

# The Bridge Booklet

(BB-10)

## Larry Cohen's 12



**The 12 Conventions that  
should be  
in your Deck**

According to Larry Cohen the 12 conventions that should be in every players deck are:

1. Negative Doubles
2. Blackwood
3. Stayman
4. Jacoby Transfers
  
5. 4th Suit Game Force
6. Methods vs Opponents NoTrump (DONT)
7. Weak Jumps in Competition
8. 2NT asks after our Weak-Two Bids
  
9. Unusual NoTrump/Michaels
10. New Minor Forcing (Checkback)
11. Jacoby 2NT
12. Support Doubles

These (and a few more) are covered here.

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The articles and examples cited here are largely taken from the ACBL web site at: [www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org) and Larry Cohem's web site at [www.larryco.com](http://www.larryco.com).

Other useful sites are:

- Karen's Bridge Library: [home.comcast.net](http://home.comcast.net)  
Bridgebum: [bridgebum.com](http://bridgebum.com)  
Bridgedepot: [bridgedepot.net](http://bridgedepot.net)

### **Maximal Double**

Consider each of the following West hands after the auction has started:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
1. ♠AKJ84 ♥63 ♦AQ72 ♣K5		2. ♠KQ10863 ♥63 ♦A72 ♣K5	

In the first case, West has a medium-strength hand and would like to invite partner to bid game with the upper range for a raise to 2♠. Without the interference, West would have invited game by freely raising to 3♠, or by bidding a new suit as a Help Suit Game Try.

In the second case, West has a minimum strength hand but would like to compete to 3♠ without having partner treat it as a game invitation.

The opponent's bidding however has left only 3♠ available for oth types of hand.

In this situation, a Double can be used to show the first type of hand - extra strength and game invitational. This is referred to as a **Maximal Double**. East can retreat to 3♠ with a minimum raise, jump to 4♠ with a maximum raise, or Pass the double with a good hand for defending 3♥.

Using this convention, an intermediate 3♠ bid by West would show the second type of hand - a competitive but non-invitational raise.

♠5				
♥543	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
♦KJT65	1♠	X	3♠	X (1)
♣AKJT				

(1) A responsive double, advertising both minors.

### Responsive Doubles After an Overall

Some pairs also play responsive doubles opposite an overall:

♠K54				
♥T7	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
♦AT73	1♠	2♥	2♠	X (1)
♣K652				

(1) A responsive double, denying heart support but promising both minors.

### Other Considerations

In their excellent book "Modern Bridge Conventions", Bill Root and Richard Pavlicek suggest these HCP minimums for a responsive double:

- 6+ points at the 2-level
- 8+ points at the 3-level
- 10+ points at the 4-level

They also suggest playing responsive doubles up to 4♦, although many partnerships play them through 3♠ instead.

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## Stayman

(This is used by Responder after a 1NT opening bid)

Responses: modern players prefer that the 1NT bidder play as many of the contracts as possible to keep the strong hand hidden from the defense. In order to cause opener to bid a suit first, experts use the Stayman convention and Jacoby Transfers to cause opener to make the first call in a suit.

Stayman: holding 8-9 HCP and one or two 4-card majors, responder bids 2♣ over 1NT to ask if opener has a 4-card major. Without such, opener bids 2♦. With two 4-card majors, opener bids hearts first. If opener bids the major in which you hold less than 4 cards, bid 2NT (with 10+ HCP, bid 3NT). Opener will know you have 4 cards in the unbid suit.

*Example:*

North	South
♠AJ76	♠KT32
♥KQ54	♥A65
♦AT	♦Q983
♣QJT	♣65

North opens 1NT and South has enough HCP (8) to invite game. With four spades, South bids 2♣ to ask if North has a 4-card major. With four cards in both majors, North bids the lower (2♥). South has only invitational points, and bids 2NT. North knows that South would not have bid 2♣ without a 4-card major. If it isn't hearts, it must be spades. Since North has 17 HCP, partner's 8-9 should be enough for game most of the time, so North bids 4♠. Note that by bidding 2♣, South ensures that if North has a 4-card major, the North hand will be the first to bid the major and will be declarer.

## Responsive

A responsive double is used after partner makes a takeout double. It occurs when:

1. Your left-hand opponent ("LHO") opens a suit,
2. Partner makes a **takeout double**, and
3. Your right-hand opponent ("RHO") raises.

A double in this situation shows at least 4-4 shape in:

- the **major** suits if the opponents bid a *minor*, or
- the **minor** suits if the opponents bid a *major*.

Examples

♠A543				
♥QT98	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
♦5	1♦	X	2♦	X (1)
♣Q652				

(1) A responsive double, showing both majors. Partner is asked to bid 2♠ or 2♥.

♠964				
♥52	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
♦AQ53	1♥	X	2♥	X (1)
♣AJ84				

(1) A responsive double, showing both minors.

♠K964				
♥5	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
♦KT53	1♥	X	2♥	2♠ (1)
♣A984				

(1) Do NOT make a responsive double if you can bid a 4-card major instead.

unlimited strength. A direct raise, consequently, shows 4-card support, while any other action denies support.

Examples:

Opener	Opp1	Resp	Opp2
1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
X			

Shows exactly 3 hearts.

Opener	Opp1	Resp	Opp2
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♦
2♥			

Shows 4 hearts.

Opener	Opp1	Resp	Opp2
1♥	Pass	1♠	2♣
2♥			

Shows 6+ hearts and denies as many as 3 spades.

