

YES, NO or MAYBE

A LOGICAL APPROACH TO BRIDGE



MORE BIDDING BASICS



DAVID GLANDORF

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The *Yes, No or Maybe* series is dedicated to my father
Oscar Glandorf
an elementary school teacher
from whom I must have inherited my love of teaching.

Other books in the *Yes, No or Maybe* series

Introduction and Card Play Basics

Introduction and Card Play Basics Workbook

Bidding Basics

Bidding Basics Workbook

More Bidding Basics Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Yes, No or Maybe is designed to teach beginning players the fundamental concepts of contract bridge. While it can be used as a self-study resource by a student with some understanding of the game of bridge, the intent is that it be used in a classroom format with an experienced teacher.

CONTENT

Yes, No or Maybe is a series of three textbooks, each with an associated workbook. Each textbook has 13 chapters plus an Index of Terms. Each chapter is designed for one three-hour lesson. *Yes, No or Maybe* therefore provides a resource for approximately a one-year series of classes meeting weekly with some time off for holidays, short breaks or personal (teacher) scheduling factors.

Each workbook also has 13 chapters with several exercises for the associated textbook chapter and most chapters include practice deals. The exercises can be done in the classroom, assigned as homework or divided between these two activities.

Each textbook/workbook can be used for a single 13-week course or divided approximately equally between two courses.

Introduction and Card Play Basics covers the mechanics of the game, a little bridge history, scoring, hand valuation and preferred contracts, along with the basics of declarer play and defense. No bidding is included here but MiniBridge or a variant is used for sample and practice deals. The Yes, No, Maybe bidding concepts are introduced for the determination of preferred contracts even though no real bidding is involved. The associated workbook includes a set of supplemental scoring exercises for both duplicate and rubber bridge.

Bidding Basics introduces the student to bidding including opening bids at the one level with responses and rebids, overcalls and takeout doubles with advances and rebids, the use of cuebids by responder and advance and the practical application of the Law of Total Tricks. This textbook also includes an appendix containing some of the basic bridge information provided in *Introduction and Card Play Basics*.

In *More Bidding Basics* the student learns about balancing, several conventions (Stayman, Jacoby transfers, negative doubles, fourth suit forcing, new minor forcing), strong opening bids, preemptive opening bids and overcalls, game tries, slam bidding (direct, Blackwood, Gerber, control bidding) and opening the bidding in third or fourth chair.

The basic material presented in these volumes is not new; in fact, books on fundamental card play and bidding in contract bridge have been around for about

a century. What is new is the organization and methodology. To the best of my knowledge the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** approach to bidding decisions presented herein is unique in the world of teaching bridge. Finally, while MiniBridge has been around for some time, I don't know that it has previously been worked into a complete framework for teaching beginners of all ages.

Be forewarned that there is a tremendous amount of information in the two bidding books. While some of the content may be considered to be more intermediate-level material, every bridge player needs to have at least a rudimentary understanding of all the basic elements of bridge. In the classroom it is possible to play in a controlled environment using deals that are set up to illustrate the topic of the day. When playing in the real world you will frequently encounter situations that were not considered in practice deals. The details included herein should provide a handy reference for many, but by no means all, of these puzzling scenarios.

Several different bidding systems, each with several variations plus optional partnership agreements, exist in today's bridge world. One of the most common systems in current use is Standard American – 5-card majors, which is used in the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** series. The method of presenting this system differs significantly from that used in other textbooks because of its emphasis on logic rather than memorization. Nonetheless, you will be compatible with anyone who plays this system even if your partner is unfamiliar with this way of thinking.

BACKGROUND

After several years of teaching beginner and intermediate bridge using the ACBL Bridge Series, I realized that students with limited past experience struggled significantly with the task of simultaneously learning the intricacies of bidding, playing the cards as declarer, and reasonably defending a deal. In particular, I observed that the demands of learning the fundamentals of bidding often adversely impacted their ability to study and comprehend the fundamentals of declarer play and defense.

I concluded that part of the problem was that the students were trying to learn how to bid using a memorization process rather than a logical sequential thought process. This realization came from the multitude of questions in the form "How many points do I need to make that bid?" or "How many points does that bid show?"

Many years ago as I worked with new players in a social environment, the idea of teaching the card play aspects of bridge before addressing bidding germinated in the back of my mind. Then a few years ago I was introduced to the concept of MiniBridge and found out that I was not the only person who was aware of the challenges of learning bidding and card play simultaneously and that someone else had actually done something about it.

About the same time, I began to present the basic bidding topics from the ACBL series in a somewhat different manner from the traditional approach. My

method consists of (1) formulating a few basic questions, the answers to which are always “**Yes**”, “**No**” or “**Maybe**” and (2) using the answers, along with some other guidelines and rules, to make bidding decisions. This required my students to make mental adjustments/conversions as they studied their student textbooks. I received much positive feedback from my students, perhaps best summarized by a comment from one of my students who had been with me for about two years: “**Yes, No or Maybe** will take you a long way.” At the same time, I found myself apologizing to them for having to convert from the textbook approach to my approach. Eventually many of them suggested that I just write my own book.

I initially just rolled my eyes at their suggestion but in 2009 I decided to take their advice. The result was the first draft of my **Yes, No or Maybe** bidding books. This bidding book maintained the overall approach of starting new students with bidding concepts but referred them to the ACBL series bidding book for introductory play and defense topics. In the fall of 2011 I wrote the first draft of **Introduction and Card Play Basics** and in January of 2012 began using it for my introductory course for new students. Eventually the bidding book expanded and split into **Bidding Basics** and **More Bidding Basics**.

NOTATIONAL ISSUES

I realize that the modern style of writing is one of gender neutrality. While I understand the social implications of this style, I personally feel it makes for very awkward reading at times. I have found a way around this for much of this series. Opener and intervener (overcaller or takeout doubler) are assigned the masculine gender while responder and advancer (partner of the intervener) are assigned the feminine gender. When reference is made to a player outside of any of these roles the traditional masculine style is used.

Here are a few notational issues:

- I sometimes use M to represent either major suit, e.g., 4M for a contract of either 4♥ or 4♠.
- I sometimes use m to represent either minor suit, e.g., 3m for a contract of either 3♣ or 3♦.
- I sometimes use N and sometimes use NT to denote a notrump contract, e.g., 3N and 3NT both denote a contract of three notrump.
- The result of a contract that is made is written as LSD+N where L is the level of the contract, S is the strain of the contract, D is the declarer compass position and N is the number of tricks above book that were taken, e.g., 3SS+4 is written for a contract of 3♠ by South for which 10 tricks were taken.
- The result of a contract that is defeated is written as LSD-N where L, S and D are the same as above and N is the number of tricks the contract was defeated, e.g., 2NW-1 is written for a contract of 2NT by West that was defeated by 1 trick.

- Bold italics are used to identify the first introduction of a bridge term and that term is included in the Index of Terms.
- Bold is used for major emphasis.
- A player's position relative to another is often denoted by LHO (left-hand opponent) or RHO (right-hand opponent).
- Distribution of the four suits in a hand without regard to specific suits is written in the form “i-j-k-l” where each letter represents a number 0-13 with $i \geq j \geq k \geq l$, e.g., 5-3-3-2 represents a hand with 5 cards in one suit, 3 cards in each of two suits, and 2 cards in one suit with specific suits unspecified. Equals signs (=) replace the dashes when the distribution of the cards with regard to specific suits is desired, with the corresponding suits identified in decreasing rank from left to right, e.g., 3=5=1=4 designates a hand with 3 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond and 4 clubs.
- Sections and topics: A major division of a chapter is referred to as a section while a major division of a section is referred to as a topic. Sections are identified by large, bold, all caps, centered titles. Topics are identified by medium, bold, left-justified titles with first letters of significant words capitalized.

The following short-hand notation was introduced in the previous two books of the *Yes, No or Maybe* series:

- **G?** – Game? = Do we want to be in a game contract?
- **GF?** – Golden Fit?¹ = Do we have a Golden Fit in any suit?
- **GF_{ms}?** – Golden Fit minor suit? = Do we have a Golden Fit in a minor suit?
- **GFMS?** – Golden Fit Major Suit? = Do we have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit?
- **GS?** – Grand Slam? = Do we want to be in a grand slam contract?
- **M** – Maybe
- **M^I** – Intermediate Maybe²
- **M^S** – Strong Maybe²
- **M^W** – Weak Maybe²
- **N** – No
- **S?** – Slam? = Do we want to be in a slam contract?
- **SS?** – Small Slam? = Do we want to be in a small slam contract?
- **Y** – Yes

¹ A Golden Fit is an 8⁺-card fit in a suit.

² A plus or minus sign may be appended to the superscripts I, S or W to further subdivide the Maybe divisions.

I truly hope that you will find these books helpful in your journey into the wonderful world of bridge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest debt of gratitude must go to my students. I could not have written this book without their encouragement and cooperation in putting up with the experimentation of my approach to teaching them this game we all love.

Second, many thanks go to Audrey Grant and Betty Starzec who wrote and updated the ACBL Bridge Series which made it easy to start teaching bridge and provided the background for much of the content of this Series. In addition I owe so much to the other great players and authors whose works were such valuable resources for this endeavor. They are listed in the next section.

Third, I must thank two of my students who are also editors, Diane Cuttler and Leah Marchand, for the numerous hours they put into proofreading and editing the text along with their many suggestions for improving its readability. In this regard thanks are also due to Ray Lee of Master Point Press for his helpful suggestions regarding layout and formatting. Thanks also go to Sally Sparrow of Master Point Press for getting my copy ready for press and Ebook distribution.

Finally, special thanks go to my wife, Becky, who is not a bridge player but knows enough about the game to listen to my bridge stories and is willing to provide help with my class preparation and writing when I need it.

RESOURCES AND PERMISSIONS

Several books were invaluable resources for writing the *Yes, No or Maybe* series, and this author is deeply indebted to those authors for their contributions to bridge education. Of particular importance were the following five books in the ACBL Bridge Series originally written by Audrey Grant and later revised by Betty Starzec:

1. *Bidding in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1990, Updated 2006
2. *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised April 2007
3. *Defense in the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised October 2007
4. *Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised 2008
5. *More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised January 2008

I used these books for several years when I first started teaching and was heavily influenced by them while writing the *Yes, No or Maybe* series. Most of the chapters in the *Yes, No or Maybe* workbooks include many sample deals for

practice in the classroom or at home. All of these deals have been extracted from the above five books and are used with the permission of the American Contract Bridge League (www.acbl.org). Special “EZ-Deal” decks of cards for these deals are available from Baron Barclay Bridge Supply (www.baronbarclay.com).

Commentary in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – “Overcalls and Advances - Part 1” relating to the Law of Total Tricks was drawn from Larry Cohen’s book:

6. *To Bid or Not to Bid – The Law of Total Tricks*, Natco Press, Boca Raton, FL © 1992

The following book by Max Hardy was influential in my presentation of the opening bid of 2♦ and responses thereto in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 6 – “Strong Opening Bids:”

7. *Two Over One Game Force*, Devyn Press Inc., Louisville, KY, © 1989

My treatment of weak two-bids and other preemptive bids, as well as their use in third and fourth seat in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 7 – “Preemptive Opening Bids and Overcalls,” Chapter 12 – “Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 1” and Chapter 13 – “Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 2” was drawn primarily from the following book by Ron Anderson and Sabine Zenkel:

8. *Preempts from A to Z*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 1996

While the ACBL Series includes a chapter on negative doubles, that material was supplemented by information gleaned from the following book by Marty Bergen devoted to this single topic for *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Negative Doubles.”

9. Points Schmooints Series, *Negative Doubles*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 2000

Most of the content on balancing in Chapter 1 – “Balancing,” Chapter 2 – “Advances after a Balancing Double or Bid” and “Chapter 3 – “Rebids after a Balancing Double or Bid” of *More Bidding Basics* was based on the following book by Mike Lawrence:

10. *The Complete Book on Balancing in Contract Bridge – Revised Edition*, Baron Barclay Bridge Supply, Louisville, KY, © 2012

Many of the sample hands were extracted from this book and used with the permission of Mike Lawrence and Baron Barclay Bridge Supply.

The above five books are highly recommended for further reading once you become comfortable with the material presented in *Yes, No or Maybe*.

The bridge history presented in *Introduction and Card Play Basics*, Chapter 1 – “Getting Started” and the Bridge Essentials portion of the Appendix of *Bidding Basics* was derived almost entirely from the following book written by Charles Goren and the editors of Sports Illustrated:

11. *The Sports Illustrated Book of Bridge*, Chancellor Hall Ltd., NY, NY, © 1961

Additional information used in the bridge history material came from private communication with Julian Laderman who so graciously read that portion of a draft of the book and provided a few corrections and enhancements.



CHAPTER 1

– Balancing

Prologue

Introduction

Balancing after an Opening Suit Bid has
been Passed

Balancing after an Opening 1NT Bid has
been Passed

Balancing after Both Opponents Have Bid

Summary



PROLOGUE

Most of the material in this chapter and the next two is based on Resource 10 by Mike Lawrence. Various references to “Lawrence” in these chapters refer to that book. Mike has been so kind to allow me to use several of his examples.

Mike is well known in the bridge world as an expert player, teacher and writer. He is a three-time world champion and an original member of the Dallas Aces with over twenty books to his credit. He has also corroborated on the development of bridge software products. You might wish to visit his home page at Michaelslawrence.com.

INTRODUCTION

Put yourself in South’s chair after each of the following auctions:

(a)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Pass	Pass	?
(b)	WEST 1NT	NORTH Pass	EAST Pass	SOUTH ?
(c)	WEST 2♣	NORTH Pass	EAST 1♣	SOUTH Pass
			Pass	?
(d)	WEST 1♣ 2♥	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1♥ Pass	SOUTH Pass ?
(e)	WEST 1♦ 2♥	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1♣ 1♥ Pass	SOUTH Pass Pass ?
(f)	WEST 1NT	NORTH Pass	EAST 1♦ Pass	SOUTH Pass ?
(g)	WEST 1♦ 1NT	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1♥ Pass	SOUTH Pass ?

(h)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦	Pass
	1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
	2♦	Pass	Pass	?
(i)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
	2♦	Pass	Pass	?

You are in what is called the ***pass-out seat*** – if you pass the auction will be over. You have 3 choices: pass, double or bid something. What should you do? Most inexperienced players would pass, and they would be wrong much more often than not. In all of these auctions the opponents have a limited combined strength of about 12 - 24 HCP at the extremes and they will usually hold approximately 18 - 22 HCP. Therefore, regardless of the strength of South's hand the partnership will usually hold the **balance** of 18 - 22 HCP. Each side may hold more total points depending on long suit points and dummy points, although East-West are unlikely to hold more than 23 total points since they have stopped bidding well below the game level. Consequently, the deal could belong to either side, and if you pass you may miss out on a great opportunity for a good partscore or even game contract. At the very least you might push the opponents up to a higher level where you will have a better chance of setting them.

This is the basic idea of ***balancing*** – bidding or doubling when in the pass-out seat. If you have rather meager strength your partner must have the balance of the missing HCP. You might wonder why she did not bid. Here you must remember the requirements for overcalls and takeout doubles, the actions other than pass that partner might have taken. It is quite possible, in fact almost guaranteed, that she has a hand that was not suited for either of those actions and had to pass even though she had an opening hand. This point was emphasized in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – “Overcalls and Advances - Part 1” and Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances.” Your partner could pass in comfort knowing that you would balance if the opportunity arose.

The action you should take depends on your strength and shape as well as the specific suits you hold relative to those bid by the opponents. But most often you should either bid or double with pass being the last option.

Vulnerability and the form of scoring also play important factors in your decision whether to pass or balance. You certainly want to be more cautious when vulnerable than when nonvulnerable. You can also be more aggressive in a duplicate matchpoint game than in an IMPs game or if playing rubber bridge where a large penalty can be disastrous. For simplicity in our examples, we assume matchpoint scoring with neither side vulnerable unless stated otherwise.

BALANCING AFTER AN OPENING SUIT BID HAS BEEN PASSED

In this section we consider those auctions similar to auction (a) in the Introduction. For our examples we will usually assume that was the auction but will make comments regarding different opening bids where necessary.

In addition to double there are many types of bids that could be made by the balancer. We consider only the following actions here:

- Double
- 1 of a new suit
- 2 of a lower-ranking suit
- 1NT

As you gain more experience you might refer to Lawrence for the use of jump bids and cuebids.

It is generally agreed that the strength requirements to compete with a double or a bid in the balancing position are lower than those in the direct position. While established partnerships have specific agreements for these actions, it is probably easiest for a beginning bridge player to have a simple guideline. The basic recommendation here is to “borrow” a king from partner’s hand, you can reduce your requirements for the given actions by 3 points from what they are in the direct position.

The Balancing Double

The balancing double is almost the same as a takeout double. The primary difference is that the minimum strength requirement is lower. How much lower is subject to partnership agreement. Certainly 10 points including dummy points are sufficient. Some players are willing to double with somewhat fewer points, but I suggest you not push this guideline without prior discussion with your favorite partners. When making a light (10 - 12 points) balancing double you want to have great distribution and prime values or good intermediate cards. Ignore singleton or double honors in the suit that was opened. Aces and kings or lower honors in combination with these are great. Isolated quacks are deterrents to your action.

Here are a few examples after an opening 1♦ bid.

♠ K Q 8 4 You would have doubled with this hand if you were in your partner’s
 chair. No reason not to double in the balancing position.

♦ 3 2

♣ K J 4

♠ J 10 8 5 This is about as light as you want to be for your balancing double.
 You have ideal shape and good interior values to go with your meager HCP.

♦ 2

♣ K 10 9 4

♠ K 8 5 2 If you are counting 9 HCP plus 1 point for your doubleton diamond
♥ 7 6 4 3 you are extremely over-valuing your hand. This hand is worth only
♦ Q J about 7 points, 6 HCP in the black suits plus 1 point for the doubleton.
♣ Q J 7 4 Best to pass and defend as well as you can.

Balancing with 1 of a Suit

The requirements for balancing with a bid of 1 of a suit are significantly different from those for overcalling with 1 of a suit:

- Just about any 5-card suit is acceptable for suit quality
- A reasonable 4-card suit is acceptable if you feel you need to compete and no other option is appropriate
- You might choose a strong 4-card suit over a significantly weaker 5-card suit
- About 7 or 8 points are adequate if you have a good suit

Other factors to consider are:

- What is your holding in opener's suit – wasted values, shortness, length?
- Do you have more than one suit you would like to bid?
- Do you have shortness in an unbid major, especially spades?
- Are you playing in a duplicate match point game or rubber bridge? A duplicate team game at IMP scoring is equivalent to rubber bridge as far as bidding philosophy goes.

Let's look at a few examples, again after an opening bid of 1♦.

♠ 9 7 5 3 2 You have a really ratty spade suit but with 10 HCP you have a great desire to compete. While you could double, your poor heart support tends to make you shy away from that option. After all, if partner has her expected 10 HCP or so and a decent 5-card heart suit she would have overcalled at her first opportunity. You bid 1♠.

♠ K Q 10 9 You can't double with only 2 hearts, you can't bid notrump without a diamond stopper (you are also a little light for that call as you will see later in this section) and you hate to sell out to a 1♦ contract. It looks like 1♠ is your best call.
♥ 9 2
♦ 6 5 2
♣ A J 8 4

♠ J 10 9 7 This is about as bad as it gets for 4-card suit quality but the overall strength of the hand demands some action. Bid 1♠.
♥ 5
♦ A J 10 6
♣ K Q 8 4

♠ K J 9 5 2 7 If you are not vulnerable take a deep breath (discreetly) and bid 1♠ in a matchpoint game but pass if you are playing rubber bridge.
♥ 5 2
♦ 8 6 4
♣ Q 8 4

♠ K Q 9 8 5 2 Recall that there is an upper limit of 16 HCP and 17 total points for an overcall. With a stronger hand and a good suit you double first and then bid your suit to show your strength and narrow strain interest (the rifle double). In order to keep things simple for the beginning bridge player, it is recommended that you use the same guideline for balancing. So with this hand, you would start by doubling and then bid your spades at your next turn.
♥ A K
♦ 7 5
♣ A 9 7

Balancing with 2 of a Lower-Ranking Suit

From *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – “Overcalls and Advances - Part 1” you know that the requirements for overcalling at the 2 level are more stringent than those for overcalling at the 1 level. You need more overall strength and a better suit. A similar philosophy applies to balancing at the 2 level vs. the 1 level. While you might balance with a 4-card suit at the 1 level, you always need a respectable 5⁺-card suit and should have a decent 10 HCP when balancing at the 2 level.

There is another subtle inference when you balance by bidding a suit at the 2 level; you tend to deny any real interest in any suits that are higher ranking than opener’s suit. Since you are bidding at the 2 level you clearly have the strength to have bid at the 1 level. Furthermore, you could have bid a higher-ranking 4-card Major Suit of rather mediocre quality at the 1 level if you had it. Since you neglected to make such a bid, you strongly suggest you have no interest in those suits. These suits actually pose some danger to your objective. If opener happens to have a strong hand with 4 cards in one of those suits, he will be able to introduce it at the 2 level and your opponents may end up outbidding you in a better contract than if you had passed.

Another danger factor associated with a balancing bid at the 2 level is that your RHO may have length in that suit and be just lacking the strength required for a response. This might prove to cost you dearly by being set several tricks. This danger is not quite so great when you are balancing at the 1 level because responder might well have stretched just a bit to mention that suit at the 1 level.

Any suits that rank between your suit and opener’s suit are also dangerous if you have shortness there. One of those suits may well be opener’s second suit and he will be able to mention it at the 2 level even without a lot of extra strength. So, your bid might push them out of a poor contract into a safe contract where your side is not able to outbid them.

We consider here an auction that begins with:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	?

- ♠ A 5 4 This should be a reasonably safe hand for a 2♣ bid. If your Major Suits were reversed you would have some concern that opener might have a good hand with something like a 4=5=3=1 pattern and be able to rebid 2♠ to find a 4-4 (or better) fit with responder.
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 8 6 4
 ♣ K Q J 9 8 4 If your red suits were reversed you would have some concern that opener might have a distributional hand in the red suits and be able to rebid 2♦ thereby finding a diamond fit with responder.
- ♠ 6 2 You have some concern about the opponents finding a spade fit but the overall strength of your hand and your good suit beg you to bid 2♣.
 ♥ 8 7 3
 ♦ A K
 ♣ A Q J 9 8 4
- ♠ 10 8 2 This deal probably belongs to the opponents but why sell out for 1♥? Bid 2♣ to bump them up another level. At least you will get partner off to a good lead if you do end up defending.
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ K 8 3
 ♣ A Q J 9 4

Balancing with 1NT

Probably most players treat a balancing bid of 1NT as showing 12 - 14 HCP and of course a balanced hand. This is the recommendation here. As you gain more experience you may want to adjust this somewhat but for starters this agreement should prove adequate. With a stronger hand you can double first and then bid notrump – the rifle double approach.

One change in the requirements for the balancing position as opposed to the direct position is that a stopper in the suit bid by opener is not required if you are on the high end of your HCP range. If you were in the direct position you could hope partner might be able to take some action, but in the balancing position this is the last chance for your partnership to enter the auction.

- ♠ K 8 2 This is a typical hand for a balancing bid of 1NT after any opening bid at the 1 level.
 ♥ A 5 3
 ♦ K 8 3
 ♣ Q 9 7 4
- ♠ A 2 Your high-card strength certainly suggests that you compete in this auction after a 1♦ opening bid. You really don't want to double with only 2 spades and your club suit is rather shabby for a 2-level bid. You don't like to bid notrump without a diamond stopper but that looks like the lesser of evils.
 ♥ A K 3
 ♦ 8 5 3
 ♣ K 8 7 4 2

BALANCING AFTER AN OPENING 1NT BID HAS BEEN PASSED

In this section we consider auction (b) of the Introduction. For this sequence you know that opener has 15 - 17 HCP and responder has 0 - 8 HCP, so the opponents have 15 - 25 HCP between them; therefore your side also has 15 - 25 HCP.

Seldom will opener and responder both be on the high ends of their ranges, so your side rates to have a little more than the minimum of 15 HCP. In fact if you give each of the opponents their average values of 16 and 4, you find that each side will have 20 HCP. So if you have a long suit, your side could well be able to make a partscore contract at the 2 level, especially if partner has a fit for your suit with a short suit on the side for additional distributional values. Very rarely will your side have enough strength to make a game contract or to defeat the 1NT contract, so you should ignore those possible objectives and just hope to be able to compete for a partscore contract. This approach should satisfy your competitive nature for a long time until you gain enough experience to feel that you want to expand your options.

There are more sophisticated (conventional) methods to show a 2-suited hand but those are beyond the scope of this book, so we will limit our discussion to those hands where you want to compete by bidding 2 of a suit. At this point in your bridge life, partner should simply pass your action regardless of her holding. While this may occasionally give you a poor result, in the long run you will get many more good results than bad.

One thing you really will not need to worry about to any significant degree is that opener will compete further. With a limited balanced hand and a passed partner he will rarely be able to take another bid. Nor will he usually be able to make a penalty double since his partner may not have any defensive help whatsoever. It is true that responder may be able to bid or double but that is also usually a low risk.

Just about any long (6^+ cards) suit qualifies for a balancing bid at the 2 level. A decent 5-card suit is adequate if you have an unbalanced hand – something like 5-4-3-1. With two 5-card suits it is reasonable to bid 2 of the lower-ranking suit. If you happen to get doubled you can always run to the other suit at the 2 level.

Here are a few examples:

♠ 6 2 This is clearly worth a 2♥ bid.

♥ A K 8 7 4 3

♦ 8 5 3

♣ 4 2

♠ Q J 9 8 7 3 2 You are unlikely to be severely punished if you bid 2♠.

♥ 5 4

♦ 5 4 3

♣ 2

♠ 7 3 2 Try 2♦ with this holding.

♥ K Q 10 9

♦ A J 10 8 7

♣ 2

♠ A K Yes, you have a really nice hand. Just remember that opener and
 ♥ K Q 10 9 6 you account for at least 33 HCP. You might miss a game contract
 ♦ A Q 10 8 7 if he has his values concentrated in the black suits, but in the long
 ♣ 2 run you will be better off to settle for a bid of 2♦. If you get dou-
 bled you might try 2♥. Remember that the object is just to get a
 positive score out of this deal, not to maximize your result.

BALANCING AFTER BOTH OPPONENTS HAVE BID

There are many auctions where both opponents have bid but the auction has stopped at a low level and you must decide whether to pass and defend or compete with a double or a bid. All of these auctions can be divided into two significant categories:

- Those where the opponents have found a fit
- Those where the opponents have not found a fit

When the Opponents Have Found a Fit

Auctions (c), (d) and (e) presented in the Introduction of this chapter are typical of auctions in this category. In all of these auctions both opponents have significantly limited the strengths of their hands with their bids and/or subsequent passes.

Since the opponents have found a fit, it is well known that there is a strong probability that your side also has a fit. We can demonstrate this with a few examples, or perhaps more appropriately, counterexamples. The only time your side will not have a Golden Fit is if the opponents have a combined holding of 6 cards in every suit other than their trump suit. Below are a few possible combined hand patterns where this would be true, with the numbers in each position denoting the number of cards in a specific suit. The first suit is the trump suit where they have exactly an 8-card fit.

Opponent 1	Opponent 2
4-3-3-3	4-3-3-3
4-4-3-2	4-2-3-4
5-3-3-2	3-3-3-4
6-3-2-2	2-3-4-4

From these examples you can infer that for any hand pattern for “Opponent 1” there is only one hand pattern for “Opponent 2” for which there is exactly an 8-card fit in the trump suit and exactly a combined holding of 6 cards in each of the side suits. For all other hand patterns held by “Opponent 2” there will be at least one side suit for which the opponents have a combined holding of fewer than 6 cards and therefore your side will have a combined holding of at least 8 cards. Furthermore, if the opponents have a combined holding in their trump suit of 9 or

more cards there will always be at least one side suit in which they have a combined holding of fewer than 6 cards.

Since there are many possible hand patterns for “Opponent 2” other than the one for which they have exactly 6 cards in each of the side suits it is common practice in the bridge community to ignore those specific patterns and adopt the following general principle.

If the opponents have a fit, so do we.

We also recall that the Law of Total Tricks suggests that we take some action. The opponents have bid to the level of their number of trumps (or perhaps even lower) so from a defensive viewpoint we should strive to not let them play there. Furthermore, if we do compete we may well find a Golden Fit at the 2 level and the Law suggests we should be playing there.

Before proceeding with our discussion of this topic it is appropriate to digress and look at another auction that at first glance may appear to be similar to those being discussed but is significantly different.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	?

The three critical differences in this auction are:

- West has shown extra values with her initial 2/1 response.
- West may not have a fit for opener but might be just showing a preference to spades over diamonds.
- You will have to go to the 3 level to compete in the unbid suit – hearts.

Consequently discretion may be the better part of valor in an auction of this type. If East’s suit had been hearts instead of spades, the 2 level in spades would still be available, but some discretion would still be suggested.

In an auction such as (c) where only one suit has been bid you should almost always balance with a double or a bid. You might be a little more cautious if their suit is hearts and you cannot bid spades or double, or if their suit is spades. In these cases you will have to compete at the 3 level. Here you will especially want to pay attention to the vulnerability and the form of scoring.

Lawrence has introduced the concepts of **dangerous suits** and **safe suits** in competitive auctions. If responder raises opener or bids 1NT then all suits higher ranking than opener’s suit are safe and all lower-ranking suits are dangerous. The point here is that neither opener nor responder is likely to have length in a higher-ranking suit but responder may have length in a lower-ranking suit without the values to bid it.

Here are a few example hands for South and his action after auction (c):

- ♠ A J 10 4 Bid 2♠. Note that partner is almost guaranteed to be short in clubs.
 ♥ 6 2
 ♦ Q J 10 5
 ♣ 8 4 2
- ♠ J 8 4 3 This ideal shape calls for a double.
 ♥ Q 9 8 6
 ♦ K J 10 2
 ♣ 4
- ♠ A J 8 Although your shape is not ideal, it is adequate for a takeout double.
 ♥ K 9 6 4
 ♦ Q 10 7 5
 ♣ 8 4
- ♠ K J 10 Can you reason that partner probably has at most a singleton club?
 ♥ Q 10 9
 ♦ A J 7
 ♣ 8 6 4 2
- ♠ A 7 For this hand East's opening bid of 1♦ was raised to 2♦ and passed to you. While you have a nice opening hand you did not have a chance to open the bidding. You really can't double with a doubleton spade and clubs is a dangerous suit. Your best action is to pass and try to defeat their 2♦ contract.
 ♥ K 6 4
 ♦ Q J 5
 ♣ K J 9 7 5

These examples just scratched the surface of all the possible auctions where the opponents have found a fit and stopped at the 2 level, but should give you a little insight into the idea of balancing. As you gain more experience you may want to refer to Resource 10 for additional guidelines.

When the Opponents Have Not Found a Fit

When the opponents have not found a fit there is a high probability that your side does not have a fit either. So the bottom line for these auctions is that you have to be quite cautious when entering the auction. You must pay particular attention to

- Dangerous suits
- Vulnerability
- Form of scoring

Lawrence has divided these auctions into three categories:

- The opponents stop in 1NT.
- The opponents have a pseudo fit where one player (usually responder) has shown a preference between two suits bid by their partner.

- The opponents have not indicated a fit – one player has rebid his suit.

It is convenient to address each of these categories separately.

The Opponents Stop in 1NT

Auctions such as (f) and (g) of the Introduction are typical for this category. If you enter such an auction your side will always be playing at the 2 level, perhaps without a fit. This can be a dangerous scenario and it is quite possible one of the opponents will double you for penalties. If you are vulnerable and go set as little as one trick doubled, the opponents will receive a score of 200 which is almost sure to give you a bottom in a matchpoint game. If you do decide to bid you promise at least a 5-card suit.

One side issue that must be addressed in these auctions is the meaning of a double by you or your partner. Is it for penalties (showing strength in the suit bid by your RHO) or for takeout? We'll answer this question shortly, but first let's look at a few hands for South for auction (f).

♠ Q J 8 7 4 If your spade suit were a little better or your hand a little stronger you would have overcalled 1♠ at your first opportunity, so this is about as good as you could be. Now that you are in the balancing position, you know that spades is a safe suit and know that the opponents have limited values, so you might bid 2♠. On the other hand, with a moderate long suit you have reasonable defensive values so you might choose to pass and defend instead.

♠ Q J 8 7 4 Note that when responder bypasses all of the other suits to bid 1NT he probably has at least 4 clubs, so partner should be short in clubs making it very likely that she has spade support. Now a bid of 2♠ is a reasonable balancing bid.

Now let's look at a couple of hands for South where his LHO opened the bidding and rebid 1NT as in auction (g).

