
Imprecise Precision

Release 7.1

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CONTENTS

1	Summary of Imprecise Precision	1
1.1	Change Log	1
1.2	Related Material	1
1.3	Summary of Imprecise Precision	1
1.4	Strong Hands (16+ HCP)	1
1.5	Balanced Hands	2
1.6	Intermediate Hands (11-15 HCP)	2
1.7	Preemptive Openers	2
1.8	Competitive Bidding	3
1.9	Beta	3
2	Bidding Balanced Hands	4
2.1	Meckwell Escape	4
3	Suit Openings	6
3.1	Opening One Of A Major	6
3.1.1	The Two Club Forcing Bid	6
3.2	Opening One Diamond	7
3.2.1	About The Amorphous Diamond	7
3.2.2	Detailed Responses	7
3.2.3	Interference Over One Diamond Openers	9
3.3	Opening Two Clubs	10
3.3.1	Responding to the Inquiry	10
3.3.2	Interference Over Two Clubs	10
3.4	Opening Two Diamonds	10
3.4.1	Interference Over Two Diamonds	11
3.5	Unusual 2N Opener	11
3.5.1	Interference Over 2N	11
4	Opening One Club	12
4.1	What Hands Do We Open One Club?	12
4.2	Summary of Responses	12
4.3	The One Diamond Response	13
4.3.1	Heart Relay	13
4.4	Transfer Positive Responses	14

4.4.1	Case I: Opener Accepts A Suit Transfer	15
4.4.2	Case II: Opener Accepts A Transfer To Notrump	16
4.4.3	Case III: Opener Declines Notrump, Bids Own Suit	16
4.4.4	Case IV: Opener Declines Suit, Bids Own Suit	16
4.4.5	Case V: Opener Declines Suit, Bids Notrump	17
4.5	Other Positive Responses	17
4.5.1	Positive Hands with Very Long Suits	17
4.5.2	Positive Hands With 4441 Shape	17
5	Interference Over One Club	19
5.1	Direct Interference	19
5.1.1	Responses Over 2nd Seat's Double	19
5.1.2	Responses Over 2nd Seat's Suit Bid	19
5.1.3	Responses Over 3- or 4-Level Interference	19
5.1.4	Conventional Interference	19
5.1.5	Interference by 1N	20
5.2	Interference by RHO	20
5.3	Interference Over Asking Bids	20
6	References	21

SUMMARY OF IMPRECISE PRECISION

This version of the Precision bidding system is less than a full expert system, but more than just the basics. I call it Imprecise Precision. Imprecise Precision tries to incorporate a set of key ideas that are manageable by non-experts. I have synthesized it from studying a variety of other systems listed in the *References* (page 21).

1.1 Change Log

Version 7.0 puts back the previous treatment of rattlesnakes and 2M responses to 1C.

Version 6.0 12-14 NT range instead of 14-16; improved scheme for interference.

Version 5.1 (April 2015) upgrades the HTML version to use the Alabaster theme.

Version 5.0 (January 2015) changes the preemptive and rattlesnake-related bids over one club openers. The chapter on check-back has been returned to the *Advanced Bidding* book. I've also eliminated the chapter on my conventions with local partners as we never achieved consensus.

1.2 Related Material

The following conventions, which work well with Precision, are documented in others volumes in this series, *Advanced Conventions* and *Defensive Conventions*.

- Two-Way New Minor Forcing
- XYZ
- Lebensohl / Rubensohl
- Meckwell / Meckwell Escapes

Please see *Bidding Notes* for information on how to contribute, resources, acknowledgements, and a glossary. That book also contains a section on notation. The main things you need to know are:

- An exclamation point after a bid means it needs to be alerted.
- Opponents' passes are usually omitted; their calls are shown in parentheses. Thus 1♥ - (2♠) - 4♥ means we opened 1 Heart, LHO overcalled Two Spades, and partner jumped to 4 Hearts.

1.3 Summary of Imprecise Precision

ImprecisePrecision defines the meaning of the opening bids up to and including 2N. Above 2N you may use any scheme you're used to. The 1N range is 12-15 HCP, and all stronger hands are opened 1♣. If you are uncomfortable with this NT range, you can play 12-14, 13-15, or 14-16 (the most popular). That requires some fairly obvious changes.

We briefly describe each opening bid here. Then we cover your choices about competitive bidding and explain a special bid called Beta. The subsequent chapters fill in the details.

1.4 Strong Hands (16+ HCP)

- 1♣!(*artificial, strong, forcing, 16+ HCP*) (page 12):

We open 1♣! with any hand with 16+ HCP, except some 16 point balanced hands with a defect such as no five card suit. We also open 1♣! with a 15 HCP

hand containing an excellent six-card suit and a stiff or void.

1♣! has no upper limit and absolutely may not be passed. The system after this opening is covered in its own chapter, *Opening One Club* (page 12).

The principal benefit of the strong 1♣ opening doesn't spring from opening 1♣. Rather, it is the limited range of the other openings. When you open 1♦, 1♥, 1♠, 2♣!, or 2♦!, your range is limited to 11-15, and it isn't a "good 15". This enables us to stay low when appropriate or jump to game without worrying about missing a slam.

The 1♣ opening can also lead to a number of elegant slam explorations, since we start out as low as possible. Minor suit slams in particular are easier to find safely.

1.5 Balanced Hands

Any balanced hand (with shape 4333, 4432, or 5332) is opened 1N if it has 12-14 HCP. This includes hands containing a five card major, so we play 1N - 3C! as Puppet Stayman.

With a balanced 15-16 HCP hand, we open 1♦ and rebid notrump (alerted). With 16 HCP and a good 5332 hand we will sometimes open 1♣!

1.6 Intermediate Hands (11-15 HCP)

Any 11-15 HCP hand that we open in a suit is not 5332. Therefore, it has two suits. In what follows, "notrump" can be thought of as the "second suit".

- 1♦ (as short as two, 11-15 HCP) (page 7)

This bid is *announced* as possibly as short as two cards. It helps to think of 1♦ as between a standard 1♣ and 1♦.

We open 2♣! with six clubs. Opening 1♦ therefore shows four+ diamonds or five clubs, or the strong notrump hand.

The strong notrump aside, we cannot have just 3 diamonds and 4 clubs or it would be a hand that could be opened 1N or 1M.

With values concentrated in the minors, 11 HCP hands can be passed.

- 1♥ or 1♠ (11-15 HCP) (page 6)

Shows a five card major and another four-card suit. The range is limited to 11-15, which is a key feature of the system. Because of the limited range, some responses are not standard.

- 2♣!(11-15 HCP, usually a six card club suit) (page 10)

This bid requires six clubs. It may contain a four- or even five-card major. However, in third seat with five good clubs we sometimes open 2♣! rather than open 1♦ and rebid 2♣.

