

Responding to Opening Weak Two Bids

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Many persons have provided lessons on responding to weak two bids; a very good overview of responses to the weak two bids is available on the Carnegie Mellon web site:

<https://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/gc00/bidding/lessons/wk2.html>.

In this bridge bit, I review the new ACBL convention card and the responses to the bid of 2NT commonly used in club games.

The weak two bids (2♦/2♥/2♠) in many bridge systems shows a hand with a 6-card suit (e.g., 6332, 6331, and 6421 – no 4-card major, a 5-card suit, or a void) and a point range of 6-10 HCP by agreement and must be announced by partner. Many now open hands with 11 HCP and two quick tricks.

With more than 6-cards, higher-level preemptive bids are employed. On the new ACBL convention card a bridge hand is designated as Weak (Wk), Intermediate (Int), Strong (Str), or Conventional (Conv) for 2♦/2♥/2♠.

The point range agreement is a characteristic of the hand; what constitutes a good suit also depends on your partnership agreement and the bridge system. It often consists of two of the top three honors or three of the top five (e.g., K-Q or Q-J-10). However, this also may vary depending on vulnerability.

The 2♣ bid in many systems is not a weak to bid and is represented on the new ACBL convention card: Very Strong (Very Str), Strong (Str), Natural (Nat) or Conventional (Conv). The Very Str 2♣ option = 20+HCP needs no alert; however, the other opening bidding options must be alerted if 2♣* is Str=15+HCP, Nat (e.g., Precision systems) and Conv (e.g., two-suited systems).

To determine the characteristics of opener's hand and suit many conventions have been devised, the most used convention used in club games is to ask for a feature which is initiated by the bid of 2NT.

The ACBL has decided that all weak two bids: 2♦/2♥/2♠ in the first seat need not be alerted; however, **all responses to the asking bid of 2NT must be alerted and described on a red line.**

If the 2-level bid is not weak in any other seat it must be alerted.

To bid 2NT, responder must have an invitational hand with at least 3+cards in opener's bid suit. What is an invitational hand?

Since 2NT forces one to the 3-level, to make 9 tricks requires between 23 **24** 25 combined points and since 23-10=13 -13+ points are an invitational hand. Game in a suit requires 26 **27** 28 points.

But $27-10=17$ is game. Hence, if partner opens 2x and one has $HCP=13+4$ trumps= $13+4=17$ or $14HCP + 3$ trumps =17 some may bid **game (Rule of 17) and not bid 2NT**.

To make 3NT recall that one needs only 23 **24** 25 points and 9 tricks for game. However, if responder has a balanced 4333 hand one normally subtracts 1 point from their 16+ HCP count and $24/25-10=14/15$ HCP adjusted points by responder is needed for a likely game.

Feature Ask after 2NT

The bid asks the opener to show a control (A/K) in an unbid suit.

The person who opened with the weak two bid next bids at the three level in any suit with a control— that may be the one card the responder needs to know about to be able to bid 3 NT. If you don't have a feature in addition to your long suit, one repeats their suit at the 3-level.

Summary

Rebid of the weak two bid suit: ANY MINIMUM (partner may also have "feature").

Rebid in a new suit: ANY NON-MINIMUM, with a "feature" in the suit bid.

Rebid of 3NT: A NON-MINIMUM with a "solid" or very good suit

All the above summary bids must be alerted.

2NT then 3NT by responder offers opener the choice to correct back to 4 of the major (with unusual shape). Opener's 4-level jump rebid after 2NT normally shows a side 5-card suit, so 6-5.

The best defense against this feature convention is to lead the suit with the feature to remove entries in dummy.

The primary disadvantage of the convention is that one knows nothing about the quality of the weak two bid suit. A better approach is to employ the Ogust Convention.

Ogust Convention after 2NT

The Ogust Convention was developed by the American champion Harold A. Ogust and is used to investigate game after a weak two bid when responder has 13+ dummy points.

After a weak two bid, the convention allows for a detailed description of the opener's hand. It is invoked by the artificial 2NT bid made by the responder.

The reply to a weak two bid shows strength and asks whether the opener is weak (6-7 HCP) or strong (8-10 HCP) and how many of the top three honors are held in the suit, often major.

The replies are most commonly as follows.

3♣* = minimum, 1 top honor (BAD/WEAK Hand and BAD/STRONG Suit)

3♦* = minimum, 2 top honors (BAD/WEAK Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
3♥* = maximum, 1 top honor (GOOD/STRONG Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
3♠* = maximum, 2 top honors (GOOD/STRONG Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
3NT* = all 3 honors, A-K-Q-x-x-x and little else.

A simple way to remember this is to picture Mama Mimi dancing. 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3... These refer to the order of the top honors in the major as shown above.

NOTE: Some players interchange the bids of three diamonds and three hearts. Then 1-1, 2-2, 1-2-3 dance step! Discuss this convention with your partner. The word OGUST may have a different meaning to your partner!

Of course, many other conventions are available using the asking bid of 2NT. There is Modified Ogust, Two-Step Ogust, Roudinesco Rebids, Romex Rebids, McCabe Adjunct, Singleton Showing Bids, Shape Relays Bids, Bergen-Cohen Rebids, and Two-Phase Ogust asking bids, to name a few.

