

2/1 GAME FORCE SYSTEM

With Chapters On
Precision Simplified
Transfer Precision
Meckwell Lite

The Final Word

Seventh Edition

NEIL H. TIMM, Ph.D.

2021

2/1 GAME FORCE SYSTEM

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Trafford

The 2/1 Game Force System is an improvement over the Standard American System that has been in effect and played by bridge players for many years. The advantage of the 2/1 System is that it allows the partnership to know that game is possible with only an initial single bid.

This book is about bridge that incorporates conventions that allow partnership's to reach game or slam. In this regard, I have incorporated modern methods for hand evaluation developed by Marty Bergen called the ADJUST-3 Method and Zar points, new bidding conventions like SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman) and Quest transfers, and an overview of "Bridge Rules and Laws" that I hope will improve your approach to the bidding structure you may use today.

Also included is the bidding structure are Bergen, Reverse Bergen, and Combined Bergen major suit raises, inverted minor suit raises with crisscross and flip-flop, cue bidding, modified scroll bids, and many more methods not used in Standard American or Precision.

The bidding conventions in the previous editions have been enhanced, corrected, expanded upon, and reorganized with new ones added. Given the release of the new ACBL convention charts, the chapter with the modifications to Fantunes, in my prior edition, is no longer needed. Fantunes may now be played using the Open Convention Chart. The Mid-chart no longer exists. Hence, I have deleted the chapter and replaced it with a new chapter on Bridge Tips, and Agreements.

New conventions include a Modern Splinter Bidding Convention, the Zirconia Convention, Unusual 2-level bids, Jump Transfer bids, a new Two-Way Check-back Convention, 1430 Modified Jacoby 2NT*, additional Bridge Rules with more examples, Four-Way Transfers with the range ask bid and more are included in this edition.

Also included is an update of the Minorwood and the Roman Keycard Blackwood Conventions, Two-Way New Minor Forcing with modified Wolff Signoff bids and new bidding sequences using Mini/Weak Notrump. The topic of Offense to Defense Ratio (ODR) is included in this revision as well as expanded bidding sequences when opening and responding to the bid of 2♣ playing the 2/1 Game Force System and many new Bridge Rules have been added to Chapter 10.

A copy of this book is on the web site www.bridgewebs.com/ocala. A hard copy is available from the publisher or from Amazon.com – search on neil timm.

Neil H. Timm is professor emeritus from the University of Pittsburgh where he taught statistics for thirty-five years. He has written several textbooks on Multivariate Analysis and Linear Models.

Dr. Timm is currently a Sapphire Life Master and has developed new bidding systems called Modified Scroll Bids, Montreal Relay bids, A Modern Splinter Convention and a new 1430 RKCB system which replaces the Jacoby 2NT bid to facilitate slam bidding.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	xix
Introduction.....	xxiii
Chapter 1	
Hand Evaluation, Opening Bids, and Rebids	1
Hand Evaluation – Starter Points	1
Opening No-trump Bids.....	6
Opening One of a Suit (Major or Minor)	10
Hand Evaluation - Dummy Points.....	12
Minor suit Dummy Points	14
Responses to one-level major suit bids.....	15
Game forcing Responses	15
Jacoby 2NT* (forcing to game, with perhaps slam interest).....	17
Splinter Bids.....	18
Why Splinter Bids Work.....	20
Questions about Splinter Bids.....	21
Auto/Self-Splinter Bids.....	21
Swiss Bids.....	22
Semi - Forcing Responses.....	23
1NT (semi-forcing or forcing).....	23
Constructive Raises (non-forcing fit bid - invitational)	25
Non-forcing responses (with a fit).....	26
Bergen Raises and Combined Bergen Raises	26
Combined Bergen with a Spade Gadget	28
Preemptive Bids	29
Overview Combined Bergen And Bergen Raises	29
The Nebulous 2♣* Convention.....	30
Walsh Bidding System.....	33
Responses to one-level minor suit bid.....	34
Non-Forcing Responses	34
Responses to the one club (1♣) opening NOT playing Walsh Club Convention	34
Weak Jump Shifts (Preemptive Bid).....	36
Forcing Responses	36
The bid of 2♣ over 1♦ (game force).....	36
Inverted Minors and Crisscross (game forcing and invitational bids).....	38
Minor Suit Splinter Bids	39

Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♣)	40
Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♦).....	40
The Walsh Club Convention	41
Meckwell 2NT Response to Minor Suit Openings	42
Hand Evaluation - Bergen Points	42
Hand Evaluation Using Zar Points	44
Dummy Points with ZAR.....	46
Overview of Forcing and Semi-Forcing Rebids by Opener	48
Strong Jump Shift	48
Jump Reverses (Mini Splinters).....	50
Jump Rebids into opening suit bid.....	50
Full Splinters or reverse jump shifts.....	50
Fit Bids (Jump Minor Suit Support Splinters).....	51
Jumps into No-trump.....	51
Rebids by Opener after Major opening bids.....	51
After 1NT (semi-forcing).....	51
Basic Lisa.....	54
Responder's Rebids without Basic Lisa	54
Gazzilli Convention	56
Gazzilli.....	56
Two Way Checkback Convention	59
The Basics.....	59
Checkback Sign-off Sequences begin with 2♣/2NT.....	60
Checkback Invitational and Forcing Sequences begin with 2♦	60
After 2/1 game force bids	60
After Jacoby 2NT*.....	63
Examples Responses to Jacoby 2NT	63
After Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters	64
After Swiss bid of 4♣*.....	65
After Swiss bid of 4♦*	65
After Constructive Raises (support at the two-level).....	65
Help Suit Game Try Bids.....	65
Two-Way Game Try Bids.....	66
Short Suit Game Try Bids.....	66
Help "Asking" vs Game Try "Telling" Bids	67
After 3♣* and 3♦* (Bergen Raises).....	69
After 3♣* and 3♦* (Combined Bergen Raises).....	70
Rebids by Opener after Minor opening bids (1♣/1♦).....	70
After 1♣-1♥	70
After 1♣ - 1♠	71
After 1♦ -1♥.....	71
After 1♦ - 1♠.....	72
3344 Convention	72
Point Count Game Try Convention (PCGT).....	73
After 1NT.....	74
After weak minor suit responses	75

After inverted minor and crisscross	75
Inverted minor	75
Slam investigation after inverted minor bid	77
Crisscross	77
What is Flip-Flop?	77
After 2/1 game force bid (1♦ - 2♣)	78
Golady Convention	79
Responses to 1NT opening bid.....	79
Stayman Convention.....	80
Garbage and Crawling Stayman Convention.....	82
Stayman with weak hands and 4-4 in the majors	83
Stayman with Super-accepts	83
Puppet Stayman	84
Raising 1NT, 2NT, 3NT, and beyond.....	85
Jacoby Transfers.....	85
Responder's bids after 1NT- 2♦ -2♥	86
Help Suit Game Try after a Jacoby Transfer.....	87
Jacoby Transfers with Super – accept.....	87
Four-Way Transfers.....	88
Four-Way transfers with the Range Ask Bid.....	90
Transfer Bidding Examples.....	91
Smolen Transfers	92
Quest Transfers	93
Texas Transfers (4♦ and ♥).....	93
Two-suited Hands (Mini-Maxi Convention).....	94
Extended Stayman when 5-5 or 6-4 in the Majors	94
Extended Texas Transfers when 6-4 in the Majors.....	95
Minor Suit Stayman.....	95
Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SARS).....	97
The Gerber Convention.....	98
The 1430 Style Gerber Convention (Expert Gerber)	98
Splinters after Stayman (with a fit and slam interest).....	99
Overview of Responses to 1NT (15-17) and Examples.....	100
Five-card Major Suit Stayman	103
Overview of Several Responder Rebids	104
New Minor Forcing (NMF).....	104
Checkback Stayman after 1NT	107
New Minor Forcing vs Checkback Stayman	107
Two-Way NMF with Wolff Modified.....	107
Non-Forcing Responses to New Minor Opening.....	108
Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF)	109
Wolff Signoff Convention Modified (WSOM).....	113
The Zirconia Convention	116
XYZ Convention.....	117
The Basics.....	117
Checkback and the Sign-off.....	118

	Checkback with Invitational Hands.....	118
	Checkback with Forcing Hands.....	119
	Checkback in General.....	120
	Checkback with Clubs.....	120
	Wolff Sign-off with Checkback Stayman.....	121
	Major Suit Checkback Stayman (with 9+ Starting Points).....	122
	Fourth Suit Forcing.....	123
	Opening Bids and Rebids –Some additional examples.....	125
	Jacoby 2NT (Modified by the Experts).....	126
	Bergen’s Jacoby 2NT.....	128
	Two-Over-One without Bergen.....	129
Chapter 2	Opening Two-, Three-, and Four-Level Bids.....	130
	The Flannery Convention.....	130
	Washington Standard Flannery.....	131
	Flexible Flannery.....	131
	Extended Flannery.....	132
	Mini Roman Three-suited hands.....	133
	Mini Roman with four spades and the suit below “submarine” singleton bid....	133
	Mini Roman with any pattern (4-4-4-1/4-4-5-0/4-4-0-5) – advanced.....	134
	The Extra-Shape Flannery Convention.....	136
	Modified Jammer 2 ♦ Convention.....	137
	Opening 2NT.....	139
	Stayman after 2NT No-trump (basic).....	140
	Jacoby Transfers four-way.....	140
	Texas Transfers (4♦ and 4♥) and Extended Texas Transfers.....	142
	Modified Puppet Stayman (3♣).....	142
	Flip-Flop Flannery Convention.....	145
	Soloff Bids.....	146
	Opening 2♣.....	147
	Evaluating your hand.....	147
	Controls.....	148
	Two diamonds waiting.....	149
	Two hearts negative and two diamonds semi-positive.....	149
	Interference note when playing the 2♥* bust.....	151
	Ace –Showing Responses.....	152
	Kokish Relay.....	152
	Mexican 2♦* Convention.....	154
	Karosek 2♦* Convention.....	155
	Opening 3NT* Gambling.....	157
	ACOL 4NT Opening.....	159
	Opening two of a major.....	159
	Rule of 17.....	160
	The OGUST Convention.....	160
	Modified OGUST Convention.....	161
	Opening three- and four-level bids.....	161

	Rule of 2/3.....	162
	Rule of 7 over Preempts.....	162
	Responder bids to three-level preempts	163
	Ogust over three-level preempts (bid 3NT*)	163
	Preempted Openings	164
	Opening Five-level Bids.....	164
	Opening Four-level Bids	164
	Roth Four Club Convention.....	165
	Asking Bids after a Preempt	165
	Responses to Asking Bids.....	166
	Grand Slam Force after a bid suit.....	167
	Namyats.....	168
	Responding to Namyats openings	169
	After a Namyats 4♦ opening.....	170
	Mc Cabe Adjunct.....	171
	Mc Cabe Adjunct (reversed)	172
Chapter 3	Slam Bidding	173
	The Blackwood Convention	173
	Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) Convention - 1430	174
	Queen Asks.....	175
	King Ask.....	175
	Spiral Scan	176
	Queen and King Asks Combined	179
	Responding with voids.....	180
	Specific Suit Asks (SSA) (provided you do not play the Spiral Scan).....	180
	Over Interference D0P1-R0P1 or DEP0.....	181
	Kickback or Redwood and Minorwood.....	182
	Responding to the 4NT/5♣ Queen ask – (next step)	182
	Slam Bidding with No Agreed Upon Suit.....	186
	Overview: Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430*.....	187
	Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB) Convention	190
	Responses to ERKCB	190
	A Modern Splinter Bidding Convention	191
	Double Agreement Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB)	192
	Quantitative Bids.....	194
	Baron Bids after 4NT.....	195
	Grand Slam Force after 1NT.....	196
	Pick a Slam.....	196
	1430 Baby Blackwood in Serious 3NT.....	196
	Cue bidding for Slam.....	200
	Scroll Bids (Modified).....	205
	With Bergen Raises	205
	After Jacoby 2NT	207
	After Jacoby 2NT- Examples.....	208
	After a Bergen Raise – Example	211

	Roman Keycard Gerber (RKCG)	212
	Responses to 4♣ RKCG.....	212
	Responding to 2NT with both Minors	213
	Roman Keycard Blackwood over Preempts	214
	Scroll Bids (Simple).....	216
	Variable Keycard Blackwood.....	216
	Weak Variable Keycard Blackwood	217
	Strong Variable Keycard Blackwood.....	220
	Middle Variable Keycard Blackwood.....	221
	Spiral Scan Bids Modified after Jacoby 2NT*.....	221
	Voids (with 3/4 card trump support and 13+ dummy/support points)	222
	Spiral Bids with an even number of Keycards and a void	224
	Spiral Bids with an odd number of Key Cards and a void.....	225
	Modified 1430 RKCB Over Jacoby 2NT* for the Majors.....	225
	Simple 1430 RKCB Jacoby 2NT*	227
	1430 6-pac Roman Keycard Blackwood	227
Chapter 4	Third and Fourth Seat Openings	230
	Rule of 22/20 (3 rd seat)	230
	Rule of 15 (4 th seat).....	230
	Reverse Drury Convention.....	231
	Two-Way Drury.....	231
	Fit Showing Jump Bids (Majors).....	233
	Two-level Major Suit bids in the third and fourth seats	233
	Three- and four-level preempts in the third seat	233
	Thrup Double.....	234
Chapter 5	Bidding with Interference.....	235
	2/1 Bids with Interference	235
	Cue bids by opener (Western Cue).....	236
	Responder Bids after a takeout double	237
	Responder Bids Over a one- or two-level suit bid.....	237
	Combined Bergen Raises with Interference	237
	Truscott Jordan 2NT	238
	Responder Bids when opponent (advancer) interferes after 2NT.....	239
	Opener's Rebids after a redouble.....	239
	Negative Doubles by Responder.....	240
	Opener Rebids - one/two-level overcalls with negative doubles	241
	Negative Free Bids.....	243
	Responder Bids used with minor suit openings (without flip-flop).....	244
	Balancing Double by Opener	245
	Rule of 9.....	245
	Responder calls after a 1NT overcall	245
	Unusual 2NT Overcall.....	245
	Michaels Cue bid	247
	After Weak Jump Overcalls	248
	Fishbein Convention	248

	Some Examples of Bidding over Interference.....	249
	Responding to 3NT after a three-level preempt.....	251
	Bidding over weak two and three level bids.....	252
Chapter 6	Takeout Doubles	255
	Standard Takeout Doubles.....	255
	Equal Level Conversion	257
	Takeout Double or Overcall.....	258
	Responding to a Takeout Double.....	258
	Cue bids in response to takeout doubles	258
	Responding to a Takeout Double with Interference	259
	Rebids by Doubler.....	260
	Takeout double over weak two bids.....	260
	Doubling 1NT (penalty or takeout)	261
	Examples	261
Chapter 7	Overcalls.....	263
	The 1NT overcall.....	263
	Systems On or Off	263
	Summary.....	264
	1NT overcalls in the balancing seat (Range/Inquiry Stayman)	265
	Suit Overcalls	265
	Responding to a Suit Overcalls (Major or Minor).....	266
	Responding to a Weak Jump Overcall	267
	Overcall or Double Revisited	267
	Advantages of Overcalling	267
	Disadvantages of Overcalling.....	268
	Advantages of Doubling	269
	Disadvantages of Doubling.....	269
	Cue bidding Principles	270
	How good is your overcall?.....	271
	Cue bids by responder (after Opponent's Overcall).....	271
	Sandwich 1NT/2NT and Skew Cue bids (Hess Bids).....	272
	Sandwich 1NT/2NT	272
	Skew Cue bids (also called Hess Cue bids).....	272
	Takeout Double	273
	Overcall.....	273
	Some Examples.....	273
	Leaping Michaels	273
	Responding to Michael Cue bids or Unusual 2NT.....	274
	Reverse Good Bad 2NT.....	275
	Scrambling 2NT	278
	An Overcall System.....	278
	The Simple Overcall (SO) at the One Level.....	279
	Responding to a SO – Uncontested Auction.....	280
	Responding to a SO – Contested Auction.....	280
	One No-trump for Takeout (NTO)	281

	Responses to a NTO – Uncontested Auction.....	281
	Responding to a NTO - Contested Auction.....	282
	The Power Double — Option One.....	282
	The Power Double — Option Two.....	283
	The Two Level Overcalls.....	283
	The Roman Jump Overcall.....	283
	Responding to a RJOC - Uncontested Auction.....	284
	Responding to a RJOC - Contested Auction.....	284
	The Two Suited Cue Bid (QB).....	285
	The 2 No Trump Overcall.....	285
	Responding to 2NT - Uncontested Auction.....	285
	Responding to 2NT - Contested Auction.....	286
	The Intermediate Jump Overcall.....	286
	Miscellany.....	286
	Alerts in the Overcall Structure.....	287
	Glossary for the Overcall System.....	288
	Footnotes for the Overcall System.....	289
	Ghestem – Two Suited Overcalls.....	291
	No-trump Natural to Take-out.....	293
Chapter 8	Conventional Doubles.....	297
	Support Double and Redouble.....	297
	Responsive Doubles - Opponents Bid And Raise (OBAR).....	298
	Maximal Support Double.....	299
	Snapdragon and Rosenkrantz Doubles.....	299
	Lead Directing Doubles.....	299
	Fisher Double.....	300
	Lightner Slam Double.....	300
	CONVENTION CARD: Special Doubles.....	300
	Card-showing Doubles.....	301
	Minimum Offshape Takeout Doubles.....	301
	SOS Redouble.....	301
Chapter 9	How to Interfere with Their Bidding.....	302
	The Rule of 8.....	302
	The Rule of 2.....	302
	Interference over No-trump Conventions.....	303
	Mohan.....	304
	Modified CAPPELLETTI.....	304
	Modified DONT (Meckwell).....	305
	Hello.....	305
	SCUM.....	306
	Multi Landy Over 1NT.....	306
	Marvin French System.....	308
	Modified Blooman.....	308
	Modified Blooman (Direct Seat).....	309
	Interference over weak/mini no-trump bids.....	309

	Modified Meckwell (Direct Seat/Balancing Seat).....	309
	When the Opponents Interfere Over 1NT Opening.....	310
	Lebensohl.....	310
	Transfer Lebensohl	311
	Simple Lebensohl.....	313
	Defense against Transfer Bids.....	315
	When Your Side Has Been Silent	316
	Against Strong NAMYATS.....	318
	Against Weak NAMYATS	319
	Action vs NAMYATS by Fourth Seat	320
	Defense over Forcing No-trump.....	320
	The Useful Space Principle (USP).....	321
Chapter 10	Review of Common “Bridge Rules/Laws”	323
	Rule of 2 (Interference over Strong 1NT)	323
	Rule of 7 (Hold Up)	323
	Rule of 8 (Interference over Strong 1NT)	323
	Rule of 9 (When to X/Bid).....	324
	Rule of 10 (High Level X’s).....	324
	Rule of 11.....	324
	Rule of 10/12.....	325
	Rule of 13 (Interference over 2NT).....	325
	Rule of 15 (Bidding in 4 th Seat).....	325
	Rule of 17 (Weak 2 Game Bids)	325
	Rule of 20/22 (When to Open)	326
	Rule of 24 (Losing Trick Count)	326
	Rule of 2/3 (Level of Preempt)	326
	Rule of 7 over Preempts	327
	Rule of 26 (Slams)	327
	Rule of 44 (Strong Openings).....	327
	Rule of 64 (Rebids).....	328
	Rule of 88 (Stayman).....	328
	The Law of Total Tricks	328
	Short Suit Total Rule (SST) Rule.....	334
	8 Ever 9 Never	334
	10 Ever 11 Never.....	334
	Losing Trick Count (LTC).....	335
	Rule of 210 (5-level Bids).....	337
	Barry Crane Rules (commandments)	338
	Evaluating Your Offense to Defense Ratio (ODR).....	339
	Play of the Hand – Rules	345
Chapter 11	Defensive Carding	346
	Standard Carding and MUD	346
	Other Carding Agreements	348
	Upside-Down Count and Attitude	348
	Odd-Even Discards	348

	Lavinthal Discards.....	348
	Suit Preference Discard.....	348
	Revolving Suit Discards.....	348
	Trump suit Preference	349
	Smith Echo	350
	Foster Echo.....	351
Chapter 12	Bridge Leads.....	353
	Standard Leads	353
	Bridge leads Do's and Don'ts	358
	Leads against 3NT.....	359
	Rusinow Leads	361
	Coded 9's and 10's	363
	Coded 7's, 8's and 9's	364
	Winning Bridge Leads	364
Chapter 13	Completing the Convention Card	368
	The 2/1 Convention Card.....	368
	The Bridge World Standard.....	370
	The Acol Bidding System.....	374
	Fantunes.....	375
	EHAA.....	375
Chapter 14	Play of the Hand	376
	Play of the Hand – Always have a Plan!.....	376
	Some Card Playing Rules.....	378
	Rule of 7.....	378
	Rule of 9 (Ruff high or low).....	379
	Rule of 12.....	379
	Dummy Reversal Play.....	381
	Cue bidding for Slam an Example.....	385
	Bidding Problems	387
	Principle of Restricted Choice.....	388
	Finding the Queen Using Vacant Places.....	389
	Vacant Places (also called Vacant Spaces).....	393
	Bid and Play 1	396
	Bid and Play 2	398
	Bid and Play 3	400
	Bid and Play 4	402
	Bid and Play 5	404
	Bid and Play 6	406
	Bid and Play 7	408
	Bid and Play 8	410
	Bid and Play 9	412
	Bid and Play 10.....	413
	Bid and Play 11	415
	Bid and Play 12.....	417

	Bid and Play 13	419
	Bid and Play 14	421
	Bid and Play 15	423
Chapter 15	Other Bridge Conventions	425
	Weak No-trump an Overview	425
	Weak Hands (12-14).....	426
	Two – Way Stayman.....	434
	Weak No-trump Runouts	434
	Modified DONT (Meckwell) No-trump Runouts	435
	Exit Transfer No-trump Runouts	435
	Helvic No-trump Runouts.....	435
	Landy - Coping with the Weak No-trump bid	436
	Modified Landy Convention	436
	An Extended Stayman Convention	437
	Stayman in Doubt (SID).....	438
	Vacant (Worthless) Doubleton Convention	439
	No-trump Overcalls.....	444
	Reverse Flannery by Responder.....	445
	The TRASH Convention	447
	The Mathe Convention	449
	The “Undercall” ♣ Convention - Extended	449
	Reuben Advances	453
	Kennedy Club Bids.....	457
	Montreal Relay Diamond Bids	457
	Multi Weak Two Bids.....	458
	Tartan Two Bids	460
	Burgay Responses to 15-17 NT Opening	461
	Kaplan Interchange.....	461
	Ekren 2♦ Convention	462
	When the Opponents Show Weakness	463
	Fast Arrival or Picture bids	463
	Jumping to 3NT.....	465
	Masked Mini-Splinters	466
	Ingberman Convention	466
	Ping Pong Convention	469
	Marvin Two Spades Convention	470
	Ripstra Convention.....	472
	Top and Bottom Cue bids	472
	A No-trump Convention.....	473
	The Forcing Pass	474
	Splimit	476
	Swedish 2NT	477
Chapter 16	Wrap-Up	480
	Hand Distributions	480
	How do they break? – Handy Chart for easy reference.....	482

	Probabilities and Odds in Bridge.....	483
Chapter 17	Transfer Precision	486
	Overview	486
	Basic Opening bids.....	486
	Responses to 1♦* Opening	486
	Responses to 1M Opening Reverse Bergen Bids over MAJOR	488
	Responses to 1NT Opening (With Double Barrel Stayman)	491
	Responses to 1NT Opening (If you Prefer Transfer Bids)	491
	Responses to 1NT Opening (If you Prefer Minor Suit Stayman)	492
	Responses to 2M Opening	495
	Responses to 2♣* Opening.....	496
	Responses to 2♦* Opening (Singleton/void in Diamonds)	497
	Responses to 2NT* Opening.....	498
	Responses to 3X Openings.....	498
	Responses to 1♣* Opening.....	499
	Responses by responder to 1NT are (8-10 Range)	502
	Responses by responder to 1NT - (11-13 Range).....	503
	Transfer to a Minor Suit with (12+ 5-5/5-4 in minors or 6m/5-4 m/M)	504
	Summary- Interference Bids Over 1♣* Opening.....	506
Chapter 18	Meckwell Lite	511
	Notation (for this Chapter).....	511
	Table of Opening Bids.....	512
	Balanced Hand Ladder	512
	1♣ Opening Bid	512
	1♦ Response	513
	1M Rebid.....	513
	1♥ Response	516
	1NT Rebid.....	516
	Asking Bids.....	519
	Beta (Control Ask)	519
	Interference After 1♣ Opening	521
	Passed Hand Responses To 1♣.....	522
	1♦ Opening Bid.....	523
	1♥ Response	523
	1♠ Response	526
	Interference over 1♦	531
	Over Fourth-Seat Interference	533
	General Rules for Competing Over 2M by Fourth Hand	534
	1♥/1♠ Opening Bids	534
	1♠ Response	535
	1NT Response.....	536
	2-over-1	537
	Modified Non-Serious 3NT	537
	Strong Raise	538
	Passed Hand Responses	539

Interference Over 1M Over Unusual 2Nt And “Standard” Michaels	540
Over Unusual 2NT and “Standard” Michaels.....	542
Over other 2-suited interference	543
1NT Opening Bid	543
Interference Over 1Nt	546
Interference By Fourth Hand	548
2NT Opening Bid	548
2♣ Opening Bid.....	551
Interference After 2♣ Opening.....	553
Passed Hand Bidding	553
2♦ Opening Bid.....	553
2NT Response.....	554
Interference After 2♦.....	554
Weak Two Bids.....	555
Over Interference	556
Higher Preempts	557
Slam Bidding.....	557
Roman Keycard (RKC-0314).....	557
Mulberry	561
Jumps To 5Nt – Choice Of Slams Or Grand Slam Force?	562
Non-Jump Bids Of 5NT.....	563
Non-Serious 3NT	563
Last Train	563
Defensive Bidding	563
Overcalls	563
Takeout Doubles.....	564
Michaels (and other) Cue bids.....	565
Unusual No-trump Overcalls.....	566
Over 1NT Opening Bids	567
Over Multi 2♦.....	568
Over Flannery 2♦	568
Over Flannery 2♥: Same except DBL = Minors, and 2NT = wider range.	569
Over Transfer Responses to 1♣.....	569
Over Artificial Bids	569
Over Kaplan Inversion.....	569
LEADS	569

Chapter 19 Precision Simplified	572
Basic Opening bids.....	572
Responses to 1♦* Opening	573
Getting to no-trump (Rev-crisscross).....	573
Responses to 1M Opening Meckwell Bids over MAJOR.....	574
Scroll Bids (Modified).....	575
Responses to 1NT Opening.....	576
Responses to 2M Opening	577
When they Double Weak bid – Reverse Mc Cabe	578

	Responses to 2♣* Opening.....	578
	Responses to 2♦* Opening (Singleton/void in Diamonds)	579
	Responses to 2NT* Opening.....	580
	Responses to 3X Openings.....	581
	Responses to 1♣* Opening.....	581
	Summary- Interference Bids Over 1♣* Opening	592
	Interference Over 1Nt By Opponents.....	595
	Other Conventional Calls	595
Chapter 20	Interfering over Precision	596
	MATHE.....	596
	CRASH.....	597
	MDONT + T (played in the direct seat only).....	597
	MACE.....	598
	SUCTION.....	598
	TRANSFERS plus TWOS	598
Chapter 21	Bridge Tips and Agreements	601
	Weak Two Bids.....	601
	Suit Bidding Battles.....	602
	After 1NT-3NT or 1NT-all Pass –Now Lead?.....	602
	Suit Leads Now Lead?.....	603
	Stayman with 7 Points.....	604
	Over 1NT are Systems On/Off?.....	604
	Are the Major-Minor suit bids Game Forcing?	605
	Competing Over 1NT Forcing/Semi-Forcing.....	606
	Aggressive Bidding Guidelines.....	607
	Singletons/Voids or Double Fits	608
	What is 1♣ - 3NT -4♣?.....	609
	What is your bid after 1m - 2NT -?	610
	Do you super accept after 1NT and 2NT?.....	611
	Inversion/Inverted Bids?	612
	Give Up Jacoby 2NT*?.....	612
	Is ERKCB Needed?	614
	Completing the Convention Card	616
	A Better Drury in the Third Seat	619
	What is the bid of 2NT by a Passed Hand?	620
	Your SOLAR Agreement	623
Index		625

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Without her encouragement, it would not have been written. I must also thank my other partners, Dave Stentz, Mary Belle Thimgan, Bob Ellis, and Donna Ziemann, for their critical reviews and comments which helped with the presentation and organization of the material.

Finally, I must thank my wife, Verena, who supported me as I sat for many hours in front of my computer typing the material for the book and Marielle Marne for proof reading. However, I am responsible for any errors.

The book, to a large extent, reflects our approach to playing the 2/1 Game Force System.

I hope the methods I have presented helps to improve your game.

Sincerely,
Neil H. Timm, Ph.D.

timmm@pitt.edu (please e-mail comments and corrections)
December, 2009

Changes for the second edition

I have had the good fortune of having responses from numerous proof-readers. Many read the first edition and provided me with invaluable feedback. I have tried to incorporate all of their suggestions and corrections into this second edition. Thank you all for your constructive and informative input. I want to extend special thanks to Brendon Conlon who provided me with numerous detail suggestions for this second edition.

In this second edition, I have included additional Bridge Rules, expanded and added material in several sections and included many more conventions common to the 2/1 Game Force System. This edition includes the Montreal club and diamond relay bids, the Kennedy club, the Kaplan interchange bid, the Ekren 2♦ convention, picture bids, the forcing pass, masked mini splinters,

the Ingberman and Ping Pong conventions, and the Marvin two spades convention, among others. Finally, a new chapter on Precision called Simplified Precision has been added.

Changes in the third edition

I have had the good fortune of again having responses from several proof-readers. Thank you for bringing to my attention some of the remaining errors in the text. I have incorporated their suggestions and corrections into this third and final edition. Thank you all for your constructive and informative input. I want to extend special thanks to Charlene Young, Bev McMullen, and Ed Schusler who provided me with numerous detail suggestions for this third edition.

I have made corrections brought to my attention by several readers. The Chapter on Slam bidding has been expanded to include asking for aces and king's simultaneously, the Baron 4NT convention, and more. New material on Roman Jump overcalls, the Mc Cabe Adjunct and the Reverse Mc Cabe Adjunct, Bergen's Jacoby 2NT bids, Meckwell major suit bids and Meckwell responses to minor suit openings, more on interference over strong no-trump, minor suit Stayman, Kokish Relays and several other conventions have been added to this latest edition.

Finally, new Chapters on Transfer Precision, the Meckwell Precision (Meckwell Lite) Bids are also included in this issue. The Meckwell Lite material (Chapter 18) was developed by a **Luke Gillespie & Jim Streisand** and is included in the book with their kind permission.

Changes in the fourth edition

I have again had the good fortune of again having responses from several proof readers. Thank you for bringing to my attention some of the remaining errors in the text. I have incorporated their suggestions and corrections into this fourth edition. I want to acknowledge the suggestions made by Mary Gavaghan who provided a detailed reading of the material and made many suggestions to improve the text.

The Minorwood Convention has been expanded and several variations of the Flannery Convention are included in this edition. I have added the Hello and SCUM conventions used to interfere over strong no-trumps and a Modified Landy convention designed to compete over partnerships that employ a weak no-trump bid. The Equal Level Conversion (ELC) double is discussed in Chapter 6 and additional material on slam bidding has been added to Chapter 3. The material on Two-Way new minor forcing and the Gazzilli Convention has been expanded upon in Chapter 1 and Jacoby transfers with a super-accept structure has been added to Chapter 2.

A new chapter that reviews the new Italian System of bids called Fantunes has been included in this edition. The System has been modified to be in compliance with the ACBL General Convention Chart (GCC). Without the modification, it is a mid-chart convention.

Changes in the fifth edition

Errors in the fourth edition have been corrected and several new bidding systems have been added; they include Tartan Weak Two Bids, The Walsh Club Convention, and the Principle of Restricted Choice, additional methods for interfering over the strong precision club bid, Variable Roman Keycard Blackwood, Spiral Scan bids, the Swedish 2NT bid, and more on interference over no-trump.

Also included is an update of Minorwood, the RKCB Convention, Two-Way New Minor Forcing with modified Wolff Signoff bids and new bidding sequences using Mini/Weak No-trump. The topic of Offense to Defense Ratio (ODR) is included in this revision as well as expanded bids when opening and responding to the bid of 2♣ playing the 2/1 Game Force System and several new Bridge Rules have been added to Chapter 10. Finally, you may find Timm's Bridge Bits and several duplicate bridge lessons on the web site www.bridgewebs.com/ocala.

Many of the concerns raised by Larry Cohen in the October 2015 issue of "The Bridge World", page 41 have been addressed in this edition.

Changes in the sixth edition

Errors in the fifth edition have been corrected and several new bidding systems have been added; they include the 1430 6-pac Roman Keycard Blackwood Convention which does not require a queen asking bid, the use of Zar Points as a further help in hand evaluation, and the use of vacant places (spaces) when playing a hand.

In addition, four-way transfers as played by experts have been added and the nebulous 2♣ convention is reviewed. Many topics in previous editions have been expanded upon. For example, bidding and play problems with a detail analysis of each problem have been added to Chapter 14, additional bridge rules have been added to Chapter 10, and more.

Changes in the seventh edition

I truly appreciate the help and comments I have received from my readers of previous editions.

The bidding conventions in the previous editions have been enhanced, corrected, expanded upon, and reorganized with new ones added. Given the release of the new ACBL convention charts, the chapter with the modifications to Fantunes, in my prior edition, is no longer needed. Fantunes may now be played using the Open Convention Chart. The Mid-chart no longer exists. Hence, I have deleted the chapter and replaced it with a new chapter on Bridge Tips, and Agreements.

New conventions include a Modern Splinter Bidding Convention, the Zirconia Convention, Unusual 2-level bids, Jump Transfer bids, a new Two-Way Checkback Convention, 1430 Modified Jacoby 2NT*, additional Bridge Rules with more examples, Four-Way Transfers with the range ask bid and more are included in this edition.



INTRODUCTION

The Two over One (2/1) Game Force bidding system is an improvement over the Standard American System that has been in effect and played by bridge players for many years. The advantage of the 2/1 system is that it allows the partnership to know that game is possible with only a single bid.

While many players “claim” they play 2/1, this is not the case. Many still follow the bidding structure of Standard American like bidding suits up-the-line and ignoring the Walsh club convention.

I have tried to change behavior in this book by presenting a series of bids geared toward the 2/1 bidding structure where simply stated means that any auction that starts with an opening one-bid that is followed with a response at the two level of a lower-ranking suit represents a game forcing bidding sequence. Also included is the bidding structure are Bergen, Reverse Bergen, and Combined Bergen major suit raises, inverted minor suit raises with crisscross and flip-flop, cue bidding, modified scroll bids, and many more methods not used in Standard American or Precision?

This book is about bridge that incorporates conventions that allow partnership's to reach game or slam. In this regard, I have incorporated modern methods for hand evaluation developed by Marty Bergen called the ADJUST-3 Method and Zar points, new bidding conventions like SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman) and Quest transfers, and an overview of “Bridge Rules and Laws” that I hope will improve your approach to the bidding structure you may use today.

My goal in writing this book is to provide a careful organization of topics so that one may easily follow the concepts unique to the 2/1 Game Force System. When opening a major, many of the 2/1 gadgets/conventions also apply to players who prefer the Precision Club approach to bidding.

The material is divided into chapters that illustrate bids by the opener, responder, and rebids by both. In addition, numerous bidding schedules are provided that summarizes standard responses and rebids with or without interference.

While many conventions are presented, those selected were chosen because they are designed to form a basic bidding structure that enhances the 2/1 Game Force System.

Bridge is a complicated game. I hope the approach I have taken is useful in the improvement of your game.



CHAPTER 1

HAND EVALUATION, OPENING BIDS, AND REBIDS

Hand Evaluation – Starter Points

The standard deck of cards for the game of bridge contains fifty-two cards. The cards are organized into suits - spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), and clubs (♣). The sequence of suits: spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs represent the rank order of the suits. Thus, spades is higher ranking than hearts; hearts is higher ranking than diamonds, etc. The major suits are spades and hearts and the minor suits are diamonds and clubs.

Each suit contains thirteen cards as follows:

A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

The Ace (A), King (K), Queen (Q), Jack (J), and 10 are called honor cards.

A bridge hand is created by dealing the fifty-two cards to four players, one at a time, so that each player has a total of thirteen cards. Partnerships at the game are the two persons sitting North-South and those sitting East-West. To evaluate the value of your hand, independent of rank, the standard/traditional method promoted by Charles Goren in the late 1940s is to assign values to the honor cards:

Honor	Value
Ace	4
King	3
Queen	2
Jack	1
Ten	0
<hr/>	
	10

The evaluation method is referred to as the 4-3-2-1-0 point count system. Using this method, one observes that a bridge deck contains a total of 40 High Card Points (HCP). Hence, an “average”

hand consists of 10 HCP. While the method of assignment is accurate, a computer analysis of bridge hands shows that the point count system (4-3-2-1-0) tends to undervalue aces and tens and to overvalue queens and jacks. Only kings are correctly valued. Using only HCP, a hand with at least 12 HCP is usually opened. More later!

To compensate for the over and under valuation using the Charles Gore standard or the traditional method, Marty Bergen, ten-time national champion, developed the ADJUST-3 Method. His 2008 book, "Slam Bidding Made Easier" published by Bergen Books, devotes the first 100 pages to his proposed method. Why adjust three? Because the accuracy of the HCP in a hand depends on the difference of overvalued and undervalued honors by the value of three.

Let's see how his process works. With a dealt hand, one goes through six simple steps to employ the ADJUST-3 Method:

Step 1: Add up your HCP using the table presented earlier (A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1, 10=0)

Step 2: Count the number of aces and 10s (undervalued honors).

Step 3: Count the number of queens and jacks (overvalued honors).

Step 4: Subtract the smaller number from the larger number.

Step 5: Evaluate the difference:

If between 0-2, make no adjustment

If within the range 3-5, adjust by 1 point

If 6+ (rare), adjust by 2 points

Step 6: If the number of aces and 10s is more, add;

If the number of queens and jacks is more, subtract

We next apply the method to a few examples.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK9	♠A67	♠A104	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥KQ54	♥10543	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦Q7	♦KJ67	♦A109
♣J67	♣5678	♣J678	♣K10	♣A

Hand 1: 10 HCP
 3 (undervalued) 10A10; 2 (overvalued) honors QJ
 3-2=1; no adjustment
 The adjusted total for the hand is 10

Hand 2: 12 HCP
 2 (undervalued) A10; 2 Js (overvalued)
 2-2= 0 no adjustment
 The adjusted total for the hand is 12

Hand 3: 12 HCP
 3 queens and jacks (overvalued); 1 ace (undervalued)
 3-1=2 no adjustment, but skewed in overvalued honors
 The adjusted total for the hand is 12

Hand 4: 11 HCP
 4 undervalued honors; 1 overvalued honor
 4-1=3; add 1 HCP; more overvalued honors
 The adjusted total for the hand is 12

Hand 5: 17 HCP
 4 undervalued honors; 1 overvalued honor
 4-1=3; add 1 HCP; more undervalued honors
 The adjusted total for the hand is 18

Using the ADJUST-3 method of hand evaluation, one may consider opening hands two- five. However, is there more to the story? Yes. Clearly, if a suit includes AKxxx and another suit contains Axxx, one may take two tricks with the first and only one with the second. Thus, in addition to HCP, one must consider suit length.

After the ADJUST-3 process, you must apply the following rule to modify your points for suit length; provided **the suit contains at least one honor card: A/K/Q/J/10.**

ADD FOR SUIT LENGTH

1 additional point for a 5-card suit
 2 additional points for a 6-card suit
 3 additional points for a 7-card suit etc.

In summary, add one additional point for each card in a suit over four that contains an honor. In addition to suit length, one has to consider dubious honors since they are OVER VALUED.

Subtract ONE point for hands with the following doubletons or singleton honors

DOUBLETONS: AJ, KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx (Quick tricks = 1, ½, or 0)

SINGLETONS: K, Q, J (½ or 0 Quick tricks)

Note that AK, AQ, Ax, and Kx are excluded honor doubletons; as is the A singleton.

Lastly, you must adjust for QUALITY SUITS - a suit with 3+ of the top five honor cards or 2 of the top 3.

ADD ONE ADDITIONAL POINT FOR EACH QUALITY SUIT.

In summary, one proceeds through the following steps to obtain the total value of a hand.

- Step 1: HCP
- Step 2: Adjust-3 (add or subtract)
- Step 3: Suit Length (add for length)
- Step 4: Dubious Honors (subtract)
- Step 5: Suit Quality (add)
- Step 6: Total Starting Points

Completing steps 1-5, one has what Bergen calls “Starting Points.” **To open the bidding in the game of bridge (one of a suit), a hand is opened if it has at least twelve Starting Points in the first seat.** There is more to a hand than simply High Card Points (HCP).

One final comment, in a suit contract, if your shape is 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2, or 6-3-2-2, or 7-2-2-2, you should downgrade your hand by one point for “flatness.”

If the shape is 4-3-3-3 and one is considering a no-trump bid, also subtract one from the total Starting Points.

Returning to Hands 1-5, we apply the process outlined above.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK10	♠A67	♠A104	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥KQ54	♥10543	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦Q7	♦KJ67	♦A109
♣J67	♣5678	♣J68	♣K10	♣A

Hand 1:	HCP	10
	Adjust -3	0
	Suit Length	add 1
	Dubious Honors	none
	Suit Quality	add 1
	Starting Points	12

Hand 2:	HCP	12
	Adjust -3	0
	Suit Length	none
	Dubious Honors	none
	Suit Quality	none
	Starting Points	12
	Flatness	-1
	Starting Points	11

Hand 3:	HCP	12
	Adjust -3	0
	Suit Length	none
	Dubious Honors	subtract 1
	Suit Quality	none
	Starting Points	11
Hand 4:	HCP	11
	Adjust -3	1
	Suit Length	none
	Dubious Honors	none (Kx excluded)
	Suit Quality	none
	Starting Points	12
Hand 5:	HCP	17
	Adjust -3	1
	Suit Length	add 2
	Dubious Honors	none
	Suit Quality	none
	Starting Points	20

Counting only HCP, one would have opened hands 2, 3, and 5; however, using Bergen's method, one opens 1, 4 and 5. Also observe that these hands have at least TWO QUICK TRICKS.

BASIC RULE: Open a bridge hand one of a suit with at least 11/12-21 Starting Points and two quick tricks (in the first or second seat). The rule is relaxed in the third seat, more on this later. And NEVER open a hand without two quick tricks. Why? Because partner knows that he/she can count on you for two tricks if you opened the bidding. This is useful information in competitive bidding.

The first step at the bridge table is that all players evaluate their hands; the process begins by the person designated DEALER. The person with 11/12 Starting Points opens the auction by bidding (there are exceptions called pre-emptive bids and strong two-level bids to be discussed later). As the auction progresses, the value of your hand may increase or decrease depending upon what you learn from your partner and your opponents. To keep the process simple at this juncture, suppose one person has a sufficient number of "starting points" to open a hand one of a suit with no interference.

Many players will open a hand with only 11 starter points (seats one and two). This is a modern day practice since it is important to get your bid in as soon as possible. However, one must have 2 quick tricks (a hand with two aces or AK in a suit). Never open a balanced 4333 11 point hand even with AK A.

Another facet of the game one must consider when bidding is vulnerability. In general, there are four situations. The two pairs are non-vulnerable, two pairs are vulnerable, one pair is vulnerable, and the other pair is non-vulnerable. The number of tricks won or lost is more critical when vulnerable. More on this later!

Opening No-trump Bids

Having sufficient Starting Points to open, the first goal is to describe your hand to your partner. When you open, you may have a balanced hand, an unbalanced hand, or a semi-balanced hand. A hand with a singleton or a void is by definition unbalanced (35.7%). The patterns that do not contain a singleton or a void are 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, and 4-3-3-3 (47.6%) and are called balanced hands; semi-balanced hands are hands with the following patterns: 5-4-2-2, 6-3-2-2, and 7-2-2-2 (16.7%). A frequency table of hand patterns follows.

Common Hand Patterns Arranged

in Order of Frequency*

Pattern Percentage

4 - 4 - 3 - 2	21.55
5 - 3 - 3 - 2	15.52
5 - 4 - 3 - 1	12.93
5 - 4 - 2 - 2	10.58
4 - 3 - 3 - 3	10.54
6 - 3 - 2 - 2	5.64
6 - 4 - 2 - 1	4.70
6 - 3 - 3 - 1	3.45
5 - 5 - 2 - 1	3.17
4 - 4 - 4 - 1	2.99
7 - 3 - 2 - 1	1.88
6 - 4 - 3 - 0	1.33
5 - 4 - 4 - 0	1.24
5 - 5 - 3 - 0	0.90
6 - 5 - 1 - 1	0.71
6 - 5 - 2 - 0	0.65
7 - 2 - 2 - 2	0.51
7 - 4 - 1 - 1	0.39
7 - 4 - 2 - 0	0.36
7 - 3 - 3 - 0	0.27
All Others	0.69

* Observe that over 33% of the hand patterns contain a singleton or a void so do not be surprised when they appear.

When you open the bidding, you first want to communicate to you partner whether you have a balanced or non-balanced (unbalanced or semi-balanced) hand. However, if the semi-balanced hand has honor cards (AKQJ) in two of its doubletons, it may be considered balanced. When hands are balanced, one usually opens the hand with an opening no-trump (NT) bid. Because roughly 50 percent of the hands dealt are balanced, many hands are opened using the no-trump bidding scheme. In addition, it is used to describe rebids by an opener when bidding one of a suit. When bidding no-trump you are saying to your partner, I have a balanced hand; suit bids often convey non-balanced hands.

Playing bridge the 2/1 way, the no-trump ranges for NT bids and rebids follow.

Opening No-trump Bids

1NT = 14/15-17 Starting Points

2NT = 20-21 Starting Points

No-trump Rebids

1NT = 11/12-15 Starting Points

2NT = 16-18 Starting Points

Opener may make an artificial and forcing opening bid of two clubs and then rebid no-trump with 22-24 Starting Points; more on this in Chapter 4. Interference is common over 1NT openings; bidding strategies are discussed in Chapter 9.

While some will open 3NT with 25-27 Starting Points, this will not be the case in this book. We will use the Gambling 3NT* bid. Playing 2/1 the Gambling 3NT* bid shows a solid seven-card minor suit and denies holding an ace or a king, in the third or fourth seat it may include an outside ace honor of called the ACOL Gambling 3NT* bid, if the seven card suit is allowed to be any major or minor suit it is called the Kantar Gambling 3NT* bid; more on opening 2♣ and 3NT* in Chapter 4. The "*" denotes that the ACBL requires that the bid be alerted.

An opening bid of 1NT usually shows stoppers in at least three suits where a minimum stopper is defined as Qxx. However, never open 1NT with Jxx. Some agree not to open 1NT with a worthless major doubleton (xx).

When opening 2NT, you should have all suits stopped; however, some may open it with an honor doubleton, hoping his partner also has a stopped. To reach game in a no-trump contract, the bid is 3NT (for example, the bidding sequence may be simply 1NT-2NT-3NT), both hands combined usually require 26 Starting Points; however, with long suits and points balanced between the two hands, only twenty-four Starting Points may work. To make a game in no-trump, you must take a minimum of NINE TRICKS out of thirteen.

If you take twelve tricks (the bid is 6NT), you have what is known as small slam. To make a small slam usually requires 33 Starting Points in the two hands. And, if you take all thirteen tricks (the bid is 7NT), you have taken all of the tricks, a grand slam; to make a grand slam normally requires approximately 37 Starting Points. The goal of a partnership when bidding is to determine whether or not one has enough points for a partial no-trump contract, a game no-trump contract, a small or grand slam contract.

Let's apply our hand evaluation methodology with a few examples; yes, it applies when opening a major or no-trump.

- Step 1: HCP
- Step 2: Adjust-3
- Step 3: Add for suit length
- Step 4: Subtract for dubious honor doubletons/singletons
- Step 5: Add for suit quality and **DO NOT subtract for flatness in NT**
- Step 6: Total Starting Points

Example N1	Example N2	Example N3	Example N4
♠KJ	♠KJ6	♠K9	♠98
♥AQ4	♥A104	♥AQ5	♥AKJ2
♦A108	♦AQ8	♦K8	♦102
♣Q10854	♣AK96	♦K109874	♣AKJ42

Example N1

- Step 1: 16HCP
- Step 2: [Undervalued Honors = 4 – Overvalued Honors = 3] = 1; no adjustment
- Step 3: Add 1 for suit length
- Step 4: Subtract 1 for dubious doubleton
- Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality
- Step 6: Total: 16 Starting Points

Open the bidding 1NT (balanced 5-3-3-2)

Example N2

- Step 1: 21 HCP
- Step 2: [Undervalued Honors = 4 – Overvalued Honors = 3] = 1; no adjustment
- Step 3: Add 0 for suit length
- Step 4: No dubious doubletons
- Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality
- Step 6: Flatness -1
- Step 7: Total: 20 Starting Points

Open the bidding 2NT (balanced 4-3-3-3)

Example N3

- Step 1: 15 HCP
- Step 2: [Undervalued Honors = 2 – Overvalued Honors = 1] = 1; no adjustment
- Step 3: Add 2 for suit length
- Step 4: No dubious doubletons
- Step 5: Add 0 for suit quality
- Step 6: Flatness -1
- Step 7: Total: 16 Starting Points

Open the bidding 1NT (semi-balanced 6-3-2-2)

Example N4

Step 1: 16 HCP

Step 2: [Undervalued Honors = 3 – Overvalued Honors = 2] = 1; no adjustment

Step 3: Add 1 for suit length

Step 4: Subtract 0 for dubious doubletons

Step 5: Add 2 for suit quality (hearts and clubs)

Step 6: Flatness-1

Step 7: Total: 18 Starting Points

With nineteen Starting Points, you should not open the bidding 1NT (if partner is a passed hand; some may open 1NT with eighteen starting point in the fourth seat). **With twenty points, you would not open the hand 2NT when holding two worthless doubletons and good suits. You must open the bidding one of a suit.**

Before discussing suit bids, one needs to understand what it means to “take tricks” in no-trump. To set our ideas, suppose you open 1NT and all other players at the table pass.

You have won the contract (1NT), and to succeed, you must take seven tricks. The first six tricks are called your book; hence to make a 1NT contract you must take your book plus one trick. Similarly, for a contract of 3NT, you must take your book of six tricks plus three tricks or nine tricks.

To capture tricks in no-trump, each card in a suit is of decreasing value from the ace down to the 2 (A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2). However, the values are only meaningful for the suit led. If you lead, for example a club, only clubs are played and four cards constitute a trick. The highest valued card in the club suit is the ♣A. When you are unable to follow suit, you may discard any card; however, if you get in the lead later, you must be careful when discarding. One generally discards cards in other suits with low value.

Because there are no trumps in “no-trump contracts,” they are the most difficult contracts to make. Tricks are only won with a suit led. To establish tricks in no-trump, you want to take advantage of long suits since these are the source of tricks.

Let’s look at an example. You have the following hand: ♠KQ ♥A10 ♦AKQ10753 ♣KQ and your contract is 3NT. In this hand, you have one spade trick, one heart trick, seven diamond tricks, and one club trick or ten tricks (ten potential tricks without a heart lead); hence, you may make 4NT. Bidding only 3NT you can make your contract plus an overtrick. In duplicate bridge, 3NT is worth 400 points if your side is not vulnerable and 600 points if your side is vulnerable. Each overtrick is worth a score of thirty so that you have made either 430 or 630 points for the 3NT contract.

If you fail to make your contract, the value of a trick lost depends on vulnerability. Fifty points if you lose a trick non-vulnerable and 100 points if you lose a trick vulnerable. And, if the opponents do not think you can make a contract, your contract may be doubled. This doubles the values of the tricks lost. Hence, when bidding a partial game (1NT = score of 90 or 2NT =

score of 120), game or slam contract, one must consider the “risk” of not making the contract. Conversely, if you make a doubled contract, it also has a higher value when doubled and made. And, a contract may be re-doubled if you believe you can make the contract. When bidding, you must consider vulnerability.

Opening One of a Suit (Major or Minor)

When opening one of a suit (club, diamond, heart, or spade), one usually has 12 Starting Points or 11 with AK and A with 2 quick tricks. Even though no-trump bidding was discussed first, the first priority in bidding is to find a fit in a major suit. A fit is defined as at least eight cards for the partnership; the best fit between two hands is 5-3, or 4-4; however, a 6-2 fit also works. In general, it is usually better to play in a 4-4 fit than a 5-3 fit since this allows one to trump in either your hand or dummy.

Contracts may be played in a major suit, no-trump, or a minor suit. Because of its simplicity, we considered no-trumps bidding first. A game in no-trump only requires taking nine tricks. A major suit game (four spades or four hearts) requires making ten tricks. A minor suit game (five clubs and five diamonds) requires making eleven tricks, book plus five; almost, the same as a small slam (one trick short of 12).

The number of total points required for a major suit game is the same as that for 3NT, from 24-26 points; while the points required for a minor suit game is 29 points. The value of each game vulnerable is respectively 600 points for no-trump, 620 points for a major suit game, and 600 points for a minor suit game. With this knowledge, the first priority is to reach a game contract in a major, then no-trump, and lastly a minor.

What about tricks in suit contracts? Again, four cards played constitute a trick; however, the values of the cards change with suit contracts. Now, the boss suit is the trump suit, spades, hearts, diamonds, or clubs. If spades is the trump suit, and let's say one leads the ace in another suit (say the ♣A), it may not win a trick since it may be trumped with ♠2, if a person is void in clubs. Thus when playing in a trump contract losers, low valued cards in a non-trump suit, may be trumped to win tricks.

In trump contracts, 4-4 fits in the major suit allow one to trump in either hand, it is superior to 5-3 fits. You have less ruffing value with only three trumps.

Playing the 2/1 game force method, with a five-card or longer five-card major suit and 11/12-21 Starting Points, one should bid one of a major (with a non-balanced hand). If one has two five-card majors, the higher ranking major (spades) is opened, not hearts. Ideal hand patterns for major suit opening are hands with the patterns 5-5-x-x, 5-4-x-x, and 5-3-3-2.

A problem hand frequently encountered is the balanced hand with a 5-3-3-2 pattern when one has sufficient values for opening 1NT and you are 5-3 in the majors. Do you open it with one of a major or with sufficient values 1NT? While there are special circumstances when opening 1NT is better; in general, one would almost always prefer to open the hand one of a major. However, you may not always get a top score. Making 4NT is better than making four of a major

since 430/630 is better than 420/620 called Match Points (MPs) scoring. In team games one uses International Match Points (IMPs) scoring where the strategy is to bid the safest game, because there is little difference.

Generally, you will score better by playing a 4-3-3-3 hand pattern opposite a 4-3-3-3 in no-trump than in a 4-4 major suit fit. A 3-3-3-4 pattern opposite a 5-3-3-2 pattern is better in no-trump and not the 5-3 major suit fit! To find these hand patterns require advanced bidding methods. For now, my advice is to always open the hand one of a major given the choice.

A similar problem occurs when you are 5-4-2-2. Do you communicate values or shape? For example, suppose the distribution was as follows: ♠AK92 ♥AKJ42 ♦102 ♣98. Do you open the hand 1NT or 1♥? Again, there is no clear cut answer. Some would open the hand 1♠ and others may open the hand 1NT. The risk when your partner is weak is that if you open it 1NT you may miss your major suit fit.

Alternatively, one may use the Flannery Convention or the Extra Shape Flannery Convention. And if you are 4-4-4-1, you might consider the Mini Roman Convention. These conventions are reviewed in Chapter 2.

Not having a five-card major, one must bid a minor suit (clubs and diamonds) with 11/12-21 Starting Points.

(1)With two minors of unequal length, open the bidding with the longer minor, regardless of strength. Here, one must be careful if one is 5-4 in clubs and diamonds. Depending on the strength of your hand, less than seventeen starter points, one may open one diamond to avoid a reverse rebid. This will be discussed more fully shortly (briefly, bidding one club, followed by a rebid say two diamonds, partner cannot return to your first bid suit at the two-level called a reverse (17+ points) ; this is not the case if you bid one diamond followed by two clubs.

(2)With two three-card minors, open the bidding with the stronger minor. If approximately equal, open the bidding with 1♣. If not, for example you hold ♦AKQ and ♣564 open the hand 1♦, the stronger suit. To “fool” the opponents, keep them from leading the weaker suit if you get to a no-trump contract, some may open 1♣. But, be careful.

(3)With two four-card minors, one opens one diamond. However, if clubs are significantly stronger, some will open one club.

(4)When one is 5-5 in the minors or 6-5 (clubs-diamonds), a difficult decision presents itself. Open the higher ranking minor if 5-5 or 6-5 (diamonds-clubs). When you are 6-5 (club-diamonds), open the bidding 1♦ unless you have seventeen Starting Points.

With hand patterns [4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, and 3-2-3-5 (♠-♥-♦-♣)] one three-card minor or a five-card minor, always open the hand one of a minor, unless of course the hand evaluation process suggests no-trump. A few examples:

M1 ♠AK43	♥J876	♦A1082	♣K
M2 ♠A1054	♥A897	♦A5	♣Q75
M3 ♠A98	♥K54	♦A103	♣Q754
M4 ♠A98	♥K5	♦QJ103	♣QJ43
M5 ♠8	♥987	♦AQ105	♣AQ987
M6 ♠KJ98	♥AQ976	♦J2	♣Q2

For hand M1, you have fourteen Starting Points (15 HCP + no adjustment-1 dubious king) and no five-card major, open 1♦.

For hand M2, you have fifteen Starting Points [14 HCP+ 1 adjustments (4 aces and 10s -1 queen=3 so add 1)]. Open 1NT.

For hand M3, you have thirteen Starting Points, open the hand 1♣.

For hand M4, you have two four-card minors; open the higher ranking minor (1♦) with thirteen Starting Points (13HCP+1 for quality suit).

For hand M5, clubs are longer than diamonds and you have only fourteen Starting Points (12 HCP+1 long suit+1 quality suit). Hence, open the hand 1♦. You have not told the truth about your shape, but you will not mislead your partner regarding hand strength by reversing – do not open 1♣.

For hand M6, you are 5-4 in the majors with twelve Starting Points; open the hand 1♥. Playing Flannery, you would also open 2♦*, and bid 3♥* to show shape and values (see Chapter 2). Playing Extra shape Flannery if partner bids 2NT*, respond 3♥* to show a heart minimum opening. Partner will pass or bid game (see Chapter 2).

Hand Evaluation - Dummy Points

When partner opens one of a major and you have three-card support, you have found a fit in the major. If you win the major suit contract, you will become Dummy and partner will play the hand. When you have a short-suit or two, you must reevaluate your hand.

The dummy hand reevaluation process is used when partner opens a major; it does not apply to minor suit or no-trump openings. Conversely, if opener opens a minor and partner (responder) bids a major, opener must reevaluate his Starting Points with a major suit fit. Thus, the reevaluation process may be done by responder when opener opens a major and a fit is found or by opener when opening a minor and partner bids a major (with 4+ cards) and opener has a four-card major, a fit has also been found. The “dummy” reevaluation process may be employed by opener or responder.

The short-suit Dummy Points are evaluated as follows:

Doubleton	1 point each, always
Singleton	2 points each, but 3 each with 4+ trump
Void	equal to the value of the number of trumps in your hand

When considering Starting Points, short-suit points are not counted (**except for the honor doubletons Ax, Kx, AQ, AK and the singleton A** – recall that the dubious doubletons lose value **AJ, KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx as do K, Q, and J singletons**).

Shortness Dummy Points is not helpful in no-trump contracts, and you do not know if your partnership will find a major suit fit. Thus, never count for “dummy” shortness when you open the bidding. However, with a fit in a major suit, this is not the case.

Dummy Points = Starter Points + Dummy Short-Suit Points

Let’s look at a few examples, when your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following hands.

Hand A: ♠ AJ62 ♥ 6542 ♦ void ♣ AK987

Hand B: ♠ AQ67 ♥ 678 ♦ AK10432 ♣ void

Hand C: ♠ KQJ32 ♥ 1098 ♦7 ♣ J987

Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣AQ1084

Hand E: ♠ 10986 ♥ K ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

First, you must calculate starter points. After calculating Starting Points, add to the total Dummy Points. The analysis for the five hands follows.

Hand A: ♠ AJ62 ♥ 6542 ♦ void ♣ AK987

Hand A: 12 HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 2 – Overvalued Honors = 1] = 1; no adjustment + 1 for suit length, no dubious doubletons, no points for suit quality; hence, the total number of starter points = 13. To establish Dummy Points with a fit, add four points for the void. There are no singletons or doubletons. Thus in Hand (A) now has seventeen Dummy Points.

Hand B: ♠ AQ67 ♥ 678 ♦ AK10432 ♣ void

Hand B: 13 HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 3 – Overvalued Honors = 1] = 2; no adjustment + 2 for suit length, no dubious doubleton, 1 point for suit quality; hence, the total number of starter points = 16. However, you have one doubleton (1 more point) and a void (3 more points). Thus, for Hand (B) we now have twenty Dummy Points.

Hand C: ♠ KQJ32 ♥ 1098 ♦7 ♣ J987

Hand C: 7 HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 1 – Overvalued Honors =3] = -2; no adjustment + 1 for length + 0 for dubious doubleton honors + 1 for quality suits. Hand (C) has nine starter points. With five trumps, the singleton is worth three points; the hand has twelve Dummy Points.

Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣AQ1084

Hand D: 13HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 3 – Overvalued Honors =1] = 2; no adjustment + 1 length points + 0 for dubious doubletons (note that the AK does not qualify) + 1 for suit quality. Total starter points = 15. Hand (D) has two doubletons, add 2 points. The total for the hand, Dummy Points = 16.

Hand E: ♠ 10986 ♥ K ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

Hand E: 5 HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 1 – Overvalued Honors = 1] = 0; no adjustment + 1 length point – 1 for the dubious king singleton + no quality; total of five starter points. With the singleton king and four trumps, add 3. Dummy Points = 5 + 3 = 8.

Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

Hand F: 12 HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 2 – Overvalued Honors = 4] = -2; no adjustment + 1 length point - 0 dubious honor doubleton + 1 quality suits. Total Starting Points = 14. Do not add 1 point for the doubleton spade — you do not have a fit. The total number of Dummy Points = 15. In review:

Hand A = 13 starter points + 4 shortness points = 17 Dummy Points

Hand B = 16 starter points + 4 shortness points = 20 Dummy Points

Hand C = 09 starter points + 3 shortness points = 12 Dummy Points

Hand D = 15 starter points + 1 shortness points = 16 Dummy Points

Hand E = 05 starter points + 3 shortness points = 08 Dummy Points

Hand F = 14 starter points + 1 shortness points = 15 Dummy Points

When responding to your partner, you always must re-evaluate your starter points and convert them to DUMMY POINTS with a fit.

Minor suit Dummy Points

With a minor suit opening (one club or one diamond), the reevaluation process is considerably different. When partner opens in a minor suit, you do not know if the length of the suit is 5+, 4, or 3. Furthermore, game in a minor is often difficult to make. You do not in general support a minor suit opening with only four cards. Instead, you should show a four-card major suit. Remember, your goal is to discover a major suit game which may happen if you and partner are 4-4 in the majors. When partner opens a minor or no-trump, **Dummy Points=Starting Points.**

The bidding goals have a hierarchy: (1) Major suit fit, (2) No-trump, and (3) Minor suit. **Never reevaluate your hand with a minor suit opening or no-trump. Shortness does not count until a fit is established in a suit (major or minor); however, suit length is counted.**

Responses to one-level major suit bids

Game forcing Responses

When responding to a major suit opening, remember that 24-26 points between your two hands will produce a major suit game, your first priority. When partner opens a major, partner has 11/12 Starting Points. If you have a fit (often exactly three cards) and upon reevaluation of your hand have at least **thirteen Dummy Points**, you have a game in the major. Your goal with 13+ points is to show a fit with a 2/1 game forcing response. The game force bid forces partner (opener) to bid; it is an absolute force to game for the partnership.

A game forcing response by responder is accomplished by showing a new suit at the two-level without jumping or skipping a bidding level. After a major suit opening, and the OPPONENTS HAVE PASSED and YOU ARE NOT A PASSED HAND, the 2/1 game force bids are:

Opening bid	2/1 Game Forcing Responses
1♠	2♣/2♦ (4+cards), 2♥ (5+cards)
1♥	2♣/2♦ (4+cards)

Note that the bid of 2♠ as a response to an opening bid of a heart is not a 2/1 game forcing response. This is because the bid of two spades skips a level of bidding (as we will see later, it denotes a weak hand). In addition, the response of 1♠ to 1♥ is not a 2/1 game force bid. The response of 1♠ over the bid of 1♥ shows a hand with at least four spades and 5/6+ Starting Points. The true value of the responders hand is only known through subsequent rebids by the responder.

When does the 2/1 bid not apply? (1) If the responder is a passed hand or (2) if responder's Right Hand Opponent (RHO) interferes with an overcall bid or a double!

The game forcing bid is always made in a suit with 3/4 cards and is **forcing** to game. The opener may not pass; if opener passes it is called a forcing pass since your side has established a game force bidding sequence.

Let's look at an example using Hands 5 and F above for opener and responder, respectively assuming no interference.

Opener	Hand 5: ♠K78 ♥AQ9852 ♦A109 ♣A
Responder	Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

Because Hand 5 has a six-card major and twenty Starting Points, one opens 1♥.

Hearing the heart bid, responder has a fit and fourteen Starting Points; however, upon reevaluation of his hand, has fifteen Dummy Points, enough for a 2/1 game force bid. With five clubs, the game force bid is 2♣ (note that we are in the slam range).

In the previous example, responder has three-card support and fifteen Dummy Points, a balanced hand and the 5-5-3-2 hand pattern. At this point, the opener does not know about the heart fit. All he knows is that the partnership has a game somewhere. Rebids by opener are needed to establish where the game will be played, usually in the major suit or in no-trump.

With exactly three-card support and a balanced hand with 13-15 Dummy Points, is there an alternative bid that would set the game contract with one bid? The answer is yes, it is part of the Bergen Raise system of bids. With a balanced hand and exactly three-card trump support (some may use this bid with only two-card support; in general this is not a good idea since it makes it difficult for partner to decide between a suit contract and no-trump), bid 3NT*. Partner now knows you have an upper limit for your bid and three-card support. His rebid depends on the structure of his hand. He will either pass 3NT* or bid 4♥. Given your (worthless) spade doubleton, the safer contract is 4♥, but it may not yield the best result. Because of the nature of the bid, 3NT* must be alerted (hence the asterisk *). If the opponents ask, you must explain the bid “exactly three-card support and 13-15 dummy/support points (not HCP). In some cases, you may want to play in no-trump, even though you have a 5-3 major suit fit.

We look at an example from Ron Klinger (2003), “100 Winning Duplicate Tips” published by Orion Press. In this example, south is dealer and with thirteen Starting Points (HCP + quality + 2 long suits) and opens the bidding 1♥. North having three-card support and sixteen Dummy Points (15 Starting Points + 1 shortness point) partner bids 3NT*. The hand patterns for south are 2-5-5-1 and north are 4-3-2-4, clear patterns for a suit contract, right?

Dealer East N-S vulnerable.

		♠	KQ106		
		♥	1074		
		♦	Q4		
		♣	AK106		
♠	987	N W E S		♠	AJ52
♥	65			♥	J98
♦	K986			♦	A3
♣	QJ852			♣	9742
		♠	43		
		♥	AKQ32		
		♦	J10752		
		♣	3		

Playing hearts, with a diamond lead by west or a spade lead followed by a diamond switch will beat four hearts if the defense finds the diamond ruff. With any other lead, declarer can succeed in four hearts, but the winning sequence is not straightforward. Try it! A three no-trump contract is cold and made easily. With better than two stoppers in the black suits by north, 3NT is the

better contract even though you have the 5-3 major suit fit. The no-trump contract succeeds due to the double minor suit fits in the hands.

In general, when one finds a major suit fit, do not play in no-trump unless you have fast tricks and solid suits. Slow tricks favor a suit contract.

Let's consider another example using Hands 1 and F.

Opener	Hand 1: ♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10987♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098

Hand 1 from our analysis has twelve Starting Points (10 HCP + 1 length + 1 quality suit) and so would be opened 1♠. However, south has only two spades, but fourteen Dummy Points and bids 2♣. Again, the opener does not know whether the contract will be in a major or no-trumps. Only that they have a game contract. Where the contract is played depends on the opener's rebid. With a singleton, he would prefer a suit contract.

Jacoby 2NT* (forcing to game, with perhaps slam interest)

Playing 2/1 game force, we imposed the restriction that one have 13+ Dummy Points and exactly three trumps and a non-balanced hand. With exactly three trumps and a balanced hand, one bids 3NT*. What happens if you have four-card support and 13+ points?

In this case, the bid becomes 2NT*, called the (Oswald) Jacoby's 2NT* bid. There are many versions and modifications of the Jacoby 2NT* bid. Thus, one should always explain to the opponents the meaning of the bid; and it must always be alerted.

The bid of 2NT* in response to partner's opening bid of one of a major most often shows four trumps and 13+ Dummy Points.

It is not a bid to suggest no-trump; you almost always want to play in the major. Let's look at an example using Hands 1 and D.

Opener	Hand 1: ♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣ AQ1084

With a five-card major and twelve Starting Points, opener bids 1♠. Partner (Hand D) has sixteen Dummy Points and four cards in the major. He must bid 2NT*. The two hands have twenty-eight points between them; hence, game in the major is certain. However, is it close to slam!

We will discuss slam bidding in Chapter 3, after introducing the reevaluation of opener's hand called "Bergen Points" and then explaining rebids by responder.

In this book, we have said that 2/1 game forcing bids to a major suit opening require exactly three-card support. Some may relax this requirement by partnership agreement to include 3/4+ cards support.

Why make this adjustment? Because we already know that a 2/1 bid is a game force bid, and it ensures a major suit game. Why waste the Jacoby 2NT* bid (with 4-card support) to restate that you have game? Use the Jacoby bid to investigate slam. Hence, you may increase the point requirements for the Jacoby 2NT* bid and use it for slam investigation. **The bid requires four-card support for the major, but with 15/16+ Dummy Points.**

As you develop your game, you may want to consider this change in strategy. You should discuss this change with your partner, since most players (the masses) still use the original version with 13+ Dummy Points, even when using the 2/1 game force system (some even use only 12 HCP).

Splinter Bids

The 2/1 game force bids and the Jacoby 2NT* bid are two bidding tools used to reach a game contract in a major and to investigate slam. Another type of bid used to investigate game and perhaps slams are splinter bids. Splinter bids show two important things, a fit in the major (**usually four trumps; however, some again only require three**) and shortness (a singleton or void) in a non-trump, side suit. To employ a splinter bid, you again must have 13+ Dummy Points. With shortness, a game in a major suit may be realized with as few as twenty-two points and a slam with as few as twenty-eight points. Thus, they are powerful tools in reaching a game or slam.

There are two kinds of splinter bids (1) direct splinters that are used by most partnerships and the newer version called (2) concealed/ambiguous splinters that are yet another aspect of Bergen Raises and the 2/1 system supported in this book. Both will be discussed.

In general, a splinter bid is a jump in a new suit, shows shortness with support in partner's bid major suit, promises four trumps, and is forcing; suggesting a slam.

Direct Splinters are shown by a **DOUBLE JUMP** in the shortness suit other than partner's major. It is a game forcing raise in the major suit and shows shortness (singleton/void). The Direct Splinter bids are defined as follows (*=alert).

1♥ - double jump to 3♠*/4♣*/4♦* shows SHORTNESS in spades, clubs, and diamonds.

The corresponding jump bids for the opening of one spade are: 1♠ - double jump to 4♥*/4♣*/4♦* shows SHORTNESS in hearts, clubs, and diamonds.

While shortness is important, it only has value when the information conveyed to the opener allows the opener to evaluate how well the two hands fit, knowing exactly where the shortness resides. An example will help to clarify this point. Consider the two hands:

Opener	♠AKJ83	♥KQ104	♦567	♣7
Responder	♠Q762	♥7	♦AJ42	♣A567

With spades as trump, opener must lose one heart and one or two diamonds, depending on the lie of the cards. But, suppose we switch the red suits in responder's hand (dummy) and observe the difference.

Switched Hand	♠Q762	♥AJ42	♦7	♣A567
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In the first case, opener's heart honors are duplicated by responder's singleton; both parties prevent two heart losers. In the second case, the defenders hold the diamond honors AKQ of diamonds, but only the ace is useful to the opponents. What can one conclude from this example?

- (1) If a singleton or void is opposite high card concentrations, it has less value.
- (2) If a singleton or void is opposite partner's low, losing cards, with high values more usefully placed, it has effective value.

Rule: An effective holding is an asset while duplicated holdings are a liability. Or, more importantly, you want your losers opposite shortness to allow losers to be trumped.

While shortness knowledge may help you to reach game (when of value), it also tells your opponents exactly where your weakness resides. Sophisticated defenders love splinters! They will lead the trump suit and try to off-set your tempo for making the hand. However, many times it is not shortness, **but the degree of fit, that is most important.**

Let's look at two examples where opener again opens 1♠.

Opener (1)	♠ Q9874	♥ KJ2	♦ K107	♣ A6
Opener (2)	♠KQ1062	♥AK52	♦AK72	♣ void

With either hand, opener has no weakness, and if partner splinters, it has little value; a direct splinter bid by his partner will only help the opponents. Is there a better approach to the direct splinter? Yes, and it is called the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids, part of the System of Bergen Raises, and they work as follows:

1♠ - pass - 3♥* is a single jump and 1♥ - pass - 3♠* a double jump in the other major!

The bid must be alerted; it indicates a singleton or void "somewhere" with 13+ Dummy Points and four-card trumps support.

The advantage of the bid is clear; the opponents only know that shortness exists, but not where. Depending on the nature of opener's hand, opener may not need the shortness information to proceed to game or slam.

When the opener has a need to know about shortness, he uses the relay asking bids: 3NT*, after the bid of 3♠* and the relay asking bid of 3♥* after 3♠*, the next sequential bid. **The sequential asking bids are called scroll asking bids.** They are asking: where is your singleton or void (the asterisk (*) denote an alert)?

The scroll asking bid and responses follow. If the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT* is the scroll ask or 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠* is the scroll ask. The responses after the 3NT* scroll asks are: 4♣*, 4♦*, 4♥* which shows singletons in clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠* are: 3NT*=♣, 4♣*=♦, and 4♦*=♥, the suit below the singleton (submarine-like bids).

- **If you do not like the “submarine” bids, one may instead use the bids: 3NT*=♠, 4♣*=♣, and 4♦*=♦; this makes the two options more consistent where clubs and diamonds are directly bid and the remaining bids show the other major singleton! Or, after 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠* (ask) the responses are 4♣*=♣, and 4♦*=♦, and 4♥*=♥, or one may use 3NT* to show singleton/void in hearts.**
- One may substitute the bid of 4♥* to show a spade singleton/void (with opening 1♥ instead of bidding 4♠*) after the 3NT* asking bid when one has no slam interest. This allows opener to pass or use 4♣ as the 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) with kickback discussed in Chapter 3.

We have shown how one may use 2/1 game force bids, Jacoby 2NT*, and splinters to move toward game in a major. All these techniques are tools to force one to reach the goal of a game or slam in a major suit. **How do you decide which to use with 13+ Dummy Points and a 4-card fit.** With 17+ Dummy Points, use the Jacoby 2NT* bid over the splinter bid since the splinter bid takes up more bidding space.

Why Splinter Bids Work

Short Suit Total (SST) Rule

When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows 3/4 card support for the major suit bid and usually 13+ Working HCP and a SST=0-3 for both partners. One applies the SST Rule.

Opener adds his HCP to 13

With 19-21 HCP then 13-SST = # of tricks possible

If the SST in both hands = 2, then we have 11 tricks with a singleton in both hands, with a **void and singleton** 13 - (SST=1) =12. **A SLAM!**

If the total HCP= 22-24 in both hands, you gain a trick. So, with singletons in both hands 13 - (SST=2) + 1=12! And with 25-27 you gain 2 tricks.

NOTE: For that unusual hand with 2 voids, 13-0=13, a grand Slam!

Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgen developed this SST Rule in their book: "I FOUGHT THE LAW of Total Tricks" (2004), Published by Mikeworks.

Questions about Splinter Bids

1. Can you use a splinter after a 2/1 bid? Yes, these are called delayed splinter bids; for example 1♥-2♦; 2♥-4♣*. Responder has 3/4-card support for hearts and 13+ Dummy Points. With delayed splinters are direct splinters showing the shortness suit.
2. Can one splinter with a singleton ace? Yes.
3. When the opponents splinter, what is the best lead? Lead trump.
4. How do you show a void? Bid the splinter suit twice or use Scroll bids.
5. Can the opener splinter? Yes, for example 1♣-1♥; then 3♦* by opener shows fours hearts with 16+ Bergen Points. Note that 2♦bid is a reverse showing 17+ points while 2♠ is a strong jump shift showing 19+ Starting Points.
6. A splinter bid for partner's suit always takes precedence over auto/self-splinter which we next discuss.

Auto/Self-Splinter Bids

Auto/Self-Splinter is a name for a splinter bid when the splinter bidder is setting not his partner's suit, but his own. Again the bid must be alerted.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥ (transfer)
2♠	4♣*(singleton/void)

Responder is setting spades as trump.

Opener	Responder
1♣	(may be short) 1♥
1NT	3♠*(singleton/void)

Responder is setting diamonds as trump.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1NT
3♥ (Singleton/Void)	??

Opener with the Auto/Self Splinter is setting diamonds as trump. Responder can bid 3NT, 4♦, or show a long club suit.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
3♠*(Auto/Self-Splinter)	4♥

Note that the bid of 2♠ would be a reverse so the jump reverse is an Auto/Self-Splinter which set hearts as trump.

Some only play Auto/Self Splinters by the opening bidder when the opener's bid is NOT natural (e.g. clubs may be short). And others only play them if responder has agreed to openers natural bid by showing a fit. So discuss these bids with your partner.

Another set of bids one may use with slam interest are called Swiss Bids.

Swiss Bids

When opening one of a major, game forcing 2/1 bids, Jacoby 2NT*, **concealed/ ambiguous splinters**, and 3NT* are used. Playing concealed/ambiguous splinters, the bids 4♣* and 4♦* may now be used to describe responder's hand when other bids fall short.

It often happens that responder has support for the major with four trumps and a balanced hand (4-3-3-3) or a hand with five trumps and invitational values. To describe these types of hands, one may employ the bids 4♣* and 4♦*, called Swiss Bids. The "Swiss Convention" comes in many flavors. There is Trump Swiss, Fruit Machine Swiss, Keycard Swiss, Singleton Swiss, and Super Swiss, among others, with all types of extensions and modifications.

In the duplicate bridge, some prefer some form of Swiss bids to Jacoby 2NT*, others prefer Jacoby, and still others combine the two. So which approach should you use? The Swiss Convention is a jump to 4♣* or 4♦* over partner's 1♥/1♠ opening to show different types of sound raises with 3-5 card support (they are not splinters since three level bids show concealed splinters; they may not be used if you play direct splinters).

The most popular form of Swiss was "Fruit Machine Swiss" whereby a bid of 4♣*/4♦* over partner's 1♥/1♠ opening showed 12+ points with the 4♣* bid promising two aces and a feature; the feature being either a third ace, the king of trumps, or a singleton. The 4♦* shows the same strength hand without two aces and a feature.

While this may work for some, we recommend a simpler approach and use a Modified Swiss Convention recommended by Max Hardy.

For his approach, 4♣* shows three-card support for the major and 16+ HCP with a balanced hand (4-3-3-3) since one may not bid 3NT* (13-15). And, 4♦* shows only an invitational hand

with five- card support and 13-15 Dummy Points, balanced or semi-balanced. We recommend using the Max Hardy Swiss bids with Jacoby:

16+	starter points	4♣* with a balanced hand and three exactly card support forthe major
12/13-15	starter points	4♦* with and balanced or semi-balanced hand and at least five card support.

Both bids must be alerted (*).

The bid of four clubs fills a gap. 3NT* =13-15 balanced with three, and 4♣* shows a 16+ hand with three-card support and balanced. The bid of 4♦*shows a fit with length, balanced or semi-balanced.

Let's look at some examples after one opens 1♠.

Hand SA:	♠KQ9 ♥ A752♦ A104 ♣ K96
Hand SB:	♠AQ932 ♥ KQ5 ♦ 74 ♣ AQ7
Hand SC:	♠ AK93♥ Q52 ♦ 74 ♣ AQ74

With hand SA, you have three-card support, you cannot bid 3NT* (13-15) so you bid 4♣* showing 16+ Dummy Points and a fit. With hand SB, you have five-card support and a doubleton so you cannot use the concealed/ambiguous bid of 3♠*. You have five trumps so you should not bid Jacoby 2NT; instead, you must bid 4♦*. With hand SC, one would use the Jacoby 2NT* bid.

We conclude this section with one more example that is not geared toward game but only a partial score (a contract less than game).

Opener	♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	♠ 9864 ♥A ♦ 753 ♣ K9432

With a five-card major and twelve Starting Points, opener bids 1♠ (the 10 HCP have been upgraded to 12 because of suit length and quality).

Responder has four-card support but only eleven Dummy Points. He cannot make a 2/1 game force bid. He has to make a one-round forcing bid. These bids are discussed next.

Semi - Forcing Responses

1NT (semi-forcing or forcing)

Not playing the 2/1 game force system, the bid of 1NT over a one level major (1♠/1♥) suit bid shows between 7-9 starting points (e.g. Standard American) and a two level bid shows only 10+ points.

A 2/1 bid by responder is forcing to game. However, suppose you have 11 to 12 Starting Points. What is your bid? Playing 2/1 the 1NT bid now represents 7-12 Starting Points.

Many (over 80%) of the 2/1 bidders always play the bid of 1NT as “Forcing”. What does this mean? It means the opening bidder **must bid again** and that the responder according to the “American Contract Bridge League” (ACBL) must announce the bid as forcing for one round. The down side of the forcing bid is that it forces the opening bidder to bid a 3-card minor (he cannot rebid a 5-card suit) or even a 2-card minor if 5=4=2=2 (5 hearts and 4 spades). The upside is that it allows the responder to bid a new suit at the 2-level or to bid the major at the 3-level to show 11-12 starting points with 3-card support.

Next to the forcing blue box is another blue box labeled “Semi-Forcing”. What does this mean? It means that the opener with say only 11 starting points, a flat minimum opening and (5-3-3-2) shape may now pass; is not required to bid again. However, the ACBL now requires the responder to announce the bid as semi-forcing. If opener does bid a new suit, he is 5-4.

As recommended for example by Bridge Expert Larry Cohen (see the September 2015 article in the Bridge Bulletin entitled “1NT Forcing or Semi-Forcing”) some (perhaps 20%) of the 2/1 bidders play the bid of 1NT as semi-forcing. However, whether or not you play the bid of 1NT as always forcing or semi-forcing the bid is ALWAYS consider “semi-forcing” by a passed hand.

In either case, what does the bid of 1NT say? The bid usually says the following.

1. Denies a hand strong enough to force to game.
2. May have a balanced or non-balanced distribution.
3. Denies four-card support for opener’s major (may have three-card support, a singleton, two-card support, or a void).
4. In response to 1♥, it denies four spades.

What is my recommendation? I agree with Larry Cohen, **play 1NT as SEMI-FORCING**. Why? With five spades and four hearts, it allows the opener to show his four hearts with only 11 starting points. Responder may now support hearts with 4 or bid 3♠* to show 3-card support for spades over the bid of 1♠ and 11-12 Dummy Points. And, over 1♥ you may pass or bid a 4-card minor at the 2-level. This allows responder to pass the minor suit bid, to bid 2NT, or to bid 3♥* to show 3 hearts with 11-12 starting points.

An example follows.

Opener	♠ AQ987 ♥ K87♦ KJ2 ♣ 56
Responder	♠ K2 ♥ Q65 ♦ 964 ♣ J10753

Opener and responder first calculate their Starting Points. Opener = 14 (13 HCP + 1 length point) and Responder = 6 HCP + 1 length point = 7 Starting Points. Opener would bid 1♠. Because responder only has shortness in spades, no short-suit adjustments are made, so responder has only seven Starting Points and must therefore bid 1NT (announced as forcing when playing the 2/1 game force system). In this example, responder has only two-card support for the major.

Let's modify the above hand slightly.

Opener	♠ Q9876 ♥ KJ2♦ 789 ♣ AK
Responder	♠ K23 ♥ Q65 ♦ 96 ♣ J10753

Again, one would open the hand 1♠ and after hearing 1NT, dealer **would like to pass**. In this example, responder has only three-card support for the major. Opener is unable to differentiate between the two (two- or three-card support). Furthermore, in this example, opener has no nice rebid. You are stuck, especially if the opponents interfere. If, instead of announcing 1NT as forcing, even if you play 2/1, you can have your cake and eat it, too.

I recommend that the bid of 1NT be announced not as forcing but as semi-forcing. In perhaps 90 % of the cases, opener will probably bid again.

With 0-2 (sometimes 3) trumps and 7-12 Starting Points, the bid of 1NT is announced as semi-forcing (also in blue on the convention card).

Why semi-forcing and not forcing? When you announce the bid as forcing, the opponents tend to take a “free” bid. In a semi-forcing auction, they are not sure if the opponents will bid again so they may not risk a call.

Constructive Raises (non-forcing fit bid - invitational)

With 8-10 Dummy Points and three-card trump support, one has a “constructive” hand and would support the major suit bid at the two-level (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠). This is called a constructive raise over a one-level bid of the major and while it used to require an alert by the ACBL this is no longer the case; it guarantees exactly three-card support when playing the Bergen System of raises (see below). For example, suppose partner opens 1♥ and you hold the following hand.

Hand F*: ♠ J2 ♥ 1076 ♦ KJ34 ♣ KQ76

This hand has ten Dummy Points (9 starting + 1 short-suit point). You would bid 2♥ (constructive). Suppose, however, your partner did not open 1♥, but 1♠. Now, you would bid 1NT (semi-forcing)

If you do not play Bergen Raises, a constructive raise may have four-card support. Persons who play constructive raises and allow for 4+ card support for the major should **not alert their two-level bid**.

Let's consider an example.

Opener	♠ AKQ95 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	♠ 10986 ♥ A ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

After the bid of 1♠, one cannot make a constructive bid of 2♠ because one has a weak hand and four-card support. To address this problem, the Bergen Raise of 3♣* is made showing 7-9 Dummy Points, considered next.

Non-forcing responses (with a fit)

There are only two major suit opening bids: 1♥/1♠. When responder has four spades, and the opener bids one heart, he must show the spades. Opener may have five hearts and four spades, and as advised before, a 4-4 fit is better than a 5-3 fit. The bid of 1♠ over 1♥ only requires 5+ Starting Points and is non-forcing. Rebids by opener and responder will clarify the situation.

When one opens 1♠ and responder has 0-3 card support in spades, and four hearts, and only 7-12 Starting Points, one must bid 1NT (with 8-10 HCP and 3 card support, one would make a constructive raise). You cannot show your four-card heart suit. In general, the bid of 1NT usually signifies LACK OF FIT!

If one opens a major and responder has four-card support with between 7-12 Dummy Points, use Bergen Raises to show the nature of the support.

Bergen Raises and Combined Bergen Raises

Suppose partner opens with 1♥/1♠ and you have **four-card support for the major**, then the bids of:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 3M* | shows 0-6 Dummy Points with 4-card support (preemptive bid) |
| 3♣* | shows 7-9 Dummy Points with 4-card support |
| 3♦* | shows 10-12 Dummy Points with 4-card support (called a limit raise) |

If one reverses these two bids, the two bids are called Reverse Bergen Raises. **The primary advantage of Reverse Bergen over Bergen is that one may now employ the bid of 3♦ as an invitational ask since 3♣*= 10-12 Dummy Points.** The bid of 3♦ is used to ask, do you have 12 points; if so, bid game. Otherwise, sign off at the three level of the agreed upon major.

What do you do playing Bergen? Then over 3♦* the bid of 3♥ becomes the asking bid. Over 1♥ you would pass without 12 and over 1♠ you would bid 3♠ without 12. With 12 points in both cases you bid your major suit game.

Because Bergen bids are made at the three-level, they may be played when the opponents interfere with a double. They are free bids; however, many pairs play that Bergen Raises are off. Others use the system called **BROMAD (Bergen Raise over MAJOR Suit Double)** recommended by Mr. Marty Bergen.

In general, the concept is to indicate the length of the support by the responder as well as the limited number of points. The general guidelines to show this difference is as follows:

1. A redouble denies in principle a 3-card support.
2. A first response of 2♣* is a constructive raise with 8-10 Dummy Points and at 3-card support.
3. The bid of 2♦* shows a limit raise with a 3-card support.
4. A 2M* raise is preemptive in nature 0-6 points.
5. Jump raises are normal Bergen/Reverse Bergen raises with at least 4-card support.
6. A response of 2NT* bid is employed to show a long Minor suit.

Consistent with Bergen Raises, I recommend one employ the following two and three level bids over a **double** of a major to show a major suit fit.

While many play that Bergen is always off over any interference, I believe this is too extreme. Why do you allow the opponents to interfere with your bidding sequences?

I also recommend they be played on over two-level bids when both sides are non-vulnerable or when the opponents are vulnerable and you are not.

For example, if the bidding goes 1♠ - 2♥ - there is room for the three-level bids, make it. If the overcall is a minor suit bid of 2♣/2♦, then then the 3-level bids of 3♣* shows 4- card support (limit raise playing reverse Bergen) and 3♦* shows 4-card support for spades and 7-9 Dummy Points. **Finally, they are always on over a double!**

Another system that has become popular is called “Combined Bergen” Raises, developed by Pat Peterson from Hernando, Florida.

It works:

3♣* shows 7-12 Dummy Points (note that we have combined the Bergen point range for this bid; hence the name Combined Bergen) with four-card support. If opener wants to know whether or not you are at the lower end (7-9) points or higher end (10-12) points, opener bids 3♦*. The response 3♥* shows the lower range and the response 3♠* shows the upper range.

3♦* shows 10-12 Dummy Points with three-card support (a limit raise).

Thus, you do not have to bid 1NT (semi-forcing) with 7-12 Dummy Points. One normally has 0-2 card trump support for the bid major.

Let’s consider our prior example.

Opener	♠ AKQ95 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67
Responder	♠ 10986 ♥A ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432

With a five-card major and twelve Starting Points, opener bids 1♠ (10 HCP have been upgraded to twelve Starting Points because of suit length and quality).

Using the Bergen Raises, responder would bid 3♦* showing a limit raise in support of the spade opening bid.

Using Combined Bergen Raises, one bids 3♣*, and opener would ask the range by bidding 3♦*, now you would respond 3♠* (10-12 Dummy Points).

A minor problem occurs when playing Combined Bergen when partner opens 1♥ and partner responds 3♣*. If you now ask using the bid of 3♦* and partner responds 3♠*, you are committed to game in hearts. Instead, one merely invites game by bidding 3♥. Alternatively, some have used Bergen Raises for hearts and Combined Bergen for spades.

Combined Bergen with a Spade Gadget

When opening the bidding one heart and responding 1NT (semi-forcing), what do you do after hearing the bid of two hearts with two card support with a top honor, A/K/Q-x?

Let's look at two bidding sequences.

(1)Partner	You	(2) Partner	You
1♥	1NT	1♥	1NT
2♥	??	3♥	??

Because you have not bid one spade, in the two examples you may make the impossible 2♠ and 3♠ spade bids, respectively. Each of the bids tells partner that you have at least a top high honor doubleton in hearts. In example (2) partner can decide between passing, bidding a major suit game, or 3NT. However, in (1) the opening bidder has more flexibility using what is known as a game try bid (e.g. Help Suit, Short Suit, Long Suit and other game try's) to be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

When opening 1♠, what do you do with the bidding sequence 1♠-1NT-2♠ - ? As opener you might have the following hand:

♠K76542 ♥ Q53 ♦ KJ ♣ AK

The bid of 2NT by responder shows a doubleton honor in spades (no fit) and 10-12 Dummy Points with stoppers in other suits, invitational to game in no-trump.

A rebid of 3♣ is invitational to game, with two card support, all other suits not stopped.

With opener's rebid is 3♠, showing 16-17 points, partner may either pass, bid 3NT or 4♠.

When opening one spade, it is often difficult to find a 5-3 fit in hearts. To find the fit in hearts, many advanced players use the Bart or Lisa Conventions. Both will be discussed later in this chapter.

Preemptive Bids

With only 0-6 Dummy Points and four-card support, for hearts or spades, one makes a preemptive three-level bid of three hearts (3♥*) or three spades (3♠*), and if you have five trumps, bid GAME. Why? This has become known as the adjunct to the LAW OF TOTAL TRICKS that states “bid to the level equal to the combined number of trumps held by your side”. For example, with eight trumps bid to the two-level, with nine trumps, bid to the three-level, with ten trumps, bid to the four-level. Again, both bids must be alerted, and if asked, described as weak with 0-6 Dummy Points. We will discuss the Law of Total Tricks later in the book (Chapter 10), following Larry Cohen (1992), “To Bid or Not to Bid” by Natco Press. Do not apply the law blindly; it does not work with unbalanced hands.

With only 0-6 Dummy Points and five trumps, one should bid game (4♥/4♠), you have ten trumps.

Before discussing responses to minor suit openings, the following chart summarizes Bergen (responses) and the Combined Bergen (responses) with no interference when opening a major suit (1♠/1♥). Also included are the Swiss bids and Concealed or Ambiguous splinter bids. It is important to realize that not all persons will play the structure below that I have suggested. You can pick and choose.

The “Bergen” system you play must be discussed. Some bridge players do not play Bergen, but instead they prefer fit bids where, for example, one of a major followed by a three-level jump in the major shows a fit with 10-12 Dummy Points (an invitational bid and non-forcing). This approach is more consistent with Standard American and not the 2/1 System.

Overview Combined Bergen And Bergen Raises

Max Hardy Swiss Bids and Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters

Combined Bergen Raises		Bergen Raises	
Dummy Points	Responder Bid	Dummy Points	Responder Bids
2 Trumps			
5-9 Pts	*1NT then 2 Major	5-9 Pts	*1NT then 2 Major
3 Trumps			
5-9 Pts	#1NT then 2 Major	5-9 Pts	#1NT then 2 Major
8-10(bad) Pts	2Major (Constructive)	8-10(bad) Pts	2Major Constructive)
10-12 Pts	**3♦	10-12 Pts	#1NT

13-15 Pts	#3NT	13-15	#3NT
13+	2 /1 bid	13+	2 /1 Bid
16+ Pts Balanced	@4♣ (Swiss)	16+ Pts Bal	@4♣ (Swiss)

4 Trumps

0-6 Pts	@3 Major (Weak)	0-6 Pts	@3 Major (Weak)
7-12 Pts	@3 ♣ Bid 3 Diamonds to Ask 3♥=7-9, 3♠=10-12	7-9 Pts	**3♣ (Weak)
		10-12	**3♦ (Invitational)

13+ Singleton (Concealed Splinter)	@3 Other Major then Step Bids	13+ Singleton (Concealed)	@3 Other Major then Step Bids
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13+ No Singleton	2/1 bid	13+ No Singleton	2/1 bid
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15/16+ Pts	@Jacoby 2NT	15/15 Pts	@Jacoby 2NT
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5 Trumps

0-11 Pts	Bid Game	0-11 Pts	Bid Game
12-15 Pts	@4♦ (Swiss)	12-15 Pts	@4♦ (Swiss)

Note: With 5 HCP and three-card trump support, pass, unless holding either a singleton or at least one trump honor with all other HCP in one side suit. #=Semi-Forcing (announce), **Forcing (alert one round), and @=Alert

If you play Reverse Bergen Raises, you merely switch the meaning of the 3♣* and 3♦* bids. The advantage of this approach is that a preemptive bid forces the opponents to a higher level and the after the bid of 3♣*, one may use the bid of 3♦* to ask if you have 12 Dummy Points.

The Nebulous 2♣* Convention

Bridge experts have adopted a new approach to handling strong balanced hands facing a 1M opening, playing the 2/1 Game Force Bidding System, the Two-Way Nebulous 2♣* response with 10+ HCP. Again the asterisk (*) = an alert.

With 0-9 HCP bid 1NT as Semi-Forcing.

Using the Nebulous 2♣* Convention method,

1♠ - 2♥ and 1M - 2♦ guarantee a 5+ card suit and game-forcing values. Subsequent bidding is natural, and can follow either the Bergen styles bids, depending on your preference.

1M - 2♣* becomes a nebulous game-forcing call. Responder will have either:

- Any balanced game-forcing hand with 2+ clubs
- A traditional game-forcing hand with a 5+card club suit

Responder will clarify later which of the two hand types he holds.

After an initial 1M - 2♣* start — the response structure follows:

1♠ - 2♣*

2♦* = a waiting relay bid showing either diamonds, or any 5-3-3-2 (with any doubleton) hand with insufficient stoppers for 2NT. Since the initial 2♣ response was artificial, opener cannot assume clubs are stopped, so 2NT is a fairly uncommon rebid.

2♥ = 4+ hearts (unchanged from standard)

2♠ = 6+ spades

2NT = balanced min with some semblance of stoppers in all suits

3♣ = 4+ clubs

3♦/♥ = splinter raises of clubs

1♥ - 2♣*

2♠ = 4-spades and no extras promised, Bergen style. (Otherwise opener rebids as above).

As you can see, opener rebids naturally for the most part.

- The 2M rebid promises a 6+ card major, providing the benefits of the Bergen-style 2M rebid.
- The 2NT rebid promises a NT-oriented
- “Raising” clubs as opener promises 4 clubs. Think of it as rebidding a club suit of your own, not raising since responder frequently holds only 2-3 clubs. Since opener did not splinter, the 3♣ promises exactly 5-2-2-4 distributions.
- With a splinter raise, opener is artificially describing his pattern as 5-1-3-4, 5-3-1-4 or 5-1-2-5, 5-2-1-5. Responder will be enthused if he holds a 5+card club suit and if he does not, his knowledge of opener’s precise shape will help him judge whether 3NT is a good contract.
- When opener is 5-4-1-3 or 5-1-4-3, he always rebids a second suit planning to bid 3♣ later to complete the description of his pattern.

Even though opener has no idea what responder holds when he responds 2♣*, this method works well when responder is balanced. Opener now has space to begin describing his shape before responder bids 2NT.

The nebulous 2♣* bid allows opener to show his hand, which makes it easy for the partnership to find the best contract.

1♥ - 2♣* - 2♦* = artificial relay

Responder's Continuations after 2♦*

Responder's primary goal after opener's nebulous 2♦* rebid is to communicate whether he holds the balanced or the natural 2♣ hand type. His continuations are natural with one exception.

1M - 2♣* - 2♦* - ?

2M = 3+ card support for opener's major (either balanced or unbalanced)

2oM = (two of the other major) Artificial (shows an unbalanced hand with 5+ clubs)

2NT = natural and balanced

3♣ = Excellent rebid able clubs, needing only minimal support (e.g., KQJxxx)

3♦ = 4 diamonds, 5 clubs and an unbalanced hand

3M = picture bid (e.g. good spades and clubs, slam mish)

3NT = balanced, very no-trumpy 16-17 HCP

When responder's hand is balanced, he will either:

- Show 3-card support for opener's major
- Rebid in NT

When responder's hand is unbalanced with 5+ clubs, he can either:

- Raise at his second turn with a fit
- Bid something other than 2M or 2NT

When responder does not fit opener's major, he frequently bids the other major (artificial). This call says only that responder is unbalanced and does not fit opener's major. He could have any side suit shape. The purpose is to allow opener to show 3-card support for responder's club suit, at the 3-level, if he has it.

Without this convention, responder would frequently have to rebid 3♣ to show his real club suit and opener would then be forced to raise to 4♣ if he wanted to show a fit. By using two of the other major instead, opener can show his fit and still leave the 3-level for club/NT exploration.

After this auction, the partnership has taken a tortuous route to replicate a simple, standard 2/1 auction: 1M - 2♣ - 3♣. Subsequent bidding is similar to that familiar auction.

Review of Artificial Calls

Here is a review of the artificial calls. Other than these bids, bidding is natural and similar to standard 2/1 methods.

1M - 2♣* = either balanced or clubs

1M - 2♣* - 2♦* = either balanced or diamonds

1M - 2♣* - 2♦* - 2oM = unbalanced with 5+ clubs and no support for opener's major

Conclusion

The nebulous 2♣* convention allows the other 2/1 calls (2♦*, 2♥) to promise 5+ cards in the suit clarifying responder's hand type. When responder holds a balanced GF hand, it leaves maximum room for opener to pattern out. Compared to responding in the better 4-card minor, the nebulous 2♣* improves bidding accuracy when responder holds either hand type. When responder holds an unbalanced GF hand with long clubs, the auction is occasionally more difficult than with the "standard" 2/1 approaches. But the benefits of staying low on balanced hands and better descriptive 2♦* and 2♥ auctions far outweigh the drawbacks.

For examples and an in depth analyses of the system go to bridgewinners.com (Andrew Gumperz's article). The idea was invented by Eddie Wold.

Walsh Bidding System

Some final remarks follow on the **Walsh Bidding System** developed by Richard Walsh, John Swanson, and Paul Soloway in the 1960's and is commonly ignored today because of Bergen Raises and Swiss bids.

From the previous table using Bergen Raises, one shows a limit raise with 10-12 Dummy Points and four-card support is signified by bidding 3♦*, a good limit raise. With 10-12 Dummy Points and three-card support, one bids one no-trump and then bids three of the major, a bad limit raise usually with no singleton or void. Using Combined Bergen Raises, one bids 3♣* with four-card support (7-12 Dummy Points) and after the asking bid of 3♦*, a good limit raise by bidding 3♠*, 10-12 Dummy Points. Or, one bids 3♦* directly to show three-card support and 10-12 Dummy Points, a bad limit raise.

However, suppose the bid is 1♥ and the responder has three hearts and four spades and only 10-12 Dummy Points but ruffing values (a singleton or void). Since the responder has less than thirteen Starting Points and only three-card support, he cannot use the Concealed/Ambiguous Splinter major bid of three spades. A jump bid of three hearts shows 0-6 Starting Points and four-card support. And, one no-trump followed by three hearts does not show ruffing values.

One uses the Walsh Bid; **the Walsh bid is one spade followed by a bid of three hearts, a good limit raise with three-card support, and ruffing values.** Consider the hand after a one heart opening bid.

♠ 9854 ♥ Q 107 ♦ 9 ♣ AK1062

One has three-card support for hearts, but with 12 Dummy Points and cannot bid two hearts constructive. While one may bid one no-trump followed by three hearts, this does not show the ruffing values in diamonds. Thus, one makes the Walsh bid of 1♠ followed by 3♥, a good limit raise in hearts.

What do you do if one opens the bidding with one spade and you want to distinguish between a good limit raise with three-card support and ruffing values from a bad limit raise with no ruffing value? Consider responder's hand after one opens one spade.

♠ J85 ♥ J1074 ♦ 9 ♣ AK1062

Here, one bids one no-trump (semi-forcing). After the rebid of two clubs or two diamonds, responder would jump to four spades. Do not bid three spades, a bad limit raise since you have ruffing values in diamonds.

Responses to one-level minor suit bid

The bid of two clubs over one diamond is not considered forcing to game by all who write about the 2/1 game force system; some authors: Mike Lawrence (1987), "Mike Lawrence's Workbook on the Two Over One System", page 122 and Audrey Grant and Eric Rodwell (2009) "2 over 1 Game Force", page 9 both suggest that the bid should only be forcing for one round, not to game. I along with Larry Cohen (2012) "Larry Teaches 2 Over 1 Game Forcing" (page 35), do not support this approach.

Opening one of a minor, there is no 2/1 game forcing suit bid when one opens 1♣ unless you play the Walsh Club Convention discussed only in this book; however, if one opens 1♦, the bid of 2♣ is forcing to game by agreement.

If you do not play it 1♦-2♣ forcing to game but for only one round, it is marked on the ACBL Convention card in the box labeled "Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid" under the heading **GENERAL APPROACH**. But it need not be alerted or announced. You must look at the Opponent's Convention Card or ask.

Opening bid	2/1 Bids
1♣	1x= non-forcing, but 1♦*= GF by Walsh Club Convention
1♦	2♣ (4/5+ cards) (forcing to game)

Non-Forcing Responses

Responses to the one club (1♣) opening NOT playing Walsh Club Convention

Recall that the opening bid of one club shows hands with 3-5+ clubs and denies a five-card major.

Even when you open a minor, the goal is to find a major suit fit. Using the Walsh approach (which is quite different from the "Standard American"), your goal is to show strength and shape as soon as possible. You often bypass a four, five, or even a six-card diamond suit to bid a four-card major with minimum to invitational values (5-12 Starting Points) and bid your four-card major (usually with non-balanced hands).

With two five-card major suits, bid the higher ranking suit (spades). With a five-card suit and a four-card suit, bid the longer suit first. With two four-card majors, you bid them up-the-line, first hearts and then spades.

Examples:

♠AK432	♥109876	♦78	♣7	bid 1♠ the higher ranking (5-5)
♠109876	♥AK43	♦78	♣78	bid 1♠ (5-4)
♠10987	♥AK43	♦78910	♣6	bid 1♥ (4-4)

On your convention card you must mark “Frequently bypass 4+diamonds.” If you have invitational starting values (10-12), you may rebid your major suit. For example, the bidding may go 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥. Or, if instead you bid 2♠, this has a special meaning called fourth suit forcing and will be discussed later.

With a five-card major and 13+ Starting Points, one may use the New Minor Forcing Convention as a forcing bid to explore game (to be discussed later). With a balanced hand and 8-10 Starting Points, you bid 1NT; 2NT =11-12, and 3NT=13-15; these bids are used to show balanced hands and values and deny a four-card major.

The response bid of 1♦ to 1♣ is used as a waiting bid showing **no four-card major** and 3+ diamonds with 6-12 Starting Points; opener may respond two clubs (6+ card suit with 12-16 Starting Points or with a singleton) may bid a major, again with 12-16 Starting Points. The opener’s bid of 1NT (12-14 Starting Points) shows a balanced hand since you have denied a major suit bid; more on responses by opener later.

The bid of 1♦ is also used with a stronger hand; after opener’s bid of 1NT over 1♦, responder may now bid your major suits (up-the-line) a **reverse by responder** to show your four-cards major. The reverse bid shows 13+ Starting Points and a four-card major (forcing to game).

Let’s look at a few examples after the bid of 1♣.

1.	♠KQ65	♥Q874	♦Q1042	♣8
2.	♠QJ84	♥53	♦KJ954	♣92
3.	♠J104	♥J105	♦J6543	♣Q6
4.	♠AK54	♥A6	♦K8743	♣93
5.	♠Q104	♥K105	♦KJ654	♣Q9

1. Bid 1♥, by passing the bid of one diamond to bid four-card majors up-the-line with a minimal hand.
2. Bid 1♠, by passing diamonds with minimum hand, bid the major.
3. Bid 1♦, too weak to bid 1NT (the bid of 1NT requires 8 - 10 HCP not 6-9 playing 2/1); **you want the strong hand to play contract and perhaps bid 1NT not the weak hand.**
4. Bid 1♦, strong enough to reverse, diamonds then spades.
5. Bid 2NT, you have 12 Starting Points.

In summary, 2/1 “Walsh” bidders show a four-card major immediately with a weak hand and use one diamond as a waiting bid. With a strong (13+ Starting Points) hand, the bid of 1♦ may now be followed by the bid of a four-card major. For Walsh bidders, the bid of 1NT is semi-forcing showing 8-10 Starting Points and denies a four-card major.

With no four-card major and 13+ Starting Points, one bids 2♣* (called the inverted minor bid) or 2♦* (called crisscross), a limit raise in clubs (10-12 Starting Points) in clubs with 5+ clubs and is the non-forcing bid. More on these two bids later.

Note: The bidding sequence 1♣ -1♦ - 1♥ (opener) - 1♠ is forcing to game playing Walsh style bids since with a weak hand responder would have bid spades and not diamonds (a fourth suit forcing auction playing Walsh and shows a suit with 4 spades); more on fourth suit forcing soon.

Weak Jump Shifts (Preemptive Bid)

The bid of 2♥/2♠ over a one club or one diamond opening is a weak Jump Shift in the major showing 6/7+ cards and a very weak hand, 2-5 Starting Points. With six Starting Points (6+), you bid one of the majors.

To show a preemptive raise in clubs, one jumps to the 3-level (3♣).

Forcing Responses

The bid of 2♣ over 1♦ (game force)

Recall that the opening bid of 1♦, denies a five-card major by opener and shows 3-5+ diamonds.

With an opening bid of one diamond, as when one opened one club, the primary objective is to find a major suit fit or no-trump. With 5/6+ Starting Points and a four or five-card major, bid the major.

With 4/5 clubs and 13+ Starting Points, one bids 2♣ yes even with one or two 4-card majors. This bid is forcing to game and one will find the major fit with subsequent bids. Be careful, some partnerships play it forcing for only one round!

Over 1♦ with a balanced hand and 6-10 Starting Points, bid 1NT; 2NT =11-12, and 3NT=13-15; these bids are used to show balanced hands and values and deny a four-card major. **Note that over a one diamond opening, the 1NT range is not the same as for a one club opening.** You do not have a relay bid to allow the stronger hand to play 1NT; either hand may play the no-trump contract.

When opener responds to the 2♣ after bidding 1♦, with no interference, the opening bidder follows a few rules/guidelines:

1. With 3-5 diamonds, bid 2♦ (1♦-2♣-2♦- ?)
2. Without diamonds bid your 4-card major up-the-line (1♦-2♣-2♥/2♠- ?)
3. With 5+ diamonds and without a 4-card major, depending on shape, either bid 2NT, support clubs, or rebid diamonds by bidding (1♦-2♣-2NT/3♣/3♦ - ?)

After opener bids, responder next:

1. 2♥/2♠ with 4 or 3♣/3♦ with 6 or 2NT/3NT balanced hand (requires discussion)
2. 3♥/3♠ with 4 or 2NT with 3-card major
3. 3NT or a minor suit game

The bidding may go: 1♦ - 2♣ -2♥ - 3♣ showing less than 5-12 Starting Points and long clubs. If instead the bidding goes 1♦ - 2♣ -2♥ - 2♠, you are showing all the suits and you are at the two-level. This is a fourth suit forcing (fsf) sequence; however, the fourth suit may or may not be real and can be played forcing for one round only or to game. We will review fsf later in this Chapter.

To appreciate why we recommend that the bidding sequence 1♦ - 2♣ as a game force sequence, consider the following:

Opener	♠876 ♥ AQ ♦ K652 ♣ K875
Responder	♠AJ23 ♥ 7 ♦ 78 ♣ AQJ943

After opening open 1♦, responder next bids 2♣ (forcing to game). Not playing two clubs forcing to game you may respond 1♠ and opener may bid 1NT. What next? Perhaps 2♣ by responder and the contract may stop in 2NT. Your missed your 3NT game.

Let's look at another example. Suppose partner opens 1♦ and you hold the hand:

♠K32 ♥ 56 ♦ AQ5 ♣ KJ742

You would clearly make a forcing raise of 2♣. However, suppose opener bids 1♣. You have no four-card major and may temporize with a bid of 1♦; hoping opener would perhaps bid hearts. Is there a better approach? Yes, one may use inverted minor bids with crisscross or the Walsh Club Convention.

Overview of bidding sequence: "Opener"= O and "Responder"=R bidding: O=1♦ R=2♣

O2	R2	O3
2♦	3-5 diamonds	
	2♥/2♠	Natural or stopper
		2NT Natural Other Major Stopped
		3♣/3♦ Natural – Forcing
		3♥/3♠ Natural wo stopper Other Maj

		3NT	to play
	2NT	Natural and forcing	
	3♣	Natural - invitational	
	3♦	Natural – game force	
2♥/2♠	4+ cards in bid suit		
	2♥	over 2♥ - game force (GF)	
	2NT	Natural forcing	
	3♣	Natural invitational	
	3♦	Natural forcing	
	3♥/3♠	Natural	
2NT	Natural game force		
3♣	4+ card support, invitational		
3♦	6+ diamonds		
3♥/3♠	Singleton/Void – Splinter bid		
3NT	Natural 18+		

Inverted Minors and Crisscross (game forcing and invitational bids)

Playing crisscross, which is part of the 2/1 bidding system, the inverted minor bids of 1♣ followed by 2♣* or 1♦ followed by 2♦* deny a four-card major and show a hand with 13+ Dummy Points and at least 4-card support for the bid minor (some insist on 5-card support). The bids are forcing to game since there is no upper limit. Again, we assume no interference. **Over a double** and playing **flip-flop** inverted minor raises are on; for those who do not play flip-flop, inverted minor bids are off over a double or interference.

Weak jump raises are also part of the crisscross convention: 1♣-2♦* or 1♦-3♣* show 4-card and with 10-12 Dummy Points in support of the bid minor suit, clubs and diamonds respectively. These “weak” Jump Shifts (J/S) bids in the other minor must be alerted. The bids are invitational to game. On the convention card in red you must mark “J/S in other minor”.

Not playing crisscross, the single raise inverted minor bids are merely invitational and show only 10+ Dummy Points. **Both variations MUST be alerted and explained fully. DO NOT SAY MERELY “INVERTED” – explain your agreement.**

To show a weak hand, between 5-9 Dummy Points, one employs double jump bids in the minor bid suits: 1♣ - 3♣* and 1♦ and 3♦*. These bids do require 5+ cards support and are used with or without interference. The weak raises are played whether or not you play crisscross. With no interference you must again alert with interference no alert is required unless you are playing flip-flop.

Returning to our example, suppose opener bids 1♣ and you again hold the hand:

♠K32 ♥56 ♦AQ5 ♣KJ742

You would respond $2\clubsuit^*$, 13+ Dummy Points and 5+clubs.

Not all partnerships play inverted minors and crisscross as explained previously. Instead, some REVERSE the meaning of the inverted and Weak Jump shift bids (e.g. $1\spadesuit-2\heartsuit^*$ and $1\spadesuit-3\clubsuit^*$ or $1\clubsuit-2\heartsuit^*$ and $1\clubsuit-2\spadesuit^*$) are reversed. Hence, for example the inverted bids would now show a limit raise. The convention is called the reverse crisscross convention.

The reason for the reverse in bidding is that many feel the jump to the three-level for the diamond bid is too extreme with only 10-12 Dummy Points. Be careful when sitting down at the bridge table and the opponents say alert!

Playing inverted minors with crisscross, one gives up the Weak Jump shift bid in the other minor or the mini-splinter bid which may be played with the 10+ inverted minor raise approach played by MANY (better ask your partners what they play). With either approach (10 + inverted minors or inverted minor raises with crisscross), a weak hand (nine or less points) is shown by a preemptive double raise in the minor; both bidding conventions deny a 4-card major.

Rebids by Opener – following a single raise (13+) or a weak Jump Shift response

A rebid of 2NT by opener shows a hand in the 12-14 point range with both majors stopped. This bid may not be used after the $3\clubsuit$ bid, instead one bids 3NT!

A jump rebid of 3NT by opener shows 18-19 HCP with stoppers in both majors, only after a 2-level bid. This is not used with crisscross after the $3\clubsuit$ bid, it is given up.

Opener's rebid of a new suit (after a single raise) at the 3-level (a mini-splinter over a single raise) shows more than a minimum, at least 16 HCP, usually distributional and forcing.

After an inverted minor raise, opener's rebids show "stoppers up the line". Opener must not by pass any suit containing a stopper since if they jump over the suit, it denies a stopper.

Note: With crisscross (a J/S response), a 3-level minor suit bid ($3\clubsuit$ after $2\heartsuit^*$) shows a minor two suiter (5-4+) and a minimum hand (12-13HCP). If one bids $2\heartsuit$ or $3\spadesuit$ (after $1\clubsuit-2\heartsuit^*$), it denotes a stopper in the bid suit.

A clear disadvantage of crisscross J/S limit raises is that they take up bidding room, especially when one bids $3\clubsuit^*$ after $1\spadesuit$. Now it is more difficult to show stoppers since one must use 3-level bids. For this reason, some play criss-crosse only after a $1\clubsuit$ bid, and **do not use it over the $1\spadesuit$ bid**. This is sometimes referred to as partial crisscross bids.

Minor Suit Splinter Bids

When opening one club (diamond), a double jump in hearts, or spades, is a splinter bid. The bid shows 5+ cards for the minor bid and 13+ Dummy Points with a singleton or void in the suit bid. It is forcing to game in the minor.

In our discussion when opening one of a major or one of a minor, there have been several times we have found a fit in a major or in a minor. After finding a fit in a major, the responder added Starting Points to short-suit points to create Dummy Points. With a fit in a minor using inverted minors or crisscross, one again finds a fit. Now, the original value of opener's starting point's increases in value. So opener must again reevaluate his hand.

This reevaluation process is again due to Marty Bergen to create "Bergen Points."

We now review the responder's bid to openers one of a minor bid also called better minor openings (at least 3-cards).

Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♣)

1♦	4+ diamonds and no 4-card major 5+ Starting Points
1♥/1♠	4+card major 5+ Starting Points
1NT	8-10 Starting Points and no 4-card major
2♣*	13+ Dummy Points and 4+clubs (inverted)
2♦*	10-12 Dummy Points (crisscross) with 4+ clubs
2♥/2♠	Weak Jump Shift in hearts/spades
2NT	10-12 Starting Points balanced
3♣*	5-9 Dummy Points (weak) and 4+ clubs
3♦*/3♥*/3♠*	13+ Dummy Points, splinter bids in support of clubs
3NT	13-15 Starting Points and a balanced hand
4♣	Preemptive, 7+ clubs
4♥/4♠	to play in hearts/spades

Review of responses to minor suit opening of (1♦)

1♥/1♠	4+card major 6+ Starting Points
1NT	7-10/11 Starting Points and no 4-card major
2♣	4+ clubs 12 – 13 Starting Points (GF)
2♦*	13+ Dummy Points (inverted) with 4+ diamonds (GF)
2♥/2♠	Weak Jump shifts in hearts/spades
2NT	10-12 Starting Points balanced
3♣*	10-12 Dummy Points (crisscross) with 4+ diamonds
3♥*/3♠*	13+ Dummy Points, splinter bids in support of diamonds
3NT	13-15 Starting Points and a balanced hand
4♦	Preemptive, 7+ diamonds
4♥/4♠	to play in hearts/spades

The Walsh Club Convention

When opening one club, we have said that the first priority is to bid the major to show 6+ HCP playing the “Walsh Bidding System”; however, playing the Walsh Club Convention you do not show your **four card major**, but instead when holding a hand with 13+ points (a game forcing hand) and diamonds (at least two), your bid is 1♦* (alert and explained as game forcing.)

The bid of 1♦* asks the opener to bid 1NT* (alert since he may have a 4-card major) with a minimum hand, 11-12 HCP; with 13+ points opener bids his 4-card major (hearts or spades). With no 4-card major but 4/5 clubs and 13+ points opener bids is 2♣* or 2♦* with 4/5 diamonds and 13+ points. This asks responder to bid 3NT.

The primary advantage of the Walsh Club Convention is that you now have a game forcing bid over the bid of 1♣, just like 2♣ clubs is a game forcing bid over 1♦ playing the 2/1 game force system.

Suppose opener has this hand ♠A872 ♥AK4 ♦83 ♣J1065; and playing the Walsh Club Convention, the auction goes: 1♣-1♦*(alert). Opener will bid 1NT* to show a minimal hand. If partner bids 2♥ you may pass (partner must bid 3♥ to force game in hearts). If partner bids 2♠ you may raise the bid to show a fit. If partner bids 2♣ he is denying a 4-card major. You may bid 3♣ to show a fit. Since partner now knows that you have 11-12 Starting Points, partner will set the contract which may be 2NT or pass.

Holding ♠AK87 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K106 opener would bid 1♥ over 1♦* to show 13+ points and four cards in the major. If partner has a four card heart suit he will raise your bid, if he has spades and not hearts he will bid 1♠ and bid 1NT without four spades. This allows you to play in a major or no-trump game.

As responder holding ♠AJ875 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K10, you would bid 1♠ over the bid of 1♣. This now shows a 4-card major. If partner next bids 2♠ showing a 4-card fit, you must bid 3♠ to show 13+ points. If partner bids 2♥, with less than 13 points, bid only 2♠.

When holding a 4-card major, over the bid of 1♣, if you bid the major: 1♥/1♠; this shows 6-12 points since you did not bid 1♦*. Now 2♣ show 5/6 clubs and no 4-card major and 2♦* shows 17+ points, a reverse as we will soon see.

What happens when they interfere? The convention is OFF. Over a double, a redouble shows 10+ HCP; bidding at the two level also shows 10+ HCP and a 5-card suit, not playing negative free bids common with precision players.

How does the Walsh Club Convention affect the inverted minor raise? Clearly, 1♦-2♦* applies (13+ Dummy Points with diamonds) as and so does 1♦-3♣* (crisscross – limit raise in diamonds); both deny a 4-card major and showing 13+ Dummy Points and a limit raise in diamonds, respectively, with diamonds. With clubs, 1♣-2♣* denies a 4-card major with 13+ Dummy Points and clubs; and 1♣-2♦* shows 10-12 Dummy Points with clubs. 1♣-1♦* now shows 13+ Dummy Points with a 4-card major or perhaps diamonds/clubs.

Meckwell 2NT Response to Minor Suit Openings

As an alternative to inverted minors, Jeff MECKstroth and Eric RodWELL (Meckwell) use the bid of 2NT as a response to a minor suit opening to show game forcing values and a hand that may contain one or both four card majors. Opener rebids are:

Over 1♦, 3♣ asks partner for a four card major. If opened 1♣, showing 5+ clubs, and an unbalanced hand, with mild slam interest, responder may choose to try for a club game/slam, bid 3NT, or rebid a four card major with additional values.

Over 1♣, 3♦ asks partner for a four card major. If opened 1♦, showing 5+ diamonds and an unbalanced hand, with mild slam interest, responder may choose to try for a diamond game/slam, bid 3NT, or rebid a four card major with additional values.

3♥ = showing a heart control and asking partner to bid 3NT with a spade control.

3♠ = showing a spade control and asking partner to bid 3NT with a heart control.

3NT = sign off in game

4♣ = either a 6+ clubs suit with slam interest if opened 1♣, 5+ clubs if opened 1♦, or Gerber, depending upon partnership agreement.

4♦ = 6+ diamond suit if opened 1♦, 5+ diamonds if opened 1♣

4♥ = 6/5 minor/hearts.

4♠ = 6/5 minor/spades

Hand Evaluation - Bergen Points

When you have a major, minor, or no-trump fit, the value of your hand will often increase. Recall that as opener, you only considered your Starting Points that EXCLUDED short-suit points. And, while you did account for suit length, you may have additional value for the extra trump length. And finally, while you accounted for quality suits, the value of these may also increase when finding a fit.

These observations suggest that your Starting Points must be modified with a fit. It works as follows.

Bergen Points (the final hand evaluation)

Step 1: Extra Trump Length (with 6+ trumps, add 1 for each trump after 5)

Add 1 Point 6 card suit
2 Points 7 card suit, etc.

Step 2: Side Suits (for a 4-card or 5-card suit)

Add 1 point for each

Step 3: Short-Suit Points (Used with suit contracts only NOT no-trump)

- Add
- 1 extra point for 2 or 3 doubletons, **not each** (Note this is not the same as Dummy short-suit point procedure)
 - 2 extra points for a singleton
 - 4 extra points for a void

Adding the above aspects of your hand to your Starting Points, your total points are called Bergen Points. This total is now used to determine if you have twenty-six points (Bergen Points + Dummy Points) for game in a major, twenty-six points for no-trump [Bergen Points (steps 1 and 2) + Partner's Starting Points], twenty-nine points for game in a minor (Bergen Points + Partner's Starting Points), or thirty-three points for a slam (no-trump or suit).

In no-trump, you cannot count shortness; hence, only steps 1 and 2 above are used to count Bergen Points.

Let's apply the process to Hands 1, 2, and 5 with 12, 11, and 20 Starting Points, respectively, using Bergen's ADJUST-3 Method back in Hand Evaluation.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK10	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J105	♦A109
♣J67	♣5678	♣A

And, suppose we have found a fit in spades, for hands 1 and 2 and hearts for hand 5.

To calculate Bergen Points for hand 1, you add 2 points for the singleton and 1 point for the 4-card heart suit. Thus, hand 1 has 15 Bergen Points.

Because hand 2 is balanced, there is no adjustment Starting Point = Bergen Points.

For hand 5, you add 1 more point for 6 trumps and 2 points for the ace singleton. Hence, Bergen Points = $19 + 2 = 22$.

Suppose you hold the following hand and partner responds $3\clubsuit^*$ and you know he has 7-12 Dummy Points playing Combined Bergen Raises or only 7-9 Dummy Points playing Bergen Raises or 10-12 Dummy Points playing Reverse Bergen raises.

♠AK42 ♥KQ632 ♦AK109 ♣void

19 HCP

Adjust-3 no adjustment (3 overvalues; 1 under value)

Length points: Add 1

Quality Suit: Add 1

Starting Points: 21

However, finding a fit in hearts, you must reevaluate

Short-suit: Add 4 points for void

Side Suits: Add 1 point (4-card diamond suit)

Bergen Points Total= 26 points

Because your partner bids three clubs, you now know, upon reevaluation, that you may have a slam in hearts. Without the reevaluation, you may have only bid game!

Suppose you have the following hand: ♠A598 ♥KJ87 ♦AQ ♣1085.

With two four-card majors and 14 Starting Points (AQ is not a dubious doubleton), you open 1 ♣. Partner with the following hand ♠K32 ♥56 ♦KJ5 ♣AJ742 with thirteen Starting Points, bids 2♣*. With the diamond doubleton, no-trump is of no interest. You have a club fit. You now reevaluate your hand, using the Bergen Method. You add two points for the doubleton and two points for the two four-card suits. You have seventeen Bergen Points. Adding this to partner's minimum 13 Dummy Points+18 = 31 points and you confidently bid 5♣, a minor suit game (almost a club slam).

Hand Evaluation Using Zar Points

Zar Points (ZP) is a statistically derived method for evaluating bridge hands developed by Zar Petkov. The Zar formula provides a simple method that allows one to quickly evaluate bridge hands.

A very simple formula that incorporates **hand strength** and **distribution** follows.

Zar Points = HCP + Control Points + (Longest – Shortest Suit) + (Two Longest Suits)

Where HCP are 4=A, 3=K, 2=Q and 1=J and Control Points are A=2 and K=1.

A bridge hand is opened if the number of $ZP/2 = 12.5$ rounded to 13 or more.

While the terms in the formula are not independent, the method is very simple.

It is very similar to the method proposed by the Four Aces in the 1930's where HCP are defined as 3=A, 2=K, 1=Q, $\frac{1}{2}$ =J; and you then add the length of your longest suit, to half the difference in length of the second and fourth longest suits; — where again 12.5 rounded to 13 or more is an opening bid.

However, unlike Bergen's ADJUST 3-method it does not distinguish between good and bad hands.

To compare the method with Bergen's Adjust-3 method, we will use the same hand evaluation hands used to calculate starting points.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠AKQ105	♠AK10	♠A67	♠A104	♠K78
♥10982	♥KJ3	♥KQ54	♥10543	♥AQ9852
♦6	♦J1052	♦Q7	♦KJ67	♦A109
♣J67	♣567	♣J68	♣K10	♣A

Hand Evaluation with Zar Points

Hand 1:	HCP	10
	Controls	3
	Longest - Shortest	5-1=4
	Two Longest	9
	Zar points	26/2= 13

Hand 2:	HCP	12
	Controls	4
	Longest - Shortest	4-3=1
	Two Longest	7
	Zar points	24/2=12

Hand 3:	HCP	12
	Controls	3
	Longest - Shortest	4-2=2
	Two Longest	7
	Zar points	24/2=12

Hand 4:	HCP	11
	Controls	4
	Longest - Shortest	4-2=2
	Two Longest	8
	Zar points	24/2=12

Hand 5:	HCP	17
	Controls	7
	Longest - Shortest	6-7=5
	Two Longest	98
	Zar points	38/2=19

Counting only HCP, one would have opened hands 2, 3, and 5; using Bergen's Adjust-3 method, hands 1, 4 and 5 are opened. Using Zar Points; hands 1 and 5 would be opened. While there is not agreement between the two, observe that both require **TWO QUICK TRICKS**.

RULE: Open a bridge hand one of a suit with at least 12 Adjust-3 Bergen points or 12.5 (rounded to 13) Zar points and two quick tricks (in the first or second seat—there are exceptions in the third and fourth seats).

Dummy Points with ZAR

When partner opens one of a **major** and you have three-card support, you have found a fit in the major, playing the 2/1 Game Force System. If you win the major suit contract, you will become Dummy and partner will play the hand. When you have a short-suit or two, you must reevaluate your hand.

The dummy hand reevaluation process is used when partner opens a major; it does not apply to minor suit or no-trump openings. Conversely, if opener opens a minor and partner (responder) bids a major, opener must reevaluate his starting points with a major suit fit. Thus, the reevaluation process may be done by responder when opener opens a major and a fit is found or by opener when opening a minor and partner bids a major (with 4+ cards) and opener has a four-card major, a fit has also been found; **the “dummy” reevaluation process may be employed by opener or responder.**

Recall that the short-suit Dummy Points are evaluated as follows with Bergen's ADJUST-3 method:

Doubleton	1 point for each doubleton
Singleton	2 points each, but 3 each with 4+trump
Void	equal to the value of the number of trumps in hand

Revaluation with shortness with Zar points requires 4+trump support (NOT 3) – a 9 card Fit:

Singleton	1 point each for each trump over 3
Void	2 points each for each trump over 3

Dummy Points = Zar Points + Revaluation Zar Points

For a major suit game you need 12.5+12.5 Dummy Zar Points = 25 Total Zar Points

Rounding each to 13, observe that the requirement is the familiar number 26!

Let's look at a few examples, when your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following hands.

Hand A: ♠ AJ62 ♥ 6542 ♦void ♣ AK987

12HCP+5 Control +L-S=5+L=9=31 Zar + Dummy=2 or $33/2=16.5$ rounded to 17 Zar Dummy Points

Hand B: ♠ AQ67 ♥ 678 ♦AK10432 ♣void
13HCP + 5 Control +L-S=6 +L=10= 34 Zar + Dummy=2 or $36/2 = 18$ Zar Dummy Points

Hand C: ♠ KQJ32 ♥ 1098 ♦7 ♣ J987
7HCP+ 1 Control+ L-S= 4+ L=10=22 Zar +Dummy=2= $24/2=12$ Zar Dummy Points

Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣AQ1084
13HCP+ 5 Control +L-S=3+L=9=30 Zar + Dummy=0 = $30/2=15$ Zar Dummy Points

Hand E: ♠ 10986 ♥ K ♦ 753 ♣ Q9432
5HCP+ 1 Control+ L-S=4+L=9=19 Zar + Dummy=1= $20/2=10$ Zar Dummy Points

Hand F: ♠ 102 ♥ J64 ♦ KQJ ♣ KQ1098
12 HCP+ 2 Control+ L-S=3+L=8=25 Zar + Dummy=0= $25/2=12.5$ or 13 Zar Dummy Points

In review the corresponding Bergen Dummy Points were:

Hand A = 13 starter points + 4 shortness points = 17 Dummy Points (Zar =17)

Hand B = 16 starter points + 4 shortness points = 20 Dummy Points (Zar =18)

Hand C = 09 starter points + 3 shortness points = 12 Dummy Points (Zar =12)

Hand D = 15 starter points + 1 shortness points = 16 Dummy Points (Zar =15)

Hand E = 05 starter points + 4 shortness points = 08 Dummy Points (Zar =10)

Hand F = 14 starter points + 1 shortness points = 15 Dummy Points (Zar =13)

When considering both hands, there is close agreement between the two methods; however, Bergen's method is more liberal and the Zar method appears to be more conservative!

For a minor suit game or a Flat NT hand you need $57/2=28.5$ or 29 Total Zar Points

However, with a 5-4 or 4-4 minors suit fit the NT requirements are again 26 rounded Zar points.

Small slams require between 31 - 34 rounded Zar points, depending on the fit and a grand slam needs 34 - 36 rounded Zar points.

I have provided an overview of Hand Evaluation using the Zar Points; Mr. Petkov has made several adjustments to the basic formula. A more extensive overview is available on the Wikipedia.org web site.

For a comprehensive analysis one may consult the paper by Mr. Petkov: *Petkov, Zar (2003), Zar Points – Aggressive Bidding Hand Evaluation*, pp 38. The paper is available on the web if you visit: www.bridgeguys.com/pdf/ZarPoints.pdf

Overview of Forcing and Semi-Forcing Rebids by Opener

We have discussed opening one-level bids for majors and minors and the corresponding responses by your partner to both bids. Before discussing rebids by the opening bidder, after a one-level bid of a suit, recall that the point range when opening at the one-level may be Starting Points, Starting Points + Short -suit points=Dummy/Support Points, or Bergen Points, depending upon the bidding sequence and fit.

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, one divides the opener's hand into three categories based upon strength and shape:

Strength

Minimum Strength	11/12-15 points
Medium Strength	16-18 points
Maximum Strength	19+ points

Shape

Semi-balanced (5422/6322/7222)

1-suited major (5xxx)

2-suited (6-4/5-5)

3-suited (5-4-4-0)

The minimum (most frequent) range for a one-level bid is between 11/12-15 points, above this range, the opener is said to have a strong or forcing hand. Thus, special bids by the opener have been created to show invitational hands, game forcing hands, and hands with slam interest. To show a strong hand, opener must make a "jump" bid.

Shape is determined by opener's rebids as we shall see with bidding examples.

Strong Jump Shift

A strong jump shift is a skip bid into a new suit (one level higher than necessary) showing 19+ points (or a hand with no more than 5 losers by the Losing Trick Count (LTC) method; Chapter 10). The suit of the opener's jump bid is a **single rank higher** than either opener's original bid suit or responder's bid suit. While it is usually made into a suit of length four, at times you may have to jump into a three-card suit. Example sequences of Jump Shift bids follow.

1♣ - 1♦ - 2♥ two hearts is single rank higher than clubs or diamonds

1♣ - 1♥ - 2♠ two spades is a single rank higher rank than clubs or hearts

1♦ - 1♥ - 2♠ two spades is a single rank higher than diamonds or hearts

- 1♦ - 1♥/1♠ - 3♣ three clubs is a single rank higher than hearts or spades
- 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣/3♦ three-level bids are required to be a rank higher than spades
- 1♥ - 1NT - 3♣/3♦/3♠ over no-trumps must make three-levels bid
- 1♠ - 1NT - 3♣/3♦/3♥ over no-trumps must make three-levels bid

When opener makes a strong jump shift bid, it is forcing to game.

Reverses

The opener’s second bid is called a reverse **bid** when responder cannot return to opener’s first bid suit at the same level (opener’s second suit is higher ranking than his first bid suit) and shows 17+ points. Responder is unable to return to opener’s first suit at the two- level. Reverse auctions show distributions in the first and second suits that are at least 5-4 where the first bid suit is longer than the second and higher ranking. **In addition, your partner should have bypassed your second suit with his bid.** Examples of reverse sequences follow.

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦ 5+ clubs and 4+ diamonds
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦/2♥ 5+ clubs and 4+ diamonds/hearts
- 1♣ - 1NT - 2♦/2♥2♥ 5+ clubs and 4+ in suit bid
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ 5+ diamonds and 4+ hearts
- 1♦ - 1NT - 2♥2♥ 5+ diamonds and 4+ in suit bid
- 1♥ - 1NT -2♦/2♥2♠ 5+ hearts and 4+ of bid suit

1♥ - 2♣/2♦ - 2♠ Playing 2/1, this is not a reverse but shows 5+♥ and 4+♠

An important note one must remember when playing the 2/1game force system is that a jump three-level bid for example (1♠ - 2♥ - 3♦) is not a reverse but natural. The suit is of lower rank than your first bid suit and usually shows 5-5 distribution.

Any time opener makes a reverse bid, responder is forced to bid. Partner cannot pass. Reverses do not apply after a 2/1 game force bid.

A reverse is forcing for one round of bidding. Responder may (1) support partner’s first suit with four-card support, (2) raise partner’s first suit bid with 3+ card support, (3) jump in partner’s first bid suit showing slam interest, (4) rebid his own long suit with 6+ cards and no fit in partner’s bid suits, (5) bid no-trump, or (6) bid a fourth suit (called fourth suit forcing) or (7) use new minor forcing bids; more on each of these options later when we review rebids by responder.

Jump Reverses (Mini Splinters)

Jump reverses, also called Mini splinters, are used when opener bids a minor and responder bids a major at the one-level (e.g., 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠). Opener makes a jump bid one level higher than a reverse (a jump) to show a singleton or void in the suit bid and four-card supports for the major. The jump reverse shows 16+ points. Examples of jump reverse sequences follow.

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♦ shows 4 hearts and a singleton/void in diamonds (2♦ would be a reverse)
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 3♦ shows 4 spades and a singleton/void in diamonds (2♦ would be a reverse)
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 3♥ shows 4 spades and a singleton/void in hearts (2♥ would be a reverse)
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♥ shows 4 spades and a singleton/void in hearts (2♥ would be a reverse)

All bids by the opener are one level above the reverse bid (a jump reverse). **The bids allow responder to sign off at the three levels (3♥ or 3♠) or with enough points to bid game.**

Jump Rebids into opening suit bid

To show a hand of with 6+ cards and only 16-17 points and a hand of medium strength, opener may make a jump bid in his opening bid suit. For example:

- 1♣ to 3♣
- 1♦ to 3♦
- 1♥ to 3♥
- 1♠ to 3♠

A jump bid by opener may be passed, it is not forcing.

Full Splinters or reverse jump shifts

A Full Splinter is a jump bid in a suit in which a non-jump bid would have been a strong jump shift, reverse, or a jump reverse (mini splinter). The Full Splinter is always a rank above responder's bid and shows 4+ card support for responder's suit and a singleton or void in the suit bid; the bid shows 18/19+ points and a fit in responder's suit.

- 1♣ - 1♦ - 3♥*/3♠* 4+ diamonds and a singleton/void in hearts/spades
(Note that 2♥/2♠ would have been a Strong Jump Shift)
- 1♣/1♦ - 1♥- 3♠* 4+ hearts and a singleton/void in spades
(Note 2♠ would have been a Strong Jump Shift)
- 1♣/1♦ - 1♠- 4♥* 4+ spades and a singleton/void in hearts
(Note 2♥ would be a reverse and 3♥ a jump reverse)
- 1♠ - 1NT - 4♣*/4♦*/4♥* 5+ spades singleton/void in clubs/diamonds/hearts

A Full Splinter bid is usually forcing to game in responder's bid suit: diamonds, hearts, or spades.

Fit Bids (Jump Minor Suit Support Splinters)

When opening a minor suit, responder will frequently bid a major. To show four-cards support for the major bid (hearts or spades), one may jump to the four-level in the bid minor (4♣*/4♦*) which also shows a strong club/diamond suit. These are support splinters or Fit Bids showing a good 5+ cards in the bid minor and support for the major bid. The bids show 17-19 points and are invitational to at least game with slam interest. These bids are used if you do not play Swiss bids. In addition, if you are a passed hand they may be used to show 10-12 points with a fit in a major and a solid side suit.

Jumps into No-trump

A jump into 2NT following a 1-level bid, playing the strong 15-17 NT range, by opener shows 18-19 points and a balanced hand with stoppers in all suits except perhaps the one bid by responder. A jump into 3NT shows 20-21 points, a balanced hand, and stoppers in all suits.

Rebids by Opener after Major opening bids

The responder may bid 1NT semi-forcing, make a 2/1 game force bid, and use a series of Bergen bids either invitational or forcing. For each of these responses, we shall consider bids available to the opening bidder, again without interference.

After 1NT (semi-forcing)

Recall that the bid of 1NT by responder shows 5-12 Starting Points and no fit. **The only forcing bid that opener may make as a game force is a jump shift bid into a suit.** The jump shift bid shows 19+ Starting Points.

Suppose one opens 1♠ and partner bids 1NT, an overview of bids by the opener follows.

Rebids by Opener	Suit Length	Starting Points
2♣/2♦	3+ cards	11/12-15
2♥	4+ cards	11/12-15
2♠	6+ cards	11/12-15

2NT (non-forcing)	(5-3-3-2)	16/17-18
3♣/3♦/3♥	4+ cards	19+ (strong jump shift)
3♠	6+ cards	16-17 (jump rebid in bid suit)
3NT	5-3-3-2	19+
4♠	7+ spades/8+spades	14+/12+

After the major suit bid of 1♥, the schedule is similar. However, the jump in hearts shows 16-17 points, and the jump shift may be made into a minor or spades. There is one additional bid available to the opener when opening the bidding with the bid of 1♥. It is the **reverse bid**. **Recall that the definition of a reverse is that responder must go to the next higher level to return to the opening bidder's first suit, in this case 1♥.**

The reverse bid is:

2♠	4 cards	17+
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Using the above schedule as a guideline, consider your rebid on each of the following hands. In each example, we indicate the bidding sequence.

(1) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK876 ♥KQ432 ♦J10 ♣7

Clearly, your rebid is 2♥ showing 4+ cards.

(2) 1♥ - 1NT ♠AK87 ♥AKJ32 ♦7 ♣K54

You have enough to reverse, bid 2♠.

(3) 1♥ - 1NT ♠KQJ5 ♥AK832 ♦J92 ♣7

You cannot reverse; hence your only rebid is 2♦.

(4) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK8765 ♥KQ43 ♦J10 ♣7

Show your six spades, but make a jump bid, bid 3♠.

(5) 1♥ - 1NT ♠A6 ♥Q10432 ♦AJ2 ♣AQ9

Your rebid is clearly 2NT, an invitational bid, partner may pass.

(6) 1♥ - 1NT ♠A6 ♥A109432 ♦7 ♣AQ109

Your heart suit is weak; your rebid is 2♣ (see Chapter 10 Rule of 64).

(7) 1♥ - 1NT ♠AQ6 ♥A109432 ♦AJ10 ♣7

Your hearts are not good enough to bid 3♥, and the hand is too good for 2♥, hence you must bid 2♦. Partner may have four diamonds and pass or bid hearts.

(8) 1♠ - 1NT ♠AK456 ♥89 ♦KQJ ♣AJ7

You only have three diamonds, not four, do not jump-shift into 3♦; instead, bid 3NT.

(9) 1♠ - 1NT ♠KQJ98762 ♥89 ♦ void ♣AQ7

With long spades, partner has 0-2 card support and 5+ points, bid 4♠.

When opening one spade, it is normally not difficult to find a heart fit after partner bids 1NT when you have four hearts; however, if responder has only three hearts and a weak hand, the fit may be more difficult to find after opener bids of 2♣/2♦ (unless you play the Two Way Checkback, Gazzilli, Bart or Lisa Conventions to be discussed shortly). Partner with five hearts and a weak hand may pass.

For example, suppose partner has the hand: ♠7 ♥KJ752 ♦ 5672 ♣AJ7. Partner may pass the bid of a minor! You may have missed a 3-5 heart fit. Partner cannot bid 2♥ since it shows a six-card suit. When responder has a stronger hand, for example: ♠J ♥KJ752 ♦ 567 ♣AK75, he will certainly bid his hearts after a minor suit bid.

When opener bids 2♦, there is no way to force your partner to bid when opening one heart. However, if you bid 2♣, showing 3+ clubs, there is hope of finding a heart fit playing either the Bart Convention, developed by the bridge expert Les Bart, or the Lisa Convention, and developed by Jamie Radcliffe and Pete Whipple, in the October 2007 issue of "The Bridge World."

Using the Bart Convention, after the bidding sequence: 1♠ - pass 1NT – pass - 2♣ - pass - ? the responder bids 2♦* as an artificial forcing bid (alert). This sequence is used to show opener one of the following hands:

1. Five hearts and two spades. Responder plans to pass opener's rebid (hopefully two hearts).
2. A doubleton spade honor with 9-11 HCP. Responder plans to correct two hearts to two spades, pass a rebid of two spades, or raise 2NT to 3NT.
3. A weak/invitational hand with a good diamond suit. Responder plans to bid 3♦.
4. A favorable hand with a club raise. Responder plans to bid 3♣.
5. A raise of 2NT with four clubs. Responder plans to bid 2NT.

Aside from giving up the "natural" two diamond bid, Bart has two serious drawbacks. When opener has extra values but fewer than two hearts, the partnership might miss a game when responder is unable to show a strong simple preference; and when opener has good heart support, he cannot safely bid past two hearts, because responder might not have heart length. WHAT DO YOU DO?

You may replace the Bart Convention with the **LISA CONVENTION**, Bart's smarter little sister.

Basic Lisa

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - ?

- 2♦* artificial (alert); usually six-plus hearts or weak spade preference
- 2♥ exactly two spades and five hearts
- 2♠ exactly two spades; strong simple preference
- 2NT invitational; fewer than four clubs
- 3♣ invitational; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ invitational; six-plus-card suit
- 3♥ invitational; six-plus-card suit

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - 2♦* - pass - Opener bids 2♥

- Pass weak; six-plus-card suit
- 2♠ weak simple preference
- 2NT invitational; exactly four clubs
- 3♣ moderate values; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ weak; six-plus-card suit

Bidding sequence 1♠ - pass - 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - 2♦* - pass - Opener bids 2♠

- Pass weak suit preference
- 2NT invitational; exactly four clubs
- 3♣ moderate values; five-plus clubs
- 3♦ weak; six-plus-card suit
- 3♥ signoff
- 4♦ transfer to hearts

The Basic Lisa Convention does not have Bart's shortcomings, and compared to other methods, the only significant disadvantage is the loss of the natural two-level diamond rebid. In addition, the basic Lisa bids are easily extended to non-Bart situations using, for example, Extended Lisa and Fourth-suit Lisa as discussed in the "The Bridge World" article.