- 2♦!(11-15 HCP, 0 or 1 diamonds) (page 10)

The allowed shapes are 4=3=1=5, 3=4=1=5, 4=4=1=4, 4=4=0=5. One way to remember this is "4=4=1=5 missing one card somewhere". Another is "0 or 1 diamonds, no five card major, and no six card club suit".

Note how these bids fit together. With 11-15 HCP, if you have five clubs, and no five card major, you are either short in diamonds and should open 2♦! or can open 1♦ or 1N.

1.7 Preemptive Openers

- 2♥, 2♠ are standard preemptive openers.

Of course, they are not preemptive in fourth seat but rather show 11-15 with a six card suit.

- 2N!(5-5 minors, preemptive) (page 11)

Shows at least 5-5 in the minors with limited strength: 4-8 HCP if not vulnerable, 8-12 HCP if vulnerable. Responses are to play except for a 3♥! inquiry.

1.8 Competitive Bidding

Interference with Beta is covered in *Interference With Asking Bids* (page 20).

Most competitive bidding is identical to standard methods; with Precision you often have better information about the range of partner's hand. You can use whatever versions of things like Michaels, Unusual NT, Lebensohl, etc. that you are comfortable with.

Precision-specific strategies are given in the descriptions for interference after $1\heartsuit$ (page 9), $2\clubsuit!$ (page 10), $2\heartsuit!$ (page 11), and $2N!$ (page 11) openers. *Interference With The One Club Opener* (page 18) has a chapter of its own, including *Interference Over Asking Bids* (page 20).

1.9 Beta

Beta is a key bid in Precision. It asks for a count of Aces and Kings, counting A=2 and K=1. The responder bids steps to show how many he has:

- The first step response corresponds to responder having no more than expected given the auction. For example, if responder is known to hold 8+ HCP, the first step will represent 0 to 2 controls, and we will write it Beta(2).
- The second step would be one more than the minimum, three steps for two more, etc.

Except for one case Imprecise Precision has only Beta(2) calls. That means:

- First step is an Ace, or two Kings, or less.
- Second step is an Ace and a King, or three Kings.
- Third step is two Aces, an Ace and two Kings, or four Kings.
- Etc.

You subtract one from the count total to get the step; you translate n steps into n+1 count.

Note that what are called "count" replies to a standard strong $2\clubsuit$ opener are similar but not quite the same.

BIDDING BALANCED HANDS

A balanced hand may contain a five-card suit, but does not have two doubletons.

- 12-15 HCP: Open 1N. Any hand with a 5332 shape in this range is opened 1N.
- 16+ HCP: Open 1♣!. Good 15 HCP hands with a five card suit can often be opened 1♣!.

If you get a positive response to 1♣!, you're in a game forcing auction. See *Opening One Club* (page 12) for continuations.

After a negative 1♣! - 1♦!(0-7), there is a special double meaning to 1♥! as explained in *The Heart Relay* (page 13). Except for some weak distributional hands, the responder will relay with 1♠!.

After 1♣! - 1♦!, we have three notrump bids, 1N, 2N, and 3N; and at each level you can bid it directly or first use the heart relay. Using the heart relay first will show a stronger hand.

We need a sequence that means a strong hand (usually with a long minor) and no interest in slam after the negative 1♦! response. 1♣! - 1♦! - 3N seems like a natural for this.

That suggests removing that bid from the scheme, leaving five steps.

1. 1♣! - 1♦! - 1N! => 16-18
2. 1♣! - 1♦! - 1♥! - 1♠! - 1N! => 19-21
3. 1♣! - 1♦! - 2N! => 22-24
4. 1♣! - 1♦! - 1♥! - 1♠! - 2N! => 25-27
5. 1♣! - 1♦! - 1♥! - 1♠! - 3N! => 28+.

Remember, 1♣! - 1♦! - 3N is to play.

After any of the above sequences the system is "on", transferring even if the responder has already bid the suit. For example:

1♣! - 1♦! (0-7)
 1♥! (hearts or strong NT) - 1♠! (relay)
 1N! (19-21) - 2♥! (transfer to spades)

lets the responder show his five spades, even though responder will play a spade contract. After 1♣! - 1♦! - 1N!(16-18), 2♣! can be bid as ordinary Stayman in three circumstances:

- Stayman with 8 HCP. (Yes, opener may have 18, but don't bid 2♣! with 7 HCP.);
- When intending to pass the reply;
- When 5-4 in the majors, intending to bid the five card suit at the two level if the reply is 2♦. (Garbage Stayman).

The sequence 1♣! - 1♦! - 1N! - 2♠! is the ordinary minor-suit relay to 3♣, pass or correct to 3♦.

For any of the sequences that show 19+ HCP balanced hands, the lowest level of clubs is Puppet Stayman, and the lowest level of spades is Minor Suit Stayman (5-4 in the minors).

2.1 Meckwell Escape

If 1N is doubled, we use this runout, although you can use any of the runouts described in *Defensive Conventions*.

Meckstroth and Rodwell's escapes are like the Meckwell bids over 1N, with the usual D.O.N.T. corrections on two-suited bids.

- Pass! shows a weak hand, with clubs, diamonds, or both majors. Opener bids 2♣!. Next, responder passes with clubs; bids 2♦ with 5 cards in diamonds; or 2♥ shows 4-4 majors.

- 2♣ promises clubs and a higher suit, 4-4 at least.
- 2♦ promises diamonds and a higher suit, 4-4 at least.
- 2♥ and 2♠ are natural five-card suits.
- Redouble is natural, showing values.

SUIT OPENINGS

The only strong opening is 1♣!. It has its own chapter.

Intermediate suit openings are 11-15 HCP. They are 1♥, 1♠, 2♣!, and 2♦!. You should play Two-Way New Minor Forcing / XYZ if possible. (See *Advanced Bidding*.) An 11 HCP hand rarely be opened 1♦.

The two of a major preemptive bids are standard. (Remember, 2♦! is not preemptive).

2N is a preemptive unusual 2N for the minors, whose strength depends on the vulnerability.

The sections in this chapter explain the details.

3.1 Opening One Of A Major

Opening of one of a major shows 11-15 HCP, instead of the standard 12-21 point range. It also promises a second four-card suit, because any 5332 hand is opened 1N. Responses by an unpassed hand:

- 1♥ - 1♠!(not forcing) shows 4+♠ and less than game-forcing values; however, if opener supports spades the revaluation of the hand may change that. A new suit after such support is a help-suit game try. Opener should only pass with a minimum.
- 1M - 1N is 6-10 HCP, no support. Not forcing. Opener bids second suit to ask for suit preference, or passes to play.
- 1M - 2♣! is an artificial game force. Responses are given below.
- 1M - 2M is 6-10- HCP, 3 or more card support.
- 1M - 2♦/2W show five card suits, invitational.

