

Advanced Bidding

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PRELIMINARIES

This book is written for the advanced-intermediate to advanced bridge player. It is a supplement to my book, *Bidding Notes*. This book does *not* get you to “expert” in bidding. Some of the conventions have many variations or followups not covered here. But this set will go a long way to making you the best non-expert bidder in your club.

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In electronic manifestations of this book, there are many operable links in the text. This book is available as a PDF, as a book for electronic readers, and can be rendered into web pages.

Please see *Bidding Notes* (hereafter BN) for information on how to contribute, resources, acknowledgements, and a glossary.

Please see *Imprecise Precision*, the third book in the series, for the Precision System.

2.1 Topics Covered

- Descriptions of many conventions and *gadgets*; at the least, is useful to know these when your opponents use them. Included are important chapters on checkback bids, slam bidding, special doubles, notrump-related offensive and defensive conventions, and major opening enhancements.
- Modern practice is changing the meaning of a jump-shift not in competition. A chapter shows you other choices.
- There are chapters on Lebensohl and Rubensohl, two related conventions for competitive situations that are much more difficult, and much more useful, than some of the more prosaic conventions. Learning them is independent from everything else.
- A chapter on playing a 12-14 no-trump opening is included for your interest.

Note: Some of these conventions are mutually exclusive!

Every book should have an index, and this one does.

NOTRUMP-RELATED CONVENTIONS

3.1 Puppet Stayman

While there are those who do not open hands in notrump with five-card majors, that is an inferior policy. It leads to rebid problems in many cases. Your opening bid is your only chance to show your values so precisely. Puppet Stayman is designed to find a fit with opener's four- *or* five-card major.

After each of the following openings, a 3♣ bid is game-forcing Puppet Stayman:

- Over 2N, or
- Over a 2N rebid after a strong 2♣ opener, or
- Over 1N (separate partnership agreement required).

Puppet Stayman is game forcing because, lacking a major, the opener will reply 3N.

Over 2N, bid 3♣!(asking for a four- or five-card major) if you have a 3-card or longer major.

With partnership agreement, over 1N, bid 3♣!(asking for a four- or five-card major) when holding a game-forcing hand with a three-card major and four or fewer cards in the other major. If you do not have a 3-card major, but do have one or two four-card majors, bid 2♣ regular Stayman.

Puppet is a partnership agreement in each case, although if you do it over 2N you should also do it after a 2N rebid over a 2♣ opener.

Note that use of 1N – 3♣ as Puppet Stayman is not common, so be sure to have a firm agreement and alert it. If you ask a casual partner, “Are we playing Puppet?”, without discussion, the answer refers to the 2N and 2N after 2♣ cases only.

The 3♣ bid over 2N need not be alerted, but the responses must be alerted.

Responses are:

- 3♦!(Opener has no five card major, has one or more 4 card majors)
 - 3♥! Responder has four SPADES <– major you do NOT have!
 - 3♠! Responder has four HEARTS <– major you do NOT have!
 - 3N! Responder does not have a four card major
 - 4♦!(Opener has two 4 card majors) Responder has choice of games.
- 3M!(Opener has this five card major) Responder chooses 3N or 4M.
- 3N!(Opener has no four or five card majors)

The name “Puppet” comes from the 3♥ and 3♠ rebids after a 3♦ response, in which the responder bids the major he DOESN'T have, so that the strong hand becomes the declarer. He's pulling the opener's strings.

If 1N – 3♣! is played as Puppet, you can show an invitational hand with clubs by bidding

1N - 2♣ - any - 3♣!

alerted as “invitational with clubs, may not have a four card major”.

3.1.1 Muppet Stayman

Muppet Stayman is a modification of Puppet Stayman apparently introduced by the Italian pair Augustin Madala- Noberto Bocchi. Muppet Stayman interchanges the 3♥ and 3N responses so that 5-3 fits can be found in either major.

2N - 3♣ (or 1N - 3♣ by partnership agreement):

- 3♦!(Opener has no five card major, has one or more 4 card majors)
 - 3♥! Responder has four SPADES <-major you do NOT have!
 - 3♠! Responder has four HEARTS <-major you do NOT have!
 - 3N! Responder does not have a four card major
 - 4♦!(Responder has BOTH 4 card majors); Opener has choice of games.
- 3♥!(Opener has no four or five card major)
 - . Responder can now bid 3♠ if he has five spades and 3 or 4 hearts, or 3N otherwise. (See below for an alternative.)
- 3N!(Opener has five hearts).

Note that if responder has five spades and 2 or fewer hearts he will transfer rather than use Stayman; so by reversing the meanings of 3♥ and 3N, we are leaving open the chance to find an 8-card fit in hearts or spades.

Option: After a 3♥ response, you can again “puppet” by having 3♠! relay to 3N while 3N! shows five spades.

3.2 Four-suit Transfers

Recall the difference between a *transfer* and a *relay*; the former asks partner to bid a suit you definitely hold, while the latter asks partner to bid a suit that you may or may not hold, letting you then bid again.

Four-suit transfers are a more flexible treatment of the relay to minors. Here is the main version; variations are described below.

Using four-suit transfers,

- 2♠ transfers to 3♣
- 2N transfersto 3♦

Since we can no longer make a direct 1N - 2N invitational raise, to make an invitational notrump bid

responder must go through Stayman, ignoring partner’s response; the 2N bid must be alerted:

- 1N - 2♣ - 2? - 2N!(may not have a four card major)

The “impossible 2♠” sequence also gets a new meaning:

- 1N - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠!(forcing one round, shows 4 spades).

This shows responder actually has spades, and is not just trying to bid 2N invitational.

The opener may rebid the “in between” strain to show interest in 3N, or just accept the transfer:

- 1N - 2♠!(transfer to clubs)
 - 2N!(shows at least Qxx in clubs)
 - Responder can bid 3♣ to decline the invitation, or bid stoppers up the line.
 - 3♣ to play, unless responder is looking for a club slam and goes on.
- 1N - 2N!(transfers to 3♦)
 - 3♣!(shows Qxx or better in diamonds)
 - Responder can bid 3♦ to decline the invitation, or bid stoppers up the line.
 - 3♦ to play, unless responder is looking for a club slam and goes on.

There is another version of four-suit transfers in which 2♠ transfers to 3♣ and 3♣ transfers to 3♦, leaving the 2N invitational undisturbed, at the cost of losing the ability to break the transfer as shown above.

Another variation is to agree that bidding the intermediate suit shows you do not like the target suit rather than that you do.

Finally, you can make 2N! the transfer to 3♣ and 3♣! transfer to 3♦, again giving up the ability to break the transfer, in order to make 2♠! mean Minor Suit Stayman, described next.

3.3 Minor Suit Stayman

1N - 2♠!(minor suit Stayman) shows 4-4 or better in the minors and at least invitational values. It denies a four-card major.

2N - 3♠!(minor suit Stayman) can also be played with game-forcing values.

This convention trades in the ability to transfer to a six-card minor for the ability to described responding hands with two minor suits and no major.

3.5 Smolen

When partner opens 1N and we have a hand that is 5 - 4 or 6 - 4 in the majors, game forcing, we begin with Stayman. If opener replies 2♦, denying a four-card major, we now bid the “wrong” suit - the four-card suit, *at the three level*; this is a transfer to the longer suit, enabling the strong hand to declare. See also *Delayed Texas* as an alternative for the 6 - 4 case.

3.4 Sons Of Texas

Playing Texas Transfers opens up some other possibilities. Here are two of them.

1. Delayed Texas Transfers

As an additional option if playing Texas Transfers, delayed Texas offers a way to show hands that are 6-4 in the majors.

Bidding 2♣ first, then 4♦ or 4♥ over a 2♦ response, is called “delayed Texas”. It explicitly shows six of the suit to which you transfer, and four of the other suit.

- 1N 2♣ 2♦ 4♥! – six spades, four hearts. Opener with 2 spades and 4 hearts should pass. Otherwise bid 4♠.
- 1N 2♣ 2♦ 4♦! – four spades, six hearts. Opener with 2 hearts and four spades should bid 4♠. Otherwise, bid 4♥.

2. Four Spades Quantitative Minors

Playing Texas Transfers, the sequence 1N - 4♠ has no meaning. With partnership agreement, this means a hand that has the points for a quantitative raise to 4N, but is 5-4 or better in the minors. Opener can choose between 4N or 5♣ to play, or six of a minor.

NOTRUMP DEFENSES

This section explains some more defenses after your opponents open or overcall 1N. Some can also be used in balancing a passing-out 1N. (See *Bidding Notes*.)

Two-suited hands are often more powerful than their HCP count alone would indicate. We've already learned the basic Unusual 2N and Michael's Cuebid. For interfering with their 1N opening, we have Cappelletti and D.O.N.T.

In all these methods, the two-suited bids promise at least 5-4 in the suits. Vulnerability should be considered. Any bid which may force to the three level requires extra points or shape, comparatively.

4.1 Landy

Landy is simple: 2♣ shows both majors, at least 5-4. According to the Bridge Guys website, Landy can claim to be the very first conventional method. Many variations have evolved with respect to the replies by advancer, but for a simple agreement, the advancer just chooses his best major, or bids a minor suit with very poor majors but a good long minor.

4.2 Modified D.O.N.T (Meckwell)

In this modification of D.O.N.T., the double works harder in order to make 2♥ and 2♠ natural. After opponents open 1N, either in direct seat, or after two passes by partnership agreement,

- X! A long minor or both majors

Response: 2♣! Forced; then the doubler passes, corrects to 2♦, or bids 2♥ to show both majors.

- 2♣! Clubs and a major suit
- 2♦! Diamonds and a major suit
- 2♥ Shows long hearts
- 2♠ Shows long spades
- 2N Shows both minors

4.3 Modified Cappelletti

In this modification of Cappelletti, the 2♣ bid works harder in order to make 2♥ and 2♠ natural. After opponents open 1N, either in direct seat, or after two passes by partnership agreement,

- X Equal hand, penalty-oriented
- 2♣! A long minor or, a minor and a major.

Advancer bids 2♦!(relay), and intervenor then bids pass, 3♣, or his major. Advancer can then ask for the minor with 2N! (good hand) or 3♣ (pass or correct).

- 2♦! Both majors
- 2♥ Shows long hearts
- 2♠ Shows long spades
- 2N Shows both minors

4.4 Bloomen

Bloomen is related to Cappelletti. All 2-level suit bids are natural long suits. A double is a relay to 2♣, and then intervenor bids one of the Capp two-suited bids: 2♦ for both majors, or 2M for a major and a minor. As usual, 2N asks for the minor. Doubling and then bidding a suit at the three level is a strong

six-carder, while bidding directly at the three level a normal preempt.

4.5 Landy

Landy is simple: 2♣ shows both majors, at least 5-4. According to the Bridge Guys website, Landy can claim to be the very first conventional method. Many variations have evolved with respect to the replies by advancer, but for a simple agreement, the advancer just chooses his best major, or bids a minor suit with very poor majors but a good long minor.

4.6 Multi-Landy

Multi-Landy became legal under the ABCL GCC in May, 2015.

- X Equal hand, penalty-oriented
- 2♣! Both majors, as in Landy.
- 2♦! A single-suited hand in an unspecified major suit. Advancer relays 2♥!, pass or correct.
- 2♥ Shows long hearts and an unspecified four-card minor. 2N asks for the minor.
- 2♠ Shows long spades and an unspecified four-card minor. 2N asks for the minor.
- 2N Shows both minors.

RUNOUTS

When partner opens 1N and your RHO doubles for penalty, and you have a weak hand, you want to help partner out of playing 1NX with power on his right. Almost any suit fit is going to be an improvement. This problem occurs more often with a Weak NT opening, but it can happen even with a strong one.

An agreement about how to get out of this dilemma is called a “runout”.

The standard runout is that double asks opener to bid his best minor. That lets you pass or correct to some 5-card suit that you have. The problem is that this is not cooperative and applies to only a fraction of the hands you might have.

This chapter shows you some better runouts. The goal is to find some 7+ card or better fit. Naturally, all of the schemes have a problem when responder’s hand is 4333.

If the double does not show strength, but rather is something like D.O.N.T.’s double showing a single-suited hand, you have two choices:

- Ignore it – systems are “on”.
- Play your runout regardless of what kind of double it is.

The case for playing the runout is that opener’s RHO might be strong and pass. Also, if it is responder who has some points, and the runout has Pass as forcing, it keeps things going.

For intermediate players, there is a more practical reason, especially when playing the weak 1N: the opponents will frequently be confused about what the double means, so that the explanation you get may be wrong. Here’s some statements by opponents that I’ve heard:

- “I thought we were playing natural over weak notrump!”

It isn’t on their card, of course.

- “We switch to Cappelletti over a weak notrump.”

But the doubler forgot and is still playing D.O.N.T.

- “I have no idea.” – at least he’s honest.
- “I presume it is penalty.” – and half the time he’s right.
- “That was for takeout, partner!”

You can call the director after you discover misinformation, but you need to show you were damaged by the misinformation to get relief, and that is hard to think out at the table, and hard for the director.

5.1 The Handy Runout

Handy Runout is named for Howard Schutzman and Andy Stark, who developed it with encouragement from Ally Whiteneck. It works properly only when the 1N opener does not have two doubletons. Over a strong 1N you can probably afford to fudge this requirement because the strength will help you if you land in a bad fit.

5.1.1 Direct Seat Doubles

After 1N (X), responder bids:

- Pass! – shows near-invitational or better values and a willingness to play 1N doubled.
- Redouble! – Shows a five card suit; opener bids 2♣!(relay), pass or correct.

- 2x!(pass or correct) – denies a five-card suit, shows lowest 4-card suit, beginning a relay until a 7 card fit is found.
- 3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠: Preemptive, usually a seven card suit.
- 3NT to play.
- 4♦, 4♥: Texas Transfer.

Worst case: you have a bad, flat hand. Bid the 4 card suit and hope.

Examples, assuming responder is not 4333:

- After 1N (X) - Pass! - 2♣, suppose responder is 2434 or 4432. He will bid 2♥. If opener has a heart doubleton, he must have at least three in all the other suits because he does not have two doubletons. Therefore he can bid 3♠, and if that is not responder's "other suit", responder can end the auction at 3♣.
- 1N - (X) - 2♦!, responder shows diamonds and a higher suit. If opener has only a doubleton in diamonds he will bid 2♥. Otherwise he passes. If hearts is not responder's second suit he bids his second suit, knowing opener must have three of them.

After the redouble, if RHO bids a suit, opener is off the hook if he wants to be.

If they bid after responder's pass, we will not let them play undoubled in any contract less than two spades. A pass is therefore forcing partner to double or bid on.

The first double by a partner who must bid due to a forcing pass, is for takeout. Example:

1N (X) P! 2♦
P! (P) X

shows diamond shortness and at least 3 card support for the other suits. The takeout double does not show extras. But:

1N (X) P! (2♣)
X (2♦) X

This second double is penalty.

