
Imprecise Precision

Release 9.0

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INTRODUCTION

Imprecise Precision is a strong club system, not for experts but more than just the basics. I have synthesized it from studying a variety of other systems listed in the *References* (page 20).

As much as possible, Imprecise Precision defines bids just one way. I don't feel it is useful to tell someone learning a new system that they have several options for this, that, or the other.

If you are just trying Precision for the first time, you can postpone learning these portions:

- *Transfer Positive Responses To 1♣* (page 14)
- *The Heart Relay* (page 12)
- *The Trump Asking Bid* (page 15)
- *The Unusual 2N Opener* (page 10), which requires the Heart Relay; and,
- *Unusual Positive Responses* (page 17)
- *Three Spades Response* (page 17)

This list is in order of importance for adding later.

The latter two are for hand types that are quite rare, considering that partner will have a strong club opener.

In many ways, this system is easier than 2/1 or SAYC, once you know it. The main reason to play a big club system is the improvement in your one-of-a-major openings, since those now have a limited range of 11-15 rather than 11-21. You'll find it much easier to get to the right level and to compete.

1.1 Notrump Openings

The notrump range for Imprecise Precision is 14-16 HCP. A 14-16 NT is played exactly as you play a

15-17 NT, but responder needs one more point for his bids; for example, the invitational range is 9-10 not 8-9. You and your partner should agree upon a "runout" over opposition doubles of your 1N opener.

Other ranges are possible, most notably 12-14. If you have experience with a weak NT, you'll know how to make the obvious changes needed.

1.2 Notes

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

- An exclamation point after a bid means it needs to be alerted. The alert explanation follows as needed.
- 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.
- Hand shapes that contain equal signs are in precisely spade = heart = diamond = club order. Parentheses show the shapes can be either way, as in (54)=2=2 meaning exactly two clubs and two diamonds and either 4 spades and 5 hearts or vice-versa. Hand shapes without separators can be in any suit order.

1.3 Change Log

Version 9.0 (July, 2020) Substantial rewrite and simplification

Version 8.1 (June, 2019) Minor corrections

Version 8.0 12-14 or 14-16 combined treatments.

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.

SUMMARY OF IMPRECISE PRECISION

Imprecise Precision defines the meaning of the opening bids up to and including 2N. Openings above 2N are whatever you like – typically preempts.

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

2.1 Strong Hands (16+ HCP)

- $1\clubsuit!$ (artificial, strong, forcing, 16+ HCP) (page 11):

We open $1\clubsuit!$ with any hand with 16+ HCP, except 16 HCP balanced hands. We also open $1\clubsuit!$ with a 15 HCP hand containing an excellent six-card suit and a stiff or void.

$1\clubsuit!$ has no upper limit and absolutely may not be passed. The responses and further bids after the $1\clubsuit$ opening are covered in their own chapter, *Opening One Club* (page 11).

2.2 Balanced Hands

Balanced hands (page 13) up to 16 HCP are opened $1\spadesuit$ (11-13 HCP) or 1N (14-16). Above 16 HCP they are opened $1\clubsuit!$. A good 16 HCP hand with a five card suit can be opened $1\clubsuit!$ also.

Strong (17+ HCP) balanced hands are opened $1\clubsuit$ (or 2N(20-21) if not using the *Unusual 2N Opener* (page 10)).

Any balanced hand (with shape 4333, 4432, or 5332) is opened 1N if it has the right number of HCP. This includes hands containing a five card major. There are also 5422 hands that can be opened 1N to avoid

rebid problems. It is recommended that at least one of the doubletons be Kx or better. An example is a 2=4=5=2 hand; if opened $1\spadesuit$, there is no good rebid if partner responds $1\spadesuit$.

2.3 Intermediate Hands (11-15 HCP)

- $1\spadesuit$ (as short as two, 11-15 HCP) (page 5)

This bid is *announced* as possibly as short as two cards. It helps to think of $1\spadesuit$ as between a standard $1\clubsuit$ and $1\spadesuit$.

With values concentrated in the minors, or balanced, 11 HCP hands should often be passed.

- $1\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit$ (11-15 HCP) (page 5)

Shows a five card major. Because of the limited range, some responses are not standard.

- $2\clubsuit!$ (11-15 HCP, 6+ \clubsuit) (page 8)

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 $2\clubsuit!$ rather than open $1\spadesuit$ and rebid $2\clubsuit$.

- $2\spadesuit!$ (11-15 HCP, 0-1 diamonds, no 5M, no 6 \clubsuit) (page 9)

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”.

Together these bids cover all hand types. 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 you have two or more and can open 1♦ or 1N.

2.4 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 10)

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.

