

## TWO NOTRUMP OPENING

Requirements for an opening bid of 2NT:

- 21-22 HCP
- Balanced hand (but avoid bidding 2NT with 5-4-2-2 distribution)
- Weakest doubleton Qx

Except for adjustment of HCP figures, this entire section applies to a rebid of 2NT after a 2♣ opening, Marvin Two Diamond opening, or Marvin Two Heart opening. See section 6-1, The Two Club Opening, section 6-2, Marvin Two Diamond Opening, and section 6-3, Marvin Two Heart Opening. For application to notrump overcalls, see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO 2NT

## Opener Responder

- 2NT 3♣ - Stayman, game forcing
- 3♦ - Jacoby transfer to hearts
- 3♥ - Jacoby transfer to spades
- 3♠ - transfer to clubs
- 3NT - transfer to diamonds
- 4♣ - Gerber
- 4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts
- 4♥ - Texas transfer to spades
- 4♠ - a mild notrump raise, Boland convention applies\*
- 4NT - a stronger notrump raise, Boland applies
- 5♣ - Miller convention, slam force
- 5♦ - signoff, but opener can sometimes bid 6♦ (e.g., with four aces and ♦K)
- 5♥/5♠/5NT - Meaningless
- 6 any is a signoff, not invitational.

The Boland and Miller conventions are discussed in sections 5-6 and 5-7.

Before reading the remainder of this section, read section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids

\* Depending on the auction, a jump to 4♠ may either have this meaning or one of Roman Key Card Blackwood, natural, or a splinter bid.

Responder's actions when RHO decides to compete are about the same as those described in Section 5-2, Strong One Notrump Opening.

## TEXAS TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
2NT	4♦ - asks opener to bid 4♥ 4♥ - asks opener to bid 4♠

Opener has no option other than to bid game in the indicated suit, no matter how good his hand.

If responder continues with a 4NT bid, that is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB). See section 6-6. Unlike Texas Transfers after a 1NT opening, this sequence does not promise a short suit.

The Texas convention is used after a 3♣ overcall (when both 4♦ and 4♥ are jumps), but not after any higher overcall:

South	West	North
2NT	3♦	4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly 3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural, forcing 4♥/4♠ - strong suit, slam interest 4NT - natural raise, too strong for 3NT

If responder follows up the forcing new suit response with a 4NT bid, that is RKCB if the suit has been raised (implicitly or explicitly), natural otherwise:

South	West	North	East
2NT	3♣	3♠	Pass
4 any	Pass	4NT - RKCB	

South	West	North	East
2NT	3♦	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT - natural, invitational	

Texas is used in competition only over a double or 3♣, when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be jump bids.

## JACOBY TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦ - asks opener to bid 3♥ 3♥ - asks opener to bid 3♠

With super support for the indicated suit, opener can bid higher than the requested bid. She should have four trumps and a ruffing value to jump to the four level or make a notrumper cue bid in support of the indicated suit. With two of the top three honors in the suit, she can bid 3NT with a good hand that has fast tricks outside and no unstopped suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
	3♥ - the usual bid
	4♥ - a super-accept, including four trumps
	4♣/4♦/3♠ - same (notrumper cue bid)
	3NT - two of top three heart honors, good outside strength

The 3NT rebid requires good quick stoppers outside, because responder will pass with, say, a queen high heart suit and nothing outside.

If responder bids 3♦, then 3♠ over 3♥, that is the Unbalanced Heart Convention (UHC). UHC will be described in the next section.

When responder uses Jacoby, then raises opener's forced bid to game, she is making a slam try with a strong suit. With no slam interest, use Texas. With a non-strong suit, start with Stayman.

After a transfer to spades, no ace or key card convention is available. If that is important, start with a Texas Transfer, then bid 4NT, RKCB, or start with 4♣, Gerber. If the three-level transfer is followed by a 4NT bid, that is a natural slam try in notrump, balanced hand, and 4♣ is natural.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♥
3♠	4♠ - slam try in spades, balanced hand, strong suit 4NT - notrump slam try 4♣/4♦ - natural 4♥ - weak two-suiter

The 4♠ slam try shows a balanced hand with a long and strong trump suit. With a broken spade suit or an unbalanced hand, start with 3♣ instead of transferring. If spades become "agreed," either by a super-acceptance by opener (jump to four, or cue bid, or later preference), then 4NT is RKCB. Showing both majors this way denies any slam interest. The 4♥ bid is "pass or correct." With slam interest, start with Stayman and show both majors, giving opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid. When the transfer is to hearts, 4♠ becomes immediately available for RKCB:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	4♥ - slam try in hearts, balanced hand, strong suit 4NT - notrump slam try 4♠ - RKCB (but why not start with Texas?) 4♣/4♦ - natural

With an unbalanced hand, responder uses UHC. With a heart suit that is not strong, it's better to start with Stayman with a balanced hand, as the above 4♥ raise implies a strong suit. As with spades, 4NT after hearts are super-accepted by opener is RKCB. The reason for not using Texas as a path to RKCB might be that responder wanted to give opener a chance to super-accept.

