

Modern Bridge

NOTRUMP

A COMPLETE BIDDING GUIDE

BOB McCONNELL , 2012

STRONG NOTRUMP OPENINGS and RESPONSES 3
 NoTrump is the Base - Captaincy – Opponents’ NoTrump Convention Card –
 NoTrump Shape – Opening NoTrump Bid Ranges – Gambling 3NT Opening –
 NoTrump Opening Holding a 5-Card Major – Opening Flat Hands Stronger than
 15 – 17 HCP – To Open NoTrump or a Suit?

RESPONDING TO NOTRUMP OPENINGS 6
 Invitations – Looking for Major Suit Fits - 4-Way Transfers – Stayman & Jacoby

OTHER MAJOR SUIT CONVENTIONAL RESPONSES 8
 Puppet Stayman –Game Forcing Stayman – Smolen – Mini-Smolen – 5 –5 Majors –
 Texas Transfers – South African Texas Transfers - Cases: (1) With one 6+ Card
 Major; (2) With Two 5-card Majors; (3) With One or Two 4-card Majors; (4) With
 one 5-card Major and (5) With one 5-card and one 4-card Major.

DIRECT NOTRUMP RAISES 14

RESPONDING IN MINOR SUITS 14
 Weak Transfers to Minors – Direct Jumps to 3♣ or 3♦ – Minor Suit Stayman

BIDDING NOTRUMP IN COMPETITION 15
 Overcalling Opponents’ Suit Opening with 1NT – The Unusual 2NT Overcall and
 Responses – Defending Against the Unusual 2NT: Unusual over Unusual

INTERFERING WITH OPPONENTS NOTRUMP OPENINGS18
 DONT - Defending Against DONT – TONT – Defending Against TONT – 8 Other
 Systems for Competing Over Opponents’ 1NT

COPING WITH OPPONENTS INTERFERENCE AFTER OUR 1NT OPENING 25
 Ignore the Double – Systems On and Stolen Bids – Lebensohl – Exclusion Double –
 Interference by Passed Hands – 4th Seat Passout Choices

WEAK NOTRUMP OPENINGS 27
 With 12 to 14 HCP - With 15 to 17 HCP - With 18 or 19 HCP –

RESPONSES TO SUIT OPENINGS VS. WEAK NOTRUMP OPENINGS 28
 Responses to Major Suit Openings – Responses to Minor Suit Openings – Responses
 When Opener Rebids NoTrump – Reverse Checkback Stayman

RESPONSES TO WEAK NOTRUMP OPENINGS 30
 Direct Responses With and Without Interference – Stayman and Forcing Stayman
 Responses - Passed Hand Responses - Slam Bidding - Escape Sequences

Appendix A – Stayman and Jacoby Transfer Conventions 35

STRONG NOTRUMP OPENINGS

NoTrump Is the Base. NoTrump openings are the baseline for all bidding systems. It's the most important bid to make whenever the HCP and distribution warrant because it's a limited bid, meaning the upper HCP range is known, as well as approximate distribution. Limited bids help partner visualize your hand and clarify who's in charge of the auction.

Also, 1NT and 2NT are preemptive to the opponents -- few partnerships can bid accurately or comfortably over an opening 1NT.

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

Strong NoTrump or Weak NoTrump?

Both are playable and effective: Many play both, with different partners. A discussion of Weak NoTrump openings and continuations is found below in Weak NoTrump Openings - below.

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

Should they use a different 1 NT opening range, 10 to 12 or 11 to 14 or 13 to 15 or any other "weak" NoTrump Opening, discuss briefly with your partner how to bid against them before you start to play.

Without time for prior discussion of alternatives with partner, recommended is to double in 2nd seat with at least an equivalent hand, and to bid naturally in 4th seat if 3rd seat passes. [1NT – P – P – 2♦ . . .] To play.

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

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

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

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

Opening Gambling 3NT

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

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

Not NoTrump? The implications of not opening NoTrump are important.

If opener opens 1♣ and later bids NoTrump, can she have a 15 count with flat distribution? No, because then she would have opened 1NT.

NoTrump Openings Holding a 5-Card Major

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

| | |
|---|--|
| ♠ Kxxxx ♥ Qxx ♦ Ax ♣ AKJ <i>Open 1 NT</i> | ♠ AJxxx ♥ KJx ♦ KQ ♣ Kxx <i>Open 1 Spade</i> |
|---|--|

Opening Flat Hands Stronger than 15 – 17 HCP

With 18 or 19 HCP, open one of a suit then jump to 2NT or jump raise partner's major suit response with appropriate support [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♥...]

| | |
|--|--|
| ♠ Kxxx | ♠ Jxxx |
| ♥ Axx | ♥ AKJx |
| ♦ AQx | ♦ AKx |
| ♣ AJx | ♣ Kx |
| 1♣ opening, then a 2 NT rebid unless partner bids 1♠ – if so, raise to 3♠. | 1♦ opening. Raise partner's Heart or Spade response to game, otherwise bid 2NT. |

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

To Open 1NT or Not?

Not every hand with 15, 16 or 17 HCP and flat distribution must be opened 1NT. Hands with 14 HCP can sometimes be opened 1NT, and hands with 15+ HCP may be opened in a suit, especially to anticipate responses that create rebid problems.

If hands are “suit-oriented” or have other flaws, they can be opened in a suit rather than NT. Especially, think about possible rebids after opening 1NT vs. opening 1 of a suit. Avoid opening 1NT with hands including a small doubleton if possible – your partner may transfer you into it and then bid game.

In the following hands, ask yourself if there's a better opening bid than 1NT.

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

Answers:

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

RESPONDING TO NOTRUMP OPENINGS

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

To Accept an Invitation or Not? Frequently, the response will indicate that a response “shows 8 or 9 points”, and is therefore an invitation to opener to play at a game-level contract.

To decide whether or not to accept, opener should do several things: evaluate the proposed suit fit, if any, discount doubleton minor side-suit honors (Qx, Jx or Jxx, for example) and evaluate the cards in her hand other than Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks. Generally, opener will accept with a maximum hand. “Maximum” means any 17 HCP hand.

15 HCP hands should usually pass without an exceptional fit with no discounted honor holdings, doubletons or small tripletons.

16 HCP openers should be re-evaluated by looking at long suits and/or "pusher cards" - 10's and 9's in longish suits. Responders should do this same re-evaluation when decisions are close.

Look for a Major Fit. The primary goal of both partners is to find a major suit fit. Experience shows that a hand that can take nine tricks in NoTrump can often take ten tricks in a major suit if an 8-card or better trump fit can be found, and it’s usually a safer contract. At Duplicate, it also scores more, and that’s a critical difference.

Count Dummy Points Only if You Are Going to Be the Dummy. When a major suit fit is found, responder may become the dummy; if so, she can count dummy points - - HCP plus voids (5 points), singletons (3 points) and doubletons (1 point) – in order to properly evaluate her hand.

Most responses to NoTrump openers or overcalls center on the Stayman and Jacoby Transfer conventions.

These conventions will find 4 – 4 and 3 – 5 and 2 – 6+ major suit fits. Responder should use either Stayman or Jacoby with any four+ card major suit. Failure to bid either of these is a clear sign to opener (and opponents) that responder has no 4+ card major suit. Stayman and Jacoby Transfers are not optional bids to use if you “feel the urge” -- you must use them when the appropriate situation arises. Your partner is entitled to believe your bids are consistent, as are your opponents.

Note: as most players are familiar with Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, the detailed discussion of these two conventions is found in Appendix A.

4-Way Transfer Responses to a 1NT Opening

Four-Way Transfers: Use “4-suit transfers”, so responder can transfer to (force opener to bid) any suit the Captain/responder wants.

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

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

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

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

The following includes major suit response conventions in addition to Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, and a thorough analysis of how and when all major-suit-seeking responses and conventions are used.

OTHER MAJOR SUIT CONVENTIONAL RESPONSES

There are other conventional responses to NoTrump openings besides Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, most of which attempt to find major suit fits.

This section describes Garbage Stayman, Puppet Stayman, Forcing Stayman, Smolen, Mini-Smolen, 5 – 5 majors, Texas Transfers and South African Texas Transfers. Collectively, they cover all cases from one 4-card major through 6+ major suits held by responder. An analytical discussion of all cases follows:

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

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

Case 1. Holding a 6+ card major

Responder should Jacoby Transfer to the major and then pass or bid game or invite game with a raise; or jump to 4NT looking for a slam. [1NT – P – 2♥* – P 2♠ – P – 4♠ ...]

With a weakish hand and a broken 6+ major suit, responder can Texas Transfer or South African Texas Transfer opener to game, making the big hand the declarer. Because there is at least an 8-card fit in the major, only the level is important.

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

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

Note that responder could theoretically get the same results by bidding a Jacoby Transfer, then jumping to game in the major. The reason to use Texas Transfers rather than a Jacoby Transfer and a subsequent jump to game is to prevent opponents from getting lead-directing bids into the auction before the game is bid: [1NT – P – 2♦ – 2♠ ??? ...]. In this Jacoby Transfer auction, 4th seat has gotten his Spades into the auction at a low level as lead-directing or as a possible sacrifice.

