

# 2/1 T-Walsh

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## INTRODUCTION

This article presents a coherent bidding structure with many elements of modern bidding, including particularly transfer responses to  $1\clubsuit$  and the Gazzilli convention, both of which are not as well-known as they deserve to be, as well as a 2/1 GF structure which does not require the forcing  $1NT$  response.

I do not claim any particular originality, all of the ideas have been invented many times over by various other bridge players. I would like to thank everyone who has shared their bidding methods on the Bridge Base Forums, but I am particularly indebted to Victor Chubukov (who designed this set of responses to  $1\clubsuit$ ), Arend Bayer (who first taught me these responses to  $1\heartsuit/\spadesuit$ ), Han Peters, Justin Lall and Michael Kamil.

This article only covers the openings at the one-level. It is assumed that your two-level openings can cover balanced hands from 20 HCP on upwards and any game-forcing unbalanced hand (or rather, an unbalanced hand worth 22+ points. I consider this a game-force, but if you want to play, say, a Multi which includes a “semi-forcing” in a minor or a strong  $2\clubsuit$  opening which allows for a double negative, feel free to do so). Furthermore, it does not cover passed-hand bidding. You should be able to play the same system over  $1\clubsuit/\diamond$  and  $1NT$  by a passed hand, but you would be well-advised to play something entirely different over  $1\heartsuit/\spadesuit$ .

## Conventions

4441 denotes a hand with exactly 4 spades, 4 hearts, 4 diamonds and 1 club. (4441) denotes any hand with three four-card suits and a singleton. (31)(45) denotes a hand with 3-1 or 1-3 in majors and 4-5 or 5-4 in minors.

Opponents' bids are denoted by parentheses, and a round of bidding is delimited by a semicolon, e. g.  $(1\heartsuit) - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit; 2\spadesuit$  means that the opponents opened  $1\heartsuit$ , we overcalled  $1\spadesuit$  and advanced  $2\clubsuit$ , whereupon overcaller rebid  $2\spadesuit$ , opponents remaining silent after their opening bid.

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## 1 OPENING STRUCTURE

1♣	a) Any 11-13 balanced hand b) Any 17-19 balanced hand c) Any 11-21 unbalanced hands in which clubs are the longest suit d) 11-21 point hands with 4414 or 4144 shape.
1♦	Any unbalanced hand wherein diamonds are the longest suit, or 1444/4441 shape, 11-21 points.
1♥	11-21 points with 5+ hearts. If balanced, 11-13 or 17-18, rarely 19.
1♠	11-21 points with 5+ spades. If balanced, 11-13 or 17-18, rarely 19.
1NT	14-16 HCP balanced. Systematically includes all (5332) hands in range.

I recommend aggressively upgrading 19 HCP hands with a 5-card major to 2NT, or whichever opening shows 20-21 HCP balanced. Whether 1NT can include, say, 6-card minors or (4441)s with a singleton honor is a matter to discuss, but this system is designed to be able to handle them with a 1♣/♦ opening.

One of the goals of this system is to be able to open any hand with 11 HCP, though of course some ugly (4333) hands may be passed. However, you should open any (4432) with 11 HCP 1♣.

As you can see, the 1♣ opening is by far the most common opening in this system.<sup>1</sup> Together with 1.3% of hands which are opened with strong 2-level openings, we open 43.8% of hands, plus preempts of course.

1♣	16.6%
1♦	4.3%
1♥	6.5%
1♠	8.7%
1NT	6.4%

Table 1: Opening frequencies

## 2 THE 1♣ OPENING

11-13 balanced	56.5%
17-19 balanced	12.6%
(4441) shape	12.8%
5+ clubs unbal.	18.1%

Table 2: 1♣ hand-type frequencies

The 1♣ opening shows basically three hand types: the weak NT (11-13), hands which would normally rebid 2NT in a standard system (17-19), or real clubs. Since we open all weak NT hands 1♣, this is what opener has more than half the time (see Table 2). Consequently, responder should stretch to respond on even very weak hands with short clubs, as we do not enjoy playing 3-1 fits, even at the 1-level. QJ9xx in a major and out should be quite enough to respond.

On the other hand, when responder does not hold a 4-card major, he should only bid with a solid holding. With 3334 or (332)5 shape, we pass even holding 6 HCP. The requirements for responding with long diamonds are somewhat

<sup>1</sup>These statistics are based on automated analysis of 10,000,000 random deals.

lower but not quite as low as the requirements for responding in a major.