♠ J 8 7 5 4 With such a ratty spade suit you certainly did not want to bid at your first opportunity when opener had not yet limited his hand and might have held 4 spades. Now that opener has denied 4 spades and limited his strength you should be fairly safe with a 2♠ bid. Of course, responder may have 4 spades but at least you have high hearts sitting over responder's presumed heart strength. You have no guarantee that partner has a fit; the suit could easily be 5-3-3-2, but you hate to sell out for 1NT. It always helps to have a short suit when balancing like this.

♠ J 10 8 7 4 With your length in hearts partner is marked for heart shortness and therefore probable spade support in this auction. You should achieve a reasonable result with a 2♠ bid. If one of your small hearts were a small diamond your action would be much less clear.

Now back to the question of the double in this type of auction. Lawrence suggests that it be for penalties based on the following observations:

- Since the opponents have not found a fit you should not expect to have one either.
- If you have the shape for a takeout double, you will be relatively weak or you would have doubled at your first opportunity.
- You will always be competing at the 2 level.
- Since you will be competing against a misfit, the combined hands of you and your partner will not play very well; your shortness will be opposite partner's length.

Here is an example of the problem with a takeout double after the auction

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	X

♠ Q J 10 2 With anything more than this you would have doubled at your first opportunity and indeed some players would have doubled then with these cards. Nonetheless, you are not likely to get a good result if you double for takeout at your second turn. The opponents clearly do not have a Golden fit so they have at most 7 hearts between them and partner will have at least 5 hearts. In fact, his pattern may very well be 5-3-3-2, in which case you will be playing in a 4-3 fit at the 2 level. If he tries to ruff heart losers in dummy, he may well lose trump control in the process. Even if you have a 4-4 fit, responder may overruff dummy if partner tries to ruff his heart losers with your trumps.

Now let's look at the same auction with a different hand if you treat the double as a penalty double.

♠ 10 2 You had no action to take at your first turn but have high prospects of defeating a 1NT contract, especially if you can get partner to lead hearts at every opportunity. Using the double for penalties with
 ♥ K J 9 7
 ♦ K Q 6
 ♣ K Q 10 5 lead-directing implications should work out very well.

Be sure to discuss this with your partner because not everyone has the same understanding. If you play a lot with one or two partners there is another agreement you might have, also mentioned by Lawrence. You can have it both ways. Partner just looks at the number of cards she has in the suit the opponents bid. If she is short you must have length and intend the double to be for penalties. If she has length you must be short and intend the double for takeout.

The Opponents Have Shown a Preference

When the opponents have stopped at the 2 level with a preference bid, they will usually not have a fit and you will want to stay out of the auction. However,

there are exceptions. The key to knowing when to at least think about taking some action is to understand when the preference bid actually shows a fit. So we will look at a few such auctions starting with (h) from the Introduction.

In auction (h) opener has shown a balanced hand without 4 or more cards in either major so he must have 4 or 5 diamonds and 2 - 4 clubs. His hand pattern will be something like 3=3=4=3, 3=3=5=2, 3=2=4=4 or even 2=2=5=4 with a decent doubleton spade. If responder also had a balanced hand she would have been happy with the 1NT contract and if she had an unbalanced hand with long hearts she could have rebid 2♥. With a 2-suited hand (hearts and an unbid suit) she might also have passed 1NT or perhaps bid her second suit. Note that if they were playing New Minor Forcing (see Chapter 8 – “New Minor Forcing”) and her second suit was clubs she would not be able to bid that with a weak hand so she could have passed. The implication is that she must have an unbalanced hand with real diamond support when she shows a diamond preference. Her pattern might be 4-4-4-1 with a singleton spade or club, 3-4-5-1 with shortness in the black suits and length in the red suits or some more distributional shape. So you have the chance of finding a fit with partner in one of the black suits but run the risk of the suit you choose being responder’s second suit. If you have length in both black suits a double would be appropriate to get partner to choose the suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

It is very likely that responder has a doubleton heart and she also has at most 3 clubs. If opener has only 5 hearts and 4 clubs they do not have a fit. Furthermore responder could have diamonds as a second suit. Best to stay out of the auction and defend. If responder’s first bid were 1NT the same conclusion could be drawn, although in some bidding systems the 1NT bid could be forcing and the 2♣ rebid might not promise at least 4 cards while responder could have as many as 4 clubs.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	Pass	?

This auction is somewhat unique in that responder had 3 other calls available – pass, 1♠ and 1NT. Her choice of 2♣ must show a real club fit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	Pass	?

East would never pass the 2♣ rebid by opener without a real fit of at least 4 cards. Here's how you know. If she has only 3 clubs, she has 10 cards in the other suits. She has at most 3 spades, so she has 7+ cards in the red suits. With a doubleton heart and 5 diamonds she would show a preference for hearts and with more diamonds she would bid 2♦. However, be aware that responder likely has a singleton heart. Unless she has excellent clubs, she would give a preference to hearts with a doubleton heart. If East's first bid had been 1♠, she may have only 3 clubs and her pattern might be 3=5=1=4.

Let's look at a couple of auctions where the preference shows a fit with an appropriate hand for South to enter the auction.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	Pass	?

♠ K Q 9 2 This is a rather unusual auction but a couple of things are clear. The opponents are not even close to having the values for a game contract.
 ♥ 9 7 5
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ 6 5 3 2 They likely have a Golden Fit in hearts, partner is short in hearts and you probably have a Golden Fit in spades. This is a reasonable time to bid 1♠.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	Pass	?

♠ K 10 7 You clearly did not want to get into this auction at your first opportunity, but now you really do not want to sell out to a 1♠ contract.
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ A J 9 6 4
 ♣ 10 3 2 You can treat this auction about the same as if West had opened the bidding with 1♠ and that was passed out to you. Bid 1NT. You do need a stopper in responder's suit as well as a stopper in at least one of opener's suits.

When an Opponent Has Rebid His Suit

Here are some of the typical types of auctions we consider in this category:

- Opener rebids his first suit after responder bids a new suit at the 1 level or 1NT.
- Responder rebids her suit at the 2 level after opener rebids a new suit, 1NT or his own suit.

There may be 1, 2 or 3 unbid suits in these auctions and you will have to bid at the 2 level or perhaps even the 3 level. There will never be a natural notrump bid available.

Following are a few typical auctions and hands for South.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

♠ 9 6 5 2 You really do not want to sell out to the 2♥ contract. You have reasonable support for all three of the unbid suits so balance with a double.

♥ 7 5

♦ A 10 4

♣ K Q 7 2

♠ K J 9 6 4 Spades is a safe suit and partner has some values so bid 2♠. Always strive to balance in a higher-ranking suit, almost never in a lower-ranking suit. You would bid 2♠ even with a much weaker suit (but about the same overall strength), especially if you were not vulnerable.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	?

♠ J 10 9 6 You have support for the two unbid suits. Get partner into the action with a takeout double. He may not have a fit for either one, but you will probably survive. Note that East may have extra values but no diamond fit so chose to take a conservative action by passing.

♥ A 5

♦ 8 4

♣ A J 10 7 4

♠ A 6 Here is a hand for you to learn something new. If you are not vulnerable, balance with a **natural** bid of 2♥. Yes, you are bidding the opponent's suit but this is not a cuebid in the sense used earlier of "partner bid something that makes sense." The difference here is that neither you nor partner has yet to do anything other than pass. Partner should have some useful values and probably at least a doubleton heart. You may be set a trick but might make the contract, perhaps even with an overtrick.

SUMMARY

When the opponents have been bidding and your side has not they sometimes stop at a low level. If your LHO was the last player to bid followed by passes by your partner and your RHO you are in the pass-out seat or balancing position. If you pass the auction is over but many times you should double or bid even though you have meager values. This is possible because your partner very likely has the balance of the missing strength but did not have the proper distribution to enter the auction. The vulnerability and form of scoring will play an important role in your decision to act or pass. If you do decide to act your hand shape and strength will govern the action you take.

Balancing after an Opening Suit Bid has been Passed

The most common actions you will take after this auction are the following:

- Double
- 1 of a new suit
- 2 of a lower-ranking suit
- 1NT

A good guideline for the strength required for these actions is about 3 points lighter than those required to make those calls after your RHO had opened the bidding.

As with a takeout double the balancing double promises support for the unbid suits. Ideally you have 4-card support for the unbid Majors but a good 3-card suit is adequate if you have a little extra overall strength or good intermediate cards in other suits.

The suit quality required for a bid of 1 of a suit is much less stringent than that required for a direct overcall. Just about any 5-card suit is adequate and even a good 4-card suit is acceptable.

If you must bid at the 2 level to mention your suit, you should have a decent 5-card suit and a respectable 10 HCP.

The 1NT balancing bid is similar to a direct 1NT overcall but may be done with 12 - 14 HCP. With a stronger hand you can double first and bid notrump later.

Balancing after an Opening 1NT Bid has been Passed

In this auction your side rates to have about as many HCP as the opponents. If you have a balanced hand you should just pass and defend. But if you have an unbalanced hand it is best to compete. With a 6⁺-card suit or a good 5-card suit go ahead and bid 2 of your suit. With two 5-card suits bid the lower ranking. If you get doubled you can run to the other suit at the same level.

Balancing after both Opponents have Bid

These auctions can be divided into two major categories:

- Those where the opponents have found a fit
- Those where the opponents have not found a fit

In the former case you rely on the following popular bridge axiom:

If the opponents have a fit, so do we.

While this is not a 100% guarantee, it is very highly probable.

You will also pay attention to safe suits and dangerous suits. If responder has bid 1NT or raised opener then all suits higher ranking than opener's suit are safe and all lower-ranking suits are dangerous. You should strive to bid a safe suit but avoid dangerous suits.

In this type of balancing position it is quite acceptable to bid a decent 4-card suit and any 5-card suit is just fine. If you have the right distribution a takeout double is appropriate.

If the opponents have not found a fit, you may not have one either, so you must be more cautious.

If the opponents stop at 1NT, you might bid a 5-card suit that was not good enough to bid the first time.

It is probably best for beginners to play a double of 1NT for penalties rather than take out. If you play a lot with the same partner you might want to use the 2-way approach. If partner is short in the suit bid by the opponents he interprets your double as penalty. If he has length in that suit he interprets it as take out.

If the opponents have stopped at a low level after responder has shown a preference, it is usually best to defend. But in certain auctions the preference will show a real fit, and action by you might be called for if you have an appropriate hand.

Sometimes the opponents stop at a low level after one of them rebids his suit. In these cases there may be anywhere from one to three unbid suits and you will have to compete at the 2 level or maybe even the 3 level. Depending on the specific auction and your holding, you may choose to double or bid a suit of at least 5 cards.



CHAPTER 2

– Advances after a Balancing Double or Bid

Introduction

Advancing after a Balancing Takeout Double

Advancing after a Balancing Suit Bid

Advancing after a Balancing Bid of 1NT

Summary



INTRODUCTION

Most often the auction after a balancing action results in a battle between both sides for a partscore contract. This battle may be anything from a mild skirmish to a major war depending on the HCP, distributional values and fits of both sides. Your side should fight fiercely through the 2 and 3 levels of bidding but be very cautious of proceeding higher. Only rarely will you have sufficient strength for a game contract. Use the Law of Total Tricks as a guideline for your bidding decisions.

Don't forget to revalue your hand as appropriate for the auction. You can also use the Y/N/M approach to answer the questions GF? and G? If you are the advancer you can proceed in a manner similar to that as if partner had taken his action in the direct seat; just remember that his minimum strength may be about 3 points lighter.

In all of the following discussion also remember that you passed at your first opportunity so it is rare that you will have a very strong hand; otherwise, you would not have passed earlier. Nonetheless, there is the possibility that you have a hand of opening strength or a little stronger but simply did not have the proper distribution to take immediate action.

ADVANCING AFTER A BALANCING TAKEOUT DOUBLE

Advancing after partner has made a balancing takeout double is very similar to advancing after partner has made a direct takeout double. The two primary new considerations are:

- Partner may have as few as 10 points, including distribution.
- Partner is somewhat more likely to have flawed distribution, especially only 3 cards in an unbid Major when doubling an opening bid of 1m.

Since partner may have as few as 10 points we need 15 points for our G? = Y decision. That leaves a range of 0 - 14 for G? = M which can be subdivided as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}0 - 5: G? &= M^W, (0 - 3: G? = M^{W-}, 3 - 5: G? = M^{W+}) \\6 - 10: G? &= M^I, (6 - 8: G? = M^{I-}, 8 - 10: G? = M^{I+}) \\11 - 14: G? &= M^S, (11 - 12: G? = M^S-, 13 - 14: G? = M^S+)\end{aligned}$$

Note that we have used 5-point intervals for the two lower subdivisions and a 4-point interval for the strong subdivision. This is consistent with our philosophy of first keeping the subdivisions as equal as possible and then the strong subdivision as narrow as possible. Note also that the midpoint of the two lower subdivisions can be put in either the lower or upper secondary subdivision based on your judgment.

Advancer's options and actions when opener rebids are slightly different from those when opener passes. We consider first the latter case and then discuss the appropriate changes for the former.

When Opener Passed

When opener passed after partner's takeout double advancer has several options:

1. Minimum suit bid
2. Jump suit bid
3. Notrump bid
4. Cuebid
5. Pass

1. Advancer's Minimum Suit Bid

This will be advancer's usual action when she decides $G? = M^{W,I}$. The only other actions she might take are a bid of 1NT or pass, both of which are discussed later. This action is essentially the same as after partner has made a normal takeout double and need not be discussed further here.

2. Advancer's Jump Suit Bid

This will be advancer's usual action when her $G?$ decision is M^S . The bid will be rare because quite often when her hand is this strong she would have taken action at her first turn rather than pass. Here are a few examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ K 8 7 Although your hand is strong enough to overcall at your first opportunity the suit quality is quite shabby. But, having passed the first time, you must show your overall strength with a jump to 2♦ at this point. This jump in a minor promises a 5-card suit. If one of your clubs were a heart or spade you would jump to 2 of that Major instead.
♥ A J 3
♦ Q 10 6 5 4
♣ 9 3

♠ Q 8 7 6 5 Some players would have overcalled 1♠ with this hand. But the poor suit quality and questionable value of the pointed suit queens might have convinced you to pass. Furthermore you certainly have no desire for a spade lead if you defend. This is a typical maximum for a jump to 2♠.
♥ K Q 3
♦ Q 8
♣ K J 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ K 3 ♦ A 2 Surely you did not even think about bidding 1♥ after your RHO bid 1♦, did you? Once again you jump to show your strong game interest. This hand has the minimum strength for your jump to 2♥.

♠ Q 9 8 7 No reasonable action you could take over the opening bid. It is time to show your values with a jump to 2♠. Note that the jump in a major does not promise a 5-card suit.

You could have a little stronger hand than those shown above if the opening bid were 1♠ and you had a 5-card (or good 4-card) heart suit. Such a hand would be suitable for a jump to 3♥ after your partner balanced with a takeout double.

Let's look at one more auction and hand.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ K 3 While some players might have overcalled with 2♦ immediately, your hand strength is minimal and the suit quality a little below the minimum standards for an overcall at the 2 level. Now you are compelled to make a jump to 3♦ to show your strength.

♥ 8 7 6

♦ A Q 10 6 5

♣ Q 13

3. Advancer's Notrump Bids

Just as when partner doubles in the direct position he really does not want to hear a notrump bid from you. Nonetheless there will be hands where that bid is really your only (or at least best) option. As in the standard takeout double sequence, you prefer to have at least 9 HCP when bidding notrump but might have to shade that a little for expediency. Of course, you have greater risk in this scenario because partner could have relatively little in HCP if he has the right distribution.

Although not ideal, we will keep the same G? decision structure for the balancing takeout double as for the direct takeout double as discussed in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances.”

0 - 8; N 9 - 10; M^W 11 - 12; M^I 13 - 14; M^S 15⁺; Y

The higher the opening bid the less constructive your 1NT bid might be because you may not want to bid a 3-card suit at the 2 level. For example,

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ 8 7 5 3 2 As North what are you supposed to bid with this hand? While 1NT is by no means ideal, it might well be the least of all evils.

♥ K 6
♦ Q 5 4
♣ J 5 3

♠ K J 9 2 Here is a more reasonable 1NT bid after the above sequence.

♥ K 6 3
♦ Q 5 4
♣ J 5 3

♠ Q 10 8 7 This is a typical hand for a jump to 2NT and you might struggle with that contract if partner held

♠ 6 ♥ Q 8 6 5 ♦ A 8 5 2 ♣ Q 6 4 2

♠ K J 6 Even though you have 15 HCP, the minimum for an immediate 1NT overcall, your lack of a source of tricks might have swayed you to pass at your first opportunity. Now you might try a bid of 3NT. Partner should have some semblance of a fit for your diamonds so you should have a good chance of scrambling home with 9 tricks even if he has only about 8 HCP as in the previous example.
♥ Q 3
♦ Q J 8 6 5
♣ A Q 7

4. Advancer's Cuebid

While there are more sophisticated uses of the cuebid in this sequence, for the beginner it is easier to retain the same usage as when advancing after a normal takeout double. The cuebid shows a hand for which G? = M^S or Y and asks partner to bid his best Major if he doubled a minor and to bid his best minor if he doubled a Major.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ Q 7 6 5 Let's get partner to choose the Major Suit with a cuebid of 2♦ just in case he doubled with only 3 cards in one of the Majors.
♥ A J 6 5
♦ A 10 5 4
♣ 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ 9 7 5 With only 3 rather poor spades you elected not to double at your first turn. Now you have to take your best shot at getting into a minor suit Golden Fit with a 2♥ cuebid. Partner will bid his best minor.
 ♥ A 4
 ♦ A 10 5 4
 ♣ A J 6 5

5. Advancer's Penalty Pass

Every once in a while you will have a hand where you wanted to make a penalty double of the opening bid by your RHO. Of course you knew you could not do that because that would be a takeout double and partner would bid something. When you have that hand you pass in tempo and hope that partner balances with a takeout double. If he does you can achieve your original goal by passing his takeout double thereby converting it to a penalty double. Your pass in this scenario is called a **penalty pass** and the basic idea was discussed in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances” where we considered the same action after partner made a direct takeout double after an opening bid by your LHO.

Before you pass partner’s double be sure that you consider the following 3 factors:

- Partner may have made a light takeout double in the balancing position so may not have the defensive values you would expect if he had doubled in the direct position.
- How good are the intermediate cards in opener’s suit? Something like Q7532 is not nearly as good as KJ97.
- What are your offensive potential and the vulnerability? You will have to set the opponents 4 tricks to make up for a game if the vulnerability is unfavorable. On the other hand, a 2 trick set is enough to offset a game contract when the vulnerability is favorable.

Following are some examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ A 8 7 6 Your defensive prospects are suspect and you have 4 spades, so bid 1♠. If the decision is close take the offensive approach.
 ♥ 3
 ♦ Q 9 7 4 2
 ♣ J 9 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ K 3
 ♥ A 8 4 3 2
 ♦ Q 10 7
 ♣ Q 9 5

You need 7 tricks to set the contract. Where are they going to come from? If partner has the ♠A your side will probably score 2 spade tricks, a spade ruff and your ♥A. Do you really think you are confident in getting 3 more tricks? A 1NT bid looks much better than pass.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

♠ J 8 7 4 2
 ♥ Q 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A Q 8 7 6

You have much more offense than defense with these cards. Give partner a jump bid of 2♠ to show your strong game interest.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	?		

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

Partner's double is just what you were hoping for. Your intermediate spades are likely to produce a couple of tricks along with the king. You are probably looking at 2 more tricks in the minors and your heart holding should help partner win a couple of tricks there. Any other tricks partner can take will be icing on the cake.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	1♠	Pass	Pass
X	Pass	?	

♠ K 10 9 3
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K Q 3
 ♣ 10 6 5

Passing may well be the winning call here, especially if the opponents are vulnerable; +200 is always a nice matchpoint score. Since partner is a passed hand it is doubtful you have game and setting them may be close. If they make it just remember that you can't win them all. If your partner doesn't defend well you might try 1NT instead.

When Opener Rebid

The bottom line when opener bid again is to not sell out cheaply if you probably have a fit and $G? = M^l$ or better. You may also consider making a penalty double. Let's look at a few examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	X
1♥	?		

♠ Q 10 8 7 You certainly didn't think of passing, did you? 1♠ is a clear choice here. Furthermore, if this gets passed to opener and he rebids 2♣ you should then bid 2♦ without a second thought.
 ♥ K 2
 ♦ K 9 8 7
 ♣ 10 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
1NT	?		

♠ J 8 7 5 4 This is near a minimum for a 2♠ bid. You do not plan to bid again, but you absolutely must let partner know you have a fit and a few working cards.
 ♥ K 4 2
 ♦ 10 7 5
 ♣ Q 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
1NT	?		

♠ K 8 7 Your best call here is probably 2♦. The alternative is a penalty double which should be rejected because: 1) It is better to play in a reasonable contract than make a speculative double, 2) The opponents are not vulnerable (did I forget to say that?) and 3) You would like your hearts to be a little stronger – at least the ten instead of the 8. Also, if you double and they run to 2♥ you would have to bid 3♦ which is not a pleasant choice.
 ♥ K 8 7
 ♦ A 10 8 7 5
 ♣ J 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	?		

♠ K J 8 7 5 If West had passed you would have bid 1♠ more because you had to than because you wanted to. Now that West has bid again you are a little light to venture to 2♠. But, change a couple of cards in the rounded suits to as little as a queen and a jack and a bid of 2♠ would be reasonable.
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ 10 6 5
 ♣ 9 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
2♥	?		

♠ A 8 5 4 The opponents are vulnerable on this deal. You need only 6 tricks to defeat them and you should be looking at 4 of those (3 hearts and a spade) plus you have a little help in developing some tricks for partner in the minors. It is time for a penalty double!
 ♥ K J 9 7
 ♦ Q 8
 ♣ J 10 3

ADVANCING AFTER A BALANCING SUIT BID

Just as with advancing after a balancing takeout double, advancing after partner has balanced by bidding a suit is similar to advancing when partner has overcalled. The primary new considerations are:

- Partner may be very light – as few as 7 points if at the 1 level
- Partner's suit may be a rather shabby 5 cards or a decent 4 cards

At the same time there is nothing to prevent partner from holding a good suit and a strong hand, up to about 17 points. With more he would double first and then bid his suit.

The minimum requirements for a balancing suit bid bring up an interesting point. For there to be game opposite a 7-point hand by partner, you would need about 18 points. But you can hardly be that strong and have passed at your first opportunity. So here are the strength brackets for your G? decisions when partner has balanced with a suit bid at the 1 level:

0 - 7: G? = N
 8⁺: G? = M (8 - 9: G? = M^W, 10 - 12: G? = M^I, 13⁺: G? = M^S)

The situation is a little different if partner has balanced with a suit bid at the 2 level, especially if he bid 2♥ after an opening bid of 1♠. Our G? brackets are now:

0 - 7: G? = N
 8 - 14: G? = M (8 - 9: G? = M^W, 10 - 12: G? = M^I, 13 - 14: G? = M^S)
 15⁺: G? = Y

However, just because you have fewer than 8 points does not mean that you should never bid. Remember that your objective here is not always to reach game but sometimes just to compete for a partscore.

There are some significant differences in advancer's options after partner has balanced with a suit bid and opener passes or rebids. For clarity and emphasis we consider opener's actions separately.

When Opener Passed

As advancer you have the following options when partner has balanced with a suit bid:

1. Raise
2. Cuebid
3. Bid notrump
4. Bid a new suit
5. Pass

If opener passed, your partner may very well buy the contract with his bid, so you have only two reasons to bid:

- Strive for a game
- Improve the contract

We'll see how you achieve these goals as we examine each of the 5 action options.

1. Raises

You will usually raise partner if you have support and $G? = M$. If $G? = M^{W,I}$, your typical action will be a simple raise as illustrated in the following examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

♠ K 8 7 There is no reason partner can't have about 16 points and a good spade suit. There might be a game in this deal. Make sure you don't miss the opportunity; raise to 2♠. If partner bids 3♠ you will pass since you are on the low end of $G? = M^I$ and the value of your ♣Q is questionable.
 ♥ A 10 9 5
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ Q 9 7 3

♠ Q 10 7 5 This is about the maximum you could have to a raise to 2♠. This time if partner bids 3♠ you will carry on to 4♠.
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K 9 5
 ♣ K 8 3

When $G? = M^S$ you need to make a stronger bid. Since the opponents have shown no game interest we do not need the jump raise for preemptive purposes in this scenario. So we can use that bid to show good support for partner and a strong game interest.

♠ Q 10 5 4 When you have 4-card support and a hand that is not flat you can give partner a jump raise. This is similar to a limit raise when partner has opened the bidding. Bid 3♠ with this hand.
 ♥ K J 7
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A Q 7 3

When partner bids a new suit at the 2 level he shows a stronger hand so on occasion you will have enough strength to jump to game in a Major.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	2♥
Pass	?		

♠ A 8 7 5 Partner's bid of 2♥ over 1♠ shows at least 10 HCP and a good 5-card suit. You have 9 HCP plus 3 dummy points. Partner rates to be short in spades and your 2 aces are undervalued. You very likely have a game on this deal; bid 4♥. This is a good example of hand evaluation in light of the bidding rather than just blind counting of points.
 ♥ J 10 5
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A 10 9 5 4

2. The Cuebid

When partner has overcalled you use the cuebid both when you have a support for partner with the strength of a limit raise or better and also when you have a good hand and a strong suit of your own. When partner has balanced with a suit bid you cannot have the latter hand or you would have overcalled at your first turn. So the use of the cuebid is different in the current scenario.

A cuebid can be used in two circumstances when you have a good hand:

- You have 4-card support for partner but a flat hand
- You do not have support for partner (perhaps a shabby 3-card suit) and no clear direction

Here are some examples:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

♠ Q 10 8 You have an opening hand but really could not take any action over the 1♣ opening bid by your RHO. You do have adequate trump support but remember that partner may have a rather weak 5-card suit. With a flat hand it will be difficult for partner to make 4♠ unless he has a good hand and a respectable suit. Start with a cuebid of 2♣ and then continue as follows:
 ♥ A 5 4
 ♦ K J 8 7
 ♣ K 6 2

- Pass if partner bids 2/3/4♠.
- Bid 2♠ if partner bids 2 of either red suit.
- Raise his 2NT bid to 3NT.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

♠ K J 8 7 You have only 12 HCP but your two aces are undervalued so you should have opened the bidding with this hand if you had the chance. But after West opened the bidding you chose to pass. Some players might have doubled but partner would expect a little better shape with such minimal values; a singleton or at least doubleton heart with another card or two in the minors would be adequate. Of course, that would give you additional dummy points so the double would be reasonable. As is, you now have the requisite 4-card support for a jump raise but you have a flat hand. Therefore it will be prudent to start with a 2♥ cuebid and continue as follows:

- Pass if partner bids 2/3/4♠.
- If partner bids 2NT you could pass but 3♠ is another option. His 2NT bid would strongly suggest a 4-card or really poor 5-card spade suit. Your decision is probably based on your partnership style.
- Bid 3♠ if partner bids 3 of either minor.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	?		

♠ K J 7 On this deal your side is vulnerable. You were eager to open 1♣ but after your RHO beat you to the punch with his opening bid of 1♦ you were reluctant to bid 2♣. Now you feel you need to tell partner you have a good hand but have no natural bid available. You don't want to raise with only 2-card support or bid notrump without a diamond stopper, so you start with a 2♦ cuebid and proceed as follows:

- Pass 2♥.
- Raise 3♥ to 4♥.
- Raise 2NT to 3NT.
- Bid 3♣ over 2♠.

3. Notrump Bids

When considering a notrump bid after partner has balanced with a suit bid, we do not have to worry that he may be counting a few points for shortness in the opponent's suit as we would when he doubles, but we do have to worry that he may be somewhat light for his bid. The end results are the same. We like to have a G? =

M decision when bidding notrump, but may have to shade that occasionally from a practical viewpoint.

You will want to bid notrump when

- You have the required strength.
- You have a stopper in the opponent's suit.
- You have length or strength in the unbid suits.
- You lack significant support for partner (a poor 3-card suit or fewer cards).

Here are the point-count recommendations:

1NT: 9 - 11 2NT (Jump): 12 - 14 2NT (Nonjump): 11 - 12

These ranges are somewhat flexible depending on intermediate cards, a partial fit with partner and your partnership style.

Let's look at a few examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

♠ J 8 7 While you could raise to 2♠, 1NT is a better bid. You have nice heart intermediates and something in all of the other unbid suits.
♥ K 10 9 7 Partner's spades may not be all that great. A notrump partscore may
♦ K 5 4 be better than spades and 3NT might be better than 4♠.
♣ Q J 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	?		

♠ Q 8 We always prefer notrump to minor suit contracts when reasonable.
♥ K 5 4 It is extremely unlikely that your side can make 5♦ on this deal, but
♦ K 9 7 5 3NT might just be there. Get started on the right track with a bid of
♣ Q J 6 3 1NT.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

♠ 8 You bid 1NT on this hand not so much because you have a stiff spade but because you have decent values to show. Lacking one of the high honors in the minors you would pass this hand.
♥ Q 10 7
♦ K J 8 3
♣ A 5 4 3 2

♠ J 7
 ♥ K Q 9 7
 ♦ Q 8 6
 ♣ K Q 10 5

This is a typical hand for a jump to 2NT. You might like better diamonds, but since opener did not rebid them he might not have a very good suit. He could even have a 4=4=3=2 hand. Even if he does have a respectable suit his partner may choose to lead something else, perhaps a rounded suit.

4. Bidding a New Suit

The fact that you are a passed hand makes this option quite rare. After all, you had a chance to show a good suit and meager values at your first turn. Why would you pass then but want to bid your suit now? There can be some reasons and we will explore those here.

Lawrence breaks these bids into five categories and I will follow his lead. But rather than headline each one I will simply mention the pertinent factors with each example.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	?		

♠ J 8 7 6 5
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A J 8
 ♣ Q 10 6 4

I surely hope you did not even think about bidding 1♠ after West opened with 1♦. Your suit is next to awful and your hand quality is substandard for an overcall. But now that partner balanced with 1♥ you feel that 1♠ might be a better spot so make that bid. Note that in this auction partner overcalled at the 1 level and you also bid at the 1 level.

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

Clearly this hand is not worth a 2♣ overcall regardless of the vulnerability. While 1♥ may not be a bad contract, 2♣ sure looks like it would be better. Since you did not bid at your first turn partner will expect you to have a good suit and not much more strength than you have. This is a case where partner balanced at the 1 level and you bid a new suit at the 2 level which is lower ranking than opener's suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	?		

♠ 9 8 2
 ♥ Q 3
 ♦ K J 10 8 6 4
 ♣ Q 3

This is similar to the previous case but now partner balanced at the 2 level. You will bid 2♦, a suit that is lower ranking than opener's suit.

The fourth case is where partner balances at the 2 level and you bid a suit that is higher ranking than opener's suit. How can you be willing to bid this suit now at the 2 level when you were not willing to bid it at the 1 level at your first opportunity? Lawrence gives an example of this but has a hard time justifying the bid.

The final case is demonstrated by the following example auction.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣		

Lawrence's only comment: "Hard to imagine."

5. Passing

Never forget that "Pass" is one of your options. This will be easy when you have a poor hand but should also be your choice for some hands/auctions where you do have substantial values.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	?		

♠ K J 7 You have only moderate values, no fit for partner and no stopper in the enemy's suit. Game is extremely doubtful and you have no reason to think that 2♣ is better than 1♥. Pass is your best call.
♥ 4 2
♦ 8 6 3
♣ A Q 8 6 2

When Opener Rebid

When opener rebid, advancer has all of the options that were available when opener passed plus the additional option of doubling for penalties. However, many of advancer's options are somewhat modified in the current scenario.

1. Raise.
2. Cuebid.
3. Bid notrump.
4. Bid a new suit.
5. Double.
6. Pass.

If opener rebid you have several reasons to take some action:

- Compete for a partscore.
- Strive for a game.
- Improve the contract.
- Penalize the opponents.

We'll see how you achieve these goals as we examine each of the 6 action options.

1. Raises

One of the major changes that arises when opener rebids is the simple raise. If advancer passes partner may not be able to take further action and your side may miss out on a partscore contract. Therefore advancer should raise partner when she has support and a few points, even if her G? decision is N. So how light might advancer be? A really good 6 points should probably be an absolute minimum, something like AQ... in a side suit or K9xx of trumps with a singleton in a side suit. Here are a couple of examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♣	?		

- ♠ Q 10 8 This is a rather poor 7 points with a flat hand. You would like a little more but you cannot afford to sell out to 2♣ when you have this much support. Raise partner to 2♠.
♥ K 3 2
♦ Q 10 9 5
♣ 4 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	2♦
2♥	?		

- ♠ A 10 8 7 5 You know partner has a somewhat decent hand since he balanced at the 2 level. Your ♠A (and length – suggesting shortness for partner), doubleton heart and nice intermediate trumps should be a decent asset for him. Raise to 3♦ but be aware that this is about the minimum you should have for this call.
♥ 4 2
♦ Q J 9
♣ 10 6 5

Jump raises after opener bids are the same as when he passes.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♥	?		