Responder's Rebids without Basic Lisa

When the bidding goes 1M - 1NT - 2m/2M - ?

- (1) Responder may pass opener's bid with 5-8 Starting Points.
- (2) With two-card support for opener's bid suit and less than eleven Starting Points, return to the major (M) at the two-level.

- (3) With less than two-card support and 10-12 Starting Points, bid 2NT.
- (4) Raise partner's minor (m) with 5+ card support and 10+ Starting Points.
- (5) With 10-12 Starting Points, playing Bergen Raises, jump to the three levels in opener's major. Playing Combined Bergen, you would not bid 1NT, but 3♦*.
- (6) Bid your own suit with 5-9 Starting Points and a 6+ card suit.
- (7) Bid your own suit at the three-level, without jumping, with 6+ cards in the suit and 5-12 Starting Points.
- (8) Bid your own suit at the four-level, by jumping, with 6+ card and 10-12 starting values.

Let's consider a few examples.

(a) The bidding goes: 1♠ -1NT - 2♦ and you hold: ♠2 ♥A10654 ♦J756 ♣Q104

You cannot support diamonds since opener may have only three, bid 2♥.

With the hand ♠J7 ♥KQ2 ♦Q987 ♣K1042, you would bid 2NT.

(b) The bidding goes 1♥ - 1NT - 2♦ and you hold: ♠K987 ♥Q6 ♦K43 ♣K965

Even though you have only two hearts, you should support hearts by bidding 2♥. Do not bid 2NT.

(c) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT - 2♣ and you hold: ♠J98 ♥A86 ♦AK43 ♣965

Playing Bergen Raises, bid 3♠ to show limit raise in spades. Playing Combined Bergen, you would not bid 1NT, but bid 3♦ to show a limit raise with three trump.

(d) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT - 2♦ and you hold: ♠2 ♥A1065 ♦K10543 ♣A43

You would support diamonds by bidding 3♦.

(e) The bidding goes 1♠ -1NT- 2NT and you hold: ♠2 ♥AK98765 ♦105 ♣Q87

Your partner is showing 16-18 Starting Points with five spades, bid 4♥.

(f) The bidding goes 1♥ -1NT-2♠ and you hold: ♠987 ♥K9 ♦10875 ♣AQ92

Your partner has reversed showing 17+ points, bid 3♥. You cannot pass.

If the opener raises your 1NT bid to 2NT, it is non-forcing; you may pass with 5-8 Starting Points. This is also the case if opener makes a jump rebid in his bid major. However, all jump shift bids are forcing to game.

If opener bids 1♥ and partner bids 1NT, it always denies four spades. If opener bids 2♣/2♦/2♥ and now you bid 2♠* (it is called the impossible two spades bid), it requests opener to bid 2NT* (a relay bid) so responder can sign off in a minor at the three-level. If opener makes a jump bid in hearts, after you have bid 1NT, you may use the impossible 3♠* bid. Opener will bid 3NT or pursue game in the minor, knowing you probably have neither hearts nor spades and less than twelve Starting Points. The impossible two spade bid show 10+ HCP and support for the bid suit. A rebid by responder at the three level shows a distributional hand with five card support for the bid suit.

Gazzilli Convention

For those who do not use the Lisa Convention, another option is to employ the Gazzilli Convention; it is a conventional method of rebidding by opener employing a low level forcing rebid of 2♣. The base auction for this convention is 1♠-1NT-2♣. The 2♣ rebid shows either clubs or various strong hands. With a weak hand responder rebids either 2♠ (preference) or 2♥ (natural, 5+card suit). With a better hand (8+ HCP) responder usually relays with 2♦, over which opener rebids 2♥ (minimum 5532 hand) or 2♠ (unbalanced, 4+ clubs). Opener's higher rebids (2NT thru 3NT) show hands in the 16-18 HCP and are game forcing over the 2♦ rebid.

Using Gazzilli opener has two ways to rebid beyond 2♠, either directly over 1NT, or indirectly via 2♣. This allows opener to show 54, 55, 64 and 63 hand patterns of 16 or more points. There are many versions of Gazzilli, and they vary mostly in the meaning of these high direct and indirect rebids.

Gazzilli may be used after 1♥-1NT, 1♥-1♠ and 1♦-1M also; where the 1♠ response uses the Kaplan Interchange (Inversion), Chapter 15.

The convention is rather involved, but has been explained in great detail by **Mr. Sudhir Aggarwal** in the **Delhi Bridge Association Newsletter (Vol. 3 – Issue 7, 2005, Vol. 3 – Issue 8, 2006 and Vol 3 – Issue 9, 2006)**. The origin of the convention is unknown, but appears to have been developed in Italy. A copy of the entire convention is available on bridgeguys.com. A portion of the System as explained by Mr. Aggarwal follows.

Gazzilli

Playing a so-called standard bidding system, the player opens one of a Major suit and, without competition, the partner responds 1NT. Now if you have a Major single suiter game-forcing hand, there is no convenient bid in several of the standard bidding systems. The player might jump to three of a Minor suit to force the bidding, but that will mean that the responder will not know whether the new suit contains 3/ 4 / 5 cards. Also when the player jumps to the three level with a game-forcing holding with 5-4-3-1 distribution, it becomes difficult to find the fit in your 3-card suit if the responder has that suit in a weak holding. The jump rebid has consumed much of the bidding space, which is of paramount importance for exploring and finding the correct and maximum contract.

Similarly another problem area for standard bidders is balanced holdings of 15-17 high card points containing a 5-card Major suit. If the player opens one of a Major suit, there is a rebid problem with these holdings. Many of the players today open 1NT with a 5-card Major suit to solve this problem. However this creates an additional problem as the partnership might miss out on a 5-4 or a 5-3 Major suit fit on borderline holdings.

To solve all these difficulties and also to allow non-forcing jumps to the three level with fewer high card points (14-16), the Gazzilli Conventional has been developed. The exact origin is somewhat clouded, but the agreement is that this method was devised in Italy.

Gazzilli is an artificial bid of 2♣ by the opener generally after an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ and a response of 1♠ or 1NT. The 2♣ response is forcing, but the partnership will normally not play in a Minor suit unless no other option is available. The 2♣ bid is employed for the following kinds of holdings:

5-3-3-2 hands with 11/12-14, 15-17 and 18-20 HCP

5 of a Major suit and 4+clubs with 11-16 HCP

All other hands with 17+ HCP (e.g. single suiters, two-suiters etc.)

The one feature about the Gazzilli conventional method is that the significance of the individual bids and responses may also be decided, altered, modified, or varied by the partnership. This feature also pertains to the meanings of the continuances.

Note: The Gazzilli conventional method may also be played over minor suit openings, and the minor suit bidding sequences are shown following the Major suit openings and continuances.

Opener's Rebids after a 1♥ Opening (an example of the bidding using Gazzilli)

Since Gazzilli covers most of the holdings containing 17 plus high card points, it allows the partnership a great deal of flexibility with Precision-like jumps. The jumps are no longer forcing and simple bids at the two level are narrower in high card points. This certainly has an advantage as the responder no longer needs to keep the bidding open. The following are opener's rebids after a 1♥ opening and a 1♠ or 1NT response.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1♥	1♠	
1NT		this shows a balanced holding with 12-14 high card points.
2♣		Gazzilli Convention (clubs or strong hand)
2♦		Natural; promises 5 Hearts and 4 plus Diamonds, and 11-16 high card points
2♥		Natural; promises 6 Hearts and shows 11-14 high card points.

2♠	Shows 3 or 4 card support and 11-14 high card points. (The Limit Raise is part of the bidding system, but does not distinguish between a 3-card and a 4-card support. The individual partnership may add such a feature.)
2NT*	This rebid may be played as a Splinter; as showing 4-card support for partner's suit; as showing a 6-card Heart suit and a 3-card Spade suit as support for partner's suit; but only shows 14-16 high card points by whichever agreement.
3♣	Natural; promises a 5-card Heart suit and a 5-card Club suit; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♦	Natural; promises a 5-card Heart suit and a 5-card Diamond suit; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♥	Natural; promises 6 Hearts and denies 3-card Spade support for partner; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♠	Promises 4-card Spade support and a close distribution of 4-5-2-2; shows 14-16 high card points.
4♣	Promises 6 Hearts and 4 Spades in support of partner's suit and shows a singleton/void in Clubs
4♦	Promises 6 Hearts and 4 Spades in support of partner's suit and shows a singleton/void in Diamonds

The rebids of the opener after the bidding sequence, without competition, of 1♥ - 1NT are as follows. The 1NT responses can have a definite range according to the partnership agreement. One option is to play standard 6-9 high card points and a second option is to play the 1NT Forcing conventional method used in the 2/1 bidding system with a range between 6-12 HCP.

A feature of the Gazzilli conventional method is that a first response of 1NT is generally considered to be forcing for one round. If the partner has previously passed, then the opener may pass this 1NT first response if the contract cannot be improved.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1♥	1NT	
2♣		Gazzilli convention
2♦		Natural; promises 4 plus Diamonds; shows 11-16 high card points.
2♥		Natural; promises 6 Hearts; shows 11-14 high card points.

2♠	Promises a 5-card plus Heart suit and a 4-card plus Spade suit; shows 17 plus high card points.
2NT*	This rebid may be played as showing a 6-card plus Heart suit and any 4-card side suit, with values of 17 plus high card points, to which 3♣ by the responder would be a game-forcing relay.
3♣	Natural; promises a 5-card Heart suit and a 5-card Club suit; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♦	Natural; promises a 5-card Heart suit and a 5-card Diamond suit; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♥	Natural; promises a 6-card plus Heart suit; shows 14-16 high card points.
3♠	Promises a 6-card Heart suit and a 5-card Spade suit.
4♣	Promises a 6 Hearts - 5 Clubs distribution; shows 14-16 high card points.
4♦	Promises a 6 Hearts – 5 Diamonds distribution; shows 14-16 high card points.

As soon as the Gazzilli conventional method has been initiated then generally the forcing bid of 2♦ is made, which the responder rebids as a relay to request additional information and shows, at the same time around 7/8 high card points.

As soon as the opener has clarified his holding promising 17 plus high card points, then a game force has been established.

Two Way Checkback Convention

The Lisa and Gazzilli Conventions both employ the bid of 2♣ to initiate the conventions. The advantage of the Two Way Checkback Convention is that it is initiated with either the bid of 2♣/2♦ which allows more flexibility.

The Basics

There are four basic features of the system:

1. The bid of 2♣ to the 1NT response forces the responder to bid 2♦. It begins all invitational sequence with no game interest.
2. The bid of 2♦*(alert) to the 1NT is artificial and must be alerted. It asks responder if he has the other 4-card major or 4-card minor suit.
3. The bid of 2NT* to 1NT (1M-1NT-2NT*) is artificial and forces the bid of 3♣ by responder. It is used as a sign-off in clubs or possible slam bidding sequences.
4. Jump rebids by responder in any suit are forcing. They show a very good hand with good suit(s) and HCPs in long suit(s).

Remember that 1NT is semi-forcing and shows 7-12 starting points which have two natural ranges Low or Invitational: 7-9 or 10-12. From the basic features of the convention, we see that it allows one to sign-off in a major, minor or no-trump. Or we may invite game or force to game in a major, minor or no-trump, and finally also investigate slam.

Checkback Sign-off Sequences begin with 2♣/2NT

1M-1NT-Pass
 1M-1NT-2♣-2♦-2M (6-card Major)
 1M-1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣/3♦ (M5-4m)
 1M-1NT-2♣-2♦-2NT (balanced <14)
 1M-2NT-3♣-Pass Sign-off in clubs

Checkback Invitational and Forcing Sequences begin with 2♦

1M-1NT-Pass
 1M-1NT-2♦-3♣-2M (6-card Major)
 1M-1NT-2♦-3♣-3oM/3M/3♣/3♦ (4oM/4-card minor)/3NT (at least 2M-cards)
 Opener bids 3NT/4M/4oM
 1M-1NT-2♦-3♣-3NT

 1M-1NT-3M/4m=18+

Advanced sequences for slam investigation are discussed in Chapter 3. However, additional modification are possible, for example Meckstroth's adjunct is one possible treatment - it uses 1M - 1NT - 2NT* (without a relay) as an artificial game forcing bid. This lets three-level jump rebids to be natural and shape-showing, for example 5-5 trick-taking hands.

After 2/1 game force bids

Recall that after opening one of a major, playing the 2/1 game force system; the following bids are absolute forcing to game.

- 1♠ 2♣/2♦ (4+cards), 2♥ (5+cards)
- 1♥ 2♣/2♦ (4+cards)

The goal of the partnership is to find a game or a slam in a major suit. Although sometimes one may play in no-trumps. The last priority is to play in a minor suit game. When responding to your partner's 2/1 bid, opener has several avenues to pursue: (1) he can support partner's suit to allow partner to bid no-trump, (2) he can show his own second suit, (3) he can rebid his major, and (4) he can bid no-trump.

(1a) Opener may support the 2/1 suit bid by responder (♣ or ♦) at the three-level showing 4+ card support and 12-15 Bergen Points. With 16+ points and support for the 2/1 bid suit, and a singleton not in the 2/1 bid suit, opener may jump (**splinter**) to the four-level in a suit that neither he nor partner bid. Note: The bid of 1♥ - 2♣/2♦ - 2♠ shows 5-4 distribution and is **not a reverse** (alternatively playing the Flannery Convention, one would open an artificial 2♦* that shows 5♥-4♠ and 11 -15 Starting Points; more on this soon).

(1b) After the bid of 1♠ - 2♥, with 3/4+ hearts and 12-15 points bid 4♥ (the principle of fast arrival); however, with 3+ hearts and 16+ bid 3♥ shows slam interest.

(2a) Opener may bid his own higher ranking suit at the two-level, usually showing 4+ cards with 5-4 distribution.

(2b) Opener may bid a lower ranking suit at the three-level showing 15+ points, usually showing 5-5 distribution.

(3) Opener may rebid his major suit typically showing 6+ cards in the major. On occasion, it may also be his only rebid, having only five cards.

(4) With a balanced hand, pattern (5-3-3-2), and at least three-card support in the 2/1 suit bid, and stoppers in the unbid suits, he will bid 2NT (12-15 Bergen Points) or 3NT (16+ Bergen Points).

Let's look at a few examples of the prior guidelines.

The bidding goes 1♠ - 2♥. What would you respond as opener?

♠AK843 ♥K62 ♦J4 ♣AQ3

You have a strong hand, eighteen Dummy Points (17 starting + 1 Shortness); bid 3♥ (slam interest)

♠AK843 ♥K62 ♦54 ♣Q32

You have a weak hand, fourteen Dummy Points (13 starting + 1 shortness); bid 4♥ (fast arrival to game)

♠AK843 ♥K1062 ♦7 ♣AQ3

You have four-card supports for hearts twenty Dummy Points (17 starting + 3 shortness); bid 4♦ (splinter)

♠AKJ84 ♥75 ♦A97 ♣J32

You have only two hearts and weak clubs, rebid spades with only 5 (bid 2♠), you should not bid no-trump; even with fifteen Dummy Points.

♠AK984 ♥75 ♦AJ8 ♣KJ6

You have a balanced hand with stoppers in all suits and eighteen Dummy Points, bid 3NT; changing the A♦ to a Q, bid 2NT.

♠AQ984 ♥7 ♦A8 ♣K10862

You have a nice club suit and 5-5 distribution, bid 3♣. You have eighteen Dummy Points (14 starting + 4 shortness points).

Next, we consider examples where the bidding is 1♥/1♠ - 2♣/2♦; because the responses are similar, we assume one opens 1♥-2♣. What would you respond as opener?

♠984 ♥KQ875 ♦AQJ2 ♣7

You have four diamonds, bid 2♦. Shows 4-4 distribution and you have twelve Dummy Points.

♠Q107 ♥KQ875 ♦AJ2 ♣J7

You have a balanced hand, bid 2NT with thirteen Starting Points.

♠7 ♥AK875 ♦A92 ♣KQJ7

You have a very strong hand, splinter by bidding 3♠ in support of clubs. You have twenty Bergen Points (assume a club fit).

♠AJ3 ♥KQ875 ♦1092 ♣K6

Even with only five hearts, you must rebid them. You have no other bid due to your diamond holdings.

These examples should help to clarify opener's rebids when opening a major and partner makes a 2/1 response. Remember, we want to get to game. Rebids by responder and subsequent bids by the opener will be covered later in the book.

When responding with a 2/1 bid to a major, we have said that the partnership may not stop short of game. This is also the case with the forcing Bergen Raise of 2NT* and Concealed/Ambiguous Splinter bids. These are game force bids with serious interest in slam.

After Jacoby 2NT*

Rebids by Opener	Suit Length	Bergen Points
3 (new suit)*	Singleton/Void	11-13+
3 (major suit opened)*	5/6+ in major	18+
3NT*	(5-3-3-2) balanced	15-17
4 (new suit)*	4+ card suit	11-16+
4 (major suit opened)	5+ major	11-14+

A jump to the four levels after 2NT* is clearly invitational to slam. When showing a singleton after 2NT*, the trump suit should contain at least two of the top three honors. Do not show a singleton with a weak trump suit.

Furthermore, a new suit at the four-level should contain two of the top three honors in the suit bid. **All rebids by opener must be alerted and explained in detail if asked.**

Examples Responses to Jacoby 2NT

The bidding goes 1♠- 2NT*. What do you bid?

(1) ♠AKJ84 ♥7 ♦K10987 ♣A2

Show your singleton, bid 3♥. You have nineteen Bergen Points.

(2) ♠AKJ84 ♥107 ♦54 ♣AQ108

You have a nice four-card suit, bid 4♣ with seventeen Bergen Points. You are too unbalanced to bid no-trump.

(3) ♠AKJ84 ♥K107 ♦KJ4 ♣76

You have a balanced hand, bid 3NT with 16 Bergen Points.

(4) ♠AKJ84 ♥J107 ♦QJ4 ♣76

You have a weak hand, using Fast Arrival, bid 4♠.

(5) ♠AKQ842 ♥ void ♦AQ42 ♣J76

You have a great hand, bid 3♥ to show shortness. Count your Bergen Points. Are you interested in slam?

Following is a summary of descriptive bids following 2NT*.

After 1♥ - 2NT*	After 1♠ - 2NT*
3♣* = ♣ shortage	3♣* = ♣ shortage
3♦* = ♦ shortage	3♦* = ♦ shortage
3♥* = good hand with no shortage	3♥* = ♥ shortage
3♠* = ♠ shortage	3♠* = good hand with no shortage
3NT* = better hand with no shortage	3NT* = better hand with no shortage
4♣* = a 4+card ♣ suit	4♣* = a 4+card ♣ suit
4♦* = a 4+card ♦ suit	4♦* = a 4+card ♦ suit
4♥ = poor hand with no shortage (Fast arrival)	4♥* = a 4+card ♥ suit
4♠ = 1430 keycard ask (Chapter 3)	4♠ = poor hand with no shortage (Fast arrival)

After Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters

Recall that a double jump in the major not bid (3♣*/3♥*), after the bid of 1♥ and 1♠, respectively, shows shortness somewhere. The decision the opener must make is whether or not he needs to ask about the singleton/void since it provides information to the opponents. If one needs to locate the singleton/void, one employs the scroll bids 3NT* and 3♠*, respectively, after 3♣* and 3♥*. As a general guideline, one should not employ the scroll asking bids if not interested in slam. In general, you need about 18+ Bergen Points after hearing the jump major bid by your partner. Let's look at an example.

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ762	♠K984
♥3	♥AQ92
♦9872	♦void
♣KQ	♣A7632

Let's evaluate Starting Points for the two hands. Opener has (12 HCP – 1 dubious honor doubleton + 2 length points + 0 for adjust-3) thirteen Starting Points. Responder has fourteen Starting Points; however, upon hearing the bid of 1♠, reevaluates his hand for the void (four points) and has eighteen Dummy Points. And, opener upon hearing the bid of 3♥* calculates Bergen Points. Thus, he adds for extra trump length (one point), the void (two points), and for the side suit (one point) eighteen Bergen Points. He next makes the asking bid 3♣*, and with a diamond void, responder bids 4♣*.

We have provided the entire bidding sequence below but will wait to explain the modified scroll bids and their responses in Chapter 3 on Slam Bidding.

Opener

- 1♠
- 3♠* (shortage asking bid)
- 4♦* (modified scroll ask)
- 6♣ (if you have 3 bid 7)

Responder

- 3♥* (shortness somewhere)
- 4♣* (submarine bid - singleton/void in diamonds)
- 4NT (void in diamonds with 0 or 3 keycards)
- 7♣

After Swiss bid of 4♣*

- 4♥/4♠ says weak hand 12-15 Dummy Points with strong and long trump suit.
- 4♦/ (4 of other Major) show a singleton or void with slam interest.
- 4NT shows slam interest with 16+ points (Roman Keycard Blackwood; more on this later).
- 5♣ shows (5-5) hand with major and clubs, with slam interest with double fit.

After Swiss bid of 4♦*

- 4♥/4♠ says weak hand, 12-15 Dummy Points with strong and long trump suit.
- 4♣/ (4 of other Major) show a singleton or void with slam interest.
- 4NT shows slam interest with 16+ points (Roman Keycard Blackwood; more on this later).
- 5♦ shows (5-5) hand with major and clubs, with slam interest with double fit.

After Constructive Raises (support at the two-level)

Recall that a constructive raise shows three-card support and only 8-10 Dummy Points.

Hence, to reach game, opener may need help in either a side suit or trumps to reach a game contract.

Help Suit Game Try Bids

There are many game try conventions available to investigate game or to settle on a part score. The Long Suit Game Try (LSGT) is probably the oldest method employed. This is an attempt by opener to tell responder more about his hand. He shows a second suit with the understanding that as responder revalues his hand, he should give extra weight to honors in this suit. However, over the years the LSGT has given way to the Help Suit Game Try (HSGT). The major difference is that the opening bidder may hold fewer than four cards in that suit and usually a good 15 HCP or perhaps less if he is 5-5 in two suits, the major and another suit. Let's look at an example when used by opener, with no interference:

1♥-2♥

3♣*/3♦*/3♠* needs help in the suit bid with help (ace or king) bid game

1♠-2♠

3♣*/3♦/2NT* needs help in clubs, diamonds, or hearts (ace or king) bid game

The method may also be used by responder in the auction 1♣-1♥; 2♥* - (Help suit bid). For responder to use the bid, he should have 10 Dummy Points.

Some prefer the Short Suit Game Try. Using the Short Suit Try (SSGT) approach, a new bid by the opener shows a **singleton**. For responder this means that the ace is probably the only honor in the short suit that will help opener. Of course, this means that honors in the OTHER suits will be what opener needs. Alternatively, one may combine the HSGT and the SSGT bids by using the 2-Way Game Try method. How does this work?

Two-Way Game Try Bids

Instead of using the HSGT method, opener bids the next suit up to tell responder that we are going into “Short Suit Mode”. Opener initiates the short suit try with the bids of 2♠ and 2NT, respectively, after hearts and spades. Responder acknowledges the short suit try with relay bids of 2NT and 3♣, respectively.

1♥-2♥-2♠* (going into shortness mode) – responder next bids 2NT (as a relay)

- 3♣* = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥* = shows shortness in spades

1♠-2♠-2NT* (going into shortness mode) – responder next bids 3♣ (as a relay)

- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥* = shows shortness in hearts
- 3♠* = shows shortness in clubs

Shortness is always 1 or 0 cards in the suit.

Responder again has few values, but not in the short suit. If they are, he stops at the three level; otherwise he bids game at four level of the agreed upon major suit.

To inquire about help, one may employ with an asking bid or a telling bid called respectively “help asking” or “telling.”

Short Suit Game Try Bids

An alternative to the Two-Way try is to use the Short Suit Game Try (SSGT). Opener again initiates the short suit try with the bids of 2♠ and 2NT, respectively, after hearts and spades. However now responder acknowledges the short suit try by bidding short suits:

1♥-2♥-2♠*

- 3♣* = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 2NT* = shows shortness in spades
- 3♥* = 4333 Minimum (8/9 Dummy Points)
- 3NT* = 4333 Maximum (10 Dummy Points)
- 3♠* = 4333 Maximum with four spades
- 4m* = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with Maximum
- 4♥* = Stiff other major with Maximum

1♠-2♠-2NT*

- 3♣* = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥* = shows shortness in hearts
- 3♠* = 4333 Minimum (8/9 Dummy Points)
- 3NT* = 4333 Maximum (10 Dummy Points)
- 4m* = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with Maximum
- 4♠* = Stiff other major with Maximum

Shortness is always is always 1 or 0 cards in the suit and sometimes 2.

After SSGT, responder re-evaluates his hand with A=3 and K=1

With 9 or 10 responder bids game or cue bids minor with 4 of other majors

With 7 or 8 make last train bid if possible

With 6 or less sign-off

If opener bids at the three levels, he is showing shortness in the bid suit by not using the relay bids. Thus, you may both tell and ask using the SSGT approach.

Help “Asking” vs Game Try “Telling” Bids

When using the asking bids, opener is asking for help in the suit bid, traditionally first or second round control due to losers in the suit. Except for the Long Suit Game Try bid which is a natural bid, the other asking bids must be **alerted by agreement (* denoted)**, a red flag to the opponents. Another problem with the asking bids is that it is often difficult to figure out the “help suit.” Instead of using the help suit type asks, one may instead make an Artificial bid of 2NT* which is played either as a relay bid or asks the responder to tell him something more about his hand; in particular, shortness. While this also communicates information to the opponents, it is less damaging. If used as a relay bid, partner bids three clubs and the opener tells the responder about shortness. Then the Responder is captain of the sequence. Alternatively, when opener bids the Artificial 2NT* not as a relay, but as “telling” bid, it asks responder to tell

the opener where he has shortness. I prefer the responder to tell, not the opener; hence, we shall illustrate the “telling” sequence.

Let’s compare the two approaches (Help Suit Game Try and Artificial 2NT “telling”), and you decide which is best for your partnership agreement. If you play help suit asks, how do you know where to ask for help with the following hands when your partner supports you by bidding 2♠, constructive?

Hand (1)	♠ AKJ54	♥ 86	♦ 97	♣ AQJ7
Hand (2)	♠ AKJ972	♥ QJ4	♦ QJ3	♣ 9
Hand (3)	♠ KQJT6	♥ AQ7	♦ K965	♣ 8
Hand (4)	♠ KQT87	♥ 86	♦ AKT5	♣ K6
Hand (5)	♠ AKJ74	♥ AKQ	♦ 942	♣ 63
Hand (6)	♠ AKJ742	♥ AJ	♦ J53	♣ 92

When opener prefers to make a short-suit game try, as in (2) and (3), or a long-suit try, as in (1) and (4), he is in trouble. On (5) and (6), he’d like to make a general game try of 3♠, but this is commonly played as a game try asking for extra help in trumps.

Opener could bid 3♦* on the last two hands and hope for the best. The fact is there are lots of players who might bid three diamonds with all six hands!

Partner must figure out what is the right diamond holding for the game try. A small doubleton would be helpful opposite K965, AK105, or 942, but would be wasted opposite 97 or QJ3. Even the worth of K86 would be unclear. It would be a good holding opposite QJ3 but doubtful opposite 942 or J53.

So, using the help suit approach, one frequently does not know in which suit to ask for help, and often partner does not know when to accept. Instead, one may use the artificial 2NT* Game Try “telling” (not the relay) approaches. In each of the above examples, one employs the bidding sequence: one simple bids 1♠-2♠-2NT*.

Responder’s first obligation is to bid his lowest ranking doubleton, even if he has a singleton. This tells partner he may have to cover two losers. However, with the “right” doubleton (say Ax), he may bid four of the major. But, if “turned off” by a doubleton, he might just bid three of the major. With a balanced hand (4-3-3-3), bid three of a major with a minimum (8-10 Dummy Points) and 3NT (11-13 Dummy Points), a maximum. Or, you may choose to bid a new suit to preserve all options.

Let’s consider a few examples.

Opener	Responder
♠KQJ74	♠A63
♥AK8	♥974

♦J73	♦8654
♣K9	♣AJ5

In this example, the bidding would go: 1♠-2♠-2NT*-3NT-pass. Three no-trump is easier than four of a major as long as responder has at least three diamonds. Using the help suit bid of 3♦*, responder may bid three of a major and opener might pass, missing game!

Next, consider the hand:

Opener	Responder
♠KQT87	♠A63
♥86	♥J754
♦AKT5	♦93
♣K9	♣QJ75

Now, the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
2NT*	3♦*
4♠	Pass

Using the Help Suit bid, opener may bid 2♥, and responder may bid 3♠ (no help), again missing a game contract.

Questions:

1. How do you respond to 2NT* holding a singleton or a void? A jump to four of the trump promises 0 or 1 in the other major. With fewer than two cards in a minor, bid the minor at the three-level just as you would a doubleton. Don't sit for 3NT if partner bids it—a rebid of your minor suit shows fewer than two cards.
2. Is 2NT* still on in competition? Yes, as long as your partner has raised the major, you must ignore the competition from either side.
3. If opener does not bid 2NT, he may make a short-suit game try with a minimum bid showing shortness in the suit (0 or 1) and interest in game!

For more information on the Game Try Bids, consult Marty Bergen's (1985) "Better Bidding with Bergen, Volume One, Uncontested Auctions" by Devyn Press, page 148. This discussion is based upon his book.

After 3♣* and 3♦* (Bergen Raises)

Playing Bergen Raises recall that the jump bids of 3♣* and 3♦* show a trump fit but only 7-9 Dummy Points and 10-12 Dummy Points, respectively. To reach game with the bid of three clubs, opener needs at least 17-19 Bergen Points. Hence, he will bid game or invite game.

Similarly, after the limit raise bid of 3♦, opener may either invite with between 14-16 Bergen Points or use the 2NT* Game Try bid as mentioned above. Or with Reverse Bergen you interchange the two bids; 3♣* becomes the limit raise.

After 3♣* and 3♦* (Combined Bergen Raises)

Recall that 3♣* shows four-card support and 5-12 Dummy Points, the bid of 3♦* shows only three-card support and a limit raise (10-12 Dummy Points). When opening a major and responding 3♣*, recall that 3♦* asks whether you are at the lower end of the range (3♥* shows the lower end and 3♣* indicates the upper end). After the bid of 3♥, you can bid 3♣/4♣ and after 3♣ you can pass or bid 4♣. This is not the case if/when you open 1♥, now an ask bid may commit you to game in hearts when you hear the response 3♣. Thus, it is best not to ask by bidding 3♦; now one invites by bidding 3♥, do not ask by bidding 3♦.

Rebids by Opener after Minor opening bids (1♣/1♦)

When opening a minor the first priority with 6+ HCP is to bid a 4-card major with a 4-card major suit up-the-line.

Opener's first priority is to support the major suit bid with 3/4 cards (YOU HAVE FOUND A MAJOR SUIT FIT). Now what? Do you have game or slam? As responder, all you know is that opener has between 11/12-21 Dummy Points. The following bidding sequences assume that your 2/1 system opens 1NT with 15-17 points, a strong no-trump.

After 1♣-1♥

Opener rebids

- 1♠ 4 spades, denies 4 hearts
- 1NT 11/12-14 Starting Points, balanced hand, denies a 4-card major
- 2♣ 11/12 -17 Starting Points, 5+ clubs, denies a 4-card major
- 2♦ **Reverse bid showing 17+ Starting Points (5-4)**
- 2♥ 3+ card support, 12-16+ Dummy Points
- 2♠ **Jump Shift 19+, game force bid**
- 2NT 18-19 Starting Points, balanced hand, may have a 4-card major
- 3♣ 16-17 Starting Points **jump rebid** with good suit and 6+ clubs
- 3♦ **Jump Reverse** 4+clubs, singleton/void in diamonds 16+ points
- 3♥ 17-19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
- 3♠ **Full Splinter** 4 hearts, singleton/void in spades 18+ slam interest
- 3NT Solid club suit, with stopper in side suits, to play
- 4♣ **Fit bid** showing strong clubs and spades 17-19 points
- 4♥ 20+ Dummy Points
- 4NT Roman Keycard Blackwood (Chapter 3)

After 1♣ - 1♠

Opener rebids

1NT	11/12-14 Starting Points, balanced hand, denies a 4-card major
2♣	11/12-17 Starting Points, 5+ clubs, denies a 4-card major
2♦	Reverse bid showing 17+ Starting Points (5-4)
2♠	3+ card support, 12-16+ Dummy Points
2NT	18-19 Starting Points may have a 4-card major
3♣	16-17 Starting Points jump rebid with good suit and 6+ clubs
3♦	Jump Reverse 4 spades, singleton/void in diamonds 16+ points
3♥	Jump Reverse 4 spades, singleton/void in hearts 16+ points
3♠	17-19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
3NT	Solid club suit, with stopper in side suit, to play
4♣	Fit bid showing strong clubs and hearts 17-19 points
4♠	20+ Dummy Points
4NT	Roman Keycard Blackwood (Chapter 3)

After 1♦ -1♥

Opener rebids

1♠	4 spades, denies 4 hearts
1NT	11/12-14 Starting Points, balanced hand, denies a 4-card major
2♣	11/12 -17 Starting Points, 5+ clubs, denies a 4-card major
2♦	11/12 -17 Starting Points, 5+ diamonds, denies a 4-card major
2♥	3+ card support, 12-16+ Dummy Points
2♠	Jump Shift 19+, game force bid
2NT	18-19 Starting Points, balanced hand, may have a 4-card major
3♣	Jump Shift 19+, game force bid
3♦	16-17 Starting Points jump rebid with good suit and 6+ clubs
3♥	17-19 starter points, four hearts, invitational to game
3♠	Full Splinter 4+diamonds, singleton/void in spades 18+ slam interest
3NT	Solid club suit, with stopper in side suits, to play
4♦	Fit bid showing strong diamonds and spades 17- 19 points
4♥	20+ Dummy Points
4NT	Roman Keycard Blackwood (Chapter 3)

After 1♦ - 1♠

Opener rebids

- 1NT 11/12-14 Starting Points, balanced hand, denies a 4-card major
- 2♣ 11/12-17 Starting Points, 5-4 diamonds and clubs, no 4-card major
- 2♦ 11/12-17 Starting Points, 5+ diamonds, denies spades
- 2♠ 3+ card support, 12-16+ Dummy Points
- 2NT 18-19 Starting Points may have a 4-card major
- 3♣ **Jump Shift 19+, game force bid**
- 3♦ 16-17 Starting Points **jump rebid** with good suit and 6+ clubs
- 3♥ **Jump Reverse** 4 spades, singleton/void in hearts 16+ points
- 3♠ 17-19 starter points, 4 hearts, invitational to game
- 3NT Solid club suit, with stopper in side suit, to play
- 4♦ **Fit bid** showing strong diamonds and hearts 17-19 points
- 4♠ 20+ Dummy Points
- 4NT Roman Keycard Blackwood (Chapter 3)

3344 Convention

When opening a minor and partner responds a major, Eric Rodwell developed a sophisticated game try convention called the Rodwell Game Try Convention. I will not try to go into the complexities here (it is for experts), but I will use a subset of the Rodwell Convention called the **3344 Convention**; the name was suggested by Joe Sacco, a member of The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club. **You do not need this convention if you always support a major suit bid with four cards and bid no-trump with three card support.**

After hearing support for the major at the two-level (2♥/2♠), responder needs to know whether major support is three or four cards and whether the opening points are a **minimum** (11/12-15) or a **maximum** (16-21). To investigate, responder bids 2NT*. The responses by the opening bidder are:

- 3♣* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
- 3♦* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **maximum** opening hand
- 3♥* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
- 3♠* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **maximum** opening hand

Val Covalciuc recommends in her September 2007 issues of the ACBL "Bridge Bulletin" (page 39) article that there are two requirements for the opener when raising responder's major: opener should have some decent values in his three-card major suit and he should have ruffing values in his hand.

Let's consider an example.

Opener ♠ K109 ♥ QJ84 ♦ QJ6 ♣ A1098
 Responder ♠ 87 ♥ AK32 ♦ AK432 ♣ K5

With no five-card major, opener opens the bidding with 1♣ and responder would bid 1♥, bypassing his five-card diamond suit. Observe that responder has eighteen Starting Points. Next, responder bids 2NT*. How good is your hand and what is its shape?

Opener has fourteen Dummy Points and bids 3♥*. With a minimum and four hearts, responder has no interest in slam and signs off in the heart game by bidding 4♥.

Without a four-card major, opener has several rebids options depending on the structure of his hand:

- (a) With 11/12-17 Starting Points, opener's rebid is 1NT showing a weak hand.
- (b) With a balanced (5-3-3-2) and 18+ Starting Points, his bid is 2NT.

Point Count Game Try Convention (PCGT)

Many do not need the 3344 convention since they may always support a major with four card supports. However, to evaluate whether or not you have game going values, you may next employ the Point Count Game try Convention.

The convention is used after the sequences 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠ followed by a two level rebid in the major; 2♥ and 2♠ respectively.

Next the responder bids either 2♠*/2NT* (the next step) over 2♥ and 2♠, respectively. Then the next three level bids show Dummy Points:

For Spades ask = 2NT*

- 3♣* 16+ Dummy Points
- 3♦* 15 Dummy Points
- 3♥* 14 Dummy Points
- 3♠* 11-13 Dummy Points

For Hearts ask = 2♠*

- 2NT* 16+ Dummy Points
- 3♣* 15 Dummy Points
- 3♦* 14 Dummy Points
- 3♥* 11-13 Dummy Points

The more values, the lower the bid; this allows one to investigate slam or to reach game in the major. The minimum bid is a simple raise of the major suit, 3♠ or 3♥.

Responder's maximum bid of 4♣ (17+ Dummy Points) over opener's 2M bid is asking for controls in the trump suit. Then steps show 4♦*= 0, 4♥*=1, 4♠*=2, and 4NT*=3 where A=2 and K=1.

After 1NT

When opening a minor and responder does not bid a major but bids 1NT, the opener sees little hope in a major suit game. Responder does not have a four-card major. Recall that partner has either 8-10 Starting Points after the bid of 1♣ or 6-9 Starting Points after opening bid of 1♦ and no four-card major. Opener's rebids are:

Rebids by Opener	Suit Length	Starting Points
2♣/2♦	5+ cards	11/12-15
2NT	5-3-3-2	16-18
3♣/3♦	5+ cards	16-17 (jump in bid suit)
3♥/3♠	4 cards	19+ (jump shift)
3NT	5-3-3-2	19+

Another option is to employ the "Puppet Checkback" over a 1NT rebid as described by Ron Klinger. Max Hardy calls the bid Modified Two-Way Stayman (however, the two are not the same). Here is how Klinger's version works.

A puppet bid simply asks partner to make the cheapest bid, whatever his holding. It is like a transfer, except that a transfer promises a holding in the suit being transferred to, whereas a puppet does not promise a holding in the requested suit.

The purpose of a puppet bid is to create an alternate pathway to some higher bid, so that a later bid can be assigned a different meaning if made via the puppet to the meaning it has if bid without travelling via the puppet. For example, in Puppet Checkback, we use 1♣- 1♥-1NT- 2♥ as a sign-off, but (with a puppet 2♣, 2♦ inserted) 1♣-1♥- 1NT- 2♣-2♦-2♥ game invitational, similar to Two-Way Checkback.

A puppet bid can also be used as an escape to the puppet suit, like a transfer. But, unlike a transfer, if the puppet bidder then continues the auction he does **not** promise any holding in the puppet suit.

The Puppet Checkback system over a 1NT rebid is:

- 2♣: Forces opener to bid 2♦, which responder can pass to play, if that is his wish. If responder bids again, his bid is natural and game-invitational.

- 2♦: An artificial game force, asking for help in uncovering the best fit.

Opener is asked to bid an unbid 4-card suit or to give 3-card support to responder, and failing that to bid NT or perhaps a good minor suit.

- 2♥: Natural and weak. To play, if a repeat of the suit. Offering opener a choice between responder's 5-card spade suit and 4-card heart suit if spades was bid first.
- 2♠: Natural and weak if a repeat of the suit. Natural and game-forcing if a reverse.
- 2NT: Forces opener to bid 3♣, which responder can pass to play, if that is his wish. If responder bids again, he shows a strong 6-card suit in his original major, including two of the top three honors. If he repeats his major suit he shows no singleton or void. If he bids a suit (even if it is opener's suit) it is a splinter. If he bids 3NT or 4♣ it is a splinter in clubs. Opener can bid or pass 3NT if he expects that to be the best contract (if, for example, he has KQxx or similar in responder's splinter suit).

Three level suit bids are natural, strong and distributional: 5-5 or better if a second suit is bid by responder, a 6-card suit or longer if a repeat of responder's suit. For more on King's approach with many examples go to RonKingerBridge.com.

In Max Hardy's "Modified Two-Way Stayman" is very similar to Puppet Checkback but with one significant difference. He plays responder's 2NT as a natural invitational raise but denying 4-card support for opener's suit. The bid of 2NT via the 2♣, 2♦ puppet sequence promises 4-card support for opener's suit, allowing opener to convert to three of his suit if he doesn't wish to accept the invitation. That is useful variation, but may be forgotten. And it has the serious disadvantage that responder's 3♣ must now be a natural weak takeout, rather than strong and forcing.

After weak minor suit responses

Playing inverted minor suit raises, recall that responder shows five-card support with a jump to the three-level bid of 3♣*/3♦* after an opening bid of 1♣/1♦, respectively. These are both weak bids showing 5-9 Dummy Points. The primary goal of the bid is to require the opponents to enter the bidding at the three-level. If the opener has a balanced hand and 19+ points, he may bid 3NT. And, with a strong minor suit unbalanced hand, he may invite game in the bid minor.

After the opening of one club, responder would bid 3♣ with the hand:

♠ 87 ♥ A2 ♦ K43 ♣ Q10654

However, suppose opener had the hand: ♠AJ62 ♥654 ♦ void ♣ AK987, a minor suit game is possible. With a more balanced hand, opener may bid no-trump.

After inverted minor and crisscross

Inverted minor (1♣/1♦ - 2♣*/2♦*)

Recall that the sequence $1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit^*$ or $1\spadesuit - 2\spadesuit^*$ shows 13+ Dummy Points and is forcing to game.

After an inverted minor suit raise, opener bids show “stoppers up-the-line.” Opener should not bypass any suit containing a stopper. Responder next bids a stopper where the goal is to reach a no-trump contract. The search for stoppers is geared toward major suit stoppers; this is because the responder has already denied a four-card major and there is an increased likelihood that the opponents will initially attack the major suits in a no-trump contract.

The bidding sequences follow when opening $1\clubsuit$ (diamonds follow similarly).

$1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit^* - 2\heartsuit$ promises a full stopper in hearts but denies a full stopper in spades

Responder must now continue cue bidding in search of no-trump:

- $2\spadesuit$ shows a spade stopper
- $2NT$ spades stopped and 15+ Bergen Points
- $3\clubsuit$ club stopper
- $3\diamondsuit$ diamond stopper
- $3\heartsuit$ cue bid showing A or K
- $3\spadesuit$ spade singleton/void and 15+ Bergen Points
- $3NT$ spades and diamonds stopped

$1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit^* - 2\spadesuit$ promises a full stopper in spades but denies a full stopper in hearts

Responder must now continue cue bidding in search of no-trump:

- $2NT$ hearts stopped and 15+ Bergen Points
- $3\clubsuit$ club stopper
- $3\diamondsuit$ diamond stopper
- $3\heartsuit$ heart singleton/void and 15+ Bergen Points
- $3\spadesuit$ no heart stopper A or K of spades
- $3NT$ spades and diamonds stopped

$1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit^* - 2NT$ promises stoppers in both majors

Responder now usually bids $3NT$ with a partial diamond stopper

If three of a new suit is bid by responder at the 3-level, it is a game force in clubs with shortness in the bid suit and $4\clubsuit$ is Minorwood (Chapter3), and $4NT$ is quantitative (chapter 3) over $2NT$.

$1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit^* - 2\diamondsuit$ promises a stopper in diamonds

Cue bidding usually continues to find no-trump

1♣ - 2♣* - 3♣ suggests a minimal hand with 5+ clubs and little interest in playing NT

1♣ - 2♣* - 3NT promises a full stopper in both majors and a hand with slam possibilities with a balanced hand and 16 – 19/20 Bergen Points.

Opener's rebid of a **new** suit at the three-level, a jump reverse (mini splinter), shows 16+ points and a very distributional hand with a singleton or void in the bid suit. The goal is to play in a minor suit game and little slam interest.

For example, after one bids 1♣ - 2♣* with the hand: ♠ AK97 ♥ 7 ♦ Q43 ♣ AKJ95, one would bid 3♥ to show 16+ Bergen Points and shortness in hearts.

Slam investigation after inverted minor bid

Opener may also investigate slam with a Jump Raise in the minor bid suit. The bids for slam investigation are double jump bids in the minor suit:

1♣ - 2♣* - 4♣ or 1♦ - 2♦* - 4♦

When opening one club and one diamond, respectively, the four-level bid shows 19+ points with no interest in no-trump. The bid is Minorwood Roman Keycard Blackwood and will be discussed later (Chapter 3).

Crisscross (1♣ - 2♦* or 1♦ - 3♣*)

Recall that the bidding has gone 1♣ - 2♦* or 1♦ - 3♣* and indicates that responder has only 10-12 Dummy Points and 5+ cards in the minor suit.

With the crisscross bid, one continues with the bidding procedure outlined for the inverted response; however, game in a minor or no-trump is less likely.

What is Flip-Flop?

Playing inverted minor raises at the 13+ level, inverted minor raises with crisscross are **off in competition**. However, there is an exception. The exception is over a double when playing Flip-Flop Convention.

Over a double and playing **flip-flop** inverted minor raises are on. Then, a bid of 2NT* (an alert) shows a preemptive raise of the opener's minor suit bid and the 3♣*/3♦* bids are reversed (Flip-flopped) showing a minor suit limit (10-12 Dummy Points) raise (an alert). To show a hand with 13+, one uses a redouble.

What about slam bidding when playing Inverted Minor Raises (13+) in 2/1, with Crisscross and Flip-Flop?

These bids are identical to those summarized using inverted minor raises.

After 2/1 game force bid (1♦ - 2♣)

For the minors, one has the following game forcing sequences:

1♦ 2♣ (4+ clubs)

Hearing the response of two clubs to a one diamond opening, the first priority of the opener is to show the length of the diamond suit. Recall that is/may be 3-5+. A rebid of diamonds indicates a 5+ card suit.

A rebid of 2NT over 2♣ shows a balanced hand and does not deny a four-card major. It shows stopper in all suits and tenace and a desire to play in no-trump. Opener may have two types of hands: minimal strength (12-15 Starting Points) or maximum strength (19- 21 points). With 15-17 points and a balanced hand, one would have opened 1NT. A jump to 3NT is stronger, showing 19-21 Starting Points and a balanced hand with all suits stopped.

A raise in clubs (3♣) shows 12-15 starting point, a minimum hand, and at least four clubs.

A jump to a new suit (diamond, hearts, or spades) is a splinter in support of clubs.

A summary of rebids by the opener are:

Rebids by Opener	Suit Length	Starting Points
2♦	5+ cards	11/12-15
2♥	4 cards with 4 diamonds	11/12-15
2♠	4 cards with 4 diamonds	11/12-15
2NT	(5-3-3-2)	11/12-15 or 19-21
3♣	4+ clubs	11/12-15
3♦	6+ diamonds	16-18
3♥/3♠	singleton/void	16+
3NT	5-3-3-2	18/19-21

After the bid of 2NT, responder can next bid 3NT with no interest in slam, show a four-card major, or rebid clubs to show 6+ clubs with perhaps interest in a club slam. Recall that slam requires thirty-three points. **However, if responder rebids clubs, the game force is off.**

Returning to our previous example, the bidding would go 1♦ - 2♣, invitational to game in diamonds or no-trump.

Opener ♠876 ♥ AQ ♦ A652 ♣ K875
 Responder ♠AKJ4 ♥ KJ43 ♦ 7 ♣ QJ92

Clearly, one would open 1♦ and responder would bid 2♣ (game force). Next, opener would bid 2NT showing a balanced minimal hand. Even with a singleton, responder may next bid 3NT knowing partner has a balanced hand. Let's look at another example.

Opener ♠9876 ♥ AQ ♦ A652 ♣ K87
 Responder ♥Q3 ♥KJ102 ♦ 7 ♣ AQ10765

Here, responder would again bid 2♣ (game force); however, after the bid of 2♠ by opener, not having four spades, responder would bid 3♣ to remove the game force auction.

Golady Convention

Some pairs playing 2/1, play that 1♦ - 2♣ is forcing for only one round and is off if clubs is rebid. Similar the nebulous 2♣* convention, one may use a modification of the Golady Convention to establish a major fit at the two-level.

Playing the Golady Convention 2♣* is alerted (may not have clubs). The convention follows.

2♦*	four-card heart suit (as if you bid 2♥)
2♥*	four-card spade suit (as if you bid 2♠)
2♠*	long diamonds
2NT	balanced hand
3♣	long clubs game force off

*These bids must be alerted since they are transfers and not natural.

The major advantage of the convention is to allow the partnership to reach a major suit (GF) fit at the two-level. And then one can begin using cue bids to investigate slam discussed later in this book and also by Ken Rexford (2006) in "Cue bidding at Bridge: A Modern Approach," published by Master Point Press, Toronto.

Responses to 1NT opening bid

When opening 1NT, opener has 14/15-17 Starting Points. Ideal or standard no-trump balanced, flat hand patterns have 4-3-3-3 and 4-4-3-2 distributions. However, balanced 5-3-3-2 major/minor suit hands are also opened 1NT (yes, even if you are 5-3 in the majors – but there is not total agreement here on opening 1NT); however, **NEVER** open 1NT if you are 5-2 in the majors, for example: ♠Q2 ♥A10982 ♦AJ62 ♣AQ; open 1♥ not 1NT. Partner may transfer you into your 2-card major!

Semi-balanced minor suit hands with 2-2-4=5 or 2-2-5=4 and 2-2-3=6 or 2-2-6=3 shape are also opened 1NT. However, with a 6-card minor suit hand it is often better to open one of the minor and to rebid it.

Effective Aug 1, 2016: Unbalanced 5-4-3-1, 6-3-3-1, and 4-4-4-1 hand patterns may be opened 1NT, provided the singleton is either an A, K, or Q with no more than one doubleton. **Not allowed** are shapely 5-5-2-1 or 6-4-2-1 or 7-2-2-2 hands. One may now open the following hands 1NT: ♠K ♥A1092 ♦J765 ♣AKJ2 or ♠ AK109 ♥AQ92 ♦J765 ♣Q.

This new rule also applies to strong 15-17/18 NT overcalls but NOT to opening 2NT.

The hand ♠AQ107 ♥K1092 ♦7 ♣AQ105 must be opened 1♣ not 1NT.

Recall that a game in a major or no-trump requires between 24-26 Starting Points. Thus, we can conclude that partner should think about the following as soon as partner bids 1NT.

Responder Starting Points*		Goal
Min 14 / Min15		
(1)	0-8 0-7	Pass or play in two of a suit holding 5+ cards.
(2)	9-10 8-9	Invite game in no-trump or a suit with a fit.
(3)	11-16 10-15	Bid a game in no-trump or a suit with a fit.
(4)	17-18 16-17	Invitational to slam in suit or no-trump.
(5)	19-22 18-21	Bid a slam in no-trump or a suit with a fit.
(6)	23+ 22+	Bid a grand slam.

*Both ranges are noted depending upon the no-trump range you prefer, 14-17 or 15-17. More and more players are lowering the range for the strong no-trump.

Over 80 percent of games reached in duplicate bridge involve a major and the most used bid is the strong (14/15-17) 1NT opening. It conveys points and shape to your partner with one bid. Most players will not open a hand 1NT with a five-card major. However, a common practice is to open a hand 1NT when you are 5-3 in the majors. Some will even open a hand using the strong 1NT bid with two doubletons. To decide, one may use the following rule: **given a strong NT 14/15-17 range, if the five-card suit is higher ranking than the four-card suit, open the five-card suit and rebid the four card suit. If the four card suit is higher ranking with 14-16 points, less than the maximum, then open the hand 1NT.**

Even when you open the bidding 1NT, the first goal is to find a 4-4 major suit fit. A convention designed for this purpose is the Stayman Convention first published by Samuel M. Stayman in “The Bridge World” (1945) but actually invented by J.C.H. Marx, a British bridge player in 1939.

Stayman Convention

After the bid of 1NT, the Stayman Convention uses the asking bid of 2♣ as an artificial bid to inquire whether or not partner has a four-card major. The convention is so engrained in bridge

that it need not be alerted. Opener needs 8HCP to initiate the bid; however, it is almost NEVER used with 4333 shape since NT is better since you have no ruffing values.

The original Stayman Convention incorporated a 2NT response to show a maximum hand with both majors. Higher bids like 2NT should, almost never not be used. To quote Marty Bergen: one should never “Never, never, never, respond 2NT” to Stayman. This approach is unsound because it precludes the use of “Garbage Stayman/Crawling Stayman,” a convention that allows one to find a major suit fit with 8HCP (see below). If you insist on showing a maximum, one may employ the Stayman Super-accept convention.

The conventional responses assume NO INTERFERENCE.

Opener's Bids after 2♣

- 2♦ Denies a four-card major.
- 2♥ Shows four hearts may have four spades.
- 2♠ Shows four spades, denies four hearts.

Responder's rebids after 2♦ by opener

- 2♥ Shows four spades and five hearts, invitational; non-forcing. (Responder bids the 5-card suit and not the 4-card suit).
- 2♠ Shows five spades and four hearts, invitational; non-forcing. (Responder bids the 5-card suit and not the 4-card points).
- 2NT Invitational (9 points).
- 2♣ Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♦ Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♥* Shows five spades and four hearts, game forcing (Smolen - Responder bids his short suit at the 3-level, the reverse of the non-forcing 2-level bid). Opener is asked to bid 3♠ with a 3-card spade suit, or 3NT with 2 spades (*=alert).
- 3♠* Shows five hearts and four spades, game forcing (Smolen- Responder bids his short suit at the 3-level, the reverse of the non-forcing 2-level bid). Opener is asked to bid 3NT if he only holds 2 hearts or 4 if he has 3 hearts. (*=Alert).
- 3NT Signoff
- 4♥ Shows four spades and six hearts, signoff.
- 4♠ Shows six spades and four hearts, signoff.
- 4NT Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP.

Responder's rebids after 2♥ by opener

- 2♠ Shows five spades and four hearts, invitational: non-forcing. (Responder bids the 5-card suit and not the 4-card suit).
- 2NT Shows four spades and less than four hearts, invitational. Opener can pass, sign-off in 3 with four spades, or bid 3NT.
- 3♣ Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♦ Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♥ Shows four hearts invitational.
- 3♠ Shows four spades, game forcing showing 5 spades and 4 hearts.
- 3NT Signoff.
- 4♥ Signoff.
- 4NT Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP.

Responder's rebids after 2♠ by opener

- 2NT Invitational
- 3♣ Game forcing with at least five clubs (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♦ Game forcing with at least five diamonds (usually 6), denies a 4-card major.
- 3♥ Shows four spades and five hearts, game forcing.
- 3♠ Shows four spades, invitational.
- 3NT Signoff shows four hearts.
- 4♠ Signoff.
- 4NT Quantitative, invites 6NT if partner has 17 HCP.

Garbage and Crawling Stayman Convention

After a 1NT (15-17) opening by partner, the bid of 2♣'s is employed to show a weak 3-suited hand, with 0-6/7 points. It is referred to Garbage Stayman with 4-4-4-1 distribution and Crawling Stayman with 4-4-x-y in the majors or 3-4-4/5-x or 4-3-4/5-x distribution with 4/5 diamonds usually requires 8HCP.

With Garbage Stayman you pass the bids of 2♦/2♥/2♠.

With Crawling Stayman you pass 2♦ with 3/4 -5-x distribution you bid 2♥ if 4-4-x-y.

This asks partner to pass or correct to 2♠. Hence you may be playing at the 2-level in a major with either a 4-4 or 4-3 fit. However, it is usually better than no-trump.

Some examples hands where you may use Garbage /Crawling Stayman

(4-4-4-1) ♠A345 ♥A1084 ♦7892 ♣7 (Garbage)

(4-3-5-1) ♠Q652 ♥Q43 ♦97652 ♣J (Crawling)

(4-4-3-2) ♠QJ32 ♥AJ98 ♦978 ♣98 (Crawling)

(4-4-3-2) ♠Q1053 ♥AJ109 ♦1097 ♣107 (Pass < 8HCP)

Garbage Stayman is used when responder has the exact distributions: 4=4=4=1 or 4=4=5=0 and you have 0-6/7 Starting Points. Responder will pass whatever opener bids; some refer to this as “Drop Dead Stayman.”

Stayman with weak hands and 4-4 in the majors

Your partner again opens 1NT (15-17) and you are 4-4-3-2 with 7/8 HCP. Should you use Stayman or pass? Returning to the example above: ♠Q1053 ♥AJ109 ♦1097 ♣107 you have only 7 HCP but 4-4 in the majors. Clearly a suit contract at the 2-level may be much better than no-trump. How do you decide?

If you have 7/8 HCP with 8 cards higher than the 8 (the rule of 88) use Stayman since a 2-level suit contract or 2NT are both likely to succeed and 2NT=120 or 2♥/2♠=110, both are better than 1NT=90. In our example we have 9 cards higher than the 8, so do not pass but bid 2♣ as Stayman with those 9’s and 10’s.

Stayman with Super-accepts

After the bid of 2♣ by responder, having 17 Starting points opener responses are:

- 2NT* a balanced hand (the Bell Convention)
- 3♣ 5 clubs and a 4-card major
- 3♦* both majors (4-4) and a maximum
- 3♥ 5 hearts and a maximum
- 3♠ 5 spades and a maximum

Playing Stayman with super-accepts, after 3♦*, responder's next bids are:

- 3♥ to play
- 3♠ to play
- 3NT to play
- 4♣ Gerber or Expert Gerber (Chapter 3)
- 4♦ transfer to hearts with 5
- 4♥ transfer to spades with 5

Stayman with Super-accepts requires that the opener has 17 Starting Points. Another approach is to use 3-level bids to show shape or doubletons with 17 Starting Points. Then the bids are:

- 3♣* minor two suiter, at least 4-4
- 3♦* doubleton in clubs or diamonds
- 3♥* doubleton in hearts
- 3♠* doubleton in spades

After the 3♦* response showing a doubleton in either minor, opener now bids 3♥* to ask which minor. Responder's bid of 3♣* shows clubs and 3NT* shows diamonds.

Puppet Stayman

Many partnerships use the bid of 2♣* for puppet Stayman instead of Stayman which now requires an alert (it has a red line or red box on the convention card. It is needed when one bids 1NT with a five card major. As with Stayman responder should have at least eight starter points. A summary of the bids are as follows.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 NT	2 ♣*	Asking for a 5-card Major suit. Promises at least 8 points in valuation.
2 ♦		This first response by the opener denies a 5-card Major suit and is a Relay bid.
	2♥	Shows a 4-card Spade suit, fewer than 4 Hearts.
	2♠	Shows a 4-card Heart suit, fewer than 4 Spades.
	2NT	Shows a 4-card Spade suit and a 4-card Heart suit. This bid is invitational. Opener may pass with minimum.
	3♥	Shows a 4-card Heart suit, a 4- or 5-card Spade suit. Game-forcing.
	3♠	Shows a 4-card Spade suit, a 4- or 5-card Hearts suit. Game-forcing.
	3NT	Shows no 4-card Major suit and game values.
	4NT	This response is slamming invitational and is accepted by the opener only if holding maximum values.

In the following auction, the responder shows a 4-card Heart suit, and the opener can show either minimum or maximum values:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 NT	2♣*	Asking for a 5-card Major suit. Promises at least 8 points in valuation.
2♦		This first response by the opener denies a 5-card Major suit and is a Relay bid.
	2♠	Shows a 4-card Heart suit, fewer than 4 Spades.
2 NT		Shows no fit for the Heart suit and minimum values.
3♥		Shows a 4-card Heart suit and minimum values.
3 NT		Shows no fit for the Heart suit and maximum values.
4♥		Shows a 4-card Heart suit and maximum values.

The puppet Stayman convention is used most often when partnerships bids 1NT with a 5-card major. Alternatively, some use 3♣* (alert) for puppet so that the bid of 2♣ may be used for Garbage or Crawling Stayman.

Raising 1NT, 2NT, 3NT, and beyond

The Stayman convention is used when you have two 4-card majors or 4-3 in the majors with 4/5 diamonds, but not with balanced 4333 hands and 8HCP.

However, suppose your hand is balanced or semi-balanced and 9+HCP playing 15-17 NT, you may raise to 1NT to 2NT which is invitational to game. Without a 4-card major some will bid 2NT with only 8 HCP since $15+8=23\text{HCP}$ and with 16/17 a 3NT game is possible.

With 10/11-16 points, bid 3NT. With 17-18, bid 4NT this is a quantitative bid. It asks partner to bid 6NT with a maximum. Finally, with 19-21, bid 5NT, a grand slam force, with a maximum partner will bid 7NT and with less sign off in 6NT; more on quantitative bids in Chapter 3.

Jacoby Transfers

Jacoby Transfers, developed by Oswald Jacoby, may be employed with a variety of hands. Responder may have a one-suited, two-suited, or even a three-suited hand. They are used with weak, invitational, or strong hands. To use the Jacoby transfer you need exactly a 5-card major suit. Not 5-4 or 4-5. Responder clarifies his hand after the transfer is **announced** and then accepted. If the opener had bid 1NT (15-17) with a singleton: A/K/Q, opener will usually refuse the transfer request and bid 2NT.

For this Jacoby transfer, the bids after 1NT are:

- 2♦ transfer to hearts (♥)
- 2♥ transfer to spades (♠)

Responder's bids after 1NT- 2♦ -2♥

- Pass A weak hand with 5+ hearts. Opposite a strong 1NT, this shows 0-7 points.
- 2♠ An invitational, non-forcing hand with 5 hearts and 5 spades. Opposite a strong 1NT, this shows 8-9 starting points.
- 2NT A balanced or semi-balanced distribution, 5 hearts, and invitational. Partner can pass, sign off in 3♥ or bid 3NT.
- 3♣ 5+ hearts, 4+ clubs and game-forcing.
- 3♦ 5+ hearts, 4+ diamonds and game-forcing.
- 3♥ 6+ hearts, invitational. Partner can pass or bid 4♥.
- 3♠ Not really part of the original convention, but can be played as a singleton/void in spades with slam interest.
- 3NT A balanced or semi-balanced (no singletons or voids) distribution with 5 hearts and 10+ points. Partner may pass or correct to 4♥.
- 4♥ 6+ hearts, signoff.
- 4NT Quantitative, inviting slam in hearts or no-trumps. Partner is also allowed to correct to 5♥.

Responder's bids after 1NT- 2♥-2♠

- Pass A weak hand with 5+ spades. Opposite a strong 1NT, this shows 0-7 points.
- 2NT A balanced or semi-balanced (no singletons or voids) distribution, 5 spades, and invitational. Partner can pass, sign off in 3♠ or bid 3NT.
- 3♣ 5+ spades, 4+ clubs and game forcing.
- 3♦ 5+ spades, 4+ diamonds and game forcing.
- 3♥ 5+ spades, 5+ hearts and game forcing with slam interest. This is stronger than jumping directly to 4♥.
- 3♠ 6+ spades, invitational. Partner can pass or bid 4♠.
- 3NT A balanced or semi-balanced (no singletons or voids) distribution with 5 spades and 10+ points. Partner may pass or correct to 4♠.
- 4♥ 5+ spades and 5+ hearts with game values. Partner can pass or bid 4♠.
- 4♥ 6+ spades, signoff.

One may also transfer to a 6+card club suit using the bid of 2♠* with a correction to 3♦ if diamonds is the preferred suit with 6+ diamonds. When the 2♠* bid is made by responder; opener may bid 2NT* which says he prefers diamonds over clubs. Responder may now bid 3♣/3♦.

Over 1NT, the bid of 2NT* shows an invitational hand with 9+ high card points if balanced or 8-9 with a 5-card suit (most often a major) and must be alerted.

Help Suit Game Try after a Jacoby Transfer

When using the Jacoby Transfer, one may not be sure of game in a major. In this case, responder may use the bid of 2NT as a Help Suit Game Try 2NT. After a Jacoby Transfer, responder bids 2NT, opener’s responses follow.

Transfer to hearts

- After 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT* (ASK)
- Pass – minimum and normally denies 3♥s
- 3♣ = is a ♣ help suit game try
- 3♦ = is a ♦ help suit game try
- 3♥ = sign off
- 3♠ = is looking for a 5-3 ♠ fit (else 3NT)
- 3NT normally denies 5♠ or 3♥s

Transfer to spades

- After 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT* (ASK)
- Pass – minimum and normally denies 3♠s
- 3♣ = is a ♣ help suit game try
- 3♦ = is a ♦ help suit game try
- 3♥ = is looking for 5-3 ♥ fit (else 3NT)
- 3♠ = sign off
- 3NT normally denies 5♥ or 3♠s

Let’s consider an example.

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder	Comments
♠ AJ9	♠ KQ876	1NT	2♥ (1)	(1) transfer
♥ AQ104	♥ J3	2♠ (2)	2NT* (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ 85	♦ Q104	3♣ (4)	3♠ (5)	(3) invitational with 5♠
♣ KJ72	♣ 964	pass		(4) can you help in clubs (5) No

Jacoby Transfers with Super – accept

After opening 1NT with 15-17 HCP and partner transfers to a major, guaranteeing a 5-card suit, partner usually accepts by bidding at the two levels. However, depending on your high card points — opener may respond as follows over 2♦ for hearts and 2♥ for spades.

2M with 2 cards in the major

3M with 4 cards and a bad 15-16 HCP

Bid 2x your doubleton with and 16-17 HCP

3M* with 3 cards in the major and 17 HCP (also called super-accept)

2NT* with 3 cards in the major and 17 HCP and all suits stopped (sometimes called the **Bell convention**, suggested by Allan Bell, a bridge professional from Los Angeles, California – see the September 1994 Issue of Bridge World, p 28).

To right side the contract, responder bids 3♦/3♥. As a re-transfer; responder next bids three of a suit with a weak hand or 3NT.

4/5M with 15-16 HCP

If partner does not bid 2M to your transfer, and you want to signoff in 3M, then a 3-level minor suit bid by you is a re-transfer to 3M. This time partner will accept.

Four-Way Transfers

Four way transfers include the Jacoby transfer bids and transfers to the minor suits.

Responder's will again clarify the nature of his hand with subsequent bids. The major suit Jacoby transfers are announced as transfers; however, the minor suit transfers **ARE NOT ANNOUNCED**, but ALWAYS alerted=*

After the bid of 1NT 15-17, responder makes the following bids, promising at least 5+ cards in the major transfer or 6+ cards in the minor suit transfers.

Standard Approach

- 2♦ Jacoby transfer to hearts (♥)
- 2♥ Jacoby transfer to spades (♠)
- 2♠* transfer to clubs (♣)
- 2NT* transfer to diamonds (♦)

The major disadvantage of using the above bids if you have lost the 2NT invitational bid with 8-9 HCP. To overcome this problem, responder must bid 2♣ (Stayman) and over

2♦/2♥/2♠ by opener (without a fit) responder next bids 2NT*, which must be alerted by the opening bidder, and if asked about the alert say that partner may or may not have a 4-card major. Because of this problem, many use the following set of transfer bids.

Modified Approach

- 2♦ Jacoby transfer to hearts (♥)
- 2♥ Jacoby transfer to spades (♠)
- 2♠* transfer to clubs (♣) – Responder corrects opener's bid and next bids 3♦
- 2NT 8-9 HCP invitation to 2NT (**NO ALERT NEEDED**)

Many 2/1 partnerships use the simple modified approach since it allows one to do a direct transfer to a 6+ card minor suit with 0-7 HCP for drop dead minor suit hands. And it allows one to invite no-trump with 8-9 HCP or to bid 3NT with 10+HCP.

So why use the “Standard Approach”? Opener may provide the responder with more information about the minor suit fit. This will allow the responder to decide whether or not the contract should be in a minor or no-trump.

If opener has a minor suit fit A/K/Q xx he makes a bid between responder’s transfers call and the actual indicated suit (this is called “bidding the gap”) and indicates a “pre-acceptance” of the indicated trump suit:

1NT - P - 2♠* - P - 2NT*=Gap

1NT - P - 2NT* - P - 3♣*=Gap

Responder now knows that the NT opener has a missing high honor and sufficient cards to suggest that the suit will run, may elect to bid 3NT with 24-26 HCP.

Be careful, some partnerships prefer to reverse the meaning of “bidding the gap” and simply prefer to complete the transfer when the fit is identified, and bidding the “gap” when no fit is identified. Arguments can be made for either approach.

The generic raise to 2NT (8-9 HCPs, balanced) has been eliminated in favor of using the 2NT* call as a transfer to diamonds. Now there needs to be a way to make a standard invitational 2NT bid.

These sequences now start with a 2♣ Stayman call by responder. Note that while responder may have a four-card major, this is no longer guaranteed. If opener rebids by showing a four-card major and a fit is found, it is raised (as normal). If opener rebids by showing a four-card major and no fit is immediately found, responder can easily define their holding by their logical rebid.

Examples (opponents are passing):

1NT-2♣-2♥-3♥=8-9 and 4-4 heart fit

1NT-2♣-2♠-3♥=8-9 and 4-4 spade fit

1NT-2♣-2♥-2♥=8-9 and 4 spades or both hearts and spades

1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT*=8-9 and no 4-card major

1NT-2♣-2♠-2NT*=8-9 and may not have a 4-card major

1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT*=8-9 and may not have a 4-card major

Now 2NT* is alerted (*), because a Stayman sequence (in other treatments) always promises a four-card major.

What if they compete/interfere?

If they make a penalty double, agree on an escape sequence/run outs. If they make an artificial double, you should ignore it (systems are on over 2♣/X). If they overcall with 2♣, unless it shows

majors, a Double is Stayman, and all other bids mean what they would have meant (transfers, etc.). If they interfere with 2♦ or higher, use a X as negative on the Convention Card to show cards – do not let them play at the 2-level and I recommend lebensohl; however some use stolen bids.

Four-Way transfers with the Range Ask Bid

The major flaw of Four-Way transfers (2♠* for ♣, 2NT* for ♦) is the trade-off of using 1NT-2NT* to show diamonds means that in order to invite with 8-9 HCP you now need to go through Stayman. This causes declarer to reveal unnecessarily information about the majors.

To avoid this problem experts have invented the range ask bid. The method accomplishes this by adding a hand range to the 2♠* club transfer bid:

2♠* = 6+♣ OR 8-9 balanced w/o a 4-card major

The responses become:

2NT* = I have a minimum for my range (I would not accept your 8-9 balanced invite)

3♣* = I have a maximum for my range (I would accept your 8-9 balanced invite)

Note that 2NT* does not say I prefer diamonds to clubs and 3♣* does not say I prefer clubs to diamonds.

When responder has 8-9 HCP, opener may pass 2NT or bid 3NT.

When responder has clubs, nothing has changed. All bids continue to mean exactly what they would have meant in the “standard” 4-way transfer structure:

3♣ = 6+♣, signoff

3♦ = 6+♣, short ♦, Game Force (GF) **OR** 6+♣, no shortness, with slam interest

3♥ = 6+♣, short ♥, GF

3♠ = 6+♣, short ♠, GF

All of these responses (except 3♣) apply over a 3♣ rebid by the opener as well.

Alternatively, some use 3♥ some hand type asking bid. Responder may show the unbalanced type with 3♠ and the balanced type with 3NT.

For a great discussion on using the range ask option see the Bridge Winners article by Gavin Wolpert September 11, 2015: bridgewinners.com/4-way-transfers-with-range-ask.

Another alternative for the 2♠* bid is to use it as Minor Suit Stayman and 2NT as an ambiguous transfer to a minor with slam interest (to be discussed shortly) or one may use **Shape Asking Relays after Stayman (SARS)** as we will soon illustrate.

Transfer Bidding Examples

1) ♠789 ♥Q7 ♦K5643 ♣J98

You have 6 HCP, but only a 5-card minor with a flat 3-2-5-3 hand. Pass and let partner play in 1NT. You need a 6-card minor.

2) ♠89 ♥7 ♦7652 ♣J98743

Bid 2♠ as a transfer to clubs, you have a 6-card club suit. Pass opener's 3♣ bid, and if he bids 2NT* preferring diamonds, bid 3♦ since you have four. However, with less than three you would bid 3♣ clubs over partner 2NT* bid with at least a 5-2 club fit.

3) ♠K954 ♥67 ♦K109743 ♣7

You have a 4-card major with 8 starting points and a distributional hand, bid 2♣ as Stayman to try to find a 4-4 spaded fit. If partner bids 2♦, you would pass and if he bids 2♥, bid 3♦ to end the auction. Even though you are 6-4 in spades and clubs, do not transfer to clubs and then bid spades. This bidding sequence is a reverse by responder and is a game force sequence requiring 10+ points.

4) ♠J2 ♥K2 ♦J57 ♣AQ10765

You have a distributional hand with a great 6-card club suit and 12 HCP. Knowing partner has 15-17HCP, bid 3NT. You have no interest in playing in your minor suit.

5) ♠K2 ♥Q57 ♦KQJ98 ♣1098

With 11HCP, you should just bid 3NT; however, if partner opened with a 5-card major you might want to consider Puppet Stayman if that is part of your agreement.

In a nut shell, responder with weak, invitational, or game force hands bids:

Weak Hand (No game interest)

With only a 5-card minor, usually pass 1NT

With a 6+ card minor, transfer to play in the minor at the 3-level

Invitational Hand

With a 5-card minor and no 4-card major, just invite in notrump

With a 5+card minor and a 4-card major, start with bid Stayman

With a 6-card minor (and no 4-card major), start with a transfer 8-9+ starting points and not Stayman

Game Force Hand

With a flat hand, you need not show your minor unless you have slam interest. With shape 6+ card minor or 4-card major - 5+ card minor and 10+ HCP, you may begin the process with either a transfer or Stayman.

For more information and examples of Four-Way transfers and the expert range ask sequence, see the book by Eric Rodwell (2019) "Bidding Topics Book Two", Baron Barclay, pp 25-42.

Smolen Transfers

If one has a five-card major and is weak, one will use a Jacoby Transfer bid to transfer into the major and if 5-4 Crawling Stayman; however, when 5-4 in the majors and 10+ playing 15-17 NT, one may play Smolen, a game-force convention.

Playing Smolen, one again bids 2♣. If partner bids a major, you have found a fit, raise to game. What if the bid is 2♦? Not playing Smolen, you would bid three of your five-card suit (game forcing) and allow partner to choose between four of the major or 3NT. However, playing Smolen you bid the 4-card suit; partner knows you are 5-4:

3♥* shows 5 spades and 4 hearts and is forcing to game
 3♠* shows 5 hearts and 4 spades and is forcing to game

Opener may pass or complete the Smolen Transfer to game in a major, although 3NT is allowed. By bidding the game in the 4-4 or 5-3 major fit, opener denies interest in slam.

If the sequence goes:

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥* (5-4) what would the bids 3♠, 4♣/4♦/4♥ mean?

Or

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠* (5-4) what would the bid 4♣/4♦ mean?

These are called **Smolen Super-accept cue bids** and have the following meaning:

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥*	and after	1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠*	
3♠*	3 spades and ♥A	4♣*	3 hearts and ♣A
4♣*	3 spades and ♣A	4♦*	3 hearts and ♦A
4♦*	3 spades and ♦A	4♥*	Smolen Transfer
4♥*	slam interest, with no ace to cue		
4♠	Smolen Transfer		

Quest Transfers

Jacoby Transfers are usually used with weak hands. Smolen Transfers are game forcing transfers. What do you do with invitational values; 8-9 points playing, 15-17 NT? An option is to use Quest Transfers which are again initiated by bidding 2♣. But, after the response of 2♦, responder now bids 3♦* as a transfer to hearts and 3♥* as a transfer to spades. Thus, we have a simple invitational sequence. The Quest bids may be invitational or better. To review,

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦,

- 3♦* transfer to hearts (5-4 in hearts and spades)
 3♥* transfer to spades (5-4 in spades and hearts)

Using Quest Transfers, the normal accept bids show a minimal hand with two-card support or perhaps three. As with Smolen, these bids must be alerted.

We also have **Quest Super-accept cue bids**:

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦*

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥*

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| 3♥ | Quest Transfer | 3♠ | Quest Transfer |
| 3NT* | natural, non-minimum
Normally 3-2 in the majors | 3NT* | natural, non-minimum
Normally 2-3 in the majors |
| 4♣* | 3 hearts and ♣A | 4♣* | 3 spades and ♣A |
| 4♦* | 3 hearts and ♦A | 4♥* | 3 spades and ♥A |
| 4♥* | 3 hearts, but no ace to cue | 4♠* | 3 spades, but no ace to cue |

Many players may not be familiar with Quest Transfers; if you do not currently play Smolen, you should consider them.

Texas Transfers (4♦ and ♥)

After opener bids 1NT, suppose you have a six-card major with game going values and no interest in slam. Using the principle of fast arrival, one employs the four-level bids of:

- 4♦# transfer to hearts
 4♥# transfer to spades
 # Announce (no alert)

Instead of using Texas Transfers, some use South African Transfers. Then 4♣* is a transfer to hearts and 4♦* is a transfer to spades. A disadvantage of these bids is that one now may not use Gerber or Expert Gerber to ask for aces, Chapter 3.

Two-suited Hands (Mini-Maxi Convention)

When partner opens 1NT (15-17), you often find that you are either 5-5 in the minors or 5-5 in the majors. A simple and straightforward convention to address this distribution is the Mini-Maxi. After the bid of 1NT, one bids (*=alert)

- 3♣* 5-5 in the minors and less than 11 Starting Points
- 3♦* 5-5 in the minors and 10+ Starting Points
- 3♥* 5-5 in the majors and less than 11 Starting Points
- 3♠* 5-5 in the majors and 10+ Starting Points

Because playing in a minor is not usually a goal, some may prefer to replace the minor suit three-level bids with Broken Suit Slam Try bids (since the goal is to play in a major). If you prefer this approach, then one would replace the three-level minor suit bids with the following.

- 1NT - 3♣* transfer to hearts 5/6+, indicates a broken heart suit with slam interest with shortage somewhere
- 1NT - 3♦* transfer to spades 5/6+, indicates a broken spade suit with slam interest with shortage somewhere

Of course, there are many more options; readers may define their own preferences.

Extended Stayman when 5-5 or 6-4 in the Majors

This convention is used when you are 5-5 (may be 6-4) in the majors. The bid of 3♣* (alert) is a check back asking bid, do you have a 3-card major?

- 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*
- 3♦* = no 3-card major (2 card major and 4/5 card minor)
 - 3♥ = 3 hearts (2-3-4-4)
 - 3♠ = 3 spades (3-2-4-4)
 - 3NT* = both majors (3-3-4-3/3-3-3-4)

- 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣*
- 3♦* = 4 card minor and 2-card major
 - 3♥ = 5 hearts
 - 3♠ = 3 spades (3-4-3-3)
 - 3NT = to play

- 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣*

3♦*	=	4 card minor and 2-card major
3♥	=	3 hearts (4-3-3-3)
3♠	=	5 spades
3NT	=	to play

Responder now knows partner's hand and is the captain or the partnership. He may pass, bid game in the major or bid 4NT asking for information about aces.

Extended Texas Transfers when 6-4 in the Majors

We can combine the Stayman Convention with Texas Transfers when one is 6-4 in the majors. After 1NT -2♣ -2♦/2♥/2♠, one next bids

4♦*	transfer to hearts with 6 and 4 spades
4♥*	transfer to spades with 6 and 4 hearts

If you are 6-5 in the majors, since we are using Mini-Maxi Convention when 5-5 in the majors, we can use Jacoby Transfers to show the long six-card suit and next bid the other major to show the five-card suit. After 1NT

2♦	transfer to hearts (♥)
2♥	transfer to spades (♠)

After opener's bid of	2♥	responder bids 4♠* to show 6 hearts and 5 spades
	2♠	responder bids 4♥* to show 6 spades and 5 hearts

Thus, you simply transfer to the six-card suit and bid the other major at the four levels (the shorter following Smolen) to show 6-5. Other bridge authors have devised more complicated systems using Quest/Smolen Transfers with super-accepts, but they are more complex. For example see the book *No Trump Bidding, Stayman and Transfers* (2006), by Terrence Quested, Trafford Press.

Minor Suit Stayman

This convention, devised by Oswald Jacoby, is used by the responder when partner has opened the bidding with 1NT. It is used when partner has a long minor suit with either (1) very little values or (2) very strong values indicating a strong interest in a possible slam contract in a minor suit. Responder is usually 5-4 in the minors or with a strong hand maybe 4-4 in the minors.

The Minor Suit Stayman (MSS) convention is applied as follows after 1NT-2♠*:

OPENER	RESPONDER
2NT	denies a 4-card minor and shows stoppers in the majors
	Pass Balanced with minimal strength
	3♣ 5+ clubs and may have 5/4 diamonds
	3♦ 5+ diamonds – drop dead bid
	3♥/3♠ Major suit void/singleton
	3NT To Play
	4♣/4♦ 5+ card minor
3♣	Shows 4+clubs or may be 4-4 in the minors
	Pass Balanced with minimal strength
	3♥/3♥ Major suit void/singleton
	3NT To Play
	4♣/4♦ 5+ card minor
3♦	Shows 4+diamonds and denies 4 clubs
	3♥/3♥ Major suit void/singleton
	3NT To Play
	4♣/4♦ 5+ card minor
3♥	Shows a heart stopper and invites 3NT if partner has a spade stopper. However, opener may be 4-4 in the minors.
	3♠ Spade void/singleton
	3NT To Play
	4♣/4♦ 5+ card minor
	4♥ 3+ hearts and unbalanced
3♠	Shows a spade stopper and denies a heart stopper, invites 3NT
	3NT To Play
	4♣/4♦ 5+ card minor
	4♠ 3+ Spades and unbalanced
3NT	Denies 4-4 shape in the minors
4♣	Shows 4 clubs with maximum strength and slam interest.
4♦	Shows 4 diamonds with maximum strength and slam interest.

The Minor Suit Stayman convention was devised for specifically three types of holdings held by the responder, and which will be determined during the ensuing auction:

1. A holding with a 6-card plus diamond suit and weak values.
2. A 5-5 distribution in both Minor suits and weak values.
3. A 5-4 distribution in both Minor suits and possible slam values.

When playing Minor Suit Stayman, the bid of 2NT is also often also revised. Instead of being used with 8-9 Dummy Points as an invitational bid to 3NT, it is used as a puppet relay to 3♣

which responder can pass with a club bust. Or it is used to show a game forcing three suited hand, either 4-4-4-1 or 4-4-5-0 with a 5-card minor. With a strong hand, responder bids his singleton/void. And with short clubs, either bids 3NT, non-forcing or bids 4♣ with slam interest to force opener to bid.

When playing a direct 2NT to 1NT as artificial, one must start with 2♣ **Stayman** to invite game in NT.

1. Opener with both **hearts** and **spades** bids 2♥
2. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2♠ shows exactly 4 **spades** and is invitational to game. Opener may pass, bid 2NT, 3NT, or 4♠
3. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT is invitational to game and denies 4 **spades**
4. Other sequences that start 1NT-2♣-2any-2NT do not promise or deny a 4 card **major**. This should be explained at the time of the 2NT rebid (an alert).

Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SARS)

We have spent most of our discussion around the major suits. After using all of our conventions and hearing 2♦, we know that the opener does not have a four-card major. And when responder is 4-3 in the majors, he needs to know something about opener's shape in the minors to consider no-trump or game/slam in a minor. This is accomplished using the bid of 3♣* after the opener's bid of 2♦, called the Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SARS).

SARS provides more information than Minor Suit Stayman and is an alternative to Minor Suit Stayman. The bidding sequence follows.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦, 3♣* **second ask**

Opener's responses about shape in the minors

3♦*	5 card minor (either clubs or diamonds), no 4 card major
3♥*	4 clubs (3=3=3=4)
3♠*	4 diamonds(3=3=4=3)
3NT*	4 clubs and 4 diamonds (2=3=4=4) or (3=2=4=4)
4♣*	5 clubs and 4 diamonds (2=2=4=5)
4♦*	5 diamonds and 4 clubs (2=2=5=4)

Next, after the response of 3♦*, the bid 3♥* **asks** which minor has five cards.

3♠* 5 clubs

3NT* 5 diamonds

After minor suit shapes ask, the bid of four of the minor always sets the minor trump suit.

The Gerber Convention

After the bid of no-trump 1NT, or 2NT the bid of 4♣ is known as the Gerber Convention (and generally a jump bid). It was devised by John Gerber of Houston, Texas in 1938. It asks partner about the number of aces and subsequently about the number of kings. The convention is frequently used over notrump. When using Gerber, remember that you should not use the convention if (1) you have a void, (2) you have worthless doubletons (e.g., Qx, Jx, xx) in an unbid suit, and (3) you need to know if partner has controls in a specific suit. Over 3NT, some use Super Gerber (5♣) to ask for aces; which then allows 4♣ to be natural.

The responses to the 4♣ Gerber ask are:

- 4♦ shows 0 aces or 4 aces
- 4♥ shows 1 ace
- 4♠ shows 2 aces
- 4NT shows 3 aces

Having all the aces, you may next ask for the number of kings by bidding 5NT. The responses are:

- 5♦ shows 0 kings or 4 kings
- 5♥ shows 1 king
- 5♠ shows 2 kings
- 5NT shows 3 kings

If you have a void, it is not an ace. Ignore the void when responding to Gerber.

An alternative ace asking version of Gerber is the “1430 style Gerber Convention”, also called Expert Gerber. The convention is usually used after the bid of 3NT. For example if the bidding goes: 1♦ - 3NT.

The 1430 Style Gerber Convention (Expert Gerber)

- 4♦ shows 1/4 aces
- 4♥ shows 0/3 aces
- 4♠ shows 2 aces with minimum 11/12-15points
- 4NT shows 2 aces with maximum 16/17 points

But, over 1NT the minimum is 15 and maximum is 17. And over the 2NT the minimum=20 and the maximum=21. Over 1♣ - 1♦ - 2NT the minimum is 18 and the maximum is 19/20.

The follow up bid of 5♣ is the specific king ask bid not the number of kings.

Suppose your partner opens 1♠ and the opponents bid 2♥; you next bid 3♦ (since you have five diamonds, five clubs and are 2-1 in the majors). Suppose your opponent passes and your partner bids 3NT; now what. You cannot bid 4♣ to show your suit, playing Gerber over first and last no-trump bids. What are you to do? Clearly, you must use Super Gerber to ask for aces and give up the agreement to use Gerber over any no-trump bid.

Overview of Responses to 1NT (15-17) and Examples

Starting Points	Bids	Meaning
0-8 (Weak)	2♣ 2♦/2♥	Stayman Jacoby Major Suit Transfer
3♠/2NT Pass	Jacoby Minor Suit Transfer	
9-11 (Invitational)	2♣ then 2NT 2♣ then 2♦/3♥	Invite game Quest Transfer (if played)
2♦/2♥ 3♠/2NT	Jacoby Major Suit Transfer Jacoby Minor Suit Transfer	
12-16 (Game)	2♣ 2♣ next 3♣*	Quest or Smolen SARS
2♦/2♥ 3♠/2NT 3NT	Jacoby Major Suit Transfer Jacoby Minor Suit Transfer semi-balanced no 4-card major	
4♦*/4♥*	Texas Transfer	
17-18 (Slam Invitational)	2♣ 2♦/2♥ 3♠/2NT	Stayman Jacoby Major Suit Transfer Jacoby Minor Suit Transfer
3♦*/3♥* 4NT	Mini-Maxi Quantitative Bid	
19+ (Slam)	4♣ 5NT	Gerber Quantitative (Slam/Grand Slam)

We have covered a lot of material, basic, intermediate, and advanced, when responding to the bid of 1NT. To review the concepts discussed, we next consider several examples.

Your partner opens 1NT, what is your bid with the following hands?

(1) ♠QJ84 ♥10786 ♦8543 ♣A

You have only six Starting Points, bid 2♣ and pass any two-level bid made by partner (Drop Dead Stayman). What if partner bids 3♦ (17 Starting Points and both majors – Super accept Stayman)? He has the majors, bid 4♥, your weakest major since he should have strength in hearts.

(2) ♠AKJ8 ♥10764 ♦54 ♣98 or (3) ♠J10987 ♥109876 ♦54 ♣7

Hands are weak, one is 4-4 in the majors and the other is 5-5, again bid 2♣.

If partner bids a major, pass; otherwise, with both hands bid 2♥, asking partner to pass or bid 2♠ (Garbage Stayman).

(4) ♠AKJ8 ♥J764 ♦54 ♣J8 or (5) ♠K1098 ♥A95 ♦Q2 ♣K987

Hands (4) and (5) are invitational. With both, one again bids Stayman. If in hand (4) partner bids 2♥ or 2♠, we would raise either to game in the major. Without the support of either major, the bid of 2♦, you would bid 3NT. However, hand (5) is different; after the bid of 2♥, you would bid 3NT; he will pass or correct to four spades if he has four.

(6) ♠KJ85 ♥K764 ♦AQ ♣AJ8 or (7) ♠AQ4 ♥KQ76 ♦Q4 ♣KQ67

Hand (6) is very strong. Bid 4NT as quantitative. With hand (7), bid 2♣. If partner bids 2♦ or 2♠, one would bid Gerber to investigate a club slam.

(8) ♠Q10987 ♥76 ♦7810 ♣432 or (9) ♠AQ6542 ♥KQ7 ♦Q4 ♣67

With the hand (8), bid 2♥ (Jacoby) and pass partner's bid. This is also the case with hand (9); however, next bid 3NT. Do not invite, partner may pass.

(10) ♠542 ♥Q7 ♦KQ9876 ♣67 (11) ♠542 ♥97 ♦J109876 ♣67

With hand (10), bid 2NT and after partner's response of 3♦, pass. What if he responds 3♣, the super-accept bid? You must next bid 3NT. For hand (11), again use the transfer bid of 2NT; however, with a super-accept, bid 3♦. If partner bids 3♦, then pass.

For the next hand, we look at a complete example. North is the dealer and opens 1NT=15-17. South bids 2♦ and north announces the bid as a transfer. After bidding 2♥, south next shows his diamond suit and bids 3♦. North has a tough choice, no-trump or hearts.

	♠	KQ106		
	♥	1074		
	♦	Q4		
	♣	AK106		
♠	987	N W E S	♠	AJ52
♥	65		♥	J98
♦	K986		♦	A3
♣	QJ852		♣	9742
	♠	43		
	♥	AKQ32		
	♦	J10752		
	♣	3		

With a diamond lead, the contract is down one due to the diamond ruff. However, with a club lead, the contract is bid and made.

Partner bids 1NT=15-17. What are your responses with each of the following hands?

- (12) ♠KQ97 ♥Q10876 ♦AQ ♣Q9 (13) ♠KQ976 ♥K10975 ♦7 ♣A6

With hand (12), you would bid Stayman. Upon hearing the bid of 2♦, playing Smolen you would bid 3♠* to show your 4-5 distribution. Partner must now bid 4♥ with three. However, playing Quest transfers, you would bid 3♦* as a transfer to hearts, an invitational bid. Now, partner can either pass or bid 4♥.

With hand (13), after 1NT, you would bid 3♠*, 5-5 in the majors (Mini-Maxi). After the bid, partner is the captain to bid a major game, no-trump, or investigate slam.

- (14) ♠KQJ972 ♥Q106 ♦56 ♣Q2 (15) ♠KQJ972 ♥AQ72 ♦J7 ♣A

Hand (14) has a six-card spade suit, bid 4♥* (Texas transfer), and pass 4♠. Partner knows you have six spades and game values. If he likes spades, he will go on.

With hand (15) would bid 2♣. If partner now bids 2♦, you would bid 4♦ (Extended Texas Transfer) to show that you are 6-4 in the majors (hearts and spades).

For our last examples, we again consider two hands:

Opener ♠KQ2 ♥A106 ♦A756 ♣K104
 Responder ♠AJ107 ♥Q72 ♦KQJ2 ♣Q2

Again, one would open 1NT. And, responder would bid 2♦ (deny a four-card major). Now, responder would bid 3♠* (SARS). Opener would bid 3♠* (showing four diamonds). East next bids 6♦.

We again consider two hands where opener bids 1NT.

Opener ♠AJ56 ♥J98 ♦AK4 ♣KJ4
 Responder ♠KQ975 ♥ void ♦Q65 ♣AQ762

In this hand, you have several options: transfer to the minor and then bid spades or bid 2♣ Stayman to find a major suit fit. Playing Broken Suit Slam tries, bid 3♣* to show shortage somewhere and good spades. We will bid 2♣ Stayman. Opener would next bid 2♠. Playing concealed/ambiguous splinters over Stayman, we would next jump and bid 3♥* (singleton or void somewhere). Opener next uses the relay bid of 3♠* (to ask). Responding 3NT* (it is a void). Now, 4♣* is bid to ask where. And partner bids 4♥ (heart void). Opener would next bid 4NT as Roman Keycard Blackwood (responding 5NT – two keycards with a void, see Chapter 3). The grand slam of 7♠ may be reached.

Five-card Major Suit Stayman

Some partnerships that play the 2/1 force system open the bidding 1NT with a five-card major with at least three cards in the other major where the pattern is 5-3-x-x or 3-5-x-x. On the convention card the box “five-card Major common” is marked. The 1NT bid has the advantage of showing points immediately, and if one transfers into the other major, it guarantees a 3-5 fit. However, playing Stayman, if partner bids 2♣, one usually jumps to the three-level in the major to show five. This takes up valuable bidding space. If you do open 1NT when 5-3 in the majors, there are at least two bidding conventions you may use to find a major fit: Puppet Stayman and Five-Card Stayman. The Puppet Stayman bid is often initiated with the bid of 3♣* (a better approach is to use Modified Puppet Stayman to be explained in some detail later). This would replace the Mini-Maxi bid of three clubs showing 5-5 in the minors with a weak hand, if you play Puppet. It is a popular bid when you open 2NT. Another option is to play five-card Major Suit Stayman as a replacement for Stayman. Playing the Five-Card Stayman one again bids: 1NT pass 2♣?

However, opener’s responses are:

2♥/2♠	minimum hand (14-16) with a 5-card major
3♥/3♠	maximum hand (17) with a 5-card major

To deny a five-card major, opener’s responses are

2♦	minimum hand with no 5-card major
3♦	maximum hand no 5-card major

With enough for game interest, to find a 4-4 major suit fit, responder merely repeats the inquiry by bidding 3♣. Note that responder may also bid either 3♥*/3♠* which are Smolen bids showing **four** cards in the bid major suit and **five** cards in the other suit (alert). Smolen does not interfere with the five-card Major Suit Stayman bids. This is also the case if you are playing Quest Transfers.

After the 3♣ bid by responder, opener can show a four-card major by bidding 3♥, the cheapest major suit, identical to the 2♣ response using Stayman.

Without game interest and hearing opener's two diamond minimum response, responder does not bid three clubs, but 2♥ = four hearts, 2♠ = four spades, or 2NT = no 4-card major.

Notes: Using non-forcing Puppet Stayman, you bid 2♣ for Puppet Stayman and respond by bidding 2♦ (no five-card major), then responder bids the major suit at the **two-level** that he DOES NOT HAVE. This allows the opener to become declarer if there is a 4-4 fit. If the responder is 4-4 in the majors, he bids 2NT (in five-card Major Stayman this signifies no four-card major). If the responder has shown one four-card major, the opener bids 2NT to deny holding four cards in the responder's major. Both methods allow you to find 5-3 and 4-4 fits in the major suits. If the responder bids at the three-level and not the two-level, this is again Smolen or Quest Transfers.

For forcing Puppet Stayman with 1NT, one uses the same structure for Puppet Stayman after opening 2NT. The bid is 3♣ (effective January 2013 no longer needs an alert, but responses MUST be alerted. With this approach, 3NT* by opener denies a four-card or five-card major and 3♦* denies a five-card major, but, promises one or two four-card majors. Responder then bids at the three-level the major he does not have (this is not Smolen). If instead, responder bids four clubs after a three diamond bid by opener, this shows both majors. A bid of four diamonds by responder is a transfer to hearts and a bid of four hearts is a transfer to spades.

Overview of Several Responder Rebids

We have reviewed major, minor, and no-trump opening bids, responses by partner, and rebids by the opening bidder. In this section, we review several significant rebids by the responder.

New Minor Forcing (NMF)

In this chapter, we have stressed the importance of finding a major suit fit. With a three- or four-card major, playing the 2/1 game force system, one opens a minor suit. Recall that playing 2/1 that opener's hand can be of minimum strength (11/12-15), medium strength (16-18) or maximum strength 19+. A rebid of 1NT by the opening bidder shows 11-15 points, 2NT shows 16-18, and 3NT is 19+

The New Minor Forcing (NMF) convention is used by the responder after opener has bid 1NT (11/12-15), a minimum hand.

After responder has bid a major suit and has heard opener's rebid of 1NT, responder with 10+ Starting Points makes the auction invitational and seeks additional information by bidding a minor suit that is new to the auction. Introduction of the second minor is called New Minor Forcing (NMF). Because this is not a natural bid, it must be **alerted**; the bid is forcing and is asking the opener if he has three-card support for the bid major. When playing NMF, the bid after 1NT cannot be passed; it is artificial and forcing for one round.

Several NMF sequences follow.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♣* | (2) 1♣ - 1♥, 1NT - 2♦* |
| (3) 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣* | (4) 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♦* |
| (5) 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣* | (6) 1♥ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♦* |

The New Minor Forcing bid asks opener to show major suit support and strength.

If the auction goes: 1♥ - 1♠ - 2NT (16-18), one may also use 3♣*/3♦* as NMF. The bid minor is usually his best suit, without a good holding in either minor suit, he bids 3♣*.

What is the NMF bid asking? It asks partner the following. Do you have 3-card support for my 5-card bid major? To use NMF you need 10+ points playing 1NT and over 2NT, 7/8+ points depending on your shape.

If now opener has 3 spades and 4 hearts what is his rebid after opener bid spades? His first obligation is to show his fit even if he has 4 hearts. If responder has both, he may next bid 3♥ over 2♠. If responder bids 1♥, even with 4 spades, opener must bid 2♥ to show his 5-3 major fit immediately. Some may not agree because they show the other major if it has four cards. Please discuss this with your partner.

1. If responder continues with 2 of a major instead of NMF, he shows a minimal hand.
2. If responder responds 2NT, he has invitational values and a 5-card major. If opener only showed 3-card support, opener can play in the major or notrump in either a game or a part score.
3. If responder bids at the 3-level of opener's bid minor, his hand is invitational.
4. If responder bid 2 of the other major, it shows 5-4 in the majors.

After responder has bid, the opening bidder next shares both his strength and shape.

More specifically, we consider a few bidding sequences:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥	1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*	1NT	2♦*
2♠ four spades no support hearts		2♥ four hearts without 3 spades	
2NT – no support, good hand		2♠ three spade support, invitational	
		2NT no support, invitational	
		3♥ four hearts, game force	
		3♠ three spades, game force	
		3♦/3♣/3NT no support, game force	

The convention may also be played with a major suit opening; one heart by opener followed by a bid of one spade by responder. If opener bids one no-trump, the bid of a minor by responder is

again NMF. It may also be used in the sequence: opener bids one diamond, you bid one heart, and opener rebids one spade. To begin an invitational auction and check on partner's heart length, bid two clubs, NMF. In most situations, NMF is used by the responder. However, it can be used by the opener in the sequence: 1♣-1♥, 1♠-1NT, 2♦* (NMF). In this case, the bid is asking responder if he has three-card support for hearts. We next consider a few examples.

Opener ♠K2 ♥K432 ♦K7 ♣K10789
 Responder ♠Q107653 ♥J3 ♦Q65 ♣A7

The bidding would be:

1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*
2♥	2♣
Pass	

The bid of two diamonds is NMF. Opener bids hearts to show four, and responder signs off in a partial, two spades.

Opener ♠K2 ♥A542 ♦K7 ♣KQ789
 Responder ♠QJ97 ♥7 ♦AQ6 ♣J10654

The bidding would be:

1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*
2♥	3♣
Pass	

The bid of 3♣ is forcing. With a weaker hand, one would bypass NMF and jump to three clubs after the bid of 1NT.

Opener ♠K89 ♥K52 ♦7 ♣AKQ789
 Responder ♠A2 ♥AQ987 ♦5643 ♣106

The bidding would be:

1♣	1♥
1NT	2♦*
3♣	3♥
4♥	Pass

Using the NMF Convention, you easily reach your heart game.

What have we learned from these examples?

1. With less than 10 points responder bids 2M and opener is encouraged to pass.
2. If responder continues with a bid of 2NT, he has a 5-card major not 6 and it is invitational.

Checkback Stayman after 1NT

The Checkback Stayman Convention after 1NT is used with the bidding sequence 1m-1M-1NT (with 11/12-15 minimum). Playing Checkback Stayman, we can redefine the bid of 2♣* as an invitational game force bid whether one opened 1♣/1♦. The bidding sequence follows.

2♣* as Checkback Stayman (whether one opened one diamond or one club)

1m-1M

1NT-2♣* (Checkback)

2♦	No 4-card major or 3-card support for the major
2♥/2♠	Min and shows either the other 4-card majors or 3-card support for responders Major
3♥/3♠	Max and show either the other 4-card major or 4-card support for responds Major

After the bid of two diamonds, responder may rebid his six-card major suit to the two-level with a weak hand. With a six-card major and a weak hand, responder may raise his major suit; if 5-4 in spades and hearts, one may show the other major. However, if responder bids hearts, to show spades, a reverse by responder, shows 13+ Starting Points and is game forcing.

New Minor Forcing vs Checkback Stayman

The major disadvantage for NMF and Checkback Stayman after 1NT is that both only show invitational values. In addition you cannot show a weak 5-5 major minor hand. Responder knows the shape and values of the opener's hand when he bids 1NT. A major disadvantage of NMF is that the opener cannot tell whether responder has an invitational or game going values until the responder's rebid.

Recommendation, use Checkback Stayman by bidding 2♣* (invitational values) and NMF by bidding 2♦* (game going values). This is exactly Two-Way New Minor Forcing.

Two-Way NMF with Wolff Modified

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, one makes a 1-level bid with 11/12-19 points. Playing 2/1 with the strong no-trump convention, one opens 1NT with 15-17 HCP and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semi-balanced distributions (2336 long

minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void. However, if one cannot open 1NT (15-17 HCP), a one-level minor suit bid is made without a 5-card major.

The opening bidder may now have a minimum hand with 11/12-15 points, an intermediate hand with 16-18 points or a strong hand with 19+ points. And partner may have 0-5/6 points (very weak), 6-9 points (weak), 10-12 points (invitational), or 13+ points (strong-game going 2/1 hand).

Not having a 5-card major, the opening bidder will now open the bidding of one of a minor, usually a 3-card suit (the convenient minor).

I note as we shall see later, some players may use a short club (0-2), which may be played as forcing (e.g. Montreal Relay or Walsh Club Conventions) or as non-forcing (e.g. Kennedy Club). Playing a short club, the bid of one diamond is usually of length four and does not require an alert. The **1♣ bid** must be **announced** as short if **non-forcing** and **alerted if forcing**.

Non-Forcing Responses to New Minor Opening

For the bidding sequence 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠, the rebid of 1NT shows a minimal hand. A new suit by responder (after opener bids 1NT) is **non-forcing**; it is only forcing if responder bids a suit and then a new suit. It shows a two-suited hand which partner may pass if he prefers the second suit. A re-bid of responder's own suit is also non-forcing after 1NT, showing a 5-card major. For example:

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♣ (non-forcing to-play)
- 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♣ (non-forcing to-play)
- 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♦ (non-forcing to-play)
- 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♦ (non-forcing to-play)

With a minimum hand, opener will usually pass; however with 16-18 points (an intermediate hand), opener may make a reverse 2-level bid (1♣-1♥/1♠-2♦, 1♣-1♠-2♥, or 1♦-1♠-2♥) or make a jump re-bid. The bid of 2NT by opener shows 18+ points. What if responder bids 2NT over opener's 1NT bid? **It is NOT invitational, but conventional.**

1m-1M-1NT-2NT* (Conventional NOT Natural)

2NT* is a relay to 3♣, that's how you sign off in clubs, then over 3♣

Pass = Clubs

3♦ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, doubleton

3♥ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, singleton/void

3♠ = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, doubleton

3NT = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, singleton/void

When partner opens one of a minor and responder has a 5-card major and bids 1♥/1♠, what convention does one use to invite game, or force to game, without jumping to the 3-level in the major?

There are several commonly used “club” conventions one may use playing the 2/1 Game Force System:

1. New Minor Forcing (NMF)
2. Checkback Stayman
3. Two-Way New Minor Forcing (also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman)

Of course other conventions are employed to address the problem, for example in England the Crowhurst convention is popular.

While many club members may want to learn either NMF or Checkback Stayman both have severe drawbacks. The conventions DO NOT distinguish between invitational and game-forcing hands, and the NMF Convention takes up too much bidding space. So do not spend your time learning two conventions.

A convention you should learn is Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2-Way NMF is marked in RED on your Convention Card, as is New Minor Forcing Convention due to their popularity). A very good brief introduction is provided by Larry Cohen at <http://www.larryco.com/BridgeArticles/ArticlePrint.aspx?articleID=549>.

Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF)

Responder uses the Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF) Convention when opener bids 1NT after opening with a minor with a 5-card major. It requires at 10-12 points (game-invitational strength); otherwise responder may just rebid his major or show a second suit. The bidding sequence follows.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)

Note: Then convention is not used with less than 10 points, it is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference, the only exception is if the opponents bid 1♦ over opener’s bid of 1♣ or doubles 1-level club bid.

Responder with game-invitational values (10 -12 points) and a 5-card major makes the forcing bid of 2♣*. Because the club bid is artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has 3-card support for the major suit bid (with 4-card support, opener would have supported the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major.

If the opener doesn't have 3-card support, his first obligation is to show 4-cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2♦. What does this mean? The bids follow in some detail for each minor and major suit bid.

Club Opening

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - no support (4 Spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points) – (3433)
- 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

Diamond Opening

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)

- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

When one has 13+ points (game - invitational values) as responder, the 2♣* bid is replaced with the bid of 2♦* and now is game-forcing with a 5+ card major.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)

Because the bid is again artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has 3-card support for the major suit bid (with 4-card support, opener would support the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major. Again if opener doesn't have 3-card support, his first obligation is to show 4-cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2NT. The responses for the forcing sequence are similar to the non-forcing 2♣* bids.

Club Opening

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)
?	

- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - no support (4 Spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)

- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)
?	

- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2NT- no support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

Diamond Opening

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF- GF)
?	

- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
 2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♦*(2NMF - GF)
?	

- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
 2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)

3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

I have tried to provide all the bidding combinations, showing shape and points, when using 2WNMF, for several example hands see the 12-page pdf on the web by pasting the following link into your web browser.

www.lajollabridge.com/LJUnit/Education/2-WayNewMinorForcing.pdf

Wolff Signoff Convention Modified (WSOM)

We have reviewed the case where the opening bidder has 11/12-17 points. We now look at the Wolff Signoff Convention (WSOM) when the opener bids 2NT=18+ points. I have modified WSO to address the 5-2, 4-2, 5-3, 4-4, 6-5, 5-5, 5-6, 4-6, and 6-4 major's suit distributions.

Wolff Signoff Modified - After opener makes a strong 2NT rebid, the Wolff Signoff is a responder method normally used by responder to warn the strong opener of sub-game values; in the normal situation, the opener is instructed to pass (opener promises 2-3 cards in responder's major suit when rebidding 2NT). The theory behind the convention assumes that opener's 2NT rebid is restricting opener's values to 18-19 HCP, thus responder is now the captain and places the contract. When used in conjunction with Major Suit Checkback, responder has the tools to force to game/slam and to signoff at the 3-level or (4-level if signing off in clubs).

Note: The WSOM convention is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference. Not playing the WSOM, but NMF, the bid of 3♣* is NMF!

We are using the WSOM convention when Opener bids a minor, it may also be used when Opener bids a major at the 1-level, or when the Opener bids 2NT over any 1-level bid by responder (e.g. 1♥-1♠-2NT, 1♦-1♥/1♠-2NT, or 1♣-1♦/1♥/1♠-2NT).

Non-forcing bids over Opener's 2NT bid

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – (Pass/3NT/4M) – Sign-off Bids (5-7 Points) – For example

Pass with ♠74 ♥K108743 ♦ J432 ♣7 or ♠AJ72 ♥863♦106 ♣876

3NT with ♠J743 ♥ K986 ♦ Q72 ♣J105

4♠ with ♠AJ1062 ♥J65 ♦1086 ♣7

With a huge hand opener may use Gerber or RKCB to investigate slam.

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣* (WSOM – 8-12 Points)

The artificial 3♣* bid shows a weak hand; generally, with at least five cards in responder's bid major (may be 6-4 or 5-5). With three-card support for the major, opener bids that suit at the three-level. Without three-card support, opener is required to rebid 3♦*, artificial (only 2-card support for the bid major). All of responder's subsequent bids over 3♦* are natural signoffs. **Major must have 5+cards – Never 4 (with 4 bid 3♦'s).**

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣*

3♦*

Sign-Off	Pass 3♦ with diamonds or bid 4♣ with clubs or 4♥/4♠ spades with 6. Over the 4-level major suit bid, opener may use RKCB with a huge hand
3M	to play in responders bid 5/6-card major (responder bids same major)
3oM	6-4 in majors (6M and 4OM)
3NT	5-5 in the majors (responder bid 1♠)
4NT	Quantitative (assumes 18-19 range)

Game forcing or slam invitational bids over 2NT (3♦/3♥/3♠) 13+ Points

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♥/1♠
2NT	3♦*(game force)
	3M = 6-cards in bid major and 4-cards in other (6-4)
	3OM = 6-cards in bid major and 5-cards in other major (6-5)
	3NT = to play
	4♣/4♦ - Minorwood for bid minor
	4NT - Quantitative

The bid of 3♦* by Responder is also asking Opener if he has 3-card support for the bid major or 4-card fit for the UNBID major. He shows a fit by bidding 3M. This is a major suit Checkback bid, it promises **4/5-cards in the bid major** and more points.

Let's look at the bids.

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♥ (4♥/5♥ and may have 4♠)

2NT 3♦*

3♥ = 3- card support for bid major may have 4 spades
 Responder may bid 3♠ if he has 4 spades (4-4 fit better than 5-3)

3♠ = no support for hearts, has 4 spades

3NT = no support for hearts and not 4 spades – to play

Notice that responder is 4-4 or 4-5 in the majors or has only 5 hearts.

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♠ (5♠ and may have 4♥)
2NT	3♦*

3♥ = 4 hearts, but may have 3-spades
 Responder will bid 4♥ with 4 hearts; otherwise, he will bid 3♠

3♠ = 3-card support for bid major and **denies** 4 hearts

3NT = no support for hearts and not 4 spades – to play

Notice that responder is 5-4 in the majors or has only 5 spades.

Examples (opponents passing):

1♣-1♦-1♥-2NT-pass (responder has 0-7 points)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♥ (responder showing 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♠ (responder 4-6 in majors) and [3NT, responder is 5-5 in majors]

1♦-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦ (responder may pass with diamonds and showing 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3♥ (opener has 3 hearts and may have 4 spades)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♦-3♠ (opener has 3 spades and denies 6 hearts)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♥ (responder 6-4 in spades and hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3NT (opener denies a fit not 3 hearts or 4 spades)

1m-1♥-2NT-3NT (to play)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♥ (responder has 4 spades and 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♠ (responder 5 spades and 6 hearts)

The Two-Way NMF Convention with the Wolff Signoff convention allows one to differentiate between invitational and forcing responses and to immediately agree on trumps. Responder is able to show their partner a double fit and show a particular singleton in order to avoid playing 3NT incorrectly and find a potential slam. There is very little downside to this convention.

The Zirconia Convention

A major problem in uncontested auctions in Standard American, Precision or 2/1 bidding starts with the sequence: 1♥-1♠-2♦. The problem is that a new fourth suit forcing bid is available only at the three-level, leaving responder with no cheap way to create a strong game force auction. This Zirconia Convention solves this problem at a very small cost.

Zirconia is a cheap fake way to show diamonds. After 1♥-1♠ opener's rebids are:

1NT*: 4+♦ or 2=5=3=3 in that order

2♦*: three-card support for spades

*=alert

All others bids are unchanged, except for the added negative inference that opener does not have three-card spade support.

Continuations are pretty standard, with 1♥-1♠-1NT*-2♣ available as a new suit forcing for one round. This allows one to invite and get out in two of a suit.

Playing this style, 1♥-1♠-1NT*-2NT+ is natural and forcing to game.

This solves all the following problems:

1. Gives an easy force (and invite) when opener has the reds and responder has spades.
2. Solves a number of difficult hands where opener has three-card support,
3. Immediately disambiguates three- and four-card spade support.

The only real negative is the loss of the natural 1♥-1♠-1NT* sequence. However, when opener has 3♠, the better of the major fits at the 2-level is often superior to 1NT*. The problem is really only the 2=5=3=3 hand opposite a less-than-invitational responder with a singleton heart.

Zirconia with Gazzilli:

Gazzilli is the bidding sequence: 1M-1NT-2♣* is forcing one round, showing either clubs or a strong hand. This method greatly improves bidding on opener's strong hands and also frees up jumps to show distributional hands (like an intermediate 5/5).

The main negative of Gazzilli is that you can no longer play in 2♣* in auctions like 1♥-1♠-2♣*

However, Gazzilli can be combined with Zirconia by making 1NT* a two way bid after 1♥-1♠:

1NT*: 4+♦, or 2=5=3=3, or any 17+HCP hand

2♣: natural and not forcing

2♦*: three-card support for spades

Others are unchanged from Gazzilli (so 3m can be 5/5, etc.)

After 1♥-1♠-1NT:

2♣: 8+ points; opener can rebid 2♦ (NF) on a min with 3+♦

2♦, 2♥, and 2♠: weak, to play opposite the reds

2NT: natural and game force

This gives you the advantages of Gazzilli without the disadvantage.

Another option is to employ the XYZ convention.

XYZ Convention

The convention goes by two names XYZ or Two-Way Checkback; however, they are both the same. It is similar to New Minor Forcing (NMF) or Two-Way NMF.

It works: over any (XYZ) sequence of bids responder invokes XYZ by bidding an artificial 2♣* to show all invitational hands and an artificial bid of 2♦* with most game force hands.

Comparing the systems involves rating how each handles the three basic hand groups that responder will hold:

- Sign-Off hands
- Invitational hands
- Forcing hands

The conventions are about equal in terms of handling sign-offs. Both have flaws as relating to getting out in a minor suit at a low level. However XYZ allows much more definition and clarity in the invitational and forcing sequences. It is capable of relaying distribution, high card strength and location of strength information to opener so that the correct strain and level can be reached.

The Basics

The basic premise the system is that bids of 2♣* and 2♦* are both artificial. There are three features to the system

1. The 2♣* response to a 1NT rebid is a forced relay to 2♦*
2. The 2♦* response to a 1NT rebid is an artificial game force (even if partner's opening bid was 1♦). It is usually a Major suit Checkback but is occasionally a prelude to showing a forcing bid in a minor.
3. Jump rebids by responder, in any suit, are forcing. They describe good hands or good suit(s) with HCPS in long suit(s).

Checkback and the Sign-off

This treatment is very much the way most play it now. Responder's rebid of the original major (or 2♥ if 1♠ was the initial response) are not forward going. Below are a few easy examples

1m	1♠	1m	1♠	1♥	1♠
1NT	2♠	1NT	2♥	1NT	2♠

The approach to signing off in a minor is as follows. To sign-off in 2♦ responder bids 2♣ - Opener should alert and explain as a RELAY to 2♦, either to play or the start of some invitational sequence.

The auction may go	1♦	1♠
	1NT	2♣*
	2♦*	Pass

*=alert

This is how responder gets back to 2♦. Remember you can't bid 2♦ directly over 1NT as a preference for it is an artificial force.

Signing off in Clubs is tricky. This is the exception to the 2♣* is invitational rule. In this case bid 2♣* forcing 2♦* then bid 3♣ to play. We'll revisit this area at the end of the discussion to see how different approaches might be applied to this sequence that will open up several possibilities for the scientists.

Checkback with Invitational Hands

In present NMF methods responder bids NMF or jumps to the 3-level to show an invitational hand. Playing Checkback responder bids 2♣ forcing 2♦ from opener. Responder then clarifies his hand type as the example below shows

1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣*
2♦*	???

Responder's Bids

- P = to play
- 2♥ = Invitational values w/5+Spades and 4+Heart
- 2♠ = Invitational with 5+Spades
- 2NT = Invitational with Clubs
- 3♣ = sign-off in Clubs

- 3♦ = Invitational with Diamonds
- 3♥ = Highly Invitational w/5+Spades and 5+Hearts
- 3♠ = Highly Invitational w/6+Spades

How do we invite in NT? Just bid 2N over 1NT as in standard.

As you can see the invitational sequences are very descriptive compared with the NMF sequences.

Checkback with Forcing Hands

In present NMF methods responder bids NMF then makes a strength showing bid of some type to establish a force. Playing Checkback responder has two options available to show forcing hands

1. Jump rebids. These tend to be good hands. If jumping in the suit you responded this should show at least 6 cards in length and values in the suit (not Kxxxxx, the worst holding may be more like AJ109xx). If jumping into a new suit, responder shows at least 5-5 distribution with HCPS concentrated in the suits bids.
2. All other forcing hands start with responder bidding 2♦ over opener’s 1NT rebid. This immediately establishes a game force. Opener now responds naturally. I use the following priorities for opener (Responder should remember that Opener’s bidding of “a” does not deny “b” or “c”. However, bidding “b” does deny “a”, and etc.)
 - a. Bid the other Major with 4 of them
 - b. Bid partner’s major with 3
 - c. Rebid good 5 card minor (or 6 card minor for hand hogs)
 - d. Bid 2NT with none of the above

So 2♦* usually is a forcing bid looking for a major suit fit (4 of the other major or 3 card support for bid major), a force in either minor or just some hand that does not fall into the jump rebid categories. Some examples will help clarify things responder needs to keep in mind.

AKQJ10 Bid 2♦* — good suits but should be 5-5 to jump,
 AKXX
 XX
 XX

AKQJ10 Bid 2♦* —good suits but should be 6+ to jump,
 KXX
 XX
 QXX

KJ10XX	Bid 2♦*— correct shape with scattered values.
KXXXX	Not a good hand. Partner must judge its potential.
AQ	
K	

An example sequence with definitions of calls by responder follows.

1♣	1♠	Responder's Bids
1NT	2♦*	2♠ = Forcing with 6+Spades, looks no-trumpish
2♥	???	2NT = Random force 17 HCP +/-
		3♣ = Natural force doesn't fit jump requirements
		3♦ = Natural force doesn't fit jump requirements
		3♥ = Forcing, better than 4H
		3♠ = Forcing 6+ (may have 4 cards in opener's minor)
		3NT = to play, opener can correct with 3 card S support.
		4m = splinter in support of Hearts

Checkback in General

Note that Checkback is used in the following 2 auctions (it actually works well in both of these)

1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
1NT		1NT	

It works well in with Walsh bids because it allows diamonds to be a playable spot at a low level.

It is also easily adapted to a weak NT system, especially when opener by passes a major suit to show strength.

Checkback with Clubs

Some of the harder parts of Checkback to remember are the exceptions.

2♣* forces 2♦*, to play or starts invitations UNLESS one rebids 3♣ then it's to play, to Invite in Clubs, bid 2♣ then 2NT. To Invite in NT do not go through 2♣ relay, bid 2NT directly.

Forget 2♣* then 3♣ to play, 2♣ then 2NT invites Clubs, bid directly to invite in NT. Use 2♣ as a relay to 2♦ to play or INVITATIONAL in some suit or NT. Now the only memory required is that if I want to invite I start with 2♣ —ALWAYS —NO EXCEPTIONS.

A Review

1♣	1♠	2NT = Natural NT Invitational
1NT	2♣*	3♣ = Inv with Clubs
2♦	???	To get out in 3♣ don't bid 2♣ bid, 2NT = a relay to 3♣

The only thing one needs to remember is that 2NT is a relay to 3♣. 2NT can't be invitational. Why? Because ALL Invitational sequences start with 2♣*.

The XYZ Convention makes all jump bids strong (except three clubs which is weak). The convention is always off in competition or by a passed hand. For additional detail for those interested, consult Max Hardy's (2002) "Advanced Bridge Bidding for the 21st Century," New York: SQueeZe Books.

Wolff Sign-off with Checkback Stayman

What do you do when you respond to partner's one-level bid with five or a bad six Starting Points HCP and your partner then bids Two No-trump?

For example:

Hand 1)	♠ K 7 6 4 2	Hand 2)	♠ Q 10 9 5
	♥ K 9 6 5 4		♥ 6 3
	♦ 5 2		♦ K 9 8 7 4 3
	♣ 6		♣ 6

In both hands, your partner opens one club and you respond one spade and now your partner bids 2NT (showing a balanced hand with 18-19 Starting Points). Your hands are very distributional; pass is not an acceptable bid and any suit continuation is forcing to game. You do not want to encourage to game. How can you stop the auction at the three levels? To solve this problem, Bobby Wolff proposed the Wolff sign-off bid.

Responder must bid 3♣* (an alert) as an artificial relay to 3♦. Opener is asked to go no higher. This permits the opener to get to any suit except clubs and stop at the three-level.

With the first hand, bid three clubs, and after opener's bid of three diamonds, you bid three hearts. Opener knows to either pass or correct to three spades.

With the second hand, you pass the three diamond bid by the opener. If responder bids 3NT after the relay bid of three diamonds, this shows **mild** interest in slam in the opener's minor suit.

What if you have a strong hand with clubs? For example, suppose you have the hand:

Hand 3) ♠ A K 6 3
 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ A 9 8 6 5

After the relay bid of three clubs, you would bid 5♣ showing no interest in slam (principle of fast arrival). With a stronger hand (15+ Starting Points), bid four clubs instead. This suggests **strong** interest in a minor suit club slam. With a balanced hand and 7-10 Starting Points, bid 3NT after 2NT as a sign-off.

Major Suit Checkback Stayman (with 9+ Starting Points)

Because three clubs is always the Wolff Sign-off, 3♦* is used as a Checkback for major suit fits. Responder is usually seeking three-card support for a five-card major already bid, four cards in the major not bid, or if holding five spades and four hearts either a 4-4 fit in hearts (preferred) or a 5-3 fit in spades.

If responder's first bid was in hearts, opener shows four spades after the Checkback bid. If responder's first suit was spades, opener's first priority is to show four hearts after the Checkback.

The goal of the Checkback sequence is to first find a 4-4 fit in the majors and if not a 5-3 fit. A bid of 3NT by the opener, after Checkback, denies a major suit fit.

In the auction 1m-1♥, 2NT - 3♦*, opener knows that partner is seeking a 5-3 heart fit. The bid of 3♠ shows four spades. If responder bids 3NT, opener will correct to four hearts holding three hearts or will pass with a heart doubleton.

In the auction 1m-pass-1♠-2NT, 3♦*, opener knows that partner is seeking a fit in the majors holding five spades and four hearts. The goal is to reach game in hearts or a heart slam. With four hearts, partner will bid 3♥, finding a heart fit, the partnership will be in a heart game or investigate slam. With three spades, he would bid 3♠ and a 5-3 spade fit would be found. With a spade doubleton or with only three hearts, opener would bid 3NT.

What if responder is 5-3 in the majors? And the bidding goes 1m-1♠, 2NT-3♦* -?

Checkback is asking for a spade fit. If opener bids 3♥ to show four, responder would bid 3NT. Opener now realizes the Checkback bid was to find a 5-3 spade fit. Opener would correct to 4♠ holding three.

There are many ways to play Checkback Stayman. The version provided here follows that recommendation of Max Hardy.

Fourth Suit Forcing

Fourth Suit Forcing is used to allow responder to create a forcing auction at his second turn to bid. The convention may be used by responder as a one round force or a game force. Both have red boxes on the Convention Card and must be alerted. If you play it as a one round force, responder should have 10-12 Starting Points. If you play it as a game force bid, responder should have 13+ Starting Points. It usually implies that one has no good bid, but values, and allows the partnership to search for the best contract. While the fourth suit bid is usually made by the responder, it may also be made by the opening bidder. The convention was developed by Norman Squire from England.

Playing opening a club, the sequence 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ is a one-round forcing auction; however, the bid of one spade is usually natural. A more typical sequence may be 1♣-1♥-1♠-2♦* or 1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥*, among others. After the fourth suit bid, opener may:

1. Raise responder's first bid suit with 3-card support and a minimum hand.
2. Jump in responder's first bid suit with 3-card support and a maximum.
3. Bid 2NT with the fourth suit stopped without 3-card support in the first bid suit of responder and even a doubleton.
4. Raise the fourth suit with 4-card support.
5. A jump in the fourth suit shows 5-5 distribution.
6. Make a more natural rebid by rebidding his first bid suit.

To illustrate, the above steps:

1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦* -	2♠	shows 3-card spade support.
	2NT	shows a diamond stopper .
	2♥	shows 6 hearts (or 5 good ones).
	3♣	shows 5 clubs .
	3♦	shows 4-card diamond support.
	3♠, 3NT, 3♥, 4♣	extra strength

Let's look at an example. Suppose as responder you hold the following hand.

Responder ♠AJ567 ♥987 ♦Q7 ♣AK5

And the bidding goes: 1♦-1♠-2♣- (?) What do you bid? Clearly, you have sufficient points for game (14 Starting Points) somewhere.

After the bid of two clubs, responder sees sufficient values for game. A rebid of spades shows a weak hand and responder is not strong enough to jump to three spades. He cannot support either minor since the opener is probably 5-4 in the minors. Without a heart stopper, he cannot bid

2NT. The only forcing bid that responder may make is 2♥*, fourth suit forcing to show values (to game or for one round, depending on the agreement). Partner with a heart stopper may bid no-trump or rebid clubs to show 5-5 distribution in the minors. Responder will then bid 5♣.

Let's consider another example when you hold the following hand.

♠Q 10 7 ♥A K 8 7 4 ♦J 10 4 ♣A 7

And the bidding goes: 1♦-1♥-2♣- (?)

Clearly, you would bid 2♠* (fourth suit forcing) to see if partner has three hearts. If he does not and rebids diamonds, you would bid 3NT.

As responder, you hold the following hand ♠A963 ♥A K 6 5 ♦Q 8 4 ♣A 7

And the bidding goes: 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣ - (?) What do you bid? Clearly, bid 3NT, do not use fourth suit forcing.

As opener and responder, you have the following hands.

Opener	♠AQJ56 ♥KJ98 ♦K4 ♣J4
Responder	♠75 ♥AQ ♦9865 ♣AQ762

The bidding may go: 1♠ - 2♣ (game force) - 2♥ - 3♦ (natural) – 3NT. The bid of three diamonds is not fourth suit forcing after a 2/1 bid.

Failure to use the fourth suit as a forcing bid always limits responder's hand. If, for example, the bidding were to go:

1♦ - 1♥
1♠- 3♠ (the 3♠ bid is non-forcing)

While fourth suit forcing is most often used by responder, it may also be employed by the opening bidder. For example, with the following hands:

Opener	♠7 ♥987 ♦AK84 ♣AKQ98
Responder	♠AJ9876 ♥A2 ♦Q7 ♣762

The bidding sequence may go as follows.

1♣ 1♠
2♦ 2♠
3♥* 3NT (I have a heart stopper)

Opening Bids and Rebids –Some additional examples

1. Your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following hand.

Responder ♠1095 ♥ A1032 ♦A106 ♣Q98

You have ten Starting Points. Playing Combined Bergen, bid 3♦* (three pieces with three trumps). If you play Bergen Raises, bid 1NT and jump to 3♠ to show a limit raise in spades. If you do not play Bergen, you would have to bid a minor suit fragment. You cannot bid 2♥ because you hold only four cards.

2. Your partner opens 1♣ and you hold the hand.

Responder ♠K93 ♥ K7 ♦A1094 ♣Q1075

You have eleven Starting Points (12 HCP – 1 for dubious doubleton) and bid 1♦. Partner bids 2♥ (a reverse showing 17+ points). You are near slam so you should show your four- card club suit, bid 3♣. Partner is the captain and will bid on.

3. Your partner opens 1♠ and you hold:

Responder ♠AQJ762 ♥7 ♦AK983 ♣5

You have great spade support and seventeen Starting Points, bid Jacoby 2NT.

4. You hold the following hand.

Opener ♠AQJ106 ♥A8 ♦QJ7 ♣K98

You have seventeen Starting Points. You have five spades and only three hearts, bid 1♠ and then jump into no-trump to 2NT for your next bid, over a one level suit bid.

5. You hold ♠A2 ♥AJ984 ♦AK852 ♣7

Your partner opens 1♣. What do you bid? You have eighteen Starting Points and two five-card suits. Bid 1♥ (new suit forcing). Partner now responds 1♠. If you bid 2♦* (fourth suit forcing), your hand is limited to 10-12 points not playing it as a game force. You are too strong; you should jump to 3♦ to show your values.

6. You hold ♠AKJ93 ♥AK96 ♦7 ♣KJ8. What do you open?

You have twenty-one Starting Points, with an unbalanced hand. Open 1♠. Partner bids 2NT* (Jacoby). You next show your singleton, bid 3♦*. You have to move toward slam. Tools for your continued responses are discussed in Chapter 3.

7. You hold ♠AJ7 ♥1075 ♦KQJ6 ♣A85

Partner opens 1♣; you have a balanced hand with fifteen Starting Points. To show your values, bid 3NT.

8. You hold ♠76 ♥Q1075 ♦QJ62 ♣J98

Partner opens 1♣; what do you bid? You have four hearts and four diamonds and only six Starting Points. Show your major and bid 1♥, bypassing diamonds. Partner next bids 2♠, a reverse showing 17+ points. To show your stopper in diamonds, bid 2NT.

9. You hold ♠Q9 ♥AK10752 ♦Q ♣KJ98

You open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT. What is your rebid?

Here you must decide whether or not to show your club suit or rebid your hearts. You have fifteen Starting Points; your hand is in the minimum range. Rebid hearts; with 16+ points, you would show your club suit.

10. You hold ♠9843 ♥A75 ♦78 ♣AKJ8

You open the hand 1♣ and partner responds 1♦. What is your rebid?

Your choices are to show your four-card spade suit or bid 1NT. Even with those spades, you must show your four-card major. With a more balanced hand, one less club and one more diamond card, some may then bid 1NT.

11. You hold ♠AQJ984 ♥75 ♦QJ1078 ♣Void

You have 10 HCP and 3 length points or 13 Starting Points. Open the hand 1♠.

Jacoby 2NT (Modified by the Experts)

Many established partnerships play a modified version of the Jacoby 2NT bid. It is a game force bid promising 4-card support for the major suit bid with an opening hand, 13+ Dummy Points. However, it better describes hand shape and values and does not require the use of scroll bids.

After the opening bid of a major and a 2NT* response by partner, opener's responses are now (all bids are alerted):

4M	a very bad hand always 5-3-3-2
3♣*	any other minimum hand even 5-3-3-2, but with redeeming value
3♦*	non-minimum, with a side singleton/void somewhere
3♥*	non-minimum, any 5-4-2-2 distribution
3♠*	non-minimum, 6+ trumps (no singleton/void)

3NT* non-minimum, 5-3-3-2
 4x* (new suit) a 5+ card suit with an ace/king

After the above responses, if responder (partner) jumps to game in the bid major, it is a sign-off bid with no slam interest.

With slam interest, responder may ask for additional information.

After opener's 3♣*: responded bids 3♦ to ask for more information which is similar to the original responses by the opener:

4♠M a bad hand always 5-3-3-2
 3♥* minimum, with a side singleton/void
 3♠* minimum, any 5-4-2-2 distribution
 3NT* minimum with 6+ trumps and no singleton/void
 4x* (new suit) minimum, 5+ card suit with ace/king
 (After opener's 3♥*/3♠* answer to 3♦*, the next steps use the same schedule of responses as below)

After opener's 3♦*:

Responder bid 3♥* to ask for more information, then

Step 1 a void somewhere
 Step 2 singleton in the lowest side suit (clubs)
 Step 3 singleton in next side suit (diamonds)
 Step 4 singleton in highest side suit (other major)

After Step 1 (void), the next bids asks where, and the first step is clubs, second step is diamonds and the third step is the other major.

After opener's 3♥*; responder bids 3♠* to ask for more information, then

Step 1 singleton in the lowest side suit (clubs)
 Step 2 singleton in next side suit (diamonds)
 Step 3 singleton in highest side suit (other major)

Playing the Modified (expert) 2NT* convention, it is never on if the opponent's interfere.

However, to cope with interference over the bid of 2NT*, the following set of bids is employed.

Double by opener shortness in opponents bid suit
 New suit natural or a control
 3NT balanced maximum (ace/king in their suit)

Pass flat hand 5-3-3-2 - if partner next double it for penalty Jump to 4 other M minimum hand with 6+ in original major

If the opponents double as asking bid, redouble= business, pass= Step 1, etc. If the opponents bid after and asking bid, double= penalty, pass=Step 1, etc. (except when the double - shortness, as above).

Another version of Jacoby 2NT* has been suggested by Marty Bergen. His version is summarized by Don Varvel (varvel@cs.utexas.edu) follows.

Bergen's Jacoby 2NT

The convention is explained using the bid 1♥-2NT*. The bids for 1♥-2NT* are similar.

Opener's rebids (all bids are alerted):

3♣* = Non-minimums with singletons OR big balanced or semi- balanced hands.

3♦* = Non-minimum two-suiters OR *any* good hand that is anxious to learn more about responder's distribution.

3♥* = All hands with voids.

3♠* = All minimums with singletons.

3NT* = Good hands with a 6-card suit.

4m* = Decent minimums, identifying cheaper ace or king.

4♥* = Decent minimums with no control in a minor suit.

4♠ = Signoff.

“Decent” tends to center around 13 HCP. 5-4 qualifies as a 2-suiter when there are 13 HCP. Big balanced is 17+, big semi balanced is 15+.

Over 3♣*/3♥* opener will usually relay; over 3♠*, sometimes. The relay suit is the next higher. Opener shows his shortness in steps, in the order ♣, ♦, OM. Over 3♣*/3♦*, with the big balanced or semi- balanced hand opener bids the cheaper minor-suit control. Non-relay bids are asking bids, again in steps. That is, over 3♣*, 3♥* is an asking bid in clubs. Responses are in steps, showing control of the suit asked: 1st step shows no control, 2nd shows Q or XX, 3rd show K or X, 4th shows ace.

Over 3♦* responder shows shortness: 3♥* = doubleton club, 3♠* = doubleton diamond, 3NT* = doubleton heart, 4♣* = non-minimum 4x3, 4♦*/ 4♥* show singleton club and diamond respectively and a hand too strong to splinter, and 4♠* shows a minimum 4x3. Bergen's splinters are limited to 12 HCP at most. After all of this, cue bids and kickback follows.

Two-Over-One without Bergen

When playing two-over-one, we have recommended some sort of Bergen bids to a major suit opening bid; however, when the Bergen bids are made it allows the opponents to double the response for a lead. To avoid this situation, many partnerships do not employ Bergen and instead use natural responses. How does this work?

If you do not use Bergen, then a jump bid to the 3-level in the major shows 4-card support and 10-12 Dummy Points. Now a jump bid of three in any lower ranking suit denies support for the bid major and shows a 6+ card suit with 10-11/12 points.

The bids of 1NT, 2NT and 3NT are defined as if you adopted the Bergen system of bids.



CHAPTER 2

OPENING TWO-, THREE-, AND FOUR-LEVEL BIDS

When opening one of a suit, one has between 11/12-21 Starting Points. In this chapter, we review special conventions for distributional hands, weak hands, and hands with more than 18+ Starting Points.

The Flannery Convention

For the Flannery Convention, one uses the bid of 2♦* to show five hearts and four spades and 11-15 Starting Points. It was devised by William L. Flannery from McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania.

When playing Flannery, a response of one spade ensures five (not four) spades (and must be alerted) when one opens one heart. One responds:

- Pass: Responder may pass the Flannery Two Diamond bid if Responder has less than 10 points and a 6-card Diamond suit.
- 2♥: This is a sign-off indicating less than 10 Dummy Points, but with support in Hearts.
- 2♠: This is a sign-off indicating less than 10 Dummy Points, but with support for Spades.
- 3♣: If the responder bids a Minor in Clubs showing at least a 6-card Club suit and 11-13 Starting Points, then his partner should bid 3 No Trump with a fit of Ax or Kx or Qxx in Clubs. This response is invitational.
- 3♦: If the responder bids a Minor in Diamonds showing at least a 6-card Diamond suit and 11-13 Starting Points, then his partner should bid 3 No Trump with a fit of Ax or Kx or Qxx in Diamonds. This response is invitational.
- 3♥: This is an invitational jump bid, and partner may pass or bid game with maximum values.
- 3♠: This is an invitational jump bid, and partner may pass or bid game with maximum values.
- 4♣: This is the South African transfer bid to 4 Hearts and game; however, many more use the bid as the keycard asking bid 1430/3014 for Hearts.
- 4♦: This is a South African transfer bid to 4 Spades and game; however, many more use the bid as the keycard asking bid 1430/3014 for spades.

3NT: Balanced hand with 16-18 Starting Points; slam invitational.

2NT is a one-round force with a good hand (10+ Dummy Points), asking opener to describe his distribution. Responder may have support. Opener's rebids after 2NT are:

- 3♣* shows 4=5=1=3
- 3♦* shows 4=5=3=1
- 3♥* shows 4=5=2=2 and 11-13 Starting Points
- 3♠* shows 4=5=2=2 and 14-15 Starting Points
- 3NT* shows 4=5=2=2, 14-15 Starting Points and concentrated minor suit strength
However, some use the 3NT* bid to show 6 hearts and 4 spades and 14-15HCP called the Semi-Flexible Flannery Convention.
- 4♣* shows 4=5=0=4
- 4♦* shows 4=5=4=0

Responder sets the contract or seeks slam (note that we have used = signs to show hand patterns, this represents an exact pattern whereas a dash [-] means any pattern).

All of the Flannery bids in response to forcing 2NT must be alerted.

When defending against the Flannery Convention, a suit overcall at the two-level shows a three-suited hand on which the overcall suit is the shortest. Suit overcalls at the three levels are natural. A double indicates a hand with strong no-trump values. And a bid of 2NT shows the minors.

Washington Standard Flannery

In the Washington Standard variation of Flannery, one uses the bids of 3♣* and 3♦* to show 3 or 4 card suits after the bid of 2NT*. The convention shows 5=4, 6=4, or 6=5 in hearts and spades.

- 3♥* shows 4=5=2=2 and 11-13 Starting Points
- 3♠* shows 4=6=2=2 and 14-15 Starting Points (**note 4 spades and 6 hearts**)
- 3NT* shows 4=5=2=2, 14-15 Starting Points
- 4♥* shows 5=6 and 11-15 Starting Points (**note 5 spades and 6 hearts**)

A variation of the Washington Standard Convention is called the Flexible Flannery convention.

Flexible Flannery

This convention is designed to show either a 5-4 or 6-4 hearts or spades, thus the name flexible (but not 5-6). It is similar to the Washington Standard. After the bid of 2NT one bids:

3♣* shows 4=5=2=2 in the minors; responders relay bid of 3♦* asks for point count.

- 3♥* = minimum (11-13 Starting Points)
- 3♠* = maximum (14-15 Starting Points)
- 3NT* = maximum with a concentration of points in the minors
- 3♦* shows 4=5=3=1 singleton club
- 3♥* shows 4=5=1=3 singleton diamond
- 3♠* shows 4=6 with a minor suit void and 14-15 points (discuss with partner)
- 3NT* shows 4=6 with no minor suit void and 14-15 points (discuss with partner)

When the opening bidder shows a 5-card heart suit, responder may use a 4♣* relay bid to ask opener which is his longer minor. With longer clubs, opener rebids 4♦* and with longer diamonds bids 4♥*.

Another variation of the Washington Standard Flannery Convention, which is more involved, is the Extended Flannery Convention.

Extended Flannery

After the forcing bid of 2NT, one bids as follows.

3♣* minimal strength, any distribution except the semi-balanced shape 4=5=2=2; if responder is still interested in learning more about opener's distribution the bid of 3♦* is made.

- 3♥* = 4=6
- 3♠* = 4=5, singleton or void in clubs
- 3NT* = 4=5, singleton or void in diamonds
- 4♣* = 5=6=2=0, void in clubs
- 4♦* = 5=6=0=2, void in diamonds
- 4♥* = 5=6=1=1, singleton club and diamond

3♦* any strength, the semi-balanced distribution 4=5=2=2 only; responders rebid of three of a major invites opener to bid game with a maximum

3♥* maximum strength, 4 spades plus 6 hearts; if responder is interested to know opener's minor suit distribution he bids 3♠* and opener then bids:

- 3NT* = void in clubs
- 4♣* = singleton club plus 2 diamonds
- 4♦* = 2 clubs plus singleton diamond
- 4♥* = void in diamonds

3♥* maximum strength, 4 spades plus 5 hearts, shortness in diamonds; to determine if the shortness is singleton or a void, responder relays with the bid of 4♣* and opener bids:

4♦* = singleton
4♥* = void

3NT maximum strength, 4 spades plus 5 hearts, shortness in clubs; to determine if the shortness is singleton or a void, responder relays with the bid of 4♠* and opener bids as above.

4♣* maximum strength, 5 spades plus 6 hearts, void in clubs
4♦* maximum strength, 5 spades plus 6 hearts, void in diamonds
4♥* 5 spades and 6 hearts with a singleton diamond or club

This is a complicated convention, but helps to clarify the distribution of the hand for investigation of a slam in a major.

Mini Roman Three-suited hands

Mini Roman uses the bid of 2♦* (alert) to describe a hand with any 4-4-4-1 distribution and 11-15 HCP; with a weak hand (0-9 points) and 3/4+ spades, partner bids two spades, to play and with 10+ and four spades invites by bidding 3♠. Without spades and a weak hand, partner bids 4-card suits up-the-line. With invitational values (13+HCP), responder bids 2NT to ask for the singleton suit. After the suit is bid, responder places the contract, asks about points, or may even ask for the number of aces with slam interest.

The bid of 2NT may be played with less than game going values (e.g. 10+ points), invitational values. You must discuss this with your partner.

Mini Roman with four spades and the suit below “submarine” singleton bid

Here the opener always has four spades, but instead of bidding the singleton after the 2NT bid, **the suit below** the singleton is bid: clubs for diamonds, diamonds for hearts, and hearts for clubs. Why bid the suit below the singleton instead of the singleton, because the bid is less likely to be doubled, and now a cue bid of the singleton suit (diamonds, hearts, or clubs) by the responder asks for more information. The opener’s responses are the following.

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min	4441 min	4441 min
2	4441 max	4441 max	4441 max

For example, after the response 3♦* (heart shortness- suit below), one bids 3♥ (the singleton). Then, one next bids 3♠* or 3NT* showing 4441 with min (11-12 HCP) and 4441 with a max (13-15 HCP), respectively. Note if you were to bid your singleton, HEARTS, now 3♠ would show a minimum and 3NT a maximum.

However, suppose you have shortness in clubs. After a response of 3♥* (short clubs –suit below), one bids 4♣ (the singleton). Then the min and max bids are 4♦* and 4♥*, respectively. You can play in diamonds (a part score) or play in a major suit game (hearts or spades). If instead of using the submarine bid, one bids 4♠* to show their singleton, now 4♦ are to play and 4♥ say pick the major suit game.

For example, using submarine bids with 4-4-1-4 distributions.

AKxx	xxxx	2♦*	2NT
QJxx	QJx	3♣* (short♣)	3♦ (cue bid ask)
J	Axxx	3NT (max)	4♠
Axxx	Kx	pass	

Not playing submarine bid, one bids 3♦* (shortness), responder bids 4♠.

Some will also use the Mini-Roman bid with a void in a minor suit (4=4-5-0/4=4-0-5). Again the opener bids the **suit below to show shortness**; three clubs shows diamonds, three diamonds shows hearts, three hearts shows spades, 3♠* shows 4=4=5=0, and 3NT* shows exactly 4=4=4=1. Again, a cue-bid again asks for more information; opener bids by steps:

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min 4441 min		4441 min
2	4405 min 5 clubs, min		4441 max
3	4414 max 5 diamonds, min		–
4	4405 max 4441 max	–	–
5	–	5 clubs, max –	–
6	–	5 diamonds, max –	–

Mini Roman with any pattern (4-4-4-1/4-4-5-0/4-4-0-5) – advanced

Again the Mini-Roman bid is 2♦*. However, not knowing the specific distribution responder bids:

- 2♥ as natural and weak with 3+ hearts
- 2♠ as natural and weak with 4+ spades (may be only 3 if less than 3 hearts)
- 2NT forcing, at least game invitational values
- 3♣ minor two-suited, weak

After a weak response, opener passes with support or pulls to the cheapest bid without it. An example follows:

x	xxxx	2♦*	2♠
Qxxx	Kx	2NT	3♦ (to play)
AKxx	Jxxxx	pass	
Kxxx	Qx		

2♦*- 2NT-?

Opener bids his singleton or void and responder places the contract. If responder bids below game, opener may continue, especially with the 4-4-5 shapes.

Without the correct shape, the opener will pass. For example, consider the following.

Kxxx	QJxx	2♦*	2NT
x	Kxxx	3♥	3♠
AQxx	xxx	pass	
K10xx	Ax		

Opener has a pretty good hand, but not enough to force on to game. In an auction like this, responder tends to have wasted values in the opener's short suit. If opener had rebid 3♦, responder would have bid game, knowing all his cards are working.

