

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

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“Competition” in this reading material means an opponent has made a call of other than Pass.

[1♥ – P – 2♥ ...] means there is no competition, so the 2♥ bid is “normal”, showing 3+ trumps and 6 to 9 dummy points.

[1♥ – Dbl – 2♥ ...] is, of course, a competitive auction, and the 2♥ bid can be considerably weaker than the first example above, playing “all raises in competition are weak” as the author recommends.

[1♥ – P – 2♥ – Dbl P – 2♠ – 3♥ ...] The 2♥ call was in a non-competitive auction, but the 3♥ call is in a competitive auction, and does not promise any more than the 6 dummy points implied by the 2♥ call - - specifically, it doesn’t mean the hand is nearer 9 than 6 points.

Vulnerability, plus the skill of your opponents, is the **key** to what and when to bid.

This document contains information about how to make many bids, and when to do so.

But in any competitive auction, the above factors, and a solid understanding of what your score will be if doubled and set 2, compared with “what they can make” is really the deciding factor - not the mechanics or point range in a non-competitive auction or in this reading.

It’s called Judgement.

INITIAL HAND EVALUATION

Opening. What should you open with these hands? Would you open them at all?

A.	♠A9	♥AQ432	♦K43	♣K43
B.	♠KQJ	♥QJ65	♦QJx	♣QJx
C.	♠AJT98	♥3	♦AJT98	♣J3

Guidelines for Initial Hand Evaluation

- Aces and Kings are worth more than point count (A); Queens and Jacks are worth less (B).
- In a close decision to open or not, deduct a point from an Ace-less hand (B)
- Honors in long suits are more valuable than their “points” but in short suits, worth less. (C)
Examples: ♥AQ987 vs. ♥AQx. Clearly these suits are not worth the same amount.
- Two-suited hands are worth more: they have trick taking power beyond their “points” (C)
- Add 1 point for each card over 4 in every suit. (C)
- Flat hands are worth less because they take no “long” tricks. 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 is the worst distribution at any contract, including NoTrump. Deduct a point. (B)
- Connected 10’s, 9’s and 8’s have real value, especially in long suits. (Texture)
Examples: ♥AJT98 vs. ♥AJ432 The 1st example is much stronger than the 2nd.

Guidelines for Evaluation as Responder

- Any fit with partner is good; a double fit is magic.
- Connected 10’s, 9’s and 8’s have real value, especially in long suits or trump.
- Aces and Kings are worth more than their point count; Queens and Jacks are worth less.
- A fourth trump is worth an extra point. Add another point holding any honor(s) in trump.
- Count “dummy points”-- voids, singletons and doubletons as 5, 3 and 1 respectively.
(♠xxx ♥x ♦xxxx ♣QJxx) = 6 dummy points in any other suit than Hearts
- Kx and Qx are magic 2-card fits for partner’s suits. Value the hand up 1 or 2 points.
- Honors in partner’s suit are worth more than point count. Value the hand up 1 or 2 points.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Examples: What is the value of these hands initially?

When partner opens 1♥? How about 1♦?

				Initial	1♥ – P – ?	1♦ – P – ?
♠QTxx	♥QJ	♦Txxxx	♣Qxx	8-	9+	8
♠x	♥AKxx	♦Qxx	♣Qxxxx	12	17	13
♠JTxx	♥Jxx	♦QJ	♣QJxx	6	7	7
♠xxx	♥AT98	♦x	♣KJT9x	9	12	8-

INITIAL HAND EVALUATION – LENGTH AND TEXTURE

Suit length, texture and rebid considerations influence opening decisions in marginal HCP strength hands.

Length: start with HCP then add extra points for length, not for shortness. Add 1 point for each 5-card suit and 2 points for each 6-card suit and 3 points for any 7 card suit.

♠KQxxxx ♥x ♦AQxxx ♣x 11 HCP plus 3 length points for 14 total.

Subtract 1 or 2 points for lots of Queens and Jacks, for doubleton honors, for honors in short suits, for square, flat hands and for no Aces. “Flat hands defend; Distributional hands declare.”

♠KQxx ♥Jxx ♦QJx ♣QJx An Aceless, flat, “Quacks” hand. Pass.

Shortness: Don’t add points for shortness until you are sure you will be the dummy in a suit contract; then add full dummy points to your HCP and length values: 5 for a void, 3 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton, assuming you have at least 3 trumps. Length usually takes tricks, but shortness only helps if you have trumps to ruff with. Voids don’t take tricks!

♠xxxx ♥KQx ♦AQxxx ♣x 11 HCP + 3 for a singleton if you’re the dummy

Texture: Texture is less exact than HCP or length, but is equally important. Texture considers the value of intermediate cards in your suits: 10’s, 9’s and 8’s in suits of 4 or more cards.

Such cards count even more in support of suits with honors, especially touching honors. Example: KJ9 counts 4 HCP, but might not take any tricks, while QJT counts only 3 HCP but is a sure trick. Subtract 1 or 2 points for poor texture and add 1 or 2 points for good texture.

Both A. & B. hands have 15 HCP + 2 length points

A. ♠AKQ75 ♥42 ♦KQJ86 ♣2 ♠J84 ♥A7 ♦T732 ♣K875 (Dummy)
B. ♠AQ753 ♥Q2 ♦K9865 ♣A

Given this typical dummy, Hand A. is cold for 10 or 11 tricks in Spades; Hand B. could easily go down simply because of poor texture. A has touching honors in long suits with no isolated honors. Hand B has isolated honors in Clubs and Hearts, broken long suits and poor intermediate cards.

Practice: what’s your initial evaluation of these hands? Which would you open in 1st seat?

C. ♠AT9832 ♥7 ♦KQJT9 ♣2 D. ♠KJ9 ♥Q9732 ♦AJ3 ♣Q4 E. ♠73 ♥85 ♦AQ5 ♣AJT987
F. ♠KQ3 ♥AK75 ♦Q952 ♣53 G. ♠KQJ985 ♥- ♦JT9862 ♣8 H. ♠QJ2 ♥K ♦AT7542 ♣QJ2

C.12+ Open 1♠ D. 12- Open 1♥ (& hate it) E.13- Open & rebid Clubs F. 14 1♦ G. 11+ Open/rebid ♠ H. 13- ?

HAND RE-EVALUATION

Re-evaluation as dummy. Once a suit fit has been found, you should re-evaluate your hand if you are going to be the dummy, by adding points for shortness - - doubletons, singletons and voids, at 1, 3 and 5 points respectively. It's simple logic: shortness is an asset only because it lets you trump opponents' high card tricks in the short suit. Shortness doesn't take tricks. Ruffing tricks are trump tricks made possible because of the shortness - - **not** the shortness itself. So you need both shortness and sufficient trumps to ruff. (That's the reason that leading trump is often a winning defense - - it reduces the value of shortness in the dummy. And trump is often the least likely suit to be a bad lead, too.)

Re-evaluation as declarer. Don't delude yourself that shortness takes tricks. Most of the time, declarer's hand has the longer trump suit. You can't count shortness in the declarer's hand because ruffing uses trumps that are good anyway. Ruffing in declarer's hand doesn't gain a trick although it may be useful for transportation or to eliminate a plain suit, but it doesn't gain per se.

Don't bid aggressively because of shortness - - be aggressive because of second suits that can produce tricks. Give yourself extra playing value for 4+ card length in a side suit. But if your second suit is weak and won't produce tricks, be conservative. Points don't take tricks; fits take tricks. Side 4-card suits have to be chunky, i.e. have some honors and intermediates. 5-card and longer side suits can be powerful trick takers even when modest in high-card strength. Coupled with a fit in dummy, or shortness in dummy, they are the difference makers in deciding to go to game/slam or to settle for a partial.

Re-evaluation in Competition. Re-evaluation of the value of your hand is necessary after every call by partner or opponent. Once opponents enter your auction, the meanings of many of your bids may change. Some responses will become unavailable to you because opponents have taken up bidding space. [1♥ - 3♣ - ? . . .] . But some responses will become available that weren't before - - negative double, redouble and cue bids, for example.

- If your LHO (the opponent to your left) bids, your high cards in that suit must be devalued. Kings and Queens and even Jacks can be finessed. Even Aces are worth less because they won't set up long suit tricks for your side.
- If RHO bids ahead of you, honors in that suit could become more valuable, but only on defense. The stronger or longer you are in opponent's suits, the more you should consider defending rather than declaring. Because you can't lead those honors, they actually don't go up in value on offense.
- If you bid NoTrump after an opponent bids a suit, you promise (good) stoppers in that suit.
- Raises of partner's suit become more important because partner can compete if she knows there's a fit, even a weak one. So raise aggressively to let partner know you have a fit.
- In competition, the flatter your hand the more you should want to defend rather than declare, and vice versa. With a fit, and especially a double fit or a fit and a side suit of some length, compete strongly.

TEXAS TRANSFERS

Texas Transfers are used when responder to an opening 1NT or 2NT wants to play at 4♥ or 4♠.

The Texas hand and suit aren't particularly strong, and slam should not be a possibility. Often they have small doubletons. Texas suits are 6+ cards long. It works like Jacoby Transfers:

4♦# by responder forces a rebid of 4♥ by opener [1NT – P – 4♦# ...] (See hand A)

4♥# by responder forces a rebid of 4♠ by opener [2NT – P – 4♥# ...] (See hand B)

A	B
♠K3	♠KQ9873
♥KQ8752	♥A52
♦873	♦73
♣K7	♣92

Why not just use Jacoby Transfers? You could do a Jacoby Transfer and then jump to 4 with the same result, no? Yes, but you can use these two types of transfers for two different types of hands.

Texas transfers don't show particularly strong hands or suits – just length.

And a bid at the 4 level is certainly preemptive to opponents.

So, when playing both Texas Transfers and Jacoby Transfers, a Jacoby Transfer followed by a jump to 4♥/♠ shows a stronger hand, one possibly interested in Slam, whereas Texas doesn't. A nice distinction.

Hand A is better as Declarer, not dummy because she has 2 black Kings that could be vulnerable on the opening lead if she is the dummy - like the ♣Q or ♠Q.

Unfortunately, with Texas or Jacoby Transfers, there is no way she can become dummy at 4 Hearts. Bid 2♣, then jump to 4♥ whatever opener responds.

OPENING MARGINAL HANDS

1st, 2nd and 4th Seat Opening: popular evaluation techniques.

There are several popular techniques for determining when a marginal hand should be opened.

All will work or fail depending on partnership understanding and each requires an awareness of what HCP values opener could hold as a minimum. The crucial factor is one of rebids: “If I open a marginal hand, do I have a reasonable rebid in all cases?”

- **Some number of high card points:** any hand with 12 (13? 11?) HCP's.

♠Axx ♥Kxx ♦Kxx ♣Qxxx 12 HCP.

- **High card points plus length points.** HCP plus a point for each card over 4 in all suits

♠Axxxx ♥Kx ♦Kxxxx ♣x 12 “total points”. Open 1 Spade.

- **High card points with two defensive tricks:** any hand with 12 (13? 11?) HCP's that also includes 2 sure tricks on defense.

♠Axx ♥Kxx ♦Kxx ♣Qxxx but not ♠Kxx ♥KJxx ♦Qxx ♣QJxx

- **Quick Tricks:** At least 2 ½ quick tricks, where A = 1 and K = ½ quick tricks.

♠Axx ♥Axx ♦Kxx ♣xxxx but not ♠Kxx ♥Kxxx ♦Kxx ♣Kxxx

- **Rule of 20:** (Used in 1st and 2nd seats only): Open if the total of HCP's plus the length of the two longest suits equals 20 or more. Discount unsupported Q's and J's and upgrade A's. (See pg 58)

♠AJxxx ♥Axxx ♦Kxx ♣x but not ♠AJxx ♥Kxx ♦Axx ♣xxx

- **Losing Trick Count:** In each suit, count missing A's, K's, and Q's. (Losers) If the total is 6 or less, open. 7 losers is optional, 8 should pass.

Open ♠Axxxx ♥Kxxx ♦KQx ♣x or ♠AJxx ♥Kxxx ♦Kxx ♣Kx

Don't open ♠AJx ♥Kxx ♦Kxx ♣Qxxx 13 HCP but 8 losers.

3rd seat openings

Third seat openings can be as weak as 8 or 9 HCP's, but only with a decent to good 5+ card major. Vulnerability is also a factor. (See the Drury Mini-Lesson for more on 3rd seat openings and responses)

P – P - ? Open ♠AKxxx ♥xxx ♦Qxx ♣xx but not ♠Qxx ♥xx ♦AKxxx ♣xxx

MAJOR SUIT RESPONSES WITHOUT COMPETITION

Good partnerships have an exact understanding for every response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening, up thru 4NT (RKC) Blackwood.

This is an example set of responses when there is no competition. Raises are the top priority.

These responses are after an auction starting [1♥/♠ – P - ???]

NF = not forcing; GF = Game Forcing. 1 RF = One round force

1NT#	– Forcing. Denies 3 trumps, unless a Limit Raise follows on 2 nd round.	5 – ? HCP	1 RF
2♣ / 2♦	– Game forcing if playing 2 over 1; near-game force in SA. 5+ card suit	12+ in 2/1; 10+ in SA.	GF/F
2♥ / ♠	– a simple raise, showing 3+ trumps. Count distribution fully.	6 – 9 dummy pts. (5-3-1)	NF
2NT*	– Jacoby 2NT: an opener with 4 trump.	12+, GF	
2♠ / 3♣ / 3♦ / 3♥	– (Not a ♠ raise) Weak Jump Shift, denies 3+ trumps, 6+ card suit	0 – 6 HCP	NF
<i>A jump to the 3-level could also be a 4 trump Bergen Raise</i>			
3♥/♠	– A good Limit Raise. 4 trumps or 3 trumps with a singleton or void	10 – 12 dummy pts. (5-3-1)	NF
1NT, then 3♥/♠	2 nd round. – A “Bad” Limit Raise. 3 trumps only, no distribution.	10 – 12 dummy pts. (5-3-1)	NF
3NT	– A flat opener with 2+ trumps.	13 – 15	NF
3♠/4♣/♦/♥	– Splinter. Game forcing, good trump support with singleton or void	12+ HCP plus 0/1 in suit	GF
4♥/♠	– Weak, distributional. Shows 5 trumps, No trump A or K.	0 – 7	NF
4NT	– RKC Blackwood	20+ dummy points	F!

NEW MINOR FORCE

Situation: Your partner has opened 1♣ or 1♦. You have a good 5-card major suit with 10+ and you respond 1♥ or 1♠. Opener then rebids 1NT or 2NT. [1♣ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - ??? ...]

Problem for Responder: If opener has 3 of your major, it's a better strain to play than NoTrump, and game might be possible in your suit. Should you rebid your 5 card major? What if opener only has one Heart or one Spade with you?

Problem for Opener: Should you raise responder's 1♥ or 1♠ response with Qxx? With xxx? What if responder has only 4 small Hearts/Spades? Does she have ♠AKQx or ♠9xxx?

Solution: The New Minor Force convention solves both problems. If responder has 5 Hearts/Spades and enough count to bid again, she bids 2 of the "new" minor - - the other minor (alertable). In no case will she rebid a 5-card suit, so if she does rebid it, she has 6 pieces.

Opener bids according to her holding in the responder's suit: Any raise of the major suit shows 3 card support and any other bid denies it. A jump bid shows a maximum hand with 3 card support. 2NT denies 3 trumps in an otherwise balanced hand. Any 3-level bid shows a real second suit without 3 card support. A rebid of the original minor shows a 6-card suit.

New Minor Force Sequences:

[1♣ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - 2♦* - P 2♥ - P - 6♥] Seeing a slam with an 8-card fit

[1♣ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - 2♦* - P 2NT - P - P] No 8 card fit; so 2NT is it

[1♦ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - 2♣* - P 2♦ . .] 5 or 6 Diamonds, less than 3 Hearts

[1♣ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - 2♣ ...] Preferring to Clubs; not a New Minor Force call.

[1♣ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - 2♦* - P 3NT...] A 15/16 point opener with 2 Hearts

[1♣ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - 2♠ . . .] a 6 card Spade suit, not 5

[1♦ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - 2♥...] 5 Spades, 4+ hearts and 10+ by HCP responder

[1♦ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - 2♠...] 5 Hearts, 5 Spades and 12+ HCP by responder

Implications For Responder: To use the New Minor Force, responder needs to have a hand strong enough to play at least 2NT, plus 5 decent Heart or Spade cards. That means 10+ HCP and interest in game. Over a 2NT rebid by opener, the New Minor Force can still be used, and shows less strength, because the 2NT rebid shows 18 or 19 HCP .

[1♣ - P - 1♥ - P 2NT - P - 3♦* ...]

Implications for Opener: Using New Minor Force, opener never raises a major response with only 3 cards in responder's suit, possibly going past the best contract of 1NT.

SPLINTER BIDS

A Splinter Bid is a double jump in a new suit showing a singleton or void in that suit. It also accepts the last bid suit as trump, is game-forcing and slam-invitational. [1♠ – P – 4♣* ...]

There are 3 kinds of Splinters: (1) Splinter by responder, (2) Splinter by opener and (3) Splinter of opener's 2nd suit by responder. They are all alertable.

1. [1♥ – P – 4♦* ...] Responder shows an opening hand with 4 Hearts (or ♥QJx or better) and a singleton or void in Diamonds.

2. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♠* ...] Opener has a 19+ HCP point hand, 4 Hearts and a singleton or void in Spades. 2♠ would be a reverse, not a Splinter.

3. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – P – 4♣* ...] Responder has an opening hand with 4+ Hearts, 4+ Spades and a singleton/void in Clubs. Not Gerber.

If the partner of the splinter bidder is interested in slam, she cue-bids Aces or bids RKCB; if not, game is bid. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 4♦* – P – 4♠ ...] Hearts are trump, responder shows slam interest and the ♠ Ace.

Splinters can be made in support of minor suits but such hands are rare.

[1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 2♦ – P – 4♥* ...] Responder has an opening hand, 4+ Diamonds and a singleton or void in Hearts.

Example Splinter sequences by:

Responder	♠KQxx ♥KQxx ♦Axxx ♣x	1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – P – 4♣* ...
Responder	♠Axxx ♥AKx ♦KQxxx ♣x	1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 2♦ – P – 4♣* ...
Responder	♠-- ♥KQxx ♦AKxxx ♣QJxx	1♥ – P – 3♠* ...
Opener	♠KQJx ♥x ♦KQJx ♣AKxx	1♦ – P – 1♠ – P 4♥* ...

FINDING 3 – 5 MAJOR SUIT FITS

Situation A: Your partner opened 1♣. You have a 5-card Heart suit with an 11 HCP hand and respond 1♥. Your LHO then bids 1♠. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ . . .]. Opener is faced with raising your Heart bid with ♥Axx or not. If responder bid 1♠ with ♠Jxxx, it's the wrong call. If responder has ♥KJTxx, it's the right call. What's the solution?

Solution A: Support Doubles solve this problem very nicely. A double by opener in this situation shows 3-card Heart support. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ **Dbl** . . .]. Now you have found your 8 card major fit. If 4th hand doubles instead of bidding a suit, opener can **Support Redouble** to show a 3-card fit. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – Dbl **ReDbl** . . .] Any other bid by opener denies 3-card support for your major suit. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ **1NT** . . .]. A “tell” convention.

Situation B: Your partner opened 1♣. You have a 5 -Heart suit with an 11 HCP hand and bid 1♥. Opener is faced with raising your Heart bid with ♥Axx or not. If you have ♥Jxxx, it's the wrong call. If you have ♥KJTxx, it's the right call. Opener must bid 1NT playing Bob's Standard, denying 4 card Heart support. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P **1NT** . . .] What's the solution?

Solution B: The New Minor Force convention solves this problem very nicely. A rebid of the “other minor” by responder, after an opener's rebid of 1NT or 2NT, **asks** opener if she has 3-card support. If not holding 3-card support, opener bids anything else. Holding 3-card support, she bids the major. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P **1NT** – P – **2♦*** – P **2♥** . . .]. Responder needs 10+ HCP to use a New Minor Force because the contract will get to 2NT or higher without a 3-card fit. An “ask” convention.

Support Double Sequences:

[1♦ – P – 1♥ – 2♣ 2♦ . . .]	‘I don't have 3 Hearts, partner’
[1♦ – P – 1♥ – 2♣ Dbl . . .]	‘I have 3 Hearts, partner’
[1♣ – P – 1♠ – Dbl ReDbl . . .]	‘I have 3 Spades, partner’
[1♣ – P – 1♠ – 3♦ Dbl . . .]	‘I have 3 Spades, partner’
[1♣ – P – 1♠ – Dbl 1NT . . .]	‘I don't have 3 Spades, partner’

New Minor Force: Typical sequences: [1 ♣/♦ – P – 1 ♥/♠ – P **1/2NT** – P – **2/3 ♦*/♣*** . . .]

New Minor Force Examples

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♦* – P 3♥ . . .]	“I have 3 hearts and a big hand”
[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2NT . . .]	“I don't have 3 Hearts”
[1♦ – P – 1♠ – P 1NT – P – 2♣* – P 2♥ . . .]	“I don't have 3 Spades”
[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 2NT – P – 3♦* – P 3♥ . . .]	“I have 3 Hearts and 18–19 HCP”

DRURY (2-WAY REVERSE DRURY)

You should open light in 3rd seat with a good major suit but not in a minor. The reasons are:

Major Suit Openers. An opening 1♥ or 1♠ is preemptive to 4th seat.

Consider: if your partner (the dealer) and 2nd seat didn't open and you have relatively few points, where are they? 4th seat, of course, so make it harder for her to bid. Not vulnerable, as little as 8 points is OK as a 3rd seat opener with at least ♠AQ986.

Minor Suit Opener. If you open a weak minor-suited hand, you make it easy for 4th seat to overcall in a major suit, even with modest values, and thus get into the bidding cheaply.

If you play weak major openings in 3rd seat, you must also play **Drury**, a convention for the dealer, who has passed. Drury is always on if 4th hand passes, bids or doubles.

Reverse Drury responses by Dealer (a passed hand).

A raise to 2♥ or 2♠ is normal, showing 6 to 9 dummy points. [P – P – 1♥ – P 2♥ ...]

A 1NT bid is normal, is not forcing, and denies 3+ trumps. [P – P – 1♥ – P 1NT ...]

The strongest hand dealer could have is a limit raise, showing 10 to 12 dummy points and 3 or more trumps. But she doesn't know if 3rd seat opened with 8 points or 18 points, so she can't jump to 3 to show limit raise strength. Instead, she should bid 2♣, an alertable Reverse Drury call, showing a 10 to 12 dummy point limit raise. [P – P – 1♥ – P 2♣* ...] (The original Drury used the reverse of this rebid technique, thus the designation "Reverse Drury" as played today.)

Opener's Rebids. If opener rebids her major suit at the 2-level, she has a weak hand, but is in a 8+ card fit at the 2-level - - safe. If she rebids anything else, she has a real opening hand and the auction can go to game or whatever.

Two-Way Reverse Drury is an improvement on Reverse Drury. A bid of 2♣ shows 3 trumps but a bid of 2♦ shows 4 trumps, i.e., "Bad" and "Good" Limit Raises. Knowing about a 4th trump can be the difference between making 9 tricks or 10 tricks.

[P – P – 1♠ – P 2♦* – P – 4♠ ...] A Two-Way Reverse Drury sequence, showing 4 trumps and a limit raise hand by dealer. Opener, with a good opener, goes on to game.

[P – P – 1♥ – P 2♣* – P – 2♥ ...] A weak hand by opener, 3 trumps in dealer's hand.

[P – P – 1♥ – P 2♣* – P – 2♦ ...] A real opening hand and a 2nd suit - Diamonds (Why?)

[P – P – 1♥ – 2♣ Dbl* – P – 4♥] A "stolen bid" Dbl, showing a 3 trump Limit Raise.

[P – P – 1♦ – Dbl 1♥ – P – 2♥ ...] Drury is not applicable, as opening was in a minor

[P – P – 1♠ – 2♣ 2♦* – 3♣ – P ...] A 3rd seat opener and a 4th seat call. Drury is still on, so the 2♦ bid is Drury and shows 4 Spades.

INVERTED MINORS

Situation: Partner opens one of a minor suit. You have five or more of her suit and biddable strength in points but no 4-card major.

In Standard American, you would bid two of the minor with a minimum hand and with a good hand you would jump to three, showing a limit raise.

[1♣ – P – 2♣ . . .] a minimum raise, or [1♦ – P – 3♦...] a Limit Raise]

Problem: As is often the case in Standard American, you preempt your own bidding space when you have a good hand, and you invite the opponents into the auction when holding a weak hand. (Is that inverted logic or what?)

Solution: Inverted Minors is a treatment that bids minor suit raises logically - - with a minimum (5 to 9 HCP) hand, jump preemptively to 3 and with a good (10+) hand raise to 2.

Both bids are alertable without competition and the 2 level response is forcing one round. As with any raise, it guarantees an 8-card fit, meaning responder needs 5+ trumps, because opener may have only 3. (You can't use "could be short" Clubs when playing Inverted Minors.)

Subsequent Bidding: After a forcing 2-level response, subsequent bidding looks for a NoTrump contract, with a safe harbor in 3 or 4 of the minor if necessary. Both opener and responder should bid stoppers up-the-line after the 2-level response. Play at some level of the minor suit if missing a stopper, or play 2NT or 3NT if they're all stopped. Occasionally, play 5 Clubs or 5 Diamonds.

Some play Inverted Minors are OFF after interference, but this is not recommended - - play it the same way always. Simple bridge is good bridge. Example Inverted Minor sequences:

N	E	S	W	N	E	S	W	N	
1♣	P	2♣*	P	2♦	P	2♥	P	3NT	The 2♦ and 2♥ bids are stoppers
1♦	P	2♦*	P	2♥	P	3♣	P	3♦	No Spade stopper, so play in Diamonds
1♦	1♥	2♦*	P	2♥	Dbl	2♠	P	3NT	Hearts stopped, so 3NT
1♦	Dbl	3♦	3♥	5♦	???				A N/S sacrifice? 3♦ is not alertable in competition
1♣	P	3♣*	Dbl	5♣	???				East gets to start bidding at the 5 level ??!
1♦	Dbl	2♦*	3♥	5♦	???				Now what East? Bid 5♥? Double? Pass?
1♣	1♥	3♣	P	P	???				Are N/S stealing or sandbagging? Who knows?

MINOR SUIT RESPONSES WITHOUT COMPETITION

Good players have an exact meaning for every response to one of a minor opening up to 4NT Blackwood. This is an example set, appropriate when there isn't any competition.

