

STRONG

AND

FOUR

Apr/2020

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Note:

Fundamental changes, new explanations and refinements compared to previous versions of these notes are marked with yellow background.

Optional treatments (can be dropped unless you have specifically agreed to play them) are marked with grey background.

1 System overview

Basic system: Strong No-trump, 5-card spades (1.and 2.hand), weak twos.

1.1 OPENING BIDS

Open lowest 4-cardsuit with a 4-4-3-2 hand, except with 4-4 in the minors:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1 ♣ : | 3+ ♣ (3 only if 4-3-3-3 with 4 ♠). |
| 1 ♦ : | 4+ ♦ |
| 1 ♥ : | 4+ ♥ |
| 1 ♠ : | 5+ ♠. Could be 4 in 3. and 4.position. With 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2, and a hand not worth another bid, you can choose to open 1 ♠ (to pre-empt, and/or for the lead). |
| 1 NT: | 15-17. 2-way Stayman |
| 2 ♣ : | 20+ or equivalent playing strength. Forcing to at least 2 NT |
| 2 ♦/♥/♠: | Weak. 2 NT and 3 ♣ forcing - other bids invitational |
| 2 NT: | 20-22. Baron & Flint. |
| 3 x : | Pre-emptive. New suit at the 3-level natural and forcing, at the 4-level asking bid (3 ♠ - 4 ♥: natural). |
| 3 NT: | Solid minor - max. one outside king in 1. and 2.position. (Could be stronger in 3. and 4.position, but even there, max. 2 outside stoppers.) |
| 4 ♣/♦: | Normal pre-empt OR <u>solid ♥/♠ and 8½-9 playing tricks</u> (if this convention is permitted in the tournament – otherwise normal pre-empt). |

1.2 DEFENSIVE BIDDING

Weak jump overcalls - at least a 6-cardsuit (or a very good 5-cardsuit at favourable vulnerability), and not much else.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 NT: | 15-18 (also in 4.position). Continue <i>as after a takeout double</i> . |
| 2 NT: | Two lowest unbid suits (at least 5-5). Opponent's suit forcing. (With 5-4, bid the 5-cardsuit instead). |
| Direct cuebid: | Two highest unbid suits (at least 5-5). 2 NT and opponent's suit forcing. |
| Jump cuebid: | A solid suit <i>or</i> a <u>strong</u> 2-suiter with the highest and lowest suit. |
| Double, followed by: | |
| new suit: | 16+, 5-cardsuit |
| jump in new suit: | 19-21, (5)6-cardsuit, no interest in partner's suit (in this case, bid opponent's suit). |
| NT: | 19-21 (jump to 2 NT shows 22-23). |
| opponent's suit: | 20+, promising another bid. If the opponent's suit is bid once more, this is forcing to game. |

Against 1 NT:

- D: Penalties
- 2 ♣: Majors (at least 4-4, 5-4 vulnerable - preferably heart longer, since partner will always bid 2 ♥ with equal length).
- 2 ♦/♥: Transfer in direct position - natural in last position.
- 2 ♠: Natural - limited values, and no sidesuits in direct position (bid 2 ♥ instead).
- 2 NT: Both minors, OR any strong 2-suiter (forcing to game). In this case, bid a major next time.

Against strong club:

- D: Majors (at least 5-4 - preferably hearts longer).
- NT: Minors (1 NT: at least 5-4, 2 NT: at least 5-5).
- Other bids: Overcall as often as possible with a decent 5-cardsuit. If the next hand passes or doubles, partner should jump as high as possible with support.

Against pre-empts:

- D: Purely takeout over 3 ♣, purely penalty over 4 ♠. The higher the pre-empt, the more the doubler must be prepared to hear a pass from partner.
- jump: Strong (you do not pre-empt over a pre-empt).

Against weak twos:

- D: Takeout, as for a one-opening.
- 2 NT: 16-20. A bit less (15-19) in 4th position.
- jump: Strong (you do not pre-empt over a pre-empt).

Against multi 2 ♦:

- D: An opening hand with at least 4 ♦. Any further doubles are for penalties.
- 2 NT: 17-20.
- suit: Sound overcall
- jump: Weak. Here, you wait and then jump with a strong hand. With a weak hand, you jump before responder has discovered what partner has.
- (If there is any chance that next hand may pass 2 ♦ - that is, the 2 ♦ opening cannot contain a very strong hand - then 3 ♦ must be forcing for one round, as you cannot risk passing with a big hand. Otherwise 3 ♦ is natural.)

Pass and then

- 2 NT: 14-17
- D: Takeout
- suit: Light overcall

Against strong twos:

D: Takeout with good distribution, 4-4-4-1 / 5-4-4-0 or any strong hand (will bid again). Might be very light (8-9 hp) non-vul. vs. vul.

If the opening bid does not show the suit (as a strong 2 ♣/♦):

D: Lead-directing

1.3 GAME CONVENTIONS

Short suit trialbid if a majorsuit is agreed. (2 NT forcing without a singleton - now both sides show honours.)

Honour/stopper showing trialbids if a minorsuit or NT is agreed.

1.4 SLAM CONVENTIONS

Blackwood 4-Ace Blackwood from the 2-level or if no trumpsuit has been agreed. RKCB otherwise.

Cuebids (1. or 2. round controls)

5 NT Grand slam force (5 ♠ if ♣ is trump)

Asking bids in specific situations

Splinter double jump from the 1-level (1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 4 ♣), or single jump from the 2-level if a minorsuit is agreed (1 ♦ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♠).

1.5 PLAYING CONVENTIONS

Leads:

Top of sequence

Low from an even number - middle from an odd number. When leading to the second trick of the suit (having made a forced play to the first trick): Show count as from the original holding. This is opposite to what you do when discarding for the 2.time (when you do not have to remember what you had originally, just look at what you have left), the reason being that you would block partner's suit too often if you were to return the small card from a holding such as A 9 2 after capturing dummy's King with your Ace at trick one.

Signals:

Odd card: Encouraging (when partner plays the suit). The "oddest" card is the 3, followed by 5-7-9-(10)-8-6-4-2. Signal as clearly as possible.

High-Low: Odd number (when declarer plays the suit).

Discards:

Odd card: Encouraging. When discarding for the 2.time: Show the count of the re-
maining cards.

Lavinthal in specific situations.

2 Opening one of a suit

- Open lowest of two 4-cardsuits, except with 4-4 in the minors.
- Jump support at any stage is a limit bid.
- New suit at the 3-level is forcing to game (with few exceptions).
- 4.suit is forcing to game (OR 11-12 balanced without a stopper in the 4th suit).
- “Cheapest jump” is gameforce with trump support.

2.1 CHOICE OF OPENING BIDS

2.1.1 Limited hands (12-16)

- 4-3-3-3: Open 1 ♣ if the 4-cardsuit is in ♠, otherwise open the 4-cardsuit. In 3. and 4.position: You can open 1 ♠ with 4-3-3-3 (or even 4-4-3-2) and 11-13 hp, and pass any response.
- 4-4-3-2: Open lowest 4-cardsuit, but 1 ♦ with 4-4 in the minors. (The reason for this is to take some pressure off the 1 ♣ opening, to be able to show the distribution comfortably after 1 NT or 2 NT rebid, and also to avoid being ‘endplayed’ after 1 ♣ – (1 ♥) – 1 ♠ – pass with 2-3-4-4 and no ♥-stopper).
- 5-4-3-1/
5-4-2-2: Open the longest suit. With 5♣/4♦, open 1 ♦ and rebid 2 ♣, unless the clubsuit is much better than the diamondsuit (open 1 ♣ - rebid 2 ♣).
- 4-4-4-1: Singleton ♠: Open 1 ♦, rebid 2 ♣ over 1 ♠.
Singleton ♥: Open 1 ♦ (not 1 ♣, since 1 ♦ enables you to bid all your suits at a low level if you wish: 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♣, and is also better if partner is strong: 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♣ - 3 ♣).
Singleton ♦: Open 1 ♣.
Singleton ♣: Open 1 ♥, rebid 2 ♦ over 2 ♣.
- 5-5-?-?: Open the highest suit, except with 5-5 in the black suits (open 1 ♣ and rebid ♠ twice). Observe that 1 ♣ - 1 NT - 2 ♠ (forcing for one round) may show this hand.
- 6-5-?-?: Open the longest suit, except if the suits are touching: Open the highest and rebid the other suit twice, no matter which is the longer. (If the lowest suit is longer and much better, you might choose to open and rebid this suit.)

2.1.2 Strong hands (16-20)

- 4-3-3-3/ Open 1 NT with 15-17.
- 4-4-3-2: Open as with limited hands with 18-19 (but never 1 ♠ with 4-3-3-3)
- 5-4-3-1: Open longest suit, reverse/jump in the other suit next time.
- 4-4-4-1: Open 1 ♦ if you can, otherwise 1 ♣, and reverse/jump as cheaply as possible next time. (A 16- or perhaps even 17-count 4-4-4-1 should normally be downgraded to a weak hand, especially if you can rebid a second suit at the 1-level, where the bidding is less likely to die).
- 5-5-?-?: Open the highest suit, bid the other suit at the 3-level next time. (With ♠ and ♣: Open 1 ♠ only if the spadesuit is better than the clubsuit).
- 6-5-?-?: Open the longest suit, reverse/jump in the other next time.

2.1.3 What hands to open

What hands to open depends very much on partnership style, but it is important that both players know what they can expect when partner opens the bidding. Here are a few suggestions - the main thing is to discuss these points with partner, not necessarily to adopt the suggestions uncritically:

1. and 2. position:

Open all 13-point hands.

Open all 12-point hands, except 4-3-3-3 with weak intermediates (10's and 9's) and 4-4-3-2 with unguarded honour(s) in the short suit and weak intermediates.

Open 11-point hands with 5-4-3-1 or better distribution, provided the singleton is not an unguarded honour. Open 5-3-3-2 and 5-4-2-2 hands with good intermediates and no unguarded honours.

Open a 10-point hand only with at least 10 cards in the two longest suits, good intermediates, and no unguarded honours.

Upgrade a 14-point 5-3-3-2 hand with good intermediates to 1 NT.

Upgrade a 17-point 5-3-3-2 hand with good intermediates to 1 of a suit followed by 2 NT (showing 18-19).

Downgrade a 15-point 4-3-3-3 hand with no 10's or 9's to 1 of a suit.

Downgrade a 18 point 4-3-3-3 hand with no 10's or 9's to 1 NT.

3. and 4. position:

Open slightly lighter than in 1. and 2. position. Partner is not going to punish you by jumping without a fit. You should even consider opening 9 or 10-points hands with a good suit for the lead in 3rd position (♠ A65 ♥KQ1087 ♦752 ♣86 - open 1 ♥ (or even 2♥) third in hand non-vulnerable).

With (10)11-13, 4-3-3-3, 4-2-4-3, 4-3-4-2, 4-2-3-4, 4-3-2-4, open 1 ♠ unless you have a much better second suit, and pass whatever partner does.

With (10)11-13, 4-4-3-2, 3-4-3-3, 3-4-4-2, 3-4-2-4, open 1 ♥ and pass whatever partner does. Be more careful with 2-4 in the majors, as you do not want to leave partner in 1 ♠ on a 4-2 fit.

Open weak twos more randomly than in 1. and 2. position (4-13p). Even if you have a 13-point hand, it is unlikely that you have a game unless partner has a super fit, and this style makes it much more difficult for the opponents to get in.

The corollary of this is that pass – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥ shows (13)14-16, since you would have opened 2 ♥ with 12 or 13 poor points opposite a passed hand.

2.2 RESPONDER'S FIRST BID

2.2.1 1-over-1

6+p, forcing for one round. Always bid the longest suit if you are strong enough to force to game. If not, do not bypass a major to bid a longer minor. With 5-5, bid the highest-ranking suit first. With 4-4, bid as economically as possible.

Exceptions:

- When partner opens 1 ♣ and you have a weak hand (not strong enough to force to game), bid a 4-card major ahead of 4- or 5-card ♦. Otherwise, you might miss a 4-4 fit if partner jumps to 2 NT, or the opponents interfere.
- When partner opens 1 ♣, bid 1 ♥ (not 1 ♦) with 4-4-4-1. Otherwise, you might miss a 4-4 fit in a major if partner jumps to 2 NT (- 3♥ - 3♠ will not show a 4-card spadesuit from partner, but rather worry about spades).

Remember that partner would normally have opened 1 ♦ with both minors, so an opening bid of 1 ♣ will normally *deny* a diamondsuit unless opener is planning to reverse.

After 1-over-1, a *jump preference* in the next round of bidding will be invitational: 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 3♥. If you want to force, you will have to go through 4.suit (2 ♦).

2.2.2 2-over-1

10+p, forcing for one round, and promises another bid unless the opener rebids his suit at the 2-level. You have either an unbalanced hand with 10-12 points and little or no support for partner, or a hand strong enough to force to game.

1♠ - 2♥ and any 2-over-1 after an initial pass shows a 5-card suit.

After 2-over-1 and a minimum rebid from opener, responder can show 10-12 unbalanced by:

- Repeating his own suit
- Giving preference to opener's first suit at the 2-level
- Bidding 2 NT
- Raising opener's second suit

All other rebids are forcing, including *preference at the 3-level* to opener's first suit, whether this is done with a jump or not: 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♠ or 1♥ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♥.

2.2.3 Other responses

1 NT: 6-9 (8-10 over 1 ♣). Denies a 4-card major that could have been bid at the 1-level.

2 NT: 10-12. Denies a 4-card major that could have been bid at the 1-level.

3 NT: 13-15, 4-3-3-3 with a 4-card minor over 1♣/♦/♥, 2-3-4-4 over 1 ♠.

Simple raise: 6-9, 4+ (3+ after 1 ♠). No 4-card major after 1♣/♦.

Jump raise: 10-12. 5+ after 1 ♣, 4+ after 1 ♦/♥, 3+ after 1 ♠. No 4-card major after 1 ♣/♦.

Jump to game: Basically pre-emptive, max 13hp, max 1 Ace.

Jump shift: Cheapest jump: Artificial gameforce with support for opener's suit.

Other jumps: 16+ (14+ with good distribution), 6(5)-cardsuit, not 4 cards in any of the two remaining suit. Opener's responses are nearly automatic.

Double jump: Void. (With a singleton, use cheapest jump instead). Good support for partner, at least game-going values. Opener can cuebid, sign off in the trump suit, use RCKB, or bid 3 NT (showing wasted values in the void-suit, can be passed).

2.3 OPENER'S SECOND BID

2.3.1 With a balanced hand, 12-14 (4333/4432/5332)

After 1♦ from partner, rebid with this priority:

- a) Bid 1 NT. Note that you do not rebid a 4-card major after 1♣ - 1♦ with a balanced hand. Partner can check with 2♦ for a 4-4 fit in a major. 1♣ - 1♦ 2♦ shows at least 4/5 (normally 4/6) in the minors.

After 1♥ from partner, rebid with this priority:

- a) Raise partner with 4-card support.
- b) Bid 1♠ with 4-card spades and (at least) 4 cards in the opening suit.
- c) Bid 1 NT.

After 1♠ from partner, rebid with this priority:

- a) Raise partner with 4-card support.
- b) Bid 1 NT.

After 2-over-1, rebid with this priority:

- a) Raise partner with 4-card support, or 3-card support if partner is known to have 5 (forcing if partner can have 4, not forcing if partner has promised 5).
- b) Bid 2 NT. Note that this is forcing for one round - you will also rebid 2 NT with 18-19 balanced.

2.3.2 With a balanced hand, 18-19

After 1-over-1, rebid with this priority:

- a) Raise 1♥/♠ to game with 4-card support.
- b) Jump to 2 NT.

After 2-over-1, rebid with this priority:

- a) Jump cuebid with 4-card support, or with 3-card support if partner is known to have 5 (after 1♠ - 2♥ or opposite a passed hand or after interference).
- b) Bid 2 NT (forcing for one round), and invite to slam next time if partner only moves on to game.

2.3.3 With an unbalanced hand, limited values

(12-15/16), rebid with this priority:

- a) Raise partner's major with 4-card support
- b) Bid a 4-card major at the 1-level
(rare) Bid a 5-cardsuit below the level of 2 in your main suit. (1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦)
(rare) Rebid a 7-cardsuit
- c) Raise partner's minor with 4-card support. This is forcing to at least 3 NT after 2-over-1.
- d) Rebid a 6-cardsuit with minimum values (even with another biddable 4-cardsuit)
- e) Bid a 4-card sidesuit below the level of two in your main suit
- f) Rebid a 6-cardsuit
- g) Raise partner with 3-card support
- h) Rebid a 5-cardsuit

2.3.4 With an unbalanced hand, strong

(16/17-20), rebid with this priority:

- a) Jump in partner's suit, or (with an even stronger hand) splinter (from the 1-level) or cuebid (from the 2-level) with 4-card support. (NB! Never jump straight to game with an unbalanced hand - this shows 18-19 balanced.)
- b) Reverse or jump in a side suit, or bid the suit at the 3-level.
- c) Jump in your own suit (this shows a one-suited hand - with a strong hand, you should always bid a sidesuit if you have one).
- d) Jump to the 4-level in your own suit with 7(6)-cardsuit and 3-card support for partner. (1♦ - 1♥ - 4♦ or 1♥ - 1♠ - 4♥). Responder can use RKCB with his own suit (the only known "fit") as trumps, since the King and Queen of this suit will normally be needed for slam purposes.
- e) Jump to 3 NT with a solid 7(6)-cardsuit and 1-2 outside stoppers. Forcing after 2-over-1, except after 1♦ - 2♣ (where opener now should have 14-16).

After 2-over-1, you can also:

- f) Raise partner's minor with 4-card support. Forcing to at least 3 NT. Partner will initially assume that you have a limited hand, so you might have to bypass 3NT yourself with extra values.
- g) Bid a new suit at the 2-level. This is forcing for one round, and you should do this with a strong hand *only if you know what to do if partner next jumps to game*. If you are in doubt now, it would generally have been better to show your strength earlier and leave the rest to partner.

3 Further bidding

3.1 REVERSE/JUMP

(Not to be mixed up with responder's immediate jump on the first round of bidding - see sec. 3.5 (special agreements) for those sequences).

Reverse or jump in a new suit

- by any player is forcing to game after 2-over-1.
- by responder is forcing to game after 1-over-1. Opener can now bid slowly to show stoppers - extra length - support.

Jump/reverse by responder does not always promise 4 cards in the suit bid, but usually 5 card in the first suit bid.

1 ♣ 1 ♥
2 ♣ 2 ♠

does not necessarily promise 4-card spades, but rather spade values. Opener cannot have 4-card spades in this sequence, but must now show the cheapest information available: Diamond stopper (2 NT), 7-card or good 6-card ♣ (3 ♣), 3-card ♥ (3 ♥), very good 3-card ♠ (3 ♠), or none of the above (3 ♦ - 4.suit).

Reverse by opener after 1-over-1 is not forcing. Responder is allowed to pass with an unsuitable hand, and has otherwise two weak bids available:

- * Repeat of own suit
- * Preference to opener's first suit

Note that a jump in the 4. suit (above 3 NT) will be cuebid in support of opener's second suit (1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♣), and that a raise of opener's second suit is forcing (1♣ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 3♥). To revert to natural bidding, you can use 4.suit or 2 NT, or jump in opener's first suit (natural and forcing: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♦) or your own suit (also natural and forcing: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 3♠).

Jump shift by opener after 1-over-1 is not forcing. The only response that can be passed is:

- * Preference to opener's first suit

Because of the space consumed, repeat of own suit (1♦ - 1♠ - 3♣ - 3♠) will have to be forcing. In this sequence, 3♦ is the only possible stopping station below game (or possibly - 3♦ - 3♠/4♣ - pass). This also applies after interference (1♦ - [1♥] - 1♠ - [2♥] - 3♣.....)

Note that (as a general principle) a jump below game level will be cuebid if a bid of the suit at a lower level is natural and 100% forcing. (1♦ - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♣) is logically cuebid with spade support, because 3♣ is 100% forcing. Even (1♦ - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♦) should be cuebid (as 3♦ will be forcing), while (1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♦) is best treated at natural with very good diamonds, as 3♦ would not be forcing here.

Note that a jump in the 4.suit is natural below the level of 3 NT, but cuebid agreeing opener's second suit at the 4-level or higher:

- 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠: 6/5 in ♣/♠
1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♣: Cuebid, *not* denying a spade control.

3.2 NEW SUIT AT THE 3-LEVEL

without forcing to game unless **responder** is already limited.

1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♣	15+, forcing to game
1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣	forcing to game*
1 ♦ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♣	forcing to game (can stop in 4 ♦)
1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♦	not forcing (2 NT limited responder's hand)
1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣	not forcing (2 ♠ limited responder's hand)
1 ♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♥ - 3 ♣	not forcing
1 ♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣	not forcing, although opener is strong.

(*) Preference to 3 ♥ is forcing, because with a less suitable hand (no heart support) opener would have to bid 3 NT. 3 ♣ need not show a suit here, just values.

3.3 TRIAL BIDS

When a suit is agreed at a low level, a new suit:

- Shows a singleton/void if a major suit is agreed.
- Shows stoppers/honours if a minorsuit is agreed, and it is clear that there is no major fit.
- Is natural if there may be a better fit available.

A jump is asking bid (not splinter - bid your singleton instead and watch partner's reaction) when a majorsuit is agreed, and splinter (here, bid honours instead without a singleton) when a minorsuit is agreed.

2 NT is natural if a minorsuit is agreed, forcing (denying a singleton) if a majorsuit is agreed.

1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣ (semi-) natural - spades is not yet agreed. Here, 3 ♠ would be invitational, not pre-emptive.

1 ♦ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ Shows spade stopper, but worry about hearts.

1 ♦ - (2 ♣) - 2 ♦ - (pass) - 2 ♠ is in principle natural, as there may still be a 4-4 fit available in spades after the interference.

After the first trialbid, both partners bid stoppers below 3 NT, cuebid above 3 NT. Even if a majorsuit is agreed, 3 NT from either side will be natural.

After 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣

responder signs off in 3 ♠ with minimum and/or wasted values in ♣, jumps to 4 ♠ with additional values, bids 3 ♦/♥ (the best of the suits) with doubts, and cuebids (4 ♣/♦) with maximum and nothing wasted in ♣ (partner could be looking for slam with 3 ♣). 4 ♥ (5-cardsuit) and 3 NT should be natural. 3 ♥ followed by 4 ♥ over 3 ♠ shows maximum and 4-card ♥. (This might be hard to remember, so avoid this sequence unless you see a clear benefit of playing in hearts).

After 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT

responder bids 3 or 4 ♠, shows honours at the 3-level if in doubt, cuebids 4 ♣/♦ with maximum, or suggests 3 NT/4 ♥ as final contracts.

After 1 ♠ - (D) - 2 NT (spade support) - (pass) -

opener shows honours at the 3-level if in doubt, or cuebids at the 4-level. Still, 3 NT/ 4 ♥ should be natural.

After 1 ♣ - 3 ♣

any bid at the 3-level shows stoppers and interest for NT. If a player then takes out partner's 3 NT bid, all the bids from this player were cuebids. (1 ♦ - 3 ♦ - 3 ♥ - 3 NT - 4 ♣: Both 3 ♥ and 4 ♣ are cuebid - opener never intended to play 3 NT).

After 1 ♦ - 2 ♦

new suit shows honours (still possible to stop in 3/4 ♦ or 2 NT), 2 NT from any player will confirm honour(s) in a suit partner has bypassed (as in 1 ♦ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT). When there is only one suit left, a bid in that suit will ask for a stopper - it could still be possible to reach 3 NT with 2 half stoppers in the suit. The principle is "3.suit tells - 4.suit asks".

a jump is splinter (singleton or void). After such a splinter, 3 NT expresses a strong desire to play there, while 4 ♦ is signoff (can be passed).

