

# Pre-empts and Weak Twos

## Opening at the 3 level

### When bad is good

Take a look at this hand:

7 KQ109754 J75 54

By no means can it be called a good hand. Of course, it has a fine heart suit, but it has no support for spades or clubs, only weak support for diamonds, and a grand total of only 6 HCPs.

But hands like this do have a value. It's value lies in the ability to disrupt the opponents, whose hands may be quite better, and they may have a good fit in spades.

How you disrupt with this hand is that you make an opening bid 3 hearts. When you open the bidding at this high level, the opponents have lost all of the lower bidding levels to discuss their hands. You have preempted their bidding space. They will have to find their fit, if any, and decide how high to bid in a very short space. They may bid too high, they may bid too low, they may find the wrong contract - - all because you used up their space.

When you open at the 3 level, you are said to have made a preemptive opening bid, and your hand is a preemptive hand. Your whole purpose is to sabotage the opponent. We will talk in a minute about the effect it may have on your own partner.

### Requirements for a preempt

- a 7-card suit with a couple honors
- no more than 9 HCPs (even 9 may be just a little too strong.)

I have not stated a lower limit. Partners have different styles. My partners seem

sometimes alarmed when I lay down only 3 HCPs, but they just have to get used to it.

QJ109643 52 4 963

Open this hand 3 spades. But this is about the lower limit of strength you want to have.

## When partner preempts

So what are you supposed to do when your partner opens at the 3 level? By far the most frequent thing you do is pass. Partner has obstructed, so just stand back and let partner's bid do its magic.

Sometimes you have a total void in partner's suit. This will probably worry you. But just hold your seat. The opponents are probably worried that your side is stealing from them, so they frequently bid. If they don't bid, they still may not double your partner. If they do, partner may not go set in a harmful way. Don't try to save your partner. Most likely you will only make it worse. Saving can sometimes be accomplished by experienced players. Until you are one of them, just leave all the saving to Jesus.

Sometimes partner preempts and you have a good hand. My question to you is, just how good is good?

**In order to take a progressive step when partner has preempted, you need about 16 points.**

When you do have 16 or more points, you probably want to put partner in game at the 4 level in their suit, if it is a major suit. If their suit is a minor, consider 3NT.

Now consider that you have this hand when partner has opened 3 hearts:

84 A753 J753 K43

Partner is weak with 7 hearts. You are weak with 4 hearts. In all likelihood, one of your opponents is void in hearts. If you defend, you probably won't even win your ace of hearts. What tricks will you win? Maybe the king of clubs. Partner won't have more than 1 winner either. Even if you do win the ace of hearts, your side will not likely win any more than 3 tricks, so the opponents can probably make 4 spades. If they do, they will score a game, and attain all the advantages of doing so. So don't let them. Raise partner immediately to 5 hearts, making the preempt even higher and more difficult. Your side will get doubled and go down a trick or two. The result will probably not be as bad as letting them play 4 spades.

pard	opp	you	opp
3♥	P	5♥	?

How would you like to be the opponent who has to take his side's first bid at the this high level of bidding? Very uncomfortable.

### Opening bids at the 4 level

When the long suit you have in your weak hand is 8 cards long, open at the 4 level.

8 75 J6 AJ987542

Sometimes your hand can be better than this if you have a major suit:

AK1086543 ---- Q1075 6

If partner has one spade and the king of diamonds, you may make 4 spades. He may have other hands, too, that will give you a play for it, even if he is weak. In that case, you are in the right spot. If it doesn't make, you have almost certainly stole the hand from your opponents.

### Weak Two Bids

Opening bids of 2 spades, 2 hearts, and 2 diamonds are all weak two bids. Here are the requirements to open your hand at the two level:

- a 6 card suit with 2 of the top 5 honors
- a point count within the range of 5 to 10 HCPs.

K109754 A3 J864 3

Open the bidding at 2 spades.

75 864 AK9875 84

Open the bidding at 2 diamonds.

8632 QJ10863 K7 4

Open the bidding at 2 hearts.

Notice that the opening bid of 2 clubs is not a weak two bid. Sometimes you will be dealt a hand of extraordinary strength. We are reserving the opening bid of 2 clubs to show any really strong hand. For now, don't worry about it.

### When partner opens a weak two

When partner opens a weak two bid, the situation is very similar to when he opens a preemptive bid.

- Frequently you pass
- With 16 HCPs, consider game (most probably in partner's major suit, or 3NT if a minor)
- Don't try to save partner

But weak two bids also allow room for a couple more variations.

### Golden Rule of Weak Twos

**With 3 or more cards in partner's suit you will always raise at least to 3 of the suit.**

Why do we have the Golden Rule of Weak Twos? There are 2 main reasons. First, we can extend the preempt to a higher level. remember that we open at the 3 level even with only a 7 card suit. When partner opens a weak two and we have 3 of that suit, then we have 9 total trump, so we can afford to preempt just a little bit higher.

The second reason to raise the weak two bid is to let partner know what we have in his suit. Presuming that your side goes on defense, partner will want to know where all the missing cards in his suit are. If we raise to say that we have 3 or more, then partner knows. If, instead, we do not raise partner's suit, then we have told partner that we have 2 or less of his suit. This information may turn out to be very useful.

### The 2NT Feature Ask

Partner's point count when he opens a weak two bid is from 5 to 10. Let's say that we have a nice 14 point hand with 3 or 4 cards in partner's suit. If partner has a 10 point hand, we might be able to bid and make a game in his suit. But if partner has only 5 or 6 points, then we will know to forget about game.

There is a bid that will allow us to learn whether partner has a minimum weak two bid (5 to 8 points), and when he has a strong weak two bid (9 or 10 points). The bid we use is 2NT. We are not saying we want to play 2NT. Instead, we are asking partner if he has a strong weak two.

If partner has a minimum weak two bid (5 to 8), then he just rebids his suit at the 3 level. But if partner has 9 or 10 points, he will bid a "feature". A feature is an ace or a king in a side suit. When the weak two bidder answers our 2NT bid with a new suit, he is showing 9 or 10 points plus a high honor in the new suit.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	P	3♥	

You have no interest in game. Partner has no idea what you have, except he knows that you have 3 or more hearts.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	P	P	

Partner knows you are content with how things are and that you have 2 hearts, at most.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	P	2NT	P
3♥			

You have some ambition to bid higher, but pard had told you that his point count is limited to 5 to 8 points.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	P	2NT	P
3♣			

You have some ambition to bid higher, and partner has told you he has 9 or 10 points, plus he has a high honor in the club suit.

### Final Observations

1. The preemptor never bids again unless his partner forces him to do so.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	2♠	dbl	

The preemptor must pass. He told partner what he had, so now partner is in control.

2. New suits by partner are forcing.

pard	opp	you	opp
2♥	P	2♠	P

Your 2 spade bid is absolutely forcing and partner may not pass. You will have a good hand and, among other things, you are looking for spades in partner's hand. You have at least 5 spades. Partner will raise you with 3 spades, bid 2NT with 2 spades, or bid a feature with a better hand.