In response to partner's 1♣ or 1♦ opening followed by pass by RHO:

Responses by a non-passed hand:

1♥ or 1♠	100% Forcing. Shows at least 4 cards in the major suit.	6 to 30 HCP.
1♦ over 1♣	100% forcing. Denies any 4+ major suit. 4+ Diamonds.	6 to 30 HCP.
1NT over 1♣	Not forcing. Denies a 4+ card major suit.	8 to 10 HCP.
1NT over 1♦	Not forcing. Denies a 4+ card major. A Club suit is implied.	6 to 10 HCP.
Raise to 2♣ or 2♦ (Inverted)	Denies 4+ card major. 5 trumps.	10+ HCP. Forcing.
Jump Raise to 3♣ or 3♦ (Inverted)	Denies 4+ card major. 5 trumps.	0 – 8 HCP. NF
Jump Shift. (2♦, 2♥, 2♠)	Weak. Shows broken, weak 6 card suit.	0 – 4 HCP. NF
2♣ over 1♦	Decent 5+ card Club suit. Not Two Over One Game Force.	10+ HCP, 5+ Clubs, F
2 NoTrump	Denies 4+ card major suit or 5+ C/D. Balanced, invitational.	10 – 12 HCP. NF
3 level, not a raise.	[1♣ – P – 3♦ . . .] Preemptive. Undefined values. To play.	? HCP. NF
3 NoTrump	Denies 4+ card major suit or 5+ ♣/♦. To play.	13 – 15 HCP. NF
4 level, not a raise	[1♣ – P – 4♥ . . .] Preemptive. Undefined values. To play.	? HCP. NF
4 NoTrump	Roman Key Card Blackwood.	20+ or dist. F

Responses by a passed hand: [P – P – 1♣/♦ – P ??? . . .]

A third seat 1-of-a-minor opening should be full valued, not weak. (See Drury)

Responses are the same as above, except that responder is known to have less than an opener and therefore no responses are forcing.

STRONG REBIDS BY OPENER

Accurate responses and rebids when strong are necessary for reaching makeable slams and games whenever possible. Disciplined bidding makes for successful bridge.

Following is a brief review of Strong Rebids by Opener, with strength and distribution parameters. NF = Not Forcing; F = Forcing one round, GF = Game forcing

Jump Rebid in a Minor. Ex: 1♣/♦ followed by 3♣/♦. (♠AJx ♥xx ♦AKQxxx ♣KQ)

Promises a solid 6+ card minor suit and 18+ HCP. NF.

Jump Rebid in a Major. Ex: 1♥/♠ followed by 3♥/♠. (♠AKJxxx ♥Kx ♦Axx ♣KJ)

Promises a good 6 card suit, 18+ HCP. Can play 4 (game) with just xx in dummy. NF

Jump Rebid of 2NT. Ex: 1♣/♦/♥/♠ followed by 2NT. (♠AKx ♥AJx ♦Axx ♣Kxxx)

18 or 19 HCP hand with NT distribution, between 1NT and 2NT opener strength. NF

Splinter. Ex: [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 4♦*...]. (♠AKxx ♥Axxx ♦x ♣KQJx)

Hearts are agreed as trump, opener has 0 or 1 Diamonds; game-going even with a with 6 point responder, so opener's strength must be about 20 dummy points. GF

Splinter. Ex: [1♥ – P – 2♥ – P 4♣*...]. (♠AQx ♥KQJxxx ♦AJT ♣x)

Opener has 0 or 1 Clubs; game-going even with a 6 point responder hand, so opener's strength must be about 20 dummy points. GF

Jump Shift. Ex: [1♥ – P – 1♠ – P 3♦...]. (♠Kxx ♥AKJxx ♦AKJxx ♣-)

Promises 18+ HCP and 5+/5+ or 5+/4+ distribution. GF

Reverse. Ex: [1♦ – P – 1♠ – P 2♥...]. (♠Jx ♥AKxx ♦AKJxx ♣Kx)

Forcing responder to bid at the 3 level, even to prefer to opener's 1st suit. 17+ HCP. F.

Jump to Game in Responder's Suit. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 4♥...]. (♠AKJx ♥Kx ♦Ax ♣KQxxx)

20+ dummy point hand by opener. Responder has shown only 6 HCP.

“Dummy points” (voids, singletons and doubletons) can be included in opener's hand evaluation. 4♥ is not a closeout, as responder could have any number of points.

There's no such thing as a closeout in an unlimited auction such as this one.

STRONG REBIDS BY RESPONDER

Accurate responses and rebids when strong are necessary for reaching makeable games and slams whenever possible.

Good slam bidding is not about Ace-showing conventions like Gerber or RKCB. It's about making accurate strength-showing bids early in the auction, avoiding strong-sounding bids without the implied strength and not "closing out" an unlimited partner.

Legend: GF = Game forcing. F = forcing 1 round. NF = Not forcing. Underlined calls are limited bids.

Jump Rebid. Ex: [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – P – 3♥ ...] (♠AJx ♥ AKQxxx ♦ xxx ♣ x)

5 excellent Hearts or 6 good ones and opening hand strength. GF.

Reverse by Responder. Ex: [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♠ ...] (♠AQJx ♥ AQJxx ♦ Jxx ♣ x)

5 – 5 or 5 – 4 in Spades and Hearts. GF.

Jump Shift. Ex: [1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 1NT – P – 3♥ ...] (♠AQJxx ♥ AQJxx ♦ Jxx ♣ -)

5 – 5 or better in Spades and Hearts. GF.

Splinter. Ex: [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – P – 4♦*...] (♠AQxx ♥ AQJx ♦ x ♣ Jxxx)

A strong short suit bid in support of opener's second suit, Spades. GF.

Quiz: Strong rebids and responses. Identify the Limited Bids, Forcing bids and Strong bids.

- A 1♥ – P – 1♠ – P 3♦ – P – 3♠ _____
- B. 1♥ – P – 1♠ – P 2♦ – P – 3♠ _____
- C. 1♣ – P – 2NT – P 3♥ – P – 3♠ _____
- D. 1♥ – P – 4♥ – P 5♣ – P – 5♥ ... _____
- E. 1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 2NT – P – 3NT. . _____
- F. 1♠ – P – 2♦ – P 2♠ – P – 4♠ ... _____
- G. 1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 2♦ – P – 3NT ... _____
- H. 1♦ – P – 1♠ – P 3♦ – P – 3NT ... _____
- I. 1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – P – 2♣ _____

... continued ...

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Answers: Strong rebids and responses quiz.

Identify the Limited Bids, Forcing bids and Strong bids.

- A. $1\heartsuit - P - 1\spadesuit - P$ $3\diamond - P - 3\spadesuit$ $1\spadesuit$ forcing, $3\diamond$ strong_____
- B. $1\heartsuit - P - 1\spadesuit - P$ $2\diamond$ - $P - 3\spadesuit$ $3\spadesuit$ is game forcing, strong 6+ Spades
- C. $1\clubsuit - P - 2NT - P$ $3\heartsuit - P - 3\spadesuit$ $2NT$ strong, limited, $3\heartsuit$ reverse ?_____
- D. $1\heartsuit - P - 4\heartsuit - P$ $5\clubsuit - P - 5\heartsuit$. . . $4\heartsuit$ limited, weak. $5\clubsuit$ is a forcing slam invitation
- E. $1\diamond - P - 1\heartsuit - P$ $2NT$ - $P - 3NT$. . $2NT$ is 18-19, limited, $1\heartsuit$ is forcing__
- F. $1\spadesuit - P - 2\diamond - P$ $2\spadesuit$ - $P - 4\spadesuit$. . . $2\diamond$ is a 2/1 GF, $2\spadesuit$ is limited but with 6 Spades
- G. $1\clubsuit - P - 1\spadesuit - P$ $2\diamond - P - 3NT$. . $1\spadesuit$ forcing, $2\diamond$ is a reverse showing 17+
- H. $1\diamond - P - 1\spadesuit - P$ $3\diamond - P - 3NT$. . $1\spadesuit$ forcing, $3\diamond$ is strong, showing 6 Diamonds
- I. $1\diamond - P - 1\heartsuit - P$ $1\spadesuit$ - $P - 2\clubsuit^*$. . . $1\heartsuit$ forcing, $1\spadesuit$ limited, $2\clubsuit$ is a 4th suit game force

2 ♣ OPENING

General: There isn't one "correct" set of responses to a 2♣ opening - - there are several systems in common use. Many show a "strong" response if responder bids anything except 2♦. But there are any similarity ends. Fundamental is that 2♣ is a game-forcing opening bid in almost every case. The trouble is, it can be 24+ HCP and a good 5-card suit, or an 18 point hand with two 6-card suits, because any hand with 9½ tricks can be opened 2♣. It's nearly game in opener's hand, so responder needs very little for opener to make game.

Traditional Responses: Years ago, a 2NT response denied any worthwhile values and 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ and 3♣ showed good suits and values. Modern players won't bid 2NT when they are responder because the wrong hand ends up playing the hand in 3NT (or 6NT!). In fact, responder should avoid bidding NoTrump whenever possible, in any system of responses. In a NT game, it puts the 22 point hand on the table for all to see. Not a good system.

Step Responses: Some play that responses are purely HCP-showing: hands with 0 – 3 points bid 2♦, 4 – 7 bid 2♥, 8 – 10 bids 2♠, etc. Exact numbers vary. This is "scientific", but again the wrong hand ends up the declarer a lot of the time, and the emphasis on "points" downgrades the importance of distribution and fit. Not a good system.

American Standard: the Second Negative. A 2♦ response is a "waiting" bid, not showing anything specific, but denying the existence of a good suit. Unfortunately, you also must bid 2♦ with a terrible, zero-point hand, and then you have to bid the "cheapest minor" – 3♣ – on the second round to show opener you are really weak - - two artificial bids, going to the three or four-level, to show weakness? Not a good system.

Single Negative Response: Many now play that a 2♦ response is artificial but not necessarily "weak" -- the hand could have any number of points, but has no good suit to show. A response of 2♠, for example, could show a decent Spade suit of 4+ cards and a couple of major honors, 8 or so HCP, and playable with a fit by opener, or is a guaranteed good stopper for NoTrump.

With a weak hand - - lacking an Ace or King - - the response is 2♥ - - artificial, a single Negative response and responder doesn't have to bid again. 2NT shows a long, real **Heart** suit with some (8+) points, and not wanting to play in NT. 2♠, 3♣, and 3♦ are real suits. A better system, but not best.

Bob's Standard. A modern variation is that 2♦ shows any Ace or King or more - - not points, but Ace(s) or King(s), with any number of HCP. (With one King, it could be just 3 HCP!) Lacking an Ace or King, the response is 2♥ (alertable). This often helps a declarer with a strong playing hand to identify slams with less than top HCP values. Question: Are two Queens the same value as an Ace? Answer: Not even close! Game is a near certainty after a 2♣ opening, so the important question is: Is there a slam in the hand? To make a slam, opener needs Aces and Kings. 2♦ is no longer alertable since January 1, 2015. A much better system.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Continuations after a 2♦ response: Opener bids her strong suit or bids NoTrump at some level. Responder then bids whatever is appropriate - - raises opener, shows a stopper for NT, bids 4 NT Blackwood (1430 RKC), etc.

Playing 2♦ shows an Ace or King, what are responder's 1st and second bids?

2♣ – P – ?

♠QJx ♥xxx ♦Qxx ♣QJxx
 ♠AKxx ♥xxx ♦Qxx ♣Txx
 ♠xx ♥KJTxx ♦xxx ♣xxxx

2♥*, then raise opener's suit or 2NT to 3NT
 2♦, then raise Hearts or Spades or bid Spades
 2♦, then raise Hearts or raise NT to game

2♣ – P – ?

♠xx ♥KQTxx ♦Qxx ♣Jxx
 ♠xx ♥Qxx ♦xxxx ♣Jxx
 ♠KQJxxx ♥x ♦Qxxx ♣xx

2♦, then bid Hearts or transfer to Hearts over 2NT
 2♥*, then pass anything except Hearts
 2♦, then Spades or transfer to Spades over 2NT

2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 2♥ – ?

♠Kxxx ♥QJxx ♦x ♣Qxxx
 ♠Kxxx ♥x ♦QJxx ♣Qxxx

4♦*, a splinter in support of Hearts
 2♠, a stopper, looking for a NT game

2♣ – P – 2♥* – P 2NT – P – ?

♠Qxx ♥Txxx ♦QTxx ♣xxx
 ♠QJxxxx ♥x ♦xxx ♣Qxx

3NT because opener has at least 22 HCP
 3♥#, a Jacoby Transfer to Spades, then bid 4♠

What do these final bids mean?

2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 2NT – P – 3♦#

A Jacoby Transfer to Hearts

2♣ – P – 2♥* – P 2♠ – P – 4♠

No Ace or King, but 3+ Spade support

2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 2♥ – P – 4NT

RKC Blackwood, Hearts is trump.

2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 3♦ – P – 3♥

A Heart stopper, looking for 3NT

SLAM BIDDING WITH CUE BIDS

Successful slam bidding starts with disciplined strong bids early in the auction.

Reverses, Jump Rebids, Strong Opening bids . . . these all indicate opening hands of 17 points or more. Responder, with an opener or more, can count “points” for a slam (33 for a small slam or 37 for a grand slam). These are example strong opening hand sequences:

[1♣ – P – 1♦ – P 2NT ...]	an 18 or 19 HCP opener
[1♥ – P – 4♣* – P 4♦ . . .]	a Splinter and the ♦ Ace, inviting slam
[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♣ . . .]	a Jump Rebid in a minor, showing 18 and solid suit

Slams make when you have controls and a source of tricks to pitch slow losers in the other hand: ♣AKQJ4, for example. With Aces and this source of tricks, declarer can pitch her losers on Clubs. 33 or 37 points is not necessary to make slam with good side suits and all 4 Aces.

Good slam bidders use Cue Bids: Bid Aces, voids and Kings to show first and second round controls. Cue bidding is usually at lower levels than Blackwood and shows specific cards, not numbers of Aces or Kings, and is therefore more accurate and keeps the level lower.

Example Cue Bidding Sequences.

1♣ – 1♥ 3♣(1) – 3♦(2) 3♥(3) – 3♠(4) 4♦(5) – 4♥ (6) 6NT

(1)18+ and solid Clubs; (2)♦A & slam interest; (3)♥A; (4)♠A; (5)♦K; (6)♥K

1♣ – 1♠ 4♠(1) – 4♦(2) 4♠(3) – 5♠(4) 6♠(5)

(1) 20+ with 4 Spades; (2) ♦A & slam interest but no ♣A; (3)♠A, no ♥A; (4)♠K
(5) ♣A or ♥A

1♥ – 4♣(1) 4♠(2) – 5♥ signoff, with a Club and a Diamond loser off the top

(1) Splinter in support of Hearts; (2) ♠A, slam interest but no ♦A or ♣A

1NT – 2♣ 2♥ – 4♠(1) 5♣(2) – 5♦(3) etc.

(1) ♠A or void, slam likely, Hearts is trump; (2) and (3) show Aces.

Don’t “jump to game” or bid “Closeouts” during any auction if your partner is unlimited: she doesn’t know if you have 15 points and a “good feeling” or the 20 points you promise with your bid. If partner never knows what you really have, you’ll miss cold slams or bid them when they don’t make. If partner has limited her hand, “closeouts” are fine because they’re not really closeouts at all. Disciplined bidding wins, not masterminding.

ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD – 1430 STYLE

Situation: Using Standard Blackwood, you find you are off an Ace and bid a small slam, but the King of trumps is offside and you go down one. Sound familiar?

Problem: Aces are not the only important controls when bidding a marginal slam when you don't have all the high card points - - the trump King is vital. And the Queen of trump would also be nice to know about if at all possible.

Solution: Roman Key Card Blackwood is a Blackwood-type Ace-asking convention that treats the King of trumps as a fifth "Ace" (control). It is universally used by experts when they use an ace-asking convention. It applies if there is a suit agreed upon; otherwise it's the last bid suit.

After a RKCB call of 4NT, a typical set of responses is called "1430", meaning the first step after 4NT (5♣) show 1 or 4 controls; the second step (5♦) shows 0 or 3 controls, and 5♥ and 5♠ show 2 controls.

The difference between the 5♥ and 5♠ response is that 5♠ shows the trump Queen and 5♥ denies it. Examples below assume 2 Over 1 is a game force.

[1♥ – P – 3♥ – P 4NT – P – 5♣ – P 6NT 5♣ = 1 or 4 "Aces"; 6NT means off an Ace
 [1♥ – P – 2♣ – P 3♥ – P – 4NT – P 5♠ – P – 6♥ Responder: 2 Aces and the ♥Queen
 [1♦ – P – 2NT – P 4NT – P – 5♣ – P 5♥ – P – 5NT] 5♥ is a relay to 5NT. Bailing out.
 [1♠ – P – 2♥ – P 3♥ – P – 4NT – P 5♣ – P – 5♥ – P 5♠ – P – 7♥] all pass

You can also use RKCB 1430 responses over a Gerber 4♣ response to an opening NoTrump, described in the Minor Suit Roman Key Card Blackwood write-up.

Asking for Kings. A better method than standard 5NT Blackwood bid for King-asking is to show "specific Kings". This means, over a 5NT rebid, responder bids the lowest King in her hand (excluding the trump King), and partner does likewise, until one or the other can set the contract. 5NT can only be bid when all 5 "Aces" are held by the partnership.

]1♥ – P – 3♥ – P 4NT – P – 5♣ – P 5NT – P – 6♠ – P 7NT] Showing ♠King
 [1♥ – P – 2♣ – P 3♥ – P – 4NT – P 5♠ – P – 6♥] Missing a control.
 [1♦ – P – 2NT – P 4NT – P – 5♣ – P 5♥ – P – 5NT] Bailing out with the 5♥ relay.
 [1♠ – P – 2♥ – P 3♥ – P – 4NT – P 5♣ – P – 5NT – P 6♠ – P – 7♥] A perfect fit.

MINOR SUIT ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD (MSRKCB)

Roman Key Card Blackwood is a major improvement on standard Blackwood because it shows the King of trump and sometimes the Queen of trump in the first response.

However, starting at 4NT when looking for a minor suit slam may go past game, and perhaps past any makeable contract. The MSRKCB approach can be used when a minor is agreed, but a stop at 5♣ or 5♦ or in a 4 NoTrump game is still possible.

MSRKCB is initiated when either player bids 4 of the agreed minor suit. In a game-forcing auction, it's an ace-asking bid, not a raise. If the player wants to bid game, she bids 5♣/5♦, not 4♣/4♦. If you play Gerber over NoTrump, use this MSRKCB style - - it's better than standard Gerber. The 4 Aces and the ♣King or ♦King are the 5 key cards.

Responses: 1st step, 1 or 4 Aces; 2nd step, 3 or 0 Aces ; 3rd step, 2 Aces without the trump Queen; 4th step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen. I.e., "1430"

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♣ – P – 5♣ ...] Responder is content in the Club game

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♣ – P – 4♣ ...] 4♣ asks for Aces, MSRKCB style.

In this example, responses of 4♦ = 1 or 4 Aces; 4♥ = 3 or 0 Aces; 4♠ = 2 Aces without the ♣Queen; 4NT = 2 Aces and the ♣Queen. If slam is off because of missing controls, the 4♣ bidder can bid 5♣, stopping in a makeable Club game.

King Ask. Any rebid past game by the MSRKCB bidder asks for Kings. In the 2nd example above, a further bid of 5♦ – not 5♣ – after the Ace-showing response asks for specific Kings, up-the-line. [1♣ 4♣ – P – 4NT – P 5♦ – P – ???] "Please bid your lowest King, partner"

You can still play in NoTrump. After a 4♣/♦ MSRKCB call and the ace-showing response, a bid of 4NT by the RKC bidder says "STOP! – there's no slam, so let's play in NoTrump", as in [1♣ 4♣ – P – 4♥ – P 4NT – P – P]. The higher-scoring NT contract is usually better than 5 of a minor.

Example hands and bids:

North	South	N	E	S	W	North	South	N	E	S	W
♠54	♠AK86	1♦ – P		1♥ – P		♠AQT75	♠K	1♠ – P		2♣ – P	
♥K	♥AQJ92	2♣ – P		2♠ – P		♥KJ8	♥AQ6	3♣ – P		<u>4♣</u> – P	
♦A8762	♦T	3♣ – P		<u>4♣</u> – P		♦3	♦KJT5	4♦ – P		4NT – P	
♣AQ953	♣KJ8	4NT – P		5♦ – P		♣QJ87	♣KT654	P			
		5♥ – P		7♣							

GERBER

Gerber is an ace-asking bid of 4♣ after an initial 1NT or 2NT bid, or after a “last bid” of 1NT or 3NT. [1NT - P - 2♦# - P 2♥ - P - 4♣ ...] Gerber, with Hearts as trump.

[1♠ - P - 1♠ - P 2NT - P - 4♣ ...] Gerber, with Spades as trumps.

Simple (original) Gerber is like old-fashioned Blackwood: the 1st step response shows 0 or 4 Aces; the 2nd step response shows 1; the 3rd step shows 2, etc.

[... 4♣ - P - 4♦ ...] 0 or 4 Aces.

[... 4♣ - P - 4♥ ...] One Ace.

[... 4♣ - P - 4♠ ...] Two Aces.

[... 4♣ - P - 4NT ...] Three Aces.

5♣ by the 4♣ bidder is then asking for the number of Kings, other than trump.

[... 5♣ - P - 5♦ ...] 0 Kings.

[... 5♣ - P - 5♥ ...] One King.

[... 5♣ - P - 5♠ ...] Two Kings.

[... 5♣ - P - 5NT ...] Three Kings.

4♣ is often a confusing bid, even among better players.

You must be sure that the opening bid or the last bid was 1NT or 2NT before 4♣ is Gerber.

The following quote is from Danny Kleinman, in his provocative book, “The NoTrump Zone”. Master Point Press, Toronto, 2002. Kleinman is the author of over 20 bridge books and an internationally known author and bridge theoretician.

“Roman Key Card Gerber (RKCG) is as far superior to simple Gerber as Roman Keycard Blackwood is to standard Blackwood. A simple yet reasonably adequate agreement is to use RKCB when a major suit is trump and RKCG when a minor suit is agreed.”

Roman Key Card Gerber: As in all Roman Keycard systems, there are 5 “Aces” or “controls” - the four Aces plus the trump King. In response to 4♣ RKCG, partner bids 4♦ with 1 or 4 controls, 4♥ with 3 or 0 controls, 4♠ with 2 controls missing the trump Queen and 4NT holding 2 controls with the trump queen. If the 4♣ bidder wants to go on, then 5♣ asks for Kings (other than the trump King), etc. (i.e., “1430 RKCG”). See the Minor Suit Roman Key Card write-up for another even better version.

Alternatives to Gerber. The purpose of all “wholesale” Ace-asking bids, Blackwood and Gerber, is to be certain the hands aren’t off 2 quick tricks when looking for slam.

Far better than any such wholesale method is to cue bid controls (Aces and Kings) up-the-line, because knowing about specific Aces and Kings is more useful in reaching not only a slam, but the correct slam. See the *Control-showing slam try cue bid* section in the Cue Bid Chapter.

TONT (TRANSFERS OVER NOTRUMP)

A 6-card suit is more than 3 times as likely to be dealt to you as two 5-card suits. A good defense over 1NT openings should therefore make it easy to show 6 card suits. You could bid them naturally, [1NT - 2♦ ...] but then the wrong hand is dummy. If you can get partner to bid Diamonds, the NT opener would be leading away from her high cards. How do you get partner to bid it? Easy: use **Transfers Over NoTrump**, i.e., **TONT**.

TONT is very simple: in the direct seat, a suit bid over a 1NT opener asks partner to bid the next higher suit: [1NT - 2♦# ...] says, "Partner, please bid 2♥". Similarly, 2♣# asks for 2♦. 2♥# calls for 2♠; 2♠# requests 3♣.

In addition to transfers, 2NT is the Unusual 2NT, showing both minors, and "Double" shows both Majors. With two 5-card suits, transfer to the higher ranking or stronger one and perhaps bid the lower one on the next round?. 8 to 14 HCP is the TONT range, like Michaels and Unusual 2NT. TONT bids are "Announced", not alerted - - 4th seat should just say the word "Transfer".

[1NT - 2♣# ...] Transfer to 2 Diamonds. [1NT - 2♦# ...] To 2 Hearts. [1NT - 2♥# ...] 2♠
[1NT - 2♠# ...] to 3 Clubs [1NT - 2NT ...] Both Minors - bid your longest one.
[1NT - Dbl ...] Both major suits. *Use this convention over all strong openings.*

It shows 5 - 5 or 5 - 4 or even 4 - 4 if not vulnerable but with good count.

Responses. 4th seat should take the transfer most of the time. Don't hesitate -- bid it confidently. When you take the transfer confidently, opponents don't know whether or not you have **any** trumps. If you hesitate or bid reluctantly, you tip them off. If you have a decent 6+ card suit and are very short in partner's suit, bid your own suit if you can do so at the same level. If 3rd seat bids, take the transfer only with 2+ cards in partner's suit and some HCP.

[1NT - 2♦# - P - 2♥ ...] Normal transfer to Hearts - accepted by 4th seat.

[1NT - 2♣# - Dbl - P ...] "I can't stand your Diamonds, partner."

[1NT - 2♠# - Dbl - 3♦ ...] "I can't do Clubs, partner, but I have very good Diamonds."

Competing with TONT - 3rd seat bids.

3rd seat bids over transfers: No Stolen Bids apply by responder to opener, i.e., "Double means I was going to bid that", makes **no** sense after a TONT transfer, because that would mean 3rd seat wants the same transfer as 2nd seat? So it has to be strength, perhaps a stopper in the bid suit.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

System On responses by 3rd seat at the 2-level **do** make sense: [1NT - 2♦# - 2♥#...] a normal Jacoby Transfer to 2 Spades, or [1NT - 2♥# - 2♠# ...] a transfer to 3 Clubs. A Double of a TONT bid could be simply a point-showing call, with 8+ HCP. [1NT - 2♥# - Db1 ...] A NoTrump response shows a stopper in the implied suit: [1NT - 2♥# - 2NT ...] “I have 8 – 9 HCP and a Spade stopper”, and 3NT would show 10+ HCP and Spade stopper(s).

Summary. TONT is simple and it comes up a lot. However, there’s no guarantee 4th seat has any trumps, so it can be risky. Be sure to have a 6-card suit or better and some HCP, like 8+ not vul and 10+ vulnerable. Also, remember this is an interference bid; you don’t always expect to play it in the transferred-to suit, but you get them off 1NT and interfere with some of their responses. You can play TONT in 4th seat, too, or play “Natural”: [1NT – P – P – 2♦# ...] a TONT transfer to 2 Hearts, or [1NT – P – P – 2♦ ...] “Natural”.

TO BALANCE OR NOT

As competitive bridge players, we want to make our opponents play for at least 2 Spades on every hand, and we try to push them to that level or higher. We do that by balancing.

Balancing is bidding what you and your partner have, based on what the opponents didn't bid. But effective balancing requires patience and trust that your partner will balance when the time comes.

The idea of balancing is to push opponents to the 3-level, or get the contract yourself, even though you might go down 50 or 100 points. Rarely can opponents double you at the 2-level and score more than they could have made, and if they double you but you make it, you get a top and they get a bottom. If they make 3, they were going to make it playing just 2, but you have a better chance to set them at the 3-level than at the 2-level.

Balancing hands comprise 30% to 40% of all bridge hands - - it's almost a different game. Some examples: (Hand diagrams are on the following page.)

N	E	S	W
1♣	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	P	2♠
???			

(1) A balancing 2♠ bid by West.

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	2♥	P
P	3♦	???	

(2) A balancing call at the 3 level.

N	E	S	W
1♣	P	1♥	2♣
P	P	Dbl	???

(3) A balancing call ?

When you and your partner agree to balance against any low-level contract (under 2 Spades, for example), you must be patient. This means you will not open bad hands and will not make overcalls with bad suits. Wait until opponents make limited bids at low levels and then balance.

