dealt hand, one goes through six simple steps to employ the Adjust-3 method:

Step 1: Add up your HCP using the table presented earlier.

Step 2: Count the number of aces and 10s (undervalued honors).

Step 3: Count the number of queens and jacks (overvalued honors).

Step 4: Subtract the smaller number from the larger number.

Step 5: Evaluate the difference:

If between zero and two, make no adjustment.

If within the range three to five, adjust by 1 point.

If six plus (rare), adjust by 2 points.

Step 6: If the number of aces and 10s is more, add;

If the number of queens and jacks is more, subtract

We next apply the method to a few examples.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK9	♠A67	♠A104	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥KQ54	♥10543	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦Q7	♦KJ67	♦A109
♣J67	♣5678	♣J678	♣K10	♣A

Hand 1: 10 HCP  
three (undervalued) 10A10; two (overvalued) honors QJ  
 $3 - 2 = 1$ ; no adjustment  
The adjusted total for the hand is 10.

Hand 2: 12 HCP  
three aces and 10s (undervalued); two Js (overvalued)  
 $3 - 2 = 1$  no adjustment, but skewed in undervalued honors  
The adjusted total for the hand is 12.

Hand 3: 12 HCP  
three queens and jacks (overvalued); one ace (undervalued)

$3 - 1 = 2$  no adjustment, but skewed in overvalued honors  
 The adjusted total for the hand is 12.

Hand 4: 11 HCP  
 four undervalued honors; one overvalued honor  
 $4 - 1 = 3$ ; add 1 HCP; more overvalued honors  
 The adjusted total for the hand is 12.

Hand 5: 17 HCP  
 four undervalued honors; one overvalued honor  
 $4 - 1 = 3$ ; add 1 HCP; more undervalued honors  
 The adjusted total for the hand is 18.

Using the Adjust-3 method of hand evaluation, one may consider opening hands 2–5. However, is there more to the story? Yes. Clearly, if a suit includes AKxxx and another suit contains Axxx, one may take two tricks with the first and only one with the second. Thus, in addition to HCP, one must consider suit length.

After the Adjust-3 process, you must apply the following rule to modify your points for suit length, provided the suit contains at least one honor card: A/K/Q/J/10.

### **ADD FOR SUIT LENGTH**

One additional point for a five-card suit  
 Two additional points for a six-card suit  
 Three additional points for a seven-card suit, etc.

In summary, add 1 additional point for each card in a suit over four that contains an honor. However, in addition to suit length, one has to consider dubious honors since they are *overvalued*.

*Subtract 1 point for hands with the following doubletons or singleton honors:*

Doubletons: AJ, KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx (quick tricks = 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , or 0)

Singletons: K, Q, J ( $\frac{1}{2}$ , or 0 quick tricks)

Note that AK, AQ, Ax, and Kx are excluded doubletons.

Last, you must adjust for *quality suits*—a suit with 3+ of the top-five honor cards.

Add 1 additional point for each quality suit.

In summary, one proceeds through the following steps to obtain the total value of a hand:

Step 1: HCP

Step 2: Adjust-3 (add or subtract)

Step 3: Suit length (add for length)



Step 4: Dubious honors (subtract)

Step 5: Suit quality (add)

Step 6: Total starting points

Completing steps 1–4, one has what Mr. Bergen calls starting points. To open the bidding in the game of bridge (one of a suit), a hand is opened if it has at least 12 starting points in the first seat. There is more to a hand than simply high card points (HCP).

One final comment: in a suit contract, if your shape is 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2, or 7-2-2-2, you should downgrade your hand by 1 point for “flatness.”

If the shape is 4-3-3-3 and one is considering a notrump bid, also subtract 1 from the total starting points.

Returning to hands 1–5, we apply the process outlined above.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK10	♠A67	♠A104	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥KQ54	♥10543	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦Q7	♦KJ67	♦A109
♣J67	♣5678	♦J68	♣K10	♣A

Hand 1:	HCP	10
	Adjust-3	0
	Suit length	add 1
	Dubious honors	none
	Suit quality	add 1
	<b>Starting points</b>	<b>12</b>
Hand 2:	HCP	12
	Adjust-3	0
	Suit length	none
	Dubious honors	none
	Suit quality	none
	Flatness	subtract 1
	<b>Starting points</b>	<b>11</b>
Hand 3:	HCP	12
	Adjust-3	0
	Suit length	none
	Dubious honors	subtract 1
	Suit quality	none

	<b>Starting points</b>	<b>11</b>
Hand 4:	HCP	11
	Adjust-3	1
	Suit length	none
	Dubious honors	none
	Suit quality	none
	Flatness	subtract 1
	<b>Starting points</b>	<b>11</b>
Hand 5:	HCP	17
	Adjust-3	1
	Suit length	add 2
	Dubious honors	none
	Suit quality	none
	<b>Starting points</b>	<b>20</b>

Counting only HCP, one would have opened hands 2, 3, and 5; however, using Bergen's starting points method, one only opens hands 1 and 5. Also observe that the hands have at least *two quick tricks*.

Basic rule: Open a bridge hand one of a suit with at least 12–21 starting points and two quick tricks (in the first or second seat). The rule is relaxed in the third seat, more on this later.

The first step at the bridge table is that all players evaluate their hands; the process begins by the person designated dealer. The person with 12 starting points opens the auction by bidding (there are exceptions called preemptive bids and strong two-level bids to be discussed later). As the auction progresses, the value of your hand may increase or decrease depending upon what you learn from your partner and your opponents. To keep the process simple at this juncture, suppose one person has a sufficient number of starter points to open a hand one of a suit with no interference.

Many players will open a hand with only 11 starter points (seats one and two). This is a modern-day practice, since it is important to get your bid in as soon as possible. However, one should have two quick tricks and a five-card suit. Never open a balanced 11-point hand.

Another facet of the game one must consider when bidding is vulnerability. In general, there are four situations. The two pairs are nonvulnerable, two pairs are vulnerable, one pair is vulnerable, and the other pair is nonvulnerable. The value of tricks (won or lost) depends upon the vulnerability of your pair. More on this later!

## Opening notrump bids

Having sufficient starting points to open, the first goal is to describe your hand to your partner. When you open, you may have a balanced hand, an unbalanced hand, or a semibalanced hand. A hand with a singleton or a void is, by definition, unbalanced (35.7 percent). The patterns that do not contain a singleton or a void are 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, and 4-3-3-3 (47.6 percent) and are called balanced hands; semibalanced hands are hands with the following patterns: 5-4-2-2, 6-3-2-2, and 7-2-2-2 (16.7 percent). A frequency table of hand patterns follows.

### Common Hand Patterns Arranged in Order of Frequency\*

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
4 - 4 - 3 - 2	21.55
5 - 3 - 3 - 2	15.52
5 - 4 - 3 - 1	12.93
5 - 4 - 2 - 2	10.58
4 - 3 - 3 - 3	10.54
6 - 3 - 2 - 2	5.64
6 - 4 - 2 - 1	4.70
6 - 3 - 3 - 1	3.45
5 - 5 - 2 - 1	3.17
4 - 4 - 4 - 1	2.99
7 - 3 - 2 - 1	1.88
6 - 4 - 3 - 0	1.33
5 - 4 - 4 - 0	1.24
5 - 5 - 3 - 0	0.90
6 - 5 - 1 - 1	0.71
6 - 5 - 2 - 0	0.65
7 - 2 - 2 - 2	0.51
7 - 4 - 1 - 1	0.39
7 - 4 - 2 - 0	0.36
7 - 3 - 3 - 0	0.27
all others	0.69

\*Observe that over 33 percent of the hand patterns contain a singleton or a void, so do not be surprised.

When you open the bidding, you first want to communicate to you partner whether you have a balanced or nonbalanced (unbalanced or semibalanced) hand. However, if the semibalanced

hand has honor cards (AKQJ) in two of its doubletons, it may be considered balanced. When hands are balanced, one usually opens the hand with an opening notrump (NT) bid. Because roughly 50 percent of the hands dealt are balanced, many hands are opened using the notrump bidding scheme. In addition, it is used to describe rebids by an opener when bidding one of a suit. When bidding notrump, you are saying to your partner, “I have a balanced hand”; suit bids often convey nonbalanced hands.

Playing bridge the 2/1 way, the notrump ranges for NT bids and rebids follow.

#### **Opening notrump bids**

1NT = 14/15–17 starter points

2NT = 20–21 starter points

#### **Opener notrump rebids**

1NT = 12–14 starter points

2NT = 18–19 starter points

Opener may make an artificial and forcing opening bid of two clubs and then rebid notrump with 22–24 starting points; more on this in chapter 4. Interference is common over 1NT openings; bidding strategies are discussed in chapter 9.

While some will open 3NT with 25–27 starting points, this will not be the case in this book. We will use the Gambling 3NT bid. Playing 2/1, the Gambling 3NT bid shows a solid seven-card suit and denies holding an ace or a king (in the third or fourth seat, it may include an outside ace honor); more on opening 2♣ and 3NT in chapter 4.

An opening bid of 1NT usually shows stoppers in at least three suits where a minimum stopper is defined as Qxx. However, never open 1NT with Jxx or less in a major.

When opening 2NT, you should have all suits stopped; however, some may open it with an honor doubleton, hoping his partner has the suit stopped. To reach game in a notrump contract, the bid is 3NT (for example, the bidding sequence may be simply 1NT-2NT-3NT), both hands combined usually require 26 starting points; however, with long suits and points balanced between the two hands, only 24 starting points may be needed. To make a game in notrump, you must take a minimum of *nine tricks* out of thirteen.

If you take twelve tricks (the bid is 6NT), you have made what is known as a slam. To make a (small) slam usually requires 33 starting points in the two hands. And if you take all thirteen tricks (the bid is 7NT), you have taken all of the tricks, a grand slam; to make a grand slam normally requires approximately 37 starting points. The goal of a partnership when bidding is to determine whether one has enough points for a partial notrump contract, a game notrump contract, a small slam contract, or grand slam contract.

Let’s apply our methodology (yes, it applies when opening a major or notrump).

Step 1: HCP

Step 2: Adjust-3

Step 3: Add for suit length

Step 4: Subtract for dubious honor doubletons/singletons

Step 5: Add for suit quality

Step 6: Total starting points

A few more examples:

Example N1

♠KJ

♥AQ4

♦A108

♣Q10854

Example N2

♠KJ6

♥A104

♦AQ8

♣AK96

Example N3

♠K9

♥AQ5

♦K8

♣K109874

Example N4

♠98

♥AKJ2

♦102

♣AKJ42

Example N1

Step 1: 16 HCP

Step 2: (Undervalued honors = 4) – (overvalued honors = 3) = 1; no adjustment

Step 3: Add 1 for suit length

Step 4: Subtract 1 for dubious doubleton

Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality

Step 6: Total: 16 starting points

### Open the bidding 1NT (balanced 5-3-3-2)

Example N2

Step 1: 21 HCP

Step 2: (Undervalued honors = 4) – (overvalued honors = 3) = 1; no adjustment

Step 3: Add 0 for suit length

Step 4: No dubious doubletons

Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality

Step 6: Flatness subtract 1

Step 7: Total: 20 starting points

### Open the bidding 2NT (balanced 4-3-3-3)

Example N3

Step 1: 15 HCP

Step 2: (Undervalued honors = 2) – (overvalued honors = 1) = 1; no adjustment

Step 3: Add 2 for suit length

Step 4: No dubious doubletons

Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality

Step 6: Total: 17 starting points

### Open the bidding 1NT (semibalanced 6-3-2-2)

Example N4

Step 1: 16 HCP

Step 2: (Undervalued honors = 3) – (overvalued honors = 2) = 1; no adjustment

Step 3: Add 1 for suit length

Step 4: Subtract 0 for dubious doubletons

Step 5: Add 2 for suit quality (hearts and clubs)

Step 6: Total: 19 starting points

With 19 starting points, you should not open the bidding 1NT (if partner is a passed hand; some may open 1NT with 18 starting point in the fourth seat). With 20 points, you would not open the hand 2NT when holding two worthless doubletons and good suits. You must open the bidding one of a suit.

Before discussing suit bids, one needs to understand what it means to “take tricks” in notrump. To set our ideas, suppose you open 1NT and all other players at the table pass. You have won the contract (1NT), and to succeed, you must take seven tricks. The first six tricks are called your book; hence, to make a 1NT contract, you must take book plus one trick. Similarly, for a contract of 3NT, you must take book plus three tricks or nine tricks.

To capture tricks in notrump, each card in a suit is of decreasing value from the ace down to the 2 (A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2). However, the values are only meaningful for the suit led. If you lead, for example a club, only clubs are played, and four cards constitute a trick. The highest valued card in the club suit is the ♣A. When you are unable to follow suit, you may discard any card in your hand; however, if you get in the lead later, you must be careful when discarding. One generally discards cards in other suits with low value.

Because there are no trumps in “notrump contracts,” they are the most difficult contracts to make. Tricks are only won with a suit led. To establish tricks in notrump, you want to take advantage of long suits, since these are the source of tricks.

Let’s look at an example. You have the following hand: ♠KQ ♥A10 ♦AKQ10753 ♣KQ,

and your contract is 3NT. In this hand, you have one spade trick, one heart trick, seven diamond tricks, and one club trick, or ten tricks (ten potential tricks without a heart lead); hence, you may make 4NT. Bidding only 3NT, you can make your contract plus an overtrick. In duplicate bridge, 3NT is worth 400 points if your side is nonvulnerable and 600 points if your side is vulnerable. Each overtrick is worth a score of 30 so that you have made either 430 or 630 points for the contract.

If you fail to make your contract, the value of a trick lost depends on vulnerability. Fifty points if you lose a trick nonvulnerable and 100 points if you lose a trick vulnerable. And if the opponents do not think you can make a contract, it may be doubled. This doubles the values of the tricks lost. Hence, when bidding a partial (1NT = score of 90 or 2NT = score of 120) game or slam contract, one must consider the “risk” of not making the contract. Conversely, if you make a doubled contract, it also has a higher value when doubled and made. And a contract may be redoubled; even more points if made. When bidding, you must consider vulnerability.

## Opening one of a suit (major or minor)

When opening one of a suit (one club, diamond, heart, or spade), one usually has 12 starting points or 11 with AK and A with two quick tricks. Even though notrump bidding was discussed first, the first priority in bidding is to find a fit in a major suit. A fit is defined as at least eight cards for the partnership; the best fit between two hands is 5-3 or 4-4; however, a 6-2 fit also works. In general, it is usually better to play in a 4-4 fit than a 5-3 fit. Contracts may be played in a major suit, notrumps, and a minor suit. Because of its simplicity, we considered notrumps bidding first. A game in notrump only requires taking nine tricks. A major suit game (four spades or four hearts) requires making ten tricks. A minor suit game (five clubs and five diamonds) requires making eleven tricks, book plus five; almost the same as a small slam.

The number of total points required for a major suit game is the same as that for 3NT, from 24–26 points; while the points required for a minor suit game is 29 points. The value of each game vulnerable is respectively 600 points for notrump, 620 points for a major suit game, and 600 points for a minor suit game. With this knowledge, the first priority is to reach a game contract in a major, then notrump, and, last, a minor.

What about tricks in suit contracts? Again, four cards played constitute a trick; however, the values of the cards change with suit contracts. Now the boss suit is the trump suit, spades, hearts, diamonds, or clubs. If spades is the trump suit, and let's say one leads the ace in another suit (say, the ♣A), it may not win a trick, since it may be trumped with ♠2, if a person is void in clubs. Thus when playing in a trump contract losers, low-valued cards in a notrump suit, may be trumped to win tricks. In trump contracts, 4-4 fits in the major suit allow one to trump in either hand; it is superior to 5-3 fits. You have less ruffing value with only three trumps.

Playing the 2/1 game force method, with a five-card or longer five-card major suit and 12–21 starting points, one should bid one of a major (with a nonbalanced hand). If one has two five-card majors, the higher-ranking major (spades) is opened, not hearts. Ideal hand patterns for major suit opening are hands with the patterns 5-5-x-x, 5-4-x-x, and 5-3-3-2.

A problem hand frequently encountered is the balanced hand with a 5-3-3-2 pattern when one has sufficient values for opening 1NT and you are 5-3 in the majors. Do you open it with one of a major or with sufficient values 1NT? While there are special circumstances when opening, 1NT is better; in general, one would always prefer to open the hand one of a major. However, you may not always get a top score. Making four notrump is better than making four of a major, since 430/630 is better than 420/620. In team games using IMPs, there is no difference. Generally, you will score better by playing a 4-3-3-3 hand pattern opposite a 4-3-3-3 in notrump than in a 4-4 major suit fit. A 3-3-3-4 pattern opposite a 5-3-3-2 pattern is better in notrump and not the 5-3 major suit fit! To find these hand patterns require advanced bidding methods. For now, my advice is to always open the hand one of a major given the choice.

A similar problem occurs when you are 5-4-2-2. Do you communicate values or shape? For example, suppose the distribution was as follows: ♠AK92 ♥AKJ42 ♦102 ♣98. Do you open the hand 1NT or 1♥? Again, there is no clear-cut answer. Some would open the hand 1♠, and others

may open the hand 1NT. The risk when your partner is weak is that if you open it 1NT, you may miss your major suit fit.

Alternatively, one may use the Flannery convention or the Extra-Shape Flannery convention. And if you are 4-4-4-1, you might consider the Mini Roman convention. These distributional hands are reviewed in chapter 2.

Not having a five-card major, one must bid a minor suit (clubs and diamonds) with 12–21 starting points.

- (1) With two minors of unequal length, open the bidding with the longer minor, regardless of strength. Here, one must be careful if one is 5-4 in clubs and diamonds. Depending on the strength of your hand, less than 17 starter points, one may open one diamond to avoid a reverse rebid. This will be discussed more fully shortly (briefly, bidding one club, followed by a rebid say two diamonds, partner cannot return to your first bid suit at the two-level called a reverse (17+ points); this is not the case if you bid one diamond followed by two clubs.
- (2) With two three-card minors, open the bidding with the stronger minor. If approximately equal, open the bidding with 1♣. For example, if you hold ♦AKQ and ♣564, open the hand 1♦.
- (3) With two four-card minors, one opens one diamond. However, if clubs are significantly stronger, some will open one club.
- (4) When one is 5-5 in the minors or 6-5 (clubs-diamonds), a difficult decision presents itself. Open the higher-ranking minor if 5-5 or 6-5 (diamonds-clubs). When you are 6-5 (club-diamonds), open the bidding 1♦ unless you have 17 starting points. With hand patterns [4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, and 3-2-3-5 (♠-♥-♦-♣)], one three-card minor or a five-card minor, always open the hand one of a minor, unless, of course, the hand evaluation process suggests notrump. A few examples:

M1 ♠AK43	♥J876	♦A1082	♣K
M2 ♠A1054	♥A897	♦A5	♣Q75
M3 ♠A98	♥K54	♦A103	♣Q754
M4 ♠A98	♥K5	♦QJ103	♣QJ43
M5 ♠8	♥987	♦AQ105	♣AQ987
M6 ♠KJ98	♥AQ976	♦J2	♣Q2

For hand M1, you have 14 starting points (15 HCP + no adjustment – 1 dubious king) and no five-card major. Open 1♦.

For hand M2, you have 15 starting points [14 HCP + 1 adjustments (4 aces and 10s – 1 queen = 3, so add 1)]. Open 1NT.

For hand M3, you have 13 starting points. Open the hand 1♣.

For hand M4, you have two four-card minors; open the higher-ranking minor (1♦) with 13 starting points (13 HCP + 1 for quality suit).



For hand M5, clubs are longer than diamonds, and you have only 14 starting points (12 HCP + 1 long suit + 1 quality suit). Hence, open the hand 1♦. You have not told the truth about your shape, but you will not mislead your partner regarding hand strength by reversing—do not open 1♣.

For hand M6, you are 5-4 in the majors with 12 starting points; open the hand 1♥. Playing Flannery, you would also open 2♦\* and bid 3♥\* to show shape and values (see chapter 2). Playing Extra-Shape Flannery if partner bids 2NT\*, respond 3♥\* to show a heart minimum opening. Partner will pass or bid game.

## Hand evaluation—dummy points

When partner opens one of a major and you have three-card support, you have found a fit in the major. If you win the major suit contract, you will become dummy, and partner will play the hand. When you have a short-suit or two, you must reevaluate your hand.

The dummy hand reevaluation process is used when partner opens a major; it does not apply to minor suit or notrump openings. Conversely, if opener opens a minor and partner (responder) bids a major, opener must reevaluate his starting points with a major suit fit. Thus, the reevaluation process may be done by responder when opener opens a major and a fit is found, or by opener when opening a minor and partner bids a major (with four plus cards) and opener has a four-card major; a fit has also been found. The “dummy” reevaluation process may be employed by opener or responder.

The short-suit dummy points are evaluated as follows:

<b>Doubleton</b>	1 point each, always
<b>Singleton</b>	2 points each, <i>but 3 each with four plus trump</i>
<b>Void</b>	equal to the value of the number of trumps in hand

When considering starting points, short-suit points are not counted (except for some honor doubletons [e.g., Ax, Kx, AQ, AK] more on this shortly). Remember, shortness is not helpful in notrump contracts, and you do not know if your partnership will find a major suit fit. Thus, never count for shortness when you open the bidding. Except for some honor doubletons and singletons, you must ignore suit shortness when calculating starting points. However, with a fit in a major suit, this is not the case.

### Dummy points = starter points + short-suit points

Let’s look at a few examples when your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following hands.

Hand A: ♠ AJ62 ♥ 6542 ♦ void ♣ AK987

Hand B: ♠ AQ67 ♥ 678 ♦ AK10432 ♣ void

Hand C: ♠ KQJ32 ♥ 1098 ♦7 ♣ J987

Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣AQ1084

Hand E: ♠ 10986 ♥ K ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

First, you must calculate starter points. After calculating starting points, add to the total dummy points. The analysis for the five hands follows.

**Hand A: ♠ AJ62 ♥ 6542 ♦ void ♣ AK987**

Hand A: 12 HCP + (undervalued honors = 2) – (overvalued honors = 1) = 1; no adjustment, + 1 for suit length, no dubious doubletons, no points for suit quality; hence, the total number of starter points = 13. To establish dummy points, add 4 points for the void. There are no singletons or doubletons. Thus, hand (A) now has 17 dummy points.

**Hand B: ♠ AQ67 ♥ 678 ♦ AK10432 ♣ void**

Hand B: 13 HCP + (undervalued honors = 3) – (overvalued honors = 1) = 2; no adjustment, + 2 for suit length, no dubious doubleton, 1 point for suit quality; hence, the total number of starter points = 16. However, you have one doubleton (1 more point) and a void (3 more points). Thus, for hand (B) we now have 20 dummy points.

**Hand C: ♠ KQJ32 ♥ 1098 ♦7 ♣ J987**

Hand C: 7 HCP + (undervalued honors = 1) – (overvalued honors = 3) = -2; no adjustment, + 1 for length, + 0 for dubious doubleton honors, + 1 for quality suits. Hand (C) has 9 starter points. With five trumps, the singleton is worth 3 points; the hand has 12 dummy points.

**Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣AQ1084**

Hand D: 13 HCP + (undervalued honors = 3) – (overvalued honors = 1) = 2; no adjustment, + 1 length points, + 0 for dubious doubletons (note that the AK does not qualify), + 1 for suit quality. Total starter points = 15. Hand (D) has two doubletons, add 2 points. The total for the hand, dummy points = 16.

**Hand E: ♠ 10986 ♥ K ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432**

Hand E: 5 HCP + (undervalued honors = 1) – (overvalued honors = 1) = 0; no adjustment, + 1 length point, - 1 for the dubious king singleton, + no quality points; total of 5 starter points. With the singleton king and four trumps, add 3. Dummy points: 5 + 3 = 8.

**Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098**

Hand F: 12 HCP + (undervalued honors = 2) – (overvalued honors = 4) = -2; no adjustment, + 1 length point, - 0 dubious honor doubleton, + 1 quality suits. Total starting points = 14. Do not

add 1 point for the doubleton spade—you do not have a fit. The total number of dummy points = 15. In review:

Hand A = 13 starter points + 4 shortness points = 17 dummy points

Hand B = 16 starter points + 4 shortness points = 20 dummy points

Hand C = 9 starter points + 3 shortness points = 12 dummy points

Hand D = 15 starter points + 1 shortness points = 16 dummy points

Hand E = 05 starter points + 3 shortness points = 08 dummy points

Hand F = 14 starter points + 1 shortness points = 15 dummy points

When responding to your partner, you always must reevaluate your starter points and convert them to *dummy points* with a fit.

### **Minor suit dummy points**

With a minor suit opening (one club or one diamond), the reevaluation process is considerably different. When partner opens in a minor suit, you do not know if the length of the suit is five plus, four, or three. Furthermore, game in a minor is often difficult to make. You do not, in general, support a minor suit opening with only four cards. Instead, you should show a four-card major suit. Remember, your goal is to discover a major suit game, which may happen if you and partner are 4-4 in the majors. When partner opens a minor or notrump, dummy points = starting points.

The bidding goals have a hierarchy: (1) major suit fit, (2) notrump, and (3) minor suit. Never reevaluate your hand with a minor suit opening or notrump. Shortness does not count until a fit is established in a suit (major or minor).

### **Responses to one-level major suit bids**

#### **Game forcing responses**

When responding to a major suit opening, remember that 24–26 points will produce a major suit game, your first priority. When partner opens a major, partner has at least 12 starting points. If you have a fit (often exactly three cards) and upon reevaluation of your hand have at least 13 dummy points, you have a game in the major. Your goal with 13+ points is to show a fit with a 2/1 game forcing response. The game force bid forces partner (opener) to bid; it is an absolute force to game for the partnership.

A game forcing response by responder is accomplished by showing a new suit at the two-level without jumping or skipping a bidding level. After a major suit opening, and the *opponents have passed* and *you are not a passed hand*, the 2/1 game force bids are

#### **Opening bid    2/1 game forcing responses**

1♠	2♣/2♦ (four plus cards), 2♥ (five plus cards)
1♥	2♣/ 2♦ (four plus cards)

Note that the bid of 2♣ as a response to an opening bid of a heart is not a 2/1 game forcing response. This is because the bid of two spades skips a level of bidding (as we will see later, it denotes a weak hand). In addition, the response of 1♠ to 1♥ is not a 2/1 game force bid. The response of 1♠ over the bid of 1♥ shows a hand with at least four spades and 5/6+ starting points. The true value of the responders hand is only known through subsequent rebids by the responder.

The game forcing bid is always made in a suit that has at least four cards and is *forcing* for one round of bidding. The opener may not pass (unless the opponents interfere); the pass made by the opener is called a forcing pass, since your side has established a game force bidding sequence. These problems will be discussed in chapter 5.

Let's look at an example using hands 5 and F above for opener and responder, respectively.

Opener                      Hand 5: ♠K78 ♥AQ9852 ♦A109 ♣A

Responder                Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

Because hand 5 has a six-card major and 20 starting points, one opens 1♥.

Hearing the heart bid, responder has a fit and 14 starting points; however, upon reevaluation of his hand, has 15 dummy points, enough for a 2/1 game force bid. With five clubs, the game force bid is 2♣ (note that we are in the slam range).

In the previous example, responder has three-card support and 15 dummy points, a balanced hand and the 5-5-3-2 hand pattern. At this point, the opener does not know about the heart fit. All he knows is that the partnership has a game somewhere. Rebids by opener are needed to establish where the game will be played, usually in the major suit or in notrump.

With exactly three-card support and a balanced hand with 13–15 dummy points, is there an alternative bid that would set the game contract with one bid? The answer is yes, it is part of the Bergen raise system of bids. With a balanced hand and exactly three-card trump support (some may use this bid with only two-card support; in general, this is not a good idea, since it makes it difficult for partner to decide between a suit contract and notrump), bid 3NT\*. Partner now knows you have an upper limit for your bid and three-card support. His rebid depends on the structure of his hand. He will either pass 3NT\* or bid 4♥. Given your (worthless) spade doubleton, the safer contract is 4♥, but it may not yield the best result. Because of the nature of the bid, 3NT\* must be alerted (hence the asterisk \*). If the opponents ask, you must explain the bid “exactly three-card support and 13–15 dummy/support points (not HCP). In some cases, you may want to play in notrump, even though you have a 5-3 major suit fit.

We look at an example from Ron Klinger (2003), *100 Winning Duplicate Tips*, published by Orion Press. In this example, south is dealer and with 13 starting points (HCP + quality + 2 long suits) and opens the bidding 1♥.

North having three-card support and 16 dummy points (15 starting points + 1 shortness point) partner bids 3NT\*. The hand patterns for south are 2-5-5-1 and north are 4-3-2-4, clear patterns for a suit contract, right?

Dealer East N-S vulnerable.

	♠	KQ106	
	♥	1074	
	♦	Q4	
	♣	AK106	
♠ 987	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>N</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>W</span> <span>S</span> </div>		♠ AJ52
♥ 65			♥ J98
♦ K986			♦ A3
♣ QJ852			♣ 9742
	♠	43	
	♥	AKQ32	
	♦	J10752	
	♣	3	

Playing hearts, with a diamond lead by west or a spade lead followed by a diamond switch, will beat four hearts if the defense finds the diamond ruff. With any other lead, declarer can succeed in four hearts, but the winning sequence is not straightforward. Try it! A three notrump contract is cold and made easily. With better than two stoppers in the black suits by north, 3NT is the better contract even though you have the 5-3 major suit fit. The notrump contract succeeds due to the double minor suit fits in the hands.

In general, when one finds a major suit fit, do not play in notrump unless you have fast tricks and solid suits. Slow tricks favor a suit contract.

Let's consider another example using hands 1 and F.

Opener                      Hand 1: ♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10987 ♦ 6 ♣ J67

Responder                Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

Hand 1 from our analysis has 12 starting points (10 HCP + 1 length + 1 quality suit) and so would be opened 1♠. However, south has only two spades, but 14 dummy points and bids 2♣. Again, the opener does not know whether the contract will be in a major or notrumps. Only that they have a game contract. Where the contract is played depends on the opener's rebid. With a singleton, he would prefer a suit contract.

**Jacoby 2NT (forcing to game, with perhaps slam interest)**

Playing 2/1 game force, we imposed the restriction that one have 13+ dummy points and exactly three trumps and a nonbalanced hand. With exactly three trumps and a balanced hand, one bids 3NT\*. What happens if you have four-card support and 13+ points?

In this case, the bid becomes 2NT\*, called the (Oswald) Jacoby's 2NT bid. There are many versions and modifications of the Jacoby 2NT bid. Thus, one should always explain to the opponents the meaning of the bid; and it must always be alerted.

The bid of 2NT\* in response to partner's opening bid of one of a major most often shows four trumps and 13+ dummy points.

It is not a bid to suggest notrump; you almost always want to play in the major.

Let's look at an example using hands 1 and D.

Opener                      Hand 1: ♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67

Responder                Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣ AQ1084

With a five-card major and 12 starting points, opener bids 1♠. Partner (hand D) has 16 dummy points and four cards in the major. He must bid 2NT\*. The two hands have 28 points between them; hence, game in the major is certain. However, is it close to slam!

We will continue the analysis later after introducing the reevaluation of opener's hand called Bergen Points and then explain rebids by responder.

In this book, we have said that 2/1 game forcing bids to a major suit opening require exactly three-card support. Some relax this requirement by partnership agreement to include three or four plus cards support.

Why make this adjustment? Because we already know that a 2/1 bid is a game force bid, and it ensures a major suit game. Why waste the Jacoby 2NT bid to restate that you have game? Use the bid to investigate slam. Hence, you may increase the point requirements for the Jacoby 2NT\* bid and use it for slam investigation. The bid requires four-card support for the major, but with 15/16+ dummy points.

As you develop your game, you may want to consider this change in strategy. You should discuss this change with your partner, since most players (the masses) still use the original version with 13+ dummy points, even when using the 2/1 game force system (some even use only 12 HCP).

**Splinter bids**

The 2/1 game force bids and the Jacoby 2NT bid are two bidding tools used to reach a game contract in a major and to investigate slam. Another type of bid used to investigate game, and

perhaps slams are splinter bids. Splinter bids show two important things: a fit in the major (four trumps; some only require three) and shortness (a singleton or void) in a nontrump side suit. To employ a splinter bid, you again must have 13+ dummy points. With shortness, a game in a major suit may be realized with as few as 22 points and a slam with as few as 28 points. Thus, they are powerful tools in reaching a game or slam.

There are two kinds of splinter bids: (1) direct splinters that are used by the masses and (2) the newer version called concealed/ambiguous splinters that are yet another aspect of Bergen raises and the 2/1 system supported in this book. Both will be discussed.

In general, a splinter bid is a jump in a new suit, shows shortness with support in partner's bid suit, promises four trumps, and is forcing, suggesting a slam.

Direct splinters are shown by a *double jump* in the shortness suit other than partner's major. It is a game forcing raise in the major suit and shows shortness (singleton/void). The direct splinter bids are defined as follows (\* = alert).

1♥ - double jump to 3♠\*/4♣\*/4♦\* shows *shortness* in spades, clubs, and diamonds.

The corresponding jump bids for the opening of one spade are

1♠ - double jump to 4♥\*/4♣\*/4♦\* shows *shortness* in hearts, clubs, and diamonds.

While shortness is important, it only has value when the information conveyed to the opener allows the opener to evaluate how well the two hands fit, knowing exactly where the shortness resides. An example will help to clarify this point. Consider the two hands:

Opener	♠ AKJ83	♥ KQ104	♦ 567	♣ 7
Responder	♠ Q762	♥ 7	♦ AJ42	♣ A567

With spades as trump, opener must lose one heart and one or two diamonds, depending on the lie of the cards. But suppose we switch the red suits in responder's hand (dummy) and observe the difference

Switched hand	♠ Q762	♥ AJ42	♦ 7	♣ A567
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In the first case, opener's heart honors are duplicated by responder's singleton; both parties prevent two heart losers. In the second case, the defenders hold the diamond honors AKQ of diamonds, but only the ace is useful to the opponents. What can one conclude from this example?

- (1) If a singleton or void is opposite high card concentrations, it has less value.
- (2) If a singleton or void is opposite partner's low, losing cards, with high values more usefully placed, it has effective value.



## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

Rule: An effective holding is an asset while duplicated holdings are a liability. Or, more importantly, you want your losers opposite shortness to allow losers to be trumped.

While shortness knowledge may help you to reach game (when of value), it also tells your opponents exactly where your weakness resides. Sophisticated defenders love splinters! They will lead the suit and try to offset your tempo for making the hand. However, many times it is not shortness, *but the degree of fit, that is most important.*

Let's look at two examples where opener again opens 1♠.

Opener (1)	♠ Q9874	♥ KJ2	♦ K107	♣ A6
Opener (2)	♠ KQ1062	♥ AK52	♦ AK72	♣ void

With either hand, opener has no weakness, and if partner splinters, it has little value; a direct splinter bid by his partner will only help the opponents. Is there a better approach to the direct splinter? Yes, and it is called the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids, part of the system of Bergen raises, and they work as follows:

1♠ - pass - 3♥\* is a single jump and 1♥ - pass - 3♠\* a double jump in the other major!

The bid must be alerted; it indicates a singleton or void "somewhere" with 13+ dummy points and four-card trumps support.

The advantage of the bid is clear; the opponents only know that shortness exists, but not where. Depending on the nature of opener's hand, opener may not need the shortness information to proceed to game or slam.

When the opener has a need to know about shortness, he uses the relay asking bids: 3NT, after the bid of 3♠\* and the relay bid of 3♠ after 3♥\*, the next sequential bid. The sequential asking bids are called scroll asking bids. They are asking, where is your singleton or void?

The scroll asking bid and responses follow. If the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠\*, 3NT is the scroll ask or 1♠ - 3♥\*, 3♠ is the scroll ask. The responses after the 3NT scroll asks are 4♣\*, 4♦\*, 4♥\*, which shows singletons in clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠\* are 3NT\*=♣, 4♣\*=♦, and 4♦\*=♥, the suit below the singleton (submarine-like bids).

- If you do not like the "submarine" bids, one may instead use the bids: 3NT = ♠, 4♣=♣, and 4♦=♦; this makes the two options more consistent where clubs and diamonds are directly bid and the remaining bids show the other major singleton! Or, after 1♠ - 3♥\*, 3♠\* (ask) the responses are 4♣\*=♣, and 4♦\*=♦, and 4♥\*=♥, or one may use 3NT to show singleton/void in hearts.
- In addition, one may substitute the bid of 4♥\* to show a spade singleton/void (with opening 1♥ instead of bidding 4♠\*) after the 3NT asking bid when one has no slam



interest. This allows opener to pass or use 4♠ as the 1430 Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) with Kickback.

We will subsequently have more examples when we discuss what I have called modified scroll bids, used by responders after opener responds to Jacoby 2NT to investigate slam.

We have shown how one may use 2/1 game force bids, Jacoby 2NT, and splinters to move toward game in a major. All these techniques are tools to force one to reach the goal of a game or slam in a major suit. How do you decide which to use with 13+ dummy points and a four-card fit? With 17+ dummy points, use the Jacoby 2NT bid over the splinter bid, since the splinter bid takes up more bidding space.

### Questions about splinter bids

- (1) Can you use a splinter bid with three-card support? Yes, these are called delayed splinter bids; for example, 1♥-2♦; 2♥-4♣\*. Responder has three-card support for hearts and 13+ dummy points. With delayed splinters, one uses a double jump bid.
- (2) Can one splinter with a singleton ace? Yes.
- (3) When the opponents splinter, what is the best lead? Lead trump.
- (4) How do you show a void? Bid the splinter suit twice or use scroll bids.
- (5) Can the opener splinter? Yes, for example 1♣-1♥; then 3♦\* by opener shows fours hearts with 16+ Bergen points. Note that 2♦ is a reverse showing 17+ points, while 2♠ is a strong jump shift showing 19+ starting points.
- (6) A splinter bid for partner's suit always takes precedence over auto/self-splinter, which we will discuss next.

### Auto/self-splinter bids

Auto/self-splinter is a name for a splinter bid when the splinter bidder is setting not his partner's suit but his own. Again the bid must be alerted.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥ (transfer)
2♠	4♣*(singleton/void)

Responder is setting spades as trump.

Opener Responder

1♣ (may be short)	1♥
1NT	3♠*(singleton/void)

Responder is setting hearts as trump.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1NT
3♥ (Singleton/Void)	?

Opener with the auto/self-splinter is setting diamonds as trump. Responder can bid 3NT, 4♦/5, or show a long club suit.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
3♠*(Auto/Self-Splinter)	4♥

Note that the bid of 2♠ would be a reverse, so the jump reverse is an auto/self-splinter, which set hearts as trump.

Some only play auto/self-splinters by the opening bidder when the opener's bid is *not* natural (e.g., clubs may be short). And others only play them if responder has agreed to opener's natural bid by showing a fit. So discuss these bids with your partner.

Another set of bids one may use with slam interest are called Swiss bids.

### Swiss bids

When opening one of a major, forcing 2/1 bids, Jacoby 2NT\*, concealed/ ambiguous splinters, and 3NT\* are used. Playing concealed/ambiguous splinters, the bids 4♣\* and 4♦\* may now be used to describe responder's hand when other bids fall short.

It often happens that responder has support for the major with four trumps and a balanced hand (4-3-3-3) or a hand with five trumps and invitational values. To describe these types of hands, one may now employ the bids 4♣\* and 4♦\*, called Swiss bids. The Swiss convention comes in many flavors. There is Trump Swiss, Fruit Machine Swiss, Key Card Swiss, Singleton Swiss, and Super Swiss, among others, with all types of extensions and modifications.

In the duplicate bridge, many prefer some form of Swiss bids to Jacoby 2NT\*, others prefer Jacoby, and still others combine the two. So which approach should you use? The Swiss convention is a jump to 4♣\* or 4♦\* over partner's 1♥/1♠ opening to show different types of sound raises with three- to five-card support. Last century, the most popular form of Swiss was Fruit Machine Swiss, whereby a bid of 4♣\*/4♦\* over partner's 1♥/1♠ opening showed 12+ points with the 4♣\* bid, promising two aces and a feature; the feature being either a third ace, the king of trumps, or a singleton. The 4♦\* shows the same strength hand without two aces and a feature. This works fine, and some have updated it to incorporate the concepts of slam bidding. While this may work for some, we recommend a simpler approach and use a modified Swiss convention recommended by Max Hardy.

Now 4♣\* shows three-card support for the major and 16+ HCP with a balanced hand (4-3-3-3), since one may not bid 3NT\*. And 4♦\* shows only an invitational hand with five-card support and 13–15 dummy points, balanced or semibalanced. We recommend using the Max Hardy Swiss bids with Jacoby:

16+ starter points 4♣\* with a balanced hand and exactly three-card support for the major

12/13–15 starter points 4♦\* with and balanced or semibalanced hand and at least five-card support.

Both bids must be alerted (\*).

The bid of four clubs fills a gap. 3NT\* = 13–15 balanced with three, and 4♣\* shows a 16+ hand with three-card support and balanced. The bid of 4♦\* shows a fit with length, balanced or semibalanced.

Let's look at some examples after one opens 1♠.

**Hand SA:** ♠KQ9 ♥A752♦A104 ♣K96

**Hand SB:** ♠AQ932 ♥KQ5 ♦74 ♣AQ7

**Hand SC:** ♠AK93♥Q52 ♦74 ♣AQ74

With hand SA, you have three-card support, you cannot bid 3NT\*, so you bid 4♣\*, showing 16+ dummy points and a fit. With hand SB, you have five-card support and a doubleton, so you cannot use the concealed/ambiguous bid. You have five trumps, so you should not bid Jacoby; instead, you must bid 4♦\*. With hand SC, one would use the Jacoby 2NT bid.

We conclude this section with one more example that is not geared toward game but only a partial score (a contract less than game).

**Opener** ♠AKQ105 ♥10982♦6 ♣J67

**Responder** ♠9864 ♥A ♦753 ♣K9432

With a five-card major and 12 starting points, opener bids 1♠ (the 10 HCP have been upgraded to 12 because of suit length and quality).

Responder has four-card support but only 11 dummy points. He cannot make a 2/1 game force bid. He has to make a one-round forcing bid. These bids are discussed next.

## Semiforcing responses

## 1NT (semiforcing)

The 2/1 bid by responder is forcing to a game contract. However, suppose you have less than 13 starting points, you hold 7–12 starting points. To address this situation playing the 2/1 game force system, responder makes the bid of 1NT, which 1♠ *announced* as semiforcing for one round (it is blue on your convention card). The bid of 1NT does not promise a rebid by responder. To use the bid, responder is either a passed or an unpassed hand, and there is no interference by the opponents. The bid usually says the following:

1. Denies a hand strong enough to force to game.
2. May have a balanced or nonbalanced distribution.
3. Denies four-card support for opener's major (may have three-card support, a singleton, two-card support, or a void).
4. In response to 1♥, it denies four spades.

An example follows.

Opener	♠ AQ987 ♥ K87♦ KJ2 ♣ 56
Responder	♠ K2 ♥ Q65 ♦ 964 ♣ J10753

Opener and responder first calculate their starting points. Opener = 14 (13 HCP + 1 length point) and responder = 6 HCP + 1 length point = 7 starting points. Opener would bid 1♠. Because responder only has shortness in spades, no short-suit adjustments are made, so responder has only 7 starting points and must therefore bid 1NT (most often announced as forcing when playing the 2/1 game force system). In this example, responder has only two-card support for the major.

Let's modify the above hand slightly.

Opener	♠ Q9876 ♥ KJ2♦ 789 ♣ AK
Responder	♠ K23 ♥ Q65 ♦ 96 ♣ J10753

Again, one would open the hand 1♠, and after hearing 1NT, dealer *would like to pass*. In this example, responder has only three-card support for the major. Opener is unable to differentiate between the two (two- or three-card support). Furthermore, in this example, opener has no nice rebid. You are stuck, especially if the opponents interfere. If instead of announcing 1NT as forcing, even if you play 2/1, you can have your cake and eat it too.

I recommend that the bid of 1NT be announced not as forcing but as semiforcing. In 90 percent of the cases, opener will bid again.

With zero to two (sometimes three) trumps and 7–12 starting points, the bid of 1NT is announced as semiforcing (also in blue on the convention card).

Why semiforcing and not forcing? When you announce the bid as forcing, the opponents tend to take a “free” bid. In a semiforcing auction, they are not sure if the opponents will bid again, so they may not risk a call.

### **Constructive raises (nonforcing fit bid—invitational)**

With 8–10 dummy points and three-card trump support, one has a “constructive” hand and would support the major suit bid at the two-level (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠). This is called a constructive raise over a one-level bid of the major, and while it used to require an alert by the ACBL, this is no longer the case; it guarantees exactly three-card support when playing the Bergen system of raises. For example, suppose partner opens 1♥ and you hold the following hand:

Hand F\*: ♠ J2 ♥ 1076 ♦ KJ34 ♣ KQ76

This hand has 10 dummy points (9 starting + 1 short-suit point). You would bid 2♥ (constructive). Suppose, however, your partner did not open 1♥, but 1♠. Now you would bid 1NT.

If hand F\* was more balanced, say, (4-3-3-3) with 10–12 starting points with three-card support, one would instead prefer to bid 1NT followed by the bid of 3♠, a limit raise in spades, playing Bergen raises.

If you do not play Bergen raises, a constructive raise may have four-card support. Persons who play constructive raises and allow for four plus card support for the major should *not alert their two-level bid*.

Let’s consider an example.

Opener	♠ AKQ95 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	♠ 10986 ♥ A ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

After the bid of 1♠, one cannot make a constructive bid of 2♠ because one has a weak hand and four-card support. The Bergen raise of 3♠\* is made showing 7–9 dummy points, considered next.

### **Nonforcing responses (with a fit)**

There are only two major suit opening bids: 1♥/1♠. When responder has four spades, and the opener bids one heart, he must show the spades. Opener may have five hearts and four spades, and as advised before, a 4-4 fit is better than a 5-3 fit. The bid of 1♠ over 1♥ only requires 5+ starting points and is nonforcing. Rebids by opener and responder will clarify the situation.

When one opens 1♠ and responder has zero to three-card support in spades, and four hearts, and only 5–7 starting points, one must bid 1NT (with 8–10 HCP and three-card support, one would

make a constructive raise). You cannot show your four-card heart suit. In general, the bid of 1NT usually signifies *lack of fit!*

If one opens a major and responder has four-card support with between 5 and 12 dummy points, use Bergen raises to show the nature of the support.

### **Bergen raises and Combined Bergen raises**

Suppose partner opens with 1♥/1♠ and you have *four-card support for the major*, then the bids of

3♣\* shows 7–9 dummy points with four-card support

3♦\* shows 10–12 dummy points with four-card support (called a limit raise)

If one reverses these two-bids, the two-bids are called Reverse Bergen raises. The primary advantage of Reverse Bergen over Bergen is that one may now employ the bid of 3♦ as an invitational ask, since 3♣ = 10–12 dummy points. The bid of 3♦ is used to ask, do you have 12 points? If so, bid game. Otherwise, sign off at the three-level of the agreed-upon major.

Because Bergen bids are made at the three-level, they may be played when the opponents interfere with a double. They are free bids; however, many pairs play that Bergen raises are off. Others use the system called BROMAD (Bergen Raise over Major Suit Double) recommended by Mr. Marty Bergen.

In general, the concept is to indicate the length of the support by the responder as well as the limited number of points. The general guidelines to show this difference is as follows:

1. A redouble denies in principle a three-card support.
2. A first response of 2♣ is a constructive raise with 8–9 dummy points and at three-card support.
3. The bid of 2♦ shows a limit raise with a three-card support.
4. A one-level raise is preemptive in nature.
5. Jump raises are normal Bergen/Reverse Bergen raises with at least four-card support.
6. A first response of two notrump can be employed to show a preempt in either minor suit.

However, consistent with Bergen/combined raises, one may employ the following club and diamond bids over a *double* of a major to show a limit raise:

2♣\* shows 10–12 dummy points with three-card support

2♦\* shows 10–12 dummy points with four-card support

Again the bids are to be alerted.

Another modification is

2♣\* 7–9 dummy points and three-card support

- 2♦\* 10–12 dummy points and three-card support
- 2M 0–6 dummy points and three-card support
- 2NT a weak hand with a long minor, opener is forced to bid 3♣
- 3♣\* 10–12 dummy points with four-card support
- 3♦\* 10–12 dummy points with four-card support

Finally, yet another option is to using the following bids:

- XX A redouble is not part of BROMAD per se but is worth mentioning. It shows 10+ points and denies three plus card supports. Some use it to show three-card support and 10–12 dummy points.
- 2♣\* A three-card “constructive” raise, showing 7–10 dummy points and exactly three-card trump support.
- 2♦\* A three-card limit raise or better, showing 10–12 dummy points and exactly three-card trump support.
- 2♥\*/2♠\* A three-card “preemptive” raise, showing 0–6 dummy points and exactly three-card trump support.
- 2NT\* A preempt in clubs or diamonds (i.e., a hand that would normally make a 3♣ or 3♦ weak jump shift). Some use it for Truscott-Jordon to show four-card support and 13+ dummy points.
- 3♣\* A four-card “constructive” raise, showing 7–10 dummy points and exactly four-card trump support.
- 3♦\* A four-card limit raise, showing 10–12 dummy points and exactly four-card trump support.
- 3♥\*/3♠\* A four-card “preemptive” raise, showing 0–6 dummy points and exactly four-card trump support

BROMAD assumes that the partnership plays five-card majors. The theory is to reach the correct level of bidding in accordance with the Law of Total Tricks. By interchanging the club and diamond bids, one has what is called reverse BROMAD; similar to Reverse Bergen.

Note that the preemptive direct raises (i.e., 1♠ : 2/3♠) are based on the principle of fast arrival. They are designed to rob the opponents of bidding space as quickly as possible.

While many play that Bergen is always off over any interference, I believe this is too extreme. Why do you allow the opponents to interfere with your bidding sequences?

I also recommend they be played on over two-level bids when both sides are nonvulnerable or when the opponents are vulnerable and you are not. For example, if the bidding goes 1♠ - 2♥ - there is room for the three-level bids, make it. If the overcall is a minor suit bid of, say, 2♣, then 3♣ (a cue bid) only ensures three plus card support for the major suit bid of 1♠. Finally, they are always on over a double!

Another system that has become popular is called Combined Bergen raises, developed by Pat Peterson from Hernando, Florida. I like the convention. It works like this.

3♣\* shows 7–12 dummy points (note that we have combined the Bergen point range for this bid; hence the name Combined Bergen) with four-card support. If opener wants to know whether you are at the lower-end (7–9) points or higher-end (10–12) points, opener bids 3♦\*. The response 3♥\* shows the lower range, and the response 3♠\* shows the upper range.

3♦\* shows 10–12 dummy points with three-card support (a limit raise).

Thus, you do not have to bid 1NT (semiforcing) and make a jump rebid in the major with 10–12 dummy points. One normally has zero- to two-card trump support for the bid major.

Let's consider our prior example.

Opener	♠ AKQ95 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	♠ 10986 ♥ A ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

With a five-card major and 12 starting points, opener bids 1♠ (10 HCP have been upgraded to 12 starting points because of suit length and quality).

Using the Bergen raises, responder would bid 3♦\*, showing a limit raise in support of the spade opening bid.

Using Combined Bergen raises, one bids 3♣\*, and opener would ask the range by bidding 3♦\*, now you would respond 3♠\* (10–12 dummy points).

A minor problem occurs when playing Combined Bergen and partner opens 1♥ and partner responds 3♣\*. If you now ask using the bid of 3♦\* and partner responds 3♠\*, you are committed to game in hearts. Instead, one merely invites game by bidding 3♥. Alternatively, some use Bergen raises for hearts and Combined Bergen for spades.

### **Combined Bergen with a spade gadget**

When opening the bidding one heart and responding 1NT, what do you do after hearing the bid of two hearts with two-card support with a top honor A/K/Q-x?



Let's look at two bidding sequences.

(1) Partner	You	(2) Partner	You
1♥	1NT	1♥	1NT
2♥	??	3♥	??

Because you have not bid one spade, in the two examples, you may make the impossible 2♠ and 3♠ spade bids, respectively. Each of the bids tells partner that you have at least a top high honor doubleton in hearts. In example (2), partner can decide between passing, bid a major suit game, or 3NT.

However, in (1), the opening bidder has more flexibility. You may make a help suit game try in the major by bidding a suit at the three-level (help suit game try, usually alerted) asking partner to bid game with help (A/K) or you may make the bid of 2NT (tell-me-about-your-hand alert). The 2NT bid may be used to ask for shortness, allowing partner to bid 3NT or 4♥. However, it may also be used to show your worst side suit fragment with three or four losers by bidding the suit or 3♥ to show neither. The approach you use after the bid of 2NT is by partnership agreement. I prefer to show shortness, a short suit game try (SSGT).

When opening 1♠, what do you do with the bidding sequence 1♠-1NT-2♠-? As opener you might have the following hand:

♠K76542 ♥Q53 ♦KJ ♣AK

Now the bid of 2NT by partner shows a doubleton honor in spades and 10–12 dummy points with stoppers in other suits, invitational to game in notrump.

A rebid of 3♣ is invitational to game, with two card support, all other suits not stopped.

With opener's rebid is 3♣, showing 16–17 points, partner may either pass or bid 3NT or 4♠.

When opening one spade, it is often difficult to find a 5-3 fit in hearts. To find the fit in hearts, many advanced players use the Bart or Lisa conventions. I prefer Lisa, which is discussed shortly.

## Preemptive bids

With only 0–6 dummy points and four-card support, for hearts or spades, one makes a preemptive three-level bid of three hearts (3♥\*) or three spades (3♠\*), and if you have five trumps, bid *game*. Why? This has become known as the adjunct to the *Law of Total Tricks* that states “bid to the level equal to the combined number of trumps held by your side”. For example, with eight trumps bid to the two-level, with nine trumps, bid to the three-level, with ten trumps, bid to the four-level. Again, both bids must be alerted, and if asked, described as weak. We will discuss the Law of

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

Total Tricks later in the book (chapter 10), following Larry Cohen (1992), *To Bid or Not to Bid*, by Natco Press. Do not apply the law blindly; it does not work with unbalanced hands.

With only 0–6 starting points and five trumps, one should bid game (4♥/4♠), you have ten trumps.

Before discussing responses to minor suit openings, the following chart summarizes Bergen (responses) and the Combined Bergen (responses) with no interference when opening a major suit (1♠/1♥). Also included are the Swiss bids and concealed or ambiguous splinter bids. It is important to realize that not all persons will play the structure below that I have suggested. You can pick and choose. The Bergen system you play must be discussed. Some bridge players do not play Bergen, but instead they prefer fit bids where; for example, one of a major followed by a three-level jump in the major shows a fit with 10–12 dummy points (an invitational bid and nonforcing). This approach is more consistent with Standard American and not the 2/1 system.

### OVERVIEW COMBINED BERGEN AND BERGEN RAISES

#### Max Hardy Swiss bids and concealed/ambiguous splinters

Combined Bergen raises		Bergen raises	
Dummy points	Responder bid	Dummy points	Responder bids
<b>Two trumps</b>			
5–9 pts	*1NT then 2 major	5–9 pts	*1NT then 2 major
<b>Three trumps</b>			
5–9 pts	*1NT then 2 major	5–9 pts	*1NT then 2 major
8–10(bad) pts	2 major (constructive)	8–10 (bad) pts	2 major constructive)
10–12 pts	**3 ♦	10–12 pts	*1NT then 3 of major
13–15 pts	*3NT	13–15	*3NT
13+	2/1 bids	13+	2/1 bids
16+ pts balanced	@4♣ (Swiss)	16+ pts bal	@4♣ (Swiss)
<b>Four trumps</b>			
0–6 pts	@3 major (weak)	0–6 pts	@3 major (weak)
7–12 pts	@3 ♣ Bid three diamonds to ask 3♥ = 7–9, 3♠ = 10–12	7–9 pts	**3♣ (weak)

13+ singleton (concealed splinter)	@3 other major then step bids	10–12 13+ singleton (concealed)	**3♦ (invitational) @3 other major then step bids
13+ no singleton	2/1 bid	13+ no singleton	2/1 bid
15/16+ pts	@Jacoby 2NT	15/15 pts	@Jacoby 2NT

### Five trumps

0–11 pts	Bid game	0–11 pts	Bid game
12–15 pts	@4 ♦ (Swiss)	12–15 pts	@4♦ (Swiss)

Note: With 5 HCP and three-card trump support, pass, unless holding either a singleton or at least one trump honor with all other HCP in one side suit. \* = semiforcing, \*\*forcing, and @ = alert

If you play Reverse Bergen raises, you merely switch the meaning of the 3♣\* and 3♦\* bids. The advantage of this approach is that a preemptive bid forces the opponents to a higher level, and the after the bid of 3♣\*, one may use the bid of 3♦\* to ask if you have 12 dummy points.

### Walsh bidding system

Some final remarks follow on the Walsh bidding system developed by Richard Walsh, John Swanson, and Paul Soloway in the 1960s and is commonly ignored today because of Bergen raises and Swiss bids.

From the previous table using Bergen raises, one shows a limit raise with 10–12 dummy points, and four-card support is signified by bidding 3♦\*, a good limit raise. With 10–12 dummy points and three-card support, one bids one notrump and then bids three of the major, a bad limit raise usually with no singleton or void. Using Combined Bergen raises, one bids 3♣\* with four-card support (7–12 dummy points) and after the asking bid of 3♦\*, a good limit raise by bidding 3♠\*, 10–12 dummy points. Or one bids 3♦\* directly to show three-card support and 10–12 dummy points, a bad limit raise.

However, suppose the bid is 1♥ and the responder has three hearts and four spades and only 10–12 dummy points but ruffing values (a singleton or void). Since the responder has less than 13 starting points and only three-card support, he cannot use the concealed/ambiguous splinter major bid of three spades. A jump bid of three hearts shows 0–6 starting points and four-card support. And one notrump followed by three hearts does not show ruffing values. One uses the Walsh bid; the Walsh bid is one spade followed by a bid of three hearts, a good limit raise with three-card support, and ruffing values. Consider the hand after a one heart opening bid.

♠ 9854   ♥ Q107   ♦ 9   ♣ AK1062

One has three-card support for hearts, but only 12 dummy points and cannot bid two hearts constructive. While one may bid one notrump followed by three hearts, this does not show the ruffing values in diamonds. Thus, one makes the Walsh bid of 1♠ followed by 3♥, a good limit raise in hearts.

What do you do if one opens the bidding with one spade and you want to distinguish between a good limit raise with three-card support and ruffing values from a bad limit raise with no ruffing value? Consider responder's hand after one opens one spade.

♠ J85   ♥ J1074   ♦ 9   ♣ AK1062

Here, one bids one notrump (semiforcing). After the rebid of two clubs or two diamonds, responder would jump to four spades. Do not bid three spades, a bad limit raise, since you have ruffing values in diamonds.

### **Review of some of 2/1 bids and Bergen responses when opening 1♥/1♠**

1♠ (over 1♥)	four plus spades and 5+ dummy points
1NT	zero to two-card support 5–12 starting points
2♣	four plus clubs and 13+ starting points (2/1 game force)
2♦	four plus diamonds and 13+ starting points (2/1 game force)
2♥/2♠ (over 1♠/1♥)	five plus cards in major and 13+ dummy points (2/1 game force)
2♥*/2♠* (over 1♥/1♠)	three-card support with 8–10 dummy points (constructive)
2NT*	13+ dummy points with four-card support
3♣*	Bergen raise 7–9 dummy points and four-card support
3♦*	Bergen raise 10–12 dummy points and four-card support
3♥*/3♠* (over 1♥/1♠)	four-card support 0–6 dummy points
3♠*/3♥* (over 1♥/1♠)	13+ starting points ambiguous/concealed splinter
3NT*	13–15 dummy points and three-card support (balanced)
4♣*	16+ dummy points with three-card support and a balanced
4♦*	12–15 dummy points and five-card support
4♥*/4♠* (over 1♥/1♠)	0–11 dummy points and five plus trumps
*Alert bids	

## Responses to one-level minor suit bids

Opening one of a minor, there is no 2/1 game forcing suit bid when one opens 1♣ (unless you play the Walsh club convention); however, if one opens 1♦, the bid of 2♣ is forcing to game. This is also the recommendation of Max Hardy. However, if one rebids the club suit, the game force is off (mark this on your convention card).

The bid of two clubs over one diamond is not considered forcing to game by all who play the 2/1 game force system; some experts like Mike Lawrence, Audrey Grant, and Eric Rodwell suggest that the bid should only be forcing for one round, not to game. We do not support this approach, since we recommend using crisscross for an invitational game in diamonds. More later on crisscross.

Opening bid    2/1 bids

1♣                Responses (may or may not be forcing to game)

1♦                2♣ (four or five plus cards) (forcing to game)

## Nonforcing responses

### Responses to the one club (1♣) opening

Recall that the opening bid of one club shows hands with three to five plus clubs and denies a five-card major.

Even when you open a minor, the goal is to find a major suit fit. Using the Walsh approach (which is quite different from the Standard American), your goal is to show strength and shape as soon as possible. You bypass a four-, five-, or even a six-card diamond suit to bid a four-card major with minimum to invitational values (5–12 starting points) and bid your four-card major (usually with nonbalanced hands).

With two five-card major suits, bid the higher-ranking suit (spades). With a five-card suit and a four-card suit, bid the longer suit first. With two four-card majors, you bid them up the line, first hearts and then spades.

Examples:

♠AK432 ♥ 109876 ♦ 78 ♣ 7    bid 1♠ the higher ranking (5-5)

♠109876 ♥ AK43 ♦ 789 ♣ 7    bid 1♠ (5-4)

♠10987 ♥ AK43 ♦ 789 ♣ 76    bid 1♥ (4-4)

On your convention card, you must mark “frequently bypass four plus diamonds.” If you have invitational starting values (10–12), you may rebid your major suit. For example, the bidding

may go 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥. Or, if instead you bid 2♠, this has a special meaning called fourth suit forcing and will be discussed later.

With a five-card major and 13+ starting points, one may use the New Minor Forcing convention as a forcing bid to explore game (to be discussed later). With a balanced hand and 8–10 starting points, you bid 1NT; 2NT = 11–12, and 3NT = 13–15; these bids are used to show balanced hands and values and deny a four-card major.

The response bid of 1♦ is used as a waiting bid showing *no four-card major* and four plus diamonds (responder has 6–12 starting points); opener may respond two clubs (six plus card suit with 12–16 starting points or with a singleton) may bid a major, again with 12–16 starting points. The opener's bid of 1NT (and 12–14 starting points) shows a balanced hand, since you have denied a major suit bid; more on responses by opener later.

The bid of 1♦ is also used with a stronger hand; after the bid of 1NT, you may now bid your major suit (up the line) a *reverse by responder* to show your four-cards major. The reverse bid shows 13+ starting points and a four-card major (forcing to game).

Let's look at a few examples.

- |    |        |        |         |      |
|----|--------|--------|---------|------|
| 1. | ♠ KQ65 | ♥ Q874 | ♦ Q1042 | ♣ 8  |
| 2. | ♠ QJ84 | ♥ 53   | ♦ KJ954 | ♣ 92 |
| 3. | ♠ Q104 | ♥ KJ5  | ♦ J6543 | ♣ Q6 |
| 4. | ♠ AK54 | ♥ A6   | ♦ K8743 | ♣ 93 |
| 5. | ♠ Q104 | ♥ K105 | ♦ KJ654 | ♣ Q9 |

- (1) Bid 1♥, bypassing the bid of one diamond to bid four-card majors up the line with a minimal hand.
- (2) Bid 1♠, bypassing diamonds with minimum hand, bid the major.
- (3) Bid 1♦, too weak to bid 1NT; you want the strong hand to play contract.
- (4) Bid 1♦, strong enough to reverse, diamonds then spades.
- (5) Bid 2NT, you have 12 starting points.

In summary, 2/1 Walsh bidders show a four-card major immediately with a weak hand and use one diamond as a waiting bid. With a strong (13+ starting points) hand, the bid of 1♦ is followed by a bid of a four-card major, a reverse bid. For Walsh bidders, the bid of 1NT is semiforcing showing 8–10 starting points and denying a four-card major.

With no four-card major and 13+ starting points, one bids 2♣\* (called the inverted minor bid) or 2♦\* (called crisscross), a limit raise in clubs (10–12 starting points) in clubs with five plus clubs and is the nonforcing bid. More on these two-bids later.

**Note:** The bidding sequence 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ (opener) - 1♠ is forcing to game playing Walsh style bids, since with a weak hand, responder would have bid spades and not diamonds (a fourth suit

forcing auction playing Walsh and shows a suit with four spades); more on fourth suit forcing soon.

### **Weak jump shifts (preemptive bid)**

The bid of 2♥/2♠ over a one club or one diamond opening is a weak jump shift in the major showing six or seven plus cards and a very weak hand, 2–5 starting points. With 6 starting points (6+), you bid one of the majors.

To show a preemptive raise in clubs, one jumps to the four-level (4♣).

### **Forcing responses**

#### **The bid of 2♣ over 1♦ (game force)**

Recall that the opening bid of 1♦ denies a five-card major by opener and shows three to five plus diamonds.

With an opening bid of one diamond, as when one opened one club, the first objective of the responder is to show a major suit. With 5+ starting points and a four- or five-card major, bid the major.

With at least five clubs and 13+ starting points, one bids 2♣. This bid is forcing to game. However, some partnerships use the bid to show a weak hand with clubs!

With a balanced hand and 6–10 starting points, bid 1NT; 2NT = 11–12, and 3NT = 13–15; these bids are used to show balanced hands and values and deny a four-card major. Note that over a one diamond opening, the 1NT range is not the same as for a one club opening. You do not have a relay bid to allow the stronger hand to play 1NT; either hand may play the notrump contract.

After the opener bids, a new suit at the two-level, the rebid of 3♣ by responder shows the opener that the force to game is off and will allow one to be in a contract short of game.

For example, the bidding may go 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣, showing less than 5–12 starting points and long clubs. If instead the bidding goes 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠, you are showing all the suits and you are at the two-level. This is a fourth suit forcing sequence; however, the fourth suit may or may not be real (and can be played forcing for one round only or to game).

To appreciate why we recommend that the bidding sequence 1♦ - 2♣ as a game force sequence, consider the following:

Opener	♠876 ♥AQ ♦A652 ♣K875
Responder	♠AKJ ♥KJ4 ♦743 ♣QJ92

Clearly, one would open 1♦ and responder would bid 2♣ (forcing to game). Not playing two clubs forcing to game you may respond 1♥ and opener may bid 1NT. What next?

Perhaps 2♠ by responder and the contract may stop in 2NT. You missed not only your club game but also a club slam!

If responder instead had the hand ♠7 ♥ A103 ♦ 678 ♣ AQJ952.

One would again respond 2♣; however, after the bid of 2♥, one would bid 3♣ (game force off).

Let's look at another example. Suppose partner opens 1♦ and you hold the hand:

♠K32 ♥ 56 ♦ AQ5 ♣ KJ742

You would clearly make a forcing raise of 2♣. However, suppose opener bids 1♣. You have no four-card major and may temporize with a bid of 1♦; hoping opener would perhaps bid hearts. Is there a better approach? Yes, one may use the forcing inverted minor bid discussed next.

### **Inverted minors and crisscross (game forcing and invitational bids)**

Using inverted minors, one bids 1♣ followed by 2♣\* or 1♦ followed by 2♦\*, when bidding one club or one diamond, respectively. The bid denies a four-card major and shows a hand with 13+ dummy points and at least four-card support for the bid minor (some insist on 5 = card support). The bids are forcing to game (and alerted); there is no upper limit for the inverted minor raise. Again, we assume no interference. *Over a double* and playing *flip-flop* inverted minor raises are on; for those who do not play flip-flop, inverted minor bids are off over a double. More on this later!

Using crisscross, responder bids are 2♦\* over the bid of 1♣, and 3♣\* over the bid of 1♦, when opening one club and one diamond, respectively. These bids are jump shifts (J/S) in the other minor (and alerted); the bids show a limit raise (10–12 dummy points) and at least four-card support for the bid minor and deny a four-card major. These bids are invitational to game. On the convention card, you must mark “J/S in other minor” in red.

To show a weak hand (between 5 and 9 dummy points), one employs double jump bids in the minor bid suits: 1♣ - 3♣\* and 1♦ and 3♦\*. These bids require five plus card support and may be used with or without interference.

Returning to our example, suppose opener bids 1♣ and you again hold the hand

♠K32 ♥ 56 ♦ AQ5 ♣ KJ742

You would respond 2♦\*, 13+ dummy points and five plus clubs.

**Note:** Not all partnerships play inverted minors and crisscross as explained previously. Instead, some *reverse* the bids. This is called reverse inverted with crisscross.



The reason for the reverse is that many feel the jump to the three-level is too extreme with only 10–12 dummy points. Be careful when sitting down with a new partner.

Playing inverted minors with crisscross, one gives up the weak jump shift bid in the other minor or the mini-splinter bid, which may be played with the ten plus inverted minor raise approach, played by *many* (better ask your partners what they play). With either approach (inverted minors or inverted minor raises with crisscross), a weak hand (9 or less points) is shown by a preemptive double raise in the minor (alerted), again denying a four-card major.

**Rebids by opener** (following a single raise [13+] or a J/S response).

A rebid of 2NT by opener shows a hand in the 12–14 point range with both majors stopped. This bid may not be used after the 3♣ bid, instead one must bid 3NT!

A jump rebid of 3NT by opener shows 18–19 HCP with stoppers in both majors, only after a two-level bid. This is not used with crisscross after the 3♣ bid, it is given up.

Opener's rebid of a new suit (after a single raise) at the three-level (a mini-splinter over a single raise) shows more than a minimum, at least 16 HCP, usually distributional and forcing.

After an inverted minor raise, opener's rebids show "stoppers up the line." Opener must not bypass any suit containing a stopper; for single raises, this is identical to the ten plus inverted minor raise bids.

**Note:** With crisscross (a J/S response), a three-level minor suit bid (3♣ after 2♦) shows a minor two suiter (5-4+) and a minimum hand (12–13 HCP). The bids 2♥ and 3♦ (after 1♣ -2♦) show stoppers. A clear disadvantage of crisscross J/S limit raises is that they take up bidding room, especially when one bids 3♣ after 1♦. Now it is more difficult to show stoppers, since one must use three-level bids. For this reason, some play crisscross only after a 1♣ bid, and *do not use it over the 1D bid*. This is sometimes referred to as partial crisscross bids.

**Rebids by responder**

With game forcing values, the responder may also bid stoppers to try to get to NT after a single forcing raise. With a J/S limit raise, no call should again be made that takes the auction beyond the three-level.

### **Minor suit splinter bids**

When opening one club (diamond), a double jump in hearts, or spades, is a splinter bid. The bid shows five plus cards for the minor bid and 13+ dummy points with a singleton or void in the suit bid. It is forcing to game in the minor.

In our discussion, when opening one of a major or one of a minor, there have been several times we have found a fit in a major or in a minor. After finding a fit in a major, the responder added starting points to short-suit points to create dummy points. With a fit in a minor using inverted

minors or crisscross, one again finds a fit. Now the original value of opener's starting points increases in value. So opener must again reevaluate his hand.

This reevaluation process is again due to Marty Bergen to create Bergen points.

### **Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♣)**

1♦	four plus diamonds and no four-card major 5+ starting points
1♥/1♠	four plus card major 5+ starting points
1NT	8–10 starting points and no four-card major
2♣*	13+ dummy points and four plus clubs (inverted)
2♦*	10–12 dummy points (crisscross) with four plus clubs
2♥/2♠	weak jump shift in hearts/spades
2NT	10–12 starting points balanced
3♣*	5–9 dummy points (weak) and four plus clubs
3♦*/3♥*/3♠*	13+ dummy points, splinter bids in support of clubs
3NT	13–15 starting points and a balanced hand
4♣	preemptive, seven plus clubs
4♥/4♠	to play in hearts/spades

### **Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♦)**

1♥/1♠	four plus card major 5+ starting points
1NT	6–10 starting points and no four-card major
2♣	weak hand with six plus clubs 5–12 starting points
2♦*	13+ dummy points (inverted) with four plus clubs
2♥/2♠	weak jump shifts in hearts/spades
2NT	10–12 starting points balanced
3♣*	10–12 dummy points (crisscross) with four plus diamonds
3♥*/3♠*	13+ dummy points, splinter bids in support of diamonds
3NT	13–15 starting points and a balanced hand
4♦	Preemptive, seven plus diamonds
4♥/4♠	to play in hearts/spades

### **The Walsh club convention**

When opening one club, we have said that the first priority is to bid the major to show 6+ HCP; however, playing the Walsh club convention, you do not show your *four card major*, but instead when holding a hand with 13+ points (a game forcing hand) and diamonds (at least two), your bid is 1♦\* (alert and explained as may be short and forcing for one round). This asks the opener to

bid 1NT\* (alert, since you may have a four-card major) with a minimum hand, 11–12 HCP; with 13+ points opener bids his four-card major (hearts or spades). With a 3-3-3-4/3-3-2-5 hand and 13+ points, opener bid is 2♣; this denies a four-card major. Opener bids: 2♣ (3334/3325) and with 3-3-5-2 or 3-3-4-3, opener would bid 2♦.

If opener bids 1NT\* over partner's bid of 1♦\*, it shows an 11–12 starting-point hand. Responder next bids his four-card major and without a major bids 2♣ with 3-3-3-4/3-3-2-5 shape; or, if responder is 3-3-4-3 or 3-3-5-2 bids 2♦. This asks the opener to bid 2NT.

With a major fit, you will play in the major and if not usually play in notrump. The primary advantage of the convention is that you now have a game forcing bid over the bid of 1♣, just like 2♣ clubs is a game forcing bid over 1♦ playing the 2/1 game force convention.

Suppose opener has this hand ♠A872 ♥AK4 ♦83 ♣J1065; and playing the Walsh club convention, the auction goes 1♣-1♦\*(alert). Opener will bid 1NT\* to show a minimal hand. If partner bids 2♥, you may pass (partner must bid 3♥ to force game in hearts). If partner bids 2♠, you may raise the bid to show a fit. If partner bids 2♣, he is denying a four-card major. You may bid 3♣ to show a fit. Since partner now knows that you have 11–12 starting points, partner will set the contract.

Holding ♠AK87 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K106, opener would bid 1♥ over 1♦\* to show 13+ points and four cards in the major. If partner has a four-card heart suit, he will raise your bid; if he has spades and not hearts, he will bid 1♠ and bid 1NT without four spades. This allows you to play in a major or notrump game.

As responder holding ♠AJ875 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K10, you would bid 1♠ over the bid of 1♣. This now shows a four-card major. If partner next bids 2♠ showing a four-card fit, you must bid 3♠ to show 13+ points. If partner bids 2♥, with less than 13 points, bid only 2♠.

When holding a four-card major, over the bid of 1♣, if you bid the major 1♥/1♠, this shows 6+ HCP. After, partner's bid of, say, 2♣/2♦ to show 13+ HCP jump, you must bid at the three-level of the major suit bid. If partner supports your major suit bid, again invite by bidding at the three-level. Instead of bidding at the one-level with a four or five plus card major with 13+ points, some may bid 1♦\*. If partner does not bid 1NT but your major, you know immediately that you have game and a fit in the major suit bid. If partner does not support your major but bids the other major, you again know that he has more than 11–12 HCP and a four-card major. If he bids 2NT, he is showing 13+ points, and you probably have a game in notrump.

What happens when they interfere? The convention is *off*. Over a double, a redouble shows 10+ HCP; bidding at the two-level also shows 10+ HCP and a five-card suit unless you play negative free bids.

How does the Walsh club convention affect the inverted minor raise? Clearly, 1♦-2♦\* applies (13+ dummy points with diamonds) as and so does 1♦-3♣\* (crisscross—limit raise in diamonds); both deny a four-card major, showing 13+ dummy points and a limit raise in diamonds, respectively, with diamonds. With clubs, 1♣-2♣\* denies a four-card major with 13+ dummy points and clubs; and 1♣-2♦\* shows 10–12 dummy points with clubs. 1♣-1♦\* - now shows 13+ dummy points with a four-card major or perhaps diamonds/clubs.

## Meckwell 2NT response to minors suit openings

As an alternative to inverted minors, Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell (Meckwell) use the bid of 2NT as a response to a minor suit opening to show game forcing values and a hand that may contain one or both four card majors. Opener rebids are

Over 1♦, 3♣ asks partner for a four-card major. If opened 1♣, showing five plus clubs, and an unbalanced hand, with mild slam interest, responder may choose to try for a club game/slam, bid 3NT, or rebid a four-card major with additional values.

Over 1♣, 3♦ asks partner for a four card major. If opened 1♦, showing five plus diamonds and an unbalanced hand, with mild slam interest, responder may choose to try for a diamond game/slam, bid 3NT, or rebid a four-card major with additional values.

- 3♥ = showing a heart control and asking partner to bid 3NT with a spade control
- 3♠ = showing a spade control and asking partner to bid 3NT with a heart control
- 3NT = sign off in game
- 4♣ = either a six plus clubs suit with slam interest if opened 1♣, five plus clubs if opened 1♦, or Gerber, depending upon partnership agreement
- 4♦ = six plus diamond suit if opened 1♦, five plus diamonds if opened 1♣
- 4♥ = 6/5 minor/hearts
- 4♠ = 6/5 minor/spades

## Hand evaluation—Bergen points

When you have a fit, a major, minor, or notrump, the value of your hand will often increase. Recall that as opener, you only considered your starting points that *excluded* short-suit points. And while you did account for suit length, you may have additional value for the extra trump length. And finally, while you accounted for quality suits, the value of these may also increase when finding a fit.

These observations suggest that your starting points must be modified with a fit. It works as follows:

Bergen points (the final hand evaluation)

- Step 1: Extra trump length (with six plus trumps, add 1 for each trump after five)
  - Add 1 point six-card suit
  - 2 points seven-card suit, etc.
- Step 2: Side suits (for a four-card or five-card suit)
  - Add 1 point for each
- Step 3: Short-suit points (used with suit contracts only, *not* notrump)

- Add
- 1 extra point for two or three doubletons, *not each* (Note: this is not the same as dummy short-suit point procedure)
  - 2 extra points for a singleton
  - 4 extra points for a void

Adding the above aspects of your hand to your starting points, your total points are called Bergen points. This total is now used to determine if you have 26 points (Bergen points + dummy points) for game in a major, 26 points for notrump (Bergen points [steps 1 and 2] + partner's starting points), 29 points for game in a minor (Bergen points + partner's starting points), or 33 points for a slam (notrump or suit).

In notrump, you cannot count shortness; hence, only steps 1 and 2 above are used to count Bergen points.

Let's apply the process to hands 1, 2, and 5 with 12, 12, and 19 starting points, respectively.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK10	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦A109
♣J67	♣567	♣A

And suppose we have found a fit in spades for hands 1 and 2 and hearts for hand 3.

To calculate Bergen points for hand 1, you add 2 points for the singleton and 1 point for the four-card heart suit. Thus, hand 1 has 15 Bergen points.

Because hand 2 is balanced, there is no adjustment starting point = Bergen points.

For hand 5, you add 1 more point for six trumps and 2 points for the ace singleton. Hence, Bergen points =  $19 + 2 = 21$ .

Suppose you hold the following hand and partner responds  $3\clubsuit^*$  and you know he has 7–12 dummy points playing Combined Bergen raises or only 7–9 dummy points playing Bergen raises or 10–12 dummy points playing Reverse Bergen raises.

♠AK42 ♥KQ632 ♦AK109 ♣void

19 HCP

Adjust-3: no adjustment (3 overvalues; 1 undervalue)

Length points: Add 1

Quality suit: Add 1

Starting points: 21

However, finding a fit in hearts, you must reevaluate

Short-suit: Add 4 points for void

Side suits: Add 1 point (four-card diamond suit)

Bergen points total = 26 points

Because your partner bids three clubs, you now know, upon reevaluation, that you may have a slam in hearts. Without the reevaluation, you may have only bid game!

Suppose you have the following hand: ♠A598 ♥KJ87 ♦AQ ♣1085.

With two four-card majors and 13 starting points (14 HCP – 1 dubious doubleton), you open 1♣. Partner with the following hand ♠K32 ♥56 ♦KJ5 ♣AJ742, with 13 starting points, bids 2♣\*. With the diamond doubleton, notrump is of no interest. You have a club fit. You now reevaluate your hand using the Bergen method. You add 2 points for the doubleton and 2 points for the two four-card suits. You have 17 Bergen points. Adding this to partner's minimum 13 dummy points = 30 points, and you confidently bid 5♣, a minor suit game.

## Overview of forcing and semiforcing rebids by opener<sup>®</sup>

We have discussed opening one-level bids for majors and minors and corresponding responses by your partner to both bids. Before discussing rebids by the opening bidder, after a one-level bid of a suit, recall that the point range when opening at the one-level may be starting points, dummy points, or Bergen points, depending upon the bidding sequence.

Playing the 2/1 game force system, one divides the strength of the opener's hand into three categories:

Minimum strength	12–15 points
Medium strength	16–18 points
Maximum strength	19+ points

The minimum (most frequent) range for a one-level bid is between 12 and 15 points; above this range, the opener is said to have a strong or forcing hand. Thus, special bids by the opener have been created to show invitational hands, game forcing hands, and hands with slam interest. To show a strong hand, opener must make a “jump” bid.

### Strong jump shift

A strong jump shift is a skip bid into a new suit (one level higher than necessary) showing 19+ points (or a hand with no more than five losers by the Losing Trick Count [LTC] method; chapter 10). The suit of the opener's jump bid is a *single rank higher* than either opener's original bid suit or responder's bid suit. While it is usually made into a suit of length four, at times you may have to jump into a three-card suit. Example sequences of jump shift bids follow.

- 1♣ - 1♦ - 2♥      two hearts is single rank higher than clubs or diamonds
- 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♠      two spades is a single rank higher rank than clubs or hearts
- 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♠      two spades is a single rank higher than diamonds or hearts
- 1♦ - 1♥/1♠ - 3♣      three clubs is a single rank higher than hearts or spades
- 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣/3♦      three-level bids are required to be a rank higher than spades
- 1♥ -      over notrumps must make three-level bid
- 1NT - 3♣/3♦/3♠
- 1♠ -      over notrumps must make three-level bid
- 1NT - 3♣/3♦/3♥

When opener makes a strong jump shift bid, it is forcing to game.

## Reverses

The opener's second bid is called a reverse bid when responder cannot return to opener's first bid suit at the same level (opener's second suit is higher ranking than his first bid suit) and shows 17+ points. Responder is unable to return to opener's first suit at the two-level. Reverse auctions show distributions in the first and second suits that are at least 5-4 where the first bid suit is longer than the second and higher ranking. In addition, your partner should have bypassed your second suit with his bid. Examples of reverse sequences follow.

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦      five plus clubs and four plus diamonds
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦/2♥      five plus clubs and four plus diamonds/hearts
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥      five plus diamonds and four plus hearts
- 1♥ - 1NT - 2♠      five plus hearts and four plus spades
- 1♥ - 2♣/2♦ - 2♠      playing 2/1, this is not a reverse but shows 5+♥ and 4+♠

An important note one must remember when playing the 2/1 game force system is that a jump three-level bid for example (1♠ - 2♥ - 3♦) is not a reverse but natural. The suit is of lower rank than your first bid suit and usually shows 5-5 distribution.

Any time opener makes a reverse bid, responder is forced to bid. Partner cannot pass. Reverses do not apply after a 2/1 game force bid.

A reverse is forcing for one round of bidding. Responder may (1) support partner's first suit with four-card support, (2) raise partner's first suit bid with three plus card support, (3) jump in



partner's first bid suit showing slam interest, (4) rebid his own long suit with six plus cards and no fit in partner's bid suits, (5) bid notrump, (6) bid a fourth suit (called fourth suit forcing), or (7) use New Minor Forcing bids; more on each of these options later when we review rebids by responder.

### **Jump reverses (mini-splinters)**

Jump reverses, also called mini-splinters, are used when opener bids a minor and responder bids a major at the one-level (e.g., 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠). Opener makes a jump bid one level higher than a reverse (a jump) to show a singleton or void in the suit bid and four-card supports for the major. The jump reverse shows 16+ points. Examples of jump reverse sequences follow.

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♦ shows four hearts and a singleton/void in diamonds (2♦ would be a reverse)
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 3♦ shows four spades and a singleton/void in diamonds (2♦ would be a reverse)
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 3♥ shows four spades and a singleton/void in hearts (2♥ would be a reverse)
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♥ shows four spades and a singleton/void in hearts (2♥ would be a reverse)

All bids by the opener are one level above the reverse bid (a jump reverse). The bids allow responder to sign off at the three levels (3♥ or 3♠) or with enough points to bid game.

### **Jump rebids into opening suit bid**

To show a hand of with six plus cards and only 16–17 points and a hand of medium strength, opener may make a jump bid in his opening bid suit. For example:

- 1♣ to 3♣    1♦ to 3♦    1♥ to 3♥    1♠ to 3♠

A jump bid by opener may be passed, it is not forcing.

### **Full splinters or reverse jump shifts**

A full splinter is a jump bid in a suit in which a nonjump bid would have been a strong jump shift, reverse, or a jump reverse (mini-splinter). The full splinter is always a rank above responder's bid and shows four plus card support for responder's suit and a singleton or void in the suit bid; the bid shows 18/19+ points and a fit in responder's suit.

- 1♣ - 1♦ - 3♥\*/3♠\*      four plus diamonds and a singleton/void in hearts/spades  
(Note that 2♥/2♠ would have been a strong jump shift)
- 1♣/1♦ - 1♥ - 3♠\*      four plus hearts and a singleton/void in spades  
(Note 2♠ would have been a strong jump shift)
- 1♣/1♦ - 1♠ - 4♥\*      four plus spades and a singleton/void in hearts



(Note 2♥ would be a reverse and 3♥ a jump reverse)

1♠ - 1NT - 4♣\*/4♦\*/4♥\* five plus spades singleton/void in clubs/diamonds/hearts

A full splinter bid is usually forcing to game in responder's bid suit: diamonds, hearts, or spades.

### **Fit bids (jump minor suit support splinters)**

When opening a minor suit, responder will frequently bid a major. To show four-card supports for the major bid (hearts or spades), one may jump to the four-level in the bid minor (4♣\*/4♦\*) which also shows a strong club/diamond suit. These are support splinters or fit bids showing a good five plus cards in the bid minor and support for the major bid. The bids show 17–19 points and are invitational to at least game with slam interest. These bids are used if you do not play Swiss bids. In addition, if you are a passed hand, they may be used to show 10–12 points with a fit in a major and a solid side suit.

### **Jumps into notrump**

A jump into 2NT by opener shows 18–19 points and a balanced hand with stoppers in all suits except perhaps the one bid by responder. A jump into 3NT shows 20–21 points, a balanced hand, and stoppers in all suits.

### **Rebids by opener after major opening bids**

The responder may bid 1NT semiforcing, make a 2/1 game force bid, and use a series of Bergen bids either invitational or forcing. For each of these responses, we shall consider bids available to the opening bidder, again without interference.

#### **After 1NT (semiforcing)**

Recall that the bid of 1NT by responder shows 5–12 starting points and no fit. The only forcing bid that opener may make as a game force is a jump shift bid into a suit. The jump shift bid shows 19+ starting points.

Suppose one opens 1♠ and partner bids 1NT, an overview of bids by the opener follows.

<b>Rebids by opener</b>	<b>Suit length</b>	<b>Starting points</b>
2♣/2♦	three plus cards	12–15
2♥	four plus cards	12–15

2♠	six plus cards	12–15
2NT (nonforcing)	(5-3-3-2)	16/17–18
3♣/3♦/3♥	four plus cards	19+ (strong jump shift)
3♠	six plus cards	16–17 (jump rebid in bid suit)
3NT	5-3-3-2	19+
4♠	seven plus spades/eight plus spades	14+/12+

After the major suit bid of 1♥, the schedule is similar. However, the jump in hearts shows 16–17 points, and the jump shift may be made into a minor or spades. There is one additional bid available to the opener when opening the bidding with the bid of 1♥. It is the *reverse* bid. Recall that the definition of a reverse is that responder must go to the next higher level to return to the opening bidder's first suit, in this case 1♥. The reverse bid is

2♠ four cards 17+

Using the above schedule as a guideline, consider your rebid on each of the following hands. In each example, we indicate the bidding sequence.

(1) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK876 ♥KQ432 ♦J10 ♣7

Clearly, your rebid is 2♥ showing four plus cards.

(2) 1♥ - 1NT ♠AK87 ♥AKJ32 ♦7 ♣K54

You have enough to reverse, bid 2♠.

(3) 1♥ - 1NT ♠KQJ5 ♥AK832 ♦J92 ♣7

You cannot reverse; hence your only rebid is 2♦.

(4) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK8765 ♥KQ43 ♦J10 ♣7

Show your six spades, but make a jump bid, bid 3♠.

(5) 1♥ - 1NT ♠A6 ♥Q10432 ♦AJ2 ♣AQ9

Your rebid is clearly 2NT, an invitational bid, partner may pass.

(6) 1♥ - 1NT ♠A6 ♥A109432 ♦7 ♣AQ109

Your heart suit is weak; your rebid is 2♣ (see chapter 10, rule of 64).

(7) 1♥ - 1NT ♠AQ6 ♥A109432 ♦AJ10 ♣7

Your hearts are not good enough to bid 3♥, and the hand is too good for 2♥, hence you must bid 2♣. Partner may have four diamonds and pass or bid hearts.

(8) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK456 ♥89 ♦KQJ ♣AJ7

You only have three diamonds, not four, do not jump-shift into 3♦; instead, bid 3NT.

(9) 1♠ - 1NT ♠KQJ98762 ♥89 ♦ void ♣AQ7

With long spades, partner has zero- to two-card support and 5+ points, bid 4♠.

When opening one spade, it is normally not difficult to find a heart fit after partner bids 1NT when you have four hearts; however, if responder has only three hearts and a weak hand, the fit may be more difficult to find after opener bids of 2♣/2♦. Partner with five hearts and a weak hand may pass.

For example, suppose partner has the hand ♠7 ♥KJ752 ♦ 5672 ♣AJ7. Partner may pass the bid of a minor! You may have missed a 3-5 heart fit. Partner cannot bid 2♥, since it shows a six-card suit. When responder has a stronger hand—for example, ♠J ♥KJ752 ♦ 567 ♣AK75—he will certainly bid his hearts after a minor suit bid.

When opener bids 2♦, there is no way to force your partner to bid when opening one heart. However, if you bid 2♣, showing three plus clubs, there is hope of finding a heart fit playing either the Bart convention, developed by the bridge expert Les Bart, or the Lisa convention, developed by Jamie Radcliffe and Pete Whipple, in the October 2007 issue of the *Bridge World*.

Using the Bart convention, after the bidding sequence 1♠ - pass 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass -, the responder bids 2♦\* as an artificial forcing bid (alert). This sequence is used to show opener one of the following hands:

1. Five hearts and two spades. Responder plans to pass opener's rebid (hopefully two hearts).
2. A doubleton spade honor with 9–11 HCP. Responder plans to correct two hearts to two spades, pass a rebid of two spades, or raise two notrump to three notrump.
3. A weak/invitational hand with a good diamond suit. Responder plans to bid three diamonds.
4. A favorable hand with a club raise. Responder plans to bid three clubs over partner's rebid.
5. A raise of two notrump with four clubs. Responder plans to bid two notrump.

Aside from giving up the “natural” two diamond bid, Bart has two serious drawbacks. When opener has extra values but fewer than two hearts, the partnership might miss a game when

responder is unable to show a strong simple preference; and when opener has good heart support, he cannot safely bid past two hearts, because responder might not have heart length. What do you do?

You may replace the Bart convention with the Lisa convention, Bart's smarter little sister.

### **Basic Lisa**

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - ?

- 2♦\* artificial (alert); usually six-plus hearts or weak spade preference
- 2♥ exactly two spades and five hearts
- 2♠ exactly two spades; strong simple preference
- 2NT invitational; fewer than four clubs
- 3♣ invitational; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ invitational; six-plus-card suit
- 3♥ invitational; six-plus-card suit

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - 2♦\* - pass - opener bids 2♥

- Pass weak; six-plus-card suit
- 2♠ weak simple preference
- 2NT invitational; exactly four clubs
- 3♣ moderate values; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ weak; six-plus-card suit

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - 2♦\* - pass - opener bids 2♠

- Pass weak suit preference
- 2NT invitational; exactly four clubs
- 3♣ moderate values; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ weak; six-plus-card suit
- 3♥ sign-off
- 4♦ transfer to hearts

The basic Lisa convention does not have Bart's shortcomings, and compared to other methods, the only significant disadvantage is the loss of the natural two-level diamond rebid. In addition, the basic Lisa bids are easily extended to non-Bart situations using, for example, extended Lisa and fourth-suit Lisa as discussed in the *Bridge World* article.

**Responder's rebids without basic Lisa**

When the bidding goes 1M - 1NT - 2m/2M -?

- (1) Responder may pass opener's bid with 5–8 starting points.
- (2) With two-card support for opener's bid suit and less than 11 starting points, return to the major (M) at the two-level.
- (3) With less than two-card support and 10–12 starting points, bid 2NT.
- (4) Raise partner's minor (m) with five plus card support and 10+ starting points.
- (5) With 10–12 starting points, playing Bergen raises, jump to the three levels in opener's major. Playing Combined Bergen, you would not bid 1NT, but 3♦\*.
- (6) Bid your own suit with 5–9 starting points and a six plus card suit.
- (7) Bid your own suit at the three-level, without jumping, with six plus cards in the suit and 5–12 starting points.
- (8) Bid your own suit at the four-level, by jumping, with six plus card and 10–12 starting values.

Let's consider a few examples.

- (a) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT - 2♦ and you hold ♠2 ♥A10654 ♦J756 ♣Q104

You cannot support diamonds, since opener may have only three, bid 2♥.

With the hand ♠J7 ♥KQ2 ♦Q987 ♣K1042, you would bid 2NT.

- (b) The bidding goes 1♥ - 1NT - 2♦ and you hold ♠K987 ♥Q6 ♦K43 ♣K965

Even though you have only two hearts, you should support hearts by bidding 2♥. Do not bid 2NT.

- (c) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT - 2♣ and you hold ♠J98 ♥A86 ♦AK43 ♣965

Playing Bergen raises, bid 3♠ to show limit raise in spades. Playing Combined Bergen, you would not bid 1NT but bid 3♦ to show a limit raise with three trump.

- (d) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT - 2♦ and you hold ♠2 ♥A1065 ♦K10543 ♣A43

You would support diamonds by bidding 3♦.

- (e) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT- 2NT and you hold ♠2 ♥AK98765 ♦105 ♣Q87

Your partner is showing 16–18 starting points with five spades, bid 4♥.

(f) The bidding goes 1♥ -1NT-2♠ and you hold ♠987 ♥K9 ♦10875 ♣AQ92

Your partner has reversed showing 17+ points, bid 3♥. You cannot pass.

If the opener raises your 1NT bid to 2NT, it is nonforcing; you may pass with 5–8 starting points. This is also the case if opener makes a jump rebid in his bid major. However, all jump shift bids are forcing to game.

If opener bids 1♥ and partner bids 1NT, it always denies four spades. If opener bids 2♣/2♦/2♥ and now you bid 2♠\* (it is called the impossible two spades bid), it requests opener to bid 2NT\* (a relay bid), so responder can sign off in a minor at the three-level. If opener makes a jump bid in hearts, after you have bid 1NT, you may use the impossible 3♠\* bid. Opener will bid 3NT or pursue game in the minor, knowing you probably have neither hearts nor spades and less than 12 starting points. The impossible two spade bid show 10+ HCP and support for the bid suit. A rebid by responder at the three-level shows a distributional hand with five-card support for the bid suit.

### **Gazilli convention**

For those who do not use Lisa convention, another option is to employ the Gazilli (sometimes spelled Gazzilli) convention; it is a conventional method of rebidding by opener employing a low level forcing rebid of 2♣. The base auction for this convention is 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣. The 2♣ rebid shows either clubs or various strong hands. With a weak hand, responder rebids either 2♠ (preference) or 2♥ (natural, five plus suit). With a better hand (8+ HCP), responder usually relays with 2♦, over which opener rebids 2♥ (minimum 5532 hand) or 2♠ (unbalanced, four plus clubs). Opener's higher rebids (2NT thru 3NT) show hands in the 16–18 HCP and are game forcing over the 2♦ rebid.

Using Gazilli opener has two ways to rebid beyond 2♣, either directly over 1NT or indirectly via 2♣. This allows opener to show 54, 55, 64, and 63 hand patterns of 16 or more points. There are many versions of Gazilli, and they vary mostly in the meaning of these high direct and indirect rebids.

Gazilli may be used after 1♥-1NT, 1♥-1♠ and 1♦-1M also; where the 1♠ response uses the Kaplan Interchange (Inversion), chapter 15.

The convention is rather involved but has been explained in great detail by Mr. Sudhir Aggarwal in the *Delhi Bridge Association Newsletter* (vol. 3, issue 7, 2005; vol. 3, issue 8, 2006; and vol. 3, issue 9, 2006). The origin of the convention is unknown but appears to have been developed in Italy. A copy of the entire convention is available on [bridgeguys.com](http://bridgeguys.com). A portion of the system as explained by Mr. Aggarwal follows.

## **Gazzilli**

Playing a so-called standard bidding system, the player opens one of a major suit, and, without competition, the partner responds 1NT. Now if you have a major single suiter game forcing hand, there is no convenient bid in several of the standard bidding systems. The player might jump to three of a minor suit to force the bidding, but that will mean that the responder will not know whether the new suit contains three, four, or five cards. Also when the player jumps to the three-level with a game forcing holding with 5-4-3-1 distribution, it becomes difficult to find the fit in your three-card suit if the responder has that suit in a weak holding. The jump rebid has consumed much of the bidding space, which is of paramount importance for exploring and finding the correct and maximum contract.

Similarly another problem area for standard bidders is balanced holdings of 15–17 high card points containing a five-card major suit. If the player opens one of a major suit, there is a rebid problem with these holdings. Many of the players today open 1NT with a five-card major suit to solve this problem. However, this creates an additional problem as the partnership might miss out on a 5-4 or a 5-3 major suit fit on borderline holdings.

To solve all these difficulties and also to allow nonforcing jumps to the three-level with fewer high card points (14–16), the Gazzilli convention has been developed. The exact origin is somewhat clouded, but the agreement is that this method was devised in Italy.

Gazzilli is an artificial bid of 2♣ by the opener generally after an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ and a response of 1♠ or 1NT. The 2♣ response is forcing, but the partnership will normally not play in a minor suit unless no other option is available. The 2♣ bid is employed for the following kinds of holdings:

- 5-3-3-2 hands of 12–14, 15–17, and 18–20 high card points
- Five of a major suit and four plus clubs with 11–16 high card points
- Generally, all other hands of 17+ high card points (single suiter, two suiter, etc.)

The one feature about the Gazzilli conventional method is that the significance of the individual bids and responses may also be decided, altered, modified, or varied by the partnership. This feature also pertains to the meanings of the continuances.

**Note:** The Gazzilli conventional method may also be played over minor suit openings, and the minor suit bidding sequences are shown following the major suit openings and continuances.

### **Opener's rebids after a 1♥ opening (an example of the bidding using Gazzilli)**

Since Gazzilli covers most of the holdings containing 17+ high card points, it allows the partnership a great deal of flexibility with Precision-like jumps. The jumps are no longer forcing, and simple bids at the two-level (except 2) are narrower in high card points. This certainly has an advantage as the responder no longer needs to keep the bidding open. The following are opener's rebids after a 1♥ opening and a 1♠ or 1NT response.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1♥	1♠	
1NT		This shows a balanced holding with 12–14 high card points.
2♣		The Gazzilli convention
2♦		Natural; promises five hearts and four plus diamonds, and 11–16 high card points
2♥		Natural; promises six hearts and shows 11–14 high card points
2♠		Shows three- or four-card support and 11–14 high card points. (The limit raise is part of the bidding system but does not distinguish between a three-card and a four-card support. The individual partnership may add such a feature.)
2NT		This rebid may be played as a splinter; as showing four-card support for partner's suit; as showing a six-card heart suit, and a three-card spade suit as support for partner's suit; but only shows 14–16 high card points by whichever agreement.
3♣		Natural; promises a five-card heart suit and a five-card club suit; shows 14–16 high card points.
3♦		Natural; promises a five-card heart suit and a five-card diamond suit; shows 14–16 high card points.
3♥		Natural; promises six hearts and denies three-card spade support for partner; shows 14–16 high card points.
3♠		Promises four-card spade support and a close distribution of 4-5-2-2; shows 14–16 high card points.
4♣		Promises six hearts and four spades in support of partner's suit. Shows a singleton in clubs (or possible void?).
4♦		Promises six hearts and four spades in support of partner's suit. Shows a singleton in diamonds (or possible void?).

The rebids of the opener after the bidding sequence, without competition, of 1♥ - 1NT are as follows. The 1NT responses can have a definite range according to the partnership agreement. One option is to play standard 6–9 high card points, and a second option is to play the 1NT forcing conventional method used in the 2/1 bidding system with a range between 6 and 12 HCP.

A feature of the Gazzilli conventional method is that a first response of 1NT is generally considered to be forcing for one round. If the partner has previously passed, then the opener may pass this 1NT first response if the contract cannot be improved.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1♥		1NT
2♣		The Gazzilli convention
2♦		Natural; promises four plus diamonds; shows 11–16 high card points



2♥	Natural; promises six hearts; shows 11–14 high card points
2♠	Promises a five-card plus heart suit and a four-card plus spade suit; shows 17+ high card points
2NT	Not assigned. This rebid may be played as showing a six-card plus heart suit and any four-card side suit, with values of 17+ high card points, to which 3♣ by the responder would be a game forcing relay.
3♣	Natural; promises a five-card heart suit and a five-card club suit; shows 14–16 high card points
3♦	Natural; promises a five-card heart suit and a five-card diamond suit; shows 14–16 high card points
3♥	Natural; promises a six-card plus heart suit; shows 14–6 high card points.
3♠	Promises a six-card heart suit and a five-card spade suit
4♣	Promises a six hearts-five clubs distribution; shows 14–16 high card points
4♦	Promises a six hearts-five diamonds distribution; shows 14–16 high card points

As soon as the Gazzilli conventional method has been initiated, then generally the forcing bid is 2♦, which the responder rebids as a relay to request additional information and shows, at the same time, around 7/8 high card points.

As soon as the opener has clarified his holding promising 17+ high card points, then a game force has been established.

### **After 2/1 game force bids**

Recall that after opening one of a major, playing the 2/1 game force system; the following bids are absolute forcing to game.

- 1♠    2♣/2♦ (four plus cards), 2♥ (five plus cards)
- 1♥    2♣/ 2♦ (four plus cards)

The goal of the partnership is to find a game or a slam in a major suit. Although sometimes one may play in notrumps. The last priority is to play in a minor suit game. When responding to your partner's 2/1 bid, opener has several avenues to pursue: (1) he can support partner's suit to allow partner to bid notrump, (2) he can show his own second suit, (3) he can rebid his major, and (4) he can bid notrump.

- (1a) Opener may support the 2/1 suit bid by responder (♣ or ♦) at the three-level showing four plus card support and 12–15 Bergen points. With 16+ points and support for the 2/1 bid suit, and a singleton not in the 2/1 bid suit, opener may jump (splinter) to the four-level in a suit that neither he nor partner bid. Note: The bid of 1♥ - 2♣/2♦ - 2♠ shows 5-4 distribution and is *not a reverse* (alternatively playing the Flannery convention, one would open an artificial 2♦\* that shows 5♥-4♠ and 11–15 starting points; more on this soon).
- (1b) After the bid of 1♠ - 2♥, with three or four plus hearts and 12–15 points bid 4♥ (the principle of fast arrival); however, with three plus hearts and 16+ bid 3♥ shows slam interest.
- (2a) Opener may bid his own higher-ranking suit at the two-level, usually showing four plus cards with 5-4 distribution.
- (2b) Opener may bid a lower-ranking suit at the three-level showing 15+ points, usually showing 5-5 distribution.
- (3) Opener may rebid his major suit typically showing six plus cards in the major. On occasion, it may also be his only rebid, having only five cards.
- (4) With a balanced hand, pattern (5-3-3-2), and at least three-card support in the 2/1 suit bid, and stoppers in the unbid suits, he will bid 2NT (12–15 Bergen points) or 3NT (16+ Bergen points).

Let's look at a few examples of the prior guidelines.

The bidding goes 1♠ - 2♥. What would you respond as opener?

♠AK843   ♥K62   ♦J4   ♣AQ3

You have a strong hand, 18 dummy points (17 starting + 1 shortness); bid 3♥ (slam interest)

♠AK843   ♥K62   ♦54   ♣Q32

You have a weak hand, 14 dummy points (13 starting + 1 shortness); bid 4♥ (fast arrival to game)

♠AK843   ♥K1062   ♦7   ♣AQ3

You have four-card supports for hearts 20 dummy points (17 starting + 3 shortness); bid 4♦ (splinter)

♠AKJ84   ♥75   ♦A97   ♣J32

You have only two hearts and weak clubs, rebid spades with only 5 (bid 2♠), you should not bid notrump; even with 15 dummy points.

♠AK984   ♥75   ♦AJ8   ♣KJ6

You have a balanced hand with stoppers in all suits and 18 Dummy Points, bid 3NT; changing the A♦ to a Q, bid 2NT.

♠AQ984   ♥7   ♦A8   ♣K10862

You have a nice club suit and 5-5 distribution, bid 3♣. You have 18 dummy points (14 starting + 4 shortness points).

Next, we consider examples where the bidding is 1♥/1♠ - 2♣/2♦; because the responses are similar, we assume one opens 1♥ - 2♣. What would you respond as opener?

♠984    ♥KQ875    ♦AQJ2    ♣7

You have four diamonds, bid 2♦. Shows 4-4 distribution and you have 12 dummy points.

♠Q107    ♥KQ875    ♦AJ2    ♣J7

You have a balanced hand, bid 2NT with 13 starting points.

♠7    ♥AK875    ♦A92    ♣KQJ7

You have a very strong hand, splinter by bidding 3♠ in support of clubs. You have 20 Bergen points (assume a club fit).

♠AJ3    ♥KQ875    ♦1092    ♣K6

Even with only five hearts, you must rebid them. You have no other bid due to your diamond holdings.

These examples should help to clarify opener's rebids when opening a major and partner makes a 2/1 response. Remember, we want to get to game. Rebids by responder and subsequent bids by the opener will be covered later in the book.

When responding with a 2/1 bid to a major, we have said that the partnership may not stop short of game. This is also the case with the forcing Bergen raise of 2NT\* and concealed/ambiguous splinter bids. These are game force bids with serious interest in slam.

### **After Jacoby 2NT\***

<b>Rebids by opener</b>	<b>Suit length</b>	<b>Bergen points</b>
3 (new suit)*	Singleton/Void	12+
3 (major suit opened)*	five or six plus in major	18+
3NT*	(5-3-3-2) balanced	15-17
4 (new suit)*	four plus card suit	12+ to 16
4 (major suit opened)	five plus major	12+ to 14

A jump to the four levels after 2NT\* is clearly invitational to slam. When showing a singleton after 2NT\*, the trump suit should contain at least two of the top three honors. Do not show a singleton with a weak trump suit.

Furthermore, a new suit at the four-level should contain two of the top three honors in the suit bid. All rebids by opener must be alerted and explained in detail if asked.

### Examples responses to Jacoby 2NT

The bidding goes 1♠- 2NT\*. What do you bid?

(1) ♠AKJ84 ♥7 ♦K10987 ♣A2

Show your singleton, bid 3♥. You have 19 Bergen points.

(2) ♠AKJ84 ♥107 ♦54 ♣AQ108

You have a nice four-card suit, bid 4♣ with 17 Bergen points. You are too unbalanced to bid notrump.

(3) ♠AKJ84 ♥K107 ♦KJ4 ♣76

You have a balanced hand, bid 3NT with 16 Bergen points.

(4) ♠AKJ84 ♥J107 ♦QJ4 ♣76

You have a weak hand, using fast arrival, bid 4♠.

(5) ♠AKQ842 ♥void ♦AQ42 ♣J76

You have a great hand, bid 3♥ to show shortness. Count your Bergen points. Are you interested in slam?

Following is a summary of descriptive bids following 2NT\*.

After 1♥ - 2NT\*

3♣\* = ♣ shortage  
 3♦\* = ♦ shortage  
 3♥\* = good hand with no shortage  
 3♠\* = ♠ shortage  
 3NT\* = better hand with no shortage  
 4♣\* = a four plus card ♣ suit  
 4♦\* = a four plus card ♦ suit  
 4♥ = poor hand with no shortage

After 1♠ - 2NT\*

3♣\* = ♣ shortage  
 3♦\* = ♦ shortage  
 3♥\* = ♥ shortage  
 3♠\* = good hand with no shortage  
 3NT\* = better hand with no shortage  
 4♣\* = a four plus card ♣ suit  
 4♦\* = a four plus card ♦ suit  
 4♥\* = a four plus card ♥ suit

4♠ = 1430 key card ask (chapter 3) (fast arrival)  
 4♠ = poor hand with no shortage (fast arrival)

### After concealed/ambiguous splinters

Recall that a double jump in the major not bid (3♠\*/3♥\*), after the bid of 1♥ and 1♠, respectively, shows shortness somewhere. The decision the opener must make is whether he needs to ask about the singleton/void since it provides information to the opponents. If one needs to locate the singleton/void, one employs the scroll bids 3NT and 3♠, respectively, after 3♠\* and 3♥\*. As a general guideline, one should not employ the scroll asking bids if not interested in slam. In general, you need about 18+ Bergen points after hearing the jump major bid by your partner. Let's look at an example.

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ762	♠K984
♥3	♥AQ92
♦9872	♦void
♣KQ	♣A7632

Let's evaluate starting points for the two hands. Opener has (12 HCP – 1 dubious honor doubleton + 2 length points + 0 for adjust-3) 13 starting points. Responder has 14 starting points; however, upon hearing the bid of 1♠, reevaluates his hand for the void (4 points) and has 18 dummy points. And opener, upon hearing the bid of 3♥\*, calculates Bergen points. Thus, he adds for extra trump length (one point), the void (two points), and for the side suit (one point), 18 Bergen points. Thus, he makes the asking bid 3♠\*, and with a diamond void, responder bids 4♠\*.

We have provided the entire bidding sequence below but will wait to explain the modified scroll bids and their responses in chapter 3 on slam bidding.

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥* (shortness somewhere)
3♠ (shortage asking bid)	4♠* (submarine bid—singleton/void in diamonds)
♦ (modified scroll ask)	4NT (void in diamonds with 0 or 3 key cards)
6♠ (if you have 3 bid 7)	7♠

### After Swiss bid of 4♣

4♥/4♠ says weak hand 12–15 dummy points with strong and long trump suit.  
 4♦/ (4 of other major) show a singleton or void with slam interest.  
 4NT shows slam interest with 16+ points (Roman Key Card Blackwood; more on this later).  
 5♣ shows (5-5) hand with major and clubs, with slam interest with double fit.

**After Swiss bid of 4♦**

4♥/4♠ says weak hand, 12–15 dummy points with strong and long trump suit.

4♣/ (4 of other major) show a singleton or void with slam interest.

4NT shows slam interest with 16+ points (Roman Key Card Blackwood; more on this later).

5♦ shows (5-5) hand with major and clubs, with slam interest with double fit.

**After constructive raises (support at the two-level)**

Recall that a constructive raise shows three-card support and only 8–10 dummy points. Hence, to reach game, opener may need help in either a side suit or trumps to reach a game contract.

**Help suit game try bids**

There are many game try conventions available to investigate game or to settle on a part score. The long suit game try (LSGT) is probably the oldest method employed. This is an attempt by opener to tell responder more about his hand. He shows a second suit with the understanding that as responder revalues his hand, he should give extra weight to honors in this suit. However, over the years, the LSGT has given way to the help suit game try (HSGT). The major difference is that the opening bidder may hold fewer than four cards in that suit and usually a good 15 HCP or perhaps less if he is 5-5 in two suits, the major and another suit. Let's look at an example when used by opener, with no interference:

1♥-2♥

3♣/3♦/3♠ needs help in the suit bid with help (ace or king) bid game

1♠-2♠

3♣/3♦/2NT needs help in clubs, diamonds, or hearts (ace or king) bid game

The method may also be used by responder in the auction 1♣-1♥; 2♥ - (help suit bid). For responder to use the bid, he should have 10 dummy points.

Some prefer the short suit game try. Using the short suit game try (SSGT) approach, a new bid by the opener shows a *singleton*. For responder, this means that the ace is probably the only honor in the short suit that will help opener. Of course, this means that honors in the *other* suits will be what opener needs. Alternatively, one may combine the HSGT and the SSGT bids by using the two-way game try method. How does this work?

**Two-way game try bids**

Instead of using the HSGT method, opener bids the next suit up to tell responder that we are going into "short suit mode." Opener initiates the short suit try with the bids of 2♠ and 2NT, respectively, after hearts and spades. Responder acknowledges the short suit try with relay bids of 2NT and 3♣, respectively.

1♥-2♥-2♠ (going into shortness mode)—responder next bids 2NT (as a relay)

- 3♣ = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦ = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥ = shows shortness in spades

1♠-2♠-2NT (going into shortness mode)—responder next bids 3♣ (as a relay)

- 3♦ = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥ = shows shortness in hearts
- 3♠ = shows shortness in clubs

Shortness is always one or zero card in the suit.

Responder again has few values, but not in the short suit. If they are, he stops at the three-level; otherwise, he bids game at four-level of the agreed-upon major suit.

To inquire about help, one may employ with an asking bid or a telling bid called, respectively, “help asking” or “telling.”

### Short suit game try bids

An alternative to the two-way try is to use the short suit game try (SSGT). Opener again initiates the short suit try with the bids of 2♠ and 2NT, respectively, after hearts and spades. However, now responder acknowledges the short suit try by bidding short suits:

1♥-2♥-2♠

- 3♣ = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦ = shows shortness in diamonds
- 2NT = shows shortness in spades
- 3♥ = 4333 minimum (8/9 dummy points)
- 3NT = 4333 maximum (10 dummy points)
- 3♠ = 4333 maximum with four spades
- 4m = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with maximum
- 4♥ = stiff other major with maximum

1♠-2♠-2NT

- 3♣ = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦ = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥ = shows shortness in hearts
- 3♠ = 4333 minimum (8/9 dummy points)
- 3NT = 4333 maximum (10 dummy points)
- 4m = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with maximum
- 4♠ = stiff other major with maximum

Shortness is always one or zero card in the suit.

After SSGT, responder reevaluates his hand with A = 3 and K = 1

With 9 or 10, responder bids game or cue bids minor with four of other majors

With 7 or 8, make last train bid if possible

With 6 or less, sign off

If opener bids at the three-level, he is showing shortness in the bid suit by not using the relay bids.

### Help “asking” vs. game try “telling” bids

When using the asking bids, opener is asking for help in the suit bid, traditionally first- or second-round control due to losers in the suit. Except for the long suit game try bid, which is a natural bid, the other asking bids must be *alerted by agreement*, a red flag to the opponents. Another problem with the asking bids is that it is often difficult to figure out the “help suit.” Instead of using the help suit type asks, one may instead make an artificial bid of 2NT\*, which either is played as a relay bid or asks the responder to tell him something more about his hand; in particular, shortness. While this also communicates information to the opponents, it is less damaging. Thus, the sequence one of a major, followed by a simple raise, and the bid of 2NT becomes a relay bid or an artificial game try bid! If used as a relay bid, partner bids three clubs, and the opener tells the responder about shortness. Then the responder is captain of the sequence. Alternatively, when opener bids the artificial 2NT\* not as a relay but as “telling” bid, it asks responder to tell the opener where he has shortness. I prefer the responder to tell, not the opener; hence, we shall illustrate the “telling” sequence.

Let’s compare the two approaches (help suit game try and artificial 2NT “telling”), and you decide which is best for your partnership agreement. If you play help suit asks, how do you know where to ask for help with the following hands when your partner supports you by bidding 2♣, constructive?

Hand (1)	♠ AKJ54	♥ 86	♦ 97	♣ AQJ7
Hand (2)	♠ AKJ972	♥ QJ4	♦ QJ3	♣ 9
Hand (3)	♠ KQJT6	♥ AQ7	♦ K965	♣ 8
Hand (4)	♠ KQT87	♥ 86	♦ AKT5	♣ K6
Hand (5)	♠ AKJ74	♥ AKQ	♦ 942	♣ 63
Hand (6)	♠ AKJ742	♥ AJ	♦ J53	♣ 92

When opener prefers to make a short suit game try, as in (2) and (3), or a long suit try, as in (1) and (4), he is in trouble. On (5) and (6), he’d like to make a general game try of 3♠, but this is commonly played as a game try asking for extra help in trumps.

Opener could bid 3♦ on the last two hands and hope for the best. The fact is there are lots of players who might bid 3♦ on all six hands! Partner must figure out what is the right diamond holding for the game try. A small doubleton would be helpful opposite K965, AK105, or 942, but



would be wasted opposite 97 or QJ3. Even the worth of K86 would be unclear. It would be a good holding opposite QJ3 but doubtful opposite 942 or J53.

So using the help suit approach, one frequently does not know in which suit to ask for help, and often partner does not know when to accept. Instead, one may use the artificial 2NT\* game try “telling” (not the relay) approaches. In each of the above examples, one employs the bidding sequence: one simple bids 1♠-2♠-2NT\*.

Responder’s first obligation is to bid his lowest-ranking doubleton, even if he has a singleton. This tells partner he may have to cover two losers. However, with the “right” doubleton (say Ax), he may bid four of the major. But if “turned off” by a doubleton, he might just bid three of the major. With a balanced hand (4-3-3-3), bid three of a major with a minimum (8–10 dummy points) and 3NT (11–13 dummy points), a maximum. Or you may choose to bid a new suit to preserve all options.

Let’s consider a few examples.

Opener	Responder
♠KQJ74	♠A63
♥AK8	♥974
♦J73	♦8654
♣K9	♣AJ5

In this example, the bidding would go 1♠-2♠-2NT-3NT-pass. Three notrump is easier than four of a major as long as responder has at least three diamonds. Using the help suit bid of 3♦, responder may bid three of a major and opener might pass, missing game!

Next, consider the hand:

Opener	Responder
♠KQT87	♠A63
♥86	♥J754
♦AKT5	♦93
♣K9	♣QJ75

Now, the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
2NT	3♦
4♠	Pass

Using the help suit bid, opener may bid 2♥, and responder may bid 3♠ (no help), again missing a game contract.

If in the above hand you held three hearts and three diamonds (3-3-3-4 distribution), you would bid 3♠ to show a minimum hand. With a stronger club suit, you may bid 3♣ called a counter try/trial rebid, showing good holdings in clubs and maximum points.

Questions:

- (1) How do you respond to 2NT holding a singleton or a void? A jump to four of the trump promises 0 or 1 in the other major. With fewer than two cards in a minor, bid the minor at the three-level just as you would a doubleton. Don't sit for 3NT if partner bids it—a rebid of your minor suit shows fewer than two cards.
- (2) Is 2NT still on in competition? Yes, as long as your partner has raised the major, you must ignore the competition from either side.
- (3) If opener does not bid 2NT, he may make a short-suit game try with a minimum bid showing shortness in the suit (0 or 1) and interest in game!

For more information on the game try bids, consult Marty Bergen's (1985) *Better Bidding with Bergen, Volume One, Uncontested Auctions*, by Devyn Press, page 148. This discussion is based upon his book.

### **After 3♣\* and 3♦\* (Bergen raises)**

Playing Bergen raises recalls that the jump bids of 3♣\* and 3♦\* show a trump fit but only 7–9 dummy points and 10–12 dummy points, respectively. To reach game with the bid of three clubs, opener needs at least 17–19 Bergen points. Hence, he will bid game or invite game. Similarly, after the limit raise bid of 3♦, opener may either invite with between 14 and 16 Bergen points or use the 2NT\* game try bid as mentioned above. Or with Reverse Bergen, you interchange the two-bids; 3♣\* becomes the limit raise.

### **After 3♣\* and 3♦\* (Combined Bergen raises)**

Recall that 3♣\* shows four-card support and 5–12 dummy points, the bid of 3♦\* shows only three-card support and a limit raise (10–12 dummy points). When opening a major and responding 3♣\*, recall that 3♦\* asks whether you are at the lower end of the range (3♥\* shows the lower end and 3♠\* indicates the upper end). After the bid of 3♥, you can bid 3♠/4♠, and after 3♠, you can pass or bid 4♠. This is not the case if/when you open 1♥; now an ask bid may commit you to game in hearts when you hear the response 3♠. Thus, it is best not to ask by bidding 3♦; now one invites by bidding 3♥. Do not ask by bidding 3♦.

### **Rebids by opener after minor opening bids (1♣/1♦)**

If the opening bid is the club bid, the first priority of the responder is to bid a four-card major, not notrump. This is also the case if one opens one diamond.

Opener's first priority is to support the major suit bid with three or four cards (you have found a major suit fit). Now what? Do you have game or slam? As responder, all you know is that opener has between 12 and 21 dummy points.

### After 1♣-1♥

#### Opener rebids

- 1♠ four spades, denies four hearts
- 1NT 12–14 starting points, balanced hand, denies a four-card major
- 2♣ 12–17 starting points, five plus clubs, denies a four-card major
- 2♦ reverse bid showing 17+ starting points (5-4)
- 2♥ three plus card support, 12–16+ dummy points
- 2♠ jump shift 19+, game force bid
- 2NT 18–19 starting points, balanced hand, may have a four-card major
- 3♣ 16–17 starting points *jump rebid* with good suit and six plus clubs
- 3♦ *jump reverse* four plus clubs, singleton/void in diamonds 16+ points
- 3♥ 17–19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
- 3♠ *full splinter* four hearts, singleton/void in spades 18+ slam interest
- 3NT solid club suit, with stopper in side suits, to play
- 4♣ *fit bid* showing strong clubs and spades 17–19 points
- 4♥ 20+ dummy points
- 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood (chapter 3)

### After 1♣ - 1♠

#### Opener rebids

- 1NT 12–14 starting points, balanced hand, denies a four-card major
- 2♣ 12–17 starting points, five plus clubs, denies a four-card major
- 2♦ reverse bid showing 17+ starting points (5-4)
- 2♠ three plus card support, 12–16+ dummy points
- 2NT 18–19 starting points, may have a four-card major
- 3♣ 16–17 starting points *jump rebid* with good suit and six plus clubs
- 3♦ *jump reverse* four spades, singleton/void in diamonds 16+ points
- 3♥ *jump reverse* four spades, singleton/void in hearts 16+ points
- 3♠ 17–19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
- 3NT solid club suit, with stopper in side suit, to play
- 4♣ *fit bid* showing strong clubs and hearts 17–19 points
- 4♠ 20+ dummy points
- 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood (chapter 3)

## After 1♦ -1♥

## Opener rebids

- 1♠ four spades, denies four hearts
- 1NT 12–14 starting points, balanced hand, denies a four-card major
- 2♣ 12–17 starting points, five plus clubs, denies a four-card major
- 2♦ 12–17 starting points, five plus diamonds, denies a four-card major
- 2♥ three plus card support, 12–16+ dummy points
- 2♠ jump shift 19+, game force bid
- 2NT 18–19 starting points, balanced hand, may have a four-card major
- 3♣ jump shift 19+, game force bid
- 3♦ 16–17 starting points *jump rebid* with good suit and six plus clubs
- 3♥ 17–19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
- 3♠ *full splinter* four plus diamonds, singleton/void in spades 18+ slam interest
- 3NT Solid club suit, with stopper in side suits, to play
- 4♦ *fit bid* showing strong diamonds and spades 17–19 points
- 4♥ 20+ dummy points
- 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood (chapter 3)

## After 1♦ - 1♠

## Opener rebids

- 1NT 12–14 starting points, balanced hand, denies a four-card major
- 2♣ 12–17 starting points, 5-4 diamonds and clubs, no four-card major
- 2♦ 12–17 starting points, five plus diamonds, denies spades
- 2♠ three plus card support, 12–16+ dummy points
- 2NT 18–19 starting points, may have a four-card major
- 3♣ jump shift 19+, game force bid
- 3♦ 16–17 starting points *jump rebid* with good suit and six plus clubs
- 3♥ *jump reverse* four spades, singleton/void in hearts 16+ points
- 3♠ 17–19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
- 3NT solid club suit, with stopper in side suit, to play
- 4♦ *fit bid* showing strong diamonds and hearts 17–19 points
- 4♠ 20+ dummy points
- 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood (chapter 3)

**3344 convention**

When opening a minor and partner responds a major, Eric Rodwell developed a sophisticated game try convention called the Rodwell Game Try convention. I will not try to go into the complexities here (it is for experts), but I will use a subset of the Rodwell convention called the 3344 convention; the name was suggested by Joe Sacco of the Villages Duplicate Bridge Club.