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

South African Texas Transfer. The original form of Texas Transfers is now called “South African Texas Transfers”. They work like Texas Transfers, but are more sophisticated, while retaining their preemptive nature.

Playing South African Texas Transfers, a direct response of 4♥ or 4♠ means responder wants to play the hand: it's not a transfer. [1NT – P – 4♠ ...] To play by responder.

A South African Texas Transfer to 4♥ is bid by a jump to 4♣: [1NT – P – 4♣# ...]

A South African Texas Transfer to 4♠ is bid by a jump to 4♦: [1NT – P – 4♦# ...]

(An easy way to remember is: “low minor to low major and high minor to high major”.)

Why is it “more sophisticated”? Because responder can determine which hand is to be the declarer. An responder hand that might want to declare the hand at 4♥ and not transfer to the NoTrump opener is: (♠K3 ♥KJT9876 ♦K8 ♣97).

If this hand becomes the dummy at 4♥, the Spade and Diamond Kings are subject to immediate attack on the opening lead by the lead of a Diamond or Spade (for example, the ♠Queen or ♦Queen). This could amount to a 1 or 2 trick difference in the outcome. However, these Kings are safe on the opening lead if responder is the declarer.

It gets even more sophisticated: When responder bids 4♣# or 4♦#, transferring opener to Hearts or Spades, opener has the option to “re-transfer” the hand back to responder by bidding the intermediate suit and not accepting the transfer:

[1NT – P – 4♦# – P 4♥! ...] Transferring the 4♠ contract back to responder for some reason. An opening NoTrump hand with no tenaces might want to do this; for example: (♠KQJ ♥QJT9 ♦AK7 ♣972). There is no suit in danger on the opening lead if this hand is dummy, so opener might want responder to declare it instead.

Option. Some play that with a self-sufficient, 6+ card, no-loser major suit and 13+ HCP, responder bids 3♥ or 3♠, inviting opener (who has all her points in the other suits) to investigate a major suit slam by cue-bidding Aces or initiating a Blackwood sequence. Opener, if interested in slam, should cue-bid Aces up the line. [1NT – P – 3♥ – P 4♦ ...]. Otherwise, opener will just bid the appropriate game. [1NT – P – 3♥ – P 4♥ ...]

Case 2. Holding two 5-card majors

With two 5-card majors, many use a jump to 3♥ or 3♠, with the 3♥ bid showing an 8 or 9 HCP invitational hand and the 3♠ bid showing a game-forcing 10+ HCP. Responder also has distribution values because of a singleton and a doubleton or a void. (This convention has no name and is alertable.)

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

- after a 3♥ bid, pass or bid 3♠ or 4♥ or 4♠ or 3NT.
- after a 3♠ bid, opener will pick a major suit game or bid 3NT. Responder with extra values can continue on, looking for slam with appropriate strength.

With a 0 to 7 HCP hand, responder should Jacoby Transfer opener to the weaker major and pass. Why to the weaker suit? A suit with some HCP has trick-taking power, especially facing a NoTrump opener. A weak suit, perhaps with no HCP, is useless unless it is trump. Because of the shape of a 5 – 5 hand, the trump suit, even with no HCP, can be used to ruff losers, and thus has some trick-taking value.

5 -5 major responses can be made over 2NT opening as well by jumping to 4♥. They require 5+ HCP as it is game-forcing. [2NT – P – 4♥*. . .] Because responders hand is very shapely, game can be forced in a major, knowing the opener must have 3 cards in one of the majors.

Remember that opener will rarely hold two doubletons, and they cannot both be majors.

| | | |
|----------|----------|--|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> | |
| 1NT | 3♥* | " I'm 5-5 in Spades and Hearts with a 8/9 point hand " |
| P | | " Sorry, not this time, South " |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ xxx | ♠ QJxxx |
| ♥ AQx | ♥ KJxxx |
| ♦ KQx | ♦ x |
| ♣ KJxx | ♣ Qx |

Case 3. Holding one or two 4-card majors

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

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

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

If opener denies any major by bidding 2♦, responder can pass or bid 2♥ or 2♠, (Garbage Stayman) or 2NT with 8 or 9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP.

Note: holding one 4-card major and an otherwise flat hand, e.g., 4-3-3-3, responder should not use Stayman, but should bid 2NT with 8 or 9 HCP (directly or indirectly) or 3NT with 10+ HCP. The reason is “No Shape, No Stayman”, meaning there’s no ruffing value, so NoTrump can be a better contract.

Garbage Stayman. The classic weak hand that could use Garbage Stayman is the following 0 HCP hand: (♠9878 ♥8765 ♦76543 ♣-) When partner opens 1NT, this hand might not take a single trick. However, because opener must rebid 2♦ or 2♥ or 2♠ over responder’s 2♣ Stayman bid, responder can pass any rebid and greatly improve the contract. She will have at least a 4 – 4 fit or 3 – 5 trump fit with opener, and a void to ruff Club losers.

Garbage Stayman has no exact definition, but it starts with a regular 2♣ Stayman bid and then attempts to end the auction at a low level. (See Weak Responses below for more on Garbage Stayman)

Forcing Stayman. Game-Forcing Stayman uses a response of 2♦* (or 3♦* over a 2NT opening) rather than 2♣ or 3♣. It guarantees the HCP strength for game, but otherwise operates the same as regular Stayman, i.e., it asks opener for a 4+ card major.

Because the 2♦ or 3♦ rebid denying a 4-card major is not available, opener without a 4+ card major bids 3NT. [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 3NT ...]

The major disadvantage to Forcing Stayman is that the 2♦ bid is no longer available as a Jacoby Transfer.

Forcing Stayman is often used by players opening a Weak NoTrump but is otherwise rarely seen. (See below for Weak NoTrump Openings and Responses)

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

Like regular Stayman, Puppet Stayman over 2NT starts with a response of 3♣*.

Opener rebids 3NT if not holding any 4 or 5-card major, thus setting the contract.
[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3NT. . .] Responder may continue on toward Slam.

Opener rebids any 5-card major suit.
[2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥]

Then, lacking 3+ trumps, responder bids 3NT or higher.
 [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 3NT. . .] Opener has 5 Hearts.

With 3+ trumps, responder bids game or continues toward slam.
 [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 4♥] or
 [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♥ – P – 4NT...]. Blackwood.

Without a 5-card major, but with one or two 4-card majors, opener rebids 3♦*.
 [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦] Opener has 4 Hearts or 4 Spades.

Holding both majors, responder bids 4♦* and opener chooses a major suit game.
 [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦* – P – 4♦* – P 4♠...]. Opener chooses Spades.

Holding one major, responder bids the **other** major and opener bids the implied major or 3NT. [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦ – P – 3♥* – P 4♠ ...]. Responder **doesn't** have 4 Hearts, so opener can bid 4♠ knowing responder has 4 of them.

Puppet Stayman over 1NT.

A responder with 10+ HCP, can use Puppet Stayman in case opener has opened with a 5-card major or any 4-card major(s). Instead of the normal 2♣ Stayman response to 1NT, responder bids 3♣*, and the same continuations as described above are in effect. Responder needs 10+ HCP to use Puppet Stayman over a 1NT opener as it's game-forcing and alertable.

Case 4. Holding one 5-card major

Lacking 8 HCP, responder may transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass.
 [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2♥ – P...]

With 8 or 9 HCP, responder can transfer opener to the 5-card major and then bid 2NT.
 [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2♥ – 2NT...]

With 10+ HCP, responder can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, offering opener the choice of game contracts at 3NT or 4 of responder's major suit.
 [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2♥ – 3NT...]

Holding one 5-card major in response to a 2NT opener, responder:

Lacking 5 HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass.
 [2NT – P – 3♦* – P 3♥ – P...]

With 5+ HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, offering opener the choice of game contracts. [2NT – P – 3♦* – P 3♥ – P – 3NT...]

Case 5. Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major

Responder can use Stayman or Forcing Stayman to inquire about opener's 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder's majors, responder can pass (Garbage Stayman), raise it to 3 with 8 or 9 points or bid game with 10+ points. (5+ HCP if responding to a 2NT opening).

If opener denies holding a major by bidding 2♦, responder can pass or bid the 5-card major (Garbage Stayman) or, holding 8 or 9 HCP, bid 2NT or Mini – Smolen, or, with 10+ HCP, bid 3NT or Smolen. (5+ HCP if responding to a 2NT opening).

Smolen after a 2♦ Rebid. Typically used over 1NT openings and a 2♦ rebid after Stayman, Smolen is used when responder holds 5 – 4 in the majors and 10+ HCP. Smolen is game forcing.

Smolen starts out with a normal Stayman 2♣ bid. If opener rebids in a major, bidding continues normally and Smolen isn't used. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P – 4♥].

If opener rebids 2♦, denying any 4+ card major, Smolen comes into play.

It's a bid of responder's 4-card major - not his 5-card major - at the 3-level: [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 3♥*]. This bid shows responder's 4-card major, but tells opener that responder also has 5 of the **other** major; Spades in this example.

With 3 of the "other major", an 8-card fit has been found and opener can bid the game as declarer. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 3♥* – P 4♠ ...].

Lacking 3 of the "other major", opener bids 3NT. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 3♥* – P 3NT ...].