- 1M - 2N denies 4 cards in M, usually balanced, invitational. May have five+ clubs.
- 1M - 3M is invitational, four trump.
- 1M - 4M!(may not be weak)

A direct game bid shows a hand whose strength may vary anywhere from the standard weak hand with five trumps to a relatively balanced 12-13 HCP hand with 3+-card support.

Be sure to alert. The upper limit on the 1M bid makes this possible. However, be careful not to rule out skinny slams by making this bid with more values. Opener will be able to revalue his hand when you show support, and we know he has shape.

There is no requirement to play this structure – you can basically play 2/1 with 2N Jacoby or natural, but with the 1M - 4M! bid replacing the standard preemptive one. Jacoby would have to show a much stronger hand than normal to be of interest for slam, because opener is limited to 15 HCP, and therefore is marginal.

3.1.1 The Two Club Forcing Bid

The bid 1M - 2♣! is game forcing and artificial. It is not necessarily a raise of M but could be. Opener replies to 2♣! by bidding his second suit, X; 2N! shows clubs. With a 6-4 opener can rebid the six-card major, or choose to show a second suit and rebid the major later.

Since 1M - 4M! would have shown a raise with at most 12-13 points, no interest in slam, there are two other raises available to responder to show varying degrees of slam interest:

- 1M - 2♣! - 2x - 4M shows 14-16/17 with support, and leaves the ball in the opener's court. That means the opener should pass unless re-evaluating his hand with the fit makes him interested in slam.
- 1M - 2♣! - 2X - 3M is available to show slam interest in the responder, say 17+ . Opener should cue bid.

With no fit in M, but a fit in X, the sequel depends on what X is.

- 1♠ - 2♣! - 2♥: With 4+ hearts, responder bids 4♥, or 3♥ to ask opener to begin cue-bidding. 1♠ - 2♣! - 2♥ - 2N does not deny three hearts but does deny 4♥ or 3♠; opener then has a chance to show extra length in one of the majors, or to bid his lowest minor stopper.
- 1M - 2♣! - 2N!(clubs): Responder with 4+ clubs bids 3♣. Opener can bid diamonds, W, or 3N; the first two deny a stopper in the other.
- 1M - 2♣! - 2♦: Responder with 4+ diamonds bids 3♦. Opener can bid 3W to deny a club stopper but show a W stopper, or 3N if both suits are stopped.

With no fit in either of opener's suits, the only possibility for an 8-card fit is if opener has a third suit or fragment.

- 1M - 2♣! - 2X - 3N shows stoppers in both unbid suits and is to play.
- 1M - 2♣! - 2X - 2N is waiting. Opener can show a fragment, rebid X / clubs to show extra length, rebid his major to show six, or bid 3N to play.
- 1M - 2♣! - 2N!(clubs):

3.2 Opening One Diamond

3.2.1 About The Amorphous Diamond

Opening 1♦ is the "catch-all" opening if no other opening applies. It can be as few as 2 diamonds, such

as a 3=3=2=5 shape, because opening 2♣! requires six clubs.

Some of the time 1♦ is the prelude to a 1N rebid to show a 15-16 HCP balanced hand. Otherwise 1♦ is probably a diamond opener, or it could be some combination of diamonds and five or less clubs. Think of it as a bid between a standard one club and one diamond. "Amorphous diamond" is a phrase some use to describe it.

3.2.2 Detailed Responses

We open 1♦ if we have 12-15 HCP, two or more diamonds, and no other bid applies.

Announce the bid as "as short as two". Your hand is not balanced and does not have a six-card club suit or a five-card major, so either you have four+ diamonds or you have five clubs.

With 11 HCP or a flat 12 HCP, do not open if you have poor major holdings, especially if vulnerable or with poor intermediates. However, a hand with an AK in one suit and an Ace in another can be opened since it has 3 quick-tricks.

Responder bids a four-card major with 6 HCP. Note that the lowest notrump response is 8 HCP. That means, no major, less than 8, just pass. Passing 1♦ is scary, but as Oliver Clarke remarks,

Partner should not be afraid to pass with a weak hand whether or not it contains Diamond support. It is rare that opponents will be able to profit significantly if they pass the hand out when having the balance of the points, whether or not they have Diamonds. Normally they will bid or double for takeout.

1♦ should be announced, "As short as two." Then:

- Pass shows 0-7 HCP. With four diamonds and a minimal hand, lean toward pass. With fewer than 3 diamonds, and 4-5 HCP, you can consider 1M as an interfering tactical response.
- 1♥ shows 6+ HCP, forcing one round, with four hearts. Bidding continues almost naturally.

Any rebid other than a raise denies four hearts.
Opener's rebid:

- 1♠ shows 4 spades. Forcing one round.
- 1N! shows a 15-16 HCP balanced hand.
- 2♣ shows a shape of (31)45.
- 2♦ shows five or six diamonds.
- 2♥ shows 4 hearts, 11-13 HCP. Can be bid with 3 good hearts and a singleton.
- 2♠ shows five spades and six diamonds.
- 2N! shows a max, six good diamonds, and stoppers in spades and clubs. If responder now bids 3♦ it must be passed.
- 3♣ shows 5-5 or better in good suits in the minors, 14-15 HCP.
- 3♦ shows 6 or 7 good diamonds, 14-15 HCP.
- 3♥ shows 4 hearts, 14-15 HCP and probably an outside singleton.
- 4♦! shows six diamonds to the AKQ, four hearts to at least one of the top 3 honors.
- 4♥! shows four very good trump, or five hearts to at least one high honor, and six good diamonds.
- 1♠ is similar to 1♥ with the obvious changes. In particular:
 - 2♥ (reverse) shows four hearts, and 14-15 HCP.
 - 2♠ shows four spades but can be bid with 3 spades and a singleton.
 - 3♥ shows five hearts and six diamonds.
 - 3♠ shows 14-15 HCP, four spades and probably an outside singleton.
- 1N shows 8-10, no four card major. Opener may pass or bid as follows:
 - 2♣ shows at least 4 diamonds and 4 clubs. With an unbalanced minimum,

this allows responder to pass or correct, since he has at least one four-card minor.

- 2♦ shows at least five diamonds, non-forcing.
- 2♥ (reverse) shows five or six diamonds and four hearts, maximum.
- 2♠ (reverse) shows five or six diamonds and four spades, maximum.
- 2N! shows the 15-16 HCP balanced hand. Responder with 10 HCP should bid game.
- 3♣ shows at least five diamonds and five clubs, both suits are very good, and the bid is highly invitational but not forcing.
- 3♦ is a very good six- or seven-card diamond suit, non-forcing.
- 3♥ is five hearts and six diamonds, forcing.
- 3♠ is five spades and six diamonds, forcing.
- 2♣ shows 11+ HCP, five+ clubs, and is *forcing to 2N*. With less than 13 HCP, you should bid a four-card major first. With a game-forcing hand, bid the major next if appropriate.

