

# Building a Bridge System

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Should the strong bid be one club or two clubs ? That is the point of departure. To make a value judgement on their relative merits would require an expert to have spent half his life being committed to one, and the other half of his life committed to the other. The systems do have points of comparison. Players learn a two club system. Some may later convert to a one club system, but the fact remains that two clubs is the norm, two players can sit down together for the first time and have an enjoyable session after no more than a couple of minutes of discussion, because a two club system is universally known and respected. Where a player is familiar with both systems and plays each system regularly, it will generally be one club with the partner of his choice and two clubs with other casual partners. A one club system has more space in the bidding. If 1C 1M is game forcing there are bound to be lots more sequences available for interpretation. This will usually lead to the one club system being more complicated. Also a one club system is susceptible to frivolous interference, and to avoid misunderstandings it is essential to have a clear-cut course of action regardless of what the opponents' bids might mean. Perhaps these two factors combine to make a one club system more accident prone. As suggested earlier 1C or 2C is an article of faith. Here the leap into the unknown is 1C

### **How strong is the bid of 1C ?**

To the devotee, a strong 1C is the bid which will lead to good contracts. It is desirable to open 1C as often as possible. It is not difficult to devise a system wherein 1C shows fourteen points, and other opening bids show 9-13. There is nothing dangerous in opening 1S with nine points. If players can open 1NT on a flat ten count and swear by the results they achieve, 1S must be safer. In the expert tournament game the cognoscenti can generally find a good reason for opening any eleven count. That is the modern trend. The only real danger in opening eleven counts, or for that matter nine counts, arises when partner gets too excited because he knows he is facing a twelve count, and makes allowance for the possibility of a nineteen count. In a futuristic one club which promised a fourteen count, responder would have seven or eight points to respond to a bid of one of a suit, and might pass nine or ten. Needless to say, if there was an immediate fit he would bid it to its full extent immediately. So 1H 3H might show a nine card fit and perhaps no more than 15-16 points

The chief drawback of devaluing the strong 1C bid is that it widens the range of the negative response. In Blue the 1C was eighteen flat, or seventeen unbalanced. The negative response was 0-5 points. In Precision 1C was 16+ and the negative was 0-7. In the "futuristic" club of 14+ points the negative would have to be two points more than in Precision, 0-9. In fact 0-10 would be more sensible, for 14+ opposite 10+ is throwing points away on a misfitting hand. The negative

range of 0-10 points is too wide for comfort and would be the price to pay for getting in to the auction with less than traditional opening bid values. Even so getting first bite at the cherry on hands in the most common range of range 9-11 would almost certainly be a winning action in the long run, in spite of a loss of accuracy on the big hands.

### **The Opening Bid of 1NT**

Next to the 1C opening bid the 1NT bid is the hallmark of the system. There are several possibilities. In Vienna, and in John Cullingworth's Chaos, 1NT was a strong artificial bid. In the Roman Club, the opening bid of 2C was a limited three suiter. If instead 1NT is used to show that hand, it is surprising how much one notch in the bidding can improve the efficiency of the convention. Many players are pleased with the results that they get from a mini no trump of 10-12 points. This mini no trump proves that the bid of 1NT is not an essential part of a bidding system, for 1NT has been taken out of the normal structure of the bidding and is used to describe a hand which would normally pass. The original argument for the weak no trump, 12-14 or 13-15, was that it solved the problem of a minimum hand that had no convenient rebid. That reasoning still applies. The modern fashion is for five card majors and a strong no trump, but playing a one club system where any sixteen count opens 1C, a weak no trump is obvious

### **The Other One Bids**

In a competitive auction the advantage lies with the side which is first to discover its fit. The way to do that is to open 1C, 1D, 1H and 1S as natural as possible showing at least four cards. It may be necessary to open 1C as a strong bid or a prepared bid, and 1D as a prepared bid. The proponents of these bids would hotly defend them on the grounds that "they work". No doubt they confer advantages in other areas of the system. No-one said they didn't work. They are not ideal

### **Summary of the Opening One Bids**

1C	-	16+ points
1D	-	11-15 4+diamonds
1H	-	11-15 4+ hearts
1S	-	11-15 4+ spades
1NT	-	12-15 not a five card major or 4-4 in both majors. A twelve count should usually prefer one of a suit, and if the only suit is clubs the hand has no right to be bidding with a twelve count

## The Theory of Opening Two Bids

In many systems the opening two bids, with the exception of 2C, are not needed in the basic structure of the bidding. The bids of 2D, 2H, and 2S are available for interpretation. People often use the two level bids destructively. The following was a recent hand from play

Game All Dealer East

	KJ85	
	Q6	
	J4	
	AQ1094	
---		10732
J10842		A9753
A10765		K98
K87		3
	AQ964	
	K	
	Q32	
	J652	

In one room South opened 1S, and they played in 4S. In the other room however this was the bidding.

W	N	E	S
		2D	Dble
4H	5C	All pass	

The contract was three down with two spade ruffs

The bid of 2D showed 5-9 points with 4-4 or better in the majors. This is extremely difficult to play against. It is like shooting fish in a barrel or bunnies in a hutch, there is not much that they can do about it. Double is not necessarily the best action on the South hand, but West is going to bid 4H anyway. North must have been tempted to double if partner has opening values, but double only increases the loss

The deal illustrates destructive bids at their most successful, also something mentioned earlier, the necessity of finding a fit before the opponents find theirs.