Smolen can be used over 2NT openings with 5+ HCP but without a jump over a 3♦ rebid by opener. [2NT – P – 3♣ – P 3♦ – P – 3♥* – P 4♠ ...] It is mutually exclusive with Puppet Stayman over 2NT, and is alertable.

Mini-Smolen. Used over 1NT openings when responder holds 5 – 4 in the majors and 8 or 9 HCP. Like Smolen, it starts with a 2♣ response, and, if opener shows a 4+ card major, normal bidding applies: [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P 3♥ ...]. Inviting with 8 or 9 HCP.

If opener rebids 2♦, denying a 4+ card major, Mini-Smolen comes into play with a bid of a major at the 2-level: [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 2♥* ...]. This bid tells opener that responder also has 5 of the **other** major with 8 or 9 HCP. Opener can bid 2NT or 3NT without a 3-card fit or bid responder's 5-card major with a fit. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 2♥* – P 4♠ ...].

Mini-Smolen is mutually exclusive with Garbage Stayman.

Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major over a 2NT opening

Responder with 5+ HCP should use Stayman to inquire about opener's 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder's majors, responder should raise to game.

If opener denies holding any major by bidding 3♦, responder can bid 3NT or Smolen (3♥ or 3♠), forcing game in the longer major or 3NT.

Lacking 5 HCP, responder can pass or transfer opener to the 5-card major and then pass.

Alternatively, Puppet Stayman can be used, as described in Case 3 above.

DIRECT NOTRUMP RAISES

Standard raises to 3NT are used when responder has no 4- or 5-card major and the hand is otherwise flat. They show 10+ HCP in response to 1NT and 5+ HCP in response to 2NT.

Note the negative implications of direct raise bids -- no four or five card major suits and no long minor suit or shape. It's important to not have majors when making direct NT raises -- opener could have a four or even a five-card major suit.

RESPONDING WITH MINOR SUITS

Weak Transfer to 3♣ or 3♦. A 2♠ response can be a transfer to 3♣ and a 2NT response can be a transfer a transfer to 3♦. (See 4-Way Transfers, pg. 11)

| | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> | |
| 1NT | 2NT* | A transfer to 3♦ – neither weak nor strong at this point. |
| 3♦ | P | Weak. |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KQxx | ♠ xxx |
| ♥ Qxx | ♥ Jx |
| ♦ xx | ♦ KJxxxx |
| ♣ AKJx | ♣ xx |

Optional: A 2NT response can be a transfer a transfer to 3♦. (See 4-Way Transfers, above)

Direct Jump to 3♣ or 3♦

With a game-inviting hand including 8 – 9 HCP and a long minor, responder should jump to 3 of the minor suit to invite 3NT. Responder may have a hand that will play well in a 3NT game if opener has a fitting hand. Responder should have a good 5 or 6 card minor suit and an outside entry. 3♣ and 3♦ invitations ask opener to bid 3NT with a fit. [1NT – P – 3♦ – P – 3NT ...].

Opener, with 3 of the minor or a good holding (♣AJx, for example) and stoppers in all other suits may accept the invitation and bid 3NT. Otherwise, she passes 3 of the minor.

| | | |
|----------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> | |
| 1NT | 3♣ | “I’ve got good clubs and 8 to 9 HCP” |
| 3NT | | “Sounds like a NT game to me, South” |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ Kxxx | ♠ Txx |
| ♥ Kxx | ♥ Qx |
| ♦ AKx | ♦ xxx |
| ♣ KJx | ♣ AQxxx |

With 10+ and a 5+ card minor suit, responder should bid 3NT directly. [1NT – P – 3NT...]

Optionally, a direct jump to 3♣ can be the Puppet Stayman Convention. (See pg. 15 above) Also, some play 3♣ and 3♦ responses are analogous to 3♥ and 3♠ responses, where the lower (3♣) show 5 – 5 shape with 8 or 9 HCP and the higher (3♦) shows 5 – 5 with 10+ HCP.

Minor Suit Stayman. Some play that 2♠ shows both minors with varying strength.

BIDDING NOTRUMP IN COMPETITION

Overcalling Opponent’s Suit Opening with 1 NT

An overcall of opponent’s 1-of-a-suit opening shows a hand that would have opened 1NT if you had been the dealer, with one important difference - - the overcaller guarantees good stoppers in opponent’s suit.

Example: [1♥ – 1NT . . .]. This call shows an opening 1NT hand with good Heart stoppers, like ♥KJ9x. A minor difference is that the upper limit can be 18 HCP instead of 17 HCP.

“Systems On”. All responding conventions and treatments, like Stayman, Jacoby Transfers and 4-suit transfers are ON if partner overcalls with 1NT, meaning responses are the same as though

1st hand had passed and partner opened 1NT. [1♥ – 1NT – P – 2♣ . . .] Stayman. Check the “Systems On” box on the Convention card in the NoTrump Overcalls section.

Unusual 2 NoTrump Overcall (Although not really a NoTrump bid, it is included here for completeness)

You are about to open 1♦ holding: (♠xx ♥x ♦AKxxx ♣KQTxx) but your RHO opens 1♥. Do you bid 2♣? 2♦? Double? Pass?

This is a perfect situation for an Unusual 2NT Overcall. It shows 5 – 5 distribution of the two lower unbid suits and 8 to 14 HCP, mostly in the implied suits. It is NOT a NoTrump bid!

Assuming third hand passes, your partner then chooses which suit provides the best fit.

Example: [1♥ – 2NT – P – 3♣ . . .]

When bid over a 1♥ or 1♠ or 1NT opener, it shows the two minor suits. (Some play it always shows the two minor suits.) Over 1♦, it would show Hearts and Clubs, and over 1♣, it shows red suits. [1♣ – 2NT – P – 4♥ . . .] Partner picks a game in Hearts.

It's usually a jump to 2NT and an 'unusual situation'. The Unusual 2NT Overcall isn't alertable. [1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥ – 2NT . . .] is not unusual so it's natural, i.e., an offer to play for 8 tricks in NoTrump after partner's 1♠ overcall and opponent's 2♥ bid.

Even [P – 1♥ – P – P 2NT . . .] (by a passed hand!) can be “unusual” in context, with the same meaning, but with fewer HCP, as it originally passed.

Between the Michael's Cue-Bid and the Unusual 2 NoTrump Overcalls, we can show almost any combination of two 5-card suits over any opening suit bid.

Advantages. As with all distributional hands, this hand can take a lot of tricks with minimum support in partner's hand. In the example hand above, put ♦Qxxx and ♣Jx in partner's hand - - - is that really just 3 “points”? Add an Ace in a major suit and game in a minor suit is almost a lay down. Partner can also sacrifice, or advance sacrifice with minimum values, especially if not vulnerable. If opponents get the contract, partner can lead intelligently, knowing your cards and your values are in your two implied suits.

Disadvantages. If your side doesn't get the contract, you have warned declarer about the unusual distribution, and told her where many of the missing high cards are. And partner may find herself as declarer in a doubled contract at the 3 level in a 2 – 5 fit.

Examples.

[1♥ – 2NT . . .] shows Club and Diamond suits. [1♦ – 2NT . . .] shows Club and Heart suits

[1♣ – 2NT . . .] shows Diamond and Heart suits [1NT – 2NT . . .] shows Club and Diamond suits

Example Unusual 2NT hands:

(♠xxx ♥KJxxx ♦AKJxx ♣-) Bid 2NT over a 1♥, 1♠ or 1NT opening

(♠x ♥AQxxx ♦KQxxx ♣xx) Bid 2NT over a 1♣ opening

(♠Kx ♥A ♦Jxxxx ♣Kxxxx) Not a good Unusual 2NT Overcall, because your HCP values are outside your suits. Your partner will lead one of them, expecting to find you with something good.

Responding to an Unusual 2NT Overcall

You should normally bid the longer of the two suits partner has implied. Not the stronger: the longer, because all those cards become trumps. High cards in either suit may take tricks, but small cards in non-trump suits don't take tricks. If they're the same length, pick the weaker one because they'll all be trumps.

Quiz: The bidding has gone [1♥ – 2NT – P ...] What should you bid?

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ♠Qxx ♥Kx ♦Kxxx ♣Jxxx | Bid 3 Clubs, not 3 Diamonds. |
| ♠QJxx ♥Kxx ♦xxxx ♣Ax | Bid 3 Diamonds. |
| ♠Axx ♥KQJx ♦Kxx ♣Qxx | Bid 3 NT |
| ♠KTx ♥KQxx ♦Jxx ♣Jxx | Pass ! |
| ♠Ax ♥xxx ♦AQx ♣KJxxx | Bid 5 Clubs |
| ♠xxx ♥Jxxx ♦x ♣KJxxx | Bid 5 Clubs |

Note the strategic value of these last two hands - - opponents don't know whether you are stealing their vulnerable 4 Heart contract, or are bidding with strength.

It doesn't matter what the 2NT bidder thinks you have, because you are the Captain and partner won't bid again regardless of what you bid. Also, the known distribution hand - - the 2NT bidder - - will be the dummy and defenders won't see what's in your hand.

