

The “Ingberman 2-NT” Convention

Basic bridge bidding, especially in the 5-card Major standard American system, is based upon the so-called "**up-the-ladder**" principle, which implies that after one opens with one-of-a-suit, Partner's 1-level response and Opener's first re-bid are always made in the *cheapest* of their 4-card suits. For example, if one opens **1C** and Partner has two 4-card Majors, he/she always bids **1H** to keep the bidding low and to give Opener room to show a possible 4-card Spade suit. This assures that the Partnership will find any Major-suit fit, should it be present, and effectively keeps the bidding low until the Partnership has exchanged complete information about their individual suit lengths.

If Partner bypasses a suit he could have shown at the 1-level, you should always assume (at least temporarily) that he/she does *not* have 4-card length in that suit. ***For example:*** You open **1D** with ♠94 ♥KQ103 ♦AJ764 ♣K10 and Partner responds **1S**. With your minimum opening, it's pointless, here, to bid **2H**, a suit which Partner has already denied, and a bidding sequence which could force the bidding to the 3-level. Opener should re-bid 1-NT with this hand in order to show minimum point-count values and to keep the auction as low as possible. Responder could possibly hold 5 spades and 4 hearts, but in that case, he/she would bid **2H** over your **1-NT** re-bid. (By the way: - this is the only bidding sequence in bridge where a new suit by Responder is *not* forcing; i.e., **1C** or **1D** – **1S** – **1-NT** – **2H**.)

Opener can afford to take the bidding higher, however, if he/she holds a stronger hand such as ♠4 ♥KQ103 ♦AKJ76 ♣A102. In order to show extra strength, Opener would be permitted to *reverse*; i.e., a bid of a suit which Partner has already bypassed. In the above example, Opener's re-bid of **2H** would be such a reverse. Putting it in another way, it's a bid that would force Partner to bid at the 3-level if he/she prefers Opener's first bid suit.

Modern bridge technique calls for a reverse by Opener being forcing for one round. However, although both Partners usually recognize this, many do *not* know how to put on the skids if each holds the minimum of their respective high-card point values. In these instances, Responder has shown at least 6 or more HCP's and Opener 17 or more. When they both hold minimums, the Partnership holds only about 23 HCP's, and Game is seldom present; yet, there is strong tendency, if they not be careful, for most Partnerships to wander into an unsound game, not knowing how, or if, to stop short of a game-level contract when necessary.

The “**Ingberman 2-NT**” bid, when played, solves this potential problem and enables Partnerships, under these conditions, to put on the brakes in order to avoid this disastrous pitfall. ***Ingberman is, therefore, a convention used to allow a Partnership to stop below game after Opener's 2-level reverse bid.*** (Definition of a **Reverse** by Opener: Any rebid by Opener which forces a potential preference of the opening suit to the 3-level.

Following a 1-Level suit response by Responder, and a Reverse by Opener, a “2-NT” bid, by Responder (The “Ingberman 2-NT” bid), shows a minimum holding of 5-7 HCP’s by Responder, and seeks to extract whether or not Opener, likewise, holds the minimum of 17-18 HCP’s, thereby stopping the Partnership from overbidding. If Opener holds the minimum, he/she must “puppet” a conventional “3C” response to Responder’s “2-NT” thus requiring the Partnership to stop at the 3-level in whatever suit best applies.

Both the bid of “2-NT” by Responder, if invoked, and a puppet bid of “3C” by Opener used by this Convention are alertable.

<u>Example:</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
	XX	KQXX
	QX	XXX
	AKXX	JXXX
	AKJXX	XX
	1C	1S
	2D (A Reverse)	<u>“2-NT”</u> (Ingberman)
	<u>“3C”</u> (showing a Minimum)	3D (To play)
	Pass	

In this example, had East not bid “2-NT”, or if having done so, if West had not bid “3C” in response, then the Partnership would be committed to game.

In summary, following a call of one of a suit by Opener, a new suit bid by Responder, and then a “Reverse” by Opener, if either Responder does not bid “2-NT”, initiating the convention, or if Opener does not bid “3C” after the “Ingberman 2-NT” is invoked by Responder, then the Partnership is committed to Game. **With a departure from the two Ingberman bids by either Partner, the Partnership is automatically committed to a game-level contract.**

Note: The situation is different, however, if Responder’s first response is a new suit at the 2-Level. Such a first response shows at least 10 or more HCP’s under standard play, and 12 or more if the Partnership is using a two-over-one system. Since a sequence such as 1H - 2D - 2S is game forcing anyway, Opener with no fewer than 17 HCP’s and Responder no fewer than 10 or 12 HCP’s, a continuation of 2-NT by Responder would be natural and would not be Ingberman. It would show at least one stopper in Clubs, here the un-bid suit.