Balance with distribution. Once they limit their hands, bid any 5-card suit, especially if it's at the same level as opponents. [1♥ – P – 2♥ – P P – 2♠...]]

Or double, telling partner to bid her longest suit, or an unbid major. As always, vulnerability is a key factor. If you're too pushy vulnerable and go down 200, that's the Death Number - - a score larger than any partial the opponents can get -- a top for them and a bottom for you. Balance aggressively when not vulnerable, but be careful if vulnerable.

Several definite advantages accrue to your side:

(1) When you open or overcall, partner will know you actually have what you bid, leading to better contracts when it is your way.

(2) When you don't overcall with bad suits, opponents won't know where the missing HCP and distribution are. The key phrase is "Limited Bids". Listen for opponents to limit their hands. (A Limited Bid shows a maximum upper HCP range). They are inviting you into the auction, as they admit to a limit of 7 or 8 tricks their way.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Examples of balancing auctions.

♠ KJ6 North
♥ AQ64
♦ KJ6
♣ 976

West	East
♠ AT742	♠ Q953
♥ 92	♥ J87
♦ T87	♦ A93
♣ AQ3	♣ K84
	♠ 8
	♥ KT53
	♦ Q452 South
	♣ JT52

N	E	S	W
1♣	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	P	2♠
???			

A balancing 2♠ bid by West.

♠ A63 North
♥ A6
♦ Q962
♣ KJ89

West	East
♠ KT	♠ J975
♥ 932	♥ J874
♦ T8	♦ 543
♣ AQT632	♣ 74

♠ Q842
♥ KQT5
♦ AKJ7 South
♣ 5

N	E	S	W
1♣	P	1♥	2♣
P	P	Dbl	???

A balancing call?

♠ KJ6 North
♥ AQ643
♦ 76
♣ AQ9

West	East
♠ AT742	♠ Q95
♥ 972	♥ J8
♦ K8	♦ AJT932
♣ 743	♣ K8
	♠ 83
	♥ KT5
	♦ Q45 South
	♣ JT652

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	2♥	P
P	3♦	???	

A balancing call at the 3-level.

♠ KJ6 North
♥ AQ643
♦ 76
♣ AQ9

West	East
♠ AT74	♠ Q952
♥ 9752	♥ J8
♦ K8	♦ AJT9
♣ 743	♣ K86

♠ 83
♥ KT
♦ Q4523 South
♣ JT52

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	1NT	P
P	Dbl	???	

Four Spade cards and the minors.

COMPETITIVE BIDDING SUMMARY

This is a brief summary of bids and treatments you should use to be competitive in modern duplicate bridge. See individual write-ups for a more complete explanation.

Takeout Doubles: Shows an opening hand in search of an 8+-card fit in any unbid major suit. Responder bids her hand all at once in one bid. With 0 to 7 HCP, make the cheapest bid in a major. With 8 – 9, jump one level. With 10 – 12 double jump and with 13+, bid game. Without a 4+- card major, bid your longest minor or 1NT if you have stoppers in opener's suit.

[1♣ – **Dbl** – P – 4♥] 13+ HCP with 4+ Hearts or

[1♥ – **Dbl** – P – 1♠] 0 to 7 HCP with 4+ Spades.

[1♣ – **Dbl** – P – 1NT] 6 or 7 HCP without a 4-card major, but with Clubs stopped.

Overcalls and Weak Raises in Competition. An overcall shows a decent suit in an 8 to 15 HCP hand. The overcaller might not bid again. Responder should raise whenever possible, and all raises should be WEAK in competition. [1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥] This 2♥ bid may be as weak as 3 HCP if it includes some distribution points and 4 trumps. Try NOT to change suits when partner overcalls.

Cue bids for Limit Raises. A cue bid of opponent's suit shows a 10 to 12 point Limit Raise.

[1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ . . .] 2♣ is a Limit Raise of partner's Hearts.

Action Overcall Double. If overcaller is strong but can't rebid her suit, which would show 6+ cards, and can't bid NT or a new suit, she can Action Double at her 2nd bid, telling partner she has 12+ HCP or better. [1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – P 2♠ – **Dbl** – P – ???] Responder can then prefer to Hearts with only two Heart cards, pass for penalty, etc.

Action Double. If opener is strong but can't rebid her suit, showing 6+ cards, or bid another suit or NT, she can double at her 2nd bid, telling partner she has 15+ HCP. [1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥ **Dbl** – P – ???] Responder to the overcall can then evaluate the hand knowing opener has about 1NT strength but no 6-card suit and can't raise responder's suit or bid NT.

Unusual 2NT and Michaels. Overcalls that show two 5-card suits and 8 to 14 HCP. 2NT is usually a jump over one of a suit or a direct 2NT bid over 1NT. It shows the 2 lower unbid suits. [1♥ – 2NT . . .]. showing both Minors. **Michaels** is a direct cue bid of opponent's suit opener and shows any unbid major(s) and a minor if opening was in a major, or both majors if the opening was in a minor. [1♣ – 2♣ . . .]. Both majors. [1♥ – 2♥ . . .]. Spades and a Minor. 2NT by 4th seat asks for the Michaels bidder's minor suit.

Lebensohl 2NT. If partner doubles a weak two opening and responder is weak, she can sign off by bidding any suit at the 2-level or by bidding 2NT, forcing doubler to bid 3♣. Responder then bids her suit or passes with Clubs. [2♠ – **Dbl** – P – 2NT* P – 3♣ – P – 3♦ . . .] Weak with Diamonds. [2♠ – **Dbl** – P – 3♥ . . .] 10+ HCP and 4+ Hearts. [2♥ – **Dbl** – P – 2♠ . . .] weak with 4+ Spades.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Support Doubles and New Minor Force. These 2 conventions search for a 3 – 5 fit in a major. (3 cards in opener's hand and 5 cards in responder's.)

[1♣/♦ – P – 1♥/♠ – P 1 or 2NT – P – (2♣/♦)...] A **New Minor force**, showing 5 card major and 10+ HCP. Responder **asks** opener for 3-card support. Logically, it would be called the “Other Minor Force”, but it isn't.

[1♣/♦ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ Dbl*...] A **Support Double**. Opener shows exactly 3-card support for responder's major suit (Hearts) by doubling. Any other bid denies 3-card trump support. Opener **tells**, without being asked, that she has 3-card support.

[1♣/♦ – P – 1♥ – Dbl **Redbl**...] A **Support ReDouble**, shows 3 card support, bid after a double by 4th seat. Opener **tells** responder about her support without being asked.

Weak Jump Overcalls and Weak Jump Shifts. In modern bridge, jumps, either Jump Overcalls or Jump Shifts in competition are weak. WJO's and WJS's show 6 card suits, 0 to 8 HCP and no outside Ace or King.

[1♣ – 2♥ ...] a Weak Jump Overcall [1♣ – Dbl – 2♥ ...] a Weak Jump Shift (4 HCP max).

CUE BID SUMMARY

A Cue Bid is a versatile bid that has several possible meanings, depending on where in the auction it happens.

Cue bids are of two types:

- a bid of a suit previously bid by an opponent, e.g., [1♣ – 2♣ ...] and
- a new suit after trumps and a game-level contract have been agreed.
[1♥ – P – 3♥ – P 4♦...] Cue bidding an Ace; showing slam interest.

Direct Cue Bid of openers 1-level bid. Over a suit bid, it can be Michaels Cue Bid, showing 5 – 5 distribution and 8 to 14 HCP [1♣ – 2♣ ...] 5 – 5 distribution in the majors. A cue bid of a major shows the other major and a minor suit. [1♥ – 2♥ ...] Spades and a minor. Over 1NT NoTrump, it can be the Unusual 2NT, which shows 5 – 5 distribution in the two lower unbid suits, usually the minors: [1NT – 2NT ...] also [1♣/♦ – 2NT ...] or [1♥/♠ – 2NT ...]

Direct Cue Bid of opponents' suit overcall. [1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ ...] Shows a limit raise to opener, which means 10 to 12 dummy points. Dummy points include HCP plus distribution points, counted as 5, 3, 1 for void, singleton or doubleton respectively. Cue bids are not alertable, as opponents are assumed to remember what suits they bid.

Cue Bid of opponents' suit in response to partner's overcall.

[1♥ – 1♠ – 1NT – 2♥ ...] Shows a limit raise of partner's Spades, which means 10 to 12 dummy points and 3+ trumps.

4- Level Cue bid in response to partner's Takeout Double.

[1♣ – Dbl – P – 4♣ ...] "Pick a major suit game, partner."

Control-showing slam try Cue Bid. When trump and a game-level contract has been agreed to, either partner may cue-bid Aces (first round controls) as a slam try:

- [1♥ – P – 3♥ – P 4♣ – P – 4♦...] 3♥ sets Hearts as trumps. 4♣ and 4♦ are Ace-showing cue bids, indicating slam interest by the opener as well as the responder.
- In subsequent rounds, Kings can be cue bid (second round controls):
[1♥ – P – 3♥ – P 4♣ – P – 4♦ – P 4♠ – P – 5♣ – P 5♦ – P – 5♠ – P ...] thus showing Kings or 2nd round controls. Cue bids show specific cards; more accurate than Blackwood.

Explanation of Cue Bids. If asked, explain what the cue bid means: "It's a cue bid" is not an explanation - - of course it's a cue bid, but what it means is required for a proper explanation. E.g., "It means an Ace or Void in Clubs".

DOUBLES SUMMARY

Double is the most flexible bid in modern bridge, and therefore the easiest to confuse. When is a double for penalty? If it's not, what does it mean?

Takeout Double. The most common double is for takeout, meaning, "Partner, I have some points and whatever suits haven't been bid by the opponents".

[1♥ – **Dbl** ...]. 4 Spade cards and some Clubs/Diamonds in an opening hand

[1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 1NT – P – P - **Dbl** ...] Balancing Double with 4 Heart cards, some Diamonds and 8 to 11 points. With 12+ points, she would have doubled initially.

Negative Double. A "takeout" made in 3rd seat to show both unbid suits.

[1♣ – 1♥ – **Dbl**...] 4 Spade cards, some Diamonds and 8+ points.

Reopening Double. Made by opener when an overcall is followed by 2 passes:

[1♣ – 2♥ – P – P **Dbl**...] A responder with good Hearts can leave this Double in.

When playing Negative Doubles, opener must bid again or reopen the bidding with a double as shown here, allowing partner to pass for penalty if reasonable.

Redouble. Used by 3rd seat to show a 3-piece Limit Raise.

[1♥ – Dbl – **Redbl** ...] With 4 trumps, responder would bid a Jordan 2NT.

Support Double. Made by the minor suit opener when partner has bid 1 of a major and 4th hand bids. Shows exactly 3-card major suit support of responder's suit.

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ **Dbl** ...] With 4 Heart cards, opener would raise. Double shows 3.

Support Redouble. Same as Support Double, except when 4th hand doubles instead of bidding.

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – Dbl **ReDbl** ...] Same meaning: "Partner, I have 3 Hearts"

Responsive Double. Made by 4th hand when partner has made a takeout double and 3rd hand raises opener. Shows all unbid suits and asks takeout doubler to choose.

[1♣ – Dbl – 2♣ – **Dbl** ...] 8+ HCP and both major suits.

Lead Directing Double. Doubles of conventional bids are lead directing.

[1NT – P – 2♦# – Dbl ...] "Please lead a Diamond, partner"

OVERCALLS Summary

Overcalls at the One Level. A simple overcall at the one level promises only a decent to good 5-card suit and 8+ HCP; ♠KQTxx for example. There's no implied promise to bid again. Partner will lead the suit whenever possible, so be prepared: don't overcall with bad suits.

Rebids after Overcalling at the One Level. With 11+, perhaps make an Action Overcall Double if you can't rebid your suit (because it's only 5 cards long) and you have no other suit to bid. *Don't rebid unsupported 5 card suits.*

Overcalls at the Two Level. An overcall at the two level promises a decent to good 5-card suit and 12+ HCP, i.e., a hand that would have opened. There's no promise to bid again. Partner will lead the suit whenever possible, so be prepared. With a poor suit, pass and balance later.

Rebids after Overcalling at the Two Level. With 15+, perhaps make an Action Overcall Double if you can't rebid your suit (because it's only 5 cards long) and you don't have another suit. *Don't rebid unsupported 5 card suits.*

Overcall or Takeout? Takeout Doubles are 12+ HCP, show an opener and unbid suits, especially majors. It promises a good dummy for any suit bid by partner.

[1♥ – Dbl . . .] Shows 4 Spades and an opening hand.

[1♣ – Dbl . . .] Promises 4 – 4 or at least 4 – 3 in Spades/Hearts and an opening hand.

Weak Jump Overcalls. With a 6+ card suit and 10 HCP or less, consider a Weak Jump Overcall as a preemptive tactic, especially when not vulnerable. WJO's can be at the 2 or 3 or even 4 level. The weaker you are, the higher you should preempt, particularly when not vulnerable.

Conventional Overcalls. Conventional overcalls include Unusual 2 Notrump, Michaels Cue Bid and a 1 NoTrump overcall with 15 to 18 HCP and double stoppers in the suit. [1♦ – 1NT ...]

Overcalls and Responses on the Convention card. Discuss and agree with your partner what each of these situations mean and how you will respond. There's no right or wrong except guessing what your partner means. Use "Bob's Standard" card.

Forcing? Generally a new suit in response to an overcall is forcing one round, so responders must be careful not to put overcaller in an impossible situation for her rebid.

If none of the above apply, pass and considering balancing on the next round.

OVERCALLS AT THE ONE LEVEL

Overcalls and Responses on the Convention card . . . discuss and agree with your partner what each of these situations mean and how you will respond. There's no right or wrong except guessing what your partner means.

Overcalls at the One Level

- A simple overcall at the one level promises a decent to good 5-card suit and 8+ HCP; ♦KQTxx for example. There's no implied promise to bid again. Also its lead directing by definition.
- With 11+, consider making a Action Overcall Double if you can't rebid your suit on the 2nd round (because it's only 5 cards long) and partner doesn't raise.
- With a 6+ card suit and 10 HCP or less, consider a Weak Jump Overcall as a preemptive tactic, especially when not vulnerable. WJO's can be at the 2 or 3 or even 4-level. The weaker you are, the higher you should preempt.
- A 1 NoTrump overcall shows 15 to 18 HCP and good (double) stoppers in overcalled suit.
- If none of the above apply, pass and considering balancing on the next round.

Responses to One Level Overcalls

- Whenever possible, responses should be raises and not new suits, even with as little as Kx in partner's suit or any 3-card support.
- All direct raises should be weak and preemptive: the weaker you are, the higher you should bid.
- Hands of limit-raise strength (10 to 12 dummy points) should cue bid opener's suit.
[1♣ – 1♥ – P – 2♣ . . .] (See Limit Raises in Competition)
- 1 NT is a good competitive call if you have stoppers in opener's suit and can't raise partner.
- Responses to a 1NT overcall are the same as though overcaller had dealt and opened 1NT. Conventions such as Jacoby Transfers and Stayman operate as though overcaller had opened.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Quiz - RESPONSES TO OVERCALLS AT THE ONE LEVEL

LHO	Partner	RHO	Your Bid	Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
1 Club	1 Heart	Pass	a. 2 Hearts	_____		
			b. 3 Hearts	_____		
			c. 4 Hearts	_____		
	Partner's points? Distribution?		d. 2 Clubs	_____		
	_____	_____	e. 1 Spade	_____		
			f. 1 NoTrump	_____		
			g. 2 Diamonds	_____		
1 Diamond	1 Spade	Double	h. 2 Spades	_____		
			i. 3 Spades	_____		
	RHO's hand?		j. 4 Spades	_____		
			k. 2 Clubs	_____		
			l. 2 Diamonds	_____		
			m. 1 NT	_____		

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

QUIZ ANSWERS - RESPONSES TO OVERCALLS AT THE ONE LEVEL

(Assuming all competitive raises are weak. LR = Limit Raise)

LHO	Partner	RHO	Your Bid	Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
1 Club	1 Heart	Pass	a. 2 ♥	3 Hearts and ? dummy pts		
			b. 3 ♥	4 Hearts and ? dummy pts		
			c. 4 ♥	5 Hearts and ? dummy pts		
	Partner's points? Distribution?		d. 2 ♣	3+ Hearts, 10 to 12 pts. (a LR)		
			e. 1 ♠	4+ Spades, ?? HCP, ? Hearts		
	___8 to 14___ _?_5+___?_?_		f. 1 NT	Less than 3 Hearts, Clubs well stopped, 6 to 9 HCP		
			g. 2 ♦	5+ Diamonds 10 + HCP, ? Hearts, Forcing 1 round		

LHO	Partner	RHO	Your Bid	Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
1 Diamond	1 Spade	Double	h. 2 ♠	3 Spades, ?? HCP		
			i. 3 ♠	4 Spades, ?? HCP		
	RHO's hand?		j. 4 ♠	5 Spades, ?? HCP		
			k. 2 ♣	5+ Clubs, 10+ HCP, forcing		
	4 Hearts, 8+ HCP, some Clubs		l. 2 ♦	3+ Spades, 10-12 points (a LR)		
			m. 1 NT	Balanced 8 – 10 with Diamond, Heart and Club stops.		

OVERCALLS AT THE TWO LEVEL

An overcall at the two level promises a decent to good 5+-card suit and 12+ HCP; ♥KQTxx for example. There's no promise to bid again unless forced. Also lead directing. This is a hand that would probably have opened in first seat, unlike a 1-level overcall, where the hand may contain only 8 HCP or so.

- With 15+ HCP, consider making a Action Overcall Double on the 2nd round if you can't rebid your suit (because it's only 5 cards long), you have no 2nd suit and partner didn't support your suit.
- With a 6+ card suit and 10 HCP or less, consider a Weak Jump Overcall as a preemptive tactic, especially when not vulnerable. WJO's can be at the 2 or 3 or even 4-level. The weaker you are, the higher you should preempt.
- The opener and the 2-level overcaller both have about 13 HCP, so the other two hands only have about 7 points each. At the point of the overcall, it's not clear which side has the balance of power, and distribution and suit will play a big part in the determination of the final contract.
- Don't overcall at the 2-level with a bad suit like ♣J9652. Partner will lead it to no good results, and, if the opponents get the contract, they will know where all the missing points are and Declarer will play the hand better than if you had simply passed.
- If none of the above apply, pass and considering balancing on the next round.

Responses to Two Level Overcalls

Whenever possible, responses should be raises and not new suits, even with as little as ♠Kx or any 3 card support.

- All direct raises should be weak and preemptive: the weaker you are, the higher you should bid.
- Hands of Limit Raise value (10 to 12 dummy points) should cue bid opener's suit.
[1♠ – 2♥ – P – 2♠ . . .] (See Limit Raises in Competition)
- 2 NT is a good competitive call if you have stoppers in opener's suit and can't raise partner.
- Bids in a new suit are forcing for one round, so be careful not to put overcaller into an impossible situation. [1♠ – 2♥ – P – 3♦ – P ???] What does overcaller do with this hand? (♠xx ♥AQTxx ♦Qx ♣AQxx)? You have forced her to bid, and she will have to go to the 4-level to show her Clubs.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Quiz – 2 Level Overcalls and Responses

OVERCALLS

What is your bid over [1♥ – ?] holding:

1. ♠AJTX ♥QXX ♦KQJTX ♣X
2. ♠AKQT ♥95 ♦KXX ♣QJXX
3. ♠AK_{xxx} ♥9XX ♦KQ ♣AJT
4. ♠KX ♥KXX ♦KQJTXX ♣XX
5. ♠AKJTXX ♥QXX ♦JTX ♣X
6. ♠AJT ♥95 ♦KJXXX ♣AXX
7. ♠AK_x ♥AJ9XX ♦Q ♣QJTX
8. ♠KX ♥XXX ♦KQT9XX ♣XX

RESPONSES

What is your response to
[1♠ – 2♥ – P – ???]

1. ♠AJTX ♥QXX ♦QJTX ♣_{xx}
2. ♠A ♥KQT5 ♦JXXX ♣QJXX
3. ♠KX ♥KXXXX ♦XXX ♣XXX
4. ♠KX ♥KXXX ♦XXX ♣KXXX
5. ♠AJTX ♥XX ♦QJTX ♣KXX
6. ♠KQT5 ♥XXX ♦JXX ♣QJX
7. ♠XX ♥KXXXX ♦AXX ♣AXX
8. ♠AQX ♥KX ♦KJXX ♣QJXX

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Quiz ANSWERS – 2 Level Overcalls and Responses

OVERCALLS

What is your bid over [1♥ - ?] holding:

1. ♠AJTX ♥QXX ♦KQJTX ♣X
2. ♠AKQT ♥95 ♦KXX ♣QJXX
3. ♠AK_{xxx} ♥9XX ♦KQ ♣AJT
4. ♠KX ♥KXX ♦KQJTXX ♣XX
5. ♠AKJTXX ♥QXX ♦JTX ♣X
6. ♠AJT ♥95 ♦KJXXX ♣AXX
7. ♠AK_x ♥AJ9XX ♦Q ♣QJTX
8. ♠KX ♥XXX ♦KQT9XX ♣XX

1. 2♦
2. DbI
3. 1♠
4. 2♦
5. 2♠
6. P
7. P
8. 2♦ or 3♦ (Not vul)

RESPONSES

What is your response to
[1♠ - 2♥ - P - ???]

1. ♠AJTX ♥QXX ♦QJTX ♣_{xx}
2. ♠A ♥KQT5 ♦JXXX ♣QJXX
3. ♠KX ♥KXXXX ♦XXX ♣XXX
4. ♠KX ♥KXXX ♦XXX ♣KXXX
5. ♠AJTX ♥XX ♦QJTX ♣KXX
6. ♠KQT5 ♥XXX ♦JXX ♣QJX
7. ♠XX ♥KXXXX ♦AXX ♣AXX
8. ♠AQX ♥KX ♦KJXX ♣QJXX

1. 2♠
2. 2♠
3. 4♥
4. 3♥
5. 2NT
6. 3♥
7. 2♠
8. 3NT

Takeout Doubles and Responses

Doubling for Takeout. Make a Takeout Double when an opponent bids a suit in front of you and you have a hand of opening strength but no decent 5+ card suit to bid. [1♥ – Dbl ...] It tells your partner you have support for all unbid suits, guaranteeing any unbid major suits.

Since you have told your whole story with this one call, you often will not bid again.

You can bid a new suit after doubling only if you have 18+ HCP, as you have forced your partner to bid and she has bid all she thinks you can make. You can raise her in competition with fewer points, but you can't change suit with less than 18 HCP. [1♥ – Dbl – P – 2♣ – P – 2♠] 2♠ shows 18+ because partner doesn't have 4 Spades and may have only a few points: you forced her to bid, so you better be ready to play for 8 tricks with no help in dummy.

Balancing Takeout Doubles. If you have passed your first opportunity to bid and subsequently double for takeout, you are balancing and show less than an opener. [1♥ – P – 1NT – P – P – Dbl ...] means "Partner, let's compete for the contract; I have 4 or more Spade cards and some HCP."

Responses. Your partner has told you she has an opening strength hand and support for anything you bid. Your task is to bid as high as you think you can make, given an average opening strength hand by partner. She probably is not going to bid again, so you must bid it all at once. Her takeout is not the start of a conversation between the two of you - - it's her only bid, so you, the responder, are the captain and you know what you need to set the contract immediately.

What to Bid?

If RHO passes, you must bid, even with zero points. For example: [1♣ – Dbl – P – ???]

Bid any 4+ card major suit.

Bid your longest minor suit – not "strongest" but longest.

Holding stoppers in opponent's suit and no 4+ card major, bid NoTrump.

How High to Bid?

With 0 to 7 points, bid at the lowest level you can. [1♥ – Dbl – P – 1♠ ...].

With 8 to 10 points, jump a level; [1♥ – Dbl – P – 2♠ ...]

with 11 or 12 points, double jump ; [1♥ – Dbl – P – 3♠ ...]

with 13+ points, jump to game.. [1♥ – Dbl – P – 3NT ...]

After this sequence, [1♠ – Dbl – P – ???] what should you bid with these 4 hands?

♠Jx ♥QJxx ♦Txxx ♣KJx	2♥ (discount the Spade Jack)
♠AJT9 ♥Qx ♦Axxx ♣Qxx	3 NoTrump
♠xx ♥Jxxx ♦xxxxx ♣Kx	2♥, the lowest possible bid showing a major suit fit
♠x ♥Qxx ♦Jxxxx ♣AKxx	Not 3♦ or 3♣: 2♥ is better, even with just 3 cards in the suit.

RAISES IN COMPETITION

All direct suit raises in competition should / could be weak, in both majors and minors. The level of the raise is influenced by your vulnerability and the number of pieces of trump you have, not by some number of “points”. Length IS strength, but only if your partner knows there is a fit.

Some reasons to raise whenever holding 3+ trumps:

- Partner must know at once that you have trumps in support of her suit to compete properly.
- She will know you don't have as much as limit raise strength (10 to 12 dummy points).
- You may not get a chance to bid again if opponents bid high before it gets back to you.
- When raises are usually weak in competition, partner won't have to wonder.
- Knowing you have support, partner can best judge whether to “take-the-push”, to sacrifice or to go quietly.
- Opponents have lost lots of bidding space, especially when you jump - even weakly.
- If you show a limit raise, partner will know exactly what you have.

Weak Raises. With 3 pieces, raise one level. With 4 pieces, jump raise. With 5 pieces, jump to 4. Vulnerable, have some HCP – 6 or so. Not vulnerable, points are practically meaningless. Weak raises are not alertable, but they should be indicated so on your convention card.

Strong Raises. If you have Limit Raise strength and trump support, use Cue bids of opponent's suit, or use Jordan 2NT* over opponent's double holding 4 trumps or Redouble over an opponent's double holding just 3 trumps. (See Limit Raises in Competition)

Quiz. Weak Raises in Competition

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1♥ – Dbl – ? | 1. ♠x ♥Qxxx ♦QJxx ♣xxxx | 2. ♠Kx ♥JTxxx ♦QJx ♣xxx |
| | 3. ♠Ax ♥Jxxx ♦KJxx ♣Jxx | 4. ♠Ax ♥Jxx ♦KJxx ♣Jxxx |
| 1♥ – 1♠ – Dbl – ? | 5. ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦Ax Qxxx | 6. ♠Kxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣Qxxx |
| | 7. ♠xx ♥Kxxx ♦QJxx ♣Axx | 8. ♠xxx ♥Kx ♦Axxx ♣QJxx |
| 1♣ – 1♥ – 3♣ – ? | 9. ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦Ax ♣Qxxx | 10. ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦Qx ♣Qxxx |
| | 11. ♠xx ♥Kxx ♦QJxx ♣Axx | 12. ♠xxx ♥Kx ♦Axxx ♣QJxx |

Notice how hard it is to bid over the weak 3♣ call.

Answers. Remember, these are not locked in stone answers: they are subject to variation regarding Vulnerability and even the quality of your opponents.