After 1 ♠ - (pass) - 2 ♠ - (3 ♣/♦/♥) -

double is penalty, while 3 ♠ is invitational only if the opponent bid 3 ♥. Otherwise, 3 ♠ is just competitive. Over 3 ♦, 3 ♥ will be inviting to 4 ♠, while both 3 ♦ and 3 ♥ are inviting over 3 ♣ (bid the shortest suit if possible). A new suit at the 4-level is in principle natural after interference (the opponents - or we - may sacrifice later). 1 ♥ - (1 ♠) - 2 ♥ - (2 ♠) - 2 NT is invitational with short spades or a balanced hand.

After 1 ♠ - (2 ♥) - 2 ♠ - (3 ♥) -

double is inviting to 4 ♠, while 3 ♠ is competitive as usual. The principle is that you should be willing to give up the penalty double when the opponents support each other, but not when one of them bids without a word from partner (as in 1 ♠ - (pass) - 2 ♠ - (3 ♥)). However, 1 ♠ - (2 ♦) - 2 ♠ - (3 ♦) - x is penalty as usual - bid 3 ♥ to invite to 4 ♠.

3.4 FOURTH SUIT

can be bid on two types of hands:

- i) Slam or game going hands.
- ii) Balanced 11-12 point hands without stopper in the 4.suit.

Note that ii) does not apply after a 2-over-1 response, since you would have bid 2 NT initially with 11-12 balanced. After 2-over-1, 4.suit is forcing to game (with the possible exception mentioned under point (c) below).

In 4.suit sequences, practically all continuations will be forcing to game. However, in any sequence starting with 1-over-1, there will be one (and only one) bid to use for hand type ii):

- a) the response is 2 NT without a jump: PASS
- b) the response is 1 NT, or a suit without jump: Raise the response (this can be passed)

There are also two other sequences where you can stop below game after 4.suit:

(rare) c) the 4.suit is repeated (this should ask for half a stopper in the suit) and the response is in the same as the first time (this can be passed). This might also apply after 2-over-1, and the principle is the same as in several other sequences: In a gameforcing situation, it should be possible to stop in 4 of a minor if it becomes clear that you cannot play 3 NT because you lack stopper in a suit.

(rare) d) 1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT may be passed

Examples of sequences where it is possible to stop after 4.suit:

1 ♥ - 1 ♠	1 ♥ - 1 ♠	1 ♦ - 1 ♠	1 ♣ - 1 ♦
2 ♣ - 2 ♦	2 ♣ - 2 ♦	2 ♣ - 2 ♥	1 ♥ - 1 ♠
2 NT	2 ♠ - 3 ♠	3 ♣ - 3 ♥	1 NT- 2 NT
		4 ♣ (- 4 ♦)	
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)

Observe that every response to the 4.suit, except a non-jump 2 NT is forcing for one round (even 1 NT in the example above).

When partner bids the 4.suit, you should try to give the cheapest valuable information possible. Partner will normally be interested in

- Stopper in the 4.suit
- Good 3-card support to partner's suit
- Extra length in your own suit(s)

NB! After a 1-over-1 response, you cannot rebid 2 NT over 4.suit at the 2-level unless you have a relatively balanced minimum hand – partner may pass. With extra values you may have to jump to 3 NT or show another feature at the 3-level.

Quite frequently, you have nothing extra to show - typically with

a)		b)
♠ 10 3		♠ 3
♥ A K 7 5 4		♥ A K 7 5 4
♦ A Q 5 3	You	♦ A Q 5 3
♣ 9 3	1 ♥	♣ 9 3 2
	2 ♦	
	?	
	Partner	
	1 ♠	
	3 ♣	

You will have to bid 3 ♠ with the first hand, despite only a small doubleton in partner's suit. With the second hand, you will have to rebid 3 ♥, and partner should know that this may still be a 5-card suit. (With very bad hearts and very good diamonds you can consider 3 ♦, but this should normally show 5-5). Over 3 ♠ from partner, you should try 3 NT, which partner will interpret as club length, but not necessarily a stopper (partner could also have 3 small). With considerably extra strength, you should bid 4 ♣ over 3 ♣ - see below.

Raise of 4.suit shows 4 cards in the suit, provided you have not already denied it. If you cannot have 4 cards in the 4.suit, a raise should show game-going values and nothing else to tell, usually 3 small in the 4.suit, typically 5-4-3-1.

1 ♣ - 1 ♦	1 ♥ - 1 ♠	1 ♦ - 1 ♥	1 ♦ - 1 ♠
1 ♥ - 1 ♠	2 ♣ - 2 ♦	2 ♣ - 2 ♠	2 ♣ - 2 ♥
2 ♠	3 ♦	3 ♠	3 ♥
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

Sequence 1 shows 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5, while sequence 2 shows 0-5-4-4. Sequence 3 shows 3-1-5-4 (or possibly 3-1-4-5) without a spade stopper, and extra values. (With no extras, bid 3 ♦ and hope for a chance to bid 3 ♠ or 3 NT).

Sequence 4 above shows 1-4-4-4, 0-4-4-5 (you had to open 1 ♦ with these distributions) or 0-4-5-4. Responder can use "5th suit forcing" (3♠) over 3♥ to find opener's exact distribution (you cannot possibly mean to set spades as trumps in this sequence – if that is what you want, you should have jumped to 2♠ over 1♦).

Note the previous example as well. 4 ♣ over 3 ♣ there could show the 1-5-4-3 hand with extra values, but it is questionable to bypass 3 NT with that distribution. It would make more sense to bid 4♣ with 2-5-4-2, 2 small spades and good red suits, waiting for partner to choose a suit instead of giving preference to spades. The main point is that 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♦ should deny 4-card ♣ – rebid 2 ♣ with 0-5-4-4.

Rebid of 4.suit asks primarily for half a stopper in the suit (Q x or J x x) unless partner has already shown shortage (as in sequence (4) above). If partner bids no trump (with half a stopper or better) and the 4.suit bidder bids again, this will be a (relatively mild - could have jumped earlier on, see next page) slam invitation with control in the 4.suit. If responder repeats the last suit at the 4.level in these sequences, the 4.suit bidder may pass.

Corollaries:

As a simple bid in a new suit after the 4.suit is forcing from both sides, jumps should have specific meanings:

- A jump rebid of your own suit on the 4.suit shows a solid suit and not considerably extras:

(1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♣ - 4 ♥)

shows solid hearts, typically 6-4 in the red suits. 3 ♥ is forcing, and any other 6-4 hand should be bid that way.

- A jump in partner's suit shows some extra values and a good 3-card support - at least a top honour (A, K or Q). Beware that partner may still have concealed support for one of your suits, and no special desire to play in the suit you jump in. If you are too strong for this, give preference to partner's suit and cuebid later - see the section on 'picture jumps' for more details.
- A jump below game by the 4.suit bidder in the next round is cuebid, agreeing the last suit bid by partner as trump:

(1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 4 ♣)

is logically a cuebid with spades as trump, as 3 ♣ is 100% forcing and (normally) inviting to slam.

(These are essential):

- A (single) jump below game by a player who could have used the 4.suit is non-forcing but invitational if the jump is not in the 4.suit (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 NT/3 ♣/♥/♠).
- A jump below 3 NT in the 4.suit is forcing and natural and shows at least 5-5 in the two suits bid. A jump in the 4.suit above 3 NT (1 ♠ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 4 ♣) is cuebid.

3.4.1 Fourth suit is doubled

Pass: No control or stopper – typically 2 or 3 small in the suit¹. The 4.suit bidder should redouble without a stopper or singleton in the suit. Now, partner bids 3 NT with half a stopper, which must be taken out without half a stopper on the other side. Afterpass - pass - RD it is possible to stop below game.

RD: 1 stopper (partner should normally be declarer in NT).

NT: At least 1½ stopper.

New suit: Singleton/void in the 4.suit. This principle applies also for the 4.suit bidder himself if partner passes the double.

This also applies when a bid of the opponent's suit is doubled:

1 ♥ (1 ♠) 2 ♣ (p)
2 ♠ (x) ?

and also when another artificial bid *that has no relation to the suit bid* is doubled:

1 NT (p) 2 ♦ (x)
?

As before, pass shows 2 or 3 small, RD exactly one stopper, while any bid (including, but not limited to, 2 NT) will show at least 1 ½ stopper (since opener cannot have a singleton).

Similarly:

1 NT (p) 2 ♦ (x)
p (p) ?

2 NT from responder will now show a diamond stopper, RD shows 2 or 3 small (could be half a stopper, of course) and cancels the gameforce, while any other bid (in principle) shows a singleton diamond.

In short: Pass: Worry. RD: Maybe worry. Bid on: No worry.

Note that this principle does not apply to

Trialbids

Cuebids

Bids showing a stopper

Bids showing a singleton (after weak twos, for example)

In these cases, the artificial bid has a relation to the suit bid, and the continuation is as described in 4.4.2.

Also, if the bid doubled is an enquiry with artificial step responses (RKCB, asking bid or 2x - 3♣), ROPI applies.

¹ The method outlined here is superior to the fairly similar "Manko" convention, since if responder has one stopper, partner (the 4.suit bidder) will be declarer in NT without telling the doubler whether or not he has half a stopper in the suit.

3.5 SPECIAL AGREEMENTS

This section deals with everyday bidding situations where special agreements are required. Most pair will not have discussed these situations in detail, but they occur frequently, and often lead to confusion in casual partnerships. Some of the principles discussed here may be extended to other bidding situations, but this requires further discussions. You can easily choose to disregard this section, or assign other meaning to the sequences discussed, as they do not form an integral part of the system. The most important issue is that both partners agree in these situations

See also the section on slam conventions.

3.5.1 Responder's jump in the first round

Bidding sequences which start with a jump, as

1 ♣ - 2 ♠ or 1 ♥ - 3 ♣

take up a lot of valuable bidding space, and should therefore be well defined. For a jump, responder should hold at least 16 hp (down to 14 with good distribution), a 6-cardsuit or a good 5-cardsuit, not as much as 4 cards in any of the sidesuits. Good support for partner's suit is permitted.

After such a start, the two other suits would normally be ruled out as trumps. Consequently, there is no reason why the opener should bid these suits naturally, especially as a lot of bidding space is already taken up. Instead, opener should respond to a jump after this priority list:

- Jump to 3 NT with a solid suit (minimum 6).
- Rebid a 5 -cardsuit with two of the three top honours
- Support partner with at least Q x x
- Bid No Trump with both sidesuits well stopped
- Bid a sidesuit containing honours

Note that this scale is automatic - do not rebid a bad 6-cardsuit (if you get a chance, you can bid it later - then partner will know that the suit is weak), and do not raise partner's suit (even with 4-card support) if your main suit is as good as K Q x x x. Remember that a direct support will deny such a good suit.

Normally, the opener will not jump in a suit after partner's jump shift, since this takes up too much bidding space. It makes sense only to jump with *both* support for partner (Q x x or better) *and* a good suit of your own (5-cardsuit with 2 honours), according to this priority list:

- Jump in your own suit if the suit is solid (could be as few as 5).
- Jump in another suit to cuebid.
- Jump in partner's suit with nothing to cuebid.

In all these cases, *partner's* suit is assumed to be the trumpsuit, even when you have shown a solid suit. (After all, this is the only suit where both of you know that you have a fit.)

If the bidding starts 1 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT, responder does not know whether opener has a balanced 12-14, or perhaps an unbalanced 17-19 point hand. If this leaves you with a guess at this stage, you should probably not have jumped in the first place.

See Annex 3 for more sequences after responder's jump in the first round.

3.5.2 Responder's cheapest jump

One disadvantage by playing an immediate jump to 2 NT (see 3.6.2) and 3 of partner's suit as limit bids, and a jump in a new suit as strong and natural (see 3.5.1), is that there are no bids available for strong hands with partner's suit as the main suit. If you have

♠ A 4
♥ K 5 2
♦ Q J 9 8 4 3
♣ K 3

and hear partner open 1 ♦, you will have to improvise. 1 ♥ and 1 ♠ is dangerous, 3 NT and 3 ♠ (splinter) misleading, so 2 ♣ on a doubleton is probably the least of evils. However, you will be hard pressed to show you diamond support later without risking partner going overboard.

A neat solution to this problem is to use the *cheapest* jump in a new suit to show this type of hand. This means that the jumps

1 ♣	2 ♦
1 ♦	2 ♥
1 ♥	2 ♠
1 ♠	3 ♣

are all forcing to game with good support for partner's suit.

After this start, opener's next bid (without jump) is in principle natural (all balanced hands will bid 2 NT, if possible), while a jump (or 'raise' of a suit bid by responder at the 2-level) will be splinter.

1 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♣	will show at least a 5-cardsuit
1 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♣	will show at least 9 cards in the minors
1 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♥	will show 5+ hearts, normally not 5-3-3-2, but could be 4-5-2-2, 4-5-1-3 or 4-5-3-1
1 ♠ - 3 ♣ - 3 ♠	5-3-3-2 or 6+♠
1 ♠ - 3 ♣ - 3 NT	4+♣
1 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♥	singleton
1 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 3 NT	singleton ♣
1 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 NT	singleton ♣ (cannot show singleton ♦, bid 3 ♥)
1 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♦	singleton ♦

All 4-level bids (in a new suit) from the opener will show a void.

After the first 3 bids, continuation is as follows:

If a minorsuit is agreed, 3 NT is normally still a possible contract. Both players can bid stoppers/values at the 3-level, but if one of the players bid the agreed trumpsuit at the 3-level (1 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣ or 1 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♣) then that is a signal that 3 NT is of no interest, and cuebids should follow.

If a majorsuit is agreed, 3 NT is not a possible contract unless both players are 3-4-3-3, in which case they can bid 1 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 NT.

After 1 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2NT, a new suit from responder is a short suit trialbid (not a stopper, since 3NT is out of the question unless responder raises 2NT to 3NT).

If opener bids a new suit, responder will normally return to the agreed suit at the 3-level in order to get more information from the opener (since opener has not had any chance to show the strength yet).

A jump to game in the agreed suit is a *picture jump* (see sec.3.5.4 for details).

A raise of opener's second suit (as in 1♠ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 4♦) is a mild slam try in this suit. Opener can cuebid, sign off in either suit or use 6-Ace RKCB (see Annex 4).

When opener has bid two suits, an immediate bid in a new suit or in NT from responder sets opener's **second** suit as trumps (same principle as below applies).

After the opener's first suit has been bid at the 3-level (by either player), a new suit shows a singleton while 3NT (normally) denies a singleton and encourages cuebids.

A second jump by responder (1♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 4♣) is best played as asking bid (see 4.8).

Examples:

1♥ - 2♠	1♥ - 2♠	1♦ - 2♥	1♠ - 3♣	1♠ - 3♣	1♠ - 3♣
3♦ - 3♥	2 NT - ?	2 NT - ?	3♠ - ?	3♥ - 3♠	3 NT - ?
?				?	
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)

In (a), 3♠ and 4♣ would show a singleton, while 3 NT will deny a singleton (i.e. show 5-2-4-2) and some extras while 4♦ would be cuebid denying a club control.

In (b), a direct 3 NT will show 3-4-3-3, while any other bid will set hearts as trumps. Here, a new suit at the 3-level should be splinter and 3♥ a general slam try. After this, opener can bid 3 NT as a serious slam try (18-19) while any other bid will be a normal cuebid (since opener cannot have a singleton) without promising more than 12-14.

In (c), 3NT is still a possible contract so stoppers are bid at the 3-level while the trumpsuit at the 3-level would show little interest in 3NT and a jump to the 4-level splinter.

In (d), 3 NT from responder is a serious slam try while 4♣/♦/♥ is a singleton.

In (e), 3 NT from opener denies a singleton (5422) while 4♣/♦ will show singleton. 4♥ will be a cuebid denying control in a minor (e.g. 5422 with honours in the majors).

In (f), 4♣ would show club support (opener can still revert to 4♠ with a minimum) while 4♦/♥ would be cuebid with spades.

3.5.3 Passed hand bidding

Jump after an initial pass (whether the next hand bids or not) shows a reasonable 5-cardsuit and 3-card support for partner's suit, near opening values (10-12 p). That is, a hand where you fear that you may miss a game by simply bidding your suit.

If the opening bid is 1♣, a jump should show at least 4-card clubs (as 1♣ may be 3). Over a diamond opening, responder may have 3 or 4-card support for a jump in a major (1♦ - 2♥: 5♥ and 3-4♦), while over a major the support should be exactly 3.

The opener can pass or repeat the suit with minimum, bid a new suit (forcing, of course) or NT with better than minimum, and cuebid directly with slam interest. (In this case, the first bid suit is normally trump: 1♥ - 3♣ - 4♦: cuebid, and opener must logically have 5♥. With 3-4-3-3 or 4-4-2-3 and 19 p (the only possibilities if you do not have 5 hearts), the values can hardly be sufficient for slam after partner's initial pass. If you want to try, bid 3♦ and then possibly 4♣ over partner's 3 NT. (If partner signs off in 3♥ - forget it).

Note that 2-over-1 by a passed hand shows a 5-cardsuit - otherwise bid 1 NT, even with a 4-4-4-1 hand. Consequently

pass 1♥
2♣

weak hand with only a doubleton (will pass 3 NT) or 3-card support (will sign off in game over a cuebid) **or** a slam-interested hand (will respond to a cuebid with another cuebid).

This is consistent with the cue-bidding technique, as (1 ♠ - 2♥ - 3 ♣ - 3♠ - 4 ♦ - 4♠) shows either a weak hand with limited spade support, or a stronger hand without a club control. In both cases opener is expected to pass.

Another case of "fast arrival" is the situation where one hand can either go straight to game, or make a "waiting bid" and then bid game. Consider the bidding sequences

1 ♦	1 ♥	and	1 ♦	1 ♥
1 ♠	3 NT		1 ♠	2 ♣
			(any) 3 NT	

The sequences should obviously mean something different, and the logical choice is to let one of them be descriptive ("I have a balanced hand with 13-15p and clubs well stopped") while the other one should be more of a command ("This is a misfit - I want to play 3 NT"). If the opener has

♠ K x x x x
♥ x
♦ A K Q x x x
♣ x

it would seem reasonable to take out in 4 ♠ or ♦ opposite the first type of hand, while it must certainly be right to pass if the hand is a misfit.

There are three reasons for letting the direct bid be the descriptive bid: First, partner cannot necessarily tell at this stage whether you have a misfit or not. Secondly, if partner lets you describe your hand first (by for example bidding 4.suit) and then bids 3 NT, you will seldom have any reason to take out, unless you have an extreme hand anyway. Last, but not least - this principle applies in other situations as well - see the weak two openings.

Note that this only applies to sequences where you can **jump to game**, or alternatively bid 4.suit without risking that partner bypasses the game you want to play. In a sequence like

1 ♠ 2 ♥
3 ♣ ?

you have to bid 3 NT directly if you want to play there, while 3 ♦ followed by 3 NT over 3 ♥/♠ shows doubt. The reason is that partner might bid 4 ♣ over your 3 ♦ (4.suit), which you cannot risk if you only want to play 3 NT.

3.6 SPECIAL SEQUENCES

This section deals with sequences that are an integral part of the system. If you want to assign different meaning to these sequences, be sure you have alternative ways of showing the hand types covered in this section.

3.6.1 One ♣/♦/♥/♠ - One NT

shows 6-10 (8-10 over 1 ♣), and denies a 4-card major which could have been bid at the 1-level. Opener should normally pass with a weak balanced hand, and never rebid his suit with a 5-3-3-2 hand (unless, possibly, if the suit is clubs). With a strong balanced hand (18-19), it seems reasonable to insist on 3 NT, so the only problem hands are the strong, unbalanced hands. Note, by the way, how uncomplicated these sequences are when you play a strong NT opening - you never need to worry about missing a 3 NT with, say 16 opposite 9 when you both are balanced.

In fact, unless you want to cut it fine with a flat 18-count, you can afford to play a rebid of 2 NT as forcing, taking care of some of the difficult strong hands.

With a weak (up to 17) unbalanced hand, opener should bid a new suit at the 2-level, if possible. If responder gives preference to the first suit, opener might make another try, which in principle should be natural:

1 ♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♣ - 2 ♥ - 2 NT: 16-17, 5/4 in ♥/♣.

1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣: 5-1-4-3 or thereabout.

In rare cases, opener might even consider rebidding a 3-card suit:

♠ A 7 5 4
♥ A J 7 3 2
♦ 3
♣ A K 5

After 1 ♥ - 1 NT, 2 ♣ would not be unreasonable on this hand. But be prepared to play in a 3-3 fit if partner is 3-1-6-3 or even 3-2-5-3.

- 1 ♠ 1 NT not 100% forcing, but partner can only pass with a completely
3 ♥ unsuitable hand. The important point to notice is that preference to 3 ♠ from responder should be forcing in this sequence, allowing opener to rebid 3 NT with 5-4 in the majors and 4 ♥ with 5-5.
- 1 x 1 NT forcing to game, and should show either
2 NT a) a strong 3-suiter (5-4-4-0 or possibly 4-4-4-1)
b) a game-going single-suited hand interested in 3 NT
or (more frequently)
c) a strong balanced/semi-balanced hand, interested in 3 NT

Responder assumes initially that partner has the 3-suiter type, and bids the lowest possible trumpsuit at the 3-level (which could be partner's first suit with a relatively balanced hand). Opener clarifies by bidding:

3 NT: 18-19 balanced.

Rebid of own suit: Single-suited hand (6+ cards).

New suit: Unbalanced, short in the suit partner has bid.

4-level: 4-card support.

- 1 ♠ 1 NT
2 NT 3 ♥ 5+ ♥. Now, 3 ♠ shows the spade hand (6+ cards), 3 NT balanced hand with doubleton hearts OR 3-suiter with short hearts, 4 ♥ balanced hand with 3-card hearts, and 4♣/♦ void or singleton (usually 3-suiter including hearts, but could also possibly be the big spade hand with excellent heart support).
- 1 x 1 NT
3 NT Solid suit, as after 1 x - any - jump to 3 NT. After 1 ♥/♠, this does not show any interest in playing 3 NT, but enables partner to cuebid with a suitable hand (bid 2 NT instead followed by your suit at the 3-level if you would like partner to suggest playing in 3 NT).
- 1 ♥ 1 NT
2 ♣/♦ 2 ♠ This shows a very strong raise of partner's second suit.
- 1 ♠ 1 NT
2 ♥/♠ 2 NT You do not need this bid to show that you really was too strong for 1 NT the first time, since partner's rebid is limited to 16-17 points. Instead, you should make this bid on one of these types of hands:
 - a) a relatively weak hand with both minors (partner should initially assume this, and give preference)
 - b) a strong balanced raise in one of opener's suits (more often than not the second suit, but it might also be the first). Responder will clarify in the next round.

With a passed hand, a raise via 2 NT is stronger than a direct raise - remember that responder can have up to 11 or 12 bad points. With an un-passed hand, the raise via 2 NT shows a maximum and completely balanced hand - opener should often suggest 3 NT with a suitable hand.

3.6.2 One ♣/♦/♥/♠ - Two NT

This shows 10-12hp, balanced. Denies 4-card major over 1 ♣/♦/♥, and 3-card ♠ over 1 ♠. May contain a 5-card minor.

This bid should be used in preference to 2-over-1 as often as possible, to avoid a bidding problem after for example 1 ♥ - 2 ♣ - 2 NT (12-14). If you have a balanced hand and do not know whether to pass or raise now, you should probably have bid 2 NT yourself in the previous round. If you wonder whether you have the right strength to 2 NT, assume that partner has opened a 12-14 NT. If you are worth 2 NT then, you can bid it now.

