

*DEFINITION*

**Opening 2♣**

Shows 23+ HCPs.

**Forcing to game**, with one exception:

2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - pass (0-2HCP)

**Responding to 2♣ opening bid.**

Responder's first bid shows HCP:

0-7 HCPs = 2♦

Ace and king/8+HCPs = positive response: with 3+ in partner's suit, bid that suit otherwise bid 5-card suit or 2NT if balanced.

There is a "second negative" bid available of 2NT (alertable) showing 0-2HCPs.

(see red book page 126)

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**Balanced hand opening bids and rebids**

12-14	1NT
15-16	1 of a suit, rebid NTs at lowest level - 1NT or 2NT depending on partner's bid.
17-18	1 of a suit, rebid NTs with a jump - 2NT or 3NT depending on partner's bid.
19	1 of a suit, rebid 3NT
20-22	2NT
23-24	2♣, rebid 2NT
25-27	2♣, rebid 3NT
28-30	2♣, rebid 4NT

## The Opening Bid : 2♣ and responses

### 1. Opening 2♣

Following our previous sessions, you know how to open any balanced hand of between 12 and 22 HCPs:

$$12-14 = 1NT \quad 20-22 = 2NT$$

in between = open 1 of a suit and rebid NTs at a level to show your HCPs.

Very occasionally you get a balanced hand that's too strong even for a 2NT opening. With 23+ HCPs and a **balanced** hand you open 'stop' 2♣ and rebid NTs at a level to show your HCPs (see the table in the sidebar).

With 23+ HCPs and an **unbalanced** hand you open 'stop' 2♣ and rebid your 5-card suit. More of this later in this handout. Last week we looked at how to handle an unbalanced hand with 20-22HCPs.

The 2♣ opening bid is a conventional bid – it is artificial – it doesn't mean what it says on the bidding card. Therefore partner should 'alert' the bid.

**The opening bid of 2♣ is forcing – your partner has to bid even with 0 HCPs.**

### 2. Responding to an Opening 2♣

**The opening bid of 2♣ is forcing – you have to bid.** Given partner has so many HCPs, quite often you will have very few.

If you have less than 8HCPs, your first response is 2♦. There is some stretch in that 8HCPs – if you have an ace and a king you would NOT bid 2♦ even though you have only 7HCPs. And if your HCPs are all in queens and jacks you may have as many as 9HCPs and still bid 2♦.

2♦ is another conventional bid. It has nothing to do with diamonds. So it also needs to be alerted. You may hear it referred to as a negative response. This is significant because you are saying "partner, I don't think slam is on".

Imagine the bidding so far has gone:

Opener: 'stop' 2♣ - Responder: 'alert' 2♦ - Opener: 'alert'

Now if opener has a balanced hand s/he will bid NTs at a level to show HCPs, eg: 2NT = 23-24HCPs.

<p style="color: red;">If opener's rebid is 2NT, responder can pass.</p> <p style="color: red;">This is the only time that following a 2♣ opening bid responder can pass.</p> <p style="color: red;">Otherwise, a 2♣ opening bid is <b>GAME forcing</b>.</p>	<p>But just because you can doesn't mean you should! Remember, opener has 23 or 24 HCPs. As responder you only need 2HCPs for your partnership to be in a NTs game, and if you have a long major suit game in that suit may be possible on 0 HCPs.</p>
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NB: *Beware of thinking a long minor suit is enough to bid 3NTs, though! The long minor suit will be no use if you can't get to the hand to play it.*

We respond to a 2NT rebid by opener just as if partner has opened 2NT, but remembering that partner has 23 or 24 HCPs. So:

2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♣ = stayman, and  
 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3NT = no 4-card major, balanced hand 3 - 7HCPs.

Similarly, if the bidding is 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT, showing opener has a balanced hand of 25 -27HCPs, responder bids as over 2NT but obviously the bid has to be at the 4-level. So:

2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT - 4♣ = stayman.

<p>If Opener has an unbalanced hand s/he won't rebid NTs. The opener's second bid will therefore be showing you a 5-card (or more) suit:</p> <p>2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ = at least 5 cards in spades.</p> <p>With a really weak hand of 0 – 2 HCPs, responder can bid 2NT on the second round. It's called a <b>second negative</b> and needs alerting because it's not a natural bid.</p>	<p>It's important to remember that you must keep bidding at least until game is reached.</p> <p style="color: red;">A 2♣ opening followed by a suit rebid is forcing to game.</p> <p>Responder must keep bidding no matter how awful their hand is. For example:</p> <p>2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♥ - responder must bid even with 0HCPs so either 3♠ or 4♥</p>
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If responder has 3-7HCPs, the second negative bid of 2NT will not be used. If responder has 3 cards in opener's suit, responder will support the suit as the 3 cards will make the 8-card fit we seek. With less than 3 cards, responder will follow the usual responder rules of bidding their own 5-card suit or the cheapest bid of two 4-card suits.

Previously in this handout we have looked at the most usual situations following a 2♣ opening bid. That is, responder gives a negative response and sometimes two negative responses.

But occasionally responder may find that they have more than 7 HCPs.

If you are responder and you have 8 or more HCPs you won't be using the negative response of 2♦.

- If you have a balanced hand you will bid 2NT as your first response;
- If you have a good 5-card suit you would bid the suit
- And with a strong solid suit of at least 6 cards you would jump bid to give a clear message to partner that that suit should be trumps.

After a positive response to a 2♣ opening you really are in a position to explore whether or not a slam is on. We will look at cue bidding and the Blackwood convention of slam bidding next week.