There is more than one candidate for the honour of opening 2D. A weak two in diamonds is common but strikes fear into the hearts of few. 2D Multi is also common and has the advantage of releasing 2H and 2S for interpretation other than weak twos. If a Multi 2D has too many options it is vulnerable to intervention, even a weak 2S bid might throw a spanner in the works. In practice the response of 2H to Multi becomes a more or less compulsory relay, effectively neither player knows what is going on until the second round. Shrewd opponents will take liberties. These objections do not apply to 2D Wagner, which is a weak two in a major. If the next hand chips in with three of a minor, responder bids 3H saying pass or correct. In fact partner does this with or without the intervention, and it is the defending side that does not know the value of its assets because the bid of 3H could have been pre-emptive or sound, all it really promises is three cards in each major. Fourth hand does not even know what the opponents' suit is

### The Opening Bids of 2H, and 2S

As with 2D there are many possible definitions of the bids of 2H and 2S. A decision must be taken whether the bids are to be destructive or constructive. A destructive bid may be as silly as 2H, a four card suit with any other four card suit and very few points. Although it has fallen out of fashion an Acol Two was constructive in that it solved a type of hand which did not fit anywhere else in the system. On frequency of occurrence it has been replaced by weak twos, which are effective but contribute nothing to the rest of the system.

“Constructive twos” are two suited opening bids, with the values for an opening bid measured in terms of losers, a hand such as this

Hand A	KJ973
	8
	6
	KQ10872

is a perfectly acceptable bid of 2S. Many modern players would open this 1C. They will be very sorry when partner stretches to bid 3NT on nine red cards, or if he doubles the opponents only to find that opener has no defensive trick. In fact this hand has no defence to seven of a red suit.

Two suited hand should be removed from the rest of the bidding structure. Their evaluation is different. If responder holds a hand such as

654
AQJ95
KJ5
74

in response to one of a black suit this is a very good hand, but in response to 2S it is a bad hand. What is more, as a result of constructive twos the opening one bids cannot be more unbalanced than 6430

Hand B	AK653
	Q4
	5
	AQ972

It seems strange that both hand A and hand B open 2S. As far as partner is concerned they are both five loser hands if there is a fit. He bids his hand the same way. Only opponents are interested in distinguishing between A and B

### The Opening Bid of 2C

This has to be natural in a one club system. In Precision 2C shows two types of hand, either a single suited six card club suit in the range of 11-15, or a five card club suit with a four card major and 12-15 points. The average responding hand will have about nine points with a doubleton club and a four card major. This is precisely the hand where it can be wrong to bid or wrong to pass. Any accurately described bid makes life easy for partner. Our 2C bid is a single suited hand with six clubs.

Canape to the average Englishman smacks of snails and horsemeat and he will have nothing to do with it. For us the correct opening bid with five clubs and a four card is one of the major suit. It is more important not to lose a 4-4 major fit than a 5-3 minor fit, and to find the fit straightaway is vital in competitive bidding. A problem arises with a sequence such as 1H 1S 2C. Is it canapé or not? This is a dilemma similar to whether to finesse or play for the drop missing four trumps to the Queen. In fact the odds are on the drop by twenty-five to twenty-four, so close that it saves wear and tear on the nerves to do the same thing all the time unless there is an indication to the contrary.

Consider this hand

9
AJ865
Q106
KQ98

It opens 1H and over 1S should rebid 1NT, partner should not suppose that 1NT is a guarantee of two cards in spades. Now change the hearts and clubs round, the opening bid is still 1H but over 1S the correct rebid is 2C. There could be a 5-5 club fit and declarer is going two down in 1NT. Consequently the rebid in clubs is more likely to be canapé than not. If responder has equal length in the two suits

either 2-2 or 3-3, he should pass with 2-2.. With 3-3 and a minimum response, pass; with a sound response, correct to the major

Rather than sweeping it under the carpet let us admit that six clubs and four of a major is not ideal for the system. If the clubs are weak open the major, if the major is weak open the clubs. So we cannot distinguish between five and six club. In some versions of Acol an opening bid of 1C could be 2-7 clubs, and in Precision, 1D shows 1-7 diamonds

### Summary of the Opening Two Bids

2C	-	11-15 points, single suited clubs
2D	-	6-10 points, a six card major
2H	-	9-15 points, 5-5 or better in hearts and another.
2S	-	9-15 points, 5-5 or better in spades and a minor
2NT	-	9-15 points, 5-5 or better in the minors

With 5-5 in the majors the correct bid is 2H to find a major suit fit at the two level. This is the way the Poles play it

### Responder's First Bid

#### The Responses to 1C

Control responses, natural positives, and point count responses all have their merit, and produce very different final products. In Blue 1C 1H was a semi-positive showing 6+ points, and denying three controls. There were complicated rules as to when the bidding could be dropped short of game. 1C could be seventeen to umpty points and the response of 1H was six to sixteen, in practice both players kept bidding just in case partner had a bit extra. In Precision 1C 1H was game forcing but opener had sixteen to umpty, and responder had eight to umpty. When both players are unlimited problems arise. The easiest and the most efficient responses are point count. Using these players know the potential of the hand early on in the bidding, and there is always one hand that is limited with the result that his partner controls the bidding. All the possibilities have been tried, the following scheme is as good as any other

1C (16+)

1D	-	0-6 points
1H	-	7-8 points
1S	-	9+ points
1NT thru 2S	-	golden negatives 5-6 points

No competent player adheres religiously to point count. With 5-5 in the majors and a six count the response should probably be 1H. Similarly a 4333 nine count with a four card minor is not worth 1S. Err towards underbidding (a strange concept in tournament bridge). Make a semi positive and there is always the option of bidding more if the bidding takes a favourable turn (a suit fit). Give a game force and there is no way on going back on it when there is no fit.

