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## Definitions

A **balanced** hand contains no singletons or voids and at most one doubleton.

**Points** refer to a total value of a hand, including shape.

**HCP** refers only to a hand's high-card points.

A **natural** suited bid shows 4+ cards in its suit. A natural notrump bid shows a desire to play in notrump.

A non-natural bid is called an **artificial** bid.

A **convention** is a commonly used artificial bid that has been given a name. Conventions are not part of Standard American, but many are commonly or nearly-universally played.

A **forcing** bid demands a bid from partner if the next opponent passes. A forcing bid is also known as **one-round-forcing**.

A **signoff** is a bid that strongly requests a pass or correction to another suit shown by the player signing off. Partner normally may not make a bid in any suit not shown by the signing-off player. A signoff usually occurs when the captain of the auction places the final contract.

An **invitational** bid communicates that the partnership should bid a game unless partner has very minimal strength for previous actions.

A **game-forcing** bid means that the partnership cannot play any contract below 3NT. The partnership can play in 4 of a minor.

A **jump** bid occurs at the next-to-lowest possible level.

A **repeat** is a bid by either opener or responder at his second turn in the same suit as that player's first bid.

A **shift** is a non-jump bid of a new suit by opener at his second turn that occurs below 2 of his first suit. A new suit by responder at his first turn is also sometimes referred-to as a shift.

A **reverse** is a non-jump bid of a new suit by opener at his second turn that occurs above 2 of his first suit.

A **limit raise** is an invitational raise opposite a Standard opening. It shows 10-12 points.

A **cuebid** is the bid of an opponent's suit.

A **preempt** is a weak opening showing a long suit.

An **overcall** is the first bid made by the side that did not open the bidding.

**Opener** is the player who opened the bidding with a non-preempt. **Preemptor** opens the bidding with a preempt. **Responder** is opener's partner. **Overcaller** is the player making an overcall or takeout double. **Advancer** is Overcaller or Preemptor's partner.

A player's **LHO** is the opponent sitting to the left of that player. (Left-hand opponent)

A player's **RHO** is the opponent sitting to the right of that player. (Right-hand opponent)

A **fit** in a suit is an 8+ card combined holding between the two partners.

A **stopper** is any holding that prevents the opps from taking the first 5 tricks in that suit against 3NT.

## 1NT opening

The Standard American 1NT opening shows 15-17 HCP, balanced.

Responder has the following options:

2suit	5+ cards, signoff
2NT	natural and invitational
3suit	5+ cards, game forcing
3NT	signoff
4M	6+ cards, signoff

We can add features to this system with conventional bids. First, the **Stayman** convention adds the ability to locate 4-4 major fits. Responder's options change to:

<b>2C</b>	<b>Stayman, asking if opener has any 4-card majors</b>
2D/H/S	5+ cards, signoff
2NT	natural and invitational
<b>3C</b>	<b>6+ cards, signoff</b>
3M	5 cards, game forcing
3NT	signoff
4M	6+ cards, signoff

After 1NT – 2C opener bids 2M with 4 or more cards in that major. Holding no 4-card or longer major, opener bids 2D. Opener is NOT allowed to bid 2NT.

After 1NT – 2C – 2D responder has the following options:

2M	5+ cards, signoff
2NT	natural and invitational
3m	natural and game forcing
3M	5 cards, game forcing
3NT	signoff
4M	6+ cards, signoff

These are similar to direct responses to 1NT. After 1NT – 2C – 2M responder has the following options:

2S	natural and invitational
2NT	natural and invitational
3m	natural and game forcing (implies other major)
raise	natural and invitational
3OM	artificial, game-forcing hand with support for opener's major
3NT	signoff
raise to game	signoff
4NT	invitational to slam

Another feature we can add is **Jacoby Transfer** responses. Transfers allow for opener to declare more contracts and for additional invitational and game-forcing sequences. We want the 1NT opener to declare as much as possible since he has more of the partnership's high cards since the high cards will be hidden and opener will be allowed to play last on the first trick. Responder's options change to:

2C	Stayman, asking if opener has any 4-card majors
<b>2D</b>	<b>Transfer to hearts, shows 5+ hearts, any strength</b>
<b>2H</b>	<b>Transfer to spades, shows 5+ spades, any strength</b>
<b>2S</b>	<b>unused</b>
2NT	natural and invitational
3C	6+ cards, weak
<b>3D</b>	<b>6+ cards, weak</b>
<b>3M</b>	<b>unused</b>
3NT	signoff
4M	6+ cards, signoff

After a transfer, opener only has 2 options: accept the transfer by bidding responder's suit at the minimum level or super-accept the transfer by jumping in responder's suit. The super-accept shows maximum values and 4-card or better support for responder's major. The accept shows any other hand, including those without support for responder's suit. Remember that responder may have ANY strength hand, so opener cannot decide to play in other suits or in notrump as responder may be very weak.

After 1NT – 2D – 2H responder has the following options:

2S	natural and invitational
2NT	natural and invitational
3m	natural and game-forcing
raise	6+ cards (this is sort of like a repeat), invitational
3OM	5+ cards, game forcing
3NT	signoff (opener often pulls to 4M with a fit)
raise to 4	6+ cards signoff
4NT	invitational to slam

We can further supplement our response structure to 1NT with some additional conventions. These are much less commonly played than Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, which are near-universally played. We also will introduce conventions which are mutually exclusive; players must choose one or the other since they use the same bids.

First, note that there are two ways to sign off in a major suit game opposite a 1NT opening: bid game directly and transfer, then raise to game. Bidding game directly deprives responder's LHO of the opportunity to bid at a low level; transferring makes opener declarer which is better for many reasons. We can combine these advantages by playing 4-level transfers to major suits.

Two commonly played conventions are Texas Transfers and South African Transfers.

In Texas Transfers:

1NT -  
4C **Gerber** convention  
4D Transfer to hearts  
4H Transfer to spades  
4S unused

In South African Transfers:

1NT –  
4C Transfer to hearts  
4D Transfer to spades  
4H signoff  
4S signoff

The Gerber convention asks partner how many aces he holds. It is not very useful, as it does not give any information about the relative strength of the 1NT opener's hand.

Further discussion of Gerber can be found in the Slam bidding section.

The advantage of Texas Transfers is that it is possible to use Gerber. The advantage of South African Transfers is that it is possible for responder to choose which player becomes declarer in 4M. Most people in the United States who play 4-level transfers play Texas Transfers; most people have not even heard of South African Transfers.

Playing either 4-level transfer scheme, responder uses the 4-level transfer followed by 4NT as an ace-asking bid (discussed in the Slam bidding section). Additionally, the Jacoby Transfer followed by a raise to game is no longer needed as a signoff bid. This becomes invitational to slam.

Another feature we can add is the ability to transfer into minor suits. This takes advantage of the unused 2S response when playing Jacoby Transfers. We introduce several schemes here: Minor Transfer, 4-Way Transfers, Improved 4-Way Transfers, Suit-Only 4-Way Transfers, Better Minor 4-Way Transfers.

The simplest option here is to play 2S as a Minor Transfer. This shows a weak hand with an undisclosed 6+ minor suit. Opener bids 3C; responder passes with clubs and corrects to 3D with diamonds. This is a common treatment, but it is overly simplistic. Its disadvantages are that it doesn't make opener declarer in diamond contracts, and it isn't clear which minor responder holds if he bids above 3D on his second turn.

The other common treatment is to play 4-Way Transfers. 2S is a transfer to clubs and 2NT is a transfer to diamonds. Opener can either accept the transfer or make the bid in-between the response and the accepting bid. This in-between step is a super-accept; it shows 1 of the top 3 honors in responder's minor and at least 3-card support. Responder may correct to 3 of his minor to play, or he can make any higher bid to force game. Opener and responder can reach some good games in this manner. For instance, if responder has KQxxxx in his minor and no other high cards, he can bid 3NT to play if opener super-accepts the transfer even though he does not have many high cards. The super-accept shows 1 of the top 3, so responder's hand is suddenly worth many tricks in notrump once responder knows opener holds the Ace.

The main disadvantage of 4-Way Transfers is that responder can no longer bid 2NT natural and invitational, which is a very significant loss. Some people choose to bid Stayman followed by 2NT with this hand, but this is bad for a few reasons. It needlessly reveals information about declarer's hand to the opponents, which will help the defense, it allows responder's LHO to bid at the 2-level, and it disallows the often useful inference that responder has a 4-card major when he bids Stayman. The author thinks 4-Way Transfers is a silly convention for these reasons.

**Improved 4-Way Transfers**, on the other hand, is a convention of which the author approves. In this method, responder bids 2S holding an invitation to game in notrump OR a transfer to clubs. Opener bids 2NT on minimum values and 3C on maximum values. One disadvantage of this method is that responder's LHO can double 2S to show a good hand with spades, when he wouldn't be able to do so after a natural 2NT response. This can help responder's RHO find the right lead against 3NT sometimes when he would have had to guess if responder had bid a natural 2NT. Another disadvantage is that some club contracts will not be declared from the correct side. However, this method gains over not playing any form of minor transfers in a number of cases, and the above disadvantages are very rare.

**Suited 4-Way Transfers** is yet another improvement to 4-Way Transfers. This scheme leaves the 2N response as natural and invitational, and it uses the 3C response as a transfer to diamonds. The 3D response can be used as a game invitation: opener will bid if he would super-accept the 2N transfer to diamonds and pass otherwise. This prevents responder from doubling the 2S invitation for the lead and gains slightly on invitational club hands (regular 4-Way is slightly more accurate than Improved because in Improved opener just shows max/min as if responder had a balanced invitation). The disadvantage is that the 3C and 3D bids must also be used as a part of this scheme instead of being used for some other purpose.