Opener	Opp1	Resp	Opp2
1♦	P	1♥	X
XX			

Shows exactly 3 hearts

Notes

- Making a support double is opener's first priority.
- Responder's rebids are natural.
- If the opponents' interference is in the form of a double, a redouble by opener can be used to show 3-card support. This of course is called a support redouble.
- Support doubles are on through all competition up to and including 2♥.

## Jacoby Transfers

Another useful convention after partner has opened 1NT or 2NT is called the Jacoby Transfer. Here you have a major suit with 5+ cards and wish to have opener bid the suit so that the strong hand will be hidden if the contract is played in that suit.

- You bid 2♦ over 1NT to transfer partner to 2♥.
- You bid 2♥ over 1NT to transfer partner to 2♠.

After partner has followed orders and made the transfer bid, you have a variety of possible actions depending on the strength of your hand and the number of cards you have in the transfer suit.

- With 0-7 HCP, pass
- With 8-9 HCP, bid 2NT with 5 cards in the transfer suit and bid 3 of the transfer suit with 6+ cards
- With 10+ HCP and 5 cards in the transfer suit, bid 3NT.
- With 10+ points and a 6-card suit, bid 4 of the transfer suit.

Examples: Partner has opened 1NT. What is your bid with each of the following hands?

- |           |          |         |         |
|-----------|----------|---------|---------|
| 1. ♠JT765 | 2. ♠T987 | 3. ♠A43 | 4. ♠A3  |
| ♥AK5      | ♥AQ65    | ♥Q654   | ♥QJT765 |
| ♦76       | ♦A32     | ♦A32    | ♦A3     |
| ♣T82      | ♣32      | ♣32     | ♣J43    |

#1. Bid 2♥ to transfer opener to 2♠; then bid 2NT to invite game.

#2. Bid 2♣ to show 8+ HCP and one or more 4-card majors. If opener shows a 4-card major, bid game in that suit. If opener denies a 4-card major by bidding 2♦, jump to 3NT.

#3. Pass with less than 8 HCP and no 5-card major or 6-card minor.

#4. Bid 2♦ to transfer opener to 2♥. Then, with 8 HCP and a 6-card suit, invite game and show the 6-card major by bidding 3♥.

The principle of bidding game or inviting game is this: If your HCP added to the minimum partner has shown equals 23-24, make an invitational bid; if that number totals 25+, make a game bid; if the total is 33+, make a slam bid.

### ***Texas Transfer***

This transfer system in response to a 1NT opener by partner is similar to Jacoby Transfers in that the transfer is made into a major suit. The primary difference is that the transfer bid of diamonds to transfer to hearts and hearts to transfer to spades is made at the 4-level.

- 1NT- 4♦ transfers to 4♥
- 1NT- 4♥ transfers to 4♠

The bid at the 4-level announces a 6-card suit (or better) and enough points for partner to play at game but denies any interest in slam. The bids have the added advantage of getting to game quickly, before LHO can make a defensive bid, either to try and steal the bid or as a suit preference and lead indicator.

If responder has slam interest in either major, the transfer is made at the two-level (Jacoby Transfer) and responder then jumps to game in the appropriate major. Opener then can evaluate the opening hand in terms of trump fit and strength. If at the upper end of the 1NT range with a good fit in the major, opener is encouraged to bid slam or to make a slam try by bidding 4NT.

Examples of negative double sequences:

Opener	Overcaller	Responder
1♣	1♦	Dbl

Usually shows 4-4 in the majors. With 5-4 or longer distribution, responder should bid his longest major first. With 5-5 distribution, responder should bid 1♠, planning on rebidding his hearts.

Opener	Overcaller	Responder
1♦	2♣	Dbl

Shows at least one 4-card (or longer) major suit. Note that if responder has a 5-card (or longer) major, he must have fewer than 10 points. Otherwise, he should bid his 5-card major immediately.

Opener	Overcaller	Responder
1♥	2♦	Dbl

Shows 4 spades with 6+ points or 5+ spades with 6-9 points. Again, with 5+ spades and 10+ points, responder would bid 2♠ instead.

Opener	Overcaller	Responder
1♦	1♠	Dbl

Shows at least 4-card support for Clubs and Hearts

Opener	Overcaller	Responder
1♥	1♠	Dbl

Shows 4-4 in the minors

### ***Support***

The support double is a double used by opener after partner makes a suit response and the next player interferes. The support double is not penalty-oriented, but shows exactly 3-card support for partner and

Takeout doubles can also be made with strong one-suited hands (16+ points):

♠AKQ32	West	North	East	South
♥A4	1♣	Pass	Pass	X (1)
♦KQ3	Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠ (2)
♣72				

(1) Takeout double.

(2) A new suit by the doubler shows a strong one-suited hand. However, this is not forcing.

- Notes:
- Min 3-card support for each of the unbid suits
  - 13+ points (incl Dummy points)
  - Applies (usually) through to 4♥ preemptive opening

## Negative

The negative double is a conventional double used by responder after opener starts the bidding with one-of-a-suit and the next player makes a suit overcall. The double always promises 6+ points and, depending on the auction, at least four cards in at least one of the unbid suits.

If one major suit is unbid, the negative double always shows that suit. If both majors are unbid, then the double shows both majors at the one-level. After an opposing 2-level overcall, the double only promises one major.

A negative double usually shows 4 cards in the unbid suit(s), although it may also be made with a 5-card or longer suit in a hand too weak to bid it directly (see below). **Note also** that a negative double usually denies support if partner has bid a major.