After hearing support for the major at the two-level (2♥/2♠), responder needs to know whether major support is three or four cards and whether the opening points are a *minimum* (12–15) or a *maximum* (16–21). To investigate, responder bids 2NT\*. The responses by the opening bidder are

3♣\* shows *three-card* (3) support and a *minimum* opening hand

3♦\* shows *three-card* (3) support and a *maximum* opening hand

3♥\* shows *four-card* (4) support and a *minimum* opening hand

3♠\* shows *four-card* (4) support and a *maximum* opening hand

Val Covalciuc recommends in her September 2007 issues of the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin* (page 39) article that there are two requirements for the opener when raising partner's major: opener should have some decent values in his three-card major suit and he should have ruffing values in his hand.

Let's consider an example.

Opener      ♠ K109 ♥ QJ84 ♦ QJ6 ♣ A1098

Responder   ♠ 87 ♥ AK32 ♦ AK432 ♣ K5

With no five-card major, opener opens the bidding with 1♣ (Walsh) and responder would bid 1♥, bypassing his five-card diamond suit. A *major* fit is found. Observe that responder has 18 starter points. Next, responder bids 2NT\*. How good is your hand, and what is its shape?

Opener has 14 dummy points and bids 3♥. With a minimum and four hearts, responder has no interest in slam and signs off in the heart game by bidding 4♥.

Without a four-card major, opener has several rebids options depending on the structure of his hand:

- (a) With 12–17 starting points, opener's rebid is 1NT showing a weak hand.
- (b) With a balanced (5-3-3-2) and 18+ starting points, his bid is 2NT.

**Point Count Game Try convention (PCGT)**

Some may not need the 3344 convention, since they may always support a major with four cards. However, to evaluate whether you have game-going values, you may next employ the Point Count Game Try convention.

The convention is used after the sequences 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠ followed by a two-level rebid in the major; 2♥ and 2♠, respectively.

Next, the responder bids either 2♣/2NT over 2♥ and 2♠, respectively. Then the next three-level bids show dummy points:

For spades ask = 2NT For hearts ask = 2♠

3♣* = 16+ dummy points	15 dummy points
3♦* = 15 dummy points	14 dummy points
3♥* = 14 dummy points	12/13 dummy points
3♠* = 12/13 dummy points	2NT = 16+ dummy points

The more values, the lower the bid; this allows one to investigate slam or to reach game in the major. The minimum bid is a simple raise of the major suit, 3♠ or 3♥. Over the maximum bid of 4♣, one asks for points in the trump suit. Then steps show 0, 1, 2, or 3.

### After 1NT

When opening a minor and responder does not bid a major but bids 1NT, the opener sees little hope in a major suit game. Responder does not have a four-card major. Recall that partner has either 8–10 starting points after the bid of 1♣ or 6–9 starting points after opening bid of 1♦ and no four-card major. Opener's rebids are

Rebids by opener	Suit length	Starting points
2♣/2♦	five plus cards	12–15
2NT	5-3-3-2	16–18
3♣/3♦	five plus cards	16–17 (jump in bid suit)
3♥/3♠	four cards	19+ (jump shift)
3NT	5-3-3-2	19+

Another option is to employ the “Puppet Checkback” over a 1NT rebid as described by Ron Klinger. Max Hardy calls the bid Modified Two-Way Stayman (however, the two are not the same). Here is how Klinger's version works.

A puppet bid simply asks partner to make the cheapest bid, whatever his holding. It is a like a transfer, except that a transfer promises a holding in the suit being transferred to, whereas a puppet does not promise a holding in the requested suit.

The purpose of a puppet bid is to create an alternate pathway to some higher bid so that a later bid can be assigned a different meaning if made via the puppet to the meaning it has if bid without travelling via the puppet. For example, in Puppet Checkback, we use 1♣, 1♥; 1NT, 2♥ as a sign-off, but (with a puppet 2♣, 2♦ inserted) 1♣, 1♥; 1NT, 2♣; 2♦, 2♥ becomes a game invitation.

A puppet bid can also be used as an escape to the puppet suit, like a transfer. But unlike a transfer, if the puppet bidder then continues the auction, he does *not* promise any holding in the puppet suit.

The Puppet Checkback system over a 1NT rebid is

- 2♣: Forces opener to bid 2♦, which responder can pass to play, if that is his wish. If responder bids again, his bid is natural and game invitational.
- 2♦: An artificial game force, asking for help in uncovering the best fit.

Opener is asked to bid an unbid four-card suit or to give three-card support to responder, and failing that to bid NT or perhaps a good minor suit.

- 2♥: Natural and weak. To play, if a repeat of the suit. Offering opener a choice between responder's five-card spade suit and four-card heart suit if spades was bid first.
- 2♠: Natural and weak if a repeat of the suit. Natural and game forcing if a reverse.
- 2NT: Forces opener to bid 3♣, which responder can pass to play, if that is his wish. If responder bids again, he shows a strong six-card suit in his original major, including two of the top three honors. If he repeats his major suit, he shows no singleton or void. If he bids a suit (even if it is opener's suit), it is a splinter. If he bids 3NT or 4♣, it is a splinter in clubs. Opener can bid or pass 3NT if he expects that to be the best contract (if, for example, he has KQxx or similar in responder's splinter suit).

Three-level suit bids are natural, strong, and distributional: 5-5 or better if a second suit is bid by responder, a six-card suit or longer if a repeat of responder's suit.

Max Hardy's Modified Two-Way Stayman is very similar to Puppet Checkback but with one significant difference. He plays responder's 2NT as a natural invitational raise but denying four-card support for opener's suit. The bid of 2NT via the 2♣, 2♦ puppet sequence promises four-card support for opener's suit, allowing opener to convert to three of his suit if he doesn't wish to accept the invitation. That is useful variation but may be forgotten. And it has the serious disadvantage that responder's 3♣ must now be a natural weak takeout, rather than strong and forcing.

### After weak minor suit responses

Playing inverted minor suit raises recall that responder shows five-card support with a jump to the three-level bid of 3♣\*/3♦\* after an opening bid of 1♣/1♦, respectively. These are both weak bids showing 5–9 dummy points. The primary goal of the bid is to require the opponents to enter the bidding at the three-level. If the opener has a balanced hand and 19+ points, he may bid 3NT. And with a strong minor suit unbalanced hand, he may invite game in the bid minor.

After the opening of one club, responder would bid 3♣ with the hand:

♠ 87 ♥ A2 ♦ K43 ♣ Q10654

However, suppose opener had the hand: ♠AJ62 ♥654 ♦ void ♣ AK987, a minor suit game is possible. With a more balanced hand, opener may bid notrump.

## After inverted minor and crisscross

### Inverted minor

(1♣/1♦ - 2♣\*/2♦\*)

Recall that the sequence 1♣ - 2♣\* or 1♦ - 2♦\* shows 13+ dummy points and is forcing to game.

After an inverted minor suit raise, opener rebids show “stoppers up the line.” Opener should not bypass any suit containing a stopper. Responder next bids a stopper where the goal is to reach a notrump contract. The search for stoppers is geared toward major suit stoppers; this is because the responder has already denied a four-card major and there is an increased likelihood that the opponents will initially attack the major suits in a notrump contract.

The bidding sequences follow when opening 1♣ (diamonds follow similarly).

1♣ - 2♣\* - 2♥ promises a full stopper in hearts but denies a full stopper in spades  
Responder must now continue cue bidding in search of notrump:

- 2♠ shows a spade stopper
- 2NT spades stopped and 15+ Bergen points
- 3♣ no spade stopper
- 3♦ no spade stopper A or K of diamonds
- 3♥ cue bid showing A or K
- 3♠ spade singleton/void and 15+ Bergen points
- 3NT spades and diamonds stopped

1♣ - 2♣\* - 2♠ promises a full stopper in spades but denies a full stopper in hearts

Responder must now continue cue bidding in search of notrump:

- 2NT hearts stopped and 15+ Bergen points
- 3♣ no spade stopper
- 3♦ no heart stopper A or K of diamonds
- 3♥ heart singleton/void and 15+ Bergen points
- 3♠ no heart stopper A or K of spades
- 3NT spades and diamonds stopped

1♣ - 2♣\* - 2NT promises a full stopper in both majors

Responder now usually bids 3NT



If three of a new suit is bid by responder at the three-level, it is a game force in clubs with shortness in the bid suit and 4♣ is Minorwood (chapter 3), and 4NT is quantitative (chapter 3) over 2NT.

1♣ - 2♣\* - 2♦ promises a full stopper in diamonds

cue bidding usually continues to find notrump

1♣ - 2♣\* - 3♣ suggests a minimal hand with five plus clubs and little interest in playing NT

1♣ - 2♣\* - 3NT promises a full stopper in both majors and a hand with slam possibilities with a balanced hand and 16–19/20 Bergen points.

Opener's rebid of a *new* suit at the three-level, a jump reverse (mini-splinter), shows 16+ points and a very distributional hand with a singleton or void in the bid suit. The goal is to play in a minor suit game and little slam interest.

For example, after one bids 1♣ - 2♣\* with the hand ♠ AK97 ♥ 7 ♦ Q43 ♣ AKJ95, one would bid 3♥ to show 16+ Bergen points and shortness in hearts.

### **Slam investigation after inverted minor bid**

Opener may also investigate slam with a jump raise in the minor bid suit. The bids for slam investigation are

1♣ - 2♣\* - 4♣ (or)

1♦ - 2♦\* - 4♦

When opening one club and one diamond, respectively, the four-level bid shows 19+ points with no interest in notrump. The bid is Minorwood Roman Key Card Blackwood and will be discussed later (chapter 3).

### **Crisscross**

(1♣ - 2♦\* or 1♦ - 3♣\*)

Recall that the bidding has gone 1♣ - 2♦\* or 1♦ - 3♣\* and indicates that responder has only 10–12 dummy points and five plus cards in the minor suit.

With the crisscross bid, one continues with the bidding procedure outlined for the inverted response; however, game in a minor or notrump is less likely.

## What is flip-flop?

Playing inverted minor raises at the 13+ level, inverted minor raises are off in competition. However, there is an exception. The exception is over a double when playing flip-flop.

*Over a double* and playing *flip-flop* inverted minor raises are on. Then a bid of 2NT\* (an alert) shows a preemptive raise of the opener's minor suit bid and the 3♣\*/3♦\* bids are reversed (flip-flopped) showing a minor suit limit (10–12 dummy points) raise (an alert). To show a hand with 13+, one uses a redouble.

## What about slam bidding when playing inverted minor raises (13+) in 2/1, with crisscross and flip-flop?

These bids are identical to those summarized using inverted minor raises.

## After 2/1 game force bid (1♦ - 2♣)

Hearing the response of two clubs to a one diamond opening, the first priority of the opener is to show the length of the diamond suit. Recall that it may be 3-5+. A rebid of diamonds indicates a five plus card suit.

A rebid of 2NT over 2♣ shows a balanced hand and does not deny a four-card major. It shows stopper in all suits and tenaces and a desire to play in notrump. Opener may have two types of hands: minimal strength (12–15 starting points) or maximum strength (19–21 points). With 15–17 points and a balanced hand, one would have opened 1NT. A jump to 3NT is stronger, showing 19–21 starting points and a balanced hand with all suits stopped.

A raise in clubs (3♣) shows 12–15 starting point, a minimum hand, and at least four clubs.

A jump to a new suit (diamond, hearts, or spades) is a splinter in support of clubs.

A summary of opener's bid follows.

Rebids by opener	Suit length	Starting points
2♦	five plus cards	12–15
2♥	four cards with four diamonds	12–15
2♠	four cards with four diamonds	12–15
2NT	(5-3-3-2)	12–15 or 19–21
3♣	four plus clubs	12–15

3♦	six plus diamonds	16–18
3♥/3♠	singleton/void	16+

3NT 5-3-3-2 18/19–21

After the bid of 2NT, responder can next bid 3NT with no interest in slam, show a four-card major, or rebid clubs to show six plus clubs with perhaps interest in a club slam. Recall that slam requires 33 points. However, if responder rebids clubs, the game force is off.

Returning to our previous example, the bidding would go 1♦ - 2♣, invitational to game in diamonds or notrump.

Opener ♠876 ♥AQ ♦A652 ♣K875

Responder ♠AKJ4 ♥KJ43 ♦7 ♣QJ92

Clearly, one would open 1♦ and responder would bid 2♣ (game force). Next, opener would bid 2NT showing a balanced minimal hand. Even with a singleton, responder may next bid 3NT knowing partner has a balanced hand. (It is better to use the Stayman convention to ask whether opener has a four-card major by bidding 3♣. The convention will be discussed shortly.) Let's look at another example.

Opener ♠9876 ♥AQ ♦A652 ♣K87

Responder ♥Q3 ♥KJ102 ♦7 ♣AQ10765

Here, responder would again bid 2♣ (game force); however, after the bid of 2♠ by opener, not having four spades, responder would bid 3♣ to remove the game force auction.

## Golady convention

Many pairs playing 2/1, play that 1♦ - 2♣ is a 2/1 game force except if clubs is rebid. However, one may use a modification of the Golady convention to establish a major fit at the two-level. Playing the Golady convention 2♣\* is alerted (may not have clubs). The convention follows.

- 2♦\* four-card heart suit (as if you bid 2♥)
- 2♥\* four-card spade suit (as if you bid 2♠)
- 2♠\* long diamonds
- 2NT balanced hand
- 3♣ long clubs game force off

\*These bids must be alerted since they are transfers and not natural.

The major advantage of the convention is to allow the partnership to reach a major suit (GF) fit at the two-level. And then one can begin using cue bids to investigate slam discussed later in this book and also by Ken Rexford (2006) in *Cue Bidding at Bridge: A Modern Approach*, published by Master Point Press, Toronto.

## Responses to 1NT opening bid

When opening 1NT, opener has 14/15–17 starting points. Recall that a game in a major or notrump requires between 24 and 26 starting points. Thus, we can conclude that partner should think about the following as soon as partner bids 1NT.

Responder starting points*			Goal
Min 14/Min15			
(1)	0–8	0–7	Pass or play in two of a suit holding five plus cards
(2)	9–10	8–9	Invite game in notrump or a suit with a fit
(3)	11–16	10–15	Bid a game in notrump or a suit with a fit
(4)	17–18	16–17	Invitational to slam in suit or notrump
(5)	19–22	18–21	Bid a slam in notrump or a suit with a fit
(6)	23+	22+	Bid a grand slam

\*Both ranges are noted depending upon the notrump range you prefer, 14–17 or 15–17. More and more players are lowering the range for the strong notrump.

Over 80 percent of games reached in duplicate bridge involve a major, and the most used bid is the strong (14/15–17) 1NT opening. It conveys points and shape to your partner with one bid. Most players will not open a hand 1NT with a five-card major. However, a common practice is to open a hand 1NT when you are 5-3 in the majors. Some will even open a hand using the strong 1NT bid with two doubletons.

To decide, one may use the following rule: given a strong NT 14/15-17 range, if the five-card suit is higher ranking than the four-card suit, open the five-card suit and rebid the four card suit. If the four card suit is higher ranking with 14–16 points, less than the maximum, then open the hand 1NT.

Even when you open the bidding 1NT, the first goal is to find a 4-4 major suit fit. A convention designed for this purpose is the Stayman convention first published by Samuel M. Stayman in *The Bridge World* (1945) but actually invented by J. C. H. Marx, a British bridge player in 1939.

## Stayman convention

After the bid of 1NT, the Stayman convention uses the asking bid of 2♣ as an artificial bid to inquire whether partner has a four-card major. The convention is so engrained in bridge that it need not be alerted.

The original Stayman convention incorporated a 2NT response to show a maximum hand with both majors. Higher bids like 2NT should not be used. To quote Marty Bergen: “Never, never, never, respond 2NT to Stayman.” This approach is unsound because it precludes the use of “Garbage Stayman,” a convention that allows one to find a major suit fit with only 0–8 points (see below). If you insist on showing a maximum, one may employ the Stayman Super-Accept convention.

### **The conventional responses assume no interference.**

#### **Opener’s bids after 2♣**

- 2♦     denies a four-card major
- 2♥     shows four hearts may have four spades
- 2♠     shows four spades, denies four hearts

#### **Responder’s rebids after 2♦ by opener**

- 2♥     Shows four spades and five hearts, invitational. Nonforcing. (Responder bids the five-card suit and not the four-card suit.)
- 2♠     Shows five spades and four hearts, invitational. Nonforcing. (Responder bids the five-card suit and not the four-card suit.)
- 2NT    Invitational (9 points)
- 2♣     Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually six), denies a four-card major.
- 3♦     Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually six), denies a four-card major.
- 3♥\*    Shows five spades and four hearts, game forcing (Smolen—responder bids his short suit at the three-level, the reverse of the nonforcing two-level bid). Opener is asked to bid 3♠ with a three-card spade suit, or 3NT with two spades (\* = alert).
- 3♠\*    Shows five hearts and four spades, game forcing (Smolen—responder bids his short suit at the three-level, the reverse of the nonforcing two-level bid). Opener is asked to bid 3NT if he only holds two hearts or four if he has three hearts. (\* = alert).
- 3NT    Sign-off.
- 4♥     Shows four spades and six hearts, sign-off.
- 4♠     Shows six spades and four hearts, sign-off.
- 4NT    Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP.

#### **Responder’s rebids after 2♥ by opener**

- 2♠     Shows five spades and four hearts, invitational. Nonforcing. (Responder bids the five-card suit and not the four-card suit.)

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

- 2NT Shows four spades, less than four hearts, invitational. Opener can pass, sign-off in 3 with four spades, or bid 3NT.
- 3♣ Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually six), denies a four-card major
- 3♦ Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually six), denies a four-card major
- 3♥ Shows four hearts invitational
- 3♠ Shows four spades, game forcing showing five spades and four hearts
- 3NT Sign-off
- 4♥ Sign-off
- 4NT Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP.

Responder's rebids after 2♠ by opener

- 2NT Invitational
- 3♣ Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually six), denies a four-card major.
- 3♦ Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually six), denies a four-card major.
- 3♥ Shows four spades and five hearts, game forcing.
- 3♠ Shows four spades, invitational.
- 3NT Sign-off shows four hearts.
- 4♠ Sign-off
- 4NT Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP

### Stayman with Super-Accepts

After the bid of 2♣ by responder, opener responses are

- 2NT five diamonds and a four-card major
- 3♣ five clubs and a four-card major
- 3♦\* both majors and exactly 17 starting points (a maximum)
- 3♥ five hearts and a maximum
- 3♠ five spades and a maximum

Playing Stayman with super-accepts, after 3♦, responder's next bids are

- 3♥ to play
- 3♠ to play
- 3NT to play
- 4♣ Gerber (later in this chapter) or Roman Key Card Gerber (chapter 3)
- 4♦ transfer to hearts with 5
- 4♥ transfer to spades with 5

Stayman with Super-Accepts requires that the opener has 17 starting points and is 4-4 in the majors. Another approach is to use three-level bids to show shape or doubletons with 17 starting points. Then the bids are

- 3♣\* minor two suiter, at least 4-4
- 3♦\* doubleton in clubs or diamonds
- 3♥\* doubleton in hearts
- 3♠\* doubleton in spades

After the 3♦\* response showing a doubleton in either minor, opener now bids 3♥\* to ask which minor. Responder's bid of 3♣\* shows clubs and 3NT\* shows diamonds.

### **Garbage and Crawling Stayman convention**

After a 1NT opening by partner, the bid of 2♣'s is employed to show a weak three-suited hand, with 0–7 points. It is referred to Garbage Stayman with 4-4-4-1 distribution and Crawling Stayman with 4-4-x-y or 3-4-x-y or 4-3-x-y distribution.

With Garbage Stayman, you pass the bids of 2♦/2♥/2♠.

With Crawling Stayman, you pass only the major suit bid, and over 2♦, you bid 2♥.

This asks partner to pass or correct to 2♠. Hence you may be playing at the two-level in a major with either a 4-4 or 4-3 fit. However, it is usually better than notrump.

Some examples of weak hands where you may use Garbage /Crawling Stayman:

(4-4-4-1) ♠10345 ♥A1084 ♦7892 ♣7

(4-3-4-2) ♠Q652 ♥Q43 ♦9762 ♣J5

(3-4-3-3) ♠QJ3 ♥AJ98 ♦978 ♣982

Garbage Stayman is used when responder has the exact distributions: 4 = 4 = 4 = 1 or 4 = 4 = 5 = 0 and you have 0–6 starting points. Responder will pass whatever opener bids; some refer to this as Drop Dead Stayman.

## Puppet Stayman

Many partnerships use the bid of 2♣ for Puppet Stayman instead of Stayman. It is needed when one bids 1NT with a five-card major. As with Stayman, responder should have at least 8 starter points. A summary of the bids are as follows:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 NT	2 ♣	Asking for a five-card major suit. Promises at least 8 points in valuation.
	2 ♦	This first response by the opener denies a five-card major suit and is a relay bid.
	2 ♥	Shows a four-card spade suit, fewer than four hearts
	2 ♠	Shows a four-card heart suit, fewer than four spades
	2 NT	Shows a four-card spade suit and a four-card heart suit. This bid is invitational. Opener may pass with minimum.
	3 ♥	Shows a four-card heart suit, a four- or five-card spade suit. Game forcing.
	3 ♠	Shows a four-card spade suit, a four- or five-card hearts suit. Game forcing.
	3 NT	Shows no four-card major suit and game values.
	4 NT	This response is slam invitational and is accepted by the opener only if holding maximum values.

In the following auction, the responder shows a four-card heart suit, and the opener can show either minimum or maximum values:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 NT	2 ♣	Asking for a five-card major suit. Promises at least 8 points in valuation.
	2 ♦	This first response by the opener denies a five-card major suit and is a relay bid.
	2 ♠	Shows a four-card heart suit, fewer than four spades
2 NT		Shows no fit for the heart suit and minimum values
	3 ♥	Shows a four-card heart suit and minimum values
3 NT		Shows no fit for the heart suit and maximum values
	4 ♥	Shows a four-card heart suit and maximum values

The Puppet Stayman convention is used most often when partnerships bids 1NT with a five-card major. Alternatively, some use 3♣ for puppet so that the bid of 2♣ may be used for Garbage or Crawling Stayman.



## **Raising 1NT, 2NT, 3NT, and beyond**

The Stayman convention is used when responder has at least one four-card major and should always be used even when your distribution is 4 = 3-3-3 or 3 = 4-3-3, very balanced hands.

However, suppose your hand is semibalanced and you have only 9–10 (8–9 playing 15–17 range), you may raise to 2NT, which is invitational to game. Note, as we will see later, we recommend playing four-way transfers, and so we will use 2NT as a transfer to diamonds. Hence, we will have to bid 2♣\* via Stayman and the bid 2NT. Stayman must now be alerted immediately with four-way transfers, and if asked, one responds that partner may not have a four-card major. With more points and balanced hand, what do you do?

With 11–16 points, bid 3NT. With 17–18, bid 4NT; this is a quantitative bid. It asks partner to bid 6NT with a maximum. Finally, with 19–21, bid 5NT, a grand slam force, with a maximum partner will bid 7NT and with less sign-off in 6NT; more on quantitative bids in chapter 3.

## **Jacoby transfers four-way**

Jacoby transfers may be employed with a variety of hands. Responder may have a one-suited, two-suited, or even a three-suited hand. The transfer can involve the minors or the majors. They are used with weak, invitational, or strong hands. There is no point counts required to use transfers. Responders will clarify the nature of his hand with subsequent bidding.

After the bid of 1NT, responder makes the following bids, promising at least five plus cards in the transfer suit.

- 2♦      transfer to hearts (♥)
- 2♥      transfer to spades (♠)
- 2♠      transfer to clubs (♣)
- 2NT    transfer to diamonds (♦)

The bids are announced as a transfer. While some may prefer to use the bid 2♠ as minor Suit Stayman and 2NT as an ambiguous transfer to a minor with slam interest, we recommend instead Shape Asking Relays after Stayman (SARS) to be discussed later.

For each of the requested transfers, the 1NT bidder must respond by bidding the requested suit, for the majors; however, for the minors, this is not the case. With at least Qxx in a minor transfer suit, he may substitute *super-acceptance bids* by bidding 2NT (the bid below) instead to 3♣, and 3♠ (the bid below) instead of 3♦ to encourage 3NT. Without at least three-card supports with an A, K, or Q, opener will again merely accept the transfer by bidding 3♣ and 3♦ as requested. Playing four-way transfers, most players use the “super-accept bid.” However, you should review this with your partner.

With a very weak hand (0–8 points), it is better to transfer to a five-card suit, since partner will have at least two-card support. Playing in a suit will usually be better than notrump. However, suppose you are weak and 5-4 in the majors.

### Help suit game try after a Jacoby transfer

When using the Jacoby transfer, one may not be sure of game in a major. In this case, responder may use the bid of 2NT as a help suit game try 2NT. After a Jacoby transfer, responder bids 2NT; opener's responses follow.

#### Transfer to hearts

After 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT\* (ASK)

Pass – minimum and normally denies 3♥s

3♣ = is a ♣ help suit game try

3♦ = is a ♦ help suit game try

3♥ = sign-off

3♠ = is looking for a 5-3 ♠ fit (else 3NT)

3NT normally denies 5 ♠ or 3 ♥s

#### Transfer to spades

After 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT\* (ASK)

Pass – minimum and normally denies 3♠s

3♣ = is a ♣ help suit game try

3♦ = is a ♦ help suit game try

3♥ = is looking for 5-3 ♥ fit (else 3NT)

3♠ = sign-off

3NT normally denies 5♥ or 3 ♠s

Let's consider an example.

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Comments
♠ AJ9	♠ KQ876	1NT	2♥ (1)	(1) transfer
♥ AQ104	♥ J3	2♠ (2)	2NT* (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ 85	♦ Q104	3♣ (4)	3♠ (5)	(3) invitational with 5♠
♣ KJ72	♣ 964	pass		(4) can you help in clubs (5) No

### Jacoby transfers two-way

Instead of using four-way transfers, some use only the two-way variety. For this convention, the bids after 1NT are

2♦ transfer to hearts (♥)

2♥ transfer to spades (♠)

2♠\* transfer to the minors (♣/♦)

2NT\* invitational 9+ high card points if balanced or 8–9 with a five-card suit

\* = alert

With 10+ HCP, one bids 3NT.

Using this convention, the bid of 2NT by opener after 2♠ says that he prefers diamonds, and the bid of 3♣ says he prefers clubs.

Depending on the hand of the responder, he may over 2NT bid either 3♦ or 3♣ and over the bid of 3♣; he may pass or bid 3♦.

### **Jacoby transfers with super-accept**

After opening 1NT with 15–17 HCP and partner transfers to a major, guaranteeing a five-card suit, partner usually accepts by bidding at the two-level. However, depending on your high card points—opener may respond as follows over 2♦ for hearts and 2♥ for spades.

2M with two cards in the major

3M with four cards and a bad 15–16 HCP

Bid 2x your doubleton with and 16–17 HCP

3M\* with three cards in the major and 17 HCP (also called super-accept)

2NT\* with three cards in the major and 17 HCP and all suits stopped (sometimes called the Bell convention, suggested by Allan Bell, a bridge professional from Los Angeles, California—see the September 1994 issue of *Bridge World*, page 28)

4/5M with 15–16 HCP

\* alert

If partner does not bid 2M to your transfer, and you want to sign off in 3M, then a three-level bid by you is a retransfer to 3M. This time partner will accept the transfer.

### **Smolen transfers**

If one has a five-card major and is weak, one will use a Jacoby transfer bid to transfer into the major, and if 5-4 and weak, one can use Garbage Stayman; however, when 5-4 in the majors and with 11+ points (10+ playing 15–17 NT), one may play Smolen. Playing Smolen, one again bids 2♣; as Stayman (alerted if you are playing four-way transfers). If partner bids a major, you have found a fit, raise to game. What if the bid is 2♦? Not playing Smolen, you would bid three of your five-card suit (game forcing) and allow partner to choose between four of the major or 3NT. However, playing Smolen you bid:

3♥\* shows five spades and four hearts and is forcing to game

3♠\* shows five hearts and four spades and is forcing to game

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

You bid three of the shorter four-card suit (partner knows you are 5-4). Opener may pass or complete the Smolen transfer to game in a major, although 3NT is allowed. By bidding the game in the 4-4 or 5-3 major fit, opener denies interest in slam.

If the sequence goes

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥\* (5-4) What would the bids 3♠, 4♣/4♦/4♥ mean?

Or

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠\* (5-4) What would the bid 4♣/4♦ mean?

These are called Smolen Super-Accept cue bids and have the following meaning:

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥\*      and after      1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠\*

3♠\*    three spades and ♥A

4♣\*    three hearts and ♣A

4♣\*    three spades and ♣A

4♦\*    three hearts and ♦A (#)

4♦\*    three spades and ♦A

4♥\*    Smolen transfer

4♥\*    slam interest, but no ace to cue (#)

4♠    Smolen transfer

(#) With no further interest in slam, responder may bid game in the five-card major.

### Quest transfers

Jacoby transfers are usually used with weak hands. Smolen transfers are game forcing transfers. What do you do with invitational values 9–10 points (8–9 points playing 15–17 NT)? An option is to use Quest transfers, which are again initiated by bidding 2♣. But after the response of 2♦, responder now bids 3♦\* as a transfer to hearts and 3♥\* as a transfer to spades. Thus, we have a simple invitational sequence. The Quest bids may be invitational or better. To review,

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦,

3♦\*    transfer to hearts (5-4 in hearts and spades)

3♥\*    transfer to spades (5-4 in spades and hearts)

Using Quest transfers, the normal accept bids show a minimal hand with two-card support or perhaps three. As with Smolen, these bids must be alerted.

We also have Quest Super-Accept cue bids:

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦\*      and after      1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥\*

3♥	Quest transfer	3♠	Quest transfer
3NT*	natural, nonminimum normally 3-2 in the majors	3NT*	natural, nonminimum normally 2-3 in the majors
4♣*	three hearts and ♣A	4♣*	three spades and ♣A
4♦*	three hearts and ♦A	4♥*	three spades and ♥A
4♥*	three hearts, but no ace to cue	4♠*	three spades, but no ace to cue

Many players may not be familiar with Quest transfers; if you do not currently play Smolen, you should consider them.

### **Texas transfers (4♦ and 4♥)**

After opener bids 1NT, suppose you have a six-card major with game-going values and no interest in slam. Using the principle of fast arrival, one employs the four-level bids of

- 4♦\* transfer to hearts
- 4♥\* transfer to spades

\* Alert

Instead of using Texas transfers, some use South African transfers. Then 4♣\* is a transfer to hearts and 4♦\* is a transfer to spades. A disadvantage of these bids is that one now may not use Gerber (four clubs to ask for aces).

### **Two-suited hands (Mini-Maxi convention)**

When partner opens 1NT, you often find that you are either 5-5 in the minors or 5-5 in the majors. A simple and straightforward convention to address this distribution is the Mini-Maxi. After the bid of 1NT, one bids

- 3♣\* 5-5 in the minors and less than 11 starting points
- 3♦\* 5-5 in the minors and 11+ starting points
- 3♥\* 5-5 in the majors and less than 11 starting points
- 3♠\* 5-5 in the majors and 11+ starting points

If you prefer the 15–17 notrump range, eleven may be replaced with ten.

Because playing in a minor is not usually a goal, some may prefer to replace the minor suit three-level bids with broken suit slam try bids (since the goal is to play in a major). If you prefer this approach, then one would replace the three-level minor suit bids with the following:

- 1NT - 3♣\* transfer to hearts 5/6+, indicates a broken heart suit with slam interest and shortage somewhere

1NT - 3♦\* transfer to spades 5/6+, indicates a broken spade suit with slam interest and shortage somewhere

Of course, there are many more options; readers may define their own preferences.

### **Extended Stayman when 5-5 or 6-4 in the majors**

This convention is used when you are 5-5 (may be 6-4) in the majors. The bid of 3♣\* (alert) is a Checkback asking bid: do you have a three-card major?

1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣\*

- 3♦ = no three-card major (two-card major and four- or five-card minor)
- 3♥ = three hearts (2-3-4-4)
- 3♠ = three spades (3-2-4-4)
- 3NT = both majors (3-3-4-3/3-3-3-4)

1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣\*

- 3♦ = four-card minor and two-card major
- 3♥ = five hearts
- 3♠ = three spades (3-4-3-3)
- 3NT = to play

1NT-2♣-2♠-3♣\*

- 3♦ = four-card minor and two-card major
- 3♥ = three hearts (4-3-3-3)
- 3♠ = five spades
- 3NT = to play

Responder now knows partner's hand and is the captain or the partnership.

He may pass, bid game in the major, or bid 4NT, asking for information about aces.

### **Extended Texas transfers when 6-4 in the majors**

We can combine the Stayman convention with Texas transfers when one is 6-4 in the majors. After 1NT -2♣ -2♦/2♥/2♠, one next bids

- 4♦\* transfer to hearts with six and four spades
- 4♥\* transfer to spades with six and four hearts

If you are 6-5 in the majors, since we are using Mini-Maxi convention when 5-5 in the majors, we can use Jacoby transfers to show the long six-card suit and, next, bid the other major to show the five-card suit. After 1NT

- 2♦ transfer to hearts (♥)
- 2♥ transfer to spades (♠)

After opener's bid of 2♥ responder bids 4♠\* to show six hearts and five spades  
 2♠ responder bids 4♥\* to show six spades and five hearts

Thus, you simply transfer to the six-card suit and bid the other major at the four levels (the shorter following Smolen) to show 6-5. Other bridge authors have devised more-complicated systems using Quest/Smolen transfers with super-accepts, but they are more complex. I have tried to keep it simple.

### Minor Suit Stayman

This convention, devised by Oswald Jacoby, is used by the responder when partner has opened the bidding with 1NT. It is used when partner has a long minor suit and, generally, very little values or very strong values indicating a strong interest in a possible slam contract in a minor suit.

The Minor Suit Stayman convention is applied as follows. Even with an overcall by the immediate opponent at the two-level will have no bearing on the functionality of this concept, since any overcall on the two-level will not affect the concept. If the overcall is two spades, then the partner of the notrump bidder simply doubles to initiate this conventional method.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 NT	2 ♠	Responder wishes to inquire about the holding in the minor suits.
3 ♣		Opener has a four-card club suit.
3 ♦		Opener has a four-card diamond suit.
3 ♥		Opener has both four-card minor suits and shows a control in hearts.
3 ♠		Opener has both four-card minor suits and shows a control in spades.
2 NT		Opener indicates interest in a possible minor suit slam.
3 NT		Opener indicates no interest in a minor suit slam.
	3 ♥ or 4 ♥	Responder shows a singleton in hearts; the level is dependent.
	3 ♠ or 4 ♠	Responder shows a singleton in spades; the level is dependent.

The Minor Suit Stayman convention was devised for specifically three types of holdings held by the responder and which will be determined during the ensuing auction:

1. A holding with a six-card plus diamond suit and weak values
2. A 5-5 distribution in both minor suits and weak values
3. A 5-4 distribution in both minor suits and possible slam values

**Note:** Some partnership understandings have the agreement that *after the auction shows slam interest*, any rebid by the responder at the lowest possible level of notrump promises a distribution containing doubletons in both major suits.

When playing Minor Suit Stayman, the bid of 2NT is also often also revised. Instead of being used with 8–9 dummy points as an invitational bid to 3NT, it is used as a puppet relay to 3♣, which responder can pass with a club bust. Or it is used to show a game forcing three-suited hand, either 4-4-4-1 or 4-4-5-0 with a five-card minor. With a strong hand, responder bids his singleton/void. And with short clubs, either bids 3NT, nonforcing, or 4♣ with slam interest to force opener to bid.

When playing a direct 2NT to 1NT as artificial, one must start with 2♣ Stayman to invite game in NT.

1. Opener with both *hearts* and *spades* bids 2♥.
2. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2♠ shows exactly four *spades* and is invitational to game. Opener may pass or bid 2NT, 3NT, or 4♠.
3. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT is invitational to game and denies four *spades*.
4. Other sequences that start 1NT-2♣-2any-2NT do not promise or deny a four-card *major*. This should be explained at the time of the 2NT rebid (an alert).

### Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SARS)

We have spent most of our discussion around the major suits. After using all of our conventions and hearing 2♦, we know that the opener does not have a four-card major. And when responder is 4-3 in the majors, he needs to know something about opener's shape in the minors to consider notrump or game/slam in a minor. This is accomplished using the bid of 3♣\* after the opener's bid of 2♦, called the Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SARS). SARS provides more information than Minor Suit Stayman and is an alternative to Minor Suit Stayman. The bidding sequence follows.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦, 3♣\* **second ask**

Opener's responses about shape in the minors

- 3♦\* five-card minor (either clubs or diamonds), no four-card major
- 3♥\* four clubs (3 = 3 = 3 = 4)
- 3♠\* four diamonds (3 = 3 = 4 = 3)
- 3NT\* four clubs and four diamonds (2 = 3 = 4 = 4) or (3 = 2 = 4 = 4)
- 4♣\* five clubs and four diamonds (2 = 2 = 4 = 5)
- 4♦\* five diamonds and four clubs (2 = 2 = 5 = 4)

Next, after the response of 3♦\*, the bid 3♥\* *asks* which minor has five cards.

- 3♠\* five clubs
- 3NT\* five diamonds



After minor suit shapes ask, the bid of four of the minor always sets the minor trump suit.

### **The Gerber convention**

After the bid of notrump 1NT, 2NT, or 3NT, the bid of 4♣ is known as the Gerber convention. It was devised by John Gerber of Houston, Texas, in 1938. It asks partner about the number of aces and subsequently about the number of kings. When using Gerber, remember that you should not use the convention if (1) you have a void, (2) you have worthless doubletons (e.g., Qx, Jx, xx) in an unbid suit, and (3) you need to know if partner has controls in a specific suit, discussed in chapter 3.

The responses to the 4♣ Gerber ask are

- 4♦ shows zero ace or four aces
- 4♥ shows one ace
- 4♠ shows two aces
- 4NT shows three aces

Having all the aces, you may next ask for the number of kings by bidding 5NT. The responses are

- 5♦ shows zero kings or four kings
- 5♥ shows one king
- 5♠ shows two kings
- 5NT shows three kings

If you have a void, it is not an ace. Ignore the void when responding to Gerber. As we will see in chapter 3, to handle voids, you must use Roman Key Card Gerber.

### **Splinters after Stayman (with a fit and slam interest)**

When opening a major, recall that concealed/ambiguous splinter bids of 3♠\* after 1♥, and 3♥\* after 1♠ showed a heart and spade fit, respectively, and a singleton or void somewhere. The same scheme may be used after Stayman when opening 1NT. The bidding sequences would be as follows:

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠\*      and after      1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥\*

The jump bids of three spades and three hearts are a concealed/ambiguous splinter showing a heart fit and a spade fit, respectively. One again uses scroll bids to ask about shortness, if needed:

3NT\* asks                      3♠\* asks

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4♣*	club singleton/void	3NT*	ambiguous void
4♦*	diamond singleton/void	4♣*	club singleton
4♥*	spades singleton/void	4♦*	diamond singleton
		4♥*	heart singleton

With a heart fit, one cannot ask about voids without passing game or bidding too high. This is not the case with a spade fit; one merely bids 4♠\*. The entire bidding sequence becomes

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥\* - 3NT\* - 4♣\* (ask) where

4♦\* shows a diamond void

4♥\* shows a heart void

4♠\* shows a club void

Because 4♣ in the above sequence denotes a splinter, it is not Gerber. Hence, if after 3NT you want to ask about aces, you must use the bid of 5♣ called *Super Gerber* (or you may use Roman Key Card Blackwood with the bid of 4NT, discussed in chapter 3).

The responses to the 5♣ (Super Gerber) ace ask is

5♦	shows zero ace or four aces
5♥	shows one ace
5♠	shows two aces
5NT	shows three aces

### Overview of responses to 1NT (14-17) and examples

Starting points	Bids	Meaning
0–8 (weak)	2♣	Stayman
	2♦/2♥	Jacoby major suit transfer
	3♠/2NT	Jacoby minor suit transfer
	Pass	
9–11 (invitational)	2♣ then 2NT	Invite game
	2♣ then 2♦/3♥	Quest transfer (if played)
	2♦/2♥	Jacoby major suit transfer
	3♠/2NT	Jacoby minor suit transfer
12–16 (game)	2♣	Quest or Smolen
	2♣ next 3♣*	SARS
	2♦/2♥	Jacoby major suit transfer
	3♠/2NT	Jacoby minor suit transfer

	3NT	semibalanced no four-card major
	4♦*/4♥*	Texas transfer
17–18	2♣	Stayman
(slam	2♦/2♥	Jacoby major suit transfer
invitational)	3♠/2NT	Jacoby minor suit transfer
	3♦*/3♥*	Mini-Maxi
	4NT	Quantitative bid
19+	4♣	Gerber
(slam)	5NT	Quantitative (slam/grand slam)

We have covered a lot of material, basic, intermediate, and advanced, when responding to the bid of 1NT. To review the concepts discussed, we next consider several examples.

Your partner opens 1NT, what is your bid with the following hands?

(1) ♠QJ84 ♥10786 ♦8543 ♣A

You have only 6 starting points, bid 2♣ and pass any two-level bid made by partner (Drop Dead Stayman). What if partner bids 3♦ (17 starting points and both majors—Super-Accept Stayman)? He has the majors, bid 4♥, your weakest major, since he should have strength in hearts.

(2) ♠AKJ8 ♥10764 ♦54 ♣98 or (3) ♠J10987 ♥109876 ♦54 ♣7

Hands are weak; one is 4-4 in the majors, and the other is 5-5. Again bid 2♣.

If partner bids a major, pass; otherwise, with both hands, bid 2♥, asking partner to pass or bid 2♠ (Garbage Stayman).

(4) ♠AKJ8 ♥J764 ♦54 ♣J8 or (5) ♠K1098 ♥A95 ♦Q2 ♣K987

Hands (4) and (5) are invitational. With both, one again bids Stayman. If in hand (4) partner bids 2♥ or 2♠, we would raise either to game in the major. Without the support of either major, the bid of 2♦, you would bid 3NT. However, hand (5) is different; after the bid of 2♥, you would bid 3NT; he will pass or correct to four spades if he has four.

(6) ♠KJ85 ♥K764 ♦AQ ♣AJ8 or (7) ♠AQ4 ♥KQ76 ♦Q4 ♣KQ67

Hand (6) is very strong. Bid 4NT as quantitative. With hand (7), bid 2♣. If partner bids either 2♦ or 2♠, one would bid Gerber to investigate a club slam.

(8) ♠Q10987 ♥76 ♦7810 ♣432 or (9) ♠AQ6542 ♥KQ7 ♦Q4 ♣67

With the hand (8), bid 2♥ (Jacoby) and pass partner's bid. This is also the case with hand (9); however, next bid 3NT. Do not invite; partner may pass.

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(10) ♠542 ♥Q7 ♦KQ9876 ♣67      (11) ♠542 ♥97 ♦J109876 ♣67

With hand (10), bid 2NT, and after partner's response of 3♦, pass. What if he responds 3♣, the super-accept bid? Next, bid 3NT. For hand (11), again use the transfer bid of 2NT; however, with a super-accept, bid 3♦. If partner bids 3♦, then pass.

As to the next hand, let's look at a complete example. North is the dealer and opens 1NT. South bids 2♦ and north announces the bid as a transfer. After bidding 2♥, south next shows his diamond suit and bids 3♦. North has a tough choice, notrump or hearts.

He bids 4♥.

	♠ KQ106	
	♥ 1074	
	♦ Q4	
	♣ AK106	
♠ 987	N W E S	♠ AJ52
♥ 65		♥ J98
♦ K986		♦ A3
♣ QJ852		♣ 9742
	♠ 43	
	♥ AKQ32	
	♦ J10752	
	♣ 3	

With a diamond lead, the contract is down one due to the diamond ruff. However, with a club lead, the contract is bid and made.

Partner bids 1NT. What are your responses with each of the following hands?

(12) ♠KQ97 ♥Q10876 ♦AQ ♣Q9 (13) ♠KQ976 ♥K10975 ♦7 ♣A6

With hand (12), you would bid Stayman. Upon hearing the bid of 2♦, playing Smolen, you would bid 3♠\* to show your 4-5 distribution. Partner must now bid 4♥ with three. However, playing Quest transfers, you would bid 3♦\* as a transfer to hearts, an invitational bid. Now partner can either pass or bid 4♥.

With hand (13), after 1NT, you would bid 3♠\*, 5-5 in the majors (Mini-Maxi). After the bid, partner is the captain to bid a major game, notrump, or investigate slam.

(14) ♠KQJ972 ♥Q106 ♦56 ♣Q2 (15) ♠KQJ972 ♥AQ72 ♦J7 ♣A

Hand (14) has a six-card spade suit, bid 4♥\* (Texas transfer), and pass 4♠. Partner knows you have six spades and game values. If he likes spades, he will go on.

With hand (15) would bid 2♣. If partner now bids 2♦, you would bid 4♦ (extended Texas transfer) to show that you are 6-4 in the majors (hearts and spades).

For our last example, we consider two hands:

Opener      ♠KQ2 ♥A106 ♦A756 ♣K104

Responder   ♠AJ107 ♥Q72 ♦KQJ2 ♣Q2

Again, one would open 1NT. And responder would bid 2♦ (deny a four-card major). Now responder would bid 3♣\* (SARS). Opener would bid 3♠\* (showing four diamonds). East next bids 6♦.

We again consider two hands where opener bids 1NT.

Opener      ♠AJ56 ♥J98 ♦AK4 ♣KJ4

Responder   ♠KQ975 ♥ void ♦Q65 ♣AQ762

In this hand, you have several options: transfer to the minor and then bid spades or bid 2♣ Stayman to find a major suit fit. Playing broken suit slam tries, bid 3♣\* to show shortage somewhere and good spades. We will bid 2♣ Stayman. Opener would next bid 2♠. Playing concealed/ambiguous splinters over Stayman, we would next jump and bid 3♥\* (singleton or void somewhere). Opener next uses the relay bid of 3♠\* (to ask). Responding 3NT\* (it is a void). Now 4♣\* is bid to ask where. And partner bids 4♥ (heart void). Opener would next bid 4NT as Roman Key Card Blackwood (responding 5NT—two key cards with a void; see chapter 3). The grand slam of 7♠ may be reached.

### Five-card major suit Stayman

Some partnerships that play the 2/1 force system open the bidding 1NT with a five-card major with at least three cards in the other major where the pattern is 5-3-x-x or 3-5-x-x. On the convention card the box “five-card major common” is marked. The 1NT bid has the advantage of showing points immediately, and if one transfers into the other major, it guarantees a 3-5 fit. However, playing Stayman, if partner bids 2♣, one usually jumps to the three-level in the major to show five. This takes up valuable bidding space. If you do open 1NT when 5-3 in the majors, there are at least two bidding conventions you may use to find a major fit: Puppet Stayman and Five-Card Stayman. The Puppet Stayman bid is often initiated with the bid of 3♣\* (a better approach is to use modified Puppet Stayman to be explained in some detail later). This would replace the Mini-Maxi bid of three clubs showing 5-5 in the minors with a weak hand, if you play puppet. It is a popular bid when you open 2NT. Another option is to play five-card major suit Stayman as a replacement for Stayman. Playing the Five-Card Stayman one again bids 1NT pass 2♣?

However, opener’s responses are    2♥/2♠    minimum hand (14-16) with a five-card major  
    3♥/3♠    maximum hand (17) with a five-card major

To deny a five-card major, opener's responses are

- 2♦ minimum hand with no five-card major
- 3♦ maximum hand no five-card major

With enough for game interest, to find a 4-4 major suit fit, responder merely repeats the inquiry by bidding 3♣. Note that responder may also bid either 3♥\*/3♠\*, which are Smolen bids showing *four* cards in the bid major suit and *five* cards in the other suit (alert). Smolen does not interfere with the five-card major suit Stayman bids. This is also the case if you are playing Quest transfers.

After the 3♣ bid by responder, opener can show a four-card major by bidding 3♥, the cheapest major suit, identical to the 2♣ response using Stayman.

Without game interest and hearing opener's two diamond minimum response, responder does not bid three clubs, but 2♥ = four hearts, 2♠ = four spades, or 2NT = no four-card major.

**Notes:** Using nonforcing Puppet Stayman, you bid 2♣ for Puppet Stayman and respond by bidding 2♦ (no five-card major), then responder bids the major suit at the *two-level* that he *does not have*. This allows the opener to become declarer if there is a 4-4 fit. If the responder is 4-4 in the majors, he bids 2NT (in five-card major Stayman, this signifies no four-card major). If the responder has shown one four-card major, the opener bids 2NT to deny holding four cards in the responder's major. Both methods allow you to find 5-3 and 4-4 fits in the major suits. If the responder bids at the three-level and not the two-level, this is again Smolen or Quest transfers.

For forcing Puppet Stayman with 1NT, one uses the same structure for Puppet Stayman after opening 2NT. The bid is 3♣ (effective January 2013 no longer needs an alert, but responses do need to be alerted), forcing Puppet Stayman. With this approach, 3NT\* by opener denies a four-card or five-card major, and 3♦\* denies a five-card major but promises one or two four-card majors. Responder then bids at the three-level the major he does not have (this is not Smolen). If instead, responder bids four clubs after a three diamond bid by opener, this shows both majors. A bid of four diamonds by responder is a transfer to hearts, and a bid of four hearts is a transfer to spades.

## Overview of several responder rebids

We have reviewed major, minor, and notrump opening bids, responses by partner, and rebids by the opening bidder. In this section, we review several significant rebids by the responder.

### New Minor Forcing (NMF)

In this chapter, we have stressed the importance of finding a major suit fit. With a three- or four-card major, playing 2/1 game force, one opens a minor suit. After the bid of a minor, partner will often bid a four-card major. With a minimum hand (12–15 starting points), opener may support

the major with only three-card support and a semibalanced hand. Using the 3344 convention, responder would bid 2NT\* to investigate opener's shape and strength. However, suppose opener bids 1NT instead with a balanced hand. Because any new suit bid by partner or a rebid of the major is nonforcing, a forcing bid at a low level is needed to facilitate the investigation of a major suit fit.

After responder has bid a major suit and has heard opener's rebid of one notrump, responder with 10+ starting points makes the auction forcing and seeks additional information by bidding a minor suit that is new to the auction. Introduction of the second minor is called New Minor Forcing (NMF). Because this is not a natural bid, it must be *alerted*; the bid is forcing and is asking the opener if he has three-card support for the bid major. When playing NMF, the bid after one notrump cannot be passed; it is artificial and forcing.

Alternatively, one may open a diamond, responder bids one heart and opener bids one spade. Again, two clubs is NMF by responder and starts an invitational auction. Or suppose you open one club, and partner responds one spade and you bid one notrump. A bid of two hearts by responder shows 5-4 in the majors and a weak hand asking partner to pass or bid two spades if he prefers the suit. To show invitational values or better, bid three diamonds, NMF, to force (even with a singleton). This will allow you to find an eight-card fit in either major. If partner has three spades, he will bid two spades and you may bid three spades to invite. If he has two spades and three hearts, he will bid two hearts and you can invite a heart game by bidding three hearts.

Several NMF sequences follow.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) 1♦ - 1♠, 1NT - 2♣* | (2) 1♣ - 1♥, 1NT - 2♦* |
| (3) 1♥ - 1♠, 1NT - 2♣* | (4) 1♣ - 1♠, 1NT - 2♦* |

The New Minor Forcing bid asks opener to show major suit support and strength. With four in the opposite major, responder first bids the other major. He may show three-card support for support for the major later. Without four cards in the other major, he supports responder's major at the two-level (10-12 starting points, minimum values) or three-level (13-15 starting points, maximum values) with three-card support. Without support, the bids of 2NT and 3NT are available. Opener's responses must also be alerted.

In summary, responder's bids are

Responder starting points	Bids
5-9	Pass
10-12	two-level of the other major with four cards in the suit two-level of responder's major with three-card support two notrump without support maximum hand
13-15	three-level of the other major with four cards in the suit

three-level of responder's major with three-card support  
three notrump without support maximum hand

More specifically, we consider a few bidding sequences:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥	1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*	1NT	2♦*
2♠ four spades no support hearts		2♥ four hearts, but may have spades	
2NT—no support, good hand		2♠ three spade support, invitational	
		2NT no support, invitational	
		3♥ four hearts, game force	
		3♠ three spades, game force	
		3♦/3♣/3NT no support, game force	

The convention may also be played with a major suit opening; one heart by opener followed by a bid of one spade by responder. If opener bids one notrump, the bid of a minor by responder is again NMF. It may also be used in the sequence: opener bids one diamond, you bid one heart, and opener rebids one spade. To begin an invitational auction and check on partner's heart length, bid two clubs, NMF. In most situations, NMF is used by the responder. However, it can be used by the opener in the sequence 1♣-1♥, 1♠-1NT, 2♦\* (NMF). In this case, the bid is asking responder if he has three-card support for hearts. We next consider a few examples.

Opener ♠K2 ♥K432 ♦K7 ♣K10789

Responder ♠Q107653 ♥J3 ♦Q65 ♣A7

The bidding would be

1♣ 1♠  
1NT 2♦\*  
2♥ 2♠

Pass

The bid of two diamonds is NMF. Opener bids hearts to show four, and responder signs off in a partial, two spades.

Opener ♠K2 ♥A542 ♦K7 ♣KQ789  
Responder ♠QJ97 ♥7 ♦AQ6 ♣J10654

The bidding would be



1♣ 1♠  
 1NT 2♦\*  
 2♥ 3♣

The bid of 3♣ is forcing. With a weaker hand, one would bypass NMF and jump to three clubs after the bid of 1NT.

Opener ♠K89 ♥K52 ♦7 ♣AKQ789  
 Responder ♠A2 ♥AQ987 ♦5643 ♣106

The bidding would be

1♣ 1♥  
 1NT 2♦\*  
 3♣ 3♥  
 4♥

Using the NMF convention, you easily reach your heart game.

### Two-Way New Minor Forcing (game force NMF)

A disadvantage of NMF is that the opener cannot tell whether the responder has invitational or game-going values until the responder's rebid. To overcome this problem, one may use the Two-Way NMF convention. This tool is based upon a relay and using both minors effectively. The club suit signals all invitational hands (10–11 starting points) and the diamond suit a game-going hand (12–13+ starting points).

Bidding sequences follows:

- (1) 1♦/1♣ - 1♥/1♠, 1NT -2♣\* invitational values
- (2) 1♦/1♣ - 1♥/1♠, 1NT -2♦\* game forcing values

Now two clubs is used by an invitational hand (whether one opens one club or one diamond) to seek three-card support for the major bid or an unbid four-card major. Lacking these, opener bids two diamonds. Now any bid by responder may be passed.

Thus, with the hand ♠7 ♥K7432 ♦Q65 ♣AQ32, a bid of three clubs may be passed by opener. Or suppose opener bids one diamond and you have an invitational hand: ♠AJT32 ♥KQT4 ♦654 ♣7 and bid one spade. After the bid of 1NT, you bid two clubs, suppose you hear the bid of two diamonds. You now bid two hearts to describe a 5-4 card hand with invitational values. With game forcing values and 5-4 or 5-5, you would bid two diamonds. At this time, a 2NT bid by opener is not needed. Instead, the bid of 2NT\* (called the Wolff Sign-Off relay bid) is used as a

relay. Partner wants you to bid three clubs, which he will pass with a long weak club hand, or if he bids another suit, it is forcing to game.

As another example, suppose you hold ♠AJ432 ♥AJT43 ♦65 7 and partner opens one diamond. You respond one spade and partner bids 1NT. With only invitational values, you bid two clubs, partner bids two diamonds, and you bid three hearts. Holding the hand ♠AKJ432 ♥7 ♦6 ♣AQT56, if partner opens one diamond, you again bid one spade. Now with game forcing values after a bid of 1NT, you bid 2♦; having a game forcing bid early keeps the bidding low and permits one to investigate slam.

What follows are some examples from [www.freewebs.com/bobbybridge/conventions](http://www.freewebs.com/bobbybridge/conventions).

After a minor suit opening, major suit response, and a 1NT rebid by opener, the normal method of rebidding by responder is to use the rebid of two of the other minor as a forcing bid, asking opener for three-card support in responder's major. This is called New Minor Forcing. A slightly more sophisticated version is to use rebids of both 2♣ and 2♦ as artificial rebids. In that method, known as Two-Way New Minor, 2♣ is the starting point for invitational sequences, and the 2♦ rebid establishes a game force.

1♦ 1♠  
1NT?

2♣ - forces opener to rebid 2♦, then responder continues:

- Pass - sign-off in diamonds
- 2♥ - invitational with five spades and four hearts
- 2♠ - mildly invitational with five plus spades
- 2NT - invitational with five spades and balanced hand
- 3♣ - invitational with four spades and five clubs
- 3♦ - invitational with five spades and four diamonds
- 3♥ - invitational with fifty-five in majors
- 3♠ - invitational with six spades

2♦ - Game force, no specific shape promised. Opener shows length in hearts, three-card spade support, and five-card diamond suit, or rebids NT, whichever seems the most natural.

Responders' third rebids are always natural.

- 2♥ - Noninvitational with 54+ in majors
- 2♠ - Noninvitational with six plus spades
- 2NT - Invitational with only 4 spades. Opener should accept with maximum count, and will not normally show spade support on the way to game
- 3♣ - Sign-off with four spades and six clubs
- 3♦ - Invitational with four spades and four plus diamonds. Opener should not normally show spade support; rebids are geared to reaching 3NT.
- 3♥ - Game force with 55 in majors. Instead 2♦ followed by 3♥ shows 54 shape

3♠ - Game force, possible slam with six good spades. Opener may cue with good controls, with as little as xx in spades. Instead 2♦ followed by 3♠ shows either five spades or six not-so-good spades.

1♣ 1♥

1NT?

2♠ - four spades and four hearts, not forcing

3♣ - not invitational, with four plus hearts and normally five plus clubs.

3♦ - Sign-off with four hearts and six diamonds

Others - same or equivalent meaning as after 1♦-1♠-1NT

Note that the above structure is geared to responding in a major over a 1♣ (Walsh) in that opener is permitted to bypass a four-card spade suit after a 1♥ response to rebid 1NT.

The only sequence lost (compared to playing New Minor Forcing) is 1♣-1M-1NT-2♠ to play. In return, you gain more ways to invite and more precise shape definition in all the sequences. Two-Way New Minor is thus strongly recommended and preferred.

Since 2♣ and 2♦ are both Checkback bids, you need a method for getting out of a minor suit partial. Getting out of 2♦ is easy, since you can bid 3♣ and pass opener's response or bid 3♦. However, getting out of clubs is a bit more involved. Now you proceed:

1m 1M

1NT 2NT is a relay to 3♣

which you now pass.

A final note when using this convention; the bid of 3NT after finding a major suit fit is always *serious 3NT* with interest in slam. If either partner bypasses 3NT and cue bids, slam is usually not of interest.

### **Two-Way NMF with Checkback Stayman after 1NT**

The Checkback Stayman convention is used with the bidding sequence 1m-1M-1NT (with 12–14 minimum and 15–17 maximum points with a nonbalanced hand). Again, with invitational values, one needs a forcing sequence. Playing Two-Way New Minor Forcing as a game force bid, we can redefine the bid of 2♣ as an invitational game force bid. The bids follow.

#### **2♣ as Checkback Stayman (whether on open one diamond or one club)**

1m-1M

1NT-2♣ (Checkback)

2♦ No four-card major or three-card support for the major

2♥/2♠ Min and shows either the other four-card majors or three-card support for responders major

3♥/3♠ Max and show either the other four-card major or four-card support for responds major

After the bid of two diamonds, responder may rebid his six-card major suit to the two-level with a weak hand. With a six-card major and a weak hand, responder may raise his major suit; if 5-4 in spades and hearts, one may show the other major. However, if responder bids hearts, to show spades, a reverse by responder, shows 13+ starting points and is game forcing.

### **New Minor Forcing vs. Checkback Stayman**

Having reviewed both, which system should you play? The major disadvantage for NMF is that one cannot show invitational values and the bidding process takes up too much bidding space. In addition, you cannot show a weak 5-5 major minor hand. Finally, NMF takes up too much bidding space when one opens one club, since now one diamond becomes New Minor Forcing. Recommendation: use Checkback Stayman by bidding 2♣ (invitational values) and NMF by bidding 2♦ (game-going values).

### **X-Y-Z convention**

#### **Introduction to X-Y-Z or Two-Way Checkback**

The convention goes by two names; however, they are both the same. They provide a series of bids after a 1NT rebid by opener. It replaces what is normally New Minor Forcing (NMF). It is applied after opener bids one of a suit, responder bids one of a suit, and opener rebids 1NT.

Comparing the systems involves rating how each handles the three basic hand groups that responder will hold:

Sign-off hands  
Invitational hands  
Forcing hands

The conventions are about equal in terms of handling sign-offs. Both have flaws as relating to getting out in a minor suit at a low level. However X-Y-Z or Two-Way Checkback allows much more definition and clarity in the invitational and forcing sequences. It is capable of relaying distribution, high card strength, and location of strength information to opener so that the correct strain and level can be reached.

#### **The basics**

The basic premise the system is that bids of 2♣ and 2♦ are both artificial. There are three features to the system:

- 1) The 2♣ response to a 1NT rebid is a forced relay to 2♦

- 2) The 2♦ response to a 1NT rebid is an artificial game force (even if partner's opening bid was 1♦). It is usually a major suit Checkback but is occasionally a prelude to showing a forcing bid in a minor.
- 3) Jump rebids by responder, in any suit, are forcing. They describe good hands or good suit(s) with HCPs in long suit(s).

### Checkback and the sign-off

This treatment is very much the way most play it now. Responder's rebids of the original major (or 2♥ if 1♠ was the initial response) are not forward going. Below are a few easy examples:

1m 1♠ 1m 1♠ 1♥ 1♠

1NT 2♠ 1NT 2♥ 1NT 2♠

The approach to signing off in a minor is as follows. To sign off in 2♦, responder bids 2♣—opener should alert and explain as a *relay* to 2♦, either to play or the start of some invitational sequence.

The auction may go 1♦ 1♠

1NT 2♣\*

2♦\* Pass

\* = alert

This is how responder gets back to 2♦. Remember you can't bid 2♦ directly over 1NT as a preference, for it is an artificial force.

Signing off in clubs is tricky. This is the exception to the 2♣ is invitational rule. In this case, bid 2♣ forcing 2♦, then bid 3♠ to play. We'll revisit this area at the end of the discussion to see how different approaches might be applied to this sequence that will open up several possibilities for the scientists.

### Checkback with invitational hands

In present NMF methods, responder bids NMF or jumps to the three-level to show an invitational hand. Playing Checkback, responder bids 2♣, forcing 2♦ from opener. Responder then clarifies his hand type as the example below shows:

1♣ 1♠ **Responder's bids**

1NT 2♣\* P = to play

2♦\* ??? 2♥ = invitational values with five plus spades and four plus heart

2♠ = invitational with five plus spades

2NT = invitational with clubs

3♣ = sign-off in clubs

3♦ = invitational with diamonds

3♥ = highly invitational with five plus spades and five plus hearts

3♠ = Highly invitational with six plus spades

How do we invite in NT? Just bid 2N over 1NT as in standard.

As you can see, the invitational sequences are very descriptive compared with the NMF sequences.

### Checkback with forcing hands

In present NMF methods, responder bids NMF, then makes a strength showing bid of some type to establish a force. Playing Checkback, responder has two options available to show forcing hands:

- 1) Jump rebids. These tend to be good hands. If jumping in the suit you responded, this should show at least six cards in length and values in the suit (not Kxxxxx; the worst holding may be more like AJT9xx). If jumping into a new suit, responder shows at least 5-5 distribution with HCPS concentrated in the suits bids.
- 2) All other forcing hands start with responder bidding 2D over opener's 1NT rebid. This immediately establishes a game force. Opener now responds naturally. I use the following priorities for opener (responder should remember that opener's bidding of a does not deny b or c. However, bidding b does deny a, etc.)
  - a. Bid the other major with four of them
  - b. Bid partner's major with three
  - c. Rebid good five-card minor (or six-card minor for hand hogs)
  - d. Bid 2N with none of the above

So 2♦ usually is a forcing bid looking for a major suit fit (four of the other major or three-card support for bid major), a force in either minor or just some hand that does not fall into the jump rebid categories. Some examples will help clarify things responder needs to keep in mind.

AKQJT    Bid 2♦—good suits but should be 5-5 to jump,  
AKXX  
XX  
XX

AKQJT    Bid 2♦—good suits but should be 6+ to jump,  
KXX  
XX  
QXX

KJTXX    Bid 2♦—correct shape with scattered values  
KXXXX    Not a good hand. Partner must judge its potential.  
AQ  
K

An example sequence with definitions of calls by responder follows.

**1♣ 1♠ Responder's bids**

- 1NT 2♦\* 2♠ = Forcing with six plus spades, looks notrumpish  
 2♥ ??? 2NT = Random force 17 HCP +/-  
 3♣ = Natural force doesn't fit jump requirements  
 3♦ = Natural force doesn't fit jump requirements  
 3♥ = Forcing, better than 4H  
 3♠ = Forcing 6+ (may have four cards in opener's minor)  
 3NT = to play, opener can correct with three-card support.  
 4m = splinter in support of hearts

**Checkback in general**

Note that Checkback is used in the following two auctions (it actually works well in both of these)

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1♠  
 1NT 1NT

It works well in with Walsh bids because it allows diamonds to be a playable spot at a low level.

It is also easily adapted to a weak NT system, especially when opener bypasses a major suit to show strength.

**Checkback with clubs**

Some of the harder parts of Checkback to remember are the exceptions.

2♣ forces 2♦, to play or starts invitations *unless* one rebids 3♣, then it's to play, to invite in clubs, bid 2♣, then 2NT. To invite in NT, do not go through 2♣ relay; bid 2NT directly.

Forget 2♣, then 3♣ to play; 2♣ then 2NT invites clubs. Bid directly to invite in NT. Use 2♣ as a relay to 2♦ to play or *invitational* in some suit or NT. Now the only memory required is that if I want to invite, I start with 2♣—always, no exceptions.

A review

- 1♣ 1♠ 2NT = Natural NT invitational  
 1NT 2♣\* 3♣ = Inv with clubs  
 2♦ ??? To get out in 3♣ don't bid 2♣; bid 2NT = a relay to 3♣

The only thing one needs to remember is that 2N is a relay to 3♣. 2NT can't be invitational. Why? Because *all* invitational sequences start with 2♣.

The X-Y-Z convention makes all jump bids strong (except three clubs, which is weak). The convention is always off in competition or by a passed hand. For additional detail for those

interested, consult Max Hardy's (2002) *Advanced Bridge Bidding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York: Squeeze Books.

### **Wolff Sign-Off with Checkback Stayman**

What do you do when you respond to partner's one-level bid with 5 or a bad 6 starting points HCP and your partner then bids two notrump?

For example:

Hand 1)	♠ K 7 6 4 2	Hand 2)	♠ Q 10 9 5
	♥ K 9		♥ 6 3
	6 5 4		
	♦ 5 2		♦ K 9 8 7 4 3
	♣ 6		♣ 6

In both hands, your partner opens one club and you respond one spade, and now your partner bids 2NT (showing a balanced hand with 18–19 starting points). Your hands are very distributional; pass is not an acceptable bid, and any suit continuation is forcing to game. You do not want to encourage to game. How can you stop the auction at the three levels? To solve this problem, Bobby Wolff proposed the Wolff Sign-Off bid.

Responder must bid 3♣\* (an alert) as an artificial relay to 3♦. Opener is asked to go no higher. This permits the opener to get to any suit except clubs and stop at the three-level.

With the first hand, bid three clubs, and after opener's bid of three diamonds, you bid three hearts. Opener knows to either pass or correct to three spades.

With the second hand, you pass the three diamond bid by the opener. If responder bids three notrump after the relay bid of three diamonds, this shows *mild* interest in slam in the opener's minor suit.

What if you have a strong hand with clubs? For example, suppose you have the hand

Hand 3)	♠ A K 6 3
	♥ Q 4
	♦ 8 4
	♣ A 9 8 6 5

After the relay bid of three clubs, you would bid 5♣, showing no interest in slam (principle of fast arrival). With a stronger hand (15+ starting points), bid four clubs instead. This suggests *strong* interest in a minor suit club slam.

With a balanced hand and 7–10 starting points, bid 3NT after 2NT as a sign-off.



**Major Suit Checkback Stayman (with 9+ starting points)**

Because three clubs is always the Wolff Sign-Off, 3♦\* is used as a Checkback for major suit fits. Responder is usually seeking three-card support for a five-card major already bid, four cards in the major not bid, or if holding five spades and four hearts, either a 4-4 fit in hearts (preferred) or a 5-3 fit in spades.

If responder's first bid was in hearts, opener shows four spades after the Checkback bid. If responder's first suit was spades, opener's first priority is to show four hearts after the Checkback.

The goal of the Checkback sequence is to first find a 4-4 fit in the majors, and if not, a 5-3 fit. A bid of 3NT by the opener, after Checkback, denies a major suit fit.

In the auction 1m-1♥, 2NT - 3♦\*, opener knows that partner is seeking a 5-3 heart fit. The bid of 3♠ shows four spades. If responder bids 3NT, opener will correct to four hearts holding three hearts or will pass with a heart doubleton.

In the auction 1m-pass-1♠ - 2NT, 3♦\*, opener knows that partner is seeking a fit in the majors holding five spades and four hearts. The goal is to reach game in hearts or a heart slam. With four hearts, partner will bid 3♥, finding a heart fit; the partnership will be in a heart game or investigate slam. With three spades, he would bid 3♠, and a 5-3 spade fit would be found. With a spade doubleton or with only three hearts, opener would bid 3NT.

What if responder is 5-3 in the majors? And the bidding goes 1m-1♠, 2NT-3♦\* -?.

Checkback is asking for a spade fit. If opener bids 3♥ to show four, responder would bid 3NT. Opener now realizes the Checkback bid was to find a 5-3 spade fit. Opener would correct to 4♠ holding three.

There are many ways to play Checkback Stayman. The version provided here follows that recommended by Max Hardy.

**Fourth suit forcing**

Fourth suit forcing is used to allow responder to create a forcing auction at his second turn to bid. The convention may be used by responder as a one round force or a game force. If you play it as a one round force, responder should have 10–12 starting points. If you play it as a game force bid, responder should have 13+ starting points (both are on the convention card in red, so the bid must be alerted). It usually implies that one has no good bid, but values, and allows the partnership to search for the best contract. While the fourth suit bid is usually made by the responder, it may also be made by the opening bidder. The convention was developed by Norman Squire from England.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

Playing opening a club, the sequence 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ is a one-round forcing auction; however, the bid of one spade is usually natural. However, a more typical sequence may be 1♣-1♥-1♠-2♦\* or 1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥\*, among others. After the fourth suit bid, opener may

1. Raise responder's first bid suit with three-card support and a minimum hand.
2. Jump in responder's first bid suit with three-card support and a maximum.
3. Bid 2NT with the fourth suit stopped without three-card supports in the first bid suit of responder and even a doubleton.
4. Raise the fourth suit with four-card support.
5. A jump in the fourth suit shows 5-5 distribution.
6. Make a more natural rebid by rebidding his first bid suit.

To illustrate, the above steps:

1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦* - 2♠	shows <i>three-card</i> spade support
2NT	shows a <i>diamond stopper</i>
2♥	shows <i>six hearts</i> (or five good ones)
3♣	shows <i>five clubs</i>
3♦	shows <i>four-card</i> diamond support
3♠, 3NT, 3♥, 4♣	extra strength

Let's look at an example. Suppose as responder you hold the following hand:

Responder ♠AJ567 ♥987 ♦Q7 ♣AK5

And the bidding goes 1♦-1♠-2♣- (?) What do you bid? Clearly, you have sufficient points for game (14 starting points) somewhere.

After the bid of two clubs, responder sees sufficient values for game. A rebid of spades shows a weak hand and responder is not strong enough to jump to three spades. He cannot support either minor, since the opener is probably 5-4 in the minors. Without a heart stopper, he cannot bid 2NT. The only forcing bid that responder may make is 2♥\*, fourth suit forcing to show values (to game or for one round, depending on the agreement). Partner with a heart stopper may bid notrump or rebid clubs to show 5-5 distribution in the minors. Responder will then bid 5♣.

Let's consider another example when you hold the following hand:

♠Q 10 7 ♥A K 8 7 4 ♦J 10 4 ♣A 7

And the bidding goes 1♦-1♥-2♣- (?)

Clearly, you would bid 2♠\* (fourth suit forcing) to see if partner has three hearts. If he does not and rebids diamonds, you would bid 3NT.

As responder, you hold the following hand:

♠A963 ♥A K 6 5 ♦Q 8 4 ♣A 7.

And the bidding goes 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣ - (?). What do you bid? Clearly, bid 3NT; do not use fourth suit forcing.

As opener and responder, you have the following hands:

Opener      ♠AQJ56 ♥KJ98 ♦K4 ♣J4

Responder   ♠75 ♥AQ ♦9865 ♣AQ762

The bidding may go 1♠ - 2♣ (game force) - 2♥ - 3♦ (natural) – 3NT. The bid of three diamonds is not fourth suit forcing after a 2/1 bid.

Failure to use the fourth suit as a forcing bid always limits responder's hand. If, for example, the bidding were to go

1♦ - 1♥

1♠ - 3♠ (the 3♠ bid is nonforcing)

While fourth suit forcing is most often used by responder, it may also be employed by the opening bidder. For example, with the following hands:

Opener      ♠7 ♥987 ♦AK84 ♣AKQ98

Responder   ♠AJ9876 ♥A2 ♦Q7 ♣762

The bidding sequence may go as follows.

1♣ 1♠

2♦ 2♠

3♥\* 3NT (I have a heart stopper)

## Opening bids and rebids—some additional examples

(1) Your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following hand.

Responder   ♠1095 ♥A1032 ♦A106 ♣Q98

You have 10 starting points. Playing Combined Bergen, bid 3♦\* (three pieces with three trumps). If you play Bergen raises, bid 1NT and jump to 3♠ to show a limit raise in spades. If you do not play Bergen, you would have to bid a minor suit fragment. You cannot bid 2♥ because you hold only four cards.

(2) Your partner opens 1♣ and you hold the hand.

Responder   ♠K93 ♥K7 ♦A1094 ♣Q1075

You have 11 starting points (12 HCP – 1 for dubious doubleton) and bid 1♦. Partner bids 2♥ (a reverse showing 17+ points). You are near slam, so you should show your four-card club suit; bid 3♣. Partner is the captain and will bid on.

(3) Your partner opens 1♠ and you hold

Responder ♠AQJ762 ♥7 ♦AK983 ♣5

You have great spade support and 17 starting points; bid Jacoby 2NT.

(4) You hold the following hand:

Opener ♠AQJ106 ♥A8 ♦QJ7 ♣K98

You have 17 starting points. You have five spades and only three hearts. Bid 1♠ and then jump into notrump to 2NT for your next bid over a one-level suit bid.

(5) You hold ♠A2 ♥AJ984 ♦AK852 ♣7

Your partner opens 1♣. What do you bid? You have 18 starting points and two five-card suits. Bid 1♥ (new suit forcing). Partner now responds 1♠. If you bid 2♦\* (fourth suit forcing), your hand is limited to 10–12 points not playing it as a game force. You are too strong; you should jump to 3♦ to show your values.

(6) You hold ♠AKJ93 ♥AK96 ♦7 ♣KJ8. What do you open?

You have 21 starting points, with an unbalanced hand. Open 1♠. Partner bids 2NT\* (Jacoby). You next show your singleton; bid 3♦\*. You have to move toward slam. Tools for your continued responses are discussed in chapter 3.

(7) You hold ♠AJ7 ♥1075 ♦KQJ6 ♣A85

Partner opens 1♣; you have a balanced hand with 15 starting points. To show your values, bid 3NT.

(8) You hold ♠76 ♥Q1075 ♦QJ62 ♣J98

Partner opens 1♣; what do you bid? You have four hearts and four diamonds and only 6 starting points. Show your major and bid 1♥, bypassing diamonds. Partner next bids 2♠, a reverse showing 17+ points. To show your stopper in diamonds, bid 2NT.

(9) You hold ♠Q9 ♥AK10752 ♦Q ♣KJ98

You open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT. What is your rebid?

Here you must decide whether to show your club suit or rebid your hearts. You have 15 starting points; your hand is in the minimum range. Rebid hearts; with 16+ points, you would show your club suit.

(10) You hold ♠9843 ♥A75 ♦78 ♣AKJ8

You open the hand 1♣ and partner responds 1♦. What is your rebid?

Your choices are to show your four-card spade suit or bid 1NT. Even with those spades, you must show your four-card major. With a more balanced hand, one less club and one more diamond card, some may then bid 1NT.

(11) You hold ♠AQJ984 ♥75 ♦QJ1078 ♣Void

You have 10 HCP and 3 length points, or 13 starting points. Open the hand 1♠.

### **Jacoby 2NT (modified by the experts)**

Many established partnerships play a modified version of the Jacoby 2NT bid. It is a game force bid promising four-card support for the major suit bid with an opening hand, 13+ dummy points. However, it better describes hand shape and values and does not require the use of scroll bids.

After the opening bid of a major and a 2NT response by partner, opener's responses are now (all bids are alerted)

4 of the major	a very bad hand always 5-3-3-2
3♣	any other minimum hand even 5-3-3-2, but with redeeming value
3♦	nonminimum, with a side singleton/void somewhere
3♥	nonminimum, any 5-4-2-2 distribution
3♠	nonminimum, six plus trumps (no singleton/void)
3NT	nonminimum, 5-3-3-2
four of a new suit	a five plus card suit with an ace/king

After the above responses, if responder (partner) jumps to game in the bid major, it is a sign-off bid with no slam interest.

With slam interest, responder may ask for additional information.

After opener's 3♣ responded bids 3♦ to ask for more information, which is similar to the original responses by the opener:

4 of other major    a bad hand always 5-3-3-2

3♥	minimum, with a side singleton/void
3♠	minimum, any 5-4-2-2 distribution
3NT	minimum with six plus trumps and no singleton/void
4 of a new suit	minimum, five plus card suit with ace/king

(After opener's 3♥ or 3♠ answer to 3♦, the next steps use the same schedule of responses as below)

After opener's 3♦:

Responder bid 3♥ to ask for more information, then

Step 1	a void somewhere
Step 2	singleton in the lowest side suit (clubs)
Step 3	singleton in next side suit (diamonds)
Step 4	singleton in highest side suit (other major)

After step 1 (void), the next bids asks where, and the first step is clubs, second step is diamonds, and the third step is the other major.

After opener's 3♥; responder bids 3♠ to ask for more information, then

Step 1	singleton in the lowest side suit (clubs)
Step 2	singleton in next side suit (diamonds)
Step 3	singleton in highest side suit (other major)

Playing the modified (expert) 2NT convention, it is never on if the opponent's interfere.

However, to cope with interference over the bid of 2NT, the following set of bids is employed.

Double by opener	shortness in opponents bid suit
New suit	natural or a control
3NT	balanced maximum (ace/king in their suit)
Pass	flat hand 5-3-3-2 - if partner next double it for penalty jump to 4
other M	minimum hand with 6+ in original major

If the opponents double as asking bid, redouble = business, pass = step 1, etc. If the opponents bid after and asking bid, double = penalty, pass = step 1, etc. (except when the double shortness, as above).

Another version of Jacoby 2NT has been suggested by Marty Bergen. His version summarized by Don Varvel ([varvel@cs.utexas.edu](mailto:varvel@cs.utexas.edu)) follows.

## **Bergen's Jacoby 2NT**

The convention is explained using the bid 1♥-2NT\*. The bids for 1♥-2NT\* are similar.

Opener's rebids (all bids are alerted):

- 3♣ = Nonminimums with singletons or big balanced or semibalanced hands
- 3♦ = Nonminimum two suiters or \*any\* good hand that is anxious to learn more about responder's distribution
- 3♥ = All hands with voids
- 3♠ = All minimums with singletons
- 3NT = Good hands with a six-card suit
- 4m = Decent minimums, identifying cheaper ace or king
- 4♥ = Decent minimums with no control in a minor suit
- 4♠ = Sign-off

"Decent" tends to center on 13 HCP. 5-4 qualifies as a two suiter when there are 13 HCP. Big balanced is 17+; big semibalanced is 15+.

Over 3♣ or 3♥ opener will usually relay; over 3S sometimes. The relay suit is the next higher. Opener shows his shortness in steps in the order ♣, ♦, OM. Over 3♣-3♦, with the big balanced or semibalanced hand, opener bids the cheaper minor-suit control. Nonrelay bids are asking bids again in steps. That is, over 3♣, 3♥ is an asking bid in clubs. Responses are in steps, showing control of the suit asked: first step shows no control, second shows Q or XX, third shows K or X, fourth shows ace.

Over 3♦ responder shows shortness: 3♥ = doubleton club, 3♠ = doubleton diamond, 3NT = doubleton heart, 4♣ = nonminimum 4x3, 4♦ and 4♥ show singleton club and diamond, respectively, and a hand too strong to splinter, and 4♠ shows a minimum 4x3. (Bergen's splinters are limited to 12 HCP at most.) After all of this, cue bids and Kickback follow.

## Two-over-one without Bergen

When playing 2/1, we have recommended some sort of Bergen bids to a major suit opening bid; however, when the Bergen bids are made, it allows the opponents to double the response for a lead. To avoid this situation, many partnerships do not employ Bergen and instead use natural responses. How does this work?

If you do not use Bergen, then a jump bid to the three-level in the major shows four-card support and 10–12 dummy points. Now a jump bid of three in any lower-ranking suit denies support for the bid major and shows a six plus card suit with 10–11/12 points.

The bids of 1NT, 2NT, and 3NT are defined as if you adopted the Bergen system of bids.

## Two-Way NMF with Wolff Modified

Playing the 2/1 game force system, one makes a one-level bid with 11/12–19 points. Playing 2/1 with the strong notrump convention, one opens 1NT with 15–17 HCP and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semibalanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void. However, if one cannot open 1NT (15–17 HCP), a one-level minor suit bid is made without a five-card major.

The opening bidder may now have a minimum hand with 11/12–14 points, an intermediate hand with 15–17 points, or a strong hand with 18+ points. And partner may have 0–5/6 points (very weak), 6–9 points (weak), 10–12 points (invitational), or 13+ points (strong—game-going 2/1 hand).

Not having a five-card major, the opening bidder will now open the bidding of one of a minor, usually a three-card suit (the convenient minor).

Note some players may use a short club (0–2), which may be played as forcing (e.g., Montreal relay or Walsh club conventions) or as nonforcing (e.g., Kennedy club). Playing a short club, the bid of one diamond is usually of length four and does not require an alert. The 1♣ bid must be *announced* as short if *nonforcing* and *alerted* if *forcing*.

### Nonforcing responses to New Minor opening

After the opening bid, one of a minor (1♣/1♦), and partner bids a major, a rebid of 1NT (by the opener) shows a minimum or intermediate hand (11/12–14 points or 15–17 points). A new suit by responder (after opener bids 1NT) is *nonforcing*; it is only forcing over suit bids. It shows a two-suited hand, which partner may pass if he prefers the second suit. A rebid of responder's own suit is also nonforcing after 1NT, showing a five-card major. For example:

1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♣ (nonforcing to play)

1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♣ (nonforcing to play)

1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♦ (nonforcing to play)

1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♦ (nonforcing to play)

With a minimum hand, opener will usually pass; however with 15–17 points (an intermediate hand), opener may make a reverse two-level bid (1♣-1♥/1♠-2♦, 1♣-1♠-2♥, or 1♦-1♠-2♥) or make a jump rebid. The bid of 2NT by opener shows 18+ points. What if responder bids 2NT over opener's 1NT bid? It is *not* invitational but conventional.

### 1m-1M-1NT-2NT\* (conventional, *not* natural)

2NT\* is a relay to 3♣, that's how you sign off in clubs, then over 3♣

Pass = clubs

3♦ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, doubleton

3♥ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, singleton/void

3♠ = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, doubleton

3NT = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, singleton/void



When partner opens one of a minor and responder has a five-card major and bids 1♥/1♠, what convention does one use to invite game, or force to game, without jumping to the three-level in the major?

There are several commonly used “club” conventions one may learn playing the 2/1 game force system:

- (1) New Minor Forcing (NMF)
- (2) Checkback Stayman
- (3) Two-Way New Minor Forcing (also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman)

Of course, other conventions are employed to address the problem; for example, in England, the Crowhurst convention is popular.

While many club members may want to learn either NMF or Checkback Stayman, both have severe drawbacks. The conventions *do not* distinguish between invitational and game forcing hands, and the NMF convention takes up too much bidding space. So do not spend your time learning two conventions.

A convention you should learn is Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF is marked in red on your convention card, as is New Minor Forcing convention due to their popularity). A very good brief introduction is provided by Larry Cohen at <http://www.larryco.com/BridgeArticles/ArticlePrint.aspx?articleID=549>.

### **Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF)**

Responder uses the Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF) convention when opener bids 1NT after opening with a minor with a five-card major. It requires at 10–12 points (game invitational strength); otherwise, responder may just rebid his major or show a second suit. The bidding sequence follows.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)

Note: This convention is not used with less than 10 points. It is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference. The only exception is if the opponents bid 1♦ over opener's bid of 1♣ or doubles one-level club bid.

Responder with game-invitational values (10–12 points) and a five-card major makes the forcing bid of 2♣\*. Because the club bid is artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has three-card support for the major suit bid (with four-card support, opener

would have supported the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major.

If the opener doesn't have three-card support, his first obligation is to show four cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2♦. What does this mean? The bids follow in some detail for each minor and major suit bid.

### Club opening

Opener    Responder

1♣        1♥

1NT       2♣\*(2WNMF)

?

2♦    - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)

2♥    - three-card support, minimum (11/12–14 points)

2♠    - no support (four spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)

2NT   - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)

3♣    - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣

3♦    - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)

3♥    - three-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener    Responder

1♣        1♠

1NT       2♣\*(2WNMF)

?

2♦    - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)

2♥    - no support (four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points) – (3433)

2♠    - three-card support (not four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)

2NT   - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)

3♣    - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣

3♦    - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)

3♥    - four hearts may have three-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)

3♠    - three-card support without four hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

### Diamond Opening

Opener    Responder

1♦        1♥

1NT       2♣\*(2WNMF)

?

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♥ - three-card support, minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - three-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener Responder

- 1♦ 1♠
- 1NT 2♣\*(2WNMF)
- ?

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♥ - no support (four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♠ - three-card support (not four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - four hearts may have three-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - three-card support without four hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

When one has 13+ points (game-invitational values) as responder, the 2♣\* bid is replaced with the bid of 2♦\* and now is game forcing with a five plus card major.

Opener Responder

- 1♣ 1♥/1♠
- 1NT 2♦\*(2WNMF - GF)

Opener Responder

- 1♦ 1♥/1♠
- 1NT 2♦\*(2WNMF - GF)

Because the bid is again artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has three-card support for the major suit bid (with four-card support, opener would support the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major. Again if opener doesn't have three-card support, his first obligation is to show four cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2NT. The responses for the forcing sequence are similar to the nonforcing 2♣\* bids.

## Club opening

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♥  
1NT 2♦\*(2WNMF - GF)  
?

- 2♥ - three-card support, minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♠ - no support (four spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - three-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♠  
1NT 2♦\*(2WNMF - GF)  
?

- 2♥ - no support (four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♠ - three-card support (not four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2NT - no support, minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - four hearts may have three-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - three-card support without four hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

## Diamond Opening

Opener Responder

1♦ 1♥  
1NT 2♦\*(2WNMF- GF)  
?

- 2♥ - three-card support, minimum (11/12–14 points)
- 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - three-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

3NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

Opener Responder

1♦ 1♠

1NT 2♦\*(2NMF - GF)

?

2♥ - no support (four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)

2♠ - three-card support (not four hearts), minimum (11/12–14 points)

2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12–14 points)

3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)

3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦

3♥ - four hearts may have three-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)

3♠ - three-card support without four hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

3NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

I have tried to provide all the bidding combinations, showing shape and points, when using 2WNMF; for several example hands, see the twelve-page pdf on the web by pasting the following link into your web browser:

[www.lajollabridge.com/LJUnit/Education/2-WayNewMinorForcing.pdf](http://www.lajollabridge.com/LJUnit/Education/2-WayNewMinorForcing.pdf)

### **Wolff Sign-Off Modified (WSOM) convention**

We have reviewed the case where the opening bidder has 11/12–17 points. We now look at the Wolff Sign-Off Modified (WSOM) convention when the opener bids 2NT = 18+ points. I have modified WSO to address the 5-2, 4-2, 5-3, 4-4, 6-5, 5-5, 5-6, 4-6, and 6-4 major's suit distributions.

**Wolff Sign-Off Modified** - After opener makes a strong 2NT rebid, the Wolff Sign-Off is a responder method normally used by responder to warn the strong opener of subgame values; in the normal situation, the opener is instructed to pass (opener promises two to three cards in responder's major suit when rebidding 2NT). The theory behind the convention assumes that openers 2NT rebid is restricting openers values to 18–19 HCP, thus responder is now the captain and places the contract. When used in conjunction with major suit Checkback, responder has the tools to force to game/slam and to sign off at the three-level or (four-level if signing off in clubs).

Note: The WSOM convention is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference. Not playing the WSOM but NMF, the bid of 3♣\* is NMF!

We are using the WSOM convention when opener bids a minor; it may also be used when opener bids a major at the one-level, or when the opener bids 2NT over any one-level bid by responder (e.g., 1♥-1♠-2NT, 1♦-1♥/1♠-2NT, or 1♣-1♦/1♥/1♠-2NT).

## Nonforcing bids over opener's 2NT bid

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – (Pass/3NT/4M) – Sign-off Bids (5–7 points) – For example

Pass with ♠74 ♥K108743 ♦ J432 ♣7 or ♠AJ72 ♥863♦106 ♣876

3NT with ♠J743 ♥ K986 ♦ Q72 ♣J105

4♠ with ♠AJ1062 ♥J65 ♦1086 ♣7

With a huge hand, opener may use Gerber or RKCB to investigate slam.

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣\* (WSOM – 8–12 points)

The artificial 3♣\* bid shows a weak hand, generally with at least five cards in responder's bid major (may be 6-4 or 5-5). With three-card support for the major, opener bids that suit at the three-level. Without three-card support, opener is required to rebid 3♣\*, artificial (only two-card support for the bid major). All of responder's subsequent bids over 3♣\* are natural sign-offs. Major must have five plus cards—never four (with four, bid 3♦s).

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣\*

3♦\*

**Sign-Off** Pass 3♦ with diamonds or bid 4♣ with clubs or 4♥/4♠ spades with 6.

Over the four-level major suit bid, opener may use RKCB with a huge hand

**3M** To play in responders bid five- or six-card major (responder bids same major)

**3OM** 6-4 in majors (6M and 4OM)

**3NT** 5-5 in the majors (responder bid 1♠)

**4NT** Quantitative (assumes 18–19 range)

## Game forcing or slam invitational bids over 2NT (3♦/3♥/3♠) 13+ points

**Opener Responder**

1♣/1♦ 1♥/1♠

2NT 3♦\*(game force)

3M = six cards in bid major and four cards in other (6-4)

3OM = six cards in bid major and five cards in other major (6-5)

3NT = to play

**4♣/4♦ - Minorwood for bid minor**

**4NT - Quantitative**

The bid of 3♦\* by responder is also asking opener if he has three-card support for the bid major or four-card fit for the unbid major. He shows a fit by bidding 3M. This is a major suit Checkback bid; it promises *four or five cards in the bid major* and more points.

Let's look at the bids.

**Opener    Responder**

**1♣/1♦    1♥ (4♥/5♥ and may have 4♠)**

**2NT    3♦\***

3♥ = three-card support for bid major may have four spades  
          Responder may bid 3♠ if he has four spades (4-4 fit better than 5-3)

3♠ = no support for hearts, has four spades

3NT = no support for hearts and not four spades—to play

Notice that responder is 4-4 or 4-5 in the majors or has only five hearts.

**Opener    Responder**

**1♣/1♦    1♠ (5♠ and may have 4♥)**

**2NT    3♦\***

3♥ = four hearts, may have three spades  
          Responder will bid 4♥ with four hearts; otherwise, he will bid 3♠

3♠ = three-card support for bid major and *denies* four hearts

3NT = no support for hearts and not four spades—to play

Notice that responder is 5-4 in the majors or has only five spades.

Examples (opponents passing):

1♣/1♦-1♥-2NT-pass (responder has 0–7 points)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♥ (responder showing six hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♠ (responder 4-6 in majors) and [3NT, responder is 5-5 in majors]

1♦-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦ (responder may pass with diamonds and showing six hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3♥ (opener has three hearts and may have four spades)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♦-3♠ (opener has three spades and denies six hearts)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♥ (responder 6-4 in spades and hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3NT (opener denies a fit not three hearts or four spades)

1m-1♥-2NT-3NT (to play)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♥ (responder has four spades and six hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♠ (responder five spades and six hearts)

The Two-way NMF convention with the Wolff Sign-Off convention allows one to differentiate between invitational and forcing responses and to immediately agree on trumps. Responder is able to show their partner a double fit and show a particular singleton to avoid playing 3NT incorrectly and find a potential slam. There is very little downside to this convention, and it is more effective than the “popular” New Minor Forcing or Checkback Stayman conventions.





## CHAPTER 2

### OPENING TWO-, THREE-, AND FOUR-LEVEL BIDS

When opening one of a suit, one has between 12 and 21 starting points. In this chapter, we review opening bids with more than 19 starting points, distributional hands, and weak hands, less than 11 starting points.

#### The Flannery convention

For the Flannery convention, one uses the bid of 2♦\* to show five hearts and four spades and 11–15 starting points. It was devised by William L. Flannery from McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania.

**When playing Flannery, a response of one spade ensures five (not four) spades (and must be alerted) when one opens one heart. One responds:**

- Pass: Responder may pass the Flannery two diamond bid if responder has less than 10 points and a six-card diamond suit.
- 2♥\*: This is a sign-off indicating less than 10 dummy points, but with support in hearts.
- 2♠\*: This is a sign-off indicating less than 10 dummy points, but with support for spades.
- 3♣: If the responder bids a minor in clubs showing at least a six-card club suit and 11–13 starting points, then his partner should bid three notrump with a fit of Ax or Kx or Qxx in clubs. This response is invitational.
- 3♦: If the responder bids a minor in diamonds showing at least a six-card diamond suit and 11–13 starting points, then his partner should bid three notrump with a fit of Ax or Kx or Qxx in diamonds. This response is invitational.
- 3♥: This is an invitational jump bid, and partner may pass or bid game with maximum values.
- 3♠: This is an invitational jump bid, and partner may pass or bid game with maximum values.
- 4♣: This is a transfer bid to four hearts and game (South African transfer bid).
- 4♦: This is a transfer bid to four spades and game (South African transfer bid).

3NT: Balanced hand with 16–18 starting points; slam invitational.

2NT is a one-round force with a good hand (10+ dummy points), asking opener to describe his distribution. Responder may have support. Opener's rebids after 2NT are

- 3♣\* shows 4 = 5 = 1 = 3
- 3♦\* shows 4 = 5 = 3 = 1
- 3♥\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2 and 11–13 starting points
- 3♠\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2 and 14–15 starting points
- 3NT\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2, 14–15 starting points and concentrated minor suit strength. However, some use the bid to show six hearts and four spades.
- 4♣\* shows 4 = 5 = 0 = 4
- 4♦\* shows 4 = 5 = 4 = 0

Responder sets the contract or seeks slam (note that we have used = signs to show hand patterns; this represents an exact pattern whereas a dash [-] means any pattern). All of the Flannery bids in response to forcing 2NT must be alerted.

When defending against the Flannery convention, a suit overcall at the two-level shows a three-suited hand on which the overcall suit is the shortest. Suit overcalls at the three levels are natural. A double indicates a hand with strong notrump values. And a bid of 2NT shows the minors.

### Washington Standard Flannery

In the Washington Standard variation of Flannery, one uses the bids of 3♣\* and 3♦\* to show three- or four-card suits after the bid of 2NT\*. The convention shows 5 = 4, 6 = 4, or 6 = 5 in hearts and spades.

- 3♥\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2 and 11–13 starting points
- 3♠\* shows 4 = 6 = 2 = 2 and 14–15 starting points (note four spades and six hearts)
- 3NT\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2, 14–15 starting points
- 4♥\* shows 5 = 6 and 11–15 starting points (note five spades and six hearts)

A variation of the Washington Standard convention is called the Flexible Flannery convention.

### Flexible Flannery

This convention is designed to show either a 5-4 or 6-4 hearts or spades, thus the name flexible (but not 5-6). It is similar to the Washington Standard. After the bid of 2NT, one bids

- 3♣\* shows 4 = 5 = 2 = 2 in the minors; responders relay bid of 3♦\* asks for point count.
- 3♥\* = minimum (11–13 starting points)
- 3♠\* = maximum (14–15 starting points)

3NT\* = maximum with a concentration of points in the minors

- 3♦\* shows 4 = 5 = 3 = 1 singleton club
- 3♥\* shows 4 = 5 = 1 = 3 singleton diamond
- 3♠\* shows 4 = 6 with no minors suit void
- 3NT\* shows 4 = 6 with an undisclosed minor suit void

When the opening bidder shows a five-card heart suit, responder may use a 4♣\* relay bid to ask opener which is his longer minor. With longer clubs, opener rebids 4♦\* and with longer diamonds bids 4♥\*.

Another variation of the Washington Standard Flannery convention, which is more involved, is the Extended Flannery convention.

### Extended Flannery

After the forcing bid of 2NT, one bids as follows:

- 3♣\* minimal strength, any distribution except the semibalanced shape 4 = 5 = 2 = 2; if responder is still interested in learning more about openers distribution the bid of 3♦\* is made.

- 3♥\* = 4 = 6
- 3♠\* = 4 = 5, singleton or void in clubs
- 3NT\* = 4 = 5, singleton or void in diamonds
- 4♣\* = 5 = 6 = 2 = 0, void in clubs
- 4♦\* = 5 = 6 = 0 = 2, void in diamonds
- 4♥\* = 5 = 6 = 1 = 1, singleton club and diamond

- 3♦\* any strength, the semibalanced distribution 4 = 5 = 2 = 2 only; responder's rebid of three of a major invites opener to bid game with a maximum

- 3♥\* maximum strength, four spades plus six hearts; if responder is interested to know opener's minor suit distribution, he bids 3♠\* and opener then bids

- 3NT\* = void in clubs
- 4♣\* = singleton club plus two diamonds
- 4♦\* = two clubs plus singleton diamond
- 4♥\* = void in diamonds

3♥\* maximum strength, four spades plus six hearts, shortness in diamonds; to determine if the shortness is singleton or a void, responder relays with the bid of 4♣\* and opener bids

4♦\* = singleton

4♥\* = void

3NT maximum strength, four spades plus five hearts, shortness in clubs; to determine if the shortness is singleton or a void, responder relays with the bid of 4♣\* and opener bids as above.

4♣\* maximum strength, five spades plus six hearts, void in clubs

4♦\* maximum strength, five spades plus six hearts, void in diamonds

4♥\* five spades and six hearts with a singleton diamond or club.

This is a complicated convention but helps to clarify the distribution of the hand for investigation of a slam in a major.

## Mini Roman three-suited hands

Mini Roman uses the bid of 2♦\* (alert) to describe a hand with any 4-4-4-1 distribution and 11–15 HCP; with a weak hand (0–9 points) and 3/4+ spades, partner bids two spades, to play and with 10+ and four spades invites by bidding 3♠. Without spades and a weak hand, partner bids four-card suits up the line. With invitational values (13+ HCP), responder bids 2NT to ask for the singleton suit. After the suit is bid, responder places the contract, asks about points, or may even ask for the number of aces with slam interest.

The bid of 2NT may be played with less than game-going values (e.g., 10+ points), invitational values. You must discuss this with your partner.

## Mini Roman with four spades and the suit below “submarine” singleton bid

Here the opener always has four spades, but instead of bidding the singleton after the 2NT bid, *the suit below* the singleton is bid: clubs for diamonds, diamonds for hearts, and hearts for clubs. Why bid the suit below the singleton instead of the singleton? Because the bid is less likely to be doubled, and now a cue bid of the singleton suit (diamonds, hearts, or clubs) by the responder asks for more information. The opener’s responses are the following:

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min	4441 min	4441 min
2	4441 max	4441 max	4441 max

For example, after the response 3♦\* (heart shortness—suit below), one bids 3♥ (the singleton). Then one next bids 3♠\* or 3NT\* showing 4441 with min (11–12 HCP) and 4441 with a max (13–15 HCP), respectively. Note: if you were to bid your singleton, *hearts*, now 3♠ would show a minimum and 3NT a maximum.

However, suppose you have shortness in clubs. After a response of 3♥\* (short clubs—suit below), one bids 4♣ (the singleton). Then the min and max bids are 4♦\* and 4♥\*, respectively. You can play in diamonds (a part score) or play in a major suit game (hearts or spades). If instead of using the submarine bid, one bids 4♠\* to show their singleton, now 4♦ are to play and 4♥ say pick the major suit game.

For example, using submarine bids with 4-4-1-4 distributions.

AKxx	xxxx	2♦*	2NT
QJxx	QJx	3♣*	3♦ (cue bid ask)
		(short♦)	
J	Axxx	3NT (max)	4♠
Axxx	Kx	pass	

*Not playing submarine bid*, one bids 3♦\* (shortness), responder bids 4♠.

Some will also use the Mini Roman bid with a void in a minor suit (4 = 4-5-0/4 = 4-0-5). Again the opener bids the *suit below to show shortness*; three clubs shows diamonds, three diamonds shows hearts, three hearts shows spades, 3♠\* shows 4 = 4 = 5 = 0, and 3NT\* shows exactly 4 = 4 = 4 = 1. Again, a cue bid again asks for more information; opener bids by steps:

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min	4441 min	4441 min
2	4405 min	five clubs, min	4441 max
3	4414 max	five diamonds, min	--
4	4405 max	4441 max	--
5	--	five clubs, max	--
6	--	five diamonds, max	--

### Mini Roman with any pattern (4-4-4-1/4-4-5-0/4-4-0-5) – advanced

Again the Mini Roman bid is 2♦\*. However, not knowing the specific distribution responder bids

2♥	as natural and weak with 3+ hearts
2♠	as natural and weak with four plus spades (may be only three if less than three hearts)
2NT	forcing, at least game invitational values
3♣	minor two-suited, weak

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

After a weak response, opener passes with support or pulls to the cheapest bid without it. An example follows:

x	xxxx	2♦*	2♠
Qxxx	Kx	2NT	3♦ (to play)
AKxx	Jxxxx	pass	
Kxxx	Qx		

2♦\*- 2NT-? Opener bids his singleton or void and responder places the contract. If responder bids below game, opener may continue, especially with the 4-4-5 shapes.

Without the correct shape, the opener will pass. For example, consider the following:

Kxxx	QJxx	2♦*	2NT
x	Kxxx	3♥	3♠
AQxx	xxx	pass	
K10xx	Ax		

Opener has a pretty good hand but not enough to force on to game. In an auction like this, responder tends to have wasted values in the opener's short suit. If opener had rebid 3♦, responder would have bid game, knowing all his cards are working.

Playing any pattern Mini Roman, one can also use submarine bids. Again opener bids the suit below to show shortness; three clubs shows diamonds, three diamonds shows hearts, three hearts shows spades, 3♠\* shows 4 = 4 = 5 = 0, and 3NT\* shows exactly 4 = 4 = 4 = 1. A cue bid asks for more information; opener bids by steps:

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min	4441 min	4441 min
2	4405 min	five clubs, min	4441 max
3	4414 max	five diamonds, min	--
4	4405 max	4441 max	--
5	--	five clubs, max	--
6	--	five diamonds, max	--

Consider the hand

void	xxxx	2♦*	2NT
KQxxx	Ax	3♥	3♠
Qxxxx	Kxxxx	4♦	5♦
Axxx	Kx	pass	

We may not reach the good slam, but at least we're in the best game contract.

**Defense**

If the next player overcalls in a suit, then the responder may pass with very few values. Otherwise, with sufficient values to compete, the partner of the opener may bid 2NT to ask for the location of the shortage as though there had been no overcall. As a result of the overcall, partner has additional information as to how to proceed. The same principle holds true if the next player doubles the 2♦\* opening. It is strongly suggested that the partnership inquire as to the meaning of the overcall and/or double (i.e., whether the double is for takeout or penalty; or if the overcall is 3♦, whether this is intended as a Michaels cue bid, as an example, or natural). Otherwise the partnership should agree when to play systems on or systems off.

For more information on Mini Roman, one may consult the book by Robert Munger (1998), *The Roman Two Diamond Opening and Variations*, by Devyn Press.

To use both the Flannery and Mini Roman conventions, some use the bid of 2♥ for Flannery and the bid of 2♦ as Mini Roman.

**The Extra-Shape Flannery convention**

Many partnerships do not play the Mini Roman 2♦\* bid to show 4-4-4-1 or the Flannery (2♦\*) convention to show four spades and five hearts (4 = 5-x-x), since they feel too much information is conveyed. Those who like both conventions do not like to substitute the weak 2♥\* bid for Flannery to play both. If you fit into either of these categories, you may like the Extra-Shape Flannery convention, which uses the 2♦\* bid to describe either a two-suited hand with four spades and five hearts (4 = 5-x-x) or a three-suited hands (4 = 4 = 4 = 1). Again, the opener has 11–15 HCP.

With this convention, the artificial 2NT bid, which is forcing to game or the start of slam investigation, is used to ask the opener about his distribution. The opener's bids after a 2NT call follows.

3♣\* shows 4 = 5 in spades and hearts and 3-1 in the minors, now a relay 3♦ bid by responder asks the opener to identify his singleton.

Opener uses step responses:

- 3♥\*     singleton diamond and 3♠\* = singleton club
- 3♦\*     shows 4 = 4 = 4 = 1
- 3♥\*     shows 4 = 5-2-2 with minimum 11–12 HCP strength
- 3♠\*     shows 4 = 5-2-2 with maximum 14–15 HCP strength
- 3NT\*    shows 4 = 5 = 4 = 0, void in clubs (submarine bid)
- 4♣\*     shows 4 = 5 = 0 = 4, void in diamonds (submarine bid)

If responder is not interested in finding out about the opener's distribution, the following nonforcing bids are used:

- 2♥\*/2♠\* sign-off
- 3♣\* nonforcing 3 = 2 = 4 = 4 distribution, opener may pass with a minimum hand and three/four clubs or he may correct to 3♦
- 3♥\*/3♠\* game invitational in bid suit either four spades or four hearts
- 4♣ establishes hearts as trump and is Key Card Blackwood
- 4♦ establishes spades a trump and is Key Card Blackwood
- 4♥/4♠ sign-off

The Key Card Blackwood convention depends on your partnership agreement, either 1430 or 3014.

The Extra-Shape Flannery convention is a popular alternative convention for the wasted weak 2♦ bid, which can be used to show hands difficult to describe. The bid is especially popular in team games when you want to get into the bidding early and describe your hand, and you can still use the weak 2♥ bid.

For a discussion of other modifications to the Flannery convention, consult the reference *Bridge Classic and Modern Conventions*, page 886, edited by Margnus Lindkvist.

## Modified Jammer 2♦convention

There are many conventions for the bid of 2♦; some use strong bids (16/18+ or 22+), others employ weak bids (5–8 or 6–10), and many use intermediate bids (11–15). There is no “best” convention. What one should consider is the frequency of the hand patterns and the HCP requirements.

The Flannery 2♦ convention, 4 = 5 (four spades and five hearts) in the majors, and the Mini Roman 2♦ convention (4-4-4-1) with 11–15 HCP each occur about 0.5 percent of the time. The Ekren two diamond convention, which is 4 = 4 in the majors with 9+ HCP, occurs about 2 percent of the time, and the weak five-card 2♦ bid with 6–10 HCP occurs about 3 percent of the time; all have low frequencies of occurrence. The strong two diamond hands (16+ HCP) also occur with low frequency, about 3 percent of the time.

To evaluate the best convention, we first consider hand patterns.

The thirty-nine hand patterns can be classified into four *hand types*: balanced hands, two-suited, three-suited, and single-suited hands. The table below gives *a priori* likelihoods of being dealt a certain hand-type.

Hand type	Patterns	Probability
Balanced	4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2	0.4761
Two-suited	5-4-2-2, 5-4-3-1, 5-5-2-1, 5-5-3-0, 6-5-1-1, 6-5-2-0, 6-6-1-0, 7-6-0-0	0.2902



Single-suited	6-3-2-2, 6-3-3-1, 6-4-2-1, 6-4-3-0, 7-2-2-2, 7-3-2-1, 7-3-3-0, 7-4-1-1, 7-4-2-0, 7-5-1-0, 8-2-2-1, 8-3-1-1, 8-3-2-0, 8-4-1-0, 8-5-0-0, 9-2-1-1, 9-2-2-0, 9-3-1-0, 9-4-0-0, 10-1-1-1, 10-2-1-0, 10-3-0-0, 11-1-1-0, 11-2-0-0, 12-1-0-0, 13-0-0-0	0.1915
Three-suited	<b>4-4-4-1, 5-4-4-0</b>	0.0423

Or in more detail, we have the following probabilities:

Pattern	Probability	#	Pattern	Probability	#	Pattern	Probability	#
4-4-3-2	0.2155	12	5-5-3-0	0.0090	12	9-2-1-1	0.00018	12
5-3-3-2	0.1552	12	6-5-1-1	0.0071	12	9-3-1-0	0.00010	24
5-4-3-1	0.1293	24	6-5-2-0	0.0065	24	9-2-2-0	0.000082	12
5-4-2-2	0.1058	12	7-2-2-2	0.0051	4	7-6-0-0	0.000056	12
4-3-3-3	0.1054	4	7-4-1-1	0.0039	12	8-5-0-0	0.000031	12
6-3-2-2	0.0564	12	7-4-2-0	0.0036	24	10-2-1-0	0.000011	24
6-4-2-1	0.0470	24	7-3-3-0	0.0027	12	9-4-0-0	0.000010	12
6-3-3-1	0.0345	12	8-2-2-1	0.0019	12	10-1-1-1	0.000004	4
5-5-2-1	0.0317	12	8-3-1-1	0.0012	12	10-3-0-0	0.0000015	12
4-4-4-1	0.0299	4	7-5-1-0	0.0011	24	11-1-1-0	0.0000002	12
7-3-2-1	0.0188	24	8-3-2-0	0.0011	24	11-2-0-0	0.0000001	12
6-4-3-0	0.0133	24	6-6-1-0	0.00072	12	12-1-0-0	0.000000003	12
5-4-4-0	0.0124	12	8-4-1-0	0.00045	24	13-0-0-0	0.000000000006	4

If you only consider hands that include at least three cards in any one suit and no more than five cards in a suit, we have the following hand patterns:

4-4-3-3 (11 percent), 4-4-3-2 (22 percent), 5-3-3-2 (18 percent), 5-4-3-1 (13 percent), 5-5-3-0 (1 percent), 4-4-4-1 (3 percent), and 5-4-4-0 (1 percent), which comprise 67 percent of the patterns, a very high frequency.

The frequency changes to about 50 percent if we add the restriction that one has 5/6–10 HCP. This is the requirement for the “wide-open” Modified Jammer 2♦ bidding convention. Hence, you would open 2♦s in the first seat *more often than any other one-level bid except perhaps pass*. The original Jammer 2♦ convention considered a subset of these distributions and may be found on the Web at [www.bridgebuff.com](http://www.bridgebuff.com).

Of course, there are risks with this preemptive convention, especially vulnerable versus nonvulnerable, since you may not find the best fit at the two-level. Using the “law,” you need to take about eight tricks for a two-level contract. Hence, we allow the same hand patterns but add the restriction that the hand *in addition contains four spades* to reduce the risk. Now if partner has a two-suited hand, neither of which is spades, you are guaranteed a 4-3 fit at the two-level in at least one suit.

The Modified Jammer 2♦ bid is used with any three-suited hand (no less than three cards in any suit and with no more than five cards in any suit) with four spades and 5/6–10 HCP, a preemptive bid.

How does it work?

When one opens 2♦, partner bids 2♠ with four spades; not having four spades, one bids 2♥ with three, four, or five hearts, even if your distribution is 2 = 3 = 3 = 5; never bid 3♣. Without three hearts and at least 3-3 in the minors, bid 2NT (forcing), which asks partner to bid his best minor. With five plus diamonds, pass, and with six plus clubs, bid 3♣; opener will pass.

For a strong shapely hand, 3♥/3♠ are preemptive (showing 5♥/4♠, respectively), but invitational after 2NT (2♦/2NT/3♣ or 3♦), 3♥ or 3♠ are invitational. The 3♦ bid by opener asks responder to bid his four-card suits up the line slipping spades.

When responding to the bid of 2♦, remember that partner will have a three-card suit 90 percent of the time, four spades 80 percent of the time, and five spades about 20 percent of the time. Opener's shortness (one or two cards) occurs more than 55 percent of the time. If you have a two-suited hand, neither one being spades, you are guaranteed a fit in one suit, but it may be only a 4-3 fit. However, even with some 4-4-3-2 shapes, without spades, you will have a poor fit less than 5 percent of the time.

In review, a spade contract is the safest bid with a 4-3 or 4-4 fit. Even with a four-card minor, do not bid 2NT; partner may have three hearts if 4 = 3-3-3 or 3 = 5-3-1. When in doubt, bid conservatively and remember partner has 5/6–10 HCP, so that game requires 15–19/20 support points in a major and 25 HCP in notrump contracts. Most bidding stops at the two-level when vulnerable and the three-level when nonvulnerable.

## Opening 2NT

The opening bid of 2NT requires a balanced hand (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2), which may have a five-card minor suit. The opening point count requirements for a 2NT opening bid is between 20 and 21 starting points and having all suits stopped. With 20–21 points and a five-card major, some also open the hand 2NT, since if a hand was opened one of a major, there is a chance partner may pass and game may be missed. When opening 2NT, the bid is not forcing; your partner may pass with a weak hand. Recall that the number of points for game is 24–26 points; partner will pass with five or less points. With 6+ points, your goal is to bid a game in a major or notrump. Slam requires about 33 points.

After the bid of 2NT with a balanced hand and 6–11 points and no four-card major bid, one merely bids 3NT (to play) showing no interest in slam. One investigates slam with 12+ points.

**Stayman after 2NT notrump (basic)**

After the bid of 2NT, the Stayman convention uses the asking bid of 3♣ as an artificial bid to inquire whether partner has a four-card major. The convention is so engrained in bridge that it need not be alerted. Opener's responses are

3♦ no four-card major

3♥ denotes a four-card heart suit, but may have four spades

3♠ denotes a four-card spade suit

To initiate the convention requires 6+ starting points and at least one four-card major.

Responder's rebid, with game-going values, will be either 3NT or a raise of opener's major to game with a fit. With more than an opening hand, cue bids or jump bids are used to investigate slam.

What happens if partner bids 3♦ (no four-card major)? Then the bid of 3♥/3♠ shows a hand that is 5-4 in the majors where the suit bid has five cards. If you are 6-4 in the majors, one again uses, as with the one notrump opening, extended transfer bids (more on this soon).

Is there a Garbage Stayman convention over 2NT? Yes, it works as follows. After the bid of 3♣, if partner responds 3♦, your next bid is 4♣ "pick a major" (careful, some partnerships may use the bid of four diamonds). Remember, you need at least 6+ points to use this option. I prefer the four club bid; it is like "extended Stayman."

With less than 6+ points and the magic 4 = 4 = 1 distribution, you may still use Drop Dead Stayman and pass any suit bid by the opener after bidding three clubs.

A major disadvantage of Stayman is it does not allow one to easily find a 5-3 major suit fit when the 2NT opener has a five-card major (one may use Modified Puppet Stayman, also called Muppet Stayman).

**Jacoby transfers four-way**

Over the bid of 2NT, transfers to the majors when responder has five plus cards are called Jacoby transfers. They are again used with a variety of hands: weak, invitational, and strong. Point counts are not required with Jacoby major suit transfers. Responder will clarify the nature of his hand with subsequent bids. We have added to the Jacoby major transfer transfers to the minors. Jacoby transfers are used when you have a long major or are 5-4 in the majors. With a weak hand, you can transfer to the major and pass. When you are 5-4 in the majors, you transfer to the five-card major and bid the four-card major. The minor suit transfers are used with either a very weak hand with a six plus cards in minor or very strong minor-suited hands (12+ starting points) with slam interest in a minor. All bids are announced as transfers.

After the bid of 2NT, responder makes the following bids, promising at least five plus cards in the transfer suit (the bids are announced, not alerted):

- 3♦ transfer to hearts
- 3♥ transfer to spades
- 3♠ transfer to clubs
- 3NT transfer to diamonds

Opener's responses for *majors suit transfers*

- 3♥ shows only two hearts
- 4♣/4♦ shows five hearts and at least four cards in the bid minor with slam interest
- 4♥ shows four hearts and mild slam interest
- 4♠ Roman Key Card Blackwood with Kickback for hearts (chapter 3)
  
- 3♠ shows only two spades
- 4♣/4♦ shows five spades and at least four cards in the bid minor with slam interest
- 4♠ shows four spades and mild slam interest
- 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood for spades (chapter 3)

When responder is 5-4 in the majors, the other major is bid showing the distribution.

Opener's responses for *minor suit transfers*

- 3NT shows good clubs, three pieces with two of top three honors (e.g., AQx, AKx, KQx, etc.—super-accept)
- 4♣ poor clubs or doubleton
  
- Pass shows good diamonds, three pieces with two of top three honors (e.g., AQx, AKx, KQx, etc.—super-accept)
- 4♣ poor diamond support
- 4♦ diamonds no honors or doubleton

After a club transfer, responder can next bid, after 3NT, 4♣ to play with 6+ clubs and a very weak hand (less than 6 points). Any other suit bid (4♦/4♥/4♠) shows slam interest with perhaps four cards in the bid suit.

After a diamond transfer, you can correct the bid of four clubs to five diamonds with six plus diamonds and a weak hand (you cannot pass). If you have interest in a diamond slam, bid 5♣ as super Gerber over four clubs. After the bid of 4♦, bid 4♥ as Roman Key Card Blackwood with Kickback.

**Texas transfers (4♦\* and 4♥\*) and extended Texas transfers**

After opener bids 2NT, suppose you have a six-card major with game-going values and no interest in slam. Using the principle of fast arrival, one employs the four-level bids of

4♦\*      transfer to hearts

4♥\*      transfer to spades

\* Alert

When you are 6-4 in the majors, you again bid 3♣ (Stayman), and then bid

4♦\*      transfer to hearts (shows 6-4 in the majors)

4♥\*      transfer to spades (shows 6-4 in the majors)

\*Alert

**Modified Puppet Stayman (3♣)**

When opening 2NT, one often has a five-card major. Puppet Stayman was designed to help locate a 4-4 major suit fit, a 5-3/5-4 spade fit, or a 5-3 heart fit. However, it does not allow responder to show a hand with five spades and four hearts. To correct this problem, there is a convention called the Modified Puppet Stayman convention (I have also seen it called Muppet Stayman). It allows one to find all 4-4 major fits and 5-3 heart or spade fits. It is identical to Puppet Stayman except that the meaning of 3NT and 3♥ in Puppet Stayman are switched in meaning (hence the modification).

It works as follows: 2NT - 3♣ (Modified Puppet Stayman or Muppet Stayman)

3NT\* shows five hearts. Responder can either pass if he has spades, or if responder wants to play it in hearts, bids 4♦\* as a transfer to hearts, which allows the strong hand to play the contract in four hearts. Again \* = alert.

3♠\* shows five spades

3♦\* has one or two four-card majors or if he has a three-card spade suit

3♥\* shows no four-card major or no five-card major *may have 3 spades*. Responder will usually now bid 3♠ as a relay back to 3NT. But if responder has five spades and four or three hearts, he can now bid 3NT to show five spades, so opener can bid 4♠ with three to right side the contract. Note: some partnerships reverse these two-bids.

When opener bids 3♦\*, responder makes the following rebids:

3♥\* Responder bids the major he does not have (like Smolen). This sequence shows four spades and denies four hearts. Opener either bids spades or 3NT.

3♣\* Responder bids the major he does not have. This sequence shows four hearts and denies four spades. Opener either bids hearts or 3NT.

4♣\* Responder has both majors; it asks partner to pick the major.

4♦\* Most partnerships play the bid of 4♦ to show slam interest, pick a slam.

If you have five hearts and four spades, you do not need Muppet; transfer to hearts and bid spades.

We next consider a few examples. Partner opens 2NT. What do you bid with the following hands?

♠ A1054 ♥ 4567 ♦ 67 ♣ J32

You have a weak hand. Bid 3♣\*, and if partner bids a major, support the major; if opener bids three diamonds, bid 4♣ to ask partner to pick a major.

♠ AQ54 ♥ 456 ♦ 67 ♣ J1032

You want to find a 5-4 spade fit or a 5-3 heart fit. If partner responds 3NT\* showing five hearts, you would next bid 4♦ as a transfer to hearts. If partner bids 3♣, you simply raise the bid to four.

♠ AK542 ♥ Q65 ♦ 67 ♣ 1032

You want to find your 5-3 spade fit or perhaps a 5-3 heart fit. If partner bids 3NT\*, finding the heart fit is no problem. If partner bid 3♥\* (showing no four- or five-card major but may have a three-card spade suit), responder next bids 3♠ to show that he is 5-3/4 in spades and hearts. Opener with only three spades would next bid four spades. If responder is 5-5 in the majors, over 3NT by opener, he may bid 4♥ to show his 5-5 shape.

Note: Using Puppet Stayman, the 5-3 spade fit could be found, and using Jacoby transfers, one would lose the 5-3 heart fit; Modified Puppet Stayman finds both fits.

What do you do if you are 5-4 in spades and hearts?

For example, you have the hand ♠ AK542 ♥ K653 ♦ 67 ♣ 103.

Using Modified Puppet (Muppet) Stayman, bid 3♣. If partner bids 3NT, you can pass or bid 4♦ as a transfer to hearts; if opener bids 3♥, then bid 3NT = five spades.

If you have five hearts and four spades, you do not need Muppet; transfer to hearts and bid spades.