- | | | | | | |
|--------|-------|----------------|----------|---------|--------------|
| 1. 3♥ | 2. 4♥ | 3. 2NT* Jordan | 4. ReDbl | 5. 2♥ | 6. 3♠ |
| 7. 1NT | 8. 2♥ | 9. 3♥? | 10. 3♥? | 11. 3♥? | 12. 3♥? Dbl? |

LIMIT RAISES IN COMPETITION

A Limit Raise is a jump raise of a suit bid. [1♥ – P – 3♥ ...]. It shows 10 to 12 dummy points and 4+ Hearts. Minor suit limit raises are often played in “reverse” style, meaning a single raise to 2♣ or 2♦ shows a 5-trump limit raise, and a jump to 3♣ or 3♦ shows a weak 5-trump hand. (See Inverted Minors and Limit Raises)

However, limit raises in competition are bid differently, because we recommend the “All raises in competition are weak” philosophy. [1♥ – 1♠ – 3♥ ...] This same-sounding Heart response is not a limit raise, it is a weak preemptive raise and not alertable.

3rd Seat Limit Raises in Competition. When opponent bids over our opening partner, we show Limit Raises in one of 3 ways.

[1♥ – 1♠ – 2♠ ...] A **cue bid** of overcaller’s suit shows a Limit Raise. Not Alertable.

[1♠ – Dbl – 2NT*...] **2NT** over a takeout double shows a 4-trump Limit Raise. (Jordan 2NT). Alertable.

[1♠ – Dbl – **ReDbl***...] **Redouble** shows a 3-trump Limit Raise. Alertable.

4th Seat Limit Raise of Partner’s Overcall. For example. [1♣ – 1♥ – P – ?]

Partner has made a bid with a hand that could have only 8 high-card points. To safely show partner a limit raise without getting too high, cue bid your opponents’ suit. Example:

[1♣ – 1♥ – P – 2♣ ...]. Cue bids offer no way to distinguish between a 3-card limit raise and a 4-card one. Not alertable. As always, a jump raise in this situation would be preemptive and weak: [1♣ – 1♥ – P – 3♥ ...] Weak: 4 Hearts but less than 9, probably less than 6 HCP.

Quiz: Limit Raises in Competition

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1♥ – Dbl – ? | 1. ♠x ♥Qxxx ♦QJxx ♣xxxx | 2. ♠Kx ♥JTxxx ♦QJx ♣xxx |
| | 3. ♠Ax ♥Jxxx ♦KJxx ♣Jxx | 4. ♠Axx ♥Jxx ♦KJxx ♣Jxx |
| 1♥ – 1♠ – P – ? | 5. ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦Ax ♣Qxxx | 6. ♠Kxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣Qxxx |
| | 7. ♠Kxxx ♥Kx ♦QJxx ♣Axx | 8. ♠Kx ♥Kxx ♦Jxxx ♣QJxx |
| 1♣ – 1♥ – 3♣ – ? | 9. ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦Ax ♣Qxxx | 10. ♠Kxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣Qxxx |
| | 11. ♠Ax ♥Jxxx KJxx Jxx | 12. ♠xx ♥JTxxx ♦xxx xxx |

Notice how hard it is to bid over the weak 3♣ bid.

- Answers. 1. 3♥ 2. 4♥ 3. 2NT* 4. ReDbl 5. 2♥ 6. 3♠
 7. 2♥ 8. 1NT 9. 3♥? 10. P 11. 3♥? 12. 4♥

Major Suit Responses in Competition

Good partnerships have an exact understanding for every response to one of a Major opening, up thru 4NT RKC Blackwood. This is an example set of responses when there is competition.

Raises are the top priority but are usually weak in competition.

These responses are after an auction starting [1♥/♠ – (bid) ...] In other words, partner has opened 1 of a major suit and RHO has interfered as indicated in the first column.

NF = not forcing; GF = Game Forcing. 1 RF = One round force

<i>Bidding</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Values. Give full value for distribution: 5 void - 3 singleton - 1 doubleton</i>
1♥/♠ - 1NT	Any raise	3+ trumps, not weak because a 1NT bid shows good stoppers. 6+ HCP NF
1♥/♠ – 2♥/♠ Michaels Cue Bid	Any raise	Weak. 3+ trumps. Bid high to preempt 4 th hand. 0 – 9 dummy points. NF
Double (takeout)	Any raise	Weak. 3+ trumps. Bid high to preempt 4 th hand. 0 – 9 dummy points. NF
1♥ – DbI – 2NT*	2NT* (Jordan)	Limit Raise. 4+ trump, 10-12 dummy points. 1 RF
1♥ – DbI – ReD	Redouble	Bad (a 3-piece) Limit Raise. . 10 – 12 dummy points. Forcing
1♥ – DbI – 2♦ .	2 of a suit	Natural, but doesn't deny 3+ trumps. 5+ card suit. 1 RF not GF. Not 2/1 GF.
1♥ – DbI – 4♣*	Double Jump Shift	Splinter. Opening hand; good trumps, singleton or void. GF
1♥ – DbI – 3NT	3NT	Natural; Opener; 13+ HCP, stoppers elsewhere. Denies 3+ trumps. NF
1♥ – DbI – 3♣	Jump Shift	Weak Jump Shift. Very weak 6+ card suit. No Ace or King. 0 - 4 HCP. NF
Suit overcall	Any raise	Weak. 3+ trumps. Bid high to preempt 4 th hand. 0 – 9 dummy points. NF
1♥ – 2♣ – 3♣ . .	Cue bid of opp't	Limit Raise. 3+ trump, 10-12 dummy points. 1 RF
1♥ – 2♣ – DbI	Double	Negative Double, denies 3+ trumps. 8+ HCP, no good 5+ card suit. 1 RF
1♥ – 2♣ – 2NT	2NT (Not Jordan)	Natural. 10 – 12 HCP; stops in overcalled suit. Denies 3 trumps. NF
1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ . .	New suit	Natural but doesn't deny 3+ trumps. 5+ card suit. 1 RF; not GF
1♥ – 2♣ – 4♣ . .	Jump Cue	Splinter. Opening hand; good trumps, singleton or void. GF
1♥ – 2♣ – 3♦ . .	Jump Shift	Weak Jump Shift. Weak 6+ card suit. No Ace or King. 0 - 4 HCP. NF
1♥ – 2♦ – 3NT .	3 NT	Natural; Opener; 13+ HCP, good stops in op's suit. Not 3+ trumps. NF

Playing all raises are weak in competition makes remembering this chart much easier, as many bids are raises, and they're almost always weak. The level of your raise depends on how many trump are available and on your vulnerability.

Next most important are the varieties of Limit Raises, showing 10 to 12 dummy points, and usually distinguishing between 3-card and 4-card trump support. Such bids can be cue bids of opponents' suit, redoubles or Jordan 2NT. Then come natural NoTrump bids, which present no memory problems. Finally, new suit bids and splinters, which are little different than without competition, except that Two Over One Game Force is off in competition.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

QUIZ - Major Suit responses After Interference

Partner	RHO	You	Your Points? Cards? Forcing?
(1) 1 Heart	Double	?	2 ♥ _____
			3 ♥ _____
			4 ♥ _____
	RHO's points? Cards?		1 NoTrump _____
			2 NoTrump _____
			Redouble _____
_____	_____		

Partner	RHO	You	Your Points? Cards? Forcing?
(2) 1 Heart	2 Clubs	?	2 ♥ _____
			3 ♥ _____
			4 ♥ _____
	RHO's points? Cards?		2 NoTrump _____
			2 ♠ _____
_____	_____		

Partner	RHO	You	Your Points? Cards? Forcing?
(3) 1 Heart	1 Spade	?	2 ♥ _____
			3 ♥ _____
			4 ♥ _____
	RHO's points? Cards?		1 NT _____
			2 NoTrump _____
			2 ♠ _____
_____	_____		

Assume the standard in this technique is that all direct raises in competition are or may be weak.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Quiz Answers - Major Suit responses After Interference

< = fewer than. NF = not forcing. F = forcing 1 round.

Partner	RHO		You	Your Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
(I) 1 Heart	Double	?	2 ♥	3 Hearts	A few pts. NF	
			3 ♥	4 Hearts	A few pts. NF	
			4 ♥	5 Hearts	A few pts. NF	
	RHO's points? 12+		1 NT	< 3 Hearts. Spade stop.	6 - 9 NF	
	Cards? 4 Spades		2 NT*	A "Good" Limit Raise (Jordan)		F
	_____	_____	ReDbI*	A "Bad" Limit Raise		F

Partner	RHO		You	Your Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
(2) 1 Heart	2 Clubs	?	2 ♥	3 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
			3 ♥	4 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
			4 ♥	5 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
	RHO's points? 12+		2 NT	< 3 Hearts. Clubs.	10 -12 NF	
	Cards? 5+ Clubs. < 4 Spades		2 ♠	5+ Spades. < 3 Hearts.	8+ F	
	_____	_____				

Partner	RHO		You	Your Points?	Cards?	Forcing?
(3) 1 Heart	1 Spade	?	2 ♥	3 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
			3 ♥	4 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
			4 ♥	5 Hearts.	A few pts. NF	
	RHO's points? 8+ HCP		1 NT	< 3 Hearts. Spade stop.	6 - 9 NF	
	Cards? 5+ Spades		2 NT	< 3 Hearts. Spade stop.	10 -12 NF	
			2 ♠	Limit Raise in Hearts	F	

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Minor Suit Responses in Competition

Good partnerships have an exact meaning for every response to one of a minor opening followed by interference, up to 4NT Blackwood. This is an example set of responses, used when there is an overcall or takeout double by second seat.

After partner's 1♣ or 1♦ opening, playing Inverted Minors, responses by a non-passed hand:

<i>Interference</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Values. full value for distribution when raising: 5 void - 3 sing. - 1 dbl.</i>
1 Notrump		
1♣/♦ - 1NT - P- ?	Any raise	Not weak; 5+ trumps, as a 1NT overcall shows good stoppers. 8+ HCP
Conventional Bid		
1♣/♦ - 2♣/♦ Michaels	Any raise	Weak. 5+ trumps. Bid high to preempt 4 th hand. 0 - 9 dummy points.
Takeout Double		
1♣/♦ - Db1 - 2NT	2 NT	Flat Hand. 10 - 12 HCP. No 4 card major. To play. NF.
1♣/♦ - Db1 - 3 NT	3 NT	Natural, to play. Opener with 13+ HCP, stoppers everywhere. NF
1♣/♦ - Db1 - ReD	Redouble	Good hand. 10+ HCP, but can't raise or bid NT. No 4 card major. NF
1♣/♦ - Db1 - 2♣/♦	Single Raise	Limit Raise. 5+ card support. Inverted is ON. Forcing but not GF
1♣/♦ - Db1 - 3 ♣/♦	Double Raise	Weak. 5+ card support. Inverted is ON. NF
1♣/♦ - Db1 - 2 ♦/♥/♠	Jump Shift	Weak Jump Shift. Weak 6+ card suit. To play. 0 - 4 HCP.
Suit Overcall		
1♣/♦ - 1♦/♥/♠ - 2♣/♦	Single Raise	Limit Raise. 10+ HCP. 5+ card support. No 4 card major. Forcing.
1♣/♦ - 1♦/♥/♠ - 3♣/♦	Double Raise	Weak Raise. 5+ card support. No 4 card major. 0 - ? HCP. NF
1♣/♦ - 1 ? - Db1	Negative Double	Normal. 8+ HCP, no 5+ card major suit. Shows unbid major suits.
1♣/♦ - 1 ? - 2NT	2NT	Natural. 10 - 12 HCP; stops in opp's suit. No unbid 4 card major. NF
1♣/♦ - 1 ? - 3NT	3NT	Natural. 13+ HCP, good stops in opp's suit. No unbid 4 card major. NF
1♣/♦ - 1 ? - 1/2 of a suit	New suit	Natural. 8+ HCP 5+ card suit. Forcing but not Game Forcing
1♣/♦ - 1 x - 2x	Western Cue	Asking for stopper in opponent's suit. With, 3NT. Else 3♣/♦. F
1♣/♦ - 1 ? - 2+ ♦/♥/♠	Jump Shift	Weak Jump Shift. Weak 6+ card suit. To play. 0 - 4 HCP. NF

Responses by a passed hand: [P - P - 1♣/♦ - Db1 ???] A third seat 1-of-a-minor opening should be full valued. Responses are the same as above, except responder is known to have less than an opener and therefore no responses are forcing.

Weak Jump Overcalls and Weak Jump Shifts

Modern bidders use jump overcalls and jump shifts as preemptive, not strength showing bids.

Old-fashioned bidding styles require us to jump or jump shift with really big hands after a 1-level opening by partner or opponent --- why? When partner opens 1♥, a simple 1♠ response is 100% forcing, so why jump and consume our own bidding space? We don't.

We bid Weak Jump Overcalls and Weak Jump Shifts with approximately the same hands we would open with a Weak Two - a 6-card suit and a weak hand. Examples:

[1♥ – 3♣ ...] with (♠xx ♥Jxx ♦xx ♣AKJxxx) A Weak Jump Overcall

[1♠ – Db1 – 3♣ ...] with (♠xx ♥Jxx ♦xx ♣KJTxxx) A Weak Jump Shift

Because of our 6+ card suit, it's difficult for opponents to be sure about a penalty double earning more than they can make by bidding, (SCORE - SCORE - SCORE!) and a WJO or WJS takes away lots of bidding space. We use them when vulnerable, too, but then we have good suits.

Strength. 0 to 6 or 8 HCP's (they can be even weaker than Weak Twos) and a 6+ card suit.

P – 2♠ - ? A standard **Weak Two** opener hand by East . . . but what if North opens 1♣ first?

1♣ – 2♠ - ? Is there any less reason for a weak 2♠ bid by East? No. But now it's a **Weak Jump Overcall**. West knows East has nothing but some Spade cards and can bid accordingly. Defense Tip: Using negative doubles in this example, South will double showing Hearts & Diamonds, raise Clubs, bid 2NT naturally, etc.

1♣ – P – 2♠ A **Weak Jump Shift** by South. It exactly describes South's hand in one bid. Remember that you are preempting your partner, who opened, so be sure you are very weak - 4 HCP Max. You can bid 1♠ with just 6 points, rather than 2♠.

WJS and WJO Bidding Guidelines:

- Not Vulnerable, almost anything goes. ♠KJTxxx, ♦KQxxxx, even ♣JTxxxxx.
- Vulnerable, you should have a decent suit – usually 2 of the top 3 honors for a WJO: ♠AKJxxx or ♦KQJTxx, etc. (These hands are far too strong for a WJS.)

A WJS hand should have no outside Aces or Kings. With an outside major honor, bid one or pass. With an unpassed partner, don't hold any 4-card major side suits. Holding outside honors, you can miss games or slams, so don't WJS with Aces or Kings.

Your hand should be useless at any other strain. Opener / partner should be reluctant to bid except to raise your suit. You won't bid again because you've said it all in one bid.

Bidding over [1♣/♦ – P – 1NT ...?]

Frequently opponents open the bidding [1♣ or 1♦ – P – 1NT - ?? ...] and you have a decent hand in the 4th seat.

What can you bid?

If you and your partner are in sync, you can have a set of actions ready when these situations come up, such as the following.

Notice that [1♦ – P – 1NT...] usually shows a 3rd seat hand with Clubs, because she didn't bid a major suit or raise.

- Takeout double to show cards in all missing suits, if your shape is right for takeout.
(Hand 2 A and B)
- Make the same bid you would have made had you been in second seat rather than 4th.
(Hand 3, Hand 5B)
- Pass and wait for partner to balance or double (Hands 4 and 5A)
- 4th seat cue bids can show Michaels-like distribution in the majors (Hand 1)

	<i>After 1♣ – P – 1NT - ???</i>	<i>After 1♦ – P – 1NT - ???</i>
(1) ♠QJ972 ♥AQ86 ♦AT3 ♣9	2♣. A Michaels-like 2♣ call shows both majors	2♦. A Michaels-like 2♦ call shows both majors
(2) ♠J97 ♥AQ86 ♦KQT8 ♣72	Double for takeout to Spades, Hearts or Diamonds.	Double for takeout. The 1NT bidder has Clubs, not your partner.
(3) ♠AJ72 ♥63 ♦AKJT5 ♣92	2♦, not Takeout Double with only 2 Hearts.	Not 2♦. (See hand 1) Pass & balance with 2♦ later.
(4) ♠AQ ♥Q963 ♦75 ♣KQ972	Pass. Not 2♣ as it would be Michaels. Bid Hearts if partner Balance Doubles.	Pass, not 2♣. 1NT bidder has Clubs. Pass & balance w/2♣ later?
(5) ♠AJ2 ♥J963 ♦T5 ♣AQJ2	Pass, hoping partner doubles for a balance in Hearts or bids Spades	Double for takeout. Same as 1♣ – Dbl ...

BIDDING OVER PREEMPTS

Situation: Your RHO preempts at the 2- or 3-level. How should you bid with modest values but a decent suit or suits? (If appropriate, you will make a Takeout Double, of course.)

Suit Overcalls. With average hands holding a biddable suit, use Mike Lawrence's *Rule of Seven*, which works as follows: Assume your partner has about 7 average points. Not 7 perfect points of your choosing, but an average 7 HCP hand. Then look at your hand and ask if you can make what you're about to bid with a 7 average point dummy, taking into account the level and your vulnerability. If so, go ahead and make an overcall. Partner will assume the Rule of Seven.

Responses Using the Rule of Seven.

If you have an average 7 point hand or worse after partner overcalls a preempt, pass.

If you have a trick better than "average", i.e., 10+ working points, raise one. With an opener or better, bid game. Examples: None vulnerable, opener opens a weak 2 as indicated.

Overcalls			Responses	
Bid over 2♦	Bid over 2♦	Bid over 2♦	After 2♦ - 2♠ - P ?	After 2♦ - 2♠ - P - ?
♠92	♠AJ642	♠AQJ8752	♠942	♠Q42
♥KQJ86	♥82	♥A8	♥K742	♥K742
♦AT2	♦K4	♦K5	♦83	♦8
♣QJ4	♣AK43	♣53	♣KJ63	♣KQJ63
2♥	2♠	3♠	Pass	4♠

Cue Bids. Direct Cue bids of Weak Two openers could mean Michaels or Unusual Notrump-type hands:

Over minors: 5 – 5 in the majors (Michaels-like) with an opener or better;

Over majors: 5 – 5 in the minors with 15+ HCP & suits with lots of working points.

Examples: Both vulnerable, opener bids preemptively as indicated. Your bid?

Bid over 2♦	Bid over 3♦	Bid over 3♥	Bid over 2♠	Bid over 2♠
♠AJ976	♠AJ976	♠AQJ875	♠9	♠A
♥KQT96	♥KQT96	♥A4	♥K3	♥K3
♦A7	♦A7	♦52	♦KQT96	♦KQT96
♣9	♣9	♣K85	♣KQT96	♣KQT96
3♦	4♦	3♠	Pass	3♠

NEGATIVE DOUBLE

Much of bridge bidding is about finding 8+ card fits in major suits. Often, each player of a pair has 4 Hearts or 4 Spades, but if there is interference, it's harder for either to bid a 4-card suit. [1♣ – 1♠ – ???]. What should 3rd hand do with 4 Heart cards and 11 points? To bid Hearts directly would show 5 or more. The answer is the Negative Double.

A negative double guarantees 4 of any unbid major, or at least 4 – 3 in the majors if neither major has been bid, [1♣ – 1♦ – **Dbl**...]. It's a form of takeout double that occurs after opener's one of a suit is overcalled in a suit and 3rd hand has the other 2 suits. [1♣ – 1♠ – **Dbl**]. This Negative Double shows exactly 4 Heart cards, 3+ Diamond cards and strength enough to bid.

Consequently, when third hand bids a major in such a situation, she has at least 5 of the suit. [1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ ...]. Bob's Rule is: Bid with 5; Negative Double with 4.

Strength: 8+ HCP with no upper limit, as it is a forcing bid. Implied minor suits may be only 3 cards long. [1♠ – 2♣ – **Dbl** ...] shows 4 Hearts but not necessarily 4+ Diamonds. It can be used to find minor suit fits. [1♥ – 1♠ – **Dbl** ...] shows at least 4 – 4 distribution in the minors. Of course, opener must rebid if third hand passes. This is a reopening bid or a reopening double. A reopening double lets third hand penalize the overcaller if appropriate.

[1♠ – 2♥ – P – P **Dbl** – P – **P**...] This is a Reopening Double that 3rd hand may pass.

Negative Doubles are usually played as high as 3♠ to allow for finding a 4 – 4 major or other suit fits when overcaller preempts: [1♣ – 3♥ – **Dbl**...]. This is not for penalty, but is a Negative Double, showing 4 Spade cards, some Diamonds and a desire to compete.

1 ♣ – 2 ♥ – Dbl	4 Spade cards, some Diamonds
1 ♣ – 2 ♥ – 2♠	5+ Spade cards
1 ♥ – 1NT – Dbl	Penalty: not Spades because overcall is in NT
1 ♣ – 1 ♦ – 1 ♠	5+ Spade cards
1 ♥ – 1 ♠ – Dbl	4 – 4 at least in the minor suits
1 ♦ – 4♣ – Dbl	Penalty: Negative doubles go only thru 3♠
1 ♣ – Dbl – 1♥	5+ Heart cards, not 4
1 ♥ – P – 2♣ – Dbl	A takeout double, not a negative double (3 rd seat only)
1 ♦ – 2♥ – Dbl	4 Spade cards and some Clubs.
2 ♥ – 3♣ – Dbl	Penalty, as opener has made a weak opening.
1 ♦ – 1♠ – 2 ♣	Natural, 5+ card suit, 10+ HCP and denies 4 Hearts

Responsive Double

Situation. The bidding has been [1♣ – 1♥ – 2♣ - ??]. You want to bid something, but can't support partner's Hearts, can't bid NoTrump over Clubs and don't have a 5+ card suit.

Problem: If you have 4 Spades and 3 or 4 Diamonds and 8+ points, can you bid?

Solution: This is the time for a **Responsive Double**. It means "Partner, I have something to say, but my values are in the unbid suits and I can't raise your suit". Partner can then revalue his hand to rebid his suit, bid another suit, bid NoTrump or even leave the double in.

[1♣ – 1♥ – 2♣ – **Dbl** . . .]

Other Responsive Double Sequences:

(a) It works the same if your partner doubles:

[1♣ – **Dbl** – 2♣ - ???] Your partner is doubling for the majors. If your majors are 4 each, a Responsive Double tells her to pick her longer major and bid to a level appropriate for an 8+ point dummy with a known fit (you). Remember, you are not forced to bid because there has been an intervening 2♣ call. You are making a "free bid", showing a decent 8+ HCP hand with some shape.

(b) It works the same if opponents don't bid and raise a suit: [1♣ – Dbl – 2♦ – ?] If you want to bid and your majors are 4 each, make a Responsive Double to tell partner to bid her best major.

(c) Bid the same if it goes: [1♣ – Dbl – 1NT - ???]. Often third hand bids 1NT with a few scattered points in an attempt to shut 4th hand out and be the first side to bid NoTrump (a good defensive bidding strategy).

Implications: If your partner overcalled at the one level and your Responsive Double forces to her to the three level, be a little cautious, especially Vulnerable. Her overcall at the one level might be just 8 points and a good suit. [1♥ – 1♠ – 3♥ – Dbl P -- ???] You may be better off to raise Spades with ♠Kx or ♠Qx) than force her too high. [1♥ – 1♠ – 3♥ – 3♠ P -- ???].

If she overcalled at the two level, she has a near-opening hand, so it's less risky. If she doubled, her suits may be shorter, but she will have opening hand HCP value to compensate.

Convention Card Recommendations: Responsive Doubles are usually played thru 3♠, like other competitive doubles: Negative, Action and Support. Responsive Doubles are not alertable.

We (Bob's Standard) play them thru 2♠.

Western Cue

Many times in competitive auctions you can play 3 NT if you or your partner has a stopper in the opponents' suit. Often this occurs when your side has a good minor suit, but you want to try for a 9 trick game instead of an 11 trick game.

If you have a stopper, you simply bid 3NT. But how do you get your partner to bid 3NT if she has one?

The answer is to use the **Western Cue** bid, in which you cue bid the opponents' suit at the 3 level, asking partner to bid 3NT with a stopper. It occurs only in competitive auctions, usually when opponents have bid and raised a suit.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠	E/W have Spades . . .
3♠	Dbf	3NT	. . .	For some reason, North wants to try 3NT if South has a Spade stopper. This South does have a Spade stopper and so bids 3NT.

1♣	1♠	2♥	P	
3♣	P	3♠	P	North has no Spade stopper so has to run out to her Club suit.
4♣	P	5♣	. . .	South is willing to go to game, but wanted to play 3NT

There has to be a safe place to go when you ask partner to bid 3NT. If she can't bid it, there has to be a default suit, as in the second example above (Clubs), although it doesn't have to be in game, meaning you could stop in 4♣ in the 2nd example.

Western Cue is an ASK: "If you have a stopper in the opponents' suit, partner, bid 3NT". Using Western Cue, the lead comes into the hand with the stopper, as common sense requires.

Eastern Cue is a TELL: "Partner, I have a stopper in the opponents' suit." Using Eastern Cue, the lead comes through the stopper, which is nonsensical, of course.

Bidding NoTrump First

General: Without competition, bidding NoTrump shows HCP range and flat distribution, not necessarily stoppers. In competition, bidding any number of NoTrump shows a flat-ish hand with stopper(s) in opponents' suit(s).

The first side to bid 1NT often has the winning competitive bid, because it's hard to beat 1NT and it forces the opponents up a level. To beat 1NT means 7+ defensive tricks, which may score only 50 for setting declarer by one. (*Score - Score - Score!*)

Rebids of NoTrump by Opener

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT - ...] With 4 Hearts, raise. With 4 Spades, bid 1♠. She has neither.

[1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – P 1NT - ...] With 3 Spades, you'd have raised. Shows a Heart stopper(s).

[1♥ – 2♣ – 2♦ – P 2NT - ...] With 6 Hearts, you'd have rebid Hearts. Shows Club stopper(s).

[1♥ – P – 2♦ – P 2NT - ...] With 6 Hearts, you'd have rebid Hearts. Nothing extra.

[1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 2NT - ...] With 4 Hearts, raise Hearts. A flat 18 – 19 HCP without 4 Spades.

[1♣ – 1♦ – Dbl – 1♥ 1NT - ...] A competitive 1NT bid, showing red-suit stoppers, getting a 1NT bid in before the opponents bid it.

NoTrump Bids by Responder

[1♣ – 1♥ – 1NT - ...] With 4 Spades, you'd have Negative Doubled. Shows Heart stopper(s).

[1♥ – 1♠ – 2NT - ...] With 3+ Hearts, you'd have raised. Showing a Spade stopper.

[1♣ – P – 1NT - ...] Denying a 4+ card major and showing 8 to 10 HCP, not 6 to 9.

[1♣ – P – 2NT - ...] Denying a 4+ card major and showing 10 – 12 HCP.

[1♣ – P – 3NT - ...] Denying a 4+ card major and showing 13 – 15 HCP.

[1♥/♠ – P – 1NT ...] Denying a raise or 4+ Spades. Showing 6 – 9 HCP (SA) or 1NT Forcing (5 – 11 HCP) playing Two Over One.

Passed-Hand NoTrump Bids in Competition.

[P – 1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ 1NT ...] Denying 3 Hearts but showing a Spade stopper.

[P – 1♥ – Dbl – 2♥ 2NT ...] A passed-hand Unusual 2NT, showing both minor suits.