If in a forcing auction, we bid a suit or 2N, it is not forcing. It is constructive and shows 10-12 HCP. If you bid a suit at the three level or cue bid the opponent's suit, it is forcing.

5.1.2 Fourth Seat Doubles

When RHO doubles after two passes, we know responder is not invitational since he passed, but he could have up to near-invitational values.

After 1N - (P) - P - (X), opener:

- Opener should bid a five card suit if they have one. Otherwise opener should pass and let responder bid if LHO is silent.
- Responder should bid a five card suit or redouble to start the relay, or pass if willing to sit for the double.
- If LHO bids, you are now back in your 1N overcall treatment, such as *Lebensohl*.

5.2 Guoba

Thanks to David Sterling for this explanation.

A redouble starts a relay to show a 5-card suit. An immediate suit bid shows non-touching four-card suits, the suit bid and one higher. Or, responder can pass and show touching suits on his next turn, or pass a redouble for penalty.

5.2.1 Direct Seat Doubles

After 1N - CX), responder bids:

- Pass!(not necessarily for penalty)

Opener must redouble or bid a five-card minor. If the redouble comes back to responder, he bids:

- Pass. If they bid all doubles are for penalty.
- 2♣! shows clubs and diamonds;
- 2♦! shows diamonds and hearts;

– 2♥! shows hearts and spades.

- 2♣ shows clubs and a major.

Opener passes with 3+ clubs, bids 2♦ with four diamonds, or 2♥ with four hearts. Responder passes with 3 in the suit bid by opener, or bids his other suit.

- 2♦ shows diamonds and spades. Over 2♦ opener passes with more diamonds than spades, otherwise bids 2♠. With equal length he can bid either one.
- Redouble forces 2♣, and responder can pass or correct to a 5-card suit.

4=3=3=3?). Like D.O.N.T., you can decide that Redouble followed by 2♠ is stronger.

An original Pass is to play, hoping to make it. I would assume we wouldn't let them play undoubled below 2♠.

One might ask, then whether there is a Meckwell runout. If 2♥ and 2♠ are natural five-card suits, and 2♣ and 2♦ show that suit and a major, that would leave Redouble prompting 2♣, pass or correct to 2♦ with a five-card suit, or correct to 2♥ showing 4-4 in the majors. This seems good to me, being more interfering. and 2

5.2.2 Fourth Seat Doubles

After 1N - (P) - P - (X), opener:

- Redoubles to show a five-card minor. Responder relays to 2♣ or bids 2♦ to show 5 diamonds and not 3 clubs.
- Passes to show non-touching suits. Responder passes to play, bids 2♣ with 3+ clubs, or 2♦ otherwise. Opener bids 2♦ over 2♣ with diamonds and spades, otherwise passes. Responder can correct the 2♦ to spades.
- Bids 2♣, 2♦, or 2♥ with touching suits. Responder will choose.
- Opener passes with a flat hand. Responder passes or bids his best suit.

5.3 Escape From Moscow, or D.O.N.T.

Escape from Moscow wins the prize for best name. It is one of a family of D.O.N.T - like runouts.

Descriptions of this convention differ, but the one that seems most understandable to me is that Redouble is a relay to 2♣, pass or correct showing a five-card suit. Otherwise suit bids are D.O.N.T, with 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ showing the bid suit and a higher, 4-4 at least; and 2♠ shows five spades (or maybe you're

IMPROVED MAJOR OPENINGS

This chapter highlights advanced treatments of major openings and their related conventions.

6.1 Two-Way Reverse Drury

In Reverse Drury, we bid 2♣! as a passed hand to show a limit raise or better. In Two-Way, we bid 2♦! to show a limit raise with four or more trump, and reserve 2♠! to show a limit raise with exactly three card support.

6.2 A Better System After J2NT

The standard scheme of responses to Jacoby 2N (1M - 2N!(4 trump, opening hand)) have a weakness. When either opener or responder make a jump to game, showing no slam interest, their partner with extras is stuck – it may be right to go on, or it may be bad, and it is most often just a guess.

While there are a lot of other schemes out there, here is a simple one. After 1M - 2N!, opener bids:

- 3♣!(minimal opener) to show a minimal hand. Any other bid shows extras.
- 3♦! extras without shortness
- 3♥! extras with club shortness
- 3♠! extras with diamond shortness
- 3N! extras with shortness in the “other major”

Consider an extra King or so as “extras”, or a hand with great playing strength.

If the opener does not have extras, the responder may have extras and still have slam interest. After 1M - 2N! - 3♣, responder can bid 3♦! to inquire about

shortness, and the same 3♥!, 3♠!, and 3N! responses show shortness. With no shortness, opener cue bids at the 4-level below game if possible.

The shortness bids are easy to remember, since they are “steps up the line” through the two minors to the other major.

6.3 Bergen Raises

Bergen Raises are an option; again, some people do not play them because of the difficulty of recognizing them, or thinking something is Bergen when it isn't. Do not try them until you are experienced in the standard raise structure.

The emphasis is on distinguishing three-card from four-card limit raises. A four card raise has a great deal more potential for game than a three-card raise.

With 4+ cards,

- 1M - 2M 6-10 HCP with 3 cards in M; or a good five, particularly Axxx in trumps.
- 1M - 3M! 2-6 preemptive, 4 card raise
- 1M - 3♣! 7-10 constructive 4 card raise
- 1M - 3♦! 10-12 limit 4 card raise
- 1M - 1N forcing is forcing for one round, may have 10-12 and 3 trump.
- 1M - 2N! 13+ game forcing 4-card raise. (Jacoby 2N)
- 1M - 3N 12-15 points, 3 spades, very balanced.

If responder has 3 trumps and 10-12 points, he bids 3M the next chance he gets.

The following part is optional: a bid of 3 of the other major shows game-forcing values, four trump, and a singleton or void somewhere. If opener rebids the next available step, responder shows the suit by making step rebids:

- 1♥ - 3♠!(gf raise, stiff or void somewhere) - 3N!(asking where)

Responses are 4♣! clubs, 4♦ diamonds, 4♥ hearts

- 1♠ - 3♥!(gf raise, stiff or void somewhere) - 3N!(asking where)

Responses are 3N! clubs, 4♣ diamonds, 4♦ hearts

Note the collision here with the normal splinter or jump shift meaning.

6.3.1 When Is It Not Bergen?

Bergen raises are off:

- if responder is a passed hand;
- if there is an overcall or double

Rationale: If there is a double, 2N! is a Jordan raise so you wouldn't need 3♦ for this. After an overcall, you have cue bids.

Reverse Bergen interchanges the meanings of 3♣ and 3♦.

6.4 Constructive Raises

Another alternative is to require 8 to 10 HCP and four card support for the raise to 2M. With only a good 5 to 7 HCP, or 3 cards, we bid 1N forcing for one round, (or 1♠ over 1♥), and then sign off with 2M on our next bid.

The idea is to prevent partner from making a game try unless we might say yes. In return for safer and more appropriate game tries, we cannot stop at 1N by the responder. Therefore, constructive raises are least disruptive when used only when 1N is already forcing, such as in 2/1 by unpassed hands. Or, you have to play 1N as “semi-forcing”, announce it, and

have your opponents laugh and ask, “What does that mean?”.

6.5 Kokish

After 1♥ - 2♥, 2♠! asks in what suit responder would accept a game try, 2N by responder meaning spades. Responder just bids 3♥ if there isn't one.

After 1♠ - 2♠, 2N! asks in what suit responder would accept a game try.

6.6 Gitelman's Major Raises

In a series of three *articles* <<http://bbi.bridgebase.com/articles/fg/2over1.html>> Fred Gitelman explains his ideas for improving 2/1. In particular he explains three helpful slam-bidding conventions: Serious 3N, Last Train to Clarksville, and Lackwood. While the latter two are complex expert-level conventions, Serious 3N is presented here, along with a cousin, Medium 3N.

6.6.1 Medium 3N

If we have a game-forcing agreement on an 8-card or better major fit at the three level, there are three bids available to continue to game: bid game, bid 3N!, or make a control-showing bid.

With the Medium 3N convention, 3N is “medium”, a mild slam try, while the control-showing bid is “serious” interest in slam.

6.6.2 Serious 3N

Serious 3N assigns the opposite roles to the 3N! and control-bid on the way to game. The 3N bid shows serious slam interest, while the control-bid is merely mild slam interest.

Serious 3N is just one of the ideas for improving Two Over One by Bridge Base Online founder Fred Gitelman. He suggests a different approach to major raises, avoiding J2NT, in his article *Improving 2/1*.

THE CHECKBACK FAMILY

The Checkback Family is New Minor Forcing (NMF), Fourth Suit Forcing, and XYZ. NMF has a variant, Two-Way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF). The first two conventions were covered in *Bidding Notes*; TWNMF and XYZ are described in detail in this chapter.

The motivation of each of these bids is to ascertain whether there is a fit to responder's suit when responder has promised only four cards but might be longer. Because of the bidding room they consume, they require invitational to game-forcing hands.

New Minor Forcing and Fourth Suit Forcing are virtually always played together, and virtually always included when playing 2/1 or Precision. The variant Two-way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF) distinguishes invitational vs. game-forcing hands by using both $2\clubsuit$ and $2\diamond$ as artificial.

XYZ extends the idea of TWNMF to the case of the opener's rebid being one of a suit, and is so-named because the auction has begun $1x - 1y - 1z$. Since it is identical to TWNMF if "z" is no-trump, the two conventions are played together. In this approach, it is still possible to have a fourth-suit auction such as $1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit - 2\diamond$!

As we will see, TWNMF and XYZ are especially suited to Precision.

7.1 Two-Way New Minor Forcing

Two-way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF) applies after a 1N rebid by opener after responder bids a major. Responder distinguishes invitational vs. game-forcing hands with his first rebid.

Note that in the case of playing a weak notrump, opener after $1m - 1M - 1N!$ (15-17 bal), opener has

not denied the other major, whether M was hearts or spades, and has not denied 3-card support for M.

None of this applies to Precision auctions that began $1\clubsuit$!

7.1.1 Invitational Hands

We bid $2\clubsuit$!(artificial) with invitational hands containing five of our major or four of the other major. Opener must rebid $2\diamond$!(forced). The bid should be explained as "invitational with five of our major or four of the other major, or a weak hand with diamonds".

Then, in the case of $1m - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit$!(artificial) - $2\diamond$!(forced), responder bids:

- Pass - signoff in $2\diamond$.
- $2\heartsuit$ - Invitational with 5 spades and 4 hearts.
- $2\spadesuit$ - Mildly invitational with 5+ spades.
- 2NT - Invitational, with 4-card support for opener's minor. This allows opener to sign off in 3 of the minor if he wishes.
- $3\clubsuit$ - Invitational with 4 spades and clubs.
- $3\diamond$ - Invitational with 4 spades and diamonds.
- $3\heartsuit$ - Invitational with 5-5 in the majors.
- $3\spadesuit$ - Invitational with 6 spades.

If responder's suit had been hearts, make the corresponding changes:

- Pass - signoff in $2\diamond$.
- $2\heartsuit$ - Mildly invitational with 5+ hearts
- $2\spadesuit$ - Invitational with 5 hearts and four spades

- 2NT- Invitational with four-card support for opener's minor.
- 3♣- Invitational with 4 hearts and clubs
- 3♦- Invitational with 4 hearts and diamonds
- 3♥- Invitational with 6 hearts

If responder does not have support for opener's minor, and no interest in pursuing a major fit, he raises 1N to 2N and does not use TWNMF. In the sequences above, the 3m bids show either support for the 1m opener or a decent suit and invitational values.

7.1.2 Game-Forcing Hands

The responses for 2♦! are as in NMF, but we can be assured we are not stopping short of game and use a slow-shows approach to slam. Opener should not jump.

Priorities for opener remain as in NMF:

- With four of the other major, bid 2W
- With 3-card support for M, opener should bid 2M. However, with a flat hand and the points mostly not in M, consider 2N.

7.1.3 Weak Hands

If you have a weak hand and bypassed a five-card diamond suit to bid a four-card major, you can bid the 2♣!(relay) and pass the obligatory 2♦!(forced).

With 5 or more in M, bid 2M to drop dead. With five spades and four hearts, bid 2H showing your shape; opener can pass or correct. It should do better than 1N.

Finally, we have the problem of a weak hand with clubs. A bid of 3♣ over 1N is weak and to play. (With a better hand we'd go through the 2♣ or 2♦ bids first and then bid 3♣).

7.1.4 Responder Jump-Rebids

After the 1N rebid, a direct bid of 3M shows a slam-mish hand with a good suit. We could go through 2♦! first if we were just game-forcing. A jump to 3♦, such as 1♦ - 1♥ - 1N - 3♦ is slammish in diamonds. But a jump to 3♣ is weak, as noted above.

TWNMF is off by a passed hand. However, playing a weak 1N, the 1N rebid shows a strong notrump hand. In that case the passed hand may still be invitational or game forcing so TWNMF is on.

TWNMF is off after interference.

7.2 XYZ

XYZ is a convention that applies when the first three bids are on the one level, and responder has an invitational or better hand. The name comes from writing this as 1X - 1Y - 1Z. The Z can be notrump. It does not apply to Precision auctions over 1♣!.

Essentially we extend the ideas of *TWNMF* to auctions where the opener's rebid is 1♠ not 1N.

Advantages to XYZ: you get to play refused invitations at the two level, and you get to start investigating slam at lower levels. Disadvantage: responder gives up the ability to play 2♣ after auctions that began with 1♣. (So for Precision players, no disadvantage at all.)

Since you'll be playing what amounts to *TWNMF* at the one level, it is consistent to play *TWNMF* at the two level as well.

XYZ applies for these sequences:

- 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥/1♠/1N (does not apply in Precision)
After 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥, either 1♠ or 1N is natural; 2♦! is the game force.
- 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠/1N (does not apply in Precision)
- 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 1N (same as *TWNMF*)

Note: It is suggested that XYZ is off in competition

or by a passed hand.

After $1x - 1y - 1z$, we are essentially playing *TWNMF*.

- $2\clubsuit!$ (artificial, relay to $2\diamond!$) in most cases shows an invitational hand. Opener should show a 3-card fit. Responder can pass $2\diamond$ to play in diamonds.
- $2\diamond!$ (artificial, gf) is game forcing and bidding proceeds as in *TWNMF*;
- $2\heartsuit$ or $2\spadesuit$ rebids are drop-dead to play.
- $2N$ is invitational.