Here is the complete system of responses:

1♦	4+ hearts, may have a longer minor. 5+ points or good suit.
1♥	4+ spades, may have a longer minor. 5+ points or good suit.
1♠	4+ clubs, 7+ points. Denies a 4-card major.
1NT	7-11 balanced with 5 diamonds or 3343.
2♣	6+ diamonds weak (5-9) or 5+ diamonds FG (13+).
2♦	6+ diamonds invitational (10-12).
2♥	(45) or better in minors, 0-1 hearts, 9-12 or very strong.
2♠	(45) or better in minors, 0-1 spades, 9-12 or very strong.
2NT	Balanced invitational (12-13), denies 4-card major.
3♣	Weak (4-8) with 6+ clubs.
3♦	14-16 balanced.
3♥/♠	As 2♥/♠ but forcing to game (13-16).
3NT	17-18 balanced.

## 2.1 Responding with a 4-card major

With most hands that contain a 4-card or longer major, responder will transfer to the major. Hands that are 4-4 in majors always respond 1♦; hands that are 5-5 or 6-6 in majors should respond 1♥ but may respond 1♦ if they are very weak.

Opener completes the transfer if he has either the weak NT with 2- or 3-card support, or a minimum (11-15) unbalanced hand with 3-card support. With the strong NT and 2- or 3-card support, opener rebids 1NT. With 4-card support, opener raises the major to the 2-level if he is minimum (11-13), raises the major to the 3-level with 17-19 balanced (or possibly some (24)25 shapes in range), splinters with a minimum gameforcing hand (about 16-18), or bids 3♦ with a merely invitational (14-15) or very strong (19-21) unbalanced 4-card raise.

With 3-card support, 6+ clubs and at least invitational strength, opener bids 2NT. With other hands, opener rebids naturally. Here is the complete scheme of rebids:

	Over 1♦ (hearts)	Over 1♥ (spades)
1♥	Weak NT or 11-15 5+♣s 3♥s	–
1♠	Natural 11-17	Weak NT or 11-15 5+♣s 3♠s
1NT	— 17-19 balanced, no 4-card support —	
2♣	— 11-15 unbalanced, 5+ clubs, no 3-card support —	
2♦	— Natural reverse, 16+ —	
2♥	11-13, 4-card heart support	Natural reverse, 16+
2♠	Natural reverse, 18+	11-13, 4-card spade support
2NT	— 6+ clubs, 3-card fit, 15+ points —	
3♣	— 6+ clubs, no 3-card fit, 16-18 points —	
3♦	— 4-card support, unbal., invitational or strong —	
3♥	17-19 balanced, 4-card support	Splinter
3♠	Splinter	17-19 balanced, 4-card support

This leaves a choice for opener with a minimum 4315 or 4306 over a 1♦ response. With 11-13 he should complete the transfer, and with 14-17 he should bid 1♠.

### 2.1.1 After 1♣–1♦; 1♥

With a weak hand and 4 spades, responder bids 1NT. With a weak hand and 5 clubs, responder bids 2♣. These are both non-forcing. Weak hands can also pass, or bid 1♠, which is a request for opener to bid 1NT with a balanced hand, or 2♣ with an unbalanced hand. The 2♣ bid promises 3 hearts, and responder can correct to 2♥ if he is short in clubs.

With an invitational hand, responder also bids 1♠, but then makes another, basically natural bid. 2♣/♦ shows 5+ cards, usually canapé, while 2♠ shows only 4+ with hearts longer. Since we defined 1♣–1♦; 1♥–1♠; 2♣–2♥ as non-forcing, in this case responder must bid 3♥ to invite in hearts, but at least we are already guaranteed a fit.

Finally, with a game-forcing hand, responder can make a natural reverse bid (2♠, 3♣ or 3♦), bid 2♦ as an artificial game force with a balanced or semi-balanced hand, or 2NT to show a single-suited game-force in hearts (this of course implies slam-interest, as 4♥ is also an option, opener having promised 2-3 hearts).

### 2.1.2 After 1♣–1♥; 1♠

In this sequence we play a more classical two-way checkback system than the lower-level one we can afford when hearts have been shown. 2♣ forces 2♦, either to play or to show any invitational hand 2NT forces 3♣, which is to play or to show a slam try with a really strong hand. The other weak options are pass, 1NT which shows some club tolerance (opener can correct to 2♣ with a hand unsuitable for Notrump), 2♥ (5+ spades and 4+ hearts) and 2♠. With a game-forcing hand, responder bids either an artificial 2♦ or naturally at the

3-level. (Of course, as above, responder can simply bid 4♠ too.)

### 2.1.3 After 1♣-1♦; 1♠

In this sequence, opener has a rather wide range (11-17), and therefore responder should make another bid on any 8+ point hand. We therefore have a wide range of non-forcing bids available for responder: 1NT, 2♣, 2♥ and 2♠. It is expected that opener will make another move with a maximum (good 15 to 17).