Balancing

What Is Balancing? Balancing occurs when opponents try to stop bidding at 2NT or lower so previously passed hands can then bid. It's called "balancing" because the HCP are in relative balance between the two sides.

Basics of Balancing. When your opponents announce weak hands by trying to stop at 2 Clubs or 1NT, for example, consider bidding your suit or doubling for takeout -- you shouldn't let your opponents play at less than 2NT or 2♠.

The key to knowing when to balance is to listen for limited bids by your opponents. A limited bid is one that caps the point range of a bid -- a rebid of 2♥ after 1♥ opener, for example, or a 1 NT response or a single raise of a suit. Once both opponents have made limited bids at low levels, your side should compete in unbid suits, especially in higher ranking suits. The objective is not necessarily to become the declarer -- it is to force the opponents to bid higher than they wanted to, and usually to the 3-level. Examples:

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♥	P	1NT	P	
2♥	P	P	2♠	A balancing 2♠ by West. North has about 13 and South has 6 to 8 -- about half the HCP. East/West have both passed, but they also must have about half the points, and West has 5 Spades. When North rebid 2♥, East/West knows she has a minimum hand and South does too, because he passed 2♥. West may have a makeable 2♠ contract, or be minus 50 or 100 instead of minus 110. It's unlikely North / South will be able to double and beat West's 2♠ contract, because South would have bid Spades if he had them.

... and the bidding may not be over yet. . .

P	P	3♥	P	South "takes the push" to 3♥. West has pushed North / South up a level, and it may be considerably harder to make 9 tricks instead of 8 tricks with just 19 or so HCP between the two hands.
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This is a successful "push" by West, regardless of the outcome. If North / South make 3 Hearts, they were going to make it playing at 2 Hearts. If they go down one, East/West now have a plus score rather than a minus.

Advance Balancing. When you see that you are going to balance, considering bidding your suit before the second opponent bids 1NT. In this way you really put them to the test. Be careful if you're vulnerable. [P – 1♥ – P – 1♠ 2♣ ...] An advance balance call by a passed hand, anticipating that LHO's rebid will be 1NT.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

BALANCING EXAMPLES

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P P – 2♣ – P – 2♦ – ...] Not selling out to a 2 Club contract.

[1♥ – P – 1NT – P P – **Dbl** – P – 2♠ ...] Finding a Spade fit as a balance

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ – 2♦ ...] An Advances Balance, preventing 1NT or a 2♣ preference

[1♦ – P – 1NT – P P – **Dbl** ...] Looking for a major suit fit as a balance.

[1NT – P – P – Dbl P – 2♦# - P - 2♥ ...] Jacoby balancing vs. a NT opener. Systems ON.

[1♦ – P – 1NT – P P – **Dbl** – 2♦ ...] Pushing opponents off their 1NT contract

[1♥ – P – 1NT – P P – 2♣ – 2♥ – 3♣ 3♥ ...] Pushing them to 3♥ rather than 1 NT

[1♣ – P – 1♠ – **Dbl** ...] A regular takeout double, not a balancing double

[1♣ – P – P – **Dbl** ...] A balancing double even though it's a non-passed hand.

Don't Rebid Five Card Suits

You shouldn't rebid an unsupported 5-card suit, either as opener, overcaller or responder.

A rebid shows a 6+ card suit. Don't think of the negatives; think of the positives.

When you and your partner follow this rule, bidding becomes much easier. As opener, rebid NoTrump rather than rebid a 5-card suit, or, better yet, Pass in competition to tell your partner you don't have a 6-card suit. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ P ...].

Many bids promise 5-card suits - - opening 1♥ or 1♠, Michaels, Jacoby, etc., but a 1-level response [1♣ – P – 1♥ ...] promises only 4 Hearts.

Question. If responder doesn't rebid her 5-card major suit, how can we find a 3-5 fit?

Answer. Responder shouldn't **tell** opener about her 5-card major suit by rebidding it, but she can **ask** if opener has 3-card support. When opener rebids 1 or 2 Notrump, responder asks opener if she has 3 cards in her major by bidding the lowest unbid suit (usually the other minor) artificially. This is the **New Minor Force**, and it is alertable. To ask in this manner, responder needs 10+ HCP because it forces the auction to at least the 2NT level. With 3-card support, opener bids the suit at some level. Without it, she rebids her 6-card suit or another suit or NoTrump at some level. (See New Minor Force)

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♦* ...] “Partner, do you have 3 Hearts with me?”

[1♥ – P – 1♠ – P 2NT – P – 3♣* ...] “Partner, do you have 3 Spades with me?”

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♦* – P 3♥ ...] “Yes, I have 3 Hearts and I'm strong.”

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2NT ...] “Do you have 3 Hearts?” “Sorry, I don't”.

[1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 2♦ ...] 2♦ shows a 6-card Diamond suit in a minimum opening hand.

[1♦ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT ...] Opener has less than 6 diamonds, but could have 3 Hearts or 4♠.

Over 4th seat interference, opener should tell about her 3-card support without being asked, by using a Support Double or Redouble if opponents intervene. (See Support Double/Redoubles)

[1♦ – P – 1♥ – 1♠ **Dbl*** ...] 3-card heart support - - a Support Double. Alertable.

[1♣ – P – 1♠ – **Dbl** **Red*** ...] A Support Redouble showing 3 Spades. Alertable.

Competing at the 5-Level

“The 5-Level belongs to the Opponents” This is a good motto that means partners should generally let the opponents play at the 5-level, and push them there whenever possible.

But if they are sacrificing against our game contract, we need tools to help us know when to double for penalty or “take the push” to the 5-level ourselves. Competitively, if you are being pushed to the 5-level after voluntarily bidding at the 4-level, you must double or bid on, even if they sometimes make 5 something doubled. You must not let opponents play undoubled if you have a makeable game contract.

In these examples, N/S are vulnerable and E/W are not.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠	Both sides have bid game, but E/W can be sacrificing, especially with Spades Many pairs almost always bid 4♠ over 4♥ in competition (<i>recommended</i>)
4♥	4♠	??		
1♥	2♣	3♥	4♣	Both sides have bid game, but it is not obvious if either is sacrificing.
4♥	5♣	??		

5-Level Competition Guideline. The key for these N/S players is to know if there are 2 quick losers in the opponents’ suit in both N/S hands. If either has 1 or 0 losers, then N/S can safely bid 5 Hearts. If both have 2 losers, they should double for penalty.

Here’s how to do that. The first N/S player after the opponents’ 4 or 5 level call must bid as follows:

- Double** with 2 or more losers in opponents’ suit.
- Pass** with 1 loser in opponents’ suit
- Bid** at the 5-level with **no** losers in opponents’ suit.

The point is to not make South guess about going on to the 5-Level before North has a chance to bid. South passes with 1 loser or doubles with 2 losers, but she doesn’t “take the push” before North gets a chance make the final bid with complete information.

Completing the above examples:

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠	
4♥	4♠	Dbl		
				South tells North she has 2 Spade losers. North then decides to leave the double in or bid 5♥, knowing about South’s 2 Spade losers.
1♥	2♣	3♥	4♣	
4♥	5♣	P . . .		
				South has 1 loser in Clubs, and North can now bid intelligently.

***Competing Over a Big Club (Precision) Opening**

A big club opening style shows at least strong NoTrump hand values: 16+ HCP or any strong distributional hand. In uncontested bidding, the strong club auction can proceed at a leisurely pace, with lots of bidding room available, compared to starting with 1NT or 2♣, which take a level of bidding space from the opener.

Defensive bidding over a big club is often avoided because of the strong nature of the bid. However, a strong 1♣ opening can be a distributional hand, and is not necessarily strong in HCP in all suits.

Defensive bidding after a strong 1♣ opening has several advantages because of the low level:

- All the one-level bids are available to the defense except 1♣.
- The opening has indicated the general nature of the hand, but has not identified a real suit, thus leaving room for effective bids by defenders.

Transfer bids, showing one long suit, can be made at the one-level. All 2nd hand 1-level suit overcalls are transfers, making 4th hand the potential declarer, so the opening strong hand has to lead away from strength.

Defensive bidding against a strong 1♣ with two suits can be based on Hamilton calls as normally used over a strong NoTrump opening.

All bids by 2nd hand show 10+ HCP or exceptional length (6+ card suits), and all 4th hand bids are to play after a transfer by 2nd hand. 4th hand calls after Hamilton bids choose the longer of two suits shown by the Hamilton bidder, or, exceptionally, a 6+ card suit in 4th hand.

Bidding vs a “Big Club”: Transfers in all suits are used by 2nd hand, alertable.

[1♣ - 1♦...] = Hearts. 4th hand bids Hearts at some level.

1♥ = Spades. 4th hand bids Spades at some level.

1♠ = Clubs. 4th hand bids Clubs at some level.

2♣ = Diamonds. 4th hand bids Diamonds at some level.

Dbl = Majors; 2NT = Minors.

4th hand bids according to her strength and vulnerability:

1♣* - 1♥* - P - 2♠...] More than a minimum and a Spade fit. 1♥# is a transfer.

1♣* - Dbl* - P - 2♥...] Choosing Hearts, not Spades, to compete.

1♣* - Dbl* - P - 1NT...] A balancing call, preventing the opener from bidding 1NT

If 4th hand doesn't honor the transfer, it shows a good long suit her hand.

[1♣* - 2♦* - P - 2♠...] this shows a very good Spade suit, as the transfer to 2♥ was not accepted.

JACOBY 2NT

[1♠ - P - 2NT* ...]

This 2NT bid shows a game-going hand with 4 Spades - not 3.

It is used only in major suit contracts. In response to a minor opener, 2NT is “natural”.

[1♣ - P - 2NT ...] This 2NT bid shows 11 - 12 HCP with no 4-card major suit.

Generally, responder is balanced, as she did not make a Splinter bid or a Two Over One response. Both of these are also game-going bids, but they are based on shape as well as strength and perhaps trump support.

Jacoby 2NT cannot be made by a passed hand or in competition. (*But see Jordan 2NT below*)

[1♠ - 2♣ - ? ...] In this auction, 2NT would be a “natural bid”, showing Club stoppers and 10 - 12 HCP: it is **not** Jacoby 2NT.

Subsequent bidding may explore for slam or just go directly to game or both.

Opener’s rebids: they are fixed and show responder anything extra or shapely in opener’s hand.

1. **An immediate jump to game** shows a balanced hand with minimum opening strength:
[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P - 4♠]

However, this is not a “closeout” (there’s no such thing) because responder may have the strength to go slamming - it is just the opener’s opinion at the time, based on her values.

2. **A bid of a new suit at the 3-level** shows a singleton or void in that suit.

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* ...] This information may or may not be interesting to responder. If she has 3 small Clubs, they have a very good match, as all their strength is in suits other than Clubs. Slam investigation may follow. However, holding ♠KQ65, opener’s 3♣* is a disappointment to responder, and she will probably just jump to 4♠.

3. **A bid of a new suit at the 4-level** shows a second good 5-card suit.

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 4♣* ...] This information may or may not be interesting to responder, but it shows a highly unbalanced opening hand, with known shortness and length in side suits. (With two 5-Card suits, opener obviously has a singleton and a doubleton or a void.)

JACOBY 2NT - *continued.*

4. **A bid of 3NT denies any of the above, but shows extra HCP - up 15 or so.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3NT ...] This may give responder more interest in looking for slam, as opener has some HCP beyond a minimum.

5. **A bid of 3NT denies any of the above, but shows a maximum strength opener.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♠ ...] This may give responder more interest in looking for slam, as opener has extra HCP beyond a minimum and possibly just short of an opening 2♣ bid.

Responders 2nd Bid, if any: (*Opener may have rebid game or slam.*)

Opener has shown anything extra or shapely by her second bid: by now, responder should have an idea about whether or not to go slamming.

1. **Jump to game in the agreed major suit.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 4♠ ...] Opener's single or void in Clubs didn't help responder's hand enough to go slamming. *Note that 3♣ is alertable, but not 4♦.*

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3NT ...] Opener's balanced hand with a few extra HCP didn't help responder's hand enough to go slamming.

2. **A new suit bid.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 3♦ ...] Obviously, this pair will play in Spades, so this Diamond bid cannot be looking for a Diamond fit. It is a **Cue Bid** showing a control in Diamonds. It indicates to opener that responder, aware of opener's singleton or void in Clubs, has a Diamond control and wants to investigate slam possibilities. Opener may pursue this interest or go directly to game, regardless of responder's interest.

Notice that either may bid game at any time: it is a judgement call, not a closeout.

Cue bidding is a more subtle slam investigation technique because it keeps the bidding below game level, whereas a jump to 4NT (RKCB) pushes the pair into a slam virtually every time.

JACOBY 2NT - *continued.*

Opener's 3rd Bid, if any: (*Responder may have jumped to game or slam.*)

- Jump to game in the agreed major suit.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 3♦ - P 4♠ ...]

A judgement call, meaning opener does not see slam possibilities with the bidding so far. However, responder may still go on, as "Game isn't a closeout".

- Continue the slam investigation when responder has initiated Cue Bidding.**

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 3♦ - P 3♥ ...]

Showing a Heart control and continuing the slam investigation.

Either player's bid or jump to 4NT. (*Roman Key Card Blackwood - 1430 Style.*)

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 3♦ - P 4NT ...]

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 4NT ...]

[1♠ - P - 2NT* - P 3♣* - P - 4NT ...]

A jump to 4NT by either player indicates a virtually sure Small Slam, and is often a search for a Grand Slam. This is because forgoing cue bid control bids and jumping to 4NT means the bidder is very confident of making a Small Slam and wants to investigate a Grand Slam.

Some example Jacoby 2NT* Auctions and hands:

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ Kx					♠ Axx
♥ AQxxx	1♥	P	2NT*	P	♥ xxxx
♦ xxx	4♥	P	P	P	♦ KQxx
♣ Kxx					♣ Ax
West opened a minimum 1♥. With game-going strength and 4 Hearts, East makes a Jacoby 2NT* call.					
But West bails out at 4♥ as she is minimum and can't see slam with her cards.					

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ KJTxx					♠ AQxxx
♥ Axx	1♥	P	2NT*	P	♥ xxx
♦ x	3♦*	P	4♠	P	♦ KQJx
♣ Axxx	P	P			♣ Kx
West opened a minimum 1♠. With game-going strength and 4 Spades, East makes a Jacoby 2NT* call. West shows her Diamond singleton but East bails out at 4♠, as she can't see slam with her hand and West's poor Diamonds.					

JORDAN 2NT

Jordan 2NT vs. Jacoby 2NT bids:

As described in the Jacoby 2NT section, Jacoby 2NT is not used in competition.

[1♠ - 2♣ - 2NT ...] This is NOT a Jacoby 2NT bid: it is in competition, and is natural.

So what is Jordan 2NT? Jordan 2NT is used **only** over a Double of a major suit by 2nd seat:

[1♠ - Dbl - 2NT* ...] This is a **Jordan** 2NT bid, NOT a Jacoby 2NT.

What does it show? It shows a 4- piece trump fit, as does Jacoby 2NT, but with Limit Raise strength (9 - 11 points) and therefore not game forcing.

Why 4-pieces of trump? Because the Double opens up new bidding possibilities without taking any bidding space. Specifically, we use ReDouble* to show a 3-piece responder hand, and Jordan 2NT to show a 4-piece one. A very nice distinction. Let's look at some Jordan 2NT and ReDouble hands:

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ Kx			1♥	Dbl	♠ xxx
♥ KQxx	2NT*	P	3♥	P	♥ AJxxx
♦ Qxxx	P	P			♦ xx
♣ xxx					♣ AKx
East opened a minimum 1♥ and South Doubled. With Limit Raise strength and 4 Hearts, West makes a Jordan 2NT* call. East bails out at 3♥, as she is minimum and a Limit Raise response isn't enough for game.					

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ Kx			1♥	Dbl	♠ xxx
♥ KQxx	2NT*	P	3♥	P	♥ AJxxx
♦ AQxx	4♥	P	P	P	♦ xx
♣ xxx					♣ AKx
Again, East opened a minimum 1♥ and South Doubled. With Limit Raise strength and 4 Hearts, West makes a Jordan 2NT* call. East tries to bail at 3♥, but West pushes on to game anyhow with 14 HCP.					

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ Kx			1♥	Dbl	♠ xxx
♥ Kxx	Red*	P	3♥	P	♥ AJxxx
♦ Qxxx	P	P			♦ xx
♣ Kxx					♣ AKx
East opened a minimum 1♥ and South Doubled. With Limit Raise strength but only 3 Hearts, West makes a ReDouble* call, not a Jordan 2NT* call. East bails out at 3♥, as she is minimum and a 3-piece Limit Raise response is not enough for game.					

West	W	N	E	S	East
♠ x			1♥	Dbl	♠ xxx
♥ Qxxxx	4♥	P	P	P	♥ AJxxx
♦ QJxx					♦ xx
♣ xxx					♣ AKx
East opened a minimum 1♥ and South Doubled. West makes a "standard" preemptive jump to game, putting extreme pressure on North to bid at the 4- or 5-level.					

CONSTRUCTIVE RAISES

[1♠ - P - 2♠ ...] A simple direct raise not in competition.

Question: What does it say?

Answer: The “Standard” answer is “6 to 9 points and 3+ Spades”.

My Problem: 6 to 9 is quite a range - 4 points. With 6, I can't make game; with 8 or 9 I could.

Question: How can we improve what a single raise means?

Answer: Playing Two Over One, we have 1NT Forcing available as an interim bid.

Here is how we differentiate between a simple raise and a Constructive Raise (alertable)

The strength of a Constructive Raise is 3+ trumps but with 8 or 9 points, and it is bid directly:

[1♠ - P - 2♠* ...] A Constructive raise.

A single raise hand with 6 or 7 points bids 1NT Forcing first, then bids the raise on the 2nd round:

[1♠ - P - 1NT# - P 2x - P - 2♠ ...]

It simple and straightforward, but . . . some issues arise.

Can it be made by a passed hand? Clearly, a passed hand could meet the specifications: 8 or 9 points and 3+ trumps.

Can it be made if opener is in 3rd seat and Drury may apply?

Q: So what is the issue?

A: That means that 1NT is always forcing, whether the responder is passed or not. A subtle but relevant change in bidding style.

Q: There's more issues?

A: Yes, sometimes. An opponent can make a lead-directing or nuisance bid after the 1NT Force:

[1♠ - P - 1NT# - 2♥ ??? ...] Responder intends to force opener to bid again, but now an opponent has interfered. Opener doesn't know what the 1NT Force means: it could be a game-going hand for all she knows in this hand, but the interference messes things up.

Solution. There is no one solution: it's a partnership decision.

Some don't play constructive raises for these reasons.

Some play them only by non-passed hands.

Some play them OFF if opener is in 3rd seat. But that adds a complication and something else to remember . . and to forget.

TRANSFERS after NOTRUMP OPENINGS

Four-Way Transfers: We can use “4-way transfers”, meaning we can transfer to (force opener to bid) any suit the Captain/responder wants.

- Jacoby Transfers to Hearts and Spades. [1NT – P – 2♦ – P – 2♥ ...]
 - A 2♠ response transfers opener to 3 Clubs. [1NT – P – 2♠ – P 3♣ ...]
 - The 2NT response can be used as a transfer to 3♦. [1NT – P – 2NT – P 3♦ ...]
- Transfers don't have to be weak: [1NT – P – 2♠* – P 3♣ – P – 6♣ ...]

Why 2NT as a transfer? A direct raise to 2NT is a poor call, as responder asks opener to make a decision with little information and a very narrow range of HCP. You can keep 2NT in your system by bidding 2♣ and then 2NT over any rebid by opener.
[1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2x – P – 2NT ...]

A subsequent Alert is required if you then bid the 2NT you wanted to:
[1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2x – P – 2NT - P ...] After the auction: Alert* “May or may not have a 4-card major”.

With 4-way transfers, wherever the Captain feels is the best place to play in a suit contract, she can force opener to bid it. When the stronger hand – the opener – is the declarer, the defense is harder as the lead comes into the strong hand and the strong hand is hidden from defenders.

The Jacoby Transfer Convention

Jacoby Transfers complement the Stayman Convention by finding major suit fits when responder holds 5 Hearts or 5 Spades.

Jacoby Transfers demand specific responses. A Jacoby Transfer response to 1NT or 2NT openings shows a 5+ card major suit in responder's hand and forces the opener to bid it, without exception

One reason for opener to bid the suit first is to make the strong hand - the opening NT - be declarer and the weaker hand be the dummy. This can often mean an additional trick because the opening lead will come into the strong hand rather than through it.

Responder Rebids After a Jacoby Transfer

A Jacoby Transfer is neither Weak nor Strong. Anything from Pass to slam sequences may follow a Jacoby Transfer. Subsequent bids by responder after a Jacoby Transfer can vary considerably because her hand is unlimited. Opener must simply reply to questions asked by responder - - the captain for this hand.

TRANSFERS after NOTRUMP OPENINGS - *Continued*

In addition to the 5+ card major promised by responder:

- Any game bid by responder shows 10+ dummy points
- 2NT by responder after opener's required suit bid shows 8-9 HCP balanced and invites 3NT or 3 or 4 of the major if maximum, or pass if minimum
- A raise to 3♥ or 3♠ after a Jacoby Transfer shows 8-9 dummy points in a suit-oriented hand, and is invitational to game
- 3♣ or 3♦ by responder, after opener's required suit bid, is game forcing and shows a second 4 or 5-card suit and asks opener to choose the game contract: 3NT or 4 of the major or even 5 of the minor. [1NT – P – 2♥ – P 2♠ – P – 3♦ ...]

Openers Choices. If responder raises to the three-level in Hearts or Spades or makes any other bid after the transfer, the opener may bid game with a 3+ card fit for the transferred-to suit and a maximum (16+ HCP) hand. Example: [1NT – P – 2♥ – P 2♠ – P – 3♠ – P 4♠ ...]

Opener should try 3NT with a minor suit fit and a maximum HCP hand.

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	
1NT	2♦	Jacoby Transfer to 2 Hearts
2♥	3♥	"I have 5 Hearts plus 8+ HCP, North"
4♥		" I think it's worth a shot, South "

<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>
♠ KQx	♠ Jxx
♥ AQxx	♥ KJxxx
♦ Qxx	♦ Kxx
♣ Axx	♣ xx

Note: Also see Texas Transfers elsewhere in this document.

Two Over One and 1NT Forcing

Why Should Two Over One Be Game Forcing? Because opener and responder know at the first response that there's a game in the hand. Subsequent bidding locates the best game or slam without consuming bidding space by unnecessary jumping, etc. *Simple.*

The Problem with "Standard". In "Standard American", a 2-level suit response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opener shows 10+ points and (usually) a 5+ card suit: [1♥ – P – 2♣ ...] Often, players "fudge" a little with poor hands or bid weak suits. Equally often, responders have more than 10 HCP, perhaps an opener or better. But the opener doesn't know which it is, and so must rebid so as to accommodate either possibility.

A responder holding an opener must somehow show a game-going hand on her 2nd bid, playing catch-up. But often it's the same bid she would make with a minimum hand. Players constantly struggle with "Is partner's bid forcing?" This ambiguity is what complicates "Standard" and is the reason so many players now play that a 2-level suit response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opener shows an opening hand or better, and thus is game-forcing. It's only a Queen or so better than a "Standard" 10-point 2-level call, so it's a minor adjustment for "Standard" players to play 2/1 GF.

For example: [1♥ – P – 2♦ ...] 2♦ is a game force, showing a good 5+ card Diamond suit and 12+ HCP or equivalent. Not alertable.

What's Simplified about Bob's 2/1 GF? Some play [1♦ – P – 2♣ ...] is game forcing, and some also (used to) play strong jump shifts are game forcing: [1♦ – P – 2♠ ...]. Eliminating these two forms of 2 over 1 bids greatly simplifies the 2/1 Game Force system while giving up bids that seldom come up. It is described in detail in the following pages.

Required Conventions. Other than 2/1 Game Force by a non-passed hand as described above, there is only ONE other convention required to play 2/1 GF - 1NT Forcing.

It's made only by a non-passed hand in response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening and is forcing for one round: [1♠ – P – 1NT ...]. The 1♠ opener must bid again. Responder's hand may not be strong enough to force game, facing an average or minimum opener, and partners then search for the best partial at a low level.

Or, because 1NT is forcing, it has no upper limit, so it can be effectively used as a temporizing bid while keeping the auction alive.

Other Conventions. Dozens of other conventions are commonly played by 2/1 GF players, just as they are by "Standard" players, but NONE is required to play 2/1 GF.

Some optional conventions in Two Over One bidding are described below.

BOB's *SIMPLIFIED* TWO OVER ONE GAME FORCING

What Is Two Over One Game Force? It's a system in which a new suit bid at the 2-level, in response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opener, is forcing to game: examples.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. [1♠ - P - 2♦ ...] | 4. [1♦ - P - 2♣ ...] |
| 2. [1♥ - 2♣ - 2♦ ...] | 5. [1♥ - P - 2♠ ...] |
| 3. [1♠ - P - 2♥ ...] | 6. [P - P - 1♠ - P 2♣ ...] |

Bob's *Simplified* Two Over One Game Force drops some of these 2 over 1 sequences:

- All jump shifts are weak, in the modern bidding style, eliminating #5
- Two Over One game force is OFF in competition.
 - #2 above suggests the opener and 2nd seat each have opening hands; the likelihood of 3rd seat – the responder – also having a game forcing hand is remote, so bidding reverts to “Standard” in competition, and 2/1 GF is OFF. A 2-level response is forcing, but only for one round.
- Passed hands can't ever make game-forcing bids, so #6 is eliminated.
- Experience has shown that two over one auctions that begin with bidding both minor suits are better played as one-round forcing responses, not game-forcing, thereby eliminating #4.

This simplification leaves **just 5 game-forcing** responses playing 2/1 GF:

[1♠ - P - 2♣ ...] [1♠ - P - 2♦ ...] [1♠ - P - 2♥ ...] [1♥ - P - 2♣ ...] [1♥ - P - 2♦ ...]

An easy way to remember all of them is: “2/1 GF bids are 2 of a minor, or 2♥ over 1♠”.

Simple, but a big improvement over “Standard American”, where these calls may or may not force game, and it won't be known until the next round or even later.

Game-forcing 2-level suit bids. A game-forcing 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥ response promises not only the HCP and/or shape to force game, but shows a good 5+ card suit, not just any collection of 5+ cards in a suit. It should include the Ace or King; 5+ HCP, and decent intermediates. It should be a suit that can be set up to run at NoTrump, or can provide side-suit discards if another suit becomes trump, or can become trump with xxx, i.e., 3 small card support by opener.

These are good game-forcing suits: ♣AKJ98 ♦KQJ98 ♦AKT98

These are not: ♣KJ654 ♦QJ864 ♦AT875. (Treat these hands as “flat”).

It's Off After Interference. If there's an intervening bid after the major suit opener, 2/1 GF is OFF, and opener / responder revert to “Standard”: [1♠ – Db1 – ...] 2/1 is off. That's because there's little chance that 3 consecutive hands have game-going values. An intervening bid opens up new forcing bids for responder: Redouble, Cue bids, etc.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Continuations after a 2/1 GF Response. Responder may make a “deferred raise”, i.e., 2nd round support of opener’s major after first showing a good side-suit.