The Unusual 2NT Overcall is easy, straightforward and very competitive. The 2-suited nature of it prevents huge penalty losses in most cases, and interferes in others, even when opener eventually gets the contract.

Like all preemptive and shape-oriented competitive bids, the Unusual 2NT Overcall will have its share of successes against you.

Defending Against the Unusual 2NT Overcall (Unusual over Unusual)

Some Choices for 3rd Seat after RHO bids 2NT over Partner's 1NT:

(A) Support (i.e., raise) partner's major suit, as always, even with minimum HCP (3 + points and 3+ trumps). The Unusual 2NT Overcall doesn't show a lot of points, and partner needs to know about least 3+ card support for her suit whenever possible. [1♥ – 2NT – 3♥ . . .]

(B) Double to deny 3+ card support for partner when holding some values and a willingness to penalize at least one of the implied suits. [1♥ – 2NT – Dbl . . .]

(C) Bid 3NT with a strong hand and good stoppers in the implied suits. [1♥ – 2NT – 3NT]

(D) Jump to game in your partner's suit with a weak hand and 4+ trumps, before opponents find their minor suit fit. [1♥ – 2NT – 4♥ . . .] Pre-empting 4th seat, forcing it to the 5-level.

(E) Pass with none of the above, or to wait and see what 4th hand bids before deciding whether to double or bid.

(F) Bid the lower of the two implied suits to show a limit raise.

[1♥ – 2NT – 3♣ . . .] Showing partner a Limit Raise in Hearts.

(G) Bid 3 of the other major, suggesting approximately a Weak Two opener in that suit.

INTERFERING WITH OPPONENT'S 1NT OPENING

Presented here in detail is a popular defense to opponent's opening of 1NT called DONT. (**D**isturb **O**pponent's **N**o**T**rump) and how to cope with it. Modern players have a number of conventional tools to make more sophisticated bids after opponent's 1NT. There are many of them, such as Hamilton/Cappalletti/Helms, Astro, Brozel, Landy, TONT, etc. Most have the ability to show one long suit or two 5-card suits. With a balanced hand, you should defend 1NT.

A "Standard" bid is simply a suit overcall or possibly the Unusual 2NT as described above to show both minor suits.

Overviews of many of these conventions are found below in "Other Systems for Interfering Over Opponent's 1 NT"

DONT

When your RHO opens 1NT, what do you bid?

There are 2 possible sequences using DONT, which is usually bid in the direct seat only. [1NT – 2♣ ...] but not [1NT – P – P – 2♣ ...] This can be a natural Club bid, not DONT, but that's a partnership option – to bid naturally in 4th seat.

(1) Double [1NT – Dbl* . . .] by second hand shows a one-suited hand. This means DONT has given up the opportunity to make a penalty double in the direct seat.

Assuming third hand passes [1NT – Dbl* – P . . .], doubler's partner, 4th hand, will in 90% of cases, bid 2♣, asking doubler to bid her suit or pass. [1NT – Dbl* – P – 2♣* . . .].

If Clubs is the DONT doubler's suit, she simply passes, and the auction continues or dies. Otherwise, the DONT bidder bids her suit: 2♦ or 2♥ or whatever. The mission is accomplished: we have disturbed opener's 1NT auction to some extent.

A single-suited hand may be quite weak, but has a 6 or 7 card suit. With a flatish 5-3-3-2 or thereabouts, defending a NT contract may be better than bidding, especially if your side is vulnerable, so simply pass and defend.

(2) A direct suit bid by the DONT bidder shows 2 suits: the suit bid and a higher-ranking one, except for a 2♠ bid, which is just Spades. The expected distribution is 5 - 5, but 5 - 4 is OK if the 4 card suit has good values, because it may become the trump suit.

- 2 Clubs [1NT – 2♣* . . .] show Clubs and any other suit.
- 2 Diamonds [1NT – 2♦* . . .] shows Diamonds and a major suit.
- 2 Hearts [1NT – 2♥* . . .] shows both major suits.
- 2 Spades [1NT – 2♠ . . .] shows 6 weak Spades – NOT 2 suits.

Notice there are two ways to show a Spade suit: Double first and then bid Spades over partner's 2♣ or bid 2♠ directly over 1NT. The Double and then bid Spades [1NT – Dbl* – P – 2♣* P – 2♠ . . .] sequence shows a stronger Spade hand than a direct bid. [1NT – 2♠ . . .]. A direct 2 Spade bid is about equivalent to a Weak Two Spade opener, but Double and then bid 2 Spades shows an opening hand or better.

Assuming third hand passes, [1NT – 2♥* – P . . .], responder (4th hand) then picks one of the two suits shown by the doubler, by either passing or bidding a higher-ranking suit.

[1NT – 2♥* – P – 2♠ . . .] or [1NT – 2♥* – P – P . . .] choosing Hearts by passing.

Notice that 2♣* shows any of 3 higher-ranking suits; 2♦* shows either of 2 higher-ranking and 2♥* shows the majors. Responding to 2♦* is easy, and to 2♥*, even easier, but 2♣* presents several choices.

Examples:

You are dealt ($\spadesuit Qx$ $\heartsuit ATxx$ $\diamonds xxx$ $\clubsuit Kxxx$) and the bidding goes [1NT – 2 \diamonds^* – P – ???]

You'd prefer to play in 2 \heartsuit if that's doubler's second suit, but you couldn't stand 2 \spadesuit . So it's better to play a known 5 – 3 Diamond fit rather than risk a bad fit in Spades. Pass is OK.

Quiz: With these 2 hands, how should you respond?

(1) $\spadesuit Qxxx$ $\heartsuit ATx$ $\diamonds xx$ $\clubsuit Jxxx$ (2) $\spadesuit AJxxx$ $\heartsuit x$ $\diamonds KQxx$ $\clubsuit xxx$

[1NT - 2 \clubsuit^* - P - ...] _____
 [1NT - 2 \diamonds^* - P - ...] _____
 [1NT - 2 \heartsuit^* - P - ...] _____

Any other direct bid is not DONT – it's natural. For example, if you were set to open 3 \heartsuit and RHO bids 1NT, you can bid 3 \heartsuit naturally, depending on your vulnerability and the strength of your suit.

[1NT – 3 \heartsuit . . .] with ($\spadesuit xx$ $\heartsuit AKJTxxx$ $\diamonds x$ $\clubsuit Qxx$)

Any other response is not DONT – it's natural. (The other 10%). For example, with this hand, (4th hand) may decide to bid 2 \spadesuit , regardless of the DONT bidder's suit or suits.

($\spadesuit AQJTxxx$ $\heartsuit x$ $\diamonds KQx$ $\clubsuit xx$) [1NT – 2 \clubsuit^* – P – 3 \spadesuit ...] or [1NT – Dbl* – P – 2 \spadesuit ...]

Quiz: What does the last bid mean in these DONT sequences?

- (a) [1NT – dbl* – P – 2 \clubsuit P – P . . .] Accepting Clubs with 2+ Club cards
- (b) [1NT – dbl* – P – 2 \clubsuit P – 2 \heartsuit . . .] Doubler has 6+ Hearts cards
- (c) [1NT – dbl* – P – 2 \heartsuit . . .] 4th seat (Advancer) has 6+ Heart cards
- (d) [1NT – dbl* – P – P . . .] 4th seat has 10+ HCP
- (e) [1NT – 2 \clubsuit^* – P – P . . .] 4th Seat is strong, with Clubs!

All DONT bids and responses are Alertable until a real suit is chosen. DONT bidders' HCP are not as important as shape and vulnerability, remembering that responder may have 0 (zero) HCP.

Defending Against DONT

DONT bidders are trying to disturb your auction . . . don't let them do it if possible.

Opener (the 1NT bidder) is a limited hand, and will usually pass during the ensuing auction without a 5-card suit of her own, or unless DONT bidders get into real trouble.

Third hand (responder) is unlimited, so it must be the active competitor.

Suggestions for third hand bidding over a DONT call:

(A) Over a double [1NT – Dbl* . . .] just ignore it. Examples:

[1NT – Dbl* – 2♣ . . .] Stayman . . . or [1NT – Dbl* – 2♥ . . .] (Jacoby Transfer) . . .

(B) Over a DONT suit bid [1NT – 2♦* . . .], play Stolen Bid Double* if that is the bid 3rd hand was going to make.

[1NT – 2♣* – Double*]. Stayman or [1NT – 2♦* – Double*] Jacoby Transfer to Hearts.

(C) Over a DONT Double, redouble to show 8+ HCP and a willingness to penalize DONT bidders wherever they end up. [1NT – Dbl* – Redouble . . .]

