
Advanced Bidding

Release 8.1

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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*.

Please note the rant in that book about not playing too many conventions. To which, we must now add:

<p>Warning: Some of these conventions are mutually exclusive!</p>
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This work grew so large that I have separated off the defensive-related conventions into a separate document, *Defensive Bidding*. This volume contains the offensive conventions.

These books do *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.

1.1 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, notrump-related conventions, and major opening enhancements.
- Modern practice is changing the meaning of a jump-shift not in competition. A chapter shows you other choices.
- A chapter on playing a 12-14 no-trump opening is included for your interest.

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

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.

NOTRUMP-RELATED CONVENTIONS

2.1 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 (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♦! Responder has two 4 card majors. Opener has choice of games.
- 3M!(Opener has this five card major)
 - Responder normally chooses between 3N or 4M.
 - Responder with slam interest and 3+ card fit in M can bid the other major as a power raise of M. It can't be natural.
 - 4♣ is natural with long clubs.
 - 4♦ is natural with long diamonds.
 - 4N is quantitative (M is not agreed as our suit)
 - Suit bids at the five level are splinters.
- 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”. Again, if opener shows a five-card major, bidding the other major is a power raise.

2.1.1 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.)
- 3♠! Opener has five spades.
- 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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 four-card suit, *at the three level*; this lets the opener declare if he has 3 of the long suit, as with Puppet Stayman.

See also *Delayed Texas* (page 4) as an alternative for the 6-4 case.

Personally, while I admire the theory behind Smolen, for me it seems to come up so rarely that the chances for tragedy outweigh its possibilities for gain. I would not agree to it with a casual or infrequent partner.

A two-level bid of a major over 2♦ means something else, depending on your agreements.

IMPROVED MAJOR CONTRACTS

This chapter highlights advanced treatments of major openings and their related conventions, and the case of opener raising responder's major.

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.2.1 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♦.

3.3 Constructive Raises

Constructive raises 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?”. (Larry Cohen says it means, “Forcing”!)

3.4 Kokish Game Tries

After an auction beginning 1M - 2M, Kokish game tries are an alternative to Help Suit Game Tries, combining that with the ability to show shortness instead. The first step up is an inquiry, while other suits show shortness.

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.
- 3♣! / 3♦! / 2N!(spades) is a game try that shows shortness.
- 3♥ is a game try needing trump honors.

After 1♠ - 2♠, the idea is the same:

- 2N! asks in what suit responder would accept a game try.
- 3♣! / 3♦! / 3♥! is a game try showing shortness.
- 3♠ is a game try needing trump honors.

In responding to a bid showing shortness, the responder should judge based on his values and whether or not any of them are wasted opposite the short suit.

Variation: always use 2N! as the inquiry bid.

3.5 Raising Responder's Major

When opener opens a minor, and responder shows a major, when can opener raise that suit?

Usually one wants four cards in the major, because the responder has only shown four. However, sometimes opener will raise on three cards to an honor, provided he has a stiff or void. For example, holding ♠K32 ♥8 ♦KJ83 ♣AQ965 we will open 1♣. If partner replies 1♠, we can raise to 2♠ rather than rebid our five-card club suit. Especially at match-points, we'd hate to find out later that responder had five spades. And in this case, we don't have enough to reverse into diamonds.

However, how should responder proceed to make a game try? Is there a way to know more about that raise? Eric Rodwell developed a game try convention for this situation, which simplified is called Spiral. It is a spiritual cousin of Ogust.

There are different versions, of course, but here is one for us mortals.

After hearing 1m - 1M - 2M, responder can bid 2N! to ask about the nature of opener's raise. The next steps represent:

1. 3 card raise, minimal (11-13)
2. 3 card raise, maximal (14-15)
3. 4 card raise, minimal
4. 4 card raise, maximal

These bids are all alertable, of course.

In addition, bids at the four level below trump are splinters with four-card support, any strength. With more than 15, opener should bid game.

In our example, the bidding would go 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♠ - 2N!(inquiry); 3♣!(min, 3 spades). This allows responder to stop at 3♠ if needed.

Had the suit been hearts, the auction would start 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♥ - 2N!.

Variation: over hearts, use 2♠ as the inquiry.

3.6 A Better System After J2NT

The standard scheme of responses to Jacoby 2N (1M - 2N!(4 trump, opening hand)) have problems. 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. Another complaint is that the standard answers gives away shape information even when it turns out nobody has slam interest at all.