Over 2 NT, rebid of the opening suit is the only non-forcing bid. A new suit below the first bid suit (1 ♥ - 2 NT - 3 ♣) could be a 3-card suit, and will normally promise at least 5 cards in the first suit. A new suit at the 3-level above the first suit (1 ♦ - 2 NT - 3 ♥) shows initially a stopper in the suit and worry about the suit(s) bypassed. Responder can show another stopper, bid NT with the other suits well controlled, or in some cases ask for half a stopper in the suit partner is worrying about.

Some examples:

1 ♦ 2 NT	1 ♥ 2 NT	1 ♠ 2 NT	1 ♣ 2 NT
3 ♣ 3 ♥	3 ♦ 3 ♥	3 ♣ 3 ♦	3 ♦ 3 ♥
3 NT	3 ♠	3 ♠	3 ♠

In the first sequence, opener shows doubt by bidding 3 ♣. 3 ♥ from partner shows a heart stopper, and 3 NT from opener shows that hearts was the problem suit. This should normally be a singleton, so with A x x in hearts, responder should usually remove 3 NT.

In the second sequence, 3 ♦ should promise 5-card hearts. After the preference, opener continues with 3 ♠, which might be a cuebid, but should initially be taken as a 3-5-3-2 hand with weak clubs (bid 3 NT with good clubs) and give partner the choice of contracts. If responder comes back over 3 NT, 3 ♠ was a cuebid.

The third sequence shows either a very good hand with at least 6 spades (too strong for 4 ♠ over 2 NT), or (more frequently) a good 5-card spadesuit and worry about hearts.

In the fourth sequence, 3 ♦ and 3 ♥ both show stoppers. Without anything in spades, opener would now have to bid 4 or 5 ♣, so 3 ♠ should show half a spadestopper. 4 ♣ from either of the players might now be passed.

The principle that a gameforce is cancelled also applies when fourth suit is doubled. If one of the players asks for half a stopper and then removes 3 NT, both players know that there are two quick losers in the suit.

Special sequences:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 ♣ - 2 NT - 3 ♠ | shows 5-5 in the black suits |
| 1 ♥ - 2 NT - 3 ♠ | shows approximately 4-5-2-2. With 4-5-3-1, bid the 3-cardsuit instead. |
| 1 ♥ - 2 NT - 4 ♣/♦ | cuebid, setting ♥ as trumps. |

Corollaries:

Following the principle that you bid 2 NT as often as possible (i.e. whenever you have a balanced 10-12 without support for partner), and that you also make any other limit bid (1 ♥ - 3 ♥) as often as you can, then the following sequences will logically be forcing:

- 1 ♥ - 2 ♣ - 3 ♣ Forcing! Opener will nearly always have 5 ♥ and 4 ♣. The main point is that responder is either strong (13+) or unbalanced (else 2 NT, not 2 ♣). You could possibly have two 11p-hands opposite each other, but in that case, you have at least 9 clubs between you, and if 4 ♣ is too high, then chances are that the opponents might have the highest contract anyway.

Note that this treatment solves some common problems:

♠ x x	♠ Q x
♥ A K J x x x	♥ K Q x x x
♦ x	♦ A x
♣ K J x x	♣ K Q x x

Both these hands represent problems after 1 ♥ - 2 ♣, unless you can make a forcing 3 ♣ bid. With the first hand, you bid 4 ♥ at your next turn (showing a 6/4 minimum), and with the second, you bid 3 ♠ (4.suit) over 3 ♦, 4 ♦ (cuebid) over 3 ♥, and 3 NT over 3 ♠. If 3 ♣ is non-forcing, you would have had to jump to 4 ♣ with this hand.

If responder is known to have a 5-cardsuit (1 ♠ - 2 ♥ or after an initial pass) a raise will not be forcing, since you will have to raise with a suitable balanced hand.

- 1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♥ - 3 ♠ 3 ♥ was not forcing (partner is known to have 5), but since you did not make an initial limit bid of 3 ♠, this should show interest in contracts other than 4 ♥ (possibly 3 NT, 4 ♠ or more likely 6 ♥ or 6 ♠).

1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♥ Short suit trialbid!

1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♣ Short suit trialbid (partner could have 10 x x x in ♣).

3.6.3 One x - One y - Two NT

shows 18-19hp, balanced. Might contain a 4-card major, even if that could have been bid at the 1-level.

The only weak bid from responder is now a repeat of his/her own suit.

An unbid minor does not promise the suit, but simply asks opener to describe the hand.

"Preference" to opener's suit is forcing, and should normally show a hand interested in slam if this is a minor. Do not "give preference" if a 4-4 fit in a major is still a possibility, i.e.

1 ♣/♦	1 ♥
2 NT	?

"Preference" to opener's should now deny interest in the two other suits. A bid by opener in a new suit below 3 NT will then show values, and doubt about the remaining suit.

Exception: After 1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 2 NT, 3 ♣ might be a 3-cardsuit (1-4-5-3 or similar).

1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♣/♦ (better minor) asks opener for the cheapest information available (5-card ♥ - 3-card ♠). If responder bids 3 NT next time, opener is allowed to go on:

♠ K Q	♠ A x x x
♥ A Q 10 x x	♥ K x
♦ K x x x	♦ A Q x x
♣ A x	♣ x x x
1 ♥	1 ♠
2 NT (?)	3 ♦
3 ♥	3 NT

Responder must have a diamond suit now (with only 4-2 in the majors), so West must go on:

4 ♦	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♠
5 NT	6 NT
7 ♦	

Not impossible, even after the slightly questionable 2 NT rebid. 4 ♥ cannot possibly be suggesting an alternative contract, since both players have invited to slam. 5 ♦ would be the only signoff over 4 ♦.

1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♥ does not promise more than 3-card support. Opener must bid 3 NT with only 4-card ♥ (after which a new suit from responder is cuebid, promising 4-card ♥ as well), otherwise cuebid. Responder should not have 5-card ♠ (bid better minor instead).

1 ♣/♦ - 1 ♥ - 2 NT - 3 ♠ shows precisely 4-4 in the majors (bid the other minor with 4-5). A bid at the 4-level from opener is now cuebid with 4-card ♠. Consequently:

1 ♣	1 ♥
2 NT	3 ♦
3 ♥	3 ♠

shows 4-5 in the majors, although the 5-3 fit in hearts is already located. This is the same principle as 2 NT (opening) - 3 ♥ - 3 ♠: Opener must show a 4-card spadesuit, regardless of the heartfit.

Thus, if the opener continues with 4 ♣ in the sequence above, this should be a cuebid agreeing spades, while 3 NT should deny 4-card spades. Responder can now cuebid - agreeing hearts.

Note that opener should normally avoid jumping to 4 in partner's major (in a sequence as 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 2 NT - 3 ♦), as responder might have only 4, with worry about one of the other suits. Thus, a jump like this should be a picture jump (as always), showing a very good 3-card support and no wasted values in the unbid suit(s).

1 x - 1 y - 2 NT - 4 ♣/♦ is cuebid agreeing responder's suit (y) as trumps. This applies even if the suit has already been bid: 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 2 NT - 4 ♦: Cuebid with ♥, denying a club control. Bid the opener's suit at the 3-level (does initially not promise more than 3) and then cuebid if you want to set that suit as trumps (1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♥ - 3 NT - 4 ♣/♦: cuebid agreeing ♥).

Careful: 1 ♥ 1 ♠
2 NT 4 ♥ is a cuebid setting spades a trumps, perhaps with:

♠ A K J x x x ♥ A x ♦ J x x ♣ x x.

Bid 3 ♥ followed by 4 ♥ if you just want to play in 4 ♥.

This sounds confusing, but is completely logical. With a weak hand and 4-card hearts, you would have supported hearts right away (2 ♥ or 3 ♥). With a stronger hand, you will certainly want to investigate slam over 2 NT.

Examples:

1 ♥	1 ♠	1 ♥	1 ♠	1 ♥	1 ♠	1 ♥	1 ♠
2 NT	3 ♥	2 NT	4 ♣	2 NT	3 ♣	2 NT	3 ♣
3 NT	4 ♣			3 ♠	4 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠
						4 ♣	

Cuebid with 4+♥ Cuebid with 6+♠ Cuebid with 5+♠ Cuebid with 3 ♠

By opening 1 ♦ with 4-4 in the minors, you will usually have enough space to show your distribution below 3 NT after 1 x - 1 y - 2 NT. In detail:

1 ♣	1 ♠	1 ♣	1 ♥
2 NT	3 ♦	2 NT	3 ♦
3 ♥ =	4-card ♥	3 ♥ =	3-card ♥
3 ♠ =	3-card ♠ (not 4♥)	3 ♠ =	4234
3 NT =	2335	3 NT =	3235

1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 2 NT - 3♥/♠ should show a 4-cardsuit and invite preference to 4 ♦ - i.e. either a very long diamond suit (where you initially chose to suppress the 4-card major) or a strong hand. Consequently, when partner opens 1 ♣ and you have a limited hand with a 4-card major, you will have to bypass a 4- or 5-card diamondsuit in order to avoid problems later.

1 ♦	1 ♠	1 ♦	1 ♥
2 NT	3 ♣	2 NT	3 ♣
3 ♦ =	5-card ♦	3 ♦ =	5-card ♦
3 ♥ =	4-card ♥	3 ♥ =	3-card ♥
3 ♠ =	3-card ♠ (not 5 ♦ or 4 ♥)	3 ♠ =	4243
3 NT =	2344	3 NT =	3244

Even though it might sometimes be difficult to find a club fit after 1 ♦ - 1 ♥/♠ - 2 NT, responder would in some cases be able to imply a clubsuit and some slam interest:

1 ♦ 1 ♥
2 NT 3 ♣
3 ♦ 3 NT

With 5-card ♥, responder would have bid 3 ♥ over 3 ♦ (and with 4-4 in the majors, 3 ♠ over 2 NT), so this sequence should show a clubsuit. Note that opener cannot really draw the same inference after a 3 ♥ or 3 ♠ response to 3 ♣:

♠ J 10 3
♥ Q 9 8 6 3
♦ A 5
♣ Q 10 7

After 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 2 NT, you bid 3 ♣ and get 3 ♥ from partner. Bid 3 NT to suggest an alternative contract. Partner will know that you have *either* this type of hand *or* (less frequently) a slam-interested hand with at least 4 clubs. If opener decides to move on (nearly always

right except with a 3-3-4-3 hand), 4 ♣ will logically be natural, while 4 ♦ will be cuebid (showing absolutely maximum) with hearts as trumps, and 4 ♥ for play.

3.6.4 One x - One y - One NT

In principle, ignore the first two bids, and bid as if partner opened 1 NT (12-14). That is, 2 ♥ / 2 ♠ / 3 ♣ is sign-off (you can stop in 2 ♦, see below) unless it is a reverse, while 2 ♣ is inviting to game and 2 ♦ is forcing to game.

After 1 x - 1 y - 1 NT - 2 ♣, partner must bid 2 ♦. Now, any bid from responder is natural and inviting to game, primarily showing interest in 3 NT. If you are mainly interested in a suit contract, you can jump to the 3-level or reverse at the 2-level instead.

1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ should show invitational values and only 3-card hearts - otherwise you should support hearts right away. Opener must correct to 2 ♠ with only 4-card hearts and minimum (must be 4-3-3-3 in this case). Other bids show extra values.

After 1 x - 1 y - 1 NT - 2 ♦, opener shows extra length in economical order. In detail, it will look like this:

1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : Bid as after a 1 NT opening (opener could have a 4-card major).

1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : 2 ♥ shows 3-card ♥ (with 3-3-3-4 or 5-card ♣), 2 ♠ 4-3-3-3 (see 'Refinement I' below), 2 NT 3-2-3-5 and higher bids other (impossible) distributions (like 6-card ♣ and 4-card ♦).

Over 2 ♥, all bids from responder are in principle natural, although 2 ♠ will just show values, announcing a hand that is either worried about the unbid suit, or interested in slam. Opener shows a 5-card clubsuit if possible, otherwise bids 2 NT with 3-3-3-4 and all suits stopped. Similarly, 3 ♣ / 3 ♦ over 2 ♥ will show interest in slam or worry about ♠.

1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : 2 ♥ will show a 4-cardsuit, 2 ♠ 3-card support (but not 4 hearts), 2 NT 2-3-3-5 and higher bids other ("impossible") distributions. If you think this is tricky to memorise, just remember that you should always give the cheapest possible information, and that 2 NT shows 5-card ♣ and higher bids a hand that should probably not have rebid 1 NT!

1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : 2 ♥: 3-card ♥ (responder can now glide with a 2 ♠ bid to find out if you have 4-card ♣ or 5-card ♦), 2 ♠: 3-card ♠ (3244 or 3253, responder can bid 2 NT to find out), 2 NT: 5-card ♣ (2-2-4-5) 3 ♣: 5-card ♦ (2-2-5-4).

1 ♦ - 1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : 2 ♥: 4-card ♥ (after which 2 ♠ from responder is natural and shows in principle a 5-cardsuit), 2 ♠: 3-card ♠ (3-3-4-3, 4-card ♣, or 5-card ♦, responder can bid 2 NT to find out), 2 NT: 2-3-4-4, 3 ♣: 2-3-5-3, higher bids: "impossibles" - 3♦: 6-card ♦, 3♥: 2-2-4-5, 3♠: 2-2-5-4, 3NT: 2-2-5-4 with spades well stopped.

Note that after 1 ♣ and 1 ♦ openings, the opener will rebid 2 NT (over the 2 ♦ gameforce) with 5-card ♣ and 3 ♣ with 5-card ♦ with 5332-hands (without 3 cards in responder's major) so that responder can bid openers 5-cardsuit at the 3-level in order to investigate slam and/or stoppers for NT.

1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 1 NT - 2 ♦ - ? : 2 ♥ shows 5-card hearts, and 2 ♠ 3-4-3-3. 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ should show 4-cardsuits in a 5-4-2-2 hand - in this case opener should have a few honours in the short suits. (2 NT is 'undefined' here maybe 2533 with no heart honours?)

Refinement I:

In the system, the club opening is somewhat overburdened, as you always open 1 ♣ with 4 clubs and a 4-card major, as well as with 4-3-3-3 and 4-card spades. This means that responder might have problems after a sequence as 1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 1 ♠, as opener could have 3-4-5-6 clubs, and a preference to 2 ♣ might land you in a silly contract.

A good solution will be to rebid 1 NT with 4-3-3-3, which means that 1 ♣ - 1 ♦/♥ - 1 ♠ then always promises at least 4 clubs. However, responder must be able to find a 4-4 fit in spades and avoid a 4-3 fit in clubs after the 1 NT rebid. If he is strong enough to force to game, this should not be a problem - opener can bid 2 ♠ with 4-3-3-3.

If the bidding starts 1 ♣ - 1 ♦/♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2♥ (invitational with 5+♥), opener should bid 2 ♠ "on the way" with 4-3-3-3 and a good hand, in case responder has 4-5 in the majors.

1 ♣ - 1 ♦/♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2♠ should show 4-4 in the majors (bid 2♥ with 5-4, otherwise partner will not know when to give preference) in an otherwise relatively balanced hand. 2 NT from opener shows minimum now, while other bids show additional values.

1 ♣ - 1 x - 1 NT - 2 NT is natural - no interest in the majors.

1 ♣ - 1 ♦/♥ - 1 NT - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 NT is inviting with clubs, saying that you rather play 2 NT if partner should happen to have 4-3-3-3 (with 4-card spades). A bid of 3 ♣ (instead of 2 NT) should show a 5-card club support.

Summary:

- With 4-3-3-3 (4-card ♠), open 1 ♣ and rebid 1 NT over 1 ♦/♥. Partner should be careful when inviting to game, to cater for the possibility that you have 4-card spades and no clubsuit.

Refinement II:

With a hand like

♠ 6 3
♥ A Q
♦ K 9 8 3 2
♣ K J 8 7

you open 1 ♦, and have a choice of rebids in the next round. If partner bids 1 ♠, you conveniently ignore your clubsuit and bid 1 NT (partner can find out about your distribution later anyway if he is strong, and will then know that your hearts are good). If partner bids 1 ♥, however, you will be better off by rebidding 2 ♣, and leave it to partner to bid NT.

Give you instead

♠ K 3
♥ A Q
♦ Q 8 7 3
♣ Q 8 7 3 2

and you open 1 ♣ and rebid 1 NT over 1 ♥/♠ from partner (but you should probably bid 2 ♦ over 1 ♦). If partner continues with 2 ♦, you show your [impossible] 2-2-4-5 distribution (remember how?), and partner will know that you have both majorsuits well covered, otherwise....

With

♠ 6 3
♥ A Q
♦ K J 8 7
♣ K 9 8 3 2

you could open 1 ♣ and rebid 1 NT over 1 ♠. However, this means that you will have to choose between 1 NT and 2 ♣ over 1 ♥ - not a satisfactory solution. You should rather open 1 ♦ and rebid 2 ♣ over 1 ♥ (partner will know that your clubs might be longer), and 1 NT over 1 ♠. If partner now forces to game with 2 ♦ over 1 NT, you can use 3 ♥ to show this hand (2-2-4-5). If partner bids 3 ♣ (not necessarily promising a club-suit), you bid 3 ♥ (showing a double heart stopper in a 2-2-4-5 hand). Now, partner will know that one of your major suits must be weak, for with both majors covered you would have opened 1 ♣ with 2-2-4-5.

Summary:

- Plan your rebid with 4-5 in the minors. If you cannot safely rebid NT, open 1 ♦ instead of 1 ♣ (this is particularly true with 5-4-3-1 hands).

Interference

If the opponents interfere, it makes sense to continue "as usual" after a 1 NT rebid whenever the interference has not seriously disturbed the bidding sequence. Per definition, the bidding sequence is *not* disturbed if

- The opponents have only shown one (known) suit.
- The opponent sitting *in front of the opener* has made a takeout double.

In the latter case, the 1 NT rebid shows a near maximum with stoppers in both the un-bid suits. The same applies if the opponent in front of the opener bids a suit – 1 NT shows a near maximum with good stoppers in the opponent's suit.

Interference – “System On”

If the bidding sequence is *not* disturbed, the system is “On” – i.e. ignore the interference:

1 ♣ - (1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (pass) - 1 NT:	2 ♣ and 2 ♦ are still artificial
1 ♣ - (1 ♠) - D - (pass) - 1 NT:	Same, as after 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 NT
1 ♦ - (1 ♥) - D - (pass) - 1 NT:	Same, but opener has not denied a 4-card major, so the responses to 2 ♦ would be (almost, since opener can hardly have 5-card ♣) the same as after a 1 NT opening.
1 ♣ - (pass) - 1 ♥ - (1 ♠) - 1 NT:	Same, as after 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 NT. Opener has now shown 14 good points with spadestopper.
1 ♦ - (pass) - 1 ♥ - (D) - 1 NT:	Same as without the double. Again, opener should be near maximum.

If responder bids the opponent’s suit at the lowest level (2 ♥/♠ or 3 ♣/♦) over 1 NT, then that is (also) forcing to game and shows shortage (singleton/void).

Interference – “System Off”

If the bidding sequence *is* disturbed - i.e. if

- second hand doubles, or
- both opponents bid and have shown more than one suit

there are danger signs: there is either an opening hand sitting over the opener, or both opponents have shown some strength and more than one suit. In these cases, it makes sense to put more emphasis on the ability to stop low and in the best fit and less emphasis on slam sequences. Thus, system is off and you can stop in 2 ♣ in these sequences:

1 ♣ - (1 ♦) - 1 ♥ - (1 ♠) - 1 NT	
1 ♣ - (D) - 1 ♥ - (pass) - 1 NT	Opener need not be balanced (a good 3-1-4-5 is quite acceptable here).
1 ♣ - (1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (D) - 1 NT	System is “Off” <i>unless the double showed heart support only.</i>
1 ♣ - (1 ♠) - D - (RD) - 1 NT	System is “Off” if the RD showed strength or one or more of the other suits, “On” if it only showed something about spades (H x or genuine support).

3.6.5 One x - Two y - Two NT

Shows (normally) 12-14 balanced. However, if you follow the principle of jumping to 2 NT as often as possible (see sec. 3.6.2), your 2-over-1 bid will *not* be made on a balanced 11-12 points hand. Consequently, a bidding sequence like

1 ♥	2 ♣
2 NT	pass

could only occur if responder has something like 3-1-4-5 and 11-12 points, but even then, it might be wrong to pass 2 NT if partner has 14.

Since passing 2 NT after 2-over-1 rarely occurs (and 2 NT might be the wrong contract anyway), you might as well consider playing 2 NT after 2-over-1 as *forcing for one round*. Normally, this bid will show 12-14 balanced as before, but you should also bid 2 NT on 18-19 balanced, as a jump to 3 NT to show this hand takes up too much space. Responder assumes 12-14, but is not allowed to pass. That means that if you have stretched to 2 ♣ over 1 ♥ with 1-3-4-5 and 11 (as above), you will have to rebid 3 ♣ over 2 NT, which might play just as well as 2 NT opposite a balanced hand.

If you have rebid 2 NT with 18-19 and hear partner raise to 3 NT, you will make another move, of course. Partner should have at least 13, so you are definitely in the slam zone. Any slam initiative from opener over a *limited* rebid from partner will show the 18-19 hand.

This means that 1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 2 NT - 3 ♥ - 4 ♣ will be cuebid with heart support - showing 18-19, since 3 ♥ was not forcing. However, 1 ♥ - 2 ♦ - 2 NT - 3 ♥ - 4 ♣ will not promise more than 13-14 and 5-card hearts, as 3 ♥ was forcing and unlimited.

Note that a new suit at the 3-level from responder will be forcing to game, so you can safely give preference with 18-19 in a sequence such as 1 ♥ - 2 ♦ - 2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♦, without risking a pass from partner. With 2-1-5-5 and a (relatively) weak hand, responder will simply have to rebid 3 ♦ over 2 NT.

Corollary:

One x - Two y - 3 NT shows (as after 1-over-1) a solid suit. This should (normally) always be taken out if the opener has a major (the combined strength should make 4 of a major easy, while there might be a weak suit in 3 NT). Any bid other than 4 of opener's suit will be cuebid.

1 ♦ - 2 ♣ - 3 NT should specifically show 14-16p and solid diamonds, since it would otherwise be impossible for responder to know when to move on.

3.6.6 One x - One y - Three y

Shows approx. 14-17p and 4-card support. A 4-4-3-2 hand and 14p would not be strong enough for a jump, so this bid must show an **unbalanced hand**, since you should jump to game with 18-19 and a balanced hand, and open 1 NT with 15-17. So the opener must either have a singleton, or possibly 5-4-2-2 distribution.

After 1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 3 ♦, 3♥/♠ from responder will (initially) show a stopper, and worry about the remaining suit (as after 1 ♣ - 2 NT - 3 ♦).

After 1 x - 1 ♥/♠ - 3 ♥/♠, responder should never make an attempt to play 3 NT, as opener must be unbalanced. Instead, use 3 NT in this sequence to show a hand with *serious slam interest*, while a new suit (when 3 NT is available) will show a singleton and normally limited slam interest.

Note that the “3 NT serious slam try” / “other suit: singleton” only applies when nobody has yet shown a singleton or void. After a splinter (1 ♥ - 3 ♠ / 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 3 ♦ / 1 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT - 3 ♦), 3 NT shows slam interest but worry about the trumpsuit.

