

This series is based on *Grant Standard*, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 INT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of *Grant Standard* and the corresponding convention card can be found at www.AudreyGrant.com. The site also has *Grant Basic*, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the *Bridge Bulletin* and can also be found under 'Articles' at www.AudreyGrant.com.

The agreements on weak two-bids in *Grant Standard* are summarized as follows:

2♦/2♥/2♠ OPENING

- 5-11 points
- Good 6-card suit (usually)

RESPONDING TO WEAK TWO-BIDS

- 2NT or new suit: forcing
- Raise: signoff

Let's see how this works.

The Range

The 5–11 range for a weak two-bid raises the question of whether this is high-card points or valuation points (high-card plus length points). The ACBL Convention Card assumes the range is expressed in high-card points and ACBL allows a maximum range of 7 high-card points—assuming we want to use conventional methods when responding. So, a range of 5–11 high-card points gives us maximum flexibility in opening a weak two-bid.

♠ J 3 However, that leaves
♥ A Q J 7 5 3 us with a quandary
♦ K 8 if we pick up a hand
♣ 7 4 2 like this as the dealer.

We have 11 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit...a total of 13. We usually open at the one level with hands that value 13 or more points, so do we open 1♥ or 2♥ with this hand?

Weak Two-Bids and Responses

The answer is not straightforward. It can depend on factors such as the partnership style, vulnerability, and the position at the table. In other words, it's a matter of judgment.

Having said that, most of today's players would open 1♥ with this hand in first or second position. It's a sound opening one level bid, with good potential for game or slam if partner has the right cards. If the opponents compete and partner makes a penalty double, we have reasonable defensive prospects with the ♠A–Q and the outside ♦K.

In third position, we might choose a different approach. Since partner has passed already game is unlikely and it might be more effective to take preemptive action with this hand. So we could open 2♥...or even 3♥ if we are not vulnerable and feel like creating some action.

In fourth position, we might make a different choice. We could open with 2♥. Partner will expect us to have a reasonably sound hand for this call since we had the option of passing the deal out. Opening 2♥ will also make it more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction. We might also choose to pass. The hand doesn't meet the *Guideline of 15*...the high-card points plus number of spades only total 13...which suggests we could be letting the opponents back into the auction if we open.

♠ Q 3 Let's change the
♥ K Q J 7 5 3 hand a bit. We still
♦ Q J have 11 high-card
♣ 7 4 2 points plus 2 length
 points for the six-card suit, for a
 total of 13. However, this hand
 doesn't look much like a one-level
 opening bid. The doubleton ♠Q–3

and ♦Q–J are of dubious value, so we might treat this as a weak two-bid in first or second chair.

If this type of judgment is too much for the partnership, it can simply use a range of, say, 6–10 high-card points for its weak two-bids and now there is no overlap. With 11 high-card points and a six-card suit, we'd simply open at the one level.

The lower end of the scale can also present a challenge. Consider this

♠ 6 3	hand which is worth
♥ Q J 10 7 5 3	5 valuation points:
♦ 8 5	3 high-card points
♣ 7 4 2	plus 2 length points.

There are players who would open 2♥ in first position but, if our stated range is 5–11 *high-card* points, that would be considered a “psychic” bid by ACBL since it misstates the agreed high-card strength. We can do this occasionally—every few months or so—but not on a regular basis. If we want to take preemptive action with such hands, we can either open 3♥ or change our range for weak two-bids to, say, 3-9 high-card points.

In summary, **5–11 is a reasonable range for weak two-bids, but the partnership can decide whether this is high-card or valuation points.**

The Suit

A “good” suit is typically defined as one that has two of the top three honors or three of the top five. So, ♠K–Q–9–8–6–5, ♥A–J–10–7–4–3, and ♦Q–J–10–8–5–2 would all qualify.