For the “standard expert idea” see Larry Cohen’s web pages. Here is a simpler version of the same idea for established intermediate to advanced partnerships:

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

After 1M - 2N!(game forcing, 4+ card support), 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”
- 4M shows the worst imaginable opener, always 5332.
- Other four-level suit bids show a great second five-card suit. These bids tend to not show extra HCP, just the great shape.

After a reply showing extras responder should cue-bid if above minimum.

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.

Note: Since a 5332 with 15-17 HCP would be opened 1N, the 3♦! reply to 2N! is usually 5422, or it is 18+ HCP.

3.7 Gitelman’s Major Raises

In a series of three articles entitled “Improving 2/1 Game Force” (1993), Bridge Base founder Fred Gitelman explained his ideas for improving 2/1. He suggested a different approach to major raises, avoiding J2NT, and explained 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.

3.7.1 Serious 3N

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

With the Serious 3N convention, 3N is a serious slam try, while the control-showing bid is mild interest in slam, and just bidding game shows no slam interest.

Experts have of course many different opinions and variations, including making 3N the non-serious choice. Some say the agreement must be in a game-forcing auction.

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♣ and 2♦ 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♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦!

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

4.1 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♣!.

4.1.1 Invitational Hands

We bid 2♣!(artificial) with invitational hands containing five of our major or four of the other major. Opener must rebid 2♦!(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♠ - 1N - 2♣!(artificial) - 2♦!(forced), responder bids:

- Pass - signoff in 2♦.
- 2♥ - Invitational with 5 spades and 4 hearts.
- 2♠ - 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♣ - Invitational with 4 spades and clubs.
- 3♦ - Invitational with 4 spades and diamonds.
- 3♥ - Invitational with 5-5 in the majors.
- 3♠ - Invitational with 6 spades.

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

- Pass - signoff in 2♦.
- 2♥ - Mildly invitational with 5+ hearts
- 2♠ - 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.

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 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♣).

4.1.4 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.

4.2 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.

suit, as in 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦!(GF) where we do not bid 2♣ as the fourth suit.

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

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

4.2.1 Followups after the 2 Club Relay

After the 2♣!(forcing, usually invitational) - 2♦!(forced) relay, the followups are:

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

<p>1♦ - 1♥ 1♠ - 2♣(relay to 2♦) 2♠</p>
--

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♣! then 2N. Partnerships could assign different shades of meaning to these bids.

Note that fourth suit forcing to game is covered by the 2♦! bid, which might not be the actual fourth

ADVANCED RESPONSES TO TWO CLUB OPENERS

When partner opens a strong 2♣ and your hand looks like a vast wasteland, the standard 2♦ (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♦!(0-3), 2♥(4-6), etc. This is not an advanced convention, it is a mistake.

5.1 Control Responses To Two Clubs

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

- 2♦! = (negative) zero or one (that is, no Aces, perhaps one King)
- 2♥! = two (one Ace or two Kings)
- 2♠! = exactly one Ace and one King
- 2N! = three Kings
- 3♣! = 4 points, 3♦! = 5 points, etc.

After 2♣ – 2♦! – 2N, responder can pass. Systems are on. If opener rebids a suit, however, responder must bid again. After 2♣ - 2♦, opener can jump to 3N if willing to be in that contract opposite a wasteland.

5.1.1 Continuations After Positive Responses

After any positive response to 2♣, we are in a game-forcing auction. Opener with a balanced hand should bid 2N, and systems are on. Opener should not 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.

Using 4N as RKC is not often useful with this convention. Rather, if opener rebids 4N, it is asking for the suit of the lowest control held by responder. Next, opener may bid the next step up to ask for the next lowest control, although this is rare.

5.2 Two Hearts Bust Response to Two Clubs

With partnership agreement, the responses to 2♣ become:

- 2♥! shows a bad (“bust”) hand, with no Ace or King and not even two Queens.
- The other bids remain the same
- 2♦ is now game forcing.
- 2N! is available to show hearts and 8+ HCP, but one would not want to make this bid unless certain you want to play in hearts.

If the opener rebids 2N over 2♥!, the responder may pass. Systems are on, so 3♦! still asks opener to bid 3♥.

If the opener rebids 2N over any other response it cannot be passed. Systems are on.

After any suit rebid over 2♥!, the responder must bid again.

5.2.1 Parrish Relay

The Parrish convention applies after a Two Hearts Bust response. It provides a way for opener to bid a suit and have it be non-forcing, thus stopping below game.

The Parrish Relay is a bid of 2♠!(relay), forcing responder to bid 2N. Opener’s next bid is now not forcing. Note that any concern about wrong-siding notrump is not correct, because if Opener is willing to play in notrump they don’t use the relay.