**Better Minor 4-Way Transfers** is yet another variation. This is basically an extension to improved 4-Way Transfers. The 2NT response may be either both minors and a weak hand or just diamonds. Opener bids his better minor, and responder can correct 3C to 3D if he has just diamonds. The disadvantages of this method as compared to Improved 4-Way Transfers are that some diamond contracts will be wrong-sided, and it becomes difficult for responder to judge whether or not to bid game when he holds an invitational hand with diamonds. The advantage is that there is now a way to bid weak hands with both minors. The author believes that the disadvantages here outweigh the advantages, and that it is better to play Improved 4-Way Transfers and play a 3C response as a weak hand with both minors; opener can pass or correct to 3D.

The last common improvement to the response structure is a declarer-optimization after the Stayman auction 1N – 2C – 2D called the **Smolen** convention. In Standard, 3M by responder at his second turn shows 5+ in the suit and is game forcing. It is slightly better to play that 3M shows 5+ in the OTHER major. This way opener will declare when the partnership does not play in 3NT.

An advanced pair's response structure might look like the following:

1NT –	
2C	Stayman, with Smolen optimization
2D	Jacoby Transfer to hearts
2H	Jacoby Transfer to spades
2S	Transfer to clubs, or invitational in notrump
2NT	Transfer to diamonds
3C	5+ in each minor, weak hand
3D/H/S	unused
3NT	signoff
4C	Transfer to hearts
4D	Transfer to spades
4H	signoff
4S	signoff

There is no common treatment for the 3-level responses to 1NT other than the very simple Standard treatment. One relatively common hand that the above structure cannot show is a game-forcing strength hand with 1-3 in the majors, 4-5 in the minors. This pattern often plays well in a minor suit game or a 4-3 major fit. Another hand that sometimes occurs is a game forcing strength hand with 5-5 or better in the minors. It is a bit awkward to describe this hand using the above structure; there is no convenient way to communicate your hand below 3NT. Perhaps the 3D/H/S bids could be used to show these hands.

### If the Opponents Double 1NT

Once in a while an opponent will decide to double your 1NT opening. They might mean the double as some sort of convention, or they might mean that they have a very good hand and they think 1NT will not make.

In the former case, most of the time you should just ignore the double and bid as if the double had not occurred. All your bids mean the same as if the double had not occurred. In the latter case, however, it doesn't make sense to have an arsenal of strong bids available. The object of the game now, most of the time, is to find the best contract at the lowest possible level. Most pairs have not discussed what to do after a penalty double of 1NT, and there is no 'Standard' agreement other than possibly to play '**systems off.**' Simply having some agreements is better than having none at all. We will discuss several options: **systems off**, **DONT Runouts**, **Transfer Runouts**, and **Suction Runouts**.

One possibility is to play '**systems off.**' Instead of playing conventions, you would just play Standard: any bid shows 5+ in that suit and a bad hand. This allows you to play in 2C and 2D: both of which are unplayable using Stayman and Jacoby Transfers. Pass would mean you don't like the partnership's chances of taking 7 tricks in notrump, and redouble would mean the opposite: you think your side can make 1NT. Systems off is probably the best treatment if the double was by responder's LHO (a balancing double).

Another option is to play **DONT Runouts**. DONT stands for ‘disturbing opponents’ notrump; it is a common conventional overcall scheme after the opponents open 1NT. It can also be used by responder after 1NT – X. In DONT Runouts, any bid shows that suit and a higher suit. Redouble shows a hand with an unspecified 5+ card suit. Pass shows a hand willing to play 1NTX. This is basically an inversion of ‘systems off’; it might be slightly better in theory to communicate the two-suiter immediately and to delay communication of the one-suiter. Then again, this might not be true.

Another option is to play **Transfer Runouts**. Having opener declare contracts after 1NT has been doubled is even MORE important than in auctions where the opponents are silent. The doubler will have to lead away from his high cards on trick 1, and the MUCH stronger hand (the 1NT opener) is concealed. In this scheme, all suit responses (2C, 2D, 2H...) are transfers to the next higher suit. They show 5+ cards in the next higher suit. Redouble is a transfer to clubs. Pass forces opener to redouble if responder’s LHO passes. Responder will either pass this if he wants to play in 1NTXX, or responder runs to the lowest suit in which he is willing to play. The advantage of this scheme is that opener will get to declare hands where responder has a 5+ card suit. The disadvantage is that the strength of responder’s hand is unclear if responder passes and responder’s LHO makes a bid. Sometimes, opener would be able to take an action in this position if he knew his partner had a decent hand, but he cannot since responder might be broke.

**Suction Runouts** is an improvement to Transfer Runouts that was designed by the author. In Suction Runouts, all bids are usually transfers, but they might also be based on a 2-suited hand with good shape (5-5 or better) with the two suits OTHER than the bid suit and the next higher suit. Thus 2C would show diamonds or majors, 2D would show hearts or black suits, etc. A redouble by responder is for penalties: responder wants to play in 1NTXX. A pass is either a transfer to clubs or a bad hand that doesn’t want to play in 1NTXX. After any bid, opener usually just accepts the transfer, which responder will pass or correct if he holds the 2-suited hand. After the pass, opener bids 2C with 3+ clubs and XX with only 2 clubs. Responder then places the contract: he will choose 2C anytime opener bids 2C and responder holds at least 4 clubs or anytime responder holds 5+ clubs. If responder pulls 2C to 2D, he has diamonds and a major and requests that opener express a preference.

#### If the Opponents Overcall after 1NT

If the opponents overcall 2C, most people play that a double by responder is Stayman and that all other bids retain their conventional meanings. This is called ‘**systems on**’.

If the opponents overcall 2D, 2H, or 2S, there are two common options. The first common option is to play systems off. The second is to play a convention called **Lebensohl**. (Pronounced LAY-BEN-SAUL). Another option is to play transfers (surprise), a convention called **Rubensohl**. (Pronounced ROO-BEN-SAUL) The meaning of a double is also an issue. We have already discussed systems off; responder’s bidding simply reverts to simple Standard bidding. We will now discuss the others.



**Lebensohl** allows responder to show both strong and weak hands with a single suit. Let's assume responder is playing systems off, and his RHO overcalls 2H. Now, responder can bid 2S signoff, 2NT invitational, 3C/D 5+ cards and game forcing, 3NT signoff, or 4M signoff. There is no way simply to compete to 3 of a minor with a bad hand and a long suit. In Lebensohl, responder has the following options:

After 1NT – overcall –

2suit	signoff (STD)
<b>2NT</b>	<b>Lebensohl, one of:</b>
	- <b>weak hand with a lower-ranking suit than the opps' suit</b>
	- <b>invitational hand with a higher-ranking suit than opps' suit.</b>
	- <b>game-forcing strength hand with a stopper in the opps' suit.</b>
3suit	5+ cards, game forcing (STD)
<b>opps' suit</b>	<b>Stayman, denies a stopper in opps' suit</b>
<b>3NT</b>	<b>hand that would bid 3NT originally, but has no stopper in opps' suit</b>
4-level	if you play 4-level transfers, those still apply

After 2NT Lebensohl, opener must bid 3C as responder might have a weak hand with clubs. Then, responder's options are:

Lower-ranking suit than opps' suit:	signoff
Higher ranking suit than opps' suit:	5+ cards, invitational
Opps' suit	Stayman, shows stopper
3NT	signoff

The reason for the lower-ranking higher-ranking distinction is that higher-ranking suits are available for signoff at the 2-level after the overcall, so responder doesn't need to go through 2NT to show a bad hand with that suit.

**Rubensohl** is another scheme that allows for weak hands to be shown. Example:

After 1NT – overcall –

2suit	signoff
<b>2NT</b>	<b>Transfer to clubs</b>
<b>3C</b>	<b>Transfer to diamonds</b>
<b>3D</b>	<b>Transfer to hearts</b>
<b>3H</b>	<b>Transfer to spades</b>
<b>3S</b>	<b>Transfer to notrump, denies stopper in opps' suit</b>
3NT	signoff, shows stopper
4-level	if you play 4-level transfers, those still apply

A transfer to the opponents' suit is Stayman, and says nothing about whether responder has a stopper in the opponents' suit. A transfer to a suit that was available at the 2-level is invitational or better; opener accepts the transfer to reject the invitation and bids above that to accept the invitation.

Rubensohl is both simpler and more effective than Lebensohl. However, Lebensohl is both well-known and commonly played, and Rubensohl is not well-known or commonly played.

### Doubles of Overcalls

Responder's other option when the opponents overcall opener's NT is to double. The natural meaning of double is for penalties, i.e. "I want the opponents to play this contract, doubled." However, more and more players now days are playing takeout-oriented doubles in a variety of situations. While the Standard meaning of double after 1N – overcall is still penalty, we will discuss takeout-oriented doubles here.

A takeout-oriented double by responder is called a **Negative Double**. If you play negative doubles after 1NT openings, a double of an overcall by responder shows invitational or better values, 2 or fewer cards in the opponent's suit, and 3 or more cards in all other suits. If opener wants to penalize the overcall, he can pass responder's negative double. If responder wants to penalize the overcall, he must pass. Opener should then make a takeout-oriented double with the appropriate hand, which responder can pass for penalties.