Opener rebids naturally:

- 2♦ at least five diamonds.
- 2♥ or 2♠ shows a four-card major and 4+ diamonds.
- 2N! shows a hand 4=5 in the minors or a balanced 15-16 HCP. If the latter, the opener does not have both majors stopped.
- 3♣ is a five-card club raise.
- 3♦ shows an excellent diamond suit;
- 3♥ or 3♠ is a five-card major and six diamonds.
- 3N shows 14-16 points at least semi-balanced with stoppers in the major suits.

After 2♦ or 2♥ or 2♠, if responder bids 2N! or 3♣, the auction may end. Any other bid is a game force.

- 2♦! shows 11+ HCP, four or more diamonds, and is *forcing to 2N*. It denies a major. Opener bids:
 - 2♥ shows a heart stopper.
 - 2♠ shows a spade stopper and denies a heart stopper.
 - 2N! shows a balanced hand up to 16 HCP; if responder bids 3♦ opener must pass.
 - 3♣ is exactly five clubs and only two diamonds. May be passed. If responder bids 3♦, opener must pass.
 - 3♦ is four or more diamonds, a minimum in HCP. May be passed.
 - 3♥! / 3♠! are splinters, 4 or more diamonds.
 - 3N semi-balanced with 14-16 HCP and stoppers in the major suits.
 - 4♣! is a splinter, five or more diamonds.

Whenever either partner bids 2N or 3♦ the auction may end. 1♦ - 2♦! - 3♣ can also be passed. Otherwise we're headed for 3N or 4♦. Responder bidding 4♣! in such cases is RKC for diamonds.

- 2♥! is five spades, four hearts, pass or correct. (Reverse Flannery)
- 2♠! is five spades, four hearts, invitational. (Reverse Flannery)
- 2N is invitational, no four card major.
- 3♣! is game forcing with slam interest. Responder has either a one-suited club hand or a two-suited hand in diamonds and clubs with the clubs longer. (Soloway JS)
- 3♦! is preemptive with six diamonds.
- 3♥, 3♠ are natural preempts.
- 3N shows 14-15 HCP, balanced.

- 4♣! is RKC for diamonds either directly over 1♦ or when bid by responder after any auction that agrees diamonds.
- 1♦! - 4♦! is preemptive, seven or eight diamonds
- 1♦! - 4♥ / 4♠ are to play.

Since we have taken away the jump-shifts in the majors, a responder with strong hand and a long major must start at the one level and then try to force.

3.2.3 Interference Over One Diamond Openers

If 1♦ is doubled, responder must redouble with any hand containing 10+ HCP. Otherwise,

- Pass if no suitable bid.
- 1M five+ cards or a great four such as AKJT, 5-9 HCP.
- 1N balanced, 7-9 HCP.
- 2♣ five or six clubs, less than 10 HCP, not forcing.
- 2♦ five or six diamonds, less than 10 HCP, not forcing.
- 2♥ or 2♠ preemptive with a good six-card suit, 4-7 HCP.
- 2N! shows 5-5 in the minors, 7-9 HCP

If opponent overcalls a suit,

- Pass – no suitable bid
- Double is negative
- All non-jump suit bids except 2♦ are forcing
- 1N is natural, 7-9 HCP, with a stopper
- 2N is game forcing with their suit well stopped, 12+ HCP.
- All jumps in new suits show 5-8 HCP and six or seven cards in the suit bid, non-forcing
- A cue bid of their suit shows either the Ace and a small card, or the K or Q and two small cards,

indicating a desire to play 3N from opener's side. (Western Cue).

If responder passes, opener should usually reopen with a double if short in their suit. With the strong notrump hand, a double or 1N can be considered.

3.3 Opening Two Clubs

The 2♣! opener is a constructive bid with 11-15 HCP and at least six clubs. A hand with a five-card major and six clubs can be opened 2♣.

In third seat a hand with five good clubs that would open 1♦ and rebid 2♣ can be opened 2♣! as a preemptive bid, especially not vulnerable.

The responses are:

- Pass – don't be afraid to pass with a weak hand, the opener has a six-card suit.
- 2♦! is artificial and forcing, asking for a further description of opener's hand. Strong hands will all start this way. Responses below.
- 2♥ / ♠ show five card suits and are not forcing, usually 8 to a bad 10 points.

Generally with 2 or more cards in the major, opener should pass, except with fabulous clubs.

With a singleton or void in the bid suit, opener will rebid 3♣. Over 2♥, opener can show a four-card spade suit. However, over 2♠ a bid of 3♥ is a reverse, showing five hearts and at least six clubs. Likewise, a bid of 3♦ over a 2M response would show five diamonds and at least six clubs.

- 2N is natural, invitational, 10-11 HCP. Opener declines if he bids 3♣. Opener can bid 3M to show a four-card major on the way to game.
- 3♣ is preemptive based on a club fit.
- 3♦ / 3♥ / 3♠ show six-card suits and game-forcing values.
- 3N shows 13-15, balanced, stoppers in the unbid suits.

- 4♦! is RKC for clubs, either directly or after any auction beginning 2♣ that agrees clubs.
- 4M is to play.

3.3.1 Responding to the Inquiry

Opener's responses after the 2♣! - 2♦! inquiry are:

- 2♥ = 4 hearts
- 2♠ = 4 spades
- 2N denies a four-card major, shows a relatively balanced 11-13 points.
- 3♣ = default response if nothing else applies
- 3♦ = four or five diamonds.
- 3♥ = five+ hearts, six+ clubs.
- 3♠ = five+ spades, six+ clubs.
- 3N = solid club suit or 14-15 balanced, suitable for notrump.

Subsequently, 4♦! by responder is RKC for clubs except after 2♣! - 2♦! - 3♦, where it is invitational to 5♦.

3.3.2 Interference Over Two Clubs

- If the 2♣! opener is doubled, the system is on; redouble shows 10+ and is penalty oriented.
- After an overcall, a double is negative; otherwise use Lebensohl. If you don't know Lebensohl just agree that 2N! shows a competitive hand with a long suit, asking opener to bid 3♣!(relay).

3.4 Opening Two Diamonds

The Precision 2♦! opener shows shortness in diamonds, no five-card major, and 11-15 HCP. Recall that you must have two diamonds to open 1♦, so this bid covers a number of hand shapes that are not otherwise covered.

The possible shapes are 3=4=1=5, 4=3=1=5, 4=4=1=4, and 4=4=0=5.

