

## Comparisons between conflicting conventions

Convention	Brief Description
<b>Weak or Strong No Trump?</b>	There have been pages (even books) written on the benefits of one over the other. It all boils down to playing whichever you prefer as they are both perfectly sound. But the decision may depend upon whether you wish to play 4 or 5 card majors: -
<b>4 or 5 card majors?</b>	Now here I do have a preference. I will play either but one scheme that I will not play is 4-card majors in conjunction with a Strong No Trump. I call this <b>Dutch Acol</b> , it is unsound and simply does not work! I have fully described why not. So if partner insists upon 4-card majors then I play a weak NoTrump (so Acol).
<b>Ace/Keycard ask</b>	There are a multitude of different ace/keycard asking bids. Easily the best/most common are Gerber (when you probably intend to play in No Trumps) and RKCB (when a trump suit has been established). The next entry suggests when 4♣ is Gerber and when 4NT is RKCB. But then there is the separate issue of what bid is RKCB. Most players play that 4NT is generally RKCB regardless of the trump suit, but this is not satisfactory with lower ranking suits and I suggest that you have a look at <b>Kickback</b> .
<b>1430 or 3014?</b>	If you have decided to play RKCB then you have to choose which variation! Basic RKCB has 5♣ as 0 or 3 keycards and 5♦ as 1 or 4 Keycards - so called 3014. But there is an 'improvement' on this where the 5♣ and 5♦ bids are reversed (1430). Why you may ask? The theory is that the RKCB bidder is more likely to be looking for slam after a 1 keycard response that after zero, so 5♣ gives more room to ask about the trump queen. This benefit is very marginal and only applies when ♥'s are trumps. With ♠'s as trumps there is always room for the queen ask whichever treatment you use and with a minor suit as trumps you are already past the point of no return (committed to a small slam). Eddie Kantar is the acknowledged expert on RKCB and in his book 'Roman Keycard Blackwood' (4th edition) he actually says that one should use 1430 when the stronger hand bids RKCB and 3014 when it is the weaker hand asking! Too complex for me; and, anyway, all of the problems are solved if you use <b>Kickback</b> .
<b>Bergen Raises or Inverted Bergen?</b>	Bergen raises are really for the more advanced player. But there is a difference of opinion about the 3♣ and 3♦ bids. Playing traditional Bergen 3♦ is a limit raise and this leaves opener with no room to invite game if ♥'s are trumps. So 'Inverted Bergen' was invented - this solves the problem but simply creates a new one!

<b>Better Minor or Short Club?</b>	If you elect to play a 5-card major system then you will sometimes have to open a minor suit containing less than 4 cards (because you have no 5 card major). The most popular choice is to play 'better minor' whereby you open the longest (or best if equal length) minor. The 'short club' scheme allows a 1♣ opening with just two cards when exactly 4432 shape. Which is best? Assuming the hand is unsuitable for a 1NT opening I will always open 1♣ when equal length, 44 or 33, (open 1♦ if 55 of course) and I prefer to play a short club as then a 1♦ opening always guarantees a 4+ card suit.
<b>Bidding the opponent's suit</b>	A cue bid of the opponent's suit may have many different meanings. The link covers the Western Cue Bid, Directional Asking Bid (DAB), a sound limit raise after an overcall, the Unassuming Cue Bid, the Jump Unassuming Cue Bid, Splinters, Michaels Cue Bids, Ghestem, Questem, the Jump Cue Bid Overcall and Stayman after partner's 1NT is overcalled.
<b>Blackwood or Gerber</b>	What 4NT and 4♣ mean in various sequences. This really is important and I suggest that you/your partner have a look at this and agree what you want to do.
<b>4441 type shape hands</b>	Which suit do you open with a 4441 type shape if you have no system bid to describe it in this point range? One popular 'rule' is the suit below the singleton. I believe this to be unsound and I will always open the lowest ranking suit. Don't believe me? Then check out the link and you'll see there's never a problem. And opening the lowest possible suit always makes partner's bidding easier.
<b>Checkback Stayman, NMF or Crowhurst</b>	A comparison between these mutually exclusive conventions after opener's NoTrump rebid.
<b>Defence against 1NT</b>	There is a multitude of choice and I certainly will not go into all the possibilities; the link discusses a dozen or so of the most widely used schemes. Cappelletti is probably one of the most popular but Multi Landy is very similar and an improvement upon it. I prefer to play <b>Multi Landy</b> but there is a lot of sense in playing <b>DONT</b> in the 4th seat <b>together with Multi Landy</b> in the direct seat. Using this combination the player in the direct seat may wish to convert a DONT double from partner in the 4th seat (showing a single-suited hand) into penalties. Bear in mind that a penalty double in the 4th seat is rare because the doubler is under the NoTrump opener and doubler may also get a poor lead from partner.
<b>Defense to the Multi two diamonds</b>	There are various defences to the Multi 2♦ around. In this link I give a good basic one.
<b>Defense against weak twos</b>	The defence to weak twos is pretty standard these days, with double for take-out. The link summarizes overcaller's options and advancer's responses. There is also a brief discussion of Leaping Michaels.

