



Landy Defence to 1NT

Hand D
 ♠ K 7 6 5
 ♥ Q 4 3 2
 ♦ A J
 ♣ K J 2

Call Landy with 4-4 in the majors only very rarely and never when the strength is evenly distributed between the suits, as in *Hand D* (on which you should pass); make sure your major suits are strong.

Hand E
 ♠ K 6 5 4 3
 ♥ Q 8 5 4 3
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ 3

Hand F
 ♠ K Q J 9
 ♥ Q 8 5 4 3
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ Q 3

Once again, make sure your suits are strong – *Hand E* is not suitable and should pass. In *Hand F*, you have one strong major, but the other one is poor and with values in both minors it is not a sensible hand for using Landy.

There are many different defences to 1NT openings, but by far the most important aspect of any defence is that it should be helpful and straightforward; moreover, both players should know it!

The weak no-trump is a very common opening bid, so you will find yourself defending against it on many occasions. In any defence to 1NT, it is imperative to have 2♥ and 2♠ as natural bids. A completely natural defence is perfectly reasonable, but below I am going to suggest the Landy defence to 1NT named after an American, Alvin Landy.

It uses one artificial overcall, 2♣; all of the other overcalls are natural.

Over a 1NT opening bid

- Double = Penalties (15+)
- 2♣ = Landy (see below)
- 2♦/2♥/2♠ = Natural overcalls
- 3♣ = Natural overcall in clubs.

Landy over 1NT

A 2♣ overcall of 1NT shows both majors, promising at least four spades and at least four hearts

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The hand should have opening values unless it is 5-5 in the majors, in which case the convention can be used on weaker hands because of the power of the distribution. It is important that the majority of your high cards are in the major suits.

For example:

Hand A
 ♠ K Q J 4
 ♥ A Q J 4
 ♦ 10 5 4 2
 ♣ 3

It is dangerous to use two-suited overcalls with two four-card suits, so it is important that they are strong suits.

Hand B
 ♠ K Q 5 4 3
 ♥ A Q 5 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 7 3 2

Hand C
 ♠ K Q 10 9 4
 ♥ Q J 10 4 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 3 2

All of these hands are suitable for Landy. If your opponent opened 1NT you could use a 2♣ overcall. The more shapely the distribution, the fewer high-card points you need. You will notice that the number of the losers in each of the above hands is the same – six losers – that is not to say you could not make the call with seven losers, but it just shows that you do not need so many high-card points to make the bid, if you have the distribution. I cannot overstate the importance of having most of your high cards in the long suits – it really does make a big difference.

Responses to 2♣

Basically you respond in your longer major or, if you have equal length, you can bid 2♦, over which your partner rebids his longer major. This allows you to get to your best major-suit fit.

If you do have good support for one of the majors (at least four cards) then you should respond as if your partner has opened the bidding in that major, i.e. using the Losing Trick and Point Count in the usual way. With a very strong hand, use the strongest response which is 2NT, asking partner to show his hand (see below).

Writing all this down as a scheme (it looks more complex than it is):

- Pass = 7+ clubs, very few points
- 2♦ = relay; asking partner to bid his longer major (see below)
- 2♥/2♠ = 3+ cards in the major (0-9)
- 2NT = 13+ points and no 4-card major
- 3♥/3♠ = 4+ cards in the major (8 losers)
- 4♥/4♠ = 4+ cards in the major (7 losers)

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There are only two slightly difficult responses: 2♦ and 2NT.