3.6.7 One x - One y - Two x

This shows a 6-cardsuit if the opener has bypassed the two other suits – i.e. in the following sequences:

- a) 1 ♠ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♠
- b) 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♥
- c) 1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 2 ♦
- d) 1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 2 ♣

and also in the following sequence:

- e) 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 2 ♣

since a hand with 4/5 in the minors would open 1 ♦.

In all these sequences, **2 NT** will be forcing for one round – normally with a limited hand interested in 3 NT. Opener can repeat the suit again with a complete minimum, or bid something else with a better hand. The main point is that we should not play in 2 NT with a 6-cardsuit. (It is very unlikely that we can make exactly 8 tricks in NT - if the suit comes in 3 NT will usually make, otherwise it is normally safer to play with the suit as trumps).

Special agreements:

- 1 ♣ - 1 ♥/♠ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦: Artificial gameforce (opener cannot have diamonds).
- 1 ♦ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♣: Artificial gameforce (opener cannot have clubs).

3.6.8 One x - One y - Three x

Treat this the same way as a jump shift – i.e. everything is forcing except “Four x” (invitational). Thus, after 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 3 ♣, you cannot stop in 3 ♥.

4 Slam Conventions

The main slam convention in the system is cuebids. Almost all slam invitations are made via cuebids, while Blackwood should be used only when you know a slam is on if not more than one ace is missing. Consequently, 4 NT followed by a sign-off means that two aces are missing, and a player who uses Blackwood must be sure that the pair cannot have two quick losers in a suit.

Other useful conventions are the Grand slam force, where a player can bid 5 NT to check the quality of the trump suit, and Splinter, where a double jump shows a singleton or void and good support for partner's last bid suit.

In some situations, i.e. where one hand is very strong, asking bids may be more useful than cuebids, as only the strong hand will be able to set the final contract anyway.

4.1 SIMPLE BLACKWOOD

Blackwood (4 NT as asking for aces) is the most widely (mis)used slam convention. The responses are simple: 5 ♣: 0 or 4 Aces, 5 ♦: 1 Ace, 5 ♥: 2 Aces, 5 ♠: 3 Aces. If all Aces are present, 5 NT will now ask for Kings - responses after the same scale.

If you discover that two Aces are missing, you can stop in 5 NT by bidding 5 ♠ (or 5 ♥ is spades is a possible trumpsuit). This forces partner to bid 5 NT, which you can pass.

Simple Blackwood should (only) be used when

- You now that the combined strength is sufficient for slam
- You know that there is not two quick losers in a suit
- No trumpsuit has been agreed

In most other cases, cuebids will do the job.

When a trumpsuit has been agreed, RKCB can be used. See sec. 4.2 for details.

4.1.1 When 4 NT is natural

In some sequences, 4 NT is needed as a natural bid. The most obvious case is a direct jump to 4 NT from 1 NT or 2 NT, this simply asks partner to pass with minimum and move on with maximum.

Another example is when one player signs off in 3 NT, partner tries for slam with 4 ♣/♦, and the 3 NT bidder continues with 4 NT. In most of these sequences, it is unthinkable that the player who just suggested playing 3 NT now knows that the combined strength is sufficient for slam. More likely, 4 NT may be the last safe landing spot if no fit is available.

As a general rule, 4 NT on 1 NT or 2 NT is always natural. 4 NT on 3 NT is always Blackwood, and in this case, 5 NT on 3 NT would be natural (not "pick-a-slam" as many prefer).

It also makes sense to agree that if a 1 NT opener (or rebidder) bids out his pattern completely below the level of 3 ♠ in reply to partner's enquiries, as in 1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♣ (2434), then 4 NT should be quantitative. With a monster hand, responder can just bid something at the 3-level and then ask for Aces at his next turn. (Note that this doesn't work if opener's last bid is 3 ♠ or 3 NT, as responder risks that partner raises a 4-level bid or bids 4 NT himself, thereby preventing responder to ask for Aces).

4.1.2 4 NT in a cuebidding sequence

In cuebid sequences, it will normally make most sense to let 4 NT be a waiting bid (denying club control) instead of Blackwood. However, this requires some discussion, and may lead to misunderstandings. It is no doubt easier to let 4 NT be Blackwood in all sequences.

But what about this sequence:

1 ♥	1 NT
3 ♣	4 ♥
4 ♠	4 NT

4 ♠ was clearly a cuebid, but can 4 NT be Blackwood from a hand that contains max. 9hp? Certainly not, it must rather show a hand which is too good for a signoff in 5 ♥, but has nothing to cuebid - something like

♠ K x x
♥ K J x
♦ x x x x x
♣ Q x

As a general rule, a hand that is already strictly limited, and hears a slam try from partner, cannot bid 4 NT as Blackwood. It will for example be completely illogical that 4 NT should be Blackwood in this sequence:

1 NT	2 ♦
3 ♣	3 ♦
4 NT	

The no-trump opener has no idea of what partner is up to, and must be trying to describe a maximum hand with stopper in both majors and some diamond fit, for example

♠ A J
♥ K x x
♦ Q 10 x
♣ A K x x x

Questionable to bid like this, perhaps, but a No-trump opener cannot use Blackwood unless partner has come up with an explicit slam try (which 3 ♦ is not - responder may simply be looking for the best game).

When you get used to cuebidding, you should try this rule (most efficient - but requires more planning in the slam sequences that the '4 NT is always Blackwood' rule):

4 NT is Blackwood (RKCB, preferably – see sec. 4.2)

- **If the 4NT bidder bypasses the trumpsuit at the 4-level when bidding 4NT.**
- **Otherwise, if nobody has made more than one cuebid.**

In other cases (i.e. when a player has made two or more cuebids and the trumpsuit has already been bid or bypassed at the 4-level) it will be a waiting bid show further slam interest - usually denying a club control.

The logic of this change is to simplify the rules. When a jump to 5 of the trumpsuit is available, 4NT is Blackwood while the "general invitation with nothing to cuebid" would be a jump in the trumpsuit.

4.1.3 Two Aces and a void

If partner bids 4 NT (Simple Blackwood or RKCB) and you have two aces and a void, bid 5 NT (provided partner cannot mistake this for 5 Aces if 4 NT was RKCB).

4.1.4 One Ace and a void

is a bit more tricky, because now you can't be 100% sure that a slam is on. Anyway, if you think slam is a good bet, you can respond 5 ♣ (provided clubs is not trumps), and wait for partner's reaction. If partner jumps to 6, you raise to seven, and if partner signs off in 5 in the trump suit, you cuebid your void.

If you have no aces, but a void, you have to respond 5 ♣, and then guess whether to raise to slam in the next round.

This treatment is a bit risky if 4 NT is RCKB (see sec 4.2), since partner might mistake your continuation for 3 Aces.

4.1.5 Three Aces and a void

Jump to 6 in your void, or to 6 in the trumpsuit if the void is in a higher suit. If it is 100% clear where your void is (after a splinter, for example), then jump to 6 ♣ regardless, to enable partner to investigate seven, or jump to 6 in the trumpsuit if you have no other outside values.

4.1.6 Interference

If somebody bids over 4 NT, you use DOPI (Double=5 ♣ response, Pass=5 ♦ response). The next higher bid shows the 5 ♥ response, *provided you don't have to bid higher than 5 ♥ yourself*. Otherwise, you will have to double with a hand you would otherwise have bid 5 ♥ with and hope that partner will be able to work out what you have. If the overcall is 5 ♠ or higher, a pass will then show the 5 ♦ or the 5 ♠ response.

If somebody doubles 4 NT, you use ROPI (Redouble=0, Pass=1, 5 ♣=2 Aces etc).

If a response to 4 NT is doubled, a pass by the 4 NT bidder shows that a sufficient number of Aces are present, by expresses worry about the suit shown by the doubler.

4.2 RKCB

When a trumpsuit is *agreed*, it makes sense to play RKCB (Roman Key Card Blackwood) instead of simple Blackwood. There are several “responding schemes” available – the simplest and probably the most efficient is as follows:

Replies	Meaning	Relay after reply to RKCB	Reply to 5 NT	Reply to other relays:
5 ♣	0 or 3 Aces	5 ♦=relay unless ♦ is trump 5 ♥=relay if ♦ is trump 5NT	5NT confirms all Aces and the trump Queen, and asks for the number of Kings.	<p>First step denies the trump Queen.</p> <p>The trumpsuit at the lowest level shows the trump Queen, and no side King.</p> <p>Other responses show the trump Queen, and specific King.</p> <p>(5 NT shows the King in the highest suit, or a suit higher than the trumpsuit. If there are no suit higher than the trumpsuit, 5 NT denies an outside King)</p>
5 ♦	1 or 4 Aces	5 ♥=relay unless ♥ is trump 5 ♠=relay if ♥ is trump 5NT		
5 ♥	2 Aces	5 ♠=relay unless ♠ is trump 5 NT New suit at the 6-level (inviting to grand slam with interest in specific King)		
5 ♠	2 Aces + the trump Queen	5 NT New suit at the 6-level (inviting to grand slam with interest in specific King)		
5 NT	5 Aces. If this is impossible: 2 Aces + a void.	6 ♣ asks for the void. Bid the void or 6 in the trumpsuit with a higher void.		<p>If the response to 4NT was 5♣ or 5♦, partner signs off in the trump suit at the 5-level and you judge to go on (because you have 3/4 Aces and could possibly have had 1/2), you should continue as if partner has asked for the trump Queen.</p>
6 ♣	5 Aces + the trump Queen. If this is impossible: 3 Aces and void in ♣.			
Higher replies	3 Aces + void in the suit bid.			
6 in the trump-suit	3 Aces + void in a higher suit.			

Both players can confirm the trump Queen if they know that the partnership has 10 trumps.

4.2.1 Jump to Blackwood from the 2-level

A jump to 4 NT from the 2-level is always simple Blackwood. If you have agreed a trumpsuit and want to use RKCB, you have 2 options:

- a) Bid the suit at the 3-level if that is forcing, or make a cuebid if a simple raise would be non-forcing. Then bid 4 NT next time.
- b) Jump to *the suit above the trumpsuit* (which will be the last suit bid by partner unless you have already agreed another suit) at the 4-level as RKCB. The responses are identical to the responses to 4 NT, except that “5 ♣” becomes “1.step”, 5 ♦ “2.step” etc. The advantage with this approach is that you don’t risk bypassing the trumpsuit at the 5-level if partner’s response is unfavourable. The disadvantage is that partner might think you are cuebidding or splintering or (even worse) making a natural bid.....

Be careful with the last agreement – a double jump from the 2-level to the suit above the last suit partner bid is always RKCB – even

1 ♥ 1 ♠
2 ♥ 4 ♠

This is one of the very few sequences where a simple jump (to 3 ♠) as well as a simple raise (to 3 ♥) would not be forcing, so if you want to stop in 4 ♠, you will have to make a forcing bid (here, preferably 2 NT) and then bid 4 ♠ to play.

Note that if you want spades as trumps, you cannot use RKCB from the 2-level.

4.2.2 Jump to Blackwood from the 3-level

A jump to 4 NT from the 3-level is RKCB if a trumpsuit has been agreed, simple Blackwood otherwise. A trumpsuit has been agreed when

- a) The bidding sequence starts with the responder immediately supporting the opener (with a limit raise or “cheapest jump”).
- b) *Both* players have bid (or implied) the suit naturally.
- c) One player sets trumps with an unambiguous cuebid or splinter bid.
- d) A player has bid a suit naturally (or transferred to a suit) opposite a balanced hand.

Point b) means that if a negative double *promises* a specific suit (1 ♣ – (1 ♠) – D: promising hearts), then that suit is considered bid by the doubler.

Point d) makes sense even though a trumpsuit is not necessarily set. The point is that the King of a suit bid by *the balanced hand’s partner* will usually be needed for slam purposes. The King in a suit bid by the balanced hand, however, is not necessarily of value, since the other hand might have a singleton in that suit. This means that in a sequence like

1 NT 2 ♦ (forcing Stayman)
2 ♥ (4+) 3 ♣ (5+)
3 ♥ (5-card) 4 NT

clubs is trumps, since this is the only suit where the partnership always has a fit (at least 7 cards between them). If responder wants hearts as trumps, an unambiguous 4 ♦ cuebid will set hearts. It is true that 4 ♣ will set clubs, but you then risk that partner raises to 5 ♣ with a minimum hand.

2 NT 3 ♣
3 ♦ (4+) 3 ♥ (4+)
3 ♠ (4+) 4 NT

Now, **hearts** is logically trumps, because the ♥K will almost certainly be a vital card in any slam.

d) (continued) If a player has bid two suits naturally opposite a balanced hand, the **last** of these suits bid (by either player) is trumps.

The reason for this is that it is much more likely that a fit exists in this suit than in the suit opener has (perhaps twice) refused to support - particularly since the responder to a 1 NT opening sometimes will have to bid a 4-card spadesuit ahead of a longer minor:

1 NT	2 ♦
2 ♥ (4+)	2 ♠ (4+)
2 NT (3-card ♠)	3 ♦ (4/5+)
3 NT	4 NT

Diamonds are trumps (at least for now). Spades are out – 2 NT does not count as “support” when the pair only has a 4-3 fit. Here, responder will usually have exactly 4-card spades and longer diamonds. (Note that 4 NT over 2 NT would have been natural).

1 NT	2 ♦
2 ♥ (4+)	2 ♠ (4+)
2 NT (3-card ♠)	3 ♦
3 ♠	4 NT

Spades has been bid by responder and supported by opener, so spades are trumps. Even though this is still most likely a 4-3 fit, the opener should have reasonable support (not 3 small) so spade honours might be crucial for the slam.

1 NT	2 ♦
2 NT (no major)	3 ♣
3 ♥ (2344)	3 ♠
3 NT	4 NT

There is no trumpsuit - responder hasn't bid any suit naturally (3 ♣ was just an enquiry and since 4 NT would have been natural over 3 ♥, 3 ♠ didn't necessarily promise spades).

In all other sequences, there is *no* trumpsuit agreed, and Simple Blackwood applies from the 3-level. The main reason for this treatment is to prevent a “random King” to get in the way of Ace asking when one player has an extreme hand.

A jump to the 4-level would either be natural or cuebid (with partner's last bid suit as trumps) – even a jump to the suit above partner's last suit bid (which will normally be a cuebid with that suit as trumps, not RKCB).

If two suits have been bid and supported, the *last* suit supported is trumps.

In most cases when you think RKCB would be better than simple Blackwood, you can try a cuebid first and then use RKCB from the 4-level.

4.2.3 RKCB from the 4-level

When you have started cuebidding, both players presumably know what the trumpsuit is, so simple Blackwood no longer applies. If someone bids 4 NT in a cuebidding sequence, this might be RKCB or a forward-going move with (usually) no club control. Use the following rule to distinguish between the two:

- If one player has made *two* cuebids, RKCB only applies if the 4NT bid bypasses the trumpsuit at the 4-level.

Note that a Splinter bid (see sec. 4.3) is *not* regarded as a cuebid for the purpose of determining whether 4 NT is RKCB. However, a “last train” bid *is* regarded as a cuebid - see sec. 4.5 for details.

In “murky” sequences when nobody is sure what the trumpsuit is, assume that the last suit bid (unambiguously) naturally by either player is trumps.

4.4 CUEBIDS

When a trump suit has been agreed (directly or implicit), and you are in a gameforcing situation, bid of a new suit will be a cuebid, showing first or second round control in the suit bid and denying control in the suit(s) bypassed.

It is important to distinguish between splinter and cuebid. A cuebid denies control in the suits bypassed, a splinter does not.

If hearts is bid by both players, the lowest possible cuebid will be **3 ♠** - otherwise, you will normally have to start cuebidding at the 4-level. Remember that a new suit at the 3-level (if not natural) is either a short suit trialbid (if a majorsuit is agreed), splinter (if bid with a double jump or single jump if a minorsuit is agreed) or showing honours as a probe for 3 NT.

Check out these bidding sequences:

1 ♠	3 ♠	1 ♦ 1 ♥	1 ♠ 2 ♥	1 ♠ 2 ♦
4 ♣		3 ♥ 3 ♠	4 ♦	4 ♥

In the first and second sequence, the trumpsuit has been agreed, and a new suit at this level is a “Splinter” – limited slam interest with singleton. See sec. 3.6.6 for details.

In the third sequence, opener could have bid 3 ♦ to force with a diamond suit, so 4 ♦ must be a cuebid (denying a club control).

In the fourth sequence, 4 ♥ should ideally be RKCB with diamonds as trumps – if you don't play that, avoid this sequence. Bid 3 ♦ (forcing) instead if you want to initiate a cuebidding sequence.

In a cuebidding sequence, 1. and 2.round controls are shown in arbitrary order, always as cheaply as possible. Consequently, one player may cuebid a suit on a singleton, the other on the King, which means that there is a live danger of bidding a slam missing two aces. This should normally be avoided with some experience, but bidding grand slams with this cuebidding technique is often difficult. In general, cuebidding first and second controls is directed towards bidding small slams, at the cost of missing grand slams where other methods would have led to the goal.

4.4.1 3 NT in a cuebidding sequence

is rare, since you seldom can start cuebidding at the 3 level. If a minorsuit is agreed, (1 ♦ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♥), 3 NT will always be an attempt to play there. If a majorsuit is agreed (1 ♥ - 3 ♥ or 1 ♥ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♠), 3 NT is no longer a possible contract, since the last bid set the trumpsuit. In this case, 3 NT should be a *serious slam try*, while a suit will show a singleton in (normally) a limited hand – see sec. 3.6.6 for details.

3 NT as a serious slam try normally only applies if you bid it at your first opportunity:

1 ♣	1 ♠
3 ♠	3 NT

Here, 3 ♠ sets spades as trumps, and 3 NT shows serious slam interest without a singleton. However, if the bidding goes

1 ♣	1 ♥
3 ♥	3 ♠
3 NT	

responder has already shown a singleton spade, so 3 NT in such a sequence show still be a serious slam try, but with worry about the trumpsuit.

Note again that the “3 NT serious slam try” / “other suit: singleton” only applies when nobody has yet shown a singleton or void. After a splinter/void (1 ♥ - 3 ♠ or 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 3 ♦), 3 NT shows slam interest but worry about the trumpsuit.

4.4.2 A cuebid is doubled

If a cuebid is doubled, it will normally give you extra space, but you should also make sure that both players know whether the opponents can start with two tricks in the suit. In detail:

RD by next hand shows the Queen in the suit.

This might be essential if the cuebid was made on the King.

Pass by next hand (normally) denies a control in the suit doubled but shows further interest.

Partner can now redouble with first round control, sign off if his control was the King and otherwise continue with a cuebid with second round control.

Cuebid by next hand shows a strong slam interest and confirms first or second control in the suit doubled.

Signoff in the trumpsuit shows a complete minimum, and is a weaker action than passing and then signing off.

See Annex 1 for cuebidding examples.

4.5 “LAST TRAIN”

Bypassing the trumpsuit at game level in order to make a cuebid should show considerable extra strength – see Annex.1 for further details. But what can you do if you are a bit too good to sign off in the trump suit, but not quite good enough to bypass it?

The solution is to “take the last train”:

The cuebid immediately below the trumpsuit does not necessarily promise a control.

It could be made on a hand with extra values without control in the suit, or (as usual) on any hand with control in the suit. When a major is trumps, this might apply both at the 4- and 5-level, but *not* by the same player in a sequence. However, if you have made a bid that could be “last train” at the 4-level, you might have to bid the suit again at the 5-level in order to confirm a control:

1 ♠	3 ♠
3 NT (serious slam try)	4 ♣ (cue)
4 ♦ (cue)	4 ♥ (last train)
5 ♣ (cue)	5 ♥ (cue)

Responder has only promised *one* heart control in this sequence.

If you make a “last train” bid and then move on over partner’s signoff, your “last train” bid was a cuebid. Otherwise, you would (normally) have bypassed the trumpsuit yourself one round earlier.

NOTE: The “last train” bid counts as a cuebid for RKCB purposes.

NOTE: A strictly limited balanced hand (1 or 2 NT opening, or a 2 NT or 3 NT response to an opening bid) can only use “last train” to confirm control in a suit partner has bypassed, not to show general extras (unless the “last train” bid is 4 NT – see below):

1 NT	2 ♦ (forcing Stayman)
2 ♠	4 ♦ (cue, stronger than 3 ♠)
4 ♥ (last train)	

4 ♥ confirms the club control that partner has denied, but says nothing about hearts. The opener could still have minimum.

1 NT	2 ♦ (forcing Stayman)
2 ♠	3 ♠
4 ♣	4 ♦
4 ♥ (cue)	

4 ♥ is a cuebid – without a heart control, opener must sign off in 4 ♠ or bypass the trumpsuit with absolute maximum.

If 4 NT is available for a player who wants to make a “last train” bid, that will be the “last train”, provided someone has already cuebid twice. If that is not the case, 4 NT would be RKCB. 4 NT as the “last train” will normally be used when clubs or diamonds is trumps, but could also be used in other situations – see sec. 4.1.2 for an example.

4.6 GRAND SLAM FORCE

When the trumpsuit is set, a bid of 5 NT (provided this is not in a Blackwood sequence) is asking for trump quality. The responses are:

3 top honours	7 in the trump suit
2 top honours	6 NT
Ace or King	6 ♣
Queen	6 ♦ (6 ♣ if ♦ is trump)
Extra length	6 ♥ (only if ♠ is trump)
No top honours	6 in the trump suit

The principle is quite simple: The lower the response, the better, unless the responder has two or three honours, in which case you are in seven, or possibly 6 NT.

If ♠ or ♥ are trumps, and the response is 6 ♣ (Ace or King), 6 ♦ will ask for extra length. Sign off in small slam without extra length, bid grand slam with more trumps than expected. This may enable you to bid a grand slam on a 5-5 or 6-4 fit without the queen.

If clubs are trumps, 5 ♠ should be used as grand slam force instead of 5 NT, to enable partner to distinguish between one and no top honours. The responses are following the same scale as above: 6 ♣ with one honour, 6 NT with 2 and 7 ♣ with all 3. In addition, 5 NT will be reserved for no honours, enabling you to stop there if two honours are missing.

Note that in a cuebid sequence with clubs as trumps, 5 NT will be a cuebid in ♠, since 5 ♠ is occupied for the grand slam force.

4.7 FIVE OF A MAJOR

A jump to 5 of a major (in a cuebidding sequence or otherwise) or a raise from 4 to 5 of a major, will normally ask partner to bid 6 with good trumps. Normally, you will bid 6 or pass, but with extra values, you can try a cuebid on the way. With solid trumps you should bid 5 NT, after which partner can bid 6 or 7, or return the ball with a cuebid at the 6-level.

The jump to 5 in a major can also be made on another type of hand, namely a hand with very strong trumps, but nothing to cuebid. Partner cannot possibly misinterpret the situation - if that happens, there must be something seriously wrong with the previous bids. In this case, 5 NT will be the grand slam force.

4.8 ASKING BIDS

When cuebidding, information will normally flow both ways between the partners, until one of them makes the final decision. This is fine when the hands are about equally strong, but not very efficient if one hand is much stronger than the other, or if one of the hands is already closely described.

In some of these situations, asking bids will normally be more useful. Asking bids could be used

- After a 2 ♣ opening (if the opener *jumps* in the second round of bidding or immediately after a trumpsuit has been agreed – asking bid. Also after a jump response to 2 ♣ and a new suit from the opener without a jump – asking bid).
- When one hand has opened with a weak two (if responder bids 3 ♣ followed by a new suit – asking bid).
- When a majorsuit has been agreed at the 2-level (jump – asking bid).
- Immediately after a 'cheapest jump' (another jump by responder – asking bid).