<b>Double !</b>	I have written up a few pages on doubles in various situations; when they are take-out, penalty or whatever ...
<b>Conventional Doubles</b>	... and I have also briefly written up a number of conventional doubles.
<b>5-4 in the majors opposite partner's 1NT opening</b>	Holding a game-going hand with 5 cards in one major and four in the other, there are various options for the bidding. Some will transfer into the 5-carder and then bid the 4- carder, but that really is best reserved for 5-5's. The most popular method is to bid Stayman and then jump over a 2♦ response (jump to 3 of your 5 card suit - or 3 of your 4 card suit if you play Smolen). This 'works' but is not really satisfactory as there is no way to show invitational hands. This has all been solved by <b>Quest transfers</b> .
<b>5-5 in the majors opposite partner's 1NT opening</b>	Now Quest transfers have solved all of the 5-4 situations, but what about 5-5's. We need to be able to distinguish between weak, invitational and game forcing without using the same sequence that shows a 5-4. Quite a task. See section 3.1.4 of the No Trump bidding book.
<b>Is it forcing?</b>	A look at various bids; reverses, jump rebids etc. to discuss if they are forcing or not. Some are forcing in Standard American but not in Acol and vice-versa.
<b>Italian Cue Bids</b>	The general style of cue bidding is to bid first round controls before second round controls. The link explains the advantages/disadvantages of bidding either a first or second round control (whichever is cheaper) as played by many Italian bridge experts.
<b>Jump Shifts</b>	A comparison between the weak jump shift and the strong jump shift.
<b>Opening with a huge (25+) balanced hand</b>	Traditionally one opens 2♣ followed by a 3NT rebid (or else open 3NT) with this huge hand type. However, this really is an extremely poor treatment as responder does not know what to do when he is virtually bust (often the case) with (a) a 4 card major (Stayman 4♣ or pass?) or with (b) a five card major (transfer or pass?). Deciding to bid may lead to an eventual 4NT contract going one down. This link discusses various options for solving the problem.
<b>Playing Tricks and Losers</b>	Are these two the opposite of each other? No! And it also depends upon how you count your losers! Consider this hand ♠KQJ10xxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxx ♣-. It has 6½ <b>Playing Tricks</b> , but how many losers? Commonsense says 6 or 7 but the rather quaint English <b>Losing Trick Count</b> evaluates the hand as 5 losers.
<b>Raising partner's 1♥/♠ opening with a big hand</b>	This link takes a look at <b>splinters</b> , <b>Jacoby 2NT</b> , <b>Key Card Swiss</b> and the <b>Delayed Game Raise</b> . It explains when which one should be used (and when another approach is best). In particular it explains why Jacoby 2NT and (Key Card) Swiss are not mutually exclusive and should both be working together in you armoury. The quaint Delayed

	Game Raise should really only be used with hand with just three card trump support. The direct raise (i.e. 1♥ - 4♥ or 1♠ - 4♠) is, of course, weak and pre-emptive.
<a href="#">Responding to 2NT</a>	When partner opens 2NT there is little room to investigate major suit (4-4 or 5-3) below game level. I give a few schemes in this link.
<a href="#">Signals in Defence</a>	A brief discussion of defensive signals, count, attitude etc. There are numerous schemes but in the Pattaya bridge club I encourage all non-regular partnerships to play <a href="#">Lavinthal</a> (McKenny). Another good system is to play <b>Distributional Discards</b> - you discard from a suit that you don't like and a high card shows an even number of cards in that suit and a low card shows an odd number. As for attitude, about 50% play standard (HELD - High Encourage, Low Discourage) and 50% play upside-down attitude (low to encourage). My personal preference is the latter, which is more common in Europe than America but it's really up to individual partnerships.
<a href="#">Two Diamonds Opening</a>	A comparison between various options for your two diamonds opening. Weak, Strong, Flannery, Multi, Roman, Mini-Roman or Benjamin - take your pick.
<a href="#">Two Over One</a>	Two-over-one (usually denoted by 2/1 on this site). The link briefly describes the differences between Standard American and 2/1.
<a href="#">The 2♠ (and 2NT) response to 1NT</a>	When you use 2♥ as a transfer to 2♠, then 2♠ bid is spare. This article discusses various options for the 2♠ (and 2NT) response to partner's 1NT opening
<a href="#">Two Suited Overcalls</a>	The most common approach is to use the combination of the Unusual No Trump (UNT) together with Michaels Cue Bids. However, that is not totally satisfactory as not all two-suited combinations are covered (spades and the other minor over a minor suit opener) and numerous Michaels bids are ambiguous for the minor suit. Ghestem solves these problems but has it's own problems. The 'best' solution is <a href="#">Questem</a> ; check out the link to the left.
<a href="#">When Stayman gets doubled</a>	When your partner's 2♣ Stayman bid is doubled then you have two extra bids available (pass and redouble). This link gives a couple of good treatments for the use of these bids.
<a href="#">When your 1NT opening gets overcalled or doubled</a>	This is not so much a comparison of conventions, but a suggested treatment. Systems on, systems off, Lebensohl, stolen bids? This link tells you when to play systems on and when to play Lebensohl. Also, it explained when you should double conventional overcalls (and the answer is not 'stolen bid!').