The 2♦ Response to 2♣

This is used when you have equal length in the two suits, or when you hold 10-12 points. Over your 2♦ relay, the 2♣ overcaller shows his longer major (hearts with equal length), then: a weak hand passes, whilst a 10-12 point hand can rebid 2NT, raise the major, or show a very long minor.

| | | |
|-----------|--|-------------|
| ♠ 10 9 4 | | ♠ A K 8 6 2 |
| ♥ 10 4 3 | | ♥ Q J 9 8 |
| ♦ A 4 2 | | ♦ 8 |
| ♣ J 7 6 3 | | ♣ Q 8 5 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♦ | Pass | 2♠ | End |

East overcalls North's 1NT with 2♣; you have a pretty horrible hand as West but if your partner does hold a five-card major, a part-score should be OK. Bid 2♦, letting partner show his longer major. When East rebids 2♠ you simply pass.

| | | |
|------------|--|-------------|
| ♠ Q 4 | | ♠ A K 8 6 2 |
| ♥ K 4 3 | | ♥ Q J 9 8 |
| ♦ A J 4 2 | | ♦ 8 |
| ♣ J 10 6 3 | | ♣ Q 8 5 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♦ | Pass | 2♠ | Pass |
| 2NT | End | | |

East overcalls North's 1NT with 2♣; as West, you might have a fit in hearts but if not, then no-trumps could be your best contract. Start by responding 2♦, over which East shows his longer major, 2♠; now you can rebid 2NT suggesting 10-12 points and no major-suit fit. East should pass this.

The 2NT Response to 2♣

An immediate 2NT over the 2♣ overcall is a strong response showing 13+ and basically heading towards game;

this is not going to come up much and therefore it is important to keep things simple. So reserve the 3♣ response for the weakest hands (that is the 5-5 hands with 7-10 points); any other response is then forcing to game.

| | | |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| ♠ 10 4 | | ♠ K Q 7 6 5 |
| ♥ K 4 | | ♥ Q J 10 3 2 |
| ♦ A Q J 6 | | ♦ 5 |
| ♣ A 9 6 5 2 | | ♣ 4 3 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2NT | Pass | 3♣ | Pass |
| 3♥ | End | | |

East has an excellent overcall of North's 1NT: he is weak, but with two good five-card suits he has a highly suitable hand. West, holding 14 points, gets quite excited and responds 2NT, but East rebids 3♣, which basically says: "Slow down partner, I have a weak hand with two five-card majors." West understands the message and so rebids 3♥, picking his best major and stopping short of game.

| | | |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| ♠ 10 4 | | ♠ K Q J 6 |
| ♥ K 4 | | ♥ Q J 10 3 2 |
| ♦ A Q J 6 | | ♦ 5 |
| ♣ A 9 6 5 2 | | ♣ K 7 4 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2NT | Pass | 3♥ | Pass |
| 3NT | End | | |

A similar auction to the previous one; West shows his strength by responding 2NT to East's 2♣ Landy overcall. East responds 3♥ to show five hearts and a good hand. Now West can confidently bid to game: 3NT. Yes, it is true that 1NT doubled would have been a better score, but after East has called 2♣ we cannot rewind the auction!

You are probably thinking that this convention is a little complicated, but that is only because I have focussed on the tricky aspects. The 2NT bid above will come up very rarely – in fact nine times out of ten, when using Landy, you will finish in either 2♥ or 2♠.

Landy in Action

| | | |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| ♠ Q 5 4 | | ♠ A K 10 6 2 |
| ♥ 5 4 | | ♥ Q J 9 8 7 |
| ♦ K 4 3 2 | | ♦ 9 |
| ♣ J 7 3 2 | | ♣ 8 5 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♠ | End | | |

East overcalls with 2♣ to show both majors and West replies 2♠ which East passes.

| | | |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| ♠ 3 | | ♠ A K 10 6 2 |
| ♥ A K 5 4 | | ♥ Q J 9 8 7 |
| ♦ Q 8 5 3 | | ♦ 9 |
| ♣ 7 6 3 2 | | ♣ 8 5 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 3♥ | Pass | 4♥ | End |

East overcalls with 2♣ to show both majors and West replies 3♥ to show primary support and eight losers (the queen of diamonds is unlikely to be worth much). Now East, with six losers, can raise to game.

