

What's Standard?

by David Lindop

This series is based on *Grant Standard*, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 INT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of *Grant Standard* and the corresponding convention card can be found at www.AudreyGrant.com. The site also has *Grant Basic*, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the *Bridge Bulletin* and can also be found under 'Articles' at www.AudreyGrant.com.

A popular modern agreement is that when partner opens 1♥ or 1♠, a jump response of 2NT is an artificial, forcing raise—the Jacoby 2NT convention.

JACOBY 2NT OVER 1♥/1♠

- four-card or longer support
- 13 or more points

It commits the partnership to game in opener's suit and leaves room to explore for slam. The key to effectively using Jacoby 2NT is what happens after the 2NT response, starting with opener's rebid.

Opener's Rebid After 2NT

To help the partnership decide whether a slam is possible, opener's rebid describes the distribution and strength of opener's hand:

OPENER'S REBID AFTER 2NT

With shortness:

- a new suit at the three level shows a singleton or void.
- a jump to the four level in a new suit shows a good five-card side suit.

With no shortness:

- a jump to game in the major shows a minimum opening.
- 3NT shows a medium-strength hand (about 15-17).
- a rebid of the major at the three level shows a maximum

JACOBY 2NT

For example, suppose we are West and the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
?			

♠ K Q 8 6 2 With this hand, we
♥ A J 7 3 rebid 3♦, showing a
♦ 3 singleton or void in
♣ Q 8 2 diamonds. As we
shall see shortly,
this is likely to be the most useful
feature in our hand to help responder
decide whether to pursue a slam.

♠ K J 9 8 4 With this hand, we
♥ 3 jump to 4♣ to show
♦ Q 4 a good five-card
♣ A Q J 7 3 side suit. The term
'good' is a little
vague. A reasonable agreement is a
suit with two of the top three or
three of the top five honors.

Partner will know we have a singleton or void in either hearts or diamonds. We have shown at least five spades and five clubs, leaving room for at most three cards in hearts and diamonds combined. For slam purposes, the second suit offers a potential source of tricks, so it's likely to be of more value than telling partner we have a singleton heart.

♠ A K J 7 3 With a weak five-
♥ K J card side suit, we
♦ Q 8 6 4 2 would rebid 3♣ with
♣ 5 this hand, emphasizing
the singleton
club. Partner can infer we have some
length in hearts and diamonds.

♠ Q J 9 7 4 With no singleton or
♥ K Q 6 void, opener describes
♦ A 6 the strength of the
♣ J 7 3 hand. With a minimum
opening bid, opener
jumps to game, 4♠. This usually
ends the auction unless responder is
still willing to consider slam,
knowing opener has a minimum
hand with no shortness.

♠ A J 9 8 4 With a medium
♥ K 3 strength hand of about
♦ K Q 7 4 15-17 points and no
♣ Q 6 singleton or void,
opener rebids 3NT.

The reason opener didn't start with 1NT is because the hand is only semi-balanced with two doubletons. Opener's extra strength might get responder to consider slam.

♠ A Q J 8 6 2 With a maximum
♥ A K hand of about 18
♦ 9 4 3 or more points, we
♣ K 8 rebid the major suit,
3♠. We're telling

responder we don't have a singleton or void but there's likely enough combined strength to consider getting to slam anyway. We're also leaving room to explore without getting to high.

After opener's descriptive rebid, the next move is up to responder.

If Opener Shows Shortness

When opener shows a singleton or void, responder considers whether this is a good thing or a bad thing for the partnership's slam prospects.

Understanding the concept of wasted values is a key to good slam bidding.

Let's look at various hands where opener has a singleton diamond and see how the auction might go.

WEST		EAST	
♠ A K J 8 5		♠ Q 10 7 3	
♥ K 6 3		♥ A J 2	
♦ 8		♦ K Q 7 5	
♣ A 9 7 3		♣ Q 4	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

After West opens 1♠ and East uses the Jacoby 2NT response, West bids 3♦, showing a singleton or void in diamonds. That is not good news for East. The ♦K and ♦Q are not likely to be of much use. East-West will have to lose a diamond trick despite West's singleton and East's 5 high-card points in the suit.

So, East simply jumps to 4♠, showing no interest in reaching slam. West has a good hand, but not enough to override East's decision. 4♠ is a good spot since a 6♠ slam has almost no chance. The defenders should get the ♦A and a club trick.