It has already been suggested that a negative of 0-7 is uncomfortable. So is 0-6. We go on to subdivide the negative into 0-4 and 5-6

1C            1D  
1H -            20+ points asks for clarification, 1S being 0-4 and anything else is natural showing 5-6 points. Any rebid other than 1H ( 1S thru' 2H) shows 16-19, whereafter bidding is freewheeling, bidding on with a fit or the chance of finding one

1C            1H  
1S            Asking for clarification similar as above. This next-suit-up bid of 1S is strong and conventional, game forcing and showing 18+ points. Any other rebid ( 1NT thru' 2S) shows 16-17 and can be passed with an unexciting seven count

1C            1S  
1NT            Yet again this next suit up is a strong conventional bid asking for range 2C = 9-11 ; 2D = 11-13 ; 2H = 13-15

The bid of 1NT guaranteed nineteen points or more. With 16-18 points opener makes a natural bid (2C thru' 2NT), in which case opener is limited and responder knows how far to go

### The Scale of No Trump Bids

1NT	-	13-15	
1C 1D 1NT	-	16-19	
1C 1H 1NT	-	16-17	
1C 1S 2NT	-	16-18	
1C 1D 1H 1S 1NT	-	20-21	(a)
1C 1D 2NT	-	22-23	(b)
1C 1D 1H 1S 2NT	-	24-25	(c)

The reasoning behind these bids is explained above, but it is convenient to have the results tabulated. With (a) the common 20-21 count the bidding can stop in 1NT or responder can bid 2C Gladiator and play in two of a suit. With the big no trump bids the ranges are restricted to two points only. Going no further than



2NT allows a Stayman enquiry. The difference between (b) and (c) is the principle of fast arrival.

### Slams in clubs

In books on slam bidding 60% of the slams are in spades, 30% are in hearts and perhaps 10% are in a minor. Elegant methods to arrive in 6S struggle to cope if the trump suit is clubs. It would be interesting to turn the hand upside down, changing the spades for clubs and the hearts for diamonds and see how well the recommended system works. There are two reasons why slams in clubs are difficult to bid. Bids in clubs are often used purely conventionally, Gladiator Stayman, Baron, Crowhurst and Gerber, etc, all use club bids conventionally. With five card majors there has to be some sort of prepared minor suit opening. Consequently bidding clubs naturally to find a fit for a slam is unusual. Secondly most pairs rely heavily on some sort of Blackwood enquiry for slam bidding, and unfortunately 4NT with clubs agreed as trumps is totally useless, and not much better with diamonds agreed.

### Responding to 1D

The same problem can occur with diamond suits if the bid of 1D is not natural. In a one club system the bid of 1D can be natural, it must not act as a sump to collect hands which do not fit elsewhere. Responses follow standard one over one principles with the exception of 2D. This is forcing and guarantees the values for 2NT or 3D. There is no top limit it could be the first move in the investigation of a grand slam. The 4-4 diamond fit comes to light immediately. With a minimum hand opener has the option of bidding 3D which could be passed, as could 2NT. The question arises as to the interpretation of 2H, 2S, and 3C, which, by definition, are positive moves. Bidding stops for no trumps is not the best treatment. Not only does it suggest to the opponents what they should lead, but if there is a suit of Jxx opposite xxx, the alternative of 5D is not likely to be a good contract. With the appropriate point count 1D 2D 3NT is a perfectly good sequence leaving the opponents to choose between three suits. It isn't much different to 1NT 3NT except it tells them not to lead diamonds, which they weren't going to do anyway. The hands below illustrate the best treatment

K84  
8  
KJ875  
AJ83

J92  
AQ7  
AQ1062  
K6

8  
K84  
KJ875  
AJ83

Responder has the hand in the middle, opener has either the hand on the left or the hand on the right. When opener has the “right” singleton a slam is lay-down. When it is the “wrong” shortage, 3NT is quite enough. Opener’s rebids of 2H, 2S and 3C are shortages

-	J92
KJ84	AQ7
KJ875	AQ1062
AJ83	K6

A combined twenty-nine count and a grand is rigid. Whenever any bid has shown a shortage to rebid that suit confirms a void

### Responding to 2D

The responses to 2D, Wagner, need explanation. They are constructed in such a way that the known hand nearly always goes down on the table

2D ?

2H - Pass or correct. If opener does correct, responder might go on with a spade fit

2S - This may be a good hand in support of hearts, but it does not have to be. Basically it shows three or more cards in hearts, and a desire to compete to at least 3H. The responses are arranged so that the known hand goes down in dummy. Pass is a weak two in spades. If opener has hearts he must indicate whether he is minimum or maximum, responder may be interested in game, but does not have to be

2D 2S

? If responder has a hand as strong as

8  
K987  
AQ1076  
K32

he bids 2S expecting to play it, but if by chance opener has hearts, responder wants to know if partner is minimum or maximum. It is still correct to bid 2S without the diamond honours, in which case 2S is a pre-emptive measure which also makes it more difficult to double 2S for penalties

So	3C	-	weak in hearts
	3D	-	strong in hearts

With the result that responder plays the hand either in game or a part score, his bid is terminal

2NT – This is a genuine game try which promises a game if partner has a maximum hand the responses are

3C – minimum in hearts

3D – minimum in spades

3H – maximum in SPADES

3S – maximum in HEARTS

Again spades and hearts are reversed so that the known hand goes down in dummy

3H, 3S - These are pre-emptive bids saying pass or correct. 3H will have three cards in each major; 3S will have three cards in spades and four in hearts

4C – This shows four card in each major it may be pre-emptive or sound. Opener rebids the suit below his, 4D for hearts and 4H for spades. Responder corrects and plays the hand.