(D) Holding stopper(s) in DONT bidder's implied suits, bid 2NT or 3NT with appropriate HCP

[1NT – 2♦* – 3NT . . .] holding (♠AJxx ♥Kxx ♦QJx ♣xxx) or
 [1NT – 2♦* – 2NT . . .] holding (♠QJxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxx ♣xxx)

(E) Pass, waiting to see what 4th seat and opener do, before balancing or doubling for penalty.
 [1NT – 2♥* – P . . .] holding (♠AJxx ♥Kxx ♦QJx ♣xxx)

Quiz: What does the 3rd bid mean?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| (a) [1NT – dbl* – Redbl* . . .] | 8+ HCP, for penalty |
| (b) [1NT – dbl* – 2♣ . . .] | Stayman |
| (c) [1NT – dbl* – 3NT . . .] | To Play |
| (d) [1NT – dbl* – 2H♥ . . .] | Jacoby Transfer to Spades |
| (e) [1NT – 2♣* – Dbl* . . .] | Stayman (Stolen Bid) |
| (f) [1NT – 2♦* – Dbl* . . .] | Jacoby Transfer to Hearts (Stolen Bid) |
| (g) [1NT – 2♠ – Dbl . . .] | Transfer to 3♣ (Stolen Bid) or penalty |

TONT (Transfers Over NoTrump) – Another Treatment Over a 1NT opener.

A 6-card suit is much more likely to be dealt to you than a hand with two 5-card suits.

A good defense over 1NT openings should make it easy to show 6-card suits. We could bid them naturally, [1NT – 2♦ ...] but then the wrong hand is dummy. If we can get partner to bid it, it would be right-sided, as the NT opener would be leading away from her high cards. How do we get partner to bid it? Easy: use **Transfers Over NoTrump**, i.e., **TONT**. # = “Transfer”

TONT is very simple: in the immediate seat, a suit bid over a 1NT opener asks partner to bid the next higher suit: [1NT – 2♦# ...] says, “Partner, please bid 2♥”. Similarly, 2♥# calls for 2♠; 2♠# requests 3♣ and 3♣# asks for 3♦. 2NT is the Unusual 2NT, showing the Minors and double is for penalty, showing an equal strength hand. With two 5-card suits, transfer to the higher ranking or stronger one. 8 to 14 HCP is the range. TONT bids are “Announced”, not alerted - - just say the word “Transfer”.

- a. [1NT - 2♦# ...] b. [1NT - 2♥# ...] c. [1NT - 2NT ...] d. [1NT - Dbl ...]

2♣ is for both majors; 5 – 5 or 5 – 4 or even 4 – 4 if not vulnerable and with good count.

- e. [1NT - 2♣# ...] f. [1NT - 2♦# ...] g. [1NT - 3♣# ...] h. [1NT - 2♠# ...]

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

- i. [1NT - 2♦ - P - 2♥ ...] j. [1NT - 2♠ - P - 3♦ ...] k. [1NT - 2♣ - P - 2♦ ...]

Competing With TONT: Competing after TONT calls could include Stolen Bids, i.e., “double” means “I was going to bid that”. Or a double of a TONT call could mean a willingness to penalize the transfer-to suit or simply a point-showing call, perhaps with 8+ HCP.

It could also be a Negative Double, showing the other major and 8+ points; e.g., [1NT - 2♦# - Dbl ...] showing 4+ Spades.

Lebensohl calls could also be the answer. (See Coping With Interference Over Our 1NT Opening – below)

TONT in 2nd Seat and DONT in Passout Seat?

TONT in first seat and DONT in 4th seat? It's rhythmic, but let's examine it a little:

It means an auction of [1NT – P – P – 2♦ ...] is DONT, showing Diamonds and a higher suit, and [1NT – P – P – Dbl ...] shows a one-suited hand and [1NT – P – P – 2♠ ...] shows Spades.

So then how does 4th hand bid a natural, balancing 6-card Diamond suit using DONT?

[1NT – P – P – Dbl* P – 2♣* – P – 2♥ ...] etc. Allowing defenders opportunities for lead-directing and doubles, etc. But [1NT – P – P – 2♥ ...] is so easy. Why DONT?

Caution: any system that can't show a major 6+ card suit directly is flawed, because 3rd seat, 4th seat and opener all have an opportunity to bid before the overcaller shows her suit - - it may be too late by then.

If responder (3rd seat) can't answer 1NT at all, then shouldn't we give 4th seat maximum flexibility to just bid her suit: [1NT – P – P – 2♠ ...]. Why DONT or any other convention?

Playing “standard” or “natural”, a 4th seat double of 1NT is an balancing bid, showing a flat 10 to 14 HCP hand, giving 2nd seat the option to leave the double in with HCP or bid naturally with shape. [1NT – P – P – Dbl P – 2♠ ...] Some play “Systems On” after a balancing double, meaning Stayman and Jacoby Transfers are in effect, to be bid by 2nd seat provided, opener passes. [1NT – P – P – Dbl P – 2♣ ...] Stayman.

When 2nd seat leaves the double in, opener will be in a lot of trouble: haven't you reluctantly passed with a nice 14 count because your RHO opened 1NT? But you can't leave it in if you're playing DONT in 4th seat.

“Natural” is simple, easy-to-remember and perhaps devastating to opener.

The purpose of transfers rather than direct bids in 2nd seat is to keep concealed the trump holding of 4th seat. If 2nd seat bids naturally, 4th seat becomes the dummy, for defenders to see completely. Sometimes a TONT bid is made and 4th seat is void and otherwise flat. This is the risk with all transfer systems, meaning the one doing the transferring must be disciplined - - have a good 6+ card suit, realizing partner may have nothing in the suit. As a matter of fact, this is the problem with all interference systems over RHO's 1NT systems: there is no assurance 4th seat will have any help in that suit(s).

Few experts are willing to give up the penalty double in either 2nd or 4th seats, especially just to enable partner to make a 2nd round 2♣ call, as with DONT.

Recommendation: Disciplined TONT in 2nd seat with double for penalty, and “standard – natural” in 4th seat, bidding a suit or balancing with a double, allowing 2nd seat to pass or bid on. This recommendation applies to all forms of interference after a 1NT by RHO; not just DONT/TONT. Several more such systems are described below.

OTHER SYSTEMS for COMPETING OVER RHO's 1NT

Systems of competing over 1NT opener are of two types: Double for penalty or to show one suit. The following chart describes many of the popular methods.

SYSTEMS THAT USE DOUBLE FOR PENALTY. [1NT – Dbl ...] shows an equal or better hand

- LANDY** 2♣ shows at least 4 – 4 in the majors. (Also used in TONT). Other suit bids are natural showing 5+ cards. 2NT shows both minors.
- RIPSTRA** A minor suit overcall shows a 3-suited hand with shortage in the unbid minor. Example: with (♠Q743 ♥KJ62 ♦KT73 ♣8) bid 2♦.
- BECKER** 2♣ shows both minors and 2♦ shows both majors; 5/5 or 5/4. 2♥ or 2♠ are natural bids.
- ASTRO** 2♣ shows Hearts and a minor; 2♦ shows Spades and any other suit.

HAMILTON / CAPPELLITTI / HELMS

2♣* shows any one suit and is a transfer to 2♦; overcaller then passes or bids a long suit; 2NT shows both minors; 2♦* shows both majors; 2♥* = Hearts and a minor; 2♠* = Spades and a minor. Responses: 2♦* or 2NT to ask for the minor.

HELLO *An improvement on Hamilton, et al.* 2♣* = Transfer to 2♦; 2♦* transfers to 2♥'s; 2♥* shows both majors; 2♠ is Spades, 2NT = Clubs and 3♣* shows both minors.

SUCTION Any suit overcall calls for a transfer to the next higher suit. The Suction bidder then passes, accepting the transfer or bids the next higher suit, showing that suit and the next highest. Thus, the suit the Suction bidder bids is the one she **cannot** have: [1NT – 2♦* – ...]. 2nd hand has either Hearts or Spades and Clubs. (5 – 5 is the assumed shape). Direct jumps to 3♣ show rounded suits, Clubs and Hearts and direct jumps to 3♦ show pointed suits, Diamonds and Spades. Suction can be used over 1♣ and 2NT openers as well.

SYSTEMS THAT USE DOUBLE FOR A 1- SUITED HAND. [1NT – Dbl ...] 1 unknown suit

BROZEL Double shows a strong 1-suited hand, on-lead, that can beat 1NT. Otherwise, Hearts is the anchor suit. 2♣* shows Clubs and Hearts; 2♦* shows Diamonds and Hearts; 2♥* shows both majors; 2♠* shows Spades and a minor and 2NT shows both minors.

Responses to Brozel Double: Pass for penalty with good values or bid 2♣ if weak; overcaller passes 2♣ or bids her suit. Responses to a Brozel suit: pick between the two suits shown. [1NT – 2♦* – P – 3♥ ...] Inviting in Hearts.

DONT / TONT (See DONT and TONT descriptions above)

COPING WITH INTERFERENCE OVER OUR 1NT OPENING. [1NT - 2♣ - ???]

Opponents will often bid over our 1NT openings. Responder can use transfers and other normal responses if LHO doubles, as there has been no bidding space lost. [1NT – Dbl – 2♣ . . .]. This 2♣ is Stayman, ignoring opponent’s Double. Because of this treatment, we have to check “System on after Double” on the convention card.

Example: [1NT – Dbl – 2♥# . . .] 2♥ is a Jacoby Transfer to 2 Spades.

Sometimes opponents will bid a suit, artificial or not, over our 1NT opening. If the overcall was the bid responder was going to make, then a Double call means “Partner, that’s what I was going to bid”, i.e., a “stolen bid”.

