

Lesson 3 – Opening Bids - Very Strong Hands

2♣: This opening bid is an *artificial bid* telling your partner that you have **22+ points**. It has nothing to do with the club suit. In fact, you could have absolutely no clubs in your hand. **2♣ is a “demand” bid.** Your partner **MUST** respond unless there is an intervening bid by opponent! **2♣** must be the first bid of the game to have this meaning.



Responding to Partner’s Opening Bid of 2♣:

Ask a group of bridge players how they respond to a **2♣** opening bid, and you are likely to get a variety of answers, many of them codes (artificial bids). I recommend the following responses as they are relatively simple to learn: two responses only, both artificial bids (nothing to do with the suit bid).

With 3 points or more, bid 2♦ which simply means **“Waiting.”** You are saying, “I’m waiting for you, Partner, to further describe your hand by indicating your best suit.” Partner will then know that there are enough points for game and the bidding should continue until game is reached in a major or No Trump. Both need to be aware that game may not be attainable in a minor (29 points recommended). When Opener rebids after a **2♦** response from partner, I recommend a bid of **2♥**, **2♠**, **3♣** or **3♦** to indicate 5 of a suit. Otherwise, use **2 NT** to indicate a balanced hand and no 5-card suit. Responder still has a chance to show a 4-card major with the next bid at the 3 level so a fit can be found in a major if Opener has a 4-card major also.

With fewer than 3 points, bid 2♥ (another artificial bid) which means a “bust” hand. Depending on how formal your bridge group is, this bid should be alerted. When Responder bids **2♥**, Opener would immediately say, “Alert” and/or put the Alert card on the table. At that point, the next opponent to bid could ask what it meant and Opener would say that it means few points. Opener will know that you cannot be depended on for much support. If Opener has the minimum 22 points, the hands may not be strong enough to reach game so a partscore may be the most that can be achieved. If Opener has more than 22 points, game may be there still. Much of this requires judgment. By responding **2♥**, you are saying, “It’s all up to you, Partner. I don’t have much to offer.”

Very Important! If any player opened the bidding and the opponent overcalled **2♣**, that does not mean a strong hand and it is not an artificial bid. It is simply an overcall indicating a good club suit. In order to have the meaning of a very strong hand, **2♣** must be an opening bid, the first bid other than Pass.

2 No Trump:

With **20-21 points** and a balanced hand (no voids, no singletons and no more than one doubleton), open with **2 NT**.



Responding to a 2 No Trump Opening Bid:

“The Easy Way” - Simplified response when not using Stayman or Jacoby:

With less than 4 points, pass.

With 4 or more points and a balanced hand, bid **3 NT**.

With 4 or more points and a 5-card major, bid the major at the 3 Level.

“The S & J Way” – Using Stayman and Jacoby:

Again, both players must be on high alert. All 3-level bids are now “codes,” just as the 2-level bids were codes after a 1NT opening bid. Responder can use Stayman and Jacoby in the same way as after a 1 No Trump opening bid. However, Responder does not need the minimum of 8 points now to use Stayman; 5 or 6 points are enough to take the partnership to game in a major or NT.

Therefore using S & J, after opening **2 NT**, all of the 3 Level bids by partner are artificial, as follows: **3♣** means Stayman asking for a 4-card major; **3♦** means transfer to Hearts, **3♥** means transfer to Spades.

You and your partner must be very clear on which method you are using, whether you are using these conventions or just bidding your suit.

If you have 6 cards or more in a minor, it is often better to just bid 3NT. If you have at least 9 points and a long minor, usually you would be able to bid to Game (**5♣** or **5♦**). Judgment and experience is needed when deciding between game in a minor at the 5 level or NT at the 3 level when responder has a weak, unbalanced hand. Remember, you can lose only 2 tricks to make game contract in a minor whereas in 3NT, you need to take just 9 tricks and can lose 4 tricks, but you will get a higher score in 3NT if it is makeable.

22+ HCPs and a balanced hand:

With **22-24 points and a balanced hand**, open **2♣** and then rebid **2 NT**.

With **25+ points and a balanced hand**, open **2♣** and then rebid **3 NT**.

Option: With 25+ points and a balanced hand, simply open **3 NT** if you have stoppers in every suit.