Playing any pattern Mini Roman, one can also use submarine bids. Again opener bids the suit below to show shortness; three clubs shows diamonds, three diamonds shows hearts, three hearts shows spades, 3♠* shows 4=4=5=0, and 3NT* shows exactly 4=4=4=1. A cue-bid asks for more information; opener bids by steps:

Steps	short ♦	short ♥	short ♣
1	4441 min	4441 min	4441 min
2	4405 min	5 clubs, min	4441 max
3	4414 max	5 diamonds, min	—
4	4405 max	4441 max	—
5	—	5 clubs, max	—
6	—	5 diamonds, max	—

Consider the hand:

void	xxxx	2♦*	2NT
KQxxx	Ax	3♥	3♠
Qxxxx	Kxxxx	4♦	5♦
Axxx	Kx	pass	

We may not reach the good slam, but at least we're in the best game contract.

Defense

If the next player overcalls in a suit, then the responder may pass with very few values. Otherwise, with sufficient values to compete, the partner of the opener may bid 2NT to ask for the location of the shortage as though there had been no overcall. As a result of the overcall, partner has additional information as to how to proceed. The same principle holds true if the next player doubles the 2♦* opening. It is strongly suggested that the partnership inquire as to the meaning of the overcall and/or double, i.e. whether the double is for takeout or penalty; or if the overcall is 3♦ whether or not this is intended as a Michaels cue bid, as an example, or natural. Otherwise the partnership should agree when to play systems on or systems off.

For more information on Mini Roman, one may consult the book by Robert Munger (1998), "The Roman Two Diamond Opening and Variations", Devyn Press.

In order to use both the Flannery and Mini Roman Conventions, some use the bid of 2♥* for Flannery and the bid of 2♦* as Mini-Roman. The advantage of this option for Flannery is that if partner is weak, the strong hand is playing 2♥ since partner may pass.

The Extra-Shape Flannery Convention

Many partnerships do not play the Mini Roman 2♦* bid to show 4-4-4-1 or the Flannery (2♦*) convention to show four spades and five hearts (4=5-x-x) since they feel too much information is conveyed. Those who like both conventions do not like to substitute the weak 2♥* bid for Flannery in order to play both. If you fit into this category, you may like the Extra-Shape Flannery convention, which uses the 2♦* bid to describe either a two-suited hand with four spades and five hearts (4=5-x-x) or a three suited hands (4=4=4=1). Again, the opener has 11-15 HCP. This convention is now allowed with the release of the open general convention card released by the ACBL in November 2018.

With this convention, the artificial 2NT bid, which is forcing to game or the start of slam investigation, is used to ask the opener about his distribution. The opener's bids after a 2NT call follows.

3♣* shows 4=5 in spades and hearts and 3-1 in the minors, now a relay 3♦ bid by responder asks the opener to identify his singleton.

Opener uses step responses:

- 3♥* singleton diamond and 3♠* = singleton club
- 3♦* shows 4=4=4=1
- 3♥* shows 4=5-2-2 with minimum 11-12 HCP strength
- 3♠* shows 4=5-2-2 with maximum 14-15 HCP strength
- 3NT* shows 4=5=4=0, void in clubs (submarine bid)

4♣* shows 4=5=0=4, void in diamonds (submarine bid)

If responder is not interested in finding out about the opener's distribution, the following non-forcing bids are used.

2♥*/2♠* signoff
 3♣* non-forcing 3=2=4=4 distribution, opener may pass with a minimum hand and three/four clubs or he may correct to 3♦
 3♥*/3♠* game invitational in bid suit either 4 spades or 4 hearts
 4♣ establishes hearts as trump and is Roman Keycard Blackwood
 4♦ establishes spades a trump and is Roman Keycard Blackwood
 4♥/4♠ signoff

The Roman Keycard Blackwood convention depends on your partnership agreement, either 1430 or 3014 (Chapter 3).

The Extra-Shape Flannery Convention is a popular alternative convention for the wasted weak 2♦* bid which can be used to show hands difficult to describe. The bid is especially popular in team games when you want to get into the bidding early and describe your hand, and you can still use the weak 2♥ bid.

For a discussion of other modifications to the Flannery Convention, consult the reference "Bridge Classic and Modern Conventions", page 886, Edited by Margnus Lindkvist.

Modified Jammer 2♦ Convention

There are many conventions for the bid of 2♦*, some use strong bids (16/18+ or 22+), others employ weak bids (5-8 or 6-10), and many use intermediate bids (11-15). There is no "best" convention; however, the Muli-2♦* convention is not allowed by the ACBL in the United States.

The Flannery 2* Convention, 4=5 (4 spades and 5 hearts) in the majors, and the Mini- Roman 2♦* Convention (4-4-4-1) with 11-15 HCP each occur about 0.5% of the time, the Ekren 2♦* Convention which is 4=4 in the majors with 9+ HCP occurs about 2% of the time, and the weak 5-card 2♦ bid with 6-10 HCP occurs about 3% of the time; all have low frequencies of occurrence. The strong two diamond hands (16+HCP) also occur with low frequency, about 3% of the time. Where again *=alert.

To evaluate the best convention, we first consider hand patterns.

The 39 hand patterns can be classified into four *hand types*: balanced hands, three-suited and single suited hands. The table below gives them *a priori* likelihoods of being dealt a certain hand-type.

Hand type	Patterns	Probability
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Balanced	4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2	0.4761
Two-suited	5-4-2-2, 5-4-3-1 , 5-5-2-1, 5-5-3-0 , 6-5-1-1, 6-5-2-0, 6-6-1-0, 7-6-0-0	0.2902
Single-suited	6-3-2-2, 6-3-3-1, 6-4-2-1, 6-4-3-0, 7-2-2-2, 7-3-2-1, 7-3-3-0, 7-4-1-1, 7-4-2-0, 7-5-1-0, 8-2-2-1, 8-3-1-1, 8-3-2-0, 8-4-1-0, 8-5-0-0, 9-2-1-1, 9-2-2-0, 9-3-1-0, 9-4-0-0, 10-1-1-1, 10-2-1-0, 10-3-0-0, 11-1-1-0, 11-2-0-0, 12-1-0-0, 13-0-0-0	0.1915
Three-suited	4-4-4-1, 5-4-4-0	0.0423

Or in more detail, we have the following probabilities.

Pattern	Probability	#	Pattern	Probability	#	Pattern	Probability	#
4-4-3-2	0.2155	12	5-5-3-0	0.0090	12	9-2-1-1	0.00018	12
5-3-3-2	0.1552	12	6-5-1-1	0.0071	12	9-3-1-0	0.00010	24
5-4-3-1	0.1293	24	6-5-2-0	0.0065	24	9-2-2-0	0.000082	12
5-4-2-2	0.1058	12	7-2-2-2	0.0051	4	7-6-0-0	0.000056	12
4-3-3-3	0.1054	4	7-4-1-1	0.0039	12	8-5-0-0	0.000031	12
6-3-2-2	0.0564	12	7-4-2-0	0.0036	24	10-2-1-0	0.000011	24
6-4-2-1	0.0470	24	7-3-3-0	0.0027	12	9-4-0-0	0.000010	12
6-3-3-1	0.0345	12	8-2-2-1	0.0019	12	10-1-1-1	0.000004	4
5-5-2-1	0.0317	12	8-3-1-1	0.0012	12	10-3-0-0	0.0000015	12
4-4-4-1	0.0299	4	7-5-1-0	0.0011	24	11-1-1-0	0.0000002	12
7-3-2-1	0.0188	24	8-3-2-0	0.0011	24	11-2-0-0	0.0000001	12
6-4-3-0	0.0133	24	6-6-1-0	0.00072	12	12-1-0-0	0.000000003	12
5-4-4-0	0.0124	12	8-4-1-0	0.00045	24	13-0-0-0	0.0000000000006	4

If you only consider hands that include at least 3 cards in any one suit and no more than 5 cards in a suit, we have the following hand patterns.

4-4-3-3 (11%), 4-4-3-2 (22%), 5-3-3-2 (18%), 5-4-3-1 (13%), 5-5-3-0 (1%), 4-4-4-1 (3%), and 5-4-4-0 (1%) comprise (67%) of the patterns, a very high frequency.

The frequency changes to about 50% if we add the restriction that one have 5/6-10 HCP. This is the requirement for the “wide-open” Modified Jammer 2♦* bidding convention. Hence, you would open 2♦’s in the first seat **more often than any other one level bid except perhaps PASS**. The original “Jammer 2♦” convention considered a subset of these distributions and may be found on web at: www.bridgebuff.com.

Of course there are risks with this preemptive convention, especially vulnerable verses non vulnerable since you may not find the best fit at the two-level. Using the “LAW” you need to take about 8 tricks for a 2-level contract. Hence, we allow the same hand patterns but add the restriction that the hand **in addition contains 4 spades** to reduce the risk. Now if partner has a two suited hand, neither of which spades you are guaranteed a 4-3 is fit at the two level in at least one suit.

The Modified Jammer 2♦* bid is used with any three-suited hand (no less than 3 cards in any suit and with no more than 5 cards in any suit) with 4 spades and 5/6-10 HCP, a preemptive bid.

How does it work?

When one opens 2♦*, partner bids 2♠ with four spades; not having 4 spades, one bids 2♥ with 3/4/5 hearts, even if your distribution is 2=3=3=5, never bid 3♣. Without 3 hearts and at least 3-3 in the minors bid 2NT (forcing) which asks partner to bid his best minor. With 5+ diamonds, pass and with 6+ clubs bid 3♣, opener will pass.

For a strong shapely hand 3♥/3♠ are preemptive (showing 5♥/4♠, respectively) but invitational after 2NT (2♦/2NT/3♣ or 3♦) 3♥ or 3♠ are invitational. The 3♦ bid by opener asks responder to bid his 4-card suits up the line slipping spades.

When responding to the bid of 2♦, remember that partner will have a 3-card suit 90% of the time and 4 spades 80% of the time, and five spades about 20% of the time. Opener's shortness (1 or 2 cards) occurs more than 55% of the time. If you have a two-suited hand, neither one being spades, you are guaranteed a fit in one suit, but it may be only a 4-3 fit. However, even with some 4-4-3-2 shapes, without spades, you will have a poor fit less than 5% of the time.

In review, a spade contract is the safest bid with a 4-3 or 4-4 fit even with a 4 card minor do not bid 2NT, partner may have 3 hearts if 4=3-3-3 or 3=5-3-1. When in doubt, bid conservatively and remember partner has 5/6-10 HCP so that game requires 15-19/20 support points in a major and 25 HCP in no-trump contracts. Most bidding stops at the 2-level when vulnerable and the 3-level when non vulnerable.

Opening 2NT

The opening bid of 2NT requires a balanced hand (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2), which may have a five-card minor suit. The opening point count requirements for a 2NT opening bid is between 20-21 Starting Points and **having all suits stopped**. With 20-21 points and a five-card major, some also open the hand 2NT since if a hand was opened one of a major there is a chance partner may pass and game may be missed. When opening 2NT, the bid is not forcing; your partner may pass with a weak hand. Recall that the number of points for game is 24-26 points; partner will pass with five or less points. With 6+ points, your goal is to bid a game in a major or no-trump. Slam requires about thirty-three points.

After the bid of 2NT with a balanced hand and 6-11 points and no four-card major bid, one merely bids 3NT (to play) showing no interest in slam. One investigates slam with 12+ points.

Stayman after 2NT No-trump (basic)

After the bid of 2NT, the Stayman Convention uses the asking bid of 3♣ as an artificial bid to inquire whether or not partner has a four-card major. The convention is so engrained in bridge that it need not be alerted. Opener's responses are:

- 3♦ no 4 card major
- 3♥ denotes a 4 card heart suit, but may have 4 spades
- 3♠ denotes a 4 card spade suit

To initiate the convention requires 6+ Starting Points and at least one four-card major.

Responder's rebid, with game going values, will be either 3NT or a raise of opener's major to game with a fit. With more than an opening hand, cue bids or jump bids are used to investigate slam.

What happens if partner bids 3♦ (no four-card major)? Then the bid of 3♥/3♠ shows a hand that is 5-4 in the majors where the suit bid has five cards. If you are 6-4 in the majors, one again uses, as with the one no-trump opening, extended transfer bids (more on this soon).

Is there a Garbage Stayman Convention over 2NT? Yes, it works as follows. After the bid of 3♣, if partner responds 3♦, your next bid is 4♣ "pick a major" (careful, some partnerships may use the bid of four diamonds). Remember, you need at least 6+ points to use this option. I prefer the four club bid; it is like "extended Stayman."

With less than 6+ points and the magic 4=4=4=1 distribution, you may still use Drop Dead Stayman and pass any suit bid by the opener after bidding three clubs.

A major disadvantage of Stayman is it does not allow one to easily find a 5-3 major suit fit when the 2NT opener has a five-card major.

Jacoby Transfers four-way

Over the bid of 2NT, transfers to the majors when responder has 5+ cards are called Jacoby Transfers. They are again used with a variety of hands: weak, invitational, and strong. Point counts are not required with Jacoby Major Suit Transfers. Responder will clarify the nature of his hand with subsequent bids. We have added to the Jacoby Major Transfer transfers to the minors. Jacoby Transfers are used when you have a long major or are 5-4 in the majors. With a weak hand, you can transfer to the major and pass. When you are 5-4 in the majors, you transfer to the five-card major and bid the four-card major. The minor suit transfers are used with either a very weak hand with a 6+ cards in minor or very strong minor suited hands (12+ Starting Points) with slam interest in a minor. All bids are announced as transfers.

After the bid of 2NT, responder makes the following bids, promising at least 5+ cards in the transfer suit (the bids are announced, not alerted).

3♦	transfer to hearts (announced)
3♥	transfer to spades (announced)
3♠*	transfer to clubs (alert)
3NT*	transfer to diamonds (alert)

Opener's responses for **majors suit transfers**

3♥	shows only 2 hearts
4♣/4♦	shows 5 hearts and at least 4 cards in the bid minor with slam interest
4♥	shows 4 hearts and mild slam interest
4♠	Roman Keycard Blackwood with kickback for hearts (Chapter 3)
3♠	shows only 2 spades
4♣/4♦	shows 5 spades and at least 4 cards in the bid minor with slam interest
4♠	shows 4 spades and mild slam interest
4NT	Roman Keycard Blackwood for spades (Chapter 3)

When responder is 5-4 in the majors, the other major is bid showing the distribution.

Opener's responses for **minor suit transfers**

3NT	shows good clubs, 3 pieces with 2 of top 3 honors (e.g., AQx, AKx, KQx, etc. - super accept)
4♣	poor clubs or doubleton
Pass	shows good diamonds, 3 pieces with 2 of top 3 honors (e.g., AQx, AKx, KQx, etc. - super accept)
4♣	poor diamond support
4♦	diamonds no honors or doubleton

After a club transfer, responder can next bid, after 3NT, 4♣ to play with 6+ clubs and a very weak hand (less than six points). Any other suit bid (4♦ /4♥/4♠) shows slam interest with perhaps four cards in the bid suit.

After a diamond transfer, you can correct the bid of four clubs to five diamonds with 6+ diamonds and a weak hand (you cannot pass). If you have interest in a diamond slam, bid 5♣ as super Gerber over four clubs. After the bid of 4♦, bid 4♥ as Roman Keycard Blackwood with kickback.

Texas Transfers (4♦ and 4♥) and Extended Texas Transfers

After opener bids 2NT, suppose you have a six-card major with game going values and no interest in slam. Using the principle of fast arrival, one employs the four-level bids of which are announced.

- 4♦ transfer to hearts (announced)
- 4♥ transfer to spades (announced)

When you are 6-4 in the majors, you again bid 3♣ (Stayman), and then bid the following bids which are also announced.

- 4♦ transfer to hearts (shows 6-4 in the majors)
- 4♥ transfer to spades (shows 6-4 in the majors)

Modified Puppet Stayman (3♣)

When opening 2NT, one often has a five-card major. Puppet Stayman was designed to help locate a 4-4 major suit fit, a 5-3/5-4 spade fit, or a 5-3 heart fit. However, it does not allow responder to show a hand with five spades and four hearts. To correct this problem, there is a convention called the Modified Puppet Stayman Convention (I have also seen it called Muppet Stayman). It allows one to find all 4-4 major fits and 5-3 heart or spade fits. It is identical to Puppet Stayman except that the meaning of 3NT and 3♥ in Puppet Stayman are switched in meaning (hence the modification).

It works as follows: 2NT - 3♣ (Modified Puppet Stayman/Muppet Stayman)

3NT* shows 5 hearts. Responder can either pass if he has spades, or if responder wants to play it in hearts, bids 4♦* as a transfer to hearts which allows the strong hand to play the contract in 4 hearts. Again *=alert.

3♠* shows 5 spades

3♦* has 1 or 2 four-card majors or if he has a 3-card spade suit

3♥* shows no 4-card major or no 5-card major **may have 3 spades**. Responder will usually now bid 3♠ as a relay back to 3NT. But, if responder has 5 spades and 4/3 hearts, he can now bid 3NT to show 5 spades so opener can bid 4♠ with three to right side the contract. **Note: some partnerships reverse these two bids.**

When opener bids 3♦*, responder makes the following rebids.

3♥* Responder bids the major he does not have (like Smolen). This sequence shows 4 spades and denies 4 hearts. Opener either bids spades or 3NT.

3♠* Responder bids the major he does not have. This sequence shows 4 hearts and denies 4 spades; opener either bids hearts or 3NT.

4♣* Responder has both majors, it asks partner to pick the major.

4♦* Most partnerships play the bid of 4♦ to show slam interest, pick a slam.

If you have five hearts and four spades, you do not need Muppet, transfer to hearts and bid spades.

We next consider a few examples. Partner opens 2NT. What do you bid with the following hands?

♠ A1054 ♥ 4567 ♦ 67 ♣ J32

You have a weak hand, bid 3♣*, and if partner bids a major, support the major; if opener bids three diamonds, bid 4♣ to ask partner to pick a major.

♠ AQ54 ♥ 456 ♦ 67 ♣ J1032

You want to find a 5-4 spade fit or a 5-3 heart fit. If partner responds 3NT* showing five hearts, you would next bid 4♦ as a transfer to hearts. If partner bids 3♠, you simply raise the bid to four.

♠ AK542 ♥ Q65 ♦ 67 ♣ 1032

You want to find your 5-3 spade fit or perhaps a 5-3 heart fit. If partner bids 3NT* finding the heart fit is no problem. If partner bid 3♥* (showing no four- or five-card major, but may have a 3-card spade suit), responder next bids 3♠ to show that he is 5-3/4 in spades and hearts. Opener with only three spades would next bid four spades.

If responder is 5-5 in the majors, over 3NT by opener he may bid 4♥ to show his 5-5 shape.

Note: Using Puppet Stayman, the 5-3 spade fit could be found and using Jacoby

Transfers one would lose the 5-3 heart fit; Modified Puppet Stayman finds both fits.

What do you do if you are 5-4 in spades and hearts?

For example, you have the hand: ♠ AK542 ♥ K653 ♦ 67 ♣ 103

Using Modified Puppet (Muppet) Stayman, bid 3♣, if partner bids 3NT, you can pass or bid 4♦ as a transfer to hearts; if opener bids 3♥, then bid 3NT= 5 spades.

If you have five hearts and four spades, you do not need Muppet, transfer to hearts and bid spades.

♠ AKJ2 ♥ KQ53 ♦ K7 ♣ 1032

You have fifteen Starting Points. You are in the slam zone for a major or no-trump. But suppose you hear the response 3♦*. You have two options: four clubs or four diamonds.

If you bid 4♦, it allows opener to pick the slam (perhaps no-trump). The bid of 4♣ asks partner to pick a major. With a marginal hand, say only eleven Starting Points, you would definitely make the bid of four clubs since you need to know how the hands fit.

♠ 1032 ♥ 67 ♦ KQ53 ♣ AK1032

You have nice diamonds and clubs. The bid of 3NT does not describe your hand, partner might pass. Bid 3♠* as a transfer to clubs, if partner bids 3NT, you would jump to 6NT. If partner bids 4♣* (pick a major), you would next bid 4♦ to show your distribution. Partner is now the captain of the hand.

♠ 1032 ♥ AK9876 ♦ 53 ♣ 32

You have a weak hand with a 6-card heart suit. Bid 4♦* as a Texas transfer hearts; you have no interest in slam. Fast arrival principle. What if you had one more spade? See the next example.

♠ J1032 ♥ AK9876 ♦ 53 ♣ 7

Now use Modified Puppet Stayman and bid 3♣; after the bids 3♦/3♥/3♠, use the extended transfer bid of 4♦* to show your 6-4 distribution. What if opener bids 3NT*? You have a great heart fit (eleven hearts). Bid five hearts which invites six; partner's values are outside of hearts.

In summary Modified Puppet (Muppet) is superior to Puppet in several ways.

1. It allows the strong hand to declare all major suit contracts.
2. It avoids the often disastrous use of a transfer bid when responder holds 5 cards in one a major and 3 cards in the other major and allows responder to look for a 5/3 fit in either major. Holding 5-3-3-2 (♠-♥-♦-♣) responder bids 3♣ to first look for a 5/3 heart fit. Opener will rebid 3♦ with a 4 card major and the auction proceeds as in standard Puppet; and opener will rebid 3♠ with a 5 spades. Now for the modifications of Puppet: opener will bid 3♥ rather than 3NT to deny a 4 or 5-card major. If responder holds five spades and 3 hearts, responder will rebid 3NT to show the 5 card spade suit enabling opener to declare in 4♠ with 3 spades and the right sort of hand. If responder does not hold 5 spades, responder rebids 3♠ relaying opener back to 3NT.
3. When holding 5 hearts and 4 spades, responder can transfer to 3♥ and to show 4 spades will rebid 3NT after opener accepts the transfer. This allows the strong hand to declare in 4♠ with a 4-4 spade fit. If responder does not have 4 spades, then after opener accepts the transfer, responder rebids 3♠ relaying opening to 3NT.
4. Muppet also allows opener to bypass a transfer to 3♥ and rebidding 3♠ when holding five spades and two hearts. Using both Jacoby and Texas transfers, if responder holds a 6-card heart suit and mild slam interest, responder will transfers to 3♥ at 3-level and, when opener bypasses the transfer to rebid 3♠; responder will have to rebid 4♦ to retransfer opener to 4♥ (showing mild slam interest and inviting opener to make a slam try). If you understand and use Puppet Stayman after any strong 2NT opening or 2♣-2♦-2NT sequence, it is easy to

remember Muppet if you just remember that responder must always bid in such a way that the strong hand will declare the hand in a NT or major suit contract.

SUMMARY

Muppet Stayman is simply Puppet Stayman but with opener's 3NT and 3♥ bids reversed (3NT shows five hearts; 3♥ denies a 4+ majors). This allows responder, over 3♥, to bid 3NT and show 5♠/4♥, an otherwise unbidable shape below 3NT when playing Puppet. So, suppose you have 5♠/4♥ and partner bids 3♣. You have both majors, but they are unbalanced 5-4 so bid 3NT to show five spades and four hearts. Or bid 3♠ to show five hearts and four spades.

Now, suppose that you have 5-5 in the majors. Muppet still works. If partner has a 4- card major, nothing can go wrong. If he has a 5-card major, wow. If you hear 3♥ bid 3NT to show 5♠ or 3/4♥. If opener declines (3NT), you can bid 4♥ to complete the picture.

If either Muppet or Puppet is too complicated, another option is to employ the Flip-Flop Flannery Convention.

Flip-Flop Flannery Convention

The Flip-Flop Flannery Convention was developed by Carolyn King and Dr. David S. Shade and published in the "Bridge World" magazine, February 1997.

The Flip-Flop Flannery Convention allows one to find a major suit fit regardless of the partnership distribution. And it also employs the transfer principle allowing the 2NT bidder to become the declarer as in Muppet Stayman. Over 2NT, the bids for the convention are:

- 3♣* asks about length in the majors; opener rebids are:
 - 3♥/3♠ 5-card major
 - 3♦* 4-card unspecified majors; in his turn responder bids 3♠ with 4 hearts and 3♠ with 4 spades; and opener places the final contract in 3NT, 4♥, or 4♠.
- 3♦* 5-card heart suit, transfer; after the completed transfer by opener, responder bids
 - 3♠ at most 3 spades 3NT
 - 3NT 4 spades; thus if a fit is found in spades opener become the declarer and places the contract.
- 3♥* transfer to spades, 5 spades but no hearts
- 3♠* transfer to 3NT, no 4-card or 5-card major
- 3NT* 5 spades and 4 hearts

Using Flip-Flop Flannery, you are able to find a major fit without going beyond 3NT and it right-sides the contract.

Soloff Bids

If you do not like Muppet Stayman and want to continue with Puppet Stayman, you may want to play the Soloff Convention. This will allow you to continue with Puppet. The bids follow.

- 3♣ Puppet Stayman (no alert)
- 3♦ Transfer to Hearts (announced as a transfer)
- 3♥ Transfer to Spades (announced as a transfer)
- 3♠* Relay to 3NT
- 3NT* shows 5♠ and 4♥

Bids after 3♠* relay to 3NT

- Pass with any hand that wants to play 3NT
- 4♣ shows 4♣ and 5♦, 4♠* agrees diamonds, 4NT denies an 8 card fit
- 4♦ shows 4♦ and 5♣, 4♥* agrees clubs, 4♠* agrees diamonds, 4NT denies an 8 card fit
- 4♥* is a one suited slam try with long clubs. 4NT now by opener shows honor doubleton. 5♣* shows a low doubleton. Any other bid is a cue bid with at least 3-card club support.
- 4♠* is a one suited slam try with long diamonds. 4NT now by opener shows honor doubleton. 5♦* shows a low doubleton. Any other bid is a cue bid with at least 3- card club support.
- 4NT is a slam try with at least 5-5 minors

3♠ Transfer

An alternative to the Soloff bids to finding a slam in a minor is to employ the following simple transfer structure; similar to minor suit Stayman.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
2 NT		The range of the 2NT opening bid is 20-21 HCPs.
	3♠*	Responder wishes to inquire about the holding in the Minor suits.
3NT		Relay bid

If responder is 5-5 in the minors, he bids 4♥* or 4♠* to show shortness in the major.

After these bids, 4NT is used to investigate slam. Because you may have a double fit in the minors some use Double Roman Keycard bid (DRKCB) of 4NT (see, Chapter 3).

If responder is distributional with one long minor, he bids the minor he does not have 4♦* to show clubs and 4♣* to show diamonds.

After 4♦, 4♥ (kickback) is 1430 to investigate slam and after 4♣, 4♦ is 1430 Crosswood is used. Again some use the bid as DRKCB (see, Chapter3).

If the opening bidder has 2344 or 3244 distribution with good minors and weak majors, he bids 4NT which is a non-forcing, slam try.

To employ the 3♠* relay bidding sequence, responder must have 12 Dummy Points.

Opening 2♣

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, the bid of 2♣ is artificial showing a strong game-forcing hand that will play in either a suit or no-trump. What are the requirements for opening a hand 2♣?

- (1) Hands with 22+ HCP. However, you may open with fewer points if you have a long, strong suit. And even if you have 22+ points, unbalanced and very distributional hands may not be opened 2♣ since they may be too difficult to rebid, you do not want to force to game, or you have soft values.
- (2) When playing in a suit contract, a good 5+ card major or a 6+-card minor suit.
- (3) A suit hand that contains at least 4 quick tricks and ≤ 4 losers using the Losing Trick Count: called the Rule of 44 (Chapter 10).
- (4) When playing in no-trump, a hand with 8 ½ or 9 quick tricks.

Evaluating your hand

♠AK8 ♥AKQJ107 ♦7 ♣AK5

Open 2♣, this hand has 24 HCP, 10 playing tricks and 3 losers.

♠AKQ1063 ♥Void ♦KQJ10 ♣A63

Open 2♣, this hand has a long suit with 19 HCP, 4+ quick tricks and 2 losers

♠AKJ ♥AKQ ♦AQ57 ♣7

Open 1♦; even with 23 HCP it is too distributional.

♠KJ8 ♥AQ10 ♦AKQJ ♣AKQ

Open 2♣, this is balanced hand with 29 HCP.

♠QJ ♥AQ10642 ♦KQJ ♣AQ

Open 1♥, this hand has 21 HCP with soft values and does not have 4 quick tricks

To count playing tricks, you only look at the first three cards in each suit where an ace, king, or queen is a winner and all other cards among the first three are losers. With less than three cards, there are these loser honor combinations: AQ=½, Kx= ½, KQ=1, K=1, Q=1, Qx=1.

Independent of points, also open a hand 2♣, with a 5+ major and at least 4+ quick tricks (A=1, K=½, KQ=1) and no more than four losers; **the rule of forty-four (44)** and then bid the major not no-trump.

Partner may not pass the bid of two clubs, even with zero points. With a balanced hand (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, 5-5-2-2), opener may jump into no-trump, after partner bids. The no-trump bidding schedule follows.

2NT	shows 22-24 Starting Points
3NT	shows 25-27 Starting Points
4NT	shows 28-30 Starting Points
5NT	shows 31-33 Starting Points

When partner opens 2♣, responder's first responsibility is to communicate something about the value of his hand. This permits opener to show the nature of his hand by bidding no-trump or a suit. When responding to partner, partnerships have several options. Based on a survey conducted by bridge expert and teacher Karen Walker, when asked what general structure respondents used for responses to a strong 2♣ in their favorite partnership, they offered the following answers (with the percentage of "votes" for each):

- 36% 2♦ semi-positive, 2♥ immediate negative
- 25% Controls
- 21% 2♦ waiting, cheapest minor second negative
- 10% 2♦ negative, 2♥ balanced positive
- 4% Point-count step responses
- 4% Other artificial systems (e.g. ace showing responses)

From Ms. Walker's survey, we observe that the MOST common approach is to use 2♥ as a bust (no ace or king), and 2♦ as semi-positive (a king or more). Others prefer showing controls or they use two diamonds as a waiting bid. We will discuss the three most popular approaches. **The ACBL has ruled that effective January, 2014 any 2♦ response to 2♣ no longer needs to be alerted.**

Controls

This approach is popular because it allows responder to show his most important cards (aces and kings) immediately, in one bid. Counting each king as one control and each ace as two, responder makes one of the following step responses:

- 2♦ 0 or 1 control (K=1)
- 2♥* 2 controls (A or KK, A=2)
- 2♠* 1 ace and 1 king (3 controls - AK in different suits)
- 2NT* 3 kings (3 controls - KKK or AK in same suit)
- 3♣* 4+ controls

*=Alerts

If the opponents INTERFERE, then a double =0 and pass=1 (D0P1) and re-double=0 and pass=1 (R0P1). Bidding a suit shows 2 controls and a good 5+ card suit.

After a 2♣ opening and any response, if RHO (right hand opponent) bids, a DOUBLE shows shortness in the RHO suit. If you have a 6+ card suit, then a bid is ambiguous as to the length in RHO suit but is preferred to an X for shortness. However, with a void with 6-4-3 shape, then X.

While the control bids communicate values, it does not allow the responder to make a natural bid to show a suit with, for example, two of the top three honors with 5+ cards. It at times uses up valuable bidding space and may wrong-side the hand. For example, showing two controls, hearts, may be opener's suit and responder plays the hand.

A few players use steps to show points; this has little value because it makes no distinction between jacks and aces. The 2♣ bidder seldom needs to know partner's total points; information about aces and kings is more helpful.

Two diamonds waiting

This approach is widely used among longtime players. The bid of 2♦ is automatic and provides an opportunity for the opener to describe his hand by bidding no-trump or a suit. It is not alerted but a waiting bid; it is also no longer announced as waiting.

With a very weak hand, less than four Starting Points, responder may pass after a no-trump bid. If a suit is named and responder is weak, there is a second negative bid. The second negative bid is either the cheapest minor or the cheapest bid, known as the Herbert Convention. The primary advantage of the two diamond bid is that it does not consume space. The major disadvantage is that specific suit strength is not immediately communicated and it may take time for responder to describe his hand.

Two hearts negative and two diamonds semi-positive

Using this approach, the bid of 2♦ is a game force bid promising at least a king or an ace. The bid of two hearts is non-forcing, **but it does not deny points**. The bids for this approach follow.

2♥*: this is a so-called **Super Negative**, it promises less than 6 HCP with no Ace or King. However, with an Ace or a King in any suit, the responder is required to bid 2♦ (you must alert the bid of 2♥).

Note: If they interfere, most play that a Pass=one A/K and X= zero A/K (D0P1). However, some play this in reverse where a double shows A/K and is for penalty and a pass shows the lack of values; discuss with your partner.

2♦: promises at least an Ace or King (needs no alert).

Note: Some use the bid to show 6+ HCP, any combination of Jacks or Queens or at least an Ace/King. You must again review the bid with your partner.

2♠/3♣/3♦: this response is a **Positive Response** and shows a **6-card** plus suit headed by two of the top three honors: Ace-King, King-Queen, or Ace-Queen. Your hand is very distributional and you want to play in the suit bid (often have a void/singleton).

Note: Some only require a 5-card suit (then the suit bid or no-trump may be an option).

2NT: this response is a **Positive Response** and shows a **6-card** heart suit headed by two of the top three honors: Ace-King, King-Queen, or Ace-Queen. Again you want to play in hearts; your hand is very distributional (you often have a void/singleton).

Note: Some only require a 5-card suit, but again with 2 of the top 3 honors

Rebids over 2♣-2♥* (negative)

Over responders' negative bid, opener can sign off in 2NT/3NT or bid three of a suit as natural and non-forcing.

To make a forcing bid over 2♥* one bids 2♠* as a relay to 2NT and the signs off in his suit at the three level; partner can now raise with a fit. After the bid of 2♠*, instead of bidding 2NT, responder may bid his own 6-card suit.

Rebids over 2♣-2♦* (positive)

When partner bids a suit, your first priority is to raise partner with 3-card support; or bid your own suit if it contains 5+ cards.

Over the sequence, 2♣-2♦*-2♥/2♠-?

2NT	no support and no 5+-card major suit bid
3♣/3♦	no support 5-card suit
3♥/3♠	shows 3-card trumps support for bid suit (forward going)
3NT	2-card support
4♥/4♠	shows 4-card trumps support for suit bid suit (fast arrival)

Over the sequence, 2♣-2♦*-3♣/3♦-?

3♥/3♠	5/6 card major suit
3NT	support with stoppers (no slam interest)
4♣/4♦	Minorwood for bid minor
4NT	Quantitative
5♣/5♦	sign-off (fast arrival)

After the bid of two diamonds, with a balanced hand, opener may bid no-trump as described above; however, the bid of a suit indicates a non-balanced hand.

After the bid of two hearts, the only bid responder may pass is 2NT. Otherwise, he must provide a second negative bid. This is usually the cheapest minor or using Herbert, the cheapest bid available.

In the above responses, observe that the bid of two spades and the three level minor suit bids wrong-side the contract. To avoid this problem, one may consider the following bids for the convention.

2♦	promises a king or an ace and is game forcing (some also include 2 Queens)
2♥*	denies a king or an ace but does not deny some values
2♠*	shows at least a 5/6-card heart suit with 2 of the top 3 (7+ points)
2NT*	shows at least a 5/6-card spade suit with 2 of the top 3 hearts (7+ points)
3♦*	shows 2 of the top 3 but with 6+ cards in the club suit (7+ points)
3♣*	shows 2 of the top 3 but with 6+ cards in the diamond suit (7+ points)

This option/modification should be discussed with your partner.

Interference note when playing the 2♥* bust

If your partner bids two clubs and your right hand opponent interferes, then a pass (alert) shows values (ace or king) and over a double, a redouble (alert) denies an ace or a king. This is often called DOP1 and ROP1 (see Chapter3).

Let's consider a few example hands.

Opener ♠AQ54 ♥KQ10 ♦K52 ♣AKQ

You have 23 HCP. Open the hand 2♣ and then bid 2NT; you have stoppers in all suits. If the hand contained 25 HCP, you would bid 3NT.

Opener ♠KQ754 ♥KQ10872 ♦void ♣AK

This hand contains 17 HCP + 3 length points = 20 Starting Points. Some may open this 1♥ and then bid spades. What if partner passes? Let's look at playing tricks for the hand. You have 13-5 losers = 8 playing tricks. You must open the hand 2♣, forcing partner to bid.

Opener ♠AJ98 ♥AQJ10872 ♦ K ♣ Q

You have 18 HCP + 3 length points – 2 dubious honor singletons = 19 Starting Points. In addition to looking at playing tricks, the hand has 13-3 =10 playing tricks. Open the hand 2♣ and then show your great heart suit. Opening 1♥, partner may pass.

Opener ♠AJ98 ♥AQJ10872 ♦ K ♣ Q

Responder ♠Q1092 ♥456 ♦ QJ78 ♣ 97

The bidding sequence for this hand playing the 2♥ bust option would be:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♥*
3♥	4♥

With three heart support and a bust hand, partner must support hearts. Provided partner takes a call after opener bids 1♥, one would still reach the game. The bidding may go:

1♥ - 1NT;
3♠ (jump shift) - 4♥.

But, why take a chance; partner with only 5 HCP may pass the bid of 1♥!

Ace –Showing Responses

This is a common convention used in Europe. The responses are:

2♦	negative
2♥*/2♠*	ace-showing
2NT	8+ HCP, but no aces
3♣*/3♦*	ace-showing
3NT*	two aces

The convention is also employed by many over weak two-level bids.

Kokish Relay

When opening 2♣ with a 25+ point hand, responding 3NT and above takes up a significant amount of bidding space; to eliminate this problem some employ the Kokish Relay.

After the bid of 2♦, the bid of 2♥* (alert) becomes a relay bid asking partner to bid 2♠. Now with a balanced big hand, partner next bids 2NT and 3♥ shows hearts.

The following sequences are used with unbalanced holdings.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values.
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i> .
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish Relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic 2♠ in order that the opener clarifies his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid (announced as relay).
2NT		Opener promises 22-24 plus points and a balanced hand.
3♣*		Opener promises a two-suited holding with Hearts and Clubs.
3♦*		Opener promises a two-suited holding with Hearts and Diamonds.
3♥		Opener promises a one-suited holding with Hearts.
3♠		Opener promises a one-suited holding with Spades.
3NT		Opener promises 25+ points and a balanced hand.

This allows the bidding to be at a lower level which allows one to more easily find a fit.

With a balanced hand, one employs the following Kokish sequences.

Example 1

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values (22+ points).
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i> .
2NT		This promises a balanced distribution and a point count between 20-21 points. The partnership remains on the two level, which is the key of this concept.

In this bidding sequence we did not employ the Kokish Relay bid since the holding does not require a relay to communicate the information that the holding is balanced with values of 20-21 points.

Example 2

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values.
	2♦	Normally either a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i> .
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish Relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic 2 Spades in order that the opener can clarify his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid.

2NT North shows a balanced distribution of 22-24 points. The partnership remains on the two level, which is the key of this concept.

Example 3

North	South	Meaning
2♣		An opening bid showing strong values.
	2♦	Normally a <i>waiting bid</i> or a <i>negative bid</i> .
2♥*		This is the <i>Kokish Relay</i> , a puppet for responder to bid an automatic 2♠ in order that the opener can clarify his holding.
	2♠	The puppet bid.
3NT		North shows a balanced distribution of 25+ points. This rebid is not part of the original version of the Kokish Relays, but could be used as an extension of this concept by partnership agreement. Note: 2♣-3NT=25-27; no need for Kokish.

By-Passing the Relay

We said that the sequence 2♥* is a relay to 2♠, allowing opener to describe his hand. However, once in a while responder may have a sufficiently unusual hand to make it worthwhile to by-pass the relay to show a long suit. One common approach is to use transfers whenever you break the relay. So, after 2♥*, a bid of 3♣ (breaking the relay) would show Diamonds.

When should you not relay! Here is a set of hands responder may have to break the relay.

KJ97643	Very good (No do not break relay)
KJ9764	Still OK.
K97643	Starting to get borderline.
Q97643	Not good enough, this will not usually play for one loser opposite Kx
Q987643	Now the extra length makes it OK.
QJ10764	This one's fine.

Rule: Play for one loser opposite Ax or Kx.

Mexican 2♦* Convention

Developed by **Mr. George Rosenkrantz**, it is a feature of the **Romex System**; however, it is becoming more common among partnerships playing the 2/1 game force system.

The problem arises with hands containing 18-19 Starting Points (some partnerships only count HCP) that are balanced or semi-balanced with 4-6 losers and possibly a five-card major suit. Never use the bid with a singleton or a void.

Consider the following hand: ♠AQJ102 ♥QJ7 ♦ QJ5 ♣ A10

You have 17 HCP + 1 length point +1 for quality suit =19 Starting Points. Clearly, you want to open, but how can you communicate strength in one bid? You have only a six loser hand. Playing the Mexican Two Diamond Convention, you would open 2♦.

The responses for the call are:

1. A Negative Response with 0-4 Starting Points is to pass with Diamond support (6+ diamonds). Some use 2♥* also 0-6 HCP.
2. A 2♥* bid is artificial and a relay bid to 2♠ (opener accepts with five) or bids his own five-card suit (clubs, diamonds, or hearts) or 2NT to show a balanced hand; responder passes all bids with 5-7 points. With 8+ points, partner may bid 3♣ as Stayman (basic) with one or two four-card majors, bid 3NT or with support (three cards) for the suit bid by the opener, he raises partner's bid suit to the three levels, an invitational raise to game.
3. A response of 2♠* (showing 7-9 Starting Points) and a balanced hand transfers the opener to two no-trump.
4. Any Positive Response on the three-level, 3♦/3♥/3♠, promises at least 8+ plus high card points and a broken six-card suit. However 3NT is usually a transfer to clubs and 3♣ is Puppet/Muppet Stayman.
5. A Positive Response also includes the use of Texas Transfers (4♣/4♦), the purpose of which is to have the stronger hand concealed during the play. The transfer bids are used only when the partner realizes he holds enough values for game or slam, not a part score.

Over interference what do you do?

Pass = 0-4 HCP and X = 5-6 HCP. The bid of 2NT = 10+ with a stopper in their bid suit.

Any 3-level bid show 7+ points.

Karosek 2♦* Convention

This conventional method was created by **Mr. Charles L. L. Dalmas** of Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, and first published in the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*, June, 2002, pages 50-52.

Employing the Karosek Two Diamonds conventional method, one again opens with 2♦* (alerted) with 18-19 high card points and is limited to holdings with a distribution of from 7-2-2-2 to more balanced distribution, no singletons and no void. Since an opening of two Diamonds describes the holding precisely to the partner, then the partner becomes the captain and sets the contract via the ensuing auction.

The ten possible responses, as described by the author, are as follows:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
2♦*		This opening bid describes a semi-balanced hand with exactly 18-19 high card points.
	Pass	Shows a weak hand with 5 plus Diamonds and no other side values.
	2♥*	Shows 0-5 points and is a negative response. This response strongly suggests that the opener rebid 2NT to play unless opener has a long suit (6/7 card length), which is rebid instead.
	2♠*	This response is Minor Suit Stayman showing at least a 5-4 distribution in both Minor suits and at least 6+ points. This response is game-forcing and could indicate slam interest.
	2NT*	This response promises a two-suiter in both Major suits. The opener bids the better Major by rebidding either 3♥ or 3♠. The responder then bids either game or shows slam interest.
	3♣	This first response is Puppet (some play Muppet) Stayman. The responder promises at least 3 cards in each Major suit.
	3♦	This response is a transfer to Hearts showing at least a 5-card plus Heart suit and at least 6 plus points. In the 2♦ opener only accepts the transfer by rebidding 3♥, then the opener is showing a 3- or 4-card Heart suit and no slam interest. If the opener super-accepts when holding a 4-card Heart suit, then this strongly indicates a mild slam interest if the responder has additional values. If the responder is interested in a slam try, then after acceptance or even super-acceptance the responder may bid 4♠, which is then Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430

Puppet Rebids

3♦	The opener promises at least one 4-card Major suit (the continuing auction is the same as with the Puppet Stayman convention). After 3♦, the responder bids the Major suit not held or 4♦ with both Major suits.
3♥	The opener promises a 5-card Heart suit.
3♠	The opener promises a 5-card Spade suit.
3NT	The opener holds neither a 4-card nor a 5-card Major suit.

In Competition:

In competition, if the opponent doubles the Karosel 2♦ opening bid, then the responder can redouble holding 9 plus high card points. If the opener holds a 5-card plus Diamond suit, then the opener may pass the redouble since the result of making 2♦ redoubled would result in a better score. If the Karosel 2♦ opener does not have a 5-card Diamond suit, then the Karosel 2♦ opener should rebid 3NT.

In competition, if the responder of the Karosel 2♦ opening bid has absolutely no values to improve the contract, then the responder may pass the double and/or overcall. In this auction, all other agreements are “system off” and/or not binding. A pass informs the opener of the values held by partner. In this instance, as strongly suggested by the author the partnership **shifts to a Rescue Mode**.

This action requires the opener to pass if the right hand opponent bids. If, however, the right hand opponent passes, then the opener rebids his/her 5-card suit at the cheapest level, but with a 4-3-3-3 distribution the preference is to redouble if the overcall after the Karosel 2♦ opening bid was a double. If the left hand opponent, who has doubled then passes for penalty, then the partner of the Karosel 2♦ bidder bids his/her longest suit. This is the so-called Rescue Mode. In the case that the left hand opponent bids over the redouble, then the partner may pass knowing that the distribution is 4-3-3-3 and the preference is to defend.

Opening 3NT* Gambling

Playing Standard American, many were taught to open a balanced hand with 25-27 Starting Points 3NT. In the 2/1 force system of bidding, this is accomplished by opening 2♣ and then bidding 3NT. Instead the bid is used for Gambling 3NT and must be alerted.

The bid promises is a long running minor suit. “Long and running” means at least AKQxxxx (yes, seven of them). In 1st, 2nd, or 3rd positions, you do not have any outside aces or kings. In the 4th position, partner should usually have stoppers in two side suits so partner may pass the bid (referred to as ACOL 3NT*). If you do not have side suit stoppers, it is best just to make a preemptive minor suit bid in the fourth seat. The Kantar Gambling 3NT* bid promises any long suit major or minor and must also be alerted.

I recommend that the 3NT* bidder have at least Qxx in the other minor, playing the gambling version. Then, if partner has the majors stopped, it allows partner to pass the 3NT* gambling bid. Not all play it this way; however, then the bidding sequences become more complicated.

Responses to gambling 3NT* (for a long minor) as suggested by Marty Bergen follow – Be Careful, there are many options.

4♣ says let’s play in a Part Score 4♣ or 4♦

4♦ usually played two ways:

- a. Asks opener to bid a singleton: responses are 4♥=Heart singleton, 4♠=Spade singleton, 4NT=minor suit singleton and 5♣=no singleton.
- b. Gerber

Depending on the location of the singleton and your hand, responder is usually interested in playing in a game, 5♣/5♦ or a slam, 6♣/6♦.

Example: Responder has

Spades: AKQ x Hearts: xx Diamonds: AKQx Clubs: xxx

With a heart singleton, you want to play in 6♣ clubs otherwise you would bid 5♣.

4♥ and 4♠ are 6-card suits. Opener must pass.

4NT is invitational to slam (Quantitative), asking opener to bid a minor suit slam

Example: Opener has a hand like

Spades: xx Hearts: x Diamonds: Qxxx Clubs: AKQJxxx

5♣ signoff play in club game or correct to 5♦; not slam interest.

5♦ signoff by responder, responder knows that the opener has long diamonds and wants to play game from his side.

5NT is a grand slam try, to play in 7♣/7♦. Responder has no losers outside the trump suit, but is usually void of the trump suit and is afraid of a trump loser. Opener bids 7♣/7♦ with a suit like A-K-Q-J-x-x-x or A-K-Q-x-x-x-x-x. With A-K-Q-x-x-x-x-x, opener would sign off in 6 of the suit.

6♣ is to play slam in 6♣/6♦, opener is to pick the suit. Again, a bid of 6♦ by responder is to play slam in diamonds, responder knows that it is the long suit.

How do you defend against the dreaded 3NT bid?

X = strong and balanced

4♣ = both majors

4♦ = one major (6+)

4M = 5-card bid major and a 5+ card minor

4NT = suit asking bid: bid your 5-card suit at the 5-level (♣♦♥♠) and 5NT = you pick the suit, usually the other minor

5m = to play, in the other minor

Pass the double if the opponents run and you are 3-suited and short in their minor; otherwise bid your longest major.

What do you lead against the 3NT bid?

An ace if you have one, fourth best with a 5-card major and without a long major, your shortest major; try to find partner's major.

ACOL 4NT Opening

An opening bid of 4NT asks for specific aces. The responses are:

5♣	0 aces
5♦/5♥/5♠/6♣	shows the ace in the suit bid
5NT	shows 2 aces

* A bridge bidding system played primarily in Great Britain.

The ACOL 3NT* convention is also used in Great Britain. It shows 19-21 HCP and is to play. All suits must be stopped. If you use this convention, the responses by partner are:

4♣	Gerber
4♦/4♥/4♠	Transfers to Hearts, Spades, and Clubs
	To bid diamonds, one corrects after 5♣ (over 4♠) and bids 5♦
4NT	Quantitative

Opening two of a major

Playing 2/1, I recommend that the bid of 2♦* has special meaning (e.g., Flannery, Extra Shape Flannery, Mini Roman, or Mexican two diamonds), and do not recommend the weak 2♦ bid which shows a 6-card suit with 5/6-10 starting points. Why tell the opponents you have a weak hand with diamonds? For this reason, many Two-over-one game force players **do not** use the weak two diamond bid. However, some do and it is never alerted.

Weak two bids in the majors are used to interfere with the opponents' bidding structure. The bids are preemptive showing a good six-card suit with between 5/6-10 Starting Points. The bids are constructive. Partner with a good hand may put you in game. If vulnerable, we recommend that the major suit have two of the top three honors. When not vulnerable, you may relax this requirement.

For example, with the hand ♠ 103 ♥ AK10987 ♦ J3 ♣Q32, you would open the hand 2♥ vulnerable or non-vulnerable. However, replacing the king of hearts with a jack, you should not open the hand vulnerable.

When responding to a weak 2-level bid, some play a new suit bid by responder, your partner, as non-forcing which must be alerted (red on the convention card). Others play any new suit bid by partner as forcing (no alert needed); however, then a raise of the bid suit as non-forcing, called RONF.

Rule of 17

When responding to a major two-level opening bid, one may use the RULE OF 17. The rule goes as follows. If the number of Dummy Points and the number of cards in the major suit bid total seventeen, bid to the four levels in the major.

With 12-15 Dummy Points and two-card support raise the two-level bid to three, a weak non-forcing, competitive raise.

With 15-16 Starting Points, responder makes a forcing 2NT bid, which asks the opening bidder to describe his hand and is invitational to game in the major with at least two-card support or perhaps no-trump, independent of vulnerability.

Bidding 2NT by some players asks partner to bid a **feature**, an ace or king outside the bid suit. It is used to determine if an entry exists in dummy to allow one to access the long suit. More importantly, one needs to know about strength in the major and strength of the hand. The convention one may use is known as OGUST.

The OGUST Convention

After a weak two bid (usually a six-card suit), the convention allows for a detailed description of the opener's hand. It is invoked by the artificial 2NT bid made by the responder. The reply to a weak two bid shows strength and asks whether the opener is weak (5-7/6-8 Starting Points) or strong (8-10/9-11 Starting Points) and how many of the top three honors are held in the major.

The replies are most commonly as follows (where*=alert).

- 3♦* minimum, 1 top suit honor (BAD/WEAK Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
- 3♠* minimum, 2 top suit honors (BAD/WEAK Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 3♥* maximum, 1 top suit honor (GOOD/STRONG Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
- 3♣* maximum, 2 top suit honors (GOOD/STRONG Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 3NT* all 3 honors, A-K-Q-x-x and little else

A simple way to remember this is to picture Mamma Mia dancing: 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3... These refer to the order of the top honors in the major as shown above. The bids represent HAND and then SUIT - NOT SUIT and then HAND!

Note: Some players interchange the bids of three diamonds and three hearts. The 1-1, 2-2, 1-2-3 dance step!

Some players use the convention to show first suit and not hand. Discuss this convention with your partner. The word OGUST may have a different meaning to your partner! This is why a description of any convention is better than simply using the words "I play Ogust." The OGUST Convention is used instead of "asking" for a feature (ace or king in another suit).

Modified OGUST Convention

Because bidding is becoming more aggressive, many partnerships will open weak twos with a five-card major one-suiter. If you do, one may use Modified OGUST rebids to describe the hand. Again, the 2NT bid is used to ask about the hand. Using this convention, the bids are:

3♣*	5-card suit GOOD/STRONG hand
3♦*	5-card suit BAD/WEAK hand
3♥*	6-card suit BAD/WEAK hand
3♠*	6-card suit GOOD/STRONG hand
3NT*	either a 5- or 6-card suit or a semi-solid 5- or 6-card suit plus ace or king in a side suit

Observe that the 3♣* bid is used to show a stronger HAND in order to leave more room for further investigation since all responses describe only the “HAND” and say nothing about the quality of the suit.

After the response of the 3♣* bid, if responder wants to find out about the SUIT, the asking bid is he bids 3♦*. Opener now clarifies the suit strength with the following bids.

3♥*	BAD/WEAK suit and 1 honor
3♠*	GOOD/STRONG suit and 2 honors
3NT*	GOOD/STRONG suit and 3 honors

Following OGUST, one describes the HAND and upon request, then the SUIT.

A common practice is to use five-card OGUST Non-Vulnerable and six-card OGUST Vulnerable!

If you do not make this distinction (five and six cards) in your partnership agreement, there is yet another convention called the TWO-STEP OGUST Convention developed by Daniel Zenko. It is discussed in the April 1997 issue of “The Bridge World.”

While experts use OGUST-type responses for two-suited 6-4 hands in the majors, the responses become complicated and will not be discussed.

Opening three- and four-level bids

Opening bids at the three-level are preemptive showing a weak hand (5-10 Starting Points) and able to take about five tricks in the trump suit bid. To open the bidding, one usually has a seven-card suit and no ace or king in an outside suit or four cards in a major. Vulnerable, you should hold two of the top three honors in the suit bid or three of the top five. **Once you make a three-level bid, you have described your entire hand, do not bid again, unless partner makes a forcing bid.** The only ways partner can force are by bidding a new suit, by cue bidding the opponent’s suit, or by asking for aces or keycards.

Opening at the four-level is also preemptive showing a weak hand (5/6-10 Starting Points) and now able to take six tricks in the trump suit. You need an eight-card suit, no outside ace or king, no four-card major, and three of the top five honors. You only get one bid.

Rule of 2/3

A guide to preemptive opening bids and overcalls is that one cannot afford to be set more than 500 (two or three tricks vulnerable and non-vulnerable when doubled) unless one is saving against a slam contract. One often assumes that a vulnerable partner can make two tricks, and a non-vulnerable partner three tricks. Thus, a player who opens 4♠ should have an eight playing trick hand if vulnerable and a seven playing trick hand if not vulnerable.

To count playing tricks, only the first three tricks in a suit are counted. Winners are the A, K, or Q only in the suit called the Losing Trick Count. With less than three cards, AQ=½, Kx= ½, KQ=1, K=1, Q=1, Qx=1 loser.

What does that mean? The Rule of 2/3 states that with a weak hand and a long, strong suit, you should count your playing tricks and add three when non-vulnerable, and add two if vulnerable.

To illustrate, we consider two hands:

- A) ♠AKQ10653 ♥8 ♦854 ♣96
- B) ♠ void ♥63 ♦AQJ876432 ♣87

In Hand A, we have six losers (0 in spades, 1 in hearts, 3 in diamonds, and 2 in clubs). Thirteen cards-six losers=seven **playing tricks**. Non-vulnerable, adding 3 = 7+3=10 so you should open 4♠. If you open at only the three levels, you would be underbidding your cards. You would open 3♠ only if vulnerable (7+2=9).

It is obvious that the opponents are able to more easily bid over three spades than four spades.

In Hand B, we have five losers and therefore eight playing tricks; adding three non-vulnerable takes us to eleven. Therefore, one would open 5♦. Vulnerable, one would open 4♦.

More generally, one may use the rule of 2-3-4: assume partner has only one trick; then, with unequal vulnerability you can have 2 losers, with equal vulnerability 3 losers, and with favorable vulnerability 4 losers. Applies with 3/4/5 level preempts.

Rule of 7 over Preempts

The rule of 2/3 tells one at what level one may open a preemptive bid. However, when the opponents make a preemptive bid, how do you know when to compete?

Assume the opponents open with a weak bid of 2♦'s or 2♥'s (6-10 pts) what do you need to make a 2-level overcall, a take out double, a jump overcall, or a cue bid? And, how many points can you expect from partner?

To succeed at the two level you and your partner need about 21-22 starting points which include HCPs and length, at the three level about 23-24, and at the four level about 25-26.

To compete over the preempt you must have a good opening hand, at least 13+ starting points where a bid of 2NT shows about 15/16-18/19 points with a stopper in the opponents bid suit. And, how many points can you expect partner to have? The guideline is that you can expect about 7HCPs (the rule of 7) suggested by Mike Lawrence and Karen Walker. Hence, to bid over preempts you need 14, 15, or 16 starting points.

Detail suggestions are provided by Mike Lawrence on the web at www.fifthchair.org.

Responder bids to three-level preempts

When partner opens the bidding at the three-level, responder has to place the contract. With a weak hand and no fit, pass. To set the contract, you must think about playing tricks and consider the vulnerability.

Opening at the three-level, partner has said he can make five tricks in the trump suit. Thus, for game in a major you need to add five tricks outside the major to raise to the four-level. When opening a minor, bid 3NT if you have four more tricks. A simple raise in the minor shows a minor trump fit without game interest. If you bid another suit, not bid by partner, it generally shows a preemptive hand in the suit bid at the three-level and is lead directing since it is very likely that the opponents will get the contract.

If you are unsure what to do, use OGUST, **only for major suit preempts**. You must have enough points for game in the major with 19+ Starting Points or have slam interest. We use the bid of 3NT* and the responses follow the bid of 2NT; however, now the bid must be alerted.

Ogust over three-level preempts (bid 3NT*)

4♣*	minimum, 1 top honor (BAD/WEAK Hand and BAD/STRONG Suit)
4♦*	minimum, 2 top honors (BAD/WEAK Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
4♥*	maximum, 1 top honor (GOOD/STRONG Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
4♠*	maximum, 2 top honors (GOOD/STRONG Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
4NT*	all 3 honors, A-K-Q-x-x and little else

We consider a few examples.

♠7 ♥ KQ10653 ♦ A54 ♣ Q6

You have six losers, or $13-6 = 7$ playing tricks. Non-vulnerable, you expect partner to cover three losers, so open $4♥$. You would open it at the three-level vulnerable.

♠974 ♥7 ♦AQJ863 ♣Q62

You have seven losers or $13-7 = 6$ playing tricks. Open $3♦$ Non-vulnerable and **pass if you are vulnerable**. Just because you have a six-card suit does not mean you should open the hand with a preemptive bid.

♠A3 ♥10987 ♦void ♣KQ108762

You have a five loser hand, strong club suit and four hearts. Pass and wait to see what partner bids. Do not preempt your partner in the first seat.

Preempted Openings

Most of the bridge literature has been written about defending against weak three-level bids. Examples include the optimal double, 3NT for takeout, Fishbein, Lower Minor, Smith, Weiss, FILM, Reese, and Two-Suiter takeout, etc. Many of these approaches involve numerous artificial bids that most players FORGET. Our goal is to keep it simple because there is no optimal system. The underlying principle that you must use is to devise a system that enables you to reach your own BEST contract and do not worry too much about penalizing the opponents.

Opening Five-level Bids

To play straight penalty doubles at this level does not make sense. Opener will always have a long and strong single suit and the opponents are trying to steal the contract! DOUBLE should always be for takeout, not penalty, and the bid of 5NT shows the two lowest unbid suits. This can be played in both the second and fourth positions.

Opening Four-level Bids

When the preemptive bid is made at the four-level, one has more options. We consider each in turn.

(1) Over $4♣$ or $4♦$

Again, a double is for takeout suggesting a good hand with no clear-cut bid and all four-level bids are natural. A cue bid usually indicates a two-suiter (both majors) or perhaps a three-suited rock crusher.

(2) Over $4♥$

Here, 4NT is not natural but a takeout bid for the minors. Double is for PENALTY, but I have tolerance for the other suits, particularly for spades. Partner, please decide. (3) Over 4♠.

Here, 4NT is generally takeout and again double is primarily for penalty. Partner will again pull the double on a very shapely hand. Alternatively, a double may be used for takeout; then, 4NT is used to show the minors. Discuss this with your partner.

For more information, see Brian Senior's (1984) "Defending against Pre-empts," by Apsbridge Services Ltd.

Roth Four Club Convention

Previously, we have suggested how to defend against preempt bids. However, if your partner preempts, there are also ways to investigate the preempt bid further. For two-level preempts, one may bid 2NT to ask your partner for a feature or you may use the Ogust Convention. Or, you can play modified Ogust, Two-step Ogust, Roudinesco rebids, Romex rebids, McCabe Adjunct Convention, etc.

What method can you employ if your partner bids at the three-level and you have a very good hand? A convention that is similar to Ogust 3NT* ask is called the Roth Four Club Convention. It is usually a slam-try allowing one to assess the partnership's prospects for slam without going beyond a safe contract.

After the three-level bid, partner bids 4♣* which is artificial and asks partner to describe his hand further. The responses are similar to Ogust and go like this (*=alert):

4♦*	bad hand, bad suit.
4♥*	bad hand, good suit (2 of the top 3 honors in the preempt suit).
4♠*	good hand (1 or 2 honors outside the preempt suit), bad suit.
4NT*	good hand, good suit.

The responses are similar to Ogust but use different steps. What do you think? Other systems like Thomas' Four Diamond system use keycard responses that are more difficult to remember. However, some recommend Asking Bids that are discussed next.

What about the four-level preempt with slam interest? One may simply modify the Roth Four Club approach!

Asking Bids after a Preempt

How many times have your partner opened at the three-level and you find yourself with a very good hand? What do you bid? Often neither Blackwood nor cue bids help. To

consider a specific example, suppose you pick up the hand: ♠AQ4 ♥AKQ654 ♦AT ♣84

And, your partner opens three spades. What do you bid? The problem revolves around what your partner has in the club suit.

Or, consider the following three OPENING hands:

1. ♠KJ109765 ♥32 ♦K76 ♣2,
2. ♠KJ109763 ♥32 ♦K9 ♣J10, and
3. ♠KJ109543 ♥32 ♦87 ♣A2.

Opposite hand (1), six spades is a lay down. With hand (2), six cannot be made because of the two club losers. And, with the third hand, seven is a lay down. The same problem occurs when your partner opens four spades. With hand (3), Blackwood (Chapter 3) solves the problem, but what about hands 1 and 2? A solution is to play ASKING BIDS whenever one opens at the three/four-level.

For a three-level bid, any JUMP response in a suit is an asking bid in that suit.

Thus, after 3♠ followed by 5♣ asks, what do you have in clubs?

After 3♦ followed by 4♥ asks, what do you have in hearts?

Following a FOUR-level bid, any five-level bid becomes an asking bid.

After 4♥ the bid of 5♦ asks, what do you have in diamonds?

After 4♠, the bid of 5♣ asks about clubs.

These bids do not interfere with normal bidding procedures because a new suit in response to a preemptive bid is usually forcing so that responder need not jump to game. Thus, the jump bid may be used more profitably. When opening at the four-level, opener should have a powerful suit and responder is not likely to have a better suit. Hence, responder is more likely to make an asking bid.

Responses to Asking Bids

Let's consider an example with the sequence: 3♠ followed by 5♣. What do you have in clubs? Responses to asking bids ALWAYS start with the next suit.

First Step - two or more quick losers' xx, xxx, xxxx

Second Step - singleton

Nearest no-trump regardless of step = king

Fourth Step - ace

Fifth Step -A-K/A-Q

Sixth Step - Void

Example 1:

Opener's Hand: ♠K4 ♥65 ♦AJ109432 ♣43.

Responder's Hand: ♠87 ♥AKQJ109 ♦K4 ♣AKQ.

The bidding goes, 3♦ followed by 4♠. What do you have in spades? The bid of 4NT shows a KING, closest NT, and responder bids 6NT to protect the king. Notice that in this case, the first step is no-trump, showing the king. With two or three small spades, opener would have responded 5♣ to the 4♠ asking bid.

Example 2:

Opener's Hand: ♠AKJ98765 ♥32 ♦2 ♣54.

Responder's Hand: ♠QT4 ♥J7♦AKQJ ♣AKJ10.

The bidding goes, 4♠ followed by 5♥. What do you have in hearts? Opener bids 5♠, first step, to show two or more quick losers in hearts. Responder passes.

Some recommend using only five steps for asking bids against preempts. They combine singleton and a king (steps 2&3) into step 2. Then step 3 is an ace, step 4 is A-K or A-Q, and step 5 becomes a void. Always discuss how you play asking bids with your partner.

Warning: THERE IS NO DISASTER WORSE THAN A MISUNDERSTOOD ASKING BID! The asking bids discussed here are based upon: Edwin B. Kantar (1974), "Bridge Conventions," Wilshire Book Company.

Grand Slam Force after a bid suit

A bid of 5NT after a three-level or four-level bid suit is called the Grand Slam Force and is used most often when the bidding has shown a strong hand and an agreed upon **major suit**. The definition of a strong hand is: (1) a preemptive opening bid or overcall when vulnerable, (2) a jump rebid, (3) a rebid in your original suit after your partner has made a jump shift. Then, a bid of 5NT by partner is the Grand Slam Force (or Josephine) bid asking about the strength of the **major**. It was originally proposed by Josephine Culbertson in 1936, asking partner if he has two of the top three trump honors in the agreed upon major. If the answer is yes, one bids seven. If a trump suit has not been agreed upon, it is usually the last suit bid major. However, this approach only handles about 40 percent of the hands. Hence, since 1936 there have been several proposed modifications to the bid. What follows is as a result of Edwin B. Kantar. There are other variations for the bid so you should discuss it with your partner! Kantar recommends the following responses.

6♣	1 of the top 3 honors, almost always the ace or king.
6 of the agreed suit	2 of the top 3 honors.
7 of the agreed suit	3 of the top 3 honors.

Some also play the bid even if the bidding does not show a strong **major** suit. For example, a preemptive bid not vulnerable. Then the responses are:

6♣	queen or less.
6♦	ace or king with minimum length

- 6♥ ace or king with more than minimum length
- 6♠ two of the top three honors
- 7♣ (or 7 of the agreed upon suit) the top three honors

Many times the responder must first find out about aces before using the Grand Slam Force. Then, the bid of 6♣ becomes the Grand Slam Force bid! An example follows:

Opener	Responder	Opener Bid	Responder Bid
♠KQJ109876	♠A	4♠	4NT
♥9	♥AKQ765	5♥	6♣
♦7	♦AK54	6♠	7NT
♣A98	♣KQ2		

The bid is also often used after 1NT asking the opener to pick a suitable slam contract. Or, it can be taken as quantitative looking for 7NT. Again, these bids should be discussed with your partner. You may also consult: Magnus Lindkvist (2002), "Bridge Classic and Modern Conventions," Arta Grafica S.A., Romania.

Namyats

NAMYATS was created by Sam Stayman who, after creating the Stayman 2♣ response to partner's no-trump opener, coined the NAMYATS Convention using his name in reverse order. The NAMYATS Convention, part of the 2/1 game force system, allows one to differentiate between a strong distributional hand, which may provide a slam opportunity with less opponent interference, and a preemptive bid that has no slam opportunity.

The bid requires a 7+ card suit in hearts or spades, and like the strong two club opener, requires 8 ½ - 9 playing tricks. The major suit has two of the top three honors non-vulnerable and three of the top five honors vulnerable, and both require an outside ace or protected king. Thus, you almost have game in hand; partner has to only cover one loser in a major game contract. The bids use the minor preemptive four-level bids:

- 4♣* transfer to hearts
- 4♦* transfer to spades

If responder bids the transfer suit, this usually denotes no interest in slam. However, if one bids the next step (the gap), it indicates slam interest in the major.

- 4♣* 4♦ slam interest
- 4♦* 4♥ slam interest

General

In first and second position, 4♣ and 4♦ openings show “good” four-level preempts in hearts and spades respectively. The requirements for such an opening are:

1. exactly two key cards (five aces and trump king), and
2. no more than one uncontrolled suit, and
3. a losing trick count of at most five, and
4. at most three of the nine side-suit aces, king and queens, with no side suit containing all three of these honors, and
5. a main suit at least as good as
 1. KQT9xxx or KQJxxxx or a side void, when holding a seven card main suit, or
 2. KQxxxxxx when holding at least an eight card main suit, and
6. if holding a void, opener must also hold
 1. An uncontrolled suit and a main suit of at least AKQxxxx or AKxxxxxx
 2. A suit lacking first- or second-round control but holding third-round control (doubleton or queen) and a weaker main suit.

A controlled suit is one in which the ace or king is held, or one in which at most one card is held.

Responding to Namyats openings

After a Namyats 4♣ opening

Responder may inquire with 4♦ when holding at least 2 key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries, or sign off in opener’s suit at the four level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, “strong” holdings (void and honor combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other-major, clubs, diamonds.

4♦		Inquiry, showing at least two key cards
	4♥	Minimum requirements
	4♠	Better than minimum, unspecified void
	4NT	Inquiry
	5♣/5♦/5♥	Club/diamond/spade void
	4NT	Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled
	5♣/5♦/5♥	Better than minimum, no void, no control in spade/club/diamond suit
	5♠	AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
	5NT	Inquiry

	6♣/6♦/6♥	Club/diamond/spade suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5S response
	5NT/6♣/6♦	AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit
	6♥	AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit
4♥		To play
4♠/4NT/5♣		Spade/diamond/club void, slam interest and at least one key card
5♦		Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else
5♥		Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else

After a Namyats 4♦ opening

Responder may inquire with 4H when holding at least 2 key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries, or sign off in opener's suit at the four level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, "strong" holdings (void and honor combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other-major, clubs, diamonds.

4♥		Inquiry, showing at least two key cards
	4♠	Minimum requirements
	4NT	Better than minimum, unspecified void
	5♣	Inquiry
	5♦/5♥/5♠	Diamond/heart/club void
	5♣	Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled
	5♦/5♥/5♠	Better than minimum, no void, no control in heart/club/diamond suit
	5NT	AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
	6♣	Inquiry
	6♦/6♥/6♠	Diamond/heart/club suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5NT response

<p>6♣/6♦/6♥</p> <p>6♠</p> <p>4♠</p> <p>4NT/5♣/5♦</p> <p>5♥</p> <p>5♠</p>	<p>AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit</p> <p>AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit</p> <p>To play</p> <p>Heart/club/diamond void, slam interest and at least one key card</p> <p>Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else</p> <p>Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else</p>
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Holding the following hand, what do you open?

♠AK109653 ♥7 ♦9 ♣KJ73

The hand is too strong to open 4♠. Playing Namyats, one would open the bidding 4♦*.

Mc Cabe Adjunct

When your partner opens a weak two bid and they double, what are your options?

With a weak hand, the contract usually belongs to the opponents; hence your partners bid should help you with the lead since it may be the opponent's contract. A convention developed by Mr. J. I. McCabe of Columbia, South Carolina, United States does just that. His article was published in *The Bridge World*, issue of January 1994.

The Mc Cabe bids are:

A simple raise of partner's weak two bids shows an Ace or a King in the bid suit. With this information the weak two-bidder may lead the suit. A bid in a lower ranking suit is also lead directing. It also shows an Ace or a King. And it suggests to the weak two- bidder to bid again without interference.

Without a fit, partner bids 2NT as a relay to three clubs. Responder then corrects or bids a new suit at the three level. The opening bidder must pass. However, if responder next bids partners weak two bid suit at the three level, after the relay bid of three clubs, he denies a good lead and it again shows an Ace or King in the weak two-bidder's suit and a good hand.

Some partnerships reverse the meaning of Mc Cabe's Adjunct.

Mc Cabe Adjunct (reversed)

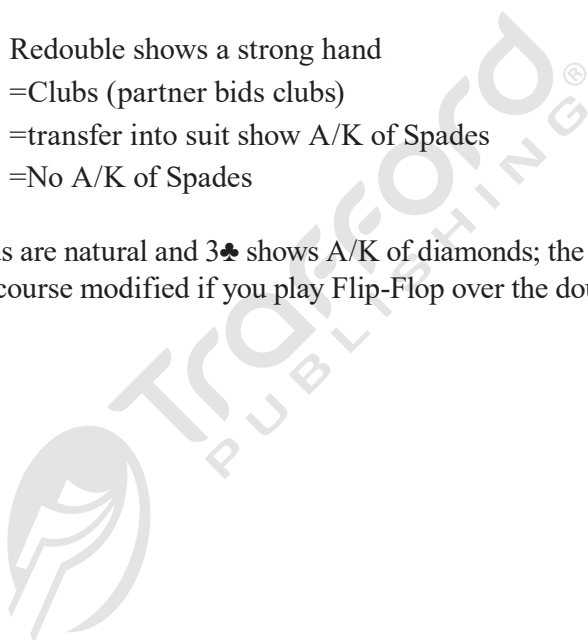
In this method, raising partner bid suit **denies** an Ace or a King and merely advances the preempt. A new suit at the two level is to play. A three level bid over a major suit bid shows an Ace or King in the major bid. 2NT is again a relay to three clubs and is as in the Mc Cabe Adjunct. A redouble of the bid suit shows a strong hand, it is designed to punish the opponents.

To be more specific with reverse Mc Cabe, we have the following structure.

2♥ - X then	Redouble shows a strong hand
2♠	=Spades
2NT	=Clubs (partner bids clubs)
3♦	=transfer into suit shows A/K of Hearts
3♥	=No A/K of Hearts

2♠- X then	Redouble shows a strong hand
2NT	=Clubs (partner bids clubs)
3♥	=transfer into suit show A/K of Spades
3♠	=No A/K of Spades

Over 2♦ all two level bids are natural and 3♣ shows A/K of diamonds; the bid of 3♦ shows the A/K. The bids over 2♦ are of course modified if you play Flip-Flop over the double of a diamond bid.



CHAPTER 3

SLAM BIDDING

To reach a slam, the partnership should have roughly 33 Bergen Points. In addition to a trump fit and count, slams require controls (aces, kings, voids, and singletons). The more controls between the partners, the easier the slam. To evaluate whether or not the partnership has the required controls, one uses cue bids and Blackwood Conventions. Blackwood Conventions reveal how many aces and kings for example, while cue bidding or control showing bids reveal where they reside.

The Blackwood Convention

The most used and perhaps the most abused convention in bridge is the original Blackwood Convention developed by Easley Blackwood Sr. because many believe it will handle all situations. It does not. While the convention does not require knowing the trump suit, it does require that one knows whether or not slam is possible. The convention augments this knowledge by helping one find the number of aces and kings.

The convention should not be used when:

- (1) Holding two or more cards in an unbid suit with no ace or king (e.g., xx, Qx, Jx).
- (2) Holding a void.
- (3) One has a slam invitational hand (e.g., 1NT facing 1NT hands).

To use the convention, the captain bids 4NT which is the asking partner for the number of aces held.

The responses are:

5♣	0 or all 4 aces
5♦	1 ace
5♥	2 aces
5♠	3 aces

If two aces are missing, the captain signs off in five of a suit. If one ace is missing, one may bid 6NT or six of a suit. When spades is not trump, the bid of 5♠ asks partner to bid 5NT.

What do you do if you have a void? Do not count it as an ace. With an even number of aces (two or four) bid 5NT and with an odd number (one or three) bid the suit at the six-level. It works. If you have no aces and a void (ignore the void), bid 5♣ since the void may be in a suit in which your partner has an ace.

Knowing you have all the aces, 5NT is the king's ask (without a void response); the responses are:

6♣	0 or all 4 kings
6♦	1 king
6♥	2 kings
6♠	3 kings

Having all the aces and kings, one is in the grand slam zone; recall it requires about thirty-seven Bergen Points.

The major problem with the Blackwood Convention is you have no way of knowing about the ace and king of trump and the specific location of aces are unknown. To solve these shortcomings, one uses cue bids and the Roman Keycard Blackwood Convention, which has replaced the Blackwood Convention.

Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) Convention - 1430

The most authoritative book on this convention is by Eddie Kantar (2008), "Roman Keycard Blackwood the Final Word" 5th Edition, Master Point Press, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

However, the books by Krzysztof Martens (2014, 2014), "Professional Slam Bidding" Part 1 and "Professional Slam Bidding" Part 2, and the books by Roger Munger (2014), "KICKBACK Slam Bidding at Bridge" and Patty Tucker (2014), "Slam Bidding Conventions", should also be consulted.

To use the RKCB Convention, one must have agreed upon a trump suit. Knowing the trump suit, there are two Roman Keycard Conventions known as 1430 and 3014. When the weak hand asks, Kantar (2008) recommends that one play the 1430 version (marked as 1430 on the convention card); if the very strong hand asks, he recommends 3014 (marked as RCK on the convention card). While Kantar has several criteria to determine which hand is considered very strong and which is the weak hand, because more often than not the hand that asks usually has two keycards (or if not, one with the Queen), **we recommend to always using the 1430 Roman Keycard Convention since it facilitates the queen ask step of 5♦ over 5♣ as we shall soon see and let's not get too complicated.**

When using the RKCB Convention, there are five keycards, the four aces, and the king of trump. Another keycard is the queen of trump. If you do not use kickback (to be explained later), the 1430 RKCB ask is again 4NT. The responses are:

5♣	1 or 4 keycards (the 14 step)
5♦	3 or 0 keycards (the 30 step)
5♥	2 (or 5) keycards without the queen of trump
5♠	2 (or 5) keycards with the queen of trump or holding a 6 th trump

When one responds five clubs or five diamonds, the queen ask may be needed. After the response five clubs, the bid of 5♦ is the queen ask (when hearts or spades are the agreed upon trump suit). After the bid of five diamonds, the bid of 5♥ is the queen asks.

Queen Asks

After five clubs and five diamonds, the queen asks are: 5♦ and 5♥ queen asks

Responding to the 5♦ ask

- (1) If you **do not** hold the queen, responder returns to the agreed upon suit at the five- level.
- (2) 5NT shows the queen, but no outside king!
- (3) With both (Q of trump and one or two kings), bid at the six-level of the lowest ranking king.

Responding to the 5♥ queen ask (whether or not hearts or spades are the agreed upon suit).

If you do not hold the queen, pass 5♥ if hearts are trumps. If spades is the agreed upon suit, then 5♠ denies the spade queen.

1. 1. If responder has a side-suit king, the king is bid at the 6 level, to show king and queen of trump.
2. 2. If responder has no side-suit king, but the queen of trump, bid 5NT.
3. 3. If responder has 4-3-3-3 distribution without a side-suit king or queen, bid 6NT.

Another simple option when hearts is the agreed upon suit is to bid 6♥ if you do not hold the queen, with three key cards and to bid 7♥ holding the queen.

King Ask

Knowing you hold all the aces and king-queen of trump (some players do not require holding the queen); **5NT is the specific king's ask (SKA)!**

The specific king ask is needed for a grand slam try in the agreed upon suit or no-trump.

Responses are:

1. Return to the agreed upon trump suit at the six-level denies any kings.
2. With two kings, bid the cheapest at the six-level (below agreed upon trump suit); if the second king is of higher rank, bid 6 of agreed suit. Only bid 6NT if spades were bid or if it was a splinter suit.
3. With three kings, bid 6NT.

To find a second king below the trump suit, bid the suit. Without the second king, responder bids the trump suit at the six-level. With the king, bid as follows.

1. Make a first step response, including 6NT with Kxx(x),
2. Make a second step response with Kxx, and
3. Raise the ask suit with Kx.

When hearts are the agreed upon suit on does not use 5NT for the king ask; instead the specific suit ask (SSA) bid is used as discussed later (below).

Spiral Scan

Spiral Scan bids were developed by **George Rosenkranz** and are an extension of 1430. When partner has the Queen of trump, one usually bids 5NT (the specific kings ask) if one is interested in a grand slam. This is a terrible waste of space. Instead he recommended using his Spiral Scan bids, recently reviewed in the August 2014 issue of the "Bridge Bulletin", to find out about kings, queens and even jacks.

Following 1430, the first non-sign-off bid still asks for the Queen (5♣/5♦/5♥) and that is where the Spiral Scan starts. If responder has four or three key cards, he treats the bid as the Queen asks. His order of priority is:

1. The Queen of trump.
2. King in any suit bid by responder that is 5-cards or longer.
3. King in inquirer's long suit.
4. King in responder's 4-card suit.
5. Remaining kings are shown in ascending order (♣/♦/♥/♠). Some employ descending order.
6. Side-queens in a bid suit, starting with the longest side suit bid by replier.
7. Remaining queens in ascending order.
8. Side jacks – if ever, in ascending order.

Answering:

First step denies the Queen.

By bypassing the first step and bidding the second step shows the first card but not the second.

And so on

Let's look at an example of the Spiral Scan.

North	South
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♠
4NT	5♣/5♦
5♦/5♥	???

In this example, following the 5♣/5♦ bids responses to the Queen ask bid 5♦/5♥ would be the Queen ASK.

For this bidding example, South did not show a 5-card suit, but has a 4-card heart suit. The spiral bidder showed a 4-card spade suit. Thus the spiral order is: ♠K, ♥K, ♣K, and ♦K.

Step one: No ♠ Queen.

Step two: ♠Q but no ♠K (no 5-card suit bid –inquirer's long suit)

Step three: ♠Q and ♠K, but no ♥K (responder 4-card suit)

Step four: ♠Q, ♠K, ♥K but no ♣K.

Possessing the trump Queen, the 1430 bidder may go through the Queen ask in order to create a third-round control query. If asks take the partnership beyond the five level of the trump suit, inquirer must be interested in a grand slam

Let's look at another example where the Queen asks step is bypassed!

North	South
1♠	2NT
4NT	5♣
5♥	???

Do you have the ♣K (second step)? Note that 5♦(first step) asks for the king of spades, since the priorities are ♠K, ♣K, ♦K, etc.

5♠ (1st step after ask) no ♣K

5NT (2nd step) ♣K, but no ♦K

6♣ (3rd step) ♣K, and ♦K, but no ♥K

6♦ (4th step) ♣K, ♦K, ♥K, but no ♣Q – and so on

If the Queen ask step is bypassed, since the 1430 bidder has the Queen. The bids (in steps) after the Queen ask bid is specific king/queen asking bids. For example, suppose spades is the trump suit, then the bids for the king/queen are:

5♦	Asks for the ♠Q. The Queen asks after the bid of 5♣.
5♥	Asks for the ♣K.
5♠	Asks for the ♦K. The responder cannot have zero Keycards

5NT	Asks for the ♥K
6♣	Asks for the ♣Q
6♦	Asks for the ♦Q
6♥	Asks for the ♥Q

The responder rebids by counting steps. If he/she bids the next step up, the responder denies holding the card asked for. If the responder bids the second step, the responder shows the card asked for, but denies higher cards.

Using the Spiral Scan, the partnership can concentrate on the most valuable Keycards and the location thereof. The concept behind the Spiral Scan is the continuance of the auction until at least a small slam is reached. If one or several Keycards are discovered to be missing, then the small slam is the better contract, but if all the Keycards are accounted for during the auction, then the grand slam can be bid.

Suppose the bidding goes:

North	South
1♠	2♦
3♣	4♣
4NT	5♥ (two keycards with no Queen)
5NT (spiral scan)	

After 5♥, the location of the Queen may be known inquirer now then the Spiral scan focuses on kings. Playing 2/1 the 2♦ bid usually shows five diamonds. So the orders of kings are: ♦K, ♥K, ♣K, and K♠; so the 5NT scan bid asks for heart king. If diamonds was a 4-card suit, the order of diamonds and hearts would be reversed; the 5♠ would be the spiral scan bid for the heart king.

One more example – suppose North and South hold the following cards:

North	South
♠AJ643	♠KQ75
♥KQ2	♥A7
♦3	♦A105
♣KQ72	♣AJ43

North	South
1♠	2NT* (1)
3♦*(2)	4NT (3)
5♣ (4)	5♥ (5)
6♠ (6)	7NT

1. Jacoby 2NT* forcing spade raise with 4 trumps
2. Singleton diamond
3. 1430 RKCB
4. One Keycard
5. The third step (5♠ would be to play), the second step 5♥ is asking about ♣K
6. The fifth step shows ♣K, ♥K, ♣Q, ♥Q, ♠J and denying the ♣J

Spiral scan bids are most useful when the partnership is known to have the Queen of trumps. However, even if you have the Queen you may have to ask in order to create a third round control query. For example, suppose the bid of 5♥ asked for the Queen of trumps and 5♠ (first step) denied it; then the bid of 6♣ would ask for the club Queen.

Queen and King Asks Combined

To make the best use of bidding space when one holds the trump queen, one may also show specific kings as well.

Assuming hearts are trump:

4NT (RCKB)	5♣ (1 or 4)		
5♦ (next suit = queen ask)	5♥	=	no queen (next suit up)
	6♥	=	queen but no kings (trumps at lowest level)
	5♠	=	queen and king of spades
	6♣	=	queen and king of clubs
	6♦	=	queen and king of diamonds
	5NT	=	queen and 2 kings

4NT (RCKB)	5♦ (0 or 3)		
5♠ (next suit = queen ask)	5NT	=	no queen (next suit up)
(5♥ would be sign off)	6♥	=	queen but no kings
	6♠	=	queen and king of spades
	6♣	=	queen and king of clubs
	6♦	=	queen and king of diamonds
	6NT	=	queen and 2 kings

Assuming spades are trump:

4NT (RCKB)	5♣ (1 or 4)		
5♦ (next suit = queen ask)	5♥	=	no queen (next suit up)
	5♠	=	queen but no kings (trumps at lowest level)
	6♥	=	queen and king of spades
	6♣	=	queen and king of clubs
	6♦	=	queen and king of diamonds

	5NT	=	queen and 2 kings
4NT (RCKB)	5♦ (0 or 3)		
5♥ (next suit = queen ask)	5♠	=	no queen (next suit up)
(5♠ would be sign off)	6♥	=	queen but no kings
	6♣	=	queen and king of clubs
	6♦	=	queen and king of diamonds
	5NT	=	queen and 2 kings

Playing 1430 RKCB, the standard is to use the specific king ask; however, some still may play the number of kings from “Blackwood” excluding the trump suit –YOU BETTER ASK your partner.

Responding with voids

Using the 1430 convention, and have a void the responses to 4NT are:

5NT = 2 or 4, an even number of keycards with a void (with 0, bid 5♦— ignore the void)

6 of suit below the trump suit = odd number keycards (1 or 3)

6 trump suit = odd number of keycards (1 or 3) with a void in higher ranking suit

Specific Suit Asks (SSA) (provided you do not play the Spiral Scan)

We have seen that one may ask for keycards, the queen of trump and having both, ask for specific kings. When searching for a grand slam, one may also need to know about an outside suit (not the trump suit). For example, do you have a queen in the suit, a doubleton, or a singleton? To ask and answer this question, one makes a Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

The specific suit asks is usually done when the captain has the queen of trump after the keycard responses of 5♣ or 5♦.

After 5♣ 6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠ is SSA.

After 5♦ 5♠, 6♣, 6♦, 6♥ is SSA

Lacking a control (xxx) simply sign-off in the trump suit at the 6-level or pass the 6-level asking bid. With a control: Axx, Kxx, xx, xx, x one jumps to the 7-level in the trump suit.

More complicated responses are:

1. Make a first step response, including 6NT with third-round control Qx(x), Ax, AQx
2. Make a second step response with second-round control Kxx(x)

3. Make a third step response with Kx
4. Raise the ask bid with KQx and JUMP to the trump suit with a singleton

The SSA is also used in place of 5NT for the king asks when hearts are trumps since you do not want to hear 5♠, going beyond 6♥. Instead of bidding 5NT one bids 5♠ as a SSA.

Following the above pattern, the responses follow.

5NT	=	third-round control, either a queen or doubleton
6♣	=	Kxx(x)
6♦	=	Kx
6♠	=	KQ(x)
7♥	=	singleton
6♥	=	denies K – usually xxx(x) – no controls

Over Interference D0P1-R0P1 or DEP0

When the opponents interfere, most players play D0P1/R0P1. Another option is to use DEP0. While some do not use both, I recommend the use of both which depends on the level of interference and the rank of the suit bid.

If the opponents interfere at the five levels with a bid, use D0P1*,

Pass	One Keycard
Double	No keycards
1 st Step suit above	Two keycards
2 nd Step up	Three keycards

If the opponents interfere at the five levels with a double, use R0P1*,

Pass	One keycard
Double	No keycards
1 st Step suit above	Two keycards
2 nd Step up	Three keycards

*Caution – Some use these as RKC responses (0/3 and 1/4) – Partnership agreement.

However, if the bid used by the opponents is higher ranking than you're agreed upon suit you must use DEP0 and not D0P1 or R0P1.

DEP0

Double	Even Number of keycards (0, 2, 4)
Pass	Odd Number of keycards (1, 3)

The bidding goes 1♥ pass 4NT then 5♠. Since spades is higher ranking than hearts, one must use DEP0: double is even and pass is odd. You are still at the 5-level and the double may be passed for penalty. If instead, the opponents bid 5♣, D0P1 is used since the bid is of lower rank. Now double is zero and pass is one keycard. A bid of 5♦ hearts shows two key cards and 5♥ would indicate three keycards. If instead, the opponents doubled, one would use R0P1.

If the opponents interfere over 5NT (at the **six-levels**) use DEP0 to show number of kings, not including the trump king. Now double shows zero or two and pass shows one or three. If you play specific kings, you may not be able to show the king and hence may also revert to DEP0.

Kickback or Redwood and Minorwood

When the agreed upon suit is a minor, the use of 4NT as a keycard ask will often get the responses too high. To avoid this problem, one uses Roman Keycard Blackwood with kickback. It works as follows: if clubs is trump, then 4♦ is used to ask. If diamonds is trump, then 4♥ is used to ask. If hearts is trump, then 4♠ and not 4NT is used. When spades is trump, one always uses 4NT to ask.

One responds to the ask using each suit in order. For example, suppose the agreed upon suit is hearts so 4♠ is the asking bid, the responses are:

4NT	1/4 keycards (the 14 step) 1st step
5♣	3/0 keycards (the 30 step) 2nd step
5♦	2/5 keycards w/o queen of trump in agreed suit 3rd step
5♥	2/5 keycards with queen of trump in agreed suit 4th step

What is the queen ask? After 4NT, it is 5♣ and after 5♣ it is 5♦; always the next step. Note that without the queen, you are at the five-level of the agreed upon heart trump suit.

Responding to the 4NT/5♣ Queen ask – (next step)

1. If you **do not** hold the queen, responder **returns to the agreed upon suit at the five-level (5♥).**
2. 5NT shows the queen, but no outside king!
3. With both (Q of trump and one or more kings), bid at the six level of the lowest ranking king.

Knowing you have all Keycards, 5♠ is now the (SKA) when using Kickback for Hearts; the responses are for specific kings:

5NT	spade king (easy to now show higher ranking king)
6♥	0 outside kings
6♣/6♦	1 king (cheapest lower rank)

Some use 5NT for the SKA, so you best ask your partner. However, then you cannot show the higher ranking king; and 6♥ would show no lower ranking king. Again one may do a second lower ranking king ask.

Asks that are not the Queen or the (SKA) are again used as for the SSA. All extensions follow.

If one uses 4NT for the majors and Only Kickback for the minors, it is referred to as Redwood. An alternative to Redwood is Minorwood for the minors.

The **Minorwood Convention** uses four of the agreed minor for the RKCB ask. For example, in the auction 1♦ - 2♦*, the bid of 4♦ is Minorwood – no alert needed (note some partnerships use 3♦* as Minorwood called 1-2-3 Minorwood – if you do it must be alerted); it is used instead of 4♥, kickback (Redwood). It can also be played in a sequence when kickback may be confusing. For example, if the bid of 4♠ is confusing, one may jump into four of a minor instead of using kickback RKCB. I have heard this called the “**Bothwood**” Convention.

Instead of playing **Minorwood**, some play **Crosswood**. The difference is that with **Crosswood**, if diamonds is the agreed upon suit then 4♣ is the 1430 keycard ask and if clubs is agreed, then 4♦ is the 1430 ask.

With a double fit in either the majors or the minors, some use Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB).

Minorwood

Over 4♣

4♦	1 or 4 keycards (the 14 step)	1 st step
4♥	3 or 0 keycards (the 30 step)	2 nd step
4♠	2 (or 5) keycards w/o queen of trump in agreed suit	3 rd step
4NT	2 (or 5) keycards with queen of trump in agreed suit	4 th step
5♣	To Play	

Over 4♦

4♥	1 or 4 keycards (the 14 step)	1 st step
4♠	3 or 0 keycards (the 30 step)	2 nd step
4NT	2 (or 5) keycards w/o queen of trump in agreed suit	3 rd step

- 5♣ 2 (or 5) keycards with queen of trump in agreed suit 4th step
- 5♦ To Play

Minorwood (Queen Ask)

As before the Queen ask is initiated by bidding the next step up after showing 1/4 or 0/3 key cards (e.g. 4♥, 4♠, or 4NT).

If you do not have the queen bid the minor suit at the 5-level. With the Queen bid the agreed upon minor suit at the six level.

Minorwood (King Ask – Specific Kings)

If one has all the Key Cards, one may ask about kings. The King-Ask is **one level higher than the Minor trump suit** (for example 5♦ if clubs is the suit and 5♥ if diamonds is the suit). Then the bid of 5NT – Denies any Kings

With two Kings, bid the cheapest at the 6-level (below the agreed trump suit); if the second king is of a higher rank bid 6NT. With three kings bid 7NT. **Note some play Number of King's Ask (Ask Partner what they Play)**

After 5♦:5♥=0, 5♠=1, 5NT=2, 6♣=3 (partner can bid 7♣ or 7NT)

After 5♥:5♠=0, 5NT=1, 6♣=3, 7♦=3 (partner can bid 7♦ or 7NT)

Let us look at an example of Kickback Dealer North and N-S vulnerable

	♠	AK1086		
	♥	5		
	♦	A5432		
	♣	K9		
♠	Q3	N W E S	♠	9754
♥	KQJ42		♥	10 873
♦	KJ6		♦	10 9
♣	763		♣	Q84
	♠	J2		
	♥	A96		
	♦	Q87		
	♣	AJ1052		

Suggested Bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass

Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass

North opened the bidding by bidding one spade showing five spades and south responded with the 2/1 bid of two clubs. North's jumps to three diamonds shows a 5-5 hand in spades and diamonds. South with three diamonds bids 4♦. Having found a diamond fit, the bid of four hearts is kickback RKCB for diamonds. The bid of five diamonds shows two keycards with the Queen of trump. North next bids six.

The advantage of the Redwood/Minorwood when investigating a slam in a minor is that it keeps the bidding at a low level; one may escape at the five level. In this example it does not make a difference; however, if one responded five spades showing three keycards when bidding diamonds or clubs, without kickback, it commits the partnership to slam so why ask; this is not the case with the kickback/minorwood RCKB bids or Minorwood.

In this example, it was critical that north showed his 5-5 shape. If he did not, the slam may be missed. Let's see how an incorrect bidding sequence may progress for the same example.

Suggested poor Bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♣	
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Double	4♣	Pass	4♣
Pass	5♣	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Because North did not show his shape the slam was missed.

When playing 2/1, one usually makes a 2/1 game force bid as soon as possible; however, it is not always critical.

We now show how to bid the same Example using Minorwood.

Suggested Bidding sequence using a forcing no-trump bid:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♣ (2/1 Bid)	
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦(1430 Minorwood)	Pass	5♣ (2 Keycards w Q♦)
Pass	5♥ (SKA)	Pass	5NT (No Kings)

Pass 6♦ Pass Pass
 Pass

If responder had a higher ranking king, he would bid 6NT while 6♣ would show a club king.

Slam Bidding with No Agreed Upon Suit

When playing 1430 RKCB, how should one proceed if there is not a prior agreement on the trump suit? Some recommend that (1) it should always be the last-bid suit, some suggest that (2) one should not play any form of RKCB, but instead just use Blackwood as an ace only ask (no keycards), others recommend (3) that RKCB be used only if the last-bid suit is a minor (opener or responder) but not a major and some play (4) that it is the last-bid suit of the responder. What is your agreement?

The approach you use must be discussed with your partner when you make out your convention card. There is no “best” or standard approach. However, let’s consider a few examples.

Suppose you open one spade and partner responds two hearts (a 2/1 response), and as opener, you hold the hand: ♠AKQJ763 ♥4 ♦KQ53 ♣7. If you play the last-bid suit, you cannot bid 4NT. You might try three spades and then 4NT, but if partner bids four hearts over three spades, you are back to square one. If your agreement allows you to agree that the last-bid major with a forcing three-level raise or a splinter jump (even a fake splinter jump!) below game and this is not done, the last-bid suit is not the agreed upon suit. In the previous example, a strong case could be made to make spades the agreed upon suit if opener jumps to 4NT over two hearts. The last-bid suit works whenever you have a fit for the last-bid suit. But if you do not, it usually does not work. We consider an example.

Opener	Responder
♠KQJ863	♠A2
♥K10942	♥J7
♦Q8	♦AK5
♣Void	♣AKQJ104

The bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	3♦
3♥	4NT
6♣	7NT

Responder leaps to 4NT to ask for keycards. Since the last-bid suit was hearts, opener bids 6♣ which shows an odd number of keycards, the king of hearts and a void in clubs. Thinking that the one keycard is the ace of hearts, responder bids a grand slam, 7NT. whose fault? The fault

was that they lacked a mutual agreement as to what 4NT means when there is no agreed upon suit.

If you play the last-bid suit, you will only survive a 4NT ask when you intend to play in your own suit as long as you hold the king of the last-bid suit. Partner is forced to answer only aces! In the above example, responder did not hold the king. Because there was no agreed upon suit, one would bid 5♣ (zero keycards). Partner would bid 6NT.

The above example suggests that one use Blackwood if there is no agreed upon suit.

To illustrate, suppose the bidding goes one heart-two clubs-two hearts-4NT. Then, since the last-bid minor suit of responder was clubs, 4NT agrees clubs. If responder wanted to agree hearts, and the partnership plays that a raise to three hearts is forcing, it is easy enough to bid three hearts and then 4NT. If a raise to three hearts is not forcing, then a jump to four diamonds agrees hearts and if partner bids four hearts, 4NT can be bid. If the responder wants to agree spades, he bids two spades or three spades, and then bids 4NT. Thus, if you do not have an agreed upon suit, you can play Blackwood or agree that one may play the last-bid minor suit of opener or responder.

With no agreed upon suit, here are my suggestions.

1. Use Keycard after any four-level bid.
2. All Kickback auctions are RKCB.
3. If two suits are agreed upon, the **FIRST SUIT BID** is trumps for RKCB purposes.
4. When none of the previous applies, use Blackwood as ace only asks.

Overview: Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430*

4NT when spades are the agreed upon suit (Keycard Ask)

5♣ = 1 or 4 keycards

5♦ = 0 or 3 keycards

5♥ = 2 or 5 keycards without the queen of trump

5♠ = 2 or 5 keycards with the queen of trump or holding a 6th trump

Kickback

Use four diamonds as keycard ask when CLUBS is the agreed upon suit

Use four hearts as keycard ask when DIAMONDS is the agreed upon suit

Use four spades as keycard ask when HEARTS is the agreed upon suit

Voids

5NT = 2 or 4 an even number of keycards with a void (5♦=0, ignore the void)

6 of suit below the trump suit = odd number keycards (1/3)

6 trump suit = odd number of keycards (1/3) with a void in higher ranking suit

DOP1/ROP1 Interference at the 5 level **DBL/RE-DBL**: 0 or 3 keycards and **PASS**: 1 or 4 keycards

DEP0 Interference at the 6-level **DBL**: Even # keycards (0/2/4) or **PASS**: Odd # (1/3)

QUEEN ASK: After 5♣, 5♦ is Queen Ask

Responses:

Denial: Return to the five-level of the agreed upon suit

6 Level of agreed Suit: With queen and **no** side-suit king or extra trump

6 Level of Lower King Suit: With queen and king

5NT: With queen **without** a side-suit king, but trump extra

After 5♦, 5♥ is the Queen Ask

Denial: If spades are trump, bids 5♠, with hearts pass.

6 Level of Lower King Suit: With queen and side king

5NT: With queen **without** a side-suit king, but trump extra

6NT: With queen **without** a side-suit king and 4-3-3-3 distribution

5NT is a Specific King ASK (NOT NUMBER OF KINGS)

Responses are:

1. Return to the agreed upon trump suit at the six-level denies any kings.
2. With two kings, bid the cheapest at the six-level (below agreed upon trump suit); if the second king is of higher rank, return agreed suit at the 6-level. If spades are bid or shown as a singleton/void is shown, bid 6NT.
3. With three kings, bid 6NT.

SPECIFIC SUIT ASK (SSA) After 5♣: 5♥, 6♣, 6♦ is SSA. After 5♦: 5♠, 6♦, 6♥ is SSA.

Make a first step response, including 6NT with third-round control Qx(x), Ax, AQx, xx

Make a second step response with second-round control Kxx(x)

Make a third step response with Kx

Raise the ask bid with KQx and JUMP to the trump suit with a singleton

***NO AGREED upon SUIT; some use standard BLACKWOOD CONVENTION for Ace Asking and 5NT for NUMBER of Kings Ask**

Slam bidding examples.

Slam 1

Opener ♠A7 ♥AQ65 ♦84 ♣AKQ98
 Responder ♠KQ5 ♥K843 ♦KQJ6 ♣7

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	3♥
4♠	5♣
5♠	5♦
6♥	Pass

The opener has 19 HCP + 1 length + 1 Quality suit = 20 Starting Points. Hence, some may open the bidding as 2NT. However, Opener has 4 quick tricks and 4 losers and opens 2♣ (the rule of 44). Responder has 14HCP and a quality suit and bids 2♦ which shows at least one A/K. Opener next bids 2♥, his 4-card suit. With four hearts, responder bids 3♥ to show their fit. Opener next bids 4♠ as kickback for hearts.

With one keycard, responder bids 5♣. Opener next bids 5♠, the SKA. Without the club king, responder bid 5♦ to show the ♦K; with this information opener bids the slam 6♥.

How would we bid the hand opening 2NT?

Opener	Responder
2NT (20-21 pts)	3♣ (Assume Puppet)
3♦* (no 5-card but a 4-card major)	3♠ (4-card heart suit)
4♥ (agree on hearts)	4♠ (kickback for hearts)
5♠ (2 keycards with the queen)	6♥
Pass	

Slam 2

Opener ♠AJ7 ♥AQJ753 ♦AQ4 ♣7
 Responder ♠K5 ♥K1084 ♦8765 ♣AK9

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT*
4NT	5♥
5NT	6♣
6♦	6♥

Opener has 18 HCP + 2 length points + 1 quality suit = 21 points. Responder has thirteen Starting Points.

After the bid of 1♥, responder bids 2NT* (Jacoby). Instead of showing his singleton, he bids 4NT. With two keycards, the bid is 5♥. Opener has the queen of trump, bids 5NT, which is the specific king ask. With the king of clubs, responder bids 6♣. The bid of 6♦ is the second king's ask. Without the king, responder again signs off in the 6♥.

Slam 3

Opener	♠AJ7 ♥AQJ753 ♦AQ98 ♣ void
Responder	♠K5 ♥K1084 ♦8765 ♣AK9

You have the same hand, but now you have a void. You cannot bid 4NT with a void. However, you have two options, Cue bidding or using another convention called Exclusion Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB). We will consider both; ERKCB) and splinter bidding with voids

Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB) Convention

The convention may be played with a known major/minor suit agreement and you know you are in the slam zone. For example, after Jacoby 2NT* or splinter bids (direct/ambiguous) and game forcing inverted minor bids.

The convention is initiated by an unusual jump to the five levels above game in your void suit. You are asking for keycards for the agreed suit (or last bid suit, if agreed) excluding the void suit. Partner does not count the ace in the void suit bid; now there are four keycards, three aces and a king. **There is really no such thing as 1430 or 3014 ERKCB.**

Responses to ERKCB

First Step	0 keycards
Second Step	1 keycard without the queen
Third Step	1 keycard with the queen
Fourth Step	2 keycards without the queen
Fifth Step	2 keycards with the queen
Sixth Step	3 keycards without the queen
Seventh	3 keycards with the queen

As with 1430 RKCB, the bid of 5NT is again the specific king ask; however, one may also use the bid of 5♠. The next step after a 0/1 or 1/4step is the queens ask. A negative response is the next step. And with the Queen and no kings, bid 5NT. With the queen and a king bid 6x to show a king. Finally, the bid of any suit that is not the queen ask is the SSA.

What do you do after an ERKCB ask with a void? Most ignore it, but you can again bid 5NT with an even number and bid 6x to show a void and an odd number.

Returning to our Slam 3 example, opener bids 5♣ (ERKCB). Excluding the club suit, responder has one keycard (king of hearts without the Q) and bids 5♥ since 5♦=0. Partner with all the aces and a void in clubs knows it is the king of hearts. Having the queen, what next? He bids 5NT which is again the specific king ask, without the king of diamonds, partner again signs off in 6♥.

While I have stated that there is no such thing as 1430 ERKCB, some do not believe this and will respond to the jump bid as if was 1430 e.g. first step=1/4, next 0/3 etc.

So, ask your partner to review the bids to ERKCB. And I have seen that some only use steps: 0, 1, 2, and 3 keycards.

A Modern Splinter Bidding Convention

Singletons

1♠ - pass - 3♥* (singleton somewhere) – to ask where, bid next step (3♠*)

Then 4♥* - 4♣* - 4♦* show singletons (direct bids) – or some may prefer use submarine-like bids 3NT*=♣ 4♣*=♦ and 4♦*=♥ to avoid a double of the bid suit.

1♥ - pass - 3♠* (singleton somewhere) – to ask where, bid next step (3NT)

Then 4♣ - 4♦ show singletons and 4♥= spades (singleton) – or again you may use submarine-like bids 4♥=♠, 4♣=♦, and 4♦=♥ to avoid a double.

If you do not need to know where the singleton is located, since it may help the opponents, bid 4NT as 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) with spades agreed — Or you may use 3NT as 1430 Baby Blackwood RKCB to keep the responses at a lower level. When hearts are the agreed the bid of 4♠ is used as 1430 kickback for hearts to keep the responses at a lower level. **NEVER** use 4NT since with the AQ you are always too high, committed to 6! Or, you may use cue bids.

Voids

1♠ - pass - 4♣*/4♦* (void in suit bid) and 3NT * = heart void.

1♥ - pass - 4♣*/4♦* (voids in suit bid) and 3NT* = spade void.

However, if you play some version of Bergen/Reverse/Combined Bergen Raises then 3NT* cannot be used to show 3-card support with 13-15 Dummy Points over a major suit bid. And, you must give up the 4♣* and 4♦* Swiss bids. Not a big Deal!

The Void bids initiate the Exclusion Roman Keycard (ERKCB) Convention — which assumes the agreed upon Major and EXCLUDES the void suit.

The responses are NOT 1430/3014 RKCB, but works using steps:

For example Over the 5♣ the steps are:

- 5♦ = 0
- 5♥ = 1 without Queen
- 5♠ = 1 with Queen
- 5NT = 2 without Queen
- 6♣ = 2 with Queen
- 6♦ = 3 without Queen
- 6♥ = 3 with Queen

Over 3NT* - the responses are again steps 4♣*/4♦*/5♦*/5♥*/5♠* and NOT 1430/3014; however, now the bids must be alerted since the asking bid is below the 4-level.

What about the Queen ask? Over the first step = zero, the next step is the Queen ask.

Over 3NT* or 5♦ — the responses are again steps and NOT 1430/3014.

The first step denies and next step says yes with the Queen. And two steps say yes and an outside king in the bid suit.

Double Agreement Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB)

With a double agreement, there are now six keycards (four aces and two kings), NOT FIVE, so we have what are called Double agreement 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB). We consider DRKCB responses for some double agreements.

1. Major-Major Agreements

a) Opener	Responder	b) Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥	1♥	2♠
3♣	3♠	3♠	4♥
4♥	4NT	4NT	

Then 4NT is a DRKCB ask.

When responding to DRKCB asks, there are now six keycards. And, **there are no void-showing responses.** The first two responses (5♣ and 5♦) of DRKCB are the same as 1430 RKCB; however, there are now three queens showing responses:

- 5♥ 2 with neither queen
- 5♠ 2 with lower ranking queen
- 5NT 2 with higher ranking queen
- 6♣ 2 with both queens

Note that in the second step (5♠), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first or second step response to a DRKCB ask (5♣ and 5♦), unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown. To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step, excluding the trump suits, but including 4NT for a queen ask. The four-response steps now become:

1 st step	2 with no queen
2 nd step	2 with lower-ranking queen only
3 rd step	2 higher-ranking queen only
4 th step	2 both queens

When investigating a small slam using the double-agreement sequence, you are looking to have at least five of the six missing keycards plus at least one queen of the agreed upon suits.

We now consider two **major-major** examples.

(A) Opener	Responder	Comments
♠A10732	♠KJ5	
♥A982	♥KQJ63	
♦K2	♦A94	
♣Q7	♣A5	
1♠	2♥	(1) Double Agreement
3♥	3♠ (1)	(2) DRKCB
4♥	4NT (2)	(3) 2 with neither queen
5♥ (3)	6♥ (4)	(4) Q♠ is missing

(B) Opener	Responder	Comments
♠A8732	♠KJ5	
♥AQ95	♥KJ632	
♦A2	♦K94	
♣A5	♣Q7	
1♠	2♥	(1) Double Agreement
3♥	3♠ (1)	(2) DRKCB
4♥	4NT (2)	(3) 1 or 4 keycards
5♣ (3)	5♦ (4)	(4) Queen ask with double agreement
5♠ (5)	6♥ (6)	(5) Q♥ (2 nd step, lower-ranking queen) (6) Q♠ is missing

Note that if the response in example (B) was 5♦ (0/3), 5♥ would be the Queen ask bid and with zero you would pass. Remember to use DRKCB you must have two keycards to begin the DRKC

asking bid of 4NT. Queen asks are more easily used with kickback DRKCB sequences. With all eight keycards, 5NT is the SKA bid.

Quantitative Bids

When one opens 1NT or 2NT, a jump bid to 4NT is usually quantitative; it is asking partner if he is at the top of his bid. If he is, he should bid 6NT, otherwise, pass. While it is most often played when opening no-trump, it may also be used with strong suit bid responses.

Examples of some common Quantitative bidding sequences follow.

1NT - 4NT	Partner passes with a minimum or bids 6NT
1NT - 2♦/2♥	Jacoby Transfer to hearts/spades
2♥/2♠ - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes or bids on with extras values/length
2♣ - 2♦	Semi-positive
3NT - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes with a minimum or 6NT with good values
1♣ - 1♠	
2♦ - 2♥	Reverse by opener showing 17+ points, fourth suit forcing
3NT - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes with a minimum or 6NT with good values
1NT - 2♣	Stayman
2♥ - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
1x - 1y	
1NT - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
1M - 2m	
2NT - 4NT	Quantitative, partner passes or bids 6NT
1NT - 2♣	
2♦ - 4NT	Quantitative partner passes or bids 6NT
2NT - 3♣	Stayman
3♠ - 4NT	Quantitative partner passes or bids 6NT

Baron Bids after 4NT

After an invitational quantitative 4NT bid, opener need not bid 6NT since finding 12 tricks may be difficult. It is often better to play slam in a suit which allows you to ruff losers. If you have four losers you may not want to play in no-trump, but a suit. Since the bid of 4NT invites a slam, any bid by the opener says “I accept” the invitation to slam, and is forcing; one may also stop in 5NT. Instead of bidding 6NT, one usually bids 4-card suits up-the-line which allows the partnership two chances to find a suit fit.

Let’s look at an example:

West	East
♠54	♠AK7
♥K67	♥QJ9
♦KQJ2	♦A10985
♣AK54	♣J2

In this example, West has 4 losers and the bidding goes 1NT – 4NT; since East has 15HCP and a 5-card suit, he invites slam. With four losers, east accepts by bidding 5♣, the cheapest 4-card suit. East does not like clubs, but is happy to bid 4♦. West likes his quality diamond suit and his two small spades are only an asset in a suit contract. Hence, he bids 6♦. In six diamonds, west can ruff a spade for the 12th trick; if the contract was in 6NT, only 11 tricks can be made.

Let’s consider a second example.

West	East
♠AKJ	♠Q72
♥AQ67	♥K9
♦A102	♦K752
♣KJ10	♣Q842

In this case, the bidding goes:

2♣	2♦ (A/K no alert)
2NT	4NT
5♣ (Baron Bid)	6♣

Finally suppose we have the following hand.

West	East
♠AJ2	♠KQ43

♥KQ87	♥52
♦KQ6	♦AJ103
♣AK8	♣J102

Here the bidding goes:

2NT	3♣ (Stayman)
3♥	4NT
6NT	

You have bid your suits so that the bid is quantitative for a slam in no-trump.

Grand Slam Force after 1NT – Is the bid of 5NT. It may be used after a no-trump opening or after one has agreed upon a suit.

To use the bid after a one no-trump opening requires 20+ HCP. If opener is at the top of his bid, 17 HCP, he bids 7NT; otherwise he bids 6NT.

After a suit bid, for example 1♠ - 5NT or 4♥ - 5NT, with two or more controls in the bid suit, partner bids:

- **6 of the agreed trump suit** if holding **one** of the top three trump honors (e.g., the ace)
- **7 of the agreed trump suit** if holding **two** of the top three trump honors (e.g., the king and queen)

Pick a Slam - Without a known fit or when the opponents interfere, a jump to 5NT is used to ask partner to pick slam. For example, he may go: 1♣ - 1♥; 2♦ - 5NT or the bidding may go 2♣ - 3♠; 4♣ - 5NT.

1430 Baby Blackwood in Serious 3NT

The bid of 3NT may be used in a variety of artificial ways in possible slam auctions when playing 2/1. Consider auctions of the following type:

West	East	West	East
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♣
3♥	3NT*	2♥	3♠
		3NT*	

*=alert

What does the bid of 3NT* mean?

Clearly, not to play! The problem is that neither player has limited his hand. At this point, both east and west could have near maximum hands with reasonable controls or could have

substantial extra values. In both bidding sequences, we have agreed upon a major, hearts and spades, respectively.

At this point, I suggest that the bid of 3NT* be used as 1430 Baby Blackwood which must be alerted since it is a keycard ask below the 4-level. It begins the keycard sequence at a low level and allows one to bail out at the five-level of the major.

It can also be used as “Serious” 3NT* convention proposed by Eric Rodwell which merely proposes slam interest as an artificial bid not as keycard asks. See for example Rodwell (2017), “Eric Rodwell’s Bidding Topics” Book 1, page 133. If one does not bid 3NT*, one begins a cue bidding sequence! With less than 15+ HCP or the equivalent, one uses a cue bid to show a minimum hand. It is a courtesy cue bid in case partner has substantial extra values. The cue bidder usually has a near minimum. If he has substantial extras, he bids 3NT*, saying that he is “serious” – with slam interest. Hence with a minimum, the bidding might be:

West	East	West	East
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♣
3♥	3♠/4♣/4♦	2♥	3♠
		4♣/4♦	

This sometimes is referred to as non-serious no-trump or frivolous no-trump.

With no interest in slam, one would sign off in four of the major and not bid 3NT or cue bid. If you cue bid, there are some important rules:

(1.) A cue bid in partner’s 2/1 suit shows one of the top three honors (A/K/Q). (2.) A cue bid in your own 2/1 suit shows two of the top three honors. (3.) A cue bid in an unbid suit shows any first or second round control (A/K/singleton/ void). Cue bidding is always done up-the-line. By skipping a step, you deny an appropriate “control” in the step you skipped. 4NT is always RKCB (1430/3014).

Slam bidding is the most rewarding and possibly one of the toughest aspects of the game. You have to make one-trick decisions, and if you’re wrong (either way), the penalties are severe. The bid of 3NT* (as 1430) is a tool that may help you improve your decision-making.

When using this convention or others, it’s important to remember the three aspects that make slams:

1. Power. For a slam purely on HCP, you need thirty-three for the six-level, thirty-seven for seven. Playing tricks can make up for some of the power, of course, provided the other criteria are met.
2. Controls. If the opponents can take the first (in seven) or first two (in six) tricks in any suit, you will go down. So you need to assure you have the necessary first and second round controls.
3. Trumps. Obviously, not important for NT slams, but in a suit, the trump suit must be both long enough to generate tricks and solid enough to not lose two.

Examples of using serious 3NT and the cue bidding style in some 2/1 auctions follow.

Cue 1:

♠KJ567	♠AQ2
♥A89	♥7
♦Q2	♦AKJ1098
♣Q56	♣A45
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♦	4NT
5♥	7NT

Opener's 4♦ denies serious slam interest (else 3NT) and denies first or second round club control (else 4♣) but shows one of the top three honors in diamonds. Responder can count thirteen tricks.

Cue 2:

♠AQJ98	♠K234
♥Ax	♥KQ
♦K987	♦AQJ43
♣Q7	♣J9
1♠	2♦
3♦	3♠
3NT*	4♥
4♠	PASS

Opener's 3NT* shows serious slam interest. Responder's 4♥ bid shows two keycards. Opener's 4♠ bid is an absolute sign-off. Responder, despite holding extra values, must pass. Note: If you did not use "Baby 3NT," you may have over bid!

Cue 3:

♠AJ1087	♠KQ2
♥KJ9	♥654
♦7	♦AKQJ98
♣Q987	♣A
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♥	4NT
5♦	6♠

4♥ denies serious slam interest but shows a heart control. A heart control is all responder needs to know about. What would happen if you exchange opener's honors in hearts?

Cue 4:

♠AJT34	♠KQ7
♥Q108	♥543
♦7	♦AKQJ98
♣KJ87	♣A
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♠	PASS

When responder bids 4♦, he is announcing serious slam interest. This is due to the fact that opener has denied serious slam interest by not bidding 3NT. Responder would sign off over 4♣ if he did not have serious slam interest of his own. Opener is now obligated to show a heart control if he has one. When opener bids 4♠, responder knows that the defense can take at least the first two heart tricks.

Cue 5:

♠K98	♠Q7
♥AJ10765	♥K32
♦79	♦AQ10654
♣K7	♣AQ
1♥	2♦
2♥	3♥
3♠	3NT
4♥	Pass

When hearts is agreed at the three-level, opener must bid 3♠ if he has a control in spades. Any other bid would deny spade control (3NT would be Baby Blackwood - Serious 3NT). Responder has extra values and shows this by bidding 3NT. 4♥ shows two keycards, and responder passes.

If there is one lesson to be learned from this discussion, it is that there is significantly more to effective bidding than merely writing down the name of a convention or a system on your convention card. Good partnership agreements are considerably more important than the system you play. If you and your partner decide to play a complex non-standard system, put in the time and do it right. Discuss your auctions and make sure you understand why you make bids and what they mean! When you truly understand your system, you will start to see the benefits in your results.

This section is based upon material in the book by Brian Senior (2001), “Conventions Today,” Chess & Bridge LTD and an article by Fred Gitelman, “Improving 2/1 Game Force” published in *Canadian Masterpoints*, a magazine for expert players. This article with extensions (including the Last Train Convention) may be found on the Web: www.imp-bridge.nl/artiles/2over1.htm.

Cue bidding for Slam

Cue bidding sequences are critical to reaching a slam in 2/1 game force auctions. In addition, we have been warned: (1) don't use Blackwood with a worthless doubleton; (2) if you use Keycard Blackwood (without kickback) and want to investigate slam in a minor, the use of 4NT can be disastrous. So, how do you investigate slam? The answer is by using cue bidding. The material in this section follows the basic principles set forth by Ken Rexford (2006) in “Cue bidding at Bridge – A Modern Approach,” published by Master Point Press, Toronto.

To stimulate how you might use cue bidding, we look at two examples from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl round-robin event (Rexford, page 180). How would you bid the following hands?

Hand 1

West	East (dealer)
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

Hand 2

West (dealer)	East
♠ AKJ974	♠ Q10
♥ A	♥ Q53
♦ AK1097	♦ Q82
♣ 6	♣ J10432

Before we analyze the two hands, we put forth Ken's simple principles.

TEN BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CUE BIDDING

P1. Cue bids of a side suit belonging to the cue bidder show **two** of the top three honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♦	

P2. Cue bids of a side suit belonging to partner show **one** of the top three honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

P3. 2NT as a cue bid denies good trumps (denies two of the top three honors).

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
2NT	

P4. Bypassing 2NT as a cue bid promises good trumps.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

P5. A cue bid of trumps shows **two of the top three honors**, or the MISSING top honor if partner has already shown the other two top honors.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♥

P6. Cue bids of unbid suits show first or second round control, in the form of honors (ace/king) or shortness (singleton/void).

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♠

P7. Bypassing a cue bid denies the ability to make that cue bid.

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♦	

P8. Bidding 3NT shows serious slam interest.

West	East
1♥	2♦ (GF)
2♥	3♥
3NT	

P9. Bypassing serious 3NT denies slam interest.

West	East
1♥	2♦ (GF)
2♥	3♥
4♣	

P10. The last train cue bid below you're agreed upon suit is an artificial bid, a "Last Train to Clarksville" cue bid, used to show slam interest with insufficient information to commit to slam or to use 1430 RKCB.

Finally, you must be able to **infer the meaning** of the skipped cue bid step. Let's look at two examples:

(1) The bidding goes:

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
2NT	

Having established hearts as the trump suit and bypassing the cue bid of 2♣, west denies a spade control and shows poor trumps (P3). Alternative, consider the example:

(2) The bidding goes:

West	East
1♥	2♣ (GF)
2♦	2♥
3♣	

Now, opener holds one of the top three honors in clubs (P2) and again lacks a spade control since the control bid was skipped. Furthermore, since the bid of 2NT was bypassed, opener must have two of the top three honors in hearts!

Continuing, suppose responder now bids 3♦; we now know that responder holds a diamond card (P2). But, do we know more? The purpose of cue bidding is to get to slam and from the bidding

we know that opener lacks a spade control, and responder did not sign-off in 4♥, but cue bid 3♦. We now know by logical inference that responder must have a spade control.

If opener now bids 3♠ after 3♦, he bypassed 3♥ so he lacks a third heart control but shows third round control in spades.

CORRECT INFERENCES IN CUE BIDDING ARE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

With the above basic principles and the ability to infer meaning to gaps in cue bidding, one may begin to develop the “art” of cue bidding in his partnerships. For more complex principles like picture jump cue bids, cue bidding after splinters, complicated auctions (e.g., Two-Way Checkback Stayman, Wolff Signoff, Flag Bids, the Golady Convention), and how to handle interference, see Rexford (2006). We now return to our two examples.

Hand (1)

West	East (dealer)
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

Before we begin, let’s examine the starter points in both hands.

East has 13 HCP with no adjustments.

West has 12 HCP +2 length points (diamonds and spades) – 1 worthless doubleton point (K2) + 1 quality suit point (three of the top 5 honors) = 15 starter points and since the number of aces and 10s (2) – 1 (Q’s +J’s) = 1 there was no adjustment for the hand.

East should open 1♦ with 13 HCP; west bids 1♠. East now bids 2♣ to establish the suit. Having determined a fit in spades, west must reevaluate his hand by adding 2 points for a singleton, 1 point for the doubleton, and 1 more point for the quality side suit, hence west has 15 + 2 + 1 = 18 Dummy Points. With the possibility of a slam near the thirty-three point level, west must begin a cue bidding sequence. He should not bid 4NT since he has a doubleton heart suit!

However, you must plan your bids. With eighteen Dummy Points, he wants to show slam interest and so bids 3♣; the bid of 2NT is bypassed since it would convey a weak spade suit. Now, east knows there is game in spades, but is there more since he is not sure that the bid of three clubs is help suit or a cue bid? With a balanced hand, east does not believe his hand is worth a slam try, even with the ace of clubs (he has thirteen Starter Points and thirteen Bergen Points since he can add no extra values for short-suits, extra length in trumps, or side suit quality – a four- or five-card suit), bid 3♠. Next, west bids “serious 3NT” (not Baby Blackwood). East cue bids 4♣, what does east now know? (1) West is serious about slam and (2) west’s 3♣ call was a cue bid. Now, west cue bids 4♦ and east should next cue bid 4♥. Thus, west must think slam and not sign-off.

He must bid 5♦ to show a second control in diamonds; east next bids 5♠ to show a spade control and west bids 6♠. In summary, the bidding follows:

Hand (1)

West	East - Dealer
♠ Q10832	♠ K754
♥ K2	♥ A84
♦ AK1085	♦ Q74
♣ 5	♣ A92

East	West
1♦	1♠
2♠	3♣ Cue Bid
3♠	3NT (Serious)
4♣ (Control)	4♦ (Forcing)
4♥ (Cue bid)	5♥ (Cue Bid)
5♠	6♠

Did you reach the spade slam? If you did not, do not feel bad, the contract by both teams in the Bermuda Bowl was four spades making six.

Let's look at our second example:

Hand (2)

West (dealer)	East
♠ AKJ974	♠ Q10
♥ A	♥ Q53
♦ AK1097	♦ Q82
♣ 6	♣ J10432

At the Bermuda bowl, the bidding went:

West	East
1♠	1NT (semi-forcing)
3♦	3♠
4♣	4♠
5♥	5♠

What a shame! What would you do?

First, let's evaluate the hands. West has 19 HCP + 3 length points (spades and diamonds) + 2 points for the quality suits – 1 point for the ace singleton = 24 Starter Points. And, east has 7 HCP + 1 for club length equal 8; since A's +10 minus Qs + J's = 2 – 4 there is no further adjustment.

We would agree with the bidding through the bid of 4♣. Instead of bidding 4♠, west must bid 4♦ to show one of the top three diamonds. With this information, west would launch into RKCB, bidding 4NT. Upon hearing 5♦ (0/3 keycards), opener next bids 5♥ (queen ask). With the queen and no extras, east bids 6♠. In this example, we have combined cue bidding with 1430 RKCB.

One final comment on cue bidding, while a cue bid at the 4-level may show an Ace or a King, first or second round control in a suit. Any control bid at the 5 level must show an Ace.

Scroll Bids (Modified)

With Bergen Raises

When playing Bergen Raises, some use concealed or ambiguous splinter bids. Recall that when opening a major, a jump into the other major indicates a singleton somewhere and four-card support with 13+ Dummy Points. For example, if one opens one heart, then three spades indicates 13+ Dummy Points with four hearts and a singleton somewhere; if one opens one spade, then a response of three hearts shows four spades, 13+HCP and a singleton somewhere.

To locate the singleton, the opener uses scroll asking bids. Thus, the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT or 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠. The responses after the 3NT scroll asks are: 4♣, 4♦, 4♠ which shows singletons in clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠ are: 3NT=♣, 4♠=♦, and 4♦=♥, the suit below the singleton. However, club members have asked me: How do you indicate not a singleton, but a VOID when using the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids?

A VARIATION: For the bidding sequence 1♥ - 3♠*, the scroll asks is 3NT; however, with a spade void it is often better to use 4♥ to show the spade void with a minimum hand. This allows the opening bidder to pass the heart game with no slam interest. Furthermore, for consistency for the two options, one may also after opening 1♠ and hearing the bid of 3♥*, use the following option: 4♠*=clubs, 4♦*=diamonds, and 4♥*=♥ (or you may use 3NT).

To show either a singleton or a void, one continues with a scroll bid. Then up-the-line bids are used to show a singleton or VOID and simultaneously provides one with information about keycards for the agreed upon suit. After hearing the response to the asking scroll bids (3NT or 3♠), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to determine the nature of the shortage. The responses are: Step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and Steps 2-5, the next four bids, indicate one has a void and simultaneously shows keycards. **However, the 4-level bid of the agreed upon major is skipped when it is the next sequential bid.**

To illustrate, suppose we are playing 1430 RKCB. And the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT and one hears the response 4♣*. To ask about the nature of the shortage (singleton or void), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to ask, bid 4♦*. The responses for showing a singleton and/or associated keycards for the major suit (hearts) with a void are:

- 4♥ club singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ club void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 4NT club void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♣ club void with 2 keycards w/o the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ club void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

If you play 0314 KCB, you merely interchange steps 2 and 3 above.

After hearing 4♦*, one would SKIP the up-the-line bid of 4♥ (sign-off) and instead use 4♠ to ask about the nature of the shortage. Now, 4NT shows a singleton diamond and the keycard steps 2-5 are: 5♣, 5♦, 5♥, and 5NT. After hearing the response 4♠, the up-the-line asking bid is 4NT. Then, 5♣=singleton in spades and the keycard steps (2-5) are: 5♦, 5♥, 5♠, 5NT.

When opening 1♠, to show a singleton somewhere with 13+Dummy Points and four-card support bid 3♥*. After hearing the asking bid of 3♠, one indicates a singleton with the bids 3NT*=♣, 4♣*=♦, and 4♥*=♠. To ask about the nature of the shortage, one again uses the up-the-line bids: 4♣, 4♦, and 4NT, SKIPPING 4♠. Again, the next cheapest up-the-line bid indicates a singleton and steps 2-5 are used to show a void and simultaneously keycards for the major suit spades.

To illustrate, following the bid of 4♣*, the shortage bid is 4♦*. The responses follow.

- 4♥ diamond singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ diamond void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 4NT diamond void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♣ diamond void with 2 keycards w/o the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ diamond void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

Other responses follow similarly.

To illustrate how the bid may be used, we consider an example.

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ762	♠K984
♥3	♥AQ92
♦9872	♦void
♣KQ	♣A7632
Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥* (shortness somewhere)

3♠* (shortage asking bid)	4♣* (singleton/void in diamonds)
4♦ (modified scroll ask)	4NT (void in diamonds with 0 or 3 keycards)
6♣ (if you have 3, bid 7)	7♠

Using the sequential scroll bids and up-the-line shortage bids, adapted from bids suggested by the Australian champion George Smolanko for splinter bids, allows one to further investigate the nature of the shortage, a singleton, or a void with information about the keycards in the agreed upon major suit.

Observe that the scroll bids and up-the-line shortage bids may also be used with the Jacoby 2NT response to a major. If you play that, a three-level bid denotes a singleton or a void and a four-level bid shows a strong (not a void) five-card suit; however, now one uses “modified” scroll-like bids to ask about shortage with keycard responses.

After Jacoby 2NT

When playing Jacoby 2NT* after a major suit opening, the three-level bid by responder is alerted and says that one has a singleton or void in the suit bid. **The bid of 2NT in response to partner’s opening bid of one of major shows at least four trump and 13+ Dummy Points in support of the major suit. And, in response to the bid of 2NT, opener’s bid at the three levels shows a singleton or a void.**

What does responder do next?

With a minimum and no interest based on opener’s response, responder usually jumps to game in the agreed suit. All other bids show at least some slam interest. Responder’s new suit bids are often cue bids looking for slam.

Are there other options?

Yes, one can use modified Scroll bids!

Let’s look at two bidding sequences:

(A) 1♠ - 2NT* - 3♣*/3♦*/3♥* which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

(B) 1♥ - 2NT* - 3♣*/3♦*/3♠* which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

To determine whether or not partner has a singleton or a void, one bids as follows.

For sequence (A), one bids: 4♣/4♦/4♥, and for sequence (B), one bids: 4♣/4♦/4♠. A scroll-up bid at the four levels. Do you have a singleton or a void?

Responses become:

- Next cheapest bid shows a singleton
- (Step 2) shows 1 or 4 keycards with a void
- (Step 3) shows 0 or 3 keycards with a void
- (Step 4) shows 2 or 5 keycards without and a void
- (Step 5) shows 2 or 5 keycards with the queen and a void

Thus, one is easily able to determine singleton and void with Keycard Blackwood. Let's look at an example:

Opening 1♠ and responding 2NT*, suppose partner hears the bid 3♥* that shows a singleton or void in hearts. After hearing the bid of 3♥*, one next bids 4♥ to ask whether it is a singleton heart or a void (**note, the bid of 4♠ is a sign-off**). The responses follow.

- 4♠ heart singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4NT heart void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 5♣ heart void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♦ heart void with 2 keycards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♥ heart void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

Similarly, opening 1♥, the responses after hearing for example 3♠* (a spade singleton or void), and one would bid 4♠.

The responses follow.

- 4NT spade singleton (next cheapest step)
- 5♣ spade void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 5♦ spade void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♥ spade void with 2 keycards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♠ spade void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

Note that the asking bids and responses provide all the information required to bid slam or to sign off at the five-level, below slam.

After Jacoby 2NT- Examples

Previously, I discussed how one may use Scroll Bids with Bergen Raises (when using concealed or ambiguous splinter bids) and after Jacoby 2NT*. We now consider two examples of the method when responder bids Jacoby 2NT* after a bid of a major.

Dealer East N-S vulnerable

	♠	J9		
	♥	A984		
	♦	J109		
	♣	Q1087		
♠	K10642	N W E S	♠	AQ875
♥	10762		♥	3
♦	AQ		♦	K765
♣	A3		♣	K42
	♠	3		
	♥	KQJ5		
	♦	6432		
	♣	J965		

Suggested Bidding:

West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3♥*	Pass
4♥*	Pass	4♠*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

*Alerts

West's 2NT* is Jacoby 2NT, showing a game-forcing raise with at least four spades.

The bid of 3♥* shows a singleton or void. Hearing shortness, and with four hearts, east bids 4♥* to ask whether or not west has a singleton or a void. The first level bid of 4♠* shows a singleton. Now, west bids 4NT (Keycard Blackwood) to ask about keycards. The response (5♣) shows one or four; with an ace missing, west signs off in 6♠.

We next consider an example with a minor suit void:

Dealer North N-S Vulnerable

		♠	KJ832		
		♥	A92		
		♦	Void		
		♣	AK1084		
♠	Q9	N W E S		♠	5
♥	10764			♥	J83
♦	A965			♦	KQJ103
♣	97			♣	Q653
		♠	A10764		
		♥	KQ5		
		♦	872		
		♣	Q2		

For this example, the bidding goes:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♦*	Pass	4♦*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♠	All pass

*Alerts

Counting high card values and length, north has thirteen HCP and two length points or fifteen starter points and opens 1♠. South has only twelve starter points, however, hearing a major suit bid, reevaluates to thirteen Dummy Points, counting the doubleton, and uses the Jacoby 2NT bid that opener alerts. Opener now bids 3♦* to show the diamond singleton/void. Hearing the shortness bid and with three diamonds, south has slam interest and bids 4♦* to see if north has a singleton or a void, knowing game is ensured. North's response of 4NT (step 3) shows 0 or 3 keycards. South now asks about kings by bidding 5NT, 6♣. North bids 7♠, a grand slam (with only twenty-five HCP).

Can you reach the slam without the Modified Scroll Bids? Perhaps; the bidding may go:

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♦*	Pass	4NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

*Alerts

The bid of 4NT is Keycard Blackwood and 6♦ shows an odd number of keycards with a void in diamonds. Yes, one can now bid 6♠, but note that getting to the grand slam is difficult.

If you do not play Keycard Blackwood, just Blackwood, Eddie Kantar recommends bidding 5NT with a void and two aces. Again, getting to seven spades is difficult.

If south does not bid 4NT, but instead bids four spades, in neither case would one reach the slam.

The use of “Scroll Bids” should enhance the convention card for those who use Bergen Raises (Reverse Bergen Raises or Combined Bergen Raises) playing 2/1, Standard American, or Precision.

After a Bergen Raise – Example

You hold the following hand ♠ KQ762 ♥ Q742 ♦ KQ4 ♣ A

You open the bidding 1♠ and playing combined Bergen raises partner bids 3♣* showing 7 – 10 Dummy Points. Not knowing the exact values, you bid 3♦* to ask, and partner next bids 3♥* showing four spades and 10-12 Dummy Points. Are you interested in slam?

In May 2008, Marty Bergen asked 60 experienced bridge players this question and found that five would bid 4♠ at match points, but investigate slam in IMPS or a team game, 26 would sign-off in fours spades, and 29 would investigate slam. What would you do?

You know partner has 10 -12 Dummy Points. What about your hand?

You have 16 HCP plus one point for length; you have only 17 Starting Points. However, with a fit you may add two points for the singleton and one more for the good side suit. You have 20 Bergen Points. Adding 20 to 12 yields only 32 total points; short of the required 33 points required for slam.

Hence do not investigate slam!
 The complete deal follows.
 Dealer South N-S Vulnerable

	♠	9543		
	♥	A3		
	♦	A1065		
	♣	K75		
♠	A108	N W E S	♠	J
♥	J86		♥	K1095
♦	83		♦	J972
♣	QJ1032		♣	9864
	♠	KQ762		
	♥	Q742		
	♦	KQ4		
	♣	A		

If you would have reached slam, using perhaps the following bidding sequence

North	South
1♠	
3♣*	3♦*
3♥*	3♠*
4NT	5♠ (two key cards with the Queen)
6♠	Pass

West would lead the ♣Q and 6♠ is down two. Declares loses two spades and one heart.

Think before investigating slam, an overbid usually leads to a bad result.

Roman Keycard Gerber (RKCG)

When is 4♣ asking for aces (Gerber)? When is 4NT asking for aces (1430 RKCB)? When is 4♣ a cue bid or a splinter? When is 4NT quantitative? What is 4♣ after a transfer? After Stayman?

These are all questions partnerships must discuss. In general, most partners tend to play Gerber over the direct bids of 1NT and 2NT; however some play it over 1st and last NT bids. That means if one opens 1NT or 2NT, the bid of 4♣ is Gerber.

However, after one agrees on a major, the bid of 4♣ is often played as 1430 Keycard Gerber when not playing Baby Blackwood. Partnerships that do not play kickback also use 1430 Keycard Blackwood to keep the bidding at a low level, in place of 4NT. Still others may not play Gerber over the first and last no-trump and instead always use 4♣ as keycard Gerber. The responses to the bid follow 1430 RKCB.

Responses to 4♣ RKCG

4♦	1 or 4 keycards
4♥	0 or 3 keycards
4♠	2/5 keycards without the queen
4NT	2/5 keycards with the queen

To show a void with two or four keycards, bid 5NT; with an odd number of keycards, bid the void at the six-level. After a void bid, next step is SKA.

4♥/4♠ over 4♦/4♥ is queen asks

4♠	SSA
4NT	to play

After a suit response to an opening bid followed by the opener rebidding 1NT or 2NT, a follow-up bid of 4♣ by responder is RKCB with responder's suit agreed.

Responding to 2NT with both Minors

Option 1 – After the bid of 3♠

1. Opener can agree to a minor by bidding 4♣/4♦ (1430 - Minorwood).
2. 3NT and 4♥/4♠ are to play.
3. After 3NT, 4♣ is Gerber by partner.

Option 2 – After the bid of 3♠ (opener must bid 3NT)

1. Responder bids 4♣/4♦ to show diamonds and clubs as Minorwood.
2. Responder bids 4♥/4♠ to show singleton heart/spade.
3. Responder bids 4NT (non-forcing) to show 5-5 or 5-4 in the minors

The advantage of Option 1 over Option 2 is that one may sign-off in 3NT; however, with Option 2 you must play in 4NT.

Example (Minorwood Over 2NT)

Opener ♠A6 ♥AKQ9 ♦Q9 ♣AJ53
 Responder ♠K7 ♥6 ♦KJ654 ♣K10542

Opener	Responder
2NT (20-21)	3♠* (Interested in minor suit slam)
4♣ (1430 Minorwood)	4♦ (1/3 – Likely One)
4♥ (Queen Ask)	5♣ (No Queen)
Pass	Pass

What do you bid with a 6+ card single minor with slam going values?

DO NOT bid 3♠.

(1) Instead bid 4♣ as Minorwood for diamonds (6+).
 And with 6+ clubs bid 4♦ as Minorwood for clubs.
 This is called the Crosswood convention.

(2) Or you may bid 4♣ directly as Minorwood for \clubs.
 And 4♦ as Minorwood for diamonds.

Partnership agreement!

Roman Keycard Blackwood over Preempts

When your partner preempts, there are ways to investigate the hand further. For two-level preempts, one may bid 2NT to ask your partner for a feature or you may use the Ogust Convention. Or, you may play Modified Ogust, Two-step Ogust, Roudinesco rebids, Romex rebids, the McCabe Adjunct Convention, etc.

What method do you employ if your partner bids at the three-level and you have a very good hand? A convention that is similar to the 2NT asks is the Ogust 3NT ask. The responses are

- 4♣* minimum, 1 top honor (BAD/WEAK Hand and BAD/STRONG Suit)
- 4♦* minimum, 2 top honors (BAD/WEAK Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 4♥* maximum, 1 top honor (GOOD/STRONG Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
- 4♠* maximum, 2 top honors (GOOD/STRONG Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 4NT* all 3 honors, A-K-Q-x-x-x and little else

However, a disadvantage of this approach is that 3NT is no longer to play!

Alternatively, you may also employ the Roth Four-club Convention. It is usually a slam-try allowing one to assess the partnership's prospects for slam without going beyond a safe contract.

After the three-level bid, partner bids 4♣ which is artificial and asks partner to describe his hand further. Recall that the responses go like this:

- 4♦ bad hand, bad suit.
- 4♥ bad hand, good suit (2 of the top 3 honors in the preempt suit).
- 4♠ good hand (1 or 2 honors outside the preempt suit), bad suit.
- 4NT good hand, good suit.

The responses are similar to Ogust but use different steps.

Need better information regarding the trump suit. Then, another option is to use 4♣ as RKCB [used with weak two bids (2♦/2♥/2♠) and three level (3♦/3♥/3♠) bids]. The bid of 4NT should not be used since it may get the auction too high. This is sometimes called the **Kantar Four Club Convention or the Weak Roman Keycard Blackwood (WRKCB) Convention**.

The responses are:

- 4♦ first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
- 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first-step. The next bid of 4♥ is the Queen ask — 4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

After the preemptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural, it advances the pre-empt; a jump to 4♦ is WKCB ask for clubs. The responses follow.

4♥	first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
4♠	second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
4NT	third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
5♣	fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
5♦	fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

Over 4♥, 4♠ is the Queen ask — 4NT = no and 5♣ = yes. Over the four spades bid, (5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA)

Let's look at an example.

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

Opener Bids	Responder Bids
3♥	4♣ (1430 RKCB for hearts)
4NT (2 w/o)	5♦ (SSA for diamonds)
6♥ (singleton ♦)	7♥

Following the WRKCB Convention, another option for the ERKCB convention may be:

Responses to ERKCB (Option 2)

First Step	0 keycards
Second Step	1 keycard without the Queen
Third Step	1 keycard with the Queen
Fourth Step	2 keycards without the Queen
Fifth Step	2 keycards with the Queen

Now the Queen ask occurs only after the first step. And the SKA is again 5NT.

Scroll Bids (Simple)

The Scroll Bids discussed in this chapter allows one to determine whether one has a singleton or a void; and if one has a void, the 1430 responses are incorporated into the responses. Is there another option that is perhaps less complex?

Yes, but you must give up weak jump shifts when opening one heart.

The System works as follows

Opener	Responder	Opener	Explanation
1♥	2♠	2NT	Game Force with a singleton Opener asks responder to bid suit of singleton (3♥=♠)
	3♠	3NT	Game Force with a void Opener asks responder to bid void suit (4♥=♠)
1♠	3♥	3♠	Game Force with a singleton/void Relay bid Responder bids singleton suit With a VOID responder bid 3NT; Opener relays again 4♣ Responder bids 4♦=♦, 4♥=♥, 4♠=♣

This method is simple and works well when opening a major. To investigate slam one may use 4NT or 4♠ if the agreed upon suit is hearts. The method is simple and always allows one to stop short of game, if necessary. It was suggested to me by Ted Deflippo.

Variable Keycard Blackwood

Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430 (with or without Kickback) or RCKB was developed to include the trump King and Queen into the slam bidding equation; however, both the trump King and Ace are given “equal” value in the slam bidding equation. Because some slams can be made without the trump King but never without the Trump Ace, Ely Culbertson introduced his 4-5NT convention where he was able to distinguish the difference between the trump honors because he required the asker to have three keycards to use the convention. In this same vain Ken Rexford has developed what he terms the Variable Keycard Blackwood (VKCB) convention which allows the partnership to show “specific keycards” similar to Culbertson, but with weaker and/or stronger requirements.

His VKCB convention is divided into three categories: (1) Weak Keycard Blackwood (WKCB), (2) Strong Keycard Blackwood (SKCB), and (3) Middle Keycard Blackwood (MKCB). In the

first case, partner is assumed to be weak and hold only 0-2 Keycards; in the second case, partner is assumed to hold 2-4 Keycards and in the third case, partner is expected to hold 1-3 key cards.

Weak Variable Keycard Blackwood

The most frequent situation is when partner holds only two Keycards. This happens when partner is a passed hand, partner has opened with a weak 2/3 bid, partner has used INT forcing, partner has used “Fast Arrival”, partner is known to have 11-12 HCP, and finally a cue bidding sequence has limited partner with two Keycards. Now WKCB applies.

Over the 4NT ask, responses are **ASSUMING SPADES IS THE AGREED UPON SUIT:**

- 5♣ first step, 1 keycard
- 5♦ second step, 0 keycards
- 5♥ third step, Ace and King of trump without the Queen
- 5♠ fourth step, 2 Aces without the Queen
- 5NT fifth step, 2 Aces with the Queen

Note that the 5♥ and 5♠ responses are similar to RKCB. However, you are using the bids to distinguish between two ACEs (the stronger holding) or whether one of the keycards is only the KING of trumps (the weaker holding). And then 5NT becomes the specific king ask as in 1430 and you may use the second king ask.

Like 1430, after hearing 5♦ (0 Keycards), 5♥ is the Queen ask and after 5♣ (1 Keycard), 5♦ is the Queen ask.