- ♠ Q 10 8 7 3♠ here is the same bid you would have made if opener had passed. You are actually a little more comfortable now since opener's heart rebid along with your three hearts suggests partner is short in hearts so your hand should fit well with his.
♥ 6 5 4
♦ A K J 8 3
♣ 10

♠ K Q 8 Surely partner is short in hearts. Since he bid spades instead of
 ♥ A 6 5 4 doubled he undoubtedly has a 5-card spade suit. You can therefore
 ♦ 2 treat your excellent 3-card support as a 4-card suit and jump to 3♠
 ♣ K 6 5 4 2 to show your values.

2. The Cuebid

This is an area that can be significantly impacted by opener's rebid, especially if he rebids his first suit. Now your cuebid will be one level higher and you may well end up in a contract which is doomed. Following is an example of this problem.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	?		

♠ K J 7 If opener had passed you would have cuebid 2♦ and been content to
 ♥ K Q 8 6 stop in 2♠ if partner did not rebid strongly. Now if you cuebid 3♦
 ♦ Q 2 you may well end up too high. While 2♠ is somewhat of an under-
 ♣ Q 10 6 3 bid, 3♠ lacks the fourth spade and is somewhat of an overbid with
 your soft values in the minors. In the long run it is probably best to
 settle for 2♠ and take your plus score at the risk of missing a game.

Of course sometimes you will still have the values for a 3-level cuebid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	2♣
2♥	?		

♠ K 2 Your side is vulnerable on this deal and partner bid 2♣ missing the
 ♥ 8 6 5 KJ. He has to have a good hand so 3NT is a possibility if he has a
 ♦ A K J 9 7 heart stopper. Start with a 3♥ cuebid and hope partner can bid 3NT.
 ♣ K J 4 If not, 5♣ is also a possibility if he has a heart singleton or void.

Opener will not always rebid his suit. Sometimes he will bid a second suit, invariably lower ranking than his first suit when you have a decent hand. (If he bids a higher-ranking suit he has reversed and there are not enough points left in the deck for you to have a good hand.) You now have the opportunity to cuebid his first suit at the 2 level which might be the same bid you would have made if he had passed.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	?		

♠ K J 7 This is the same as the first hand shown in this subtopic where
 ♥ K Q 8 6 opener had started with 1♦ and then rebid 2♦. There the only cuebid
 ♦ Q 2 you had available was 3♦ but now you can cuebid 2♥. How con-
 ♣ Q 10 6 3 venient of opener to make life easy for you!

3. Notrump Bids

The requirements for notrump bidding when opener rebid are about the same as for when he passed. Of course if he bid a second suit you must have stoppers in both suits and if he rebid his suit it doesn't hurt to have a couple of stoppers there.

4. Bidding a New Suit

There is no real difference here from the auction when opener passed.

5. The Penalty Double

The criteria for doubling opener for penalties when he rebids are about the same as for passing partner's balancing takeout double and converting it to a penalty double. Of course if opener rebid his first suit he will be one level higher so you need one less trick to set him. If he bids a new suit and you double that, you run the risk that he (or responder) might run back to his first suit so you should be prepared to double that too.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	?		

♠ 3 2 You anticipate taking 1 heart trick, 3 diamond tricks and maybe a club
 ♥ A 9 7 5 trick. If partner can provide a trick or two you should not have a
 ♦ K J 9 3 problem defeating this contract. It is time for a penalty double.
 ♣ K 5 4

6. Passing

Whenever you have a bad hand or a moderate hand with no fit and no clear action you will pass. But for some auctions you might have a fairly good hand and still pass because there is no obvious action to take. Here are a couple of examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♥
2♣	?		

- ♠ Q J 7 You have a smattering of points but they are mostly soft values and
 ♥ 10 6 you have no fit for partner. As much as you hate to let them buy the
 ♦ K J 8 4 2 contract at 2♣ you have no reasonable call to make other than pass.
 ♣ Q 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	2♣
2♦	?		

- ♠ K J 9 8 You do not have enough in the red suits to bid notrump nor good
 ♥ Q 6 4 2 enough clubs to raise partner. It also does not make much sense to
 ♦ K 8 3 bid spades. Pass seems to be your best call by a process of elimination.
 ♣ Q 5

ADVANCING AFTER A BALANCING BID OF 1NT

Life for advancer is easy when partner has balanced with a bid of 1NT. Simply bid as if partner had opened the bidding with 1NT but allow for his lower range. Here are your G? decision brackets:

$$0 - 10: G? = N \quad 11 - 12: G? = M \quad 13^+: G? = Y$$

By all means use Stayman and Jacoby transfers if you use them after a 1NT opening bid. These popular conventions are presented in Chapter 4 – “The Stayman Convention” and Chapter 5 – “Jacoby Transfers.”

SUMMARY

The auction following a balancing double or bid is usually followed by competition for a partscore contract although sometimes the balancing side will be able to reach a game contract. Generally speaking the balancing side should be very willing to compete to the 2 level and sometimes a level higher. The Law of Total Tricks is a useful guideline for partscore competition, especially for the balancing side. The Y/N/M idea is applicable when the balancing side is considering a game contract.

Advancing after a Balancing Takeout Double

Advancer's action here is similar to that after a normal takeout double. The main differences are:

- Partner may have as few as 10 points, including distribution
- Partner is somewhat more likely to have flawed distribution, especially only 3 cards in an unbid Major when doubling an opening bid of 1m.

In light of this first difference advancer's G? decision ranges become:

$$0 - 5: G? = M^W, (0 - 3: G? = M^{W-}, 3 - 5: G? = M^{W+})$$

$$6 - 10: G? = M^I, (6 - 8: G? = M^{I-}, 8 - 10: G? = M^{I+})$$

$$11 - 14: G? = M^S, (11 - 12: G? = M^{S-}, 13 - 14: G? = M^{S+})$$

When opener passed after partner's takeout double advancer's options are:

1. Minimum suit bid
2. Jump suit bid
3. Notrump bid
4. Cuebid
5. Pass

Most often advancer will choose the first option showing a hand for which $G? = M^{W,I}$. This is the same action she would take after a normal takeout double. She will be bidding a suit in which she has at least 4 cards, always preferring a Major to a minor.

When advancer has a stronger hand for which $G? = M^S$ she can make a jump bid in a suit. She needs a 5-card suit to make this bid in a minor but only a 4-card suit for a Major.

There will be times when advancer has a strong hand without a 4-card Major or 5-card minor but with stoppers in the opponent's suit. She can show this with an appropriate notrump bid. Although a little aggressive, we use the same HCP brackets for her G? decision here as for the same bids after a normal takeout double.

Another call available for advancer is a cuebid. This call carries the same meaning as after a normal takeout double. It asks partner to bid his best Major if he doubled a minor and to bid his best minor if he doubled a Major. It can be made when advancer decides $G? = M$ or Y and has no preference for either of the indicated suits.

There will be times when advancer is holding length and strength in the suit opener bid as well as some defensive strength in some of the side suits. She then has the option of passing partner's double, thereby converting it into a penalty double. Before making this decision she must consider the following factors:

- Partner may have made a light takeout double in the balancing position so may not have the defensive values you would expect if he had doubled in the direct position.
- How good are your intermediate cards in opener's suit? Something like Q7532 is not nearly as good as KJ97.
- What are your offensive potential and the vulnerability?. You will have to set the opponents 4 tricks to make up for a game if the vulnerability is unfavorable. On the other hand a 2 trick set is enough to offset a game contract when the vulnerability is favorable.

If opener rebid, advancer has no pressure to bid when she has a bad hand. But if she has a fit for partner she should go ahead and bid rather than sell out cheaply provided she has at least a little strength – at least the high end of the $G? = M^W$ range. When she has a good defensive hand she also has the option of doubling opener's rebid for penalties.

Advancing after a Balancing Suit Bid

Advancing after partner has balanced with a suit bid is similar to advancing after he has overcalled. New factors to consider are:

- Partner may be very light – as few as 7 points if at the 1 level
- Partner's suit may be a rather shabby 5 cards or a decent 4 cards

He also has a maximum of about 17 points; with more he would have made a rifle double and bid his suit on the next round.

There is also a practical consideration – you will not have a strong hand and a good suit of your own. If you did, you would have bid the first time. Even without a good suit you might have doubled or bid notrump if you had a strong hand. The end result of this is that you will never have a hand for which $G? = Y$. When partner has balanced with a suit bid at the 1 level the brackets for your $G?$ decisions now become:

0 - 7: $G? = N$

$8^+: G? = M$ ($8 - 9: G? = M^W$, $10 - 12: G? = M^I$, $13^+: G? = M^S$)

However, if he balanced with a suit bid at the 2 level:

0 - 7: G? = N

8 - 14: G? = M (8 - 9: G? = M^W, 10 - 12: G? = M^I, 13 - 14: G? = M^S)

15+: G? = Y

When Opener Passed

Your options in this scenario are:

1. Raise.
2. Cuebid.
3. Bid notrump.
4. Bid a new suit.
5. Pass.

When opener passes you really have only two compelling reasons to bid:

- Strive for a game.
- Improve the contract.

If you have trump support for partner your usual action will be to raise – a simple raise if G? = M^{W,I} and a jump raise if G? = M^S. The simple raise requires only 3-card support and usually a little shortness someplace. The jump raise requires 4-card support and some shortness.

The cuebid is also available in this scenario. It can be used with 4-card trump support and a flat hand or a lack of trump support and no clear direction.

A notrump bid can be made under the following conditions:

- You have the required strength
- You have a stopper in the opponent's suit
- You have length or strength in the unbid suits
- You lack significant support for partner – a poor 3-card suit or fewer cards

The recommended point count recommendations are:

1NT: 9 - 11 2NT (Jump): 12 - 14 2NT (Nonjump): 11 - 12

It will be rare that you will bid a new suit. You will usually be in a position that you could have bid it at your previous turn. The exceptions are a lack of suit quality when it could have been bid at the 1 level or a lack of suit quality/overall strength if it would have had to be bid at the 2 level. If you do make such a bid, it is nonforcing and shows a lack of support for partner. It is a corrective bid rather than a game try.

Most of the time when you pass you will have a rather poor hand, but sometimes you will have a moderate or better hand with no other reasonable option.

When Opener Rebid

When opener rebids advancer has more reasons to enter the auction. The possibilities are:

- Compete for a partscore.
- Strive for a game.
- Improve the contract.
- Penalize the opponents.

His tactics are:

1. Raise.
2. Cuebid.
3. Bid notrump.
4. Bid a new suit.
5. Double.
6. Pass.

Whenever advancer has a hand that calls for a raise if opener passed she will take the same action when opener rebids. But she may also give partner a simple raise with a little lighter hand just to compete for a partscore. Her requirements for a jump raise are about the same as if opener had passed, perhaps just a little stronger.

If opener rebids her original suit the practicality of the cuebid is very low because it will now be a level higher and that may lead to an unsafe contract. But sometimes opener will introduce a new suit that is lower ranking than his first suit. Now the original suit can be cuebid just as if opener had passed. When advancer does cuebid it carries the same meaning as if opener had passed.

Notrump bids by advancer after a rebid by opener are about the same as if opener had passed. If opener rebid his first suit, advancer's stoppers should be a little stronger and if he bid a new suit advancer needs a stopper in both suits.

Advancer's bid of a new suit carries the same meaning as if opener had passed.

When opener rebids, advancer has the additional option of doubling for penalties. His holding will be similar to that for a penalty pass of partner's balancing double.

Advancer will pass as a last resort – insufficient support or strength to take any other action.

Advancing after a Balancing Bid of 1NT

This is probably the easiest scenario for advancer. She can bid the same way as if partner had opened the bidding with 1NT except to account for the lower HCP range (12 - 14) for partner.



CHAPTER 3

– Rebids after a Balancing Double or Bid

Rebids after a Balancing Takeout Double

Rebids after a Balancing Suit Bid

Summary



REBIDS AFTER A BALANCING DOUBLE

The value of your hand when you have made a balancing double has a very wide range – from a minimum of about 10 points (including distribution) to about 25, perhaps even a little higher. So the chances that you will want to take further action are much greater than if you had bid a suit where your range would be much less.

The key to your next call is your G? decision and that will be based on partner's call which was one of the following:

- Minimum suit bid
- Jump suit bid
- Notrump
- Cuebid
- Pass

You will also have to take into account opener's call – did he pass or rebid?

Advancer Made a Minimum Suit Bid

Partner's G? decision was $M^{W,I}$ so her point count is from 0 to 10. Unless your G? decision is now M or Y, you will pass; otherwise, you will bid something indicative of your G? decision. You will probably have to play a lot of bridge before you get a hand where your G? decision is Y and even a hand where G? = M will be rare. Consequently, most of the time you will quietly bow out of the auction. If opener had rebid, partner's lower range limit is about 6 instead of 0, but that usually has no impact on your G? decision. Only if you have about 19 - 24 points will your decision probably change from M to Y.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

♠ K J 3 Yes, you have 15 HCP and, yes, partner could have 10 or 11. But she will also need a 5-card suit for a reasonable game contract and if she had all of that she would have overcalled at her first turn. This hand emphasizes the importance of taking into account all of the calls that have been made during an auction. So just pass and hope she doesn't have a bust and can make her 1♠ contract. Of course, she really does have at least a few points. There are 25 HCP outstanding; if the opponents had all of them they would have been bidding more.

♠ Q 10 8 7 Another 15 point hand (counting dummy points) and a sure Golden Fit. This hand is barely worth a raise to 2♠ and you have to recognize that might be too high since partner has not promised anything except 4 spades.

♠ K J 8 7 With 18 total points you have a strong game interest. Lawrence suggests a bid of 3♠, but I recommend a bid of only 2♠ based on the following:

♦ A Q 10 7 If partner has 0 - 5 points she should pass. If she has 6 - 8 points she should bid 3♠ and you can raise to 4♠. If she has 8 - 10 points she should bid 4♠. So why bury her in 3♠ if she has fewer than 6 points?

I think you should have about 21 total points for the jump to 3♠. Then partner should pass with 0 - 3 points and bid 4♠ with 3 - 5 points. This philosophy is completely analogous to that presented in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 13 – “Rebids after a Takeout Double.”

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	1♥	Pass	?

♠ K Q 10 8 7 This hand represents about the minimum requirements for a rifle double in the balancing position. Your main interest here is the spade suit so bid 1♠. In the direct position doubling and then bidding would show a hand worth about 18 points. In the balancing position everything drops by about 3 points.

♠ J 8 7 This is another example of a rifle double in the balancing position, this time with a notrump hand. Remember that a balancing bid of 1NT shows only 12 - 14 HCP so with this hand you double first and then bid 1NT at your second turn.
 ♦ A Q 9
 ♣ A J 10 5

Advancer Made a Jump Suit Bid

Partners’ jump bid shows about 11 - 14 points so your G? decision is easy. If her jump is at the 2 level in a Major you have 3 easy options: pass if G? = N, raise to 3 if G? = M and raise to 4 if G? = Y. If her jump is at the 3 level (usually in a minor but it could be 3♥ after a 1♠ opening) you have less flexibility and you may have to decide between passing and bidding game.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

♠ K 10 8 7 This is about as light as you would be for your balancing double.
 ♦ Q 8 5 2 You have no game interest so you will pass. Change the ♣Q to the ♣A and your hand is worth 12 support points. You decide G? = M and raise to 3♥. If you also change the ♥8 to the ♥K your hand value increases to 15 support points and G? = Y so your bid is 4♥.
 ♣ Q 7 5 4

Advancer Bid Notrump

This is not particularly what you wanted to hear from partner but she would not have bid notrump if she had another reasonable choice. One advantage in this scenario against her notrump bid if you had made a takeout double in the direct position is that her high cards will be sitting behind the opening bidder.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

♠ 8 7 Partner should have a minimum of about 9 HCP for her bid. With
♥ K J 9 6 your 15 HCP you decide G? = M and raise to 2NT. Partner should
♦ A Q 10 5 pass with 9 - 10 HCP and raise to 3NT with 11 - 12 HCP. Change
♣ A J 4 your ♠8 to the ♠Q and you would have enough to bid 3NT.

Advancer Made a Cuebid

Partner's cuebid retains the same message as when used after a normal takeout double in the direct position. She has a hand for which G? = M^s or Y and wants you to bid your best Major if you doubled a minor and to bid your best minor if you doubled a Major. You will comply making a minimum bid if G? = N and bidding game G? = Y. This is especially true if you doubled a minor. If you doubled a Major you may want to proceed a little more cautiously and might pursue a notrump contract instead of a minor.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	2♦	Pass	?

♠ A Q 7 You did not want to sell out to opener's 1♦ bid so made a reasonable
♥ Q 10 9 6 balancing takeout double. Partner is giving you a choice of Majors
♦ 7 5 and you certainly prefer hearts. You are not a minimum for your
♣ K J 8 4 double but you do not have a lot of extras either. Settle for a bid of
 2♥. If partner has a little extra she can raise to 3♥ and you will bid
 4♥. Change your ♥Q to the ♥A and you would bid 4♥ immediately
 after her cuebid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

♠ A Q 7 4 This hand is similar to the previous one. The primary difference is in
♥ 7 5 the red suits and the opening bid is now 1♥ instead of 1♦. Again,
♦ Q 10 9 you doubled hoping partner could bid spades. Instead she made a 2♥
♣ K J 8 4 cuebid. This cuebid is a little stronger than her 2♦ cuebid for the
 previous hand since you must go to the 3 level. You are happy to bid
 3♣.

Advancer Passed

If both opener and responder also passed after your double you have no choice; the auction is over. Put on your defensive hat and work hard on your defense. You certainly do not want declarer to make his doubled contract.

If opener rebid something at his second turn you should probably pass. Partner would have made every effort to bid something if she had about 5 or 6 points. Your only reason to take action would be if you had really good distribution (4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0) and about 16 or more HCP, or if you had a rifle double with a good long suit of your own. In the first case you could double again (still for takeout) and in the latter you could bid your suit.

There is also the chance that both opener and partner passed (converting your takeout double to a penalty double) but responder bid a new suit to “rescue” partner from her doubled contract. That would show a weak hand (she initially passed opener’s bid) and a long suit of her own. You now have several options:

- Double responder’s bid for penalties
- Bid a long suit of your own
- Bid notrump – do not need a stopper in opener’s suit – partner has that suit under control
- Pass

You should have a good idea what to do based on the cards you hold.

REBIDS AFTER A BALANCING SUIT BID

When you have balanced with a suit bid you will seldom have a strong hand and your usual rebid decision, if you have that opportunity, will be whether to bid more of your own suit or introduce a new suit. Remember that advancer’s options were:

- Raise
- Cuebid
- Bid notrump
- Bid a new suit
- Double
- Pass

We will briefly look at each of these possibilities.

Advancer Raised Your Suit

When advancer gives you a simple raise you will often pass. Your only reason for bidding more is to make a game try or, if the opponents continue to bid, you may wish to compete to a higher level. You will seldom have a very strong hand; if you did you would have started with a rifle double. Regardless of your

holding, always analyze partner's bid in light of the opponent's action. If opener passed partner promised a $G? = M^{W,I}$ hand (9 - 12 points), whereas if opener re-bid partner may have stretched a little just to compete.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	?

♠ Q 9 8 7 5 Partner's spade raise has significantly increased the value of your hand. Your spade suit is less than impressive by itself but with partner's support looks much better. While you could simply raise to 3♠ a more constructive bid is 3♦. This shows a decent second suit and invites partner to revalue her hand in light of that call and to proceed to game if her hand fits well. Note that the help suit and short suit game tries to be discussed in Chapter 8 – “Moving Forward” are not particularly useful here. Opener's bid is too likely to get in the way because a bid of his suit would be a cuebid. If opener had bid 2♣ before partner bid 2♠ you would do well to pass. Opener has shown more strength and partner has not promised as much. On the other hand, if opener rebids 2♣, partner bids 2♠ and responder bids 3♣ you would do well to bid 3♠. This is not an invitational bid but rather simply a competitive bid. In this last auction you might have some justification in making a 3♦ game try on the assumption that partner does not have any wasted values in clubs.

Here is another example, where responder suddenly gets into the auction.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	2♠	3♦	?

♠ 10 8 7 6 5 4 Once again partner's raise greatly improved the offensive potential of your hand. Not that you are interested in game, but with at least a 9-card fit and probably a 10-card fit you have to be competing. The opponents are unlikely to go to the 4 level so a 3♠ bid has a good chance of buying the contract and you have a good chance of making it unless partner really stretched for her bid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

♠ A 10 8 6 Don't you just love it when partner raises your mediocre suits?
 ♥ Q 10 9 4 3 2 Even though you have not been blessed with a lot of HCP, you have great playing strength. No reason not to try 4♥ with these cards.
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A 10

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♣	Pass	?

♠ 10 7
♥ A 8 7
♦ K 9
♣ A Q 10 8 7 5

Long minor suits were meant for 3NT contracts. Don't worry about your spade holding. Neither one of the opponents bid that suit so they probably do not have much length/strength there. You should be able to take 6 club tricks (with help from partner) and 1 heart trick. You expect partner can provide at least one more, maybe two, or the opening lead is a diamond to provide your eighth and ninth tricks.

Sometime partner will give you a single jump raise showing an opening hand, 4-card support and at least a little shape. She can't have a whole lot more than an opening hand or she would have either jumped to game or not have passed at her first turn. You simply look at your hand, make a G? decision and bid accordingly.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
	Pass	3♠	Pass ?

♠ Q 10 8 7 5
♥ K 6 2
♦ A 9 5
♣ 4 3

Note that since partner has shown an opening hand with a short suit she must have club length and shortness in one of the red suits; otherwise, she would have doubled at her first turn. You do not have quite enough for game so just pass.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	3♠	Pass	?

♠ K Q 8 7
♥ A 6 5 4
♦ 3
♣ 10 8 5 4

You seem not to have a very good hand. But partner heard West's bids and still gave you a jump to 3♠. She must like her hand in light of the opponent's bids and you are far from a minimum with your prime cards. Carry on to 4♠.

Advancer Cuebid

When advancer cuebids she shows a good hand with no clear direction. She has about opening strength or better. She may lack support and a stopper in the opened suit or she may have support but a flat hand with no stopper. Your job as balancer is to further describe your hand, particularly your distribution and game interest.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	?

♠J 8 7 6 5 Your only purpose in bidding the first time was to keep the opponents from buying the contract cheaply when you knew partner had some values. You have no game interest so simply rebid your suit – 2♠. This does not promise a good suit or even a 5-card suit. Of course, if it is only a 4-card suit it will be decent. This may be your only reasonable call, especially if the cuebid crowds the bidding.

♠Q 8 6 5 4 Do your job and describe your hand. You have a second suit to show and it is lower ranking than your first suit so bid 2♦. Partner's cuebid is forcing to at least 2 of your first suit so she will bid again. She might bid 2♠, 2NT or 3♦. You would need a stronger hand to bid your second suit if you had to go to the 3 level.

♠A K 8 7 5 When you have an opening hand you have to make sure you get to game. You cannot bid 3♠ as that would show a 6-card suit. (Change a small heart to a small spade and you could bid 3♠.) You can't bid 2NT without a club stopper. If you bid 2♥ partner will think you have at least a 4-card heart suit. So you temporize with a bid of 2♦. You are using this call as a waiting bid – waiting to see what partner does next. We have talked about making up a bid previously in this book. The key is never to make up a bid in a Major – partner might take you seriously. If you make it in a minor suit she is more likely to look for a notrump contract.

♠A Q 9 5 4 What better call than 2NT? You have a balanced hand worth an opening bid. You will rarely have all of the suits stopped but you do need a stopper in opener's suit.
 ♦K J 3

Advancer Bid Notrump

When advancer bids 1NT she denies real support for your suit and usually has about 10 HCP. You would need about 15 to be thinking of game, and if you were that strong you probably would have made a rifle double at your first turn. But you might be able to rebid your first suit (promising 6 cards if a Major, usually also 6 if a minor – diamonds, but perhaps only 5) or introduce a second 4+ card suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

♠ K 3
 ♥ K Q J 10 4
 ♦ J 3
 ♣ A 10 8 4

With a high honor in spades and a little help in diamonds along with 14 HCP you have a minimum raise to 2NT. Your hearts are solid enough to probably produce 4 tricks. Without the ♥10 you should probably pass. There is absolutely no reason to rebid your hearts.

♠ 3
 ♥ K 10 8 7 5
 ♦ J 2
 ♣ A 9 8 6 3

With this much distribution you should shy away from a notrump contract. Bid 2♣ and let partner take it from there. This bid does not show extra strength but rather extra distribution.

Lawrence suggests that there is a systemic problem if advancer jumps in notrump. The issue is whether a new suit by balancer is forcing or not. He suggests that whatever you decide you will often wish you played it the other way. My suggestion is that as a beginner you play it as nonforcing for the next few years and see how that works out. My guess is that this scenario will come up so infrequently that it will not make a lot of difference in your results.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

♠ A 10 8 7 6 5
 ♥ K J 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q J 4

Since partner has shown an opening hand with diamonds stopped you should have enough values for a game contract. The only question is whether it should be 3NT or 4♠. You really do not know enough about partner's hand to make the decision. Since I have recommended that a bid of 3♠ be nonforcing, we have to come up with another way to handle this hand. We defer providing a solution until we look at another possibility.

♠ A J 8 6 5
 ♥ K Q 10 8 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 4

With this hand you also have game values but now you have 3 possibilities: 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠. For these two examples you wish you had agreed that a rebid of a suit or the bid of a new suit were forcing. Of course, if that had been your understanding I could have weakened both of these hands a little so that you did not want to be in game but wanted to play in a partscore. So we will stay with the earlier recommendation that those bids are nonforcing.

Now then, how are we going to find a solution for these two hands? How about calling on our good friend the cuebid? I think 3♦ here is a reasonable solution to the problem. You can play this as showing a hand with game values but no clear direction. I think this should always be a question of 3NT or 4M and advancer should be able to work out the specific choices. If she bids 3♥ over your 3♦ bid when you have the first hand, thinking you might really have the second hand, you can always bid 3♠ to clarify the situation.

♠ Q 10 8 7 5 This is not a problem hand. You have a clear cut 3NT call.

♥ K Q 4

♦ J 2

♣ K 10 7

Advancer Bid a New Suit

As discussed earlier these auctions are rare so we will not spend a lot of effort discussing them. We will assume that such bids are natural and corrective, that is, partner does not like your suit and does like hers. You will rarely take another bid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

♠ Q 8 This is easy. Partner does not like hearts. You have tolerance

♥ A 10 6 5 4 for spades and no game interest – pass.

♦ K 10 7

♣ Q 8 4

♠ 4 You did not expect partner to fall in love with your 1♥ bid.

♥ A Q J 10 6 5 4 You really do prefer hearts to spades. Partner should have

♦ 10 7 some values for her bid and they will be more useful to you in a heart contract than your hand will be to her in a spade contract.
♣ 8 6 4 Bid 2♥ and expect partner to pass. If she doesn't, pass her bid at your next turn.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

♠ 8 2 Partner probably did not have quite enough strength for a 2-

♥ 10 2 level overcall at her first turn. Be glad you have 2 hearts as you pass.

♦ A 6 4 2

♣ A Q J 9 7

Advancer Doubled

When you have balanced with a decent hand and partner doubles you will have no problem passing and defending, relatively confident that you will set the contract. On the other hand, when you have made a light balancing bid you may have some trepidation about your prospects of defeating declarer. Then there are times when you will want to pull partner's double and bid something.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♣	X	Pass	?

♠ J 10 8 7 5 You should feel comfortable defending with this hand. You have good defensive prospects in the red suits. Partner may well have wanted to double 1♣ for penalties but couldn't because a double the first round would have been for takeout.
 ♥ A 3 2
 ♦ K J 9 3
 ♣ 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	X	Pass	?

♠ A 9 8 6 4 2 Yes, you have a 6-card spade suit you could run to but you have 2 defensive tricks. Partner should not expect more from you. Who knows... you might even get a heart ruff.
 ♥ A 3
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ J 7 3

♠ J 10 9 7 6 5 This one is close. You have some playing strength in spades and not very much defense. It is close to a draw whether you should bid 2♠ or pass the double. If you and partner play good defense and you trust your partner you might pass. If your defense is sometimes shaky and you don't always defend well you might be better off bidding 2♠.
 ♥ Q 10 8
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A 8 6

♠ K Q J 8 7 6 This hand is a clear pull to 2♠. You have much more offensive strength than defensive potential. You even should be thinking that you have a good chance to make your contract.
 ♥ 7 5 4 3
 ♦ 2
 ♣ Q 3

♠ 8 7 6 5 4 2 Not enough defense to leave the double in. Bid 2♥ and hope partner has some support. She can always correct to 2♠ if she thinks that will work out better. You probably will not make your contract regardless, but your loss should be less than if they would have made their doubled contract.
 ♥ K 10 9 7
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K 2

Advancer Passed

The only scenarios in which balancer has another chance to bid after advancer passes is if opener rebids or responder bids. Now balancer has to decide whether to pass or bid again. Lawrence lists the following considerations:

- If partner has a fit for you she does not have a very good hand – even worse if opener rebid.

- There are 40 points divided between the four players. If the opponents are not showing strength your side has as many as 20, regardless of partner's inactivity.
- You should usually be able to conclude where partner's points are and why she has not bid.
- A further bid by you should not be interpreted as showing extra strength, rather some extra feature, and you are still counting on partner to produce something worthwhile.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	Pass	1♥
2♣	Pass	Pass	?

♠ 8 7 Partner should have something in the pointed suits. Maybe a moderate 5-card suit that was not worth an overcall or even 4-card suits.
 ♥ A 10 8 5 4
 ♦ K Q 9 7
 ♣ 8 3

♠ K 8 7 5 ♠ J 10 6 4 2 These hands are representative of what you might find.
 ♥ J 2 ♥ K 3 Even though partner has nice diamond support for you
 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♦ J 10 5 she should take no further action even if the opponents
 ♣ Q 10 7 ♣ K 4 2 bid more. You have already bid her hand.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

♠ Q J 9 8 7 5 You have a respectable 6-card spade suit. There is no reason to sell out to 2♥ when you know partner has some values someplace.
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ A Q 8
 ♣ 10 7

♠ A Q 8 6 5 You also want to compete further with this hand and hope partner has some length in one of the minors. Double is your call. This is for takeout – not penalties, although partner might choose to pass and convert it to a penalty double. Here are some possible hands and appropriate actions for her:

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

Partner's action: Pass 2♠ 3♣

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥ Pass	Pass Pass	Pass 2♥	1♠ ?

♠ Q 10 8 7 5

♥ 3

♦ A 5 4

♣ K J 9 8

This hand and auction are similar to the previous one but in this case responder entered the auction after the balancing bid. You should also double with this hand to get partner involved. She is unlikely to pass in this sequence since responder has shown a few values and trump support for opener.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥ 2♥	Pass Pass	Pass Pass	2♦ ?

♠ K 7

♥ 4 2

♦ A Q 8 7 6 5

♣ K 7 3

Your hand and suit quality do not justify another bid. It is too risky to compete to the 3 level so simply pass and defend.

♠ A 9 7

♥ 8 7

♦ K Q J 10 8 7

♣ 4 3 2

This hand is not as strong in terms of HCP as the previous one but your suit quality is much better. Bidding 3♦ should be a reasonable action.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥ 2♥	Pass Pass	Pass Pass	2♣ ?

♠ J 10 8 7

♥ 3

♦ 9 2

♣ A Q 10 6 5 4

This is a good time to bid 2♠. This does not promise extra strength but rather good shape. Most of the time it is better to introduce a new suit rather than to rebid a suit. You have twice the chance of finding a fit with partner.

SUMMARY

Rebids after a Balancing Double

The range for your balancing double is roughly 10 - 25 points, including distribution. So you will have to further clarify your hand after partner's call, which was one of the following:

- Minimum suit bid
- Jump suit bid
- Notrump
- Cuebid
- Double
- Pass

Each of the four types of bids carry a corresponding point range as well as some distribution/feature information. So all you need do is add your points to those shown by partner, interpret her distribution/feature, make your G? decision and bid accordingly. It really is that simple. Here is a brief review.

Advancer Made a Minimum Suit Bid

She has at least a 4-card suit with $G? = M^{W,I}$ (0 - 10).

Advancer Made a Jump Suit Bid

She has at least a 4-card suit (5-card if a minor) and $G? = M^S$ (11 - 14)

Advancer Made a Notrump Bid

She does not have an unbid Major. She has at least one stopper in the enemy suit with some length or strength in the other suits. Her HCP ranges are

1NT: 9 - 12 2NT: 13 - 14 3NT: 15

Advancer Cuebid

Her G? decision is M^S or Y. She wants you to bid your best Major if you doubled a minor or your best minor if you doubled a Major.

Advancer Doubled

This option is available only if opener rebid. Her double is for penalties. You should usually pass but may bid if you have poor defensive prospects and better offensive prospects.

Advancer Passed

If opener also passed she has converted your takeout double into a penalty double. If responder also passed the auction is over and you will have to defend.