♠ A 6	What if we pick up a
♥ J 8 7 5 3 2	hand like this? We
♦ 7 5	have a six-card suit
♣ K 9 3	and only 8 high-

card points, but most players would not open 2♥ with such a poor suit. It tends to give partner the wrong picture of our hand. 2♥ is essentially a preemptive opening bid—good suit but little defensive prospects outside. That's not what this hand looks like, so we can pass and perhaps enter the auction later.

If the partnership does want to open weak two-bids with this type of hand, it should add the term “undisciplined” on its Convention Card. This doesn’t mean that we can’t occasionally exercise judgment when applying Grant Standard.

♠ K Q J 10 5
♥ 8 4
♦ 10 9 7 5
♣ 6 3

Suppose we have this hand. It’s not an ideal weak two-bid since it doesn’t have a six-card suit, so we should probably pass in first or second chair, and definitely in fourth seat. In third position, however, we might open 2♠ after two passes, if we are non vulnerable.

When partner has passed, and we have a weak hand, the opponents are likely to have enough combined strength for at least game. By making a preemptive opening bid, we may prevent them from getting to the right spot. So, we can treat this good five-card suit as a six-card suit, which is why we put “usually” beside our description for the weak two-bid.

The New Suit Response

When partner opens a weak two, it sends the message partner has a good six-card suit with little strength outside. We can picture a hand which will take about five tricks *if partner’s suit is trumps*. So, we usually pass unless we think there are enough combined tricks for game or we want to take further preemptive action.

If we are unsure WHERE and HOW HIGH the partnership belongs, we can bid a new suit. As when responding to an opening bid at the one level, a new suit response is forcing unless we passed originally.

For example, suppose ♠ A K J 7 5 partner opens 2♦ and ♥ A K Q 8 3 we have this hand. ♦ 6 4 There could be game ♣ 5 or even slam in either major suit if partner has 3-card support. Or we might belong in 5♦ or 6♦.

We can start with 2♠, forcing. If partner doesn’t have support for that suit and rebids 3♦, we can try 3♥. This is still forcing because it is a new suit below the game level. If partner can’t support either major, we’ll probably settle for 5♦.

The Forcing 2NT Response

The other choice we have if we are unsure HOW HIGH and WHERE the partnership belongs is to make an artificial forcing response of 2NT. Opener then rebids as follows:

OPENER’S REBID AFTER 2NT

5-8 points (minimum)

- Rebid suit at the three level

9-11 points (maximum)

- Bid a feature (ace or king in another suit)
- Bid 3NT with no feature

2NT is rarely used since responder usually passes with no fit and raises with a fit. However, it can be used when responder has a close decision or is considering playing in 3NT.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

East is unsure whether there are enough tricks for game and can ask for more information by responding 2NT. With a minimum weak two-bid, West rebids 3♥. East passes and settles for partscore.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♥	All Pass

This time, West shows a maximum with a feature in diamonds and East decides to go for the game bonus.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

When West shows a feature in hearts in response to 2NT, East decides to go for the 3NT game.

Responding Without a Fit

With no fit for opener, responder passes unless game is still possible.

WEST	EAST
♠ K Q J 8 7 2	♠ 3
♥ 8	♥ K Q 5 3
♦ 10 3 2	♦ K Q 7 5
♣ 9 8 2	♣ K Q 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

With 15 high-card points but no fit, East passes. Game is unlikely in either spades or notrump.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	Pass	4♥	All Pass

East has a good chance of taking ten tricks in hearts despite West’s weak two-bid. **If responder jumps to game, opener is expected to pass.**

Responding With a Fit

With a fit, responder can raise to game with the expectation of making it or raise preemptively using the competitive guideline (based on the Law of Total Tricks):

COMPETITIVE GUIDELINE

Compete to the level of the number of combined trumps held by the partnership.

Opener has promised a six-card suit, so this translates into raising to the three level with 3-card support and the four level with 4-card support.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	3♥	

With no prospect of game but 3-card support, East raises as a further preemptive bid. **When responder raises, opener is expected to pass.** North-South can make at least a game in spades...if they judge correctly. East would make the same call if North doubled or overcalled. With 4-card support, East would raise to 4♥. ♠