Note: It is NOT correct to say the shape is “like mini-Roman with a diamond shortage” or “4441”

Responses are:

- Pass, 2♥, 2♠, and 3♣ are to play. After 2♥, if opener has a 4=3=1=5, he must bid 2♠; then responder passes or corrects to 3♣ or 3♥, depending on his holding.
- 2N!(inquiry) bid is forcing and asks for a description of the opener’s hand, to which opener mainly replies to show his holdings in hearts or spades. Since opener has at least one four-card major, he shows it.
 - 3♣! shows a shape of 3=4=1=5 (shows 4 hearts, but not 4 spades)
 - 3♦! shows a shape of 4=3=1=5 (shows 4 spades but not 4 hearts)
 - 3♥! shows a shape of 4=4=1=4 (4 hearts and 4 spades)
 - 3♠! shows a shape of 4=4=0=5 (4 hearts, and 4 spades, diamond void)
 - 3N! shows a shape of 4=4=1=4 with the Ace or King of Diamonds and a 15-point hand.

After the reply, 4♦! is *Beta* (2) (page 3), asking for a count of controls.

- 3♦! is *Beta* (2) (page 3).

3.4.1 Interference Over Two Diamonds

- If there is an overcall of 2♦!, 2N! is on. A double is for penalty.
- If 2♦! is doubled (usually showing diamonds)
 - Redouble shows a willingness to penalize it. Responder has diamonds.
 - Pass is waiting:

- * Opener will redouble if 4414 or 4405 with a minimum;
 - * Bid 2♥ if 3=4=1=5; or maximum with hearts and maybe spades.
 - * Bid 2♠ if 4=3=1=5, or maximum with spades but not hearts.
- All other bids over the double are as if there was no interference: 2N! asks shape, 2M or 3♣ to play, 3♦ to play, 3♦ Beta(2).

3.5 Unusual 2N Opener

Open 2N with hands at least 5-5 in the minors with limited strength: 4-8 HCP if not vulnerable, 8-12 HCP if vulnerable.

Responses are all to play, except 2N! - 3♥!(inquiry), which is Ogust-like:

- 3♠! means a minimum 5-5 hand for the vulnerability.
- 3N! maximum hand for the vulnerability.
- 4♣ six clubs, five diamonds, minimum.
- 4♦ six diamonds, five clubs, minimum.
- 4♥! six clubs, five diamonds, maximum.
- 4♠! six diamonds, five clubs, maximum.
- 4N! six - six in the minors.

3.5.1 Interference Over 2N

If the opponents double 2N!, the system is on. If they interfere by making a suit bid, any double is for penalty.

OPENING ONE CLUB

4.1 What Hands Do We Open One Club?

We can open 1♣!(16+ HCP, artificial, forcing) with any 16+ HCP. With a 16 HCP flat hand you can downgrade it to 1N. We also use 1♣! to open “good” 15 HCP hands, defined as those with a 6+ card suit playable opposite a singleton, usually containing a singleton or void.

Opening 1♣ is unequivocally forcing. Responder must never pass, even with a club stack and no points.

Dealing with interference is covered later in *Interference Over One Club* (page 18).

4.2 Summary of Responses

There is one negative response, 1♦!(0-7, artificial). You will make this bid with less than a good 8 HCP. If you have 8+ HCP, you make a “positive” response, which is game forcing. With 8 HCP, it is ok to downgrade hands such as one that is aceless without a five-card suit.

Major suit two bids are basically preemptive but highly invitational:

- 2♥!, 2♠! six cards, semi-positive, highly invitational with 4-6 HCP concentrated in the suit. 2N! asks for shortness.

All other responses (“positive responses”) are game forcing.

The positive responses for hands that are balanced or have a five-card suit are:

- 1♥!, 1N!, 2♣!, 2♦! show 8+ HCP, and five cards in the next higher strain.

Do not bid a four-card suit even if it is AKQJ.

- 1♠! shows 8+ HCP, balanced.

The hand has no five card major but may have a poor five-card minor.

- 2N! shows 14+ HCP, balanced, denies a five card major; may have a poor 5 card minor. This bid is forcing to 4N.

3♣! next by opener is the Baron convention, asking for four-card suits up the line.

- 3♠! shows a solid seven or eight card suit, not necessarily spades. See *The Three Spades Response* (page 17)
- 4N is plain Blackwood.

If a hand is not balanced and does not have a five-card suit, it is a 4441 hand. Such a hand is called a “rattlesnake”, and the suit with the stiff is the “rattler”. The bids showing these hands come in two groups:

1. Less than 12 HCP or lacking four controls (A=2, K=1):
 - 3♣!(black singleton, less than 4 controls or 12 HCP)
 - 3♦!(red singleton, less than 4 controls or 12 HCP)
2. 12 or more HCP with 4 or more controls. We bid the strain below the singleton.
 - 3♥!(1=4=4=4, 4+ controls, usually 12+ HCP) Spade rattlesnake, slam interest.
 - 3N!(4=4=4=1, 4+ controls, usually 12+HCP) Club rattlesnake, slam interest.

- 4♣!(4=4=1=4, 4+ controls, usually 12+HCP) Diamond rattlesnake, slam interest.
- 4♦!(4=1=4=4, 4+ controls, usually 12+HCP) Heart rattlesnake, slam interest.

Note that 3♠ shows a solid seven or eight card suit, not a rattlesnake.

No other response to 1♣! is permitted.

The negative response is discussed next in the section *The Negative Response* (page 13).

The positive transfer bids are discussed in the section *Transfer Positive Responses* (page 14).

The rattlesnake bids are discussed in the section *Rattlesnake Responses* (page 17).

Interference after a 1♣! opening is discussed in the next chapter, *Interference Over One Club* (page 18).

4.3 The One Diamond Response

After the weak 1♦(0-7 HCP) response, opener makes fairly natural bids designed to show his strength and shape. The *Heart Relay* (page 13) allows us to show various strong balanced hands.

After 1♣! - 1♦!(0-7), opener's rebids are:

- 1♥! (hearts or 20+ balanced) describes a hand which is usually a heart suit but may also be a 20-21 or 25+ HCP balanced hand; or rarely, is 6-5 in the minors.

See *Heart Relay* (page 13) for the continuations.

- 1♠, 2♣, and 2♦ show five card suits. These bids are non-forcing. If your hand has 8 tricks, do not make these bids.
- 1N!(16-19, balanced)
- 2♥! or 2♠! shows a strong hand with a 5+ card major, like a standard 2♣ opener followed by a 2M rebid.

- 2N shows a 22-24 HCP balanced hand. Systems are on, 3♣ is Puppet Stayman.
- 3♣ and 3♦ show very strong, unbalanced hands with a long minor suit.
- 3♥ and 3♠ set trump and show an extremely strong hand (9 tricks). Trumps are long and solid. Partner should cue-bid.
- 3N is to play based on a long solid suit.