Over the bid of 5♣ (1 Keycard) the follow-up bids are:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|--|---|
| 4NT | P | 5♣ | P |
| 5♦ | ? | | |
| | 5♥ | No trump Queen, but an Ace | |
| | 5♠ | No trump Queen, but the trump King as a keycard (sign-off) | |
| | 5NT | One Keycard with the trump Queen | |

Over the bid of 5♦ (0 Keycards) the follow-up bids follow which allow one to show specific KINGS:

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|--|---|
| 4NT | P | 5♦ | P |
| 5♥ | ? | | |
| | 5♠ | No trump Queen | |
| | 6♣/6♦/6♥ | Trump Queen with King of clubs/diamonds/hearts | |

If responder has for example shown the club king then you may invite a grand slam by asking for a second kind by bidding 6♦.

If responder does not have the diamond king, he may show the heart king:

6♠	Nothing more to show
6♥	No diamond king, but the heart king
7♠	Shows the diamond king

There are two other possible calls to make on the way to 6♠. First, you could show “something else” by bidding 5NT. This confirms the trump Queen that partner has asked about and denies any Kings of note. With no kings, just bid 6♠.

When spades is not the agreed upon suit, one uses KICKBACK WKCB. Thus, 4♠ is Kickback WKCB when hearts is the agreed upon suit, 4♥ is Kickback WKCB when diamonds is the agreed upon suit (or you may prefer 4♦), and 4♦ (or 4♣) is Kickback WKCB when clubs is the agreed upon suit.

Let’s look at each in turn

Hearts agreed

4NT	first step, 1 keycard
5♣	second step, 0 keycards
5♦	third step, Ace and King of trump without the Queen
5♥	fourth step, 2 Aces without the Queen
5♠	fifth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen
5NT	sixth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen and a useful void

Over 4NT (1 keycard), 5♣ is the specific ask:

5♦	No trump Queen, but an Ace
5♥	No trump Queen, but the trump King as a keycard (sign-off)
5♠	One Keycard with the trump Queen

And 5♦ becomes the specialized request for the trump Ace and Queen.

Over the response of 5♣ (0 keycards, above), 5♦ is the Queen ask.

Diamonds agreed

4♠	first step, 1 keycard
4NT	second step, 0 keycards
5♣	third step, Ace and King of trump without the Queen

- 5♦ fourth step, 2 Aces without the Queen
- 5♥ fifth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen
- 5♠ sixth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen and a useful void

Over 4♠ (1 keycard), 4NT is the specific ask:

- 5♣ No trump Queen, but an Ace
- 5♦ No trump Queen, but the trump King as a keycard (sign-off)
- 5♥ One Keycard with the trump Queen

And 5♣ becomes the specialized request for the trump Ace and Queen. Over the response of 4NT (0 keycards, above), 5♣ is the Queen ask.

Clubs agreed

- 4♥ first step, 1 keycard
- 4♠ second step, 0 keycards
- 4NT third step, Ace and King of trump without the Queen
- 5♣ fourth step, 2 Aces without the Queen
- 5♦ fifth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen
- 5♥ sixth step, 2 Aces with the trump Queen and a useful void

Over 4♥ (1 keycard), 4♠ is the specific ask:

- 4NT No trump Queen, but an Ace
- 5♣ No trump Queen, but the trump King as a keycard (sign-off)
- 5♦ One Keycard with the trump Queen

And 4NT becomes the specialized request for the trump Ace and Queen. Over the response of 4♠ (0 keycards, above), 4NT is the Queen ask

Let's look at an example were south opens with a weak two bid.

South	North
♠ QJ10942	♠ AK73
♥ A3	♥ KQ764
♦ J106	♦ 7
♣ 82	♣ A76

South	North
2♠	2NT (Ogust)
3♥* (Good Hand-Bad Suit)	4NT (WKCB)

5♣ (one Keycard) 5♦ (Queen Ask)
 5NT (trump Q and 1 Keycard) 6♠

In this example, south makes a weak two bid and 2NT is Ogust. With a Good Hand but a Bad suit, south bids 3♥*. Now 4NT is WKCB and 5♣ shows one keycard (an Ace or the King of trumps). The bid of 5♦, is the Queen ask and 5NT shows the trump Queen and an Ace. Hence, north bids 6♠.

Strong Variable Keycard Blackwood

The Weak Variable Keycard Blackwood convention is used when the person responding to 4NT (or Kickback) cannot have more than two keycards with the Queen of trumps. We now turn to the opposite situation where the person asking has the weaker hand, and the responder holds 2-4 keycards. This is expected to occur when one makes a strong opening bid like 2♣, playing 2/1, 2NT (with 20-21 HCP), Mexican 2♦, or Precision when one opens 1♣ and the weaker partner asks. This also occurs if one partner has reversed, made a strong jump shift, opened 1NT with a super-accept, the bidder used serious 3NT, or a person has shown two keycard using cue bidding and partner does the asking. When the “weak” hand asks, one uses SKCB (Strong Variable Keycard Blackwood) sequences.

The SKCB convention is not much different from the WKCB. Using WKCB you subtracted two keycards from your keycard count; now with SKCB you add them back.

Over the 4NT ask, responses are **ASSUMING SPADES IS THE AGREED UPON SUIT:**

5♣ first step, 3 keycards
 5♦ second step, 2 keycards
 5♥ third step, 3 Aces and King of trump without the Queen
 5♠ fourth step, 4 Aces without the trump Queen
 5NT fifth step, 4 Aces with the trump Queen

Note that we just added back the two lost keycards from the WKCB convention. The kickback responses follow similarly. In his book on Variable Keycard Blackwood; Ken Rexford discusses an expanded version for SKCB.

Like 1430, after hearing 5♦ (2 Keycards), 5♥ is the Queen ask and after 5♣ (3 Keycard), 5♦ is the Queen ask.

Over the bid of 5♣ (3 Keycard) the follow-up bids are:

4NT P 5♣ P
 5♦ ?

 5♥ No trump Queen, but 3Aces

5♠ No trump Queen, but the trump King and 2 Aces
 5NT 3 Keycards with the trump Queen

Over the bid of 5♦ (2 Keycards) the follow-up bids follow which allow one to show specific KINGS:

4NT P 5♦ P
 5♥ ?

5♠ No trump Queen
 5NT Two Aces
 6♣/6♦/6♥ Trump Queen with King of clubs/diamonds/hearts

Middle Variable Keycard Blackwood

We have seen that WKCB is oriented toward weak-hand responders with 0-2 keycards and that SKCB is oriented toward strong-hand responder's with 2-4 keycards. When neither applies because one is unsure or the situation is indeterminate, one uses Middle Keycard Blackwood (MKCB) which assumes 1-3 keycards. The MKCB convention parallels SKCB, except that one does not count one of your keycards. The bids follow:

Over the 4NT ask, responses are **ASSUMING SPADES IS THE AGREED UPON SUIT**:

5♣ first step, 2 keycards
 5♦ second step, 1 keycard
 5♥ third step, 3 keycards with trump King but without the Queen
 5♠ fourth step, 3 Aces without the trump Queen
 5NT fifth step, 3 Aces with the trump Queen

Finally whenever the opponents interfere, the following structure may be used.

Double = Penalty
 Pass = Stolen Bid
 Other = As if they did not Interfere

For more information and examples of this convention, please see the book authored by Ken Rexford in 2012 and published by Master Point Press.

Spiral Scan Bids Modified after Jacoby 2NT*

Spiral Scan bids, as discussed above, are an effective method for investigating slams; however, their use is most effective most effective playing kickback/redwood with 1430 asks.

I recommend that they be modified to investigate a slam after one bids a major (1♥/1♠) and partner responds with the Jacoby bid of 2NT* which shows 4-card trump support and 13+ Dummy Points.

After the bid of 2NT*, playing Jacoby one usually shows a singleton or void; however, bridge experts have modified the responses. Following their lead, I am recommending that the bid of 2NT* be a 1430 asking bid which must be alerted and explained as a 1430 keycard ask.

The responses to the 1430 Roman Keycard bid of 2NT* are:

3♣ = 1 or 4 Keycards

3♦ = 0 or 3 Keycards

3♥ = 2 or 5 Keycards without the Queen of Trump

3♠ = 2 or 5 Keycards with the Queen of Trump or holding a 6th Trump

Voids (with 3/4 card trump support and 13+ dummy/support points)

- 3NT = 2/4 an even number of Keycards with a void somewhere (♣/♦/major not bid)
- 4♣/4♦ is a void in the suit bid (below trump suit) and an odd number of key cards (1/3) when spades/hearts are trump
- 4♥ is a void in hearts and an odd number of keycards (1/3) if spades are trump
- 4♠ odd number of key cards (1/3) with a void in spades if hearts are trump

After the bid of 3♣/3♦, the bids of 3♦/3♥ (the next step up) is the Queen ask bid which begins the Spiral Scan.

Now logic dictates the features of the Spiral Scan.

1. Trump Queen
2. Kings in ascending order (♣/♦/other major)
3. Queens in ascending order (♣/♦/other major)
4. Side jacks, if ever in same order.

Answering with the first step denies the Queen.

By bypassing the first step and bidding the second step shows the Queen and no ♣K; and so on.

Let's look at an example of the Spiral Scan.

North	South
1♠	2NT*
3♣/3♦	3♦/3♥ (Queen ask)
???	

In this example, following the 3♣/3♦ bids (showing 1/4 or 0/3 key cards) the next step bids of 3♦/3♥ would be the Queen ASK.

- Step one: No ♠ Queen.
- Step two: ♠Q but no ♣K
- Step three: ♠Q and ♣K, but no ♦K
- Step four: ♠Q, and ♣K,♦K, but no ♥K

Possessing the trump Queen, the 1430 bidder may go through the Queen ask in order to create a third-round control query. If asks take the partnership beyond the four of the trump suit, inquirer must be interested in a slam/grand slam.

Let's look at another example where the Queen asks step is bypassed!

North	South
1♠	2NT*
3♣(1/4 key cards)	3♠

Do you have the ♦K (second step)? Note that the bid of 3♦ would be the Queen as and that 3♥ (first step) asks for the king of clubs since the priorities are ♣K, ♦K, ♥K, etc.

3NT (1 st step after ask)	no ♦K
4♣ (2 nd step)	♦K, but no ♥K
4♦ (3 rd step)	♦K and ♥K, but no ♣K
4♥(4 th step)	♦K, ♥K, ♣K, but no ♣Q – and so on.

If the Queen ask step is bypassed, since the 1430 bidder has the Queen. The bids (in steps) after the Queen ask bid is specific king/queen asking bids. For example, suppose spades is the trump suit, then the bids for the king/queen are:

3♦	Asks for the ♠Q. The Queen Ask after the bid of 4♣
3♥	Asks for the ♣K.
3♠	Asks for the ♦K.
3NT	Asks for the ♥K.
4♣	Asks for the ♣Q
4♦	Asks for the ♦Q
4♥	Asks for the ♥Q
4♠	Asks for the ♠J

The responder rebids by counting steps. If he/she bids the next step up, the responder denies holding the card asked for. If the responder bids the second step, the responder shows the card asked for, but denies higher cards. Using the Spiral Scan, the partnership can concentrate on the most valuable Keycards and the location thereof. The concept behind the Spiral Scan is the continuance of the auction until at least a small slam is reached. If one or several Keycards are

discovered to be missing, then the small slam is the better contract, but if all the Keycards are accounted for during the auction, then the grand slam can be bid.

One more example – suppose North and South hold the following cards: Where the order for the bids are: ♠K, ♦K,♥K, ♣Q, ♦Q,♥Q, ♣J after the bid of 1♠.

North	South
♠AJ643	♠KQ75
♥KQ2	♥A7
♦3	♦A105
♣KQ72	♣AJ43

North	South
1♠	2NT* (1)
3♣(2)	3♥(3)
3NT (4)	4♣(5)
4♠(6)	4NT (7)
5♦(8)	7NT

1. Jacoby 2NT forcing spade raise with 4 trumps
2. 1430 RKCB (1/4 keycards)
3. The first step (3♥) is asking about ♠K (4♠ would be to play)
4. The first step (3NT) shows ♣K, but not the ♦K
5. The next step (4♣) is asking for the ♥K
6. 4♠ says I have ♥K and the ♣Q, since the step of 4♥ was skipped
7. 4NT do you have the ♥Q
8. 5♦ says yes, since 5♣ step was skipped

Spiral scan bids are most useful when the partnership is known to have the Queen of trumps. However, even if you have the Queen you may have to ask in order to create a third round control query.

To complete our discussion on the Spiral Scan bids, I will now briefly discuss the difficult topic of voids.

Spiral Bids with an even number of Keycards and a void

Over the bid of 3NT, 4♣ (the next step **is not the queen ask**) It asks where is your void?
 If hearts are trump then 4♦/4♠/4NT show voids in diamonds/spades/clubs.
 If spades are trump then 4♦/4♥/4NT shows voids in diamonds, hearts/clubs.

The next step bid, after the void response, now becomes the QUEEN ASK. As discussed above, the first step denies the Queen; however the void suit is excluded from the spiral scan hierarchy.

Spiral Bids with an odd number of Key Cards and a void

With an odd number of key cards, the next step by the asker, excluding the trump suit (sign-off) becomes the QUEEN ASK. Where again the first step response again denies the Queen.

Because the void suit is unknown with an odd number of key cards, a jump to six level of lower ranking suit shows the void in the suit bid (6♣/6♦/6♥) with the Queen of spades are trump.

If hearts are trumps, the bids of 6♣ and 6♦ are again used to show the Queen of trumps with a void in the bid 6-level suit. With a void in spades, one bids 6♥ to show the Queen and the spade void.

Note that the span can be used after a 2/1 bid: 1M - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2M - 2NT* (1430 ask) and the Scan starts/3M (invitational). for spades). Or, 1M-2M-2NT* (1430 Ask).

Alternatively, you may use 1430 with NO SPIRAL SCAN after 2NT*. The bids follow.

Modified 1430 RKCB Over Jacoby 2NT* for the Majors

The responses to the 1430 Roman Keycard bid of 2NT with 4-card support for the Major

3♣ = 1 or 4 Keycards

3♦ = 0 without the Queen of trump

3♥ = 2 or 5 Keycards without the Queen of Trump

3♠ = 2 or 5 Keycards with the Queen of Trump or holding a 6th Trump

3NT = 3 without the Queen of trump

4♣ = 3 with the Queen of Trump

4NT = Specific King Ask (SKA).

QUEEN ASK – Next step 3♦ After 3♣ OR 3♥ After 3♠

After 3♣ the 3♦ = Trump Queen Ask - one answers as follows

Hearts Trump

3♥ - NO Queen of Trump – (1st step)

3♠ - Specific King Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest King = 4♣/4♦/4♥/3NT = K♠

(May try second King ask)

4♠ = Non -Trump Queen Ask

Cheapest Queen = 5♣/5♦/4NT = Q♠

3♠ = Q♥ but NO KINGS (2nd step)

3NT = Specific Non-Trump Queen Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest Queen = 4♣/4♦/4♠

(May try second Queen Ask)

4♥ - Sign-off = NONE

3NT = Q♥ and ♠K

4♣/4♦/4♥ = Q♥ and King of bid Suit (K♣/K♦/K♥)

(May try second King Ask)

Spades Trump

3♥ = NO Queen of Trump – (1st step)

3♠ = Specific King Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest King 4♣/4♦/4♥/3NT = ♠K

(May try second king ask)

4NT = Non -Trump Queen Ask

Cheapest Queen = 5♣/5♦/5NT = Q♥

3♠ = Q♠ but NO KINGS (2nd step)

3NT = Specific Non-Trump Queen Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest Queen 4♣/4♦/4♥

(May try second Queen Ask)

4♠ - Sign-off = NONE

4♣/4♦/4♥ = Q♠ and King of bid Suit (K♣/K♦/K♥)

(May try second King Ask)

4♠ = Q♠ and ♠K

After 3♥ (Queen Ask) - one bids as follows

Hearts

3♠ = NO Queen of Trump – (1st step)

3NT = Specific King Ask

Cheapest King = 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠

(May try second King Ask)

4NT = Non -Trump Queen Ask

Cheapest Queen = 5♣/5♦/5♥ = Q♠

(May try second Queen Ask)

3NT = Q♥ but NO KINGS (2nd step)

4♣ = Specific Non-Trump Queen Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest Queen = 4♦/4♠/4NT = Q♣

(May try second Queen ask)

4♥ - Sign-off = NONE

4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ = Q♥ and King of bid suit

(May try second King Ask)

Spades

3♠ - NO Queen of Trump – (first step)

3NT=Specific King Ask

Cheapest King = 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠

(May try second king ask)

4NT = Non-Trump Queen Ask

Cheapest Queen = 5♣/5♦/5♥

3NT = Q♠ but NO KINGS (2nd step)

4♣ = Specific Queen Ask (Next Step)

Cheapest Queen 4♦/4♠/4NT = Q♣

(May also try second Queen ask)

4♠ - Sign-off = NONE

4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ = Q♠ and King of bid suit

(May try second King Ask)

Voids

Used ONLY after Sign-Off in Major 4♥/4♠

5♣/5♦/5♥ Void in bid Suit

4♠=Void in Spades if Hearts are Trump

Simple 1430 RKCB Jacoby 2NT*

If Modified Scan Bids and Jacoby 2NT* or Modified 1430 RKCB Jacoby 2NT* for the majors are both too involved, one may use simple 1430 RKCB Jacoby 2NT*:

After the bid of 2NT*, the responses to the 1430 RKCB bid of 2NT* are:

3♣ = 1 or 4 Keycards

3♦ = 0 or 3 Keycards

3♥ = 2 or 5 Keycards without the Queen of Trump

3♠ = 2 or 5 Keycards with the Queen of Trump or holding a 6th Trump

After 3♣ or 3♦, the next step is the familiar queen ask bid and 3NT becomes the SKA.

1430 6-pac Roman Keycard Blackwood

After a major suit bid, the response of 2NT* is the 4015 6-pac Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) Convention and replaces the Jacoby 2NT bid. The 2NT bid promises 3/4+ card trump support and 13+ Dummy Points and must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The convention assumes 6 Keycards: AKQ of trumps and 3 Aces, the 6-pac. The responses are similar to 3014 since the weak hand is usually asking; however, the convention will allow you to determine the number of keycards for the trump suit and all your Kings and Queens before you commit to a slam or grand slam.

The asking sequence is initiated by the cheapest jump shift (either 2NT* or the cheapest kickback suit KBS). For example, for Spades the bid is 2NT*, for hearts it is spades, for diamonds it is hearts, and for clubs it is clubs.

The responses after 2NT* are:

3♣ = 0 or 4 Keycards (the 40 step)

3♦ = 1 or 5 Keycards (the 15 step)

3♥ = 2 or 6 (usually unlikely)

3♠ = 3 with /without the Queen

The bid of the major by the opener at the 4-level is sign-off and is used when the opener determines that there are 4 or less keycards.

When there are 5 or more key cards, one initiates the Specific King Ask (SKA) bid. **There is NO Queen ask bid with this approach!**

3NT = SKA (always ask with 5/6 Keycards) Note that it is the 5th Step[®]

With no (zero) kings return to the major at the 4-level and with one/two kings bid the cheapest; then the next step is the second king ask.

Skipping the SKA step and having/assuming the trump Queen

4NT = SQA – Note that it is the 6th step

With one/two queens bid the cheapest, then the next step is the second queens ask and **with all 3 bid 5NT**. And with none (zero), bid five of the agreed upon major (5♥/5♠).

The above bids are used when opening a Major (playing 2/1 or Precision, for example).

If responder signs off after asking for Kings, knowing there are at least five keycards, partner may now use 1430 RCKB to find 5/6 keycard information. And may use the Specific Suit Asking bid instead of the Queen ask bids.

If **Hearts** is the agreed suit, instead of using 2NT*, you may make the cheapest kickback bid of spades (2♠). This initiates the 4015 Kickback 6-pac sequence (e.g. 1♥ - 2♠ = kickback)

2NT = 0 or 4 Keycards (the 40 step)

3♣ = 1 or 5 Keycards (the 15 step)

3♦ = 2 or 6 (usually unlikely)

3♥ = 3 with /without the Queen

The bid of the major by the opener at the 4-level is sign-off and is used when the opener determines that there are 4 or less keycards.

There is again NO Queen asking bid with this approach!

3♠ = SKA (always ask with 5/6 Keycards) – Again the 4th Step

With no (zero) kings return to the major at the 4-level and with one/two kings bid the cheapest; then the next step is the second king ask.

Skipping the SKA step and having /assuming) the trump Queen

3NT = SQA – Again the 5th Step

With One/Two queens bid the cheapest, then the next step is the second queens ask and **with all 3 bid 5NT**. And with none (zero), bid 5♥.

At times the bid of 3♠ may also initiate the Kickback sequence, for example playing Reverse Bergen where the bidding may go: 1♥-3♣ (limit raise in Hearts – 10-12 Dummy Points) - 3♠-4015 Kickback with hearts agreed. 3NT and 4NT are the SKA and SQA, respectively.

If **Diamonds** is the agreed upon suit then the cheapest kickback bid in hearts initiates the 4015 Kickback 6-pac sequence (e.g. 1♦- 2♥ = 4015 Kickback 6-pac for diamonds). Again the SKA is the 4th step and the SQA is the 5th step. Again at times it may be a 3-level bid (e.g. 1♦-2♣ (2/1 bid) - 2NT-3♥ = 4015 Kickback 6-pac for diamonds). Again 3NT and 4NT is the specific King and Queen asks, respectively.

Not playing Precision, the bids may also be used for Clubs; then the cheapest kickback bid in diamonds initiates the 4015 Kickback 6-pac sequence. Be careful now 1♣ - 2♦= kickback.

The primary advantage of the 4015 approach is that there is **No TRUMP QUEEN ASK BID** since many partnerships that play 1430/3014 do not use the queen ask responses. Not playing the queen asks bid, I call that approach the 3014/1430 Blackwood Convention with 5 Keycards or the 5-Pack Convention!

How do you respond with voids?

Following the 1430/3014 approaches one may use the following bids.

Over the bid of 2NT* or a Kickback 6-pac bid, one bids:

3NT = an even number of keycards 2, 4, or 6 with an **unknown** void.

3X = an odd number of keycards with a void 1, 3, or 5 and a **void in the bid suit**.

However with the 4015 6-pac Roman Keycard Convention this approach is not recommended. Why? Because the keycard bids are at a very low level it is better to show keycards first and to ignore all voids. **Only show a void if partner signs-off in the agreed upon suit in game; then with a void show it at the 5-level/6-level when the rank of the void is below the agreed upon suit.**

For example if hearts or spades are the agreed upon suits a 5-level bid shows a void in the bid suit. Partner now may sign-off or bid slam. With a minor the bid, it is at the 6-level.

CHAPTER 4

THIRD AND FOURTH SEAT OPENINGS

Up to this point, we have assumed that one was in the first or second seat to open a hand. If two players have passed and you are in the third seat, you may have a full opener with 11/12+ Starting Points and two quick tricks or you may have less.

In the third seat, the requirements to open a hand are less stringent; you need only 10 Starting Points and 1½ quick tricks. Many players will even open a good four-card major. In the fourth seat, a 2-level major suit bid usually shows an opening hand with 6+ cards (with partner agreement and no alert required). This is not the case in the first two seats it is a weak bid and again requires no alert.

Rule of 22/20 (3rd seat)

Another option is to employ the rule of 22 (some use the rule in the first three seats). The rule goes like this: count your Starting Points and the total number of cards in your two longest suits, they must add to 20. Next, add the number of quick tricks, if that total is 22 or more, open the hand. Some use the rule of 20 which not require counting the number of quick tricks.

Rule of 15 (4th seat)

In the fourth seat, one usually has a full opener 11/12+ Starting Points and two quick tricks. The only exception is when you hold 4+ spades and 11+ Starting Points. Now you add your Starting Points to the number of spades held, if the total is 15+, open the hand either a minor or with 5+ spades one spade (some may open the hand one spade with only four good spades: AKQx).

To determine whether your partner has a full opener, some variation of the Drury Convention, developed by Douglas Drury, is used when partner opens one of a major (1♥/1♠) in the third seat (some also use it in the fourth seat, discuss this with your partner).

Reverse Drury Convention

The Reverse Drury Convention employs an artificial bid of 2♣* used by a passed hand after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ in third seat (some also use Drury it in the fourth seat; I do not recommend this practice. It is best if opener has at least 11+ Starting Points – nearly a full opener). The artificial bid of two clubs shows 3+ card trump support and 10-11 Dummy Points and a fit.

In the original Drury Convention, opener rebids 2♦, to show a light opening. With **Reverse Drury**, more common today, a rebid of two of opener's original major suit shows a light opening (that is, no game interest) and responder is expected to pass. Any other rebid by opener confirms a full opening hand (or better) and shows game interest. With a good hand, say 15+ Starting Points, opener may simply jump to game (four of the major suit). Other bids tend to be natural and descriptive.

Two-Way Drury

The Two-Way Drury Convention employs two artificial bids: 2♣* or 2♦*, again it is used by a passed hand after partner opens 1♥/1♠ in third seat (some use the convention in the fourth seat). The artificial bid of two clubs shows three-card trump support and 10-11 Dummy Points; the artificial bid of two diamonds shows 4+ card support for the major and 10-11 Dummy Points. The complete convention follows playing Bergen Raises.

With no interference, the bids over 1M bid are:

A simple raise of partner's major suit bid usually shows three-card support and 6-9 Starting Points (Drury and constructive raises are off).

2♣*	limit raise, 3 card support and 10-11 Starting Points
2♦*	limit raise, 4 card support and 10-11 Starting Points
2NT	10-11 points and 5-5 in minors (opener's rebids are "pass or correct")
3♣	preemptive in clubs
3♦	preemptive in diamonds
1♥-3♠*	4 card limit raise with concealed/ambiguous singleton/void
1♠-3♥*	4 card limit raise with concealed/ambiguous singleton/void
1♥-2♠*	preemptive in spades (6+)
1♠-2♥*	preemptive in hearts (6+)

* Alert Bids – 3-level bids are part of Bergen Raises (regular or reverse) — **If you use the Two-Way "Reverse" Drury Convention, the bids of two clubs and two diamonds are interchanged.**

Opener's CONTINUATIONS AFTER DRURY BIDS:

1♥/1♠ -2♣*/2♦* (2♥/2♠ is sub-minimal hand) all other bids are natural and promise a full opener (12-17 Starting Points).

Two of other major after 2♣* allows one to investigate whether one has a 4-4 fit in other major.

Non-jump suit bid (other than two-level bid of other major) below 3M = help suit game try:

Three-level bid of major is invitational.

Double jump bid (e.g., 4♣/4♦, etc.) = splinter.

2NT = DRURY SLAM TRY (18-19 Starting Points without a splinter)

- 3♣, 3♦, 3♠ = singleton.
- 3♠ = more-than-minimum strength with a ruffing value (a good 11+ points).
- 3NT = balanced maximum (11+ high-card points).
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = 5-card suit with at least two of the top four honors (QJxxx or better).
- 4♠ = minimum values, no singleton.

3NT = 15-17 Starting Points with balanced hand and denies other four major

4 of bid major is to play with no slam interest

4NT is RCKCB with slam interest

In competition:

Over DBL or 1♠ - Drury is off

Over 1NT - Drury is off

Over 2♣ - 2♦ is omnibus limit raise

after 1♠-2♥, DBL = limit raise (Drury double)

After 1♥-2♠, DBL = limit raise (Drury double)

Two/three-level bids are usually defined by partnership agreement.

The Two-Way Drury Convention allows a pair to avoid guessing on game contracts when partner has already passed.

Example (1)

First Seat	♠KJ2 ♥J1094 ♦ KJ76 ♣ 98
Third Seat	♠1096 ♥KQ852 ♦ 72 ♣ A53

The person in first seat has nine Starting Points and would pass. Partner in the third seat has ten Starting Points and 1½ quick trick and opens 1♥. Not playing Reverse Drury, partner has

four-card support for hearts and ten Dummy Points and bids 3♦ (Bergen on with a passed hand showing 10-12 points with four-card support). Partner must bid 3♥.

Alternatively, playing Two-Way Drury, one would bid 2♦ to show 10-12 points with four-card support. Partner bids 2♥ (not a full opener) and the correct contract are reached.

You are playing Reverse Drury and hold the following hands and partner has opened 1♥. What do you bid?

Example (2) ♠KJ42 ♥A65 ♦K976 ♣98 Bid 2♣* 11 Starting Points with three hearts

Example (3) ♠Q942 ♥A6 ♦J76 ♣KJ108 Bid 1♠ 10 Starting Points

Example (4) ♠A2 ♥A7 ♦K10543 ♣653 Bid 1NT only two-card support 10 points

Example (5) ♠42 ♥QJ76 ♦1076 ♣AKJ10 Bid 2♦* 11 Starting Points with four hearts

Fit Showing Jump Bids (Majors)

Fit showing jumps (or Flower) bids are made over interference (because many play Bergen Off). Fit Showing Jumps (FSJ) require 10-12 dummy points, length in partner's suit (4+ cards), a minor side suit with 4/5+ cards with working honors. The bid is a jump to the three level in the long minor. The bid allows partner to bid at the three-level of the major or go on to bid game with a double fit in the minor. The major advantage of FSJ over Drury is that the bids show strength and are not artificial. Thus, it is less likely that the opponents would double a fit bid. This is a disadvantage of Drury.

Two-level Major Suit bids in the third and fourth seats

In the first two seats, preemptive major suit bids at the two-level show 5/6-10 Starting Points and a six-card suit. In the third/fourth seat this is not the case. A two-level bid is stronger since your partner has passed. You should have 12+ starting point (an opening hand) and a six-card major suit. When responding to your partner's preempt, remember you are a passed hand so game is unlikely.

Three- and four-level preempts in the third seat

In the first two seats, we suggested that the rule of 2 or 3 be used. However, in the third seat, one may use the simple 2-3-4 rule.

1. Overbid by two tricks at unfavorable vulnerability (vulnerable vs not vulnerable)
2. Overbid by three tricks at equal vulnerability
3. Overbid by four tricks at favorable vulnerability (not vulnerable vs vulnerable)

Returning to the hand used above with the rule of 2 or 3:

♠AKQ10653 ♥8 ♦854 ♣96

We would bid as follows. Open 2♠ at unfavorable; open 3♠ at equal; open 4♠ at favorable vulnerability.

Recall using the rule of 2 or 3, we have six losers (0 in spades, 1 in hearts, 3 in diamonds, and 2 in clubs). 13 cards-6 losers=7 playing tricks. Non-vulnerable, adding 3 = 7+3=10 so you should open 4♠. You would open 3♠ only if vulnerable (7+2=9). The rules provide very similar results.

Thrupp Doubles

When the opponents open at the three-level and partner doubles, it takes on a special meaning called a **THREe notUMP** (Thrupp) double. It requires 10+ HCPs and was created by Marty Bergen.

The double denies a 5-card major and asks partner to bid 3NT over any 3-level bid or pass for penalty.

The thrupp double may also be used in the sequence:

1♣ - 3♦ - X

1♠ - 3♥ - X

1♦ - 3♥ - X

The X is normally for penalty or negative; however, it is also used to ask partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the opponent's suit. Be careful, some play doubles of 3-level bids as penalty only.

A disadvantage of the thrupp double is that one may miss a 4-4 major suit contract when partner opens a minor.

For more discussion and tips on 3rd and 4th seat bidding see Mike Lawrence (2011), "The Complete Guide to Passed Hand Bidding" and Eric Rodwell (2019) "Eric Rodwell's Bidding Topics" Book 2.

CHAPTER 5

BIDDING WITH INTERFERENCE

We have assumed up to this point in our 2/1 Game Force bidding that the opponents have not interfered. If there is direct interference with, for example, a suit bid or a double, **the 2/1 game force is off.**

2/1 Bids with Interference

1. You open one heart and your LHO doubles, partner bids two diamonds. Is it forcing to game? No — it is not even forcing for one round.
2. You open one heart and your LHO bids one spade. You again bid two diamonds. Is the bid forcing to game? NO — However, since the overcall was at the one level, it is forcing for ONE ROUND! Opener must bid again.
3. You open one heart and your LHO bids two spades. Partner next bids three clubs, is it forcing to game or for one round? When responder bids a new suit at the three level, it is not only forcing for one round, it is forcing to game!
4. You open one heart and your LHO bid three diamonds. Partner bids three spades. Is the bid forcing? Over the preemptive bid, the bid is only forcing for one round, but not necessarily to game. Alternatively, you can double and bid a new suit. This sequence is forcing to game. Note, some 2/1 partnerships play that all three level bids are forcing to game over any preempt.

Many partnerships play that Bergen Raises are off over interference. Because you may have 10-12 dummy points and 3/4 card support for the major, I recommend that you play “Bergen Raises” as on. Yes, even by a passed hand. This approach must be discussed with your partner.

If one makes a game force bid, and the opponents choose to bid, the game force remains on.

When a partnership is committed to game and the opponents choose to interfere, opener may double the contract of the opponents instead of proceeding to game, if he believes the double would result in a better score. Doubles (penalty, responsive, cooperative, etc.) will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. For now, if the bidder is on the opener’s right (he is sitting behind the bidder), a double is usually for penalty. When the bidder is on the opener’s left, it is called a cooperative double and partner may leave it or choose to bid. Finally, opener may make a cue bid (western of the opponent’s suit usually at the three-level) used to investigate whether or not

partner has a stopper for no-trump. Cue bids of suits not bid are used for slam investigation as discussed in Chapter 3 or they may show exceptional hands with voids and significant strength, Chapter 8.

Cue bids by opener (Western Cue)

The term “Eastern Cue bid” refers to a style of low level cue bidding of the opponent’s suit showing stoppers in the bid suit. It has been replaced by the more popular “Western Cue bid” that asks for a full stopper in the opponent’s suit. One is a telling bid while the other is an asking bid. The repeat “Western” cue bid (also called a Directional Asking Bid) is usually asking for more information at low levels below 3NT and the cue bidder is asking for a partial stopper (Qx or Jxx). The Western, Eastern, and repeat cue bids are used to help the partnership reach a no-trump contract. An example follows.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	2♦
2♥	3♥#	pass	3NT

the 3♥ cue bid is asking if south for a heart stopper. If he does he should bid 3NT. If not he would either rebid diamonds or with spade support bid four spades. Cue bids are not alerted or announced.

An example of a repeat cue bid asking for a partial stopper which sometimes combines Eastern and Western cue bids follows.

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
Pass	2♠#	pass	3♦
Pass	3♠##	pass	3NT

how good is your overcall and I have a spade stopper (Eastern Cue)?

Do you also have a partial stopper in spades, if yes bid 3NT?

When the opponents interfere, they may or may not take up bidding space. When the overcall allows you to bid at the one-level, your response is natural, limited, and non-forcing. If the opponents bid a suit, you may have room to bid your own suit or no-trump. For example, if you open one club and the opponents overcall one diamond, the bid of a major show 5+ Starting Points. However, the bid of 1NT shows a stopper in the overcalled suit. If you are allowed to make a bid at the one-level, it is the same as if the overcall did not occur. This is also the case when the opponents make a takeout double.

Responder Bids after a takeout double

When the opponents make a takeout double over partner's one-level bid suit, it usually shows support for the other suits (at least three cards) with an opening hand of 12+ Starting Points. The takeout double asks your partner to bid a suit and implies shortness in the suit doubled (Chapter 6).

Many play that all systems are on over a takeout double (some have devised special systems over a double such as those who play **Bergen Raise Over MAjor suit Double** (BROMAD) and Modified Jacoby 2NT over a double). Most players ignore the double and make their normal responses, assuming the double did not occur. The following guidelines apply.

1. A new suit is forcing at the one-level.
2. A bid suit at the two-level is weak (a weak jump shift) and is non-forcing.
3. 1NT is semi-forcing, shows a stopper in the over caller's suit with lack of fit.
4. All Bergen Raises are on when opening one of a major.

One may also redouble the double. It shows 10+ points with or without a fit (some play that it always implies no fit).

Responder Bids Over a one- or two-level suit bid

When the opponents interfere over a major suit bid, the Combined Bergen Bids follow over a double, suit bid (at the one or two-level), or for a passed hand. The following schedule summarizes the bids when partner opens one of a major.

Combined Bergen Raises with Interference

Max Hardy Swiss Bids and Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters

Dummy Pts	No Interference	Double	Suit bid	Passed Hand
2 Trumps				
5-9 Pts	*1NT then 2 Major	pass	pass	pass
3 Trumps				
5-9 Pts	*1NT then 2 Major	pass	pass	pass
8-10(bad) Pts	@2 Major (Constructive)		2 Major	2 Major
10-12 Pts	@3♦**	@2♣	Cue bid	Drury (2♣*)

13+	2 over 1 Bids	Redouble	Cue bid	N/A
16+ Pts Balanced	@4♣ (Swiss)	@4♣	@4♣	N/A
4 Trumps				
0-6 Pts	@3 Major (Weak)	@3 Major	@3 Major	@3 Major
7-12 Pts	@3♣**	@3 Clubs	2 Major	2 Major
	Bid 3 Diamonds to Ask 3♥=7-9, 3♠=10-12			
13+ Singleton (Concealed Splinter)	@3 Other Major then Step Bids# (see footnote#)	@3 Other Major	@3 Other Major	N/A
13+ No Singleton	2 over 1 Bid	2 over 1 Bid	2 over 1 Bid	N/A
15/16+ Pts	@Jacoby 2NT	@Jacoby 2NT	@Jacoby 2NT	N/A
5 Trumps				
0-11 Pts	Bid Game	Bid Game	Bid Game	Bid Game
12-15 Pts	@4♦ (Swiss)	@4♦	@4♦	N/A

Note: With five HCP and three-card trump support, pass, unless holding either a singleton or at least one trump honor with all other HCP in one side suit. *Semi-Forcing **=Forcing, @=Alert

after 3♠ bid 3NT* to find singleton/void, then 4♣/4♦/4♥/4♠ denote Singleton/void. After 3♥, bid 3♠, again, steps denote the singleton. For example, 3NT denotes club singleton/void, etc. If you want to know if it is a singleton/void, bid next suit up which are Scroll Bids?

The above table also applies to Bergen Raises, one only need change the bid of 3♣** to show 7-9 points with four-card support and 3♦** to show four-card support with 10-12 points, 1NT* followed by three of the major to show 10-12 points with three-card support and Jacoby 2NT requires only 13+ Starting Points and four-card support.

If the overcall is at the two-level, we also use the Bergen bids; however, if the bid is, for example, 2♣, the bid of 3♣* may show three- or four-card support because of its cue bid nature.

Truscott Jordan 2NT

In the Combined Bergen Convention, we have chosen not to include the Truscott Jordan 2NT* bid; it is not the same as the Jacoby 2NT* bid. The bid is typically used to show a limit raise

with three- support for the bid of a major over a double and must be alerted. We recommend the redouble that shows 10+ points with or without a fit. After a redouble, one next supports the major (shows 13+ with three- or four-card support for the major). If you redouble and bid your own suit, you are denying a fit. Discuss these options with your partner.

We recommend the Jordan 2NT* over a minor suit opening if you do not play Flip-Flop. It shows 5+ card support and a limit raise. Recall that playing Flip-Flop, 2NT is weak and a three-level bid of the minor shows a limit raise.

Responder Bids when opponent (advancer) interferes after 2NT

To illustrate suppose the bidding goes: 1♥-P-2NT*-3♦

4♥	- is signoff, no shortness
Pass	- forcing pass, shows shortness in opponent's bid suit
New Suit	-shows shortness in bid suit
3NT	-medium or maximum hand, no shortness

After a forcing pass bid by opener, rebids by responder are:

Double	-Penalty
3M	-new Major, Ace in suit and 0-1 losers in opponent's bid suit
3NT	-King in Opponent's bid suit
4m	-Ace in suit bid and 0-1 losers in opponent's bid suit

Opener's Rebids after a redouble

Partner's redouble after a double shows 10+ Starting Points. If the opponents make a runout bid to compete and the opener cannot double the bid for penalty, it is always best to pass and allow responder to bid. Partner will show his suit or support for the opening bid suit. In most situations as opener **you should pass a redouble**. This allows your partner to show his hand; do not be quick to bid.

However, if opener has a long suit or a strong two-suited hand that is not suited to a penalty double, opener must bid. For example, a reverse would show a strong hand.

When the opponents bid over a redouble, a rebid of the suit shows a long suit with a weak hand, a double usually shows 4+ cards in the opponent's bid suit. A bid (or jump bid) of a new suit shows 5-5 distribution and a weak hand. A pass is forcing. If responder passes first and then bids, it shows a stronger hand, usually 5-5 in the two suits and 15+ Starting Points.

Negative Doubles by Responder

The **negative double** is like a takeout double. It is made by the responder after his right-hand opponent overcalled at the first round of bidding. A negative double guarantees that responder has at least **ONE** of the unbid suits (there is one exception, if partner bids a minor and the opponents overcall the other minor a double always implies both majors; however, some may do it with only one). In addition, if partner bids a major, the negative double usually shows support for the other major.

The starting point requirements for a negative double provided the overcall bid is no higher than 3♠, the most popular option (this is marked on the back of the convention card, some may play that they are in effect with higher level bids, e.g., 4♥, 5♠ or higher because they do not want the opponents to steal the bid), is:

You need 6+ HCP	to double at the 1-level
You need 8+ HCP	to double at the 2-level <u>MINOR</u>
You need 10+/11+ HCP	to double at the 2-level <u>MAJOR</u>
You need 12+ HCP	to double at the 3-level or higher

Note that all the Point Ranges are Unlimited and HCP.

Negative doubles never apply after a NT bid or a two-level cue bid such as Michaels (discussed soon).

After one Minor – (one or two of Major), a negative double promises only the single unbid major. It says nothing about the unbid minor; however, some insist on having both unbid suits.

After one Major – (one or two of Other Major), a negative double promises only **one minor**, not both. It does not deny both.

After one Minor – (two of Other Minor), a negative double promises **both** four-card majors.

After responder's negative double, opener must make a rebid that describes both his strength and his support for the suit partner may have shown with the double.

Some examples:

As responder you hold: ♠57 ♥KQ78 ♦QJ567 ♣42

Partner	RHO	You	LHO
1♣	1♠	X	Pass

After your partner opens 1♣, you have 9 points and want compete over 1♠. You want to see if partner has four hearts. If partner next bids 2♥/2♦ you may pass. If he rebids 2♣, you may also pass. To bid diamonds over 2♣ forces partner to the 3-level and you need at least 11/12 HCP.

With the same hand, suppose the bidding goes:

Partner	RHO	You	LHO
1♦	1♠	X	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	

You make a negative X, with support for partner's suit because you are again looking for a 4-4 major suit fit. However, you do not have support for the two unbid suits, but support for partner's bid suit. So if partner does not have hearts, you may return to his bid suit.

As responder, suppose you hold the hand: ♠AJ57 ♥KQ78 ♦76 ♣J102

Partner	RHO	You	LHO
1♦	1♠	X	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	

You again make a negative X, without support for partner's suit, but with a stopper in the opponents' bid suit. If partner again cannot support hearts and you lack support for the minors, you may next bid no-trump.

Using the same example, suppose you have not four hearts, but six:

♠J57 ♥KQ10782 ♦76 ♣J2

In this case you would not bid no-trump but instead bid 2♥ with 8 points.

Of course there is many more example of the use of the negative double. See the book by Larry Cohen (2015), Larry Teaches Doubles (and Redoubles) Spiral-bound.

Opener Rebids - one/two-level overcalls with negative doubles

When responder makes a negative double, the only way to create a forcing auction on the next round is to cue bid the opponent's suit. If partner opens a minor and you double for a major and next bid, it usually shows a weak hand. Rebidding a major after bidding it the first time shows more values. Neither of these bids is forcing. The only way to make a forcing bid is to cue bid the opponent's suit on your next turn to bid. It is often used to reach a no-trump contract and called a Western Cue bid. If partner does not bid no-trump, returning to opener's first bid suit shows a strong hand. An overview of bids by Opener follows.

A cue bid is forcing to game.

All jumps below game are invitational.

1NT for one-level overcalls and 2NT for two-level overcalls usually promise a stopper in overcaller's suit.

Opener may be forced to rebid a five-card suit or introduce a three-card suit.

A double jump to 3NT shows length and strength in the suit opened and a bid hand. It does not require a balanced hand.

Double and triple jump to game in a major show great shape and is weaker than a cue bid followed by a jump to game.

A reverse bid by opener is forcing to game.

We consider two examples of cue bidding.

A cue bid is the only forcing bid a negative doubler may make. This cue bid often shows a good hand with no other clear course of action.

1♣ - 1♥ - Dbl - pass

2♣ - pass - 2♥

The two heart bidder may hold ♠AQ94 ♥763 ♦AK75 ♣J5. Responder is hoping the opening bidder has a heart stopper and can bid 3NT. For example, opener may have the following hand: ♠K5 ♥KJ6 ♦63 ♣AQ10987.

Jumps by a negative doubler are non-forcing, but highly invitational. For example:

1♦ - 1♠ - Dbl - pass

2♦ - pass - 3♥ which shows less than ten Starting Points, and 6+ hearts - an invitational bid. The 3♥ bid may be based upon: ♠7 ♥KQJ965 ♦Q87 ♣987. With ten Starting Points and 5+ hearts, for example, with a hand as: ♠7 ♥KQ965 ♦A87 ♣954 or ♠A6 ♥AQJ107 ♦876 ♣954, responder would not double but bid 2♥. The negative double at the two-level shows a hand with only four hearts and unlimited point count or five or more hearts and not enough points to bid at the two-level.

Opener Rebids - three-level overcalls with negative doubles

A cue bid is forcing to game.

3NT guarantees a stopper in clubs.

Opener may be forced to rebid a five-card suit and rarely introduce a three-card suit.

After (one Level and 3♦ or one Level and 3♥ or one Level and 3♠), the negative double is called a trump double by Marty Bergen. It asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the opponent's overcall suit (with a stopper do not use a negative double, bid 3NT directly).

Opener in general has three types of hands when responding to a negative double.

Minimum (12-15 Starting Points)

with support for suit - partner's implied suit
with the double, you should bid it.

Invitational (16-17 Starting Points)
 Game values (18+ Starting Points)

Jump one level to show support
 Jump to game or Cue bid the opponent's suit,
 this allows partner to show his suit

Instead of a negative double, one may bid a new suit at the two-level with 10+ Starting Points. These are called a "standard" free bid. However, some play **Negative Free Bids**. Negative free bids usually require only 6-10 Starting Points and show a long suit. Negative free bids must be alerted, if played. If you play negative free bids, it also affects the negative double, since now, playing negative free bids, you have to double and bid with 10+ values.

Negative Free Bids

DEFINITION – Negative Free Bids are used when partner opens the bidding at the one level and the opponents show a one suited hand by bidding at the 1/2/3 levels through 3♦. If responder now bids **any new suit** at the two or three level, the bid shows a 5+-card suit and is non-forcing showing 5-10 HCP. With 11+ points one must double and bid their suit, a game force bidding sequence. **The NFB and the doubles must be alerted** since the new suit is non-forcing and the double may not be negative.

Let's look at an example when the bidding goes: 1♠ - (2♣) - 2♥*= 6-9HCP with 5+ hearts.

Pass	Minimal hand with hearts
2♠/3♦	Less than three hearts and non-forcing
2NT	Invitational to 3NT may have heart fit
3♥	Preemptive heart raise
3♣	Game invitational raise in hearts
3♠	Natural and invitational
3NT	Natural and no heart fit
4♣/4♦	Delayed splinter with heart fit
4♥	Sign-off
4NT	1430 Keycard Blackwood for hearts
5♣/5♦	Exclusion Keycard Blackwood for hearts with club/diamond void

With a strong hand, the bidding sequence would be: 1♠ - (2♣) – X*.

Note that the double may not be negative; it only shows 10+ HCP and is forcing. Responder bids 2♠. Partner may raise or bid his own suit 3♦.

Examples of NFB weak sequences (5/6-9 HCP):

Partner	Overcall	NFB
1♣/1♦	1♠	2♥*

1♣	1♥/1♠	2♦*
1♣	2♠/2♣	3♦*
1♦	2♥/2♠	3♣*
1♥	1♠	2♣*/2♦*
1♥	2♣/2♦	2♠*
1♥	3♣	3♦*
1♠	3♣/3♦	3♥*

Using the definition of a NFB, none of the following are NFB's.

1♣	1♥	1♠ (Natural 1-level bid)
1♦	3♥	3♠ (Natural, NFB applies through 3♦ by over caller)
1♣	2♣	2♦ (Natural, opponents have shown a 2-suited hand)

So far, we've showed how responder can show a long suit with a relatively weak hand and a forcing hand. With the Negative Free Bids, you can also show a third hand type: one that's at the top of the NFB point-range and has a very strong suit.

To show this highly invitational hand, responder jump-shifts after an opponent's overcall. The jump in a new suit now shows a strong 6+-card suit.

Responder Bids used with minor suit openings (without flip-flop)

While we have stressed major suit openings, there are also several bids that may be used when the opponents interfere over a minor suit opening. Let's suppose you open 1♦ and the opponents bid a major. A summary of responses follow.

1♦ - 1M

Double	Negative double shows other major
1NT	8-10 Starting Points, 3 diamonds and a stopper in the major
2♦	Less than 10 Starting Points, 4 diamonds (inverted minors is off)
2♣/2♥	Natural with 10+ Starting Points
2M	Cue bid, 12+ Starting Points and asking for a major stopper
2NT*	11- 12 Starting Points with a major stopper and 5+ diamonds
3♣	Splinter (singleton/void) in support of diamonds
3♦	Weak raise 6-10 Starting Points
3M	Splinter in major with 5+ card support in diamonds

*Truscott Jordan

Balancing Double by Opener

Often, your partner bids and your right hand opponent (RHO) interfere and you have their bid suit. You make what is called a trap pass. When the opponents pass, your partner often makes a **balancing double** when holding only two cards in the overcall suit he is asking you to bid. Do you bid or pass the double? To decide, one uses the rule of nine. It works as follows:

Rule of 9

Add the level of the contract (usually one or two) to the number of trumps you hold in the overcaller's suit, plus the number of honors including the ten. If the total is nine or more, pass, leaving the double in, otherwise bid to take out the double.

This action may cause the overcall bidder to bid a new suit. If you had enough to leave the double in the first time, you should also double the second suit. Partner may pass for penalty holding a strong hand with a good holding in the second suit bid, rebid his original suit, or perhaps bid no-trump. A direct cue bid of over caller's second suit shows a strong hand and a desire to play in the over caller first suit.

Responder calls after a 1NT overcall

When the opponents interfere by bidding 1NT, they usually have the suit bid stopped, a balanced hand showing a no-trump opener with 15-17/18 Starting Points. If this is not the case, the bid must be alerted. Some partnerships play that the bid of 1NT for takeout with shortness in the bid suit to interfere with the opponents' agreements.

When the opponents bid 1NT, responder's options are limited. The bid has taken away the negative double. Responder may pass, raise his partner's suit, or **double for penalty**. Observe that if partner has 12+ points and the over caller has fifteen; the remaining points shared between the remaining hands are only thirteen.

With 5-9 points and at least three-card support, raise your partner's major suit. A jump raise in partner's major shows 10-12 points with support with three or four-card support. Unless you have 10 + points and a good 5+ card suit, do not bid it.

With 10+ Starting Points or a very good suit of your own (8+ cards), consider doubling for penalty.

Unusual 2NT Overcall

The Unusual 2NT overcall is used after one has made a majors suit bid. A 2NT overcall shows at least five cards in each of the lowest unbid suits; partner is expected to bid the one he likes best. Some examples:

1♣ - 2NT	2NT shows the lowest two unbid suits, diamonds and hearts.
1♦ - 2NT	2NT shows clubs and hearts.
1♥ - 2NT	2NT shows clubs and diamonds.
1♠ - 2NT	2NT shows clubs and diamonds.

In each of these cases, the partner of the 2NT bidder normally corrects to the suit for which he has the most tolerance. With equal length in both suits, especially with two doubletons, he bids the cheapest suit. If he has a weak hand with at least four-card support, he can consider making a preemptive jump bid to the four-level in one of the known suits.

When the opponents interfere using the 2NT overcall bid, you may use the convention known as **Unusual over unusual 2NT** which is a series of cue bids to show support for your partner's bid suit.

Because we know the two suits when the opponents use employing the unusual 2NT bid, we can use this information to your advantage. One uses the suits of the opponents (the cheapest suit and their second suit, as cue bids) and the two natural available bids to describe the hand of the responder:

Cheapest Cue bid: A limit raise or better in the bid suit.

Second Cue bid: Game forcing hand in the fourth unbid suit.

Raise in the fourth suit: Natural and non-forcing.

Raise in the bid suit: Competitive raise (weak).

An example follows.

- 1♥ - 2NT (clubs & diamonds) – (?)
- 3♣ the Cheapest Cue bid is a Limit raise or better in hearts (the bid major).
- 3♦ the Second Cue bid is a game forcing bid in spades.
- 3♥ is a competitive raise and weak.
- 3♠ is natural and non-forcing

NOTE: Some play the second cue bid as invitational only, not forcing; it depends on your partnership agreement. Check with your partner!

If the bidding goes:

- 1♠ - 2NT (clubs & diamonds) – (?)
- 3♣ the Cheapest Cue bid is a Limit raise or better in spades (the bid major).
- 3♦ the Second Cue bid is a game forcing bid in hearts.
- 3♥ is a competitive raise and weak.
- 3♠ is natural and non-forcing

NOTE: Some play that three clubs over the major bid still shows support for hearts. Discuss these bids with your partner.

What about bids above the three-level? Discuss these with your partner.

3NT is usually natural with stoppers in the two suits.

4♣/4♦ is splinter raise in hearts (for our example).

4♠ is natural.

When should the double be used? It usually shows 10 + Starting Points (with or without a fit) and is primarily used as if the bid of two no-trump was a double (for our example, 1♥-Dbl).

Thus, a double after the bid of 2NT is like a redouble. Because the opponent's bid of 2NT is forcing, the opener can now double the opponent's bid with good trumps, make a descriptive bid with an offensive hand, or make a forcing pass.

Some partnerships also play unusual 2NT in the balancing seat: 1♥ - pass - pass - 2NT, showing the minors; however in the Direct seat over weak two bids, the bid of **2NT IS NOT UNUSUAL**. The bid shows strong no trump bid with 15-17 HCP and at least two stoppers in the overcall bid suit.

Michaels Cue bid

This is a direct cue bid of the opponent's opened suit (one club by RHO, two clubs by you) to show 5+card length in two other suits. One of your suits is always a major, but the exact two you promise depend upon the opening bid.

- Over a **minor-suit opening**, a Michaels Cue bid (1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦) shows **both majors**.
- Over a **major-suit opening**, a Michaels Cue bid (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠) shows **the OTHER major and an unspecified minor**.

When using Michaels and the two suits of the opponents are known, the bids by responder are identical to those used in Unusual over Unusual 2NT. To illustrate, after the bids of 1♣-2♣ (the majors, hearts and spades), we have that

2♦	is natural and non-forcing.
2♥	the cheapest cue bid is a limit raise or better in clubs.
2♠	the Second cue bid is a game forcing bid in diamonds.
2NT	is natural and invitational.
3♣	is a competitive club raise and weak.
3♦	is natural and forcing.
3♥/3♠	is splinter raises in clubs.
3NT	is natural with stoppers in the two suits.
4♥/4♠	is splinter raise in clubs.
5♣	is natural.

A double shows 10+ Starting Points with or without a fit.

What about when the second suit of the Michaels bid is ambiguous? (See footnote (#) below.) Then only **one** suit is known; for example, with the bids 1♥-2♥, and 1♠-2♠. Now, we can no longer do everything since we have only one known cue bid. For example, for the bid 1♠-2♠ (shows hearts and a minor), we have the following bids.

- 2NT is natural and invitational.
- 3♣ is a non-forcing club raise.
- 3♦ is a not forcing diamond raise.
- 3♥ the only cue bid shows a limit raise in spades.
- 3♠ is competitive and weak.
- 4♥ is splinter raise for spades.

If the opener doubles the opponent's three-level bid after Michaels or Unusual 2NT, it is generally for penalty, not takeout.

(#) Some play that the opponents' cue bids show the upper two unbid suits; then one heart followed by two hearts would show spades and diamonds; and one spade followed by two spades would show hearts and diamonds! It is called Modified Michaels and all suits are known. Hence, the responses may be patterned after the one club-two club bid discussed above.

Some partnerships also play Michaels if the bidding goes, for example, 1♣ - pass - pass - 2♣; or if the bidding goes 1♣ - pass - 1NT - 2♣, a balancing seat Michaels.

Michaels bids need to be alerted. **YOU MUST AND SHOULD ALWAYS ASK WHAT THE CUE BID MEANS.** If the club bid is a Precision club bid or announced as short, some play that a club bid is natural and no longer Michaels. For additional details, consult Marty Bergen's (1986) "Better Bidding with Bergen, Volume Two, Competitive Bidding Fit Bids, and More," by Devyn Press.

After Weak Jump Overcalls

After a preemptive jump overcall, for example 3♦, after partner has bid a major you have several options: pass, support, bid your own suit, etc. If you have support for partner's major and 10-12 Starting Points, show support immediately. With a stronger hand, make a cue bid or bid your own suit freely and the support partner's major. The advantage of bidding your own suit is that if the opponents compete in the auction, opener (your partner) will be a better position to decide whether or not to double the opponents for penalty or bid on.

Fishbein Convention

The **Fishbein Convention** is a bidding convention developed by Harry Fishbein. It is in the direct seat when the opponents preempt at the two or three levels. Instead of doubling for takeout

(negative), one bids the next higher suit (excluding 2NT) for takeout. Then double is for penalty. The bid of 3NT is usually to play.

Some Examples of Bidding over Interference

When the opponents interfere, there are number of strategies one may consider. We review several applying the principles reviewed in this chapter.

(1) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	2♥

(?)

South has the following hand: ♠ KQJ76 ♥ J54 ♦ AQ5 ♣ 107.

South has fourteen Starting Points and his partner responded with a 2/1 game force bid. However, the opponents interfered with the bid of two hearts. South has no more to say and must pass. The auction will not end since his partner (north) has given a 2/1 response and will bid. The pass by the opener is called a forced pass; south has bid his hand and is not required to bid again. What would a double show? The overcaller (east) is on the opening bidder right. It would be for penalty.

(2) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	double	2♦	2♥

(?)

South has the same hand, but west has made a takeout double. Partner has taken a free bid at the two-level showing 10+ Starting Points. South knows that his partner has diamonds and with three, he competes by bidding 3♦. This allows partner to return to spades at the three-level for a partial score. Partner did not use Bergen; game in a major is unlikely.

(3) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2NT	3♣	3♦

(?)

The bid of 3♣ by partner is a limit raise for spades (the bid of 3♦ would be a game force bid in hearts) showing 10-12 Starting Points. Partner may invite or bid game. A cue bid of three diamonds would show interest in slam.

(4) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♥	pass	2♣	2♠
(?)			

(a) North has the following hand: ♠ 765 ♥ A2 ♦ AQ5 ♣ AJ1076.

Without a spade stopper, south cannot bid no-trump. Instead, south bids 3♠ asking for a spade stopper. Without a stopper, north bids 3♥.

(b) North has the following hand: ♠ AKQ ♥ 82 ♦ K65 ♣ KQJ43.

With a spade stopper, north bids 2NT (with eighteen Starting Points). Depending on opener's response, may show his extra values later in the bidding sequence.

(c) North has the following hand: ♠ 87 ♥ K54 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

With three-card support for hearts, show your support, bid 3♥.

(5) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	3♦	(?)	

North has the following hand: ♠ 874 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

Do not show your five-card suit, show your support immediately.

(6) The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♠	(?)	

(6) North has the following hand: ♠ 874 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AK1043.

A bid of 3♠ shows a weak hand, cue bid 3♣ to show support even with three in this case.

Partner should bid game.

(7) An example of the Fishbein Conventions (from the World Championships in Sao Paolo, Brazil)

	♠	A3		
	♥	AQJ3		
	♦	K2		
	♣	106543		
♠	Q42	N W E S	♠	J10765
♥	K1097652		♥	4
♦	6		♦	J975
♣	87		♣	KJ2
	♠	K98		
	♥	8		
	♦	AQ10843		
	♣	AQ9		

In this example, the bidding goes

South	West	North	East
1♦	3♥	(?)	

You have a heart stack against the opponents; you cannot make a negative double since you do not have spades. Playing the Fishbein Convention, one would double for penalty. Not playing the convention, you must pass and hope partner reopens with a double. Do not bid 4♦.

Responding to 3NT after a three-level preempt

While a bid of 3NT over a three-level bid is to play, when you have a big hand you need a method to investigate slam since you know partner has stoppers and at least a strong no-trump hand with 15+ Starting Points. How do you investigate slam when you have a strong hand or a very distributional hand? With a balanced hand, 4NT would be quantitative. And transfers would be on where 4♦/4♥ are transfers to a major are non-forcing slam try in the major suits, hearts and spades, respectively. While a direct bid of a major is to play. Now, 4♦ may be used as an artificial enquiry with the following responses.

4 of a suit	minimum hand to play
4NT	15-18 balanced hand
5 of a suit	good hand with slam interest
5NT	19-21 balanced hand
6 of suit	great hand 6+ cards
6NT	22+ balanced hands

Bidding over weak two and three level bids

How do you respond when the opponents' make a preemptive bid at the two or three level?

When making a preemptive bid, the opponents usually have 6-10 Starting Points and if vulnerable two of the top three honors in the suit bid. So there are about 30 points remaining in the three unbid hands. If you have 12-15 points, that leaves 15-18 points in the remaining two hands. Thus, you can expect partner to have about 7 points, often referred to as the **RULE of SEVEN**. So how should one proceed?

Direct Seat Bids

- Overcall (rather than double) if you have 15 or fewer points and a good 5-card suit headed by one of the top three honors if non-vulnerable and two if vulnerable.
- Use the **Rule of Seven** to decide if your overcall is safe at the two or three level. Try to imagine partner with about 7 points. If you can make your bid opposite that hand, you should overcall at the two or three level.
- Double (instead of overcalling a minor) if you have 3+-card support for the unbid majors.
- Over the opponent's opening 3-level bid, bid 3NT (instead of doubling or overcalling a minor) if you have 15+ points and two stoppers in the opponent's bid suit.
- **A bid of 2NT over a weak two bid shows a 15-17 no-trump hand with two stoppers in the bid suit; not the minors.**
- Over a weak 2-level bid, use a jump to 3NT to show a good hand and a running suit. This jump always denies takeout-double shape (you are usually very short in an unbid suit). With a strong balanced hand, double first, then bid no-trump.
- All jumps are *strong*. A jump overcall (for example, 2♥ by RHO - 3♠ by you) forces to game.
- Use Leaping Michaels bid if it applies (Chapter 7).

Balancing Seat Bids

- Always compete if you are short in their suit, make a takeout double, partner may have a stack in their suit and convert your double to penalty
- For doubles and overcalls, mentally add 4 HCPs to your hand and choose the same bid you would make in the direct seat.

Responder's Bids

After partners direct overcall (2X-2Y-Pass-?)

- **Pass** = 0-7 points
- **Single raise of partner's suit** 8-10 points and 3+ card support
- **Cue bid** of their suit (2X-2Y-P-3X) = Strong raise of partner's suit, forcing to game.
- **Jump in another suit** (2X-2Y-P-4Z) = Splinter raise (slam-try values, trump support and a singleton in the bid suit)
- **New suit** (3X-3Y-P-3X) = Forcing, 5+-card suit.

- **Double** (if RHO raises his partner's suit: (2X-2Y-3X-DBL) = Responsive double, showing values (10+ pts.), length in the unbid suits, 2 or fewer cards in partner's suit Or Rosenkrantz double showing support for the Y suit and the Ace/King or both— depends on your agreement.

After partners direct double (2X-DBL-Pass-?)

- Make your “normal” bids:
 1. with a weak hand (0-7 points), make a low-level bid in your longest unbid suit (2X-DBL-Pass-2Y, 3Z)
 2. Jump to 3 of your suit with 8-10 points and a 5-card suit (2X-DBL-Pass-3Y)
 3. Jump to game in your suit with 11+ points.
- Use the Lebensohl convention as a relay to 3♣ (Chapter 9) when holding 0-11 points.
- If you're considering passing the double for penalties, use the **Rule of Nine** (See Chapter 10) to decide whether or not to bid or pass the double.

After partner's direct cue bid (2X-3X-Pass-?)

- Bid no-trump if you have a stopper in their suit.
- With no stopper, bid your cheapest 3-card suit.
- After partner's no-trump overcall (2X-2NT-Pass-?)
- Playing “system on” – 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers.
- If partner jumps to 3NT either pass or transfer to your long suit if you have a slam try. Be careful, he may be short in your suit.

Summary of Direct-Seat Actions recommend by Karen Walker

Your action:	Over their Weak 2-bid:	Over their 3-bid:
Simple overcall	10-17 pts. 5+ card suit	12-17 pts. 6+-card suit or strong 5+ cards
Double	12+ pts., shortness in their suit 3-4+ cards in all unbid suits OR 18+ pts. and a long suit	14+ pts., shortness in their suit 3+ cards in all unbid suits OR 19+ pts. and a long suit
Double, then bid a suit	17+ pts. Strong 5+-card suit	18+ pts. Strong 5+-card suit
Jump to 3S over 2H opener	16+ pts., very strong 6+-card suit	
Jump to 4 of a minor	(2H/2S - 4♣ or 4♦ = Leaping Michaels Strong 5-5 or better in bid suit & other major	3♣-4♦ = Strong one-suiter, asks for cue bid
4♥ or 4♠	16+ pts. and a strong 6+-suit	16+ pts. and a strong 6+-suit

Cue bid (2♥-3♥)	Usually a strong 1-suiter Asks for stopper for no-trump	Minor (3♣-4♣) = Strong, at least 5-5 in both majors Major (3♥-4♥) = Strong, at least 5-5 in spades and a minor
Jump cue bid	Leaping Michaels (2♥-4♥, 2♦-4♦)	
2NT	14-18 pts. balanced with stopper(s)	
Double, then rebid NT	18+ pts. balanced with stopper(s)	22+ pts. with stoppers and support for unbid suits
3NT	16+ pts. with stopper and a long running minor	16-22 pts. with stopper(s) May be a running minor and stopper(s)



CHAPTER 6

TAKEOUT DOUBLES

Standard Takeout Doubles

As seen in Chapter 5, a takeout double is a competitive bid used to show an opening hand with at least 11/12+ Starting Points when used in the direct seat. The purpose of the bid is to get into the auction. The ideal hand for the doubler is 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 where the singleton or void is in the opponent's bid suit. It tends to deny a five-card major.

The doubler usually has two kinds of hands, weak or strong. With a weak hand, the doubler will usually pass any bid made by his partner; with a stronger hand 16/17+ Starting Points, he will double and bid his own suit. With 18/19+ Starting Points, the doubler will generally double and cue bid. When the opponents bid after partner responds to a double, the second double is usually for penalty.

If you double and then bid a new suit, how do you know whether or not the bid is forcing? Does it make a difference if you partner made a free bid? Let's look at an example.

Suppose the bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
		1♦	double
Pass	1♥	Pass	?

If South bids 1♠ or 2♣ he is showing a good hand, but since partner (North) can have nothing, the bids are NOT forcing. Partner (North) may pass. Even if you jump to the three level for these bids, partner may pass. If South has a really good hand, he must now cue bid 2♦.

However, suppose partner made a free bid:

West	North	East	South
		1♣	double
1♦	1♥	Pass	?

Now a new suit by South is forcing for one round. However, it is not forcing to game.

Returning to our example, suppose partner bids 1NT:

West	North	East	South
		1♦	double
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

West	North	East	South
		1♦	double
1♥	1NT	Pass	?

Now if you bid at the two level (2♣) a lower ranking suit, you are not showing a good hand – you are running from no-trump. However, if you bid at the two level, a higher ranking suit (2♠), you are showing a very good hand, 17/18 HCP.

How big a hand do you need to double and then bid no trump? You again should have a very good hand, about 19 HCP (an overcall of 1NT is usually 15/16-18).

Finally, suppose you double and double again without hearing from partner? The second double is again for takeout, not penalty.

The doubler will normally have no more than three cards in the opponent’s opening suit (do not double with a stack in the opponent’s suit, make a trap pass, if partner balances with a double, use the rule of nine to see whether you pull the double or leave it in for penalty). When the doubler doubles a major suit opening, he will usually have four cards in the other major or a strong hand where he will bid his own suit or cue bid.

The takeout double is not restricted to the direct seat. It occurs when partner has not yet bid, passes do not count but redoubles are considered bids, and the double is of a suit bid (not no-trump) at the 1, 2, or 3 bidding levels. Thus, one may also use a takeout double in the fourth seat when the bidding has gone 1x – pass – pass – double. The double is for takeout since partner has not yet bid; it is virtually never used for penalty in this situation.

Let’s look at some simple auctions:

South	West	North	East
	1♦	1♥	3♦
Pass	pass	double	

Because partner south has not bid, the double is for takeout. Some authors refer to this double as a Responsive Double. It shows support for the other three suits. However, some play the double as a Rosenkrantz double showing three card support for hearts with the Ace, King or both.

South	West	North	East
1♥	pass	1NT	double

In this example, the double by east is equivalent to a direct takeout double of the heart opening bid. If opener had bid a minor, the double is more than likely asking for a major suit.

Additionally, the double by east is equivalent to a direct takeout double of the heart opening bid.

Getting more complicated, E-W vulnerable and N-S non-vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	pass
Pass	double	pass	pass
2♥	double		

What is the second double by north? South's pass of the first double is a "penalty pass," equivalent to bidding spades since the first double of the spade bid should have showed hearts (at least three and maybe four) with a shortage in spades. Even though partner has passed in the auction, it is not for takeout but for penalty. When three different suits have been bid, the second double is usually for penalty.

Suppose north does not double but passes the bid of two hearts; if south holds the hand:

♠ KQ75 ♥ AJ102 ♦ 7 ♣ 9865, using the rule of nine, he must double for penalty at the two-level.

Equal Level Conversion

When partner doubles and bids his own suit, we have said that he usually has a "big" hand, at least 16/17+ points. However there is an exception called the Equal Level Conversion (ELC) double (X). It is used when partner has a two suited hand with diamonds and hearts, diamonds and spades, and the opponents open one club or with hearts and spades (5-4 in each case) and the opponents open one club or one diamond. Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth call the convention **Minimum Equal Level Conversion Double**.

The ELC X was developed by **Robert B. Ewen** and published his book "Doubles for Takeout, Penalties, and Profit in Contract Bridge" (1973); however, he did not name it as such. The double is illustrated by him on Page 25 of his book.

South

♠ KJ97

♥ 64

♦ AQJ982

♣ 8

East	South	West	North
1♥	?		

With this type of hand what is south to do? He has values for a takeout double but not the distribution. He doubles and when partner bids 2♣, he corrects to 2♦. This does not show a big

hand with diamonds. It corrects partner's bid at the two level to show diamonds and spades or after the bid of bids 3♣ by partner he bids 3♦ if the opponents enter the auction at the two level by bidding 2♥. The ELC double is useful since partner can now show two suits, five diamonds and four spades.

The ELC double can also be employed when the opponents open 1♦ and you have five hearts and four spades. To show the 5-4 hand you double and bid hearts to show your off-shape distribution after partner bids 2♣. If you were 5-5, you would use the Michaels cue bid. With five spades and four hearts there is no problem, you can overcall one spade and bid hearts.

Takeout Double or Overcall

When an opponent opened the bidding, you can make a simple overcall with 8+ to 16 Starting Points and a five-card suit major, never a minor (for example, if the opponents open one club and your distribution is 3=3=5=2, double). If your overcalls have to bid at the two-levels, you'd better have 13+ points. Jump overcalls are preemptive. If you have a balanced hand, you can make a no-trump overcall with 15-18 points (careful, some use it as a takeout bid). If you have strong hand with shortness in opponents' suit, you should make a takeout double. Overcalls are explained in Chapter 7.

Responding to a Takeout Double

When partner makes a takeout double and the opponents do not bid, you must respond; the double is forcing. Your options are:

Suit bid	6-9 Starting Points and 3+ card suits (usually 4+)
Jump Longest Suit	10+ Starting Points 4+ cards, forcing one round
Double Jump	13+ Starting Points 5+ cards, forcing to game, may bid game
1NT	8-10 Starting Points balanced with a stopper, no 4-card major
2NT	11-12 Starting Points balanced with a stopper, no 4-card major
3NT	13-15 Starting Points balanced with a stopper, no 4-card major
Cue bid	12+ points, over natural bids, artificial and forcing
Pass	Converts the double into a penalty, Rule of 9.

Cue bids in response to takeout doubles

A cue bid is the only forcing bid an advancer may make to a takeout double. All other bids, including jumps, are non-forcing.

With a good four-card suit or 5+ card suit and an opening hand, it may be easy to get to game after a double; however, suppose you have good values and two suits, what do you do? For example, with equal length and perhaps even equal strength in two suits when the bidding proceeds:

1♣ -X - pass and the advancer may hold one of the following hands.

1. ♠K986 ♥K986 ♦A8 ♣K64
2. ♠A975 ♥A975 ♦A98 ♣J3
3. ♠KQ9 ♥KJ10 ♦AQ43 ♣765.

With two four-card majors (hands 1 and 2), you must cue bid 2♣. It asks partner to bid his best major.

With hand 3, if the takeout doubler bids spades, advancer may repeat the cue (3♣) that suggests less than four-card support for the doubler's major suit but with game going values. The doubler would often bid 3NT with stoppers in the opponent's suit.

Responding to a Takeout Double with Interference

A freely-bid suit shows 6+ points and at least a four-card suit. If the takeout double is redoubled, all bids are natural but jump suit bids are now preemptive, not strong, showing at least five cards and 0-9 points.

How high to play takeout doubles is a matter of partnership agreement. Many partnerships play takeout doubles through the 3♠. A double above the bid of three spades is then often taken as penalty. However, some may play it to the level of 5♦ or no limit. You should discuss the level with your partner.

In the preceding three examples there was no interference; suppose the bidding now goes:

1♣ - X - 1NT - (?). Now what do you bid?

You again invoke the Michaels cue bid of 2♣ in the balancing seat for the first two hands; however, with hand (3), a double is used to show the two lower ranking suits (hearts and diamonds). Note you must be at least 4-4 to use the cue bid or the double.

If the opponents open a diamond and the bidding goes 1♦ - X - 1NT - (?), again 2♦ shows the majors and a double shows clubs and hearts.

The bids may also be used with a major suit opening where now a cue bid of the major shows the other major and a minor and again a double is used to show the lower ranking suits. Be careful here since if partner does not have the major, you are at the three levels in a minor. You should have 10-12 points to cue bid the major.

Rebids by Doubler

When making a takeout double, remember, partner may have nothing. You have forced partner to bid; on average he usually has 7 HCP. Partner may have no more than nine Starting Points. After a minimal response, you will need at least 16+ points for game in partner's bid suit. You can invite with 16-18 Starting Points. With 19-20 or 21+ jump, bid at the three- or four-level, respectively. If partner bids at the two-level, make a single raise with 16-19 Starting Points and a double jump to game in a major with 20+ points.

Summary:

With a Minimum Hand (12-15 points)

- Responder made the cheapest possible response – pass
- Responder jump, pass, raise to invite or bid game, you must decide

With a Medium Hand (16-18 points)

- Responder made the cheapest possible response – raise one level to invite, game is still possible.
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

With a Maximum Hand (19-21 points)

- Responder has made a cheapest possible response – jump raise
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

Takeout double over weak two bids

Playing Fishbein, recall that a double is for penalty, one has to bid the next level suit for takeout. If you do not play Fishbein, a double is for takeout. While in most cases you would bid your best suit, suppose you have zero points; partner doubles the bid of 2♠ and you have a weak hand with four hearts:

♠ 872 ♥ 7654 ♦ 983 ♣ 876

What do you do? You cannot bid 3♥; you have less than six points. You bid 2NT* as a relay bid which is part of the Lebensohl or Transfer Lebensohl systems played over interference to 1NT (Chapter 9). It asks partner to bid 3♣* so you may sign off at the three-level in a suit with no interest in game. If the doubler does not accept the relay and bids any other suit, it shows a 20+ HCP hand. If you do not bid 2NT, but bid a suit at the three-level you are showing about 6 HCP.

2NT followed by 3NT denies four of the other majors and shows a stopper in the weak suit bid. A direct cue bid of the weak suit shows a very strong hand; it is game forcing.

Fishbein is played the in direct seat over a weak two or three-level bid and does not use 2NT. 2NT over a weak two bid always shows a strong 1 NT opener (14/15-17 points).

Doubling 1NT (penalty or takeout)

The double of a 1NT opening may be for takeout or penalty. Whether the double is for penalty or takeout usually depends on the convention you play as defense over no-trump. Several approaches will be discussed in Chapter 9. However, before we get there, let me explain what you need to double a strong 1NT bid for penalty with a balanced hand.

If the opponents are playing 15-17, you need 18+ to double for penalty.

If the opponents are playing 12-14 or 10-12, you need 15+ to double for penalty.

The experts do not agree on whether a double should be for penalty or takeout; however, all have opinions. You may read about it at: www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm.

Some partnerships use the simple rule that all doubles when partner has not bid are for takeout. Your agreements must be discussed.

Examples

1. The opponents open 1♦ with either of the following hands you must make a takeout double with shortness in diamonds.

♠ AK65 ♥ KQ65 ♦ 98 ♣ K42 ♠ Q972 ♥ AK65 ♦ 7 ♣ KJ43

You will pass any bid partner makes, even if it is clubs, you do not have sufficient values (16/17+) to double and bid.

However, with the following hand you would again double:

♠ AKJ1094 ♥ KQ ♦ 7 ♣ AK87

and bid spades. If the opponents opened 1NT, you would double for penalty.

2. The bidding goes 1♣ - double - pass - (What do you bid?)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| a) ♠ 652 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ82 ♣ A976 | you can bid 1♦ or because you have a stopper, try bidding 1NT. You do not want to play in a minor. |
| b) ♠ 652 ♥ 75 ♦ KQ982 ♣ 762 | you have a weak hand, bid 1♦. |
| c) ♠ 542 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ1082 ♣ AK7 | you have a strong hand, bid 2NT. You do not want to play in a diamond game |
| d) ♠ 92 ♥ 10987 ♦ K865 ♣ 632 | bid 2NT as a relay to three clubs |
| e) ♠ AKJ1094 ♥ KQ ♦ 7 ♣ 8765 | bid 4♠, jump to game to show values |

3. The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♦	double	pass	1♠
Pass	(?)		

And you have a four-card spade suit, do you raise or pass? With 16+, raise, otherwise pass; remember you forced your partner to bid.

(3) Suppose the bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
		1♦	double
pass	1♠	2♦	(?)

You again hold four spades, but you have less than 16+ points. Do you pass or bid on? Do not let the opponents steal the bid; you are only at the two-level with the master suit. You must bid 2♠, even vulnerable versus non-vulnerable. Never let the opponents play at the two-level holding the master suit or if they do not have a fit.

4. The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
	1♦	pass	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	(?)

And you again hold spades ♠ AK543 ♥ 7 ♦ 985 ♣ AQ76. What do you do? You have two choices - support diamonds or double for takeout, hoping partner will bid spades with only two.

5. The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
			1♥
pass	pass	Double	(?)

And you hold ♠ 9876 ♥ 7 ♦ QJ832 ♣ K87. What do you do? The opponents have passed, so your partner must have a very good hand; even though you have four spades, bid your best suit, bid 2♦. If partner does not bid spades, bid them at the next turn.

See Mike Lawrence (2012), "The Complete Book on Takeout Doubles" for an exhaustive treatment of takeout doubles and Lawrence (2012), "The Complete Book on Balancing in Contract Bridge, two classics.

CHAPTER 7

OVERCALLS

Overcalls are complicated and countless books have been written about them. However, there are basically only four common types of overcalls: simple overcalls, no-trump overcalls, jump overcalls, and two-suited overcalls (in Chapter 5, we discussed two-suited overcalls: Unusual 2NT and Michaels Cue bids, but not the responses to these bids).

The 1NT overcall

The ACBL regulations state that a direct overcall of 1NT shows 15-17/18 Starting Points and a stopper (most often) in the opponent's bid suit. This is considered "standard" and need not be alerted. For now, let's assume you are playing the standard approach. Then the bids for a no-trump overcall are as follows.

15/16-18	Overcalls 1NT
19-20	Double and then bid No-trump
21-23	Double and then jump in No-trump
24-26	Double and rebid 3NT (or double and cue bid)

If you play the "standard overcall" strong 1NT bid, one next has to ask whether or not you play systems on or off. This must be marked on your convention card. You may overcall a strong NT with a singleton A/K/Q as of August 2016.

Systems On or Off

ON

Most partnerships play that all systems are on which means you do not differentiate between a 1NT openings from the overcall bid of 1NT. Thus, Stayman, Jacoby Transfer, etc. are all in effect.

OFF

Alternatively, you may play that systems are off. If you do, one does not use Stayman (however, some use it with off- discuss with your partner) or any of the transfer bids. Why take this approach? Are not the two situations the same? No.

Keeping systems off allow you to play at the 2-level. All 2-level bids are “drop” dead bids. 2NT=8-9 HCP and 3NT is to play. All 3-level bids show a 5-card suit. If you overcall 1NT and partner cue bid’s the opponents, it is Stayman.

Consider this: If your LHO opens 1♠ and your partner overcalls 1NT, you can only play one of the remaining three suits at the two-level, and that’s hearts. What if you want to play two diamonds or two clubs? You can’t if you play systems on.

If your LHO has about twelve Starting Points and your partner has sixteen, then there are only about twelve points left for your RHO and you. Sometimes you don’t get your fair share, right?

Take a look at your partner’s hand and yours.

Opener ♠ KJ9 ♥ AJ107 ♦ QJ8 ♣ K87 Responder ♠ 876 ♥ 7 ♦ 109762 ♣ 5643

Where do you think it plays best? Not 1NT. Your hand has no value for partner, but if you play it in two diamonds, your hand can take several tricks. If the A-Q of spades and the ♣A are on your left, you will make two diamonds.

If you don’t play natural bids at the two-level, you will either have to pass and apologize for such a poor hand or play at the three-level. Good luck.

Suppose you have a good hand? When you hold points there are several ways to show them.

You can cue bid the opponent’s suit and partner should respond as though it were Stayman. You can discover a 4-4 fit by using a cue bid, the convention is called Cue bid Stayman.

You can bid 2NT with an invitational hand that is balanced, and of course you can always bid 3NT.

You can also jump to the three levels with an unbalanced hand and a good suit. Let your partner decide what to do.

Summary

When you have some points, you don’t have a problem playing Systems On. It’s when you don’t have them, which is more likely, that you need a way to find the best contract using Systems Off. Rather than playing in a hopeless no-trump contract, you might consider not playing Systems On, your partner overcalls 1NT and bids naturally. If you only have 4-8 points and a balanced hand, you should pass.

You have to discuss with your partner whether Systems are ON or OFF after a 1NT overcall.
Playing off:

1x – 1NT – Pass - ?

2y = to play

2x= Stayman

2NT= invitational value balanced hand

3y= invitational values and unbalanced hand

Over 1NT, some play that a bid of 2NT shows a 1NT hand (14/15-17), it is not unusual for the minors.

Be careful (please ask); it must be discussed with your partners.

1NT overcalls in the balancing seat (Range/Inquiry Stayman)

When playing 2/1, the bid of 1NT in the balancing seat usually shows 11/12-14 HCP. However, if partner doubles and then bids 1NT, he should have 19HCP when playing a strong no-trump 2/1 system. To show 20-21 HCP, one doubles and bids 2NT. This usually works well when the opponents open with a minor; however, when opening with a major there is less room to bid since partner must now bid at the two level.

To solve this problem, over a major suit opening bid the balancing no-trump bidder usually has more values, 14/15- 16 HCP. To avoid getting too high, one uses the Range/Inquiry Stayman convention. Now a bid of 2♣ is not only Stayman, but also an asking bid. With 10-14 HCP, you make the normal response of 2♦ with no 4-card major or two of the major if you have one. If however you are in the 15-16 HCP range you bid 2NT, delaying your normal Stayman response. Partner next continues with the re-Stayman bid of 3♣ if he wants to know if you have a four card major.

Suit Overcalls

A simple overcall at the one-level shows 8-15 Starting Points. A one-level overcall usually shows a 5+ card suit with an A/K. Why do you need one of the top two honors? The bid always suggests an opening lead if you do not win the contract. If you do not satisfy this criterion, it is often better to best to pass and wait for partner to bid. **Do not overcall with a jack high six-card suit.** With 16-17+ Starting Points, one doubles and bids. If you have a medium sized hand, you may again double and pass partner's bid suit.

Many duplicate bridge players are afraid to overcall with a 4-card major. This may be because they are afraid they will be penalized, or they are afraid partner will raise with only three card support, or if after passing they may be afraid partner will return to the major suit bid. All these fears are unfounded.

The advantages of the major overcall are that it is lead directing, allows one to compete aggressively for a part score, allows one to get a bid in early even if one has a five card minor, and often disturbs the bidding of the opponents.

When overcalling with a four card major one may use the following guidelines.

1. The four card major overcall should only be made at the one level.
2. The overcall major should have 3 of the top 5 honors with an ace or king.
3. Overcall with a good hand (10+ HCP) and a poor suit, only two of the top three honors in the major.
4. Overcall at the two level with 12+ HCP.

Examples of major suit holdings at the one level:

AJ107 KQJ6 AKJ8 AQ105

Holding only AJ93, one needs 12+ HCP.

Overcalls at the two-level require both a great hand and a good suit and should have 12+ Starting Points.

Responding to a Suit Overcalls (Major or Minor)

With 3+ card support, provided the opponents pass, you should:

Raise one level	with 7-9 Starting Points
Jump-raise	with 10-11 Starting Points
Bid game	with 12+ Starting Points

With no major suit fit, bid no-trump provided you have a stopper in the opponent's bid suit.

1NT	with 8-10 Starting Points
2NT	with 11-12 Starting Points
3NT	with 13+ Starting Points

If you do not have a stopper, or three-card support for partner's overcall suit, bid your own five-card suit if you have 9+ Starting Points. How do you play a new suit? You may play it Forcing for one round, Non-forcing constructive, or Non-forcing (see the back of your convention card). What is the meaning of a cue bid of the opponent's suit?

In general, a cue bid of the opponent's suit is always forcing. All good hands start with a cue bid! However, the responses to a major overcall and a minor overcall are different.

Let's look at the major overcall, the bidding goes:

1♣ - 1♠ - pass - (?)

1NT	8-10 Starting Points, with club stopper and non-forcing
2♣	asking bid, how good is your overcall (shows fit with 6-10 HCP)
2♦/2♥/2♠	non-forcing
2NT	11-12 Starting Points, with club stopper and non-forcing
3♣	Fit Bid forcing with 4-card support
3♦/3♥	Very good suit, non-forcing constructive
3♠	Preemptive non-forcing
3NT	13+ Starting Points, to play with stopper

If partner overcalls diamonds, you can follow the same general rules as above. However, if you have stoppers in the opponent's suit and 10+ Starting Points, you should consider not raising partner's suit but instead bid no-trump. No-trump will often be the easiest game to make, especially if you have at least a partial fit with partner's suit (a doubleton honor, for example).

Responding to a Weak Jump Overcall

Partner's jump overcall is preemptive, so you need a fit and quick trick (aces and kings) to consider a game. If you're weak or if you lack support for partner's suit, you should generally pass. If you do have a fit (three-card support) and a few tricks, you can make a simple raise below game. A raise is not invitational; it is only furthering the preemptive bid. Partner will always pass a simple raise.

Overcall or Double Revisited

When you overcall, partner does not know whether you have eight or sixteen Starting Points while a double usually shows at least twelve Starting Points. What is the "best" strategy?

Advantages of Overcalling

1. It is usually lead directing.

You should have an ace or a king in the bid suit! Do not overcall with junk. However, if you have two bids and an opening hand, it is usually better to double provided you have support for the other three suits.

For example, with the hand: ♠975 ♥975 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75, you would overcall 1♦ after the opponents bid 1♣.

But, with the hand: ♠K75 ♥A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75, it would be better to double. Telling partner you have at least an opening hand and support for the other three suits is much better than telling him to lead a diamond.

Suppose partner has the hand: ♠642 ♥KQ9864 ♦ 4 ♣ A84 and you overcall a diamond. The bidding went: 1♣ - 1♦ - 3♣ - (?), partner would probably pass fearing a misfit and only moderate values. However, if you instead double so the auction was: 1♣ - X - 3♣ - (?), partner would confidently bid 4♥.

What do you do in the fourth seat? The bidding goes 1♥ - P - 1♠ - (?). And you hold the following hand: ♠8732 ♥K ♦ KQJ9 ♣ K764. Your partner has passed and you are not going to outbid the opponents. Clearly, a lead directing bid of 2♦ is better than a takeout double. In addition, your bid will certainly not be doubled for penalty.

2. An overcall does not give the opponents (or your partner) information about your distribution.

This may be important for declarers when deciding to finesse a queen in a suit that you have doubled for takeout. This is the price you pay for describing your hand accurately with a double. You have to weigh what information you need to give partner versus the opponents.

3. You can sometimes bid a second suit, clarifying your distribution.

Suppose you hold the following hand: ♠AK875 ♥7 ♦ AJ10652 ♣ A and the RHO opens 1♣. What do you bid?

You have to overcall a diamond and then bid spades (reverse by overcaller). You have two very good suits, always bid the longer. However, if instead you had the hand: ♠AK875 ♥7 ♦ 987652 ♣ A, bid 1♠, you do not have the strength to reverse.

Disadvantages of Overcalling

1. The bidding may die before you can show support for the other suits.

This may happen if you have a strong hand on which you have decided to overcall instead of double. Sometimes it is better to describe your two-suited hand which may only happen if the bidding continues.

- 2. A fit in another suit may be missed. It happens.**
- 3. Defensive values are undervalued or overvalued.**

Partner does not know whether you have eight or sixteen Starting Points, this is a significant drawback when you have support for all unbid suits. Even though you are very distributional, it is sometimes better to double and take a change since partner knows you have at least an opening bid.

4. You may get doubled and go down when you have a fit elsewhere.

Advantages of Doubling

1. Shows high card strength.

A double shows at least twelve Starting Points and hence defensive values; partner better able to place the contract with this information.

2. Allows partner to double the opponents.

Even though you have twelve Starting Points, you should not always double. For example, suppose you have the following hand: ♠ Q42 ♥KQ109 ♦ KQJ75 ♣ 5. With this hand you should bid 1♦ over 1♣. Even with twelve Starting Points, you do not have defensive values to double.

3. Allows partner to bid a suit confidently, knowing you will have at least three-card support.

4. A new suit bid by you later shows a hand too strong for a simple overcall.

For example, the opponents open 1♠ and you have five hearts and 17+ points. Do not overcall, double and bid hearts. If your partner now bids 4♥ and the opponents go to four spades, you can then double for penalty.

5. Avoids being doubled when you have a better fit.

If you overcall and are doubled, usually you just have to sit and take your medicine. It is often too dangerous to scramble around trying to find the right spot. Starting off with a double, you have a better chance of finding a fit. A double behind a bidder is usually for penalty. In front of a bidder, it is usually for takeout.

Disadvantages of Doubling

1. Partner may miss the best lead.

This is especially true against a no-trump contract. However, unless you have a very top-heavy suit, doubling may in fact be your best chance of getting the defense off to the right start.

2. You might misjudge your fit.

It is easy to make the wrong decision as to how high to bid, or what defensive values you have, as you may have a nine- or ten-card fit which you think is only an eight- or nine-card fit. This issue is often overlooked. For example, over a heart opening, you have a choice of bidding 2♦ or to double with the following hand: ♠Q86 ♥98 ♦ AKJ107 ♣ J64. Again, any bid may work; however, if you overcall and partner is all diamonds, he will know either to preempt or keep quiet hoping the opponents misgauge their fit. Let's look at an example.

	♠	J752		
	♥	J75		
	♦	Q1984		
	♣	9		
♠	K1043	N W E S	♠	A9
♥	Q6		♥	AK1043
♦	632		♦	Void
♣	AK73		♣	Q10852
	♠	Q86		
	♥	98		
	♦	AKJ107		
	♣	J64		

With east-west vulnerable, if south doubles east's 1♥ opening, the bidding might go:

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Dbl
Rdbl	1♠	2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	5♦*	Pass
5NT	Pass	7♣	All Pass

* Exclusion Keycard Blackwood, asking partner not to count keycard in the diamonds.

However, if instead you bid 2♦, things may go:

West	North	East	South
		1♥	2♦
Dbl	6♦	Dbl	

Down four for =800 for east-west, instead of +2140.

The material in this section is based upon information in the book by Neil Kimelman (2008) "Improve your Bidding Judgment" by Master Point Press. A must-read for any serious bridge players since bidding is where you often win or lose at the game. There are many more topics in the book to help bridge players know when to be passive or aggressive. Neil Kimelman is a Canadian expert bridge player.

Cue bidding Principles

Cue bids have become an integral part of contract bridge and you do not have to be an expert or an advanced player to use them. They allow one to reach the appropriate level for a part-score, game, or slam. They are used to show support for partner's overcall, responses to takeout doubles, looking for no-trump contracts, getting to slams, as conventions and more. There are more than fifty conventional cue bids listed in the Official Encyclopedia of Bridge. We review

a few common uses that may help to improve your partnership agreements. A comprehensive overview of cue bidding is provided by Dee Berry (author of “Two over One in a Nutshell”) in her recent book “Cue bids in a Nutshell” (2008) published by PDI Bridge Supplies.

How good is your overcall?

In most bidding systems, overcalls in an unbid suit are natural and usually include a five-card or longer suit with 8-16 HCP for an overcall at the one-level and 10-17 HCP for an overcall at the two-levels. Given these wide ranges, how good is the overcall? To find out, one may make an asking cue bid! For example, suppose the bidding goes 1♣ - 1♠ - pass - 2♣.

The bid of two clubs to the overcaller is the only forcing bid partner may make and is asking partner how good is your overcall. It usually promises 6-10 Dummy support points with a fit (3+ cards). A jump cue bid is most often played as a limit raise with four-card support; however, some play the jump fit cue bid as a Mixed Raise with four trumps and less than a limit raise (8-11) and some defensive values.

A rebid of the suit (by the overcaller) at the lowest level conveys a “minimum overcall.” Any other bid (a new suit, no-trump, or a jump) shows a sound overcall with an opening hand (12-15/16 HCP). With more points, the overcaller would double and bid! If the opener doubles the advancer’s cue bid (showing a good suit), a pass by the overcaller shows the lightest overcall, a rebid of the suit shows a respectable overcall, and a new suit or jump shows approximately an opening bid or better.

In the prior example, the 2♣ bidder’s hand may look like ♠QJ5 ♥K9 ♦KQJ876 ♣975. If the overcaller has the hand ♠AK876 ♥Q4 ♦A43 ♣J82, a bid of 2♥ shows an opening bid or better and is forcing for one round. Alternatively, one may have the hand: ♠AK1098 ♥Q4 ♦543 ♣AJ8 and bid 2NT which promises at least one stopper in the opponent’s suit and preferable two. Some may even bid 3NT; alternatively, with the hand ♠AK1086 ♥AQJ64 ♦54 ♣8, one may bid 3♥, a game forcing bid, showing five hearts. A bid of 2♠ would show a minimum overcall, for example: ♠AK1087 ♥54 ♦10965 ♣AJ. And, if the opener were to double the bid of two clubs, the overcaller would pass.

Cue bids by responder (after Opponent’s Overcall)

A cue bid by responder shows a limit raise or better in opener’s suit, with at least three-card support for opener’s major suit or at least four-card (and preferable five-card) support for opener’s minor suit.

1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠ promises a limit raise or better in hearts. Responder may hold:

1. ♠842 ♥K763 ♦AK65 ♣54
2. ♠7 ♥Q875 ♦Q864 ♣AKQ6
3. ♠A54 ♥987 ♦AQ109 ♣Q87

A cue bid is a one round force. With the second hand, some responders would prefer to bid 2♣ since that bid is forcing (any new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing) and hearts could be supported later. And, with the third hand, some would perhaps bid 2♦ for the same reason.

If the cue bid forces your partner to the four-level, it shows an opening bid or better.

1♥ - 1♠ - 3♠ shows a game forcing heart raise with at least three-card supports. Hands could be:

- (A) ♠92 ♥QJ76 ♦9874 ♣AKQ
- (B) ♠K5 ♥A632 ♦A543 ♣K75
- (C) ♠876 ♥AK7 ♦A8432 ♣K6

In 2/1, a jump to three or four hearts is preemptive showing at least four trumps and weak, less than nine Starting Points.

What if the bidding went 1♥ -1♠ - pass - 4♥? A double jump cue bid is a splinter in support of spades and game forcing.

Sandwich 1NT/2NT and Skew Cue bids (Hess Bids)

Sandwich 1NT/2NT

The bid of 1NT is usually made in the fourth seat after your partner has passed and the opponents have bid two suits at the one-level. It must be alerted and shows five-five or better in the unbid suits and less than a full opener. You are usually willing to play at the two-level (eight losers non-vulnerable, seven losers vulnerable).

With the same distribution (five-five or better) and 16+ Starting Points, you bid a Sandwich 2NT (also called a Roman Jump Overall). Now, you are willing to play at the three-level.

Example 1: 1♦/pass/1♥/1NT with ♠KJ987 ♥7 ♦109 ♣QJ543, bid 1NT.

Suppose instead of the hand in the Example 1, you have the hand:

Example 2: ♠KQ987 ♥K7 ♦A ♣AKJ87. Now, one would bid 2NT.

When one is four-four in the two unbid suits or five-four in the unbid suits, the Sandwich NT bids are replaced by a Takeout Double or Skew Cue bids, respectively.

Skew Cue bids (also called Hess Cue bids)

When the opponents have bid two different suits, then a cue bid of the higher ranking suit shows five cards in the higher unbid suit and four cards in the lower unbid suit. A cue bid of the lower bid suit shows five cards in the lower bid suit and four cards in the higher unbid suit. Use this bid instead of the Sandwich 2NT bid to show shape and extra values, 16+ Starting Points.

Takeout Double

The takeout double has more HCP and less shape. For example, the distribution may be: ♠KQ76 ♥98 ♦456 ♣AKJ2, more than an opening hand when partner is forced to bid at the three-level. But, if partner is forced to bid at only the two-level, the doubler needs only 12+ Starting Points, an opening hand.

Overcall

The previous bids are used to represent shape and values. In general, the shapelier the hand, the lighter the values may be. An overcall of an unbid suit at the two-level will show length in the suit with little value. As in the case of the sandwich NT bid, if the bid is made at the two-level, one must again have about eight losers non-vulnerable and seven losers vulnerable. A three-level bid requires extra values.

Some Examples

1♦/pass/1♥/1NT	shows clubs and spades with 5-5 shape, but not strength.
1♦/pass/1♥/double	shows clubs and spades with 4-4 shape and opening values.
Pass/1♣/pass/1♠/1NT	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-5 shape, but not strength.
1♠/pass/2♣/2NT	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-5 shape and 16+hcps.
1♠/pass/2♣/2♠	shows hearts and diamonds with 5-4 shape and 16+HCP.
1♠/pass/2♣/3♣	shows diamonds and hearts with 5-4 shape and 16+HCP.

Final Note: In the sequence 1♣, pass, 1♠, pass / pass/1NT, the 1NT bid is not Sandwich; it shows some values and you do not want the opponents to play at the one-level.

Leaping Michaels

Leaping Michaels utilizes the 4♣ and 4♦ bids. Similar to the Michaels cue bid, in case this minor suit overcall is in the opposing suit, both major suits are implied. In case the overcall is not a Cue bid, the suit bid plus a major suit is indicated. So, on preempts of the opponents (indicated between brackets), the following applies when playing Leaping Michaels:

- (2/3♥) - 4♣: Clubs and spades
- (2/3♥) - 4♦: Diamonds and spades

- (2/3♠) - 4♣: Clubs and hearts
- (2/3♠) - 4♦: Diamonds and hearts
- (3♣) - 4♣: Majors
- (3♣) - 4♦: Diamonds and an undisclosed major
- (3♦) - 4♣: Clubs and an undisclosed major
- (3♦) - 4♦: Majors

All bids show 5-5 shape.

After 3♦ or 4♣, the bid of 4♦ asks for a major. The bids 4♥ and 4♠ are to play. Following 3♣ or 4♦, the bid of 4♥ is played as pass-or-correct.

Some partnerships prefer to interchange the meanings of the 4♣ and 4♦ bids following a 3♣ preempt so that 4♣ denotes diamonds and an undisclosed major. This has the advantage that the 4♦ becomes available to ask for the major suit. The 4♥/4♠ responses may then be played as natural (to play). Discuss this with your partner!

Leaping Michaels can be utilized after natural two-level preempts and also after conventional preempts such as the **Muiderberg Convention**, also called the Dutch Two opening. It is a preemptive opening based on a two-suiter with precisely a five-card major and a minor suit (four-cards or longer). In Muiderberg, the 2♥ opening denotes five hearts and an unknown minor suit, while 2♠ denotes five spades and an unknown minor suit.

It can also be played against a weak 2♦ bid; here, Leaping Michaels may be utilized to good effect:

- (2♦) - 4♣: Clubs and an undisclosed major (4♦ asks for the major)
- (2♦) - 4♦: Diamonds and an undisclosed major (4♥ is pass-or-correct).

If you currently play 2/1 using Michaels Cue bids, you may want to consider adding the Leaping Michaels Convention.

An alternative to using Leaping Michaels (strong hand) with Michaels (weak hand) is to employ the Liberalized Leaping Michaels Convention. Using this convention, one again uses the Leaping Michaels bids as defined above, but it is now used to show a weak two-suiter with 9-10 HCP. Using the Liberalized Convention, a cue bid of the 2/3 level bid is used to show a strong two-suiter. The bids are flip-flopped. Mike Cappelletti suggested the Liberalized Leaping Michaels Convention in the July 1988 issue of "The Bridge World." The advantage of the convention is that it allows for more bidding room when one has a strong hand and takes less bidding space with a weak hand. Hence, the opponents have less room to investigate slam.

Responding to Michael Cue bids or Unusual 2NT

In Chapter 5, we introduced Michaels cue bid and unusual 2NT as overcalls and showed how the opponents (opener and responder) may use cue bids when it is used. The two bids are used with

either very strong 5-5 hands or with weak hands in a competitive auction. With between with 12 -16 Starting Points, one may use either an overcall or a double.

Now, we need to discuss advancer responses to the bids. Recall that Michaels shows both majors or a major and a minor. Unusual 2NT shows the two lowest unbid suits, either both minors or a major and a minor.

Let's first look at Michaels:

1. Without a good fit for either of the known suits, give simple preference for the one you like best (or dislike least);
2. With a good fit for a known suit, make a single raise or double jump in a known suit with 12+ Starting Points;
3. With an even better hand (17+ Starting Points), cue bid the opponent's suit as a game force bid. The suit will be revealed later;
4. With a strong balanced hand (16+ Starting Points), and stoppers in opener's suit and the "other" suit, one may bid 3NT
5. After 1♠ - 2♠ or 1♥ - 2♥ overcaller's second suit is not known. A reply of 2NT is forcing and asks which minor is held;
6. A bid in a suit not promised by the overcaller is natural and non-forcing, based on a very long suit. Overcaller will not bid again unless he is extra strong.

When the opponents interfere above the level of 2NT, a bid of 4♣ is a request to play in the minor at the four levels and the bid of 4NT is forcing to game in the minor.

Without interference, a bid of 3NT is to play and the bid of 4NT is Blackwood, no agreed upon suit. A direct cue bid of the opponent's suit shows a strong hand and is game forcing. If your partner bids a suit not bid by the opponents or shown by the cue bid, it is natural and wants to play in the suit bid.

If after a Michaels Cue bid or Unusual 2NT and partner responds with a weak bid and partner bids again, 17+ Starting Points, like a double and bidding a suit. The responses to the 2NT overcall are similar.

Reverse Good Bad 2NT

Let's suppose you have the following HAND: ♠ K8754 ♥ 6 ♦ KQ862 ♣ Q2 and the bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	?

What do you bid?

For this situation, Marty Bergen (“Better Bidding with Bergen,” page 112) recommends what he calls the “good-bad” 2NT bid. Originally, following Lebensohl, you would bid 2NT with the hand, followed by 3♦ over partner’s relay bid (alert) of 3♣*, while with a stronger hand (10+ Starting Points), you would bid 3♦ immediately which is forcing for one round. However, based upon two articles in the 1999 “Bridge World,” Reverse Lebensohl is now more popular, then a bid of a new suit at the three-level is weaker than bidding 2NT first.

Similarly, the modern tendency for those who play good-bad 2NT is to reverse the bids. Then, the immediate three-level bid (to take up valuable bidding space) shows a weak hand (and is non-forcing) and 2NT, followed by a bid shows a forcing hand. This is called reverse good-bad 2NT. Clearly, the reason for the modern change is that with a weaker hand, you want to get your bid in before the opponents compete further since you are too weak to show your suit at the four-level. When you hold the stronger hand, the opponents are not likely to compete further (and if they do, they may be sorry), so you will be able to finish describing your hand. Because these are new concepts, we consider the (reverse) good-bad- 2NT by opener first. After:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	2♠	?

And as opener (south), you have the following hands, from Bergen:

- | | | | | |
|----|------|--------|----------|---------|
| a) | ♠ 97 | ♥ J8 | ♦ KQJ873 | ♣ AJ8 |
| b) | ♠ 97 | ♥ J8 | ♦ AKQJ87 | ♣ A92 |
| c) | ♠ 97 | ♥ KJ74 | ♦ AK952 | ♣ J10 |
| d) | ♠ 97 | ♥ KJ7 | ♦ AK952 | ♣ K108 |
| e) | ♠ 97 | ♥ AJ92 | ♦ AKJ92 | ♣ K8 |
| f) | ♠ 97 | ♥ 8 | ♦ AK952 | ♣ AQ843 |
| g) | ♠ 97 | ♥ A | ♦ AK952 | ♣ KJ843 |
| h) | ♠ K7 | ♥ 6 | ♦ AKJ92 | ♣ AQJ42 |
| i) | ♠ 7 | ♥ A7 | ♦ AKJ92 | ♣ AQ842 |

On hand (a) you would bid 3♦ while with (b) you would bid 2NT; followed by 3♦. With hands (c) or (d), you would bid 3♥ (support doubles do not apply at this level, only usually through 2♥, Chapter 8); hence, a double to show three-card support is not an option. With (e), bid 2NT followed by 3♥.

The only real problem occurs when you as opener have a minor two-suiter. With an average or skimpy 5-5, you would bid 3♣, as in hands (f) or (g). With a very strong minor two-suiter you would start with 2NT and then, over 3♣, bid 3NT with a spade stopper - hand (h) - or cue bid 3♣ without a stopper - hand (i). Both 3♣ and 3NT guarantee five clubs and a very good hand.

Over 2NT by opener, the 3♣ bid by responder is forcing since opener hasn’t shown which type of hand he has, so responder must relay to 3♣ over 2NT to find out. With extra values, responder can bid more after opener finishes describing his hand, but with a minimum hand and a long,

independent suit of his own, he should rebid his suit (non-forcing) instead of bidding 3♣. For example, suppose as responder you hold:

♠ 875 ♥ QJ10974 ♦ 86 ♣ K10

Bid 3♥, which might enable opener to raise to game with a good hand but skimpy heart support. Add a king to responder's hand and he would be too strong for a non-forcing 3♥ bid, so he must bid 3♣, followed by 3♥ (forcing), if opener's rebid is 3♦.

Following the philosophy of the Wolff sign-off bid, suppose responder bids 3♦, instead of 3♣ after the opener bids 2NT. This would suggest that responder is near minimum with a decent five-card heart suit or a very weak six-card suit. He is not strong enough to bid 3♣ and the 3♥ (forcing), hence he bids the "reverse" Checkback bid of 3♦. Now, if the opener has the hand:

♠ A8 ♥ 7 ♦ AQ107654 ♣ KJ8

He would pass. And bid 3♥ with the hand

♠ A8 ♥ 7 ♦ AK754 ♣ Q9

Or bid 4♥ with

♠ A8 ♥K75 ♦ AK10754 ♣ A9

Let us think about how we handle responder's problems with the "reverse" 2NT bid. Suppose the auction goes:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♥
2♠	pass	pass	?

And you hold the hand: ♠ J8 ♥AJ876 ♦ Q75 ♣ K87.

Double on this hand! A double in front of the bidder is for takeout. You don't know whether partner bids 3♥ with three-card support, bids 3♣ (over which you bid 3♦), bids 3♦, or pass (with four spades).

However, with the hand: ♠ J8 ♥AJ87 ♦ Q75 ♣ K875.

Do not bid 3♥; instead bid 3♦. Because support doubles are not applicable at this level, you have to gamble that partner has five diamonds.

We consider four more examples:

j)	♠ J8	♥ AJ84	♦ 7	♣ K87542
k)	♠ J8	♥ AQJ875	♦ 7	♣ J875
l)	♠ J8	♥ AQJ875	♦ 7	♣ K875
m)	♠ 8	♥ AJ876	♦ Q75	♣ K875

With hand (j), bid 2NT, intending to pass partner's bid of 3♣. With (k), bid 3♥, expecting partner to pass. With hand (l), bid 2NT, followed by 3♥ to show the kind of hand where you would have bid 3♥, invitational, if LHO had passed. Finally, with hand (m), bid 3♦. Although a double would be for takeout, partner would pass with four spades. You don't like to defend doubled contracts at the two-level when the opponents have eight trumps.

Well, what do you think? Some people even play reverse good-bad 4NT! Partner opens one heart and the RHO bids four spades.

Which do you think would be more useful, playing 4NT as Blackwood or showing extra values? If you choose the latter, 4NT transfers to 5♣, and if responder bids 5♥, it is invitational to slam. While a bid of 5♥ opener should have extra values. A bid of 5♣ is natural and invitational to slam in hearts. With a weak hand, he would bid 4NT and pass 5♣! Similarly, if opener bids 4♠, a double is for takeout/penalty and 4NT is a relay to 5♣.

Reference: Marshall Miles (2002), "Competitive Bidding in the 21st Century," Master Point Press.

Scrambling 2NT

Another use of the 2NT bid is in the auction 1M - pass -2M - 2NT. The bid of 2NT is for takeout and only played over major suit bids. You usually have no more than two cards in the major bid and it asks partner to bid his four-card suits up-the-line. It allows you to perhaps find a partial contract in a minor or the other major. It may also force the opponents to an un-makeable three-level contract. Playing duplicate bridge, you never allow the opponents to play in a one-level contract, and you normally do not want them to play in a two-level partial. If the two-level bid is announced as constructive, you have to be more careful when vulnerable.

An Overall System

Following is an overall system of bids developed by John E. Fout with permission from John Twineham. It is non-standard so be careful.

When the opponents open the bidding, they have already garnered an advantage. Standard defensive bidding methods generally allow you to compete, but this requires holding a good hand. We never have good hands¹; we want to compete anyway. The only problem presented to us is that our partner can never take a joke if we're bidding on a distributional hand. The Structure, thus, has been created so that partner will not hang you.

The questions arise: why do we want to compete on these “bad” hands, and isn’t that dangerous? We believe that competing at the one and the two level is superior to balancing at the three level which can be very dangerous as both opponents have already communicated their values. One note about our style before we go on: all of our bids are made according to relative vulnerability as it relates to sanity. We aren’t insane; we just like to compete. This is what the advancer (partner of overcaller) must keep in mind because 90% of the time it will be the advancer’s job to make the decision about how high to compete on the combined offensive values of the partnership. The advancer should definitely remember that many calls are limited in values, and more importantly do not promise defensive values!

In order to understand this competitive style properly, we encounter several theoretical considerations. The Law of Total Tricks best explains why and how to compete. On most hands we possess at least an eight card fit which usually will allow us to compete successfully at the two level; sometimes we will have two eight card fits which will allow us to compete at the three level. If we have a nine card fit, the three level should be safe, etc. The opponents of course attempt to do the same depending on how big their trump fits are, but there exists a limited number of tricks available because of a limited number of trumps and a limited number of values or working high cards. In essence, on every hand everyone aims to compete to the par spot.

But not everyone truly comprehends the idea of the par spot. People think of it as being a plus position. This is not always the case. Frequently, the par spot translates to out competing the opponents, and actually going minus; for example, we go to three spades over the opponents’ three hearts, down one. The opponents can make three hearts. We win. Many times we only have a minus score available, and strive to reduce that minus. It certainly can be difficult to decide how much to bid at certain vulnerabilities in conjunction to reaching the par spot. But having this understanding of the par spot and competing on a greater number of hands, however, over time will lead to better hand evaluation, better judgment and better results.

How are we going to compete more effectively? Using these tools:

Simple Overcalls, No Trump for Takeout, Power Doubles, Roman Jump Overcalls, the two suited cue bid, Intermediate Jump Overcalls, NAMYATS, and a few other gadget bids. Using this structure, it will become apparent that we have found the easiest way to enter effectively into the auction.

The Simple Overcall (SO) at the One Level

The simple overcall (SO) occurs most frequently and the inferences drawn from a SO or a pass are many. Because the overcaller has several available bids, making a SO denies possession of the other possible hands, and remembers that partner will always take inference. Let’s see what this means.

We make a SO for several reasons. We have a suit that we want led; we have too many values to pass, e.g. a good 10-14 hcp; we want to find out which of our suits to lead; we want to preempt at a low level; we have a hand that seems conducive to competition. So what are we overcalling on? Many times one level overcalls only have four card suits, and tend to show length in opener’s

suit. It denies holding a side five card suit or probably even a four card suit unless you're 4-4, 5-4 or 6-4, and no other available systemic bid describes your hand. As these overcalls are so aggressive, we cautiously raise partner. We thus employ support doubles and redoubles² after an overcall and interference. Occasionally, we must conceal three card support on hands people might commonly raise with in standard. Be more conservative especially when holding three small, Jxx or Qxx of LHO's suit which is known as the "Death Holding" or a 4333 hand with a bad six or seven count.

What about suit quality? There exist no specific requirements here except that you hold four cards in that suit. For example, if holding S KQx H T9xx D xx C AKxx, and RHO opens 1 club, we would not pass but rather overcall 1 heart. The average suit quality with which someone would overcall on approximates to KJ9x. Again, these bids are all relative to vulnerability or the ability to get to another spot if necessary.

Responding to a SO – Uncontested Auction

The aggressive nature of our overcalls requires a delicate response structure to handle various possibilities:

1. A 1 over 1 response is not constructive merely suggesting an alternative spot. This strongly suggests 2 or fewer cards in overcaller's suit (check LHO's pulse to find out how few partner has!).
2. 1NT is not natural! It is Lebensohl with three distinct purposes:
 - a. Run out to another five card or longer suit.
 - b. Invitational in a new suit that could not have been bid previously as invitational, or invitational in no trump.
 - c. A flower bid in opener's suit (see 3 below); shown by rebidding partner's suit.
3. Non-jumps at the 2 level are flower bids; fit showing with 3+ card trump support, 4+ cards in the bid suit, limit raise values, but non-forcing.
4. Cue-bid of opener's suit is a strong no-fit game try; advancer looks for game either in no trump or in his own suit.
5. Single jumps in suits, even jump cue-bids, are mini-splinters; generally 4+ trumps and around limit raise values (more if subsequent action is taken).
6. 2 No Trump is Jacoby style; an opening hand with 4+ trumps; not forcing to game if overcaller responds with a minimum.

Responding to a SO – Contested Auction

The responses are similar but modified. A 1 over 1 tends to be more constructive. A new suit at the two level is a flower bid in that suit or length with that suit and enough values to force a level higher. Cue-bids are a limit raise or better for partner's suit while single jumps are still mini-splinters. Remember that support doubles and redoubles apply and come up quite frequently.

The inferences from partner passing in an auction like this: 1♣ - P - 1♠, are very revealing. It's known that partner could not even compete at the one level. Partner almost surely denies

possession of all the hands mentioned in the second paragraph on the SO, and denies also the three-suited takeout, two-suited hands, etc., as will be described ahead. The hands most likely to be passed are 4x3 hands with length in opener's suit or any hand with opener's suit, very weak hands, and hands with a bad suit and only average values, i.e. Jxxx or worse and 6-9 HCP, depending on the hand.

One No-trump for Takeout (NTO)

All other bid have been centered on the one No Trump Overcall (NTO). The NTO comes up frequently and creates havoc in the opponent's auction while letting us know in what suits we should be competing. The NTO can be described as a light three suited takeout, showing three cards in all the unbid suits, and generally 6 -15 HCP at equal vulnerability. The minimum shape here is 4-4-3-2 up to as shapely as 7-3-3-0. People always ask, would you really overcall a NTO with six spades and a stiff club, 6-3-3-1 shape over a one club opening? We say YES, and tell them about the number of times we have buried the opponents' heart fits. Furthermore, you must bid a NTO on these hands; otherwise, partner gets confused about your shape and will be unable to accurately place or accurately defend the hand.

Responses to a NTO – Uncontested Auction

1. Any response in a new suit at the two level is to play. If the NTO bidder raises, expect a shapely max with four card support (in some cases it could be blocking with 5+ card support).
2. Cue-bidding opener's suit first asks partner for a four card major, but if advancer later bids a new suit, then this reveals an invitational sequence for a major but not necessarily invitational for a minor. A follow-up cue-bid by advancer demonstrates a strong interest in game - probably in the suit you've bid - opposite any hand with reasonable cover cards⁴.
3. Jumping in a suit at the three level is preemptive even if opposite a maximum, unless bid red versus white. This shows any six card suit or a good five card suit with a little shape.
4. Bidding 2 No Trump over 1 NT tends to show minors, but could be a hand with a minor and a major. This depends on the auction.

All other game or four of minor bids are to play. Here's an interesting example; atimps both vulnerable, you hold: ♠ Jx ♥ AKTxxx ♦ J9xx ♣ x. Over a one diamond opening by LHO, partner bids a NTO while RHO follows with 2 clubs. You gamble out a 4 heart bid. It goes down one - barely - when partner holds a mere six count, but the opponents are gin for 5 clubs, win 10imps. Here's another interesting hand from a matchpoint session: ♠ QJxx ♥ Qxxx ♦ – ♣ QJxxx. Your RHO opens 1 diamond; you bid a NTO. Your LHO doubles, and partner leaps to 5 clubs! What does partner have? You pass, happy for now until your LHO chimes in with 5 hearts while partner and RHO pass it around to you. What does partner have? Well, work it out; with any six card suit partner should bid 3 clubs; with a little shape and a good six card suit that would constitute a 4 club bid. So, partner must have 7 clubs and it seems likely partner has one or fewer hearts. Since partner couldn't hammer five hearts, you're going to have to follow the LTT and bid six clubs with a 12 card fit. Score it up. Partner held: ♠ Kxx ♥ – ♦ Jxx ♣ AKTxxxx; the kind

of hand you would expect. It's unlikely standard bidders could possibly draw these inferences from such a short auction, and find a way to preempt the opponents out of their cheap six diamond save.

Responding to a NTO - Contested Auction

1. The opponents double. We play a runout system that helps us find our eight card fits. Over the double, a direct suit bid by advancer promises a five card suit; a redouble shows exactly four cards in the highest unbid suit. A pass denies either of the above, but advancer could still have a lower four card suit. After advancer's pass, a redouble by overcaller shows possession of a five cards or longer suit. Advancer then responds in the lowest suit that would be reasonable to play in opposite a five card suit. If overcaller doesn't redouble, bidding a suit starts a runout looking for 4-4 fits⁵.
2. The opponents bid a new suit or raise opener's suit. A double is responsive style showing at least one of the unbid suits - usually the other major - but not promising both. 2 No Trump in these sequences is minors, or the unbid suits with a weaker hand. It's hard to imagine a hand where bidding 2 NT as natural would be right. Bidding a new suit is non-forcing and usually lead directing. While cue-bidding, then, bidding a new suit shows a good hand.

There will be times when a certain hand will force you to bid a NTO with extra values and the wrong shape to make a Power Double (PD). The PD tends to show a doubleton or greater length in opener's suit because responder will more often convert a PD for penalties. So for example, if holding ♠ AJT9 ♥ AQTx ♦ – ♣ KQxxx, and your RHO opened 1 Diamond, bid a NTO. Even though you hold considerable extra values, a double on your second turn would communicate these greater values.

The Power Double — Option One

This bid is the easiest to understand and the simplest to use. Essentially, it shows a good 15/16+ HCP that tends to be balanced like a strong no trump overcall, but doesn't guarantee a stopper. Certain hands have been eliminated from the PD as alluded to above, and come up as either an Intermediate Jump Overcall or some of the strong two suited bids.

Responding to the PD is very similar to a standard takeout double except that opener always has a good hand which makes bidding easier for responder. Free bids tend to limit hands in that they contain less than invitational values; any jump would show invitational values as in standard although we invite more frequently with distributional hands. A cue-bid is forcing. Both responder and the Partners follow up with natural bids allowing room to find the best spot. We play South African Transfers: a transfer to four of a major by bidding the corresponding minor, ♣ => ♥ & ♦ => ♠, and this allows the Partner to super accept by bidding the step in between. The ranges for responding in no trump are slightly adjusted as compared to standard: 1 NT = a good 4 to a bad 7, 2 NT = a good 7 to a bad 9, 3 NT = 10-14, etc. This works out well because many times we right side the no trump, forcing the strong hand to be on lead, resulting in an overtrick. Notice that we also avoid the danger of overcalling a no trump and getting doubled off for penalties.

A definite advantage to the PD comes from the ability to penalize the opponents at a low level, especially if we're white and they're RED. For example, if holding ♠ Kxx ♥ Axx ♦ QJ9x ♣ xxx and partner made a PD over LHO's 1 diamond opening, we would float the double. We'll make 3 NT, but LHO won't enjoy playing this one out of his hand. Floating the double is probably right on two types of hands. The type of hand given in the example that's all primed, balanced with a couple trump tricks or a hand with just LHO's suit and no side suit precluding your side from having a big fit. These aggressive passes have been successful; a further benefit develops from passing these doubles. If opener runs from the double, it's a reasonable possibility that their bid was psychic and partner would now play any of your bids in that suit as natural. It becomes very difficult for the opponents to dink around as we can draw so many more inferences from an auction than in standard.

The Power Double — Option Two

Another alternative system for the Power Double (PD) is to treat it as if your partner opened a strong one no-trump with 15-17 HCP. Now you play the PD exactly as you did with your strong no-trump system with all transfers on. However, it's best now not to play 4-way transfers? But, Texas transfer bids and Lebensohl (or Transfer Lebensohl) are on.

The Two Level Overcalls

The TLO is kind of a tweener bid. Sometimes it fits right into our system while other times it resembles more closely a standard TLO. If an Intermediate overcall is available, then a TLO is either a more or less standard overcall - with only a five card suit - or it is a preemptive bid⁶. If there's no Intermediate available, then it's more difficult to tell exactly what the overcaller has - especially when the hand appears to be inappropriate for a PD or other action - which could be anywhere from a preempt to an ok intermediate.

The best way to respond to this bid is to treat the TLO as a standard overcall, but try not to hang partner. Maybe have a little extra for a natural 2 NT, and try not to raise on a bad hand with honor doubleton for support. Two level bids in a new suit aren't forcing, which is different from standard, but partner will strive to raise you with a good hand and support. In competition, we play that a double or a redouble by advancer shows a good raise to three of partner's suit while the direct raise is merely blocking, not guaranteeing values. A cue-bid in these sequences just promises a good hand either in support of partner or in another suit.

The Roman Jump Overcall

The two cheapest jump overcalls over a one level bid by opener show the suit bid and the higher touching suit with generally 6-15 HCP. There will always be at least nine cards in the two suits. If there are only 9 cards, the lower ranking will always have five cards and the higher ranking will have four. The bids are as follows with minimum holdings and tendencies:

- 2♦/1♣: 5 diamonds & often 4 hearts
- 2♥/1♣: 5 hearts & often 4 spades
- 2♥/1♦: 5 hearts & often 4 spades
- 2♠/1♦: 5 clubs & 4 spades; 5-5 if vul
- 2♠/1♥: 5 clubs & 4 spades; 5-5 if vul
- 3♣/1♥: 5 clubs & 4 diamonds; often 5-5
- 3♣/1♠: 5 clubs & 4 diamonds; often 5-5
- 3♦/1♠: 5 diamonds & 4 hearts; often 5-5

The point ranges and limitations are very sensitive to relative vulnerability. Non-vulnerable vs vulnerable opponents, 2♥/1♣ with ♠ Jxxxx ♥ Txxxx ♦ x ♣ –, would be acceptable. Vulnerable vs non-vulnerable opponents, 2♥/1♣ with ♠ KJxx ♥ AJxxx ♦ Qx ♣ KQ, would be reasonable, as opposed to a double, especially opposite a passed partner. One hand that you will never have is 4-5-3-1 shape with shortness in opener's suit because that is a NTO.

Responding to a RJOC - Uncontested Auction

1. Cue-bid shows the best possible hand; either interested in one of overcaller's suits or the fourth suit. Responding in the cheapest possible fashion shows the worst hand by overcaller. Certain responses are logical. For example, if the auction proceeded 1♦ - 2♥ - P - 3♦; P - ?, then a 3♥ response shows any minimum, 3♠ shows a 5-5 relative minimum, 3 NT shows relative extras with a diamond stopper (probably 4-5-3-1 shape), 4♣/♦ both show relative maximums with shortness in that suit, and 4♥ shows 6 hearts and 4 spades with a little extra.
2. 2NT response promises at least invitational values, and leaves more room to investigate. It also tends to show interest in the higher ranking suit. Again, follow the maxim that the cheaper the response, the worse the hand overcaller has. Jumps are still like in the cue-bid above, showing shortness and extras⁷.
3. Any raise of either the higher ranking or the lower ranking suit is blocking whether a single or double raise. A double jump of the higher ranking suit is mildly invitational red v. white.
4. Bidding the fourth suit as a non-jump is non-forward going but a single jump in the fourth suit would be a splinter while a game bid in the fourth suit would be to play. This can be a little confusing, but doesn't come up very often.

Responding to a RJOC - Contested Auction

1. If the opponents double, redouble is equivalent to a cue-bid above. Pass is to play. Any other bid is essentially as above.
2. If the opponents raise or bid the 4th suit, a double replaces the cue bid. A double at a very high level just shows values. Any raises of the higher ranking suit aren't necessarily invitational, but remember advancer is under pressure. We would probably re-raise to game with a maximum.

We have auctions where responder quickly leaps to game following a RJOC. What frequently happens on these hands is not that no one knows who can make what, nor do the opponents have the courage to double us, fearing that it will be a lucky make. Many times we go down two,

maybe even vulnerable. Even so, most times the opponents have a game in a side suit, and can't find it because responder is forced to pass on certain hands over a RJOC while opener can't take action at the four or five level. We thus have an effective tool for finding good sacrifices; sometimes even good sacrifices versus their part scores. Try to utilize this preemption whenever possible.

The Two Suited Cue Bid (QB)

This bid shows the two suits left out by the RJOC, or the suits above and below the cue bid suit. The only difference between the QB and the RJOC is that the upper range to the QB remains unlimited. Here's a list of the suits shown:

- 2♣/1♣: 5 diamonds & 4 spades
- 2♦/1♦: 5 hearts & 4 hearts
- 2♥/1♥: 5 diamonds & 4 spades
- 2♠/1♠: 5 clubs & 4 hearts; often 5-5

The responses for these are exactly the same as for the RJOC, but overcaller, here, has to remember his hand is unlimited unlike the RJOC. If advancer makes any forward going motion, make sure you keep bidding with a rock crusher.

The 2 No Trump Overcall

The 2NT bid shows a strong two suited hand. One suit is always known, which is the non-touching suit, over 1 club it's hearts and over 1 diamond it's spades and vice versa. What do we mean by strong, a hand that has fewer than 4 1/2 AKQ losers, according to the Losing Trick Count – LTC⁸. Here's an example 2NT bid over a 1 heart opening: ♠ A ♥ x ♦ AK9x ♣ KQT9xxx. This is a pretty good three loser hand; the hand has a loser in every suit outside of spades. Slams would be a pretty good bargain opposite an ace and queen fourth or fifth in either minor. As it turned out, we were in slam opposite the ace of hearts, JTxx of diamonds and a stiff club, which worked when the diamond hook was on through the opening bidder. Although the 2NT can be off-shape as in the example, the normal would be 5-5 or a good 6-4, like ♠ x ♥ QJTxx ♦ AKQxxx ♣ x. The advantage we have comes from quickly describing our hand, allowing advancer to make a good decision even with a modicum of values. It's never this easy in standard.

Responding to 2NT - Uncontested Auction

1. Bid of known suit is to play with a very weak hand.
2. Bidding the cheapest non-cue bid suit also shows a weak hand looking to play in the back suit.
3. Bypassing the cheaper non-cue bid suit implies an ok hand for the higher suit and a tolerance to play in the anchor suit, but essentially it's still weak.
4. Cue-bid asks for further description; tends to be a good invitation or better. Doesn't promise more than 1 trick, since 2NT has 4 1/2 losers or fewer.

5. Jump in known suit either to play in game or invitational if not already game.
6. Jump in unknown suit or opener's suit is a splinter for overcaller's known suit.

Responding to 2NT - Contested Auction

1. If the opponents bid a suit:
 - a. Bid of anchor suit is to play – weak.
 - b. Double is the same as cue bid if anchor suit could be bid at 3 level. Value showing if anchor suit cannot be bid at 3 level, and tends to deny fit for anchor suit.
2. If the opponents double:
 - a. Bidding anchor suit is to play; redouble is the same as cue bid above.
 - b. Pass forces a redouble or bid of second suit if lower than anchor.

These auctions come up quite infrequently, but are awesome when they do. Just be familiar with the general process involved and go from there. When these auctions come up, remember to look at the potential cover cards in your hand because many of these positional games and slams roll home as the points have already been located.

The Intermediate Jump Overall

Bids at the 3 level when higher than the two cheapest jump shifts show a single suited hand with the values to bid to the 3 level in competition. The hands generally range from 12 HCP and a 7 card suit to a bad 17 HCP with a six card suit⁹. Suit quality is generally about a 1 loser maximum. The available bids are: 3♦-3♥-3♠/1♣, 3♣-3♥-3♠/1♦, 3♦-3♠/3♥ and 3♥/1♠. Treat with respect to vulnerability. In a major, one top trick and a fit by responder is usually sufficient to bid game vulnerable vs nonvulnerable, but nonvulnerable vs vulnerable even 1 & 1/2 tricks with a fit would probably be insufficient (overcaller has a NAMYATS bid available showing 8 to 8 1/2 tricks). All game bids are to play, and 4 level bids below game are usually slam tries for overcaller's suit.

Miscellany

NAMYATS

Bids at the 4 level are NAMYATS style showing 8 to 8-1/2 playing tricks. Bid 4 of the corresponding minor to show the strong hand while bidding 4 of the major shows the more preemptive hand: 4♣ => 4♥ and 4♦ => 4♠. Over 1♥ and 1♠, 4♣ and 4♦ are normal 4 minor preempts.

Responding to NAMYATS

1. Accepting the transfer denies interest in slam.
2. Bidding the step in between, shows slam interest
3. Bidding a new suit asks for a control in bid suit; 4NT=RKC

Two Level Spade Jump bid Over 1 Club

This is the only existing jump preempt available below the 4 level; treat this as you would in standard. A 1♥ overcall of 1♣ thus tends to deny the preemptive style hand.

Three Level Jump Cue Bid

One of the easiest bids in the system asks advancer for a stopper in the bid suit and tends to show a long minor with a couple outside cards.

Alerts in the Overcall Structure

Clearly, many calls in the structure are alertable as they differ greatly from standard practices, such as a NTO. An alert “problem” materializes from our natural overcalls. Even though they are natural, they still diverge from standard whether or not you happen to hold an unusual hand systemic for us). We believe it’s only fair to alert these calls; generally, we are only alerting the opponents to the negative inferences from the call. This unfortunately elicits confusion. The best way to avoid this is to try and pre-alert the opponents to our unusual methods. When the opponents ask for explanation, give them just a general understanding of the bid while letting them know there’s more information available if they are interested.

Putting it All Together

The hardest thing to remember at first is to bid with a “bad” hand. You must be relentless. Partner expects this from you, and will definitely blame you for not bidding or miss bidding a hand¹⁰. Other keys, responder normally maintains control of the auction which means getting in and out after having bid the limit of the partnership’s offensive values without leaving any burn marks around partner’s neck! Something to be aware of is balancing - especially over a 1 of minor opening - because partner would have already pre-balanced by overcalling. Pay attention to vulnerability. Down two undoubled is a great score non-vulnerable at matchpoints, but vulnerable it’s definitely bad news.

We aim at certain strategic targets when playing against standard bidders using five card majors. If the opponents open 1 of a minor in standard, we want to use whatever means we can to preempt the auction, making it difficult for them to locate their fits. For example, utilizing the preemptiveness of the Intermediate Jump Overcalls, the RJOC are also very preemptive as is bidding a NTO and having advancer preempt at the 3 level. Whenever you eat up a level of bidding, the opponents will be forced to guess at a final contract. It’s been our experience that they guess wrong.

The basis for our system is that we trade off ease in handling a few relatively infrequent strong hands to increase our use of lighter and more frequent hands. We, furthermore, try to increase our percentage of success with these more common hands. We use specific description to reduce the strength necessary to compete successfully in an auction. The tradeoff is that less strength is required when less time is needed in the auction to find your proper position. You may be

weaker, but if your exposure to danger is shorter, you do not need as much raw power to be relatively secure.

Glossary for the Overcall System

Advancer: the fourth person at the table who happens to be the partner of an overcaller.
Balancing: any time someone is in the pass out seat and has to decide to take action.

Cover Cards: a corollary of the Losing Trick Count that says to evaluate the number of losers you can reasonably cover in partner's hand with your cards in conjunction with the LTC (not always easy to do).

Flower Bids: bids that show a suit in addition to a fit for partner in other words fit showing.

Intermediate Jump Overcall: single suited hand with the values to bid to the 3level in competition characterized by a good suit with generally about a six loser hand.

Jacoby Raise: a conventional raise showing a forcing hand with 4 or more card trump support for partner asking for greater description.

Law of Total Tricks: a bidding theory that attempts to explain how many tricks are available to be taken on any given hand depending on the number of available trumps. For general purposes, assume that you can compete to an equal level to the number of trumps held between two hands.

Lebensohl: a conventional understanding that characterizes the use of a no trump bid as a puppet rather than natural in order to delineate certain hand strengths.

Losing Trick Count: a hand evaluation theory or formula that states when a trump fit has been located to add the number of losers of your hand and your partners hand together and subtract that number from 24 to find the number of tricks available ($[\text{your losers} + \text{partner's losers}] - 24 = \text{number of tricks}$).

Mini-Splinter: a bid showing shortness in a suit with support for partner that gives your hand limit raise values.

NAMYATS: a conventional bid showing a major suit preempt with about 8 to 8.5 tricks made by bidding four of corresponding minor while a direct bid shows less than that.

No Trump for Takeout: a conventional call that shows a three suited takeout at the one level rather than making a takeout double.

Par Spot: a theoretical spot to be reached on a given hand assuming that both sides take proper action and that the par spot thereby will be reached.

Power Double: a defensive double that shows 15+ HCP, tends to be balanced like a strong no trump overcall and shows two or more cards of the bid suit.

Psychic bid: any bid made that is deceptive in nature and does not describe the hand actually held.

Roman Jump Overcall: a jump overcall that shows the suit bid and the higher touching suit.

Simple Overcall: a natural overcall made at the cheapest possible level without jumping.

South African Transfer: a jump transfer that allows partner to super accept or not super accept.

Support Doubles and Redoubles: a conventional bid that allows one to make a raise showing an exact number of cards, usually three while a direct raise shows four or more.

Footnotes for the Overcall System

1. When your RHO opens, the frequency of high card points you will hold is as follows: 0-5 HCP => 18.18%, 6-8 HCP => 27.65%, 9-11 HCP => 28.55%, 12-14 HCP => 19.02 %, 15+ HCP => 6.60%, 38+ HCP => 00.00%. Notice, the great majority are the weaker hands.
2. Support doubles and redoubles are conventional calls allowing one to show exactly three card trump support with unlimited strength. A direct raise shows four or more trumps. The exchange of information about the number of trumps we hold eases three level decisions.
3. Direct action has proven to be tactically superior to passing and pulling a double. Even if you run from one 5-1 to another 5-1, unless the direct seat can hammer it without knowing about the strength of their partner's hand, then the person in the pass out seat many times is stuck and cannot take a call.
4. Cover cards is a theory expounded by George Rosenkranz, and is a corollary to the Law of Total Tricks. Cover cards cover losers in partner's hand, allowing for hands to fit better. For example, if you have AKQ opposite partner's void, you don't have any cover cards, but if you have only an A opposite partner's stiff you have a cover card. We usually assume any fitters in partner's suits are cover cards, and potentially A's and K's in side suits where its known partner probably does not have shortness.
5. This is one area where many people believe the Overcall Structure gets nailed when trying to runout. Sometimes we do get nailed. But the number of times we've gotten nailed here versus the number of times you get nailed balancing at the three level is still fewer. Many times when the opponents think they have nailed us, it's because they're cold for game or slam their way.
6. Remember that there are no preempts below the four level; it's just possible that partner has a pre-empt. Of course, the opponents will let you know by having a strong auction.
7. Decisions about whether to show extras depend upon vulnerability and what partner would expect at a given vulnerability
8. Count a loser for every AKQ missing in a suit. Distribution ally count none for a void, one for a singleton, and two for any Qx doubleton or worse. Some suits have only half losers whenever a finessing position can be assumed, e.g. AQJ, AKJ, AJT, KJT, etc. The number of losers calculated assumes that we will have an eight cards or better trump fit.
9. We have no requirements set in stone. The basic idea is to make a descriptive bid showing a single suited hand that doesn't require very much to make game.

10. Under certain circumstances, it's acceptable to make a simple overcall instead of bidding a NTO or a two suited bid. This only happens when you're red v. white with a suit that's more important to overcall for a lead director, and you don't want to risk going for

The Overcall Structure — Summary

(THIS APPLIES IN THE DIRECT SEAT ONLY)

RHO opens→ You bid:	1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
2NT	Strong 2-suiter (8.5+ playing tricks) Non-touching suit + another			
Double	15/16+ HCP Any shape			
1♦	Simple Overcall 6-14 HCP 5+ diamonds			
1♥	Simple Overcall 6-14 HCP 5+ hearts			
1♠	Simple Overcall 6-14 HCP 5+ spades			
1NT	1NT Takeout 10-14 HCP (12 – 14 vul. & passed hand) 3+ card support for all unbid major suits (1N over 1M promises 4 in other major)			
2♣	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) 5+ diamonds 4+ spades 10+ HCP	Two level overcall 5+ clubs 11-14 HCP		
2♦	Two-suited jump overcall 5+ diamonds 4+ hearts 10-14 HCP	Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) 5+ clubs 4+ hearts 10+ HCP	Two level overcall 5+ diamonds 11-14 HCP	
2♥	Two-suited jump overcall 5+ hearts 4+ spades 10-14 HCP		Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) 5+ diamonds 4+ spades 10+ HCP	Two level overcall 5+ hearts 11-14 HCP

2♠	Weak jump overcall < 6 HCP 6+ spades	Two-suited jump overcall 4+ spades 5+ clubs 10-14 HCP		Two-suited cue bid (touching suits) 5+ hearts 5+ clubs 10+ HCP
3♣	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 6+ clubs	Two-suited jump overcall 5+ clubs 5+ diamonds 10-14 HCP	
3♦	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 7+ diamonds	Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 7+ diamonds	Two-suited jump overcall 5+ diamonds 5+ hearts 10-14 HCP
3♥	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 7+ hearts		Asks for stopper for 3NT	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 7+ hearts
3♠	Weak jump overcall <6 HCP 7+ spades			Asks for stopper for 3NT
3NT	To play			

Priority: 1. Strong 2-suiter; 2. Power Double ; 3. Roman Jump Overcall; 4. Cue Bid; 5. Simple Overcall; 6. Two Level Overcall; 7. Weak Jump Overcall; 8. 1NT for Takeout

Ghestem – Two Suited Overcalls

Roman Jump Overcalls and Cue Bids are used to show 5-4 and 5-5 hands. Recall that we learned that Michaels Cue bids and the Unusual 2NT bids (UNT) were used to show 5-5 hands.

Another scheme called The Ghestem System is used to show 5-5 suits.

The Ghestem bids are defined:

- Direct cue bid = highest + lowest suits
- 2NT = 2 lowest suits
- 3♣ = 2 highest suits

So we have: -

Opening bid:	Overcall:	Meaning
1♣	2♣	♠'s and ♦'s (highest + lowest)
1♣	2NT	♦'s and ♥'s (two lowest)
1♣	3♣	♠'s and ♥'s (two highest)
1♦	2♦	♠'s and ♣'s (highest + lowest)
1♦	2NT	♣'s and ♥'s (two lowest)
1♦	3♣	♠'s and ♥'s (two highest)
1♥	2♥	♠'s and ♣'s (highest + lowest)
1♥	2NT	♣'s and ♦'s (two lowest)
1♥	3♣	♠'s and ♦'s (two highest)
1♠	2♠	♥'s and ♣'s (highest + lowest)
1♠	2NT	♣'s and ♦'s (two lowest)
1♠	3♠	♦'s and ♥'s (two highest)

Now this really is not too difficult to remember. 2NT is the same as the unusual NT, so always the two lowest. That leaves the cue bid and 3♣. 3♣ is always the higher bid and it means the two highest suits. That just leaves the cue bid for what's left (the highest and lowest).

There are just six of these two-suited combinations. So playing Ghestem we have: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ 6	♠ 6	♠ KQ942	♠ 6	♠ KQ942	♠ KQ942
♥ 95	♥ KQ942	♥ 6	♥ K8742	♥ 6	♥ K8742
♦ KQ942	♦ 95	♦ 95	♦ KQ942	♦ K8742	♦ 6
♣ K8742	♣ K8742	♣ K8742	♣ 95	♣ 95	♣ 95

Hand 1:	Over an opening bid of 1♥/♠, bid 2NT.	This shows the two lowest
Hand 2:	Over an opening bid of 1♦, bid 2NT.	This shows the two lowest
	Over an opening bid of 1♠, bid 2♠.	This shows the highest and lowest
Hand 3:	Over an opening bid of 1♦, bid 2♦.	This shows the highest and lowest
	Over an opening bid of 1♥, bid 2♥.	This shows the highest and lowest
Hand 4:	Over an opening bid of 1♣, bid 2NT.	This shows the two lowest
	Over an opening bid of 1♠, bid 3♠.	This shows the two highest

Hand 5: Over an opening bid of 1♣, bid 2♣. This shows the highest and lowest
 Over an opening bid of 1♥, bid 3♣. This shows the two highest

Hand 6: Over an opening bid of 1♣/♦, bid 3♣. This shows the two highest

Hand 7 Now Ghestem is basically pre-emptive. But most people play that it may also be very strong. So with this hand we bid the 2NT over a 1♦ opening and we bid 2♠ over a 1♠ opening. But after partner's response we then make a forcing bid or bid game.

♠ 6
 ♥ KQ942
 ♦ A
 ♣ AKQ642

Hand 8 But hand 8 is different; it is neither weak nor very strong. So with intermediate hands like this we simply overcall.

♠ 6
 ♥ KQ942
 ♦ A5
 ♣ AQ642

There are a couple of drawbacks with using Ghestem: -

1. You lose 3♣ as a weak jump overcall or whatever it normally means in your system.
2. Sometimes you have to bid higher than you would have using UNT/Michaels. For example with Hand 6 we bid 3♣ but playing Michaels it would be a cue bid of two of the minor and so we are a level lower using Michaels.

No-trump Natural to Take-out

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, the no-trump overcall bid is most often either 15-17 or 15-18 over a 1-level bid with a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Making this bid, following the ACBL convention chart it has to be neither announced nor alerted. Note some partnerships do not require a stopper and it need not be announced, but does need to be explained if asked whether or not you require a stopper.

The strong no-trump bid usually deters the opponents from bidding; however, suppose you make a take-out double. To make a takeout double, you need support for all of the unbid suits, ideally four-card support, especially in the un-bid major suit(s). You also need at least the strength of an opening bid (12+ Starting Points). Another option is to reverse the take-out double and the 1NT overcall bids and change their values. What does this mean?

Now a double of the bid suit becomes a power double with 16+ HCP with or without a stopper in the opponents bid suit, **the power double does not require an alert** and is treated as if your partner bid 1NT strong (15-17). Over the power double, all systems are on over a redouble or 2♣; as if partner opened 1NT in the first seat.

The bid of 1NT* becomes the take-out bid with 10-15 HCP with or without a stopper in the opponents bid suit, and at least 3-cards in the un-bid suits. Now the 1NT* bid **MUST** be alerted. If partner does not bid a 5-card suit, but 1NT, it shows a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Without a 5-card suit, bid 4-card suits up the line.

Why use this practice? It is preemptive and often keeps the opponents out of the auction; they must make 2-level bids. You must discuss this practice with your partner!

Suppose the bidding goes 1♣/1♦/1♥/1♠ - pass- pass -1NT; most play this as a balancing 1NT bid with 10-14 HCP with systems OFF; however, some play systems on. I recommend again playing it as a take-out bid (10-15 HCP), which needs not to be alerted, and that a double is again a power double, showing 16+ HCP; again not alerted.

Suppose the bidding goes 1x-1y by the opponents. Then a double shows 4-4 in the un-bid suits and an opening hand. The bid of 1NT* shows a 5-5 hand and weak (sandwich no-trump) and the bid of 2NT* becomes a 5-5 power double sandwich no-trump bid and must be alerted. Note some play the bid as natural with 15-17 HCP, again no alert needed. A suit bid usually shows 6-card suit. A cue bid of the x or y bid suit shows a 5-4 hand in the un-bid suits and 13+ points (a Hess or off-shape cue bid). For example, over the sequence 1♣ - 1♦, the cue bid of higher-ranking 2♦ bids shows 5-4 in spades and hearts and the cue bid of the lower ranking suit shows 5-4 hands in hearts and spades. No alert required.