If you play negative doubles by responder to a 1NT opening, you should usually double with the appropriate shape rather than make one of the Stayman bids that are part of the Lebensohl/Rubensohl structures. This keeps the auction at a lower level and allows opener to pass for penalties when appropriate.

## 1H/S Openings

The Standard 1H and 1S openings show 5 or more cards in the suit and 12-21 points.  
Open 1S with 5 cards in both suits.

### *General Principles in Bidding*

- A natural bid shows 4+ cards in the suit
- Any new suit by responder is forcing unless opener's last bid was 1NT
- A new suit by responder shows 6+ points at the 1-level, 11+ at the 2-level, game-forcing values at higher levels (unless opener's last bid was 1NT)
- A bid of any previously-bid suit at the lowest level shows minimum values
- Repeating one's own suit shows 6+ cards (except after a 2/1 response)
- 1NT shows minimum values
- 2NT is always natural and invitational, in any position
- Bidding at the 3-level shows invitational values in a previously-bid suit
- The fourth suit by responder is artificial and forcing to game
- Jumps to game are signoffs

### *Overview of Responses*

Single raise	shows fit, 6-10 points
Double raise	shows fit, 11-12 points
Triple raise (to game)	5+-card support, 6-12 points
New suit, 1 level (non-jump)	4+ cards, 6+ points
New suit, 2 level (non-jump)	4+ cards, 11+ points, 10+ HCP
2H response to 1S open	5+ cards, 11+ points, 10+ HCP
1NT response	any shape without support, 6-10 points
Jump in new suit (also called jump-shift)	4+ cards, 17+ points

### *Opener's Decision After a Raise*

After a major suit has been agreed, the partnership cannot normally play in any other suit. After a single raise, opener can bid any suit as natural game try; the bid shows the suit and shows an invitational hand. This allows responder to better evaluate his lower honors in all side suits. Opener can also re-raise the agreed major as a general game try. Another option is to play in no-trump; opener can bid 2NT as a passable game try or 3NT to suggest playing there. Additionally, either player may make slam tries after a major suit has been agreed. A new suit by either opener or responder above 3 of the agreed major shows first or second round control of the suit and is a slam try. Normally players show first-round controls before second-round controls. These are called **Control-Showing Bids** or cuebids.

There is one auction where the partnership may play in a suit other than the agreed major. After a major-suit opening and a single raise, if opener bids the other major responder may raise to suggest playing there. This is often a superior 4-4 fit to the 5-3 fit in the other major.

### *One-Over-One Auctions*

Opener has the following rebid options available after a 1-level response:

1NT	12-14 balanced	MIN
Single raise of spades	shows a fit, 13-16 points	MIN
Double raise of spades	shows a fit, 17-18 points	MED
Triple raise of spades (to game)	shows a fit, 19-21 points	MAX
Raise 1NT to 2NT	natural, 16-18 points	MED
Shift (new suit below 2-opener's-M)	natural, 12-17 points	MIN / MED
Jump Shift	natural, 18-21 points	MAX
Reverse (see Definitions)	natural, 17-21 points	MED / MAX
Repeat (of opener's major)	6+ cards, 13-16 points	MIN
Jump Repeat	6+ cards, 17-18 points	MED
Repeat at game-level	7+ cards, 19-21 points	MAX
Jump to 2NT	18-19 balanced	MED
3NT	natural, 19-21 points	MAX

### *Responder's Bidding After a 1NT Rebid*

After the auction begins 1H – 1S – 1NT, responder has the following options:

New suit at 2-level (2m)	natural, signoff
2 of opener's suit (2H)	shows a fit, signoff
Non-jump repeat (2S)	6+ cards, signoff
2NT	natural and invitational
Jump in new suit (3m)	natural, game-forcing
3 of opener's suit (3H)	shows a fit, invitational
Jump repeat (3S)	6+ cards, invitational
3NT	signoff
4 of either major	signoff

### *Responder's Bidding After Opener Shifts*

In these auctions, opener has not shown a very limited point range. Responder must show his own values so that opener may sign off, invite, or force. The meanings of all responder's bids follow directly from general principles.

### *Responder's Bidding After Opener Repeats His Suit*

In these auctions, opener has shown a limited point range. After a non-jump repeat, the meanings of all responder's bids follow from general principles. After a jump repeat, the only non-game-forcing option responder has is to pass. All other bids are game-forcing.

### *Responder's Bidding After Opener Reverses*

In these auctions, responder cannot pass as opener can have maximum values. Responder's repeat of his own suit at the 2-level shows 5+ cards and is 1-round forcing. It does not promise extra values. 2NT is natural and invitational; it also does not promise extra values. Responder's other option with a bad hand is 3 of opener's first suit. This is

non-forcing. With a hand willing to game-force, responder must make some other bid. Other bids are natural, except for the 4<sup>th</sup> suit, which is an artificial game force as usual.

#### *Two-Over-One (2/1) Auctions*

A non-jump two-level response in a new suit to a major-suit opening is natural and shows a hand nearly good enough to force game (11+ points, 10+ HCP). Opener's options after a 2/1 response are quite different than in other auctions. With a 12-14 point hand that is unwilling to force game, opener must bid at or below two of his original major. Since shifts are still natural in 2/1 auctions, opener's repeat in a 2/1 auction does not promise extra cards in the suit. It is either based on an unspecified 12-14 or on 15+ with 6+ cards in the major. The key that makes this treatment acceptable (and the key to understanding 2/1 auctions for that matter) is that **responder's 2/1 response promises a second bid.**

Opener's repeat in a 2/1 auction is a waiting bid; it does not promise anything in particular. Responder makes his promised second bid, and then opener clarifies his hand.

Aside from the above, bidding in 2/1 auctions is natural and follows from general principles. If opener bids above 2 of his original major at his second turn, the auction becomes game-forcing. Else, the only ways responder can show a less-than-game-forcing hand at his second turn are to bid 2NT, bid 3 of opener's second suit, or bid 3 of responder's own suit. Any other bid, including a preference or raise to opener's original major, is game-forcing. If responder continues with a non-forcing 2NT at his second turn, opener can sign off in responder's first suit, his own first suit, or a new suit. Other bids are game-forcing.

#### *Conventions After Major Openings*

Note that Standard lacks a direct, forcing way to raise partner's major suit. Responder might hold both of the following hands opposite a 1S opener.

(a)	(b)
KQxx	xxx
AJ	Kx
Jxxx	Ax
Kxxx	AKJTxx

The normal way to bid both of these hands in Standard is to respond 2C and then support spades at the second turn. However, with (a) there is no question in responder's mind as to which suit should play best: spades should definitely play as trumps. Also, responder's clubs aren't really a source of tricks. With (b), the club suit is important, as it might be a better trump suit for a slam and is a valuable source of tricks in any contract. Ideally, it would be nice to have a direct, game forcing way to raise spades with hand (a) so that a 2/1 response followed by a bid of partner's major actually shows a significant side suit.

There are two common conventional solutions to this problem.

We introduce two artificial game-forcing raises of partner's major opening: **Jacoby 2NT** and **Splinters**. Both of these bids show 4+ card support for opener's major suit and game-forcing strength. Jacoby 2NT is for hands without side singletons or voids; Splinters are for hands with those holdings.

The **Jacoby 2NT response** to a 1M opening shows 4+ card support and game-forcing strength. It normally denies any side singletons or voids. Knowing about singletons and voids is important when playing in a good 9+ card fit. If the contract is declared in such a trump suit, high cards in such suits become largely irrelevant. Opener and responder can bid games and slams on fewer combined points, as those HCP in the short suits are invalidated by the ability to ruff.

After 1M – 2NT, opener is to show the location of any side-suit singletons or voids in his hand. Else, opener shows how good a hand he has.

*Opener's Rebids after a Jacoby 2NT Response*

3 of a new suit (lowest level)	singleton or void in bid suit
3 of the agreed major	significant extra values, no 5+ side suit
3NT	no extra values
4 of a new suit (jump)	good 5+ card suit, extra values

The **principle of fast arrival** applies after Jacoby 2NT. This principle applies to many game-forcing auctions. It states that if a player jumps to game in the agreed suit, he denies holding any extra high cards beyond those required for previous bidding. Also, remember that, except for the explicitly defined bids above, new suits by either opener or responder above 3 of the agreed major are control-showing slam tries.

**Splinter** responses to 1M are double-jump-shifts. This means that responder must bid two levels above the minimum in a suit. These bids show a singleton or void in the bid suit, 4+ card support for opener's major suit, and game-forcing values. New suits by either player are control-showing bids afterwards.

These two conventions are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are quite common, and people that play one of them generally play the other as well.

## 1C/D openings

The 1C and 1D openings show 3+ cards in the suit (1D is 4+ 95+% of the time) and 12-21 points. In Standard, a player opens his longer minor. If they are the same length, then a player should open 1D unless both suits are exactly 3 cards. Open 1C in this case.

First of all, the general principles for bidding after a 1M opening also apply to bidding after a 1m opening.