Responder's second bid:

- With 0-4, pass, especially if balanced, unless you have an Ace.
- Over 1♥, the heart relay is on, see below. If not playing that, treat as with 1♠.
- Over 1♠, raise with 4-5 support points; jump raise with 6 or 7.
- Over 1N, systems are on; see *Bidding Balanced Hands* (page 4) for details.

4.3.1 Heart Relay

After 1♣! - 1♦!, 1♥! asks responder to bid an artificial 1♠!. The opener will clarify his hand on his next bid. It is usually a positive reply in hearts, but more rarely a strong balanced hand, and even more rarely a hand 6-5 in the minors.

This bid should be explained as, "A five-card heart suit or a strong balanced hand; or rarely, a hand 6-5 in the minors." The answer to "How strong a balanced hand?" is 20-21 HCP or 25+ HCP.

After 1♣! - 1♦! - 1♥!, responder accepts the relay and bids 1♠!(not weak and distributional) except in these cases:

- 1N with 5-5 in the majors, very weak.
- 2-level suit bids with a modest six-card suit, weak hand, no outside Queens.
- 2N with 5-5 in the minors, very weak.
- 3-level suit bids with seven-card suits, very weak.

The 1♠! bid can be explained in more detail as not showing one of the above hands.

If the opener is balanced, after 1♣! - 1♦!(0-7):

- 1N immediately shows 16-18 HCP; with the heart relay first, 19-21 HCP
- 2N immediately shows 22-24 HCP; with the heart relay first, 25-27 HCP
- 3N immediately is to play; with the heart relay first, 28+ HCP

After the 1♥! relay is accepted with 1♠!, an unbalanced opener bids as follows, all bids showing a heart suit, and jumps showing extras.

- 2♣! shows 3+ clubs as well as the 5+ hearts.
- 2♦! shows 3+ diamonds as well as the 5+ hearts.
- 2♥ shows a 6+ heart suit, no extras.
- 2♠! shows 4+ spades as well as the 5+ hearts.
- 3♣!, 3♦! are forcing, suggestive of 5+ in the minor as well, or extras.
- 3♥ shows 6+ hearts, invitational.
- 3♠ shows 4+ spades, 5+ hearts, with extras.
- 4♥ shows 6+ hearts, to play.
- 4N is RKC for hearts

Two special bids show 6-5 minor-suited hands:

- 4♣ forcing, 6+ clubs, 5+ diamonds.
- 4♦ forcing, 6+ diamonds, 5+ clubs.

4.4 Transfer Positive Responses

If responder is balanced with 8+ HCP, he responds 1♠!.

Other bids from 1♥! up to 2♦! show a 8+ HCP hand with a five-card suit in the next higher strain:

- 1♣! - 1♥!(8+ HCP, 5+ spades)
- 1♣! - 1N!(8+ HCP, 5+ clubs)
- 1♣! - 2♣!(8+ HCP, 5+ diamonds)

- 1♣! - 2♦!(8+ HCP, 5+ hearts)

These bids should be made with any five or more cards in a major suit. For a 5332 hand with a minor, we treat it as a notrump hand unless the suit is good.

This section is about those five “transfer” bids, considering 1♠! as a “transfer to notrump”, the next higher strain. The auction is now game forcing. There are five cases we will need to consider when opener rebids.

When opener rebids notrump, he jumps with exactly 20-21 HCP (shown below with *). With more than 21 HCP, opener waits to show strength, by continuing to force or if necessary bid one past game.

The first two cases are when opener “accepts” responder’s proposal. They are somewhat detailed to support slam bidding.

- Responder indicated a suit, and opener bids it.
- Responder indicated notrump and opener bids notrump (*);

The other three cases are when we do not agree. Emphasis turns to finding the right strain and bidding is natural.

- Responder indicated a suit, but opener bids his own suit;
- Responder indicated a suit, but opener bids notrump (*);
- Responder indicated notrump but opener bids his own suit.

Not accepting a minor suit does not definitively deny support. An opener with three-card support and no suit of his own will usually bid notrump first. Or, he may want to show his major suit rather than immediately support the minor.

Transferring to a minor must show a good suit or a two-suited hand.

If opener has a traditional strong-two hand, he will wait to show this. Both opener and responder will consider bidding one past game if needed to show big hands with slam interest.

4.4.1 Case I: Opener Accepts A Suit Transfer

Completing the transfer shows support and asks for controls, *Beta(2)* (page 3). Responder replies by steps showing the count of controls, with A=2, K=1, and the first step being zero to two controls. You don't need to count on your fingers – just subtract one from the number of controls you have and bid that many steps.

Beta can be followed by either:

- A sign off in game.
- Bidding trump below the level of game. This is a “trump asking bid”, or TAB.
- Bidding a side-suit. This is a “Control-Asking Bid” or CAB.

IMPORTANT: opener does NOT “super-accept” with a strong hand. Accepting and following the Beta response with a TAB or CAB shows slam interest even if responder has shown 0-2 controls.

CONVERSELY, opener does not make a TAB or CAB bid without slam interest over an 8 point response. Making these bids shows a traditional strong-two type hand.

Trump-Asking Bid

The Trump-Asking Bid (TAB) occurs IMMEDIATELY after the Beta sequence when opener accepts responder's suit. TAB should only be bid with a strong hand, the kind of hand that a standard bidder opens 2♣, or an extremely distributional hand.

TAB asks about the quality of the responder's suit. (A responder can never make a TAB, and opener can only make it if he does so the first chance he gets.)

Step responses indicate the length of the suit, and the number of the top three honors held:

- first step: zero honors, any length
- second step: one, five cards
- third step: two, five cards
- fourth step: one, six+ cards

- fifth step: two, six+ cards
- sixth step: three (AKQ), five+

After a TAB, each rebid short of game is asking about the quality of the trump suit or of a specific side suit.

- Asking further about the trump suit, Repeat TAB (rTAB), is invoked by another bid in the trump suit below game.
 - If you have shown 0 or 3 of the top three honors, the first step shows a seven-card suit; the second a six-card suit; the third a five-card suit. That's right: worse is higher!
 - If you have shown one of the top three honors, the steps show Ace, King, Queen. Again, worse is higher.
 - If you have shown two of the top three honors, the steps show AK, AQ, KQ.
- Asking about control details for a given suit, CAB, is invoked by other suit bids. There can be a sequence of these.

After a TAB or repeat TAB, if you make a bid in a non-trump suit it is a Control-Asking Bid (CAB). So if you want to make an rTAB inquiry, you must do it immediately after the TAB, and once you make a CAB you cannot make any trump-quality inquiry.

