

Jacoby 2NT

2NT as an artificial forcing raise showing support for Partner's major and showing game forcing values (at least)

Examples of Jacoby 2NT:

1♠ – 2NT* or 1♥ – 2NT*

It commits the partnership to game in opener's suit and leaves room to explore for slam. The key to effectively using Jacoby 2NT is what happens after the 2NT response, starting with opener's rebid.

We shall look at auctions a little later.

Digressing; modern-day bridge tends to use:

1. Fast Arrival to show a **weaker** hand than slow bidding – say 7 HCPs:

1♠ – 4♠

Would show a distributional 7-loser hand with good trump support (5-card support or better).

2. Pudding raise - shows a raise to game in a balanced hand:

1♠ – 3NT

13-15 HCPs and 4-card trump support and a balanced hand 4333.
(Some partnerships use this to show about 16-18 HCPs and 4-card trump support.)

3. GF jump – showing delayed support

1♠ – 3♣

3♦ – 3♠

? continuations depend on the strength of the hand (4♠, cue-bid, RKCB)

4. Splinters

1♠ – 4♦

would show 4-card support and a singleton/void in ♦s

However, these auctions are very limited, they tell Opener about Responder's hand but don't allow for the Responder to ask about Opener's hand. Let us see how Jacoby works:

Opener's rebid

In addition to giving responder a direct way to show a forcing hand, the Jacoby 2NT improves the accuracy of your slam bidding. Its biggest advantage is that it gives Opener room to further describe his hand. There are several different meanings you can assign to opener's rebids. Here's one of the most used structures:

After a Jacoby 1♥ – 2NT (or 1♠-2NT)

Opener describes his hand:

- Bids 4♥ (weakest bid) – minimum opening hand. If you have a minimum opener with no singleton or void, jump to 4 of your suit (1♥ – 2NT*//4♥) (fast arrival). This is your weakest rebid. It shows a fairly balanced hand (typically 5332) with no interest in slam. However, Pard may still be strong enough to move the bidding forward.

- Bids side suit **naturally** at 3-level (1♥ – 2NT//3♦) with a good suit:

If you have a second 5-card suit (a semi-strong one: KJxxx or better), show it.

Some players show it by jumping to 4 of the suit: 1♥ – 2NT*//4♦ would show a 5-card ♦ suit. However, this isn't the best method. You should show the suit at the **3-level** and if Pard ALSO has a fit in the 2nd suit, he can raise to 4-level and now you have shown a double fit and a good chance of getting to slam.

1♥ – 2NT*
3♦ – 4♦

- 4-level side-suit bid (1♥ – 2NT//4♦) (**splinter** style)

With any other hand that has a singleton or void, bid 4 of that suit: 1♥ – 2NT*//4♦ would show a singleton/void in ♦s. However, you can't show a singleton spade, but then you would probably have a 2nd suit.

- 3NT – 15-19 HCPs with only 4 card suit (but maybe 5332 with values in the short suits)

If you have only 4-card suit (or maybe 5-card suit) AND extra values (but no singleton or void), describe your strength and pattern by rebidding 3NT with a fairly balanced hand (15+) – see Note 1 below

1♥ – 2NT
3NT - ?

Over 3NT we have an asking bid of 4♣, and Opener shows his point count (4♦=15-16, 4♥=17-18, 4♠=19) and Responder is in a good place to place the contract (maybe using RKCB or by cue-bidding).

- 3♥ – strong bid with a 6-card suit (GF of course)
Bid 3 of your suit (1♥ – 2NT*//3♥) with extra strength/length (a 6+ card suit) - - see Note 2 below

1♥ – 2NT
 3♥

But with all these modifications there are drawbacks. The only drawback is that Opener can't show a splinter bid in spades. But we have many ways to continue the auction and cue-bid spades on the way.

Over 3♥ rebid by Opener:

Responder can find out the true strength (losers) by using a 4♣ asking bid (4♦=6-losers, 4♥=5 losers, 4♠=4 losers). Responder will be in a good position to envisage if a slam is on and may use: RKCB now (or prior to this asking bid, but why not use the science available).

Alternatively use cue-bidding if that is what is preferred by the partnership.

