



Bidding Basics

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Responding to 2NT

Responding to 2NT uses a schedule similar to the one recently laid out for responding to 1NT. The big difference, of course, is that opener will now have 20–21 HCP instead of 15–17. Responder still can use Stayman and Jacoby transfers.

Pass

0–4 HCP and no five-card or longer major. Pass 2NT with:

♠K 7 6 2 ♥9 8 5 3 ♦4 2 ♣5 4 3
or

♠8 7 ♥3 2 ♦J 10 7 6 5 ♣J 8 6 5.

3♣ Stayman

This is Stayman, asking opener for a four-card major. How many points do you need for Stayman? Generally, enough for game, so about a decent 5 HCP or more. You could have a weaker hand if you are willing to pass any answer to 3♣. This would usually mean short clubs, something like:

♠J 4 3 2 ♥10 8 7 6 ♦J 6 5 4 2 ♣—.

With 5–4 in the majors, use Stayman (not a transfer).

Transfers

3♦ is a transfer to hearts, and 3♥ is a transfer to spades. (When such a response is made, the 2NT opener Announces out loud “transfer.”) After the opener accepts the transfer, the responder can pass or bid game (in notrump or in his major). He can also bid a new suit (game forcing). More

details on the follow-ups will appear in future articles. Transfer to the major with:

♠J 10 7 6 5 ♥2 ♦9 8 6 5 ♣7 4 2

(and then pass), or with:

♠8 6 ♥K J 7 3 2 ♦Q 6 5 3 ♣9 8

(and then bid 3NT to offer opener a choice between 3NT and 4♥).

Other responses

I recommend not using 3♠ (although if your partnership wants to define it as both minors, good luck waiting for a chance to use it – and better luck remembering).

A raise to 3NT, is of course a signoff. Raise to 3NT with:

♠K 7 2 ♥Q 3 2 ♦Q 8 7 6 5 ♣J 2

or

♠4 2 ♥7 5 ♦8 5 2 ♣A Q 9 6 5 4.

4♣ would ask for aces (Gerber) and is one of the most-abused responses in bridge. (It is extremely rare that knowledge of how many aces opener has will be useful.)

For now, don't use a response of 4♦ or 4♥ (unless both you and your partner are 100% sure you know about and will remember Texas transfers).

Definitely don't respond 4♠ to 2NT. A 4NT response is “quantitative” which is a fancy way of saying “invitational” to slam. It is not ace-asking. It invites partner to go to 6NT if he has a maximum.

BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

What is your response to 2NT with each hand below?

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

Answers

- Pass. Not enough for Stayman.
- 3♣. Planning to raise 3♠ to 4♠, otherwise to bid 3NT.
- 3♣. Planning to raise 3♥ or 3S, but to pass 3♦.
- 3♥. Planning to bid 3NT next, allowing partner to correct to 4♠ if he wishes.
- 3NT. No need to show clubs.
- 3NT. Even if you have a way to show minors, where are you going?
- 3♥. Planning to place the contract in 4♠ next. (If you are 100% sure you and your partner play Texas transfers, you can respond 4♥ directly instead.)
- 4NT. Quantitative, which means inviting slam in notrump. ■