Notice that even though the ♦K-Q can be developed into a trick or two, that is not much help. West can't discard enough clubs on the diamonds to avoid a club loser. The ♦K-Q are essentially wasted values.

If we move East ♦K and ♦Q to different suits, the situation is quite different after West shows the singleton diamond:

WEST	EAST
♠ A K J 8 5	♠ Q 10 7 3
♥ K 6 3	♥ A Q J 2
♦ 8	♦ 7 5 4 2
♣ A 9 7 3	♣ K Q

None of East's high cards are wasted. Although the partnership has no high cards in diamonds, it won't lose more than one trick in the suit because of West's singleton.

Being short in diamonds, West will have length in hearts and clubs, so East's high cards in those suits are certain to be useful. East will want to move toward slam, perhaps making a cuebid of 3♥ to show some interest, or going straight to 4NT.

We'll leave a detailed discussion of slam bidding methods for another time. The point is to recognize when the hands fit well together. Although West's hand is the same as before, 6♠ is now an excellent contract. The defenders will get only one diamond trick...and only if they take it right away!

Let's keep the West hand the same but change the East hand again: East has two fewer high-card points,

WEST	EAST
♠ A K J 8 5	♠ Q 10 7 3
♥ K 6 3	♥ Q J 2
♦ 8	♦ A 5 4 2
♣ A 9 7 3	♣ K 4

but the ♦A opposite West's singleton guarantees there are no losers in that suit. So, the auction might go:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

East doesn't want to jump to 4♠ and give up on slam, so East simply bids 3♠ to give West an opportunity to show interest. With a good hand, West could ask for aces using the Blackwood convention and then take the partnership to slam when only one ace is missing.

6♠ can be made by trumping two club losers in the East hand. The only trick lost is the ♥A.

If West had a minimum hand after East showed slam interest with the 3♠ bid, West could simply bid 4♠, showing nothing extra. The partnership would stop safely in game.

So, when opener shows shortness after the Jacoby 2NT bid, responder decides whether to stop in game, bid slam, or invite slam based on how well the hands seem to fit together.

If Opener Shows a Second Five-Card Suit

When opener shows a second suit, responder can also decide whether this makes slam appealing. Suppose these are the combined hands:

WEST	EAST
♠ 6 2	♠ A 8 5
♥ A J 8 5 2	♥ K 10 6 3
♦ 5	♦ A 7 6 2
♣ A Q 10 7 3	♣ K 4

The auction might go:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♥	All Pass

Once East finds out that West has a good five-card club suit, slam looks possible. East can anticipate that there won't be many losers in 6♥ and, after checking for aces, bids the good slam.

Slam could go down, but it could also make an overtrick. Not bad on 25 combined high-card points.

If Opener Shows Strength

If opener has no shortness, the decision on whether to bid slam is typically based on combined strength rather than distribution. Suppose these are our combined hands:

WEST	EAST
♠ Q J 4	♠ K 9 2
♥ K J 9 6 5	♥ A Q 8 3
♦ J 7 4	♦ Q 8
♣ A 8	♣ K Q 7 2

The auction might go:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

East has a good hand for the 2NT response but West shows a minimum by jumping to 4♥. East has no reason to get the partnership higher. Even the five level is too high since the opponents can take the ♠A and ♦A-K.

If opener shows a medium-strength hand, responder will usually move toward slam. For example:

WEST	EAST
♠ J 4	♠ K 9 2
♥ K J 9 6 5	♥ A Q 8 3
♦ A K 7 4	♦ Q 8
♣ A 8	♣ K Q 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

After West shows about 15-17 points, East makes an invitational jump to 5♥ and West accepts. Not very scientific, but it gets the job done. 6♥ is a good contract which will only go down if a spade is led and both the ♠A and ♠Q are unfavorably placed.

When opener shows a maximum, the partnership will usually be headed for slam or grand slam.

WEST	EAST
♠ A 4	♠ K 9 2
♥ K 10 7 6 5 4	♥ A Q 8 3
♦ A K 7	♦ Q 8
♣ A 8	♣ K Q 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	7♥	All Pass

So, Jacoby 2NT is a useful tool if the partnership follows up successfully. ♠