However, opener doesn’t know this at her first rebid, so, unless she can rebid her suit or jump in another suit, she should assume the hand is heading toward 3 NT, and show her cheapest stopper by bidding up the line. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♠ ...] 2♠ shows a Spade stopper, but **denies** a Diamond stopper. Responder should do likewise unless he intends to raise opener at his 2nd bid. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♠ - P - 3♥ or 4♥ ...].

Example 2/1 GF Sequences:

♠AKJ98	♠Q543	♠AQJ987	♠K32	♠AKJ98	♠42
♥A	♥54	♥Q7	♥AKJ98	♥KT5	♥QJ
♦KJ987	♦QT	♦KT2	♦654	♦T5	♦AKJ98
♣Q5	♣AKJ98	♣A6	♣K5	♣KJ8	♣AT97
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♥	1♠	2♦
3♦	3♠	3♠	4♠	2♥	3NT
4NT	5♣				
6♠					

1NT Response: Forcing For One Round. Using the 2/1 GF bidding system, in this auction [1♠ - P - 1NT ...] the 1NT response is forcing for one round, meaning the opener must bid again. It’s made only by a non-passed hand in response to a major suit opening in 1st or 2nd seat: [1♠ - P - 1NT# ...] It’s not forcing in competition: [1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT ...] (# means this bid is “announced” by partner of the bidder. It’s not an Alert, it’s just the single spoken word “Forcing”, without stopping the auction.)

Other than pass, 1♠ over 1♥, a major-suit raise or a game-forcing response, 1NT is the “catchall” non-preemptive response. As such, it has a wide range of HCP strength, from a lower limit of as little as 5 HCP to an upper limit of 11 or a bad 12 HCP, or unlimited occasionally. Hands of greater strength make game-forcing responses.

Opener’s Rebids After a 1NT Forcing Response.

Opener further describes her shape and strength, in a natural way:

- Rebid a 6 card suit. *Rebidding a 5 card suit is strongly discouraged, but some do.*
- Bid another 4+ card suit, jumping if strength warrants [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 3♣ ...]
- Bid 2NT with 17+ HCP or 3NT with 19+ HCP [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2NT ...]

Opener often has no better rebid than to bid her longest minor, which could be just 3 cards long: [1♠ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ ...]. A hand with 5 – 3 – 2 – 3 shape, for example.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Responder must consider this possibility when considering raising a minor suit rebid.

The following hands open 1♥ or 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. What is the rebid?

♠AKJ98	♠43	♠QJ9873	♠K32	♠AKJ98	♠4
♥A	♥AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKJ98	♥KT5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦KT5	♦KT5	♦KJ9	♦KJ5	♦AQJ
♣K5	♣876	♣76	♣K5	♣KJ	♣T987
<i>Bid 3♦</i>	<i>Bid 2♣</i>	<i>Rebid 2♠</i>	<i>Bid 2NT</i>	<i>Bid 3NT</i>	<i>Bid 2♣</i>

A Final Alternative. Occasionally, there will be a game-forcing hand that doesn't fit the patterns above: a 14 HCP hand with 1 trump and no decent 5-card suit, for example. With such a hand, responder should first bid 1NT *because it's forcing*. Lacking some dramatic rebid by opener, responder can then rebid 3NT or whatever. This bid isn't the conventional 3NT described below: it's to play. [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 3NT ...]

Similar hands could also be suitable for a 4♥ or 4♠ rebid, without sounding preemptive: [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 4♥ ...] holding (♠KQx ♥Kxxx ♦Q9xx ♣Kx).

Other Game Forcing Responses. There are many other game forcing responses, but they are not required parts of 2/1 GF: Splinters, Jacoby 2NT, old-fashioned jump raises:

[1♥ - 3♥ ...]; strong jump shift responses, jumps to 2NT or 3NT by agreement, etc. 2/1 players can use these conventions, but none are required to play 2/1 Game Force.

Simple raises. Simple raises are not 2/1; they are bid using “normal” high-card strength and shape: 6 – 9+ HCP and 3+ trumps = a single raise; 10 – 12 = jump raise; jump to game with 0 – 8 HCP and 5 trumps.

Responding 1♠ over 1♥. 1♠ in response to a 1♥ opener is a one-over-one response, not two-over-one. It's forcing one round and unlimited, but not game-forcing. Bid on as in Standard American or any other system.

2NT or 3NT Responses. Non-conventional 2NT and 3NT responses to a major suit opening can be played as Standard, but many “Standard” players, as well as 2/1 GF players, use conventional 2NT and 3NT responses to major suit openers. (See below)

Exception. After one of the five 2/1 GF responses, game, or 4 of a minor or penalty double of an opponent's bid must be reached, with one optional exception: If the opener immediately rebids her major suit, it shows a weak hand with as few as 10 or 11 HCP but with a 6+ card suit. The 2/1 responder may pass or may bid on, knowing opener's shape and strength. [1♠ – P – 2♦ – P 2♠ ...] 2♦ is game-forcing, but the 2♠ rebid may be passed by responder. If responder bids on after the weak rebid, then both must continue to game.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Improved Weak Twos. Playing Weak Twos, this Exception distinguishes between a 10 HCP Weak Two and a 6 HCP Weak Two because openings of 2♥ or 2♠ can be really weak - - 6 to 9 HCP - - and responder knows it at once. There's no need to ask for outside entries, because there won't be any!

On the convention card is a box to check which indicates that you play "Two over One is Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid" Check that box if you allow this exception . (*Highly recommended*)

Bidding in a Two Over One Game Forcing Auction. Since the very first response sends the pair into a search for the best game or slam, bidding 2/1 GF auctions are simple and straightforward. Both know to continue on to game, so rebids show shape and extras, if any.

Opener's Rebid. Initial rebids by opener can be rebids of a 6-card major (see exception above), a second suit at the two level or a jump, (showing a strong two-suiter), a raise of partner's minor suit (showing the Ace or King+), a NoTrump bid showing a flat hand with stoppers in the other two suits, etc. Lacking any extras, suit bids show stoppers, up the line, moving toward a 3NT game. Examples after [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P ?? ...]

♠AKJ98 ♥A ♦KJ987 ♣K5	♠43 ♥AKJ98 ♦KT5 ♣876	♠QJ9873 ♥AQ ♦JT5 ♣76	♠K32 ♥AKJ98 ♦KJ9 ♣Q5	♠AKJ98 ♥KT5 ♦KJ5 ♣KJ	♠4 ♥AKJ98 ♦AQJ ♣T987
<i>Rebid 3♦, showing shape and extras.</i>	<i>Rebid 2♦, showing a Diamond stopper</i>	<i>Bid 2♠. (See Exception above)</i>	<i>Bid 2NT, showing ♦ and ♠ stoppers.</i>	<i>Bid 3NT, showing stoppers and extra count.</i>	<i>Bid 2♦, awaiting partner's rebid.</i>

Responder's Rebids: Raise if possible. Opener has bid twice, showing his shape and perhaps extras. With an 8+ card major suit fit, you should bid the major as your first rebid (second bid), so both know the trump suit. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♦ - P - 3♥ ...]

This 3♥ bid shows a fit in Hearts and some extra strength; i.e., 14+ HCP. With just 12 or 13 dummy points (including shortness points) rebid 4♥, not 3♥, telling partner you have no extra strength.

If unable to raise opener, bid the cheapest stopper, up-the-line, moving toward a NoTrump game or slam; or rebid your own solid 6 card-suit; or bid 2NT or 3NT if you have stoppers

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

everywhere. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♦ - P - 3NT ...] Showing a Spade stopper. 3NT is not a closeout; it shows the hand accurately and opener may bid on.

PRACTICE YOUR TWO OVER ONE SYSTEM BIDDING

For purposes of this “self-test”, you are playing 2/1 GF, with the ability to call off the game force by immediately rebidding your 6 card major suit: [1♠ - P - 2♦ - P 2♠ ...]

Reminders:

- A 2/1 suit has 5+ HCP: it has the Ace or King or both: AQxxx or KQJxx
 - *Note: Not everyone plays in this disciplined way: too bad.*
- 1NT by a non-passed hand is forcing for 1 round.
- 2NT is a conventional Jacoby 2NT game – forcing response
- Splinters show strong trump support, an opening hand or better and 0 or 1 of the splintered suit: [1♥ - P - 4♣ ...]
- A “Good” Limit Raise is 10 – 12 dummy points and 4 trumps: [1♠ - P - 3♠ ...]
- A “Bad” Limit Raise is shown by bidding 1NT first, then jumping to 3. It shows 10 – 12 dummy points and 3 trumps. [1♠ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 3♠ ...]

First Response Quiz:

Partner has opened 1♥. What is your first response, and what do you plan to rebid?

♠983	♠ A32	♠QJ98	♠K32	♠ KJ98	♠J4
♥AK5	♥ A8	♥AQ	♥J98	♥ KQ52	♥9876
♦KJ987	♦ KT95	♦JT75	♦KJ9	♦ KQT5	♦AQ
♣K5	♣ K987	♣763	♣Q532	♣ J	♣AKT98
2♦	1NT then game	1♠ or 1NT; then ?	1NT, then 3♥ (Bad Limit Raise)	4♣ Splinter; then ?	2♣, then 4♥

Opener’s Rebid Quiz:

A. Partner has responded 2♣ to your 1♥ or 1♠ opening. What’s your rebid?

♠AKJ98	♠ K3	♠ QJ9873	♠T32	♠ AKJ98	♠ AQJ
♥A	♥ AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKQJ98	♥ Q5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦ KT5	♦JT5	♦T93	♦ T52	♦74
♣K5	♣ 876	♣A6	♣Q5	♣ KJT	♣T98
3♦	2♦	2♥; then rebid Spades	2♥	3♣	2♠

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

B. Partner has responded 1NT to your opening 1♥ or 1♠. What's your rebid?

♠AKJ98	♠K3	♠QJ9873	♠T32	♠AKJ98	♠AQJ
♥A	♥AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKQJ98	♥Q5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦KT5	♦JT5	♦T93	♦T52	♦T74
♣K5	♣876	♣A6	♣Q5	♣KJT	♣98
3♦	2♣	2♠	2♥	2♣	2♦

C. Partner has shown a good Limit Raise [1♥/1♠ - P - 3♥/3♠]. What's your rebid?

♠AKJ98	♠K3	♠QJ9873	♠T32	♠AKJ98	♠AQJ
♥A	♥AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKQJ98	♥Q5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦KT5	♦J95	♦T93	♦T52	♦74
♣K5	♣876	♣A6	♣Q5	♣KT9	♣T98
4NT	4♥	P	P	P	4♥

D. Partner has responded 2NT* to your opening 1♥ or 1♠.
What's your rebid playing Jacoby 2NT?

♠AKJ98	♠Q3	♠QJ9873	♠T32	♠AKJ98	♠AQJ
♥A	♥AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKQJ98	♥Q5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦QT5	♦J95	♦T93	♦J52	♦74
♣K5	♣876	♣A6	♣Q5	♣KT9	♣T98
3♥	4♥	4♠	4♥	4♠	3NT

E. Partner has responded 3NT* to your opening 1♥ or 1♠. What's your rebid?

♠AKJ98	♠K3	♠QJ9873	♠T32	♠AKJ98	♠AQJ
♥A	♥AKJ98	♥AQ	♥AKQJ98	♥Q5	♥AKJ98
♦KJ987	♦KT5	♦J95	♦T93	♦T52	♦74
♣K5	♣876	♣A6	♣Q5	♣KT9	♣T98
4NT	4♥	4♣	4♥	4♠	4♠

Considerations for Preemptive Bidding

Relative Vulnerability. There are three conditions of relative vulnerability between pairs:

- 1: Favorable – you are white (not vulnerable) and they are red (vulnerable)
- 2: Equal vulnerability – both red or both white
- 3: Unfavorable – you are red and they are white

With favorable vulnerability, you can and should be outrageous. When equal, be pushy, but be careful about the Death Number – down 200 – if there are only partial scores at stake. With unfavorable, be cautious! (But realize they will have “favorable” relative vulnerability, so they’ll be outrageous!)

Position at the Table. Whether or not to preempt is always relative to your position at the table (in addition to Relative Vulnerability – see above): There are three positions to consider:

- (1) **In 1st or 2nd Seat:** You preempt your partner as well as the opponents, so 1st and 2nd seat preempts should be rare and really weak, to make the preempt of your partner worthwhile.
- (2) **In 3rd Seat:** Your partner in 1st seat has passed as has 2nd seat. It’s obvious that 4th seat has whatever points you don’t have, meaning the weaker you are, the stronger 4th seat is; so the weaker you are, the more you should think Preempt in 3rd seat. You are your side’s last chance to interfere with 4th seat’s auction. If she was going to open a strong 2♣, but you stick in a weak 2♠ bid first, how much harder is her auction going to be? A lot harder!
- (3) **In 4th Seat:** 4th seat has an option no other has: pass, take a zero on the hand and avoid going minus. So there’s no point in bidding in 4th seat unless you are sure of being plus.

There are 2 ways to go minus: bid and go down or open the bidding, then opponents outbid you and make their contract. Either case is bad bidding when you could have passed and not gone minus. Passed-out hands are NOT scored as average and can’t be redealt. Both pairs are given a score of zero, which is a good or bad score, depending on what others did. Zero could be a top score!

Preempt Types. These two factors with 3 cases each – Relative Vulnerability and Position at the Table – make about 9 types of preempts. The exact same hand could make perhaps 5 different bids or passes, depending on the 3 vulnerability conditions times the 3 positions at the table.

Preemptive Tactics. These agreements should be a rock-solid part of your partnership:

- Having once made a preemptive bid or overcall, you will NOT make another bid during that hand, unless forced to by your partner – you cannot be forced by your opponents. Bid 5♣ on your first bid if you are ever going to bid it. The only forcing bid by partner is 4NT Blackwood, and that would be quite rare.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Reason: Your partner may be waiting for a 500 point set of opponents because of your opening preempt. Your preempt is a limited bid, making partner the captain, and a preemptor promises not to bid again.

- Especially important in a decision to preempt is the prior bidding. If your partner has passed, bid like crazy. If she has not bid, be careful about preempting -- wait until your next turn and then preempt if appropriate.
- Also important is the major suit situation. If you are considering preempting in Hearts with a singleton or void in Spades, you can be sure the opponents will bid Spades – so get your Heart preempt in early and high. But if you have Spades, you can simply overcall an opposing preempt, so don't preempt your partner unnecessarily.
- With 7 or more cards in a suit, be very aggressive, especially if you are weak in HCP.
- Preemptor's partner gets **one** bid in the auction, and pass is a bid. If partner wants to advance the preempt, she must do so on her first bid, but never later, after opponents have found their fit. [3♣ – Dbl – 5♣ ...] This 5♣ bid is fine as an advance of the 3♣ preempt because it means the opponents have to try to find their fit starting at the 5-level.

But this auction is a no-no:

3♣ – Dbl – P – 4♥

P – P – 5♣ ... This 5♣ is awful, because opponents have found their fit and can now double your side for penalty, or go on to 5♥ or even 6♥.

Three Level Weak Openings or Overcalls

Three level openings or overcalls should show less than 10 HCP, no outside four card major suit, and no chance of game outside the bid suit. They can be quite weak -- in fact, very weak. They show 7-card broken suits, but in a minor, they are sometimes 6-card suits. Not vulnerable; the weaker you are, the better result you'll get from a preempt.

Major vs. Minor Suit Preempts. With a broken 7-card minor suit, open 3♣ or 3♦. The same goes for a broken major suit. Broken = AQ98645 or KJT7532

However, with a good 7-card **major** suit, consider opening 4♥ or 4♠. This is game, and opponents must start competing at the 5-level. If partner is really weak, you have made a very successful preempt. If your partner has any kind of a side suit, you may be able to squeak out 10 tricks. If you go down one or two, the chances are you won't have been doubled, as it is dangerous to double a hand that is known to have 7 trumps, because it also has short suits somewhere.

Weak Two Openings

Weak Two Openings. A weak two opening is made with six cards in a suit and a hand from 5 to 10 HCP; no outside 4-card major and (*usually*) no outside Ace or King. With a outside Ace or King, 9+ HCP and a decent 6-card Major suit, open 1♥ or 1♠ and then rebid them immediately. [1♠ – P – 2♣ – P 2♠ ...] Partner should realize you have a sub-minimum hand with 6 Spades and bid accordingly. (There is no Weak 2♣ opening: only 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠. An opening 2♣ is an artificial bid: the strongest call in bridge!)

Strength isn't the major consideration for weak two openings - - suit texture is the key. Not vulnerable, almost anything goes: ♠KJT972, for example. Vulnerable, the standard is "2 of the top 3 honors", e.g., ♥AQT864. Remember that with a 6-card suit, especially Spades, you can easily open one and then rebid your suit, promising nothing much more than a long suit, so don't open weak twos with more than 10 HCP.

Also remember that when you open a weak two, you preempt your partner as well as your opponents. Be cautious about opening weak in 1st or 2nd seat, but be very aggressive if partner has passed. [P – P – 2♠ ...] This 2♠ bid can be really weak, especially when not vulnerable, because your partner has already passed.

Responses to Partner's Preempt

Good for her. If your partner made a weak preemptive bid, good for her. She has shown you exactly what she has and she won't bid again -- count on it.

Respond only once. Respond as high as you're willing to go at your first bid. Don't wait until they've found their fit before sacrificing at the 4 or 5 level - - bid high before they find their fit. Sometimes you'll get away with it and not get doubled, because opponents don't know if you have a strong hand with a good fit, or not. Sometimes they'll end up in the wrong contract. Sometimes they'll take the push and go off one. But if you wait until they know what fit they have, you've just lowered your odds a lot. They'll always figure it out.

Don't even think about changing suits if partner preempts and opponents pass. The one time in ten your long weak suit is better than your partners long weak suit won't make up for the 8 bad results you'll get by changing suits: [2♠ - P - 3♣ ...]

Raising partner's preemptive opening or overcall below game. A raise of a preempt short of game is not a game try. Preemptor won't bid again unless forced to, not invited to. A raise short of game is simply advancing the preempt, making it harder to compete. For example; [2♠ – Dbl – 3♠ ...] is not a game try or an invitation to game -- it's simply advancing partner's preempt to make it harder for the opponents to find their right contract.

Bidding Game over Partner's Preempt. Sometimes, you'll have a good hand and want to try for game after partner opens a weak two. To bid game over partner's preemptive opening, you need a trump or two plus 2 Aces and a King minimum. Forget about HCP, it's about quick

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tricks: Aces and Kings, to cover her losers in side suits. A “quacks” hand with lots of Queens and Jacks does her no good at all. [2♠ – P – 3NT] or [2♦ – P – 5♦ ...]

2NT Response to Partners Weak Two Opening – a Conventional, Artificial response

Sometimes responder sees a chance for game in 3NT because she has good strength but only a couple of cards in opener’s suit. If the preempt suit can be set up for several tricks, 9 tricks can often be made in NoTrump, but once set up, there has to be a card in an outside suit to get back to those tricks – it’s called an “entry”, and it means an Ace or King outside the preempt suit. [2♠ – P – 2NT ...] means “Partner, do you have an outside entry so we can set up and run your Spades for lots of tricks in NoTrump?”

If so, the opener bids it, and responder goes from there. If not, opener rebids her suit.

[2♠ – P – 2NT – P 3♠ ...] “Nope” or [2♠ – P – 2NT – P 3♣ ...] “I have the ♣A or ♣K”

Defense to Weak Two's In Direct Seat

Weak Two Openers are the most common preemptive bids because they come up far more often than 3-level or higher preemptive bids.

To defend against a Weak Two opening, bid your good suit at the two or three level. With a normal opening strength hand, bid a takeout double if you have the proper distribution, meaning 4 cards in any unbid major suits, in addition to opening strength.

Bid with a suit. You can overcall competitively with somewhat less than an opener, not vulnerable, because 4th hand (your partner) won’t expect an opener if you overcall rather than doubling for takeout.

[2♠ – 3♥ – P – ??? ...] 4th seat knows 2nd seat has a Heart suit and wants to compete. 4th seat can pass, raise, bid 4NT - - whatever - - but she doesn’t have to wonder about overcaller’s strength. If 2nd seat had a full opener, she might have doubled the 2♠ bid first.

Defense to Weak Two's in the Passout Seat (4th seat)

If your partner has passed and 3rd seat has also passed, you are in a passout position, meaning that if you pass the auction is over, and you will defend against a weak two opener.

You should make every effort to bid: bid your good suit if you have one, or with almost an opener or better, bid a takeout double, as in [2♥ – P – P – Dbt ...]

Weak Jump Overcalls

The hand that would open a weak 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ can make a weak jump overcall instead. As in any situation, vulnerability is the important consideration as regards the quality of the bid suit. “Points” isn’t the primary issue.

Examples: [1♥ - 2♠...] or [1♣ - 2♦...]. Weak jump overcalls.

Hand A. A weak 2♠ bid, vulnerable or not; as an opening or an overcall

♠ AQJ9xx
♥ xx
♦ Qxx
♣ xx

Hand B. A Weak 2♠ opening? Vulnerable, no.

♠ QJ10876
♥ xx
♦ QJx
♣ xx

Not vulnerable? Perhaps, but it’s OK to overcall opponents’ 1-of-a-minor opening with 2♠ with this hand.

[1♦ - 2♠ ...]

Responding after a weak jump overcall by opponent. [1♣ - 2♠ - ???] The primary tool to combat weak jump overcalls is the negative double if responder can’t raise partner or bid a new 5+ card suit. Because weak jump overcalls are so common, you should play Negative Doubles at least as high as 2♠ to fight preemptive bids at the 2 level, to find your 4 – 4 major suit fits. [1♣ - 2♠ - Dlb ...] Showing 4 Hearts; some points and some Diamonds.

Be aware of vulnerability, and expect to get a poor score sometimes. Like all preempts, Weak Jump Overcalls do their job well - - that’s why you should use them.

Defense

Attitude is the Key to Defense. Good defense is the most noticeable difference between novices and better bridge players. Much of the real difference is the players’ attitude toward defense. Because you play defense more often than you declare, an effort to learn good defense will easily double your enjoyment of bridge.

Planning the Defense

Make the Declarer’s Plan Your Own. Declarer, after the dummy comes down, looks at her losers and makes a plan to eliminate them or maximize the numbers of tricks in some other way. You can do the same by visualizing where declarer sees her losers - - they are your

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winners, so you must visualize where they will come from, unless they've bid a grand slam! You can get a good start at this visualization by considering what suits your opponents did not bid.

Talk To Yourself. This kind of conversation should go on in your mind as you start to play every hand: "Why didn't they bid No-trump? They bid Hearts and Clubs and I see the ♠AQ4 on the board. Why are they stopping at Three Clubs? They bid for nine tricks anyhow ... Diamonds must be their problem! "

Your Side's Suits

If your side has bid, you have some values in your suits. The opponents heard your bids and they probably expect to lose some tricks there. Declarer will try to dump losers in your suits at her first opportunity. Therefore, you must get them as early as possible, so lead your suits. If you forget your partner's bids or mastermind the defense by ignoring your partner's suit, you will lose often - and your loss may be your partner! There is another reason for leading partner's suit -- when your partner knows you will lead it without fail, it may discourage him from making bids with bad suits.

Visualization

You Can See All the Cards. Remembering the bidding will help you see the hidden cards. There's no magic: it's always the exact same 52 cards, thirteen in each hand, and 26 of them are initially visible to everyone. Declarer's bids will tell you a lot about her distribution and HCP values; and you can see your hand and the dummy, so you can figure out your partner's distribution and HCP's with just a little work concentration.

Distribution Clues. Question: If declarer opened Hearts but plays in Clubs, what is her distribution? Answer: 5 Hearts and 4 or 5 Clubs - - that's nine or ten cards, allowing only three or four other cards in her hand. The 5 Hearts must be trumped or sluffed except for high card winners, but they are in her hand throughout the play.

Point Count Clues. If declarer opened NoTrump and plays in Four Hearts, how many points does she have? Dummy? Count your points, declarer's HCP and dummy's points -- the rest are in your partner's hand. So how many points does your side have? What cards could they be?

Weakness Clues. If declarer opened One Club and rebid Two Clubs, she has a weak hand. She doesn't have all the high cards you can't see: your partner has some of them. From the bidding, which cards could your partner have? Which one(s) must she have to defeat the declarer's plan?

Count, Count, Count

Count everything, all the time, without fail: cards, points, distribution, suits and tricks. 13 is not a big number. Tricks usually take 4 cards of a suit out of play, so the number of cards left outstanding goes from 13 to 9 to 5. You're basically concerned with only 16 cards: 4 Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks: some of them will be in dummy and in your hand, and some that you

can't see can be assigned to declarer because you know the HCP requirements for openings, raises, overcalls, etc.

Counting Distribution Before Play and During Play

Figure out the probable distribution before play starts: "Declarer bid two suits – so she has at least 9 cards in those two suits and therefore has at most 4 cards in the other two suits" ... etc. After play starts, verify or modify your distribution, tricks and HCP estimates by watching all the cards played, especially partner's signals or sluffs. Every one tells you more about distribution, high card strength, etc.

Counting Probable Tricks

"Declarer has 5 apparent trump tricks plus the ♦AK on the board in a 4 Heart contract. Declarer has a good 5-card Club suit in the dummy, so how many losers can she sluff if she gets it set up? What cards am I going to play as she runs it? What suits are defensive tricks going to come from?"

Counting the Number of Cards Played in Each Suit

Example: "Diamonds have gone twice and there are still 2 in Dummy; partner has given me a high-low, showing 2. I have two, so declarer still has one left in her hand. I'm going to lead a Diamond for partner to ruff and we can set this contract!"

Defense Planning Summary - STP

Declarer's **Shape** (distribution) can be closely estimated from the bidding and upon seeing the dummy. **Tricks**, likewise: "Declarer has rebid Spades, so there's 5 or 6 tricks there, plus the ♣AK6 and ♦KQ5 in the dummy is 8 or 9, so she has to make a Club trick to make her contract. "If I lead my ♣A, she'll get her ♣K, but if I lead trump, she'll have to play Clubs to me eventually". **Points** can be closely estimated even before the opening lead: "She open 1NT showing 15 to 17, dummy raised to 2NT and declarer went to 3NT. So declarer has 17, dummy about 9 and I have 6 – a total of 32 points. So my partner has about 8 points. As the play develops, watch for those 8 points to appear - - they are in her hand until you see them on the table. Declarer doesn't have 20 points; you know that.

Defense Rules

Make every hand a bidding contest

Force Opponents to Bid High. If you bid aggressively and force your opponents up as far as they will go, they will be within one trick of their best contract, either way. If you don't bid aggressively, they will just bid enough to take the contract and rake in whatever tricks they can while you follow suit and wait for the next hand, missing half the fun of good bridge. Don't let them do it.

Concentrate

Concentrate on Everything, All the Time. Concentration in bridge means paying close attention to every bid, every card, every signal and every opportunity to count something - in short, concentrate on everything. When you develop this habit, you'll enjoy bridge much more and you'll be a much better bridge partner and player, without a doubt. But it's only for 3 or 4 or 5 minutes at a time, remember.

Take your tricks

You Are Entitled to Your tricks -- Take Them. One notion to keep in mind always is that you are entitled to a certain number of tricks unless your opponents bid a grand slam. As soon as you can see or figure out declarer's plan to make her contract, figure out where your tricks are and take them - don't lose them. This means you sometimes must 'cash out' - just lay down your winners when you're on lead.