7.2.1 Followups after the 2 Club Relay

After the $2\clubsuit!$ (forcing, usually invitational) - $2\diamond!$ (forced) relay, the followups are:

- pass is to play in diamonds.
- $2\heartsuit / 2\spadesuit$ are invitational promising five of the major.
- $3\clubsuit$ is to play in clubs.
- $3\diamond$ is invitational
- $2N$ is invitational with support for opener's minor.
- If opener has freak distribution, he can break the $2\clubsuit!$ relay, such as:

$1\diamond - 1\heartsuit$ $1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit$ (relay to $2\diamond$) $2\spadesuit$
--

indicating diamonds and spades, diamonds longer than the spades.

- Similar to Lebensohl, there are two ways to make some invitational bids, such as $2N$ directly or $2\clubsuit!$ then $2N$. Partnerships could assign different shades of meaning to these bids.

Note that fourth suit forcing to game is covered by the $2\diamond!$ bid, which might not be the actual fourth suit, as in $1\diamond - 1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\diamond!$ (GF) where we do not bid $2\clubsuit$ as the fourth suit.

UNUSUAL VS. UNUSUAL

Unusual vs. Unusual is a convention for handling two-suited interference bids, such as Michaels or Unusual 2NT. This may include cases where one suit is unknown. It is also our “General Defense To Two-Suited Bids”, to be used over opponents two-suited bids for which we have not agreed on something else.

Be aware that when an opponent makes a two-suited overcall, if we do have a fit, the trump break may be poor. Length in your partner’s suit is important. Be conservative with only an eight-card fit. The same factors face your opponents, so your eagerness to defend should be correspondingly higher. Pass rather than do something marginal.

What we present here is called the “lower-lower” version of Unusual vs. Unusual. The other version fixes the lowest available cue bid as showing support.

8.1 Two Suits Are Known

Some of the bids that show two specific suits are Unusual 2N, and Michaels Cue Bid of a minor suit.

If they make an overcall that shows two specific suits, there are two possible cue bids available, and two other suits.

Call the two suits implied by their bid “their suits” and the other two “our suits”. Among their two suits, the one which would be cheapest to bid next is called the “lower” suit and the other one the “higher” suit. Usually but not always the “lower” is the lower-ranked suit.

We set up a correspondence between the implied cue bids and our two suits:

- A cue bid of the “lower” of their suits shows length in the lower of our two suits. Remem-

ber, lower means cheapest to bid here, not rank.

- A cue bid of the “higher” of their suits shows length in the higher of our two suits.

Responder’s bids are:

- A double shows you have a penalty double of at least one of their suits, and another bid. Typically this is 10+ HCP. Assuming advancer bids, partner should usually pass to give you the option of making a penalty double.
- Bidding notrump shows stoppers in BOTH their suits.
- A simple raise of partner shows trump support and 7-10 support points. This is the kind of hand where would have made a simple raise if there had been no interference.
- The implied cue bid corresponding to partner’s suit is a limit raise or better.
- A raise to game in partner’s suit shows long trumps, and good playing strength with less than limit raise values (usually a singleton somewhere).
- A jump cue-bid is a splinter, slam try in partner’s suit.
- A free bid of our other suit is competitive and non-forcing. Typically this hand might look like a weak-two opener in the other suit, 7-10 points.
- The cue bid corresponding to our other suit shows 5+ cards and at invitational values.

Pass if you cannot make one of these bids.

8.2 Second Suit Is Unknown

Some of the bids that show one specific suit and an unknown second suit are a Michaels Cue Bid of a major suit, and certain defenses to 1N openers such as 1N (2♥) showing hearts and a minor suit.

- A bid of their known suit is a limit raise or better in partner's suit. For example, after 1♥ - (2♥(Michaels)), 2♠ is a limit raise or better in hearts.
- A jump cue-bid is a splinter and a slam try. For example, after 1♥ - (2♥(Michaels)), 3♠! shows spade shortness and is a slam try in hearts.
- Bidding notrump would show stoppers in the bid suit and in possible unknown suits.
- All other bids are not forcing. For example, after a Michaels bid in hearts, 3♣ would be a preemptive hand in clubs.
- With values but no clear action, a double will let the opponents tell you where they have their best fit. With this information you can choose a rebid to describe your hand. Opener will usually pass but with a solely offensive hand such as a solid one-suiter or strong two-suiter, may bid to show this.

The meaning of the responder's rebids after an initial double and pass by opener over advancer's bid are:

- Double is for penalty
- Pass suggests a tolerance for defending.
- New suit is 5+ cards, game forcing.
- 3N is game strength with a stopper in the suit the opponents have chosen.
- Delayed cuebid of overcaller's originally known suit is Western cue, forcing to game and denying a stopper in the suit opponent's have chosen and asking partner to bid 3N if he holds one.

Pass if you cannot make one of these bids.

OTHER TWO-SUITED COMPETITIVE BIDS

9.1 Sandwich 1N

After (1x) - P - (1y), a double is for takeout and shows the other two suits; the suits are at least 5-4 and you have an opening hand.

The Sandwich 1N convention is a bid of 1N rather than double, showing the other two suits but less than an opening hand:

(1x) - P - (1y) - 1N!(other two suits, less than opener)

9.2 Extended Michaels

Extended Michaels changes the meaning of the Michaels cue bid over a minor, promising spades and another suit (which could be hearts, but no longer definitely is hearts). There are other such systems, e.g. Ghestem, and minor variants. We keep it simple here.

Note that 2♣ over the opponents 1♣ is not alerted (in general, cue bids are not alerted) but must be alerted if their 1♣ was announced as “could be short” and your cue bid is not natural. I recommend always playing the cue bid as Michaels.

As before, 2N asks for the other suit. However, it is also possible to bid the cheapest of the possible other suits as “pass or correct”. Therefore, 2N can be reserved to show constructive values, or to start game tries, using “pass or correct” with weak hands.

Here’s an example. (1♦) 2♦ shows spades and either hearts or clubs. So:

- (1♦) 2♦ - 2♥ I do not like spades. I have 3 hearts. If hearts isn’t your other suit, bid your minor.

- (1♦) 2♦ - 2N!(Asks for the other suit, constructive)

Asking for the other suit with 2N and then going back to spades is a game try:

- (1♣) 2♣ - 2N - 3♦ - 3♠ is a game try in spades.

“Super” pass and correct bids can be made if a fit is certain and the hand is weak, as preemptive:

- (1♣) 2♣ - 3♦!(support for diamonds and hearts, weak)

Using extended Michaels and U2NT together, we cover all the bases:

RHO	You	Bid
1♣	♦&♥	2N
1♣	♦&♠	2♣! Extended Michaels
1♣	♥&♠	2♣ Michaels
1♦	♣&♥	2N
1♦	♣&♠	2♦! Extended Michaels
1♦	♥&♠	2♦ Michaels
1♥	♣&♦	2N
1♥	♣&♠	2♥ Michaels
1♥	♦&♠	2♥ Michaels
1♠	♣&♦	2N
1♠	♣&♥	2♠ Michaels
1♠	♦&♥	2♠ Michaels

9.3 Top and Bottom Cue Bid

Top and Bottom is another replacement for Michael’s Cue Bid. The cue bid shows the highest and lowest unbid suits. For example, 1♥ - (2♥) shows spades and clubs. Knowing both suits right away can be helpful, but you can’t use it as often.

SPECIAL DOUBLES

These three special doubles have their own area on your convention card. Be sure to mark it appropriately. You have to decide at what level the double stops being conventional and turns to penalty. The usual agreement is conventional through 2♠.

10.1 Support Doubles and Redoubles

Some times opponents interfere after the responder has shown a new suit, and the opener does not know if this is a four-card or five-card suit. Support Doubles give us a way to show exactly 3 card support. If RHO makes a takeout double, we can use Redouble for the same purpose. For example:

- 1♦ (P) 1♥ (1♠) X! Shows 3 hearts exactly.
- 1♣ (P) 1♠ (2♦) X! Shows 3 spades exactly.
- 1♣ (P) 1♠ (X) XX! Shows 3 spades exactly.

With four or more in partner's suit, opener raises.

Note: Only the opener can make a support double. When you first start to play support doubles, you will see them behind every tree. Realizing that only the opener makes this bid helped me sort them out.

10.2 Responsive Doubles

When partner makes a takeout double of an opener and RHO raises his partner, a double shows scattered values with at least 6 points and interest in locating a fit.

- If the opponents are bidding a minor suit, a responsive double asks partner to pick a major

suit. We know partner has at least 4-3 in the majors so with equally good majors ourselves we want partner to choose.

- If the opponents are bidding a major suit, a responsive double requests partner to choose a minor suit, because if we had the other major we would bid it as partner has promised it with his takeout double.

Warning: If the opponents bid two *different* suits, a double is not a responsive double. The opponents have to have *raised*.

Examples

- (1♠) X (2♠) X! Has both minors, partner to choose.
- (1♦) X (2♦) X! Has both majors, partner to choose.

10.3 Maximal Doubles

If interventor overcalls our major, partner makes a simple raise, and the advancer raises his partner, the opener has a dilemma if their suit is one below our suit. For example, 1♠ - (2♥) - 2♠ - (3♥) -? or 1♥ - (2♦) - 2♥ - (3♦) - ?.

If opener now bids 3M, is he inviting or just competing? A “maximal double” means that we agree opener doubles to show the invitational hand, while just bidding the suit to compete.

Note that if we cue-bid here there is no room to stop in 3M. If their suit was not the one just under ours (or “the maximal suit”) we’d have room to bid the suit below ours as a convention to invite. There is some controversy on this point. Partners should agree if

the double is a maximal double, hence a limit raise or better in that case, or is penalty. I personally like to keep it uniform and have the double be the invite, not the mysterious other suit.

ADVANCED RESPONSES TO TWO CLUB OPENERS

When partner opens a strong $2\clubsuit$ and your hand looks like a vast wasteland, the standard $2\diamond$ (waiting) approach really wastes an opportunity to say so and requires a possibly vague second bid. Likewise, if your hand is really good but has no good five-card suit, you also can't say that until later. These two conventions do a better job on one or both of these fronts.

Another system is "steps", a system in which responder shows his point count in steps of three HCP starting with $2\diamond!(0-3)$, $2\heartsuit(4-6)$, etc. This is not an advanced convention, it is a mistake.

11.1 Control Responses To Two Clubs

By partnership agreement, responder shows Aces and Kings. Counting A=2 and K=1,

- $2\diamond!$ = (negative) zero or one (that is, no Aces, perhaps one King)
- $2\heartsuit!$ = two (one Ace or two Kings)
- $2\spadesuit!$ = exactly one Ace and one King
- $2N!$ = three Kings
- $3\clubsuit!$ = 4 points, $3\diamond!$ = 5 points, etc.

After $2\clubsuit - 2\diamond!$ – $2N$, responder can pass. If opener rebids a suit, however, responder must bid again.

After any positive response to $2\clubsuit$, we are in a game-forcing auction.

Opener with a balanced hand should bid $2N$, and systems are on. Don't jump in no-trump immediately – give partner a chance to transfer or bid Puppet Stayman first. Since we're in a game-forcing auction, no need to rush.

After opener's rebid in a suit, responder should raise if possible; or show a good five-card suit, or bid no-trump.

The usual techniques are in play after opener bids a suit and responder raises. The problem cases arise when responder does not have support. If responder shows a suit it should be a good suit or a good four-card suit with extra points interested in slam somewhere. Otherwise a fast-arrival $3N$ shows no particular extras besides the control-card count already given.

Using Control Responses, the responder should generally not be pushing to explore for slam; the opener will likely already know if it is possible or not. $5N$ pick-a-slam should be remembered when you believe we have the points and controls but haven't found a suit.

11.2 Two Hearts Bust Response to Two Clubs

With partnership agreement, the responses to $2\clubsuit$ become:

- $2\heartsuit!$ shows a *bust* hand, with no Ace or King and not even two Queens.
- $2N!$ shows 8+ points and five good hearts
- The other bids remain the same, except $2\diamond!$ is now alerted as "game forcing".

If the opener rebids $2N$ over $2\heartsuit$, the responder may pass.

If the opener rebids notrump over any other response, it shows point count:

- $2N = 22-24$

- $3N = 25-27$
- $4N = 28 - 31$

At that point responder is “captain”.

After $2\clubsuit - 2\heartsuit!$ - any suit bid, the responder must bid again.

INTERESTING GADGETS

This chapter describes a variety of interesting *gadgets* you might see, or wish to adopt.

12.1 Showing Both Majors in Stayman

Having 4-4 majors and a maximal 1N opener, opener bids 3♣ as a response to Stayman. Responder then transfers to their suit (or best suit).

1N 2♣ 3♣!(max, 4-4 majors) 3♦!(transfer) 3♥

1N 2♣ 3♣!(max, 4-4 majors) 3♥!(transfer) 3♠

After this, responder can pass, bid the game, or explore for slam as appropriate. Note that this is not compatible with the weak Stayman bid.

12.2 South African Texas

South African Texas is similar to Texas: 4♣ transfers to 4♥, 4♦ transfers to 4♠. This leaves 4♥ and 4♠ as natural and to play. Why have two ways to end up in the same place? Responder can choose to be the declarer if he has the kind of hand that would be better having the lead come into it in the side suits.

12.3 Montreal Relays

This was invented by someone who went crazy trying to tell if responder has four or five of his major over a 1♣ opening. Responder does not bid a four-card major; instead, he bids an artificial 1♦. Responses of 1♥ or 1♠ show five card suits. A responder with 5 hearts and 5 spades bids 1♥.

A response of 1♦ shows enough values to respond but is otherwise artificial. Opener's rebids after 1♣ - 1♦!(artificial, no five-card major):

- 1♥ promises 4 hearts, does not deny 4 spades
- 1♠ promises 4 spades, denies 4 hearts
- 1N denies a four-card major, denies six clubs
- 2♣ shows six clubs
- 2N is 17-18 balanced (as usual).
- 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ are normal reverses.

Some play this convention with additional 3-level splinter conventions. It is off in competition.

12.4 Namyats

Namyats is Stayman spelled backwards. Apparently this amazing fact is supposed to help you remember what it means. Doesn't work for me, but maybe it does for you. Samuel Stayman didn't invent either Stayman or Namyats!

An opening bid of 4♣ is a strong hand with an 8-card heart suit. Likewise, 4♦ is a stronghand in spades. This leaves opening the majors at the 4-level as weak bids with no slam interest. Generally the distinction is that you use Namyats with a hand with no more than five losers.

If the responder wishes the opener to become the declarer, or has slam interest, he can temporize with the intervening suit, e.g.

- 4♦!(transfer to 4♠) - 4♥!(transfer to 4♠).

To accept the Namyats transfer is a sign-off.

There are more complicated agreements about follow-ups, but that's the basics.

12.5 Mathe Defense To A Big Club

can also be used to keep the bidding open for your next bid when you really do have a good hand.

After a strong $1\clubsuit$ opener, Mathe is the simplest commonly-used defense. In the simplest version, double is the majors, $1N$ is the minors, and suits are natural. A slight improvement is:

- Double shows the majors
- $1\diamond$ is a transfer to hearts
- $1\heartsuit$ is a transfer to spades
- $1N$ shows the minors
- $2\clubsuit$ shows clubs
- $2\diamond$ shows diamonds

The added transfers force the big hand to lead.