Responder's bids from 2NT to 3♠ are all natural and invitational, that is about 11-12 points. It should be noted that 3♦ here promises 5+ diamonds, but not necessarily more than 4 hearts. For even stronger hands we reserve the artificial game-force bid of 2♦, which is completely analogous to the standard fourth-suit-forcing auction of 1♣-1♥; 1♠-2♦.

### 2.1.4 The 1NT rebid showing 17-19 balanced

The following structure has some complexities, and if they are too much of a memory drain, you may play as if the previous round of bidding hadn't happened and a 17-19 1NT had been opened. However, to take advantage of the fact that opener has already denied 4-card support for responder's major, we play the following:

	Over 1♣-1♦; 1NT	Over 1♣-1♥; 1NT
2♣		— GF relay —
2♦	Retransfer, 5+ hearts	Transfer, 4+ hearts
2♥	Weak, both majors	Retransfer, denies 4 hearts
2♠		— Transfer to clubs (usually weak) —
2NT		— Invitational —
3♣		— Transfer to diamonds (usually weak) —
3NT		— To play. —
4♠/♥		— Retransfer to hearts/spades —

Transferring to a minor and then bidding 4 of that minor is RKCB. Transferring to a minor and then bidding 3NT implies concentrated values and suggests correction to 5 of the minor or a 4-3 major fit if opener lacks a decent stopper in one of the other suits.

Retransferring and then bidding 2/3/4NT shows exactly 5 cards in the major and invitational/game-forcing/slam-invitational values. Retransferring at the 4-level followed by 4NT is Blackwood.

With 5+ spades and 4+ hearts, responder bids 2♦, transfer to hearts. With 4 hearts, opener completes the transfer, otherwise he bids 2♠. Afterwards, 2♠/2NT/3♥ are invitational.

With any game-forcing hand not covered by the above sequences, responder bids 2♣, a game-forcing relay. The response structure is:

Over 1♣-1♦; 1NT-2♣	Over 1♣-1♥; 1NT-2♣
2♦ (4432) with 3♥ (2♥ asks d.)	(4432) with 2♠ (2♥ asks t.)
2♥ (4432) with 2♥ (2♠ asks t.)	(4432) with 3♠ (2♠ asks d.)
2♠ — Five diamonds (2NT asks doubleton) —	—
2NT — Five clubs (3♣ asks doubleton) —	—
3♣ — 3334 —	—
3♦ — 3343 —	—
3♥ 4333	3433

The answers to the doubleton/tripleton ask are natural – if 2NT is available it can be used in place of the most expensive answer. For example, after 1♣-1♥; 1NT-2♣; 2♥-2♠, 3♣ shows 3442 shape, 3♦ shows 3424 shape, and the 3244 shape is shown with 2NT (however in case opener forgets he can also bid 3♥ to show the same shape).

After this relay, responder's bids are as follows: game bids are to play, bids below game set trump and are RKCB, 5 of a major is invitational, mainly asking about trump quality, and 4NT is a quantitative invite, unless 3 of responder's first major was not available, in which case 4NT becomes RKCB for opener's major. These same interpretations apply if responder makes a bid other than the tripleton/doubleton ask after the first relay. If opener accepts a 4NT invitation, he should do so with 5NT to give responder the option of preferring a minor-suit slam.

### 2.1.5 The natural 2♣ rebid

Opener's 2♣ rebid is natural, showing 11-15 points and denying 3-card support for responder's major. 1♣-1♦; 2♣ is a very simple auction, because opener has also denied 4 spades. He might have very long clubs but more often he will have secondary diamonds. So 2♦ and 2♥ are simply to play, 2NT invitational and anything else forcing.

1♣-1♥; 2♣ is a somewhat more problematic auction. Perfect continuations would involve quite some artificiality, but this auction is rare and therefore we sacrifice definition for simplicity. 2♥ and 2♠ are natural and non-forcing, 2NT and 3♣ are natural and invitational, and 2♦ is an artificial checkback bid, invitational or better. Opener's responses are up-the-line, 2♥ showing 4 hearts, 2♠ showing 2 spades and 2NT showing (seminaturally!) 4 diamonds. With none of these features, opener reverts to 3♣ (which thus must show at least 6 clubs).

The sequences 1♣-1♥; 2♣-2♦; 2♥-2♠ and 1♣-1♥; 2♣-2♦; 2NT-3♦ are both nonforcing but invitational (the latter primarily suggesting 3NT).

Over the invitational bids of 2NT or 3♣, opener may bid 3♦/♥ with a stopper in

the bid suit and none in the other.