By contrast, after 2♥!, suit bids at the three level are forcing. So:

2♣ - 2♥!(bust)
 2N is not forcing
 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ are forcing

but

2♣ - 2♥!(bust)

2♠!(relay) - 2N!(forced)
 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ are not forcing

5.3 Kokish

Kokish applies after a 2♦ response to 2♣, whether it means waiting or negative.

A rebid of 2♥! means a hand that has five hearts, and possibly another suit; or a strong notrump hand. Responder relays with 2♠!, then opener rebids hearts, another suit, or in notrump. All of these are forcing.

Another suit shows five hearts and at least four of the suit bid. Rebidding hearts shows six hearts. Notrump shows a 25+ notrump hand.

In both cases, systems are on if notrump is rebid, and we are in a game forcing auction.

The point is that an opener with 25+ or more points does not have to jump in notrump but can use the Kokish 2H bid first so that a subsequent 2N is forcing. Also, it helps in showing two-suited very strong hands, which are often awkward to show after 2♣ openers.

5.4 Smith’s 2♦ Waiting System

Marc Smith uses the following system which has Kokish but no second negative. The range of the 2N opener is expanded to 20-22.

After 2♣ FG or 23-24 balanced:

- 2♦ waiting:
 - 2♥ Kokish, FG or 25+ Balanced
 - * 2♠ most hands, all balanced hands, hands with majors, good hands
 - ^ 2N 25+ Balanced; systems on, 3N next 25-27, 4N 29-31, ... ^ 3m or 3♠ second suit with hearts ^ 3♥ 6+ hearts, not solid hearts with 9 tricks) ^ 3N solid hearts exactly 9 tricks

- * 2N 5/5 minors and weak, no slam interest opposite a balanced 25.
 - ^ 3m slam interest, sets suit
 - ^ 3♥ 6+ hearts, invites a raise with a doubleton ^ 3♠
 - less than 2 hearts
- * 2♠ natural FG
- * 2N 23-24 NF, systems on
- 3♣ 6+ clubs, may or may not have a four-card major.
 - * 3♦ Stayman; 3M reply or 4♦ natural
 - * 3M five card suit – W or 4♦ agrees major.
- 3♦ 6+ diamonds with no 4-card major
- 3M 4 card major and 5+ ♦.
- **3N shows a solid minor and exactly 9 tricks. Opener may have an unstopped suit.**
 - Responder may remove to 5♣ pass or correct, or 4♣ with slam interest in opener's minor.
- 2M positive values (8+ HCP) with a good 5-card suit. Forcing to 4M or 4N. Note that 3N by opener is forcing.
- 3m positive values (8+ HCP) with a good 6-card suit. Forcing to 4N or 5m. Note that 3N by opener is forcing.

INTERESTING GADGETS

This chapter describes a variety of interesting *gadgets* you might see, or wish to adopt. Many gadgets outside the standard ones have one or more variants. If something here sparks your interest, you may wish to do further research.

6.1 Showing Both Majors in Stayman

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

1N $2\clubsuit$ $3\clubsuit$!(max, 4-4 majors) $3\diamondsuit$!(transfer) $3\heartsuit$

1N $2\clubsuit$ $3\clubsuit$!(max, 4-4 majors) $3\heartsuit$!(transfer) $3\spadesuit$

After this, responder can pass, bid the game, or explore for slam as appropriate.

Note: Stayman with a poor hand short in clubs is no longer available.

6.2 South African Texas

South African Texas is similar to Texas: $4\clubsuit$ transfers to $4\heartsuit$, $4\diamondsuit$ transfers to $4\spadesuit$. This leaves $4\heartsuit$ and $4\spadesuit$ 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.

6.3 Montreal Relays

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

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

- $1\heartsuit$ promises 4 hearts, does not deny 4 spades
- $1\spadesuit$ promises 4 spades, denies 4 hearts
- 1N denies a four-card major, denies six clubs
- $2\clubsuit$ shows six clubs
- 2N is 17-18 balanced (as usual).
- $2\diamondsuit$, $2\heartsuit$, and $2\spadesuit$ are normal reverses.

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

6.4 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 $4\clubsuit$ is a strong hand with an 8-card heart suit. Likewise, $4\diamondsuit$ 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.

- $4\heartsuit!$ (transfer to $4\spadesuit$) - $4\clubsuit!$ (transfer to $4\spadesuit$).

To accept the Namyats transfer is a sign-off.

An opening bid of $3N!$ shows a hand that would have preempted in $4\clubsuit$ or $4\heartsuit$; partner usually bids $4\clubsuit!$ pass or correct.

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

ADVANCED JUMP SHIFTS

7.1 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.