If the bidding goes 1♣ - 1NT or 1♦ - 1NT by the opponents, a cue bid (2♣/2♦) shows the majors 4-4 or 5-5 and a double shows the two lower un-bid suits; over 1♣ a double shows club & diamonds and over 1♦ it shows clubs & hearts. Otherwise bid your 5/6-single suited hand. Again, an alert required, but must explain fully if asked. You must almost never pass these bids since the HCP are usually divided 20-20, compete to the 2-level.

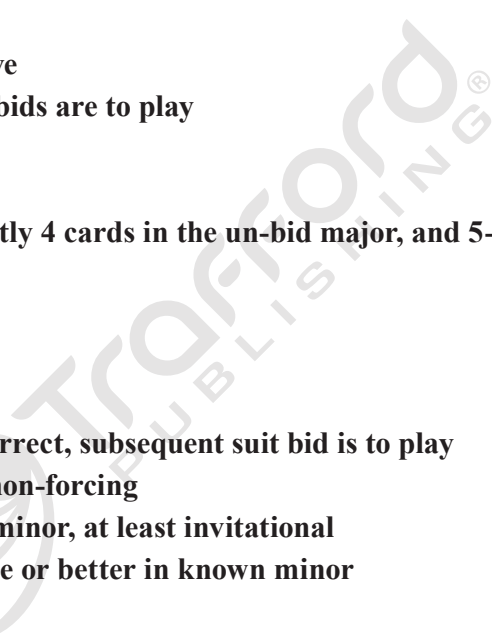
I have said that the NT overcall is 10-15 HCP with three cards in the unbid suits. If you need more structure, some play the Raptor convention (10/11-15), popular in Poland and Sweden in the 1980's and re-discovered by Ron Sutherland and his son who published it in a Toronto magazine in 1993 as "wRAP around TORonto" style or RAPOR. It is used in the direct or sandwich positions, but not in the balancing seat.

Definitions: q = opener's minor m = raptor's known minor Q = opener's major M = raptor's known major

1♣/1♦ 1NT: exactly 4 cards in a major and 5-6 cards in the unbid minor

Responses

Pass	To Play
2m	Signoff, common with a doubleton
2q	Asks for the major; MAY BE WEAK, but interest in game
2♥	Natural, non-forcing (may raise with 4)
2♠	Natural, non-forcing (may raise with 4)
2NT	Limit raise or better in known minor
	3m Refusal-signoff
	3q Acceptance. Help (Qx, Jxx, or better in openers)
	3♥/3♠ Major 4-3, acceptance, no help in minor
	3NT Natural acceptance, shortness in minor
3m	Preemptive raise
3q	Splinter
3♥/3♠	Preemptive
3NT	All game bids are to play
1♥/1♠	1NT: exactly 4 cards in the un-bid major, and 5-6 cards in either
minor	
Responses	
Pass	To Play
2♣	Pass or correct, subsequent suit bid is to play
2♦	Natural, non-forcing
2Q	Bid your minor, at least invitational
2NT	Limit raise or better in known minor
	3♣/3♦ Minimal, natural
	2NT Maximal and stopper in opener's major
	Other Maximal
2M	To Play
2NT	Limit raise or better for raptor's known major
3♣/3♦	Preemptive
3Q	Splinter in support of M
3M	Preemptive
3NT	All game bids are to play
Sandwich	1 x – P- 1y – 1 NT: exactly 4 cards in the higher unbid suit and 5-6 cards in the lower suit



Responses

Pass	To Play
2x	Limit raise or better in the lower suit
2y	Limit raise or better in the higher suit
2 Other	To play
2NT	Natural, invitational
3x/3y	Splinter, trump suit TO BE DETERMINED
3 Other	Preemptive
3NT	All game bids are to play

Competition

1 NT – X **XX Business**
Pass Asks for unknown suit: XX = lower, 2♣ = higher
Advancer places the contract

2♣/2♦ **To Play**
Other **To Play**

1 NT- bid **X = takeout thru 4♦**
2NT/Q = Natural/Q is Limit Raise+

Later **X = Penalty when raptor's suits are known**

With a NT hand **X 1-level bids with 16+ and Systems on**

For more discussion of overcalls in bridge, see Lawrence (2009), "The Complete Book on Overcalls in Contract Bridge", another classic.

CHAPTER 8

CONVENTIONAL DOUBLES

Support Double and Redouble

Support doubles, invented by Eric Rodwell in 1974, are used when the opponents overcall after they have bid a suit. For examples: the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♥ - 2♣ (overcall) – double*. The double is not for penalty, it shows three-card supports (support double) for hearts. A bid of 2♥ shows four-card support. The convention is usually played through 2♥ or 2♠. If instead of bidding two clubs, one doubles then the double is replaced by a redouble to show three-card supports for hearts. Support doubles and redoubles must be alerted. The support double says nothing at all about the strength of you hand. It says “I have three card support” for the bid major.

Support doubles are unusually only played for the majors; however, some play them for all suits. If you want to play support doubles over 3-level bids, they show three card support and extra values.

If the auction goes 1♣ - pass - 1♦ - 1♥ - and opener has a four-card spade suit, he should not use the support double with three hearts, but instead show the spade suit. If now the RHO bids 1NT instead of a suit, the double would be for penalty. Some examples follow.

1♦ - Pass - 1♥ - 1♠ (overcall) - double*

The double shows three-card supports for hearts

1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦ (overcall) - 2♥

Shows four-card supports for hearts.

1♥ - pass - 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♥

Shows 6+ hearts and denies spade support (less than three).

Some partnerships playing 2/1 do not like support doubles since it precludes making a penalty double of the overcall. Because penalty is not as likely at the two-level, this is not a problem for most players.

For more information on support doubles, read the article by Eric Rodwell on the web site: www.bridgetopics.com or Rodwell (2017), “Eric Rodwell’s Bidding Topics”, Book 1, page 3.

Responsive Doubles - Opponents Bid And Raise (OBAR)

A double used for takeout after partner has made a takeout double or a simple suit (not NT) overcall, and RHO has raised the suit bid by opener.

Example (1) 1♦/♣ - double (takeout) - 2♦/♣ - doubles (responsive)

Example (2) 1♦/♣ - double (takeout) - 3♦/♣ - double (responsive)

In this auction, you should be 4-4 in the majors and you are asking partner to pick a major. To use the responsive double, you should have 6-9 Starting Points at the two-level and 10+ at the three-level.

Example (3) 1♥ - double (takeout for spades) - 2♥ - double (responsive)

Example (4) 1♠ - double (takeout for hearts) - 2♠ - double (responsive)

In (3) you must bid spades if you have four, if not you make the responsive double which denies four spades. Partner next bids his 5-card suit, if he has none; he bids 2NT asking you do bid your 4-card suits up the line. In (4) you must bid spades, if not double, and partner will bid his 5 card suit or bid 2NT again asking you to bid your 4-card suits up the line.

If the bidding were to go:

Example 1♣ - double - 1♥ - double

The second double is not responsive but shows hearts (4+ cards).

Responsive doubles are usually played through the same level as negative doubles, most partnerships use 3♠.

What if the bidding goes?

Example 1♦ - 1NT - 2♦ - double

You need an agreement for this double; it is either penalty or transfer. Playing systems on over the no-trump bid, it would be a transfer to hearts. If systems are off, it is probably for penalty. Few play the double for takeout (unlikely).

What if partner overcalls; the bidding goes:

Example 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♣ - double

This is also a **responsive double**, used by many to show the other two unbid suits. If this is your agreement, you may not play Snapdragon or Rosenkrantz doubles.

Maximal Support Double

A double of a three-level bid that asks partner to bid game.

Example: 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ - double (maximal double). The double asks partner to bid 3♠ with a minimum and 4♠ with a maximum. If you merely compete by bidding 3♠, partner may take the bid as only competitive.

Snapdragon and Rosenkrantz Doubles

If partner has overcalled a minor and all suits have been bid, the snapdragon double shows three-card support for the minor and a five-card major.

Example: 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - double*

This is a snapdragon double (alert) that shows three-card support for diamonds and a five-card spade suit.

Alternatively, suppose partner overcalled a major:

Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♣ - double*

This is a Rosenkrantz double (alert) which a spade raise is promising an ace, king, or queen (some only use it to show an ace or king). The bid of two spades would deny a top honor. **Note: If you use this type of double, you must give up the responsive double.**

In the above, the bidding could also go:

Example: 1♣ - 1♠ - double - redouble*

This is also Rosenkrantz (alert), showing three-card supports with an honor (A, K, or some promise a Q). Because the goal is to get to major suit contract, I recommend that Snapdragon Doubles be played over a minor overcall and that Rosenkrantz Doubles/Redoubles be played over major suit overcalls.

Lead Directing Doubles

A lead directing double is used when the opponents make an artificial bid. For example, if the opponents Stayman after the bid of 1NT, a double of Stayman asks partner to lead a club. To make the double, you must hold either Ax or Kx. They may also be used over transfers, any artificial bid, and Splinter bids.

Fisher Double

Invented by Dr. John W. Fisher, the Fisher double is used when opening 1NT or 2NT. The double of the final no-trump contract at any level asks for a lead in a minor suit, CLUBS if the 2♣ Stayman Convention was NOT used and diamonds if Stayman was used but it was not doubled. A final note: some partnerships use the convention asking for a diamond lead, no matter if clubs were bid or not. Discuss this bid with your partner!

Lightner Slam Double

This convention was designed by Theodore Lightner and asks the partner of the opening leader to make a lead directing double of a slam contract.

If doubler has bid a suit, (1) partner MUST NOT lead the suit, (2) DO NOT LEAD a TRUMP, (3) assume that the double is based on a void or an unexpected AK (or AQ) in a suit bid by the opponents. (Very often dummies first bid suit.)

If doubler has NOT bid a suit, (1) partner MUST NOT lead the unbid suit, (2) DO NOT LEAD a TRUMP, (3) assume that the double is based on a void or an unexpected AK (or AQ) in a suit bid by the opponents or perhaps declarers side suit (second bid suit).

If both the doubler and the doubler's partner have bid a suit, (1) partner MUST NOT lead the suit bid by the doubler, (2) DO NOT LEAD a TRUMP, (3) partner is forbidden to lead his own suit, (4) lead the unbid suit.

Doubles of no-trump slams usually ask partner to lead dummy's first bid suit or an unusual lead.

CONVENTION CARD: Special Doubles

On the back of the ACBL convention card, there is the section called **SPECIAL DOUBLES**.

Special Doubles	
After Overcall: Penalty <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Negative thru _____	
Responsive <input type="checkbox"/> thru _____	Maximal <input type="checkbox"/>
Support: Dbl <input type="checkbox"/> thru _____	Redbl <input type="checkbox"/>
Card-Showing <input type="checkbox"/> Min. Offshape T/O <input type="checkbox"/>	

We have discussed all Special Doubles on the Convention Card except for the card-showing doubles and off shape doubles, which we now define.

Card-showing Doubles

If your low-level competitive doubles show values without being strictly penalty or negative in nature, check this box. For example, if partner opens 1♣, RHO bids 1♥, and you double simply to show a good hand regardless of the pattern, this would be a card-showing double.

Minimum Offshape Takeout Doubles

A takeout double of an opening bid usually shows a hand with at least opening values and shortness in the opener's suit. It also suggests support for the unbid suits. However, some players will make a takeout double on any hand with minimal opening values (twelve to fourteen HCP) even if the pattern isn't classic! For example, after RHO bid of 1♥ opening, and if you would double with the hand:

♠ A5 ♥ K873 ♦ KJ52 ♣ Q98.

CHECK THE BOX.

While the Box is not YET in Red on the Convention Card, it should be - just like Walsh Convention bidders should alert their bid (not required by ACBL if one holds 3 diamonds) in the sequence 1♣ Pass 1♦!

SOS Redouble

Many times the opponents will double a part score suit contract at the two or three-level for penalty. When partner redoubles the penalty double, it is called an SOS Redouble. It asks partner for his best rescue bid.

CHAPTER 9

HOW TO INTERFERE WITH THEIR BIDDING

The Rule of 8

When defending against no-trump, interference is typically based upon a weak one- or two-suited hand using some convention like Brozel, Cappelletti, DONT, Hello, etc. The question is how weak is weak? Mel Colchamiro proposed the rule of eight, published in "The Bridge Bulletin," October 2000.

The rule follows:

Holding a minimum of six Starting Points; deduct from the total number of cards in your two longest suits the total number of losing tricks. If the difference is TWO or greater, you should interfere.

If it is less than TWO, do not interfere.

Examples:

1. ♠ A Q 9 4 3 ♥ K 6 2 ♦ 7 4 ♣ K 8 6

You have a total of eight cards in your two longest suits. Subtracting seven losers (one in spades plus two each in the other suits) is equal to one. You must NOT interfere even with thirteen Starting Points.

2. ♠ K 7 6 5 2 ♥ K 9 5 3 2 ♦ 8 3 ♣ 6

You have a total of ten cards in the long suits. Subtracting seven losers (two each in spades, hearts, diamonds, and one in clubs) is equal to three. You should interfere despite the weakness of your hand, only eight Starting Points.

The Rule of 2

Mel has another rule that is used in the balancing seat called the Rule of 2.

It is used in the sequence 1NT-Pass-Pass- ?

Should you bid or pass? You should bid only if you have two or more shortness points, regardless of vulnerability, otherwise pass. Let's consider some hands.

♠Q84 ♥ A63 ♦9 ♣ J8642 (yes- bid two clubs)

♠A84 ♥ K963 ♦K92 ♣ K86 (No- better to defend - no shortness points)

♠10643 ♥ Q1095 ♦10 ♣ Q965 (yes- bid two clubs)

Interference over No-trump Conventions

In the October 2007 issue of the ACBL "Bridge Bulletin," several experts recommended and discussed systems they play over the bid of a strong 1NT (14/15-17 HCP). Even if you have read the article (also available at www.clairebridge.com/defensevsnt.htm), you still may not have a clear picture regarding which system is "best."

A well-known British tournament director David Stevenson has posted 55 no-trump defenses at: http://blakjak.org.def_1nt01.htm.

What system should you play over a weak 1NT (12-14 or 10-12, say), should your approach change playing Match Points vs IMPS, and should the system change depending upon whether you are in the direct or balancing (pass-out) seat? There is no clear or best system for all situations: weak vs strong no-trump, Match Points vs IMPS, direct vs balancing seat. We consider each in turn, and then recommend an approach. When considering a system to play over the bid of 1NT (weak or strong), the first question you should ask yourself is whether or not a double should be value-showing and penalty-oriented.

Clearly, over a weak NT bid, a double has to show values (15+) and be for penalty. Over weak no-trumps, if you do not double, and defeat the 1NT contract by one or two tricks, you will get an inferior score at Match Points or IMPS. Furthermore, over a weak NT, you may easily compete at the two levels. Thus, over weak no-trumps (Match Points or IMPS) you need a system where a double is for penalty and that is able to show the majors (80 percent of all game bids are played in a major). Finally, over the weak NT bid, it does not matter whether or not the declarer is in the direct or pass-out seat. Hence, it is best to bid your suit, as soon as possible, especially if it is spades! A system designed with these requirements is Mohan. Like most systems designed to interfere over weak no-trumps, it is based upon transfers (e.g., Weber). This allows the over caller a second opportunity to bid, especially with a moderate to good holding.

The John Mohan system over weak NT follows:

Mohan

Double	Penalty
2♣*	Shows both majors (4-4 or 5-5)
2♦*	Transfer to hearts
2♥*	Transfer to spades
2♠*	Spades and a minor
2NT*	Hearts and a minor

All three-level bids are natural, usually a six-card suit and preemptive.

What if the bid is a strong NT (14/15-17 HCP)? Again, most would agree that a double is value showing and penalty oriented. NOT ALL AGREE ON THIS. Cappelletti is unwavering in his view: "It must be penalty-oriented. On a particular hand it might not work, but in the long run it's best. Remember that you're 'over' the 1NT opener and that you get to make the opening lead." If you agree, do not adopt any system (IN THE DIRECT SEAT) where a double is not for penalty. Hence you would not use, for example, DONT, Meckwell, or Brozel.

Even though Larry Cohen likes DONT because it allows you to show all one- and two-suit hands without having to bid at the three-level, the double is NOT for penalty. Furthermore, the system must be able to show the majors at the two-level either directly or indirectly and one usually wants the strong hand on LEAD. If you agree with the above comments and want a system that may be played over either weak or strong no-trumps (Match Points or IMPS) it is, in my opinion, a better system is Modified Cappelletti.

Modified CAPPELLETTI

Double: Any double over weak no-trump is for penalty. However, over strong no-trump bids it may be used for takeout/penalty.

2♣*: Shows a single-suited minor suited hand OR a two-suited holding in an unspecified major suit and minor suit. After a pass by the partner of the no-trump bidder, the advancer bids 2♦*, this is forcing for one round. Then the overcaller will either pass or raise with diamonds if holding stronger values or bid clubs at the three levels.

If the overcaller shows the two-suited holding after the 2♦* bid, then the advancer can bid 2NT to return to the actual minor suit (clubs or diamonds) or pass if the major suit is preferred.

2♦*: Shows both major suits (as in Cappelletti).

2♥*: Shows a single-suited holding in hearts. Partner should pass after a no-trump opening by an opponent.

2♠*: Shows a single-suited holding in spades. Partner should pass after a no-trump opening by an opponent.

2NT*: Shows both minor suits (5+ in each).

WHAT SYSTEM SHOULD YOU ADOPT IN THE PASS-OUT SEAT? Clearly, in the pass-out seat, a double for penalty is not as valuable since the doubler is not on lead against 1NT. In the pass-out seat you should perhaps use Modified DONT also called Meckwell.

Modified DONT (Meckwell)

Double*: Shows a one-suited hand (6+ cards) or both majors.

2♣*: Shows clubs and a major suit (5-4 or 4-5 or longer).

2♦*: Shows diamonds and a major suit (5-4 or 4-5 or longer).

2♥: Shows hearts (5+)

2♠: Shows spades (5+)

2NT*: Shows both minor suits (5+in each).

Modified Cappelletti and Modified DON'T (Meckwell) are good selections for interference over no-trump. There have been many methods proposed. These methods both show the majors immediately and may be used with two-suited or single suited hands.

In both of the above conventions, 2NT* is used to show the minors. This is sometimes modified to show an equivalent no-trump hand. Discuss this option with your partner - *=alert.

Hello

A convention that is very similar to the Modified Cappiletti convention is the Helms-Lohman "Hello" convention. Here are their bids.

Double: Any double over weak no-trump is for penalty. However, over strong no-trump bids it may be used for takeout/penalty.

2♣*: Shows a single-suited holding in diamonds OR a two-suited holding in an unspecified major suit and an unspecified minor suit. After a pass by the partner of the no-trump bidder, the advancer can bid 2♦*, which is forcing for one round. Then the overcaller will either pass or raise with a single-suiter in diamonds if holding stronger values OR bid the major suit if the holding is a two-suiter.

If the overcaller shows the two-suited holding after the 2♦* bid, then the advancer can bid 2NT to return to the actual minor suit (clubs or diamonds) or pass if the major suit is preferred.

2♦*: Shows show 5+ hearts.

2♥*: Shows both majors 5-5.

2♠: Shows a single-suited holding in spades. Partner should pass after a no-trump opening by an opponent.

2NT*: Shows 5+ clubs.

3♣*: Shows both minors 5-5.

3♦*: Shows both majors with a very good hand.

A X* by a passed hand shows either clubs or diamonds and hearts.

SCUM

Another defensive convention that that is similar to Modified Cappiletti is SCUM which stand for “Shape, Color and Majors”. SCUM was invented by the American expert Bart Bramley. A full write-up is available in the March 12, 2007 issue of the ACBL Daily Bulletin. According to Bramley, the ambiguities of the system (double and 2♣) are coupled. Once you know one suit, you know the other.

Double*	2 suits of the same Shape, i.e. ♣/♥ (the rounded suits) or ♦/♠ (the pointed suits). Advancer is expected to bid 2♣ with club tolerance, or else 2♦.
2♣*	2 suits of the same color, i.e. ♣/♠ or ♦/♥. Advancer should pass or correct.
2♦*	The majors
2♥	Natural
2♠	Natural
2NT*	The minor suits

Multi Landy Over 1NT

While the number of conventions used to interfere over no-trump is many, I came across a new system developed by Martin Johnson on the Web site:

www.freewebs.com/bobbybridge/conventions/conventions.htm.

While it is similar Modified Cappiletti and Meckwell, the clear advantage is that it may be played in both the direct and balancing seats. One convention for both the direct and balancing seat is attractive. The system Martin Johnson suggested follows; also included are his comment and analysis regarding systems one should use over no-trump openings.

1NT(opponent) ?

2 ♣* - Landy (at least 5-4 or 4-5 in majors). Advancer bids 2♦ to ask opener to show longer major (over weak no-trump, may be 4-4).

2♦*- Multi (one-suiter in a major). Advancer bids 2♠ with good spades, else 2♥.

2♥*/2♠*- 5 card suit with a minor suit (usually 5-5). Advancer bids 2NT to ask for minor suit.

2NT* - minors

3m - 6+ suit, sounds vulnerable, may be pure preempt not vulnerable

Double* - 4-card major and 5-card minor, typically opening hand or better.

Advancer may pass with a decent hand, otherwise bids 2♣ to ask opener to show his minor (passing with clubs, else 2♦) or 2♦ to ask for the major (will usually be 4-4 at least in majors), or 2M to play (own decent six-card suit).

Double* - Versus a weak no-trump, double is played as for penalty.

Analysis by Martin Johnsons: “Multi Landy seems clearly superior to Cappelletti (Hamilton). The 2 ♣ bid to show majors allows room to sort out the overcaller’s major, which the Capp 2♦ bid does not. The Multi 2 overcall allows advancer to determine overcaller’s suit if responder bids a major, whereas the Capp 2♣ one suited bid does not. Furthermore, the Capp 2♣ can be doubled as a Stayman response and the Multi 2♦ cannot. The Multi double showing a major with a longer minor is another hand type that Capp does not handle at all. The only other no-trump defense that handles that combination is Astro (2♣ =♥ and lower, perhaps 4-5, 2♦ =♠ and other, often 4-5), but Astro will get you to the three-level in most cases where you belong in the minor, whereas Multi Landy does not.

“Another popular defense is DONT (Double=one-suiter, 2x=that suit and a higher suit). DONT handles Astro style hands okay, but the double to show a one-suiter has no preemption value, and overcaller’s suit can easily be lost. The 2♥ overcall to show the majors also leaves insufficient room to determine overcaller’s long major. More significantly, DONT has no penalty double of 1NT, which is a must versus a weak no-trump.”

Extending the Multi Landy defense: In the standard American auction: 1♦-pass-1NT-(?), the responding hand almost invariably has length in clubs. It is therefore a reasonable idea for the sandwich bidder to use Multi Landy in this sequence. An overcall of 2♣ can be used for major takeout, at least 5-4, a 2♦ Cue bid as a weak one-suiter in a major, and a 2M overcall as either a sound overcall (opening strength or better) or as that suit with secondary clubs. Double can be a normal takeout of diamonds or something else if you wish. I don’t have much experience to assess the merits of this treatment, but the loss of a natural club overcall is certainly not a problem.

My only issue with the Multi Landy is that a double over strong NT (14/15-17) is not for penalty. However, I believe that it is superior to DONT.

Marvin French System

Mr. David Stevenson on his no-trump site has a very nice overview of the Marvin French (bridge expert from San Diego California) system. It is rather unique in that the system may be used to show three- two- or one-suited hands. The bids are:

Direct Seat or Balance SEAT over Strong NO TRUMPS

Double*:	♠♦♥ or ♦♥ or ♥ (weak or strong)
2♣*	♦♥♠ or ♥♠ or strong ♠
2♦*	♥♠♣ or ♠♣ or strong ♣
2♥*	♠♣♦ or ♣♦ or strong ♦
2♠	♠
2NT*	one or two minors (weak ♣ or weak ♦)
3♣*	♠♥ (non-forcing)
3♦*	♦♠ (non-forcing)

In the four three-possible-suit cases, advancer chooses among the three suits, preferring a major to a minor; intervener will usually pass or correct but may raise or jump with a very strong hand. With game interest advancer can bid two no-trump to inquire.

Over intervener's 2NT, advancer will usually bid three clubs, past-or-correct. If intervener then bids a forcing three of a major, he cancels the original message and announces a two-suiter too strong for an initial jump to three of a minor.

If intervener's call is doubled or redoubled, a pass or a bid is to play; a redouble asks intervener to clarify. If responder bids a suit, advancer's double is negative unless it is a bid in intervener's anchor suit, a bid is to play, and a pass is noncommittal.

In the direct seat, if you want to double one no-trump, you may use two spades with the meaning shown for the double and add weak spades to the list for the bid of two clubs.

Modified Blooman

While many players of the 2/1 Game Force System play either DON'T or Cappelletti or their modifications, a major disadvantage is that they are both geared toward two-suited hands and if the contract is played in a suit the no-trump bidder is often NOT on lead.

Looking at Hand and Suit patterns, two-suited 5-5 hands occur far less frequently than one-suited hands and cards with SIX cards are 3.5 times more frequent. The 5-5 patterns occur about 4% of the time, while a 6-card pattern occurs more than 15% of the time. Thus, we need a convention that shows SIX cards and has the no-trump bidder (opener) on lead. One such convention is what I have called Modified Blooman. It is a modification of BLOOMAN devised by Robert (*Bob*) Hoffman of Boynton Beach, Florida, United States, and Irv Bloom of West Palm

Beach Florida. And published in the "Bridge Bulletin", March 2006, page 28. **The very best convention when interfering over strong 1NT bids. It puts the strong hand on lead!**

Modified Blooman (Direct Seat)

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Relay to 2♣ then bid Cappelletti to show two-suited 5-5 hand
2♣*	Transfer to 6-card diamond suit
2♦*	Transfer to 6-card heart suit
2♥*	Transfer to 6-card spade suit
2♠*	Transfer to 6-card club suit
2NT*	Shows the minors (usually 5-5)

If you win the contract, the no-trump bidder is usually on lead; in the balancing seat bid your 6-card suit, shows a 5-5 hand (majors/major+minor), and 2NT* to shows the minors.

In the balancing seat, a double (X) is again Cappelletti showing a 5-5 hand with either two shortness points or 6 HCP with two five card suits (the rule of 8). All other bids are natural showing either a 5/6 card suit and 6HCP.

Interference over weak/mini no-trump bids

Many play the same convention over strong or weak no-trump bids by partnership agreement. However, a commonly used convention is **Landy** (played in both seats). Then Double*=penalty; 2♣ is Stayman, 2-level bids are natural, and 2NT*=minors.

Consistent with Modified Blooman – I recommend a convention I have called Modified Meckwell, following Blooman. With the weak range it does not matter who is on lead.

Modified Meckwell (Direct Seat/Balancing Seat)

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Shows equal values – if the opponents bid 2♣ make a jump bid over their bid where 3♥/3♠ show a 6- card suit and 2NT shows the minors (5-5)
2♣*	Spades or a rounded suit (hearts or clubs); advancer bids 2♦*
2♦*	Unspecified Major
2♥	6-card heart suit
2♠	6-card spade suit
2NT*	Long minor, advancer bids 2♣; partner passes or corrects

When the Opponents Interfere Over 1NT Opening

Lebensohl is a common convention used over weak two bids, reverses, and interference over no-trump. However, a less common convention is the Rubensohl convention, which uses transfer bids and Lebensohl bids in a competitive auction aimed at allowing a player to show his distribution with both weak and strong hands. It is similar to the “stolen bid” convention played by many of club players. The method was introduced by Bruce Neill of Australia in an article in “The Bridge World” in 1983. The concept was based upon the article published in the same magazine by Jeff Rubens, who used the term Rubensohl. However, the method had been previously used in the United States by Ira Rubin, and therefore named Rubensohl and not Rubensohl. Both names (Rubensohl and Rubensohl) appear in the Bridge Literature. A convention similar to the Rubensohl, used in the United States, is the Transfer Lebensohl convention.

Lebensohl

Lebensohl is used after one opens no-trump when the opponents interfere to show game forcing hands immediately. However, the downside of Lebensohl is that you must go through relay bids to find out partner’s real suit and if RHO competes you might never know that you have a good fit. In today’s game, the opponents always seem to use their “toy” to disturb your no-trump and the RHO is getting into the action more and more to re-preempt the auction. Ira Rubin and Jeff Rubens thought it was better for partner to announce his suit directly and to show strength later.

The structure of Lebensohl is, briefly:

Double is for penalty (some play it as take-out be-careful)

Two-level bid is to play.

Three-level bid is forcing to game.

2NT is artificial, forcing opener to bid three clubs.

An immediate cue bid by responder is Stayman (except after two clubs, double is Stayman).

A direct jump to 3NT denies a stopper.

Two no-trump followed by a cue bid of the enemy suit after opener’s forced club relay bid is Stayman.

2NT followed 3NT, after a relay to three clubs, shows a stopper and asks opener to play in 3NT.

For example, consider the hand where opener has (♣, ♥, ♦, ♠) xxx AQxx AKxx Kx and the bidding goes: 1NT-2♠-2NT-4♠ and your partner has the hand: x Kxxxxx xx QTxx. You are forced to pass and miss the huge heart fit. Or, you hold xxx Ax Axxx AKxx and the bidding goes 1NT-2♠-2NT-3♠ and partner holds x xxx QJTxxx Qxx and you guess that he was competing in hearts so you pass. You missed the five diamond contract. In the first hand, it would be better to transfer to hearts, and in the second, one would want to transfer to diamonds.

To avoid these disasters, one may play Rubensohl or Rumpelsohl that is part of the Kaplan Sheinwold bidding system.

I do not recommend either; instead, my system of choice is Transfer Lebensohl.

The Major disadvantage of Lebensohl is that it results in the play of a hand from the **WRONG** side; since it is a relay based system instead of a transfer based system. This is not the case for Basic Rubinsohl and Transfer Lebensohl.

Transfer Lebensohl

A close cousin to Basic Rubinsohl, and often confused with it, is Transfer Lebensohl. The conventional bids follow. The primary difference in the two systems is in the meaning of the bid of three spades. First off, all two-level bids are to play, identical to Lebensohl. However, it may also be played over weak two bids and more as seen below.

Transfer Lebensohl over no-trump and weak two bids.

After (1) 1NT (2X)?
(2) (2X) Dbl (P)?

(a) X = Diamonds/Hearts/Spades.

Double = Penalty/negative (over 2♠ or higher)

2Y to play where Y is not equal to X.

2NT: Puppet to 3♣

-> Pass /Lower Suit: To play.

3X cue bid Stayman with stopper GF

Over X=H, 3♠=both minors

3NT with a stopper

3♣: Transfer to diamonds, INV or better. *

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better. *

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better. *

* If transfer to opponents -> Stayman w/o stopper

3♠: Transfer to clubs no stopper

3NT: To play, but no stopper

4m: Leaping Michaels. 5-5 up

(X=M: 4♣=C+oM. 4♦=D+oM.

X=D: 4♣=C+One major. 4♦=H+S.)

4M: Unbid: NAT. with stopper.

Jump Cue: Minors. Strong.

4NT: Minors. (Weak if X=M.)

(b) X = Clubs.

Double = Cue bid Stayman w/o stopper

2Y where Y is not equal to X: To play.

2NT transfer to diamonds no stopper (weak).

-> 3♦=Accept. 3♣=Decline.

- 3♣: Stayman with a stopper GF
- 3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better.
- 3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better.
- 3♠: Transfer to diamonds no stopper (INV)
- 3NT: To play but no stopper
- 4m: Leaping Michaels.
- 4M: NAT. with stopper.

It may also be played in the sequence 1X – Dbl -2X?

The best system to play after an overcall of partner's 1NT bid has a long history in "The Bridge World." For an informative discussion, one may consult the May/June 1989 Issue of "Bridge Today" and the article by Alvin Roth (one of America's foremost bidding theorist) "Doctor Roth's What Do You Bid and Why?" pages 39 – 41. He recommends that one NOT play Lebensohl but use a transfer based system like either Transfer Lebensohl or Basic Rubinsohl.

The Basic Rubinsohl bids follow.

Over a natural 2♠ overcall

- 2NT=transfer to clubs
- 3♣= transfer to diamonds
- 3♦= transfer to hearts
- 3♥ (transfer into their suit) is Stayman without a stopper
- 3♠ is a transfer to 3NT with a stopper
- 3NT= natural with a stopper in the bid suit.

Over a natural 2♥ overcall

- 2♠ is natural and non-forcing
- 2NT= transfer to clubs
- 3♣= transfer to diamonds
- 3♦ (transfer into their suit) is Stayman without a stopper
- 3♥ shows spades with a heart stopper
- 3♠ shows spades without a stopper in hearts
- 3NT= natural with a stopper in the bid suit.

If the opponents overcall a natural minor, the treatment is as follows. Two-level bids are natural and non-forcing. With the overcall 2♦, 2NT shows clubs as usual, but 3♣ is Stayman for both majors and asks if partner has a diamond stopper. If no major or stopper, one accepts the transfer. Jumps in the majors are natural and forcing. The bids of 3♦/3♥ are transfers. But, 3♠ is partnership defined most, use it to show a club bust (Minor Suit Stayman). A bid of 3NT shows a stopper in diamonds.

With a 2♣ (natural or not) overcall, a double is Stayman without a club stopper and two-level bids are natural and competitive. 2NT is usually defined as Stayman with a club stopper. A jump to a three-level bid is a transfer and forcing.

What if their bid shows two suits, then transferring into their lower ranking suit shows the next higher suit which is not the opponents? So if their bid shows hearts and a minor, transferring into hearts must show spades.

With so many “toys” being used over 1NT, Rubensohl and Transfer Lebensohl have a distinct advantage over Lebensohl since you know your suit early and it ignores the RHO getting into the act. In both systems, a double is not for penalty but for takeout.

Simple Lebensohl

When playing in club games, I have noticed that most club players do not play Lebensohl, Transfer Lebensohl, Rubensohl, or Rumpelsohl; they are too complicated. What I find is that many play the very limited “Stolen Bid” convention.

The purpose of the stolen bid double is to allow Stayman and Jacoby transfer sequences to proceed as if no overcall had been made. Thus, in the sequence

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♣	Dbl

Playing “stolen bids”, a double is Stayman. In this following sequence,

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♦	2♥

Is a transfer to spades or if the bidding sequence is:

Partner	Opponents	You
1NT	2♥	Dbl

Then double also requests a transfer to spades.

There are two very serious problems with “stolen bids” after 1NT openings.

(1) They do not allow use of a penalty double which is a powerful deterrent to opponents contemplating an overcall after a strong 1NT opening.

(2) It is not always possible to make a stolen bid, especially when the overcall is artificial, as in for example with the Landy and Cappelletti defenses to no trump openers. In Cappelletti, the bid of 2♦* shows the majors, do want your partner to transfer into hearts with a stack of hearts

behind him/her? The same is the case with Landy where now 2♣* shows majors. Now Stayman doesn't make a lot of sense.

Playing any more sophisticated system like Lebensohl or Transfer Lebensohl, a double of an artificial two-suited hand is for penalty. However, if the bid of 2♣* shows an unknown single suited hand, it remains Stayman. Other bidding sequences are more complicated and most club players will not invest the time to learn either more fully.

If you are not going to learn a more complicated alternative, and would still like to penalize them for interfering, what can you do? Give up "Stolen Bids" and play Simple Lebensohl over a strong 14-17 no-trump opening. The Simple Lebensohl system of bids takes bids used in both Lebensohl and Transfer Lebensohl with simplification.

Simple Lebensohl Bids

Over a Double

Pass = no interest in competing

Redouble* = relay to 2♣ (unless advancer bids) then responder passes or corrects to 2♦

2♣	Stayman
2♦/2♥	Jacoby transfer to hearts and spades, respectively
2♠*	Transfer to clubs with a correction to diamonds
2NT	Natural 8-9 HCP
3NT	To play
4♣*	5-5 in the majors
4♦/4♥	Texas Transfers

Another option is to play 4-way transfers, but most club members do not use this option so I do not recommend it in "Simple Lebensohl".

Overcall 2♣ (Natural/Undefined/Two Suited)

Double Penalty

If 2♣ is natural, then 3♣* is Stayman

If 2♣* is undefined, then bid your 5-card suit at the two level (transfers are off)

If 2♣* is a known two suiter, then a cue-bid of the lower ranking know suit is Stayman and a cue bid of the higher ranking suit is game force

2NT* is a relay bid to 3♣ (Lebensohl)

3NT to play with stoppers if suits are know

4♣* 5-5 in the majors

4♦/4♥ Texas Transfers

Natural Suit Overcalls (2♦/2♥/2♠)

All Doubles are for penalty

All cheapest two level bids are to play

Three level bids are transfers and a transfer into their suit is Stayman without a stopper.

2NT* is a relay bid to 3♣ (Lebensohl) over a suit bid

3NT to play with a stopper

4♣* 5-5 in the majors

4♦/4♥ Texas Transfers

After 2NT Overcall (Strong/Minors)

Double is Stayman (if Strong) and 3♣* is Stayman (if Minors) and 3NT to play with stoppers in Minors

3♦ is transfer to hearts with a correction if needed to spades

3♠ is natural

3NT to play with stoppers

4♣* show 5-5 in the majors

4♦/4♥ Texas Transfers

Defense against Transfer Bids

In duplicate bridge, transfer bids (e.g., Jacoby, Texas, and NAMYATS, etc.) are almost standard. How do you defend against these systems?

The following defenses against transfer bids will allow you to show two-suited hands with one call. They may be employed not only against transfers but against any bid that shows specific suits (e.g., 2NT to show the minors). A major disadvantage of transfer bids is that they give the opponent two opportunities for action: immediate or delayed. This aid to defensive bidding accuracy should be utilized.

When Your Side Has Been Silent

When the transfer bid occurs before your side has bid or doubled (e.g., vs Jacoby or Texas response to a 1NT opening, or vs an opening preemptive transfer bid), use the following defense:

- A no-trump bid asks for a preference between the lower two suits, excluding the one indicated by the transfer bid.
- A double of the transfer bid shows the higher two suits.
- A “cue bid” (in the suit indicated by the transfer bid) is top-and-bottom, asking for a preference between the top and bottom suits.

For instance, after a 2♦ Jacoby response to a 1NT opening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	2NT* - both minors Dbl* - spades/diamonds 2♥* - spades/clubs 2♠/3♣/3♦ - one-suited hand

The double may be made with less strength than any of the other two-suited calls. One of the suits indicated by the double is the suit bid by the opponent, so partner can pass with an unsuitable hand. This sequence has an easy mnemonic: Dbl for Diamonds and the other major, Cue bid for Clubs and the other major. Bids over a 2♥ transfer to spades have the same mnemonic.

When given a choice of suits in which you have equal length, prefer a major to a minor, hearts to spades, and clubs to diamonds. Partner can keep this in mind when deciding whether to overcall or pass with a marginal hand.

The immediate overcall with a one-suited hand should be quite sound. With a doubtful hand, simply pass and reopen the bidding if the transfer suit gets passed:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥*	Pass	Pass	2♠/3♣/3♦

These reopening bids can be made with moderate hands, since partner is marked with some high cards when the opponents stop at the two-levels.

The soundness of immediate natural overcalls applies at higher levels, too:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	4♦	4♠/5♣/5♦ - sound bids 4NT* - for the minors

Remember that a direct bid of 4NT is for the minors and a balancing 4NT bid is natural. That is the general rule and for the sake of consistency it must be followed even at this level.

With a doubtful hand, perhaps taking a deliberate save with many playing tricks but little defense, east can pass on this round and bid next time. This policy may help partner when he has to make a double/bid/pass decision.

You may sometimes have a three-suited hand with shortness in the suit indicated by the transfer bid. In that case, pass the transfer, then double for takeout on the next round. You can do this with a huge hand, since the transfer bid is forcing; there is no need to jump into the bidding immediately:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl* - takeout double strong 1NT

If 1NT was weak, this double is optional, just showing a strong balanced hand.

When the transfer is an opening bid that shows a preemptive bid in the next higher suit, the same principles apply. An immediate no-trump overcall still shows the lower two “unbid” suits. A reopening no-trump bid is therefore natural:

South	West	North	East
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl normal takeout double		
	3♠ competitive reopening bid		
	3NT natural		

South’s 3♦ bid shows a preemptive type hand. The double is not a reopening action, since an immediate double would show a two-suited hand with spades and diamonds. It is true that passing 3♦ with a nine-trick no-trump hand gives north a chance to make a preemptive raise in hearts, but that must be changed. There are two advantages to this approach: (1) a two-suited hand in the minors can be easily shown by an immediate 3NT bid, and (2) the general principles of countering transfer bids remain the same, with no exceptions. We consider an example.

South	West	North	East
3♣	Pass	3♦	3♥/3♠/Dbl

Believe it or not, east is actually making a reopening call. North has indicated that he would have passed a normal 3♦ opening bid, so east pretends that is just what has happened. He is no worse off than he would be with a normal preemptive 3♦ opening. This is especially true if he is short in diamonds. The hand short in the opposing suit must be quick to act, since partner probably cannot.

Against Strong NAMYATS

The NAMYATS Convention uses a 4♣* opening to show hearts and a 4♦* opening to show spades. Even in the “strong” version a 4♥ or 4♠, the bids are usually weak in high cards (only 7- 7 ½ quick tricks), while a 4♣* or 4♦* opening shows a good hand (8-8 ½+ quick tricks) that would welcome a slam contract. The fact there is an intervening suit between the transfer bid and the indicated suit affects the usual defense against transfer bids:

- Passing and then doubling opener’s major on the next round retains the same meaning: a strong three-suited hand short in opener’s suit.
- Immediate overcalls in the ranking suit (i.e., the suit lying between opener the opening bid and opener’s major) may be weaker than overcalls in the remaining two suits. If you don’t bid now, you have to bid higher next time.
- Immediate overcalls in the remaining two suits are very sound, because you can pass and bid on the next round with a sacrifice type hand, at the same level that an immediate bid would require.
- Jump overcalls are extra strong.
- The immediate double, “cue bid” of opener’s suit, and no-trump bids all retain the same meaning: major/diamonds, major/clubs, and both minors, respectively:

South	West
4♣*	Db * – Diamonds and hearts 4♦ - diamonds, may be a stretch 5♣* -Clubs and spades 4♠/5♣ - good hand 4NT* – minors 5♦/5♠ - extra strong

With a sacrifice bid of 4♠ or 5♣, west could pass and bid on the next round. The immediate overcall shows a good hand both offensively and defensively. The difference may be important if partner has to decide what to do when the opponents go to 5♥.

There are two ways to show spades and a minor: double/cue bid, or bid 4♠ and then bid the minor (if you get the chance). Choose the natural bid when spades are strong and longer than the minor, the conventional call otherwise. You are not going to run if 4♠ gets doubled, so the spades had better be pretty good. When you show the suits conventionally, partner will not take a false preference in order to play the major suit.

There at least two ways of showing both minors: bid 4NT immediately or on the second round. Common sense says that an immediate 4NT bid is stronger than a delayed one. The immediate bid promises a good hand, both offensively and defensively, while a delayed bid implies poor defense.

When the opening is 4♣*, you can also show diamonds and clubs by bidding them instead of overcalling 4NT, which provides a third way of showing both minors. Show the minors this way

when the clubs are not longer than the diamonds. Partner will then prefer diamonds with equal length. After a 4NT bid, he prefers clubs with equal length.

There are also three ways to get to 5♦ after a 4♣* opening: bid 5♦ immediately; bid 4♦, then 5♦, or pass and then bid 5♦. The jump is stronger; the delayed bid (passing first) is weaker. Bidding diamonds twice (a seemingly illogical action) allows room for partner to bid 4♠, so it could be based on a good hand with some spade support.

When the opening is 4♦* it is the immediate major suit bid that may be a stretch:

South	West
4♦*	Dbl* – Diamonds and hearts
	4♥ - may be a stretch
	4♠* - clubs and hearts
	4NT* – minors
	5♣/5♦ - sound bids
	5♥ - extra strong

West has three ways to get to 5♥: bid 5♥ immediately, obviously the strongest action; bid 5♥ on the next round (weakest); or bid 4♥, then 5♥, which is somewhere in-between.

There are two ways to show hearts and a minor: double/cue bid or bid both suits. With hearts longer than the minor, one bids 4♥ and then the minor. When the two suits are of equal length or the minor is longer, double or cue bid.

There is no way left to double opener's eventual game bid for business, unless you are able to overcall in the ranking suit and then double on the next round. That is not a big deal, because doubling a strong NAMYATS game bid is seldom profitable and often disastrous.

Against Weak NAMYATS

When the opening bid of 4♣ or 4♦ shows a weak major suit preempt, we must have a way of doubling the major for business. The delayed double therefore becomes a little more optional than takeout, not necessarily a three-suited hand. Otherwise, the defense is the same as against the strong version of NAMYATS.

NAMYATS NOTE: When playing strong NAMYATS, most people will open 4♥/4♠ directly with weak preemptive hands and long major suits. Warning, if NAMYATS is **not played by the partnership, the “preemptive bid” may be strong!** Even if you play strong NAMYATS, you should discuss it with your partner. For example, some partnerships play the refusal of the transfer (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦) to allow opener to play game (usually no tenace) while others use the intermediate bid to request partner to bid an ace if he has one or to sign off without an ace. For a review of bidding sequences, visit: members.shaw/convention/Namyats.htm.

Action vs NAMYATS by Fourth Seat

When the opening has been passed by second seat, third seat will either bid four of partner's major or bid the next higher suit (as a query bid or as a "retransfer" to let opener play the hand).

- When third seat signs off in opener's suit, a double is for takeout and a 4NT bid shows both minors:

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♥	Dbl* - takeout 4NT* - minors

Against the weak version of NAMYATS, the double of 4♣ is more optional than takeout, just as it would be over a normal preemptive 4♥ or 4♠ opening.

- When third seat bids the ranking suit so that opener can play the hand that is treated like a transfer bid:

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♦	Dbl* - spades and diamonds 4♥* - spades and clubs 4NT* - minors

South	West	North	East
4♣*	Pass	4♥	Dbl* - hearts and diamonds 4♠* - hearts and clubs 4NT* - minors

Other defensive actions are similar in meaning to those used in the second seat.

Defense over Forcing No-trump

Using the 2/1 convention, after a major opening the opponents bid 1NT and announce the bid as forcing. How do you compete?

Suppose the bidding goes 1♥/1♠ - Pass - 1NT - ? And you want to compete. While some may play all bids as natural, sometimes you need a way to show hands that are widely varying in strength, without misleading partner, or a two-suiter. A clever way is to switch some bids around that allow one to compete in the fourth position. Using the Useful Space Principle (USP), one may employ the Vasilevsky Convention.

In the above forcing 1NT sequence, you bid as:

Db1*	Transfer to clubs
2♣*	Transfer to diamonds
2♦*	Transfer to the unbid major
2 of the bid major	Good, distributional takeout “double”
2 of unbid major	Weaker takeout double, guaranteeing four of the major bid
2NT	Distributional takeout for the minors
3♣/3♦	Natural, but shows 6-4, the four being the unbid major

Let’s see how it works. The bidding goes 1♥ - Pass - 1NT - ?

And you hold:

a. ♠Q10654 ♥A5 ♦9 ♣KJ1076

Double* to show clubs (*=alert). If opener passes and partner bids 2♣, you next bid 2♠*, showing a two-suited 5-5 hand. If you were 6-4 in clubs and spades, you would bid 3♣.

However, suppose you are 4-4 in clubs and spades. You have the hand:

b. ♠AJ54 ♥7 ♦AK93 ♣A874

You now bid 2♥*, showing a strong takeout double.

With either of the following hands:

c. ♠AJ54 ♥72 ♦Q87 ♣KJ74

d. ♠9542 ♥7 ♦KJ854 ♣Q107

You would bid 2♠*, a weak takeout double.

When you are a passed hand, Vasilevsky no longer applies. Since intervener’s hand is limited, he doesn’t need two bids.

The only disadvantage of the convention is that one may not penalize a 1NT bid; however, this does not occur that often. The advantage is that, using transfers, the calls are logical, hence easy to remember and show exactly the distribution and strength needed to compete.

The Useful Space Principle (USP)

The Vasilevsky Convention is based upon the Useful Space Principle developed by Jeff Rubens. The principle has formed the basis for the creation and development of many modern day conventions; for example, Roman Keycard Blackwood with Kickback.

The definition of USP follows:

“When allocating bidding space under partnership agreements, assign it where most useful without deference to natural or traditional bridge meanings of calls”

Let’s apply the principle in some situations.

Suppose the bidding goes: 1♣ - Dbl - 1♥ - ?

What do you bid if you are weak and have four spades? Bid 2♥ and with 10+ points and five spades, bid 2♠.

Recall that Leaping Michaels is a reasonable way to show a two-suited hand over weak level bids. Using the USP, suppose the bidding goes:

2♠ - Pass - 3♠ - (?)

How do you now compete? Consider the following bids.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 4♣* | shows clubs and hearts |
| 4♦* | shows diamonds and hearts |
| 4♠* | shows game in a long minor and asks partner to bid 5♣ which may be corrected, if necessary, to 5♦ |
| 4♥ | natural |
| 4NT* | shows both minors |

The previous are just two examples of exchanging the normal meaning of bids; you can invent many more if you are so inclined. For additional suggestions, consult “Competitive Bidding in the 21st Century” by Marshall Miles (2000) published by Master Point Press.

A simple method for competing over the 1NT (forcing/semi-forcing) bid is to use the Modified Blooman convention to transfer to 6-card suits and an X to show a 5-5 two suited hand.

CHAPTER 10

REVIEW OF COMMON “BRIDGE RULES/LAWS”

Rule of 2 (Interference over Strong 1NT)

You should interfere over the bid of a strong 1NT = 15-17 in the balancing seat if you have two shortness points. Otherwise, do not interfere.

Rule of 7 (Hold Up)

When playing NT contracts and having only one stopper in the suit led headed by the ace, one may use the Rule of 7 to decide how many times to hold up. Rule: subtract the total number of cards you and dummy hold in the suit from seven. This is the number of times you should hold up when the suit is led by the opponents. The rule is also used with suit contracts.

Rule of 8 (Interference over Strong 1NT)

Provided you have at least 6 Starting Points, you should interfere over the strong bid of 1NT in the direct seat if the number of cards in your two longest suits minus the number of losers in your hand is two or more. Otherwise, do not interfere. Note $6\text{HCP} + 2\text{ Losers} = 8$.

Example: The opponents open 1NT=15-17 and you hold

♠ 107 ♥KQJ1098 ♦1093 ♣ 86

Do you interfere in either the direct seat or the balancing Seat?

The two longest suits $(9) - \text{LTC} (9) = 0 < 2$ so NO for the direct seat, but you have only two shortness point so yes in the balancing seat.

♠ AK ♥KJ1098 ♦1093 ♣ K6

Here we have $9-6=3 > 2$ and $\text{SST}=2$ so both seats.

Rule of 9 (When to X/Bid)

A reopening double by opener is for takeout. Responder is expected to bid his best suit or pass for penalty with the correct hand. What is the correct hand? The Rule of 9 (called the RULE of “N” by the ACBL in the November 22, 2018 convention charts) may help one decide whether to pass for penalty or bid. To use the rule, add the level of the contract to the number of trumps to the number of trump honors held including the ten and if this sum is nine or more, pass the takeout double for penalty. If the number is eight or less, bid something, do not let the double stand.

Formula: Level of Bid + # of trumps + # of trump honors = 9+ leave the Double (X) in for penalty, otherwise bid.

Examples: Hand 1 ♠ 105 ♥AJ64 ♦109764 ♣ 86 Hand 2: ♠ 10754 ♥AQ109 ♦Q72 ♣ 352

The opponents are Vulnerable and you are not, your partner opens 1♠ and your RHO bids 2♥, all pass and your partner doubles, do you now bid or leave the X stand?

In both hands, you have 4 of their trumps. Applying the rule in Hand 1, $2+4+2=8<9$ and for hand 2, $2+4+3=9$. Hence with hand 1, bid and with hand 2, leave the X stand.

What if they bid 3♥? Now with both hands, you must leave the X stand and do not bid.

The rule of 9 is only to be used for low level bids at the 3-level or lower. Do not use it for higher level bids.

What is one to do with level 4 or higher level bids? Use the Rule of 10 which is based upon Losing Trick Count (LTC) or the rule of 24 discussed below.

Rule of 10 (High Level X's)

In a competitive auction with both sides are bidding.

If partner has opened assume 2 quick tricks and if $24-7+2(\text{quick}) - \text{level of the contract}$ is 10 or more then X for penalty or leave partner's X stand.

If partner has not bid you must use the winning trick rule based upon the rule of 2/3 reviewed in Chapter 2 and also discussed below in the chapter.

$13 - 7(\text{losers}) + \text{Level of Contract} - \text{Trump winners} = 10+$ then leave X in for penalty.

Rule of 11

The Rule of 11 is used for placing the outstanding higher cards when partner makes a fourth best lead. One subtracts the spot of the card led from eleven ($15-4=11$) to determine the number

of higher cards in the remaining three hands. Since the high cards in the dummy and your hand can be seen, the remaining cards are with declarer. This information is quite useful in deciding which card to play on the trick and how to play the suit if you take the trick. If the answer does not make sense, the card led may not be fourth best.

Rule of 10/12

When playing third and fifth best leads the concepts remain the same. Using fifteen as the base subtract from fifteen the card led (**third or fifth best suit contract leads**). If partner's lead is third best, subtract spot card from twelve ($15-3=12$). If partner's lead is fifth best, subtract spot card from ten ($15-5=10$). If you are not sure, try both; one of the answers is likely to make more sense than the other, giving you an idea of partner's holdings. A very low card suggest a 5-card suit and a moderate value suggest third best or a lead from 4-cards.

Rule of 13 (Interference over 2NT)

Provided you have at least 11 Starting Points, you should interfere in the direct seat over 2NT=20-21 HCP if by adding your two longest suits – LTC =2+. Otherwise, do not interfere. Note 11HCP+ 2 Losers=13+.

Example:

♠ AK ♥KJ10987 ♦1093 ♣ K6

Here we have 14HCP>11 and 9-6=3>2 and SST=2. You would interfere over 2NT in both seats, direct and balancing.

Rule of 15 (Bidding in 4th Seat)

A rule used for opening the bidding in the fourth seat. You should open the bidding if the number of high card points and the number of spades equals fifteen. This assumes that spades are likely to be evenly divided between the two partnerships and that a fit in spades may exist.

Rule of 17 (Weak 2 Game Bids)

When your partner preempts with a weak major suit two bid, you have to decide whether to compete to the three-level or bid game. To help, one may use the Rule of 17. Add your high card points to the number of trump held. If this total is seventeen or more, bid game; if the total is more than ten but less than seventeen compete to the three-level. If you are still unsure, use OGUST and bid 2NT; if the response is 3♥ (good hand, bad suit) or 3♠ (good hand, good suit), bid game, compete to only the four-level, otherwise, raise the bid to the three-level. The ACBL calls a hand with "Near Average Strength" a hand with 8 HCP or meets the Rule of 17.

Rule of 20/22 (When to Open)

To determine whether or not to open a hand in the first or second seats, one often uses the rule of 20/22. If the number of high card points and the number of cards in your two longest suits add to twenty and you have two quick tricks (22), open the hand. In the third seat, one only needs 1 and one-half quick tricks (the rule of 21 ½). In the 4th seat, the rule of 15 is used. Some use 20; however this does not require two quick tricks.

Rule of 24 (Losing Trick Count)

Losing trick count is a method of evaluating the hand to determine the proper bidding level. The method is most effective with unbalanced hands with an eight-card or better trump fit when the two hands have different distributional patterns. The Rule of 24 goes as follows.

STEP 1: Count your losers and assume seven losers in your partner's hand. Rule: 24-7- (Your losers) = Number of Tricks. Reduce the number of tricks by six to determine the level of the bid.

STEP 2: Partner will correct the bid with fewer than seven losers.

Note: Only the first three cards in each suit are considered when counting losers in each suit. With three cards, only the A, K, and Q are not losers. With less than two cards, then AQ=½, Kx=½, KQ=1, K=1, Q=1, Qx=2 represent losers.

The New ACBL Convention Charts which went into effect November 22, 2018 says that a "Strong" hand is on with at least 14 HCP or meets the Rule of 24.

Rule of 2/3 (Level of Preempt)

This was reviewed in Chapter 2; recall that a guide to preemptive opening bids and overcalls is that one cannot afford to set more than five hundred unless one is saving against a slam contract. One often assumes that a vulnerable partner can make two tricks, and a non-vulnerable partner three tricks. Thus, a player who opens 4♠ should have an eight playing trick hand if vulnerable, and a seven playing trick hand if not vulnerable.

Tricks = 13 – losers +3 if non-vulnerable, and Playing tricks = 13 – losers + 2 if vulnerable. If the number of tricks is 10, open the bidding at the 4 level, if the number is 9; open the bidding at the three level. The quantity 13 – LTC is called the number of playing tricks.

- You hold: ♠A987 ♥A5 ♦A109 ♣K987
- What do you do if they bid not 2♦?
- What if they bid 3♦?
- You are behind the declarer and partner has passed.

Do you pass or X for penalty? You must use the rule of 10!

$13 - 7(\text{losers}) + \text{Level of Contract} - \text{Trump winners} = 10+$

If the opponents bid $2\spadesuit$!

$13 - 7(\text{Losers}) + 2(\text{level}) + 1 \text{ trump winner} = 9 < 10$ so pass $1\spadesuit$.

If the opponents bid $3\spadesuit$

Now we have that $13 - 7(\text{losers}) + 3(\text{level}) + 1(\text{trump trick}) = 10$.

So you must X the $3\spadesuit$ bid for penalty sitting behind the declarer.

Rule of 7 over Preempts

The rule of 2/3 tells one at what level one may open a preemptive bid. However, when the opponents make a preemptive bid, how do you know when to compete?

Assume the opponents open with a weak bid of $2\spadesuit$'s or $2\heartsuit$'s (6-10 pts) what do you need to make a 2-level overcall, a take out double, a jump overcall, or a cue bid? And, how many points can you expect from partner?

To succeed at the two level you and your partner need about 21-22 starting points which include HCPs and length, at the three level about 23-24, and at the four level about 25-26.

To compete over preempts you must have a good opening hand, at least 13+ starting points. In general partner will have 7 HCP. Hence you need 14, 15, and 16 points to interfere.

Rule of 26 (Slams)

When opening one of a major, some partnerships play direct splinters or concealed/ambiguous splinters. In either case, a splinter bid usually shows four card support for the major suit bid and 13+ HCP (some only require three card support).

When should the opening bidder consider slam? One may apply the Rule of 26.

Opener merely adds his HCP in his suits outside the known splinter suit and if the total is 26+, you should consider slam in the major suit bid.

This rule works because once the partnership can ignore an entire suit, you can expect to make a small slam with only 26+ game points; you do not need 33+ points which is required when you have to take into account all the suits.

Rule of 44 (Strong Openings)

When you open $2\clubsuit$ (playing 2/1), should you bid 2NT or two of a major?

If you intend to bid 2NT, you should have 22-24 HCP and no-trump distribution. This is not the case when you bid a major 2♥ or 2♠. What are critical are losers and quick tricks, not points! What is needed?

To open 2♣ and then the bid a major requires at least five cards in the major, **NO MORE THAN FOUR LOSERS** and a minimum of **FOUR QUICK TRICKS** (A=1, K=½, KQ =1); **the rule of 44**.

Given these two requirements, open TWO CLUBS, independent of points.

Let's look at an example: You hold the hand ♠ AKQJ2 ♥ AKQ10 ♦76 ♣ 7. You have only 19 HCP + one length point or 20 Starting Points. But you have three losers in the minors (less than four losers) and four quick tricks (two aces and two KQ combinations); **using the rule of 44, open the hand 2♣**.

Marty Bergen in the September 2009 issues of the "Bridge Bulletin" (page 50) also reviews this rule, but he did not name it the Rule of 44.

Rule of 64 (Rebids)

When opening a hand that is 6-4 in the majors, show the four-card suit only if the number of HCP in the four-card suit is greater than or equal to the number of HCP in the six-card suit. If this is not the case, rebid the six-card suit and do not show the four-card suit.

Rule of 88 (Stayman)

Playing 2/1 and opening 1NT with 15-17 HCP, one invites 2NT with 8-9HCP. And the Stayman require 8HCP. What if you have only 7? If one has 8 HCP and at least eight cards higher than the 8, one can invite by bidding 2NT or you may use Stayman with only 7 HCP. Why? This is because 10's and 9's count in no-trump contracts.

The Law of Total Tricks

In his book, Larry Cohen (1972) "To Bid or Not to Bid," Cohen states the Law of Total Tricks as: the **Total Number of Tricks** available on any deal is approximately equal to the total **Number of Trumps**. The total number of trumps means the combined total of cards in both sides' best trump fit. For example, if north-South's best (longest) fit is a 5-4 spade fit, and east-west's best (longest) fit is a 4-4 diamond fit, then the Total Number of Trumps would be 9+8, or 17. Now for the Rule: Never outbid the opponents at the three-level with sixteen trumps. But, always outbid the opponents at the three levels with eighteen trumps. With seventeen trumps, it is usually right to outbid them on the three levels, if not vulnerable.

Note: With 10 trump in a major suit partnership fit, it is usually correct to bid to the 4-level (due to Marty Bergen, not the Law).

Let's look at the Law in more detail, for example with only sixteen trumps and both sides vulnerable Cohen shows that it is better to let the opponents play in three hearts and for you not to bid three spades when both sides have only 16 trumps. He calls this "chart logic". To see this more clearly let's look at the chart, assuming nobody doubles.

Both Sides Vulnerable with 16 Trumps

Contract played in three spades		Contract played in three hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+170	6	+300
9	+140	7	+200
8	-100	8	+100
7	-200	9	-140

From the chart, we see no matter how the trumps break, when both are vulnerable, that it is better to allow the opponents to play the contract in three hearts.

Rule: When both are vulnerable do not compete to the three level with only 16 trumps.

Or, given that both sides have eight trumps between them, both can be expected to make eight tricks, making either two hearts or two spades. This being the case, you must bid to the three level in hearts; however, do not compete to the three level in spades when both sides are vulnerable — this is the "LAW"!

In Larry's new book "Following the Law" the sequel To Bid or Not to Bid, he has a simple formula that may be used when both sides are **vulnerable**.

Formula: $\sum \text{Trump} - 11 = \sum \text{Bid}$

Where the symbol \sum denotes "SUM OF"; thus, applying the formula $16 - 11 = 5$. The bid of $3\heartsuit + 2\spadesuit = 5$ so do not bid to the level of three spades.

Important Note: The formula should only be used when both sides are vulnerable.

What happens when both sides are non-vulnerable? Again, we may make a chart, again assuming no doubles:

Both Sides Non-vulnerable with 16 Trumps

Contract played in three spades		Contract played in three hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+170	6	+150
9	+140	7	+100

8	-50	8	+50
7	-100	9	-140

From the chart we see that by competing to the three level, when both sides are non-vulnerable, succeeds in three out of four cases. Thus, while the formula fails we may always use chart logic and bid to the three level when non-vulnerable and having only 16 trumps.

What if the spade bidder is vulnerable and the heart bidder is non-vulnerable. Then we have the following chart, again assuming no doubles.

Spade (V) and Hearts (NV) with 16 Trumps

Contract played in three spades		Contract played in three hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+170	6	+150
9	+140	7	+100
8	-50	8	+50
7	-200	9	-140

And finally, suppose the heart bidder is vulnerable and the spade bidder is not. Then we have the following chart with no doubles.

Spade (NV) and Hearts (V) with 16 Trumps

Contract played in three spades		Contract played in three hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+170	6	+300
9	+140	7	+200
8	-50	8	+100
7	-100	9	-140

From the charts we have the following rule.

Rule: Never compete to the three level when both sides are vulnerable or with unfavorable vulnerability with only 16 trumps. However, with favorable vulnerability or both non-vulnerable, compete to the three level playing three spades over three hearts.

The above rules are based upon our chart analysis and bidding the majors. What if one side is bidding a major and the opponents are bidding a minor? Again, when both sides are vulnerable, we may use the simple formula. Looking at an example, suppose the opponents open the bidding 2♦ and your partner bids 2♥ followed by a bid of 3♦ by the opponents. Should you bid 3♥ with three hearts?

Applying the formula there are probably 9 (diamonds) + 8 (hearts) = 17 trumps and 17-11 = 6. Thus, bid 3♥ over 3♦.

However, suppose the bidding went:

RHO	YOU	LHO	PARTNER
2♦ (weak)	pass	3♦	Dbl
Pass	??		

Now what do you bid? At equal vulnerability bid your three card major. However, if they are vulnerable and you are not, pass.

The next logical question you must ask yourself is what happens when both sides have 17 trumps in the majors? This is more complicated. However, let's begin with a logic chart assuming no doubles.

Both Sides Vulnerable with 17 Trumps

Contract played in four spades		Contract played in four hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+620	7	+300
9	-100	8	+200
8	-200	9	+100
7	-300	10	-620

Both Sides Non-vulnerable with 17 Trumps

Contract played in four spades		Contract played in four hearts	
Our Tricks won	Our Score	Their Tricks won	Our Score
10	+420	7	+150
9	-50	8	+100
8	-100	9	+50
7	-150	10	-420

The charts suggest that if the opponents can win only 8 or 9 tricks in four hearts that we should not bid four spades winning the same number of tricks.

Based upon 10,000 deals, the likelihood of winning 10 tricks occurs about 10% of the time while winning 8 or 9 tricks occurs almost 33% of the time. Hence, it is best to complete to the four level and bid four spades over four hearts with only 17 trumps. However, if you were to apply the formula, 17-11=6 it would suggest that one not compete to the four level. You will be down at least one trick.

Rule: With 17 trumps (vulnerable or non-vulnerable), one may sometimes complete to the four level when bidding spades over hearts.

Rule: With 17 trumps, never bid to the four level of a minor over a three level major suit bid with equal or unfavorable vulnerability.

When bidding four spades over four hearts and both sides vulnerable, the formula suggested that one **not** compete at the four level. However, by taking into account hand shape (distribution), double fits, and poor honor combinations, one may adjust the “Formula” for the law to better decide whether to bid or pass. Let’s see how it works.

1. For hands with poor honor combinations subtract one trick; however, with few honor combinations add one trick.
2. For a double fit in two suits, add one trick; but, for a negative fit subtract one.
3. For balanced (flat) hands, subtract one trick; however, for non-balanced hands add one trick.
4. For poor trump quality, subtract one trick (no A/K/Q); however, with a high honor or good intermediaries add one trick.

Taking these factors into account the formula becomes:

Adjusted Formula: $\sum \text{Trumps} - 11 + \text{positive factors} - \text{negative factors} = \sum \text{Bids}$

Adding the adjustments to the formula allows one to apply it in more situations since if the factors allow one to reach the 19 “trumps” level observe that $19 - 11 = 8$, allows each to bid to the four level (e.g. $4\heartsuit$ over $4\clubsuit/4\spadesuit$, or $4\spadesuit$ over $4\heartsuit$, but not $5\heartsuit$ over $4\spadesuit$).

We now look at an example. You hold the following hand knowing the opponents hold nine hearts and both are vulnerable.

$\spadesuit J8765 \heartsuit QJ2 \diamondsuit J762 \clubsuit Q$

Applying the formula with no adjustment $18 - 11 = 7$ you expect to be down only one so you might bid four spades if you were to make no adjustments. However, with spades as trumps subtract one (-1) for no high honor, for poor honor combinations outside of trump subtract one (-1), for the unbalanced hand add +1.

Using the formula with adjustments we have that $18 - 11 - 2 + 1 = 6$. You should not bid to the four level even with 10 trumps!

Do not apply the law without taking into account adjustments.

We look at a second example from Larry Cohen’s new book. Your partner opens $2\heartsuit$ and you hold the following hands:

1. $\spadesuit K104 \heartsuit K876 \diamondsuit QJ3 \clubsuit QJ4$
2. $\spadesuit K43 \heartsuit KJ76 \diamondsuit QJ43 \clubsuit 54$

In both situations you have 10 trumps with say 18 total trumps, $18 - 11 = 7$ so do you bid $4\heartsuit$ over $3\spadesuit$?

Let's look at each of the hands. With hand (1) you have the King of trump (+1), but many Q's and J's in the other suits (-1), and a flat hand (-1) thus $18 - 11 - 2 + 1 = 6$, do not compete to the four level!

With hand (2) you also have the King of trump (+1), a flat hand (-1), but fewer minor honors in the other suits; thus, $18 - 11 - 1 + 1 = 7$, compete to the four level.

To read more on making adjustments to the Law of Total Tricks, read Larry Cohen's (1995) book "Following the Law the Total Tricks Sequel."

Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgren's (2004) "I Fought the Law of Total Tricks," published by Mikeworks, show that hands that agree with the LAW diminish as the number of trumps increase. With sixteen trumps, it is right only 44.1 percent of the time, but with seventeen or eighteen trumps, the Law is right only 36.0 percent of the time. They claim that it isn't the number of trumps that is important, but distribution which the **Law** ignores. It is the partnership short-suit total (SST) that determines how well the trumps will work.

The Lawrence and Wirgren's LAW is: Estimate the short-suit total (SST) between the hands and subtract it from thirteen. With 19-21 HCP between two hands (about half the high card points); your winner's equal thirteen minus your SST. Say your side has a SST of four (a doubleton in each hand), $13 - 4 = 9$, you can expect to take nine tricks. **BID TO THE THREE-LEVEL.** With 22-24 HCP, you have one extra trick; with 25-27 HCP, you have two extra tricks, etc.

Let's look at an example from Lawrence and Wirgren, page 151.

		♠	AKJQ10		
		♥	J9874		
		♦	54		
		♣	32		
♠	765	N W E S		♠	432
♥	32			♥	65
♦	AKW106			♦	J987
♣	J98			♣	AKQ10
		♠	J98		
		♥	AKQ10		
		♦	32		
		♣	764		

In this example, both opponents have 20HCP and both sides have nine card trump suits. The simple Law of Total Tricks says that there should be 18 tricks, the sum of the total number of trumps. However, south can make nine heart tricks and west can make only eight tricks in diamonds. The simple Law fails; however, applying the formula we have those $18 - 11 = 17$ tricks. When we apply the Lawrence and Wirgren formula, North-South has 20 HCP and a SST of four

(two in diamonds and two in clubs). So $13-4=9$ tricks. East-West has the same HCP total, but less distribution. Now $13-5$ (two in hearts and three in spades or clubs) = 8. While the simple total trump formula fails, the formula, for this example hand, works as does the Lawrence and Wirgren's formula. **Shape is the key, not the total number of trumps.**

Short Suit Total Rule (SST) Rule

When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows $3/4$ card support for the major suit bid and $13+$ Working points. If the SST in both hands is known to be between 0-3, one may apply the SST Rule to determine the number of tricks.

Opener adds his HCP to 13 and with 19-21 total points in both hand $13-SST$ =the number of possible tricks. Note if both hands contain a void $13-0=13$, a grand slam with only 19-21 points.

If the total points are between 22-24 you gain one more trick. And with 25-27 you gain two more tricks.

8 Ever 9 Never

When finessing for the queen, with nine cards and no information, the odds for a drop are 52.18% vs 50% for finesse! This is a nominal difference. In general, if the finesse is into the safe hand, even with nine cards, one would finesse, with no information from the bidding, it is better to play for the drop of the queen.

Let me explain the percentage in more detail. With AJxxx (dummy) and Kxxx (hand), plan (1) is to cash the king, and if the queen does not drop, take the finesse and plan (2) is to cash the ace and king to drop the queen. Plan (1) wins if trumps are 3-1 with three on our left (24.87%), when they are 2-2 with the queen on the left (20.35%), and when they are 1-3 with the bare queen onside (6.22%), for a total of 51.22 percent. For plan (2), when the suit is 2-2 (40.70%) or 3-1 either way round with a bare queen (12.44%), for a total of 53.14 percent. I averaged these two approaches to obtain 52.18% or about 52%! It works! You say, if the queen does not drop with plan (1), each opponent follows low; do not finesse, but play for the drop. Now, the probability of queen to three on the left is 47.85% and queen doubleton on the right is 52.15%. Here the difference is $52.15-47.85=4.30\%$. This has a greater difference than playing for the drop, $53.14-51.22=1.92\%$. Thus, if no queen falls on first card, still play for the drop.

10 Ever 11 Never

A similar rule applies when finessing for the king; with eleven cards, it is again better to play for the drop; however, with ten cards, finesse. Again, the probability is small, about 52% vs 50%. I will not bore you with the details. However, let's look at an example.

If the king is missing and you have 11 cards, only two cards are outstanding in the suit. If they split evenly (1-1) which occurs 52% of the time, the king will drop. A 2-0 split occurs only about 48% of the time. Thus play for the drop!

While simple rules may be used for the king and the queen, what happens missing the Jack? Suppose you have Q72 and AK106 in a suit. Do you finesse or play for the drop? You have seven hearts and the opponents have six. If they split 3-3, the jack will drop. This is referred to as the Finesse Drop Test "FDT". Simply count the outstanding cards!

Losing Trick Count (LTC)

The Losing Trick Count (LTC) method of hand evaluation is used when you and your partner have established an adequate fit (at least 5-3) in a trump suit contract. While the original method was introduced in 1934 by Dudley Courtney in his book "The System of Expert Play," the modern method is due to Ron Klinger with suggestions by Jeff Rubens.

The method works with both balanced and distributional hands (since it does not count twice for duplicated honors in short-suits) and hence is preferred to the "Law of Total Tricks" which does not take into account short-suits! Using the LTC, you are able to evaluate you and your partner's potential losers to give you third round control of all suits and thus the number of tricks you can expect to make in your trump contract.

To use the LTC method, one considers only the top three cards in each suit. The top three cards in each suit ace, king, or queen are counted as winners and all others are considered losers. Thus, LTC counts A-x-x, K-x-x, and Q-x-x as two losers. To compensate for this disparity, Jeff Rubens suggests that if you have an equal number of queens and aces, it does not matter; however, if you have more queens than aces, ADD $\frac{1}{2}$ losers for each queen, and if you have more aces than queens, SUBTRACT $\frac{1}{2}$ losers for each ace. This is called the adjusted LTC Method.

Counting Losers for LTC

- xxx, Jxx = 3 losers
- Qxx, Qxxx = 2.5 losers (or simply=2)
- Axx, AJx, KJx, Kxx, = 2 losers.
- QJx, Q10x, Qxxx, QJ, Qx, Jx, xx = 2 losers
- AQx, AQx, AJ10, KQx, KJ10, Q = 1
- AKx, AQJ, KQ, Kx, K, Q, J, x = 1 loser
- AQ = 0.5 losers
- AK, AKQ, void = 0 losers
- You do not count more than 3 losers per suit. For example, xxxxx is only 3 losers, not 5!

Two examples follow.

Hand (a): ♠ KQ543 ♥ AKQ ♦ J72 ♣ 94 and Hand (b): ♠ 74 ♥ void ♦ 875432 ♣ 96432.

Hand (a) contains six losers (one in spades, none in hearts, three in diamonds, and two in clubs); however, there are two more queens than aces, so one adds $1/2$ to the total for $6\frac{1}{2}$ losers and thirteen HCP. Hand (b) has no HCP and eight losers.

Using the adjusted LTC method, one is able to calculate the number of expected tricks your partnership should take (with a trump fit) by subtracting the number of losers you and your partner hold from twenty-four. Why twenty-four? It is the total number of losers the partnership can hold, twelve by each partner.

Using the adjusted method, the partnership should be able to take twelve tricks if there are twelve losers between the two hands ($24-12=12$), eleven tricks with thirteen losers ($24-13=11$), ten with fourteen and so on.

To use the LTC method, you must be able to estimate the number of losing tricks you and your partner have. Fortunately, there is a high correlation between the expected number of losing tricks and one's HCP count. It goes as follows.

Opener: 12-14 HCP; seven losers; 15-17 HCP; six losers; 18-20; five losers.

Responses: 6-9 HCP; nine losers; 10-12 HCP; eight losers; 12-14 HCP; seven losers.

Using these guidelines, suppose you open the bidding with eighteen HCP (five losers) and your partner makes a limit raise (eight losers). You have thirteen losers between the two hands. LTC predicts that you can expect to take eleven tricks ($24-13$). You have game but not slam.

There will not be a dramatic difference between standard point-count hand evaluation and LTC; however, it may offer an additional edge since losers in at least one hand is known.

Let's consider a few examples where partner opens $1\heartsuit$ and you hold:

Hand (1): $\spadesuit 84 \heartsuit A764 \diamond K6543 \clubsuit 92$

LTC says you have two losers in each suit and adjusting for the ace-queen factor, subtracting $\frac{1}{2}$ from the total, you have $7\frac{1}{2}$ losers. Adding your total to your partner's, the partnership has 14.5 losers or ($24-14.5=9.5$) 9.5 tricks, almost "10." Thus, even though you have only 7HCP, a limit raise is appropriate. (Note: With four trumps, the number of effective points is ten). Playing Bergen Raises, one would bid $3\clubsuit$, 7-9 HCP. All methods seem to lead to the same result. However, consider the following balanced hand.

Hand (2): $\spadesuit J65 \heartsuit A764 \diamond 754 \clubsuit KQ8$

This hand has nine losers and since the number of queens is the same as the number of aces, no adjustment is necessary. Adding your losers to partner's ($9+7=16$), and using the LTC formula ($24-16=8$), you can expect only eight tricks. Hence, with 10 HCP you only bid two hearts. With standard point count methods you may give a limit raise or using Bergen you may bid $3\spadesuit$. Both may result in game contracts for down one since neither take into account the balanced 3-4-3-3 distribution!

Hand (3): ♠ 6 ♥ A7643 ♦ K8642 ♣ 92

The adjusted LTC method indicates that this hand has seven losers, less $\frac{1}{2}$ because you have one ace and no queens. Hence, you expect to take 10.5 tricks even if partner has a minimum opener. Bid four hearts, no interest in slam. Playing Bergen with Swiss bids, you would also bid four hearts. Using Dummy Points, some may bid Jacoby 2NT! This would be incorrect since you need solid high card points for the bid.

Hand (4): ♠ 6 ♥ K643 ♦ Q932 ♣ Q954

You have seven losers and adding $\frac{1}{2}$ because you have two queens and aces; adding your losers to the opener's seven, you expect to make $9\frac{1}{2}$ tricks, almost ten or you can give a limit raise, even though you have only 7 HCP. Using Bergen Raise, do not bid 3♥, you might also miss game.

Hand (5): ♠ 6 ♥ K643 ♦ AK98654 ♣ 9

This hand has one spade loser, two heart losers, one diamond loser, and one club loser, minus one-half loser (one ace and no queens); a $4\frac{1}{2}$ loser hand. Now, partner has a seven or fewer loser hand. Thus, $24 - 11.5 = 12.5$ expected tricks. You may have a grand slam! Hence, with your fit in hearts, you must use some form of Blackwood to investigate the possibility of slam.

Bridge is a complicated game. The adjusted LTC method allows one to investigate the potential of your combined hands and should not be ignored by duplicate players. It can be used with 2/1, Standard American, Precision, and other methods as a tool for hand evaluation. You should combine it with your method of choice to play better bridge. Reference: Ron Klinger (1998), "Modern Losing Trick Count Flipper." Also see Klinger's Lecture on LTC at <http://members.shaw.ca/conventions/ltc.pdf>.

For an overview and discussion of many of the above rules and more, consult Mel Colchamiro's book (2007), "How You Can Play like an Expert" by Magnus Press.

Rule of 210 (5-level Bids)

How many times have you heard bridge players say that the 5-level belongs to the opponents?

THIS IS NOT THE CASE IN COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS!

If you are in a competitive auction and the opponents have bid to the 5-level, do you compete, double or pass. You may use the rule of 210.

With two (2) cards in the opponents bid suit you should DOUBLE for penalty.

With ONE (1) card in their suit pass, and with ZERO (0) cards in there suit, compete to the five level.

For example you are bidding diamonds and they are bidding clubs. Use the rule to determine whether or not you should bid five diamonds over five clubs, double, or pass.

This is also the case for hearts over diamonds or spades over hearts. Remember the rule of 210; simple!

The rule comes from negative slam doubles, which are used to decide whether to sacrifice. Over a slam the second hand doubles to show no defensive tricks, but passes with one or more tricks.

Negative Slam Double - A Double of opponent's slam is used to indicate either a willingness to continue bidding or penalize the opponents

Example:

(1♥) - 2♠ - (4♥) - 4♠;
(6♥) - X

This Double indicates the player has no defensive tricks and, assuming partner's hand is limited to offensive values, suggests partner make a sacrifice slam bid (usually with favorable vulnerability).

Barry Crane Rules (commandments)

Finding the Queen is one of the most difficult tasks in the game of Bridge. If you have the following card combination:

	♠/♥AJxx			♦/♣AJxx	
West		East	or	West	East
	♠/♣K10xx			♦/♣K10xx	

You can finesse either way, West or East, you have a Two-Way finesse. Barry Crane one of the best American Match Play card players of all time recommends, with no information from the bidding, that you always do the same thing. Be consistent every time with no information.

In addition he finds that for the MAJORS, the Queen lies UNDER the Jack and that for the MINORS, it is lies OVER the Jack.

Hence, he will always play WEST for the Queen for the Major suits and EAST for the Queen for the Minor suit. This rule is part of Barry Crane's 12 COMMANDMENTS; his commandments are as follows:

1. Never pull partner's penalty double.
2. Always take a sure profit.
3. Watch out for the three level.
4. The more you bid the more you got (no "fast arrival" here).

5. Sevens are singletons.
6. Don't bid grand slams at Swiss teams.
7. Don't put cards in partner's hand.
8. (Only) Jesus saves.
9. Don't east between sessions.
10. Never ask "How's your game?"
11. Never gloat.
12. The queen is over the jack in the minors and under the jack in the majors.

Evaluating Your Offense to Defense Ratio (ODR)

Duplicate Match-point Bridge is all about bidding in competition and how many tricks each side can take. However, you do not want to outbid the opponents if the penalty you earn is more than the value of the contract they would have earned.

If you can make eight tricks in hearts and they can make eight tricks in spades, and they bid 2♠, then you should bid 3♥ if you know with some certainty that you can expect to go down by at most ONE trick since to score of -50 or -100 is better than the 110 that their 2♠ contract would produce, bid to the 3-level; since any positive difference (even 10 points) to the majority of the field is decisive in terms of match points. Even two tricks down for a score of -100 are fine if not vulnerable; but if vulnerable a score of -200 is clearly bad so you may not want to outbid them when vulnerable if you were to get doubled.

The challenge is to **accurately** evaluate how many tricks you and the opponents can take. Remember that the aim of competitive bidding in regular match-point pairs is not to bid what you can make. Rather you are striving for the best possible score on the board, the **par score**, even if that means bidding to go down - provided it scores better than allowing the opponents to make their contract. Therein lies the rub since most of the methods used do evaluate the number of tricks do not guarantee success because "success" depends upon high-card strength, shape, the distribution of HCP values, and suit quality. Together they define your Offense/ Defense Ratio or (ODR), a concept most current methods do not address. The higher you're ODR, the more you should compete to win the contract. With a low ODR, it is best to defend!

In this bridge "Bit" I will try to define ODR factors and how you may use them to bid or defend; however, before I address ODR lets review some of the techniques used to evaluate trick taking success!

Hand Evaluation and points

If your partner makes an opening bid then you have a reasonable estimate of your total points if you have a fit by adding your Dummy Points to partners after adjusting for shortages, suit length and suit quality. However, if both sides are bidding it is very likely a distributional contract suggesting that more tricks may be won with fewer points; but by how much less? You do not know; hence points by themselves do not allow you to evaluate success in a competitive auction. Point evaluation is most effective in no-trump contracts.

Losing trick Count (LTC)

A little more useful, when partner opens and you have a fit, is to count your losers and adding them to those indicated by your partner's opening bid. This gives a better indication of the number of tricks your side might win, since it captures some of the power of distributional hands. Recall that the formula for total tricks is: **Maximum possible losers in both hands (24) minus # of losers = Tricks Expected**. For example for a major suit contract, if each hand has 7 losers for a total of 14, one can expect 10 tricks; on average. But some of the assumptions behind loser count, such as considering every card after the fourth to be a winner, become less assured when the opponent's hands are also very distributional. In addition loser trick count doesn't help estimate the trick potential of the opponents, nor does it take into account the information provided by the opponents' bidding. And, LTC does not work with no-trump contracts.

The Law of Total Tricks

Counting total tricks is a better general guide for competitive auctions. Total tricks refer to total number of tricks you can expect to make with a trump fit. It is equal to the sum of the trumps in both hands. Thus, with 9 trumps, one should bid to the 3-level; and with 10 to the 4-level. Simple! Yes, too simple. It does not take into account honor combinations, distribution, or trump quality. For more detail, see the Law of Total Tricks "Bridge Bit" on the Ocala Web site. As a simple estimate, bid to the level where the $\# \text{ trumps} - 11 = \# \text{ bids}$.

Lawrence and Wirgen Working Points

Lawrence and Wirgen define Working Points (WP) as HCP that take tricks. Returning to hand evaluation, one can define approximate WP as the number of HCP after adjusting for dubious honor doubletons and honor singletons. Where dubious doubletons are defined as: AJ, KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx and singletons are K, Q, and J. Subtract one point for each from your HCP total. Assuming the WP in both hands is 19-21, the number of tricks one can expect is obtained by subtracting from 13 the Short Suit Total (SST).

Thus Total Tricks Expected = $13 - \text{SST}$. On average your SST is about 4 (doubletons in both hands) so with a fit, one can expect 9 tricks, if balanced. With a SST of 3 you can expect 10 tricks. Or as WP increase, in steps of 3 points, one trick is gained. Hence with WP= 22-24 and SST=4, one can expect 10 tricks. Your SST determines the value of your trumps. This method takes into account High-card strength and shape.

None of the methods discussed take into account all the factors: high-card strength, shape, the distribution of values, and suit quality. Together they are used to evaluate your Offense/ Defense Ratio (ODE).

You're Offense/Defense Ratio

Your Offense/Defense Ratio (or ODR) is a useful tool in the decision to win the contract or to defend. It is based on the assumption that hands with approximate equal Starting Points, identical HCP, equal LTC, and equal trumps and distribution can have very different offensive and defensive values.

Consider the following hands opening hands:

1. ♠KQJ109 ♥743 ♦A53 ♣Q5
2. ♠A8732 ♥Q5 ♦A43 ♣Q5

Hand (1) has 14 Starting Points and hand (2) has 12, both hands have 12 HCP with 8 losers and with the same shape yet should be bid differently.

The first hand has five tricks playing in spades, whereas defensively it might only have 2 tricks. Because of its offensive strength it would be important to bid early and to try to obtain the contract.

The second hand, in contrast, has only 3 or 4 tricks playing in spades and probably 3 in defense. Consequently it is more defensive. Note the ♥Q, and any intermediate honor in a short suit, is more likely to win a trick in defense than as declarer. On this holding you would be happier to defend if partner does not support spades.

A few general ODR simple guidelines:

- Qs and Js in your long suits are offensive, but in short suits are defensive
- Honor sequences particularly in your long suits are offensive
- Concentrated HCP are offensive while distributed values are defensive

ODR in more detail

(1) High Card Points (HCP)

In evaluating ODR, HCP is NOT the most important. Why you ask, because it is equally important to Offense and Defense. This is because HCP, in the abstract, is just as likely to increase your offense potential as your defense potential. However, this may not be the case if one obtains a fit. Now a hand may be offensively strong with NO HCP; yet with no HCP you may have no defensive strength. In general, the greater your high-card strength, the less significant will be your ODR. Why you ask? Let's look at an example.

You hold the hand ♠9876 ♥7 ♦653 ♣9754, and your partner opens 1♠.

Clearly with a singleton and 4-card support, the hand is Offensive with little Defensive value. Now let's add 10 HCP to the hand: ♠A876 ♥7 ♦A53 ♣Q754 and assume that our offense and defense increased equally. However our ODR has increased by 10 fold.

To see this, consider two persons that are aged 10 and 5, the ratio of their ages is 2:1; however, adding 40 to each of the ages; we have 50 and 45, respectively. The gap remains at 5, but the ratio is insignificant; thus, the greater the high-card strength, the less significant the ODR.

(2) Shape

The number of trumps beyond 8 contributes to your offensive value; this is not the case if the hand is balanced. Assuming the number of trumps remains constant, the more unbalanced your hand, the higher the ODR and conversely. Clearly hand (a) ♠9876 ♥7 ♦653 ♣9754 is more defensive than hand (b) ♠9876 ♥753 ♦65 ♣9754. Hand (b) is clearly offensive. Balanced hands have less defensive value.

(3) Distribution of HCP Values

The most important variable in the determination of ODR is the distribution of your HCP.

Values in your own agreed upon suit are offensive while values in the opponent's suit are defensive. Furthermore, the greater the concentration of values in the un-bid suit, the higher you can expect your ODR.

Consider the following hands opening hands in a spade contract.

1. ♠AJ87 ♥KQ96 ♦653 ♣85
2. ♠10753 ♥AQ ♦J54 ♣K65

Both hands have 10 HCP; hand (a) is offensive while (b) is more defensive.

(4) Suit Quality

When addressing suit quality, you have to consider the kinds of values in (a) your trump suit, (b) a long 5-card suit, (c) the opponents' suit, and (d) your short 2-card suits.

- a. Honors in your trump suit AKQJ are offensive.
- b. Top honors AKQ in a side 5-card suit are offensive.
- c. In you opponents' suit, the situation is reversed. KQJ are offensive and Ace is neutral.
- d. Short suit, A's and K's are offensive or defensive, while Q's and J's are more defensive (if partner did not support your short suit).

In summary, a suit contract will be approximately equal to the number of trumps in both hands provided your ODR is not brought down by poor shape, suit quality, distribution of HCP, and defensive honor-card holdings.

The ODR and Total Tricks/Trumps guidelines still do not take full advantage of all the information provided by the bidding. You need to build your own picture of your hand. Start with re-evaluating the value of your honor holdings in the opponent's suits. A KJx holding in a suit bid by the opponents, for example, has little value over the opponent bidding the suit (you can count on 1-2 tricks); you may get none if the opponent is over you.

Slightly tougher is to use the bidding to judge the length of side suit fits for both your partnership and your opponents. If each side has a double fit, that is a fit in a side-suit as well as trumps, and then this suggests even more total tricks and even more competitive bidding. On the other

hand, if you are short in your partner's second suit or have length in an opponent's second suit, it suggests the opposite - restrained bidding. To see how all this may work, we look at an example.

Example

You hold ♠52 ♥K1097 ♦32 ♣AQ1065

And your partner opens with the bid of 1♥, which is followed by a 1♠ overcall. What is your next bid?

You have 9HCP and 2 shortness points and one length point or 12 dummy/support points with at least a 9-card trump fit. Game is clearly possible, but not certain. And what happens if the opponents confirm a spade fit?

You have several options, playing the 2/1 Game Force System.

1. Not playing "Bergen", you can bid 3♥ immediately to show your fit and a limit raise (called a high-card raise). The advantage of the bid is that it might make it harder for the opponents to continue to interfere (you have taken away the 2♠ bid of the opponents); however, it also makes it more difficult for you to show values should the opponents bid 3♠ or more. Alternatively, you may make the 2/1 bid of 3♣, which is forcing to game and helps to describe your hand. Of course it also provides the opponents with information. But, if the opponents do bid spades at the 3-level you may never get a chance to show your club suit. And, how does your partner make an informed decision after a three-spade bid, to bid on, pass, or double? Clearly, bidding 3♥ is better than making a 2/1 bid. The worst destructive bid is to bid 4♥ which tries to prevent the opponents from finding their level, a vulnerable game.
2. Playing "Reverse Bergen", one may bid 3♠* (alert) to show a limit raise in spades with 4 spades and 10-12 Dummy Points. If the opponents next bid 3♠ or more, now what do you bid? Do you bid 4♥, pass or double? Again, things are not so clear. Note with Bergen the bid of 3♥* would be a pre-emptive raise. You cannot cue bid 2♠ because it shows a limit raise with only 3-card support.
3. Some may even bid Jacoby 2NT; however, you should have 13 not 12 dummy/support points.

The most important principle in competitive bidding is to **show partner you have a fit**; since if you have one, it is very likely that the opponents also have one. The bidding goes as follows (E-W Vulnerable and N-S Not Vulnerable).

North	East	South	West
		1♥	1♠
3♣*	3♠	?	

Now what?

Do you Pass, double or bid on?

You know you have 10 trumps so using the principle that you bid to the level of your total trumps suggests you bid 4♥!

Using the Law, the sum of the trumps is between 17-18, worst cases 18 -11=7 the sum of the bids, since 3♠+4♥=7, the Law says bid 4♥!

Using the LTC method, 24-14 (7 losers in each hand) = 10, bid 4♥!

But have you pushed the opponents' into their vulnerable spade game?

Using Lawrence and Wirgen with 19-21 WP and SST=4; 13-SST=9 total tricks. Do not bid 4♥!

What about you're ODR? You have a very good side suit clubs that contains two honors, perhaps 1-2 tricks and probably 1 heart trick; and partner promises at least 2 tricks as opener. Even though you have good offensive values, you judge that with a low ODR it is better to defend than to bid a game in hearts. It is better to defend than bid on. So you double 3♠ and do not bid 4♥. The hand layout for this example follows.

	North	
	♠ 52	
	♥ K1097	
	♦ 32	
	♣ AQ1065	
West		East
♠ AKJ108		♠ Q976
♥ 52		♥ 85
♦ 78		♦ AQ1023
♣ KJ74		♣ 32
	South	
	♠ 43	
	♥ AQJ64	
	♦ KJ94	
	♣ 98	

Observe that while 4 hearts does make for a score of 420; 3♠ goes down at least 2 tricks for a score of 500. Thus, taking into account ODR, it is better to defend than to bid your heart game. If you do indeed bid 4 hearts, the opponents without your tools may bid 4♠ (using the rule of total trumps!) which I hope you would surely double as well.

Play of the Hand – Rules

1. Play third hand high, unless partner's lead is the LOWEST of equal visible cards. For example, partner leads the 10 and you hold AQJ5. And, dummy holds say the K432. Since the 10 is the lowest of equal visible cards, play LOW; not high.
2. Return partners suit only if partner led a low card; bottom of something an attitude lead; otherwise, NO.
3. Cover an honor with an honor if dummy has a single honor; otherwise, cover the second honor and NOT the first.
4. Never under lead an Ace in a suit contract; however, this is not the case during the play of the hand. Make declarer guess.
5. On your first discard, play what you do not want; not what you want. Do not help the opponents.



CHAPTER 11

DEFENSIVE CARDING

Standard Carding and MUD

On the convention card under defensive carding, one observes two boxes next to Standard: vs Suits vs NT. If these are marked, then standard carding means that on partner's lead, one is playing attitude and on the opponent's lead, one is playing count. Attitude is shown by playing a high card to encourage the suit lead and a low card discourages. The cutoff is the six, which means neither.

Count is given by playing high low for an even number of cards and low high for an odd number of cards. Count does not apply for the trump suit. If you do not play trump suit preference, then a high-low discard shows extra trumps (usually three). When the attitude signal is not needed (partner has led the ace and the king is in dummy) then one shows suit preference. A high trump card requests the higher of the remaining suits that are not trump and a low trump card requests the lower of the two suits that are not trump.

In no-trump, some use **BOSTON** leads which means BOS (Bottom Of Something), an Honor, or TON (Top Of Nothing). When partner has bid a suit, then one usually leads the highest card in partner's bid suit, if supported; otherwise, from three small one leads the lowest when the suit is not supported.

When leading a card most play fourth best leads for both suits and no-trump contracts; **but never from four small cards for no-trump leads**. However using the Rule of 11, the fourth best lead helps the opponents whether playing in no-trump or suit contracts. Instead, one may use 3rd/5th best for **suit** contracts (the rule of 12/10, respectively) and attitude leads against NT (BOSTON); however, some use 4th best leads. When a low card is lead from 5-card suit and the 3-card is led from a 4-card suit. From 3 lead low from an honor.

Alternatively, some play MUD which is "Middle-Up-Down" or Roman MUD developed by Benito Garozzo of the famous Italian Blue Team. Versus suit and no-trump contracts, leading low promises a Jack or higher, hence leading low from three or fourth best when the suit is longer promises an honor. From three cards or longer in a suit with no honor one leads the second highest card; an exception; if you are holding 10-9-x or longer, lead the 10. The advantage of MUD is that you know whether or not partner has an honor, but do not know how many cards partner holds. Let's look at a few examples of MUD vs 3/5 leads for suit contracts

Cards led vs suit contracts

Holding	3/5	MUD
Q7542	2	4
Q742	4	2
Q72	2	2
872	2	7
9842	4	8
97642	2	7
72	7	7

Which is better for suit contracts, 3/5 or MUD?

Let's look at an example. Suppose we have the following situation:

DUMMY		
Q754		
PARTNER LEADS		YOU
2		AJ1063

Which card do you play?

Playing 3/5 leads, the 2 can be from K72 or K72 or K92. Should you play the Ace or the 10? You do not know. However, playing MUD you know partner has the king! MUD is better. To be fair, suppose the lead is not the 2 but the 7. Playing 3/5 leads, you know partner usually has a doubleton; however, playing MUD partner can have K72 or 972, you do not know. No scheme is foolproof. Partnerships must choose. The bridge expert Mel Colchamiro says for suit contracts including four spades or lower use MUD, but for five clubs or higher contracts use 3/5. For more, see his article in the September 2013 issue of the "Bridge Bulletin".

Against NT, if partner leads an ace, it usually requests partner to unblock, to play his highest honor. If the king is lead, partner is to play his second highest honor. If, however, the queen is lead, partner is requested to play the jack. Against suit contracts, the ace/queen requests attitude and the king count from your partner.

When partner leads small and you take the trick as appropriate, then the standard return of a suit is the lowest card from three remaining cards or the highest from two remaining.

To show shortness in a suit, one plays high-low (playing standard). If you do get a ruff, the card returned should indicate whether you want the higher suit returned and a low card asks for the lower of the remaining suits.

Other Carding Agreements

While the “standard” carding system is played by many duplicate bridge players, some do not like the system since it tends to waste “high” cards. A popular option is upside down count and attitude which is the opposite of standard.

Upside-Down Count and Attitude

Playing upside-down count and attitude (UDCA), a low card is encouraging on a lead and a high card is discouraging. Now, a doubleton is denoted by low-high instead of high-low. However on leads, one still uses the high-low single to show a doubleton. If you do not, it must be alerted because they are usually using 2/4 leads which is similar to MUD.

Count is also opposite of standard for UDCA, high-low is odd and low-high is even. When you cannot follow suit, a low card in a suit is encouraging and a high card is discouraging. Most partnerships playing 2/1 use this approach since high values are not wasted.

Playing UDCA many duplicate players also play 3/5 leads against suit contracts and BOSTON against NT. Never lead 4th best!

Odd-Even Discards

Odd-Even discards is also called Roman Discards. It is used when you cannot follow suit the first time, an odd card in a suit is encouraging and an even card is discouraging. A high even card says you like the higher of the suits not led, excluding the trump suit, and a low even card says you like the lower of the two suits not lead, again excluding the trump suit. It is played against both suit contracts and no-trump. When played in no-trump contracts, a low even card says you want the lower of the two suits, excluding the suit lead.

Lavinthal Discards

Similar to odd even, except a low card (less than six) says you would like the lower of the suits that is not trump and a high card says you want the higher of the two suits that are not trump.

Suit Preference Discard

When you cannot follow suit the first time, a discard of any suit shows your suit preference.

Revolving Suit Discards

When unable to follow suit for the first time, you discard a card from a suit you do not want. A high card asks for the higher-ranking suit, and a low card asks for the lower-ranking suit.

What carding system should you adopt? Let's look at an example where both are vulnerable and north deals.

	♠	AKJ10		
	♥	32		
	♦	2		
	♣	AKJ1032		
♠	9532	N W E S	♠	64
♥	Q1094		♥	A765
♦	K1095		♦	AJ65
♣	6		♣	987
	♠	Q87		
	♥	KJ8		
	♦	Q876		
	♣	Q54		

The bidding goes:

North	East	South	West
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead is the 4♥.

Playing upside-down signals, east wins with the ace. Now, to defeat the contract, the defense needs red suit tricks, so instead of making the routine return of a heart, east returns a low diamond. West now encourages with the five. East continues with the jack of diamonds and the defenders take the first five diamond tricks to defeat the contract. On a heart return, declarer makes eleven tricks.

If instead of playing upside-down signals, suppose you are playing standard signals and make the same switch. Now you must play the ten or the nine of diamonds, declarer covers the jack with the queen and the defenders get only three diamond tricks and a heart. The contract makes.

Of course, there is no “best” carding system. But why use a high card to encourage partner?

On average, the better carding system is upside-down count and attitude against both suit and no-trump contracts. Against no-trump contracts, some use 4th best or BOSTON; however, for suit contracts, it is usually better to use third and fifth leads.

Trump suit Preference

The most “basic” trump echo signal is when declarer begins to draw trump. A high-low signal shows an odd number of trumps and a low-high shows an even number (upside-down count).

Instead of showing count, it is often better to tell partner where your strength is outside the trump suit (Trump Suit Preference). Now; going up-the-line shows strength in lower-ranking suit strength and high-low shows strength in a higher-ranking suit.

On the deal below, most wests would lead the ♥9 against the N-S 4♠ contract. East inserted the ten and allowed south to win the trick with the queen. South was reluctant to begin on diamonds before pulling trump. Playing Trump Suit Preference east played the 9-3 in spades to show hearts. When east wins the A♠, he knows to continue hearts, holding the contract to ten tricks.

		♠	A76		
		♥	K63		
		♦	QJ98		
		♣	Q75		
♠	42	N W E S		♠	93
♥	9754			♥	AJ10
♦	A7			♦	6542
♣	K10982			♣	J643
		♠	KQJ1085		
		♥	Q82		
		♦	K103		
		♣	A		

On the following layout, east again plays the ♥10; however, now he would play the 3-9 of trumps (low-high) showing suit preference for clubs. West must shift to clubs when he wins the ♦A.

		♠	A76		
		♥	K62		
		♦	QJ98		
		♣	Q76		
♠	42	N W E S		♠	93
♥	9754			♥	AJ10
♦	A7			♦	6542
♣	K10982			♣	J643
		♠	KQJ1085		
		♥	Q83		
		♦	K103		
		♣	A		

While Trump suit Preference is a commonly used carding convention when playing in a suit contract, the Smith Echo convention is used when one is playing against a no-trump contract.

Smith Echo

Devised and published in 1963 in the “British Bridge World” magazine by I.G. Smith of Great Britain, the Smith Echo is an attitude signal most often used against no-trump contracts to show

partner either the desire to continue leading the opening suit or to switch to another suit. Unlike the usual suit signals, the Smith Echo is not made on the opening lead but when declarer is next on lead.

When declarer begins to run his own or dummy's long suit, a high-low signal in this suit by the defenders (opening leader and partner) has the following meaning:

If made by partner of the opening leader, it shows good support for the opening lead and asks partner to continue the suit led when regaining the lead. If made by the opening leader, it says that the suit led was weak and that partner should switch to another suit when gaining the lead.

When playing defense, we are all taught to return partner's suit! However, consider the following situation.

	♠	832		
	♥	94		
	♦	AQ3		
	♣	A10863		
♠	AQ104	N W E S	♠	J965
♥	Q1053		♥	J86
♦	76		♦	J1092
♣	942		♣	K7
	♠	K7		
	♥	AK74		
	♦	K854		
	♣	QJ3		

Against 3NT, west leads fourth best 3♥ which was covered by east's jack; declarer wins the king and returns the ♣Q and west sees that declarer has four club tricks, possibly three diamonds and two hearts. The only hope in setting the contract is in spades. Playing Smith Echo, west follows with the 9♣ telling partner NOT TO RETURN HEARTS. Winning with the ♣K, east does not return a heart, his partner's lead. He can see that the only possible return is a spade: for down one!

Some partnerships play **Reverse Smith Echo** when playing UDCA. Now low-high is encouraging! Be careful, look at the opponents carding scheme. It is similar to the Foster Echo.

Foster Echo

This carding procedure was devised by Robert Frederick Foster of New York. He also invented the "rule of eleven."

There are several versions of this convention used primarily against no-trump. One is used when the opening lead is an honor and the third hand wants to show four cards in the suit headed by an honor.

With four cards, the Foster Echo always begins by following with the third highest card. If the suit lacks an honor, on the second round partner follows with the fourth highest card, but if headed by an honor, one follows with the second highest. For example, suppose you (third hand) hold:

Hand (1) 8 7 5 2 Hand (2) Q 7 5 2

And partner leads the king with hand (1) you play the five followed by the two (high-low: have no honor); with hand (2) the five is followed by the seven (low-high: have an honor). This version of Foster Echo allows the opening leader to locate the missing honors in the suit and to help choose the right continuation. If you were playing the upside-down carding system, one would discard the eight with hand (1) to discourage and the two with hand (2) to encourage.

Another version (less frequently used) combines an unblocking play with giving count. If the third hand cannot top either the card led or the card played by dummy, he follows with his second highest card; with a four-card holding, on the second round plays the third highest card, next the highest, reserving the lowest for the last round. However, with a three-card holding, on the first round partner also plays the second-highest card in the suit and on the second round the highest card. This may cause some ambiguity if the suit is headed by two honors. Holding, for example, Q-10-x or J-10x, partner would play the ten on the first round; hence, the leader doesn't know if the higher honor is the queen or the jack against no-trump and the three against a suit contract.

Or playing Foster Echo, one gives count when you cannot beat dummy's card. Playing UDCA low-high is even and high-low is odd.

How you play the Foster Echo carding system must be discussed.

CHAPTER 12

BRIDGE LEADS

Many books have been written on Bridge Leads, but the two written by David Bird and Taf Anthias (2011 and 2012) called “Winning Notrump Leads” and “Winning Suit Contract Leads”, respectively, published by Master Point Press are the most detailed and comprehensive. Advice is based upon 100,000 simulations for both MP and IMP scoring.

While leads are difficult since a contract may be made or fail because of the lead, the most important thing to remember is to listen to the bidding since it may help the most in what one should or should not lead. Then you must decide whether to be active or passive.

In general, an active lead is when you lead honors; however, it may give up a winner. Alternatively, you may be passive, which avoids giving the declarer a trick he does not deserve.

Dick Olson at www.slospin.net provides a very nice summary of basic lead principles. His recommendations follow, Points 1-6.

Standard Leads

(1) Leading a Trump

If you can attack a contract, it is usually best to do so. However, there are times when a trump lead is called for.

Example 1: You have: ♠64 ♥AJ93 ♦AQ105 ♣KJ6

The bidding goes: [1♠ Dbl 2♠ Pass]: [4♠ Pass Pass Pass]

Since leading a side suit is unattractive, lead a trump here – protect those tenaces.

Example 2: The bidding goes: [1♠ Pass 1NT Pass 2♠]

An optimal time to lead trumps is when dummy denies support for a major suit opener. In Example 2, responder obviously has 0, 1, or 2 card support for spades. This is a good time to lead a trump.

(2) Leads in Suits that include the Ace

Never under lead an ace against a suit contract at trick one.

If you do not have the king, lead the ace only when you are defending against a slam (except 6NT) or declarer preempted, or

Your ace is singleton, or

Your ace is the only unbid suit against five clubs or five diamonds, or

Your side promised length and strength in the suit, or

You have a seven- or eight-card suit.

Lead the ace from AKx (unless you play Rusinow Leads); after trick one, lead the king from AKx.

(3) Short-Suit Leads

Singletons are invariably good choices.

Doubletons are overrated, especially with one honor.

The best time to lead a short-suit is with trump control, e.g., A63.

Avoid a short-suit lead when you do not need a ruff; e.g., with trump holdings such as QJ9 and KQ10 or when you have trump length. With four trumps it is usually correct to lead a long suit to make declarer ruff (this is called a forcing game).

(a) Basic Leads

In selecting your lead, you must consider your hand as well as inferences from the bidding.

Desirable Leads

Partner's suit, especially if he promised five or six cards. The proper card to lead is the same one you would have led in any other suit. Therefore, lead low from Q63 or K852 (this is called BOS "Bottom Of Something"; however, some lead the top of a suit if partner has bid the suit. It is best to discuss your approach with partner). Top of a three-card (or longer) sequence is TON (Top Of Nothing).

Sequences

It is better to lead top of a sequence than fourth-best (or third and fifth against a suit contract)

A sequence must contain an honor (10 or higher)

Against a suit contract, a sequence can be as short as two cards. Lead the king from KQ53 and the queen from QJ64. However, against a no-trump contract, lead low from both holdings.

Partner has Not Bid and there is no Sequence

Prefer to lead a suit the opponents have not shown. In general, try to lead from length against any contract. A lead from Q1074 is more attractive than from Q107. It is acceptable to lead away from a king against a suit contract.

Leading Dummy's Suit

Leading through strength is overrated. Lead dummy's suit only when partner is likely to have length and strength behind him.

(b) Standard Leads Against Suits (3rd and 5th) -Preferred

Sequences:

A K x, 10 9 x, K Q x, K J 10 x, Q J x, K 10 9 x, J 10 9, Q 10 9 x, K Q 10 9

Length Leads with an Honor (X = honor) - lowest-card lead usually indicates an honor:

X x x, X x x x (start of high-low), X x x x x (start of low-high), X x x x x x (start of high-low)

Length leads Without an Honor:

x x, x x x (MUD to indicate no honor), x x x x (start of high-low), x x x x x (start of low-high), x x x x x x (start of high-low)

Primary signals:

Count is usually first option

Attitude is given if count doesn't make sense

Suit preference is given if neither count nor attitude makes sense (some always give attitude first).

(c) Standard Leads Against Suits (4th Best) – Not preferred

Sequences:

A K x, 10 9 x, K Q x, K J 10 x, Q J x, K 10 9 x, J 10 9, Q 10 9 x, K Q 10 9

Length Leads with an Honor (X = honor) - Lowest-card lead usually indicates an honor:

X x x, X x x x, X x x x x, X x x x x x

Length leads Without an Honor:

x x, x x x (MUD to indicate no honor), x x x x (MUD), x x x x x (MUD), x x x x x x (MUD)

Primary signals:

Attitude is first option

Count is given if attitude doesn't make sense

Suit preference is given if neither attitude nor count makes sense

(4) Standard Leads against No-trump

Length Leads → 4th best

x x, x x x (MUD), x xx x (MUD if no honor), x xx x x (MUD if no honor), **10** 9 x,

K Q x, K **J** 10 x, Q J x, K **10** 9 x, J 10 9, Q **T** 9 x, K Q 10 9

A **K** x x (x) – only against no-trump; K asks for attitude

A K J x (x) – only against no-trump; A asks to unblock honor; if no honor, then give count

Primary signals: attitude then count

(5) Journalist Leads –“Ten Promises and Jack Denies” (Non-Standard)

Usually against no-trump, though some play it against suit contracts. Purpose is to promise or deny one of the top three honors. Whenever the opening lead is a 10, the leader promises the A, K, or Q and an interior sequence. Whenever a jack is led, the leader denies having the A, K, or Q and shows a sequence headed by the jack. Note a lead of the queen always promises the jack or a singleton, never lead from Qx.

Used when you have:

A high honor with an interior sequence – lead the 10 which indicates having the A, K, or Q. An “interior sequence” is defined as QJ10x, J109x, or 109xx (98xx is not considered a sequence here).

An interior sequence with nothing above it – 10 which denies having the A, K, or Q

Typical hands where a 10 is lead (“Ten Promises”)

AJ109(x), AJ10x(x), KJ109(x), K1098(x), Q109x(x) — lead the 10

but for the sequence QJ109(x) or QJ10x(x) — lead the Q

Typical hands where the J is lead (“Jack Denies”)

J109x(x), J10x(x) — lead the J

Other leads that deny holding an A, K, or Q

1098(x) or 109x(x) — lead the 9 (can't lead the 10) which promises either the 10 at the head of a sequence with no high honor or a doubleton 9x.

(6) Rusinow Leads (Non-Standard) normally used against suit contracts and only on the opening lead. Primary purpose of these leads is to remove the ambiguity when using the king lead from AK.

The most difficult play in bridge is the lead. To become proficient, you must listen to the auction. Rules are only helpful when you have limited information. Let's look at an example found in Bridge with the Abbot (David Bird), in the September 2009 issue of the "Bridge Bulletin," page 59.

	♠	753		
	♥	742		
	♦	AQ764		
	♣	83		
♠	QJ1062	N W E S	♠	94
♥	5		♥	983
♦	K95		♦	J103
♣	9742		♣	KQ1065
	♠	AK8		
	♥	AKQJ106		
	♦	82		
	♣	AJ		

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

As west, what do you lead? The natural lead is the ♠Q (top of a sequence), but if you listen to the bidding, what have you learned? Clearly, south has a control in spades and north has a control in diamonds. And, a trump lead gains nothing; in general, it is not a good idea to lead a singleton trump. The lead that has a chance of setting the contract is a club lead; lead the club 9. Leading away from the king of diamonds when the opponents are strong in the suit is never a good idea.

For more advice on bridge leads, one may also consult books by Mike Lawrence (1996), "Opening Leads," Los Alamitos, CA: C&T Bridge Supplies and Sally Brock (2007), "Leading Questions in Bridge", Master Point Press.

Bridge leads Do's and Don'ts

The most difficult task in bridge is the opening lead. It often results in a top or a bottom. You cannot be correct 100% of the time, but there are some does and don'ts. I will go out on a "limb" with the following general guidelines.

Don'ts

1. Don't lead away from a King, if you have another option.
2. Don't lead trump.
3. Don't lead an Ace in suit contracts.
4. Don't lead a singleton when you have a better alternative.
5. Don't lead your partner's suit if he has not shown a good suit or you have trump control.
6. Don't lead the unbid suit when the opponents have jumped to game in no-trump.
7. Don't lead fourth best in no-trump when your hand is weak or your suit has bad intermediates.
8. Don't lead doubletons.
9. Don't lead from broken honor sequences.

The above are general guidelines, of course there are exceptions. Never say never in the game of bridge.

Do's

1. Lead fourth best in no-trump contracts with very good intermediaries when you have bid your suit and the opponents have bid no-trump. If not, better to lead low from and honor or top of nothing.
2. Lead partner's suit, even if you have a good 5-card suit as an alternative, unless you also have an outside entry.
3. When the opponents are in a major suit contract, lead the other major unless you have an alternative lead in a minor suit.
4. Lead the unbid suit in no-trump or a suit contract if the opponents reached the contract slowly.
5. When you have a choice between two suits, lead the one with the strongest secondary cards.
6. When partner has bid two suits, lead his second suit. Or, lead a singleton if you know partner has values.
7. When the opponents have bid their suit aggressively, it is time to be passive.
8. Lead an ace against preempts if you have one.
9. When you have a weak defensive hand lead an unsupported honor in partner's suit.
10. Lead a trump when you have five trumps or when partner's double shows good trumps.

The does and don'ts assume that the auction was uninformative. For example, the bidding may go 1x – 1NT.

1. Suppose the bidding goes: (South) 1♠ - Pass -4♠ - All pass and as west you hold the following hand:

♠ 7 ♥ K873 ♦ KJ53 ♣ K985

You have no information. What do you lead?

Clearly a trump lead is passive and gains nothing for the defense. Do not use the adage “When in doubt lead trump”!

Leading away from your kings in general will give up a trick; do not close your eyes and hope for the best! Observe that by leading a club or a heart will establish at most a single trick. However, if partner were to hold the queen of diamonds then leading a diamond may set up two tricks.

Hence, you must lead the ♦J or the 3.

2. The bidding goes (South) 3♠ - Pass - 4♠ -double – All pass and as west you are on lead with the following hand. What do you lead?

♠ AQ7 ♥ J5 ♦ 10987 ♣ K653 what do you lead?

The immediate raise to four spades suggests that dummy has a solid suit and your partner has doubled. You have no information, lead the trump ace and after seeing dummy you can decide on your switch to reach partner. Do not guess.

As the opponents’ bidding becomes stronger, your opening lead should become easier.

The guidelines may help with no information, but there is no substitute for Listening to the Auction!

Leads against 3NT

The bidding has gone 1NT – 3NT and you hold the following cards:

1. ♠ Q105 ♥ KQ853 ♦ K83 ♣ 82
2. ♠ 953 ♥ Q53 ♦ 762 ♣ J842
3. ♠ QJ976 ♥ K5 ♦ J7632 ♣ 7
4. ♠ AQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ 10987 ♣ 7
5. ♠ 73 ♥ A54 ♦ Q1087 ♣ Q753
6. ♠ 532 ♥ AQ754 ♦ QJ103 ♣ Q
7. ♠ 973 ♥ K4 ♦ 876543 ♣ K7
8. ♠ 972 ♥ AJ1094 ♦ 76 ♣ 543
9. ♠ Q97 ♥ AJ7 ♦ KJ2 ♣ 8763
10. ♠ AQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ 10987 ♣ 7
11. ♠ K9852 ♥ 7 ♦ QJ1064 ♣ 73
12. ♠ A7 ♥ A53 ♦ A76 ♣ 65432

With each of the above hands, you have no information about, what do you lead?

1. Clearly your best suit is hearts. Lead 4th best, the ♥5; or the ♠5, may be partners suit. They have denied a 4-card major.
2. You have a weak hand and should try to fine partner's best suit. Leading an unbid major is usually always better than leading an unbid minor. You have values in hearts, lead the ♥3 or ♠3.
3. You have five spades to the Queen and five diamonds to the Jack. It is usually better to lead a strong four card suit instead of a weak five card suit. Lead the ♥Q.
4. You do not want to lead from your AQ tenaces, hence, lead the ♦10. Playing coded 9's and 10's it conveys zero or two of the top three honors.
5. You have two nice 5-card suits; lead the fourth best from the stronger suit, the ♦7. Or lead the ♠3 since a major has been denied.
6. You have two strong suits, one 5-card and one 4-card. Lead from the stronger 5-card suit. Lead the ♥5, fourth best.
7. You have two weak suits, spades and diamonds. You will not develop a trick in diamonds. Lead the ♠9.
8. Lead the ♥10 to show zero or two of the top honors in hearts.
9. You have a great hand, lead top of nothing or the ♣8. Partner when he gets in will switch to another suit.
10. Protect your tenaces and lead the ♦10.
11. You have two suits of equal length, lead from the stronger suit. Lead the ♦Q.
12. You have three entries to your club suit, lead the ♣6.

How did you do?

SUMMARY when the bidding goes 1NT- 3NT. Almost always lead a major even if you have a long minor. If you have four cards in one major and a singleton in the other, lead the singleton.

If you have two majors, a 4-card and a 3-card major, lead the shortest.

For more on winning no-trump leads, see the book by David Bird and Taf Anthias (2011) called "Winning No-trump Leads" published by Master Point Press.

In our examples we had no information from the bid; however with more information, the easier the lead. Let's consider an example. Suppose you hold the following hand:

♠ J987 ♥ 853 ♦ J83 ♣ A75

And the bidding goes:

West (you)	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass			

Do you have any clues? First, you know that North has a strong diamond suit and that the defense has spades.

Partner did not overcall one heart over the bid of one diamond so that suggests that you should not lead a heart, he does not have first or second round control. However, he might have a club holding and since the opponents stopped at the three level, may have some values in clubs.

You best lead is a low club – not the ace!

The bidding goes:	North	South
	1♠	1NT
	3♥	3NT

You as west hold the following cards:

♠ A7 ♥ 1098 ♦ J754 ♣ J654

What do you lead?

South has not bid either of the minor suits and did not support the majors bid by his partner. The lead of the 4 of either minor from the Jack is in general not a good lead in no-trump, the opponents have the minors. Lead the ♥10. Or, lead the space ace. Always listen to the bidding!

Rusinow Leads

Devised by **Mr. Sydney Rusinow**, and applied at the bridge table with his friends and partners, **Mr. Philip Abramsohn** and **Mr. Simon Rossant**, in the 1930s. Although the leads were original and unique, the ACBL, for undisclosed reasons, declared them illegal and barred the use of this principle at ACBL sanctioned tournaments until 1964, whereupon the ban was lifted. The principle behind the concept of the Rusinow Leads apparently did not sit well with the bridge community in the United States, but they were adopted by many European bridge players. They were employed also by Mr. Walter Avarelli and Mr. Giorgio Belladonna and incorporated into the **Roman System**, which they devised, and became also known as **Roman Leads**. Since the Rusinow Leads have become common practice with many bridge players, they have been incorporated in several bidding systems.

The principle behind Rusinow Leads is simply the leading of the second-ranking of touching honors. Rusinow Leads are used only on the first trick against a suit contract in a suit, which the partner has not bid during the auction, if at all. It is uncommon to employ the Rusinow Leads also against a No Trump contract since the purpose of the lead against a No Trump contract is entirely different in nature, but it is not illegal.

Since the 1930s represented the era of the transition from Whist to Contract Duplicate Bridge, many innovations had to be considered and many traditional playing strategies had to be re-arranged and redefined. It was quite normal practice for the defenders to lead the King against a contract, when holding the Ace and King of the same suit. It was also quite standard for the defender to lead the King against a contract, when holding the King and Queen of the same suit. This standard practice sometimes led to unusual situations where the partner of the defender was

uncertain as to the better play, since the partner was uncertain as to whether his partner had the Ace or the Queen after leading the King.

Dummy

♠654

Defender

♠K

Defender

♠J103

The ambiguity of the lead becomes apparent. If West has the King/Queen, East will wish to play the Jack of Spades and encourage West at the same time. However, if West has the Ace/King, then East will wish to play the 3, so that West will choose to change to another suit. If south, the declarer holds the Queen-9-8-x, a continuation will give south at least one winner in this suit.

In the early days of bridge, defenders were looking for new ways to impart information, and to try new strategies. The attempt at leading the Ace from an Ace/King, promising the King, proved unsatisfactory, since leading a single Ace against a suit contract seemed prudent and in hindsight the only lead that would defeat the suit contract. It was concluded that one problematic situation was exchanged for a second problematic situation, and it was not quite clear, which principle should be more favored, or if a new principle should be created for the defense.

Mr. Sydney Rusinow came up with a solution, which was first endorsed by Mr. Ely Culbertson. However, the solution did not gain very much favor and popularity by the bridge community. The solution was to lead the second highest from touching honors, such as leading the King from Ace/King and Queen from King/Queen and Jack from Queen/Jack. Although this solution of leading in this manner was eventually barred from ACBL tournaments, the Europeans seemed captivated by the concept. They were eventually adopted by the World Bridge Federation and especially by the advocates of the Roman Club bidding system, the players of which were looking for innovative ideas.

The main principles of the Rusinow Leads are as follows:

1. **Ace:** this lead denies the King, except when holding the Ace-King as a doubleton.
2. **King:** this lead is from Ace-King. The third hand should signal with the Queen or a doubleton.
3. **Queen:** this lead is from King-Queen. The third hand should normally signal with the Ace or Jack, but not with a doubleton if the dummy contains three or four small cards of the same suit. This may be to avoid a Bath Coup, whereby the declarer could possibly be holding the Ace-Jack-x, and thereby cash two tricks.
4. **Jack:** this lead is from Queen-Jack.
 - 4.1. **Ten:** this lead is from Jack-Ten.
 - 4.2. **Nine:** this lead is from Ten-Nine.

These leads complement the MUD lead convention, in which the original lead is from three small cards. The first is the Middle card, followed by the higher card, followed by the lower card, when holding only three cards in that suit, or Middle, Up, Down.

5. In the case that more than two touching honors are held, and a lead has to be made, the card representing the second-highest honor is led. For example, from King-Queen-Jack, the Queen is led. The second card from this sequence, which is then led, is the Jack. The third hand knows that his partner holds the King of that suit.

Rusinow Leads gave the partner information about the holding, but the Rusinow Leads are used only on the first trick against a suit contract. This fact is very important to remember concerning the communication with the partner. After the first trick, it is important to remember that the highest card should be led from touching honors. This is true whether the lead is from either of the hands of the defenders.

An important side note: the Rusinow Leads were originally devised for use against a suit contract. The experiment was made to use this lead also against a No Trump contract, and the experiment failed miserably, since the purpose of a lead against a No Trump contract is different than against a suit contract. The information needed by the partner is whether the partner has led from his longest suit, and not where his honors are located.

Whether or not Rusinow Leads should be part of the partnership agreement must be considered by the individual partnership. The advantages are obvious and they are presently accepted as a form of defense by the ACBL and most other bridge governing bodies around the world. They must be noted on the Convention Card and must be made known to the opponents.

If you wish to include this feature, or any other feature, of the game of bridge in your partnership agreement, then please make certain that the concept is understood by both partners. Be aware whether or not the feature is alertable or not and whether an announcement should or must be made. Check with the governing body and/or the bridge district and/or the bridge unit prior to the game to establish the guidelines applied. Please include the particular feature on your convention card in order that your opponents are also aware of this feature during the bidding process, since this information must be made known to them according to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. We do not always include the procedure regarding Alerts and/or Announcements, since these regulations are changed and revised during time by the governing body. It is our intention only to present the information as concisely and as accurately as possible.

This discussion is from Simon's Web page at: members.shaw.ca/conventions/alpha.htm

Coded 9's and 10's

When leading against no-trump contracts, most people lead fourth best and when leading against suit contract leading third or fifth best is preferred. When leading fourth best, the rule of 11 is used by the defense and when leading 3rd or 5th best the rule of 15 and 10 are used.

These rules often help the opponents, a better strategy is to use coded 9 and 10 against both suit and no-trump contracts and to combine it with second highest from a worthless hold also called Roman Mud. Here Jack denies and ten or nine shows zero or two higher.

In principle, the lower the card you lead the more you like the suit. For example, if you lead the two it shows either a four or five card suited with an honor (AKQ or J). For example:

From K8752, lead the 2 and from Q872 lead the 7. From 10653 or perhaps 106543 lead the 6. If you hold J982 lead the 8 since the 9 would infer zero or two higher.

Most pairs only play coded 9's and 10' against no-trump contract, but it can also be used against suit contracts. For example, from 752 you would lead the 5 and on the second round play the 7 so partners know it is not a doubleton. Some may lead the 2 here, but clearly you do not have an honor; however, from 532 you would lead the 5 a

Coded 7's, 8's and 9's

A coding system similar to coded eights and nines is known as coded sevens, eights and nines. For this system, if one leads a 7 it always denotes a singleton (Barry Crane's 5th commandment). It is used against suit contracts. For no-trump contracts, leading the eight or nine is similar to coded nines and tens showing zero or two honors. The system must be marked on your convention cards as "special carding" since it is not known by many opponents.

Winning Bridge Leads

One of the most important and hardest tasks in the game of Bridge is the Lead. This Bridge Tip sets out some simple Rules you must remember.

Leads depend on the contract: No-trump; Suits; Slams; and No fit

No Trump Leads playing 15-17

In general you want to make an aggressive lead when playing in no-trump. However, the bidding may determine the lead!

In General:

1. Partner has bid a suit. You should then lead his suit, low from and honor or top of nothing.
2. Your long suit is one the opponents have bid. You should choose your longest un-bid suit or a suit dummy has bid, lead through strength.
3. Your long suit has three or more touching honors (KQJx, QJ10x, AQJ10x, J109x, etc.). You should lead the top honor to be sure you force declarer to win with the highest card possible. DO NOT lead 4th best.
4. Leading from three cards is better than leading from four cards with a weak hand.

5. When leading an un-bid suit at no-trump with four cards not headed by an honor, it is too misleading to lead low which shows strength. It is better to lead your highest or next highest card. If your highest card is an eight or lower, lead high. If your highest card is a nine or a ten, lead your second highest card. Lead the 8 from 8543, but lead the 6 from 9642. Lead the 7 from 10732 if you want another suit returned.

If the bidding has gone 1NT-3NT, only lead 4th best major with a 5-card major suit; otherwise ALWAYS lead your shortest major even if you have a 4-card major. Yes, and even if you have a 5-card minor. This also applies if the opponents are playing in 1NT.

If the opponents have transferred into a major after 1NT, lead the other major.

If the bidding goes 1M-1NT, lead the other major.

The bidding has got 1NT-2NT-3NT or 2NT-3NT, make a passive lead. Never lead 4th best; lead a MAJOR.

Against 6NT, be passive by leading spot cards. Never lead away from A, K, or Q and do not lead a sequence with touching honors.

A/K/Q leads against NT

A/Q asks for **Attitude** (with Ace leads we are looking for the Queen – best to unblock, but do not unblock with a Queen lead).

K leads asks for **count**. The King lead is usually from a broken sequence (KQJ.., KQ10...), or a strong suit headed by the ace and king (e.g., AKJ10, AKJ93, and AKQ104). It asks you to unblock any high honor.

Lead of the jack against NT

The jack is usually the top of a sequence, with nothing higher. The jack may also be led from QJ9.., asking partner to play the 10 if he has it. When partner cannot see the 10, he will think the lead is from a jack-high sequence.

Lead of the 10 against NT

The 10 lead usually shows strength: an interior sequence headed by the jack or 10, or a QJ10 sequence. It can also be the right lead from (e.g. AQJ10, KJ10.., AJ10.., AQ109.., AK109.., K109.., A109.., Q109.., QJ10.., AQJ10.., etc.)

Lead of the 9 against NT

The lead shows no higher honor.

Leads of the 7/8 against NT

Usually either 4th best or worthless sequence

Suit Leads

In general you want to make a passive lead when playing in a suit contract. However, the bidding may again determine the lead!

In General:

1. Lead a singleton or doubleton, even if partner has bid a suit.
2. Lead a suit the opponents have not bid.
3. If all suits have been bid, lead through strength.
4. Your long suit has three or more touching honors (KQJx, QJ10x, AQJ10x, J109x, etc.). Lead top honor.
5. If partner has bid, lead low from three and high from two.
6. Do not lead from A, K, or Q; instead lead a trump. And with three trumps, lead low holding the Ace of trump.

If the bidding has gone 1M-2M-4M or 1M-4M, lead an unsupported ace. And do not lead away from an honor, lead trump. Or lead a singleton or doubleton. With Kx or Qx in a suit, lead low –you are more likely to find partner with an honor.

If the opponents have splintered and reached game, lead your weakest side suit. Do not lead trump.

Leads against a major part score 1M-2M. Lead top of sequence but prefer a singleton lead to a sequence lead. Lead trump instead of leading away from an honor. With Qxx lead low or lead high from a worthless doubleton.

If the opponents have sacrificed, it is best to lead partner's suit, NOT the OPPONENTS.

Leads against Suit Slams

Be **passive** not aggressive, side suit singletons are best. But do not lead a singleton with a natural trump trick.

In match points lead an ace, but not in IMPS; do not lead an ace if the opponents have indicated a side suit ace. Better to lead a worthless doubleton.

Only lead a trump, when any other lead forces you to lead away from an A, K, or Q.

An Ace lead is less likely to gain two tricks in the suit if the opponents used cue bidding to reach their slam, more like if Blackwood was used.

Only be aggressive with touching sequence honor leads (QJxx, KQx, AJ109xx, etc.).

Trump Leads

Never lead trump if the opponents have a misfit or partner is marked with a singleton.

Lead trump with a strong trump sequence (KQJ, QJ109) avoid leading away from A, K, or Q in all other suits.

In general trump leads are poor unless you are trying to protect tenaces or the opponents have splintered.



g u t t e r

CHAPTER 13

COMPLETING THE CONVENTION CARD

The 2/1 Convention Card

The growth in Bridge Systems since the 1950s has revolutionized the game today, there are numerous systems used by the experts. For example, on Graeme Williams' Web site: www.gwilliamd.org.uk/systems/hdex.html, he discusses the following systems: ACOL, Blue Team Club, Culbertson, Eastern Scientific, EHAA, Goren, Kaplan-Scheinwold, Precision, Roth-Stone, Schenken, Standard American, and 2/1 Game Force.

As a new bridge player, which one should you learn? According to Bert Hall & Lynn Rose-Hall (1996), "How the Experts Win at Bridge," Jordan Press, the optimum system used by many top players in the world today is 2/1. However, the 2/1 approach includes many conventions. Which ones should you learn?

In this book, I have tried to cover the most played 2/1 conventions. As a guide to the utility of conventions, one must decide upon the effectiveness of the convention, how often it occurs, if it greatly improves your bidding, how it may affect a natural bid, and whether or not your partner understands and remembers it. What one is seeking is a number of conventions that meet these tests, blend together, and effectively handle a range of hands that come up most often. The critical variable in the development of the system is whether or not the conventions BLEND together. Don't play a convention because it is a "present day" gimmick. In this book, we have put together such a set that does just that - blends. Playing 2/1 Game Force, one may include in the Convention Card, the following items.

No-trump

Strong 1NT (14/15-17)
Jacoby transfers
Gambling 3NT
Extended Texas Transfers
Stayman with super accepts
Smolen
4-Way Transfers
2-Way Reverse Drury

Major Suit

5-Card Major
1NT Semi-Forcing
Reverse Bergen
Rev BROMAD
Constructive Raise
Concealed Splinters
Jacoby 2NT (Scroll)

Minor Suit

Convenient Minor
Inverted (13+)
Crisscross (10-12)
Flip-Flop Over X
2NT Invitational
Walsh Convention
Bypass 4 diamonds

Lisa Convention

Slam Bidding

1430 RKCB (kickback)
 Gerber+ Super Gerber
 ERKCB
 Grand Slam Force
 Minorwood
 Cue bidding
 Pick a Slam
 Grand Slam Force

Special Doubles

Negative
 Rosenkrantz
 Support D/Re-DbI
 Fisher Double
 Cooperative X
 Maximal X

Opening Two Bids

2♣ - Strong
 2♦* - Flannery (54)
 2♥/♠ Weak (6-10)
 Ogust + Modified
 2NT (20-21)
 Muppet Stayman (3♣)

Other Conventions

Two-Way (NMF)
 Fourth Suit Forcing to Game
 Weak Jump Shifts
 Michaels
 Leaping Michaels
 Sandwich 1NT/2NT
 Unusual 2NT
 Unusual vs Unusual
 Unusual vs Michaels
 Skew (Hess) Cue bids
 Western Cue
 3344
 SSGT
 Wolff Sign-Off with
 Checkback
 Reverse Good Bad 2NT
 Serious 3NT* with Baby
 Blackwood
 Scrambling 2NT

Defensive Carding

Leads Suit 3rd & 5th
 NT leads BOSTON
 Coded 9s & 10s
 Signals
 Foster Echo
 Trump Suit Preference
 Smith Echo

Defense Conventions

Inter Over NT
 Mod BLOOMAN
 Transfer Lebensohl
 UDCA

What must be alerted on your convention card? If the line is in blue, your agreement MUST be announced; however, if the line is in RED it must be alerted if it represents a conventional like agreement! For example, over 1NT 2♠ must be alerted; but 2NT need not be alerted. And 3♣ over the bid of 1NT must be alerted only if it represents a convention (e.g. puppet/muppet or a transfer); not if it is a natural bid.

Example of 2/1 Convention Card

SPECIAL DOUBLES
 After Overcall: Penalty
 Negative thru infinity
 Responsive : thru 3S Maximal
 Support: Dbl. thru 2S Redbl
 Card-showing Min. Offshape T/O
 Rox X/RX & Eq Lev Cov (ELC)X

SIMPLE OVERCALL
 1 level 10 to 15 HCP (usually)
 often 4 cards very light style
Responses
 New Suit: Forcing NFConst NF
 Jump Raise: Forcing Inv. Weak
 Undercall Club

JUMP OVERCALL
 Strong Intermediate Weak

OPENING PREEMPTS
 Sound Light Very Light
 3/4-bids
 Conv./Resp. 2 of 3 or 3 of 5

DIRECT CUEBID
 OVER: Minor Major
 Natural
 Strong T/O
 Michaels

SLAM CONVENTIONS Gerber : 4NT: Blackwood RKC 1430
 Blackwood with no agreed suit, Kickback 1430, Expert Gerber

vs Interference: DOPI DEPO Level: _____ ROPI

LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold)
 versus Suits versus Notrump
 x x x x x x x x x x x x x x
 x x x x x x x x x x x x x x
 A K x T 9 x A K J x A Q J x
 K Q x K J T x A J T 9 A T 9 x
 Q J x K T 9 x K Q J x K Q T 9
 J T 9 Q T 9 x Q J T x Q T 9 x
 K Q T 9 J T 9 x T 9 x x

LENGTH LEADS:
 4th Best vs SUITS vs NT
 3rd/5th Best vs SUITS vs NT
 Attitude vs NT

Primary signal to partner's leads
 Attitude Count Suit preference

SPECIAL CARDING **PLEASE ASK**

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS
 Direct: 15 to 18 Systems on
 Conv. Systems OFF
Balancing: 10 to 14
 Jump to 2NT: Minors 2Lowest
 Conv. Sand 1NT/2NT&Hess

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP
 vs: Mod Bloom: Nat/X=Cap
 2♣ tr D 6+
 2♦ tr H 6+
 2♥ tr S 6+
 2♠ tr C 6+
 Dbl: X=capp 55
 Other: 2NT 55 minors
 Ov Weak NT=Capp

OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE
 New Suit Forcing: 1 level 2 level
 Jump Shift: Forcing Inv. Weak
 Redouble implies no fit

2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak
 Majors
 Minors
 Other: _____

VS Opening Preempts Double Is
 Takeout thru 4H Penalty
 Conv. Takeout: _____
 Lebensohl 2NT Response
 Other: Lebensohl Ov Reverses

DEFENSIVE CARDING
 Standard: vs SUITS vs NT
 Except
Coded 8's/10's
 Upside-Down: count
 attitude

FIRST DISCARD
 Lavinthal
 Odd/Even
 Rev Smith Eco

OTHER CARDING
 Smith Echo
 Trump Suit Pref.
 Foster Echo

NAMES Timm - Favoriate CC

GENERAL APPROACH
Two Over One: Game Forcing Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid
VERY LIGHT: Openings 3rd Hand Overcalls Preempts
FORCING OPENING: 1♣ 2♣ Natural 2 Bids Other

NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS
 1NT
 15 to 17
 3♣ Puppet
 3♦ 55>9
 3♥ 55<10
 3♠ 55>9
 5-card Major common
 System on over X,2c
 2♣ Stayman Puppet
 2♦ Transfer to ♥ 4♦, 4♥ Transfer
 Forcing Stayman Smolen
 2♥ Transfer to ♠ Lebensohl (Fastdenies)
 2♠ Minors Neg. Double
 2NT 8-9 Other: _____

2NT 20 to 21
 Puppet Stayman
Transfer Responses:
 Jacoby Texas
 3♠ tr 3NT
 4C/4D Minorwood
 3NT _____ to _____
 Gambling
 Conventional NT Openings

MAJOR OPENING
 Expected Min. Length 4 5
 1st/2nd
 3rd/4th

MINOR OPENING
 Expected Min. Length 4 3 0-2 Conv. NF
 1♣
 1♦

RESPONSES
 Double Raise: Force Inv. Weak
 After Overcall: Force Inv. Weak
 Conv. Raise: 2NT 3NT Splinter
 Other: Rev Bergen R BROMAD
 1NT: Forcing Semi-forcing
 2NT: Forcing Inv. _____ to _____
 3NT: _____ to _____
 Drury : Reverse 2-Way Fit
 Other: _____

RESPONSES
 Double Raise: Force Inv. Weak
 After Overcall: Force Inv. Weak
 Forcing Raise: J/S in other minor
 Single raise Other: 13+
 Frequently bypass 4+♦
 1NT/1♣ 8 _____ to 10
 2NT Forcing Inv. 11 _____ to 12
 3NT: 13 _____ to 15
 Other: CCriss-Cros&Ov 1D-1NT=6-♣

DESCRIBE **RESPONSES/REBIDS**
 2♣ 22+ to _____ HCP
 Strong Other Rule of 44 2D=A/K 2H=None
 2♦ Resp: Neg Waiting 2NT=6+H X/RX or bid = bust
 2♦ 11 to 15 HCP Mini-Roman 4+ Spades
 Natural: Weak Intermediate Strong Conv. 2NT Force New Suit NF
 2♥ 11 to 15 HCP Flannery
 Natural: Weak Intermediate Strong Conv. 2NT Force New Suit NF
 2♠ 6 to 10 HCP Ogust
 Natural: Weak Intermediate Strong Conv. 2NT Force New Suit NF
OTHER CONV. CALLS: New Minor Forcing: 2-Way NMF
 Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. Not in Comp.
 4th Suit Forcing: 1 Rd. Game
 WQ, SSGT, Un ov UN, Leaping Flannery ov 1C/1D
 Leaping Michaels, Ov Precision=1-LV Mod Blooman

The Bridge World Standard

Brid sed on the majority preferences of approximately 125 leading experts and thousands of Bridge World readers. Its methods were determined by polls: a clear expert preference determined the treatment; close questions were decided by the readers' vote. Because it is a consensus system, BWS is rarely used by regular partnerships. It is, however, very valuable in forming casual partnerships—if both partners know the system, they need discuss only those

areas in which individual preferences do not conform to the BWS treatment. BWS is also used as a foundation for voting in the Master Solvers' Club in The Bridge World.

Opening Bids and Responses

Minimum balanced hand: good 12.

1 NT: good 15 to bad 18. Jacoby transfers (splinter rebids; game raise is slam try; two diamonds plus two spades forcing only one round); two spades shows minors; three hearts invitational, major two-suiter; Texas transfers; Stayman (two-spade rebid invitational; two-heart rebid weak; minor rebid forcing); Smolen; three of a minor invitational; Gerber.

2 NT: good 20 to bad 22 (small doubleton acceptable). Jacoby transfers; three spades shows minors; Texas transfers; Gerber; High Gerber

Two clubs artificial, strong: Natural responses (positive response requires good suit); two diamonds neutral; second negative=cheaper minor to three diamonds.

Preempts: Weak two-bids (two no-trump, which asks for feature if maximum, and new-suit responses forcing) "Weak gambling" three-bids. New-suit response to game-level opening asking-bid (step responses)

3 NT: gambling (little outside strength); four-diamond response artificial.

Five-card majors in first and second position: one-no-trump response forcing; two-over-one promises rebid; limit jump raises (four trumps; cheapest rebid asks shortness); two no-trump strong raise (asks shortness); three no-trump natural, 16-17; passed-hand responses: one no-trump 6-12, two clubs strong raise, three clubs natural.

Responses to minor-suit openings: Single raise strong, 10+, denies major; jump raise weak; 1 NT 8-10 after one club, 6-10 after one diamond; two no-trump natural, game force; up the line may be ignored with moderate hand; two-club response to one diamond promises a rebid.

Partnership Bidding

Splinter raises: Double-jump shift after suit opening; single jump in fourth suit if one level above a reverse; single jump in third suit if four level, or reverse; double jump in fourth suit; four of opener's minor after new-suit rebid; jump-shift by two-diamond responder to two clubs; new-suit jump after single major raise; double new-suit jump after 1 NT response.

Slam methods: Roman key-card Blackwood with trump-queen ask; D0P1; five no-trump (2 keys) or higher response with void; 5 NT rebid invites seven, asks king cue-bidding.

Cheapest-weakest responses to grand-slam force, Gerber after one-no-trump or two-no-trump opening, or rebid Picture jumps in forcing situations.

Other methods: Fourth-suit bidding: non-forcing by passed hand unless reverse; one spade may be weak; promises another bid at two level; game force if reverse or at three level. Third-suit bidding: game force if reverse or at three level, otherwise does not promise rebid. Opener's suit-over-suit reverse promises rebid; responder's cheaper of 2 NT and fourth suit neutral, and all non-jump-shift secondary jumps by one-over-one responder invitational. Opener's jump rebid to four of original minor is strong raise. Unbid minor forcing and artificial after one-no-trump rebid, requests support. Three clubs artificial may be prelude to signoff, after two-no-trump jump by opener. Re-raise to three of major preemptive.

Competitive Bidding

Negative doubles: After suit opening, through three spades (including opener's suit); after one-no-trump opening, at the three level; unlimited; suggests length in unbid major; of one heart shows four spades; of one spade after minor opening shows four or more hearts. Repeat same-suit double by negative doubler for takeout.

Weak jump responses after overcall of minor opening.

Over overcall: jump raise preemptive, cue-bid is at least limit raise; jump cue-bid is splinter.

Over two-suited overcalls: cheapest cue = raise; next cue = unbid suit; unbid suit non-forcing.

Over minor Michaels: unbid suit non-forcing; major suit shows stopper.

Over major Michaels: cue-bid in enemy major is limit raise or better; new suit forcing.

Support doubles and redoubles when raise to two is available, except one club–(pass)–one diamond–(one spade)–double shows hearts.

Over a double of partner's suit bid: new suit forcing at the one level only; jump shift non-forcing; two no-trump limit raise or better; double jump in new suit splinter

Lebensohl after two-level overcalls of one no-trump (fast denies stop).

Jump cue-bid by opener is splinter raise.

Pass and pull strong in forcing situation.

Defensive Bidding

Michaels cue-bids (in minor: majors; in major: other major plus unspecified minor) in direct and reopening position over suit one-bids and over one-no-trump response; weak or quite strong.

Direct jump cue-bid natural over minor, asks stopper over major.

Takeout doubles of preemptive openings through four hearts; otherwise for penalty.

Maximal overcall double of raised suit.

Re-openings: 1 NT, 10-14; 2 NT, 18-19.

In fourth seat over a response: one no-trump and cue-bids natural.

After 1 NT overcall: two clubs Stayman; jumps are invitational

Double of free new-suit bid by responder shows fourth suit plus tolerance.

Cappelletti over one no-trump (all situations)

Direct two no-trump unusual for lower unbid suits; weak or quite strong.

Takeout doubles: may be light with shape; new-suit rebid very strong.

Preemptive jump overcalls and jump raises of overcalls.

Responsive and extended responsive doubles after takeout doubles, at the two level after an overcall, after a preempt

Mixed-raise advances of overcalls.

Cue-bid by advancer forcing until a suit is bid twice, or game.

Lebensohl after double of weak two-bid, either position by unpassed hand, and following one-no-trump overcall

Opening Leads

Against suit contracts: third from even; low from odd. All other leads old-fashioned.