♠ AKJ2 ♥ KQ53 ♦ K7 ♣ 1032

You have 15 starting points. You are in the slam zone for a major or notrump. But suppose you hear the response 3♦\*. You have two options: four clubs or four diamonds. If you bid 4♦, it allows opener to pick the slam (perhaps notrump). The bid of 4♣ asks partner to pick a major. With a marginal hand, say, only 11 starting points, you would definitely make the bid of four clubs, since you need to know how the hands fit.

♠ 1032 ♥ 67 ♦ KQ53 ♣ AK1032

You have nice diamonds and clubs. The bid of 3NT does not describe your hand; partner may pass. Bid 3♠\* as a transfer to clubs; if partner bids 3NT, you would jump to 6NT. If partner bids 4♣\* (pick a major), you would next bid 4♦ to show your distribution. Partner is now the captain of the hand.

♠ 1032 ♥ AK9876 ♦ 53 ♣ 32

You have a weak hand with a six-card heart suit. Bid 4♦\* as Texas transfer to your heart; you have no interest in slam. Fast arrival principle. What if you had one more spade? See the next example.

♠ J1032 ♥ AK9876 ♦ 53 ♣ 7

Now use Modified Puppet Stayman and bid 3♣; after the bids 3♦/3♥/3♠, use the extended transfer bid of 4♦\* to show your 6-4 distribution. What if opener bids 3NT\*? You have a great heart fit (eleven hearts). Bid five hearts, which invites six; partner's values are outside of hearts.

In summary, Modified Puppet (Muppet) is superior to Puppet in several ways.

1. It allows the strong hand to declare all major suit contracts.
2. It avoids the often disastrous use of a transfer bid when responder holds five cards in one major and three cards in the other major and allows responder to look for a 5/3 fit in either major. Holding 5-3-3-2 (♠-♥-♦-♣), responder bids 3♣ to first look for a 5/3 heart fit. Opener will rebid 3♦ with a four-card major opener, and the auction proceeds as in standard Puppet. And opener will rebid 3♠ with a five spades. Now for the modifications of Puppet: opener will bid 3♥ rather than 3NT to deny a four- or five-card major. If responder holds five spades and three hearts, responder will rebid 3NT to show the five-card spade suit, enabling opener to declare in 4♠ with three spades and the right sort of hand. If responder does not hold five spades, responder rebids 3♠, relaying opener back to 3NT.
3. When holding five hearts and four spades, responder can transfer to 3♥, and to show four spades will rebid 3NT after opener accepts the transfer. This allows the strong hand to declare in 4♠ with a 4-4 spade fit. If responder does not have four spades, then after opener accepts the transfer, responder rebids 3♠, relaying opening to 3NT.
4. Muppet also allows opener to bypass a transfer to 3♥ and rebidding 3♠ when holding five spades and two hearts. Using both Jacoby and Texas transfers, if responder holds a six-card heart suit and mild slam interest, responder will transfers to 3♥ at three-level and when opener bypasses the transfer to rebid 3♠, responder will have to rebid 4♦ to retransfer opener to 4♥ (showing mild slam interest and inviting opener to make a slam try). If you understand and use Puppet Stayman after any strong 2NT opening or 2♣-2♦-2NT sequence, it is easy to



remember Muppet if you just remember that responder must always bid in such a way that the strong hand will declare the hand in a NT or major suit contract.

## SUMMARY

Muppet Stayman is simply Puppet Stayman but with opener's 3NT and 3♥ bids reversed (3NT shows five hearts; 3♥ denies a four plus majors). This allows responder, over 3♥, to bid 3NT to show 5♠/4♥, an otherwise unbiddable shape below 3NT when playing Puppet. So suppose you have 5♠/4♥ and partner bids 3♦. You have both majors, but they are imbalanced 5-4, so bid 3NT to show five spades and four hearts. Or bid 3♠ to show five hearts and four spades.

Now suppose that you have 5-5 in the majors. Muppet still works. If partner has a four-card major, nothing can go wrong. If he has a five-card major, wow. If you hear 3♥, bid 3NT to show 5♠ or 3/4♥. If opener declines (3NT), you can bid 4♥ to complete the picture.

If either Muppet or Puppet is too complicated for you, another option is to employ the Flip-Flop Flannery convention.

## Flip-Flop Flannery convention

The Flip-Flop Flannery convention was developed by Carolyn King and Dr. David S. Shade and published in the *Bridge World* magazine, February 1997.

The Flip-Flop Flannery convention allows one to find a major suit fit regardless of the partnership distribution. In addition, it also employs the transfer principle, allowing the 2NT bidder to become the declarer as in Muppet Stayman. The bids for the convention follow, after the bid of 2NT:

- 3♣ asks about length in the majors; opener rebids are
  - 3♥/3♠ five-card major
  - 3♦ four-card unspecified majors; in his turn responder bids 3♠ with four hearts and 3♣ with four spades; and opener places the final contract in 3NT, 4♥, or 4♠.
- 3♦ five-card heart suit, transfer; after the completed transfer by opener, responder bids
  - 3♠ at most three spades 3NT
  - 3NT four spades; thus if a fit is found in spades, opener becomes the declarer and places the contract.
- 3♥ transfer to spades, five spades but no hearts
- 3♠ transfer to 3NT, no four-card or five-card major
- 3NT five spades and four hearts



Using Flip-Flop Flannery, you are able to find a major fit without going beyond 3NT and it right-sides the contract.

### **Soloff bids**

If you do not like Muppet Stayman and want to continue with Puppet Stayman, you may want to play the Soloff convention. This will allow you to continue with Puppet. The bids follow:

- 3♣ Puppet Stayman
- 3♦ Transfer to hearts
- 3♥ Transfer to spades
- 3♠ Relay to 3NT
- 3NT shows 5♠ and 4♥

Bids after 3♠ relay to 3NT

- Pass with any hand that wants to play 3NT
- 4♣ shows 4♣ and 5♦, 4♠ agrees diamonds, 4NT denies an eight-card fit
- 4♦ shows 4♦ and 5♣, 4♥ agrees clubs, 4♠ agrees diamonds, 4NT denies an eight-card fit
- 4♥ is a one-suited slam try with long clubs. 4NT now by opener shows honor doubleton. 5♣ shows a low doubleton. Any other bid is a cue bid with at least three-card club support.
- 4♠ is a one-suited slam try with long diamonds. 4NT now by opener shows honor doubleton. 5♦ shows a low doubleton. Any other bid is a cue bid with at least three-card club support.
- 4NT is a slam try with at least 5-5 minors.

### **3♠ transfer**

An alternative to the Soloff bids to finding a slam in a minor is to employ the following simple transfer structure; similar to Minor Suit Stayman:

#### **Opener Responder Meaning**

2 NT The range of the 2NT opening bid is 20 to 21 high card points.

3♠ Responder wishes to inquire about the holding in the minor suits.

3NT Relay bid

If responder is 5-5 in the minors, he bids 4♥ or 4♠ to show shortness in the major.

After these bids, 4NT is used to investigate slam. Because you may have a double fit in the minors, some use Double Roman Key Card bid (DRKCB) of 4NT.

If responder is distributional with one long minor, he bids the minor; he does not have 4♦ to show clubs and 4♣ to show diamonds.

After 4♦, 4♥ (Kickback) is 1430 to investigate slam and after 4♣, 4♦ is 1430 Crosswood is used. Again some use the bid as DRKCB.

If the opening bidder has 2344 or 3244 distribution with good minors and weak majors, he bids 4NT, which is a nonforcing slam try.

To employ the 3♠ relay bidding sequence, responder must have 12 dummy points.

## Opening 2♣

Playing the 2/1 game force system, the bid of 2♣ is artificial showing a strong game forcing hand that will play in either a suit or notrump. What are the requirements for opening a hand 2♣?

- (1) Hands with 22+ HCP. However, you may open with fewer points if you have a long, strong suit. And even if you have 22+ points, unbalanced and very distributional hands may not be opened 2♣, since they may be too difficult to rebid; you do not want to force to game, or you have soft values.
- (2) When playing in a suit contract, a good five plus card major or a six plus card minor suit
- (3) A suit hand that contains at least four quick tricks and no more than four losers (no more than four losers using Losing Trick Count)
- (4) When playing in notrump, a hand with eight and a half or nine quick tricks

## Evaluating your hand

♠AK8 ♥AKQJ107 ♦7 ♣AK5

Open 2♣; this hand has 24 HCP, ten playing tricks and three losers.

♠AKQ1063 ♥Void ♦KQJ10 ♣A63

Open 2♣; this hand has a long suit with 19 HCP, four plus quick tricks and two losers.

♠AKJ ♥AKQ ♦AQ57 ♣7

Open 1♦; even with 23 HCP, it is too distributional.

♠KJ8 ♥AQ10 ♦AKQJ ♣AKQ

Open 2♣; this is balanced hand with 29 HCP.

♠QJ ♥AQ10642 ♦KQJ ♣AQ

Open 1♥; this hand has 21 HCP with soft values and does not have four quick tricks.

To count playing tricks, you only look at the first three cards in each suit where an ace, king, or queen is a winner and all other cards among the first three are losers. With less than three cards, there are these loser honor combinations: AQ = ½, Kx = ½, KQ = 1, K = 1, Q = 1, Qx = 1.

Independent of points, also open a hand **2♣**, with a five plus major and at least four plus quick tricks (A = 1, K = ½, KQ = 1) and no more than four losers; *the rule of 44* and then bid the major not notrump.

Partner may not pass the bid of two clubs, even with zero points. With a balanced hand (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, 5-5-2-2), opener may jump into notrump after partner bids. The notrump bidding schedule follows.

2NT shows 22–24 starting points

3NT shows 25–27 starting points

4NT shows 28–30 starting points

5NT shows 31–33 starting points

When partner opens two clubs, responder's first responsibility is to communicate something about the value of his hand. This permits opener to show the nature of his hand by bidding notrump or a suit. When responding to partner, partnerships have several options. Based on a survey conducted by bridge expert and teacher Karen Walker, when asked what general structure respondents used for responses to a strong **2♣** in their favorite partnership, they offered the following answers (with the percentage of "votes" for each):

- 36 percent    2♦ semipositive, 2♥ immediate negative
- 25 percent    Control-showing step responses
- 21 percent    2♦ waiting, cheapest minor second negative
- 10 percent    2♦ negative, 2♥ balanced positive
- 4 percent    Point-count step responses
- 4 percent    Other artificial systems (e.g., ace showing responses)

From Ms. Walker's survey, we observe that the *most* common approach is to use **2♥** as a bust (no ace or king), and **2♦** as semipositive (a king or more). Others prefer showing controls or they use two diamonds as a waiting bid. We will discuss the three most popular approaches. The two diamond response does not need to be alerted.

## Controls

This approach is popular because it allows responder to show his most important cards (aces and kings) immediately in one bid. Counting each king as one control and each ace as two, responder makes one of the following step responses:

- **2♦**        zero or one control (K = 1)
- **2♥\***       two controls (A or KK)

- 2♠\* one ace and one king (three controls—AK in different suits)
- 2NT\* three kings (three controls—KKK or AK in same suit)
- 3♣\* four plus controls

\* = Alerts

If the opponents *interfere*, then a double (or redouble) are the weakest bids you can make (one or fewer controls and less than 5 HCP). Bidding would show one plus controls and a good five plus card suit.

After a 2♣ opening and any response, if RHO (right-hand opponent) bids, a *double* shows shortness in the RHO suit. If you have a six plus card suit, then a bid is ambiguous as to the length in RHO suit but is preferred to an X for shortness. However, with a void with 6-4-3 shape, then X.

While the control bids communicate values, it does not allow the responder to make a natural bid to show a suit with, for example, two of the top three honors with five plus cards. It, at time, uses up valuable bidding space and may wrong-side the hand. For example, showing two controls, hearts, may be opener's suit and responder plays the hand.

A few players define "controls" by steps to show points; this has little value because it makes no distinction between jacks and aces. The 2♣ bidder seldom needs to know partner's total points; information about aces and kings is more helpful.

### **Two diamonds waiting**

This approach is widely used among longtime players. The bid of 2♦ is automatic and provides an opportunity for the opener to describe his hand by bidding notrump or a suit. It is not alerted but a waiting bid; it is also no longer announced as waiting.

With a very weak hand, less than 4 starting points, responder may pass after a notrump bid. If a suit is named and responder is weak, there is a second negative bid. The second negative bid is either the cheapest minor or the cheapest bid, known as the Herbert convention. The primary advantage of the two diamond bid is that it does not consume space. The major disadvantage is that specific suit strength is not immediately communicated, and it may take time for responder to describe his hand.

### **Two hearts negative and two diamonds semipositive**

Using this approach, the bid of 2♦ (effective January 2014, no longer needs to be alerted) is a game force bid promising at least a king or an ace. The bid of two hearts is nonforcing, *but it does not deny points*. The bids for this approach follow.

2♥\*: this is a so-called *super negative*; it promises less than 6 HCP with no ace or king. However, with an ace or a king in any suit, the responder is required to bid 2♦ (you must alert the bid of 2♥).

**Note:** If they interfere, most play that a pass (DOP1) shows values (A/K) and or double shows no A/K (zero). However, some play this in reverse where a double shows A/K and is for penalty and a pass shows the lack of values; discuss with your partner.

2♦: promises at least an ace or king (needs no alert).

**Note:** Some use the bid to show 6+ HCP, any combination of jacks or queens or at least an ace/king. Must again review the bid with your partner.

2♠/3♣/3♦: this response is a positive response and shows a *6-card* plus suit headed by two of the top three honors: ace-king, king-queen, or ace-queen. Your hand is very distributional and you want to play in the suit bid (often have a void/singleton).

**Note:** Some only require a five-card suit (then the suit bid or notrump may be an option).

2NT: this response is a *positive response* and shows a *6-card* heart suit headed by two of the top three honors: ace-king, king-queen, or ace-queen. Again you want to play in hearts; your hand is very distributional (you often have a void/singleton).

**Note:** Some only require a five-card suit, but again with two of the top three honors

### **Rebids over 2♣-2♥\* (negative)**

Over responders' negative bid, opener can sign off in 2NT/3NT or bid three of a suit as natural and nonforcing.

To make a forcing bid over 2♥\*, one bids 2♠\* as a relay to 2NT and then signs off in his suit at the three-level; partner can now raise with a fit. After the bid of 2♠\*, instead of bidding 2NT, responder may bid his own six-card suit.

### **Rebids over 2♣-2♦ (positive)**

When partner bids a suit, your first priority is to raise partner with three-card support or to bid our own suit if it contains five plus cards.

Over the sequence, 2♣-2♦-2♥/2♠-?

- 2NT    no support and no five plus card major suit bid
- 3♣/3♦    no support five-card suit
- 3♥/3♠    shows three-card trumps support for bid suit (forward going)
- 3NT    two-card support
- 4♥/4♠    shows four-card trumps support for suit bid suit (fast arrival)

Over the sequence 2♣-2♦-3♣/3♦-?

- 3♥/3♠ five- or six-card major suit
- 3NT support with stoppers (no slam interest)
- 4♣/4♦ minorwood for bid minor
- 4NT quantitative
- 5♣/5♦ sign-off (fast arrival)

After the bid of two diamonds, with a balanced hand, opener may bid notrump as described above; however, the bid of a suit indicates a nonbalanced hand.

After the bid of two hearts, the only bid responder may pass is 2NT. Otherwise, he must provide a second negative bid. This is usually the cheapest minor or, using Herbert, the cheapest bid available.

In the above responses, observe that the bid of two spades and the three-level minor suit bids wrong-side the contract. To avoid this problem, one may consider the following bids for the convention:

- 2♦ promises a king or an ace and is game forcing (some also include two queens)
- 2♥\* denies a king or an ace but does not deny some values
- 2♠ shows at least a five- or six-card *heart* suit with two of the top three (7+ points)
- 2NT shows at least a five- or six-card *spade* suit with two of the top three hearts (7+ points)
- 3♦ shows two of the top three but with six plus cards in the *club* suit (7+ points)
- 3♣ shows two of the top three but with six plus cards in the *diamond* suit (7+ points)

This option/modification should be discussed with your partner.

### **Interference note when playing the 2♥\* bust**

If your partner bids two clubs and your right-hand opponent interferes, then a pass (alert) shows values (ace or king) and a redouble (alert) denies an ace or a king. This is often called DOP1 (see chapter 3). Both bids must be alerted. If the opponents interfere with a suit bid at the two- or three-level (or double), again a double (redouble) shows no values and a pass shows values.

Let's consider a few example hands.

Opener ♠AQ54 ♥KQ10 ♦K52 ♣AKQ

You have 23 HCP. Open the hand 2♣ and then bid 2NT; you have stoppers in all suits. If the hand contained 25 HCP, you would bid 3NT.

Opener ♠KQ754 ♥KQ10872 ♦void ♣AK

This hand contains 17 HCP + 3 length points = 20 starting points. Some may open this 1♥ and then bid spades. What if partner passes? Let's look at playing tricks for the hand. You have 13 – 5 losers = 8 playing tricks. You must open the hand 2♣, forcing partner to bid.

Opener ♠AJ98 ♥AQJ10872 ♦K ♣Q

You have 18 HCP + 3 length points – 2 dubious honor singletons = 19 starting points. In addition to looking at playing tricks, the hand has 13 – 3 = 10 playing tricks. Open the hand 2♣ and then show your great heart suit. Opening 1♥, partner may pass.

Opener ♠AJ98 ♥AQJ10872 ♦K ♣Q

Responder ♠Q1092 ♥456 ♦QJ78 ♣97

The bidding sequence for this hand playing the 2♥ bust option would be

Opener Responder

2♣ 2♥\*

3♥ 4♥

With three heart support and a bust hand, partner must support hearts. Provided partner takes a call after opener bids 1♥, one would still reach the game. The bidding may go

1♥ - 1NT;

3♠ (jump shift) - 4♥.

But why take a chance? Partner with only 5 HCP may pass the bid of 1♥!

### Ace-showing responses

This is a common convention used in Europe. The responses are

2♦ negative

2♥/2♠ ace-showing

2NT 8+ HCP, but no aces

3♣/3♦ ace-showing

3NT two aces

The convention is also employed by many over weak two-level bids.

### Kokish relay

When opening 2♣ with a 25+ point hand, responding 3NT and above takes up a significant amount of bidding space; to eliminate this problem, some employ the Kokish relay.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

After the bid of 2♦, the bid of 2♥\* (alert) becomes a relay bid asking partner to bid 2♠. Now with a balanced big hand, partner next bids 2NT.

The following sequences are used with unbalanced holdings.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i>
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic 2♠ so that the opener clarifies his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid
2NT		Opener promises 22–24+ points and a balanced hand.
3♣		Opener promises a two-suited holding with hearts and clubs.
3♦		Opener promises a two-suited holding with hearts and diamonds.
3♥		Opener promises a one-suited holding with hearts.
3♠		Opener promises a one-suited holding with spades.
3NT		Opener promises 25+ points and a balanced hand.

This allows the bidding to be at a lower level, which allows one to more easily find a fit.

With a balanced hand, one employs the following Kokish sequences:

### Example 1

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values (22+ points)
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i>
2NT		This promises a balanced distribution and a point count between 20 and 21 points. The partnership remains on the two-level, which is the key of this concept.

In this bidding sequence, we did not employ the Kokish relay bid, since the holding does not require a relay to communicate the information that the holding is balanced with values of 20–21 points.

### Example 2

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i>
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic two spades so that the opener can clarify his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid



2NT North shows a balanced distribution of 22–24 points. The partnership remains on the two-level, which is the key of this concept.

### Example 3

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values
	2♦	Normally a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i>
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic 2♠ so that the opener can clarify his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid
3NT		North shows a balanced distribution of 25+ points. This rebid is not part of the original version of the Kokish relays but could be used as an extension of this concept by partnership agreement. Note: 2♣-3NT = 25–27; no need for Kokish.

### Bypassing the relay

We said that the sequence 2♥\* is a relay to 2♠, allowing opener to describe his hand. However, once in a while, responder may have a sufficiently unusual hand to make it worthwhile to bypass the relay to show a long suit. One common approach is to use transfers whenever you break the relay. So after 2♥\*, a bid of 3♣ (breaking the relay) would show diamonds.

When should you not relay! Here is a set of hands responder may have to break the relay.

**KJ97643** Very good (no, do not break relay)

**KJ9764** Still OK

**K97643** Starting to get borderline

**Q97643** Not good enough; this will not usually play for one loser opposite **Kx**

**Q987643** Now the extra length makes it OK.

**QJ10764** This one's fine.

Rule: Play for one loser opposite Ax or Kx.

### Mexican 2♦\* convention

Developed by Mr. George Rosenkranz, it is a feature of the Romex System; however, it is becoming more common among partnerships playing the 2/1 game force system.

The problem arises with hands containing 18–19 starting points (some partnerships only count HCP) that are balanced or semibalanced with four to six losers and possibly a five-card major suit. Never use the bid with a singleton or a void.

Consider the following hand: ♠AQJ102 ♥KJ7 ♦ KJ5 ♣ A10

You have 19 HCP + 1 length point – 1 dubious honor doubleton = 19 starting points. Clearly, you want to open, but how can you communicate strength in one bid? You have only a six loser hand. Playing the Mexican Two Diamond convention, you would open 2♦.

The responses for the call are

1. A negative response with 0–4 starting points is to pass with diamond support (six plus diamonds).
2. A 2♥\* bid is artificial and a relay bid to 2♠ (opener accepts with five) or bids his own five-card suit (clubs, diamonds, or hearts) or 2NT to show a balanced hand; responder passes all bids with 5–7 points. With 8+ points, partner may bid 3♣ as Stayman (basic) with one or two four-card majors, bid 3NT or with support (three cards) for the suit bid by the opener, he raises partner's bid suit to the three levels, an invitational raise to game.
3. A response of 2♠\* (showing 7–9 starting points) and a balanced hand transfers the opener to two notrump.
4. Any positive response on the three-level, 3♦/3♥/3♠, promises at least 8+ plus high card points and a broken six-card suit. However 3NT is usually a transfer to clubs and 3♣ is Puppet/Muppet Stayman.
5. A positive response also includes the use of Texas transfers (4♣/4♦), the purpose of which is to have the stronger hand concealed during the play. The transfer bids are used only when the partner realizes he holds enough values for game or slam, not a part score.

## Karosek 2♦\* convention

This conventional method was created by Mr. Charles L. L. Dalmas of Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, and first published in the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*, June 2002, pages 50–52.

Employing the Karosek Two Diamonds conventional method, one again opens with 2♦\* (alerted) with 18–19 high card points and is limited to holdings with a distribution of from 7-2-2-2 to more balanced distribution, no singletons and no void. Since an opening of two diamonds describes the holding precisely to the partner, then the partner becomes the captain and sets the contract via the ensuing auction.

The ten possible responses, as described by the author, are as follows:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
2♦*		This opening bid describes a semibalanced hand with exactly 18–19 high card points.
	Pass	Shows a weak hand with five plus diamonds and no other side values
	2♥*	Shows 0–5 points and is a negative response. This response strongly suggests that the opener rebid 2NT to play unless opener has a long suit (six- or seven-card length), which is rebid instead.

- 2♠\* This response is Minor Suit Stayman showing at least a 5-4 distribution in both minor suits and at least 6+ points. This response is game forcing and could indicate slam interest.
- 2NT\* This response promises a two suiter in both major suits. The opener bids the better major by rebidding either 3♥ or 3♠. The responder then bids either game or shows slam interest.
- 3♣ This first response is Puppet (some play Muppet) Stayman. The responder promises at least three cards in each major suit.
- 3♦ This response is a transfer to hearts showing at least a five-card plus heart suit and at least 6+ points. In the 2♦ opener only accepts the transfer by rebidding 3♥, then the opener is showing a three- or four-card heart suit and no slam interest. If the opener super-accepts when holding a four-card heart suit, then this strongly indicates a mild slam interest if the responder has additional values. If the responder is interested in a slam try, then after acceptance or even super-acceptance, the responder may bid 4♠, which is then Roman Key Card Blackwood 1430.

### Puppet Rebids

- 3♦ The opener promises at least one four-card major suit (the continuing auction is the same as with the Puppet Stayman convention). After 3♦, the responder bids the major suit not held or 4♦ with both major suits.
- 3♥ The opener promises a five-card heart suit.
- 3♠ The opener promises a five-card spade suit.
- 3NT The opener holds neither a four-card nor a five-card major suit.

### In Competition:

In competition, if the opponent doubles the Karosel 2♦ opening bid, then the responder can redouble holding 9+ high card points. If the opener holds a five-card plus diamond suit, then the opener may pass the redouble, since the result of making 2♦ redoubled would result in a better score. If the Karosel 2♦ opener does not have a five-card diamond suit, then the Karosel 2♦ opener should rebid 3NT.

In competition, if the responder of the Karosel 2♦ opening bid has absolutely no values to improve the contract, then the responder may pass the double and/or overcall. In this auction, all other agreements are “system off” and/or not binding. A pass informs the opener of the values held by partner. In this instance, as strongly suggested by the author, the partnership *shifts to rescue mode*.

This action requires the opener to pass if the right-hand opponent bids. If, however, the right-hand opponent passes, then the opener rebids his/her five-card suit at the cheapest level, but with a 4-3-3-3 distribution, the preference is to redouble if the overcall after the Karosel 2♦ opening bid was a double. If the left-hand opponent, who has doubled then passes for penalty, then the

partner of the Karosel 2♦ bidder bids his/her longest suit. This is the so-called rescue mode. In the case that the left-hand opponent bids over the redouble, then the partner may pass knowing that the distribution is 4-3-3-3 and the preference is to defend.

## **Opening 3NT\* gambling**

Playing Standard American, many were taught to open a balanced hand with 25–27 starting points 3NT. In the 2/1 force system of bidding, this is accomplished by opening 2♣ and then bidding 3NT. Instead the bid is used for gambling 3NT and must be alerted.

The bid promises is a long, running minor suit. “Long and running” means at least AKQxxxx (yes, seven of them). In first, second, or third positions, you do not have any outside aces or kings. In the fourth position, partner should usually have stoppers in two side suits, so partner may pass the bid (referred to as ACOL 3NT\*). If you do not have side suit stoppers, it is best just to make a preemptive minor suit bid in the fourth seat.

I recommend that the 3NT bidder have at least Qxx in the other minor. Then if partner has the majors stopped, it allows partner to pass the 3NT gambling bid. Not all play it this way; however, then the bidding sequences become more complicated.

**Responses to gambling 3NT\*—be careful; there are many options.**

**The bids here follow many suggested by Marty Bergen.**

4♣, says, let’s play in a part score 4♣ or 4♦

4♦ usually played two ways:

- (a) Asks opener to bid a singleton: responses are 4♥ = heart singleton, 4♠ = spade singleton, 4NT = minor suit singleton, and 5♣ = no singleton.
- (b) Gerber

Depending on the location of the singleton and your hand, responder is usually interested in playing in a game, 5♣/5♦ or a slam, 6♣/6♦.

Example: Responder has

Spades: AKQ x Hearts: xx Diamonds: AKQx Clubs: xxx

With a heart singleton, you want to play in 6♣ clubs, otherwise you would bid 5♣.

4♥ and 4♠ are six-card suits. Opener must pass.

4NT is invitational to slam (quantitative), asking opener to bid a minor suit slam.

Example: Opener has a hand like

Spades: xx Hearts: x Diamonds: Qxxx Clubs: AKQJxxx

**5♣** sign-off play in club game or correct to **5♦**; not slam interest.

**5♦** sign-off by responder, responder knows that the opener has long diamonds and wants to play game from his side.

**5NT** is a grand slam try, to play in **7♣/7♦**. Responder has no losers outside the trump suit, but is usually void of the trump suit and is afraid of a trump loser. Opener bids **7♣/7♦** with a suit like A-K-Q-J-x-x-x or A-K-Q-x-x-x-x-x-x. With A-K-Q-x-x-x-x-x, opener would sign off in six of the suit.

**6♣** is to play slam in **6♣/6♦**; opener is to pick the suit. Again a bid of **6♦** by responder is to play slam in diamonds; responder knows that it is the long suit.

### How do you defend against the dreaded 3NT bid?

X = strong and balanced

4♣ = both majors

4♦ = one major (6+)

4M = five-card bid major and a five plus card minor

4NT = suit asking bid: bid your five-card suit at the five-level (♣♦♥♠) and 5NT = you pick the suit, usually the other minor

5m = to play, in the other minor

Pass the double if the opponents run and you are three-suited and short in their minor; otherwise, bid your longest major.

### What do you lead against the 3NT bid?

An ace if you have one, fourth best with a five-card major and without a long major, your shortest major; try to find partner's major.

### ACOL\* 4NT opening

An opening bid of 4NT asks for specific aces. The responses are

5♣                zero aces

5♦/5♥/5♠/6♣ shows the ace in the suit bid

5NT                shows two aces

\* A bridge bidding system played primarily in Great Britain.

The ACOL 3NT\* convention is also used in Great Britain. It shows 19–21 HCP and is to play. All suits must be stopped. If you use this convention, the responses by partner are

- 4♣ Gerber
- 4♦/4♥/4♠ Transfers to hearts, spades, and clubs  
To bid diamonds, one corrects after 5♣ (over 4♠) and bids 5♦
- 4NT Quantitative

## Opening two of a major

Because we recommend that the bid of 2♦\* has special meaning (e.g., Flannery, Extra-Shape Flannery, Mini Roman, or Mexican two diamonds), we exclude the bid here. Why tell the opponents you have a weak hand with diamonds? For this reason, many 2/1 game force players *do not* use the weak two diamond bid. However, some do!

Weak two-bids in the majors are used to interfere with the opponents' bidding structure. The bids are preemptive showing a good six-card suit with between 5 and 10 starting points. The bids are constructive. Partner with a good hand may put you in game. If vulnerable, we recommend that the major suit have two of the top three honors. When not vulnerable, you may relax this requirement.

For example, with the hand ♠ 103 ♥ AK10987 ♦ J3 ♣ Q32, you would open the hand 2♥, vulnerable or nonvulnerable. However, replacing the king of hearts with a jack, you should not open the hand vulnerable.

## Rule of 17

When responding to a major two-level opening bid, one may use the rule of 17. The rule goes as follows. If the number of dummy points and the number of cards in the major suit bid total 17, bid to the four-level in the major.

With 12–15 dummy points and two-card support, raise the two-level bid to three, a weak competitive raise that is nonforcing. It is called by some “raise only nonforcing” (RONF).

With 15–16 starting points, responder makes a forcing 2NT bid, which asks the opening bidder to describe his hand and is invitational to game in the major with at least two-card support or perhaps notrump, independent of vulnerability.

Bidding 2NT by some players asks partner to bid a feature, an ace or king in an outside suit; bid the suit. It is used to determine if an entry exists in dummy to allow one to access the long suit. More importantly, one needs to know about strength in the major and strength of the hand. The convention one may use is known as Ogust.

## The Ogust convention

After a weak two-bid (usually a six-card suit), the convention allows for a detailed description of the opener's hand. It is invoked by the artificial 2NT bid made by the responder. The reply to a weak two-bid shows strength and asks whether the opener is weak (5–7/6–8 starting points) or strong (8–10/9–11 starting points) and how many of the top three honors are held in the major.

The replies are most commonly as follows (where \* = alert).

- 3♦\*     minimum, one top suit honor (bad/weak hand and bad/weak suit)
- 3♦\*     minimum, two top suit honors (bad/weak hand and good/strong suit)
- 3♥\*     maximum, one top suit honor (good/strong hand and bad/weak suit)
- 3♠\*     maximum, two top suit honors (good/strong hand and good/strong suit)
- 3NT\*   all three honors, A-K-Q-x-x and little else

A simple way to remember this is to picture Mamma Mia dancing: 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3 . . . These refer to the order of the top honors in the major as shown above. The bids represent *hand* and then *suit*—not suit and then hand!

Note: Some players interchange the bids of three diamonds and three hearts. The 1-1, 2-2, 1-2-3 dance step!

Some players use the convention to show first suit and not hand. Discuss this convention with your partner. The word “Ogust” may have a different meaning to your partner! This is why a description of any convention is better than simply using the words “I play Ogust.” The Ogust convention is used instead of “asking” for a feature (ace or king).

What if responder has his own suit? We have said that a raise in opener's suit is nonforcing. When partner bids his own suit, it is most often played as forcing for one round and asks partner to support the suit bid with three-card support . . . or to pass. If you do not play it as forcing, you must alert the new bid as nonforcing; “it appears in red on your convention card.”

## Modified Ogust convention

Because bidding is becoming more aggressive, many partnerships will open weak twos with a five-card major one suiter. If you do, one may use Modified Ogust rebids to describe the hand. Again the 2NT bid is used to ask about the hand. Using this convention, the bids are

- 3♣\*     five-card suit good/strong hand
- 3♦\*     five-card suit bad/weak hand
- 3♥\*     six-card suit bad/weak hand
- 3♠\*     six-card suit good/strong hand
- 3NT\*   either a five- or six-card suit or a semisolid five- or six-card suit plus ace or king in a side suit

Observe that the 3♣\* bid is used to show a stronger *hand* to leave more room for further investigation, since all responses describe only the “hand” and say nothing about the quality of the suit.

After the response of the 3♣\* bid, if responder wants to find out about the *suit*, he bids 3♦\*. The opener now clarifies the suit strength with the following bids:

- 3♥\*     bad/weak suit and one honor
- 3♠\*     good/strong suit and two honors
- 3NT\*   good/strong suit and three honors

Following Ogust, one describes the *hand* and, upon request, then the *suit*.

A common practice is to use five-card Ogust nonvulnerable and six-card Ogust vulnerable!

If you do not make this distinction (five and six cards) in your partnership agreement, there is yet another convention called the Two-Step Ogust convention developed by Daniel Zenko. It is discussed in the April 1997 issue of the *Bridge World*.

While experts use Ogust-type responses for two-suited 6-4 hands in the majors, the responses become complicated and will not be discussed.

## Opening three- and four-level bids

Opening bids at the three-level are preemptive showing a weak hand (5–10 starting points) and able to take about five tricks in the trump suit bid. To open the bidding, one usually has a seven-card suit and no ace or king in an outside suit or four cards in a major. Vulnerable, you should hold two of the top three honors in the suit bid. Once you make a three-level bid, you have described your entire hand; do not bid again unless partner makes a forcing bid. The only ways partner can force are by bidding a new suit, by cue bidding the opponent’s suit, or by asking for aces.

Opening at the four-level is also preemptive showing a weak hand (5–10 starting points) and now able to take six tricks in the trump suit. You need an eight-card suit, no outside ace or king, no four-card major, and three of the top five honors. You only get one bid.

## Rule of 2/3

A guide to preemptive opening bids and overcalls is that one cannot afford to be set more than five hundred (two or three tricks vulnerable and nonvulnerable when doubled) unless one is saving against a slam contract. One often assumes that a vulnerable partner can make two tricks, and a nonvulnerable partner three tricks. Thus, a player who opens 4♠ should have an eight playing trick hand if vulnerable and a seven playing trick hand if not vulnerable.



To count playing tricks, only the first three tricks in a suit are counted. Winners are the A, K, or Q only in the suit. With less than three cards,  $AQ = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $Kx = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $KQ = 1$ ,  $K = 1$ ,  $Q = 1$ ,  $Qx = \text{one loser}$ .

What does that mean? The rule of 2/3 states that with a weak hand and a long, strong suit, you should count your playing tricks and add three when nonvulnerable, and add two if vulnerable.

To illustrate, we consider two hands:

A)  $\spadesuit AKQ10653$   $\heartsuit 8$   $\diamondsuit 854$   $\clubsuit 96$

B)  $\spadesuit \text{void}$   $\heartsuit 63$   $\diamondsuit AQJ876432$   $\clubsuit 87$

In hand A, we have six losers (zero in spades, one in hearts, three in diamonds, and two in clubs). Thirteen cards – six losers = seven playing tricks. Nonvulnerable, adding 3 =  $7 + 3 = 10$ , so you should open  $4\spadesuit$ . If you open at only the three levels, you would be underbidding your cards. You would open  $3\spadesuit$  only if vulnerable ( $7 + 2 = 9$ ).

It is obvious that the opponents are able to more easily bid over three spades than four spades.

In hand B, we have five losers and therefore eight playing tricks; adding three nonvulnerable takes us to eleven. Therefore, one would open  $5\diamondsuit$ . Vulnerable, one would open  $4\diamondsuit$ .

## Responder bids to three-level preempts

When partner opens the bidding at the three-level, responder has to place the contract. With a weak hand and no fit, pass. To set the contract, you must think about playing tricks and consider the vulnerability.

Opening at the three-level, partner has said he can make five tricks in the trump suit. Thus, for game in a major, you need to add five tricks outside the major to raise to the four-level. When opening a minor, bid 3NT if you have four more tricks. A simple raise in the minor shows a minor trump fit without game interest. If you bid another suit, not bid by partner, it generally shows a preemptive hand in the suit bid at the three-level and is lead directing, since it is very likely that the opponents will get the contract.

If you are unsure what to do, use Ogust, *only for major suit preempts*. You must have enough points for game in the major with 19+ starting points or have slam interest. We use the bid of 3NT\*, and the responses follow the bid of 2NT; however, now the bid must be alerted.

## Ogust over three-level preempts (bid 3NT\*)

$4\clubsuit^*$  minimum, one top honor (bad/weak hand and bad/strong suit)

- 4♦\* minimum, two top honors (bad/weak hand and good/strong suit)
- 4♥\* maximum, one top honor (good/strong hand and bad/weak suit)
- 4♠\* maximum, two top honors (good/strong hand and good/strong suit)
- 4NT\* all three honors, A-K-Q-x-x-x and little else

We consider a few examples.

♠7 ♥ KQ10653 ♦ A54 ♣ Q6

You have six losers, or  $13 - 6 = 7$  playing tricks. Nonvulnerable, you expect partner to cover three losers, so open 4♥. You would open it at the three-level vulnerable.

♠974 ♥ 7 ♦ AQJ863 ♣ Q62

You have seven losers, or  $13 - 7 = 6$  playing tricks. Open 3♦ nonvulnerable and *pass if you are vulnerable*. Just because you have a six-card suit does not mean you should open the hand with a preemptive bid.

♠A3 ♥ 10987 ♦ void ♣ KQ108762

You have a five-loser hand, strong club suit, and four hearts. Pass and wait to see what partner bids. Do not preempt your partner in the first seat.

## Preempted openings

Most of the bridge literature has been written about defending against weak three-level bids. Examples include the optimal double, 3NT for takeout, Fishbein, Lower Minor, Smith, Weiss, FILM, Reese, and Two Suiter Takeouts, etc. Many of these approaches involve numerous artificial bids that most players *forget*. Our goal is to keep it simple because there is no optimal system. The underlying principle that you must use is to devise a system that enables you to reach your own *best* contract and do not worry too much about penalizing the opponents.

## Opening five-level bids

To play straight penalty doubles at this level does not make sense. Opener will always have a long and strong single suit, and the opponents are trying to steal the contract! *Double* should always be for takeout, not penalty, and the bid of 5NT shows the two lowest unbid suits. This can be played in both the second and fourth positions.

## Opening four-level bids

When the preemptive bid is made at the four-level, one has more options. We consider each in turn.

### (1) Over 4♣ or 4♦

Again, a double is for takeout, suggesting a good hand with no clear-cut bid and all four-level bids are natural. A cue bid usually indicates a two suiter (both majors) or perhaps a three-suited rock crusher.

### (2) Over 4♥

Here, 4NT is not natural but a takeout bid for the minors. Double is for *penalty*, but I have tolerance for the other suits, particularly for spades. Partner, please decide.

### (3) Over 4♠

Here, 4NT is generally takeout and again double is primarily for penalty. Partner will again pull the double on a very shapely hand. Alternatively, a double may be used for takeout; then 4NT is used to show the minors. Discuss this with your partner.

For more information, see Brian Senior's (1984) *Defending against Pre-empts*, by Apsbridge Services Ltd.

## Roth Four club convention

Previously, we have suggested how to defend against preempt bids. However, if your partner preempts, there are also ways to investigate the preempt bid further. For two-level preempts, one may bid 2NT to ask your partner for a feature or you may use the Ogust convention. Or you can play Modified Ogust, Two-Step Ogust, Roudinesco rebids, Romex rebids, McCabe Adjunct convention, etc.

What method can you employ if your partner bids at the three-level and you have a very good hand? A convention that is similar to Ogust 3NT\* ask is called the Roth Four club convention. It is usually a slam try allowing one to assess the partnership's prospects for slam without going beyond a safe contract.

After the three-level bid, partner bids 4♣\*, which is artificial, and asks partner to describe his hand further. The responses are similar to Ogust and go like this (\* = alert):

- 4♦\*     bad hand, bad suit
- 4♥\*     bad hand, good suit (two of the top three honors in the preempt suit)
- 4♠\*     good hand (one or two honors outside the preempt suit), bad suit
- 4NT\*    good hand, good suit

The responses are similar to Ogust but use different steps. What do you think? Other systems like Thomas' Four Diamond system use key card responses that are more difficult to remember. However, some recommend asking bids, which are discussed next.

What about the four-level preempt with slam interest? One may simply modify the Roth Four club approach!

## Asking bids after a preempt

How many times have your partner opened at the three-level and you find yourself with a very good hand? What do you bid? Often neither Blackwood nor cue bids help. To consider a specific example, suppose you pick up the hand ♠AQ4 ♥AKQ654 ♦AT ♣84, and your partner opens three spades. What do you bid? The problem revolves around what your partner has in the club suit.

Or consider the following three *opening* hands:

- (1) ♠KJ109765 ♥32 ♦K76 ♣2,
- (2) ♠KJ109763 ♥32 ♦K9 ♣J10, and
- (3) ♠KJ109543 ♥32 ♦87 ♣A2.

Opposite hand (1), six spades is a lay down. With hand (2), six cannot be made because of the two club losers. And with the third hand, seven is a lay down. The same problem occurs when your partner opens four spades. With hand (3), Blackwood (chapter 3) solves the problem, but what about hands 1 and 2? A solution is to play *asking bids* whenever one opens at the three-/four-level.

For a three-level bid, any *jump* response in a suit is an asking bid in that suit.

Thus, after 3♠ followed by 5♣ asks, what do you have in clubs?

After 3♦ followed by 4♥ asks, what do you have in hearts?

Following a four-level bid, any five-level bid becomes an asking bid.

After 4♥ the bid of 5♦ asks, what do you have in diamonds?

After 4♠, the bid of 5♣ asks about clubs.

These bids do not interfere with normal bidding procedures because a new suit in response to a preemptive bid is usually forcing so that responder need not jump to game. Thus, the jump bid may be used more profitably. When opening at the four-level, opener should have a powerful suit and responder is not likely to have a better suit. Hence, responder is more likely to make an asking bid.

## Responses to asking bids

Let's consider an example with the sequence 3♣ followed by 5♣. What do you have in clubs? Responses to asking bids *always* start with the next suit.

First step – two or more quick losers xx, xxx, xxxx

Second step – singleton

Nearest notrump regardless of step = king

Fourth step – ace

Fifth step – A-K or A-Q

Sixth step - Void

Example 1:

Opener's hand: ♠K4 ♥65 ♦AJ109432 ♣43

Responder's hand: ♠87 ♥AKQJ109 ♦K4 ♣AKQ

The bidding goes 3♦ followed by 4♠. What do you have in spades? The bid of 4NT shows a *king*, closest NT, and responder bids 6NT to protect the king. Notice that in this case, the first step is notrump, showing the king. With two or three small spades, opener would have responded 5♣ to the 4♠ asking bid.

Example 2:

Opener's hand: ♠AKJ98765 ♥32 ♦2 ♣54

Responder's hand: ♠QT4 ♥J7♦AKQJ ♣AKJ10

The bidding goes 4♠ followed by 5♥. What do you have in hearts? Opener bids 5♠, first step, to show two or more quick losers in hearts. Responder passes.

Some recommend using only five steps for asking bids against preempts. They combine singleton and a king (steps 2 and 3) into step 2. Then step 3 is an ace, step 4 is A-K or A-Q, and step 5 becomes a void. Always discuss how you play asking bids with your partner.

**Warning:** There is no disaster worse than a misunderstood asking bid! The asking bids discussed here are based upon Edwin B. Kantar (1974), *Bridge Conventions*, Wilshire Book Company.

## Grand slam force after a bid suit

A bid of 5NT after a three-level or four-level bid suit is called the grand slam force and is used most often when the bidding has shown a strong hand and an agreed-upon *major suit*. The definitions of a strong hand are (1) a preemptive opening bid or overcall when vulnerable, (2) a jump rebid, and (3) a rebid in your original suit after your partner has made a jump shift. Then a bid of 5NT by partner is the grand slam force (or Josephine) bid asking about the strength

of the *major*. It was originally proposed by Josephine Culbertson in 1936, asking partner if he has two of the top three trump honors in the agreed-upon major. If the answer is yes, one bids seven. If a trump suit has not been agreed upon, it is usually the last suit bid major. However, this approach only handles about 40 percent of the hands. Hence, since 1936, there have been several proposed modifications to the bid. What follows is as a result of Edwin B. Kantar. There are other variations for the bid, so you should discuss it with your partner! Kantar recommends the following responses:

6♣ one of the top three honors, almost always the ace or king six of the agreed suit two of the top three honors seven of the agreed suit three of the top three honors

Some also play the bid even if the bidding does not show a strong *major* suit. For example, a preemptive bid not vulnerable. Then the responses are

- 6♣ queen or less
- 6♦ ace or king with minimum length
- 6♥ ace or king with more than minimum length
- 6♠ two of the top three honors
- 7♣ (or seven of the agreed-upon suit) the top three honors

Many times the responder must first find out about aces before using the grand slam force. Then the bid of 6♣ becomes the grand slam force bid! An example follows:

Opener	Responder	Opener Bid	Responder Bid
♠KQJ109876	♠A	4♠	4NT
♥9	♥AKQ765	5♥	6♣
♦7	♦AK54	6♠	7NT
♣A98	♣KQ2		

The bid is also often used after 1NT asking the opener to pick a suitable slam contract. Or it can be taken as quantitative looking for 7NT. Again, these bids should be discussed with your partner. You may also consult Magnus Lindkvist (2002), *Bridge Classic and Modern Conventions*, Arta Grafica S. A., Romania.

## Namyats

Namyats was created by Sam Stayman who, after creating the Stayman 2♣ response to partner's notrump opener, coined the Namyats convention using his name in reverse order. The Namyats convention, part of the 2/1 game force system, allows one to differentiate between a strong distributional hand, which may provide a slam opportunity with less opponent interference and a preemptive bid that has no slam opportunity.

The bid requires a seven plus card suit in hearts or spades, and like the strong two club opener, requires eight and a half to nine playing tricks. The major suit has two of the top three honors nonvulnerable and three of the top five honors vulnerable, and both require an outside ace or protected king. Thus, you almost have game in hand; partner has to only cover one loser in a major game contract. The bids use the minor preemptive four-level bids:

4♣\*      transfer to hearts

4♦\*      transfer to spades

If responder bids the transfer suit, this usually denotes no interest in slam. However, if one bids the next step (the gap), it indicates slam interest in the major.

4♣\*    4♦ slam interest

4♦\*      4♥ slam interest

## General

In first and second position,  $4\clubsuit$  and  $4\spadesuit$  openings show “good” four-level preempts in hearts and spades, respectively. The requirements for such an opening are

1. exactly two key cards (five aces and trump king)
2. no more than one uncontrolled suit
3. a Losing Trick Count of at most five
4. at most three of the nine side suit aces, king and queens, with no side suit containing all three of these honors
5. a main suit at least as good as
  1. KQT9xxx or KQJxxxx or a side void, when holding a seven-card main suit, or
  2. KQxxxxxxx when holding at least an eight card main suit
6. if holding a void, opener must also hold
  1. an uncontrolled suit and a main suit of at least AKQxxxx or AKxxxxxxx, or
  2. a suit lacking first- or second-round control but holding third-round control (doubleton or queen) and a weaker main suit.

A controlled suit is one in which the ace or king is held, or one in which at most one card is held.

## Responding to Namyats openings

### After a Namyats 4♣ opening

Responder may inquire with 4♦ when holding at least two key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries or sign off in opener's suit at the four-level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, "strong" holdings (void and honor combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other major, clubs, diamonds.

4♦

Inquiry, showing at least two key cards

4♥			Minimum requirements
4♠			Better than minimum, unspecified void
	4NT		Inquiry
		5♣/5♦/5♥	Club/diamond/spade void
4NT			Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled
5♣/5♦/5♥			Better than minimum, no void, no control in spade/club/diamond suit
5♠			AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
	5NT		Inquiry
		6♣/6♦/6♥	Club/diamond/spade suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5S response
5NT/6♣/6♦			AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit
6♥			AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit
4♥			To play
4♠/4NT/5♣			Spade/diamond/club void, slam interest and at least one key card
5♦			Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else
5♥			Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else

### After a Namyats 4♦ opening

Responder may inquire with 4H when holding at least two key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries or sign off in opener's suit at the four-level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, "strong" holdings (void and honor combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other major, clubs, diamonds.

4♥			Inquiry, showing at least two key cards
4♠			Minimum requirements
4NT			Better than minimum, unspecified void
	5♣		Inquiry
		5♦/5♥/5♠	Diamond/heart/club void
5♣			Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled



5♦/5♥/5♠	Better than minimum, no void, no control in heart/club/diamond suit
5NT	AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
6♣	Inquiry
6♦/6♥/6♠	Diamond/heart/club suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5NT response
6♣/6♦/6♥	AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit
6♠	AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit
4♠	To play
4NT/5♣/5♦	Heart/club/diamond void, slam interest and at least one key card
5♥	Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else
5♠	Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else

Holding the following hand, what do you open?

♠AK109653 ♥7 ♦9 ♣KJ73

The hand is too strong to open 4♠. Playing Namyats, one would open the bidding 4♦\*.

## McCabe Adjunct

When your partner opens a weak two-bid and they double, what are your options?

With a weak hand, the contract usually belongs to the opponents; hence your partners bid should help you with the lead, since it may be the opponent's contract. A convention developed by Mr. J. I. McCabe of Columbia, South Carolina, United States, does just that. His article was published in the *Bridge World*, issue of January 1994.

The McCabe bids are

A simple raise of partner's weak two-bids shows an ace or a king in the bid suit. With this information, the weak two-bidder may lead the suit. A bid in a lower-ranking suit is also lead directing. It also shows an ace or a king. And it suggests to the weak two-bidder to bid again without interference.

Without a fit, partner bids 2NT as a relay to three clubs. Responder then corrects or bids a new suit at the three-level. The opening bidder must pass. However, if responder next bids partners weak two-bid suit at the three-level, after the relay bid of three clubs, he denies a good lead, and it again shows an ace or king in the weak two-bidder's suit and a good hand.

Some partnerships reverse the meaning of McCabe's Adjunct.

### **McCabe Adjunct (reversed)**

In this method, raising partner bid suit *denies* an ace or a king and merely advances the preempt. A new suit at the two-level is to play. A three-level bid over a major suit bid shows an ace or king in the major bid. 2NT is again a relay to three clubs and is as in the McCabe Adjunct. A redouble of the bid suit shows a strong hand; it is designed to punish the opponents.

To be more specific with reverse McCabe, we have the following structure:

- 2♥ - X then    Redouble shows a strong hand
- 2♠       = spades
  - 2NT      = clubs (partner bids clubs)
  - 3♦       = transfer into suit shows  
          A/K of hearts
  - 3♥       = no A/K of hearts
- 2♠ - X then    Redouble shows a strong hand
- 2NT      = clubs (partner bids clubs)
  - 3♥       = transfer into suit show A/K  
          of spades
  - 3♠       = no A/K of spades

Over 2♦, all two-level bids are natural, and 3♣ shows A/K of diamonds; the bid of 3♦ shows the A/K. The bids over 2♦ are, of course, modified if you play flip-flop over the double of a diamond bid.

## CHAPTER 3

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### SLAM BIDDING

To reach a slam, the partnership should have roughly 33 Bergen points. In addition to a trump fit and count, slams require controls (aces, kings, voids, and singletons). The more controls between the partners, the easier the slam. To evaluate whether the partnership has the required controls, one uses cue bids and Blackwood conventions. Blackwood conventions reveal how many aces and kings, for example, while cue bidding or control showing bids reveal where they reside.

#### The Blackwood convention

The most used and perhaps abused convention in bridge is the original Blackwood convention developed by Easley Blackwood Sr. because many believe it will handle all situations. It does not. While the convention does not require knowing the trump suit, it does require that one knows whether slam is possible. The convention augments this knowledge by helping one find the number of aces and kings.

The convention should not be used when

- (1) holding two or more cards in an unbid suit with no ace or king (e.g., xx, Qx, Jx),
- (2) holding a void, or
- (3) one has a slam invitational hand (e.g., 1NT facing 1NT hands).

To use the convention, the captain bids 4NT, which is the asking partner for the number of aces held.

The responses are

- 5♣ zero aces or all four aces
- 5♦ one ace
- 5♥ two aces
- 5♠ three aces

If two aces are missing, the captain signs off in five of a suit. If one ace is missing, one may bid 6NT or six of a suit. When spades is not trump, the bid of 5♠ asks partner to bid 5NT.

What do you do if you have a void? Do not count it as an ace. With an even number of aces (two or four), bid 5NT, and with an odd number (one or three), bid the suit at the six-level. It works. If you have no aces and a void (ignore the void), bid 5♣, since the void may be in a suit in which your partner has an ace.

Knowing you have all the aces, 5NT is the king's ask (without a void response); the responses are

- 6♣ zero kings or all four kings
- 6♦ one king
- 6♥ two kings
- 6♠ three kings

Having all the aces and kings, one is in the grand slam zone; recall it requires about 37 Bergen points.

The major problem with the Blackwood convention is you have no way of knowing about the ace and king of trump and the specific location of aces are unknown. To solve these shortcomings, one uses cue bids and the Roman Key Card Blackwood convention, which has replaced the Blackwood convention.

## **Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) convention—1430**

The most authoritative book (in my opinion) on this convention is by Eddie Kantar (2008), *Roman Keycard Blackwood: The Final Word* fifth edition, Master Point Press, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. However, the book by Krzysztof Martens (2014), *Professional Slam Bidding* part 1 and part 2, and the books by Roger Munger (2014), *Kickback Slam Bidding at Bridge*, and Patty Tucker (2014), *Slam Bidding Conventions*, should also be consulted.

To use the RKCB convention, one must have agreed upon a trump suit. Knowing the trump suit, there are two Roman Key Card conventions known as 1430 and 3014. When the weak hand asks, Kantar (2008) recommends that one play the 1430 version (marked as 1430 on the convention card); if the very strong hand asks, he recommends 3014 (marked as RCK on the convention card). While Kantar has several criteria to determine which hand is considered very strong and which is the weak hand, because more often than not the hand that asks usually has two key cards (or if not, one with the queen), we recommend to always using the 1430 Roman Key Card convention, since it facilitates the queen ask step of 5♦ over 5♣ as we shall soon see and let's not get too complicated.

When using the RKCB convention, there are five key cards, the four aces, and the king of trump. Another key card is the queen of trump. If you do not use Kickback (to be explained later), the 1430 RKCB ask is again 4NT. The responses are

- 5♣ one or four key cards (the fourteen step)
- 5♦ three or zero key card (the thirty step)
- 5♥ two (or five) key cards without the queen of trump
- 5♠ two (or five) key cards with the queen of trump or holding a sixth trump

When one responds five clubs or five diamonds, the queen ask may be needed. After the response five clubs, the bid of 5♦ is the queen ask (when hearts or spades are the agreed-upon trump suit). After the bid of five diamonds, the bid of 5♥ is the queen asks.

### Queen asks

After five clubs and five diamonds, the queen asks are 5♦ and 5♥.

#### Responding to the 5♦ ask

- (1) If you *do not* hold the queen, responder returns to the agreed-upon suit at the five-level.
- (2) 5NT shows the queen, but no outside king!
- (3) With both (queen of trump and one or two kings), bid at the six-level of the lowest-ranking king.

#### Responding to the 5♥ queen ask (whether hearts or spades are the agreed-upon suit)

If you do not hold the queen, pass 5♥ if hearts are trumps. If spades is the agreed-upon suit, then 5♠ denies the spade queen.

1. If responder has a side suit king, the king is bid at the six-level to show king and queen of trump.
2. If responder has no side suit king but the queen of trump, bid 5NT.
3. If responder has 4-3-3-3 distribution without a side suit king or queen, bid 6NT.

Another simple option when hearts is the agreed-upon suit is to bid 6♥ if you do not hold the queen, with three key cards and to bid 7♥ holding the queen.

### King asks

Knowing you hold all the aces and king-queen of trump (some players do not require holding the queen), *5NT is the specific king's ask (SKA)!*

The specific king ask is needed for a grand slam try in the agreed-upon suit or notrump.

Responses are

- (1) Return to the agreed-upon trump suit at the six-level denies any kings.
- (2) With two kings, bid the cheapest at the six-level (below agreed-upon trump suit); if the second king is of higher rank, bid six of agreed suit. Only bid 6NT if spades were bid or if it was a splinter suit.
- (3) With three kings, bid 6NT.

To find a second king below the trump suit, bid the suit. Without the second king, responder bids the trump suit at the six-level. With the king, bid as follows:

- (1) Make a first step response, including 6NT with Kxx(x),
- (2) Make a second step response with Kxx, and
- (3) Raise the ask suit with Kx.

When hearts are the agreed-upon suit, one does not use 5NT for the king ask; instead the specific suit ask (SSA) bid is used as discussed later (below).

## **Spiral Scan**

Spiral Scan bids were developed by George Rosenkranz and are an extension of 1430. When partner has the queen of trump, one usually bids 5NT (the specific king ask) if one is interested in a grand slam. This is a terrible waste of space. Instead he recommended using his Spiral Scan bids, recently reviewed in the August 2014 issue of the *Bridge Bulletin*, to find out about kings, queens, and even jacks.

Following 1430, the first non-sign-off bid still asks for the queen (5♣/5♦/5♥), and that is where the Spiral Scan starts. If responder has four or three key cards, he treats the bid as the queen asks. His order of priority is

1. the queen of trump
2. king in any suit bid by responder that is five cards or longer
3. king in inquirer's long suit.
4. king in responder's four-card suit
5. remaining kings are shown in ascending order (♣/♦/♥/♠); some employ descending order.
6. side queens in a bid suit, starting with the longest side suit bid by replier
7. remaining queens in ascending order
8. side jacks—if ever, in ascending order

## **Answering**

First step denies the queen.

By bypassing the first step and bidding the second step shows the first card but not the second. And so on.

Let's look at an example of the Spiral Scan.

North	South
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♠
4NT	5♣/5♦
5♦/5♥	???

In this example, following the 5♣/5♦ bids responses to the queen ask bid, 5♦/5♥ would be the queen ask.

For this bidding example, south did not show a five-card suit but has a four-card heart suit. The spiral bidder showed a four-card spade suit. Thus the spiral order is ♠K,♥K,♣K,♦K.

Step 1: No ♠Q.

Step 2: ♠Q but no ♠K (no five-card suit bid—inquirer's long suit)

Step 3: ♠Q and ♠K, but no ♥K (responder four-card suit)

Step 4: ♠Q, ♠K, ♥K but no ♣K

Possessing the trump queen, the 1430 bidder may go through the queen ask to create a third-round control query. If asks take the partnership beyond the five-level of the trump suit, inquirer must be interested in a grand slam.

Let's look at another example where the queen asks step is bypassed!

North	South
1♠	2NT
4NT	5♣
5♥	???

Do u have the ♣K (second step)? Note that 5♦(first step) asks for the king of spades, since the priorities are ♠K, ♣K, ♦K, etc.

5♠ (first step after ask)	no ♣K
5NT (second step)	♣K, but no ♦K
6♣ (third step)	♣K, and ♦K, but no ♥K
6♦ (fourth step)	♣K, ♦K, ♥K, but no ♠Q—and so on

If the queen ask step is bypassed, since the 1430 bidder has the queen, the bids (in steps) after the queen ask bid is specific king/queen asking bids. For example, suppose spades is the trump suit, then the bids for the king/queen are

5♦	Asks for the ♠Q. The queen asks after the bid of 5♣.
5♥	Asks for the ♣K.

- 5♠ Asks for the ♦K. The responder cannot have zero key card
- 5NT Asks for the ♥K
- 6♣ Asks for the ♣Q
- 6♦ Asks for the ♦Q
- 6♥ Asks for the ♥Q

The responder rebids by counting steps. If he/she bids the next step up, the responder denies holding the card asked for. If the responder bids the second step, the responder shows the card asked for but denies higher cards.

Using the Spiral Scan, the partnership can concentrate on the most valuable key cards and the location thereof. The concept behind the Spiral Scan is the continuance of the auction until at least a small slam is reached. If one or several key cards are discovered to be missing, then the small slam is the better contract; but if all the key cards are accounted for during the auction, then the grand slam can be bid.

Suppose the bidding goes

North	South
1♠	2♦
3♣	4♣
4NT	5♥ (two key cards with no queen)
5NT	(Spiral Scan)

After 5♥, the location of the queen may be known inquirer now, then the Spiral Scan focuses on kings. Playing 2/1, the 2♦ bid usually shows five diamonds. So the orders of kings are ♦K, ♥K, ♣K, ♠K; so the 5NT scan bid asks for heart king. If diamonds was a four-card suit, the order of diamonds and hearts would be reversed; the 5♠ would be the Spiral Scan bid for the heart king.

One more example—suppose north and south hold the following cards:

North	South
♠AJ643	♠KQ75
♥KQ2	♥A7
♦3	♦A105
♣KQ72	♣AJ43

North	South
1♠	2NT (1)
3♦(2)	4NT (3)
5♣ (4)	5♥ (5)
6♠(6)	7NT



- (1) Jacoby 2NT forcing spade raise with four trumps
- (2) Singleton diamond
- (3) 1430 RKCB
- (4) One key card
- (5) The third step (5♠ would be to play), the second step 5♥ is asking about ♣K
- (6) The fifth step shows ♠K, ♥K, ♣Q, ♥Q, ♠J and denying the ♠J

Spiral Scan bids are most useful when the partnership is known to have the queen of trumps. However, even if you have the queen, you may have to ask to create a third-round control query. For example, suppose the bid of 5♥ asked for the queen of trumps and 5♠ (first step) denied it, then the bid of 6♣ would ask for the club queen.

### Queen and king asks combined

To make the best use of bidding space when one holds the trump queen, one may also show specific kings as well.

Assuming hearts are trump:

4NT (RKCB)	5♣ (1 or 4)
5♦ (next suit = queen ask)	5♥ = no queen (next suit up)
	6♥ = queen but no kings (trumps at lowest level)
	5♠ = queen and king of spades
	6♣ = queen and king of clubs
	6♦ = queen and king of diamonds
	5NT = queen and two kings

4NT (RKCB)	5♦ (zero or three)
5♠ (next suit = queen ask)	5NT = no queen (next suit up)
(5♥ would be sign-off)	6♥ = queen but no kings
	6♠ = queen and king of spades
	6♣ = queen and king of clubs
	6♦ = queen and king of diamonds
	6NT = queen and two kings

Assuming spades are trump:

4NT (RKCB)	5♣ (one or four)
5♦ (next suit = queen ask)	5♥ = no queen (next suit up)
	5♠ = queen but no kings (trumps at lowest level)
	6♥ = queen and king of spades

6♣ = queen and king of clubs  
 6♦ = queen and king of diamonds  
 5NT = queen and two kings

4NT (RKCB)                      5♦ (zero or three)  
 5♥ (next suit = queen ask)   5♠ = no queen (next suit up)  
 (5♠ would be sign-off)      6♥ = queen but no kings  
    6♣ = queen and king of clubs  
    6♦ = queen and king of diamonds  
    5NT = queen and two kings

Playing 1430 RKCB, the standard is to use the specific king ask; however, some still may play the number of kings from Blackwood excluding the trump suit—you better ask your partner.

### Responding with voids

Using the 1430 convention and have a void, the responses to 4NT are

**5NT** = two or four, an even number of key cards with a void (with zero, bid 5♦—ignore the void)

**six** of suit below the trump suit = odd number key cards (one or three)

**six** trump suit = odd number of key cards (one or three) with a void in higher-ranking suit

### Specific suit asks (SSA) (provided you do not play the Spiral Scan)

We have seen that one may ask for key cards, the queen of trump, and having both, ask for specific kings. When searching for a grand slam, one may also need to know about an outside suit (not the trump suit). For example, do you have a queen in the suit, a doubleton, or a singleton? To ask and answer this question, one makes a specific suit ask (SSA).

The specific suit asks is usually done when the captain has the queen of trump after the key card responses of 5♣ or 5♦.

After 5♣    6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠ is SSA

After 5♦    5♠, 6♣, 6♦, 6♥ is SSA

Lacking a control (xxx), simply sign-off in the trump suit at the six-level or pass the six-level asking bid. With a control, Axx, Kxx, xx, xx, x, one jumps to the seven-level in the trump suit.

More complicated responses are

(1) Make a first step response, including 6NT with third-round control Qx(x), Ax, AQx

- (2) Make a second step response with second-round control Kxx(x)
- (3) Make a third step response with Kx
- (4) Raise the ask bid with KQx and *jump* to the trump suit with a singleton

The SSA is also used in place of 5NT for the king asks when hearts are trumps, since you do not want to hear 5♠ going beyond 6♥. Instead of bidding 5NT, one bids 5♠ as a SSA.

Following the above pattern, the responses follow.

- 5NT = third-round control, either a queen or doubleton
- 6♣ = Kxx(x)
- 6♦ = Kx
- 6♠ = KQ(x)
- 7♥ = singleton
- 6♥ = denies K—usually xxx(x)—no controls

### **Over Interference DOP1-ROP1 or DEPO**

When the opponents interfere, most players play DOP1/ROP1. Another option is to use DEPO. While some do not use both, I recommend the use of both, which depends on the level of interference and the rank of the suit bid.

If the opponents interfere at the five levels with a bid, use DOP1\*.

- Pass one key card
- Double no key cards
- First step suit above two key cards
- Second step up three key cards

If the opponents interfere at the five levels with a double, use ROP1\*.

- Pass one key card
- Double no key cards
- First step suit above two key cards
- Second step up three key cards

\*Caution: Some use these as RKC responses (0/3 and 1/4)—partnership agreement.

However, if the bid used by the opponents is higher ranking than your agreed-upon suit, you must use DEPO and not DOP1 or ROP1.

## DEPO

Double even number of key cards (zero, two, four)

Pass odd number of key cards (one, three)

The bidding goes 1♥ pass 4NT, then 5♠. Since spades is higher ranking than hearts, one must use DEPO: double is even and pass is odd. You are still at the five-level, and the double may be passed for penalty. If, instead, the opponents bid 5♣, DOP1 is used, since the bid is of lower rank. Now double is zero and pass is one key card. A bid of 5♦ hearts shows two key cards, and 5♥ would indicate three key cards. If, instead, the opponents doubled, one would use ROP1.

If the opponents interfere over 5NT (at the six levels), use DEPO to show number of kings, not including the trump king. Now double shows zero or two and pass shows one or three. If you play specific kings, you may not be able to show the king and hence may also revert to DEPO.

## Kickback or Redwood and Minorwood

When the agreed-upon suit is a minor, the use of 4NT as a key card ask will often get the responses too high. To avoid this problem, one uses Roman Key Card Blackwood with Kickback. It works as follows: if clubs is trump, then 4♦ is used to ask. If diamonds is trump, the 4♥ is used to ask. If hearts is trump, then 4♠ and not 4NT is used. When spades is trump, one always uses 4NT to ask.

One responds to the ask using each suit in order. For example, suppose the agreed-upon suit is hearts, so 4♠ is the asking bid. The responses are

4NT	one/four key cards (the fourteen step)	<b>first step</b>
5♣	three/zero key cards (the thirty step)	<b>second step</b>
5♦	two/five key cards without queen of trump in agreed suit	<b>third step</b>
5♥	two/five key cards with queen of trump in agreed suit	<b>fourth step</b>

What is the queen ask? After 4NT, it is 5♣, and after 5♣, it is 5♦; always the next step. Note that without the queen, you are at the five-level of the agreed-upon heart trump suit.

## Responding to the 4NT/5♣ queen ask (next step)

- (1) If you *do not* hold the queen, responder *returns to the agreed-upon suit at the five-level (5♥)*.
- (2) 5NT shows the queen, but no outside king!
- (3) With both (queen of trump and one or more kings), bid at the six-level of the lowest-ranking king.

Knowing you have all key cards, 5♠ is now the (SKA) when using Kickback for hearts; the responses are for specific kings:

- 5NT spade king (easy to now show higher-ranking king)
- 6♥ zero outside kings
- 6♣/6♦ one king (cheapest lower rank)

Some use 5NT for the SKA, so you best ask your partner. However, then you cannot show the higher-ranking king; and 6♥ would show no lower-ranking king. Again one may do a second lower-ranking king ask.

Asks that are not the queen or the SKA are again used as for the SSA. All extensions follow.

Instead of playing Kickback (called Redwood if only restricted to the minors), some play Minorwood. The Minorwood convention uses four of the agreed minor for the RKCB ask. For example, in the auction 1♦ - 2♦\*, the bid of 4♦ is Minorwood—no alert needed (note some partnerships use 3♦\* as Minorwood called 1-2-3 Minorwood—if you do, it must be alerted); it is used instead of 4♥, Kickback or Redwood. It can also be played in a sequence when Kickback may be confusing. For example, if the bid of 4♠ is confusing, one may jump into four of a minor instead of using Kickback RKCB. I have heard this also called the Bothwood convention.

Instead of playing Minorwood, some play Crosswood. The difference is that with Crosswood, if diamonds is the agreed-upon suit, then 4♣ is the 1430 key card ask, and if clubs is agreed, then 4♦ is the 1430 ask. The term “Bothwood” is more often used if one plays both Minorwood and Kickback for hearts. When both minors have been bid, some use Double Roman Key Card Blackwood.

### Minorwood

Over 4♣

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 4♦  | one or four key cards (the fourteen step)                     | first step  |
| 4♥  | three or zero key cards (the thirty step)                     | second step |
| 4♠  | two (or five) key cards without queen of trump in agreed suit | third step  |
| 4NT | two (or five) key cards with queen of trump in agreed suit    | fourth step |
| 5♣  | to play   |             |

Over 4♦

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 4♥  | one or four key cards (the fourteen step)                     | first step  |
| 4♠  | three or zero key cards (the thirty step)                     | second step |
| 4NT | two (or five) key cards without queen of trump in agreed suit | third step  |
| 5♣  | two (or five) key cards with queen of trump in agreed suit    | fourth step |
| 5♦  | to play   |             |

### Minorwood (queen ask)

As before, the queen ask is initiated by bidding the next step up after showing one/four or zero/three key cards (e.g., 4♥, 4♠, or 4NT).

If you do not have the queen, bid the minor suit at the five-level. With the queen, bid the agreed-upon minor suit at the six-level.

### Minorwood (king ask—specific kings)

If one has all the key cards, one may ask about kings. The king ask is *one level higher than the minor trump suit* (for example, 5♦ if clubs is the suit, and 5♥ if diamonds is the suit). Then the bid of 5NT denies any kings.

With two kings, bid the cheapest at the six-level (below the agreed trump suit); if the second king is of a higher rank, bid 6NT. With three kings, bid 7NT.

**Note: some play number of king's ask (ask partner what they play)**

After 5♦:5♥ = 0, 5♠ = 1, 5NT = 2, 6♣ = 3 (partner can bid 7♣ or 7NT)

After 5♥:5♠ = 0, 5NT = 1, 6♣ = 3, 7♦ = 3 (partner can bid 7♦ or 7NT)

Let us look at an example of Kickback dealer north and N-S vulnerable

		♠ AK1086	
		♥ 5	
		♦ A5432	
		♣ K9	
♠ Q3		N	♠ 9754
♥ KQJ42		W	♥ 10 873
♦ KJ6		E	♦ 10 9
♣ 763		S	♣ Q84
		♠ J2	
		♥ A96	
		♦ Q87	
		♣ AJ1052	

Suggested bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass

North opened the bidding by bidding one spade showing five spades, and south responded with the 2/1 bid of two clubs. North's jumps to three diamonds shows a 5-5 hand in spades and diamonds; south with three diamonds 4♦. Having found a diamond fit, the bid of four hearts is RKCB for diamonds, using Kickback. The bid of five diamonds shows two key cards with the queen of trump. North next bids six.

The advantage of the Redwood/Minorwood when investigating a slam in a minor is that it keeps the bidding at a low level; one may escape at the five-level. In this example, it does not make a difference; however, if one responded five spades showing three key cards when bidding diamonds or clubs, without kickback, it commits the partnership to slam, so why ask? This is not the case with the Kickback/Minorwood RKCB bids or Minorwood.

In this example, it was critical that north showed his 5-5 shape. If he did not, the slam may be missed. Let's see how an incorrect bidding sequence may progress for the same example.

Suggested poor bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♣	
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Double	4♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Because north did not show his shape, the slam was missed.

When playing 2/1, one usually makes a 2/1 game force bid as soon as possible; however, it is not always critical.

We now show how to bid the same example using Minorwood.

Suggested bidding sequence using a forcing notrump bid:

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♣ (2/1 bid)
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦(1430 Minorwood)	Pass	5♣ (two key cards with Q♦)
Pass	5♥ (SKA)	Pass	5NT (no kings)
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

If responder had a higher-ranking king, he would bid 6NT, while 6♣ would show a club king.

## Slam bidding with no agreed-upon suit

When playing 1430 RKC, how should one proceed if there is not a prior agreement on the trump suit? Some recommend that (1) it should always be the last-bid suit, (2) some suggest that one should not play any form of RKCB but instead just use Blackwood as an ace only ask (no key cards), (3) others recommend that RKCB be used only if the last-bid suit is a minor (opener or responder) but not a major, and (4) some play that it is the last-bid suit of the responder. What is your agreement?

The approach you use must be discussed with your partner when you make out your convention card. There is no “best” or standard approach. However, let’s consider a few examples.

Suppose you open one spade and partner responds two hearts (a 2/1 response), and as opener, you hold the hand ♠AKQJ763 ♥4 ♦KQ53 ♣7. If you play the last-bid suit, you cannot bid 4NT. You might try three spades and then 4NT, but if partner bids four hearts over three spades, you are back to square one. If your agreement allows you to agree that the last-bid major with a forcing three-level raise or a splinter jump (even a fake splinter jump!) below game and this is not done, the last-bid suit is not the agreed-upon suit. In the previous example, a strong case could be made to make spades the agreed-upon suit if opener jumps to 4NT over two hearts. The last-bid suit works whenever you have a fit for the last-bid suit. But if you do not, it usually does not work. We consider an example.

Opener	Responder
♠KQJ863	♠A2
♥K10942	♥J7
♦Q8	♦AK5
♣Void	♣AKQJ104

The bidding goes

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
2♥	3♦
3♥	4NT
6♣	7NT
Pass	

Responder leaps to 4NT to ask for key cards. Since the last-bid suit was hearts, opener bids 6♣, which shows an odd number of key cards, the king of hearts, and a void in clubs. Thinking that the one key card is the ace of hearts, responder bids a grand slam, 7NT. Whose fault? The fault was that they lacked a mutual agreement as to what 4NT means when there is no agreed-upon suit.

If you play the last-bid suit, you will only survive a 4NT ask when you intend to play in your own suit as long as you hold the king of the last-bid suit. Partner is forced to answer only aces! In



the above example, responder did not hold the king. Because there was no agreed-upon suit, one would bid 5♣ (zero key card). Partner would bid 6NT.

The above example suggests that one use Blackwood if there is no agreed-upon suit.

To illustrate, suppose the bidding goes one heart-two clubs-two hearts-4NT. Then since the last-bid minor suit of responder was clubs, 4NT agrees clubs. If responder wanted to agree hearts, and the partnership plays that a raise to three hearts is forcing, it is easy enough to bid three hearts and then 4NT. If a raise to three hearts is not forcing, then a jump to four diamonds agrees hearts, and if partner bids four hearts, 4NT can be bid. If the responder wants to agree spades, he bids two spades or three spades, and then bids 4NT. Thus, if you do not have an agreed-upon suit, you can play Blackwood or agree that one may play the last-bid minor suit of opener or responder.

With no agreed-upon suit, here are my suggestions:

1. Use Key card after any four-level bid.
2. All Kickback auctions are RKCB.
3. If two suits are agreed upon, the *first suit bid* is trumps for RKCB purposes.
4. When none of the previous applies, use Blackwood as ace only asks.

## Overview: Roman Key Card Blackwood 1430\*

4NT when hearts or spades are the agreed-upon suit (Key card ask)

5♣ = one or four key cards

5♦ = zero or three key cards

5♥ = two or five key cards without the queen of trump

5♠ = two or five key cards with the queen of trump or holding a sixth trump

### Kickback

Use four diamonds as key card ask when *clubs* is the agreed-upon suit.

Use four hearts as key card ask when *diamonds* is the agreed-upon suit.

Use four spades as key card ask when *hearts* is the agreed-upon suit.

### Voids

5NT = two or four, an even number of key cards with a void (5♦ = 0, ignore the void)

6 of suit below the trump suit = odd number key cards (one/three)

6 trump suit = odd number of key cards (one/three) with a void in higher-ranking suit

**DOP1/ROP1:** Interference at the five-level, **DBL/RE-DBL:** zero or three key cards, and **PASS:** one or four key cards

**DEPO** Interference at the six-level, **DBL**: Even number key cards (zero/two/four), or **PASS**: Odd number (one/three)

**QUEEN ASK**: After 5♣, 5♦ is queen ask

Responses:

**Denial**: Return to the five-level of the agreed-upon suit

**Six-level of agreed suit**: With queen and *no* side suit king or extra trump

**Six-level of lower king suit**: With queen and king

**5NT**: With queen *without* a side suit king, but trump extra  
After 5♦, 5♥ is the queen ask

**Denial**: If spades are trump, bids 5♠, with hearts pass.

**Six-level of lower king suit**: With queen and side king

**5NT**: With queen *without* a side suit king, but trump extra

**6NT**: With queen *without* a side suit king and 4-3-3-3 distribution

**5NT is a specific king ask (not number of kings)**

Responses are

(1) Return to the agreed-upon trump suit at the six-level denies any kings.

(2) With two kings, bid the cheapest at the six-level (below agreed-upon trump suit); if the second king is of higher rank, return agreed suit at the six-level. If spades were bid or shown as a singleton/void, bid 6NT.

(3) With three kings, bid 6NT.

**SPECIFIC SUIT ASK (SSA)** After 5♣: 5♥, 6♣, 6♦ is SSA. After 5♦: 5♠, 6♦, 6♥ is SSA.

Make a first step response, including 6NT with third-round control Qx(x), Ax, AQx, xx.

Make a second step response with second-round control Kxx(x).

Make a third step response with Kx.

Raise the ask bid with KQx and *jump* to the trump suit with a singleton.

\*No agreed-upon suit; some use standard Blackwood convention for ace asking and 5NT for number of king ask

Let's consider some examples on the use of RKCB.

Slam 1

Opener ♠A7 ♥AQ65 ♦84 ♣AKQ98

Responder ♠KQ5 ♥K843 ♦KQJ6 ♣7

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
4♥	4NT
5♦	5♥
6♣	6♥

The opener has 19 HCP + 1 length – 1 dubious doubleton = 19 starting points. Responder has 14 starting points. Opener bids 1♣, responder bids 1♥. Finding a fit, opener reevaluates his hand. He has 19 starting + 2 doubletons = 21 dummy points and bids 4♥; we have game. Finding the heart fit, responder bids 4NT (alternatively, he could use kickback and ask by bidding 4♠). The response of 5♦ shows zero or three key cards. The bid of 5♥ is the queen asks. The bid of 6♣ shows the queen of hearts and the club king. Opener bids the slam 6♥.

In this example, we did not use kickback. We should have because it may be difficult to determine if the bid of 5♥ is sign-off or queen ask. Instead of bidding 4NT, suppose one bids 4♠; we would then have

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
4♥	4♠
5♣	5♦
6♣	6♥

Now 5♣ shows zero or three key cards and 5♦ becomes the queen ask. Denying the queen, the bid would be 5♥, which is short of game. However, 6♣ shows the queen plus the king of clubs. Responder again bids 6♥.

#### Slam 2

Opener	♠AJ7 ♥AQJ753 ♦AQ4 ♣7
Responder	♠K5 ♥K1084 ♦8765 ♣AK9

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT*
4NT	5♥
5NT	6♣
6♦	6♥

Opener has 18 HCP + 2 length points + 1 quality suit = 21 points. Responder has 13 starting points.

After the bid of 1♥, responder bids 2NT\* (Jacoby). Instead of showing his singleton, he bids 4NT. With two key cards, the bid is 5♥. Opener has the queen of trump, bids 5NT, which is the specific king ask. With the king of clubs, responder bids 6♣. The bid of 6♦ is the second king ask. Without the king, responder again signs off in the heart slam.

Slam 3

Opener     ♠AJ7 ♥AQJ753 ♦AQ98 ♣ void

Responder ♠K5 ♥K1084 ♦8765 ♣AK9

You have the same hand, but now you have a void. You cannot bid 4NT with a void. However, you have two options: cue bidding or using another convention called Exclusion Key Card Blackwood (EKCB). We will consider both; however, because cue bidding a void can be risky, we first consider EKCB.

## Exclusion Roman Key Card Blackwood (ERKCB) convention

The convention is most often played with a known major suit agreement and you know you are in the region of slam; for example, after a Jacoby 2NT bid, a concealed splinter bid, or perhaps a Swiss bid. The convention may also be played whenever the last-bid suit is a major (with or without an agreement). The convention is initiated by an unusual jump to the five levels above game in your void suit. You are asking for key cards for the agreed-upon major (or last-bid suit) excluding the void suit. Partner does not count the ace in the void suit bid; now there are only four key cards, three aces and a king. There is no such thing as 1430 or 3014 ERKCB.

When playing the convention over a minor, one uses a four-level bid, one level above a splinter bid. The responses are steps above the bid suit.

### Responses to ERKCB

- First step     zero key card
- Second step   one key card
- Third step    two key cards without the queen
- Fourth step   two key cards with the queen
- Fifth step    three key cards (very unusual)

The only exception to a five-level bid is that one may use 4♠ if you agree that hearts is trump at the two-level. However, you cannot do this if you play kickback for hearts. Thus, I would only recommend that it be used with bids at the five-level.

As with 1430 RKCB, the bid of 5NT is again the specific king ask; however, one may also use the bid of 5♠. The next step after a 0/1 or 1/4 step is the queen ask. A negative response is the next step. And with the queen and no kings, bid 5NT. With the queen and a king, bid 6x to show a king. Finally, the bid of any suit that is not the queen ask is the SSA.

What do you do after an EKCB ask with a void? Most ignore it, but you can again bid 5NT with an even number and bid 6x to show void and an odd number.

Returning to our slam 3 example, opener bids 5♣ (ERKCB). Excluding the club suit, responder has one key card (king of hearts) and bids 5♦. Partner with all the aces and a void in clubs knows it is the king of hearts. Having the queen, what next? He bids 5NT, which is again the specific king ask; without the king of diamonds, partner again signs off in six hearts.

While I have stated that there is no such thing as Exclusion Roman Key Card Blackwood, some do not believe this and will respond to the jump exclusion bid as they may with 1430. So ask your partner to review the bids to ERKCB.

## Double Agreement Roman Key Card Blackwood (DRKCB)

With a double agreement, there are now six key cards (four aces and two kings), *not five*, so we have what are called Double Agreement 1430 Roman Key Card Blackwood (DRKCB). We consider DRKCB responses for some double agreements.

### 1. Major-major agreements

a) Opener	Responder	b) Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥	1♥	2♠
3♣	3♠	3♠	4♥
4♥	4NT	4NT	

Then 4NT is a DRKCB ask.

When responding to DRKCB asks, there are now six key cards. And there are no void-showing responses. The first two responses (5♣ and 5♦) of DRKCB are the same as 1430 RKCB; however, there are now three queens showing responses:

5♥	two with neither queen
5♠	two with lower-ranking queen
5NT	two with higher-ranking queen
6♣	two with both queens

Note that in the second step (5♠), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first- or second-step response to a DRKCB ask (5♣ and 5♦), unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown. To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step, excluding the trump suits, but including 4NT for a queen ask. The four-response steps now become

First step	two with no queen
Second step	two with lower-ranking queen only
Third step	two higher-ranking queen only
Fourth step	two both queens

When investigating a small slam using the Double-Agreement sequence, you are looking to have at least five of the six missing key cards plus at least one queen of the agreed-upon suits.

We now consider two *major-major* examples.

(A) Opener	Responder	Comments
♠A10732	♠KJ5	
♥A982	♥KQJ63	
♦K2	♦A94	
♣Q7	♣A5	
1♠	2♥	(1) Double Agreement
3♥	3♠ (1)	(2) DRKCB
4♥	4NT (2)	(3) Two with neither queen
5♥ (3)	6♥ (4)	(4) Q♠ is missing

(B) Opener	Responder	Comments
♠A8732	♠KJ5	
♥AQ95	♥KJ632	
♦A2	♦K94	
♣A5	♣Q7	
1♠	2♥	(1) Double Agreement
3♥	3♠ (1)	(2) DRKCB
4♥	4NT (2)	(3) One or four key cards
5♣ (3)	5♦ (4)	(4) Queen ask with double agreement
5♠ (5)	6♥ (6)	(5) Q♥ (second step, lower-ranking queen)
		(6) Q♠ is missing

Note that if the response in example (B) was 5♦ (0/3), 5♥ would be the queen ask bid, and with zero, you would pass. Remember to use DRKCB, you must have two key cards to begin the DRKC asking bid of 4NT. Queen asks are more easily used with Kickback DRKCB sequences. With all eight key cards, 5NT is the SKA bid.

## Quantitative bids

When one opens 1NT or 2NT, a jump bid to 4NT is usually quantitative; it is asking partner if he is at the top of his bid. If he is, he should bid 6NT; otherwise, pass. While it is most often played when opening notrump, it may also be used with strong suit bid responses.

Examples of some common quantitative bidding sequences follow.

<b>1NT - 4NT</b>	Partner passes with a minimum or bids 6NT
<b>1NT - 2♦/2♥</b>	Jacoby transfer to hearts/spades
<b>2♥/2♠ - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes or bids on with extras values/length
<b>2♣ - 2♦</b>	Semipositive
<b>3NT - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes with a minimum or 6NT with good values
<b>1♣ - 1♠</b>	
<b>2♦ - 2♥</b>	Reverse by opener showing 17+ points, fourth suit forcing
<b>3NT - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes with a minimum or 6NT with good values
<b>1NT - 2♣</b>	Stayman
<b>2♥ - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
<b>1x - 1y</b>	
<b>1NT - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
<b>1M - 2m</b>	
<b>2NT - 4NT</b>	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
<b>1NT - 2♣</b>	
<b>2♦ - 4NT</b>	Quantitative partner passes or bids 6NT
<b>2NT - 3♣</b>	Stayman
<b>3♠ - 4NT</b>	Quantitative partner passes or bids 6NT

**Baron bids after 4NT**

After an invitational quantitative 4NT bid, opener need not bid 6NT, since finding twelve tricks may be difficult. It is often better to play slam in a suit that allows you to ruff losers. If you have four losers, you may not want to play in notrump but a suit. Since the bid of 4NT invites a slam, any bid by the opener says, "I accept the invitation to slam," and is forcing; one may also stop in 5NT. Instead of bidding 6NT, one usually bids four-card suits up the line, which allows the partnership two chances to find a suit fit.

Let's look at an example:

West      East

♠54      ♠AK7  
 ♥K67    ♥QJ9  
 ♦KQJ2   ♦A10985  
 ♣AK54   ♣J2

In this example, west has four losers, and the bidding goes 1NT-4NT; since east has 15 HCP and a five-card suit, he invites slam. With four losers, east accepts by bidding 5♣, the cheapest four-card suit. East does not like clubs but is happy to bid 4♦. West likes his quality diamond suit, and his two small spades are only an asset in a suit contract. Hence, he bids 6♦. In six diamonds, west can ruff a spade for the twelfth trick; if the contract was in 6NT, only eleven tricks can be made.

Let's consider a second example.

West      East

♠AKJ    ♠Q72  
 ♥AQ67   ♥K9  
 ♦A102   ♦K752  
 ♣KJ10   ♣Q842

In this case, the bidding goes

2♣                      2♦ (ace or king)  
 2NT                    4NT  
 5♣ (Baron bid)    6♣

Finally, suppose we have the following hand:

West      East

♠AJ2      ♠KQ43  
 ♥KQ87   ♥52  
 ♦KQ6    ♦AJ103  
 ♣AK8    ♣J102

Here the bidding goes

2NT            3♣ (Stayman)  
 3♥            4NT  
 6NT



You have bid your suits so that the bid is quantitative for a slam in notrump.

Grand slam force after 1NT is the bid of 5NT. It may be used after a notrump opening or after one has agreed upon a suit.

To use the bid after a one notrump opening requires 20+ HCP. If opener is at the top of his bid, 17 HCP, he bids 7NT; otherwise, he bids 6NT.

After a suit bid, for example 1♠ - 5NT or 4♥ - 5NT, with two or more controls in the bid suit, partner bids

- **6 of the agreed trump suit** if holding *one* of the top three trump honors (e.g., the ace)
- **7 of the agreed trump suit** if holding *two* of the top three trump honors (e.g., the king and queen)

**Pick a slam** - Without a known fit or when the opponents interfere, a jump to 5NT is used to ask partner to pick slam. For example, he may go 1♣ - 1♥; 2♦ - 5NT, or the bidding may go 2♣ - 3♠; 4♣ - 5NT.

## Baby Blackwood in Serious 3NT

The bid of 3NT may be used in a variety of artificial ways in possible slam auctions when playing 2/1. Consider auctions of the following type:

West	East	West	East
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♣
3♥	3NT	2♥	3♠
		3NT	

What does the bid of 3NT mean?

Clearly, not to play! The problem is that neither player has limited his hand. At this point, both east and west could have near maximum hands with reasonable controls or could have substantial extra values. In both bidding sequences, we have agreed upon a major, hearts and spades, respectively, at the three levels.

At this point, some play the bid of 3NT as Baby Blackwood. It begins the key card sequence at a low level and allows one to bail out at the five-level of the major.

This can also be a part of the “Serious” 3NT convention proposed by Eric Rodwell. If one does not bid 3NT, one begins a cue bidding sequence! With less than 15+ HCP or the equivalent, one uses a cue bid to show a minimum hand. It is a courtesy cue bid in case partner has substantial extra values. The cue bidder usually has a near minimum. If he has substantial extras, he bids 3NT, saying that he is “serious”—“Baby” Blackwood with slam interest. Hence with a minimum, the bidding might be

West	East	West	East
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♣
3♥	3♠/4♣/4♦	2♥	3♠
	4♣/4♦		

This sometimes is referred to as nonserious notrump or frivolous notrump.

With no interest in slam, one would sign off in four of the major and not bid 3NT or cue bid. If you cue bid, there are some important rules.

(1.) A cue bid in partner's 2/1 suit shows one of the top three honors (A/K/Q). (2.) A cue bid in your own 2/1 suit shows two of the top three honors. (3.) A cue bid in an unbid suit shows any first- or second-round control (A/K/singleton/ void). Cue bidding is always done up the line. By skipping a step, you deny an appropriate "control" in the step you skipped. 4NT is always RKCB (usually 1430).

Ace-asking bids at the level of 3NT or below and usages on the first round (other than Blackwood and Gerber) require an *immediate alert*. Unusual ace-asking bids above the level of 3NT starting with opener's second turn to call require a *delayed alert*. Delayed alerts for the declaring side's auction are made before the opening lead and for the defending side's auction after the opening lead.

Slam bidding is the most rewarding and possibly one of the toughest aspects of the game. You have to make one-trick decisions, and if you're wrong (either way), the penalties are severe. Serious 3NT is a tool that may help you improve your decision making.

When using this convention or others, it's important to remember the three aspects that make slams:

1. Power. For a slam purely on HCP, you need 33 for the six-level, 37 for seven. Playing tricks can make up for some of the power, of course, provided the other criteria are met.
2. Controls. If the opponents can take the first (in seven) or first two (in six) tricks in any suit, you will go down. So you need to assure you have the necessary first- and second-round controls.
3. Trumps. Obviously, not important for NT slams, but in a suit, the trump suit must be both long enough to generate tricks and solid enough to not lose two.

Examples of using serious 3NT and the cue bidding style in some 2/1 auctions follow.

Cue 1:

♠KJ567	♠AQ2
♥A89	♥7
♦Q2	♦AKJ1098
♣Q56	♣A45

1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♦	4NT
5♥	7NT

Opener's 4♦ denies serious slam interest (else 3NT) and denies first- or second-round club control (else 4♣) but shows one of the top three honors in diamonds. Responder can count thirteen tricks.

Cue 2:

♠AQJ98	♠K234
♥Ax	♥KQ
♦K987	♦AQJ43
♣Q7	♣J9
1♠	2♦
3♦	3♠
3NT	4♥
4♠	PASS

Opener's 3NT shows serious slam interest. Responder's 4♥ bid shows two key cards. Opener's 4♠ bid is an absolute sign-off. Responder, despite holding extra values, must pass. Note: If you did not use "Baby 3NT," you may have overbid!

Cue 3:

♠AJ1087	♠KQ2
♥KJ9	♥654
♦7	♦AKQJ98
♣Q987	♣A
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♥	4NT
5♦	6♠

4♥ denies serious slam interest but shows a heart control. A heart control is all responder needs to know about. What would happen if you exchange opener's honors in hearts?

Cue 4:

♠AJT34	♠KQ7
♥Q108	♥543
♦7	♦AKQJ98

♣KJ87	♣A
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♠	PASS

When responder bids 4♦, he is announcing serious slam interest. This is because the opener has denied serious slam interest by not bidding 3NT. Responder would sign off over 4♣ if he did not have serious slam interest of his own. Opener is now obligated to show a heart control if he has one. When opener bids 4♠, responder knows that the defense can take at least the first two heart tricks.

Cue 5:

♠K98	♠Q7
♥AJ10765	♥K32
♦79	♦AQ10654
♣K7	♣AQ
1♥	2♦
2♥	3♥
3♠	3NT
4♥	Pass

When hearts is agreed at the three-level, opener must bid 3♠ if he has a control in spades. Any other bid would deny spade control (3NT would be Baby Blackwood—Serious 3NT). Responder has extra values and shows this by bidding 3NT. 4♥ shows two key cards, and responder passes.

If there is one lesson to be learned from this discussion, it is that there is significantly more too effective bidding than merely writing down the name of a convention or a system on your convention card. Good partnership agreements are considerably more important than the system you play. If you and your partner decide to play a complex nonstandard system, put in the time and do it right. Discuss your auctions and make sure you understand why you make bids and what they mean! When you truly understand your system, you will start to see the benefits in your results.

This section is based upon material in the book by Brian Senior (2001), *Conventions Today*, Chess & Bridge LTD, and an article by Fred Gitelman, "Improving 2/1 Game Force," published in *Canadian Masterpoint*, a magazine for expert players. This article with extensions (including the Last Train convention) may be found on the Web: [www.imp-bridge.nl/artiles/2over1.htm](http://www.imp-bridge.nl/artiles/2over1.htm).

## Cue bidding for slam

Cue bidding sequences are critical to reaching a slam in 2/1 game force auctions. In addition, we have been warned: (1) don't use Blackwood with a worthless doubleton; (2) if you use Key Card Blackwood (without Kickback) and want to investigate slam in a minor, the use of 4NT can be disastrous. So how do you investigate slam? The answer is by using cue bidding. The material in this section follows the basic principles set forth by Ken Rexford (2006) in *Cue Bidding at Bridge—A Modern Approach*, published by Master Point Press, Toronto.

To stimulate how you might use cue bidding, we look at two examples from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl round-robin event (Rexford, page 180). How would you bid the following hands?

### Hand 1

West	East (dealer)
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

### Hand 2

West (dealer)	East
♠ AKJ974	♠ Q10
♥ A	♥ Q53
♦ AK1097	♦ Q82
♣ 6	♣ J10432

Before we analyze the two hands, we put forth Ken's simple principles.

### TEN BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CUE BIDDING

P1. Cue bids of a side suit belonging to the cue bidder show *two* of the top three honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♦	

P2. Cue bids of a side suit belonging to partner show *one* of the top three honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

P3. 2NT as a cue bid denies good trumps (denies two of the top three honors).

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
2NT	

P4. Bypassing 2NT as a cue bid promises good trumps.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

P5. A cue bid of trumps shows *two of the top three honors*, or the *missing* top honor if partner has already shown the other two top honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♥

P6. Cue bids of unbid suits show first- or second-round control in the form of honors (ace/king) or shortness (singleton/void).

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♠

P7. Bypassing a cue bid denies the ability to make that cue bid.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♦	

P8. Bidding 3NT shows serious slam interest.

West	East
1♥	2♦ (GF)
2♥	3♥
3NT	

P9. Bypassing serious 3NT denies slam interest.

West	East
1♥	2♦ (GF)
2♥	3♥
4♣	

P10. The last train cue bid below you're agreed-upon suit is an artificial bid, a "Last Train to Clarksville" cue bid, used to show slam interest with insufficient information to commit to slam or to use 1430 RKCB.

Finally, you must be able to *infer the meaning* of the skipped cue bid step. Let's look at two examples:

(1) The bidding goes

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
2NT	

Having established hearts as the trump suit and bypassing the cue bid of 2♠, west denies a spade control and shows poor trumps (P3). Alternatively, consider the example:

(2) The bidding goes

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

Now opener holds one of the top three honors in clubs (P2) and again lacks a spade control, since the control bid was skipped. Furthermore, since the bid of 2NT was bypassed, opener must have two of the top three honors in hearts!

Continuing, suppose responder now bids 3♦; we now know that responder holds a diamond card (P2). But do we know more? The purpose of cue bidding is to get to slam, and from the bidding,

we know that opener lacks a spade control, and responder did not sign-off in 4♥ but cue bid 3♦. We now know by logical inference that responder must have a spade control.

If opener now bids 3♠ after 3♦, he bypassed 3♥, so he lacks a third heart control but shows third-round control in spades.

## **CORRECT INFERENCES IN CUE BIDDING ARE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS**

With the above basic principles and the ability to infer meaning to gaps in cue bidding, one may begin to develop the “art” of cue bidding in his partnerships. For more complex principles like picture jump cue bids, cue bidding after splinters, complicated auctions (e.g., Two-Way Checkback Stayman, Wolff Sign-Off, flag bids, the Golady convention), and how to handle interference, see Rexford (2006). We now return to our two examples.

Hand (1)

West	East (dealer)
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

Before we begin, let’s examine the starter points in both hands.

East has 13 HCP with no adjustments.

West has 12 HCP + 2 length points (diamonds and spades) – 1 worthless doubleton point (K2) + 1 quality suit point (three of the top five honors) = 15 starter points, and since the number of As and 10s (2) – 1 (Qs + Js) = 1, there was no adjustment for the hand.

East should open 1♦ with 13 HCP; west bids 1♠. East now bids 2♠ to establish the suit. Having determined a fit in spades, west must reevaluate his hand by adding 2 points for a singleton, 1 point for the doubleton, and 1 more point for the quality side suit, hence west has 15 + 2 + 1 = 18 dummy points. With the possibility of a slam near the 33-point level, west must begin a cue bidding sequence. He should not bid 4NT, since he has a doubleton heart suit!

However, you must plan your bids. With 18 dummy points, he wants to show slam interest and so bids 3♣; the bid of 2NT is bypassed, since it would convey a weak spade suit. Now east knows there is game in spades, but is there more, since he is not sure that the bid of three clubs is help suit or a cue bid? With a balanced hand, east does not believe his hand is worth a slam try, even with the ace of clubs (he has 13 starter points and 13 Bergen points, since he can add no extra values for short suits, extra length in trumps, or side suit quality—a four- or five-card suit), so he bids 3♠. Next, west bids “serious 3NT” (not Baby Blackwood). East cue bids 4♣. What does east now know? (1) West is serious about slam and (2) west’s 3♣ call was a cue bid. Now west cue bids 4♦, and east should next cue bid 4♥. Thus, west must think slam and not sign off. He must



bid 5♦ to show a second control in diamonds. East now bids 5♠ to show a spade control, and west bids 6♠. In summary, the bidding follows:

Hand (1)

West	East - Dealer
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

East	West
1♦	1♠
2♠	3♣ cue bid
3♠	3NT (serious)
4♣ (control)	4♦ (forcing)
4♥ (cue bid)	5♥ (cue bid)
5♠	6♠

Did you reach the spade slam? If you did not, do not feel bad; the contract by both teams in the Bermuda Bowl was four spades, making six.

Let's look at our second example:

Hand (2)

West (dealer)	East
♠ AKJ974	♠ Q10
♥ A	♥ Q53
♦ AK1097	♦ Q82
♣ 6	♣ J10432

At the Bermuda Bowl, the bidding went:

West	East
1♠	1NT (semiforcing)
3♦	3♠
4♣	4♠
5♥	5♠

What a shame! What would you do?

First, let's evaluate the hands. West has 19 HCP + 3 length points (spades and diamonds) + 2 points for the quality suits – 1 point for the ace singleton = 24 starter points. And east has 7 HCP + 1 for club length = 8; since  $As + 10s - Qs + Js = 2 - 4$ , there is no further adjustment.

We would agree with the bidding through the bid of 4♣. Instead of bidding 4♠, west must bid 4♦ to show one of the top three diamonds. With this information, west would launch into RKCB, bidding 4NT. Upon hearing 5♦ (zero/three key cards), opener next bids 5♥ (queen ask). With the queen and no extras, east bids 6♠. In this example, we have combined cue bidding with 1430 RKCB.

One final comment on cue bidding, while a cue bid at the four-level may show an ace or a king, first- or second-round control in a suit, any control bid at the five-level must show an ace.

## Scroll bids (modified)

### With Bergen raises

When playing Bergen raises, some use concealed or ambiguous splinter bids. Recall that when opening a major, a jump into the other major indicates a singleton somewhere and four-card support with 13+ dummy points. For example, if one opens one heart, then three spades indicates 13+ dummy points with four hearts and a singleton somewhere; if one opens one spade, then a response of three hearts shows four spades, 13+ HCP and a singleton somewhere.

To locate the singleton, the opener uses scroll asking bids. Thus, the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠\*, 3NT or 1♠ - 3♥\*, 3♠. The responses after the 3NT scroll asks are 4♣, 4♦, 4♠, which shows singletons in clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠ are 3NT = ♣, 4♣ = ♦, and 4♦ = ♥, the suit below the singleton. However, club members have asked me, "How do you indicate not a singleton but a *void* when using the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids?"

\*NOTE VARIATIONS: For the bidding sequence 1♥ - 3♠\*, the scroll asks is 3NT; however, with a spade void, it is often better to use 4♥ to show the spade void with a minimum hand. This allows the opening bidder to pass the heart game with no slam interest. Furthermore, for consistency for the two options, one may also after opening 1♠ and, hearing the bid of 3♥\*, use the following option: 4♣\* = clubs, 4♦\* = diamonds, and 4♥\* = ♥ (or you may use 3NT).

To show either a singleton or a void, one continues with a scroll bid. Then up-the-line bids are used to show a singleton or void and simultaneously provide one with information about key cards for the agreed-upon suit. After hearing the response to the asking scroll bids (3NT or 3♠), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to determine the nature of the shortage. The responses are step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and steps 2–5, the next four

bids, indicate one has a void and simultaneously shows key cards. However, the four-level bid of the agreed-upon major is skipped when it is the next sequential bid.

To illustrate, suppose we are playing 1430 RKCB, and the bidding goes 1♥ - 3♠\*, 3NT and one hears the response 4♣\*. To ask about the nature of the shortage (singleton or void), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to ask, bid 4♦\*. The responses for showing a singleton and/or associated key cards for the major suit (hearts) with a void are

- 4♥ club singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ club void with one or four key cards (step 2)
- 4NT club void with zero or three key cards (step 3)
- 5♣ club void with two key cards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ club void with two key cards with the queen (step 5)

If you play 0314 KCB, you merely interchange steps 2 and 3 above.

After hearing 4♦\*, one would *skip* the up-the-line bid of 4♥ (sign-off) and instead use 4♠ to ask about the nature of the shortage. Now 4NT shows a singleton diamond, and the key card steps 2–5 are 5♣, 5♦, 5♥, and 5NT. After hearing the response 4♠, the up-the-line asking bid is 4NT. Then 5♣ = singleton in spades and the key card steps (2–5) are 5♦, 5♥, 5♠, 5NT.

When opening 1♠, to show a singleton somewhere with 13+ dummy points and four-card support, bid 3♥\*. After hearing the asking bid of 3♠, one indicates a singleton with the bids 3NT\* = ♣, 4♣\* = ♦, and 4♥\* = ♠. To ask about the nature of the shortage, one again uses the up-the-line bids: 4♣, 4♦, and 4NT, *skipping* 4♠. Again, the next cheapest up-the-line bid indicates a singleton, and steps 2–5 are used to show a void and simultaneously key cards for the major suit spades.

To illustrate, following the bid of 4♣\*, the shortage bid is 4♦\*. The responses follow.

- 4♥ diamond singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ diamond void with one or four key cards (step 2)
- 4NT diamond void with zero or three key cards (step 3)
- 5♣ diamond void with two key cards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ diamond void with two key cards with the queen (step 5)

Other responses follow similarly.

**To illustrate how the bid may be used, we consider an example.**

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ762	♠K984
♥3	♥AQ92
♦9872	♦void
♣KQ	♣A7632

<b>Opener</b>	<b>Responder</b>
1♠	3♥* (shortness somewhere)
3♣* (shortage asking bid)	4♣* (singleton/void in diamonds)
4♦ (modified scroll ask)	4NT (void in diamonds with zero or three key cards)
6♣ (if you have three, bid seven)	7♠

Using the sequential scroll bids and up-the-line shortage bids, adapted from bids suggested by the Australian champion George Smolanko for splinter bids, allows one to further investigate the nature of the shortage, a singleton, or a void with information about the key cards in the agreed-upon major suit.

Observe that the scroll bids and up-the-line shortage bids may also be used with the Jacoby 2NT response to a major. If you play that, a three-level bid denotes a singleton or a void, and a four-level bid shows a strong (not a void) five-card suit; however, now one uses “modified” scroll-like bids to ask about shortage with key card responses.

### **After Jacoby 2NT**

When playing Jacoby 2NT after a major suit opening, the three-level bid by responder is alerted and says that one has a singleton or void in the suit bid. The bid of 2NT in response to partner’s opening bid of one of a major shows at least four trump and 13+ dummy points in support of the major suit. And in response to the bid of 2NT, opener’s bid at the three levels shows a singleton or a void.

### **What does responder do next?**

With a minimum and no interest based on opener’s response, responder usually jumps to game in the agreed suit. All other bids show at least some slam interest. Responder’s new suit bids are often cue bids looking for slam.

### **Are there other options?**

Yes, one can use modified Scroll bids!

Let’s look at two bidding sequences:

(A) 1♠ - 2NT\* - 3♣\*/3♦\*/3♥\*, which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

(B) 1♥ - 2NT\* - 3♣\*/3♦\*/3♠\*, which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

To determine whether partner has a singleton or a void, one bids as follows:

For sequence (A), one bids 4♣/4♦/4♥, and for sequence (B), one bids 4♣/4♦/4♠, a scroll-up bid at the four levels. Do you have a singleton or a void?

Responses become

Next cheapest bid shows a singleton.

Step 2 shows one or four key cards with a void.

Step 3 shows zero or three key cards with a void.

Step 4 shows two or five key cards without and a void.

Step 5 shows two or five key cards with the queen and a void.

Thus, one is easily able to determine singleton and void with Key Card Blackwood. Let's look at an example:

Opening 1♠ and responding 2NT\*, suppose partner hears the bid 3♥\* that shows a singleton or void in hearts. After hearing the bid of 3♥\*, one next bids 4♥ to ask whether it is a singleton heart or a void (note: the bid of 4♠ is a sign-off). The responses follow.

- 4♠ heart singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4NT heart void with one or four key cards (step 2)
- 5♣ heart void with zero or three key cards (step 3)
- 5♦ heart void with two key cards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♥ heart void with two key cards with the queen (step 5)

Similarly, opening 1♥, the responses after hearing, for example, 3♠\* (a spade singleton or void), one would bid 4♠.

The responses follow.

- 4NT spade singleton (next cheapest step)
- 5♣ spade void with one or four key cards (step 2)
- 5♦ spade void with zero or three key cards (step 3)
- 5♥ spade void with two key cards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♠ spade void with two key cards with the queen (step 5)

Note that the asking bids and responses provide all the information required to bid slam or to sign off at the five-level, below slam.

### **After Jacoby 2NT—examples**

Previously, I discussed how one may use Scroll bids with Bergen raises (when using concealed or ambiguous splinter bids) and after Jacoby 2NT. We now consider two examples of the method when responder bids Jacoby 2NT after a bid of a major.

Dealer East N-S vulnerable

		♠ J9	
		♥ A984	
		♦ J109	
		♣ Q1087	
♠ K10642		N W E S	♠ AQ875
♥ 10762			♥ 3
♦ AQ			♦ K765
♣ A3			♣ K42
		♠ 3	
		♥ KQJ5	
		♦ 6432	
		♣ J965	

Suggested Bidding:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass		
2NT*	Pass	3♥*	Pass
4♥*	Pass	4♠*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

\*Alerts

West's 2NT\* is Jacoby 2NT, showing a game forcing raise with at least four spades.

The bid of 3♥\* shows a singleton or void. Hearing shortness, and with four hearts, east bids 4♥\* to ask whether west has a singleton or a void. The first level bid of 4♠\* shows a singleton. Now, west bids 4NT (Key Card Blackwood) to ask about key cards. The response (5♣) shows one or four; with an ace missing, west signs off in 6♠.

We next consider an example with a minor suit void:

Dealer North N-S Vulnerable

		♠ KJ832	
		♥ A92	
		♦ Void	
		♣ AK1084	
♠ Q9		N W E S	♠ 5
♥ 10764			♥ J83
♦ A965			♦ KQJ103
♣ 97			♣ Q653
		♠ A10764	
		♥ KQ5	
		♦ 872	
		♣ Q2	

For this example, the bidding goes:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♦*	Pass	4♦*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♠	All pass

\*Alerts

Counting high card values and length, north has 13 HCP and two length points or 15 starter points and opens 1♠. South has only 12 starter points, however, hearing a major suit bid, reevaluates to 13 Dummy Points, counting the doubleton, and uses the Jacoby 2NT bid that opener alerts. Opener now bids 3♦\* to show the diamond singleton/void. Hearing the shortness bid and with three diamonds, south has slam interest and bids 4♦\* to see if north has a singleton or a void, knowing game is ensured. North's response of 4NT (step 3) shows 0 or 3 key cards. South now asks about kings by bidding 5NT, 6♣. North bids 7♠, a grand slam (with only 25 HCP).

Can you reach the slam without the Modified Scroll Bids? Perhaps; the bidding may go:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♦*	Pass	4NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	6♠	Pass

Pass Pass

\*Alerts

The bid of 4NT is Key Card Blackwood, and 6♦ shows an odd number of key cards with a void in diamonds. Yes, one can now bid 6♠, but note that getting to the grand slam is difficult.

If you do not play Key Card Blackwood, just Blackwood, Eddie Kantar recommends bidding 5NT with a void and two aces. Again, getting to seven spades is difficult.

If south does not bid 4NT, but instead bids four spades, in neither case would one reach the slam.

The use of Scroll bids should enhance the convention card for those who use Bergen raises (Reverse Bergen raises or Combined Bergen raises) playing 2/1, Standard American, or Precision.

### After a Bergen raise—example

You hold the following hand ♠ KQ762 ♥ Q742 ♦KQ4 ♣A.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

You open the bidding 1♠, and, playing Combined Bergen raises, partner bids 3♣\*, showing 7–10 dummy points. Not knowing the exact values, you bid 3♦\* to ask, and partner next bids 3♥\*, showing four spades and 10–12 dummy points. Are you interested in slam?

In May 2008, Marty Bergen asked sixty experienced bridge players this question and found that five would bid 4♠ at match points, but investigate slam in IMPS or a team game, twenty-six would sign off in four spades, and twenty-nine would investigate slam. What would you do?

You know partner has 10–12 dummy points. What about your hand?

You have 16 HCP plus 1 point for length; you have only 17 starting points. However, with a fit, you may add 2 points for the singleton and one more for the good side suit. You have 20 Bergen points. Adding 20 to 12 yields only 32 total points; short of the required 33 points required for slam.

Hence, do not investigate slam!

The complete deal follows.

Dealer South N-S Vulnerable

		♠ 9543	
		♥ A3	
		♦ A1065	
		♣ K75	
♠ A108			♠ J
♥ J86			♥ K1095
♦ 83			♦ J972
♣ QJ1032			♣ 9864
		♠ KQ762	
		♥ Q742	
		♦ KQ4	
		♣ A	

If you would have reached slam, using perhaps the following bidding sequence:

North	South
	1♠
3♣*	3♦*
3♥*	3♠*
4NT	5♠ (two key cards with the Queen)
6♠	Pass

West would lead the ♣Q and 6♠ is down two. Declares loses two spades and one heart.

Think before investigating slam; an overbid usually leads to a bad result.



## **Roman Key Card Gerber (RKCG)**

When is 4♣ asking for aces (Gerber)? When is 4NT asking for aces (1430 RKCB)? When is 4♣ a cue bid or a splinter? When is 4NT quantitative? What is 4♣ after a transfer? And after Stayman?

These are all questions partnerships must discuss. In general, most partners tend to play Gerber over the direct bids of 1NT and 2NT; however, some play it over first and last NT bids. That means if one opens 1NT or 2NT, the bid of 4♣ is Gerber.

However, after one agrees on a major, the bid of 4♣ is often played as 1430 Key Card Gerber when not playing Baby Blackwood. Partnerships that do not play Kickback also use 1430 Key Card Blackwood to keep the bidding at a low level, in place of 4NT. Still others may not play Gerber over the first and last notrump and instead always use 4♣ as Key Card Gerber. The responses to the bid follow 1430 RKCB.

### **Responses to 4♣ RKCG**

- 4♦ one or four key cards
- 4♥ zero or three key cards
- 4♠ two/five key cards without the queen
- 4NT two/five key cards with the queen

To show a void with two or four key cards, bid 5NT; with an odd number of key cards, bid the void at the six-level.

### **King ask in RKCG**

After a response to the number of key cards, the next step in Key Card Gerber is the king ask (Progressive Gerber bid). It requests the number of kings, excluding the trump suit. The steps are respectively 0, 1, 2, 3 etc.

After a suit response to an opening bid followed by the opener rebidding 1NT or 2NT, a follow-up bid of 4♣ by responder is RKCB with responder's suit agreed.

## **Responding to 2NT with both minors**

### **Option 1 – After the bid of 3♠**

1. Opener can agree to a minor by bidding 4♣/4♦ (1430—Minorwood).
2. 3NT and 4♥/4♥ are to play.
3. After 3NT, 4♣ is Gerber by partner.

**Option 2 – After the bid of 3♠ (opener must bid 3NT)**

1. Responder bids 4♣/4♦ to show diamonds and clubs as Minorwood.
2. Responder bids 4♥/4♠ to show singleton heart/spade.
3. Responder bids 4NT (nonforcing) to show 5-5 or 5-4 in the minors.

The advantage of option 1 over option 2 is that one may sign off in 3NT; however, with option 2, you must play in 4NT.

**Example (Minorwood over 2NT)**

Opener      ♠A6 ♥AKQ9 ♦Q9 ♣AJ53  
 Responder ♠K7 ♥6 ♦KJ654 ♣K10542

Opener	Responder
2NT (20-21)	3♠* (Interested in minor suit slam)
4♣ (1430 Minorwood)	4♦ (1/3—likely one)
4♥ (Queen Ask)	5♣ (no queen)
Pass	Pass

What do you bid with a six plus card single minor with slam going values?

Do *not* bid 3♠.

(1) Instead bid 4♣ as Minorwood for diamonds (6+).  
 And with 6+ clubs, bid 4♦ as Minorwood for clubs.  
 This is called the Crosswood convention.

(2) Or you may bid 4♣ directly as Minorwood for \clubs.  
 And 4♦ as Minorwood for diamonds.

Partnership agreement!

**Roman Key Card Blackwood over preempts**

When your partner preempts, there are ways to investigate the hand further. For two-level preempts, one may bid 2NT to ask your partner for a feature, or you may use the Ogust convention. Or you may play Modified Ogust, Two-Step Ogust, Roudinesco rebids, Romex rebids, the McCabe Adjunct convention, etc.

What method do you employ if your partner bids at the three-level and you have a very good hand? A convention that is similar to the 2NT asks is the Ogust 3NT ask. The responses are

- 4♣\* minimum, one top honor (bad/weak hand and bad/strong suit)
- 4♦\* minimum, two top honors (bad/weak hand and good/strong suit)
- 4♥\* maximum, one top honor (good/strong hand and bad/weak suit)
- 4♠\* maximum, two top honors (good/strong hand and good/strong suit)
- 4NT\* all three honors, A-K-Q-x-x and little else

However, a disadvantage of this approach is that 3NT is no longer to play!

Alternatively, you may also employ the Roth Four club convention. It is usually a slam try allowing one to assess the partnership's prospects for slam without going beyond a safe contract.

After the three-level bid, partner bids 4♣, which is artificial, and asks partner to describe his hand further. Recall that the responses go like this:

- 4♦ bad hand, bad suit.
- 4♥ bad hand, good suit (two of the top three honors in the preempt suit).
- 4♠ good hand (one or two honors outside the preempt suit), bad suit.
- 4NT good hand, good suit.

The responses are similar to Ogust but use different steps.

Need better information regarding the trump suit. Then another option is to use 4♣ as RKCB (used with weak two-bids [2♦/2♥/2♠] and three-level [3♦/3♥/3♠] bids). The bid of 4NT should not be used, since it may get the auction too high. This is sometimes called the Kantar Four club convention or the Weak Roman Key Card Blackwood (WRKCB) convention.

The responses are

- 4♦ first step, zero key card in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, one key card without the queen
- 4♠ third step, one key card with the queen
- 4NT fourth step, two key cards without the queen
- 5♣ fifth step, two key cards with the queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first step. The next bid of 4♥ is the queen ask—4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

After the preemptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural; it advances the preempt. A jump to 4♦ is WKCB ask for clubs. The responses follow.

- 4♥ first step, zero key card in the agreed suit
- 4♠ second step, one key card without the queen
- 4NT third step, one key card with the queen

- 5♣ fourth step, two key cards without the queen
- 5♦ fifth step, two key cards with the queen

Over 4♥, 4♠ is the queen ask—4NT = no and 5♣ = yes. Over the four spades bid, (5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

Let's look at an example.

Opener	Responder
♠ A 7	♠ K 2
♥ K 10 9 8 7 6 5	♥ A Q 2
♦ 7	♦ A Q 6 5 4 2
♣ 3 4 5	♣ A 7

3♥ 4♣ (1430 RKCB for hearts)  
 4NT (2 without) 5♦ (SSA for diamonds)  
 6♥ (singleton ♦) 7♥

Following the WRKCB convention, another option for the ERKCB convention may be

### Responses to ERKCB (option 2)

First step	zero key card
Second step	one key card without the queen
Third step	one key card with the queen
Fourth step	two key cards without the queen
Fifth step	two key cards with the queen

Now the queen ask occurs only after the first step. And the SKA is again 5NT.

### Scroll bids (simple)

The Scroll bids discussed in this chapter allows one to determine whether one has a singleton or a void; and if one has a void, the 1430 responses are incorporated into the responses. Is there another option that is perhaps less complex?

Yes, but you must give up weak jump shifts when opening one heart.

The system works as follows:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Explanation
1♥	2♠		Game force with a singleton
		2NT	Opener asks responder to bid suit of singleton (3♥ = ♠)
	3♠		Game force with a void
		3NT	Opener asks responder to bid void suit (4♥ = ♠)
1♠	3♥		Game force with a singleton/void
		3♠	Relay bid
			Responder bids singleton suit
			With a <i>void</i> , responder bid 3NT; opener relays again 4♣
			Responder bids 4♦ = ♦, 4♥ = ♥, 4♠ = ♠

This method is simple and works well when opening a major. To investigate slam, one may use 4NT or 4♣ if the agreed-upon suit is hearts. The method is simple and always allows one to stop short of game, if necessary. It was suggested to me by Ted Deflippo.

## Variable Key Card Blackwood

Roman Key Card Blackwood 1430 (with or without Kickback) or RKCB was developed to include the trump king and queen into the slam bidding equation; however, both the trump king and ace are given “equal” value in the slam bidding equation. Because some slams can be made without the trump king but never without the trump ace, Ely Culbertson introduced his 4-5NT convention where he was able to distinguish the difference between the trump honors because he required the asker to have three key cards to use the convention. In this same vein, Ken Rexford has developed what he terms the Variable Key Card Blackwood (VKCB) convention, which allows the partnership to show “specific key cards” similar to Culbertson, but with weaker and/or stronger requirements.

His VKCB convention is divided into three categories: (1) Weak Key Card Blackwood (WKCB), (2) Strong Key Card Blackwood (SKCB), and (3) Middle Key Card Blackwood (MKCB). In the first case, partner is assumed to be weak and hold only zero to two key cards; in the second case, partner is assumed to hold two to four key cards; and in the third case, partner is expected to hold one to three key cards.

## Weak Variable Key Card Blackwood

The most frequent situation is when partner holds only two key cards. This happens when partner is a passed hand, partner has opened with a weak 2/3 bid, partner has used 1NT forcing,

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

partner has used “fast arrival”, partner is known to have 11–12 HCP, and, finally, a cue bidding sequence has limited partner with two key cards. Now WKCB applies.

Over the 4NT ask, responses are assuming *spades* is the agreed-upon suit:

- 5♣ first step, one key card
- 5♦ second step, zero key card
- 5♥ third step, ace and king of trump without the queen
- 5♠ fourth step, two aces without the queen
- 5NT fifth step, two aces with the queen

Note that the 5♥ and 5♠ responses are similar to RKCB. However, you are using the bids to distinguish between two aces (the stronger holding) or whether one of the key cards is only the king of trumps (the weaker holding). And then 5NT becomes the specific king ask as in 1430, and you may use the second king ask.

Like 1430, after hearing 5♦ (zero key card), 5♥ is the queen ask, and after 5♣ (one key card), 5♦ is the queen ask.

Over the bid of 5♣ (one key card) the follow-up bids are

- 4NT P    5♣ P
- 5♦ ?

- 5♥ no trump queen, but an ace
- 5♠ no trump queen, but the trump king as a key card (sign-off)
- 5NT one key card with the trump queen

Over the bid of 5♦ (zero key card), the follow-up bids follow, which allow one to show specific kings:

- 4NT P    5♦ P
- 5♥ ?

- 5♠ no trump queen
- 6♣/6♦/6♥ trump queen with king of clubs/diamonds/hearts

If responder has, for example, shown the club king, then you may invite a grand slam by asking for a second kind by bidding 6♦.

If responder does not have the diamond king, he may show the heart king:

- 6♠ nothing more to show
- 6♥ no diamond king, but the heart king

7♠ shows the diamond king

There are two other possible calls to make on the way to 6♠. First, you could show “something else” by bidding 5NT. This confirms the trump queen that partner has asked about and denies any kings of note. With no kings, just bid 6♠.

When spades is not the agreed-upon suit, one uses Kickback WKCB. Thus, 4♠ is Kickback WKCB when hearts is the agreed-upon suit, 4♥ is Kickback WKCB when diamonds is the agreed-upon suit (or you may prefer 4♦), and 4♦ (or 4♣) is Kickback WKCB when clubs is the agreed-upon suit.