Some also use this defense over a standard strong $2\clubsuit$ opening.

12.6 Lead-directing Raise of Partner's Preempt

When partner opens a weak two-level bid, you generally want to raise to the three level if you have three-card support and a few values, in order to be as obstructive as possible. This is called reinforcing the preempt.

However, it often happens that the auction goes something like:

$2\heartsuit - (3\diamond) - 3\heartsuit(\text{you}) - 3N$
--

Now your partner is on lead and unless he has a great suit he's leading into stoppers. Meantime you're sitting there with the Ace of spades. If only partner knew to lead spades so you could return a heart.

We change the agreement about what a new suit by you means; it shows a lead-directing raise. Partner is authorized to raise to $3\heartsuit$ for you if necessary. So in this case you bid $2\spadesuit$!(heart raise, lead-directing). You also might do this for example if you had three hearts and $\spadesuit KQ52$. $2N$ remains feature-asking but

ADVANCED JUMP SHIFTS

13.1 Soloway Jump Shifts

When your partner opens a suit and you have a hand that wants to invite slam, and which features a good suit with or without support for opener's suit, it is sometimes very difficult to avoid getting in a situation in which your partner can pass the bid you need to show the nature of your hand.

The Soloway jump-shift (SJS) is meant to make it easier to explore for slam without getting too high, leaving other techniques for the really powerful hands where forcing bids will be safe.

The SJS shows one of these types of hands:

1. A strong (17+) hand with one long, strong suit containing at least two of the top three honors.
2. A balanced slam-invitational hand (17- bad 19) with a *good suit*. After the jump-shift, you'll bid 3N to show the balanced hand.
3. A slam-try or better hand (16+) with a *good suit* and length in opener's suit. After the jump-shift, then show the support on your next bid.
4. An intermediate hand (13-16) with a long *solid* major suit and good controls. You'll bid your suit at the four level on your second turn. Don't make the bid with two quick losers in an unbid suit. (Perhaps you might omit this one until you have more experience. I know my partner got confused the first time I used it. The temptation is to assume that juicy jump-shift is one of the stronger hands.)

Note: The SJS commits us to play in one of three strains: opener's suit, our suit, or no-trump!

When in doubt, the SJS is best for hands where you need to describe your hand to the opener and let partner make the decision about slam, rather than where you need to know about the opener. You need a good suit, slam-try strength, and a good rebid (such as raising partner).

If you think about that idea, you'll also see when *not* to make the jump-shift:

- A two- or three-suited hand (unless one is the opener's and yours is good).
- A one-suited hand with a bad suit.
- A very strong balanced hand.

In these cases, you are not able to narrow down the choice of trump suit or no-trump in time if you use up too much bidding room with a jump-shift. Karen Walker gives this example for a very strong hand that came up at a sectional:

♠AKQ84 ♥A98 ♦A8 ♣A54

The use of a traditional jump-shift resulted in the auction 1♦- 2♠ - 3♥. Responder was now stuck: 3N isn't strong enough, and could be passed. You can't rebid spades or raise diamonds or hearts, and you don't know if diamonds or hearts are running. Change one of the Aces to a 10 or J and the 3N rebid would describe your hand perfectly.

After the SJS, the opener rebids. The main points to remember are that responder has at least a good five-card suit, is making a slam invite, does not have a good 19 points, and could have as few as 13-16. He doesn't have a second suit unless it is your suit – so you don't show another four-card suit but rather tell partner where your honors are.

- A raise of responder's suit promises one of the top three honors and at least doubleton sup-

port; that is, Qx or better. A failure to raise responder's suit denies such support.

- A rebid of your suit shows extra length with good honor strength. If you have length in responder's suit but no honor, you can come back to it next time.
- A new suit shows concentrated honors but not necessarily length. (Remember, we are NOT going to play in that suit – it's yours, mine, or no-trump.)
- Notrump rebids show balance minimums with stoppers in both unbid suits. Walker shows this instructive case: Suppose opener holds ♠8 ♥KJ64 ♦KQ75 ♣AT3 after 1♦ - 2♠! (Soloway). Shouldn't opener bid 3♥? No – because responder does not have a heart suit! Partner will not have a second suit unless it is yours. For this hand, you respond 2N - nothing extra in your suit, no Qx or better in spades, minimal points.

Finally, it is time for responder to make his second bid:

- 2N or 3N is the 17- bad 19 balanced hand with a strong five-card suit.
- The jump to four of your major suit jump-shift is the intermediate (13-16) hand with a long solid suit and good controls.
- A simple rebid of your suit is a long, solid suit with more HCP.
- Raising opener's suit shows 4+ if it is a minor, 3+ for a major, and tends to deny an outside singleton; the latter because:
- A new suit is a splinter in support of partner.
- Now or later, RKC is for the jump-shift suit unless you've raised the opener before it.

13.2 Fit-Showing Jump Shifts

Suppose you're a passed hand and your partner opens. SAYC defines a jump-shift by responder as showing a good hand with a good suit – a hand you

nearly opened; you're doing the jump to emphasize to partner that game is nigh. For example, after a P - 1♣, you might bid 2♠ with ♠KQJxx ♥Axx ♦Jxx ♣xx. However, this may be too high if partner is a bit light. And, if you have support for partner's major, you have reverse Drury as a tool. So many good players retask the passed-hand jump-shift as a "Fit-showing Jump Shift". You'll note that the ideas are similar to the 'fit for you with a good side-suit' case in Soloway Jump-Shifts.

The bid has four requirements:

1. A good five-card suit.
2. 4+ support for partner. When it is a terrific 3-card holding in partner's major, you have Drury, so use it. (Some allow the fit-showing jump shift in this case.)
3. Maximum HCP (10-12).
4. Good distribution, usually a singleton.

Opener in responding must remember he's just been raised! Consider the bid virtually forcing. What counts are your holdings in the two suits that have been mentioned, not so much HCP per se.

- You can pass have weak support for partner and have opened without love in your heart.
- Rebidding your suit is to play; partner must pass.
- A jump to game (1♣ - 2♠ - 4♠) is a sign off.
- A jump to 3N is to play, showing good stoppers in the unbid suits and no slam interest.
- Raising partner's major is showing slam interest, asking for a cue-bid.
- A new suit is a cue bid for slam in opener's suit.
- A jump in a new suit (1♣ - 2♥ - 4♦) is a cue bid for the major; or, preferably, use a minimum no-trump bid to ask partner for his singleton. Yes, 1♥ - 3♦ - 3N is asking for the singleton, not bidding to play.

SLAM BIDDING

Slam bidding, especially in the minors, is really hard. This chapter arms you for battle.

14.1 Italian Control Bidding

In the Italian style, a control bid shows a first- *or* second-round control. A second-round control can be shown without a first-control having been shown in that suit. These rules are applied to interpret the bids:

- A control bid is a slam try after trump agreement in a major. It promises first- or second-round control. (Again, over minors or in 2/1 these bids also possible but agreement is needed.)
- A control bid is a non-jump bid in a game-forcing auction. Thus 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♦ is not a control bid because we are not yet in a game forcing auction. But 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♥ - 3♠! is a control bid because bidding on is game forcing and we have suit agreement.
- A control bid that skips a suit(s) denies a control in that suit. So 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♣ shows a club control and denies a spade control.
- As long as slam is possible, always show a control bid below the game level. Likewise, don't control bid if partner has a limited hand and slam is not possible.
- A control bid in a 5+ card side suit promises the Ace or King. For example, 1♠ - 2N! - 4♦ - 4♥ (control) - 5♦ shows the Ace or King of diamonds. Opener's suit must be a good suit or he would have bid his shortness, so being able to show possession of the Ace or King is important.

- Once you show a short suit, control-bid that suit only with a void, not a singleton Ace. An example would be a Jacoby 2N auction, with opener rebidding a stiff or void, such as 1♠ - 2N! - 3♦! (stiff or void) - 4♣ (control) - 4♦; this shows opener has a void in diamonds.
- A control bid at the five level promises first round control, because 4N is no longer available.

Bergen gives this example of a five-level control bid:

West	East
♠JT752	♠AK643
♥AK982	♥Q64
♦A4	♦87
♣2	♣AJT

The bidding is:

1♠ - 2N!
4♥ - 5♣ (not 4N here)
5♦ - 7♠

The 4♥ bid shows a five-card suit with two of the top three honors. Therefore East knows West has the AK in hearts. East makes the control-bid in clubs to give West a chance to show the Ace of diamonds; for West to immediately bid 4N would be wrong because of the worthless doubleton in diamonds. After knowing all suits are stopped, and foreseeing setting up the hearts for a diamond discard, East can see the tricks for the 26 HCP grand slam. We don't promise this will happen to you, but it shows the power of the method.

Note that quite often preliminary control bids below the level of game allow us to bid 4N where we otherwise could not, or to avoid getting to the five level when we don't belong here.

Bergen's *Better Slam Bidding* and its workbook has excellent examples.

14.2 Five Notrump Pick-a-slam

When we have not agreed on a suit but you determine that the partnership has the points to be in slam, a jump bid of 5N is a great alternative to just shooting out 6N. It is much, much easier to make 12 tricks in a suit, even a seven-card fit, than it is in no-trump.

In response, partner can suggest a suit to play in or bid 6N.

Bergen's *Better Slam Bidding* and its workbook has excellent examples.

14.3 Minorwood

An optional convention to use with inverted minors is "Minorwood", a jump to four of the minor after a two of a minor response. This becomes Roman Keycard Blackwood for the minor. For example,

- 1♣ – 2♣! – 4♣!(asks for keycards)
- 1♣ – 2♣! – 2♥ – 4♣!(asks for keycards)

but not in a non-jump sequence such as 1♣ – 2♣! – 2♥ – 3♦ – 4♣ in which the players simply discover they lack a spade stopper and decide to play in clubs.

Using clubs for illustration, and 1430 RKC, the responses are:

- 4♦ – 1 or 4 keycards
- 4♥ – 0 or 3 keycards
- 4♠ – 2 keycards, no trump queen
- 4N – 2 keycards, with trump queen

After a response of 14 or 30, a bid of the next higher suit asks for the trump queen.

After any response, the bid of the suit one higher than trumps (5♦ in this case) asks for Kings.

For diamonds as trumps, the responses are all one higher.

Important: a rebid of 4N is to play:

1♣ – 2♣! (10+, 5+ clubs)
4♣! (keycards) – 4♥ (0 or 3)
4N to play

The usual principle of RKC is used here too – if an ambiguous (03 or 14) response was made holding the higher number of keycards, responder would now bid the slam if the asker signs off. Presumably the asker was willing to take yes for an answer.

14.4 Kickback or One-Over

When hearts are trump, a problem arises with using 4N as RKC: sometimes there is insufficient room for a queen ask, or "two and the queen" will be too high. To solve this problem, a bid of 3♠ after an agreement on hearts is RKC. All responses are just one lower than normal. Kickback is off if either partner has bid spades naturally or bid Jacoby 2N; in the latter case the responses to J2NT take precedence.

These are kickback:

- 1♣ – 1♥ – 3♥ – 3♠!(Kickback)
- 1♥ – 2N! – 3♦!(shortness) – 3♠!(Kickback)

but not:

- 1♠ – 2♥ – 3♥ – 3♠(natural)
- 1♥ – 2N! – 3♠!(shortness)

This idea can be extended to spades too or all suits: after an agreement on a suit, the next step up is RKC.

TWO DIAMOND OPENERS

The weak 2♦ opener doesn't get much respect these days – the chances that you'll end up playing it are not that great, since either opponent with a good holding in a major suit is able to get in relatively cheaply. Therefore, the bid has been co-opted to handle various other problems, particularly awkwardly-shaped hands.

Note that Precision has its own two-diamond opener showing a 4441 hand 11-15 HCP with a stiff diamond. There are many other two-diamond bids in different systems. Some of them are strong.

Moral: when you hear a 2♦!(alert), you have no idea what it means.

The so-called Multi-2♦ is a particular headache – it is not allowed in ACBL tournaments using the General Convention Chart, but you can encounter it at higher-level events or online. If you are playing in an event and someone makes a strange bid, ask them to explain a defense. ACBL has a database of such defenses.

It is also worth saying that if 2♦ isn't strong or Flannery or a Roman of some sort, or you see any other bid that seems to mean too many things at once, you might want to call the director to inquire about it. Twice I've caught people playing an illegal convention.

15.1 Flannery

The Flannery 2♦!(5 hearts, four spades, 11 to 15 HCP) opener covers a hand with five hearts and four spades and values insufficient to reverse on the second bid. Obviously, you lose the ability to make a weak 2♦ opener.

If you open 1♥ then responder will assume you do

not hold four spades, and in particular 1♥ - 1♠ shows five spades.

The responses are:

- Pass can be made with a six card diamond suit and less than 10 HCP.
- 2♥ and 2♠ are sign-offs
- 2N! inquires about opener's minor suits. Responses are:
 - 3♣ shows a 4=5=1=3 shape.
 - 3♦ shows a 4=5=3=1 shape.
 - 3N shows a maximum with most of the values in the minors
 - 4♣ shows a 4=5=0=4 shape.
 - 4♦ shows a 4=5=4=0 shape.
- 3♣ shows at least 6 clubs and 11-13 points, and partner should bid 3N with Ax, Kx, or Qxx in clubs.
- 3♦ is likewise for diamonds.
- 3♥ and 3♠ are invitational.
- 4♣ and 4♦ are transfers to 4♥ and 4♠ respectively.

15.2 Mini-Roman

A mini-Roman 2♦ opener is a 4441 or 4405 hand, 11-15 HCP. The most frequent agreement seems to be that the bid promises 4 spades – the 1=4=4=4 hand being handled by opening a diamond; but that is not universal.

Lacking invitational values, the responder will suggest a place to play, bidding up-the-line; only rarely will responder pass with a long diamond suit.

With invitational values or better, responder bids 2N! asking opener to bid his short suit. This is forcing; responder next places the contract in game or makes an invitational bid in a suit.

The mini-Roman is part of a family of Roman 2♦ bids which chiefly differ as to strength. A Precision player's 2♦ opener means explicitly a diamond shortage but NOT a 4=4=1=4 shape necessarily.

15.3 Other Bids

Of course, 2♦ openers were strong in the days of Goren, but that was superseded by the use of 2♣ as the sole strong opener. However, some systems, especially those with weak no-trump openers, use 2♦ to show an 18-19(20) point balanced hands. For these systems, 2♥ is often a weak response, with 2♠ being game-forcing. One such system is Mexican Two Diamonds.

If you are facing a pair playing a strong 1♣ system, such as Precision, a 2♦ opening will be either an intermediate (11-15 HCP) bid short in diamonds with no four-card major, or it can be a strong bid. See *Imprecise Precision* for an intermediate version. A responder bid of 2N! shows a strong hand, and inquires about the opener's shape.