If responder shows a minor suit after the Jacoby response, he probably has a strong 5-4-2-2 hand.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦/3♥
3♥/3♠	4♣ - probably 2=5=2=4, slam try 4♦ - probably 2=5=4=2, slam try

With an unbalanced hand responder uses UHC with hearts, Stayman with spades, to show a two-suiter when he has slam interest:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♣/4♦ - unbalanced, 5=4 or 5-5

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
3NT	4♣/4♦/4♥ - unbalanced, 5=4 or 5-5

Bidding spades and hearts this way definitely shows at least 5-5, with slam interest. Use Jacoby with 5-5 or better in the majors and no slam interest:

After showing a two-suited hand, a following RKCB uses the last bid suit (cue bids excepted) as the key suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	4♣ - natural, second suit
4♦	4NT - RKCB

It is not known whether opener's cue bid of 4♦ is in support of hearts or diamonds, but for now it is assumed to be diamonds for key-card purposes.

## UNBALANCED HEART CONVENTION

Responder uses UHC with five or more hearts and an unbalanced hand:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT - no heart support	
4♣/4♦ - notrumper cue bid, heart support	
4♥ - normal heart raise	

Opener bids 4♥ to show support when neither minor holding is suitable for a notrumper cue bid.

When opener rebids 3NT, responder may show a second suit or a six-card heart suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♣/4♦ - second suit, 5-4 or 5-5
	4♥ - six or more hearts, slam interest

Bidding a two-suited hand this way shows an unbalanced hand. With a 5-4-2-2 hand and slam hopes, bid the four-card minor suit immediately after opener's 3♥ bid.

The 4♥ bid needs an explanation: Responder did not raise opener's 3♥ bid to 4♥, which also shows six or more hearts, because that would show a balanced hand (and a strong suit). In this case responder has an unbalanced hand and some slam interest. The hearts may be weakish or strong, no telling. With a balanced hand, slam interest, and a weakish heart suit, he would have started with Stayman. With no interest in slam he would have started with a Texas transfer (4♦).

Using UHC instead of just raising the 3♥ response with a six-card suit gives opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid in support of hearts. A fit discovered in this way could lead to a good slam that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to bid. With a balanced hand you just raise 3♥ to 4♥ to try for slam, indicating a need for good cards anywhere rather than the need for a meshing hand.

## STAYMAN CONVENTION

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣

The 3♣ response to a 2NT opening asks opener to bid any four-card major he may possess. With both majors, opener bids 3NT; with neither, he bids 3♦. Playing minor suit transfers (section 11-2), responder may not have a major suit, since she must bid 3♣ first in order to raise to 3NT. Or a bluff Stayman might be used with two short majors. Also, with a 4-3-3-3 hand, opener may suppress a major if it is very weak and he has double stoppers in the other suits.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
	3♦ - no four-card major (probably)
	3♥/3♠ - four or five-card major
	3NT - both majors

If responder continues by showing a new major at the three level, the suit is at least five cards long:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	3♠ - five or more spades, forcing

Without support, opener bids 3NT; with support, he bids 4♠ or makes a notrump cue bid. A 4♥ bid at this point is a cue bid in support of spades, not a suit-showing bid (i.e., not a heart rebid to show five hearts or a previously suppressed heart suit).

When a 4♣ or 4♦ bid immediately follows the 3♣ Stayman bid, it's natural:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
Any	4♣/4♦ natural, forcing

This must be at least a mild slam try, since responder has gone past 3NT. A 4NT bid by opener at this point is not RKCB. If he has a fit, he should cue bid and then responder can use RKCB.

When the reply to Stayman is 3♠, no Gerber or RKCB is immediately available:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4NT - natural notrump raise
	4♣/4♦ - natural, forcing
	4♥ - natural, six or more weakish hearts, slam interest

When the reply to Stayman is 3♥, responder can use an artificial 4♠ for RKCB

When the reply to Stayman is 3♦, a jump to game shows a strong suit and some interest in slam.

Responder is probably 6-4 in the majors, but may be one-suited::

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	4♥/4♠ - strong suit, slam try

With a non-strong suit, responder would not jump to game. The artificial 4♠ notrump raise is not used in Stayman sequences following a 2NT opening.