2D 2NT

?

3C - weak in hearts

3D - weak in spades

3H - strong in SPADES

3S - strong in HEARTS

2D 4C

?

4D - hearts

4H - spades

## Transfers

### Responses to 1H and 1S

Transfers in response to 1NT are universally popular. It is sometimes argued that transfers protect opener's tenaces. That is not the reason for transfers, responder has tenaces as well. Transfers increase the vocabulary of bidding. Without transfers 1NT 2H means "let me play in 2H", end of story. But if 2D means "please bid 2H" responder can pass with the weak hand. He can follow the 2D bid by 2NT offering the choice of pass, 3H, 3NT and 4H so that opener can select the best game or part score. Thirdly responder can use the 2D transfer as the start of slam bidding. All of this for the loss of a weakness take out into diamonds. What is more if transfer breaking is allowed, there is another vast range of possible sequences for interpretation.

The opening bid has to be limited before transfers can be used in response. If the opening bid of 1H describes anything between a four card suit in a nineteen count, and 6-5 in the majors with an eleven count, responder cannot bid 2C as a transfer asking opener to bid 2D. Opener won't do it. The idea is ridiculous.

In the proposed one club system the opening bids of 1H, 1S, and 2C are limit bids, they cannot be two suiters and they cannot hold more than fifteen points. The most unbalanced hand pattern is 6430. Transfer responses function easily, and just as with transfers over 1NT the bidding vocabulary is increased tenfold. The cost of these transfers is the loss of 1NT in reply to a major, and 2D in response to 2C. 2D is going to be a conventional bid in reply to 2C anyway, and many one club systems play 1NT as forcing in reply to an opening of one of a major. As with transfers over 1NT, not much has been lost.

The rebids after a transfer are counter instinctive. The principle is to complete the transfer if you don't like it and break the transfer if you do

Deal A	AJ762	9
	KQ96	J53
	K105	742
	8	AJ9754

This hand opens 1S and if partner bids 1NT, which is a transfer to clubs, the correct rebid is 2C. Just as 1NT 2D might be a weakness take out into hearts, so 1S 1NT might be a weakness take out into clubs

Deal B	AJ762	9
	KQ96	J53
	8	742
	K105	AJ9754

Here opener breaks the transfer to clubs because he likes them. He rebids 2H which shows five spades, four hearts and three clubs

Notice the difference between the fit and the misfit. With A/ 2C is a good contract; with B/ 5C is playable. Playing standard methods 2H is probably the contract on both A and B

### Rebids after a transfer

1H    1NT  
?

Responder shows four or more clubs. Opener indicates his suitability in clubs. A distinction is made between no support or secondary support, Hxx, and primary support, Hxxx

### Secondary Support

2C This is the rebid on all hands which have no support for clubs. It could also be 12-13 points with four clubs and four hearts, where there is no game unless partner is going on over 2C

2D five hearts, four diamonds and three clubs

2H six hearts and not four clubs

2S similar to 2D above, five hearts four spades and three clubs

### Primary support

2NT 14-15 points with primary club support, not necessarily flat it could be a thirteen count with compensating values

3C a losing count raise to 4C if responder was showing eleven points, which he wasn't. Sensibly it stays below the level of 3NT

3D this is a splinter. All jumps throughout the system are splinters unless defined otherwise, Since the opening bid is limited to fifteen points and responder may only have five or six points, this bid of 3D may well have a void diamond

3H six hearts and four clubs

3S as 3D above

### **Responder's second bid**

These are logical and as natural as is possible

**1H 1NT**

**2C ?**

Pass - weakness take out with six clubs  
2D - a second suit and invitational values opener's rebids of 2H and 2NT can be passed

2H - a natural bid with 8-10 points and three card heart support

2S - a second suit, game invitation

2NT - natural, could be passed. This sequence denies three card support for partner's suit. That would have bid an immediate 2NT

3C - this has to be game forcing, a single suited hand with six clubs

3H - This also, is game forcing. It shows three card heart support, because with four card support the correct first response would have been 2D, as explained later

3NT - to play, and not three cards in hearts which would have bid an immediate 3NT

Continuations are natural and obvious except for the fourth suit.

1H 1NT 2D 2S ? Effectively this is fourth suit, hearts clubs and diamonds having been bid. Clearly responder wants to know more about his partner's hand. He already knows that his partner has five hearts, four diamonds, three clubs and a shortage in spades with 12-15 points. What more would he want to know? It must be whether partner is 12-13 or 14-15 and whether the shortage in spades is a singleton or a void. So the responses are Min sing, max sing, min void max void.

1H 1NT 2C 3H ? 3H shows three card heart support. With four card support responder would start with 2D.

Opener bids 3NT with only four hearts. With five hearts he bids 4H on minimum values and an advance cue bid with a maximum hand

1H 1NT 2C 3C ? In principle after a forcing bid of three of a minor the partnership must have half an eye on 3NT. If opener has a small doubleton club or a singleton, he knows 5C is not a good contract, and signs off in 3NT. Where else is there to go? A continuation of 3D or 3S would carry the message of club tolerance and a stop in the named suit, and probably no stop in the other unbid suit, It offers partner the choice of 3NT or 5C, or even 6C if he is so inclined

### **Responder has diamonds**

1H	2C	or	1S	2C
?			?	

rebids follow the pattern shown above

### **Responder has hearts**

1S	2D
?	

