



Pre-emptive ("Barrage") Bids

The pre-empt opening of three of a suit shows seven or more cards in the suit, few high card points, typically six-nine, mostly in the suit.

♠ K Q J 5 4 3 2

♥ 9 7

♦ 10 2

The intent is to disrupt the opponents on the assumption that they have most of the points. The opener's hand should be good enough for a profitable sacrifice expecting to be doubled.

♣ 3 2

This type of pre-emptive opening is so well established that it is neither announced nor alerted.

Strong Twos...

In Pure ACOL an opening bid of 2♥ or 2♠ shows a strong hand, taking 8 tricks in the bid suit without help. This bid shows values greater than 1♥ or 1♠ opening showing 12-19 and less than 2♣ opening showing 23+ or the capability of taking 9 tricks in a suit.

Weak Twos

Some partnerships agree to use an opening 2 to show a weak hand (6-9HCP) with six cards in the suit. These hands are more common, and the bid is pre-emptive, making it difficult for the opposition to find their best contract.

There are two widely used versions of weak two's.

Benjaminised ACOL, or "Benji", is an agreement to open 2♥ or 2♠ on weak hands (6-9HCP) with six in the suit.



“Weak Two’s in Three Suits”, where the partners agree that an opening bid of 2♦ shows a similar hand but with 6 diamonds.

Let opponents know

At the table, any opening 2 of a suit, where the suit bid is the long suit in the hand requires an announcement by partner. Where the opening is weak, partner must say “Weak”. Online, the bid should be alerted with the explanation “Weak”.

At the table, these opening bids require the STOP card.

They assume that the opponents have most of the high card points, enough for game.

The opening bid is not expected to succeed as a contract, but is intended to give away less, even doubled, than the opponents can make. This means that the vulnerability should be checked, and adverse vulnerability treated with caution.

You need to be quite sure which version of ACOL you and your partner are playing. You need to understand weak twos so that you and your partner can compete against them when opponents use them.

Bidding against Pre-emptive (“Barrage”) Bids

When opponents use a weak three level opening

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <u>N</u> | <u>E</u> | <u>S</u> | <u>W</u> |
| 3♣ | ? | | |

You need to be sure that the bid is weak, so if considering action and in any doubt, ask.

Then check the vulnerability.



A simple defensive system:

1. Double for take-out.

If you have a hand with opening values and a shortage in the opened suit, double the opener's bid for take-out by your partner.

♠ K Q 6 5
♥ K Q 9 7
♦ A 10 2
♣ 3 2

2. 3NT if you can make it.

If you have a balanced or "semi-balanced" hand with 16+ HCP and a "stop" in the opened suit, bid 3NT.

♠ K Q 6 5
♥ Q J 7
♦ A 10
♣ K J 3 2

3. A natural suit overcall.

If you have a long suit (five with two honours, six with one honour or seven), you can overcall your suit, even at the three level with 12 HCP, or 7 losers.

♠ K Q 6 5 4 3
♥ Q J 7
♦ A 10
♣ 3 2

4. Cue bid a two-suited hand.

Bid the opponents suit if you are five:five or better with no more than seven losers, or at least 12 HCP.

♠ K Q 6 5 4
♥ K Q J 7 6
♦ A 10

5. Also use the double for any hand with more strength and/or good shape.

♣ 3

6. Otherwise Pass.



Fishbein

The standard defence to pre-emptive openings has one flaw. You never get to double for penalties!

If you use the Fishbein convention you and partner agree that a double will be for penalties and NOT take out. You must ALERT this double.

If you have a hand suitable for take-out, you make an overcall of the next SUIT up.

This must be alerted. Any other call or bid has the same meaning as before. Partner must therefore respond to an overcall of the next suit up as though it was a take out double. If they happen to have your suit, they can pass.



When opponents use a weak two- level opening

A simple defensive system is the same as above.

However, again, you can't double for penalties.

Another defence to Weak 2s

2NT Overall shows 11-15 HCP and is for take-out. It must be alerted. The hand should meet the criteria for a normal take-out. It should have opening values and four cards in unbid major(s).

Double shows 16+ HCP and is for penalties (though partner should be free to convert to take out by bidding). It must be alerted.

An overcall has a natural message.

Cue bid of the opponents suit shows an opening quality hand with five:five or more in any two unbid suits.