## Smolen

Instead of using transfers for hands that are 5-4 in the majors, the Smolen Convention uses Stayman (2♣). After partner's 1NT opening, you bid 2♣. If partner pleasantly surprises you by bidding a major, you'll simply jump to four of that major, and partner will declare. If your partner doesn't have a four-card major he will respond to your Stayman inquiry with 2♦. Now what? Could you still have a 5-3 major-suit fit? Is there a way to find out?

This is where Smolen helps. You now jump to the three-level of your shorter major. This *Alertable* call tells partner that you have four cards in that major and five in the other.

Consider the following:

Opener	Responder
♠Q82	♠AK653
♥A96	♥K874
♦K54	♦873
♣AQT7	♣4

With this example hand, you'd jump to 3♥ after opener's 2♦ rebid. This would tell partner that you have four hearts and five spades. With three-card spade support, he would bid 3♠, and you could raise to 4♠ or cuebid if you were interested in slam. Without a three-card spade fit, partner would simply sign off in 3NT. Either way, partner – the 1NT opener – declares.

Example auctions:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (1)
2♦ (2)	3♠ (3)
4♥ (4)	Pass
Pass	

- (1) Stayman: do you have a four-card major?
- (2) No.
- (3) Smolen: I have five hearts and four spades.
- (4) I have three hearts and prefer this to 3NT.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (2)
2♦ (1)	3♥ (3)
3NT (4)	Pass

- (1) Stayman: do you have a four card major ?
- (2) No
- (3) Smolen: I have five spades and four hearts.
- (4) I don't have a fit for spades - we will play NoTrump

### Two-Way Reverse Drury

This is a variation of the Drury convention. It allows a passed hand to show 3- and 4-card limit raises after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠. After hearing partner's 1♥/♠ in third or fourth seat:

- 2♣ Artificial, 10-12 points with exactly 3-card support
- 2♦ Artificial, 10-12 points with 4+ card support

#### Opener's Rebids

After opening 1♥ and hearing a 2♣ response:

- 2♦ A sound opening bid (12+ points)
- 2♥ A weak hand (10-12 points)

All other bids: Natural, with normal opening values (12+ points)

After opening 1♥ and hearing a 2♦ response:

- 2♥ A weak hand (10-12 points)

All other bids: Natural, with normal opening values (12+ points)

## Doubles

### Takeout

The takeout double is a double that asks partner to bid one of the unbid suits. The double usually shows 11+ points and 3+ cards in each unbid suit. Some basic examples:

♠A532				
♥KQJ5	West	North	East	South
♦AT93	Pass	Pass	1♣	X (1)
♣7				

(1) Takeout double, asking partner to bid diamonds, hearts or spades - whichever suit in which he has the greatest length and strength.

♠AQ32				
♥K4	West	North	East	South
♦AT973	1♣	Pass	1♥	X (1)
♣72				

(1) Takeout double, asking partner to bid diamonds or spades.

♠A532				
♥KJT5	West	North	East	South
♦6	1♦	Pass	1NT	X (1)
♣KQT3				

(1) Not for penalty; asks partner to bid clubs, hearts or spades.



dummy for an overtrick. With spades as trumps, 10 tricks are the limit.

Note that this problem does not occur when the auction begins 1♥:2♥ and opener rebids 2♠. This is because responder should not be holding 4 spades and 3 hearts. With that distribution, he should initially reply 1♠, not 2♥. So there is no need for opener to probe for a secondary 4-4 spade fit.

Lastly, the adoption of help suit game tries means that opener's 3♥/♠ rebids ask for help in the trump suit:

Opener	Responder
♠AK6	♠J82
♥J8532	♥T74
♦3	♦KQJ2
♣AKJ3	♣Q65

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
3♥ (1)	Pass (2)
1 My hearts are lousy	
2 So are mine!	

>> Also look at **Short Suit Game Try** at <http://www.bridgebum.com>

After opening 1♠ and hearing 2♣:

- 2♦ A sound opening bid
  - 2♥ Natural, 4+ hearts, but does not guarantee a full opening bid
  - 2♠ A weak hand
- All other bids: Natural, with normal opening values (12+ points)

After opening 1♠ and hearing 2♦:

- 2♥ Natural, 4+ hearts, but does not guarantee a full opening bid
  - 2♠ A weak hand
- All other bids: Natural, with normal opening values (12+ points)

### Examples

North	South
♠864	♠AJ92
♥AKT	♥QJ987
♦A752	♦6
♣T83	♣QJ2

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣ (1)	Pass	2♥ (2)
All Pass			

- 1 Two-Way Reverse Drury, showing exactly 3 hearts and 10-12 points.
- 2 Showing minimum strength. (Playing "normal" Drury, this would show a sound opening bid.)

North	South
♠K864	♠AJ952
♥K632	♥A9
♦T8	♦92
♣A63	♣KQ65

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦ (1)	Pass	3♣ (2)
Pass	4♠ (3)	All Pass	

- 1 Two-Way Reverse Drury, showing 4+ spades and 10-12 points.
- 2 Natural, promising sound opening strength.
- 3 Bidding game with a good club fit.

## Jacoby 2NT

This convention fills the gap when responder has a limit raise or better. As a Responder

- bidding a new suit and then supporting opener shows 11-12 HCP with 3-card support for opener's suit
- jumping to 3 of openers suit shows 11-12 HCP with 4-card support
- bidding (a Jacoby) 2NT is treated as a game force with min 3-card support, perhaps with an interest in slam

1♥ – P – 2NT – P  
??