Plan your defense

Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan. Before playing the first card, have it clear in your mind how many tricks you expect to take and how many partner will take, in what suits, specifically. Don't count on your partner for a trick "somewhere". If this number will defeat the contract, fine; if not, it's no less important to take every trick you can to make declarer's life as hard as possible.

Be dependable - don't mastermind

No One Likes a Mastermind. "Masterminding" is taking the defense into your own hands without letting partner in on your plan. You can't always play the best defense - it is much harder than declaring. But you can always be a reliable partner. That way, win or lose, it'll be a team effort and you'll be ready to do it again another day. Lead your partner's suits, take your tricks, pay attention; in short, behave. You can do whatever you want to do while declaring - but not when you're defending.

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Play the card you are known to have

If everyone at the table knows you have the ♣K, play the ♣K. If declarer leads the ♠Q with the ♠Ace on the board to finesse you, play your ♠King without hesitation. Finesses are dealt by the Card Gods, whom you can blame for everything having to do with distribution. The right defensive play is usually to 'cover an honor with an honor', as you may set up the ♠10xx in your partner's hand. If not, declarer was going to get all the tricks in that suit anyhow: you haven't given away anything.

Keep length with dummy's long suits

Dummy
♠ KQx
♥ JTx
♦ Qxx
♣ Txxx

In this example, either defender with 4 Clubs should not sluff any Clubs. The danger is that declarer may set up dummy's 4th Club as her 10th trick. Even apparently weak 4 card suits such as ♣9xxx can be dangerous. Make sure the declarer sluffs a Club in dummy before you, as East, sluff a Club.

When discarding, don't give declarer information on any suit not played

Sluff cards the declarer knows you have, for example in the suits you've bid. Don't sluff in every suit -- that confuses your partner.

Don't sluff cards in a new suit (an unplayed suit) because declarer is counting every card in every suit, just as you do when you're the declarer. For example, If you see partner sluffing cards in Diamonds, maybe you should keep your Diamonds and sluff another suit - - certainly not Diamonds. Your partner will do the same, allowing one of you to keep length with the dummy, or stop side suits that declarer can throw losers on.

Don't break new suits

The most important Defense Rule is this last one: don't break (lead) new suits. This often gives Declarer the trick she needs to make her contract. Lead partner's suit, lead trump, lead to pin Declarer in dummy, but don't lead a suit that hasn't been lead before at all costs. Because the opening lead is a "new suit", consider leading trump often in suit contracts - - it's the least likely suit to be a "bad" lead.

UPSIDE-DOWN SIGNALS vs. OTHER SYSTEMS

“Upside-Down” is an alternative to Standard American signaling technique; in fact, many describe it as “the opposite of Standard”.

Most signaling systems use the concept of “High” and “Low” cards. High and Low are situation dependent, as a 5 or a 9 could be a high card or a low one, depending on what’s in the dummy, in discarder’s hand or previously played.

As in all signaling systems, Upside-Down signals don’t exist in isolation because the bidding always provides context, especially if defenders have bid. Similarly, the opening lead gives information to 3rd hand about the leader’s intentions.

Attitude. A basic component of Upside-Down is the use of attitude signals opposite from Standard: a low card shows interest in the suit led and a high one discourages. Attitude can be given on partner’s lead or declarer’s lead or even a lead from dummy.

In “Standard”, the discard of a 2 or 3 is discouraging, denying interest in that suit, and a high card shows interest. The disadvantage of playing a high card in a desired suit is obvious; a fundamental flaw of “Standard” technique.

In Odd-Even, an odd card discard encourages continuation of the suit if led, or suggests to partner it is a desired suit to lead. An even card discourages.

Count. Count can be played “upside down”, but many prefer to use “standard” count, where high-then-low shows an even number of cards and vice versa. Some don’t use count signals at all unless there’s a clear benefit to the defense, so as not to give unnecessary information to the declarer. (*Recommended*)

Attitude and Count are shown in the suit led.

Suit Preference. Suit preference, playing Upside-Down, is shown by the discard or play of a low card in a desired suit. Similarly, the discard or play of a high card indicates no interest in the suit, and, by inference, possible interest in the fourth suit. Suit Preference can be shown when following to partner’s or declarer’s lead when attitude or count are no longer relevant to that suit, as when dummy or declarer is void.

Negative Discards. All effective signaling systems must include the concept of a negative discard, meaning “Partner, please don’t lead the indicated suit”. This is an important technique, as we shouldn’t discard any card from a suit we hope to establish, or run, especially at NoTrump. Generally, one should avoid discarding from any 4-card suit at NoTrump or when keeping length with the dummy in a suit contract

Lavinthal Discards. The classic negative discard technique is the use of Lavinthal Discards, wherein the first discard carries a primary message: “Partner, don’t lead this suit”. It can have a secondary message, if the card played is “unusually low or high”. In that case, it is suit-preference for the higher or lower of the 2 remaining non-trump suits.

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Example: with Spades as trump, the discard of the ♠9 could mean “Don’t lead Diamonds; please lead Hearts, the higher of the non-trump suits”. A ♠3 in this same example could mean “Please lead a Club”.

Upside-Down Negative Discards. Playing Upside-Down, the discard of the ♦3 means the player likes Diamonds, and the discard of a ♦9 means she doesn’t. The ♦9 could also be a suit preference signal for the 4th suit.

Continuing this example, if we have 4 Heart cards, we certainly don’t want to use one of them as an encouraging discard if we have hopes of establishing the Heart suit or preventing declarer getting the 13th card Heart trick. Using a negative discard discouraging Clubs could suggest Hearts is our suit of interest.

Standard Negative Discards. Playing Standard, the play of a small card is a “negative discard”, possibly suggesting the 4th suit.

Odd – Even Negative Discards. Playing Odd-Even, an odd card encourages and an even one discourages and can imply suit preference, similar to other systems.

Thus the “negative discard” in a side suit is a valuable part of all discard techniques because it can convey an important message, yet preserves length in the desired suit.

Upside-Down techniques apply throughout the hand; they are not limited to the “first discard”, as other systems often are. The first discard in a particular suit is relevant to that suit, positive or negative or neutral, but subsequent play, leads or discards may carry messages about other suits.

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Note: Topics preceded by an asterisk (*) are NOT included in Bob’s Standard; they are here for reference, and are candidates to be added toward the end of the 2015 class season.

NOTRUMP

NoTrump Is the Base. NoTrump openings are the baseline for all bidding systems. It's the most important bid to make whenever the HCP and distribution warrant because it's a limited bid, meaning the upper HCP range is known, as well as approximate distribution. Limited bids help partner visualize your hand and clarify who's in charge of the auction. Also, 1NT and 2NT are preemptive to the opponents -- few partnerships can bid accurately or comfortably over an opening 1NT.

The Captain. Of prime importance to good NT bidding is that partner of the opening NT bidder always becomes the Captain of the hand. As in any bidding situation, NoTrump or not, when one player makes a limited bid, the other becomes the Captain. Responder / Captain asks opener to further describe her hand, given her flat holding. Finding major suit fits is the key job for responder, who will use Jacoby Transfers and Stayman, and other conventions, to find them.

Read the Opponents' NoTrump Opening Section. Glance at opponents' NoTrump Opening section on their convention card, just before starting to bid. The great majority will say 15 – 17, as does ours, and that's all you need to see because they will bid very similar to you, using Jacoby Transfers and Stayman and other conventions just as you do. They - and you - will alert or announce conventions they use; these are printed in red or blue on the Convention Card.

Distribution. NoTrump openers have no void, no singleton and at most two doubletons. So, distributions for NoTrump openers are 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 or 4 – 4 – 3 – 2 or 3 – 3 – 2 – 5 (5 card minor suit) or 4 – 5 – 2 – 2 - - - no other distributions fit the definition. Avoid opening NT with a small major suit doubleton if possible. Two doubletons are sometimes acceptable if holding an Ace or King in both, and with no better bid. Both doubletons cannot be in the major suits.

Opening Bid Choices: 1NT openings show 15 – 17 HCP in all seats. 3rd and 4th seat openings or 1NT overcalls may be 15 – 18 HCP, by partnership agreement. (*Recommended*)

2NT Openings show 20 or 21 HCP, with NoTrump distribution. With hands in this point range that don't have NT distribution, open 2♣ or one of a suit.

3NT Openings. “Natural” 3NT Openings show 25 – 27 HCP and are so rare as to be virtually unheard of. Instead, use an opening 3NT call as “Gambling), as follows:

Opening Gambling 3NT. A 3NT opening shows a solid 7 card minor suit and no outside Ace or King. An example “Gambling 3NT” opener: (♠x ♥9x ♦AKQTxxx ♣Jxx). Some play opener can have partial stoppers, such as Queens and Jacks or an occasional King. With an outside Ace or King, the opening should be 1♣ or 1♦, not 3NT.

Responding to a Gambling 3NT Opener. Opener has shown 7 tricks in a minor suit. With stoppers in other suits, responder passes, expecting to make 9 tricks. Lacking stoppers, responder bids 4♣, and opener passes or corrects to 4♦. It's now a preemptive opening sequence, so opponents are faced with starting to bid at the 4 level.

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Not NoTrump? The implications of not opening NoTrump are important. If opener opens 1♣ and later bids NoTrump, can she have a 15 count with flat distribution? No, because then she would have opened 1NT.

NoTrump Openings Holding a 5-Card Major. Do It - - sometimes or never or always. A 1NT opening may include a hand with a poor five card major. Hands with a good five card major should probably open it rather than 1NT. A definition of "good" is a suit with 5 HCP or more, like ♥AJxxx or ♠KQ10xx but not ♠KJxxx or ♠QJxxx. Partnerships have different agreements about always or never opening a hand 1NT holding a 5-card major. That's OK, so long as both understand and remember the agreement.

(♠ Kxxxx ♥ Qxx ♦ Ax ♣ AKJ) Open 1 NT

(♠ AJxxx ♥ KJx ♦ KQ ♣ Kxx) Open 1 Spade ?

Opening Flat Hands Stronger than 15 – 17 HCP. With 18 or 19 HCP, open one of a suit then jump to 2NT or jump raise partner's major suit response with appropriate support.

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♥...]

Examples:

(♠ Kxxx ♥ Axx ♦ AQx ♣ AJx)

A 1♣ opening, then a 2 NT rebid unless partner bids 1♠ – if so, raise to 3♠.

(♠ Jxxx ♥ AKJx ♦ AKx ♣ Kx)

A 1♦ opening. Raise partner's Heart or Spade response to game, otherwise rebid 2NT.

With 22+ HCP and a balanced hand, open 2♣, then bid 2NT or 3NT or raise partner's major to game. [2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 3NT...]

To Open 1NT or Not? Not every hand with 15, 16 or 17 HCP and flat distribution must be opened 1NT. Hands with 14 HCP and good intermediates - "pushers" - can sometimes be opened 1NT, and hands with 15+ HCP may be opened in a suit, especially to anticipate responses that create rebid problems, or are Aceless with poor "pushers" - 10's and 9's and 8's.

If hands are "suit-oriented" or have other flaws, they can be opened in a suit rather than NT. Especially, think about possible rebids after opening 1NT vs. opening 1 of a suit.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Quiz: In the following hands, ask yourself if there is a better opening bid than 1NT.

- (1) ♠AQJxx ♥KJx ♦Ax ♣xxx _____
- (2) ♠AQJx ♥Kxx ♦xx ♣AJxx _____
- (3) ♠Ax ♥xx ♦KQxx ♣AQJxx _____
- (4) ♠KQx ♥QJx ♦Qxx ♣KQxx _____
- (5) ♠Jx ♥xxx ♦AKQx ♣KQJx _____
- (6) ♠AJx ♥Axx ♦AQx ♣Kxxx _____
- (7) ♠KQxxx ♥AJ ♦Kxx ♣Kxx _____
- (8) ♠AJ ♥KQxxx ♦Kxx ♣Kxx _____

Answers:

- (1) ♠AQJxx ♥KJx ♦Ax ♣xxx With 5 HCP in a 5 card major suit, open in the major
- (2) ♠AQJx ♥Kxx ♦xx ♣AJxx With minimum HCP and weak short suits, open 1 Club
- (3) ♠Ax ♥xx ♦KQxx ♣AQJxx With two doubletons and a convenient rebid, open 1 Diamond
- (4) ♠KQx ♥QJx ♦Qxx ♣KQxx Deduct a point for no Aces and open 1 Club.
- (5) ♠Jx ♥xxx ♦AKQx ♣KQJx Imagine being transferred into Spades or Hearts. Open 1♦
- (6) ♠AJx ♥Axx ♦AQx ♣Kxxx Open 1♣ and then bid 2 NT on the 2nd round.
- (7) ♠KQxxx ♥AJ ♦Kxx ♣Kxx With 5 Spades, open 1 Spade, but compare with Hand 8
- (8) ♠AJ ♥KQxxx ♦Kxx ♣Kxx Open 1NT. There's no rebid after a 1♠ response. (Majors reversed from Hand #7)

RESPONDING TO NOTRUMP OPENINGS

Responder is the Captain. Opener's NT hand is limited to a narrow range of HCP and distribution -- but responder's hand is unlimited. Therefore, responder must find the best contract.

To Accept an Invitation or Not? Frequently, the response will indicate that it “shows 8 or 9 points”, and is therefore an invitation to opener to play at a game-level contract. To decide whether or not to accept, opener should do several things: evaluate the proposed suit fit, if any, discount doubleton minor side-suit honors ♦(Qx or ♣Jx, for example) and evaluate the cards in her hand other than Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks. Generally, opener will accept with a maximum hand. “Maximum” means any 17 HCP hand. 15 HCP hands should usually pass without an exceptional fit with no discounted honor holdings, doubletons or small tripletons. 16 HCP openers should be re-evaluated by looking at long suits and/or "pusher cards" - 10's and 9's in longish suits. Responder should do this same re-evaluation when decisions are close.

Count Dummy Points Only if You Are Going to Be the Dummy. Dummy Points can be counted only in the short-suit hand. . . not both hands. When a major suit fit is found, responder may become the dummy; if so, and she has the short trump holding, she can count dummy points - - HCP plus voids (5 points), singletons (3 points) and doubletons (1 point) – to properly evaluate her hand.

Most responses to NoTrump openers or overcalls center on the Stayman and Jacoby Transfer conventions. These conventions will find 4 – 4 and 3 – 5 and 2 – 6+ major suit fits. Responder should use either Stayman or Jacoby with any four+ card major suit. Failure to bid either of these is a clear sign to opener (and opponents) that responder has no 4+ card major suit.

Four-Way Transfers. We use “4-suit transfers”, so responder can transfer to (force opener to bid) any suit the Captain/responder wants. Jacoby Transfers are used for transfers to Hearts and Spades. A 2♠ response transfers opener to 3 Clubs. [1NT – P – 2♠# – P 3♣ ...]
A 2NT# response is used as a transfer to 3♦. [1NT – P – 2NT# – P 3♦ ...] (*See below*)
Transfers don't have to be weak: [1NT – P – 2♠* – P 3♣ – P – 6♣ ...]

2NT as a transfer to 3♦? A standard direct raise to 2NT is a poor call, as responder asks opener to make a decision with little information and a very narrow range of HCP. We keep 2NT invitational in our system by first bidding 2♣, then 2NT over any rebid.

[1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2x – P – 2NT* ...]. Opener should Alert this 2NT rebid as “she may or may not have a 4-card major”.

With 4-way transfers, wherever the Captain feels is the best place to play in a suit contract, she can ask opener to bid it. When the stronger hand – the opener – is the declarer, the defense is harder as the lead comes into the strong hand that is hidden from defenders, and the known long suit on the table.

OTHER MAJOR SUIT CONVENTIONAL RESPONSES

There are many other conventional responses to NoTrump openings besides Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, most of which attempt to find major suit fits. This section adds **Garbage Stayman**, **Puppet Stayman**, **5 – 5 majors** and **Texas Transfers**. Collectively, they cover all cases from one 4-card major through 6+ major suits held by responder. An discussion of all cases follows.

A responder to a NoTrump opener may face any of these 5 cases requiring major suit responses or searches for an 8+ card major fit:

- Case 1. a 6+ card major
- Case 2. two 5- card majors
- Case 3. one or two 4-card majors
- Case 4. one 5-card major
- Case 5. one 5-card and one 4-card major

Case 1. Holding a 6+ card major, responder should **Jacoby Transfer** to the major and then pass or bid game or invite game with a raise; or jump to 4NT looking for a slam.

[1NT – P – 2♥# – P 2♠ – P – 4♠ ...]

Texas Transfer. With a weakish hand and a broken 6+ major suit, responder can Texas Transfer opener to game, making the big hand the declarer. Because there is at least an 8-card fit in the major, only the level is important. Texas Transfers in major suits are made to the 4-level after a 1NT or 2NT opening. Like Jacoby Transfers, they ask opener, the stronger hand, to be declarer in a major suit contract. Texas Transfers are not strong hands, but usually have 6 or 7 Hearts or Spades and slightly less than game forcing HCP strength, i.e., they are preemptive. They have little chance for slam, such as a hand with 1 or more worthless doubletons. Because of the shape, they have some dummy points. (singletons or doubletons or a void).

To bid a Texas Transfer, responder jumps to the suit below the desired major, exactly as Jacoby Transfers do, but at the 4-level: [1NT – P – 4♥# – P 4♠ ...] A Texas Transfer to 4 Spades. An example hand for this transfer could be: (♠AJT9862 ♥87 ♦87 ♣A2).

Note that responder could get the same results by bidding a Jacoby Transfer, then jumping to game in the major. The reason to use Texas Transfers rather than a Jacoby Transfer is to prevent opponents from getting lead-directing bids into the auction before the game is bid:

[1NT – P – 2♦# – 2♠ ??? ...]. In this Jacoby Transfer auction, 4th seat has gotten her Spades into the auction at a low level as lead-directing or as a possible sacrifice. A comparable Texas Transfer sequence would be: [1NT – P – 4♦# – P 4♥ ...]. In this case, 4th seat couldn't put in a 4♠ bid over 4♦* because it is too high. The opening leader therefore doesn't know about the Spade strength in 4th seat's hand, so may make a lead not advantageous to the defense. Of course, 4th seat could double 4♦ as lead-directing, but that shows Diamonds, not Spades.

Case 2. Holding two 5-card majors.

With two 5-card majors, responder should jump directly to 3♥ or 3♠, with the 3♥ bid showing an 8 or 9 HCP invitational hand and the 3♠ bid showing a game-forcing 10+ HCP. Responder has distribution values because of a singleton and a doubleton or a void.

[1NT – P – 3♥* ...] (This convention has no name and is alertable.) Invitational strength: 8 / 9

Depending on shape and HCP, opener will reevaluate her hand and:

- after a 3♥ response, pass or bid 3♠ or 4♥ or 4♠ or 3NT.
- after a 3♠ response pick a major suit game. (She must have 3 of at least one major)

Responder with extra values can continue on, looking for slam with appropriate strength. With a 0 to 7 HCP hand, responder should Jacoby Transfer opener to the weaker major and pass. Why to the weaker suit? A suit with some HCP has trick-taking power, especially facing a NoTrump opener. A weak suit, perhaps with no HCP, is useless unless it is trump. Because the shape of a 5 – 5 hand, the trump suit, even with no HCP, can be used to ruff losers, and thus has some trick-taking value. 5 – 5 major responses can be made over 2NT openings by jumping to 4♥ or 4♠. They require 5+ HCP and are game-forcing. [2NT – P – 4♥*. . .]

Because responder's hand is very shapely, game can be forced in a major, knowing the opener must have 3 cards in one of the majors. Remember that opener will rarely hold two doubletons, and they cannot both be majors.

Case 3. Holding one or two 4-card majors.

Responder should use Regular or Garbage Stayman 2♣ (see below) to see if opener has a 4+ card major. If opener bids a major held by responder, responder can pass, raise as an invitation with 8 or 9 HCP or bid game with 10+ points.

If opener bids a major not held by responder, responder should bid 2NT* with 8 or 9 HCP or bid 3NT with 10+ points: in this case only, opener can infer that responder has the other major.

Therefore, if also holding the other major, opener can correct responder's 3NT bid to 3 or 4 of the other major. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P – 3NT – P 4♠ ...] Correcting to the Spade fit.

[1NT - P _3♥* ...] “I'm 5 - 5 in Spades and Hearts with a 8 or 9 point hand

[1NT - P - 3♥* - P 3♠ ...] " Sorry, no game this time, partner “

Opener: (♠ Txxx ♥ AQ ♦ KQxx ♣ KJx)

Responder: (♠ QJxxx ♥ KTxxx ♦ x ♣ Qx)

If opener denies any major by bidding 2♦ in response to Stayman, responder can pass or bid 2♥ or 2♠, (Garbage Stayman) or 2NT with 8 or 9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP. **Note:** holding one 4-card major and an otherwise flat hand, e.g., 4-3-3-3 shape, responder should not use Stayman because there's no ruffing value: “No Shape, No Stayman”.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Garbage Stayman. “Garbage Stayman” is a response sequence that starts out with a regular 2♣ Stayman bid, but then attempts to stop below 2NT; i.e., it a weak hand with shape, trying to improve the 1NT contract.

The classic weak hand that could use Garbage Stayman is this 0 HCP hand:
(♠9878 ♥8765 ♦76543 ♣-)

When partner opens 1NT, this hand probably will not take a single trick. However, because opener must rebid only 2♦ or 2♥ or 2♠ over the 2♣ Stayman bid, this responder can pass any rebid and improve the contract. She will have a 4 – 4 fit or 3 – 5 trump fit with opener, and a void to ruff Club losers. Garbage Stayman has no exact definition, but it starts with a regular 2♣ Stayman bid and then ends the auction at a low level.

***Puppet Stayman over 2NT.** Players often open 2NT holding a 5-card major to avoid being passed out at 1♥ or 1♠. To investigate this possibility, responder can bid 3♣ as “Puppet Stayman” to determine if the 2NT opener holds a 5-card major or any 4-card major(s). Responder should have at least 5 HCP to use Puppet, as it’s game-going, and it’s alertable.

Like regular Stayman, Puppet Stayman over 2NT starts with a response of 3♣. Opener rebids 3NT if not holding any 4 or 5-card major, thus setting the contract.
[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3NT. . .] Responder may continue toward Slam.

Opener rebids any 5-card major suit.

[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ . . .] Showing a 5-card Heart suit by opener. Then:

If lacking 3+ trumps, responder bids 3NT or higher.

[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 3NT. . .] Opener has 5 Hearts, but responder doesn’t have 3.

With 3+ trumps, responder bids game or continues toward slam.

[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 4♥] or [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 4NT. . .]. 1430 RKCB

Without a 5-card major, but with one or two 4-card majors, opener rebids 3♦*.

[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦ . . .] Opener has 4 Hearts and/or 4 Spades. Then:

If holding both majors, responder bids 4♦* and opener chooses her major suit game.

[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦* – P – 4♦* – P 4♠. . .]. Opener chooses Spades.

If holding one major, responder bids the other major and opener bids the implied major or 3NT.
[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦* – P – 3♥* – P 4♠. . .]. Responder doesn’t have 4 Hearts, so opener can bid 4♠ knowing responder has 4 of them, and the contract is right-sided.

***Puppet Stayman over 1NT.** A responder with 10+ HCP can use Puppet Stayman in case opener has opened with a 5-card major or any 4-card major(s). Instead of the normal 2♣ Stayman response to 1NT, responder bids 3♣*, and the same continuations as described above.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Case 4. Holding one 5-card major

Lacking 8 HCP, responder may transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass.

[1NT – P – 2♦# – P 2♥ – P...]

With 8 or 9 HCP (invitational values) , responder can transfer opener to her 5-card major and then bid 2NT. [1NT – P – 2♦# – P 2♥ – 2NT...]

With 10+ HCP, responder can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, offering opener the choice of game at 3NT or 4 of responder's major suit.

[1NT – P – 2♦# – P 2♥ – P – 3NT...] “Your choice, partner - 3NT or 4♥”

In response to a 2NT opener, responder, lacking 5 HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass. [2NT – P – 3♦# – P 3♥ – P – P...]

With 5+ HCP, she can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, again offering opener the choice of game contracts. [2NT – P – 3♦# – P 3♥ – P – 3NT...]

Case 5. Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major

Responder can use Stayman to inquire about opener's 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder's majors, responder can pass or raise it to 3 with 8 or 9 points or bid game with 10+ points. *(There is a convention called Smolen for this shape, but it's not in Bob's Standard.)*

If opener denies holding a major by bidding 2♦, responder can pass or bid the 5-card major (Garbage Stayman) or, holding 8 or 9 HCP, bid 2NT or, with 10+ HCP, bid 3NT.

Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major over a 2NT opening, a responder with 5+ HCP should use Stayman to inquire about opener's 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder's majors, responder should raise to game. If opener denies holding any major by bidding 3♦, responder can bid 3NT. Lacking 5 HCP, responder can pass or transfer opener to the 5-card major and then pass. Alternatively, Puppet Stayman can be used, as described in Case 3 above.

DIRECT NOTRUMP RAISES.

Direct raises to 3NT are used when responder has no 4- or 5-card major and the hand is otherwise flat. They show 10+ HCP in response to 1NT and 5+ HCP in response to 2NT.

Note the negative implications of direct raise bids -- no four or five card major suits and no long minor suit or shape. It's important to not have majors when making direct NT raises -- opener could have a four or even a five-card major suit.

A direct 2NT# response is a transfer to 3♦ in Bob's Standard. (See 4-Way Transfers, above)

RESPONDING WITH MINOR SUITS.

Transfer to 3♣ or 3♦.

A 2♠# response to 1NT is a transfer to 3♣

A 2NT# response is a transfer a transfer to 3♦. (4-Way Transfers)

[1NT - P - 2NT#. . .] A transfer to 3♦— neither weak nor strong at this point.

[1NT - P - 2NT# - P 3♦ - P - P ...] A weak Diamond bust, such as the following.

Opener: (♠ KQxx ♥ Qxx ♦ xx ♣ AKJx)

Responder: (♠ xxx ♥ Jx ♦ KJxxxx ♣ xx)

Direct Jump to 3♣ or 3♦

Direct responses of 3♣ or 3♦ are invitations asking opener to bid 3NT with a fit. With a game-inviting hand including 8 or 9 HCP and a long minor, responder should jump to 3 of the minor suit to invite 3NT. Responder may have a hand that will play well in a 3NT game if opener has a fitting hand. Responder should have a good 5 or 6 card minor suit and an outside entry.

[1NT – P – 3♦* – P 3NT ...].

Opener, with 3 of the minor or a good holding (♣AJx, for example) and stoppers in all other suits, may accept the invitation and bid 3NT. Otherwise, she passes 3 of the minor.

[1NT - P - 3♣ - P 3NT...] “I’ve got good clubs and 8 to 9 HCP”

Opener: (♠ Kxxx ♥ KQx ♦ Axx ♣ KJx) “Sounds like a NT game to me, partner”

Responder: (♠ Txx ♥ xx ♦ Kxx ♣ AQxxx)

Opener: (♠ Qxxx ♥ KQx ♦ AKxx ♣ Jx) “Not this time, partner”

Responder: (♠ Kxx ♥ xx ♦ xxx ♣ AQxxx)

With 10+ and a 5+ card minor suit, responder should bid 3NT directly. [1NT – P – 3NT...]