Defending against such systems, it is important to discuss beforehand what 3♦ means and what double means (penalty, or takeout, or lead-directing?). Generally a double of an artificial bid would be lead-directing unless you agree otherwise.

The "could be short" meaning "as few as two" announcement of a 2♦ bid is your warning to check their card. Some Precision pairs do not even promise two diamonds, and they should alert that not just announce it.

LEBENSOHL

The Lebensohl convention is applicable in a wide variety of competitive situations, but most begin by learning it as a way of dealing with interference over a 1N opener. It can also be used after partner doubles a 2-level preempt or opponents interfere over a 2♣ opener, or after an opener's reverse, and other competitive situations. We will begin with the defense to 1N overcalls, and cover the other situations later.

A transfer-based variant of Lebensohl, called Rubensohl, is discussed in a separate chapter. You should understand Lebensohl first.

In this chapter we use the terms weak, competitive, invitational, and game forcing to describe hand strength. For a 12-14 point notrump, these are 0-7, 8-10, 11-12, and 13+ respectively. For a strong notrump, subtract three from these values. Shape may of course contribute to your classification – a five card suit is always a plus.

Lebensohl and *Rubensohl* can be used in a variety of situations. What these seemingly different situations have in common is that a bidder has to make a bid in a situation with reduced bidding room, and needs to have a way to differentiate different hands but is running out of room to do so at a reasonable level.

16.1 Lebensohl After We Open 1N

Since life will usually be easy for us after we open 1N, opponents are motivated to interfere. That uses up the room we need to decide our strain and level. Lebensohl gives up one natural reply in order to effectively double the remaining space.

16.1.1 Introduction

Suppose we open 1N and this is overcalled at the two-level. Natural bids have a marked weakness when responder has a suit lower than the overcalled suit. For example, suppose responder has a good club suit and enough values that he wishes to compete for a part-score. Consider this bidding sequence:

1N (2♥) 3♣

Responder has shown opener his club suit but not his strength. With just this one bid, we cannot distinguish whether responder has a competitive, invitational, or game-forcing hand. This is a matter upon which the partnership must agree. If it is game forcing, opener does not know yet if responder has a heart stopper.

On the other hand, life is easier if responder's suit is above the overcall, say spades here. Then 2♠ is available as a bid. Assuming we take that to be competitive, we still have an ambiguity in the 3♠ bid: is it invitational or game forcing? And what about stoppers?

Assume the bidding has begun 1N (2x), where x is diamonds, hearts, or spades.

Note: After 1N (2♣), Lebensohl has a potential complication, so we will assume a double is Stayman, and that otherwise systems are "on", so 2♦ is a transfer, etc. See below if 2♣ is artificial.

Responder now must distinguish both what kind of hand he has, and if interested in 3N, whether or not he has a stopper in the opponent's suit.

16.1.2 The 2N Relay

The signature bid in Lebensohl is 2N!(relay). This is an artificial bid over the overcall, and demands that opener bid 3♣!(forced). This 2N bid says nothing about responder's suit, and does not show or deny that he has a suit or a four-card major.

Note: Do not fall into the trap of calling this bid by itself "Lebensohl". Lebensohl is the entire system described in this chapter. This bid is its signature, but it isn't the only thing to know.

The presence or absence of the relay is used to show strength and clarify the stopper situation.

- If responder can bid his suit at the two-level, it is to play.
- If responder bids his suit after a relay, it is weaker than if he bids it immediately.
- If responder bids the opponent's suit after a relay, he has game-forcing values and a stopper.
- If responder bids the opponent's suit directly, he has game-forcing values but no stopper.
- If responder bids 3N after a relay, he has a stopper.
- If responder bids 3N immediately, he does not have a stopper.

When the responder's suit is above the overcall, there are three possible bids: the two-level bid is competitive; the slow three-level bid is invitational; and the fast three-level bid is game-forcing.

- 1N (2♦) 2♥ is to play
- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣! - 3♥ is invitational
- 1N (2♦) 3♥ is game-forcing.

When the two-level bid is not possible, we have no invitational bid. Using the relay is to play, a direct three-level bid is game-forcing.

Lebensohl players call a bid after the relay "slow", and a direct 3-level bid "fast".

The responder wishing to be in notrump typically denies a stopper with an immediate 3N, and affirms one

with the slow 2N - 3♣ - 3N relay ("slow shows"), but some reverse these two meanings ("slow denies").

- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣ - 3N is to play, diamonds are stopped - slow shows.
- 1N (2♦) 3N wants to play 3N but does not have a diamond stopper. Opener will pass if he has one, or start suggesting suits to play in with 4♣.

16.1.3 Stayman

The slow and fast cue bids are used for game-forcing Stayman, which show or deny a stopper. Note that regular Stayman is invitational or better; in the Lebensohl context we just don't have the room to make an invitational Stayman. Again, slow shows.

- 1N (2♦) 3♦ is GF Stayman, but denies a diamond stopper.
- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣! - 3♦ is GF Stayman and promises a diamond stopper.

After this the Stayman dance is modified in obvious ways. For example, in these auctions, opener lacking a four-card major will have to bid

- 3N if he has no four-card major and either has a diamond stopper or was promised one by responder, or
- 4♣ to show responder that we lack a major fit or a diamond stopper.

16.1.4 About Doubles

Lebensohl per se does not say what a double of the overcall means. Two choices are:

- A double is penalty-oriented, game-forcing values, or,
- A double initially shows competitive values and while takeout-oriented it promises 2 (or more cards) in their suit. This allows opener to pass if appropriate. Responder may bid again with a stronger hand.

A reopening double by opener of an overcall in fourth seat is for takeout.

Generally, playing a weak 1N, we play the second alternative.

16.1.5 Lebensohl's Weaknesses

Lebensohl has two weaknesses in this situation.

First, it is not possible to invite in a suit below the overcall because only two bids, "slow" and "fast" are available.

Second, if the RHO of the opener bids, opener does not yet know responder's suit. For example:

1N (2♦) 2N!(relay) (3♦)

Now opener does not know what suit, if any, responder holds. If it is hearts or spades, responder has invitational strength. If it is clubs, responder is simply trying to compete; or, it is possible responder is game-forcing and intended his next bid to be a cue bid showing a major with a stopper in diamonds. The 2N bid has left opener with little useful information.

I believe it is not possible to solve both of these problems simultaneously. Rubensohl has variants that emphasize one or the other of these two facets, but none of them solve both problems completely.

16.1.6 Lebensohl Details

Here are the available bids after we open 1N and they overcall two of a suit. Some bids require more detailed explanation in the following sections. Let O be the their suit (either the suit they bid naturally or one they showed artificially.)

Here are the bids after 1N (2O) or 1N (P) P (2O) P (P)

- A double initially shows competitive values and while takeout-oriented it promises 2 or more in their suit. This allows opener to pass if appropriate. Responder may bid again with a stronger hand.
- (Alternative) A double is penalty-oriented.

- A double by opener of an overcall in fourth seat is for takeout.
- 2 level suit bids are to play. Example: 1N (2♥) 2♠ is to play. These bids show a five or more card suit.
- 2N!(relay) starts a "slow" sequence; opener must bid 3♣. A subsequent 3N is to play; a cuebid of 3O is game-forcing Stayman; 3 of a suit below O is to play; and 3 of a suit above O is game forcing.
- 3 of a suit other than O is game forcing.
- 3O is Stayman but denies a stopper in O.
- 3N is to play, and denies any unbid major or a stopper.
- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4♦! and 4♥! are Texas Transfers to hearts and spades, showing six card suits and values for game only. With a strong hand and a six-card major game-force at the three level first.
- 4♠! (rare) invites opener to pick a minor game.
- 4N is invitational to 6N and of course promises a stopper.

16.1.7 Lebensohl Over Artificial Overcalls

If an overcall shows a definite suit plus an unspecified suit, bid as if the specified suit were overcalled unless and until the second suit becomes specified.

If an overcall shows two definite suits, proceed as normal except that both of the opponents suits are available as cue bids. In that case,

- A slow 3N promises stops in both suits.
- A fast 3N denies stops in both suits.
- A cue bid therefore shows a stop in that suit but at most a half-stop in the other.

When we speak of the overcalled suit or suits, we mean the ones the bid *meant*, not the artificial one actually bid. For example, 1N (2N) shows the minors,

so a response of 3♦ would show a stop in diamonds, no stop in clubs, and game-going values.

16.1.8 Three-level Overcalls

Over three-level overcalls:

- A double is for takeout, showing support for the other three suits.
- Bids at the three level are natural, one-round forcing, and
- 3N, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, and 5♦ are to play.

If the overcall is in a minor, a cue bid is Stayman, or may show slam interest lacking a four-card major.

- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4♥ – 4N (to play)
- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4N(no major) - Pass
- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4? – 5♣ (slam interest in clubs)

16.2 Answering Takeout Doubles Of Weak Two Bids

When an opponent opens a weak two bid, and we double it, that shows a decent opening hand with shortness in their suit. The double is for takeout. But we run into a familiar dilemma. Consider an auction that begins (2♥) X (P) ? where the advancer holds a very weak hand with six diamonds. Advancer definitely wants to bid three diamonds and have that be that.

But if he has a much stronger hand with diamonds that wants to go to game, then he wishes he could ask partner whether he has hearts stopped.

The solution is to realize that (2♥) X (P) ? is not that different from 1N (2♥) ?. We can just play Lebensohl. The opener can refuse a 2N – 3♣ relay to show a hand with slam interest.

16.3 When They Overcall Our Two Club Opener

The auction 2♣ (2♥) is similar to 1N (2♥). We have the same dilemma of wanting to compete but not wanting to confuse partner as to our hand strength. Lebensohl can be used in these situations. If opponents play 2♣ (X) as showing the majors we would treat that as a two-suited bid in hearts and spades.

16.4 Lebensohl Over Reverses

Imagine this headache: partner opens 1♣, you bid 1♠ with a minimal four-card holding, and partner reverses with 2♥. This is forcing for one round. What to do? If you had five spades you could just bid 2♠. But let's say you don't, but you do prefer clubs or have five diamonds you by-passed in order to show your four-card major.

If you just bid 3♣ as a preference, that's ok – until the next time when you have a better hand and can't bid 3♣ because the partnership has decided it is weak. Hmm. This sounds familiar – it is the same dichotomy as 1N (2♥) 3♣ – what does it mean? And it has the same solution – Lebensohl.

So, for example, a direct bid of 3♣ over 2♥ is game-forcing. A “slow” trip to 3♣ via 2N, shows you want to stop there.

16.5 Simplified Lebensohl

If you do not feel comfortable with full Lebensohl, use this simpler version of it. It covers most responder hand types.

The opposition has bid a suit 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ over our 2♣!(11-15, six clubs) opener.

- Double is penalty-oriented with at least two of their suit.
- Two-level suit bids are to play
- Three-level suit bids are game forcing

- 2N! is a relay to 3♣!(forced), pass or correct. If responder corrects to a suit he could have bid at the two-level, it is invitational; otherwise, to play.
- 3N is to play with a stopper.
- A cue bid is game-forcing Stayman. Opener should show a major if he has one.

When you've been bitten enough times by the holes in the simplification, you can learn the rest of it.

You can get super-simplified by just remembering the 2-level is to play, and 2N is a relay to 3♣, pass or correct. Ordinary bridge logic should kick in from there.

16.6 Good - Bad 2N

This Lebensohl variant is explained most fully in Larry Cohen's "To Bid Or Not To Bid" and in Marty Bergen's "Better Bidding With Bergen". There is a good explanation at www.bridgeguys.com.

In a competitive auction, it is your turn to bid and RHO has just bid 2x, whether as a raise of his partner or a new suit, after your partner doubled or made an overcall. For example, let's suppose the auction went (1♥) - 1♠ - (2♥). Suppose you have a good diamond suit but no spade support. Then what does your 3♦ bid show? Most of the time of course you're just trying to compete but other times you have a extras and partner may wish to go higher knowing that.

Enter the Good - Bad 2N, created by Larry Cohen in his book "To Bid Or Not To Bid". Whenever we are in a competitive suit auction and our RHO has made a 2-level bid, 2N! is a relay to 3♣, pass or correct. Bidding directly on the three level shows extras.

Take for example this auction:

(1♠) 2♦ (2♠) ?

Without an agreement, a 3♦ bid here is hard to read. With Good - Bad 2N, 3♦ might be a good four-card diamond suit with 9 points, while 2N!(relay) - 3♣!(forced) - 3♦ might be only six points and partner will know not to compete further.

This convention also applies when you opened:

1♥(you) (2♣) Pass (2♠)

If you have a two-suiter in hearts and diamonds, you want to distinguish 3♦ giving partner a choice vs. 3♥ showing something like an 18-point 5-5 hand.

You must draw inferences when partner does not use the relay when he could have.

With some experience, you can use the Good - Bad distinction in many other competitive auctions. According to "Better Bidding With Bergen", it is important that this convention be off in situations such as:

- where 2N is clearly Unusual 2N
- when either side has opened 1N
- when the opponents opened a strong 1♣!
- when the opponents have made a penalty double
- when we have already found a fit
- when we are already in a game-forcing auction.

RUBENSOHL: TRANSFER LEBENSOHL

The Rubensohl convention is a way of dealing with interference over a 1N opener with its roots in Lebensohl. It can also be used in the same additional scenarios as Lebensohl. It is an advanced convention and requires a lot of understanding. You should have significant experience with Lebensohl before attempting it.

Rubensohl, like Lebensohl, attempts to deal with responding hands of different strength, from a hand wanting to compete for a part-score to a game-forcing hand, and to help the partners determine such things as stoppers and major-suit fits. Given the disruptive nature of the interference, no one method can handle everything, but Rubensohl does a nice job on most hands the responder may have.

In the Lebensohl chapter, we mentioned that Lebensohl has a particular weakness when the RHO intervenes, such as raising his partner. Rubensohl does a better job in this regard.

Assume for the moment the LHO has made a natural suit overcall. Use the same strategies for two-suited overcalls as in Lebensohl; and whatever runout you have chosen.

17.1 Transfer Bids

Just as the 2N relay was the signature bid for Lebensohl, Rubensohl's key bid is that the bids from 2N through 3S are transfers to the next strain. That is, to show a suit, responder bids the next lower strain as a transfer. A "transfer" to the overcalled suit using the suit below it is called a transfer cue bid. The transfer cue will be used to both:

- Ask for stoppers and,
- Find a 4-card major fit

It is possible to do both of these unless the overcall is in spades, so we will call it "Ask & Stayman", with the word "Ask" first to emphasize that the opener will next show or not show a stopper, as part of beginning the Stayman process.