### *General Principles in Bidding*

- A natural bid shows 4+ cards in the suit
- Any new suit by responder is forcing unless opener's last bid was 1NT
- A new suit by responder shows 6+ points at the 1-level, 11+ at the 2-level, game-forcing values at higher levels (unless opener's last bid was 1NT)
- A bid of any previously-bid suit at the lowest level shows minimum values
- Repeating one's own suit shows 6+ cards (except after a 2/1 response)
- 1NT shows minimum values
- 2NT is always natural and invitational, in any position
- Bidding at the 3-level shows invitational values in a previously-bid suit
- The fourth suit by responder is artificial and forcing to game
- Jumps to game are signoffs

Much of the continuations by opener and responder on the second round of bidding are the same as the second round of bidding after a 1M opening. We will discuss that later.

### *Responding to 1m*

The highest priority for opener and responder is to locate a major-suit fit after the 1m opening. There are several different responding styles with regards to which response to choose when a hand qualifies for more than one response; we will discuss them all. First, we discuss the Standard meanings of responses to 1m.

After a minor-suit opening, responder has the following options:

New suit, 1-level	natural, 6+ points
1NT	natural, 6-10 points
Single raise	4+ card support (tends to be 5), 6-10 points
2C (after 1D open)	natural, 11+ points, 10+ HCP
2NT	natural, 11-12 points
Double raise	4+ card support (tends to be 5), 11-12 points
3NT	natural, 13-16 points

Responder will nearly always bid a new suit at the 1-level. Here are some general principles regarding which suit to respond:

- If responding in a major, bid the longer major
- If responding in a major, bid 1H with 4-4 in the majors, bid 1S with 5-5 or 6-6

We will briefly discuss the second round of bidding, and then turn to bidding styles.

Opener's rebid after a minor opening works just like opener's rebid after a major opening. In one-over-one auctions, opener may rebid NT if balanced, shift to any suit naturally with minimum or medium strength, reverse to any suit naturally with medium or maximum strength, jump-shift with maximum strength, repeat or jump repeat as necessary, raise, or rebid 2NT. The highest priority for opener is to raise responder's major. This shows 4-card support regardless of the level; the level is determined by opener's strength. One option that opener has in a minor-opening one-over-one auction that differs from after a major-suit opening is the 3NT rebid. After a minor opening, this takes the place of the jump to game in opener's first suit. Instead of showing 19-21 balanced, this shows an unbalanced maximum with 6+ in opener's minor, 19-21 points.

Responder's bidding on the second round is exactly the same as his bidding after a major suit opening. However, the auction 1C – 1D – 1H – 1S is not generally taken as the 4<sup>th</sup> suit game forcing convention in Standard. Rather, it is taken just as a new suit at the 1-level: it shows 4+ cards and 6+ points and is forcing one round.

We will now turn to discussion of responding and rebidding styles.

#### *Up-The-Line Responding*

This style of responding is considered Standard in the United States. In this style, if responder has multiple 4-card suits, he bids the lowest of those even if one is diamonds and one or more are majors. Opener also bids up-the-line; he rebids major suits even if balanced and only rebids 1NT if he doesn't have a major suit. The advantage of up-the-line responding is that opener and responder will never fail to find a major fit in a noncompetitive auction.

#### *Walsh Style (frequently bypass 4+ diamonds)*

This style of responding is popular in Canada, regional areas of the United States, and among younger bridge players. In this style, responder will ignore a diamond suit if he has a major suit unless he has a hand willing to force game with a longer diamond suit than his major. After a 1D response, opener will rebid 1NT if balanced even if he has one or more 4-card majors, as responder usually does not have a 4-card major. If responder bids diamonds and then bids a major at his second turn, this is game-forcing. The advantage of this style is that opener will declare more no-trump contracts when responder is weak, the opponents generally have less information about both players' distributions on defense, and auctions when responder has a good hand with a major and longer minor are improved. Also, this style is less vulnerable to interference than Std.

#### *Unilateral Bypass (always bypass 4+ diamonds)*

In this style of responding, a 1D response flatly denies a 4-card or longer major. Responder may hold a longer minor with a good or bad hand. Opener will rebid as in Walsh style. This style is used by a very few regular partnerships who wish to assign conventional meanings to major-suit bids by responder in later rounds of the auction.



Additionally, some partnerships choose to have opener bypass majors to rebid 1NT when balanced even if playing up-the-line responding or in any style after a 1H response. The advantage of this is that opener will get to declare more contracts, which is better since he tends to have more of the partnership's high cards. This method also gives a bit less information to the opponents about opener's hand. The downside is that opener and responder will sometimes miss a spade fit when responder has a bad hand and cannot act over 1NT. Another downside is that responder must check back for major suit fits more frequently after 1NT rebids (discussed in next section).

### *Conventions after Minor Openings*

One major shortcoming of Standard bidding is the inability to locate 3-5 major fits in the auction 1m – 1M – 1NT or to locate 4-4 heart fits in the auction 1m – 1S – 1NT. There is a convention called **New Minor Forcing** that is designed to fix this problem. It is somewhat analogous to Stayman.

In any auction where opener's rebid is 1NT, responder may bid 2 of the unbid minor as **New Minor Forcing**. NMF states that responder has an invitational or better hand and is looking for a fit in a major suit. Opener obviously cannot pass, as responder's strength is unlimited. Opener is to show any unshown major holdings, which may include an unshown 4-card heart suit and/or 3-card support for responder's major. If opener happens to have both 4 hearts and 3 spades after 1m – 1S – 1NT, he shows the hearts first. Responder can bid 2S if he had an invitational hand with 5 spades, somewhat analogous to a Stayman auction. The continuations after NMF are similar to those after Stayman. One important thing to note is that if 2D is NMF, opener normally rebids 2NT with no relevant holding in the majors. Playing New Minor Forcing, none of responder's other bids after the 1NT rebid change. NMF can also occur after a major opening in the auction 1H – 1S – 1NT. 2C is NMF in this case.

Another solution to the same problem is **Two-Way New Minor Forcing**, or **2-Way Checkback** as it is commonly called. This convention uses both 2C and 2D after the 1NT rebid as conventional bids. 2C states that responder has an invitational or worse hand, and 2D states that responder has a game-forcing strength hand. The continuations after 2D in 2-Way NMF are the same as the continuations after 2D in NMF. After 2C in 2-Way NMF, opener must bid 2D. Responder then bids one of the following:

Pass	signoff (in diamonds)
2M	natural and invitational
3C	natural and invitational, 6+ cards if clubs unbid

There is no Standard meaning for the other bids; they are typically assigned meaning on a by-partnership basis. However, there is clearly a lot of room for additional meanings.

We will now explore a second major deficiency in Standard bidding.

Recall that there was no forcing way to raise partner's major suit opening in Standard bidding. There is also no forcing way to raise partner's minor suit opening. This is bad for the same reasons we saw before. However, we cannot employ the same fix here as after a major suit opening; 2NT is too valuable as a natural bid. We will now explore the most common fix to this problem: **Inverted Minor Raises**.

In **Inverted Minor Raises**, or **Inverted Minors** for short, a single raise is forcing, and shows 10 or more points. A double raise shows 7-9 points, a slightly tighter range than the Standard single raise. The origin of this convention's name is obvious: this is basically an inversion of the Standard single and double raises.

Continuations after Inverted Minor Raises have basically the same meanings as Standard continuations. Opener obviously needs a better hand to bid after a double raise. After a single raise, opener may not pass; the raise is forcing. After a forcing single raise, a bid of 2NT or 3 of the agreed minor by either player is non-forcing. Other bids show a stopper in the bid suit and are 1-round forcing. Any bid above 3 of the agreed minor is game-forcing. A 3C bid by responder when diamonds is agreed is also game-forcing, by general principles.

Another convention that many players use is **Weak Jump Shifts** opposite suited openings by responder. These bids show 0-5 HCP, 6+ in the bid suit. They communicate that the partnership usually does not have a chance at game unless opener has near-maximal values and a fit with responder's suit. One reason to play weak jump shifts instead of the Standard strong jump shifts (natural, 17+) is that sometimes you will pick up a hand with shortness in partner's opening minor, a long suit, and very few HCP. In Standard bidding, you must either pass with this hand or respond in your suit at the one-level. The former action risks responder's LHO passing and partner playing a non-fit in a minor, probably going down several tricks. The latter action risks opener jump rebidding 2NT or his suit, or jump shifting, any of which will not help your result. It is very hard to back out of those auctions. Finally, responder's LHO may intend to enter the auction with an overcall, and passing or responding at a low level allows him more room with which to enter the auction. Playing weak jump shifts costs nothing: with a very good hand, responder may make a minimum level response, which is always forcing after a suited opening.

## Weak openings

Let's say you pick up the following hand:

KQJTxxx

x

xx

xxx

This hand will almost surely be worth 6 tricks if spades are trumps. However, this hand might not take any tricks in notrump or some other trump suit. If partner doesn't have a good hand, it is quite likely that the opponents can make a game in some suit or in notrump. The bid that describes this sort of hand is a preemptive opening. We open weak hands with one long suit at the two-level or higher. This has the effects of communicating our hand very precisely to partner and depriving the opponents of several levels of bidding that they could have used to communicate to one another.

When making a preemptive opening, we will deliberately overbid our hands by several tricks. One reason for this is that we want to give the opponents as hard a time as possible during the auction. Another reason is that since we are opening on hands with few HCP and we must use the 1-level to open good hands, we have to overbid our weak hands if we want to bid them at all.

The basic meanings of preemptive openings are as follows:

2D, 2H, or 2S	6+ cards in suit, 5-11 HCP (a.k.a. <b><u>Weak Twos</u></b> )
3 any suit	7+ cards in suit, 5-11 HCP
4 any suit	8+ cards in suit, 5-11 HCP
5C or 5D	good 8 or 9+ cards, most to all HCP in suit

2C is not included in the above because we must use it as a strong opening. See the next section for details.