If opener bid your partner either has a poor hand (most likely) or just did not have any other reasonable call available.

Rebids after a Balancing Suit Bid

You will seldom have a strong hand in this sequence. If you decide to bid again it will probably be more of your first suit but you might introduce a new suit.

Partner took one of the following actions:

- Raise
- Cuebid
- Bid notrump
- Bid a new suit
- Double
- Pass

When advancer raised your suit the only reason to bid again is to make a game try or compete for a partscore if one of the opponents gets back into the auction. If opener passed, partner showed a hand for which $G? = M^{W,I}$ (9 - 12). If opener bid again partner might be a little weaker. You should be able to make a G? decision and bid accordingly.

If advancer gave you a simple jump raise she shows an opening hand (perhaps just a little more), 4-card support and some shape. Your action should be straightforward.

Advancer's cuebid shows an opening hand and no real direction. She may have 4-card trump support with a flat hand, but more likely she has at best poor 3-card support so that she cannot raise your bid and lacks a stopper in the opponent's suit so she cannot bid notrump either.

If advancer bid 1NT she denies real support for you and usually has about 10 HCP. You can rebid your suit if it is a 6-carder or introduce a new suit of at least 4 cards if you do not like notrump as a contract.

If advancer jumps to 2NT showing about 13 HCP I have suggested you play a new suit by balancer as nonforcing with a cuebid as a forcing bid suggesting a two-suiter in the Majors or a mediocre 6-carder in your first suit.

If opener rebid and partner doubled she expects to set their contract. You will usually pass, but if you lack significant defensive values and hold respectable offensive values you can bid again.

If advancer passed you will not have another chance to bid unless one of the opponents bid something. In this scenario you should remember the following:

- If partner has a fit for you she does not have a very good hand – even worse if opener rebid.
- There are 40 points divided between the four players. If the opponents are not showing strength your side has as many as 20, regardless of partner's inactivity.

- You should usually be able to conclude where partner's points are and why she has not bid.
- A further bid by you should not be interpreted as showing extra strength, rather some extra feature, and you are still counting on partner to produce something worthwhile.



CHAPTER 4

– The Stayman Convention

Why?

How it Works

Requirements

Rebids

Using Stayman when G? = N

Handling Interference

Summary



WHY?

♠ A Q 7 2 Suppose you hold this hand and partner has opened the bidding 1NT.
♥ K Q 5 4 You can envision 3 possible game contracts – 3NT, 4♥ or 4♦. If
♦ 9 8 7 6 partner has 4 cards in either Major you would prefer to play with that
♣ 8 suit as trumps, but, as pointed out in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 2 – “Responses to a 1NT Opening Bid,” there is no way to explore for a 4-4 fit in a Major Suit using standard methods. In the early days of bridge it was common practice to open the bidding with 1M holding only a 4-card suit. At that time it was also quite common not to open the bidding with 1NT when you held a 4-card Major even if you held the HCP appropriate for that bid (back then it was 16 - 18 instead of the modern 15 - 17 range) for fear of missing a 4-4 Major Suit Golden Fit.

Then George Rapée observed that the 2♣ response used to sign off in that contract after an opening bid of 1NT was not all that useful and proposed another use for that bid as an artificial bid to ask opener if he had a 4-card Major Suit. Thus was born the **Stayman convention**. You probably wonder why it is called the Stayman convention when Rapée invented it. Sam Stayman was George's frequent partner and a syndicated newspaper columnist for bridge articles. He publicized it and his name eventually became associated with it. There is an Internet Wikipedia article that also credits the British expert Jack Marx with the invention considerably earlier, but not publicized until after Stayman's article.

A convention is a nonstandard use for some bid. You and your partner decide before you start playing in a game whether you are going to use the standard meaning for the bid or the conventional meaning. You are free to change your agreement between deals but not in the middle of a deal. It is highly recommended that you learn the Stayman convention and use it whenever you play with someone who also understands it. If your partner has never heard of it or does not fully understand how to use it, fall back to standard usage.

It should be emphasized that Stayman is not a substitute for all responses to an opening bid of 1NT. Rather, it is a supplement to the standard responses, replacing only the standard meaning of the 2♣ response with that described here. All other responses retain their standard meanings.

HOW IT WORKS

After a 1NT opening bid, responder may bid 2♣ as a completely artificial bid. It says absolutely nothing about her club holding but simply asks partner if he has a 4-card (or 5-card) Major Suit. Opener has no way to show a 5-card suit rather than a 4-card suit, so in the remainder of this chapter we will use only the 4-card notation.

Opener then replies as follows:

- 2♦ – I do not have a 4-card Major Suit (this bid is also completely artificial, saying absolutely nothing about his diamond holding)
- 2♥ – I have a 4-card heart suit, I may or may not also have a 4-card spade suit
- 2♠ – I have a 4-card spade suit, I do not have a 4-card heart suit

Some players use a different approach when holding both Majors but this seems to be the current standard – bidding 4-card suits “up-the-line.”

REQUIREMENTS

There are only two basic requirements for responder to invoke the Stayman bid:

- She must hold at least one 4⁺-card Major suit
- Her G? decision is M or Y (recall that after an opening 1NT bid responder does not subdivide her G? = M answer)

Under very restricted additional conditions even the second requirement may be relaxed. We will discuss this application later in this chapter.

Even if you satisfy the requirements for a Stayman bid, you do not have to use it. For example, many experts recommend that you do not make a Stayman bid when you have a flat hand.

REBIDS

The rebids by responder and opener after opener’s initial reply to Stayman are all actually quite simple and logical if you understand the requirements and associated implications of the 2♣ bid and opener’s reply. However, some of these are a little difficult for beginners because of the inferences that are used in the process. Rather than memorizing the sequences in this section, try to understand the logic involved.

After Opener’s 2♦ Reply

Responder can bid 2M to show a 5⁺-card Major (no reason to bid a 4-card Major when opener has denied holding one) with a hand for which G? = M. Responder may have 4⁺ cards in the other Major but there is no convenient way to show that distribution in this auction and also no need to do so. Opener then has several options:

- With 3-card support
 - Pass if G? = N
 - Bid 3M if G? = M
 - Bid 4M G? = Y
- With a doubleton in responder’s Major

- Bid 2N if G? = N
- Bid 3NT if G? = Y

Note especially that there is no need to memorize these bids. They are simply logical actions based on opener's revised answers to G? and GFMS?. Note that opener's raise to 3M is the only case where opener can make a bid that indicates a G? = M decision. Without 3-card support for responder's Major Suit, opener will have to make a G? = Y or N decision and bid either 2NT or 3NT.

Opener's action will usually end the auction but there are two exceptions. If responder has a 6⁺-card Major Suit she knows that GFMS? = Y so she should correct opener's 2NT bid to 3M or his 3NT bid to 4M. Again, this is not rocket science, just simple logic.

If responder does not have a 5⁺-card Major, she will bid 2NT if G? = M or 3NT if G? = Y – just as she would have done initially if she were not using Stayman. Opener will pass 3NT but raise 2NT to 3NT if he decides G? = Y.

If responder is 4=5=x=x or 5=4=x=x with G? = Y she would have started out with 2♣ to uncover a possible Golden Fit in her 4-card Major. After opener's 2♦ reply, responder can now bid 3M (her 5-card Major) to show her length and strength. Opener will then choose between 3NT (with a doubleton M) or 4M (3-card support). Note that 3M is the same bid responder would have made directly over 1NT if she were not using the Stayman convention.

If responder is 4=6=x=x or 6=4=x=x with G? = Y she should also start out with 2♣ to uncover a possible Golden Fit in her 4-card Major. You can often take more tricks with the 4-4 fit as trumps than the 6-2⁺ fit. After opener's 2♦ reply, responder can simply jump to 4M (her 6-card Major) to show her length and strength. Again, 4M is the same bid responder would have made directly over 1NT if she were not using the Stayman convention.

After Opener's 2♥ Reply

If responder has 4⁺ hearts she knows there is a Golden Fit in hearts so will raise to 3♥ if G? = M or 4♥ if G? = Y. If she bids 4♥ opener will pass. If she bids 3♥ opener will pass if his G? decision is N but raise to 4♥ if it is Y.

If responder has fewer than 4 hearts she must have 4⁺ spades since her 2♣ bid promised at least one 4⁺-card Major.

If she has 5⁺ spades her G? decision must be M (if it was Y and she did not have 4⁺ hearts she would have bid 3♠ or 4♠ immediately instead of 2♣). She will show her holding by bidding 2♠. The auction now continues just as if responder had bid 2♠ over a 2♦ reply, except that opener may have 4-card spade support.

If she has only 4 spades she will bid 2NT if G? = M and 3NT if G? = Y. Opener will know she has exactly 4 spades. If he also has 4 spades he will correct 2NT to 3♠ (G? = N) or 4♠ (G? = Y) and 3NT to 4♠.

After Opener's 2♦ Reply

In some respects the continuing auction is similar to that after opener's 2♥ reply.

If responder has 4+ spades she knows there is a Golden Fit in spades so will raise to 3♠ if G? = M or 4♠ if G? = Y. If she bids 4♠ opener will pass. If she bids 3♠ opener will pass if his G? decision is N but raise to 4♠ if it is Y.

If responder has 5+ hearts and fewer than 4 spades her game decision must be M, if not she would have bid 3♥ or 4♥ immediately instead of 2♣. Unfortunately she has no way to show a 5-card heart suit without risking an inferior contract. Another way to handle this situation is presented in the next chapter. If she has 6+ hearts she can bid 3♥. Opener may then pass if G? = N or bid 4♥ if G? = Y.

So, if responder has fewer than 4 spades she will bid 2NT if G? = M and 3NT if G? = Y. Opener will pass her 3NT bid. He will also pass her 2NT bid if his G? decision is N but raise to 3NT if it is Y. In the latter case responder can correct to 4♥ if she holds 6+ hearts.

USING STAYMAN WHEN G? = N

Responder is normally expected to bid again after invoking Stayman so that the proper contract level and strain can be reached. But, suppose that as responder your hand shape is 4=4=5=0 and G? = N. You really don't think that 1NT is the best strain with your club void. There is also a very good chance that you have a Golden fit in one of your suits. (The only time you will not have such a fit is if opener's pattern is 3=3=2=5.) In this case you can bid 2♣ and then pass whatever opener bids next. The very worst that can happen is that you end up playing in a 5-2 diamond fit. Any other result should be a better contract than 1NT. You can make this bid even if you have no HCP points whatsoever. Your partner may not make the contract, but you may have talked the opponents out of bidding something they could have made.

HANDLING INTERFERENCE

It is rather risky for an opponent to compete after an opening bid of 1NT. However, experienced players know that if they are quiet during the auction your side will likely reach a reasonable contract and they will get a poor result. Consequently, they may well take the risk to interfere with your auction and make it difficult for you to communicate effectively. In fact, many conventional methods have been developed over the years to allow the opponents to describe various types of hands. Those conventions are beyond the scope of this elementary book. Nonetheless, when the opponents do stick their nose in your auction, you need to have a method to counter their interference. While there are sophisticated countermeasures that can be taken, we will limit our discussion here to those that are considered standard.

When Responder's RHO Interferes

If you are responder and your RHO doubles partner's opening 1NT bid, the standard approach is to just ignore it since the double has not taken up any bidding space. The situation is different if your RHO overcalls. Here are the general guidelines:

- Double is for penalties
- A cuebid is Stayman
- 2-level suit bids are natural, primarily competitive, but perhaps $G? = M -$ with a really poor hand you can pass. With maximum values and a fit, opener can raise to the 3 level.
- 2NT and 3NT are natural promising at least one stopper in the overcalled suit
- 3-level suit bids are natural and forcing

There is one slight change you might make if you have a regular partner with whom you can discuss the modification. Quite often the 2♣ overcall is conventional, so your penalty double will be ineffective when the opponents run to another suit. You could then use the double for Stayman instead of the cuebid, conserving valuable bidding space. Before making your double it is quite appropriate for you to inquire of your opponents whether their 2♣ bid is natural or artificial and choose your call accordingly. There is no problem if you agree (ahead of time) that the double of a natural 2♣ overcall is for penalty while a double of an artificial 2♣ overcall is Stayman. Your proper method of inquiry is to either look at their convention card or ask your LHO the meaning of her partner's bid.

When Opener's RHO Interferes

Here also, if opener's RHO doubles the standard approach is to simply ignore it. Here are the guidelines after an overcall:

- Double is for penalties
- 2-level suit bids are natural replies to Stayman
- 2NT is natural but promises a stopper in the overcalled suit
- Use caution when bidding 3♥ after 2♠ in the following sequence:
1N – P – 2♣ – 2♠; 3♥
- Pass may be your only reasonable call

SUMMARY

The Stayman convention is a powerful tool for finding a 4-4 fit in a Major Suit after an opening bid of 1NT when responder's G? decision is M or Y. It is also helpful in finding a 5-3 Major suit fit when responder holds a 5-card Major with $G? = M$. It can even be used to find a possible Golden Fit in either Major Suit or diamonds when responder's G? decision is N and her shape is $4=4=5=0$.

All of this is accomplished by simply changing the meaning of the 2♣ response from a sign-off bid with a long club suit to a request for opener to show a 4-card Major Suit. Partners decide before they start to play if they will use the natural meaning of the 2♣ bid or the artificial Stayman meaning.

Responder normally needs to hold a hand for which $G? = M$ or Y with at least one Major Suit of 4^+ cards. She can also make the 2♣ bid if $G? = N$ and her shape is $4=4=5=0$. In this case (rare) she will pass opener's rebid, hoping to have found a Golden Fit in one of her three suits. When her G? decision is M or Y she will bid again after opener's reply.

After responder's 2♣ bid, opener bids 2♦ if she has neither Major Suit, 2♠ if she has only spades or 2♥ if she has only hearts or both Majors.

Subsequent rebids are natural and logical based on opener's reply and inferences from responder's 2♣ bid.

Both partners must be alert to certain adjustments that are made if the opponents interfere in their bidding. Doubles by the opponents are ignored but modifications are made for overcalls.



CHAPTER 5

– Jacoby Transfers

Why?

How they Work

Jacoby Transfers into a Major Suit

Jacoby Transfers into a Minor Suit

Jumps to 3m after 1NT

Jumps to 3M after 1NT

Handling Interference

Summary



WHY?

Jacoby Transfer bids were invented by Oswald Jacoby for the purpose of **transferring dealership** of a suit contract from responder to opener after opening bids of 1NT or 2NT as well as rebids by opener of 2NT or 3NT after a strong 2♣ opening bid (see Chapter 6 – “Strong Opening Bids”). The reason is that it is usually advantageous to have the stronger hand concealed and the weaker hand as dummy. Although opener is not always the stronger hand, this is usually true after the applicable opening bids. Here is a deal that illustrates the advantage of having the strong hand as declarer.

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

Playing standard methods South would sign off in 2♠ after North opens 1NT and West would lead the ♥K while East played the encouraging ♥8. West would continue with the ♥6 to East’s ♥A and East would return the ♥5 to West’s ♥Q. West would now shift to the ♦J and the defenders would eventually take 3 more tricks with the ♠K, ♦K and ♣A, defeating the contract 1 trick.

On the other hand, if North plays the deal in a contract of 2♠ East will have the opening lead and will not be able to see any cards except his own. Looking at only those cards, he will probably select the ♦3. North will now be able to take 5 spade tricks, 2 diamond tricks and 1 club trick to make his contract.

Jacoby suggested changing the meanings of the 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ responses to an opening bid of 1NT and to similar bids for the other scenarios mentioned in the previous paragraph. He knew the power of the Stayman convention so retained that usage for the 2♣ response.

Just like Stayman, Jacoby Transfer bids are a convention, and a partnership decides before they start to play whether they will use the standard or Jacoby Transfer meanings for these bids. Note particularly that Jacoby Transfer bids do not replace Stayman but actually augment Stayman, and the two conventions complement each other quite well.

In this chapter we will focus on the application of Jacoby Transfers after a 1NT opening bid.

HOW THEY WORK

The fundamental implementation of a Jacoby Transfer bid into a Major suit is by responder bidding 2 of the suit that is immediately lower ranking than the suit she

wants opener to bid. Opener then makes the cheapest suit bid available. The details of the implementation are slightly different for transfers into a minor suit, but here are the three basic starting sequences:

Opener	Responder	Opener
1NT	2♦	2♥
1NT	2♥	2♠
1NT	2♠	3♣

JACOBY TRANSFERS INTO A MAJOR SUIT

Responder never has to worry about the strength of her hand when making a Jacoby Transfer bid into a Major Suit. She can have anywhere from 0 - 25 HCP. Opener has at least 15 HCP so she will never have more than 25 HCP. Of course, with 25 HCP she would just bid 7NT instead of making a Jacoby Transfer bid. Her G? decision can be N, M or Y. In fact, she may even be interested in a slam contract.

There are no strength requirements or limitations for responder's Jacoby Transfer bids.

Because of the lack of strength restrictions, responder is able to sign off in a partscore contract, invite game or force to game. Slam invitations or sign offs are also possible but will not be further discussed here.

The only suit requirements for transferring into a Major Suit is that responder has at least 5 cards in that suit.

Responder promises at least 5 cards in the Major Suit into which she is transferring.

Responder has several options after opener accepts the transfer:

1. Pass.
2. Bid 2NT.
3. Raise opener from 2M to 3M.
4. Bid 3NT.
5. Raise opener from 2M to 4M.
6. Bid 2♠ after first transferring to 2♥.
7. Bid 3♥ after first transferring to 2♠.
8. Bid 3m after first transferring to 2M.

The first five options are all straight forward and logical while the last three are somewhat more complex. All of them are discussed further below.

1. Responder Passes

This will be responder's choice when her G? decision is N. She will have the type of hand for which she would have bid 2M playing standard agreements.

♠ J 10 7 5 4 2 Playing standard methods responder would have bid 2♠. Playing
♥ 9 2 Jacoby Transfers responder starts with 2♥ and then passes opener's 2♠ rebid.
♦ 5 4
♣ 10 9 8

2. Responder Bids 2NT

This will be responder's choice when her G? decision is M and she has exactly 5 cards in the Major Suit. Playing standard methods (without Stayman) she would not have been able to show her 5-card Major. Playing standard methods with Stayman she could have started out with a 2♣ bid and then

- Bid 2M over a 2♦ response .
- Bid 2♠ over a 2♥ response if her Major was spades.
- Bid 2NT over a 2♠ response if her Major was hearts – opener would not have known she held 5 hearts.
- Raised 2M to 3M if opener bid her 5-card Major, but opener would not have known she had a 5-card suit.

If you play both Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, it is better to use the Jacoby Transfer bid when you have this type of hand.

♠ 10 7 2 Start with 2♦ and then rebid 2NT over opener's 2♥ rebid.
♥ K J 10 7 2
♦ 5 4
♣ A 9 8

Opener has no difficulty deciding what to do next:

- Pass with a doubleton in responder's Major if his G? decision is N.
- Bid 3M with 3⁺ cards in responder's Major if his G? decision is N.
- Bid 3NT with a doubleton in responder's Major if his G? decision is Y.
- Bid 4M with 3⁺ cards in responder's Major if his G? decision is Y.

3. Responder Raises Opener from 2M to 3M

Responder will make this bid when she has 6⁺ cards in her Major and her G? decision is M. Opener then passes if his G? decision is N or raises to 4M if his G? decision is Y.

♠ K 10 7 6 5 2 Start with a bid of 2♥ and then raise opener's 2♠ rebid to 3♠.

♥ 9 2

♦ A 4

♣ 10 9 8

4. Responder Bids 3NT

This will be responder's choice when her G? decision is Y and she has exactly 5 cards in the Major Suit. Opener will then pass with a doubleton in the Major or correct to 4M with 3+ cards in the Major. If the partnership were not playing Jacoby Transfers, responder would have bid 3M directly over the 1NT opening bid.

♠ 1 0 7 2 Start by bidding 2♦ and then jump to 3NT after opener's 2♥ re-

♥ K J 10 7 2 bid. Opener will pass with a doubleton heart or otherwise bid 4♥.

♦ Q 4

♣ A 9 8

5. Responder Raises Opener from 2M to 4M

When responder makes this bid she has decided GFMS? = Y and G? = Y so she has at least six cards in her Major. Opener has no decision to make; he simply passes.

♠ K 10 7 6 5 2 Start with a 2♥ bid and raise opener's rebid of 2♠ to 4♠.

♥ K 2

♦ A 4

♣ 10 9 8

6. Responder Bids 2♠ after First Transferring to 2♥

This sequence shows at least 5 cards in both Major Suits with G? = M. Opener has to have at least a 3-card fit for at least one of your Majors. He has the following choices at his third turn to bid:

- Pass.
- Correct to 3♥.
- Bid game in either Major.

The first 2 options would be appropriate if his G? decision is N, picking the Major in which he has a fit. If he has a fit in both Majors he will have to decide if he thinks it is better to play at 2♠ with you as declarer or at 3♥ with himself as declarer. Opener will choose the third option if G? = Y. He again picks the suit with the Golden Fit. If there is a fit in both suits, he should usually choose hearts so that he becomes declarer.

♠ K J 7 6 2 Start with a bid of 2♦ and then bid 2♠ after opener's 2♥ rebid.

♥ Q J 10 8 5 You will pass at your next opportunity if you have one.

♦ 9 4

♣ 8

7. Responder Bids 3♥ after First Transferring to 2♠

This sequence is similar to the previous one but is made when responder is at least 5-5 in the Majors with G? = Y. Note that bidding at a higher level with your rebid shows a stronger hand. In the first case the partnership has the possibility of stopping at the 2 level. In this case you are already at the 3 level. Of course, partner cannot pass because you have already told him you want to be at a game contract. So he will bid 4♥ or 4♠ choosing the suit with the fit. With a fit in both suits he should usually bid 4♠ so he becomes declarer. But, if he has more hearts than spades, he might choose hearts where there is probably a better trump fit.

♠ K J 7 6 2 Start by bidding 2♥ and then rebid 3♥ after opener's 2♠ rebid.

♥ Q J 10 8 5

♦ K 4

♣ 8

8. Responder Bids 3m after First Transferring to 2M

This is a very rare sequence showing at least 5 cards in the Major Suit and at least 4 cards in the minor suit. Furthermore, your hand is either highly unbalanced or has extra strength so that a game contract in your minor is a viable option (perhaps only if opener has a fit) with slam in either suit another possibility. Here are the usual actions taken by opener with his second bid:

- Bid 3M with at least 3-card support
- Bid 4m with at least 4-card support
- Bid 3NT with a doubleton in the Major and only 3 cards in the minor

Various continuations by responder are possible after these rebids by opener. Either of the two suit bids by opener establishes the trump suit so responder can sign off by bidding game in that suit or make some move toward slam as described in Chapter 9 – “Bidding Slams - Part 1” and Chapter 10 – “Bidding Slams - Part 2.” After opener’s 3NT bid, responder can pass or bid either of the two suits at the 4 level, showing additional length (6⁺-card M or 5⁺-card m) in that suit and setting it as the trump suit. Other bids to investigate slam are also possible.

Following are some typical hands where you can envision game or slam in either spades or diamonds. You would first bid 2♥ to transfer to spades and then bid 3♦. Your subsequent action would depend on opener’s next bid.

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

With the following hands even though you have similar distribution to those above, you have no interest in slam or a diamond contract, so you would start by transferring to spades and then rebid notrump or spades, not bothering to introduce your diamonds.

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

Summary of Responder's Rebids

- Pass – Sign off
- 2♠ – Invitational with 5-5 in the Majors
- 2NT – Invitational with a 5-card Major
- 3M – Invitational with a 6⁺-card Major (if M is Major she transferred to)
- 3NT – Game values with a 5-card Major
- 4M – Game values with a 6⁺-card Major (if M is Major she transferred to)
- 3♥ – Game values with 5-5 in the Majors
- 3m – Game values with at least a 5-card Major and 4-card minor, possible slam interest

Super-Acceptance

Opener normally accepts responder's transfer by bidding the appropriate Major Suit at the 2 level. He can bid that suit at the 3 level when he is on the top of his opening 1NT range and has 4 or 5 cards in responder's Major Suit and a doubleton. This is called *super-acceptance* and can lead to a game contract when responder would have otherwise not been quite strong enough for a subsequent invitational bid. It can also be advantageous if responder is thinking about a slam contract. Consider for example the following two hands.

Opener	Responder	After opener's 1NT bid responder bids 2♦. If opener bids only 2♥ responder will pass because her G? decision is N. But if opener super-accepts the transfer by jumping to 3♥, responder should reconsider her game decision and bid 4♥. This contract should be successful with only 1 club trick and at most 2 diamond tricks
♠ A 7 4 2	♠ 5	
♥ K Q 10 6	♥ A 9 8 5 2	
♦ A 9	♦ 8 6 5 4	
♣ K J 8	♣ Q 10 5	

being lost to the defenders. In fact, if the hearts divide 2-2, two diamond losers can be ruffed in opener's hand and 11 tricks can be taken. Depending on the opening lead and the defenders' play, this might even be arranged with a 3-1 trump break. Note that even though opener is declarer, responder has the long trump suit, so the doubleton diamond in opener's hand is really worth an extra "dummy" point. When Jacoby Transfers are used, opener is really just a surrogate declarer and the hand is often played as though responder is declarer and opener is dummy.

Of course opener's hand might be somewhat different and 4♥ might be set, or responder might have no values at all in which case she would pass 3♥ and even that contract might be set. So, super-acceptance will not always be profitable but most players feel the possible reward is worth the risk.

Jacoby Transfers and Stayman

A Jacoby Transfer bid is not always used when responder has a 5⁺-card Major suit. If she holds 4 cards in the other Major she should start with Stayman provided her G? decision is M or Y. This allows her to explore the possibility of a 4-4 fit in her 4-card Major. If her G? decision is N she should simply transfer to her 5⁺-card Major and then pass. Here are a few examples.

♠ Q 7 6 2 With G? = N just bid 2♦ and pass opener's 2♥ rebid.

♥ Q J 10 8 5

♦ 9 4

♣ 8 6

♠ A 7 6 2 G? = M so start with 2♣. Over a 2♦ reply by opener, bid 2♥ to show your 5-card heart suit and invitational values. If opener bids either Major, raise to 3M. If your Major Suits were reversed you would bid in a similar manner.

♠ A 9 7 6 2 G? = Y so start with 2♣. Over a 2♦ reply by opener, bid 3♠ to show your 5-card spade suit and game values. If opener bids either Major instead of 2♦, raise to 4M.

♣ 8 6

JACOBY TRANSFERS INTO A MINOR SUIT

When Jacoby Transfer bids are used for the Major Suits there is no longer a need for a natural response of 2♠ after a 1NT opening bid. Assuming Stayman is also being played, it is not possible for responder to sign off at 2m. The 2♠ response is therefore often used as a transfer (actually the proper terminology is puppet because responder does not promise a long club suit) to 3♣, allowing the partnership to play in a contract of 3♣ or 3♦ when responder has a long (6⁺-card) minor suit and her G? = N. If responder has a long club suit she passes the 3♣

bid by opener. If her long suit is diamonds she bids 3♦ after opener bids 3♣ and opener is expected to pass.

Note that in this structure, opener will be declarer in a club contract while responder will be declarer in a diamond contract, so the “transfer” is effective only half the time. There is a system called “Four Suit Transfers” whereby responder can transfer into either clubs or diamonds as well as both Majors but that is more advanced and requires a modification to Stayman, so it is not pursued in this book.

In theory responder’s G? decision could also be Y with an interest in slam but that use is also beyond the scope of this book.

So for our current purposes

Responder’s requirements for a Jacoby Transfer into a minor suit

- $G? = N$
- A 6⁺-card minor suit

Here are a couple of examples.

♠ 9 6 2	Unless partner has the ♣ AKx your club suit is likely to be of little value in a notrump contract so 3♣ looks like a much better spot. Bid 2♠ and then pass partner’s 3♣ rebid.
♥ –	
♦ 5 4 2	
♣ Q J 10 8 7 6 2	
♠ 6 5	You probably will not make a contract of 3♦ but the result should not be as bad as 1NT played by opener. Bid 2♠ and then correct opener’s 3♣ rebid to 3♦.
♥ 9	
♦ 10 9 8 6 5 4 3 2	
♣ 6 2	

JUMPS TO 3m AFTER 1NT

This topic is not really part of Jacoby Transfer bids but fits in well as a complement to Jacoby Transfers into a minor suit, especially since these bids were not discussed in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 2 – “Responses to a 1NT Opening Bid.”

A jump to 3m by responder after an opening bid of 1NT serves a very special purpose. It shows a good 6⁺-card minor with a hand for which $G? = M$ **IF partner has a fit for your minor suit**. You should have very little strength outside of your long minor. You are hoping that you have a reasonable chance of taking 6 tricks in your minor and that opener has 3 tricks in the other 3 suits so he can make 3NT.

If opener has 3⁺-card support for your minor with at least one of the top 3 honors, he should bid 3NT or otherwise pass. Note that opener does not need to be on the high end of his range to accept the invitational bid. This is a case where fit is more important than strength.

Here are a couple of typical hands for responder.

♠ 6 5 If opener has a diamond fit with the ♦K he should have an excellent chance of making 3NT. Without the fit, your diamond suit will not be worth much in a notrump contract but will still take several tricks in a 3♦ contract. Jump to 3♦.
♥ J 10 5
♦ A Q 9 8 6 2
♣ 6 2

♠ K 5 Here your club suit is not quite as solid as your diamond suit in the previous example, but you have the ♠K as a possible outside entry if all opener has in clubs is the Qxx. Bid 3♣.
♥ 10 5
♦ 8 6 2
♣ K J 10 8 7 6

Here are a couple of hands for opener to pair with the above example.

♠ A 6 3 Opener has only 15 HCP but does have a high club honor with 3-card support. He has a decent chance to take 9 tricks in a notrump contract – 2 spades, 1 heart and 6 clubs. He will need the clubs to break favorably or maybe something else good to happen but 3NT is a quite reasonable contract. He should bid 3NT after responder's 3♣ bid.
♥ A 8 4
♦ Q J 7 5
♣ A 5 4

♠ A Q 3 This time opener has 17 HCP but little chance of taking 9 tricks in a notrump contract since he does not have a club fit. On the other hand, responder should make 3♣ losing at most only 1 heart, 1 diamond and 2 clubs. Opener should pass responder's 3♣ bid.
♥ A 8 4 2
♦ A Q J 5
♣ 5 4

JUMPS TO 3M OR 4M AFTER 1NT

When playing Jacoby Transfers there is no longer a need for a jump to 3M after an opening 1NT bid to show a hand with exactly a 5-card Major and game values. That hand can now be shown by transferring to the Major and then jumping to 3NT. Bidding theorists always like to assign special meanings to bids that are not required for other purposes. In this case the jump to 3M is used to show a good 6⁺-card suit with slam invitational or better values. Here is a typical hand.

♠ A Q J 10 6 2 With 15 HCP and 17 total points you certainly are thinking about slam and know that GFMS? = Y in spades, but could be missing 2 aces. Show your hand with a jump to 3♠. With a minimum hand opener will sign off at 4♠ or possibly 3NT if he has a poor fit for spades. Otherwise, he will make a move toward slam using one of the techniques presented in Chapter 9 – “Bidding Slams - Part 1” and Chapter 10 – “Bidding Slams - Part 2.” Note that when you are this strong it is not so important to have opener as declarer; you may actually have the stronger hand.
♥ K J 10
♦ 4
♣ A 6 5

When you have a good 6⁺-card Major suit and G? = Y but Slam? = N you will usually transfer to your Major and then jump to 4M so that opener can be declarer. But sometimes you will have a hand where you would prefer the opening lead to come up to you from your LHO rather than through you from your RHO. In that case you can jump to 4M yourself. Here is an example.

♠ J 10 9 8 6 2 This is a hand in which 3NT might be a better contract than 4♠. You really don't have a good way to find out so you decide to play in 4♠ where you know you have a Golden Fit. The lead of any side suit by your LHO has the potential of giving you an extra trick, while a lead by your RHO has the potential of costing you a trick, so you would rather be declarer than dummy. Jump to 4♠.

HANDLING INTERFERENCE

As always you have to be prepared for the possibility of an opponent entering the auction. He may do so by making a double or by bidding a suit. Such action may be immediately after the 1NT opening bid or after the Jacoby Transfer bid has been made.

Opener Responder Here is a hand where opener bids 1NT and responder plans to bid 2♥ as a transfer to spades and then pass opener's second bid. We will look at how responder and opener handle interference with these cards.

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

After Responder's RHO Doubles

This double has not taken up any bidding space from responder so the standard approach is to ignore the double and make the same bid you would have if your RHO had passed. In other words, Jacoby Transfers are still "on." For the above example responder would still bid 2♥.

After Responder's RHO Overcalls

In contrast to a double by responder's RHO, his overcall may have interfered with your bidding. Suppose, for example, that the overcall was 2♦. If responder bids 2♥ is that a natural bid or a transfer to spades? If it is still a transfer to spades how does responder show a heart suit? On the other hand, what if the overcall was 2♣? That bid does not interfere at all with your Jacoby Transfer bids.