So, with one of the four suit transfers being a "transfer cue", we have:

- Two-level suit bids, when available, are to play.
- 2N transfers to 3♣
- 3♣ transfers to 3♦
- 3♦ transfers to 3♥
- 3♥ transfers to 3♠
- 3♠ "transfers" to 3N, denying a stopper in the overcalled suit, and denying a four card major. (Slow denies)
- 3N is to play, showing a stopper and denying a four card major. (Fast shows)

When the two-level bid is not available, because the responder's suit is below the overcalled suit, the transfers are *always* completed by the opener. Then the responder passes to show a competitive hand or bids on to force to game.

When the two level bid is available, that bid is competitive, to play. The transfer bid shows invitational or better values. Opener will treat it as invitational at first, completing the transfer to decline the invitation, or making the next higher descriptive bid to force to game.

If the opener completes the transfer, responder gets a turn to make the auction game forcing by proceeding.

17.1.1 When The RHO Speaks

Before we go into the details, let's see how Rubensohl helps deal with a noisy RHO. Suppose that the responder has an invitational hand with hearts, but a diamond overcall is made. The responder playing Lebensohl starts with 2N!, but RHO raises his partner:

1N (2♦) 2N! (3♦)

Now opener does not know what suit, if any, responder holds. If it is hearts or spades, responder has invitational strength. If it is clubs, responder may be simply trying to compete. Or, it is possible responder intended next to cue bid showing four spades with a stopper in diamonds. The 2N bid has left opener with little useful information.

Playing Rubensohl in the same auction, responder bids 3♦ to transfer to hearts. Opener knows partner's suit is hearts, for sure. He does not know if that is invitational or game forcing.

1N (2♦) 3♦!

In this particular case RHO's raise has been "accidentally" blocked. Even if it hadn't been blocked, the opener can revalue his hand in light of a fit, if there is one, and decide what to do. And of course, if opener passes responder has a double if necessary, because if nothing else, opener can complete the transfer, since he knows the suit.

17.2 Rubensohl Details

Here are the available bids after we open 1N and they overcall two of a suit. Some bids require more detailed explanation in the following sections. Let O be the their suit (either the suit they bid naturally or one they showed artificially.)

Here are the bids after 1N (2O) or 1N (P) P (2O) P (P)

- A double initially shows competitive values and while takeout-oriented it promises 2+ in their suit. This allows opener to pass if appropriate. Responder may bid again with a stronger hand.

- A double by opener of an overcall in fourth seat is for takeout.
- 2 level suit bids are to play. Example: 1N (2♥) 2♠ is to play. These bids show a five or more card suit.
- 2N!, 3♣!, 3♦!, 3♥! are transfers to the next higher suit. These bids show a five or more card suit.
- 3♠! is a "transfer" to 3N, and denies a stopper and any unbid major.
- 3N is to play, and denies any unbid major.
- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4♦! and 4♥! are Texas Transfers to hearts and spades, showing six card suits and values for game only. With a strong hand and a six-card major, transfer first and then bid the suit at the four level to show slam interest.
- 4♠! (rare) invites opener to pick a minor game.
- 4N is invitational to 6N.

The transfer bids give some immediate information about strength if the suit being transferred to is higher than O. In that case responder is invitational or game forcing, because responder did not bid his suit at the two level. Compare:

- 1N (2♦) 3♦! = transfer to 3♥, invitational or game forcing, vs.
- 1N (2♦) 2♥ = to play

17.3 Bids after a transfer bid

After a responder makes a transfer bid to a suit, opener must compare the *target* suit to the *overcalled* suit.

- If a two-level bid was not available in responder's suit the responder is either competitive or game forcing.
 - The opener *must* complete the transfer

- Responder with a game-forcing hand will bid on.
- If the two-level bid was available, responder is at least invitational.
 - Opener declines the invitation by completing the transfer after which responder may force to game by bidding again.
 - Opener forces to game by making the lowest available descriptive bid instead of completing the transfer.

17.3.1 Sequences after suit transfers

Suppose responder has a diamond suit, lower than the overcalled suit, hearts, and does not have a four card or longer spade suit.

Assume the opponents pass throughout after the overcall. First responder transfers to diamonds:

1N (2♥) 3♣!(transfer to diamonds, competitive or game forcing)

Opener has no choice but to complete the transfer since diamonds (the target suit) is under hearts, so he bids 3♦!(forced).

Then responder's choices are after the completion of the transfer to 3♦ are:

- Pass with a competitive hand.
- 3♥! is a game force. Following a transfer to a minor with a cue bid shows exactly a single stopper and a six card good minor suit. Opener should be able to choose the contract.
- 3♠! is a game force, asking for a stopper. Responder denies a stopper in hearts.
- 3N to play, responder has a stopper.

Now consider some examples where responder's suit, hearts, is higher than the overcalled suit, diamonds. The big differences are

- Responder has a 2-level "drop dead" bid available, so the transfer is invitational or better, and

- Opener has a choice of whether or not to complete a transfer.
- Transfer and then cue is not available.

Here the responder has a heart suit, five or longer.

- 1N (2♦) 2♥ a competitive bid, to play.
- 1N (2♦) 3♦! transfer to hearts, invitational or better

Suppose the opener would not accept an invitation in hearts. He bids:

1N (2♦) 3♦! 3♥!(declines invitation).

Responder passes with an invitational hand. If responder goes on, he has a game forcing hand:

- 3♠! Asks responder to bid 3N with a stopper.
- 3N Has a stopper. Opener with 3 hearts may correct to 4♥.

But here the opener accepts the invitation by not completing the transfer:

1N (2♦) 3♦!(transfer to hearts, invitational or better)

- 3N to play, opener has diamonds stopped, and does not have three or more hearts. Should responder next bid 4♥ that would show six hearts with slam interest because he did not use a Texas Transfer.
- 3♠! Game force. Denies a diamond stopper and denies 3 or more hearts.
- 4♥ Opener has 3 or more hearts.

To illustrate the richness of information in these sequences, consider the sequence 1N (2♦) 3♦! 3♠!. We know that:

- Opener must be near max because he has put us in a game forcing auction.
- Opener has asked responder to bid 3N, rather than bidding 3N himself, so opener does not have a diamond stopper.
- Opener does not have three hearts.

- Responder has at least an invitational hand.

That's a pretty good haul with just two bids!

17.4 Show A Minor Or Just Go?

Suppose as responder you have a game-forcing hand with a decent minor suit, say diamonds, but lack a stopper in the overcalled suit, say hearts, and do not have a four card major. Both these approaches seem plausible:

- 1N (2♥) 3♣! Transfer to diamonds, planning to bid 3♠ next to ask for a stopper.
- 1N (2♥) 3♠! Denying a stopper, looking for 3N.

You should bid 3♣!, and then go on. The reason is, if your partner also lacks a stopper, you'll be looking for a minor fit and so you should show your diamonds on the way. On the other hand, if you do have a stopper, your second bid would be 3N, not 3♠; opener would wonder why you bothered to show the diamonds if you could have just bid 3N to start without his help. Therefore, he would conclude that you had slam interest.

Another strategy is to make the transfer and bid 3♠ when you have a less than premium hand and worry that you really need a stopper from partner to help. If he goes on to your diamonds, perhaps it will be for the best.

17.5 Transfer Cue Bids (Ask & Stayman)

As well as transferring to a real suit, the responder can transfer to their suit, O. This is game forcing. This bid simultaneously looks for a four-four major fit and a stopper in O. Responder must have a four card major under this scheme, because the he could just have bid 3♠ or 3N originally with a game-forcing notrump holding without a four-card major.

When the overcalled suit is a minor, completing the transfer will deny a stopper but not deny a four-card

major. When the overcalled suit is a major, completing the transfer will deny both a stopper and the other major. In both cases the subsequent bids are very logical and natural.

Note that 3♠ bids in Stayman sequences show spades, except in the case that spades is their suit. In all other cases in Rubensohl, 3♠ bids are denying stoppers.

17.5.1 When their suit is a minor

- Opener denies a stopper by completing the transfer to their suit, regardless of whether or not he has a four-card major.

That is opposite of normal Stayman, where the failure to bid a major denies both majors. At this point responder bids his lowest four card major looking for a fit.

If a fit cannot be located, opener can later bid 3N having already denied the stopper. Responder then passes 3N with a stop or pulls to a minor.

- Opener with a stopper does not complete the transfer, but instead bids his cheapest four card major, or 3N if he does not have one.

Raise opener's bid to 4M if there was a fit.

Bid 3N with a stopper but no unbid major.

Examples:

1N (2♦) 3♣! - 3♠ shows four spades, denies 4 hearts, shows a diamond stopper. This is the case in Rubensohl where 3♠ is good news, but since we were asking for a major no confusion should occur. Responder will bid 3N or 4♠.

1N (2♦) 3♣! - 3♥ shows a diamond stopper, and four hearts, but does not deny four spades. Now comes the usual Stayman dance: Responder with hearts will bid 4♥; with spades but not hearts will bid 3♠; and otherwise will bid 3N.

1N (2♦) 3♣! - 3N shows diamond stoppers but denies 4 hearts or 4 spades.

In this example sequence opener has no club stopper but does have spades:

```
1N (2♣) 2N! (Stayman, game forcing)
3♣! (no club stopper, does not deny a major)
- 3♠! (four spades, not four hearts)
4♠
```

Here opener does not have a major or a stopper:

```
1N (2♣) 2N! (Stayman, game forcing)
3♣! (no club stopper, does not deny a major)
- 3♠! (four spades, not four hearts)
3N! (denies four spades)
```

Since opener has denied a major fit and denied a club stopper, responder will now have to pass with a stopper or bid on to 4♦ looking for a fit.

In this example sequence opener has a no club stopper, four hearts, but not four spades. Responder has four hearts and a club stopper:

```
1N (2♣) 2N! (Stayman, game forcing)
3♣! (no club stopper) - 3♥
3♠ - 3N
```

Alas, this time responder has four hearts but like the opener lacks a club stopper:

```
1N (2♣) 2N! (Stayman, game forcing)
3♣! (no club stopper) 3♥
3♠ - 4♦ begins the search for a fit.
```

17.5.2 When their suit is hearts

When their suit is hearts, the transfer cue of 3♦! is Stayman showing a four-card spade suit. Opener:

- With four spades bids 4♠.
- Without four spades but with a heart stopper, opener bids 3N.
- Without four spades or a heart stopper, opener completes the transfer with 3♥.

17.5.3 When their suit is spades

When their suit is spades, the transfer cue of 3♥! is Stayman showing a four card heart suit. Opener:

- With four hearts bids 4♥.
- Without four hearts but with a spade stopper, opener bids 3N.
- Without four hearts or a spade stopper, opener completes the transfer with 3♠.

Note how in all cases completing the transfer is denying a stopper.

17.6 When We Have No Stoppers Or Major Fit

Some of the Stayman sequences will end with a crisis: no major fit has been found, and no stopper of their suit means we cannot stop at 3N. The system is arranged so that it is always responder's turn to bid when this is first known. Responder bids his lowest sensible four-card suit. If opener has a doubleton in that suit he bids the next suit up, and if responder does not have three cards in that suit he bids the next suit.

Note that opener has only one doubleton so if he does not like the first suggestion he has at least 3 cards in the remaining suits and in almost all realistic scenarios a 4-3 or better fit will be found.

17.7 Artificial Bids

If the opponents bid an artificial 2♣ meaning an unspecified long suit, or if they double meaning a long suit, we ignore this bid and play "systems on". Over 2♣, a double is Stayman.

If an overcall shows a definite suit plus an unspecified suit, bid as if the specified suit were overcalled unless and until the second suit becomes specified.

If an overcall shows two definite suits, proceed as normal except that both of the opponents suits are available as transfer cue bids. In that case,

- A direct 3N promises stops in both suits.
- A 3♠! (transfer to 3N) denies stops in both suits.

- A transfer cue therefore shows a stop in that suit but at most a half-stop in the other.

When we speak of the overcalled suit or suits, we mean the ones the bid *meant*, not the artificial one actually bid. For example, 1N (2N) shows the minors, so a response of 3♦ would show a stop in diamonds, no stop in clubs, and game-going values.

17.8 Rubensohl Themes

- Fast arrival to 3NT shows stoppers.
- A bid of 3♠ is most often denying stoppers and asking you to bid 3N if you can. The exception is when the bidder is showing spades in response to Stayman.
- Completing a transfer as requested is usually a negative vibe: - You may not have many points so I have to complete the transfer, or - I am denying stoppers, or
- I do not want game opposite an invitational hand.

17.9 Rubensohl Inferences

As we will see in these examples, Rubensohl requires thinking about not just what your partner bid but what he did not bid. Tremendous inferences are possible both as to shape and strength.

17.9.1 Inferences When Our Suit Is Lower

Responder has a club suit, lower than the overcalled suit, diamonds.

```
1N (2♦) 2N!
  Transfer to clubs, competitive or game
3♣! (forced)
  - 3♦! (six clubs, exactly one stop)
```

Inference: The transfer followed by the cue bid means six plus clubs and exactly one stopper. The

opener should be able to judge where to place the contract.

Responder asks for a stopper and opener doesn't have one:

```
1N (2♦) 2N!
3♣! (forced) 3♠! (stopper ask)
```

Inference: it is safe for opener to bid 4♣ since responder has five of them. Responder can bid 5♣ with sufficient values.

When responder slows down the auction to no apparent purpose, it shows slam interest.

```
1N (2♦) 2N!
3♣! (forced) 3N
```

Responder has a diamond stopper and game forcing values, so he could have just bid 3N directly unless he had a four-card major. But he doesn't, because with game forcing values and a four-card major he would bid Stayman.

Inference: going through the suit transfer first and then bidding 3N shows slam interest in his suit.

In the next two examples, the overcall is in spades. Suppose responder has a game-forcing hand with five hearts.

```
1N (2♠) 3♦! (transfer) 3N
```

Inference: Opener has a spade stopper, and two hearts (or he would have bid 4♥).

But without a spade stopper, opener completes the transfer.

```
1N (2♠) 3♦! (transfer) 3♥! (forced)
```

Inference: Opener does not have a spade stopper. The transfer-then-cue rule does not apply here because there was no room to ask for a stopper. If responder has a game forcing hand he must have a stopper to bid 3N. Otherwise he can temporize with 3♠ to see if opener will bid 4♥ or search for a minor fit. Note that in this process responder will know that if opener does not have three hearts, he must have at least three of everything else.

Note that these sequences are for hands with five or

more hearts. With four hearts use Stayman by making a transfer cue.

17.9.2 Inferences When Our Suit Is Higher

In the next set of examples, our suit is higher than the overcalled suit. A transfer is at least invitational since the 2-level bid is available for just competing.

The opener can decline the invitation by just accepting the transfer. He can accept with 3N if he has a stopper, or bid 4 of the major (or with a nice, slam suitable maximum, even make a cue bid on the way to 4 of the major).

1N (2♦) 2♥ is to play, as is 2♠.