Let’s look at each in turn:

### Hearts agreed

- 4NT first step, one key card
- 5♣ second step, zero key card
- 5♦ third step, ace and king of trump without the queen
- 5♥ fourth step, two aces without the queen
- 5♠ fifth step, two aces with the trump queen
- 5NT sixth step, two aces with the trump queen and a useful void

Over 4NT (one key card), 5♣ is the specific ask:

- 5♦ no trump queen, but an ace
- 5♥ no trump queen, but the trump king as a key card (sign-off)
- 5♠ one key card with the trump queen

And 5♦ becomes the specialized request for the trump ace and queen.

Over the response of 5♣ (zero key card, above), 5♦ is the queen ask.

### Diamonds agreed

- 4♠ first step, one key card
- 4NT second step, zero key card
- 5♣ third step, ace and king of trump without the queen
- 5♦ fourth step, two aces without the queen
- 5♥ fifth step, two aces with the trump queen
- 5♠ sixth step, two aces with the trump queen and a useful void

Over 4♠ (one key card), 4NT is the specific ask:

- 5♣ no trump queen, but an ace
- 5♦ no trump queen, but the trump king as a key card (sign-off)

5♥ one key card with the trump queen

And 5♣ becomes the specialized request for the trump ace and queen. Over the response of 4NT (zero key card, above), 5♣ is the queen ask.

### Clubs agreed

- 4♥ first step, one key card
- 4♠ second step, zero key card
- 4NT third step, ace and king of trump without the queen
- 5♣ fourth step, two aces without the queen
- 5♦ fifth step, two aces with the trump queen
- 5♥ sixth step, two aces with the trump queen and a useful void

Over 4♥ (one key card), 4♠ is the specific ask:

- 4NT no trump queen, but an ace
- 5♣ no trump queen, but the trump king as a key card (sign-off)
- 5♦ one key card with the trump queen

And 4NT becomes the specialized request for the trump ace and queen. Over the response of 4♠ (zero key card, above), 4NT is the queen ask.

Let's look at an example where south opens with a weak two-bid.

South	North
♠ QJ10942	♠ AK73
♥ A3	♥ KQ764
♦ J106	♦ 7
♣ 82	♣ A76

South	North
2♠	2NT (Ogust)
3♥* (hood hand-bad suit)	4NT (WKCB)
5♣ (one key card)	5♦ (queen ask)
5NT (trump queen and one key card)	6♠

In this example, south makes a weak two-bid and 2NT is Ogust. With a good hand but a bad suit, south bids 3♥\*. Now 4NT is WKCB and 5♣ shows one key card (an ace or the king of trumps). The bid of 5♦ is the queen ask and 5NT shows the trump queen and an ace. Hence, north bids 6♠.



## Strong Variable Key Card Blackwood

The Weak Variable Key Card Blackwood convention is used when the person responding to 4NT (or Kickback) cannot have more than two key cards with the queen of trumps. We now turn to the opposite situation where the person asking has the weaker hand, and the responder holds two to four key cards. This is expected to occur when one makes a strong opening bid like 2♣, playing 2/1, 2NT (with 20–21 HCP), Mexican 2♦, or Precision when one opens 1♣ and the weaker partner asks. This also occurs if one partner has reversed, made a strong jump shift, opened 1NT with a super-accept, the bidder used Serious 3NT, or a person has shown two key card using cue bidding and partner does the asking. When the “weak” hand asks, one uses SKCB (Strong Variable Key Card Blackwood) sequences.

The SKCB convention is not much different from the WKCB. Using WKCB, you subtracted two key cards from your key card count; now with SKCB, you add them back.

Over the 4NT ask, responses are assuming *spades* is the agreed-upon suit:

- 5♣ first step, three key cards
- 5♦ second step, two key cards
- 5♥ third step, three aces and king of trump without the queen
- 5♠ fourth step, four aces without the trump queen
- 5NT fifth step, four aces with the trump queen

Note that we just added back the two lost key cards from the WKCB convention. The Kickback responses follow similarly. In his book on Variable Key Card Blackwood; Ken Rexford discusses an expanded version for SKCB.

Like 1430, after hearing 5♦ (two key cards), 5♥ is the queen ask, and after 5♣ (three key cards), 5♦ is the queen ask.

Over the bid of 5♣ (three key cards), the follow-up bids are

- 4NT P      5♣ P
- 5♦ ?

- 5♥ no trump queen, but three aces
- 5♠ no trump queen, but the trump king and two aces
- 5NT three key cards with the trump queen

Over the bid of 5♦ (two key cards), the follow-up bids follow, which allow one to show specific kings:

- 4NT P      5♦ P
- 5♥ ?

5♠	no trump queen
5NT	two aces
6♣/6♦/6♥	trump queen with king of clubs/diamonds/hearts

### Middle Variable Key Card Blackwood

We have seen that WKCB is oriented toward weak-hand responders with zero to two key cards and that SKCB is oriented toward strong-hand responders with two to four key cards. When neither applies because one is unsure or the situation is indeterminate, one uses Middle Key Card Blackwood (MKCB), which assumes one to three key cards. The MKCB convention parallels SKCB, except that one does not count one of your key cards. The bids follow:

Over the 4NT ask, responses are assuming *spades* is the agreed-upon suit:

5♣	first step, two key cards
5♦	second step, one key card
5♥	third step, three key cards with trump king but without the queen
5♠	fourth step, three aces without the trump queen
5NT	fifth step, three aces with the trump queen

Finally, whenever the opponents interfere, the following structure may be used:

Double	=	Penalty
Pass	=	Stolen bid
Other	=	As if they did not interfere

For more information and examples of this convention, please see the book authored by Ken Rexford in 2012 and published by Master Point Press.

### Spiral Scan bids modified after Jacoby 2NT\*

Spiral Scan bids, as discussed above, are an effective method for investigating slams; however, their use is most effective most effective playing Kickback/Redwood with 1430 asks.

I recommend that they be modified to investigate a slam after one bids a major (1♥/1♠) and partner responds with the Jacoby bid of 2NT\*, which shows four-card trump support and 13+ dummy points.

After the bid of 2NT\*, playing Jacoby, one usually shows a singleton or void; however, bridge experts have modified the responses. Following their lead, I am recommending that the bid of 2NT\* be a 1430 asking bid, which must be alerted and explained as a 1430 key card ask.

The responses to the 1430 Roman Key Card bid of 2NT\* are

3♣ = one or four key cards

3♦ = zero or three key cards

3♥ = two or five key cards without the queen of trump

3♠ = two or five key cards with the queen of trump or holding a sixth trump

### **Voids (with three- or four-card trump support and 13+ dummy/support points)**

3NT = 2/4 an even number of key cards with a void somewhere (♣/♦/major not bid)

4♣/4♦ is a void in the suit bid (below trump suit) and an odd number of key cards (one/three) when spades/hearts are trump

4♥ is a void in hearts and an odd number of key cards (one/three) if spades are trump

4♠ odd number of key cards (one/three) with a void in spades if hearts are trump

After the bid of 3♣/3♦, the bids of 3♦/3♥ (the next step up) is the queen ask bid, which begins the Spiral Scan.

Now logic dictates the features of the Spiral Scan.

- 1) Trump queen
- 2) Kings in ascending order (♣/♦/other major)
- 3) Queens in ascending order (♣/♦/other major)
- 4) Side jacks, if ever in same order.

Answering with the first step denies the queen.

By bypassing the first step and bidding, the second step shows the queen and no ♣K; and so on.

Let's look at an example of the Spiral Scan.

North	South
1♠	2NT*
3♣/3♦	3♦/3♥ (queen ask)
???	

In this example, following the 3♣/3♦ bids (showing one/four or zero/three key cards), the next step bids of 3♦/3♥ would be the queen ask.

Step 1: No ♠ queen.

Step 2: ♠Q but no ♣K

Step 3: ♠Q and ♣K, but no ♦K

Step 4: ♠Q, and ♣K,♦K, but no ♥K

Possessing the trump queen, the 1430 bidder may go through the queen ask to create a third-round control query. If asks take the partnership beyond the four of the trump suit, inquirer must be interested in a slam/grand slam.

Let's look at another example where the queen asks step is bypassed!

North	South
1♠	2NT*
3♣(one/four key cards)	3♠

Do you have the ♦K (second step)? Note that the bid of 3♦ would be the queen ask and that 3♥ (first step) asks for the king of clubs, since the priorities are ♣K, ♦K, ♥K, etc.

3NT (first step after ask)	no ♦K
4♣ (second step)	♦K, but no ♥K
4♦ (third step)	♦K and ♥K, but no ♣K
4♥(fourth step)	♦K, ♥K, ♣K, but no ♣Q—and so on.

If the queen ask step is bypassed, since the 1430 bidder has the queen. The bids (in steps) after the queen ask bid is specific king/queen asking bids. For example, suppose spades is the trump suit, then the bids for the king/queen are

3♦	asks for the ♠Q; the queen ask after the bid of 4♣
3♥	asks for the ♣K
3♠	asks for the ♦K
3NT	asks for the ♥K
4♣	asks for the ♣Q
4♦	asks for the ♦Q
4♥	asks for the ♥Q
4♠	asks for the ♠J

The responder rebids by counting steps. If he/she bids the next step up, the responder denies holding the card asked for. If the responder bids the second step, the responder shows the card asked for, but denies higher cards. Using the Spiral Scan, the partnership can concentrate on the most valuable key cards and the location thereof. The concept behind the Spiral Scan is the continuance of the auction until at least a small slam is reached. If one or several key cards are discovered to be missing, then the small slam is the better contract, but if all the key cards are accounted for during the auction, then the grand slam can be bid.

One more example—suppose north and south hold the following cards, where the order for the bids are ♣K, ♦K, ♥K, ♣Q, ♦Q, ♥Q, ♠J after the bid of 1♠.

North	South
♠AJ643	♠KQ75
♥KQ2	♥A7
♦3	♦A105
♣KQ72	♣AJ43

North	South
1♠	2NT* (1)
3♣(2)	3♥(3)
3NT (4)	4♣(5)
4♠(6)	4NT (7)
5♦(8)	7NT

- (1) Jacoby 2NT forcing spade raise with four trumps
- (2) 1430 RKCB (one/four key cards)
- (3) The first step (3♥) is asking about ♣K (4♠ would be to play).
- (4) The first step (3NT) shows ♠K, but not the ♦K.
- (5) The next step (4♣) is asking for the ♥K.
- (6) 4♠ says, "I have ♥K and the ♣Q," since the step of 4♥ was skipped.
- (7) 4NT says, "Do you have the ♥Q?"
- (8) 5♦ says yes, since 5♣ step was skipped.

Spiral scan bids are most useful when the partnership is known to have the queen of trumps. However, even if you have the queen, you may have to ask to create a third-round control query.

To complete our discussion on the Spiral Scan bids, I will now briefly discuss the difficult topic of voids.

### **Spiral bids with an even number of key cards and a void**

Over the bid of 3NT, 4♣ (the next step is not the queen ask), it asks, "Where is your void?"

If hearts are trump, then 4♦/4♠/4NT show voids in diamonds/spades/clubs.

If spades are trump, then 4♦/4♥/4NT shows voids in diamonds, hearts/clubs.

The next step bid after the void response now becomes the queen ask. As discussed above, the first step denies the queen; however, the void suit is excluded from the spiral scan hierarchy.

### **Spiral bids with an odd number of key cards and a void**

With an odd number of key cards, the next step by the asker, excluding the trump suit (sign-off), becomes the queen ask, where again the first step response again denies the queen.

Because the void suit is unknown with an odd number of key cards, a jump to six-level of lower-ranking suit shows the void in the suit bid (6♣/6♦/6♥) with the queen of spades is trump.

If hearts are trumps, the bids of 6♣ and 6♦ are again used to show the queen of trumps with a void in the bid six-level suit. With a void in spades, one bids 6♥ to show the queen and the spade void.

Note that the scan can be used after a 2/1 bid: 1M - 2♣ -2♦ - 2M -2NT\* (1430 ask) and the Scan starts/3M (invitational) for spades. Or 1M-2M-2NT\* (1430 ask).

Alternatively, you may use 1430 with *no Spiral Scan* after 2NT\*. The bids follow.

## 1430 over 2NT for the majors

The responses to the 1430 Roman Key Card bid of 2NT with four-card support for the major

- 3♣ = one or four key cards
- 3♦ = zero
- 3♥ = two or five key cards without the queen of trump
- 3♠ = two or five key cards with the queen of trump or holding a sixth trump
- 3NT = three without the queen of trump
- 4♣ = three with the queen of trump
- 4NT = specific king ask (SKA)

**QUEEN ASK—Next step 3♦ After 3♣ OR 3♥ After 3♦**

**After 3♣ the 3♦ = trump queen ask—one answers as follows**

### Hearts trump

- 3♥ - *no* queen of trump (first step)
  - 3♠ - specific king ask (next step)
    - cheapest king = 4♣/4♦/4♥/3NT = K♠
    - (may try second king ask)
      - 4♠ = nontrump queen ask
      - cheapest queen = 5♣/5♦/4NT = Q♠
  - 3♠ = Q♥ but *no kings* (second step)
    - 3NT = specific nontrump queen ask (next step)
      - cheapest queen = 4♣/4♦/4♠
      - (may try second queen ask)
        - 4♥ - sign-off = *none*
    - 3NT = Q♥ and ♠K
    - 4♣/4♦/4♥ = Q♥ and king of bid suit (K♣/K♦/K♥)
      - (may try second king ask)

### Spades Trump

- 3♥ = *no* queen of trump (first step)
  - 3♠ = specific king ask (next step)

cheapest king 4♣/4♦/4♥/3NT = ♠K  
 (may try second king ask)  
 4NT = nontrump queen ask  
 cheapest queen = 5♣/5♦/5NT = Q♥  
 3♠ = Q♠ but *no kings* (second step)  
 3NT = specific nontrump queen ask (next step)  
 cheapest queen 4♣/4♦/4♥  
 (may try second queen ask)  
 4♠ - Sign-off = *none*  
 4♣/4♦/4♥ = Q♠ and king of bid suit (K♣/K♦/K♥)  
 (may try second king ask)  
 4♠ = Q♠ and ♠K

**After 3♥ (queen ask), one bids as follows**

### Hearts

3♠ = *no* queen of trump (first step)  
 3NT = specific king ask  
 cheapest king = 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠  
 (may try second king ask)  
 4NT = nontrump queen ask  
 cheapest queen = 5♣/5♦/5♥ = Q♠  
 (may try second queen ask)  
 3NT = Q♥ but *no kings* (second step)  
 4♣ = specific nontrump queen ask (next step)  
 cheapest queen = 4♦/4♠/4NT = Q♣  
 (may try second queen ask)  
 4♥ - Sign-off = *none*  
 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ = Q♥ and king of bid suit  
 (may try second king ask)

### Spades

3♠ - *no* queen of trump (first step)  
 3NT = specific king ask  
 cheapest king = 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠  
 (may try second king ask)  
 4NT = nontrump queen ask  
 Cheapest Queen = 5♣/5♦/5♥  
 3NT = Q♠ but *no kings* (second step)  
 4♣ = specific queen ask (next step)  
 cheapest queen 4♦/4♠/4NT = Q♣  
 (may also try second queen ask)  
 4♠ - Sign-off = *none*  
 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ = Q♠ and king of bid suit  
 (may try second king ask)

**Voids**

Used *only* after sign-off in major 4♥/4♠

5♣/5♦/5♥ Void in bid suit

4♠ = void in spades if hearts are trump





## CHAPTER 4

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### THIRD AND FOURTH SEAT OPENINGS

Up to this point, we have assumed that one was in the first or second seat to open a hand. If two players have passed and you are in the third seat, you may have a full opener with 12+ starting points and two quick tricks or you may have less. In the third seat, the requirements to open are less stringent; you need only 10 starting points and one and a half quick tricks. Many players will even open a good four-card major. In the fourth seat, a two-level major suit bid usually shows an opening hand with six plus cards. This is not the case in the first two seats.

#### Rule of 22/20 (third seat)

Another option is to employ the rule of 22 (some use the rule in the first three seats). The rule goes like this: count your starting points and the total number of cards in your two longest suits; they must add to 20. Next, add the number of quick tricks; if that total is twenty-two or more, open the hand. The rule of 20 does not require counting the number of quick tricks.

#### Rule of 15 (fourth seat)

In the fourth seat, one usually has a full opener 12+ starting points and two quick tricks. The only exception is when you hold 4+ spades and 11+ starting points. Now you add your starting points to the number of spades held; if the total is 15+, open the hand, either a minor or with 5+ spades, one spade (some may open the hand one spade with only four).

To determine whether your partner has a full opener, some variation of the Drury convention, developed by Douglas Drury, is used when partner opens one of a major (1♥ or 1♠) in the third seat (some also use it in the fourth seat, discuss this with your partner).

#### Reverse Drury convention

The Reverse Drury convention employs an artificial bid of 2♣\* used by a passed hand after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ in third seat (some also use Drury in the fourth seat; I do not recommend

this practice. It is best if opener has at least 11+ starting points—nearly a full opener). The artificial bid of two clubs shows three plus card trump support and 10–11 dummy points and a fit.

In the original Drury convention, opener rebids 2♦ to show a light opening. With reverse Drury (more common today), a rebid of two of opener's original major suit shows a light opening (that is, no game interest) and responder is expected to pass. Any other rebid by opener confirms a full opening hand (or better) and shows game interest. With a good hand, say 15+ starting points, opener may simply jump to game (four of the major suit). Other bids tend to be natural and descriptive.

## Two-Way Drury

The Two-Way Drury convention employs two artificial bids: 2♣\* or 2♦\*; again it is used by a passed hand after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ in third seat (some use the convention in fourth seat; I do not recommend this practice. It is best if opener has at least 11+ starting points—nearly a full opener). The artificial bid of two clubs shows three-card trump support and 10–11 dummy points; the artificial bid of two diamonds shows four plus card supports for the major and 10–11 dummy points. The complete convention follows playing Bergen raises.

With no interference, the bids over 1M bid are

A simple raise of partner's major suit bid usually shows three-card support and 6–9 starting points (Drury and constructive raises are off).

2♣*	limit raise, three-card support and 10–11 starting points
2♦*	limit raise, four-card support and 10–11 starting points
2NT	10–11 points and 5-5 in minors (opener's rebids are “pass or correct”)
3♣	preemptive in clubs
3♦	preemptive in diamonds
1♥-3♠*	four-card limit raise with concealed/ambiguous singleton/void
1♠-3♥*	four-card limit raise with concealed/ambiguous singleton/void
1♥-2♠*	preemptive in spades (6+)
1♠-2♥*	preemptive in hearts (6+)

\* Alert Bids – three-level bids are part of Bergen raises (regular or reverse)—If you use the Two-Way “Reverse” Drury convention, the bids of two clubs and two diamonds are interchanged.

Opener's continuations after Drury bids:

1♥/1♠-2♣\*/2♦\* (2♥/2♠ is subminimal hand) – all other bids are natural and promise a full opener (12–17 starting points).

Two of other major after 2♣\* allows one to investigate whether one has a 4-4 fit in other major.

Nonjump suit bid (other than two-level bid of other major) below 3M = help suit game try:

Three-level bid of major is invitational.

Double jump bid (e.g., 4♣/4♦, etc.) = splinter.

2NT = Drury Slam Try (18–19 starting points without a splinter)

- 3♣, 3♦, 3♠ = singleton
- 3♠ = more-than-minimum strength with a ruffing value (a good 11+ points)
- 3NT = balanced maximum (11+ high-card points).
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = five-card suit with at least two of the top four honors (QJxxx or better)
- 4♠ = minimum values, no singleton

3NT = 15–17 starting points with balanced hand and denies other four major

four of bid major is to play with no slam interest

4NT is RCKCB with slam interest

In competition:

Over DBL or 1♠ - Drury is off

Over 1NT - Drury is off

Over 2♣ - 2♦ is omnibus limit raise

After 1♠-2♥, DBL = limit raise (Drury double)

After 1♥-2♠, DBL = limit raise (Drury double)

Two/three-level bids are usually defined by partnership agreement.

The Two-Way Drury convention allows a pair to avoid guessing on game contracts when partner has already passed.

Example (1)

First seat    ♠KJ2 ♥J1094 ♦ KJ76 ♣ 98

Third seat    ♠1096 ♥KQ852 ♦ 72 ♣ A53

The person in first seat has 9 starting points and would pass. Partner in the third seat has 10 starting points and one and a half quick trick and opens 1♥. Not playing Reverse Drury, partner has four-card support for hearts and 10 dummy points and bids 3♦ (Bergen on with a passed hand showing 10–12 points with four-card support). Partner must bid 3♥.

Alternatively, playing Two-Way Drury, one would bid 2♦ to show 10–12 points with four-card support. Partner bids 2♥ (not a full opener), and the correct contract is reached.

You are playing Reverse Drury and hold the following hands and partner has opened 1♥. What do you bid?

Example (2) ♠KJ42 ♥A65 ♦K976 ♣98	Bid 2♣* 11 starting points with three hearts
Example (3) ♠Q942 ♥A6 ♦J76 ♣KJ108	Bid 1♠ 10 starting points
Example (4) ♠A2 ♥A7 ♦K10543 ♣653	Bid 1NT only two-card support 10 points
Example (5) ♠42 ♥QJ76 ♦1076 ♣AKJ10	Bid 2♦* 11 starting points with four hearts

### Fit showing jump bids (majors)

Fit showing jumps (or flower) bids are made over interference (because most play Bergen Off). Fit showing jumps (FSJ) require 10–12 dummy points, length in partner's suit (four plus cards), and a minor side suit with four or five plus cards with working honors. The bid is a jump to the three-level in the long minor. The bid allows partner to bid at the three-level of the major or go on to bid game with a double fit in the minor. The major advantage of FSJ over Drury is that the bids show strength and are not artificial. Thus, it is less likely that the opponents would double a fit bid. This is a disadvantage of Drury.

### Two-level major suit bids in the third and fourth seats

In the first two seats, preemptive major suit bids at the two-level show 5/6–10 starting points and a six-card suit. In the third/fourth seat, this is not the case. A two-level bid is stronger, since your partner has passed. You should have 12+ starting point (an opening hand) and a six-card major suit. When responding to your partner's preempt, remember you are a passed hand, so game is unlikely.

### Three- and four-level preempts in the third seat

In the first two seats, we suggested that the rule of 2 or 3 be used. However, in the third seat, one may use the simple 2-3-4 rule.

1. Overbid by two tricks at unfavorable vulnerability (vulnerable vs. not vulnerable)
2. Overbid by three tricks at equal vulnerability
3. Overbid by four tricks at favorable vulnerability (not vulnerable vs. vulnerable)

Returning to the hand used above with the rule of 2 or 3:

♠AKQ10653 ♥8 ♦854 ♣96

We would bid as follows. Open 2♠ at unfavorable; open 3♠ at equal; open 4♠ at favorable vulnerability.

Recall using the rule of 2 or 3, we have six losers (zero in spades, one in hearts, three in diamonds, and two in clubs).  $13 \text{ cards} - 6 \text{ losers} = 7 \text{ playing tricks}$ . Nonvulnerable, adding 3 =  $7 + 3 = 10$ , so you should open 4♠. You would open 3♠ only if vulnerable ( $7 + 2 = 9$ ). The rules provide very similar results.



## CHAPTER 5

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### BIDDING WITH INTERFERENCE

We have assumed up to this point in our 2/1 game force bidding that the opponents have not interfered. If there is direct interference with, for example, a suit bid or a double, the 2/1 game force is off.

#### 2/1 bids with interference

- 1) You open one heart and your LHO doubles, partner bids two diamonds. Is it forcing to game? No—it is not even forcing for one round.
- 2) You open one heart and your LHO bids one spade. You again bid two diamonds. Is the bid forcing to game? No—However, since the overcall was at the one-level, it is forcing for *one round*! Opener must bid again.
- 3) You open one heart and your LHO bids two spades. Partner next bids three clubs. Is it forcing to game or for one round? When responder bids a new suit at the three-level, it is not only forcing for one round but also forcing to game!
- 4) You open one heart and your LHO bid three diamonds. Partner bids three spades. Is the bid forcing? Over the preemptive bid, the bid is only forcing for one round, but not necessarily to game. Alternatively, you can double and bid a new suit. This sequence is forcing to game. Note: some 2/1 partnerships play that all three-level bids are forcing to game over any preempt.

Many partnerships also play that Bergen raises are off. I do not support this approach; you may, so please decide what is best for your partnership.

If one makes a game force bid and the opponents choose to bid, the game force remains on.

When a partnership is committed to game and the opponents choose to interfere, opener may double the contract of the opponents instead of proceeding to game, if he believes the double would result in a better score. Doubles (penalty, responsive, cooperative, etc.) will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8. For now, if the bidder is on the opener's right (he is sitting behind

the bidder), a double is usually for penalty. When the bidder is on the opener's left, it is called a cooperative double, and partner may leave it or choose to bid. Finally, opener may make a cue bid (western of the opponent's suit usually at the three-level) used to investigate whether partner has a stopper for notrump. Cue bids of suits not bid are used for slam investigation as discussed in chapter 3 or they may show exceptional hands with voids and significant strength, chapter 8.

## Cue bids by opener (Western cue)

The term "Eastern cue bid" refers to a style of low level cue bidding of the opponent's suit showing stoppers in the bid suit. It has been replaced by the more popular "Western cue bid" that asks for a full stopper in the opponent's suit. One is a telling bid, while the other is an asking bid. The repeat "Western" cue bid (sometimes called a directional asking bid) is usually asking for more information at low levels below 3NT, and the cue bidder is asking for a partial stopper (Qx or Jxx). The Western, Eastern, and repeat Western cue bids (DAB) are used to help the partnership reach a notrump contract. An example follows.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	2♦
2♥	3♥#	pass	3NT

# the 3♥ cue bid is asking if south for a heart stopper. If he does, he should bid 3NT. If not, he would either rebid diamonds or with spade support bid four spades. Cue bids are not alerted or announced.

An example of a repeat cue bid asking for a partial stopper, which sometimes combines Eastern and Western cue bids, follows.

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
Pass	2♠#	pass	3♦
Pass	3♠##	pass	3NT

# How good is your overcall and I have a spade stopper (Eastern cue)?

## Do you also have a partial stopper in spades? If yes, bid 3NT.

When the opponents interfere, they may or may not take up bidding space. When the overcall allows you to bid at the one-level, your response is natural, limited, and nonforcing. If the opponents bid a suit, you may have room to bid your own suit or notrump. For example, if you open one club and the opponents overcall one diamond, the bid of a major show 5+ starting points. However, the bid of 1NT shows a stopper in the overcalled suit. If you are allowed to make a bid at the one-level, it is the same as if the overcall did not occur. This is also the case when the opponents make a takeout double.

## Responder bids after a takeout double

When the opponents make a takeout double over partner's one-level bid suit, it usually shows support for the other suits (at least three cards) with an opening hand of 12+ starting points. The takeout double asks your partner to bid a suit and implies shortness in the suit doubled (chapter 6).

Many play that all systems are on over a takeout double (some have devised special systems over a double such as those who play Bergen Raise Over Major suit Double [BROMAD] and Modified Jacoby 2NT over a double). Most players ignore the double and make their normal responses, assuming the double did not occur. The following guidelines apply:

1. A new suit is forcing at the one-level.
2. A bid suit at the two-level is weak (a weak jump shift) and is nonforcing.
3. 1NT is semiforcing and shows a stopper in the overcaller's suit with lack of fit.
4. All Bergen raises are on when opening one of a major.

One may also redouble the double. It shows 10+ points with or without a fit (some play that it always implies no fit).

## Responder bids over a one- or two-level suit bid

When the opponents interfere over a major suit bid, the Combined Bergen bids follow over a double, suit bid (at the one- or two-level), or for a passed hand. The following schedule summarizes the bids when partner opens one of a major.

### Combined Bergen raises with interference

#### Max Hardy Swiss bids and concealed/ambiguous splinters

Dummy pts	No interference	Double	Suit bid	Passed hand
<b>Two trumps</b>				
5-9 pts	*1NT then two major	pass	pass	pass
<b>Three trumps</b>				
5-9 pts	*1NT then two major	pass	pass	pass
8-10 (bad) pts	@2 major (constructive)	two major	two major	



10–12 pts	@3♦**	@2♣	cue bid Drury (2♣*)	
13+	2/1 bids	redouble	cue bid	N/A
16+ pts balanced	@4♣ (Swiss)	@4♣	@4♣	N/A
<b>Four trumps</b>				
0–6 pts	@3 major (weak)	@3 major	@3 major	@3 major
7–12 pts	@3♣** Bid three diamonds to Ask 3♥ = 7–9, 3♠ = 10–12	@3 clubs	2 major	2 major
13+ singleton (concealed splinter)	@3 other major then step bids# (see footnote#)	@3 other major	@3 other major	N/A
13+ no singleton	2/1 bid	2/1 bid	2/1 bid	N/A
15/16+ pts	@Jacoby 2NT	@Jacoby 2NT	@Jacoby 2NT	N/A
<b>Five trumps</b>				
0–11 pts	bid game	bid game	bid game	bid game
12–15 pts	@4♦ (Swiss) @4♦	@4♦	N/A	

**Note:** With 5 HCP and three-card trump support, pass, unless holding either a singleton or at least one trump honor with all other HCP in one side suit. \* = Semiforcing \*\* = Forcing, @ = Alert

# after 3♠ bid 3NT\* to find singleton/void, then 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ denote singleton/void. After 3♥, bid 3♠, again, steps denote the singleton. For example, 3NT denotes club singleton/void, etc. If you want to know if it is a singleton/void, bid next suit up, which are scroll bids.

The above table also applies to Bergen raises; one only need change the bid of 3♣\*\* to show 7–9 points with four-card support and 3♦\*\* to show four-card support with 10–12 points. 1NT\* followed by three of the major to show 10–12 points with three-card support and Jacoby 2NT requires only 13+ starting points and four-card support.

If the overcall is at the two-level, we also use the Bergen bids; however, if the bid is, for example, 2♣, the bid of 3♣\* may show three- or four-card support because of its cue bid nature.

### Truscott Jordan 2NT

In the Combined Bergen convention, we have chosen not to include the Truscott Jordan 2NT\* bid. If used, it is not the same as the Jacoby 2NT bid. The bid is typically used to show a limit

raise with three- or four-card support for the bid of a major over a double (it must be alerted). We recommend the redouble that shows 10+ points with or without a fit. After a redouble, one next supports the major (shows 13+ with three- or four-card support for the major). If you redouble and bid your own suit, you are denying a fit. Discuss these options with your partner.

We recommend the Jordan 2NT over a minor suit opening if you do not play flip-flop. It shows five plus card support and a limit raise. Recall that playing flip-flop, 2NT is weak and a three-level bid of the minor shows a limit raise.

## **Responder bids when opponent (advancer) interferes after 2NT**

To illustrate, suppose the bidding goes 1♥-P-2NT\*-3♦.

- 4♥ - is sign-off, no shortness
- Pass - forcing pass, shows shortness in opponent's bid suit
- New suit - shows shortness in bid suit
- 3NT - medium or maximum hand, no shortness

After a forcing pass bid by opener, rebids by responder are

- Double -Penalty
- 3M -new major, ace in suit and zero to one losers in opponent's bid suit
- 3NT -king in opponent's bid suit
- 4m -ace in suit bid and zero to one losers in opponent's bid suit

## **Opener's rebids after a redouble**

Partner's redouble after a double shows 10+ starting points. If the opponents make a runout bid to compete and the opener cannot double the bid for penalty, it is always best to pass and allow responder to bid. Partner will show his suit or support for the opening bid suit. In most situations as opener, you should pass a redouble. This allows your partner to show his hand; do not be quick to bid.

However, if opener has a long suit or a strong two-suited hand that is not suited to a penalty double, opener must bid. For example, a reverse would show a strong hand.

When the opponents bid over a redouble, a rebid of the suit shows a long suit with a weak hand; a double usually shows four plus cards in the opponent's bid suit. A bid (or jump bid) of a new suit shows 5-5 distribution and a weak hand. A pass is forcing. If responder passes first and then bids, it shows a stronger hand, usually 5-5 in the two suits and 15+ starting points.

## Negative doubles by responder

The negative double is like a takeout double. It is made by the responder after his right-hand opponent overcalled at the first round of bidding. A negative double guarantees that responder has at least *one* of the unbid suits (there is one exception: if partner bids a minor and the opponents overcall the other minor, a double always implies both majors; however, some may do it with only one). In addition, if partner bids a major, the negative double usually shows support for the other major.

The starting point requirements for a negative double provided the overcall bid is no higher than 3♠, the most popular option (this is marked on the back of the convention card; some may play that they are in effect with higher level bids [e.g., 4♥, 5♠ or higher] because they do not want the opponents to steal the bid), is

You need 6+ HCP            to double at the one-level

You need 8+ HCP            to double at the two-level minor

You need 10+/11+ HCP    to double at the two-level major

You need 12+ HCP            to double at the three-level or higher

Note that all the point ranges are unlimited and HCP.

Negative doubles never apply after a NT bid or a two-level cue bid such as Michaels (discussed soon).

After one minor – (one or two of major), a negative double promises only the single unbid major. It says nothing about the unbid minor.

After one major – (one or two of other major), a negative double promises only *one minor*, not both. It does not deny both.

After one minor – (two of other minor), a negative double promises *both* four-card majors.

After responder's negative double, opener must make a rebid that describes both his strength and his support for the suit partner may have shown with the double.

## Opener rebids - one/two-level overcalls with negative doubles

When responder makes a negative double, the only way to create a forcing auction on the next round is to cue bid the opponent's suit. If partner opens a minor and you double for a major and next bid, it usually shows a weak hand. Rebidding a major after bidding it the first time shows more values. Neither of these bids is forcing. The only way to make a forcing bid is to cue bid the opponent's suit on your next turn to bid. It is often used to reach a notrump contract and called

a Western cue bid. If partner does not bid notrump, returning to opener's first bid suit shows a strong hand. An overview of bids by opener follows.

A cue bid is forcing to game.

All jumps below game are invitational.

1NT for one-level overcalls and 2NT for two-level overcalls usually promise a stopper in overcaller's suit.

Opener may be forced to rebid a five-card suit or introduce a three-card suit.

A double jump to 3NT shows length and strength in the suit opened and a bid hand. It does not require a balanced hand.

Double and triple jump to game in a major show great shape and is weaker than a cue bid followed by a jump to game.

A reverse bid by opener is forcing to game.

We consider two examples of cue bidding.

A cue bid is the only forcing bid a negative doubler may make. This cue bid often shows a good hand with no other clear course of action.

1♣ - 1♥ - DbI - pass

2♣ - pass - 2♥

The two heart bidder may hold ♠AQ94 ♥763 ♦AK75 ♣J5. Responder is hoping the opening bidder has a heart stopper and can bid 3NT. For example, opener may have the following hand: ♠K5 ♥KJ6 ♦63 ♣AQ10987.

Jumps by a negative doubler are nonforcing but highly invitational. For example:

1♦ - 1♠ - DbI - pass

2♦ - pass - 3♥, which shows less than 10 starting points, and six plus hearts—an invitational bid. The 3♥ bid may be based upon ♠7 ♥KQJ965 ♦Q87 ♣987. With 10 starting points and five plus hearts, for example, with a hand as ♠7 ♥KQ965 ♦A87 ♣954 or ♠A6 ♥AQJ107 ♦876 ♣954, responder would not double but bid 2♥. The negative double at the two-level shows a hand with only four hearts and unlimited point count or five or more hearts and not enough points to bid at the two-level.

### **Opener rebids - three-level overcalls with negative doubles**

A cue bid is forcing to game.

3NT guarantees a stopper in clubs.

Opener may be forced to rebid a five-card suit and rarely introduce a three-card suit.

After one-level and 3♦ or one-level and 3♥ or one-level and 3♠, the negative double is called a trump double by Marty Bergen. It asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the opponent's overcall suit (with a stopper do not use a negative double, bid 3NT directly).

Opener in general has three types of hands when responding to a negative double.

Minimum (12–15 starting points)	with support for suit - partner's implied suit with the double, you should bid it.
Invitational (16–17 starting points)	Jump one level to show support
Game values (18+ starting points)	Jump to game or cue bid the opponent's suit, this allows partner to show his suit

Instead of a negative double, one may bid a new suit at the two-level with 10+ starting points. These are called a standard free bid. However, some play *negative free bids*. Negative free bids usually require only 6–10 starting points and show a long suit. Negative free bids must be alerted, if played. If you play negative free bids, it also affects the negative double, since now, playing negative free bids, you have to double and bid with 10+ values.

## Negative free bids

**DEFINITION** – Negative free bids are used when partner opens the bidding at the one-level and the opponents show a one-suited hand by bidding at the 1/2/3 levels through 3♦. If responder now bids *any new suit* at the two- or three-level, the bid shows a five plus card suit and is nonforcing, showing 5–10 HCP. With 11+ points, one must double and bid their suit, a game force bidding sequence. *The NFB and the doubles must be alerted*, since the new suit is nonforcing and the double may not be negative.

Let's look at an example when the bidding goes 1♠ - (2♣) - 2♥\*. How does opener respond? The NFB of 2♥\* shows 5–10 HCP and 5+ hearts.

Pass	Minimal hand with hearts
2♠/3♦	Less than three hearts and nonforcing
2NT	Invitational to 3NT may have heart fit
3♥	Preemptive heart raise
3♣	Game invitational raise in hearts
3♠	Natural and invitational
3NT	Natural and no heart fit
4♣/4♦	Delayed splinter with heart fit
4♥	Sign-off
4NT	1430 Key Card Blackwood for hearts
5♣/5♦	Exclusion Key Card Blackwood for hearts with club/diamond void

With a strong hand, the bidding sequence would be 1♠ - (2♣) - X\*.

Note that the double may not be negative; it only shows 11+ HCP and is forcing. Responder bids 2♠. Partner may raise or bid his own suit 3♦.

Examples of NFB weak sequences (5–10 HCP):

Partner	Overcall	NFB
1♣/1♦	1♠	2♥*
1♣	1♥/1♠	2♦*
1♣	2♠/2♣	3♦*
1♦	2♥/2♠	3♣*
1♥	1♠	2♣*/2♦*
1♥	2♣/2♦	2♠*
1♥	3♣	3♦*
1♠	3♣/3♦	3♥*

Using the definition of a NFB, none of the following are NFBs.

- 1♣ 1♥ 1♠ (Natural one-level bid)
- 1♦ 3♥ 3♠ (Natural, NFB applies through 3♦ by overcaller)
- 1♣ 2♣ 2♦ (Natural, opponents have shown a two-suited hand)

So far, we've showed how responder can show a long suit with a relatively weak hand and a forcing hand. With the negative free bids, you can also show a third hand type: one that's at the top of the NFB point range and has a very strong suit.

To show this highly invitational hand, responder jump-shifts after an opponent's overcall. The jump in a new suit now shows:

- a strong six plus card suit.

## Responder bids used with minor suit openings (without flip-flop)

While we have stressed major suit openings, there are also several bids that may be used when the opponents interfere over a minor suit opening. Let's suppose you open 1♦ and the opponents bid a major. A summary of responses follow.

1♦ - 1M

Double Negative double shows other major

1NT 8–10 starting points, three diamonds and a stopper in the major

- 2♦ Less than 10 starting points, four diamonds (inverted minors is off)
- 2♣/2♥ Natural with 10+ starting points
- 2M Cue bid, 12+ starting points and asking for a major stopper
- 2NT\* 11–12 starting points with a major stopper and five plus diamonds
- 3♣ Splinter (singleton/void) in support of diamonds
- 3♦ Weak raise 6–10 starting points
- 3M Splinter in major with five plus card support in diamonds

\*Truscott Jordan

## Balancing double by opener

Often, your partner bids and your right-hand opponent (RHO) interfere and you have their bid suit. You make what is called a trap pass. When the opponents pass, your partner often makes a *balancing double*; when holding only two cards in the overcall suit, he is asking you to bid. Do you bid or pass the double? To decide, one uses the rule of 9. It works as follows:

### Rule of 9

Add the level of the contract (usually one or two) to the number of trumps you hold in the overcaller's suit, plus the number of honors including the ten. If the total is nine or more, pass, leaving the double in; otherwise, bid to take out the double.

This action may cause the overcall bidder to bid a new suit. If you had enough to leave the double in the first time, you should also double the second suit. Partner may pass for penalty holding a strong hand with a good holding in the second suit bid, rebid his original suit, or perhaps bid notrump. A direct cue bid of over caller's second suit shows a strong hand and a desire to play in the over caller first suit.

## Responder calls after a 1NT overcall

When the opponents interfere by bidding 1NT, they usually have the suit bid stopped, a balanced hand showing a notrump opener with 15–17/18 starting points. If this is not the case, the bid must be alerted. Some partnerships play that the bid of 1NT for takeout with shortness in the bid suit to interfere with the opponents' agreements.

When the opponents bid 1NT, responder's options are limited. The bid has taken away the negative double. Responder may pass, raise his partner's suit, or *double for penalty*. Observe that if partner has 12+ points and the overcaller has 15, the remaining points shared between the remaining hands are only 13.

With 5–9 points and at least three-card support, raise your partner's major suit. A jump raise in partner's major shows 10–12 points with support with three- or four-card support. Unless you have 10+ points and a good five plus card suit, do not bid it.

With 10+ starting points or a very good suit of your own (eight plus cards), consider doubling for penalty.

## Unusual 2NT overcall

The unusual 2NT overcall is used after one has made a majors suit bid. A 2NT overcall shows at least five cards in each of the lowest unbid suits; partner is expected to bid the one he likes best. Some examples:

- 1♣ - 2NT    2NT shows the lowest two unbid suits, diamonds and hearts.
- 1♦ - 2NT    2NT shows clubs and hearts.
- 1♥ - 2NT    2NT shows clubs and diamonds.
- 1♠ - 2NT    2NT shows clubs and diamonds.

In each of these cases, the partner of the 2NT bidder normally corrects to the suit for which he has the most tolerance. With equal length in both suits, especially with two doubletons, he bids the cheapest suit. If he has a weak hand with at least four-card support, he can consider making a preemptive jump bid to the four-level in one of the known suits.

When the opponents interfere using the 2NT overcall bid, you may use the convention known as *unusual over unusual 2NT*, which is a series of cue bids to show support for your partner's bid suit.

Because we know the two suits when the opponents use employing the unusual 2NT bid, we can use this information to your advantage. One uses the suits of the opponents (the cheapest suit and their second suit) as cue bids and the two natural available bids to describe the hand of the responder:

Cheapest cue bid: A limit raise or better in the bid suit.

Second cue bid: Game forcing hand in the fourth unbid suit.

Raise in the fourth suit: Natural and nonforcing

Raise in the bid suit: Competitive raise (weak)

An example follows.

- 1♥        - 2NT (clubs and diamonds) – (?)
- 3♣        the cheapest cue bid, is a limit raise or better in hearts (the bid major)
- 3♦        the second cue bid, is a game forcing bid in spades



- 3♥ is a competitive raise and weak  
 3♠ is natural and nonforcing

**NOTE:** Some play the second cue bid as invitational only, not forcing; it depends on your partnership agreement. Check with your partner!

If the bidding goes

- 1♠ - 2NT (clubs and diamonds) – (?)  
 3♣ the cheapest cue bid, is a limit raise or better in spades (the bid major)  
 3♦ the second cue bid, is a game forcing bid in hearts  
 3♥ is a competitive raise and weak  
 3♠ is natural and nonforcing

**NOTE:** Some play that three clubs over the major bid still shows support for hearts. Discuss these bids with your partner.

What about bids above the three-level? Discuss these with your partner.

3NT is usually natural with stoppers in the two suits.

4♣/4♦ is splinter raise in hearts (for our example).

4♠ is natural.

When should the double be used? It usually shows 10 + starting points (with or without a fit) and is primarily used as if the bid of two notrump was a double (for our example, 1♥-Dbl).

Thus, a double after the bid of 2NT is like a redouble. Because the opponent's bid of two notrump is forcing, the opener can now double the opponent's bid with good trumps, make a descriptive bid with an offensive hand, or make a forcing pass.

Some partnerships also play unusual 2NT in the balancing seat: 1♥ - pass – pass – 2NT, showing the minors; however in the direct seat over weak two-bid, the bid of 2NT is *not unusual*. The bid shows strong notrump bid with 15–17 HCP and at least two stoppers in the overcall bid suit.

## Michaels cue bid

This is a direct cue bid of the opponent's opened suit (one club by RHO, two clubs by you) to show five plus card length in two other suits. One of your suits is always a major, but the exact two you promise depend upon the opening bid.

- Over a *minor-suit opening*, a Michaels cue bid (1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦) shows *both majors*.
- Over a *major-suit opening*, a Michaels Cue bid (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠) shows *the other major and an unspecified minor*.

When using Michaels and the two suits of the opponents are known, the bids by responder are identical to those used in unusual over unusual 2NT. To illustrate, after the bids of 1♣-2♣ (the majors, hearts and spades), we have that

- 2♦ is natural and nonforcing
- 2♥ the cheapest cue bid, is a limit raise or better in clubs
- 2♠ the second cue bid, is a game forcing bid in diamonds
- 2NT is natural and invitational
- 3♣ is a competitive club raise and weak
- 3♦ is natural and forcing
- 3♥/3♠ is splinter raises in clubs
- 3NT is natural with stoppers in the two suits
- 4♥/4♠ is splinter raise in clubs
- 5♣ is natural

A double shows 10+ starting points with or without a fit.

What about when the second suit of the Michaels bid is ambiguous? (see footnote (\*) below.) Then only *one* suit is known; for example, with the bids 1♥-2♥, and 1♠-2♠. Now we can no longer do everything, since we have only one known cue bid. For example, for the bid 1♠-2♠ (shows hearts and a minor), we have the following bids:

- 2NT is natural and invitational
- 3♣ is a nonforcing club raise
- 3♦ is a not forcing diamond raise
- 3♥ the only cue bid, shows a limit raise in spades
- 3♠ is competitive and weak
- 4♥ is splinter raise for spades

If the opener doubles the opponent's three-level bid after Michaels or unusual 2NT, it is generally for penalty, not takeout.

(\*) Some play that the opponents' cue bids show the upper two unbid suits; then one heart followed by two hearts would show spades and diamonds; and one spade followed by two spades would show hearts and diamonds! It is called Modified Michaels and all suits are known. Hence, the responses may be patterned after the one club-two club bid discussed above.

Some partnerships also play Michaels if the bidding goes, for example, 1♣ - pass - pass - 2♣; or if the bidding goes 1♣ - pass - 1NT - 2♣, a balancing seat Michaels.

Michaels bids need to be alerted. You must and should ask what the cue bid means. If the club bid is a Precision club bid or announced as short, some play that a club bid is natural and no longer Michaels. For additional details, consult Marty Bergen's (1986) *Better Bidding with Bergen, Volume Two, Competitive Bidding Fit Bids, and More*, by Devyn Press.

## After weak jump overcalls

After a preemptive jump overcall, for example 3♦, after partner has bid a major, you have several options: pass, support, bid your own suit, etc. If you have support for partner's major and 10–12 starting points, show support immediately. With a stronger hand, make a cue bid or bid your own suit freely and the support partner's major. The advantage of bidding your own suit is that if the opponents compete in the auction, opener (your partner) will be in a better position to decide whether to double the opponents for penalty or bid on.

## Fishbein convention

The Fishbein convention is a bidding convention developed by Harry Fishbein. It is in the direct seat when the opponents preempt at the two or three levels. Instead of doubling for takeout (negative), one bids the next higher suit (excluding 2NT) for takeout. Then double is for penalty. The bid of 3NT is usually to play.

## Some examples

When the opponents interfere, there are number of strategies one may consider. We review several applying the principles reviewed in this chapter.

### (1) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	2♥
(?)			

South has the following hand: ♠ KQJ76 ♥ J54 ♦ AQ5 ♣ 107.

South has 14 starting points and his partner responded with a 2/1 game force bid. However, the opponents interfered with the bid of two hearts. South has no more to say and must pass. The auction will not end since his partner (north) has given a 2/1 response and will bid. The pass by the opener is called a forced pass; south has bid his hand and is not required to bid again. What would a double show? The overcaller (east) is on the opening bidder right. It would be for penalty.

### (2) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
1♠	double	2♦	2♥
(?)			

South has the same hand, but west has made a takeout double. Partner has taken a free bid at the two-level showing 10+ starting points. South knows that his partner has diamonds, and with three, he competes by bidding 3♦. This allows partner to return to spades at the three-level for a partial score. Partner did not use Bergen; game in a major is unlikely.

(3) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

1♠	2NT	3♣	3♦
----	-----	----	----

(?)

The bid of 3♣ by partner is a limit raise for spades (the bid of 3♦ would be a game force bid in hearts) showing 10–12 starting points. Partner may invite or bid game. A cue bid of three diamonds would show interest in slam.

(4) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

1♥	pass	2♣	2♠
----	------	----	----

(?)

(a) North has the following hand: ♠ 765 ♥ A2 ♦ AQ5 ♣ AJ1076.

Without a spade stopper, south cannot bid notrump. Instead, south bids 3♠ asking for a spade stopper. Without a stopper, north bids 3♥.

(b) North has the following hand: ♠ AKQ ♥ 82 ♦ K65 ♣ KQJ43.

With a spade stopper, north bids 2NT (with 18 starting points). Depending on opener's response, may show his extra values later in the bidding sequence.

(c) North has the following hand: ♠ 87 ♥ K54 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

With three-card support for hearts, show your support, bid 3♥.

(5) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

1♠	3♦	(?)
----	----	-----

North has the following hand: ♠ 874 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

Do not show your five-card suit, show your support immediately.

(6) The bidding goes

South West North East

1♠ 2♠ (?)

(6) North has the following hand: ♠ 874 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

A bid of 3♠ shows a weak hand, cue bid 3♣ to show support even with three in this case.

Partner should bid game.

(7) An example of the Fishbein conventions (from the World Championships in Sao Paolo, Brazil)

		♠ A3	
		♥ AQJ3	
		♦ K2	
		♣ 106543	
♠ Q42		N	♠ J10765
♥ K1097652	W	E	♥ 4
♦ 6	S		♦ J975
♣ 87			♣ KJ2
		♠ K98	
		♥ 8	
		♦ AQ10843	
		♣ AQ9	

In this example, the bidding goes

South West North East

1♦ 3♥ (?)

You have a heart stack against the opponents; you cannot make a negative double, since you do not have spades. Playing the Fishbein convention, one would double for penalty. Not playing the convention, you must pass and hope partner reopens with a double. Do not bid 4♦.

## Responding to 3NT after a three-level preempt

While a bid of 3NT over a three-level bid is to play, when you have a big hand, you need a method to investigate slam, since you know partner has stoppers and at least a strong notrump hand with 15+ starting points. How do you investigate slam when you have a strong hand or a very distributional hand? With a balanced hand, 4NT would be quantitative. And transfers would

be on where 4♦/4♥ are transfers to a major are nonforcing slam try in the major suits, hearts and spades, respectively. While a direct bid of a major is to play. Now 4♦ may be used as an artificial enquiry with the following responses:

4 of a suit	minimum hand to play
4NT	15–18 balanced hand
5 of a suit	good hand with slam interest
5NT	19–21 balanced hand
6 of suit	great hand six plus cards
6NT	22+ balanced hands

## **Bidding over weak two- and three-level bids**

How do you respond when the opponents make a preemptive bid at the two- or three-level?

When making a preemptive bid, the opponents usually have 6–10 starting points and, if vulnerable, two of the top three honors in the suit bid. So there are about 30 points remaining in the three unbid hands. If you have 12–15 points, that leaves 15–18 points in the remaining two hands. Thus, you can expect partner to have about 7 points, often referred to as the rule of 7. So how should one proceed?

### **Direct seat bids**

- Overcall (rather than double) if you have 15 or fewer points and a good five-card suit headed by one of the top three honors if nonvulnerable and two if vulnerable.
- Use the *rule of 7* to decide if your overcall is safe at the two- or three-level. Try to imagine partner with about 7 points. If you can make your bid opposite that hand, you should overcall at the two- or three-level.
- Double (instead of overcalling a minor) if you have three plus card support for the unbid majors.
- Over the opponent's opening three-level bid, bid 3NT (instead of doubling or overcalling a minor) if you have 15+ points and two stoppers in the opponent's bid suit.
- A bid of 2NT over a weak two-bid shows a 15–17 notrump hand with two stoppers in the bid suit, not the minors.
- Over a weak two-level bid, use a jump to 3NT to show a good hand and a running suit. This jump always denies takeout-double shape (you are usually very short in an unbid suit). With a strong balanced hand, double first, then bid notrump.
- All jumps are *strong*. A jump overcall (for example, 2♥ by RHO - 3♠ by you) forces to game.
- Use Leaping Michaels bid if it applies (chapter 7).

### **Balancing seat bids**

- Always compete if you are short in their suit, make a takeout double, partner may have a stack in their suit and convert your double to penalty

- For doubles and overcalls, mentally add 4 HCPs to your hand and choose the same bid you would make in the direct seat.

**Responder's bids****After partners direct overcall (2X-2Y-Pass-?)**

- **Pass** = 0–7 points
- **Single raise of partner's suit** = 8–10 points and three plus card support
- **Cue bid** of their suit (2X-2Y-P-3X) = strong raise of partner's suit, forcing to game.
- **Jump in another suit** (2X-2Y-P-4Z) = Splinter raise (slam-try values, trump support and a singleton in the bid suit)
- **New suit** (3X-3Y-P-3X) = Forcing, five plus card suit.
- **Double** (if RHO raises his partner's suit: (2X-2Y-3X-DBL) = Responsive double, showing values (10+ pts.), length in the unbid suits, two or fewer cards in partner's suit or Rosenkranz double showing support for the Y suit and the ace/king or both—depends on your agreement.

**After partners direct double (2X-DBL-Pass-?)**

- Make your “normal” bids:
  1. with a weak hand (0–7 points), make a low-level bid in your longest unbid suit (2X-DBL-Pass-2Y, 3Z)
  2. Jump to three of your suit with 8–10 points and a five-card suit (2X-DBL-Pass-3Y)
  3. Jump to game in your suit with 11+ points.
    - Use the Lebensohl convention as a relay to 3♣ (chapter 9) when holding 0–11 points.
    - If you're considering passing the double for penalties, use the rule of 9 (see chapter 10) to decide whether to bid or pass the double.

**After partner's direct cue bid (2X-3X-Pass-?)**

- Bid notrump if you have a stopper in their suit.
- With no stopper, bid your cheapest three-card suit.

**After partner's notrump overcall (2X-2NT-Pass-?)**

- Playing “system on” – 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers.
- If partner jumps to 3NT either pass or transfer to your long suit if you have a slam try. Be careful; he may be short in your suit.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

*Summary of Direct-Seat Actions recommend by Karen Walker*

Your action:	Over their weak two-bid:	Over their three-bid:
<b>Simple overcall</b>	10–17 pts. five plus card suit	12–17 pts. six plus card suit or strong five plus cards
<b>Double</b>	12+ pts., shortness in their suit three to four plus cards in all unbid suits <i>or</i> 18+ pts. and a long suit	14+ pts., shortness in their suit three plus cards in all unbid suits <i>or</i> 19+ pts. and a long suit
<b>Double, then bid a suit</b>	17+ pts. Strong five plus card suit	18+ pts. Strong five plus card suit
<b>Jump to 3S over 2H opener</b>	16+ pts., very strong six plus card suit	
<b>Jump to 4 of a minor</b>	(2H/2S - 4♣ or 4♦ = Leaping Michaels Strong 5-5 or better in bid suit and other major	3♣-4♦ = Strong one suiter, asks for cue bid
<b>4♥ or 4♠</b>	16+ pts. and a strong six plus suit	16+ pts. and a strong six plus suit
<b>Cue bid (2♥-3♥)</b>	Usually a strong one suiter Asks for stopper for notrump	Minor (3♣-4♣) = Strong, at least 5-5 in both majors Major (3♥-4♥) = Strong, at least 5-5 in spades and a minor
<b>Jump cue bid</b>	Leaping Michaels (2♥-4♥, 2♦-4♦)	
<b>2NT</b>	14–18 pts. balanced with stopper(s)	
<b>Double, then rebid NT</b>	18+ pts. balanced with stopper(s)	22+ pts. with stoppers and support for unbid suits
<b>3NT</b>	16+ pts. with stopper and a long running minor	16–22 pts. with stopper(s) May be a running minor and stopper(s)



## CHAPTER 6

### TAKEOUT DOUBLES

#### Standard takeout doubles

As seen in chapter 5, a takeout double is a competitive bid used to show an opening hand with at least 12+ starting points when used in the direct seat. The purpose of the bid is to get into the auction. The ideal hand for the doubler is 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 where the singleton or void is in the opponent's bid suit. It tends to deny a five-card major. The doubler usually has two kinds of hands, weak or strong. With a weak hand, the doubler will usually pass any bid made by his partner; with a stronger hand 16/17+ starting points, he will double and bid his own suit. With 18/19+ starting points, the doubler will generally double and cue bid. When the opponents bid after partner responds to a double, the second double is usually for penalty.

If you double and then bid a new suit, how do you know whether the bid is forcing? Does it make a difference if you partner made a free bid? Let's look at an example.

Suppose the bidding goes

West	North	East	South
		1♦	dbl
Pass	1♥	Pass	?

If south bids 1♠ or 2♣, he is showing a good hand, but since partner (north) can have nothing, the bids are *not* forcing. Partner (north) may pass. Even if you jump to the three-level for these bids, partner may pass. If south has a really good hand, he must cue bid 2♦.

However, suppose partner made a free bid:

West	North	East	South
		1♣	dbl
1♦	1♥	Pass	?

Now a new suit by south is forcing for one round. However, it is not forcing to game.

Returning to our example, suppose partner bids 1NT:

West	North	East	South
		1♦	dbl
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

West	North	East	South
		1♦	dbl
1♥	1NT	Pass	?

Now if you bid at the two-level (2♣), a lower-ranking suit, you are not showing a good hand—you are running from notrump. However, if you bid at the two-level, a higher-ranking suit (2♠), you are showing a very good hand, 17/18 HCP.

How big a hand do you need to double and then bid notrump? You again should have a very good hand, about 19 HCP (an overcall of 1NT is usually 17–18).

Finally, suppose you double and double again without hearing from partner? The second double is again for takeout, not penalty.

The doubler will normally have no more than three cards in the opponent's opening suit (do not double with a stack in the opponent's suit, make a trap pass, if partner balances with a double, use the rule of 9 to see whether you pull the double or leave it in for penalty). When the doubler doubles a major suit opening, he will usually have four cards in the other major or a strong hand where he will bid his own suit or cue bid.

The takeout double is not restricted to the direct seat. It occurs when partner has not yet bid; passes do not count but redoubles are considered bids, and the double is of a suit bid (not notrump) at the 1, 2, or 3 bidding levels. Thus, one may also use a takeout double in the fourth seat when the bidding has gone 1x – pass – pass – double. The double is for takeout since partner has not yet bid; it is virtually never used for penalty in this situation.

Let's look at some simple auctions:

South	West	North	East
	1♦	1♥	3♦
Pass	pass	double	

Because partner south has not bid, the double is for takeout. Some authors refer to this double as a responsive double. It shows support for the other three suits. However, some play the double as a Rosenkrantz double showing three card support for hearts with the ace, king or both.

South	West	North	East
1♥	pass	1NT	double

In this example, the double by east is equivalent to a direct takeout double of the heart opening bid. If opener had bid a minor, the double is more than likely asking for a major suit.

Additionally, the double by east is equivalent to a direct takeout double of the heart opening bid.

Getting more complicated, E-W vulnerable and N-S nonvulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	pass
Pass	double	pass	pass
2♥	double		

What is the second double by north? South's pass of the first double is a "penalty pass," equivalent to bidding spades, since the first double of the spade bid should have showed hearts (at least three and maybe four) with a shortage in spades. Even though partner has passed in the auction, it is not for takeout but for penalty. When three different suits have been bid, the second double is usually for penalty.

Suppose north does not double but passes the bid of two hearts; if south holds the hand:

♠ KQ75 ♥ AJ102 ♦ 7 ♣ 9865, using the rule of nine, he must double for penalty at the two-level.

## Equal Level Conversion

When partner doubles and bids his own suit, we have said that he usually has a "big" hand, at least 16/17+ points. However, there is an exception called the equal level conversion (ELC) double. It is used when partner has a two-suited hand with diamonds and hearts, diamonds and spades, and the opponents open one club or with hearts and spades (5-4 in each case) and the opponents open one club or one diamond. Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth call the convention Minimum Equal Level Conversion Double.

The ELC double was developed by Robert B. Ewen and published his book *Doubles for Takeout, Penalties, and Profit in Contract Bridge* (1973); however, he did not name it as such. The double is illustrated by him on page 25 of his book.

**South**  
 ♠ KJ97  
 ♥ 64  
 ♦ AQJ982  
 ♣ 8

East    South    West    North  
 1 ♥       ?

With this type of hand, what is south to do? He has values for a takeout double but not the distribution. He doubles, and when partner bids 2♣, he corrects to 2♦. This does not show a big hand with diamonds. It corrects partner's bid at the two-level to show diamonds and spades or after the bid of bids 3♣ by partner he bids 3♦ if the opponents enter the auction at the two-level by bidding 2♥. The ELC double is useful, since partner can now show two suits, five diamonds, and four spades.

The ELC double can also be employed when the opponents open 1♦ and you have five hearts and four spades. To show the 5-4 hand, you double and bid hearts to show your off-shape distribution after partner bids 2♣. If you were 5-5, you would use the Michaels cue bid. With five spades and four hearts, there is no problem; you can overcall one spade and bid hearts.

## Takeout double or overcall

When an opponent opened the bidding, you can make a simple overcall with 8+ to 16 starting points and a five-card suit major, never a minor (for example, if the opponents open one club and your distribution is 3 = 3 = 5 = 2, double). If your overcalls have to bid at the two-levels, you'd better have 13+ points. Jump overcalls are preemptive. If you have a balanced hand, you can make a notrump overcall with 15–18 points (careful, some use it as a takeout bid). If you have strong hand with shortness in opponents' suit, you should make a takeout double. Overcalls are explained in chapter 7.

## Responding to a takeout double

When partner makes a takeout double and the opponents do not bid, you must respond; the double is forcing. Your options are

Suit bid	6–9 starting points and three plus card suits (usually four plus)
Jump longest suit	10+ starting points, four plus cards, forcing one round
Double jump	13+ starting points, five plus cards, forcing to game, may bid game
1NT	8–10 starting points balanced with a stopper, no four-card major
2NT	11–12 starting points balanced with a stopper, no four-card major
3NT	13–15 starting points balanced with a stopper, no four-card major
Cue bid	12+ points, over natural bids, artificial and forcing
Pass	Converts the double into a penalty, rule of 9.

**Cue bids in response to takeout doubles**

A cue bid is the only forcing bid an advancer may make to a takeout double. All other bids, including jumps, are nonforcing.

With a good four-card suit or five plus card suit and an opening hand, it may be easy to get to game after a double; however, suppose you have good values and two suits, what do you do? For example, with equal length and perhaps even equal strength in two suits when the bidding proceeds:

1♣ - Dbl - pass and the advancer holds one of the following hands.

1) ♠K986 ♥K986 ♦A8 ♣K64

2) ♠A975 ♥A975 ♦A98 ♣J3

3) ♠KQ9 ♥KJ10 ♦AQ43 ♣765.

With two four-card majors (hands 1 and 2), you must cue bid 2♣. It asks partner to bid his best major.

With hand 3, if the takeout doubler bids spades, advancer may repeat the cue (3♣) that suggests less than four-card support for the doubler's major suit but with game-going values. The doubler would often bid 3NT with stoppers in the opponent's suit.

**Responding to a takeout double with interference**

A freely-bid suit shows six plus points and at least a four-card suit. If the takeout double is redoubled, all bids are natural, but jump suit bids are now preemptive, not strong, showing at least five cards and 0–9 points.

How high to play takeout doubles is a matter of partnership agreement. Many partnerships play takeout doubles through the 3♠. A double above the bid of three spades is then often taken as penalty. However, some may play it to the level of 5♦ or no limit. You should discuss the level with your partner.

In the preceding three examples, there was no interference; suppose the bidding now goes

1♣ - Dbl - 1NT - (?). Now what do you bid?

You again invoke the Michaels cue bid of 2♣ in the balancing seat for the first two hands; however, with hand (3), a double is used to show the two lower-ranking suits (hearts and diamonds). Note you must be at least 4-4 to use the cue bid or the double.

If the opponents open a diamond and the bidding goes 1♦ - Dbl - 1NT - (?), again 2♦ shows the majors and a double shows clubs and hearts.

The bids may also be used with a major suit opening where now a cue bid of the major shows the other major and a minor and again a double is used to show the lower-ranking suits. Be careful

here, since if partner does not have the major, you are at the three levels in a minor. You should have 10–12 points to cue bid the major.

### **Rebids by Doubler**

When making a takeout double, remember, partner may have nothing. You have forced partner to bid; on average, he usually has 7 HCP. Partner may have no more than 9 starting points. After a minimal response, you will need at least 16+ points for game in partner's bid suit. You can invite with 16–18 starting points. With 19–20 or 21+ jump, bid at the three- or four-level, respectively. If partner bids at the two-level, make a single raise with 16–19 starting points and a double jump to game in a major with 20+ points.

Summary:

With a minimum hand (12–15 points)

- Responder made the cheapest possible response – pass
- Responder jump, pass, raise to invite or bid game, you must decide

With a medium hand (16–18 points)

- Responder made the cheapest possible response – raise one level to invite, game is still possible.
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

With a maximum hand (19–21 points)

- Responder has made a cheapest possible response – jump raise
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

### **Takeout double over weak two-bids**

Playing Fishbein, recall that a double is for penalty, one has to bid the next level suit for takeout. If you do not play Fishbein, a double is for takeout. While in most cases you would bid your best suit, suppose you have zero points; partner doubles the bid of 2♠ and you have a weak hand with four hearts:

♠ 872 ♥ 7654 ♦ 983 ♣ 876

What do you do? You cannot bid 3♥; you have less than 6 points. You bid 2NT\* as a relay bid, which is part of the Lebensohl or Transfer Lebensohl systems played over interference to 1NT (chapter 9). It asks partner to bid 3♣\*, so you may sign off at the three-level in a suit with no interest in game. If the doubler does not accept the relay and bids any other suit, it shows a 20+ HCP hand. If you do not bid 2NT but bid a suit at the three-level, you are showing about 6 HCP.

2NT followed by 3NT denies four of the other majors and shows a stopper in the weak suit bid. A direct cue bid of the weak suit shows a very strong hand; it is game forcing.

Fishbein is played the in direct seat over a weak two or three-level bid and does not use 2NT. 2NT over a weak two-bid always shows a strong 1 NT opener (14/15–17 points).

## **Doubling 1NT (penalty or takeout)**

The double of a 1NT opening may be for takeout or penalty. Whether the double is for penalty or takeout usually depends on the convention you play as defense over notrump. Several approaches will be discussed in chapter 9. However, before we get there, let me explain what you need to double a 1NT bid for penalty with a balanced hand.

If the opponents are playing 15–17, you need 18+ to double for penalty.

If the opponents are playing 12–14 or 10–12, you need 15+ to double for penalty.

I am of the opinion that in the direct seat, one should always double the contract of 1NT for penalty when you can or if not pass, but in the balancing seat and the bidding has gone 1NT – pass – pass then it should be for takeout (10–14 HCP). In either case, the double must be alerted.

The experts do not agree on whether a double should be for penalty or takeout; however, all have opinions. You may read about it at [www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm](http://www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm).

Some partnerships use the simple rule that all doubles when partner has not bid are for takeout. Your agreements must be discussed.

## **Examples**

(1) The opponents open 1♦ with either of the following hands you must make a takeout double with shortness in diamonds.

♠ AK65 ♥ KQ65 ♦ 98 ♣ K42    ♠ Q972 ♥ AK65 ♦ 7 ♣ KJ43

You will pass any bid partner makes; even if it is clubs, you do not have sufficient values (16/17+) to double and bid.

However, with the following hand, you would again double

♠ AKJ1094 ♥ KQ ♦ 7 ♣ AK87

and bid spades. If the opponents opened 1NT, you would double for penalty.

(2) The bidding goes 1♣ - double - pass – (What do you bid?)

- a) ♠ 652 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ82 ♣ A976      you can bid 1♦ or because you have a stopper, try bidding 1NT. You do not want to play in a minor.
- b) ♠ 652 ♥ 75 ♦ KQ982 ♣ 762      you have a weak hand, bid 1♦.
- c) ♠ 542 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ1082 ♣ AK7      you have a strong hand, bid 2NT. You do not want to play in a diamond game
- d) ♠ 92 ♥ 10987 ♦ K865 ♣ 632      bid 2NT as a relay to three clubs
- e) ♠ AKJ1094 ♥ KQ ♦ 7 ♣ 8765      bid 4♠, jump to game to show values

(3) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

1♦	double	pass	1♠
Pass	(?)		

And you have a four-card spade suit, do you raise or pass? With 16+ raise, otherwise pass; remember you forced your partner to bid.

(3) Suppose the bidding goes

West	North	East	South
------	-------	------	-------

	1♦	double	
pass	1♠	2♦	(?)

You again hold four spades, but you have less than 16+ points. Do you pass or bid on? Do not let the opponents steal the bid; you are only at the two-level with the master suit. You must bid 2♠, even vulnerable versus nonvulnerable. Never let the opponents play at the two-level holding the master suit or if they do not have a fit.

(4) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

	1♦	pass	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	(?)

And you again hold spades ♠ AK543 ♥ 7 ♦ 985 ♣ AQ76. What do you do? You have two choices—support diamonds or double for takeout, hoping partner will bid spades with only two.



(5) The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

		1♥	
--	--	----	--

pass	pass	Double	(?)
------	------	--------	-----

And you hold ♠ 9876 ♥ 7 ♦ QJ832 ♣ K87. What do you do? The opponents have passed, so your partner must have a very good hand; even though you have four spades, bid your best suit, bid 2♦. If partner does not bid spades, bid them at the next turn.



# CHAPTER 7

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## OVERCALLS

Overcalls are complicated and countless books have been written about them. However, there are basically only four common types of overcalls: simple overcalls, notrump overcalls, jump overcalls, and two-suited overcalls (in chapter 5, we discussed two-suited overcalls: unusual 2NT and Michaels cue bids, but not the responses to the bids).

### The 1NT overcall

The ACBL regulations state that a direct overcall of 1NT shows 15–17/18 starting points and a stopper (most often) in the opponent's bid suit. This is considered "standard" and need not be alerted. For now, let's assume you are playing the standard approach. Then the bids for a notrump overcall are as follows.

- 15-17/18** Overcalls 1NT
- 18/19-20** Double and then bid notrump
- 21-23** Double and then jump in notrump
- 24-26** Double and rebid 3NT (or double and cue bid)

If you play the "standard overcall" strong 1NT bid, one next has to ask whether you play systems on or off. This must be marked on your convention card.

### Systems on or off

#### On

Most partnerships play that all systems are on, which means you do not differentiate between a 1NT openings from the overcall of 1NT. Thus, Stayman, Jacoby Transfer, etc. are all in effect.

#### Off

Alternatively, you may play that systems are off. If you do, one does not use Stayman or any of the transfer bids. Why take this approach? Are not the two situations the same? No.

Consider this: If your LHO opens 1♠ and your partner overcalls 1NT, you can only play one of the remaining three suits at the two-level, and that's hearts. What if you want to play two diamonds or two clubs? You can't if you play systems on.

If your LHO has about 12 starting points and your partner has 16, then there are only about 12 points left for your RHO and you. Sometimes you don't get your fair share, right?

Take a look at your partner's hand and yours.

Opener ♠ KJ9 ♥ AJ107 ♦ QJ8 ♣ K87

Responder ♠ 876 ♥ 7 ♦ 109762 ♣ 5643

Where do you think it plays best? Not 1NT. Your hand has no value for partner, but if you play it in two diamonds, your hand can take several tricks. If the A-Q of spades and the ♣A are on your left, you will make two diamonds.

If you don't play natural bids at the two-level, you will either have to pass and apologize for such a poor hand or play at the three-level. Good luck.

Suppose you have a good hand? When you hold points, there are several ways to show them.

You can cue bid the opponent's suit and partner should respond as though it were Stayman. You can discover a 4-4 fit by using a cue bid, the convention is called Cue Bid Stayman.

You can bid 2NT with an invitational hand that is balanced, and, of course, you can always bid 3NT.

You can also jump to the three levels with an unbalanced hand and a good suit. Let your partner decide what to do.

## Summary

When you have some points, you don't have a problem playing systems on. It's when you don't have them, which is more likely, that you need a way to find the best contract using systems off. Rather than playing in a hopeless notrump contract, you might consider not playing systems on; your partner overcalls 1NT and bids naturally. If you only have 4–8 points and a balanced hand, you should pass.

You have to discuss with your partner whether systems are on or off after a 1NT overcall.

Over 1NT, some play that a bid of 2NT shows a 1NT hand (14/15–17), it is not unusual for the minors.

Be careful (please ask); it must be discussed with your partners.

## 1NT overcalls in the balancing seat (Range/Inquiry Stayman)

When playing 2/1, the bid of 1NT in the balancing seat usually shows 11/12–14 HCP. However, if partner doubles and then bids 1NT, he should have 19 HCP when playing a strong notrump 2/1 system. To show 20–21 HCP, one doubles and bids 2NT. This usually works well when the opponents open with a minor; however, when opening with a major, there is less room to bid, since partner must now bid at the two-level.

To solve this problem, over a major suit opening bid the balancing notrump bidder usually has more values, 14/15–16 HCP. To avoid getting too high, one uses the Range/Inquiry Stayman convention. Now a bid of 2♣ is not only Stayman but also an asking bid. With 10–14 HCP, you make the normal response of 2♦ with no four-card major or two of the major if you have one. If, however, you are in the 15–16 HCP range, you bid 2NT, delaying your normal Stayman response. Partner next continues with the re-Stayman bid of 3♣ if he wants to know if you have a four-card major.

## Suit overcalls

A simple overcall at the one-level shows 8–15 starting points. A one-level overcall usually shows a 5+ card suit and one of the top two honors (ace or king). Why do you need one of the top two honors? The bid always suggests an opening lead if you do not win the contract. If you do not satisfy this criterion, it is best to pass and wait for partner to bid. Do not overcall with a jack high six-card suit. With 16–17+ starting points, one doubles and bids. If you have a medium-sized hand, you may again double and pass partner's bid suit.

Many duplicate bridge players are afraid to overcall with a four-card major. This may be because they are afraid they will be penalized, or they are afraid partner will raise with only three-card support, or if after passing, they may be afraid partner will return to the major suit bid. All these fears are unfounded.

The advantages of the major overcall are that it is lead directing, allows one to compete aggressively for a part score, allows one to get a bid in early even if one has a five-card minor, and often disturbs the bidding of the opponents.

When overcalling with a four-card major, one may use the following guidelines:

1. The four-card major overcall should only be made at the one-level.
2. The overcall major should have three of the top five honors with an ace or king.
3. Overcall with a good hand (10+ HCP) and a poor suit, only two of the top three honors in the major.
4. Overcall at the two-level with 12+ HCP.

Examples of major suit holdings at the one-level:

AJ107 KQJ6 AKJ8 AQ105

Holding only AJ93, one needs 12+ HCP.

Overcalls at the two-level require both a great hand and a good suit and should have 12+ starting points.

## Responding to a suit overcall (major or minor)

With three plus card support, provided the opponents pass, you should

**Raise one level** with 7–9 starting points  
**Jump-raise** with 10–11 starting points  
**Bid game** with 12+ starting points

With no major suit fit, bid notrump provided you have a stopper in the opponent's bid suit.

**1NT** with 8–10 starting points  
**2NT** with 11–12 starting points  
**3NT** with 13+ starting points

If you do not have a stopper, or three-card support for partner's overcall suit, bid your own five-card suit if you have 9+ starting points. How do you play a new suit? You may play it forcing for one round, nonforcing constructive, or nonforcing (see the back of your convention card). What is the meaning of a cue bid of the opponent's suit?

In general, a cue bid of the opponent's suit is always forcing. All good hands start with a cue bid! However, the responses to a major overcall and a minor overcall are different.

Let's look at the major overcall. The bidding goes

1♣ - 1♠ - pass - (?)

**1NT** 8–10 starting points, with club stopper and nonforcing  
**2♣** asking bid, how good is your overcall (shows fit with 6–10 HCP)  
**2♦/2♥/2♠** nonforcing  
**2NT** 11–12 starting points, with club stopper and nonforcing  
**3♣** **fit bid forcing with four-card support**  
**3♦/3♥** Very good suit, nonforcing constructive  
**3♠** Preemptive nonforcing  
**3NT** 13+ starting points, to play with stopper

If partner overcalls diamonds, you can follow the same general rules as above. However, if you have stoppers in the opponent's suit and 10+ starting points, you should consider not

raising partner's suit but instead bid notrump. Notrump will often be the easiest game to make, especially if you have at least a partial fit with partner's suit (a doubleton honor, for example).

## **Responding to a weak jump overcall**

Partner's jump overcall is preemptive, so you need a fit and quick trick (aces and kings) to consider a game. If you're weak or if you lack support for partner's suit, you should generally pass. If you do have a fit (three-card support) and a few tricks, you can make a simple raise below game. A raise is not invitational; it is only furthering the preemptive bid. Partner will always pass a simple raise.

## **Overcall or double revisited**

When you overcall, partner does not know whether you have 8 or 16 starting points, while a double usually shows at least 12 starting points. What is the "best" strategy?

### **Advantages of overcalling**

#### **1) It is usually lead directing.**

You should have an ace or a king in the bid suit! Do not overcall with junk. However, if you have two-bids and an opening hand, it is usually better to double provided you have support for the other three suits.

For example, with the hand ♠975 ♥975 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75, you would overcall 1♦ after the opponents bid 1♣.

But with the hand ♠K75 ♥A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75, it would be better to double. Telling partner you have at least an opening hand and support for the other three suits is much better than telling him to lead a diamond.

Suppose partner has the hand ♠642 ♥KQ9864 ♦ 4 ♣ A84 and you overcall a diamond. The bidding went 1♣ - 1♦ - 3♣ - (?). Partner would probably pass fearing a misfit and only moderate values. However, if you instead double so the auction was 1♣ - X - 3♣ - (?), partner would confidently bid 4♥.

What do you do in the fourth seat? The bidding goes 1♥ - P - 1♠ - (?). And you hold the following hand ♠8732 ♥K ♦ KQJ9 ♣ K764. Your partner has passed and you are not going to outbid the opponents. Clearly, a lead directing bid of 2♦ is better than a takeout double. In addition, your bid will certainly not be doubled for penalty.

**2) An overcall does not give the opponents (or your partner) information about your distribution.**

This may be important for declarers when deciding to finesse a queen in a suit that you have doubled for takeout. This is the price you pay for describing your hand accurately with a double. You have to weigh what information you need to give partner versus the opponents.

**3) You can sometimes bid a second suit, clarifying your distribution.**

Suppose you hold the following hand ♠AK875 ♥7 ♦AJ10652 ♣A and the RHO opens 1♣. What do you bid?

You have to overcall a diamond and then bid spades (reverse by overcaller). You have two very good suits, always bid the longer. However, if instead you had the hand ♠AK875 ♥7 ♦987652 ♣A, bid 1♠; you do not have the strength to reverse.

**Disadvantages of overcalling****1) The bidding may die before you can show support for the other suits.**

This may happen if you have a strong hand on which you have decided to overcall instead of double. Sometimes it is better to describe your two-suited hand, which may only happen if the bidding continues.

**2) A fit in another suit may be missed. It happens.****3) Defensive values are undervalued or overvalued.**

Partner does not know whether you have 8 or 16 starting points, this is a significant drawback when you have support for all unbid suits. Even though you are very distributional, it is sometimes better to double and take a chance, since partner knows you have at least an opening bid.

**4) You may get doubled and go down when you have a fit elsewhere.****Advantages of doubling****1) Shows high card strength**

A double shows at least 12 starting points and hence defensive values; partner better able to place the contract with this information.

**2) Allows partner to double the opponents**

Even though you have 12 starting points, you should not always double. For example, suppose you have the following hand: ♠ Q42 ♥KQ109 ♦ KQJ75 ♣ 5. With this hand, you should bid 1♦ over 1♣. Even with 12 starting points, you do not have defensive values to double.

**3) Allows partner to bid a suit confidently, knowing you will have at least three-card support****4) A new suit bid by you later shows a hand too strong for a simple overcall**

For example, the opponents open 1♠ and you have five hearts and 17+ points. Do not overcall, double and bid hearts. If your partner now bids 4♥ and the opponents go to four spades, you can then double for penalty.

**5) Avoids being doubled when you have a better fit**

If you overcall and are doubled, usually you just have to sit and take your medicine. It is often too dangerous to scramble around trying to find the right spot. Starting off with a double, you have a better chance of finding a fit. A double behind a bidder is usually for penalty. In front of a bidder, it is usually for takeout.

**Disadvantages of doubling****1) Partner may miss the best lead.**

This is especially true against a notrump contract. However, unless you have a very top-heavy suit, doubling may in fact be your best chance of getting the defense off to the right start.

**2) You might misjudge your fit.**

It is easy to make the wrong decision as to how high to bid, or what defensive values you have, as you may have a nine- or ten-card fit, which you think is only an eight- or nine-card fit. This issue is often overlooked. For example, over a heart opening, you have a choice of bidding 2♦ or to double with the following hand: ♠Q86 ♥98 ♦ AKJ107 ♣ J64. Again, any bid may work; however, if you overcall and partner is all diamonds, he will know either to preempt or keep quiet hoping the opponents misgauge their fit. Let's look at an example.



		♠ J752	
		♥ J75	
		♦ Q1984	
		♣ 9	
♠ K1043		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>N</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>W</span> <span>S</span> </div>	♠ A9
♥ Q6			♥ AK1043
♦ 632			♦ Void
♣ AK73			♣ Q10852
		♠ Q86	
		♥ 98	
		♦ AKJ107	
		♣ J64	

With east-west vulnerable, if south doubles east's 1♥ opening, the bidding might go:

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Dbl
Rdbl	1♠	2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	5♦*	Pass
5NT	Pass	7♣	All pass

\* Exclusion Key Card Blackwood, asking partner not to count key card in the diamonds.

However, if instead you bid 2♦, things may go

West	North	East	South
		1♥	2♦
Dbl	6♦	Dbl	

Down four for = 800 for east-west, instead of +2140.

The material in this section is based upon information in the book by Neil Kimelman (2008) *Improve your Bidding Judgment*, by Master Point Press. A must-read for any serious bridge players, since bidding is where you often win or lose at the game. There are many more topics in the book to help bridge players know when to be passive or aggressive. Neil Kimelman is a Canadian expert bridge player.

## Cue bidding principles

Cue bids have become an integral part of contract bridge, and you do not have to be an expert or an advanced player to use them. They allow one to reach the appropriate level for a part-score, game, or slam. They are used to show support for partner's overcall, responses to takeout doubles, looking for notrump contracts, getting to slams, as conventions and more. There are more than fifty conventional cue bids listed in the *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*. We review a few common uses that may help to improve your partnership agreements. A comprehensive

overview of cue bidding is provided by Dee Berry (author of *Two Over One in a Nutshell*) in her recent book *Cue Bids in a Nutshell* (2008) published by PDI Bridge Supplies.

### **How good is your overcall?**

In most bidding systems, overcalls in an unbid suit are natural and usually include a five-card or longer suit with 8–16 HCP for an overcall at the one-level and 10–17 HCP for an overcall at the two-levels. Given these wide ranges, how good is the overcall? To find out, one may make an asking cue bid! For example, suppose the bidding goes 1♣ - 1♠ - pass - 2♣.

The bid of two clubs to the overcaller is the only forcing bid partner may make and is asking partner how good is your overcall. It usually promises 6–10 dummy support points with a fit (three plus cards). A jump cue bid is most often played as a limit raise with four-card support; however, some play the jump fit cue bid as a mixed raise with four trumps and less than a limit raise (8–11) and some defensive values.

A rebid of the suit (by the overcaller) at the lowest level conveys a “minimum overcall.” Any other bid (a new suit, notrump, or a jump) shows a sound overcall with an opening hand (12–15/16 HCP). With more points, the overcaller would double and bid! If the opener doubles the advancer’s cue bid (showing a good suit), a pass by the overcaller shows the lightest overcall, a rebid of the suit shows a respectable overcall, and a new suit or jump shows approximately an opening bid or better.

In the prior example, the 2♣ bidder’s hand may look like ♠QJ5 ♥K9 ♦KQJ876 ♣975. If the overcaller has the hand ♠AK876 ♥Q4 ♦A43 ♣J82, a bid of 2♥ shows an opening bid or better and is forcing for one round. Alternatively, one may have the hand ♠AK1098 ♥Q4 ♦543 ♣AJ8 and bid 2NT, which promises at least one stopper in the opponent’s suit and preferable two. Some may even bid 3NT; alternatively, with the hand ♠AK1086 ♥AQJ64 ♦54 ♣8, one may bid 3♥, a game forcing bid, showing five hearts. A bid of 2♠ would show a minimum overcall—for example, ♠AK1087 ♥54 ♦10965 ♣AJ. And if the opener were to double the bid of two clubs, the overcaller would pass.

### **Cue bids by responder (after opponent’s overcall)**

A cue bid by responder shows a limit raise or better in opener’s suit, with at least three-card support for opener’s major suit or at least four-card (and preferable five-card) support for opener’s minor suit.

1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠ promises a limit raise or better in hearts. Responder may hold

- (1) ♠842 ♥K763 ♦AK65 ♣54
- (2) ♠7 ♥Q875 ♦Q864 ♣AKQ6
- (3) ♠A54 ♥987 ♦AQ109 ♣Q87

A cue bid is a one-round force. With the second hand, some responders would prefer to bid 2♣, since that bid is forcing (any new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing) and hearts could be supported later. And with the third hand, some would perhaps bid 2♦ for the same reason.

If the cue bid forces your partner to the four-level, it shows an opening bid or better.

1♥ - 1♠ - 3♠ shows a game forcing heart raise with at least three-card supports. Hands could be

(A) ♠92 ♥QJ76 ♦9874 ♣AKQ

(B) ♠K5 ♥A632 ♦A543 ♣K75

(C) ♠876 ♥AK7 ♦A8432 ♣K6

In 2/1, a jump to three or four hearts is preemptive showing at least four trumps and weak, less than 9 starting points.

What if the bidding went 1♥ - 1♠ - pass - 4♥? A double jump cue bid is a splinter in support of spades and game forcing.

## **Sandwich 1NT/2NT and skew cue bids (Hess bids)**

### **Sandwich 1NT/2NT**

The bid of 1NT is usually made in the fourth seat after your partner has passed and the opponents have bid two suits at the one-level. It must be alerted and shows 5-5 or better in the unbid suits and less than a full opener. You are usually willing to play at the two-level (eight losers nonvulnerable, seven losers vulnerable).

With the same distribution (five-five or better) and 16+ starting points, you bid a Sandwich 2NT (also called a Roman Jump Overcall). Now you are willing to play at the three-level.

Example 1: 1♦/pass/1♥/1NT with ♠KJ987 ♥7 ♦109 ♣QJ543, bid 1NT.

Suppose instead of the hand in the example 1, you have the hand

Example 2: ♠KQ987 ♥K7 ♦A ♣AKJ87. Now one would bid 2NT.

When one is 4-4 in the two unbid suits or 5-4 in the unbid suits, the Sandwich NT bids are replaced by a takeout double or skew cue bids, respectively.

**Skew cue bids (also called Hess cue bids)**

When the opponents have bid two different suits, then a cue bid of the higher-ranking suit shows five cards in the higher unbid suit and four cards in the lower unbid suit. A cue bid of the lower bid suit shows five cards in the lower bid suit and four cards in the higher unbid suit. Use this bid instead of the Sandwich 2NT bid to show shape and extra values, 16+ starting points.

**Takeout double**

The takeout double has more HCP and less shape. For example, the distribution may be ♠KQ76 ♥98 ♦456 ♣AKJ2, more than an opening hand when partner is forced to bid at the three-level. But if partner is forced to bid at only the two-level, the doubler needs only 12+ starting points, an opening hand.

**Overcall**

The previous bids are used to represent shape and values. In general, the shapelier the hand, the lighter the values may be. An overcall of an unbid suit at the two-level will show length in the suit with little value. As in the case of the sandwich NT bid, if the bid is made at the two-level, one must again have about eight losers nonvulnerable and seven losers vulnerable. A three-level bid requires extra values.

**Some examples**

1♦/pass/1♥/1NT	shows clubs and spades with 5-5 shape, but not strength
1♦/pass/1♥/double	shows clubs and spades with 4-4 shape and opening values
Pass/1♣/pass/1♠/1NT	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-5 shape, but not strength
1♠/pass/2♣/2NT	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-5 shape and 16+ HCP
1♠/pass/2♣/2♠	shows hearts and diamonds with 5-4 shape and 16+ HCP
1♠/pass/2♣/3♣	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-4 shape and 16+ HCP.

**Final note:** In the sequence 1♣, pass, 1♠, pass / pass/1NT, the 1NT bid is not Sandwich; it shows some values and you do not want the opponents to play at the one-level.

## Leaping Michaels

Leaping Michaels utilizes the 4♣ and 4♦ bids. Similar to the Michaels cue bid, in case this minor suit overcall is in the opposing suit, both major suits are implied. In case the overcall is not a cue bid, the suit bid plus a major suit is indicated. So on preempts of the opponents (indicated between brackets), the following applies when playing Leaping Michaels:

- (2/3♥) - 4♣: clubs and spades
- (2/3♥) - 4♦: diamonds and spades
- (2/3♠) - 4♣: clubs and hearts
- (2/3♠) - 4♦: diamonds and hearts
- (3♣) - 4♣: majors
- (3♣) - 4♦: diamonds and an undisclosed major
- (3♦) - 4♣: clubs and an undisclosed major
- (3♦) - 4♦: majors

All bids show 5-5 shape.

After 3♦ or 4♣, the bid of 4♦ asks for a major. The bids 4♥ and 4♠ are to play. Following 3♣ or 4♦, the bid of 4♥ is played as pass-or-correct.

Some partnerships prefer to interchange the meanings of the 4♣ and 4♦ bids following a 3♣ preempt so that 4♣ denotes diamonds and an undisclosed major. This has the advantage that the 4♦ becomes available to ask for the major suit. The 4♥/4♠ responses may then be played as natural (to play). Discuss this with your partner!

Leaping Michaels can be utilized after natural two-level preempts and also after conventional preempts such as the Muiderberg convention, also called the Dutch Two opening. It is a preemptive opening based on a two suiter with precisely a five-card major and a minor suit (four cards or longer). In Muiderberg, the 2♥ opening denotes five hearts and an unknown minor suit, while 2♠ denotes five spades and an unknown minor suit.

It can also be played against a weak 2♦ bid; here, Leaping Michaels may be utilized to good effect:

- (2♦) - 4♣: clubs and an undisclosed major (4♦ asks for the major)
- (2♦) - 4♦: diamonds and an undisclosed major (4♥ is pass-or-correct).

If you currently play 2/1 using Michaels cue bids, you may want to consider adding the Leaping Michaels convention.

An alternative to using Leaping Michaels (strong hand) with Michaels (weak hand) is to employ the Liberalized Leaping Michaels convention. Using this convention, one again uses the Leaping Michaels bids as defined above, but it is now used to show a weak two suiter with 9–10 HCP. Using the Liberalized convention, a cue bid of the two- or three-level bid is used to show a

strong two suiter. The bids are flip-flopped. Mike Cappelletti suggested the Liberalized Leaping Michaels convention in the July 1988 issue of the *Bridge World*. The advantage of the convention is that it allows for more bidding room when one has a strong hand and takes less bidding space with a weak hand. Hence, the opponents have less room to investigate slam.

## Responding to Michael cue bids or unusual 2NT

In chapter 5, we introduced Michaels cue bid and unusual 2NT as overcalls and showed how the opponents (opener and responder) may use cue bids when it is used. The two-bids are used with either very strong 5-5 hands or with weak hands in a competitive auction. With between with 12–16 starting points, one may use either an overcall or a double.

Now we need to discuss advancer responses to the bids. Recall that Michaels shows both majors or a major and a minor. Unusual 2NT shows the two lowest unbid suits, either both minors or a major and a minor.

Let's first look at Michaels:

- 1) Without a good fit for either of the known suits, give simple preference for the one you like best (or dislike least);
- 2) With a good fit for a known suit, make a single raise or double jump in a known suit with 12+ starting points;
- 3) With an even better hand (17+ starting points), cue bid the opponent's suit as a game force bid. The suit will be revealed later;
- 4) With a strong balanced hand (16+ starting points), and stoppers in opener's suit and the "other" suit, one may bid 3NT
- 5) After 1♠ - 2♠ or 1♥ - 2♥ overcaller's second suit is not known. A reply of 2NT is forcing and asks which minor is held;
- 6) A bid in a suit not promised by the overcaller is natural and nonforcing, based on a very long suit. Overcaller will not bid again unless he is extra strong.

When the opponents interfere above the level of 2NT, a bid of 4♣ is a request to play in the minor at the four levels, and the bid of 4NT is forcing to game in the minor.

Without interference, a bid of 3NT is to play and the bid of 4NT is Blackwood, no agreed-upon suit. A direct cue bid of the opponent's suit shows a strong hand and is game forcing. If your partner bids a suit not bid by the opponents or shown by the cue bid, it is natural and wants to play in the suit bid.

If after a Michaels cue bid or unusual 2NT and partner responds with a weak bid and partner bids again, 17+ starting points, like a double and bidding a suit. The responses to the 2NT overcall are similar.

## Reverse good-bad 2NT

Let's suppose you have the following hand: ♠ K8754 ♥ 6 ♦ KQ862 ♣ Q2 and the bidding goes

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	?

What do you bid?

For this situation, Marty Bergen (*Better Bidding with Bergen*, page 112) recommends what he calls the good-bad 2NT bid. Originally, following Lebensohl, you would bid 2NT with the hand, followed by 3♦ over partner's relay bid (alert) of 3♣\*, while with a stronger hand (10+ starting points), you would bid 3♦ immediately, which is forcing for one round. However, based upon two articles in the 1999 *Bridge World*, Reverse Lebensohl is now more popular, then a bid of a new suit at the three-level is weaker than bidding 2NT first.

Similarly, the modern tendency for those who play good-bad 2NT is to reverse the bids. Then the immediate three-level bid (to take up valuable bidding space) shows a weak hand (and is nonforcing) and 2NT, followed by a bid shows a forcing hand. This is called reverse good-bad 2NT. Clearly, the reason for the modern change is that with a weaker hand, you want to get your bid in before the opponents compete further, since you are too weak to show your suit at the four-level. When you hold the stronger hand, the opponents are not likely to compete further (and if they do, they may be sorry), so you will be able to finish describing your hand. Because these are new concepts, we consider the (reverse) good-bad 2NT by opener first. After

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	2♠	?

And as opener (south), you have the following hands from Bergen:

- a) ♠ 97 ♥ J8 ♦ KQJ873 ♣ AJ8
- b) ♠ 97 ♥ J8 ♦ AKQJ87 ♣ A92
- c) ♠ 97 ♥ KJ74 ♦ AK952 ♣ J10
- d) ♠ 97 ♥ KJ7 ♦ AK952 ♣ K108
- e) ♠ 97 ♥ AJ92 ♦ AKJ92 ♣ K8
- f) ♠ 97 ♥ 8 ♦ AK952 ♣ AQ843
- g) ♠ 97 ♥ A ♦ AK952 ♣ KJ843

- h) ♠ K7 ♥ 6 ♦ AKJ92 ♣ AQJ42  
 i) ♠ 7 ♥ A7 ♦ AKJ92 ♣ AQ842

On hand (a) you would bid 3♦, while with (b) you would bid 2NT; followed by 3♦. With hands (c) or (d), you would bid 3♥ (support doubles do not apply at this level, only usually through 2♥, chapter 8); hence, a double to show three-card support is not an option. With (e), bid 2NT followed by 3♥.

The only real problem occurs when you as opener have a minor two suiter. With an average or skimpy 5-5, you would bid 3♣, as in hands (f) or (g). With a very strong minor two suiter, you would start with 2NT and then, over 3♣, bid 3NT with a spade stopper, hand (h). or cue bid 3♠ without a stopper, hand (i). Both 3♠ and 3NT guarantee five clubs and a very good hand.

Over 2NT by opener, the 3♣ bid by responder is forcing, since opener hasn't shown which type of hand he has, so responder must relay to 3♣ over 2NT to find out. With extra values, responder can bid more after opener finishes describing his hand, but with a minimum hand and a long, independent suit of his own, he should rebid his suit (nonforcing) instead of bidding 3♣. For example, suppose as responder you hold:

♠ 875 ♥ QJ10974 ♦ 86 ♣ K10

Bid 3♥, which might enable opener to raise to game with a good hand but skimpy heart support. Add a king to responder's hand and he would be too strong for a nonforcing 3♥ bid, so he must bid 3♣, followed by 3♥ (forcing), if opener's rebid is 3♦.

Following the philosophy of the Wolff Sign-Off bid, suppose responder bids 3♦, instead of 3♣ after the opener bids 2NT. This would suggest that responder is near minimum with a decent five-card heart suit or a very weak six-card suit. He is not strong enough to bid 3♣ and the 3♥ (forcing), hence he bids the "reverse" Checkback bid of 3♦. Now if the opener has the hand

♠ A8 ♥ 7 ♦ AQ107654 ♣ KJ8

He would pass and bid 3♥ with the hand

♠ A8 ♥ 7 ♦ AK754 ♣ Q9

Or bid 4♥ with

♠ A8 ♥ K75 ♦ AK10754 ♣ A9

Let us think about how we handle responder's problems with the "reverse" 2NT bid. Suppose the auction goes

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♥
2♠	pass	pass	?



And you hold the hand ♠ J8 ♥ AJ876 ♦ Q75 ♣ K87.

Double on this hand! A double in front of the bidder is for takeout. You don't know whether partner bids 3♥ with three-card support, bids 3♣ (over which you bid 3♦), bids 3♦, or pass (with four spades).

However, with the hand ♠ J8 ♥ AJ87 ♦ Q75 ♣ K875.

Do not bid 3♥; instead bid 3♦. Because support doubles are not applicable at this level, you have to gamble that partner has five diamonds.

We consider four more examples:

- a) ♠ J8 ♥ AJ84 ♦ 7 ♣ K87542
- b) ♠ J8 ♥ AQJ875 ♦ 7 ♣ J875
- c) ♠ J8 ♥ AQJ875 ♦ 7 ♣ K875
- d) ♠ 8 ♥ AJ876 ♦ Q75 ♣ K875

With hand (j), bid 2NT, intending to pass partner's bid of 3♣. With (k), bid 3♥, expecting partner to pass. With hand (l), bid 2NT, followed by 3♥ to show the kind of hand where you would have bid 3♥, invitational, if LHO had passed. Finally, with hand (m), bid 3♦. Although a double would be for takeout, partner would pass with four spades. You don't like to defend doubled contracts at the two-level when the opponents have eight trumps.

Well, what do you think? Some people even play reverse good-bad 4NT! Partner opens one heart and the RHO bids four spades.

Which do you think would be more useful, playing 4NT as Blackwood or showing extra values? If you choose the latter, 4NT transfers to 5♣, and if responders bids 5♥, it is invitational to slam. While a bid of 5♥ opener should have extra values. A bid of 5♣ is natural and invitational to slam in hearts. With a weak hand, he would bid 4NT and pass 5♣! Similarly, if opener bids 4♠, a double is for takeout/penalty and 4NT is a relay to 5♣.

Reference: Marshall Miles (2002), *Competitive Bidding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Master Point Press.

## Scrambling 2NT

Another use of the 2NT bid is in the auction 1M - pass - 2M - 2NT. The bid of 2NT is for takeout and only played over major suit bids. You usually have no more than two cards in the major bid and it asks partner to bid his four-card suits up the line. It allows you to perhaps find a partial contract in a minor or the other major. It may also force the opponents to an unmakeable three-level contract. Playing duplicate bridge, you never allow the opponents to play in a one-level contract, and you normally do not want them to play in a two-level partial. If the two-level bid is announced as constructive, you have to be more careful when vulnerable.

## An overcall system

Following is an overcall system of bids developed by John E. Fout with permission from John Twineham. It is nonstandard so be careful.

When the opponents open the bidding, they have already garnered an advantage. Standard defensive bidding methods generally allow you to compete, but this requires holding a good hand. We never have good hands<sup>1</sup>; we want to compete anyway. The only problem presented to us is that our partner can never take a joke if we're bidding on a distributional hand. The structure, thus, has been created so that partner will not hang you.

The questions arise: why do we want to compete on these "bad" hands, and isn't that dangerous? We believe that competing at the one- and the two-level is superior to balancing at the three-level, which can be very dangerous as both opponents have already communicated their values. One note about our style before we go on: all of our bids are made according to relative vulnerability as it relates to sanity. We aren't insane; we just like to compete. This is what advancer (partner of overcaller) must keep in mind because 90 percent of the time, it will be advancer's job to make the decision about how high to compete on the combined offensive values of the partnership. Advancer should definitely remember that many calls are limited in values, and more importantly do not promise defensive values!

To understand this competitive style properly, we encounter several theoretical considerations. The Law of Total Tricks best explains why and how to compete. On most hands, we possess at least an eight-card fit, which usually will allow us to compete successfully at the two-level; sometimes we will have two eight-card fits, which will allow us to compete at the three-level. If we have a nine-card fit, the three-level should be safe, etc. The opponents, of course, attempt to do the same depending on how big their trump fits are, but there exists a limited number of tricks available because of a limited number of trumps and a limited number of values or working high cards. In essence, on every hand, everyone aims to compete to the par spot.

But not everyone truly comprehends the idea of the par spot. People think of it as being a plus position. This is not always the case. Frequently, the par spot translates to out competing the opponents, and actually going minus; for example, we go to three spades over the opponents' three hearts, down one. The opponents can make three hearts. We win. Many times we only have a minus score available and strive to reduce that minus. It certainly can be difficult to decide how much to bid at certain vulnerabilities in conjunction to reaching the par spot. But having this understanding of the par spot and competing on a greater number of hands, however, over time will lead to better hand evaluation, better judgment and better results.

How are we going to compete more effectively? Using these tools:

Simple overcalls, notrump for takeout, power doubles, Roman jump overcalls, the two-suited cue bid, intermediate jump overcalls, Namyats, and a few other gadget bids. Using this structure, it will become apparent that we have found the easiest way to enter effectively into the auction.

**The simple overcall at the one-level**

The simple overcall (SO) occurs most frequently and the inferences drawn from a SO or a pass are many. Because the overcaller has several available bids, making a SO deny possession of the other possible hands, and remember that partner will always take inference. Let's see what this means.

We make a SO for several reasons. We have a suit that we want led; we have too many values to pass (e.g., a good 10–14 HCP); we want to find out which of our suits to lead; we want to preempt at a low level; we have a hand that seems conducive to competition. So what are we overcalling on? Many times one-level overcalls only have four-card suits and tend to show length in opener's suit. It denies holding a side five-card suit or probably even a four-card suit unless you're 4-4, 5-4 or 6-4, and no other available systemic bid describes your hand. As these overcalls are so aggressive, we cautiously raise partner. We thus employ support doubles and redoubles<sup>2</sup> after an overcall and interference. Occasionally, we must conceal three-card support on hands people might commonly raise with in standard. Be more conservative especially when holding three small, Jxx or Qxx of LHO's suit, which is known as the Death Holding or a 4333 hand with a bad six or seven count.

What about suit quality? There exist no specific requirements here except that you hold four cards in that suit. For example, if holding S KQx H T9xx D xx C AKxx, and RHO opens one club, we would not pass but rather overcall one heart. The average suit quality with which someone would overcall on approximates to KJ9x. Again, these bids are all relative to vulnerability or the ability to get to another spot if necessary.

**Responding to a SO – Uncontested Auction**

The aggressive nature of our overcalls requires a delicate response structure to handle various possibilities:

- 1) A one-over-one response is not constructive merely suggesting an alternative spot. This strongly suggests two or fewer cards in overcaller's suit (check LHO's pulse to find out how few partner has!).
- 2) 1 Notrump is not natural! It is Lebensohl with three distinct purposes:
  - a) Run out to another five-card or longer suit<sup>3</sup>.
  - b) Invitational in a new suit that could not have been bid previously as invitational, or invitational in notrump.
  - c) A flower bid in opener's suit (see 3 below); shown by rebidding partner's suit.
- 3) Nonjumps at the two-level are flower bids; fit showing with three plus card trump support, four plus cards in the bid suit, limit raise values, but nonforcing.
- 4) Cue bid of opener's suit is a strong no-fit game try; advancer looks for game either in notrump or in his own suit.
- 5) Single jumps in suits, even jump cue bids, are mini-splinters; generally four plus trumps and around limit raise values (more if subsequent action is taken).

- 6) Two notrump is Jacoby style; an opening hand with four plus trumps; not forcing to game if overcaller responds with a minimum.

### **Responding to a SO—contested auction**

The responses are similar but modified. A one-over-one tends to be more constructive. A new suit at the two-level is a flower bid in that suit or length with that suit and enough values to force a level higher. Cue bids are a limit raise or better for partner's suit, while single jumps are still mini-splinters. Remember that support doubles and redoubles apply and come up quite frequently.

The inferences from partner passing in an auction like this: 1♣ - P - 1♠, are very revealing. It's known that partner could not even compete at the one-level. Partner almost surely denies possession of all the hands mentioned in the second paragraph on the SO and denies also the three-suited takeouts, two-suited hands, etc., as will be described ahead. The hands most likely to be passed are four-by-three hands with length in opener's suit or any hand with opener's suit, very weak hands, and hands with a bad suit and only average values (i.e., Jxxx or worse and 6–9 HCP, depending on the hand).

### **One notrump for takeout (NTO)**

All other bids have been centered on the one notrump overcall (NTO). The NTO comes up frequently and creates havoc in the opponent's auction while letting us know in what suits we should be competing. The NTO can be described as a light three-suited takeout, showing three cards in all the unbid suits, and generally 6–15 HCP at equal vulnerability. The minimum shape here is 4-4-3-2 up to as shapely as 7-3-3-0. People always ask, would you really overcall a NTO with six spades and a stiff club, 6-3-3-1 shape over a one club opening? We say yes and tell them about the number of times we have buried the opponents' heart fits. Furthermore, you must bid a NTO on these hands; otherwise, partner gets confused about your shape and will be unable to accurately place or accurately defend the hand.

### **Responses to a NTO—uncontested auction**

- 1) Any response in a new suit at the two-level is to play. If the NTO bidder raises, expect a shapely max with four-card support (in some cases, it could be blocking with five plus card support).
- 2) Cue bidding opener's suit first asks partner for a four-card major, but if advancer later bids a new suit, then this reveals an invitational sequence for a major but not necessarily invitational for a minor. A follow-up cue bid by advancer demonstrates a strong interest in game—probably in the suit you've bid—opposite any hand with reasonable cover cards.<sup>4</sup>
- 3) Jumping in a suit at the three-level is preemptive even if opposite a maximum, unless bid red versus white. This shows any six-card suit or a good five-card suit with a little shape.
- 4) Bidding two notrump over 1NT tends to show minors but could be a hand with a minor and a major. This depends on the auction.

All other game or four of a minor bid are to play. Here's an interesting example: at imps both vulnerable, you hold ♠ Jx ♥ AKTxxx ♦ J9xx ♣ x. Over a one diamond opening by LHO, partner bids a NTO, while RHO follows with two clubs. You gamble out a four heart bid. It goes down one—barely—when partner holds a mere six count, but the opponents are gin for five clubs, win ten imps. Here's another interesting hand from a matchpoint session: ♠ QJxx ♥ Qxxx ♦ -- ♣ QJxxx. Your RHO opens one diamond; you bid a NTO. Your LHO doubles, and partner leaps to five clubs! What does partner have? You pass, happy for now until your LHO chimes in with five hearts, while partner and RHO pass it around to you. What does partner have? Well, work it out; with any six-card suit, partner should bid three clubs; with a little shape and a good six-card suit that would constitute a four-club bid. So partner must have seven clubs, and it seems likely partner has one or fewer hearts. Since partner couldn't hammer five hearts, you're going to have to follow the LTT and bid six clubs with a twelve-card fit. Score it up. Partner held ♠ Kxx ♥ -- ♦ Jxx ♣ AKTxxxx, the kind of hand you would expect. It's unlikely standard bidders could possibly draw these inferences from such a short auction and find a way to preempt the opponents out of their cheap six diamond save.

### **Responding to a NTO—contested auction**

- 1) The opponents double. We play a runout system that helps us find our eight-card fits. Over the double, a direct suit bid by advancer promises a five-card suit; a redouble shows exactly four cards in the highest unbid suit. A pass denies either of the above, but advancer could still have a lower four-card suit. After advancer's pass, a redouble by overcaller shows possession of a five-card or longer suit. Advancer then responds in the lowest suit that would be reasonable to play in opposite a five-card suit. If overcaller doesn't redouble, bidding a suit starts a runout looking for 4-4 fits.<sup>5</sup>
- 2) The opponents bid a new suit or raise opener's suit. A double is responsive style showing at least one of the unbid suits—usually the other major—but not promising both. Two notrump in these sequences is minors, or the unbid suits with a weaker hand. It's hard to imagine a hand where bidding 2NT as natural would be right. Bidding a new suit is nonforcing and usually lead directing. While cue bidding then, bidding a new suit shows a good hand.

There will be times when a certain hand will force you to bid a NTO with extra values and the wrong shape to make a power double (PD). The PD tends to show a doubleton or greater length in opener's suit because responder will more often convert a PD for penalties. So, for example, if holding ♠ AJT9 ♥ AQTx ♦ -- ♣ KQxxx, and your RHO opened one diamond, bid NTO. Even though you hold considerable extra values, a double on your second turn would communicate these greater values.

### **The power double—option one**

This bid is the easiest to understand and the simplest to use. Essentially, it shows a good 15/16+ HCP that tends to be balanced like a strong no trump overcall but doesn't guarantee a stopper. Certain hands have been eliminated from the PD as alluded to above and come up as either an intermediate jump overcall or some of the strong two-suited bids.

Responding to the PD is very similar to a standard takeout double except that opener always has a good hand, which makes bidding easier for responder. Free bids tend to limit hands in that they contain less-than-invitational values; any jump would show invitational values as in standard, although we invite more frequently with distributional hands. A cue bid is forcing. Both responder and the partners follow up with natural bids allowing room to find the best spot. We play South African transfers: a transfer to four of a major by bidding the corresponding minor,  $\clubsuit \Rightarrow \heartsuit$  &  $\diamondsuit \Rightarrow \spadesuit$ , and this allows the partner to super-accept by bidding the step in between. The ranges for responding in notrump are slightly adjusted as compared to standard: 1 NT = a good 4 to a bad 7, 2 NT = a good 7 to a bad 9, 3 NT = 10–14, etc. This works out well because many times, we right-side the notrump, forcing the strong hand to be on lead, resulting in an overtrick. Notice that we also avoid the danger of overcalling a notrump and getting doubled off for penalties.

A definite advantage to the PD comes from the ability to penalize the opponents at a low level, especially if we're white and they're red. For example, if holding  $\spadesuit$  Kxx  $\heartsuit$  Axx  $\diamondsuit$  QJ9x  $\clubsuit$  xxx and partner made a PD over LHO's one diamond opening, we would float the double. We'll make 3NT, but LHO won't enjoy playing this one out of his hand. Floating the double is probably right on two types of hands. The type of hand given in the example that's all primed, balanced with a couple of trump tricks or a hand with just LHO's suit and no side suit precluding your side from having a big fit. These aggressive passes have been successful; a further benefit develops from passing these doubles. If opener runs from the double, it's a reasonable possibility that their bid was psychic and partner would now play any of your bids in that suit as natural. It becomes very difficult for the opponents to dink around as we can draw so many more inferences from an auction than in standard.

### **The power double—option two**

Another alternative system for the power double (PD) is to treat it as if your partner opened a strong one notrump with 15–17 HCP. Now you play the PD exactly as you did with your strong notrump system with all transfers on. However, is it best now not to play four-way transfers? But Texas transfer bids and Lebensohl (or Transfer Lebensohl) are on.

### **The two-level overcalls**

The TLO is kind of a tweener bid. Sometimes it fits right into our system, while other times it resembles more closely a standard TLO. If an intermediate overcall is available, then a TLO is either a more or less standard overcall—with only a five-card suit—or it is a preemptive bid.<sup>6</sup> If there's no intermediate available, then it's more difficult to tell exactly what the overcaller has—especially when the hand appears to be inappropriate for a PD or other action—which could be anywhere from a preempt to an OK intermediate.

The best way to respond to this bid is to treat the TLO as a standard overcall, but try not to hang partner. Maybe have a little extra for a natural 2NT and try not to raise on a bad hand with honor doubleton for support. Two-level bids in a new suit aren't forcing, which is different from standard, but partner will strive to raise you with a good hand and support. In competition, we play that a double or a redouble by advancer shows a good raise to three of partner's suit while



the direct raise is merely blocking, not guaranteeing values. A cue bid in these sequences just promises a good hand either in support of partner or in another suit.

### **The Roman jump overcall**

The two cheapest jump overcalls over a one-level bid by opener show the suit bid and the higher touching suit with generally 6–15 HCP. There will always be at least nine cards in the two suits. If there are only nine cards, the lower ranking will always have five cards, and the higher ranking will have four. The bids are as follows with minimum holdings and tendencies:

- 2♦/1♣: five diamonds and often four hearts
- 2♥/1♣: five hearts and often four spades
- 2♥/1♦: five hearts and often four spades
- 2♠/1♦: five clubs and four spades; 5-5 if vul
- 2♠/1♥: five clubs and four spades; 5-5 if vul
- 3♣/1♥: five clubs and four diamonds; often 5-5
- 3♣/1♠: five clubs and four diamonds; often 5-5
- 3♦/1♠: five diamonds and hearts; often 5-5

The point ranges and limitations are very sensitive to relative vulnerability. Nonvulnerable vs. vulnerable opponents, 2♥/1♣ with ♠ Jxxxx ♥ Txxxx ♦ x ♣ --, would be acceptable. Vulnerable vs. nonvulnerable opponents, 2♥/1♣ with ♠ KJxx ♥ AJxxx ♦ Qx ♣ KQ, would be reasonable, as opposed to a double, especially opposite a passed partner. One hand that you will never have is 4-5-3-1 shape with shortness in opener's suit because that is a NTO.

### **Responding to a RJOC—uncontested auction**

- 1) Cue bid shows the best possible hand; either interested in one of overcaller's suits or the fourth suit. Responding in the cheapest possible fashion shows the worst hand by overcaller. Certain responses are logical. For example, if the auction proceeded 1♦ - 2♥ - P - 3♦; P -?, then a 3♥ response shows any minimum, 3♠ shows a 5-5 relative minimum, 3NT shows relative extras with a diamond stopper (probably 4-5-3-1 shape), 4♣/♦ both show relative maximums with shortness in that suit, and 4♥ shows six hearts and four spades with a little extra.
- 2) 2NT response promises at least invitational values, and leaves more room to investigate. It also tends to show interest in the higher-ranking suit. Again, follow the maxim that the cheaper the response, the worse the hand overcaller has. Jumps are still like in the cue bid above, showing shortness and extras.<sup>7</sup>
- 3) Any raise of either the higher-ranking or the lower-ranking suit is blocking whether a single or double raise. A double jump of the higher-ranking suit is mildly invitational red v. white.
- 4) Bidding the fourth suit as a nonjump is non-forward going but a single jump in the fourth suit would be a splinter while a game bid in the fourth suit would be to play. This can be a little confusing but doesn't come up very often.

### **Responding to a RJOC—contested auction**

- 1) If the opponents double, redouble is equivalent to a cue bid above. Pass is to play. Any other bid is essentially as above.
- 2) If the opponents raise or bid the fourth suit, a double replaces the cue bid. A double at a very high level just shows values. Any raises of the higher-ranking suit aren't necessarily invitational, but remember advancer is under pressure. We would probably reraise to game with a maximum.

We have auctions where responder quickly leaps to game following a RJOC. What frequently happens on these hands is that no one knows who can make what, nor do the opponents have the courage to double us, fearing that it will be a lucky make. Many times we go down two, maybe even vulnerable. Even so, most times the opponents have a game in a side suit and can't find it because responder is forced to pass on certain hands over a RJOC, while opener can't take action at the four- or five-level. We thus have an effective tool for finding good sacrifices; sometimes even good sacrifices versus their part scores. Try to utilize this preemption whenever possible.

### **The two-suited cue bid (QB)**

This bid shows the two suits left out by the RJOC, or the suits above and below the cue bid suit. The only difference between the QB and the RJOC is that the upper range to the QB remains unlimited. Here's a list of the suits shown:

- 2♣/1♣: five diamonds and four spades
- 2♦/1♦: five hearts and four hearts
- 2♥/1♥: five diamonds and four spades
- 2♠/1♠: five clubs and four hearts; often 5-5

The responses for these are exactly the same as for the RJOC, but overcaller here has to remember his hand is unlimited unlike the RJOC. If advancer makes any forward going motion, make sure you keep bidding with a rock crusher.

### **The Two Notrump Overcall**

The 2NT bid shows a strong two-suited hand. One suit is always known, which is the nontouching suit; over one club it's hearts, and over one diamond it's spades, and vice versa. What do we mean by strong? A hand that has fewer than four and a half AKQ losers, according to the Losing Trick Count, LTC.<sup>8</sup> Here's an example 2NT bid over a one heart opening: ♠ A ♥ x ♦ AK9x ♣ KQT9xxx. This is a pretty good three-loser hand; the hand has a loser in every suit outside of spades. Slams would be a pretty good bargain opposite an ace and queen fourth or fifth in either minor. As it turned out, we were in slam opposite the ace of hearts, JTxx of diamonds and a stiff club, which worked when the diamond hook was on through the opening bidder. Although the 2NT can be off shape as in the example, the normal would be 5-5 or a good 6-4, like ♠ x ♥ QJTxx ♦ AKQxxx ♣ x. The advantage we have comes from quickly describing our hand, allowing advancer to make a good decision even with a modicum of values. It's never this easy in standard.



**Responding to 2NT—uncontested auction**

- 1) Bid of known suit is to play with a very weak hand.
- 2) Bidding the cheapest noncue bid suit also shows a weak hand looking to play in the back suit.
- 3) Bypassing the cheaper noncue bid suit implies an OK hand for the higher suit and a tolerance to play in the anchor suit, but essentially it's still weak.
- 4) Cue bid asks for further description; tends to be a good invitation or better. Doesn't promise more than one trick, since 2NT has four and a half losers or fewer.
- 5) Jump in known suit either to play in game or invitational if not already game.
- 6) Jump in unknown suit or opener's suit is a splinter for overcaller's known suit.

**Responding to 2NT—contested auction**

- 1) If the opponents bid a suit:
  - a) Bid of anchor suit is to play—weak.
  - b) Double is the same as cue bid if anchor suit could be bid at three-level. Value showing if anchor suit cannot be bid at three-level, and tends to deny fit for anchor suit.
- 2) If the opponents double:
  - a) Bidding anchor suit is to play; redouble is the same as cue bid above.
  - b) Pass forces a redouble or bid of second suit if lower than anchor.

These auctions come up quite infrequently, but are awesome when they do. Just be familiar with the general process involved and go from there. When these auctions come up, remember to look at the potential cover cards in your hand because many of these positional games and slams roll home as the points have already been located.

**The intermediate jump overcall**

Bids at the three-level when higher than the two cheapest jump shifts show a single-suited hand with the values to bid to the three-level in competition. The hands generally range from 12 HCP and a seven-card suit to a bad 17 HCP with a six-card suit.<sup>9</sup> Suit quality is generally about a one loser maximum. The available bids are 3♦-3♥-3♠/1♣, 3♣-3♥-3♠/1♦, 3♦-3♠/3♥ and 3♥/1♠. Treat with respect to vulnerability. In a major, one top trick and a fit by responder is usually sufficient to bid game vulnerable vs. nonvulnerable, but nonvulnerable vs. vulnerable even one and a half tricks with a fit would probably be insufficient (overcaller has a Namyats bid available showing eight to eight and a half tricks). All game bids are to play, and four-level bids below game are usually slam tries for overcaller's suit.

**Miscellany****Namyats**

Bids at the four-level are Namyats style showing eight to eight and a half playing tricks. Bid four of the corresponding minor to show the strong hand while bidding four of the major shows the

more preemptive hand:  $4\clubsuit \Rightarrow 4\heartsuit$  and  $4\diamondsuit \Rightarrow 4\spadesuit$ . Over  $1\heartsuit$  and  $1\spadesuit$ ,  $4\clubsuit$  and  $4\diamondsuit$  are normal four minor preempts.

Responding to Namyats

- 1) Accepting the transfer denies interest in slam.
- 2) Bidding the step in between shows slam interest
- 3) Bidding a new suit asks for a control in bid suit;  $4NT = RKC$

Two spade jump over one club

This is the only existing jump preempt available below the four-level; treat this as you would in standard. A one spade overcall of one club thus tends to deny the preemptive style hand.

Three-level jump cue bid

One of the easiest bids in the system asks advancer for a stopper in the bid suit and tends to show a long minor with a couple of outside cards.

### **Alerts in the overcall structure**

Clearly, many calls in the structure are alertable, as they differ greatly from standard practices, such as a NTO. An alert “problem” materializes from our natural overcalls. Even though they are natural, they still diverge from standard whether you happen to hold an unusual hand systemic for us. We believe it’s only fair to alert these calls; generally, we are only alerting the opponents to the negative inferences from the call. This unfortunately elicits confusion. The best way to avoid this is to try and prealert the opponents to our unusual methods. When the opponents ask for explanation, give them just a general understanding of the bid while letting them know there’s more information available if they are interested.

Putting it all together

The hardest thing to remember at first is to bid with a “bad” hand. You must be relentless. Partner expects this from you and will definitely blame you for not bidding or misbidding a hand.<sup>10</sup> Other keys, responder normally maintains control of the auction, which means getting in and out after having bid the limit of the partnership’s offensive values without leaving any burn marks around partner’s neck! Something to be aware of is balancing—especially over a one of minor opening—because partner would have already prebalanced by overcalling. Pay attention to vulnerability. Down two undoubled is a great score nonvulnerable at match points but vulnerable; it’s definitely bad news.

We aim at certain strategic targets when playing against standard bidders using five-card majors. If the opponents open one of a minor in standard, we want to use whatever means we can to preempt the auction, making it difficult for them to locate their fits. For example, utilizing the preemptiveness of the intermediate jump overcalls, the RJOC are also very preemptive as is bidding a NTO and having advancer preempt at the three-level. Whenever you eat up a level of

bidding, the opponents will be forced to guess at a final contract. It's been our experience that they guess wrong.

The basis for our system is that we trade off ease in handling a few relatively infrequent strong hands to increase our use of lighter and more frequent hands. We, furthermore, try to increase our percentage of success with these more common hands. We use specific description to reduce the strength necessary to compete successfully in an auction. The trade-off is that less strength is required when less time is needed in the auction to find your proper position. You may be weaker, but if your exposure to danger is shorter, you do not need as much raw power to be relatively secure.

### **Glossary for the overcall system**

Advancer: the fourth person at the table who happens to be the partner of an overcaller.  
Balancing: any time someone is in the pass-out seat and has to decide to take action.

Cover cards: a corollary of the Losing Trick Count that says to evaluate the number of losers you can reasonably cover in partner's hand with your cards in conjunction with the LTC (not always easy to do).

Flower bids: bids that show a suit in addition to a fit for partner; in other words, fit showing.