Game forcing Jacoby 2NT

If you open 1 of a major and partner responds with 2NT:

Note 1:	Note 2:
1♥ – 2NT*//3NT - ?	1♥ – 2NT*//3♥ - ?
A bid of 4♣ asks for point count:	A bid of 4♣ asks for losers (or cue-bids if you prefer that method):
4♦ = 15-16	4♦ = 6-losers
4♥=17-18	4♥= 5-losers
4♠=19	4♠= 4-losers

For example, after you open 1♠ and partner responds 2NT, the meanings of your rebids are:

- 4♣, 4♦ or 4♥ = Singleton or void in that suit.
- 3♠ = good 15+ pts. with extra length (usually 6) in your suit (or upto19+ pts.
- 3NT = 15-19 pts., balanced (semi) (no singleton or void).

- **3♣, 3♦, 3♥** = Decent 5-card side suit (KJxxx or better) – you could agree 4-card suit
- **4♠** = Minimum hand (11-14 pts.), no singleton/void.

Hands to describe the above responses:

- Opener bids his singleton/void

♠ K Q 8 6 2
 ♥ A J 7 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 8 2

With this hand, rebid 4♦, showing a singleton or void in ♦s. As we shall see shortly, this is likely to be the most useful feature in our hand to help responder decide whether to pursue a slam.

When Opener shows a singleton or void, responder considers whether this is a good thing or a bad thing for the partnership's slam prospects.

Understanding the concept of wasted values is a key to good slam bidding. c.p. these two sets of hands and auctions:

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

1♠	2NT
4♦	4♠

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

1♠	2NT
4♦	4♥*
4NT*	5♦*
6♠	

Both sets of hands hold the same honours but the 2nd hand fits together well and the 1st hand has wasted values. Although the 2nd hand has a ♦ loser, all values are spread around the other three suits – a magic fit.

- Opener bids his suit at minimum level (1♠ – 2NT//3♠)

♠ A Q J 8 6 2
 ♥ A K
 ♦ 9 4 3
 ♣ K 8

With a very good hand we rebid the major suit at the 3-level, 3♠. We are telling responder we are better than a 7-loser hand and there maybe enough combined strength to consider getting to slam. We're also leaving room to explore without getting too high.

After opener's descriptive rebid, the next move is up to Responder to:

- ask for losers (4♣)
- cue-bid or
- RKCB

- Opener shows a good HCP semi-balanced hand

1♠ – 2NT
 3NT

♠ A J 9 8 4
♥ K 3
♦ K Q 7
♣ Q 6 4

Note 1: When Opener shows a 15+ 'balanced hand' Responder can ask for the strength by using a 4♣ asking bid. Opener's responses are: 4♦ = 15-16, 4♥ = 17-18, 4♠ = 19 HCPs. For example:

1♠ – 2NT
3NT – 4♣*
4♦* showing 15-16 HCPs

- Opener shows a decent 5-card side suit

♠ K J 9 8 4
♥ 3
♦ Q 4
♣ A Q J 7 3

We have a decent 5-card suit AND a singleton. Well, if you think about it, you must have a singleton/void if you have two 5-card suits. Therefore, it is more helpful to show the extra 5-card suit. However, what if the hands are:

♠ A K J 7 3
♥ K J
♦ Q 8 6 4 2
♣ 5

Now the extra 5-card suit may not be of such value, so it would be better to show the singleton, letting Pard infer that there ought to be length/strength in the red suits.

- Opener shows a minimum hand

♠ Q J 9 7 4
♥ K Q 6
♦ A 6
♣ J 7 3

1♠ – 2NT

4♠ Fast arrival shows a minimum hand

Responder's rebids after a Jacoby bid

After Opener makes his rebid in a game forcing situation, Responder is now in a good position to know where the partnership is going to. The optional bids are shown below:

- PASS (If Opener has shown a minimum hand (4♥/4♠), maybe that will be sufficient for the partnership)
- Cue-bids below game (game forcing) with possibility of slam
- 4NT – RKCB
- 4♣ asking bid if Opener bids 3NT/3M

Related bidding

Bidding auctions such as:

1♥ – 2♥

and

1♠ – 3♠

Keep their normal meaning:

4-card support and: 6-9 points, and 10-11 points respectively; similarly:

4-card support and: 9 losers, and 8 losers respectively.

Jacoby 2NT review:

We use Jacoby 2NT when our partnership has the greater number of points, and want to get to a forcing situation but allow room to communicate the types of hand we have.

Example:

Partner opens 1♠, how do you proceed with the following?