If you currently use the Ogust or the Feature convention, an improved convention is the Two-phase Ogust convention which employs relay asking bids after 3♣* and 3♦* since in addition to strength (points) and suit quality (honors) there are two other attributes the Ogust convention does not address: distribution (6331, 6332, 6421) and features (Aces and Kings) in the unbid suits.

Two-Phase Ogust Convention after 2NT

To use the convention the partnership the partnership agrees to show strength and feature.

Strength and features are shown:

3♣* = minimum, with a feature in a side suit; if responder need to know the feature, he bids 3♦*.

3♥* = Feature in the lowest unbid suit

3♠* = Feature in the middle unbid suit

3NT* = Feature in the highest unbid suit

3♦* = unknown strength with no side feature if responder in strength he bid 3♥*.

3♠* = minimum

3NT* = maximum which shows a good suit since the opening bidder has denied features in a side suit.

3♥* = maximum with a feature in the lowest unbid suit

3♠* = maximum with a feature in then middle unbid suit

3NT* = maximum with a feature in the highest bid suit

Example

Opener ♠964 ♥AK9853 ♦987 ♣7

Responder ♠A ♥Q72 ♦AKQJ5 ♣9752

Opener has 7HCP and responder has 17 dummy points

Opener	Responder
2♥	2NT
3♣* (minimum with feature)	3♦*= ask
3♥* none	4NT 1430
5♥ (2 keycards)	6♥
Pass	Pass

Note in this example do not use the rule of 17 – you are too strong and if you did you would have missed the slam!

Using the Feature convention, opener would bid 2♥* no feature and using Ogust bid 3♦*= bad hand with good suit and opener may pass!

Because there are commonly more unbalanced hands than balanced NT hands, the convention may be modified to show strength and shortness:

Strength and shortness (distribution) are shown:

3♣* = minimum, with a singleton in a side suit; if responder need to know shortness, he bids 3♦*.

- 3♥* = Shortness in the lowest unbid suit
- 3♠* = Shortness in the middle unbid suit
- 3NT* = Shortness in the highest unbid suit

3♦*= unknown strength with no shortness if responder in strength he bid 3♥*.

- 3♠* = minimum
- 3NT* =maximum with unknown quality and since he denied shortness, he did not convey information regarding Ace/kings in the side suits.

- 3♥* = maximum with shortness in the lowest unbid suit
- 3♠* = maximum with shortness in the middle unbid suit
- 3NT*= maximum with shortness in the highest bid suit

For our example the bidding would go:

Opener	Responder
2♥	2NT
3♣* (minimum with shortness)	3NT* (shortness in spades)
4♥ (to play)	4NT 1430 (or 4♠ if you play kickback)
5♥ (1430 - 2 keycards)	6♥
Pass	Pass

Why use Kickback with hearts agreed? If you have 2 keycards with the Q using 1430 the bid is 5♠! Why ask you are committed to 6♥. Kickback allows one to escape to the 5-level in hearts since 2 keycards with the Queen is 4NT.

Common responses to the weak two bid from the Carnegie Mellon site!

2D, 2H, or 2S shows 6-10 HCP with a 6-card suit, no 4-card hidden major, and good suit quality.

- 2D, 2H, 2S -
 - 2H, 2S (/2D, 2H): 16+ HCP, 5+ Card suit, asking for 3 card support. Forcing.
 - 2NT: Forcing, either 16+ HCP or 13+ HCP with support.
 - 3C: Club stopper.
 - 3D: Diamond stopper.
 - 3H (after 2S opening): Heart stopper.
 - 3S (after 2H opening): Spade stopper.
 - 3M (same as opening): no outside stoppers.
 - 3C, 3D: 16+ HCP, 5+ Card suit, asking for 3 card support. Forcing.
 - 3H(/2S): 16+ HCP, 5+ Card suit, asking for 3 card support. Forcing.
 - 3M: 6-9 HCP, 3 trump. Signoff.
 - 3N: 16+ HCP. All other suits stopped. Signoff. (Note, this bid will not be easy to make if partner has no outside stopper to provide an entry for you).
 - 4M: Either 6-9 HCP with 4+ Trumps or 16+ HCP with 2+ Trumps. Signoff.
 - 5M: 6-9 HCP with 5+ Trumps. Signoff.
 - 6M: Lots of trumps, either lots of points or very preemptive. Signoff.

Dealing with Intervention after You Have Opened with a Weak Two Bid

All bids, wherever possible, retain their original meaning. Doubles after intervention are always penalties and not negative.

If the opponents overcall at the two level:

Double = penalties

2NT = relay

New suit = constructive and non-forcing as before

Supporting at the three level = still pre-emptive as before

If the opponents overcall at the three level:

Double = penalties

New suit (below partner's) = constructive and non-forcing

New suit (above partner's) = forcing

Supporting at the 3 level = competitive

If the opponents double:

Redouble = strong hand, usually penalty

New suit = constructive and non-forcing