Intermediate jump overcall: single-suited hand with the values to bid to the three-level in competition characterized by a good suit with generally about a six-loser hand.

Jacoby raise: a conventional raise showing a forcing hand with four- or more card trump support for partner asking for greater description.

Law of total tricks: a bidding theory that attempts to explain how many tricks are available to be taken on any given hand depending on the number of available trumps. For general purposes, assume that you can compete to an equal level to the number of trumps held between two hands.

Lebensohl: a conventional understanding that characterizes the use of a notrump bid as a puppet rather than natural to delineate certain hand strengths.

Losing Trick Count: a hand evaluation theory or formula that states when a trump fit has been located to add the number of losers of your hand and your partner's hand together and subtract that number from twenty-four to find the number of tricks available ( $[\text{your losers} + \text{partner's losers}] - 24 = \text{number of tricks}$ ).

Mini-splinter: a bid showing shortness in a suit with support for partner that gives your hand limit raise values.

Namyats: a conventional bid showing a major suit preempt with about eight to eight and a half tricks made by bidding four of corresponding minor, while a direct bid shows less than that.

Notrump for takeout: a conventional call that shows a three-suited takeout at the one-level rather than making a takeout double.

Par spot: a theoretical spot to be reached on a given hand assuming that both sides take proper action and that the par spot thereby will be reached.

Power double: a defensive double that shows 15+ HCP and tends to be balanced like a strong notrump overcall and tends to show two or more cards of the bid suit.

Psychic bid: any bid made that is deceptive in nature and does not describe the hand actually held.

Roman jump overcall: a jump overcall that shows the suit bid and the higher touching suit.

Simple overcall: a natural overcall made at the cheapest possible level without jumping.

South African transfer: a jump transfer that allows partner to super-accept or not super-accept.

Support doubles and redoubles: a conventional bid that allows one to make a raise showing an exact number of cards, usually three while a direct raise shows four or more.

#### **Footnotes for the overcall system**

1. When your RHO opens, the frequency of high card points you will hold is as follows: 0–5 HCP => 18.18 percent, 6–8 HCP => 27.65 percent, 9–11 HCP => 28.55 percent, 12–14 HCP => 19.02 percent, 15+ HCP => 6.60 percent, 38+ HCP => 00.00 percent. Notice, the great majority are the weaker hands.
2. Support doubles and redoubles are conventional calls allowing one to show exactly three-card trump support with unlimited strength. A direct raise shows four or more trumps. The exchange of information about the number of trumps we hold eases three-level decisions.
3. Direct action has proven to be tactically superior to passing and pulling a double. Even if you run from one 5-1 to another 5-1, unless the direct seat can hammer it without knowing about the strength of their partner's hand, then the person in the pass-out seat many times is stuck and cannot take a call.
4. Cover cards is a theory expounded by George Rosenkranz and is a corollary to the law of total tricks. Cover cards cover losers in partner's hand, allowing for hands to fit better. For example, if you have AKQ opposite partner's void, you don't have any cover cards; but if you have only an A opposite partner's stiff, you have a cover card. We usually assume any fitters in partner's suits are cover cards and potentially As and Ks in side suits where its known partner probably does not have shortness.
5. This is one area where many people believe the overcall structure gets nailed when trying to run out. Sometimes we do get nailed. But the number of times we've gotten nailed here versus the number of times you get nailed balancing at the three-level is still fewer. Many times when the opponents think they have nailed us, it's because they're cold for game or slam their way.
6. Remember that there are no preempts below the four-level; it's just possible that partner has a preempt. Of course, the opponents will let you know by having a strong auction.

7. Decisions about whether to show extras depend upon vulnerability and what partner would expect at a given vulnerability.
8. Count a loser for every AKQ missing in a suit. Distribution ally count none for a void, one for a singleton, and two for any Qx doubleton or worse. Some suits have only half losers whenever a finessing position can be assumed (e.g., AQJ, AKJ, AJT, KJT, etc.). The number of losers calculated assumes that we will have an eight-card or better trump fit.
9. We have no requirements set in stone. The basic idea is to make a descriptive bid showing a single-suited hand that doesn't require very much to make game.
10. Under certain circumstances, it's acceptable to make a simple overcall instead of bidding a NTO or a two-suited bid. This only happens when you're red v. white with a suit that's more important to overcall for a lead director, and you don't want to risk going for \_\_\_\_.

**The Overcall Structure—Summary**  
**(THIS APPLIES IN THE DIRECT SEAT ONLY)**

RHO opens--> You bid:	1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
2NT	Strong two suiter (8.5+ playing tricks) Nontouching suit + another			
Double	15/16+ HCP <b>Any shape</b>			
1♦	Simple overcall 6–14 HCP five plus diamonds			
1♥	Simple overcall 6–14 HCP five plus hearts			
1♠	Simple overcall 6–14 HCP five plus spades			
1NT	1NT takeout 10–14 HCP ( <b>12–14 vul. and passed hand</b> ) three plus card support for all unbid major suits ( <b>1N over 1M promises four in other major</b> )			
2♣	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) five plus diamonds four plus spades 10+ HCP	Two-level overcall five plus clubs 11–14 HCP		
2♦	Two-suited jump overcall five plus diamonds four plus hearts 10–14 HCP	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) five plus clubs four plus hearts 10+ HCP	Two-level overcall five plus diamonds 11–14 HCP	

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

2♥	Two-suited jump overcall five plus hearts four plus spades 10–14 HCP	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) five plus diamonds four plus spades 10+ HCP	Two-level overcall five plus hearts 11–14 HCP
2♠	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP six plus spades	Two-suited jump overcall four plus spades five plus clubs 10–14 HCP	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) five plus hearts five plus clubs 10+ HCP
3♣	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP six plus clubs	Two-suited jump overcall five plus clubs five plus diamonds 10–14 HCP
3♦	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP seven plus diamonds	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP seven plus diamonds
3♥	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP seven plus hearts	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP seven plus hearts
3♠	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP seven plus spades	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Asks for stopper for 3NT
3NT	To play		

**Priority: 1. Strong two suiter; 2. Power double ; 3. Roman jump overcall; 4. Cue bid; 5. Simple overcall; 6. Two-level overcall; 7. Weak jump overcall; 8. 1NT for takeout**

### Ghestem—two-suited overcalls

Roman jump overcalls and cue bids are used to show 5-4 and 5-5 hands. Recall that we learned that Michaels cue bids and the unusual 2NT bids (UNT) were used to show 5-5 hands.

Another scheme called the Ghestem system is used to show 5-5 suits.

The Ghestem bids are defined:

Direct cue bid = highest + lowest suits

2NT = two lowest suits

3♣ = two highest suits

So we have

Opening bid: Overcall: Meaning

1♣	2♣	♠s and ♦s (highest + lowest)
1♣	2NT	♦s and ♥s (two lowest)
1♣	3♣	♠s and ♥s (two highest)
1♦	2♦	♠s and ♣s (highest + lowest)
1♦	2NT	♣s and ♥s (two lowest)
1♦	3♣	♠s and ♥s (two highest)
1♥	2♥	♠s and ♣s (highest + lowest)
1♥	2NT	♣s and ♦s (two lowest)
1♥	3♣	♠s and ♦s (two highest)
1♠	2♠	♥s and ♣s (highest + lowest)
1♠	2NT	♣s and ♦s (two lowest)
1♠	3♣	♦s and ♥s (two highest)

Now this really is not too difficult to remember. 2NT is the same as the unusual NT, so always the two lowest. That leaves the cue bid and 3♣. 3♣ is always the higher bid and it means the two highest suits. That just leaves the cue bid for what's left (the highest and lowest).

There are just six of these two-suited combinations. So playing Ghestem, we have

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ 6	♠ 6	♠ KQ942	♠ 6	♠ KQ942	♠ KQ942
♥ 95	♥ KQ942	♥ 6	♥ K8742	♥ 6	♥ K8742
♦ KQ942	♦ 95	♦ 95	♦ KQ942	♦ K8742	♦ 6
♣ K8742	♣ K8742	♣ K8742	♣ 95	♣ 95	♣ 95

Hand 1: Over an opening bid of 1♥/♠, bid 2NT. This shows the two lowest.

Hand 2: Over an opening bid of 1♦, bid 2NT. This shows the two lowest.  
Over an opening bid of 1♠, bid 2♠. This shows the highest and lowest.

Hand 3: Over an opening bid of 1♦, bid 2♦. This shows the highest and lowest.  
Over an opening bid of 1♥, bid 2♥. This shows the highest and lowest.

Hand 4: Over an opening bid of 1♣, bid 2NT. This shows the two lowest.  
Over an opening bid of 1♠, bid 3♣. This shows the two highest.

Hand 5: Over an opening bid of 1♣, bid 2♣. This shows the highest and lowest.

Over an opening bid of 1♥, bid 3♣. This shows the two highest.

Hand 6: Over an opening bid of 1♣/♦, bid 3♣. This shows the two highest.

Hand 7 Now Ghestem is basically preemptive. But most people play that; it may also be very strong. So with this hand, we bid the 2NT over a 1♦ opening and we bid 2♠ over a 1♠ opening.  
But after partner's response, we then make a forcing bid or bid game.

♠ 6  
♥ KQ942  
♦ A  
♣ AKQ642

Hand 8 But hand 8 is different; it is neither weak nor very strong. So with intermediate hands like this, we simply overcall.

♠ 6  
♥ KQ942  
♦ A5  
♣ AQ642

There are a couple of drawbacks with using Ghestem:

- 1- You lose 3♣ as a weak jump overcall or whatever it normally means in your system.
- 2- Sometimes you have to bid higher than you would have using UNT/Michaels. For example, with hand 6, we bid 3♣; but playing Michaels, it would be a cue bid of two of the minor, and so we are a level lower using Michaels.

## Notrump natural to takeout

Playing the 2/1 game force system, the notrump overcall bid is most often either 15–17 or 15–18 over a one-level bid with a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Making this bid, following the ACBL convention chart, it has to be neither announced nor alerted. Note some partnerships do not require a stopper and it need not be announced, but does need to be explained if asked whether you require a stopper.

The strong notrump bid usually deters the opponents from bidding; however, suppose you make a takeout double. To make a takeout double, you need support for all of the unbid suits, ideally four-card support, especially in the unbid major suit(s). You also need at least the strength of an opening bid (12+ starting points). Another option is to reverse the takeout double and the 1NT overcall bids and change their values. What does this mean?



Now a double of the bid suit becomes a power double with 16+ HCP with or without a stopper in the opponent's bid suit, *the power double does not require an alert* and is treated as if your partner bid 1NT strong (15–17). Over the power double, all systems are on over a redouble or 2♣; as if partner opened 1NT in the first seat.

The bid of 1NT\* becomes the takeout bid with 10–15 HCP with or without a stopper in the opponents bid suit, and at least three cards in the unbid suits. Now the 1NT\* bid *must* be alerted. If partner does not bid a five-card suit, but 1NT, it shows a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Without a five-card suit, bid four-card suits up the line.

Why use this practice? It is preemptive and often keeps the opponents out of the auction; they must make two-level bids. You must discuss this practice with your partner!

Suppose the bidding goes 1♣/1♦/1♥/1♠ - pass- pass -1NT; most play this as a balancing 1NT bid with 10–14 HCP with systems *off*; however, some play systems on. I recommend again playing it as a takeout bid (10–15 HCP), which needs not to be alerted, and that a double is again a power double, showing 16+ HCP; again not alerted.

Suppose the bidding goes 1x-1y by the opponents. Then a double shows 4-4 in the unbid suits and an opening hand. The bid of 1NT\* shows a 5-5 hand and weak (sandwich notrump) and the bid of 2NT\* becomes a 5-5 power double sandwich notrump bid and must be alerted. Note some play the bid as natural with 15–17 HCP, again no alert needed. A suit bid usually shows six-card suit. A cue bid of the x or y bid suit shows a 5-4 hand in the unbid suits and 13+ points (a Hess or off-shape cue bid). For example, over the sequence 1♣ - 1♦, the cue bid of higher-ranking 2♦ bids shows 5-4 in spades and hearts, and the cue bid of the lower-ranking suit shows 5-4 hands in hearts and spades. No alert required.

If the bidding goes 1♣ - 1NT or 1♦ - 1NT by the opponents, a cue bid (2♣/2♦) shows the majors 4-4 or 5-5 and a double shows the two lower unbid suits; over 1♣ a double shows club and diamonds, and over 1♦ it shows clubs and hearts. Otherwise, bid your 5/6 single-suited hand. Again, an alert required, but must explain fully if asked. You must almost never pass these bids, since the HCP are usually divided 20-20, compete to the two-level.

I have said that the NT overcall is 10–15 HCP with three cards in the unbid suits. If you need more structure, some play the Raptor convention (10/11–15), popular in Poland and Sweden in the 1980s and rediscovered by Ron Sutherland and his son who published it in a Toronto magazine in 1993 as “*Wraparound Toronto*” style, or Raptor. It is used in the direct or sandwich positions, but not in the balancing seat.

**Definitions:** **q** = opener's minor **m** = raptor's known minor **Q** = opener's major **M** = raptor's known major

1♣/1♦ 1NT: exactly four cards in either major, and five to six cards in the unbid minor

Responses

Pass To play  
 2m Sign-off, common with a doubleton  
 2q Asks for the major; *may be weak*, but interest in game  
 2♥ Natural, nonforcing (may raise with four)  
 2♠ Natural, nonforcing (may raise with four)  
 2NT Limit raise or better in known minor  
  
 3m Refusal-sign-off  
 3q Acceptance. Help (Qx, Jxx, or better in opener's)  
 3♥/3♠ Major 4-3, acceptance, no help in minor  
 3NT Natural acceptance, shortness in minor  
  
 3m Preemptive raise  
 3q Splinter  
 3♥/3♠ Preemptive  
 3NT All game bids are to play

1♥/1♠ 1NT: exactly four cards in the un bid major, and five to six cards in either minor

Responses

Pass To play  
 2♣ Pass or correct, subsequent suit bid is to play  
 2♦ Natural, nonforcing  
 2Q Bid your minor, at least invitational  
 2NT Limit raise or better in known minor  
  
 3♣/3♦ Minimal, natural  
 2NT Maximal and stopper in opener's major  
 Other Maximal  
  
 2M To play  
 2NT Limit raise or better for raptor's known major  
 3♣/3♦ Preemptive  
 3Q Splinter in support of M  
 3M Preemptive  
 3NT All game bids are to play

Sandwich                      1 x – P- 1y – 1 NT: exactly four cards in the higher unbid suit and five to six cards in the lower suit

Responses

Pass                              To play  
 2x                                Limit raise or better in the lower suit  
 2y                                Limit raise or better in the higher suit  
 2 Other                        To play  
 2NT                              Natural, invitational  
 3x/3y                          Splinter, trump suit *to be determined*  
 3 Other                        Preemptive  
 3NT                              All game bids are to play

Competition

1 NT – X                      XX business  
                                     Pass asks for unknown suit: XX = lower, 2♣ = higher  
                                     Advancer places the contract  
                                     2♣/2♦ To play  
                                     Other To play

1 NT- bid                      X = takeout through 4♦  
                                     2NT/Q = Natural/Q is limit raise+

Later                            X = Penalty when raptor's suits are known

With a NT hand              X 1-level bids with 16+ and systems on

## CHAPTER 8

### CONVENTIONAL DOUBLES

#### Support double and redouble

Support doubles, invented by Eric Rodwell in 1974, are used when the opponents overcall after they have bid a suit. For examples: the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♥ - 2♣ (overcall) – double\*. The double is not for penalty; it shows three-card supports (support double) for hearts. A bid of 2♥ shows four-card supports. The convention is usually played through 2♥ or 2♠. If instead of bidding two clubs, one doubles, then the double is replaced by a redouble to show three-card supports for hearts. Support doubles and redoubles must be alerted. The support double says nothing at all about the strength of your hand. It says, “I have three-card support,” for the bid major.

Support doubles are unusually only played for the majors; however, some play them for all suits. If you want to play support doubles over three-level bids, they show three-card support and extra values.

If the auction goes 1♣ - pass - 1♦ - 1♥ - and opener has a four-card spade suit, he should not use the support double with three hearts, but instead show the spade suit. If now the RHO bids 1NT instead of a suit, the double would be for penalty. Some examples follow.

1♦ - Pass - 1♥ - 1♠ (overcall) – double\*

The double shows three-card supports for hearts

1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦ (overcall) – 2♥

Shows four-card supports for hearts.

1♥ - pass - 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♥

Shows six plus hearts and denies spade support (less than three).

Some partnerships playing 2/1 do not like support doubles, since it precludes making a penalty double of the overcall. Because penalty is not as likely at the two-level, this is not a problem for most players.

For more information on support doubles, read the article by Eric Rodwell on the website: [www.bridgetopics.com](http://www.bridgetopics.com).

## Responsive doubles - Opponents Bid And Raise (OBAR)

A double used for takeout after partner has made a takeout double or a simple suit (not NT) overcall, and RHO has raised the suit bid by opener.

Example (1) 1♦/♣ - double (takeout) - 2♦/♣ - doubles (responsive)

Example (2) 1♦/♣ - double (takeout) - 3♦/♣ - double (responsive)

In this auction, you should be 4-4 in the majors and you are asking partner to pick a major. To use the responsive double, you should have 6–9 starting points at the two-level and 10+ at the three-level.

Example (3) 1♥ - double (takeout for spades) - 2♥ - double (responsive)

Example (4) 1♠ - double (takeout for hearts) - 2♠ - double (responsive)

In (3), you must bid spades if you have four; if not, you make the responsive double, which denies four spades. Partner next bids his five-card suit, if he has none; he bids 2NT, asking you to bid your four-card suits up the line. In (4), you must bid spades, if not double, and partner will bid his five-card suit or bid 2NT again, asking you to bid your four-card suits up the line.

If the bidding were to go

Example 1♣ - double - 1♥ - double

The second double is not responsive but shows hearts (four plus cards).

Responsive doubles are usually played through the same level as negative doubles; most partnerships use 3♠.

What if the bidding goes

Example 1♦ - 1NT - 2♦ - double

You need an agreement for this double; it is either penalty or transfer. Playing systems on over the notrump bid, it would be a transfer to hearts. If systems are off, it is probably for penalty. Few play the double for takeout (unlikely).

What if partner overcalls? The bidding goes

Example 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♣ - double

This is also a *responsive double*, used by many to show the other two unbid suits. If this is your agreement, you may not play Snapdragon or Rosenkrantz doubles.

## **Maximal support double**

A double of a three-level bid that asks partner to bid game.

Example: 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ - double (maximal double). The double asks partner to bid 3♠ with a minimum and 4♠ with a maximum. If you merely compete by bidding 3♠, partner may take the bid as only competitive.

## **Snapdragon and Rosenkranz doubles**

If partner has overcalled a minor and all suits have been bid, the snapdragon double shows three-card support for the minor and a five-card major.

Example: 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - double\*

This is a snapdragon double (alert) that shows three-card support for diamonds and a five-card spade suit.

Alternatively, suppose partner overcalled a major:

Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♣ - double\*

This is a Rosenkranz double (alert), which is a spade raise promising an ace, king, or queen (some only use it to show an ace or king). The bid of two spades would deny a top honor. Note: If you use this type of double, you must give up the responsive double.

In the above, the bidding could also go

Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - double – redouble\*

This is also Rosenkranz (alert), showing three-card supports with an honor (A, K, or some promise a Q). Because the goal is to get to major suit contract, I recommend that Snapdragon doubles be played over a minor overcall and that Rosenkranz doubles/redoubles be played over major suit overcalls.

## **Lead directing doubles**

A lead directing double is used when the opponents make an artificial bid. For example, if the opponents Stayman after the bid of 1NT, a double of Stayman asks partner to lead a club. To make the double, you must hold either Ax or Kx. They may also be used over transfers, any artificial bid, and Splinter bids.

## Fisher double

Invented by Dr. John W. Fisher, the Fisher double is used when opening 1NT or 2NT. The double of the final notrump contract at any level asks for a lead in a minor suit, *clubs* if the 2♣ Stayman convention was *not* used, and diamonds if Stayman was used but it was not doubled. A final note: some partnerships use the convention asking for a diamond lead, no matter if clubs were bid or not. Discuss this bid with your partner!

## Lightner slam double

This convention was designed by Theodore Lightner and asks the partner of the opening leader to make a lead directing double of a slam contract.

If doubler has bid a suit, (1) partner *must not* lead the suit, (2) *do not* lead a trump, and (3) assume that the double is based on a void or an unexpected AK (or AQ) in a suit bid by the opponents. (Very often dummies first bid suit.)

If doubler has *not* bid a suit, (1) partner *must not* lead the unbid suit, (2) *do not* lead a trump, (3) assume that the double is based on a void or an unexpected AK (or AQ) in a suit bid by the opponents or perhaps declarers side suit (second bid suit).

If both the doubler and the doubler's partner have bid a suit, (1) partner *must not* lead the suit bid by the doubler, (2) *do not* lead a trump, (3) partner is forbidden to lead his own suit, and (4) lead the unbid suit.

Doubles of notrump slams usually ask partner to lead dummy's first bid suit or an unusual lead.

## Convention card: special doubles

On the back of the ACBL convention card, there is the section called Special Doubles.

Special Doubles		
After Overcall: Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> _____		
Negative	thru _____	
Responsive	thru _____	Maximal
Support: Dbl	thru _____	Redbl
Card-Showing	Min. Off shape	T/O

We have discussed all special doubles on the convention card except for the card-showing doubles and off-shape doubles, which we now define.

**Card-showing doubles**

If your low-level competitive doubles show values without being strictly penalty or negative in nature, check this box. For example, if partner opens 1♣, RHO bids 1♥, and you double simply to show a good hand regardless of the pattern, this would be a card-showing double.

**Minimum off-shape takeout doubles**

A takeout double of an opening bid usually shows a hand with at least opening values and shortness in the opener's suit. It also suggests support for the unbid suits. However, some players will make a takeout double on any hand with minimal opening values (12–14 HCP) even if the pattern isn't classic! For example, after RHO bid of 1♥ opening, and if you would double with the hand

♠ A5 ♥ K873 ♦ KJ52 ♣ Q98,

*check the box.*

While the box is not yet in red on the convention card, it should be—just like Walsh convention bidders should alert their bid (not required by ACBL if one holds three diamonds) in the sequence 1♣ Pass 1♦!

**SOS redouble**

Many times the opponents will double a part score suit contract at the two- or three-level for penalty. When partner redoubles the penalty double, it is called an SOS redouble. It asks partner for his best rescue bid.



## CHAPTER 9

### HOW TO INTERFERE WITH THEIR BIDDING

#### The rule of 8

When defending against notrump, interference is typically based upon a weak one- or two-suited hand using some convention like Brozel, Cappelletti, DONT, etc. The question is how weak is weak? Mel Colchamiro proposed the rule of 8, published in the *Bridge Bulletin*, October 2000.

The rule follows:

Holding a minimum of 6 starting points, deduct from the total number of cards in your two longest suits the total number of losing tricks. If the difference is two or greater, you should interfere.

If it is less than two, do not interfere.

Examples:

1) ♠ A Q 9 4 3 ♥ K 6 2 ♦ 7 4 ♣ K 8 6

You have a total of eight cards in your two longest suits. Subtracting seven losers (one in spades plus two each in the other suits) is equal to one. You must *not* interfere even with 13 starting points.

2) ♠ K 7 6 5 2 ♥ K 9 5 3 2 ♦ 8 3 ♣ 6

You have a total of ten cards in the long suits. Subtracting seven losers (two each in spades, hearts, diamonds, and one in clubs) is equal to three. You should interfere despite the weakness of your hand, only 8 starting points.

#### The rule of 2

Mel has another rule that is used in the balancing seat called the rule of 2.

It is used in the sequence 1NT-Pass-Pass-?

Should you bid or pass? You should bid only if you have two or more shortness points, regardless of vulnerability; otherwise, pass. Let's consider some hands.

♠Q84 ♥ A63 ♦9 ♣ J8642 (yes—bid two clubs)

♠A84 ♥ K963 ♦K92 ♣ K86 (no—better to defend; no shortness points)

♠10643 ♥ Q1095 ♦10 ♣ Q965 (yes—bid two clubs)

## Interference over notrump conventions

In the October 2007 issue of the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*, several experts recommended and discussed systems they play over the bid of a strong 1NT (14/15–17 HCP). Even if you have read the article (also available at [www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm](http://www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm)), you still may not have a clear picture regarding which system is “best.”

A well-known British tournament director David Stevenson has posted fifty-five notrump defenses at [http://blakjak.org.def\\_1nt01.htm](http://blakjak.org.def_1nt01.htm).

What system should you play over a weak 1NT (12–14 or 10–12, say) should your approach change playing match points vs. IMPS, and should the system change depending upon whether you are in the direct or balancing (pass-out) seat? There is no clear or best system for all situations: weak vs. strong notrump, match points vs. IMPS, direct vs. balancing seat. We consider each in turn and then recommend an approach. When considering a system to play over the bid of 1NT (weak or strong), the first question you should ask yourself is whether a double should be value showing and penalty oriented.

Clearly, over a weak NT bid, a double has to show values (15+) and be for penalty. Over weak notrumps, if you do not double, and defeat the 1NT contract by one or two tricks, you will get an inferior score at match points or IMPS. Furthermore, over a weak NT, you may easily compete at the two levels. Thus, over weak notrumps (match points or IMPS), you need a system where a double is for penalty and that is able to show the majors (80 percent of all game bids are played in a major). Finally, over the weak NT bid, it does not matter whether the declarer is in the direct or pass-out seat. Hence, it is best to bid your suit as soon as possible, especially if it is spades! A system designed with these requirements is Mohan. Like most systems designed to interfere over weak notrumps, it is based upon transfers (e.g., Weber). This allows the overcaller a second opportunity to bid, especially with a moderate to good holding.

The John Mohan system over weak NT follows:

## Mohan

<b>Double</b>	Penalty
2♣*	Shows both majors (4-4 or 5-5)
2♦*	Transfer to hearts
2♥*	Transfer to spades
2♠*	Spades and a minor
2NT*	Hearts and a minor

All three-level bids are natural, usually a six-card suit and preemptive.

What if the bid is a strong NT (14/15–17 HCP)? Again, most would agree that a double is value showing and penalty oriented. Not all agree on this. Cappelletti is unwavering in his view: “It must be penalty-oriented. On a particular hand it might not work, but in the long run it’s best. Remember that you’re ‘over’ the 1NT opener and that you get to make the opening lead.” If you agree, do not adopt any system (in the direct seat) where a double is not for penalty. Hence, you would not use, for example, DONT, Meckwell, or Brozel. Even though Larry Cohen likes DONT because it allows you to show all one- and two-suit hands without having to bid at the three-level, the double is *not* for penalty. Furthermore, the system must be able to show the majors at the two-level either directly or indirectly and one usually wants the strong hand on *lead*. If you agree with the above comments and want a system that may be played over either weak or strong notrumps (match points or IMPS) it is, in my opinion, the best system is Modified Cappelletti.

## Modified Cappelletti

Double: Any double over weak notrump is for penalty. However, over strong notrump bids, it may be used for takeout/penalty.

2♣\*: Shows a single-suited minor-suited hand or a two-suited holding in an unspecified major suit and minor suit. After a pass by the partner of the notrump bidder, the advancer bids 2♦\*; this is forcing for one round. Then the overcaller will either pass or raise with diamonds if holding stronger values or bid clubs at the three-level.

If the overcaller shows the two-suited holding after the 2♦\* bid, then the advancer can bid 2NT to return to the actual minor suit (clubs or diamonds) or pass if the major suit is preferred.

2♦\*: Shows both major suits (as in Cappelletti).

2♥\*: Shows a single-suited holding in hearts. Partner should pass after a notrump opening by an opponent.

2♠\*: Shows a single-suited holding in spades. Partner should pass after a notrump opening by an opponent.

2NT\*: Shows both minor suits (5+ in each).

What system should you adopt in the pass-out seat? Clearly, in the pass-out seat, a double for penalty is not as valuable, since the doubler is not on lead against 1NT. In the pass-out seat, you should perhaps use Modified DONT, also called Meckwell.

### **Modified DONT (Meckwell)**

**Double\*:** Shows a one-suited hand (six plus cards) or both majors

**2♣\*:** Shows clubs and a major suit (5-4 or 4-5 or longer)

**2♦\*:** Shows diamonds and a major suit (5-4 or 4-5 or longer)

**2♥:** Shows hearts (5+)

**2♠:** Shows spades (5+)

**2NT\*:** Shows both minor suits (5+ in each)

Modified Cappelletti and modified DON'T (Meckwell) are good selections for interference over notrump. There have been many methods proposed. These methods both show the majors immediately and may be used with two-suited or single-suited hands.

In both of the above conventions, 2NT\* is used to show the minors. This is sometimes modified to show an equivalent notrump hand. Discuss this option with your partner—\* = alert.

### **Hello**

A convention that is very similar to the Modified Cappelletti convention is the Helms-Lohman "Hello" convention. Here are their bids.

**Double:** Any double over weak notrump is for penalty. However, over strong notrump bids, it may be used for takeout/penalty.

**2♣\*:** Shows a single-suited holding in diamonds or a two-suited holding in an unspecified major suit and an unspecified minor suit. After a pass by the partner of the notrump bidder, the advancer can bid 2♦\*, which is forcing for one round. Then the overcaller will either pass or raise with a single suiter in diamonds if holding stronger values or bid the major suit if the holding is a two suiter.

If the overcaller shows the two-suited holding after the 2♦\* bid, then the advancer can bid 2NT to return to the actual minor suit (clubs or diamonds) or pass if the major suit is preferred.

**2♦\*:** Shows show five plus hearts

**2♥\*:** Shows both majors 5-5

2♠: Shows a single-suited holding in spades. Partner should pass after a notrump opening by an opponent.

2NT\*: Shows five plus clubs

3♣\*: Shows both minors 5-5

3♦\*: Shows both majors with a very good hand

Double\* by a passed hand shows either clubs or diamonds and hearts.

## SCUM

Another defensive convention that is similar to modified Cappelletti is SCUM, which stands for “Shape, Color, and Majors.” SCUM was invented by the American expert Bart Bramley. A full write-up is available in the March 12, 2007, issue of the ACBL *Daily Bulletin*. According to Bramley, the ambiguities of the system (double and 2♣) are coupled. Once you know one suit, you know the other.

- Double\* two suits of the same shape (i.e., ♣/♥ [the rounded suits] or ♦/♠ [the pointed suits]). Advancer is expected to bid 2♣ with club tolerance, or else 2♦.
- 2♣\* two suits of the same color (i.e., ♣/♠ or ♦/♥.) Advancer should pass or correct.
- 2♦\* The majors
- 2♥ Natural
- 2♠ Natural
- 2NT\* The minor suits

## Multi-Landy over 1NT

While the number of conventions used to interfere over notrump is many, I came across a new system developed by Martin Johnson on the website

[www.freewebs.com/bobbybridge/conventions/conventions.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/bobbybridge/conventions/conventions.htm).

While it is similar Modified Cappelletti and Meckwell, the clear advantage is that it may be played in both the direct and balancing seats. One convention for both the direct and balancing seat is attractive. The system Martin Johnson suggested follows; also included are his comment and analysis regarding systems one should use over notrump openings.

1NT (opponent) ?

- 2 ♣\* - andy (at least 5-4 or 4-5 in majors). Advancer bids 2♦ to ask opener to show longer major (over weak notrump, may be 4-4).

- 2♦\*- Multi (one suiter in a major). Advancer bids 2♠ with good spades, else 2♥.
- 2♥\*/2♠\*- five-card suit with a minor suit (usually 5-5). Advancer bids 2NT to ask for minor suit.
- 2NT\* - minors
- 3m - 6+ suit, sounds vulnerable, may be pure preempt not vulnerable

Double\* - four-card major and five-card minor, typically opening hand or better. Advancer may pass with a decent hand, otherwise bids 2♣ to ask opener to show his minor (passing with clubs, else 2♦) or 2♦ to ask for the major (will usually be 4-4 at least in majors), or 2M to play (own decent six-card suit).

Double\* - Versus a weak notrump, double is played as for penalty.

**Analysis by Martin Johnsons:** “Multi Landy seems clearly superior to Cappelletti (Hamilton). The 2♣ bid to show majors allows room to sort out the overcaller’s major, which the Capp 2♦ bid does not. The Multi 2 overcall allows advancer to determine overcaller’s suit if responder bids a major, whereas the Capp 2♣ one suited bid does not. Furthermore, the Capp 2♣ can be doubled as a Stayman response and the Multi 2♦ cannot. The Multi double showing a major with a longer minor is another hand type that Capp does not handle at all. The only other notrump defense that handles that combination is Astro (2♠ = ♥ and lower, perhaps 4-5, 2♦ = ♠ and other, often 4-5), but Astro will get you to the three-level in most cases where you belong in the minor, whereas Multi Landy does not.

“Another popular defense is DONT (Double = one suiter, 2x = that suit and a higher suit). DONT handles Astro style hands okay, but the double to show a one suiter has no preemption value, and overcaller’s suit can easily be lost. The 2♥ overcall to show the majors also leaves insufficient room to determine overcaller’s long major. More significantly, DONT has no penalty double of 1NT, which is a must versus a weak notrump.”

**Extending the Multi-Landy defense:** In the standard American auction: 1♦-pass-1NT(?), the responding hand almost invariably has length in clubs. It is therefore a reasonable idea for the sandwich bidder to use Multi-Landy in this sequence. An overcall of 2♣ can be used for major takeout, at least 5-4, a 2♦ Cue bid as a weak one suiter in a major, and a 2M overcall as either a sound overcall (opening strength or better) or as that suit with secondary clubs. Double can be a normal takeout of diamonds or something else if you wish. I don’t have much experience to assess the merits of this treatment, but the loss of a natural club overcall is certainly not a problem.

My only issue with the Multi-Landy is that a double over strong NT (14/15–17) is not for penalty. However, I believe that it is superior to DONT.

## Marvin French system

Mr. David Stevenson on his notrump site has a very nice overview of the Marvin French (bridge expert from San Diego, California) system. It is rather unique in that the system may be used to show three-, two-, or one-suited hands. The bids are

### Direct seat or balance seat over strong notrumps

Double*:	♣♦♥ or ♦♥ or ♥ (weak or strong)
2♣*	♦♥♠ or ♥♠ or strong ♠
2♦*	♥♠♣ or ♠♣ or strong ♣
2♥*	♠♣♦ or ♣♦ or strong ♦
2♠	♠
2NT*	one or two minors (weak ♣ or weak ♦)
3♣*	♣♥ (nonforcing)
3♦*	♦♠ (nonforcing)

In the four three possible suit cases, advancer chooses among the three suits, preferring a major to a minor; intervener will usually pass or correct but may raise or jump with a very strong hand. With game interest, advancer can bid two notrump to inquire.

Over intervener's two notrump, advancer will usually bid three clubs, pass or correct. If intervener then bids a forcing three of a major, he cancels the original message and announces a two suiter too strong for an initial jump to three of a minor.

If intervener's call is doubled or redoubled, a pass or a bid is to play; a redouble asks intervener to clarify. If responder bids a suit, advancer's double is negative unless it is a bid in intervener's anchor suit, a bid is to play, and a pass is noncommittal.

In the direct seat, if you want to double one notrump, you may use two spades with the meaning shown for the double and add weak spades to the list for the bid of two clubs.

## Modified Blooman

While many players of the 2/1 game force system play either DONT or Cappelletti or their modifications, a major disadvantage is that they are both geared toward two-suited hands, and if the contract is played in a suit, the notrump bidder is often *not* on lead.

Looking at hand and suit patterns, two-suited 5-5 hands occur far less frequently than one-suited hands and cards with *six* cards are three times more frequent. The 5-5 patterns occur about 3 percent of the time, while a six-card pattern occurs more than 15 percent of the time. Thus, we need a convention that shows *six* cards and has the notrump bidder (opener) on lead. One such convention is what I have called Modified Blooman. It is a modification of Blooman devised by Robert (Bob) Hoffman of Boynton Beach, Florida, United States, and Irv Bloom of West Palm Beach, Florida, and published in the *Bridge Bulletin*, March 2006, page 28.

### **Modified Blooman (direct seat)**

<b>Bid</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Double*	Relay to 2♣, then bid Cappelletti to show two-suited 5-5 hand (2♦/2♥/2♠)
2♣*	Transfer to six-card diamond suit
2♦*	Transfer to six-card heart suit
2♥*	Transfer to six-card spade suit
2♠*	Transfer to six-card club suit
2NT*	Shows the minors (usually 5-5)

If you win the contract, the notrump bidder is usually on lead; in the balancing seat, bid your six-card suit, which shows a 5-5 hand (majors/major + minor), and 2NT\* to show the minors.

### **Interference over weak/mini notrump bids**

Many play the same convention over strong or weak notrump bids by partnership agreement. However, a commonly used convention is Landy (played in both seats). Then Double\* = penalty; 2♣ is Stayman, two-level bids are natural, and 2NT\* = minors.

Consistent with Modified Blooman—I recommend a convention I have called modified Meckwell, following Blooman. With the weak range, it does not matter who is on lead.

### **Modified Meckwell (direct seat/balancing seat)**

<b>Bid</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Double*	Shows equal values—if the opponents bid 2♣, make a jump bid over their bid where 3♥/3♠ show a six-card suit and 2NT shows the minors (5-5)
2♣*	Spades or a rounded suit (hearts or clubs); advancer bids 2♦*
2♦*	Unspecified major
2♥	six-card heart suit
2♠	six-card spade suit
2NT*	Long minor, advancer bids 2♣; partner passes or corrects

### **When the opponents interfere over 1NT opening**

Lebensohl is a common convention used over weak two-bids, reverses, and interference over notrump. However, a less common convention is the Rubinsohl convention, which uses transfer bids and Lebensohl bids in a competitive auction aimed at allowing a player to show his distribution with both weak and strong hands. It is similar to the “stolen bid” convention played by many of club players. The method was introduced by Bruce Neill of Australia in an article in the *Bridge World* in 1983. The concept was based upon the article published in the same magazine by Jeff Rubens, who used the term “Rubensohl.” However, the method had been previously used in the United States by Ira Rubin, and therefore named Rubinsohl.



and not Rubensohl. Both names (Rubinsohl and Rubensohl) appear in the Bridge literature. A convention similar to the Rubensohl, used in the United States, is the Transfer Lebensohl convention.

## Lebensohl

Lebensohl is used after one opens notrump when the opponents interfere to show game forcing hands immediately. However, the downside of Lebensohl is that you must go through relay bids to find out partner's real suit, and if RHO competes, you might never know that you have a good fit. In today's game, the opponents always seem to use their "toy" to disturb your notrump, and the RHO is getting into the action more and more to re-preempt the auction. Ira Rubin and Jeff Rubens thought it was better for partner to announce his suit directly and to show strength later.

The structure of Lebensohl is, briefly,

Double is for penalty.

Two-level bid is to play.

Three-level bid is forcing to game.

Two notrump is artificial, forcing opener to bid three clubs.

An immediate cue bid by responder is Stayman (except after two clubs, double is Stayman).

A direct jump to 3NT denies a stopper.

Two notrump followed by a cue bid of the enemy suit after opener's forced club relay bid is Stayman.

Two notrump followed by three notrump, after a relay to three clubs, shows a stopper and asks opener to play in three notrump.

For example, consider the hand where opener has (♣, ♥, ♦, ♠) xxx AQxx AKxx Kx and the bidding goes 1NT-2♠-2NT-4♠ and your partner has the hand x Kxxxxx xx QTxx. You are forced to pass and miss the huge heart fit. Or you hold xxx Ax Axxx AKxx and the bidding goes 1NT-2♠-2NT-3♠ and partner holds x xxx QJTxxx Qxx and you guess that he was competing in hearts, so you pass. You missed the five diamond contract. In the first hand, it would be better to transfer to hearts, and in the second, one would want to transfer to diamonds.

To avoid these disasters, one may play Rubinsohl or Rumpelsohl that is part of the Kaplan Sheinwold bidding system.

I do not recommend either; instead, my system of choice is Transfer Lebensohl.

The major disadvantage of Lebensohl is that it results in the play of a hand from the *wrong* side, since it is a relay based system instead of a transfer based system. This is not the case for Basic Rubinsohl and Transfer Lebensohl.

## Transfer Lebensohl

A close cousin to Basic Rubensohl, and often confused with it, is Transfer Lebensohl. The conventional bids follow. The primary difference in the two systems is in the meaning of the bid of three spades. First off, all two-level bids are to play, identical to Lebensohl. However, it may also be played over weak two-bids and more as seen below.

Transfer Lebensohl over notrump and weak two-bids.

After (1) 1NT (2X)?  
(2) (2X) Dbl (P)?

(a) X = Diamonds/hearts/spades.

Double = Penalty/negative (over 2♠ or higher)

2Y to play where Y is not equal to X.

2NT: Puppet to 3♣

-> Pass /lower suit: To play

3X cue bid Stayman with stopper GF

Over X = H, 3♠ = both minors

3NT with stopper

3♣: Transfer to diamonds, INV or better\*

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better\*

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better\*

\* If transfer to opponents -> Stayman without stopper

3♠: Transfer to clubs no stopper

3NT: To play, but no stopper

4m: Leaping Michaels. 5-5 up

(X = M: 4♣ = C + oM. 4♦ = D + oM

X = D: 4♣ = C + One major. 4♦ = H + S)

4M: Unbid: NAT. with stopper

Jump Cue: Minors. Strong.

4NT: Minors. (Weak if X = M)

(b) X = Clubs

**Double = Cue bid Stayman without stopper**

2Y where Y is not equal to X: To play

2NT transfer to diamonds no stopper (weak)

-> 3♦ = Accept. 3♣ = Decline

3♣: Stayman with a stopper GF

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better

3♠: Transfer to diamonds no stopper (INV)

3NT: To play but no stopper

4m: Leaping Michaels

4M: NAT. with stopper

It may also be played in the sequence 1X – Dbl -2X?

The best system to play after an overcall of partner's 1NT bid has a long history in the *Bridge World*. For an informative discussion, one may consult the May/June 1989 issue of *Bridge Today* and the article by Alvin Roth (one of America's foremost bidding theorists) "Doctor Roth's What Do You Bid and Why?" pages 39–41. He recommends that one *not* play Lebensohl but use a transfer based system like either Transfer Lebensohl or Basic Rubinsohl.

The Basic Rubinsohl bids follow.

Over a natural 2♠ overcall

2NT = transfer to clubs

3♣ = transfer to diamonds

3♦ = transfer to hearts

3♥ (transfer into their suit) is Stayman without a stopper

3♠ is a transfer to 3NT with a stopper

3NT = natural with a stopper in the bid suit.

Over a natural 2♥ overcall

2♠ is natural and nonforcing

2NT = transfer to clubs

3♣ = transfer to diamonds

3♦ (transfer into their suit) is Stayman without a stopper

3♥ shows spades with a heart stopper

3♠ shows spades without a stopper in hearts

3NT = natural with a stopper in the bid suit

If the opponents overcall a natural minor, the treatment is as follows. Two-level bids are natural and nonforcing. With the overcall 2♦, 2NT shows clubs as usual, but 3♣ is Stayman for both majors and asks if partner has a diamond stopper. If no major or stopper, one accepts the transfer. Jumps in the majors are natural and forcing. The bids of 3♦/3♥ are transfers. But 3♠ is partnership defined most; use it to show a club bust (minor suit Stayman). A bid of 3NT shows a stopper in diamonds.

With a 2♣ (natural or not) overcall, a double is Stayman without a club stopper and two-level bids are natural and competitive. 2NT is usually defined as Stayman with a club stopper. A jump to a three-level bid is a transfer and forcing.

What if their bid shows two suits? Then transferring into their lower-ranking suit shows the next higher suit, which is not the opponents. So if their bid shows hearts and a minor, transferring into hearts must show spades.

With so many “toys” being used over 1NT, Rubensohl and Transfer Lebensohl have a distinct advantage over Lebensohl, since you know your suit early and it ignores the RHO getting into the act. In both systems, a double is not for penalty but for takeout.

## Simple Lebensohl

When playing in club games, I have noticed that most club players do not play Lebensohl, Transfer Lebensohl, Rubensohl, or Rumpelsohl; they are too complicated. What I find is that many play the very limited “Stolen Bid” convention.

The purpose of the stolen bid double is to allow Stayman and Jacoby transfer sequences to proceed as if no overcall had been made. Thus, in the sequence

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♣	Dbl

playing “stolen bids,” a double is Stayman. In this following sequence

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♦	2♥

is a transfer to spades, or if the bidding sequence is

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♥	Dbl

then double also requests a transfer to spades.

There are two very serious problems with “stolen bids” after 1NT openings.

- (1) They do not allow use of a penalty double, which is a powerful deterrent to opponents contemplating an overcall after a strong 1NT opening.
- (2) It is not always possible to make a stolen bid, especially when the overcall is artificial, as in for example with the Landy and Cappelletti defenses to no trump openers. In Cappelletti, 2♦\* shows the majors, so you can hardly want your partner to transfer into hearts with a stack of hearts behind him/her. The same is the case with Landy where now 2♣\* shows majors. Now Stayman doesn’t make a lot of sense.

Playing any more sophisticated system like Lebensohl or Transfer Lebensohl, a double of an artificial two-suited hand is for penalty. However, if the bid of 2♣\* shows an unknown single-suited hand, it remains Stayman. Other bidding sequences are more complicated, and most club players will not invest the time to learn either more fully.

If you are not going to learn a more complicated alternative and would still like to penalize them for interfering, what can you do? Give up “Stolen Bids” and play Simple Lebensohl over a strong

14–17 notrump opening. The Simple Lebensohl system of bids takes bids used in both Lebensohl and Transfer Lebensohl with simplification.

### Simple Lebensohl Bids

#### Over a Double

**Pass = no interest in competing**

Redouble\* = relay to 2♣ (unless advancer bids), then responder passes or corrects to 2♦

- 2♣ Stayman
- 2♦/2♥ Jacoby transfer to hearts and spades, respectively
- 2♠\* Transfer to clubs with a correction to diamonds
- 2NT Natural 8–9 HCP
- 3NT To play
- 4♣\* 5-5 in the majors
- 4♦/4♥ Texas transfers

Another option is to play four-way transfers, but most club members do not use this option, so I do not recommend it in Simple Lebensohl.

#### Overcall 2♣ (natural/undefined/two suited)

Double penalty

If 2♣ is natural, then 3♣\* is Stayman.

If 2♣\* is undefined, then bid your five-card suit at the two-level (transfers are off).

If 2♣\* is a known two suiter, then a cue bid of the lower-ranking known suit is Stayman, and a cue bid of the higher-ranking suit is game force.

2NT\* is a relay bid to 3♣ (Lebensohl).

3NT to play with stoppers if suits are known

- 4♣\* 5-5 in the majors
- 4♦/4♥ Texas transfers

#### Natural suit overcalls (2♦/2♥/2♠)

All doubles are for penalty.

All cheapest two-level bids are to play

Three-level bids are transfers and a transfer into their suit is Stayman without a stopper.

2NT\* is a relay bid to 3♣ (Lebensohl) over a suit bid

3NT to play with a stopper

4♣\* 5-5 in the majors

4♦/4♥ Texas transfers

### **After 2NT overcall (strong/minors)**

Double is Stayman (if strong) and 3♣\* is Stayman (if minors) and 3NT to play with stoppers in minors.

3♦ is transfer to hearts with a correction if needed to spades

3♠ is natural

3NT to play with stoppers

4♣\* show 5-5 in the majors

4♦/4♥ Texas transfers

### **Defense against transfer bids**

In duplicate bridge, transfer bids (e.g., Jacoby, Texas, and Namyats, etc.) are almost standard. How do you defend against these systems?

The following defenses against transfer bids will allow you to show two-suited hands with one call. They may be employed not only against transfers but also against any bid that shows specific suits (e.g., 2NT to show the minors). A major disadvantage of transfer bids is that they give the opponent two opportunities for action: immediate or delayed. This aid to defensive bidding accuracy should be utilized.

### **When your side has been silent**

When the transfer bid occurs before your side has bid or doubled (e.g., vs. Jacoby or Texas response to a 1NT opening, or vs. an opening preemptive transfer bid), use the following defense:

- A notrump bid asks for a preference between the lower two suits, excluding the one indicated by the transfer bid.
- A double of the transfer bid shows the higher two suits.

- A “cue bid” (in the suit indicated by the transfer bid) is top and bottom, asking for a preference between the top and bottom suits.

For instance, after a 2♦ Jacoby response to a 1NT opening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	2NT* - both minors Dbl* - spades/diamonds 2♥* - spades/clubs 2♠/3♣/3♦ - one-suited hand

The double may be made with less strength than any of the other two-suited calls. One of the suits indicated by the double is the suit bid by the opponent, so partner can pass with an unsuitable hand. This sequence has an easy mnemonic: Dbl for diamonds and the other major; cue bid for clubs and the other major. Bids over a 2♥ transfer to spades have the same mnemonic.

When given a choice of suits in which you have equal length, prefer a major to a minor, hearts to spades, and clubs to diamonds. Partner can keep this in mind when deciding whether to overcall or pass with a marginal hand.

The immediate overcall with a one-suited hand should be quite sound. With a doubtful hand, simply pass and reopen the bidding if the transfer suit gets passed:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥*	Pass	Pass	2♠/3♣/3♦

These reopening bids can be made with moderate hands, since partner is marked with some high cards when the opponents stop at the two levels.

The soundness of immediate natural overcalls applies at higher levels too:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	4♦	4♠/5♣/5♦ - sound bids 4NT* - for the minors

Remember that a direct bid of 4NT is for the minors and a balancing 4NT bid is natural. That is the general rule, and for the sake of consistency, it must be followed even at this level.

With a doubtful hand, perhaps taking a deliberate save with many playing tricks but little defense, east can pass on this round and bid next time. This policy may help partner when he has to make a double/bid/pass decision.

You may sometimes have a three-suited hand with shortness in the suit indicated by the transfer bid. In that case, pass the transfer, then double for takeout on the next round. You can do this

with a huge hand, since the transfer bid is forcing; there is no need to jump into the bidding immediately:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl* - takeout double strong 1NT

If 1NT was weak, this double is optional, just showing a strong balanced hand.

When the transfer is an opening bid that shows a preemptive bid in the next higher suit, the same principles apply. An immediate notrump overcall still shows the lower two “unbid” suits. A reopening notrump bid is therefore natural:

South	West	North	East
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl normal takeout double		
	3♠ competitive reopening bid		
	3NT natural		

South's 3♦ bid shows a preemptive type hand. The double is not a reopening action, since an immediate double would show a two-suited hand with spades and diamonds. It is true that passing 3♦ with a nine-trick notrump hand gives north a chance to make a preemptive raise in hearts, but that must be changed. There are two advantages to this approach: (1) a two-suited hand in the minors can be easily shown by an immediate 3NT bid, and (2) the general principles of countering transfer bids remain the same, with no exceptions. We consider an example.

South	West	North	East
3♣	Pass	3♦	3♥/3♠/Dbl

Believe it or not, east is actually making a reopening call. North has indicated that he would have passed a normal 3♦ opening bid, so east pretends that is just what has happened. He is no worse off than he would be with a normal preemptive 3♦ opening. This is especially true if he is short in diamonds. The hand short in the opposing suit must be quick to act, since partner probably cannot.

### Against strong Namyats

The Namyats convention uses a 4♣\* opening to show hearts and a 4♦\* opening to show spades. Even in the “strong” version, a 4♥ or 4♠, the bids are usually weak in high cards (only seven to seven and a half quick tricks), while a 4♣\* or 4♦\* opening shows a good hand (eight to eight and a half plus quick tricks) that would welcome a slam contract. The fact there is an intervening suit between the transfer bid and the indicated suit affects the usual defense against transfer bids:



- Passing and then doubling opener's major on the next round retains the same meaning: a strong three-suited hand short in opener's suit.
- Immediate overcalls in the ranking suit (i.e., the suit lying between opener the opening bid and opener's major) may be weaker than overcalls in the remaining two suits. If you don't bid now, you have to bid higher next time.
- Immediate overcalls in the remaining two suits are very sound, because you can pass and bid on the next round with a sacrifice type hand, at the same level that an immediate bid would require.
- Jump overcalls are extra strong.
- The immediate double, "cue bid" of opener's suit, and notrump bids all retain the same meaning: major/diamonds, major/clubs, and both minors, respectively:

South	West
4♣*	Dbl* – diamonds and hearts
	4♦ - diamonds, may be a stretch
	5♣* - clubs and spades
	4♠/5♣ - good hand
	4NT* – minors
	5♦/5♠ - extra strong

With a sacrifice bid of 4♠ or 5♣, west could pass and bid on the next round. The immediate overcall shows a good hand both offensively and defensively. The difference may be important if partner has to decide what to do when the opponents go to 5♥.

There are two ways to show spades and a minor: double/cue bid, or bid 4♠ and then bid the minor (if you get the chance). Choose the natural bid when spades are strong and longer than the minor, the conventional call otherwise. You are not going to run if 4♠ gets doubled, so the spades had better be pretty good. When you show the suits conventionally, partner will not take a false preference to play the major suit.

There at least two ways of showing both minors: bid 4NT immediately or on the second round. Common sense says that an immediate 4NT bid is stronger than a delayed one. The immediate bid promises a good hand, both offensively and defensively, while a delayed bid implies poor defense.

When the opening is 4♣\*, you can also show diamonds and clubs by bidding them instead of overcalling 4NT, which provides a third way of showing both minors. Show the minors this way when the clubs are not longer than the diamonds. Partner will then prefer diamonds with equal length. After a 4NT bid, he prefers clubs with equal length.

There are also three ways to get to 5♦ after a 4♣\* opening: bid 5♦ immediately; bid 4♦, then 5♦, or pass and then bid 5♦. The jump is stronger; the delayed bid (passing first) is weaker. Bidding diamonds twice (a seemingly illogical action) allows room for partner to bid 4♠, so it could be based on a good hand with some spade support.

When the opening is 4♦\*, it is the immediate major suit bid that may be a stretch:

South	West
4♦*	Dbl* – diamonds and hearts
	4♥ - may be a stretch
	4♠* - clubs and hearts
	4NT* – minors
	5♣/5♦ - sound bids
	5♥ - extra strong

West has three ways to get to 5♥: bid 5♥ immediately, obviously the strongest action; bid 5♥ on the next round (weakest); or bid 4♥, then 5♥, which is somewhere in between.

There are two ways to show hearts and a minor: double/cue bid or bid both suits. With hearts longer than the minor, one bids 4♥ and then the minor. When the two suits are of equal length or the minor is longer, double or cue bid.

There is no way left to double opener's eventual game bid for business, unless you are able to overcall in the ranking suit and then double on the next round. That is not a big deal, because doubling a strong Namyats game bid is seldom profitable and often disastrous.

### Against weak Namyats

When the opening bid of 4♣ or 4♦ shows a weak major suit preempt, we must have a way of doubling the major for business. The delayed double therefore becomes a little more optional than takeout, not necessarily a three-suited hand. Otherwise, the defense is the same as against the strong version of Namyats.

**Namyats note:** When playing strong Namyats, most people will open 4♥/4♠ directly with weak preemptive hands and long major suits. Warning, if Namyats is not played by the partnership, the “preemptive bid” may be strong! Even if you play strong Namyats, you should discuss it with your partner. For example, some partnerships play the refusal of the transfer (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦) to allow opener to play game (usually no tenace), while others use the intermediate bid to request partner to bid an ace if he has one or to sign off without an ace. For a review of bidding sequences, visit [members.shaw/convention/Namyats.htm](http://members.shaw/convention/Namyats.htm).

### Action vs. Namyats by fourth seat

When the opening has been passed by second seat, third seat will either bid four of partner's major or bid the next higher suit (as a query bid or as a “retransfer” to let opener play the hand).

- When third seat signs off in opener's suit, a double is for takeout and a 4NT bid shows both minors:

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♥	Dbl* - takeout
			4NT* - minors

Against the weak version of Namyats, the double of 4♠ is more optional than takeout, just as it would be over a normal preemptive 4♥ or 4♠ opening.

- When third seat bids the ranking suit so that opener can play the hand that is treated like a transfer bid

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♦	Dbl* - spades and diamonds
			4♥* - spades and clubs
			4NT* - minors

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♥	Dbl* - hearts and diamonds
			4♠* - hearts and clubs
			4NT* - minors

Other defensive actions are similar in meaning to those used in the second seat.

## Defense over forcing notrump

Using the 2/1 convention, after a major opening the opponents bid 1NT and announce the bid as forcing. How do you compete?

Suppose the bidding goes 1♥/1♠ - Pass - 1NT -? and you want to compete. While some may play all bids as natural, sometimes you need a way to show hands that are widely varying in strength, without misleading partner, or a two suiter. A clever way is to switch some bids around that allow one to compete in the fourth position. Using the Useful Space Principle (USP), one may employ the Vasilevsky convention.

In the above forcing 1NT sequence, you bid as

Dbl*	Transfer to clubs
2♣*	Transfer to diamonds
2♦*	Transfer to the unbid major
2 of the bid major	Good, distributional takeout "double"
2 of unbid major	Weaker takeout double, guaranteeing four of the major bid
2NT	Distributional takeout for the minors
3♣/3♦	Natural, but shows 6-4, the four being the unbid major

Let's see how it works. The bidding goes 1♥ - Pass - 1NT -?

And you hold

a) ♠Q10654 ♥A5 ♦9 ♣KJ1076

Double\* to show clubs (\* = alert). If opener passes and partner bids 2♣, you next bid 2♠\*, showing a two-suited 5-5 hand. If you were 6-4 in clubs and spades, you would bid 3♣.

However, suppose you are 4-4 in clubs and spades. You have the hand

b) ♠AJ54 ♥7 ♦AK93 ♣A874

You now bid 2♥\*, showing a strong takeout double.

With either of the following hands:

c) ♠AJ54 ♥72 ♦Q87 ♣KJ74

d) ♠9542 ♥7 ♦KJ854 ♣Q107

You would bid 2♠\*, a weak takeout double.

When you are a passed hand, Vasilevsky no longer applies. Since intervener's hand is limited, he doesn't need two-bids.

The only disadvantage of the convention is that one may not penalize a 1NT bid; however, this does not occur that often. The advantage is that, using transfers, the calls are logical, hence easy to remember and show exactly the distribution and strength needed to compete.

### **The Useful Space Principle (USP)**

The Vasilevsky convention is based upon the Useful Space Principle developed by Jeff Rubens. The principle has formed the basis for the creation and development of many modern-day conventions; for example, Roman Key Card Blackwood with Kickback.

The definition of USP follows:

“When allocating bidding space under partnership agreements, assign it where most useful without deference to natural or traditional bridge meanings of calls.”

Let's apply the principle in some situations.

Suppose the bidding goes 1♣ - Dbl - 1♥ -?.

What do you bid if you are weak and have four spades? Bid 2♥, and with 10+ points and five spades, bid 2♠.

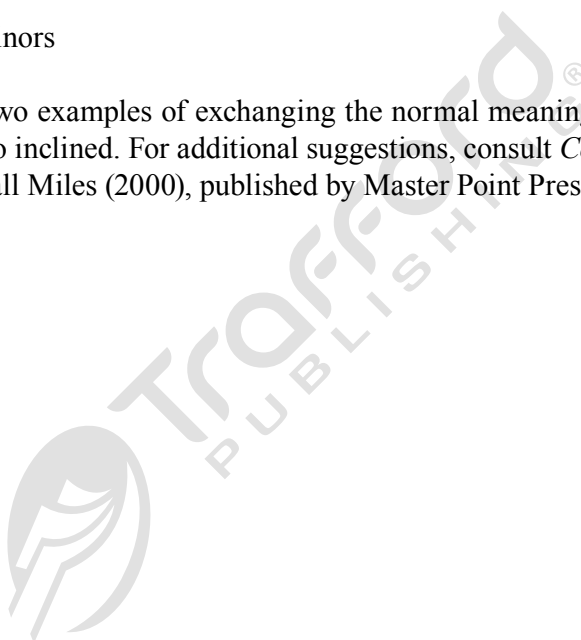
Recall that Leaping Michaels is a reasonable way to show a two-suited hand over weak level bids. Using the USP, suppose the bidding goes

2♠ - Pass - 3♠ - (?)

How do you now compete? Consider the following bids.

- 4♣\* shows clubs and hearts
- 4♦\* shows diamonds and hearts
- 4♠\* shows game in a long minor and asks partner to bid 5♣, which may be corrected, if necessary, to 5♦
- 4♥ natural
- 4NT\* shows both minors

The previous are just two examples of exchanging the normal meaning of bids; you can invent many more if you are so inclined. For additional suggestions, consult *Competitive Bidding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, by Marshall Miles (2000), published by Master Point Press.



## CHAPTER 10

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### REVIEW OF COMMON “BRIDGE RULES/LAWS”

#### Rule of 2

You should interfere over the bid of a strong 1NT in the balancing seat if you have two shortness points. Otherwise, do not interfere.

#### Rule of 7

When playing NT contracts and having only one stopper in the suit led headed by the ace, one may use the rule of 7 to decide how many times to hold up. Rule: subtract the total number of cards you and dummy hold in the suit from seven. This is the number of times you should hold up when the suit is led by the opponents. The rule is also used with suit contracts.

#### Rule of 8

Provided you have at least 6 starting points, you should interfere over the strong bid of 1NT in the direct seat if the number of cards in your two longest suits minus the number of losers in your hand is two or more. Otherwise, do not interfere.

#### Rule of 9

A reopening double by opener is for takeout. Responder is expected to bid his best suit or pass for penalty with the correct hand. What is the correct hand? The rule of 9 may help one decide whether to pass for penalty or bid. To use the rule, add the level of the contract, the number of the trump, and the number of trump honors held, including the ten. If this sum is nine or more, pass the takeout double for penalty. If the number is eight or less, bid something, do not let the double stand.

## **Rule of 10**

In a competitive auction, both sides are bidding without a fit. This rule is used to double a two-level contract. Double if the number of winning tricks is eight + the number of trump winners is at least two ( $8 + 2 = 10$ ). For a three-level double, you need nine winners and only one trump winner ( $9 + 1 = 10$ ). Following this guideline, a penalty double of a one-level bid requires seven winners and three trump winners.

## **Rule of 11**

The rule of 11 is used for placing the outstanding higher cards when partner makes a fourth best lead. One subtracts the spot of the card led from eleven to determine the number of higher cards in the remaining three hands. Since the high cards in the dummy and your hand can be seen, the remaining cards are with declarer. This information is quite useful in deciding which card to play on the trick and how to play the suit if you take the trick. If the answer does not make sense, the card led may not be fourth best.

## **Rule of 10/12**

When playing third and fifth best leads, the concepts remain the same. Using fifteen as the base, subtract from fifteen the card led (third or fifth best). If partner's lead is third best, subtract spot card from twelve ( $15 - 3$ ). If partner's lead is fifth best, subtract spot card from ten ( $15 - 5$ ). If you are not sure, try both; one of the answers is likely to make more sense than the other, giving you an idea of partner's holdings.

## **Rule of 15**

A rule used for opening the bidding in the fourth seat. You should open the bidding if the number of high card points and the number of spades equals fifteen. This assumes that spades are likely to be evenly divided between the two partnerships and that a fit in spades may exist.

## **Rule of 17**

When your partner preempts with a weak major suit two-bid, you have to decide whether to compete at the three-level or bid game. To help, one may use the rule of 17. Add your high card points to the number of trump held. If this total is seventeen or more, bid game; if the total is more than ten but less than seventeen, compete to the three-level. If you are still unsure, use Ogust and bid 2NT. If the response is  $3\heartsuit$  (good hand, bad suit) or  $3\spadesuit$  (good hand, good suit), bid game, compete to only the four-level; otherwise, raise the bid to the three-level.

## Rule of 20/22

To determine whether to open a hand in the first or second seats, one often uses the rule of 20/22. If the number of high card points and the number of cards in your two longest suits add to twenty and you have two quick tricks (22), open the hand. In the third seat, one only needs one and one-half quick tricks (the rule of 21 ½). In the fourth seat, the rule of 15 is used. Some use 20; however, this does not require two quick tricks.

## Rule of 24 (Losing Trick Count)

Losing Trick Count is a method of evaluating the hand to determine the proper bidding level. The method is most effective with unbalanced hands with an eight-card or better trump fit when the two hands have different distributional patterns. The rule of 24 goes as follows.

STEP 1: Count your losers and assume seven losers in your partner's hand. Rule:  $24 - 7 - (\text{your losers}) = \text{Number of Tricks}$ . Reduce the number of tricks by six to determine the level of the bid.

STEP 2: Partner will correct the bid with fewer than seven losers.

**Note:** Only the first three cards in each suit are considered when counting losers in each suit. With three cards, only the A, K, and Q are not losers. With less than two cards, then  $AQ = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $Kx = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $KQ = 1$ ,  $K = 1$ ,  $Q = 1$ ,  $Qx = 2$  represent losers.

## Rule of 26

When opening one of a major, some partnerships play direct splinters or concealed/ambiguous splinters. In either case, a splinter bid usually shows four card support for the major suit bid and 13+ HCP (some only require three card support).

When should the opening bidder consider slam? One may apply the rule of 26.

Opener merely adds his HCP in his suits outside the known splinter suit, and if the total is 26+, you should consider slam in the major suit bid.

This rule works because once the partnership can ignore an entire suit, you can expect to make a small slam with only 26+ game points; you do not need 33+ points, which is required when you have to take into account all the suits.

## Rule of 44

When you open 2♣ (playing 2/1), should you bid 2NT or two of a major?



If you intend to bid 2NT, you should have 22–24 HCP and notrump distribution. This is not the case when you bid a major 2♥ or 2♠. What are critical are losers and quick tricks, not points! What is needed?

To open 2♣ and then the bid a major requires at least five cards in the major, no more than four losers, and a minimum of four quick tricks ( $A = 1$ ,  $K = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $KQ = 1$ ); the rule of 44.

Given these two requirements, open *two clubs*, independent of points.

Let's look at an example: You hold the hand ♠ AKQJ2 ♥ AKQ10 ♦ 76 ♣ 7. You have only 19 HCP + one length point, or 20 starting points. But you have three losers in the minors (less than four losers) and four quick tricks (two aces and two KQ combinations); using the rule of 44, open the hand 2♣.

Marty Bergen in the September 2009 issues of the *Bridge Bulletin* (page 50) also reviews this rule, but he did not name it the rule of 44.

## Rule of 64

When opening a hand that is 6-4 in the majors, show the four-card suit only if the number of HCP in the four-card suit is greater than or equal to the number of HCP in the six-card suit. If this is not the case, rebid the six-card suit and do not show the four-card suit.

## Rule of 2/3

This was reviewed in chapter 2; recall that a guide to preemptive opening bids and overcalls is that one cannot afford to set more than five hundred unless one is saving against a slam contract. One often assumes that a vulnerable partner can make two tricks, and a nonvulnerable partner three tricks. Thus, a player who opens 4♠ should have an eight-playing trick hand if vulnerable, and a seven-playing trick hand if not vulnerable.

Tricks =  $13 - \text{losers} + 3$  if nonvulnerable, and playing tricks =  $13 - \text{losers} + 2$  if vulnerable. If the number of tricks is 10, open the bidding at the four-level; if the number is 9, open the bidding at the three-level. The quantity  $13 - \text{LTC}$  is called the number of playing tricks.

## The law of total tricks

In Larry Cohen's book (1972) *To Bid or Not to Bid*, Cohen states the law of total tricks as: the *total number of tricks* available on any deal is approximately equal to the total *number of trumps*. The total number of trumps means the combined total of cards in both sides' best trump fit. For example, if north-south's best (longest) fit is a 5-4 spade fit, and east-west's best (longest) fit is a

4-4 diamond fit, then the total number of trumps would be  $9 + 8$ , or 17. Now for the rule: Never outbid the opponents at the three-level with sixteen trumps, but always outbid the opponents at the three levels with eighteen trumps. With seventeen trumps, it is usually right to outbid them on the three levels, if not vulnerable.

**Note:** With ten trumps in a major suit partnership fit, it is usually correct to bid to the four-level (due to Marty Bergen, not the law).

Let's look at the law in more detail; for example, with only sixteen trumps and both sides vulnerable, Cohen shows that it is better to let the opponents play in three hearts and for you not to bid three spades when both sides have only sixteen trumps. He calls this "chart logic." To see this more clearly, let's look at the chart, assuming nobody doubles.

### Both sides vulnerable with sixteen trumps

Contract played in three spades		Contract played in three hearts	
Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	+170	6	<b>+300</b>
9	+140	7	<b>+200</b>
8	-100	8	<b>+100</b>
7	-200	9	<b>-140</b>

From the chart, we see no matter how the trumps break, when both are vulnerable, that it is better to allow the opponents to play the contract in three hearts.

Rule: When both are vulnerable, do not compete to the three-level with only sixteen trumps.

Or given that both sides have eight trumps between them, both can be expected to make eight tricks, making either two hearts or two spades. This being the case, you must bid to the three-level in hearts; however, do not compete to the three-level in spades when both sides are vulnerable—this is the "law"!

In Larry's new book, *Following the Law*, the sequel *To Bid or Not to Bid*, he has a simple formula that may be used when both sides are *vulnerable*.

Formula:  $\sum \text{trumps} - 11 = \sum \text{bids}$

Where the symbol  $\sum$  denotes "sum of"; thus, applying the formula  $16 - 11 = 5$ . The bid of  $3\heartsuit + 2\spadesuit = 5$  so do not bid to the level of three spades.

Important note: The formula should only be used when both sides are vulnerable.

What happens when both sides are nonvulnerable? Again, we may make a chart, again assuming no doubles:

**Both sides nonvulnerable with sixteen trumps**

Contract played in three spades      Contract played in three hearts

Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	<b>+170</b>	6	+150
9	<b>+140</b>	7	+100
8	-50	8	<b>+50</b>
7	<b>-100</b>	9	-140

From the chart, we see that by competing to the three-level, when both sides are nonvulnerable, succeeds in three out of four cases. Thus, while the formula fails, we may always use chart logic and bid to the three-level when nonvulnerable and having sixteen trumps.

What if the spade bidder is vulnerable and the heart bidder is nonvulnerable? Then we have the following chart, again assuming no doubles.

**Spade (V) and hearts (NV) with sixteen trumps**

Contract played in three spades      Contract played in three hearts

Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	<b>+170</b>	6	+150
9	<b>+140</b>	7	+100
8	-50	8	<b>+50</b>
7	-200	9	<b>-140</b>

And finally, suppose the heart bidder is vulnerable and the spade bidder is not. Then we have the following chart with no doubles.

**Spade (NV) and hearts (V) with sixteen trumps**

Contract played in three spades      Contract played in three hearts

Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	+170	6	<b>+300</b>
9	+140	7	<b>+200</b>
8	-50	8	<b>+100</b>
7	<b>-100</b>	9	-140

From the charts, we have the following rule.

Rule: Never compete to the three-level when both sides are vulnerable or with unfavorable vulnerability with only sixteen trumps. However, with favorable vulnerability or both nonvulnerable, compete to the three-level playing three spades over three hearts.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

The above rules are based upon our chart analysis and bidding the majors. What if one side is bidding a major and the opponents are bidding a minor? Again, when both sides are vulnerable, we may use the simple formula. Looking at an example, suppose the opponents open the bidding 2♦ and your partner bids 2♥ followed by a bid of 3♦ by the opponents. Should you bid 3♥ with three hearts?

Applying the formula there are probably 9 (diamonds) + 8 (hearts) = 17 trumps, and  $17 - 11 = 6$ . Thus, bid 3♥ over 3♦.

However, suppose the bidding went

RHO	YOU	LHO	PARTNER
2♦ (weak)	pass	3♦	Dbl
Pass	??		

Now what do you bid? At equal vulnerability, bid your three-card major. However, if they are vulnerable and you are not, pass.

The next logical question you must ask yourself is what happens when both sides have seventeen trumps in the majors? This is more complicated. However, let's begin with a logic chart assuming no doubles.

### Both sides vulnerable with seventeen trumps

Contract played in four spades      Contract played in four hearts

Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	<b>+620</b>	7	+300
9	-100	8	<b>+200</b>
8	-200	9	<b>+100</b>
7	<b>-300</b>	10	-620

### Both sides nonvulnerable with seventeen trumps

Contract played in four spades      Contract played in four hearts

Our tricks won	Our score	Their tricks won	Our score
10	<b>+420</b>	7	+150
9	-50	8	<b>+100</b>
8	-100	9	<b>+50</b>
7	<b>-150</b>	10	-420

The charts suggest that if the opponents can win only eight or nine tricks in four hearts, we should not bid four spades, winning the same number of tricks.

Based upon ten thousand deals, the likelihood of winning ten tricks occurs about 10 percent of the time, while winning eight or nine tricks occurs almost 33 percent of the time. Hence, it is best to complete to the four-level and bid four spades over four hearts with only seventeen trumps. However, if you were to apply the formula  $17 - 11 = 6$ , it would suggest that one not compete to the four-level. You will be down at least one trick.

Rule: With seventeen trumps (vulnerable or nonvulnerable), one may sometimes complete to the four-level when bidding spades over hearts.

Rule: With seventeen trumps, never bid to the four-level of a minor over a three-level major suit bid with equal or unfavorable vulnerability.

When bidding four spades over four hearts and both sides vulnerable, the formula suggested that one *not* compete at the four-level. However, by taking into account hand shape (distribution), double fits, and poor honor combinations, one may adjust the “formula” for the law to better decide whether to bid or pass. Let’s see how it works.

- 1) For hands with poor honor combinations, subtract one trick; however, with few honor combinations, add one trick.
- 2) For a double fit in two suits, add one trick; but for a negative fit, subtract one.
- 3) For balanced (flat) hands, subtract one trick; however, for nonbalanced hands, add one trick.
- 4) For poor trump quality, subtract one trick (no A/K/Q); however, with a high honor or good intermediaries, add one trick.

Taking these factors into account, the formula becomes

Adjusted formula:  $\sum \text{trumps} - 11 + \text{positive factors} - \text{negative factors} = \sum \text{bids}$

Adding the adjustments to the formula allows one to apply it in more situations, since if the factors allow one to reach the nineteen “trumps” level, observe that  $19 - 11 = 8$ , allows each to bid to the four-level (e.g.,  $4\heartsuit$  over  $4\clubsuit/4\diamonds$ , or  $4\spadesuit$  over  $4\heartsuit$ , but not  $5\heartsuit$  over  $4\spadesuit$ ).

We now look at an example. You hold the following hand knowing the opponents hold nine hearts and both are vulnerable:

$\spadesuit J8765 \heartsuit QJ2 \diamonds J762 \clubsuit Q$

Applying the formula with no adjustment,  $18 - 11 = 7$ , you expect to be down only one, so you might bid four spades if you were to make no adjustments. However, with spades as trumps, subtract one (-1) for no high honor; for poor honor combinations outside of trump, subtract one (-1); and for the unbalanced hand, add +1.

Using the formula with adjustments, we have that  $18 - 11 - 2 + 1 = 6$ . You should not bid to the four-level even with ten trumps!

Do not apply the law without taking into account adjustments.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

We look at a second example from Larry Cohen's new book. Your partner opens 2♥ and you hold the following hands:

1) ♠K104 ♥K876 ♦QJ3 ♣QJ4

2) ♠K43 ♥KJ76 ♦QJ43 ♣54

In both situations, you have ten trumps with say eighteen total trumps,  $18 - 11 = 7$ , so do you bid 4♥ over 3♠?

Let's look at each of the hands. With hand (1), you have the king of trump (+1), but many Qs and Js in the other suits (-1), and a flat hand (-1), thus  $18 - 11 - 2 + 1 = 6$ ; do not compete to the four-level!

With hand (2), you also have the king of trump (+1), a flat hand (-1), but fewer minor honors in the other suits; thus,  $18 - 11 - 1 + 1 = 7$ , compete to the four-level.

To read more on making adjustments to the law of total tricks, read Larry Cohen's (1995) book, *Following the Law the Total Tricks Sequel*.

Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgren's (2004) *I Fought the Law of Total Trick*, published by Mikeworks, shows that hands that agree with the law diminish as the number of trumps increase. With sixteen trumps, it is right only 44.1 percent of the time; but with seventeen or eighteen trumps, the law is right only 36.0 percent of the time. They claim that it isn't the number of trumps that is important but distribution, which the law ignores. It is the partnership short-suit total (SST) that determines how well the trumps will work.

The Lawrence and Wirgren's law is estimate the short-suit total (SST) between the hands and subtract it from thirteen. With 19–21 HCP between two hands (about half the high card points); your winner's equal thirteen minus your SST. Say your side has a SST of four (a doubleton in each hand),  $13 - 4 = 9$ , you can expect to take nine tricks. Bid to the three-level. With 22–24 HCP, you have one extra trick; with 25–27 HCP, you have two extra tricks, etc.

Let's look at an example from Lawrence and Wirgren, page 151.

	♠ AKJQ10	
	♥ J9874	
	♦ 54	
	♣ 32	
♠ 765	<div style="text-align: center;">N W      E S</div>	♠ 432
♥ 32		♥ 65
♦ AKW106		♦ J987
♣ J98		♣ AKQ10
	♠ J98	
	♥ AKQ10	
	♦ 32	
	♣ 764	

In this example, both opponents have 20 HCP and both sides have nine-card trump suits. The simple law of total tricks says that there should be eighteen tricks, the sum of the total number of trumps. However, south can make nine heart tricks and west can make only eight tricks in diamonds. The simple law fails; however, applying the formula, we have those  $18 - 11 = 17$  tricks. When we apply the Lawrence and Wirgren formula, north-south has 20 HCP and SST of four (two in diamonds and two in clubs). So  $13 - 4 = 9$  tricks. East-west has the same HCP total but less distribution. Now  $13 - 5$  (two in hearts and three in spades or clubs)  $= 8$ . While the simple total trump formula fails, the formula, for this example hand, works as does the Lawrence and Wirgren's formula. Shape is the key, not the total number of trumps.

## 8 ever 9 never

When finessing for the queen, with nine cards and no information, the odds for a drop are 52.18 percent vs. 50 percent for a finesse! This is a nominal difference. In general, if the finesse is into the safe hand, even with nine cards, one would finesse, with no information from the bidding; it is better to play for the drop of the queen.

Let me explain the percentage in more detail. With AJxxx (dummy) and Kxxx (hand), plan (1) is to cash the king, and if the queen does not drop, take the finesse, and plan (2) is to cash the ace and king to drop the queen. Plan (1) wins if trumps are 3-1 with three on our left (24.87 percent), when they are 2-2 with the queen on the left (20.35 percent), and when they are 1-3 with the bare queen onside (6.22 percent), for a total of 51.22 percent. For plan (2), when the suit is 2-2 (40.70 percent) or 3-1, either way round with a bare queen (12.44 percent), for a total of 53.14 percent. I averaged these two approaches to obtain 52.18 percent or about 52 percent! It works! You say, if the queen does not drop with plan (1), each opponent follows low; do not finesse, but play for the drop. Now the probability of queen to three on the left is 47.85 percent, and queen doubleton on the right is 52.15 percent. Here the difference is  $52.15 - 47.85 = 4.30$  percent. This has a greater difference than playing for the drop,  $53.14 - 51.22 = 1.92$  percent. Thus, if no queen falls on first card, still play for the drop.

## 10 ever 11 never

A similar rule applies when finessing for the king; with eleven cards, it is again better to play for the drop; however, with ten cards, finesse. Again, the probability is small, about 52 percent vs. 50 percent. I will not bore you with the details. However, let's look at an example.

If the king is missing and you have eleven cards, only two cards are outstanding in the suit. If they split evenly (1-1), which occurs 52 percent of the time, the king will drop. A 2-0 split occurs only about 48 percent of the time. Thus, play for the drop!

While simple rules may be used for the king and the queen, what happens with the missing jack? Suppose you have Q72 and AK106 in a suit. Do you finesse or play for the drop? You have seven

hearts and the opponents have six. If they split 3-3, the jack will drop. This is referred to as the Finesse Drop Test, FDT. Simply count the outstanding cards!

## Losing Trick Count (LTC)

The Losing Trick Count (LTC) method of hand evaluation is used when you and your partner have established an adequate fit (at least 5-3) in a trump suit contract. While the original method was introduced in 1934 by Dudley Courtney in his book *The System of Expert Play*, the modern method is due to Ron Klinger with suggestions by Jeff Rubens.

The method works with both balanced and distributional hands (since it does not count twice for duplicated honors in short suits) and hence is preferred to the law of total tricks, which does not take into account short suits! Using the LTC, you are able to evaluate you and your partner's potential losers to give you third-round control of all suits and thus the number of tricks you can expect to make in your trump contract.

To use the LTC method, one considers only the top three cards in each suit. The top three cards in each suit, ace, king, or queen, are counted as winners, and all others are considered losers. Thus, LTC counts A-x-x, K-x-x, and Q-x-x as two losers. To compensate for this disparity, Jeff Rubens suggests that if you have an equal number of queens and aces, it does not matter; however, if you have more queens than aces, *add* one-half losers for each queen, and if you have more aces than queens, *subtract* one-half losers for each ace. This is called the adjusted LTC method.

Two examples follow.

Hand (a): ♠ KQ543 ♥ AKQ ♦ J72 ♣ 94 and Hand (b): ♠ 74 ♥ void ♦ 875432 ♣ 96432.

Hand (a) contains six losers (one in spades, none in hearts, three in diamonds, and two in clubs); however, there are two more queens than aces, so one adds one-half to the total for six and a half losers and 13 HCP. Hand (b) has no HCP and eight losers.

Using the adjusted LTC method, one is able to calculate the number of expected tricks your partnership should take (with a trump fit) by subtracting the number of losers you and your partner hold from twenty-four. Why twenty-four? It is the total number of losers the partnership can hold, twelve by each partner.

Using the adjusted method, the partnership should be able to take twelve tricks if there are twelve losers between the two hands ( $24 - 12 = 12$ ), eleven tricks with thirteen losers ( $24 - 13 = 11$ ), ten with fourteen and so on.

To use the LTC method, you must be able to estimate the number of losing tricks you and your partner have. Fortunately, there is a high correlation between the expected number of losing tricks and one's HCP count. It goes as follows.



**Opener:** 12–14 HCP, seven losers; 15–17 HCP, six losers; 18–20, five losers

**Responses:** 6–9 HCP, nine losers; 10–12 HCP, eight losers; 12–14 HCP, seven losers

Using these guidelines, suppose you open the bidding with 18 HCP (five losers) and your partner makes a limit raise (eight losers). You have thirteen losers between the two hands. LTC predicts that you can expect to take eleven tricks ( $24 - 13$ ). You have game but not slam.

There will not be a dramatic difference between standard point-count hand evaluation and LTC; however, it may offer an additional edge, since losers in at least one hand is known.

Let's consider a few examples where partner opens 1♥ and you hold

Hand (1): ♠ 84 ♥ A764 ♦ K6543 ♣ 92

LTC says you have two losers in each suit and adjusting for the ace-queen factor, subtracting one-half from the total, you have seven and a half losers. Adding your total to your partner's, the partnership has 14.5 losers or ( $24 - 14.5 = 9.5$ ) 9.5 tricks, almost 10. Thus, even though you have only 7 HCP, a limit raise is appropriate. (Note: With four trumps, the number of effective points is ten). Playing Bergen raises, one would bid 3♣, 7–9 HCP. All methods seem to lead to the same result. However, consider the following balanced hand:

Hand (2): ♠ J65 ♥ A764 ♦ 754 ♣ KQ8

This hand has nine losers, and since the number of queens is the same as the number of aces, no adjustment is necessary. Adding your losers to partner's ( $9 + 7 = 16$ ), and using the LTC formula ( $24 - 16 = 8$ ), you can expect only eight tricks. Hence, with 10 HCP you only bid two hearts. With standard point count methods, you may give a limit raise, or using Bergen, you may bid 3♦. Both may result in game contracts for down one, since neither take into account the balanced 3-4-3-3 distribution!

Hand (3): ♠ 6 ♥ A7643 ♦ K8642 ♣ 92

The adjusted LTC method indicates that this hand has seven losers, less one-half because you have one ace and no queens. Hence, you expect to take 10.5 tricks even if partner has a minimum opener. Bid four hearts, no interest in slam. Playing Bergen with Swiss bids, you would also bid four hearts. Using dummy points, some may bid Jacoby 2NT! This would be incorrect, since you need solid high card points for the bid.

Hand (4): ♠ 6 ♥ K643 ♦ Q932 ♣ Q954

You have seven losers and adding one-half because you have two queens and aces; adding your losers to the opener's seven, you expect to make nine and a half tricks, almost ten, or you can give a limit raise, even though you have only 7 HCP. Using Bergen raise, do not bid 3♥; you might also miss game.

Hand (5): ♠ 6 ♥ K643 ♦ AK98654 ♣ 9

This hand has one spade loser, two heart losers, one diamond loser, and one club loser, minus one-half loser (one ace and no queens); a four and half loser hand. Now partner has a seven or fewer loser hand. Thus,  $24 - 11.5 = 12.5$  expected tricks. You may have a grand slam! Hence, with your fit in hearts, you must use some form of Blackwood to investigate the possibility of slam.

Bridge is a complicated game. The adjusted LTC method allows one to investigate the potential of your combined hands and should not be ignored by duplicate players. It can be used with 2/1, Standard American, Precision, and other methods as a tool for hand evaluation. You should combine it with your method of choice to play better bridge. Reference: Ron Klinger (1998), *Modern Losing Trick Count Flipper*. Also see Klinger's Lecture on LTC at <http://members.shaw.ca/conventions/ltc.pdf>.

For an overview and discussion of many of the above rules and more, consult Mel Colchamiro's book (2007), *How You Can Play like an Expert*, by Magnus Press.

## **Rule of 210**

How many times have you heard bridge players say that the five-level belongs to the opponents?

This is not the case in competitive auctions!

If you are in a competitive auction and the opponents have bid to the five-level, do you compete, double, or pass? You may use the rule of 210.

With two cards in the opponents bid suit, you should *double* for penalty.

With one card in their suit pass, and with zero card in their suit, compete to the five-level.

For example, you are bidding diamonds and they are bidding clubs. Use the rule to determine whether you should bid five diamonds over five clubs, double, or pass.

This is also the case for hearts over diamonds or spades over hearts. Remember the rule of 210; simple!

The rule comes from negative slam doubles, which are used to decide whether to sacrifice. Over a slam bid, the second hand doubles to show no defensive tricks but passes with one or more tricks.

If the second hand doubles, then the fourth hand passes with two or more defensive tricks but sacrifices with zero or one.

If the second hand passes, fourth hand also passes with one or more tricks but doubles with no tricks. Now the second hand sacrifices if he has only one trick but passes with two or more.

## Barry Crane rule

Finding the queen is one of the most difficult tasks in the game of bridge. If you have the following card combination

♠/♥AJxx			♦/♣AJxx	
<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	or	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
♠/♣K10xx			♦/♣K10xx	

you can finesse either way, west or east; you have a two-way finesse. Barry Crane, one of the best American match play card players of all time, recommends, with no information from the bidding, that you always do the same thing. Be consistent every time with no information.

In addition, he has found that for the *majors*, the queen lies *under* the jack, and that for the *minors*, it lies *over* the jack.

Hence, he will always play *west* for the queen for the major suits and *east* for the queen for the minor suit. This rule is Barry Crane's twelfth in the commandments; the rest of his commandments are as follows:

1. Never pull partner's penalty double.
2. Always take a sure profit.
3. Watch out for the three-level.
4. The more you bid, the more you got (no "fast arrival" here).
5. Sevens are singletons.
6. Don't bid grand slams at Swiss teams.
7. Don't put cards in partner's hand.
8. (Only) Jesus saves.
9. Don't east between sessions.
10. Never ask, "How's your game?"
11. Never gloat.

## Evaluating your offense to defense ratio (ODR)

Duplicate match-point bridge is all about bidding in competition and how many tricks each side can take. However, you do not want to outbid the opponents if the penalty you earn is more than the value of the contract they would have earned.

If you can make eight tricks in hearts and they can make eight tricks in spades and they bid 2♠, then you should bid 3♥ if you know with some certainty that you can expect to go down by at most *one* trick, since to score of -50 or -100 is better than the 110 that their 2♠ contract would produce, bid to the three-level; since any positive difference (even 10 points) to the majority of the field is decisive in terms of match points. Even two tricks down for a score of -100 is fine if not vulnerable; but if vulnerable, a score of -200 is clearly bad, so you may not want to outbid them when vulnerable if you were to get doubled.

The challenge is to *accurately* evaluate how many tricks you and the opponents can take. Remember that the aim of competitive bidding in regular match-point pairs is not to bid what you can make. Rather you are striving for the best possible score on the board, the *par score*, even if that means bidding to go down—provided it scores better than allowing the opponents to make their contract. Therein lies the rub, since most of the methods used do evaluate the number of tricks do not guarantee success because “success” depends upon high-card strength, shape, the distribution of HCP values, and suit quality. Together they define your offense/defense ratio, or ODR, a concept most current methods do not address. The higher your ODR, the more you should compete to win the contract. With a low ODR, it is best to defend!

In this bridge “bit,” I will try to define ODR factors and how you may use them to bid or defend; however, before I address ODR, let’s review some of the techniques used to evaluate trick taking success!

### Hand evaluation and points

If your partner makes an opening bid, then you have a reasonable estimate of your total points if you have a fit by adding your dummy points to partners after adjusting for shortages, suit length, and suit quality. However, if both sides are bidding, it is very likely a distributional contract suggesting that more tricks may be won with fewer points; but by how much less? You do not know; hence points by themselves do not allow you to evaluate success in a competitive auction. Point evaluation is most effective in notrump contracts.

### Losing Trick Count (LTC)

A little more useful, when partner opens and you have a fit, is to count your losers, adding them to those indicated by your partner’s opening bid. This gives a better indication of the number of tricks your side might win, since it captures some of the power of distributional hands. Recall that the formula for total tricks is maximum possible losers in both hands (24) – # of losers = tricks expected. For example, for a major suit contact, if each hand has seven losers for a total of fourteen, one can expect ten tricks on average. But some of the assumptions behind loser count, such as considering every card after the fourth to be a winner, become less assured when the

opponent's hands are also very distributional. In addition, loser trick count doesn't help estimate the trick potential of the opponents; nor does it take into account the information provided by the opponents bidding. And LTC does not work with notrump contracts.

### **The law of total tricks**

Counting total tricks is a better general guide for competitive auctions. Total tricks refer to total number of tricks you can expect to make with a trump fit. It is equal to the sum of the trumps in both hands. Thus, with nine trumps, one should bid to the three-level; and with ten to the four-level. Simple! Yes, too simple. It does not take into account honor combinations, distribution, or trump quality. For more detail, see the law of total tricks "Bridge Bit" on the Ocala website. As a simple estimate, bid to the level where the  $\sum \text{trumps} - 11 = \sum \text{bids}$ .

### **Lawrence and Wirgren working points**

Lawrence and Wirgren define working points (WP) as HCP that take tricks. Returning to hand evaluation, one can define approximate WP as the number of HCP after adjusting for dubious honor doubletons and honor singletons, where dubious doubletons are defined as AJ, KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx, and singletons are K, Q, J. Subtract one point for each from your HCP total. Assuming the WP in both hands is between 19 and 21, the number of tricks one can expect is obtained by subtracting from thirteen, the short suit total (SST).

Thus, total tricks expected =  $13 - \text{SST}$ . On average, your SST is about four (doubletons in both hands), so with a fit, one can expect nine tricks, if balanced. With SST of three, you can expect ten tricks. Or as WP increase, in steps of 3 points, one trick is gained. Hence with WP = 22 – 24 and SST = 4, one can expect ten tricks. Your SST determines the value of your trumps. This method takes into account high-card strength and shape.

None of the methods discussed take into account all the factors: high-card strength, shape, the distribution of values, and suit quality. Together they are used to evaluate your offense/defense ratio (ODE).

### **Your offense/defense ratio**

Your offense/defense ratio (ODR) is a useful tool in the decision to win the contract or to defend. It is based on the assumption that hands with approximate equal starting points, identical HCP, equal LTC, and equal trumps and distribution can have very different offensive and defensive values.

Consider the following hands opening hands:

- (1) ♠KQJ109 ♥743 ♦A53 ♣Q5
- (2) ♠A8732 ♥Q5 ♦A43 ♣Q5

Hand (1) has 14 starting points, and hand (2) has 12; both hands have 12 HCP with eight losers and with the same shape, yet should be bid differently.

The first hand has five tricks playing in spades, whereas defensively it might only have two tricks. Because of its offensive strength, it would be important to bid early and to try to obtain the contract.

The second hand, in contrast, has only three or four tricks playing in spades and probably three in defense. Consequently, it is more defensive. Note the ♥Q, and any intermediate honor in a short suit, is more likely to win a trick in defense than as declarer. On this holding, you would be happier to defend if partner does not support spades.

A few general ODR simple guidelines:

- Qs and Js in your long suits are offensive, but in short suits are defensive.
- Honor sequences particularly in your long suits are offensive.
- Concentrated HCP are offensive, while distributed values are defensive.

## **ODR in more detail**

### **(1) High card points (HCP)**

In evaluating ODR, HCP is *not* the most important. Why, you ask? Because it is equally important to offense and defense. This is because HCP, in the abstract, is just as likely to increase your offense potential as your defense potential. However, this may not be the case if one obtains a fit. Now a hand may be offensively strong with *no* HCP; yet with no HCP, you may have no defensive strength. In general, the greater your high-card strength, the less significant will be your ODR. Why, you ask? Let's look at an example.

You hold the hand ♠9876 ♥7 ♦653 ♣9754, and your partner opens 1♠.

Clearly with a singleton and four-card support, the hand is offensive with little defensive value. Now let's add 10 HCP to the hand: ♠A876 ♥7 ♦A53 ♣Q754 and assume that our offense and defense increased equally. However, our ODR has increased by tenfold.

To see this, consider two persons that are aged ten and five, the ratio of their ages is 2:1; however, adding forty to each of the ages; we have fifty and forty-five, respectively. The gap remains at five, but the ratio is insignificant; thus, the greater the high-card strength, the less significant the ODR.

### **(2) Shape**

The number of trumps beyond eight contributes to your offensive value; this is not the case if the hand is balanced. Assuming the number of trumps remains constant, the more unbalanced your hand, the higher the ODR, and conversely. Clearly, hand (a) ♠9876 ♥7 ♦653 ♣9754 is more defensive than hand (b) ♠9876 ♥753 ♦65 ♣9754. Hand (b) is clearly offensive. Balanced hands have less defensive value.

**(3) Distribution of HCP values**

The most important variable in the determination of ODR is the distribution of your HCP. Values in your own agreed-upon suit are offensive, while values in the opponent's suit are defensive. Furthermore, the greater the concentration of values in the unbid suit, the higher you can expect your ODR.

Consider the following hands opening hands in a spade contract.

- (1) ♠AJ87 ♥KQ96 ♦653 ♣85
- (2) ♠10753 ♥AQ ♦J54 ♣K65

Both hands have 10 HCP; hand (a) is offensive, while (b) is more defensive.

**(4) Suit quality**

When addressing suit quality, you have to consider the kinds of values in (a) your trump suit, (b) a long five-card suit, (c) the opponents' suit, and (d) your short two-card suits.

- (a) Honors in your trump suit AKQJ are offensive.
- (b) Top honors AKQ in a side five-card suit are offensive.
- (c) In you opponents' suit, the situation is reversed. KQJ are offensive and ace is neutral.
- (d) Short suit, As and Ks are offensive or defensive, while Qs and Js are more defensive (if partner did not support your short suit).

In summary, a suit contract will be approximately equal to the number of trumps in both hands provided your ODR is not brought down by poor shape, suit quality, distribution of HCP, and defensive honor-card holdings.

The ODR and total tricks/trumps guidelines still do not take full advantage of all the information provided by the bidding. You need to build your own picture of your hand. Start with reevaluating the value of your honor holdings in the opponent's suits. A KJx holding in a suit bid by the opponents, for example, has little value over the opponent bidding the suit (you can count on one to two tricks); you may get none if the opponent is over you.

Slightly tougher is to use the bidding to judge the length of side suit fits for both your partnership and your opponents. If each side has a double fit—that is, a fit in a side suit as well as trumps—then this suggests even more total tricks and even more competitive bidding. On the other hand, if you are short in your partner's second suit or have length in an opponent's second suit, it suggests the opposite—restrained bidding. To see how all this may work, we look at an example.



**Example**

You hold ♠52 ♥K1097 ♦32 ♣AQ1065

and your partner opens with the bid of 1♥, which is followed by a 1♠ overcall. What is your next bid?

You have 9 HCP and two shortness points and one length point, or 12 dummy/support points with at least a nine-card trump fit. Game is clearly possible but not certain. And what happens if the opponents confirm a spade fit?

You have several options playing the 2/1 game force system.

- (1) Not playing Bergen, you can bid 3♥ immediately to show your fit and a limit raise (called a high-card raise). The advantage of the bid is that it might make it harder for the opponents to continue to interfere (you have taken away the 2♠ bid of the opponents); however, it also makes it more difficult for you to show values should the opponents bid 3♣ or more. Alternatively, you may make the 2/1 bid of 3♣, which is forcing to game and helps to describe your hand. Of course, it also provides the opponents with information. But if the opponents do bid spades at the three-level, you may never get a chance to show your club suit. And how does your partner make an informed decision after a three-spade bid to bid on, pass, or double? Clearly, bidding 3♥ is better than making a 2/1 bid. The worst destructive bid is to bid 4♥, which tries to prevent the opponents from finding their level, a vulnerable game.
- (2) Playing Reverse Bergen, one may bid 3♣\* (alert) to show a limit raise in spades with four spades and 10–12 dummy points. If the opponents next bid 3♠ or more, now what do you bid? Do you bid 4♥, pass, or double? Again, things are not so clear. Note: with Bergen, the bid of 3♥\* would be a preemptive raise. You cannot cue bid 2♠ because it shows a limit raise with only three-card support.
- (3) Some may even bid Jacoby 2NT; however, you should have 13, not 12 dummy/support points.

The most important principle in competitive bidding is to *show partner you have a fit*; since if you have one, it is very likely that the opponents also have one. The bidding goes as follows (E-W vulnerable and N-S not vulnerable).

North	East	South	West
1♥		1♠	
3♣*	3♠	?	

**Now what?**

Do you pass, double, or bid on?

You know you have ten trumps, so using the principle that you bid to the level of your total trumps suggests you bid 4♥!



Using the law, the sum of the trumps is between 17 and 18, worst cases  $18 - 11 = 7$ , the sum of the bids, since  $3\spadesuit + 4\heartsuit = 7$ , the law says bid  $4\heartsuit$ !

Using the LTC method,  $24 - 14$  (seven losers in each hand) = 10, bid  $4\heartsuit$ !

But have you pushed the opponents into their vulnerable spade game?

Using Lawrence and Wirgren with 19–21 WP and SST = 4;  $13 - \text{SST} = 9$  total tricks. Do not bid  $4\heartsuit$ !

What about your ODR? You have a very good side suit clubs that contains two honors, perhaps one to two tricks and probably one heart trick; and partner promises at least two tricks as opener. Even though you have good offensive values, you judge that with a low ODR, it is better to defend than to bid a game in hearts. It is better to defend than bid on. So you double  $3\spadesuit$  and do not bid  $4\heartsuit$ . The hand layout for this example follows.

		<b>North</b>	
		♠ 52	
		♥ K1097	
		♦ 32	
		♣ AQ1065	
<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>	
♠ AKJ108		♠ Q796	
♥ 97		♥ 85	
♦ 78 ♦		AQ1023	
♣ KJ74		♣ 32	
		<b>South</b>	
		♠ 43	
		♥ AQJ64	
		♦ KJ94	
		♣ 98	

Observe that while four hearts does make for a score of 420;  $3\spadesuit$  goes down at least two tricks for a score of 500. Thus, taking into account ODR, it is better to defend than to bid your heart game. If you do indeed bid four hearts, the opponents without your tools may bid  $4\spadesuit$  (using the rule of total trumps!), which I hope you would surely double as well.

# CHAPTER 11

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## DEFENSIVE CARDING

### Standard carding and MUD

On the convention card under defensive carding, one observes two boxes next to Standard vs. Suits vs. NT. If these are marked, then standard carding means that on partner's lead, one is playing attitude, and on the opponent's lead, one is playing count. Attitude is shown by playing a high card to encourage the suit lead and a low card discourages. The cutoff is the six, which means neither.

Count is given by playing high low for an even number of cards and low high for an odd number of cards. Count does not apply for the trump suit. If you do not play trump suit preference, then a high-low discard shows extra trumps (usually three). When the attitude signal is not needed (partner has led the ace and the king is in dummy) then one shows suit preference. A high trump card requests the higher of the remaining suits that are not trump, and a low trump card requests the lower of the two suits that are not trump.

In notrump, some use BOSTON leads, which means BOS (bottom of something), an honor, or TON (top of nothing). When partner has bid a suit, then one usually leads the highest card in partner's bid suit, if supported; otherwise, from three small one leads the lowest when the suit is not supported.

When leading a card, most play fourth-best leads for both suits and notrump contracts, *but never from four small cards for notrump leads*. However, using the rule of 11, the fourth-best lead helps the opponents whether playing in notrump or suit contracts. Instead, one may use third/fifth best for *suit* contracts (the rule of 10/12) and fourth best versus only NT. When a low card is lead, third/fifth leads give you count immediately; however, you do not know if partner has an honor card.

Alternatively, some play MUD, which is Middle Up Down, or Roman MUD, developed by Benito Garozzo of the famous Italian Blue Team. Versus suit and notrump contracts, leading low promises a jack or higher, hence leading low from three or fourth best when the suit is longer promises an honor. From three cards or longer in a suit with no honor one leads the second-highest card; an exception; if you are holding 10-9-x or longer, lead the 10. The advantage of MUD is that you know whether partner has an honor, but do not know how many cards partner holds. Let's look at a few examples of MUD vs. 3/5 leads for suit contracts.

Cards led vs. suit contracts

Holding    3/5    MUD

Q7542    2    4

Q742    4    2

Q72    2    2

872    2    7

9842    4    8

97642    2    7

72    7    7

Which is better for suit contracts, 3/5 or MUD?

Let's look at an example. Suppose we have the following situation:

**DUMMY**

Q754

**PARTNER LEADS    YOU**

2    AJ1063

Which card do you play?

Playing 3/5 leads, the two can be from K72 or K72 or K92. Should you play the ace or the ten? You do not know. However, playing MUD, you know partner has the king! MUD is better. To be fair, suppose the lead is not the two but the seven. Playing 3/5 leads, you know partner usually has a doubleton; however, playing MUD partner can have K72 or 972, you do not know. No scheme is foolproof. Partnerships must choose. The bridge expert Mel Colchamiro says for suit contracts including four spades or lower, use MUD, but for five clubs or higher contracts, use 3/5. For more, see his article in the September 2013 issue of the *Bridge Bulletin*.

Against NT, if partner leads an ace, it usually requests partner to unblock, to play his highest honor. If the king is lead, partner is to play his second-highest honor. If, however, the queen is lead, partner is requested to play the jack. Against suit contracts, the ace/queen requests attitude and the king count from your partner.

When partner leads small or fourth best and you take the trick as appropriate, then the standard return of a suit is the lowest card from three remaining cards or the highest from two remaining.

To show shortness in a suit, one plays high-low (playing standard). If you do get a ruff, the card returned should indicate whether you want the higher suit returned and a low card asks for the lower of the remaining suits.

## **Other carding agreements**

While the “standard” carding system is played by many duplicate bridge players, some do not like the system, since it tends to waste “high” cards. A popular option is upside down count and attitude, which is the opposite of standard.

### **Upside-down count and attitude**

Playing upside-down count and attitude (UDCA), a low card is encouraging on a lead and a high card is discouraging. Now a doubleton is denoted by low-high instead of high-low. However on leads, one still uses the high-low single to show a doubleton. If you do not, it must be alerted because they are usually using 2/4 leads, which is similar to MUD.

Count is also opposite of standard for UDCA, high-low is odd and low-high is even. When you cannot follow suit, a low card in a suit is encouraging and a high card is discouraging. Most partnerships playing 2/1 use this approach, since high values are not wasted.

### **Odd-even discards**

Odd-even discards is also called Roman discards. It is used when you cannot follow suit the first time, an odd card in a suit is encouraging, and an even card is discouraging. A high even card says you like the higher of the suits not led, excluding the trump suit, and a low even card says you like the lower of the two suits not lead, again excluding the trump suit. It is played against both suit contracts and notrump. When played in notrump contracts, a low even card says you want the lower of the two suits, excluding the suit lead.

### **Lavinthal discards**

Similar to odd even, except a low card (less than six) says you would like the lower of the suits that is not trump, and a high card says you want the higher of the two suits that are not trump.

### **Suit preference discard**

When you cannot follow suit the first time, a discard of any suit shows your suit preference.

### **Revolving suit discards**

When unable to follow suit for the first time, you discard a card from a suit you do not want. A high card asks for the higher-ranking suit, and a low card asks for the lower-ranking suit.

What carding system should you adopt? Let's look at an example where both are vulnerable and north deals.

		♠	AKJ10		
		♥	32		
		♦	2		
		♣	AKJ1032		
♠	9532	N W       E S		♠	64
♥	Q1094			♥	A765
♦	K1095			♦	AJ65
♣	6			♣	987
		♠	Q87		
		♥	KJ8		
		♦	Q876		
		♣	Q54		

The bidding goes

North	East	South	West
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead is the 4♥.

Playing upside-down signals, east wins with the ace. Now to defeat the contract, the defense needs red suit tricks, so instead of making the routine return of a heart, east returns a low diamond. West now encourages with the five. East continues with the jack of diamonds, and the defenders take the first five diamond tricks to defeat the contract. On a heart return, declarer makes eleven tricks.

If instead of playing upside-down signals, suppose you are playing standard signals and make the same switch. Now you must play the ten or the nine of diamonds, declarer covers the jack with the queen, and the defenders get only three diamond tricks and a heart. The contract makes.

Of course, there is no “best” carding system. But why use a high card to encourage partner?

On average, the better carding system is upside-down count and attitude against both suit and notrump contracts. Against notrump contracts, one usually leads fourth best; however, for suit contracts, it is usually better to use third and fifth leads or MUD (see chapter 12).

## Trump suit preference

The most “basic” trump echo signal is when declarer begins to draw trump. A high-low signal shows an odd number of trumps, and a low-high shows an even number (upside-down count).

Instead of showing count, it is often better to tell partner where your strength is outside the trump suit (trump suit preference). Now going up the line shows strength in lower-ranking suit strength, and high-low shows strength in a higher-ranking suit.

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

On the deal below, most wests would lead the ♥9 against the N-S 4♠ contract. East inserted the ten and allowed south to win the trick with the queen. South was reluctant to begin on diamonds before pulling trump. Playing trump suit preference, east played the 9-3 in spades to show hearts. When east wins the A♦, he knows to continue hearts, holding the contract to ten tricks.

	♠ A76	
	♥ K63	
	♦ QJ98	
	♣ Q75	
♠ 42	N W      E S	♠ 93
♥ 9754		♥ AJ10
♦ A7		♦ 6542
♣ K10982		♣ J643
	♠ KQJ1085	
	♥ Q82	
	♦ K103	
	♣ A	

On the following layout, east again plays the ♥10; however, now he would play the 3-9 of trumps (low-high) showing suit preference for clubs. West must shift to clubs when he wins the ♦A.

	♠ A76	
	♥ K62	
	♦ QJ98	
	♣ Q76	
♠ 42	N W      E S	♠ 93
♥ 9754		♥ AJ10
♦ A7		♦ 6542
♣ K10982		♣ J643
	♠ KQJ1085	
	♥ Q83	
	♦ K103	
	♣ A	

While trump suit preference is a commonly used carding convention when playing in a suit contract, the Smith Echo convention is used when one is playing against a notrump contract.

## Smith Echo

Devised and published in 1963 in the *British Bridge World* magazine by I. G. Smith of Great Britain, the Smith Echo is an attitude signal most often used against notrump contracts to show partner the desire either to continue leading the opening suit or to switch to another suit. Unlike the usual suit signals, the Smith Echo is not made on the opening lead but when declarer is next on lead.

When declarer begins to run his own or dummy's long suit, a high-low signal in this suit by the defenders (opening leader and partner) has the following meaning:

If made by partner of the opening leader, it shows good support for the opening lead and asks partner to continue the suit led when regaining the lead. If made by the opening leader, it says that the suit led was weak and that partner should switch to another suit when gaining the lead.

When playing defense, we are all taught to return partner's suit! However, consider the following situation:

	♠ 832	
	♥ 94	
	♦ AQ3	
	♣ A10863	
♠ AQ104	N	♠ J965
♥ Q1053	W E	♥ J86
♦ 76	S	♦ J1092
♣ 942		♣ K7
	♠ K7	
	♥ AK74	
	♦ K854	
	♣ QJ3	

Against 3NT, west leads fourth best 3♥, which was covered by east's jack; declarer wins the king and returns the ♣Q, and west sees that that declarer has four club tricks, possibly three diamonds and two hearts. The only hope in setting the contract is in spades. Playing Smith Echo, west follows with the 9♣, telling partner *not to return hearts*. Winning with the ♣K, east does not return a heart, his partner's lead. He can see that the only possible return is a spade: for down one!

Some partnerships play *Reverse Smith Echo* when playing for example upside-down count an attitude. Now low-high is encouraging! Be careful. Look at the opponents carding scheme. It is similar to the Foster Echo.

## Foster Echo

This carding procedure was devised by Robert Frederick Foster of New York. He also invented the rule of eleven.

There are several versions of this convention used primarily against notrump. One is used when the opening lead is an honor and the third hand wants to show four cards in the suit headed by an honor.

With four cards, the Foster Echo always begins by following with the third-highest card. If the suit lacks an honor on the second round, partner follows with the fourth-highest card; but if headed by an honor, one follows with the second highest. For example, suppose you (third hand) hold:

Hand (1) 8 7 5 2 Hand (2) Q 7 5 2

and partner leads the king, with hand (1), you play the five followed by the two (high-low: have no honor); with hand (2), the five is followed by the seven (low-high: have an honor). This version of Foster Echo allows the opening leader to locate the missing honors in the suit and to help choose the right continuation. If you were playing the upside-down carding system, one would discard the eight with hand (1) to discourage and the two with hand (2) to encourage.

Another version (less frequently used) combines an unblocking play with giving count. If the third hand cannot top either the card led or the card played by dummy, he follows with his second-highest card; with a four-card holding, on the second round plays the third-highest card, next the highest, reserving the lowest for the last round. However, with a three-card holding, on the first round, partner also plays the second-highest card in the suit, and on the second round, the highest card. This may cause some ambiguity if the suit is headed by two honors. Holding, for example, Q-10-x or J-10x, partner would play the ten on the first round; hence, the leader doesn't know if the higher honor is the queen or the jack against notrump and the three against a suit contract.





# CHAPTER 12

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## BRIDGE LEADS

Many books have been written on bridge leads, but my favorite is by Sally Brock (2007), *Leading Questions in Bridge*, by Master Point Press. While leads are difficult, since a contract may be made or fail because of the lead, the most important thing to remember is to listen to the bidding, since it may help the most in what one should or should not lead. Then you must decide whether to be active or passive.

In general, an active lead is when you lead honors; however, it may give up a winner. Alternatively, you may be passive, which avoids giving the declarer a trick he does not deserve.

Dick Olson at [www.slospin.net](http://www.slospin.net) has provided a comprehensive summary regarding leads, following the principles put forth by Sally Brock. His recommendations follow points 1–6.

### Standard leads

#### (1) Leading a trump

If you can attack a contract, it is usually best to do so. However, there are times when a trump lead is called for.

Example 1: You have: ♠64 ♥AJ93 ♦AQ105 ♣KJ6

The bidding goes [1♠ Dbl 2♠ Pass]: [4♠ Pass Pass Pass]

Since leading a side suit is unattractive, lead a trump here.

Example 2: The bidding goes [1♠ Pass 1NT Pass 2♠]

An optimal time to lead trumps is when dummy denies support for a major suit opener. In example 2, responder obviously has zero-, one-, or two-card support for spades. This is a good time to lead a trump.

#### (2) Leads in suits that include the ace

Never underlead an ace against a suit contract at trick one.

If you do not have the king, lead the ace only when you are defending against a slam (except 6NT) or declarer preempted, or

Your ace is singleton, or

Your ace is the only unbid suit against five clubs or five diamonds, or

Your side promised length and strength in the suit, or

You have a seven- or eight-card suit.

Lead the ace from AK (unless you play Rusinow leads); after trick one, lead the king from AK.

### **(3) Short-suit leads**

Singletons are invariably good choices.

Doubletons are overrated, especially with one honor.

The best time to lead a short suit is with trump control (e.g., A63).

Avoid a short-suit lead when you do not need a ruff (e.g., with trump holdings such as QJ9 and KQ10 or when you have trump length). With four trumps, it is usually correct to lead a long suit to make declarer ruff (this is called a forcing game).

#### **(a) Basic leads**

In selecting your lead, you must consider your hand as well as inferences from the bidding.

##### *Desirable leads*

Partner's suit, especially if he promised five or six cards. The proper card to lead is the same one you would have led in any other suit. Therefore, lead low from Q63 or K852 (this is called BOS (bottom of something)); however, some lead the top of a suit if partner has bid the suit. It is best to discuss your approach with partner). Top of a three-card (or longer) sequence is TON (top of nothing).

##### *Sequences*

It is better to lead top of a sequence than fourth best (or third and fifth against a suit contract).

A sequence must contain an honor (ten or higher).

Against a suit contract, a sequence can be as short as two cards. Lead the king from KQ53 and the queen from QJ64. However, against a notrump contract, lead low from both holdings.

*Partner has not bid and there is no sequence*

Prefer to lead a suit the opponents have not shown. In general, try to lead from length against any contract. A lead from Q1074 is more attractive than from Q107. It is acceptable to lead away from a king against a suit contract.

### *Leading dummy's suit*

Leading through strength is overrated. Lead dummy's suit only when partner is likely to have length and strength behind him.

### **(b) Standard leads against suits (third and fifth)—preferred**

Sequences:

A K x, 10 9 x, K Q x, K J 10 x, Q J x, K 10 9 x, J 10 9, Q 10 9 x, K Q 10 9

Length leads with an honor (X = honor) - lowest-card lead usually indicates an honor:

X x x, X x x x (start of high-low), X x x x x (start of low-high), X x x x x x (start of high-low)

Length leads without an honor:

x x, x x x (MUD to indicate no honor), x x x x (start of high-low), x x x x x (start of low-high), x x x x x x (start of high-low)

Primary signals:

Count is usually first option.

Attitude is given if count doesn't make sense.

Suit preference is given if neither count nor attitude makes sense (some always give attitude first).

### **(c) Standard leads against suits (fourth best)—not preferred**

Sequences:

A K x, 10 9 x, K Q x, K J 10 x, Q J x, K 10 9 x, J 10 9, Q 10 9 x, K Q 10 9

Length leads with an honor (X = honor) - lowest-card lead usually indicates an honor:

X x x, X x x x, X x x x x, X x x x x x

Length leads without an honor:

x x, x x x (MUD to indicate no honor), x x x x (MUD), x x x x x (MUD), x x x x x x (MUD)

Primary signals:

Attitude is first option.

Count is given if attitude doesn't make sense.

Suit preference is given if neither attitude nor count makes sense.

#### **(4) Standard leads against notrump**

Length leads ---> fourth best

$\underline{x}$  x, x  $\underline{x}$  x (MUD), x  $\underline{x}$  x x (MUD if no honor), x  $\underline{x}$  x x x (MUD if no honor), **10** 9 x,  
**K** Q x, K **J** 10 x, Q J x, K **10** 9 x, J 10 9, Q **T** 9 x, K Q 10 9

A **K** x x (x) – only against notrump; K asks for attitude

**A** K J x (x) – only against notrump; A asks to unblock honor; if no honor, then give count

Primary signals: attitude then count

#### **(5) Journalist leads—“ten promises and jack denies” (nonstandard)**

Usually against notrump, though some play it against suit contracts. Purpose is to promise or deny one of the top three honors. Whenever the opening lead is a ten, the leader promises the A, K, or Q and an interior sequence. Whenever a jack is led, the leader denies having the A, K, or Q and shows a sequence headed by the jack. Note: a lead of the queen always promises the jack or a singleton; never lead from Qx.

Used when you have

A high honor with an interior sequence – lead the ten, which indicates having the A, K, or Q. An “interior sequence” is defined as QJ10x, J109x, or 109xx (98xx is not considered a sequence here).

An interior sequence with nothing above it – ten, which denies having the A, K, or Q

Typical hands where a ten is lead (“ten promises”)

AJ109(x), AJ10x(x), KJ109(x), K1098(x), Q109x(x) ----- lead the ten

but for the sequence QJ109(x) or QJ10x(x) ----- lead the Q

Typical hands where the J is lead (“jack denies”)

J109x(x), J10x(x) ----- lead the J

Other leads that deny holding an A, K, or Q

1098(x) or 109x(x) ----- lead the nine (can’t lead the ten), which promises either the ten at the head of a sequence with no high honor or a doubleton 9x.

(6) **Rusinow leads (nonstandard)** normally used against suit contracts and only on the opening lead. Primary purpose of these leads is to remove the ambiguity when using the king lead from AK.

The most difficult play in bridge is the lead. To become proficient, you must listen to the auction. Rules are only helpful when you have limited information. Let's look at an example found in Bridge with the Abbot (David Bird), in the September 2009 issue of the *Bridge Bulletin*, page 59.

		♠ 753	
		♥ 742	
		♦ AQ764	
		♣ 83	
♠ QJ1062		<div style="text-align: center;"> N W      E S </div>	♠ 94
♥ 5			♥ 983
♦ K95			♦ J103
♣ 9742			♣ KQ1065
		♠ AK8	
		♥ AKQJ106	
		♦ 82	
		♣ AJ	

The bidding

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♥
All pass			

As west, what do you lead? The natural lead is the ♠Q (top of a sequence), but if you listen to the bidding, what have you learned? Clearly, south has a control in spades, and north has a control in diamonds. And a trump lead gains nothing; in general, it is not a good idea to lead a singleton trump. The lead that has a chance of setting the contract is a club lead; lead the club nine. Leading away from the king of diamonds when the opponents are strong in the suit is never a good idea.

For more advice on bridge leads, one should also consult the book by Mike Lawrence (1996), *Opening Leads*, Los Alamitos, CA: C & T Bridge Supplies.

## Bridge leads dos and don'ts

The most difficult task in bridge is the opening lead. It often results in a top or a bottom. You cannot be correct 100 percent of the time, but there are some dos and don'ts. I will go out on a limb with the following general guidelines.

**Don'ts**

- 1) Don't lead away from a king if you have another option.
- 2) Don't lead trump.
- 3) Don't lead an ace in suit contracts.
- 4) Don't lead a singleton when you have a better alternative.
- 5) Don't lead your partner's suit if he has not shown a good suit or you have trump control.
- 6) Don't lead the unbid suit when the opponents have jumped to game in notrump.
- 7) Don't lead fourth best in notrump when your hand is weak or your suit has bad intermediates.
- 8) Don't lead doubletons.
- 9) Don't lead from broken honor sequences.

The above are general guidelines; of course, there are exceptions. Never say never in the game of bridge.

**Dos**

- 1) Lead fourth best in notrump contracts with good intermediaries when you have bid your suit and the opponents have bid notrump.
- 2) Lead partner's suit, even if you have a good five-card suit as an alternative, unless you also have an outside entry.
- 3) When the opponents are in a major suit contract, lead the other major unless you have an alternative lead in a minor suit.
- 4) Lead the unbid suit in notrump or a suit contract if the opponents reached the contract slowly.
- 5) When you have a choice between two suits, lead the one with the strongest secondary cards.
- 6) When partner has bid two suits, lead his second suit. Or lead a singleton if you know partner has values.
- 7) When the opponents have bid their suit aggressively, it is time to be passive.
- 8) Lead an ace against preempts if you have one.
- 9) When you have a weak defensive hand, lead an unsupported honor in partner's suit.
- 10) Lead a trump when you have five trumps or when partner's double shows good trumps.

The dos and don'ts assume that the auction was uninformative. For example, the bidding may go 1x – 1NT.

- (1) Suppose the bidding goes (south) 1♠ - Pass -4♠ - All pass, and as west, you hold the following hand:

♠ 7 ♥ K873 ♦ KJ53 ♣ K985

You have no information. What do you lead?

Clearly, a trump lead is passive and gains nothing for the defense. Do not use the adage “When in doubt lead trump”!

Leading away from your kings in general will give up a trick; do not close your eyes and hope for the best! Observe that by leading a club or a heart will establish at most a single trick. However, if partner were to hold the queen of diamonds, then leading a diamond may set up two tricks.

Hence, you must lead the ♦J or the 3.

(2) The bidding goes (south) 3♠ - Pass - 4♠ -double – All pass, and as west, you are on lead with the following hand.

♠ AQ7 ♥ J5 ♦ 10987 ♣ K653

What do you lead?

The immediate raise to four spades suggests that dummy has a solid suit and your partner has doubled. You have no information; lead the trump ace, and after seeing dummy, you can decide on your switch to reach partner. Do not guess.

As the opponents’ bidding becomes stronger, your opening lead should become easier.

The guidelines may help with no information, but there is no substitute for listening to the auction!

## Leads against 3NT

The bidding has gone 1NT – 3NT and you hold the following cards:

- (1) ♠ Q105 ♥ KQ853 ♦ K83 ♣ 82
- (2) ♠ 953 ♥ Q53 ♦ 762 ♣ J842
- (3) ♠ QJ976 ♥ K5 ♦ J7632 ♣ 7
- (4) ♠ AQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ 10987 ♣ 7
- (5) ♠ 73 ♥ A54 ♦ Q1087 ♣ Q753
- (6) ♠ 532 ♥ AQ754 ♦ QJ103 ♣ Q
- (7) ♠ 973 ♥ K4 ♦ 876543 ♣ K7
- (8) ♠ 972 ♥ AJ1094 ♦ 76 ♣ 543
- (9) ♠ Q97 ♥ AJ7 ♦ KJ2 ♣ 8763
- (10) ♠ AQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ 10987 ♣ 7
- (11) ♠ K9852 ♥ 7 ♦ QJ1064 ♣ 73

(12) ♠ A7 ♥ A53 ♦ A76 ♣ 65432

With each of the above hands, you have no information about. What do you lead?

- (1) Clearly, your best suit is hearts. Lead fourth best, the ♥5; or the ♠5, may be partners suit. They have denied a four-card major.
- (2) You have a weak hand and should try to find partner's best suit. Leading an unbid major is usually always better than leading an unbid minor. You have values in hearts, lead the ♥3 or ♠3.
- (3) You have five spades to the queen and five diamonds to the jack. It is usually better to lead a strong four-card suit instead of a weak five-card suit. Lead the ♥Q.
- (4) You do not want to lead from your AQ tenaces, hence, lead the ♦10. Playing coded nines and tens, it conveys zero or two of the top three honors.
- (5) You have two nice five-card suits; lead the fourth best from the stronger suit, the ♦7. Or lead the ♠3, since a major has been denied.
- (6) You have two strong suits, one five-card and one four-card. Lead from the stronger five-card suit. Lead the ♥5, fourth best.
- (7) You have two weak suits, spades and diamonds. You will not develop a trick in diamonds. Lead the ♠9.
- (8) Lead the ♥10 to show zero or two of the top honors in hearts.
- (9) You have a great hand, lead top of nothing or the ♠8. Partner, when he gets in, will switch to another suit.
- (10) Protect your tenaces and lead the ♦10.
- (11) You have two suits of equal length, lead from the stronger suit. Lead the ♦Q.
- (12) You have three entries to your club suit, lead the ♣6.