Openers rebids are:

- 3-of-a-new-suit shows a singleton or a void in that suit

(3) Opener	Responder
♠AJT62	♠9754
♥AT5	♥KQ2
♦975	♦6
♣AK	♣J8543

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
3♦ (1)	4♠ (2)
Pass	

- 1 A HSGT in diamonds
- 2 Voids and singletons count as first and second round controls, respectively

## Other Considerations

After 1♠:2♠, a 3♥ may or may not be a help suit game try. This requires partnership discussion:

Opener	Responder
♠AJT62	♠KQ8
♥AQ65	♥KT73
♦7	♦J65
♣A96	♣532

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
3♥ (1)	4♥ (2)
Pass	

- 1 Natural and forcing with 15+ points
- 2 Bidding the heart game with 4-card support

This sequence is natural because a 4-4 fit is often preferable to a 5-3 fit. These two hands play better with hearts as trumps, because the spades can be used to pitch club losers from dummy. Declarer can draw trumps in three rounds, run the spades, and then ruff a club in

(3) Holding	# Losers	Responders Call
xxx	3 losers	Sign off in 3♥/♠
Txxx	3 losers	
Jxxxx	3 losers	

A drawback to help suit game tries is that they help inform the defense's opening lead, especially when responder stops below game.

### Examples

(1) Opener	Responder
♠6	♠AJ8
♥AKT53	♥987
♦KQJ	♦A763
♣Q743	♣962

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
3♣ (1)	3♥ (2)
Pass	

- 1 A HSGT in clubs
- 2 Signing off with a poor club holding, despite 9 HCP

(2) Opener	Responder
♠T9	♠A63
♥KQ8632	♥J94
♦AJ	♦6543
♣A2	♣K54

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
2♠ (1)	4♥ (2)
Pass	

- 1 A HSGT in spades
- 2 Bidding game with a help suit control (the ace)

- 4-of-a-new-suit shows a good quality 5-card suit
- 4-of-the-agreed-major shows a minimum hand without shortness or slam interest
- Rebidding 3NT (medium hand) shows a sound opening without shortness
- Rebidding 3-of-the-major (maximum hand) shows slam interest and denies shortness

### Michaels Cuebid and Unusual NoTrump

After an opponent opens, it's often difficult to describe a hand with two long suits. The auction may get too high (or end too soon) for you to show both, or you may not have the strength to safely bid either suit. Consider these problems if RHO opens:

- a. RHO opens 1♣ or 1♦ and you hold:

♠KQ964 ♥KQ872 ♦52 ♣7

- b. RHO opens 1♥ or 1♠ and you hold:

♠765 ♥Void ♦K10765 ♣QJ1093

- c. RHO opens 1♣ or 1♠ and you hold:

♠4 ♥KJ872 ♦AJ10754 ♣5

With a. you would overcall 1♠ and hope to bid hearts later. With b. and c. it may be dangerous to bid at all, especially at the 2-level. Both hands have good playing strength, but neither can be described with a standard overcall, which tends to show a one-suited hand with more high-card points.

The Michaels Cuebid and Unusual Notrump are conventions that let you show two suits with one bid. The convention you use depends on which suit the opponent opens and which suits you have. They are generally played together, as the concepts behind them are similar.

## Michaels Cue-Bid

This is a direct cuebid of the opponent's opened suit (1♣ by RHO, 2♣ by you) to show 5+-card length in two other suits. One of your suits is always a major, but the exact two you promise depend on the opening bid:

- Over a minor-suit opening, a Michaels Cuebid (1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦) shows both majors.
- Over a major-suit opening, a Michaels Cuebid (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠) shows the OTHER major and an unspecified minor.

## Unusual 2NT

This convention is a direct jump to 2NT over an opponent's opening bid to show the two lowest-ranking unbid suits. You should have at least 5 cards in each suit for this bid. The exact suit you promise depend on the opening bid. Over an opening of:

- 1♣, 2NT shows diamonds and hearts.
- 1♦, 2NT shows clubs and hearts.
- 1♥ or 1♠, 2NT shows both minors.

In the example hands, Hand a. is perfect for a Michaels Cuebid. With b. an Unusual 2NT shows both suits without promising great high-card strength. And with c. your overcall depends on which suit the opponent opened -- over 1♠, you would bid 2♠ Michaels to show the other major and a minor; over 1♣, you would use the Unusual 2NT to show the two lower unbid suits.

## Strength requirements

Michaels Cuebids and Unusual Notrump overcalls are usually preemptive in nature - they show good suits and distributional values, but don't necessarily promise the

## Help Suit Game Try

A help suit game try (aka weak suit game try) may occur after an auction begins 1♥:2♥ or 1♠:2♠.

When opener holds invitational values (15-17 HCP), he can bid a new suit at the cheapest level to say, "Partner, I'm interested in game, but I have weakness in this suit. Please bid game if you have a good holding in this suit." Partnership styles vary, but examples of suits meriting a help suit game try are:

- xxx(xx) • Qxx(xx) • Kxx(xx) • Axx(xx)
- Jxx(xx) • QJX(xx) • KJx(xx)

Note that a help suit game try can be made with only a three-card suit, but it does not need to be alerted under ACBL tournament rules.

After hearing a help suit game try, responder should bid game with 0 - 1.5 losers in the suit. (In other words, a first or second round control.) With 2 - 2.5 losers, responder must exercise judgement. And with 3 losers (e.g. a worthless tripleton), responder should sign off in 3♥/♠.