♠ KQ765

♥ A7

♦ AJT4

♣ 85

We want to be in at least game, but we don't need to pre-empt the auction. Better to take things slowly with a forcing bid (2NT), giving the partnership the chance to investigate slam below the level of game. This is the purpose of the Jacoby 2NT convention, which allows Responder to utilize 2NT as game-forcing and fit-showing for Partner's one-of-a-major opening.

So we start with 2NT (Jacoby).

What types of hands are used for a Jacoby 2NT bid?

- Semi-balanced hands (5332, 4432) 11+ (7-losers or better)
- Distributional hands 12+ (7- losers or better)
- Strong balanced (4333 & 16+) hands

All other hands containing 4-card support:

Remember we use:

- An immediate Responder bid of 3NT to show a balanced 13-15 WITH 4-card support.
- A splinter bid to show singleton/void, but with 4-card support and a 7-loser hand.
- Distributional weak HCP hand (usually 7-9 HCPs) but with 5+ trumps (pre-emptive)

Note: As Responder with a distributional hand, including a singleton/void you have a choice of:

- showing the hand via a splinter bid (letting Opener decide whether he ought to look for a slam)
- Using the 2NT bid to ask about Opener's hand

My advice is to use the direct splinter to show a 7-loser hand but use Jacoby 2NT on stronger hands.

Examples:

1)	♠ 2	♠ A73
	♥ KJ984	♥ Q1072
	♦ AJ872	♦ KQ
	♣ A8	♣ K953

Opener

1♥

3♦ (5 card suit)

5♣ (3 key cards)

Responder

2NT

4NT (RKCB)

6♥

Over the 2NT, opener shows his second suit. Responder's ♦KQ are now very useful. With one key-card missing, settle for the small slam.

An alternative auction:

1♥	2NT
4♠ (singleton/void)	4NT (RKCB)
5♣ (3 key cards)	6♥

After the 4♠ bid (a bit of a push but with good cards for slam), East knows there are no ♠ losers so his honours and intermediates must be useful, therefore with only a 14 count he uses RKCB.

2)	♠ AK2	♠ QJ3
	♥ KQ984	♥ AJ72
	♦ QJ72	♦ 84
	♣ 8	♣ KQJ3

Opener

1♥

4♣

Responder

2NT

4♥

Opener shows the singleton ♣ which is not to Responder's liking so he settles for 4♥. With a better hand he may progress.

3)

♠ AJ2	♠ KQ3
♥ K10984	♥ AJ72
♦ QJ72	♦ 84
♣ 8	♣ A973
<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
1♥	2NT
4♥	Pass

Opener shows a minimum hand rather than showing the singleton.
With ♦A instead of ♦Q (13 points), it is worth showing the singleton ♣.

4)

♠ A2	♠ KQ3
♥ KQ984	♥ AJ72
♦ AKQ3	♦ 84
♣ 86	♣ A973
<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
1♥	2NT
3NT	4♣ (ask)
4♥ (17-18)	4NT (RKCB)
5♣ (3 key cards)	6♥

5)

♠ AKJ53	♠ Q1072
♥ 1095	♥ AK
♦ 8	♦ 763
♣ KJ64	♣ AQ32

Opener

1♠

4♦

5♥

Pass

Responder

2NT

4NT (RKCB)

6♠

That 4♦ response to Jacoby, showing shortness, greatly improves Responder's hand. Although the hand is near minimum, the honours are in the long suits so the splinter bid may improve Responder's hand. Now, he knows that the honours in the two hands are working well together and can charge to slam. The 4NT in this auction is RKCB and the 5♥-response showed 2 Key Cards without the queen of trumps.

6)

Let's change the hand above to illustrate a couple of points. First, we'll tweak it as follows:

Opener

♠ AKJ53

♥ T95

♦ 8

♣ KJ64

Responder

♠ QT72

♥ 763

♦ AK

♣ AQ32

We have switched Responder's ♥s and ♦s around, so that Opener's ♦ shortness now faces the ♦AK ... this is not good! Shortness opposite strength means wasted values. So, after:

1♠ - 2NT//4♦, Responder should abandon the slam hunt and go straight to 4♠. The two hands may have the same shapes and high-card values as before, but now they just don't fit well together.