How did you do?

Summary when the bidding goes 1NT- 3NT: Almost always lead a major even if you have a long minor. If you have four cards in one major and a singleton in the other, lead the singleton.

If you have two majors, a four-card and a five-card major, lead the shortest.

For more on winning notrump leads, see the book by David Bird and Taf Anthias (2011) called *Winning Notrump Leads*, published by Master Point Press.



In our examples, we had no information from the bid; however, with more information, the easier the lead. Let's consider an example. Suppose you hold the following hand:

♠ J987 ♥ 853 ♦ J83 ♣ A75

And the bidding goes

West (you)	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass			

Do you have any clues? First, you know that north has a strong diamond suit and that the defense has spades.

Partner did not overcall one heart over the bid of one diamond, so that suggests that you should not lead a heart; he does not have first- or second-round control. However, he might have a club holding and, since the opponents stopped at the three-level, may have some values in clubs.

You best lead is a low club—not the ace!

The bidding goes:	North	South
	1♠	1NT
	3♥	3NT

You as west hold the following cards:

♠ A7 ♥ 1098 ♦ J754 ♣ J654

What do you lead?

South has not bid either of the minor suits and did not support the majors bid by his partner. The lead of the four of either minor from the jack is in general not a good lead in notrump; the opponents have the minors. Lead the ♥10. Or lead the space ace. Always listen to the bidding!

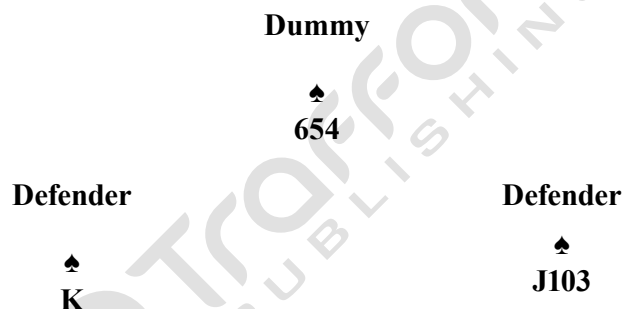
## Rusinow leads

This is devised by Sydney Rusinow and applied at the bridge table with his friends and partners, Philip Abramsohn and Simon Rossant, in the 1930s. Although the leads were original and unique, the ACBL, for undisclosed reasons, declared them illegal and barred the use of this principle at ACBL sanctioned tournaments until 1964, whereupon the ban was lifted. The principle behind the concept of the Rusinow leads apparently did not sit well with the bridge community in the United States, but they were adopted by many European bridge players. They were employed also by Walter Avarelli and Giorgio Belladonna and incorporated into the Roman

system, which they devised, and became also known as Roman leads. Since the Rusinow leads have become common practice with many bridge players, they have been incorporated in several bidding systems.

The principle behind Rusinow leads is simply the leading of the second ranking of touching honors. Rusinow leads are used only on the first trick against a suit contract in a suit, which the partner has not bid during the auction, if at all. It is uncommon to employ the Rusinow leads also against a notrump contract, since the purpose of the lead against a notrump contract is entirely different in nature, but it is not illegal.

Since the 1930s represented the era of the transition from Whist to Contract Duplicate Bridge, many innovations had to be considered, and many traditional playing strategies had to be rearranged and redefined. It was quite normal practice for the defenders to lead the king against a contract when holding the ace and king of the same suit. It was also quite standard for the defender to lead the king against a contract when holding the king and queen of the same suit. This standard practice sometimes led to unusual situations where the partner of the defender was uncertain as to the better play, since the partner was uncertain as to whether his partner had the ace or the queen after leading the king.



The ambiguity of the lead becomes apparent. If west has the king/queen, east will wish to play the jack of spades and encourage west at the same time. However, if west has the ace/king, then east will wish to play the three so that west will choose to change to another suit. If south, the declarer, holds the queen-9-8-x, a continuation will give south at least one winner in this suit.

In the early days of bridge, defenders were looking for new ways to impart information and to try new strategies. The attempt at leading the ace from an ace/king, promising the king, proved unsatisfactory, since leading a single ace against a suit contract seemed prudent and, in hindsight, the only lead that would defeat the suit contract. It was concluded that one problematic situation was exchanged for a second problematic situation, and it was not quite clear which principle should be more favored or if a new principle should be created for the defense.

Mr. Sydney Rusinow came up with a solution, which was first endorsed by Mr. Ely Culbertson. However, the solution did not gain very much favor and popularity by the bridge community. The solution was to lead the second highest from touching honors, such as leading the king from ace/king and queen from king/queen and jack from queen/jack. Although this solution of leading in this manner was eventually barred from ACBL tournaments, the Europeans seemed

captivated by the concept. They were eventually adopted by the World Bridge Federation and especially by the advocates of the Roman club bidding system, the players of which were looking for innovative ideas.

**The main principles of the Rusinow leads are as follows:**

1. Ace: this lead denies the king, except when holding the ace-king as a doubleton.
2. King: this lead is from ace-king. The third hand should signal with the queen or a doubleton.
3. Queen: this lead is from king-queen. The third hand should normally signal with the ace or jack, but not with a doubleton if the dummy contains three or four small cards of the same suit. This may be to avoid a Bath Coup, whereby the declarer could possibly be holding the ace-jack-x, and thereby cash two tricks.
4. Jack: this lead is from queen-jack.
- 4.1. Ten: this lead is from jack-ten.
- 4.2. Nine: this lead is from ten-nine.

These leads complement the MUD lead convention, in which the original lead is from three small cards. The first is the middle card, followed by the higher card, followed by the lower card, when holding only three cards in that suit, or middle, up, down.

5. In the case that more than two touching honors are held and a lead has to be made, the card representing the second-highest honor is led. For example, from king-queen-jack, the queen is led. The second card from this sequence, which is then led, is the jack. The third hand knows that his partner holds the king of that suit.

Rusinow leads gave the partner information about the holding, but the Rusinow leads are used only on the first trick against a suit contract. This fact is very important to remember concerning the communication with the partner. After the first trick, it is important to remember that the highest card should be led from touching honors. This is true whether the lead is from either of the hands of the defenders.

An important side note: the Rusinow leads were originally devised for use against a suit contract. The experiment was made to use this lead also against a notrump contract, and the experiment failed miserably, since the purpose of a lead against a notrump contract is different than against a suit contract. The information needed by the partner is whether the partner has led from his longest suit, and not where his honors are located.

Whether Rusinow leads should be part of the partnership agreement must be considered by the individual partnership. The advantages are obvious and they are presently accepted as a form of defense by the ACBL and most other bridge governing bodies around the world. They must be noted on the convention card and must be made known to the opponents.

If you wish to include this feature, or any other feature, of the game of bridge in your partnership agreement, then please make certain that the concept is understood by both partners. Be aware whether the feature is alertable and whether an announcement should or must be made. Check with the governing body and/or the bridge district and/or the bridge unit prior to the game to establish the guidelines applied. Please include the particular feature on your convention card so that your opponents are also aware of this feature during the bidding process, since this information must be made known to them according to the laws of duplicate contract bridge. We do not always include the procedure regarding alerts and/or announcements, since these regulations are changed and revised during time by the governing body. It is our intention only to present the information as concisely and as accurately as possible.

This discussion is from Simon's Web page at [members.shaw.ca/conventions/alpha.htm](http://members.shaw.ca/conventions/alpha.htm).

### **Coded nines and tens**

When leading against notrump contracts, most people lead fourth best, and when leading against suit contract, leading third or fifth best is preferred. When leading fourth best, the rule of 11 is used by the defense, and when leading third or fifth best, the rules of 15 and 10 are used.

These rules often help the opponents. A better strategy is to use coded nine and ten against both suit and notrump contracts and to combine it with second highest from a worthless hold also called Roman MUD. Here jack denies, and ten or nine shows zero or two higher.

In principle, the lower the card you lead, the more you like the suit. For example, if you lead the two, it shows either a four- or five-card suited with an honor (AKQ or J). For example:

From K8752, lead the two, and from Q872, lead the seven. From 10653 or perhaps 106543, lead the six. If you hold J982, lead the eight, since the nine would infer zero or two higher.

Most pairs only play coded nines and tens against notrump contract, but it can also be used against suit contracts. For example, from 752, you would lead the five, and on the second round, play the seven, so partners knows it is not a doubleton. Some may lead the two here, but clearly you do not have an honor; however, from 532, you would lead the five.

### **Coded sevens, eights, and nines**

A coding system similar to coded eights and nines is known as coded sevens, eights, and nines. For this system, if one leads of the seven always denotes a singleton. It is used against suit contracts. For notrump contracts, leading the eight or nine is similar to coded nines and tens showing zero or two honors. The system must be marked on your convention cards as "special carding," since it is not known by many opponents.

## Winning bridge leads

One of the most important and hardest tasks in the game of bridge is the lead. This bridge tip sets out some simple rules you must remember.

Leads depend on the contract: notrump, suits, slams, and no fit.

### Notrump leads playing 15–17

In general, you want to make an aggressive lead when playing in notrump. However, the bidding may determine the lead!

#### In general:

1. Partner has bid a suit. You should then lead his suit, low from and honor or top of nothing.
2. Your long suit is one the opponents have bid. You should choose your longest unbid suit or a suit dummy has bid, lead through strength.
3. Your long suit has three or more touching honors (KQJx, QJ10x, AQJ10x, J109x, etc.). You should lead the top honor to be sure you force declarer to win with the highest card possible. *Do not* lead fourth best.
4. Leading from three cards is better than leading from four cards with a weak hand.
5. When leading an unbid suit at notrump with four cards not headed by an honor, it is too misleading to lead low, which shows strength. It is better to lead your highest or next highest card. If your highest card is an eight or lower, lead high. If your highest card is a nine or a ten, lead your second highest card. Lead the eight from 8543, but lead the six from 9642. Lead the seven from 10732 if you want another suit returned.

If the bidding has gone 1NT-3NT, only lead fourth-best major with a five-card major suit; otherwise, *always* lead your shortest major even if you have a four-card major. Yes, and even if you have a five-card minor. This also applies if the opponents are playing in 1NT.

If the opponents have transferred into a major after 1NT, lead the other major.

If the bidding goes 1M-1NT, lead the other major.

The bidding has gone 1NT-2NT-3NT or 2NT-3NT. Make a passive lead. Never lead fourth best; lead a *major*.

Against 6NT, be passive by leading spot cards. Never lead away from A, K, or Q, and do not lead a sequence with touching honors.

#### A/K/Q leads against NT

A/Q asks for *attitude* (with ace leads, we are looking for the queen—best to unblock, but do not unblock with a queen lead).

K leads asks for *count*. The king lead is usually from a broken sequence (KQJ . . . , KQ10 . . . ), or a strong suit headed by the ace and king (e.g., AKJ10, AKJ93, AKQ104). It asks you to unblock any high honor.

### **Lead of the jack against NT**

The jack is usually the top of a sequence, with nothing higher. The jack may also be led from QJ9 . . . , asking partner to play the ten if he has it. When partner cannot see the ten, he will think the lead is from a jack-high sequence.

### **Lead of the ten against NT**

The ten lead usually shows strength: an interior sequence headed by the jack or ten, or a QJ10 sequence. It can also be the right lead from (e.g., AQJ10, KJ10 . . . , AJ10 . . . , AQ109 . . . , AK109 . . . , K109 . . . , A109 . . . , Q109 . . . , QJ10 . . . , AQJ10 . . . , etc.)

### **Lead of the nine against NT**

The lead shows no higher honor.

### **Leads of the seven/eight against NT**

Usually either fourth best or worthless sequence

### **Suit leads**

In general, you want to make a passive lead when playing in a suit contract. However, the bidding may again determine the lead!

### **In general:**

1. Lead a singleton or doubleton, even if partner has bid a suit.
2. Lead a suit the opponents have not bid.
3. If all suits have been bid, lead through strength.
4. Your long suit has three or more touching honors (KQJx, QJ10x, AQJ10x, J109x, etc.). Lead top honor.
5. If partner has bid, lead low from three and high from two.
6. Do not lead from A, K, or Q; instead lead a trump. And with three trumps, lead low holding the ace of trump.

If the bidding has gone 1M-2M-4M or 1M-4M, lead an unsupported ace and do not lead away from an honor; lead trump. Or lead a singleton or doubleton. With Kx or Qx in a suit, lead low—you are more likely to find partner with an honor.

If the opponents have splintered and reached game, lead your weakest side suit. Do not lead trump.

Leads against a major part score 1M-2M. Lead top of sequence but prefer a singleton lead to a sequence lead. Lead trump instead of leading away from an honor. With Qxx, lead low, or lead high from a worthless doubleton.

If the opponents have sacrificed, it is best to lead partner's suit, not the opponent's.

### **Leads against suit slams**

Be *passive*, not aggressive; side suit singletons are best. But do not lead a singleton with a natural trump trick.

In match points, lead an ace, but not in IMPS; do not lead an ace if the opponents have indicated a side suit ace. Better to lead a worthless doubleton.

Only lead a trump when any other lead forces you to lead away from an A, K, or Q.

An ace lead is less likely to gain two tricks in the suit if the opponents used cue bidding to reach their slam, more like if Blackwood was used.

Only be aggressive with touching sequence honor leads (QJxx, KQx, AJ109xx, etc.).

### **Trump leads**

Never lead trump if the opponents have a misfit or partner is marked with a singleton.

Lead trump with a strong trump sequence (KQJ, QJ109) or to avoid leading away from A, K, or Q in all other suits.

In general, trump leads are poor leads.

The above recommendations are based on the findings in two books and based upon over one hundred thousand simulations of bridge hands. The books are by David Bird and Taf Anthias, published by Master Point Press: *Winning Notrump Leads* and *Winning Suit Contract Leads*, published in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

## CHAPTER 13

### COMPLETING THE CONVENTION CARD

#### The 2/1 convention card

The growth in bridge systems since the 1950s has revolutionized the game today. There are numerous systems used by the experts. For example, on Graeme Williams's website: [www.gwilliamd.org.uk/systems/hdex.html](http://www.gwilliamd.org.uk/systems/hdex.html), he discusses the following systems: ACOL, Blue Team Club, Culbertson, Eastern Scientific, EHAA, Goren, Kaplan-Sheinwold, Precision, Roth-Stone, Schenken, Standard American, and 2/1 game force.

As a new bridge player, which one should you learn? According to Bert Hall and Lynn Rose-Hall (1996), *How the Experts Win at Bridge*, Jordan Press, the optimum system used by many top players in the world today is 2/1. However, the 2/1 approach includes many conventions. Which ones should you learn?

In this book, I have tried to cover the most played 2/1 conventions. As a guide to the utility of conventions, one must decide upon the effectiveness of the convention, how often it occurs, if it greatly improves your bidding, how it may affect a natural bid, and whether your partner understands and remembers it. What one is seeking is a number of conventions that meet these tests, blend together, and effectively handle a range of hands that come up most often. The critical variable in the development of the system is whether the conventions *blend* together. Don't play a convention because it is a "present day" gimmick. In this book, we have put together such a set that does just that—blends. Playing 2/1 game force, one may include in the convention card the following items:

#### Notrump

Strong 1NT (14/15-17)  
Jacoby transfers  
Gambling 3NT  
Extended Texas transfers  
Stayman with super-accepts  
Smolen  
Four-Way transfers

#### Major suit

five-card major  
1NT Semiforcing  
Reverse Bergen  
Fit bids  
Constructive raise  
Concealed splinters  
Jacoby 2NT (Scroll)  
Two-Way Reverse Drury

#### Minor suit

Convenient minor  
Inverted (13+)  
Crisscross (10-12)  
Flip-Flop over X  
2NT invitational  
Walsh club  
Bypass four diamonds  
Walsh convention



Lisa convention

### **Slam bidding**

1430 RKCB (kickback)  
Gerber+ Super Gerber  
ERKCB  
Grand slam force  
Minorwood  
Cue bidding  
Pick a slam  
Grand slam force

### **Special doubles**

Negative  
Rosenkrantz  
Support D/Re-DbI  
Fisher double  
Cooperative X  
Maximal X  
Fishbein

### **Opening two-bids**

2♣ - Strong  
2♦ - Flannery (54/64)  
2♥/♠ Weak (6-10)  
Ogust + Modified  
2NT (20-21)  
Muppet Stayman (3♣)

### **Other conventions**

Two-Way (NMF)  
Fourth suit forcing to game  
Weak jump shifts  
Michaels  
Leaping Michaels  
Sandwich 1NT/2NT  
Unusual 2NT  
Unusual vs. unusual  
Unusual vs. Michaels  
Skew (Hess) cue bids  
Western cue  
3344  
SSGT  
Wolff Sign-Off with  
Checkback  
Reverse Good-Bad 2NT  
Serious 3NT  
Scrambling 2NT

### **Defensive carding**

Leads suit third and fifth  
NT fourth best  
Coded nines and tens  
Signals  
Attitude  
Trump suit preference  
Smith Echo

### **Defense conventions**

Inter over NT  
Blooman  
Transfer Lebensohl  
UDCA

## **The Bridge World Standard**

Bridge World Standard (BWS) is a system based on the majority preferences of approximately 125 leading experts and thousands of Bridge World readers. Its methods were determined by polls: a clear expert preference determined the treatment; close questions were decided by the readers' vote. Because it is a consensus system, BWS is rarely used by regular partnerships. It is, however, very valuable in forming casual partnerships—if both partners know the system, they need discuss only those areas in which individual preferences do not conform to the BWS

treatment. BWS is also used as a foundation for voting in the Master Solvers' Club in the Bridge World.

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## **Opening bids and responses**

**Minimum balanced hand:** good 12

**1 NT:** good 15 to bad 18. Jacoby transfers (splinter rebids; game raise is slam try; two diamonds plus two spades forcing only one round); two spades shows minors; three hearts invitational, major two suiter; Texas transfers; Stayman (two-spade rebid invitational; two-heart rebid weak; minor rebid forcing); Smolen; three of a minor invitational; Gerber.

**2 NT:** good 20 to bad 22 (small doubleton acceptable). Jacoby transfers; three spades shows minors; Texas transfers; Gerber; High Gerber.

**Two clubs artificial, strong:** Natural responses (positive response requires good suit); two diamonds neutral; second negative = cheaper minor to three diamonds.

**Preempts:** Weak two-bids (two notrump, which asks for feature if maximum, and new-suit responses forcing). "Weak gambling" three-bids. New-suit response to game-level opening asking-bid (step responses).

**3 NT:** gambling (little outside strength); four-diamond response artificial.

**Five-card majors** in first and second position: one-notrump response forcing; 2/1 promises rebid; limit jump raises (four trumps; cheapest rebid asks shortness); two notrump strong raise (asks shortness); three notrump natural, 16-17; passed-hand responses: one notrump 6-12, two clubs strong raise, three clubs natural.

**Responses to minor-suit openings:** Single raise strong, 10 +, denies major; jump raise weak; 1 NT 8-10 after one club, 6-10 after one diamond; two notrump natural, game force; up the line may be ignored with moderate hand; two-club response to one diamond promises a rebid.

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## **Partnership bidding**

**Splinter raises:** Double jump shift after suit opening; single jump in fourth suit if one level above a reverse; single jump in third suit if four-level, or reverse; double jump in fourth suit; four of opener's minor after new-suit rebid; jump shift by two-diamond responder to two clubs; new-suit jump after single major raise; double new-suit jump after 1 NT response.

**Slam methods:** Roman Key Card Blackwood with trump queen ask; DOP1; five notrump (two keys) or higher response with void; 5 NT rebid invites seven, asks king cue bidding. Cheapest,

weakest responses to grand slam force. Gerber after one-notrump or two-notrump opening, or rebid. Picture jumps in forcing situations.

**Other methods:** Fourth-suit bidding: nonforcing bypassed hand unless reverse; one spade may be weak; promises another bid at two-level; game force if reverse or at three-level. Third-suit bidding: game force if reverse or at three-level, otherwise does not promise rebid. Opener's suit-over-suit reverse promises rebid; responder's cheaper of 2NT and fourth suit neutral. All non-jump-shift secondary jumps by one-over-one responder invitational. Opener's jump rebid to four of original minor is strong raise. Unbid minor forcing and artificial after one-notrump rebid, requests support. Three clubs artificial may be prelude to sign off, after two-notrump jump by opener. Reraise to three of major preemptive.

### **Competitive bidding**

**Negative doubles:** After suit opening, through three spades (including opener's suit); after one-notrump opening, at the three-level; unlimited; suggests length in unbid major; of one heart shows four spades; of one spade after minor opening shows four or more hearts. Repeat same-suit double by negative doubler for takeout.

**Weak jump responses** after overcall of minor opening.

**Over overcall:** jump raise preemptive, cue bid is at least limit raise; jump cue bid is splinter.

**Over two-suited overcalls:** cheapest cue = raise; next cue = unbid suit; unbid suit nonforcing.

**Over minor Michaels:** unbid suit nonforcing; major suit shows stopper.

**Over major Michaels:** cue bid in enemy major is limit raise or better; new suit forcing.

**Support doubles and redoubles** when raise to two is available, except one club - (pass) - one diamond - (one spade) - double shows hearts.

**Over a double** of partner's suit bid: new suit forcing at the one-level only; jump shift nonforcing; two notrump limit raise or better; double jump in new suit splinter

**Lebensohl** after two-level overcalls of one notrump (fast denies stop).

**Jump cue bid by opener** is splinter raise.

**Pass and pull** strong in forcing situation.

**Defensive bidding**

**Michaels cue bids** (in minor: majors; in major: other major plus unspecified minor) in direct and reopening position over suit one-bids and over one-notrump response; weak or quite strong.

**Direct jump cue bid** natural over minor, asks stopper over major.

**Takeout doubles of preemptive openings** through four hearts; otherwise for penalty.

**Maximal overcall double** of raised suit.

**Reopenings:** 1NT, 10-14; 2NT, 18-19.

**In fourth seat** over a response: one notrump and cue bids natural.

**After 1 NT overcall:** two clubs Stayman; jumps invitational.

**Double of free new-suit bid by responder** shows fourth suit plus tolerance.

**Cappelletti** over one notrump (all situations).

**Direct two notrump** unusual for lower unbid suits; weak or quite strong.

**Takeout doubles:** may be light with shape; new-suit rebid very strong.

**Preemptive jump overcalls and jump raises of overcalls.**

**Responsive and extended responsive doubles** after takeout doubles, at the two-level after an overcall, after a preempt.

**Mixed-raise advances** of overcalls.

**Cue bid by advancer** forcing until a suit is bid twice, or game.

**Lebensohl** after double of weak two-bid, either position by unpassed hand, and following one-notrump overcall.

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**Opening leads**

Against suit contracts: third from even; low from odd. All other leads old-fashioned.

## The Acol bidding system

As explained on bridgeguys.com, the Acol bidding system is not a standard bidding system as the five-card American Standard System. This means that the Acol bidding system is rather interpretable and allows stronger latitude in flexibility according to the partnership agreement. We would like to present a general structure of the Acol bidding system so that the bridge player who would like to learn has a general concept of the meanings behind the bids.

### The general structure of the Acol bidding system is outlined below:

- Opener:** With five plus card suits, open the higher-ranking longer suit.  
 With only four-card suits, such as a 4-3-3-3 distribution, open the four-card suit. If you wish to guarantee a five-card spade opener, the opener will then open one club with four spades, and this is the only situation when you will only have four spades.  
 With a 3-4-4-2 touching distribution, open the higher suit. The exception is when you're holding hearts and spades as in the distribution of 4-4-2-3, and the general rule is to open one heart.  
 With a 4-4-1-4 distribution, open the suit immediately below the singleton. The exception is the 4-4-4-1 distribution, and then the opening should be one heart.
- Responder:** A nonreverse change of suit rebid by opener is nonforcing if the responder bids at the one-level, but is forcing if the responder has made a 2/1 response.  
 Any change of suit rebid by the responder is forcing except over opener's one notrump rebid.
- Opener's Rebid:** A nonreverse change of suit rebid by opener is nonforcing if the responder bids at the one-level, but is forcing if the responder has made a 2/1 response.  
 A reverse by opener is forcing for one round with 16+ points and at least 5-4 distribution and the first suit will be longer.

The following principles are major in the general principles of the Acol system. Much of this has to be learned by heart, but once it is memorized, then the auction proceeds with both partners acting as one. Even with the five-card American Standard, we had to memorize certain guidelines and principles to show length and strength.

### Fourth-suit forcing is generally forcing, except in the following bidding auction:

Opener	Responder
1 ♣	1 ♦
1 ♥	1 ♠

1. In this instance, a one notrump rebid shows 15+ HCPs and is generally forcing.
2. However, rebids by the responder at the two-level are nonforcing over 2♣ / 2♦ / 2♥ by the opener.
3. Three-level rebids are generally forcing.

Any possibly ambiguous bid by the opener or responder shows values or length in that suit. This is called *fragmenting*, rather than *splintering*, which means that the bid is indicating a stopper rather than asking for a stopper.

Note: To fragment means to show a stopper. To splinter is asking for a stopper, and this is very important to remember.

Over three of a major, when there is a known fit in the major, three notrump is a natural bid if three of a major is nonforcing. But it is a *trump cue* if three of a major is forcing.

Over three of a minor, three notrump is always at least a suggestion to play.

A simple raise of responder's 2/1 is invitational that is nonforcing. A jump raise to four of a minor is generally forcing and suggests slam interest. Hands worth "3-5" minor raise must find another bid.

The auction one spade-two hearts promises five cards in hearts, but two of a minor promises only a four-card suit.

**A new suit at the four-level, after partner has shown strength, is a cue bid showing a hand too strong to raise partner's last-bid suit directly.**

The following bidding auctions should clarify this principle:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 ♣	1 ♠	
3 ♥	4 ♦	Shows a strong heart raise
1 ♥	1 ♠	
3 ♥	4 ♣/4 ♦	The rebid by responder is a cue bid, and hearts is the agreed-upon suit.
1 ♥	2 ♣	
2 ♦		Forcing bid for one round.
1 ♥	1 ♠	
3 ♥		This bid is invitational.
1 ♥	2 ♣	
3 ♥		This bid is game forcing.
1 ♠	2 ♥	
3 ♥		This bid is invitational.

1 ♣	1 ♥	
2 ♦	2 ♥/3 ♣	Either of these rebids by responder is not encouraging, nonforcing.
1 ♣	1 ♥	
2 ♦	2 ♠	Indicates a four-card spade suit and is game forcing
1 ♣	1 ♥	
2 ♦	2 NT	This bid is invitational.
1 ♣	1 ♥	
2 ♦	3 ♦	This bid is forcing for one round.
1 ♣	1 ♥	
2 ♦	3 ♥	This bid is game forcing, because opener has reversed.

#### In the bidding sequence:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 ♥	1 ♠	
2 ♦	3 ♣	
3 ♦	3 ♥	The last bid by the responder is an attempt at slam.
3 NT		This is a <b>Trump Cue</b> .

#### In the bidding sequence:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 ♥	3 ♥	
3 NT		This bid gives the responder a choice of the better contract.

These examples show the general principles of the auction using the Acoll system. Many of them must simply be memorized. It is not surprising that many bridge players incorporate some/many of the guidelines used in the Acoll system. We must remember that many intelligent minds went into devising new methods of bidding and thereby creating new bidding systems. Many of these methods and treatments and conventions have become intermixed with other bidding systems, and bridge players around the world use them without always realizing that they are an integral part of different bidding systems.

## Fantunes

This is a bidding system designed by the Italian champions Fulvio Fantoni and Claudio Nunes, nicknamed Fantunes. The system is based on very solid one-level and two-level natural bids. Unlike Precision, all bids are natural. The system is complex and is explained in some detail by Bill Jacobs in his 2012 book *Fantunes Revealed*, published by Master Point Press. I review the basic elements of the system in chapter 21.

## CHAPTER 14

### PLAY OF THE HAND

There are many great books on play of the hand. A new book I would strongly recommend is by Guy Levé (2007), *Encyclopedia of Card Play Techniques at Bridge*, Master Point Press. When playing a hand, have a plan and be aware of the bidding, as Levé recommends: stop, look at dummy, listen. Many times, the play to the first trick will make or defeat the contract.

There are numerous techniques and strategies to the play of the hand, such as safety plays, elimination (end) plays, finesses, squeezes, avoidance plays, and more. Two basic principles are to use of the rule of 12 to guide one on making finesses and the dummy reversal play.

#### Play of the hand—always have a plan!

You (sitting south) and your partner reach the final contract of 3NT. As south, you bid 1NT and partner bids 3NT. Opening lead is the queen of clubs. Can you make the contract?

North
♠ AJ2
♥ 954
♦ KJ72
♣ K76
South
♠ K96
♥ A873
♦ A54
♣ A94

Many players may go down with this hand because they do not plan their play. The auction was simple and did not reveal anything. All the opponents know is that dummy is not going to have a four-card major and ruffing values.

With the lead of the queen of clubs, your first problem is are you going to win the first trick, or are you going to duck the club?



Clearly, you do not want a heart shift that could be more dangerous than the club threat, so you must win the first trick. Now you have to consider which hand do you win the trick.

Obviously, you want to be in your hand and lead toward dummy. You have five fast tricks outside the diamond suit. How are you going to tackle diamonds? You do not know yet! It depends on how many tricks you need in the suit! You must win the trick in your hand and lead a spade to the jack. Next, how will you continue if that loses? Do you play the same way if the finesse wins? No.

If the finesse loses, you need four diamond tricks, and the only way to get them is to take the finesse and hope the suit splits evenly. But if the spade finesse wins, you only need three tricks from diamonds and can afford a safety play. You would cash the king of diamonds and lead a diamond to the ace. If the queen does not appear, play the jack. That lands the contract any time the queen drops, the break 3-3, or west holds the queen. Great odds! The complete deal follows.

		♠ AJ2	
		♥ 954	
		♦ KJ72	
		♣ K76	
♠ Q53		N	♠ 10874
♥ K6	W	E	♥ QJ102
♦ 10983	S		♦ Q6
♣ QJ102			♣ 853
		♠ K96	
		♥ A873	
		♦ A54	
		♣ A94	

Let's consider one more example from the book *Winning Declarer Play* (2013), by Dorothy Hayden Truscott and updated by Gail Greenberg, page 31. The contract is 3NT and the opening lead is the jack of hearts and you are sitting south. How do you make your contract?

North
♠ AKJ63
♥ AQ2
♦ K10
♣ A54
South
♠ 74
♥ K75
♦ J9642
♣ K83

Many players may go down with this hand because they do not plan their play. How do you proceed?

First, count your tricks; you can see seven—two spades, three hearts, and two clubs. You must develop two more tricks. To develop spades, they must be 3-3. The only source of tricks is diamonds. However, you must knock out both the ace and the king. Where do you take the lead and why? Most will play low and take the opening lead in their hand with the king of hearts. Then leading a diamond to the king, you lose to the ace. Now you only have one entry to your hand, the king of clubs, and west will still have the diamond queen to stop the suit. You have set up diamonds, but you cannot cash them, since you do not have enough entries in your hand.

The solution is to not take the heart lead in your hand, but in dummy. Now nothing can stop you from making your contract. When planning your hand, make sure you have the sufficient number of entries to make your contract. The first trick is the most critical.

The entire deal follows.

		♠ AKJ63	
		♥ AQ2	
		♦ K 10	
		♣ A54	
♠ 2		N W E S	♠ Q10985
♥ J1098			♥ 643
♦ AQ85			♦ 73
♣ 9762			♣ QJ10
		♠ K74	
		♥ K75	
		♦ J9642	
		♣ K83	

## Some card playing rules

### Rule of 7

When playing NT contracts and having only one stopper in the suit led headed by the ace, one may use the rule of 7 to decide how many times to hold up. Rule: subtract the total number of cards you and dummy hold in the suit from seven. This is the number of times you should hold up when the suit is led by the opponents. The rule is also used with trump contracts.

Let's look at an example.

The bidding goes:	South	West	North	East
	Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
	1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
	3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: ♥J; the deal follows.

	♠ AK	
	♥ Q972	
	♦ AQJ	
	♣ K742	
♠ Q	<div style="text-align: center;"> N W      E S </div>	♠ 8543
♥ J10854		♥ K3
♦ K863		♦ 10752
♣ QJ5		♣ A109
	♠ J109762	
	♥ A6	
	♦ 94	
	♣ 863	

West led the jack of hearts, covered by the queen and the king and taken by the ace. Declarer successfully finessed the jack of diamonds, cashed the ace and king of trumps, but then had no fast return to his hand to draw the last rump and repeated the diamond finesse for a club discard. A low heart from the table was taken by west's eight, and the switched to the queen of clubs quickly netted the defenders three tricks in the suit for down one.

South's error was made at *trick one!* The rule of seven says that one should duck the heart lead. Now there is no way west can gain the lead. Declarer wins the heart continuation, finesses the jack of diamonds, and cashes the table's top trumps, fetching the queen. A heart ruff is the entry to hand to draw the last trump, repeating the diamond finesse. Contract bid and made, since the defenders are now limited to two clubs trick to go with the heart trick.

### Rule of 9 (ruff high or low)

Add the number of cards held in a suit between you and dummy to the number of rounds played. If that number is ten or more, a ruff is likely. For example, suppose you hold the AK in a suit and the number of cards in the suit is seven; then a ruff is likely after it is played a third time since  $7 + 3 = 10$ ; hence, ruff high!

### Rule of 12

Consider the following three hands:

1. NORTH Q 10 3 2	2. NORTH J 7	3. NORTH Q 9 2
SOUTH A J 6 4	SOUTH A Q 10 5 4 3	SOUTH A J 10 4 3

One hand has a tenace missing the king. The opposite hand holds one or more cards equal in rank to the lower card(s) in the tenace. In hand 1, the A-J is the tenace and the Q-10 opposite is

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equal in rank to the jack, the lower card of the tenace. Given you intend to finesse for the king, how should you handle these combinations, assuming you have plenty of entries to the north hand?

The question is whether you should lead low from north to finesse or whether you can afford to lead a high card from dummy and let it run. The rule of 12 provides the answer! It goes as: with eight, nine, or ten cards in the two hands, if the number of cards in the two hands plus the cards in the sequence totals twelve or more, you can afford to lead a high card opposite the tenace. If the total is less than twelve, lead low to the tenace. Wow!

In hand 1, you have eight cards and three cards (Q, J, and 10) in the sequence,  $8 + 3 = 11$ . Hence, it is *not* safe to lead the Q or the ten from north. The correct play is to lead low from north to the jack in your hand. If the jack wins, return to north and then lead the queen or the ten to repeat the finesse. The layout could be

	Q 10 3 2	
9 8 7 5		K
	A J 6 4	

If you lead the queen or ten on the first round, you lose a trick. Start with a low card from north and you have all the tricks. If entries to the north hand are a problem, take the risk and lead an honor from north.

The answer for hand 2 is the same: 8 cards + 3 in the sequence = 11. Therefore, it is not safe to lead the jack on the first round. Again, king singleton would cost you a trick. As long as entries to north are comfortable, start by leading the seven to your ten. If that wins, return to dummy and lead the jack for the second finesse.

In hand 3, you have 8 cards + 4 in the sequence = 12. It is therefore safe to lead the queen or the nine for the first-round finesse. Even with a singleton king onside, it does not harm you. Let's consider a few more examples: hands 4, 5, and 6.

<p>4. NORTH A Q 7 6</p> <p>SOUTH J 5 4 3 2</p>	<p>5. NORTH J 10 2</p> <p>SOUTH A Q 7 6 5 4</p>	<p>6. NORTH Q 2</p> <p>SOUTH A J 7 6 5 4 3</p>
--	---	--

In hand 4, 9 cards + 2 in the sequence (Q and J) = 11. The rule of 12 tells us that you should lead low on the first round, *not* the jack. Play low to the queen. If that wins, cash the ace. To lead the jack first would cost a trick if the king is singleton in this position:

	A Q 7 6 3 2	
K		10 9 8
	J 5 4	

In hand 5, 9 cards + 3 in the sequence = 12. Therefore, it is safe to lead the jack or the ten first.

In hand 6, 9 cards + 2 in the sequence = 11. It is not safe to lead queen first. If east has king singleton, playing the queen will cost you a trick, while leading the two from north avoids losing a trick.

7. NORTH J 8 7 6 4	#7: 10 + 2 = 12. It is safe to lead the jack. In fact, it makes no difference whether you start with the jack or lead low to the queen first.
SOUTH A Q 5 3 2	

8. NORTH J 8 7 6 4	Again, you should lead the jack first. If east started with K-10-9, low to the queen leaves you with a loser, but jack first can avoid losing a trick.
SOUTH A Q 5 3 2	

The rule of 12 also applies when missing the king and queen as here.

9. NORTH 10 9 5 2	10. NORTH 10 7	11. NORTH 9 4 2
SOUTH A J 6 4	SOUTH A J 9 5 4 3	SOUTH A J 10 6 5 3

In hands 9 and 10, 8 cards + 3 in the sequence = 11. Therefore, do not lead a high card on the first round. Start with a low card from north. To lead high from north costs a trick if east has a singleton honor. You can lead high from north for the second round finesse.

In hand 11, 9 card + 3 in the sequence = 12. It is safe to start with the nine from north.

For more bridge tips regarding card play, consult Ron Klinger's (1998), *Better Bridge with a Better Memory*, Cassell Press, and the book by William S. Root (1990) *How to Play a Bridge Hand*, Crown Trade Publishers, New York, may also be consulted.

## Dummy reversal play

You (sitting south) and your partner reach the final contract of 7♠ and the diamond king is led. Can you make the contract?

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		♠ J98	
		♥ Q43	
		♦ AJ76	
		♣ Q85	
♠ 762		N	♠ 43
♥ 9875		W	♥ KJ102
♦ KQ1085		E	♦ 432
♣ 3		S	♣ 9764
		♠ AKQ105	
		♥ A6	
		♦ 9	
		♣ AKJ102	

Many players may go down with this hand because they assume the contract is impossible. What is the winning line of play? Counting your winners you see from the south hand, twelve winners. The problem is in hearts. Do you take the finesse, which will win only 50 percent of the time, or is there another approach? Walk around the table and sit in north's chair! From this point of view, you have a better idea of how to make the hand!

Although your trump holding is not great (J98), it is good enough to draw the outstanding trump, provided they break 3-2 (approx.  $2/3 = 67$  percent, see table in chapter 16). Your three diamond losers can be ruffed in "dummy." And best of all, your three heart losses can eventually be thrown on "dummy's" club suit.

Win the opening lead with the diamond ace and ruff a diamond with the spade ace. Lead the spade five to north's eight, and ruff another diamond with the king. Lead the spade ten to north's jack, and ruff the last diamond with south's last spade the queen. Now return to the north hand with the club queen and lead the spade nine. This draws the opponent's last trump; as south, you have no spades left, so you discard the heart six. South's hand is now high, and the grand slam is home!

The above technique is known as a dummy reversal. What you have done in effect is made the "short" hand (north) into the master hand. The dummy reversal technique is the major exception to the general policy of avoiding ruffs in the "long" hand (other exceptions are the trump coup and cross ruffing a hand).

For an explanation of why the technique works, let's consider solely the trump holding for a moment.

North: ♠ J 9 8 and South ♠ A K Q 10 5

You have five trump tricks. The normal way to get an extra trick is to ruff once in the short hand (north) and then draw trumps with the south hand ( $5 + 1 = 6$ ). The *unusual* way to get an extra trump trick is to ruff three times in the south hand and then draw trumps with the north hand ( $3 + 3 = 6$ ).

On the actual hand, declarer has twelve tricks and needs to find a thirteenth. The normal procedure of ruffing a loser in dummy is impossible. But the *unusual* technique of reversing the

dummy is the winning approach (the dummy reversal). How do you as declarer know when to use the technique?

First, the trump holding in the short hand must be strong enough to draw the opponents' trumps. In our example, the J98 of spades are all high enough and can take care of the likely 3-2 spade break.

Second, the short side suit must be in the hand with the long trumps. In our example hand, the singleton diamond and the spade trump length.

Finally, a dummy reversal will not work unless there are sufficient entries to dummy. In our example, three entries are needed to ruff dummy's three diamonds and one extra entry is needed to draw the last trump. Before embarking on a dummy reversal, declarer must count his entries. The diamond ace and the two trump entries are used to ruff the three diamonds, and the ♣Q is the extra entry to the last trump. In the play, declarer doesn't trump the diamonds with the A K Q of spades just to be flamboyant. He has to ruff high because the ten and the five spot are his entries to dummy! Let's look at another example. You have reached the contract of 4♥ and the opponent's lead the ♠K. Can you make the contract?

		♠ 1065	
		♥ Q109	
		♦ Q32	
		♣ A742	
♠ KQ98			♠ A76
♥ 54			♥ 876
♦ J1074			♦ 98
♣ 963			♣ KQ1085
		♠ J32	
		♥ AKJ32	
		♦ AK65	
		♣ J	


The opponents cash the first three spade tricks and shift to a club, which is won by your ace. There are now three different ways to try to make the contract.

1. Declarer can draw all the trumps and hope that the opponents' diamonds are divided 3-3. However, with six cards out, they may not break 3-3 (chapter 16), and this method of play will work only about one-third of the time.
2. Declared can considerably improve his chances by drawing only two round of trumps before playing three rounds of diamonds. He is still all right if the diamonds are 3-3, and he gives himself the extra chance that the opponent who is short in diamond does not have more than two trumps. This approach will work a little more than half the time.
3. There is also the option of reversing the dummy. After winning the club ace, ruff a club with a high trump. Lead a small trump to dummy and ruff another club high. Lead the other small trump to dummy, and ruff dummy's last club with south's last trump. Now enter dummy with the diamond queen and play dummy's last trump, discarding a diamond from the south hand. The ace and king of diamonds win the last two tricks, and the contract is made. This method will work when trump break 3-2, about two-thirds of the time.

Of the three options, the dummy reversal approach is clearly the superior line of play!

Source of Lesson: *Winning Declarer Play* (1969) by Dorothy Hayden Truscott.

Let's look at a final example (a little more advanced) that includes bidding and play (based upon a hand from the *Bridge World*, May 2009, p. 14). You are sitting north with neither side vulnerable with the following hand:

		♠ A53	
		♥ AK10	
		♦ A9865	
		♣ K10	
♠ 10874	N W E S	♠ 9	
♥ 32		♥ J984	
♦ KJ1032		♦ Q8	
♣ 97		♣ 865432	
		♠ KQJ62	
		♥ Q765	
		♦ 4	
		♣ AQJ	

The bidding goes

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass		
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♥	Pass	7♠	

And the opening lead is a trump.

## Bidding

Let's first look at the bidding. 4NT was 1430 RKCB and five diamonds shows zero/three key cards (Clearly, three with the bid of 2NT). 5NT was the specific king ask, and six clubs showed the king. Six hearts was the second king ask, and with the king, north bids 7♠. Note: Some players do not use the specific king ask but the number of kings. In this auction, they would respond 5♥ (two); however, not knowing that one has the K♥ versus the K♦, the grand slam contract may not be bid (you should discuss whether you use specific king or number of kings option with your partner!).

## Play

You have to start with the king-queen of spades. If trumps break 4-1, you should play the spade ace, club queen, spade jack (pitching a diamond), heart, ace, and club ace-jack, leaving



North

♠ ----  
♥ K10  
♦ A97  
♣ ----

South

♠ 6  
♥ Q75  
♦ 4  
♣ ----

Now you must guess what to do. Leading to the heart king gains if the jack drops doubleton and there is no red-suit-squeeze, but ruffing a diamond gains when an opponent started with jack-fourth (or fifth) of hearts and at least five diamonds. Perhaps the count, discards on the trumps, or some other aspect of the defense carding will help.

If spades break 3-2, things are clear. After playing the KQ of spades, one plays the heart ace-king; if the heart jack does not fall (and there is no ruff), diamond ace, three clubs to discard the ten of hearts, a heart ruff with the ace of trumps, diamond ruff, spade jack.

**Best play (dummy reversal)** - Two trumps, diamond ace, diamond ruff, heart ace, diamond ruff, heart king, diamond ruff, club king, draw the last trump, plus 1510, if not, minus fifty!

## Cue bidding for slam, an example

North-south is vulnerable. How do you bid this hand?

North	South
♠ 43	♠ AKQJ1075
♥ KJ87	♥ AQ10543
♦ 976	♦ Void
♣ J432	♣ 5

The bidding goes:    West    North    East    South  
                         1♦       Pass    5♦       ?

**What do you bid and why?**

Clearly, the east-west pair is trying to steal the bid. Some may be tempted to bid 6♠ (this was the bid of the pair in the team match at the recent ACBL Summer North American Championships

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in Las Vegas, see the October 21, 2008, issue of the *Daily Sun*). If you bid 6♠, the bidding would go

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	5♦	6♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl*	Pass
Pass	Pass		

\* Lightner Double

You hold the following hand: ♠986 ♥6432 ♦AJ82 ♣AQ. What do you lead? You are looking at the AQ of clubs; clearly, the double is calling for a heart lead, an unusual lead.

The entire deal follows:

		♠ 43	
		♥ KJ87	
		♦ 976	
		♣ J432	
♠ 986			♠ 2
♥ 6432			♥ Void
♦ AJ2			♦ Q10543
♣ AQ			♣ KQ9876
		♠ KQJ1075	
		♥ AQ1095	
		♦ Void	
		♣ 5	

As the cards lie, the ace of clubs could also defeat the slam (partner would toss the king, asking for a heart return; the higher of the other two suits).

### What went wrong?

South should not bid six spades; you can use a six-diamond cue bid. Your partner would bid six hearts and you would find your unbeatable heart slam (some may play that a double of the bid of five diamonds is for takeout, not penalty, and also reach the slam contract).

## Bidding problems

(1) You hold the following hand: ♠ AQxx ♥ Axxx ♦ Jx ♣ xxx

And the bidding goes

P 1♣ 1♦ P  
??

What call would you now make?

**(2) You hold the following hand:** ♠ Ax ♥ xx ♦ AQJxx ♣ AKJ9

And the bidding goes

1♦ P    1♠ P  
3♣ P    3♦ P  
??

What call would you now make?

**(3) You hold the following hand:** ♠ Ax ♥ AQxx ♦ Qxx ♣ AKxx

And the bidding goes

1♣ 3♦ 3♠ P  
??

What call would you now make?

- (1) While you should have three diamonds to cue bid clubs, the best bid is a cue bid of 2♣. It tells your partner you have 10/11 HCP, support for the unbid suits and some support for diamonds. If partner bids two of a major, you would be happy to raise to three!
- (2) Clearly, the Western cue bid of 3♥ is in order. With a heart stopper, partner will bid notrump. If he bids 3♠, then you would bid four, since his bid probably shows at least two honors. And without two honors, he can bid 5♦.
- (3) While some may disagree, the best bid is 4♦. While 3NT will probably make, your hand is too strong to sign off in game! If your partner has six good spades and short diamonds, you have a good play for slam. If you bid 4♥, partner may think you hold hearts and clubs and might pass.

## Principle of restricted choice

In February 1975, Monty Hall on the TV show *Let's Make a Deal* had three doors labeled A, B, and C. Behind one of the doors was a car, a 1975 Lincoln Continental, and behind the other two were goats. If you choose the door with the car you win, while choosing the other two, you lose because you chose the goat.

After picking a door, Monty asks, "Do you want to keep the door you selected, or do you want to switch?" Remember that there are three scenarios: CGG, GCG, or GGC. So the probability of selecting the car is one-third, since two doors contain the goats; however, the probability of the box you selected contains a goat is two-thirds. Now Monty asks, "Do you want to keep your original selection or switch?"

Before the contestant decides, Monty opens a second door, which contains a goat, and again asks, “Do you want to keep your original selection or switch?” Does the knowledge of knowing one of the doors has a goat change the original probability? The answer is yes; it goes from one-third to two-thirds, so it is *right* to switch! If you do not switch, you only win one-third of the time. To see this, suppose you always choose door one and that Monty only opens a door that contains a goat; we see that in two of the three scenarios, you win by switching. You have increased your chances by a factor of *two*.

When Monty opened one of the doors you did not select, his choice was restricted. He could not show the car. This is the principle of restricted choice. Can it be used in card play? The answer is *yes*.

Consider the following situation:

**North**

♥ K 10 7 6

**South**

♥ A 5 4 3 2

You play the ace and your LHO (west) follows low, while your RHO (east) drops the queen. You next play a small heart from your hand, and west again follows low. Should you play the ♥K and hope that east started with ♥QJ, or should you finesse dummy’s ten, playing west for the jack (J98)? The principle of restricted choice says *you should finesse*—do not play for the drop. Two-thirds out of three ( $2/3$ ), the honor that dropped from east will be a singleton. Only one time in three ( $1/3$ ) will it be from QJ doubleton. East’s choice was restricted. He had no other card to play. If he had the QJ doubleton, he would have had the freedom to play either 50 percent of the time.

From the Monty Hall show, east has one of three holdings:

♥QJ doubleton

♥Q singleton

♥J singleton

The QJ doubleton is identical to picking the car door. You are going to be a loser if you finesse (one-third of the time). But when the queen appears, you must assume that east *had no choice*; now if you finesse, you are expected to win two-thirds of the time (by switching).

The principle of restricted choice works with other card combinations. For example, suppose you have the following situation:

**North**

♥ A K 8 2

**South**

♥ Q 6 4 3

You play the ace and then the queen, and your RHO drops the nine and then the jack. There are only two cards left for the ten to drop. Again using the principle of restricted choice (now really a double-restricted choice), you should finesse the eight on the third round.



## CHAPTER 15

### OTHER BRIDGE CONVENTIONS

#### Weak notrump, an overview

When playing 2/1, most partnerships use the strong notrump opening in all seats with balanced/semibalanced hands and 14/15–17 HCP. However, many use different ranges depending upon the seat and/or vulnerability. For example, some play 14–17 in the first two seats and 15–17 in the third and fourth seats, independent of vulnerability (fried chicken NT). Regular chicken notrump means you open 1NT with 12–14 HCP in the first two seats and only at favorable or equal vulnerability. And super chicken NT means you need the vulnerability more in your favor. You open a weak 12–14 NT if not vulnerable; otherwise, 15–17 HCP are required when vulnerable. For chicken notrump, you open 1NT in all seats with 12–14 points; this is the approach used in the Kaplan-Sheinwold bidding system. Should you adopt some form of “chicken” notrump?

Yes, there are certain advantages. (1) It has the preemptive effect, (2) balanced/semibalanced hands occur frequently, (3) rebidding becomes easier, (4) it is easier to punish your opponents, and (5) it provides an improved bidding structure when partner bids one of a minor. In North America, the ACBL does not allow any ranges lower than 10–12 HCP, often called Kamikaze NT, which is part of some systems—for example, EHAA (*Every Hand An Adventure*). When playing the Precision system, 1NT often shows a balanced hand with 13–15 HCP or 14–16 HCP. We support the super-chicken variety, since, as suggested by Edgar Kaplan, it supports high, preemptive bidding for weaker hands and allows for no risk when vulnerable.

The primary difference between a weak and a strong notrump is *three* points (a king). Thus, to reach game using a weak NT (12–14), you need 12 HCP, and 11 HCP becomes invitational, exactly three more points than the required amount using the strong notrump bid. But what if you have a strong 15–17 opener? Playing 12–14 NT, you cannot open 1NT. You must open a convenient minor and then bid 1NT to show a balanced/semibalanced hand with 15–17 HCP. If you are unbalanced or have a five-card major, you should bid a major and bypass the 1NT rebid. Simple!

## Weak hands (12–14)

With a weak 1NT opening (12–14), one should have a balanced hand and one of the following distributions: 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2, or 4-4-3-2 with length in a minor or a weak nonbiddable major. Let's consider a few examples:

(1) ♠ KQ87 ♥ 10853 ♦ AK3 ♣ Q3	(2) ♠ KJ7 ♥ 93 ♦ Q1063 ♣ AQ84	(3) ♠ 75 ♥ AJ2 ♦ A93 ♣ K10875
(4) ♠ KJ7 ♥ J8753 ♦ AQ6 ♣ Q5	(5) ♠ AQ72 ♥ 104 ♦ J84 ♣ KQJ5	(6) ♠ 632 ♥ AQ105 ♦ AQ109 ♣ J6

In hands 1–4, one would open with a weak 1NT. In hands (1) and (2), with scattered honors in three suits, the general weakness of the hand does not allow for a comfortable two-level bid. In hand (3), the club length is useful for a possible NT contract. In hand (4), the heart suit is too weak to rebid. One would not open hands (5) and (6) 1NT. In (5), one would open one club, and if responder bids one diamond or one heart, opener can bid one spade. In (6), one would open one diamond, since one can raise hearts or rebid diamonds.

Responder with a balanced hand must take into account that game is possible only if he has a minimum of 12 HCP (an opening hand) and opener has a maximum hand. Hence, with a balanced hand, no five-card suit and fewer than 12 HCP, responder must pass. Responder does not use transfer bids. Two hearts and two spades are to play. Three-level bids are invitational. We review some bids after a weak 1 NT opener.

2♣/2♦ nonforcing/forcing Stayman. Opener bids 2♦/2NT with no four-card major, two of a major with four, where 2♥ may imply both.

### After 1NT-2♣/2♦

Pass	Garbage Stayman
2♥, 2♠	to play (2♣)/invitational (2♦)
2NT	invitational
3m	five plus card minor suit, game forcing, slam oriented. By a passed hand it is invitational with a four-card major and five plus cards in the minor.
3M	Smolen
4♣	Gerber
4♦, 4♥	Delayed Texas transfer, 6+ 4 in the majors, no slam interest/very strong hand with a void
4NT, 5NT	Quantitative

5M GSF

**After**

**1NT-2♣-2M:**

2NT Invitational

3m five plus card minor suit, game forcing, slam oriented. By a passed hand it is invitational with a four-card major and five plus cards in the minor.

3M Invitational

Sets M as trump suit, and responder may be planning to RKCB in M in his next bid (kickback/1430).

4m Void, fit in M, slam interest

4NT, 5NT Quantitative

5M GSF

5m, 6X Sign-off

**After 1NT opening,**

2♥, 2♠ to play

2NT invitational

3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ natural and invitational

**Interference with weak NT is common.**

**After double, 1NT-double,** the following scheme is used.

Redouble shows clubs.

2-level bids Transfers and sign-off.

Pass Opener is asked to show a five-card minor or to redouble with none.  
After opener redoubles, responder starts bidding suits up the line.

2NT Two-suited monster

3X Weak hand seven plus card suit

3NT Solid seven plus card minor, nothing else outside, opener is expected to bid four clubs without reasonable stoppers.

**After the auction: 1NT-p-p-X-p-p:**

Redouble Five-card minor, opener relays to two clubs

2♣, 2♦, 2♠ Lower of two four-card suits

With the auction 1NT-2X, a natural or artificial bid, you can play Lebensohl, Rubinsohl, Rumpelsohl (a combination of Lebensohl and Rubinsohl), or Transfer Lebensohl.



### After the auction 1NT-p-2♣-2X

Opener rarely bids. A double would be for penalties. 2M shows a good fitting maximum [4-4-2-3] hand when X = ♦; otherwise, it shows a maximum hand with a two small cards in X.

### After the auction 1NT-p-2♣-X

In general, the opener will indicate whether he should be playing in 2♣-doubled. Therefore, pass shows a good four-card suit, allowing opener to redouble for business; redouble shows a five-card suit.

### After the auction 1NT-p-2♦-X and 1NT-p-2♥-X

Responses are unchanged except that opener must pass with two cards in partner's suit. Redouble is natural showing a fair four plus card suit and willing to play the redoubled contract.

### After the auction 1NT-p-p-2X

Opener's double is for takeout, showing exactly xx in opponent's suit. Responder's double is penalty oriented: opener must take out with xx in the opponent's suit or other poor defensive hand. As responder, it denies a five plus card major; he may compete on the two-level showing his cheapest four-card suit or with 2NT showing both minors (or if X = ♠, any takeout).

The primary advantage of playing a weak NT is its preemptive value. Let's consider an example taken from a National Championship.

North

		<p>♠ K x x</p> <p>♥ 10 9 8 x x</p> <p>♦ A K 10</p> <p>♣ x x</p>	
West (Dealer)		East	
♠ A x		♠ x x x	
♥ K Q x x		♥ A J x x	
♦ J x x		♦ x x	
♣ K x x x		♣ Q J x x	
		South	
		♠ Q J 10 x	
		♥ x	
		♦ Q x x x x	
		♣ A x x	

Playing a weak NT, west opens 1NT. Neither north nor south can afford to overcall at the two-level, so the contract is played at 1NT. If, however, you opened the west hand one club, north

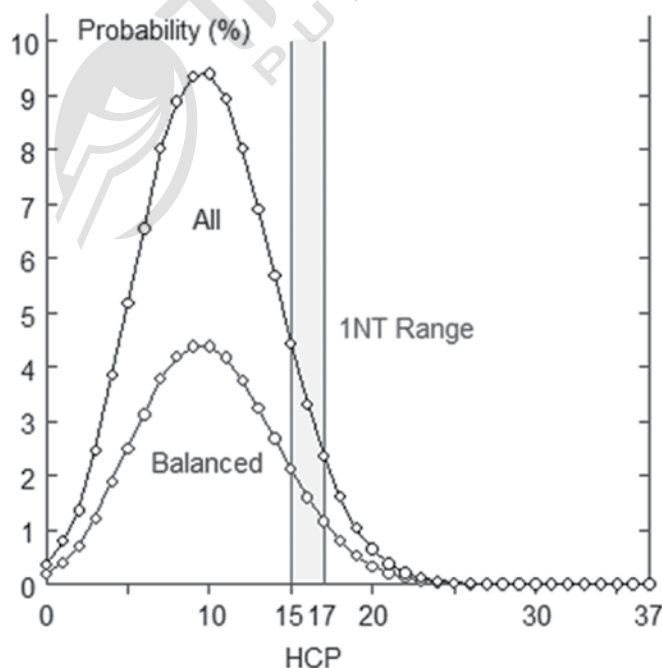
might double and the spade game by north-south may be reached. While the east-west pair cannot make 1NT, the contract should be down two for a north-south score of 200. This is clearly better than the game score of 620. However, north led the ♥10 with no information to guide the lead and the contract was made! South shifted to a diamond upon taking the A♣, but the opponents can only take six tricks before east-west took seven. The opponents were punished because they do not know which suit to attack; they must guess. West is dealer with east-west nonvulnerable and north-south vulnerable.

With a strong hand, playing any form of chicken NT, you cannot open 1NT; instead, you must open one of a minor and then bid 1NT.

Much of the material in this section on weak NT is based upon the book by Andy Stark (2006), *The Weak Notrump, How to Play it, How to Play Against it*, Master Point Press. Using a Google search with the string defined by Katzman@math.umn.edu, one may obtain a Kaplan-Sheinwold PDF by Katzman, who reviews his system of bids to 1NT using the range 12–14.

Playing the 2/1 game force system, one makes a one-level bid with 11/12–19 points. Playing a strong notrump, one opens 1NT with 15–17 HCP and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semibalanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void. How often does this bid occur?

Looking at the distributions of HCP and hand patterns, what do you see? Clearly, the mode (most frequent occurrence) is near ten, not fifteen! To get into the bidding more frequently, it is better to play a weak notrump.



What range do you select? Any range that *does not* include fifteen is considered a weak notrump range. The most popular ranges in the United States seem to be 10–12 and 12–14; however, some use 13–15 (semiweak, but considered strong, since it includes fifteen).

Why play the weak notrump? There are several advantages.

- (1) It occurs much more frequently than the strong notrump; this allows one to get into the bidding early.
- (2) It has preemptive value, forcing the opponents to the two-level.
- (3) The bid immediately conveys to your partner that your hand is balanced, and there tends to be fewer rebidding problems.
- (4) Because all balanced hands with minimum values are opened, constructive bidding and rebidding are enhanced.
- (5) Since all 15–17 hands are now opened one of a minor and forcing, responder must bid even with a weak hand. This often allows the partnership to find a fit, which may be missed playing the strong notrump.

What about the disadvantages?

- (1) You may get doubled and have no convenient escape, vulnerable.
- (2) Because you open strong hands with one of a minor instead of 1NT, the opponents tend to get into the bidding early when this is not the case for the strong notrump opening.
- (3) At times, you may miss a minor suit fit and instead play a contract in notrump.
- (4) You may miss a suit contract that goes against the field or your contract may be wrong sided.

In general, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

When beginning to play the weak notrump system, the first decision you must make is to decide on a range. Playing the Precision club, the common ranges are either 12–15 or 13–15 (since in Precision, the 1♣\* bid shows 16+ HCP). Playing the 2/1 game force system, a common weak range is 12–14 (the difference between weak and strong is just three points).

Playing 2/1 and a strong notrump all balanced 15–17 hands are opened 1NT, and all balanced 12–14 hands are opened the better minor and rebid 1NT. Playing the weak notrump is now simple you merely *switch* the meaning of these two-bids!

### **Playing 12–14 Weak NT**

- 12–14 Open 1NT (announce range)
- 15–17 Open 1♣/1♦, rebid 1NT\*
- 18–19 Open any five-card suit, rebid 2NT
- 20–21 Open 2NT

Observe that the 2NT range is identical to the range used in the 2/1 bidding system and requires no change to any conventions you may play (e.g., Jacoby, Texas, etc.). With the bid of 1NT or the rebid of 1NT, after 1♣/1♦, all your 2/1 conventions apply. While the 1NT bid need not be alerted

(only announced), the rebid of 1NT\* must be alerted because we have switched the meaning of the bids, better minor and 1NT.

Note: playing 12–14 weak NT, weak hands = 0–9, invitational hands = 10–12, and game force hands = 13+, playing the strong notrump, weak = 0–7, invitational = 8–9, and game force = 10+, the difference of two points.

Playing weak NT, the bid of 2♣ is Stayman. Having a weak hand (0–9 points), you must play Garbage and Crawling Stayman when 4-4-4-1 and 4-3/4-4 in the majors, respectively.

For example, with the following hands, one bids as follows.

♠K76 ♥873 ♦J107 ♣102 Bid 2♣ and after 2♦, bid 2♥ (pick a major Crawling Stayman)

♠Q872 ♥J754 ♦J863 ♣7 Bid 2♣ and pass 2♦/2♥/2♠ (Garbage Stayman)

Using the 12–14 ranges is simple because you keep all of your “strong notrump” conventions like transfers (two-way/four-way), Stayman, and whatever three-level conventions you play with no change with the opening bid or rebid of 1NT.

However, the opening bid requires one small change: you invite game by bidding 2NT (not playing four-way transfers) with 10–12 HCP instead of 8–9 HCP and bid 3NT over 1NT with 13 instead of 10 HCP. So just do it and get into the bidding!

While the transition to weak NT is now very easy, playing the 2/1 game force system, and allows one to open 1NT more frequently than the strong (15–17) notrump convention, it is not the best range playing match points. The best weak notrump range playing match points is 10–12, also called mini NT or Kamikaze NT. Why? You get to bid more often! However, playing in team games with IMP scoring or if partner has passed, the best range to use is 12–14. Once partner has passed with perhaps 0–9 HCP, bidding 1NT with 10–12 HCP is just too risky, vulnerable or nonvulnerable. Hence, here is what we do:

Use mini NT (10–12) in the first and second seats and weak NT (12–14) in the third and fourth seats.

Having decided to play the mini NT in the first two seats, our next problem is to decide on how to fit it into our 2/1 bidding system. Opening the bidding 1NT is simple; it follows the same rules as the strong/weak notrump openings. Open 1NT with 10–12 and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semibalanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void.

Fitting the weak NT into our 2/1 system was easy; however, with the mini NT, one has to decide how to bid balanced hands with 13+ HCP. Keeping with the weak notrump approach, we use the diamond bid to show either diamonds or a balanced notrump, and the club bid becomes short (0–2) and must be alerted. The bidding scheme follows.

**Playing 10–12 mini NT (first and second seats)**

- 10–12 Open 1NT (announce range)
- 13–15 Open 1♦\* (without a five-card major), rebid 1NT\* (if balanced)
- 15–17 Open 1♣\*, rebid 1NT\*
- 18–19 Open any five-card suit, rebid 2NT
- 20–21 Open 2NT

Note that the club bids for both the mini NT and weak NT are the same; however, in the mini NT case, it must be alerted as may be short (0–2) and announced as forcing. And we must also now alert the diamond bid as may be short (0–2) and forcing. One makes the 1NT response as soon as possible for both bids with balanced hands; however, if partner bids a major over the diamond bid, the 1NT bid is bypassed if the major can be supported with four cards.

If you open 1♦\* and partner bids 1♥ and you have four spades, you do not bid it, but instead bid 1NT\* to show a balanced hand. Now responder uses the Checkback bid of 2♣\*, which asks, “Do you have four spades or three hearts in that order?” The bid of 1♠ is used to show an unbalanced or semibalanced hand with spades and diamonds.

Observe the overlap in the 1♦\* and 1♣\* ranges playing mini NT; this is not a mistake. It is needed to handle awkward hands. Consider the following hand in the third seat where partner has passed.

♠AQ76 ♥A3 ♦KQ9532 ♣10

You hold 15 HCP, but would not open it 1♣\*, and rebid 1NT\*. Instead, you must open 1♦\*. If partner bids 1♥, rebid a 1♠ (unbalanced hand); if responder bids 1NT, you can correct to 2♦. (Sometimes you may have to use this gadget even if you were 4-2-4-3 in the third or fourth seats, if partner has passed).

Note: playing 10–12 mini NT weak, weak hands = 0–11, invitational hands = 12–14, and game force hands = 15+.

Playing the mini NT, the bid of 2♣ remains Stayman. However, having a weak hand (0–11 points), you must again play Garbage and Crawling Stayman when 4-4-4-1 or 4-3/4-4 in the majors, respectively, identical to the weak NT scheme.

Using either the weak or mini NT ranges, it is not critical that the strong hand play the final contract. Thus, many suggest that one not use transfers and to replace the Stayman convention with Two-Way Stayman (marked in red on your convention card). Because this requires new bids that are not used playing the 2/1 system, I am not recommending this approach; you may add this later, if you choose. Let’s make the transition to weak notrump easy.

## **Opponents interfere**

When the opponents interfere over your mini/weak NT, after a double (takeout/penalty) or 2♣, play that all your conventions are on, like transfers and Stayman. When the double is for penalty, one needs an escape sequence. They are called runout schemes. There are, for example, DONT, Brozel, Helvic, and many more schemes. A very simple scheme follows.

### **Simple runout**

To keep it simple, if the double is for penalty, one redoubles for penalty, bids a five-card suit immediately, or passes\*. The pass must be alerted, since it asks partner to bid his five-card suit or to bid four-card suits up the line or to redouble. After a redouble opener bids four-card suits up the line to try to find the best fit, if 4-3-3-3, one bids three-card suits up the line.

### **Competing over mini/weak NT (any seat)**

Competitive bidding over a strong notrump is geared toward finding a part score or to sacrifice; games are unlikely. Hence, you often interfere with a weak hand. Over the mini/weak NT, a game is a possibility, so doubles and bidding must be constructive and disciplined. What systems should you use? Many employ Landy.

### **Landy**

- 2♣\* Both majors 4-4, 5-4, 4-5, or 5-5 (2♦ asks for longest)
- 2♦/2♥/2♠ Natural
- Double\* Penalty (14/15 HCP)

Other popular conventions one may employ are Mohan, Multi-Landy, Modified Cappelletti, among others. Whatever you convention use double, a double for penalty not takeout. Do not use Meckwell or DONT.

By design, competing against mini notrump bids can be difficult. Suppose the bidding starts 1NT—double—pass—pass, redouble—pass—suit bid. Your partner doubled the mini NT, you passed with strength, the notrump bidder redoubled, and his partner on your right started an escape sequence with a suit bid. A double by you would be for penalties, but if your RHO has bid your small doubleton, what are you to do?

If you pass, partner will get another chance to bid, but a pass by you would imply that your original pass showed weakness, and you don't want that. So pass is not an option. A bid by you shows strength as well as a hand unsuited for a penalty double, but the question remains, should your bid be forcing or simply constructive?

One of the problems with bidding strong hands after a weak notrump opener is that you don't have a cue bid to announce strength. Now that they have started an escape sequence, there is a cue bid available and it should show either flat or multisuit hand, which is not suitable for a penalty double but is strong enough for game.

It is best that a minimum bid by you is constructive but not forcing, but that jump bids (below game) are forcing.

## **Two-Way Stayman**

When playing weak notrumps, 10–12 or 11–14 HCP (or semiweak 13–15), one may use Two-Way Stayman. In response to a 1NT opening, responses have these meanings:

**2♣** - Any sort of invitational hand denies game-going strength opener that shows any major, but with both majors, one bids 2NT with a minimum and 3♣ with a maximum. This will avoid getting the bidding too high when opener has both majors and a minimum, with responder having neither major. This response can also be made with a weak three-suited hand short in diamonds, planning to pass any two-level bid by opener. If opener ungraciously shows both majors, responder's 3♥/3♠ bid closes the auction, even if opener has shown a maximum hand. Otherwise, any rebid by responder is invitational. That could be awkward when responder has an invitational hand with five hearts and opener bids 2♠. He will normally bid 3♥, which opener will have to pass with a minimum, even with a doubleton heart. To avoid this situation, responder should bid 2NT over 2♠ when holding five hearts and a balanced hand.

**2♦** - Forcing to game bid. Opener shows a major, bidding 2♠ with both (planning to bid 3♥ later if spades are not raised). When opener responds in two of a major, responder should not jump to 3NT when holding three-card support. Instead, she should bid a forcing 2NT, giving opener a chance to rebid a five-card suit. She should also rebid 2NT when holding four hearts after opener has responded 2♠, in case opener has four hearts too. A rebid of three in a minor implies some slam interest.

**2♥/2♠**- Natural sign-off bids (not alerted). While the response denies much interest in game, opener can raise one level (only) to show an extremely good supporting hand.

**2NT** – Invitational to 3NT (Note: some play this as a puppet to 3♣ with/without a correction to 3♦).

**3♣/3♥/3♦/3♠**- A six-card suit with two of the top three honors and 9–11 HCP.

Texas transfers are applicable, but in competition only through three plus (when both transfers would be jump bids).

## **Weak notrump runouts**

Many more players are opening 1NT weak. Any range that does not include fifteen is considered a weak notrump bid.



When the opponents make a penalty double of your weak 1NT opening bid, your side can be at serious risk of being set and going for a very large penalty (especially if you are playing a weak notrump opening bid). This is particularly true if the opponents can run off a long suit against you in notrump. Consequently, it is imperative in these situations that your side has a mechanism for finding its best fit at the two levels. DONT notrump runouts are one such mechanism for escaping the penalty double and finding your fit.

### **Modified DONT (Meckwell) notrump runouts**

DONT runouts bids are similar to the notrump overcall convention; hence, they share the same name. Playing this convention, after the auction has begun 1NT-double (for penalty), a redouble shows a single-suited hand and forces partner to bid 2♣ so that you can pass or correct to your suit. All bids at the two levels show a two-suited hand with the bid suit and a higher-ranking suit: 2♣ shows clubs and a major suit, 2♦ shows diamonds and a major, 2♥ shows both majors, and 2NT shows the minors. All three-level bids show a long suit and are to play, and Texas transfers are on. If you have a good hand and want to play 1NT doubled, you should pass. For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit, or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.

If you don't like the modified DONT runout procedure, you can play standard DONT runouts, or you may use the following.

### **Exit transfer notrump runouts**

If the opponents have doubled your partner's 1NT opening bid, exit transfer notrump runouts provide you with a way to try to escape the penalty with as little damage as possible. Exit transfers additionally have the benefit of allowing the notrump opener to declare most two-level contracts, "right-siding" them.

Playing exit transfers after the auction has gone 1NT-double, redouble is a transfer to 2♣ and shows five plus clubs, 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds and shows five plus diamonds, 2♦ is a transfer to hearts and shows five plus hearts, and 2♥ is a transfer to spades and shows five plus spades. If you have a two-suited hand, you should pass; your pass forces partner to redouble, then with a hand well suited to play 1NT redoubled, you can pass, or else you can describe your two-suited hand by bidding 2♣ to show clubs and a higher-ranking suit, 2♦ to show diamonds and a major, and 2♥ to show both majors.

For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.



**Helvic notrump runouts**

Helvic notrump runouts are a convention that is popular in England. Part of the reason for its popularity is that the Standard English/ACOL system contains a weak notrump opening bid, which is significantly more susceptible to penalty doubles.

If the opponents have doubled your partner's 1NT opening bid, Helvic notrump runouts provide you with a way to try to escape the penalty with as little damage as possible. Playing Helvic, you can either show a single-suited hand by redoubling or show a two-suited hand by bidding at the two-level. A 2♣ bid shows clubs and diamonds, a 2♦ bid shows diamonds and hearts, a 2♥ bid shows hearts and spades, and a 2♠ bid shows spades and clubs. If you redouble, partner will bid 2♣ as a pass-or-correct bid. And finally, if you wish to play in 1NT despite the double, or if you have a two-suited hand with nontouching suits, you should pass. Your pass forces partner to redouble so that you can play 1NT redoubled or so that you can bid 2♣ to show clubs and hearts or 2♦ to show diamonds and spades. For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.

**Landy—coping with the weak notrump bid**

The weak notrump bid forces the opponents to the two-level early in the bidding cycle; for this reason, one needs a method to convey your bids. One may either use Mohan or Landy, among others. For Landy, the bids are

2♣	both majors
2♦/2♥/2♠	natural
Double	penalty

While the Landy convention is easy to implement, a modification to Landy is to use the bid of 2♣\* to show a hand with one or both majors and a weak hand, 7–10 HCP, and the bid of 2♦\* to show a hand with both majors and a hand with 11–15 HCP. With this modification, we have Modified Landy.

**Modified Landy convention**

2♣*	one or both majors (7–10 HCP)
2♦*	both majors (11–15 HCP)
2♥/2♠	natural (11–15 HCP)
Double	penalty alert (16+ HCP)
* alert	

Responder now bids over the bid of 2♣\* (one or both majors):

- 2♦\* prefers spades
- 2♥ prefers hearts

If the overcaller bids 2♣\* and partner responds 2♥, the overcaller (the two club bidder) now bids

- With both majors Pass
- With just hearts Pass
- With just spades Bid 2♠

When the overcaller bids 2♣\* and partner responds 2♦\* (I prefer spades), the overcaller (the two club bidder) now bids

- With both majors Bid 2♠
- With just hearts Bid 2♥
- With just spades Bid 2♠

Let's look at a few examples where the opponents open 1NT weak. You have the following hand:

- 1) ♠AKJ4 ♥AQJ7 ♦987 ♣32
- 2) ♠AJ432 ♥QJ762 ♦98 ♣3
- 3) ♠AKJ1043 ♥AJ7 ♦98 ♣32
- 4) ♠10987 ♥AJ73 ♦987 ♣32

For hand 1, you have 15 HCP, so you must overcall 2♦\* to show partner a good hand with the majors. Hand 2, you have only 8 HCP, so you bid 2♣\*. If partner bids 2♥, you pass and if partner bids 2♦\*, you bid 2♠. With hand 3, bid 2♠, and with hand 4, pass.

The convention may also be used to investigate game. This might go

1NT - 2♣\* - pass - 2♦\* (I prefer spades)

Pass - 2♠ - Pass - ??

Next bids:

3♠ = invitational

4♠ = to play

2NT\* Short suit game try

This sequence works well when the overcaller has at least five spades. However, suppose he is 5-5 in the majors. Now one would replace the 2♠ bid with 2NT (I have both majors). Then the bid of 3♣\* is used to ask, "Are u a minimum 7-8 or maximum 9-10?" where 3♦\* shows a minimum and 3♥\* shows a maximum. Responder to overcaller can now decide where to play the hand (pass, bid 3♠, bid 3NT or bid game in spades).

## An Extended Stayman convention

Everyone plays the Stayman convention; recall that the bidding goes

1NT-2♣-2♦ = No four-card major, 2♥ = Four hearts, and 2♠ = Four spades.

It is normal to bid 2♥ with both majors. After using Stayman, a 3♣ rebid by responder cancels the initial message and says you want to play in clubs. This is not the case if you play Extended Stayman, as described here where now 3♣ initiates Extended Stayman (the French use it for Spring Stayman).

Because there are many versions of Extended Stayman, a simple variation follows:

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♠-3♣\* = do you have another four-card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦ = 4 diamonds; 3♠ = 5 spades; 3NT = 4 clubs, 3♥ shows 4-3-3-3 shape.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣\* = do you have a four-card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦ = 4 diamonds; 3♠ shows 3-4-3-3 shape; 3NT = 4 clubs, 3♥ = 5 hearts.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣\* = do you have a four-card suit?

Opener's bid of 3♦ = some five-card minor; and 3♥ by responder asks which five-card minor; opener responses are then: 3♠ = clubs and 3NT = diamonds.

A bid of 3♥ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣\*) by opener shows a 2-3-4-4 pattern (major fragments and both minors).

A bid of 3♠ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣\*) by opener shows a 3-2-4-4 pattern.

A bid of 3NT (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣\*) shows one four-card minor with 3-3-3-4/3-3-4-3 pattern over which one can ask by bidding 4♣ (where 4♦ = diamond, 4♥ = clubs). One now usually plays in a minor suit game or in a minor suit slam.

\* Some bridge players use the bid of 3♦ after the bid of 2♦ to initiate an older version of Extended Stayman used to ask opener to bid his better three-card major. Today, many use the Mini-Maxi convention and not bid 2♣; instead after 1NT, one bids 3♥ to show 5-5 in majors and weak and the bid of 3♠ to show 5-5 in majors and strong. In addition, some use the bid of 3♣ for SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman); SARS is similar to the version of Extended Stayman provided above as discussed in chapter 1. However, if you want to use SARS and Extended Stayman, then 3♣ would be used for SARS and 3♦ would be Extended Stayman.

If you do not use 3♦ as Extended Stayman, it may be used for Stayman in Doubt (SID).

## Stayman in Doubt (SID)

Stayman is designed to locate a 4-4 fit in the majors. However, some argue that one should not use Stayman if your distribution is 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3. In general, this is bad advice. It is usually better to play in a 4-4 major suit fit rather than in notrump. However, there may be one exception. This is when the opener and partner have identical shape (4-3-3-3 facing 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3 facing 3-4-3-3). Then it may be better to play in notrump rather than a 4-4 major suit fit! To determine whether you and partner have the same shape, responder bids 3♦ after the two-level major suit bid by opener known as the Stayman in Doubt (SID) convention. It says, “Partner, I am totally flat with four of your major, if you are also totally flat considering bidding 3NT.” This allows the partnership to play in 3NT when there is total duplication in shape, even with a fit in the majors! Responder should only use this convention with 12–15 HCP. Then the value of the combined hand is 27+ HCP and the notrump will usually yield a higher score than the major suit contract.

## Vacant (worthless) Doubleton convention

What do you do when your partner opens 1NT (14/15–17 HCP) and you have 10–14 HCP but a worthless doubleton?

Let’s consider a few examples:

Hand 1:

Opener’s hand ♠A6 ♥AK52 ♦763 ♣KQ92  
 Responder’s hand ♠42 ♥Q63 ♦AK42 ♣J654

Hand 2:

Opener’s hand ♠AQJ4 ♥J7 ♦AQ6 ♣K963  
 Responder’s hand ♠K52 ♥42 ♦K754 ♣A754

With both hands, partner opens 1NT and the next person passes. What do you now bid?

The obvious bids for both responder hands are 3NT, but are you not nervous about your worthless doubleton? With the first hand, you may play better in five of a minor or even four hearts with a spade lead. With the second hand, making 3NT with a heart lead has zero play. Making ten tricks in spades has a chance if spades are no worse than 4-2; as long as clubs divide 3-2 or diamonds 3-3 is a better contract! How do you reach the most makeable contract?

To avoid playing notrump with worthless doubletons (Jx at best), Dave Cliff, who also invented splinter bids, suggested the Vacant Doubleton (VD) convention. The convention is used when responder has no four-card major and a worthless doubleton. While the notrump bidder may also have a worthless doubleton, the VD convention is used to find responders worthless doubleton, allowing the notrump bidder to conceal his.

For responder to use the convention, we said he must have an invitational notrump hand, no four cards in the major, and a worthless doubleton with 8–9 HCP. In addition, there are two more requirements.

1. Responder must have three to an honor in at least one major.
2. Responder does not hold a six-card minor.

How do we proceed?

- (1) Recall that in SAYC, a bid of 2♠ is used as a relay to 3♣ to show a weak hand to sign off in 3♣ or 3♦. Opener is required to complete the transfer by bidding 3♣ and responder will pass or correct to 3♦. These are both used to show “bust” hands with 6–8 HCP and a six-card minor.
- (2) Playing 2/1 and Minor Suit Stayman, the bid of 2♠ is asking partner to show a four-card minor. It is used to show the following types of hands: (1) a weak minor two suiter, (2) a weak hand with diamonds, and (3) a strong minor two suiter. Playing Minor Suit Stayman, opener shows a four-card minor by bidding 3♣/3♦. Without a four-card minor, opener bids 2NT. Responder passes holding a weak minor two suiter if opener shows a four-card minor. If opener has denied holding a four-card minor by bidding 2NT, responder’s rebid of 3♣ shows a weak two suiter and asks opener to pass with three-card support, or to correct to 3♦. Opener will always have three cards in one of the minors, since with three cards, opener would be 5-4 in the majors and would have opened 1♥/1♠.

To show a diamond bust, responder will either pass a 3♦ rebid by opener or correct opener’s 2NT or 3♣ responses to 3♦. Minor Suit Stayman followed by a 3♦ rebid is always a drop-dead bid. Any rebid by responder, other than 3♣/3♦, shows a strong minor two suiter. Responder’s normal rebids are

3♥/3♠ shows a singleton or void in the suit bid

3NT shows 2-2-5-4 (5-5 in the minors) and mild slam interest

4NT shows 2-2-5-4 (5-4 in the minors) and strong slam interest

A raise of opener’s 3♣/3♦ rebid to 4♣/4♦ is usually Roman Key Card Minorwood; however, some play Kickback (the suit above the agreed-upon trump suit). If opener shows a four-card minor, all sequences are natural and forcing to game.

- (3) In Standard American, one does not employ transfers. The bid of 2♠ is to play.
- (4) In modified SAYC, a bid of 2♠ is used as a relay to 3♣ to show a weak hand (6–8 HCP) with a six-card club suit. Opener is required to bid 3♣. A bid of 3♣ is a transfer to 3♦, 6–8 HCP and six diamonds. And, a bid of 2NT is 8–9 HCP and invitational.

Note that none of the aforementioned methods protect one against a worthless doubleton. How might we proceed?

In this book, we recommend four-way transfers; however, to invoke the Vacant Doubleton convention, you cannot use four-way transfers.

For the Vacant Doubleton convention, the bid of 2NT is an *asking* bid. What kind of hand do you have?

- 3♣ minor two suiter and forcing
- 3♦ vacant doubleton in clubs or diamonds
- 3♥ vacant doubleton in hearts
- 3♠ vacant doubleton in spades

After the 3♦ response showing a VD in either minor, opener bids 3♥ to ask which minor. Responder's bid of 3♠ shows clubs and 3NT shows diamonds.

When using this convention, the bid of 2NT by responder suggests 8–9 HCP, invitational, but partner may still have a worthless doubleton; however, opener may invoke a Checkback bid as described more fully below.

For hand 1, responder would bid 2♠. When partner bids 2NT (the asking bid), responder bids 3♠ to show his vacant/worthless doubleton in spades. The rest is up to partner. Over 3♠, he would likely bid 4♥ and play in a 4-3 fit. Note that this contract has a good chance of making if hearts are 3-3. With a spade lead, the 3NT contract has almost a zero probability of making.

For hand 2, one would again bid 2♠, and after a 2NT bid by opener, one would bid 3♥ to show the vacant/worthless doubleton. Now partner would bid 4♠. This will make if spades split 4-2, provided clubs split 3-2, or diamonds split 3-3; again, much better than 3NT.

But opener has four clubs; instead of bidding 2NT, suppose he bids 3♣ showing four plus clubs. Now responder bids 3♦, and opener must bid 3♠ because of the heart doubleton. With three spades, responder bids 4♠. All is well!

Let's look at one more example.

Hand 3:

Opener's hand ♠A1075 ♥K52 ♦AK54 ♣Q9

Responder's hand ♠KJ2 ♥AJ6 ♦Q8762 ♣63

Playing the convention, the bidding would go

- |                  |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1NT              | 2♠                        |
| 2NT              | 3♦ (doubleton is a minor) |
| 3♥ (which minor) | 3♠ (clubs)                |
| 4♠               | Pass                      |

Now four spades again has a reasonable chance of making. With a club lead, 3NT has little chance of making.

Whenever responder bids 2NT nonforcing, Stayman, or transfers to hearts, opener may Checkback for a vacant doubleton. Here is how it works:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2x	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ (Transfer)
2♥	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

In all cases, opener with enough points to bid game has the option of bidding 3♣ to ask responder if he has a vacant/worthless doubleton. Over the bid of 3♣, responder responses are

3♦ vacant doubleton in clubs or diamonds  
 3♥ vacant doubleton in hearts  
 3♠ vacant doubleton in spades  
 3NT no vacant doubleton

After 3♦, one may again ask which minor by bidding 3♥ as above. Again, a bid of 3♠ shows clubs and 3NT shows diamonds.

NOTE: It is not useful to show a vacant/worthless doubleton in a suit bid by the opener (e.g., after Stayman, if opener bid spades, responder should not bother to show a worthless doubleton in spades).

We now look at some more examples of the Checkback variation of vacant doubletons.

Hand 4:

Opener's hand ♠Q42 ♥KJ1054 ♦K32 ♣AK

Responder's hand ♠63 ♥A76 ♦QJ106 ♣J654

The bids follow.

<b>Opener</b>	<b>Responder</b>
1NT	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♠ (spade doubleton)
4♥	Pass

Opener has five hearts and three spades, to avoid a rebid problem, he opens 1NT. He checks back over 2NT by bidding 3♣ and finds out that partner has a worthless doubleton spade and bids 4♥. (Yes, he could have bid 3♥ over 2NT as a natural bid, but this informs the opponents about his five-card suit, something he would prefer to hide if the final contract is 3NT).

Hand 5:

Opener's hand ♠AK64 ♥AK ♦QJ102 ♣963  
Responder's hand ♠J82 ♥QJ754 ♦A43 ♣83

The bids follow.

<b>Opener</b>	<b>Responder</b>
1NT	2♦
2♥	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♦ (worthless doubleton in clubs or diamonds)
3♥	3♠ (worthless club doubleton)
4♥	Pass

Hand 6:

Opener's hand ♠AQ6 ♥AQ2 ♦32 ♣KQ973  
Responder's hand ♠KJ43 ♥10874 ♦65 ♣A52

The bids follow.

<b>Opener</b>	<b>Responder</b>
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2♦	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♦ (worthless doubleton in clubs or diamonds)
3♥	3NT (worthless doubleton in diamonds)
4♦ (choose better major*)	4♠

\* Called choice-of-game cue bid!

Final note: suppose responder has a VD (worthless doubleton) with a four-card or five-card major. You may want to add the VD option to your agreement as follows.



Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♣ (Checkback*)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2x	3♣ (Checkback*)

Here, the bid of 3♣ is used to show a “game force + VD.”

What do you lose by playing the Vacant (worthless) Doubleton convention?

The major risk is that it provides information to the opponents. If you had bid 1NT-3NT, the opponents may not have found the lead in your partner’s VD (worthless) suit.

To add the VD convention to your partnership agreement and opening 1NT (14/15–17 HCP), the bid of 2NT is invitational to 3NT having 8–9 HCP, and bid of 3♣ is then used as a transfer to a six-card diamond suit. The bid of 2♠ is either VD or a transfer to clubs.

This convention is an extension of the Vacant Doubleton convention contained in the 2003 book *Bridge Conventions in Depth*, by Matthew and Pamela Granovetter and published by Master Point Press.

## Notrump overcalls

When the opponents open the bidding at the one-level and you overcall with the bid of one notrump, one usually has a strong 15–18 HCP hand and a stopper in the bid suit. As discussed herein, one can play systems on/off over the notrump overcall—that is, if off, then one plays all responses as natural with cue bid Stayman, or with systems on, one uses transfers and Stayman. However, when the opponents open the bidding, it is less likely that you have a “strong” notrump overcall (it occurs in less than 10 percent of all hands and even less frequently with a stopper). What do you bid after the opponents open the bidding with one of a major and you hold the following hand?

♠ 7 3 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q J 9 6 3 ♣ J 8 4

You only have 8 HCP, so you should not bid at the two-level, and you cannot double, since you cannot pass any suit bid by partner. A solution is to play the Gardner Notrump Overcall convention devised by the World Champion Nico Gardener, London, England. In France, it is called the Comic Notrump Overcall. Or one may play the Baron Notrump Overcall convention developed by Leo Baron from Salisbury, Southern Zimbabwe, or the Lindkvist One Notrump Overcall convention developed by the Swedish champion Magnus Lindkvist (also called the Raptor [Polish] Notrump convention), among others.

Is there a simpler approach? Yes! Use the bid of 1NT as a takeout bid.

Playing the 2/1 game force system, the notrump overcall bid is most often either 15–17 or 15–18 over a one-level bid with a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Making this bid, following the ACBL convention chart, it has to be neither announced nor alerted. Note some partnerships do not require a stopper and it need not be announced, but it does need to be explained if asked whether you require a stopper.

The strong notrump bid usually deters the opponents from bidding; however, suppose you make a takeout double. To make a takeout double, you need support for all of the unbid suits, ideally four-card support, especially in the unbid major suit(s). You also need at least the strength of an opening bid (12+ starting points). Another option is to reverse the takeout double and the 1NT overcall bids and change their values. What does this mean?

Now a double of the bid suit becomes a power double with 16+ HCP (a strong NT overcall) with or without a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. The power double does not require an alert and is treated as if your partner bid 1NT strong (15–17). The bid of 1NT\* then becomes the takeout bid with 10–15 HCP with/without a stopper in the opponent's bid suit, and at least three cards in the unbid suits. Now the 1NT\* bid *must* be alerted. If partner does not bid a suit, but 1NT, it shows a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Why use this practice? It is preemptive and often keeps the opponents out of the auction; they must make two-level bids. You must discuss this practice with your partner! There are other uses for the bid of 1NT, which may be actual bids, or for takeout.

If one has a stopper in the opponent's bid suit and 15+ HCP and a balanced hand, one merely doubles. However, with no more than two cards in the opponent's bid suit and 8–14 HCP, one bids 1NT\* for takeout.

After a double, one responds as if your partner opened a strong notrump (systems on/off per partnership agreement). If the opponents interfere, you again use your agreed-upon convention over notrump interference (e.g., Stolen Bids, Lebensohl, Transfer Lebensohl, etc.). Over the 1NT\* takeout bid, bid your longest suit.

Note: The ACBL standard 1NT overcall requires 15–17/18 HCP, a balanced hand, and a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Any variation from this standard must be alerted.

Can a similar practice be used with a two- or three-level preemptive opening? Yes, now 2/3NT\* is for takeout! This practice is sometimes referred to as the Notrump for Takeout convention.

## **Reverse Flannery by responder**

How many times as responder with five spades and four hearts with 5–8 HCP has your partner opened one of a minor and you bid one spade, and opener rebid his minor and you missed a fit in hearts?

To illustrate, suppose you have the following hands:

Opener ♣ 842 ♦ AQ972 ♥ AKJ ♠ 42

Responder ♣ J 9 ♦ 84 ♥ Q532 ♠ K9754

And the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass; 2♦ - Pass - Pass - Pass, so you missed your heart fit.

Or even worse, suppose you have the following hand:

Opener ♣ J5 ♦ AK853 ♥ AJ94 ♠ J9

Responder ♣ 7 ♦ J4 ♥ 109742 ♠ KQ853

And again the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass; 2♦ - Pass - Pass - Pass, so again you missed your heart fit.

This bidding problem is handled by using the Reverse Flannery convention (RFC). How does it work?

After a minor suit opening, the convention works:

- (1) An immediate jump shift to two hearts after partner's minor opening is defined as showing a hand with five spades and four or five hearts, minimum responding values (about 5–8 HCP).
- (2) A one spade response followed by a jump shift to three hearts on the second round is invitational, showing 5-5 distribution or better, originated by Edwin Kantar.
- (3) A bid of 2 spades shows 5-4 distribution with 9–11 HCP.
- (4) A one spade response followed by a two heart rebid is forcing for one round showing a minimum of 9 HCP and no upper limit. A three heart rebid on the third round is forcing to game.

While the RFC does not allow one to use the weak jump shift in hearts (two hearts), this is not a major problem, since two hearts is of dubious preemptive value if jump shifts are weak, and the strong jump shift of two hearts can be handled by a one heart response and aggressive rebidding.

Continuation of the auction after RFC is simple. Opener in most cases places the contract bypassing, bidding two spades, or bidding three of his original minor. He may invite naturally by bidding two notrump or three of either minor.

Responder's obligations are, usually in order of priority:

- (a) Rebid three hearts with five hearts
- (b) Rebid three notrump with stop in the unbid minor
- (c) Raise opener's minor with three
- (d) Raise opposite minor with four-card support for opener's minor (usually a void of opposite minor)
- (e) Bid three spades failing (a) through (d) above.

The RFC can be combined with inverted minors (crisscross) using the following bids:

- 1♣ 2♣ game forcing club raise
- 2♦ limit raise for clubs
- 2♥ five spades, four to five hearts, 5–8 pts
- 2♠ five spades, four to five hearts, 9–11 pts
- 2NT invitational to game, 10–12 pts
- 3♣ limit raise in clubs
- 1♦ 2♦ game forcing raise for diamonds
- 2♥ five spades, four to five hearts, 5–8/9 pts
- 2♠ five spades, four to five hearts, 9–11 pts
- 2NT invitational to game, 10–12 pts
- 3♣ limit raise in diamonds
- 3♦ weak preemptive raise for diamonds

## The TRASH convention

Most partnerships have their favorite conventions they play over a NT opening. There are a host of conventions: Cappelletti, Modified Cappelletti (also called Hamilton/Modified Hamilton), Astro, Pinpoint Astro, Brozel, Landy, Transfers (Weber), Ripstra, Hello, SCUM, DONT, Blooman, and the list goes on. For those who play a convention in the direct seat, they often have a different convention in the indirect seat. In addition, many have yet another convention over a weak NT bid (10–12/12–14) and over the Precision strong club bid (e.g., *Color RAnk* and *SHape* [CRASH] and Mathe). A convention that may be unknown to many partnerships is the TRASH convention. It can be played in the direct seat, the indirect seat, over strong bids and over weak bids. It is truly a panacea.

This convention was designed by the American champion and bridge author Harold Feldheim. The TRASH (*TRansfer And SHape*) convention is a defensive convention that can be planned against all strong opening bids (1♣, 1NT, 2♣, 2NT, etc.) and is therefore better than CRASH/Mathe that is usually only played against the one club opening. The convention is similar to the transfer system (sometimes called Weber) played over the strong notrump opening; however, it is better, since it allows the defenders to enter the auction with either one- or two-suited hands. The TRASH convention may also be used over weak 1NT (e.g., 10–12, 12–14, etc.) openings. Now one has to learn only a single convention for all seats and several bidding systems.

Based on the transfer principle, the TRASH artificial overcall shows either a one suiter in the next ranking suit (first step) or a two suiter, second and third step above the bid suit. Only the spade overcall is an exception (since the next higher step is notrump) showing a rounded (hearts and clubs) or a pointed (diamonds and spades) two suiter. The following table shows the meanings of all TRASH overcalls.

Opening bid	Overcall	Meaning of overcall
1♣, 2♣ or 1NT 2NT	Double 2♣ 3♣	Diamond one suiter Hearts-spades two suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♦ 2♦ 3♦	Heart one suiter Spades-clubs two suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♥ 2♥ 3♥	Spade one suiter Clubs diamonds two suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1NT 2NT 3NT	Club one suiter Diamonds-hearts two suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♠ 2♠ 3♠	Two suiter (unknown) Pointed (hearts and clubs) or rounded (spades and diamonds) suits

Over 1NT/2NT *double* is always for penalty.

To use the convention to show two-suited bids over the strong 1♣ opening bid (following Mathe), one may agree to use the 1NT overcall bid to show the minors instead of a club one suiter and the spade bid for an unknown two suiter. Now 1♣-2♣ is natural. With this modification, one should have a hand equal to a strong notrump opener (15–17 HCP).

### Responder bids

Facing a TRASH overcall, partner must transfer to the next ranking suit. The only exception is he has good support for the next ranking suit as well as for one of the other suit, he then bids as follows.

With a weak hand = jump in the next higher-ranking suit

With a good hand = bid notrump

The intervener now has enough information to choose the best contract for the defending partnership. With a strong hand and holding a one suiter, he may rebid the original suit or he may rebid the lowest suit of the two suiter.

TRASH has a strong nuisance effect on the opponents, posing new kinds of problems. It is also useful in finding a good sacrifice or perhaps an ideal contract.

## The Mathe convention

This is a simple convention played over a strong Precision club opening developed by Lewis L. Mathe. It goes

All single suit bids: diamonds, hearts, and spades are natural showing five plus cards.

1NT shows both minors (5+/5+)

Double shows both majors (4/4 or 5/5 by agreement)

## The “Undercall” club convention—extended

How many times have the opponents opened 1♣ and you have overcalled a major and then they negative double to show the other major? Or you make an overcall and win the contract and the weak hand is on lead? Is there a convention you can use that can prevent the often used negative double or ensure the strong hand leads?

The answer is yes; let us look at an example.

In the second seat, after the bid of 1♣, you pick up at favorable vulnerability the following hand.

♠AQJ873 ♥432 ♦J87 ♣A what do you bid?

With an opening hand and six spades, most would overcall a spade to show a good suit and lead directing! However, if you win the contract, the weak hand is on lead. In many situations, it is better to get the strong hand on lead. Thus, you want your partner to play the contract. To accomplish this goal, you may use the “Undercall” club convention based upon transfers.

The convention applies *only* over the opening bid of 1♣. In the second (overcall) seat, your overcall bids are

1♦ = transfer to hearts (five plus hearts and first- or second-round control)

1♥ = transfer to spades (five plus spades and first- or second-round control)

1♠ = transfer to diamonds (should have 10–14 HCP with an ace or king) Note: May be played to transfer to notrump, usually with a club stopper, since playing in a minor may not be attractive.

1NT = shortness in clubs and 10–15 HCP (optional\*—for takeout)

X = 16 + HCP with stopper in clubs (optional\*)

2♣ = both majors and weak 8–11 HCP

2♦ = Flannery or Extra-Shape Flannery (optional—depends on partnership agreement)

2♥ = transfer to spades (five/six plus spades and strong 16–21 HCP)

2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16–21 HCP)

2NT = five plus hearts and five plus diamonds (optional)

\* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids—then 1NT is 15–17/18 usually with a stopper and double is for takeout.

That is it! What do you gain by using the transfer bids?

- 1) You get partner to declare the hand in your long suit, putting the strong hand opening bidder on lead.
- 2) With diamonds, you preempt their one-level overcall by bidding 1♠.
- 3) You escape a penalty double if partner happens to hold length in the suit you bid and shortness in the suit you have shown.
- 4) You get to make two-bids (usually) for the price of one, since most of the time, partner will bid your suit or something else and you get to make another bid (standard transfer advantage).
- 5) By transferring into your major suit, it may take away their negative double.

Now let's look at the complete deal and employ our new "Undercall" club convention.

	♠ AQJ873	
	♥ 432	
	♦ J87	
	♣ A	
♠ 2	N W E S	♠ 64
♥ AQ75		♥ J108
♦ KQ10		♦ 654
♣ K10973		♣ Q8642
	♠ K1095	
	♥ K96	
	♦ A632	
	♣ J5	

Not playing the Undercall club convention, north would overcall a spade and N-S would reach a part score or game in spades and make eight or nine tricks with east leading the jack of hearts.

Playing the Undercall club convention, the bidding would proceed as follows.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥*	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♥**	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

\*Alert

\*\*Help suit game try—alert

With south playing the contract, west leads the king of diamonds. South wins the ace, cashes the ace of clubs, leads a trump to hand and ruffs a club, draws a second trump, and leads a diamond toward dummy, ending in hand. A heart is discarded on the thirteenth diamond. If west started

with two diamonds, he is end-played. If west started with four diamonds, he gets out with a diamond, and declarer wins the jack, leads a third trump to hand, and plays a diamond, throwing a heart. Now west is end-played. Four spades bid and made—but only from the south side.

It is true that even if south plays the hand, a club or spade lead with defeat 4♠, but only if west defends perfectly. After winning the first round of diamonds, he must shift to a heart, leading away from AQxx. It is not that easy!

What do you lose by playing the Undercall club convention?

You lose the ability to hear partner bid 1♥ or 1♠ as he could after a 1♦ overcall. Also, if you bid 1♠ with diamonds, committing your side to the two levels, you will need a better diamond suit than for a 1♦ overcall.

As in Precision, can you refuse the transfer? Yes, if they pass, bid 1NT without a fit (a void or only one card in the transfer suit, with two/three cards—accept the transfer). Or you can bid your own five plus suit. And if they interfere, you can pass without support or perhaps bid your own suit. Finally, you can bid 2♣ to ask overcaller to bid his second suit.

Let's look at a few more examples. The opponents open 1♣ and you hold the following hands:

- (1) ♠ 975 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75
- (2) ♠ K75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75
- (3) ♠ A75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75

For hand (1), you would bid 1♥ as a transfer to diamonds (lead directing); however, with hand (2), you would bid 1NT as takeout (tells partner you have 10–15 HCP and can support all suits), and with hand (3), you would double to show 16+ points. You would reverse your bids in hands (2) and (3) if you play 1NT as a strong hand and double for takeout!

Finally, with the following hand: ♠ AKQJ7 ♥ 7 ♦ 987652 ♣ A, you would bid 1♥ (transfer to spades) and (if necessary) perhaps bid diamonds later (e.g., if partner bids 2♣).

This is the basic Undercall club “transfer” convention; it is best played only over a 1♣ bid (provided the club bid is not the strong Precision club).

However, you may also play transfers over other one-level opening as follows.

What happens if they open 1♦? Can we extend the transfer bids? Yes!

One can again use transfer bids:

Opener	You
1♦	1♥ = transfer to spades (five plus spades and first- or second-round control)
	1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10–14 HCP with an ace or king)



Note: May be played to transfer to notrump, usually with a diamond stopper.

1NT = shortness in diamonds and 10–15 HCP (optional\*—for takeout)

X = 16+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (optional\*)

2♦ = both majors (optional)

2♥ = transfer to spades (five/six plus spades and strong 16–21 HCP)

2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16–21 HCP)

2NT = five plus hearts and five plus diamonds (optional)

\* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids—then 1NT is 15–17 and double is for takeout.

What happens if they open 1♥?

Opener You

1♥ 1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10–14 HCP with an ace or king)

Note: May be played to transfer to notrump, usually with a heart stopper.

1NT = shortness in hearts and 10–15 HCP (optional\*—for takeout)

X = 16+ HCP with stopper in hearts (optional\*)

2♥ = spades and a minor (optional)

2NT = five plus clubs and five plus diamonds (optional)

3♥ = transfer to spades (five/six plus and strong 16–21 HCP)

\* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids—then 1NT is 15–17 and double is for takeout.

And finally, if they open 1♠

Opener You

1♠ 1NT = shortness in hearts and 10–15 HCP (optional\*—for takeout)

X = 16+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (optional\*)

2♠ = hearts and a minor (optional)

2NT = five plus clubs and five plus diamonds (optional)

\* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids—then 1NT is 15–17 and double is for takeout.

The convention proposed here is an extension of the Undercall club convention discussed in *Bridge Conventions in Depth* (2003) by Matthew & Pamela Granovetter, by Master Point Press.

Note: All of the material in this book is included on the ACBL General Convention Chart. This means they may be played at clubs, Sectional, Regional, and National ACBL events. This is not the case for the Undercall club; it is a Mid Chart convention, meaning it may only be played in events that have no upper master point limit.

## Reuben advances

Bidding a new suit over partner's overcall bid is played as (a) forcing, (b) nonforcing constructive, or (c) nonforcing. Each option works well with some hands and poorly with others. Is there a better option even if it cannot be used with all hands? Yes, they are called Reuben advances. Unlike the Undercall club convention, which is a Mid Chart convention, Reuben advances are allowed in the ACBL General convention chart, used in most local bridge clubs.

As motivation for Reuben advances, recall that over the opening bid of a strong notrump, most partnerships play transfer bids. This is done to allow the strong hand to play the contract to protect tenaces on the opening lead. When you make the transfer bid, as responder, you may (1) make the bid and pass, (2) transfer and raise, (3) transfer and bid notrump, and (4) transfer to one suit and bid another. In most cases, you want to bid and make another bid.

Can one employ the notrump strategy when making an overcall bid? Yes! Let's look at an example. Suppose the opener bids 1♣ and partner overcalls 1♠ and your RHO passes.

With the following hand, you would like to (1) transfer to 2♥ and pass.

♠7 ♥AQ1098 ♦Q76 ♣5432

However, with a better hand, you want to (2) transfer and raise to 3♥.

♠76 ♥AQJ98 ♦K76 ♣54

Or with a more balanced hand, (3) transfer to hearts and bid 2NT.

♠76 ♥AQ1098 ♦K76 ♣QJ2

Finally, with a two-suited hand,

♠7 ♥KQ1098 ♦AJ976 ♣J2

you might (4) raise and bid a second suit.

If the overcaller holds the following hand:

♠AQJ1098   ♥7   ♦Q76   ♣543

he may refuse the transfer and instead bid 2♠. Or with a strong two-suit hand when the transfer is to diamonds, bid 4♠ if the overcaller had the following hand:

♠AQJ1098   ♥7   ♦K765   ♣43

This is exactly how Reuben advances work.

Playing Reuben advances, the transfer begins with a cue bid of the opener's suit. In our example 1♣ - 1♠ - pass, 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds, 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, 2♥ is a transfer to spades showing three plus card supports with 10+ working points (excluding honors in the opponent's suit), and 2♠ shows a minimal raise. Reuben raises are in effect when opener's partner either passes or makes a negative double. If the overcall had been 1♥, then the bid of 1♠ is natural and forcing for one round (a jump to 2♠ is preemptive), since Reuben advances begin with 2♣—the cheapest bid of opener's suit.

#### Summary of 1♣- 1♠- Pass (double)

- 1NT    balanced with a stopper
- 2♣    transfer to diamonds
- 2♦    transfer to hearts (over a pass only not a negative double)
- 2♥    three plus card support 10+ working points
- 2♠    shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
- 2NT    balanced with stopper and two card support for spades
- 3♣/♦   Western cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

Over 1♣-1♥- pass (double), 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds, and 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, showing a limit raise or better in hearts. After 1♦-2♣- pass, 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, and 2♥ is a transfer to spades. Now 2♠ is natural.

#### Summary of 1♣- 1♥- Pass (double)

- 1♠    natural (over a pass only not a negative double)
- 1NT    balanced with a stopper
- 2♣    transfer to diamonds
- 2♦    transfer to hearts with three plus card support (limit raise)
- 2♥    shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
- 2♠    natural and preemptive (over a pass only not a negative double)
- 2NT    balanced with stopper and two card support for hearts
- 3♣/♦   Western cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

In both of these cases, a bid of 1NT would show a balanced hand with a stopper in opener's bid suit clubs, and 2NT conveys two-card support in the overcaller's major.

Rueben advances are also in effect over the bidding sequence 1♦-1♠- (pass). For this case, the bids are

Summary of 1♦- 1♠- Pass (double)

- 1NT    balanced with a stopper
- 2♣    natural
- 2♦    transfer to hearts (over a pass only not a negative double)
- 2♥    three plus card support 10+ working points
- 2♠    shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
- 2NT    balanced with stopper and two card support for spades
- 3♣/♦   Western cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

When the overcall involves two touching suits 1♣-1♦, 1♦-1♥ or 1♠-2♣, Rueben advances do not apply. This is why they cannot be used with all overcalls. Now the cheapest bid of the opponent's suit shows a limit raise in over caller's suit with three plus card support.

How does the overcaller respond after the transfer?

Let's look at our last example where the bidding went 1♦- 1♠- Pass- 2♦. The responses would be

- 2♥    accept transfer with a minimum and three-card support
- 2♠    deny support
- 3♣    deny support and shows second suit
- 3♥    accept transfer with four plus card support
- 3♦    cue bid with three plus card support and maximum
- 3♠    very good six-card suit and maximum
- 3NT   stoppers in all suits but hearts

## Montreal club relay bids

In the first or second seat, one may open a short club (0-2) to find out whether partner has a five-card major. A common system of bids is called the Montreal club relay bid, which is used in the first or second seats are forcing; however, in the third or fourth seats, the bid is nonforcing. The responses follow.

Open one club with 11-19 starting points or *double* if bid was stolen by the opening bidder.

High card points (HCP)    Responses

5/6-9 points

- 1 ♦ five plus diamonds
- 1 ♥ five plus hearts

Opener's rebid 2♣ forcing

Responder rebid six plus major suit  
or bid four-card suit

	1 ♠ five plus spades 1NT no five-card major	or bid three-card suit with A or K
10–12 points	2♣ five hearts 2♦ five spades 2♥ six plus hearts 2♠ six plus spades 2NT no five plus major	3♣ forcing, next level responder bids 4♦ - first level higher 10 points 4♥ - second level higher 11 points 4♠ - third level higher 12 points
13+ points	3♣ five hearts 3♦ five spades 3♥ six plus hearts 3♠ six plus spades 3NT no five plus major	4♣ forcing, next level responder bids 13–14 4♦ 15–16 4♥ 17–18 4♠ 19+ 5NT

Note: With one or two four-card majors, may bid 2NT with 13+ points so that partner may bid their four card major suit if available. With no four-card major, bid 3NT. With a larger hand, bid 4NT Blackwood, since no agreed-upon suit.

\* = Alert as forcing artificial bid @ = announce bid as nonforcing and may be short

A less complicated system of bids played by some is called the Kennedy club bids.

## Kennedy club bids

Open 1♣ with 11–19 starting points or *double* if bid was stolen.

High card points (HCP)	Responses	Opener's rebids
5/6–10 points	1 ♦ no five-card major 1 ♥ five plus hearts 1 ♠ five plus spades	Bid four-card majors up the line jump with 15+ Bid 1NT balanced minimum
	1NT no four/five-card major	Invite 2NT or bid best minor

The responder, holding neither a four-card major suit nor a five-card major suit, and no five-card support for opener's minor suit, will bid notrump on the appropriate level according to the number of working values: 2NT with values of 9/10 to 12, and 3NT with game values.

## Montreal diamond relay bids

In the first or second seat, one may open a diamond to find out whether partner has a four-card major. A common system of bids called the Montreal diamond relay bid, which is used in the first or second seats, is forcing; however, in the third or fourth seats, the bid is nonforcing. The responses follow.

Open one diamond with 11–19 starting points or *double* if bid was stolen by the opening bidder.

High card points (HCP) Responses

6–9 points	1 ♥ four plus spades	Opener rebid of 2♣ forcing any other bid to play
	1 ♠ four plus hearts	
	1NT no major	
10–12 points	2♣ four hearts	3♣ forcing any other bid to play
	2♦ four spades	
	2♥ five plus hearts	
	2♠ five plus spades	
	2NT no major	
13+ points	3♣ four hearts	5♣ forcing, next level bids 13–14 five diamonds 15–16 five hearts 17–18 five spades 19+ 5NT
	3♦ four spades	
	3♥ five plus hearts	
	3♠ five plus spades	
	3NT no major	

\* = Alert bid as forcing and artificial one or two four-card majors

The Montreal club and diamond relay bids are used to find major suit fits, either 5-3 or 4-4 in the majors. If you choose to use the Montreal bids, you cannot use the 2/1 inverted minor bids.

## Multi weak two-bids

The opening bids of 2♦/2♥/2♠ usually show a hand with 5/6–10 HCP and a six-card suit. Is there a better bidding strategy?

Yes. How about the multisuit weak two-bids?

**The bids are defined:**

2♦ - Single heart suit, or two suits: diamonds and clubs, or diamonds and spades

2♥ - Single spade suit, or two suits: hearts and clubs, or hearts and diamonds

2♠ - Single club suit, or two suits: spades and diamonds, or spades and hearts

Observe that the single-suited hands are the next level suit (diamonds implies hearts, hearts implies spades, and spades implies clubs), transfer like bids. Hence, responder bids the next suit up the line to play, and opener passes if the hand is single suited. If opener has a two-suited hand (the hand includes the suit bid and two suits excluding the suit immediately above the suit bid), he refuses the two-level bids and bids three clubs (after 2♦-2♥-3♣) or three diamonds (after 2♥-2♠-3♦ or 2♠-3♣-3♦), the lower-ranking suit of a two-suited hand. Partner now knows both suits and either passes or bids the second suit at the three-level.

With game interest, responder does not use the relay bids of hearts, spades, and clubs, but instead bids 2NT.

Now opener bids his suit if single suited (hearts, spades, or clubs) at the three-level. If two suited, he again bids three clubs or three diamonds, the lower-ranking suit, with minimal values (5–7 HCP).

With 8–10 HCP, opener bids 3NT if single suited or the higher-ranking suit at the three-level if holding a two-suited hand—for example, the bids would be after 2♦-2NT-3♠, after 2♥-2NT-3♥, and after 2♠-2NT-3♠.

Let's look at three examples.

#### Example (1)

Opener: ♠ 6 ♥ A Q 8 7 6 5 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ 10 7 6

Responder: ♠ A Q 7 8 ♥ J 10 ♦ J 10 4 ♣ A 2

In (1), opener bids 2♦\*. Responder with only 12 HCP, bids 2♥ and opener would pass.

#### Example (2)

Opener: ♠ 6 2 ♥ A Q 8 7 6 ♦ A 9 6 5 3 ♣ 7

Responder: ♠ A Q 7 8 ♥ J 10 ♦ J 10 4 ♣ A 2

In (2) opener bids 2♥ and when partner bids 2♠, he does not pass, but bids 3♦ to show hearts and diamonds. Partner would now pass with three diamonds.

#### Example (3)

Opener: ♠ 7 ♥ A Q 8 7 6 5 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ 10 7 6

Responder: ♠ A K J 8 ♥ K J 10 9 ♦ A 10 4 ♣ 4 2

In (3), after opener's bid of 2♦\* responder bids 2NT. With only 6 HCP, opener bids 3♥ to show a minimal single-suited hand. Responder bids 4♥; however, with fewer points and no fit, responder could pass.

Some may feel that the multisuit weak two-bidding structure defined above is too complicated. Because the bids are weak, the structure must be involved to differentiate between invitational hands and game-going hands.

If one increases the value of “weak” bids to hands with more points, say, 10–12, the bidding structure may be greatly simplified; however, you have now given up weak two-bids. With weak bids increased in value one may perhaps adopt the following bidding structure. Instead of using transfer bids, one may define a structure of bids as follows:

2♦ = diamonds or diamonds and a lower-ranking suit

2♥ = hearts or hearts and a lower-ranking suit

2♠ = spades or spades and a lower-ranking suit

With a weak hand, responder may pass; there is no relay involved. With game interest, responder bids 2NT. Now the bid of 2NT becomes an asking bid. What is your second suit if two suited?

Not having a second suit, you would rebid your suit at the three-level; however, with a two-suited hand, you would bid your lower-ranking suit.

The revised bidding structure of 10–12 HCP is not arbitrary; it is identical to opening a weak notrump. Thus, if you play weak notrumps, you might want to also consider the two-suited/single-suited “weak” bids. Just a thought!

Let’s look at two more examples.

(1) ♠ 83 ♥ K J 10 9 8 ♦ J ♣ A Q 10 9 8

(2) ♠ J 10 9 4 ♥ Q J 10 7 ♦ J 10 3 ♣ A Q 10

Hand (1) has only 11 starting points, but you are 5-5 in hearts and clubs. Open the bidding 2♥.

Hand (2) also has 11 HCP; however, it is balanced.

Playing weak notrumps open the hand 1NT.

If you adopt the weak notrump bid and the weak two-bids with 10–12 HCP, consider the following bidding structure after vulnerable or nonvulnerable.

10–12 open the bidding 1NT

13–15 open 1♣, rebid 1NT

16–17 open 1♦, rebid 1NT

18–19 open one of a suit, rebid 2NT

20–21 open the bidding 2NT

As an alternative to the multi weak two-bids, some may choose to adopt Tartan two-bids devised by Hugh Kelsey and Tom Culbertson. The bidding structure follows.



## Tartan two-bids

Opener	Responder	Description
2♥		Meaning yet to be determined
	2♠	Relay/cheapest bid
2NT		20–21 HCP and a balanced hand
3♣/3♦		5-5 hearts and clubs/hearts and diamonds (6–10 HCP)
3♥		five plus hearts, 6–10 HCP
2♠		Meaning yet to be determined
	2NT	Relay/cheapest bid
3♠/3♦/3♥		5-5 spades and clubs/spades and diamonds/hearts and spades with 6–10 HCP
3♠		five plus spades, 6–10 HCP

## Burgay responses to 15–17 NT opening

I found this very interesting convention when playing strong notrumps. It incorporates Stayman, Transfers, Smolen, slammish hands, and major suit voids. It was developed by Leandro Burgay, a leading Italian expert in the early 1970s.

- 2♣ forces opener to bid 2♦, then
  - pass with a weak hand and diamonds
  - 2♥/2♠ invitational with a four-card major
  - 2NT standard 1NT-2NT invitational sequence
  - 3♣/3♦ 5-4 distribution in the minor (five cards in bid minor, four cards in the other)
  - 3NT 2-2-5-4 or 2-2-4-5
  - 3♥ Smolen five spades and four hearts
  - 3♠ Smolen four spades and five hearts
- 2♦ transfer to 2♥, (opener bids 3♥ with a four-card heart suit unless min with 3 = 4-3-3 distribution), then
  - 2♠ shows four hearts without four spades
  - 2NT shows four hearts and four spades
  - 3♣/3♦ shows four cards in bid minor and five hearts
  - 3NT shows five Hearts, balanced hand
- 2♥ transfer to 2♠, (opener bids 3♠ with four spades unless min with 4 = 3-3-3 distribution), then
  - 2NT shows four spades without four hearts
  - 3♣/3♦ shows four cards in minor and five spades
  - 3NT shows a balanced hand with five spades
- Other responses to the strong 1NT opening:

- 2♠ transfer to clubs
- 2NT transfer to diamonds
- three-level suit bid natural six plus card suit and slammish
- 3NT to play
- 4♣ major two-suited hand, longer hearts
- 4♦ major two-suited hand, longer spades
- 4♥ minor two-suited hand, heart void
- 4♠ minor two-suited hand, spade void

## Kaplan Interchange

After an opening bid of 1♥, there is an advantage to switching the 1♠ and 1NT (forcing) responses, since opener may not have a hand big enough to make a reverse bid of 2♠. This is called the Kaplan Interchange.

Suppose responder does *not* have spades but does have a typical 1NT forcing bid with 7–12 HCP. Playing standard responses, you cannot play in 1NT, because that bid is forcing. However, if you play the Kaplan Interchange, responder bids 1♠ with those hands, and opener with most minimum 5332 hands can now rebid 1NT to play, if responder agrees that is a good spot.

Other bids over the bid of 1♠ are

- 2♣ four-card club suit
- 2♦ four-card diamond suit
- 2♥ four-card heart suit
- 2♠ three-card spade suit with 12–15 HCP

If you play Flannery, you do not need this bid, since over 1♥, the bid of 1♠ shows five spades.

The disadvantage is that when responder *does* have spades, he must bid 1NT forcing, so the partnership cannot play 1NT (with normal methods they can, with opener rebidding 1NT--- 1♥-1♠ - 1NT).

However, the advantage outweighs the disadvantage, because responder will *not* have spades more often than he will have spades, so you will be able to settle in 1NT more often. The interchange is not needed if you play 1NT as semiforcing.

## Ekren two diamond convention

The weak two diamond bid has little utility in duplicate bridge. Instead, many bridge players use it as Flannery, Extra Shape Flannery, Mini Roman, Mexican two diamonds, and many others.

Because it is important to find a major suit fit, another option is to employ the bid as the Ekren two diamond bid suggest by Biørn Olav Ekren of Norway.

The bid of 2♦, playing the 2/1 game force system is defined as 4-4, 4-5, 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors with 5–10 HCP.

Responses to the bid are

- Pass to play (can be a tactical maneuver in the absence of a major suit fit and does not guarantee long diamonds)
- 2♥/♠ to play
- 2NT relay (invitational or stronger)
- 3♣ natural, not forcing
- 3♦ invitational with 3-3 in the majors
- 3♥/♠ preemptive to play
- 4♥/♠ to play

In responding to the 2NT relay, the opener indicates whether his holdings are a minimum (5–7 HCP) or a maximum (8–10 HCP) and something about his distribution.

- 3♣ = any minimum (responder's 3♥/♠ rebid now indicates an invite)
- 3♦ = 5-5 min or max (creates game force)
- 3♥ = 4-5 max (creates game force)
- 3♠ = 5-4 max (creates game force)
- 3NT = 4-4 max (creates game force)

Playing the Ekren two diamond convention, one may use the bid of 2♥ to indicate a hand with 11–15 HCP and exactly 4-4 in the majors. This treatment has the advantage that the left-hand opponent of the opener can hardly gamble on the fact that he will get a second chance to bid.

The bid of 2♠ shows a five plus spade hand with 5–10 HCP and two of the top three honors when vulnerable.

## **When the opponents show weakness**

Playing 2/1 game force, you often hear the following auctions: 1♣-1NT or 1♦ - 1NT and you are in the balancing seat. What do you bid?

Clearly, the points are 20-20. Do you double? And if you do, what is the meaning of the bid? Do you really have the other three suits? I don't think so.

I would recommend the following strategy.

When you are 4-4 in the majors, cue bid their suit as a delayed Michaels bid to show partner that you are 4-4 in the majors. And use a double to show that you are 4-4 in the two lowest unbid suits, like an unusual 2NT bid (e.g., diamonds and hearts after the club bid, and clubs and hearts

after the diamond bid). If you have spades, bid them at the one-level, even with four and with two of the top three honors.

How does partner respond? With a fit, he bids the suit; however, without a fit, partner must bid his own five-card suit at the two-level.

Try to never let the opponents play 1NT in a duplicate game when you have the majors or hearts and a minor.

What if the bidding goes 1♥ - 1♠ - 1NT?

Because the opponents have bid the majors, it is usually best to pass with this bidding sequence. Let them play in a notrump contract. Who wants to play in a minor suit partial?

### **Fast arrival or picture bids**

Playing the 2/1 game force system, suppose the bidding goes 1♠ - 2♣; 2♠ - 4♠. What does the game bid mean?

Using the principle of “fast arrival,” some may interpret the bid as “I am not interested in bidding on,” since if I were, I would have bid 3♠. Or does it show a specific holding?

Some bridge experts agree that it should show a specific holding called a picture bid. The bid of 4♠ would show that partner’s high card points are in clubs and spades with no controls or shortness in the unbid suits.

This concept was considered by Eric Rodwell in his March/April 2008 2/1 article called the “Principle of Fast Arrival” on the website [/www.betterbridge.com/articles/Two-Over-One/09-200803.pdf](http://www.betterbridge.com/articles/Two-Over-One/09-200803.pdf).

Fast arrival does not rule out the possibility of slam when partner has extra values. Let’s look at Rodwell’s first example.