If not using the *Heart Relay* (page 12), the 2N opener reverts to the standard balanced 20-21 HCP bid.

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.
- Fourth step shows 5 controls, etc.

Note: In standard bidding, “count” replies to a strong 2♣ opener are similar, but not the same.

Interference with Beta is covered in *Interference With Asking Bids* (page 19).

2.5 Competitive Bidding

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 2NT, Lebensohl, etc. that you are comfortable with.

Precision-specific strategies are given in the descriptions for interference after 1♦ (page 8), 2♣! (page 9), 2♦! (page 9), and 2N! (page 10) openers. *Interference With The One Club Opener* (page 17) has a chapter of its own, including *Interference Over Asking Bids* (page 19).

2.6 Beta

Beta is a bid peculiar to 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 number given the auction. For example, if responder is known to hold 8+ HCP, the first step will

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♦!. An 11 HCP hand will only rarely be opened 1♦.

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

2N is a preemptive, unusual 2N for the minors, whose strength depends on the vulnerability, if playing the heart relay. Otherwise it is balanced 20-21.

Since the suit openings are limited to 15 HCP, you can repurpose any 3-level opener rebids to indicate hands at the upper range, 14-15 HCP.

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. We open 5332 hands 1N if 14-16, so a hand opened 1M is unbalanced if it has 14-15 HCP.

You can play your usual system with the following exceptions:

- 1M - 4M!(may not be weak)

An immediate 4M raise 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. For standard bidders this bid shows a weak hand and to make it with a stronger hand risks missing a slam. In Precision, the opener can have no more than 15

HCP, and not 15 HCP with a great suit. Therefore responder can bid game without fear of missing slam with a minimal opening hand. However, be careful not to miss skinny slams by making this bid with more values. Opener will be able to revalue his hand when you show support, and he may have shape.

- Playing Jacoby 2N 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 2N is natural, with 2-card support only, as Goren played it.

With a strong hand make up a 2/1 response if necessary, then bid 3M.

- Jump-rebidding at the 3-level shows only 14-15 HCP, since we did not open 1♣. This usually shows a very good six card suit but is not forcing.
- Jump shifting on your second bid can be used with a maximum hand and excellent distribution. Again, it is not forcing.

3.2 Opening One 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 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.

One diamond openers will constitute about 32% of our opening bids. Therefore, the system suggested

requires some study. When first playing Imprecise Precision, you can get by with standard or inverted minor bidding – but try not to raise either suit immediately with four cards – give opener a chance to admit he really has clubs.

We open 1♦ if we have 11-15 HCP, two or more diamonds, and do not qualify as a 1N opener. A corollary is that a 14-15 HCP hand that opens one diamond is not balanced. We want to be sure to find any major fit in such a case.

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. The lowest notrump response is 8 HCP. That means, if you do not have a major, pass with less than 8 HCP. 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 2 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 12-13 HCP balanced or semi-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 hearts, 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. 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 a 15 HCP semi-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 semi-balanced 15 HCP. If the latter, the opener does not have both majors stopped.
- 3♣ is a good 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 semi-balanced hand up to 15 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 14-15 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.

3.2.1 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.

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 4), asking for a count of controls.

- 3♦! is *Beta (2)* (page 4).

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. This bid is not used unless playing the heart relay.

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 Preemptive 2N

If the opponents interfere with the preemptive 2N opener, treat it the same as if we made an unusual 2N overcall.

OPENING ONE CLUB

4.1 What Hands Do We Open One Club?

We can open 1♣!(16+ HCP, artificial, forcing) with any 16+ HCP hand, or 17+ if it is balanced. Balanced hands of 16 HCP or less are opened either 1♦ or 1N, depending on the chosen notrump range.

A flat hand should be downgraded 1 HCP, and a balanced hand with a decent five-card suit should be upgraded 1 HCP. 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 17).

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.

Major suit two-level replies 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”) show 8+ HCP and are game forcing.

Warning: The 2018 changes to the convention charts include the “Basic” chart, which will be

used in ACBL events with a maximum of 750 MP or less, such as Gold Pairs. Under that chart the “transfer positive” responses to 1♣ openings (described here) are not allowed. You will play these bids (1♥ through 2♦) as natural.

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 five-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”. The bids showing these hands come in two groups:

1. With a positive 4441 hand (a “rattlesnake”), we bid three of the rank *below* the singleton:
 - 3♣!(4=4=1=4)
 - 3♦!(4=1=4=4)

- 3♥!(1=4=4=4)
- 3N!(4=4=4=1)

Note that 3♠ shows a solid seven or eight card suit, not a 4441 hand.