Example: [1NT – 2♦ – Dbl# . . .] Dbl# = a Jacoby Transfer to 2♥. We must announce this call, and put it on our convention card under Other. Transfers are “announced”, i.e., the single word “Transfer” is spoken by opener when partner bids any transfer. (Shown as # herein.)

Responder knows the approximate shape and strength of opener’s hand, and can bid as though (A) the overcaller hadn’t bid at all, or can (B) use the “Stolen Bid” technique for transfers or Stayman or use (C) Lebensohl.

Examples:

A. [1NT – Dbl – 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ or 2NT. . .] 2♣ is Stayman, the others are Transfers.

B. [1NT – 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ or 2NT – **Dbl** . . .]. Dbl = “*Partner, 2nd seat stole my bid*”.

C. The Lebensohl Convention (simplified)

- Any 2-level double is for penalty: [1NT – 2♠ – Dbl . . .]
- Any 2-level bid is to play [1NT – 2♦ – 2♥ . . .]
- 2NT is a transfer (puppet) to 3♣’s. [1NT – 2♠ – 2NT – 3♣’s . . .] To play or ...?
- A cue bid is game forcing Stayman, denying a stopper : [1NT – 2♠ – 3♠ . . .]
- 3NT denies a stopper: [1NT – 2♠ – 3NT . . .]
- Any direct 3-level bid is game forcing: [1NT – 2♠ – 3♣ . . .]

ADVANCER (4th Seat) BIDS AFTER 3rd SEAT CALLS OVER INTERFERENCE

The Exclusion Double. If responder (3rd seat) bids or implies a bid with a double after a single-suit showing call, e.g., [1NT – 2♦ – Dbl# . . .] then 4th seat is not required to bid. So, if she doubles or redoubles, she is short in the suit bid or implied by 3rd seat, has some count and support for overcaller’s suit, even though she may not know what suit it is! [1NT – 2♣ (Hamilton) – 2♦# – Dbl . . .] “Partner, I’m short in Hearts, so bid your (unknown) suit.”

If 3rd seat passes after a double for penalty, that means the first 2 hands show about 32 HCP, leaving ~ 8 HCP for the 3rd and 4th seats combined. If 4th seat has 5 ~ 6 HCP, she can pass to leave in the penalty. Or she can use “Systems On” or natural bids, per partnership agreements.

Interference by Passed Hands. Any NT interference system that uses double as a strong bid, suggesting penalty, must have a different meaning if the doubler is a passed hand, as obviously a passed hand can't be strong enough for penalties over 1NT. Examples after [P – 1NT – P – P
Dbl ...]

Landy: Double shows both majors. 2♣ etc. is natural.

Hamilton, et al. or HELLO: Double shows both majors. 2♣ is natural.

You and partner should work out the meaning when a passed hand doubles a subsequent 1NT opening, depending on the interference system you use. A logical place to start is the usual 10 – 14 HCP balanced double, as though the past hand was in 4th seat. Suit overcalls should probably be “standard”. i.e.; normal suit-showing calls.

4th Seat Passout Calls. Many play natural bids in 4th seat: [1NT – P – P – 2♣...] A Club suit. Double in the passout seat shows 10 to 14 HCP balanced. [1NT – P – P – Dbl ...] Partner should pass for penalty with 12+ HCP or bid her best suit. [1NT – P – P – Dbl P – P]. leaving the penalty in. Partners can agree to use System On techniques in this situation as well (Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, for example) [1NT – P – P – Dbl P – 2♣...] Stayman.

WEAK NOTRUMP OPENINGS

Weak NoTrump openings have been around for many years: since the K-S days, and are often used in “Big Club” styles. They are fun, easy and an interesting change of style. * = *Alert*

Weak NoTrump openings can be of several HCP ranges, such as 12 to 14 or 11 to 14 or 10 to 12 (called Kamikaze NoTrump). Described herein is the most common Weak NoTrump opening range, 12 to 14 HCP. (Note that most 1-of-a-suit openings fall into this same HCP range). There are several Cases:

Case A. Open all balanced 12 to 14 HCP hands with 1NT, in all seats, at all vulnerabilities. (Some use them only when non-vulnerable or in 3rd seat only).

Partner should announce them as “12 to 14 HCP”. (1NT overcalls show “standard” 15 to 17/18 HCP). With 5+ cards in a major, open the major, by partnership agreement. “Balanced” means all 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 hands and many 5-3-3-2 or 5-4-2-2 (5-card minor only). With 4-4-4-1 or 4-4-5 (5-card minor) and 11 to 15 HCP, open 2♦* Mini – Roman, or 1 Club or 1 Diamond, but not 1NT.

Case B. With 15 to 17 HCP and NoTrump shape, open with a minor suit and rebid 1NT*, denying 4-card support for partner’s major if she bid one. The 1NT rebid is alerted as “15 to 17 HCP”.

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT* ...] Showing a balanced 15+ opener.

Here is a Case B. sequence **with** 4-card support: [1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 2♠* . . .]. It shows 15 – 17 dummy point support, and is alertable.

Note: The HCP range for this raise may be 12 to 14, as in a normal unbalanced opener. However, as it is unbalanced, there are shape points that bring the “dummy point” total up to 15 or nearly that: (♠KT98 ♥KJ6 ♦32 ♣AQ875), 13 HCP plus 1 each for a doubleton and 5-card suit makes it stronger than a “normal” flat 12 point raise to 2♠.

Case C. With 18 or 19 HCP and NoTrump shape, open with a minor suit and rebid 2NT, as in “Standard” bidding, denying 4-card support for partner’s major if she bid one, and probably, but not always, denying the other major. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 2NT ...]

Here is the Case C. sequence with 4-card support: [1♣ – P – 1♠ – P 3♠ . . .]. It shows 18 – 19 point support for Spades, as in “Standard” bidding. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 4♥ . . .] shows 20+ points with 4-card support, like “Standard” bidding. Neither requires an alert.

Case D. Opening One of a Suit When Playing Weak NoTrump Openings

Opening Majors. Major suit openings should be “Standard” or Two Over One, whichever is your style. Recommended is to open all 5-card majors, even in an otherwise balanced 12 to 14 HCP hand. A major suit opening is not limited to 12 to 14 HCP.

Opening Minors. A sequence such as [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT* ...] is the Case B hand above: balanced, but with 15 to 17 HCP, and the 1NT bid must be alerted. Therefore, opening in a minor suit suggests an unbalanced hand *or* a balanced hand of 15+ HCP. Example: [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1♠ ...]. This sequence shows a 12 to 14 HCP unbalanced hand, by definition. The Spades are 4 cards long, so the Clubs are 5+ long. If the Clubs are only 4 cards long, opener should have opened 1NT, or 2♦ Mini-Roman if 4-4-4-1, but not 1♣. Notice the differences:

(♠A765 ♥K76 ♦K76 ♣K87) is a 1NT opening hand, not a 1♣ opening.

(♠A765 ♥K7 ♦K6 ♣KT987) is a 1♣ opener, to be followed by a 1♠ rebid over partner’s 1♥ response or a 1♠ rebid over partner’s 1♥ response.

(A765 ♥KQ76 ♦7 ♣K876) is a Mini-Roman 2♦ opener, not a 1♣ or 1NT opener.

RESPONSES TO ONE OF A SUIT OPENING PLAYING WEAK NOTRUMP

Responding to Major Suit Openings. Responses to major suit openings are in the “Standard” or “Two Over One” style of your choice, and are not affected by the fact you play 1NT Weak NoTrump Openings.

Responding to Minor Suit Openings. When partner opens 1♣ or 1♦, “normal” responses are called for, as responder doesn’t know anything unusual except that opener does **not** have a balanced 12 to 14 HCP hand. Respond with 4+ card majors, Inverted Minors, NoTrump, etc., just as you would playing “Standard”.

Openers 2nd bid will clarify her HCP as 12 to 14 or 15 to 17 or 18-19. 18 or 19 HCP hands will jump to 2NT; 15 to 17 HCP hands will rebid 1NT and must be alerted; Other strength hands will NOT bid 1NT, as they are unbalanced by definition. They may bid the other minor, in a Reverse or normal sequence; they may rebid a weakish 6-card minor; they may jump rebid the minor in a strong 18+ hand, they may jump-shift, etc. In short they may rebid anything “Standard” bidders would bid **except** 1NT.

Responder’s Rebids when Opener Rebids NoTrump over a Major Suit Response

Case B. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 1NT* ...] Showing 15 – 17 HCP and alertable.

Case C. [1♦ – P – 1♠ – P 2NT ...] “Standard”. 18 – 19 HCP. Not Alertable.

In either of these cases, responder can pass or raise NoTrump, as in “Standard” bidding, remembering that the 1NT rebid shows 15 to 17 HCP points, not 12 to 14.

Responder can also rebid his 6+card major at the 2-, 3- or 4-level, knowing opener’s HCP and trump holding (2 or 3 trumps). But with 5 cards in the major, and possibly the other major as well, plus a desire to go on to game or slam, responder uses a convention called “Reverse Checkback Stayman”, (RCS).