In this example, responder is invitational with hearts:

```
1N (2♦) 3♦! (hearts, invitational or better)
3♥ - Pass
```

Opener declined the invitation by completing the transfer. In the next example, responder has slam interest in hearts:

```
1N (2♦) 3♦!
3♥ 4♥ (six hearts, game-forcing values)
```

Inference: Responder has slam interest, because without extras responder could have just used a Texas transfer.

```
1N (2♦) 3♦!
3♥ 3N
```

Responder has a diamond stopper, and game forcing values)

This is the same idea as an ordinary transfer without interference, 1N – 3♦! – 3♥ – 3N. If the opener has 3 hearts he will correct to 4♥. Compare with 1N (2♦) 2♥, which is just to play.

```
1N (2♦) 3♦!
3♥ 3♠!
```

Responder has game-forcing values but is asking for a stopper.

Inference: A 2♥ bid was possible for responder, so opener had a choice. Completing the transfer showed

no interest in accepting an invitation in hearts. However, responder bid on, using the artificial 3♠ bid to ask for a stopper. Opener must now bid 3N with a stopper, or bid 4♥ with three hearts, or look for a minor fit first with 4♣.

```
1N (2♦) 3♦!
4♥
```

Inference: Opener has made a super-accept. He has a maximum opener and four hearts.

```
1N (2♦) 4♦! (six hearts, invitational+)
```

Inference: This Texas Transfer shows six hearts, no slam interest.

17.9.3 Inferences When Our Suit Is Diamonds

Say the bidding has gone:

```
1N (2♣) 3♣! (transfer to diamonds)
3♦
```

Inference: opener is declining the invitation. If responder has game-forcing values,

- 3♥! game forcing, probably a hand with long diamonds and some values in hearts.
- 3♠! game forcing, asking for a bid of 3N if opener has stopper.
- 3N to play, has stopper – non forcing but interested in slam (because he did not bid 3N directly)

Note that 3♥ is not promising four hearts. If responder had a four card major he would have started with a cue bid, 2N in this case, as Stayman.

17.10 When Responder Passes

If responder has no other bid, they pass. This may include the case of a responder with values and a trump stack in the overcalled suit, similar to the case where responder cannot double because it would be a negative double and so opener reopens with a double to protect partner if short in the opponent's suit.

In this case, opener would have to have exactly a doubleton in the opponent's suit to reopen with a double. Playing a weak NT, that could mean ending up at 2N or the three level in a very hopeless contract if responder is very weak and not able to leave in the double. On the other hand, in some of these cases it is the opponent's hand and we may be stealing it.

I suggest we play this as reopening with a double only if not vulnerable with a hand suited to defense.

17.11 Three-level Overcalls

Rubensohl and Lebensohl are the same over three-level overcalls:

- A double is for takeout, showing support for the other three suits.
- Bids at the three level are natural, one-round forcing, and
- 3N, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, and 5♦ are to play.

17.12 Rubensohl Problems

Here are some problems using Rubensohl. I have gotten some of these problems from other sources on Lebensohl systems. In these problems, the 1N bids will show 12-14 and the responder will treat 11-12 points as invitational, but game forcing if it is a balanced 12.

1. Partner opens 1N, and your RHO overcalls 2♥. You hold:

♠5 ♥QJ7 ♦KJ742 ♣AQ52

What is the bidding from here?

1. You hold, as responder:

♠A ♥K9743 ♦A93 ♣8643

The bidding starts with 1N (2♦). You bid 3♦!, a transfer to hearts.

- What do you bid after your partner answers 3♥?

- This time your transfer is super-accepted with 4♥. Your call?
- Suppose your transfer sparks a 3♠ call. What now?

#. Your partner opens 1N, which your RHO overcalls with a natural 2♣. What do you bid?

♠Kx ♥AJT ♦KQJxxx ♣xx

1. Partner opens 1N, RHO overcalls 2♥. What's your plan?

♠KT9x ♥Kjx ♦Kx ♣KQJx

2. The bidding goes to you 1N (2♥). What next?

♠Kxxx ♥xx ♦AQJxxx ♣void

17.12.1 Answers

#. You have a game forcing hand and you do have a heart stopper. You can just bid 3N. You have no interest in slam and no particular reason to show the diamonds.

#. After 3♥, Pass. Partner declines your invitation. Hearts don't turn him on. After 4♥, Pass. You have no extras. After 3♠, your partner is looking for 3N. You have a stopper, so bid it!

#. Bid 3♣! This is a transfer to diamonds, not a cue bid. Your partner will either bid 3♦, indicating a minimum hand, or 3N showing a club stopper, or something else. If he bids 3♦, you can ask for the club stopper with 3♠!. If he bids 3♠!, he is asking if you have it, and since you don't you'll have to bid 4♦.

An alternative is a simple 3♠!, showing no club stopper and asking partner to bid 3N. However, if he doesn't have it and has only two diamonds he is less secure about how to go on than if he knows you have long diamonds.

#. The bid of 3♦! is a transfer to hearts, their suit, and hence is Stayman.

- If partner has four spades he will bid 4♠.
- If he has a stopper but not four spades he will bid 3N.

- If partner completes the transfer with 3♥, he does not have a stopper or four spades. You have a stopper so you can bid 3N.

#. This hand is a rule of 20 opener. Since diamonds is lower than the overcalled suit, there is a stark choice of playing this hand as game forcing or just competitive.

- If you transfer to diamonds with 3♣, partner must accept it with 3♦, and you could pass.
- Are you feeling lucky, kid? Well, are you? If partner has spades, your chances of game are great. So you can bid Stayman to find out: 3♦!. If partner replies 3♠ you can bid 4♠. And if partner replies 3N, perhaps it is worth a roll of the dice. But over 3♥, you must bail out at 4♦.

THE WEAK 1N OPENER

This document describes one approach to playing a weak 1N. Our approach assumes inverted minors and a SAYC or 2/1 system onto which you are adding a 12-14 weak NT. This version selects from the options offered in the book *The Weak Notrump* by Andy Stark, for the most part. That book is highly recommended.

If you are playing SAYC without inverted minors, learn them first. Note that playing a weak NT changes the minor openings in significant ways, as detailed below.

Dealing with competition is important with a weak NT system because competition is more likely. You are more vulnerable to a penalty double. A way to escape, called a *runout*, is necessary. Likewise you are less likely to be able to double for penalty effectively when they overcall your 1N opener. See *Runouts* for some choices.

You can use a weak NT system in certain situations only. For example, in first- or second-seat openings only, or only not vulnerable.

A side effect of playing a weak notrump is a big improvement in your skills playing 1N contracts; get strong or die.

18.1 Opening 1N

Open all hands 1N that meet these criteria:

- 12-14 points
- Shape is 4333, 4432, or 5332

There are two special cases:

- **Do** open almost all hands with three quick tricks, such as 3 Aces or AK in one suit and another Ace. Otherwise,

- **Do not** open a 12 point hand with a 4333 shape in first or second seat. If you open it in 3rd or 4th seat, open it 1N. Do not open it in a minor “just to get in there”. Your partner will think your hand is unbalanced as the auction goes on. Yes, sometimes you will be wrong, but many times you will be right. This restriction will allow us to bid some thin games.

For purposes of treating a hand as a strong 1N (15-17), the shape can be 5422 but only if at least one of the doubletons is Kx or Ax or better.

18.2 Responses when there is no competition

18.2.1 Using the Strong 1N System

Responding to a weak 1N can be done with the same system you use with a strong 1N. Invitational range is 11-12 (add 3 to normal values). However, with a balanced 12 that is not flat, usually we push to game. Two 12 point hands make 3N more often than a 17-8 split because you have entries in both hands.

18.2.2 Forcing Stayman

An alternative is Forcing Stayman. In the forcing Stayman scheme, 2♦ is a game force, and there are no transfers except Texas transfers.

Responses to 1N depend on the strength of the responder’s hand:

- Weak hands pass or make drop-dead bids of 2♥, 2♠, or at the 3-level.
- Holding a five card major, bid 2♥ or 2♠. These are natural and to play.

- Holding a six-card minor, bid 3♣ or 3♦. These are natural and to play.
- Holding a seven-card major, bid 3♥ or 3♠. These are natural and to play.
- All invitational hands with a four-card major respond with 2♣, Stayman. This bid can also be made with a weak hand with a stiff or void in clubs, intending to pass any response. Responses are as with normal Stayman.
- 2N shows invitational values and no four-card major.
- With a six card major, and a minimum raise to game, bid a Texas Transfer of 4♦ or 4♥.
- Most game forcing hands respond with 2♦!(artificial, forcing to game or four of a minor). This is called Forcing Stayman.

After responder bids 2♦, opener's rebid clarifies his hand type. We agree not to stop short of 3N, four of a minor, or four of a major. We are not forcing to five of a minor.

- If you have a 4-card major, bid that major. If you have both 4-card majors, bid 2 hearts.
- If you have a five-card major, bid it. You will rebid it next to show the five-card suit.
- If you do not have a major, bid a five card minor.
- If you have neither a four card major or a five card minor, bid 2N. (Note, not 3N, and this 2N can NEVER be passed.) Your shape will be 3244, 2344, 3334, or 3343.

If opener bids a major that the responder holds, the responder can jump to game holding a minimum, or give a raise to show slam interest. Remember, responder is the captain of the hand. Opener should then start cue bidding.

Responder now can show a five-card or longer major by bidding it. He can bid 2N!(tell me more), if available, to ask partner for more information. In the following auctions, responder's second bid shows a five-card major:

```
1N 2♦!
2♥ 2♠!
```

```
1N 2♦!
2♠ 3♥
```

```
1N 2♦!
2N 3♥
```

```
1N 2♦!
3♣ 3♠
```

Note particularly that 1N 2♦! 2♥ 2♠ shows five spades. With only four, bid 2N! (tell me more). This gives opener room to bid 3♠ next to show 4 hearts and 4 spades, or to bid 3♥ to show five hearts.

18.2.3 Slam Auctions

If responder bids 2♦!(forcing) and then 4N, it is a quantitative raise.

If a suit is agreed to after 2♦, then 4N becomes RKC. For example:

```
1N 2♦!(forcing)
2♥ 2♠!(five spades)
3♠ 4N(RKC)
```

If responder makes a Texas Transfer and then bids 4N it is RKC:

```
1N 4♦!(transfer)
4♥ 4N (keycard)
```

Other slam auctions can use splinters. Note that in this auction, hearts are agreed to and responder is showing a splinter in spades:

```
1N 2♦!(forcing)
2♥ 3♠!(agrees hearts, 0-1 spades)
```

And in this one:

```
1N 2♦!(forcing)
2♠ 2♥!(five hearts)
3♥! 4♣ (splinter in clubs)
```

Finally,

```
1N 2♦!(forcing)
2♥ 4♦ (agrees hearts, splinter in diamonds)
```

Of course, responder should not splinter without slam interest.

18.3 Opening a minor

With a hand that would normally open a strong 1N, you open a minor and then rebid notrump. We tend not to open iffy minors so as not to let the opponents glide into the auction with their major. Therefore a 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid is either 15 points or more, balanced, OR it is a sound unbalanced opening. Equal short minors(3-3 or 4-4) are normally opened 1♣. Black 5-5's are opened 1♠.

The main idea is that opener will rebid notrump to show the strong balanced hand; rebidding something else shows the unbalanced opener. Because opener might be so strong, the responder tries hard to bid, rather than insisting on a solid six.

The minor raises are inverted, so that the single raise shows 10 points and four cards in the suit, while the double raise is preemptive. Since opener either has a real minor suit OR has 15 HCP, the inverted minor bids are safer than normal and you can make the strong 2m raise with only 4 cards.

Responder does not bypass 1♦ for a four card major unless he intends to pass a 1N rebid by opener. Therefore, a 1♦ response to a 1♣ opener indicates either an invitational hand or a hand lacking a four-card major.

Sometimes a hand that is 4=5 in the minors is especially awkward to rebid, so depending on suit quality, it is acceptable to open these 1♦ if minimum, or in first or second seat to consider passing a 12 point hand.

18.3.1 Responses to one of a minor

Here are the responses to a 1♣ or 1♦ opener.

- 1♣ - 1♦ is a normal 6+ bid. Responder will either have a hand capable of a bid over 1N or no four card major.

- 1♣/1♦ - 1M, shows 4+ cards in M. If the hand is good enough to bid over 1N, it will not have a longer diamond suit.
- 1♣/1♦ - 1N shows 6-10 HCP, balanced, denies diamonds, hearts, and spades. With a good 9 or 10 and a decent club suit, consider bidding a 3=3=3=4 as 2♣ rather than 1N.
- 1♣/1♦ - 2N shows 11-12 HCP, balanced, no four card major. Again, prefer a suit bid if you have one.
- 1♣/1♦ - 3N shows 13-15 HCP, balanced, no four card major.

Note that we try to avoid notrump responses, especially 1N, so that opener can show the big balanced hand on his second bid.

- The raise to the two-level shows 4+ cards, 10+ HCP, and no four-card major. Four cards are allowed here because opener either has a real suit or is strong.
- The raise to the three level is preemptive, showing 5+ cards and 5 points or less, ideally – but since bidding 1N is to be avoided with a weak 1N, you can stretch this as far as 7 points.
- Jump shifts are a partnership agreement, weak or strong.

After a 1m – 2m inverted raise, a rebid of 2N shows the strong 15-17 notrump hand and is game forcing. Otherwise, start bidding stoppers up the line.

18.3.2 Opener's rebid

Opener can pass a 1N or 2N response or any preemptive bid, but otherwise must bid again. 1♦ - 1N - 2♣ or 1♦ - 1N - 2♦ is not forcing; a reverse is forcing for one round.

After 1m – 1M, raise the major with 4 cards, or with 3 cards and an outside stiff or void; details below. Otherwise,

- With 15 or more HCP and a balanced hand, opener will rebid some level of notrump.
 - 1N shows 15 - 17 balanced.

- A jump to 2N shows 18 - 19 balanced.
 - A 2N bid over a two-level bid by partner is 15 or more and is game forcing.
 - 3N shows a long solid minor with an opening hand, akin to a gambling 3N opener.
- Opener can reverse with a good 17. Rebidding the other minor is 'reverse-like': either 1♣ then 2♦ or 1♣ then 2♦ is treated as a reverse.
 - Jumping to 3m shows 17 or more, unbalanced, with no available reverse, so a long suit.
 - 1m - 1x - 3N is a long solid minor with an opening hand, similar to a gambling 3N.
 - 1♦ then 3♣ is a minimal opener usually 5-5 in the minors. Except for that,
 - Jump shifts by opener show a strong 19 or more unbalanced hand.
 - When nothing else applies rebid the minor.