Examples of responder's possible holdings in the help suit:

(1) Holding	# Losers	Responder's Call
void	0 losers	Bid Game
AK	0 losers	
x	1 loser	
Ax	1 loser	
KJxx	1.5 losers	
(2) Holding	# Losers	Responders Call
xx	2 losers	Bid game with a
Kxx	2 losers	Maximum
QTxx	2.5 losers	

Bidding:

Partner	Opp1	You	Opp2
1♦	1♥	2♥	P
3♦*	P	P/4♦*	P*

Partner's 3♦ bid shows a minimum opener and suggests that you should pass with only a limit raise. However, should you now bid 4♦, it would indicate extra values and slam interest. 5♦ by you would be a closeout (the principle of **Fast Arrival**, indicating enough values to play at game opposite partner's minimum opener but less than a slam invite).

If partner has opened a major suit, overcalled by RHO, the principles are the same for showing a limit raise or better. Cue-bid the enemy suit. If partner jumps to game (indicating a hand with more than a minimum opener), and you also hold more than an opening hand, a slam try is indicated. If partner bids three of the major suit, you may pass or continue to game based on your strength.

high-card strength of a regular overcall (the right 7HCP is enough). They can, however, be used with stronger hands where you want to force partner to choose one of your suits. Over an opponent's 1♦ opener, for example, you can bid 2♦ Michaels with ♠AKQ98 ♥KQJ92 ♦K5 ♣7, and then jump to game in the major partner bids.

### Finding partner's unknown suit

The one case where you won't know partner's exact two suits is when he makes a Michaels Cuebid over a 1♥ or 1♠ opening (showing the other major and an unspecified minor). Since you know his major, you can bid it if you have 3+-card (or 2-card) support. If you can't support his major but have at least 3-card length in both minors, you'll want to play in his minor suit. To ask partner which minor he holds -- and tell him that's your preferred trump suit -- bid 2NT. Partner will bid his long minor and you can then pass, raise or sacrifice.

### Responding bids

Remember that partner's Michaels Cuebid or 2NT overcall is artificial. If your RHO passes, you cannot pass. For all Unusual 2NT overcalls and most Michaels Cuebids, you'll know the exact two suits partner holds, so bid your longer one. You should almost always bid one of partner's suits; don't be tempted to suggest any other suit as trumps unless you have great length and strength in it.

The level of your bid depends on your strength and trump support. With a weak-to-intermediate hand, bid at the lowest level available. With a stronger hand, you can jump in one of partner's suits to invite game or jump directly to game.

If RHO makes an intervening bid, you should compete if you have some strength and support for one of partner's suits. Partner is promising 5-5 in his suits, so any 3-card

holding is good support.

If you're not vulnerable and you have a weak hand with strong support, you may want to sacrifice. Suppose LHO opens 1♥, partner overcalls 2♥ (spades and a minor), and you hold ♠J964 ♥5 ♦A872 ♣J874. You know the opponents can make at least 4♥, so if you're not vulnerable, you should sacrifice right away by jumping to 4♠. With your long trumps and singleton (and filler in whatever partner's minor is), a spade contract should make at least 8 or 9 (and maybe 10) tricks.

### Other uses

These conventions are most commonly used in direct seat over an opponent's opening bid, but can apply in other types of auctions, too. If an opening bid is passed around to you, you can balance with a Michaels Cuebid or Unusual 2NT. For example, after 1♣ by LHO-Pass-Pass, 2♣ by you would be Michaels, showing both majors. After 1♥-Pass-Pass, a bid of 2NT is Unusual, showing both minors.

You can also play that any "unusual" notrump overcall (even if it's not a jump) is the Unusual Notrump. For example, after 1♥ by LHO-Pass-2♥, 2NT by you shows both minors (similarly, 1♥-Pass-2♥-3♥ is Michaels, showing spades and a minor).

Notrump overcalls at higher levels also convey this meaning: 1♦ by LHO-Pass-3♦-3NT by you shows clubs and hearts. 1♠-Pass-4♠-4NT shows both minors. The higher the level, the stronger and more distributional your hand should be for your bid.

## Cue-Bid Limit Raise Basics

When partner's suit is overcalled by an opponent, you can indicate a limit raise or better in partner's suit by cue-bidding the opponent's suit.

Since 1♣ and 1♦ opening bids often are made with only three cards, a limit raise in a minor suit should show a minimum of five cards in partner's suit plus 11+ playing points.

If partner's opening bid of 1 major is overcalled by an opponent, a cue-bid should show 3+ cards in partner's suit.

Using the cue-bid to show a limit raise or better allows your partnership to apply different meanings to single raises and jump raises in partner's suit. Typically, these meanings take two forms:

- a single raise-made on as few as 4 HCP—a courtesy raise to show limited support for partner and an unwillingness to let the opponents steal the contract.
- a jump raise to show 8-10 HCP and 3-4 card support for partner's suit—just a bit short of a limit raise. Alternately, you may opt for a more preemptive approach:
- a single raise to show 3+-card trump support with less than limit raise values.
- a preemptive jump raise with 4-card support and almost any point count short of a limit raise.

In hand 2, there are 10 cards in the 2 long suits and 7 losers (2 each in Spades, Diamonds and Clubs). Here however you should bid since:

$$\text{Length (10)} - \text{Losers (7)} = 3$$

Pay attention to vulnerability when using DONT but remember, **Distribution is the KEY**

### Modified Ogust

When partner opens a Weak-2, add your HCP to your trump holding. If the total is 17 or more you should be investigating game through the use of the Ogust convention.

The Ogust convention allows the responder to bid 2NT, a forcing bid, to allow opener, by a system of Relay bids, to describe his hand more precisely. Using these step-by-step bids, both North and South can find better establish the final contract. The following relays are those rebids as indicated in the original version by Mr. Harold Ogust. There are several variations to the original concept listed below.