The Reverse Checkback Stayman Convention (RCS)

When opener rebids in NoTrump after a minor-suit opening and a major suit response, responder may hold 5 in his/her major and possibly the other major as well, and may want to press on with a major suit exploration. (Cases B. and C. above)

Let’s revisit Case B., above, for example. [1♣ – P – 1♥ – P – 1NT* . . .] Showing 15 – 17 HCP.

This responder, holding (♠QJ98 ♥KQJ65 ♦3 ♣J87), would like to ask opener if he holds 3 of her Hearts or holds 4 Spades. This is where RCS comes in.

Insofar as asking about 3 Heart cards, RCS acts like New Minor Force.

In fact, NMF can be used instead of RCS, but you may miss a fit in the other major.

The RCS call is always 2♣, regardless of which minor suit the opener bid:

[1♣ – P – 1♥ – P – 1NT* – P – 2♣* . . .]. Both 1NT and 2♣ must be alerted.
1NT “shows 15 to 17 HCP” and 2♣ “asks about opener’s major suits”.

There is a fixed set of responses by opener to responder’s 2♣* RCS bid:

- 2♦* says “I have 3 of your major and 4 of the other major”
- 2 of responder’s major* says “I have 3 of your major but not 4 of the other major”
- 2 of the other major* says “I have only 2 of your major but I have 4 of the other one”
- 2NT says “I have none of the above”

Responder’s Rebids Other Than 2♣ RCS after Opener’s 1NT Rebid

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2♦ or 3♣ | To play |
| 2♥ or 2♠ | 6-card suits, to play |
| 3♥ or 3♠ | 6-card suits, invitational to game |
| 4♥ or 4♠ | 6+ card suits, to play |
| 5♣ or 5♦ | To play. |
| 3NT, 6NT, 7NT | To play |
| 4NT | RKCB for responder’s major suit |
| 6 or 7 of a suit | To play |

RESPONSES TO WEAK ONE NOTRUMP OPENINGS

Bids by non-passed hands without an intervening bid, i.e., [1NT – P – ??]. There is no need for Jacoby or other low-level transfers, as game-going hands will be roughly equal in strength. Thus, most suit bids are natural. (See below for responses in competition.)

2♣ is non game-forcing Stayman. (See below for continuations)

2♦* is game-forcing Stayman, (12+ HCP) (See below for continuations)

2♥ and 2♠ responses are to play; opener must pass. [1NT – P – 2♥/2♠] Not a transfer.

2NT shows exactly 11 or 12 HCP; invitational to 3NT. [1NT – P – 2NT . . .] Not a transfer.

3♣, 5♣, 3♦ and 5♦ responses are to play, showing a 6+ card suit; opener must pass.

[1NT – P – 3♦/3♣]

3♥ and 3♠ responses show weak 6+-card suits; opener must pass. [1NT – P – 3♥/♠]

3NT is to play

South African Texas Transfers are a more sophisticated way to play 4 of a major, as responder can transfer to opener or declare: (See South African Texas Transfers, pg. ??? above)

4♣* is a transfer to 4♥ (A transfer – not Gerber!) [1NT – P – 4♣*]

4♦* is a transfer to 4♠ [1NT – P – 4♦*]

4♥ is to play [1NT – P – 4♥]

4♠ is to play [1NT – P – 4♠]

Example hands: Responses to [1NT – P – ???]

| | | | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|------------|
| ♠K8654 | ♠K865 | ♠KT8654 | ♠AK654 | ♠AQJ9864 | ♠AQJ9864 |
| ♥Q6 | ♥Q64 | ♥Q6 | ♥Q6 | ♥T2 | ♥T2 |
| ♦QJ32 | ♦QJ432 | ♦QJ3 | ♦QJ3 | ♦8 | ♦8 |
| ♣A8 | ♣J | ♣98 | ♣AK8 | ♣AQT | ♣KQJ |
| 2♦ then | 2♣ | 2♠ | 2♦ then | 4♠ | 4♦* (xfer) |
| ?♠ or NT | | | ?♠ | | |
| ♠Q2 | ♠3 | ♠A32 | ♠3 | ♠A73 | ♠A73 |
| ♥KJT2 | ♥KJT | ♥KJT2 | ♥KJT982 | ♥QJ8 | ♥QJ8 |
| ♦A54 | ♦54 | ♦A5 | ♦54 | ♦A32 | ♦J32 |
| ♣J543 | ♣QJT6543 | ♣Q543 | ♣6543 | ♣K983 | ♣Q983 |
| 2♣ then | 3♣ | 2♦ then | 2♥ | 3NT | Pass |
| 3♥ or | | 4♥ or 3NT | | | |
| 2NT | | | | | |

Opener's and Responder's Rebids after a 2♣ Stayman. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P ? ...]
 Most Stayman responses and rebids are “standard”, but both know game is not forced, so Garbage Stayman techniques are often used.

Opener's rebid

2♦ (No 4 card major.)

Responder's Rebid

- Pass 5+ Diamonds.
- 2♥ 5 Hearts, may be passed if opener has 3 Hearts, else rebid 2NT
- 2♠ 5 Spades, may be passed with 3 Spades, else rebid 2NT
- 2NT Invitational, 11 or 12 HCP

2♥ (4 Hearts; may have 4 Spades as well)

Responder's Rebid

- Pass 3+ Hearts by responder
- 2♠ 5 Spades; opener passes with 3 Spades, else rebids 2NT
- 2NT 4 Spades, less than 4 Hearts. Invitational, 11 – 12 HCP
- 3♣ 5+ strong Clubs, not 4 Hearts or Spades. (10+ HCP)
- 3♦ 5+ strong Diamonds, not 4 Hearts or Spades. (10+ HCP)

2♠ (4 Spades; not 4 Hearts)

Responder's Rebid

- Pass 3+ Spades by responder
- 2NT 4 Hearts, less than 4 Spades. Invitational, 11 – 12 HCP
- 3♣ 5+ strong Clubs, not 4 Hearts or Spades. (10+ HCP)
- 3♦ 5+ strong Diamonds, not 4 Hearts or Spades. (10+ HCP)

Opener's and Responder's Rebids after a 2♦ Stayman Response. [1NT – P – 2♦* – P..]

2♦ Stayman (Game-Forcing Stayman) responses are similar to regular non game-forcing Stayman, except the 2♦ rebid by opener isn't available.

Opener's Rebid

2♥ (4 Hearts; may have 4 Spades as well)

Responder's Rebid

- 4♥ No slam interest; 4+ Hearts; to play
- 3NT 4 Spades; opener chooses 4♠ or 3NT
- 2♠ 5 Spades; opener must raise with 3.
- 3♣ Not 4 Hearts, 4 Spades; great Clubs
- 3♦ Not 4 Hearts, 4 Spades; great Diamonds
- 3♥ 4+ Hearts; opener cue bids Aces up-the-line.
- 4NT RKCB for Hearts

2♠ (4 Spades, fewer than 4 Hearts)

Responder's Rebid

- 4♠ No slam interest; 4+ Spades; to play
- 3NT To play
- 3♥ 5 Hearts, opener must raise with 3 Hearts
- 3♠ 4+ Spades; opener cue bids Aces up-the-line.
- 3♣ Not 4 Spades; 4 Hearts, great Clubs
- 3♦ Not 4 Spades; 4 Hearts, great Diamonds
- 4NT RKCB for Spades

2NT (No 4 card major)

Responder's Rebid

- 3NT To play
- 3♥/3♠ 5-card suit; opener must raise with 3 or bid 3NT with only 2.

Slam Bidding Sequences

A raise of a minor suit to 4 is Minor Suit Roman Key Card Blackwood (MSRKCB).

[1NT – P – 2♦* – P 3♣ – P – 4♣*...] Use 1430 style responses to 4♣.
 4♦ shows 1 or 4 “Aces”; 4♥ shows 0 or 3 “Aces”, 4♠ shows 2 “Aces” with the ♣Q and
 4NT shows 2 “Aces” with the ♣Q (This bid can be passed!).

Subsequently, responder's 5♣ is a minor suit game signoff. Responder's 5♦ (the other minor after opener's response to MCRKCB) is a King-Ask; specific Kings up-the-line are recommended; the ♣K and all 4 Aces are held before 5♦ can be bid. Diamond slam tries are analogous, with “5♣ - other minor” being the continuation for King-Ask.

4NT is regular Roman Key Card Blackwood – 1430 Style.

The last bid suit, or an agreed major, is the 5th Ace & trump Queen.
 [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2♥ – P – 4NT ...] Hearts is the agreed trump.
 [1NT – P – 2♦* – P 2NT – P – 4NT ...] Use the Diamond King and Queen.

Passed Hand Responses to 1NT Opening [P – P – 1NT – P ??...]

The only forcing bid by a passed hand is Stayman: [P – P – 1NT – P 2♣...]

2NT shows exactly 11 HCP with no 5-card+ major. [P – P – 1NT – P 2NT...]

All other suit bids are to play, including 2♦. [P – P – 1NT – P 2♦...] Non Forcing Stayman.

Responses to 1NT Openings after an Intervening Bid (not a penalty double)

Game is unlikely, so the bidding objective is to find a 7 or 8 card fit at a low level.