Responder's jump shift after 1♣-1♥; 2♣ is natural and game-forcing, showing a 5-5 distribution or (in the case of 3♠) 6+ spades. With 5-4, responder bids 2♦ even with a game-forcing hand, and therefore 1♣-1♥; 2♣-2♦; 2♥-3♦ is natural and forcing. On the other hand, 1♣-1♥; 2♣-2♦; 2NT-3♥ asks for a stopper since a heart fit is out of the question here.

### 2.1.6 Strong major raises

With an invitational or better hand a 4-card support for responder's major, opener has the following options:

- raise to 3 with 17-19 balanced;
- splinter with a minimum game-force or
- bid 3♦ with an unbalanced hand which is invitational or very strong.

The point ranges for 3♦ are about 14-15 and 19-21, but this is based on HCP in a hand with shortness and decent honor location. With a 4225 hand and 14 HCP, a downgrade to 1♣-1♥; 2♠ is often reasonable. Similarly, with a 4225 16-count, 1♣-1♥; 3♦ is enough, while with 17-18 it is usually best to sell it as a balanced hand, i. e. 1♣-1♥; 3♠. Of course, some of these problems can be avoided by opening suitable (24)25s in range 1NT.

In response to 3♦, 3 of the major is non-forcing, declining an invitation. 1♣-1♦; 3♦-3♠ and 1♣-1♥; 3♦-3♥ asks about shortness, the answers being: first step low (diamond) shortage, second step high (other major) shortage, third step no shortage. If a shortage is shown the step asks about singleton/void and keycards, as described in section 4.3.1.

### 2.1.7 Natural reverses

We have 4 reverse sequences to deal with here:

1. 1♣-1♦; 2♠
2. 1♣-1♥; 2♥
3. 1♣-1♦/♥; 2♦

For the first of these we require a full 18+ points, since we allow for a wide range in the 1♠ rebid. The other sequences can be made on as little as 16 points, though with a bad 16 one should consider a downgrade to 1M or 2♣.

In all cases, we play Ingberman: responder can bid the lower of 2NT or fourth suit<sup>2</sup> to show weakness, and opener bids the step if he is willing to accept a sign-

<sup>2</sup>Fourth suit is based on the suits shown, so 1♣-1♥; 2♦-2♥ is Ingberman, not 2♠.



off, in which case responder places the final contract. All other continuations are natural and forcing. We play FADS, so a direct 3NT by responder shows the values for game but no stopper in the fourth suit, whereas bidding 3NT via Ingberman shows a stopper.

## 2.2 The 1♠ response

This response shows 4 or more clubs without a 4 card major. Our standards for this bid are a bit higher than for the other responses – a full 7 points – because with clubs we are after all content to play 1♣, and if opener is unbalanced, the opponents are almost certain to reopen.

Note that with less than game-forcing strength, it is possible for responder to have 5 diamonds. This is quite rare, however, therefore our responses do not cater for this shape.

Opener's rebids are quite natural:

1NT	11-13 balanced
2♣	11-15 unbalanced
2♦/♥/♠	16+, 4+ clubs, 3+ and values in suit bid
2NT	17-18 balanced, usually not 4 clubs
3♣	Invitational (16-17), 5+ clubs
3♦/♥/♠	18+ with shortness in the suit bid
3NT	19 balanced without 4 clubs
4♣	RKCB for clubs

Hence, with 17-19 balanced, opener will immediately show whether he has a club fit or not, which will be of primary concern to responder if he happens to also be strong.

The 2-level reverse bids are all forcing to 3♣. Generally speaking, if the most likely destination seems to be 3NT, responder should waste no time in bidding it. Otherwise, over any of the non-minimum bids, responder can show values at the 2-level and shortness at the 3-level, or get straight to the point by bidding 4♣ RKCB.

If opener pulls responder's 3NT to 4♣, it is RKCB, but if opener bids 4♣ over responder's shortness-showing bid, it merely denies a stopper and is nonforcing.

Of course, the above will not come into play often because opener will usually disappoint by bidding 1NT or 2♣. Over 1NT, 2♣ is to play, other 2-level bids are stopper-showing, 2NT and 3♣ are invitational, and other 3-level bids show shortness.

Over opener's 2♣ rebid, 2♦ is an artificial game-force confirming clubs, generally not interested in 3NT (but opener can express a different opinion of course), 2♥/♠

show stoppers, 2<sub>NT</sub> is invitational, 3♣ is *not* invitational but rather to discourage the opponents from balancing, and other 3-level bids show shortness.