If the strong hand takes a slam initiative, a bid of a new suit is not cuebid, but asking bid (a la precision) in this suit. Partner's responses are automatic:

- 1.step: No control
- 2.step: Queen or doubleton
- 3.step: King or singleton
- 4.step: Ace or void
- 5.step: AK or AQ

Then, the strong hand can continue to ask in another suit, or ask again in the same suit. In this case, 1.step will show that the control was a short suit, while 2.step shows that it was an honour.

If the strong hand asks in another suit and then comes back to the first suit, this will ask for extra controls in the suit, provided the first response showed 1. or 2.round control. The responses are simple: 1.step: no extra control, 2.step: extra 3.round control (A x or K x or K Q or x), 3.step: extra 2.round control (void or singleton Ace).

(Game all, dealer East)

♠ A K Q J x x	♠ x
♥ A Q x	♥ K J 10 x x x
♦ x x x	♦ K J x
♣ A	♣ x x x
	2 ♥
4 ♦	4 NT
5 ♦	5 ♠
6 NT	

4 ♦: asking, 4 NT: second round control, 5 ♦: asking, 5 ♠: the King. 6 NT: top in any tournament (unless partner has singleton King of diamonds.....). Switch partner's minorsuits, and the response to 4 ♦ is 4 ♥, which you happily pass.

(Game all, dealer East)

♠ K x	♠ A 10 x
♥ A K 10 x x x	♥ J x x x
♦ --	♦ K J 10 x
♣ A J x x x	♣ K x
	1 ♦
1 ♥	2 ♥
3 ♠ ?	4 ♥ (1.round control)
5 ♣ ?	5 ♠ (2.round control)
7 ♥	

Note that 3 ♠ is an asking bid, as you can make a short suit trialbid, or bid 2 NT (forcing) with other slam-interested hands. Even though that would (initially) just be a game-try, partner should co-operate with a cuebid on all suitable hands, in case you were looking for slam.

If you start slam investigation with 3 ♦ on the West hand above (a reasonable alternative), it would be difficult to get East to co-operate with a sub-minimum hand, weak trumps, and a lot of wasted values in diamonds.

If an asking bid is doubled, use the **ROPI** principle (RD: 1.step, pass: 2.step etc).

5 One NT opening

shows 15-17p - may contain a 5-card major. Go down to 14 good points (preferably with a 5-cardsuit) in 3. and 4.position.

The original no-trump system in precision is simple, yet more efficient than many much more complicated systems. It is based on a two-way Stayman: 2 ♣ being weak Stayman and 2 ♦ unconditionally forcing to game. Other bids are natural.

In detail, it will look like this:

5.1 ONE NT - TWO ♣

weak Stayman, normally 0-10p (opposite a 15-17 NT), but may be stronger if you know where to go over partner's response. Responses are:

- 2 ♦ No 4-card major.
- 2 ♥ 4-card ♥, may have 4-card ♠.
- 2 ♠ 4-card ♠, not 4 ♥.

If responder bids again, this is natural and invitational. In fact: All invitational sequences, apart from 1 NT - 2 NT (natural) starts with 2 ♣, and a second bid from responder will always be invitational. In detail:

- 2 ♥ (over 2 ♦): 5-card suit, invitational. (In pairs, it might make sense to bid like this with a slightly weaker hand with both majors, so opener should bid 2 ♠, not 2 NT, with maximum and 3-2 in the majors).
- 2 ♠ 5-card suit, invitational.
- 2 NT Natural, invitational. Over 2 ♥, this should guarantee 4 ♠ (opener bids 3 or 4 ♠ with a 4-cardsuit).
- 3 ♣ 5(6)-card suit, invitational. With 4-4 in majors and additional values, opener should bid 3 ♠ on the way to 3 NT, in case responder has a 4-card suit here.
- 3 ♦ 5(6)-card suit, invitational.
- 3 ♥ Natural, invitational. (Very strong over 2 ♦.)
- 3 ♠ Natural, invitational. Very strong over 2 ♦ and 2 ♥.
- 3 NT To play.
- 4 ♣/♦ Cuebid (should be void) over 2 ♥/♠, natural over 2 ♦.

If opener accepts an invitation of 2 ♥ and 2 ♠, 3 ♣/♦ should show a 5-card suit, and 3-card support for partner. Without support, opener must pass or bid 2 NT (or 2 ♠ over 2 ♥, showing (logically) 3-2 in majors and additional values).

If opener accepts an invitation of 2 NT, the normal bid will be 3 NT or alternatively rebid of a 5-cardsuit on the way to 3NT. With a weak hand, however, opener may bid another suit at the 3-level in order to find a better contract than 2 NT. Note that this will not be accepting the invitation (if you accept, it makes more sense not to tell the opponents where you have your strength).

If opener accepts an invitation of 3 ♣/♦, the first duty is to ensure that the partnership does not miss a 4-4 fit in major. If a 4-4 fit is impossible, a new suit at the 3-level should show a stopper, and doubt about the final contract.

5.2 ONE NT - TWO ♦

is forcing to game, any distribution. With a 5-card or longer major and no sidesuits, you should usually start by showing your suit instead. The responses to 2 ♦ are:

- 2♥ 4-card
- 2♠ 4-card, not 4 ♥
- 2NT No 4-card major, no 5-card minor.
- 3♣ 5-card
- 3♦ 5-card

Next bid from responder is (in principle) natural - jump is cuebid.

After

1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥/♠ - 2 NT - opener should bid a 4-card minor if possible, otherwise bid 3 NT, **rebid a 5-card major with 5-2 in the majors, or bid the other major with 5-3.**

After

1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 NT - 3 ♣ from responder does not promise a suit - responder should show a 4-card diamond suit with 3-3-4-3, or bid a 3-card major with 4-4 in the minors, and 3 NT with 3-3-3-4.

3 ♥/♠ from responder shows at least a 5-cardsuit and an unbalanced hand - opener *must* support with 3 cards. (Bid 1 NT - 3 ♥/♠ with 5-3-3-2 hands, whereby opener is allowed to bid 3 NT with a suitable 4-3-3-3 hand).

After

1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - responder should bid 2 ♠ with 4 or 5 ♠. Opener bids 3 ♠ (or makes a cuebid at the 4-level with maximum) with 4-card support, bids 2 NT with 3-card ♠ (after which 3 ♠ sets the trump), and a 4-card minor or 5-card hearts at the 3-level with doubleton ♠.

After

1 NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 2 NT (3-card spades), 3 ♣/♦ from responder is natural, but does not promise more than a 4-cardsuit. Opener should sign off in 3 NT with the least suitable hands, and give delayed support to 3 ♠ with some interest in partner's last suit. 3 ♥, however, should show a 5-cardsuit.

When a gameforce has been established, a jump from any of the players will be a cuebid (not splinter), and a very strong slam invitation. A milder slam invitation would be a raise of partner's last bid (provided you are still below game level) followed by a cuebid.

Note that the raise in itself is not necessarily a slam invitation - you might still just be looking for the best game:

1 NT 2 ♦	1 NT 2 ♦	1 NT 2 ♦	1 NT 2 ♦
2 ♥ 4 ♣	2 ♥ 3 ♥	2 ♥ 3 ♦	2 ♥ 3 ♥
	3 ♠ 4 ♣	4 ♥	3 NT pass
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)

- (a) Responder makes a strong slam try in hearts, denying a spade control. Opener should nearly always cuebid (or "last train") with a spade control.
- (b) A weaker slam invitation. Responder raises to 3 only, but confirms slam interest by cuebidding 4 ♣ over 3 ♠. Note that 3 ♠ is a cuebid here (see section 4.5) - one of the rare cases where an unambiguous cuebid can be made at the 3-level.

- (c) 4 ♥ is a cuebid, showing a maximum hand and normally 4-4 in the red suits. It should deny a club control, since 4 ♣ would also have been a cuebid (opener cannot bypass 3 NT without a fit for partner). 4 ♦ instead of 4 ♥ would have been a slightly weaker slam invitation, and does not necessarily set diamonds as trumps (partner can still suggest to play in 4 ♥ over 4 ♦).
- (d) Both players should have 4-3-3-3. Generally, the 3 ♥ bid shows interest in playing other contracts than 4 ♥, which will almost always be 6 ♥ or 3 NT.

A jump to 4 ♥ (over 2 ♥) by responder in the sequences above should not be confused with a 'picture jump' (see section 3.5.4). Since the opener is well defined, such a bid will just place the final contract, without giving away unnecessary information to the opponents.

5.2.1 Special agreements

1 NT 2 ♦ 1 NT 2 ♣

2 ♥ 3 NT 2 x 3NT

(a)

(b)

What does responder have in sequence (a)? Clearly no 4-card major, since you will have to continue with 2 ♠ over 2 ♥ in that case. So logically, the 2 ♥ bid was what made you decide that 3NT is probably the best contract.

This means that you must have a singleton heart to bid like this. Thus, if you have (as opener) something like Axxx or xxxx in hearts, you should seriously consider other contracts. Assume partner is 3145/3154 and bid accordingly.

And what about sequence (b). We have previously bid like this when we know what to do over partner's reply and have no interest in revealing opener's distribution. However, it might be more efficient to agree that these sequences (2 ♣ followed by 3NT) always promise a singleton spade (may or may not have 4-card hearts).

Thus, if you think game is on but slam is unlikely after partner's 1NT opening:

- If you have a singleton ♠ in a 5431-hand, bid 2 ♣ followed by 3NT.
- If you have a singleton ♥ in a 5431-hand, start with 2 ♦ and

Over 2 ♥: Bid 3NT.

Over 2 ♠: Bid 2NT and hope to be able to sort out stoppers.

Over 2NT: Bid 3 ♣ and guess what to do next. You should often avoid 3NT now.

When the bidding starts 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2 ♠ - 2NT or 1NT - 2 ♦ - 2NT - 3 ♣, opener would know that partner is much more likely to have a singleton heart than spade.

5.3 HIGHER RESPONSES TO 1 NT

are natural:

2 NT is invitational without a 4-card major. A minor at the 3-level by opener is now for play. A major shows a 5-card suit and extras.

2 ♥/♠, 3 ♣/♦ is for play.

3 ♥/♠ is forcing. Opener is supposed to bid 3 NT with doubleton, raise to 4 with minimum and 3-card support, or cuebid with additional values. Responder can have two types of hands for this auction: Either 6 or more ♥/♠ and slam ambitions, or any 5-3-3-2 hand. In the first case, responder should take out 3 NT (a new suit at the 4-level is cuebid).

After 1 NT - 3 ♥/♠ opener is allowed to bid 3 NT with a 4-3-3-3 hand. 1NT - 3 ♥ - 3 ♠ simply shows doubt – normally 3-card hearts and interest in 3NT. 4 ♣ would be the lowest cuebid.

4 ♣/♦ is transfer to ♥/♠. 4 ♥/♠ is for play, so responder can choose to play the contract - often best with a freakish hand.

5.4 ONE NT IS DOUBLED

Redouble	is for play (7+p). Now, the opponents cannot play undoubled contracts.
2 NT	is gameforce with a very good distribution (a 2- or 3-suiter)
2 ♣	is in principle natural, but may be the start of an escape manoeuvre with a very weak hand. Partner should pass, and if 2 ♣ is doubled, the responder can clarify the hand: (pass = clubs) 2 ♦ = ♦+♥, 2 ♥ = ♥+♠, RD = ♦ + ♠.
Higher bids	are weak and natural, but 4 ♣/♦ still retain their original meaning (transfer to ♥/♠).

5.5 TWO ♣/♦ IS DOUBLED

Bid as when 4.suit is doubled (see 3.4.1):

Pass: no stopper in the suit. Partner may redouble to ask you to continue bidding, and any no-trump bid from you will then show half a stopper. If the bidding goes 1 NT - (pass) - 2 ♣ - (Double) - pass - (pass) - Redouble, this may still be very weak, while 2 ♥/♠ or even 2 ♦ would be invitational.

RD: From the NT opener: 1 stopper (as when 4.suit is doubled).

After	1 NT (p)	2 ♣ (x)
	xx (p)	?

2 ♦ will be the only 'escape' bid while everything else is invitational.

From the responder (after pass from the opener):

Very weak (SOS) after 2 ♣

2 or 3 small in the suit after 2 ♦.

Now, it should be possible to stop below game with no 8-cardfit in one of the majors.

New suit: From the NT opener: At least 1 ½ stopper, and same meaning as without the double.

From the responder: Control (singleton/void or stopper) in the opponent's suit (redouble with 2 or 3 small).

This might look complicated, but the principle is as follows:

- No problems** with the suit doubled: Ignore the double and bid on. This applies to both players.
- Possible problem** in the suit (one stopper only): RD from the opener.
- Problem** in the suit (no stopper or control): Pass from opener. RD from responder now confirms that here is a problem, while a bid signals (according to point a) that the suit is under control.

5.6 INTERFERENCE

After interference, any double from the responder is penalties. A 4-hand double from the opener (1 NT - ? - pass - pass - x) is takeout, and shows absolute maximum and a doubleton in the suit overcalled. A direct double (1 NT - pass - pass - ? - x) is penalty, and should (at least in teams) guarantee something like 4 card trumps with 3 trump tricks.

After interference at the 3-level, any new suit from responder is forcing to game. A jump to 4 ♣/♦ is still transfer to ♥/♠, unless the opponents have bid this suit.

After interference at the 2-level, a new suit at the 2-level is for play, while a suit at the 3-level is a mild invitation (opener should often pass, especially at pairs). A jump below game is a strong invitation, 4 ♣/♦ are transfers as above.

2 NT is artificial, and shows either a weak hand with both the 2 lowest unbid suits (at least 4-4) or a strong hand with one or both majors. Partner gives preference, and opener can clarify the hand.

Ex: 1 NT - (2 ♠) - 2 NT - (pass) - 3 ♣:

3 ♦: weak with 4/6 in the red suits (rare)

3 ♥: Forcing to game with 5-card ♥.

3 ♠: 4-card ♥, no spade stopper.

3 NT: 4-card ♥, spade stopper.

A direct cuebid (1 NT - 2 ♠ - 3 ♠, asking for a stopper), or a direct 3 NT denies any 4-card major.

Note the similarity with other situations where negative doubles are an option - failure to make a negative double (after a 1-level opening) or bid 2 NT (after a NT opening) denies interest in the majors, a direct cuebid asks for a stopper, while a jump to 3 NT shows a stopper. Thus, you are in exactly the same position if the bidding starts

1 NT - (2 ♥) - 2 NT

1 NT - (2 ♥) - 3 ♥

1 NT - (2 ♥) - 3 NT

and

1 ♦ - (2 ♥) - Double

1 ♦ - (2 ♥) - 3 ♥

1 ♦ - (2 ♥) - 3 NT

Nobody would suggest that the last sequence should *deny* a stopper in hearts, but strangely enough, many play that the third sequence above denies a heartstopper. This is both illogical (because it gives you an extra sequence to remember) and impractical, as it prevents you from finding 3 NT when both of you have half a stopper in hearts:

1 NT	(2 ♥)	3 ♥ (no 4-card ♠, no ♥-stopper)
3 ♠ (no ♥-stopper)		3 NT (half a stopper)

6 Strong openings

There are only two strong openings in the system: 2 ♣ and 2 NT. Although it is possible and perfectly logical to play other 2-openings as strong as well, the possible gain by being able to open in your best suit with a strong hand is in the long run far outweighed by the small frequent gains arising from weak 2-openings. However, since so many different types of hands must be opened by 2 ♣ or 2 NT, it is very important to have firm agreements on what to do later. An error will normally be very costly.

6.1 TWO NT OPENING

shows 20-22hp. May include a 5-card major, but prefer to open 2 ♣ with a maximum and a 5-cardsuit. 19 good points and a 5-cardsuit should normally be upgraded to 2 NT.

6.1.1 Two NT - Three ♣

"Baron" - asking for 4-cardsuits in ascending order. A new suit at the 4-level from opener is always cuebid in support for partner's last bid suit, while a new suit from responder is cuebid if partner has denied interest in that suit, or if responder jumps:

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♠ - 4 ♣: Natural, as opener has not denied clubs. Responder has typically 4-5 (or even 4-4 with a very strong hand) in ♥/♣.

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♠ - 4 ♦: Cuebid - opener has denied 4-card diamonds. Since 4 ♣ would be natural, this does not deny a club control.

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♥ - 5 ♣: Cuebid, since 4 ♣ would have been natural. Denies diamond- and spade control.

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♥ - 4 ♣: Natural - responder has both minors. 4 ♦ would have been the lowest cuebid.

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♥ - 3 NT: Logically, this shows that responder would have been interested in something else over a 3 ♦ response. However, the same inference could not have been drawn if the response to 3 ♣ had been 3 ♠.....

2 NT - 3 ♣ - 3 ♦ - 3 NT: Who knows? A very mild slam try with both minors?

Baron 2019

Standard Baron sequences frequently means that the weak hand will be declarer. In order to make the strong hand declarer as often as possible, try the following modification:

- After - 2NT - 3♣ - 3♦: Responder bids 3♥ with 4-card spades, 3♠ with 4-card hearts and 3NT or 4♣ with both majors.
- After - 2NT - 3♣ - 3♥: Responder bids 3NT, 4♣ or 4♦ with 4-card spades, otherwise 3♠.

No changes after - 2NT - 3♣ - 3♠/3NT.

In detail:

- 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥: 4-card ♠, not 4♥. Opener normally bids 3♠ or 3NT, but can also cuebid at the 4-level with supermax and a hand where there appears to be no advantage to be declarer.

3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠ - 3NT: Offering an alternative contract?

3♠: 4-card ♥, not 4♠. Opener can cue with ♥ and must otherwise bid 3NT. Over 3NT from opener, all bids are natural.

3NT: 4-4 in the majors, limited. Opener can now show strong slam interest in ♥/♠ with 4♣/♦. Responder should transfer to the agreed suit with no slam interest, while all other bids (including 4 in the trumpsuit) accepts the slam invitation.

4♣: 4-4 in the majors, too strong to risk a pass on 3NT. All bids from opener are now natural, but only 4NT (useless minimum with no fit) can be passed.

Higher bids show ♦ (4♦; natural, higher bids: Cue, strong).

- 3♣ - 3♥ - 3♠: Denies 4-card ♠, could have 4-card support in ♥. Opener must bid 3NT, then 4♣ will be natural, 4♦ cue/last train (with ♥) and 4♥ a mild slam invitation.

Higher bids show 4-card ♠:

3NT: 4-card ♠ and a limited hand.

4♣: 4♠ and 4+♣, too strong to risk a pass of 3NT. 4♦ from opener now shows slam interest in clubs, while 4♥ and 4♠ are natural and forcing. Only 4NT and 5♣ can be passed.

4♦: 4♠ (denies 4♣/4♥). All bids from opener are now natural, but only 4NT (useless minimum with no fit) can be passed.

Note that in this variation, responder will always be able to locate a 4-4 fit in clubs by starting with 3♣ and (eventually) continuing with 4♣ (except possibly with 4414).

Also note that opener will often be able to show 5-card ♦ or ♥ in this variation, when responder is strong.

6.1.2 Two NT - Three ♦

"Flint" - weak with a major, strong with a minor, or possibly 5♥ and 4♠, limited values. With a 2-suiter including a long minor, you should usually start with 3♣, although 6♦/4♣ should probably be treated as a one-suiter, since it might become impossible to show both suits accurately if you start with 3♣.

Partner normally bids 3 ♥, but can bid 3 ♠ with maximum and very good hearts, or 3 NT with maximum and good fit in both majors.

Over 3 ♥:

With a weak hand, responder passes or corrects to 3 ♠.

With a strong minorsuit, responder bids 4 ♣ (with ♣) or 4 ♦/♥/♠ (with ♦ - 4 ♥/♠ being cuebids). Opener can cuebid, or sign off in 4 NT (over 4 ♣/♦) or 5 in partner's suit.

With 5 ♠ and 4 ♥, responder bids 3 NT. If opener now bids 4 ♣/♦, this will be cuebid in support of spades (since opener can hardly have 4-card hearts and maximum, having bid only 3 ♥). With 10-12 hp, responder can bid 4 NT (quantitative) instead of 3 NT.

With 10-12 hp, responder can bid 4 NT (quantitative) instead of 3 NT.

Over 3 ♠:

With a weak hand, responder passes 3 ♠, or bids 4 ♦ as a transfer to 4 ♥. This might be a bit tricky to remember, but it is quite logical that a near Yarborough should avoid becoming declarer opposite a 2 NT opener.

With a strong minorsuit: Bid 4 ♣ with clubs. Bid 4 ♥/♠ or 5 ♣ (cuebids) with diamonds. Note that you cannot stop in 4 NT now.

With 5-4 in the majors, bid 3 NT (forcing!). If opener now bids 4 ♣/♦, this is cuebid in support of hearts (opener has already shown good hearts and poor spades by bidding 3 ♠). 4 NT over 3 ♠ should be RKCB, as a fit has (presumably) been found, and a limit bid is pointless as opener has already shown maximum.

Over 3 NT:

With a weak hand, transfer to 4 ♥/♠.

With a strong minorsuit: Bid 4 ♣ with clubs, 4 ♠(cuebid) 4 NT(can be passed) or 5 ♣ (cuebid) with diamonds.

With 5-4 in the majors, simply transfer to hearts or spades. You can then cuebid or use 6-Ace RKCB (double fit, remember) if you are strong.

Note that if responder is inviting to slam with a diamond suit, you can stop in 4 NT only if opener has bid 3 ♥ over 3 ♦.

Examples: 1) 2 NT 3 ♦
 3 NT 4 NT

"Natural, with ♦". Can be passed if opener has no diamond support. Responder can have

♠ Q x x		♠ A x
♥ K x	or	♥ x x
♦ A J x x x x		♦ A J 10 x x
♣ x x		♣ J x x x

2) 2 NT 3 ♦
 3 NT 4 ♠

Cuebid with ♦. Cannot stop in 4 NT now - will be RKCB from opener. Responder can have:

♠ A x
♥ x x
♦ A J 10 x x x
♣ J x x

Note that a cuebid sets the suit as trumps, while a bid of the suit (2 NT - 3 ♦ - 3 ♥ - 4 ♣) still makes it possible to play in 4 NT.

6.1.3 Higher responses to 2 NT

3 ♥/♠ are forcing to game with 5-card **in the other major**. Opener should not bid 3 NT with 3-card support, as responder could be fairly unbalanced. With support, opener should cuebid as often as possible, and only raise to game with complete minimum.

With 5♠/4♥, bid 3 ♥ over 2 NT. Opener bids **3 ♠ with a 4-card hearts**, regardless of the spade holding. All bids from responder are now natural, including 4♥. A jump would be cuebid with hearts, and 4NT will be RKCB with hearts as trumps. Thus,

2 NT - 3 ♥ - 3 ♠ - 3 NT - 4 ♣

is a cuebid agreeing spades - opener has shown (at least) 3-4 in the majors.

2 NT - 3 ♥ - 3 NT - 4 ♣ is natural, showing at least 5 ♥ and 4 ♣. Opener can sign off in 4 ♥, 4 NT(!) and 5 ♣, or cuebid 4 ♦ or 4 ♠. Note that opener can never take over with Blackwood here, as responder might just be looking for the best game.

With a one-suiter in spades (where you want 4 ♣ to be a cuebid, as in 1 NT - 3 ♠ - 3 NT - 4 ♣), you must transfer to 4 ♠ and then move on.

4 ♣/♦ is transfer to 4 ♥/♠. Opener can break the transfer with maximum, but must beware that he might end up with the strong hand as dummy if he does. Responder can move on with a cuebid (or RKCB) after opener has completed the transfer.

6.2 TWO CLUB OPENING

is the only strong artificial opening bid in the system. Although not very frequent, an error after a 2♣ opening will often be expensive. It shows 20+ points (18+ with good distribution - 23+ if balanced) - any distribution.