The Relay Bids are:

- 3♣ : Minimum hand with 1 of the top 3 honours
- 3♦ : Minimum hand with 2 of the top 3 honours
- 3♥ : Maximum hand with 1 of the top 3 honours
- 3♠ : Maximum hand with 2 of the top 3 honours
- 3NT: Maximum hand with all 3 top honours

As soon as the partner of the Weak Two bidder discovers the quality of the holding, then the partner sets and establishes the final contract.

### Splinter Bids

Splinter bids offer a method to make a slam inquiry below the four-level of partner's suit. A splinter bid over partner's 1♥/1♠ major shows a void or singleton in the suit bid, four or more trumps, and an opening hand. The bid is made as a double jump shift into the splinter suit. If the singleton is an honor card, the hand should hold opening count not counting the singleton honor. If partner has no wasted values in the splinter suit—or a full opener not counting any wasted values—a slam can usually be made with a combined 26+ HCP because all high cards are "working"—complementing each other as they are all in the same three suits.

Bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♠	P	4♣	P
?			

With a minimum opening and wasted values in clubs, opener will bid 4♠ to reject the slam try—and responder with extras can still make a slam try by bidding past 4♠. If opener makes any bid other than four of the agreed major, the slam try has been accepted. Opener and responder may start a cue-bidding sequence to show aces, kings, or first-round controls—or may start a Blackwood or Roman Key Card inquiry.

Possible continuation of the bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♠	P	4♣	P
4♥*	P	5♦**	P
6♠***	All pass		

\* I accept the slam try, and I hold the ace of hearts but not the ace of diamonds

\*\*I hold the ace of diamonds but not the ace of spades or a void in clubs

\*\*\*6♠ looks makeable

With a good “read” on the hand opener bids 6♠ with expectations of making the bid. Here might be representative hands:

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ32	♠K987
♥A2	♥KQ43
♦K98	♦A54
♣43	♣2

Total HCP in the combined hands: 26; making slam—priceless.

Splinter bids can also be made over partner’s minor suit opening with a double jump shift into a new suit. Since the 1♣/1♦ minor bid can be made with a three-card suit, responder should hold 5+ cards in partner’s suit.

### ***New Minor Forcing***

This convention is used when the OPENER rebids 1NT or 2NT. Responder bids the new minor as an artificial way to ask about (or "check back" on) the majors.

Example Auctions: In each of these auctions, responder's second bid is new minor forcing. The responder is asking the opener about the majors (typically looking for 3-card support).

1.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1♦	1♥
	1NT	2♣

agreement, it can be an intricate shape-asking bid, but if a simpler version of DONT is preferred, it can just show support for overcaller's suit and ask him to bid more with extra values.

### ***When to use DONT***

DONT is all about Disturbing the Opponents NoTrump opener. To determine if it is OK to overcall a 1NT bid use the following guideline:

- count the number of cards you have in your two longest suits
- subtract the number of losers
- if the answer is 2 or higher, bid something
- if the answer is 1 or less, Pass

Counting Losers: consider the hand

♠AK754	1 loser (missing the Q)
♥KJ53	2 losers (missing AQ)
♦Q84	2 losers (missing AK)
♣6	1 loser (missing A)

Now look at the following:

1. ♠K75	2. ♠K7532
♥AQ865	♥K8654
♦K43	♦43
♣76	♣7

In hand 1, there are 8 cards in the two long suits but there are 7 losers (two each in Spades, Diamonds and Clubs). You should pass despite having 12 HCP and a 5-card major since:

$$\text{Length (8) - Losers (7) = 1}$$



## DONT

Disturbing Opponents' No Trump is a conventional defense used after an opposing 1NT opening. It sacrifices the natural penalty double in order to show all possible one- and two-suited hands.

After an opposing 1NT:

- Dbl: Any one suit (5+ cards), relays to 2♣
- 2♣: Clubs and a higher suit (At least 5-4 in the two suits)
- 2♦: Diamonds and a higher suit (at least 5-4)
- 2♥: Hearts and spades (at least 5-4)
- 2♠: 5+ spades, (weaker than a double followed by a 2♠ rebid)

After hearing a double, partner is expected to bid 2♣, which is completely artificial. (He may, however, bypass the 2♣ relay and bid a very strong 6-card suit of his own.) The 2♣ bid allows doubler to then show his suit: he passes with clubs and bids his suit otherwise. A jump bid by either player is strong and invitational, but not forcing. A raise of doubler's suit is also invitational but not forcing.

After hearing a 2♣ or 2♦ overcall, partner usually passes with support for the bid suit; otherwise, he can bid the next-highest suit to try correcting the contract. For example:

Opp1	Overcaller	Opp2	Partner
1NT	2♣!	Pass	2♦!

The 2♦ bid denies support for clubs and asks for overcaller's other suit. With diamonds, overcaller passes; with a major, overcaller bids it.

A 2NT response by partner at any time is strong and forcing for one round. Depending on partnership

2.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1♣	1♠
	1NT	2♦
3.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1♦	1♠
	2NT	3♣

New minor is used only by the responder and always as his second bid of the auction. It promises at least invitational (10 - 11) strength (after a 1NT rebid) and some doubt about what the final contract should be. In most cases, the responder will have 5 cards in his major and be trying to decide if the hand should be played in his suit or in notrump.