Our seat position at the table also has a large effect on the decision to make a preemptive opening. We can afford to be more aggressive if we are in third seat; a preempt normally hurts whoever has the high cards, and partner has already denied a good hand. We must be less aggressive in second seat; partner has equal chance at having the best hand at the table as LHO. In first seat, our chance of hurting the opponents is twice as good as our chance of hurting our own partnership as there are two of them who have not yet communicated and only 1 partner.

The vulnerability also has an effect on our decision to preempt. If we are vulnerable, failing to make our contract is more expensive than when not vulnerable, whether we are doubled or not. If the opponents are not vulnerable, the value of the game they may or may not be making on the hand is less than it would be if they were vulnerable. Thus, the best vulnerability at which to preempt is NV against V. The next best is all NV. The third best is all V, and the worst is V against NV. Take a look at the following table.

<u>Vulnerability</u>	<u># tricks down (not X'd) OK if opponents making a partscore</u>	<u># tricks down (X'd) OK if opps making a game</u>
NV vs. V (favorable)	2	3
NV vs. NV (equal)	2	2
V vs. V (equal)	1	2
V vs. NV (unfavorable)	1	1

The above table simply has to do with the scoring system in bridge. Going down by the indicated numbers or less is usually a win for the preemptive action. Going down by more than what is indicted above is usually a loss.

We can reasonably expect partner to provide one trick for us in our suit of choice. Thus, we usually overbid our hand by 3 tricks at equal vulnerability (slightly more conservative when vulnerable), 2 tricks at unfavorable vulnerability, and 4 tricks at favorable vulnerability. In second seat, we preempt more significantly more conservatively than in the other seats.

Not all hands that meet the technical requirements for a preemptive opening should make that opening. Many of them should pass instead. A common reason is that, since we expect to not make our preemptive bid, we must ensure that the opponents can make something in another suit or notrump on the deal as well. Here are some positive and negative factors for making preemptive openings:

<u>Factor</u>	<u>+ / -</u>	<u>Reason</u>
High cards in long suit	+	more tricks if your suit is trump, fewer if not
Lack of high cards in long suit	-	see above
Aces (any suit)	-	defensive tricks against opponents' contract
High cards in other suits	-	likely defense against opponents' contract, may not help in your contract
Good trump spots (T,9,8)	+	bad split less likely to affect your result, more likely to mean opponents make theirs
Poor trump spots	-	see above
Less trump length than normal @ lvl	-	opps make less, pard likely to overbid
More length than normal @ level	-	pard more likely to underbid or double
Voids	+/-	good if in opps' suit, bad otherwise
Non-normal trick-strength	-	pard may not make right decision a/b game
Outside 4-card or longer major	big -	your long suit may not be the best trump suit
Outside 5+ card suit	big -	ditto

If you have many negative factors and/or few positive ones, you may be better off passing than preempting. Deciding the level at which to preempt is a function of the seating, vulnerability, suit length, and trick strength. If unsure, beginners should preempt solely on the length of the long suit and make adjustments in time given experience.

### *Responding to a Preempt*

Most of the time, responder's goal is simply to continue the preempt as high as possible. A raise of the preempt to any level is a signoff; it shows that responder thinks the bid will be a safe contract. Sometimes raises to game are based on little more than good support for preemptor's long suit; sometimes they are based on high cards instead.

All other bids by responder show invitational or better hands. Any new suit by responder shows 5+ in the suit and is forcing for one round. Even at the 3-level, new suits are only one-round forcing, they are not game-forcing. Preemptor can raise responder's suit to show a fit or a good honor doubleton in support, or he can rebid his own suit. Additionally, preemptor can bid a new suit. This tends to show 'something' in the suit, though this is not necessary. The reason that these are not natural bids is that preemptor rarely has a second suit. This is especially true if preemptor bids a new major if forced. Preemptor may simply be trying to keep the auction open and take up as little room as possible so that responder has more room to act.

A 2NT response to a preemptive opening is conventional. The Standard meaning is **Feature-Asking 2NT**. This asks preemptor to repeat his suit if he holds minimum values for the preempt and to bid a suit in which he holds an outside Ace, King, or Queen if he holds maximum values for the preempt. Responder uses this 2NT bid on invitational hands and hands where he needs to decide between game in preemptor's suit and 3NT.

Another variant on the 2NT response to a preempt is **OGUST 2NT**. This is also an asking bid. It asks preemptor to describe his hand strength and suit quality. The responses to OGUST by preemptor are also conventional.

3C	bad hand, bad suit
3D	bad hand, good suit
3H	good hand, bad suit
3S	good hand, good suit
3NT	AKQ in the long suit, nothing outside

A 'bad hand' typically has minimum HCP for the 5-11 range or fewer tricks than normal for the preemptive level. A 'bad suit' lacks 2 of the top three trump honors or AJT.

Because there is a good bit of room for opener and responder to communicate after a weak two (preemptive 2-level opening), many players preempt at the 2-level on a wide range of hands and hand qualities. Some of these players have devised other variants of the 2NT response asking bid. Some players choose to use 2-level openings for other purposes than preempts, but those are not Standard, and this is about Standard bidding.

## Strong openings

There are several more opening bids which we have not discussed thus far.

### *2NT opening*

The 2NT opening shows 20-21 points, balanced. The Standard responses are the same as to the 1NT opening: new suits at the 3-level show 5+ and are game-forcing. 3NT is to play. 4M is also to play. You can play the same conventions after the 2NT opening as after the 1NT opening at a higher level. People typically play Stayman (3C), Jacoby Transfers (4C, 4D), and Texas Transfers (4D, 4H). There is no Standard meaning for a 3S response when playing Stayman and Jacoby Transfers. See the 1NT opening section for a description of these conventions.

### *2C opening*

The 2C opening is strong and artificial, shows any hand with 22+ points. It says nothing about clubs. It is called the **Strong, Artificial 2C Opening**. Opener typically can make a game by himself or with the help of one high card from responder. Thus the 2C opening is nearly game-forcing. The only times responder can pass are if opener has made a game-level bid or if responder has managed to show 0-2 HCP and opener's next bid is a non-jump. There are several conventions commonly used after the 2C opening.

In **Negative 2D**, the 2D response is used to show any hand with 0-7 HCP. All other responses show 5+ cards in the suit, 8+ HCP. 2NT shows 8+ HCP, balanced. Suit rebids by opener are natural and normally show 5+ in the suit. Jumps in suits are forcing, and they unilaterally decide the trump suit. Even if responder is void, the partnership must play in that suit or in no-trump. The 2NT rebid shows 22-24 balanced, and the 3NT rebid shows 25-27 balanced. After 2C – 2D – 2NT, 2NT systems are on. This means that the meanings of all bids are just as if opener had opened 2NT. Another convention people use in conjunction with Negative 2D is **Cheaper Minor Second Negative**. After opener makes a suited rebid, the cheapest new minor suit by responder at his second turn shows an unspecified very weak hand, typically 0-2 HCP. Opener may make any non-jump rebid to play; jumps by opener are forcing. The advantage of Negative 2D is that opener will find out the limit (lower or upper) of responder's high-card strength quickly.

In **Waiting 2D**, the 2D response is artificial and unlimited it shows almost any hand. Some people who use Waiting 2D also play that a direct 2H response is similar to Cheaper Minor Second Negative; it shows 0-2 HCP, any hand. The same continuations by opener apply as after Cheaper Minor Second Negative. This is often called **2H Direct Double Negative**. Some people play Waiting 2D and play Cheaper Minor Second Negative as well. There is no normal definition for the other responses when playing Waiting 2D; the theory is that it is very important to allow opener to rebid 2M, so 2D should be bid on as many hands as possible.

One other convention that some people use after the Strong Artificial 2C opening is the **Kokish 2H Relay**. The purpose of this is to allow two ways for opener to 'rebid 2NT' after the 2C opening. 2C – 2D – 2H shows either a hand with 5+ hearts or any 25-27 balanced hand. Responder bids 2S with any hand 3+ HCP and bids 3C as Cheaper Minor Second Negative. Then opener can rebid 2NT to show the 25-27 balanced hand and anything else to show the heart hand + a natural bid in the new suit (or 6+ hearts if hearts rebid). Playing the Kokish 2H Relay, the direct 3NT rebid shows 28-29 balanced and the slow 3NT rebid by way of the 2H relay shows 30-31 balanced.

### *3NT opening*

The Standard meaning of the 3NT opening is 25-27 balanced. However, it is better to open these hands 2C and rebid 3NT. The 3NT opening should be used for some other purpose if the partnership agrees to bid 25-27 balanced hands through the 2C opening.

## Overcalls

If your opponents open the bidding, there are several reasons that you might want to bid:

- You want to buy the contract in your suit
- You want to help partner make the best opening lead
- You want to deprive the opponents of valuable bidding room

The basic requirements for a suited overcall are as follows:

- 1 level: 8+ HCP, 5+ cards in the suit
- 2 level: 10+ HCP, 5+ cards in the suit, near-opening strength hand or better
- 3-level: 11+ HCP, 5+ cards in the suit, at least decent minimum opening strength
- any jump overcall: same as preemptive opening bid at that level

Not all hands which meet the basic requirements for an overcall should make the overcall. Ideally, a 1-level overcall should qualify for at least ONE of the 3 reasons to overcall defined above. A 2-level overcall or higher should qualify for at least TWO of these reasons.