With a good 6-card suit in ♥ and no unguarded honours, you might want to stretch to 2♣ with as few as 18p (♠ A x ♥ A Q 10 9 x x ♦ A x x ♣ A x). Otherwise, partner might be hard pressed to find another bid after 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♥, which is the alternative way of bidding this hand. Note that this is not so important with a spadesuit, since you have more options available after 1♠ - 1NT (2NT and 3♠). Also, you can bid a single suited hand with hearts quite economically after 2♣ - 2♦.

6.2.1 Responses to 2♣

2♦ is the only negative response to 2♣ - all other responses are forcing to game. In principle, responder should force to game as often as possible (i.e. on most 6-point hands), but two types of hands should be treated separately:

- 4-4-4-1 hands represent a problem. The recommended way to bid a limited (6-10) point hand is by starting with 2♦ and then jump as a cuebid next time (not necessarily in the singleton, since this will be a cuebid, not a splinter). Jump in NT if partner bids your singleton. Use Baron after 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT, and move on over 3NT later if you do not find a fit.

With a stronger 4-4-4-1 hand, you may have to bid your best 4-card suit over 2♣, as you might otherwise never be able to describe the hand.

- A limited hand (6-9) with 5-card ♦ and a 4-card major should preferably bid 2♦ first - otherwise a 4-4 major fit tends to disappear.

A jump by responder (2♣ - 3♠) shows a suit (min. 6-cards at the 3-level, preferably 7 at the 4-level) with one loser opposite a singleton, and normally no outside values. (K Q J 10 x x or A Q J 10 x x). Partner can continue with asking bids.

A jump to 3NT shows a solid 6-card suit (A K Q 10 x x or better). Partner can bid the suit to encourage cuebids, or make an asking bid in another suit. This should be forcing to at least 5 in the suit shown, unless responder's next bid makes it possible to stop at the 4-level. Note that 2♣ - 3NT - 4♠ is forcing (regardless of whether responder has spades or not).

6.2.2 The opponents interfere

If the opponents interfere over 2♣, all responses are natural and game-forcing. D shows a useless hand while pass shows at least a semi-positive hand. D from the opener is now takeout.

After a "double negative" D, a new suit from the opener is non-forcing but highly invitation-al. After a semi-positive pass, a new suit from the opener is forcing for one round.

If the opponents double 2♣ (showing ♣ or some other defined suit(s)), pass (as above) is semi-positive, 2♦ is double negative while RD shows a balanced or semi-balanced positive hand with no desire to bid NT (usually no stopper in their suit or want partner to be declarer).

After a double negative 2♦, opener's 2♥ and 2♠ are non-forcing. Jump or the opponent's suit is forcing.

6.2.3 Opener's rebid

After 2 ♣ - 2 ♦

2 ♥/♠ could be a 4-cardsuit with a longer minor. Forcing to game unless the suit is repeated. Could be balanced if 25+.

2 NT shows 22-24, balanced. Continue as after 2 NT opening.

3 ♣/♦ is forcing and normally denies a 4-card major. Partner bids a new suit or values at the 3-level, and can raise with x x x.

3 ♥/♠ shows 9 playing tricks. Partner can pass.

3 NT shows 25-27 balanced, no 4-card major.

6.2.4 Double negative

After 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥/♠/3♣/♦, responder bids the next suit (3 ♣ over 2 ♠ - avoid bidding NT) with a useless hand.

Other non-jump bids are natural and forcing to game.

Jump in NT: positive 3-suiter, short in partner's suit.

All other jumps show 4-card support for partner:

4 in the trumpsuit: picture jump - good trumps, no outside values.

Other jumps: cuebid.

Other semi-positive hands (4-4-4-1 with singleton in partner's suit) must give a double negative first and try to catch up later.

2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥/♠ might be a 4-cardsuit, so responder should only raise to 3 with 3-cardsupport including an honour (could be 4-card in an otherwise useless hand). This is forcing to game - with a blank hand, responder can give a double negative and then a simple preference later. 3 ♠ / NT is natural and higher bids **natural** from the opener.

6.2.5 Slam investigation

If the 2 ♣ opener takes a direct slam initiative, a jump in a new suit is **asking bid**, while a new suit after a trumpsuit has been agreed will be cuebid as usual. If the responder invites to slam after a trumpsuit has been agreed, cuebids are used.

Examples:

2 ♣ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♠/4 ♣/4 ♦ : Asking bids. Opener has to bid 3 ♥ to get into a cuebid sequence.

2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♣ - 4 ♦ : Asking bid.

2 ♣ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 4 ♣: Cuebid – responder cannot use asking bids.

2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♠ - 4 ♣ : Cuebid, since the responder started with a cuebid.

2 ♣ - 3 ♥ - 3 ♠: Asking bid

2 ♣ - 3 NT - 4 ♣: Asking bid if responder doesn't have clubs, encouraging cuebid if responder has clubs.

Conclusion:

A new suit by the 2 ♣ opener after the trumpsuit is agreed is asking bid when:

- Opener jumps and is the first to take a slam initiative.
- The response to 2 ♣ was a jump.

7 Weak openings

All opening bids higher than 2 ♣ (with the exception of 2 NT) can profitably be played as weak. Although a weak 2 ♦ is not particularly pre-emptive (unless partner can jump immediately with a good fit), there is really no point in using this bid as strong. The only good alternative may be to open 2 ♦ with strong 4-4-4-1/5-4-4-0 hands, as they are otherwise difficult to bid. The low frequency of these hands, however, makes it questionable to assign a separate opening bid for them.

7.1 WEAK TWO OPENINGS

Opening bids of 2 ♦, 2 ♥ and 2 ♠ show 6-11hp and a 6-cardsuit. Occasionally, you can have a 7-cardsuit, if the hand is not strong enough to be opened at the 3-level.

In 1.and 2.position, the suit should not be weaker than Q 10 x x x x, and the hand should not contain a void or a 4-card sidesuit in a major. A weak 4-card sidesuit in a minor (not more than one top honour) is acceptable. Without these restrictions, it will be too difficult for partner to guess whether to try for game or not.

In 3.position, the hand could be a bit weaker or stronger (4-13p), as game is unlikely when partner has passed, and this might make it more difficult for the 4.player. Non-vulnerable, a 3.hand in weak two may be made on a good 5-cardsuit.

Any raise (2 ♠ - 3 ♠ or 2 ♠ - 4 ♠) is in principle pre-emptive. A raise to game could be anything from a purely pre-emptive raise to a hand confident of making the game. It might be an idea to try and vary your pre-empts, even if it means that you might occasionally miss a good slam when partner has the ideal hand. It is not uncommon to see the opponents come in over 2 ♠ - (pass) - 4 ♠ when you have bid 4 ♠ to make.....

2 NT (forcing to game, any distribution) and 3 ♣ (one round force, at least partial support) are partner's main methods for investigating higher contracts. 2 NT followed by a new suit is natural, 3 ♣ followed by a new suit is cuebid.

A new suit from partner will be constructive, but non-forcing. The opener should only bid on with a fit for partner and (automatically) pass with a singleton unless absolutely maximum - remember, partner's suit is at least as good as yours!

A jump is an asking bid or splinter (depending on your agreements) - even 2 ♠ - 4 ♥.

If the opponents interfere by bidding a suit, a new suit by partner will be natural and forcing (often lead-directing with support), but 2 NT and 3 ♣ (if possible) retain their original meaning. Double from responder is penalty, as is a double from the opener in a natural sequence (2 ♥ - (2 ♠) - 3 ♦ - (3 ♠) - x). After 2 NT or 3 ♣ (as in 2 ♥ - (pass) - 2 NT - (3 ♠) - ?), double means that you were going to make this bid yourself, while pass means that you were going to make a lower bid.

If the opponents double the weak 2 opening, a new suit by partner is to play (but often lead-directing with support), 2 NT retains the original meaning while RD replaces 3 ♣ and shows either a strong hand that wants to double the opponents OR at least a mild game try with support.

A direct jump to 3 NT by responder should show a balanced or semi-balanced hand. Opener should normally pass, but may take out with an untypical hand. (Bid a 4-card minor or repeat a long suit.)

7.1.1 Two NT - forcing to game

This is the only strong bid available when partner opens a weak two, and it is unconditionally forcing to game. Partner shows a singleton at the 3-level, repeats the suit without a singleton, or bids 3 NT with maximum and a good suit (at least 3 of the 4 top honours). A jump to the 4-level should be avoided - remember partner can have 9 solid tricks in NT.

A new suit from responder is now natural. A bid in the opener's suit is natural, but does usually not show good support, typically a doubleton. The opener can cuebid with maximum, suggest 3 NT with outside values, or raise to game.

2 NT followed by 3 NT must be passed. (Bid 3 NT directly if you want to consult partner.)

7.1.2 Three clubs - one round force

This is an artificial bid asking about the strength of the opener. The responses are:

3 ♦ : Minimum, bad suit	3 ♥ : Minimum, good suit
3 ♠ : Maximum, bad suit	3 NT: Maximum, good suit

"Good suit" may vary with the vulnerability. When in doubt, consider the suit "good" if you only expect to lose one trick in the suit opposite a singleton 10, J or Q.

If responder now bids opener's suit, then this is non-forcing, but invitational. It might seem strange that opener should be allowed to raise to game after

2 ♠ - 3 ♣ - 3 ♦ - 3 ♠

(where he has shown minimum and a bad suit), but if responder is really interested in game, then hands like

♠ Q 10 9 x x x	or	♠ A J x x x x
♥ A x x		♥ x
♦ x x		♦ J 10 9 x
♣ x		♣ x x

should probably qualify for a raise to 4 ♠, non-vulnerable. The point is, that these hands are probably unsuitable if partner was looking for a slam (which we cannot tell when he bids 3 ♣), but quite promising for game.

A new suit by responder will be cuebid, and a strong slam invitation. (A weaker slam invitation would be 2 NT first and then supporting partner). A jump by responder (below slam) will be asking bid.

3 ♣ followed by 3 NT shows some interest for other contracts (perhaps he intended to stop in 3 ♥/♠ over a minimum response) - opener should normally pass, but is allowed to move on with a very unbalanced hand. (Bid 2 NT first if you cannot stand a bid from partner over 3 NT - 3 NT directly if you want partner to decide.)

3 ♣ implies support, so 3 ♣ followed by 4 NT is RKCB with the opener's suit as trumps.

2 NT does not imply support, so 2 NT followed by 4 NT is Simple Blackwood.

If 3♣ is doubled, use the **ROPI** principle (RD: 1.step, pass: 2.step etc).

7.2 PRE-EMPTS

All 3-openings (and higher) are pre-empts. Use the 1-2-3 rule in 1. and 2.position, while a 3.hand pre-empt can be a bit weaker or stronger.

A new suit from partner at the 3-level is natural, and forcing for one round. Opener can show a side honour below 3 NT if possible, bid 3 NT with a suitable hand, repeat a good suit, or raise with J x or better. A new suit at the 4-level from opener should be cuebid.

4 of a minor, or a jump to 4 of a major can be played as natural (not very efficient), cuebid, or asking bid. The most useful treatment is probably to play "Sharples" in these situations: Bid the suit below the one you are interested in. Opener signs off in the trumpsuit without control, bids the interesting suit with 2.round control, and shows another feature with 1.round control (another 2.round control, NT with a good suit, jump in the trumpsuit without anything extra). A new suit from the responder will now be **cuebid** ~~asking bid~~, as after a 2 ♣ opening.

Although these bids do not occur very often and might be a bit tricky to remember, they do give the responder a chance to take complete control, while making it possible to leave the initiative to the opener in many situations (3 ♠ - 4 ♦ - 4 ♥ - 4 ♠: Opener can make another move with a suitable hand, knowing that ♥ is the critical suit.)

3 ♠ - 4 ♥ is best played as natural, unless you have specifically agreed that this should be asking bid or cuebid. Note that if you think you can make 4 ♠ after partner opens 3 ♥, you have to bid 3 ♠ followed by 4 ♠. If you think you can make 4 ♠ after partner opens 4 ♥ - tough luck.

7.3 OPENING 3 NT

Gambling - solid minor with max. one outside King in 1. and 2.position - may have considerably more in 3. and (especially) 4.position. Responder should seldom take out with a useless hand unless someone doubles. In any case, 4 ♣ is a weak takeout, 4 ♦ is a strong invitation to slam (opener should cuebid), 4 ♥/♠ is natural, while 4 NT means that you want partner to be declarer in 5(6). 5 ♣/♦ demands correction if this is not opener's suit, you cannot play in the other minor below the 6-level.

7.4 OPENING 4 OF A MINOR

Normal pre-empt or solid ♥/♠ (min. A K Q x x x x) - if this is permitted (which it should be, according to the latest WBF regulations). Partner assumes that the opening is based on a solid major unless otherwise proved. The next suit up (4 ♣ - 4 ♦) is inviting to slam without necessarily promising a control. Opener shows a side control with additional values, and signs off in 4 of the major with minimum. 4 ♣ - 4 ♦ - 5 ♣ shows that the opening was based on a clubsuit after all, while - 4 NT shows a club control and solid hearts.

Note that a 4 ♣ opening will prevent partner from playing in 4 ♥ with a strong hand and a long heartsuit, so the minorsuit should be good if you open 4 ♣/♦ in 1. or 2.hand without a solid major. 4 ♣ - 4 ♠ is to play if partner has ♣.

8 The opponents interfere

8.1 THE OPPONENTS DOUBLE

When an opponent doubles partner opening bid at the 1-level, **RD** and **2 NT** are the only strong bids.

2 NT shows at least a limit raise in partner's suit. Any hand with 10+p and 4-cardsupport (or better) for partner should bid 2 NT. The possible exceptions are completely flat hands (4-3-3-3) with honours in all suits, and hands with a suit so good that you might have an alternative trumpsuit. These hands may redouble first.

RD shows all other strong hands (10+). After this bid, the opponents cannot play an undoubled contract below the level of 2 in the opener's suit (unless opener shows extreme weakness - see below). As long as the redoubler bids new suits, the opener is not allowed to pass.

Support at any level is pre-emptive.

1 NT shows 6-9hp, and does not deny 4-card majors.

3 NT is for play, usually with a long minor.

Jumps are purely pre-emptive - even **1 ♥ - x - 4 ♣**. All slam invitations must start with 2 NT. Consequently, opener should usually cuebid on the way to game after 2 NT with a good hand, as partner might be quite strong. Note that with a passed hand, jumps retain the same meaning as without the intervening double, but could be made on slightly weaker hands (7+ points) with good fit for partner.

Other bids are weak (0-9hp), and show at least a 5-cardsuit. Normally no support for partner - and the opener should not bid on with minimum hands, even without a fit for partner's suit. With a singleton in the opener's suit, responder might be very weak.

Pass normally shows (but does not guarantee) a partial fit for opener's suit.

If responder later comes in with a new suit, it will typically show a 5-cardsuit and 3-card support (or at least "tolerance") for partner Without any fit: bid at once.

If responder later supports partner's suit, then it shows **6-9 balanced** and genuine support and some defensive potential - i.e. a hand unsuitable for a destructive immediate raise.

It is quite common in UK and USA for the responder to bid as if nobody has doubled - i.e. new suit is forcing and does not promise more than a 4-cardsuit. However, although this treatment has its merits when responder is fairly strong, the danger is that you cannot avoid paying a big penalty when responder is weak with little or no support for partner. And to introduce a 4-card major on a relatively weak hand when this is very likely to be one of the doubler's suits, will probably help the opponents more often than not.

8.1.1 Opener's rebid

After 2 NT opener signs off at the 3-level, bids game with more than minimum, shows values below the agreed suit at the 3-level with doubts (whether to bid game or (rare) whether to try for slam), or cuebids above the trumpsuit at the 3- or 4-level.

When the opener is better than minimum, a jump to game should only be made on hands that are not suitable for slam even if partner is strong. Otherwise opener should cuebid on the way to game - which is not a particularly strong bid. Responder should always sign off in game with a limit hand.

If opener is strong enough to make a slam try opposite a limit (10-12) hand, he should show values below 3 in the agreed suit, and then make a cuebid over partner's signoff.

If the opponents interfere (1 ♥ - x - 2 NT - 3 ♠), a new suit from either hand below game level is **natural** (at least showing values - not necessarily controls), and means that you want partner to decide what to do if the opponents continue to bid. If you nevertheless overrule partner later, then the first bid (and any later bids from you) must have been slam tries.

After RD A free bid by opener **when a pass would have been forcing** shows a sub-minimum hand. After such a bid, responder will have to cuebid or bid a new suit to create a forcing situation - pass below the level of 2 in opener's first suit will no longer be forcing from either side.

Even jump in a new suit by opener (1 ♥ - D - RD - pass - 3 ♣) shows a weak hand with at least 5-5 (preferably 6-6) in the suits bid. Not forcing. With a better hand, pass and then bid the second suit, which will be forcing for one round.

8.1.2 The opponents double higher opening bids

See the chapter on 1 NT opening for doubles of 1 NT or responses to 1 NT.

If 2 ♣ is doubled, bid as normal. **RD** will show a hand which would otherwise have bid 2 NT, but lacks stopper(s) in the suit(s) the doubler has shown. A bid of the suit the doubler has shown shows a general positive hand (usually a 3-suiter) with shortage in this suit.

If a weak 2 opening is doubled, **RD** shows a good hand - either a serious game try with some support for partner, or a strong hand interested in doubling the opponents. 2 NT is gameforce as before, while 3 ♣ should be natural (RD instead).

If a pre-empt is doubled, a new suit from partner is in principle natural, but more often than not lead-directing (no reason to rescue partner with a weak hand). RD shows that it is our hand, and sets up a forcing situation if the opponents bid game.

8.1.3 The opponents double a response

Opener rebids in principle as without the double, but with a few modifications. It is pointless to bid a weak 4-cardsuit after 1 x - pass - 1 y - D, since the doubler has announced length in this suit.

RD should show a strong hand with at least a doubleton in partner's suit (typically 18-19 balanced), inviting partner to double the opponents later. (It is important that the opener promises 'something' in partner's suit, so that responder can pass the redouble without risking a pass from the doubler.)

Jump to 2 NT shows a strong raise in partner's suit (redouble with 18-19 balanced).

Jump in partner's suit is basically preemptive (redouble or bid 2 NT with a serious hand).

Pass normally shows a minimum hand, but could also be bid on a stronger hand with shortage in partner's suit.

A minimum rebid in NT shows 14 good points - pass with 12-13(14). System is "on".

8.2 THE OPPONENTS OVERCALL

In general, all bids retain their original meaning after an overcall. A direct cuebid (1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♠) is forcing to game with support for partner's suit. A single jump by an unpassed hand below 3 of partner's suit is natural and forcing (automatic responses still apply - see section 3.5.1), while a higher jump is cuebid (splinter in suits other than the opponent's does not apply after interference).

8.2.1 Direct cuebid

A direct cuebid after partner has opened, (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 2♥), is forcing to game with support for partner's suit. If the cuebid has to be made at the 3-level (1 ♣ - 2♥ - 3♥), it could also be made on a hand containing a solid minor at not much else (the point is that if you bid your suit with such a hand, next hand might support his partner, and you will never be able to check for a stopper).

A direct jump cuebid (1 ♣ - [1 ♥] - 3♥) is either a splinter, or a solid minor and not much else. The opener should bid NT with a stopper, and partner must take out with the splinter hand.

8.2.2 Negative doubles

A negative double is a take-out double made after partner has opened the bidding. It makes sense to play negative doubles to as far as 3 ♠, although it means that you may have to give up the chance of doubling for penalty at the 3-level.

1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - x should (normally) show 4/5 (with limited strength) or 4/4 in the majors.

1 ♣/♦ - 1 ♥ - x should show interest in the minors, and 4-card spades only with a 3-suited hand, or with a limited hand with a longer minor. You can show the latter type of hand by bidding *spades* next time, if possible.

A common treatment is to let double here show 4-card spades, and 1 ♠ 5-card, but that makes hands like ♠ Q x x ♥ x x x ♦ A K x x ♣ x x x completely unbidable after 1 ♣ - (1 ♥)

1 ♣/♦ - 1 ♠ - x shows 4+ ♥. This is the only situation where the doubler specifically promises a suit. All balanced hands with 4-card hearts will have to double in this situation.

Higher doubles may either be based on a long suit with insufficient strength to bid it at the lowest possible level, a relatively weak hand with support for all other suits, or an unlimited balanced or semi-balanced hand with at least one (unbid) 4-card major. Note that most other bids (1 ♥ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♣/3 ♦) will deny interest in the unbid major(s).

An important corollary (and the major drawback) to using negative doubles this way, is that the responder cannot double an overcall for penalties. At the 1- and 2-level, the solution will be to pass, and wait for partner to re-open. The opener has to keep the bidding open on all hands with 2 or fewer cards in the opponent's suit, and a double or a simple bid of a new suit does not promise extra strength. The opener should try to double as often as possible (in case partner has a penalty double), but not with hands that cannot handle the most likely response from partner (after 1♥ - 2♣ - pass - pass, you will have to bid 2♦ with 2-5-4-2, since you cannot handle a 2♠ response from partner). A bid in no trumps shows 18-19 balanced, even after 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - pass - pass (pass or double with 12-14).

Trap passes should only be made with clear-cut penalty doubles - make a natural bid instead with a marginal hand, as partner may have to reopen with a double on hands that may have considered taking out a direct penalty double.

Trap passes should not be used at the 3-level. Consequently, 1♦ - 2♠ - pass - pass - x may be a minimum hand, while 1♦ - 3♣ - pass - pass - x shows a strong opening hand (since partner should not have a strong hand with clubs in this sequence).

Negative doubles do not apply after an opening bid of 1 NT or higher.

8.2.3 Invitational doubles

apply in only one situation - when the opponents have bid *and supported* the suit below your own (1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♥ - x) is inviting to 4 ♠, while 3 ♠ is competitive. Note that this only applies when the opposition support each other - otherwise a double would be for penalty. (1 ♥ - (pass) - 2 ♥ - 3 ♦ - x is best played as a penalty double, while 3 ♥ is the game try, not competitive, here.)

8.2.4 1 x - (any) - 1 NT - (2 y) - ?

2 NT (which would have showed a strong hand without interference) now shows a hand willing to fight at the 3-level or (rarely) a very good hand, while a new suit at the 3-level shows a hand which would have been close to making that bid without interference:

1 ♥ (pass/1 ♠/D) 1 NT (2 ♠)
2 NT

wants to play in 3 of a minor or possibly 3 ♥, or possibly a very strong invitational hand. Responder should assume the weak version and bid the lowest 'acceptable' trumpsuit, which could easily be a 3-cardsuit. With the weak version, opener should normally have a 5-card minor or 6-card heartsuit, or possibly 1-5-3-4. With the strong version, opener must bid again.

Note that 3 ♥ (instead of 2 NT) above would have shown a hand that would have been close to bidding 3 ♥ even without the interference.

8.2.5 1 m - (1 NT) - 2 m

Partner's suit at the 2-level is always natural.

The other minor at the 2-level shows both majors. Normally 5/5, but 5/4 with longer hearts is also possible. Opener gives preference to hearts with equal length. 1 ♦ - (1 NT) - 2 ♣ - pass - 2 ♦: To play.

9 Takeout doubles

A takeout double (with an unpassed hand) shows (in principle) either an opening hand with at least 3 cards in all of the unbid suits or 16+ points, any distribution.

If 2 suits have been bid by the opponents (1 ♣ - pass - 1 ♥), a double shows either at least 4 cards in each of the unbid suits, or 16+ points.

In 4.position (1 ♦ - pass - pass): Add 3 points to your hand, and bid as before. This means that you can double and bid again with as little as 13 points, but beware that suits with a finesse combination (A Q or K J) do not pull their full weight, as opener is likely to have the missing honour.