The standard approach to handling Jacoby Transfers after any overcall is to turn them "off" and have all bids be natural. This certainly seems reasonable for overcalls above 2♣, but why not leave Jacoby Transfers "on" after a 2♣ overcall? The only price paid is the ability to sign off at 2♦. If you have not discussed this option with your partner, assume the standard treatment. If responder

does bid at the 2 level, her G? decision should be M. With a long suit and no game interest she should just pass. That would be her action for the example hand. With another king she would have enough to bid 2♠.

After Opener's RHO Doubles

This situation is a little different from the case where responder's RHO doubles. Opener now has several options with the following recommended:

- Accept the transfer if you have at least 3-card support for responder's suit. Partner will know you have support
- Pass. This tells partner you have only a doubleton in his suit and allows him to take appropriate action
- Redouble if you have at least 4 cards in the doubled suit; even a bid of 2♦ redoubled will give you a game bonus. You might take this action even with 3-card support for responder's long suit if you would reject a game invitational bid by responder. Responder can remove the redouble to 2/3/4 of her suit or 2/3 notrump.

For the example hand opener would pass. But, suppose opener had the following hand:

♠ A 6 Now opener could redouble.

♥ A K 10 8 3

♦ 7 5 2

♣ A J 2

After Opener's RHO Overcalls

This is probably the most difficult scenario for opener. The overcall will have taken away his opportunity to accept the transfer at the 2 level. Accepting the transfer at the 3 level is paramount to having made a super-acceptance had his RHO passed. Doubling the overcall for penalties is dangerous because responder has not promised any values. For the same reason, bidding a 5-card suit other than partner's or bidding 2NT (with maximum values and a stopper in the over-called suit) carries great risk. Most often opener will have to pass and leave further action up to responder.

SUMMARY

This is a good time to review all of the responses and rebids after a 1NT opening bid when the partnership is playing Stayman and Jacoby Transfers.

Responses to 1NT

- 2♣ – Stayman
- 2♦ – Jacoby Transfer to hearts
- 2♥ – Jacoby Transfer to spades
- 2♠ – Jacoby Transfer to clubs
- 2NT – G? = M (no 4⁺-card Major)
- 3m – G? = M with a good 6⁺-card m and little outside strength, opener needs a fit to accept the invitation
- 3M – Slam try (or better) with a good 6⁺-card suit
- 3NT – G? = Y (no 4⁺-card Major)
- 4M – G? = Y with a 6+-card suit and a holding where you would like to be declarer rather than dummy

Opener's Rebids after a Jacoby Transfer Bid

Opener normally simply accepts the transfer by bidding the appropriate suit at the cheapest level. After a transfer to a Major Suit he may super accept the transfer by jumping to 3M if he has maximum values and at least 4-card trump support.

Responder's Rebids after a Jacoby Transfer Bid

Responder has the following options after transferring to a Major Suit:

- Pass to play in a partscore if G? = N.
- Bid 2♠ after first transferring to hearts to show 5-5 or better in the Majors and G? = M.
- Bid 2NT to invite game if she has exactly 5 cards in her Major and G? = M.
- Bid 3m to show 4+-cards in the minor with an interest in a 5m contract or perhaps even a minor suit slam, especially if opener has a fit for her minor but not for her Major.
- Bid 3♥ after first transferring to spades if she is 5-5 or better in the Majors and G? = Y.
- Raise to 3M if she has 6⁺-cards in her Major and G? = M.
- Bid 3NT if she has exactly 5 cards in her Major and G? = Y.
- Raise to 4M if she has 6⁺-cards in her Major and G? = Y.

After responder transfers to clubs she can pass and let opener play it there or bid 3♦ which opener should pass. This is the mechanism used to sign off at the 3 level in either minor suit.

Handling Interference

If responder's RHO doubles Jacoby Transfer bids are “on” but if RHO overcalls they are “off.” Upon partnership agreement they can be “on” after an overcall of 2♣. If opener’s RHO doubles opener should accept the transfer if he has 3⁺-card support for the transfer suit; otherwise he should pass. He also has the option to redouble if he has 4⁺ cards in the doubled suit. If opener’s RHO bids, opener will have to pass unless he has a hand with which he would have super accepted the transfer.



CHAPTER 6

– Strong Opening Bids

The 2NT Opening Bid and Responses

The Strong 2♣ Opening Bid

Responding to a 2♣ Opening Bid

Rebids after a 2♣ Opening Bid

Summary



THE 2NT OPENING BID AND RESPONSES

Opening the Bidding with 2NT

The opening bid of 2NT shows a balanced hand and 20 - 21 HCP. Here are a few examples.

♠ K J 7 2 This is a typical hand for an opening bid of 2NT.

♥ K Q 5

♦ A J 8 4

♣ A Q

♠ K Q J 2 With a worthless doubleton in clubs this hand is not ideal for an opening 2NT bid. But you will have a problem describing your hand with your rebid if you choose to open 1♦ instead and responder bids 1♥. Even a 2♣ response would give you some problems. You could jump to 3NT but miss a slam if partner had 12 or 13 points and passed thinking you were not quite so strong. A 1♠ rebid would be another possibility, but that too could lead to partner misjudging your strength. In the long run you will be better off if you just make the descriptive bid of 2NT and let responder take over from there.

♠ K Q J 6 2 The presence of a 5-card suit, even if it is a Major, should not deter you from making the descriptive 2NT opening bid.

♥ A Q 6

♦ A J 7

♣ K 2

Responding to an Opening 2NT Bid

Responding to an opening bid of 2NT is very similar to responding to an opening bid of 1NT with one significant difference. Since you have lost a whole level of bidding, there is not any bidding space available to invite opener to a game contract. Consequently, responder's G? decision will have to be Y or N. But, that should not be difficult because opener's strength is defined by only a 2-point range instead of the 3-point range for a 1NT opening bid. Yes, it is true that when responder has exactly 4 points her "real" decision is M. She will just have to make a judgment call and convert it into Y or N for the purpose of bidding.

Responder's standard responses follow the same pattern as those after a 1NT opening bid:

- Pass: G? = N and no better contract available
- 3 of any suit: G? = N but responder has at least 5 cards in the suit bid
- 3NT: G? = Y and notrump appears to be the best strain
- 4M: G? = Y and responder has at least 6 cards in the suit bid

Note that with these standard bids responder has no way to explore for a 4-4 or 5-3 Major Suit fit when her G? decision is Y. Fortunately, both the Stayman convention and the Jacoby Transfer bids presented in the previous two chapters can also be used here. These conventions are implemented after the 2NT opening bid as follows:

- 3♣ – Stayman
- 3♦ – Transfer to hearts
- 3♥ – Transfer to spades

With standard bidding responder can show a 5-card Major Suit with a G? = Y decision after a 1NT opening bid by jumping to 3M. A similar bid is not available after a 2NT opening bid, but the Jacoby Transfer bids do provide a means of showing this hand. Responder simply transfers to the Major Suit and then bids 3NT, so it is highly recommended that you adopt both Stayman and Jacoby Transfers. Here are several examples when using both of these conventions.

♠ J 10 8 6	With 5 HCP you have just enough to decide G? = Y. Bid 3♣. If opener bids 3♦ denying a 4-card Major, you will bid 3NT. If he bids either Major you will raise to 4M. If you were not playing Stayman you would have to bid 3NT and hope for the best.
♥ Q J 7 6	
♦ J 7 2	
♣ 4 2	
♠ 10 8 6	Transfer to hearts and then rebid 3NT. Opener should pass 3NT with a doubleton heart or else bid 4♥. If you were not playing Jacoby Transfers you would have to be satisfied with a bid of 3NT.
♥ K Q J 7 6	
♦ 8 7 2	
♣ 10 6	
♠ Q J 10 9 8 6	Transfer to spades and then raise to 4♠. If you were not playing transfers you would have to jump to 4♠ becoming declarer and exposing partners cards to the opponents as dummy.
♥ 7 6	
♦ 8 7 2	
♣ K 6	
♠ 8 6	Transfer to hearts and then pass. Without the transfer bid available you would have to bid 3♥ yourself.
♥ J 7 6 5 4 3	
♦ 8 7 2	
♣ 10 6	
♠ K 8 7 6	Bid 3♣. If opener bids either Major you will raise to 4M. If he bids 3♦ you will bid 3♥. He should then bid 3NT with a doubleton heart or otherwise raise to 4♥. Without Stayman you would have to bid 3NT and hope partner could make the contract. Four of either Major should be a superior contract if opener has a fit.
♥ Q 6 5 4 3	
♦ 8 7	
♣ 10 6	

♠ K Q 8 6 Bid 3♣. If opener bids 3♠ you will raise to 4♠. If he bids 3♦ you will rebid 3NT and he will pass. If he bids 3♥ you will also bid 3NT, but now he will bid 4♣ if he also has a 4-card spade suit, passing if he has fewer spades. Depending on opener's cards, this hand might play just as well in notrump even if he does have 4 spades. Since you have no way of knowing, you are best to play in spades if there is a fit.

If responder has a stronger hand with slam interest the methods presented in Chapter 9 – “Bidding Slams - Part 1” and Chapter 10 – “Bidding Slams - Part 2” can be used.

THE STRONG 2♣ OPENING BID

There was a time in bridge history when all opening bids in a suit at the 2 level showed a hand with a good 5⁺-card suit (the one that was bid) that was too strong to open at the 1 level. Similarly, opening bids of 2NT and 3NT were used for balanced hands with more than 21 HCP. This approach is still used in some circles but the modern style is to use the artificial opening bid of 2♣ for all hands with more than 21 points. This bid says nothing at all about opener's holding in the club suit, only that he has a hand that is too powerful to open at the 1 level. **Since opener's strength is unlimited responder's G? decision is never N.** Consequently, the 2♣ opening bid becomes a *de facto* forcing bid for one round.

It is important for the beginning player to not get too hung up on the exact point requirements for an opening bid of 2♣, but rather to understand why you want to force responder to bid.

Open the bidding with 2♣ only if you are afraid you might miss a game contract if you open at the 1 level because partner and the opponents might all pass.

This is a straightforward decision when you have a balanced hand with 22⁺ HCP. Partner would pass with 3 - 5 points and it would be unlikely either opponent would have enough strength to enter the auction. The decision is a little more difficult when you have an unbalanced hand. A common general guideline is that you should have

- 9⁺ playing tricks (no more than 4 losers) if you are considering a **Major Suit** contract
- 10⁺ playing tricks (no more than 3 losers) if you are considering a **minor suit** contract

In other words, you need only 1 trick from partner to make a game contract. Note that you do not need to have game in your hand, so the 2♣ opening bid is

not forcing to game and the auction can stop before a game contract is reached. But, responder must bid at least once because you could have enough for game and even be thinking of a slam contract. This subject is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Some players reduce the number of playing tricks by half a trick, but I think those given above are best for beginners. In fact, many experts adhere to the more stringent requirements. After all, if partner has 1½ tricks he probably has enough to respond if you open at the 1 level.

While the 2♣ opening bid has the advantage of immediately telling partner you have a very strong hand, it has the disadvantage of removing an entire bidding level from the subsequent auction. The opening bidder must also take this into consideration when contemplating an initial bid of 2♣. Some two-suited hands may be difficult to describe after a 2♣ opening.

Here are several examples.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>♠ K Q 7 6</p> <p>♥ Q J 5 2</p> <p>♦ A K</p> <p>♣ A K 3</p> | <p>A balanced hand with 22 HCP. You will have a reasonable play for 3NT if partner has as little as the ♥K and ♣Q. Open 2♣. Your plan is to rebid 2NT to show this hand.</p> |
| <p>♠ K 8 7</p> <p>♥ A K 2</p> <p>♦ A K</p> <p>♣ A K Q 3 2</p> | <p>This balanced hand has 26 HCP. With a decent break in the club suit you can take 9 tricks in clubs, diamonds and hearts. If the opponents lead a spade you should score an overtrick. Open 2♣ with the intent of rebidding 3NT. Some players would open this 3NT but you leave more options open if you start with 2♣ and see what responder bids before committing to 3NT.</p> |
| <p>♠ A K Q J 3 2</p> <p>♥ 7</p> <p>♦ A K 6</p> <p>♣ A K 4</p> | <p>From your viewpoint this hand is not suitable for a notrump contract, but you should have no trouble making 4♠ unless you get a disastrous trump break. You also have a chance for a slam contract. Open with a 2♣ bid. You will tell your partner about your spade suit with your rebid.</p> |
| <p>♠ K Q 7</p> <p>♥ A K J 10 7 6 2</p> <p>♦ A</p> <p>♣ A 2</p> | <p>You have 24 points (21 HCP plus 3 for your 7-card heart suit) and at most 4 losers (1 club, 1 heart and 2 spades). If partner has as little as the ♥Q or ♠J you can make 4♥. Open the bidding with 2♣ and show your heart suit with your rebid.</p> |
| <p>♠ –</p> <p>♥ A 8 2</p> <p>♦ A K 7</p> <p>♣ A K Q J 8 3 2</p> | <p>You expect to take 10 tricks in a club contract losing only 2 heart tricks and a diamond trick. Open with a 2♣ bid and then rebid clubs at your second turn to show that you really have a club suit.</p> |

♠ A 9 8 7 6 3 2

♥ A Q

♦ A J

♣ A J

Here is a hand with 20 HCP plus 3 length points for the 7-card spade suit, but you could easily lose 2 (or more) spade tricks plus 1 trick in each of the other 3 suits. Open this with 1♠ rather than 2♣. If partner doesn't pass you will jump to 4♠ at your next turn. If partner does pass you probably have not missed a game contract. Note that those two jacks are highly overvalued.

♠ 6 3 2

♥ A K Q J 10 3 2

♦ A K

♣ 9

Here you have only 17 HCP plus 3 length points for the 7-card suit. But you have only 4 losers and could easily make game if your partner has either missing ace or the ♠KQ. You could even make 4♥ if she has as little as the ♠K and the ♠A is favorably located. Open 2♣.

♠ 6

♥ A J

♦ A K Q 8 4

♣ A Q J 10 2

In this hand you have 21 HCP plus 2 points for length. Strong hands with length in both minors are particularly difficult to describe after an opening bid of 2♣. As you will see in the next two sections responder may very well bid 2♦ if you opened 2♣. You would then bid 3♦ (show your higher-ranking suit first) and then may have to go to the 4 level to show your club suit. Even if you bid 3♣ at your second turn, you would have to bid 4♦ to show your second suit. All in all, this is a very ugly bidding sequence! It is better to open with 1♦, planning to jump shift to 3♣ at your second turn. Note that you also expect to have 4 losers (1 in each suit), so you do not satisfy the guideline of being within one trick of game in a minor suit.

It is common for a beginning bridge player to look for an excuse to open the bidding with 2♣. It gives a sense of power and euphoria. Because of the associated reduced bidding space, it is suggested that it is often better to look for an excuse **not** to open with 2♣.

RESPONDING TO A 2♣ OPENING BID

If you were to ask a room full of 100 bridge players, with various levels of experience, how to respond to an opening 2♣ bid, you would probably get about a half-dozen different answers. Furthermore, some players would have very strong opinions about why their method was best. In fact, there are several methods in popular use and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

For simplicity, only one of these systems is presented here. It is one of two recommended by the late expert Max Hardy and is based on his wisdom summarized by the following:

As responder, do not get in opener's way without purpose.

Opener's job is to describe his hand to responder. He described his strength with his opening bid. Now give him maximum freedom to describe his shape unless you have a good reason to infringe on his bidding space. This is best done with an artificial response of 2♦. This is neither a positive nor negative response but something called a *waiting bid*. You are waiting to hear more about opener's hand. Seldom will responder meet the requirements for some other response so

The 2♦ response to a 2♣ opening bid is semi-automatic.

This simply means that most of the time responder will bid 2♦ after a 2♣ opening bid. Only when she has something very descriptive and positive to say will she make a different bid. What does she need to make some other bid? A 5⁺-card suit (6⁺ cards if diamonds) headed by 2 of the top 3 honors. In addition, it is suggested (by this author) that she not skip over a suit (other than diamonds) in which she holds 3⁺ cards unless she has a very good suit. This suggestion is made to allow opener to bid any suit where there is a strong potential of a Golden Fit as cheaply as possible. It is not a standard requirement so discuss it with your partner.

Let's look at several examples.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ♠ 9 7 6 4
♥ 8 7 5
♦ 9 5 3
♣ 7 5 4 | Although your hand is essentially worthless, you cannot pass.
Make your 2♦ waiting bid. |
| ♠ A 7 6 4
♥ K 7 5
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ 7 5 | This is a nice hand but you still want to bid 2♦ to let opener further describe his shape. |
| ♠ A 10 7 6 4
♥ K 7 5
♦ J 5 3
♣ 7 5 | Resist the temptation to bid 2♠; your suit is not good enough and you have 3 hearts. Bid 2♦. |
| ♠ A K 7 6 4
♥ 9 7 5
♦ J 5 3
♣ 7 5 | Your spade suit is good enough to bid but you have 3 hearts. Give opener the opportunity to bid it at the 2 level rather than force him to the 3 level. Bid 2♦. If your Major Suits were reversed you would bid 2♥. |
| ♠ A K Q J 4
♥ 9 7 5
♦ J 5 3
♣ 7 5 | Even though you have 3 hearts you have an outstanding spade suit. Go ahead and bid 2♠. If you later raise a heart bid by opener he will know that you also have a source of tricks in spades and that might lead him to pursue a slam. |

♠ 6 4
♥ 7 5
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ K Q 10 9 8

This hand is appropriate for a 3♣ response. You have strongly suggested to partner that you do not have 3-card support for either major.

♠ 6 4
♥ 7 5
♦ A 5 3 2
♣ K J 10 9 8

This is an exception to the guidelines. While your club suit does not have 2 of the top 3 honors, it is a decent suit and your hand strength is respectable. As you will discover in the next section, this may be your best opportunity to show it. Bid 3♣.

♠ 6 5 4
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 2
♣ K Q J 10 9 8

Here is another exception to the guidelines. You suspect that partner might have a long diamond suit so that if you bid 2♦ he will raise to 3♦ and then you will have to go to the 4 level to show your clubs thereby bypassing 3NT and generating a very awkward auction. Even if opener were to bid 2M, a 3♣ bid by you would be artificial so you would be able to show your good club suit only by jumping to 4♣, which by some agreements would also be artificial. So here it is best to respond with 3♣ immediately.

♠ 6 4
♥ 7 5
♦ A Q 9 7 4 3 2
♣ 9 8

Here is a typical hand for a 3♦ response. Note that this bid bypasses all three other suits, so you should usually have no more than a doubleton in any of those suits. That means you probably have at least a 7-card diamond suit, a rare occurrence.

♠ 9 6 4
♥ 10 8 5
♦ A K Q 9 7 2
♣ 8

When you think partner might bid 3♣ over a 2♦ response, you might also want to make an immediate 3♦ response to show an excellent 6-card diamond suit. Again, as you will see in the next section, if you first bid 2♦ and then bid 3♦ after a 3♣ rebid by opener you will be showing a different type of hand.

Note that responder never makes a notrump response to an opening 2♣ bid. If the hand is to be played in notrump it will usually be much better if it is played by opener instead of responder. As pointed out by some authors this is not always the case and they do allow a 2NT response in their system.

REBIDS AFTER A 2♣ OPENING BID

Rebids after a 2♦ Response

1. When Opener Has a Balanced Hand

With a balanced hand opener will tend to rebid as follows:

- 22 - 24 HCP: 2NT
- 25 - 27 HCP: 3NT

- 28 - 30 HCP: 4NT

The exception is when opener's shape is 5-3-3-2 with a 5-card major. He now has the option of bidding 2 of his Major instead of notrump. With a worthless doubleton, it is usually best to show the 5-card Major. With a poor 5-card Major, it is usually best to ignore the Major and make the appropriate notrump bid. There will be many "in between" hands where opener will just have to use his judgment to select an option.

When opener's rebid is 3NT or 4NT, responder will usually just pass although bidding a 6⁺-card Major Suit is a possibility. Pursuing a slam contract is also an option, but such discussion is deferred to Chapter 9 – "Bidding Slams - Part 1." The Stayman convention at this level is not particularly helpful because you will probably be able to take as many tricks in a notrump contract as a suit contract with a 4-4 fit. However, Jacoby Transfer bids are appropriate when responder has a 6⁺-card Major Suit.

When opener's rebid is 2NT responder can use the same bidding style as presented earlier in this chapter after an opening bid of 2NT. The only difference here is her method of making her G? decision. In theory opener needs only 1 to 3 points for a game contract. In practice, if all he needed was a jack, he would probably have bid game himself. In fact, what he probably really needs is a trick. We learned a long time ago that all points are not created equal. Opener will be much happier to see a king in dummy than 3 jacks. Here is a recommendation for minimum requirements for a G? = Y decision:

- An ace, king or QJ
- Two queens
- A 6-card Major Suit headed by the jack
- A 7⁺-card Major Suit

Stayman and Jacoby Transfers can certainly be used here with appropriate hands for responder.

2. When Opener Has an Unbalanced Hand

When opener has an unbalanced hand he starts to describe his shape by bidding his longest suit as cheaply as possible. He need not fear that partner will pass because of the following principle.

After an opening bid of 2♣, any bid of a new suit by opener is forcing for one round.

This principle applies even if opener's second bid is 3♣, since the 2♣ opening was artificial and said nothing about his club holding.

At this point responder makes a bid that not only describes her G? decision but also states the suitability of her hand for a slam contract. She makes that decision *assuming* that opener is one trick short of game in his hand. Because of the lack of bidding space, her decision will be Y or N. Her decision will be Y if she holds any of the following (a *positive hand*):

- An ace, king or two queens
- The trump queen plus two or more smaller trumps
- 3^+ small trumps plus a singleton or void

If responder's decision is N, she shows it by using a "system" referred to here as

Cheapest 3-Level Bid Second Negative

This is a short way of saying that if responder's **second** bid is the **cheapest** available **bid** she can make at the **3 level**, she is making a **negative bid** thereby denying a positive hand. There is actually one other bid responder can make to show a poor hand. If opener has bid a Major Suit she can jump to four of that Major if she has 3^+ -card trump support without a positive hand. This warns opener that she has no useful values for a slam contract and any further bidding by opener must be based on his values alone. In fact, responder is not even sure of game, so the bid is kind of a "Hope you can make this partner." bid.

If responder has a positive hand she should make an appropriate descriptive bid. Any such bid is known as a **positive bid** or response. First and foremost, if she has at least 3-card support for partner's suit, she should raise it one level to conserve bidding space to allow the use of the slam-investigation methods of Chapter 9 – "Bidding Slams - Part 1" and Chapter 10 – "Bidding Slams - Part 2." If she does not have adequate trump support she can bid a 5^+ -card suit of her own. Lacking a long suit, a notrump bid is appropriate.

Note that when responder has a positive hand and a heart suit that is not quite good enough to bid directly after the $2\clubsuit$ opening bid, she will not be able to show it at the 3 level if opener's rebid is $3\spadesuit$, because that would be a negative bid. When she expects this might happen (she has a singleton or void in diamonds) she might stretch the requirements for an immediate positive response slightly and bid $2\heartsuit$ instead of $2\spadesuit$. This idea is even more significant when responder has a G? = Y hand with a decent club suit that does not fully satisfy the requirements for an immediate positive response. Such an example was shown in the previous section.

♠ 9 6 4 You have a feeling opener may bid $3\spadesuit$ at his second turn. If you
♥ A 10 8 6 5 start with a $2\spadesuit$ response, your subsequent $3\heartsuit$ bid would be nega-
♦ 2 tive. Better to start with a $2\heartsuit$ response and then bid 3NT if opener
♣ 9 8 7 2 bids $3\spadesuit$ at his second turn.

When responder makes a negative response with her second bid the partnership is allowed to stop short of a game contract, but responder can pass only if opener subsequently rebids his first suit. Such a rebid tends to show a 6⁺-card suit because responder could have jumped to game with a poor hand and 3⁺-card support. The bid of a new suit by opener is forcing for another round and shows an unbalanced hand, usually a second 5⁺-card suit but he could have a 5-4-3-1 or 5-4-2-2 shape and be reluctant to bid notrump. With these types of hands and barely the strength for a 2♣ opening bid, opener might well choose to open the bidding at the 1 level in his 5-card suit and reverse or jump shift into his 4-card suit, anticipating the problems presented with the 2♣ opening bid.

When responder makes a positive response with her second bid, the partnership is in a game-forcing auction and both partners must keep bidding until a game contract is reached. The most important objective is to first find a trump fit if possible. Once a trump fit is found, slam exploration is a possibility. If a trump fit is not found, a notrump contract is reasonable. Bidding by both partners is natural until a trump fit is found.

Rebids after an Immediate Positive Response

Bidding by both partners is somewhat simplified when responder bids 2M or 3m in response to the 2♣ opening bid. The positive response establishes a game-forcing auction and slam is a distinct possibility. As usual, the first priority is to establish a trump fit if possible. Until a trump fit is found all bids are natural. If a trump fit is found, the slam exploration methods of Chapter 9 – “Bidding Slams - Part 1” and Chapter 10 – “Bidding Slams - Part 2” can be used if either partner thinks slam is a possibility. A bid of 3NT by either partner does not necessarily end the auction. If the other partner still thinks slam is a possibility, further bidding is possible. However, heed the following warning.

Be wary of pursuing slam if both partners have shown unbalanced hands and no fit has been found.

Under these conditions there may be no source of tricks unless the partnership holds the necessary HCP or one or both of the partners have a solid suit.

Opener will tend to make the same rebid he would have after a 2♦ response, but will have to make it at a higher level if responder bypassed his intended rebid. He also has the option of raising responder’s suit.

HANDLING INTERFERENCE

The opponents are usually silent after a 2♣ opening bid, but once in a while opener’s LHO will overcall or double. Here is the standard action for responder after such interference:

- After an overcall
 - Pass shows a positive hand
 - Double shows a negative hand
 - A bid is natural (this includes a notrump bid which also promises a stopper in the opponent's suit)
- After a double
 - Pass shows a positive hand
 - Redouble shows a negative hand
 - A bid is natural

As usual, a positive response establishes a game-forcing auction. If responder makes a negative response, subsequent bids by opener are not forcing.

It is also possible that opener's LHO passes but his RHO overcalls or doubles after responder bids.

SUMMARY

The 2NT Opening Bid and Responses

The 2NT opening bid shows a balanced hand with 20 - 21 HCP. This bid is very similar to the 1NT opening bid, just with a different HCP range.

Responding to a 2NT opening bid is similar to responding to an opening 1NT bid, just a level higher and there is no invitational bid available. The Stayman and Jacoby Transfer conventions can also be used here, just one level higher. Without the Jacoby Transfer convention there is no way for responder to show a hand with a 5-card Major for which G? = Y.

The Strong 2♣ Opening Bid

The opening bid of 2♣ is artificial and shows a hand that is too strong to open at the 1 level or with 2NT. With a balanced hand it will always contain 22⁺ HCP. With an unbalanced hand it will usually have 22⁺ total points, but some hands with fewer points and strong playing strength may also be opened with 2♣. Conversely, it may be better to open some hands with 22⁺ total points at the 1 level instead of 2♣.

Open the bidding with 2♣ only if you are afraid you might miss a game contract if you open at the 1 level because partner and the opponents might all pass.

A general guideline for opening the bidding with 2♣ when you have an unbalanced hand is that you should have

- 9⁺ playing tricks (no more than 4 losers) if you are considering a Major Suit contract
- 10⁺ playing tricks (no more than 3 losers) if you are considering a minor suit contract

The 2♣ opening bid is forcing for one round but not in and of itself to game.

Responding to a 2♣ Opening Bid

As responder, do not get in opener's way without purpose.

The 2♦ response to a 2♣ opening bid is semi-automatic.

Any other suit bid by responder shows a good 5⁺-card suit and tends to deny 3⁺-cards for any suit she bypasses.

Rebids after a 2♦ Response

With a balanced hand opener will tend to rebid as follows:

- 22 - 24 HCP: 2NT
- 25 - 27 HCP: 3NT
- 28 - 30 HCP: 4NT

but may instead elect to bid a 5-card Major Suit at the 2 level.

After the 2NT rebid by opener, responder has the same options as if opener had opened the bidding with 2NT. After opener's rebids of 3NT or 4NT Stayman is not used but Jacoby Transfers still apply, especially if responder has a 6⁺-card Major.

When opener has an unbalanced hand he will normally show his longest suit by bidding it as cheaply as possible. The following principle applies in these auctions:

After an opening bid of 2♣, any bid of a new suit by opener is forcing for one round.

After this rebid responder makes a bid that not only describes her G? decision but also states the suitability of her hand for a slam contract. Her decision will be Y if she holds any of the following positive hands:

- An ace, king or two queens
- The trump queen plus two or more smaller trumps
- 3⁺ small trumps plus a singleton or void

If her G? decision is N she passes this message to opener by using the following construct.

Cheapest 3-Level Bid Second Negative

If her decision is Y she makes some other appropriate bid. This establishes a game-forcing auction and both partners continue to bid naturally until a fit is found or a game contract is reached. Slam investigation is also possible.

Handling Interference

If opener's RHO bid or doubles the following agreements are standard for responder's actions:

- Pass shows a positive hand
- Double or redouble shows a negative hand
- A bid is natural with a 2NT bid after an overcall promising a stopper in the opponent's suit



CHAPTER 7

– Preemptive Opening Bids and Overcalls

Preemptive Opening Bids

Weak Two-Bid Opening Bids and Responses

High Level Preemptive Opening Bids

Responses to High Level Preemptive Opening Bids

Competing after Opening Preemptive Bids

Preemptive Overcalls and Advances

Summary



PREEMPTIVE OPENING BIDS

Using the 2♣ opening bid for all strong hands frees up all higher suit opening bids for other purposes. In modern bridge all of the opening suit bids from 2♦ through 5♦, and in some agreements also 3NT and 4NT, are collectively referred to as *preemptive opening bids*. They all show hands which are not strong enough to open at the 1 level. Their sole purpose is to make life miserable for the opponents while maintaining a reasonable degree of safety.

Suppose that you were all set to open the bidding with 1♥, but the player to your right was the dealer and opened the bidding with 2♠. Now if you want to get into the auction and show your suit you will have to bid 3♥. Do you want to risk that action not knowing the strength of your LHO or partner? Suppose you pass and later find out partner had 4-card support with an opening hand but also could not take any action when the bid was passed around to her. You likely just missed a game. You may have set declarer a couple of tricks, but, if you were vulnerable and the opponents not, you just lost 620 points for a gain of 100 points. Not a very satisfactory result. On the other hand, suppose you bid 3♥ and now find that your LHO with a trump stack, a singleton spade and a reasonably strong hand decided to make a penalty double while your partner held virtually nothing. You go set two or three tricks giving up 500 or 800 points when the best the opponents could have made offensively was maybe 110 or 140. Even if they had bid and made 4♠ they would have received only 420 points. This is not a good result in either case. This somewhat abstract scenario illustrates the effectiveness of a preemptive opening bid. The higher the opening bid, the more bidding space you have taken away. An opening bid of 5♦ is much more effective than a 2♦ opening bid.

When you make an opening preemptive bid you know that there is a very strong probability that you will not make your contract and may even be subject to a penalty double. **But bridge is not about making your contract every time you are declarer; it is about scoring more points than your opponents.** You are hoping that if you do go set, the opponents will score fewer points than if they had been allowed to reach their optimum contract. This is the same concept presented with regard to competitive bidding and the Law of Total Tricks in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – “Overcalls and Advances - Part 1.” In this regard relative vulnerability is very significant in your preemptive bidding decision.

There are pros and cons to all bidding agreements. The downside to preemptive opening bids is that you preempt your partner as well as the opponents. In this regard your position at the table is particularly relevant. When you make a preemptive opening bid as the dealer you may be giving a problem to two opponents and one partner (a two to one advantage), but remember that you will be giving your partner a problem a third of the time. When you are in second chair your RHO has already passed, so you know at least one of your opponents does not have an opening hand. Since you also have less than opening values, there is an equal chance that your preemptive opening will be disruptive to your partner

or your remaining opponent. When you are considering a preemptive bid in third chair, you know that it is very likely your LHO has an opening hand and could be quite strong. In fact, if you are quite weak, you know he has at least opening values. Some players take the viewpoint that “almost anything goes” when preempting in this position. Making a preemptive bid in fourth chair is a rather unique occurrence. Here you can simply pass and take a null result (neither side receiving any points) rather than risk a negative result. So, if you are going to make a “preemptive” opening bid, you should have a reasonable expectation of making the contract. If done, your bid will invariably be one of the 2-level bids. In the following two sections we focus on preemptive opening bids in first or second position. Preemptive opening bids in third or fourth chair are considered in further detail in Chapter 12 – “Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 1.”

Every time you make any bid you have taken away some bidding space from the opponents; therefore every bid has some preemptive value. But in bridge terminology the use of “preemptive” carries a connotation of weakness.

