

Bidding Sequences after 2NT

By Neil H. Timm

Playing standard two club systems (e.g. Standard American or 2/1 Game Force), the bid of 2NT is used to show 20-21 HCP with a balanced hand and stoppers in all four suits. The distribution may be the same as opening a strong notrump, namely 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 2-3-3-5 with length in a minor; however, some open hands that are 6-3-3-3 or 5-4-2-2, with a six or five card major. If you open two clubs and then make a rebid of 2NT, it usually shows 22 – 24 HCP playing two club systems, the bid of 3NT shows 25 – 27 HCP.

What conventions do you play when these two bidding sequences occur? Are the systems you employ the same or are they different?

When responding to 2NT, there are several systems available. For example:

1. Smolen Stayman with Transfers
2. Puppet Stayman with Jacoby and Texas Transfers
3. Muppet Stayman (Modified Puppet)
4. Niemeijer (Puppet with and artificial 3NT bid developed in Holland)
5. Nilstrand Two Notrump (Swedish)
6. Modern Efos (Swedish)
7. Wohlin Responses (Swedish)
8. Five-card Transfer Stayman (developed by Dr. George Rosenkranz)
9. Romax Stayman (developed by Dr. George Rosenkranz)
10. Baron Three Clubs (developed by Leo Baron Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia)
11. Baron with Jacoby and Texas Transfers
12. Flint Three Diamonds (developed by Jeremy Flint of England)
13. Baron together with Flint three diamonds
14. Flint Three Diamonds
15. Flip Flop Flannery (developed by Carolyn King and Dr. David Shade, USA)
16. Cotter (Pat Cotter, English expert)
17. Roth Responses (developed by Alvin Roth, USA)
18. Miles Responses
19. Mitchell Adjunct
20. Multi Transfers

And many more!

The most basic system is **Smolen Stayman with Transfers**

3♣ asks for 4 card major

Opener's bids

3♦ shows no 4-card major

Responder bids

3♥ 5 spades and 4 hearts (allows for 5-3 major fit)

3♠ 5 hearts and 4 spades (allows for 5-3 major fit)

3NT to play

4♣ Transfer to diamonds

3♥/3♠ shows 4 (or 5) card major

3NT both 4-card majors

Responder bids

Pass to play

4♣ Transfer to diamonds

4♦ Transfer to hearts

4♥ Transfer to spades

3♦/3♥ transfers to hearts and spades respectively

3♠ transfer to clubs with a correction to diamonds (minor suit slam try)

4♦ transfer to hearts with 6 to play

4♥ transfer to spades with 6 to play

3NT to play

This really is rather rudimentary and players past the beginner's stage should really move on to something like Muppet Stayman or the Niemeijer Convention. I consider these next.

Opening 2NT with 20-21 HCP with a six or five card major

When one opens 2NT, we have the following bidding sequences

3♣ Muppet Stayman, asks about majors

3♦ transfer to hearts

3♥ transfer to spades

3♠ transfer to 3NT

3NT 4=4=4=1 or 4=4=1=4, shortness in a minor invitational to slam

4♣ 5-5 in the minors with slam interest (some use Gerber)

4♦ transfer to hearts

4♥ transfer to spades

4♠ 2-3=4=4, 4-4 in the minors, slam try in a minor suit

4NT quantitative, probably with 4-3-3-3 distribution

Many readers may not use Muppet (Modified Puppet) Stayman, but instead use Puppet Stayman. The advantage of Muppet over Puppet is that one may always find a fit in a major when responder is 5-4 in spades and hearts. This is not the case using Puppet Stayman.

Continuation after Muppet Stayman

The Muppet responses, with 3♥ and 3NT are flipped (if you play Puppet):

3♦ no 5-card major
3♥ no 4-card major
3♠ five spades
3NT five hearts

After 3♦ by opener (no 5-card major), the bidding is:

3♥ 4 or more spades (as in Smolen, bid the one you do not have)
3♠ 4 or more hearts
3NT to play
4♣/4♦ natural and forcing with 5+ cards
4NT quantitative

After bidding the three card major, opener bids the appropriate major with a fit, or can cue bid at the four level to show a fit (delayed splinter). With no fit, opener bids 3NT.

After the bid of 3NT by opener, suppose the responder first bids 3♥ (showing spades), the continuation bids are:

4♣/4♦ natural, 5+ cards, forcing
4♥ to play, a heart fit has been found
4♠ 4=1=4=4, this bid is the impossible spade bid – slam try

If responder started by bidding 3♠ (showing hearts), then the 4♥ and 4♠ bids are reversed or flipped.

After 3♥ by opener (no 4-card major), the bids are:

3♠ five spades (and four hearts) looking for best game
3NT to play
4♣/4♦ natural and forcing with 5+ cards in bid suit
4♥ 4=1=4=4 (shortness in hearts) with slam interest
4♠ 1=4=4=4 (shortness in spades with slam interest)
4NT Quantitative

After 3NT by opener (5 hearts), the continuation bids are:

- 4♣/4♦ 5+ card suit, forcing
- 4♥ to play
- 4♠ 1430 RKCB kickback with hearts
- 4NT Quantitative
- 5♣ EKCB for hearts with void in bid suit, higher bids have the same meaning

After 3♠ by opener (five spades), the bidding is similar to the responses after the bid of 3NT, except that 4♥ set spades in a forcing manner and 4♠ is to play. This eliminates the need for RKCB since opener will bid 4♠ over the heart relay and now RKCB is the bid of 4NT is employed.