WEST	EAST
♠ K Q 8 7 6 4 3	♠ A J 2
♥ K 3	♥ A Q J 6 2
♦ A 9	♦ 8 4 2
♣ K 7	♣ 9 5

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥
2♠	4♠
4NT	5♥
6♠	Pass

With a minimum for the 2/1 response, east's jumps to game over the 2♠ rebid. That doesn't deter west from going to slam once east shows a fit for spades, along with enough strength for a 2/1 game forcing response. East jump to game is called a picture bid. It paints a nice picture of his hand: a minimum opening bid with most of the high cards in hearts and spades with no controls in diamonds or clubs. With extra values, or high cards in clubs and diamonds, east could raise to 3♥. With shortness in clubs or diamonds, east could make a *splinter* jump to 4♣ or 4♦.

Both partners can use the bid. Sometimes the opener may take a fast route to game: We look at Rodwell's second example.

WEST	EAST
♠ A K J 7 5	♠ 8 2
♥ K J 6 2	♥ A Q 10 7 4
♦ 8 4	♦ K Q 6
♣ 9 8	♣ Q 7 4

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥
4♥	Pass

West likes east's 2♥ response, but has a minimum opening bid with no help outside of hearts and spades. West quickly takes the partnership to game. East knows that opener could have simply raised to 3♥ to leave more room for slam exploration west's jump to game is again a picture bid. It paints a nice picture of the west hand: a minimum opening bid with most of the high cards in hearts and spades.

Playing the 2/1 game force system, a jump to the four-level in the bid suit may not mean stop. You must discuss this with your partner.

As another example, suppose the bidding goes 1NT - 2♣; 2♦ - 4♣. What is the bid of four clubs? Clearly, a picture bid showing a distributional hand (perhaps 6-4-2-1 or 6-4-3-0) with values in clubs and a major inviting partner to investigate slam in clubs.

The picture bid may also be played with Jacoby 2NT. What does the bidding sequence 1♠ - 2NT followed by the opener's bid of 4♠ imply?

Consider this set of bids, playing picture bids:

- 3♣, 3♦ or 3♥ = Singleton or void in that suit
- 3♠ = good 14+ HCP with extra length in spades, no singleton
- 3NT = 15–18 pts., balanced (no singleton or void)
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = Decent five-card side suit (QJxxx or better)
- 4♠ = 19+ HCP with slam interest

Without the concept of picture bids, most partnerships playing Jacoby use the bid of 4♠ with no slam interest. Then the bid of 3♠ is either semistrong or real strong. With this sequence of bids, information is conveyed to the opponents. Instead, one should consider the bidding structure proposed above to convey information to your partner; instead of the opponents.

### **Jumping to 3NT**

In the auction 1♥-2♣-3♦-3NT, partner has jumped to game. What does this mean? Some play it as fast arrival. But is that the best approach? Let's look at an example.

Say, the bidding goes 1♠-2♦-2♠ and you hold the following hand:

♠Q4 ♥KQ9 ♦AQ872 ♣K45

You have 16 points, clearly not a minimum! If you bid 3NT (fast arrival), you may have missed a slam. And if you bid 2NT, and partner next bids 3NT, you may also miss a slam if partner has extras.

To solve this dilemma, one may define the sequence 1x-2y-2z/x-3NT as a hand with 16–17 points. Thus, the bid of 3NT shows extra values. This like picture bids is an exception to the principle of fast arrival. Again, discuss the meaning of this bidding sequence with your partner.

### **Masked mini-splinters**

A mini-splinter is a jump bid such as 1♣-1♠-3♦. Here 3♦ is the equivalent to raising spades to the three-level but shows a singleton diamond or a void. Since 2♦ would be a reverse, the bid cannot be misunderstood.

A mini-splinter shows a 15+ to 18 points and should not be confused with the regular splinter bid at the four-level, such as 1♣-1♠-4♦, where you are showing something like 18+ to 20 points with a shortage in diamonds, or 1♦-1♠-4♦ shows four-card spade support with a six-card diamond suit.

You are limited in how you use a mini-splinter, since 1♦-1♠-3♣ would be a natural jump shift. You have to think twice about whether you are showing a natural bid or a mini-splinter.

How do you tell the difference? What you do, playing mini-splinters, is to use the concept of “masked mini-splinters.” Using this concept, the bid of three clubs is a mini-splinter that is a game force in some suit, and three diamonds is a mini-splinter in some suit that is not forcing to game.

If partner is interested in slam, one now bids 3NT. Where is your singleton? Now you bid your controls up the line. 3NT is not natural showing duplication and offering a choice of contracts. After you have splintered, there is no choice of contracts as the major is preferred.

There are some RKCB rules in mini-/maxi-splinter auctions. If *either player* has splintered, a six-level response to the specific king ask in the splinter suit shows the spade king. It is wasteful for the responder to show the king of the splinter suit when hearts is the agreed suit, so why not use it for something useful? Showing the spade king is always *dangerous*, as its rank virtually forces you to a grand. Do not splinter with stiff kings, as it is a splinter distortion. Splintering with stiff aces is also a no-no.

## Ingberman convention

This convention was named for Monroe Ingberman of New York, who was a mathematician and bridge player. He was also known for splinter and the three notrump response as a forcing major raise. The Ingberman convention is used to allow you to stop below game after opener's two-level reverse bid. It is similar to Lebensohl in that bidding 2NT (relay to 3♣) then giving preference is weaker than an original preference. However, other bids are also defined so that it is more than Lebensohl after a reverse bid.

**Definition of a reverse:** Any rebid by opener that forces preference of the opening suit to the three-level. If the initial bid and response were one of a suit, this bid is forcing one round (promises a rebid) but does not create a game force.

For example:

- (1) 1♠ - pass- 1♠ - pass      (2) 1♦ - pass- 1♠ - pass  
      2♦ - pass -??                2♥ - pass -??

Reverses after 1♦ - 2♣ are forcing to game, since responder has shown 13+ HCP in 2/1 or 10+ in Standard American and opener has extra values.

Even after a response of 1NT by responder, reverses should be forcing to game, since opener knows there is no fit in the higher suit. If you don't have a game force in this situation, just raise to 2NT.

Let's now look at the responses by partner in example (2) in more detail.

- 2♠      five plus spades, any strength, forcing for one round. All other calls deny five spades except for raises in hearts
- 2NT    denies the values for game opposite a minimum reverse. Asks partner to rebid 3♣, so responder can take preference at the three-level to play
- 3♣      good hand (10+), with values in clubs
- 3♦      two plus diamonds, values for game; denies five plus spades
- 3♥      four plus hearts, values for game: serious 3NT is on by both hands

- 3♠ solid or semisolid spades, can play opposite a small singleton
- 3NT 8–10 HCP, club stopper, denies three diamonds or four hearts
- 4♣ splinter in support of hearts
- 4♦ good hand (13+), with values in diamonds
- 4♥ *picture bid*: five spades, four hearts, and no controls in the minors

Note: Do not play fast arrival. Observe that the 3♦ preference bid may be made with a doubleton. This would only happen if you had nothing in clubs—for example, ♠AQxx ♥Kxx ♦Qx ♣xxxx. You certainly have the values for game but have no other bid. If we the contract belongs in 3NT, it must be played from partner's side.

If instead the bidding goes

1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass

2♥ - Pass - 2NT - Pass -??

then opener's bids are

- 3♣ relay bid 17+ points
- 3♦ six plus diamonds, game forcing
- 3♥ five plus hearts, six plus diamonds, game forcing
- 3♠ three spades, game forcing
- 3NT probably 2 = 4 = 5 = 2, 20–21 HCP

The responses for the bidding sequence

1♦ - pass - 1♥ - pass - 2♠ - pass -??

are similar.

We next consider (1) in more detail.

1♣ - pass - 1♠ - pass - 2♦ - pass -??

- 2♠ five plus spades, any strength, forcing for one round. All other calls deny five spades except for raises in hearts
- 2NT denies the values for game opposite a minimum reverse. Asks partner to rebid 3♣, so responder can take preference at the three-level to play
- 3♦ good hand (10+), with values in diamonds
- 3♣ two plus clubs, values for game; denies five plus spades
- 3♥ four plus hearts, values for game: serious 3NT is on by both hands



- 3♠ solid or semisolid spades, can play opposite a small singleton
- 3NT 8–10 HCP, club stopper, denies three clubs or four hearts
- 4♣ good hand (13+), with values in clubs
- 5♦ *picture bid*: five spades, four diamonds, and no controls in hearts or clubs

If instead the bidding goes

1♣ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass

2♦ - Pass – 2NT – Pass

??

then opener's bids are

- 3♣ relay bid 17+ points
- 3♦ five plus diamonds, game forcing
- 3♥ four hearts, six plus clubs, game forcing
- 3♠ three spades, game forcing
- 3NT probably 2 = 2 = 4 = 5, 20–21 HCP

## Ping Pong convention

The origin of this convention is unknown. The concept is to assist the opener to further clarify his holding when the first rebid by the opener is 1NT, which can signify various hand types. The following diagram contains the various auctions whereby this conventional method may be employed:

North	East	South	West	Meaning
1♣/1♦/1♥	Pass	1♥ / 1♠	Pass	May only show a four-card suit
1 NT	Pass	2♣		Forcing the so-called Ping Pong action by responder (also known as a puppet bid)
2♦				An automatic rebid by opener

The 2♣ so-called Ping Pong is employed by the responder to show one of the following three holdings:

1. To show weak holdings when the responder wishes to cease the auction in a part score in a minor suit. If diamonds is the minor suit, then the responder passes the automatic rebid by opener. If clubs is the intended suit, then the responder will correct to 3♣.
2. To show balanced holdings of 5-3-3-2 or 4-3-3-3 and at least 10 high card points. Once the transfer (Ping Pong) has been completed and opener has rebid 2♦, then the responder rebids

2NT: shows a holding with 10–12 points

3NT: shows a holding with 12–16 points

4NT: shows a holding with 17–18 points

and the opener becomes the captain and establishes the final contract.

3. To show limited, balanced holding with a range of 11–13 points. The holding also contains at least a five-card suit in the first suit bid by the responder. Continuances are then considered natural sequences, but they are generally considered invitational and not forcing.

When the Ping Pong conventional method is the partnership agreement, then all other responses by the responder to a one notrump rebid by the opener has the following meanings:

1. Bids at the lowest level are discouraging, particularly the raise of a 1♥ opening by partner.
2. Any reverse bids or jump bids are considered natural and semi-invitational.
3. A 2NT rebid is natural and invitational, and denies a five-card suit in any original major suit bid by the responder.
4. A 2♣ first response to a 1♣ opening is natural. A 2♣ first response to a 1♦ opening is natural and one-round forcing.

## Marvin two spades convention

The popular “Gambling 3NT” opening shows a solid seven-card minor with little outside strength. Besides being rather restrictive as to suit quality, the notrump contract is played from the wrong side. Not only is the lead through dummy’s strength, but also the exposure of that hand lets the opponents put up a “double dummy” defense. If responder can’t support a 3NT contract, the bidding ends up at the dangerous four-level.

Marvin 2♠ shows the same sort of hand, or (nine times as frequent) a semisolid (KQJ or AQJ) seven-card minor with one ace or king outside. The hand must contain at least one ace, so responder can count on seven playing tricks. Besides a solid minor, opener could have

♠32 ♥A7 ♦KQJ10876 ♣J2

or ♠K3 ♥9 ♦962 ♣AQJ9432

or ♠75 ♥92 ♦AQJ7652 ♣A

A third-seat bidder might cheat with an eight-card suit or regard an AKJ10 suit as solid. Responder bids 3♣ to sign off, whereupon opener will pass with clubs or rebid 3♦ with diamonds. If responder would raise clubs but not diamonds, she responds 3♦. If she would raise diamonds but not clubs, she bids 3♣. Opener can correct if responder bids the wrong suit.

A response of 3♥ or 3♠ is forcing. Opener bids 3NT to show Qx, xxx, or better support, so responder (perhaps fishing for a notrump contract) need not have a real suit (e.g., respond 3♥ with ♠A7532 ♥J76 ♦A87 ♣K2). Although this response must be alerted (“That is an asking bid, not a telling bid”), its ambiguous nature can make it useful as a lead inhibitor or as a complete psych when an opposing game is feared.

A 2NT response asks for clarification. Opener bids 3NT with a solid minor or indicates where the outside high card is located when the minor is only semisolid:

Opener	Responder
2♠	2NT

3NT - solid minor suit

3♣ - club suit, high card in diamonds

3♦ - diamond suit, high card in clubs

3♥ - high card in spades, may have either minor

3♠ - high card in hearts, may have either minor

Opener’s rebid will usually give responder the information she needs to place the contract. These bids are designed so that opener’s LHO cannot double to direct a lead through the high card (perhaps an unguarded king).

A 4♣ response asks opener to show a short suit:

Opener	Responder
2♠	4♣

4♦/4♥/4♠/5♣ - short suit

4NT - no short suit

A 4♦ response asks for a major suit preference (Ripstra), and 4NT is Blackwood (5♣ or 5♦ with one ace—must have one—5♥ with two).

A game response is a sign-off, but a jump to 5♣ is “pass or correct” (to 5♦).

### When the opponents intervene

If the 2♠ opening gets doubled, presumably showing a spade suit, responder may choose to make a forcing pass. She would pass, for instance, with ♠972 ♥QJ543 ♦A2 ♣A53, giving opener a chance to bid notrump if he has spades stopped:

South	West	North	East
2♠	Dbl	Pass	Pass

2NT - spade stopper

3♣/3♦ - no spade stopper

Suppose there is an overcall and responder cue bids

South	West	North
2♠	3♦	4♦

South now bids 4♦ with solid diamonds, 4♥ with a high card in spades, 4♠ with a high card in hearts, 4NT with a high card in clubs, and 5♣ with a solid club suit! (Maybe 3♣ was meant as Michaels). Similarly,

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♦	4♦	Pass

4♥ - high card in spades

4♠ - high card in hearts

4NT - high card in diamonds, club suit

5♣/5♦ - solid suit

When the cue bid is in a major, opener has less room to show his hand and responder may have to guess opener's minor:

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♥	4♥	Pass

4♠ - high card in spades, unknown minor

4NT - high card in hearts, unknown minor

5♣/5♦ - natural

The 5♣/5♦ bids show either a solid suit or a high card in the unbid minor.

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♠	4♠	Pass

4NT - high card in spades, unknown minor

5♣/5♦ - natural

The bidding here is so crowded that opener can show an outside high card in spades only. Summarizing the advantages of Marvin 2♠ over Gambling 3NT:

- 1) It gives an accurate picture of more hard-to-describe hands.
- 2) It comes up ten times as often.
- 3) Notrump is played from the right side.
- 4) Responder can bail out at the three-level.
- 5) Responder can inquire about a major at the three-level.
- 6) Responder can ask for a short suit.
- 7) It frees the 3NT opening for another purpose (e.g., a nine-trick notrump hand, also hard to describe).

The above bidding sequence was developed by Marvin L. French ([www.marvinfrench.com](http://www.marvinfrench.com)).

## Ripstra convention

Ripstra is a convention developed by J. G. Ripstra and used when the opponents have opened 1NT. It is a variation of the Landy convention, using not only a 2♣ overcall to show the major suits (at least 4-4) but a 2♦ overcall as well. The difference between overcalling two 2♣ and 2♦ lies in the strength of overcaller's minor suits. With better clubs, he overcalls 2♣, and with better diamonds, 2♦. With equal length in the minors, overcaller bids 2♣. The purpose of Ripstra is to allow partner to pass 2♣/2♦ when he can see no major-suit fit but has a lot of cards in the minor suit that overcaller has bid.

## Top and bottom cue bids

The origins of these cue bids are unknown. They are employed after a suit opening of any opponent and not after any notrump opening by the opponents. The direct cue bid of the suit of the opponent may be employed in direct seat or in the balancing seat. The concept behind this method is to show that the two suits of the cue bidder are known to be the highest unbid suit and lowest unbid suit of the suit of the opener. The two suits of the overcaller should contain either a 5-4 distribution by favorable vulnerability; otherwise, a distribution of at least 5-5 should be the norm by unfavorable vulnerability. The following chart indicates the possible suits following a suit opening by the opponents.

Opener	Overcaller	Meaning
1♣	2♣	Shows both the spade suit and the diamond suit
1♦	1♦	Shows both the spades suit and the club suit
1♥	2♥	Shows both the spade suit and the club suit
1♠	2♠	Shows both the heart suit and the club suit

As can be noticed by closer inspection, the main disadvantage of this concept is that the overcaller is unable to show a two-suited holding with both major suits after a minor suit opening by the opener.

To overcome this disadvantage, many partnerships have come to the understanding that the Michaels cue bid should be used to show both major suits if the opening has been in a *minor suit* and restrict the top and bottom cue bids to an opening by the opponent in either *major suit*. Again, this understanding includes the disadvantage that the diamond suit could not be shown by either cue bid; neither Michaels cue bid nor top and bottom cue bids. This particular flaw contained in this concept has led to a certain unpopularity of this conventional method. However, the partnership can come to an understanding by certain continuance rebids to show the diamond suit as the second suit, but this is left up to the partnership to decide.

## A notrump convention

In the 2/1 game force system, one usually employs the 15–17 HCP notrump range. An alternative suggested to me by Val Jakubowitch is to use a double-barrel range for all notrump openings. This allows one to use 2NT openings and overcalls as preemptive.

The basic system assumes no five-card major and no more than one doubleton. The advantage of the approach is that it prevents the opponents from overcalling at the one-level. It goes as follows.

1NT: 12-14 or 15-17  
 2NT: 18-20 or 24-16  
 3NT: 21-23 or 27+

The specific bids are

12 to 14 HCP	Open 1NT
15 to 17 HCP	Open 1♣ (partner announces “could be short”) and bids 1♦. Opener is waiting and bids 1NT
18 to 20 HCP	Bid 1♣ followed by 2NT
21 to 23 HCP	Bid 1♣ followed by 3NT
24 to 26 HCP	Open 2♣ followed by 2NT
27+ HCP	Open 2♣ followed by 3NT

When opening a weak notrump (12–14 HCP), and your LHO doubles, you must have an escape plan. Val recommends the following, which allows the partnership to play in a seven-card or better fit at the two-level or let the opponents have the contract. It works as follows.

If partner has a five-card suit, he bids it and opener passes.

If partner is 4-3-3-3, he redoubles. Opener either bids his four-card suit if your RHO passes or passes if your RHO bids.

If partner is either 4-4-3-2 or 4-4-4-1, he redoubles (which you must alert). If your RHO passes, you bid your four-card suit. If your bid is your partner’s one- or two-card suit, he will bid his next higher four-card suits, which allows for a seven-card fit, which may be at the three-level. A redouble by responder is for penalty.

What if the opponents interfere over 1♣?

One usually employs a negative double or with values bids a five-card suit. However, a pass over interference does not necessarily mean a bust because the opener will usually get a chance to bid.

Responses to all notrump level bids, including an overcall, are the same. Lebensohl, Smolen, and four-way transfers (yes, for weak notrump too), which apply over a double or 2♣, are the same. With the weak notrump bid, Crawling Stayman is popular.

When using the notrump convention, one now uses 2NT as 5-5 in the minors with 5-10 HCP nonvulnerable and 11-15 HCP vulnerable, similar to some versions of Precision.

For the notrump convention, all overcalls show 7-15 HCP and a double shows 16+. When responding to a major, 1NT is forcing and shows 9-12 HCP and a stopper if the opponents have bid a suit. Two notrump promises two plus stoppers and 13+ HCP.

## The forcing pass

A forcing pass in a competitive auction is a pass that allows partner to choose the most profitable option between a rebid in agreed suit, doubling opponents for penalty, allowing partner to redouble a makeable contract, showing a stronger hand than a simple competitive overcall, providing partner a conventional response, and the like.

As a background, partnerships should decide on one of these methods: <b>METHOD 1</b>	<b>METHOD 2</b>
Bid shows a good offensive hand	Bid shows good offensive hand
Double shows good defensive hand	Pass shows a fairly good offensive hand
Pass implies neither of these hands	Double implies neither of the above

While many players employ method 1, some partnerships (notably Meckstroth-Rodwell) prefer method 2.

Fundamentally, as summarized in bridgehands.com, we find partnership agreements fall in two camps: industrialists and the scientists. While industrialist methods vary, a typical agreement might include: After we open, responder bids at the two-level and opponents bid three notrump or above; either partner's pass is forcing. Additionally, the forcing pass is the strongest action showing slam interest and at least a second-round control.

<b>A.</b>	Forcing passes apply when your side bids a game or higher and the other side sacrifices
	1. You bid a vulnerable game.
	2. You bid a nonvulnerable game voluntarily.
	3. The opponents have preempted.
<b>B.</b>	There are five options at the five-level:
	1. Cue bid is a slam try—strongest action
	2. Pass and pull partners double—also a slam try
	3. Bid five-level—extra values but no slam interest

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	4. Pass—offers partner to bid five with extra values
	5. Double—worst hand based on auction
C.	Cue bid with an outstanding hand, showing first-round control and interest in slam.
D.	“Pass and pull” is uncommon. Be aware when you pass, partner doubles, and you need to pass unless you have slam interest.

On the side of the scientists, in the *Okbridge Spectator*, Marc Smith featured a series of forcing pass articles (6/01, 12/01, 1/02). Another scientist, Eddie Kantar authored the definitive *Forcing Pass* book and wrote a series of articles in *Bridge Today* (2/05, 3/05, 5/05).

Naturally, scientists methods for forcing pass bids vary considerably, possibly including

1.	Opponents have made an obvious sacrifice bid.
2.	Your side has voluntarily bid game based on strength, not merely distributional values. This is particularly true when partner’s pass allows you to evaluate the trade-offs of doubling for penalty, especially when opponents are vulnerable, as opposed to bidding at a higher level—perhaps exploring slam.
3.	After three- or four-level opening preempt by left-hand opponent in first or second seat, double by partner, game raise by right-hand opponent, our pass is forcing except when opponents are vulnerable (assuming a sane RHO has values).
4.	Your side has established a baseline contract level exploring game or slam, but not yet reached that threshold and opponents have interceded in the auction.
5.	A pass over opponents’ high-level obstructive bid typically shows a first-round control (ace or void). The threshold for “high level” may be the five- or six-level, depending on agreements.
6.	Opponents have doubled a cue bid on your side.
7.	Opponents are retreating by bidding multiple suits (usually up the line), where your partnership has repeatedly doubled.
8.	Pulling partner’s penalty double shows strong interest in slam

Scientists have more scenarios (and memory work) with less catch-all guidelines such as a universal “whenever opponents bid above our three spade call and our bids are constructive, our subsequent pass is forcing.” Regardless of your approach, consider environmental factors—particularly vulnerability, freak distribution, and offensive/defensive tricks.

Here are several common situations:

**2♣ – (any) – P – (any);**  
**P**



When opener has near-game values such as a strong *two club* opener showing 22+ points, many play a subsequent pass is a forcing bid; lacking a better bid, responder can double to keep the auction alive. However, when opener begins with a *two notrump* bid showing 20–21 points, subsequent passes are not forcing.

1♠ – (P) – 2N – (3♦)  
P

Responder's 2NT bid is game forcing, so opener's pass is forcing.

1♦ – (1♥) – 1♠ – (P);  
3♦ – (3♥) – 3♠ – (4♥);  
P

Assuming you recognize responder's 3♠ rebid as establishing a game force (opener jumps, responder rebids own suit), opener is making a forcing pass, inviting responder to *double* or bid 4♠ with great spades.

1♦ – (1♠) – 2♦ – (2♠);  
1♥ – (2♦) – 2♥ – (3♦);

Here, opener can make a forcing bid by cue bidding opponents' suit or calling a new suit. When opener (the stronger hand) bids a new suit at the three-level, the call is invitational. Jumping in a new suit at the four-level subsequently establishes a forcing pass if necessary. Opener's jump to game has the same effect. Note: some play this treatment only with adverse vulnerability based on the risk-reward differential. At any rate, if opener takes another path, as rebidding at the three-level, belated opener passes are not forcing. Note: many also play maximal doubles at the three-level.

Yet rules like this one should not be thought of as iron-clad. Contrast these bids:

W      N      E      S

1♥ – (1♠) – 2♥ – (2♠);  
4♥ – (P) – P – (4♠);  
P  
1♥ – (2♠) – 2♥ – (3♠);  
4♥ – (P) – P – (5♠);  
P

It is unlikely south is “walking the dog” with extra values on the above auctions. Apparently, south is making a sacrifice bid, so opener's pass is definitely a forcing bid in these auctions. However, south may indeed be walking the dog on this auction:

W N E S

1♥ – (P) – 2♥ – (2♠);

3♦ – (P) – 4♥ – (4♠);

P

The responder may be bidding game based on an anticipated double fit in the red suits after opener's help suit game try; realizing this, opponent south may upgrade a two-suited black hand and solely bid game. Thus, the meaning of opener's pass will vary by partnership agreement (again, some play forcing only with adverse vulnerability). As an aside, when your side bids a lower suit rank as hearts over their spades, it may not be wise to "advertise" a possible double fit—smart opponents certainly enjoy such useful information.

In some situations, the scientists liberalize their conventional gadgets to replace the meaning of the forcing pass or even the double. Consider this auction:

W N E S

-- -- (P) - P

(1♦) - 1♥ - (2♥) - P

(3♣) - 4♥ - (P) - P

(5♦) -?

Should a double be purely for penalty here, or is it a cooperative (optional) double asking partner to consider a 5♥ sacrifice with an offensive hand? Scientists point out the 1♣ overcall shows defensive values, not immediately making a preemptive jump to 4♥. So a common treatment is DSI, asking partner to *do something intelligent!* That is, "Partner, with defensive values of your own, let the double ride, otherwise think strongly about supporting my suit."

So we've seen the forcing pass agreements can have many subtleties, particularly for the scientists. Regardless of your approach, be sure your partnerships have clear agreements.

Finally, here's what the Bridge World Standard says about the forcing pass:

1.	If a two-club opening is overcalled, responder's pass is forcing at every level—responder's double shows double-negative strength.
2.	When a forcing bid is doubled and there is no contrary explicit system agreement or logic from the auction, a pass is forcing and a redouble is to play (suggests a contract).
3.	After a negative response to two clubs and an overcall, opener's pass is forcing.
4.	After one any - (X) - XX - (bid); opener's (or responder's) pass is forcing everywhere.

## Splimit

The Splimit, the combination of two bridge terms “*splinter*” and “*limit*,” is a convention inspired by the Splinter family and defined by Pier Massimo Fornaro, author of the bidding system *Quinta Maggiore Milano*.

They may be integrated into any five-card major bidding system, provided you do not play Bergen raises.

After a major suit opening, the bids show four-card support for the major and a singleton/void and are defined:

### Openings: 1♥

- 2♠ Splimit, hearts fit, 7–10 HCP, spades singleton/void
- 3♣ Splimit, hearts fit, 7–10 HCP, clubs singleton/void
- 3♦ Splimit, hearts fit, 7–10 HCP, diamonds singleton/void

### Openings: 1♠

- 3♣ Splimit, spades fit, 7–10 HCP, clubs singleton/void
- 3♦ Splimit, spades fit, 7–10 HCP, diamonds singleton/void
- 3♥ Splimit, spades fit, 7–10 HCP, hearts singleton/void

### Jump reverses (mini-splinters)

They are also used over a minor suit opening when responder bids a major at the one-level. To show a fit, responder with 15/16+ points and a singleton or void bids at the three-level below the major into a higher-ranking suit than the minor bid, a jump reverse:

Here are the only four Splimit response bids:

- 1♣ - 1♠; 3♦ singleton/void in diamonds
- 1♣ - 1♠; 3♥ singleton/void in hearts
- 1♠ - 1♥; 3♦ singleton/void in diamonds
- 1♦ - 1♠; 3♥ singleton/void in hearts

If you were not making a jump reverse, a jump to the three-level in a lower-ranking suit (for example, 1♦ - 1♠; 3♣), this would be considered a strong jump shift showing 19+ points and therefore is not a Splimit bid.

## Bluhmer bids

This not-so-well-known convention has something similar to the splinter and is due to the American player Lou Bluhm. When the rare opportunity comes, it may be really very useful.

The convention may be adopted when the opener shows a three suits hand in a clear misfit situation stated by the responder with a NT bid: the convention takes place using an unusual jump done by the responder in the first suit answered.

Two common sequences are used by the Bluhmer:

South	North
1♦	1♥
1♠	1NT
2♣	3♥

South	North
1♣	1♥
1♠	1NT
2♦	3♥

In the two sequences, responder's jump cannot show a strong hand or a long hearts suit, as these two possibilities have been both excluded by his previous bid of 1NT that could have been passed by the opener. The jump in delayed repetition shows, instead, a great fit in the last suit of the opener and almost total absence of values in his first suit.

South	North
♠KJ32	♠Q104
♥	♥8752
♦A9853	♦K2
♣KQ106	♣AJ1026

The bidding would go

1♦    1♥  
 2♣    3♥ (bad hearts, great clubs)

With these cards, 3NT would be a very bad contract, easily beatable by one or more tricks. A club game or even slam, instead, shows sensible possibilities. A Bluhmer bid by north is really very effective, as it shows to the opener there are no wasted HCP in hearts.

## Swedish 2NT

A major disadvantage of opener's response to the Jacoby 2NT bid is that one cannot tell if opener has a minimum hand or a strong hand. To compensate for this, one can replace the Jacoby 2NT bid with the Swedish 2NT\* bid, which also must be alerted. The bid reduces the point count requirement and also the number of trumps.

**2NT\* (Swedish Jacoby):** three-/four-card support, limit raise (10–12) or better (may or may not have a single/void).

Responses by opener

3♣\*: less than 15 Bergen points

3♦\*: no shortness, 15+

3♥\*: singleton club, 15+

3♠\*: singleton diamond, 15+

3NT\*: singleton/void other major, 15+

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣:

Opener's responds 4♦ with singleton, 4♥ with void

4♣\*/4♦\*: void, 15+

4♥/4♠: No slam interest

After 1♥/1♠ – 2NT – 3♣\*, a response of 3♥/3♠ is a limit raise (10–12), and can be passed.

After opener's 3♣\* response, responder bids 3♦\* to request opener's distribution.

After 1♥/1♠ – 3♣\* – 3♦\*, opener rebids are

3♥\*: singleton club

3♠\*: singleton diamond

3NT\*: singleton or void other major

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣.

Opener responds 4D with singleton, 4H with void

4♣\*/4♦\*: void in clubs/diamonds

4♥/4♠: no singleton/void or slam interest

4NT: 1430 RKCB

## Advantages

No longer bid 1NT over partner's major opening, planning to rebid three of major at next bid playing some version of "Bergen" raises. Instead, the 1NT bid is replaced by Swedish 2NT\* bid.

One can now pass 1NT as natural after 1♥/1♠; it becomes nonforcing.

If playing Reverses Bergen raises, the 3♣\* shows four pieces and 10–12 dummy points. Now opener's bid of 3♦\* asks, "Do u have a singleton/void or 12 dummy points?"

Responses are

33♥\*: singleton club

33♠\*: singleton diamond

33NT\*: singleton or void other major

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣.

Opener responds 4D with singleton, 4H with void

4♣\*/4♦\*: void in clubs/diamonds

4♥/4♠: no singleton/void or slam interest 12 dummy points

4NT: 1430 RKC



## CHAPTER 16

### WRAP-UP

A common remark made by many bridge players is those computer-dealt hands are more skewed than hands dealt manually. This is not true. The following analysis compares computer-dealt hands with manual-dealt hands using one hundred thousand deals. This was provided by Chuck Deal in the Villages.

#### Hand distributions

**Probability of hand distributions** - The a priori probability of holding a certain hand pattern is based on mathematical odds. Aspiring bridge players make mental references to the hand distribution when bidding or determining the best line of play, particularly the *most probable* distribution. Among the thirty-nine possible hand patterns, five hand patterns comprise 70 percent of the possible hands based upon one hundred thousand deals, and they follow a normal distribution. Manual deals *do not* follow a normal distribution. The results follow.

Longest suit	Distribution pattern	Computer dealt %/(manual dealt %)
4	4-4-3-2	21.6/(22.1)
	4-3-3-3	10.5/(10.8)
	4-4-4-1	3.0/(3.0)
		<b>35.10/(35.90)</b>
5	5-3-3-2	15.5/(15.7)
	5-4-3-1	12.9/(12.8)
	5-4-2-2	10.6/(10.5)
	5-5-2-1	3.2/(3.1)
	5-4-4-0	1.2/(1.2)
	5-5-3-0	0.90/(0.88)
		<b>44.34/(42.98)</b>

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6	6-3-2-2	5.6/(5.6)
	6-4-2-1	4.7/(4.6)
	6-3-3-1	3.5/(3.4)
	6-4-3-0	1.3/(1.3)
	6-5-1-1	0.71/(0.65)
	6-5-2-0	0.65/(0.60)
		<b>16.55/(16.15)</b>
7	7-3-2-1	1.9/(1.8)
	7-2-2-2	0.51/(0.48)
	7-4-1-1	0.39/(0.38)
	7-4-2-0	0.36/(0.33)
	7-3-3-0	0.27/(0.24)
	7-5-1-0	0.1/(0.98)
		<b>3.90/(4.21)</b>
<b>Others</b>		<b>0.50/(0.98)</b>

Based upon one hundred thousand deals, the computer-dealt hands follow a normal distribution almost exactly where the probability of acceptance for a “normal” curve is 99.78 percent, using a chi-square goodness of fit test. The corresponding probability of fit for manually dealt hands is < 0.1 percent. Wow!

### How do they break? Handy chart for easy reference

Cards missing	Break	%
2	1-1	52.0
	2-0	48.0
3	2-1	78.0
	3-0	22.0
4	3-1	49.7
	2-2	40.7
	4-0	9.6
5	3-2	67.8
	4-1	28.3
	5-0	3.9
6	4-2	48.5
	3-3	35.5
	5-1	14.5
	6-0	1.5



7	4-3	62.2
	5-2	30.5
	6-1	6.8
	7-0	0.5
8	5-3	47.1
	4-4	32.7
	6-2	17.1
	7-1	2.9
	8-0	0.2

**Note: With five/six cards, use ratio 2/3 or 1/4 and 2/4 or 1/5 as approximations!**

## Probabilities and odds in bridge

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid game, assuming a 26+ point game = **25.29 percent** (1 in 3.95 deals)

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid slam, assuming a 33+ point slam = **.70 percent** (1 in 143.5 deals)

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid grand slam, assuming a 37+ point grand slam = **.02 percent** (about 1 in 5,848 deals)

Number of different hands a named player can receive = **635,013,559,600** =  $52! / (39! \times 13!)$

Number of different hands a second player can receive = **8,122,425,444** =  $39! / (26! \times 13!)$

Number of different hands the third and fourth players can receive = **10,400,600** =  $26! / (13! \times 13!)$

Number of possible deals =  $(52! / 13!)^{*4}$  = **53,644,737,765,488,792,839,237,440,000**

Number of possible auctions with north as dealer, assuming that east and west pass throughout =  $2^{*36} - 1$  = **68,719,476,735**

Number of possible auctions with north as dealer, assuming that east and west do not pass throughout = **128,745,650,347,030,683,120,231,926,111,609,371,363,122,697,55**

Odds against being dealt at least one singleton = **2 to 1**

Odds against receiving a hand with 37 HCP (four aces, four kings, four queens, and one jack) = **158,753,389,899 to 1**

Odds against receiving a perfect hand (thirteen cards in one suit) = **169,066,442 to 1**

Odds against a Yarborough = **1827 to 1**

Odds against both members of a partnership receiving a Yarborough = **546,000,000 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than ten = **274 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than jack = **52 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than queen = **11 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no aces = **2 to 1**

Odds against being dealt four aces = **378 to 1**

Odds against being dealt four honors in one suit = **22 to 1**

Odds against being dealt five honors in one suit = **500 to 1**

Odds against having at least one void = **19 to 1**

Odds that two partners will be dealt twenty-six named cards between them = **495,918,532,918,103 to 1**

Odds that no players will be dealt a singleton or void = **4 to 1**

Reference: Antonio Vivaldi & Gianni Barracho (2003), *Probabilities and Alternatives in Bridge*.

**Final note:** Using combination notation,  $nCr$ , and probability theory, the total number of bridge hands is shown to be

$$52C13 \times 39C13 \times 26C13 \times 1 = 52! / (39! \times 13!) \times 39! / (26! \times 13!) \times 26! / (13! \times 13!) \times 1$$

= **53,644,737,765,488,792,839,237,440,000** or 53 decillion bridge hands.

Now what are the odds of each person receiving a complete suit (thirteen spades, thirteen hearts, thirteen diamonds, and thirteen clubs, for example)? There are four! Or twenty-four ways for each player to obtain a complete suit; dividing the number of bridge hands by twenty-four yields the odds are 2,235,197,406,895,366,368,301,559,999 (2 decillion) to 1 against receiving a complete suit. Or if the entire adult population of the world were to play bridge in every waking moment for ten million years, it would still be ten million to one against one of these perfect deals to turn up!

So duplicate bridge players, *do not* expect this to occur the next time you play!

### Note on large numbers

A Mersenne number is a positive number that can be expressed in the form  $2^a - 1$  where the exponent  $a$  is an integer. A Mersenne prime is a Mersenne number that is prime (is only dividable by itself and one). For example, for  $a = 1, 2, 3$  and  $5$ , the Mersenne primes are  $1, 3, 7$ , and  $31$ , respectively. For  $a = 4$ , the number  $15$  is a Mersenne number, but is not a prime. Searching for higher primes is an unofficial pastime for some mathematicians. The forty-sixth Mersenne prime was found this year by a team at UCLA. It contains thirteen million digits. The value for the exponent  $a$  is  $43,112,609$ .

A googol is ten raised to the one hundred (one followed by one hundred zeros and written as  $10^{100}$ ) and a googolplex is  $10^{\text{googol}}$ , the name of Google's (the search engine) headquarters, but spelled "googolplex"! Using the speed of today's fastest desktop computer (about ten to the power of seven digits per second,  $10^7$ ), it would take more than 534 years to print the googolplex number. Is there a bigger named number? Of course, it is the googolplexplex, ten to the power of a googolplex, written as  $10^{\text{googolplex}}$ .

The world champion largest number, listed in the latest *Guinness Book of Records* (1980), is Graham's number.

Graham's number, named after Ronald Graham, is a large number that is an upper bound on the solution to a certain problem in Ramsey theory.

Graham's number is much larger than many other large numbers such as a googol or googolplex.

# CHAPTER 17

## TRANSFER PRECISION

### Overview

Precision is an important bidding convention played by many pairs. To compete against pairs that play Precision, it is essential that you understand their bidding structure. In this version of Precision, one uses transfer bids over 1♣ and the Transfer Stayman convention.

### Basic opening bids

- 1♣\* Artificial 16+ HCP—*must alert* with unbalanced/balanced hand
- 1♦\* 11–15 HCP (announced as may be short, if one uses the 10–12 NT range)
- 1♥/1♠ 11–15 HCP five plus majors with Reverse Bergen bidding structure
- 1NT 12–15 HCP (or 13–15 HCP)—**some use the 10–12 NT range**
- 2♣\* 11–15 HCP six plus clubs (may have a four-card major)—*must alert*
- 2♦\* 11–15 HCP 4 = 3-1-5, 3 = 4-1-5, 4 = 4-1-4, or 4 = 4-0-5 **must alert singleton diamond/void**
- 2♥/2♠ 5–10 HCP six plus cards (weak two-bids vulnerable with Ogust/Feature)
- 2NT\* 0–6 long minor (NV) and 11–15 HCP (vul)
- 3X 5–10 must have two of top three honors in the bid suit vulnerable and one if nonvulnerable. However, 3♣\* = 10-12.

3NT\* Gambling solid seven plus minor suits (AKQJxxx)

\* Indicates forcing bids and alerts

### Responses to 1♦\* opening

#### Responses to 1♦\* opening (11–15 HCP) strong jump shifts

1♥/1♠ four plus cards in suit with 6+ HCP (to show weak hand rebid majors since using strong jump shifts)

## Rebids by opener

**1♠** four plus spades over 1♥

1NT 11–15 HCP over 1♥/1♠

**2♣** five plus clubs

**2♦** five plus diamonds

**2M** 13–16 dummy points

**3M** 17–18 dummy points

1NT 6–10 HCP, balanced hand

2NT 11–12 HCP, balanced hand

3NT 13–15 HCP, balanced hand

**2♣** 13+ HCP forcing one round

**2♦\*** 13+ six/seven plus diamonds (crisscross)

**2♥/2♠** 16+ HCP strong jump shift in major five plus cards, game force

**3♠\*** 10–12 HCP six/seven plus diamonds (crisscross)

**3♦\*** less than 10 HCP, weak, preemptive raise 6+♦

**3♥/3♠** Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)

**4♣** Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)

**4♦** Minorwood 1430 key card for diamonds

**4♥/4♠** Single-suited hand to play

Over a major suit interference bid, the bid of 1NT by responder shows 6–10 HCP and diamonds.

## Getting to notrump (crisscross)

After an inverted minor raise 1♦\* - pass - 2♦\* (13+ HCP)

1. Show major suit stoppers 2♥ or 2♠, bid up the line. No extra values
2. Bid 2NT with a minimum and both majors are stopped.
3. Bid 3♣ to show club stopper, neither hearts or spades stopped
4. Bid 3♦ with a minimum without major stoppers
5. Bid 3♥ or 3NT, showing ♥ stopped, over 2♠ with minimum values

After a weak raise 1♦\* - pass - 3♣\* (less than 10 HCP)

- a. Pass with all minimum and almost all intermediate-sized hands
- b. A new suit is forcing one round and shows a very strong hand
- c. 3NT is to play regardless what partner had for his preemptive raise
- d. *Four of the minor* is invitational (may be used as RKC Blackwood).

## Responses to 1M opening Reverse Bergen bids over major

- 1NT 7–12 points, forcing  
 1NT followed by 3M with 10–12 HCP (limit raise with three)  
 2M 8–10, three-card support (constructive)

## BROMAD (Reverse) bids over a double of a major

- XX A redouble is not part of BROMAD per se but is worth mentioning. It shows 10+ points and denies three plus card support.  
 2♦\* A three-card raise, showing 7–9 points and exactly three-card trump support.  
 2♣\* A three-card limit raise or better, showing 10–12 points and exactly three-card trump support.  
 2♥/♠\* A three-card “preemptive” raise, showing 0–6 points and exactly three-card trump support.  
 2NT\* A preempt in clubs or diamonds (i.e., a hand that would normally make a 3♣ or 3♦ weak jump shift).  
 3♦\* A four-card raise, showing 7–9 points and exactly four-card trump support.  
 3♣\* A four-card limit raise, showing 10–12 points and exactly four-card trump support.  
 3♥\*/3♠\* A four-card “preemptive” raise, showing 0–6 points and exactly four-card trump support.

## Responses to 1M opening (open 1♥/1♠ with 11–15 HCP)

### 2M 8–10 dummy points three cards support (constructive raise)

### Short suit game try (SSGT) over 1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠

Any three-level suit bid by opener shows shortness in the suit 0-2.  
 Otherwise, relay bids are used by the opener and responder shows shortness.

	1♥-2♥ 2♠*	or	1♠-2♠ 2NT*
Club shortness	3♣*		3♣*
Diamond shortness	3♦*		3♦*
Heart shortness			3♥*
Spade shortness	2NT*		
4333 min 8–9	3♥		3♠
4333 max 10–11	3NT		3NT
4333 with 4S and max 10–11	3♠		
5 to KQ+	4m		4m
Stiff other major	4♥		4♠

After SSGT, response reevaluates his hand with A = 3 and K = 1.

With 9 or 10/11, responder bids game or cue bids minor with four of other majors.

With 7 or 8, make last train bid if possible.

With 6 or less, sign off.

2NT*	13+ with four trumps (Jacoby)
3♣*	10–12 with four trumps
3♦*	7–9 with four trumps
3M*	0–6 weak with four trumps
3 of other M	ambiguous splinter with four-card support, 13+ dummy points
3NT*	13–15 with three-card support (some use it to show void in other major)
4♣*/4♦*	void and ERKCB with three- or four-card support for the major

### With interference at the two-level

Cue bid is limit raise with three plus trumps

2NT	limit raise with four plus trumps
3♣/3♦	fit jump bids three/four plus trumps with four plus clubs/diamonds
3 other M	fit bid with three/four plus trumps and four plus cards in other major
3M	weak raise—0–6 dummy points with four-card support for bid major
4M/5m	to play
4m	splinter jump four-card support with singleton
4 other M	to play

### With interference at the three-level

X	trump double (Western cue)
3X	invitational to game in a major
	four-level cue bid forcing raise to game in major bid
3M	weak with major fit
4X	fit jumps bids below major bid
4M	preemptive

### Ambiguous splinter bids (simple)

Opener	Responder	Opener	Explanation
1♥	2♠*		Game force with a singleton
		2NT*	Opener asks responder to bid suit of singleton (3♥ = ♠)
	3♠*		Game force with a void
		3NT*	Opener asks responder to bid void suit (4♥ = ♠)

1♠	3♥*	Game force with a singleton/void
	3♠*	Relay bid
		Responder bids singleton suit
		With a void responder bid 3NT; opener relays again 4♣
		Responder bids 4♦ = ♦, 4♥ = ♥, 4♠ = ♠

This method is simple and works well when opening a major. To investigate slam, one may use 4NT or 4♠ if the agreed-upon suit is hearts. The method is simple and always allows one to stop short of game, if necessary. It was suggested to me by Ted Deflippio.

## Responses to 1NT opening (with Double Barrel Stayman)

### Responses to 1NT (12–15 HCP)

2♣	NF Stayman	10–12 HCP
	Opener rebids	
	2♦ = 15 HCP	
	Responder rebids	
	2♥ shows spades	
	2♠ shows hearts	
	2NT show both majors	
2♦*	Forcing Stayman	13+ HCP
2♥/2♠	to play	0–8 HCP
3♣/3♦	six plus card suit two of top three	9–11 HCP
3♥	5-5 in the majors	11–12 HCP
3♠	5-5 in the majors	13+ HCP

### Responses to 1NT opening (if you prefer transfer bids)

### Responses to 1NT (12–15 HCP)

2♣	Stayman (may not have a four-card major)/Smolen
2♦/2♥	Transfer hearts/spades
2♠	MSS bid minors up the line (3♣/3♦ shows three plus card suit)
	2NT denies a four plus minor suit



After hearing the bid of 2NT, responder next bids; 3♣ says both minors and 3♦ says long diamond denies clubs, while 3NT says 2245 or 2254 interest in slam. Cue bid of major shows a singleton with slam interest.

2NT	Weak club suit (opener bids three clubs)
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠	six-card suit with two of top three honors 9–11
3♥	5-5 in majors (11–12 HCP)
3♠	5-5 in majors (13+)
4♦/4♥	Texas transfer

Over a double of 1NT, we employ Helvic notrump runouts

Redouble shows a single-suited hand (partner bids 2♣)

And bidding shows a two-suited hand

2♣ = clubs and diamonds

2♦ = diamond and hearts

2♥ = hearts and spades

2♠ = spades and clubs

If you pass the double, you have a two-suited hand with two nontouching suits or you want to play 1NT for penalty—partner must redouble or bid five-card suit. Opener may leave double in or bid the anchor suit.

### Responses to 1NT opening (if you prefer Minor Suit Stayman)

2♣	Stayman (may not have a four-card major)/Smolen
2♦/2♥	Transfer hearts/spades (announce)
2♠*/2NT*	Minor Suit Stayman (MSS)

Minor Suit Stayman is just what its name implies: a device that allows a partnership to look for a minor suit fit after an opening bid of 1NT (and over 2NT/3NT, see note 2 below). Presupposing the use of Jacoby transfers, the 2♣ response to 1NT is no longer needed to show *spades* and can be used to ask opener to bid a four-card *minor* suit. The OKB 2/1 card uses a specific variant of MSS, which also includes weak hands with a long *diamond* suit, hence the notation “MSS or correct to or 3♦ with *diamond* bust.” This is a treatment that is part of the Walsh system. Other MSS variants may not include the weak hands that Walsh does and have different response structures, so it may be best to avoid this bid in a new partnership.

2♠ response to 1NT (strong NT) shows one of three types of hands. It is either a weak hand with long (6+) *diamonds*, a weak hand with both *minors* (5-5), or a strong hand at least 5-4 or 4-5 minors with *slam* interest. (With both minors and only minimum values for game, bid 3NT. Nine tricks in NT is usually easier than eleven in a minor. Using MSS may pinpoint a weak major for the opponents to lead.

The 1NT opener should rebid:

1. 2NT = denies a four-card or longer *minor*
2. 3♣ or 3♦ = at least four cards in the *minor* bid, bid the better one with both

After using MSS and hearing any of the above rebids, responder's available rebids are

1. 3♣ over 2NT = weak both minors, opener may pass or correct to 3♦ (e.g., xx x KJxxx QTxxx)
2. 3♦ over 2NT/3♣ = weak with long *diamonds* (x xx QJxxxxx Qxx)
3. Pass over 3♣/3♦ = content with contract, weak hand
4. 3NT = 2245 or 2254, slam invitational, nonforcing (xx Ax AKxxx KJxx)
5. Any *major* suit bid (!) = single/void in that suit, slam interest (3♠! with x Ax AKxxx KJxxx)
6. 4NT = Roman Key Card Blackwood if minor suit has been agreed but natural otherwise

Note: The use of MSS over 2NT, or 2♣-2♦-(2NT/3NT) is easily defined in that, if Jacoby applies, so does MSS (i.e., if a diamond or heart bid is Jacoby, then a spade bid is MSS. The use of MSS over 2/3NT *always* shows slam interest. If a minor suit has been agreed, then a later bid of 4NT is RKC, otherwise natural.

### 2NT followed by 3♣ = club sign-off, or 4441

Over opener's 1NT, a direct response of 2NT is a puppet (relay) to 3♣, which responder can pass with *clubs* and a bust, or show a game forcing three-suited hand, either 4441 or 4450 with a five-card minor. With the strong hand, rebid the suit containing your singleton/void. With short *clubs*, either rebid 3NT, nonforcing, or bid 4♣ with slam interest to force opener to bid.

Examples: after 1NT-2NT-3♣-?

1. Pass (x xxx Kxx QT9xxxx)
2. 3♥ (AJxx x AKxx Qxxx)
3. 3NT (AJxx AKxx Qxxx x)
4. 4♣ (AJxx AKxx AQxx x)

After the strong shortness showing bids, opener picks a suit or rebids in NT with the short suit well stopped (and hence wasted values for a suit slam). Over suit agreement, 4NT is RKC. Over 3NT, 4NT by responder is natural and invitational.

When playing a direct 2NT to 1NT as artificial, one must start with 2♣ Stayman to invite game in NT.

1. Opener with both *hearts* and *spades* bids 2♥.
2. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2♠ shows exactly 4 *spades* and is invitational to game. Opener may pass, bid 2NT, 3NT, or 4♠.
3. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT is invitational to game and denies 4 *spades*.
4. Other sequences that start 1NT-2♣-2any-2NT do not promise or deny a four-card major. This should be explained at the time of the 2NT rebid.

## Over 12–15/13–15 notrump bids

- 3♣/3♦ six-card suit with two of top three honors  
And 9–11 invite to 3NT
- 3♥ 5-5 in majors (11–12 HCP)
- 3♠ 5-5 in majors (13+)
- 4♦/4♥ Texas transfer

## Over a penalty double or 2♣ over 1NT systems are on

### Transfer Lebensohl over notrump

We open 1NT, and they overcall. Remember, if they bid 2♣, you just ignore it (so if you bid 2NT after their 2♣ overcall, you should treat the auction as if it went 1NT PASS 2NT—however you play it). If they bid 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠, we use Transfer Lebensohl. Recall that if we bid a suit on the two-level, it is natural, NF. Using Transfer Lebensohl, if we bid a suit on the three-level, starting with 3♣, it is a transfer to the “next” suit. (I’ll explain the quote marks in a moment). By transferring, we are showing the suit (5+) transferred to with *invitational or better* values. (With less than an invitation, we either sign off on the two-level or bid 2NT to relay to 3♣ to sign off—the old-fashioned Lebensohl way). When we show invitational or better, partner can sign off (just bid the suit transferred to), or he can accept the game try (by doing many things, including 3NT if he wishes). If partner “signs off” and you have the “or better,” of course, you just bid again (naturally). Some examples:

1NT (2♥) 3♣ = diamonds, invitational or better (to sign off in ♦, responder would have bid 2NT to relay to 3♣, then bid 3♦)

1NT (2♠) 3♦ = hearts, invitational or better (If opener bids 3♥, he rejects your invitation, but you bid again with a GF.)

Remember, to sign off, you either bid on the two-level or use 2NT to relay to sign off on the three-level. Using the transfer promises at least a game invite.

Now what about the quote marks? When transferring to your suit on the three-level, you have to take their suit into account. For example, if 2♥ showed ♥ and a minor, it wouldn’t make much sense for you to transfer (via 3♦) into ♥. Accordingly, this is what we do: Transferring into “their suit” (such as 3♦ into their ♥) shows the next higher suit (i.e., ♠). Are you ready to kill me by now? Sorry, but if you want to be prepared, there is no shortcut. You simply must devote a little time to study and practice this. So transferring “into their suit” is like transferring “through” their suit. What if you actually bid their suit? (Example, they bid 2♦ to show ♦+ whatever, and you bid 3♦). Cue bidding their suit means what it means with regular Lebensohl, typically “Stayman, no stopper.” This assumes “FADS—fast always denies stopper.” If you want to Stayman with a stopper, you go through the 2NT relay, then cue bid 3♦. OK, no doubt you are ready to just scrap this and wing it, but maybe some examples will help:

1NT (2♠ = ♠+ whatever, or just ♠):

2NT = Relay to 3♣ (either to play 3♣, or as a prelude to sign off in 3♦ or 3♥, or to follow with 3♠ to show Stayman and a ♠ stopper, or to follow with 3NT to just show a ♠ stopper—no Stayman)

3♣ = ♦ invitational+ (opener rejects by bidding 3♦, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener accepts by bidding above 3♦)

3♦ = ♥ invitational+ (opener rejects by bidding 3♥, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener accepts by bidding above 3♥)

3♥ = ♣ invitational+—This was tricky, but remember: transfer to “their” suit is “through” their suit to the next highest suit, ♣ in this case.

3♠ = Cue bid showing “Stayman, no ♠stopper”

3NT = To play, but no ♠stopper (fast denies)

## Responses to 2M opening

**Responses to 2♥/ 2♠ (open 5–10 six plus card suit)—same as 2/1**

**Over 2NT asks for Feature/Ogust (per agreement)**

The weak major two-level bid is a “normal” weak two and typically shows between 5 and 10 points and at least a six-card suit. The optimum hand for a weak two has most of its points in the long suit, although it is recognized that this is not always possible and sometimes (particularly third hand at favorable vulnerability) you have to go with what you’ve got.

**4♣ is RKCB (used with weak two-bids [2♥/2♠]).**

The responses are

- 4♦ first step zero key card in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, one key card without the queen
- 4♠ third step, one key card with the queen
- 4NT fourth step, two key cards without the queen
- 5♣ fifth step, two key cards with the queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first step. The next bid of 4♥ is the queen ask—4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

## When they double weak two-bid McCabe Adjunct

2♥ - X then Redouble show a strong hand

- 2♠ = to play
- 2NT = clubs (partner bids clubs)
- 3♣ = shows A/K in suit bid
- 3♦ = shows A/K in suit bid
- 3♥ = shows an A/K of hearts

2♠- X then Redouble shows a strong hand

- 2NT = clubs (partner bids clubs)
- 3♣ = shows A/K in suit bid
- 3♦ = shows A/K in suit bid
- 3♥ = to play
- 3♠ = shows an A/K of spades

## Responses to 2♣\* opening

Responses to 2♣ opening (open 11–15 HCP, six plus clubs and four-card major, must have two of the top three honors—five plus in third seat.

### Partner responses

2♦\* 11+ HCP, conventional and forcing for one round

#### Opener rebids

- 2♥ 11–15 HCP, four-card ♥ suit
- 2♠ 11–15 HCP, four-card ♠ suit
- 2NT 11–15 HCP, 6-3-2-2 bal hand, six-card club suit with a major stopper

3♦\* requests opener to clarify stoppers

#### Opener bids

- 3♥\* ♥ stopper
- 3♠\* ♠ stopper
- 3NT ♥ and ♠ stoppers

- 3♦ 14–15 HCP six plus clubs and four plus diamonds
- 3♣ 14–15 HCP nonforcing and unbalanced hand (1-3-3-6)
- 3♥ 14–15 HCP, five plus card ♥ suit

3♣ 14–15 HCP, relay back to ♣s, solid club suit AKJ109x allows responder to bid 3NT  
 3NT 14–15 HCP, five plus spades and six plus clubs

2♥/2♠ Natural with five plus cards, 8–10 HCP  
 2NT\* **Lebensohl (for two-suited hands)**

**Partner bids 3♣**

**Responder next bids**

3♦ = 5-5 diamonds and hearts

3♥ = 5-5 hearts and spades

3♠ = 5-5 spades and diamonds

3♣ **10–12 Invitational**

3♦/3♥/3♠ six plus card suit, 12 HCP openers raises or bids 3NT (**opener may not pass**)

4♣ Invitational to game in clubs

4♥/4♠ Natural and to play

4♦ RKCB for clubs

**With interference**

Negative double through 3♣

Redouble 10+ HCP

Cue bid 13+ HCP

## Responses to 2♦\* opening (singleton/void in diamonds)

### Responses to 2♦\* opening (11–15 HCP)

**Partner response to 2♦\***

3♦ Asks for controls

2♥/2♠ To play in hearts/spades

3♣ To play in clubs

2NT\* Ask

### Opener rebids (option 1—with 4-3 or 4-4 hands)

3♣\* any minimum 11–12/13, 3♦ ask

3♥ = four hearts

3♠ = four spades

3NT = 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5

3♦ = 4-4-1-4, maximum with singleton diamond

3♥ = 3-4-1-5, maximum with four hearts

3♠ = 4-3-1-5, maximum with four spades

3NT = 4-4-0-5, maximum with five clubs

### **Opener rebids (option 2—with only 4-4 hands)**

3♣ = 4-4-1-4, minimum

3♦ = 4-4-1-4, maximum

4♥ = 4-4-0-5, minimum

4♠ = 4-4-0-5, maximum

## **Responses to 2NT\* opening**

### **Responses to 2NT\* and 11–15 HCP vul**

3♣ or 3♦ is to play

3♥\* is an asking bid

### **Opener rebids**

3♠ 5-5 minimum (5–10 NV; 11–15 vul)

3NT maximum

4♣ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), minimum

4♦ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), minimum

4♥ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), maximum

4♠ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), maximum

4NT 6-6 in the minors

3♠ to play

3NT to play

4♣/4♦ preemptive bids and to play

4♥/4♠ to play

5♣/5♦ to play

### **Over interference (game force)**

4NT === I prefer diamonds

4♣ === I prefer clubs

When NV (0–6 HCP), the response of 3♣ asks for the suit.

**Gambling 3NT\*** ----- Same as 2/1

**Namyats** ----- Same as 2/1

Shows a hand with eight to eight and a half tricks in hearts (open 4♣\*), in spades open 4♦\*. Refuse transfer by bidding the step in between (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦), requesting that partner bid an ace if he has one or to sign off in his long suit. 4NT is RKCB.

## Responses to 3X openings

Responses to 3X bids by opener (always ensures two of the top three honors vulnerable) and 5–10 HCP plus distribution.

4♣ RKCB (over three-level [3♦/3♥/3♠] bids)

4♦ Asks for outside controls first step zero to two controls (A = 2; K = 1), second step = 3, etc.

The bid of 4NT should not be used, since it may get the auction too high.

The responses for 4♣ RKCB are

4♦ first step zero key card in the agreed suit

4♥ second step, one key card without the queen

4♠ third step, one key card with the queen

4NT fourth step, two key cards without the queen

5♣ fifth step, 2 key cards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first step. The next bid of 4♥ is the queen ask—4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

After the preemptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural and advances the preempt; a jump to 4♦ is RKCB for clubs.

## Responses to 1♣\* opening

**Responses to 1♣\* opening (16+ HCP)**

**(1) Negative: 1♦\* 0–7 HCP**

**Opener rebids after 1♦\*:**

Nonforcing bids: 1♠/2♣/2♦ (minimum unbalanced hands with five-/six-card suits, 16–21 HCP).



**1NT\* 16–19 HCP balanced may have a five-card major**

**Partner responses**

- Pass 0–6 HCP
- 2♣ 6–7 HCP, Stayman
- 2♦/2♥ Jacoby transfer
- 2NT 7 HCP, inviting 3NT
- 3♣3♦ 5-5 in the minors min/max (0–5/6–7)
- 3♥/3♠ 5-5 in the majors min/max (0–5/6–7)
- 3NT 8–10 HCP to play

**2♥ shows 22+ balanced hand or five plus heart hand**

**Partner must bid 2♠**

**Opener responses**

**3x natural with 22+ five plus hearts**

**2NT 22–23 with notrump hand**

**3NT 24–26 with notrump hand**

**Partner responses**

Pass 0–3/4 HCP

**Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g., 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)**

4♣ = Gerber

4♦ = transfer to hearts

4♥ = transfer to spades

4♠ = transfer to clubs

5♣ = transfer to diamonds

4NT = invite 6NT

**Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g., 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)**

3♣/3♦ shows very strong unbalanced minor suit hand six plus cards (19+ HCP).

3♥/3♠ shows a solid major suit with nine tricks.

Requires responder to cue bid ace or void

3NT 27+ HCP balanced may have a five-card major.

**Partner rebids**

0–3 HCP

pass or

4♣ = Gerber

4♦ = transfer to hearts

4♥ = transfer to spades

4♠ = transfer to clubs

5♣ = transfer to diamonds

4–7 HCP and balanced 4NT invite 6NT

4♥/4♠ shows a hand stronger than a Namyats opener.

## **(2) Transfer bids (opener must have three plus card support to accept transfer)**

Transfer positive responses to one are all five plus card suits except the transfer to 1NT. We use transfer positives to suits with 8+ HCP and 1NT.

1. 1♣-1♥\* shows five plus spades.
2. 1♣-1♠\* shows balanced 8–13 (opener bids 1NT)
3. 1♣-1NT\* shows five plus clubs.
4. 1♣-2♣\* shows five plus diamonds.
5. 1♣-2♦\* shows five plus hearts.

### **Positive 1NT responses**

1♠ is a transfer that shows 8–13 HCP, no good five-card minor, no five-card major. 1NT accepts the transfer and asks for further information. It uses a Transfer Stayman system that shows four-card majors and splits the point ranges into 8–10 and 11–13.

Any other bid by opener is natural and at least five cards.

Responses to the 1NT acceptance are

1. 2♣\* = 8–10, *both* four-card majors
2. 2♦\* = 8–10, four hearts
3. 2♥\* = 8–10, four spades
4. 2♠\* = 8–10, *no* four-card major, only one minor
5. 2NT\* = 8–10, *both* minors, at least 4-4
6. 3♣\* = 11–13, *both* four-card majors
7. 3♦\* = 11–13, four hearts
8. 3♥\* = 11–13, four spades
9. 3♠\* = 11–13, *no* four-card major, only one minor
10. 3NT\* = 11–13, *both* minors, at least 4-4

Note: Opener may accept the transfer even though he has a five-card major, thus if you show no major if he bids a major, it shows five cards in the suit.

An alternative structure for the transfer response that allows more flexibility was suggested to me by Calvin Rowe, which follows.

### **Responses by responder to 1NT are (8–10 range)**

**2♠\* = 8–10, both four-card major**

Opener may bid 3NT, 3♥/3♠, 4♥/4♠, or 4NT Blackwood for H/S.

With 16–17, opener bids 3♥/3♠: responder passes with 8–9/bids 4♥/4♠ with 10.

With 18–21, opener bids 4♥/4♠ sign-off (cannot use kickback).

With 21+, opener bids 4NT (asking for aces).

If opener bids 2NT, the bids of 3♣\*/3♦\* by responder show a five-card minor.

And 3NT denies a five-card minor. Opener is captain and bids accordingly.

**2♦\* = 8–10, four hearts**

**2♥\* = 8–10, four spades**

Opener *may* ask by bidding the major (2♥/2♠), which asks, “Do you have a five-card minor?”

If yes, responder bids 3♣\*/3♦\* = 5, clubs/diamonds.

3♥\*/3♠\* shows 6, respectively

If *no*, bid 2NT to deny five-/six-card minor.

If opener 4♠ over 2♦, it is 1430 for hearts and 4NT is 1430 for spades.

or

Opener bids 3NT, then 4♥/4♠ or 5♣/5♦ is to play

**2♣\* = 8–10, no four-card major, only one four plus card minor**

Opener may bid 2♦\* to ask what your long minor is.

2NT by responder denies a five-card minor

Responder makes cheapest bid to show five, next major step = 6+

2♥/2♠ = 5♣/5♦

3♣/3♦ = 6♣+/6♦+, respectively

Opener may pass, bid 3NT or a major suit game.

4NT is ace asking Blackwood, since no agreed suit or bid 4♣/4♦ Minorwood.

**2NT\* = 8–10, both *minors***

Opener may next bid 3NT—to play

or

Opener may bid 3♣, which asks, “Are you 4-4, 5-4 or 5-5 in the minors?”

Responder bids: 3NT\* = 4-4  
 3♦\* = 5-5  
 3♥\* = 4♦/5♣  
 3♠\* = 5♦/4♣  
 4♣/4♦ = Minorwood for bid minor

### Responses by responder to 1NT (11–13 range)

**3♠\* = 11–13, both four-card majors**

Opener may bid 3NT—to play  
 or

Opener bids: 4♣ = 1430 for hearts  
 4♦ = 1430 for spades  
 4♥/4♠ = to play  
 4NT = quantitative

3♦\* = 11–13, four hearts

3♥\* = 11–13, four spades

Opener *may* bid the major (3♥\*/3♠\*), which asks, “Do you have a five-card minor?”

If yes, responder bids 4♣\*/4♦\* = 5

4♥\*/4♠\* shows 6, respectively

If *no*, bid 3NT to deny five-/six-card minor.

Opener may pass 3NT, pass 4♥/4♠ = to play or bid 5♣/5♦ to play or bid a slam at the six-level.

If opener bids 4♠ over 3♦, it is 1430 for hearts and 4NT is 1430 for spades.  
 or

Opener bids 3NT, 4♥/4♠ or 5♣/5♦ to play.

**3♣\* = 11–13, no four-card major, only one four plus card minor.**

Opener bids 3♦. Do you have a five-card suit?

Responder cheapest bids

3NT denies a five-card minor suit

3♥/4♦ = 5♣/5♦

4♣/4♠ = 6+♣/6+♦

Opener bids 3NT, a game in major or 4NT ask

**3NT\* = 11–13, both minors, at least 4-4.**

Opener bids 4♣/4♦ for Minorwood.

**Transfer to a minor suit with (12+ 5-5/5-4 in minors or 6m/5-4 m/M)**

1♣-1NT\* shows five plus clubs (*never* 5-3-3-2)

Opener next bids 2♣ (may not have clubs).

Over two-level bids, responder bids 2♦/2♥/2♠ four plus cards in suit bid and 3♣ = six plus clubs, and 3♦ = 5-5 minors.

Opener's bids of 4♣\*/3♦\*/3♥\*/3♠\* is RKCB for the suit bid.

Opener's bid of 2NT over two-level major suit bids asks for range.

Responder bids 3♣\* = 12-13

3♦\* = 14-15

3♥\* = 16-17

3♠\* = 18+

Opener's next step bids of 3♦\*/3♥\*/3♠\*/4♣\* is RKCB for the bid suit.

1♣-2♣\* shows five plus diamonds (*never* 5-3-3-2)

Opener next bids 2♦ (may not have diamonds).

Over two-level bids, responder bids 2♥/2♠ with four cards in suit bid.

Where now 2NT\* = **four clubs**, 3♣\* = 5-5 in minors and 3♦\* = six plus diamonds

Opener's bid of 3♣\*/3♦\*/3♥\*/3♠\* is RKCB for the suit bid.

Opener's bid of 2NT asks for range over two-level bids ASKS

Responder bids 3♣\* = 12-13

3♦\* = 14-15

3♥\* = 16-17

3♠\* = 18+

Opener's next step bids of 3♦\*/3♥\*/3♠\*/4♣\* is RKCB for bid suit.

After accepting the transfer (spades/clubs/diamonds/hearts)

Responder next tells about his controls

First step zero to two controls (A = 2, K = 1), next step = 3, etc.

**TAB bid the trump suit at any level (all bids are alerted)**

First step Five or more trumps with no top honor (A, K, Q)

Second step Five with one top honor

Third step Five with two top honors

Fourth step Six or more with one honor

Fifth step Six or more with two honors

Sixth step Six or more with three top honors

**CAB bid a nontrump suit ask\***

First step    No controls (Jxx or worse)  
 Second step    Second-round control (K/singleton)  
 Third step    First-round control (A/void)

**Responding with balanced hands and no suit fit.**

1/2NT\*    16–19 HCP  
 2/3NT\*    20–21 HCP  
 3/4NT\*    22–23 HCP  
 4/5NT    24+ HCP

**(3) 2♥/2♠/3♣/3♦ (8+ HCP with singleton in bid suit)**

**(4) 2NT\* 14+ HCP, balanced no five-card major/minor (my not stop short of 4NT)**

**Opener rebids**

3♦/3♥/3♠    Natural bids  
 3♣\*    Baron asking bid (not Muppet)

Partner bids  
 Bid four-card suits up the line (3♦/3♥/3♠)  
 3NT show clubs

**3NT    Ask bid**  
 Responder bids  
 4♣ 14–15 points  
 4♦ 16–17 points

After four clubs and four diamonds, opener bids four-card suits up the line or bid 4NT sign-off or 6/7 NT

4♥ 18–19 points  
 4♠ 20–21 points

After four hearts and four spades, opener may bid 4NT ace asking or bid 6/7 NT

4NT    Blackwood ace ask

**(5) Strong 6-4/6-5 hands over 1♠ bids with singleton/void**

3♥ six spades with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP  
 3♠ six clubs with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

4♣ six diamonds with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

4♦ six hearts with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

Next level bids by opener (3♠\*/3NT/4♦\*/4♥\*) asks bid four-/five-card suit

Responder bids his four-/five-card suit

3♠ then 4♣/4♦/4♥

3NT then 4♦/4♥/4♠

4♦ then 4♥/4♠/5♣

4♥ then 4♠/5♣/5♦

Opener sets contract or bids 4NT/5NT 1430 for suit bid

4NT = 1430 RKCB for suit bid

3NT To play

## SUMMARY—INTERFERENCE BIDS OVER 1♣\* OPENING

### Direct seat interference

Double – Mathe, which shows majors

Pass	0–4 HCP
1♦	5–7 HCP
Redouble	8+ HCP
1♥	8–10 HCP no stopper in hearts
1♠	8–10 HCP no stopper in spades
1NT	8–10 HCP stoppers in the majors
2♣	8–13 HCP and six plus cards
2♦	8–13 HCP and six plus diamonds
2♥	11+ spade stopper (no heart stopper)
2♠	11+ heart stopper (no spade stopper)
2NT	11+ both majors stopped

At one-level – (natural)

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, five plus card suit, game force
Jump in suit	systems on 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠

1NT	8–13 HCP, with stopper
2NT	10+ HCP, with 1/2 stopper
Cue bid	10+ game force no stopper

**1NT – (natural)**

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, five plus card suit

**1NT – Mathe, which shows minors**

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
2♣	five plus hearts, GF
2♦	five plus spades GF
2♥	5+ HCP, natural and nonforcing
2♠	5+ HCP, natural and nonforcing
3NT	10+ HCP, both minors stopped

**At two-level – (natural)**

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, natural
Cue bid	9+ flat with no stopper
2NT	9–13 HCP with stopper
3NT	14+ with stoppers

**At three-level – (natural)**

Pass	0–7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, and five plus card suit

**At four-level – (natural)**

Pass	0–7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP, takeout or penalty



**Balancing seat interference**

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1♥/♠)

Pass	balance minimum no five-card suit
Double	support for the other three suits
Suit bid	Natural, nonforcing
1NT	shows stopper with (16–21 HCP)
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)
Cue bid	20 + HCP no stopper

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1NT for minors)

Pass	balanced minimum no five-card suit
Double	support for the both majors
2♣/2♦	unusual extra values shows ♥/♠
2♥/2♠	Natural nonforcing
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (double = majors)

Pass	balanced minimum no five-card suit
Double	support for the both minors
2♣/2♦	natural five plus card suit
2♥/2♠	unusual extra values shows ♣/♦
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

**INTERFERENCE OVER 1NT by OPPONENTS**

Direct seat = Modified Cappelletti

Bal seat = Modified DONT

Over Weak NT = Landy where 2♣ is for the majors and all other bids are natural and double is for penalty with 13+

**OTHER CONVENTIONAL CALLS**

Over a major bid play Leaping Michaels, Unusual vs. Michaels

Unusual over Unusual, SSGT

Overcalls Michaels and 2NT = two – lowest unbid suits

3X level bids over the opponents bid are preemptive

Fourth suit forcing at the two levels is forcing one round—three-level shows.

**Western cue**

1♣ X is a power double 16+ and 1♦/1♥/1♠ X is takeout

INT 15–18 systems off

Leads—fourth best leads no trumps and 3/5 against suits

A/Q asks for attitude and king = count

Upside-down count and attitude (suit and notrump)

Trump suit preference



# CHAPTER 18

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## MECKWELL PRECISION BIDS

In this chapter, we review the Precision bids used by Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth as summarized by Luke Gillespie and Jim Streisand, with their kind permission, often called the Meckwell Lite System.

Meckwell Lite is a simplified version of the Precision system used by Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell (a.k.a. Meckwell). All balanced hands with 17+ HCP (except for hands that open 2NT) and all unbalanced hands with 16+ HCP open 1♣. Other opening bids are limited to a maximum of 15 HCP.

Their basic style is very aggressive. If not vulnerable, they almost always open 11 HCP hands and may respond with very weak hands (even Yarboroughs!). They open many light distributional hands with only 9 or 10 HCP. They upgrade aggressively, but always with a reason. “I felt like it” is *not* a reason.

Keep in mind that these notes are guidelines, not a rigid set of rules. We may deviate when logic or inspiration so dictates, but we try to keep partner happy.

### Notation (for this chapter)

NT = notrump

M = major, OM = other major

m = minor, om = other minor

R = red suit, x = any suit

Nat = natural, Artif = artificial

Bal = balanced, Unbal = unbalanced

Spl = splinter

F = forcing, GF = game force, F1 = forcing one round

INV = invitational

P/C = pass or correct

COG = choice of games

RKC = Roman Key Card (0314)

NV = nonvulnerable, V or vul = vulnerable, FAV = NV vs. V, UNFAV = V vs. NV

HCP = high card points (4321)

DNE = does not exist

Mulberry (Bush) = RKC variant used on three-suited relay auctions

Opponents' bids shown in parenthesis

Distributional notation:

4 = 4 = 3 = 2 means 4♠, 4♥, 3♦, 2♣ exactly

4 = 4 = (3-2) means 4♠, 4♥, 3 cards in either minor and two cards in the other

4-4-3-2 (or 4432) means 4-4 in any two suits and three in any third suit

## Table of opening bids

1♣	16+ unbalanced, 17+ balanced; upgrades allowed
1♦	10–15, two plus diamonds; often a balanced 11–13
1M	10–15, five plus cards in the major
1NT	14–16 (first all, second all, third NV), 15–17 (third vul, fourth all)
2♣	10–15, six plus clubs
2♦	10–15, three suited with short diamonds
2M	4–9, usually six cards, suit quality varies, especially NV
2NT	19–20 usually, but 20–21 when opening 1NT is 15–17
3x	Natural, wide range based on position/vulnerability
3NT	Gambling, solid minor suit with no side ace or king; loser in third/fourth
4x	Natural
4NT	Blackwood (0123 responses)

## Balanced hand ladder

11 to 13	Open 1♦ (or 1M with 5)
14 to 16	Open 1NT (5M, 6m, 5422 OK)
17 to 18	Open 1♣ and rebid 1NT
19 to 20	Open 2NT
21 to 23	Open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over 1♦, or rebid 1NT over 1M
24 to 26	Open 1♣ and rebid 2♥ (Kokish, GF) over 1♦, or rebid 2NT over 1♥. Over 1♠ must rebid 1NT and catch up later

In fourth seat, or vulnerable in third seat, 1NT is 15–17 with corresponding adjustments to all of the stronger sequences.

## 1♣ opening bid

All 16+ unbalanced.

All 17+ balanced except those that fall into the range for a 2NT opening.

Upgrade with extra playing strength or prime values (e.g., AKQxxx-AQx-xxx-x).

Responses:

- |    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| 1♣ | 1♦    | 0–7 (almost) any - (see three-level responses)                              |
|    | 1♥    | 8–11, any shape except primary spades                                       |
|    | 1♠    | 8+ HCP, 5+♠   |
|    | 1NT   | 12+ HCP, 5+♥  |
|    | 2m    | 12+ HCP, 5+ m   |
|    | 2♥    | 12–13 balanced (then 2♠ nat; also 2NT nat with four-card suits up the line) |
|    | 2♠    | 12+, 4441 (then 2NT asks short)   |
|    | 2NT   | 14+ balanced (then 3♣ = Baron or nat, other = nat)                          |
|    | 3 any | natural, seven plus suit, < 8 HCP – KJ10xxxx is typical                     |
|    | 3NT   | DNE   |
|    | 4 any | natural, eight-card suit (?)  |

## 1♦ response

- |       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 1♣-1♦ | 1M  | Nat, F1, may be four cards if unbalanced     |
|       | 1NT | 17–18 (18–19 when opening NT = 15–17)        |
|       | 2m  | Nat, 5+, NF, denies 4M                       |
|       | 2♥  | Kokish - bal GF (24+), or nat very strong—GF |
|       | 2♠  | Nat very strong, GF                          |
|       | 2NT | 21–23 (22–24 when opening NT = 15–17)        |
|       | 3♣  | Nat GF, may have major                       |
|       | 3♦  | Nat GF, denies major                         |
|       | 3M  | GF, 4M and 5+♦                               |
|       | 3NT | To play—probably unbalanced                  |
|       | 4m  | Demands cue ace                              |
|       | 4M  | To play                                      |

### 1M rebid

- |          |       |   |
|----------|-------|---|
| 1♣-1♦-1M | 1♠/1♥ | F1, four plus spades, 0-7, < 4 ♥ (with 3♥, 4+♠ and 5–7, bid 1♠) |
|          | 1NT   | 0-4(5), < 4M—over 1♥ denies 4♠                                  |
|          | 2♣    | Artif, 5+-7, < 3M—over 1♥ denies 4♠                             |
|          | 2♦    | Artif, 5+-7, exactly 3M, over 1♥ denies 4♠                      |
|          |       | With 5 HCP can judge between 1NT and 2m                         |

- 2M 0-4(5), 4+M  
 2♥/1♠ (4)5-7, 6 hearts (weaker than 1♣-1♦-1♠-3♥)  
 2♠/1♥ (4)5-7, 6 spades (wider range than 2♥/1♠)  
 2NT Artif, 4-7, exactly 4M with some short (or super 5+M no short)  
 3m 5+-7, nat, good 6+-card suit (also 1♣-1♦-1♠-3♥)  
 3M 5+-7, 4M, no short  
 3M+1 5+-7, 5M, some void (then relay asks, LMH)  
 3M+2 thru 3M+4 5+-7, 5M, singleton (3NT = ♠ spl/1♥)  
 4M 5+-7, 5M, no short (or very weak with short)

1♣-1♦-1♥-1♠ or

- 1♣-1♦-1M-1NT 1NT Nat, NF—may be unbalanced  
 2m Nat, NF, ambig lengths, may be 5-4 either way  
 2♥/1♠ Nat, NF—at least 5♠, 4♥  
 2M Nat, NF, 6+M  
 2♠/1♥ Nat, F1  
 2NT Artif, some 6+m, exactly 4M  
 3♣/3♦/4♣/4♦ P/C, 3♥/1♠ natural 0-4  
 3m Nat, at least 5-5, strong but NF  
 3♥/1♠ Nat, at least 5-5, strong but NF  
 AKQxx of both suits would qualify  
 3M Strong but NF  
 4m 6-6—Also 1♣-1♦-1S-1NT-4♥

Natural continuations over all of the above except as noted.

- 1♣-1♦-1M-2♣ 5+-7, < 3M, denies 4♠ over 1♥  
 2♦ “Semi-artif,” F1  
 2♥/1♠ Exactly 5  
 2♠/1♥ Artif, 5-5 minors  
 2M Exactly 2  
 2NT “Nat,” < 2M, default if no other call applies  
 3m 6 bad (5 good?)  
 If opener does not place contract, he implies real diamonds.  
 If opener next bids 3♣, he implies 5+♣, 4(5)M, minimum.  
 2♥/1♠ Nat F1  
 2M Nat NF  
 2NT Artif GF, some 6+m, exactly 4M  
 3♣ asks m (3♦ = ♦, higher = ♣), 3♥/1♠ natural  
 3m Nat, at least 5-5, GF (also 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♣-3♥)

3M GF  
3NT To play

1♣-1♦-1M-2♦ 5+-7, 3M, denies 4♠ over 1♥  
2M To play, often with only 4M—responder bids at his peril.  
This is the *only* sign-off.  
2♥/1♠ Nat, F1, looking for second fit  
2NT Artif GF, asking—usually slammish in M  
3 new Natural (except 3S/1♥)  
3M Punt, does not qualify for a different call  
3NT 4333  
4 new Short, also 3♠/1♥  
4M Good trumps (two of top three or AJx or KJx)  
3m Nat 5+, implies only 4M, GF

Note: 2NT/3m is *different* over 2♦ than over 1♠/1NT/2♣.

3M Nat invite (only way to invite in M)

1♣-1♦-1M-2NT 4-7, exactly 4M and some short (or supermax 5+M no short)  
3♣ asks  
3♦ Minimum  
3♥ Asks  
3♠ Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)  
3NT/4♣/4♦ Singleton, LMH  
3♥ Max, some void, then 3♠ asks (LMH)  
3♠/3NT/4♣ Max, singleton, LMH  
4M Supermax, 5+M, no short

1♣-1♦-2♥-2♠ GF, Kokish, 2♠ = normal (can bid 3m with weak 6+ m)  
2NT 24+ balanced, GF—use 2NT structure  
3♣ Heart one suiter  
3♦ Primary hearts, secondary diamonds  
3♥ Primary hearts, secondary clubs  
3♠ Primary hearts, secondary spades  
3NT Primary hearts, natural, COG

1♣-1♦-2♠ 3♣ Second neg—then 3M is forcing (2♠ = GF)  
1♣-1♦-2NT 21-23 balanced, use 2NT structure  
1♣-1♦-3m 3♦ Neutral—opener bids four-card M if he has one (3m = GF)  
3M Nat, 5+M

1♣-1♦-3M GF, 4M and (5) 6+♦

1♣-1♦-3NT 100 percent to play

## 1♥ response

The 1♥ response shows 8–11 with any shape except primary spades.

1♣-1♥	1♠	Nat, 5+♠
	1NT	Bal, usually 17–18 but possibly 21–22 With 23+ bid 2NT
	2m, 2♥	Nat, five plus cards
	2♠	Artif, some 4441 (then 2NT asks, bid short at three-level)
	2NT	23+, then use 2NT structure
	3x	Nat, sets trumps, asks for cue ace
	3NT	To play—rare (e.g., Kx-K-QJx-AKQJxxx)

## 1♠ rebid

1♣-1♥-1♠	2♠	Usually three trumps, then 2NT asks
	2NT	Asks, slam interest
	3♣	<b>five plus clubs</b>
	3♦	<b>five plus diamonds</b>
	3♥	<b>five plus hearts</b>
	3♠	<b>4 = 3 = 3 = 3</b>
	3NT	3M, no feature
	4x	<b>Splinter</b>
	4M	3M, two of top three, no feature
	3X	Nat, strong suit
	2NT	Strongest raise, 4+♠
	3♣	Asks
	3♦	Some shortness (3♥ asks, LMH)
	3♥	Some second five plus suit (3♠ asks, LMH)
	3♠	4+♠, no short, better than 4♠
	3NT	4+♠, some void, relay asks (LMH)
	4m, 4♥	4+♠, singleton, weaker than 2NT
	4♠	4+S, no short, weakest raise
3x		<b>Natural, strong six plus card suit (KQxxxx)</b>



**1NT rebid**

1♣-1♥-1NT	2♣	Stayman—promises at least one major
	2♦	Transfer
	2♥	<b>Some 4441 (1♥ response denies primary spades)</b>
	2♠	Clubs (don't need size ask)—then 3♣ = likes clubs
	2NT	<b>Puppet Stayman (does not include 4441s with 4♥)</b>
	3♣	Diamonds
	3♦	5-5 minors
	3M	3 = 1 = (5-4)
	3NT	8–11—opener keeps bidding with big range
	Four-level	As in opening 1NT structure

1♣-1♥-1NT-2♣-2♦	2M	Smolen
	2NT	Clubs
	3♣	Asks
	3♦	2 = 4 = 2 = 5 or 4 = 2 = 2 = 5
	3♥	Asks, then 3♠ = 2425, 3NT = 4225
	3♥, 3♠, 3NT	LMH short
	3♣	Diamonds with some shortness
	3♦	Asks
	3♥, 3♠, 3NT	LMH short
On both of these auctions, 4♣ instead of 3NT shows same type with extras.		
	3♦	2 = 4 = 5 = 2 or 4 = 2 = 5 = 2
	3♥	Asks, then 3♠ = 2452, 3NT = 4252
	3M	Shortness implies 4441 (5440 with weak five-card m possible)
	3NT	8–11—opener keeps bidding with big range

1♣-1♥-1NT-2♣-2M	2♠/2♥	4♠, 6m – 2NT asks, then 3m = nat
	2NT	Clubs, implies 4OM
	3♣	Asks, then 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ = Bal, LH
	3♣	Diamonds, implies 4OM
	3♦	Asks, then 3♥, 3♠, 3NT = Bal, LH
	3♦	Min raise of M, some short (stiff if M = ♠), relay LMH
	3♥/2♠	Spade raise, some void, relay asks (LMH)
	3♠/2♥	Max heart raise, short spades
	3M	Max raise of M, balanced
	3NT	8–11—opener keeps bidding with big range (4m = 5)
	4m	Max raise of M, short m (also 4♥/2♠ = max ♥ spl)
	4M	Minimum, usually no shortness

# TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

1♣-1♥-1NT-2♦-2♥	2♣	Clubs
	2NT	Asks
	3♣	5 clubs
	3♦, 3♠	Fragment, then Mulberry (esp. over 3♠)
	3♥	0 = 5 = 4 = 4, then Mulberry
	3NT	2524: 4♣ or 4♥ nat, 4♦ 6RKC, 4♠ RKC ♥
	2NT	Natural, maximum (bid 3NT with min)
	3♣	Diamonds, then 3♦ asks (Bal, LH)
	3♦	Retran, 6+, minimum, unbal, relay asks (LMH)
	3♥	6+♥, slam try, no short (usually 6322, with 2722 bid 4♥)
	3♠, 4m	6+♥, maximum, shortness
	3NT	Natural, COG, minimum (bid 2NT with max)
	4♥	2722
1♣-1♥-1NT-2♥	2♠	4 spades
	2NT	1 = 4 = 4 = 4
	3x	shortness
	2NT	Asks for shape
	3x	shortness
1♣-1♥-2♣	2♦	Waiting, opener shows major if he has one
	2♥	Nat, five plus hearts
	2♠	Artif, five plus diamonds
1♣-1♥-2♦	2♥	Nat, five plus hearts
	2♠	Waiting
1♣-1♥-2m-3M	4M, fit for m, then first new suit sets M as trumps	
1♣-1♥-2♥ 3♠	3♥	3+♥, better than 4♥
	4+♥, some void, relay asks (LMH)	
	3NT	4+♥, singleton ♠
	4m	4+♥, singleton m
	4♥	3+♥, weakest raise
1♣-1♥-2♠-2NT	3m	Can set any suit trumps below game (4M = weaker)
	3M	3♠ Sets spades
	3NT	To play
This is "Mulberry"	4♣	Relay to 4♦, then NF nat slam try
	4♦	Relay to 4♥ for sign-off in game
	(Bush).	If opener is big, he bids > 4♥ (usually 4♠).

4♥, 4♠, 4NT RKC in LMH of opener's suits  
Higher RKC responses for the short suit

## 1♠ response

Some versions of Meckwell Lite treat all positive responses other than 1♥ to show 12+ HCP. We use the "traditional" Precision treatment in that the 1♠ response doesn't promise more than GF values (i.e., 8+ HCP). Most continuations after opener's rebid allow responder to immediately differentiate minimums (8–11) from maximums (12+).

1♣-1♠	1NT	Control asking bid
	2x	Nat, five plus cards, support asking bid
	2♠	Trump asking bid
	2NT	???
	3x	Nat, sets trumps, asks for cue ace
	3♠	??? Balanced 17–18, four trumps
	3NT	To play—rare (e.g., x-Kx-QJx-AKQJxxx)

## 1NT response (hearts)

1♣-1NT-2♣ Clubs or balanced—natural continuations

## Higher responses

1♣-2m	5+m, 12+ HCP, natural continuations
1♣-2♠-2NT	2♠ = Some 4441, 12+ HCP, use same structure as 1♣-1♥-2♠ (above)
1♣-2♠-3 suit	five steps: 1 = low stiff (2-10), 2 = hi stiff (J-A), 3, 4, 5 = 4 support (LMH stiff)

## Asking bids

Tradition Precision systems feature extensive use of asking bids. We use some of these asking bids in limited circumstances, usually when responder bids 1M naturally. This can occur when an unpassed hand responds 1♠, when a passed hand responds 1M, or when the opponents either double 1♣ or overcall 1♦.

Note that asking bids are not used if fourth hand intervenes over 1M; we then revert to natural bidding.

## Beta (control ask)

Beta asks responder to show his controls, counting ace as two and king as one. The control responses stop at 2NT (6+) and three-level responses show extra suit quality.

After 1♣-1M-1NT:

- 2♣ zero to two controls; 2♦ asks for clarification (see below)
- 2♦ three controls
- 2♥ four controls
- 2♠ five controls
- 2NT six plus controls
- 3x five plus cards with 2/3 top honors in both suits
- 3M six plus cards with 2/3 top honors plus the jack

After 1♣-1♠-1NT-2♣-2♦:

- 2♥ zero or one control
- 2♠ two controls
- 2♣ an ace (all bids show two kings)
- 2NT 5332, two kings
- 3x four plus cards, two kings
- 3M six plus cards, two kings
- 3NT 5332, two kings, two queens

If responder is a passed hand, his maximum number of controls is four. Also, it's very unlikely that a passed hand would have two ♥♥xxx suits (one a major) and impossible for a passed hand to have ♥♥Jxxx in a major, so responses above 2♥ have different meanings.

After P-1♣-1M-1NT:

- 2♣/2♦/2♥ as above
- 2♠ 5-5 with 2/3 top honors in the M; 2NT asks for side suit
- 2NT ???
- 3x 5-5 with 2/3 top honors in the second suit

### **Alpha (support ask)**

Alpha asks for responder's general strength (in controls) and degree of support for opener's primary suit. Responder answers in steps.

After 1♣-1M-2x:

- Step 1 zero to three controls, no support (less than ♥xx or xxxx)
- Step 2 four plus controls, no support
- Step 3 zero to three controls, support (♥xx or xxxx)
- Step 4 four plus controls, support
- Step 5 four controls, good support (♥xxx or better)
- Step 6 five controls, good support

Step 7 six controls, good support (etc.)

If responder bids the first or second step, opener's new suit is natural. If the responder bids the third step or higher, then opener's suit is agreed and a new suit asks for specific controls.

### **Gamma (suit quality ask)**

Gamma agrees responder's suit and asks for suit length and quality. Responder answers in steps:

After 1♣-1M-2M:

- Step 1 no top honor
- Step 2 five cards with one top honor
- Step 3 five cards with two top honors
- Step 4 six cards with one top honor
- Step 5 six cards with two top honors
- Step 6 all three top honors

After the Gamma response, a new suit asks for specific controls.

### **Epsilon (specific control ask)**

After a trump suit has been agreed following Alpha or Gamma, a new suit asks for first- or second-round control in that suit. Responder answers in steps:

- Step 1 no control
- Step 2 second-round control (king or singleton)
- Step 3 first-round control (ace or void)
- Step 4 ace and king

A repeat ask in the same suit asks for third-round control:

- Step 1 no control
- Step 2 third-round control (queen or doubleton)

### **INTERFERENCE AFTER 1♣ OPENING**

1♣-(DBL)	P	0-4(5)
	1♦	5+-7
	RDBL	GF, no good bid, usually bal or 4441, then first DBL = TO
	1M, 2m	Nat 5+ cards, GF
	1NT	Nat, 8-11 or 14+
	2NT	Nat, 12-13

	3 any	Nat, NF, seven-card suit
1♣-(bid)	P	0-4(5)
	DBL	(5)6-7 any, F through 2♠
	New suit	Natural, five plus cards, GF
	Cheapest NT	Natural, 8-11 or 14+
	Jump in NT	Natural, 12-13
	Cue	8+, bal, no stop (two-level)—three-suited (three-level)
	Jump Cue	4441, short in opponent's suit
1♣-(1 any)	3 new	Nat, NF, seven-card suit

Over 2♠ or higher double includes 8+ with no convenient bid. (Then 2NT = F)

Over three any or higher, any positive action is GF.

**Over fourth-hand interference:**

When responder has not shown a suit, opener's double is *takeout*.

The first double on either side is *takeout*. Subsequent doubles are business.

If responder has bid 2♥ or 2NT, opener's double is *penalty*.

Opener's cue bid is *Michaels*. Opener's jump cue bid = *natural*.

**Pass-double inversion:**

1. Applies only after 1♣ opening.
2. Applies only in GF auctions.
3. Applies only at high levels (3♠ and up)

Then: Pass requests double, either (1) for penalty, or (2) to show a flexible hand (more than one place to play), or (3) to show extras with a fit.

Double = would have passed partner's penalty double, but encourages a bid

Bid = (1) single suited if no fit found yet, or (2) weakest action with fit

Examples: 1♣-1♥-(3♠)-Pass and Pull = multisuited, direct bid = one suited, double = "you decide whether to defend" 1♣-(1♥)-1♠-(4♥)-Pass and Pull to 4NT implies clubs plus longer diamonds, pull to 5♣ implies diamonds plus longer clubs, pull to 5♦ implies diamonds with spade tolerance, pull to 4♠ = slam try, immediate bids show one suiters, immediate 4NT = RKC spades, double = "you decide"

## PASSED HAND RESPONSES TO 1♣

We revert to natural responses above 1♦.

- 1♦ 0–7
- 1♥ GF, 5+♥
- 1♠ GF, 5+♠
- 1NT GF, 8–10 (11) balanced, may include a weak five-card minor
- 2m GF, 5+m
- 2♥ DNE??
- 2♠ GF, some 4441

### 1♦ opening bid

Two plus diamonds, (10) 11–15 HCP

If balanced 11–13 (or 14 when 1NT = 15–17)

Balanced includes hands with five clubs:  $4 = 2 = 2 = 5$ ,  $2 = 4 = 2 = 5$ ,  $2 = 2 = 4 = 5$  and  $(332) = 5$ .

Unbalanced possibilities include

Primary diamonds

Five clubs:  $4 = 1 = 3 = 5$  or  $1 = 4 = 3 = 5$  or  $3 = 1 = 4 = 5$  or  $1 = 3 = 4 = 5$

4441 pattern including diamonds

5440 with 5m and void M

11–13 balanced is the most frequent and worst for offense. Thus, many auctions cater to not getting overboard with this type. When opener is unbalanced, he must often take aggressive action to disclose his hand type.

Responses:

- 1♥ Occasionally three (Bart will usually have four)
- 1♠ Assume 4+
- 1NT Wide range, up to bad 11
- 2♣ Nat, F1, 5+—denies major unless GF and six plus cards
- 2♦ Nat, F1, 5+—denies major unless GF and six plus cards
- 2♥ 5+♠, 4+♥, less than invitational values opposite 11–13 bal
- 2♠ 5+♠, 4+♥, invitational opposite 11–13 bal
- 2NT 11+ to 13, bal, invitational
- 3♣ Preemptive/mixed, both minors, usually five plus in both
- 3♦ Nat, preemptive/mixed, usually six diamonds
- 3M Nat, preemptive
- 3NT Nat, 13–15
- 4♣ Both minors, usually eleven plus cards

- 4♦ Lots of diamonds  
 4M Nat, to play  
 4NT Blackwood (0123, since no “suit” shown)

**1♥ response**

- 1♦-1♥ 1♠ Must show spades if held, even with balanced hand—1NT denies 4♠  
 1NT 11–13 (14) bal, no singleton (normal rebid with 3 = 1 = (54) is 2♣)  
 2♣ Both minors, at least 5-4, ambig lengths, can be 5-4 either way, *not* 6-4  
 2♦ Nat, 6+♦, minimum, may have four clubs  
 2♥ Shows 4  
 2♠ Either 5♠ and 6♦ with some extras, or mini-splinter for hearts  
 2NT 6+♦ and 3♥, not minimum (with min bid 2♦)  
 3♣ fifty-five minors, maximum but NF  
 3♦ 6+♦, maximum, denies 3♥  
 3♥ Strongest invite (stronger than 2♠), some short (then 3♠ asks, LH)  
 3♠ 4♥, some void—3NT asks (LH)  
 3NT Offer to play with good long diamonds, usually seven  
 4♣/4♦ Artif, 4♥, splinter (LH), exactly a singleton (with void bid 3S)—6♦  
 4♥ 5♥, 6♦

**1♦-1♥-1♠-2♣ GF**

- 2♦ 5+♦, denies 3♥—natural continuations  
 2♥ All hands with 3♥, then: 2S = relay without 4♠, 2NT = relay with 4♠  
 2♠ Relay, denies 4♠  
     2NT Balanced  
         3♣ Relay  
             3♦ 4♣, exactly 4 = 3 = 2 = 4  
             3♥ 4♦, exactly 4 = 3 = 4 = 2  
             3♠ 4 = 3 = 3 = 3 minimum  
             3NT 4 = 3 = 3 = 3 maximum  
         3♣ 4 = 3 = 5 = 1 These two are the only possible  
         3♦ 4 = 3 = 6 = 0 unbalanced shapes.  
 2NT Relay, shows 4♠, agrees spades (see exception below)  
     3♣ Balanced  
         3♦ Relay  
             3♥ 4 = 3 = 2 = 4  
             3♠ 4 = 3 = 4 = 2  
             3NT 4 = 3 = 3 = 3, no min-max step here  
         3♥ Sets hearts—changing horses



- 3♦ 4 = 3 = 5 = 1  
 3♥ 4 = 3 = 6 = 0  
 2♠ Either 5♠ and 6♦, or 5♣ and a max  
 2NT Asks  
 3♣ 5♣, max  
 Higher 5♠, 6♦—specific meanings undefined  
 2NT No 5m, no 3♥, thus 4234, 4243, or 4144  
 3♣ Asks  
 3♦ 4♣ balanced, exactly 4 = 2 = 3 = 4  
 3♥ 4♦ balanced, exactly 4 = 2 = 4 = 3  
 3♠ 4 = 1 = 4 = 4 minimum  
 3NT 4 = 1 = 4 = 4 maximum  
 3♣ 5♣, minimum, either 4225 or 4135

- 1♦-1♥-1♠-2♦ F1, game invite with five hearts or four spades  
 2♥ minimum, two or three hearts (then 2♠ = nat inv)  
 2♠ reject, zero or one heart  
 2NT accept, zero or one heart  
 Over any of the above 3m by responder shows 5♥, 4+m, invite  
 3m Does not exist?  
 3♥ accept with 3♥  
 3♠ 5♠, 6♦?  
 3NT accept with 3♥ and ♣ stop?

Note: With 4♥, 5+m and invite, jump directly to 3m over 1♠.

- 1♦-1♥-1♠-2NT Nat invite  
 1♦-1♥-1♠-3m Canape invite, 4♥, 5+m  
 1♦-1♥-1♠-3♥ GF—slam try  
 1♦-1♥-1♠-3♠ GF—slam try

- 1♦-1♥-2♣-2♠ Artif, GF  
 2NT 3 = 1 = (54), then 3m = 4 supp, then step 1 = 4m, other = 5m  
 3♣ 5-5m  
 3♦ 2 = 2 = (54), then 3H asks HJx or more (3NT = no), and 3♠ asks ♠Qx or more (3NT = yes)  
 3♥ 1 = 3 = 4 = 5, then Mulberry  
 3♠ 1 = 3 = 5 = 4, then Mulberry  
 3NT 0 = 3 = 5 = 5 minimum, then Mulberry  
 4♣ 0 = 3 = 5 = 5 maximum, then mod. Mulberry (can't make nat slam try)

1♦-1♥-2♠ Either 5♠-6♦ or a heart mini-splinter (2.5 heart raise)

2NT Asks and shows some values

3♣ Low splinter (clubs)

3♦ 5♠ and 6+♦

3♥ High splinter (spades)

3♠ Undefined yet

3♦ Bad hand, only bailout—opener should pass or correct to 3♥

3♥ GF, natural, 6+♥

### 1♠ response

1♦-1♠ 1NT As over 1♥ (complete structure a couple of pages down)

2♣ “Natural”, can be 1 = 4 = 4 = 4 or 1 = 4 = (53)—with 6♦-4♣ bid 2♦

2♦ Natural, 6+♦ – then 2♥ = GF (ambiguous about hearts)

2♥ Artif, 4♠, not the pits, some short or 5♥, 6♦ minimum

2♠ Shows four (unless 3 = 4 = 5 = 1)—shapely min or balanced

2NT/3m As over 1♥

3♥ Natural, 5♥ and 6♦, maximum

3♠ Strongest invite, some short (then 3NT asks, LH)

3NT As over 1♥ (to play with long diamonds)

4♣ Artif, 4♠, some void, then 4♦ asks (LH)

4♦/4♥ Artif, splinter (LH)—exactly a singleton (with void bid 4♣)

4♠ 5♠, 6♦

1♦-1♠-2♣-2♦-2♥ 1 = 4 = 3 = 5—avoid six-card ♦ fit, hope for some eight-card fit

1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥ Artif, GF

2♠ Artif: (a) 1 = 4 = 4 = 4, (b) 1 = 4 = (5-3), (c) spade support

2NT Asks

3♣ *not* spade support

3♦ Asks

3♥ 1 = 4 = 4 = 4, Mulberry?

3S 1 = 4 = 3 = 5, Mulberry?

3NT 1 = 4 = 5 = 3, Mulberry?

3♥ Sets hearts

3♦ 3 = 1 = 4 = 5, then Mulberry

3♥ 3 = 1 = 5 = 4, then Mulberry

3♠ 3 = 0 = 5 = 5 min, then Mulberry

3NT 3 = 0 = 5 = 5 max, then Mulberry

2NT 1 = 3 = (54), then 3m = 4 support, then step 1 = 4m, other = 5m 3♠ 5-5m

- 3♦ 2 = 2 = (54), then 3♥ asks ♥Qx or more (3NT = yes), and 3♠ asks ♠Jx or more (3NT = no)  
 3♥ 0 = 4 = 4 = 5, Mulberry applies  
 3♠ 0 = 4 = 5 = 4 minimum, Mulberry applies  
 3NT 0 = 4 = 5 = 4 maximum, Mulberry applies

1♦-1♠-2♥ Artif ♠ raise with short OR 5♥, 6♦ minimum (bid immed. 3♥ with max)

2♠ Sign-off (then 3♦ = 5♥, 6♦)

2NT Asks

3♣ Low splinter (clubs)

3♦ 5♥, 6♦ minimum—then Mulberry?

3♥ High splinter (hearts)

1♦-1♠-2♣ 3♣/3♦/3♠ Natural invite

3♥ 5-5 GF

1♦-1M-1NT 2♣ Relay to 2♦, either to play or some invite or certain slam tries

2♦ Forced

2♥/1♠ 4 = 1 = 4 = 4 inv+, resp can pass 2NT or 3m with min

2♠ = NF, should be 3 = 4 = 3 = 3 with weak hearts

3M = max with corresponding m, 3NT = max no fit

2♠/1♥ 1 = 4 = 4 = 4 inv+, continue as above

2M Nat, invite

2NT Nat, invite (raising 1NT directly to 2NT is artif)

3m ?? Nat, 5M, 5+m, invite?? (with canape bid 2OM)

3♥/1♠ 5-5M—strong inv with good hearts (else 2S over 1♦)

3M Nat, 6+M, strong inv (with 6♠-4♥ bid 2♠/1♦, or this)

3♠/1♥ Self-splinter, singleton or void

3NT 5M, COG

4♣ Self-splinter, singleton or void

4R Self-splinter, void

2♦ Artif GF

2♥ Artif, 3M, no five-card minor

2♠ Artif, < 3M, some five-card minor, then 2NT asks

2NT < 3M, no five-card minor

3m 3M and 5m

1♦-1♥-1NT-2♦-3♦-4♥ = 6RKC (resp usually has 5♥). To sign off in 4♥ must bid 3♥ first

2♥/1♠ Artificial, some canape inv+

2♠ x spade support

2NT	Less than ♥♥x spade support
3m	Invite, 4♠ and 5+m (usually six)
3M	GF, 4♠ and 5 (exactly) of corresponding m
2♠/1♥	Artificial, some canape inv+
2NT	Forced
3m	Invite, 4♥ and 5+m (usually six)
3M	GF, 4♥ and 5 (exactly) of corresponding m
2M	To play
2NT	Artif, relay to 3♣ to play, or show various 5-5 hands
3♣	Forced (This is how we escape to 3♣.)
3♦	??
3♥	??
3♠	??
3NT	??
3 lower	Slam try, 5♠
3M	Slam try, natural
3♠/1♥	GF, 5♠ and 6♥
3NT	The end
4♣	RKC in M
4♦/4♥	Splinter (exactly singleton—with void bid 2♣-2♦-4R)
4M	The end
1♦-1♥-2♥ 2♠	Artif, asks
2NT	3 = 4 = 3 = 3
3♣	five clubs, then 3♦ asks: bal-LH
3♦	five diamonds, unbalanced, then 3♥ asks, LH
3♥	minimum
3♠	minimum, 4♥, 6♦
3NT	2 = 4 = 5 = 2
4♣	Stiff club, implies 4 = 4 = 4 = 1, else bid 3♦
4♦	Stiff spade, implies 1 = 4 = 4 = 4, else bid 3m
4♥	Max bal
1♦-1♠-2♠ 2NT	Artif, asks
3♣	five clubs, then 3♦ asks: bal-LH
3♦	3 = 4 = 5 = 1
3♥	five diamonds, unbalanced, then 3S asks, LH
3♠	minimum
3NT	minimum, 4♠, 6♦
4♣	4 = 2 = 5 = 2

- 4♦ Stiff club, implies 4 = 4 = 4 = 1, else bid 3♥
- 4♥ Stiff heart, implies 4 = 1 = 4 = 4, else bid 3♣/3♥
- 4♠ Max bal

1♦-1M-2M Jump in new suit = short, slam try

1♦-1M-2NT 6+♦, 3M, some extra (else bid 2♦)

3♣ “Wolffis♥”, forces 3♦

3♦ Forced

P To play (duh!)

3M To play

3OM Short with diamond support (2+)—*not* LH

3NT Short clubs with diamond support—*not* LH

4♣ Short clubs, ♦ support, stronger than 3NT

3♦ GF, some slam interest (denies shortness, didn't bid 3♣)

3M GF, natural, some slam interest

3OM GF, 4M, 6(5) clubs

1♦-1M-3♦ 6+♦, denies (or unwilling to show) 3M

1♦-2♣ 2♦ 5+♦, not NT type, 5422 or more shapely

2M GF, (semi) natural, nat continuations

2NT GF, natural

3m nat, some interest in contracts other than 3NT

3M short

3NT To play, regressive

3♣ NF, nat invite

3♦ GF, then 3M = “naturalish” (looking for 3NT)

3M Short with ♦ support (expect four)

3NT \*\* To play \*\*

4♣ Natural, requests cue (but 4♦ by opener is RKC clubs)

4♦ RKC clubs

4♥ RKC diamonds

2♥ Artif, 11–13 balanced

2♠ Relay to 2NT

2NT Forced

Pass Possible but unlikely—save this for match points

3♣ GF, nat, balanced, slam interest

3 other GF, short, 6+♣

3NT To play

2NT GF, nat, want to declare, interest above 3NT, then 3M = nat with ♣ fit

- 3♣ Natural, *not forcing*
- 3♦ GF, nat, presumably 4♦, 5+♣
- 3M GF, *natural*, 4(5)M, 6+♣(with short M start with 2♠)
- 3NT The end
- 4♣/4♦ As over 1♦-2♣-2♦
- 2♣ Artif, 4♣ (five with crap) and some stiff
- 2NT Asks, then 3♣/♦ = short ♥/♠
- 3♣ NF opposite min, then 3♦/♥ = short ♥/♠ max
- 3♦ ??
- 3M GF, nat, then OM sets M
- 2NT 10-13, 4 = 4 = 4 = 1
- 3♣ To play
- 3 other GF, nat
- 3♣ 5 (4) clubs, balanced, don't want to declare NT, then stoppers
- 3♦ GF, six plus solid diamonds, no 4M, not min
- 3M GF, 5♣, short M (with five clubs and crap bid 2♠)
- 3NT 14-15, 4 = 4 = 4 = 1, then Mulberry applies
- 4♣ DNE
- 4♦ RKC clubs (unlikely but possible with big fit)
- 4M Natural, 5M, 6♦

If fourth hand overcalls M, then double = short M.

If fourth hand overcalls ♦ (any meaning), then double = real diamonds (usually five plus).

If 2♣ bidder is passed hand:

- P-1♦-2♣ 2♦ Nat, corrective
- 2♥ Artif, good hand, forces 2♣, usually no club fit
- 2♣ Forced
  - 2NT 4 = 4 = 4 = 1
  - 3♣ Nat, no short
  - 3♦ Nat, suit not as good as P-1♦-2♣-3♦
  - 3M 5M, 6♦
- 2♠ 4♣, some stiff, as above
- 2NT Nat, shows two plus fit (with bal and no fit just pass)
- 3♣ Nat—weaker than 2♥-2S-3♣
- 3♦ Nat—good suit
- 3M GF, 5♣, short M

1♦-2♦ 2♥ 11-13 balanced (12+ or 13 if Jx or worse in ♦—with 12- bid 2NT immed)

2♠ Relay to 2NT

2NT Forced

3♣ GF, Nat, ♦+♣

3♦ Sets ♦, then 3M = short

3M Sets ♣, values in M, looking for 3NT

3♦ GF, bal or short ♣

3♥ Asks

3♠ Short ♣

3NT and higher Balanced

3M GF, short M, slam interest

3NT To play

2NT GF, nat, some interest above 3NT

3m NF, nat

3M GF, *natural*, 4(5)M, six plus diamonds (with short M start with 2♠)

3NT The end

4♣ Void

4♦ Natural, requests (begs?) partner to bid RKC

4♥ RKC diamonds

2♠ Artif, 4♦ and some stiff (or 5♦ with crap)

2NT Asks (LMH)

3♣ DNE

3♦ NF opposite min, then 3♥/3♠/3NT = short ♣/♥/♠ max

2NT 10 to bad 12 bal, Jx or worse in ♦ (with 12+ or 13 bid 2♥)

3m NF, nat

3M GF, short

3♣ (41) = 3 = 5

3♦ NF opposite min, then 3M = short max

3M Stopper, does not preclude 4-6 GF

3♦ NF, bal, not “no-trumpy,” 5(4)♦, then seminatural (stoppers)

3M/4♣ GF, 5+♦, short M/♣

1♦-2♦ 3NT DNE

If fourth hand overcalls, then double = short.

If 2♦ bidder is passed hand:

P-1♦-2♦ 2♥ Artif, good hand, forces 2♠

2♠ Forced

2NT Max, bad diamonds

3♣ 5♣, bal, usually looking for best part score

- 3♦ Stronger than 3♦ direct
- 3M 5M, 6♦, looking for M fit
- 2♠ 4♦, some short, as above
- 2NT Nat, ♦ fit
- 3♣ Nat
- 3♦ Weaker than 2♥-2♠-3♦
- 3M GF, 5♦, short M

### Interference over 1♦

- 1♦-(DBL) RDBL four plus hearts, then 1♥ = 3, 2♥ = 4, other = fewer and natural
- 1♥ four plus spades, then 1♠ = 3, 2♠ = 4, other = fewer and natural
- After RDBL or 1♥ and any one-level rebid by opener, 2♣ forces 2♦, 2♦ = GF, 3♣ = nat weak.
- 1♠ Requests 1NT, no interest in major suit fit
- 1NT Clubs, F1 (Note: may wrong-side NT)
- 2♣ Clubs, NF, good suit (else bid 1NT)
- 2♦ Diamonds, NF
- 2M As without interference
- 2NT Diamonds, Lim+
- 3m As without interference
- 3M Nat preempt
- 1♦-(1♥) DBL Standard, usually exactly four spades
- 1♠ Five plus spades, F1 (with six plus spades and GF, bid 2♠)
- 1NT Nat, NF—sometimes no stop if nothing else fits
- 2♣ Nat, NF (if followed by 2♥, forcing only to 3♣)
- 2♦ Nat, F1, five plus cards—nat continuations—**3♣ next = NF**
- 2♥ GF, clubs (possibly only four)
- 2♠ Nat, six plus spades, GF
- 2NT Nat, NF
- 3♣ Mixed with *both* minors
- 3♦ Mixed/pre with six plus (five) diamonds
- 3♥ Transfer to 3NT
- 3♠ Nat preempt
- 3NT To play, wishes to declare
- 4m As without interference
- 4♥ RKC diamonds
- 4♠ To play
- 1♦-(1♠) DBL Negative, normal OR GF with exactly five hearts
- 1NT/2m As over 1♥ (2♣ = neg. free bid, 2♦ = F1)
- 2♥ Nat, 5+, NF—negative free bid



	2♠	GF, clubs (possibly only four)
	2NT/3♣/3♦	As over 1♥
	3♥	GF, six plus hearts
	3♠	Transfer to 3NT
	3NT/4m	As over 1♥
	4♥	To play
	4♠	RKC diamonds
1♦-(1NT)	We play 2♣ as both majors plus transfers	
	DBL	Penalty, forcing through 2♦
	2♣	Both majors
	2♥/2♦	Transfer to major
	2♠	Natural
	2NT	Both minors, stronger than 3♣
	3♣	Natural
1♦-(2♣/3♣)	Min ♦ = hearts	All of these apply by UPH only.
	Min ♥ = spades	Then cue = good raise, also DBL if fourth hand raises
	Min ♠ = diamonds	
1♦-(2♣)	2NT	Nat invite
	3♣	5-5+ majors, INV+
	3♦	5+♦, mixed/pre
	3M	GF, nat, strong suit
Double then M is NF and implies 4OM (else immed transfer)		
1♦-(2♠)	2NT	Nat invite
	3♣/3♦/3♥	Show ♦/♥/♣ respectively UPH only
	3♠	Requests opener to bid 3NT??
1♦-(2♦ natural)	DBL	Neg or GF with exactly 5M
	2M	Nat, NF—negative free bid
	3♦	Asks stop
	3♠	Nat, GF, 6+
1♦-(2♦ Michaels)	DBL	Cards
	2♥	Clubs, invite+
	2♠	Diamonds, invite+
	2NT	Both minors
	3m	Nat, NF
	3M	Short M, diamonds
1♦-(2♥ Michaels)	As above, except 3♣ = forcing	
1♦-(2♥ Natural)	2♠ = neg. free bid, 3♠ = GF, 6+	

## Over fourth-seat interference

Support doubles and redoubles:

When responder shows a major at the one-level and fourth hand overcalls below two of responder's suit, we play support doubles, including when fourth hand overcalls 1NT, strong and natural. This applies whether second hand has acted. We also play support redoubles if fourth hand doubles.

## General rules for competing over 2M by fourth hand

Many different auctions fall under this category. Second hand may or may not have acted. If he has acted, he could have doubled or overcalled 1M or overcalled in a different suit. Third hand also could have acted in one of several ways: pass, 1NT, negative double, negative free bid, transfer, or a natural F1 bid.

In the most general case:

Double	Extra values, invite+, often the strongest call available
2NT	Looking for a minor-suit fit on many auctions, but nat on others
3♣	Usually both minors—on a few specific auctions clubs only
3♦	Natural
Cue	??

## 1♥/1♠ opening bids

Style: five cards expected in first/second seat. Four more often in third/fourth, but with a full opener, we try to make the normal opening bid. Very aggressive, but we pay attention to vulnerability and suit quality. With 14/16 HCP and no singleton, we tend to open 1NT, even with many 5422 patterns. Therefore, our Jacoby structure does not cater to showing such hands.

1♥	1♠	Expected on most hands with four plus spades—with GF may start with 2/1
1NT		Semiforcing
2♣		GF, nat or balanced
2♦		GF, usually five plus
2♥		Raise, not the pits, usually three trumps (with four can make mixed raise)
2♠		Weak, six plus spades
2NT		GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter
3♣		Limit raise; 3♦ asks:
	3M	Bal, four plus trumps
	3OM	Unbal, three trumps, some singleton; 3NT asks (LMH)
	3NT	Spade void
	4m	Void
3♦		Mixed raise, four plus trumps

- 3♥ Preemptive raise, four plus trumps
- 3♠ Artif raise, some singleton—then 3NT asks (LMH)
- 3NT Spade void—10–12 HCP
- 4m Void—10–12 HCP
- 4♥ Many hand types possible opposite limited opening
- 4♠ RKC hearts (with a natural 4♠ bid must bid 1♠ first)
- 4NT Aces (0, 1, 2 . . .)
  
- 1♠ 1NT Semiforcing
- 2♣ GF, nat or balanced
- 2♦ GF, usually 5+♦
- 2♥ GF, nat, 5+♥
- 2♠ Raise, not the pits, usually three trumps (with four can make mixed raise)
- 2NT GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter
- 3♣ Limit raise; 3♦ asks (see above)
- 3♦ Mixed raise, four plus trumps
- 3♥ Natural, invitational
- 3♠ Preemptive raise, four plus trumps
- 3NT Artif raise, some singleton; 4♣ asks (LMH)
- 4m Void—10–12 HCP
- 4♥ Void—10–12 HCP (with a natural 4♥ bid must bid 2♥ first)
- 4♠ Many hand types possible opposite limited opening
- 4NT RKC spades

### 1♠ response

- 1♥-1♠-1NT 2♣ Forces 2♦ to start invitational sequences
  - 2♦ Forced
    - 2M Inv
    - 2NT Nat invite
- 2♦ Artif, GF
  - 2♥ Strong suit (two of top three), denies three spades
  - 2♠ Three spades
  - 2NT Neither
  - 3m 2 = 5 = (42), 4m, stopper in om
- 2M To play
- 2NT Relay to 3♣ – then P = to play, 3x =?? (not needed yet)
- 3m GF, 5-5
- 3♥ Nat, slam try
- 3♠ Nat, slam try

1♥-1♠-2♣ 3♠ Natural, invite

1♥-1♠-2♥ 3♣ Artif, GF  
3♦/♥/♠ Invite

1♥-1♠-2♠ Shows four trumps, or three trumps plus weak m; 2NT asks:  
3♣ three trumps, minimum (could be 3 = 5 = (3-2))  
3♦ three trumps, maximum, unbal (if bal open 1NT)  
3♥ four trumps, minimum  
3♠ four trumps, maximum  
3NT 4 = 5 = 2 = 2, maximum, stuff in minors (?)  
4m Splinter, six *good* hearts

1♥-1♠-3m Natural, 5-5, extras but NF  
3♦ = NF, 3♥ = NF, 3♠ = F, 4m = F, 4om = RKC m, 4♠ = RKC ♥  
We have no force in hearts except 4♠ (= RKC).

1♥-1♠-3NT four spades, seven hearts

### 1NT response

1♥-1NT-2♣ Possibly as few as 2 (4 = 5 = 2 = 2), but assume three plus with semiforcing NT

1♥-1NT-2m 2♠ Artif, strongest raise of m  
3m Courtesy raise, but some game interest

1♥-1NT-2♥ 2♠ Artif, both minors, assume 5-5, indeterminate strength

1♥-1NT-3m Nat, 5-5, extras but NF  
3♥ = NF, 3♠ = three-card LR, 4m = F, 4om = RKC m

1♥-1NT-2♠ 5♠, 6♥—weakish

1♥-1NT-3♠ 5♠, 6♥—strong

1♠-1NT-2m Opposite SF NT this will be four plus more often than three, especially 2♦

1♠-1NT-2♣ 2♦ Five hearts—with stiff opener must judge—nat continuations  
Responder can show 2♠, 5♥ by bidding . . . 2♦-2♥-2♠

2♥ Artif, Mod Bart: (a) ♠ sign-off, (b) good ♣ raise, or (c) ♦ invite

2♠ Forced unless unusually good opposite ♠ sign-off

P To play—weak with doubleton or bad with 3(4)

2NT Max invite, four clubs

3♣ Max invite, five plus clubs

3♦ Natural invite

	Higher	Undefined but show clubs
2♠	Doubleton S, 9+ to 11	
2NT	Nat, 11–12	
3♣	Courtesy raise	
3♦	To play (start with 2♥ to show ♦ invite)	
3♥	5♥, 5♣ (with 5♥, 4♣ start with 2♦)	
3♠	Three-card limit raise	
1♠-1NT-3m	Nat, 5-5, extra♠ but NF	
	3♥ = nat NF, 3♠ = NF, 4m = F, 4om = RKC m, 4♥ = three-card LR	
1♠-1NT-3♥	Nat, 5-5, extras but NF	
	3♠ = NF, 4m = artif, slammish in corresponding M, 4M = to play	
1M-1NT-2NT	Nat with six strong M, offering NT	
1M-1NT-3M	Nat, “strong,” but limited by failure to open 1♣	
1M-1NT-3NT	Solid suit, offer to play	
1M-1NT-4 lower	6-6	
1M-2M	New suit “Natural” game try	
2NT	Natural try for 3NT, 6322 with side stoppers	
4 new	Nat slam try, 6-5 or 6-6	

## 2/1

Over a major-suit opening, we play 2/1 game forcing.

2♣ over 1M is either natural or balanced.

If opener rebids 2M, he shows 6+M.

Therefore, opener may have to make some ugly 2NT bids, either off shape or missing stopper(s), or both. 2NT is our punt; other bids should retain their integrity. Try *not* to rebid in a three-card suit.

A high reverse (e.g., 1S-2H-3♣) shows five of the second suit.

After a 2/1 opener’s jump in a new suit is a *splinter*.

Unlike many standard systems, we play *fast arrival* on most auctions. This is a logical extension of the limited opening-bid style. But beware that sometimes we cannot use fast arrival when that would be RKC for the suit immediately below, a danger most frequent when we are bidding diamonds and hearts (e.g., 1H-2♦-3♦-4♥ is RKC for diamonds).

## Modified Nonserious 3NT

If we are in a game force and we have established a major-suit fit (eight plus cards) and the last bid was 3M (our fit) and we still have potential slam interest, then we play Modified Nonserious 3NT (with exceptions noted below).

Typical Auctions: 1M-2x-2M-3M, or 1M-2x-2y-2M-3M

Over 3♠:	3NT	Nonserious slam try—partner cooperates with interest himself
	4m/4♥	Cue, serious slam try—partner must cooperate below game
Over 3♥:	3♠	Cue, strength unspecified
	3NT	Artif, nonserious slam try
	3NT	Artif, no spade control, nonserious slam try
	4m	Cue, no spade control, serious slam try

### EXCEPTION:

1♠-2♥-3♥	3♠	Nat, some slam interest, establishes 6RKC
	3NT	Nonserious slam try
	4m	Serious slam try

Note: Nonserious 3NT does *not* apply on the auction 1M-2x-2NT-3M. Opener's 3NT is an offer to play. With slam interest, he should cue bid. His 2NT bid has already limited the slam potential of his hand.

