



Advanced Series #3 Inverted Minors and trying for 3NT

Today we're looking at the situation where partner opens 1 of a minor, and you have a good hand with at least 4 card support for partner's minor, and no 4-card major.

Here's an example

West (dealer)	East
♠ A 6 5	♠ 8 3 2
♥ 8	♥ K Q
♦ 8 7 6 3	♦ A K 2
♣ A K J 6 5	♣ Q 8 7 4 2

West, with 12 HCP would open 1♣. The problem East has is that any response in clubs is a limit bid. The hand has 14 points, so it's much too strong for 2♣. It's also too strong for a 3♣ response, which would show club support, and 10-12 points or an 8-loser hand. Even if East does try 3♣, West can't bid 3NT with no stopper in the red suits, so would likely try 5♣. Alternatively, East might bid 4♣, but that by-passes any possibility of 3NT. Here, West would accept the invitation and bid 5♣.

As you can see, 5♣ is likely to fail, losing a spade, a heart, and a diamond. We don't like playing in 5♣ or 5♦, as it's usually a hard contract to make, and fares poorly against those who bid 3NT and make. It often fares poorly even if the minor suit game makes 11 tricks, scoring lower than other pairs who play in 3NT and make 10 tricks.

In our example hand, East might punt 3NT in response to partner's opening 1♣, but is taking the risk that partner has no spade stop. Sometimes, as here, it will be in luck, but often it won't.

How can we overcome this problem, and avoid the need for a guess whether 3NT is on?

The answer is **INVERTED MINORS**.

The principle is that we switch the meaning of a single and double raise in partner's minor. Playing inverted minors, a double raise (1♣ - 3♣ or 1♦ - 3♦) shows a **weak hand** with 4+ card support for partner's minor, denies a 4-card major, and is pre-emptive in nature. It's the sort of hand that would have been bid by a single raise if we were not playing inverted minors.

Playing inverted minors, a single raise of partner's minor (1♣ - 2♣ or 1♦ - 2♦) shows a **good hand** (10+ points) with 4+ card support for partner's minor, and again denies a 4-card major. It is UNLIMITED in strength, and is forcing for 1 round.

What's the point? Why should we do this?

The great advantage is that the partnership knows they have a fit in the minor suit, and opener knows that partner is strong, yet they are still only at the 2 level in the bidding. There is room to explore for 3NT, and if that isn't on because there is at least one suit exposed, then they can settle in a contract in the minor suit at the appropriate level.

Trial bids for 3NT

Once we have the “inverted minor” sequence 1♣ - 2♣ or 1♦ - 2♦, the partnership now embarks on trial bids for 3NT. The way it works is that each partner bids the cheapest bid in a suit in which they have a stopper, other than the agreed minor suit.

If we take our example hand from before, and assume the opposition passes throughout,

West (dealer)	East
♠ A 6 5	♠ 8 3 2
♥ 8	♥ K Q
♦ 8 7 6 3	♦ A K 2
♣ A K J 6 5	♣ Q 8 7 4 2

The bidding would proceed

West (dealer)	East
1♣	2♣ (1)
2♠ (2)	3NT (3)

- (1) I have a strong hand, 4+ support for your clubs, and no 4-card major
- (2) I don't have a stop in ♦ or ♥, but I do have a spade stop.
- (3) The spade stop is all I needed to know. With my 14 points opposite your opening hand, and all suits stopped, we're playing in 3NT.

Note that if East had been a bit weaker, and unsure whether 2NT or 3NT is on, she would have bid 2NT over partner's 2♠, saying “we have all suits stopped, partner. If you are a minimum opener, pass. If you have extra strength, bid 3NT.”

In the trial bid sequence, if either partner knows there is an unstopped suit, she bids the agreed minor at the appropriate level. Here is an example

West (dealer)	East
♠ A Q 5	♠ K 3
♥ 8	♥ 9 4 2
♦ 8 7 6 3	♦ A K 2
♣ A K J 6 5	♣ Q 8 7 4 2

The bidding would proceed

West (dealer)	East
1♣	2♣ (1)
2♠ (2)	4♣ (3)
5♣ (4)	

- (1) I have a strong hand, 4+ support for your clubs, and no 4-card major
- (2) I don't have a stop in ♦ or ♥, but I do have a spade stop.
- (3) I know partner has no stop in hearts, and I don't either. A NT contract is not on, so I'll revert to our agreed minor. Partner is showing a spade stop, and I hold K♠, so I think 5♣ might be on. I will invite with 4♣.
- (4) Invitation accepted. I'm loving the Club fit with my holding, and my heart singleton.

Note that if East had been a bit weaker, she would simply bid 3♣ in response to partners' 2♠. This says I have no extra values for my inverted minor raise to 2♣, and I know we have at least one unstopped suit.

What happens if the opposition interfere?

This is a matter for partnership agreement, but the simplest approach is to agree that after an opposition double or overcall, Inverted Minors are off.

West (dealer)	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	2♣ (1)	

- (1) Since inverted minors are off after North's overcall, East's 2♣ bid is a normal limit bid, denying holding 4 spades, and showing 4+ card club support, and 6-9 points (balanced) or 9 losers (unbalanced).

What about a passed hand?

Again, this is a matter for partnership agreement, but there is no reason why you can't play that inverted minors are still on by a passed hand.

West (dealer)	North	East	South
Pass 2♣ (1)	Pass	1♣	Pass

- (1) Since inverted minors are still on after West's initial pass, West's 2♣ bid is an inverted minor, showing 10+ points, 4+ card club support, and denying a 4-card major. However, because of the initial pass, the 2♣ bid does have an upper limit ie a hand not good enough to open.

Is an Inverted Minor alertable?

Although you are bidding a natural suit, inverted minor bids are alertable. This means both the weak double raise in a minor suit, and the strong single raise in a minor suit, are alertable.

The prepared hands in the lesson will help clarify the concepts in Inverted Minors and trial bids for NT.