*Some play that 3♣ and 3♦ responses are analogous to 3♥ and 3♠ responses, where the lower (3♣) shows 5 – 5 shape with 8 or 9 HCP and the higher (3♦) shows 5 – 5 with 10+ HCP.

BIDDING NOTRUMP IN COMPETITION

Overcalling Opponent's Suit Opening with 1NT. Your 1NT overcall of opponent's 1-of-a-suit opening shows a hand that would have opened 1NT if you had been the dealer, with one important difference - a 1NT overcall guarantees good stoppers in opponent's suit.

Example: [1♥ – 1NT . . .]. This call shows an opening 1NT hand with good Heart stoppers, like ♥KJ9x. A minor difference is that the upper limit can be 18 HCP instead of 17 HCP.

“Systems On”. All responding conventions and treatments, like Stayman, Jacoby Transfers and 4-suit transfers are on if partner overcalls with 1NT, meaning responses are the same as though 1st hand had passed and your partner opened 1NT. [1♥ – 1NT – P – 2♣ . . .] Stayman.

Check the “Systems On” box on the Convention card in the NoTrump Overcalls section.

Unusual 2 NoTrump Overcall (Although not really a NoTrump bid, it is included here for completeness.) You are about to open 1♦ holding: (♠xx ♥x ♦AKxxx ♣KQTxx) but your RHO opens 1♥. Do you bid 2♣? 2♦? Double? Pass? This is a perfect situation for an Unusual 2NT Overcall. 2NT here shows 5 – 5 distribution of the two lower unbid suits and 8 to 14 HCP, mostly in the implied suits. It is NOT a NoTrump bid.

Assuming third hand passes, your partner then chooses which suit provides the best fit. Example: [1♥ – 2NT – P – 3♣ . . .] 2NT is not alertable.

When bid over a 1♥ or 1♠ or 1NT opener, it shows the two minor suits. (Some play it always shows the two minor suits.) Over 1♦, it would show Hearts and Clubs, and over 1♣, it shows red suits. [1♣ – 2NT – P – 4♥ . . .] Partner picks a game in Hearts. It's usually a jump to 2NT.

[1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥ – 2NT . . .] is not unusual so it's natural, i.e., an offer to play for 8 tricks in NoTrump after partner's 1♠ overcall and opponent's 2♥ bid. Even [P – 1♥ – P – P 2NT . . .] (by a passed hand!) can be “unusual” in context, with the same meaning. Between the Michael's Cue-Bid and the Unusual 2 NoTrump Overcalls, we can show almost any combination of two 5-card suits over any opening suit bid.

Advantages. As with all distributional hands, this hand can take a lot of tricks with minimum support in partner's hand: (♠xx ♥x ♦AKxxx ♣KQTxx). Put ♦Qxxx and ♣Jx in partner's hand - - is that really just 3 “points”? Or add an Ace in a major suit and game in a minor suit is almost a lay-down. Partner can also sacrifice or advance sacrifice with minimum values, especially if not vulnerable. If opponents get the contract, partner can lead intelligently, knowing your cards and your values are in your two implied suits.

Disadvantages. If your side doesn't get the contract, you have warned declarer about the unusual distribution, and told her where many of the missing high cards are. In addition, partner may find herself as declarer in a doubled contract at the 3-level in a 2 – 5 fit.

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

Example Unusual 2NT hands:

(♠xxx ♥KJxxx ♦AKJxx ♣-) Bid 2NT over a 1♥, 1♠ or 1NT opening

(♠x ♥AQxxx ♦KQxxx ♣xx) Bid 2NT over a 1♣ opening

(♠Kx ♥A ♦Jxxxx ♣Kxxxx) Not a good Unusual 2NT Overcall, because your HCP values are outside your suits. Your partner will lead one of them, expecting to have something in it.

Responding to an Unusual 2NT Overcall. You should normally bid the longer of the two suits partner has implied. Not the stronger - the longer, because all those cards become trumps. High cards in either suit can take tricks, but small cards in non-trump suits can't take tricks. If they are the same length, again, pick the weaker one because they will all be trumps.

Quiz: The bidding has gone [1♥ – 2NT – P ...] What should you bid?

(♠Qxx ♥Kx ♦Kxxx ♣Jxxx) Bid 3 Clubs, not 3 Diamonds.

(♠QJxx ♥Kxx ♦xxxx ♣Ax) Bid 3 Diamonds.

(♠Axx ♥KQJx ♦Kxx ♣Qxx) Bid 3NT

(♠KTx ♥KQxx ♦Jxx ♣Jxx) Pass !

(♠Ax ♥xxx ♦AQx ♣KJxxx) Bid 5 Clubs

(♠xxx ♥Jxxx ♦x ♣KJxxx) Bid 5 Clubs

Note the strategic value of these last two hands - - opponents don't know whether you are stealing their vulnerable 4 Heart contract, or are bidding with strength. It doesn't matter what the 2NT bidder thinks you have, because you are the Captain and she won't usually bid again regardless of what you bid. Also, the known distribution hand - - - the 2NT bidder - - will be the dummy and defenders won't see what's in your hand.

The Unusual 2NT Overcall is easy, straightforward and very competitive. The 2-suited nature of it prevents huge penalty losses in most cases, and interferes in others, even when opener eventually gets the contract. Like all preemptive and shape-oriented competitive bids, the Unusual 2NT Overcall will have its share of successes against you. It's not alertable, either.

***Defending Against the Unusual 2NT Overcall** (Unusual over Unusual).

Some choices for 3rd Seat after RHO bids 2NT over Partner's 1NT:

(A) Support (i.e., raise) partner's major, as always, even with minimum HCP (3 + points and 3+ trumps). The Unusual 2NT Overcall doesn't show a lot of points, and partner needs to know about at least 3+ card support for her suit whenever possible. [1♥ – 2NT – 3♥ . . .]

(B) Double to deny 3+ card support for partner when holding some values and a willingness to penalize at least one of the implied suits. [1♥ – 2NT – Dbl . . .]

(C) Bid 3NT with a strong hand and good stoppers in the implied suits. [1♥ – 2NT – 3NT]

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

(D) Jump to game in your partner's suit with a weak hand and 4+ trumps, before opponents find their minor suit fit. [1♥ – 2NT – 4♥ . . .] Pre-empting 4th seat, forcing it to the 5-level.

(E) Pass with none of the above, or to wait and see what 4th hand bids before deciding whether to double or bid.

(F) Bid the lower of the two implied suits to show a limit raise. [1♥ – 2NT – 3♣ . . .] Showing partner a Limit Raise in Hearts.

(G) Bid 3 of the other major, suggesting approximately a Weak Two opener in that suit.

INTERFERING WITH OPPONENT'S 1NT OPENING.

Modern players have a number of conventional tools to make nuisance bids after opponent's 1NT. There are many of them, such as Hamilton/Cappelletti, (Bob's Standard), Astro, Brozel, Landy, TONT, DONT, etc. All have the ability to show one long suit or two 5-card suits. With a balanced hand, you should defend against 1NT.

***TONT** (Transfers Over NoTrump) – An alternative to Hamilton over a 1NT opener.

A 6-card suit is much more likely to be dealt to you than a hand with two 5-card suits, so a good defense over 1NT openings should make it easy to show 6-card suits. We could bid them naturally, [1NT – 2♦ . . .] but then the wrong hand is dummy. If we can get partner to bid it, it would be right-sided, as the NT opener would be leading away from her high cards.

How do we get partner to bid it? Easy: use Transfers Over NoTrump, i.e., TONT.

In the immediate seat, a suit bid over a 1NT opener asks partner to bid the next higher suit: [1NT – 2♣# . . .] says, "Partner, please bid 2♦". Similarly, 2♦# calls for 2♥; 2♥# calls for 2♠ and 2♠# calls for 3♣. 2NT is the Unusual 2NT showing the Minors and Double shows both majors.

With two 5-card suits other than both minors or both majors, transfer to the higher ranking or stronger one. 8 to 14 HCP is the range.

***TONT Responses.** 4th seat should take the transfer most of the time. Don't hesitate -- bid it confidently and promptly. When you take the transfer, opponents don't know whether or not you have any trumps. If you hesitate or bid reluctantly, you tip them off. If you have a decent 6+ card suit and are very short in partner's suit, bid your own suit, especially if you can do so at the same level.

[1NT – 2♣# – P – 2♦ . . .] or [1NT – 2♦# – P – 2♠ . . .] or [1NT – 2♠# – P – 3♦ . . .]

***Competing With TONT:** Competing after TONT calls could include Stolen Bid Doubles, i.e., "double" means "I was going to bid that". Or a double of a TONT call could mean a willingness to penalize the transfer-to suit or simply a point-showing call, perhaps with 8+ HCP. It could also be a Negative Double, showing the other major and 8+ points; e.g., [1NT – 2♦# – Dbl . . .] showing 4+ Spades. Playing "standard" or "natural", a 4th seat double of 1NT is an balancing bid, showing a flat 10 to 14 HCP hand, giving 2nd seat the option to leave the double in with HCP or bid "Systems On".

BIDDING CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES

“Systems On” after a balancing double, means Stayman and Jacoby Transfers are in effect, to be bid by 2nd seat provided opener passes. [1NT – P – P – Dbl P – 2♣ ...] Stayman. When 2nd seat leaves the double in, opener will be in some trouble: haven’t you reluctantly passed with a nice 14 count because your RHO opened 1NT?

The purpose of transfers rather than direct bids in 2nd seat is to keep concealed the trump holding of 4th seat. If 2nd seat bids naturally, 4th seat becomes the dummy, for defenders to see completely.

Sometimes a TONT bid is made and 4th seat is void and otherwise flat. This is the risk with all transfer systems, meaning the one doing the transferring must be disciplined. Have a good 6+ card suit, realizing partner may have nothing in that suit.

As a matter of fact, this is the problem with all interference systems over 1NT openings: there is no assurance 4th seat will have any help in that suit(s).

Recommendation: Disciplined TONT in 2nd seat with Double showing the majors, and “standard – natural” in 4th seat, bidding a suit or balancing with a double, allowing 2nd seat to pass or bid with “Systems On”.

COPING WITH INTERFERENCE OVER OUR 1NT OPENING. [1NT - 2♣ - ???]

Opponents will often bid over our 1NT openings, often with Hamilton. Responder can use transfers and other normal responses if 2nd doubles, as there has been no bidding space lost. [1NT – Dbl – 2♣ ...]. This 2♣ is Stayman, ignoring opponent’s Double. Because of this treatment, we have to check “System on after Double” on the convention card.

Example: [1NT – Dbl – 2♥# ...] 2♥ is a Jacoby Transfer to 2♠. Sometimes opponents will bid a suit, artificial or not, over our 1NT opening. If the overcall was the bid responder was going to make, then a Double call means “Partner, that’s what I was going to bid”, i.e., a “**stolen bid**”.

Example: [1NT – 2♦ – Dbl# ...] Dbl# is a Jacoby Transfer to 2♥. We must announce this call, and put it on our convention card under Other. Responder knows the approximate shape and strength of opener’s hand, and can bid as though (A) the overcaller had not bid at all, or can (B) use the “Stolen Bid” technique for 4-way or Jacoby Transfers or Stayman, or (C) Bid naturally.

Examples:

- A. [1NT – Dbl – 2♣, 2♦#, 2♥#, 2♠# or 2NT#. . .] 2♣ is Stayman, the others are Transfers.
- B. [1NT – 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ or 2NT – Dbl ...]. Dbl = “Partner, 2nd seat stole my bid”.
- C. [1NT – 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ or 2NT – 3NT ...]. “Partner, it’s our game hand.”

***3rd Seat Escape Responses to 1NT Openings after an Intervening Penalty Double**

The objective is to find any 2-level 7+ card fit to minimize the penalty.

[1NT – Dbl - ??? ...] A Penalty Double.

- Pass*. Denying any 5+ card suit. Alertable.
- 2♣ is Stayman.
- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠, 3♣. To play. 5+ card suits; Not transfers.
- Redouble is to play (10+ HCP), expecting to make a doubled 1NT contract.
- 3NT is to play. 10+. Rather than penalize opponents, (Vul vs. Not Vul is the only likely case.)

***Opener's Escape after [1NT – Dbl – P – P ??? ...]**

A Penalty Double in direct seat, passed around to opener after responder denies a 5+ card escape suit because she passed. Opener's Rebids:

- 2♣ or 2♦ shows a 5+ card suit. Responder should pass with 2 or more. (Opener won't usually have 5 of a major.) [1NT – Dbl – P* – P 2♦ ...] Opener has 5 Diamonds but not 5 Clubs.

- Redouble. Denies any 5+ card suit; asks responder (3rd seat) to start bidding 4+ card suits up the line. [1NT – Dbl – P* – P ReDouble - P - ???] Responder and opener bid 4-card suits up the line until a 7 or 8-card fit is found.

***Escape after [1NT – P – P – Dbl ?? . .] A Penalty Double in passout seat.**

Opener's rebid is automatically Pass. It's required because responder may want to leave the double in, for example, when holding 7+ HCP, or may want to bid something. If opener and 2nd seat both pass the 4th seat double, responder bids are:

- Pass. Responder is willing to play 1NT doubled.
- 2♣ is Stayman.
- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ A 5+ card suit - not transfers. Opener must pass, as she has at least 2 of any suit.
- Redouble. "Opener, please bid your 4+ suits up the line" . Opener then bids 4 card suits up-the-line and responder does likewise, as above.

“UPSIDE-DOWN” SIGNALS, LEADS and DISCARDS

“Upside-Down” is an alternative to Standard American signaling technique; in fact, many describe it as “the opposite of Standard”.

Most signaling systems use a concept of “High” and “Low” cards. High and Low are situation dependent, as a 5 or a 9 could be a high card or a low one, depending on what’s in the dummy, in discarder’s hand or previously played.

As in all signaling systems, Upside-Down signals, discards and leads do not exist in isolation because the bidding always provides context, especially if defenders have bid. Similarly, the opening lead gives information to 3rd hand about the leader’s intentions.

Attitude. A basic component of Upside-Down is the use of attitude signals opposite from Standard: a low card shows interest in the suit led and a high one discourages. Attitude is usually given on partner’s lead but can sometimes be on declarer’s lead or even a lead from dummy.

In “Standard”, the discard of a 2 or 3 is discouraging, denying interest in that suit, and a high card shows interest. The disadvantage of playing a high card in a desired suit is obvious; a fundamental flaw of “Standard” technique.

***Count.** Count can be played “upside down”, but many prefer to use “standard” count, where high-then-low shows an even number of cards and vice versa. Some don’t use count signals at all unless there’s a clear benefit to the defense, so as not to give unnecessary information to the declarer. (*Recommended*) Bob’s Standard does NOT use Upside Down Count - use Standard.

Suit Preference. Suit preference, playing Upside-Down, is shown by the discard or play of a low card in a desired suit. Similarly, the discard or play of a high card indicates no interest in the suit, and, by inference, possible interest in the fourth suit. Suit Preference can be shown when following to partner’s or declarer’s lead when attitude or count are no longer relevant to that suit, as when dummy or declarer is void.

Discards. All effective signaling systems must include the concept of a negative discard, meaning “Partner, please don’t lead the indicated suit”. Playing Upside-Down, the discard of the ♦ 3 means the player likes Diamonds, and the discard of a ♦ 9 means she doesn’t. The ♦ 9 could also be a suit preference signal for the 4th suit. Upside-Down techniques apply throughout the hand; they are not limited to the “first discard”, as other systems often are. The first discard in a particular suit is relevant to that suit, positive or negative or neutral, but subsequent play, leads or discards may carry messages about other suits.

Leads. When you lead a card, it can be Attitude or Suit Preference as well. For example, if you have opened in Hearts, you have at least 5 of them. Therefore you have a range of high to low cards. If you are trying to signal partner about another suit, for example, you can lead a relatively high Heart; or a low one would mean the lower of the side suits. If you are NOT trying to tell partner something, be sure lead a “middling” Heart: NOT a high one or a low one.

MICHAELS

Problem: Opponent opens 1 of a suit in front of you and you have a two-suited hand.

[1♥ – ???] What do you bid with (♠AQJxx ♥xx ♦x ♣AKxxx)? 1♠? 2♣?

Solution: Michaels is a cue bid of opponent's opening 1-of-a-suit bid:

[1♣ – 2♣] or [1♦ – 2♦ -] or [1♥ – 2♥] or [1♠ – 2♠]:

It shows 5 – 5 distribution of two other suits as follows:

[1♣ or 1♦ – 2♣ or 2♦] = shows both major suits, 5 – 5 distribution, as in
(♠AQJxx ♥AKxxx ♦x ♣xx)

[1♥ or 1♠ – 2♥ or 2♠] = shows the other major and a 5-card minor suit, as in:
(♠AQJxx ♥xx ♦x ♣AKxxx)

Strength. The Michaels HCP range is 8 to 14 HCP. Points must be concentrated in the 2 suits, and vulnerability is always a key factor, more than HCP:

Bid [1♥/♠ - 2♥/2♠...] with (♠AJTxx ♥KTxxx ♦x ♣Qx)
but not with (♠Jxxxx ♥Kxxxx ♦A ♣Qx)

The Michaels bidder has made a limited bid and so usually does not bid again unless responder bids 2NT, asking for the minor. Responder is the captain, not the Michaels bidder.

Responses to Michaels. Responder bids according to her distribution and her knowledge of the Michaels bidder's distribution. If a bid in the major suit is not possible, responder can bid 2NT* to identify the Michaels bidder's minor suit, provided she has strength to go to the 3-level and support for both minor suits:

[1♥ – 2♥ – P – 2NT* . . .] The Michael's bidder will bid her minor suit.

Responder should bid the cheapest major suit when weak, even with fewer than 3 cards:

Example: After [1♥ – 2♥ – P - ?], a responder holding (♠xx ♥Axxx ♦xxxx ♣Qxx) should bid 2♠ and not go to the 3 level in Clubs or Diamonds. Opponents often bid again and that will take responder off the hook.

[1♥ – 2♥ – P – ?]

1. ♠Axx ♥Qx ♦QJxx ♣xxxx	2. ♠xxx ♥xx ♦AKQx ♣JTxx
3. ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦KJxx ♣JTxx	4. ♠Jx ♥AQx ♦AKxx ♣xxxx
5. ♠xx ♥Kxxx ♦Axx ♣xxxx	6. ♠x ♥xxx ♦KQJxxx ♣xxx
7. ♠KJxx ♥Jxx ♦AQxx ♣xx	8. ♠Kxxx ♥x ♦QTxxx ♣AQx

Answers: 1. 2♠ 2. 3♠ 3. 2♠ 4. 3NT 5. 2♠ 6. 2NT, then pass 7. 3♠ 8. 4♠

JOURNALIST LEADS

Technically now called “Zero or Two Higher Leads”, the original “Journalist Leads” were introduced in the 1960’s and are obsolete nowadays, in favor of the “Two or None” style described below. In this paper, and on the convention cards of many users, they are still called Journalist Leads. Some now call them “Coded 9’s and 10’s”, which is the term we prefer.

Standard Leads. “Standard Leads” in NoTrump or Suit contracts are printed on the front of the convention card, and you must use them as printed unless you modify the “Standard Leads” table on your convention cards. “Journalist” or “Coded Nine’s and Ten’s” are such modifications.

NON-JOURNALIST LEADS

Consider all the possible leads from the deuce to the Ace. **Low.** The lead of a low card suggests some high card strength. **High.** The lead of an Ace suggests “Ace from Ace & King”. A lead of a King or Queen or Jack promises an honor sequence: “The Top of a sequence of (usually) 3 honors. “Boston” is a popular term for both High and Low, meaning “Bottom of Something; Top of Nothing”. **Nothing:** The lead of a 9, 8, 7 or 6 (?) usually shows the 2nd highest of a suit with no honors.

But the lead of 9’s, 10’s and Jack’s is ill-defined in Standard leads. Is it the top of nothing? The top of an Jack-high honor sequence? The top of an “interior sequence”? There’s a better way:

CODED 9’s, 10’s and JACK’S LEADS? WHAT ARE THEY?

When you examine the “Standard Leads” on the convention card, you see that some of the examples could be described as “suits with broken honor sequences”, like ♣AJ109(x) or ♣KT9(x). I call them “mixed suits”, meaning they have some honors but in broken sequences.

Journalist leads are an alternate way to handle mixed suits as referenced above: But why bother?

As far back as 1974, world-class experts like Eddie Kantar recognized that the “Standard” leads in “mixed suits”, fail to convey as much information as they might, and especially fail to show the power of Jacks, Tens and Nines in combination with higher honors in mixed suits.

“Journalist” leaders believe the standard **Ten** lead from ♣KT9(x) – the Ten – is improved upon by leading the **9** instead, with corresponding rules about the leading of a Nine or a Ten.

Here’s all the “Rules” for Journalist Leads: there’s only two:

- (1) “Jack Denies” means the lead of a Jack denies any higher honors in the leader’s hand. Period. Lead a Jack and you don’t have the Ace, King or Queen in that suit. Simple. The Ten is sometimes implied, but not promised - ever.
- (2) The lead of a 9 or 10 “Implies” (guarantees) either zero or two higher honors, not in sequence: so the ♣KT9(x) Standard Lead above becomes ♣KT9(x) (lead the **9**). It’s

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the “coded Nines and Tens” part. Conversely, the lead of a ♣Queen would show an honor sequence of ♣QJT(x); i.e., it’s “Standard”, not “Journalist”. The lead of a Nine implies - doesn’t guarantee - the 10, plus the Ace, King or Queen, but not the Jack, which would be an honor sequence. (♣JT9(x) Lead the Jack in this case.

All this comes down to a simple phrase: “Jack Denies; 9 or 10 Implies”. That’s “Journalist” or “Coded Jacks, Nines or 10’s” in just 6 words. Ok, so it’s easy to remember; So what? Why complicate Defense any more than it already is?

As you will see below, it makes the lead of a 9, 10 or Jack much more meaningful to partner, and that was recognized in 1974 or earlier. (I have Eddie’s 1974 book illustrating this). Here is why:

West leads the ♣9 as an opening lead, dummy has ♣653 and East has the ♣Kxx. What 2 honors could West have in Clubs? If she has two higher honors, they are the ♣AQ or the ♣AJ or ♣AT. In this case, East should play her ♣K and lead a Club back if it wins, possibly capturing Declarer’s ♣Q. If the ♣9 is the “top of nothing” – a Standard lead – then declarer has the ♣AQJ(x) and the struggle for defensive tricks is over in Clubs. But that’s important early information for the defense: “Every card played is a message”.

Another example: West leads the ♠T; dummy has ♠Jxx and East has the ♠KQ95. East can see 4 honors, meaning West can’t have two higher ones, so the complete picture in Spades is clear to East at once. West’s ♠Ten lead was a “Coded Ten” lead, denying any higher Spade honor. And East has the 9 as well. Everything’s now clear in Spades.

Usually, partner knows immediately the exact distribution of honors, as she sees her hand and the dummy and can mentally place 2 or zero honors in the leader’s hand if partner led a Nine or Ten. Of course, the lead of a Jack is also clear: Nada higher honors. Often, the bidding will help her decide whether it’s possible the leader could have 2 higher honors. The declarer, on the other hand, also knows how Journalist Leads work and can look at her hand and the dummy and West’s lead to see the honor situation. However, declarer doesn’t know whether the missing honors are: in the West or East hand, whereas East does know where they are: in her own hand or West’s. So the defense keeps the opening lead advantage because East knows something declarer (South) does not, even if declarer wins the first trick.

The bottom line about Journalist Leads, at a suit or no-trump contract, is that the defense can make an informative lead from a broken honor suit, often letting partner know the entire honor distribution on the opening lead. This can often retain the “tempo” in that suit for the defenders even if they don’t win the first lead. And, if 3rd hand sees there’s no future in that suit, she can change her Defensive Plan so far as that suit is concerned.

Additional considerations for Journalist users include whether or not such leads are used when defenders have bid the suit, and whether or not partner of the bidder has supported it.

Notice how the combination of Michaels and the Unusual 2NT covers most combinations of two 5-card suits in a hand.

OPENING PREEMPTS

♠ 8 3
♥ K Q J 10 9 7 3
♦ 8 5 3
♣ 2

Considerations: Do you have enough points to open the bidding? (No.) You need 13 or more points to open the bidding at the one level. Sometimes you have a hand with a very long suit, a good trump suit for your side, but you don't have enough points to open the bidding at the one level. With such hands, you can open the bidding at the two level or higher. This is called a preemptive opening bid or a preempt. With this hand, you could open 3♥.

The requirements for a preemptive opening bid are simple to remember:

Cautions: You are preempting your partner as well if you preempt in the first or second seat and, as always, vulnerability is key. Not Vul vs. Vul: be aggressive. Vul vs Not Vul, be careful! In 3rd seat, your partner has already passed, so be very aggressive, especially not vul. Maybe even be a card short, like opening 3♣ with only 6 good Clubs, not 7. The Rule for 3rd Seat is: There are not rules!

♠2, 2♥ and 2♦ openings promise a strong, six-card suit and fewer than 13 points. These bids also are called weak two-bids. You should not have as many as 3 of "the other major" - what if your partner has a game going hand in that suit? You have hurt her - not your opponents.

3♠, 3♥, 3♦ and 3♣ openings promise a strong seven-card suit and less than an opening hand.

4♠, 4♥, 4♦ and 4♣ openings promise a strong eight-card suit and less than an opening hand.

A strong suit contains at least two of the top three honor cards. As you can see, the longer your suit is, the more you can bid.

Why would you want to start the auction off at the two or three level with such a hand, when you don't even have the strength to open the bidding at the one level? There are two reasons.

First, the bid is very descriptive. It tells your partner you have a weak hand with a good long suit.

More importantly, it makes the auction very difficult for the opponents. If the opponent on your left was planning to open the bidding 1♣, what's that player going to do when you start the auction with 3♥, eating up a lot of bidding space?

Assuming your side is not vulnerable, what is your opening bid with each of these hands?

1) ♠ A K J 8 7 3 2
♥ 6 3
♦ 8 5
♣ 10 9

2) ♠ 8 4
♥ 8 2
♦ 3
♣ A J 10 7 6 5 3 2

3) ♠ K 4
♥ A K Q 8 4 3 2
♦ 6 4 2
♣ J

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(1) The first hand is a good one to start the bidding with 3♠. You don't have enough to open the bidding 1♠, and this preempt makes the opponents guess what to do at a very high level.

(2) On the second hand, with an eight-card suit, you could start the bidding with 4♣. You don't have to — you could pass or open 3♣ — but 4♣ gets things off to an interesting start.

(3) In the final hand, you have long hearts, but look again. This isn't the time to start the bidding at the three level, since you have enough to open the bidding at the one level. Bid 1♥ instead."

Summary

The preemptive bid is used to get in the way of the opponents, not your side. If you have enough strength for an opening bid at the one level, you're better off describing your hand in the normal fashion and having a constructive auction with your partner.

Doubling Opponent's Preempts. A Double of a preemptive opening (thru the 4♥ level) shows a hand strong enough to compete at the appropriate level, and unbid suits - it is for takeout.

If you think you can beat the preemptive opening, pass and hope your partner doubles - you can then leave the double in or maybe bid 3NT.

For more information in this area, see "**Vs Opening Preempts Double is**" in Bob's Standard documentation.