Should the opponents choose to enter the bidding after 1♠, there is little point in looking for a major suit fit that won't be there, so double is value-showing from both sides. Opener's double generally shows 17-19 balanced; responder's double if reopening below 2♠ will often suggest a Moysian 2M fit, but be more penalty-oriented in direct seat. Opener's 2<sub>NT</sub> shows a minimum hand that wants to compete to 3♣, with a direct 3♣ showing a good 14 to 16 points.

### 2.3 Responding with diamonds

Three actions are available which focus on diamonds, but they are compressed into only two bids. 2♣ shows a weak (5-9) or game-forcing (13+) hand with diamonds, whereas 2♦ shows an invitational (10-12) hand. The weak and invitational variants show 6+ diamonds and deny a 4-card major, whereas the game-forcing variant promises only 5 diamonds and may have a 4-card major.

Facing the 2♣ response, opener simply bids 2♦ if willing to play there opposite the weak variant, and naturally otherwise. Noncompletion of the transfer is forcing. Opener may bid a major at the two-level either with 5 cards (and thus 6+ clubs), looking for a 5-3 fit, or with a weak holding in the other major, hoping that responder can bid 2<sub>NT</sub>. Opener's 2<sub>NT</sub> rebid shows the 17-19 balanced hand, over which 3♦ and 2<sub>NT</sub> are to play and other bids are natural and forcing.

If opener completes the transfer and responder bids on, it is natural and forcing to game.

### 2.4 Balanced responses without a 4-card major

For balanced hands with 4 (or 5) clubs, the recommended response is 1♠—see section 2.2 for the followups. The reason for this is that it will allow an unbalanced opener to compete more freely, and make it possible to bid some less obvious club slams. The following responses therefore generally should show either specifically 3343 shape, or 5 diamonds in a (5332) shape. However, especially at matchpoints, we allow responder to judge to use these responses with (32)44 shape as well. We do retain the requirement to have 4 diamonds, which will be very useful if opener happens to have a hand that was planning to reverse into diamonds and can also set his mind at ease if he has a weak holding in that suit. Therefore, with 3334 shape the only systematic bid is 1♠.

With a mere 7 to 11 points, responder's bid on these shapes is 1<sub>NT</sub>. Opener's rebids to this 1<sub>NT</sub> response are as simple as can be - 2♣/♦ are to play, 2♥/♠ show a reverse<sup>3</sup> (see section 2.1.7 for followups), 2<sub>NT</sub> and 3♣ are invitational (16 to

<sup>3</sup>In this scenario, it is safe for opener to reverse into a 3-card suit when he wants to force with a

poor 18), 3♦ is a game-force with diamonds and 3NT is to play. Don't be shy to pass 1♣ instead of responding 1NT when you have only 6 points. With 17 opposite 6 there is a significant risk of going down in 2NT, and if partner has only 11 it will be much easier for the opponents to find a penalty double when you bid 1NT than when you pass.

With an invitation opposite the 11-13 balanced hand, that is with about 12-13 points, responder bids 2NT. Over this, 3♣ is to play and anything else is semi-natural, either to make sure that stoppers are in place for 3NT or looking for a slam.

With even more points, responder's bids are: 3♦ 14-16, 3NT 17-18, 4NT 19, 5NT 23, 6NT 20-22, 7NT 24+<sup>4</sup>.

A direct 4♣/♦ by opener over any of these bids sets that minor as trumps and asks for cuebids, whereas 4NT is quantitative.

## 2.5 The splinter responses with both minors

### 3 THE 1♦ OPENING

It must be stressed that this opening absolutely promises an unbalanced hand. If you have 3352 shape, open 1♣ or 1NT instead! We will be putting this restriction to good use when we define opener's rebids.

The only case in which the 1♦ opening can contain less than 5 diamonds is with exactly 4441 or 1444 shape. This is because we want to maintain some semblance of being a natural system and shy away from opening 1♣ with a singleton club, and because we would otherwise have a rebid problem after 1♣-1♠. However, judgement is allowed, and it may happen that a 4441 hand with weak diamonds and a singleton club honor feels more like a balanced hand...

Here are the responses:

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single-suited hand.

<sup>4</sup>Double Dummy analysis shows that you should generally be in 6NT on a combined 31 HCP and 7NT on a combined 35 HCP. If you don't believe in this, feel free to adjust your range upward by a point or two. Also, this probably doesn't apply for 3343 shape, so deduct a point if you have that.

1♥	4+ hearts, 6+ points.
1♠	4+ spades, 6+ points.
1NT	7-11 balanced or 7-9 with clubs, non-forcing.
2♣	Simple diamond raise (7-10) or game force with 5+ clubs or balanced
2♦	Weak jump (5-8) in either major
2♥	5 spades, 4 hearts, 6-9 points
2♠	Invitational or better (11+) diamond raise
2NT	Invitational (11-12) with 3334 or 3325 shape.
3♣	Invitational (10-11) with 6+ clubs
3♦	Preemptive (0-6) with 4+ diamonds.