Note that this is the ONLY scenario that involves TAB and rTAB, – when it is opener accepting responder's suit. It is always asking about the responder's suit.

A TAB can also be made by a simple raise of responder's suit when he has been forced by interference to bid it directly, e.g., 1♣! - (2♥) - 2♠ - 3♠(TAB).

If a TAB is not called for, opener can show slam interest with one or more CABs.

Control-Asking Bid

A Control-Asking Bid (CAB) is asking about controls in that suit. The replies are in steps:

1. No control (Jxx or worse)

2. Third round control (a queen or doubleton)
3. Second round control (a king or singleton)
4. First round control (an ace or void)
5. AK or AQ

For steps 2 through 4, opener can bid the suit again to ask responder to distinguish strength (first step) from length (2nd step).

Any subsequent bid that is not trump is again a CAB.

Once a control-asking bid is at the five level, the replies must be compressed:

1. Neither first- nor second-round control
2. Second-round control
3. First-round control

These points may help avoid confusion due to the ambiguous use of the word “control”:

- Only the 1♣ opener makes CAB bids. Similar bids by responder are cue bids.
- Do not confuse the CAB with Beta. It is not the same kind of “controls”.

4.4.2 Case II: Opener Accepts A Transfer To Notrump

The responder has bid 1♠! showing 8+ HCP and a balanced hand. If he has a five-card suit it is a poor minor.

If opener has a balanced hand he bids notrump. He jumps to show 19-21 HCP. With 22+ HCP he waits to show the bigger hand with an unexpected jump or otherwise.

Note that since responder does not have a five-card major or a six-card minor, there are no suit transfers after opener’s notrump bid. However, two-way Stayman is on. A good minor suit would have been bid, so a bid of a minor by responder shows a poor five-card suit but a good hand with slam interest (typically 12+ HCP).

When responder has a four-card major and is not 4=3=3=3:

- 2♣ is ordinary Stayman, 8-10 HCP.
- 2♦ is Stayman, 11+ HCP. Opener replies 3N if he does not have a major.

When opener has jumped to 2N, everything is up a level.

With a hand containing neither a four-card major or a poor five-card minor, responder raises notrump. Over 1N!(17-19),

- 3N is 8-13 HCP;
- 4N is 14-15 HCP (quantitative);
- 4♣ is Gerber.

Over 2N!(20-21):

- 3N is 8-11 HCP;
- 4N is 12 HCP;
- 4♣ is Gerber. Hand is not suitable for Stayman.

4.4.3 Case III: Opener Declines Notrump, Bids Own Suit

If opener shows his own suit, a balanced responder replies naturally, with priority of course to raising opener’s suit.

If responder does not raise, opener may:

- Repeat his six-card or longer suit.
- Show a second four-card suit;
- Bid notrump, usually showing a 5332 hand.

4.4.4 Case IV: Opener Declines Suit, Bids Own Suit

If responder suggests a suit but opener bids his own, bidding continues naturally. Responder may raise opener’s suit, rebid his six-card or longer suit, bid a second suit of four cards or longer, or bid notrump.

Responder with support for opener’s suit may also choose a splinter bid if appropriate.

4.4.5 Case V: Opener Declines Suit, Bids Notrump

Opener jumps in notrump to show exactly 20-21 HCP.

Responder may show another four-card suit, bid his own suit with six, or raise in notrump. Note there is no Stayman; responder would bid just bid his four-card major. For example:

```

1♣! - 2♣! (diamonds)
2N! (17-19) - 3♦ (six ♦)

1♣! - 2♣! (diamonds)
2N! (17-19) - 3♥ (4♥ + 5♦)

1♣! - 1♥! (spades)
1N! (17-19) - 2♥ (5♠ + 4♥)

1♣! - 1N! (clubs)
2N! (17-19) - 3♣ (six ♣)

```

If opener has originally bid 2N as a jump, 4N is quantitative (12 HCP usually), and 4♣ is Gerber.

4.5 Other Positive Responses

This section covers other positive responses to a 1♣! opener: long solid suits and 4441 hands.

4.5.1 Positive Hands with Very Long Suits

The 3♠ response to a 1♣! opener shows a long solid (unspecified) suit, at least seven cards headed by the AKQ. Opener then bids:

- 3N offers to play. Responder can keep going with a great hand.
- 4♣! implies that opener knows what the long suit is and asks for controls outside the solid suit (Beta(0), that is, 0, 1, 2, ...).
- 4♦! asks for the suit, 4N = diamonds.
- 4♥ or 4♠ is to play, at least five trump. Responder should pass with three-card support or a doubleton honor unless he has a great hand.

4.5.2 Positive Hands With 4441 Shape

If responder does not have a five-card suit, and is not balanced, then he has a 4441 shape. (Note that the other version of the rattler, with a five card minor and a void, cannot occur here because if you had a five card suit you would bid it.) Precision players call such a rattlesnake hand with 8+ points an “unusual positive”.

The unusual positives come in two flavors.

Routine Hands

First, the weaker bids showing 8-13 HCP and lacking four controls:

- 3♣ showing a black rattlesnake, and
- 3♦ showing a red rattlesnake.

Bidding the next step asks where the rattle is, and in reply, the two steps after that show the lower or higher suit of the specified color.

For example,

```

1♣! - 3♦! (4441, stiff ♦ or ♥)
3♥! (♦ or ♥?) - 3N! (♥)

```

Here, 3♠, the first step after 3♥, would show a stiff diamond, while 3N, the second step, showed a singleton heart.

Following the clarification of the location of the stiff, cue-bidding that suit asks for the number of controls (counting A=2, K=1), with replies in steps 0-2, 3, etc.

Routine Hands

Second, the strong rattlesnakes, where with 14+ HCP and at least four controls, you bid the strain below the rattle, skipping over 3♠:

- 3♥ for a spade rattlesnake (1=4=4=4);
- 3N for a club rattlesnake (4=4=4=1);
- 4♣ for a diamond rattlesnake (4=4=1=4); and
- 4♦ for a heart rattlesnake (4=1=4=4).

A cue bid now asks for controls but the first step is 4 since the responder is known to have four at least.

Remember, 1♣! - 3♠ shows a long solid suit, not a rattler.

INTERFERENCE OVER ONE CLUB

Opponents are often anxious to bid something to interfere with your 1♣! opening, or after 1♣! - 1♦!. We in turn are anxious to take advantage of it.

Our guiding principle is to ignore their interference when we can, and to cue-bid their suit or double when we can't respond normally.

5.1 Direct Interference

5.1.1 Responses Over 2nd Seat's Double

If they double after 1♣!, we split the negative bid into two ranges.