After one of these “rattlesnake” bids, opener’s bid of the next step is Beta(2).

No other response to 1♣! is permitted.

The negative response is discussed next in the section *The Negative Response* (page 12).

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

The 4441 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 17).

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 12) 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 12) for the continuations. If you choose not to play the Heart Relay, 1♥ shows a five card heart suit, not forcing.

- 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 *Balanced Hands* (page 13) for details.

4.4 The Heart Relay

1♣! - 1♦! - 1♥! asks responder to bid an artificial 1♠!. The opener will clarify his hand type on his next bid. Note that the special meaning of 1♥ is only after the negative 1♦ response. 1♥ usually means a hand with hearts, but it also can show a strong notrump hand or (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.

Responder shows his five spades, even though he will play a spade contract.

4.4.1 Balanced Hands

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.

1. 1N! => 17-19
2. 1♥! - 1♠! - 1N! => 20-21
3. 2N! => 22-24
4. 3N is to play, usually based on a long solid minor.
5. 1♥! - 1♠! - 2N! => 25-27
6. 1♥! - 1♠! - 3N! => 28+. Forcing to 4N.

After 1♣! - 1♦! - 1N!(18-19), the system is on. Responder bids 2♣ as ordinary (not Puppet) Stayman in three cases:

- As Stayman with 7 HCP. Yes, opener may have 19, but don't bid 2♣ with 6 HCP;
- As Stayman with a bust hand short in clubs, 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).

After any of the stronger sequences the system is "on", and:

- The lowest level of clubs is Puppet Stayman.
- The lowest level of spades is Minor Suit Stayman (5-4 in the minors).
- Transfers are on even if the suit has already been bid. For example:

```
1♣! - 1♦! (0-7)
1♥! (hearts or strong NT) - 1♠!
↪ (relay)
1N! (20-21) - 2♥! (transfer to ♣)
↪ spades
```

4.4.2 Unbalanced Hands

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.

4.5 Natural Positive Responses

If Transfer Positive Responses are not allowed in your event, you will play the bids 1♥ through 2♦ as natural, five cards or more, 8+ HCP. In addition, you need a special reverse form of Stayman after 1♣! - 1N!. After 1♣! - 1N! - 2♣! (asking about majors) we know responder does not have a five card major (or he would have bid it, not 1N). We can avoid wrong-siding a major fit however with these responses:

- 2♦! Responder has four hearts (and maybe four spades)
- 2♥! Responder has four spades but not four hearts

- 2♠! Responder has no four-card major. Opener's 3N next would be to play. Elaborate follow-on agreements are possible. For example, opener bids 2N as a relay, and responder shows 8-10 with 4 clubs with 3♣, with 4 diamonds bids 3♦, etc. See *Precision Today*.

In regular Stayman, the responder might have zero points, hence the need to avoid any bids other than 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠, because responder may be planning to pass. Since we are in a game-forcing auction after 1♣! - 1N!, that does not apply here.

4.6 Transfer Positive Responses

Unfortunately Transfer Positives are not allowed in ACBL events using the lowest level "Basic" chart.

Positive responses require 8+ HCP. The response chosen shows the hand shape:

- 1♣! - 1♥!(8+ HCP, 5+ spades)
- 1♣! - 1♠!(8+ HCP, balanced)
- 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.

4.6.1 Case I: Opener Accepts A Suit Transfer

Completing the transfer shows support and asks for controls, *Beta(2)* (page 4). 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.

If new to Precision, you can omit use of both the TAB and CAB bids, and just bid naturally, treating side-suit bids as control-showing, and trump bids below game as indicating extra strength.

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”.

4.6.2 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 20-21 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.

4.6.3 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 raises opener’s suit, opener may bid the next higher step as Beta(2). For example, 1♣! - 1♠! - 2♥ - 3♥, next 3♠ by opener is Beta(2).

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.

4.6.4 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.

If responder raises opener’s suit, opener may bid the next higher step as Beta(2). For example, 1♣! - 2♣! - 2♥ - 3♥, next 3♠ by opener is Beta(2).

4.6.5 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.

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.)

You bid the strain below the rattler, thus skipping over 3♠:

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

If opener bids the next step in reply, it is Beta(2).

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

4.7 Unusual Positive Responses

This section covers other positive responses to a 1♣! opener: long solid suits and 4441 hands. Precision players call such a hand with 8+ points an “unusual positive”.

4.7.1 The Three Spades Response

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 that suit.
- 4♦! asks for the suit; hearts, spades, 4N = diamonds, 5♣ = clubs.
- 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.

4.7.2 Rattlesnake 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

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.

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 - 1♣ responses, 17
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- 3♥ (*spade rattlesnake*)
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