At higher levels, generally subtract one point per level, and bid as before. However, good suits (lots of 10's, 9's and 8's) are more important now, as this makes it more difficult for the opponents to double in case partner is weak.

A double of 3 ♣ is purely takeout, while a double of 4 ♠ is purely penalty. The higher the double, the more the doubler should be prepared that partner might leave it in with a weak 4-3-3-3 hand. (Partner should never do this over 3 ♣, always over 4 ♠).

A double of 1 NT is in principle penalty, with at least the same strength as the no-trump opener, even in 4.position.

In other sequences, a double of a partscore by a limited hand (a hand that has been limited by a simple overcall or a 1-opening) is takeout if partner has not bid anything else than pass. If both players have bid, double is penalty.

If both players have bid but one player has not promised any strength, a double by the weak hand's partner shows extras, *partial fit* and *good defensive values*. As in

(1 ♦)	D	(pass)	1 ♠	1 NT	(pass)	2 ♠	(3 ♥)
(2 ♦)	D				D		

The doubler must expect partner to take out with a weak hand. Thus, you cannot double 3 ♥ in the last sequence with

♠ 6 4
♥ A K J 9
♦ A K 6
♣ Q 10 6 4

Just pass and take your plus score. However, switch your spades and diamonds and a double is clear-cut.

9.1 RESPONSES TO A TAKEOUT DOUBLE

A simple suit shows approx. 0-8hp.

With **0-4hp** (a hand that you do not intend to bid more than once, unless forced) prefer to show a 4-card major instead of a 5-card minor if that can be done a level lower. Otherwise bid your longest suit, and the cheapest of two 4-cardsuits (even if the other one is a major). 1 NT shows (5)6-9 hp, so you may have to bid a 3-cardsuit with for example 4-3-3-3 distribution. In that case, bid the cheapest 3-cardsuit unless all your strength is in another suit which can be bid at the same level.

With **5-8hp** you should plan a possible rebid. Bid your longest suit first, and bid 1 ♠ with 4-4 in the majors (intending to bid 2 ♥ next, if possible) if partner doubles one of a minor. 1 NT shows 5-8/9 hp and denies an unbid 4-card major.

A jump shows 8-12 hp.

Jump in a major is frequently a 4-cardsuit, while a jump in a minor will usually be 5 and deny a 4-card major. A new suit from the doubler is now forcing to game (or to 4 of a minor if you do not have a stopper in the opponent's suit).

A double jump (1 ♦ - x - pass - 3 ♥) shows the same strength, but a single suited hand (6-cardsuit).

Cuebid

of the opponent's suit is forcing to game (or to 4 of a minor if you do not have a stopper in the opponent's suit).

Double cuebid

retains the same meaning as before: A strong minorsuit and nothing else - first of all interested in a stopper. Typically:

♠ x x
♥ x x x
♦ x x
♣ A K Q x x x

1 ♥ x pass 3 ♥

(Rare) If you later come back with another suit, you set your own suit as trumps, show control in the suit bid, and demand that partner cuebids.

9.2 DOUBLER'S REBID

With an unbalanced hand and 16+ points, opener should always bid again unless the level has become uncomfortably high. Because the doubler may be very strong, it is important to define the subsequent bids accurately. Try this scheme:

Bid of a new suit shows approx. 16-20p and 5-cardsuit. Not forcing.

Jump in a new suit shows approx. 18-22p and normally a 6-cardsuit (may be a good 5-cardsuit with near maximum). Not forcing.

No-trump at the lowest level shows 19-21p - i.e. a hand too strong for a direct 1 NT. (This applies also after a double in 4.hand).

Jump to 2 NT shows 22-24p.

Cuebid in the opponent's suit is forcing for one round and promises another bid. Forcing as long as new suits are bid. A second cuebid of the opponent's suit is unconditionally forcing to game.

Jump cuebid is specifically asking for a stopper (1 ♦ - x - pass - 1 ♥ - pass - 3 ♦).

With a normal opening hand and 4-card support for partner, opener should only bid again with extra values. When in doubt, try the following rule:

The bidding goes (1 ♦) - D - pass - 1 ♥ - pass - ?

- If you are in doubt whether to raise partner or not, assume instead that you had opened 1 ♥ and partner raised to 2 ♥.
- If you would have been strong enough to make a game try, you should raise to 2 ♥ now.

- If you would have been strong enough to bid game, you should jump to 3 or 4 ♥ now (depending on distribution more than high-card points).
- If you would have been strong enough to make a slam try, you should cuebid the opponent's suit now.

9.3 SPECIAL DOUBLES

Generally, a double is defined as takeout if

- The double is below game
- The doubler's partner has not made a positive bid

A double of a game-contract when the opponents have found a fit, the doubler's partner has not bid, and the doubler has not had an opportunity to bid earlier (1 ♥ - pass - 4 ♥), should also be considered as takeout.

Other situations are treated in this section.

9.3.1 Responsive doubles

A double is responsive (i.e. takeout) if LHO opens, partner doubles, and RHO supports. (1 ♥ - x - 2 ♥ - x). It makes sense to play responsive doubles up to 3 ♠, while (1 ♣ - x - 4 ♣ - x) should be penalties - normally with a fairly balanced hand. Trap pass does not apply when the opponents support each other.

9.3.2 Competitive doubles

are used when everyone else is bidding, and you also want to join in. (1 ♣ - 1 ♦ - 1 ♥) or (1 ♦ - 1 ♥ - 2 ♦). It makes sense to play these double up to 3 ♠ as well (easier to remember is the upper limit for all artificial doubles are the same). A double in these situations is takeout provided you have not had a chance to double earlier:

(1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (2 ♣) - D: takeout

(1 ♦) - pass - (1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (2 ♣) - D: strong hand with ♦ (2 ♥ would show ♠)

(1 ♦) - pass - (1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (2 ♦) - D: penalties (you didn't double 1 ♦)

(1 ♦) - pass - (1 ♥) - 1 ♠ - (2 ♥) - D: takeout (♣ plus ♠ tolerance)

If the opponents have bid two suits and partner one suit, a bid of the fourth suit is natural and (normally) denies support for partner's suit.

Trap passes apply only when RHO makes a non-forcing bid in a new suit (1 ♠ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♥: non-forcing). Note that you might support partner a bit lighter than usual in this situation, as a pass might put a lot of pressure on the overcaller.

9.3.3 Double of slam contracts

If the opponents bid a slam without any interference, a double asks for an unusual lead. Normally, the doubler is void in a suit, but might also have two quick tricks to take. Lead dummy's first bid suit unless it is clear that tricks in this suit cannot disappear, or that partner might be void in another suit.

If you double a cuebid or a response to Blackwood for the lead, a double by partner of the final contract will demand a lead in that suit.

If you are in a sacrificing position, a double of a small slam in direct position shows 2 defensive tricks (pass with 1 or 0). A double in 4.position shows 1 defensive trick. Partner sacrifices with 0 and passes with 1. Note that you have to pass in 4.position with 2 defensive tricks.

9.3.4 Support double

If the bidding starts 1x – ? – 1y (where “?” is pass or overcall but not double) and the fourth player bids a suit, a double by the opener is a support double (showing exactly 3 cards in partner’s suit) if partner’s suit could have been bid at the 2-level.

- Double is not mandatory with 3-card support. Instead, double shows a “willingness to bid”. With a sub-minimum hand, pass with 3-card support.
- Double is not mandatory with a balanced 12-14 point hand. With maximum and good stoppers in the opponent’s suit(s), bid 1NT instead.
- Other bids (a new suit, or repeat of the suit opened) denies 3-card support for partner – even 1♣ - pass - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠. Double with 3-card ♦ even if you have 4♠. (If partner has spades, you will be in game anyway).
- A bid of partner’s suit at the 2-level promises 4-card support but does not promise any extra strength.
- We do not play “support redoubles” (1x – pass – 1y – D – RD) – RD here shows 18-19 (or thereabout) with at least a doubleton in partner’s suit.
- Support doubles do not apply if the overcall is 1NT (double is now for penalties).
- Trap passes apply if a double by the opener would have been a support double – responder must reopen (preferably with a takeout double if he can stand a pass from the opener) if short in the suit overcalled. If a double by the opener had been for penalties, a double from responder would also be for penalties.

10 Overcalls

6-15hp, depending on vulnerability and distribution. The weaker you are, the more important is the suit quality.

10.1 PARTNER'S REACTION

Any raise by partner is in principle pre-emptive. Cuebid is forcing, and shows a constructive raise or any strong hand. 1 NT and 2 NT are constructive (approx. 8-13 and 11-16 respectively, depending on the vulnerability. Remember, you can expect more from a vulnerable overcaller, so it makes sense to try for game with a little less). Other bids are natural, constructive and one round force at the 1- and 3-level, non-forcing at the 2-level. Jumps are non-forcing, but show a 6-cardsuit (normally no side-suits) and a good opening hand. Double cuebid is specifically asking for a stopper (below 3 NT) or splinter (will take out 3 NT or support later). Double jump below game level is cuebid. Jump to game is for play.

Simple raise (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - ? - 2 ♥) is pre-emptive. A new suit from the overcaller in an undisturbed auction (i.e. the opponents have only bid one suit and the RHO passes) is short suit trialbid. 2 NT is a general try, and does not promise stopper in the opponent's suit. Re-raise (- 3 ♥) is pre-emptive. A jump in a new suit, or a new suit from the overcaller in a disturbed auction is natural, and is usually preparation for a sacrifice.

Double raise (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - ? - 3 ♥) is also pre-emptive. As slam should be out of the question, a new suit from the overcaller should be natural (although it is doubtful to bid a new suit without interference).

Redouble of a negative double (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - D - RD) shows at least a doubleton honour (A or K) in partner's suit. A simple raise in this sequence (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - D - 2 ♥) should normally deny a top honour.

Double of a new suit after partner's overcall (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - D) shows the unbid suit plus partial support for partner's suit (at least H x - normally 3-card). If the first suit bid was not natural (i.e. if 1 ♣/♦ could be as little as 1 card), then the double is purely takeout, showing 2 of the 3 other "suits" (opener's suit / the unbid suit / support).

Double of a raise of opener's suit after partner's overcall (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 2 ♣ - D) is for takeout, and shows **either** both the other suits, **or** a weak but relatively constructive raise in partner's suit (does not bypass 2 ♥).

Cuebid of opener's suit is **either** a game-try with support for the overcaller (this is always the case with a passed hand) **or** any very strong hand. The overcaller assumes the former, and repeats the suit with a minimum hand. With better than minimum: Bid another suit, NT or jump. This does not necessarily show a powerhouse - it is still possible to stop below game in the overcaller's first suit.

If the cuebidder bids a new suit the second time, it is forcing for one round (same principle as after a takeout-double followed by a cuebid). A second cuebid is forcing to game. If the overcaller did not repeat the suit (and thus showed additional values), then a new suit or NT from the cuebidder is forcing to game.

If two cuebids are available (1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♣/♠), then the highest one is the strongest, while the lowest shows a limited constructive raise in partner's suit, regardless of whether the opening bid promised the suit or not. If you have this suit and nothing else to show (with support or the 2.suit you can double if the opening bid did not promise the suit), you must either cuebid strongly or pass and then possibly come back later.

Jump cuebid (1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - pass - 3 ♥) is specifically asking for a stopper (as when partner has opened and next hand has overcalled), but could also be slam interested with support for partner and shortage in the opponent's suit. With a passed hand, the jump shows shortage and a good raise.

10.2 WEAK JUMP OVERCALLS

Jump overcalls are natural, and show approximately the same as the corresponding opening bid.

If the overcall is at the 3-level, partner bids as after a preempt, except that the opponent's suit at the 3-level asks for a stopper. If responder then comes back to partner's suit, this shows a good, constructive raise.

If the overcall is at the 2-level, 2 NT from partner is in principle natural, but cannot be passed. The overcaller repeats the suit with minimum, and raises to 3 NT or shows concentration of strength with additional values. Partner should either have a constructive raise, or a genuine interest in 3 NT. 2 NT followed by 3 NT must be passed. Thus, the overcaller cannot jump to game over 2 NT - bid the opponent's suit instead (partner can have 9 top tricks in NT).

A new suit from the overcaller's partner is constructive and non-forcing, while a bid in the opponent's suit asks for a stopper. After this, the overcaller cannot pass as long as partner bids new suits below game. This also sets up a forcing situation if the opponents later sacrifice.

Jump to game is natural (3 NT is a suggestion, not a command). Jump below the game level is cuebid. Raise of partner's suit is always pre-emptive.

Weak jump overcalls also apply in 4th position (1 ♣ - pass - pass - 2 ♥).

10.3 THE UNUSUAL NT - MICHAEL'S CUEBID

A jump overcall to 2 NT or 4 NT (1 ♥ - 2 NT) shows the 2 lowest unbid suits - at least 5/4 at the 1-level, and 5/5 at the 2 level or higher. Good suits are more important than general strength.

Any support from partner is pre-emptive. If the opponents have bid two suits, a bid in one of their suits shows values (partner can bid NT with the other suit stopped), and is at least inviting to game. If the opponents have bid one suit, a bid in this suit is just forcing, while a bid in the last suit is constructive, but non-forcing.

A suit mentioned by the opponents is considered 'unbid' if it promises less than 2 cards in the suit - i.e. if a 1♦ opening in precision could be made on a singleton. If it promises at least 2, however, regard the suit as bid.

A direct cuebid of the opponent's suit (1♥ - 2♥) shows the two highest unbid suits (many prefer to play it a showing the highest suit + another suit, but the continuation is more complicated with that treatment, as responder will not always know if there is a fit). The bidding continues as after an unusual NT overcall.

Note that (1♥ - pass - 1♠ - 2♥) is natural (2♠ is the cuebid).

A direct jump cuebid (1♥ - 3♥) shows either a strong hand with the two-suiter not covered by Michael's cuebid (♠/♣ in this case) or a solid suit, interested in a stopper. Partner should always assume the latter, and bid 3 NT with a stopper. If the overcaller now bids a suit at the 4-level, this shows the 2-suiter type.

These conventions also apply in 4th position (1♥ - pass - pass - 2♥ and 1♥ - pass - pass - 2 NT).

Note that 2 NT without a jump is unusual only if the opponents are in a forcing situation (1♠ - pass - 2♥ - 2 NT). However, if they are not in a forcing situation, and you have not had a chance to bid earlier, you will need 2 NT to be natural: (1♠ - pass - 2♠ - 2 NT).

Also note that if the opponents bid 1♥ - pass - 1 NT, you bid as after a 1♥ opening from them (double is takeout, 2 NT will show the two lowest unbid suits, while 2♥ will show the two highest, as usual). Do not confuse this with the bidding after 1♥ - pass - 1♠ from the opponents (where 2♥ from you is natural), since this latter sequence give you many more options for showing 2-suiters (double, NT).

10.4 ONE NT OVERCALL

shows 15-18, in all positions. (If you want this bid to be weaker in 4. position, consider then how to bid a balanced 16p hand after 1♠ - pass - pass. Double followed by 2 NT.....?)

Considering that you hardly ever want to investigate a slam, and very frequently want to play a low partscore after this start to the bidding, it makes sense to play 2 of the opponent's suit as the only forcing bid. This shows *either* an invitational hand with at least one unbid 4-card major, *or* any hand strong enough to force to game. The 1 NT bidder should not bypass 2 NT with minimum.

Other bids at the 2-level are for play, jumps are invitational. 4♣ and 4♦ are transfers to ♥/♠, as after a 1 NT opening.

Examples:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1♥) - 1 NT - (pass) - 2♥ - (pass) - 2♠: | 4-card ♠ |
| (1♥) - 1 NT - (pass) - 2♥ - (pass) - 2 NT: | minimum, not 4-card ♠ |
| (1♥) - 1 NT - (pass) - 2♥ - (pass) - 3♣: | maximum, 4+ ♣, not 4-card ♠ |
| (1♥) - 1 NT - (pass) - 3♠: | invitational. Bid 2♥ followed by 3♠ to force with 5+ ♠. |
| (1♠) - 1 NT - (pass) - 2♠ - (pass) - 2 NT: | minimum, not 4-card ♥. With maximum <i>or</i> 4-card ♥, bid at the 3-level (3♥ if you can). Note that you cannot stop in 3♥ if you have a 4-4 fit. |

11.2 DEFENCE TO STRONG 1 ♣

Natural. Double shows both majors (min. 4-4 non-vul vs. vul - 5-5 vul vs. non-vul), while any NT bid shows both minors (2 NT will always show at least 5-5).

Any support is pre-emptive. A new suit is constructive. Jump in a new suit is pre-emptive, but a passed hand shows support for partner.

A jump to 2 NT shows a constructive raise in partner's suit. (No point in inviting to 3 NT with a balanced hand and maximum 24p.) 1 NT and 3 NT is natural.

Bid only good suits after a strong club. A good 4-cardsuit is acceptable non-vul.

(1 ♣ - pass - 1 ♦ - x) shows diamonds, while 1 NT and 2 NT still shows the minors.

11.3 DEFENCE TO PRE-EMPTS

Double of 3 ♣ is purely takeout, while double of 4 ♠ is purely penalty. The higher the opening bid, the more prepared the doubler must be for a pass by partner. Double in 4th position could be a bit weaker.

Any suit is natural. 3 NT is for play. 4 NT shows a strong 2-suiter (at least 5-5). Partner gives preference to the lowest playable suit, which the NT bidder should always take out if it is not one of his suits.

Double of a pre-empt by a passed hand (pass - 4 ♠ - pass - pass - x) is always takeout, and shows a 3-suiter.

Over a weak 2-opening:

- 2 NT shows approx. 16-20hp. Continuation basically as after a 1 NT overcall - i.e. the opponent's suit is the only forcing bid at the 3-level, while a jump to 4 of a minor is *natural and forcing*. 2 ♥ - 2 NT - (pass) - 3 ♥ shows 4 or 5 spades - the 2NT bidder can bid 3 ♠ with 3-card spades (whereafter 3 NT from responder will confirm that the spadesuit is only 4) or cuebid with 4-card spades and better than minimum. Likewise, 2 ♠ - 2 NT - (pass) - 3 ♠ shows 4 or 5 hearts - you might have to play 3 NT with a 5-3 heartfit (or risk 4 ♥ on a 4-3 fit if the 2 NT bidder prefers that).
- 3 NT is for play, 4 NT shows both minors. A cuebid (2 ♥ - 3 ♥) is either asking for a stopper, or shows a big 2-suiter (not both minors after a weak 2 ♥/♠).

When we have opened the bidding and the opponents preempt, the same principles apply. A double of a 4-level bid is in principle for penalties. However, you might have to double with a balanced hand with nowhere to go and enough to suspect that we have a game on.

A jump to 4NT follows the same principle as in an undisturbed sequence - straight Blackwood unless a suit has been agreed.

A non-jump 4NT is RKCB over 4m, "two places to play" over 4M. The two places might be 5 or 6 in the highest of the possible places to play.

11.4 DEFENCE TO MULTI 2 ♦

Assuming 2 ♦ shows a weak 2 in ♥ or ♠, or some type of strong hand:

In direct position:

- Double: An opening hand with at least 4 ♦. Partner is supposed to leave in the double if next hand passes. Any subsequent double (from any of the players) will be for penalties.
- 2 NT: 17-19 (20), balanced. Now, the opener's suit is unknown, so continuation will have to be *as after a 2 NT opening*.
- New suit: Natural, at least opening values. After overcall in a major, the opponent's suit is assumed to be the other major, so a bid in this suit will be forcing and primarily ask for a stopper (or show a good raise in partner's suit if there is space) while a new suit at the 3-level will be natural and forcing for one round.

Pass and then:

- Double: Takeout. As over a normal weak 2.
- 2 NT: 14-16, balanced. Continuation as after a 1 NT overcall.
- New suit: Natural, too weak to bid directly.

In 4th position: (2 ♦ - pass - 2 ♥/♠ - ?)

- Double: Either max. 1 or min. 5 in the suit, and an opening hand. This means that it shows that you would either have overcalled the suit yourself, or that you would have doubled for takeout. Partner will be able to tell from the bidding and his/her hand what you have. (Most pairs play that 2 ♦ - pass - 2 ♠ shows good hearts and bad spades, so if partner doubles and you have a doubleton, you can be quite sure that partner has spades, even if the next hand passes.) Never double with a 3-card suit - partner might not be able to interpret this correctly.
- 2 NT: 15+ -20, balanced. Again, opener's suit is undefined so continuation will have to be *as after a 2 NT opening*.
- New suit: Natural.

Cuebid(2 ♦ - pass - 2 ♥ - 3 ♥)

As over a weak 2 ♥ - asking for a stopper, but could also be a strong 2-suiter not including the suit bid. (If you have hearts and a good hand – double instead. If you are not strong enough for that, pass and bid 3 ♥ later if you can.)

A jump for any player *before the opener has revealed his hand type* will be weak (“do not pre-empt over a pre-empt” does not apply here, since it might be important to deprive the responder of information about the opener's hand).

11.5 DEFENCE TO 2-SUITED OVERCALLS

Against the unusual NT, or an overcall which shows two specific suits (1 NT - 2♦: both majors) or (1♦ - 2♦: both majors), the following principle applies:

Support of partner suit is a relatively weak raise.

Bid of the 4.suit is non-forcing, but constructive.

Double is "penalty" (support for partner after 1♥ - 2♥), general strength showing after (1♥ - 2NT), diamondsuit after (1 NT - 2♦).

A bid of the cheapest of the opponent's suits shows either a strong hand with the cheapest of the two remaining suit (partner's suit or the 4.suit - this is always the case after an unusual NT) or a hand interested in NT with values in this suit, but not the other suit (usually the case after a NT opening). Similarly, a bid of the other of the opponent's suit shows a strong hand with the last of the two remaining suits (partner's or the 4.suit), or a hand interested in NT with values in the suit.

Ex: 1♠ - 2NT:

x is penalties. After this, all doubles will be for penalties.

pass and then double next time is also penalties, but shows a generally weaker hand. Partner may take out.

3♣ is a one round force with at least 5♥. Sets up a forcing situation if the opponents bid to game level.

3♦ is at least a strong limit raise in ♠. Sets up a forcing situation if the opponents bid to game level. Bid 3 or 4♠ directly if you have no defence.

3♥ is constructive, but non-forcing with ♥ (normally at least a 6-cardsuit and no spade support).

3♠ is a weak limit raise.

3NT is for play.

4♣/♦ is splinter as before. Bid 3♦ first with slam interest without a singleton. Partner should not jump to 4♠ with a very good hand (cuebid instead). You are more or less in the same situation as after (1♠ - x - 2NT).

4♥/♠ should be for play, and does not set up a forcing situation, should the opponents bid on.

Against overcalls which shows only one specific suit (1♥ - 2♥: ♠ and a minor) normal principles apply, as if they have only bid one suit. Double is "penalty", new suit is forcing for one round, and the opponent's suit is a general forcing bid. A jump in the opponent's known suit is either splinter or asking for a stopper.

11.6 DEFENCE TO 3NT OPENING

D = Penalties (in principle).

4♣ = Both majors.

4NT = A minor and a major, very strong.

Other bids = Natural.

12 Leads and signals

When defending, a pair needs to pass information to each other about distribution and possession of high cards. This is done with two types of signals: **encouraging/discouraging** and **count**. A third type of signal is **suit preference**, which is best used only in specific situations.

12.1 LEAD CONVENTIONS

When leading a small card (9 or lower), there are basically two sensible approaches: Give count, or show interest/disinterest in the suit. If you choose to use attitude leads (show whether you want the suit returned or not), you will run into many situations where you cannot tell what you want partner to play, while if you give count, you can always pass exact information at trick one.