Opener – Opponent

1NT – 2♣/2♦

Responder

Pass No majors, weak or sandbagging

Dbl “Stolen Bid” “I was going to bid 2♣ or 2♦ Stayman” 10+
2+♥, 2+♠, 3+♣, 3+♦ are to play. 5+ card suits. 8+ HCP.

1NT – 2♥/2♠

Pass Weak or sandbagging

Dbl To play

3♣ or 3♦ 6+ card suits, 8+ HCP.

Escape Responses to 1NT Openings after an Intervening Penalty Double

The objective is to find any 2-level 7+ card fit to minimize the penalty.

Escape after a Direct Seat Penalty Double.

Opener – Opponent

1NT – Dbl - ??

Responder

Pass* No 5+ card suit. *Alertable*.

2♣ Non game-forcing Stayman.

2♦, 2♥, 2♠, 3+♣. To play. 5+ card suits.

Redouble is to play (10+ HCP).

2NT 11 HCP, invitational.

3NT To play. 13+. Rather than penalize opponents,
(Vul vs. Not Vul is the only likely case.)

Escape after [1NT – Dbl – P – P ?? . . .] Double in direct seat, passed around to opener after responder denies a 5+ card escape suit.

Opener’s Rebid

2♣ or 2♦ A 5+ card suit. Responder should pass. (Opener can’t have 5 of a major.)
[1NT – Dbl – P* – P 2♦ . . .] Opener has 5 Diamonds but not 5 Clubs.

Redouble. Denies any 5+ card suit; asks responder to bid 4+ card suits up the line.
[1NT – Dbl – P* – P ReDouble . . .] Responder and opener bid 4-card suits up-the-line until a 7 or 8-card fit is found.

Escape after [1NT – P – P – Dbl ??..] A Penalty Double in passout seat.

Opener's rebid

Pass. A required pass by opener, because responder may want to leave the double in, for example, when holding 10 HCP, or may want to bid something.

If opener and 2nd seat both pass the 4th seat double, responder bids are:

Pass Responder is willing to play 1NT doubled. 10+ HCP

2♣ Non game-forcing Stayman.

2♦, 2♥, 2♠ A 5+ card suit. Opener must pass.

Redouble “Opener, please bid your 4+ suits up the line” .

Opener then bids 4 card suits up-the-line and responder does likewise, as above.

Escape Sequences in Practice.

Consider: you can open 1♠ with 12 to 14 HCP and get doubled and go off one or two, but when is the last time that actually happened to you? 12 to 14 1NT is no different.

Their Frustration is Your Friend. And that's another advantage of Weak NoTrump openings; opponents have not bid anything constructive while they are trying to penalize you, so they have to start finding their best contract at the 2 or even 3-level. At a minimum, you have taken away all the 1-level and possibly some 2-level bids, so opponents' system has to start at a higher level.

Except against expert opponents, the frustration of starting at the 2 or 3-level often leads to missed games or playing in the wrong contract or level. Experts have ways to cope, but it still takes away a level or two of their bidding.

APPENDIX A – STAYMAN and JACOBY TRANSFER CONVENTIONS

Finding an 8 Card Major Suit Fit With the Stayman Convention - Stayman Mechanics

(1) Responder bids 2♣ (or 3♣ over an opening 2NT), then

(2) Opener makes one of these three rebids:

2/3♦ = No four card major; 2/3♥ = Four+ Hearts, perhaps 4+ Spades as well

2/3♠ = Four+ Spades, denies four+ Hearts

No other rebids are allowed -- responder is captain of the hand and she must be able to trust opener to bid correctly. Suit strength in HCP is irrelevant. Responder may want to pass 2♦! Especially, 2NT rebids and “Super Accept rebids” are not recommended.

(3) Responder then makes the final bid using her knowledge about opener’s hand.

[1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P – P...], or

[1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 3NT...], etc.

Example Stayman Sequences:

| | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♥ | P A Heart fit is found. |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KQx | ♠ Txx |
| ♥ Axxx | ♥ Qxxx |
| ♦ AKxx | ♦ xxx |
| ♣ xx | ♣ AJx |

| | |
|----------|---|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♠ | 4♠ 4♠ means "We have 8 Spades and 26+ HCP, North" |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KQxx | ♠ Jxxx |
| ♥ Axx | ♥ xxx |
| ♦ AKxx | ♦ Qx |
| ♣ Qx | ♣ AKJx |

Pass When It's Right. Responder may pass with a weak hand and a fit for the suit rebid by the opener, including 2♦, or she may rebid 2NT (invitational, showing 8 or 9 points) to indicate a non-fit with opener's major, or bid 3NT with 10+ HCP. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P – 3NT ...]

Bailing Out At the Two-Level. A weak responder hand could bid 2♠ with 4 Spade cards over a 2♥ rebid by opener to try for a 4-4 or even a 4-3 fit at the two-level. Opener should respect this try and pass with 3 or 4 Spades. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P – 2♠ ...]

| | |
|----------|---|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♥ | 2♠ "I'm weak but have 4 Spade cards. Pass with 3 or more" |
| P | OK, South, I hear you! |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KQx | ♠ Jxxx |
| ♥ Axxx | ♥ xx |
| ♦ AKxx | ♦ xxxxx |
| ♣ xx | ♣ Qx |

| | |
|----------|---|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♥ | 3♥ A raise, short of game " I have 4 Hearts and 8+ HCP" |
| P | P = " 3 Hearts is enough South, -- I'm at minimum HCP" |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KJx | ♠ Qxx |
| ♥ Axxx | ♥ Kxxx |
| ♦ AKxx | ♦ Jxx |
| ♣ xx | ♣ Kx |

Implied Major. If the 2♣ responder bids 3NT after the opener shows a four card major, she has the other major - guaranteed. A sequence such as this is common:

| | |
|----------|--|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♥ | 3NT 3NT = "I have 4 Spades, North and 10+ HCP" |
| P | P = "I don't have four Spades, South, so NT it is" |

Invitations. With 8 or 9 dummy points and a major suit fit, responder should invite game:

| | |
|----------|--|
| <i>N</i> | <i>S</i> |
| 1NT | 2♣ Stayman |
| 2♥ | 3♥ 3♥ = "We have 8+ Hearts; bid game with a maximum" |
| 4♥ | 4♥ = "I'm at the maximum, partner" |

Finding an 8+ Card Major Suit Fit With the Jacoby Transfer Convention

Transfers complement the Stayman Convention by finding major suit fits when responder holds 5+ Hearts or 5+ Spades. (With 6+ card suits, there's no question about an 8+-card fit.)

All transfers demand specific rebids by opener. A Jacoby Transfer response to 1NT or 2NT openings shows a 5+ card major suit in responder's hand and forces the opener to bid it. Responder/captain then continues on or passes, as she is in charge of the bidding for the hand.

Jacoby Transfer Mechanics. The mechanics of Jacoby Transfers are as follows:

1. Responder to a 1NT opener or overcall, or to a 2NT opener, bids the suit immediately below the intended major suit -- Diamonds or Hearts, calling for a rebid of Hearts or Spades, respectively. [1NT – P – 2♥ ...] “Please bid 2♠, partner”
2. Opener says the word “Transfer”, then bids the implied suit at the lowest legal level. No originality is allowed. Over interference, responder can still use transfers if there is room: [1NT – 2♣ – 2♥ - ...] A Jacoby Transfer to Spades.
3. Responder then passes, places the final contract, or invites opener to place it depending on opener's holding in the transferred-to suit.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---|
| <i>N</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>S</i> | |
| 1NT | P | 2♦ | Jacoby Transfer to 2♥ |
| 2♥ | P | 3NT | 3NT = " I have 10+ HCP and 5 Hearts, North " |
| 4♥ | | | 4♥ = " I have 3+ Hearts, too, South. Let's play Hearts" |

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
| ♠ KQx | ♠ Jxx |
| ♥ KQxx | ♥ Axxxx |
| ♦ Kx | ♦ Qxx |
| ♣ Axxx | ♣ Kx |

In the above example, opener has four heart cards, so she chooses the 4 Heart game rather than the alternative, 3NT. If opener had only two Heart cards, she would choose 3NT rather than 4♥.

Responder Rebids after a Jacoby Transfer

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

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

- 2NT by responder after opener's required suit rebid shows a balanced 8-9 HCP and invites 3NT or 3 or 4 of the major if maximum, or pass if minimum. [1NT – P – 2♥ – P 2♠ – P – 2NT ...] An invitation, including 5 Spade cards.
- A responder raise to 3 Hearts or 3 Spades shows 8-9 dummy points in a suit-oriented hand, and a 6-card suit. [1NT – P – 2♥ – P 2♠ – P – 3♠ ...] An invitation.

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

| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i> |
|--------------|--------------|
| ♠ KQxx | ♠ Jxx |
| ♥ AQx | ♥ KJxxx |
| ♦ Qxx | ♦ Kxx |
| ♣ Axx | ♣ xx |

- A 3♣ or 3♦ rebid by responder, after opener's required transfer rebid, is game forcing and shows a second 4 or 5 card suit and asks opener to choose the game contract: 3NT or 4 of the major or, rarely, 5 of the minor. [1NT – P – 2♥ – P 2♠ – P – 3♦ ...]. Opener will usually bid 3NT with a maximum HCP hand. Rarely, 5♦ will be better.