**RESPONDING TO A 2♣ OPENING**

Responder's first bid shows his strength. The requirements for a positive are similar to those over a two-bid.

Responder should not strain to give a positive on dubious hands; he can bid up later having limited the hand initially. A 2♦ bid does not deny values; it denies the ability to make a positive response. In particular, queens and jacks are often not so valuable, so a negative response can be as many as 9 HCP.

Initial suit responses show a sound 5-card or longer suit. No trump bids show fairly balanced hands but can include 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-2-2 hands with weak 5-card suits. After a suit response, the auction proceeds naturally with cue bidding once a suit is agreed.

**summary of responses to two clubs**

2♦	0–7 HCP (0–9 if all queens and jacks). Any distribution.
2♥/2♠	Values for a positive. 5+ card suit normally with two honours or extra length.
2NT	8+ HCP balanced or 4-4-4-1 or any weak 5-card suit
3♣/3♦	Values for a positive. 5+ card suit with 2+ honours or extra length.
3♥/3♠	A long, one-loser suit, say K Q J 10 9 7 4, which could play opposite a void.
3NT & up	Not used as they take up too much bidding space.

69

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# Responding to an opening 2♣ bid



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STANDARD ENGLISH

ONLY a few times each year are we dealt an amazingly strong hand – so strong that we expect to make game, even if our partner is very, very weak. Naturally we want to let partner know the good news. In return we want partner to tell us about the few bits and pieces he has in his hand. We use an opening bid of 2♣ to convey the good news and to ask a question. 2♣ says nothing about opener's clubs, it just says: 'I have a great hand and we are going to game and possibly even to slam. Tell me about your hand.'

After partner has opened 2♣, you must reply even if holding no high cards at all. So responding to 2♣ may show no enthusiasm, no points, not even a long suit. But however poor the hand you have been dealt as responder, **you must not pass a 2♣ opening** – remember, opener may not have any clubs at all, just a very strong hand. With a poor hand that does not include useful high cards, responder bids 2♦ and that can lead to the only sequence which is not forcing to game: 2♣ – 2♦ – 2NT.

If opener rebids 2NT over responder's 2♦, it shows 23-24 points, a bit stronger than a 2NT opening bid. With 0-2 points, responder can pass 2NT, but must find another bid with 3 or more points. In response to the 2NT rebid, the bidding continues just as though 2NT had been the opening bid. So 3♣ over a 2NT rebid is Stayman, you can play transfers if that is

your normal system and a raise to 3NT probably has one useful card.

### Responses to an opening 2♣

See table below.

### Practise replying to partner's 2♣ opening

(1) ♠ 4 3 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ 8 6 4 3 2	(2) ♠ A Q 4 3 2 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ 8 3
(3) ♠ J 5 4 3 2 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ Q J 8 ♣ A 3	(4) ♠ 9 7 6 4 ♥ J 8 7 2 ♦ J 6 ♣ Q J 3
(5) ♠ 9 7 ♥ Q 10 7 2 ♦ A J 8 ♣ A Q 10 9	(6) ♠ 4 2 ♥ K Q J 10 7 2 ♦ 9 8 ♣ K 8 4

(1) Tempting as it is to pass, 2♣ demands that you find a bid. Even with this Yarborough and a feeling that 2♣ is already too high, you must respond 2♦. And if partner rebids 2♥ or 2♠, say 2NT. You

must keep the bidding open till game is reached but 2NT shows a very poor hand.

(2) This hand is well worth the positive response of 2♠. If opener continues with 3♣ or 3♦, bid 3NT. Since partner has a strong hand, you don't need to have stoppers in all the suits to bid 3NT. If partner bids 2NT, bid 3NT and if partner bids 3♥, raise to 4♥. But if partner raises spades, you can bid 4♥ as a cue-bid, showing first- or second-round control in hearts.

(3) With 10 points this hand is worth a positive response. Even though you have five spades, they are not headed by good honours and it is best to treat the spades like a four-card suit. Bid 2NT which is forcing to game. If partner bids 3♣ or 3♦ bid 3♠. If partner bids 3♥, raise to 4♥.

(4) Bid 2♦. If partner now bids a major, raise to game to prevent him looking for a slam. If partner rebids 2NT, bid 3♣ Stayman to see if he has a four-card major.

(5) Bid 2NT. This hand is huge opposite a 2♣ opening. With 13 points, we must be able to make a slam, but start quietly by responding 2NT showing a balanced hand with 8+ points. If you get stuck for a bid, you can always raise partner's suit to slam or bid 6NT. By taking it slowly, you may be able to bid a grand slam with confidence.

(6) Bid 2♥. Whilst you have a great heart suit, partner may have opened 2♣ with a spade/diamond two-suiter and your cards will then be less useful. So take it slowly. Give partner a chance to bid his suit and then you can rebid your hearts. When this hand occurred, the final contract was 7♣. Your hearts proved useless as partner was void, but your clubs enabled spade and diamond losers to be ruffed. □

RESPONSES TO AN OPENING 2♣	
BID	MEANING
2♦	Fewer than 8 points, nothing to do with diamonds.
2♥/2♠/3♠/3♦	A positive response, forcing to game, with a five-card suit headed by two high honours or a longer suit with one top honour.
2NT	8 or more points, fairly balanced. May have a poor five-card suit. May be very strong. Remember you are forced to game.
3♥/3♠/4♠/4♦	A solid suit of at least six cards. Opener should be happy to play in this suit with only one or two small cards in support.
3NT upward	Not used (except 4♣/4♦) as these bids take up too much space.