WEAK TWO-BID OPENING BIDS AND RESPONSES

The opening bids of 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ are collectively known as ***weak two-bids***. In this section we focus only on these bids, leaving the higher preemptive bids for the next section.

Requirements

Different authors and players have various requirements for a weak two opening bid both in terms of suit quality and hand strength. In general, all agree that the hand should not be worth an opening bid at the 1 level and most agree you should have a “good” suit. The vulnerability and position at the table are additional factors. Perhaps more important than the specific requirements is that you and your partner have an agreement as to what constitutes a weak two-bid in a specific situation. The information given below was put together from various sources and forms a rather basic consensus for what are commonly referred to as ***disciplined weak two-bids***.

***Requirements for a Disciplined Weak Two-Bid Opening
(first or second chair)***

1. A good 6-card suit headed by 2 of the top 3 honors or any 3 honors
2. 5 – 11 HCP, mostly in your long suit
3. A 1-suited hand; a side 4-card minor is OK, not a 4-card Major
4. No more than one outside ace or king
5. No void

Let's look at each of these requirements in more detail.

1. Suit Quality

Good suit quality is required to minimize your losses if you end up as declarer after the auction is over. Anderson (Resource 8) has summarized the quality requirements with the following rule of thumb.

If responder holds a matching high doubleton honor there should be no more than one trump loser, assuming normal breaks.

A high honor is generally considered to be any of the top three. As you may surmise, it is not only honor cards that are critical here but also high intermediate cards. Here are some typical suits that would be satisfactory:

- AQ10xxx
- KQ9xxx
- AJ98xx
- QJ10xxx
- QJ987x (you are missing one honor but the 987 may be better than 10xx in the previous hand)

You do not want a suit that is too good, e.g., AKQJxx. This suit will normally produce six running tricks on offense; once you get the lead you can take your tricks. Partner will not expect that much offensive power from you and might well pass when your combined assets are sufficient for a game contract.

2. HCP

♠ 7 4 ♠ 7 4 You will frequently have the **minimum of 5 HCP in your long suit**. If not, then you should have something worthwhile in a side suit for added safety. This is about the minimum you should hold for an opening bid of 2♥.

If you have 11 HCP your 2 extra length points from your 6-card suit give you a total of 13, enough for a normal opening bid at the 1 level. Not all such hands are really worth that bid.

♠ Q 4 ♠ Q 4 This hand has 11 HCP but those quacks in the side suits do not carry their full value. It is much more descriptive to open with 2♥ than 1♥.

♦ J 3 ♦ J 3

♣ J 8 2 ♣ J 8 2

3. Hand Shape

Typical hand shapes are 6-3-2-2 and 6-3-3-1. You might have a 6-4-2-1 pattern if the 4-card suit is a minor. You want to avoid opening with a weak two-bid if you have a 4-card Major. It is too easy to miss a 4-4 Major Suit fit.

4. Defensive Strength

All preemptive bids deny significant defensive values. You are making the preemptive bid because you are afraid the opponents have a game in some other suit. That likelihood decreases when you have a couple of high cards on the side.

♠ K 4 2 This hand has entirely too much defensive value for a weak two opening bid. It is much better to pass initially and possibly enter the auction later. Swap one of the small diamonds with the ♠K or
♥ A 9
♦ Q J 10 9 8 7 the auction later. Swap one of the small diamonds with the ♠K or
♣ 8 2 **♥A** and you would have a nice 2♦ opening bid.

5. Voids

The problem with opening a weak two-bid when you have a void is that you have too much support for the other two suits and might miss a good fit with partner in one of those suits. Your shape will be 6-4-3-0 with a 4-card minor. You have respectable offensive ruffing power if partner has a fit for one of your other suits.

Responses

Just as there are many “systems” for responding to a strong 2♣ opening bid there are also several systemic agreements for responding to an opening weak two-bid. Of course, pass is always an option. For simplicity, only one system will be presented here, with two variations on one particular bid.

This system is often referred to as ***RONF*** – a Raise is the Only Nonforcing bid that responder can make. This is a little misleading because not only is a raise nonforcing; if below the game level, it is not even invitational. It is made simply to increase the preemptive nature of the opening bid. The single raise is based on the Law of Total Tricks. Partner has shown a 6-card suit. If you have 3-card support you have a 9-card fit and belong at the 3 level. Give partner a simple raise to 3 of his suit. By analogy, if you have 4-card support, give partner a jump raise to 4 of his suit. On occasion you will also raise partner to the 4 level if his suit is a Major and you think you have a reasonable play for game. In this case you might have only 3-card support. Let your LHO try to figure out which hand you have as he considers his bidding options.

Analyzing your game prospects as responder after an opening weak two-bid has very little to do with the number of points you hold but very much to do with the existence of a fit (either your fit with partner’s suit or his fit with a long suit you might hold) and the number of quick tricks you have in your hand. The key here is that you need aces and kings or a good suit of your own, not assorted queens and jacks in opener’s side suits. Remember that he has very little in terms

of high cards outside of his long suit. Your two queens in side suits are not likely to be of much help whereas the same 4 points as a side suit ace will be wonderful.

Here are the most common types of bids responder might make:

1. 2NT
2. A new suit at the 2 level (2M)
3. A new suit at the 3 level in a lower-ranking suit
4. A raise to 3 of partner's suit
5. 3NT
6. A jump raise of 2♦ to 4♦
7. A jump raise of 2M to 4M
8. A jump raise of 2♦ to 5♦

While other bids are possible, they would be extremely rare. Let's take a closer look at the common responses.

1. Responder Bids 2NT

There are two common uses for this bid. Each partnership must decide which approach they are going to use.

Probably the most common use for this bid asks opener to show a “*feature*” if he has a good hand, although he should bid 3NT if he has a solid suit and no feature. With a bad hand opener just rebids his suit at the 3 level. Regardless of opener’s rebid, responder sets the contract with her next bid. A **feature** is generally regarded as an ace or king in a side suit but some partnerships have other agreements. It is never a void or singleton.

The other application of the 2NT response is called *Ogust* after its inventor, Harold Ogust. It is a system of five step-rebids by opener whereby he shows the strength and suit quality of his hand:

- 3♣ – bad hand, bad suit
- 3♦ – bad hand, good suit
- 3♥ – good hand, bad suit
- 3♠ – good hand, good suit
- 3NT – solid suit (AKQxxx)

This structure is slightly different from Ogust’s original system which reversed the two red suit bids and did not include the 3NT step. The system shown here always allows responder to stop at 3 of opener’s suit when he shows a bad hand.

A bad hand is generally considered one with 5 - 8 HCP and a good hand one with 8 - 11 HCP where opener uses his judgment to put the 8-HCP hand in either category.

Partnerships who employ this system often slightly relax their suit quality requirements for their opening weak two-bids. That allows them to be a little more aggressive with these preemptive bids. Regardless, they need to decide what dis-

tinguishes a good suit from a bad suit, but one which satisfies the “disciplined” requirements presented earlier in this section would be a good starting point.

2. Responder Bids 2M

Responder has a decent 5⁺-card Major Suit and is either hoping to improve the contract or may be interested in game. If hoping to improve the contract she should have some tolerance for opener’s suit or a really good/long suit of her own that she is willing to rebid at the 3 level.

While it is generally agreed that this bid is forcing (some do play it as nonforcing), there seems to be little consensus in the literature regarding what opener should do next. If you prefer to “keep it simple” you might choose the following agreements suggested by Anderson (Resource 8). Opener

- Raises responder with 3-card support or a high doubleton honor
- Rebids his suit, suggesting a minimum
- Bids a new suit, showing a feature
- Jumps in a new suit to show good 3-card support with a singleton in the bid suit

If you want to get a little more sophisticated you might choose the following system developed by this author as somewhat of an extension of Ogust, whereby opener further describes his hand in terms of overall strength and support for responder’s suit.

- 2NT – bad hand without support for responder’s suit
- 3♣ – bad hand with support for responder’s suit
- 3 of opener’s original suit – good hand without support for responder’s suit
- 3 of responder’s suit – good hand with support for responder’s suit
- 3NT – solid suit (AKQxxx); there is a slight advantage to using 3 of an unbid suit other than clubs instead of 3NT to show this hand. Responder will then frequently have more options available, including bidding 3NT herself thereby becoming declarer and concealing more information from the opponents as well as protecting certain vulnerabilities in her hand on the opening lead. But that agreement may be more difficult to remember.

As a general guideline, opener should put his hand in the bad category if he has 5 - 8 HCP and in the good category if he has 8 - 11 HCP, with a judgment decision for a hand with 8 HCP. Support for responder’s suit generally means any 3 cards, but a high doubleton honor is also sufficient. Opener will often have to use a little additional judgment based on his suit quality and fit for responder’s suit. For example, a holding of Qxx in responder’s suit along with a singleton in a side suit certainly increases the value of opener’s hand.

Note that with this system of rebids, whenever opener has a bad hand, responder will be able to sign off at the 3 level either in opener's suit or her own suit. In addition the higher opener rebids, the higher the probability of a game contract. Since this structure has many similarities to the set of Ogust rebids after a 2NT response it should be rather easy to remember if you are also using that system.

Responder's second bid will usually set the final contract. Only a move toward slam would require or suggest further bidding by opener.

3. Responder Bids a New Lower-Ranking Suit at the 3 Level

This is a very rare bid and always shows a good 6⁺-card suit. A bid of 3m after an opening bid of 2M would be very unusual. There really is not anything in the literature about this sequence. A bid of 3 \heartsuit after a 2 \spadesuit opening bid does make a lot of sense when responder has a good suit with game interest. Opener should raise with 2-card support or else rebid 3 \spadesuit .

4. Responder Raises to 3 of Opener's Suit

This bid is made when responder has 3-card support and no game interest. It is not invitational but strictly a sign-off bid made to further disrupt the opponents' bidding.

5. Responder Bids 3NT

This is also a sign-off bid. Responder expects to make 3NT.

6. Responder Raises Opener's 2♦ Bid to 4♦

This is another preemptive raise made when responder has 4-card support.

7. Responder Raises Opener's 2M Bid to 4M

This may be either a preemptive raise with 4-card support and little intent of making the contract or a bid made with strong values and great expectation of making the contract. In the latter case responder may have only 2 or 3 cards in opener's suit but enough strength in terms of playing tricks to think a game contract is reasonable.

8. Responder Raises Opener's 2♦ Bid to 5♦

This falls into the same category as responder's raise of 2M to 4M, but is more likely to be preemptive than intending to be a makeable contract. If the latter, responder surely would have been thinking about slam and proceeded more slowly, probably starting with a 2NT bid to find out more about opener's hand.

HIGH-LEVEL PREEMPTIVE OPENING BIDS

Opening bids at the 3 level are typically made with a 7-card suit while those at the 4 level are usually made with an 8-card suit. Except for an opening bid of 4M, they are never made with a hand that meets the requirements for an opening bid at the 1 level and the hand should be more oriented toward offense than de-

fense; most of your HCP should be concentrated in your long suit. You avoid making these bids with 2-suited hands, especially a hand with a side 4⁺-card Major. Also, just as with weak two-bids, you prefer not to have a void. Your hand patterns will usually be 7-2-2-2, 7-3-2-1 or 7-4-1-1 for a 3-level preempt and 8-2-2-1 or 8-3-1-1 for a 4-level preempt. We will not discuss the 5m opening bids in this book.

One basic guideline that is used by many experienced players for all high-level preemptive opening bids is the ***Rule of 2, 3 and 4***:

Rule of 2, 3 and 4

(first or second chair high-level preemptive opening bids)

- *Expect to be set no more than 2 tricks if the vulnerability is unfavorable.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 3 tricks if the vulnerability is equal.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 4 tricks if the vulnerability is favorable.*

The following additional guidelines are recommended for opening with a 3-level preemptive bid:

Requirements for a 3-Level Opening Preemptive Bid

(first or second chair)

1. *Vulnerable – A **good** 7-card suit: no more than 2 losers opposite a singleton assuming normal breaks*
Non-vulnerable – an occasional 6-card suit may be adequate, especially if the suit is clubs since a weak two-bid is not available there
Rarely an 8-card suit if it does not qualify for a 4-level preempt
2. *No more than 1 outside ace or king*
3. *A 1-suited hand, a side 4-card minor is OK, not a 4-card Major*
4. *No voids*

Here are some examples of hands which should or should not be opened with a 3-level preemptive bid.

♠ K While your diamond suit is appropriate, you have too much defensive strength. Pass with this hand.
♥ K 8 3
♦ Q J 10 7 4 3 2
♣ Q 2

♠ 5
♥ 8 3
♦ J 10 3
♣ A K J 9 8 6 4

This is an ideal hand for a 3♣ opening bid at equal or favorable vulnerability.

♠ 7
♥ 8 7
♦ Q J 9 3
♣ K Q J 9 8 4

A 3♣ opening bid at favorable vulnerability could be quite effective on this hand. You would like to open with a weak 2♣ bid but that bid does not exist, so try 3♣ instead.

♠ 4
♥ A 7
♦ A Q J 9 5 3 2
♣ 9 8 4

This hand is worth an opening 1♦ bid. Don't open with a preemptive bid just because you have a 7-card suit.

♠ A 8 6 5 4 3 2
♥ 3
♦ K 9
♣ 7 5 4

You could easily lose 2 spade tricks, 1 heart trick, 1 diamond trick and 3 club tricks even with a reasonable distribution in the trump suit and favorable location of the ♦A. You might try a 3♠ opening if the vulnerability is favorable, but don't be surprised if you get a poor result.

♠ 6 5
♥ K Q J 9 6 5 2
♦ 9 6
♣ 5 4

This hand is worth a 3♥ opening bid if the vulnerability is equal or favorable.

Opening preemptive bids at the 4 level are somewhat different from those at the 3 level for two primary reasons:

- Another level of bidding has been wiped out.
- A 4-level preempt in a Major Suit is a game contract, whereas a minor suit preempt at the 4 level is still below game.

Here are the requirements for a 4-level preempt in a minor suit:

Requirements for a 4-Level Minor Suit Opening Preemptive Bid
(first or second chair)

1. A reasonable 8- or 9-card broken suit; at least 2 of the top 4 honors
2. No outside ace or king
3. No 4-card Major
4. A void is acceptable
5. Follow the Rule of 2, 3 and 4

Let's look at a couple of examples.

♠ 6
♥ 9
♦ J 10 5
♣ A Q 10 9 6 5 4 3

You should not lose more than 6 tricks. That would be down 3 tricks at the 4 level so this hand is worth a 4♣ opening bid if the vulnerability is equal or favorable.

♠ –
♥ 4 2
♦ Q J 10
♣ A Q J 10 6 5 4 3

Here you have at most 5 losers. That makes the hand acceptable for a 4♣ opening bid at any vulnerability combination.

The opponents are more likely to double a 4M opening bid than a 4m opening bid because they do not have nearly as much to lose if you should make your contact. They are not doubling you into game; you are already at a game contract. Consequently it is recommended that instead of using the Rule of 2, 3 and 4 you use the ***Rule of 2 and 3***:

Rule of 2 and 3

- *Expect to be set no more than 2 tricks if vulnerable.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 3 tricks if not vulnerable.*

The other guidelines for opening the bidding with 4M are

***Requirements for a 4-Level Major Suit Opening Preemptive Bid
(first or second chair)***

1. *A good 7- or 8-card suit: vulnerable – don't expect more than 1 loser if partner has a singleton; nonvulnerable – may occasionally have 2 losers*
2. *No more than one outside ace or king*
3. *Usually fewer than 4 cards in the other Major*

Here are a couple of examples.

♠ K Q J 10 6 4 3 2 With 5 losers you expect to be set 2 tricks in a 4♠ contract.
♥ 4 2 You should open 4♠ if vulnerable.

♦ 8
♣ K Q

♠ – This is the weakest trump suit you should have for a vulnerable 4-level opening preempt in a Major. **Note that a void is acceptable for an opening bid of 4M.**
♥ K Q 10 9 6 5 4 2
♦ A J 10
♣ 6 2

RESPONSES TO HIGH-LEVEL PREEMPTIVE OPENING BIDS

There are some rather sophisticated response systems that can be used after a high level opening preemptive bid by your partner. These are designed to get the partnership to the best contract be it a partscore, game or slam. After all, responder can have a wide variety of hands, so even slam is not always out of the picture. For the beginning player these systems probably require more memory work than you want to submit to at this stage of your bridge life. Until you are ready to invest the time and energy to study and adopt one or more of these systems, it is easier to be guided by the following after your partner has made a high level preempt:

- Making a game contract will be dependent on the number of tricks available, NOT the HCP held by the partnership. Assorted quacks in side suits will be mostly useless. Aces and kings in those suits will be wonderful.
- Assuming partner has been diligent about his use of the rule of 2, 3 and 4 you will know how many tricks you need to produce to make a game contract. Count your likely tricks not your points.
- A fit for partner's suit is a virtual necessity for a game contract.
- When you have a fit for partner, feel free to use the Law of Total Tricks to increase the preempt by raising partner even if you do not have enough tricks for game. Make life more difficult for the opponents if you know the hand belongs to them. They will have to guess whether your raises are based on trick-taking ability or trump length.

Here are a couple of examples after partner has opened with a 3♥ bid in first seat and the next player passed.

♠ Q J 6 2 You have an opening hand but partner does not. You do not have a fit and only 1½ quick tricks. Your hand is much more suited to defense than offense. Pass and hope the opponents enter the auction.
 ♥ 6
 ♦ K J 7 2
 ♣ K Q J 5

♠ 4 3 Here you have only 11 points in support of partner but aren't they wonderful points? Your hand should produce 3 or 4 tricks for partner. Raise to 4♥ with the full expectation that partner will make the contract.
 ♥ Q 8 4
 ♦ A 7 4 2
 ♣ A 10 5 3

♠ 4 3 Remember that partner does not have a side 4-card Major so he has at most 3 spades, and therefore the opponents have at least 8 spades between them, a Golden Fit. Partner has fewer than 13 HCP and you have only 3 HCP so the opponents have at least 24 HCP. Don't you
 ♥ Q 8 4
 ♦ 9 7 4 2
 ♣ J 10 5 3

think they have at least a game in a 4♠ contract? Your LHO is certainly poised to enter the auction with a takeout double or spade bid. Your ♥Q should be one trick for partner and your hand might produce another trick by ruffing a spade if he has 3 of them. You also have a 10-card fit in hearts so the Law suggests you raise to 4♥ and let your LHO guess whether you have a good hand (as in the previous example) and intend to make the contract or whether you have this hand and are just making life difficult for him. Isn't bridge fun?

COMPETING AFTER PREEMPTIVE OPENING BIDS

After an Opening Weak Two-Bid

When your RHO opens the bidding with a weak two-bid your competitive options are the same as if he opened with a bid of 1 of a suit:

- Double for takeout
- Overcall

The requirements for the takeout double are about the same as after a 1-level opening bid. You must have a hand that satisfies the requirements for the shotgun double (support for all unbid suits, especially the unbid Major Suits) or the rifle double (long suit but too strong to overcall). It makes sense that your strength should be just a little stronger, more so after a 2♠ bid than after a 2♦ bid. Although there are some sophisticated methods that can be used by advancer it is best for the beginner to just follow the same general guidelines as after a takeout double of a 1-level opening bid.

The overcall requirements after a weak two-bid are a little stronger than after an opening bid at the 1 level. Here too there are some advanced methods for dealing with an opening weak two-bid but we will limit our discussion to the elementary approaches. There are two basic requirements for a suit overcall:

- You need a good suit of at least 5 cards with respectable interior values.
- Your overall hand strength should be at least very near that of an opening bid.

Clearly both your suit quality and strength must be higher for a bid at the 3 level than for a 2-level overcall.

Although not technically the best agreement, it is easiest in your early bridge life to use almost the same agreements for advancer as after an overcall of a 1-level opening bid. The exception is that a bid of a new suit below game by advancer is forcing for 1 round.

A 2NT overcall should show the same strength as a 1NT overcall after an opening 1-level bid. Of course you must also have good stoppers in the opponent's suit. It is common to use the same system of advances after a 2NT over-

call as after an opening 2NT bid. Just remember that the overcaller's hand is not quite so strong.

After an Opening 3-Level Preemptive Bid

The options and requirements for competing after a 3-level preemptive opening bid by your RHO are about the same as after his weak two-bid. For a shotgun double you really need a full opening bid (counting dummy points). Similarly, a hand with decent opening strength is required for a suit overcall. A bid of 3NT may be made with the values of a good 1NT overcall up to about 20 HCP provided you have adequate stoppers in the opponent's suit. It might also be made with a slightly weaker hand and a long running suit of your own.

After a takeout double advancer will frequently have very little leeway in choosing her bid. She will often have to sign off at the 3 level or bid game at the 4 level in a Major Suit. Sometimes she will have a hand where passing to convert the takeout double into a penalty double is the best option.

Because of the crowded bidding space it is suggested that the bid of a new suit below game by advancer after an overcall be forcing for 1 round. This is consistent with the recommended agreement following an overcall of a weak two-bid.

PREEMPTIVE OVERCALLS AND ADVANCES

A jump overcall is an overcall that skips one or more levels. For example: 1♣ – 2♥, 1♠ – 3♦, 1♦ – 3♠. In the early days of bridge and for some players even into the latter part of the 20th century a jump overcall was used to show a good suit of at least 5 cards and a strong hand, one that was too strong for a simple overcall. In the 21st century those hands are shown by first making a takeout double and then bidding your suit. That treatment allows the jump overcalls to be used as preemptive (weak) bids, similar to weak-two opening bids and the higher-level opening preemptive bids. After all, why should only one side have all the fun?

While most experts relax the requirements for a 2-level jump overcall relative to a weak two preemptive opening bid, it is probably easiest for the beginner to use the same requirements, minimizing the amount of "new stuff" that must be remembered. As you gain more experience you can expand your application of these bids. Correspondingly, you can use the same system for advancing after a weak jump overcall as responding to an opening weak two-bid.

To keep things simple at this point, you can also use the same ideas for high-level jump overcalls and advances as for high-level preemptive opening bids.

SUMMARY

Preemptive Opening Bids

Opening suit bids of 2♦ through 5♦ are preemptive in nature. They are made with the purpose of disrupting the opponents' communication while maintaining a reasonable degree of safety. Except for the opening bids of 4M they are all made with hands that have less than the values for an opening bid at the 1 level. Preemptive opening bids at the 2 level are generally made with a 6-card suit, those at the 3 level with a 7-card suit and those at the 4 level with an 8-card suit.

The requirements for the various preemptive opening bids depend on several factors including

- Relative vulnerability
- The level of the bid
- The position at the table relative to the dealer

In this chapter we considered only preemptive opening bids in first or second chair.

The opening bids of 2♦ through 2♠ are called weak two-bids. The requirements for these bids are:

***Requirements for a Disciplined Weak Two-Bid Opening
(first or second chair)***

1. *A good 6-card suit headed by 2 of the top 3 honors or any 3 honors*
2. *5 – 11 HCP, mostly in your long suit*
3. *A 1-suited hand; a side 4-card minor is OK, not a 4-card Major*
4. *No more than 1 outside ace or king*
5. *No void*

A common approach for responding to a weak two-bid is RONF. In this system all of responder's bids below game are forcing except for a raise of opener's suit. Raises below game of opener's suit are not invitational but preemptive, usually based on the Law of Total Tricks. A raise to game may be preemptive or based on sufficient values to provide a reasonable expectation of making the contract.

In this system the 2NT response is an artificial bid. It has one of two meanings depending on the partnership agreement.

- Asks opener to show a feature (ace or king) in a side suit if he has one; otherwise, he is to rebid his suit at the 3 level. If opener has a solid suit and no feature he should bid 3NT.
- Asks opener to describe his overall hand strength and suit quality using the following step responses

- 3♣ – bad hand, bad suit
- 3♦ – bad hand, good suit
- 3♥ – good hand, bad suit
- 3♠ – good hand, good suit
- 3NT – solid suit (AKQxxx)

A general guideline for high-level preemptive bids is the

Rule of 2, 3 and 4

(first or second chair high-level preemptive opening bids)

- *Expect to be set no more than 2 tricks if the vulnerability is unfavorable.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 3 tricks if the vulnerability is equal.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 4 tricks if the vulnerability is favorable.*

The following additional requirements apply to the indicated preemptive opening bids.

Requirements for a 3-Level Opening Preemptive Bid

(first or second chair)

1. *Vulnerable – A **good** 7-card suit: no more than 2 losers opposite a singleton assuming normal breaks*
Non-vulnerable – an occasional 6-card suit may be adequate, especially if the suit is clubs since a weak two-bid is not available there
Rarely an 8-card suit if it does not qualify for a 4-level preempt
2. *No more than one outside ace or king*
3. *A 1-suited hand, a side 4-card minor is OK, not a 4-card Major*
4. *No voids*

Requirements for a 4-Level Minor Suit Opening Preemptive Bid

(first or second chair)

1. *A reasonable 8- or 9-card broken suit: at least 2 of the top 4 honors*
2. *No outside ace or king*
3. *No 4-card Major*
4. *A void is acceptable*
5. *Follow the Rule of 2, 3 and 4*

For a 4-level Major Suit opening preemptive bid the following rule is used in place of the Rule of 2, 3 and 4.

Rule of 2 and 3

- *Expect to be set no more than 2 tricks if vulnerable.*
- *Expect to be set no more than 3 tricks if not vulnera-*

Requirements for a 4-Level Major Suit Opening Preemptive Bid

(first or second chair)

1. *A good 7- or 8-card suit: vulnerable – don't expect more than 1 loser if partner has a singleton; nonvulnerable – may occasionally have 2 losers*
2. *No more than one outside ace or king*
3. *Usually fewer than 4 cards in the other Major*

Responding to High-Level Preemptive Opening Bids

When you respond to your partner's high-level opening preemptive bid you will usually be considering a raise of his suit. In doing so you may be thinking of raising for preemptive purposes or possibly thinking of making a game contract.

If you are raising just to increase the level of the preempt you can use the Law of Total Tricks.

If you think you might have a game contract you need to consider how many tricks your hand will provide – not how many points you have. You should have a fit for partner's suit with a source of playing tricks in terms of a good side suit and/or aces and kings. Unsupported quacks in side suits are unlikely to have any trick-taking potential. You can use the Rule of 2, 3 and 4 to determine how many tricks partner is short of his contract. You will need to cover those tricks plus any others needed to reach the game level.

Competing after Preemptive Opening Bids

When your RHO opens the bidding with a weak two-bid or a 3-level preemptive bid, your options for competing are the same as after an opening bid at the 1 level – the takeout double and the overcall.

The takeout double may be a shotgun double or a rifle double. When making a shotgun double your minimum strength as dummy should be slightly stronger than after a 1-level opening bid – the higher the preemptive bid the more additional strength required.

When making a suit overcall your strength and suit quality should be a little better than that required for a 1-level overcall. As for a shotgun double, the higher the preemptive bid the more strength and better suit that are needed. Advancer's bid of a new suit below game should be treated as forcing for one round.

Notrump overcalls require decent stoppers in the opponent's suit and at least the strength of a 1NT overcall. A 2NT overcall shows about the same values as a 1NT overcall. A jump to 3NT after a weak two-bid is based more on trick-taking ability (a long solid suit) than extra HCP. A bid of 3NT after a 3-level preemptive opening bid may be based on either a little stronger hand in terms of HCP or on a long solid suit.

Preemptive Overcalls and Advances

When the opponents have already opened the bidding you can use weak jump overcalls to interfere with their communication in the same manner as if you had opened with a preemptive bid.



CHAPTER 8

– Moving Forward

Major Suit Game Tries

Notrump Game Tries

Fourth Suit Forcing

New Minor Forcing

Summary



In *Bidding Basics*, Chapters 3 - 8 we discussed responses to an opening bid of one of a suit and subsequent rebids by opener and responder in an uncontested auction. In those chapters we usually took a rather simplistic approach to bidding when either player's G? decision was M or Y. In this chapter we will look at some more sophisticated approaches to those bidding issues. We will be moving forward in our understanding of bidding in those situations when we are interested in moving forward toward a game contract.

MAJOR SUIT GAME TRIES

In this section we consider an auction that starts as follows:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1M	2M
?	

Furthermore, we are interested in those hands for opener where he decides G? = M. In *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 5 – “Rebids by Opener - Part 1” we suggested opener simply bid 3M and responder should then pass if her initial G? decision was M^W and bid 4M if it was M^L. This approach will often work out quite well, but frequently the success of the contract hinges not so much on the total points in the partnership but on how well the two hands fit together. So it is advantageous if opener has a way to further describe some feature of his hand that allows responder to revalue her hand in light of that feature and use that information to decide whether to pass or bid game. We will look at three possible approaches to this issue:

- Help Suit Game Tries
 - Short Suit Game Tries
 - Two-Way Game Tries

Help Suit Game Tries

A **help suit game try** is appropriate when opener has 1 side suit in which he has several losers and needs responder to provide some help in covering those losers either by length, high cards or shortness (ruffing capability). Opener bids that suit as cheaply as possible and responder revalues her hand in light of her help in that suit.

♠ A J 10 9 7 3 Suppose you are opener holding these cards and the auction has started as follows:

♦ 9 8 6 4 **YOU** **PARTNER**
♣ A K 1♠ 2♠
 ?

You hope you do not have more than 1 spade loser but are worried that you might also have 3 diamond losers. If responder can provide some help in the di-

diamond suit, you want to be in a 4♠ contract; otherwise, 3♠ is probably the limit for this deal. So you bid 3♦ and let responder make the final decision. If she has diamond help she will bid 4♠; otherwise, she will be content with a 3♠ bid.

Here are a few more hands that would be appropriate for a help suit game try; for simplicity and convenience spades has been chosen as the trump suit and diamonds as the help suit but suits could be interchanged without loss of applicability.

<p>♠ A Q 10 9 3</p>	<p>♠ A K 9 7 3</p>	<p>♠ K Q J 9 7 3</p>	<p>♠ A K 10 9 3</p>
<p>♥ K 8 3</p>	<p>♥ A Q</p>	<p>♥ K Q</p>	<p>♥ 4</p>
<p>♦ 9 8 4</p>	<p>♦ 9 8 6 4</p>	<p>♦ 9 8 4</p>	<p>♦ Q 8 6 4</p>
<p>♣ A K</p>	<p>♣ A 3</p>	<p>♣ A Q</p>	<p>♣ K Q J</p>

When opener makes a help suit game try how does responder decide whether to accept the invitation and bid game or stop at the 3 level? Here are the guidelines which are based on the number of losers in the help suit:

- < 2 – always bid game
- 2 or 2½ – bid game with a maximum initial raise, otherwise bid 3M
- 3 – always bid 3M

We continue our theme for an auction that starts with

PARTNER	YOU
1♠	2♠
3♦	?

and look at some possible holdings in the diamond suit and the action you should take as responder.

♠ Q 9 3 You have 3 diamond losers so sign off in 3♠ even though you have maximum values for your raise to 2♠.

♥ K 8 3

♦ 9 8 4

♣ A 9 6 5

♠ Q 9 5 3 You have only 1 diamond loser and 4 trumps. Bid 4♠ despite being on a minimum for your 2♠ bid.

♥ 8 7 3

♦ A 4

♣ 8 6 5 2

♠ 10 9 6 3 You initially added 3 points for your stiff diamond. Now you know that feature is going to be very helpful to partner. Bid 4♠.

♥ 4

♦ K 10 8 2

♠ Q 9 3 2 You have 2 diamond losers but maximum values for your initial raise.
 ♥ K 8 3 Those high honors in the side suits, 4 trumps to the queen and doubleton diamond should fit very well with partner. Bid 4♠.
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ K 9 7 6

Short Suit Game Tries

Short suit game tries are similar to help suit game tries. The difference is that opener rebids a suit in which he is short – a singleton or void. The idea is that responder should devalue honor cards other than the ace in that suit and then make a game decision. If nearly all of her HCP are outside of that suit her hand will fit well with opener and a game contract is very likely.

Suppose as opener you have the following hand:

♠ KQT82 ♥ AQ53 ♦ 6 ♣ AQ2

You open the bidding with 1♠ and responder raises to 2♠. You are strong enough to invite partner to bid game but the locations of her high cards are more important than their total value. Consider two possible hands for responder:

a)	♠A54	♥862	♦KQ8	♣8643
b)	♠J54	♥K62	♦9754	♣K73

If you invited game by bidding 3♠, responder would accept the invitation with hand a) but reject it with hand b). However, with hand a) you have 6 losers – 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 2 clubs. You can eliminate 1 loser by discarding on a diamond in dummy and might be able to eliminate another loser via a finesse in clubs or hearts. Note that you have only one sure entry to dummy so you may not be able to take both finesses. Unless you receive a favorable club or heart lead, you are unlikely to make your 4♠ contract even though responder has maximum values for her 2♠ bid. On the other hand, with hand b) you have only 3 losers – 1 spade, 1 heart and 1 diamond, and the heart loser will go away if the missing hearts divide 3-3. All this in spite of the fact that responder has near minimum values for her 2♠ bid.