This is slightly different. In any system the response in a minor would show at least four cards in the suit, but the response of 2H would guarantee five cards. .

The transfers of 1NT and 2C may be a means of developing the hand, whereas the response of 2D showing hearts is a genuine attempt to play in that suit. This is a basic principle

2H no particular liking for hearts, but it could be 12-13 points with three small hearts, where there is no game unless partner is going on over 2H

2S six spades and not four hearts

2NT Primary heart support in a minimum hand

3C,3D natural bids with rebiddable spades and primary heart support, consequently a shortage in the unbid suit. Since primary support in hearts is either three or four cards 1S 2D 3D can be 5431 or 5341 The supposed diamond suit might be a fragment rather than four cards. This does not matter, because if there is a heart fit the hand is not going to be played in a minor.

A simple way of looking at the problem is that bidding a third suit always shows primary support for partner's suit, (three cards in the case of hearts) and a shortage in the unbid suit. In reality the third suit is a zany splinter when supporting partner's hearts, but a possible trump fit when responder's suit is a minor.

3S six spades and four hearts

### Transfer to partner's major

A/ K1085  
972  
Q876  
54

B/ K1085  
Q72  
Q876  
54

C/ K1085  
K72  
Q876  
J4

D/ KJ1085  
1087  
J62  
Q5

E/ K10852  
1087  
Q62  
A5

F/ K10852  
Q87  
Q62  
A5

Partner opens 1S. If responder were allowed to make a bid and comment on that bid. These might be the comments he would make

A/ I have spade support but I am not really worth a bid. If they bid 4H sacrifice if you have a six card spade suit. At green even three off doubled would be a good result

B/ I have a sound 2S bid

C/ My hand is worth two and a half spades, I could be wrong to bid either 2S or 3S

D/ This is a pre-emptive raise to 3S to keep them out, it is not a game try

E/ I have a minimum high card raise to 3S. When in doubt, pass

F/ 3S, but I am full strength, bid the game when in doubt

Playing transfers all of these inferences can be passed across the table.

A and B/ These are courtesy raises, allowing partner to continue competing if he has five spades, or sacrificing if he has six. We do not expect the hand to belong to us, unless they stay quiet. Bid 2S

C/ this is a two and a half spade bid, partner is allowed to retreat to 2S with minimum values Bid 2D. This is effectively a game try at the two level

D/ this is an obstructive raise to 3S, expecting to go one off in a good cause Bid 3S

E/ If a raise to 3S is passed there is no guarantee that it will make. If both opponents have already passed, bid 2H and pass 2S. Otherwise this is a sound raise to 3H

F/ This is worth about three and a half spades, Bid 2H, partner will bid 2S without much to spare. A raise to 3S will now show this hand, telling partner to bid the game with any sound opening bid

## 1S 2H

?

This response guarantees primary support and any hand worth two and a half to seven spades. Game tries are made at the two level, and slam tries also start at the two level. These are opener's rebids.

2S - A minimum hand with little to spare. Partner's two and a half spade bid will be on 8-10 in terms of points, and a flat fifteen count would be unlikely to produce game unless both trumps and a side suit were good

AQ93

A8

872

KQ106

is worth a rebid of 3C

A932

A8

QJ8

KJ65

Is only worth a rebid of 2S

2NT - no side suit worth showing but better than minimum

QJ1065

AK8

AJ6

72

A seven loser hand but a good one, worth 2NT



AJ962      The reason for bidding 3C on a previous hand  
 105            was to ask for help in clubs. The Jack of clubs  
 AKQ7        would have been gold dust, a red suit Jack waste  
 106            paper. The diamond suit does not want help,  
 responder wants a ten count rather than an eight count.    If they want to lead  
 diamonds who are we to discourage them

In the next two hands both opener and responder show side suits. This is to judge how well the hands fit

1/	AQ872	K965
	K1065	Q93
	A6	742
	87	A106

	1S	2H (a)
	3H(b)	4S (c)

- (a) - No ruffing values but the middle of the range in high cards
- (b) - A six loser hand with good trumps, 2S would be an underbid
- (c) - Reverse the red suits and it is only worth 3S

2/	A10542	Q976 (a)
	A8 (b)	KJ92 (c)
	Q76 (d)	J3
	Q104	A72

	1S	2H
	2S	3H
	3S	Pass

- (a) - A full strength raise to 3S
- (b) - No game opposite a flat 8-10 points
- (c) - Interested in game despite partner's near minimum
- (d) - Minor honours in two outside suits. If partner had shown a minor suit, 4S would have been worth a shot

### Transfers in Response to 2C

The transfers over an opening bid of 2C are quite different to transfers over one of a major. The logic is different. The opening bid of one of a major

promises four cards. In contrast the opening bid of 2C shows a six card suit. Players do not like being rescued from their six card suits. Partner should have at least game invitational values to respond. In the Blue Club a response of 2H was “a non-forcing response on about 6-11 points” Their 2C bid could be sixteen points, a point more than ours. It could also be a very good hand, and it could hold a major suit A huge hand, quoted in the book as a 2C bid was

AJxxx  
x  
x  
AKQxxx

This is far too strong for us. It is a 2S opening and a super maximum one at that. 1C could be a better opening bid than 2C. Kxxx in spades is enough for game.