Since partner has about 5 and a half diamonds on average, we are not afraid to jump to 3♦ preemptively with weak hands even on shapes such as (31)45.

### 3.1 Major suit responses

The responses of 1♥ and 1♠ are natural, showing at least a 4-card suit, and forcing for one round. They may conceal a diamond fit or, in non-game-forcing hands, a longer club suit. Since we don't open 1♦ with a balanced minimum, we don't need a natural 1NT rebid, and thus use

	<u>Over 1♦-1♥</u>	<u>Over 1♦-1♠</u>
1NT	— 4+ clubs, intended as forcing —	
2♣	— Usually 6+ diamonds, forcing —	
2♦	— 3-card support and 11-14 points, non-forcing —	
2♥	4-card support, 11-14	Natural, 18+
2♠	Natural, 18+	4-card support, 11-14
2NT	— Strong single-suiter —	
3♣	— Strong 5-5 minors —	
3♦	— Intermediate single-suiter —	
3♥	4-card invite	Splinter
3♠	Splinter	4-card invite

Generally speaking, delayed support of opener's major shows 3-card support with an intermediate hand, that is roughly 15-17 points. We will look at this in detail in a moment.

First, however, we consider the problem of responder having either a 6-card major or 5 spades and 4 hearts. Bidding 1M followed by 2M shows these shapes, but it is impractical to play this with a very wide range, and yet these hands are important to show no matter what responder's strength. We have thus opted for 1M followed by 2M to be forcing, and show the non-forcing variant of these bids by jumping to the two-level immediately.

1♦-2♦ shows a weak jump with 6+ hearts or 6+ spades, multi-style. Over this, opener can bid 2♥, to play opposite hearts, possibly invitational opposite

spades, or 2♠, to play opposite spades, definitely invitational opposite hearts.

### 3.1.1 Opener's minimum rebids

Minimum is about the 11-14 HCP range, though of course upgrades are allowed. The main priority is to clarify the degree of support for responder's major. With 4-card support, raise to 2 of the major immediately. With 3-card support, bid 2♦. This bid is non-forcing, so we can play in diamonds with only a 4-3 major fit.

With no support, bid 1♠ (over 1♥) with 4 spades, 1NT with 4+ clubs (over which both 2♣ and 2♦ are to play), or 2♣ with other hands. This means that 1♦-1♥; 2♣ generally shows 6 diamonds, but 1♦-1♠; 2♣ may be only 5 on shapes such as 2452

### 3.1.2 Opener's medium rebids

### 3.1.3 Opener's strong rebids

### 3.1.4 Responder's transfer noncompletion

## 3.2 Other responses

## 4 THE 1♥/♠ OPENINGS

Ye olde 5-card majors. There is not much to say here except that we always open 1NT with 14-16 and (5332) shape. Here are the response:

	Over 1♥	Over 1♠
1♠	6+ points, 4+ spades	—
1NT	— 6-12 points, non-forcing, no other bid available —	
2♣	— Invitational with 3-card fit OR balanced GF OR GF with ♣ —	
2♦	— Game-forcing with 5+ diamonds —	
2♥	Raise with 6-9 points	Game-forcing with 5+ hearts
2♠	Invitational or better, 4+ hearts	Raise with 6-9 points
2NT	Invitational with 6+ spades	Invitational or better, 4+ spades
3♣	— Invitational with 6+ clubs —	
3♦	— Invitational with 6+ diamonds —	
3♥	Preemptive raise (0-5)	Invitational with 6+ hearts
3♠	Any singleton	Preemptive raise (0-5)
3NT	Void spade	Any singleton

Optionally, when vulnerable, you can play the direct raise to the 3-level as mixed (6-9) rather than preemptive.

### 4.1 1♥–1♠ and the Zirconia convention

The 1♠ response shows at least 4 spades and at least 6 points. That covers a lot of possible hands, of course, some of which are better bid via a different route. The following hands should not respond 1♠:

- If you also have 4+ hearts you should raise hearts immediately.
- A game-forcing balanced hand with exactly 4 spades should respond 2♣.
- A hand with 3 hearts too weak to invite should respond 2♥.
- With a 6-card minor and invitational values, prefer the invitational jump shift.
- With a longer minor and game-forcing values, bid the minor first.

Thus the only hands with 4 spades and 3 hearts that respond 1♠ are those with exactly invitational strength – they will generally follow up with a 3♥ bid on the second round. It is not uncommon, however, to upgrade to a game force if a double fit in both majors is found.