It looks optimistic, but on a 4-3 spade break the contract should make quite comfortably.

| | | |
|---------------|--|-------------|
| ♠ 9 4 | | ♠ K 8 6 2 |
| ♥ 3 | | ♥ K Q J 9 8 |
| ♦ A 7 6 4 3 2 | | ♦ 8 5 |
| ♣ Q 6 4 2 | | ♣ A 8 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♦ | Pass | 2♥ | End |

This type of hand *will* come up, so it is worth trying to get used to it; it is rather like when partner makes a normal overcall and you always hold a singleton; when he shows two suits, you are short in them both!

Here your diamonds are not good enough to bid unilaterally, so you have to settle for one of partner's suits. Best is to respond 2♦ asking him to show his five-card suit – after all, a 5-1 fit is better than a 4-2 fit.

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| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| ♠ 9 8 7 4 | <table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td></tr> </table> | N | W | S | E | ♠ A K 6 2 |
| N | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | |
| ♥ 6 3 | ♥ Q J 9 8 7 | | | | | |
| ♦ A 9 3 2 | ♦ 8 5 | | | | | |
| ♣ 6 4 2 | ♣ A 8 | | | | | |

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♠ | End | | |

As West, you have a miserable hand, but that should not affect your bidding; respond 2♠ to your partner's Landy and you finish in an excellent contract.

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| ♠ A 9 8 7 4 | <table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td></tr> </table> | N | W | S | E | ♠ K Q 5 2 |
| N | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | |
| ♥ K 4 | ♥ A J 8 7 2 | | | | | |
| ♦ 10 9 8 7 6 | ♦ K 3 | | | | | |
| ♣ 2 | ♣ 8 3 | | | | | |

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | Pass |
| 4♠ | End | | |

East overcalls 2♣ to show both majors and West replies 4♠. Fantastic spade fit and excellent distribution – game is likely to be on.

Penalty doubles of 1NT

Doubles of 1NT opening bids are for

penalties. If you have more points than the 1NT bidder then *double*, with just one proviso: if you have only 15 points you should have a good lead, or a few tens and nines. A flat 15 points with no inner strength is not enough.

You require a 'good 15' points or more for a penalty double.

Natural Overcalls

The weak no-trump is a pre-emptive type of call, so you should try to overcall aggressively. However, you do need at least a good five-card suit (ideally a six-card suit). When you are non-vulnerable, 10 points and a strong six-card suit will suffice.

Note that since 2♣ is conventional, your natural overcall in clubs is now 3♣. To bid this you would need at least a good six-card suit as in *Hand G* below:

| |
|----------------|
| <i>Hand G</i> |
| ♠ 3 |
| ♥ A 6 2 |
| ♦ Q J 4 |
| ♣ A J 10 9 7 5 |

This is a reasonable non-vulnerable 3♣ overcall of 1NT. Do not think you could overcall 2♣, then bid 3♣, because by that time your partner would have jumped to

3♠ and your face would be red! (Also bear in mind that this treatment is not allowed at Levels 1 and 2 in EBU events; you can play it at Level 3 and above, but cannot call it 'Landy'!)

| |
|----------------|
| <i>Hand H</i> |
| ♠ Q J 10 9 8 7 |
| ♥ A Q 2 |
| ♦ 4 |
| ♣ 7 6 5 |

This is a very reasonable 2♠ overcall – the solidity of the suit is the key. You have four spade tricks guaranteed and the ace of hearts; with five and a half playing tricks in your hand, you have to be worth an overcall.

Conclusions

As I mentioned above you can play all sorts of defences to 1NT but you should choose one with which both members of the partnership are comfortable.

If you are going to try Landy, give it some time and when it goes wrong a few times, try to work out why – bear in mind that all new conventions take a little time to get used to.

The reason I have chosen Landy is because it is relatively straightforward. However, if you still find it a bit tricky, then stick to a natural defence – it is one of the best defences, because you should never have any misunderstandings! ■



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