The Acol Bidding System

As explained on bridgeguys.com, the Acol Bidding System is not a Standard Bidding System as the Five Card American Standard System. This means that the Acol Bidding System is rather interpretable and allows stronger latitude in flexibility according to the partnership agreement. We would like to present a General Structure of the Acol Bidding System in order that the bridge player, who would like to learn, has a general concept of the meanings behind the bids.

The General Structure of the Acol Bidding System is outlined below:

- Opener:** With 5+ card suits, open the higher ranking longer suit
With only 4 card suits, such as a 4-3-3-3 distribution, open the 4 card suit.
If you wish to guarantee a 5-card Spade opener, the opener will then open 1 Club with 4 Spades, and this is the only situation when you will only have 4 Spades.
With a 3-4-4-2 touching distribution, open the higher suit. The exception is when your holding is Hearts and Spades as in the distribution of 4-4-2-3, and the general rule is to open 1 Heart.
With a 4-4-1-4 distribution, open the suit immediately below the singleton. The exception is the 4-4-4-1 distribution, and then the opening should be one Heart.
- Responder:** A non-reverse change of suit rebid by opener is non-forcing, if the responder bids at the One Level, but is forcing if the responder has made a 2-over-1 response.
Any change of suit rebid by the responder is forcing except over opener's 1 No Trump rebid.
- Opener's Rebid:** A non-reverse change of suit rebid by opener is non-forcing, if the responder bids at the One Level, but is forcing if the responder has made a 2-over-1 response.
A reverse by opener is forcing for one round with 16+ points and at least 5-4 distribution and the first suit will be longer.

The following principles are major in the general principles of the Acol System. Much of this has to be learned by heart, but once it is memorized, then the auction proceeds with both partners acting as one. Even with the 5-Card American Standard we had to memorize certain guidelines and principles to show length and strength.

Fourth-Suit Forcing is generally forcing, except in the following bidding auction:

Opener	Responder
1 ♣	1 ♦
1 ♥	1 ♠

1. In this instance, a 1 No Trump rebid shows 15+ HCPs and is generally forcing.
2. However, rebids by the responder at the Two-Level are non-forcing over 2♣ / 2♦ / 2♥ by the opener.
3. Three-Level rebids are generally forcing.

Any possibly ambiguous bid by the opener or responder shows values or length in that suit. This is called **fragmenting**, rather than **splintering**, which means that the bid is indicating a stopper, rather than asking for a stopper.

Note: **To fragment means to show a Stopper. To Splinter is asking for a Stopper**, and this is very important to remember.

Over 3 of a Major, when there is a known fit in the major, 3 No Trump is a natural bid, if three of a Major is Non-Forcing. But it is a **Trump Cue** if three of a Major is forcing.

Over 3 of a Minor, Three No Trump is always at least a suggestion to play.

A simple raise of responder's 2-over-1 is invitational that is Non-Forcing. A Jump raise to 4 of a Minor is Generally Forcing and suggests slam interest. Hands worth "3-5" Minor raise must find another bid.

The auction 1 Spade - 2 Hearts promises 5 cards in Hearts, but 2 of a Minor promises only a 4-card suit.

Fantunes

This is a bidding system designed by the Italian champions Fulvio Fantoni and Claudio Nunes, nicknamed Fantunes. The system is based on very solid one level and two level natural bids. Unlike Precision, all bids are natural. The system is complex and is explained in some detail by Bill Jacobs in his 2012 book "Fantunes Revealed" published by Master Point Press.

EHAA

Every Hand An Adventure (EHAA) is a system developed in California in the early 1950s and spread to the East Coast in the 60s. It featured mini notrumps and undisciplined weak two bids. Numerous modifications have been made to it over the last 40+ years. Most now play the Southern Variation which using a strong club, mini notrump and weak two bids. The system is discussed in the 64-page book by Eric Landau and Randall Baron (1966), "Every Hand An Adventure", Devyn Press Inc. and distributed by Baron Barclay.

CHAPTER 14

PLAY OF THE HAND

There are many great books on Play of the Hand. A new book I would strongly recommend is by Guy Levé (2007), “Encyclopedia of Card Play Techniques at Bridge” Master Point Press. When playing a hand, have a plan and be aware of the bidding, as Levé recommends, STOP – LOOK at DUMMY – LISTEN. Many times, the play to the first trick will make or defeat the contract.

There are numerous techniques and strategies to the play of the hand, such as safety plays, elimination (end) plays, finesses, squeezes, avoidance plays, and more. Two basic principles are to use of the Rule of 12 to guide one on making finesses and the dummy reversal play.

Play of the Hand – Always have a Plan!

You (sitting south) and your partner reach the final contract of 3NT. As south, you bid 1NT and partner bids 3NT. Opening lead is the queen of clubs. Can you make the contract?

North
♠ AJ2
♥ 954
♦ KJ72
♣ K76
South
♠ K96
♥ A873
♦ A54
♣ A94

Many players may go down with this hand because they do not plan their play. The auction was simple and did not reveal anything. All the opponents know is that dummy is not going to have a four-card major and ruffing values.

With the lead of the queen of clubs, your first problem is: Are you going to win the first trick, or are you going to duck the club?

Clearly, you do not want a heart shift that could be more dangerous than the club threat, so you must win the first trick. Now, you have to consider which hand do you win the trick?

Obviously, you want to be in your hand and lead toward dummy. You have five fast tricks outside the diamond suit. How are you going to tackle diamonds? YOU DO NOT KNOW YET! It depends on how many tricks you need in the suit! You must win the trick in your hand and lead a spade to the jack. Next, how will you continue if that loses? Do you play the same way if the finesse wins? NO.

If the finesse loses, you need four diamond tricks, and the only way to get them is to take the finesse and hope the suit splits evenly. But if the spade finesse wins, you only need three tricks from diamonds and can afford a safety play. You would cash the king of diamonds and lead a diamond to the ace. If the queen does not appear, play the jack. That lands the contract any time the queen drops, the break 3-3, or west holds the queen. Great odds! The complete deal follows.

		♠	AJ2		
		♥	954		
		♦	KJ72		
		♣	K76		
♠	Q53	N W E S		♠	10874
♥	K6			♥	QJ102
♦	10983			♦	Q6
♣	QJ102			♣	853
		♠	K96		
		♥	A873		
		♦	A54		
		♣	A94		

Let's consider one more example from the book "Winning Declarer Play" (2013) by Dorothy Hayden Truscott and updated by Gail Greenberg, page 31. The contract is 3NT and the opening lead is the Jack of Hearts and you are sitting south. How do you make your contract?

North
♠ AKJ63
♥ AQ2
♦ K10
♣ A54
South
♠ 74
♥ K75
♦ J9642
♣ K83

Many players may go down with this hand because they do not plan their play. How do you proceed?

First count your tricks; you can see seven; two Spades, three Hearts, and two Clubs. You must develop two more tricks. To develop spades, they must be 3-3. The only source of tricks is diamonds. However, you must knock out both the Ace and the King. Where do you take the lead and why? Most will play low and take the opening lead in their hand with the King of Hearts. Then leading a diamond to the King, you lose to the Ace. Now you only have one entry to your hand, the King of clubs, and West will still have the diamond queen to stop the suit. You have set up diamonds, but you cannot cash them since you do not have enough entries in your hand.

The solution is to not take the Heart lead in your hand, but in Dummy. Now nothing can stop you from making your contract. When planning your hand, make sure you have the sufficient number of entries to make your contract. The first trick is the most critical.

The entire deal follows.

	♠	AKJ63	
	♥	AQ2	
	♦	K 10	
	♣	A54	
♠	2	N W E S	♠ Q10985
♥	J1098		♥ 643
♦	AQ85		♦ 73
♣	9762		♣ QJ10
	♠	K74	
	♥	K75	
	♦	J9642	
	♣	K83	

Some Card Playing Rules

Rule of 7

When playing NT contracts and having only one stopper in the suit led headed by the ace, one may use the Rule of 7 to decide how many times to hold up. **Rule:** subtract the total number of cards you and dummy hold in the suit from seven. This is the number of times you should hold up when the suit is led by the opponents. The rule is also used with trump contracts.

Let's look at an example.

The bidding goes:	South	West	North	East
	Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
	1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
	3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening Lead: ♥J; the deal follows.

	♠	AK	
	♥	Q972	
	♦	AQJ	
	♣	K742	
♠	Q	N W E S	♠ 8543
♥	J10854		♥ K3
♦	K863		♦ 10752
♣	QJ5		♣ A109
	♠	J109762	
	♥	A6	
	♦	94	
	♣	863	

West led the Jack of hearts, covered by the queen and the king and taken by the ace. Declarer successfully finessed the jack of diamonds, cashed the ace and king of trumps but then had no fast return to his hand to draw the last rump and repeated the diamond finesse for a club discard. A low heart from the table was taken by West's eight, and the switched to the queen of clubs quickly netted the defenders three tricks in the suit for down one.

South's error was made at TRICK ONE! The rule of seven says that one should duck the heart lead. Now there is no way West can gain the lead. Declarer wins the heart continuation, finesses the jack of diamonds and cashes the table's top trumps, fetching the queen. A heart ruff is the entry to hand to draw the last trump and repeating the diamond finesse. Contract bid and made since the defenders are now limited to two clubs trick to go with the heart trick.

Rule of 9 (Ruff high or low)

Add the number of cards held in a suit between you and dummy to the number of rounds played. If that number is ten or more, a ruff is likely. For example, suppose you hold the AK in a suit and the number of cards in the suit is seven; then a ruff is likely after it is played a third time since $7+3=10$; hence, ruff high!

Rule of 12

Consider the following three hands:

1. NORTH	2. NORTH	3. NORTH
Q 10 3 2	J 7	Q 9 2
SOUTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
A J 6 4	A Q 10 5 4 3	A J 10 4 3

One hand has a tenace missing the king. The opposite hand holds one or more cards equal in rank to the lower card(s) in the tenace. In #1, the A-J is the tenace and the Q-10 opposite is equal

in rank to the jack, the lower card of the tenace. Given you intend to finesse for the king, how should you handle these combinations, assuming you have plenty of entries to the north hand?

The question is whether you should lead low from north to finesse or whether you can afford to lead a high card from dummy and let it run. The **Rule of 12** provides the answer! It goes as: With 8, 9, or 10 cards in the two hands, if the number of cards in the two hands plus the cards in the sequence totals twelve or more, you can afford to lead a high card opposite the tenace. If the total is less than twelve, lead low to the tenace. WOW!

In hand #1, you have eight cards and three cards (Q, J, and 10) in the sequence, $8 + 3 = 11$. Hence, it is **not** safe to lead the Q or the 10 from north. The correct play is to lead low from north to the jack in your hand. If the jack wins, return to north and then lead the queen or the 10 to repeat the finesse. The layout could be:

	Q 10 3 2	
9 8 7 5		K
	A J 6 4	

If you lead the queen or 10 on the first round, you lose a trick. Start with a low card from north and you have all the tricks. If entries to the north hand are a problem, take the risk and lead an honor from north.

The answer for #2 is the same: 8 cards + 3 in the sequence = 11. Therefore, it is not safe to lead the jack on the first round. Again, king singleton would cost you a trick. As long as entries to north are comfortable, start by leading the 7 to your 10. If that wins, return to dummy and lead the jack for the second finesse.

In hand #3, you have 8 card + 4 in the sequence = 12. It is therefore safe to lead the queen or the 9 for the first-round finesse. Even with a singleton king onside, it does not harm you. Let's consider a few more examples: hands 4, 5, and 6.

4. NORTH	5. NORTH	6. NORTH
A Q 7 6	J 10 2	Q 2
SOUTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
J 5 4 3 2	A Q 7 6 5 4	A J 7 6 5 4 3

In hand #4, 9 cards + 2 in the sequence (Q and J) = 11. The Rule of 12 tells us that you should lead low on the first round, NOT the jack. Play low to the queen. If that wins, cash the ace. To lead the jack first would cost a trick if the king is singleton in this position:

	A Q 7 6 3 2	
K		10 9 8
	J 5 4	

In #5, 9 cards + 3 in the sequence = 12. Therefore, it is safe to lead the jack or the 10 first.

In # 6, 9 cards + 2 in the sequence = 11. It is not safe to lead queen first. If east has king singleton, playing the queen will cost you a trick while leading the 2 from north avoids losing a trick.

7. NORTH
J 8 7 6 4

#7: $10 + 2 = 12$. It is safe to lead the jack. In fact, it makes no difference whether you start with the jack or lead low to the queen first.

SOUTH
A Q 5 3 2

8. NORTH
J 8 7 6 4

Again, you should lead the jack first. If east started with K-10-9, low to the queen leaves you with a loser, but jack first can avoid losing a trick.

SOUTH
A Q 5 3 2

The Rule of 12 also applies when missing the king and queen as here.⊗

9. NORTH
10 9 5 2

10. NORTH
10 7

11. NORTH
9 4 2

SOUTH
A J 6 4

SOUTH
A J 9 5 4 3

SOUTH
A J 10 6 5 3

In hands #9 and #10, 8 cards + 3 in the sequence = 11. Therefore, do not lead a high card on the first round. Start with a low card from north. To lead high from north costs a trick if east has a singleton honor. You can lead high from north for the second round finesse.

In #11, 9 card + 3 in the sequence = 12. It is safe to start with the 9 from north.

For more bridge tips regarding card play, consult Ron Klinger (1998) "Better Bridge with a Better Memory," Cassell Press and the book by William S. Root (1990) "How to Play a Bridge Hand," Crown Trade Publishers, New York may also be consulted.

Dummy Reversal Play

You (sitting south) and your partner reach the final contract of $7\spadesuit$ and the diamond king is led. Can you make the contract?

	♠	J98		
	♥	Q43		
	♦	AJ76		
	♣	Q85		
♠	762	N W E S	♠	43
♥	9875		♥	KJ102
♦	KQ1085		♦	432
♣	3		♣	9764
	♠	AKQ105		
	♥	A6		
	♦	9		
	♣	AKJ102		

Many players may go down with this hand because they assume the contract is impossible. What is the winning line of play? Counting your winners you see from the south hand twelve winners. The problem is in hearts. Do you take the finesse which will win only 50 percent of the time or is there another approach? Walk around the table and sit in north's chair! From this point of view, you have a better idea of how to make the hand!

Although your trump holding is not great (J98), it is good enough to draw the outstanding trump, provided they break 3-2 (approx. $2/3=67$ percent, see Table in Chapter 16). Your three diamond losers can be ruffed in "dummy." And best of all, your three heart losses can eventually be thrown on "dummy's" club suit.

Win the opening lead with the diamond ace, and ruff a diamond with the spade ace. Lead the spade five to north's eight, and ruff another diamond with the king. Lead the spade ten to north's jack, and ruff the last diamond with south's last spade the queen. Now return to the north hand with the club queen and lead the spade nine. This draws the opponent's last trump, as south you have no spades left, so you discard the heart six. South's hand is now high and the grand slam is home!

The above technique is known as a "dummy reversal." What you have done in effect is made the "short" hand (north) into the master hand. The dummy reversal technique is the major exception to the general policy of avoiding ruffs in the "long" hand (other exceptions are e.g., the trump coup and cross ruffing a hand).

For an explanation of why the technique works, let's consider solely the trump holding for a moment.

North: ♠ J 9 8 and South ♠ A K Q 10 5

You have five trump tricks. The normal way to get an extra trick is to ruff once in the short hand (north) and then draw trumps with the south hand ($5+1=6$). The *unusual* way to get an extra trump trick is to ruff three times in the south hand and then draw trumps with the north hand ($3+3=6$).

On the actual hand, declarer has twelve tricks and needs to find a thirteenth. The normal procedure of ruffing a loser in dummy is impossible. But the *unusual* technique of reversing the dummy is the winning approach (the dummy reversal). How do you as declarer know when to use the technique?

First, the trump holding in the short hand must be strong enough to draw the opponents' trumps. In our example, the J98 of spades are all high enough and can take care of the likely 3-2 spade break.

Secondly, the short side suit must be in the hand with the long trumps. In our example hand, the singleton diamond and the spade trump length.

Finally, a dummy reversal will not work unless there are sufficient entries to dummy. In our example, three entries are needed to ruff dummy's three diamonds and one extra entry is needed to draw the last trump. Before embarking on a dummy reversal, declarer must count his entries. The diamond ace and the two trump entries are used to ruff the three diamonds, and the ♣Q is the extra entry to the last trump. In the play, declarer doesn't trump the diamonds with the A K Q of spades just to be flamboyant. He has to ruff high because the ten and the five spot are his entries to dummy! Let's look at another example. You have reached the contract of 4♥ and the opponent's lead the ♠K. Can you make the contract?

	♠	1065		
	♥	Q109		
	♦	Q32		
	♣	A742		
♠	KQ98	N W E S	♠	A76
♥	54		♥	876
♦	J1074		♦	98
♣	963		♣	KQ1085
	♠	J32		
	♥	AKJ32		
	♦	AK65		
	♣	J		

The opponents cash the first three spade tricks and shift to a club, which is won by your ace. There are now three different ways to try to make the contract.

1. Declarer can draw all the trumps and hope that the opponents' diamonds are divided three-three. However, with six cards out, they may not break 3-3 (Chapter 16), and this method of play will work only about one-third of the time.
2. Declarer can considerably improve his chances by drawing only two round of trumps before playing three rounds of diamonds. He is still all right if the diamonds are 3-3, and he gives himself the extra chance that the opponent who is short in diamond does not have more than two trumps. This approach will work a little more than half the time.
3. There is also the option of reversing the dummy. After winning the club ace, ruff a club with a high trump. Lead a small trump to dummy, and ruff another club high. Lead the

other small trump to dummy, and ruff dummy's last club with south's last trump. Now, enter dummy with the diamond queen and play dummy's last trump, discarding a diamond from the south hand. The ace and king of diamonds win the last two tricks, and the contract is made. This method will work when trump break 3-2, about two-thirds of the time.

Of the three options, the dummy reversal approach is clearly the superior line of play!

Source of Lesson: "Winning Declarer Play" (1969) by Dorothy Hayden Truscott.

Let's look at a final example (a little more advanced) that includes bidding and play (Based upon a hand from "The Bridge World," May 2009, p. 14). You are sitting north with neither side vulnerable with the following hand:

	♠	A53		
	♥	AK10		
	♦	A9865		
	♣	K10		
♠	10874	N W E S	♠	9
♥	32		♥	J984
♦	KJ1032		♦	Q8
♣	97		♣	865432
	♠	KQJ62		
	♥	Q765		
	♦	4		
	♣	AQJ		

The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♥	Pass	7♠	

And the opening lead is a trump.

Bidding

Let's first look at the bidding. 4NT was 1430 RKCB and 5-diamonds shows 0/3 keycards (Clearly, 3 with the bid of 2NT). 5NT was the specific kings ask, and 6 clubs showed the king. 6 hearts was the second kings ask and with the king, north bids 7♠. Note: Some players do not use the specific kings ask, but the number of kings. In this auction they would respond 5♥ (two);

however, not knowing that one has the K♥ versus the K♦, the grand slam contract may not be bid (you should discuss whether you use specific king or number of kings option with your partner!).

Play

You have to start with the king-queen of spades. If trumps break four-one, you should play the spade ace, club queen, spade jack (pitching a diamond), heart, ace, and club ace-jack, leaving:

North

♠ —
♥ K10
♦ A97
♣ —

South

♠ 6
♥ Q75
♦ 4
♣ —

Now, you must guess what to do. Leading to the heart king gains if the jack drops doubleton and there is no red-suit-squeeze, but ruffing a diamond gains when an opponent started with jack-fourth (or-fifth) of hearts and at least five diamonds. Perhaps the count, discards on the trumps, or some other aspect of the defense carding will help.

If spades break three-two, things are clear. After playing the KQ of spades, one plays the heart ace-king; if the heart jack does not fall (and there is no ruff), diamond ace, three clubs to discard the 10 of hearts, a heart ruff with the ace of trumps, diamond ruff, spade jack.

Best play (Dummy Reversal) -Two trumps, diamond ace, diamond ruff, heart ace, diamond ruff, heart king, diamond ruff, club king, draw the last trump, plus 1510, if not, minus fifty!

Cue bidding for Slam an Example

North-South is Vulnerable. How do you bid this hand?

North	South
♠ 43	♠ AKQJ1075
♥ KJ87	♥ AQ10543
♦ 976	♦ Void
♣ J432	♣ 5

The bidding goes: West North East South
 1♦ Pass 5♦ ?

What do you bid and why?

Clearly, the east-west pair is trying to steal the bid. Some may be tempted to bid 6♠ (this was the bid of the pair in the team match at the recent ACBL Summer North American Championships in Las Vegas, see the October 21, 2008 issue of the Daily Sun). If you bid 6♠, the bidding would go:

West North East South
 1♦ Pass 5♦ 6♠
 Pass Pass Dbl* Pass
 Pass Pass
 * Lightner Double

You hold the following hand: ♠986 ♥6432 ♦AJ82 ♣AQ. What do you lead? You are looking at the AQ of clubs; clearly, the double is calling for a heart lead, an unusual lead.

The entire deal follows:

	♠	43		
	♥	KJ87		
	♦	976		
	♣	J432		
♠	986	N W E S	♠	2
♥	6432		♥	Void
♦	AJ2		♦	Q10543
♣	AQ		♣	KQ9876
	♠	KQJ1075		
	♥	AQ1095		
	♦	Void		
	♣	5		

As the cards lie, the ace of clubs could also defeat the slam (partner would toss the king, asking for a heart return; the higher of the other two suits).

What went wrong?

South should not bid six spades; you can use a six-diamond cue bid. Your partner would bid six hearts and you would find your unbeatable heart slam (some may play that a double of the bid of five-diamonds is for takeout, not penalty and also reach the slam contract).

Bidding Problems

1. You hold the following HAND: ♠ AQxx ♥ Axxx ♦ Jx ♣ xxx

And the BIDDING goes:

P	1♣	1♦	P
??			

What call would you now make?

2. You hold the following HAND: ♠ Ax ♥ xx ♦ AQJxx ♣ AKJ9

And the BIDDING goes:

1♦	P	1♠	P
3♣	P	3♦	P
??			

What call would you now make?

3. You hold the following HAND: ♠ Ax ♥ AQxx ♦ Qxx ♣ AKxx

And the BIDDING goes:

1♣	3♦	3♠	P
??			

What call would you now make?

1. While you should have three diamonds to cue bid clubs, the best bid is a cue bid of 2♣. It tells your partner you have 10/11 HCP, support for the unbid suits and some support for diamonds. If partner bids two of a major, you would be happy to raise to three!
2. Clearly, the “Western” Cue bid of 3♥ is in order. With a heart stopper, partner will bid no-trump. If he bids 3♠, then you would bid four, since his bid probably shows at least two honors. And, without two honors, he can bid 5♦.
3. While some may disagree, the best bid is 4♦. While 3NT will probably make, your hand is too strong to sign off in game! If your partner has six good spades and short diamonds, you have a good play for slam. If you bid 4♥, partner may think you hold hearts and clubs and might pass.

Principle of Restricted Choice

In February 1975, Monty Hall on the TV show “Let’s Make a Deal” had three doors labeled A, B, and C. Behind one of the doors was a car, a 1975 Lincoln Continental, and behind the other two were goats. If you choose the door with the car you win, while choosing the other two you lose because you chose the goat.

After picking a door, Monty asks do you want to keep the door you selected or do you want to switch. Remember that there are three scenarios: CGG, GCG, or GGC. So the probability of selecting the car is $1/3$ since two doors contain the goats; however, the probability of the box you selected contains a goat is $2/3$. Now Monty asks do you want to keep your original selection or switch.

Before the contestant decides, Monty opens a second door which contains a goat. And again asks, do you want to keep your original selection or switch. Does the knowledge of knowing one of the doors has a goat change the original probability? The answer is yes, it goes from $1/3$ to $2/3$ so it is RIGHT to switch! If you do not switch you only win $1/3$ of the time. To see this, suppose you always choose door one, and that Monty only opens a door that contains a goat; we see that in two of the three scenarios you win by switching. You have increased your chances by a factor of TWO.

When Monty opened one of the doors you did not select, his choice was restricted. He could not show the car. This is the principle of restricted choice. Can it be used in card play? The answer is YES.

Consider the following situation:



North
♥K1076

South
♥A5432

You play the Ace and your LHO (West) follows low while your RHO (East) drops the Queen. You next play a small heart from your hand and west again follow low. Should you play the ♥K and hope that east started with ♥QJ or should you finesse dummy’s 10, playing west for the Jack (J98)? The principle of restricted choice says YOU SHOULD FINESSE – do not play for the drop. Two-thirds out of three ($2/3$), the honor that dropped from east will be a singleton. Only one time in three ($1/3$) will it be from QJ doubleton. East’s choice was restricted. He had no other card to play. If he had the QJ doubleton, he would have had the freedom to play either 50% of the time.

From the Monty Hall show, east has one of three holdings

- ♥QJ doubleton
- ♥Q singleton
- ♥J singleton

The QJ doubleton is identical to picking the car door. You are going to be a loser if you finesse (1/3 of the time). But when the Queen appears, you must assume that East HAD NO CHOICE, now if you finesse you are expected to win 2/3 of the time (by switching).

The principle of restricted choice works with other card combinations. For example, suppose you have the following situation.

North

♥ AK82

South

♥ Q643

You play the ace and then the queen and your RHO drops the 9 and then the jack. There are only two cards left for the 10 to drop. Again using the principle of restricted choice (now really a double-restricted choice). You should finesse the 8 on the third round.

Finding the Queen Using Vacant Places

You have a total of 9 trumps and you want to find the queen. Do you finesse or play for the drop? A prior with no information from the bidding many use the Rule of 8 ever 9 never. **That is finesse with 8 and play for the drop with 9.** The percentage of each is 50% vs 52.18% as explained in detail in Chapter 10, 8 Ever 9 Never.

However, when does this rule not work: whenever you have more information? What is meant by more information? Let's look at an example where the opponents are using the Flannery Convention where the bid of 2♦* = 5 Hearts and 4 Spades with 11-15 HCP and *=alert.

The North-South hands follow; where west is the Dealer.

NORTH

♠2

♥A4

♦KJ876

♣A9854

SOUTH

♠A1053

♥982

♦A1092

♣K2

The bidding goes:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH (Declarer)
2♦*	X=take-out	2♠*=to play	5♦
Pass	6♦	All Pass	

Knowing that a 4-4 fit is better than a 5-3 fit, east's bid is 2♠'s and not 3♥'s. East's bid is alerted by west bid because they know that it is non-forcing and to play. Note that if east were to bid 2NT (no alert required) however, it is forcing because it asks for more information about the shape and strength of west's hand. The opponents must ask what the bid of 2NT means.

With the bidding complete, west leads the K♥.

South wins the trick with the A♥ in dummy and must now decide how to play diamonds. Do you finesse (declarer has a Two-Way finesse; either East - his Right hand opponent or West - his Left hand opponent) or play for the drop. Not thinking/listening to the bidding, a beginner may just play the K♦ and then the A♦ using the Rule 8 ever 9 never, hoping that the Q♦ will drop. Even though a 3-1 fit is more likely than a 2-2 split (49.7% vs 40.7%). And a 4-0 split is small (9.6%).

A more experienced player would get to his hand with a spade and play a low diamond towards the K♦ to guard against a 4-0 split in diamonds when west is void. Then, if both opponents follow, he would lead a low diamond from Dummy and play the A♦ when east follows with a second diamond; BOTH APPROACHES ARE WRONG since they assume the 8 ever 9 never rule!

What is one to do? LISTEN TO THE BIDDING. The bidding tells us something about the distribution. From the bidding, the distribution of the West-East hands is:

West – East
 ♠ 4-4
 ♥ 5-3
 ♦& ♣ 4-6

Given what we know about the majors, there are 4 vacant places in the west hand and 6 in the east hand. The relative probability that the Q♦ is on declarers Right (QR) (in the East hand) rather than declarers Left (QL) (in the West hand) is the ratio of the number of vacant places available. That is, the Q♦ is more likely to be on the Right since the Ratio is 3:2.

There are two possibilities for the distribution, assuming that the 10 minor suit cards may be placed at random in either the West or East hands.

	Other Cards		Other Cards
Q♦ on the Left	3L – 6R	Q♦ on the Right	4L – 5R

Looking at the combinations, assuming Queen is on the left (QL), we have $9!/6!x3!=84$ combinations and for the Queen being on the Right (QR), we have $9!/4!x5!=126$. Note that the

ratio of combinations is 6:4 which is **identical** to the ratio of the vacant places for the minor suits or 3:2. Thus, we do not need to calculate the combinations (know complicated mathematics) when playing the hand — WE NEED TO ONLY COUNT THE VACANT PLACES and calculate the **RATIO!** Yes, just count.

There is really no magic in the use of vacant places; probabilities are no more than the ratio of combinations.

We would finesse east for the Queen. The full deal follows. **WOW! Glad we took the time to LISTEN to the bidding! Did you make the slam?**

	♠	2		
	♥	A4		
	♦	KJ876		
	♣	A9854		
♠	KQJ4	N W E S	♠	9876
♥	KQ653		♥	J107
♦	3		♦	Q54
♣	J73		♣	Q106
	♠	A1053		
	♥	982		
	♦	A1092		
	♣	K2		

Whenever there is a Two-Way finesse for the Queen, the principle of vacant places may be invoked. What do you do when you have little direct information from the bidding? For example, consider the same layout in diamonds, but as North-South you are in a slam contract in hearts (6♥) and find that hearts are split 3-0. Can do you use this information if the diamonds are again as before, but you have no information? Does an uneven split in hearts affect your play for the Q♦? Yes and No. If you play diamonds immediately, with no information about the black suits, it is usually better to finesse (the odds are 11:9 that the queen lies with east) and not play for the drop since unevenness suggests unevenness. However, if you play the black suits and find them to break unevenly, which tends to be more likely; then it is better to **PLAY** for the **DROP**. There is no simple answer since uneven and even breaks are independent. The magic of vacant places can be used to find other cards, for example the K. To see how this may work, I will use a hand from an example in the May 24, 2017 issue of the Daily Sun newspaper, The Villages, FL.

The North-South hands follow; where south is the Dealer.

NORTH
 ♠A10642
 ♥A1075
 ♦A743
 ♣Void

SOUTH

♠KQ753
♥J2
♦QJ5
♣K84

The bidding goes:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	3♣	4♣*	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♣	All Pass

* = Alert - bid shows a spade fit with a singleton/void

The opening lead was the 9♠.

South won the opening lead and continued by drawing trump and ended in his hand.

To make the slam what is one to do missing two kings?

Independent of who has the Kings (50%), if the diamonds split 3-3 (36%), he should lead the Q♦. He can ignore the K♥, since he can toss his losing heart on the established diamond having four. A low percentage slam!

What is one to do? LISTEN TO THE BIDDING. The bidding tells us something about the distribution. From the bidding, the West-East hands are:

West – East
♠ & ♦ & ♥ 6-10
♣ 7-3

Given what we know about the clubs, there are 6 vacant places in the west hand and 10 in the east hand. The relative probability that a king is in the east hand is 5:3, the ratio of the vacant places.

However, based on the spade lead (a singleton), the vacant places for hearts and diamonds is likely 5-9 or 5-10; or a ratio of about 1.6-1 or 2:1.

So south should not lead the Q♦, but instead after pulling trumps end in dummy and lead a low diamond toward the Q♦ in his hand. If that holds, he must ruff a club and repeat leading a diamond. East may win with his king, but declarer has now established diamonds for a heart discard. And the slam makes!

In the Daily Sun, declarer led the Q♦ and the slam failed. The deal follows.

	♠	A10642		
	♥	A1075		
	♦	A743		
	♣	Void		
♠	9	N W E S	♠	J8
♥	Q98		♥	K643
♦	82		♦	K1096
♣	AJ106532		♣	Q97
	♠	KQ753		
	♥	J2		
	♦	QJ5		
	♣	K84		

Vacant Places (also called Vacant Spaces)

You are South and Declarer; west had opened 2♠ and leads a spade. After the first trick you believe east started with two spades. You now know that of the remaining cards; west has 7 spaces that hold non-spades and east has 11 spaces that hold non-spades. The theory of vacant places in bridge states that when the distribution of one or more suits is completely known, the probability that an opponent holds a particular card in any other suit is directly proportional to the number of vacant places remaining in their respective hands.

The basic principle is: when the distribution of one suit (or more) is completely known, the probability that an opponent holds a particular card is proportional to the number of vacant places remaining in his hand.

Using Vacant Places in No-trump

You open 1NT as south and partner raises to 3NT. East leads a small minor card, say the 5 and you know (based on the lay of three cards) that it was from a 4-card suit. And say you need to finesse a Queen in the other minor. What do you know? Well east has a total of 9 vacant places and west has 12. Using this information, the odds are 4 to 3 that west have the Queen.

So listen to the Bidding and use information from a lead of a small card to find the Queen using the principle of vacant places. No need to guess.

The following deal appeared in the June 21, 2017 issue of the Daily Sun.

Neither is vulnerable and south deals

	♠	653		
	♥	AK108		
	♦	Q5		
	♣	K1052		
♠	KJ10942	N W E S	♠	O8
♥	53		♥	Q9762
♦	10982		♦	A4
♣	9		♣	QJ83
	♠	A7		
	♥	J4		
	♦	KJ763		
	♣	A764		

The bidding goes:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	2♠	Dbl*	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠ (WQ)	Dbl
3NT	All Pass		

*= Negative values with no clear bid. And
The 3♠ bid was Western Queue; do you have a spade stopper?

Opening Lead: J♠

With only two spades, south ducked the opening spade lead and won the spade continuation. South next led a diamond a diamond to the queen, with east winning the ace. East led a second diamond and south won the ace. South next cashed his J♦ tossing a spade from dummy with east playing a heart. Knowing that east had four diamonds and probably six spades, he had to abandon diamonds. South next played the J♥ and won by east queen. East exited with a heart and south won in dummy. Now for clubs!

You are missing both the Jack and Queen of clubs, do you play the club king and hope for the drop of an honor or do you play the club 10? Not much to go on! The principle of restricted choice suggests that the honors are split. However, counting vacant places the odds are 4:1 that an honor is with east. Thus, play the ♣10 and duck east's honor is the winning play since east will have to lead clubs giving south three club tricks for the contract.

More on Finesse or Drop using Vacant Places

The opponents drop an honor card on the first round of a suit and you hold as north A 10 9 8 7 6 and in dummy (south) K 5 2. You play the king, which results in the jack from west and on the next round west plays the 4. Do you finesse the queen or play for the drop?

A count of vacant places indicates that the odds are 12 to 11 on the queen being with east. But you must also take into account that the drop resulted from a singleton or a doubleton. You know that if east had QJ that the probability of his playing the jack was 50% so that the proportional number of 12 given by the count is reduced to 6.

If east has a singleton jack, the probability of playing it is 100%. Hence the proportional number of 11 remains and the odds are 11 to 6 that the queen is with west. Or, the finesse is nearly twice as good as the play for the drop. Is there a rule? Yes!

If we let H denote the number of vacant places in the hand that drops an Honor in a critical suit and L the number of vacant places in the hand that follows with a Low card;

Then:

If $H < 2L$, finesse.

If $H > 2L$, play for the drop.

If $H = 2L$, you have no information, flip a coin!

Let's see how this works.

East makes a preemptive bid of 3♠ and you bid 4♦; the deal follows.

NORTH

♠Q1097

♥AQ4

♦K6

♣A985

SOUTH

♠ Void

♥KJ9

♦A1097543

♣KQ2

Your partner bids 6♦ and all pass.

You ruff the spade lead and lead a diamond to the king. West plays the queen and east the 2. When you continue with the six of diamonds, east plays the eight. Do you now finesse the nine or play the ace? Looking only at the diamond suit, the odds favor the drop, but the principle of restricted choice favors the finesse. What is one to do?

East's preempt suggests seven spades and two diamonds or four vacant places. West with two spades and one diamond has 10 vacant places. Since $H > 2L$ it is right to play for the drop.

Bid and Play 1

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	5		
	♥	9654		
	♦	A973		
	♣	AQJ10		
♠	KQJ108	N W E S	♠	9643
♥	10		♥	KQ8
♦	KJ1064		♦	52
♣	63		♣	9854
	♠	A72		
	♥	AJ732		
	♦	Q8		
	♣	K72		

DEALER is SOUTH!

You are playing 2/1 and as south you would clearly bid 1♥; however, west overcalls 2♥ showing spades and an unknown minor; how do you and your partner proceed?

Simple Approach

North makes a cue bid to show a limit raise in hearts and bids 3♦. With only an opening hand, south bids 4♥ and all pass. Slam is not reached.

Simple Approach with Cue Bidding

North makes a cue bid to show a limit raise in hearts and bids 3♦. With only an opening hand, south again bids 4♥. However with two aces, north cue bids 5♣. Without a diamond control south bids 5♥ and all again pass. Slam is not reached.

Standard Splinter Approach

North bids 3♠* (alert- splinter) to show a singleton/void in spades with heart support and 13+ Dummy Points (some may play this as unusual over Michaels). Partner cue bids 4♣ to show an A/K in clubs (first or second round control). North next bids 4♦ to show a diamond control. Now what does south bid? Some may give up and again bid 4♥. Many may again pass.

However, some as south may bid 4NT (1430) instead of 4♥. North with two aces will bid 5♥ and south will bid 5NT to ask for kings, having all the aces. With no kings, north will bid 6♥. They found the slam!

Ambiguous Splinter Approach

North bids 3♠* (alert - splinter bid) to show a singleton/void somewhere with heart support and 13+ Dummy Points. Partner next makes the scroll asking bid 3NT (next step bid), which asks where is your singleton? North bids 4♠* (singleton/void). South next bids 4NT (1430) and slam is reached.

If you use my “Modern Splinter Convention”, it shows a singleton and never a void. The bids of 4♣/4♦ show voids and 3NT= void in other major.

Serious 3NT* with Baby Blackwood

North bids 3NT* (alert – ace asking bid). South bids 4♥ to show two aces. North bids 4♠ asking for kings. With one king, south bids 5♣ and north bids 6♠; slam is reached.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —Spade KING!

Win the opening spades lead with the ace and ruff a spade in dummy. If the hearts are split 2-2, 12 tricks come home. West is known to be 5-5 in spades and a minor so trumps are more likely split 3-1.

A low trump from dummy would see east play the 8. You are missing the 10, king and queen of hearts. Now you must play the ace to capture an honor. With another spade ruff and the lead of a low heart toward your jack of hearts, one may make 12 tricks.

Alternatively, you may lead a low trump from dummy, now you must play the jack of hearts when east plays the 8. And again claim 12 tricks.

What happens if you do not lead the spade king, but a trump? This makes the play for 12 tricks very easy!

How did you do with the bidding and play?

Bid and Play 2

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	42		
	♥	AKQ106		
	♦	105		
	♣	K976		
♠	QJ1053	N W E S	♠	K976
♥	13		♥	7
♦	Q976		♦	AK8432
♣	A108		♣	52
	♠	A8		
	♥	J98542		
	♦	J		
	♣	QJ43		

DEALER is SOUTH and none are vulnerable!

How would you bid this hand? You clearly have several options!

OPTION 1

Given the vulnerability, some may open 2♥, even with that very poor suit!

North with 16 Dummy Points will bid 4♥. And some may pass. This is a very good result for North-South.

OPTION 2

However, many east players with a singleton heart will double; and, after west's bid of 5♣, east will bid 5♦. A good result for E-W if not doubled.

OPTION 3

However, with no defense in diamonds (low ODR – Offense to Defense Ratio), should north now bid 5♥ (not good) or double (better)?

With two diamonds, north must double and NOT bid 5♥. If north were to bid at the 5-level, east with two quick tricks, and low ODR – must double; hoping partner has one trick.

OPTION 4

With a poor suit, most will not open 2♥. Then the bidding may go:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♥	2♦
4♦*	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

*=Delayed splinter in support of hearts

OPTION 5

The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♥	2♦
4♦*	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	5♠
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

In Option 5, east converted a plus score to a minus!

When the opponents are bidding to the 5-level in a competitive auction, many have heard that “the 5-level belongs to the opponents”. This is not the case. One must invoke the rule of 210! What is this rule? It goes:

Bid to the 5-level with a void (zero cards in their suit), pass with one and double with two.

The rule comes from negative slam doubles, which are used to decide whether to sacrifice. Over a slam the second hand doubles to show no defensive tricks (0), but passes with one (1) or more (2) tricks.

Negative Slam Double - A Double of opponent’s slam is used to indicate either a willingness to continue bidding or penalize the opponents

Example:

(1♥) - 2♠ - (4♥) - 4♠;
(6♥) - X

This Double indicates the player has no defensive tricks and, assuming partner’s hand is limited to offensive values, suggests partner make a sacrifice slam bid (usually with favorable vulnerability).

Bid and Play 3

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	KQ		
	♥	K953		
	♦	Q103		
	♣	KQ72		
♠	974	N W E S	♠	A10632
♥	1072		♥	4
♦	KJ5		♦	9862
♣	J1094		♣	653
	♠	J87		
	♥	AQJ86		
	♦	A74		
	♣	A8		

DEALER is SOUTH!

You are playing 2/1 and as south you would clearly bid 1♥; how would you proceed?

Playing 2/1 with Blackwood/1430

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4NT	All Pass

The two club bid shows 13+ Dummy Points and three hearts by south shows 16+ points. The bid of 4NT is Blackwood and with 3 aces — south bids the slam. With this approach, note that you are committed to slam; there is no escape after the three-spade bid. And you have two losers a spade and a diamond!

Is 1430 any better?

Some play 4NT as 1430 with the last bid suit; now south bids 5♦ (0/3 keycards). North next bids 5♥ (queen ask). With the queen and no extras, south again bids 6♥. Some do not play 1430 without an agreed suit since you cannot tell the difference between an A/K! If this is not your agreement then 4NT is again Blackwood.

If you require an agreement to bid 1430, North will bid 4♥ and south will bid 4NT or 4♠ if you play kickback with an agreed upon suit.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass

4NT Pass 5♣ Pass
 ?

Over 4NT by south, north has ONE keycard (the heart King or the spade ace) and bids 5♣. Since south has the queen there is no need for the queen ask bid of 5♦. Missing one keycard south can now bid 5♥/ 6♥. This is not the case with Blackwood.

Using kickback, 4NT is replaced with 4♠ and now 1 or 4 keycards is bid by bidding 4NT (the first step). The queens ask becomes 5♣ (which again is not needed). Again with only one keycard missing, south may bid 5♥/6♥. Both approaches are better than Blackwood.

Playing 2/1 with Jacoby 2NT and Blackwood/1430

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	?	

*=Alert game-forcing heart raise.

The bid of 3NT shows a balanced hand with extras and 4NT is again Blackwood; or as above one may use 1430 with/without kickback.

Playing 2/1 with 1430 Jacoby Roman Keycard (a new approach)

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥/6♥	All Pass

*=Alert 1430 for the agreed upon heart suit

Here the response of 3♦ by south says he has 0/3 keycards and the next step (3♥) by north becomes the queen ask. With the queen and no kings, south bids 3NT (the second step); the first step would have denied the queen.

For this approach note that one can investigate slam at a very low level and still escape in game or bid slam.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —J♣!

South wins the club lead with his ace and plays the ace, king, and queen of hearts, drawing trumps.

Now a spade to the queen loses to east's spade Ace. What is east to do?

If east shifts to a diamond and does not return his partner's lead of club, south will play his diamond ace. He next leads a spade to the queen and returns to his hand with a heart to the Jack as west discards a spade. South next cashes his J♠, and west discards the J♦. Now south cashes his last trump and now west must discard a club to protect diamonds so south drops his losing diamond queen. Now declarer's clubs take the last three tricks. Slam bid and made!

If east had returned his partners' club lead rather than switching to a diamond, the slam is defeated.

Advise use 1430 with kickback to investigate slams and return you partner's lea

Bid and Play 4

How would you bid this Hand?

		♠	8		
		♥	86542		
		♦	A4		
		♣	A10975		
♠	J32	N W E S		♠	A9
♥	KJ10			♥	73
♦	Q73			♦	KJ109862
♣	KQ63			♣	83
		♠	KQ107654		
		♥	AQ9		
		♦	5		
		♣	J2		

DEALER is SOUTH and N-S Vulnerable!

You are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Simple Approach without the "Law"

South	West	North	East
1♠	X	1NT	3♦
3♠	Pass	4♠	All

The south hand has 12 HCP and 3 lengths points, but must subtract 1 HCP for the Jx worthless doubleton, but add 1 point for the quality suit (3 of the top 5 honors); so, south has 13 starting points and opens the bidding 1♠.

East with 12HCP makes a take-out X.

North with two aces and a singleton spade and bids 1NT (announced as forcing/semi-forcing).

East bids 3♦ over the bid of 1NT to show the long diamond suit and south bid 3♠ to show a 6-card suit.

What is north to do? North have two aces and 11 Dummy Points and reasons that this is a distributional hand and that his partner must have a singleton diamond or perhaps a singleton club.

Using the SST (short Suit Total) rule: 13-SST (in both hands) =Number of tricks with 19-21 working points, or 13-3=10, north bids 4♠.

Law of Total Tricks

What is north to do? North has two aces and 11 Dummy Points, but un-favorable vulnerability. Not knowing the SST rule uses the Law of Total Tricks.

The Law of Total Tricks says:

$$\text{Sum of Trump} - 11 = \text{Sum of the bids}$$

Assuming E-W has 8 diamonds and N-S has 8 spades, the sum of the trumps is 16 and 16-11=5; the sum of the bids. Since 3+3=6 is greater than 5, the “Law” says pass – do not bid to the 3-level. Or almost never bid 3 over 3 vulnerable. And the Law of total trumps is only 7/8. Depending on whether or not south has 6/7 trumps. The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♠	X	1NT	3♦
3♠	All Pass		

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —3♦!

Declarer wins the diamond lead with the dummy’s ace and leads a spade to the 10. East plays the 9♠ so it loses to the Jack. South ruffs the diamond continuation and plays another trump losing to the ace. East plays another diamond and south must ruff. Should he play west for the king of clubs or east for the king of hearts?

He leads the J♣ and allows west to win the king. He ruffs the diamond return and plays a club to the ace. Now he leads a low heart and inserts the Queen, which loses to the Ace for down one, if you were in game.

Those who bid to the 3-level make three spades

How did you do?

In this example hand, the Law prevailed and the SST rule failed. More often than not, the Law usually works best with balanced or semi-balanced hands and the SST rule works more often with distributional hands.

To be fair the SST must be in two different suits, not in the same suit as in this example hand!

Bid and Play 5

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	AK		
	♥	Q53		
	♦	AK864		
	♣	762		
♠	J843	N W E S	♠	10765
♥	J10976		♥	82
♦	Void		♦	Q9753
♣	Q1084		♣	95
	♠	Q92		
	♥	AK4		
	♦	J102		
	♣	AKJ2		

DEALER is SOUTH with N-S Vulnerable!

You are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed

Simple Approach

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	6NT	All Pass

The south hand has 18 HCP and opens 1♣, the better minor. Without a 4-card major, north bids 1♦. South next bids 2NT to show 18+ points. With 17 points, North bids 6NT.

Simple Approach with Gerber/Expert Gerber

Because south may not have exactly 18 points but a very poor balanced 20 point hand and no 5-card suit, some over 2NT may bid 4♣ as Gerber.

With two aces south responds 4♥. With all the aces, north next bids 5♣. And with two kings, south bids 5♥.

While Gerber is common over first or last NT, I recommend that one play Expert Gerber over any NT.

Recall that the bids for 1430 Expert Gerber over 4♣ are:

5♦	1/4 aces
5♥	0/3 aces
5♠	2 aces with a min
5NT	2 aces with a max

The advantage of Expert Gerber over Gerber is that one can tell if the hand is a min/max.

It is most often used over a 3NT bid. For example if the bidding were to go: 1♦ - 3NT - 4♣. Over 3NT a minimum is 15 and a maximum is 16+. Over the bid of 1NT a minimum is 15 and the maximum is 17.

Neither works well with this example since one also needs to know about the diamond Q.

The Specific suit asking bid for either Gerber or Expert Gerber is 6♦; do you have the diamond Queen? If so bid 7NT otherwise, bid 6NT. south again bids 6NT without the queen.

While the simple approach works with this example, I have tried introducing a new gadget, Expert Gerber, which may work better than Gerber with other hands. Note this is not 1430 Gerber.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —J♥!

Begin by counting your winners. You have three spades, three hearts, two diamonds and two clubs. Thus, you must get two more tricks and they must be in diamonds. Who has the queen?

To find the queen you have four approaches, play for the drop, finesse, use the principle of vacant places, or use a safety play.

The drop verse finesse is 52% vs 50%, but you remember the rule 8 ever 9 never. But, you need two diamond tricks – do not finesse. In this example there is a 100% safety play. Your play must be towards the J102 of diamonds.

If east has all the diamonds, you must lead up to your hand to ensure your four diamond tricks; if west has them all he will win the jack with his queen but you later can cash the ten and lead low to dummy's eight.

However, entries may be a problem. Suppose you win the lead of the J♥ with the Q♥ and lead a low diamond to your jack, which holds. Next you would cross back to the spade king and play a

second diamond. East rises with his queen and plays a second spade and you no longer have the entries to the long diamonds.

Hence, you must win the heart lead in your hand. Then, cross to a spade and play a low diamond. Then go back to another spade and play another low diamond.

Your make your 6NT contract and there is nothing that east can do!

Count your tricks and have a plan. Many times a contract is won/lost at trick number ONE!

Bid and Play 6

How would you bid this Hand?

		♠	Q65		
		♥	KJ42		
		♦	Void		
		♣	AKQJ102		
♠	A104	N W E S		♠	J973
♥	10953			♥	6
♦	KQ932			♦	A876
♣	6			♣	9843
		♠	K82		
		♥	AQ87		
		♦	J1054		
		♣	75		

DEALER is NORTH

You are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Approach One (1♣)

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass		
1♥	Pass	4♦*	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♥	All Pass

*=Alert

With 19 points (16HCP + 2 length points+1 for quality the suit) south opens 1♣ (a 4 loser hand).

The 4♦* bid shows heart support with a singleton/void (delayed splinter). Now south shows a control in spades (1st or 2nd) and cue bids 4♠. Playing 1430, North bids 4NT and with one keycard south responds 5♣ (1/4). North next bids 5, the queen asking bid. Having the queen and the spade king, south bids 5NT. If the king were a lower ranking king, one would bid 6 of the king suit to show the king and the queen of trump. Missing one keycard, south bids 6♥. If your agreement is that a delayed splinter bid shows a void, like in exclusion keycard Blackwood, then south must exclude the diamond suit when responding to the bid of 4NT playing 1430 or RKC Blackwood.

With 4 quick tricks and 4 losers, **rule of 44with a 5-card suit**, some may open the hand 2♣; this prevents partner from passing the bid of one club.

Approach Two (2♣)

South	West	North	East
2♣	Pass		
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

Opening two clubs, the bid of 2♦ shows at least one control (A/K), which is no longer alerted or announced so please say nothing unless asked.

North next bids his suit and south bids 4♥ to show his control (at least one A/K). With four hearts, north bids 4♥. South next bids 4NT (1430 for hearts the agreed suit) and with a void in diamonds, north bids 5NT (2/4 keycards with a void). South bids the heart slam, assuming two keycards. With the worthless club doubleton south does not bid no-trump.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —K♦!

You clearly must trump the diamond lead. But then what?

If you continue to draw trump and they break poorly, you make only one diamond ruff, four hearts and six clubs; or, only 11 tricks. When you eventually play spades you will no longer have trumps, which allows the opponents to cash at least one diamond trick.

Playing two rounds of trump you get the bad new – a 4-1 break.

So now you now play spades, but which spade? Do you play the queen or lead a spade to the king?

If you play a spade to the spade king, west may win and play another diamond. You will be blocked in dummy and forced to play clubs. If west now ruffs and plays spades you will not make your slam. Hence, you must play the spade queen at trick four.

If it holds, you draw trumps and cash your clubs. If either opponent takes the spade ace, and plays another diamond, you ruff cross to your spade king draw trumps and run your clubs.

Count your tricks and have a plan. Many times you must postpone drawing trumps.

Bid and Play 7

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	53		
	♥	A1092		
	♦	J843		
	♣	AK5		
♠	1042	N W E S	♠	76
♥	53		♥	KJ8764
♦	753		♦	Q1096
♣	QJ982		♣	3
	♠	AKQJ98		
	♥	Q		
	♦	AK		
	♣	10764		

DEALER is East and Opens 2♥

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Approach One

South	West	North	East
2♥			
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	All Pass

With 20 points (19HCP + 1 for quality suit +2 for length -2 for dubious singleton) south bids 3♠ (some may double).

North bids 4♥ (slam try cue bid) and south cue bids 5♦ (1st or 2nd round control). North bids 6♣.

Approach Two

South	West	North	East
2♥			
X	Pass	4♥	Pass

4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♠	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

With a singleton heart and 20 points south doubles. With no clear bid, north makes the forcing 4♥ cue bid (you pick the suit). South bids 4♠. With only two spades, north makes the forcing bid of 5♣ and south rebids spades to show 5/6 (more likely 6 than 5). With a heart stopper, north bids 5NT (pick a slam – it is not the grand slam force bid since no suit has been agreed upon). With only a singleton heart, south bids 6♠.

Instead of bidding 4♠, some souths may bid 5♠ to show a very good suit. This bid asks partner to pick the best slam. With the AK of hearts he may pick no-trump; but with only the heart ace, north would again bid the spade slam.

South	West	North	East
2♥			
X	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♠	All Pass

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —5♥!

With a heart lead, you can count 11 tricks. The twelfth trick may come from diamonds (Queen doubleton in either hand) or from clubs if they split 3-3. However, with only 6 diamonds, the likelihood of Qx is remote and a 3-3 split in clubs is only about 36%. So, both options are dubious. What is one to do?

With the weak heart bid, you know that east has at least 6 hearts. Do you win the Ace or duck the heart lead?

You remember the rule of 7, which says with only the ace you take the sum of your hearts, which is 6, and subtract it from 7 to determine how many times to duck, which is one. Yes, you must duck the heart lead since your Queen is singleton (no better than x) and east wins the king.

Most east players will shift to a trump to reduce ruffing values for declarer. So east leads a spade.

Next, you draw trumps in two rounds and cross to dummy with a club, and play another club and the heart ace, discarding a club loser. Next play the heart 10 and discard another club loser, (loser on loser play) to claim your slam. You have your winning AK of diamonds and trumps.

The winning play was at trick number so have a plan and thing through your options!

Bid and Play 8

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	KJ2		
	♥	AQ2		
	♦	A1062		
	♣	A104		
♠	98763	N W E S	♠	Q104
♥	10974		♥	KJ8
♦	53		♦	1KQJ987
♣	74		♣	2
	♠	A5		
	♥	653		
	♦	4		
	♣	KQJ9863		

DEALER is East and Opens 1♦

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Cue Bidding

South	West	North	East
			1♦
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	6♣	All Pass

With weak majors, south cannot double, but instead bids 3♣, with 14 points (10 HCP + 3

length points + 1 for the quality suit). North has 18 Dummy Points with club support and makes a cue bid of 3♦ (forcing). South cue bids 3♠ and north bids 6♣.

4NT approach

With club support, some may bid 4NT as Blackwood and not cue bid. South with one ace bids 4♦. Now with a balanced hand, north bids 5NT asking for kings. South bids 5♥ (one king). With this bidding sequence, what is north to do?

With a balanced hand he bids 6NT (a very bad contract).

The bid of 4NT by north takes up too much bidding space, another option for north is to show club support immediately and bid 4♣. South will now bid 4NT and with three aces north bids 5♠. South will next bid 6♣, again reaching a good slam.

Super Gerber/Expert Gerber

When bidding a minor one must cue bid, many use Minorwood/Crosswood or some form of Gerber (Expert/Super).

Playing Super Gerber, some north players may bid 5♣ as super Gerber. The bid of 4♣ is not Expert Gerber but merely invitational to game in clubs. South bids 5♥ (the second step) to show one ace and north again bids 6♣.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead by west —5♦!

You can count 11 tricks, 7 clubs, two spades, a heart and a diamond. However, to make one more trick, the spade or heart finesse must work; at least one. But, because east opened the bidding, both cards may be in east's hand.

Do you finesse or end play east for both cards?

Before you decide, you must try to determine the shape/distribution of the opponent's cards and think about trumps, which may split 2-1, or 3-0.

Trumps split 2-1 (most likely)

With the diamond lead, you win the ace in dummy and ruff a diamond. Next cross back to dummy with a trump and ruff a second diamond. You again ruff a diamond and play another trump and observe that west shows out on the third diamond. On the fourth diamond you toss your heart 10 and allow east winning the diamond. Now east must lead a spade/heart into your tenancies or give you a ruff and a discard.

However, this approach will not work if trumps split 3-0. West would ruff the third diamond winner and play a spade or a heart and you will be down one?

Trumps split 3-0 (less likely, but safer)

It is safer to play all your trumps and play for a strip-squeeze. Play your ♦A and 8 clubs. Then your last four cards in your hand will be the ♠5 and 6-5-4 of hearts. And in dummy you will have K-J of spades and A-Q of hearts.

Counting the discards, east will either have a singleton spade, so you can drop the queen, or a doubleton heart in which case you play your A and Q of hearts and east must exit with a spade in to your KJ tenace.

In this example trumps split 2-1; but the safer approach is to use a strip-squeeze.

Bid and Play 9

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	102		
	♥	AQ652		
	♦	Q54		
	♣	K82		
♠	765	N W E S	♠	K984
♥	94		♥	J1087
♦	A72		♦	108
♣	QJ943		♣	765
	♠	AQJ3		
	♥	K3		
	♦	KJ963		
	♣	A10		

DEALER is South and Opens 1♦

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Option 1 (Gerber)

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	6♦	All Pass

With 19 points and no 5-card major south opens 1♦. With a 5-card heart suit, north bids 1♥. South with 19 points and 4 spades bids 2♠ (a reverse). With three diamonds and only a doubleton spade, north bids 3♦ and south bid 3NT. However, with 12 points and a diamond fit, north bids 4♣ (Expert Gerber) and south with two aces and a good hand bids 4NT. Missing an ace, north bids 6♦.

Over 3NT some will bid Gerber (1st and last no trump agreement). With two aces, south bids 4♠, and north will again bid 6♦.

Option 2 (Cue Bidding/Minorwood)

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♦	All Pass		

Over 3NT, instead of using Gerber/Expert Gerber, north bids 4♦ as an invitational bid (17+11=29). With a great hand, south makes a forcing 4♥ cue bid and north cue bids 5♣ (1st or 2nd round control). With the club ace, south bids 6♦.

Playing Minorwood and an agreed upon diamond suit, 4♦ is a 1430 for diamonds (some may play 3014 or RKC Minorwood). With three keycards, south bids 4♠ (second step). With the diamond queen, north again bids 6♦ (missing one keycard – an Ace). If he were missing the Queen and had all the keycards, the bid of 4NT would be the queen-asking bid (next step).

How would you play the Hand?

Opening Lead — Q♣

Do you win the club in your hand or in dummy?

You clearly want to win it in dummy so you can lead a diamond from dummy to your hand. Now west wins the diamond ace and continues with the club jack.

Now what? To make your contract, you need the spade finesse or the hearts to break 3-3. Do you test the hearts, take the spade finesse or pull trumps? And the heart finesse is a pure guess.

The best approach is to pull trumps and try to discover shape/distribution.

Win the club in your hand with the ace and play a diamond to the queen. This allows you to pick up the 10xxx with east and pull the remaining trumps.

Now you can test the hearts. If they break 3-3 you are home free and if they do not, you merely discard a small spade from your hand and take the spade finesse leading the 10 from dummy.

Bid and Play 10

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	A9542		
	♥	A874		
	♦	A		
	♣	QJ2		
♠	63	N W E S	♠	1087
♥	10932		♥	J5
♦	Q643		♦	K1098
♣	K75		♣	10964
	♠	KQJ		
	♥	KQ6		
	♦	J752		
	♣	A83		

DEALER is South and Opens 1NT (15 to 17)

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Direct Approach

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	6♠	Pass

With 15 HCPs south opens 1NT. With 5 spades, north bids 2♥ (announced as a transfer by south). South accepts the transfer and because north has 4 hearts, bids 3♥.

South with 3 spades next bids 4♠. Finding a fit in spades, north bids 4NT as 1430 (the agreed upon suit). And with 2 keycards and the spade Queen, bids 5♠. Having all the keycards, north bids 5NT, to show he has all the keycards, the specific king asking bid. South bids 5♥. North next bids 6♠, missing two kings (clubs and diamonds).

Smolen

Being 5-4 in the majors, some may bid 2♣. And south with no 4-card major will bid 2♦. North next bids 3♥* (*=alert) showing his 5-4 shape in spades and hearts. With 3 spades south bids 4NT three without an agreed upon suit, the bid of 4NT by south is Blackwood and north bids 5♠ (3 aces). South again bids the slam, 6♠.

If you play the last bid suit, north will bid 5♥ (two keycards) and south with the ace and queen of spades will bid 6♠.

When bidding 4NT it is critical that partnerships review their agreements. Without an agreed upon suit, many play Blackwood and not the last bid suit since one cannot tell the difference between hold the ace and the king.

How would you play the Hand?

What do you lead?

If you feel aggressive, you may lead the 5♣; but, if you feel passive, you may lead a trump or the heart 10.

By leading a club, you may give up a trick. Let's assume you lead the five of clubs.

South wins the trick with dummy's club queen. You then cash the diamond ace and play a spade to the jack. You ruff another diamond. You lead a heart to your queen and ruff another diamond. And, you play a heart to your king and ruff your last diamond.

You next play your spade ace. And play a club to your ace cashing the king of spades to draw the last trump. West is squeezed in hearts and clubs so you make an overtrick. Yes 7 spades.

What happens if you are passive and lead a trump? The slam is defeated! Try it.

When leading against a slam contract it is usually better to be passive than aggressive.

Yes lead a trump with honors in the non-trump suits.

Bid and Play 11

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	Q10		
	♥	AK93		
	♦	72		
	♣	K9742		
♠	J52	N W E S	♠	K974
♥	Q8		♥	J764
♦	KQJ654		♦	10983
♣	Q10		♣	5
	♠	A863		
	♥	1052		
	♦	A		
	♣	AJ863		

DEALER is south and opens 1♣ and west overcalls 1♦.

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Cue bidding

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	X	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

With 13 HCP and one length point south opens 1♣. West with 14 points (11HCP +1 for a quality suit and 2 length points) overcalls 1♦. North next makes a negative double and with 4-card major,

south bids 1♠. North with 14 Dummy Points and short spades, but with great club support, makes the jump bid of 3♣ (forcing club raise). South cue bids 3♦ and north cue bids 3♥. South next bids 4NT (1430 with agreed suit) and north with 2 keycards bids 5♥. With a singleton diamond, south bids 6♣.

Minorwood

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	X	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

In this bidding sequence, north establishes clubs as the suit and playing Minorwood, south's double jump in clubs is 1430 Minorwood for clubs. With two keycards north bids 4♠ (the third step). With a singleton diamond, south again bids 6♣.

If you do not play Minorwood or dislike cue bidding, over the 2♣ (Minorwood) or 3♣ (cue bidding) bids, some south hands may bid 4NT as 1430/3014-KCB/standard Blackwood, depending on your slam partnership agreement.

All bidding methods should allow you to arrive at the minor suit clubs slam.

How would you play the Hand?

Opening lead by west K♦

You win the diamond lead in your hand with the singleton ace of diamonds.

Counting your tricks, you have 10 fast tricks; hence, you need to develop two more tricks for your slam.

Clearly they must come from hearts and spades.

You must lead a low heart after winning the diamond in your hand and west plays low. You win the trick with your Ace. Next you ruff a diamond and play the Ace and king of trumps – drawing all the trumps.

And you lead another heart and allow west to win the Queen. Now a diamond would allow a ruff-sluff so west plays a spade. Now you insert the 10 and east wins with the king. You can now claim the remaining tricks.

Can the defense set the contract?

How do you set the contract?

What do you do if East DOES NOT “DUCK” the low heart, after you win the diamond ace, but plays the Queen of hearts?

The contract is set — a difficult play!

Bid and Play 12

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	KQ		
	♥	K87		
	♦	AK1053		
	♣	Q94		
♠	J10732	N W E S	♠	Void
♥	Q95		♥	10432
♦	Q2		♦	J8764
♣	J32		♣	AK65
	♠	A98654		
	♥	AJ6		
	♦	9		
	♣	1087		

DEALER is south — what do you bid?

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you bid this hand?

Direct

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	All Pass

With 9 HCP + 2 length points and two quick tricks, some players will not open south’s hand. As north you have 17 HCP, but only one spade stopper, even so some may open 1NT.

North opens the bidding 1♦.

South with six spades and a singleton diamond bids 1♠. North next bids 2NT showing a 17+-point hand and south with 13 Dummy Points bids 3♠, not four, to show a good hand. What is north to do?

North begins a cue bidding sequence as does south, but with club losers north signs-off in 4♠.

Instead of opening 1♦, suppose north bids 1NT. Clearly south will bid 2♥ (announced as a transfer) with a six card spade suit and north will again be playing in 4♠.

Direct (Light Opening)

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

With 9 HCP + 2 length points and two quick tricks, some south players may open the bidding 1♠. North makes the 2/1 bid of 2♦. And, south with six spades bids 2♠. With five diamonds, north rebids 3♦, and south signs-off in 4♠.

By opening the bidding, observe that the weak hand is now playing the contract (south) and not north!

Does this make a difference?

How would you play the Hand?

With south playing the hand, west leads - 2♣?

South ducks the opening club lead and east plays the K♣. South now knows that the club jack is with west.

East shifts to a low diamond, 4-9-Q-K. North next leads the K♠ and finds that they break 5-0. Now what?

South leads a low heart to his hand playing the Ace and plays the 8♣ to the 9♣, and east wins the ♣A.

East shifts to a heart, which goes to the jack, queen and king. South cash's his Q♣ and discards a heart on the ♦A. North plays the A♦ and discards a heart. Now north ruffs a heart in his hand and enters dummy with a spade to the queen.

At his point, south now has the A, 9, and 8 of spades with east having the J, 10 and 7.

He next leads a diamond from dummy, which he ruffs with the 8♠. West over-ruffs, but must now lead a spade/heart. So south makes his game contract!

With north playing the hand, east leads - 5♣?

Why a club and not a heart or a diamond. East has no entry to his clubs so must lead low. Any other lead may give up a trick!

South wins the club in dummy and leads the K♠ and finds that they break 5-0. Now what?

Note that the contract fails! Try it!

This often happens when contracts are wrong sided!

Bid and Play 13

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	Q7642		
	♥	86		
	♦	KQ		
	♣	KQJ10		
♠	853	N W E S	♠	KJ109
♥	J1073		♥	K54
♦	AJ8		♦	97653
♣	543		♣	2
	♠	A		
	♥	AQ92		
	♦	1042		
	♣	A9876		

DEALER is south and opens 1♣.

As south you are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed?

Direct

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦*	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

With 14 HCP and one length point south opens 1♣. West with 15 points (13HCP +1 for a quality suit and 1 length point) bids 1♠. With no spade support south responds 1NT. Playing new minor forcing (nmf) (or 2-way nmf), north bids 2♦* (alert).

Without spade support south bids 3♣ and North makes an invitational bid of 4♣. And, south bids the slam 6♣.

Minorwood

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass

In this bidding sequence, south establishes clubs as the suit and playing Minorwood, north jumps to 4♣ as 1430 Minorwood for clubs. Showing three keycards, south bids 4♥. And north again bids the club slam.

How would you play the Hand?

What do you lead?

Looking at your holdings, there is no future in hearts; spades were bid so lead a trump the 3♣.

You need 12 tricks, so win the club in dummy and lead a heart. Next cash the spade ace and lead a diamond.

West wins the ace and leads another trump that you win in dummy.

Now ruff another spade and lead a diamond to your king, ruffing another spade.

Cash the ace of hearts and ruff a heart. This yields the following position.

	♠	Q7		
	♥	void		
	♦	void		
	♣	K		
♠	void	N W E S	♠	K
♥	J		♥	void
♦	J		♦	97
♣	5		♣	void
	♠	void		
	♥	9		
	♦	10		
	♣	A		

Next ruff a spade with the club ace. What is west to do? Under-ruff or discard a red suit?

West is squeezed, contract bid and made.

Bid and Play 14

How would you bid this Hand?

	♠	A96		
	♥	AK872		
	♦	A83		
	♣	A6		
♠	Q32	N W E S	♠	J754
♥	Q10643		♥	95
♦	105		♦	7
♣	QJ9		♣	K105432
	♠	K108		
	♥	J		
	♦	KQJ9642		
	♣	87		

DEALER is north – what do you open? You are playing 2/1; how do you and your partner proceed? The hand is from the Sunday December 2, 2017 issue of the “Dailey Sun”.

Option 1 - Direct (2NT with Minorwood – south plays the hand)

South	West	North	East
2NT	Pass		
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass
7♦	All Pass		

With 19 HCP and one length point south opens 2NT. Playing Minorwood over 2NT, south bids 4♦ (1430 for diamonds). With four keycards, north bids 4♥ (first step 1/4). South then bids 5♦ as the specific king ask. With the heart king north bids 5♥. Missing one king, south bids 7♦ and not 7NT.

Option 2 - Direct (2NT with Crosswood – north plays the hand)

South	West	North	East
		2NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♠	Pass	7♦	All Pass

To right side the contract, some play Crosswood instead of Minorwood. Then 4♣ show interest in a diamond slam. North next bids 4♦, which is again 1430 Minorwood for diamonds. With one keycard, south bids 4♥ (first step). North bids the next step 4♠ as the queens ask. The bid of 5♠ shows the Queen of diamonds and the spade king. Missing one king north bids 7♦ and not 7NT.

Option 3 - Direct (2NT with MSS – north plays the hand)

South	West	North	East
		2NT	Pass
3♠*	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
7♦	All Pass		

Some instead of Minorwood or Crosswood play Minor Suit Stayman (MSS). Now south bids 3♠* (*=alert) that is used to show interest in a minor suit slam (some use it as relay to 3NT – then bid 4♣ is either Gerber or Expert Gerber). Without a 4-card minor, the 2NT bidder bids 3NT (no 4-card minor). Over 3NT, south bids 4♣ as Expert Gerber (an ask asking bid - some play only Gerber). With Expert Gerber and 4 aces north bids 4♦ (1/4 aces — the responses of 4♥ = 0/3 aces and 4♠ = 2 with min and 4NT=2 with max). South bids 5♣ to ask for the number of kings. With one, north bids 5♦ and south again bids 7♦ and not 7NT.

Using the rule of 44, some may open north’s hand 2♣. Others may use transfers, Blackwood, Gerber and other gadgets. — Go to Next Page – Play of the Hand

How would you play the Hand?

West leads the O♣ – with south playing 7♦ (Option 1)?

South wins the opening club lead with dummy’s ace, cashes the A♥ and ruffs a heart with the K♦. Declarer crosses to dummy with a low diamond to the A♦ and leads another heart. East discards a club and south ruffs the hearts drawing three rounds of trumps. This results in the following layout.

	♠	A96		
	♥	K8		
	♦	Void		
	♣	Void		
♠	Q32	N W E S	♠	J754
♥	Q10		♥	Void
♦	Void		♦	Void
♣	Void		♣	K
	♠	K108		
	♥	Void		
	♦	7		
	♣	8		

Everyone discarded a spade on the last trump and declarer-entered dummy with the A♠ and next plays the K♥. East had to play another spade to protect the clubs. South tossed the 7♣ and was able to take the last two tricks with the King and 10 of spades.

I will leave it up to you to play the hand as North. In a grand slam, east will make a passive lead and lead his singleton trump!

Bid and Play 15

How would you bid this Hand

	♠	874		
	♥	AKJ		
	♦	AQ43		
	♣	AQ8		
♠	QJ10	N W E S	♠	3
♥	10863		♥	974
♦	97		♦	KJ10652
♣	K943		♣	1072
	♠	AK9652		
	♥	Q53		
	♦	8		
	♣	J65		

DEALER is east – You are playing 2/1; how do you proceed after East opens 3♦

Passive - 1

South	West	North	East
			3♦
Pass	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

With 10 HCP, south passes and north bids 3NT. South with a singleton diamond south bids 4♠.

Passive - 2

South	West	North	East
			3♦
3♠	Pass	4♠	All

With 12 staring points, south bids at the 3-level and north bids 4♠.

Aggressive

South	West	North	East
			3♦
Pass	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass

With 12 starting points, south bids at the 3-level and north bids 4♠. With 20 points, north bids 4NT. Not having an agreed upon suit, north bids 4NT as Blackwood, asking for aces. Having all the aces, 5NT asks for the number of kings; with only one, north bids the slam in spades.

Some play last bid suit (not always good because you cannot tell the difference between an ace or a king). In this example, south would bid 5♥ (two keycards). Clearly, the ace and king of spades, and north will again bid the slam. In this example, it did not matter!

How would you play the Hand?

West leads the 9♦.

South wins the opening diamond lead with dummy's ace and plays the ace and king of spades. Next one cashes the three rounds of hearts, ending in dummy. South leads a spade to West, hoping for a club return. West however, exits with a heart and declarer must give the opponents a club, making 5♠.

But, can we do better?

Yes! South must ruff a diamond at trick two and cash the ace and king of spades, and then play three rounds of hearts.

Then, declarer may ruff another diamond. West cannot over-ruff because dummy still has a trump and would have to yield a ruff-sluff or lead a club away from his king. West is forced to discard a club to keep a heart as a safe exit.

South may now lead a club to dummy's queen for a successful finesse, and then ruff dummy's last diamond. West is stuck! If west over-ruffs, one would have to choose between leading a club and yielding a ruff-sluff. A club discard instead would leave the club king unprotected, and a heart discard would subject him to an endplay having the queen of spades.

Hence, one may make 12 tricks, a slam.

It pays to be aggressive!

CHAPTER 15

OTHER BRIDGE CONVENTIONS

Weak No-trump an Overview

When playing 2/1, most partnerships use the strong no-trump opening in all seats with balanced/semi-balanced hands and 14/15-17 HCP. However, many use different ranges depending upon the seat and/or vulnerability. For example, some play 14-17 in the first two seats and 15-17 in the third and fourth seats, independent of vulnerability (**fried chicken NT**). **Regular chicken** no-trump means you open 1NT with a 12-14 HCP in the first two seats and only at favorable or equal vulnerability. And, **super chicken** NT means you need the vulnerability more in your favor. You open a weak 12-14 NT if not vulnerable; otherwise, 15-17 HCP when vulnerable. For **chicken** no-trump, you open 1NT in all seats with 12-14 points; this is the approach used in the Kaplan-Sheinwold bidding system. Should you adopt some form of “chicken” no-trump?

Yes, there are certain advantages. It has the (1) preemptive effect, (2) balanced/semi-balanced hands occur frequently, (3) rebidding becomes easier, (4) it is easier to punish your opponents, and (5) it provides an improved bidding structure when partner bids one of a minor. In North America, the ACBL does not allow any ranges lower than 10-12 HCP, often called “**Kamikaze**” NT which is part of some systems, for example EHAA (**E**very **H**and **A**n **A**dventure). When playing the Precision System, 1NT often shows a balanced hand with 13-15 HCP or 14-16 HCP. We support the **super chicken** variety since, as suggested by Edgar Kaplan, it supports high, preemptive bidding for weaker hands and allows for no risk when vulnerable.

The primary difference between a weak and a strong no-trump is THREE points (a king). Thus, to reach game using a weak NT (12-14), you need 12 HCP and 11 HCP becomes invitational; exactly three more points than the required amount using the strong no-trump bid. But, what if you have a strong 15-17 opener? Playing 12-14 NT, you cannot open 1NT. You must open a convenient minor and then bid 1NT to show a balanced/semi-balanced hand with 15-17 HCP. If you are unbalanced or have a five-card major, you should bid a major and bypass the 1NT rebid. Simple!

Weak Hands (12-14)

With a weak 1NT opening (12-14), one should have a balanced hand and one of the following distributions: 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2, or 4-4-3-2 with length in a minor or a weak non-biddable major. Let's consider a few examples:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| (1) ♠ KQ87
♥ 10853
♦ AK3
♣ Q3 | (2) ♠ KJ7
♥ 93
♦ Q1063
♣ AQ84 | (3) ♠ 75
♥ AJ2
♦ A93
♣ K10875 |
| (4) ♠ KJ7
♥ J8753
♦ AQ6
♣ Q5 | (5) ♠ AQ72
♥ 104
♦ J84
♣ KQJ5 | (6) ♠ 632
♥ AQ105
♦ AQ109
♣ J6 |

In hands 1-4, one would open with a weak 1NT. In hands (1) and (2), with scattered honors in three suits and the general weakness of the hand does not allow for a comfortable two-level bid. In hand (3), the club length is useful for a possible NT contract. In hand (4), the heart suit is too weak to rebid. One would not open hands (5) and (6) 1NT. In (5), one would open one club and if responder bids one diamond or one heart, opener can bid one spade. In (6), one would open one diamond, since one can raise hearts or rebid diamonds.

Responder with a balanced hand must take into account that game is possible only if he has a minimum of 12 HCP (an opening hand) and opener has a maximum hand. Hence, with a balanced hand, no five-card suit and fewer than 12 HCP, responder must pass. Responder does not use transfer bids. Two hearts and two spades are to play. Three-level bids are invitational. We review some bids after a weak 1 NT opener. 2♣/2♦ non-forcing/forcing Stayman. Opener bids 2♦/2NT with no four-card major, two of a major with four, where 2♥ may imply both.

After 1NT-2♣/2♦

Pass	Garbage Stayman
2♥, 2♠	to play (2♣)/invitational (2♦)
2NT	invitational
3m	5+ card minor suit, game forcing, slam oriented. By a passed hand it is invitational with a four-card major and 5+ cards in the minor.
3M	Smolen
4♣	Gerber
4♦, 4♥	Delayed Texas transfer, 6+ 4 in the majors, no slam interest/very strong hand with a void
4NT, 5NT	Quantitative
5M	GSF

After 1NT-2♣-2M:

2NT	Invitational
3m	5+ card minor suit, game forcing, slam oriented. By a passed hand it is invitational with a four-card major and 5+ cards in the minor.
3M	Invitational
Sets M as trump suit, and responder may be planning to RKCB in M in his next bid (kickback/1430).	
4m	Void, fit in M, slam interest.
4NT, 5NT	Quantitative
5M	GSF
5m, 6X	Signoff

After 1NT opening,

2♥, 2♠	to play
2NT	Invitational
3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠	Natural and invitational

Interference with weak NT is common.

After double, 1NT-double, the following scheme is used.

Redouble	shows clubs.
2-level bids	Transfers and Signoff.
Pass	Opener is asked to show a 5-card minor or to redouble with none.

After opener redoubles, responder starts bidding suits up-the-line.

2NT	Two-suited monster
3x	Weak hand 7+ card suit
3NT	Solid 7+ card minor, nothing else outside, opener is expected to bid four clubs without reasonable stoppers.

After the auction: 1NT-p-p-X-p-p:

Redouble	Five-card minor, opener relays to two clubs
2♣, 2♦, 2♠	Lower of two four-card suits

With the auction 1NT-2x, a natural or artificial bid, you can play Lebensohl, Rubinsohl, Rumpelsohl (a combination of Lebensohl and Rubinsohl), or Transfer Lebensohl.

After the auction 1NT-p-2♣-2x

Opener rarely bids. A double would be for penalties. 2M shows a good fitting maximum 4-4-2-3 hand when x=♦, otherwise it shows a maximum hand with a two small cards in X suit.

After the auction 1NT-p-2♣-X

In general, the opener will indicate whether he should be playing in 2♣-doubled. Therefore, pass shows a good four-card suit allowing opener to redouble for business, redouble shows a five-card suit.

After the auction 1NT-p-2♦-X and 1NT-p-2♥-X

Responses are unchanged except that opener must pass with two cards in partner's suit. Redouble is natural showing a fair 4+card suit and willing to play the redoubled contract.

After the auction 1NT-p-p-2x

Opener's double is for takeout, showing exactly xx in opponent's suit. Responder's double is penalty-oriented: opener must take out with xx in the opponent's suit or other poor defensive hand. As responder, it denies a 5+card major, he may compete on the 2-level showing his cheapest four-card suit or with 2NT showing both minors (or if x=♠, any takeout).

The primary advantage of playing a weak NT is its preemptive value. Let's consider an example taken from a National Championship.

	North	
	♠ K x x	
	♥ 10 9 8 x x	
	♦ A K 10	
	♣ x x	
West (Dealer)		East
♠ A x		♠ xx x
♥ K Q x x		♥ A J x x
♦ J x x		♦ x x
♣ K x x x		♣ Q J x x
	South	
	♠ Q J 10 x	
	♥ x	
	♦ Q x x x x	
	♣ A x x	

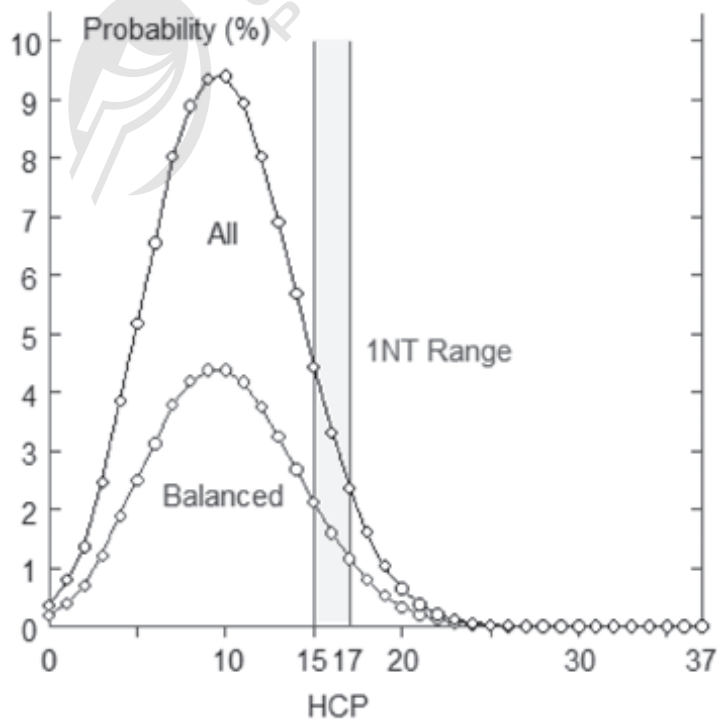
Playing a weak NT, west opens 1NT. Neither north nor south can afford to overcall at the two-level; so, the contract is played at 1NT. If, however, you opened the west hand one club, north might double and the spade game by north-south may be reached. While the east-west pair cannot make 1NT, the contract should be down two for a north-south score of 200. This is clearly better than the game score of 620. However, north led the ♥10 with no information to guide the lead and the contract was made! South shifted to a diamond upon taking the A♣, but the opponents can only take six tricks before east-west took seven. The opponents were punished because they do not know which suit to attack; they must guess. West is dealer with east-west non-vulnerable and north-south vulnerable.

With a strong hand, playing any form of chicken NT, you cannot open 1NT; instead, you must open one of a minor and then bid 1NT.

Much of the material in this section on weak NT is based upon the book by Andy Stark (2006), "The Weak No-trump, How to Play it, How to Play Against it." Master Point Press. Using a Google search with the string defined by Katzman@math.umn.edu, one may obtain a Kaplan-Sheinwold PDF by Katzman who reviews his system of bids to 1NT using the range 12-14.

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, one makes a 1-level bid with 11/12-19 points. Playing a strong no-trump, one opens 1NT with 15-17 HCP and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semi-balanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void. How often does this bid occur?

Looking at the distributions of HCP and hand patterns, what do you see? Clearly, the mode (most frequent occurrence) is near 10 not 15! To get into the bidding more frequently, it is better to play a weak no-trump.



What range do you select? **Any range that that does not include 15 is considered a weak no-trump range.** The most popular ranges in the United States seem to be 10-12 and 12-14; however, s use 13-15 (semi-weak, but considered strong since it includes 15).

Why play the weak no-trump? There are several **advantages**.

1. It occurs much more frequently than the strong no-trump, this allows one to get into the bidding early.
2. It has preemptive value, forcing the opponents to the two level.
3. The bid immediately conveys to your partner that your hand is balanced and there tend to be fewer rebidding problems.
4. Because all balanced hands with minimum values are opened, constructive bidding and rebidding are enhanced.
5. Since all 15-17 hands are now opened one of a minor and forcing, responder must bid even with a weak hand. This often allows the partnership to find a fit, which may be missed playing the strong no-trump.

What about the **disadvantages**?

1. You may get doubled and have no convenient escape, vulnerable.
2. Because you open strong hands with one of a minor instead of 1NT, the opponents tend to get into the bidding early when this is not the case for the strong no-trump opening.
3. At times you may miss a minor suit fit and instead play a contract in no-trump.
4. You may miss a suit contract that goes against the field or your contract may be wrong sided.

In general, the advantages far out-weigh the disadvantages.

When beginning to play the weak no-trump system, the first decision you must make is to decide on a range. Playing the Precision Club, the common ranges are either 12-15 or 13-15 (since in Precision the 1♣* bid shows 16+ HCP). Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, a common weak range is 12-14 (the difference between weak and strong is just three points).

Playing 2/1 and a strong no-trump all balanced 15-17 hands are opened 1NT, and all balanced 12-14 hands are opened the better minor and rebid 1NT. Playing the weak no-trump is now simple you merely **switch** the meaning of these two bids!

Playing 12-14 Weak NT

12-14	Open 1NT (announce range)
15-17	Open 1♣/1♦, rebid 1NT*
18-19	Open any 5-card suit, rebid 2NT
20-21	Open 2NT

Observe that the 2NT range is identical to the range used in the 2/1 bidding system and requires no change to any conventions you may play (e.g. Jacoby, Texas, etc.). With the bid of 1NT or the rebid of 1NT, after 1♣/1♦, all your 2/1 Conventions apply. While the 1NT bid need not be alerted

(only announced), the rebid of 1NT* must be alerted because we have switched the meaning of the bids, better minor and 1NT.

Note: playing 12-14 Weak NT, weak hands=0-9, invitational hands=10-12, and game-force hands= 13+, playing the strong no-trump, weak=0-7, invitational=8-9, and game-force=10+, the difference of two points.

Playing Weak NT, the bid of 2♣ is Stayman. Having a weak hand (0-9 points) you must play Garbage and Crawling Stayman when 4-4-4-1 and 4-3/4-4 in the majors, respectively.

For example with the following hands, one bids as follows.

♠K76 ♥873 ♦J107 ♣102	Bid 2♣ and after 2♦, bid 2♥ (pick a major- crawling Stayman)
♠Q872 ♥J754 ♦ J863 ♣7	Bid 2♣ and pass 2♦/2♥/2♠ (Garbage Stayman)

Using the 12-14 ranges is simple because you keep all of your “strong no-trump” conventions like transfers (2-way/4-way), Stayman, and whatever 3-level conventions you play with NO CHANGE with the opening bid or rebid of 1NT.

However, the opening bid requires one small change: you invite game by bidding 2NT (not playing 4-way transfers) with 10-12 HCP instead of 8-9 HCP and bid 3NT over 1NT with 13 instead of 10 HCP. **So just do it and get into the bidding!**

While the transition to Weak NT is now very easy, playing the 2/1 Game Force System, and allows one to open 1NT more frequently than the strong (15-17) no-trump convention, it is not the best range playing Matchpoints. The best weak no-trump range playing Matchpoints is 10-12 also called Mini NT or Kamikaze NT. Why? YOU GET TO BID MORE OFTEN! However, playing in team games with IMP scoring or if partner has passed the best range to use is 12-14. Once partner has passed with perhaps 0-9 HCP, bidding 1NT with 10-12 HCP is just too risky, vulnerable or non-vulnerable. Hence here is what we do:

Use Mini NT (10-12) in the 1st and 2nd seats and Weak NT (12-14) in the 3rd and 4th Seats.

Having decided to play the Mini NT in the first two seats, our next problem is to decide on how to fit it into our 2/1 bidding system. Opening the bidding 1NT is simple; it follows the same rules as the strong/weak no-trump openings. Open 1NT with 10-12 and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semi-balanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no singleton or void.

Fitting the Weak NT into our 2/1 System was easy; however, with the Mini NT one has to decide how to bid balanced hands with 13+ HCP. Keeping with the weak no-trump approach, we use the diamond bid to show either diamonds or a balanced no-trump and the club bid becomes short (0-2) and must be alerted. The bidding scheme follows.

Playing 10-12 Mini NT (1st and 2nd Seats)

10-12	Open 1NT (announce range)
13-15	Open 1♦ (without a 5-card major), rebid 1NT* (if balanced)
15-17	Open 1♣, rebid 1NT*
18-19	Open any 5-card suit, rebid 2NT
20-21	Open 2NT

Note that the club bids for both the Mini NT and Weak NT are the same; however, in the Mini NT case it must be alerted as may be short (0-2) and announced as forcing. And, we must also now alert the diamond bid as, may be short (0-2) and forcing. One makes the 1NT response as soon as possible for both bids with balanced hands; however, if partner bids a major over the diamond bid, the 1NT bid is bypassed if the major can be supported with 4-cards.

If you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥ and you have 4 spades you do not bid it, but instead bid 1NT* to show a balanced hand. Now responder uses the Checkback bid of 2♣* which asks do you have 4 spades or three hearts in that order. The bid of 1♠ is used to show an unbalanced or semi-balanced hand with spades and diamonds.

Observe the overlap in the 1♦ and 1♣ ranges playing Mini NT, this is not a mistake. It is needed to handle awkward hands. Consider the following hand in the third seat where partner has passed.

♠AQ76 ♥A3 ♦KQ9532 ♣10

You hold 15 HCP, but would not open it 1♣, and rebid 1NT*. Instead you must open 1♦. If partner bids 1♥, rebid a 1♠ (unbalanced hand); if responder bids 1NT, you can correct to 2♦. (Sometimes you may have to use this gadget even if you were 4-2-4-3 in the 3rd or 4th seats, if partner has passed).

Note: playing 10-12 Mini NT weak, weak hands=0-11, invitational hands=12-14, and game-force hands= 15+.

Playing the Mini NT the bid of 2♣ remains Stayman. However, having a weak hand (0-11 points) you must again play Garbage and Crawling Stayman when 4-4-4-1 or 4-3/4-4 in the majors, respectively, identical to the Weak NT scheme.

Using either the Weak or Mini NT ranges, it is not critical that the strong hand play the final contract. Thus, many suggest that one not use transfers and to replace the Stayman convention with Two-Way Stayman (marked in red on your Convention Card). Because this requires new bids that are not used playing the 2/1 System, I am not recommending this approach; you may add this latter, if you choose. Let's make the transition to weak no-trump easy.

Opponents Interfere

When the opponents interfere over your Mini/Weak NT, after a double (take-out/penalty) or 2♣, play that all your conventions are on, like transfers and Stayman. When the double is for penalty, one needs an escape sequence. They are called runout schemes. There are for example DONT, Brozel, Helvic and many more schemes. A very simple scheme follows.

Simple Runout

To keep it simple, if the double is for penalty one redoubles for penalty, bids a 5-card suit immediately, or passes*. The pass must be alerted since it asks partner to bid his 5-card suit or to bid 4-card suits up the line or to re-double. After a redouble opener bids 4-card suits up the line to try to find the best fit, if 4-3-3-3, one bids 3-card suits up-the-line.

Competing over Mini/Weak NT (Any Seat)

Competitive bidding over a strong no-trump is geared toward finding a part score or to sacrifice; games are unlikely. Hence, you often interfere with a weak hand. Over the Mini/Weak NT a game is a possibility so doubles and bidding must be constructive and disciplined. What systems should you use? Many employ Landy.

Landy

2♣*	Both Majors 4-4, 5-4, 4-5, or 5-5 (2♦ asks for longest)
2♦/2♥2♠	Natural
Double	* Penalty (14/15 HCP)

Other popular conventions one may employ are Mohan, Multi Landy and Modified Cappelletti, among others. Whatever you convention use double, a double for Penalty not take-out. **Do not use Meckwell or DONT.**

By design, competing against Mini no-trump bids can be difficult. Suppose the bidding starts 1NT—double—pass—pass, redouble—pass—suit bid. Your partner doubled the Mini NT, you passed with strength, the no-trump bidder redoubled and his partner on your right started an escape sequence with a suit bid. A double by you would be for penalties but if your RHO has bid your small doubleton, what are you to do?

If you pass, partner will get another chance to bid but a pass by you would imply that your original pass showed weakness and you don't want that. So pass is not an option. A bid by you shows strength as well as a hand unsuited for a penalty double, but the question remains, should your bid be forcing or simply constructive?

One of the problems with bidding strong hands after a weak no-trump opener is that you don't have a cue bid to announce strength. Now that they have started an escape sequence there is a cue bid available and it should show either flat or multi-suited hand, which is not suitable for a penalty double but is strong enough for game.

It is best that a minimum bid by you is constructive but not forcing, but that jump bids (below game) are forcing.

Two – Way Stayman

When playing weak No-trumps 10-12 or 11-14 HCP (or semi-weak 13-15), one may use Two-Way Stayman. In response to a 1NT opening, responses have these meanings:

2♣ - Any sort of invitational hand, denies game-going strength opener shows any major, but with both majors one bids 2NT with a minimum and 3♣ with a maximum. This will avoid getting the bidding too high when opener has both majors and a minimum, with responder having neither major. This response can also be made with a weak three-suited hand short in diamonds, planning to pass any two-level bid by opener. If opener ungraciously shows both majors, responder's 3♥/3♠ bid closes the auction, even if opener has shown a maximum hand. Otherwise, any rebid by responder is invitational. That could be awkward when responder has an invitational hand with five hearts and opener bids 2♠. He will normally bid 3♥, which opener will have to pass with a minimum, even with a doubleton heart. To avoid this situation, responder should bid 2NT over 2♠ when holding five hearts and a balanced hand.

2♦ - Forcing to game bid. Opener shows a major, bidding 2♠ with both (planning to bid 3♥ later if spades are not raised). When opener responds in two of a major, responder should not jump to 3NT when holding three-card support. Instead, she should bid a forcing 2NT, giving opener a chance to rebid a five-card suit. She should also rebid 2NT when holding four hearts after opener has responded 2♠, in case opener has four hearts, too. A rebid of three in a minor implies some slam interest.

2♥/2♠- Natural signoff bids (not alerted). While the response denies much interest in game, opener can raise one level (only) to show an extremely good supporting hand.

2NT – Invitational to 3NT (Note: some play this as a puppet to 3♣ with/without a correction to 3♦).

3♣/3♥/3♦/3♠- A six-card suit with two of the top three honors and 9-11 HCP.

Texas Transfers are applicable, but in competition only through 3+ (when both transfers would be jump bids).

Weak No-trump Runouts

Many more players are opening 1NT weak. Any range that does not include 15 is considered a weak no-trump bid.

When the opponents make a penalty double of your weak 1NT opening bid, your side can be at serious risk of being set and going for a very large penalty (especially if you are playing a weak no-trump opening bid). This is particularly true if the opponents can run off a long suit

against you in no-trump. Consequently, it is imperative in these situations that your side has a mechanism for finding its best fit at the two levels. DONT No-trump Runouts are one such mechanism for escaping the penalty double and finding your fit.

Modified DONT (Meckwell) No-trump Runouts

DONT runouts bids are similar to the no-trump overcall convention; hence, they share the same name. Playing this convention, after the auction has begun 1NT-Double (for penalty), a Redouble shows a single-suited hand and forces partner to bid 2♣ so that you can pass or correct to your suit. All bids at the two levels show a two-suited hand with the bid suit and a higher-ranking suit: 2♣ shows clubs and a major suit, 2♦ shows diamonds and a major, 2♥ shows both majors, and 2NT shows the minors. All three-level bids show a long suit and are to play and Texas transfers are on. If you have a good hand and want to play 1NT doubled, you should pass. For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.

If you don't like the modified DONT runout procedure, you can play standard DONT runouts or you may use the following.

Exit Transfer No-trump Runouts

If the opponents have doubled your partner's 1NT opening bid, Exit Transfer No-trump Runouts provide you with a way to try to escape the penalty with as little damage as possible. Exit Transfers additionally have the benefit of allowing the No-trump opener to declare most two-level contracts, "right-siding" them.

Playing Exit Transfers after the auction has gone 1NT-Double, Redouble is a transfer to 2♣ and shows 5+ clubs, 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds and shows 5+ diamonds, 2♦ is a transfer to hearts and shows 5+ hearts, and 2♥ is a transfer to spades and shows 5+ spades. If you have a two-suited hand, you should pass; your pass forces partner to redouble, then with a hand well suited to play 1NT redoubled you can pass, or else you can describe your two-suited hand by bidding 2♣ to show clubs and a higher-ranking suit, 2♦ to show diamonds and a major, and 2♥ to show both majors.

For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.

Helvic No-trump Runouts

Helvic No-trump Runouts are a convention that is popular in England. Part of the reason for its popularity is that the Standard English/ACOL system contains a weak no-trump opening bid, which is significantly more susceptible to penalty doubles.

If the opponents have doubled your partner's 1NT opening bid, Helvic No-trump Runouts provide you with a way to try to escape the penalty with as little damage as possible. Playing Helvic, you can either show a single-suited hand by redoubling or show a two-suited hand by bidding at the two-level. A 2♣ bid shows clubs and diamonds, a 2♦ bid shows diamonds and hearts, a 2♥ bid shows hearts and spades, and a 2♠ bid shows spades and clubs. If you redouble, partner will bid 2♣ as a pass-or-correct bid. And finally, if you wish to play in 1NT despite the double, or if you have a two-suited hand with non-touching suits, you should pass. Your pass forces partner to redouble so that you can play 1NT redoubled or so that you can bid 2♣ to show clubs and hearts or 2♦ to show diamonds and spades. For the purposes of runout bids, a hand is two-suited if it is 4-4 or better, and it is single-suited if it contains a six-card or longer suit or a five-card suit without another four-card suit. If 4-3-3-3, it is usually best to pretend the hand is two-suited.

Landy - Coping with the Weak No-trump bid

The weak no-trump bid forces the opponents to the 2-level early in the bidding cycle; for this reason, one needs a method to convey your bids. One may either use Mohan or Landy, among others. For **Landy** the bids are:

2♣	both majors
2♦/2♥/2♠	natural
Double*	penalty

While the Landy convention is easy to implement, a modification to Landy is to use the bid of 2♣* to show a hand with one or both majors and a weak hand, 7-10 HCP, and the bid of 2♦* to show a hand with both majors and a hand with 11-15 HCP. With this modification we have MODIFIED LANDY.

Modified Landy Convention

2♣*	one or both majors (7-10 HCP)
2♦*	both majors (11-15 HCP)
2♥/2♠	natural (11-15 HCP)
Double*	penalty (16+ HCP)

* Alert

Responder now bids over the bid of 2♣* (one or both majors):

2♦*	prefers spades
2♥	prefers hearts

If the overcaller bids 2♣* and partner responds 2♥ the overcaller (the two club bidder) now bids:

With both majors	Pass
With just hearts	Pass
With just spades	Bid 2♠

When the overcaller bids 2♣* and partner responds 2♦* (I prefer spades) the overcaller (the two club bidder) now bids:

With both majors	Bid 2♠
With just hearts	Bid 2♥
With just spades	Bid 2♠

Let's look at a few examples where the opponents open 1NT weak. You have the following hand.

1. ♠AKJ4 ♥AQJ7 ♦987 ♣32
2. ♠AJ432 ♥QJ762 ♦98 ♣3
3. ♠AKJ1043 ♥AJ7 ♦98 ♣32
4. ♠10987 ♥AJ73 ♦987 ♣32

For Hand 1) you have 15 HCP, so you must overcall 2♦* to show partner a good hand with the majors. Hand 2), you have only 8 HCP so you bid 2♣*. If partner bids 2♥, you pass and if partner bids 2♦*, you bid 2♠. With hand 3), bid 2♠ and with hand 4), pass.

The convention may also be used to investigate game. This might go:

1NT - 2♣* - pass - 2♦* (I prefer spades)

Pass - 2♠ - Pass - ??

Next bids:

3♠ = invitational

4♠ = to play

2NT* Short suit game try

This sequence works well when the overcaller has at least five spades. However suppose he is 5-5 in the majors. Now one would replace the 2♠ bid with 2NT (I have both majors). Then the bid of 3♣* is used to ask (are you a minimum 7-8 or maximum 9-10). Where 3♦* shows a minimum and 3♥* shows a maximum. Responder to overcaller can now decide where to play the hand (Pass, bid 3♠, bid 3NT or bid game in spades).

An Extended Stayman Convention

Everyone plays the Stayman Convention; recall that the bidding goes:

1NT-2♣-2♦ = No four-card major, 2♥ = Four hearts, and 2♠ = Four spades.

It is normal to bid 2♥ with both majors. After using Stayman, a 3♣ rebid by responder cancels the initial message and says you want to play in clubs. This is not the case if you play Extended Stayman, as described here where now 3♣ initiates Extended Stayman (the French use it for Spring Stayman).

Because there are many versions of Extended Stayman, a simple variation follows:

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♠-3♣* = do you have another 4 card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦=4 diamonds; 3♠=5 spades; 3NT=4 clubs, 3♥ shows 4-3-3-3 shape.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣* = do you have a 4 card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦=4 diamonds; 3♠ shows 3-4-3-3 shape; 3NT=4 clubs, 3♥=5 hearts.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣* = do you have a 4 card suit?

Opener's bid of 3♦=some five-card minor; and 3♥ by responder asks which five-card minor; opener responses are then: 3♠=clubs and 3NT=diamonds.

A bid of 3♥ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) by opener shows a 2-3-4-4 pattern (Major Fragments and both minors).

A bid of 3♠ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) by opener shows a 3-2-4-4 pattern.

A bid of 3NT (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) shows one four-card minor with 3-3-3-4/3-3-4-3 pattern over which one can ask by bidding 4♣ (where 4♦=diamond, 4♥=clubs). One now usually plays in a minor suit game or in a minor suit slam.

* Some bridge players use the bid of 3♦ after the bid of 2♦ to initiate an older version of Extended Stayman used to ask opener to bid his better three-card major. Today, many use the Mini-Maxi convention and not bid 2♣; instead after 1NT, one bids 3♥ to show 5-5 in majors and weak and the bid of 3♠ to show 5-5 in majors and strong. In addition, some use the bid of 3♣ for SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman); SARS is similar to the version of Extended Stayman provided above as discussed in Chapter 1. However, if you want to use SARS and Extended Stayman, then 3♣ would be used for SARS and 3♦ would be Extended Stayman.

If you do not use 3♦ as Extended Stayman, it may be used for Stayman in Doubt (SID).

Stayman in Doubt (SID)

Stayman is designed to locate a 4-4 fit in the majors. However, some argue that one should not use Stayman if your distribution is 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3. In general, this is bad advice. It is usually better to play in a 4-4 major suit fit rather than in no-trump. However, there may be one

exception. This is when the opener and partner have identical shape (4-3-3-3 facing 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3 facing 3-4-3-3). Then it may be better to play in no-trump rather than a 4-4 major suit fit! To determine whether or not you and partner have the same shape, responder bids 3♦ after the 2-level major suit bid by opener known as the Stayman in Doubt (SID) convention. It says “partner, I am totally flat with four of your major, if you are also totally flat considering bidding 3NT.” This allows the partnership to play in 3NT when there is total duplication in shape, even with a fit in the majors! Responder should only use this convention with 12-15 HCP. Then, the value of the combined hand is 27+ HCPS and the no-trump will usually yield a higher score than the major suit contract.

Vacant (Worthless) Doubleton Convention

What do you do when your partner opens 1NT (14/15-17 HCP) and you have 10-14 HCP, but a worthless doubleton?

Let’s consider a few examples:

Hand 1:

Opener’s Hand	♠A6 ♥AK52 ♦763 ♣KQ92
Responder’s Hand	♠42 ♥Q63 ♦AK42 ♣J654

Hand 2:

Opener’s Hand	♠AQJ4 ♥J7 ♦AQ6 ♣K963
Responder’s Hand	♠K52 ♥42 ♦K754 ♣A754

With both hands, partner opens 1NT and the next person passes; what do you now bid?

The obvious bids for both responder hands are 3NT, but are you not nervous about your worthless doubleton? With the first hand, you may play better in five of a minor or even four hearts with a spade lead. With the second hand, making 3NT with a heart lead has zero play. Making ten tricks in spades has a chance if spades are no worse than 4-2; as long as clubs divide 3-2 or diamonds 3-3 is a better contract! How do you reach the most makeable contract?

To avoid playing no-trump with worthless doubletons (Jx at best), Dave Cliff, who also invented splinter bids, suggested the Vacant Doubleton (VD) Convention. The convention is used when responder has no four-card major and a worthless doubleton. While the no-trump bidder may also have a worthless doubleton, the VD convention is used to find responders worthless doubleton, allowing the no-trump bidder to conceal his.

For responder to use the convention, we said he must have an invitational no-trump hand, no four cards in the major and a worthless doubleton with 8-9 HCP. In addition, there are two more requirements.

1. Responder must have three to an honor in at least one major.
2. Responder does not hold a six-card minor.

How do we proceed?

1. Recall that in SAYC, a bid of 2♠ is used as a relay to 3♣ to show a weak hand to sign off in 3♣ or 3♦. Opener is required to complete the transfer by bidding 3♣ and responder will pass or correct to 3♦. These are both used to show “bust” hands with 6-8 HCP and a six-card minor.
2. Playing 2/1 and Minor Suit Stayman, the bid of 2♠ is asking partner to show a four-card minor. It is used to show the following types of hands: 1) a weak minor two-suiter, 2) a weak hand with diamonds, and 3) a strong minor two-suiter. Playing Minor Suit Stayman, opener shows a four-card minor by bidding 3♣/3♦. Without a four-card minor, opener bids 2NT. Responder passes holding a weak minor two-suiter if opener shows a four-card minor. If opener has denied holding a four-card minor by bidding 2NT, responder’s rebid of 3♣ shows a weak two-suiter and asks opener to pass with three-card support, or to correct to 3♦. Opener will always have three cards in one of the minors since with three cards; opener would be 5-4 in the majors and would have opened 1♥/1♠.

To show a diamond bust, responder will either pass a 3♦ rebid by opener or correct opener’s 2NT or 3♣ responses to 3♦. Minor suit Stayman followed by a 3♦ rebid is always a drop-dead bid. Any rebid by responder, other than 3♣/3♦, shows a strong minor 2-suiter. Responder’s normal rebids are:

3♥/3♠ shows a singleton or void in the suit bid

3NT shows 2-2-5-4 (5-5 in the minors) and mild slam interest

4NT shows 2-2-5-4 (5-4 in the minors) and strong slam interest

A raise of opener’s 3♣/3♦ rebid to 4♣/4♦ is usually Roman Keycard Minorwood, however, some play Kickback (the suit above the agreed upon trump suit). If opener shows a four-card minor, all sequences are natural and forcing to game.

3. In Standard American, one does not employ transfers. The bid of 2♠ is to play.
4. In modified SAYC, a bid of 2♠ is used as a relay to 3♣ to show a weak hand (6-8 HCP) with a six-card club suit. Opener is required to bid 3♣. A bid of 3♣ is a transfer to 3♦, 6-8 HCP and six diamonds. And, a bid of 2NT is 8-9 HCP and invitational.

Note that none of the aforementioned methods protect one against a worthless doubleton. How might we proceed?

In this book, we recommend four-way transfers; however, to invoke the Vacant Doubleton Convention you cannot use four-way transfers.

For the Vacant Doubleton Convention, the bid of 2NT is an ASKING bid. What kind of hand do you have?

- 3♣ minor two-suiter and forcing
- 3♦ vacant doubleton in clubs or diamonds
- 3♥ vacant doubleton in hearts
- 3♠ vacant doubleton in spades

After the 3♦ response showing a VD in either minor, opener bids 3♥ to ask which minor. Responder's bid of 3♠ shows clubs and 3NT shows diamonds.

When using this convention, the bid of 2NT by responder suggests 8-9 HCP, invitational, but partner may still have a worthless doubleton; however, opener may invoke a Checkback bid as described more fully below.

For Hand 1, responder would bid 2♠. When partner bids 2NT (the asking bid), responder bids 3♠ to show his vacant/worthless doubleton in spades. The rest is up to partner. Over 3♠, he would likely bid 4♥ and play in a 4-3 fit. Note that this contract has a good chance of making if hearts are 3-3. With a spade lead, the 3NT contract has almost a zero probability of making.

For Hand 2, one would again bid 2♠, and after a 2NT bid by opener, one would bid 3♥ to show the vacant/worthless doubleton. Now, partner would bid 4♠. This will make if spades split 4-2, provided clubs split 3-2, or diamonds split 3-3; again, much better than 3NT.

But, opener has four clubs; instead of bidding 2NT, suppose he bids 3♣ showing 4+ clubs. Now, responder bids 3♦ and opener must bid 3♠ because of the heart doubleton. With three spades, responder bids 4♠. All is well!

Let's look at one more example.

Hand 3:

Opener's Hand	♠A1075 ♥K52 ♦AK54 ♣Q9
Responder's Hand	♠KJ2 ♥AJ6 ♦Q8762 ♣63

Playing the convention, the bidding would go:

1NT	2♠
2NT	3♦ (doubleton is a minor)
3♥ (which minor)	3♠ (clubs)
4♠	Pass

Now, four spades again has a reasonable chance of making. With a club lead, 3NT has little chance of making.

Whenever responder bids 2NT non-forcing, or Stayman, or transfers to hearts, opener may CHECKBACK for a vacant doubleton. Here is how it works:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2x	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ (Transfer)
2♥	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	

In all cases, opener with enough points to bid game has the option of bidding 3♣ to ask responder if he has a vacant/worthless doubleton. Over the bid of 3♣, responder responses are:

- 3♦ vacant doubleton in clubs or diamonds
- 3♥ vacant doubleton in hearts
- 3♠ vacant doubleton in spades
- 3NT no vacant doubleton

After 3♦, one may again ask which minor by bidding 3♥ as above. Again, a bid of 3♠ shows clubs and 3NT shows diamonds.

NOTE: It is not useful to show a vacant/worthless doubleton in a suit bid by the opener (e.g., after Stayman, if opener bid spades, responder should not bother to show a worthless doubleton in spades).

We now look at some more examples of the Checkback variation of vacant doubletons.

Hand 4:

Opener's Hand ♠Q42 ♥KJ1054 ♦K32 ♣AK

Responder's Hand ♠63 ♥A76 ♦QJ106 ♣J654

The bids follow.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♠ (spade doubleton)
4♥	Pass

Opener has five hearts and three spades, to avoid a rebid problem, he opens 1NT. He checks back over 2NT by bidding 3♣ and finds out that partner has a worthless doubleton spade and bids 4♥. (Yes, he could have bid 3♥ over 2NT as a natural bid, but this informs the opponents about his five-card suit, something he would prefer to hide if the final contract is 3NT). And some may pass the 1NT bid with only 8 HCP.

Hand 5:

Opener's Hand	♠AK64 ♥AK ♦QJ102 ♣963
Responder's Hand	♠J82 ♥QJ754 ♦A43 ♣83

The bids follow.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ (announce as a transfer)
2♥	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♦ (worthless doubleton in clubs or diamonds)
3♥	3♠ (worthless club doubleton)
4♥	Pass

Hand 6:

Opener's Hand	♠AQ6 ♥AQ2 ♦32 ♣KQ973
Responder's Hand	♠KJ43 ♥10874 ♦65 ♣A52

The bids follow.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2♦	2NT
3♣ (Checkback)	3♦ (worthless doubleton in clubs or diamonds)
3♥	3NT (worthless doubleton in diamonds)
4♦ (choose better major*)	4♠

* Called choice-of-game cue bid!

Final note: suppose responder has a VD (worthless doubleton) with a four-card or five-card major. You may want to add the VD option to your agreement as follows.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♣ (Checkback*)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2x	3♣ (Checkback*)

Here, the bid of 3♣ is used to show a “game force + VD”.

WHAT DO YOU LOSE BY PLAYING THE VACANT (WORTHLESS) DOUBLETON CONVENTION?

The major risk is that it provides information to the opponents. If you had bid 1NT-3NT, the opponents may not have found the lead in your partner’s VD (worthless) suit.

To add the VD convention to your partnership agreement and opening 1NT (14/15-17HCP), the bid of 2NT is invitational to 3NT having 8-9 HCP, and bid of 3♣ is then used as a transfer to a six-card diamond suit. The bid of 2♠ is either VD or a transfer to clubs.

This convention is an extension of the “Vacant Doubleton” Convention is contained in the 2003 book “Bridge Conventions in Depth” by Matthew and Pamela Granovetter and published by Master Point Press.

No-trump Overcalls

When the opponents open the bidding at the one-level and you overcall with the bid of one no-trump, one usually has a strong 15-18 HCP hand and a stopper in the bid suit. As discussed herein, one can play systems on/off over the no-trump overcall. That is, if off, then one plays all responses as natural with cue bid Stayman (some play off, but allow only Stayman; giving up 2♣ to play), or with systems on, one uses transfers and Stayman. However, when the opponents open the bidding, it is less likely that you have a “strong” no-trump overcall (it occurs in less than 10 percent of all hands and even less frequently with a stopper). What do you bid after the opponents open the bidding with one of a major and you hold the following hand?

♠ 7 3 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q J 9 6 3 ♣ J 8 4

You only have 8 HCP so you should not bid at the two-level and you cannot double since you cannot pass any suit bid by partner. A solution is to play the Gardner No-trump Overcall Convention devised by the World Champion Nico Gardener, London, England. In France, it is called the “Comic No-trump Overcall.” Or, one may play The Baron No-trump Overcall Convention developed by Leo Baron from Salisbury, Southern Zimbabwe or the Lindkvist One No-trump Overcall Convention developed by the Swedish champion Magnus Lindkvist (also called the Raptor [Polish] No-trump Convention), among others.

Is there a simpler approach? YES! Use the bid of 1NT as a takeout bid.

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, the no-trump overcall bid is most often either 15-17 or 15-18 over a 1-level bid with a stopper in the opponent’s bid suit. Making this bid, following the ACBL

convention chart it has to be neither announced nor alerted. Note some partnerships do not require a stopper and it need not be announced, but it does need to be explained if asked whether or not you require a stopper.

The strong no-trump bid usually deters the opponents from bidding; however, suppose you make a take-out double. To make a takeout double, you need support for all of the un-bid suits, ideally four-card support, especially in the un-bid major suit(s). You also need at least the strength of an opening bid (12+ Starting Points). Another option is to reverse the take-out double and the 1NT overall bids and change their values. What does this mean?

Now a double of the bid suit becomes a power double with 16+ HCP (a strong NT Overall) with or without a stopper in the opponents bid suit, **the power double does not require an alert** and is treated as if your partner bid 1NT strong (15-17). The bid of 1NT* then becomes the take-out bid with 10-15 HCP with/without a stopper in the opponents bid suit, and at least 3-cards in the un-bid suits. Now the 1NT* bid **MUST** be alerted. If partner does not bid a suit, but 1NT, it shows a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Why use this practice? It is pre-emptive and often keeps the opponents out of the auction; they must make 2-level bids. You must discuss this practice with your partner! There are other uses for the bid of 1NT, which may be actual bids, or for take-out.

If one has a stopper in the opponent's bid suit and 15+ HCP and a balanced hand, one merely doubles. However, with no more than two cards in the opponent's bid suit and 8-14 HCP, one bids 1NT* for takeout.

After a double, one responds as if your partner opened a strong no-trump (systems on/off per partnership agreement). If the opponents interfere, you again use your agreed upon convention over no-trump interference (e.g., Stolen Bids, Lebensohl, Transfer Lebensohl, etc.). Over the 1NT* takeout bid, bid your longest suit.

Note: The "ACBL standard" 1NT overall requires 15-17/18 HCP, a balanced hand, and a stopper in the opponent's bid suit. ANY VARIATION FROM THIS STANDARD must be alerted.

Can a similar practice be used with a 2/3 level pre-emptive opening? Yes, now 2/3NT* is for takeout! This practice is sometimes referred to as the No-trump for Takeout Convention.

Reverse Flannery by Responder

How many times as responder with five spades and four hearts with 5-8 HCP has your partner opened one of a minor and you bid one spade and opener rebid his minor and you missed a fit in hearts?

To illustrate, suppose you have the following hands:

Opener ♣ 842 ♦ AQ972 ♥ AKJ ♠ 42
 Responder ♣ J 9 ♦ 84 ♥ Q532 ♠ K9754

And the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass; 2♦ - Pass - Pass - Pass, so you missed your heart fit.

Or even worse, suppose you have the following hand:

Opener ♣ J5 ♦ AK853 ♥ AJ94 ♠ J9
 Responder ♣ 7 ♦ J4 ♥ 109742 ♠ KQ853

And again the bidding goes 1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass; 2♦ - Pass - Pass - Pass, so again you missed your heart fit.

This bidding problem is handled by using the Reverse Flannery Convention (RFC). How does it work?

After a minor suit opening, the convention works:

1. An immediate jump shift to two hearts after partner's minor opening is defined as showing a hand with five spades and four or five hearts, minimum responding values (about 5-8 HCP).
2. A one-spade response followed by a jump shift to three hearts on the second round is invitational, showing 5-5 distribution or better, originated by Edwin Kantar.
3. A bid of 2 spades shows 5-4 distribution with 9-11 HCP.
4. A one-spade response followed by a two-heart rebid is forcing for one round showing a minimum of 9 HCP and no upper limit. A three-heart rebid on the third round is forcing to game.

While the RFC does not allow one to use the weak jump shift in hearts (two hearts), this is not a major problem, since two hearts is of dubious preemptive value if jump shifts are weak, and the strong jump shift of two hearts can be handled by a one-heart response and aggressive rebidding.

Continuation of the auction after RFR is simple. Opener in most cases places the contract by passing, bidding two spades, or bidding three of his original minor. He may invite naturally by bidding 2NT or three of either minor.

Responder's obligations are, usually in order of priority:

- a. Rebid three hearts with five hearts or
- b. Rebid three no-trump with stop in the unbid minor or
- c. Raise opener's minor with three or
- d. Raise opposite minor with four-card support for opener's minor (usually a void of opposite minor)
- e. Bid three spades failing (a) through (d) above.

The RFC can be combined with inverted minors (criss-cross) using the following bids.

1♣	2♣	Game forcing club raise
	2♦	Limit raise for clubs
	2♥	5 spades, 4-5 hearts, 5-8 pts
	2♠	5 spades, 4-5 hearts, 9-11 pts
	2NT	invitational to game, 10-12 pts
	3♣	Limit raise in clubs
1♦	2♦	Game forcing raise for diamonds
	2♥	5 spades, 4-5 hearts, 5-8/9 pts
	2♠	5 spades, 4-5 hearts 9-11 pts
	2NT	Invitational to game 10-12 pts
	3♣	Limit raise in diamonds
	3♦	Weak preemptive raise for diamonds

The TRASH Convention

Most partnerships have their favorite conventions they play over a NT opening. There are a host of conventions: Cappelletti, Modified Cappelletti (also called Hamilton/Modified Hamilton), Astro, Pinpoint Astro, Brozel, Landy, Transfers (Weber), Ripstra, Hello, SCUM, DONT, Blooman, etc. and the list goes on. For those who play a convention in the direct seat, they often have a different convention in the indirect seat. In addition, many have yet another convention over a weak NT bid (10-12/12-14) and over the precision strong club bid (e.g., Color **R**ANK and **S**Hape [CRASH] and Mathe). A convention that may be unknown to many partnerships is the TRASH Convention. It can be played in the direct seat, the indirect seat, over strong bids and over weak bids. It is truly a panacea.

This convention was designed by the American champion and bridge author Harold Feldheim. The TRASH (**T**Ransfer **A**nd **S**Hape) Convention is a defensive convention that can be planned against all strong opening bids (1♣, 1NT, 2♣, 2NT, etc.) and is therefore better than CRASH/Mathe that is usually only played against the one club opening. The convention is similar to the transfer system (sometimes called Weber) played over the strong no-trump opening; however, it is better since it allows the defenders to enter the auction with either one- or two-suited hands. The TRASH Convention may also be used over weak 1NT (e.g., 10-12, 12-14, etc.) openings. Now, one has to learn only a single convention for all seats and several bidding systems.

Based on the transfer principle, the TRASH artificial overcall shows either a one-suiter in the next ranking suit (first step) or a two-suiter, second and third step above the bid suit. Only the spade overcall is an exception (since the next higher step is no-trump) showing a rounded (hearts and clubs) or a pointed (diamonds and spades) two-suiter. The following table shows the meanings of all TRASH overcalls.

Opening Bid	Overcall	Meaning of Overcall
1♣, 2♣ or 1NT 2NT	Double 2♣ 3♣	Diamond one-suiter Hearts-spades two-suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♦ 2♦ 3♦	Heart one-suiter Spades-clubs two-suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♥ 2♥ 3♥	Spade one-suiter Clubs-diamonds two-suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1NT 2NT 3NT	Club one-suiter Diamonds-hearts two-suiter
1♣ or 1NT, 2♣ 2NT	1♠ 2♠ 3♠	Two-suiter (unknown) Pointed (hearts and clubs) or rounded (spades and diamonds) suits

Over 1NT/2NT **double** is always for penalty.

To use the convention to show two-suited bids over the strong 1♣ opening bid (following Mathe), one may agree to use the 1NT overcall bid to show the minors instead of a club one-suiter and the spade bid for an unknown two-suiter. Now, 1♣-2♣ is natural. With this modification, one should have a hand equal to a strong no-trump opener (15-17 HCP).

Responder Bids

Facing a TRASH overcall, partner must transfer to the next ranking suit. The only exception is he has good support for the next ranking suit as well as for one of the other suit, he then bids as follows.

With a weak hand = jump in the next higher ranking suit

With a good hand= bid no-trump

The intervener now has enough information to choose the best contract for the defending partnership. With a strong hand and holding a one-suiter, he may rebid the original suit or he may rebid the lowest suit of the two-suiter.

TRASH has a strong nuisance effect on the opponents, posing new kinds of problems. It is also useful in finding a good sacrifice or perhaps an ideal contract.

The Mathe Convention

This is a simple convention played over a strong Precision Club opening developed by Lewis L. Mathe. It goes:

All single suit bids: diamonds, hearts, and spades are natural showing 5+ cards.

1NT shows both minors (5+/5+) and double shows both majors (4/4 or 5/5 by agreement). Is there something better? Yes, because a double does nothing to interfere over the strong club, use instead 1NT to show the majors and 2NT/2♣ for the minors! Using the Mathe convention, it is almost better to pass. Or you may use the modified Blooman Convention:

Modified Blooman (Direct Seat)

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Relay to 2♣ then bid Cappelletti to show two-suited 5-5 hand (2♦/2♥/2♠)
2♣*	Transfer to 6-card diamond suit
2♦*	Transfer to 6-card heart suit
2♥*	Transfer to 6-card spade suit
2♠*	Transfer to 6-card club suit
2NT*	Shows the minors (usually 5-5)

The “Undercall” ♣ Convention - Extended

How many times have the opponents opened 1♣ and you have overcalled a major and then they negative double to show the other major? Or, you make an overcall and win the contract and the weak hand is on lead? Is there a convention you can use that can prevent the often used negative double or ensure the strong hand leads?

The answer is YES; let us look at an example.

In the second seat, after the bid of 1♣, you pick up at favorable vulnerability the following hand.

♠AQJ873 ♥432 ♦J87 ♣A what do you bid?

With an opening hand and six spades, most would overcall a spade to show a good suit and lead directing! However, if you win the contract, the weak hand is on lead. In many situations it is better to get the strong hand on lead. Thus, you want your partner to play the contract. To accomplish this goal, you may use the “Undercall” Club Convention based upon transfers.

The convention applies ONLY over the opening bid of 1♣. In the second (overcall) seat, your overcall bids are:

1♦ = transfer to hearts (5+ hearts and first or second round control)

1♥ = transfer to spades (5+ spades and first or second round control)

1♠ = transfer to diamonds (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king) **NOTE: May be played to transfer to No-trump, usually with a club stopper since playing in a minor may not be attractive.**

1NT = shortness in clubs and 10-15 HCP (Optional* - for takeout)

X= 16+ HCP with stopper in clubs (Optional*)

2♣=both majors and weak 8-11HCP

2♦ = Flannery or Extra-Shape Flannery (Optional - depends on partnership agreement).

2♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ spades and strong 16-21 HCP)

2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16-21 HCP)

2NT = 5+hearts and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17/18 usually with a stopper and double is for takeout.

That is it! What do you gain by using the transfer bids?

1. You get partner to declare the hand in your long suit, putting the strong hand opening bidder on lead.
2. With diamonds, you preempt their one-level overcall by bidding 1♠.
3. You escape a penalty double if partner happens to hold length in the suit you bid and shortness in the suit you have shown.
4. You get to make two bids (usually) for the price of one, since most of the time partner will bid your suit or something else and you get to make another bid (standard transfer advantage).
5. By transferring into your major suit, it may take away their negative double.

Now, let's look at the complete deal and employ our new "Undercall" club convention.

	♠	AQJ873		
	♥	432		
	♦	J87		
	♣	A		
♠	2	N W E S	♠	64
♥	AQ75		♥	J108
♦	KQ10		♦	654
♣	K10973		♣	Q8642
	♠	K1095		
	♥	K96		
	♦	A632		
	♣	J5		

Not playing the Undercall Club Convention, north would overcall a spade and N-S would reach a part score or game in spades and make eight or nine tricks with east leading the jack of hearts.

Playing the Undercall Club Convention, the bidding would proceed as follows.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥*	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♥**	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

*Alert

**Help suit game try – alert

With south playing the contract, west leads the king of diamonds. South wins the ace, cashes the ace of clubs, leads a trump to hand and ruffs a club, draws a second trump, and leads a diamond toward dummy, ending in hand. A heart is discarded on the thirteenth diamond. If west started with two diamonds, he is end-played. If west started with four diamonds, he gets out with a diamond and declarer wins the jack, leads a third trump to hand and plays a diamond, throwing a heart. Now, west is end-played. Four spades bid and made - but only from the south side.

It is true that even if south plays the hand, a club or spade lead with defeat 4♠, but only if west defends perfectly. After winning the first round of diamonds, he must shift to a heart, leading away from AQxx. It is not that easy!

What do you lose by playing the Undercall Club Convention?

You lose the ability to hear partner bid 1♥ or 1♠ as he could after a 1♦ overcall. Also, if you bid 1♠ with diamonds, committing your side to the two levels, you will need a better diamond suit than for a 1♦ overcall.

As in Precision, can you refuse the transfer? Yes, if they pass, bid 1NT without a fit (a void or only one card in the transfer suit, with two/three cards – accept the transfer). Or, you

can bid your own 5+ suit. And, if they interfere, you can pass without support or perhaps bid your own suit. Finally, you can bid 2♣ to ask overcaller to bid his second suit.

Let's look at few more examples: The opponents open 1♣ and you hold the following hands:

1. ♠ 975 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75
2. ♠ K75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75
3. ♠ A75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75

For hand (1), you would bid 1♥ as a transfer to diamonds (lead directing); however, with hand (2), you would bid 1NT as takeout (tells partner you have 10-15 HCP and can support all suits), and with hand (3), you would double to show 16+ points. You would reverse your bids in hands (2) and (3) if you play 1NT as a strong hand and double for takeout!

Finally, with the following hand: ♠ AKQJ7 ♥ 7 ♦ 987652 ♣ A, you would bid 1♥ (transfer to spades) and (if necessary) perhaps bid diamonds later (e.g., if partner bids 2♣).

This is the basic Undercall Club “Transfer” Convention; it is best played only over a 1♣ bid (Provided the club bid is not the strong Precision Club).

However, you may also play transfers over other one-level opening as follows.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY OPEN 1♦? Can we extend the transfer bids? Yes!

One can again use transfer bids:

Opener	You
1♦	1♥ = transfer to spades (5+ spades and first or second round control) 1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king) NOTE: May be played to transfer to No-trump, usually with a diamond stopper.
	1NT = shortness in diamonds and 10-15 HCP (Optional* - for takeout) X= 16+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (Optional*)
	2♦=both majors (Optional) 2♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ spades and strong 16-21 HCP) 2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16-21 HCP) 2NT = 5+hearts and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY OPEN 1♥?

Opener	You
1♥	1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king)

NOTE: May be played to transfer to No-trump, usually with a heart stopper.

1NT = shortness in hearts and 10-15 HCP (Optional* - for takeout)

X= 16+ HCP with stopper in hearts (Optional*)

2♥=spades and a minor (Optional)

2NT = 5+clubs and 5+diamonds (Optional)

3♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ and strong 16-21 HCP)

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

AND FINALLY, if they open 1♠

Opener	You
1♠	1NT = shortness in hearts and 10-15 HCP (Optional* - for takeout) X= 16+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (Optional*)

2♠=hearts and a minor (Optional)

2NT = 5+clubs and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

The convention proposed here is an extension of the Undercall Club Convention discussed in “Bridge Conventions in Depth” (2003) by Matthew & Pamela Granovetter by Master Point Press.

Reuben Advances

Bidding a new suit over partner’s overcall bid is played as (a) forcing, (b) non-forcing constructive, or (c) non-forcing. Each option works well with some hands and poorly with others. Is there a better option even if it cannot be used with all hands? Yes, they are called Reuben advances. Unlike the Undercall club convention, which is a Mid Chart Convention, Reuben advances are allowed in the ACBL General Convention Chart, used in most local bridge clubs.

As a motivation for Reuben Advances, recall that over the opening bid of a strong no-trump most partnerships play transfer bids. This is done to allow the strong hand to play the contract in order

to protect tenaces on the opening lead. When you make the transfer bid, as responder you may (1) make the bid and pass (2) transfer and raise (3) transfer and bid no-trump, and (4) transfer to one suit and bid another. In most cases, you want to bid and make another bid.

Can one employ the no-trump strategy when making an overcall bid? Yes! Let's look at an example. Suppose the opener bids 1♣ and partner overcalls 1♠ and your RHO passes.

With the following hand you would like to (1) transfer to 2♥ and pass.

♠7 ♥AQ1098 ♦Q76 ♣5432

However, with a better hand you want to (2) transfer and raise to 3♥.

♠76 ♥AQJ98 ♦K76 ♣54

Or, if one has a more balanced hand transfer to hearts and bid 2NT.

♠76 ♥AQ1098 ♦K76 ♣QJ2

Finally, with a two-suited hand,

♠7 ♥KQ1098 ♦AJ976 ♣J2

You might (4) raise and bid a second suit.

If the overcaller holds the following hand:

♠AQJ1098 ♥7 ♦Q76 ♣543

He may refuse the transfer and instead bid 2♠. Or, with a strong two-suit hand when the transfer is to diamonds, bid 4♠ if the overcaller had the following hand

♠AQJ1098 ♥7 ♦K765 ♣43

This is exactly how Reuben advances work.

Playing Reuben advances, the transfer begins with a cue bid of the opener's suit. In our example 1♣ - 1♠ - pass, 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds; 2♦ is a transfer to hearts; 2♥ is a transfer to spades showing 3+ card supports with 10+ working points (excluding honors in the opponent's suit); 2♠ shows a minimal raise. **Reuben raises are in effect when opener's partner either passes or makes a negative double.** If the overcall had been 1♥, then the bid of 1♠ is natural and forcing for one round (a jump to 2♠ is preemptive) since Reuben advances begin with 2♣ - the cheapest bid of opener's suit.

Summary of 1♣- 1♠- Pass (double)

1NT	balanced with a stopper
2♣	transfer to diamonds
2♦	transfer to hearts (over a pass only not a negative double)
2♥	3+ card support 10+ working points
2♠	shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
2NT	balanced with stopper and two card support for spades
3♣/♦	Western Cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

Over 1♣-1♥- pass (double), 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds, and 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, showing a limit raise or better in hearts. After 1♦-2♣- pass, 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, and 2♥ is a transfer to spades. Now 2♠ is natural.

Summary of 1♣- 1♥- Pass (double)

1♠	natural (over a pass only not a negative double)
1NT	balanced with a stopper
2♣	transfer to diamonds
2♦	transfer to hearts with 3+ card support (limit raise)
2♥	shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
2♠	natural and preemptive (over a pass only not a negative double)
2NT	balanced with stopper and two card support for hearts
3♣/♦	Western Cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

In both of these cases, a bid of 1NT would show a balanced hand with a stopper in opener's bid suit clubs and 2NT conveys two card support in the over caller's major.

Rueben advances are also in effect over the bidding sequence 1♦-1♠- (pass). For this case, the bids are:

Summary of 1♦- 1♠- Pass (double)

1NT	balanced with a stopper
2♣	natural
2♦	transfer to hearts (over a pass only not a negative double)
2♥	3+ card support 10+ working points
2♠	shows minimal raise, poor defensive values
2NT	balanced with stopper and two card support for spades
3♣/♦	Western Cue bid, with a stopper bid 3NT

When the overcall involves two touching suits 1♣-1♦, 1♦-1♥ or 1♠-2♣, Rueben advances do not apply. This is why they cannot be used with all overcalls. Now the cheapest bid of the opponent's suit shows a limit raise in over caller's suit with 3+ card support.

How does the over caller respond after the transfer?

Let's look at our last example where the bidding went: 1♦- 1♠- Pass- 2♦. The responses would be:

- 2♥ accept transfer with a minimum and 3 card support
- 2♠ deny support
- 3♣ deny support and shows second suit
- 3♥ accept transfer with 4+ card support
- 3♦ cue bid with 3+ card support and maximum
- 3♠ very good six card suit and maximum
- 3NT stoppers in all suits but hearts

Montreal Relay Club Bids

In the first or second seat, one may open a short club (0-2) to find out whether or not partner has a five card major. A common system of bids is called the Montreal Relay Club bid which is used in the first or second seats are forcing; however in the third or fourth seats, the bid is non-forcing. The responses follow.

Open 1 Club with 11-19 Starting Points or **Double** if bid was stolen by the opening bidder.

High Card Points (HCP)	Responses	
	5/6-9 Points	Opener's rebid 2♣ forcing
	1 ♥ 5+ Hearts	1 ♦ 5+ Diamonds Responder Re-Bid 6+ Major Suit
	1 ♠ 5+ Spades	or Bid 4-card Suit
	1 NT No 5-card Major	or Bid 3-card Suit with A or K
10-12 Points	2♣ 5 Hearts	3♣ forcing, Next Level Responder Bids
	2♦ 5 Spades	4♦ - 1 st Level Higher 10 Points
	2♥ 6+ Hearts	4♥ - 2 nd Level Higher 11 Points
	2♠ 6+ Spades	4♠ - 3 rd Level Higher 12 Points
	2NT No 5+ Major	
13+ Points	3♣ 5 Hearts	4♣ forcing, Next Level Responder Bids
	3♦ 5 Spades	13-14 4♦
	3♥ 6+ Hearts	15-16 4♥

3♠ 6+ Spades	17-18 4♠
3NT No 5+ Major	19+ 5NT

Note: With one or two four-card majors, may bid 2NT with 13+ points so that partner may bid their four card major suit if available. With no 4-card major, bid 3NT. With a larger hand bid 4NT Blackwood since no agreed upon suit.

*= Alert as Forcing Artificial Bid @=announce Bid as Non-Forcing and maybe short

A less complicate system of bids played by some is called the Kennedy Club bids

Kennedy Club Bids

Open 1♣ with 11-19 Starting Points or **Double** if bid was stolen

High Card Points (HCP)	Responses	Opener's Rebids
5/6-10 Points	1♦ No 5-card Major	Bid four-card majors Up-the-line
	1♥ 5+ Hearts	jump with 15+
	1♠ 5+ Spades	Bid 1NT balanced minimum
	1NT No 4/5-card Major	Invite 2NT or bid best minor

The responder, holding neither a 4-card major suit nor a 5-card major suit, and no five-card support for opener's Minor suit, will bid No Trump on the appropriate level according to the number of working values: 2NT with values of 9/10 to 12, and 3NT with game values.

Montreal Relay Diamond Bids

In the first or second seat, one may open a diamond to find out whether or not partner has a four card major. A common system of bids is called the Montreal Relay Diamond bid which is used in the first or second seats is forcing; however in the third or fourth seats, the bid is non-forcing. The responses follow.

Open 1 Diamond with 11-19 Starting Points or **Double** if bid was stolen by the opening bidder.

High Card Points (HCP)	Responses	
6-9 Points	1♥ 4+ Spades	Opener rebid of 2♣ forcing any other bid to play
	1♠ 4+ Hearts	
	1 NT No Major	

10-12 Points	2♣ 4 Hearts	3♣ Forcing
	2♦ 4 Spades	any other bid to play
	2♥ 5+ Hearts	
	2♠ 5+ Spades	
	2NT No Major	
13+ Points	3♣ 4 Hearts	5♣ Forcing, Next Level Bids
	3♦ 4 Spades	13-14 5 Diamonds
	3♥ 5+ Hearts	15-16 5 Hearts
	3♠ 5+ Spades	17-18 5 Spades
	3NT No Major	19+ 5NT

*= Alert bid as Forcing and Artificial one or two four card majors

The Montreal Relay Club and Diamond bids are used to find major suit fits, either 5-3 or 4-4 in the majors. If you choose to use the “Montreal Bids”, you cannot use the 2/1 inverted minor bids.

Multi Weak Two Bids

The opening bids of 2♦/2♥/2♠ usually show a hand with 5/6-10 HCP and a 6-card suit. Is there a better bidding strategy?

Yes, how about the multi-suit weak two bids.

The bids are defined:

2♦ - Single heart suit, or two suits: Diamonds and Clubs, or Diamonds and Spades

2♥ - Single spade suit, or two suits: Hearts and Clubs, or Hearts and Diamonds

2♠ - Single club suit, or two suits: Spades and Diamonds, or Spades and Hearts

Observe that the single suited hands are the next level suit (Diamonds implies Hearts, Hearts implies Spades and Spades implies Clubs), transfer like bids. Hence, responder bids the next suit up-the-line to play and opener passes if the hand is single suited. If opener has a two-suited hand (the hand includes the suit bid and two suits excluding the suit immediately above the suit bid), he refuses the two level bids and bids three clubs (after 2♦-2♥-3♣) or three diamonds (after 2♥-2♠-3♦ or 2♠-3♣-3♦), the lower ranking suit of a two suited hand. Partner now knows both suits and either passes or bids the second suit at the three level.

With game interest, responder does not use the relay bids of hearts, spades and clubs, but instead bids 2NT.

Now, opener bids his suit if single suited (Hearts, Spades or Clubs) at the three level. If two suited, he again bids three clubs or three diamonds, the lower ranking suit, with minimal values (5-7 HCP).

With 8-10 HCP, opener bids 3NT if single suited or the higher ranking suit at the three level if holding a two suited hand, for example the bids would be: after 2♦-2NT-3♠, after 2♥-2NT-3♥, and after 2♠-2NT-3♠.

Let's look at three examples.

Example (1)

Opener: ♠ 6 ♥ A Q 8 7 6 5 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ 10 7 6
 Responder: ♠ A Q 7 8 ♥ J 10 ♦ J 10 4 ♣ A 2

In (1), opener bids 2♦*. Responder with only 12 HCP, bids 2♥ and opener would pass.

Example (2)

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

In (2) opener bids 2♥ and when partner bids 2♠, he does not pass, but bids 3♦ to show hearts and diamonds. Partner would now pass with three diamonds.

Example (3)

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

In (3), after opener's bid of 2♦* responder bids 2NT. With only six HCP, opener bids 3♥ to show a minimal single suited hand. Responder bids 4♥; however with fewer points and no fit, responder could pass.

Some may feel that the multi-suit weak two bidding structure defined above is too complicated. Because the bids are weak, the structure must be involved to differentiate between invitational hands and game going hands.

If one increases the value of "weak" bids to hands with more points, say 10 -12, the bidding structure may be greatly simplified; however, you have now given up weak two bids. With weak bids increased in value one may perhaps adopt the following bidding structure. Instead of using transfer bids, one may define a structure of bids as follows:

- 2♦ = diamonds or diamonds and a lower ranking suit
- 2♥ = hearts or hearts and a lower ranking suit
- 2♠ = spades or spades and a lower ranking suit.

With a weak hand, responder may pass; there is no relay involved. With game interest, responder bids 2NT. Now the bid of 2NT becomes an asking bid, what is your second suit if two suited?

Not having a second suit, you would rebid your suit at the three level; however, with a two suited hand you would bid your lower ranking suit.

The revised bidding structure of 10-12 HCP is not arbitrary; it is identical to opening a weak no-trump. Thus, if you play weak no-trumps you might want to also consider the two-suited/single suited “weak” bids. Just a thought!

Let’s look at two more examples.

1. ♠ 83 ♥ K J 10 9 8 ♦ J ♣ A Q 10 9 8
2. ♠ J 10 9 4 ♥ Q J 10 7 ♦ J 10 3 ♣ A Q 10

Hand (1) has only 11 Starting Points, but you are 5-5 in hearts and clubs. Open the bidding 2♥.

Hand (2) also has 11 HCP, however, it is balanced. Playing weak no-trumps open the hand 1NT.

If you adopt the weak no-trump bid and the weak two bids with 10-12 HCP, consider the following bidding structure after vulnerable or non-vulnerable.

10-12	open the bidding 1NT
13-15	open 1♣, rebid 1NT
16-17	open 1♦, rebid 1NT
18-19	open one of a suit, rebid 2NT
20-21	open the bidding 2NT

As an alternative to the Multi Weak Two Bids, some may choose to adopt Tartan Two Bids devised by Hugh Kelsey and Tom Culbertson. The bidding structure follows.

Tartan Two Bids

Opener	Responder	Description
2♥		meaning yet to be determined
	2♠	Relay/cheapest bid
2NT		20-21 HCP and a balanced hand
3♣/3♦		5-5 Hearts and Clubs/Hearts and Diamonds (6-10 HCP)
3♥		5+ Hearts 6-10 HCP
2♠		meaning yet to be determined
	2NT	Relay/cheapest bid
3♣/3♦/3♥		5-5 Spades and Clubs/Spades and Diamonds/Hearts and Spades with 6-10 HCP
3♠		5+ Spades 6-10 HCP

Burgay Responses to 15-17 NT Opening

I found this very interesting convention when playing strong no-trumps. It incorporates Stayman, Transfers, Smolen, slamish hands and major suit voids. It was developed by **Leandro Burgay**, a leading Italian expert in the early 1970s.

1. $2\clubsuit$ forces opener to bid $2\diamondsuit$, then
 - pass with a weak hand and diamonds
 - $2♥/2♠$ invitational with a four card major
 - 2NT standard 1NT-2NT invitational sequence
 - $3♣/3♦$ 5-4 distribution in the minor (5-cards in bid minor, 4-cards in the other)
 - 3NT 2-2-5-4 or 2-2-4-5
 - $3♥$ Smolen five spades and four Hearts
 - $3♠$ Smolen four spades and five Hearts
2. $2\diamondsuit$ transfer to $2♥$, (opener bids $3♥$ with a four-card heart suit unless min with 3=4-3-3 distribution), then:
 - $2♠$ shows 4 Hearts without four Spades
 - 2NT shows four Hearts and four Spades
 - $3♣/3♦$ shows four cards in bid minor and five Hearts
 - 3NT shows five Hearts, balanced hand
3. $2♥$ transfer to $2♠$, (opener bids $3♠$ with four Spades unless min with 4=3-3-3 distribution), then:
 - 2NT shows four Spades without four Hearts
 - $3♣/3♦$ shows four cards in minor and five Spades
 - 3NT shows a balanced hand with five Spades
4. Other responses to the strong 1NT opening:
 - $2♠$ transfer to Clubs
 - 2NT transfer to Diamonds
 - 3-level suit bid natural 6 + card suit and slamish
 - 3NT to play
 - $4♣$ major two suited hand, longer Hearts
 - $4♦$ major two suited hand, longer Spades
 - $4♥$ minor two suited hand, Heart void
 - $4♠$ minor two suited hand, Spade void

Kaplan Interchange

After an opening bid of $1♥$, there is an advantage to switching the $1♠$ and 1NT (forcing) responses since opener may not have a hand big enough to make a reverse bid of $2♠$. This is called the Kaplan Interchange.

Suppose responder does NOT have spades but does have a typical 1NT forcing bid with 7-12 hcp. Playing standard responses, you cannot play in 1NT, because that bid is forcing. However if you play the Kaplan Interchange, responder bids $1♠$ with those hands, and opener with most minimum 5332 hands can now rebid 1NT to play, if responder agrees that is a good spot.

Other bids over the bid of 1♠ are:

- 2♣ 4-card club suit
- 2♦ 4-card diamond suit
- 2♥ 4-card heart suit
- 2♠ 3-card spade suit with 12-15 hcp

If you play Flannery you do not need this bid since over 1♥ the bid of 1♠ shows five spades.

The disadvantage is that when responder **DOES** have spades he must bid 1NT forcing, so the partnership cannot play 1NT (with normal methods they can, with opener rebidding 1NT— 1♥-1♠ - 1NT).

However the advantage outweighs the disadvantage, because responder will **NOT** have spades more often than he will have spades, so you will be able to settle in 1NT more often. The interchange is not needed if you play 1NT as semi-forcing.

Ekren 2♦ Convention

The weak two diamond bid has little utility in duplicate bridge. Instead, many bridge players use it as Flannery, Extra Shape Flannery, Mini Roman, Mexican Two diamonds, and many others.

Because it is important to find a major suit fit, another option is to employ the bid as the Ekren 2♦* bid suggest by Biørn Olav Ekren of Norway.

The bid of 2♦, playing the 2/1 Game Force System is defined as 4-4, 4-5, 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors with 5-10 HCP.

Responses to the bid are:

- Pass to play (can be a tactical maneuver in the absence of a major suit fit and does not guarantee long diamonds)
- 2♥/♠ to play
- 2NT Relay (invitational or stronger)
- 3♣ Natural, not forcing
- 3♦* Invitational with 3-3 in the majors
- 3♥/♠ preemptive to play
- 4♥/♠ to play

In responding to the 2NT relay, the opener indicates whether his holdings are a minimum (5-7 HCP) or a maximum (8-10 HCP) and something about his distribution.