For opener's rebids we play the Zirconia convention<sup>5</sup>. With 3-card support for spades and any strength, opener rebids 2♦. All other hands that had a natural 2♦ rebid go into 1NT instead, along with the leftover 2533 hand.

#### 4.1.1 After 1♥–1♠; 1NT

Here we play a modified version of 2-way checkback. 2♣ is a weak or invitational relay, over which opener normally will bid 2♦, but instead bids 2♥ with the 2533 shape. If responder bids again over this, it is natural and invitational.

2♦ is *not* a weak takeout to diamonds (bid 2♣ with that), but rather an artificial game-force. Opener's 2♠ and 2NT over this show 2533 shape (the former with doubleton honor); other bids promise 4+ diamonds.

2♥ and 2♠ are simply to play, while 3-level bids are natural and game-forcing.

#### 4.1.2 After 1♥–1♠; 2♦

Having ascertained the exact degree of spade fit, responder will usually be quite well placed to place the denomination of the contract. 2♥ is to play (almost certainly a 5-2 fit), as is 2♠ (which does *not* promise an 8-card fit!) 2NT, 3♥ and 3♠ are all invitational and 3NT, 4♥ and 4♠ are all to play (4♥ presumably an upgraded invite). 3♣/♦ are natural game tries (or better) agreeing spades while 4♣/♦ are splinters agreeing spades.

<sup>5</sup>A cubic Zirconia is a fake diamond. This convention was invented and named by Adam Meyerson.

## 4.2 The 1NT response

This is much as in Standard American, in fact unlike classical 2/1 systems our 1NT response is nonforcing (Some prefer to call this approach “semiforcing”). It 1NT response shows a hand strong enough to respond (6+) but with no suitable other bid, thus including – and that is the only difference to Standard – hands in the invitational range (11-12) which are (semi)balanced with only doubleton support or contain a weak 6-card suit.

With 11-13 balanced, opener passes a 1NT response. Otherwise, with a minimum (11-15) hand, opener rebids as follows: with 6+ cards in the major, rebid 2♣; with 4 clubs rebid 2 of the major; with 4 diamonds (or hearts rebid) 2♦ (or 2♥).

This leaves a bit of a hole when opener has 4 spades and 5 hearts. Here opener needs to choose a lie. As a general guideline, pass with 11-13 points, with 14-15 and 45(31) shape bid your 3-card minor, and with 14-15 and 4522 shape show 6 hearts (by bidding 2♣).

As an exception, with shapely hands (5-5 for a two-suiter, or good 6-card suit with a singleton/void for a single-suiter) at the top of the range (14-15), opener can bid reverse or jump shift, e.g. 1♥ – 1♠; 3♣, 1♥ – 1NT; 2♠, 1♠ – 1NT 3♠, etc.

Finally, with any 16+ point hand, opener also rebids 2♣.

### 4.2.1 The Reverse Gazzilli convention

We have thus assigned two possible meanings to opener’s 2♣ rebid which need to be sorted out . . .

## 4.3 Raising partner’s major

With a minimum response (6-9) and a fit for partner’s major, our first (and often last) duty is to show our support by raising the major to the 2-level. With even less (0-5), 4-card support and some shape (especially NOT (4333)!), we lawfully raise partner’s major to the 3-level.

As for invitational hands, we distinguish between 3-card support and 4-card support. With 3-card support, we respond 2♣, but this also contains other hand types. The continuations are discussed in section 4.4.1.

With 4-card support and invitational or better hands, we bid 2NT. With game-forcing hands we can of course bid a splinter instead.

Finally, with game-forcing values but only 3-card support, we begin by bidding our longest suit and show our support later.

### 4.3.1 The Swedish 2NT raise

With a 4-card fit for partner's major and at least invitational values, we respond 2NT. Partner responds in steps, as follows:

3♣	Minimum (about 11-15)
3♦	Extras, any shortage
3♥	Extras, any (5422) distribution
3♠	Extras, 6 trumps with no shortage
3NT	Extras, 5 clubs
4♣	Extras, 5 diamonds
4♦	Extras, 5 other major
4♥	Extras, any (5332) distribution

This is "in steps" because, as you can see, the 5-card side suits are not bid naturally but in low-middle-high order. Similarly, after a shortage or a 4-card suit is shown, the next step asks for the suit, and again it is shown in low-middle-high order. So, for example, 1♥–2NT; 3♦–3♥; 3NT shows a diamond shortage.

After opener shows a minimum, responder can inquire with the next step, and the responses are exactly as above: first step shortage, second step (5422), and so on.