Note that as opener you do not really have a hand that is appropriate for a help suit game try. How much better (for this deal) if you were playing short suit game tries. You could invite game by bidding 3♦ and with hand a) responder would sign off at 3♠ while with hand b) she would bid 4♠.

Two-Way Game Tries

As we have seen there are some hands for which a help suit game try is a good way to invite partner to bid game and others for which a short suit game try is appropriate. Does this mean that we have to choose one method over the other and just live with the consequences when the other method would work better? Absolutely not. You can have your cake and eat it too via *two-way game tries*.

Before delving into the specifics of this approach it is appropriate to introduce some new terminology.

A *puppet bid* is a bid that forces partner to make a specific bid, usually the cheapest bid available. A *relay bid* is a bid that says nothing about your hand but asks partner to further describe his hand.

A Jacoby Transfer bid for a major suit is an example of a puppet bid asking partner to bid the cheapest suit available. A Jacoby Transfer bid for the minors is an example of a puppet bid asking partner to bid 3♣. A Stayman bid of 2♣ is an example of a relay bid.

A two-way game try incorporates the cheapest bid by opener as a puppet bid asking responder to make the next cheapest bid after which opener makes a short suit game try. If opener fails to make the puppet bid but instead bids a suit at the 3 level he is making a help suit game try.

After the auction 1♥ – 2♥:

- 2♠ is a puppet to 2NT. After responder bids 2NT opener then makes a short suit game try as follows:
 - 3♣ shows short clubs
 - 3♦ shows short diamonds
 - 3♥ shows short **spades**
- 3♣ is a help suit game try in clubs
- 3♦ is a help suit game try in diamonds
- 3♥ is a help suit game try in **spades**

After the auction 1♠ – 2♠:

- 2NT is a puppet to 3♣. After responder bids 3♣ opener then makes a short suit game try as follows:
 - 3♦ shows short diamonds
 - 3♥ shows short hearts
 - 3♠ shows short **clubs**
- 3♣ is a help suit game try in clubs
- 3♦ is a help suit game try in diamonds
- 3♥ is a help suit game try in hearts
- 3♠ can be played one of three ways
 - A blocking bid. Opener has no game interest but wants to make it more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction. This is sometimes referred to as “**I-2-3 stop.**”
 - A help suit try in trumps. Opener has a weak trump holding and needs a couple of high honors from partner to make game a reasonable contract.
 - A general strength game try. Opener has reasonable trumps, no short suit and no particularly weak suit. He simply needs responder to be on the high end of his simple raise for game to be probable.

It is recommended here that you choose the last option since it is easiest to remember and probably comes up most frequently.

After a puppet bid, a bid of the trump suit at the 3 level is used to show shortness in the suit taken up in the puppet process – spades when hearts are trumps and clubs when spades are trumps. When hearts are trumps an immediate bid of 3♥ is used as a help suit game try in spades (2♠ is a puppet and 3♠ is past the safe level of 3♥).

Note: Other variations of two-way game tries can be found on the Internet.

Decision Time

As you can see from the above topics the bid of a new suit by opener after a simple raise of his Major Suit opening bid can have any of at least three different meanings depending upon partnership agreement. Which system should you choose? Ultimately it is your choice. Help suit game tries are probably the most popular in current use so it makes sense to become comfortable with those first. Two-way game tries are clearly the most powerful. So if you have a frequent favorite partner you both might decide to play that system.

NOTRUMP GAME TRIES

In the previous section we considered a scenario in which opener made a G? = M decision after responder raised his opening bid of 1M to 2M. In this section we consider similar scenarios with the minor suits. In particular we consider auctions that start as

OPENER	RESPONDER
1m	2m

or

OPENER	RESPONDER
1m	3m

Although they appear similar, these auctions are significantly different from the simple Major Suit raise considered in the previous section. The only game contract considered after the Major Suit raise was 4M. For the current scenarios the primary game contract of interest is 3NT. When opener has a balanced hand that is too strong to have been opened 1NT, he will usually be able to rebid 2NT with the first auction and 3NT with the second, although he might have a weak doubleton or 3 small cards in one suit and be concerned about the lack of stoppers there. On the other hand, if opener is unbalanced, perhaps something like a 5-5-2-1, 5-4-3-1, 5-4-2-2 or 4-4-4-1 shape, he is very likely to have one or even two suits that are subject to attack in a notrump contract. Under these conditions he would like to find out if responder has help (a stopper) in these suits before committing to a 3NT contract.

The most common way to find out about stoppers is for both players, starting with opener, to show stoppers “up-the-line” by bidding a side suit in which they have a stopper. If either player bids notrump at any level he shows stoppers in all remaining suits. If either partner skips over one or more suits he denies holding a stopper in those suits. Either player can return to the original minor suit if he has nothing more to show. This sequence of bidding can be called a ***notrump game try***.

Let's look at a couple of examples to see how this works in practice.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A J 6 5	♠ Q 7 3	While some players might open this hand with 1NT instead of 1♣, the slightly unbalanced hand with a worthless doubleton would induce others to open with 1♣. Responder might also bid 1NT but with 5-card club support the 2♣ response seems to be a reasonable action. Now opener can “see” the probability of 5 club tricks, 1 diamond trick and 1 spade trick, with possibly another diamond and maybe even another spade trick. If responder has a heart stopper 3NT looks like a good gamble. So opener bids 2♦ and when responder bids 2♥ he comes back with
♥ 6 4	♥ A 5 3	
♦ A Q	♦ 8 6	
♣ A Q 8 6 2	♣ K 9 7 5 4	2NT. The 2NT bid confirms a spade stopper and invites responder to game. With an initial G? decision of M ¹ responder accepts the invitation. If responder's sQ were a small spade she would pass the 2NT bid. While 3NT is not ironclad it has an excellent chance of being successful. If the opponents lead either a diamond or spade there are 9 tricks off the top. A heart lead could be problematic, but a successful spade finesse or a 4-4 heart break will still bring home the contract.
1♣	2♣	
2♦	2♥	
2NT	3NT	
Pass		

Let's change both hands a little.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5	♠ 9 7 3	This time opener envisions 5 club tricks, 1 diamond and 2 spades so all he needs is one heart stopper from responder. So he jumps to 3NT after hearing the 2♥ bid from partner.
♥ 6 4	♥ A 5 3	
♦ A 5	♦ 8 6	
♣ A Q 8 6 2	♣ K 9 7 5 4	
1♣	2♣	
2♦	2♥	
3NT	Pass	

Not all attempts to reach 3NT are successful. In those cases a minor suit contract provides a safe harbor.

Opener	Responder	
♠ AJ 6 5	♠ K 7 3	When responder denies a heart stopper by bidding 2♠, opener retreats to 3♣. This contract will be successful with the opponents taking at most 2 heart tricks 1 diamond trick and 1 spade trick. There is the possibility of 2 overtricks with the diamond and spade finesses.
♥ 6 4	♥ 8 5	
♦ A Q	♦ 8 6 4	
♣ A Q 8 6 2	♣ K 9 7 5 4	
1♣	2♣	
2♦	2♠	
3♣	Pass	

Not all deals are quite so straightforward.

Opener	Responder	
♠ AJ 6 5	♠ 9 7 3	Opener's 2♥ bid is clearly a notrump game try and denies a diamond stopper. It also strongly suggests a spade stopper; opener does not usually expect responder to provide stoppers in two side suits after a simple raise. Responder has additional evidence of this since she is holding the ♣A and suspects opener is counting on her for that card. So responder could simply bid 3NT instead of 3♦. But the 3♦ bid is better for two reasons: 1) opener may not have a spade stopper (see the next deal) and 2) it is usually better to have the stronger hand as declarer.
♥ A K 4	♥ 8 5	
♦ 8	♦ K Q 4	
♣ K Q 8 6 2	♣ A 9 7 5 4	
1♣	2♣	
2♥	3♦	
3NT	Pass	

The bid of a new suit after a simple minor suit raise is not always a notrump game try.

Opener	Responder	
♠ 5	♠ 9 7 3	Recall that the first rule for choosing the suit for your opening bid is your longest suit, not to open a Major Suit whenever you have at least a 5-card Major. This is a good example of that principle. Opener can see that with his great distribution 5♣ might be a better contract than 4♥ and there might even be a slam in either of those suits. To say he was surprised when responder raised his clubs would be an understatement indeed. But, such things do happen in this wild game of bridge. Now he knows he wants to reach at least 5♣ but still envisions more if responder has just
♥ A K J 10 4	♥ 8 5	
♦ 8	♦ K Q 4	
♣ K Q J 6 3 2	♣ A 9 7 5 4	
1♣	2♣	
2♥	3♦	
3♥	4♣	
5♣	Pass	

the right cards – any two aces would be wonderful. (If responder had the ♠K instead of one of the small spades and the ♣10 instead of the ♣A the 5♣ contract would be doomed. But we bid a lot of game contracts without guarantees of success.) Furthermore, responder might have 3-card heart support and a final heart contract cannot be ruled out. So opener continues with a 2♥ bid which sounds to responder like a notrump game try.

Now we see why responder's 3♦ bid is better than 3NT. When opener continues with 3♥ a light bulb should turn on for responder! Why did opener rebid his hearts? Oh, he must have 5+ of them. Then why did he open 1♣? Oh, he must have 6+ of those! Now responder can conclude that his ♦KQ are probably overvalued and "signs-off" at 4♣. Hoping responder has one of the missing aces opener carries on to 5♣ and is justly rewarded.

All of the above game tries started after a simple raise of a minor suit. Let's see what might happen after a limit raise.

Opener	Responder	
♠ 8 5	♠ K Q 3	With his strength concentrated in the red suits and significant weakness in both black suits opener chooses a 1♦ opening bid instead of a slightly offshape 1NT. Similarly, with respectable diamond support and heart weakness responder elects a 3♦ bid instead of 2NT. With a few extra HCP opener sees that 3NT might be reachable if partner has help in the black suits so initiates a notrump game try by bidding 3♥. Responder is delighted to hear that bid because opener has now covered her only weakness for a notrump contract.
♥ A K J 10	♥ 8 5	
♦ K Q 8 7 6	♦ J 10 9 4 3	
♣ Q 2	♣ A J 4	
1♦	3♦	
3♥	3NT	
Pass		

With her strength concentrated in the black suits she bids 3NT. On this deal it might be better if opener were declarer, but there really is no practical way to achieve that. If responder had bid 3♠ to show a spade stopper opener would assume she did not have a club stopper and would be reluctant to bid 3NT on his own. In general, when the HCP are nearly equally distributed it is not always terrible to have the weaker hand as declarer. Sometimes you just have to take what you can get. Responder should be able to take at least 9 tricks: 1 or 2 clubs, 4 diamonds, 3 or 4 hearts and 1 or 2 spades. Depending on the distribution of the remaining cards and the opening lead, not all of those tricks are likely to materialize, but she will probably be able to make the contract.

Let's look at a variation of the above deal.

Opener	Responder	
♠ 8 5	♠ A J 3	This time responder cannot afford to bid 3NT at her second turn because she does not have a club stopper.
♥ A 3	♥ 8 5	So she settles for the 3♠ bid to show her spade stopper.
♦ K Q 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4 3	That is all opener needs to hear to bid 3NT since he has clubs well under control. He will have no trouble making this contract with 9 tricks off the top: 2 clubs, 5 diamonds, 1 heart and 1 spade.
♣ A K 7 2	♣ 9 6 4	
1♦	3♦	
3♥	3♠	
3NT	Pass	

Let's look at one more variation.

Opener	Responder	When responder fails to bid 3NT at her second turn opener knows neither partner has a club stopper and settles for the safe 4♦ contract.
♠ K Q J 6	♠ A 7 3	
♥ A 3	♥ Q 5 4	
♦ K Q 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4 3	
♣ 7 2	♣ 9 6	
1♦	3♦	
3♥	3♠	
4♦	Pass	

Despite inferences to the contrary from the above examples you will not always be able to reach the optimum contract with these notrump game tries. This is illustrated with the following final example.

Opener	Responder	You might wonder why opener bid 3♠ instead of 3♥ as in the previous example. The reason is that in this case responder is unlikely to have a spade stopper so the only way to reach 3NT is if she has both a heart stopper and a club stopper so she can bid 3NT after the 3♠ bid. As it is, after opener's 3♠ bid responder must bid something and her 4♣ bid is the only sensible call she can make. This is actually a "courtesy bid" showing first or second round control in the club suit just in case opener has slam aspirations – see Chapter 10 – "Bidding Slams - Part 2." Lacking the extra values to pursue slam, opener signs off at 4♦. While this contract should make, they missed the solid 3NT contract.
♠ A K 9 6	♠ 7 5 3	
♥ A 3	♥ Q 5 4	
♦ K Q 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4 3	
♣ 7 2	♣ A 6	
1♦	3♦	
3♠	4♣	
4♦	Pass	

Note that if responder's hand had been

♠ 7 5 3 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ A 9 5 4 3 ♣ A 6

she would have been able to bid 3NT for a cold game contract.

FOURTH SUIT FORCING

The Problem

♠ A Q J 7 4	Suppose you are responder holding these cards and the auction has started as follows:
♥ 8 5	
♦ K 5	
♣ A 6 5 3	

PARTNER **YOU** Now what are you going to bid? As soon as you heard partner open the bidding you decided G? = Y and that decision has not changed. But what game contract do you want to be in? 3NT might be right if partner has a heart stopper. 4♠ is probably the best contract if partner has 3-card support for you. Although you might be a little light, 5♣ or even 5♦ could be the proper spot. You would like to get more information about opener's hand but have no natural forcing bid available to elicit that information. You could just pick one of the game contracts and bid it, but you have a high probability of choosing the wrong one.

The Solution

If you sit there and think about this a little you might come up with a solution. You might remember that the bid of a new suit by responder is forcing for 1 round in an auction like this and bid 2♥. The problem with that bid is that you do not have a 4-card heart suit as the bid would suggest. Would you believe that bridge experts recognized this type of bidding problem a long time ago and came up with a convention to resolve the issue? That's right! The convention is called "**Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF)**." This is actually somewhat of a misnomer because the bid of the fourth (new) suit has always been forcing. It is conventional because it does not promise the holding of any particular number of cards in that suit. So it might be better if it were called "Fourth Suit Artificial." In fact, that was the original terminology, but, sometime later it was changed, so we will live with the current terminology.

Since it is an artificial bid your opponents must be informed of that in the usual manner. Some players prefer to play the bid as forcing for only one round while others like to play it as forcing to game. I suggest you play it as forcing to game, or at least 4m. Otherwise you might have a similar problem with your next bid.

Here are the requirements for the applicability of the convention.

- It must be an uncontested auction
- Neither opener or responder made a jump bid
- Responder bids the fourth suit at her second turn

There is one particular bidding sequence that most (but not all) players exclude from this agreement:

PARTNER **YOU** In the original example partner showed an unbalanced hand with at least 9 cards in the minors so it is very unlikely that he also held a 4-card heart suit; his shape would have been 0=4=5=4. In the current auction his shape could very well be 4=4=2=3, 4=4=1=4 or even 4=4=0=5. So it is common practice to treat the 1♠ bid in this auction as natural (promising 4+ cards), but still forcing (for one round) since it is the bid of a new suit.

So what is opener supposed to do after responder makes a FSF bid? As you might surmise he is supposed to further describe his hand, but there are actually priorities that have been established for this convention:

1. Raise responder's first suit with 3-card support
2. Raise responder's second suit with 4-card support, provided that bid is below 3NT
3. Bid notrump with a stopper in the fourth suit
4. Rebid either of his suits to show extra distribution

Unfortunately opener will not always have a hand ideally suited to any of these options.

♠ 6 5 Suppose opener has this hand and the bidding has gone
♥ J 7
♦ A Q J 8 4
♣ K Q 10 2

OPENER RESPONDER Opener's hand does not match any of the four priorities.
1♦ 1♠ Under these conditions opener must choose the smallest lie. In this example 3♦ is his best call. Responder must
2♣ 2♥ be aware that opener might have this type of hand.

Most often opener's third bid will give responder enough information to choose the proper (game) contract. Certainly if responder's first suit were a 5⁺-card Major and opener showed 3-card support, responder can bid game in her Major. Similarly a notrump rebid by opener will usually lead to a 3NT contract. But let's look at another scenario by combining the two hands and auction given in this section.

Opener	Responder	Responder was initially hoping to reach a contract of 4♠ or 3NT. But when opener fails to show her 3-card support or a heart stopper her G? decision changed from Y to M because now she is not sure if the hands will support a 5♣ contract. So she shows her support for opener's clubs by bidding only 4♣. With no extra values for his opening bid opener decides to pass at his next turn. So, even if you are playing FSF to game, the partnership is allowed to stop at 4m if a Major Suit or notrump game is not feasible.
♠ 6 5	♠ A Q J 7 4	
♥ J 7	♥ 8 5	
♦ A Q J 8 4	♦ K 5	
♣ K Q 10 2	♣ A 6 5 3	
1♦	1♠	
2♣	2♥	
3♦	4♣	
Pass		

When you are playing FSF there is one type of hand for responder that deserves additional discussion.

♠AQJ74 Suppose you are responder holding these cards and the auction has started as follows:
 ♥AK653
 ♦75
 ♣3

PARTNER **YOU** This auction has started about the way you expected. The best bid for you at this point is a jump to 3♥. This shows a real 2-suited hand with at least 5 cards in both of your suits and sufficient strength for a game contract. Now opener should have enough information to choose the best game contract, perhaps supporting either of your major suits with a high doubleton honor. A notrump contract or even one of his minors are other options.

NEW MINOR FORCING

The Problem

In the previous section we considered the bidding problem of responder at her second turn when three suits had been bid and she wanted to make a forcing bid to gather more information regarding opener's hand. We resolved that problem with the FSF convention. Responder has a similar problem when opener's rebid is 1NT as in the following auction:

PARTNER	YOU
1♣	1♥
1NT	?

♠K2 You have 16 points so as soon as partner opened the bidding you decided G? = Y and have not changed your decision after partner's rebid.
 ♥AQJ83 The problem is that you don't know which game contract is best. If partner has 3-card heart support 4♥ is the preferred contract, especially if he does not have a diamond stopper. If he has only a doubleton heart and a diamond stopper 3NT is probably the best contract. And if his hand is something like
 ♦84
 ♣KQ76

♠A86 ♥K4 ♦975 ♣AJT54

then 5♣ is a reasonable contract, although 4♥ would also be acceptable, but difficult to reach. Swap the ♥K with the ♦9 and 5♣ is a little better than 4♥.

In standard bidding the bid of a new suit by responder after a 1NT rebid by opener is not forcing unless it is in a higher-ranking suit than her first bid and any such bid should be natural, promising at least four cards. For this hand opener might lie and bid 2♠. That bid in this sequence is actually called a faux reverse as discussed in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 6 – “Opener’s Rebids - Part 2.” Opener has already denied a 4-card spade suit with his 1NT rebid, so responder cannot possibly be looking for a 4-4 spade fit.

But, suppose your Major Suits were reversed and your first bid was 1♠. Then a 2♥ rebid would be natural, requesting opener to choose between the 2 Majors at a partscore contract, and you would have a difficult bidding problem.

The Solution

The solution to this bidding problem is another convention which is very similar to FSF. It is called **New Minor Forcing** (NMF) and simply states that after a 1NT rebid by opener the bid of a new minor suit by responder is forcing for 1 round. There is an implication here that responder's first bid was 1M. The only other possibility is an auction that started 1♣ – 1♦; 1NT, and then there is no new minor suit for responder to bid. The opening bid need not be 1m. The auction could have started as 1♥ – 1♠; 1NT. Then both minor suits qualify as a new minor suit. If that is the case responder should bid the minor in which she has a stopper for a notrump contract.

This convention is typically used when responder has decided G? = M or Y with a 5-card Major Suit that she bid the first time and is looking for 3-card support from opener. She usually is interested only in a 3NT or 4M contract but on occasion has a stronger hand with good support for opener's minor and has a 5m contract in mind as a last resort. Of course there is always the possibility that she has an even stronger hand with slam interest someplace. There is also the possibility that responder's shape is 5=4=x=x and she is interested in both Major Suits.

What should opener do after a NMF bid? As always, answer GFMS?, revalue his hand, answer G? and choose a bid that further describes his hand. Here are his priorities:

1. Bid 2♥ with a 4-card suit after an initial response of 1♠.
2. Raise partner with 3-card support. On occasion responder will not have a 5-card suit so raise only to 2M.
3. Bid notrump with stoppers in both unbid suits (the new minor bid does not count as a "bid" suit).
4. Bid a new suit with a stopper in that suit but not the other unbid suit. But do not bid 2♥ without 4 cards if the initial response was 1♠.
5. Rebid your first suit with 5 cards.

Following are some examples of openers rebid after an auction that starts

YOU	PARTNER
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
?	

♠ Q 5 Bid 2♥. Partner's shape might be 5=4=x=x and you might have a GF in hearts. Whatever responder rebids you will make sure you get to game someplace – most likely 3NT or 4♥.

♥ K Q 6 5

♦ A 10 8 2

♣ K 6 3

♠ Q 6 4 You have 3-card support for spades so bid 2♠. You will pass if responder bids 4♠ but raise her 3♠ bid to 4♠.

♥ A 5 4

♦ K Q 7 3

♣ K 6 3

♠ K 4 You have a minimum opening bid with stoppers in the unbid suits so bid 2NT. Partner will probably either pass or bid 3NT. If perchance she bids 3♦ you will pass.

♥ A Q 4

♦ K 10 9 7 5

♣ 9 7 3

As with the previous hand you have a minimum opening bid but this time you do not have stoppers in both of the unbid suits. Rebid your diamonds cheaply; bid 2♦. Change one of the small diamonds to the ♦Q and you would jump to 3♦.

♠ Q 4 With a maximum 1NT rebid, stoppers in the unbid suits and a partial fit for responder 3NT is your ideal bid. Note that you should have initially devalued the ♠Q but now that responder bid spades it is really worth a little more than 2 points.

♥ K Q 4

♦ K 10 9 7 5

♣ K J 3

♠ Q 4 Try a 3♣ bid with this hand. You are not intending to play in clubs with this bid. You are telling partner you have a maximum 1NT rebid with clubs stopped but not hearts and do not have 3-card support for her spades. You are hoping she has hearts stopped and can bid 3NT. You will accept whatever action she takes with her next bid.

♥ 8 7 4

♦ K Q 10 9 7

♣ A K 3

♠ Q 4 This is a good hand for a rebid of 3♦. There is a very strong inference here that your shape is 2=3=5=3, that you have hearts stopped but not clubs, and you have a maximum for your 1NT rebid. You are hoping responder has clubs stopped and can bid 3NT but will accept whatever she bids next.

Note that in all of the above examples you held a 5-card diamond suit. What if you held only 4 diamonds? Then your shape might have been 3=3=4=3 and you could have raised partner's spades. If you had only 4 diamonds and only 2 spades your shape would have been either 2=4=4=3 or 2=3=4=4. In the first case you would have bid hearts. In the second case you would have bid notrump with stoppers in both clubs and hearts or clubs with only a club stopper – even 4 small clubs would be considered a club stopper in a pinch, e.g. if you held something like

Having seen some examples of opener's rebid after NMF let's look at responder's rebids after an auction that starts as follows.

PARTNER	YOU
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦
?	?

- ♠ A K 8 5 3 If partner bids 2♠ raise to 4♠, otherwise bid 3NT. However be wary of 3NT if opener rebids 3♣. His hand pattern then has to be 2=3=3=5 without a diamond stopper. In that case you might raise to 4♣. Note that your hand is worth 15 points in support of clubs and if he is on a maximum of 14 points he might be able to make a 5♣ contract when 3NT would fail.
 ♥ K 6 4
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ A 8 3
- ♠ A K 8 5 3 If partner bids 2♠ raise to 4♠. Pass if he bids 2NT, 3NT or 3♣. If he bids 2♥, follow with a bid of 2NT. He should then pass with 13 points or go on to 3NT with 14 points. If opener bids 3♦, follow with a bid of 3NT.
 ♥ 9 6 4
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ A 8 3
- ♠ A K 8 5 3 If opener bids 2 of either Major you will raise to game. If he bids 3♦ or 2NT you will bid 3NT. You will pass if he bids 3♣ or 3NT.
 ♥ K J 6 4
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ K 3

There is a secondary advantage to NMF – the implication that when you do NOT use that bid you show a hand for which G? = N. Let's look at a couple of hands where this is helpful in an auction that starts as follows:

PARTNER	YOU
1♦	1♠
1NT	?

- ♠ A 9 8 5 3 Clearly you are not interested in a game contract but feel 2♥ or 2♠ would be better than 1NT. You can rebid 2♥ as a request for opener to pass or correct to 2♠. You would make the same bids if you were 5-5 in the Majors so partner will not know your exact distribution but should be able to make a reasonable bidding choice since he must have 3 or 4 cards in at least one of the Majors.
 ♥ K J 6 4
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ 7 3
- ♠ A 9 8 3 Here you are quite confident a club contract is better than notrump. But you cannot bid 2♣ because that would be NMF and promise invitational values. The solution is to jump to 3♣. Partner should pass this bid knowing that you have no game interest.
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ Q J 8 7 3 2

SUMMARY

Major Suit Game Tries

When responder raises your opening bid of 1M to 2M and your G? decision is M the success of a 4M contract is often more a function of how well partner's hand fits with yours than the number of points she has within the range shown by her 2M bid. There are three common methods available to find out how well your two hands fit:

- Help Suit Game Tries – This method can be used when you have a weak suit, one with 3 or more small or medium cards and you need partner to provide some trick-taking help in that suit, either through high cards or shortness with adequate ruffing values. You simply bid that suit as cheaply as possible and accept responder's second bid as the contract.
- Short Suit Game Tries – This method can be used when you have a short suit and want responder's high cards to be in other suits where they will help you to avoid some of your losers in those suits. Playing this system you simply bid your short suit as cheaply as possible and pass responder's second bid.
- Two-Way Game Tries – This is the most powerful method because it combines the ideas behind both help suit game tries and short suit game tries.

In this approach if you want to make a short suit game try you first bid the next step above your Major (M) and responder bids the next step after that. You then bid your short suit if you can do so below 3M. You bid 3M if your short suit would have to be bid above 3M.

You make a help suit game try by bidding that suit directly if it is a minor or even hearts if your Major is spades. If your Major is hearts you have to use a direct bid of 3♥ as a help suit game try in spades.

Notrump Game Tries

When your partner raises your opening bid of 1m to 2m or 3m and your G? decision is M or Y your first goal is to try to reach a reasonable 3NT contract. Quite often you will be concerned about stoppers in one or two of the side suits. When responder has bid 2m it is unlikely she has help in two side suits unless you hold most of the high cards in your minor.

The most common way to find out about stoppers is for both players, starting with opener, to show stoppers "up-the-line" by bidding a side suit in which they have a stopper. If either player bids notrump at any level he shows stoppers in all remaining suits. If either partner skips over one or more suits he denies holding a stopper in those suits. Either player may return to the original minor suit if he has nothing more to show. The bid of a new suit by either partner in these auctions is forcing. Only a notrump bid or a bid in the original minor can be passed.

Fourth Suit Forcing

When partner has opened the bidding with one of a suit and rebid a third suit after you have bid a second suit you will often be faced with a bidding problem when you have decided G? = Y. You may not yet have enough information about opener's hand to decide which game contract should be reached and also not have a natural forcing bid available. The FSF convention resolves this problem. It allows you to bid the fourth suit artificially as a forcing bid regardless of your holding in that suit. This bid can be played as forcing for only 1 round or forcing to game. The latter is the recommendation made in this book. Even those players who play it forcing to game generally agree that if it becomes apparent that 3NT and 4M are not viable contracts the auction may stop at 4m.

Most players agree that when the bid of the 4th suit is 1♠ it is not an artificial bid but a natural bid and does not promise extra values. Therefore it is not forcing to game, but being a natural new suit by responder is still forcing for 1 round.

After a FSF bid opener's priorities are:

1. Raise responder's first suit with 3-card support
2. Raise responder's second suit with 4-card support, provided that bid is below 3NT
3. Bid notrump with a stopper in the fourth suit
4. Rebid either of his suits to show extra distribution

Sometimes opener will not have a hand suitable to any of these options and will have to choose the one that best describes his hand.

New Minor Forcing

A problem similar to that addressed by FSF can occur when opener rebids 1NT and responder's G? decision is M or Y. A new suit by responder in this scenario is not forcing unless it is higher ranking than her first suit so she may not have a natural forcing bid available. The resolution to this problem is the NMF convention whereby the bid of a new minor suit by responder is artificial and forcing for 1 round. Responder's first bid in such a scenario will always have been 1M and she will almost always have bid a 5-card suit when she decides to invoke NMF.

Opener's priorities for his third bid after NMF are:

1. Bid 2♥ with a 4-card suit after an initial response of 1♠.
2. Raise partner with 3-card support. On occasion responder will not have a 5-card suit so raise only to 2M.
3. Bid notrump with stoppers in both unbid suits (the new minor bid does not count as a "bid" suit).
4. Bid a new suit with a stopper in that suit but not the other unbid suit. But do not bid 2♥ without 4 cards if the initial response was 1♠.
5. Rebid your first suit with 5 cards.

Responder will normally set the final contract with her next bid after NMF. But her bids of 2NT and 3M should be taken as invitational.



CHAPTER 9

– Bidding Slams - Part 1

Introduction

Simple Slam Bidding

The Blackwood Convention

Summary



INTRODUCTION

Slam Contracts

For most deals each partnership is trying to determine an answer to G? so they might be able to achieve the bonus for bidding and making a game contract. Whenever one partnership has decided G? = Y and there is an indication they have a combined strength of about 30 points, they should be considering a slam contract so they might be able to garner those additional bonuses. Remember that a small slam is a 6-level bid while a grand slam is a 7-level bid with the following bonuses given if the contract is bid and made.

Slam Bonuses

Vulnerable	Small Slam	Grand Slam
N	500	1000
Y	750	1500

Besides the value of these large additional bonuses, a player or partnership receives an added degree of excitement and euphoria when they bid and make a slam contract.

Clearly, for a grand slam you cannot allow the opponents to take any tricks. For a small slam you can afford to let them have only one trick.

Minimum Strength Requirements

Just as 25 combined partnership points are considered the minimum requirements for a game contract, the following general guidelines can be used as the minimum strength requirements for slam contracts.

Minimum Strength Requirements for Slam Contracts

- *Small Slam – 33*
- *Grand Slam – 37*

If you are going to bid a slam based only on your combined HCP you can see why these are considered minimum requirements. If you have only 36 HCP the opponents have 4 and those points could be concentrated in an ace which would prevent you from making a grand slam. Similarly, if you have only 32 points, the defenders could have two aces and again you would be defeated. Admittedly, even with 33 HCP the opponents could have an ace and king which might prevent you from fulfilling your contract, but unless they were in the same suit and in the hand of the opening leader you would have a reasonable chance of success.

When you have 25 points in a partnership there is no guarantee that you will be able to make a game contract in notrump or a Major Suit. Nonetheless, we know that you would like to be in one of those contracts because you will be suc-

cessful most of the time. Similarly, when your partnership has 33 or 37 points there is no guarantee that you will be successful in a small slam or grand slam, but you would still like to be in those contracts because you know that you have a very reasonable expectation of being successful and reaping the benefits thereof.

Controls

If you are going to include points for long suits or dummy points in your slam decisions there will be more HCP available for the opponents. Now if you hope to be successful you will have to ensure that those points are not concentrated in aces and kings which they might be able to use to take tricks immediately or at least before you can take the tricks you need. To prevent this you must have a sufficient number of **controls**.

Controls in slam contracts are very similar to stoppers in notrump contracts and in some cases can be identical, but there are some subtle differences in the terminology. In a notrump contract we say that a player has a stopper in a suit if he holds a card that is sure to eventually take a trick in a suit if the opponents keep leading that suit. Examples of stoppers are something like the bold cards in each of the following: **A**..., **KQ**..., **QJ10**..., **J1098**..., **109876**....

A control, on the other hand, is any holding that will prevent the opponents from winning a trick in some suit on a particular round of that suit being played. In a notrump contract a stopper is also a control, but on a particular round of the play of the suit. In reference to the stoppers of the previous paragraph, the **A** is a first-round control, the **K** a second-round control, the **Q** a third-round control, the **J** a fourth-round control and the **10** a fifth-round control. In a suit contract there is another way to prevent the opponents from taking a trick in a suit if you have at least one trump in your hand. A void in a side suit is a first-round control and a singleton is a second-round control. Technically, a doubleton is a third-round control, but that will not be of much use if you are in a slam contract trying to take 12 or 13 tricks. In fact, when considering a slam contract you are interested in only first-round and second-round controls. We also slightly relax the “stopper” requirement for second-round control from **KQ** to just **K**.

Control Definitions

- *First-round control – an ace or void*
- *Second-round control – a king or single-*

Minimum Control Requirements for Slam Contracts

- *Small Slam – First-round control in 3 suits and second-round control in the remaining suit*
- *Grand Slam – First-round control in all 4 suits*

Three common methods are used to determine if these controls exist:

- The Blackwood Convention
- The Gerber Convention
- Control Bidding

The Blackwood Convention is described later in this chapter. The Gerber Convention and Control Bidding are deferred to the next chapter. We first consider slam bidding without directly worrying about controls.