## Strong raise

1M-2NT	Artif, GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter	
3♣	All minimums except 6322 or 7222 garbage (bid 4M immed)	
3♦	Asks	
	3♥	No shortness, <i>exactly</i> 5M, then 3S = still hoping
	3♠	Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)
	3NT/4♣/4♦	LMH singletons
	4M	6322 or 7222—min but not crap (else immed 4M)
	3♥	Some void, too strong to splinter, forces 3S (LMH)
	3♠/3NT/4♣	LMH singletons, too strong to splinter
3♦	Extras with some shortness	
	3♥	Asks
	3♠	Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)
	3NT/4♣/4♦	LMH singletons
3♥	Extras, some 5422, then 3♠ asks (LMH four-card suit)	
3♠	Extras, some 6-4, then 3NT asks (LMH four-card suit)	

- 3NT Extras, 6+M, balanced—nat (cue) continuations
- 4x Extras, nat, 5-5
- 4M 6322 or 7222 garbage—We have *three* ranges with this shape.

Responder can break the relay only over 3♣.

With 5-5 show second suit only with two of top three. With 6-4 show second suit only with A or K.

With 5332 opener is limited to 13 HCP, else would have opened 1NT.

After interference over Jacoby 2NT

If RHO bids a new suit over 2NT, a pass by opener denies a control in the opponent's suit. Double shows shortness in the opponent's suit, and a four-level cue bid shows a void. Any bid by opener promises a high-card control in the opponent's suit. A new suit shows shortness in the bid suit, 3M shows six cards with extra values, 3NT shows six cards with minimum values and 4M shows five cards with minimum values.

### Passed hand responses

- P-1♥ 2♣ Drury (see below)
- 2♦ Nat (often a weak 2♦ opener)
- 2♥ Normal
- 2♠ Mixed raise, some shortness; 2NT asks (LMH)
- 2NT Both minors (5-5)
- 3♣ Nat, invite
- 3♦ Fit-showing, 6♦, 3♥
- 3♥ Limit raise, five trumps; 3S asks for shortness (LMH/none)
- 3NT Spade void, four plus trumps
- 4m Void, four plus trumps
  
- P-1♠ 2♣ Drury (see below)
- 2♦ Nat (often a weak 2♦ opener)
- 2♥ Nat
- 2♠ Normal
- 2NT Mixed raise, some shortness; 3♣ asks (LMH)
- 3♣ Nat, invite
- 3♦ Fit-showing, 6♦, 3♠
- 3♥ Fit-showing, 6♥, 3♠
- 3♠ Limit raise, five trumps; 3NT asks for shortness (LMH/none)
- 4x Void, 4+ trumps

After P-1M-2♣:

- 2♦ Real opener, no immed game interest, nat continuations
- 2♥/1♠ Nat, F1
- 2M Worst, min opener or less
- 2NT Slam interest
- 3x Slam try, length in x (also 2♠/1♥)
- 3M Solid six-card suit plus side card
- 3NT 6322, side stoppers
- 4x Slam try, short in x (also 3♠/1♥)

If 2♣ gets doubled:

- Pass Worst with 4M
- 2M Worst with 5M
- RDBL Clubs
- Other Ignore the double

# **INTERFERENCE OVER 1M Over Unusual 2NT and “Standard” Michaels**

- 1M-(DBL) RDBL Bal, 8+, exactly two-card support for M
- 1♠/1♥ Nat, F1
- 1NT Clubs, length or strength or both
- 2♣ Diamonds, length or strength or both
- 2♦/1♠ Hearts, length or strength or both
- 2M-1 Artif, constructive raise of M
- 2M Weakest raise of M
- 2♠/1♥ Nat, preemptive
- 2NT 4+M, inv+, then 3♣ = artif game try, 3M = NF, other = slam try
- 3♣ Nat, preemptive
- 3♦/1♠ Nat, preemptive
- 3M-1 Artif, mixed raise
- 3M Preemptive
- 3♠/1♥ Splinter
- 3NT Artif, raise to 4M with defense, lets opener participate
- 4x Splinter, including 1S-(DBL)-4♥
- 4M Wide range, opener is on his own
- 4♠/1♥ Natural
- 4NT RKC M

- 1♥-(1♠) 1NT Nat, NF, may be heavy because 2NT is artif
- DBL Neg, then cue by either side = GF



- 2m Nat, F1  
 2♥ Nat, normal raise  
 2♠ Support, exactly a limit raise  
 2NT Artif raise, GF, like Jacoby 2NT, some extra (else 4♥ immed)  
 3m Nat, pre  
 3♥ Nat, mixed  
 3♠/4m Splinter  
 3NT Nat  
 4♥ Nat, wide range, no slam interest if balanced  
 4♠ RKC for hearts  
 4NT Blackwood aces only (0123)—rare exception to “always RKC”
- 1♥-(2m) DBL Neg  
 2♥ Nat, normal raise  
 New suit nonjump = nat, F1  
 2NT Artif, support, GF, like Jacoby 2NT  
 3m Support, exactly a limit raise  
 3♦/2♣ Natural, preemptive  
 3♥ Nat, mixed  
 3♠ Nat, preemptive  
 3NT Nat  
 4m Splinter  
 4om Splinter  
 4♥ Nat, wide range  
 4♠ Nat  
 4NT RKC hearts
- 1♥-(2♠) 2NT Exactly a limit raise—this auction differs from lower overcalls  
 3m Nat, F1 only  
 3♥ Nat, NF  
 3♠ Support, establishes force over 4♠  
 4m Splinter  
 4♥ Nat, wide range  
 4♠ RKC hearts  
 4NT Blackwood aces only (0123)—rare exception to “always RKC”
- 1♠-(2x) DBL Neg, then cue by either side = GF  
 New suit nonjump = nat, F1  
 2NT Artif, support, GF, like Jacoby 2NT  
 3x Support, exactly a limit raise  
 New suit single jump at three-level = preemptive  
 3♠ Nat, mixed

- 4x Splinter
- New minor jump at four-level = splinter
- 4♥/2m Nat
- 4♠ Nat, wide range
- 4NT RKC spades

If we have established a major-Suit fit, then 3NT in comp is artificial and sets up a force. Cue bid at four-level = void but does *not* establish a force. New suit = natural, also does not establish a force.

1M-1NT-(2x) Double is takeout, including 1♥-1NT-(2♠)-DBL. With a singleton need just a “normal” opener. Over 2♠ need some extras. If opener passes then double by responder is *penalty*, since opener usually has a balanced hand.

- 1♥-1♠-(2m) DBL Support double, shows three spades
- 2♠ Shows four spades
- 1♥-1♠-(DBL) RDBL Support redouble, shows three spades
- 2♠ Shows four spades

### Over Unusual 2NT and “Standard” Michaels

- 1M-(2NT) Minors
- DBL Negative (4 of OM)
- 3♣ Shows the other major
- 3♦ Shows support for the opening suit

In either case, the bid that shows opener’s suit is a limit raise *exactly*. The bid that shows the other major is *game forcing*.

- 3M Nat, NF, from a sound single raise to just below a limit raise
- 3OM Nat, NF

With weak hands and either support or the other major, responder should pass and hope to balance with 3M or 3OM later. Thus, 3M or 3OM immediately shows some values.

- 3NT Artif, GF raise of M, creates force
- 4m Splinter—creates a force
- 4M To play, wide range
- 4OM To play
- 4NT RKC in M

- 1M-(2M) Michaels, OM and an unknown minor
- DBL Cards, penalty interest
- 2♠/2♥ Support, limit raise exactly
- 2NT Clubs

3♣	Diamonds
3♦	Mixed raise
3M	Nat, NF (often three)
3♥/♠	Support, limit raise exactly
3♠/♥	Splinter
3NT	Artif, GF raise, creates force
4m	Splinter
4M	To play, wide range
4♥/♠	Splinter
4♠/♥	RKC in hearts

### Over other two-suited interference

If both suits are known:

Cheapest available cue shows the lower ranking of “our” suits. Other cue shows the higher ranking. For example, over 1♥-(2♥) showing spades and clubs, 2♠ shows diamonds. Over 1♠-(3♣) showing hearts and clubs, 3♥ shows diamonds. This may not always be best, but it should avoid screw-ups. A bid of the fourth suit is natural and nonforcing.

If only one suit is known:

Cue bid shows support. If 2NT is available, it shows a GF raise. New suits are natural and *forcing*. With a weak hand and a long suit pass and hope to get your suit in later. The Michaels defense above is a specific exception to this default defense.

### 1NT opening bid

1NT 14–16 in first seat, second seat, and NV third seat—5M, 6m, 5422 OK  
15–17 in fourth seat and vul third seat

2NT 19–20 when 1NT = 14–16  
20–21 when 1NT = 15–17

With less than a 1NT opening, open 1♦ (or 1M with 5). We open most 11 HCP in first/second.

With the range between 1NT and 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 1NT.

With the range above 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over 1♦, or rebid 1NT over 1M.

With two ranges above 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 2H (Kokish, GF) over 1♦, or rebid ♦ 2NT over 1♥.

Over 1S must rebid ♦ 1NT and ♦ catch up later.

1NT 2♣ Stayman, promises a major  
2♥/2♦ Transfer, shows five plus cards

- 2♠ Size ask or clubs; opener bids 3♣ with a max for notrump
- 2NT Puppet Stayman
- 3♣ Diamonds, sign-off or GF (we don't have an invite)
- GF, 5-5m, then 3M = Flag corres. m, 4m = Nat with *optional* KC responses
- 3M Stiff M, 3OM, (54)m, then 3♠ Nat, 4m Nat with optional KC responses
- 3NT The end
- 4♣ Gerber, aces only (0123)
- 4♥/4♦ Transfer, then 4M+1 = RKC, higher = void (1NT-4♦-4♥-4NT = ♠ void)
- 4♠ Artif, "weak" raise to 4NT (since 1NT is relatively wide range)
- 4NT "Strong" raise to 4NT, then 5m = 4 card, 6m = 5(6) cards
- 5m To play
- 5M (23) = 4 = 4, M = Fragment, forcing to slam
- 5NT Forcing

1NT-2♣-2♦ No major

- 2♥ Garbage Stayman—opener may correct with 3 = 2 in majors
- 2♠ Nat, shows 5♠, invite—only way to invite with 5♠
- 2NT Nat, invite, implies major(s)
- 3m Nat, GF, implies major—no special continuations *yet*
- 3M Smolen, shows 5OM, 4M—see below
- 3NT The end
- 4♣ Gerber (0123)
- 4♥/4♦ Transfer
- 4♠ Artif, "weak" raise to 4NT
- 4NT "Strong" raise to 4NT—opener's 5m = four cards, 6m = five (six) cards

1NT-2♣-2♦-3M-3NT No support for OM

- 4m Fragment, slam interest
- 4M Four cards in corresponding m, void om, slam interest

1NT-2♣-2♥

- 2♠ Nat, shows 5♠, invite—only way to invite with 5♠
- 2NT Nat, implies 4♠, then opener's 3♠ is to play
- 3m Nat, GF, implies 4S—anything special here?
- 3♥ Nat, invite
- 3♠ Artif, distro slam try in ♥, then 3NT asks short (LMH)
- 3NT To play, but implies 4♠S—opener may correct
- 4♣ Artif, balanced slam try in hearts, then 4♦ = last train
- 4♦ RKC in hearts
- 4♥ To play
- 4♠ Spade void

4NT Nat, implies 4♠

1NT-2♣-2♠ 2NT Nat, implies 4♥

3m Nat, GF, implies 4♥—anything special here?

3♥ Artif, distro slam try in ♥, then 3♠ asks short (void, LMH)

With spades trump, we have enough room to show exact voids.

3♠ Nat, invite

3NT To play

4♣ Artif, bal slam try in spades, then 4♦ = cue, 4♥ = last train

4♦ RKC in spades

4H Heart void

4NT Nat, implies 4♥

1NT-2♦-2♥ 2♠ Artif, all invites with hearts

2NT Reject without three hearts

3m Nat, NF, invite, 5♥ and 5m

3♥ 5-5 majors, invite

3♣ Max, only 2♥

3♦ Max, 3+♥, may be COG

3♥ Reject with three (four) hearts

2NT Four plus clubs, GF

3♣ Four plus diamonds, GF

3♦ Slam try with some short

3♥ COG, must choose ♥ with 3

3♠/4m Void, slam try

3NT COG

4♥ Nat, slam try, no short

1NT-2♥/2♦ 2NT Super-accept with four trumps

3M Super-accept with five trumps

After 2NT responder shows hand type with a slam try.

See August 2009 *Bridge World* article by Henry Sun for details.

Responder, if making a slam try, can show any shortness (or bal), and any side four plus card side suit (or none). Cannot distinguish singletons/voids.

1NT-2♥-2♠ 2NT Four plus clubs, GF

3♣ Four plus diamonds, GF

3♦ 5-5+ majors, GF (with 5S, 4♥ use Smolen)

3♥ Slam try with some short or 6♠, 4♥

3♠ COG, must choose ♠ with 3

3NT COG  
 4m/4♥ Void, slam try in spades  
 4♠ Nat, balanced slam try

1NT-2♠ Size ask or clubs

2NT Rejects NT try

3♣ To play

3♦ Clubs, slam try, balanced or short diamonds

3♥ Asks

3♠ Singleton diamond exactly

3NT Balanced

4♣ Balanced, stronger than 3NT

4♦ Void

3M Clubs, short M, then 4♣ = *optional* RKC

3NT To play—implies clubs but no longer interested opp. min.

4♣ ??

4♦ RKC in clubs

4M Void

3♣ Accepts NT try

Pass To play

Other As above—3NT does not imply clubs opposite acceptance.

1NT-2NT Puppet Stayman

3♣ DNE (??)

3♦ No five-card major

3M four cards in the other major

3M Five cards

1NT-3♣ Transfer to diamonds, after opener's 3♦ (forced):

Pass To play

3M Shortness, 6+♦

3NT Bal, slam interest

## INTERFERENCE OVER 1NT

System on over nonpenalty doubles (any meaning) or 2♣ (any meaning except majors).

Meckwell runouts over penalty doubles:

P To play—we can't redouble for penalty

RDBL Artif, one minor or both majors

- 2m Two suits, m + higher suit (slight mod to Meckwell, catering to both m)  
 2M Nat
- 1NT-(2♣) Both majors  
 DBL Penalty interest  
 2♦ Nat, NF  
 2♥ Artif, competitive with both minors  
 2♠ Artif, GF, one or both minors  
 2NT Relay to 3♣, usually to play, but 3R = transfer, F, shows R+1  
 3m Nat, GF, 6+m  
 3M Short  
 3NT To play
- 1NT-(2♦) Both majors  
 As over 2♣, but 2NT relays to 3♣ to get out in *either* minor, and 3M = nat.  
 3M direct = short
- 1NT-(2♥) Nat or other artif meaning (not both majors)  
 DBL Neg, usually like Stayman  
 2M Nat, NF, to play  
 2NT Relay to 3♣, to play in 3♣ (or in 3♦ if logical)  
 Three of opponent's suit (if known) = short  
 Three of any other suit = nat, GF  
 3NT To play
- 1NT-(2♠) Both majors  
 DBL Penalty  
 2NT Leb, relay to 3♣ to get out in 3♣ or 3♦, or 3M = nat F  
 3m Nat, GF  
 3M GF, short
- 1NT-(2M) Nat, or nat with another (unknown) suit  
 DBL Neg, Staymanish—try to avoid with shortness  
 2♠/2♥ Nat, NF  
 2NT Leb, either (1) to get out in a suit below M, or (2) GF with clubs  
     3♣ Then P or 3 lower = to play (opener's 3♦ = good clubs)  
     3M Clubs, unbalanced, slammish  
     3♠/2♥ 4♠, primary clubs, GF  
     3NT Clubs, bal, slammish (*not* stopper show/ask)  
 3♣ Diamonds, inv+, then OM by responder = nat, second suit  
 3♦ Artif, OM (5+), inv+  
 3♥ GF, short M—note: 3♥ is same over *either* major.  
 3♠ Four cards in OM

## TWO-OVER-ONE GAME FORCE SYSTEM

- 3♠ GF, both minors—note: 3♠ is same over *either* major.  
 3NT To play—we do *not* have a way to *ask* for (or show) a *stopper*.

If opponents show two specific suits, then cheaper cue = competitive with the other suits, and higher cue = GF with at least one (often both) of the other suits.

- 1NT-(3♣) DBL Neg  
 3♥/3♦ Transfer, then raise = slam try  
 3♠ Diamonds, then 3NT by opener shows stop and lack of interest  
 4♣ Short  
 4♥/4♦ Transfer, then 4M + 1 = RKC
- 1NT-(3♦) DBL Neg  
 3♥ Spades  
 3♠ Hearts  
 4♣ Nat, GF  
 4♦ Short ♦  
 4M Natural—no four-level transfers over 3♦ or higher.  
 4NT Nat
- 1NT-(3M) DBL Neg  
 New suit below game is forcing.  
 4NT asks aces (0123), then 5NT asks kings (# of) and other is to play.
- 1NT-(4x) ??

## INTERFERENCE BY FOURTH HAND

- 1NT-2♣-(DBL) RDBL Four plus clubs, attempt to play  
 Pass Denies club stopper  
 RDBL Re-Stayman, opener's rebid is transfer  
 2♦ Garbage Stayman  
 2♥ 4♠, 5♥ invite  
 2♠ 5+♠, invite  
 Higher As if opener bid 2♦, except no Smolen  
 2x Shows stopper, then system on
- 1NT-2♣-(2NT/3♣/3♦) Smolen still applies
- 1NT-2♣-(bid) Double by either side is penalty
- 1NT-2R-(DBL) Pass Denies 3M  
 RDBL Retransfer, then 2NT shows stop, new suit = F  
 2M Light invite with 6M  
 2NT Nat, denies stop



	New suit = nat, NF (including 2♠ = 5-5 inv)
RDBL	Shows 3(4)M and will accept game try (then 3R = re-tran)
2M	Shows 3(4)M and will reject game try
Higher	As without the double

## 2NT opening bid

This structure applies over opening 2NT, 1♣-1♦-2NT, 1♣-1♥-2NT and 1♣-1♦-2♥-2♠-2NT. The 2NT class of openings or rebids shows at least 19 HCP. 2NT does not by itself establish a force unless we are in a game force. However, if responder bids Stayman, that *does* establish a force. Three-level transfers *do not* establish a force, but four-level bids do.

2NT	3♣	Stayman, implies at least one major
	3♦/3♥	Transfer, promises five plus cards
	3♠	Relay to 3NT preparatory to slam try in one or both minors (or wk both m)
	3NT	To play (bitter experience has taught us to play this natural)
	4♣	Gerber (0123)
	4♦/4♥	Transfer, then 4M = RKC, other = void (2NT-4♦-4♥-4NT = ♠ void)
	4♠	Raise to 4NT with (32) = 4 = 4, but over Kokish = “weak” raise to 4NT
	4NT	Nat, implies 4333 or possibly 5332 with a minor (over Kok = “strong”)
	5m	To play
	5M	(23) = 4 = 4, M = fragment, forcing to slam
	5NT	Forcing

2NT-3♣	3♦	No major
	3M	Smolen—use same structure as over 1NT
	3NT	To play
	4m	Nat, 5+m, GF, implies a major
	4NT	Sign-off
	4m+1, etc.	RKC responses for m
	4M	Natural, to play (no delayed Texas over 2NT)
	4NT	Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting
3♥		Shows hearts, does not deny spades
	3♠	Artif, slam try in hearts
	3NT	To play
	4m	Nat, 5+m, implies four spades
	4♠	Nat
	4NT	Sign-off
	4M+1, etc.	RKC responses for m
	4♥	To play

- 4♠ RKC for hearts (don't need two-range invite over 2NT)  
 4NT Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting
- 3♠ Shows spades, denies hearts  
 3NT To play  
 4m Nat, 5+m, implies four hearts  
 4NT Sign-off  
 4m+1, etc. RKE responses for m
- 4♥ Artif, slam try in spades  
 4♠ To play  
 4NT Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting  
 5m To play (to bid RKC in spades must bid 4♥ first)
- 2NT-3♣ 3NT DNE  
 4♣ DNE
- 2NT-3♦-3♥ 3♠ 5-5M, slammish  
 3NT Regressive  
 4m Slam try in corresponding M, stronger than 4M  
 4M Weaker than 4m  
 3NT COG  
 4m Nat, GF, at least mild slam interest  
 4♥ Sign-off  
 4NT Sign-off  
 Cheapest unbid 6RKC for m  
 Next unbid 5RKC for M  
 4♥ Nat, slam try  
 4♠ Splinter, then 5♥ = sign-off, other = RKC responses  
 4NT Nat, NF, slam try with 5♥  
 5m Splinter, then 5♥ = sign-off, other = RKC responses
- 2NT-3♦ 3♠ Artif, max super-accept (typically decent trumps, good controls)  
 3NT Rejects hearts, wants to play NT  
 4♥ Minimum super-accept (typically good trumps, bad controls)  
 4m Undefined—we want to save space with the big one
- 2NT-3♥-3♠ 3NT COG  
 4m Nat, GF, at least mild slam interest  
 4♠ Sign-off  
 4NT Sign-off  
 Cheapest unbid 6RKC for m  
 Next unbid 5RKC for M

- 4♥ 5-5M, game only
- 4♠ Nat, slam try
- 4NT Nat, NF, slam try with 5♠
- 5x Splinter, then 5S = sign-off, other = RKC responses

- 2NT-3♥ 3NT Rejects spades, wants to play NT
- 4♣ Artif, max super-accept (typically decent trumps, good controls)
- 4♠ Minimum super-accept (typically good trumps, bad controls)
- 4♦/♥ Undefined—we want to save space with the big one

- 2NT-3♠-3NT 4♣ Slam try in ♣, then 4NT = sign-off, other = RKC responses
- 4♦ Slam try in ♦, then 4NT = sign-off, other = RKC responses
- 4M Shortness, 5-4 or 5-5
- 4NT 2 = 2 = (5-4)
- 5♣ 6+-5+ minors (either way), weak
- 5♦ 5-5m, forcing, then 5H = 6RKC

## 2♣ opening bid

The 2♣ opening bid shows six plus clubs and 10–15 HCP. Opener may have a side suit including a five-card major.

- 2♣ 2♦ Artif ask, at least constructive values
- 2M Nat, NF, 5+M—raise with 3M, bail with < 2, judge whether to bid with 2
- 2NT Artif, relay to 3♣ to play there or show GF nonfit two suiter (5-5)
- 3♣/3♦/3♥ Transfers, invite+, show six plus in next higher suit
- 3♠ GF, 6+♠ and 4♥, then 4♦ = slammish for S
- 3NT To play
- 4♣ Nat, NF, preemptive
- 4♦ RKC for clubs
- 4M To play
- 4NT Aces only (0123)

- 2♣-2♦ 2♥ Artif, shows either 4♥ or 4♠
- 2♠ Asks
- 2NT/3♣ Hearts/spades
- 3♣/P To play
- 3♦ Artif, club slam try
- 3M Nat invite
- 3OM Artif, slam try in M
- 2NT Asks with positional considerations (usually to right-side NT)
- 3♣/3♦ Hearts/spades
- As above, where possible—don't bid 2NT if can't cope
- 3♣ Constructive raise, no M interest
- 3♦ Artif, club slam try
- 3M Natural, 5M, GF
- 3NT DNE—with a nat 4NT bid, use 2♣-2NT-3♣-3NT
- 2♠ Artif, no major (nor 5♦), useful hand, do not want to bid NT
- 2NT F1, ask
- 3♣ Reject in context, then 3♦ ask M short (LHN)
- 3♦/3♥/3♠ Accept, short in bid suit
- 3NT Accept, no short
- 3♣ Mainly to play after not finding M fit
- 3♦ Artif, club slam try
- 3M Nat, GF, exactly 5M
- 3NT To play
- 2NT Natural, F1, nonminimum, usually bal with Qx or better in two plus side suits
- 3♣ Mainly to play after not finding M fit
- Other as over 2♠
- 3♣ Worst
- 3♦ Nat, five-card side suit
- 3♥ GF, agrees clubs
- 3♠ GF, agrees diamonds
- 4♣ NF
- 4♦ NF
- 4M/4NT DNE
- 2♣-2♦ 3♥/3♠ Nat, five-card side suit
- 3♠/4♥ Artif, agrees ♥/♠, slammish
- 4♣ NF
- 4♦ Artif, club slam try –?
- 4♥/4♠ To play
- 4NT DNE over 3♥, RKC S over 3♠?

- 2♣-2NT-3♣ Pass To play, nonconstructive  
 3♦ Artif, GF, 5-5M, then 3M agrees M  
 3♥ GF, 5♥+5♦, then 3S agrees ♥  
 3♠ GF, 5♠+5♦, then 4♥ agrees ♠  
 3NT Quant raise to 4NT
- 2♣-3♣/3♦/3♥ Transfers, six plus suit, inv+  
 Accept transfer is weakest, may have no support  
 4♣ Good suit, no support – NF  
 4♦ GF, strong raise of suit shown  
 3♠/3♦ or 4♥/3♥ Nat, 5♠/♥ and 6♣
- 2♣-3♠ GF, 6+♠, 4♥  
 3NT No M interest, ♦ stop  
 4♣ No M interest, no ♦ stop (or no NT interest)  
 4♦ Artif, S fit, slammish  
 4♥ ♥ support, wide range  
 4♠ No slam interest, stiff honor possible, limited by failure to bid 4♦
- 2♣-3NT The end

## INTERFERENCE AFTER 2♣ OPENING

- 2♣-(DBL) RDBL Penalty interest, establishes force at two-level, not higher  
 2♦ Artif, asks for M, opener shows *naturally*  
 2M Nat, NF, as without interference  
 2NT/3x Artif, system on
- 2♣-(overcall) DBL Neg, asks for major, opener shows *naturally*  
 New suit Nat, F1  
 2NT Nat, NF
- 2♣-2♦-(DBL) Bid = nat, P = min, RDBL = max  
 2♣-2♦-(2M) DBL = 4OM  
 2♣-2♦-(3♦) DBL = TAKEOUT, bid = nat (no penalty interest)

## PASSED HAND BIDDING

P-2♣ 2NT/3♣ Natural  
 3 other Fit-showing with five of bid suit

## 2♦ opening bid

The 2♦ opening bid shows a three-suited hand, short diamonds, and 10–15 HCP. Acceptable hand patterns are 4 = 4 = 1 = 4, 4 = 4 = 0 = 5 and (4-3) = 1 = 5; a five-card major is not allowed.

2♦ P To play  
 2M To play, but see below  
 2NT Artif, inv+, asking  
 3♣ To play  
 3♦ Natural, invitational  
 3M Nat, NF, shape-based, need super-max to raise with three  
 3NT To play  
 4♣ Preemptive, raise only if prime  
 4♦ RKC in clubs  
 4M To play, wide range

2♦-2♥ To play Over 2♥ opener *bails* with just three.  
 2♠ 4 = 3 = 1 = 5, any strength  
 2NT Max, 4 = 4 = 0 = 5  
 3♣ Max, 4 = 3 = 1 = 5  
 With 4 = 4 = 1 = 4 max must *pass*

2♦-2♠ To play Over 2♠ opener must pass with three.  
 2NT Max, 4 = 4 = 0 = 5  
 3♣ Max, 4 = 3 = 1 = 5  
 With 3 = 4 = 1 = 5 any strength just pass  
 With 4 = 4 = 1 = 4 max must *pass*

## 2NT response

The 2NT response asks for opener's strength (min/max) and exact pattern. Mulberry applies after opener has completed the description. Note that opener's 3M, either directly or after a 3♣ rebid and 3♦ reask, shows three cards in the M and four cards in the OM.

2♦-2NT Asking  
 3♣ All minimums  
 3♦ Asks  
 3M 4OM-3M = 1 = 5, then 3♠ (over 3♥) = invite

3NT	$4 = 4 = 1 = 4$
4♣	$4 = 4 = 0 = 5$
3M	Nat, invite
3♦	Max, $4 = 4 = 1 = 4$ , GF, then 3M = F
3M	Max, $4OM-3M = 1 = 5$ , GF, then 3♠ (over 3♥) = forcing
3NT	Max, $4 = 4 = 0 = 5$ , GF

Bypassed hand 2NT is *system on*, asking with game interest.

## INTERFERENCE AFTER 2♦

2♦-(DBL)	P	To play
	RDBL	Request for four-card major
	Other	System on, but 2M = to play
2♦-(overcall)	DBL	Penalty
	Bid	Nat, NF
2♦-(2NT)	3♦	Request for four-card major
2♦-(3♣)		If 3♣ is artificial, DBL = clubs
2♦-2NT-(3♣)		DBL = penalty, P = neutral
2♦-2NT-(3♦)	P	Minimum (but <i>not</i> $4 = 4 = 0 = 5$ )
	DBL	Max, $4 = 4 = 1 = 4$
	3M	Max, $4OM-3M = 1 = 5$
	3NT	$4 = 4 = 0 = 5$ any strength
2♦-2NT-(3M)	P	Minimum (or neutral)
	DBL	4M, good trumps
	Other	“Naturalish”

## WEAK TWO-BIDS

Style: Six-card suits expected. Five possible at fav, or in third seat. Seven 7 rare. Suit quality may be suspect NV, especially fav. Vul we expect high honors or internal solidity or both. Strength defined as 4 to 9 HCP, but QJ10xxx and out qualifies at fav. Many hands that are max weak twos in “standard” are one-bids for us (e.g., KQxxxx-x-AJx-xxx), although we can go either way in certain seats and vulnerabilities with that hand.

2M	2NT	Asks feature—show a feature unless you have the pits
	3♣	Club feature or maximum without feature, like AKJxxx-xx-Jxx-xx
	3 other	Feature, Q or better, preferably A or K
	3M	Minimum
	3NT	Artif, 4OM, then 4♣ = mini RKC in M, 4♦ sets OM, slammish
	4x	6M and 5x
2M-2NT-3♣	3♦	Artif, asks
	3♥	No club feature
	3♠	Asks short (Bal-LMH)
	3♠+	Artif, club feature and shape (Bal-LMH)
2M-2NT-3♦/3♥/3♠		Cheapest suit (including 3M) asks shape (Bal-LMH)
2M-2NT-3♣/3♦/3♥/3NT	4♣	Mini RKC (still on after feature ask)
2M-2NT-3♣	4♣	Shape ask (Bal-LMH)
	4♦	Mini RKC over 3S response only

After feature ask and shape ask, mini RKC is the cheapest four-level call other than 4M.  
If the mini RKC ask gets doubled, ignore the double.

2♥	2♠	Nat, F1
	2NT	Artif, doubleton spade with interest
	3m	“Nat” without ♠ support
	3♥	No fit, no minor feature
	3♠	Shows 3
	3NT	Nat with stuff in both minors (not recommended)
	4m	Splinter with 3♠
	4♥	To play, semisolid suit
2M	3m	Nat, F1
	3♥/♠	Nat, F1, then 4m = nat
	3M	Nat, not constructive, but opener can bid game with a twist (6-5 or void)
	3NT	To play—if you pull you better be right
	4♣	Mini RKC, then 4♦ = 0, 4♥ = 1, 4♠ = 1+Q, 4NT = 2 no Q, 5♣ = 2+Q
	4♦	DNE
	4M	To play
	4OM	To play

Mini RKC does *not* apply after auctions that start 2M-new suit.

## OVER INTERFERENCE

2M-(DBL)	RDBL	Penalty-oriented (but pass then double = penalty)
	2♠	Nat, NF
	2NT through 3M-1	are transfers, either own suit or lead-direct.



	3M-1	Transfer <i>and</i> suggests lead of M
	3M	Does <i>not</i> suggest lead of M
	Higher	Fit-showing
2M-(overcall)		New suits nat, nonforcing—This includes, e.g., 2♠-(3♥)-4♣

We do *not* play Mini RKC in comp.

2M-2NT-(DBL)	P	Minimum, bad shape (usually no singleton)
	RDBL	High-card max
	3x	Feature
	3M	Minimum, but with some shape (usually a singleton)
2M-2NT-(overcall)	DBL	High-card max, at least two of their suit
	Bid	Feature
	Cue	Short
	4M	Allowed after interference over 2NT

## HIGHER PREEMPTS

Style: Aggressive but not insane (except occasionally at favorable). NV we may have six-card suits at the three-level, but we try to have seven. Vul we usually have seven and some texture, especially at unfav.

New suits forcing if no overcall, but NF after overcall. 3x-(DBL): RDBL thru 4x-1 = transfer (3S = clubs, 3NT = nat). Transfer to our suit invites opener to compete. (??) 4♣ Mini RKC applies over 3♦/3♥/3♠. 4♦ is Mini RKC over 3♣. Same responses as above.

Opening 3NT is gambling. Over 3NT: 4♣/5♣/6♣ is P/C, 4♦ asks short (4M = short, 4NT = no short, 5m = short om), 4M is natural to play, 4NT asks for an eight-card suit.

4m is *natural*—We do *not* play Namyats.

4M is natural and wide ranging. We like to open 4M, despite the wide range and potential guessing for partner. After all, there are two opponents to guess wrong.

4♥-4♠ is natural, to play. Over 4M, we must bid 4NT to ask for key cards.

Over 4M or 5m opening, five of a new suit asks for control.

Note: Opening 4NT is Blackwood.

## SLAM BIDDING

Our usual cue bidding style is “American”: First-round controls before second-round controls, and length (first cue bid) before shortness. However, we may vary to help pinpoint a key control efficiently when we can handle the later auction.

### Roman Key Card (RKC-0314)

Our main slam tool is Blackwood, usually key card. RKC has its detractors, but we are not among them. Often RKC is the only sensible way to get concrete information when the level gets high.

If it's ace asking, then it's *key card*, as long as we have shown at least one suit. The only exceptions (and only where explicitly noted) are when we use one call (usually “one-over”) as a key card ask and have 4NT available to ask for aces only.

We do not play exclusion Blackwood. Ever! If we make a funny jump to the five-level that you might play as Exclusion with your other partners, it may well show a void, but we do *not* play RKC responses to it.

We have several possible response structures, but we should have little difficulty figuring out which one applies, or in figuring out which suit (or suits) is key. Our first step always includes *zero* (“old-guy responses”):

1. Normal: First step      zero or three out of five key cards (four aces plus trump king)  
                  Second step    one or four KC  
                  Third step      two KC, no trump queen  
                  Fourth step    two KC plus trump queen  
                  Fifth step, etc.   Same as first step, etc., plus a void

Don't show a void unless (a) the void suit is “obvious” and (b) you know it's safe and (c) you are confident that you're not spoiling partner's plans.

“Normal” RKC applies whenever our side has shown at least one suit naturally. This includes specifically 1M-4NT, which is RKC for M. Bart likes it this way. Humor him.

2. Mini RKC First step      zero KC  
                  Second step    one KC, no trump queen  
                  Third step      one KC plus trump queen  
                  Fourth step    two KC, no trump queen  
                  Fifth step      two KC plus trump queen

Mini RKC applies over weak two-bids and weak three-bids. It is a bid of 4♣, usually directly, but after a weak two-bid, responder can inquire with 2NT and then bid 4♣. Over an opening 3♣ bid, 4♦ is Mini RKC. Over other three-level preempts 4♣ is Mini RKC.

3. Non-RKC    First step    zero or four aces  
                   Second step   one ace  
                   Third step    two aces  
                   Fourth step   three aces

Grandma's Blackwood. It applies when we have shown *no suits* naturally. Examples: 4NT opening or 4NT overcall over a suit opening of 3♠ or lower, Gerber directly over a 1NT or 2NT opening, or after a "no-major" response to Stayman. We use old-fashioned responses because there may still be ambiguity between zero and three. (Imagine ten solid and three singletons for example.)

4. 6-RKC    First step    zero or three of six key cards (four aces plus kings of two key suits)  
                   Second step   one or four KC  
                   Third step    two (or five) KC plus *neither* key queen  
                   Fourth step   two KC plus the *lower* key queen  
                   Fifth step    two KC plus the *higher* key queen  
                   Sixth step+   two KC plus *both* key queens

If there is enough room below one of our trump suits, use additional steps to show or deny specific side kings. For example, if both majors are key, then over 4NT bid 6♣ to show both major-suit queens and the club king, bid 6♦ to deny the club king and show the diamond king, and bid 6♥ to deny both minor kings. We cannot show voids when using 6-RKC.

6-RKC applies in two main situations:

- a. Two suits bid and raised immediately (e.g., 1S-2♥-3♥-3♠ establishes 6-RKC)
- b. Two suiter opposite a known balanced hand, and the second suit is known to be five plus cards long. For example, 1NT-2♥-2♠-3♥-3♠-4NT is 6-RKC because responder showed 5-5 in the majors.

## WHAT BIDS ARE ACE ASKING?

1. "One-over" the trump suit. This is the most common bid we use as RKC. It applies even if not a jump. "Trump suit" usually means a bid-and-raised suit. Occasionally, we can *imply* a fit by jumping into the "one-over" suit (e.g., 1♠-2♦-4♥ is RKC for diamonds; opener can have AKxxxx-x-KQxxx-x or the like). RKC takes precedence over splinters.

Ambiguities can arise if the "one-over" suit has previously been bid naturally. Our default is that RKC applies unless we have also established a fit in the "one-over" suit. For example, 1H-2♦-3♦-3S-4♠-4♥ is RKC for diamonds. 1♥-2♦-3♦-4♥ is RKC, because a natural 3♥ is available. Similarly for 1♥-2♦-3♦-3S-4♥. Generally, if three of the one-over suit is forcing, then four of the one-over suit is RKC.

If the "one-over" suit would clearly be natural, then the RKC bid is the next highest call that is clearly *not* natural. Discuss.

If the rules for 6-RKC indicate that it applies, then it's still on even if the ace-asking bid is something other than 4NT (e.g., 1H-2♦-3♦-3♥-4♣-4♠ is 6-RKC for both red suits).

2. 4♣ over weak two-bids and three-bids (except 3♣), and 4♦ over 3♣. Also, 4♣ after responding 2NT over a weak two-bid. These bids are Mini RKC, discussed above.
3. Opening 4NT, and 4NT overcalls immediately over opening natural suit bids through 3S. These ask for aces only, with old-fashioned replies (0/4, 1, 2, 3).
4. 1NT-4♣, 1NT-2♣-2♦-4♣ and 2NT-4♣ are ace asking for aces only (0/4, 1, 2, 3).
5. 1NT-2♣-2M-4♦ is RKC for M. (4♣ would be a balanced slam try for M.)

### WHAT BIDS ARE *NOT* ACE ASKING?

1. In general, when four of some suit is ace asking, then 4NT is something else:  
If 4NT is *not* a jump, then it is a substitute cue bid in the suit that *would* be RKC. For example, 1♥-2♦-2♥-3♥-4♣-4NT is a *spade* cue bid, since 4♠ would be RKC. (This is an unlikely sequence, but you get the idea.)

If 4NT *is* a jump, then it should be a natural slam try. For example, 1H-2♦-3♦-4NT is a power slam try, not forcing, because 4♥ is RKC. (4S is *not* 6-RKC; bid 3H first. 4♠ shows a void. Eddie)

2. If clubs is the agreed trump suit, then 4♦ is the *only* RKC available. If we cue bid above 4♦, then 4NT is a further slam try, but it is *not* RKC.
3. A “weak” hand cannot ask for aces. This applies to a 1♦ responder to 1♣, but even then certain big jumps would “obviously” be RKC.

### WHAT IS THE KEY SUIT OR SUITS?

A bid and raised suit is key. Two suits bid and raised early are *both* key. A bid and raised suit along with a second suit known to be five plus opposite a balanced hand makes *both* suits key.

If no suit has been raised, the default is the last-bid suit: 1S-4NT is RKC for spades. 1S-2H-4NT is RKC for hearts (4♠ would be natural). Sometimes the logic of the auction makes it clear that some other (strongly bid) suit should be key, even if it was not the last-bid suit: 1♦-1♠-3♦-3♥-4♣-4NT should be RKC for diamonds (both 4♥ and 4S would be natural).

### INTERFERENCE IN RKC AUCTIONS

1. If opponents BID over RKC *below* our trump suit, then we play DOP1:  
 Double = zero or three  
 Pass = one or four  
 First step = two, no Q  
 Second step = two + Q

- In the specific case where they interfere directly below our trump suit, we don't bid the second step ( $= 5T + 1$ ) unless we are confident that we have enough key cards for slam.
2. If opponents bid over RKC *at or above* our trump suit, then we play DEPO:
    - Double = zero or two or four (even)
    - Pass = one or three or five (odd)
    - Bid is undefined but logically shows an even number that does not want to defend.
    - The mnemonic when the opponents bid is that double always shows zero (possibly) and pass always shows one (possibly). If you have more than one, you have to figure it out.
  3. If opponents double the RKC, ask:
    - Pass denies a control in the doubled suit, then redouble is "Re-RKC."
    - Bid shows a control and is a normal RKC response.
    - Redouble shows a control and takes control—that is, responder is now asking for key cards (!).
  4. If opponents double the RKC response:
    - Pass asks for control, then redouble shows control.
    - Redouble is to play (very rare).
    - Bid shows control and continues the RKC sequence as if no double.

## RKC CONTINUATIONS

Queen ask: If the RKC response did not clarify the trump queen (step 1 or step 2), then the queen ask is the cheapest call that is not to play *and* is not the king ask. (K ask is usually a repeat of the RKC suit one level higher—see below.) Over the queen ask, the cheapest bid in the trump suit denies the queen, and anything else shows the queen. A response in a new suit also shows that king. When the queen ask is below five of the trump suit, then 5NT shows the king of the queen ask suit (and six of the queen-ask suit shows some non-K plus value). In this case, a jump to six of the trump suit shows the queen and nothing else noteworthy. When the queen ask is above five of the trump suit, six of the trump suit denies the queen, and 5NT shows the queen with no biddable side king. In 6-RKC queen-ask auctions, we use coded responses: step 1 = no Q, step 2 = lower Q, step 3 = higher Q, step 4 and higher = both Qs.

King ask: If the RKC ask was "4x," then the king ask is "5x," which takes precedence over the queen ask. (Usually we avoid the problem of "not enough room" by using "one-over" RKC.) The "king ask" *shows* that we own all of the key cards and *invites a grand slam*. Responder is allowed to bid a grand right now. If he does not, then he is *obligated* to cue bid a king *below the trump suit*. (The only exception to this obligation is when asker is limited and responder knows that the grand is impossible. For example, if a 1NT opener bids RKC and then shows all of the key cards via the king ask, he is merely giving an unlimited responder the chance to bid seven. If responder *does* show a king, then he is also announcing grand slam potential opposite a 1NT opening.) If 5NT is available, then it shows the king of the "king ask" suit. Responder is *not* obligated to show a king above the trump suit, which is tantamount to forcing to seven.

Other tries: If asker bids something other than the queen ask or king ask, it is a grand slam try with emphasis on the bid suit, usually seeking third-round control. If only one such suit is available, then it *may* be a general grand slam try, kind of like a "last train" try for seven. If more than one such suit is available, any suit other than the highest is a specific try with emphasis on

the bid suit. The highest suit *may* focus on that suit, or may be a general try; responder has to figure it out. Note that the failure to use the “king ask” affords inferences about what the asker needs.

If asker uses the king ask, gets a king-showing response, and then makes another call between there and the trump suit, the same conditions apply. This time the asker may need a *different* king than the one already shown, or he may need some other kind of extra value. Again, responder has to figure it out.

## Mulberry

Mulberry is a special RKC on certain relay auctions that end with 3♥ or higher and where the trump suit can be one of several. This applies after auctions that specifically show a three-suited pattern such as 1♣-2♠, 1♣-1♥-2♠, 1♦-2♣-3NT, 2♦-2NT, and a few other well-defined sequences. On these auctions, if the last call by the multisuit hand is 3♥, 3♠ or 3NT, then

- 4♣     Artif, puppet to 4♦, then next bid = nat slam try, NF
- 4♦     Artif, puppet to 4♥, then next bid (or pass) is to play
- 4♥/4♠/4NT are RKC in the lowest/middle/highest of multisuit hand's three suits
- 5♣+ are RKC responses in multisuit hand's short suit

If the last call by the multisuit hand is 4♣, then the NF slam try is no longer available, but the other bids remain unchanged.

We call this method Mulberry Bush, or just Mulberry. (Thanks, Chris Compton)

## JUMPS TO 5NT—CHOICE OF SLAMS or GRAND SLAM FORCE?

Our *default* for jumps to 5NT is “choice of slams”. This applies when we do *not* have a clearly defined trump suit.

If trumps are well defined, then a jump to 5NT is the grand slam force. Our response structure, regardless of how many steps are available, is “the more you bid, the more you have.” In all cases, responder should jump to seven with two of the top three honors. A jump to seven of a new suit normally shows extra strength in that suit and is offering 7NT as a contract. (We try to avoid this kind of torture.) Details:

Spades trump—four steps

- 6♣     No A, K or Q—then 6♦ asks for extra length
- 6♦     Q exactly—then 6♥ asks for extra length
- 6♥     A or K *without* extra length
- 6♠     A or K *with* extra length

Hearts trump—three steps

- 6♣     Q or none—then 6♦ asks for the queen

6♦ A or K *without* extra length

6♥ A or K *with* extra length

Diamonds trump—two steps

6♣ Q or none

6♦ A or K

Clubs trump—one step

6♣ Fewer than two of the top three

Don't sweat the details. If you remember "more = more," you'll usually be close enough.

## NONJUMP BIDS OF 5NT

On those rare occasions when we haven't bid RKC and we are cue bidding at the five-level and someone bids 5NT, the default is still choice of slams. However, if the trump suit is obvious and we are clearly trying for seven, then 5NT is the try that emphasizes trumps. It is *not* the GSF, but it suggests needing help in trumps. Side-suit tries suggest needing help outside of trumps.

## NONSERIOUS 3NT

When we are in a game force with an eight plus major-suit fit and the last bid is 3M (our fit), and we have slam potential, then (usually) we have two degrees of slam try available. 3M+1 is a nonserious try, and a cue bid is a serious try. (3NT over 3♥ is a serious spade cue bid.) A raise from 3M to 4M denies any slam interest. Over the nonserious try, you can sign off or cooperate. When hearts are trump and the last bid was a nonserious 3S, then 3NT is a spade cue bid.

**Applies:** 1M-2x-2M-3M, or 1S-2m-2♥-2♠-3♠, or 1♠-2♥-3m-3♠ (assume ♠-card fit here even though not quite assured)

**Does NOT apply:** 1M-2x-2NT-3M Here 3NT is still a possible contract, and opener is somewhat limited. He can bid 3NT to play, cue bid with slam interest, or raise to game with no slam interest.

1♠-2♣-2♥-3♣-3♥-3♠ Probable seven-card fit, so 3NT is natural.

**Wrinkle:** 1♠-2♥-3♥ 3♠ is natural and wide range. It establishes 6-RKC. Then 3NT by opener is a nonserious try.

3NT is a nonserious try and denies spade support.

4m is a serious try.

## LAST TRAIN

On cramped auctions, the bid just below game in our trump suit is often an artificial slam try, showing interest but not willingness to bid above game. Bart suggests that we don't get hung up worrying about whether we actually have a control in that suit; in a pinch, assume we do.



## DEFENSIVE BIDDING

Definition: Defensive auctions are those in which the opponents initiate the bidding.

### Overcalls

Our style is aggressive but not insane, with special attention to the vulnerability. We do *not* overcall aggressively with four-card suits. Not vul we will try to show any decent five-bagger at the one-level.

If the opening bid of one of a minor could be a doubleton or shorter, then

- (1♣) 2♣ Natural
- 2♦ Michaels
- 3♣ More clubs—preemptive
- 3♦ Natural and preemptive—lowest ♦ preempt available
- (1♦) 2♦ Natural
- 2♥ “Weak” Michaels
- 3♦ “Strong” Michaels

Advancing one-level overcalls: Cue bids *always* show support. three-card support is expected, but Hx is allowable in a pinch. Overcaller is allowed to jump to game with a five-bagger. After cue bidding, a new suit or NT by advancer is natural, but *still shows support*. Simple new suits are not forcing and “semiconstructive” (whatever that means). If you have a good suit, bid it. If third hand passes, new suit jumps are strong and forcing. This should cover the (rare) strong misfit. If third hand acts, then jumps are preemptive and 2NT shows a four-card LR. If third hand *passes*, then 2NT is *natural*. In either case, jump cue = mixed raise.

If we overcall 1M and third hand doubles, then we play *transfers*, starting with 1NT and through 2M-1. The direct raise is weaker than the transfer raise. A transfer into the opening bid suit (if it showed three plus) is equivalent to a cue bid in support. But if the opening suit can be two or fewer (e.g., Precision 1♦, Polish 1♣), then a transfer into that suit is natural, 2M-1 = limit raise (usually 3M), and a raise to 2M has a wider range.

Advancing two-level overcalls: Again, cue bids show support. If third hand passes, new suits are forcing. (1♠)-2♥-(2♠)-2NT is an artificial heart raise. (1♠)-2♥-(3♠)-3NT is an artificial heart raise and creates a force.

Fourth-seat overcalls: After (1x)-P-(1y) both 2x and 2y are *natural*. 3x and 3y are also natural.

### Takeout doubles

We make takeout doubles very aggressively. We strain to get in when we have unbid majors or when we have 12 HCP or more. We prefer to make immediate balanced doubles than to have to guess later whether to back into the auction.



Advancing takeout doubles: Jumps are invitational. Cue bid is forcing to game or suit agreement. Cue bid by doubler over a minimum advance does not promise another call unless advancer bids *above* his original suit. Cue bid by doubler followed by a new suit by doubler is *forcing*. Cue bid by doubler over a nonminimum advance is GF. New suit by doubler over a nonminimum advance is F1. Cue bid by a passed hand advancer promises another call. (Doubler can thus keep it low with a good hand and get info without using up a lot of room.)

Special cases: (1♠)-DBL-(2♠)-2NT is *natural* and double is responsive. Double followed by 3♥ is invitational. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-DBL shows spades. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-2♠ is equivalent to a responsive double. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-2NT is *natural*.

### Michaels (and other) cue bids

We play wide-range Michaels. We like to show our two suiters and sort out the strength issues later. When we are 6-5 (in that order) we try to bid the six-bagger first and show the five-bagger later, since advancer to Michaels will bid the lower suit with equal length. However, there are still many 6-5 hands where that approach is untenable, and we bid Michaels anyway. We play (1M)-2M shows the other major and an unknown minor.

Advancing over Michaels: After (1m)-2m jumps are invitational, 3m shows high cards, 4C = slammish in hearts and 4D = slammish in spades.

(1♥)-2♥-(P)	2♠	To play
	2NT	Artif, inv+, asking
	3m	Nat, minimum
	3♥	Artif, clubs, maximum
	3S	Artif, diamonds, maximum
	3NT	6M, maximum, minor still unknown
	4m	Nat, 6+m, extras
	3♣	Pass or correct to 3♦, regressive
	3♦	Artif, invitational in spades
	3♥	Slammish
	3♠	Nat, preemptive
	3NT	To play
(1♠)-2♠-(P)	2NT	Artif, inv+, asking, then continue as above
	3♣	Pass or correct to 3♦, regressive
	3♦	Artif, invitational in hearts
	3♥	Nat, wide range—cannot distinguish preemptive from bailing
	3♠	Slammish
(1M)-2M-P	3NT	To play
	4♣	?? P/C, pre in both m??
	4♦	Constructive bid of 4OM (establishes force?)

(1M)-2M-(3M)	DBL	Minors, better than 4♣
	3NT	Natural
	4♣	P/♣, weaker than double
	4♦	Constructive bid of 4OM

(1m)-3m is natural, except when 1♦ could be 2 or fewer than 3♦ is “Strong” Michaels.

(1M)-3M shows a strong one suiter and is asking for a stopper. The strong suit is allowed to be the other major (rare). If advancer is weak with no stopper, he must bail to 4♣. If he is strong enough to think about slam, he can ignore his stopper and cue bid in return (?). 4♦ is P/C.

### Unusual notrump overcalls

(1x)-2NT shows the two lower unbid suits. This is still true even if the opening bid does not guarantee length in the bid suit, for example, over Polish club.

### Natural notrump overcalls

We’re aggressive here too, nominally 15–18, but we are not obligated with fifteen bad, especially with a passed partner. Our sandwich notrump is also natural at the one-level. We play “system on” after a direct 1NT overcall (including the Sandwich type), *except* on the specific auction (1x)-1NT-(2y) we play *penalty doubles*, since x and y are different and the opponents may be in trouble. On this auction, a raise to 2NT is *natural*. If third hand *raises* opener, we play *system on*.

Our balancing 1NT shows (10) 11–15 (16). We play “Three-range Size Ask” Stayman here:

(1x)-P-(P)-1NT-2♣	2♦	Minimum, no major
	2M	Minimum, 4M (bid hearts with both—rare)
	2NT	Middle range, then 3♣ = “ReStayman”
	3x	Maximum, “natural” (M if possible, else better m)

On the auctions (2M)-2NT, (2M)-P-(P)-2NT, and (1M)-P-(P)-2NT (the last of these shows about 19 HCP) we play:

3♣	Relay to 3♦, with diamonds or both minors or sign-off in OM
3♦	Forced
	P To play
	3OM To play
	3M Short M, both minors
	3NT Diamonds, slammish
3♦	Transfer to OM, inv+ (then 4M = weakest accept, 3OM = strongest accept, then 4♦ = retransfer)

3M Stayman

3OM Clubs

If we overcall 2NT over a *minor*, we play our “front of the card” 2NT system on.

If we overcall 3NT over a weak two-bid or a three-level preempt, we play a version of Tonto:

4♣/4♦/4♥ Transfers to H/S/♣/♦, skipping opponent’s suit

Then accept xfer = weakest, first step = strongest (mid = mid if avail)

Then 4NT by resp. = quantitative, cheapest new suit = RKC

4♠ Blackwood, aces only (0123)

4NT Nat invite

**Over preempts:** We play Leaping Michaels over weak two-bids, with a modification over 2♦.

(2♦) 3♦ Majors

4♣ Clubs and hearts, forcing

4♦ Clubs and spades

4M Nat

4NT Blackwood (aces only, 0123)

(2M) 3M Strong one suiter, stopper ask

4m Two suiter, m and OM, forcing

4M Both minors

4NT Blackwood (aces only, 0123)

We play takeout doubles to the moon, including over 4♠ and (to a lesser extent) 5m. We play Lebensohl only after a *direct* double of a weak two-bid.

(2♥)-DBL 2NT Lebensohl, relay to 3♣

3♣ Normal, may bid more with extras

P/3♦ To play

3♥ GF with ♥ stop

3♠ Natural invite, NF

3NT Stop, suggests other contracts

3m Nat, NF, constructive

3♥ GF, no H stop

3♠ Forcing

3NT To play, no interest in other contracts (else 2NT-3♣-3NT)

Also: (3m) 4m Majors

4♦/3♣ Diamonds and a major

4NT Blackwood

(3♥) 4♥ 5♠ and 5m

(3♠)	4♠	5-5 minors
(3M)	4NT	Blackwood
(4m)	4NT	??
(4M)	DBL	Takeout, then 4NT shows two places to play
(4♥)	4NT	Minors
(4♠)	4NT	Two suits, may include hearts

### Over 1NT opening bids

We play two defenses, one for “strong” NT and one for “weak” NT. “Strong” is defined as any range that includes 15 HCP, regardless of the lower limit. “Weak” is defined as any range with a maximum of 14 HCP or less. The “strong” defense also is used by a passed hand vs. any range NT.

“Strong” NT defense (Meckwell), vs. range that includes 15 HCP or more:

(1NT)	DBL	Either one minor or <i>both</i> majors
	2m	Pass or correct
	2M	Natural, shows own suit
	2NT	Good hand, F1

If third hand acts, DBL by advancer is competitive, implying some fit.

2m Two suits, m + some major, relative lengths ambiguous

2♦ over 2♣ is artif, asking for major.

If 2m is doubled: P = To play, RDBL = Asks major, 2 any = own suit

2M Natural

“Weak” NT defense (Pen DBLs and Transfers), vs. range that is max of 14 HCP:

(1NT)	DBL	Penalty, tricks or good 14+ HCP—natural continuations
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We are forced through 2♦, but not higher. Doubles of 2m are takeout in direct seat. In balancing seat, we need more latitude, since we’re in a force. Doubles above 2M are more “card-showing”/takeout; again, we need more latitude, since we’re *not* in a force, especially advancer, who has not yet shown values.

2♣	Both majors, then 2♦ = “you pick”
	If 2♣ is doubled: P = to play, RDBL = “You pick M”, 2D = natural
2♦	five plus hearts
2♥	five plus spades
2♠	4♠ and a longer minor
2NT	4♥ and a longer minor

**Over Multi 2♦**

We play the defense where bids are natural and double shows up to about 15 HCP or a very strong hand, and 2NT is about 16–18. Use the ACBL defense if we can. If we can't use ACBL defense, discuss before we play.

**Over Flannery 2♦**

DBL = 13+ to 16, 2♥ = minors, 2♠ = nat, 2NT = (16) 17–19 (then use 2NT overcall defense with opp's suit = hearts), 3m = nat, 3H = ask stop, 3♠ = nat.

**Over Flannery 2♥:** Same except DBL = minors, and 2NT = wider range

**Over transfer responses to 1♣**

Over a response of 1R (showing a major), double is takeout with OM and *diamonds*. Bidding their major is Michaels, with OM and *clubs*. Two of their major is *natural*. Over an artificial response of 1S double shows *spades*.

**Over artificial bids**

Generally, a double of an artificial bid shows that suit. Unfortunately, we have numerous exceptions. If the artificial bid is a raise and is at the three-level (Bergen raises), then our meaning depends on the strength shown. If the bid shows invitational strength or more, then our double shows that suit. If the bid shows a weaker hand, then our double is takeout of the anchor suit. At the two-level, our doubles of artificial raises are takeout (e.g., a double of Drury is takeout).

**Over Kaplan Inversion**

Kaplan Inversion switches the meaning of the 1♠ and 1NT responses to an opening bid of 1♥. Note that some practitioners revert to “natural” if responder is a passed hand.

After (1♥)-P-(1♠), which shows a forcing NT but which may contain four spades, double is takeout of hearts and 1NT is natural. Question: What does the 1NT overcall mean when intervenor is a passed hand?

After (1♥)-P-(1NT), which shows five or more spades and is forcing for one round, double is takeout for the minors.

## LEADS

### Versus suits

#### Honor leads:

Rusinow (second of touching honors). Applies down to the eight. That is, from 98x or 87x, we lead the eight (but try to lead low if you must lead the suit). Rusinow does *not* apply in partner's suit. "Partner's suit" is defined as any naturally bid suit (including a 1D opening bid), or any unbid major shown by a takeout double, or any four plus card implied suit—for example, after (1♣)-P-(1♥)-DBL, the doubler "owns" both spades and diamonds. We also lead standard honors if we preempt showing a long suit and lead a different suit, and when leading dummy's suit(s).

We do not lead differently versus high-level contracts, although for tactical reasons, we will vary more often from the "correct" lead, especially from AK(x).

#### Spot-card leads:

Third from even and lowest from odd, but from a seven-card suit, we lead *fifth*, preserving seventh for oddball purposes. If we have raised, we will often lead high from small cards; otherwise usually third.

#### Shifting:

We lead *standard* honors when shifting, except 10/9 = 0/2 higher. We lead 3/5 when shifting if we are trying to give count, but often we shift to an "attitude" card.

### Versus notrump

#### Honor leads:

King is the "power lead" (asks for unblock or count). Other honors are Rusinow. We lead Rusinow from holdings of four cards or more. Three-card suits are considered "short" for NT purposes, so we lead standard honors from three-card or shorter holdings (except Q from KQx and A from AKx).

The ace asks for attitude. Lead ace from AKJx; lead king from AKJ10. Lead Q from KQJx; lead K from KQJxx (usually).

#### Spot-card leads:

Fourth best is normal. We *may* lead a higher card from a bad holding, but we do so less often than most players (Bart speaking). If we are leading high, we lead the second best from a disconnected holding (86xx) but *may* lead top from a connected holding (876x).

We lead third best in *partner's suit*, even from four.

#### Shifting:

We lead *standard* honors when shifting, except 10/9 = 0/2 higher. We lead fourth if we are trying to give count, but often we shift to an "attitude" card.

## **SIGNALS**

We are *not* compulsive signallers. Our theory of signals is to make them on a “need-to-know” basis, not on an “every-card-tells-a-story” basis. Nevertheless, we signal often enough to get the job done. We will signal more against weak opposition than strong.

We play upside-down count and attitude vs. both suits and notrump. Our top priority is attitude, with count a close second. Suit preference is third.

Exception: Versus suits, on a lead that shows ace-king, we play a standard signal at trick one.

At trick one vs. suits, when dummy has a singleton and third hand is known to have sufficient length, very high or low cards are suit preference and middle is neutral or encouraging.

We play suit preference in trumps, but sometimes will echo in ruff situations.

We play Smith Echo only when third hand plays the jack (if Bart remembers).



# CHAPTER 19

## PRECISION SIMPLIFIED OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we review the bids of the Precision system developed by Timm (2011) in his book *Precision Simplified*, second edition, published by Trafford Press. While many of the bids are similar to Transfer Precision, it employs the 1♥ and 2♥ relay bids.

### Basic opening bids

- 1♣\* Artificial 16+ HCP—must alert
- 1♦\* 11–15 HCP may be short NV (at least two) must announce, may be short  
Vul no announcement since have four plus diamonds
- 1♥/1♠ 11–15 HCP five plus majors with Meckwell bidding structure
- 1NT 12–15 HCP Vul or fourth seat 10–12 HCP NV (transfers on)
- 2♣\* 11–15 HCP five/six plus clubs (with five must have a four-card major)—must alert
- 2♦\* 11–15 HCP 4 = 3-1-5, 3 = 4-1-5, 4 = 4-1-4, or 4 = 4-0-5 must alert  
Singleton diamond or void
- 2♥/2♠ 7–11 HCP five/six plus cards (weak two-bids vulnerable with Modified Ogust  
5-5-6-6)
- 2NT\* 5-5 in the minors 5–10 HCP (NV) and 11–15 HCP (vul)
- 3X 5–10 must have 2/3 of top three honors in the bid suit vulnerable and one if non  
vulnerable
- 3NT\* gambling solid seven plus minor suits (AKQJxxx)  
\* Indicates forcing bids and alerts



## Responses to 1♦\* opening

### Responses to 1♦\* opening (11–15 HCP diamonds may be short) strong jump shifts

1♥/1♠ four plus cards in suit with 6+ HCP (to show weak hand rebid majors since using strong jump shifts)

### Rebids by opener

1♠	4+ spades ov 1♥
1NT	11–15 HCP ov 1♥/1♠
2♣	five plus clubs
2♦	five plus diamonds
2M	13–16 dummy points
3M	17–18 dummy points
1NT	6–10 HCP, balanced hand
2NT	11–12 HCP, balanced hand
3NT	13–15 HCP, balanced hand
2♣	13+ HCP forcing
2♦*	10–12 HCP 5/6+ diamonds (rev crisscross)
2♥/2♠	16+ HCP strong jump shift in major five plus cards, game force
3♣*	13+ diamond raise five/six plus diamonds
3♦*	less than 10 HCP, weak, preemptive raise 5/6+♦
3♥/3♠	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♣	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♦	Minorwood 1430 key card for diamonds
4♥/4♠	Single-suited hand to play

### Getting to notrump (rev crisscross)

After an inverted minor raise 1♦\* - pass - 3♣\* (13+ HCP)

1. Show major suit stoppers 2♥ or 2♠, bid up the line. No extra values
2. Bid 2NT with a minimum and both majors are stopped.
3. Bid 3♣ to show club stopper, neither hearts of spades stopped
4. Bid 3♦ with a minimum without major stoppers.
5. Bid 3♥ or 3NT, showing ♥ stopped, over 2♠ with minimum values

After a weak raise 1♦\* - pass - 3♦\* (less than 10 HCP)

- a. Pass with all minimum and almost all intermediate-sized hands.
- b. A new suit is forcing one round and shows a very strong hand.
- c. 3NT is to play regardless what partner had for his preemptive raise.
- d. Four of the minor is invitational (may be used as RKC Blackwood).

### Responses to 1M opening Meckwell bids over major

#### Responses to 1M opening (open 1♥/1♠ with 11–15 HCP)

2M 8–10/11 dummy points three-card support (constructive raise)

**Short suit game try (SSGT) over 1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠**

Any three-level suit bid by opener shows shortness in the suit 0-2.

Otherwise, relay bids are used by the opener and responder shows shortness.

	1♥-2♥ 2♠	or	1♠-2♠ 2NT
Club shortness	3♣		3♣
Diamond shortness	3♦		3♦
Heart shortness	3♥		
Spade shortness	2NT		
4333 min 8–9	3♥		3♠
4333 max 10–11	3NT		3NT
4333 with 4S and max 10–11	3♠		
5 to KQ+	4m		4m
Stiff other major	4♥		4♠

After SSGT, responder reevaluates his hand with A = 3 and K = 1.

With 9 or 10/11, responder bids game or cue bids minor with four of other majors.

With 7 or 8, make last train bid if possible.

With 6 or less, sign off.

3M 0–6 dummy points four-card support (weak raise)

1NT 7–12 dummy points zero- to two-/three-card support

After partner bids at the two-level, a jump to 3M shows 10–12 with three cards

2NT 12+ dummy points four plus card support

**Ambiguous splinter with four-card support = three-level bid of other major 13+ dummy points**

3NT	13–15 with three-card support
3♣/3♦	Weak six plus clubs/diamonds less than seven points
4♣	16+ balanced with three plus card support in the major
4♦	12–15 points with five trumps in the major bid

**With interference at the two-level**

**Cue bid is limit raise with three plus trumps**

2NT	Limit raise with four plus trumps
3♣/3♦	Fit jump bids three/four plus trumps with four plus clubs/diamonds
3 other M	Fit bid with three/four plus trumps and four plus cards in other major
3M	Weak raise—0–6 dummy points with four-card support for bid major
4M/5m	To play
4m	Splinter jump four-card support with singleton
4 other M	To play

**With interference at the three-level**

X	Trump double (Western cue)
3X	Invitational to game in a major
Four-level cue bid	forcing raise to game in major bid
3M weak with major fit	
4X fit jumps bids below major bid	
4M preemptive	

**Scroll bids (modified)**

To locate the singleton, the opener uses scroll asking bids. Thus, the bidding goes 1♥ - 3♠, 3NT or 1♠ - 3♥, 3♠. The responses after the 3NT scroll asks are 4♣, 4♦, 4♥, which shows singletons in either clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠ are 3NT = ♥, 4♣ = ♣, and 4♦ = ♦.

To determine a void, one continues with a scroll bid. Then up-the-line bids are used to show a singleton or void and simultaneously provide one with information about key cards for the agreed-upon suit. After hearing the response to the asking scroll bids (3NT or 3♠), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to determine the nature of the shortage. The responses are step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and steps 2–5, the next four bids, indicate that one has a void and simultaneously shows key cards (e.g., 1/4 or 0/3 or 2 or 2 with queen).

## Responses to 1NT opening

### Responses to 1NT (13–15 HCP vul and 10–12 HCP NV)

2♣	Stayman/Smolen
2♦/2♥	Transfer hearts/spades
2♠	Transfer to the minor (2NT by opener says he prefers diamonds and 3♣ says he prefers clubs)
2NT	Invitational in notrump (11+ vul and 13+NV)
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠	Six-card suit with two of top three honors 9–11 strong (12–14 weak) HCP
4♦/4♥	Texas transfer

If NV and 13–15 HCP, open 1D—the bid of 1NT = 13–15 ov heart or spade (alert).

Over a double of 1NT (weak or strong), we employ Helvic notrump runouts.

Redouble shows a single-suited hand (partner bids 2♣)

And bidding shows a two-suited hand

2♣ = clubs and diamonds

2♦ = diamond and hearts

2♥ = hearts and spades

2♠ = spades and clubs

If you pass the double, you have a two-suited hand with two nontouching suits or you want to play 1NT for penalty—partner must redouble or bid five-card suit. Opener may leave double in or bid the anchor suit.

### Transfer Lebensohl over notrump

After (1) 1NT (2X)?

(a) X = diamonds/hearts/spades

Double = penalty/negative (ov 2♠ or higher)

2Y to play where Y is not equal to X.

2NT: Puppet to 3♣

-> Pass /lower suit: to play

3X cue bid Stayman with stopper GF

Over X = H, 3♠ = both minors

3NT slammish with stopper

3♣: Transfer to diamonds, INV or better\*

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better\*

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better\*

\* If transfer to opponents -> Stayman without stopper

3♠: Transfer to clubs no stopper

3NT: To play, but no stopper

4m: Leaping Michaels. 5-5 up.

(X = M: 4♣ = C + OM. 4♦ = D + OM.

X = D: 4♣ = C + one major. 4♦ = H + S.)

4M: Unbid: NAT. with stopper.

Jump cue: Minors. Strong.

4NT: Minors. (Weak if X = M.)

(b) X = clubs

Double = cue bid Stayman without stopper

2Y where Y is not equal to X: to play

2NT transfer to diamonds no stopper

-> 3♦ = accept. 3♣ = decline

3♣: Stayman with a stopper GF

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better.

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better.

3♠: Transfer to diamonds no stopper

3NT: To play but no stopper

4m: Leaping Michaels

4M: NAT. with stopper

Over 2♦/2♥/2♠—transfer Lebensohl if three-level but neg double over the majors

## Responses to 2M opening

**Responses to 2♥/ 2♠ (open 5–10 six plus card suit)—same as 2/1**

**Over 2NT asks for feature**

The weak major two-level bid is a “normal” weak two and typically shows between 5 and 10 points and at least a six-card suit. The optimum hand for a weak two has most of its points in the long suit, although it is recognized that this is not always possible and sometimes (particularly third hand at favorable vulnerability) you have to go with what you’ve got.

**4♣ is RKCB (used with weak two-bids [2♥/2♠]).**

The responses are

- 4♦ first step zero key card in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, one key card without the queen
- 4♠ third step, one key card with the queen
- 4NT fourth step, two key cards without the queen
- 5♣ fifth step, two key cards with the queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first step. The next bid of 4♥ is the queen ask—4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

### **When they double weak bid—Reverse McCabe**

2♥ - X then Redouble shows a strong hand  
 2♠ = spades  
 2NT = clubs (partner bids clubs)  
 3♦ = transfer into suit shows A/K of hearts  
 3♥ = no A/K of hearts

2♠ - X then Redouble shows a strong hand  
 2NT = clubs (partner bids clubs)  
 3♥ = transfer into suit show A/K of spades  
 3♠ = no A/K of spades

### **Responses to 2♣\* opening**

**Responses to 2♣ opening (open 11–15 HCP, six plus clubs or five/six clubs and four-card major, must have two of the top three honors—five plus in third seat)**

#### **Partner responses**

2♦\* 11+ HCP, conventional and forcing for one round

#### **Opener rebids**

2♥ 11–15 HCP, four-card ♥ suit  
 2♠ 11–15 HCP, four-card ♠ suit  
 2NT 11–15 HCP, 6-3-2-2 bal hand, six-card club suit with a major stopper  
 3♦\* requests opener to clarify stoppers

#### **Opener bids**

3♥\* ♥ stopper  
 3♠\* ♠ stopper  
 3NT ♥ and ♠ stoppers  
 3♣ 14–15 HCP nonforcing and unbalanced hand (1-3-3-6)  
 3♥ 14–15 HCP, five plus card ♥ suit

- 3♠ 14–15 HCP, relay back to ♣'s, solid club suit AKJ109x allows responder to bid 3NT  
 3NT 14–15 HCP, five plus spades and six plus clubs  
 2♥/2♠ Natural with five plus cards, 8–10 HCP

2NT\* **Lebensohl (for two-suited hands)**

**Partner bids 3♣**

**Responder next bids**

- 3♦ = 5-5 diamonds and hearts  
 3♥ = 5-5 hearts and spades  
 3♠ = 5-5 spades and diamonds

3♣ **10–12 Invitational**

3♦/3♥/3♠ six plus card suit, 12 HCP openers raises or bids 3NT (opener may not pass)

4♣ Invitational to game in clubs

4♥/4♠ Natural and to play

4♦ RKCB for clubs

**With interference**

Negative double through 3♠

Redouble 10+ HCP

Cue bid 13+ HCP

**Responses to 2♦\* opening (singleton/void in diamonds)**

**Responses to 2♦\* opening (11–15 HCP)**

**Partner response to 2♦\***

2♥/2♠ To play in bid major

3♣ To play in clubs

2NT\* Ask

**Opener rebids**

3♣\*any minimum 11–13,

3♦ ask (by responder)

3♥ = four hearts

3♠ = four spades

3NT = 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5

3♦ = 4-4-1-4, maximum with singleton diamond

3♥ = 3-4-1-5, maximum with four hearts

3♠ = 4-3-1-5, maximum with four spades

3NT = 4-4-0-5, maximum with five clubs

## Responses to 2NT\* opening

**Responses to 2NT\* 5-5 in the minors 5-10 HCP NV and 11-15 HCP vul**

3♣ or 3♦ is to play

3♥\* is an asking bid

### Opener rebids

3♠ 5-5 minimum (5-10 NV; 11-15 vul)

3NT maximum

4♣ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), minimum

4♦ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), minimum

4♥ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), maximum

4♠ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), maximum

4NT 6-6 in the minors

3♠ to play

3NT to play

4♣/4♦ preemptive bids and to play

4♥/4♠ to play

5♣/5♦ to play

### Over interference (game force)

4NT === I prefer diamonds

4♣ === I prefer clubs

Gambling 3NT\* ----- Same as 2/1

Namyats ----- Same as 2/1

Shows a hand with eight to eight and a half trick in hearts (open 4♣\*), in spades open 4♦\*. Refuse transfer by bidding the step in between (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦), requesting that partner bid an ace if he has one or to sign off in his long suit. 4NT is RKCB.



## Responses to 3X openings

Responses to 3X bids by opener (always ensures two of the top three honors vulnerable) and 5–10 HCP plus distribution; nonvulnerable at least one top honor.

4♣ RKCB (over three-level [3♦/3♥/3♠] bids)

4♦ Asks for outside controls first step zero to two controls (A = 2; K = 1), second step = 3, etc.

The bid of 4NT should not be used, since it may get the auction too high.

The responses for 4♣ RKCB are

4♦ first step, zero key card in the agreed suit

4♥ second step, one key card without the queen

4♠ third step, one key card with the queen

4NT fourth step, two key cards without the queen

5♣ fifth step, two key cards with the queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first step. The next bid of 4♥ is the queen ask—4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the specific suit ask (SSA).

After the preemptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural and advances the preempt; a jump to 4♦ is RKCB for clubs.

## Responses to 1♣\* opening

**Responses to 1♣\* opening (16+ HCP, but 17 + HCP for a balanced hand and a four-card major)**

**(1) Negative: 1♦\* 0–7 HCP**

**Opener rebids after 1♦\*:**

Nonforcing bids: 1♠/2♣/2♦ (minimum unbalanced hands with five/six-card suits, 16–21 HCP).

**1NT\* 16–19 HCP balanced may have a five-card major (no Muppet)**

**Partner responses**

Pass 0–6 HCP

2♣ 6–7 HCP, Stayman

2♦/2♥ Jacoby transfer

- 2NT 7 HCP, inviting 3NT  
 3♣3♦ 5-5 in the minors min/max (0-5/6-7)  
 3♥/3♠ 5-5 in the majors min/Max (0-5/6-7)

**2NT\* 22-23 HCP balanced may have five-card major (no relay bid)**

### **Partner responses**

Pass 0-2 HCP

**Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g., 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)**

### **3♣ - Muppet Stayman**

3NT\* shows five hearts. Responder can either pass if he has spades, or if responder wants to play it in hearts, bids 4♦\* as a transfer to hearts, which allows the strong hand to play the contract in four hearts.

3♠\* shows five spades

3♦\* has one or two four-card majors

3♥\* shows no four-card major or no five-card major, but may have a three-card spade suit. Responder will usually now bid 3NT. But if responder has five spades and four/three hearts, he can now bid 3♠, looking for the 5-3 major spade fit.

When opener bids 3♦\*, responder makes the following rebids.

3♥\* Responder bids the major he does not have (like Smolen). This sequence shows four spades and denies four hearts. Opener either bids spades or 3NT.

3♠\* Responder bids the major he does not have. This sequence shows four hearts and denies four spades; opener either bids hearts or 3NT.

4♣\* Responder has both majors; it asks partner to pick the major.

4♦\* Most partnerships play the bid of 4♦ to show slam interest, pick a slam.

\* Alert (do not use Muppet if 4-5 in spades-hearts, Transfer to hearts and bid spades)

4♣ = Gerber

4♦ = transfer to hearts

4♥ = transfer to spades

4♠ = transfer to clubs

5♣- = transfer to diamonds

5NT = invite grand slam

**Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g., 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)**

**1♥\* relay responder must respond 1♠\***

**Opener rebids after 1♥\***

1NT 20–21 HCP balanced may have a five-card major (may use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT)

- 2♣ five plus hearts, four plus clubs, nonforcing
- 2♦ five plus hearts, four plus diamonds, nonforcing
- 2♥ five plus heart suit, no extras
- 2♠ five plus hearts, four plus spades, nonforcing

2NT 24–25 HCP balanced (may use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT)

- 3♣/3♦ Forcing, possibly 5-5 in hearts and the suit bid (clubs/diamonds)
- 3♥ five/six-card suit, invitational over the 1♦ response
- 3♠ five plus hearts, four plus spades with extras
- 3NT to play
- 4♣ six clubs, five plus diamonds, forcing
- 4♦ six plus diamonds, five plus clubs, forcing
- 4♥/4♠ to play
- 4NT Blackwood ace ask

Exceptions—Do not relay hearts to spades if the following conditions apply.

After 1♥\* responder bids

- 1NT 5-5 or better in the majors, very weak (0–4 HCP)
- 2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠ modest six plus card suit, very weak
- 2NT 5-5 or better in the minors, very weak (0–4 HCP)
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ modest seven plus card suit, very weak

After 2♥\* responder bids

- 2NT two suited 5-5 or better, extremely weak (0–2)
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ modest seven plus card suit, extremely weak

**2♥\* relay responder must bid 2♠\***

**Opener rebids and corresponding partner rebids**

2NT 26–27 HCP balanced hand may have a four-card major

(May use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT)

**3♥ - five/six plus hearts—equivalent of 2/1 bidders 2♣ 22+ HCP (forcing)**

3NT 0–4 HCP, minimum and no support

4♥ 0–4 HCP, minimum and two-card support

**3♣/3♦ - unbalanced very strong seven plus minor hand (game force, 22+ pts)**

New suit shows king/void/ace

3NT no king or void

4♣/4♦ with singleton

Raise to game denies K, singleton, or void

**3NT—5-5 in the minors with 22+ HCP**

**4♣/4♦—6-5 clubs-diamonds/6-5 diamonds-clubs, 22+ HCP**

New suit shows king/void/ace

4NT no king or void

Raise to game denies K, singleton, or void

**2♠/3♣/3♦ without relay shows five plus cards and 22+ HCP—equivalent of Standard bidders 2♣ (no relay)**

Bids follow 2/1 structure

**3NT 28+ HCP balanced may have a five-card major**

**Partner rebids**

0–3 HCP pass or  
 4♣ = Gerber  
 4♦ = transfer to hearts  
 4♥ = transfer to spades  
 4♠ = transfer to clubs  
 5♣ = transfer to diamonds

4–7 HCP and balanced 4NT invite slam

**(2) Transfers to majors positive bids**

- 1♥# five plus spades opener bids 1♠ 12+ points
- 2♦# five plus hearts opener bids 2♥, 12+ points
- 1♠# eight plus points balanced/unbalanced hand may be 5-5 in major-minor, 5-5 in majors or 5-5 in the minors

**# announced as a transfer**

Opener (only accepts transfer if he has a fit by bidding 1♠/2♥ with three-card support). After the bid of 1NT, Stayman/ Smolen and transfers are again used.

- 3♥/3♠ Shows a 3-3-3-4 hand—three-card support for the major (16–17 HCP)
- 4♥/4♠ Show a hand with exactly 16 HCP and four-card support

Responder uses (Gamma) control bids to show length after opener *accepts* showing 17+ HCP.

- 3♣\* by responder says, “I have 5”
- 3♦\* by responder says, “I have 6+”

Next level bids of the major by opener at the three-level after Gamma bids are 1430 RKCB asking bids.

**3♥\*/3♠\***

- 3♠/3NT show one or four
- 3NT/4♣ show zero or three
- 4♣/4♦ show two key cards
- 4♦/4♥ show two with queen

Over the 1/4 or 1/3 level bids, next bid up is queen ask.

Over the bids of two key cards with the queen, the next level bid is the specific king (4♥/4♠ respectively—last bid in chain).

An important adjunct to Gamma length bids (when one has six plus trumps) is the CAB, which is initiated by bidding the *suit!* Note that this is used for the investigation of *slam* in a suit and *not* notrump.

**Responses to CAB (abbreviated) are for the suit bid step after queen ask:**

- first step, no controls
- second step, second-round control—king/singleton
- third step, first-round control—ace/void

**When responder is 5-5 in spades and a minor**

Bid 1♥ as a transfer to spades—after the relay bid of 1♠ one bids:

- 2♣\* = 5-5 in spades and club
- 2♦\* = 5-5 in spades and diamonds
- 3♣\* = five spades and no five-card minor
- 3♦\* = six plus spades and no five-card minor

Opener next bids 3♠\* is 1430 for spades and then 4♠ is the spec king ask. Furthermore, 3♣\* and 3♦\* are Minorwood bids.

**When responder is 5-5 in hearts and a minor**

Bid 2♦ as a transfer to hearts—after the relay bid of 2♥ one bids:

- 2♠\* = 5-5 in hearts and clubs
- 2NT = 5-5 in hearts and diamonds
- 3♣\* = five hearts and no five-card minor
- 3♦\* = six plus hearts and no five-card minor

If opener next bids 3♥\* = 1430 for hearts where last train bid is the spec king ask Over 2♠/2NT, then the bids of and 3♣\*/3♦\* are Minorwood asks.

**When responder is 5-5 in the majors**

If responder is 5-5 in the majors after 1NT, he next bids 3♥/3♠.

- 3♥\* = 5-5 and 12+ HCP
- 3♠\* = 5-5 and 8–11 HCP

The next bid up by opener is DRKCB (e.g., 3♠\*/3NT\*); game bids are to play.

- 3NT/4♣ one or four
- 4♣/4♦ zero or three
- 4♦/4♥ two with neither queen
- 4♥/4♠ two with one queen
- 4♠/4NT two with both queens

Note that in the second step (4♦/4♥), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first or second step response to a DRKCB asks, unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown.

To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step (4♥/4♠).

The four-response steps now become:

- |             |                           |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| First step  | no queen                  |
| Second step | lower-ranking queen only  |
| Third step  | higher-ranking queen only |
| Fourth step | both queens               |

**When responder is 5-5 in the minors**

If responder is 5-5 in the minors after 1NT, he next bids

3♣\* = 5-5 and 12+ HCP

3♦\* = 5-5 and 8–11 HCP

Next step 3♦\*/3♥\* (next step bids are DRKCB for the minor and 3NT is to play)

**5♣/5♦ is to play game in the minor**

**DRKCB Minorwood for clubs** (example—similar for hearts)

Over 3♦

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 3♥  | one or four key cards (the fourteen step) | first step  |
| 3♠  | zero or three key cards (the thirty step) | second step |
| 3NT | two with neither queen                    | third step  |
| 4♣  | two with one queen                        | fourth step |
| 4♦  | two with both queens                      | fifth step  |

Note that in the second step (3♥/3♠), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first or second step response to a DRKCB asks, unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown.

To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step.

The four-response steps now become

- |             |                           |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| First step  | no queen                  |
| Second step | lower-ranking queen only  |
| Third step  | higher-ranking queen only |
| Fourth step | both queens               |

Last train bids are the specific king asks.

When responder has 8–11 HCP—1♣-1♠-1NT

**Responder bids**

**2♦** transfer to hearts with five plus

**2♥** transfer to diamonds with five plus

**2♠** transfer to minors with five plus

**2NT** by opener says he prefers diamonds

**3♣** says he prefers clubs

**2NT** 8–9

**3NT** 10–11

**When responder has one long minor**

The bid of **2♣\*** by responder says he has a long minor (8–13 HCP) and the bid of **1NT\*** shows a balanced hand (with 12–13 HCP) details (3) and (4) below.

NONTRANSFER BIDS by OPENER—Five plus card suit of his own denying a fit in the transfer major. Or one may bid **1NT** showing balanced hand with 16–19 HCP.

**Responding with balanced hands and no major suit fit**

**1/2NT\*** 16–19 HCP

**2/3NT\*** 20–21 HCP

**3/4NT\*** 22–23 HCP

**4/5NT** 24+ HCP

**(3) 1NT\* 12 – 13 HCP and no five-card major (1♣-Pass -1NT -?)**

**Opener bids**

**2♣** Stayman

**2♦/2♥/2♠** Shows five-card suit 16/17 HCP

**2NT** Show clubs with 16/17 HCP

**3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠** Strong hand with 18+ HCP and five-/six-card suit

**3NT** 16/17 HCP and no four-card major

**(4) 2♣\* 8+ HCP six cards in a minor**

**Opener rebids (after 1♣\* - 2♣\*)—summary**



2♥/2♠ Shows a five-card major suit

**Partner rebids**

Raise major with support or bid minor

2♦ (ask) Asking partner for minor

**Partner rebids**

2♥ shows clubs

2♠ Shows diamonds

**Opener bids**

2NT 1430 for the minor

2NT Forcing with major stoppers

3NT No interest in slam or the minor

4NT Blackwood ace asking

**(5) 2♥/2♠ 4–6 HCP six plus card**

(Weak jump shift with all values in the suit—with seven plus scattered values bid 1♦)

**Opener rebids**

Pass Game unlikely

4♥/4♠/3NT 20+ HCP

New suit five plus cards without support for the majors

**Partners rebids**

Raise three plus support (or Qx)

Rebid ♥/♠ minimum no support

Cue bid under 3NT singleton or void

3♥/3♠ Minimal hand with support (16–18 HCP)

**Partners rebids**

Pass or bid game

2NT Feature

3NT Natural

4NT RKCB

**(6) 2NT\* 14+ HCP, balanced no five-card major (may not stop short of 4NT)**

**Opener rebids**

3♦/3♥/3♠ Natural bids

3♣\* Baron asking bid (not Muppet)

**Partner bids**

Bid four-card suits up the line (3♦/3♥/3♠)

3NT show clubs

**3NT Ask bid**

Responder bids

4♣ 14–15 points

4♦ 16–17 points

After four clubs and four diamonds, opener bids four-card suits up the line or bids 4NT sign-off or 6/7 NT.

4♥ 18–19 points

4♠ 20–21 points

After four hearts and four spades, opener may bid 4NT ace asking or bid 6/7 NT.

**4NT Blackwood ace ask**

**(7) 3♣\* 1444/4441 Black singleton lacking four controls (8–13 HCP)**

**Opener rebids after 3♣**

3♦\* where is the singleton?

3♥\* club singleton

3♠\* spade singleton

3NT to play

4♥/4♠ to play

4NT Blackwood ace asking

Cue bid by opener of singleton (4♣\*/4♠\*) is the CAB

First step, zero to two (at most one ace or two kings)

Second step, three (ace and king)

Third step, four (two aces)

### **(8) 3♦\* 4144/4414 Red singleton lacking four controls (8–13 HCP)**

#### **Rebids after 3♦**

**3♥\*** where is singleton?

**3♠\*** diamond singleton

**3NT\*** heart singleton

**4♥/4♠** to play

**4NT** Blackwood ace asking

Cue bid by opener of singleton (**4♦\*/4♥\***) is the CAB

First step, zero to two (at most one ace or two kings)

Second step, three (ace and king)

Third step, four (two aces)

### **(9) (Submarine strong singleton responses after 1♣ bids)**

**3♥\*** specifically 1444 with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

**3NT\*** specifically 4441 with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

**4♣\*** specifically 4414 with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

**4♦\*** specifically 4144 with four plus controls, usually 14+ HCP

Next level bids by opener are CAB (**3♠\***, **4♣\***, **4♦\*** and **4♥\***, respectively)

The responses to the CAB (**3♠\*/4♣\*/4♦\*/4♥\***) are

First step—four controls (two aces or ace and two kings)

Second step—five controls (two aces and one king/ace and three kings)

Third step—six controls (three aces/two aces and two kings)

### **(10) 3♠\* a solid seven plus card suit (AKQxxxx), 9 + HCP with or without side controls**

#### **Opener rebids**

**3NT** to play

**4♥/4♠** natural showing at least five cards with no slam interest

**Opener bids** (if he knows the suit)

**4♣\*** CAB - Asks about outside suit controls

**Responses to CAB**

- 4♦\* no outside controls
- 4♥\* outside king
- 4♠\* outside ace or 2 kings
- 4NT\* ace/two to three kings

**Opener bids** (if suit is unknown)

**4♦\*** asking for suit

**Responses to suit ask**

- 4♥\*/4♠\*/5♣\* hearts, spades, clubs
- 4NT\* diamonds

Opener may also bid 4NT, which is Blackwood.

## **Summary—Interference Bids Over 1♠\* Opening**

### **Direct seat interference**

Double – Mathe, which shows majors

- Pass 0–4 HCP
- 1♦ 5–7 HCP
- Redouble 8+
- 1♥ 8–10 HCP no stopper in hearts
- 1♠ 8–10 HCP no stopper in spades
- 1NT 8–10 HCP stoppers in the majors
- 2♣ 8–13 HCP and six plus cards
- 2♦ 8–13 HCP and six plus diamonds
- 2♥ 11+ spade stopper (no heart stopper)
- 2♠ 11+ heart stopper (no spade stopper)
- 2NT 11+ both majors stopped

At one-level – (natural)

- Pass 0–4 HCP
- Double 5–7 HCP
- Suit 8+ HCP, five plus card suit, game force
- Jump in suit Systems on 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠

1NT	8–13 HCP, with stopper
2NT	10+ HCP, with 1/2 stopper
Cue bid	10+ game force no stopper

1NT – (natural)

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, five plus card suit

1NT – Mathe, which shows minors

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
2♣	five plus hearts, GF
2♦	five plus spades GF
2♥	5+ HCP, natural and nonforcing
2♠	5+ HCP, natural and nonforcing
3NT	10+ HCP, both minors stopped

At two-level – (natural)

Pass	0–4 HCP
Double	5–7 HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, natural
Cue bid	9+ flat with no stopper
2NT	9–13 HCP with stopper
3NT	14+ with stoppers

At three-level – (natural)

Pass	0–7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, and five plus card suit

At four-level – (natural)

Pass	0–7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP, takeout or penalty

### Balancing seat interference

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1♥/♠)

- Pass      balance minimum no five-card suit
- Double    support for the other three suits
- Suit bid   natural, nonforcing
- 1NT       shows stopper with (16–21 HCP)
- 2NT       shows stopper with (22+ HCP)
- Cue bid   20+ HCP no stopper

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1NT for minors)

- Pass      balanced minimum no five-card suit
- Double    support for the both majors
- 2♣/2♦    unusual extra values shows ♥/♠
- 2♥/2♠    Natural nonforcing
- 2NT       shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

After 1♣\* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (double = majors)

- Pass      balanced minimum no five-card suit
- Double    support for the both minors
- 2♣/2♦    natural five plus card suit
- 2♥/2♠    unusual extra values shows ♣/♦
- 2NT       shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

## INTERFERENCE OVER 1NT BY OPPONENTS

### Direct seat or balance seat over strong notrumps

- Double:   ♣♦♥ or ♦♥ or ♥ (weak or strong)
- 2♣        ♦♥♠ or ♥♠ or strong ♠
- 2♦        ♥♠♣ or ♠♣ or strong ♣
- 2♥        ♠♣♦ or ♣♦ or strong ♦
- 2♠        ♠ + minor
- 2NT       one or two minors
- 3♣        ♣♥ (nonforcing)
- 3♦        ♦♠ (nonforcing)

**Over weak (10–12) NT**

Direct seat double = penalty with 13+ and Landy where 2♣ = majors and all other bids are natural

**OTHER CONVENTIONAL CALLS**

Over a major bid play Leaping Michaels, Unusual vs. Michaels

Unusual over Unusual, SSGT

Overcalls Michaels and 2NT = two—lowest unbid suits

3X level bids over the opponents bid are preemptive

Fourth suit forcing at the two levels is forcing one round—three-level shows

Western cue

Rosenkranz doubles over major/minor overcalls

1♣ X is a power double 16+ and 1♦/1♥/1♠ X is takeout

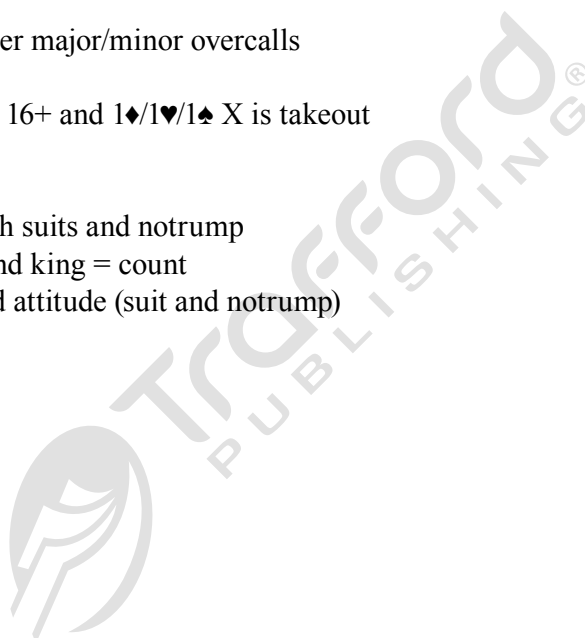
1NT 15–18 systems off

Leads—fourth best both suits and notrump

A/Q asks for attitude and king = count

Upside-down count and attitude (suit and notrump)

Trump suit preference



## CHAPTER 20

### INTERFERING OVER PRECISION

Interfering over Precision players is similar to interfering over the 2/1 15–17 HCP strong notrump pairs. In this chapter, we review several conventions. Interference comes in many flavors. There are natural bids, artificial bids, two-suited bids, among others, that are designed to interfere in the direct or balancing seat.

#### Overview of interference systems used over the Precision 1♣\* bid

##### Mathe

The most popular system is called Mathe, developed by Lewis L. Mathe from California. It is popular because of its simplicity. It goes

Over 1♣\*, bids in the direct seat are

Double*	4-4 or better in the majors
1NT*	4-4 or better in the minors
2NT*	5-5 or better in the minors

All one-level bids are natural (diamonds, hearts, and spades) and the bid of 2♣ shows a club suit. The system is also used in the balancing seat over the sequence: 1♣\* - Pass - 1♦\* - (?).

Because both bids are artificial, all Mathe responses remain the same; however, now two clubs and two diamonds are natural. Higher two-level bids usually show a distributional hand. A disadvantage of Mathe is that the double does not interfere significantly over the strong club bid.

An alternate is the system Bill Amason, and I call SPAM, which says *SPades And More*, to be used against other Precision players. The advantage of spam is that it employs the bid of one spade as a takeout bid, making it more difficult for Precision player. However, the most destructive bid is 3♠.



Double	the majors (4-4 or 5-4)
1♠*	takeout with an unspecified long suit five plus cards
1NT*	the minors (5-5)
2♣*	the majors (5-5)
2♦*	diamonds and a major (5-5)
2NT*	strong notrump 15–17 HCP
3X	Natural suit six plus cards

## CRASH

Another convention used by some partnerships is called CRASH, representing Color, *Rank*, and *Shape*. The system was developed by Kit Woolsey and Steve Robinson. The basic bids are

Double*	two suits of the same color (red or black)
1♦*	two suits of the same rank (majors or minors)
1NT*	two suits of the same shape (rounded ♣ ♥ or pointed ♦ ♠)
1♥/1♠/2♣/2♦	shows natural five plus card suits

CRASH, like Mathe, may also be employed in the balancing seat.

Mathe and CRASH are probably the most widely used systems to interfere over the Precision club.

Because many 2/1 game force partnerships play some version of DONT or Weber (transfer bids), I have modified the bids to make them consistent with Modified DONT (Meckwell). The system is similar to DONT + T (ON), developed by Tony Melucci in cooperation with Neill Currie. The bids follow. I call the system MDONT + T.

### MDONT + T (played in the direct seat only)

1♦*	Transfer to hearts with five plus hearts
1♥*	Transfer to spades with five plus spades
1♠*	Transfer to clubs
1NT*	Transfer to diamonds
2♣*	Clubs + major
2♦*	Diamonds + major
2♥*	Hearts + spades (the majors are at least 4-4)
2NT*	Clubs + diamond (the minors are at least 5-5)

Higher level bids are natural.

Another system developed by Tony Melucci and Neill Currie is called MACE. Because some feel that coping with the MACE bids is difficult, I have included their system of bids.

## **MACE**

- Double\* 4-4 in the minors
  - 1♦\* shows 3-3 or 4-3 in the majors
  - 1♥/1♠ Natural five plus card suit
  - 1NT\* Rounded or points suits (4-4 or better)
  - 2NT\* Both majors or both minors (5-5 or better)
- Suit bids at the two- or three-levels are natural

## **SUCTION**

This convention was developed by Harold Feldheim of Hamden, Connecticut, United States. The overcall of any suit shows the next-higher suit, or the other two suits. This is known as a *transfer overcall*, since the overcaller is actually transferring his partner to the desired suit. The objective and advantage of this transfer overcall is that the 1♣ bidder is then forced to lead the first card as opposed to being in third seat.

- 2♣\*: Shows a one suiter in diamonds, or a two-suited holding with hearts and spades
- 2♦\*: Shows a one suiter in hearts, or a two-suited holding with spades and clubs, or both black suits
- 2♥\*: Shows a one suiter in spades, or a two-suited holding with clubs and diamonds
- 2♠\*: Shows a one suiter in clubs, or a two-suited holding with diamonds and hearts, or both red suits
- 2 NT\*: Shows nontouching suits, either clubs and hearts or diamonds and spades
- Double\*: *Optional*: Shows nontouching pointed suits, diamonds and spades, as opposed to an overcall of two notrump.

Note that the two-suited hands are the suits above the potential single-suited hands. The overcaller will bid the next suit, if two suited.

## **TRANSFERS plus TWOS**

This system of interference over the strong club was devised by Michael L. Donnelly who maintains the site Bridge Matters. It is unique in that it incorporates transfers that right-side the

contract, and the two-level two-suited 5-5 card combinations are easy to remember, since the bids indicate the denomination immediately above the made call.

The systems of bids are as follows.

Double*	Transfer to diamonds
1♦*	Transfer to hearts
1♥*	Transfer to spades
1♠*	♦s and ♠s
1NT*	Transfer to clubs
2♣*	♣s and ♦s
2♦*	♦s and ♥s
2♥*	♥s and ♠s
2♠*	♠s and ♣s
2NT*	♣s and ♥s

The only bids that require some memory are the one and two notrump bids.

When the opponents open 1♣\* followed by a pass and a bid of 1♦\* (which usually shows a minimal hand: 0–7 HCP), the balancer may employ the identical bidding structure as above, with two exceptions. A double becomes a transfer to hearts (stolen bid), while a 1NT\* bid shows a single-suited hand with either clubs or diamonds. In the latter situation, partner bids 2♣\*, which may be corrected to 2♦.

### **When should you interfere over Precision and what is the best system?**

The guidelines for interference over the strong club follow those you used when playing 2/1 game force. In the direct seat, you need a distributional hand, and in the balancing seat, you need shortness. Again, the rules of 8 and 2 apply.

#### **Rule of 2**

You should interfere over the bid of 1♣\* in the balancing seat if you have at least two shortness points. Otherwise, do not interfere.

#### **Rule of 8**

Provided you have at least 6 HCP, you should interfere over 1♣\* in the direct seat if the number of cards in your two longest suits minus the number of losers in your hand is two or more. Otherwise, do not interfere.

The best system to play over Precision is the one you remember. The simplest are SPAM and Mathe. Even though MDONT + T address the most hand combinations, SPAM is simple and provides adequate interference over the strong club opening; more importantly, it is easily remembered.

# CHAPTER 21

## FANTUNES (MODIFIED)

In this chapter, we review the basic bids in Fantunes, a natural bidding system developed by the Italian champions Fulvio Fantoni and Claudio Nunes.

The Fantunes system developed by the Italians has not been accepted yet by the ACBL as a General Convention Chart (GCC). This is because ACBL does not allow “transfer” bids for weak opening hands; hands with less than 15 high card points (HCP). However, this is not the case for hands with 15 or more high card points, 15+ HCP. I have modified the system so that it fits within the GCC. The review is a mixture of the Fantunes bids as suggested by Gerben Dirkson and played on BBO (Bridge Base Online) and those discussed by Bill Jacobs in his book *Fantunes Revealed*. However, I follow the Reverse Bergen 2/1 bids for major suit openings, and when opening 2NT, I also follow the 2/1 bids with 20–21 HCP. In Fantunes, the range is 21–22 HCP. Unlike Precision, all the bids in the system are natural. However, like Precision, hand evaluation depends on HCP only.

The original system depends on three types of bids: solid one-level bids, distributional but solid two-level bids, and minimal notrump bids. What does this mean? The one-level bids have from 15–37 HCP, two-level bids are in the 10–13 HCP range, and the notrump range for balanced minimal hands is 12–14 HCP. There are no artificial bids in the system and no “weak” bids. All bids are natural. I have modified some of these ranges to ensure that the system may be played in club games that use the GCC.

### Basic opening bids

- 1♣      15+ HCP five plus clubs unbalanced/4414/15+ balanced (e.g., two clubs)  
(Must announce as may be short)
- 1♦      13/14+ HCP four plus diamonds or 4441, 1444, 4144 hands
- 1♥/1♠    13/14+ HCP five plus Reverse Bergen responses
- 1NT\*    12–14 HCP balanced 4432/4333 or semibalanced 5422/5332 and

4441 hands; but never 1444/4144 hands—may have a five-card major

2♣\*/2♦\* 10–13 HCP five plus card minors (open 1444/4144/4414 hands 2♦\*)

2♥\*/2♠\* 10–13 HCP 5+ card majors

2NT 20–21 HCP balanced (bids will follow 2/1 methods)

3X 5–10 must have 2/3 of top three honors in the bid suit vulnerable and one if nonvulnerable (natural preempts)

3NT\* gambling solid seven plus minor suits (AKQJxxx)

\* Indicates forcing bids and alerts

Observe that the bid of one club shows either a balanced hand with 15+ HCP, which may include five diamonds or an unbalanced hand and does not need to be alerted. However, because the two-level bids are strong and unbalanced, they must be alerted. The 1NT\* bid is alerted, since you may have a singleton club by agreement.

## Responses to 1♣ opening

1♦\* 0–10 HCP four plus hearts may also have a longer minor

1♥\* 0–10 HCP four plus spades may also have a longer minor

1♠\* 0–10 HCP no four-card major

All two-level bids show game forcing values (GF) and are natural bids, but all deny 5332 shape—instead you bid 1NT. With a 5332 shape and a five-card major, one responds 2NT—or you may have a five-card minor.

1NT 10+ balanced GF

2♣ 10+ five plus clubs GF

2♦ 10+ five plus diamonds GF

2♥/♠ 10+ five plus major, GF but not 5322 shape

2NT\* 10+ five-card major, exactly 5332 major shape or 5+♣/♦

## All three-level bids show GF values with 5-5 card suit combinations

3♣\* 10–15 shows clubs and another suit

Opener next bids 3♦ to ask for second suit

3♥ = hearts; 3♠ = spades; and 3NT = diamonds

The club bidder may now sign off in 3NT, four of a major, or five of a minor. A bid of four of the minor is Minorwood and 4NT is RKCB.

- 3♦\* 10–15 shows hearts and spades (5-5)  
 3♥\* 10–15 shows hearts and diamonds (5-5)  
 3♠\* 10–15 shows spades and diamonds (5-5)
- 3NT 10–15 balanced and stoppers in both majors

### **Responses to 1♣ -1♦\*/1♥\* (relay bids – 4+♥/♠ 0–10 pts)**

- 1♥/♠ Four plus hearts or spades any strength (accept transfer) or 22+ balanced  
 Then 2♥♠ shows 0–5 and 1NT = 6+ with 3433 shape; new suit shows shortage
- 1♠/♥ Deny transfer—shows four plus other major and five plus clubs unbalanced hand  
 Then 2♣♥♠ shows 0–5 natural; jumps invitational; 2♦ fourth suit forcing
- 1NT 15–17/18 balanced and fewer than 4♥/♠

### **Responder next bids:**

Pass with 0–7/Garbage Stayman

2♣ = invitational hand or better 8+ HCP:

Opener rebids 2♦ with 17–18 HCP bids. With 15–16, opener describes his hand with 2♥ (three hearts), 2♠ (four spades), and 2NT (neither). After opener's 2♦, responder bids 2NT to allow opener to describe his hand and usually become declarer.

2♦/2♥ Retransfer shows five of major

2NT Puppet to 3♣

3♣/♦ five plus card suit

3♥ transfer to spades shows 4-4 in the majors

- 2♣ 15–17, 5+♣  
 2♦ 18+ natural with four plus diamonds and five plus clubs  
 2NT 18/19–20 balanced and fewer than 4♥/♠  
 3♣/♦ Semiforcing six plus clubs/diamond (eight playing tricks in clubs/diamonds)

### **Responses to 1♣ -1♠\* (no four-card major—0–10 pts)**

- 1NT 15–17 balanced  
 2♣/♦ to play  
 2♥/♠ asks for stopper  
 2NT natural

- 3♣/♦ natural  
 3♥/♠ shortage 5-4 in the minors
- 2♣ 15–17, 5+♣ NF  
 2♦ 18–20 natural with four plus diamonds and five plus clubs
- 2♥\* a three-way bid  
 18–20 with long clubs and at most two diamonds  
 21+ with clubs and a singleton or void somewhere  
 22+ balanced

**Responder now bids:**

- 2♠ 4+ points—enough for game if 21+  
 Opener bids 2NT to show 23+; 3♣ = 18–20;  
 3♦♥♠ = 21+ with shortage in suit bid
- 2NT 0–3 with six diamonds and one to two clubs  
 Opener can choose between 3♣/3♦ and 3NT
- 3♣/3♦ Sign-off
- 2♠\* a two-way bid  
 18–20 with long clubs and at most three diamonds  
 21+ with clubs and no singleton or void

**Responder now bids:**

- 2NT 6+ GF  
 3♣/3♦ 0-5 HCP to play
- 2NT 19–20 balanced  
 Then 3♣/♦ to play; 3♥/♠ show shortage and 5-4 in the minors

**Responses to 1♣ -1NT (10+ pts, GF)**

The bid of 1NT shows a hand that does not contain a five-card suit.

- 2♣ 15+ balanced  
 2♦ 18+ unbalanced  
 2♥\* 15–17 hearts and clubs  
 2♠\* 15–17 spades and clubs

- 2NT\* 15–17 diamonds and clubs  
 3♣ 15–17 six plus clubs  
 3♦♥♠ 18+ natural showing six plus clubs and four of the bid suit

### **Responses to 1♣ - 2♣ (10+ pts, GF)**

- 2♦ 15+ balanced  
 2♥/♠ 5+♣ and four-card major bid  
 2NT 15+ balanced and 5+♦  
 3♣ 15+ with clubs  
 3♦♥♠ 18+ natural showing six plus clubs and four of the bid suit

### **Responses to 1♣- 2♦/♥/♠ (10+ pts, GF)**

As above, opener bids naturally and with a balanced hand bids 2NT; other bids at the two levels show the suit (four plus) bid with clubs.

#### **After 2NT by opener—responder bids:**

- 3♣\* any hand with 13+ points  
 3♦♥♠\* natural with 10–12 points and six-card suit  
 3NT 10–12 with clubs

### **Responses to 1♣ - 2NT (10+ pts, GF)**

Opener bids will raise 2NT to 3NT with 15 HCP and 2245/3334 balanced hand. With long clubs, he will bid 3♦\*, which set clubs as trump; cue bidding follows.

#### **3♣\* by opener asks about the major suit –**

Then responder bids are

- 3♦\* 10–12 with hearts  
 3♥\* 10–12 with spades  
 3♠\* 13–15 with hearts  
 3NT\* 13–15 with spades  
 4♣\* 16+ with hearts  
 4♦\* 16+ with spades



These relay bids allow the opener to be declarer, cue bids or RKCB follow.

## Interference over 1♣ opening (direct seat)

At one-level – (double)

Pass	0–5 HCP
Double*	6+ HCP
1♦*	5+ HCP and four to five hearts

If the fourth hand passes, opener bids:

1♥	three-card support 14–17 HCP
1NT	15–17 HCP balanced
2♥	four-card support 14–17 HCP
2NT	18–20 HCP
4♥	18+ HCP

1♥\* 5+ HCP and four to five spades  
Continuations by opener follow as above with no interference

1♠*	five clubs and 5–9 HCP
1NT*	five diamonds and 5–9 HCP
2♣	clubs 10+ HCP, GF
2♦*/2♥*	six plus card suit transfer bids

1♣ - (1♦)

Pass	0–5 HCP
Double*	6+ HCP
1♥*	5+ HCP and spades (transfer bid)
1♠*	5+ HCP and hearts (transfer bid)
1NT	natural nonforcing 5–9 HCP
2♣	10+ clubs, GF
2♦*	4-4 in the majors 6+ HCP

1♣ - (1♥)

Pass	0–5 HCP
Double*	6+ HCP four to five spades
1♠	6+ HCP and denies hearts
1NT	natural nonforcing 5–9 HCP
2♣/2♦	10+ clubs, GF and natural
2♥	6+ spades 6+ HCP

**1♣ - (1♠)**

- Pass     0–5 HCP
- Double   7+ negative for spades
- 2♣/2♦   10+ clubs/diamonds, GF and natural
- 1NT     6–8 HCP shows stopper in bid suit

**Interference over 1♣ opening (balancing seat)**

What happens when responder has made a bid with 0–11 HCP and the fourth position enters the auction? Opener bids are now natural with more values. For example, 1NT now becomes 18–20 HCP.

**Responses to 1♦ opening**

- 1♥     0–10 HCP four plus hearts may also have a longer minor
- 1♠     0–10 HCP four plus spades may have a longer minor
- 1NT    0–10 HCP and no four-card major
- 2♦\*    0–6 HCP, five plus spades and four plus hearts
- 3♦     0–6 HCP, four plus diamonds

All two-level bids show game forcing values (GF).

- 2♣     10+, balanced, clubs, or clubs and diamonds
- 2♥/♠   10+, five plus major, but not 5322 shape
- 2NT\*   10+, five-card major, exactly 5332 major shape

**All three-level bids show GF values with 5-5 card suit combinations**

- 3♣\*    10–15 shows clubs and another suit  
Opener next bids 3♦ to ask for second suit  
3♥ = hearts; 3♠ = spades; and 3NT = diamonds  
The club bidder may now sign-off in 3NT, four of a major, or five of a minor. A bid of four of the minor is minorwood and 4NT is RKCB.
- 3♦\*    10–15 shows hearts and spades (5-5)
- 3♥\*    10–15 shows hearts and diamonds (5-5)
- 3♠\*    10–15 shows spades and diamonds (5-5)
- 3NT    10–15 balanced and stoppers in both majors

## Responses to 1♦ - 1♥ (0–10 four plus hearts)

- 1♠ 13–17 with spades, may have a longer minor  
Then 2♣♥♠ shows 0–5 natural; jumps invitational
- 1NT 18+ unbalanced  
Then 2♣ = 6+. GF; 2♦/2♥/3♣ = 0–5, natural; 2♠ = 6–9, 4-4 in majors; 2NT = 6–9 and 3433
- 2♣ 13–17, 5+♦, 4+♣
- 2♦ 13–17, 6+♦ and 8+ natural tricks with six plus diamonds
- 2♥ 13–17, 4+♥
- 2♠ GF, 6+♦ and 4+♠
- 2NT GF, one suiter in diamonds, or 5-5 ♦-♣, or a game forcing heart raise
- 3♣ 16–17 5-5 in the minors
- 3♦ eight playing tricks in diamonds, NF
- 3♥ 13–17, four plus hearts
- 3NT solid diamonds with stoppers

## Responses to 1♦ - 1♠ (0–10 four plus spades)

- 1NT 18+ unbalanced  
Then 2♣ = 6+. GF; 2♦/2♥/3♣ = 0–5, natural; 2♠ = 6–9, 4-4 in majors; 2NT = 6–9 and 3433
- 2♣ 13–17, 5+♦, 4+♣
- 2♦ 13–17, 6+♦ and eight plus natural tricks with six plus diamonds
- 2♥ GF, 6+♦ and 4+♥
- 2♠ 13–17, 4+♠
- 2NT GF, one suiter in diamonds, or 5-5 ♦-♣, or a game forcing heart raise
- 3♣ 16–17 5-5 in the minors
- 3♦ eight playing tricks in diamonds, NF
- 3♠ 13–17, four plus spades
- 3NT solid diamonds with stoppers

## Responses to 1♦ - 1NT (0–10 no four-card major)

Responder may pass showing a minimal hand without six diamonds or four clubs. With 14–20 HCP, opener will bid 2♣/♦ to show shape. With semi GF hands, opener can choose between

four bids: 2♥♠ or 3♣♦. 2NT is a general GF hand; 3♥♠ shows both minors and splinter in the bid major.

### **Responses to 1♦ - 2♣ (10+ GF with ♣/♦ or balanced)**

**Opener now bids shape and strength as 14–17 or 18+.**

- 2♦ 13–17, single suiter of diamonds (any strength) or 4+♦, 4+♣
- 2♥♠ any strength and 4+♥/♠
- 2NT 18+, six plus diamonds and three clubs
- 3♣ 18+, four plus clubs
- 3♦ 18+ set trumps as diamonds
- 3NT solid diamonds with stoppers

### **Responses to 1♦ - 2♥/2♠ (10+ GF natural)**

This is the same response used in the 1♣ opening; it denies 5332 shape (2NT is again used for that). It also denies 5-5 (again three-level bids are used).

**After 2NT\* by opener—responder bids:**

- 3♣\* any hand with 13+ points
- 3♦♥♠\* natural with 10–12 points and six-card suit
- 3NT 10–12 with clubs

### **Responses to 1♦ - 2NT (10+ pts, GF)**

Opener bids will raise 2NT to 3NT with 15 HCP and 2245/3334 balanced hand. With long diamonds, he will bid 3♦, which set diamonds as trump cue bidding follows.

**3♣ by opener asks about the major suit –**

Then responder bids are

- 3♦\* 10–12 with hearts
- 3♥\* 10–12 with spades
- 3♠\* 13–15 with hearts
- 3NT\* 13–15 with spades

- 4♣\* 16+ with hearts  
 4♦\* 16+ with spades

**Responses to 1♥ opening**

- 1♠ 0–9 HCP four plus spades F1R  
 1NT 0–9 HCP 3♥ possible F1R  
 2♣ 10+ GF 5+♣  
 2♦ 10+ GF 5+♦  
 2♥ 8–10 3+♥  
 2♠ Invitational 6+♠  
 2NT\* Jacoby  
 3♣\* 10–12 four plus hearts Rev Bergen  
 3♦\* 7–9 four plus hearts Rev Bergen  
 3♥\* 0–6 four plus hearts  
 3♠\* Splinter and 4♣/4♦  
 3NT\* 13–15 exactly three hearts

**Responses to 1♠ opening**

- 1NT 0–9 HCP 3♠ possible F1R  
 2♣ 10+ GF 5+♣  
 2♦ 10+ GF 5+♦  
 2♠ 8–10 3+♠  
 2NT\* Jacoby  
 3♣\* 10–12 four plus spades Rev Bergen  
 3♦\* 7–9 four plus spades Rev Bergen  
 3♠\* 0–6 spades  
 3♥\* Splinter and 4♣/4♦  
 3NT\* 13–15 exactly three spades

**BROMAD (Reverse) over a double of a major**

XX A redouble is not part of BROMAD per se but is worth mentioning. It shows 10+ points and denies three plus card support.

2♦\* A three-card “constructive” raise, showing 7–10 points and exactly three-card trump support

2♣\* A three-card limit raise or better, showing 10–12 points and exactly three-card trump support

**2♥/♠\*** A three-card “preemptive” raise, showing 0–6 points and exactly three-card trump support

**Short suit game try (SSGT) over 1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠**

Any three-level suit bid by opener shows shortness in the suit 0-2. Otherwise, relay bids are used by the opener and responder shows shortness.

	1♥-2♥ 2♠*	or	1♠-2♠ 2NT*
Club shortness	3♣*		3♣*
Diamond shortness	3♦*		3♦*
Heart shortness	3♥*		
Spade shortness	2NT*		
4333 min 8–9	3♥		3♠
4333 max 10	3NT		3NT
4333 with 4S and max 10	3♠		
5 to KQ+	4m		4m
Stiff other major	4♥		4♠

After SSGT, responder reevaluates his hand with A = 3 and K = 1.

With 9 or 10, responder bids game or cue bids minor with four of other majors.

With 7 or 8, make last train bid if possible.

With 6 or less, sign off.

**Responses to 1NT opening**

2♣	Stayman
2♦	Transfer to hearts
2♥	Transfer to spades
2♠	Transfer to clubs/correct to diamonds
2NT	Invitational
3♣	Transfer to diamonds
3♦	Six plus diamonds
3♥	4♥ and short spades GF
3♠	4♠ and short hearts GF
3NT	to play
4♣	5-5 hearts and spades GF
4♦	Transfer to hearts
4♥	Transfer to spades
4♠	5-5 in the minors GF

The above responses are but one example you may use. Alternatively, you may use the same methods you employ when playing 2/1.

## Responses to two-level openings

The one-level bids in Fantunes with their higher point ranges are an advantage to reaching game or slam. However, the real advantage of the system is their preemptive two-level bids. Like ACOL and EHAA, it tends to keep the opponents out of the auction. The 10–13 point range is not too strong or too weak but just perfect for destroying the methods of the opponents, since we are at the two-level. In Fantunes, all responses to the two-level bids are based upon the following principles.

1. Responder bids the next step as a relay inquiry, which asks the opener to describe his shape. Responder will then have the opportunity to make a second relay bid or perhaps more bids are used to uncover opener's shape.
2. After the first response to the relay, responder can usually return to opener's first bid suit at the three levels, which is invitational.
3. After the first response to the relay, if responder next bids a new suit (other than a secondary relay), it is natural and forcing to game.
4. After a two-level major suit opening, the second step in the response shows the other major with subsequent natural bids.
5. A simple raise is always natural and shows no game interest; however, a jump bid of a new suit is invitational.

## Responses to 2♣ opening

2♦*	6+ HCP asks opener for shape
2♥♠	7–11 HCP 4+ cards in major bid
2NT	5-4 in the majors invitational
3♣	noninvitational raise, preempt
3♦♥♠	invitational one suiter six/seven plus card suit
3NT	to play

## Responses to 2♣ - 2♦ (relay)

2♥	three plus card suit Then 2♠ = 5+spades, GF; 2NT = further enquiry for shape, GF; 3♣ = invitational natural; 3♦/3♥ natural, GF; 3NT to play
2♠	three plus card suit Then 2NT = further enquiry for shape, GF;
3♣	= invitational natural; 3♦/3♥ natural, GF; 3NT to play

- 2NT 2236, 2227, or (12)37 maximum values
- 3♣ six-card suit minimum—may have four diamonds
- 3♦ 6-4 in clubs and diamonds, nonminimum
- 3♥♠ major suit void 0445 or 4045 shape

## Responses to 2♣ - 2♦ (relay) -2♥/2♠ -2NT

- 3♣ six clubs
- 3♦ four diamonds, so opener is (31) 45

2♣ - 2♦ -2♥ - 2NT -3♥ confirms a four-card major with singleton  
 2♣ - 2♦ -2♠ - 2NT -3♠ in other major so opener is (41) 15

2♣ - 2♦ -2♥ - 2NT -3♠ three cards in that major and four cards  
 2♣ - 2♦ -2♠ - 2NT -3♥ in other major, so opener is (34) 15

## 3NT 4405 shape

There is one further relay possible after opener has shown six clubs with the bid of 3♣. Responder may next bid 3♦ to ask opener for a further description.

## 2♣ - 2♦ -2♥ - 2NT -3♣ - 3♦:

- 3♥ six clubs and four hearts
- 3♠ 3316 shape
- 3NT 1336 or 2326 denying three spades

## 2♣ - 2♦ -2♠ - 2NT -3♣ - 3♦:

- 3♥ 4306 or 3315 with three hearts
- 3♠ six clubs and four spades—fewer than three hearts
- 3NT 3135 or 3135

The relay and subsequent bids after opening two clubs are complex. For additional detail, see the text by Bill Jacobs, *Fantunes Revealed*. Instead of using the complex relay bids, one can use the relay for just asking for minimum or maximum distribution. This simplifies the responses to the two-level opening bids.

## Responses to two-level openings (modified)

Use relay bids to ask and then opener shows shape and strength.



**Modified responses to 2♣ opening**

- 2♦\* 6+ HCP asks opener for shape and strength (relay)  
 After the relay, opener bids the better major, which may be three plus cards if clubs cannot be rebid; 3♣\* shows a minimum with five plus clubs and 2NT\* shows a maximum with five plus clubs.
- 2♥♠ 10–11 HCP three plus cards in major bid  
 2NT\* 12–13 maximum with five plus clubs  
 3♣\* 10–11 minimal with five plus clubs  
 3♦♥♠ 10–11 minimal one suiter six/seven plus card suit  
 3NT to play

**Modified responses to 2♦ opening**

- 2♥\* 6+ HCP asks opener for shape and strength (relay)  
 After the relay, opener bid of 2♠\* shows a minimum with four cards in either major. With a maximum, bid three of the major. 3♦\* is a minimum with five plus diamonds.
- 2♠\* 10–11 HCP (minimum) four plus of either major: 3♣ = by responder asks opener to bid the major at the three-level
- 2NT\* 12–13 HCP maximum  
 3♦\* 10–11 HCP minimal noninvitational raise  
 3♥♠ 12–13 with three plus in major suit bid  
 3NT to play

**Modified responses to 2♥ opening**

- 2♠\* 6+ HCP asks opener for shape and strength (relay)  
 After the relay, opener bid of 3♥\* shows a six-card minimum or a four-card minor. With a maximum, bid 2NT\*, which may or may not include spades.
- 2NT\* 12–13 HCP maximum  
 3♣♦\* 10–11 minimal with four plus cards in bid minor  
 3♥\* 10–11 minimal with six plus hearts  
 3♠\* 10–11 minimal with four plus spades  
 3NT to play

## **Modified responses to 2♠ opening**

**2NT\***    **6+ HCP asks opener for shape and strength (relay)**  
After the relay, opener bids a new suit as natural but may be three cards if maximum.

**3♣♦♥\***    **four plus card maximum 11–12 HCP**

**3NT**       **to play**

## **Overview of two-level bids with interference**

When the opponents double a two-level bid, relays are off and all bids are natural. A redouble shows 10+ points, and further doubles are for penalty.

New suits bid at the two-level are constructive and nonforcing, and all three-level bids are forcing for one round. If the three-level bid is higher in rank, it is a game force bid.

## **Responses to 2NT openings (20–21)**

**3♣**       Muppet Stayman  
**3♦/3♥**    Transfer bids  
**3♠**       Relay to 3NT then opener uses Minorwood  
**4♣**       Gerber  
**4♦/4♥**    Texas transfers



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