Suited overcalls are normally limited to about 17 HCP. With more HCP, hands should take another action, defined in the next chapter.

A 1NT overcall shows the same hand as a 1NT open: 15-17 balanced. Additionally, it is preferable to have a stopper in the opponents' suit so they do not cash the first 5 tricks against 3NT if that is what partner decides to bid. Bidding after a 1NT overcall is the same as after a 1NT opening.

### *Responder's decision after an overcall*

After a suited overcall, responder basically pretends that the overcall did not occur. The meanings of most of responder's bids follow from general principles. Non-jump new suits at the lowest level are natural and forcing. If the bid occurs at 2H or higher, it shows 5+ in the suit. The required strength for a new suit is normal according to general principles. Responder does have two additional options: double and pass. We will now discuss a near-universally played convention used by responder after an overcall:

### **Negative Doubles.**

A double of a suited overcall by responder shows a hand almost good enough to bid at the lowest required level. Negative Doubles emphasize unbid major suits: they show 4 or more cards in an unbid major. If there are multiple unbid majors, responder need only hold one of them. If there is no unbid major, responder need not hold any specific shape. When responder makes a negative double, he either lacks the HCP to bid at the required level or lacks the 5<sup>th</sup> card in the major that is usually necessary for a bid. A negative double shows 6+ HCP at the one-level, 8+ HCP at the lower end of the two-level, and 10+ HCP at the upper end of the two level. Opener bids naturally after the double, but he can pass the double if he wishes to penalize the overcall. Further bids from both players follow from general principles. There is much literature about Negative Doubles. This has been called the most useful and misunderstood convention in bridge. Marty Bergen's Negative Doubles is a good discourse on this subject.



Since a double by responder is conventional, responder must pass if he wishes to penalize the overcall. This book is not about bridge judgement, so we won't discuss when it is right to penalize. Responder should consider it whenever he holds 4+ cards in the overcalled suit and a decent hand. If overcaller's partner (Advancer) passes as well, opener is more or less obliged to reopen the bidding with a double to protect responder's penalty pass. This means that if opener cannot tell conclusively that responder is not trying to penalize the overcall, then he must double so that responder can pass the double if that was his original intention. When opener has 2 or fewer cards in the overcalled suit, he usually reopens with a double. Opener may also make a natural bid instead of doubling. He would do this if unwilling to defend the overcall doubled, for any reason. Usually opener would hold 10 cards in 2 suits or a void in the overcalled suit for such an action. Opener may also pass out the overcall if he holds 3+ cards in overcaller's suit; responder is not usually trying to penalize when that happens, but rather simply holds a bad hand that cannot bid or make a Negative Double.

#### *Advancer's decision after an overcall*

In the old, classic version of Standard, advancer's bidding after his partner overcalls was similar to responder's bidding after the same opening bid in Standard (with no conventions). One exception to this are that the notrump bids by advancer are slightly stronger; 1NT shows 9-11, 2NT shows 12-14, 3NT shows 15-17. The reason for this is that an overcall is weaker than an opening bid. Additionally, new suits by advancer are natural and NOT forcing but show decent hands, typically 7-14 points. They also tend to show 5+ cards in the suits since advancer would raise overcaller's suit as a top priority. Overcaller isn't supposed to pass a new suit by responder if he has better than minimum values for the overcall.

In classic Standard, a bid of opener's suit by advancer, called a **cuebid**, showed an unspecified game-forcing hand. Today, a cuebid shows a **limit raise** (see Definitions) or better in support of overcaller's suit. This allows all direct raises of overcaller's suit to show weaker hands, typically 6-9. The higher advancer raises, the more cards he has in overcaller's suit. Advancer generally promises that the partnership has at least as many trumps as the number of tricks of the raise level. As an aside, responder can also adopt this modern philosophy after an overcall: his direct raises can all show 6-9 points and a cuebid can be a limit raise or better.

The meaning of raises and the meaning of a cuebid by advancer are the only things that have changed in Standard bidding since the classic version. New suits by advancer are still 5+, non-forcing, and the NT bids retain their old meaning.

## The Takeout Double

What if your RHO opens 1C and you hold something like this hand:

AQxx  
KJxx  
Kxxx  
x

You have a good hand, and you are happy with any suit as trumps other than clubs. As clubs is the opponent's suit, it would be nice if there was a way to offer partner a choice of suits. This sort of hand comes up all the time. Compare with the following hand:

AJx  
KQx  
Ax  
KQTxx

It's not very often you get a hand this good. It's even rarer that you have this hand after an opponent has opened in your best suit. It's even more rare that that player's partner will also be willing to play in your best suit.

The above hands illustrate why bridge players use the double of an opening suited bid (or preemptive opening) as conventional. The **Takeout Double** shows an opening-strength hand with 3+ cards in every suit OTHER than the opponents' suit AND 0-2 cards in the opponents' suit. It offers advancer a choice between the other three suits. The Takeout Double also might show a hand too strong for an overcall: any shape with 18+ HCP.

After a Takeout Double, responder has one additional option: redouble. This shows 10+ HCP and tends to deny support for opener's suit. The purpose of the redouble is either to punish the takeout-doubler for entering the auction via subsequent doubles of advancer's bids or to announce a good hand to opener. A new suit by responder after a Takeout Double is only forcing at the 1-level. If responder wants to show a good hand with a suit that is only available at the 2-level or higher, he must first redouble and then bid later (which is forcing 1 round). A direct new suit by responder at the 2-level or higher denies 10+ HCP. Additionally, a common convention played by opener and responder is called **Jordan 2NT** or **Truscott 2NT**. This is similar to the cuebid of an overcall by responder. It shows a limit raise or better in support of opener's suit. This convention allows all direct raises by responder to be weaker: 6-9 points. 2NT is no longer needed as a natural bid after an overcall because of the availability of redouble to show a similar hand. However, the meaning of the 1NT response is unchanged.

Partner of the takeout doubler (we will call him Advancer as well) has these options:

- New suit at the minimum level shows 0-9 points
- Jump in a new suit shows 10-12 points, invitational
- Cuebid shows 13+ points, game-forcing
- Pass shows desire to play the opponents' contract, doubled.

Advancer cannot pass unless he holds both a good hand and a very long, strong holding in the opponents' suit. At the 1-level, something like KQJxx is a minimum holding in the opponents' suit. This pass also demands that takeout doubler lead a trump if possible against the opponents' contract.

If advancer is not going to pass, he picks his favorite of the other three suits. If partner holds a normal takeout double (the three-suited hand), this will be the agreed suit. Partner might hold the unspecified strong hand (18+ HCP). If takeout-doubler bids a new suit, he is showing the strong hand, 5+ cards in the suit, and says nothing about his holdings in the other suits. If takeout-doubler bids no-trump, he shows a hand too good for a notrump overcall, typically 18-21 balanced.

Takeout-doubler might also make a voluntary raise of advancer's choice of suit. This is game forcing if advancer had shown 10-12 points, but if advancer had showed 0-9 points, this is merely invitational opposite this range. Advancer should bid game with a maximum for 0-9 (7-9ish). Takeout-doubler may also make a voluntary double raise of advancer's choice. This shows a maximum-opening strength hand (19-21) and asks advancer to bid a game unless he has very few points (0-4). If opener bids again, takeout doubler may raise advancer's choice of suits as a mere competitive action; it does not show extra values. A cuebid by the takeout doubler shows a good hand that is very interested in game, but is not sure which game to bid. This might be because the takeout doubler's support isn't very good, or because the takeout-doubler wants to bid 3NT but lacks a stopper in the opponent's suit.

## Slam Bidding

Many of the conventions discussed thus far in the previous sections assist the partnership in finding slams. Here is a review of some of them:

<u>After 1NT opening</u>	<u>After Major opening</u>	<u>After Weak Twos</u>
Stayman	Jacoby 2NT	Feature-Asking 2NT
Jacoby Transfers	Splinters	OGUST 2NT
	Control-Showing Bids	

Before we get into ace-asking bids, the author feels the necessity to mention that Control-Showing Bids (also called cuebids for some reason) are a fine slam bidding tool. Ace-asking bids are not actually necessary if the partnership has a sound understanding of Control-Showing Bids. For information on this tool, see the section on continuations after agreeing a major suit.

We will now discuss the subject of ace-asking bids. Sometimes, it may seem that the partnership has enough strength to bid a slam. However, the partnership may also be missing several critical high cards that will win defeat the slam. If a player wants to bid a slam, he should also typically check to see if the partnership is missing no more than one Ace or other critical card.

A 4NT bid **that is not a raise of partner's no-trump bid** is used as an ace-asking convention in Standard. There are several varieties, we will discuss them.

### Blackwood

4NT Blackwood asks partner how many aces he holds. The responses are:

5C 0 or 4      5D 1 ace      5H 2 aces      5S 3 aces

This is a very simple convention: further continuations are natural except for 5NT, which asks for kings. The responses to 5NT are the same, but one level higher. Responder should only sign off below the 6-level if the partnership is missing more than one ace. The purpose of Blackwood is to make sure that the partnership is not missing 2 aces; its purpose is not to discover how good partner's hand is.