3♣* = any minimum (responder's 3♥/♠ rebid now indicates an invite)

3♦* = 5-5 min or max (creates game force)

3♥* = 4-5 max (creates game force)

3♠* = 5-4 max (creates game force)

3NT* = 4-4 max (creates game force)

Playing the Ekren two diamond convention, one may use the bid of 2♥ to indicate a hand with 11 -15 HCP and exactly 4-4 in the majors. This treatment has the advantage that the left hand opponent of the opener can hardly gamble on the fact that he will get a second chance to bid.

The bid of 2♠ shows a 5+ spade hand with 5-10 HCP and two of the top three honors when vulnerable.

When the Opponents Show Weakness

Playing 2/1 Game Force, you often hear the following auctions: 1♣-1NT or 1♦ - 1NT and you are in the balancing seat, what do you bid?

Clearly the points are 20 – 20, do you double? And if you do, what is the meaning of the bid? Do you really have the other three suits? I don't think so.

I would recommend the following strategy.

When you are 4-4 in the majors, cue bid their suit as a delayed "Michaels" bid, to show partner that you are 4-4 in the majors. And use a double to show that you are 4-4 in the two lowest unbid suits, like an unusual 2NT bid (e.g. diamonds and hearts after the club bid, and clubs and hearts after the diamond bid). If you have spades, bid them at the one level, even with four and with two of the top three honors.

How does partner respond? With a fit, he bids the suit; however, without a fit partner must bid his own 5-card suit at the two level.

Try to never let the opponents play 1NT in a duplicate game when you have the majors or hearts and a minor.

What if the bidding goes 1♥ - 1♠ - 1NT?

Because the opponents have bid the majors, it is usually best to pass with this bidding sequence. Let them play in a no-trump contract. Who wants to play in a minor suit partial?

Fast Arrival or Picture bids

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, suppose the bidding goes 1♠ - 2♣; 2♠ - 4♠. What does the game bid mean?

Using the principle of “fast-arrival” some may interpret the bid as “I am not interested in bidding on;” since if I were, I would have bid 3♠. Or, does it show a specific holding?

Some bridge experts agree that it should show a specific holding called a “picture bid”. The bid of 4♠ would show that partner’s high card points are in clubs and spades with no controls or shortness in the unbid suits.

This concept was considered by Eric Rodwell in his March/April 2008 Two-Over-One article called the “Principle of Fast Arrival” on the website /www.betterbridge.com/articles/Two-Over-One/09-200803.pdf.

Fast Arrival does not rule out the possibility of slam when partner has extra values. Let’s look at Rodwell’s first example.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥
2♠	4♠
4NT	5♥
6♠	Pass

With a minimum for the 2/1 response, East’s jumps to game over the 2♠ rebid. That doesn’t deter West from going to slam once East shows a fit for spades, along with enough strength for a 2/1 game forcing response. East jump to game is called a picture bid. It paints a nice picture of his hand: a minimum opening bid with most of the high cards in hearts and spades with no controls in diamonds or clubs. With extra values, or high cards in clubs and diamonds, East could raise to 3♥. With shortness in clubs or diamonds, East could make a *splinter* jump to 4♣ or 4♦.

Both partners can use the bid. Sometimes the opener may take a fast route to game: We look at Rodwell’s second example.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥
4♥	Pass

West likes East's 2♥ response, but has a minimum opening bid with no help outside of hearts and spades. West quickly takes the partnership to game. East knows that opener could have simply raised to 3♥ to leave more room for slam exploration. West's jump to game is again a picture bid. It paints a nice picture of the West hand: a minimum opening bid with most of the high cards in hearts and spades.

Playing the 2/1 game force system, a jump to the four level in the bid suit may not mean stop. You must discuss this with your partner.

As another example, suppose the bidding goes 1NT - 2♣; 2♦ - 4♣; what is the bid of four clubs? Clearly, a picture bid showing a distributional hand (perhaps 6-4-2-1 or 6-4-3-0) with values in clubs and a major inviting partner to investigate slam in clubs.

The picture bid may also be played with Jacoby 2NT. What does the bidding sequence 1♠ - 2NT followed by the opener's bid of 4♠ imply?

Consider this set of bids, playing picture bids:

- 3♣, 3♦ or 3♥ = Singleton or void in that suit.
- 3♠ = good 14+ HCP with extra length in spades, no singleton.
- 3NT = 15-18 pts., balanced (no singleton or void).
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = Decent 5-card side suit (QJxxx or better).
- 4♠ = 19+ HCP with slam interest.

Without the concept of picture bids, most partnerships playing Jacoby use the bid of 4♠ with no slam interest. Then the bid of 3♠ is either semi-strong or real strong. With this sequence of bids, information is conveyed to the opponents. Instead, one should consider the bidding structure proposed above to convey information to your partner; instead of the opponents.

Jumping to 3NT

In the auction 1♥-2♣-3♦-3NT, partner has jumped to game. What does this mean? Some play it as Fast Arrival. But is that the best approach? Let's look at an example.

Say the bidding goes 1♠-2♦-2♠ and you hold the following hand:

♠Q4 ♥KQ9 ♦AQ872 ♣K45

You have 16 points, clearly not a minimum! If you bid 3NT (fast arrival), you may have missed a slam. And if you bid 2NT, and partner next bids 3NT you may also miss a slam if partner has extras.

To solve this dilemma, one may define the sequence $1x-2y-2z/x-3NT$ as a hand with 16-17 points. Thus, the bid of 3NT shows extra values. This like picture bids is an exception to the principle of fast arrival. Again, discuss the meaning of this bidding sequence with your partner.

Masked Mini-Splinters

A mini-splinter is a jump bid such as $1\clubsuit-1\spadesuit-3\heartsuit$. Here $3\heartsuit$ is the equivalent to raising spades to the 3-level, but shows a singleton diamond or a void. Since $2\heartsuit$ would be a reverse, the bid cannot be misunderstood.

A mini-splinter shows a 15+ to 18- points, and should not be confused with the regular splinter bid at the 4-level, such as $1\clubsuit-1\spadesuit-4\heartsuit$, where you are showing something like 18+ to 20 points with a shortage in diamonds, or $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-4\heartsuit$ shows 4 card spade support with a 6 card diamond suit.

You are limited in how you use a mini-splinter, since $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-3\clubsuit$ would be a natural jump shift. You have to think twice about whether you are showing a natural bid or a mini-splinter.

How do you tell the difference? What you do, playing mini-splinters is to use the concept of “masked mini-splinters.” Using this concept, the bid of three clubs is a mini-splinter that is a game force in some suit, and three diamonds is a mini-splinter in some suit that is not forcing to game.

If partner is interested in slam, one now bids 3NT, where is your singleton? Now you bid your controls up-the-line. 3NT is not natural showing duplication and offering a choice of contracts. After you have splintered, there is no choice of contracts as the major is preferred.

There are some RKCB rules in mini/maxi splinter auctions. If *either player* has splintered, a six level response to the Specific King Ask in the splinter suit shows the Spade King. It is wasteful for the responder to show the king of the splinter suit when hearts is the agreed suit, so why not use it for something useful? Showing the spade king is always *dangerous* as its rank virtually forces you to a grand. Do not splinter with stiff kings as it is a splinter distortion. Splintering with stiff Aces is also a no-no.

Ingberman Convention

This convention was named for **Mr. Monroe Ingberman** of New York, who was a mathematician and bridge player. He was also known for the direct splinter bid and the forcing 3NT response as a forcing major suit raise with at least two card support. The Ingberman convention is used to allow you to stop below game after opener’s 2-level reverse bid. It is similar to Lebensohl in that bidding 2NT (relay to $3\clubsuit$) then giving preference is weaker than an original preference. However, other bids are also defined so that it is more than Lebensohl after a reverse bid.

Definition of a Reverse: Any rebid by opener which forces preference of the opening suit to the three-level. If the initial bid and response were one of a suit, this bid is forcing one round (promises a rebid), but does not create a game force.

For example:

- (1) 1♣ - pass- 1♠ - pass (2) 1♦ - pass- 1♠ - pass
 2♦ - pass - ?? 2♥ - pass - ??

Reverses after 1♦ - 2♣ are forcing to game since responder has shown 13+ HCP in 2/1 or 10+ in Standard American and opener has extra values.

Even after a response of 1NT by responder, reverses should be forcing to game, since opener knows there is no fit in the higher suit. If you don't have a game force in this situation, just raise to 2NT.

Let's now look at the responses by partner in example (2) in more detail.

- 2♠ 5+ spades, any strength, forcing for one round. All other calls deny five spades except for raises in hearts
- 2NT Denies the values for game opposite a minimum reverse. Asks partner to rebid 3♣, so responder can take preference at the three-level to play
- 3♣ Good hand (10+), with values in clubs
- 3♦ 2+ diamonds, values for game; denies 5+ spades
- 3♥ 4+ hearts, values for game: serious 3NT is on by both hands
- 3♠ Solid or semi-solid spades, can play opposite a small singleton
- 3NT 8-10 HCP, club stopper, denies 3 diamonds or 4 hearts
- 4♣ Splinter in support of hearts
- 4♦ Good hand (13+), with values in diamonds.
- 4♥ *Picture Bid:* 5 spades, 4 hearts, and no controls in the minors

Note: Do not play fast arrival. Observe that the 3♦ preference bid may be made with a doubleton. This would only happen if you had nothing in clubs, for example, ♠AQxx ♥Kxx ♦Qx ♣xxxx. You certainly have the values for game, but have no other bid. If we the contract belongs in 3NT, it must be played from partner's side.

If instead the bidding goes:

- 1♦ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass
 2♥ - Pass - 2NT - Pass - ??

Then opener's bids are:

- 3♣ Relay bid 17+ points
- 3♦ 6+ diamonds, game forcing
- 3♥ 5+ hearts, 6+ diamonds, game forcing
- 3♠ 3 spades, game forcing
- 3NT Probably 2=4=5=2, 20 - 21 HCP

The responses for the bidding sequence:

- 1♦ - pass - 1♥ - pass
- 2♠ - pass - 2NT - Pass - ??

Are similar.

We next consider (1) in more detail.

- 1♣ - pass - 1♠ - pass - 2♦ - pass - ??
- 2♠ 5+ spades, any strength, forcing for one round. All other calls deny five spades except for raises in hearts
- 2NT Denies the values for game opposite a minimum reverse. Asks partner to rebid 3♣, so responder can take preference at the three-level to play
- 3♦ Good hand (10+), with values in diamonds
- 3♣ 2+ clubs, values for game; denies 5+ spades
- 3♥ 4+ hearts, values for game: serious 3NT is on by both hands
- 3♠ Solid or semi-solid spades, can play opposite a small singleton
- 3NT 8-10 HCP, club stopper, denies 3 clubs or 4 hearts
- 4♣ Good hand (13+), with values in clubs.
- 5♦ *Picture Bid*: 5 spades, 4 diamonds, and no controls in hearts or clubs.

If instead the bidding goes:

- 1♣ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass
- 2♦ - Pass - 2NT - Pass
- ??

Then opener's bids are:

- 3♣ Relay bid 17+ points
- 3♦ 5+ diamonds, game forcing
- 3♥ 4 hearts, 6+ clubs, game forcing
- 3♠ 3 spades, game forcing
- 3NT Probably 2=2=4=5, 20 - 21 HCP

Ping Pong Convention

The origin of this convention is unknown. The concept is to assist the opener to further clarify his holding when the first rebid by the opener is 1 NT, which can signify various hand types. The following diagram contains the various auctions whereby this conventional method may be employed:

North	East	South	West	Meaning
1♣/1♦/1♥	Pass	1♥ / 1♠	Pass	May only show a 4-card suit
1 NT	Pass	2♣		Forcing - the so-called Ping Pong action by responder (also known as a puppet bid)
2♦				An automatic rebid by opener

The 2♣ so-called Ping Pong is employed by the responder to show one of the following three holdings:

- To show weak holdings when the responder wishes to cease the auction in a part score in a Minor suit. If Diamonds is the Minor suit, then the responder passes the automatic rebid by opener. If Clubs is the intended suit, then the responder will correct to 3♣.
- To show balanced holdings of 5-3-3-2 or 4-3-3-3 and at least 10 high card points. Once the transfer (Ping Pong) has been completed and opener has rebid 2♦, then the responder rebids:

2NT: Shows a holding with 10-12 points.

3NT: Shows a holding with 12-16 points.

4NT: Shows a holding with 17-18 points.

and the opener becomes the captain and establishes the final contract.

- To show limited, balanced holding with a range of 11-13 points. The holding also contains at least a 5-card suit in the first suit bid by the responder. Continuances are then considered natural sequences, but they are generally considered invitational and not forcing.

When the Ping Pong Conventional method is the partnership agreement, then all other responses by the responder to a 1 No Trump rebid by the opener has the following meanings:

- Bids at the lowest level are discouraging, particularly the raise of a 1♥ opening by partner.
- Any reverse bids or jump bids are considered natural and semi-invitational.
- A 2NT rebid is natural, invitational, and denies a 5-card suit in any original Major suit bid by the responder.
- A 2♣ first response to a 1♣ opening is natural. A 2♣ first response to a 1♦ opening is natural and one-round forcing.

Marvin Two Spades Convention

The popular “Gambling 3NT” opening shows a solid seven-card minor with little outside strength. Besides being rather restrictive as to suit quality, the no-trump contract is played from the wrong side. Not only is the lead through dummy’s strength, but the exposure of that hand lets the opponents put up a “double dummy” defense. If responder can’t support a 3NT contract, the bidding ends up at the dangerous four level.

Marvin 2♠ shows the same sort of hand, or (nine times as frequent) a semi-solid (KQJ or AQJ) seven-card minor with one ace or king outside. The hand must contain at least one ace, so responder can count on seven playing tricks. Besides a solid minor, opener could have:

♠32 ♥A7 ♦KQJ10876 ♣J2
 or ♠K3 ♥9 ♦962 ♣AQJ9432

 or ♠75 ♥92 ♦AQJ7652 ♣A

A third-seat bidder might cheat with an eight-card suit or regard an AKJ10 suit as solid.

Responder bids 3♣ to sign off, whereupon opener will pass with clubs, or rebid 3♦ with diamonds. If responder would raise clubs but not diamonds, she responds 3♦. If she would raise diamonds but not clubs, she bids 3♣. Opener can correct if responder bids the wrong suit.

A response of 3♥ or 3♠ is forcing. Opener bids 3NT to show Qx, xxx, or better support, so responder (perhaps fishing for a no-trump contract) need not have a real suit (e.g., respond 3♥ with ♠A7532 ♥J76 ♦A87 ♣K2). Although this response must be alerted (“That is an asking bid, not a telling bid.”), its ambiguous nature can make it useful as a lead inhibitor or as a complete psych when an opposing game is feared.

A 2NT response asks for clarification. Opener bids 3NT with a solid minor, or indicates where the outside high card is located when the minor is only semi-solid:

Opener	Responder
2♠	2NT

- 3NT- solid minor suit
- 3♣ - club suit, high card in diamonds
- 3♦ - diamond suit, high card in clubs
- 3♥ - high card in spades, may have either minor
- 3♠ - high card in hearts, may have either minor

Opener’s rebid will usually give responder the information she needs to place the contract. These bids are designed so that opener’s LHO cannot double to direct a lead through the high card (perhaps an unguarded king).

A 4♣ response asks opener to show a short suit:

Open	Responder
2♠	4♣

4♦/4♥/4♠/5♣ - short suit

4NT - no short suit

A 4♦ response asks for a major suit preference (“Ripstra”), and 4NT is Blackwood (5♣ or 5♦ with one ace—must have one—5♥ with two).

A game response is a signoff, but a jump to 5♣ is “pass or correct” (to 5♦).

When the Opponents Intervene

If the 2♠ opening gets doubled, presumably showing a spade suit, responder may choose to make a forcing pass. She would pass, for instance, with ♠972 ♥QJ543 ♦A2 ♣A53, giving opener a chance to bid no-trump if he has spades stopped:

South	West	North	East
2♠ Dbl	Pass	Pass	

2NT - spade stopper

3♣/3♦ - no spade stopper

Suppose there is an overcall and responder cue bids:

South	West	North
2♠	3♦	4♦

South now bids 4♦ with solid diamonds, 4♥ with a high card in spades, 4♠ with a high card in hearts, 4NT with a high card in clubs, and 5♣ with a solid club suit! (Maybe 3♣ was meant as Michaels). Similarly:

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♦	4♦	Pass

4♥ - high card in spades

4♠ - high card in hearts

4NT - high card in diamonds, club suit

5♣/5♦ - solid suit

When the cue bid is in a major, opener has less room to show his hand and responder may have to guess opener’s minor:

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♥	4♥	Pass

4♠ - high card in spades, unknown minor
 4NT - high card in hearts, unknown minor
 5♣/5♦ - natural

The 5♣/5♦ bids show either a solid suit or a high card in the unbid minor.

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♠	4♠	Pass

4NT - high card in spades with minor
 5♣/5♦ - natural

The bidding here is so crowded that opener can show an outside high card in spades only.

Summarizing the advantages of Marvin 2♠ over Gambling 3NT:

1. It gives an accurate picture of more hard-to-describe hands.
2. It comes up ten times as often.
3. No-trump is played from the right side.
4. Responder can bail out at the three level.
5. Responder can inquire about a major at the three level.
6. Responder can ask for a short suit.
7. It frees the 3NT opening for another purpose (e.g., a nine-trick no-trump hand, also hard to describe).

The above bidding sequence was developed by Marvin L. French (www.marvinfrench.com).

Ripstra Convention

Ripstra is a convention, developed by J. G. Ripstra, is used the opponents have opened 1NT. It is a variation of the Landy convention, using not only a 2♣ overcall to show the major suits (at least 4-4), but a 2♦ overcall as well. The difference between overcalling 2♣ and 2♦ lies in the strength of overcaller's minor suits. With better clubs he overcalls 2♣ and with better diamonds, 2♦. With equal length in the minors, overcaller bids 2♣. The purpose of Ripstra is to allow partner to pass 2♣/2♦ when he can see no major-suit fit but has a lot of cards in the minor suit that overcaller has bid.

Top and Bottom Cue bids

The origins of these cue bids are unknown. They are employed after a suit opening of any opponent and not after any No Trump opening by the opponents. The direct cue bid of the suit

of the opponent may be employed in direct seat or in the balancing seat. The concept behind this method is to show that the two suits of the cue bidder are known to be the highest unbid suit and lowest unbid suit of the suit of the opener. The two-suiter of the overcaller should contain either a 5-4 distribution by favorable vulnerability; otherwise a distribution of at least 5-5 should be the norm by non-favorable vulnerability. The following chart indicates the possible suits following a suit opening by the opponents.

Opener	Overcaller	Meaning
1♣	2♣	Shows both the Spade suit and the Diamond suit.
1♦	1♦	Shows both the Spades suit and the Club suit.
1♥	2♥	Shows both the Spade suit and the Club suit.
1♠	2♠	Shows both the Heart suit and the Club suit.

As can be noticed by closer inspection, the main disadvantage of this concept is that the overcaller is unable to show a two-suited holding with both Major suits after a Minor suit opening by the opener.

In order to overcome this disadvantage, many partnerships have come to the understanding that the **Michaels Cue bid** should be used to show both Major suits if the opening has been in a **Minor suit** and restrict the **Top and Bottom Cue bids** to an opening by the opponent in either **Major suit**. Again, this understanding includes the disadvantage that the diamond suit could not be shown by either cue bid, neither Michaels cue bid nor Top and Bottom cue bids. This particular flaw contained in this concept has led to a certain unpopularity of this conventional method. However, the partnership can come to an understanding by certain continuance rebids to show the Diamond suit as the second suit, but this is left up to the partnership to decide.

A No-trump Convention

In the 2/1 game force system, one usually employs the 15-17 HCP no-trump range. An alternative suggested to me by Val Jakubowitch is to use a double barrel range for all no-trump openings. This allows one to use 2NT openings and overcalls as preemptive.

The basic system assumes no 5-card major and no more than one doubleton. The advantage of the approach is that it prevents the opponents from overcalling at the one level. It goes as follows.

1NT:	12-14 or 15-17
2NT:	18-20 or 24-16
3NT:	21-23 or 27+

The specific bids are:

12 to 14 HCP	Open 1NT
15 to 17 HCP	Open 1♣ (partner announces "could be short") and bids 1♦. Opener is waiting and bids 1NT.

18 to 20 HCP	Bid 1♣ followed by 2NT
21 to 23 HCP	Bid 1♣ followed by 3NT
24 to 26 HCP	Open 2♣ followed by 2NT
27+ HCP	Open 2♣ followed by 3NT

When opening a weak no-trump (12-14 HCP), and your LHO doubles, you must have an escape plan. Val recommends the following which allows the partnership to play in a 7-card or better fit at the two level or let the opponents have the contract. It works as follows.

If partner has a 5-card suit, he bids it and opener passes.

If partner is 4-3-3-3, he redoubles. Opener either bids his 4-card suit if your RHO passes or passes if your RHO bids.

If partner is either 4-4-3-2 or 4-4-4-1, he redoubles (which you must alert). If your RHO passes, you bid your 4-card suit. If your bid is your partner's one or two card suit, he will bid his next higher 4-card suits which allows for a 7-card fit which may be at the three level. A redouble by responder is for penalty.

What if the opponents interfere over 1♣?

One usually employs a negative double or with values bids a 5-card suit. However, a pass over interference does not necessarily mean a bust because the opener will usually get a chance to bid.

Responses to all no-trump level bids, including an overcall are the same. Lebensohl, Smolen, 4-way transfers (yes, for weak no-trump too) which apply over a double or 2♣ are the same. With the weak no-trump bid, Crawling Stayman is popular.

When using the no-trump convention, one now uses 2NT as 5-5 in the minors with 5-10 HCP non-vulnerable and 11-15 HCP vulnerable, similar to some versions of Precision.

For the no-trump convention, all overcalls show 7-15 HCP and a double shows 16+. When responding to a major, 1NT is forcing and shows 9-12 HCP and a stopper if the opponents have bid a suit. Two no-trump promises 2+ stoppers and 13+ HCP.

The Forcing Pass

A **Forcing Pass** in a competitive auction, is a pass that allows partner to choose the most profitable option between a rebid in agreed suit, doubling opponents' for penalty, allowing partner to redouble a makeable contract, showing a stronger hand than a simple competitive overcall, providing partner a conventional response and the like. If you use the forcing pass, partnerships need to decide on either Method 1 or Method 2.

METHOD 1	METHOD 2
Bid shows a good offensive hand	Bid shows good offensive hand
Double shows good defensive hand	Pass shows a fairly good offensive hand
Pass implies neither of these hands	Double implies neither of the above

While many players employ METHOD 1, some partnerships (notably Meckstroth-Rodwell) prefer METHOD 2.

Fundamentally, as summarized in bridgehands.com, we find partnership agreements fall in two camps: Industrialists and the Scientists. While Industrialist methods vary, a typical agreement might include: After we open, responder bids at the 2 level and opponents bid 3 No-trump or above, either partner's pass is forcing. Additionally, the Forcing Pass is the strongest action showing slam interest and at least a second round control.

A.	Forcing passes apply when your side bids a game or higher and the other side sacrifices
	1. You bid a vulnerable game
	2. You bid a non-vulnerable game voluntarily
	3. The opponents have preempted
B.	There are five options at the 5 level:
	1. Cue bid is a slam try - strongest action
	2. Pass and pull partners double - also a slam try
	3. Bid 5 level - extra values but no slam interest
	4. Pass – offers partner to bid five with extra values
	5. Double - worst hand based on auction
C.	Cue bid with an outstanding hand, showing first round control and interest in slam.
D.	“Pass and pull” is uncommon. Be aware when you pass, partner doubles, you need to pass unless you have slam interest

Here is what the Bridge World Standard says about the Forcing Pass:

1.	If a two-club opening is overcalled, responder's pass is forcing at every level - responder's double shows double-negative strength
2.	When a forcing bid is doubled and there is no contrary explicit system agreement or logic from the auction, a pass is forcing and a redouble is to play (suggests a contract)
3.	After a negative response to two clubs and an overcall, opener's pass is forcing
4.	After 1any - (X) - XX - (bid); opener's (or responder's) pass is forcing everywhere

Splimit

The Splimit, the combination of two bridge terms Splinter and LIMIT, is a convention inspired by the Splinter family and defined by *Pier Massimo Fornaro*, author of the bidding system '*Quinta Maggiore Milano*'.

They may be integrated into any five card major bidding system, provided you do not play Bergen Raises.

After a major suit opening, the bids show 4-card support for the major and a singleton/void and are defined:

Openings: 1♥

- 2♠ Splimit. hearts fit, 7-10HCP spades singleton/void
- 3♣ Splimit. hearts fit, 7-10HCP clubs singleton/void
- 3♦ Splimit. hearts fit, 7-10HCP diamonds singleton/void

Openings: 1♠

- 3♣ Splimit. spades fit, 7-10HCP clubs singleton/void
- 3♦ Splimit. spades fit, 7-10HCP diamonds singleton/void
- 3♥ Splimit. spades fit, 7-10HCP hearts singleton/void

Jump-reverses (Mini-splinters)

They are also used over a minor suit opening when responder bids a major at the one level. To show a fit, responder with 15/16+ points and a singleton or void bids at the three level below the major into a higher ranking suit than the minor bid, a jump-reverse:

Here are the only four Splimit response bids:

- 1♣ - 1♠; 3♦ singleton/void in diamonds
- 1♣ - 1♠; 3♥ singleton/void in hearts
- 1♣ - 1♥; 3♦ singleton/void in diamonds
- 1♦ - 1♠; 3♥ singleton/void in hearts

If you were not making a jump-reverse, a jump to the three level in a lower-ranking suit (for example, 1♦ - 1♠; 3♣), this would be considered a strong-jump shift showing 19+ points, and therefore is not a Splimit bid.

Bluhmer bids

This not so well known convention has something similar to the Splinter and is due to the American player Lou Bluhm. When the rare opportunity comes it may be really very useful.

The convention may be adopted when the Opener shows a three suits hand, in a clear misfit situation stated by the responder with a NT bid: the convention takes place using an unusual jump done by the responder in the first suit answered

Two common sequences are used by the Bluhmer:

South	North
1♦	1♥
1♠	1NT
2♣	3♥

South	North
1♣	1♥
1♠	1NT
2♦	3♥

In the two sequences, responder's jump cannot show a strong hand or a long hearts suit, as these two possibilities have been both excluded by his previous bid of 1NT that could have been passed by the Opener. The jump in delayed repetition shows, instead, a great fit in the last suit of the Opener and almost total absence of values in his first suit.

South	North
♠KJ32	♠Q104
♥	♥8752
♦A9853	♦K2
♣KQ106	♣AJ1026

The bidding would go:

1♦	1♥
2♣	3♥ (bad hearts, great clubs)

With these cards 3NT would be a very bad contract, easily beatable by one or more tricks. A club game or even slam, instead, shows sensible possibilities. A Bluhmer bid by North is really very effective as it shows to the Opener there are no wasted HCP in hearts.

Swedish 2NT

A major disadvantage of Opener's response to the Jacoby 2NT bid is that one cannot tell if opener has a minimum hand or a strong hand. To compensate for this, one can replace the Jacoby 2NT bid with the Swedish 2NT* bid which also must be alerted. The bid reduces the point count requirement and also the number of trumps.

2NT* (Swedish Jacoby): 3/4 card support, limit raise (10-12) or better (may or may not have a single/void).

Responses by Opener

3♣*: less than 15 Bergen Points

3♦*: no shortness, 15+

3♥*: singleton club, 15+

3♠*: singleton diamond, 15+

3NT*: singleton/void other major, 15+

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣:

Opener's responds 4♦ with singleton, 4♥ with void

4♣*/4♦*: void, 15+

4♥/4♠: No Slam interest

After 1♥/1♠ – 2NT – 3♣*, a response of 3♥/3♠ is a limit raise (10-12), and can be passed.

After Opener's 3♣* response, responder bids 3♦* to request opener's distribution

After 1♥/1♠ – 3♣* – 3♦*, opener re-bids are:

3♥*: singleton club

3♠*: singleton diamond

3NT*: singleton or void other major

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣.

Opener responds 4D with singleton, 4H with void

4♣*/4♦*: void in Clubs/Diamonds

4♥/4♠: no singleton/void or slam interest

4NT: 1430 RKCB

Advantages

No longer bid 1NT over partner's major opening, planning to re-bid 3 of major at next bid playing some version of "Bergen" raises. Instead the 1NT bid is replaced by Swedish 2NT* bid.

One can now pass 1NT as natural after 1♥/1♠; it becomes non-forcing.

If playing Reverses Bergen Raises, the 3♣* shows 4 pieces and 10-12 Dummy Points. Now opener's bid of 3♦* asks – do you have a singleton/void or 12 Dummy Points?

Responses are:

3♥*: singleton club

3♠*: singleton diamond

3NT*: singleton or void other major

Responder can request clarification by bidding 4♣.

Opener responds 4D with singleton, 4H with void

4♣*/4♦*: void in Clubs/Diamonds

4♥/4♠: no singleton/void or slam interest 12 Dummy Points

4NT: 1430 RKC



CHAPTER 16

WRAP-UP

A common remark made by many bridge players is those computers dealt hands are more skewed than hands dealt manually. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The following analysis compares computer dealt hands with manual dealt hands using 100,000 deals. This was provided by Chuck Deal in The Villages.

Hand Distributions

Probability of Hand Distributions - The a priori probability of holding a certain hand pattern is based on mathematical odds. Aspiring bridge players make mental references to the hand distribution when bidding or determining the best line of play, particularly the *most probable* distribution. Among the thirty-nine possible hand patterns, five hand patterns comprise 70 percent of the possible hands based upon 100,000 deals and they follow a Normal Distribution. Manual deals DO NOT follow a Normal Distribution. The results follow.

Longest Suit	Distribution Pattern	Computer Deal %/(Manual Deal %)
4	4-4-3-2	21.6/(22.1)
	4-3-3-3	10.5/(10.8)
	4-4-4-1	3.0/(3.0)
		35.10/(35.90)
5	5-3-3-2	15.5/(15.7)
	5-4-3-1	12.9/(12.8)
	5-4-2-2	10.6/(10.5)
	5-5-2-1	3.2/(3.1)
	5-4-4-0	1.2/(1.2)
	5-5-3-0	0.90/(0.88)
		44.34/(42.98)

6	6-3-2-2	5.6/(5.6)
	6-4-2-1	4.7/(4.6)
	6-3-3-1	3.5/(3.4)
	6-4-3-0	1.3/(1.3)
	6-5-1-1	0.71/(0.65)
	6-5-2-0	0.65/(0.60)
		16.55/(16.15)
7	7-3-2-1	1.9/(1.8)
	7-2-2-2	0.51/(0.48)
	7-4-1-1	0.39/(0.38)
	7-4-2-0	0.36/(0.33)
	7-3-3-0	0.27/(0.24)
	7-5-1-0	0.1/(0.98)
		3.90/(4.21)
Others		0.50/(0.98)

Based upon 100,000 deals, the computer dealt hands follow a Normal Distribution almost exactly where the probability of acceptance for a “Normal” curve is 99.78 percent, using a Chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The corresponding probability of fit for manually dealt hands is <0.1 percent. **WOW!**

Reviewing the hand Pattern Frequencies what do you observe?

Hand patterns with 3 odd numbers and 1 even number:

4333, 5431, 5332, 6331 constitute 42.4% of the patterns.

And patterns with 3 even and 1 odd number

4432, 5422, 6421, 6322 constitute 53.3% of the patterns.

Together these patterns account for 96% of the hand patterns.

Why is this important? Well if you know that for a given suit based upon the bidding that the opponents each hold 4 cards in a suit and you hold 3, then you know partner must have only 2. So during the play of the hand, your side may get a ruff in a suit contract.

What else is seen from the hand patterns?

The **Balanced** hand patterns 4333, 4432, and 5332 contain no void or singleton and at most one doubleton, or 57.6% of the patterns.

A **Semi-Balanced** hand has 5422, 6322, or 7222 pattern has no void or singleton but will have two or three doubletons.

An **Unbalanced** hand pattern has 4441 or 5431 shapes and all other shapes contain voids and singletons.

Why are these observations important?

Balanced hands are usually played in no-trump, unbalanced hands are played in suit contracts, and Semi-Balanced hands are played in either no-trump or suit contracts.

What else do we know about the patterns? Playing 2/1 and bidding a major we know the bidder has a 5xxx pattern and that two suiters have 5-4 or 6-4 patterns.

Keep these facts in mind when defending a bridge contract.

When you play a hand you should be aware of how the cards break. What follows is a schedule that will help you in your play.

How do they break? – Handy Chart for easy reference

Cards Missing	Break	%
2	1-1	52.0
	2-0	48.0
3	2-1	78.0
	3-0	22.0
4	3-1	49.7
	2-2	40.7
	4-0	9.6
5	3-2	67.8
	4-1	28.3
	5-0	3.9
6	4-2	48.5
	3-3	35.5
	5-1	14.5
	6-0	1.5
7	4-3	62.2
	5-2	30.5
	6-1	6.8
	7-0	0.5

8	5-3	47.1
	4-4	32.7
	6-2	17.1
	7-1	2.9
	8-0	0.2

Note: With 5/6 Cards, use ratio 2/3 or 1/4 and 2/4 or 1/5 as approximations!

Probabilities and Odds in Bridge

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid game, assuming a 26+ point game = **25.29%** (1 in 3.95 deals)

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid slam, assuming a 33+ point slam = **.70%** (1 in 143.5 deals)

Probability that either partnership will have enough to bid grand slam, assuming a 37+ point grand slam = **.02%** (about 1 in 5,848 deals)

Number of different hands a named player can receive = **635,013,559,600 = 52! / (39! x 13!)**

Number of different hands a second player can receive = **8,122,425,444 = 39! / 26! x 13!**

Number of different hands the third and fourth players can receive = **10,400,600 = 26! / 13! x 13!**

Number of possible deals = $[52! / 13!]^{*4} = \mathbf{53,644,737,765,488,792,839,237,440,000}$

Number of possible auctions with north as dealer, assuming that east and west pass throughout = $2^{*36} - 1 = \mathbf{68,719,476,735}$

Number of possible auctions with north as dealer, assuming that east and west do not pass throughout = **128,745,650,347,030,683,120,231,926,111,609,371,363,122,697,55**

Odds against being dealt at least one singleton = **2 to 1**

Odds against receiving a hand with 37 HCP (4 aces, 4 kings, 4 queens, and 1 jack) = **158,753,389,899 to 1**

Odds against receiving a perfect hand (13 cards in one suit) = **169,066,442 to 1**

Odds against a Yarborough = **1827 to 1**

Odds against both members of receiving a Yarborough = **546,000,000 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than 10 = **274 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than jack = **52 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no card higher than queen = **11 to 1**

Odds against a hand with no aces = **2 to 1**

Graham's number, named after Ronald Graham, is a large number that is an upper bound on the solution to a certain problem in Ramsey theory.

Graham's number is much larger than many other large numbers such as a googol or googolplex.

Finally, what is the probability of getting a "10-borough" hand? A Yarborough includes no honor cards.

Highest Card	Probability (1/X)
10	274
09	1827
08	16,960
07	254,398
06	8,191,609
05	1,133,952,785

And, what is the probability that you and your partner both have a "10-borough" - About 1 in 1.951 million.

Are there also small numbers yes for example, a googolminex = $1/\text{googolplex} = .000\dots001$ (googol zeros, including the first one). The name was suggested by John Conway and Richard K. Guy (1996), "The Book of Numbers".



CHAPTER 17

TRANSFER PRECISION

Overview

Precision is an important bidding convention played by many pairs. To compete against pairs that play precision, it is essential that you understand their bidding structure. In this version of precision one uses transfer bids over 1♣ and the Transfer Stayman Convention.

Basic Opening bids

- 1♣* Artificial 16+ HCP (unbalanced) 17+ (balanced) MUST ALERT
1♦* 11-15 HCP (Announced as may be short, if one uses the 10-12 NT range)
1♥/1♠ 11-15 HCP 5+ Majors with Reverse Bergen Bidding Structure
1NT 12-15 HCP (or 13-15 HCP) – Some use the 10-12 NT range
2♣* 10-15 HCP 6+ Clubs (may have a 4-card major) — MUST ALERT
2♦* 11-15 HCP 4=3-1-5, 3=4-1-5, 4=4-1-4, or 4=4-0-5 MUST ALERT
Singleton Diamond/Void
2♥/2♠ 5/6-10 HCP 6+ Cards (Weak 2-bids Vulnerable with Ogust/Feature)
2NT* 11-15 HCP
3X 5-10 must have 2 of top 3 Honors in the Bid Suit Vulnerable and one if Non-vulnerable However 3♣*=10-12.

3NT* GAMBLING solid 7+ minor suits (AKQJxxx)

* Indicates forcing bids and alerts

Responses to 1♦* Opening

Responses to 1♦* opening (11-15 HCP) strong Jump Shifts

1♥/1♠ 4+ Cards in suit with 6+ HCP (to show weak hand rebid majors since using strong jump shifts)

Rebids by Opener

1♠	4+ spades over 1♥
1NT	11-15 HCP over 1♥/1♠
2♣	5+ clubs
2♦	5+diamonds
2M	13-16 Dummy Points
3M	17-18 Dummy Points
1NT	6-10 HCP, balanced hand
2NT	11- 12 HCP, balanced hand
3NT	13-15 HCP, balanced hand
2♣	13+ HCP forcing one round
2♦*	13+ 6/7+ diamonds (Criss-Cross)
2♥/2♠	16+ HCP strong jump shift in Major 5+ cards, game force
3♣*	10-12 HCP 6/7+ diamonds (Criss-Cross)
3♦*	less than 10 HCP, Weak, preemptive raise 6+♦
3♥/3♠	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♣	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♦	Minorwood 1430 Keycard for diamonds
4♥/4♠	Single suited hand to play

Over a major suit interference bid, the bid of 1NT by responder shows 6-10 HCP and diamonds.

Getting to no-trump (Criss-Cross)

After an inverted minor raise 1♦* - pass - 2♦* (13+ HCP)

1. Show major suit stoppers 2♥ or 2♠, bid up the line. No extra values
2. Bid 2NT with a minimum and both majors are stopped.
3. Bid 3♣ to show club stopper, neither hearts or spades stopped
4. Bid 3♦ with a minimum without major stoppers.
5. Bid 3♥ or 3NT, showing ♥ stopped, over 2♣ with minimum values

After a weak raise 1♦* - pass - 3♣* (less than 10 HCP)

- a. Pass with all minimum and almost all intermediate sized hands
- b. A new suit is forcing one round and shows a very strong hand
- c. 3NT is to play regardless what partner had for his pre-emptive raise
- d. 4 of the minor is invitational (may be used as RKC Blackwood).

Responses to 1M Opening Reverse Bergen Bids over MAJOR

- 1NT 7- 12 points, Forcing
 1NT followed by 3M with 10-12 HCP (limit raise with 3)
 2M 8-10, 3 card support (constructive)

BROMAD (Reverse) Bids over a double of a major

XX A redouble is not part of BROMAD per se, but is worth mentioning. It shows 10+ points and denies 3+ card support.

2♦* A 3-card raise, showing 7-9 points and exactly 3-card trump support.

2♣* A 3-card Limit raise or better, showing 10-12 points and exactly 3-card trump support.

2♥/♠* A 3-card “Preemptive” raise, showing 0-6 points and exactly 3-card trump support.

2NT* A preempt in clubs or diamonds (i.e. a hand that would normally make a 3♣ or 3♦ weak jump shift).

3♦* A 4-card raise, showing 7-9 points and exactly 4-card trump support.

3♣* A 4-card Limit Raise, showing 10-12 points and exactly 4-card trump support.

3♥*/3♠* A 4-card “Preemptive” raise, showing 0-6 points and exactly 4-card trump support.

Responses to 1M Opening (Open 1♥/1♠ with 11-15 HCP)

2M 8-10 Dummy Points 3 cards support (constructive raise)

Short Suit Game Try (SSGT) over 1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠

Any three level suit bid by opener shows shortness in the suit 0-2.

Otherwise relay bids are used by the Opener and responder shows SHORTNESS

	1♥-2♥- 2♠*	or	1♠-2♠-2NT*
Club Shortness	3♣*		3♣*
Diamonds Shortness	3♦*		3♦*
Heart Shortness	3♥*		
Spade Shortness	2NT*		
4333 min 8-9	3♥		3♠
4333 max 10-11	3NT		3NT

4333 with 4S and Max 10-11	3♣	
5 to KQ+	4m	4m
Stiff Other Major	4♥	4♠

After SSGT, response re-evaluates his hand with A=3 and K=1
 With 9 or 10/11 responder bids game or cue bids minor with 4 of other majors
 With 7 or 8 make last train bid if possible
 With 6 or less sign-off

2NT*	13+ with 4 trumps (Jacoby)
3♣*	10-12 with 4 trumps
3♦*	7-9 with 4 trumps
3M*	0-6 weak with 4 trumps
3 of other M	Ambiguous Splinter with 4-card support, 13+ Dummy Points
3NT*	13-15 with three card support (some use it to show void in other major)
4♣*/4♦*	Void and ERKCB with 3 or 4 card support for the major

With Interference at the 2-level

Cue bid is Limit Raise with 3+ trumps

2NT	Limit raise with 4+ trumps
3♣/3♦	Fit Jump Bids 3/4+ trumps with 4+ clubs /Diamonds
3other M	Fit Bid with 3/4+ trumps and 4+ cards in other Major
3M	Weak raise – 0-6 Dummy Points with 4-card support for bid major
4M/5m	To-Play
4m	Splinter-Jump 4-card support with singleton
4o M	To-Play

With Interference at the 3-level

X	Trump Double (Western Cue)
3X	Invitational to game in a major

- 4-level Cue bid Forcing raise to game in Major bid
- 3M weak with major fit
- 4X Fit jumps bids below major bid
- 4M preemptive

Ambiguous Splinter Bids (Simple)

Opener	Responder	Opener	Explanation
1♥	2♠*		Game Force with a singleton
		2NT*	Opener asks responder to bid suit of singleton (3♥=♠)
	3♠*		Game Force with a void
		3NT*	Opener asks responder to bid void suit (4♥=♠)
1♠	3♥*		Game Force with a singleton/void
		3♠*	Relay bid
			Responder bids singleton suit With a VOID responder bid 3NT; Opener relays again 4♣ Responder bids 4♦=♦, 4♥=♥, 4♠=♣

This method is simple and works well when opening a major. To investigate slam one may use 4NT or 4♣ if the agreed upon suit is hearts. The method is simple and always allows one to stop short of game, if necessary. It was suggested to me by Ted Deflippo.

Ambiguous Splinter Bids (Scroll Bids)

Opener	Responder	Opener	Explanation
1♥	3♠*		Game Force with a singleton
		3NT*	Scroll Bid – where is it?
	3NT*		Void in other Major
	4♣		Void in clubs
	4♦		Void in diamonds
1♠	3♥*		Game Force with a singleton
		3♠*	Scroll Bid - where is it?
	3NT*		Void in other Major
	4♣		Void in clubs
	4♦		Void in diamonds

Responses to 1NT Opening (With Double Barrel Stayman)

Responses to 1NT (12-15 HCP)

2♣ NF Stayman 10-12 HCP

Opener Rebids

2♦ = 15 HCP

Responder Rebids

2♥ shows spades

2♠ shows hearts

2NT show both majors

2♦* Forcing Stayman 13+ HCP

2♥/2♠ to Play 0-8 HCP

3♣/3♦ 6+ Card suit 2 of top 3 9-11 HCP

3♥ 5-5 in the majors 11-12 HCP

3♠ 5-5 in the majors 13+ HCP

Responses to 1NT Opening (If you Prefer Transfer Bids)

Responses to 1NT (12-15 HCP)

2♣ Stayman (may not have a 4-card major)/Smolen

2♦/2♥ Transfer hearts/spades

2♠ MSS bid minors up the line (3♣/3♦ shows 3+ card suit)

2NT denies a 4+ minor suit

After hearing the bid of 2NT responder next bids 3♣ says both minors and 3♦ says long diamond denies clubs while 3NT says 2245 or 2254 interest in slam. Cue bid of major shows a singleton with slam interest.

2NT Weak club suit (opener bids 3clubs)

3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ 6 card suit with 2 of top 3 honors 9-11

3♥ 5-5 in majors (11-12 HCP)

3♠ 5-5 in majors (13+)

4♦/4♥ Texas Transfer

Over a double of 1NT we employ Helvic No-trump Runouts

Redouble shows a single suited hand (partner bids 2♣)

And bidding shows a two-suited hand

2♣=clubs and diamonds

2♦=diamond and hearts

2♥=hearts and spades

2♠=spades and clubs

If you pass the double you have a two-suited hand with two non-touching suits or you want to play 1NT for penalty — partner must re-double or bid 5-card suit. Opener may leave double in or bid the anchor suit.

Responses to 1NT Opening (If you Prefer Minor Suit Stayman)

2♣ Stayman (may not have a 4-card major)/Smolen

2♦/2♥ Transfer hearts/spades (announce)

2♠*/2NT* Minor-Suit Stayman (MSS)

Minor-Suit Stayman is just what its name implies: a device that allows a partnership to look for a **minor**-suit fit after an opening bid of 1NT (and over 2NT/3NT see note 2 below). Presupposing the use of **Jacoby Transfers**, the 2♠ response to 1NT is no longer needed to show **spades** and can be used to ask opener to bid a 4-card **minor** suit. The **OKB 2/1 card** uses a specific variant of **MSS**, which also includes weak hands with a long **diamond** suit, hence the notation “**MSS** or correct to or 3♦ with **diamond** bust”. This is a treatment that is part of the Walsh system. Other **MSS** variants may not include the weak hands that Walsh does, and have different response structures, so it may be best to avoid this bid in a new partnership.

2♠ response to 1NT (strong NT) shows one of three types of hands. It is either a weak hand with long (6+) **diamonds**, a weak hand with both **minors** (5-5), or a strong hand at least 5-4 or 4-5 **minors** with **slam** interest. (With both **minors** and only minimum values for game, bid 3NT. 9 tricks in NT is usually easier than 11 in a **minor**. Using **MSS** may pinpoint a weak **major** for the opponents to lead)

The 1NT opener should rebid:

1. 2NT = denies a 4 card or longer **minor**
2. 3♣ or 3♦ = at least 4 cards in the **minor** bid, bid the better one with both.

After using **MSS** and hearing any of the above rebids, responder’s available rebids are:

1. 3♣ over 2NT = weak both **minors**, opener may pass or correct to 3♦ (e.g. xx x KJxxx QTxxx)
2. 3♦ over 2NT/3♣ = weak with long **diamonds** (x xx QJxxxxx Qxx)
3. Pass over 3♣/3♦ = content with contract, weak hand
4. 3NT = 2245 or 2254, slam invitational, non-forcing (xx Ax AKxxx KJxx)
5. Any **major** suit bid (!) = single/void in that suit, slam interest (3♠! with x Ax AKxxx KJxxx)

6. 4NT = **Roman Key Card Blackwood** if **minor** suit has been agreed but natural otherwise

Note: The use of **MSS** over 2NT, or 2♣-2♦-(2NT/3NT) is easily defined in that, if **Jacoby** applies, so does **MSS**, i.e., if a **diamond** or **heart** bid is **Jacoby**, then a **spade** bid is **MSS**. The use of **MSS** over 2/3NT **always** shows slam interest. If a **minor** suit has been agreed, then a later bid of 4NT is **RKC**, otherwise natural.

2NT followed by 3♣ = club signoff, or 4441

Over opener's 1NT, a direct response of 2NT is a puppet (relay) to 3♣ which responder can pass with **clubs** and a bust, or show a game forcing 3-suited hand, either 4441 or 4450 with a 5 card **minor**. With the strong hand rebid the suit containing your singleton/void. With short **clubs**, either rebid 3NT, non-forcing, or bid 4♣ with slam interest to force opener to bid.

Examples: after 1NT-2NT-3♣-?

1. Pass (x xxx Kxx QT9xxxx)
2. 3♥ (AJxx x AKxx Qxxx)
3. 3NT (AJxx AKxx Qxxx x)
4. 4♣ (AJxx AKxx AQxx x)

After the strong shortness showing bids, opener picks a suit or rebids in NT with the short suit well-stopped (and hence wasted values for a suit slam). Over suit agreement, 4NT is RKC. Over 3NT, 4NT by responder is natural and invitational.

When playing a direct 2NT to 1NT as artificial, one must start with 2♣ **Stayman** to invite game in NT.

5. Opener with both **hearts** and **spades** bids 2♥
6. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2♠ shows exactly 4 **spades** and is invitational to game. Opener may pass, bid 2NT, 3NT, or 4♠
7. The sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-2NT is invitational to game and denies 4 **spades**
8. Other sequences that start 1NT-2♣-2any-2NT do not promise or deny a 4 card **major**. This should be explained at the time of the 2NT rebid.

Over 12-15/13-15 no-trump bids

3♣/3♦	6 card suit with 2 of top 3 honors And 9-11 invite to 3NT
3♥	5-5 in majors (11-12 HCP)
3♠	5-5 in majors (13+)
4♦/4♥	Texas Transfer

Over a penalty double or 2♣ over 1NT Systems are ON

Transfer Lebensohl over no-trump

We open 1NT, and they overcall. Remember, if they bid 2♣, you just ignore it (so if you bid 2NT after their 2♣ overcall, you should treat the auction as if it went 1NT PASS 2NT – however you play it). If they bid 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ we use TRANSFER Lebensohl. Recall that if we bid a suit on the 2-level, it is natural, NF. Using Transfer Lebensohl, if we bid a suit on the 3-level, starting with 3♣, it is a transfer to the “next” suit. (I’ll explain the quote marks in a moment). By transferring, we are showing the suit (5+) transferred to with *invitational or better* values. (With less than an invitation, we either sign-off on the 2-level, or bid 2NT to relay to 3♣ to sign-off – the old fashioned-Lebensohl way). When we show invitational or better, partner can sign-off (just bid the suit transferred to), or he can accept the game try (by doing many things, including 3NT if he wishes). If partner “signs off” and you have the “or better,” of course you just bid again (naturally). Some examples:

1NT (2♥) 3♣ = Diamonds, invitational or better (to sign off in ♦, responder would have bid 2NT to relay to 3♣, then bid 3♦)

1NT (2♠) 3♦ = Hearts, invitational or better. (If opener bids 3♥, he rejects your invitation, but you bid again with a GF.)

Remember, to sign off, you either bid on the 2-level, or use 2NT to relay to sign off on the 3-level. Using the transfer promises at least a game invite.

Now, what about the “quote marks?” When transferring to your suit on the 3-level, you have to take their suit into account. For example, if 2♥ showed ♥ and a minor, it wouldn’t make much sense for you to transfer (via 3♦) into ♥. Accordingly, this is what we do: Transferring into “their suit” (such as 3♦ into their ♥) shows the next higher suit – i.e., ♠. Are you ready to kill me by now? Sorry, but if you want to be prepared, there is no shortcut. You simply must devote a little time to study and practice this. So, transferring “into their suit,” is like transferring “through” their suit. What if you actually bid their suit? (Example, they bid 2♦ to show ♦+ whatever, and you bid 3♦). Cue-bidding their suit means what it means with regular lebensohl, typically “Stayman, no stopper.” This assumes “FADS–Fast Always Denies Stopper.” If you want to Stayman with a stopper, you go through the 2NT relay, then cue-bid 3♦. OK, no doubt you are ready to just scrap this and wing it, but maybe some examples will help:

1NT (2♠ = ♠+ whatever, or just ♠):

2NT = Relay to 3♣ (either to play 3♣, or as a prelude to sign-off in 3♦ or 3♥, or to follow with 3♠ to show Stayman and a ♠ stopper, or to follow with 3NT to just show a ♠ stopper-no Stayman)

3♣ = ♦ Invitational+ (Opener rejects by bidding 3♦, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener accepts by bidding above 3♦)

3♦ = ♥ Invitational+ (Opener rejects by bidding 3♥, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener accepts by bidding above 3♥)

3♥ = ♣ Invitational+ – This was tricky, but remember a transfer to “their” suit is “through” their suit to the next highest suit, ♣ in this case.

3♠ = Cue-bid showing “Stayman, no ♠stopper”

3NT = To play, but no ♠stopper (Fast Denies)

Responses to 2M Opening

Responses to 2♥/ 2♠ (Open 5-10 6+ card suit) - Same as 2/1

Over 2NT asks for Feature/Ogust (per agreement)

The weak major 2-level bid is a “normal” weak two and typically shows between 5-10 points and at least a 6-card suit. The optimum hand for a weak-2 has most of its points in the long suit although it is recognized that this is not always possible and sometimes (particularly 3rd hand at favorable vulnerability) you have to go with what you’ve got.

4♣ is RKCB [used with weak two bids (2♥/2♠)].

The responses are:

- 4♦ first step 0, keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
- 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first-step. The next bid of 4♥ is the Queen ask — 4♠ = No and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

When they Double Weak two-bid Mc Cabe Adjunct

- 2♥ - X then Redouble show a strong hand
 - 2♠ = to play
 - 2NT =Clubs (partner bids clubs)
 - 3♣ =shows A/K in suit bid
 - 3♦ =shows A/K in suit bid
 - 3♥ =shows an A/K of Hearts

- 2♠- X then Redouble shows a strong hand
 - 2NT =Clubs (partner bids clubs)
 - 3♣ =shows A/K in suit bid
 - 3♦ =shows A/K in suit bid
 - 3♥ = to play
 - 3♠ =shows an A/K of Spades

Responses to 2♣* Opening

Responses to 2♣ Opening (Open 11-15 HCP, 6+ Clubs and 4 card major, must have two of the top three honors — 5+ in third seat.

Partner responses

2♦* 11+ HCP, conventional and forcing for one round

Opener Rebids

2♥ 11-15 HCP, 4-card ♥ suit

2♠ 11-15 HCP, 4-card ♠ suit

2NT 11-15 HCP, 6-3-2-2 BAL hand, 6-card club suit with a major stopper

3♦* requests opener to clarify stoppers

Opener Bids

3♥* ♥ stopper

3♠* ♠ stopper

3NT ♥ and ♠ stoppers

3♦ 14-15 HCP 6+ clubs and 4+ diamonds

3♣ 14-15 HCP non-forcing and unbalanced hand (1-3-3-6)

3♥ 14-15 HCP, 5+card ♥ suit

3♠ 14-15 HCP, relay back to ♣'s, solid club suit AKJ109x allows responder to bid 3NT

3NT 14-15 HCP, 5+spades and 6+ clubs

2♥/2♠ Natural with 5+cards, 8-10 HCP

2NT* **Lebensohl (for two-suited hands)**

Partner Bids 3♣

Responder next bids

3♦ = 5-5 diamonds and hearts

3♥ = 5-5 hearts and spades

3♠ = 5-5 spades and diamonds

3♣ **10-12 Invitational**

3♦/3♥/3♠ 6+ card suit, 12 HCP openers raises or bids 3NT (**Opener May Not Pass**)

4♣ Invitational to game in clubs

4♥/4♠ Natural and to play
 4♦ RKCB for clubs

With interference

Negative double through 3♣
 Redouble 10+ HCP
 Cue bid 13+ HCP

Responses to 2♦* Opening (Singleton/void in Diamonds)**Responses to 2♦* Opening (11-15 HCP)****Partner Response to 2♦***

3♦ Asks for controls
 2♥/2♠ To play in hearts/spades
 3♣ To play in clubs
 2NT* ASK

Opener Rebids (Option1- with 4-3 or 4-4 hands)

3♣* any minimum 11-12/13, 3♦ ASK

3♥= four hearts

3♠ = four spades

3NT=4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5

3♦=4-4-1-4, maximum with singleton diamond

3♥=3-4-1-5, maximum with four hearts

3♠=4-3-1-5, maximum with four spades

3NT=4-4-0-5, maximum with five clubs

Opener Rebids (Option 2 – with only 4-4 hands)

3♣= 4-4-1-4, minimum

3♦= 4-4-1-4, maximum

4♥= 4-4-0-5, minimum

4♠= 4-4-0-5, maximum

Responses to 2NT* Opening

Responses to 2NT* with 11-15 HCP

3♣ or 3♦ is to play

3♥* is an asking bid

Opener Rebids

3♠ 5-5 minimum

3NT maximum

4♣ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), minimum

4♦ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), minimum

4♥ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), maximum

4♠ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), maximum

4NT 6-6 in the minors.

3♠ to play

3NT to play

4♣/4♦ pre-emptive bids and to play

4♥/4♠ to play

5♣/5♦ to play

Over interference (Game force)

4NT === I prefer diamonds

4♣ === I prefer clubs

When NV (0-6HCP) the response of 3♣ asks for the suit

Gambling 3NT* — Same as 2/1

NAMYATS — Same as 2/1

Shows a hand with 8 - 8 ½ trick in hearts (Open 4♣*), in spades open 4♦*. Refuse transfer by bidding the step in between (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦), requesting that partner bid an ace if he has one or to sign off in his long suit. 4NT is RKCB.

Responses to 3X Openings

Responses to 3X bids by OPENER (always ensures 2 of the top 3 honors Vulnerable) and 5-10 HCP plus distribution.

- 4♣ RKCB [over three level (3♦/3♥/3♠) bids]
 4♦ Asks for outside controls first step 0-2 controls (A=2; K=1), second step = 3, etc.

The bid of 4NT should not be used since it may get the auction too high.

The responses for 4♣ RKCB are:

- 4♦ first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first-step. The next bid of 4♥ is the Queen ask — 4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

After the pre-emptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural and advances the preempt; a jump to 4♦ is RKCB for clubs.

Responses to 1♣* Opening

Responses to 1♣* OPENING (16+ HCP)

(1) Negative: 1♦* 0-7 HCP

Opener Rebids after 1♦*:

Non-forcing bids: 1♠/2♣/2♦ (minimum unbalanced hands with 5/6-card suits, 16-21 HCP).

1NT* 16-19 HCP Balanced May have a 5-Card Major

Partner	Responses
Pass	0-6 HCP
2♣	6-7 HCP, Stayman
2♦/2♥	Jacoby Transfer
2NT	7HCP, inviting 3NT
3♣/3♦	5-5 in the Minors Min/Max (0-5/6-7)
3♥/3♠	5-5 in the Majors Min/Max (0-5/6-7)
3NT	8-10 HCP to play

2♥ shows 22+ balanced hand or 5+ heart hand

Partner must bid 2♠

Opener Responses

3x Natural with 22+ 5+ hearts

2NT 22-23 with no-trump hand

3NT 24-26 with no-trump hand

2♠ shows 5+cards and 22+HCP – equivalent of Standard bidders **2♣**

2NT* 20-21 HCP balanced may have 5-card major (no relay bid)

Partner Responses

Pass 0-3/4 HCP

Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g. 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)

4♣=Expert Gerber

4♦=transfer to hearts

4♥=transfer to spades

4♠=transfer to clubs

5♣-=transfer to diamonds

4NT=invite 6NT

Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g. 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)

3♣/3♦ shows very strong unbalanced minor suit hand 6+ cards (19+ HCP)

3♥/3♠ shows a solid major suit with 9 tricks

Requires responder to cue bid ace or void

3NT 27+ HCP balanced may have a 5-card major

Partner Rebids

0-3 HCP

pass OR

4♣= Expert Gerber

4♦=transfer to hearts

4♥=transfer to spades

4♠=transfer to clubs

5♣- transfer to diamonds**4-7 HCP and balanced 4NT invite 6NT****4♥/4♠ shows a hand stronger than a Namyats opener****(2) Transfer Bids (Opener must have 3+ card support to accept transfer)**

Transfer Positive Responses to 1 are all 5+ card suits except the transfer to 1NT. We use Transfer Positives to suits with 8+ HCP and 1NT

1. 1♣-1♥* shows 5+ spades.
2. 1♣-1♠* shows balanced 8-13 (Opener bids 1NT)
3. 1♣-1NT* shows 5+ clubs.
4. 1♣-2♣* shows 5+ diamonds.
5. 1♣-2♦* shows 5+ hearts.

Positive 1NT Responses

1♠ is a transfer that shows 8-13 HCP, no good 5-card minor, no 5-card major. 1NT accepts the transfer and asks for further information. It uses a Transfer Stayman system that shows 4-card majors and splits the point ranges into 8-10 and 11-13.

Any other bid by opener is natural and at least 5-cards.

Responses to the 1NT acceptance are:

1. 2♣*=8-10, **both** 4-card majors.
2. 2♦*=8-10, 4 hearts.
3. 2♥*=8-10, 4 spades.
4. 2♠*=8-10, **no** 4-card major only one minor.
5. 2NT*=8-10, **both** minors, at least 4-4.
6. 3♣*=11-13, **both** 4-card majors.
7. 3♦*=11-13, 4 hearts.
8. 3♥*=11-13, 4 spades.
9. 3♠*=11-13, **no** 4-card major only one minor.
10. 3NT*=11-13, **both** minors, at least 4-4.

Note: Opener may accept the transfer even though he has a 5-card major, thus if you show no major if he bids a major it shows 5-cards in the suit.

An alternative structure for the transfer response which allow more flexibility was suggested to me by Calvin Rowe which follows

Responses by responder to 1NT are (8-10 Range)

2♠*=8-10, both 4-card major

Opener may bid 3NT, 3♥/3♠, 4♥/4♠, or 4NT BLACKWOOD for H/S.

With 16-17, opener bids 3♥/3♠: responder passes with 8-9/bids 4♥/4♠ w 10.

With 18-21, opener bids 4♥/4♠ sign-off (cannot use kickback).

With 21+, opener bids 4NT (asking for aces).

If Opener bids 2NT, the bids of 3♣*/3♦* by responder show a 5-card minor
And 3NT denies a 5- card minor. Opener is captain and bids accordingly.

2♦*= 8-10, 4 hearts.

2♥*= 8-10, 4 spades.

Opener **May** ask by bidding the Major (2♥/2♠) which

ASKS – Do you have a 5-card minor?

If YES responder bids 3♣*/3♦* =5, clubs/diamonds

3♥*/3♠* shows 6, respectively

If NO bid 2NT to Deny 5/6 card minor

If Opener 4♠ over 2♦ - It is 1430 for Hearts and 4NT is 1430 for Spades.

OR

Opener bids 3NT, then 4♥/4♠ or 5♣/5♦ is to play

2♣*=8-10, no 4-card major only one 4+ card minor

Opener may bid 2♦* to ASK what your long minor is.

2NT by responder denies a 5-card minor

Responder makes cheapest bid to show 5, next major step = 6+

2♥/2♠= 5♣/5♦

3♥/3♠= 6♣+/6♦+, respectively

Opener may pass, bid 3NT or a major suit game.

4NT is ace asking BLACKWOOD since no agreed suit or bid 4♣/4♦ Minorwood.

2NT*=8-10, both minors

Opener may next bid 3NT – to play

OR

Opener may bid 3♣ which ASKS are you 4-4, 5-4 or 5-5 in the minors

Responder bids: 3NT*=4-4
 3♦* = 5-5
 3♥*=4♦/5♣
 3♠*=5♦/4♣
 4♣/4♦ = Minorwood for bid minor

Responses by responder to 1NT - (11-13 Range)

3♠*=11-13, both 4-card majors

Opener may bid 3NT – to Play

OR

Opener bids: 4♣=1430 for hearts
 4♦=1430 for spades
 4♥/4♠ = to play
 4NT = Quantitative

3♦*=11-13, 4 hearts.

3♥*=11-13, 4 spades.

Opener **May** bid the Major (3♥*/3♠*) which

ASKS – Do you have a 5-card minor?

If YES responder bids 4♣*/4♦* =5

4♥*/4♠* shows 6, respectively

If NO bid 3NT to Deny 5/6 card minor

Opener may pass 3NT, pass 4♥/4♠ = to PLAY or

Bid 5♣/5♦ to play OR bid a slam at the 6-level

If Opener bids 4♣ over 3♦, it is 1430 for Hearts and 4NT is 1430 for Spades.

OR

Opener bids 3NT, 4♥/4♠ or 5♣/5♦ to play

3♣*=11-13, no 4-card major only one 4+ card minor.

Opener bids 3♦, do you have a 5-card suit?

Responder cheapest bids

3NT denies a 5-card minor suit

$3♥/3♠ = 5♣/5♦$

$4♥/4♠ = 6+♣/6+♦$

Opener bids 3NT, a game in major or 4NT Ask

3NT*= 11-13, both minors, at least 4-4.

Opener bids $4♣/4♦$ for Minorwood

Transfer to a Minor Suit with (12+ 5-5/5-4 in minors or 6m/5-4 m/M)

$1♣$ -1NT* shows 5+ clubs (NEVER 5-3-3-2)

Opener next bids $2♣$ (may not have clubs)

Over 2-level bids, Responder bids $2♦/2♥/2♠$ 4+cards in suit bid and $3♣=6+$ clubs, and $3♦=5-5$ minors

Opener's bids of $4♣^*/3♦^*/3♥^*/3♠^*$ is RKCB for the suit bid

Opener's bid of 2NT over 2-level major suit bids asks for range

Responder bids $3♣^*=12-13$

$3♦^*=14-15$

$3♥^*=16-17$

$3♠^*=18+$

Opener's next step bids of $3♦^*/3♥^*/3♠^*/4♣^*$ is RKCB for the bid suit

$1♣$ - $2♣^*$ shows 5+ diamonds (NEVER 5-3-3-2)

Opener next bids $2♦$ (may not have diamonds)

Over 2-level bids, Responder bids $2♥/2♠$ with 4-cards in suit bid

Where now 2NT*=4 CLUBS, $3♣^*= 5-5$ in minors and $3♦^*= 6+$ Diamonds

Opener's bid of $3♣^*/3♦^*/3♥^*/3♠^*$ is RKCB for the suit bid

Opener's bid of 2NT asks for range over 2-levels bids ASKS

Responder bids

$3♣^*=12-13$

$3♦^*=14-15$

$3♥^*=16-17$

$3♠^*=18+$

Opener's next step bids of $3♦^*/3♥^*/3♠^*/4♣^*$ is RKCB for bid suit

After accepting the transfer (spades/clubs/diamonds/hearts)

Responder next tells about his controls

First Step 0-2 controls (A=2, K=1), next step = 3, etc. Often called Beta Accept bids – and the bids are different from playing controls when opening 2♣ in 2/1.

TAB bid the Trump suit at any level all bids are alerted)

1 st step	Five or more trumps with no top honor (A, K, Q)
2 nd step	Five with one top honor
3 rd step	Five with two top honors
4 th step	Six or more with one honor
5 th step	Six or more with two honors
6 th step	Six or more with three top honors

CAB bid a none-trump suit ASK*

1 st step	No Controls (Jxx or worse)
2 nd step	Second round Control (K/singleton)
3 rd step	First round Control (A/void)

Responding with Balanced Hands and no suit fit.

1/2NT*	16-19 HCP
2/3NT*	20-21 HCP
3/4NT*	22-23 HCP
4/5NT*	24+ HCP

(3) 2♥/2♠/3♣/3♦ (8+HCP with Singleton in bid suit)

(4) 2NT* 14+HCP, balanced no 5-card major/minor (May not stop short of 4NT)

Opener Rebids

3♦/3♥/3♠	Natural bids
3♣*	Baron asking bid (Not Muppet)

Partner Bids

Bid 4-card suits up the line (3♦/3♥/3♠)
3NT show clubs

3NT	ASK BID Responder bids
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4♣* 14-15 points

4♦* 16-17 points

After 4 clubs and 4 diamonds, Opener bids 4-card suits up-the-line or bid 4NT sign-off or 6/7 NT

4♥* 18-19 points

4♠* 20-21 points

After 4 hearts and 4 spades, Opener may bid 4NT ACE ASKING or bids 6/7 NT

4NT **Blackwood Ace ask**

(5) Strong 6-4/6-5 hands over 1♣ bids with singleton/void

3♥ 6 spades with 4+ controls, usually 14+ HCP

3♠ 6 clubs with 4+ controls, usually 14+ HCP

4♣ 6 diamonds with 4+ controls, usually 14+ HCP

4♦ 6 hearts with 4+ controls, usually 14+ HCP

Next level bids BY OPENER (3♠*/3NT/4♦*/4♥*) asks bid 4/5-card suit

Responder bids his 4/5-card suit



3♠ then 4♣/4♦/4♥

3NT then 4♦/4♥/4♠

4♦ then 4♥/4♠/5♣

4♥ then 4♠/5♣/5♦

Opener sets contract or bids 4NT/5NT 1430 for suit bid

4NT = 1430 RKCB for suit bid

3NT To play

Summary- Interference Bids Over 1♣* Opening

Direct Seat Interference

Double – Mathe which shows Majors

Pass	0-4 HCP
1♦	5-7 HCP
Redouble	8+ HCP
1♥	8-10 HCP no stopper in hearts
1♠	8-10 HCP no stopper in spades
1NT	8-10 HCP stoppers in the majors
2♣	8-13 HCP and 6+ cards
2♦	8-13 HCP and 6+ diamonds
2♥	11+ spade stopper (no heart stopper)
2♠	11+ heart stopper (no spade stopper)
2NT	11+ both majors stopped

At 1 level – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, 5+ card suit, Game Force
Jump in suit	SYSTEMS ON 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠
1NT	8-13 HCP, with stopper
2NT	10+ HCP, with 1/2 stopper
Cue bid	10+ Game force no stopper

1NT – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, 5+ card suit

1NT – Mathe which shows Minors

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
2♣	5+ hearts, GF
2♦	5+ spades GF
2♥	5+ HCP, natural and non-forcing
2♠	5+ HCP, natural and non-forcing
3NT	10+ HCP, both minors stopped

At 2 level – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, natural
Cue bid	9+ Flat with no stopper
2NT	9-13 HCP with stopper
3NT	14+ with stoppers

At 3 level – (natural)

Pass	0-7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, and 5+ card suit

At 4 level – (natural)

Pass	0-7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP, takeout or penalty

Balancing Seat Interference

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1♥/♠)

Pass	balance minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the other three suits
Suit Bid	Natural, non-forcing
1NT	shows stopper with (16-21 HCP)
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)
Cue bid	20 + HCP no stopper

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1NT for Minors)

Pass	balanced minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the both majors
2♣/2♦	unusual extra values shows ♥/♠
2♥/2♠	Natural non-forcing
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (Double = Majors)

Pass	balanced minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the both minors

2♣/2♦	natural 5+ card suit.
2♥/2♠	unusual extra values shows ♣/♦
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

INTERFERENCE OVER 1NT by OPPONENTS**OTHER CONVENTIONAL CALLS**

Blooman Modified – Direct SEAT ONLY – Balance SEAT = Natural/x=Capp

Or Competing over the 1X – Pass – 1NT - ? With 8+ HCP

2♣* = transfer to Diamonds 6+ card suit

2♦* = transfer to Hearts 6+ card suit

2♥* = transfer to Spades 6+ card suit

2♠* = transfer to clubs with a good hand 6+ clubs

2NT*= 5-5 in the Minors

X* = Responder bids 2♣ – May Pass with a weak hand and 6+ clubs or bid Capp (5-5)

(Over weak NTX is for penalty)

Over a Major Bid Play Leaping Michaels, Unusual vs Michaels

Lebensohl over NT Interference

Negative Doubles 1-Level only with Negative Free bids through 3♦ with X or XX shows 10+

Support Doubles through 2♥, Crawling Stayman, Checkback Stayman

Unusual over Unusual (X=Penalty in one minor, 3♣ limit in hearts, 3♦limit in spades, 3X weak)

Overcalls Michaels and 2NT=two – lowest unbid suits

3X level bids over the opponents bid are pre-emptive

Rosenkrantz doubles for overcalls and Support Doubles

Negative Doubles and Negative Free Bids

4th Suit Forcing to Game, 2/3 level asks — Western Que

1♣* X is a power double 16+ and 1NT= Takeout 4-3 or 4-4 in the majors 10-15 HCP

Over 1♦/1♥/1♠ X is for take-out—1NT 15-18 Systems ON

LEADS— 3rd /5th suits and attitude vs NT, but over 1NT- 3NT shortest major from 3

Rev Smith Echo, Foster Echo, Trump Suit Preference

A/Q ASKS FOR Attitude and King=count AND Coded 9s and 10s and 7's

Upside-down COUNT AND ATTITUDE (Suit and Notrump)

Over their 2/1 bid of 1♣

The convention applies ONLY over the opening bid of 1♣. In the second (overcall) seat your overcall bids are: Opener 1♣:

1♦* = transfer to hearts (5+ hearts 10-15 and 1st or 2nd round control)

1♥* = transfer to spades (5+ spades 10-15 and 1st or 2nd round control)

NEIL H. TIMM, PH.D.

1♠* = transfer to diamonds (should have 10-15 and 1st or 2nd round control)

1NT* = shortness in clubs and 10-15 HCP (Take-Out – some play it as 15-18)

X= 16+ HCP with stopper in clubs (some play it as Take-Out)

Over their 1X bid, 1NT=15-17/18 and SYSTEMS are OFF

Competing Over PRECISION – USE 1-Level transfer bids (Modified Blooman) with X=Capp



CHAPTER 18

MECKWELL LITE

In this chapter we review the Precision bids used by Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth as summarized by **Luke Gillespie and Jim Streisand**, with their kind permission, often called the Meckwell Lite System.

Meckwell Lite is a simplified version of the Precision system used by Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell (aka “Meckwell”). All balanced hands with 17+ HCP (except for hands that open 2NT) and all unbalanced hands with 16+ HCP open 1♣. Other opening bids are limited to a maximum of 15 HCP.

Their basic style is very aggressive. If not vulnerable, they almost always open 11-HCP hands and may respond with very weak hands (even yarboroughs!). They open many light distributional hands with only 9 or 10 HCP. They upgrade aggressively, BUT ALWAYS WITH A REASON. “I felt like it” is NOT a reason.

Keep in mind that these notes are guidelines, not a rigid set of rules. We may deviate when logic or inspiration so dictates, but we try to keep partner happy.

Notation (for this Chapter)

NT = No Trump

M = Major, OM = other Major

m = minor, om = other minor

R = red suit, x = any suit

Nat = natural, Artif = artificial

Bal = balanced, Unbal = unbalanced

Spl = splinter

F = forcing, GF = game force, F1 = forcing one round

INV = invitational

P/C = Pass or Correct

COG = Choice of Games

RKC = Roman Keycard (0314)

NV = non-vulnerable, V or vul = vulnerable, FAV = NV vs V, UNFAV = V vs NV

HCP = High-Card Points (4321)

DNE = DOES NOT EXIST

Mulberry (Bush) = RKC variant used on 3-suited relay auctions

Opponents' bids shown in parenthesis

Distributional notation:

4=4=3=2 means 4♠, 4♥, 3♦, 2♣ exactly

4=4= (3-2) means 4♠, 4♥, 3 cards in either minor and two cards in the other

4-4-3-2 (or 4432) means 4-4 in any two suits and 3 in any third suit.

Table of Opening Bids

1♣	16+ unbalanced, 17+ balanced; upgrades allowed
1♦	10-15, 2+ diamonds; often a balanced 11-13
1M	10-15, 5+ cards in the major
1NT	14-16 (1 st all, 2 nd all, 3 rd NV), 15-17 (3 rd vul, 4 th all)
2♣	10-15, 6+ clubs
2♦	10-15, three suited with short diamonds
2M	4-9, usually 6 cards, suit quality varies, especially NV
2NT	19-20 usually, but 20-21 when opening 1NT is 15-17
3x	Natural, wide range based on position/vulnerability
3NT	Gambling, solid minor suit with no side ace or king; looser in 3 rd /4 th
4x	Natural
4NT	Blackwood (0123 responses)

Balanced Hand Ladder

11 to 13	Open 1♦ (or 1M with 5)
14 to 16	Open 1NT (5M, 6m, 5422 OK)
17 to 18	Open 1♣ and rebid 1NT
19 to 20	Open 2NT
21 to 23	Open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over 1♦, or rebid 1NT over 1M
24 to 26	Open 1♣ and rebid 2♥ (Kokish, GF) over 1♦, or rebid 2NT over 1♥. Over 1♠ must rebid 1NT and catch up later

In 4th seat, or vulnerable in 3rd seat, 1NT is 15-17 with corresponding adjustments to all of the stronger sequences.

1♣ Opening Bid

All 16+ unbalanced.

All 17+ balanced except those that fall into the range for a 2NT opening.

Upgrade with extra playing strength or prime values, e.g., AKQxxx-AQx-xxx-x

Responses:

1♣	1♦	0-7 (almost) any - (see 3 level responses)
	1♥	8-11, any shape except primary spades
	1♠	8+ HCP, 5+ ♠
	1NT	12+ HCP, 5+ ♥
	2m	12+ HCP, 5+ m
	2♥	12-13 balanced (then 2♠ nat; also 2NT nat w/4-card suits up the line)
	2♠	12+, 4441 (then 2NT asks short)
	2NT	14+ balanced (then 3♣ = Baron or nat, other = nat)
	3 any	natural, 7+ suit, <8 HCP – KJ10xxxx is typical
	3NT	DNE
	4 any	natural, 8-card suit (?)

1♦ Response

1♣-1♦	1M	Nat, F1, may be 4 cards if unbalanced
	1NT	17-18 (18-19 when opening NT = 15-17)
	2m	Nat, 5+, NF, DENIES 4M
	2♥	Kokish - bal GF (24+), or nat very strong – GF
	2♠	Nat very strong, GF
	2NT	21-23 (22-24 when opening NT = 15-17)
	3♣	Nat GF, may have major
	3♦	Nat GF, DENIES MAJOR
	3M	GF, 4M and 5+ ♦
	3NT	To play – probably unbalanced
	4m	Demands cue ace
	4M	To play

1M Rebid

1♣-1♦-1M	1♣/1♥	F1, 4+ spades, 0-7, <4 ♥ (with 3♥, 4+♠ and 5-7, bid 1♠)
	1NT	0-4(5), <4M – over 1♥ denies 4♠
	2♣	Artif, 5+-7, <3M – over 1♥ denies 4♠
	2♦	Artif, 5+-7, exactly 3M, over 1♥ denies 4♠ With 5 HCP can judge between 1NT and 2m.
	2M	0-4(5), 4+M
	2♥/1♠	(4)5-7, 6 hearts (weaker than 1♣-1♦-1♠-3♥)

- 2♠/1♥ (4)5-7, 6 spades (wider range than 2♥/1♠)
- 2NT Artif, 4-7, exactly 4M w/some short (or super 5+M no short)
- 3m 5+-7, nat, good 6+-card suit (also 1♣-1♦-1♠-3♥)
- 3M 5+-7, 4M, no short
- 3M+1 5+-7, 5M, some void (then relay asks, LMH)
- 3M+2 thru 3M+4 5+-7, 5M, singleton (3NT=♠ spl/1♥)
- 4M 5+-7, 5M, no short (or very weak w/short)

1♣-1♦-1♥-1♠ or
1♣-1♦-1M-1NT

- 1NT Nat, NF – may be unbalanced
- 2m Nat, NF, ambig lengths, may be 5-4 either way
- 2♥/1♠ Nat, NF – at least 5♠, 4♥
- 2M Nat, NF, 6+M
- 2♠/1♥ Nat, F1
- 2NT Artif, some 6+m, exactly 4M
3♣/3♦/4♣/4♦ P/C, 3♥/1♠ natural 0-4
- 3m Nat, at least 5-5, strong but NF
- 3♥/1♠ Nat, at least 5-5, strong but NF
AKQxx of both suits would qualify.
- 3M Strong but NF
- 4m 6-6 – Also 1♣-1♦-1S-1NT-4♥

Natural continuations over all of the above except as noted.

1♣-1♦-1M-2♣

- 5+-7, <3M, denies 4♠ over 1♥
- 2♦ “Semi-artif”, F1
- 2♥/1♠ Exactly 5
- 2♠/1♥ Artif, 5-5 minors
- 2M Exactly 2
- 2NT “Nat”, <2M, default if no other call applies
- 3m 6 bad (5 good?)
- If opener does not place contract he implies real diamonds.
- If opener next bids 3♣ he implies 5+♣, 4(5) M, minimum.
- 2♥/1♠ Nat F1
- 2M Nat NF
- 2NT Artif GF, some 6+m, exactly 4M
3♣ asks m (3♦=♦, higher=♣), 3♥/1♠ natural
- 3m Nat, at least 5-5, GF (also 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♣-3♥)
- 3M GF

1♣-1♦-1M-2♦ 3NT To play
 5+-7, 3M, denies 4♠ over 1♥
 2M To play, often with only 4M – responder bids at his peril.
 This is the ONLY signoff.
 2♥/1♠ Nat, F1, looking for second fit
 2NT Artif GF, asking – usually slammish in M
 3 new Natural (except 3S/1♥)
 3M Punt, does not qualify for a different call
 3NT 4333
 4 new Short, also 3♠/1♥
 4M Good trumps (2 of top 3 or AJx or KJx)
 3m Nat 5+, implies only 4M, GF

NOTE: 2NT/3m is DIFFERENT over 2♦ than over 1♠/1NT/2♣.

3M Nat invite (only way to invite in M)

1♣-1♦-1M-2NT 4-7, exactly 4M and some short (or supermax 5+M no short)
 3♣ asks
 3♦ Minimum
 3♥ Asks
 3♠ Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)
 3NT/4♣/4♦ Singleton, LMH
 3♥ Max, some void, then 3♠ asks (LMH)
 3♠/3NT/4♣ Max, singleton, LMH
 4M Supermax, 5+M, no short

1♣-1♦-2♥-2♠ GF, Kokish, 2♠=normal (can bid 3m with weak 6+ m)
 2NT 24+ balanced, GF – use 2NT structure
 3♣ Heart one-suiter
 3♦ Primary hearts, secondary diamonds
 3♥ Primary hearts, secondary clubs
 3♠ Primary hearts, secondary spades
 3NT Primary hearts, natural, COG

1♣-1♦-2♠ 3♣ 2nd neg – Then 3M is forcing (2♠=GF)
 1♣-1♦-2NT 21-23 balanced, use 2NT structure
 1♣-1♦-3m 3♦ Neutral – Opener bids 4-card M if he has one (3m=GF)
 3M Nat, 5+M
 1♣-1♦-3M GF, 4M and (5)6+♦
 1♣-1♦-3NT 100% to play

1♥ Response

The 1♥ response shows 8-11 with any shape except primary spades.

1♣-1♥	1♠	Nat, 5+♠
	1NT	Bal, usually 17-18 but possibly 21-22 With 23+ bid 2NT.
	2m, 2♥	Nat, 5+ cards
	2♠	Artif, some 4441 (then 2NT asks, bid short at 3-level)
	2NT	23+, then use 2NT structure
	3x	Nat, sets trumps, asks for cue ace
	3NT	To play – rare, e.g., Kxx-K-QJx-AKQJxxx

1♠ Rebid

1♣-1♥-1♠	2♣	Usually 3 trumps, then 2NT asks
	2NT	Asks, slam interest
	3♣	5+ clubs
	3♦	5+ diamonds
	3♥	5+ hearts
	3♠	4=3=3=3
	3NT	3M, no feature
	4x	Splinter
	4M	3M, 2 of top 3, no feature
	3X	Nat, strong suit
2NT		Strongest raise, 4+♠
	3♣	Asks
	3♦	Some shortness (3♥ asks, LMH)
	3♥	Some 2 nd 5+ suit (3♠ asks, LMH)
	3♠	4+♠, no short, better than 4♠
	3NT	4+♠, some void, relay asks (LMH)
	4m, 4♥	4+♠, singleton, weaker than 2NT
	4♠	4+S, no short, weakest raise
	3x	Natural, strong 6+ card suit (KQxxxx)

1NT Rebid

1♣-1♥-1NT	2♣	Stayman – promises at least one major
	2♦	Transfer
	2♥	Some 4441 (1♥ response denies primary spades)
	2♠	Clubs (don't need size ask) – then 3♣ = likes clubs

- 2NT Puppet Stayman (does not include 4441s with 4♥)
- 3♣ Diamonds
- 3♦ 5-5 minors
- 3M 3=1= (5-4)
- 3NT 8-11 – Opener keeps bidding with big range
- 4 Level As in opening 1NT structure

- 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♣-2♦ 2M Smolen
- 2NT Clubs
- 3♣ Asks
 - 3♦ 2=4=2=5 or 4=2=2=5
 - 3♥ Asks, then 3♠=2425, 3NT=4225
 - 3♥, 3♠, 3NT LMH short
- 3♣ Diamonds with some shortness
 - 3♦ Asks
 - 3♥, 3♠, 3NT LMH short

On both of these auctions 4♣ instead of 3NT shows same type with extras.

- 3♦ 2=4=5=2 or 4=2=5=2
- 3♥ Asks, then 3♠=2452, 3NT=4252
- 3M Shortness implies 4441 (5440 w/weak 5-card m possible)
- 3NT 8-11 – Opener keeps bidding with big range

- 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♣-2M 2♠/2♥ 4♠, 6m – 2NT asks, then 3m=nat
- 2NT Clubs, implies 4OM
- 3♣ Asks, then 3♦, 3♥, 3♠=Bal, LH
- 3♣ Diamonds, implies 4OM
 - 3♦ Asks, then 3♥, 3♠, 3NT=Bal, LH
- 3♦ Min raise of M, some short (stiff if M=♠), relay LMH
- 3♥/2♠ Spade raise, some void, relay asks (LMH)
- 3♠/2♥ Max heart raise, short spades
- 3M Max raise of M, balanced
- 3NT 8-11 – Opener keeps bidding with big range (4m = 5)
- 4m Max raise of M, short m (also 4♥/2♠ = max ♥ spl)
- 4M Minimum, usually no shortness

- 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♦-2♥ 2♠ Clubs
- 2NT Asks
 - 3♣ 5 clubs
 - 3♦, 3♠ FRAGMENT, then Mulberry (esp. over 3♠)
 - 3♥ 0=5=4=4, then Mulberry

- 3NT 2524: 4♣ or 4♥ nat, 4♦ 6RKC, 4♠ RKC ♥
- 2NT Natural, maximum (bid 3NT w/min)
- 3♣ Diamonds, then 3♦ asks (Bal, LH)
- 3♦ Retran, 6+, minimum, unbal, and relay asks (LMH)
- 3♥ 6+♥, slam try, no short (usually 6322, with 2722 bid 4♥)
- 3♠, 4m 6+♥, maximum, shortness
- 3NT Natural, COG, minimum (bid 2NT w/max)
- 4♥ 2722

1♣-1♥-1NT-2♥

- 2♠ 4 spades
- 2NT 1=4=4=4
- 3x shortness
- 2NT Asks for shape
- 3x shortness

1♣-1♥-2♣

- 2♦ Waiting, opener shows major if he has one
- 2♥ Nat, 5+ hearts
- 2♠ Artif, 5+ diamonds

1♣-1♥-2♦

- 2♥ Nat, 5+ hearts
- 2♠ Waiting

1♣-1♥-2m-3M

4M, fit for m, then first new suit sets M as trumps

1♣-1♥-2♥

- 3♥ 3+♥, better than 4♥
- 3♠ 4+♥, some void, relay asks (LMH)
- 3NT 4+♥, singleton ♠
- 4m 4+♥, singleton m
- 4♥ 3+♥, weakest raise

1♣-1♥-2♠-2NT

- 3m Can set any suit trumps below game (4M = weaker)
- 3M 3♠ Sets spades
- 3NT To play

**THIS IS
"MULBERRY"
(BUSH).**

- 4♣ Relay to 4♦, then NF nat slam try
- 4♦ Relay to 4♥ for signoff in game

IF OPENER IS BIG HE BIDS > 4♥ (USUALLY 4♠)

- 4♥, 4♠, RKC in LMH of opener's suits
- 4NT
- Higher RKC RESPONSES for the SHORT suit

1♠ Response

Some versions of Meckwell Lite treat all positive responses other than 1♥ to show 12+ HCP. We use the “traditional” Precision treatment in that the 1♠ response doesn’t promise more than GF values (i.e., 8+ HCP). Most continuations after opener’s rebid allow responder to immediately differentiate minimums (8-11) from maximums (12+).

1♣-1♠	1NT	Control asking bid
	2x	Nat, 5+ cards, support asking bid
	2♠	Trump asking bid
	2NT	???
	3x	Nat, sets trumps, asks for cue ace
	3♠	??? Balanced 17-18, 4 trumps
	3NT	To play – rare, e.g. x-Kx-QJx-AKQJxxx

1NT Response (Hearts)

1♣-1NT-2♣ Clubs or balanced – natural continuations

Higher Responses

1♣-2m	5+m, 12+HCP, natural continuations
1♣-2♠-2NT	2♠=Some 4441, 12+HCP, use same structure as 1♣-1♥-2♠ (above)
1♣-2♠-3 suit	5-steps: 1=low stiff (2-10), 2=hi stiff (J-A), 3, 4, 5=4 support (LMH stiff)

Asking Bids

Traditional Precision systems feature extensive use of asking bids. We use some of these asking bids in limited circumstances, usually when responder bids 1M naturally. This can occur when an unpassed hand responds 1♠, when a passed hand responds 1M or when the opponents either double 1♣ or overcall 1♦.

Note that asking bids are not used if fourth hand intervenes over 1M; we then revert to natural bidding.

Beta (Control Ask)

Beta asks responder to show his controls, counting Ace as two and King as one. The control responses stop at 2NT (6+) and three level responses show extra suit quality.

After 1♣-1M-1NT:

2♣	0-2 controls; 2♦ asks for clarification (see below)
2♦	3 controls

- 2♥ 4 controls
- 2♠ 5 controls
- 2NT 6+ controls
- 3x 5+ cards with 2/3 top honors in both suits
- 3M 6+ cards with 2/3 top honors plus the Jack

After 1♣-1♠-1NT-2♣-2♦:

- 2♥ 0 or 1 control
- 2♠ Two controls
- 2♣ An Ace (all bids show two Kings)
- 2NT 5332, Two Kings
- 3x 4+cards, 2 Kings
- 3M 6+ cards, 2 Kings
- 3NT 5332, 2 Kings, 2 Queens

If responder is a passed hand, his maximum number of controls is four. Also, it's very unlikely that a passed hand would have two ♥♥xxx suits (one a major) and impossible for a passed hand to have ♥♥Jxxx in a major, so responses above 2♥ have different meanings.

After P-1♣-1M-1NT:

- 2♣/2♦/2♥ as above
- 2♠ 5-5 with 2/3 top honors in the M; 2NT asks for side suit
- 2NT ???
- 3x 5-5 with 2/3 top honors in the second suit

Alpha (Support Ask)

Alpha asks for responder's general strength (in controls) and degree of support for opener's primary suit. Responder answers in steps.

After 1♣-1M-2x:

- Step 1 0-3 controls, no support (less than ♥xx or xxxx)
- Step 2 4+ controls, no support
- Step 3 0-3 controls, support (♥xx or xxxx)
- Step 4 4+ controls, support
- Step 5 4 control, good support (♥xxx or better)
- Step 6 5 controls, good support
- Step 7 6 control, good support (etc.)

If responder bids the first or second step, opener's new suit is natural. If the responder bids the third step or higher then opener's suit is agreed and a new suit asks for specific controls.

Gamma (Suit Quality Ask)

Gamma agrees responder's suit and asks for suit length and quality. Responder answers in steps:

After 1♣-1M-2M:

Step 1	no top honor
Step 2	5 cards with one top honor
Step 3	5 cards with two top honors
Step 4	6 cards with one top honor
Step 5	6 cards with two top honors
Step 6	all three top honors

After the Gamma response, a new suit asks for specific controls

Epsilon (Specific Control Ask)

After a trump suit has been agreed following Alpha or Gamma, a new suit asks for first or second round control in that suit. Responder answers in steps:

Step 1	no control
Step 2	second round control (King or singleton)
Step 3	first round control (Ace or void)
Step 4	Ace and King

A repeat ask in the same suit asks for third round control:

Step 1	no control
Step 2	third round control (Queen or doubleton)

Interference After 1♣ Opening

1♣-(DBL)	P	0-4(5)
	1♦	5+-7
	RDBL	GF, no good bid, usually bal or 4441, then first DBL = TO
	1M, 2m	Nat 5+ cards, GF
	1NT	Nat, 8-11 or 14+
	2NT	Nat, 12-13
	3 any	Nat, NF, 7-card suit
1♣-(bid)	P	0-4(5)
	DBL	(5)6-7 any, F through 2♠

New suit	Natural, 5+ cards, GF
Cheapest NT	Natural, 8-11 or 14+
Jump in NT	Natural, 12-13
Cue	8+, bal, no stop (2 level) – 3-suited (3 level)
Jump Cue	4441, short in opponent's suit
1♣-(1 any)	3 new Nat, NF, 7-card suit

Over 2♠ or higher Double includes 8+ with no convenient bid. **(Then 2NT=F)**
Over 3 any or higher any positive action is GF.

Over Fourth-hand Interference:

When responder has not shown a suit, opener's double is TAKEOUT.
The first double on either side is TAKEOUT. Subsequent doubles are business.
If responder has bid 2♥ or 2NT, opener's double is PENALTY.
Opener's cue bid is MICHAELS. Opener's jump cue bid = NATURAL.

Pass-Double Inversion:

1. Applies only after 1♣ opening.
2. Applies only in GF auctions.
3. Applies only at high levels (3♠ and up)

THEN: Pass requests Double, either (1) for penalty, or (2) to show a flexible hand (more than one place to play), or (3) to show extras with a fit.

Double = would have passed partner's penalty double, but encourages a bid

Bid = (1) single-suited if no fit found yet, or (2) weakest action with fit

EXAMPLES: 1♣-1♥-(3♠)-Pass and Pull = multi-suited, Direct Bid = 1-suited, Double = "you decide whether to defend" 1♣-(1♥)-1♠-(4♥)-Pass and Pull to 4NT implies clubs + longer diamonds, pull to 5♣ implies diamonds + longer clubs, pull to 5♦ implies diamonds with spade tolerance, pull to 4♠ = slam try, immediate bids show one-suiters, immediate 4NT = RKC spades, Double = "you decide"

Passed Hand Responses To 1♣

We revert to natural responses above 1♦.

1♦	0-7
1♥	GF, 5+♥
1♠	GF, 5+♠
1NT	GF, 8-10(11) balanced, may include a weak 5-card minor

2m	GF, 5+m
2♥	DNE??
2♠	GF, some 4441

1♦ Opening Bid

2+ diamonds, (10)11-15 HCP

If balanced 11-13 (or 14 when 1NT = 15-17)

Balanced includes hands with 5 clubs: 4=2=2=5, 2=4=2=5, 2=2=4=5 and (332)=5.

Unbalanced possibilities include:

Primary diamonds

5 clubs: 4=1=3=5 or 1=4=3=5 or 3=1=4=5 or 1=3=4=5

4441 pattern including diamonds

5440 with 5m and void M

11-13 balanced is the most frequent and worst for offense. Thus, many auctions cater to not getting overboard with this type. When opener is unbalanced he must often take aggressive action to disclose his hand type.

Responses:

1♥	Occasionally 3 (Bart will usually have 4)
1♠	Assume 4+
1NT	Wide range, up to bad 11
2♣	Nat, F1, 5+ – DENIES MAJOR UNLESS GF AND 6+ CARDS
2♦	Nat, F1, 5+ – DENIES MAJOR UNLESS GF AND 6+ CARDS
2♥	5+♠, 4+♥, less than invitational values opposite 11-13 bal
2♠	5+♠, 4+♥, invitational opposite 11-13 bal
2NT	11+ to 13, bal, invitational
3♣	Preemptive/Mixed, BOTH MINORS, usually 5+ in both
3♦	Nat, preemptive/mixed, usually 6 diamonds
3M	Nat, preemptive
3NT	Nat, 13-15
4♣	BOTH MINORS, usually 11+ cards
4♦	Lots of diamonds
4M	Nat, to play
4NT	Blackwood (0123, since no “suit” shown)

1♥ Response

1♦-1♥	1♠	Must show spades if held, even with balanced hand – 1NT denies 4♠
	1NT	11-13(14) bal, no singleton (Normal rebid w/3=1=(54) is 2♣)
	2♣	Both minors, at least 5-4, ambig lengths, can be 5-4 either way, NOT 6-4

- 2♦ Nat, 6+♦, minimum, may have 4 clubs
- 2♥ Shows 4
- 2♠ Either 5♠ and 6♦ with some extras, OR mini-splinter for hearts
- 2NT 6+♦ and 3♥, not minimum (with min bid 2♦)
- 3♣ 55 minors, maximum but NF
- 3♦ 6+♦, maximum, denies 3♥
- 3♥ Strongest invite (stronger than 2♠), some short (then 3♠ asks, LH)
- 3♠ 4♥, some void – 3NT asks (LH)
- 3NT Offer to play with good long diamonds, usually 7
- 4♣/4♦ Artif, 4♥, splinter (LH), exactly a singleton (with void bid 3S) – 6♦
- 4♥ 5♥, 6♦

1♦-1♥-1♠-2♣ GF

- 2♦ 5+♦, denies 3♥ – Natural continuations
- 2♥ All hands with 3♥, then: 2S=relay without 4♠, 2NT=relay w/4♠
 - 2♠ Relay, denies 4♠
 - 2NT Balanced
 - 3♣ Relay
 - 3♦ 4♣, exactly 4=3=2=4
 - 3♥ 4♦, exactly 4=3=4=2
 - 3♠ 4=3=3=3 minimum
 - 3NT 4=3=3=3 maximum
 - 3♣ 4=3=5=1 These two are the only possible
 - 3♦ 4=3=6=0 unbalanced shapes
 - 2NT Relay, shows 4♠, agrees Spades (see exception below)
 - 3♣ Balanced
 - 3♦ Relay
 - 3♥ 4=3=2=4
 - 3♠ 4=3=4=2
 - 3NT 4=3=3=3, no min-max step here
 - 3♥ SETS HEARTS – changing horses
 - 3♦ 4=3=5=1
 - 3♥ 4=3=6=0
- 2♠ Either 5♠ and 6♦, or 5♣ and a max
 - 2NT Asks
 - 3♣ 5♣, max
 - Higher 5♠, 6♦ – Specific meanings undefined
 - 2NT No 5m, no 3♥, thus 4234, 4243, or 4144
 - 3♣ Asks
 - 3♦ 4♣ balanced, exactly 4=2=3=4

- 3♥ 4♦ balanced, exactly 4=2=4=3
- 3♠ 4=1=4=4 minimum
- 3NT 4=1=4=4 maximum
- 3♣ 5♣, minimum, either 4225 or 4135

- 1♦-1♥-1♠-2♦ F1, game invite with 5 hearts or 4 spades
- 2♥ minimum, 2 or 3 hearts (then 2♠=nat inv)
- 2♠ reject, 0 or 1 heart
- 2NT accept, 0 or 1 heart

Over any of the above 3m by responder shows 5♥, 4+m, invite

- 3m Does not exist?
- 3♥ accept w/3♥
- 3♠ 5♠, 6♦?
- 3NT accept w/3♥ AND ♣ stop?

NOTE: With 4♥, 5+m and invite, jump directly to 3m over 1♠.

- 1♦-1♥-1♠-2NT Nat invite
- 1♦-1♥-1♠-3m Canape invite, 4♥, 5+m
- 1♦-1♥-1♠-3♥ GF – Slam try
- 1♦-1♥-1♠-3♠ GF – Slam try

- 1♦-1♥-2♣-2♠ Artif, GF
- 2NT 3=1=(54), then 3m = 4 support, then step 1 = 4m, other = 5m
- 3♣ 5-5m
- 3♦ 2=2=(54), then 3H asks HJx or more (3NT=no), and 3♠ asks ♠Qx or more (3NT=yes)
- 3♥ 1=3=4=5, then Mulberry
- 3♠ 1=3=5=4, then Mulberry
- 3NT 0=3=5=5 minimum, then Mulberry
- 4♣ 0=3=5=5 maximum, then mod. Mulberry (can't make nat slam try)

- 1♦-1♥-2♠ Either 5♠-6♦ OR a heart mini-splinter (2.5 Heart raise)
- 2NT Asks and shows some values
 - 3♣ Low splinter (clubs)
 - 3♦ 5♠ and 6+♦
 - 3♥ High splinter (spades)
- 3♣ Undefined as yet
- 3♦ Bad hand, only bailout – opener should pass or correct to 3♥
- 3♥ GF, natural, 6+♥

1♠ Response

- 1♦-1♠ 1NT As over 1♥ (complete structure a couple of pages down)
- 2♣ “Natural”, can be 1=4=4=4 or 1=4=(53) – with 6♦-4♣ bid 2♦
- 2♦ Natural, 6+♦ – THEN 2♥ = GF (ambiguous about hearts)
- 2♥ Artif, 4♣, not the pits, some short OR 5♥, 6♦ minimum
- 2♠ Shows 4 (unless 3=4=5=1) – shapely min or balanced
- 2NT/3m As over 1♥
- 3♥ Natural, 5♥ and 6♦, maximum
- 3♠ Strongest invite, some short (then 3NT asks, LH)
- 3NT As over 1♥ (to play with long diamonds)
- 4♣ Artif, 4♣, some void, then 4♦ asks (LH)
- 4♦/4♥ Artif, splinter (LH) – exactly a singleton (with void bid 4♣)
- 4♠ 5♠, 6♦

1♦-1♠-2♣-2♦-2♥ 1=4=3=5 – Avoid 6-card ♦ fit, hope for some 8-card fit

1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥ Artif, GF

- 2♣ Artif: (a)1=4=4=4, (b) 1=4=(5-3), (c) Spade support
- 2NT Asks
 - 3♣ NOT spade support
 - 3♦ Asks
 - 3♥ 1=4=4=4, Mulberry?
 - 3S 1=4=3=5, Mulberry?
 - 3NT 1=4=5=3, Mulberry?
 - 3♥ Sets hearts
 - 3♦ 3=1=4=5, then Mulberry
 - 3♥ 3=1=5=4, then Mulberry
 - 3♠ 3=0=5=5 min, then Mulberry
 - 3NT 3=0=5=5 max, then Mulberry
- 2NT 1=3=(54), then 3m = 4 support, then step 1 = 4m, other = 5m 3♣ 5-5m
- 3♦ 2=2=(54), then 3♥ asks ♥Qx or more (3NT=yes), and 3♠ asks ♠Jx or more (3NT=no)
- 3♥ 0=4=4=5, Mulberry applies
- 3♠ 0=4=5=4 minimum, Mulberry applies
- 3NT 0=4=5=4 maximum, Mulberry applies

1♦-1♠-2♥ Artif ♠ raise w/short OR 5♥,6♦ minimum (bid immed. 3♥ w/max)

- 2♠ Signoff (then 3♦ = 5♥,6♦)
- 2NT Asks

- 3♣ Low splinter (clubs)
- 3♦ 5♥, 6♦ minimum – then Mulberry?
- 3♥ High splinter (hearts)

- 1♦-1♠-2♣ 3♣/3♦/3♠ Natural invite
 3♥ 5-5 GF
- 1♦-1M-1NT 2♣ Relay to 2♦, either to play or some invite or certain slam tries
- 2♦ Forced
- 2♥/1♠ 4=1=4=4 inv+, resp can pass 2NT or 3m w/min
 2♠ = NF, should be 3=4=3=3 w/weak hearts
 3M = max w/corresponding m, 3NT = max no fit
 - 2♠/1♥ 1=4=4=4 inv+, continue as above
 - 2M Nat, invite
 - 2NT Nat, invite (raising 1NT directly to 2NT is artif)
 - 3m ?? Nat, 5M, 5+m, invite?? (w/canape bid 2OM)
 - 3♥/1♠ 5-5M – strong inv w/good hearts (else 2S over 1♦)
 - 3M Nat, 6+M, strong inv (w/6♠-4♥ bid 2♠/1♦, or this)
 - 3♠/1♥ Self-splinter, singleton or void
 - 3NT 5M, COG
 - 4♣ Self-splinter, singleton or void
 - 4R Self-splinter, VOID
- 2♦ Artif GF
- 2♥ Artif, 3M, no 5-card minor
 - 2♠ Artif, <3M, some 5-card minor, then 2NT asks
 - 2NT <3M, no 5-card minor
 - 3m 3M AND 5m
 - 1♦-1♥-1NT-2♦-3♦-4♥ = 6RKC (resp usually has 5♥). To sign off in 4♥ must bid 3♥ first.
- 2♥/1♠ Artificial, some canape inv+
- 2♠ x spade support
 - 2NT Less than ♥♥x spade support
 - 3m Invite, 4♠ and 5+m (usually 6)
 - 3M GF, 4♠ and 5 (exactly) of corresponding m
- 2♠/1♥ Artificial, some canape inv+
- 2NT Forced
 - 3m Invite, 4♥ and 5+m (usually 6)
 - 3M GF, 4♥ and 5 (exactly) of corresponding m
- 2M To play
- 2NT Artif, relay to 3♣ to play, or show various 5-5 hands

	3♣	Forced (This is how we escape to 3♣.)
	3♦	??
	3♥	??
	3♠	??
	3NT	??
3 lower		Slam try, 5♠
3M		Slam try, natural
3♠/1♥		GF, 5♠ and 6♥
3NT		The End
4♣		RKC in M
4♦/4♥		Splinter (exactly singleton – with void bid 2♣-2♦-4R)
4M		The End
1♦-1♥-2♥	2♠	Artif, asks
	2NT	3=4=3=3
	3♣	5 clubs, then 3♦ asks: BAL-LH
	3♦	5 diamonds, unbalanced, then 3♥ asks, LH
	3♥	minimum
	3♠	minimum, 4♥, 6♦
	3NT	2=4=5=2
	4♣	Stiff club, implies 4=4=4=1, else bid 3♦
	4♦	Stiff spade, implies 1=4=4=4, else bid 3m
	4♥	Max bal
1♦-1♠-2♠	2NT	Artif, asks
	3♣	5 clubs, then 3♦ asks: BAL-LH
	3♦	3=4=5=1
	3♥	5 diamonds, unbalanced, then 3S asks, LH
	3♠	minimum
	3NT	minimum, 4♠, 6♦
	4♣	4=2=5=2
	4♦	Stiff club, implies 4=4=4=1, else bid 3♥
	4♥	Stiff heart, implies 4=1=4=4, else bid 3♣/3♥
	4♠	Max bal
1♦-1M-2M		Jump in new suit = short, slam try
1♦-1M-2NT	6+♦, 3M, some extra (else bid 2♦)	
	3♣	“Wolfish♥”, forces 3♦
	3♦	Forced

P To play (duh!)
 3M To play
 3OM Short with diamond support (2+) – NOT LH
 3NT Short clubs with diamond support – NOT LH
 4♣ Short clubs, ♦ support, stronger than 3NT

3♦ GF, some slam interest (denies shortness, didn't bid 3♣)
 3M GF, natural, some slam interest
 3OM GF, 4M, 6(5)Clubs

1♦-1M-3♦

6+♦, denies (or unwilling to show) 3M

1♦-2♣

2♦ 5+♦, not NT type, 5422 or more shapely

2M GF, (semi)natural, nat continuations

2NT GF, natural

3m nat, some interest in contracts other than 3NT

3M short

3NT To play, regressive

3♣ NF, nat invite

3♦ GF, then 3M="naturalism" (looking for 3NT)

3M Short with ♦ support (expect 4)

3NT ** To play **

4♣ Natural, requests cue (but 4♦ by opener is RKC clubs)

4♦ RKC Clubs

4♥ RKC Diamonds

2♥ Artif, 11-13 balanced

2♠ Relay to 2NT

2NT Forced

Pass Possible but unlikely – save this for matchpoints

3♣ GF, nat, balanced, slam interest

3other GF, short, 6+♣

3NT To play

2NT GF, nat, want to declare, interest above 3NT, then 3M=nat w/♣ fit

3♣ Natural, NOT FORCING

3♦ GF, nat, presumably 4♦, 5+♣

3M GF, NATURAL, 4(5)M, 6+♣(with short M start w/2♠)

3NT The End

4♣/4♦ As over 1♦-2♣-2♦

2♠

Artif, 4♣ (5 with crap) and some stiff

2NT Asks, then 3♣/♦=short ♥/♠

3♣ NF opposite min, then 3♦/♥=short ♥/♠ max

	3♦	??
	3M	GF, nat, then OM sets M
2NT	10-13, 4=4=4=1	
	3♣	To play
	3other	GF, nat
3♣	5(4) clubs, balanced, don't want to declare NT, then stoppers	
3♦	GF, 6+ solid diamonds, no 4M, not min	
3M	GF, 5♣, short M (with 5 clubs and crap bid 2♠)	
3NT	14-15, 4=4=4=1, then Mulberry applies	
4♣	DNE	
4♦	RKC Clubs (unlikely but possible with big fit)	
4M	Natural, 5M, 6♦	

If 4th hand overcalls M, then double = short M.

If 4th hand overcalls ♦ (any meaning), then double = real diamonds (usually 5+)

If 2♣ bidder is passed hand:

P-1♦-2♣	2♦	Nat, corrective
	2♥	Artif, good hand, forces 2♠, usually no club fit
	2♠	Forced
	2NT	4=4=4=1
	3♣	Nat, no short
	3♦	Nat, suit not as good as P-1♦-2♣-3♦
	3M	5M, 6♦
	2♠	4♣, some stiff, as above
2NT		Nat, shows 2+ fit (with bal and no fit just pass)
3♣		Nat – Weaker than 2♥-2S-3♣
3♦		Nat – Good suit
3M		GF, 5♣, short M
1♦-2♦	2♥	11-13 balanced (12+ or 13 if Jx or worse in ♦ – with 12- bid 2NT immed)
	2♠	Relay to 2NT
	2NT	Forced
	3♣	GF, Nat, ♦+♣
	3♦	Sets ♦, then 3M=short
	3M	Sets ♣, values in M, looking for 3NT
	3♦	GF, bal or short ♣
	3♥	Asks
	3♠	Short ♣
		3NT and higher Balanced
	3M	GF, short M, slam interest

3NT To play

- 2NT GF, nat, some interest above 3NT
 - 3m NF, nat
 - 3M GF, NATURAL, 4(5)M, 6+ diamonds (with short M start w/2♠)
 - 3NT The End
 - 4♣ Void
 - 4♦ Natural, requests (begs?) partner to bid RKC
 - 4♥ RKC Diamonds
 - 2♠ Artif, 4♦ and some stiff (or 5♦ with crap)
 - 2NT Asks (LMH)
 - 3♣ DNE
 - 3♦ NF opposite min, then 3♥/3♠/3NT=short ♣/♥/♠ max
 - 2NT 10 to bad 12 bal, Jx or worse in ♦ (with 12+ or 13 bid 2♥)
 - 3m NF, nat
 - 3M GF, short
 - 3♣ (41)=3=5
 - 3♦ NF opposite min, then 3M=short max
 - 3M Stopper, does not preclude 4-6 GF**
 - 3♦ NF, bal, not “no-trumpy”, 5(4)♦, then semi-natural (stoppers)
 - 3M/4♣ GF, 5+♦, short M/♣
 - 1♦-2♦ 3NT DNE
- If fourth hand overcalls, then double=short.

If 2♦ bidder is passed hand:

- P-1♦-2♦ 2♥ Artif, good hand, forces 2♠
- 2♠ Forced
- 2NT Max, bad diamonds
- 3♣ 5♣, bal, usually looking for best part score
- 3♦ Stronger than 3♦ direct
- 3M 5M, 6♦, looking for M fit
- 2♠ 4♦, some short, as above
- 2NT Nat, ♦ fit
- 3♣ Nat
- 3♦ Weaker than 2♥-2♠-3♦
- 3M GF, 5♦, short M

Interference over 1♦

- 1♦-(DBL) RDBL 4+ Hearts, then 1♥=3, 2♥=4, other=fewer and natural
- 1♥ 4+ Spades, then 1♠=3, 2♠=4, other=fewer and natural

After RDBL or 1♥ and any 1-level rebid by opener, 2♣ forces 2♦, 2♦=GF, 3♣=nat weak.

- 1♠ Requests 1NT, no interest in major suit fit
- 1NT Clubs, F1 (NOTE: may wrong-side NT)
- 2♣ Clubs, NF, good suit (else bid 1NT)
- 2♦ Diamonds, NF
- 2M As w/o interference
- 2NT Diamonds, Lim+
- 3m As w/o interference
- 3M Nat preempt
- 1♦-(1♥) DBL Standard, usually exactly 4 spades
 - 1♠ 5+ spades, F1 (with 6+ spades and GF, bid 2♠)
 - 1NT Nat, NF – sometimes no stop if nothing else fits
 - 2♣ **Nat, NF (if followed by 2♥, forcing only to 3♣)**
 - 2♦ Nat, F1, 5+ cards – Nat continuations – **3♣ next = NF**
 - 2♥ GF, Clubs (possibly only 4)
 - 2♠ Nat, 6+ spades, GF
 - 2NT Nat, NF
 - 3♣ Mixed with BOTH minors
 - 3♦ Mixed/pre with 6+(5) diamonds
 - 3♥ Transfer to 3NT
 - 3♠ Nat preempt
 - 3NT To play, wishes to declare
 - 4m As without interference
 - 4♥ RKC diamonds
 - 4♠ To play
- 1♦-(1♠) DBL Negative, normal OR GF w/exactly 5 hearts
 - 1NT/2m As over 1♥ (2♣=neg. free bid, 2♦=F1)
 - 2♥ **Nat, 5+, NF – Negative Free Bid**
 - 2♠ GF, Clubs (possibly only 4)
 - 2NT/3♣/3♦ As over 1♥
 - 3♥ GF, 6+ hearts
 - 3♠ Transfer to 3NT
 - 3NT/4m As over 1♥
 - 4♥ To play
 - 4♠ RKC diamonds
- 1♦-(1NT) We play 2♣ as both majors plus transfers
 - DBL Penalty, forcing through 2♦
 - 2♣ Both majors

- 2♥/2♦ Transfer to major
- 2♠ Natural
- 2NT Both minors, stronger than 3♣
- 3♣ Natural

1♦-(2♣/3♣) Min ♦=Hearts **ALL OF THESE APPLY BY UPH ONLY.**
 Min ♥=Spades Then cue=good raise, also DBL if 4th hand raises
 Min ♠=Diamonds

- 1♦-(2♣) 2NT Nat invite
- 3♣ 5-5+ Majors, INV+
- 3♦ 5+♦, Mixed/Pre
- 3M GF, Nat, Strong Suit

Double then M is NF and implies 4OM (else immed transfer).

- 1♦-(2♠) 2NT Nat invite
- 3♣/3♦/3♥ Show ♦/♥/♣ respectively **UPH ONLY**
- 3♠ Requests opener to bid 3NT ??

- 1♦-(2♦ natural) DBL Neg or GF w/exactly 5M
- 2M **Nat, NF – Negative Free Bid**
- 3♦ Asks Stop
- 3♠ Nat, GF, 6+

- 1♦-(2♦ Michaels) DBL Cards
- 2♥ Clubs, invite+
- 2♠ Diamonds, invite+
- 2NT Both minors
- 3m Nat, NF
- 3M Short M, diamonds

1♦-(2♥ Michaels) As above, except 3♣ = Forcing

1♦-(2♥ Natural) 2♠=Neg. Free Bid, 3♠=GF, 6+

Over Fourth-Seat Interference

Support Doubles and Redoubles:

When responder shows a major at the one-level and 4th hand overcalls below 2 of responder's suit, we play Support Doubles, including when 4th hand overcalls 1NT, strong and natural. This applies whether or not 2nd hand has acted. We also play Support Redoubles if 4th hand doubles.

General Rules for Competing Over 2M by Fourth Hand

Many different auctions fall under this category. Second hand may or may not have acted. If he has acted, he could have doubled or overcalled 1M or overcalled in a different suit. Third hand also could have acted in one of several ways: Pass, 1NT, Negative Double, Negative Free Bid, Transfer or a Natural F1 Bid.

In the most general case:

Double	Extra values, invite+, often the strongest call available
2NT	Looking for a minor-suit fit on many auctions, but nat on others
3♣	Usually both minors – on a few specific auctions clubs only
3♦	Natural
Cue	??

1♥/1♠ Opening Bids

Style: 5 cards expected in 1st/2nd seat. 4 more often in 3rd/4th, but with a full opener we try to make the normal opening bid. Very aggressive, but we pay attention to vulnerability and suit quality. With 14/16 HCP and no singleton we tend to open 1NT, even with many 5422 patterns. Therefore, our Jacoby structure does not cater to showing such hands.

1♥	1♠	Expected on most hands with 4+ spades – with GF may start with 2/1
	1NT	Semi-forcing
	2♣	GF, nat or balanced
	2♦	GF, usually 5+
	2♥	Raise, not the pits, usually 3 trumps (with 4 can make mixed raise)
	2♠	Weak, 6+ spades
	2NT	GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter
	3♣	Limit raise; 3♦ asks:
	3M	Bal, 4+ trumps
	3OM	Unbal, 3 trumps, some singleton; 3NT asks (LMH)
	3NT	Spade void
	4m	Void
	3♦	Mixed raise, 4+ trumps
	3♥	Preemptive raise, 4+ trumps
	3♠	Artif raise, some singleton – then 3NT asks (LMH)
	3NT	Spade void – 10-12 HCP
	4m	Void – 10-12 HCP
	4♥	Many hand types possible opposite limited opening
	4♠	RKC HEARTS (With a natural 4♠ bid must bid 1♠ first)
	4NT	Aces (0,1,2...)

1♠	1NT	Semi-forcing
	2♣	GF, nat or balanced
	2♦	GF, usually 5+♦
	2♥	GF, Nat, 5+♥
	2♠	Raise, not the pits, usually 3 trumps (with 4 can make mixed raise)
	2NT	GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter
	3♣	Limit raise; 3♦ asks (see above)
	3♦	Mixed raise, 4+ trumps
	3♥	Natural, invitational
	3♠	Preemptive raise, 4+ trumps
	3NT	Artif raise, some singleton; 4♣ asks (LMH)
	4m	Void – 10-12 HCP
	4♥	Void – 10-12 HCP (With a natural 4♥ bid must bid 2♥ first)
	4♠	Many hand types possible opposite limited opening
	4NT	RKC SPADES

1♠ Response

1♥-1♠-1NT	2♣	Forces 2♦ to start invitational sequences
	2♦	Forced
		2M Inv
		2NT Nat invite
	2♦	Artif, GF
	2♥	Strong suit (2 of top 3), denies 3 spades
	2♠	3 spades
	2NT	Neither
	3m	2=5=(42), 4m, stopper in om
	2M	To play
	2NT	Relay to 3♣ – then P=to play, 3x = ?? (not needed yet)
	3m	GF, 5-5
	3♥	Nat, slam try
	3♠	Nat, slam try
1♥-1♠-2♣	3♠	Natural, invite
1♥-1♠-2♥	3♣	Artif, GF
	3♦/♥/♠	Invite
1♥-1♠-2♠		Shows 4 trumps, or 3 trumps plus weak m; 2NT asks:
	3♣	3 trumps, minimum (could be 3=5=(3-2))

- 3♦** 3 trumps, maximum, unbal (if bal open 1NT)
- 3♥** 4 trumps, minimum
- 3♠** 4 trumps, maximum
- 3NT** 4=5=2=2, maximum, stuff in minors (?)
- 4m** Splinter, 6 GOOD hearts

1♥-1♠-3m Natural, 5-5, extras but NF
 3♦=NF, 3♥=NF, 3♠=F, 4m=F, 4om=RKC m, 4♠=RKC ♥

We have no force in hearts except 4♠ (=RKC)

1♥-1♠-3NT 4 spades, 7 hearts

1NT Response

- 1♥-1NT-2♣** Possibly as few as 2 (4=5=2=2), but assume 3+ with semi-forcing NT
- 1♥-1NT-2m**
 - 2♠** Artif, strongest raise of m
 - 3m** Courtesy raise, but some game interest
- 1♥-1NT-2♥** **2♠** Artif, both minors, assume 5-5, indeterminate strength
- 1♥-1NT-3m** Nat, 5-5, extras but NF
 3♥=NF, 3♠=3-card LR, 4m=F, 4om=RKC m
- 1♥-1NT-2♠** **5♠, 6♥** – weakish
- 1♥-1NT-3♠** **5♠, 6♥** – strong

- 1♠-1NT-2m** Opposite SF NT this will be 4+ more often than 3, especially 2♦
- 1♠-1NT-2♣**
 - 2♦** 5+ Hearts – With stiff opener must judge – Nat continuations
 Responder can show 2♠,5♥ by bidding ...2♦-2♥-2♠
 - 2♥** Artif, Mod Bart: (a)♠ signoff, (b)good ♣ raise, or(c)♦ invite
 - 2♠** Forced unless unusually good opposite ♠ signoff
 - P** To play – Weak with doubleton or bad with 3(4)
 - 2NT** Max invite, 4 clubs
 - 3♣** Max invite, 5+ clubs
 - 3♦** Natural invite
 - Higher** Undefined but show CLUBS
 - 2♠** Doubleton S, 9+ to 11
 - 2NT** Nat, 11-12
 - 3♣** Courtesy raise
 - 3♦** TO PLAY (Start with 2♥ to show ♦ invite)
 - 3♥** 5♥, 5♣ (with 5♥, 4♣ start with 2♦)
 - 3♠** 3-card limit raise
- 1♠-1NT-3m** Nat, 5-5, extra♠ but NF

- 3♥=Nat NF, 3♠=NF, 4m=F, 4om=RKC m, 4♥=3-card LR
- 1♠-1NT-3♥ Nat, 5-5, extras but NF
3♠=NF, 4m=artif, slammish in corresponding M, 4M=to play
- 1M-1NT-2NT Nat with 6 strong M, offering NT
- 1M-1NT-3M Nat, “strong”, but limited by failure to open 1♣
- 1M-1NT-3NT Solid suit, offer to play
- 1M-1NT-4 6-6
lower
- 1M-2M New “Natural” game try
suit
2NT **Natural try for 3NT, 6322 with side stoppers**
4 new Nat slam try, 6-5 or 6-6

2-over-1

Over a major-suit opening we play 2/1 game forcing.

2♣ over 1M is either natural or balanced.

If opener rebids 2M he shows 6+M.

Therefore, opener may have to make some ugly 2NT bids, either off shape or missing stopper(s), or both. **2NT is our punt; other bids should retain their integrity. Try NOT to rebid in a 3-card suit.**

A high reverse (e.g., 1S-2H-3♣) shows 5 of the second suit.

After a 2/1 opener’s jump in a new suit is a SPLINTER.

Unlike many standard systems, we play FAST ARRIVAL on most auctions. This is a logical extension of the limited opening-bid style. But beware that sometimes we cannot use fast arrival when that would be RKC for the suit immediately below, a danger most frequent when we are bidding diamonds and hearts, e.g., 1H-2♦-3♦-4♥ is RKC for diamonds.

Modified Non-Serious 3NT

If we are in a game force, AND we have established a major-suit fit (8+ cards), AND the last bid was 3M (our fit), AND we still have potential slam interest, THEN we play Modified Non-Serious 3NT (with exceptions noted below).

Typical Auctions: 1M-2x-2M-3M, or 1M-2x-2y-2M-3M

- Over 3♠: 3NT Non-Serious slam try – partner cooperates with interest himself
4m/4♥ Cue, serious slam try – partner must cooperate below game
- Over 3♥: 3♠ **Cue, strength unspecified**
3NT **Artif, non-serious slam try**

3NT **Artif, no spade control, non-serious slam try**
4m **Cue, no spade control, serious slam try**

EXCEPTION:

1♠-2♥-3♥ **3♠** **Nat, some slam interest, establishes 6RKC**
 3NT **Non-Serious slam try**
 4m **Serious slam try**

NOTE: Non-Serious 3NT does NOT apply on the auction 1M-2x-2NT-3M. Opener's 3NT is an offer to play. With slam interest he should cue bid. His 2NT bid has already limited the slam potential of his hand.

Strong Raise

1M-2NT **Artif, GF, 4+M, bal or too strong to splinter**
3♣ **All minimums except 6322 or 7222 garbage (bid 4M immed)**
 3♦ **Asks**
 3♥ **No shortness, exactly 5M, then 3S=still hoping**
 3♠ **Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)**
 3NT/4♣/4♦ **LMH singletons**
 4M **6322 or 7222 – min but not crap (else immed 4M)**
 3♥ **Some void, too strong to splinter, forces 3S (LMH)**
 3♠/3NT/4♣ **LMH singletons, too strong to splinter**
3♦ **Extras with some shortness**
 3♥ **Asks**
 3♠ **Some void, then 3NT asks (LMH)**
 3NT/4♣/4♦ **LMH singletons**
3♥ **Extras, some 5422, then 3♠ asks (LMH 4-card suit)**
3♠ **Extras, some 6-4, then 3NT asks (LMH 4-card suit)**
3NT **Extras, 6+M, balanced – nat (cue) continuations**
4x **Extras, nat, 5-5**
4M **6322 or 7222 garbage – We have THREE ranges with this shape.**

Responder can break the relay only over 3♣.

With 5-5 show 2nd suit only with **2 of top 3**. With **6-4** show 2nd suit only with **A or K**.

With 5332 opener is limited to 13 HCP, else would have opened 1NT.

After Interference Over Jacoby 2NT

If RHO bids a new suit over 2NT, a pass by opener denies a control in the opponent's suit. Double shows shortness in the opponent's suit, and a four level cue bid shows a void. Any bid

by opener promises a high-card control in the opponent's suit. A new suit shows shortness in the bid suit, 3M shows 6 cards with extra values, 3NT shows 6 cards with minimum values and 4M shows 5 cards with minimum values.

Passed Hand Responses

P-1♥	2♣	Drury (see below)
	2♦	Nat (often a weak 2♦ opener)
	2♥	Normal
	2♠	Mixed raise, some shortness; 2NT asks (LMH)
	2NT	Both minors (5-5)
	3♣	Nat, invite
	3♦	Fit-showing, 6♦, 3♥
	3♥	Limit raise, 5 trumps; 3S asks for shortness (LMH/none)
	3NT	Spade void, 4+ trumps
	4m	Void, 4+ trumps

P-1♠	2♣	Drury (see below)
	2♦	Nat (often a weak 2♦ opener)
	2♥	Nat
	2♠	Normal
	2NT	Mixed raise, some shortness; 3♣ asks (LMH)
	3♣	Nat, invite
	3♦	Fit-showing, 6♦, 3♠
	3♥	Fit-showing, 6♥, 3♠
	3♠	Limit raise, 5 trumps; 3NT asks for shortness (LMH/none)
	4x	Void, 4+ trumps

After P-1M-2♣:

2♦	Real opener, no immed game interest, nat continuations
2♥/1♠	Nat, F1
2M	Worst, min opener or less
2NT	Slam interest
3x	Slam try, length in x (also 2♠/1♥)
3M	Solid 6 card suit plus side card
3NT	6322, side stoppers
4x	Slam try, short in x (also 3♠/1♥)

If 2♣ gets doubled:

Pass	Worst w/4M
2M	Worst w/5M
RDBL	Clubs
Other	Ignore the double

Interference Over 1M Over Unusual 2Nt And “Standard” Michaels

1M-(DBL)	RDBL	Bal, 8+, exactly 2 card support for M
	1♠/1♥	Nat, F1
	1NT	Clubs, length or strength or both
	2♣	Diamonds, length or strength or both
	2♦/1♠	Hearts, length or strength or both
	2M-1	Artif, constructive raise of M
	2M	Weakest raise of M
	2♠/1♥	Nat, preemptive
	2NT	4+M, inv+, then 3♣=artif game try, 3M=NF, other=slam try
	3♣	Nat, preemptive
	3♦/1♠	Nat, preemptive
	3M-1	Artif, mixed raise
	3M	Preemptive
	3♠/1♥	SPLINTER
	3NT	Artif, raise to 4M with defense, lets opener participate
	4x	SPLINTER, including 1S-(DBL)-4♥
	4M	Wide range, opener is on his own
	4♠/1♥	Natural
	4NT	RKC M
1♥-(1♠)	1NT	Nat, NF, may be heavy because 2NT is artif
	DBL	Neg, then cue by either side = GF
	2m	Nat, F1
	2♥	Nat, normal raise
	2♠	Support, exactly a limit raise
	2NT	Artif raise, GF, like Jacoby 2NT, some extra (else 4♥ immed)
	3m	Nat, pre
	3♥	Nat, MIXED
	3♠/4m	Splinter
	3NT	Nat
	4♥	Nat, wide range, no slam interest if balanced
	4♠	RKC for hearts
	4NT	Blackwood aces only (0123) – rare exception to “always RKC”

1♥-(2m)	DBL	Neg	
	2♥	Nat, normal raise	
	New suit non-jump = Nat, F1		
	2NT	Artif, support, GF, like Jacoby 2NT	
	3m	Support, exactly a limit raise	
	3♦/2♣	Natural, preemptive	
	3♥	Nat, MIXED	
	3♠	Nat, preemptive	
	3NT	Nat	
	4m	Splinter	
	4om	Splinter	
	4♥	Nat, wide range	
	4♠	Nat	
	4NT	RKC Hearts	
	1♥-(2♠)	2NT	Exactly a limit raise – this auction differs from lower overcalls
		3m	Nat, F1 only
3♥		Nat, NF	
3♠		Support, establishes force over 4♠	
4m		Splinter	
4♥		Nat, wide range	
4♠		RKC Hearts	
1♠-(2x)	4NT	Blackwood aces only (0123) – rare exception to “always RKC”	
	DBL	Neg, then cue by either side = GF	
	New suit non-jump = Nat, F1		
	2NT	Artif, support, GF, like Jacoby 2NT	
	3x	Support, exactly a limit raise	
	New suit single jump at 3-level = preemptive		
	3♠	Nat, MIXED	
	4x	Splinter	
	New minor jump at 4-level = Splinter		
	4♥/2m	Nat	
	4♠	Nat, wide range	
	4NT	RKC Spades	

If we have established a Major-Suit fit, then 3NT in comp is artificial and sets up a force. Cue bid at 4 level = VOID but does NOT establish a force. New suit = natural, also does not establish a force.

1M-1NT-(2x) Double is takeout, including 1♥-1NT-(2♠)-DBL. With a singleton need just a “normal” opener. Over 2♠ need some extras. If opener passes then double by responder is PENALTY, since opener usually has a balanced hand.

1♥-1♠-(2m)	DBL	Support double, shows 3 spades
	2♠	Shows 4 spades
1♥-1♠-(DBL)	RDBL	Support redouble, shows 3 spades
	2♠	Shows 4 spades

Over Unusual 2NT and “Standard” Michaels

1M-(2NT)	Minors	
	DBL	Negative (4 of OM)
	3♣	Shows the other major
	3♦	Shows support for the opening suit

In either case, the bid that shows opener’s suit is a limit raise EXACTLY. The bid that shows the other major is GAME FORCING.

3M	Nat, NF, from a sound single raise to just below a limit raise
3OM	Nat, NF

With weak hands and either support or the other major, responder should pass and hope to balance with 3M or 3OM later. Thus, 3M or 3OM immediately shows some values.

3NT	Artif, GF raise of M, creates force
4m	Splinter – creates a force
4M	To play, wide range
4OM	To play
4NT	RKC in M
1M-(2M)	Michaels, OM and an unknown minor
DBL	Cards, penalty interest
2♠2♥	Support, limit raise exactly
2NT	Clubs
3♣	Diamonds
3♦	Mixed Raise
3M	Nat, NF (often 3)
3♥♠	Support, limit raise exactly
3♠♥	Splinter
3NT	Artif, GF raise, creates force
4m	SPLINTER

4M	To play, wide range
4♥/♠	Splinter
4♠/♥	RKC in hearts

Over other 2-suited interference

If both suits are known:

Cheapest available cue shows the lower-ranking of “our” suits. Other cue shows the higher-ranking. For example, over 1♥-(2♥) showing spades and clubs, 2♠ shows DIAMONDS. Over 1♠-(3♣) showing hearts and clubs, 3♥ shows DIAMONDS. This may not always be best, but it should avoid screw-ups. A bid of the fourth suit is natural and non-forcing.

If only one suit is known:

Cue bid shows support. If 2NT is available it shows a GF raise. New suits are natural and FORCING. With a weak hand and a long suit pass and hope to get your suit in later. The Michaels defense above is a specific exception to this default defense.

1NT Opening Bid

1NT	14-16 in 1 st seat, 2 nd seat, and NV 3 rd seat – 5M, 6m, 5422 OK 15-17 in 4 th seat and Vul 3 rd seat
2NT	19-20 when 1NT = 14-16 20-21 when 1NT = 15-17

With less than a 1NT opening, open 1♦ (or 1M with 5). We open most 11 HCP in 1st/2nd.

With the range between 1NT and 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 1NT.

With the range above 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over 1♦, or rebid 1NT over 1M.

With TWO ranges above 2NT, open 1♣ and rebid 2H (Kokish, GF) over 1♦, or rebid♦ 2NT over 1♥. Over 1S must rebid♦ 1NT an♦ catch up later.

1NT	2♣	Stayman, promises a major
	2♥/2♦	Transfer, shows 5+ cards
	2♠	Size ask or clubs; opener bids 3♣ with a max FOR NO-TRUMP
2NT		Puppet Stayman
	3♣	Diamonds, signoff or GF (we don't have an invite)
	GF,	5-5m, then 4m=Nat w/Optional KC Responses
	3M	Stiff M, 3OM, (54)m, then 3♠ Nat, 4m Nat w/Optional KC Responses
	3NT	The End
	4♣	Gerber, aces only (0123)
	4♥/4♦	Transfer, then 4M+1 = RKC, higher = VOID (1NT-4♦-4♥-4NT = ♠ void)

- 4♠ Artif, “Weak” raise to 4NT (since 1NT is relatively wide range)
- 4NT “Strong” raise to 4NT, then 5m=4 card, 6m=5(6) cards
- 5m To play
- 5M (23)=4=4, M=Fragment, Forcing to Slam
- 5NT Forcing

- 1NT-2♣-2♦ No major
- 2♥ Garbage Stayman – opener may correct with 3=2 in majors
- 2♠ Nat, shows 5♠, invite – only way to invite with 5♠
- 2NT Nat, invite, implies major(s)
- 3m Nat, GF, implies major – no special continuations YET
- 3M Smolen, shows 5OM, 4M – see below
- 3NT The End
- 4♣ Gerber (0123)
- 4♥/4♦ Transfer
- 4♠ Artif, “weak” raise to 4NT
- 4NT “Strong” raise to 4NT – Opener’s 5m = 4 cards, 6m = 5(6) cards

- 1NT-2♣-2♦-3M-3NT No support for OM
- 4m **Fragment, slam interest**
- 4M **Four cards in corresponding m, void om, slam interest**

- 1NT-2♣-2♥ 2♠ Nat, shows 5♠, invite – only way to invite with 5♠
- 2NT Nat, implies 4♠, then opener’s 3♠ is to play
- 3m Nat, GF, implies 4S – Anything special here?
- 3♥ Nat, invite
- 3♠ Artif, distro slam try in ♥, then 3NT asks short (LMH)
- 3NT To play, but implies 4♠S – opener may correct
- 4♣ Artif, balanced slam try in hearts, then 4♦ = last train
- 4♦ RKC in hearts
- 4♥ To play
- 4♠ Spade void
- 4NT Nat, implies 4♠

- 1NT-2♣-2♠ 2NT Nat, implies 4♥
- 3m Nat, GF, implies 4♥ – Anything special here?
- 3♥ Artif, distro slam try in ♥, then 3♠ asks short (VOID, LMH)
- With **spades** trump we have enough room to show exact voids.
- 3♠ Nat, invite
- 3NT To play

- 4♣ Artif, bal slam try in spades, then 4♦ = cue, 4♥ = last train
- 4♦ RKC in spades
- 4H Heart void
- 4NT Nat, implies 4♥

- 1NT-2♦-2♥ 2♠ Artif, all invites with hearts
- 2NT Reject without three hearts
- 3m Nat, NF, invite, 5♥ and 5m
- 3♥ 5-5 MAJORS, invite
- 3♣ Max, only 2♥
- 3♦ Max, 3+♥, may be COG
- 3♥ Reject with 3(4) hearts
- 2NT 4+Clubs, GF
- 3♣ 4+Diamonds, GF
- 3♦ **Slam try w/some short**
- 3♥ COG, must choose ♥ w/3
- 3♠/4m Void, slam try
- 3NT COG
- 4♥ Nat, slam try, no short

- 1NT-2♥/2♦ 2NT
- 3M

After 2NT responder shows hand type with a slam try.
 See August, 2009 Bridge World article by Henry Sun for details.
 Responder, if making a slam try, can show any shortness (or bal), and any side 4+card side suit (or none). Cannot distinguish singletons/voids.

- 1NT-2♥-2♠ 2NT 4+Clubs, GF
- 3♣ 4+Diamonds, GF
- 3♦ 5-5+ Majors, GF (with 5S,4♥ use Smolen)
- 3♥ Slam try w/some short OR 6♠,4♥
- 3♠ COG, must choose ♠ w/3
- 3NT COG
- 4m/4♥ Void, slam try in spades
- 4♠ Nat, balanced slam try

- 1NT-2♠ Size ask or clubs
- 2NT Rejects NT try
- 3♣ To play

- 3♦ Clubs, slam try, balanced or short diamonds
- 3♥ Asks
 - 3♠ Singleton diamond exactly
 - 3NT Balanced
 - 4♣ Balanced, stronger than 3NT
 - 4♦ Void
- 3M Clubs, short M, then 4♣=OPTIONAL RKC
- 3NT To play – implies clubs but no longer interested opp. min.
- 4♣ ??
- 4♦ RKC in clubs
- 4M VOID
- 3♣ Accepts NT try
 - Pass To play
 - Other As above – 3NT does not imply clubs opposite acceptance.

1NT-2NT Puppet Stayman

- 3♣ DNE (??)
- 3♦ No five card major
- 3M 4 cards in the other major
- 3M Five cards

1NT-3♣ Transfer to diamonds, after opener's 3♦ (forced):

- Pass To play
- 3M Shortness, 6+ ♦
- 3NT Bal, slam interest

Interference Over 1Nt

System on over non-penalty doubles (any meaning) or 2♣ (any meaning except majors).
 Meckwell runouts over penalty doubles:

- P To play – we can't redouble for penalty
- RDBL Artif, one minor or both majors
- 2m Two suits, m + higher suit (slight mod to Meckwell, catering to both m)
- 2M Nat

- 1NT-(2♣) Both majors
 - DBL Penalty interest
 - 2♦ Nat, NF
 - 2♥ Artif, competitive with both minors

- 2♠ Artif, GF, one or both minors
 2NT Relay to 3♣, usually to play, **but 3R=Transfer, F, shows R+1**
 3m Nat, GF, 6+m
 3M Short
 3NT To Play
- 1NT-(2♦) Both majors
 As over 2♣, but 2NT relays to 3♣ to get out in **either** minor, and 3M=Nat.
 3M direct = Short
- 1NT-(2♦) Nat or other artif meaning (not both majors)
 DBL Neg, usually like Stayman
 2M Nat, NF, to play
 2NT Relay to 3♣, to play in 3♣ (or in 3♦ if logical)
 3 of opponent's suit (if known) = short
 3 of any other suit = nat, GF
 3NT To play
- 1NT-(2♥) Both majors
 DBL Penalty
 2NT Lab, relay to 3♣ to get out in 3♣ or 3♦, or 3M=Nat F
 3m Nat, GF
 3M GF, short
- 1NT-(2M) Nat, or nat with another (unknown) suit
 DBL Neg, Staymanish – try to avoid with shortness
 2♠/2♥ Nat, NF
 2NT Leb, either (1) to get out in a suit below M, or (2) GF with clubs
 3♣ Then P or 3 lower = to play (opener's 3♦ = good clubs)
 3M Clubs, unbalanced, slammish
 3♠/2♥ 4♠, primary clubs, GF
 3NT Clubs, bal, slammish (NOT stopper show/ask)
- 3♣ Diamonds, inv+, then OM by responder = nat, 2nd suit
 3♦ Artif, OM (5+), inv+
 3♥ GF, short M – NOTE: 3♥ is same over EITHER major.
 3♠ Four cards in OM
 3♠ GF, both minors – NOTE: 3♠ is same over EITHER major.
 3NT To play – we do NOT have a way to ASK for (or show) a stopper.

If opponents show two specific suits, then cheaper cue = competitive with the other suits, and higher cue = GF with at least one (often both) of the other suits.

- 1NT-(3♣) DBL Neg
 3♥/3♦ Transfer, then raise = slam try
 3♠ Diamonds, then 3NT by opener shows stop and lack of interest

	4♣	Short
	4♥/4♦	Transfer, then 4M+1 = RKC
1NT-(3♦)	DBL	Neg
	3♥	Spades
	3♠	Hearts
	4♣	Nat, GF
	4♦	Short ♦
	4M	Natural – No 4-level transfers over 3♦ or higher.
	4NT	Nat
1NT-(3M)	DBL	Neg
		New suit below game is forcing.
		4NT asks aces (0123), then 5NT asks kings (# of) and other is to play.
1NT-(4x)	??	

Interference By Fourth Hand

1NT-2♣-(DBL)	RDBL	4+ clubs, attempt to play
	Pass	Denies club stopper
	RDBL	Re-Stayman, opener's rebid is transfer
	2♦	Garbage Stayman
	2♥	4♠, 5♥ invite
	2♠	5+♠, invite
		Higher As if opener bid 2♦, except No Smolen
	2x	Shows stopper, then system on
1NT-2♣-(2NT/3♣/3♦)		SMOLEN STILL APPLIES
1NT-2♣-(bid)		Double by either side is penalty
1NT-2R-(DBL)	Pass	Denies 3M
	RDBL	Re-transfer, then 2NT SHOWS stop, new suit = F
	2M	Light invite w/6M
	2NT	Nat, DENIES stop
		New suit = Nat, NF (including 2♠ = 5-5 inv)
	RDBL	Shows 3(4)M and will accept game try (then 3R = re-transfer)
	2M	Shows 3(4)M and will reject game try
	Higher	As without the double

2NT Opening Bid

This structure applies over opening 2NT, 1♣-1♦-2NT, 1♣-1♥-2NT and 1♣-1♦-2♥-2♠-2NT. The 2NT class of openings or rebids shows at least 19 HCP. 2NT does not by itself establish a force

unless we are in a game force. However, if responder bids Stayman that DOES establish a force. 3-level transfers do NOT establish a force, but 4-level bids do.

- 2NT 3♣ Stayman, implies at least one major
- 3♦/3♥ Transfer, promises 5+cards
- 3♠ Relay to 3NT preparatory to slam try in one or both minors (weak both m)
- 3NT To play (bitter experience has taught us to play this natural)
- 4♣ Gerber (0123)
- 4♦/4♥ Transfer, then 4M = RKC, other = void (2NT-4♦-4♥-4NT = ♠ void)
- 4♠ Raise to 4NT with (32)=4=4, but over Kokish = “weak” raise to 4NT
- 4NT Nat, implies 4333 or possibly 5332 with a minor (over Kok = “strong”)
- 5m To play
- 5M (23)=4=4, M = Fragment, Forcing to Slam
- 5NT Forcing

- 2NT-3♣ 3♦ No major
 - 3M Smolen – use same structure as over 1NT
 - 3NT To play
 - 4m Nat, 5+m, GF, implies a major
 - 4NT Signoff
 - 4m+1, etc. RKC RESPONSES for m
 - 4M NATURAL, to play (no delayed Texas over 2NT)
 - 4NT Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting
- 3♥ Shows hearts, DOES NOT DENY SPADES
 - 3♠ Artif, slam try in hearts
 - 3NT To play
 - 4m Nat, 5+m, implies 4 spades
 - 4♠ Nat
 - 4NT Signoff
 - 4M+1, etc. RKC RESPONSES for m
 - 4♥ To play
 - 4♠ RKC for hearts (don’t need 2-range invite over 2NT)
 - 4NT Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting
- 3♠ Shows spades, DENIES HEARTS
 - 3NT To play
 - 4m Nat, 5+m, implies 4 hearts
 - 4NT Signoff
 - 4m+1, etc. RKE RESPONSES for minor
 - 4♥ Artif, slam try in spades
 - 4♠ To play
 - 4NT Nat, invite, then opener bids minors naturally if accepting

	5m	To play (To bid RKC in Spades must bid 4♥ first)
2NT-3♣	3NT	DNE
	4♣	DNE
2NT-3♦-3♥	3♠	5-5M, slammish
	3NT	Regressive
	4m	Slam try in corresponding M, stronger than 4M
	4M	Weaker than 4m
	3NT	COG
	4m	Nat, GF, at least mild slam interest
	4♥	Signoff
	4NT	Signoff
		Cheapest unbid 6RKC for m
		Next unbid 5RKC for M
	4♥	Nat, slam try
	4♠	Splinter, then 5♥ = signoff, other = RKC RESPONSES
	4NT	Nat, NF, slam try with 5♥
	5m	Splinter, then 5♥ = signoff, other = RKC RESPONSES
2NT-3♦	3♠	Artif, max super-accept (typically decent trumps, good controls)
	3NT	REJECTS HEARTS, wants to play NT
	4♥	Minimum super-accept (typically good trumps, bad controls)
	4m	Undefined – we want to save space with the big one
2NT-3♥-3♠	3NT	COG
	4m	Nat, GF, at least mild slam interest
	4♠	Signoff
	4NT	Signoff
		Cheapest unbid 6RKC for m
		Next unbid 5RKC for M
	4♥	5-5M, game only
	4♠	Nat, slam try
	4NT	Nat, NF, slam try with 5♠
	5x	Splinter, then 5S = signoff, other = RKC RESPONSES
2NT-3♥	3NT	REJECTS SPADES, wants to play NT
	4♣	Artif, max super-accept (typically decent trumps, good controls)
	4♠	Minimum super-accept (typically good trumps, bad controls)
	4♦/♥	Undefined – we want to save space with the big one

- 2NT-3♠-3NT 4♣ Slam try in ♣, then 4NT=signoff, other=RKC responses
- 4♦ Slam try in ♦, then 4NT=signoff, other=RKC responses
- 4M Shortness, 5-4 or 5-5
- 4NT 2=2=(5-4)
- 5♣ 6+-5+ minors (either way), WEAK
- 5♦ 5-5m, FORCING, then 5H = 6RKC

2♣ Opening Bid

The 2♣ opening bid shows 6+ clubs and 10-15 HCP. Opener may have a side suit including a five card major.

