

Weak Twos and Responses

Why play Weak Twos?

The way that many of us learned to play bridge had any opening 2-level bid as strong.

However, hands which crop up, suitable for a strong two opener, are not very common. Therefore, far better systems for using those 2-level opening bids have been developed. They are so much better and more successful than the old strong two system that they are universally taught now; the strong two system has been more or less abandoned.

If you use No Fear Bridge, or get taught the EBU Beginners course, you'll find that weak twos are there from the outset.

Weak twos are a fantastic weapon to make life difficult for the opposition, and they crop up quite a lot. So- if you're still attached to strong twos, you are handicapping your bridge needlessly – make the change!

This lesson will tell you how. You might already have studied Weak Twos in the Improvers course, so if you're already playing weak twos, this lesson should help you use them better.

There are two main systems you will come across: Acol with 3 weak twos, where opening bids of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ are all weak twos. This is the system we are teaching here.

As we no longer have opening bids of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ as strong, we use other bids to show strong hands. For strong balanced hands of 20-22 points, we open 2NT. For other very strong hands (23+ balanced, or a strong hand based on a suit/shape), we open 2♣. We will cover those later in this course (Lessons 30 and 31)

The other common system you might have come across is Benji Acol, where opening two level bids are weak bids only in the majors, and opening bids of 2♣ and 2♦ are used for various strong hands. Benji Acol is fine, and quite popular- if you play that, then that's OK. But I won't say any more about that here.

What is a Weak Two opening bid?

It is an opening bid of two of a suit, with a 6-card suit, and a hand *too weak* to open at the 1 level.

You will need 5-10 high card points non-vulnerable, or 6-10 high card points vulnerable, and at least one of the A, K, or Q of the bid suit.

You will want a better suit if you're vulnerable; you can be a bit bolder if non-vulnerable.

Obviously, you and your partner will need to have agreed you are playing weak twos.

Example

♠A J 9 6 4 2 ♥3 ♦Q 10 3 ♣7 6 2 perfect to open 2♠

You only have 7 HCP but see how difficult life is now for the opposition to get into the bidding! They might well have game-going strength between them, but it's going to be hard for them to find out and locate their possible fit.

But

♠7 6 2 ♥3 ♦Q 10 3 ♣A J 9 6 4 2

Exactly the same hand, but with clubs and spades swapped round.

This time you can't bid 2♣, as this has a different meaning, so you have to pass.

If your hand is good enough to open at the 1 level, eg if it's a "rule of 20" light opener, it's better to open at the 1 level. For example, you are dealer and hold ♠A 6 ♥A K 5 4 3 2 ♦9 6 5 3 ♣5. You have 11 HCP, and a hand good enough to open at the 1 level. Open 1♥, not 2♥. You are too strong for 2♥, and if you bid it your partner will take you as weaker, and you might miss a game contract.

If your 6-card suit isn't good enough for a weak two, better to pass.

Here, for example, you are missing all 3 top honours in ♥

♠A 6 ♥J 8 5 4 3 2 ♦Q 6 5 3 ♣5

Beware of "new system enthusiasm". There's a risk when you introduce a new system into your bidding, you might overuse it – ie bid it when it doesn't match the hand you hold.

How do you defend against opponents who bid a weak two?

It's difficult- but then that's the whole point of the weak two!

In general, defend the same way as you would against them opening one of a suit, except you must take into account that you're a level higher, so need to be a bit more cautious.

You should agree with your partner that **X** of a weak two is for take-out. Partner will bid his/her best suit, except in the rare occasion when he/she has a good holding in the opener's weak two suit, when PASS converts the take-out to a penalty double. If you overcall opposition's Weak Two with 2NT, show are showing a strong hand (16+ HCP) and a stop in opponent's suit.

How do you respond if partner opens a weak two?

You can bid naturally, especially supporting partner's suit if you have some values in it, say two including an honour, or three +. You know partner has 6 cards in her suit.

But if you have a good hand, of 15 points or more, you might have values for game if partner is at the top of the range for her weak two opener, but not if partner is low end of the range. The weak two opener disrupts the opposition with its pre-emptive value, but you don't want it to pre-empt you and partner out of finding your best contract!

When we have a good hand and partner has opened a weak two, we want to avoid the need to make a guess about partner's strength in her weak two range.

There is a brilliant convention, called **OGUST**, which solves the problem, and I strongly recommend you add it to your bidding system. We don't add a whole lot of new conventions in this Intermediate course, and this is one of the few we do. It's a great feature to have when you've agreed you're playing weak twos. It is to bid 2NT in response to partner's weak two opener. This is a conventional bid, the OGUST 2NT, which has a very specific meaning: "Partner, please tell me more about your hand".

So you've opened a weak two, say 2♥ for example, and partner has bid 2NT, asking you for more information about your hand.

What do you bid now?

There are two aspects of your hand that are of interest-

- Where you are in the points range for your weak two opener
- How good is your 6-card suit

And with one bid you can convey all that information! Let's see how.

The replies to the OGUST 2NT are very specific: consider your HCP first of all.

If you are low end of the points range, bid 3 of a minor (lower ranking suits ♣ / ♦ = low points)

If you are at high end of the points range, bid 3 of a major (higher ranking suits, ♥ / ♠ = high points)

But which minor, which major? Now consider how good your SUIT is.

If you hold only 1 of the top 3 honours, bid the lower ranking of the two suits.

If you hold 2 of the top 3 honours, bid the higher ranking of the two suits.

If (rare!) you hold AKQ in your suit, you have at least 9 points, and you bid 3NT. This is **not** an attempt to play in 3NT – it says “I have high range points for my two level weak opener, and all 3 top honours.”

So, after you open a weak two, and partner responds 2NT, your next bid means

- 3♣ – I am low in the points range, and have only 1 of AKQ in my suit
- 3♦ – I am low in the points range, but have 2 of AKQ in my suit
- 3♥ – I am upper end of the points range, but hold only 1 of AKQ of my suit
- 3♠ – I am upper end of the points range, and hold 2 of AKQ of my suit
- 3NT – I have AKQ in my suit (and by definition 9+ points)

These bids always apply, irrespective of which suit your opening weak two was in.

Partner will now be able to judge the right level of contract to play in, in your suit. You will be declarer, because you’ll be playing in the suit you opened with.

Example of the power of the weak two opener:

South is dealer

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

Playing weak twos, South opens 2♠. West passed, and North increased the disruptive effect of South’s Weak Two by raising to game. East-West had no idea whether he was bidding to make or to spoil, and neither made a bid. Can you see what they would have been able to make, if NS had not been playing weak twos? East-West could have bid and made 12 tricks - a Small Slam - with either ♥ or ♣ as trumps!

The 4♠ contract can be defeated, but it requires brilliant defence. In practice, it will almost always make.

This is a common scenario. Players playing weak twos will shut the opposition out of finding their contract. Playing strong twos, they have to pass, and the opposition have a free run to bid, find their fit, and bid and make game or even slam.