### Roman Keycard

4NT Roman Keycard has 2 varieties: normal **RKC** and **1430**. The basic idea is that the King of trumps is just as important a card as the Aces. The partnership should not bid a slam missing more than one key card. There are five total key cards: the four aces and the king of trumps. Here are the responses to 4NT:

	<b>RKC</b>	<b>1430</b>
5C	0 or 3 keycards	1 or 4 keycards
5D	1 or 4 keycards	0 or 3 keycards
5H	2 keycards, no trump Q	← same as RKC
5S	2 keycards and trump Q	← same as RKC

After any of the responses to 4NT in either version of Roman Keycard, the asker (person who bid 4NT originally) has the following options:

Trump suit, any level	signoff
5NT	ask for side kings
Cheapest step*	ask for trump Q

(\* ) only an option after the 5m responses to 4NT, and only if this is not the trump suit

Unfortunately, there are multiple versions of the continuations after each of these. After the 5NT king ask, partnerships play either **Numeric Responses** or **Specific Responses**. In the former, the first step shows 0, the second step shows 1, etc. In the latter, responder to the ask bids the cheapest suit in which he holds a side king. Partnerships must discuss which version they are playing.

After the trump Queen ask, there are also multiple versions of continuations. Partnerships play either **Step Responses** or **King Responses**. In step responses, the first step denies the trump Queen, the second shows the trump Queen. In King responses, the trump suit at the cheapest level denies the trump Q; any other bid shows the trump Queen and a king in the bid suit. If available, asker can bid 5NT as the side King ask after the response to the trump Queen ask.

There can sometimes be an issue with the response to the 4NT ask getting the partnership too high; if this might happen, asker should probably make a simple quantitative invitational raise to the 5-level rather than asking for key cards.

## Carding

In Standard carding, there are three kinds of signals: **Attitude Signals**, **Count Signals**, and **Suit Preference Signals**. We will discuss what they are and when each apply after we discuss leads.

### *Standard leads*

The Standard lead from any suit containing an honor sequence is the highest card in that sequence, with one exception. An honor sequence is two touching cards in the same suit, one of which is an honor. AK is the best honor sequence, T9 is the worst. The Standard lead from AK is the King. If you are defending a no-trump contract, you need a third high card in the suit in order for your holding to count as an honor sequence.

If there is no honor sequence in a suit, the 4<sup>th</sup> best card is the Standard lead from a 4-card or longer suit. The 3<sup>rd</sup> best card is the Standard lead from a 3-card suit. The high card is the Standard lead from a doubleton. Against no-trump contracts, the Standard lead from 3 or 4 small is a high card or the second-best.

### *Standard Attitude*

A Standard attitude signal is given by one defender in response to partner's first lead of a suit (not exclusive to trick 1). A high spot card shows that the defender would like the leader to continue playing the suit if possible. It shows ruffing value or an important high card. A low spot card discourages partner from leading the suit. Standard attitude is also given on the first discard by each defender.

### *Standard Count*

A Standard count signal is given by each defender in response to declarer's lead of a non-trump suit. A low spot card shows an odd number of cards currently held in the suit; a high spot card shows an even number of cards. This continues until exact count in the suit has been shown by one of the three concealed hands failing to follow suit. Discards other than the first discard are also count signals if the layout of the suit is not known by both partners.

### *Standard Suit Preference*

A Standard suit preference signal is given by any defender when the previous signals do not apply. A high card shows that the defender giving the signal has something in a higher-ranking suit other than trumps and the suit being played. One common situation for suit preference is the value of the lead when giving partner a ruff. Another common situation is in the opponents' trump suit. Another common situation is opposite partner's lead on trick 1 of a side suit in which dummy has singleton or void. Another common situation is when following suit in a suit where count is known.

Many other carding schemes exist, but this is not a book about those. One common scheme is called **Upside-Down Count and Attitude (UDCA)**. This is simply the reverse of Standard Attitude and Standard Count. This is slightly more effective. I suggest reading A Switch in Time by Pam and Matt Granovetter for a discussion of a totally alternative approach to defensive signaling.

<p><b>SPECIAL DOUBLES</b>          After Overcall: Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> _____          Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 3♣          Responsive <input type="checkbox"/> thru _____ Maximal <input type="checkbox"/>          Support Dbl. <input type="checkbox"/> thru _____ Redbl <input type="checkbox"/>          Card-showing <input type="checkbox"/> Min. Offshape T/O <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>NOTRUMP OVERCALLS</b>          Direct: 15 to 17 Systems On <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>          Balancing: 12 to 15          Jump to 2NT: Minors <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Lowest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>NAMES</b> STANDARD AMERICAN # _____</p>																												
<p><b>SIMPLE OVERCALL</b>          1 level 8 to 17 HCP (usually)          often 4 cards <input type="checkbox"/> very light style <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>Responses</b>          New Suit: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> NFConst <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NF <input type="checkbox"/>          Jump Raise: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          cuebid = Limit+ raise</p>	<p><b>DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP</b>          vs: _____          2♣ _____          2♦ _____          2♥ _____          2♠ _____          Dbl: _____          Other _____</p>	<p><b>GENERAL APPROACH</b>          STANDARD AMERICAN  <b>TWO OVER ONE:</b> Game Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>VERY LIGHT:</b> Openings <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Hand <input type="checkbox"/> Overcalls <input type="checkbox"/> Preempts <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>FORCING OPENING:</b> 1♣ <input type="checkbox"/> 2♣ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural 2 Bids <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>																												
<p><b>JUMP OVERCALL</b>          Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE</b>          New Suit Forcing: 1 level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 level <input type="checkbox"/>          Jump Shift: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>          Redouble Implies no fit <input type="checkbox"/>          2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak          Majors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Minors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Other _____</p>	<p><b>NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS</b>          1NT 15 to 17 3♣ _____          _____ to _____ 3♦ _____          _____ to _____ 3♥ _____          5-card Major common <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3♠ _____          System on over X,2C          2♣ Stayman <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Puppet <input type="checkbox"/>          2♦ Transfer to ♥ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4♦, 4♥ Transfer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Forcing Stayman <input type="checkbox"/> Smolen <input type="checkbox"/>          2♥ Transfer to ♠ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lebensohl <input type="checkbox"/> (___ denies) Conventional NT Openings          2♠ Minor Transfer _____ Neg. Double <input type="checkbox"/>          2NT _____ Other: _____</p>																												
<p><b>OPENING PREEMPTS</b>          Sound Light Very Light          3/4-bids <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Conv./Resp. _____</p>	<p><b>VS Opening Preempts Double Is</b>          Takeout <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♦ Penalty <input type="checkbox"/>          Conv. Takeout: _____          Lebensohl 2NT Response <input type="checkbox"/>          Other: _____</p>	<p><b>MAJOR OPENING</b>          Expected Min. Length 4 5          1st/2nd <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          3rd/4th <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  <b>RESPONSES</b>          Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>          After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>          Conv. Raise: 2NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3NT <input type="checkbox"/> Splinter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Other: Jacoby 2NT          1NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-forcing <input type="checkbox"/>          2NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> _____ to _____          3NT: 13 to 16          Drury <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way <input type="checkbox"/> Fit <input type="checkbox"/>          Other: _____</p>																												
<p><b>DIRECT CUEBID</b>          OVER: Minor Major Artif. Bids          Natural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Strong T/O <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Michaels <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>SLAM CONVENTIONS</b> Gerber <input type="checkbox"/> 4NT: Blackwood <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RKC <input type="checkbox"/> 1430 <input type="checkbox"/>          vs Interference: DOPI <input type="checkbox"/> DEPO <input type="checkbox"/> Level: _____ ROPI <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>MINOR OPENING</b> NF 0-2 Conv.          Expected Min. Length 4 3          1♣ <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          1♦ <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>RESPONSES</b>          Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Forcing Raise: JS in other minor <input type="checkbox"/>          Single raise <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Inverted Minors          Frequently bypass 4+♦ <input type="checkbox"/>          1NT/1♣ 6 to 10          2NT Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11 to 12          3NT: 13 to 16          Other: _____</p>																												
<p><b>LEADS</b> (circle card led, if not in bold)          versus Suits versus Notrump  <table style="font-family: monospace; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x x x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">x x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x x x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">x x x x x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">A K x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">T 9 x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">A K J x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">A Q J x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">K Q x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">K J T x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">A J T 9</td><td style="padding: 2px;">A T 9 x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Q J x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">K T 9 x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">K Q J x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">K Q T 9</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">J T x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Q T 9 x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Q J T x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Q T 9 x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">K Q T 9</td><td></td><td style="padding: 2px;">J T 9 x</td><td style="padding: 2px;">T 9 x x</td> </tr> </table> <b>LENGTH LEADS:</b>          4th Best vs SUITS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          3rd/5th Best vs SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>          Attitude vs NT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	x x	x x x x	x x	x x x x	x x x	x x x x x	x x x	x x x x x	A K x	T 9 x	A K J x	A Q J x	K Q x	K J T x	A J T 9	A T 9 x	Q J x	K T 9 x	K Q J x	K Q T 9	J T x	Q T 9 x	Q J T x	Q T 9 x	K Q T 9		J T 9 x	T 9 x x	<p><b>DEFENSIVE CARDING</b>          vs SUITS vs NT          Standard: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Except <input type="checkbox"/>          Upside-Down:          count <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          attitude <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>FIRST DISCARD</b>          Lavinthal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Odd/Even <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>OTHER CARDING</b>          Smith Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Trump Suit Pref. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Foster Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>DESCRIBE</b> <b>RESPONSES/REBIDS</b>          2♣ 22 to + HCP          Strong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>          2♦ Resp: Neg. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waiting <input type="checkbox"/>          2♦ 5 to 11 HCP          Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>          2♥ 5 to 11 HCP          Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>          2♠ 5 to 11 HCP          Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>OTHER CONV. CALLS:</b> New Minor Forcing: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Way NMF <input type="checkbox"/>          Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. <input type="checkbox"/> Not in Comp. <input type="checkbox"/>          4th Suit Forcing: 1 Round <input type="checkbox"/> Game <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
x x	x x x x	x x	x x x x																											
x x x	x x x x x	x x x	x x x x x																											
A K x	T 9 x	A K J x	A Q J x																											
K Q x	K J T x	A J T 9	A T 9 x																											
Q J x	K T 9 x	K Q J x	K Q T 9																											
J T x	Q T 9 x	Q J T x	Q T 9 x																											
K Q T 9		J T 9 x	T 9 x x																											
<p><b>SPECIAL CARDING</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>PLEASE ASK</b></p>																														

This is an example of what the old people in your local bridge club might be playing. It includes a smattering of the very commonly played conventions, but it doesn't have much more. I'm sure many club players don't even play this complex a convention card.