- 2♣ 2♦ Artif ask, at least constructive values
- 2M Nat, NF, 5+M – raise w/3M, bail with <2, judge whether to bid with 2
- 2NT Artif, relay to 3♣ to play there or show GF non-fit 2-suiter (5-5)
- 3♣/3♦/3♥ Transfers, invite+, show 6+ in next higher suit
- 3♠ GF, 6+♠ and 4♥, then 4♦=slammish for S
- 3NT To Play
- 4♣ Nat, NF, preemptive
- 4♦ RKC for clubs
- 4M To Play
- 4NT Aces only (0123)

- 2♣-2♦ 2♥ Artif, shows EITHER 4♥ or 4♠
 - 2♠ Asks
 - 2NT/3♣ Hearts/Spades
 - 3♣/P To play
 - 3♦ Artif, club slam try
 - 3M Nat invite
 - 3OM Artif, slam try in M
 - 2NT Asks with positional considerations (usually to right-side NT)
 - 3♣/3♦ Hearts/Spades
 - As above, where possible – don't bid 2NT if can't cope
 - 3♣ Constructive raise, no M interest
 - 3♦ Artif, club slam try
 - 3M Natural, 5M, GF
 - 3NT DNE – with a nat 4NT bid, use 2♣-2NT-3♣-3NT
- 2♠ Artif, no major (nor 5♦), useful hand, do not want to bid NT
 - 2NT F1, ask
 - 3♣ Reject in context, then 3♦ ask M short (LHN)
 - 3♦/3♥/3♠ Accept, short in bid suit

	3NT	Accept, no short
	3♣	Mainly to play after not finding M fit
	3♦	Artif, club slam try
	3M	Nat, GF, exactly 5M
	3NT	To Play
2NT		Natural, F1, non-minimum, usually bal with Qx or better in 2+ side suits
	3♣	Mainly to play after not finding M fit
		Other as over 2♠
	3♣	Worst
	3♦	Nat, 5-card side suit
	3♥	GF, agrees clubs
	3♠	GF, agrees diamonds
	4♣	NF
	4♦	NF
	4M/4NT	DNE
2♣-2♦	3♥/3♠	Nat, 5-card side suit
	3♠/4♥	Artif, agrees ♥/♠, slammish
	4♣	NF
	4♦	Artif, club slam try – ?
	4♥/4♠	To Play
	4NT	DNE over 3♥, RKC S over 3♠?
2♣-2NT-3♣	Pass	To play, non-constructive
	3♦	Artif, GF, 5-5M, then 3M agrees M
	3♥	GF, 5♥+5♦, then 3S agrees ♥
	3♠	GF, 5♠+5♦, then 4♥ agrees ♠
	3NT	Quant raise to 4NT
2♣-3♣/3♦/3♥		Transfers, 6+ suit, inv+
		Accept transfer is weakest, may have no support
	4♣	Good suit, no support – NF
	4♦	GF, strong raise of suit shown
	3♠/3♦ or 4♥/3♥	Nat, 5♠/♥ and 6♣
2♣-3♠		GF, 6+♠, 4♥
	3NT	No M interest, ♦ stop
	4♣	No M interest, no ♦ stop (or no NT interest)
	4♦	Artif, S fit, slammish
	4♥	♥ support, wide range

4♠ No slam interest, stiff honor possible, limited by failure to bid 4♦

2♣-3NT The End

Interference After 2♣ Opening

2♣-(DBL) RDBL Penalty interest, establishes force at 2-level, not higher
 2♦ Artif, asks for M, opener shows NATURALLY
 2M Nat, NF, as without interference
 2NT/3x ARTIF, SYSTEM ON

2♣-(overcall) DBL Neg, asks for major, opener shows naturally
 New suit Nat, F1
 2NT Nat, NF

2♣-2♦-(DBL) Bid=Nat, P=Min, RDBL=Max
 2♣-2♦-(2M) DBL=4OM
 2♣-2♦-(3♦) DBL=TAKEOUT, bid=nat (no penalty interest)

Passed Hand Bidding

P-2♣ 2NT/3♣ Natural
 3 other Fit-showing with 5 of bid suit

2♦ Opening Bid

The 2♦ opening bid shows a three suited hand, short diamonds and 10-15 HCP. Acceptable hand patterns are 4=4=1=4, 4=4=0=5 and (4-3)=1=5; a five card major is not allowed.

2♦ P To play
 2M To play, but see below
 2NT Artif, inv+, asking
 3♣ To play
 3♦ Natural, invitational
 3M Nat, NF, shape-based, need super-max to raise with 3
 3NT To play
 4♣ Preemptive, raise only if prime
 4♦ RKC in clubs
 4M To play, wide range

2♦-2♥ To play **Over 2♥ opener BAILS with just 3.**

2♠ 4=3=1=5, any strength

2NT Max, 4=4=0=5

3♣ Max, 4=3=1=5

With 4=4=1=4 max must pass.

2♦-2♠ To play **Over 2♠ opener MUST PASS WITH 3.**

2NT Max, 4=4=0=5

3♣ Max, 4=3=1=5

With 3=4=1=5 any strength just pass.

With 4=4=1=4 max must pass.

2NT Response

The 2NT response asks for opener's strength (min/max) and exact pattern. Mulberry applies after opener has completed the description. Note that opener's 3M, either directly or after a 3♣ rebid and 3♦ re-ask, shows 3 cards in the M and four cards in the OM.

2♦-2NT Asking

3♣ All minimums

3♦ Asks

3M 4OM-3M=1=5, then 3♠ (over 3♥) = invite

3NT 4=4=1=4

4♣ 4=4=0=5

3M Nat, invite

3♦ Max, 4=4=1=4, GF, then 3M = F

3M Max, 4OM-3M=1=5, GF, then 3♠ (over 3♥) = FORCING

3NT Max, 4=4=0=5, GF

By passed hand 2NT is system on, asking with game interest.

Interference After 2♦

2♦-(DBL)

P To play

RDBL Request for 4-card major

Other System on, but 2M=To Play

2♦-(overcall)

DBL PENALTY

Bid Nat, NF

2♦-(2NT)	3♦	Request for 4 card major
2♦-(3♣)		If 3♣ is artificial, DBL = Clubs
2♦-2NT-(3♣)		DBL=penalty, P=neutral
2♦-2NT-(3♦)	P	Minimum (but NOT 4=4=0=5)
	DBL	Max, 4=4=1=4
	3M	Max, 4OM-3M=1=5
	3NT	4=4=0=5 any strength
2♦-2NT-(3M)	P	Minimum (or neutral)
	DBL	4M, good trumps
	Other	“Naturalish”

Weak Two Bids

Style: 6-card suits expected. 5 possible at fav, or in 3rd seat. 7 rare. Suit quality may be suspect NV, especially fav. Vul we expect high honors or internal solidity or both. Strength defined as 4 to 9 HCP, but QJ10xxx and out qualifies at fav. Many hands that are max weak twos in “standard” are one-bids for us, e.g., KQxxxx-x-AJx-xxx, although we can go either way in certain seats and vulnerabilities with that hand.

2M	2NT	Asks feature – Show a feature unless you have the pits.
	3♣	Club feature or maximum without feature, like AKJxxx-xx-Jxx-xx
		3 other Feature, Q or better, preferably A or K
	3M	Minimum
	3NT	Artif, 4OM, then 4♣=mini-RKC in M, 4♦ sets OM, slamish
	4x	6M and 5x
2M-2NT-3♣	3♦	Artif, asks
	3♥	No club feature
	3♠	Asks short (Bal-LMH)
	3♠+	Artif, club feature and shape (Bal-LMH)
2M-2NT-3♦/3♥/3♠		Cheapest suit (including 3M) asks shape (Bal-LMH)
2M-2NT-3♣/3♦/3♥/3NT	4♣	Mini-RKC (still on after feature ask)
2M-2NT-3♣	4♣	Shape ask (Bal-LMH)
	4♦	Mini-RKC <u>over 3S response only</u>

**After feature ask & shape ask, mini-RKC is the cheapest 4-level call other than 4M.
If the mini-RKC ask gets doubled, IGNORE THE DOUBLE.**

2♥	2♠	Nat, F1
	2NT	Artif, doubleton spade with interest
	3m	“Nat” without ♠ support
	3♥	No fit, no minor feature
	3♠	Shows 3
	3NT	Nat with stuff in both minors (not recommended)
	4m	Splinter with 3♠
	4♥	To play, semi-solid suit
2M	3m	Nat, F1
	3♥/♠	Nat, F1, then 4m = nat
	3M	Nat, not constructive, but opener can bid game with a twist (6-5 or void)
	3NT	To play – if you pull you better be right
	4♣	Mini-RKC, then 4♦=0, 4♥=1, 4♠=1+Q, 4NT=2 no Q, 5♣=2+Q
	4♦	DNE
	4M	To play
	4OM	To play

Mini-RKC does NOT apply after auctions that start 2M-new suit.

Over Interference

2M-(DBL)	RDBL	Penalty-oriented (but pass then double = penalty)
	2♠	Nat, NF
	2NT through 3M-1	are transfers, either own suit or lead-direct.
	3M-1	Transfer AND suggests lead of M
	3M	Does NOT suggest lead of M
	Higher	Fit-showing
2M-(overcall)		New suits nat, NON-FORCING – This includes, e.g., 2♠-(3♥)-4♣

We do NOT play Mini-RKC in comp.

2M-2NT-(DBL)	P	Minimum, bad shape (usually no singleton)
	RDBL	High-card max
	3x	Feature
	3M	Minimum, but with some shape (usually a singleton)
2M-2NT-(overcall)	DBL	High-card max, at least 2 of their suit
	Bid	Feature
	Cue	Short
	4M	Allowed after interference over 2NT

Higher Preempts

Style: Aggressive but not insane (except occasionally at favorable). NV we may have six-card suits at the 3-level, but we try to have seven. Vul we usually have seven and some texture, especially at unfavorable vulnerability.

New suits forcing if no overcall, but NF after overcall. **3x-(DBL): RDBL thru 4x-1 = transfer (3S=clubs, 3NT=nat). Transfer to our suit invites opener to compete. (??) 4♣ Mini-RKC applies over 3♦/3♥/3♠. 4♦ is Mini-RKC over 3♣. Same responses as above.**

Opening 3NT is Gambling. Over 3NT: 4♣/5♣/6♣ is P/C, 4♦ asks short (4M=short, 4NT=no short, 5m=short om), 4M is natural to play, 4NT asks for an eight card suit.

4m is **NATURAL** – WE DO **NOT** PLAY NAMYATS.

4M is natural and wide-ranging. We like to open 4M, despite the wide range and potential guessing for partner. After all, there are two opponents to guess wrong.

4♥-4♠ is **NATURAL, TO PLAY**. Over 4M we must bid 4NT to ask for keycards.

Over 4M or 5m opening, 5 of a new suit **ASKS FOR CONTROL**.

NOTE: Opening 4NT is BLACKWOOD

Slam Bidding

Our usual cue bidding style is “American”: First-round controls before second-round controls, and length (first cue bid) before shortness. However, we may vary to help pinpoint a key control efficiently when we can handle the later auction.

Roman Keycard (RKC-0314)

Our main slam tool is Blackwood, usually Keycard. RKC has its detractors, but we are not among them. Often RKC is the only sensible way to get concrete information when the level gets high.

IF IT'S ACE-ASKING, THEN its KEYCARD, AS LONG AS WE HAVE SHOWN AT LEAST ONE SUIT. THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS (AND ONLY WHERE EXPLICITLY NOTED) ARE WHEN WE USE ONE CALL (USUALLY “1-OVER”) AS A KEYCARD ASK AND HAVE 4NT AVAILABLE TO ASK FOR ACES-ONLY.

WE DO NOT PLAY EXCLUSION BLACKWOOD. EVER! If we make a funny jump to the 5-level that you might play as Exclusion with your other partners, it may well show a void, but we do **NOT** play RKC responses to it.

We have several possible response structures, but we should have little difficulty figuring out which one applies, or in figuring out which suit (or suits) is key. Our first step always includes ZERO (“old-guy responses”):

- | | | |
|------------|------------------|--|
| 1. Normal: | First step | 0 or 3 out of FIVE keycards (4 aces plus trump king) |
| | Second step | 1 or 4 KC |
| | Third step | 2 KC, no trump queen |
| | Fourth step | 2 KC plus trump queen |
| | Fifth step, etc. | Same as first step, etc., PLUS A VOID |

Don’t show a void unless (a) the void suit is “obvious”, AND (b) you know it’s safe, AND (c) you are confident that you’re not spoiling partner’s plans.

“Normal” RKC applies whenever our side has shown at least one suit naturally. This includes specifically 1M-4NT, which is RKC for M. Bart likes it this way. Humor him.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 2. Mini-RKC | First step | 0 KC |
| | Second step | 1 KC, no trump queen |
| | Third step | 1 KC plus trump queen |
| | Fourth step | 2 KC, no trump queen |
| | Fifth step | 2 KC plus trump queen |

Mini-RKC applies over weak 2-bids and weak 3-bids. It is a bid of 4♣, usually directly, but after a weak 2-bid, responder can inquire with 2NT and then bid 4♣. Over an opening 3♣ bid, 4♦ is Mini-RKC. Over other 3-level preempts 4♣ is Mini-RKC.

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 3. Non-RKC | First step | 0 or 4 Aces |
| | Second step | 1 Ace |
| | Third step | 2 Aces |
| | Fourth step | 3 Aces |

Grandma’s Blackwood. It applies when we have shown NO SUITS naturally. Examples: 4NT opening or 4NT overcall over a suit opening of 3♠ or lower, Gerber directly over a 1NT or 2NT opening, or after a “no-major” response to Stayman. We use old-fashioned responses because there may still be ambiguity between 0 and 3. (Imagine 10 solid and 3 singletons for example.)

- | | | |
|----------|-------------|---|
| 4. 6-RKC | First step | 0 or 3 of 6 keycards (4 aces plus kings of TWO key suits) |
| | Second step | 1 or 4 KC |
| | Third step | 2 (or 5) KC plus NEITHER key queen |
| | Fourth step | 2 KC plus the LOWER key queen |
| | Fifth step | 2 KC plus the HIGHER key queen |
| | Sixth step+ | 2 KC plus BOTH key queens |

If there is enough room below one of our trump suits, use additional steps to show or deny specific side kings. For example, if both majors are key, then over 4NT bid 6♣ to show both major-suit queens and the club king, bid 6♦ to deny the club king and show the diamond king, and bid 6♥ to deny both minor kings. WE CANNOT SHOW VOIDS WHEN USING 6-RKC.

6-RKC applies in two main situations:

- a. Two suits bid and raised immediately, e.g., 1S-2♥-3♥-3♠ establishes 6-RKC.
- b. Two-suiter opposite a known balanced hand, AND the second suit is known to be 5+ cards long. For example, 1NT-2♥-2♠-3♥-3♠-4NT is 6-RKC because responder showed 5-5 in the majors.

What Bids Are Ace-Asking?

1. “One-over” the trump suit. This is the most common bid we use as RKC. **It applies even if not a jump.** “Trump suit” usually means a bid-and-raised suit. Occasionally we can IMPLY a fit by jumping into the “one-over” suit, e.g., 1♠-2♦-4♥ is RKC for diamonds (opener can have AKxxxx-x-KQxxx-x or the like). **RKC TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER SPLINTERS.**

Ambiguities can arise if the “one-over” suit has previously been bid naturally. Our default is that RKC APPLIES unless we have also established a fit in the “one-over” suit. For example, 1H-2♦-3♦-3S-4♣-4♥ is RKC for diamonds. 1♥-2♦-3♦-4♥ is RKC, because a natural 3♥ is available. Similarly for 1♥-2♦-3♦-3S-4♥. Generally, if 3 of the 1-over suit is forcing, then 4 of the 1-over suit is RKC.

If the “one-over” suit would clearly be natural, then the RKC bid is the next highest call that is clearly NOT natural. **DISCUSS.**

If the rules for 6-RKC indicate that it applies, then it’s still on even if the ace-asking bid is something other than 4NT, e.g., 1H-2♦-3♦-3♥-4♣-4♠ is 6-RKC for both red suits.

2. 4♣ over weak two-bids and three-bids (except 3♣), and 4♦ over 3♣. Also, 4♣ after responding 2NT over a weak two-bid. These bids are Mini-RKC, discussed above.
3. Opening 4NT, and 4NT overcalls immediately over opening natural suit bids through 3S. These ask for aces only, with old-fashioned replies (0/4, 1, 2, and 3).
4. 1NT-4♣, 1NT-2♣-2♦-4♣ and 2NT-4♣ are ace-asking for ACES ONLY (0/4, 1, 2, 3).
5. 1NT-2♣-2M-4♦ is RKC for M. (4♣ would be a balanced slam try for M.)

What Bids Are Not Ace-Asking?

1. In general, when 4 of some suit is ace-asking, then 4NT is something else:

If 4NT is NOT a jump, then it is a substitute cue bid in the suit that WOULD be RKC. For example, 1♥-2♦-2♥-3♥-4♣-4NT is a SPADE cue bid, since 4♠ would be RKC. (This is an unlikely sequence, but you get the idea.)

If 4NT IS a jump, then it should be a natural slam try. For example, 1H-2♦-3♦-4NT is a power slam try, not forcing, because 4♥ is RKC. (4S is NOT 6-RKC; bid 3H first. 4♠ shows a VOID. Eddie)

2. If CLUBS is the agreed trump suit, then 4♦ is the ONLY RKC available. If we cue bid above 4♦, then 4NT is a further slam try, but it is NOT RKC.
3. A “weak” hand cannot ask for aces. This applies to a 1♦ responder to 1♣, but even then certain big jumps would “obviously” be RKC.

What Is The Key Suit Or Suits?

A bid and raised suit is key. **Two suits bid and raised early are BOTH key. A bid and raised suit along with a second suit known to be 5+ opposite a balanced hand makes BOTH suits key.**

If no suit has been raised, the default is the last bid suit: 1S-4NT is RKC for spades. 1S-2H-4NT is RKC for hearts (4♠ would be natural). Sometimes the logic of the auction makes it clear that some other (strongly bid) suit should be key, even if it was not the last bid suit: 1♦-1♠-3♦-3♥-4♣-4NT should be RKC for diamonds (both 4♥ and 4S would be natural).

Interference In Rkc Auctions

1. If opponents BID over RKC BELOW our trump suit, then we play DOP1:
Double = 0 or 3
Pass = 1 or 4
First step = 2, no Q
Second step = 2 + Q

In the specific case where they interfere directly below our trump suit, we don't bid the second step (=5T+1) unless we are confident that we have enough keycards for slam.

2. If opponents BID over RKC AT OR ABOVE our trump suit, then we play DEP0:
Double = 0 or 2 or 4 (even)
Pass = 1 or 3 or 5 (odd)

Bid is undefined, but logically shows an even number that does not want to defend.

The mnemonic when the opponents bid is that double always shows 0 (possibly) and pass always shows 1 (possibly). If you have more than one you have to figure it out.

3. If opponents DOUBLE the RKC ASK:
Pass denies a control in the doubled suit, then redouble is “Re-RKC”.
Bid shows a control and is a normal RKC response.
Redouble shows a control and TAKES CONTROL, i.e., responder is now asking for keycards (!).
4. If opponents double the RKC RESPONSE:
Pass asks for control, then redouble shows control.

Redouble is to play (very rare).

Bid shows control and continues the RKC sequence as if no double.

RKC Continuations

Queen Ask: If the RKC response did not clarify the trump queen (step 1 or step 2), then the queen ask is the cheapest call that is not to play AND is not the king ask. (K ask is usually a repeat of the RKC suit 1 level higher - see below.) Over the queen ask, the cheapest bid in the trump suit denies the queen, and anything else shows the queen. A response in a new suit also shows that king. When the queen ask is below 5 of the trump suit, then 5NT shows THE KING OF THE QUEEN-ASK SUIT. (And 6 of the queen-ask suit shows some non-K plus value.) In this case a jump to 6 of the trump suit shows the queen and nothing else noteworthy. When the queen ask is above 5 of the trump suit, 6 of the trump suit denies the queen, and 5NT shows the queen with no biddable side king. **In 6RKC queen-ask auctions we use coded responses: Step 1=no Q, Step 2=lower Q, Step 3=higher Q, Step 4 and higher=both Qs.**

King ask: If the RKC ask was “4x”, then the king ask is “5x”, which takes precedence over the queen ask. (Usually we avoid the problem of “not enough room” by using “one-over” RKC.) The “King Ask” SHOWS that we own all of the key cards and INVITES A GRAND SLAM. Responder is allowed to bid a grand right now. If he does not, then he is **obligated** to cue bid a king **below the trump suit**. (The only exception to this obligation is when asker is limited and responder knows that the grand is impossible. For example, if a 1NT opener bids RKC and then shows all of the keycards via the king ask, he is merely giving an unlimited responder the chance to bid 7. If responder DOES show a king, then he is also announcing grand slam potential opposite a 1NT opening.) If 5NT is available, then it shows the king of the “king-ask” suit. Responder is NOT obligated to show a king above the trump suit, which is tantamount to forcing to 7.

Other tries: If asker bids something other than the queen ask or king ask, it is a grand slam try with emphasis on the bid suit, usually seeking third-round control. If only one such suit is available, then it MAY be a general grand slam try, kind of like a “Last Train” try for 7. If more than one such suit is available, any suit other than the highest is a specific try with emphasis on the bid suit. The highest suit MAY focus on that suit, or may be a general try; responder has to figure it out. Note that the failure to use the “king ask” affords inferences about what the asker needs.

If asker uses the king ask, gets a king-showing response, and then makes another call between there and the trump suit, the same conditions apply. This time the asker may need a DIFFERENT king than the one already shown, or he may need some other kind of extra value. Again, responder has to figure it out.

Mulberry

Mulberry is a special RKC on certain relay auctions that end with 3♥ or higher and where the trump suit can be one of several. This applies after auctions that specifically show a three-suited

pattern such as 1♣-2♠, 1♣-1♥-2♠, 1♦-2♣-3NT, 2♦-2NT and a few other well-defined sequences. On these auctions, if the last call by the multi-suited hand is 3♥, 3♠ or 3NT, then:

- 4♣ Artif, puppet to 4♦, then next bid = nat slam try, NF.
- 4♦ Artif, puppet to 4♥, then next bid (or pass) is TO PLAY.
- 4♥/4♠/4NT are RKC in the lowest/middle/highest of multi-suiter's three suits.
- 5♣+ are RKC RESPONSES in multi-suiter's SHORT SUIT.

If the last call by the multi-suited is hand is 4♣ then the NF slam try is no longer available, but the other bids remain unchanged.

We call this method “Mulberry Bush”, or just “Mulberry”. (Thanks, Chris Compton)

Jumps To 5Nt – Choice Of Slams Or Grand Slam Force?

Our default for jumps to 5NT is “choice of slams”. This applies when we do NOT have a clearly defined trump suit.

If trumps are well-defined, then a jump to 5NT is the Grand Slam Force. Our response structure, regardless of how many steps are available, is “the more you bid, the more you have.” **In all cases responder should jump to 7 with 2 of the top 3 honors.** A jump to 7 of a new suit normally shows extra strength in that suit and is offering 7NT as a contract. (We try to avoid this kind of torture.) Details:

Spades trump – four steps

- 6♣ No A, K or Q – then 6♦ asks for extra length
- 6♦ Q exactly – then 6H asks for extra length
- 6♥ A or K without extra length
- 6♠ A or K with extra length

Hearts trump – three steps

- 6♣ Q or none – then 6♦ asks for the queen
- 6♦ A or K without extra length
- 6♥ A or K with extra length

Diamonds trump – two steps

- 6♣ Q or none
- 6♦ A or K

Clubs trump – one step

- 6♣ Fewer than 2 of the top 3

Don't sweat the details. If you remember “more = more” you'll usually be close enough.

Non-Jump Bids Of 5NT

On those rare occasions when we haven't bid RKC and we are cue bidding at the 5-level and someone bids 5NT, the default is still choice of slams. However, if the trump suit is obvious and we are clearly trying for 7, then 5NT is the try that emphasizes TRUMPS. It is NOT the GSF, but it suggests needing help in trumps. Side-suit tries suggest needing help outside of trumps.

Non-Serious 3NT

When we are in a game force with an 8+ major-suit fit and the last bid is 3M (our fit), and we have slam potential, then (usually) we have two degrees of slam try available. 3M+1 is a non-serious try, and a cue bid is a serious try. (3NT over 3♥ is a serious spade cue bid.) **A raise from 3M to 4M denies any slam interest.** Over the non-serious try you can sign off or cooperate. When hearts are trump and the last bid was a non-serious 3S, then 3NT is a spade cue bid.

Applies: 1M-2x-2M-3M, or 1S-2m-2♥-2♠-3♠, or 1♠-2♥-3m-3♠ (assume ♠-card fit here even though not quite assured)

Does NOT apply: 1M-2x-2NT-3M Here 3NT is still a possible contract, and opener is somewhat limited. He can bid 3NT to play, cue bid with slam interest, or raise to game with no slam interest.

1♠-2♣-2♥-3♣-3♥-3♠ Probable 7-card fit, so 3NT is natural.

Wrinkle: 1♠-2♥-3♥ 3♠ is natural and wide-range. It establishes 6-RKC. Then 3NT BY OPENER is a non-serious try.

3NT is a non-serious try and denies spade support.

4m is a serious try.

Last Train

On cramped auctions the bid just below game in our trump suit is often an artificial slam try, showing interest but not willingness to bid above game. Bart suggests that we don't get hung up worrying about whether we actually have a control in that suit; in a pinch, assume we do.

Defensive Bidding

Definition: Defensive auctions are those in which the opponents initiate the bidding.

Overcalls

Our style is aggressive but not insane, with special attention to the vulnerability. We do NOT overcall aggressively with 4-card suits. Not vul we will try to show any decent 5-bagger at the one level.

If the opening bid of 1-of-a-minor could be a **doubleton or shorter**, then:

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| (1♣) | 2♣ | Natural |
| | 2♦ | Michaels |
| | 3♣ | More clubs - preemptive |
| | 3♦ | Natural and preemptive – lowest ♦ preempt available |
| (1♦) | 2♦ | Natural |
| | 2♥ | “Weak” Michaels |
| | 3♦ | “Strong” Michaels |

Advancing 1-level overcalls: Cue bids ALWAYS show support. 3-card support is expected, but Hx is allowable in a pinch. Overcaller is allowed to jump to game with a 5-bagger. After cue-bidding, a new suit or NT by advancer is natural, but STILL SHOWS SUPPORT. Simple new suits are not forcing and “semi-constructive” (whatever that means). If you have a good suit, BID IT. If third hand passes, NEW SUIT JUMPS ARE STRONG AND FORCING. This should cover the (rare) strong misfit. If third hand **acts**, then jumps are preemptive and 2NT shows a 4-card LR. If third hand **PASSES**, then 2NT is NATURAL. In either case, Jump cue = mixed raise.

If we overcall 1M and third hand doubles, then we play TRANSFERS, starting with 1NT and through 2M-1. The direct raise is weaker than the transfer raise. A transfer into the opening bid suit (if it showed 3+) is equivalent to a cue bid in support. But if the opening suit can be 2 or fewer (e.g. Precision 1♦, Polish 1♣), then a transfer into that suit is natural. 2M-1 = limit raise (usually 3M), and a raise to 2M has a wider range.

Advancing 2-level overcalls: Again, cue bids show support. If third hand passes, new suits are FORCING. (1♠)-2♥-(2♠)-2NT is an artificial heart raise. (1♠)-2♥-(3♠)-3NT is an artificial heart raise **AND creates a force**.

Fourth-seat overcalls: After (1x)-P-(1y) both 2x and 2y are NATURAL. **3x and 3y are also natural.**

Takeout Doubles

We make takeout doubles very aggressively. We strain to get in when we have unbid majors or when we have 12 HCP or more. We prefer to make immediate balanced doubles than to have to guess later whether to back into the auction.

Advancing takeout doubles: Jumps are invitational. Cue bid is forcing to game or suit agreement. Cue bid by doubler over a minimum advance does not promise another call unless advancer bids ABOVE his original suit. Cue bid by doubler followed by a new suit by doubler is FORCING. Cue bid by doubler over a non-minimum advance is GF. New suit by doubler over a non-minimum advance is F1. **CUE BID BY A PASSED HAND ADVANCER PROMISES ANOTHER CALL.** (Doubler can thus keep it low with a good hand and get info without using up a lot of room.)

Special cases: (1♠)-DBL-(2♠)-2NT is NATURAL and Double is Responsive. Double followed by 3♥ is invitational. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-DBL SHOWS SPADES. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-2♠ IS EQUIVALENT TO A RESPONSIVE DOUBLE. (1♥)-DBL-(2♥)-2NT is NATURAL.

Michaels (and other) Cue bids

We play wide-range Michaels. We like to show our two-suiters and sort out the strength issues later. When we are 6-5 (in that order) we try to bid the 6-bagger first and show the 5-bagger later, since advancer to Michaels will bid the lower suit with equal length. However, there are still many 6-5 hands where that approach is untenable and we bid Michaels anyway. We play (1M)-2M shows the other major and an unknown minor.

Advancing over Michaels: After (1m)-2m jumps are invitational, 3m shows high cards, 4C=slammish in hearts and 4D=slammish in spades.

(1♥)-2♥-(P)	2♠	To play
	2NT	Artif, inv+, asking
	3m	Nat, minimum
	3♥	Artif, CLUBS, maximum
	3S	Artif, DIAMONDS, maximum
	3NT	6M, maximum, minor still unknown
	4m	Nat, 6+m, extras
	3♣	Pass-or-correct-to-3♦, regressive
	3♦	Artif, invitational in spades
	3♥	Slammish
(1♠)-2♠-(P)	3♠	Nat, preemptive
	3NT	To play
	2NT	Artif, inv+, asking, then continue as above
	3♣	Pass-or-correct-to-3♦, regressive
	3♦	Artif, invitational in hearts
(1M)-2M-P	3♥	Nat, wide range – cannot distinguish preemptive from bailing
	3♠	Slammish
	3NT	To play
(1M)-2M-(3M)	4♣	?? P/C, pre in both m??
	4♦	Constructive bid of 4OM (establishes force?)
(1M)-2M-(3M)	DBL	Minors, better than 4♣
	3NT	Natural
	4♣	P/♣, weaker than double
	4♦	Constructive bid of 4OM

(1m)-3m is natural, EXCEPT when 1♦ could be 2 or fewer than 3♦ is “Strong” Michaels.

(1M)-3M shows a strong one-suiter and is asking for a stopper. The strong suit is allowed to be THE OTHER MAJOR (rare). If advancer is weak with no stopper he must bail to 4♣. If he is strong enough to think about slam he can ignore his stopper and cue bid in return (?). **4♦ is P/C.**

Unusual No-trump Overcalls

(1x)-2NT shows the two lower unbid suits. **This is still true even if the opening bid does not guarantee length in the bid suit, for example, over Polish Club.**

We're aggressive here, too, nominally 15-18, but we are not obligated with 15 bad, especially with a passed partner. Our sandwich no-trump is also natural at the one level. We play "System On" after a direct 1NT overcall (including the Sandwich type), **except** on the specific auction (1x)-1NT-(2y) we play PENALTY DOUBLES, since x and y are different and the opponents may be in trouble. On this auction a raise to 2NT is NATURAL. If third hand RAISES opener we play System On.

Our balancing 1NT shows (10)11-15(16). We play "3-Range Size-Ask" Stayman here:

(1x)-P-(P)-1NT-2♣	2♦	Minimum, no major
	2M	Minimum, 4M (bid hearts with both – rare)
	2NT	Middle range, then 3♣ = "Re-Stayman"
	3x	Maximum, "natural" (M if possible, else better m)

On the auctions (2M)-2NT, (2M)-P-(P)-2NT, and (1M)-P-(P)-2NT (the last of these shows about 19 HCP) we play:

3♣	Relay to 3♦, with diamonds <u>or</u> both minors <u>or</u> signoff in OM
3♦	Forced
	P To play
	3OM To play
	3M Short M, both minors
3NT	Diamonds, slammish
3♦	Transfer to OM, inv+ (then 4M=weakest accept, 3OM=strongest accept, then 4♦=retransfer)
3M	Stayman
3OM	Clubs

If we overcall 2NT over a minor we play our "front-of-the-card" 2NT system on.

If we overcall 3NT over a weak 2-bid or a 3-level preempt, we play a version of TONTO:

4♣/4♦/4♥	Transfers to H/S/♣/♦, skipping opponent's suit
	Then accept transfer=weakest, first step=strongest (mid=mid if available)
	Then 4NT by resp.=quantitative, cheapest new suit = RKC
4♠	BLACKWOOD, ACES ONLY (0123)
4NT	Nat invite

Over Preempts: We play Leaping Michaels over weak two-bids, with a modification over 2♦.

(2♦)	3♦	Majors
	4♣	Clubs and Hearts, forcing
	4♦	Clubs and Spades
	4M	Nat
	4NT	BLACKWOOD (Aces only, 0123)
(2M)	3M	Strong one-suiter, stopper ask
	4m	Two-suiter, m and OM, forcing
	4M	BOTH MINORS
	4NT	BLACKWOOD (Aces only, 0123)

We play takeout doubles to the moon, including over 4♠ and (to a lesser extent) 5m. **We play lebensohl only after a DIRECT double of a weak two-bid.**

(2♥)-DBL	2NT	lebensohl, relay to 3♣
	3♣	Normal, may bid more with extras
	P/3♦	To play 3♥ GF with ♥ stop
	3♠	Natural invite, NF
	3NT	Stop, suggests other contracts
	3m	Nat, NF, constructive
	3♥	GF, no H stop
	3♠	FORCING
	3NT	To play, no interest in other contracts (else 2NT-3♣-3NT)

Also:	(3m)	4m	Majors
		4♦/3♣	Diamonds and a major
		4NT	BLACKWOOD
	(3♥)	4♥	5♠ and 5m
	(3♠)	4♠	5-5 minors
	(3M)	4NT	BLACKWOOD
	(4m)	4NT	??
	(4M)	DBL	Takeout , then 4NT shows 2 places to play
	(4♥)	4NT	Minors
	(4♠)	4NT	2 suits, may include hearts

Over 1NT Opening Bids

We play two defenses, one for “Strong” NT and one for “Weak” NT. “**Strong**” is defined as **any range that includes 15 HCP**, regardless of the lower limit. “**Weak**” is defined as any range with a **maximum of 14 HCP** or less. The “Strong” defense also is used by a passed hand vs any range NT.

“Strong” NT defense (Meckwell), vs range that includes 15 HCP or more:

- (1NT) DBL Either one minor or BOTH majors
- 2m Pass or correct
- 2M Natural, shows own suit
- 2NT Good hand, F1

If third hand acts, DBL by advancer is competitive, implying some fit.

2m Two suits, m + some major, relative lengths ambiguous

2♦ over 2♣ is artif, asking for major.

If 2m is doubled: P=To play, RDBL=Asks Major, 2 any=Own Suit

2M Natural

“Weak” NT defense (Pen DBLs and Transfers), vs range that is max of 14 HCP:

- (1NT) DBL Penalty, tricks or good 14+ HCP – Natural continuations.

We are forced through 2♦, but not higher. Doubles of 2m are takeout in direct seat. In balancing seat we need more latitude, since we’re in a force. Doubles above 2M are more “card-showing”/takeout; again, we need more latitude, since we’re NOT in a force, especially advancer, who has not yet shown values.

2♣ Both majors, then 2♦ = “you pick”

If 2♣ is doubled: P=To play, RDBL=“You pick M”, 2D=Natural

2♦ 5+ Hearts

2♥ 5+ Spades

2♠ 4♠ and a longer minor

2NT 4♥ and a longer minor

Over Multi 2♦

We play the defense where bids are natural and double shows up to about 15 HCP or a very strong hand, and 2NT is about 16-18. Use the ACBL defense if we can. **If we can’t use ACBL defense, DISCUSS BEFORE WE PLAY.**

Over Flannery 2♦

DBL = 13+ to 16, 2♥ = Minors, 2♠ = Nat, 2NT = (16)17-19 (then use 2NT overcall defense with opp’s suit = Hearts), 3m = Nat, 3H = Ask stop, 3♠ = Nat.

Over Flannery 2♥: Same except DBL = Minors, and 2NT = wider range.

Over Transfer Responses to 1♣

Over a response of 1R (showing a major), double is takeout with OM and DIAMONDS. Bidding their major is Michaels, with OM and CLUBS. 2 of their major is NATURAL. Over an artificial response of 1S double SHOWS SPADES.

Over Artificial Bids

Generally, a double of an artificial bid shows that suit. Unfortunately, we have numerous exceptions. If the artificial bid is a raise AND is at the 3-level (Bergen Raises), then our meaning depends on the strength shown. If the bid shows INVITATIONAL STRENGTH OR MORE, then our double shows that suit. If the bid shows a WEAKER hand, then our double is **takeout** of the anchor suit. At the TWO LEVEL, our doubles of artificial raises are **takeout**, e.g., **a double of Drury is takeout.**

Over Kaplan Inversion

Kaplan Inversion switches the meaning of the 1♠ and 1NT responses to an opening bid of 1♥. Note that some practitioners revert to “natural” if responder is a passed hand.

After (1♥)-P-(1♠), which shows a forcing NT but which may contain 4 spades, double is takeout of hearts and 1NT is natural. **QUESTION: what does the 1NT overcall mean when intervenor is a passed hand?**

After (1♥)-P-(1NT), which shows five or more spades and is forcing for one round, double is takeout for the minors.

LEADS

Versus Suits

Honor Leads:

Rusinow (2nd of touching honors). Applies down to the 8. That is, from 98x or 87x we lead the 8 (but try to lead low if you must lead the suit). Rusinow does NOT apply in partner's suit. “Partner's suit” is defined as any naturally bid suit (including a 1D opening bid), or any unbid major shown by a takeout double, or any 4+ card implied suit, e.g., after (1♣)-P-(1♥)-DBL, the doubler “owns” both spades and diamonds. We also lead standard honors if we preempt showing a long suit and lead a different suit, and when leading DUMMY'S suit(s).

We do not lead differently versus high-level contracts, although for tactical reasons we will vary more often from the “correct” lead, especially from AK(x).

Spot-card Leads:

3rd from even and lowest from odd, but from a 7-card suit we lead FIFTH, preserving seventh for oddball purposes. If we have raised we will often lead high from small cards; otherwise usually 3rd.

Shifting:

We lead **standard** honors when shifting, **except 10/9 = 0/2 higher**. We lead 3/5 when shifting **if we are trying to give count**, but often we shift to an “attitude” card.

Versus No-trump

Honor Leads:

King is the “power lead” (asks for unblock or count). Other honors are Rusinow. We lead Rusinow from holdings of 4 cards or more. 3-card suits are considered “short” for NT purposes, so we lead standard honors from 3-card or shorter holdings (except Q from KQx and A from AKx).

The Ace asks for attitude. Lead Ace from AKJx; lead King from AKJ10. Lead Q from KQJx; lead K from KQJxx (usually).

Spot-card Leads:

4th best is normal. We MAY lead a higher card from a bad holding, but we do so less often than most players (Bart speaking). If we are leading high, we lead the second best from a disconnected holding (86xx) but MAY lead top from a connected holding (876x).

We lead 3rd best in PARTNER’S SUIT, even from four.

Shifting:

We lead **standard** honors when shifting, **except 10/9 = 0/2 higher**. We lead 4th **if we are trying to give count**, but often we shift to an “attitude” card.

SIGNALS

We are NOT compulsive signalers. Our theory of signals is to make them on a “need-to-know” basis, not on an “every-card-tells-a-story” basis. Nevertheless, we signal often enough to get the job done. We will signal more against weak opposition than strong.

We play **UPSIDE-DOWN COUNT AND ATTITUDE**, vs both suits and no-trump. Our top priority is attitude, with count a close second. Suit preference is third.

EXCEPTION: Vs SUITS, on a lead that shows ACE-KING, we play a STANDARD signal at TRICK ONE.

At trick one vs suits, when dummy has a singleton and 3rd hand is known to have sufficient length, very high or low cards are suit preference and middle is neutral or encouraging.

We play suit-preference in trumps, but sometimes will echo in ruff situations.

We play Smith Echo only when 3rd hand plays the JACK (if Bart remembers).



CHAPTER 19

PRECISION SIMPLIFIED

In this Chapter we review the bids of the Precision System developed by Timm (2011) in his book “Precision Simplified”, Second Edition, published by Trafford Press. While many of the bids are similar to Transfer Precision, it employs the 1♥ and 2♥ relay bids.

Basic Opening bids

- 1♣* Artificial 16+ HCP — MUST ALERT
- 1♦* 11-15 HCP may be short NV (at least 2) MUST ANNOUNCE May be short
VUL no announcement since have 4+ Diamonds
- 1♥/1♠ 11-15 HCP 5+ Majors with Meckwell Bidding Structure
- 1NT **12-15 HCP Vul or 4th Seat 10-12 HCP NV (Transfers On)**
- 2♣* 11-15 HCP 5/6+ Clubs (with 5 must have a 4-card major) — MUST ALERT
- 2♦* 11-15 HCP 4=3-1-5, 3=4-1-5, 4=4-1-4, or 4=4-0-5 MUST ALERT
Singleton Diamond or Void
- 2♥/2♠ 7-11 HCP 5/6+ Cards (Weak 2-bids Vulnerable with **Modified Ogust 5-5-6-6**)
- 2NT* 5-5 in the minors 5-10 HCP (NV) and 11-15 HCP (VUL)
- 3X 5-10 must have 2/3 of top 3 Honors in the Bid Suit Vulnerable and 1 if
Non-vulnerable

3NT* GAMBLING solid 7+ minor suits (AKQJxxx)

* Indicates forcing bids and alerts

Responses to 1♦* Opening

Responses to 1♦* Opening (11-15 HCP diamonds may be short) strong Jump Shifts

1♥/1♠ 4+ Cards in suit with 6+ HCP (to show weak hand rebid majors since using strong jump shifts)

Rebids by Opener

1♠	4+ spades over 1♥
1NT	11-15 HCP over 1♥/1♠
2♣	5+ clubs
2♦	5+diamonds
2M	13-16 Dummy Points
3M	17-18 Dummy Points

1NT	6-10 HCP, balanced hand
2NT	11- 12 HCP, balanced hand
3NT	13-15 HCP, balanced hand
2♣	13+ HCP forcing
2♦*	10-12 HCP 5/6+ diamonds (Rev-Crisscross)
2♥/2♠	16+ HCP strong jump shift in Major 5+ cards, game force
3♣*	13+ Diamond raise 5/6+ diamonds
3♦*	less than 10 HCP, Weak, preemptive raise 5/6+♦
3♥/3♠	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♣	Splinter bid in support of diamonds (slam interest 16+)
4♦	Minorwood 1430 Keycard for diamonds
4♥/4♠	Single suited hand to play

Getting to no-trump (Rev-crisscross)

After an inverted minor raise 1♦* - pass - 3♣* (13+ HCP)

1. Show major suit stoppers 2♥ or 2♠, bid up the line. No extra values
2. Bid 2NT with a minimum and both majors are stopped.
3. Bid 3♣ to show club stopper, neither hearts or spades stopped
4. Bid 3♦ with a minimum without major stoppers.
5. Bid 3♥ or 3NT, showing ♥ stopped, over 2♠ with minimum values

After a weak raise 1♦* - pass - 3♦* (less than 10 HCP)

- a. Pass with all minimum and almost all intermediate sized hands
- b. A new suit is forcing one round and shows a very strong hand

- c. 3NT is to play regardless what partner had for his pre-emptive raise
- d. 4 of the minor is invitational (may be used as RKC Blackwood).

Responses to 1M Opening Meckwell Bids over MAJOR

Responses to 1M Opening (Open 1♥/1♠ with 11-15 HCP)

2M 8-10/11 Dummy Points 3 cards support (constructive raise)

Short Suit Game Try (SSGT) over 1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠

Any three level suit bid by opener shows shortness in the suit 0-2.

Otherwise relay bids are used by the Opener and responder shows **SHORTNESS**

	1♥-2♥ 2♠	or	1♠-2♠ 2NT
Club Shortness	3♣		3♣
Diamonds Shortness	3♦		3♦
Heart Shortness			3♥
Spade Shortness	2NT		
4333 min 8-9	3♥		3♠
4333 max 10-11	3NT		3NT
4333 with 4S and Max 10-11	3♠		
5 to KQ+	4m		4m
Stiff Other Major	4♥		4♠

After SSGT, responder re-evaluates his hand with A=3 and K=1

With 9 or 10/11 responder bids game or cue bids minor with 4 of other majors

With 7 or 8 make last train bid if possible

With 6 or less sign-off

3M 0-6 Dummy Points 4 card support (weak raise)

1NT 7-12 Dummy Points 0-2/3 card support

After partner bids at the 2-level, a jump to 3M shows 10-12 with 3-cards

2NT 12+ Dummy Points 4+ card support

Ambiguous Splinter with 4-card support = 3 level bid of other major 13+ Dummy Points

3NT	13-15 with three card support
3♣/3♦	Weak 6+ clubs/diamonds less than 7 points
4♣	16+ balanced with 3+ card support in the major
4♦	12-15 points with 5 trumps in the major bid

With Interference at the 2-level**Cue bid is Limit Raise with 3+ trumps**

2NT	Limit raise with 4+ trumps
3♣/3♦	Fit Jump Bids 3/4+ trumps with 4+ clubs /Diamonds
3other M	Fit Bid with 3/4+ trumps and 4+ cards in other Major
3M	Weak raise – 0-6 Dummy Points with 4-card support for bid major
4M/5m	To-Play
4m	Splinter-Jump 4-card support with singleton
4other M	To-Play

With Interference at the 3-level

X	Trump Double (Western Cue)
3X	Invitational to game in a major
4-level Cue bid	Forcing raise to game in Major bid
3M weak with major fit	
4X	Fit jumps bids below major bid
4M	peemptive

Scroll Bids (Modified)

To locate the singleton, the opener uses scroll asking bids. Thus, the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♣, 3NT or 1♠ - 3♥, 3♠. The responses after the 3NT scroll asks are: 4♣, 4♦, 4♥, which shows singletons in either clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠ are: 3NT=♥, 4♣=♣, and 4♦=♦.

To determine a void, one continues with a scroll bid. Then up-the-line bids are used to show a singleton or VOID and simultaneously provides one with information about keycards for the agreed upon suit. After hearing the response to the asking scroll bids (3NT or 3♠), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to determine the nature of the shortage. The responses are: Step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and Steps 2-5, the next four bids, indicate that one has a void and simultaneously shows keycards (e.g. 1/4 or 0/3 or 2 or 2 with Queen).

Responses to 1NT Opening

Responses to 1NT (13-15 HCP VUL and 10-12 HCP NV)

2♣	Stayman/Smolen
2♦/2♥	Transfer hearts/spades
2♠	Transfer to the minor (2NT by opener says he prefers diamonds and 3♣ says he prefers clubs)
2NT	Invitational in no-trump (11+ Vul and 13+NV)
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠	<u>6 card suit with 2 of top 3 honors 9-11 Strong (12-14 Weak) HCP</u>
4♦/4♥	Texas Transfer

If NV and 13-15 HCP Open 1D ===== the bid of 1NT = 13-15 over heart or spade (ALERT)

Over a double of 1NT (weak or Strong) we employ Helvic No-trump Runouts

Redouble shows a single suited hand (partner bids 2♣)

And bidding shows a two-suited hand

2♣=clubs and diamonds

2♦=diamond and hearts

2♥=hearts and spades

2♠=spades and clubs

If you pass the double you have a two-suited hand with two non-touching suits or you want to play 1NT for penalty — partner must re-double or bid 5-card suit. Opener may leave double in or bid the anchor suit.

Transfer Lebensohl over no-trump.

After (1) 1NT (2X)?

(a) X = Diamonds/Hearts/Spades.

Double = Penalty/negative (over 2♠ or higher)

2Y to play where Y is not equal to X.

2NT: Puppet to 3♣

-> Pass /Lower Suit: To play.

3X cue bid Stayman with stopper GF

Over X=H, 3♠=both minors

3NT Slammish with stopper.

3♣: Transfer to diamonds, INV or better. *

3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better. *

3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better. *

* If transfer to opponents -> Stayman w/o stopper

3♣: Transfer to clubs no stopper
 3NT: To play, but no stopper
 4m: Leaping Michaels. 5-5 up.
 (X=M: 4♣=C+OM. 4♦=D+OM.
 X=D: 4♣=C+One major. 4♦=H+S.)
 4M: Unbid: NAT. with stopper.
 Jump Cue: Minors. Strong.
 4NT: Minors. (Weak if X=M.)

(b) X = Clubs.

Double = Cue bid Stayman w/o stopper
 2Y where Y is not equal to X: To play.
 2NT transfer to diamonds no stopper.
 -> 3♦=Accept. 3♣=Decline.
 3♣: Stayman with a stopper GF
 3♦: Transfer to hearts, INV or better.
 3♥: Transfer to spades, INV or better.
 3♠: Transfer to diamonds no stopper
 3NT: To play but no stopper
 4m: Leaping Michaels.
 4M: NAT. with stopper.

Over 2♦/2♥/2♠ — Transfer Lebensohl if 3-level but neg double over the majors

Responses to 2M Opening

Responses to 2♥/ 2♠ (Open 5-10 6+ card suit) - Same as 2/1

Over 2NT asks for Feature

The weak major 2-level bid is a “normal” weak two and typically shows between 5-10 points and at least a 6-card suit. The optimum hand for a weak-2 has most of its points in the long suit although it is recognized that this is not always possible and sometimes (particularly 3rd hand at favorable vulnerability) you have to go with what you’ve got.

4♣ is RKCB [used with weak two bids (2♥/2♠)].

The responses are:

- 4♦ first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen

- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first-step. The next bid of 4♥ is the Queen ask — 4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

When they Double Weak bid – Reverse Mc Cabe

- 2♥ - X then Redouble shows a strong hand
 2♠ =Spades
 2NT =Clubs (partner bids clubs)
 3♦ =transfer into suit shows A/K of Hearts
 3♥ =No A/K of Hearts

- 2♠- X then Redouble shows a strong hand
 2NT =Clubs (partner bids clubs)
 3♥ =transfer into suit show A/K of Spades
 3♠ =No A/K of Spades

Responses to 2♣* Opening

Responses to 2♣ Opening (Open 11-15 HCP, 6+ Clubs or 5/6clubs and 4 card major, must have two of the top three honors — 5+ in third seat.

Partner responses

- 2♦* 11+ HCP, conventional and forcing for one round

Opener Rebids

- 2♥ 11-15 HCP, 4-card ♥ suit
 2♠ 11-15 HCP, 4-card ♠ suit
 2NT 11-15 HCP, 6-3-2-2 BAL hand, 6-card club suit with a major stopper

 3♦* requests opener to clarify stoppers

Opener Bids

- 3♥* ♥ stopper

3♠* ♠ stopper
 3NT ♥ and ♠ stoppers

3♣ 14-15 HCP non-forcing and unbalanced hand (1-3-3-6)
 3♥ 14-15 HCP, 5+card ♥ suit
 3♠ 14-15 HCP, relay back to ♣'s, solid club suit AKJ109x allows responder to bid 3NT
 3NT 14-15 HCP, 5+spades and 6+ clubs
 2♥/2♠ Natural with 5+cards, 8-10 HCP

2NT* **Lebensohl (for two-suited hands)**

Partner Bids 3♣

Responder next bids

3♦ = 5-5 diamonds and hearts
 3♥ = 5-5 hearts and spades
 3♠ = 5-5 spades and diamonds

3♣ **10-12 Invitational**
 3♦/3♥/3♠ 6+ card suit, 12 HCP openers raises or bids 3NT (**Opener May Not Pass**)
 4♣ Invitational to game in clubs
 4♥/4♠ Natural and to play
 4♦ RKCB for clubs

With interference

Negative double through 3♠
 Redouble 10+ HCP
 Cue bid 13+ HCP

Responses to 2♦* Opening (Singleton/void in Diamonds)

Responses to 2♦* Opening (11-15 HCP)

Partner Response to 2♦*

2♥/2♠ To play in bid major
 3♣ To play in clubs
 2NT* ASK

Opener Rebids

3♣*any minimum 11-13,

3♦ ASK (by responder)

3♥= four hearts

3♠ = four spades

3NT=4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5

3♦=4-4-1-4, maximum with singleton diamond

3♥=3-4-1-5, maximum with four hearts

3♠=4-3-1-5, maximum with four spades

3NT=4-4-0-5, maximum with five clubs

Responses to 2NT* Opening

Responses to 2NT* 5-5 in the minors 5-10 HCP NV and 11-15 HCP VUL

3♣ or 3♦ is to play

3♥* is an asking bid

Opener Rebids

3♠ 5-5 minimum (5-10 NV; 11-15 VUL)

3NT maximum

4♣ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), minimum

4♦ 6-5 (diamonds, clubs), minimum

4♥ 6-5 (clubs, diamonds), maximum

4♠ z6-5 (diamonds, clubs), maximum

4NT 6-6 in the minors.

3♠ to play

3NT to play

4♣/4♦ pre-emptive bids and to play

4♥/4♠ to play

5♣/5♦ to play

Over interference (Game force)

4NT === I prefer diamonds

4♣ === I prefer clubs

Gambling 3NT* — Same as 2/1

Namyats — Same as 2/1

Shows a hand with 8 - 8 ½ trick in hearts (Open 4♣*), in spades open 4♦*. Refuse transfer by bidding the step in between (4♦ over 4♣ and 4♥ over 4♦), requesting that partner bid an ace if he has one or to sign off in his long suit. 4NT is RKCB.

Responses to 3X Openings

Responses to 3X bids by OPENER (always ensures 2 of the top 3 honors Vulnerable) and 5-10 HCP plus distribution; Non-vulnerable at least ONE top Honor.

- 4♣ RKCB [over three level (3♦/3♥/3♠) bids]
- 4♦ Asks for outside controls first step 0-2 controls (A=2; K=1), second step = 3, etc.

The bid of 4NT should not be used since it may get the auction too high.

The responses for 4♣ RKCB are:

- 4♦ first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
- 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

The only step in which the queen is not known is the first-step. The next bid of 4♥ is the Queen ask — 4♠ = no and 4NT = yes. A jump over the four hearts bid (5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠) is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA).

After the preemptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural and advances the preempt; a jump to 4♦ is RKCB for clubs.

Responses to 1♣* Opening

Responses to 1♣* OPENING (16+ HCP, but 17 + HCP for a balanced hand and a 4 card major)

(1) Negative: 1♦* 0-7 HCP

Opener Rebids after 1♦*:

Non-forcing bids: 1♠/2♣/2♦ (minimum unbalanced hands with 5/6-card suits, 16-21 HCP).

1NT* 16-19 HCP Balanced May have a 5-Card Major (NO MUPPET)

Partner Responses

Pass 0-6 HCP

- 2♣ 6-7 HCP, Stayman
- 2♦/2♥ Jacoby Transfer
- 2NT 7HCP, inviting 3NT
- 3♣3♦ 5-5 in the Minors Min/Max (0-5/6-7)
- 3♥/3♠ 5-5 in the Majors Min/Max (0-5/6-7)

2NT* 22-23 HCP balanced may have 5-card major (no relay bid)

Partner Responses

Pass 0-2 HCP

Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g. 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)

3♣ - Muppet Stayman

- 3NT* shows 5 hearts. Responder can either pass if he has spades, or if responder wants to play it in hearts, bids 4♦* as a transfer to hearts which allows the strong hand to play the contract in 4 hearts
- 3♠* shows 5 spades
- 3♦* has 1 or 2 four-card majors
- 3♥* shows no 4-card major or no 5-card major, but may have a 3-card spade suit. Responder will usually now bid 3NT. But, if responder has 5 spades and 4/3 hearts, he can now bid 3♠, looking for the 5-3 major spade fit.

When opener bids 3♦*, responder makes the following rebids.

- 3♥* Responder bids the major he does not have (like Smolen). This sequence shows 4 spades and denies 4 hearts. Opener either bids spades or 3NT.
- 3♠* Responder bids the major he does not have. This sequence shows 4 hearts and denies 4 spades; opener either bids hearts or 3NT.
- 4♣* Responder has both majors, it asks partner to pick the major.
- 4♦* Most partnerships play the bid of 4♦ to show slam interest, pick a slam.

* Alert (**Do not use Muppet if 4-5 in spades-hearts, Transfer to Hearts and Bid spades**)

- 4♣= Gerber
- 4♦=transfer to hearts
- 4♥=transfer to spades
- 4♠=transfer to clubs
- 5♣=transfer to diamonds
- 5NT=invite Grand Slam

Other bids same as 2/1 (e.g. 3♠ is transfer to 3NT)

1♥* relay responder must respond 1♠*

Opener Rebids after 1♥*

1NT 20-21 HCP balanced may have a 5-card major (**May Use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT**)

- 2♣ 5+ hearts, 4+ clubs. Non-forcing
- 2♦ 5+ hearts, 4+ diamonds Non-forcing
- 2♥ 5+ heart suit, no extras
- 2♠ 5+ hearts, 4+ spades, non-forcing

2NT 24-25 HCP balanced (**May Use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT**)

- 3♣/3♦ Forcing, possibly 5-5 in hearts and the suit bid (clubs/diamonds)
- 3♥ 5/6-card suit, invitational over the 1♦ response
- 3♠ 5+ hearts, 4+ spades with extras.
- 3NT to play
- 4♣ 6 clubs, 5+ diamonds, forcing
- 4♦ 6 diamonds, 5+ clubs, forcing
- 4♥/4♠ to play
- 4NT Blackwood ace ask

Exceptions — Do not relay hearts to spades if the following conditions apply.

After 1♥* responder bids:

- 1NT 5-5 or better in the majors, very weak (0-4 HCP)
- 2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠ modest 6+ card suit, very weak
- 2NT 5-5 or better in the minors, very weak (0-4 HCP)
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ modest 7+ card suit, very weak

After 2♥* responder bids:

2NT	two suited 5-5 or better, extremely weak (0-2)
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠	modest 7+ card suit, extremely weak

2♥* relay responder must bid 2♠*

Opener Rebids and Corresponding Partner Rebids

2NT 26-27 HCP balanced hand may have a 4 card major

(May Use Muppet and the same bids reviewed over the bid of 1♣-2NT)

3♥ - 5/6+hearts – equivalent of 2/1 bidders 2♣ 22+ HCP (forcing)

3NT	0-4 HCP, minimum and no support
4♥	0-4 HCP, minimum and 2-card support

3♣/3♦ - unbalanced very strong 7+ minor hand (game force, 22+ PTS)

New suit	shows king/void/ace
3NT	no king or void
4♣/4♦	with singleton
Raise to game	denies K, singleton, or void

3NT – 5-5 in the minors with 22+ HCP

4♣/4♦— 6-5 clubs-diamonds/6-5 diamonds-clubs 22+ HCP

New suit	shows king/void/ace
4NT	no king or void
Raise to game	denies K, singleton, or void

2♠/3♣/3♦ without relay shows 5+cards and 22+HCP – equivalent of Standard bidders 2♣ (no-relay)

Bids follow 2/1 structure

3NT 28+ HCP balanced may have a 5-card major

Partner Rebids

0-3 HCP	pass OR
	4♣= Gerber

- 4♦=transfer to hearts
- 4♥=transfer to spades
- 4♠=transfer to clubs
- 5♣- transfer to diamonds

4-7 HCP and balanced 4NT invite slam

(2) Transfers to MAJORS Positive Bids

- 1♥#** 5+ spades opener bids **1♠** 12+ points
- 2♦#** 5+ hearts opener bids **2♥**, 12+ points
- 1♠#** 8+ points balanced/unbalanced hand may be 5-5 in major-minor, 5-5 in majors or 5-5 in the minors

announced as a transfer

Opener (Only accepts Transfer if he has a fit by bidding 1♠/2♥ with three card support). After the bid of 1NT, Stayman/ Smolen and transfers are again used.

- 3♥/3♠** Shows a 3-3-3-4 hand— 3-card support for the major (16-17 HCP)
- 4♥/4♠** Show a hand with exactly 16 HCP and 4-card support

Responder uses (Gamma) control bids to show length after Opener ACCEPTS showing 17+ HCP.

- 3♣* by responder says I have 5
- 3♦* by responder says I have 6+

Next level bids of the MAJOR by Opener at the 3 level after Gamma bids are 1430 RKCB asking bids.

- 3♥*/3♠***
- 3♠/3NT** show 1 or 4
- 3NT/4♣** show 0 or 3
- 4♣/4♦** show 2 keycards
- 4♦/4♥** show 2 with Queen

Over the 1/4 or 1/3 level bids, next bid up is Queen ask.

Over the bids of 2 keycards with the Queen the next level bid is the specific King (4♥/4♠ respectively— last bid in chain).

An important adjunct to Gamma length bids (when one has 6+ trumps) is the CAB which is initiated by bidding the SUIT! Note that this is used for the investigation of SLAM in a suit and NOT No-trump.

Responses to CAB (abbreviated) are for the suit bid, step after queen ask:

- 1st step no controls
- 2nd step second round control — king/singleton
- 3rd step first round control — ace/void

When responder is 5-5 in spades and a minor

Bid 1♥ as a transfer to spades ===== after the relay bid of 1♠ one bids:

- 2♣* = 5-5 in spades and club
- 2♦* = 5-5 in spades and diamonds
- 3♣* = 5 spades and no 5-card minor
- 3♦* = 6+ spades and no 5-card minor

Opener next bids 3♠* is 1430 for spades and then 4♠ is the spec king ask. Furthermore, 3♣* and 3♦* are Minorwood bids.

When responder is 5-5 in hearts and a minor

Bid 2♦ as a transfer to hearts ===== after the relay bid of 2♥ one bids:

- 2♠* = 5-5 in hearts and clubs
- 2NT = 5-5 in hearts and diamonds
- 3♣* = 5 hearts and no 5-card minor
- 3♦* = 6+ hearts and no 5-card minor

If opener next bids 3♥*=1430 for hearts where last train bid is the spec king ask Over 2♠/2NT then the bids of and 3♣*/3♦* are Minorwood asks.

When responder is 5-5 in the majors

If responder is 5-5 in the majors after 1NT, he next bids 3♥/3♠.

3♥*=5-5 and 12+ HCP

3♠*=5-5 and 8-11 HCP

The next bid up by opener is DRKCB (e.g. 3♠*/3NT*), Game bids are to play.

- 3NT/4♣ 1or 4
- 4♣/4♦ 0or 3

4♦/4♥	2 with neither queen
4♥/4♠	2 with one queen
4♠/4NT	2 with both queens

Note that in the second step (4♦/4♥), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first or second step response to a DRKCB asks, unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown.

To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step (4♥/4♠).

The four-response steps now become:

1 st step	no queen
2 nd step	lower-ranking queen only
3 rd step	higher-ranking queen only
4 th step	both queens

When responder is 5-5 in the minors

If responder is 5-5 in the minors after 1NT, he next bids

3♣*=5-5 and 12+ HCP

3♦*=5-5 and 8-11 HCP

Next step 3♦*/3♥* (next step bids are DRKCB for the minor and 3NT is to play

5♣/5♦ is to play game in the minor

DRKCB Minorwood for clubs (Example — similar for hearts)

Over 3♦

3♥	1 or 4 keycards (the 14 step)	1 st step
3♠	0 or 3 keycards (the 03 step)	2 nd step
3NT	2 with neither Queen	3 rd step
4♣	2 with one Queen	4 th step
4♦	2 with both Queens	5 th step

Note that in the second step (3♥/3♠), you do not know which queen. However, if partner makes a first or second step response to a DRKCB asks, unless the asker has both of the agreed-upon suit queens, the queen situation is unknown.

To now ask about queens, the asker uses the next available “free bid” step.

The four-response steps now become:

- 1st step no queen
- 2nd step lower-ranking queen only
- 3rd step higher-ranking queen only
- 4th step both queens

Last Train bids are the specific King asks.

When responder has 8-11 HCP =====1♣-1♠-1NT

Responder Bids

- 2♦ transfer to Hearts with 5+**
- 2♥ transfer to Diamonds with 5+**
- 2♠ transfer to Minors with 5+**

- 2NT by opener says he prefers diamonds**
- 3♣ says he prefers clubs**

- 2NT 8-9**
- 3NT 10-11**

When responder has one long minor

The bid of **2♣*** by responder says he has a long minor (8-13 HCP) and the bid of **1NT*** shows a balanced hand (with 12-13 HCP) details (3) and (4) below.

NON-TRANSFER BIDS by OPENER — 5+card suit of his own denying a fit in the transfer major. Or one may bid 1NT showing balanced hand with 16-19 HCP.

Responding with Balanced Hands and no major suit fit.

- 1/2NT* 16-19 HCP**
- 2/3NT* 20-21 HCP**
- 3/4NT* 22-23 HCP**
- 4/5NT 24+ HCP**

(3) 1NT* 12 – 13 HCP and no 5-card Major (1♣-Pass -1NT - ?)

Opener Bids

- 2♣ Stayman**

2♦/2♥/2♠ Shows 5-card suit 16/17 HCP
 2NT Show Clubs with 16/17 HCP

3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ Strong Hand with 18+ HCP and 5/6 card suit
 3NT 16/17 HCP and no 4-card major

(4) 2♣* 8+ HCP 6-cards in a Minor

Opener Rebids (after 1♣* - 2♣*) – Summary

2♥/2♠ Shows a 5-card major suit

Partner Rebids

Raise major with support or bid minor

2♦ (Ask) Asking partner for Minor

Partner Rebids

2♥ shows CLUBS

2♠ Shows DIAMONDS

Opener Bids

2NT 1430 for the MINOR

2NT Forcing with Major stoppers

3NT No interest in slam or the minor

4NT Blackwood Ace Asking

(5) 2♥/2♠ 4-6 HCP 6+card

(Weak Jump Shift with all values in the suit — with 7+ scattered values bid 1♦)

Opener Rebids

Pass Game unlikely

4♥/4♠/3NT 20+ HCP

New suit 5+ cards without support for the majors

Partners Rebids

Raise	3+ support (or Qx)
Rebid ♥/♠	minimum no support
Cue-bid under 3NT	singleton or void

3♥/3♠ Minimal hand with support (16-18 HCP)

Partners Rebids

Pass or bid game

2NT	Feature
3NT	Natural
4NT	RKCB

(6) 2NT* 14+HCP, balanced no 5-card major (May not stop short of 4NT)

Opener Rebids

3♦/3♥/3♠	Natural bids
3♣*	Baron asking bid (Not Muppet)

Partner Bids

Bid 4-card suits up the line (3♦/3♥/3♠)

3NT show clubs

3NT

ASK BID

Responder bids
 4♣ 14-15 points
 4♦ 16-17 points

After 4 clubs and 4 diamonds, Opener bids 4-card suits up-the-line or bid 4NT sign-off or 6/7 NT

4♥ 18-19 points
 4♠ 20-21 points

After 4 hearts and 4 spades, Opener may bid 4NT ACE ASKING or bids 6/7 NT

4NT

Blackwood Ace ask

(7) 3♣* 1444/4441 Black Singleton Lacking 4 controls (8 – 13 HCP)**Opener Rebids after 3♣**

3♦*	where is the singleton?
3♥*	club singleton
3♠*	spade singleton
3NT	to play
4♥/4♠	to play
4NT	Blackwood ace asking

Cue bid by Opener of singleton (4♣*/4♠*) is the CAB

1st step 0-2 (at most one ace or two kings)

2nd step 3 (ace and king)

3rd step 4 (two aces)

(8) 3♦* 4144/4414 Red Singleton Lacking 4 controls (8-13 HCP)**Rebids after 3♦**

3♥*	where is singleton?
3♠*	diamond singleton
3NT*	heart singleton
4♥/4♠	to play
4NT	Blackwood ace asking

Cue bid by Opener of singleton (4♦*/4♥*) is the CAB

1st step 0-2 (at most one ace or two kings)

2nd step 3 (ace and king)

3rd step 4 (two aces)

(9) (Submarine Strong Singleton Responses after 1♣ bids)

3♥* specifically 1444 with 4+ controls, usually 14+ HCP

3NT* specifically 4441 with 4+ controls, usually 14+HCP

4♣* specifically 4414 with 4+ controls, usually 14+HCP

4♦* specifically 4144 with 4+ controls, usually 14+HCP

Next level bids BY OPENER are CAB (3♠*, 4♣*, 4♦* and 4♥*, respectively)

The responses to the CAB (3♠*/4♣*/4♦*/4♥*) are:

- 1st step – 4 controls (two aces or ace and two kings)
- 2nd step – 5 controls (two aces and one king/ ace + three kings)
- 3rd step – 6 controls (three aces/ two aces and two kings)

(10) 3♠* a solid 7+ card suit (AKQxxxx), 9 + HCP with or without side controls

Opener Rebids

- 3NT to play
- 4♥/4♠ natural showing at least 5-cards with no slam interest

Opener bids (if he knows the suit)

4♣* CAB - Asks about outside suit controls

Responses to CAB

- 4♦* no outside controls
- 4♥* outside king
- 4♠* outside ace or 2 kings
- 4NT* Ace/2-3 kings

Opener bids (if suit is unknown)

4♦* asking for suit

Responses to suit ask

- 4♥*/4♠*/5♣* hearts, spades, clubs
- 4NT* diamonds

Opener may also bid 4NT which is Blackwood

Summary- Interference Bids Over 1♣* Opening

Direct Seat Interference

Double – Mathe which shows Majors

Pass	0-4 HCP
1♦	5-7 HCP
Redouble	8+
1♥	8-10 HCP no stopper in hearts
1♠	8-10 HCP no stopper in spades
1NT	8-10 HCP stoppers in the majors

2♣	8-13 HCP and 6+ cards
2♦	8-13 HCP and 6+ diamonds
2♥	11+ spade stopper (no heart stopper)
2♠	11+ heart stopper (no spade stopper)
2NT	11+ both majors stopped

At 1 level – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, 5+ card suit, Game Force
Jump in suit	SYSTEMS ON 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠
1NT	8-13 HCP, with stopper
2NT	10+ HCP, with 1/2 stopper
Cue bid	10+ Game force no stopper

1NT – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit	8+ HCP, 5+ card suit

1NT – Mathe which shows Minors

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
2♣	5+ hearts, GF
2♦	5+ spades GF
2♥	5+ HCP, natural and non-forcing
2♠	5+ HCP, natural and non-forcing
3NT	10+ HCP, both minors stopped

At 2 level – (natural)

Pass	0-4 HCP
Double	5-7 HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, natural
Cue bid	9+ Flat with no stopper
2NT	9-13 HCP with stopper
3NT	14+ with stoppers

At 3 level – (natural)

Pass	0-7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP
Suit bid	8+ HCP, and 5+ card suit

At 4 level – (natural)

Pass	0-7 HCP
Double	8+ HCP, takeout or penalty

Balancing Seat Interference

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1♥/♠)

Pass	balance minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the other three suits
Suit Bid	Natural, non-forcing
1NT	shows stopper with (16-21 HCP)
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)
Cue bid	20 + HCP no stopper

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (1NT for Minors)

Pass	balanced minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the both majors
2♣/2♦	unusual extra values shows ♥/♠
2♥/2♠	Natural non-forcing
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

After 1♣* - (Pass) - 1♦ - (Double = Majors)

Pass	balanced minimum no 5-card suit
Double	support for the both minors
2♣/2♦	natural 5+ card suit.
2♥/2♠	unusual extra values shows ♣/♦
2NT	shows stopper with (22+ HCP)

Interference Over 1Nt By Opponents

Direct Seat or Balance SEAT over Strong NO TRUMPS

Double:	♣♦♥ or ♦♥ or ♥ (weak or strong)
2♣	♦♥♠ or ♥♠ or strong ♠
2♦	♥♠♣ or ♠♣ or strong ♣
2♥	♠♣♦ or ♣♦ or strong ♦
2♠	♠ + minor
2NT	one or two minors
3♣	♣♥ (non-forcing)
3♦	♦♠ (non-forcing)

Over Weak (10-12) NT

Direct Seat DOUBLE = Penalty with 13+ and Landy where 2♣= majors and all other bids are natural

Other Conventional Calls

Over a Major Bid Play Leaping Michaels, Unusual vs Michaels

Unusual over Unusual, SSGT

Overcalls Michaels and 2nt=two – lowest unbid suits

3X level bids over the opponents bid are pre-emptive

4th Suit Forcing at the two levels is forcing one round — 3 level shows

Western Que

Rosenkrantz Doubles over a Major/Minor Overcalls

1♣ X is a power double 16+ and 1♦/1♥/1♠ X is take-out

1NT 15-18 Systems Off

LEADS— 4th Best both suits and no-trump

A/Q ASKS FOR Attitude and King=count

Upside-down COUNT AND ATTITUDE (Suit and No-trump)

Trump Suit Preference

CHAPTER 20

INTERFERING OVER PRECISION

Interfering over Precision players is similar to interfering over the 2/1 15-17 HCP strong no-trump pairs. In this Chapter we review several conventions. Interference comes in many flavors. There are natural bids, artificial bids, and two-suited bids among others that are designed to interfere in the direct or balancing seat.

Overview of Interference Systems used over the Precision 1♣* bid

MATHE

The most popular system is called Mathe, developed by Lewis L. Mathe from California. It is popular because of its simplicity. It goes:

Over 1♣*, bids in the direct seat are:

Double*	4-4 or better in the majors
1NT*	4-4 or better in the minors
2NT*	5-5 or better in the minors

All one-level bids are natural (diamonds, hearts, and spades) and the bid of 2♣ shows a club suit. The system is also used in the balancing seat over the sequence: 1♣* - Pass - 1♦* - (?)

Because both bids are artificial, all Mathe responses remain the same; however, now two clubs and two diamonds are natural. Higher two-level bids usually show a distributional hand. A disadvantage of Mathe is that the double does not interfere significantly over the strong club bid.

An alternate is the system Bill Amason and I call SPAM, which says **S**pades **A**nd **M**ore, to be used against other Precision players. The advantage of spam is that it employs the bid of one spade as a takeout bid making it more difficult for Precision player. However, the most destructive bid is 3♠.

Double	the majors (4-4 or 5-4)
1♠*	takeout with an unspecified long suit 5+ cards

1NT*	the minors (5-5)
2♣*	the majors (5-5)
2♦*	diamonds and a major (5-5)
2NT*	strong no-trump 15-17 HCP
3X	Natural suit 6+ cards

CRASH

Another convention used by some partnerships is called CRASH, representing **C**olor **R**ank and **S**hape. The system was developed by Kit Woolsey and Steve Robinson. The basic bids are:

Double*	2 suits of the same color (red or black)
1♦*	2 suits of the same rank (majors or minors)
1NT*	2 suits of the same shape (rounded ♣ ♥ or pointed ♦ ♠)
1♥/1♠/2♣/2♦	shows natural 5+ card suits

CRASH, like Mathe, may also be employed in the balancing seat.

Mathe and CRASH are probably the most widely used systems to interfere over the Precision club.

Because many 2/1 Game Force partnerships play some version of DONT or Weber (Transfer bids), I have modified the bids to make them consistent with Modified DONT (Meckwell). The system is similar to DONT+T (ON), developed by Tony Melucci in cooperation with Neill Currie. The bids follow. I call the system MDONT +T.

MDONT + T (played in the direct seat only)

1♦*	Transfer to hearts with 5+ hearts
1♥*	Transfer to spades with 5+ spades
1♠*	Transfer to clubs
1NT*	Transfer to diamonds
2♣*	Clubs + Major
2♦*	Diamonds + Major
2♥*	Hearts + Spades (the majors are at least 4-4)
2NT*	Clubs + Diamond (the minors are at least 5-5)

Higher level bids are natural.

Another system developed by Tony Melucci and Neill Currie is called MACE. Because some feel that coping with the MACE bids is difficult, I have included their system of bids.

MACE

- Double* 4-4 in the Minors
 1♦* shows 3-3 or 4-3 in the Majors
 1♥/1♠ Natural 5+ card suit
 1NT* Rounded or Points Suits (4-4 or better)
 2NT* Both Majors or Both Minors (5-5 or better)
 Suit bids at the two- or three-levels are natural

SUCTION

This convention was developed by **Harold Feldheim** of Hamden, Connecticut, United States. The overcall of any suit shows the next-higher suit, or the other two suits. This is known as a *transfer overcall* since the overcaller is actually transferring his partner to the desired suit. The objective and advantage of this *transfer overcall* is that the 1♣ bidder is then forced to lead the first card as opposed to being in third seat.

- 2♣*: Shows a one-suiter in Diamonds, or a two-suited holding with Hearts and Spades.
 2♦*: Shows a one-suiter in Hearts, or a two-suited holding with Spades and Clubs, or both black suits.
 2♥*: Shows a one-suiter in Spades, or a two-suited holding with Clubs and Diamonds.
 2♠*: Shows a one-suiter in Clubs, or a two-suited holding with Diamonds and Hearts, or both red suits.
 2 NT*: Shows non-touching suits, either Clubs and Hearts or Diamonds and Spades.
 Double*: *Optional*: Shows non-touching pointed suits, Diamonds and Spades, as opposed to an overcall of 2 No Trump.

Note that the two suited hands are the suits above the potential single suited hands. The overcaller will bid the next suit, if two suited.

TRANSFERS plus TWOS

This system of interference over the strong club was devised by Michael L. Donnelly who maintains the site Bridge Matters. It is unique in that it incorporates transfers which right-side the contract and the two-level two suited 5-5 card combinations are easy to remember since the bids indicate the denomination immediately above the made call.

The systems of bids are as follows.

- Double* Transfer to Diamonds

1♦*	Transfer to Hearts
1♥*	Transfer to Spades
1♠*	♦'s and ♠'s
1NT*	Transfer to Clubs
2♣*	♣'s and ♦'s
2♦*	♦'s and ♥'s
2♥*	♥'s and ♠'s
2♠*	♠'s and ♣'s
2NT*	♣'s and ♥'s

The only bids that require some memory are the one and two no-trump bids.

When the opponents open 1♣* followed by a pass and a bid of 1♦* (which usually shows a minimal hand: 0-7 HCP), the balancer may employ the identical bidding structure as above, with two exceptions. A double becomes a transfer to Hearts (stolen bid), while a 1NT* bid shows a single-suited hand with either clubs or diamonds. In the latter situation, partner bids 2♣* which may be corrected to 2♦.

When should you interfere over Precision and what is the best system?

The guidelines for interference over the strong club follow those you used when playing 2/1 Game Force. In the direct seat, you need a distributional hand and in the balancing seat you need shortness. Again, the rules of 8 and 2 apply.

Rule of 2

You should interfere over the bid of 1♠* in the balancing seat if you have at least two shortness points. Otherwise, do not interfere.

Rule of 8

Provided you have at least 6 HCP, you should interfere over 1♣* in the direct seat if the number of cards in your two longest suits minus the number of losers in your hand is two or more. Otherwise, do not interfere.

The best system to play over Precision is the one you remember. The simplest are SPAM and Mathe. Even though MDONT +T address the most hand combinations, SPAM is simple and provides adequate interference over the strong club opening; more importantly, it is easily remembered.

Another simple system is to play the modified Blooman 1-level bids over 1♣*:

1♦*	6+ Hearts
1♥*	6+ Spades

- 1♠* 6+ Club
- 2♣* 6+ Diamonds
- X* 5-5 in two unknown suits (partner bids 2♦ and you respond with Cappelletti bids)
- 2NT* 5-5 in the minor

*=alert

These bids again put the strong hand on lead as with strong NT bidders.

In the balance seat all bids are natural showing a 6+ card suit and X= 5-5 in two unknown suits (aka Cappelletti).



CHAPTER 21

BRIDGE TIPS AND AGREEMENTS

This is a new chapter in this edition where we review several Bridge Tips and Bridge Agreements.

Weak Two Bids

Playing 2/1, when opening weak twos, 2♥/2♠, many require 5/6 – 10 HCP and a 6-card suit.

When is it best to only have a 5-card major suit?

Often I hope to get into the bidding early. Mark it on your convention card that weak bids may be a 5-card suit. You do not have to alert this bid. But, when should you use it?

1. The suit should be good with 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 honors with 6-10 HCP.
2. Your hand distribution should be at least 5-4 in the major with a minor.
3. You should not be vulnerable.
4. The bids apply in only the 1st and 3rd seats.

When not to use the weak 5-card major opening?

1. A bad suit
2. With good 5332 distribution
3. Vulnerable
4. First seat

A typical good hand – Non Vulnerable

♠ KJ1064 ♥A2 ♦7 ♣Q5432

Suit Bidding Battles

The bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♦ (2/1 bid - 13+ HCP)
2♥ (6+ hearts)	3♦ (5+ diamonds)
3♥ (7 hearts)	4♦ (6 diamonds)
4♥/4♠/4NT/5♦/5NT	

What do the bids by the opener mean?

When you bid all the suits, if the last bid sounds “natural” then it is to play; so 4♥/5♦ is to play! And 5NT is “pick a slam”.

However, playing kickback; the **cheapest** “impossible” suit is RKCB 1430/3014 (per your agreement) with slam interest for the lowest suit.

4♠ are kickback for diamonds - lowest possible trump suit.

4NT is kickback for hearts – the highest possible trump suit.

NOT playing kickback: what is one to do?

When there is a fight between two suits, you must establish an agreement! Many club players may use 4NT for both and for the minor there is considerable RISK!

After 1NT-3NT or 1NT-all Pass –Now Lead?

The bidding goes 1NT – 3NT or 1NT PPP by the opponents and you are on lead. What do you lead?

The book by Bird and Anthias “Winning Notrump Leads” (2011) by Master Point press provides a detailed analysis.

Against notrump, many play 4th best leads and others play attitude leads, low from an honor. Nether apply since the opponents did not use Stayman, it suggests that one must lead a major, playing IMPS or Matchpoints.

Remember it usually costs you about a half of a trick if you lead away from an honor. Unless you have a 5-card major, it is almost always best to lead your shortest major. Lead low from a major suit honor (A/K/Q) or high from a 3-card major headed by the jack. Low suggests a return of the major suit lead and high discourages a return of the lead. **Never make a 4th best minor suit lead.**

You hold —♠J82 ♥105 ♦KQ82 ♣ KJ63

	Ave Tricks (Matchpoints)	Beats Contract (IMPs)
♠8	3.43	21.3%
♥10	3.42	20.6%
♦2	3.16	14.1%
♣3	3.25	15.7%

The best leads are the ♠8 or the ♥10 – Not the 4th best minor!

Suit Leads Now Lead?

The bidding goes 1M-2M-3M -4M by the opponents and you are on lead. What do you lead?

The book by Bird and Anthias “Winning Suit Contract Leads” (2012) by Master Point press provides a detailed analysis.

Leading from ten or a Jack is safer than leading from a higher honor. And remember that aggressive leads from a K/Q, or two non-touching honors are generally not a good idea.

What is best?

1. Side singletons are excellent leads.
2. Side-suit doubletons are better than most realize.
3. Best to make a passive lead from x-x-x or x-x-x-x.
4. Lead a trump to protect tenaces.
5. While some will never lead an unsupported Ace, it is not that bad since partner may give you a suit preference signal.

You hold —♠3 ♥A10874 ♦Q76 ♣ 10865

	Ave Tricks (Matchpoints)	Beats Contract (IMPs)
♠3	3.06	33.8%
♥A	3.09	33.0%
♦6	3.05	33.7%
♣5	3.17	37.6%

The passive club lead wins in this example.

Stayman with 7 Points

Your partner opens 1NT with 15-17 HCP and you are 4-4 in the majors' with 0-7HCP what is your agreement for each of the following hands?

Hand 1	♠K542 ♥A974 ♦765 ♣ 102
Hand 2	♠K542 ♥A1074 ♦765 ♣ 102
Hand 3	♠K1053 ♥AJ94 ♦1092 ♣ 102

You were told that to employ the Stayman Convention (the bid of 2♣) that you must have a 4-card major and 8 HCP, but it is not recommended with 4-3-3-3 distributions; since you have no ruffing values. However, what is one to do when you are 4-4 in the majors with only 0-7 HCP? **With all three hands you MUST bid 2♣, do not pass 1NT.**

If partner bids 2♦, bid 2♥ with Hands 1 & 2 – Crawling Stayman which asks partner to pick his best 3-card major, or to pass or correct. If partner bids either 2♥/2♠, you will pass. If partner is 2-2 in the majors, he will bid 3♣/3♦; then pass. Crawling Stayman also works when 4-3 in the majors with 4 diamonds. You will pass 2♦ or again bid 2♥; pass or correct.

With Hand 3, use the rule of 88 with eight cards higher than the 8 and 8HCP. After the bid of 2♦, bid 2NT as invitational. If partner bids 2♥/2♠ you will pass.

If you are 4-4-4-1 and weak 0-7 HCP again bid 2♣ as Garbage Stayman and pass any 2-level bid.

Over 1NT are Systems On/Off?

Playing 2/1 the opponents make a one level bid (major or minor) and your partner overcalls 1NT (15-18 HCP) what is your agreement?

Are systems “On” or “Off”? Most club member play that systems are on!
Crazy, Crazy, Crazy! Why?

1. It is a disadvantage to have the lead coming up to the 1NT over caller (as opposed to the 1NT opener) since opener's partner will lead opener's suit unless he finds a better lead. If one does lead opener's suit it will be through any cards that dummy may have in the suit, rather than the opener leading up to it or them if he is on lead (as in systems OFF). So it is clearly better to simply have the 1NT over caller's partner bid his suit naturally and to have the lead come from the opener rather than his partner. Also, if you transfer (with systems on) then the opener can double to show a second suit and/or suggest an alternate lead, which he can't do if you play systems OFF unless he is willing to risk bidding the suit at the three-level.
2. There is the bid of 2♣ as Stayman.
3. The 1NT over caller's partner is more likely to have fewer points than the 1NT opener's partner, so it is “more” likely that you will be doubled for penalty.
4. Your side is less likely to have game/slam-going values.

So play “Systems be OFF” and NEVER “ON”!

A great bidding sequence is to use a system developed by the bridge expert Granovetter. The idea is that it forces the original opener to lead away into both the 1NT over caller and you. On average you and opener’s partner will have only 7HCP. If the opener even wins a trick, he is always being end played and is easily finessable. The only thing that is given up is a natural 2♣ bid. Bids are as follows:

2♣ is Stayman and the responses by the 1NT over caller are as follows:

2♦ show 4 hearts or 4-4 majors - responder in this case chooses the major to play in and becomes the declarer.

2♥ show 4♠ - responder then bids spades as if he has 4 spades

2♠ no major, and a minimum

2NT no major and a maximum

After his partner (the advancer of the 1NT over caller) accepts the transfer, the original 1NT over caller may pass or bid more if has a maximum.

Except for the bid of 2♣, any other bid 2♦/2♥/2♠ are drop-dead bids and 2NT shows a raise with 8-9 HCP. 3NT is to play.

Three level bids in a new suit promise a 5-card suit and a hand that can play either 3NT or 4 of the suit with any help at all from the NT over caller are slamish.

A the cue-bid of the opener’s suit promises at least 9 HCP, no 5-card suit worth showing, and no 4-card major. One should also play Lebensohl when the opponents bid over your partner’s 1NT overall bid.

Are the Major-Minor suit bids Game Forcing?

Playing 2/1 and one bids as follows:

(1) Opener	Responder	(2) Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♦
?	?		

Are both bids game forcing? **In general NO if a minor suit is re-bid!**

Common responses follow (mark your convention card-**Game forcing unless suit is rebid**).

- (1) 2♦/2♥ 4+ cards – natural & 3♣ responder (re-bid) NON-FORCING
- 2♠ 5/6 spades & denies 4♥/4♦ & 3♣ (re-bid) NON-FORCING
- 2NT natural -5(332) and or perhaps 5♠-4♦ NON-FORCING
- 3♣ - usually game forcing with 4+ clubs

3♦/3♥ delayed splinter in support of clubs

3♠ game-forcing with 6+ spades

Opener must have at least 13+ points to re-bid anything above 2M.

- (2) 2♥ 4+ cards – natural & 3♦ responder (re-bid) NON-FORCING
- 2♠ 5/6+ spades & denies 4♥/4♣ & 3♦ (re-bid) NON-FORCING
- 2NT natural -5(332) or perhaps 5♠-4♣ and NON-FORCING
- 3♦ - usually game forcing with 4+ diamonds
- 4♣ delayed splinter in support of diamonds
- 3♠ game-forcing with 6+ spades

Opener must have at least 13+ points to re-bid anything above 2M.

Similar bids follow if one opens 1♥ and responder bids a minor suit.

What is your agreement and responses? Discuss these bids with your partner.

The bidding goes 1♥/1♠ - Pass -1NT (7-12 HCP) which is announced as forcing/semi-forcing. And you have 10+ HCP and want to compete, what is your agreement?

Competing Over 1NT Forcing/Semi-Forcing

While some may play all bids as natural, sometimes you need a way to show hands that are widely varying in strength or two suited. A clever way is to switch some bids, which allows one to compete in the fourth position. Using the Useful Space Principle, one may employ the Aleksandr Vasilevsky Convention.

In the above forcing/semi-forcing 1NT sequence, your bids are:

- Db1* transfer to clubs, 5/6+ cards
- 2♣* transfer to diamonds, 5/6+cards
- 2♦* transfer to the un-bid major, 5/6+ cards
- 2M their major good, distributional takeout “double” & 4+other Major
- 2M un-bid major weaker takeout double, guaranteeing 4/5+ cards
- 2NT* distributional takeout for the minors, 5-5
- 3♣/3♦ natural but shows 6m-4M, with 4 in the un-bid major
- *=alert

Let’s see how it works. The bidding goes 1♥ - Pass - 1NT-? And you hold:

♠Q10654 ♥A5 ♦9 ♣KJ1076

double* (alert) shows clubs. If opener passes and partner bids 2♣, you next bid 2♠, showing a two-suited 5-5 hand. If you were 6-4 in clubs and spades, you would bid 3♣.

♠AJ52 ♥7 ♦AK74 ♣A1065

Bid 2♠ (their major), a strong take-out double that shows 4+ spades. With a weak hand, bid 2♥, the un-bid major

Another option is to use the **Suction convention**, normally played over the strong 16+ precision club, when the bidding goes 1♥/1♠ - Pass -1NT (7-12 HCP) which is announced as forcing/semi-forcing.

- 2♣* = 6+♦ or 5-5 in ♥ and ♠
- 2♦* = 6+♥ or 5-5 in ♠ and ♣
- 2♥* = 6+♠ or 5-5 in ♣ and ♦
- 2♠* = 6+ ♣ or 5-5 in ♦ and ♥
- 2NT* = 5-5 in ♣ and ♥ (rounded suits)
- X* = 5-5 in ♦ and ♠ (pointed suits)
- *=alert

The **Modified Blooman** bids may also be used

- 2♣* = 6+♦
- 2♦* = 6+♥
- 2♥* = 6+♠
- 2♠* = 6+ ♣
- 2NT* = 5-5 in ♣ and ♦
- X* = 5-5 two suits
- *=alert

Aggressive Bidding Guidelines

Playing 2/1 or Precision, one must be aggressive when bidding.

Below are simple aggressive bidding guidelines for the New ACBL Open Convention Card.

1. With 8 HCP - you need a VOID and a 5-card suit
2. With 8 HCP - you need AT LEAST 5-5/6-4/5-4-4-0 distribution with 2 Aces
3. With 9 HCP - you need AT LEAST 5-4-3-1 distributions with 2 Aces
4. With 10 HCP - you need AT LEAST 5-4 distribution with 2 Aces
5. With 11 HCP - you need EITHER a 5-card suit OR 5 controls (A=2 & K=1)

Examples:

♠KJxxx

♥Jxxxx

♦Kxx

♣ Void

Open 1♠ 8 HCP a void and a 5-card suit

♠xx

♥Axxxx

♦Axxxx

♣ x

Open 1♥ 8 HCP 5-5 and 2 Aces (Near Average Strength/Rule of 17)

♠Axxx

♥AQxxx

♦xx

♣ xx

Open 1♥ 10 HCP 5-4 and 2 Aces (Average Strength/Rule of 19)

Note with AK A and 11 HCP you need a 5-card suit

Singletons/Voids or Double Fits

Playing any bridge system whether it be 2/1, or Precision, or Standard American, or ACOL, etc. one usually plays in 3NT with 25 HCP in your combined hands, in 4♥/4♠ with 26 Distribution Points (DP), 5♣/5♦ with 29 DP, 6NT with 33 HCP, 6 in any suit with 32 DP, and finally one bids a grand slam with more.

However, what happens when the partnership has singletons or voids and only 17-23 HCP, which occurs about 53% of the time or what is one to do with a double fit in the majors or the minors or a major – minor double fit? Do things change? Yes.

What happens with shortness (singletons or voids) after a one level major suit bid?

♠AKQ72

♠843

♥A45

♥7

♦102

♦A987

♣A105

♣KQ743

With only 29 DP in the combined hands, 7♠ can be made on any lead!

♠345

♠

♥AKQ72

♥9643

♦A10 ♦974
 ♣A52 ♣KQ743

With only 26 DP, 7♥ may be made even on a trump lead, a contract that usually requires 36 DP in the two hands.

To evaluate hands with voids and singletons, one needs a system of bids that show shortness and a “fit” with associated outside suit length and methods for evaluating controls. Methods include Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB) and the ambiguous splinter convention as well as delayed splinter methods.

What happens with double fit hands?

♠AKQ72 ♠843
 ♥345 ♥AKQ102
 ♦A7 ♦345
 ♣345 ♣A7

With only 26 HCP or 28 DP, you can make 6♠, 6♥ or even 6NT when the majors break 2/3 about 66% of the time (2/3)! A far cry away from 32 DP or 33 HCP usually needed for a slam.

♠7 ♠A84
 ♥AK45 ♥102
 ♦AQ7 ♦K9543
 ♣AKJ103 ♣Q74

With only 29 HCP or 32 DP, you can make 7♣ with this these double fit minor suit hands.

To evaluate double fit hands, one uses fit bids and 1430 or 3014 Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB) depending on who is asking when the opener has shown extra values.

What is 1♣ - 3NT -4♣?

In a competitive auction many club players play Gerber over first or last NT bids. However, experts play Expert Gerber What is the difference? In both cases one is asking about **only aces**.

Gerber 4♦ = 0/4
 4♥ = 1
 4♠ = 2
 4NT = 3

And 5♣ after 4♣ asks for number of kings.

However, in Expert Gerber the responses over 4♣ are:

4♦ = 1/4

4♥ = 0/3

4♠ = 2 with a minimum HCP hand

4NT=2 with a maximum HCP hand

And 5♣ after 4♣ usually asks for specific kings.

However, what is your agreement in a **non-competitive auction**?

For example, you hold: ♠AK54 ♥7 ♦- ♣AQ976543

And your partner overcalls 3NT after the opponent pre-empt 3♥

West	North	East	South
3♥	3NT	Pass	?

Your bid is clearly 4♣; however is the bid (1) is it natural and forcing? (2) Stayman? (3)Gerber/Expert Gerber? And what is 5♣ (1) to play or (2) Super Gerber?

What is your Agreement?

Because the opponents pre-empted at the 3-level, 4♣ has to be Stayman or clubs. This would also be the case over 3♠/3♦.

With no agreement, many would just pass.

What is your agreement if the opponents' opened 3♣ and partner bids 3NT?

Do 4♣ show the majors? Or, is it again Stayman?

What is your bid after 1m - 2NT -?

Minor suit openings playing 2/1 show 11/12 to 21-HCP as in major suit openings. But they do not have the same suit length requirements. This is because we use minor suit bids as a catchall bid for hands that don't have a 5+ major and don't qualify for a no-trump opening. For example:

♠ KQ74 ♥A10 54 ♦75 ♣ KJ3

This hand doesn't have a 5+ major, and it isn't within the 15-17 or 20-21 HCP ranges for a no-trump openings. So we open a minor suit. 1♣ is the correct opening bid (better minor).

You might think that any opening bid is an attempt to find a trump fit in the suit bid. With major suits, that's correct. But with minor suits, we often use the bid as the beginning of a two-bid sequence where the second bid is more important than the suit opened. Minor suits are well named – they have only minor importance. Majors and no-trump have higher priority.

Playing 2/1 and you open 1♣/1♦ to show 3+ of the minor and partner bids 2NT showing 11-12 HCP. What is your bidding agreement?

Because partner did not bid 2m to show a minor suit fit (inverted 10+/13+ depending on your agreement) and did not bid 1M to show a 4-card major, or playing crisscross bid 2♦ over 1♣ or 3♣ over 1♦ to show limit raise with 10-12 Dummy Points in the bid minor, what is one to do?

Over 2NT and no interest in game, opener may pass and with game going values bids 3NT and no 4-card major. With more openers' next bids 4♣ as Gerber/Expert Gerber.

With game interest, opener bids 3♦ over 1♣ to show a 4-card major and with a 4-card major responder bids either 3♥/3♠. Over 1♦ responder bids 3♥/3♠ to show a game force and his 4-card major.

Again one may play in 3NT or bid 4♣ with slam interest.

If you play 2/1 without inverted raises/crisscross some experts play Mixed Transfers. See "The Bridge World" – June 2019, p. 44

Do you super accept after 1NT and 2NT?

Opening 1NT 15-17 most 2/1 partners use major suit transfers. What is your agreement with 3 or 4 card support and 17 HCP? With a balanced hand and 4333 distribution with 4-card support and 17 HCP many employ a simple 2-level accept bid; however, if you have 4432 say with a doubleton somewhere many use the super accepting bid to convey a doubleton. This is fine but is rarely helpful and conveys too much information to the opponents about shape!

For hearts, consider bidding one step above the simple accept for example 1NT-2♦- 2♠ which announces a worthless doubleton somewhere with a 4-card ♥ fit and 17 HCP, do not bid 3♥; with less than 17 HCP opener and 3 or 4-card support bid 2♥.

If responder wants to know the doubleton suit, he relays with the next bid 2NT over 2♠, the next step. Opener bids 3♣/3♦/3♠, the doubleton suit. Responder is now the captain and can 4♠ as 1430, or 4♥ to play, or 4NT as pick a slam.

If responders does not relay, has no need to know the doubleton location. He may bid 4♠ is 1430 for hearts, 4♥ to play or perhaps 4NT as pick a slam.

For spades, consider bidding one step above the simple accept for example 1NT-2♥- 3♣ which announces a worthless doubleton somewhere with a 4-card ♠ fit. Note that I do not use 2NT, the next step because it is reserved for another bid.

Now if responder wants to know the suit, he relays with the next bid 3♦, the next step. Opener next bids 4♣/4♦/4♥. Responder is now the captain and can bid 5NT as pick a slam or perhaps 4NT as 1430 or 4♠ to play.

Observe that opener has by-passed 2NT over both the 2♦/2♥ bids. Why? Because the bid of 2NT by the opener says he has 3-card support for the major and 17HCP, known as the Bell Convention.

What is one to do over the opening bid of 2NT where opener has 20-21 HCP?

Now over 3♣/3♦ opener bids 3♥/3♠; with 20 HCP and 3 or 4 card support and 3NT is the super accepting bid with 4-card support, 21 HCP **and 3 aces**.

Inversion/Inverted Bids?

Many 2/1 partnerships play inverted minors with crisscross. Then 1♣/1♦ - 1NT - 2♣/2♦ show 13+ Dummy Points with a fit, a GF bid and 2♦/3♣ (weak jumps) show a limit raise in clubs/diamonds (10-12 Dummy Points), respectively and a fit in clubs/diamonds. And some add flip-flop over interference.

Standard American partnerships normally use only 10+ Dummy Points for inverted minor bids with weak (less than 10) 3-level minor suit bids.

In either 2/1 or Standard American, the bidding sequence 1♦ - 1NT (0-7 HCP) - 2♣ show a minimum and less than a game force (GF) hand (11/12 - 16 HCP) is problematic. Why? Because now the opponents are encouraged to bid on perhaps to the 3-level if they can locate a major fit. And even with a strong hand, opener may not be able to bid 3NT because of a short major. What is your agreement?

The solution to this bidding problem is to use "Inversion/Inverted rebids", what are these?

Do not bid 2♣ as opener; instead with a minimum hand and 4-4 in the minors (but never when 4=4-3-2) bid 3♣*. And with a GF hand bid 3♥*/3♠* = shortness in bid major and 5/6+ diamonds.

After 1♦ - 1NT (0-7 HCP) - 2♣ - 2♦, opener may force to game by bidding 2♥* (alert artificial and forcing); responder next bids 2♠ to show 5-4 or 4-4 in the minors with 15-16 HCP, bids 2NT with 17-18, 3♣ with 17 HCP, and 3♦ with 15-17 HCP.

However with 15/16+ HCP, now bid 2♣, which is forcing. Responder next bids 2♦ with a minimum with major suit stoppers or 3♦ to play.

Give Up Jacoby 2NT*?

Playing 2/1 or Precision, most pairs play the Jacoby 2NT* convention. The convention is used when partner opens a major and responder has 4-card support and 13+ Dummy Points.

To illustrate, let's look at a typical example.

	♠	A954		
	♥	9753		
	♦	KQ3		
	♣	A5		
♠	Q106	N W E S	♠	872
♥	KQ		♥	2
♦	J86		♦	10975
♣	QJ1072		♣	K9863
	♠	KJ3		
	♥	AJ10864		
	♦	A42		
	♣	4		

The Bidding:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♣**	Pass	3♦(control)	Pass
4NT(1430)	Pass	5♥(2keycrds)	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

* Alert 13+ Dummy Points - Jacoby 2NT* (some may use expert Jacoby 2nt*).

** Alert Shortness in Clubs

Opening Lead: ♣Q

A reasonable slam contract with only 26 combined HCP!

This example may be found in the Sunday December 13, 2019 issue of the Daily Sun Newspaper.

The example was taken from Larry Cohen's web site – Larryco.com as referenced in the Daily Sun paper.

The article in the paper claims the hand cannot be made!

While most duplicate players use the Jacoby 2NT* convention, is that always the best partnership agreement? NO

Why? You may not have sufficient bidding space to investigate slams.

Instead one may treat the 2NT* bid as 1430! **Yes give Up Jacoby!**

The Bidding:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2NT*(1430)	Pass
3♥(2 w/o Q)	Pass	4♥	Pass
All Pass			

The Roman Keycard Blackwood Jacoby 2NT* convention is reviewed on my web site: www.bridgewebs.com/ocala and found under Timm’s Bridge Bits and called: Jacoby Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430.

Sharing this Tip with Larry Cohen, he claims contrary to the Daily Sun that the slam is makeable and he supports the Jacoby convention. And, Larry says “just strip the hand and play ace and a heart to endplay west.

Thank You Larry

A major disadvantage of the Jacoby convention is that the responder is captain and the opener provides too much information; the tail is wagging the dog!

Is ERKCB Needed?

Playing 2/1 many club players bid slams using Blackwood, 1430 or 3014; but what bidding technique or convention do you use when having a void?

To illustrate, your partner opens 1♦. What do you now bid as south in (1) a competitive auction or (2) a pre-emptive auction?

	♠	Q1063		
	♥	Q1063		
	♦	AK54		
	♣	A		
♠	K87	N W E S	♠	AJ9542
♥	72		♥	4
♦	106		♦	QJ92
♣	Q109652		♣	84
	♠			
	♥	AKJ985		
	♦	873		
	♣	KJ73		

(1) Completive auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	?

(2) Pre-emptive auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♠	3♥
4♠	5♥	Pass	?

(1) You bid 4NT and partner answers 5♥, now what? You know partner has two keycards, but where? You bid 6♥.

Instead of using 4NT, you may cue bid 5♣ showing a control. Partner knows it is the king and cue bids 6♦. Now what, if you bid your void you are in seven, and unsure, so again you bid 6♥.

(2) Over 4♠ you bid 5♠ to show a control. Partner next bids 6♥.

In case, using 4NT or cue bidding you get to a slam, but not a grand slam which is critical in match points, but not with IMP scoring; it usually never pays off.

Is there a better bidding sequence?

YES!

In both cases partner must bid 5♠ as Exclusion Keycard Blackwood. The bidding convention used when having a void!

How do you play it? Well some recommend 1430 responses, but Kantar (2008) in his book "Roman Keycard Blackwood – The Final Word", 5th edition Master Point Press recommends steps excluding the bid suit; the steps are just 0, 1, 2 and sometimes 3 keycards (a rare case).

I recommend steps: 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 where 0 = no keycards, 1 with the queen, 1 w/o the queen, 2 with the queen, 2 w/o the queen 3 with the queen and 3 w/o the queen; again excluding the bid suit.

In both cases north shows 2 keycards with the Queen and south next bids 7♥. Yes a grand slam.

This example is from Baron Barclay "Bid and Play" by Frank Stewart.

How did he bid it?

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
3♠	6♥	Pass	7♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

While his example was from a team game, his comment is appropriate “bidding speculative grand slams” is against the odds.

If you have the tools, it removes speculative bidding sequences.

Completing the Convention Card

With the Corona virus, I finally read the book by Larry Cohen (2018) “Tricks of the Trade” – Strategic Thinking for Advanced Bridge Players. I found the Chapter in the book called “What should we play” very informative.

You meet a new partner and begin to fill out a convention card!

You might hear the discussion going something like this:

“1NT (15-17) with 4-way transfers?”

“ok.”

“Inverted Minors?”

“Of course.”

“1430 RKCB?”

“Sure.”

“Bergen Raises?”

“Certainly.”

“Weak two bids?”

“Yes with Ogust.”

“Unusual 2NT?”

“ok.”

“Support Doubles?”

“Yes.”

And on it goes! Really what do all these “statements” mean?

How do you super accept a 4-way transfer bid and do you play range-asking bids?

For inverted minors, are they game-forcing or invitational and are they on or off over interference?

Playing 1430, if you have not agreed on a suit do you play Blackwood or the last bid suit, and do you play, the queen ask, the specific king response/number, and specific suit asking (SSA) bids?

Are Bergen raises on or off over interference or over a double – do you play BROMAD?

For Ogust do you play Hand-Suit or Suit-Hand?

Are support doubles applied through 2♥ or 2♠ and are they on or off over interference?

For Unusual 2NT, if the opponents raise the major suit bid to the two level what does the cheapest cue bid of their major imply versus bidding a minor?

Getting the picture? Are you confused? I hope so!

Larry states the following when developing a Convention Card.

1. If a convention has a low frequency, forget it.
2. Does it gain much?
3. Do not add conventions without discussion.
4. Don't take on more than you can handle.

Cohen in his book Page (25) has a detailed example of how simple support doubles are often confused without discussion – it is worth a read.

As you know Eric Rodwell invented Support doubles in 1974 while playing Precision. In his book Eric Rodwell's Bidding Topics (2017) by Baron Barclay, he suggested when they apply.

His short answer: when you and your partner agree that they do!

His recommendations follow:

1. They apply through 2♠ a bid on openers' right.
2. Support doubles only apply when responder has bid 1♥ or 1♠.
3. It does not matter what opener's LHO did.
4. Over 3♣ or higher – what you have agreed: take-out, good, hand, or penalty.

What about support redoubles – requires further discussion!

Rodwell in his same book also discusses inverted minor suit bids!

In short they are off in competition, are forcing for one round, show a limit raise with 10-12 points, and 4+ card support; unless you play crisscross.

What about Bergen raises?

Bergen raises as first written are used in response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid to show hands with 4+ card trump support and strength as follows:

- 1NT followed by 3♥/3♠ on next round – invitational to game (typically 11-12 high card points) with three-card support

- 2♥/2♠ – weak (7-10 high card points) with three-card support
- 3♣ – weak (typically 7-10 high card points) with four-card support
- 3♦ – a limit raise (typically 11-12 high card points) with four-card support; invitational to game
- 3♥/3♠ – very weak (preemptive, typically less than 7 high card points) and four-card support
- 4♥/4♠ – very weak (preemptive, typically less than 7 high card points) and five-card support

Note the overlap in the ranges and that Jacoby 2NT was not part of the original convention.

For this reason by partnership agreement the ranges have changed over time: 0-6 (weak), 7-9, 10-12 and 13+ =2NT with 4-card support. Finally, splinter bids were added and require 3+card support (some require 4) with 13+ points where all points are “DUMMY” points and **NOT ONLY HCP**.

Again a discussion is recommended. Next what if they X or interfere are the bids on or off; again, agreements are required.

I could go into all the bidding sequences — but what have we seen? Discussion, discussion, and more discussion are required when completing the convention card.

What is one to do? Apply the “Keep it Short and Simple” (**KISS**) principle.

An overview of completed Convention Cards is available on the site Adventures in Bridge (AiB): www.advinbridge.com/convention-cards-1.

Depending on your Browser, some may have to copy and paste the web address into their Browser and then click on Upgrade Your Bidding System – Adventures in Bridge.

The agreements listed below are what Adventures in Bridge (AiB) have experienced with their students at different points in their development. For each of the following six levels, AiB provides a completed Convention Card.

1. Basic 2/1 Game Forcing (Red) – Under 100 Master points
2. Intermediate 2/1 Game Forcing (Orange) – 100-500 Master points
3. Modern 2/1 Game Forcing (Yellow) – 300-1000 Master points
4. Advanced 2/1 Game Forcing (Green) – 750-2000 Master points
5. Complex 2/1 Game Forcing (Blue) – 2000+ Master points
6. Expert 2/1 Game Forcing (Purple) – 3500+ Master points

Finally, if you play on BBO against the robots, what card is used? It is NOT simple and is called Ginsberg’s Intelligent Bridge-player (GIB) Convention Card and found on the Web:

www.bridgebase.com/doc/gib_system_notes.php

Good Luck with developing your Convention Card with your new partnership.

A Better Drury in the Third Seat

What are your agreements for third seat bidding?

Have you heard about the Five Rules purposed by Mike Lawrence?

They go as follows.

1. You open in third seat and partner has passed, but bids a new suit at the 1-level. A pass by you is non-forcing constructive. You have tolerance for his suit with 2/3-card support. If you bid again you have a full opener.
2. After you have passed, if your passed partner next re-bids his suit again at the 2-level, he shows 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5 honors and a good suit; yes, your passed partner has a very good suit.
3. If you do not pass partner's new suit at the 1-level and bid 1NT, it shows 12-14 HCP and **never** 10-11 HCP.
4. Instead of bidding 1NT; suppose you re-bid your suit at the 2-level; it again shows 12-14 HCP and a six-card suit, **never** five. Why? If you had a weak hand in the 3rd seat, and partner had passed you would open the 5-card suit with a weak two bid!
5. If you're passed partner re-bids his own suit (six-cards) or a new suit at the 2-level (never the 3-level), partner shows 10-11 HCP.

Many will say there is no need for these Five Rules since they use 2-way Reverse Drury where 2♣* and 2♦* asks if the third-seat bidder has a full opener with 3 card support (10-12 Dummy Points) or 4 card support (9-12 Dummy Points) respectively after the 3rd seat bidder bids a major 1♥/1♠ where *=alert.

The convention works well for game going hands, but not slam going hands and how for example, does the passed hand show a 5-card diamond suit? Instead of using 2-way Reverse Drury, one may use a modification of the "Lawrence" Drury bids. How does it work?

The bid of 2♣*'s show 3/4 card support (most often 3) and 10-12 Dummy Points which allows the major suit 3rd seat bidder to use 2♦* as an asking bid.

How is the bid of 2♦* used after the bid of 2♣* after the bid of 1♥?

2♦* shows game/slam interest and ask what his "Drury" hand looks like. Re-bidding the major 2♥* rejects game/slam, the same as 2-way Reverse Drury.

All other bids by 3rd seat opener are forcing to game with slam interest.

2♠ show a maximum balanced hand (10-12 Dummy Points) and 3-card support – game force.

2NT is a slam try and game force bid with 4 trump.

3NT asks the Drury bidder to bid game in the major or pass.

3♣*/3♦* bids show singleton/void in the suit bid; but, 3♥* **shows a singleton/void in spades.**

Higher jump bids are splinter bids showing voids (again 4♥ shows a spade void).

How is the bid of 2♦* used after the bid of 2♣* after the bid of 1♠?

2♦* shows game/slam interest and ask what his “Drury” hand looks like.
 Re-bidding the major 2♠* reject game/slam, the same as 2-way Reverse Drury.

All other bids by 3rd seat opener are forcing to game with slam interest.

2♥ natural with 10-12 Dummy Points and 4+ hearts (full opener, invitational- same as Reverse Drury)

2NT is a slam try and game force bid with 4 trump.

3NT asks the Drury bidder to bid game in the major or pass.

3♣*/3♦*/3♥* are slam tries with singleton/void in suit bid;

Higher jump bids are splinter bids showing voids in the suit bid.

A bid of 2NT*instead of 2♣* is used with a hands that have less than 2 quick tricks, **4-card** support with 10-12 Dummy Points, and a balanced with no singleton/void.

Hands with 10-12 Dummy Points and 3/4-card support with a singleton/void, the passed bidder jumps to the 3-level of the other major. With slam interest, the 3rd seat bidder may bid the next step (3♠* /3NT*) as a scroll-asking bid (where is your singleton/void). Let’s look at an example:

North	South	North	South
♠7	♠983	Pass	1♥
♥A98	♥KQ10742	3♠*(S/Somewhere)	3NT* (ask)
♦QJ532	♦AK	4♠ (In spades)	4NT (1430)
♣QJ75	♣AK	5♣ (1/4 keycards)	6♥

If the opening bidder is not interested in finding the singleton/void, he may investigate slam by using 4♠ as kickback for hearts and 4NT for spades. Or, Exclusion RKCB may be used if the opening bidder has a void. With no slam interest game is bid.

Playing 2-way Reverse Drury, you would bid 2♣* (10-12 Dummy Points) and may have missed the slam!

For more on 3rd and 4th seat bidding, see the book by Mike Lawrence (2011) “The Complete Guide to Passed Hand Bidding”, 2nd Edition, Master Point Press.

What is the bid of 2NT by a Passed Hand?

You’re a passed hand playing 2/1 and have less than 11 HCP without two quick tricks. Both your opponents have passed and your partner opened one of a major (1M) in third seat. What is your agreement if you respond 2NT?

1. Does it show a balanced hand with 10/11 HCP Dummy Points and at least 3-card support?
2. Does it show no fit with both minors with 10/11 HCP?

3. Does it show a fit with 10/11 Dummy Points and 3 trumps?
4. Does it show a fit with 4+ trumps, a singleton/void somewhere and 10/11 Dummy Points?

A discussion is recommended; but is there a “best” method?

1. With 10/11 points and 3 or less trumps, bid 1NT not 2NT balanced or unbalanced.
2. This option requires 5-5 in the minors and not 5-4 or 4-4. Your partner will have no clue on what next to bid and one major may be wide open! This method should be avoided.
3. Since your opponent did not double, this treatment of 2NT* is NOT the standard Jordan (Truscott) convention, which is usually used over a take-out double by the opponent. If you choose to employ option (3) it must be discussed and agreed since it is very unusual and should be alerted.

Furthermore if you play Reverse Bergen, it is better to play Reverse BROMAD (Bergen Raise Over Major Suit X). Now 2-level bids show 3-card support (0-6, 10-12, 7-9 Dummy Points and the bids: 2M, 3♣, 3♦). the 2NT bid is not needed. Or if you play Bergen, use BROMAD and again 2NT is not needed.

4. Following (3), 2NT* may now be used to show a singleton/void (S/V) with 4-card support and 10-11 Dummy Points and alerted. **In my opinion, this is the best agreement!**

How does it work?

After bidding 2NT*, 3♣* (the next step) asks where is your singleton/void?

Over 1♠ the 3-level bids show a S/V: 3♦* = diamonds, 3♥* = Hearts, 3♠* = Clubs

Over 1♥, 3♦* = diamonds, 3♥* = Clubs, 3♠* = spades

For the 3-level bids, diamonds show diamonds, the un-bid major shows that singleton, and the bid of the other major shows clubs.

To determine whether or not the opener has a singleton, responder bids the next step. Step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and Steps 2-5, the next four bids, indicate he has a void and simultaneously shows keycards.

To illustrate, suppose we are playing 1430 RKCB. And the bidding goes: 1♥ - pass - 3♣* - pass - 3♠* = club (S/V). To ask about the nature of the shortage (singleton or void), one uses the next sequential up the line bid to ask, the bid of 3NT* (needs an alert since it is a keycard asking bid below 4♣). The responses for showing a singleton and/or associated keycards for the major suit bid (spades) with a void are:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 4♣ | Club singleton (next cheapest step) |
| 4♦ | Club void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2) |
| 4♠ | Club void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3) |

- 4NT Club void with 2 keycards w/o the queen (step 4)
- 5♣ Club void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

If you do not need to know whether or not the opening bidder has a void, the next step up the line scroll bid is not used.

Using the rule 13-SST (in both hands) = total tricks with 19-21 working points. You know partner has at least 10 points and you can count your own points to determine the need to ask.

North	South	North	South
♠A762	♠KQ1094	Pass	1♠
♥7	♥1082	2NT*(S/Vsomewhere)	3♣* (ask)
♦QJ923	♦AK6	3♥* (S/V)	4NT (1430)
♣K543	♣AQ	5♣ (1/4 keycards)	6♣

With 19HCP and knowing partner has at least 10 HCP with a Singleton/Void, he has now need to use the up the line scroll asking bid of 4♠ with three hearts. Instead, he uses 1430 keycard Blackwood to find the slam.

What about this hand?

North	South
♠K762	♠AJ10943
♥7	♥AK2
♦QJ92	♦63
♣A543	♣KQ

Following the above bidding sequence, now the heart singleton/void is not helpful. South would only go forward if north showed a diamond singleton/void and merely bids game, 4♠ and not 4NT.

Let's consider one last example to investigate a void with 1430 responses.

North	South
♠A1087	♠KJ543
♥7642	♥AK10
♦	♦Q52
♣AQ643	♣7

North	South
Pass	1♠
2NT*	3♣* (S/V asking bid)

3♦* (S/V) 3♥* (Next Step =Void/Keycard Ask)
 4♥* (dV&2keycards) 6♠

The bid of 4♥* shows a void with 2 keycards since using the steps: 3NT=Singleton, 4♣= 1/4, 4♦=0/3, 4♥= 2/5 without the queen. Note that over the bid of 4♦ instead of the 4♥ response, 4♥ (the next step) would be the 1430 Queen ask bid (the next step), and 4♠ would be the Specific Suit control Ask (SSA) which skips over the Queen Asking bid.

Yes, slam bidding sometimes becomes involved and more complicated.

What is your agreement if you are a passed hand and partner opens 1♣.

What now does 2NT show? Playing 2/1 over a 1♣ opening in the 1st or 2nd seat, most play 1NT as 8-10 HCP (NOT 6-9 HCP since then one bids 1♦ which allows the strong hand rather than the weak hand to play 1NT), 2NT as 11-12 HCP and 3NT as 13-15 HCP and denies a 4-card major.

In the 3rd seat; however, 2NT shows 10/11 HCP, but without a 4-card major.

If you are a passed hand, things have changed because you have 0-11 HCP without 2 quick tricks.

What is your agreement over 1♦ for the bid of 2NT? Playing 2/1 most now play 1NT= 6-9 HCP, 2NT=10-12 HCP, and 3NT=13-15 HCP with again denying a 4-card major.

Over a minor suit bid, 2NT also shows 10/11 HCP, but without a 4-card major, in the 3rd seat.

Your SOLAR Agreement

You are playing 2/1 with reverses and the bidding goes:

(1) 1♣ – 1♥ – 2♦ – ? or (2) 1♣ – 1♠ – 2♦ – ?

As responder what is your agreement when opener is “Strong” Or “Light” After a “Reverse” showing 17+ HCPs; what are your **SOLAR** bidding agreements?

Some play Lebensohl, then 2NT by responder is a relay to 3♣ and may be passed; however, if opener is stronger and does not want responder to pass, opener may bid more than three clubs. Any other bid other than 2NT by responder is natural and game forcing (GF) playing Lebensohl.

Since many 2/1 players do not play Lebensohl; then, what is one to do?

After the reverse of 1 or 2, if responder makes a 2M bid of the other major, he shows either

- a. No game interest
- b. GF values, usually without a stopper in the other major

- c. A possible fit in the minor suit with perhaps mild slam interest
- d. GF without a fit

With any other type of hand responder bids 2NT – a Game Force (GF) bid.

After responder's "fourth suit 2-level bid", opener with a **minimum** makes the non-forcing (NF) 3M bid to show 3-card support, 2NT or 3♣ as natural, and 3♦ with GF strength and 5-4 in the minors, and bids 3♠ as a GF bid or 3NT to show a stopper in the fourth suit.

After a minimum 3-level a bid of bid 3M/3♣ by the opener or 2NT, what are responder's responses? With (a), responder passes or bids 3m; with (b), responder rebids 4th suit; with (c), responder bids 3NT or 4m; with (d), responder bids 3NT/4NT/6NT.

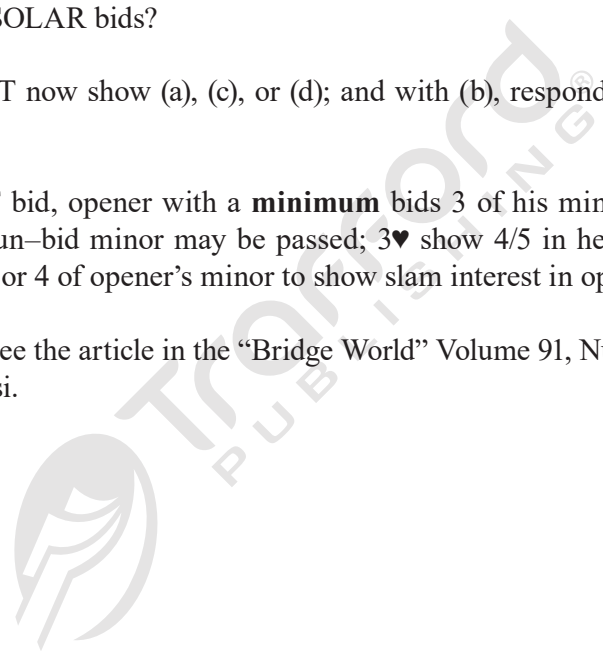
After (3) 1♣ – 1♠ – 2♥ – ? or (4) 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♥ – ?

What are responder's SOLAR bids?

Responder's bid of 2NT now show (a), (c), or (d); and with (b), responder bids 3 of the un-bid minor.

After responder's 2NT bid, opener with a **minimum** bids 3 of his minor where any other bid is a GF. Three of the un-bid minor may be passed; 3♥ show 4/5 in hearts and the bid minor. Responder may bid 3♠ or 4 of opener's minor to show slam interest in opener's minor.

For more on SOLAR, see the article in the "Bridge World" Volume 91, Number 2, and November 2019 by Tuomo V. Helsi.



INDEX

Symbols

- INT Overcall 245, 263, 265, 293, 445, 448, 566, 569, 605
INT Semi-forcing 51, 368
2/1 Convention Card 368, 370
8 ever 9 never 334, 389, 390, 405
10 ever 11 never 334
1430 xxi, 20, 64, 98, 99, 130, 137, 147, 156, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 183, 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 192, 196, 197, 202, 205, 206, 212, 213, 215, 216, 217, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 243, 369, 384, 396, 397, 400, 401, 402, 405, 407, 413, 414, 416, 420, 421, 427, 478, 479, 487, 502, 503, 506, 573, 585, 586, 589, 602, 609, 611, 613, 614, 615, 616, 620, 621, 622, 623
1430 Modified Jacoby 2NT xxi
3344 72, 73, 369
3344 Convention 72, 73
- ## A
- Ace showing responses 148
Acol 3NT 157, 159
Acol 4NT 159
Acol Bidding System 374
Adjust-3 Method xxiii, 2, 3, 43, 45, 46
Agreements xxi, 18, 34, 38, 42, 46, 47, 57, 58, 67, 68, 79, 91, 100, 124, 137, 154, 157, 161, 181, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 199, 213, 230, 232, 245, 246, 253, 259, 261, 271, 298, 309, 322, 348, 363, 369, 374, 400, 407, 412, 414, 416, 443, 444, 445, 449, 450, 469, 475, 493, 495, 564, 601, 602, 604, 606, 610, 611, 612, 613, 618, 619, 620, 621, 623
Asking Bids xxi, 20, 26, 33, 64, 65, 66, 67, 80, 90, 94, 128, 130, 140, 158, 161, 165, 166, 167, 177, 180, 182, 192, 194, 205, 206, 207, 208, 222, 223, 228, 236, 265, 267, 397, 405, 407, 413, 414, 422, 440, 441, 459, 470, 498, 505, 519, 559, 575, 580, 585, 590, 616, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623
Asking bids after a preempt 165
Auto/Self-Splinter 21, 22
- ## B
- Baby Blackwood 191, 196, 197, 199, 203, 212, 369, 397
Balancing Double 245
Baron 4NT xx
Barry Crane Rule 338
Bart 28, 53, 54, 306, 523, 536, 558, 563, 570, 571
Bart Convention 53
Basic Lisa Convention 54
Bell Convention 83, 88, 612
Bergen xx, xxiii, 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 51, 55, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 76, 77, 81, 125, 128, 129, 157, 173, 174, 191, 203, 205, 208, 211, 229, 231, 233, 234, 235, 237, 238, 242, 248, 249, 276, 328, 336, 337, 343, 368, 476, 478, 486, 488, 569, 616, 617, 621
Bergen Raises 16, 18, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 43, 55, 62, 69, 70, 125, 191, 205, 208, 211, 231, 235, 237, 238, 336, 337, 476, 478, 569, 616, 617, 621
Bergen's Jacoby 2NT xx, 128
Bidding with Interference 235
Blackwood Convention xxi, 137, 173, 174, 188, 220, 229

Blooman 308, 309, 322, 369, 447, 449, 509, 510, 599, 607
Bothwood 183
Bridge Tips xxi, 364, 381, 601
Bridge World Standard 370, 475
BROMAD 26, 237, 368, 488, 617, 621

C

Card-Showing Doubles 300, 301
Checkback Stayman 107, 109, 121, 122, 203, 509
Coded 7's, 8's and 9's 364
Coded 9's and 10's 360, 363, 364
Coded 9s and 10s 509
Cohen xxi, 24, 29, 34, 109, 304, 328, 329, 332, 333, 613, 614, 616, 617
Combined Bergen Raises 26, 28, 29, 33, 43, 70, 191, 211, 237
Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters 18, 19, 22, 29, 33, 62, 64, 99, 103, 205, 237, 327
Constructive Raises 25, 26, 27, 65, 231, 368, 488, 540, 551, 574
Controls iv, 42, 44, 45, 47, 67, 74, 98, 127, 128, 148, 149, 169, 170, 173, 177, 179, 180, 181, 188, 196, 197, 198, 199, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 223, 224, 286, 287, 335, 354, 357, 358, 361, 396, 407, 408, 413, 450, 452, 464, 466, 467, 468, 475, 497, 499, 505, 506, 509, 510, 519, 520, 521, 538, 539, 550, 557, 560, 561, 563, 581, 585, 586, 591, 592, 607, 609, 613, 615, 623
Crisscross xxiii, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 75, 77, 368, 573, 611, 612, 617
Crosswood 147, 183, 213, 411, 421, 422
Cue bidding principles 270

D

Dont Runouts 435
Double Roman Keycard Blackwood 183, 609
Drury 230, 231, 232, 233, 237, 368, 539, 569, 619, 620
Dummy Reversal Play 376, 381

E

EHAA 368, 375, 425
Equal Level Conversion xx, 257

Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood 190, 609
Extended Stayman Convention 437
Extended Texas Transfers 95, 102, 142, 368
Extra-Shape Flannery 136, 137, 450

F

Fantunes xx, xxi, 375
Fast Arrival Principle 144
Fishbein Convention 248, 251
Fisher Doubles 300, 369
Fit Bids 25, 29, 51, 70, 71, 72, 233, 248, 267, 489, 575, 609
Fit Showing Jump Bids 233
Five-card Major Suit Stayman 103
Flannery xx, 11, 12, 61, 130, 131, 132, 136, 137, 145, 146, 159, 369, 389, 445, 446, 450, 462, 568, 569
Flexible Flannery 131
Flip-Flop xxiii, 38, 77, 145, 146, 172, 239, 244, 368, 612
Flip-Flop Flannery 145, 146
Forcing Pass xix, 15, 239, 247, 471, 474, 475
Foster Echo 351, 352, 369, 509
Fourth Best Leads 324, 346
Fourth Suit Forcing 35, 36, 37, 49, 116, 123, 124, 125, 194, 369
Full Splinters 50, 51, 70, 71

G

Gambling 3NT 7, 157, 368, 470, 472, 498, 580
Game Forcing Responses 15, 464
Garbage Stayman 81, 82, 83, 101, 140, 426, 431, 544, 548, 604
Gerber Convention 98
Golady 79, 203
Grand Slam Force 85, 167, 168, 196, 369, 409, 562
Grant 34

H

Hand Distributions 480, 601
Hand Evaluation xxi, xxiii, 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 279, 288, 335, 336, 337, 339, 340
Bergen Points 17, 21, 27, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 76, 77, 173, 174, 203, 211, 478

Dummy Points 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19,
20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33,
38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46, 47, 61, 62, 64,
65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75,
76, 77, 96, 126, 129, 130, 131, 147, 160,
191, 203, 205, 206, 207, 210, 211, 222,
227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 337, 339, 343,
396, 397, 398, 400, 403, 410, 416, 417,
478, 479, 487, 488, 489, 573, 574, 575,
611, 612, 613, 619, 620, 621

Minor Suit Dummy Points 14

Starter Points 1, 5, 11, 13, 14, 23, 47, 70, 71,
72, 84, 203, 205, 210

Hello xx, 302, 305, 447

Helms 305

Hess Cue Bids 272

I

IMPS 11, 211, 281, 303, 304, 366, 602, 603

Ingberman Convention 466

Inverted Minors xxiii, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,
75, 76, 77, 78, 190, 244, 447, 458, 487, 573,
612, 616, 617

J

Jacoby 2NT xx, xxi, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 30, 63, 125,
126, 128, 179, 190, 207, 208, 209, 210, 221,
224, 225, 227, 237, 238, 337, 343, 368, 401,
465, 477, 538, 540, 541, 612, 613, 614, 618

Jacoby Transfers xx, 85, 86, 87, 88, 92, 93, 95,
140, 194, 263, 313, 314, 368, 371, 492, 499,
582

Jacoby Transfers four-way 140

Jammer 137, 138, 139

Journalist Leads 356

Jump Reverses 22, 50, 70, 71, 72, 77

Jump Transfers xxi, 289

K

Kantar 7, 157, 167, 174, 211, 214, 446, 615

Kantar Gambling 3NT 7, 157

Kaplan Interchange xix, 56, 461

Karosel 155, 156, 157

Kennedy Club Bids 457

Key-Card(s)

Blackwood xxi, 20, 65, 70, 71, 72, 77, 99, 103,
137, 141, 156, 165, 166, 173, 174, 180,
182, 183, 186, 187, 188, 190, 191, 192,
196, 197, 199, 200, 203, 208, 209, 210,
211, 212, 214, 216, 217, 220, 221, 227,
229, 243, 270, 275, 278, 321, 337, 366,
369, 371, 397, 400, 401, 407, 410, 414,
416, 422, 424, 457, 471, 487, 493, 502,
506, 512, 523, 540, 541, 557, 558, 566,
567, 574, 583, 589, 590, 591, 592, 609,
614, 615, 616, 622

Exclusion 190, 191, 243, 270, 407, 557, 609,
615, 620

Gerber 42, 84, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 113, 141,
157, 159, 212, 213, 369, 371, 372, 404,
405, 410, 411, 412, 413, 422, 426, 500,
543, 544, 549, 558, 583, 584, 609, 610,
611

Roman xx, xxi, 11, 20, 65, 70, 71, 72, 77, 99,
103, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 141, 146,
156, 159, 174, 182, 183, 187, 190, 191,
192, 212, 214, 216, 222, 225, 227, 229,
272, 279, 283, 289, 291, 321, 346, 348,
361, 362, 364, 371, 401, 440, 462, 493,
511, 557, 609, 614, 615

Kickback 20, 128, 141, 147, 174, 175, 182, 183, 184,
185, 187, 189, 191, 194, 200, 212, 216, 218,
220, 221, 228, 229, 321, 369, 400, 401, 402,
427, 440, 502, 602, 620

King Ask 98, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 183, 184, 188,
190, 191, 217, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 421,
466, 561, 586, 588

King asks 98, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 183, 184,
188, 190, 191, 217, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229,
421, 466, 561, 586, 588

Kings Ask 176, 188, 384

Klinger 16, 74, 335, 337, 381

Kokish Relay xx, 152, 153, 154

L

Lavinthal discards 348

Law of Total Tricks 21, 29, 279, 288, 289, 328, 333,
335, 340, 403

Lawrence 21, 34, 163, 234, 262, 296, 333, 334,
340, 344, 357, 619, 620

Leaping Michaels 252, 253, 254, 273, 274, 311, 312, 322, 369, 509, 567, 577, 595
Lebensohl 90, 253, 260, 276, 280, 283, 288, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 369, 372, 373, 427, 445, 466, 474, 493, 494, 496, 509, 567, 576, 577, 579, 605, 623
Lightner Slam Double 300
Losing Trick Count 48, 147, 162, 169, 285, 288, 324, 326, 335, 337, 340
LTC 48, 288, 323, 324, 325, 326, 335, 336, 337, 340, 344

M

Major suit Checkback Stayman 122
Marvin French 308
Masked Mini Splinters xix
Match Points 11, 211, 303, 304, 339, 366, 615
Mathe Convention 449
Maximal Support Doubles 299
Mc Cabe Adjunct xx, 171, 172, 495
Meckwell iii, xx, 42, 304, 305, 306, 309, 433, 435, 511, 519, 546, 568, 572, 574, 597
Meckwell Lite iii, xx, 511, 519
Meckwell Runouts 546
Mini-Maxi Convention 94, 95, 438
Minimum Offshape Takeout Doubles 301
Mini Roman 11, 133, 134, 135, 136, 159, 462
Mini Splinters xix, 50, 77
Minor suit splinters 39
Minor Suit Stayman xx, 90, 95, 96, 97, 146, 156, 312, 422, 440, 492
Minorwood xx, xxi, 76, 77, 114, 151, 182, 183, 184, 185, 213, 369, 411, 412, 413, 416, 420, 421, 422, 440, 487, 502, 503, 504, 573, 586, 587
Modified Cappelletti 304, 305, 433, 447
Modified DON'T 305
Modified Ogust Convention 161
Modified Puppet Stayman 103, 142, 143, 144
Mohan 303, 304, 433, 436
MPs 11, 238, 353
MUD 346, 347, 348, 355, 356, 363, 364
Multi Landy 306, 307, 433
Multi Weak Two Bids 458, 460
Muppet Stayman 142, 145, 146, 155, 369, 582

N

Namyats 168, 169, 170, 171, 279, 286, 288, 315, 318, 319, 320, 498, 501, 557, 580
Nebulous xxi, 30, 31, 32, 33, 79
Negative Doubles 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 251, 298, 372, 415, 449, 450, 454, 455, 474, 497, 509, 534, 579
Negative Free Bids 41, 243, 244, 509, 532, 533, 534
New Minor Forcing xx, xxi, 35, 49, 104, 105, 107, 109, 117, 419
Non-forcing Responses 26, 34, 108
Notrump Leads 353, 602

O

Odd-even 348
Odd-even discards 348
ODR xxi, 339, 340, 341, 342, 344, 398
Ogust Convention 160, 161, 165, 214
Opening One of a Suit 10, 130
Opening Two Clubs 407
Overcalls xx, 15, 27, 80, 89, 131, 136, 157, 162, 163, 167, 235, 236, 238, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 252, 253, 256, 258, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 307, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 326, 327, 343, 361, 372, 373, 396, 415, 429, 435, 437, 444, 445, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 453, 454, 456, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 494, 509, 519, 530, 531, 533, 541, 553, 554, 556, 557, 558, 559, 563, 564, 566, 568, 569, 595, 598, 604, 605, 610

P

Pick a Slam 143, 196, 369, 409, 582, 602, 611
Picture Bids xix, 32, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468
Ping Pong Convention xx, 469
Play of the hand 345, 376, 422, 481
Play of the Hand 345, 376, 422, 481
Point Count Game Try 73
Precision iii, xx, xxi, xxiii, 41, 57, 116, 211, 220, 228, 229, 248, 337, 368, 375, 425, 430, 447,

- 449, 451, 452, 474, 486, 510, 511, 519, 564, 572, 596, 597, 599, 607, 608, 612, 617
- Precision Simplified iii, 572
- Preempt 162, 163, 164, 165, 167, 169, 172, 214, 233, 235, 248, 251, 269, 273, 274, 279, 282, 283, 286, 287, 288, 289, 307, 310, 319, 325, 326, 327, 358, 371, 373, 395, 450, 488, 499, 532, 557, 558, 564, 566, 567, 569, 581
- Preempted openings 164
- Preemptive Bids 26, 29, 30, 36, 139, 162, 164, 166, 167, 168, 215, 235, 252, 267, 317, 319, 327, 395, 581
- Probabilities and odds in Bridge 483
- Puppet Checkback 74, 75
- Puppet Stayman 84, 85, 91, 103, 104, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 156, 517, 543, 546
- Q**
- Quantitative Bids 85, 100, 194
- Queen and King asks combined 179
- Queen Ask 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 182, 184, 188, 190, 192, 193, 194, 205, 212, 213, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 371, 400, 401, 495, 499, 561, 578, 581, 585, 586, 616, 623
- Queen asks 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 182, 184, 188, 190, 192, 193, 194, 205, 212, 213, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 371, 400, 401, 495, 499, 561, 578, 581, 585, 586, 616, 623
- Quest Transfers xxiii, 93, 100, 102, 103, 104
- R**
- Range Ask xxi, 90, 92
- Range/Inquiry Stayman 265
- Raptor 294, 295, 296, 444
- Rebids by Opener after Major opening bids 51
- Redwood 182, 183, 185, 221
- Responding to a takeout double 258, 259
- Responsive Doubles 253, 256, 298, 299, 373, 565
- Reverse crisscross 39
- Reverse Drury 231, 232, 233, 368, 619, 620
- Reverse Drury Convention 231
- Reverse Good Bad 2NT 275, 369
- Reverses xx, xxiii, 11, 21, 22, 26, 27, 30, 35, 39, 41, 43, 49, 50, 52, 61, 70, 71, 72, 75, 77, 81, 89, 91, 107, 108, 125, 126, 142, 150, 168, 171, 172, 191, 194, 211, 229, 231, 232, 233, 239, 242, 268, 275, 276, 277, 278, 293, 310, 343, 351, 368, 369, 371, 372, 374, 412, 445, 446, 450, 452, 453, 461, 466, 467, 468, 469, 476, 486, 488, 537, 578, 619, 620, 621, 623
- Revolving Suit discards 348
- Rodwell 34, 42, 72, 92, 197, 234, 257, 297, 464, 475, 511, 617
- Roman discards 348
- Roman Jump Overcalls xx, 272, 279, 283, 289, 291
- Roman Keycard xxi, 20, 65, 70, 71, 72, 77, 99, 103, 137, 141, 146, 156, 174, 182, 183, 187, 190, 191, 192, 212, 214, 216, 222, 225, 227, 229, 321, 401, 440, 511, 557, 609, 614, 615
- Roman Keycard Blackwood xxi, 20, 65, 70, 71, 72, 77, 99, 103, 137, 141, 156, 174, 182, 183, 187, 190, 191, 192, 214, 216, 227, 321, 609, 614, 615
- Rosenkrantz Doubles 253, 256, 298, 299, 509, 595
- Roth Four Club Convention 165
- Rule of 2 162, 233, 234, 302, 323, 324, 326, 327, 599
- Rule of 2/3 162, 324, 326, 327
- Rule of 7 162, 163, 323, 327, 378, 409
- Rule of 8 302, 309, 323, 389, 599
- Rule of 9 245, 258, 324, 379
- Rule of 10 324, 325, 326
- Rule of 11 324, 346, 363
- Rule of 12 346, 376, 379, 380, 381
- Rule of 15 230, 325, 326, 363
- Rule of 17 160, 325, 608
- Rule of 20 230, 326
- Rule of 22 230
- Rule of 22/20 230
- Rule of 24 324, 326
- Rule of 26 327
- Rule of 44 147, 189, 327, 328, 422
- Rule of 64 52, 328
- Rule of 88 83, 328, 604
- Rule of 210 337, 338, 399
- Rusinow Leads 354, 357, 361, 362, 363

S

Sandwich INT/2NT 272, 369
Scroll Bids xxiii, 21, 64, 99, 126, 205, 207, 208, 210, 211, 216, 238, 490, 575, 622
SCUM xx, 306, 447
Semi-flexible Flannery 131
Serious 3NT 196, 198, 199, 202, 203, 220, 369, 397, 467, 468, 537, 538, 563
Shape Asking Relay after Stayman (SAES) 97
Simple Lebensohl 313, 314
Smith Echo 350, 351, 369, 509, 571
Smolen Transfers 92, 93, 95
Snapdragon Doubles 299
SOLAR 623, 624
Soloff Bids 146
South African Transfer 93, 130, 282, 289
Special Doubles 300, 369
Specific Suit Asks (SSA) 176, 180, 181, 183, 188, 190, 212, 215, 495, 499, 578, 581, 616, 623
Spiral Scan xxi, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225
Splimit 476
Splinter xix, xxi, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 29, 30, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 50, 51, 58, 61, 62, 64, 70, 71, 75, 77, 78, 99, 103, 120, 128, 176, 186, 190, 191, 203, 205, 207, 208, 212, 232, 237, 238, 243, 244, 247, 248, 252, 272, 280, 284, 286, 288, 295, 296, 299, 327, 334, 368, 371, 372, 375, 396, 397, 399, 407, 439, 464, 466, 467, 476, 487, 489, 490, 511, 516, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 540, 541, 542, 543, 550, 556, 559, 573, 575, 606, 609, 618, 619, 620
Splinter Bids 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 38, 39, 40, 51, 62, 99, 190, 205, 207, 208, 299, 327, 334, 397, 407, 439, 466, 487, 490, 573, 618, 619, 620
Splinters after Stayman 99
Standard carding 346
Standard Leads 353, 355, 356
Starter Points 1, 5, 11, 13, 14, 23, 47, 70, 71, 72, 84, 203, 205, 210
Stayman Convention 80, 81, 82, 85, 95, 96, 107, 140, 142, 156, 265, 300, 432, 437, 486, 604
Stayman in Doubt 438, 439
Strong Jump Shifts 21, 48, 49, 50, 52, 220, 446, 486, 487, 573

Suction 598, 607
Suit overcalls 131, 265, 266, 273, 299, 315
Suit Overcalls 131, 265, 266, 273, 299, 315
Suit preference discard 348
Super-accept xx, 81, 83, 84, 87, 92, 93, 95, 101, 156, 220, 550
Super Gerber 98, 99, 100, 141, 369, 410, 411, 610
Support Doubles and Redoubles 280, 289, 297, 372, 533
Swedish 2NT xxi, 477, 478
Swiss Bids 22, 23, 29, 33, 51, 65, 191, 237, 337
Systems off 136, 264, 294, 595, 604
Systems on 136, 263, 264, 294, 296, 298, 444, 445, 507, 509, 593, 604

T

Takeout Double 236, 237, 240, 249, 252, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 268, 270, 272, 273, 282, 288, 293, 298, 301, 317, 321, 324, 373, 445, 564, 567, 569, 606
Takeout double or overcall 258
Tartan Two Bids 460
Texas Transfers 93, 95, 100, 102, 142, 144, 155, 283, 314, 315, 368, 371, 426, 434, 435, 491, 493, 576
Third and Fifth Leads 349
Third and Fourth Seat Openings 230
Thrupp 234
Timm iii, xix, xxi, 572, 614
Top and Bottom Cue Bids 472, 473
Transfer Lebensohl 260, 283, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 369, 427, 445, 493, 494, 576, 577
Transfer Precision iii, xx, 486
Transfers iii, xx, xxi, xxiii, 21, 54, 74, 79, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 130, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 154, 155, 156, 159, 168, 172, 194, 212, 251, 253, 260, 263, 264, 278, 282, 283, 286, 289, 298, 299, 303, 304, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 368, 369, 371, 414, 418, 422, 426, 427, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 458, 459, 461, 469, 474, 486, 491, 492, 493, 494, 498, 499, 500, 501, 504, 505, 509, 510, 516, 532, 533, 534,

543, 544, 546, 547, 548, 549, 551, 552, 556,
557, 564, 566, 568, 569, 572, 576, 577, 578,
581, 582, 583, 585, 586, 588, 597, 598, 599,
604, 605, 606, 611, 616

Trash Convention 447

Trump Suit Preference 346, 349, 350, 369, 509,
595

Truscott Jordan 2NT 238

Two diamonds waiting 149

Two hearts negative 149

Two suited cue bids 279, 285

Two-Way New Minor Forcing xx, xxi, 107, 109

Two-Way Stayman 74, 75, 432, 434

U

UDCA 348, 351, 352, 369

Undercall Club 451, 452, 453

Unusual 2NT 245, 246, 247, 248, 263, 274, 275,
291, 369, 463, 540, 542, 616, 617

Useful Space Principle 320, 321, 606

V

Vacant Doubleton Convention 440

Vacant Places xxi, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394,
395, 405

W

Walker 148, 163, 253

Walsh xxi, xxiii, 33, 34, 36, 37, 41, 108, 120, 301,
368, 492

Walsh Bidding System 33, 41

Walsh club xxi, xxiii, 34, 37, 41, 108

Walsh Club Convention xxi, xxiii, 34, 37, 41, 108

Weak Jump Shifts 36, 39, 40, 216, 237, 369, 446,
488, 589

Weak Roman Keycard Blackwood 214

Weak Two Bids xxi, 159, 160, 171, 214, 219, 220,
247, 252, 260, 310, 311, 375, 458, 459, 460,
495, 555, 577, 601, 616, 619

Wolff Sign-off 121, 122, 277, 369

Z

Zar points xxi, xxiii, 44, 45, 46, 47

Zirconia Convention xxi, 116