When the reply to Stayman is 3NT, showing both majors, responder will have to play any major suit contract, because both 4♣ and 4♦ are needed as natural bids. If playing minor suit transfers, they are not so needed and can be used as transfers to let opener play the hand.

When opener shows one major and responder insists on game in the other major, he is making a slam try. In spades, this slam try implies a weakish suit or an unbalanced hand. With strong spades in a balanced hand, use Jacoby. When the suit is hearts, the Stayman approach implies a broken suit in a balanced hand. Use UHC with an unbalanced hand, strong hearts or not, and use Jacoby with strong hearts in a balanced hand.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	3♠
3NT	4♠ - unbalanced, long spades

The spade suit may be broken or fairly solid, there is no way to tell. This sequence gives opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid in support of spades.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	4♠ - balanced, long spades

This jump to 4♥ over a 3♦ reply is useful to distinguish between a balanced and an unbalanced hand. Contrary to the general principle that un-necesssary jumps show suit strength, the spades are definitely not strong. Responder would use Jacoby to invite slam with a balanced hand and strong spades. Since responder is balanced, there is no need to bid 3♠ in order to give opener room to make a notrumper cue bid (which is useful only opposite an unbalanced hand). Note that splinter bids are not used in Stayman sequences following a 2NT opening.

After a Stayman bidder shows a five-card major, a second suit bid tends to be a real suit, not a cue bid.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
4♥	5♣ - showing a second suit



## 6♣

Opener has ♠K87 ♥KQ3 ♦AQ8 ♣AK84, responder ♠AQ1065 ♥864 ♦5 ♣QJ72. If opener's hearts and diamonds were reversed, he would have made his notrumper cue bid in diamonds instead of hearts, and responder would have settled for game in spades.

When responder shows both majors via Stayman, she indicates slam interest:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
3NT	4♥ - slam interest

With no interest in slam, responder shows both majors by using a Jacoby sequence. Using Stayman gives opener a chance to cue bid in support of spades, perhaps leading to a good slam based on mesh of the two hands.

## MINOR SUIT STAYMAN

A response of 3♠ to 2NT is Minor Suit Stayman, asking opener to bid a minor suit of four or more cards. Holding both minors, opener bids 4NT. With neither, he bids 3NT. He may choose to show a five-card major if he likes his minor suit holdings, but a rebid of 3NT does not deny one.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♠ - Minor Suit Stayman
	3NT - no minor suit, probably no five-card major
	4♣/4♦ - denies the other minor
	4♥/4♠ - five card suit, no minor suit
	4NT - both minors

If responder rebids four of a minor after opener's 3NT bid, or 4♦ after a 4♣ bid, that shows a suit of at least five cards. Opener can make a notrumper cue bid in a major with support for the suit, or bid 4NT without support. Responder's rebid of 4♥ or 4♠ shows a four-card suit in a hand good enough to play 4NT.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♠ - Minor Suit Stayman
3NT	4♣/4♦ - at least a five-card suit
	4♥/4♠ - four-card suit, forcing

If opener's rebid does not catch a fit with responder's hand, responder can bid 4NT as natural and merely invitational. No control or ace-asking bid is available.

For an alternative approach, see section 11-1, Minor Suit Transfers in Response to 2NT Opening.

## SLAM TRIES WITH LONG SUITS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a hand that contains a six or seven-card suit. A summary follows. First, major suits:

-- With a balanced hand and strong suit, use Jacoby and raise to game:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦/3♥
3♥/3♠	4♥/4♠

-- With a balanced hand and non-strong spades, use Stayman and then bid 4♠:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	4♠

Opener will probably pass, in view of his lack of spade support, but he might go on with a very strong doubleton spade.

-- With an unbalanced hand and non-strong suit, use Stayman and bid the suit minimally. The suit may be strong or not.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	3♠
3NT	4♠ - unbalanced, slam try

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

Of course opener won't know immediately whether responder is interested in slam or not when he follows up Stayman with a 3♥ or 3♠ bid. He just shows his hand and waits to hear more.

-- With an unbalanced hand and heart suit, use UHC. The suit may be strong or not:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

In all these auctions, responder's last bid shows that he had slam in mind, as he obviously could otherwise have started with a Texas transfer.

Now for the minors:

In the absence of Minor Suit Stayman (section 11-2), either minor can be shown immediately following a 3♣ response:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥/3♠/3NT	4♣/4♦ - natural, slam interest

Opener can now bid 4NT to deny a fit, or cue bid to confirm one. If a fit is denied, 4NT by responder is natural. If confirmed, 4NT by responder is RKCB.

Responder's bid of a second suit tends to show a real suit, not a cue bid.