<p><b>SPECIAL DOUBLES</b>          After Overcall: Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> _____          Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♣          Responsive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 2♣ Maximal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Support Dbl. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 2♥ Redbl. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Card-showing <input type="checkbox"/> Min. Offshape T/O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Snapdragon X tru 2♥</p>	<p><b>NOTRUMP OVERCALLS</b>          Direct: 15 to 17 Systems On <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sandwich 1NT mini-unusual          Balancing: 12 to 15          Jump to 2NT: Minors <input type="checkbox"/> 2Lowest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>NAMES</b> Noble Shore # _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GENERAL APPROACH</b> STANDARD AMERICAN</p> <p>TWO OVER ONE: Game Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid <input type="checkbox"/>          VERY LIGHT: Openings <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Hand <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overcalls <input type="checkbox"/> Preempts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          FORCING OPENING: 1♣ <input type="checkbox"/> 2♣ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural 2 Bids <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>SIMPLE OVERCALL</b>          1 level 8 to 17 HCP (usually)          often 4 cards <input type="checkbox"/> very light style <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>Responses</b>          New Suit: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> NFConst <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NF <input type="checkbox"/>          Jump Raise: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          cuebid = Limit+ raise</p>	<p><b>DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP</b>          vs: strong _____ wkr than 15-17          2♣ ♥+♠ _____ ♥+♠          2♦ natural _____ natural          2♥ natural _____ natural          2♠ natural _____ natural          Dbl: (♥ or ♠)+(♣ or ♦) any 15+ HCP          Other _____</p>	<p><b>NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS</b>          1NT _____ to _____          15 to 17          3♣ 5-5 minors, weak          3♦ 5-5 minors, GF          3♥ 3-1-(45) GF          3♠ 1-3-(45) GF          5-card Major common <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          System on over X,2C          2♣ Stayman <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Puppet <input type="checkbox"/>          2♦ Transfer to ♥ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4♠, 4♥ Transfer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Forcing Stayman <input type="checkbox"/> Smolen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          2♥ Transfer to ♠ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lebensohl <input type="checkbox"/> (___ denies)          2♠ bal inv / Xfer to ♣ Neg. Double <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          2NT Xfer to ♦ Other: Rubensohl</p>
<p><b>JUMP OVERCALL</b>          Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE</b>          New Suit Forcing: 1 level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 level <input type="checkbox"/>          Jump Shift: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Redouble Implies no fit <input type="checkbox"/>          2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak          Majors <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Minors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Other systems on after 1M-X</p>	<p><b>MAJOR OPENING</b>          Expected Min. Length 4 5          1st/2nd <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          3rd/4th <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>OPENING PREEMPTS</b>          Sound Light Very Light          3/4-bids <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv./Resp. Sound UF, V.Light FV</p>	<p><b>VS Opening Preempts Double Is</b>          Takeout <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♦ Penalty <input type="checkbox"/>          Conv. Takeout:          Lebensohl 2NT Response <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Other _____</p>	<p><b>MINOR OPENING</b>          Expected Min. Length 4 3 NF Conv.          1♣ <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          1♦ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>DIRECT CUEBID</b>          OVER: Minor Major Artif. Bids          Natural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Strong T/O <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Michaels <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Top and Bottom Cuebids</p>	<p><b>SLAM CONVENTIONS</b> Gerber <input type="checkbox"/> 4NT: Blackwood <input type="checkbox"/> RKC <input type="checkbox"/> 1430 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          vs Interference: DOPI <input type="checkbox"/> DEPO <input type="checkbox"/> Level: _____ ROPI <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>RESPONSES</b>          Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Conv. Raise: 2NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3NT <input type="checkbox"/> Splinter <input type="checkbox"/>          Other: Jacoby 2NT, Inverted Bergen Raises          1NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-forcing <input type="checkbox"/>          2NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> to _____          3NT: 13 to 16          Drury <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way <input type="checkbox"/> Fit <input type="checkbox"/>          Other: _____</p>
<p><b>LEADS</b> (circle card led, if not in bold)          versus Suits versus Notrump          x x x x x x x x          x x x x x x x x          (A)K x T 9 x AK J x A Q J x          K Q x K J T x A J T 9 A T 9 x          Q J x K T 9 x K Q J x K Q T 9          J T x Q T 9 x Q J T x Q T 9 x          K Q T 9 J T 9 x T 9 x x</p>	<p><b>DEFENSIVE CARDING</b>          Standard: <input type="checkbox"/> vs Suits <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>          Except <input type="checkbox"/>          Upside-Down:          count <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          attitude <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  <b>FIRST DISCARD</b>          Lavinthal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Odd/Even <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          upside-down att. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  <b>OTHER CARDING</b>          Smith Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>          Trump Suit Pref. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Foster Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>DESCRIBE</b>          2♣ 22 to + HCP          Strong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>          2♦ Resp: Neg. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waiting <input type="checkbox"/>          2♥ 5 to 11 HCP          Natural: Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>          2♠ 5 to 11 HCP          Natural: Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>OTHER CONV. CALLS:</b> New Minor Forcing: <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way NMF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not in Comp. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-way NMF after 1D-1H-1S          4th Suit Forcing: 1 Round <input type="checkbox"/> Game <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          Suction runouts after 1NT-X          Suction vs. artificial minor opening, Defense to Multi, Flannery, Mini-Roman</p>
<p><b>LENGTH LEADS:</b>          4th Best vs Suits <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          3rd/5th Best vs Suits <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>          Attitude vs NT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>OTHER CARDING</b>          Primary signal to partner's leads          Attitude <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Count <input type="checkbox"/> Suit Preference <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>RESPONSES/REBIDS</b>          2♥ Direct Dbl Negative          2♥ Kokish Relay          OGUST, new suit NF @ 113 NV          2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>          OGUST, new suit NF @ 113 NV          2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>          OGUST, new suit NF @ 113 NV          2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>SPECIAL CARDING</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>PLEASE ASK</b></p>		

This is the author's lame attempt to create a Standard American convention card worthy of his time. It's still not aggressive or accurate enough, but it's better than most peoples' convention cards. See Author's Note for explanation of his views on bidding systems.



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## Author's Note

This concludes our discussion of Standard American Bridge. I just want to take this time to share my opinions on conventional bids and carding in the game.

First, the new Bridge reader needs to understand a few things about conventional bids. A convention is only useful if the following three statements are all true.

- (1) It solves a multiply occurring problem in bidding
- (2) It is more useful than the Standard bid it replaces
- (3) You and your partner can both remember the convention and its continuations

Number (1) can be more true than (2) and the convention can still be useful. However, that doesn't mean that there are better methods out there. (3) is very important. NO convention is a good one if you and your partner are going to have bidding accidents because of it. It is important for partnership harmony not to force more on your partner than he or she is enthusiastic about.

Having said all of that, I will now share my personal opinions. There are a lot of really bad conventions out there. Some of the conventions described in this book fall into that category. The purpose of this book is to educate beginning and intermediate level players on Standard American bidding, with some asides into its history and commonly played conventions as of 2004. Just because a convention or treatment exists doesn't mean it's a good one; this point is very, very important. Don't start playing a convention just because you read about it somewhere.

Having said all of THAT, I happen to think that strong club systems and the like are the right approach to bidding. The reasons for this are that I think most hands with 8+ HCP should be opened, in theory, and that it is too difficult to have accurate auctions facing a 9-point opening range. The 1C and 1D openings in Standard are especially meaningless: they show anything from a nondescript 11 count with 3 small clubs to a rock-crushing 21 count with long clubs. I think it is better to immediately split on the 8-21 HCP range (one bid for 16-21 or some such and all other bids for 8-15) so that there will be many immediately descriptive bids for the hands that occur most often (8-15). The stronger hands should definitely be handled well because they tend to be slam hands and there are a lot of points riding on accurate slam bidding. However, I think getting in the auction aggressively, especially not vulnerable, is very important. I believe in aggressive INITIAL action; the more the opponents have communicated, the less your own bidding will help your side. I don't approve of borderline aggressive bids in late rounds of an auction. I believe in a get-in get-out style of bidding. I don't think Standard is the right approach because it doesn't allow for aggressive openings and the range of hands one could have is too wide for the 1-level openings.

I would encourage the bidding enthusiast to get out and learn some more systems (Precision, EHAA, Recursive Diamond) to widen one's worldview. Remember, just because an approach is widely accepted and used doesn't mean it is the correct one. ☺