These Responder hands match the auctions above:

1. 1♦-1♥-1NT-2♣: ♠KQT ♥AQJ73 ♦Q32 ♣32
2. 1♣-1♠-1NT-2♦: ♠AQT85 ♥KJ75 ♦K2 ♣54
3. 1♦-1♠-2NT-3♣: ♠KJ854 ♥5 ♦Q76 ♣7652

In each hand above, the responder is hoping the opener can show 3-card support for his major. When the new minor is bid, the opener must ALERT. If the opponents ask, he can explain: "My partner's bid is artificial and forcing for one round. He is asking me about my majors." The opener now should show 3-card support if he has it (with 4-card support he would have raised on the previous round). If the opener doesn't have 3-card support, his next obligation is to show 4-cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he makes the cheapest bid he can (over clubs he bids diamonds; over diamonds he bids notrump).

## Meanings for Opener:

### 1. OPENER RESPONDER

1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣
??	

2♥ = 3-card heart support

2♠ = 4 spades, but not 3-card heart support  
(unlikely since no 1♠ bid)

2♦ = None of the above

### 2. OPENER RESPONDER

1♦	1♥
2NT	3♣
??	

3♦ = No major

3♥ = 3-card heart support

3♠ = 4 spades (not 3 hearts)

\*Note: If you play this convention, make sure partner is playing it the same way as you. I suggest it be played as written here, but some people play that on Opener's 3rd bid he bids his cheapest major (up-the-line). (In other words, he might show 4 hearts before showing 3-card spade support.)

## Examples for Opener:

1 ♠KQ2 ♥J432 ♦AQ2 ♣Q76

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦
??	

Bid 2♠ (unless you are playing that you show hearts first with 4 hearts and 3 spades)

An example auction playing RKCB 1430 with a queen-ask:

Opener	Responder
♠AJT75	♠K93
♥AKT	♥Q3
♦AKT2	♦J8
♣5	♣KQ7642

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
3♦	3♠
4NT (1)	5♣ (2)
5♦ (3)	5♠ (4)
Pass	

1	RKCB for spades.
2	1 key card.
3	Asking for the ♠Q.
4	Denies the ♠Q.

## RKCB In Competition

**ROPI** when the opponents double 4NT. Redouble shows 0, 3 or 5 keycards while Pass shows 1 or 4 keycards.

There are a number of ways to show key cards if 4NT is overcalled. One way is called **DOPI**, which stands for "Double = 0 (or 3 or 5) key cards, Pass = 1 (or 4)." The cheapest available bid shows two key cards, the second-cheapest bid shows three key cards, and the third-cheapest bid shows four.

Another method of showing key cards is **DEPO**, which stands for "Double = Even number of key cards, Pass = Odd number of key cards."

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥
4NT (1)	5♥ (2)
5NT (3)	6♦ (4)
6♥ (5)	

- 1 RKCB for hearts.
- 2 2 key cards without the Q♥.
- 3 Asking for partner's cheapest king.
- 4 Showing the ♦K.
- 5 Signing off because of the missing ♣K.

### Asking for the Trump Queen

Sometimes the 4NT bidder wants to know the location of the trump queen, but hears a 5♣ or 5♦ reply. These responses don't indicate whether responder holds the queen of trumps. So, the 4NT bidder can bid the cheapest non-trump suit to ask this question. The responses to the queen-ask are as follows.

Responses to the Queen Ask	Meaning
Bidding the trump suit	No trump queen
5NT	The trump queen without any side-suit kings
Bidding any non-trump suit	The trump Queen AND the king of that suit

2 ♠AQ3 ♥KJ ♦KQT52 ♣K43

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♥
2NT	3♣
??	

Bid 3♦ (Denying 3♥ and denying 4♠)

3 ♠AQ ♥AJ54 ♦AT43 ♣KT3

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♠
2NT	3♣
??	

Bid 3♥

Follow-ups (Responder's 3rd Bid):

- a bid of 3NT is "Choice of games," promising 5 cards in his major.
- a bid of 4 of the major is to play.
- a re-raise is invitational.

Examples:

1 ♠KJ954 ♥AJ3 ♦K54 ♣J 2

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦
2♠	??

Bid 3NT—This means you have 5 spades and you are offering a choice between 3NT and 4♠ (partner knows you would have bid 3NT directly without 5 spades).

2 ♠3 ♥KQJ95 ♦AJT4 ♣Q32

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♥	??

Bid 4♥ – You are not interested in offering a choice with this shapely hand.

3 ♠A9765 ♥AQ32 ♦43 ♣J 7

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♥	??

Bid 3♥ to invite (or 4♥ if your partner really plays them well).

Note: "New Minor" should NOT be on in competition (of any kind). Decide if you wish to use it by a Passed Hand (No strong feelings--just make sure to discuss).

### Fourth Suit Forcing

Fourth Suit Forcing is used by the responder to establish a game force. So, after, say, 1♦-1♥-1♠, a bid of 2♣ is the 4th suit. Any time the auction starts: 1 grape-1 apple, and opener bids a 3rd suit, responder can bid the 4th suit (artificially) to set up a game force.

I recommend that the 4th suit is 100% forcing to Game. Example: After 1♥-1♠-2♣, responder holds: ♠AQ432 ♥4 ♦Q32 ♣AKQ2. He bids 2♦ to set up a game force. *The bids says absolutely nothing about the suit.* It could be 432, it could be AKQ. It could be a singleton, it could be a five-card suit. If opener has the 4th suit stopped, he will

- A diamond void if hearts or spades are trumps, or
- A void in hearts or spades, if diamonds are trumps

6♥ Shows an odd # of key cards and:

- A heart void if spades are trumps, or
- A spade void if hearts are trumps

### Asking for Kings (5NT)

A 5NT rebid asks partner for kings. It is a grand slam try, and should only be bid if the partnership holds all 5 key cards and the queen of trumps.