Since the top limit of our 2C bid is lower than in Blue we have a minimum of eight points to respond. A transfer response to 2C is a genuine game try. After a response of 2D, showing hearts, opener’s first duty is to indicate his suitability in hearts. With a singleton heart the rebids are 3C minimum, and 2NT maximum ; with a doubleton heart, opener completes the transfer to 2H, prepared to play there but with no great enthusiasm. But with a maximum hand and a doubleton heart he would prefer to rebid 2NT. With three card heart support opener will usually show it. But with three small hearts in a minimum hand he might well feel that “prepared to play there but with no great enthusiasm” is the most apt description of his hand.

6  
7  
AJ107  
A1087632

2C            2D  
3C

Opener is far too strong to open 3C. He hopes to be allowed to play 3C

K75  
Q2  
K5  
AQ10654

2C            2D  
2NT

This hand is far too strong to rebid 2H, which is effectively a sign off, the sort of hand which would have passed a natural invitational response of 2H

Q2	
1085	
K5	
AQ10963	
2C	2D
2H	

Queen doubleton in an outside suit is potentially wasted. 2H is quite enough

Primary support of partner's suit is Hxx. A 2326 shape such as

K4
Q107
J9
AKJ954

should rebid 3H.

With primary support opener should always show an outside singleton if he has one, even on a minimum hand. If the singleton gives a perfect fit there can be a game on a very low point count

K86	Q107
Q85	AJ1052
9	765
AK10832	J7

All the cards in each hand are working hard, and there is a game on a combined twenty count.

Showing the singleton follows the principle outlined above, namely the third suit shows a shortage in the fourth suit. So the hand above would start

2C	2D
2S	?

Every single card in responder's hand is working overtime and responder knows that. He should bid 4H. If responder does bid only 3H opener must pass with this minimum hand.

Take another hand

KQ2  
5  
A94  
AQ10873

2C 2H ? This hand is worth game in spades, but it is most unhelpful to bid it straightaway if partner is interested in a slam. Show the shortage and raise to game even if partner signs off

## Two suiters

### Responding to 2H and 2S

Often 2H and 2S are employed as aggressive bids on hands lacking the requirements for an opening bid. 2NT then asks for the other suit, which might be raised, but there is no constructive bidding.

For us the bids of 2H and 2S cover the range of opening bids, and, as explained above, they also include some nine, or even eight counts which have compensating distributional value which give them the playing strength of an opening bid. A simple response of 2NT will not suffice. The response of 2NT has to be a genuine game try, so that opener with a maximum hand can accept game by rebidding at the four level in a minor, and the simple rebid of three of a minor would be a minimum hand which responder might pass

A response of 2NT will guarantee two useful cards. Minor honours in outside suits are probably wasted

2S 3S - a mild game try with three card support, or pre-emptive with four card support. Opener should bid game only with four losers

2S 2NT  
3m 3S - a sound game try, opener can pass on a minimum.

Consider this hand

K987  
Q1076  
A4  
Q84

Partner opens 2S . What should this hand bid? Partner promises six to four losers. The Queen of hearts is of no value, since partner is known to hold spades and a minor. If partner's second suit is clubs the Queen covers one of his losers, and responder has three valuable cards. But if his second suit is diamonds, the Queen of clubs is wasted. Bid 2NT and raise 3C to 4S , but if partner bids rebids 3D, 3S is enough a sound game try

When responder does not have enough to make a game try he responds on Multi principles

6  
KJ65  
AQ1032  
J65

This is a good example of why two suiters should be removed from the rest of the bidding structure. If partner opens 1S the hand is worth a game invitation. But if he opens 2S, this is a poor hand. Partner's second suit is probably clubs in which case the minor honours in the red suits are wasted. Responder bids 3C saying pass or correct. If by any chance partner does correct to diamonds, the hand is worth a raise to 4D.

6  
KJ65  
J65  
AQ1032

This hand wants to make a sign off in diamonds and a game try in clubs. The response of 3D shows precisely that. If opener has a maximum with clubs he must bid 5C, because the bid of 3D showed the values for 4C

This hand raises another issue. If opener has a maximum 2S bid he is expected to rebid 4m over the game try of 2NT. What if he opens 2H and has a spade suit? To bid 4S with a maximum and a spade suit would not be very clever if responder was making a sound game try in hearts. Fortunately there is a simple solution. The rebid of 3H is idle. Over 2NT 3H can show a minimum hand with spades, and 3S shows a maximum.

Another problem is slam going hands. They start with 2NT to find the other suit, and might then want to ask for controls. The unbid suits are ciphers for controls. The most economical sequence will be 2S 2NT 3C. Now 3D asks for controls in clubs and 3H asks for controls in spades, the higher rank for the higher suit. The least economical sequence is 2H 2NT 4D. 4S will ask for controls in diamonds and 4NT for controls in hearts.

The constructive two has six to four losers. If a hand has only three losers, or 16+ points, it is too strong to open one of these constructive twos. It must open 1C  
A hand such as

8  
AQJ65  
AKQ964  
7

is too good to open 2H. Even with a hand as weak as

J965  
1082  
J7  
9653

There is a good game, but a nominally stronger hand such as

Q9652  
8  
83  
QJ432

has very poor prospects of game. To find out if partner has 5-6 points does not solve the hand. The answer is to employ the idle rebids of 2S, 3C, 3D, and 3H to describe two-suited hands which can make game with one valuable card

1C 1D

2S - spades and a minor  
3C - clubs and hearts  
3D - diamonds and hearts  
3H - hearts and spades

These bids are not game forcing, but partner needs very little of the right stuff to make game.