7.2 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 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.

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 Three Spades Kickback

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)

8.5 Full Kickback

After a suit agreement, a bid of one over the trump suit at the four level is RKC. For example, 1♦ – 2♦ – 4♥!(RKC for diamonds) or 1♣ – 1♥ – 2♥ – 4♠!(RKC for hearts).

4N is used over spades.

You can extend the agreement to cover more kinds of auctions, and cases of implicit agreement on the suit, but it can get complicated. For one full treatment see "Kickback: Slam Bidding at Bridge" by Robert Munger, Master Point Press.

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 lower-level ACBL tournaments, but you can encounter it at higher-level events or online.

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.

9.1 Flannery 2♦

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 to play.
- 3♥ and 3♠ are invitational.
- 4♥ and 4♠ are to play.
- 3N is to play.
- 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.
 - 3♥ shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, minimum.
 - 3♠ shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, maximum.
 - 3N shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, both minors stopped.
 - 4♣ shows a 4=5=0=4 shape.
 - 4♦ shows a 4=5=4=0 shape.

There are also these special bids:

- 3♣ shows at least six clubs, to play.
- 3♦ shows at least six diamonds, invitational
- 4♣ and 4♦ are transfers to 4♥ and 4♠ respectively. These transfers are the power raises, giving responder a chance to start slam bidding.

9.2 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.

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.

Multi, a two diamond opener showing a preempt in an unknown major, is now legal in ACBL Open+ Chart Events (typically, 2-session Regionals and NABCs). You may encounter it, or its full monster sister that might also be a strong 4441 or NT hand, online or in other jurisdictions.

9.3 Mexican Two Diamonds

Opening 2♦ shows a balanced 18 to 19 HCP. Responder bids 2♥! to deny values for game, so opener places the contract, usually at 2N. Otherwise responder relays with 2♠! to 2N, and systems are on. Typically this convention is played with a weak notrump system.

Much more complicated versions exist. Be sure to ask for an explanation if on defense.

9.4 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.

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 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 the chapter on Runouts in *Defensive Bidding* 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.

10.1 Defending the Weak 1N

Defending against the weak 1N opener, standard advice is to not use D.O.N.T. or other systems that lack a penalty double; but this feeling is not universal. Some teachers feel it more important to stick to the same system regardless, to avoid confusion, and some even feel that D.O.N.T. will work just fine as long as you liberalize your criteria for using it a bit,

such as considering five cards routinely adequate for long-suit bids.

Stark and others recommend Mohan, explained in *Defensive Bidding*.

10.1.1 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.

10.1.2 Responses when there is no competition

10.2 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.

10.3 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♠. There 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.

10.4 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.

10.4.1 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 mi-

nor 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.

10.5 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.

10.6 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 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.

10.7 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.

10.8 After the Strong 1N Rebid

The structure after the 1N rebid is almost exactly the same as with the 1N opener. Note that the assump-

tion 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 $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1N$ later.

10.9 After $1\clubsuit - 1M - 1N$

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 $2\clubsuit!$, invitational checkback Stayman. Stronger hands will begin with $2\diamond!$ (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) $2\clubsuit!$ 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:

- $2\diamond!$: No three card support for partner's suit, no four cards in other major.
- $2\heartsuit / 2\spadesuit$: 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.

10.10 After $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1N$

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

- $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1N - 2\clubsuit!$ is invitational checkback Stayman.
- $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1N - 2\diamond!$ is game forcing checkback Stayman.
- $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1N - 3\clubsuit$ 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 $2\clubsuit$ here. With a major and weak values, responder would have bid the major rather than $1\diamond$. Therefore, this must be a 8 or more HCP club raise with not enough clubs to have made the strong $2\clubsuit$ response. Hence responder probably has 3 clubs.

10.11 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 $2\clubsuit!$ for invitational hands, and $2\diamond!$ 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.

10.11.1 Competitive Bidding After A Weak 1N Opener

1N (2♦!majors) P(you) (2♥)
P (P) ?

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

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.

10.12 Over A Double

When 1N is doubled, we play a runout chosen from the chapter Runouts in *Defensive Bidding*.

10.15 The Opponents Overcall At The Three Level

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

10.13 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.

10.16 RHO Overcalls After Two Passes

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

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

- 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.

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.

10.14 Over Two-Suited Overcalls

10.17 The Opponents Double Stayman

- 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:

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 *Defensive Bidding*.
- 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*.

Symbols

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Minor Suit Stayman

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Minorwood, **29**

Minorwood

convention, 19

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Montreal Relays

convention, 14

Muppet Stayman

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N

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New Minor Forcing

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