The easiest, and probably also the most efficient lead system is to give count, and hope that partner might be able to work out the high card positions later. The main disadvantage with such a lead system is that declarer necessarily gets the same information, and might take advantage of this in the play. However, you will probably find that accurate count will help partner far more often than it will help declarer. And best of all - you can often lead and discard 'automatically' with useless hands, and leave it to partner to work out the best defence.

When giving count on lead, you can either lead low from an even number or low from an odd number. You should obviously lead the same way as you give count later in the game (see section 12.3), to keep memory restraint to a minimum. If you feel more comfortable with one of the methods than the other - choose that one, particularly if you are already used to it. Otherwise, you should first of all consider

- a) Which method gives partner the most accurate information with one card
- b) Which method requires me to 'lie' most frequently

The last point might seem a bit odd, but if you are playing 'low from an odd number' (3. and 5.) and want to lead from a suit like

A J 9 2

in no-trump, you cannot really lead the 9, as this will cost a trick too often. This means that you have to 'lie' if you want to lead small from this suit.

Thus, point b) is clearly in favour of 'small from an even number', as you will always be able to afford your 4.highest card from a 5-cardsuit. And if you want to lead from a 3-cardsuit like

J 9 2

the middle card will seldom cost a trick, and will help to unblock if you hit partner's suit.

Point a) is less obvious, as the lead of the smallest card from a suit like

A 10 8 6 2

will make it perfectly clear for partner that you have 5, while the lead of the 6 is ambiguous if you play 'low from an even number' (you could have had A 10 8 6). However, you can make this clearer to partner if you lead the 8 instead, provided the bidding indicates that you can afford it (that is - if both opponents have denied 4 cards in this suit). So unless you already are familiar with another method, try:

- Smallest card from an even number
- Middle card from an odd number

This also applies to leads in the middle of the game, although there are positions (particularly when the full distribution is known) where it makes sense to switch to attitude leads. However, this requires thorough discussions, and is not recommended unless you are 100% sure of the consequences.

12.2 ENCOURAGING/DISCOURAGING

When signalling in a suit, the most common methods are **normal** signals (high card encouraging) or **reverse** signals (low card encouraging). A third approach (first used by the famous Blue Team) is to use **odd** card as encouraging (or similarly **even** card if you prefer that). The three methods are in fact not very different - it all boils down to defining which cards are 'strongest' and which are 'weakest'. Using 'normal' signals, the sequence will be (ignoring honours, which might be used for other purposes):

STRONGEST ————— WEAKEST
[10] 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

reverse signals, will give this sequence:

STRONGEST ————— WEAKEST
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 [10]

while 'odd card encouraging' gives this sequence:

STRONGEST ————— WEAKEST
3 5 7 9 [10] 8 6 4 2

The 10 is put in parentheses here, because you will often be unable to signal with it for fear of losing a trick. The same might sometimes apply to 9's and 8's, particularly if you use 'normal' signals.

Regardless of method, it is important that you signal as clearly as possible - never throw an indifferent middle card if you can encourage with a stronger card or discourage with a weaker card. You must decide whether your holding in a suit is strong or weak, and signal as clearly as possible. Thus, if you signal with the 4.strongest card (7, 5 or 9), you **either** encourage denying any of the stronger cards ([10]/9/8 or 2/3/4 or 3/5/7) **or** you discourage denying any of the weaker cards (6/5/4/3/2 or 6/7/8/9/[10] or [10]/8/6/4/2). By looking at dummy and his own hand, partner should seldom go wrong.

The 'normal' way of signalling has the disadvantage of sometimes costing a trick if you want to give a clear signal, while you will often block a suit if you use 'reverse' signals. Both these problems are greatly reduced if you use 'odd' (or 'even') card as encouraging.

Which of these to choose is a matter of taste, but when it comes to unblocking, a 3-cardsuit including the 9 is often the most troublesome holding:

5 4	
K Q 8 3	J 9 2
A 10 7 6	

West leads the King against a no-trump contract. East will need to encourage, and at the same time unblock the suit with the 9. Odd (or high) card encouraging will do the trick.

5 4	
K Q 9 2	J 8 3
A 10 7 6	

With East holding the eight instead of the nine, unblocking is no longer necessary, so any signalling system should get this one right. Thus, **odd** card encouraging is probably slightly better than even (or high or low), but the most important factor is to use a method that both players are comfortable with.

12.3 COUNT

When giving count in a suit, you should apply the same rules as when you lead, provided you give count when leading as well. See section 12.1 for a discussion of the possible methods - **low from an even number** seems to have a slight theoretical advantage over 'low from an odd number'.

However, consider the following suit again:

5 4
K 10 8 3 Q 9 2
A J 7 6

West leads the 3 of this suit against a no-trump contract, and South captures the Queen with the Ace. A few tricks later, East is on lead, and has to play the 9 to roll up the suit. Move the 6 from South to East, however, and any card will do, as long as West knows to continue the suit.

This is a very frequent situation: If partner leads a suit where you have 3 cards, you will almost always have to unblock if you return the suit (immediately or at a later stage). This means that

- When you **lead to a trick**, play the card that you would have played if you were to lead that suit **originally**.
- When you give count by **discarding** or **following** to a trick, give count from your **remaining** holding.

This means that if you are not on lead, you do not have to remember what you started with in a suit to follow correctly - just look at what you are left with, and play the middle card from an odd number, and the smallest from an even number.

If you play the suit yourself (and the suit has already been played by partner or declarer), you have to switch. Lead your highest card from a remaining doubleton, the smallest from a remaining 3(or 5)-cardsuit, and a high a card as you can afford from a remaining 4-cardsuit.

If you fear that this will be too difficult to remember, you might consider using 'small from an odd number' instead. In that case, there is no need to 'switch' when returning a suit - you give count from your remaining holding whether you lead or discard.

12.4 WHEN AND HOW TO SIGNAL

In some situations, partner will need to know your strength in a suit, and in other situations, your count will be most useful. It is important that both players agree on the positions where the various signal apply. Unless you have already discussed this with your partner, the following guidelines might help:

- Never put more than one meaning into a signal - is should either be encouraging/discouraging or give count, but not both.
- Always signal as clearly as possible.
- Encourage/discourage when
 - partner leads a suit.
 - you cannot follow suit, but make your first discard in another suit.
- Give count when
 - declarer leads a suit (also the trumpsuit).
 - you discard from a suit where you have already encouraged or discouraged.

- Encourage
 - if partner leads an honour (presumably from a sequence) and you know you have an honour touching partner's sequence.
 - If partner leads a King (using standard leads), encourage with the Ace or Jack. If partner leads an Ace, encourage with the Queen or King.
 - from a doubleton if partner leads the Ace (hopefully from A K) in a suit contract.
 - If dummy also has a doubleton, you should only encourage if you want partner to play 3 rounds of the suit.
 - when you can see that it is right for the defence to continue the suit.
 - If partner leads a 9 against a no-trump contract (nearly always from 3 to an honour), dummy wins the Ace from A x x and you have 4 yourself, you can encourage. From 3 to an honour, however, you should generally discourage, since declarer must have 4.
- Exceptions
 - Switch from encouraging/discouraging to giving count if partner leads the 'wrong' honour.
 - That is, if partner leads the King and the Queen is in dummy, you should give count. If partner leads the Ace with the Queen in dummy, you encourage from the King, or from a doubleton in suit contract.
 - This means that you should lead King from A K against slams, since you want partner to give count if the Queen or Jack turns up in dummy (why Jack? Because declarer could have a singleton Queen!).
 - Switch to suit preference (see sec. 12.5) if partner leads an honour against a suit contract and dummy has a singleton.
 - Occasionally, you might want partner to continue the suit. In this case, try to play an indifferent suit-preference card, or give suit preference to a suit in which there is clearly no future for the defenders.

12.5 SUIT PREFERENCE

Suit preference signals (play a low card to indicate a switch to the lowest suit and a high card for a switch to a higher-ranking suit), should be used when:

- Attempting to give partner a ruff
- When partner is leading an honour against a suit contract and dummy has a singleton.
- The third and subsequent discards from a suit (having encouraged/ discouraged and given count already).
- Partner is trying to find an entry to get a ruff.

Ex: Partner leads the King and then the Ace - showing (normally) A K bare.

- a) Your play to the King was encouraging/discouraging (unless the Queen was in dummy - then you give count instead). Your play to the Ace is suit preference.
- b) Partner leads Ace and another in a suit where dummy has K Q. Your play to the second trick is suit preference.

Be careful to put other interpretations into the signal, as 'when both players know that a switch is required'. In some cases, only one might know.....

Examples:

♥ Q J 10

♥ 2

♥ 8 7 5 4

After 1 NT - 3 NT from the opponents, partner leads ♥2 - hopefully 4th best. Unless another suit looks more promising, you should encourage with the 5. This tells partner that it is safe to continue the suit from his side in the critical case when he has led from four to the King.

If you think it is more logical to give count in a situation like this (when you cannot beat dummy), consider then what you would do in this case:

♥ Q J 10

♥ 2

♥ A K 6 4 3

Again, partner leads ♥2 after 1 NT - 3 NT from the opponent, this time obviously from a doubleton. Looks like a very good lead from your point of view, but if you do not have a quick entry, you will have to duck this trick. However, if you gave count in the first situation, how can you now convince partner to continue hearts when he gets in.....?

ANNEX 1 – WHEN TO CUEBID

When you are (or may be) in the slam zone, you should consider the following points:

- The first cuebid should always convey the message "From my point of view slam can be on even if you cannot take any initiative"

This means that in the sequence

1 NT 3 ♠

where the opener does not know how strong partner is, a slam initiative should only be taken with a hand better than minimum (Aces, Kings and distributional values count considerably more than Queens and Jacks here). However, a cuebid here does not promise a maximum hand, just a hand which is a bit better than minimum.

- The second cuebid (the first from the other player) is often the most important, as this will confirm that slam is a possibility.

In the sequence above (1 NT - 3 ♠) the opener had no idea where partner was heading, but should produce a cuebid as often as possible in case partner is thinking of slam. A cuebid from responder will confirm that slam is a possibility.

- After the first two cuebids, **bypassing the trumpsuit** shows considerable extra values, while a cuebid below the trumpsuit does not promise extras.

The sequence 1 NT 3 ♠
 4 ♦ 4 ♥
 4 ♠

shows that the no-trump opener is better than minimum, but to bypass 4 ♠ now should show a near maximum hand.

- Cuebid in a suit partner has bypassed shows first round control.

The fact that you continue to cuebid, shows that you have a control in the suit partner has bypassed (without a control, you must sign off as soon as possible). If the bidding sequence above continues

1 NT 3 ♠
 4 ♦ 4 ♥
 4 ♠ 5 ♥

the responder has promised 1 and 2.round control in ♥ (cuebid twice), no control in ♦ (bypassed 5 ♦) and 2.round control in ♣ (did not cuebid 5 ♣, so no 1.round control, but did cuebid over 4 ♦, when partner denied club control). The opener has so far shown a medium notrump opening with spade support, and should have a fair chance to decide whether to play 5 or 6.

- When looking for a grand slam, do not cuebid 2.round controls unless you are sure that the 1.round control is not missing.

In some cases (i.e. when you know that your side has a lot of tricks, but may miss some controls) it may be necessary to cuebid an Ace twice in order to confirm the 1.round control.

♠ Q J x x x	1 ♦
♥ A x	1 ♠ 2 NT
♦ A Q x x	3 ♦ 4 ♣
♣ x x	4 ♥ 4 ♠
	5 ♥

On 2 NT you could force with 3 ♦, which should show real diamond support and some interest in slam or at least a diamond game. Without good diamond support you would have to bid 3 ♣ instead, which is also forcing, but does not necessarily promise clubs (partner has normally denied 4).

4 ♣ from partner is now clearly a cuebid, and should show a near maximum (could have suggested 3 NT with a minimum hand). When partner can cuebid spades the next turn, you are always going to bid a small slam, and grand slam should be a possibility. You should tell partner this by cuebidding hearts again - although partner will visualise A K or singleton Ace or void, you should not worry, as you know that partner's heart losers can be discarded on spades. What you want to hear is 5 ♠ from partner, after which you can use 5 NT to check the trumpsuit. Partner can have

♠ A K
♥ x x x x
♦ K J x x
♣ A K x

or better (this is only 18 flat points - partner should have a better hand for the 4 ♣ bid). And with the ♥ K instead of the ♣ A? Then partner will sign off in 6 ♦ over your 5 ♥, as you have denied the Ace by not cuebidding 5 ♣.

- Only in one type of sequence can a first round control be cuebid before a second round control.

Consider the following bidding sequence:

1 NT 3 ♠
4 ♣ 4 ♥
4 ♠ 5 ♦

Here, the responder denied a diamond control with the 4 ♥ cuebid, but then cuebid diamonds next time. This sounds completely illogical, and should therefore be done only with a specific type of hand, namely with double control in hearts (the first suit) and 2.round control in diamonds (the 2.suit). Furthermore, since this way of bidding has taken up a lot of space (partner may have been forced to sign off, even with a useful hand), it should also show that you have nothing more significant to say - i.e. no club control or not a sensational trump holding in the sequence above.

- Do not miss the negative inferences.

This is the most important, but also the most difficult rule. Ask yourself all the time what partner has shown and what kind of picture partner has got of your hand. Take the following problem (you deal, game all):

♠ Q x x	1 ♥ (4 ♣) 4 ♥
♥ A K x x x x	5 ♣ 6 ♣
♦ A K J	?
♣ x	

You have a good hand after partner's 4 ♥ call, and decide to take a shot at slam, as the five-level should be fairly safe (remember, you could have had a balanced 12 p-hand). Partner apparently got excited, but what do you do on 6 ♣ ?

This should not be a problem. Partner should have ♠ A K and ♣ A, so you can safely bid 7 ♥, knowing that it will depend at worst on a finesse, and will be laydown if partner has

♠ A K x x
♥ Q x x x
♦ x x
♣ A x x

The point is that you have denied Ace or King of spades, so partner must have these cards to be interested in a grand slam. And when looking for a grand slam, partner should not cuebid 2.round controls (with the King of clubs instead of the Ace, partner would have bid 5 ♠, logically showing A K and denying other 1.round controls).

- When in doubt about making a slam (or game) try, place partner with an ideal minimum hand. If this makes slam laydown, you should try for it. If not, sign off.

♠ A J 10 x x x		1 NT
♥ Q x x	3 ♠	4 ♣
♦ K x	4 ♦	4 ♥
♣ K x	?	

You have already shown some slam interest with 4 ♦, but now you need considerable extra strength to bypass 4 ♠. Do you have that?

An ideal minimum hand for partner:

♠ K x x x
♥ K x
♦ A x x
♣ A x x x

14 hp, but 6 ♠ is practically laydown. Clearly you must make another move.

- If you at any stage can see that there is a reasonable play for slam if partner has the worst possible maximum hand, you should bid slam (or continue cuebidding on the way, if grand slam still is a possibility).

♠ A J 10 x x x		1 NT
♥ Q x x	3 ♠	4 ♣
♦ K x	4 ♦	4 ♥
♣ K x	5 ♣	5 ♦

You have nothing more to cuebid, and have to take the final decision. 5 or 6?

Give partner

♠ x x x x
♥ K J x
♦ A Q J
♣ A Q J

A dreadful 18p-hand, reasonably enough downgraded to 1 NT, with no play for slam. Could partner have bid differently? Probably not, so you will clearly have to sign off at this stage. With the right honours (first of all something in spades) partner will probably raise to slam - remember that this is the first time in the bidding sequence you have shown sign of weakness, so partner knows that you are close to bidding slam yourself.

- If a player uses the GSF in a cuebid sequence, partner should sign off in the trump suit if the last cuebid was a 2.round control (where it could have been a first round control), unless it is completely clear that you will need both 1. and 2.round control in the suit.

Since the cuebidding technique is geared towards small slams, you have to be alert if partner suddenly tries for a grand slam:

♠ K Q x x x	♠ A
♥ A J x	♥ K Q x x x x
♦ x x	♦ A K x x
♣ ? x x	♣ x x
1 ♠	2 ♥
4 ♥	4 ♠
5 ♣	5 NT
?	

Sign off in 6 ♥ if your "?" is the club King, but show the Ace of hearts (by bidding 6 ♣) if you have the Ace of clubs.

ANNEX 2 – COMBINATION OF SIMPLE BLACKWOOD AND GRAND SLAM FORCE

A drawback with simple Blackwood is that you cannot easily check the Aces and the trump quality at the same time. However, this is possible if you think that the trump quality is more important than the number of Kings. The principle is to force partner to bid 5 NT, and then move on.

When playing RKCB, this problem will occur only when you know what the trumpsuit should be, but you have been unable to set the trumps in time (so that RKCB does not apply). Example:

(West/E-W)

♠ A 4 3 ♥ Q J 10 6 5 4 ♦ 4 3 ♣ Q 3	(3 ♠)	♠ 2 ♥ A ♦ A K Q 10 ♣ A K J 9 8 7 2
2 ♥ 5 ♦ 5 NT 7 ♣		4 NT 5 ♠ 6 ♣

5 ♠ tells West to bid 5 NT - normally to play, but when East follows up with 6 ♣, 5 NT was “grand slam force” telling partner to bid 7 with a club honour.

More frequently, though, you will have heart support in such a sequence:

(West/E-W)

♠ 10 3 ♥ K Q 9 6 5 4 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ 4 3	(3 ♦)	♠ A K 8 7 5 ♥ A 10 ♦ 2 ♣ A K Q 10 5
2 ♥ 5 ♦ 5 NT 7 ♥		4 NT 5 ♠ 6 ♥

Here, 6 ♥ asks for *two* top honours in trumps, which has to be hearts in this sequence. If all East needed was *one* top honour (Ace or King), he could have bid 6 ♦ instead of 6 ♥, using the principle of fast arrival (the longer the route you take, the more interested you are in a higher contract). And if he wanted to stop in 5 ♠ opposite an Ace (how much can you expect from a weak 2 opener?) he would have to start with 3 ♠ over 3 ♦.

Note that in both sequences above, no trumpsuit was not agreed when East bid 4 NT, so simple Blackwood applies. See sec. 4.2.2 for details.

If it is impossible to force partner to bid 5 NT (the response is 5 ♠, or ♠ is a suit one of you have already bid), the opponent’s suit (or an unbid suit that you could have bid naturally earlier) at the 6-level should act as the grand slam force. If there is no such suit available, you should probably not have been in this situation.....

ANNEX 3 – MORE ON RESPONDER'S JUMP IN THE FIRST ROUND

See Sec. 3.5.1 Responder's jump in the first round for opener's automatic responses. (Not to be mixed with sec. 3.5.2 Responder's cheapest jump.)

Responder will normally have one of three types of hands for an initial jump:

- a) A self-supporting suit
- b) Good support for partner suit, slam interested
- c) A relatively balanced hand (15-18) - after the first jump, further initiatives should be left to partner.

A 20-point hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution does not fall into any of these categories. Such a hand may be difficult to bid if you start with a jump, so it is usually better to bid hands like this slowly (4.suit etc.) to find out more about partner's hand.

Responder will normally clarify the hand type in the second round:

1 ♥	3 ♣	1 ♦	2 ♠	1 ♥	3 ♣
3 ♥	4 ♣	2 NT	3 ♦	3 ♠	3 NT

The first sequence sets clubs as trumps, and tells partner to cuebid. The opener can still try 4 ♥ in a last attempt to play there, but responder should be very strong for this sequence, with a self-supporting clubsuit. Normally, if responder rebids the suit immediately, this sets the trump.

The second sequence suggests good diamond support, but may also contain a balanced 16p-hand with 3-card diamonds, as opener is still unlimited. The opener is invited to take a slam initiative or show spade support.

The last sequence shows a balanced 15-17p hand with 5-6 card clubs and diamonds stopped. Opener may pass with an unsuitable hand, or bid 4 ♣ with some support. In this sequence

1 ♥	3 ♣
3 ♠	3 NT
4 ♣	4 NT

4 NT must be natural - how can a player who just signed off in game suddenly have got a hand strong enough to ask for aces? Responder has to cuebid now, in order to show some slam interest.

Check these sequences in light of the possible hand types for responder (remember that responder normally knows where to go over any response from the opener):

1 ♣	2 ♠	1 ♥	3 ♣
3 ♣	4 ♠	3 ♠	4 ♦

In the first sequence, responder could have bid 3 ♠ to encourage partner to cuebid. As in similar situations (see the slam section), a jump here should have a specific meaning, and it seems most logical to let 4 ♠ show a solid spadesuit at not much more than minimum. This may enable partner to take a slam initiative with a suitable hand, even with a singleton spade:

♠ x	1 ♣	2 ♠	♠ A K Q J x x
♥ K x x	3 ♣	4 ♠	♥ A x x
♦ A x x	4 NT	5 ♥	♦ J x
♣ A K x x x x	7 ♠		♣ x x

A fair grand slam (clubs 3-2 or a non-diamond lead).

The second sequence is a bit more complicated, but completely logical. The point is that 4 ♦ must be a cuebid, and responder knows what the trump is. By elimination, this must be hearts, as 4 ♣ was available here to set clubs as trump. Other sequences may be a bit more obscure, but if we remember that responder can set the trump by a simple rebid, a sequence like

1 ♣ 2 ♥
 2 NT 4 ♦

should be perfectly clear: 4 ♦ must be a cuebid (2 ♥ denied a diamond suit), and the absence of a 3 ♥ bid rules out that suit as trump. Consequently, clubs is trump - responder can have something like:

♠ Q x
 ♥ A Q J x x
 ♦ A
 ♣ K x x x x

i.e. a hand where the heartsuit is uninteresting (remember that partner does not have Q x x in hearts!). This sequence forces opener to show a heart or spade control (whereas most other situations, like 1 ♠ - 4 ♦ (void) allows partner to sign off in 4 ♠ with minimum, even with a heart control).

In this sequence:

1 ♦ 2 ♠
 3 ♣ 3 ♦
 3 ♠ 4 ♣

Opener's second bid showed club values, and denied H H x x x in diamonds, H x x in spades, and heart values. 3 ♦ showed some diamond support, 3 ♠ showed support in that suit (x x x (x) or H x), and 4 ♣ was clearly a cuebid. By comparing with the sequence above, it should become clear that spades is trump - responder could have bid 4 ♣ (or jumped to 4 ♦) in the previous round with 4-card diamond support.

If the opponents interfere, a pass shows that your response has been taken or bypassed. Double should be suggesting a penalty, while 3 NT should show minimum (12-14) and good stoppers in the unbid suits.

Note that a double from the responder (after two passes) will be 'optional' (responder cannot have a sidesuit anyway) and typically be made on 3 small in the opponent's suit:

♠ A K x x x
 ♥ x x x
 ♦ K Q x
 ♣ A x

1 ♣ (pass) 2 ♠ (3 ♥)
 pass (pass) ?

You were planning to rebid 3 ♦ over 3 ♣, but now you have to double. Partner should assume that you have a balanced hand and act accordingly.

ANNEX 4 – 6-ACE RKCB

When a fit has been found in two suits, the King of both suits will normally have to be present in order for slams to be good. When a double fit has been identified, it makes sense to include both Kings and Queens in the replied to RKCB. In detail:

4NT	5♣	0 or 3
	5♦	1 or 4
	5♥	2 or 5 and no Queen
	5♠	2 or 5 and one Queen
5NT		2 or 5 and both Queens

After 4NT - 5♣/♦, the next available suit will (as usual) ask for Queens. The responses are:

1.step No Queen

2.step One Queen

Higher steps: Two Queens and the King in the suit bid (if possible)