- Pass with 0-5 HCP. Assuming RHO bids, opener behaves as if they opened. Double is takeout, a cue bid is Michaels. A jump to 2N is Unusual.
- Redouble with 6-8 HCP or with a positive hand with no good bid. Doubles of their suit bid is takeout. Responder promises to bid once more.
- Suit bids are positive, game forcing, and show a five-card suit. Bidding proceeds naturally.
- 1N is a positive response with 8+ HCP and a stopper. It is game forcing. Reverse Stayman is on but not transfers (because if responder had a five-card suit he would bid it).

5.1.2 Responses Over 2nd Seat's Suit Bid

If 2nd seat bids a suit at the one- or two-level, we follow the same general idea. Double can be 6-8 HCP

or it could be a positive, balanced hand with no stopper. Responder promises one more bid.

Again, a new suit is a five-card suit with 8 or more points, game forcing. Our doubles are penalty now.

A bid of notrump by responder is game-forcing and promises a stopper. Reverse Stayman is on but not transfers.

A jump-shift is preemptive, 5-7 HCP with most of the points in the suit.

A cue-bid is a game-forcing hand with three suits, short in their suit.

5.1.3 Responses Over 3- or 4-Level Interference

Over 3- or 4-level interference, a double is game-forcing, but has no primary suit to bid below 3N. Opener can bid a 5+ card suit, pass the double for penalty, or try 3N. And of course, if responder bids a suit, it is a 5+ card suit and game-forcing.

Otherwise, with 0-6 HCP responder must just pass, and opener can pretend they have made a preemptive bid. Passing it is an option.

5.1.4 Conventional Interference

If opponents play transfer overcalls, treat it as if the target suit was the overcall.

There are conventional bids used to interfere with our opener. The three most popular are discussed in "Precision Today".

Unless otherwise discussed, we use our normal defense to two-suited bids. A double (or redouble)

shows a positive hand with no suitable bid, usually balanced.

Mathe is the only system we have seen so far in practice. In Mathe, double shows the majors, and 1N the minors, at least 4-4. As in our general defense, (invisible) cue bids show a positive response in the corresponding suit, and direct bids of those suits are competitive (say 5-8 HCP or some shape).

- Pass! is the second step
- The next available bid is the third step, etc.

For example, in the auction 1♣! - 1♥! - 1♠(Beta), suppose LHO suddenly bids 3♥. In that case 3♠ shows the third step.

5.1.5 Interference by 1N

A bid of 1N that was not conventional would be equal hand.

When by the opener's LHO, responder's pass or double as usual ought to suffice. If responder has more than 8 HCP, clearly the bid may well be a psyche or miscommunication (that is, it really is conventional but the advancer forgot to alert it).

5.2 Interference by RHO

If they intervene after 1♣! - 1♦!, generally opener acts as if they have opened.

- Opener passes with any balanced minimum.
- Double (or redouble) by opener is for takeout.
- Sometimes the responder with shortness in their suit doubles to protect an opener possibly holding a stack in their suit. Responder's hand should contain four-card support for any unbid major.

If the opener's RHO overcalls a positive response, bidding is natural and doubles are penalty oriented.

5.3 Interference Over Asking Bids

Asking bids are those that request step responses: CAB, TAB, and Beta. We use a uniform system to deal with interference to such bids:

- Double! / Redouble! is the first step

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I'd also like to thank partners Yih-Renn Kan, John Engstrom, and the late Dennis Tretheway for their insights and suggestions.

Symbols

- 1♣
 - interference over, 18
 - opener, 12
- 1♣ responses
 - 3N (strong club rattlesnake), 17
 - 3♣ (black rattlesnake), 17
 - 3♦ (red rattlesnake), 17
 - 3♥ (strong spade rattlesnake), 17
 - 3♠ long solid suit, 17
 - 4♣ (strong diamond rattlesnake), 17
 - 4♦ (strong heart rattlesnake), 17
 - rattlesnake hands, 17
 - transfer positives, 14
 - unusual positive responses, 17
- 1♦
 - opening bids, 7
- 1♦ opener
 - interference over, 9
- 2N opener
 - interference over, 11
- 2♣
 - opener, 10
- 2♣ opener
 - interference over, 10
- 2♦ opener
 - interference over, 11
- 3N (strong club rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17
- 3♣ (black rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17
- 3♦ (red rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17
- 3♥ (strong spade rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17
- 3♠ long solid suit
 - 1♣ responses, 17

- 4♣ (strong diamond rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17
- 4♦ (strong heart rattlesnake)
 - 1♣ responses, 17

A

- alert notation, 1
- asking bids
 - Beta, 3
 - Control-Asking Bid, 15
 - interference over, 20
 - repeat CAB in same suit, 15
 - Repeat Trump-Asking Bid, 15
 - Trump-Asking Bid, 15

B

- Beta
 - asking bids, 3
 - convention, 3
 - interference over, 20

C

- CAB, see Control-Asking Bid, 15
- competitive bidding, 2
- Control-Asking Bid
 - asking bids, 15
 - interference over, 20
- convention
 - Beta, 3
 - Lebensohl, 1
 - Meckwell Escape, 4
 - Two-Way New Minor Forcing, 1
 - XYZ, 1
- CRASH
 - interference, 19

E

- exclamation point, 1

H

Heart Relay

- strong balanced hands, 13
- strong hands 6-5 in the minors, 13

I

interference

- CRASH, 19
- Mathe, 19
- two-suited bids, 19

interference over

- 1♣, 18
- 1♦ opener, 9
- 2N opener, 11
- 2♣ opener, 10
- 2♦ opener, 11
- asking bids, 20
- Beta, 20
- Control-Asking Bid, 20
- RKC, 20
- Trump-Asking Bid, 20

L

Lebensohl

- convention, 1

M

Mathe

- interference, 19

Meckwell Escape

- convention, 4
- runout, 4

N

notation, 1

notrump

- opening bids, 4

O

opener

- 1♣, 12
- 2♣, 10

opening bids

- 1♦, 7
- notrump, 4
- summary of, 1

R

rattlesnake hands

- 1♣ responses, 17

repeat CAB in same suit

- asking bids, 15

Repeat Trump-Asking Bid

- asking bids, 15

RKC

- interference over, 20

rTAB, see Repeat Trump-Asking Bid, 15

runout

- Meckwell Escape, 4

S

strong balanced hands

- Heart Relay, 13

strong hands 6-5 in the minors

- Heart Relay, 13

summary of

- opening bids, 1

T

TAB, see Trump-Asking Bid, 15

transfer positives

- 1♣ responses, 14

Trump-Asking Bid

- asking bids, 15
- interference over, 20

two-suited bids

- interference, 19

Two-Way New Minor Forcing

- convention, 1

U

unusual positive responses

- 1♣ responses, 17

X

XYZ

- convention, 1