7)

The second tweak of our deal 5 moves the K♣ into the short ♦ hand as follows:

Opener

♠AKJ53

♥T95

♦K

♣J864

Responder

♠QT72

♥AK

♦763

♣AQ32

More wastage! You might not open this hand! What was initially the highly valuable K♣, has now become the K♦, a quite useless card opposite three small. This raises the issue of whether or not we should own up to shortness when that shortness is a singleton Ace or King. It is recommended that you **don't** show the shortness in these cases; it is similar to Splinter bids with a singleton Ace or King. It's just too misleading ... Partner will expect working points in the other suits and won't be happy to see them wasted in the short suit.

Note: If cue-bidding, don't show singleton/voids in Partner's side-suit, only cue-bid As & Ks in their suit

8)

♠AKJ85

♥K63

♦8

♣A973

♠Q1073

♥QJ2

♦A542

♣K4

Opener

1♠

4♦

5♣ (0/3)

Responder

2NT

4NT (RKCB)

6♠

After West's 4♦ bid, East knows there are no ♦ losers and perhaps the other suits fit well together. Therefore, it is worth trying RKCB as ♥ QJ and ♣K must be worth lots as West's cards in those suits may fit well with those in East's hand. The auction lands the partnership in a very good contract on minimal values.

9)

♠ Q J 4
♥ K J 9 6 5
♦ J 7 4
♣ A 8

♠ K 9 2
♥ A Q 8 3
♦ Q 8
♣ K Q 7 2

Opener

Responder

1♥
4♥

2NT
Pass

East has a good hand for the 2NT response but West shows a minimum by jumping to 4♥. East has no reason to get the partnership higher. Even the 5-level is too high since the opponents can take the ♠A and ♦A-K. It is a good job that we had the room to describe the hands.

10)

♠ J 4
♥ K J 9 6 5
♦ A K 7 4
♣ A 8

♠ K 9 2
♥ A Q 8 3
♦ Q 8
♣ K Q 7 2

Opener

Responder

1♥
3NT
4♦ (15-16)
5♣

2NT*
4♣*
4NT*
6♥

Alternatively:

1♥	2NT
3NT	5♥
6♥	Pass

The values are available but an ace is missing. Perhaps a push but it only goes down when ♠AQ is in the south hand AND ♠s are led. When there are lots of values available, given time a loser might get discarded; often it depends on the lead. And who gets the lead correct every time?

11)

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

Opener

1♥
3♥
5♦*
6♦*

Responder

2NT*
4NT*
5NT*
7♥

After West shows extra values, East is looking for the stars. He checks on keycards and finds four, then checks on kings and finds: the ♦K or both black kings. East can see that all aces and kings are held, and trumps are solid so bids the grand slam.

12)

♠ KJ832	♠ A10764
♥ A65	♥ KQ5
♦ 10	♦ 872
♣ A954	♣ K7

Opener

1♠
4♦*
5♣*

Responder

2NT*
4NT*
6♠

After responder uses the Jacoby 2NT, opener bids 4♦ to show his singleton. This is encouraging news for Responder because it means his ♣ and ♥ honors will fit well in partner's hand. Knowing that his xxx suit is covered by opener's singleton/void -- and that opener's outside strength is in ♣s and/or ♥s -- Responder can use RKCB to check on keycards, and then bid his 24-point slam.

13)

♠QJ10543
♥AKJ
♦32
♣K9

♠AK72
♥105
♦KQ54
♣A62

Opener

1♠
3♠
4♦* (6 losers)
5♦*
6♥* (yes + ♥K)

Responder

2NT*
4♣*
4NT*
5♥* (asks for trump queen)
6♠

Opener's 3♠ rebid denies a singleton, but promises a good (somewhat distributional 6-loser or better) opener. Holding such good trumps, East realises that Pard must have a long suit.

Although East's heart holding is worrying, he can enquire about the trump queen and gets a positive WITH ♥K, so East arrives in 6♠. If West denied the trump queen (5♠) East could PASS.

Conclusions

This is a very important convention, but can you see a slight problem with it?

The opener describes his hand (the hidden one when play begins), so the defense can listen in. But it is best for the partnership to have a good understanding of the combined hands, thereby allowing the partnership to bid the correct slams and not bid them when they should be missed.

This convention is played throughout the world by nearly all the top players, but there is another system 'Raise to 3 or 5' that allows the Declarer to ask questions about Dummy's hand, and of course the Defenders will be seeing that hand anyway. This system starts in the same way as Jacoby:

1♥ – 2NT*

Opener then can start asking about Partner's hand with a 3♣* relay. But that method is for another time.