It is possible that opener could really have "Game in his own hand" This was a hand which occurred recently

A / AJ9xxx / AKQxxx / -                      xxxx / Kxx / x / xxxxx

The bidding was 1C 1D 3D 4H 6H    3D was not forcing, opener would have been very disappointed to be left there, and we concluded that a better sequence would have been

1C 1D 4D 5H 6H

As a result of this hand we added another tier to the two suited bids

1C 1D ?	
3S -	spades and a minor
3NT -	the minors
4C -	clubs and hearts
4D -	diamonds and hearts
4H -	hearts and spades

With the exception of 3NT where responder will bid 5D if he can, these bids are game forcing. The sequences 1C 1D 4H and 1C 1D 3NT not sound like two-suiters. The rule is all immediate jumps over 1C 1D are two suiters with the exception of 1C 1D 2NT which shows a flat 22-23 and also 1C 1D 2H which is a natural minimum because 1H is conventional.

Without any agreement to the contrary 1C 1D 3NT or 4H might describe hands such as

A9		A9
AKQ976	or	AKQ7654
AK5		AK5
K10		10

The rule was “all immediate jumps” are two suiters. Here when a natural meaning is required, opener must take the slow road

1C 1D 1H any 3NT/4H

All of these jump rebids to show two suiters are equally applicable if partner has six points or eight. So they apply after a response of 1H as well as 1D

### Responding to 2NT

3C and 3D are negative responses and may be very weak. Responder would like to have an invitational bid of four of a minor and also a forcing bid of four of a minor. This is achieved by using the response of 3H as a compulsory transfer to 3S. Then a follow up of 3NT shows a six card heart suit and asks partner to choose between 4H and 3NT. A follow up of four of a minor is forcing and a control ask in that suit. This leaves the immediate bids of 4C and 4D as invitational

## Splinters

### Universal splinters

Some splinters have already been shown. 1D 2D 2S is a splinter. 1S 1NT 2H is a splinter showing a shortage in diamonds. One way of evaluating the strength of any bidding system is its ability to incorporate splinters as often as possible.

Any unnecessary jump is a splinter

1C 1S 1NT 2C 2S 4D

Opener has shown 19+ points with five spades, he is unlimited. Responder has shown 9-11 points with primary spade support and a shortage in diamonds. Slam will depend on the wastage in the splinter suit. If there is a perfect fit in the splinter suit the slam will be good on a combined twenty-eight count. A perfect fit is either three small opposite a small singleton in which case the opponents have ten points to take one trick and a further two points to try and take another, or Axx opposite x where the opponents have six points wasted, and another six with which to take two tricks. Twenty-five and thirty-four are the magic figures for no trump contracts. Twenty-eight is the magic figure for a splinter slam

Opener must discount any minor honours in a splinter suit. AKQx opposite a splinter is hideous duplication of values, which is bound to entail a duplication of losers. With AQxx when partner splinters, the Queen is a wasted value which is required elsewhere. KJxx opposite a singleton will be wasted values, those four points in the other suits would be invaluable.

Hands can be constructed where it is helpful to splinter on a singleton Ace, but in principle it is bad technique. A splinter tells partner to devalue any minor honours in that suit. Both KQx and Kxx are poor holdings opposite a splinter. But if the splinter is a singleton Ace they are full value. More often than not splintering on a singleton Ace will make partner misvalue his holdings

1H 1S 3D is a splinter. In the modern tournament world with a hand midway between a 2S bid and a 3S bid, 3S will always be the bid chosen. There is far more justification for overbidding if a player can be specific about his holdings. That is where a splinter comes in.

Hand A	J874	Hand B	KJ87
	AK53		AQJ53
	7		7
	KJ92		Q96

Both these hands are satisfactory opening bids of 1H. If partner responds 1S there is no excuse for bidding anything else but 2S on hand A. Hand B, however, is worth two and a half spades, the trumps are good, there is a suit which has the potential to run, and there are only six losers. This is a perfectly good splinter to 3D



Hand C	A9653	Hand D	A9653
	108		108
	872		K842
	K842		872

These two hands illustrate the value of a splinter, Hand C opposite B gives a good game on a combined twenty count. In hand D the king of diamonds is wasted

### Splinters by responder

Jump bids in reply to one of a major are the most common splinters. A double jump is a game try, for example 1H 3C. The triple jump, such as 1H 4D is a slam try guaranteeing at least fourteen points. If partner has a maximum opening bid of 14-15, with no wastage in the splinter suit, a slam will be an excellent proposition. A game try splinter shows 8-14 points. The upper end of that range will go on in the face of a sign off.

An opening bid shows 11-15 points. When partner splinters, all minor honours in that suit must be discounted. That leaves the “residual point count”

AQ4		
KQ732		
765	1H	4D
A6	?	

Here there is nothing at all wasted. The residual point count is fifteen, and partner promises fourteen points. The slam must be lay down. The technique on this hand is to cipher in spades, normally a control, but it does not have to be. Partner’s first duty is to repeat cue if he has a void. In that happy event the grand is lay down

A1076  
Q876  
KQ4  
Q6

This hand could open 1NT. Better technique is to open 1H and pick up a possible 4-4 major fit

1H	4D
?	

This is as bad as it gets. The trumps are weak and the residual count is eight. Sign off and sign off again if partner goes on above game.

Residual point counts, as shown above can vary between eight and fifteen.