There are two ways to play 5NT:

- 1 To ask partner to bid his cheapest (non-trump) king.
- 2 To ask partner how many kings he holds (standard Blackwood responses):
  - 6♣ shows 0 kings.
  - 6♦ shows 1 king.
  - 6♥ shows 2 kings.
  - 6♠ shows 3 kings.

An example auction playing RKCB with the 5NT "cheapest" king-ask:

Opener	Responder
♠K	♠A65
♥AQT754	♥K632
♦A5	♦K6
♣AQ54	♣J932

## Roman Key Card Blackwood (1430)

This is a variation of the Blackwood convention. It is used when the partnership has agreed to a trump suit and is interested in slam. A 4NT bid asks partner how many "key cards" he holds. A key card is any ace or the trump suit king.

There are two versions of RKC: 0314 and 1430 ("Fourteen-Thirty"), which refer to the step responses below.

### Responses to 4NT

Bid	Meaning
5♣	Shows 1 or 4 key cards.
5♦	Shows 0 or 3 key cards.
5♥	Shows 2 or 5 key cards without the queen of trumps.
5♠	Shows 2 or 5 key cards with the queen of trumps.

The 4NT bidder can usually (!) determine if responder has 1/4, 0/3, or 2/5 key cards.

### Void-showing responses

If responder has a void, he can make one of the following bids to describe his hand.

Bids	Meaning
5NT	Shows an even # of key cards and a void somewhere.
6♣	Shows an odd # of key cards and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A club void if clubs aren't trumps, or</li><li>• A void in any other suit if clubs are trumps</li></ul>
6♦	Shows an odd # of key cards and:

usually bid notrump. Both players assume the 4th suit is unstopped until either player bids notrump.

### Opener's 3rd bid (after 4th suit forcing is used)

The opener bids naturally. He should have a stopper in the 4th suit in order to bid notrump. He is allowed to take a preference to responder's first suit with honor-doubleton.

Example hands for opener after: 1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥:

♠53 ♥K2 ♦KQJ87 ♣A1076  
Bid 2NT (hearts stopped)

♠Q5 ♥54 ♦KQJ87 ♣AJ74  
Bid 2♠ (this does not guarantee 3-card support)

♠53 ♥Q ♦AK765 ♣KQ1065  
Bid 3♣ to show 5-5

Opener can jump raise responder's first suit with three cards and a maximum, such as: ♠KQ107 ♥K32 ♦AQJ43 ♣2 (after 1♦-1♥-1♠-2♣, jump to 3♥).

### Notes:

- Only the responder can use 4th suit forcing (never the opener).
- It has to be the 4th bid of the auction.
- Fourth suit forcing is typically not used after a 2/1 GF response. The 4th suit would be natural in that case (1♠-2♦-2♥-3♣=clubs).
- Fourth-Suit is NATURAL and non-forcing by a passed hand (P-P-1♥-P-1♠-P-2♣-2♦ = 5-5 or longer in ♠/♦). If the opponents have made an early double, 4th suit forcing is still on. If they overcall, it is off.
- Fourth Suit forcing is alertable.
- Fourth Suit forcing is not used after a 1NT rebid by opener (new minor forcing is used).

## ***Inverted Minor***

The popular Inverted Minors convention reverses (or "inverts") the standard meaning of the strength of minor-suit raises.

In "Standard," a raise from 1♣ to 2♣ (or 1♦ to 2♦) shows 6-9, while a raise to 3-of-the-minor shows 10-12 (limit).

If playing "Inverted," the raise from 1♣ to 2♣ (or 1♦ to 2♦) is 10+ and the raise from 1♣ to 3♣ (or 1♦ to 3♦) is weak (typically less than 7). There is a gap for hands of about 8-9 points (too strong to raise to 3, but not strong enough to raise to 2). [Note: In some modern versions of this convention the raise to 3 is used as a "Mixed" raise to show 6-9--make sure you and your partner know if you are playing the jump as "weak" or "mixed."]

In no case should a minor be raised if responder has a 4-card major.

Here is an example of 1♦-2♦:

♠A2 ♥K32 ♦QJ10876 ♣J2

Here is an example (nobody vul) of 1♣-3♣:

♠2 ♥654 ♦875 ♣KJ8765

When playing this convention, here are the discussion points:

1. *Is it on by a Passed Hand?* I'd say: YES.
2. *Is it on after a Double or Overcall?* I'd say: NO.
3. *How high is the partnership forced after the raise from 1 to 2?* I recommend that you can stop in a partscore if either player's next bid is 2NT or 3-of-the-minor. Otherwise, it is Game Forcing. (Example of a NF auction: 1♦-2♦-2NT-3♦)
4. *How light can the raise from 1 to 3 be?* I suggest relying on the vulnerability. At favorable, it can be

something like Jxxxx and out. At unfavorable, it would be much sounder, maybe up to AQ10xxx and out. (See the note above about the option to play the jump raise as Mixed).

5. *How many cards to raise?* In clubs, usually five or more. In diamonds, five are also the normal requirement, but it can occasionally be done with four (since a one-diamond opener is usually four-plus cards).
6. *What does it mean if opener bids 2-of-a-Major after an inverted raise (1-2-2)?* I recommend that it shows a stopper/concentration (it is pointless to show a 4-card major, since responder should never raise a minor with a 4-card major). After this show of concentration, if responder bids 2NT or 3-of-the-minor, it can be passed.

There are more bells and whistles which can be added, but in the KISS style, the above is sufficient to use Inverted Minors.