When opener shows a shortage, responder can ask about it by bidding the next step, if that is still below 4 of our major. The responses are: step 1, a void, step 2, a singleton with 1 or 4 keycards, step 3, a singleton with 0 or 3 keycards, etc. After a void is shown the step again asks for keycards. In all other cases, bids below game are cuebids, and frivolous 3M+1 is on.

With a merely invitational hand, responder bids 3 of the major opposite a 3♣ response, and 4 of the major opposite a response showing extras. Note that the 3♣ response does not mean that opener will decline any invitations, 1♥–2NT; 3♣–3♥; 4♥ is a perfectly valid auction.

### 4.3.2 Splinters

## 4.4 2/1 forcing to game responses

### 4.4.1 The 3-way 2♣

Over 1♥/♠, our 2♣ response shows any of the following hand types:

1. 3-card support for partner's major with exactly invitational strength,
2. a game-force with 5+ clubs or
3. a balanced game-force with (4333) or (4432) shape.



In order to let us clarify, opener will almost always bid 2♦. Bidding anything other than 2♦ shows exceptional distribution (5-5, (7321) or better) and the strength to accept any invitation. If responder was merely planning to invite, he will jump to 4 of opener's major.

In the more normal case of 1♥/♠-2♣; 2♦, responder's rebids are as follows, with M denoting the major that was opened and oM denoting the other major:

2M	Exactly invitational with 3-card support.
2oM	Balanced GF with 3-card support.
2NT	Balanced GF with only 2-card support, 12-14 or 18+.
3♣	Unbalanced, 5+ clubs with no fit for opener's major.
3♦	5+ clubs, fit for opener's major, short diamonds.
3M	5+ clubs, fit for opener's major, no shortness.
3oM	5+ clubs, fit for opener's major, short in the other major.
3NT	Balanced GF with only 2-card support, 15-17.

#### 4.5 Invitational jump responses

Responder's immediate jump shift shows a hand with exactly invitational strength, no fit, and a decent 6-card or longer suit. While bidding 12-point hands with a Qxxxx suit via 1NT is no fun, we nevertheless stipulate some minimum suit quality because we also want to find some 3NT games on less than 25 HCP. Thus, QJTxxx or KJ9xxx should be considered a minimum for this bid.

The continuations are simple and natural. Opener with somewhat more than a minimum can bid game, in either of the named suits or NT. With a minimum he can simply pass, and any other bid – including 3 of opener's suit – is natural and forcing. (Exception: 1♥-2NT; 3♠ is to play.) Opener's 3-level rebids do not necessarily show significant extras; certainly opener should bid 4 cards in the other major en passant in case responder is 6-4, and rebidding his own major may show a simple accept of the invitation checking back for a 6-2 fit (responder generally should bid 3NT without a fit). Opener's direct 4NT rebid is RKCB for responder's suit.

## 5 THE 1NT OPENING

Our 1NT opening shows 14-16 HCP and a balanced or semibalanced hand. We open it on all (4333), (4432) and (5332) hands in range, including those with a 5-card major, though with a nice honor structure (which is to say, no queens or jacks in the side suits) we may well "upgrade" a 16 HCP 5-card major hand to 1M. It is strongly encouraged to also open (42)(52) hands in range 1NT, especially with 5 clubs, as it is hard to describe the strength of these hands

accurately when raising partner's major. Whether to also allow (4441) hands or hands with a 6-card minor to open 1NT is a matter of partnership style.

Here are the responses:

2♣	a) weak with both majors or 4 hearts and 5+ minor b) invitational with a 4-card major or 5 spades c) game-forcing with both majors or 4 major and 5+ minor
2♦	5+ hearts (not GF with 6 except mild slam try)
2♥	5+ spades (not GF with 6 except mild slam try)
2♠	Range ask, 6 clubs weak, or 5+ clubs GF
2NT	Both minors weak or 5+ diamonds
3♣	Game-forcing with exactly one 4-card major, or an unbalanced hand with a 3-card major
3♦	5-5 or better in the minors, game-forcing
3♥	3 spades, 0-1 hearts
3♠	3 hearts, 0-1 spades
3NT	To play
4♦	6+ hearts
4♥	6+ spades

You'll note that we have meticulously avoided the use of the word "Stayman"—after all, the bridge laws ask us to describe the meaning of our bids to the opponents, not partner's responses. Some of the hands which might be bid via Stayman in other schemes have been moved to 2♠ or 3♣. Nevertheless we would expect 2♣ to not be alertable in most jurisdictions.

## 6 SLAM BIDDING

### 6.1 Cuebidding

### 6.2 RKCB and Minorwood

### 6.3 5NT Pick-a-slam