Another alternative to Muppet Stayman is the **Niemeijer Convention** developed in Holland.

3♣ Asks for a 4- and 5-card major, the replies are:

- a) 3♦ No 5-card major, may have a four card major

The 3♣ bidder then shows his major suit holdings as follows:

3♥ shows 4♠

3♠ shows 4♥

3NT shows no 4 card major, and is to play Note

4♣ shows both majors and interest in slam4

4♦ shows both majors and no slam interest

Note The 3♣ bidder may have gone this route because the direct 3NT bid is needed conventionally. Alternatively, he may have a 3 card major and a weak doubleton elsewhere and was hoping to find the 5-3 major suit fit.

- b) 3♥/3♠ 5-card major

- c) 3NT no 4 or 5 card major

3♦ Transfer to hearts

If the 3♣ bidder now bids spades, it shows 5-4 in hearts and spades

3♥ Transfer to spades

3NT shows 5-4 in spades and hearts (may not be shown with transfer bids)

Note that if 2♣ were 'normal' Stayman then you could bid 3♣ followed by 3♥/3♠ to show 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors after a 3♦ response, but when playing Puppet Stayman

that is no longer possible. With 5 ♥'s and ♠'s you simply transfer into ♥'s and then bid 3♠ of course.

- 4♣ 5-5 in the minors with slam interest or Gerber (partnership agreement)
- 4♦ Transfer to hearts (to play)
- 4♥ Transfer to spades (to play)
- 4♠ 2-3-4=4, 4-4 in the minors, slam try in a minor suit
- 4NT Quantitative

I will not go into the other conventions since they are not widely used. However, they are discussed in some detail by Magnus Lindkvist (2002) "Bridge Classic and Modern Conventions published by Arta Grafica S.A., Romania.

My recommendation for beginners is to use Smolen Stayman with Transfers; while more advanced players should try Muppet Stayman.

Continuations after Three-Level Transfers

Opener should always accept the Jacoby transfer bids of 3♦/3♥ by bidding three hearts and three spades respectively with two or three card support for the major; a jump to the four level of the major shows four card support for the major.

Responder passes the transfer with a weak hand. There are three rebids by responder that indicate a hand of game going or slam value. The bids are 3NT, raising the transfer to game, transferring to spades the bidding 4♥ (5-4 in spades and hearts) and transferring to hearts and bidding spades to show a 5-5 hand in the majors. A Jacoby transfer bids followed by 3NT asks the opening bidder to pass or correct to four of the major holding 3-card support.

Similarly, opener should always accept bid after the three level bid of 3♠. In this sequence, responder may pass, bid a suit at the four level as natural and forcing or bid 4NT.

Continuations after 3NT and Four-Level Transfers

After 3NT

This bid shows 4=4=4=1 or 4=4=1=4, shortness in a minor invitational to slam.

Opener's bids are:

- 4♣ good hand for slam if partner is short in clubs
- 4♦ good hand for slam if partner is short in diamonds (but not in clubs)
- 4♥/4♠ natural, four card suit, but wastage in both minors
- 4NT no major fit, wastage in both minors, suggests playing here

Responder may pass a bid of 4 of the major or 4NT. If he has continued slam interest he can cuebid over a major suit call or bid keycard (the major is agreed). Over 4NT he can bid his 4-card minor at the five-level to force at least one round and indicate continued slam interest.

After the bid of 4♣/4♦ by opener, responder's bids are:

- 4♦ shows shortness in clubs, looking for slam and looking for fit
- 4♥ pass or correct, short in wrong minors and will to give up slam interest
- 4♥ short in right minor (which will be diamonds), forcing, best fit ask
- 4NT short in wrong minor but still interested in slam, quantitative values, non-forcing
- 5♣ short in the wrong minor but forcing to slam, best fit ask

After 4♣

Opener bids 4♦ to show better diamond clubs, otherwise cuebids. All other bids accept clubs; 4NT is a cuebid of diamonds with no major suit ace.

After 4♦/♥

Always accept the transfer and then use kickback RKCB>

After 4♠

Bidding 4NT shows a minimum hand and other bids are natural, showing maximum values. After 4NT, responder can bid 6♣ (pick a slam) or pass.

Opening 2♣ and bidding 2NT shows 22 - 24 HCP

The next question one asks is what should you play after for example the bidding sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT?

Many partnerships play the same convention over 2NT whether one opens 2NT or 2♣.

I would recommend Muppet Stayman when opening 2NT. When opening 2♣, I prefer to get back to the basics and use Smolen Stayman with Transfers after the bid of 2NT. I support this approach since the opening bidder is less likely to have a five card major and the partner of the two-club opener usually has a weak hand (5-8 HCP).

How do you play the bid of 3♠ over the bid of 2NT? Some use Minor Suit Stayman (MSS) to show interest in a minor suit slam which asks partner to bid a 4-card minor. Not having a 4-card minor, opener bids 3NT.

Others use the bid as a relay to 3NT. Now one may either bid the minor he has or the one he does not have with slam interest depending on your agreement and use Minorwood or Crosswood with slam interest.