The sequence where there is most room for manoeuvre is 1S 4C

- 1/ With 8-9 points (residual count) sign off in 4S and if partner continues sign off in 5S
- 2/ With 10-11 points sign off in 4S. If he continues, go to slam because he knows you are 10-11 at best
- 3/ With 12-13 cipher with 4D but pass 4S, he wanted a super maximum
- 4/ With 14-15 cipher with 4D and keep going to a slam there might be a grand.

A sequence where there is no room for manoeuvre is  
Either 1S 4H or 1H 4D

1S                      4H  
?

- 1/ With 8-9 points sign off in 4S and sign off again in 5S
- 2/ With 10-11 points sign off in 4S but accept if partner tries again
- 3/ With 12-13 points cipher above game but pass 5S by partner
- 4/ With 14-15 cipher above game and keep going

Examples

1/                      K108543  
                            AK107  
                            A87  
                            -  
                            1S                      3D  
                            ?

Partner might only have eight points, but a slam must be good

2/                      K98  
                            AQ976  
                            A1054  
                            8

1H                      2S  
?

This is not a splinter it is a weak two in spades., as is 1D 2H and 1D 2S.  
Raise to 3S. He is bidding on 6-10 points and 3S might be enough

3/            Q32  
               J  
               AJ7654  
               A52

1D            2D  
 2H            2S  
 ?

Partner is in control of this auction, but this hand must co-operate with a bid of 3C

4/            53  
               AQ7  
               106  
               KQ10872

2C            3H  
 ?

Absolutely no interest in a slam bid 3NT. This splinter should be treated as game going, it is too unreal to stop on a pinhead in 4C

5/            7  
               K965  
               K87  
               AQ1065

1H            4D  
 4H            4S  
 ?

The club suit looks attractive, it might run, and they might lead a club against 6H. But partner has not rebid 5D, there is a diamond loser and a heart loser is all too likely, bid 5H

6/            K97  
               K10876  
               AQ9  
               107

1H            4D  
 4H            4S  
 ?

A residual count of ten and partner knows this hand has less than twelve points. Accept, the fifth trump makes it worth while.

## Other conventions

### Canape in the majors

In some systems a strong hand with a minor suit shows the suit for the first time at the three level. This may not matter if it is a one suited hand, partner can bid a five card major and there may be a fit. But if opener is 5-4 ,or 6-4 with a major suit, the 4-4 major fit may be lost.

1C	1S	1C	1H	1C	1D
2C		1S	2C	1H	1NT
		2D		2C	

There is more bidding space in a one club system, and in all of these sequences two of a minor is game forcing. The first sequence is perhaps the most common

1C	1S
2C	?

Responder bids major suits “up the line”. The bid of 2H shows four or more hearts, 2S by opener then denies a heart suit and shows four or more spades. Over 2H opener raises with four card support, bids spades with four or more, or bids 3C or 2NT with no major

1C	1S	
2C	2H	
2NT	3H	
etc		Opener denies four spades. Responder shows

rebiddable hearts

1C	1S	
2C	2H	
2S	3H	
3S	etc	Responder has rebiddable hearts, opener has rebiddable

spades

1C	1S	
2C	2S	
3C	3H	
etc		Responder has denied hearts with the 2S bid, and now

he is bidding them. This is the sequence to show 5-5 in the majors

Q2	AJ765
74	AQ1083
AK8	Q8
AQJ1085	3

1C	1S
2C	2S
3C	3H
3NT	4NT
Pass	

AQ6	KJ54
64	KQ87
AKQ1065	93
AQ	K87

1C	1S
1NT (a)	2D (b)
3D	3H
6NT	Pass

three level

(a) - Asks for strength, content to bid diamonds at the

(b) - 11-13 points

AK87	J543
KJ7	A864
-	K105
AK8765	42

1C	1H (a)
1S(b)	1NT
2C	2H
2S	3S
4S	Pass

(a) - 7-8 points

(b) - artificial game force

## Blackwood in a minor

Blackwood with clubs as trumps is useless and in diamonds it is not much better. The solution is to play four of a minor as the control enquiry, provided four of the minor is forcing. If there is a sequence where it is not forcing, Blackwood would be four of the other minor

Partner is more likely to want to go on if he has been shown one Ace rather than no Aces. So the responses, out of five key cards are, 4-1 ; 3-0 Two without the Queen of trumps ; Two with the Queen of trumps

After the response showing one or zero key cards, the next suit up will ask for the Queen of trumps : the next suit up but one will ask for Kings. When the response has shown the absence or the presence of the Queen of trumps the relay will ask for Kings

Responding to the Queen enquiry a return to the trump suit denies the Queen. With the Queen and no Kings bid the slam : with the Queen and one or more Kings , cue bid. That cue bid shows the named King or the other two. A similar response is given to the King enquiry , a cue bid showing that King or the other two

Let us consider the most economical and the least economical sequences

	2S	2NT
	3C	3H (controls in spades?)
	3S (one)	3NT (queen of trumps?)
	?	
4C	-	Queen of trumps and King of clubs, (or the other two)
4D	-	Queen of trumps and King of diamonds (or the other two)
4H	-	Queen of trumps and King of hearts (or the other two)
4S	-	no Queen of trumps

It can be seen that there is no response for the Queen of trumps and no outside King. Partner might well need the Queen of trumps and the King of clubs as well, in which case he would not be pleased to hear a leap to the six level with only the Queen. 4NT is clearly a positive move and must show the Queen of trumps but no King

	1S	1NT(transfer)
	2C	3C(forcing)
	4C	4D (controls)
	4NT	5D (Kings)
	?	
5H	-	King of hearts (or the other two)
5S	-	King of spades (or the other two)
6C	-	no King