Notes:

- As usual, if there is an overcall by LHO and it is passed around to the opener, opener should consider reopening with a double if short in their suit.
- If RHO balances or raises his partner's overcall, Lebensohl or whatever you are using over overcalls, applies.
- Otherwise, if responder has bid but an intended 1N rebid is not possible due to competition, 2N shows the strong NT hand and a stopper. With a strong NT hand and no stopper, opener doubles.
- After 1m - 1N, we know responder has 6 - 9 and less than four cards in any bypassed suit. With a hand less than 16 HCP,
 - Sign off with a pass, or 2m
 - 1♦ - 1N - 2♣ shows a minimal opener, 5 - 4 in the minors, letting responder choose a minor.

- The auction 1♣ - 1♦ is standard except you can't rebid 1N lacking the 15-17 balanced hand. You can raise diamonds with 4. When stuck rebid your minor.

18.3.3 Raising A Major

After 1m - 1M, if you have 4 cards in M or 3 with an outside stiff or void, revalue the hand. Since your hand was either strong and balanced, or unbalanced, the hand is unlikely to be worth less than 14 support points.

- With 14 - 17 support points rebid 2M.
- With 18 - 19 support points rebid 3M.
- With 20 or more support points rebid 4M.

18.3.4 After the Strong 1N Rebid

The structure after the 1N rebid is almost exactly the same as with the 1N opener. Note that the assumption here is that opener could not raise partner's suit. First we'll discuss the auction where responder bids a major and opener shows the strong 1N hand. We'll discuss the auction 1♣ - 1♦ - 1N later.

18.3.5 After 1♣ - 1M - 1N

If responder has less than 8 points, he may pass, rebid his major to play, or bid a new suit at the 3 level, to play.

If responder has 8 or 9 points, he usually wants to know more about the opener's hand. If the responder does not have five of his major, and has no interest in the other major, with an invitational balanced hand he can just raise to 2N. Otherwise, he should begin with 2♣!, invitational checkback Stayman. Stronger hands will begin with 2♦!(game forcing) if using Forcing Stayman.

A special exception is to rebid a major at the 3 level: this is an invitational hand with a six card major that is a good suit. With a lesser suit, use 2 Clubs first and then rebid the major.

1m - 1M - 1N!(15 - 17 balanced) 2♣! is Invitational Checkback Stayman. It should be alerted as, “asking for further hand description, invitational.” Opener with a minimum hand (that is, declining the invitation) replies:

- 2♦!: No three card support for partner’s suit, no four cards in other major.
- 2♥ / 2♠: Bidding responder’s major shows three, bidding the other major shows four. When holding both 3 of his suit, and 4 of the other major, raise responder’s major.

If opener has a maximum (accepting the invitation), he can bid 2N or at the 3 level:

- 2N: Opener has no support, does not have the other major, but has a maximum hand.
- 3m: Opener has 5+ in the minor, with a maximum hand.
- 3M: Opener has a maximum hand and at least 3 of partner’s major.
- 3W: Bidding the other major at the three level shows a maximum and 4 of that major, but denies 3 of the responder’s major. Responder will pick from 4W, 3N, or even 4M.

On responder’s second bid, he can rebid his major to show an invitational hand with six cards.

18.3.6 After 1♣ - 1♦ - 1N

Responder should bypass 1♦ to show a four card major only if he intends to pass a 1N rebid. Hence the 1♦ bid shows responder has no four-card major or has 8 points. Now:

- 1♣ - 1♦ - 1N - 2♣! is invitational checkback Stayman.
- 1♣ - 1♦ - 1N - 2♦! is game forcing checkback Stayman.
- 1♣ - 1♦ - 1N - 3♣ 8 HCP, probably 3 clubs and 4+ diamonds.

Note that with no major, and 4 clubs, responder would have made a strong or a weak club raise. With a major and invitational-plus values, responder

would bid 2♣ here. With a major and weak values, responder would have bid the major rather than 1♦. Therefore, this must be a 8 or more HCP club raise with not enough clubs to have made the strong 2♣ response. Hence responder probably has 3 clubs.

18.3.7 After We Make A 1N Overcall

We use the same system after we overcall 1N as we do with a strong 1N rebid. The only difference is neither party has shown a suit. Use 2♣! for invitational hands, and 2♦! for game-forcing hands, or just 2N to invite with no major suit.

When the 1N overcall is in balancing seat, the range is 11-14. Since the hand in second seat can be up to 16 HCP but had been unable to find a bid, we proceed normally. However, remember to “give back the King” in computing ranges.

18.4 Competitive Bidding After A Weak 1N Opener

In this section we discuss our method of dealing with interference after we have opened a weak 1N.

18.4.1 Over A Double

When 1N is doubled, we use the *Handy Runout*.

18.4.2 Over An Overcall

The choices here are to use stolen bids, Lebensohl, or Rubensohl. If the overcall is 2♣, natural or artificial, then double is Stayman, and otherwise we ignore their bid for the moment unless it shows two definite suits. In that case see “Two-suited Overcalls”, below.

If the opponents bid is a transfer, such as 1N (2♥) to show spades,

- Double shows 10+ points and is forcing through 2♥.

- If you pass first and then double after opponents have come to rest, that is penalty.
- New suits at the two level are to play. New suits at the three level are game forcing.
- A bid of the suit they are trying to transfer to is Stayman, game forcing.

18.4.3 Over Two-Suited Overcalls

- Reminder: if the bid is clubs, systems are on.
- A double shows 10 or more points and the ability to double at least one of their suits. It is forcing through 2♥.
- Pass and then double shows 8-10, a takeout-oriented competitive double. Stark gives this example:

1N (2♦!majors) P(you) (2♥) P (P) ?

holding ♠K93 95 ♦AJ84 ♣QT98, is a good place for a competitive double. However, with slightly less values, it is ok to pass and defend, especially if vulnerable. As usual with takeout doubles, shape is crucial to the decision.

18.4.4 The Opponents Overcall At The Three Level

A double is for takeout. Three level suit bids are forcing.

18.4.5 RHO Overcalls After Two Passes

Generally opener must pass after a bid by RHO. Responder is captain here. He may have zero HCP, he may have 10.

Any suit bid by responder is to play, and shows at least five cards. A double is for takeout; opener should bid his best suit. Any subsequent double by us is penalty.

18.4.6 The Opponents Double Stayman

If 2♣ is doubled, normal responses to Stayman are available. Pass shows 4 Clubs and suggests leaving the penalty in. Redouble shows five clubs and suggests leaving the penalty in. In turn, the responder can repeat the Stayman with 3♣, or bid 2♥ or 2♠ to play showing a five-card suit.

If 2♦ (forcing) is doubled, the same scheme can be used, but the emphasis should be on seeing if we can play 2♦ redoubled.

GLOSSARY

Conventions and concepts described as “advanced” are in the *Advanced Bidding* notes.

2/1 Stands for the advanced system Two Over One Game Force, or the signature meaning of a non-jump bid of two of a new suit over partner’s one bid in a suit.

advancer The partner of the *overcaller*.

alert To give a required notification to the opponents. The need for an alert is shown by an exclamation point following the bid. If the opponents ask what the bid means, the proper explanation is shown following the exclamation point.

announce To say aloud certain explanations, such as notrump ranges.

attitude When signaling on defense, refers to showing if you want a suit continued or not.

balanced A hand with an even distribution of suit lengths, 5-3-3-2, 4-4-3-2, or 4-3-3-3.

balancing To make a bid in *passout seat* when your partner has passed. For example, (1♥) - P - (P) - 1♠ and (1♥) - P- (2♥) - P; (P) 2♠ are balancing bids.

business double A synonym for *penalty double*

bust A hand with very few points; no Aces or Kings, and at most one Queen.

captain Refers to the partner who knows the other’s strength and shape within sufficient limits that he must decide the correct path to the final contract, after possibly gathering more information. Switches of captain later may occur, but generally the captain is in charge.

competitive A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, strong enough to bid but not strong enough for

bidding game.

control bid A bid showing an Ace or void; or in the Italian system, first or second round control of that suit.

controls Refers to the number of control points in a hand, counting an Ace as 2 and a King as 1. Also refers to a certain advanced system for responding to a 2♣ opener.

convention A bid which changes the standard meaning of that bid to serve another purpose, together with its followups.

cooperative double A double that is nominally for takeout but which seeks partner’s opinion on the best action to take.

count When signaling on defense, refers to showing number of cards in a suit.

cue bid A bid of a suit already bid by the opponents. Cue bid is also an older term for *control bid*.

current count When signaling on defense, refers to showing the number of cards in a suit that one holds at the moment, as opposed to originally.

doubleton A suit of exactly two cards. Called *worthless* if it does not contain an Ace or King.

Drury A convention played after a major opening in third or fourth seat when the responder is a passed hand, to show a limit raise or better. Reverse Drury and Two-Way Reverse Drury are two variants; the original version is almost never played today.

gadgets A gadget is a convention that is usually applicable in a small niche bidding situation, or which is considered a minor tweak on another convention. Gadgets are often inappropriate for intermediates or casual partnerships.

- game forcing** A hand, or bid indicating a hand, strong enough to require bidding that leads to a game or four of a minor suit. Abbreviated “gf”.
- Gerber** A bid of 4 clubs that asks responder how many Aces he holds.
- gf** An abbreviation of *game forcing*.
- good suit** A “good suit” is one with 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5, but not QJ10, and usually five or more cards.
- grand** Short for *grand slam*.
- HCP** High-card points. See Hand Evaluation.
- intervenor** Another word for *overcaller*.
- inv** An abbreviation of *invitational*.
- invitational** A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, within 2 points of being game forcing. Abbreviated INV.
- jump-shift** A bid of a new suit (a shift) one level higher than it needs to be (a jump).
- Law of Total Tricks** A guideline used to help determine how high to bid in a competitive auction. With a trump fit of 8 cards or more, and the *HCP* fairly evenly divided, the number of tricks the partnership can expect to win is approximately the total number of trump held by the partners.
- leave it in** To pass partner’s *takeout double*.
- Lebensohl** An advanced convention for distinguishing strengths of responder’s hand in difficult circumstances, especially after an overcall of a 1N opener.
- LHO** Left hand opponent; the player to the left of the player
- major** Spades or hearts; frequently abbreviated M.
- minimax** A style of making two-suited bids, in which the bid is not used for intermediate hands.
- minor** Diamonds or clubs; frequently abbreviated M.
- Minorwood** An ace-asking bid of four of the minor, played with inverted minors.
- negative double** A double that shows strength in unbid suits is called a negative double. The most common example is partner opens a suit and is overcalled in another suit; then a double by responder is a negative double.
- overcaller** The player that overcalled; the partner of the *advancer*. We also call him the *intervenor*.
- pass or correct** A bid intended to either be passed or corrected to another suit. See Minor Relay for an example.
- passout seat** A bidder about to make the third consecutive pass, ending the auction. After an opening bid and two passes, to bid in passout seat is called *balancing*.
- penalty double** A double made with the intent of having partner pass, to collect penalties.
- preempt** Short for *preemptive bid*.
- preemptive** Describes a bid intended to interfere in the opponents auction, usually by or opening or jumping in a long suit.
- pull** To pull a double means to bid over partner’s *penalty double*.
- quantitative** A bid that invites partner to bid slam if on the top of his known range. In conversation, often abbreviated as *quant*.
- rattlesnake** Describes a hand with a 4441 shape (or 5440, if the five-card suit is a minor).
- relay** A bid which requires partner to bid a certain suit, but does not imply possession of that suit by the bidder. Compare to *transfer*.
- responder** The partner of the opener
- responsive double** An advanced convention used to compete after partner makes a takeout double.
- reverse** (1) a bid in a suit higher than the suit you first bid, showing a stronger hand than you’ve shown so far; or (2) an adjective applied to the name of a convention indicating a variant in which two of the bids are interchanged, as in Reverse Bergen or Reverse Drury.

- RHO** Right hand opponent; the player to the right of the player
- Rubensohl** A *transfer* version of *Lebensohl*; Rubensohl is the hardest convention in this book. See *Rubensohl*.
- Rule of 17** A guideline used to help determine whether or not to raise a preemptive major bid by partner to game. The rule says to add your *HCP* and number of trumps, and bid game if the total is 17 or more.
- Rule of 20** A hand is said to satisfy the Rule of 20 if its number of high card points plus the sum of the lengths of its two longest suits adds up to 20 or more.
- runout** A method of escaping from a penalty double, such as a double of a
- Sandwich 1N** After opponents have bid 1x - 1y, a 1N conventional bid to show the other two suits with a sub-opening hand.
- semi-balanced** A hand with a 5-4-2-2 or 6-3-2-2 shape, the longest being a minor.
- short** A suit is *short* if it contains 2 or fewer cards.
- singleton** A suit containing just one card.
- slamish** A hand, or a bid showing a hand, that possibly but not definitively might contribute to a slam.
- SOS redouble** A redouble in the passout seat after an opening bid has been doubled for takeout or for balancing.
- splinter** A triple-jump bid showing a stiff or a void in the suit bid and agreeing to partner's last-bid suit as trump. Examples are 1♠ - 4♥!, 1♥ - 4♣!, and the tricky one, 1♥ - 3♠!.
- Stayman** The Stayman Convention is classically a bid of the lowest number of clubs after a notrump opening; it inquires about the opener's major suit holdings. The term is also used to refer other bids with the same purpose.
- stiff** Slang for *singleton*.
- super-accept** A jump agreement in response to a *transfer*.
- support double** An advanced convention used to show exactly 3-card support for responder's suit.
- takeout double** A double that asks partner to bid, usually with an emphasis on getting partner to reveal an unbid major suit.
- tenace** A holding that includes two cards separated by one missing one, such as AQ or KJ. Such a holding is strong if behind the missing card, but weak if the stronger card(s) are behind it. The missing card is said to be *onside* if ahead of the tenace, and *offside* otherwise.
- thirteen** The most important number in bridge.
- transfer** A bid which requests partner to bid a certain suit which is held by the bidder; the intent is usually to cause partner to be the declarer if that suit is trump. Usually the suit bid is one denomination less than the suit requested, known as the *target suit*.
- If partner bids the target suit as requested it is called *accepting* the transfer. If he bids it but one level higher than necessary it is called a *super-accept*; and if he bids something else it is called *breaking* the transfer.
- Compare to *relay*.
- Two Over One** An advanced version of Standard American. Also written 2/1.
- UDA** Short for "upside down attitude, right-side up count". A low card is encouraging or from an even number.
- UDCA** Short for "upside-down count and upside-down attitude" card signals. A low card is encouraging or from an odd number.
- underlead** To lead a small card from a suit containing an honor; for example to lead the 5 from K985.
- unpassed hand** A hand that has not yet had a chance to bid, or did have a chance but did not pass.
- void** A suit containing no cards.

W W is our notation for the “other” major in an auction where a major M has been bid.

w w is our notation for the “other” minor in an auction where the a minor m has been bid.

weak A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, too weak for any but obstructive action.

X Double

XX Redouble

yarborough A hand containing no honors; a real *bust*.

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