

# Opening and Responding to 2♣

## By Neil H Timm

### Guidelines for Opening 2♣

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, the bid of 2♣ is artificial showing a strong game-forcing hand that will play in either a suit or notrump. What are the requirements for opening a hand 2♣?

- (1) Hands with 22+ HCP. However, you may open with fewer points if you have a long, strong suit. And even if you have 22+ points, unbalanced and very distributional hands may not be opened 2♣ since they may be too difficult to rebid, you do not want to force to game, or you have soft values.
- (2) When playing in a suit contract, a good 5+ card major or a 6+-card minor suit.
- (3) A suit hand that contains at least 4 quick tricks and no more than 4 losers (no more than 4-losers using Losing Trick Count).
- (4) When playing in notrump, a hand with 8 ½ or 9 quick tricks.

### Evaluating your hand

♠AK8 ♥AKQJ107 ♦7 ♣AK5

Open 2♣, this hand has 24 HCP, 10 playing tricks and 3 losers.

♠AKQ1063 ♥Void ♦KQJ10 ♣A63

Open 2♣, this hand has a long suit with 19 HCP, 4+ quick tricks and 3 losers

♠AKJ ♥AKQ ♦AQ57 ♣7

Open 1♦, even with 23 HCP it is too distributional.

♠KJ8 ♥AQ10 ♦AKQJ ♣AKQ

Open 2♣, this is balanced hand with 29 HCP and 3 losers.

♠QJ ♥AQ10642 ♦KQJ ♣AQ

Open 1♥, this hand has 21 HCP with soft values and does not have 4 quick tricks

### Responding to 2♣

There are many systems one may play responding to the bid of two clubs playing the 2/1 Game Force System. Before I discuss my preferred approach, let me tell you what not to do. **First and foremost to not show points** (often communicated in steps) or controls because partner needs room to show his hand! The responses I recommend follow.

2♥\*: this is a so-called **Super Negative**, it promises less than 6 high card points with no

Ace or King. However, with an Ace or a King in any suit, the responder is required to bid 2♦ (must alert the bid of 2♥).

**Note:** If they interfere, most play that a pass (Dop1) shows values (A/K) and or double shows no (zero) A/K. However, some play this in reverse where a double shows A/K and is for penalty and a pass shows the lack of values. Must discuss with your partner.

2♦: this is a **Waiting Bid**, the bid promises at least an Ace or King (need not alert).

**Note:** Some use the bid to show 6+ HCP, any combination of Jacks or Queens or at least an Ace/King. Must again review the bid with your partner.

2♠/3♣/3♦: this response is a **Positive Response** and shows a **6-card** plus Spade suit headed by two of the top three honors: Ace-King, King-Queen, or Ace-Queen. Your hand is very distributional and you want to play in the suit bid (often have a void/singleton).

**Note:** Some only require a 5-card suit (then suit or notrump may be an option).

2NT: this response is a **Positive Response** and shows a **6-card** heart suit headed by two of the top three honors: Ace-King, King-Queen, or Ace-Queen. Again you want to play in hearts; your hand is very distributional (often have a void/singleton).

**Note:** Some only require a 5-card suit (then suit or notrump may be an option)

### **Opener's rebids over 2♣-2♥\* (negative)**

Over responders' negative bid, opener can sign off in 2NT/3NT or bid three of a suit as natural and non-forcing.

**To make a forcing bid** over 2♥\* one bids 2♠\* as a relay to 2NT and the signs off in his suit at the three level; partner can now raise with a fit. After the bid of 2♠\*, instead of bidding 2NT, responder may bid his own 6-card suit.

### **Opener's rebids over 2♣-2♦ (positive)**

When partner bids a suit, your first priority is to raise partner with 3-card support or to bid our own suit if it contains 5+ cards.

Over the sequence, 2♣-2♦-2♥/2♠-?

2NT	no support and no 5+-card major suit bid
3♣/3♦	no support 5-card suit
3♥/3♠	shows 3-card trumps support for bid suit (forward going)
3NT	2-card support
4♥/4♠	shows 4-card trumps support for suit bid suit (fast arrival)

Over the sequence, 2♣-2♦-3♣/3♦-?

3♥/3♠	5/6 card major suit
3NT	support with stoppers (no slam interest)
4♣/4♦	minorwood for bid minor
4NT	Quantitative
5♣/5♦	sign-off (fast arrival)

### Responding to 2♣ with a balanced hand (point ranges - steps of 3) after 2♦/2♥\*

Points	Bid
22-24	2NT

After bidding 2♥\*, responder may pass (0-2 HCP) or bid 3♣ as double negative with 3- 6 HCP. Opener will play in notrump or a suit contract in game.

25-27	3NT
28-30	4NT
31-33	5NT
34-36	6NT
37+	7NT

Remember that a balanced hand needs 34 points for a small slam and 37 points for a grand slam. With a good eight cards or longer suit fit, those points may be reduced by one or two points as long as one has aces and kings.

After a No Trump rebid by the opener (up to the 2/3/4-level), responder has the possibility of employing the Jacoby Transfer bids to either Major suit, but not to the Minor.

It becomes a matter of partnership agreement at what level of bidding Transfer bids or the Stayman convention are employed. Gerber or Super Gerber may be played over 3NT or 4NT, respectively. Many play Gerber and transfers over 3NT; however, I prefer to use 4♣ as Stayman, 4♦/4♥ as transfers and 4NT as invitational.

### Transfers weak distributional hands

The bids 2♣ -3♣ is a transfer to play in 7-card minor (diamonds or clubs), and 2♣-3♦/3♥ are transfers to 7-card suits (hearts and spades) with 0-3 HCP.

### Final Comments

1. After you're bid of 2♦ try to bid your 5-card suit.
2. The 2♣ bidders should try to show a 5-card suit.
3. A jump to game by opener/responder after 2♣ is a shutout bid.
4. Cue bids after suit agreement show first or second round controls.

There are many other systems one may play when opening 2♣. Another popular system is Kokish Relays (developed by Eric Kokish, a Canadian expert). The system is used to

show strong balanced hands. A puppet relay bid is used for suit contracts. Why learn it, because with strong balanced hands, the bidding auction over 2♦ does not start until the opening bidder bids 3NT or 4NT which takes up too much bidding space. Kokish Relays solve this problem.