SIMPLE SLAM BIDDING

Sometimes bidding a slam can be very easy. This typically happens when one partner makes a notrump bid that very accurately describes his strength and shape. We look at several possibilities in this section.

Suppose that partner opens the bidding with 1NT. Then, if you have

- < 16 points you know S? = N
- 16 - 17 points you know SS? = M and GS? = N
- 18 - 19 points you know SS? = Y and GS? = N
- 20 - 21 points you know SS? = Y and GS? = M
- 22⁺ points you know GS? = Y

Similar results can be obtained if partner opens 2NT or opens 2♣ and rebids 2/3/4NT after your 2♦ response.

Direct Slam Bidding

When S? = Y you can often jump right to a slam contract. This is known as *direct slam bidding* as demonstrated below.

♠ A 7 4 ♠ A 7 4 You have 18 HCP. Suppose your partner opens the bidding with 1NT. You know he has 15 - 17 HCP so your partnership has a combined holding of 33 - 35 HCP. You should have a reasonable play for 6NT while 7NT is probably out of reach. You are the captain and know where this contract should be played. Jump directly to 6NT. Change the ♦5 to the ♦A and you now have a combined total of 37 - 39 HCP. Jump directly to 7NT.

♥ K Q 5 ♥ K 5 2 Partner opens the bidding with 2NT showing a balanced hand with 20 - 21 HCP. With your 13 HCP your partnership has 33 - 34 HCP. Bid 6NT. If your RHO leads the ♦AK chalk it up to a very bad day and go on to the next deal. Change the ♦5 to the ♦A and you now have a combined total of 37 - 38 HCP. The opponents have at most 3 HCP. Jump to 7NT.

♠ A K Q J 7 4 Partner opens the bidding with 1NT. Just as in the first example you have 18 HCP. But with this hand you know you have a Golden Fit in spades. Bid 6♠. Are you concerned that you might be missing a grand slam because when you add 2 points for your spade length you could have a combined strength of 37 points? That is a possibility but partner would probably have to have the maximum of 17 HCP; your lack of controls in the side suits suggests that a grand slam is unlikely.

♠ K 7 4 Partner opened the bidding 2♣, you responded 2♦ and partner rebid 2NT. Since partner has a balanced hand with 22 - 24 HCP your 12 HCP should provide a reasonable play for 6NT while a grand slam is out of reach. Bid 6NT and watch partner enjoy the play.

Inviting Slam

When SS? = M a very simple method can be used to *invite* partner to a small slam contract in notrump or a Major Suit.

Bidding 1 level higher than game in notrump or a Major Suit invites partner to bid a small slam.

Let's look at a few examples to see how this works.

♠ A Q 5 4 Partner opened the bidding with 1NT. You have 17 HCP so the partnership total is 32 - 34. Bid 4NT inviting partner to bid 6NT. He should accept the invitation with 17 HCP or a good 16 HCP but pass with only 15 HCP.

♠ A 7 4 Partner opened the bidding 1♣, you responded 1♠ and partner jumped to 3♠. Remember that when you responded 1♠ partner assumed you had only 6 - 9 points when he made his G? decision. His jump to 3♠ invited you to game, wanting you to pass if you had only 6 - 7 points but to go on to game with 8 or more. So he must have about 17 - 19 points. With fewer points he would not have been interested in game and with 20 or more (maybe even a good 19) would have bid 4♠. With your 15 HCP your combined strength is 32 - 34. Clearly you not only want to be in a game contract but slam is a possibility. Bid 5♠ to ask partner to bid 6♠ with 18 or 19 points but to pass with only 17.

♠ A 6 Partner opened the bidding with 1NT. You have 16 HCP plus 2 length points so the partnership total is 33 - 35. But you could have as few as 31 combined HCP, so you don't want to commit to a slam contract unless opener has 16 or 17 HCP. If you are

not playing Jacoby Transfers, jump to 5♥. If you are playing Jacoby Transfers, first bid 2♦ and then jump to 5♥ after partner's 2♥ bid. If he happens to surprise you by super-accepting with a 3♥ bid, jump to 6♥ yourself.

♠ A 9 6 This hand is very similar to the previous hand but you have only five hearts. Partner again opened the bidding with 1NT. If you are not playing Jacoby Transfers start with a bid of 3♥. If partner rebids 3NT raise to 4NT. Opener should then pass with 15 or a poor 16 HCP, else bid 6NT. If he rebids 4♥ instead of 3NT raise to 5♥. Opener should then pass with 15 or a poor 16 HCP or otherwise bid 6♥.

If you are playing Jacoby Transfers, start with a bid of 2♦ and then jump to 4NT after his 2♥ rebid. If he happens to super-accept your transfer with a jump to 3♥, go ahead and jump to 6♥ yourself. In the sequence where you rebid 4NT opener should take the following action at his next turn:

- Pass with only 15 or a poor 16 points
- Bid 6NT with only 2 hearts and 17 or a good 16 points
- Bid 6♥ with 3⁺ hearts and 17 or a good 16 points

♠ A J 10 6 After partner opens 1NT you have visions of a slam in hearts, spades or notrump. If you are not playing Stayman you will have to give up on the Major Suit options and simply raise to 4NT. To explore all options you start with a Stayman bid of 2♣. If opener rebids 2♦ you jump to 4NT. If he bids 2M you jump to 5M.

Responder has one other slam invitational bid available for certain auctions.

An immediate bid of 5NT by responder after any of the following sequences forces opener to at least 6NT and invites him to bid 7NT:

- An opening bid of 1NT or 2NT
- An opening bid of 2♣ followed by a rebid of 2NT, 3NT or 4NT

♠ A K 10 Partner opened the bidding 1NT and you are looking at 21 HCP so you know the combined partnership strength is 36 - 38 HCP. This is plenty for 6NT and possibly enough for 7NT. Jump to 5NT. Partner must raise to at least 6NT and should bid 7NT with 17 HCP or a good 16.

THE BLACKWOOD CONVENTION

Years ago one of the top players of the era named Easley Blackwood realized that, in certain auctions where slam was a possibility and a trump suit had been

agreed upon, the total points in the partnership were not as important as the number of aces and kings (controls) that were held. Undoubtedly other players of the time were also aware of this but Blackwood did something about it.

Since the 4NT bid was traditionally used as a *quantitative* slam invitational bid as described in the previous topic, he decided that use was not appropriate in the situations of concern, so under those conditions he changed the meaning of the 4NT bid to an artificial *qualitative* inquiry as will be described later in this section. His idea took hold in the bridge community and became known as the Blackwood Convention or informally simply as Blackwood. It is one of the most widely recognized and used conventions in the bridge world. Over the years several changes to improve the convention have been devised, but in this book we will consider only the original agreements.

Without going into details of Blackwood at this point, in order to understand the next topic, it will be helpful to know that Blackwood allows one player to find out **how many** aces and perhaps kings his partner holds.

Applicable Scenarios

One of the problems with Blackwood is that the “mechanics” involved are really easy to learn and use. Since that part of the convention is so easy to learn it is very popular and it becomes very easy to misuse by players that do not fully understand the other part of the convention – when it is applicable. By applicable we mean two things:

1. A bid of 4NT is Blackwood rather than the standard quantitative slam invitational bid
2. You have a hand in which the information you receive from its use will be helpful in determining whether you should be in a slam contract

Let's address each of these issues separately.

1. When is 4NT Blackwood?

This is perhaps the easiest question to answer.

A bid of 4NT is Blackwood if and only if the partnership has agreed on a trump suit.

This appears to be simple enough but certain auctions might appear ambiguous without prior discussion. We'll look at a few examples to clarify the conditions under which a trump suit has been established. Since the statement is independent of the cards held by either partner, there is no reason to associate the bidding with particular hands. Only the auction is important.

OPENER RESPONDER This is a clear-cut auction where 4NT is Blackwood. Hearts is the agreed trump suit. The same would be true if opener had jumped to 3♥ or 4♥.

1♣	1♥
2♥	4NT

OPENER RESPONDER This 4NT bid might at first appear to be ambiguous. But the strength of opener's hand is quite wide, 13 - 21 points. The 4NT bid can hardly be a quantitative invitation. How should opener decide whether to pass or bid 6NT? His range is too large. Responder must be implicitly agreeing to hearts as the trump suit and 4NT is Blackwood.

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♦ (Jacoby Transfer)
2♥	4NT

Responder has promised only a 5-card heart suit and opener may have only a doubleton so there may not be a Golden Fit in hearts. Therefore, hearts cannot be confirmed as the trump suit so 4NT is not Blackwood but a quantitative invitation to slam in either notrump or hearts depending on opener's strength and heart support.

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♦ (Jacoby Transfer)
3♥	4NT

In this auction opener super-accepted responder's transfer so must have 4-card heart support. Since hearts have been agreed as trumps 4NT is Blackwood.

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♣ (Stayman)
2♥	4NT

The meaning of 4NT in this auction can be derived from an analogy to the similar auction in which responder's rebid was 3NT. In such an auction responder would be showing a hand for which $G? = Y$ and she held a 4-card spade suit but not a 4-card heart suit. By analogy the 4NT bid in the given auction shows a hand for which $SS? = M$ and she holds a 4-card spade suit but not a 4-card heart suit. Consequently 4NT is not Blackwood but a quantitative invitation to slam in notrump or spades.

These examples have by no means exhausted the possible auctions where 4NT might be bid and both partners will have to decide whether it is Blackwood or a quantitative slam invitation, but hopefully the arguments presented for making that decision in these examples will be helpful for other auctions.

2. When should you use Blackwood?

The simple answer to this question is the following:

*Use Blackwood when you and your partner have agreed upon a trump suit, S? = M and you will be able to change M to Y or N by finding out **how many** aces and/or kings your partner holds.*

Your slam question in this statement can be either a small slam or a grand slam. As you will find out in the next topic you will not be able to find out how many kings your partner has unless you first determine that the partnership holds all of the aces. With this understanding there is a corollary to the above statement.

Do NOT use Blackwood if

- *You have a void in a side suit or*
- *You lack a control in a side suit*

Here are a couple of examples to illustrate the two items in the above box.

♠ A Q 3 2 Your partner opened the bidding with 1♠ in first seat and you hold these cards. With your 14 HCP plus 5 dummy points for your diamond void you know the partnership has at least 32 points – enough to be thinking about slam. Suppose you were to use Blackwood and find out partner has only one ace. Would that give you enough information to decide if you should bid 6♠? Hardly. You would not know if his ace were the ♦A or the ♣A. Suppose he held the following:

♠ K J 10 5 4 He would surely have opened 1♠ with this hand, but could easily lose 1 heart trick and 2 club tricks, not even able to make 5♠ which is the minimum contract you could play after your 4NT bid. On the other hand, suppose he held the following:

♠ K J 10 5 4 The only differences between these two hands is that the cards in the minor suits have been interchanged. Now 7♠ is virtually unstoppable! Maybe opener's LHO has a 5-card club suit while his RHO is void; a club lead would allow RHO to ruff the first trick before declarer could draw trumps.

We won't discuss how the deal might be bid. The point is simply that Blackwood will not help you answer your S? question, so don't use it!

Now let's look at the second case when you should **not** use Blackwood.

♠ A Q 3 2

♥ A Q J

♦ 8 5 4 3

♣ K J

Your partner opened the bidding with 1♠ in first seat and you hold these cards. With your 17 HCP you know the partnership has at least 30 points, enough to be thinking about slam. Once again you will have a problem if you use Blackwood and find out partner has only one ace. He might be holding the following hand:

♠ K J 10 5 4

♥ K 8 4

♦ Q 6 2

♣ A 5

Partner will have an easy time making 4♠ with this hand but 5♠ is doubtful and 6♠ has absolutely no chance against any reasonable defense. On the brighter side opener might hold the following cards:

♠ K 10 9 5 4

♥ K 8 5 4

♦ K Q

♣ A 5

With this hand declarer is virtually guaranteed to make 6♠, losing only 1 diamond trick.

Once again the point is that responder will not be able to determine how many diamond losers there might be by using Blackwood so that approach will not help to resolve his S? decision. Therefore, it should not be used.

Now let's look at a case where Blackwood is appropriate.

Partner opens the bidding with 1♦ and you respond with 1♥. Next opener jumps to 3♥. As mentioned early in this chapter in conjunction with a similar auction, that jump shows about 17 - 19 points with 4-card heart support. You aren't really interested so much in how many points partner has as you are how many aces and kings he has. If several of his points are in quacks in the black suits they will not be very helpful in a slam contract, but if they are in any aces and kings they will be extremely useful. Bid 4NT. If he has only one ace you will stop at 6♥. If he has two aces you will ask about the number of kings he holds and then decide whether to stop at 6♥ or to try 7♥ or even 7NT.

There is one final point to be made regarding the use of Blackwood. **Blackwood is most frequently used when the initiator has an unbalanced hand with one or more singletons and/or doubletons.** It is under these conditions when he is counting extra for long or short suits and is concerned that the missing HCP may be in aces and kings held by the opponents – so he wants to ensure that the partnership has the necessary controls for the slam contract.

Mr. Blackwood himself stated that the purpose of the convention is not to get into slams that will make but to stay out of slams that are not makeable.

How Blackwood Works

When either partner bids 4NT as a Blackwood bid as determined by the rules outlined previously in this section he takes over captaincy of the auction. We will refer to that player as the asker and assign that player the male gender. The partner becomes the teller and is assigned the female gender. After the 4NT bid the teller makes a bid to show the number of aces she holds as follows:

- 5♣ – 0 or 4
- 5♦ – 1
- 5♥ – 2
- 5♠ – 3

Note that the 5♣ bid is used to show either no aces or all four aces. The asker should not have any trouble deciding which she holds from the previous portion of the auction or his own holding.

After teller makes her bid asker has several options:

1. Bid the agreed trump suit at any level or jump to any notrump slam
2. Bid 5NT
3. Bid any suit except the trump suit at the 5 level

1. Asker Bids the Agreed Trump Suit at any Level or Jumps to any Notrump Slam

This is always a sign-off bid. The asker may bid the agreed trump suit at the 5 level if that bid is available. He may also bid that suit or notrump at the 6 level or 7 level. Regardless of the level, teller must pass at her next opportunity.

2. Asker bids 5NT

Asker should make this bid **only if the partnership has all four aces** because you are committing to at least a small slam contract. It is also made only when you have a reasonable expectation that a grand slam is a possibility, or perhaps you are looking for the extra points available in a 6NT contract as compared to a small slam in any suit. The bid of 5NT asks teller how many kings she holds. She bids in a manner similar to, but slightly different from, the steps used after a 4NT bid.

- 6♣ – 0
- 6♦ – 1
- 6♥ – 2
- 6♠ – 3
- 6NT – 4

The difference here is that the 6♣ bid shows no kings while 6NT shows 4 kings. The reason for the difference is that 5NT is reserved for opener to ask for kings while 6NT is not needed for any other purpose. And, certainly, if the partnership has all of the aces and kings asker is willing to play at either 6NT or a grand slam which he could then bid.

Note: While performing an Internet search on this topic I found some references that used the same step assignments when replying to 5NT as when replying to 4NT. That agreement may be easier to remember for beginners. The most important consideration is that you and your partner agree on the system you are going to use.

After the asker finds out how many kings teller holds, he places the final contract with his next call, including a pass if teller bid the agreed trump suit or 6NT. There is no bid to request teller to bid 6NT since asker can make that call himself.

3. Asker Bids a Different Suit at the 5 Level

This bid directs the teller to bid 5NT. It is used when her bid is higher ranking than the agreed trump suit and the number of aces shown is not sufficient to safely contract for a small slam. This little “trick” to stop at 5NT is used most often if a minor suit has been agreed as the trump suit. But in any case asker must always be prepared for an unfavorable bid by teller.

Suppose for example that diamonds have been agreed as trumps and asker wants to be in a 6♦ contract if teller has 3 aces. When asker bids 4NT and teller bids 5♥ showing only 2 aces, asker has a problem. He can no longer stop at 5♦ and 6♦ is too high. He needed to be aware of this potential problem before he bid 4NT and been prepared to stop at 5NT. But he cannot bid 5NT himself because as you just saw that bid asks teller how many kings she has. Instead he uses a little “trick” of bidding 5♠ to direct teller to bid 5NT, after which he will pass.

Handling Interference

Most frequently when your partnership is exploring a slam contract the opponents have little strength and are not competing in the auction, but sometimes distributional features in all of the hands lead to a slam probe even when both sides are bidding. In these cases it is quite possible an opponent will bid after a 4NT Blackwood bid. Other times the opponents may have a special agreement for a double of the 4NT bid and make that call. If you and your partner are not prepared for this action, you may have difficulty deciding what action should be taken.

When an opponent bids after the 4NT asking bid, he has taken away some bidding space. The most common method of compensating for this is to use a convention referred to by the acronym **DOPI**. This convention is easy to remember if you interpret the letters as follows:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| • D – Double | • O – 0 (zero) |
| • P – Pass | • I – 1 (one) |

The convention can then be explained with these 4 actions by the teller:

- DO – Teller doubles with 0 or 4 aces.
- PI – Teller passes with 1 ace.
- Teller makes the cheapest bid available with 2 aces.
- Teller makes the next higher bid with 3 aces.

This system works well as long as the overcall is below 5NT, because teller's bid will be no higher than 5NT if she has 2 aces and no higher than 6♦ if she has 3 aces. In either case the partnership should be able to reach a reasonable contract.

When the interference is 5NT or higher there is a risk that any bid by teller will put the partnership into an unmakeable contract. Now it is best if teller either doubles or passes. This gives rise to another convention known by the acronym **DEPO** (**D**ouble = **E**ven, **P**ass = **O**dd). So teller doubles if she has an even number of aces (0, 2 or 4) and passes if she has an odd number of aces (1 or 3).

If an opponent doubles, he has not taken away any bidding space, so a common method of dealing with the double is to simply ignore it and make the standard bid. However, some players prefer to adapt the DOPI idea and use **ROPI**: RO – Redouble = 0, PI – Pass = 1. The two cheapest bids show 2 or 3 aces as in the DOPI convention.

SUMMARY

Bidding slams is one of the most exciting and challenging aspects of playing bridge. To reach these high-level contracts a partnership must have an appropriate combination of power (HCP), long suits and controls. Controls are features that prevent the opponents from taking the first or second trick in a suit:

- Aces and voids (suit contracts) are first-round controls
- Kings and singletons (suit contracts) are second-round controls

Control Requirements for Slam Contracts

- *Small Slam – First-round control in 3 suits and second-round control in the remaining suit*
- *Grand Slam – First-round control in all 4 suits*

If a slam is to be bid primarily on the combined partnership strength, the general guidelines are

Minimum Strength Requirements for Slam Contracts

- *Small Slam – 33*
- *Grand Slam – 37*

When one partner has very accurately described his strength, usually by some notrump bid, the other partner can often decide that S? = Y and simply jump to the appropriate level. Other times that player may decide S? = M and invite the other partner to bid a slam by bidding one level past game in notrump or a Major Suit. A jump to 5NT in these situations forces partner to 6NT and invites him to 7NT.

Quite often a player may think that slam is a possibility but is concerned that the partnership may not have sufficient controls. Three common methods are used to determine if these controls exist:

- The Blackwood Convention
- The Gerber Convention
- Control Bidding

Blackwood

Blackwood is used after a trump suit has been agreed when all a player needs to know is **how many** aces/kings his partner has. After a trump suit has been established a player may bid 4NT to ask partner how many aces she holds whereupon she answers using the following bidding schedule:

- 5♣ – 0 or 4
- 5♦ – 1
- 5♥ – 2
- 5♠ – 3

If all of the aces are held the asker can follow up with a 5NT bid to ask for the number of kings with the following answers:

- 6♣ – 0
- 6♦ – 1
- 6♥ – 2
- 6♠ – 3
- 6NT – 4

Some players use the same scheme as for aces, so check with a new partner before you start to play.

A bid of the agreed trump suit at any level or a bid of 6NT or 7NT by the asker terminates the asking sequence and sets the contract.

There are times when the asker will want to stop at 5NT. Since that bid would ask for kings, he must bid a suit, other than the trump suit, at the 5 level to ask partner to bid 5NT.

Before using Blackwood that player should be relatively certain that the partnership holds either first-round or second-round control in each suit. If not, the defenders may be able to take 3 tricks at the start of play to set the 5-level contract.

Blackwood should not be used when the asker has a void or lacks a control in a side suit where there is no prior indication that partner has a control.

If an opponent overcalls after a 4NT (Blackwood) bid, teller can use the DOPI convention to show the number of aces held as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double – 0 or 4 • Pass – 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheapest bid – 2 • Next higher bid – 3 |
|---|---|

If the overcall is 5NT or higher the DEPO convention can be used:

- Double – Even (0, 2, 4)
- Pass – Odd (1, 3)

If an opponent doubles the 4NT bid many players ignore the double and make their natural bid, but some employ ROPI:

- Redouble – 0 or 4
- Pass – 1
- Cheapest bid – 2
- Next higher bid – 3



CHAPTER 10

– Bidding Slams - Part 2

The Gerber Convention

Control Bidding

Summary



THE GERBER CONVENTION

Sometime after Easley Blackwood invented his convention John Gerber came up with a method to ask for aces/kings when 4NT could not be used as Blackwood because it was a quantitative small slam invitation. Just as Blackwood's convention eventually became known simply by his name, Gerber's convention is known simply as *Gerber*.

How Gerber Works

Gerber works very much like Blackwood except that it is initiated by a bid of 4♣. Most of the time the 4♣ bid must be a jump, skipping over at least one level of bidding, but there are exceptions and there are times when a jump to 4♣ is not Gerber but a natural bid. This issue is discussed in the next topic. For now we consider what happens after a bid of 4♣ that is Gerber, using the same player references of asker and teller as was used in the discussion of Blackwood. The teller makes a bid indicating the number of aces she holds utilizing the cheapest four bids just as after Blackwood is initiated.

- 4♦ – 0 or 4
- 4♥ – 1
- 4♠ – 2
- 4NT – 3

After hearing how many aces are held by teller, asker can either continue the process by bidding 5♣ to ask for kings (provided no aces are missing) or sign off by making any other bid. Note that asker can always stop at 4NT by passing teller's 4NT bid or bidding 4NT himself, so no "trickery" as in Blackwood is required to stop at that contract.

Applicable Scenarios

First and foremost a partnership utilizing Gerber must understand that

Gerber is NOT an alternative to Blackwood.

In other words, Gerber is not simply a "cheap" way to ask for aces when in pursuit of a slam contract. You do not have to decide if you are going to use Gerber instead of Blackwood. Rather you can use both Blackwood and Gerber, choosing the 4♣ bid to ask for aces when a bid of 4NT would be a quantitative invitation to slam rather than Blackwood. The only time 4NT is a quantitative invitation to slam is when partner has made a notrump bid that describes his strength within a range of 2 or 3 HCP. There are actually numerous such auctions. For a beginning bridge player it is recommended that you limit the application to just a few scenarios defined by the following guidelines:

- The opening bid must be 1NT, 2NT or 2♦ followed by a 2NT rebid.
- Responder must either immediately jump to 4♣ after the opening notrump bid or the 2NT rebid or first make a Stayman or Jacoby transfer bid and then bid 4♣ at her next turn.

This means that the 4♣ bids are Gerber in the following auctions:

- 1NT – P – 4♣
- 1NT – P – 2♣ – P
2♦/♥/♠ – P – 4♣
- 1NT – P – 2♦/♥ – P
2♥/♠ – P – 4♣
- 2NT – P – 4♣
- 2NT – P – 3♣ – P
3♦/♥/♠ – P – 4♣
- 2NT – P – 3♦/♥ – P
3♥/♠ – P – 4♣
- 2♣ – P – 2♦/♥/♠ – P
2NT – P – 4♣
- 2♣ – P – 2♦ – P
2NT – P – 3♣ – P
3♦/♥/♠ – P – 4♣
- 2♣ – P – 2♦ – P
2NT – P – 3♦/♥ – P
3♥/♠ – P – 4♣

It should be pointed out that not all bids of 4♣ following a notrump bid are Gerber. For example:

1♦ – P – 1♥ – P
3NT – P – 4♣

In this auction opener does not promise a specific HCP range. He will often have a solid minor suit (diamonds in this example) with some semblance of stoppers in the other unbid suits and hopes to take nine tricks in a notrump contract. Responder's 4♣ bid is natural showing a second suit with slam aspirations.

Handling Interference

If an opponent interferes after the 4♣ bid the DOPI, DEPO and ROPI conventions discussed in the previous chapter can be adapted to counter the interference.

CONTROL BIDDING

When Blackwood or Gerber is used for a slam investigation one player, the asker, becomes the captain of the auction and his partner, the teller, has no role in the final contract decision other than through her answers to the requests for the number of aces/kings she holds. These approaches also have the disadvantage of starting the probe above the Major suit game level. For a minor suit slam probe, they will often push the final contract past the minor suit game level.

There is another way for both players to be involved in determining the existence of controls and it can even be done below the game level. This is accomplished by a series of *control-showing bids* by both partners. Just as in Blackwood a trump suit must have been agreed upon before this process can begin. Instead of one player asking partner about the controls the other holds, one player can tell partner about a control he holds and then his partner can make a similar bid. The process continues until both partners have nothing more to show or until the game level has been reached in the agreed upon suit. At any time in the control-showing sequence either player can switch to Blackwood by bidding 4NT or jump to a slam in the agreed suit.

In the traditional approach first-round controls are shown initially and then second-round controls. In the modern approach either a first-round or second-round control can be shown at any time. This method can often be very useful to conserve bidding space and is the one presented here. Be sure to discuss this with a new partner before you begin play.

Another advantage of using control-showing bids is that voids and singletons can also be shown as controls although not specifically identified as such. There are some modifications to Blackwood and Gerber that can be used to show a void. They are rather awkward and were not presented in the previous sections because there is not a general agreement as to how a void should be shown.

Control bidding is generally initiated when Blackwood is inappropriate (asker has a void or lacks a control in a side suit). It is always assumed that at least one of the partners has a control in the trump suit.

Applicable Scenarios

Although both players participate in the control-showing process, it is invariably initiated by declarer after partner has supported his suit thereby establishing the trump suit. To a certain degree declarer also tends to play the role of captain because he is usually trying to determine specific information regarding dummy's control holding.

Not all bids in a new suit below the game level after a trump suit has been agreed upon are control-showing bids. One of two conditions must be satisfied:

1. The bid will force the partnership to the game level
2. The bid is ambiguous but the intent is clarified later in the auction

Let's take a closer look at each of these possibilities.

1. The Bid Forces to the Game Level

This is probably the most common scenario for the initiation of control-showing bids. Here are a couple of examples.

OPENER RESPONDER The partnership has agreed that they will play with hearts as trumps. Opener's 4♣ rebid forces the auction to at least a game level of 4♥. Therefore the 4♣ bid shows a first-round or second-round control in clubs.

OPENER RESPONDER Opener's 3♥ bid set hearts as the trump suit so responder's 3♠ bid forces the auction to at least 4♥ and therefore shows a spade control.

OPENER RESPONDER Just as in the previous example responder's 3♠ bid shows a spade control.

OPENER RESPONDER Opener's 4♦ bid shows a diamond control, and as will be explained later in this section, ostensibly denies a club control.

2. Ambiguity Resolved Scenarios

Quite often when a minor suit has been “agreed” at a low level 3NT is still an optional contract. In these cases the bid of a new suit could be either a suggestion that the partnership play in 3NT or a control-showing bid with slam interest. The other partner should assume it is a try for 3NT and bid accordingly. If the player bidding the new suit really intended that bid as a control-showing bid he will take further action at his next turn.

OPENER RESPONDER While opener's club raise showed support for responder's club suit 3NT may be the best contract. Responder may be concerned about hearts but have a diamond stopper, not necessarily a first-round or second-round control. So her 3♦ call could be asking opener to bid 3NT if he has a heart stopper. Opener should assume this is the case and proceed accordingly. Here are some possible continuations of the auction.

a)		b)	
OPENER	RESPONDER	OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♣
3♣	3♦	3♣	3♦
3NT	Pass	3NT	4♣

c)		d)	
OPENER	RESPONDER	OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♣
3♣	3♦	3♣	3♦
4♣	Pass	4♣	4♥

- a) Opener has a heart stopper and responder was simply looking for a 3NT contract.
- b) Responder has slam interest with a diamond control but either not enough strength to proceed beyond 4♣ or no other controls to show.
- c) Opener denied a heart stopper. Responder was simply looking for 3NT and has no interest in slam or even 5♣.
- d) Responder has great slam interest. Her 3♦ and 4♥ bids are both control-showing bids.

Sometimes the bid of a new suit after even a Major Suit has been agreed as trumps can be ambiguous.

OPENER RESPONDER Here there is no guarantee that responder even has enough strength to force to a game contract. Her 3♣ bid may simply be a game try. At the very minimum, responder has at least 10 points, more than the 6 - 9 opener assumed when he raised to 2♠. Opener should now revise his G? decision and proceed as follows:

- Bid 3♦ or 3♥ if he has a control in either of those suits, regardless of his G? decision. If responder subsequently signs off at 3♠ opener should pass if his G? decision was N, otherwise bid 4♠. If instead responder bids another suit she confirms her 3♣ bid as control-showing and has slam interest so opener can cooperate as appropriate for his hand.
- Without a control in either red suit opener should bid 3♠ or 4♠, whichever is consistent with his G? decision.

Other Scenarios

Here are a couple of sequences where the bid of a new suit after trumps have been set is not a control-showing bid.

OPENER RESPONDER Opener's 3♣ bid cannot be a control-showing bid because the combined holding is well short of the 33 points required for a small slam. He has at most around 21 points and responder has at most about 9 points. The 3♣ bid is one of the Major Suit game tries discussed in Chapter 8 – “Moving Forward.”

OPENER RESPONDER This auction is similar to the previous one. Opener's 1m 2M bid is not a control-showing bid but a notrump game try as discussed in Chapter 8 – "Moving Forward." If responder's bid had been 3m and opener's rebid 3M it could have been an advance control-showing bid or a notrump game try. Responder should interpret it as a notrump game try. If opener subsequently moves past a game contract responder should reinterpret the 3M bid as an advance control-showing bid.

Continuing the Auction

A control-showing sequence is invariably initiated by declarer and always shows "extra" values – more than the minimum required for game. The following **rules** apply in these sequences:

- Controls are not shown in the trump suit
- Either first-round or second-round controls are shown, including voids and singletons
- If you have no control to be shown you bid the agreed trump suit at the game level – 4M or 5m (or below if available)
 - This rule applies to dummy, but see exception in the second guideline below
- Declarer can jump to slam at any point in the auction
- Declarer can switch to Blackwood by bidding 4NT at any point in the auction

The additional **guidelines** shown below are usually followed:

- If you have two or more controls in your hand you choose to show the one that can be shown most cheaply
 - Dummy should always follow this guideline
 - Declarer may violate this guideline for the purpose of preventing dummy from showing a control in which he has no interest
- You show controls only below the game level
 - There is one major exception to this guideline. If declarer shows a control in the suit that is one rank below the trump suit, dummy should go past the game level to show another control if she has one.

Examples

Let's look at a few examples where the opponents pass throughout the auction so only opener's and responder's hands and bids are shown.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ Q J 8 3	Opener is not quite strong enough to start with a 2♣ bid but after responder gives him a limit raise promising 4-card support he can envision a small slam if she has a heart control. He is reluctant to use Blackwood immediately for fear that there might be two heart losers and a club loser off the top so he starts with a ♦c control bid. Responder cooperates by showing a heart control. Opener is not sure if the heart control is the ace or king and doesn't know if she might also have the ♣A. But now he feels comfortable using Blackwood to check on the number of aces. When he finds out she has only one ace he settles for the small slam and is perhaps somewhat fortunate to find dummy with cards that makes the slam virtually guaranteed. After gaining the lead he can draw trumps and discard his heart loser on a diamond in dummy, losing only one club trick. Yes, you can change dummy's hand slightly (change a small diamond to a small club) such that 6♠ is doomed. But you can also construct many other hands for dummy where 6♠ is successful. Most players feel the risk is worth the reward.
♥ 6 4	♥ A 7 3	
♦ A K 3	♦ Q J 8 6	
♣ K Q	♣ 6 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♥	
4NT	5♦	
6♠	Pass	

Here is another deal similar to the above where responder has a little different holding.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ Q J 8 3	When responder fails to show a control in hearts, opener knows the opponents can take 2 heart tricks immediately to set a 6♠ contract so settles for the game. It is interesting to note that if the opponents do not take their 2 heart tricks right away, declarer can take all 13 tricks, discarding both of his hearts on the extra minor suit winners in dummy after drawing trumps.
♥ 6 4	♥ 7 3	
♦ A K 3	♦ Q J 8 6	
♣ K Q	♣ A 6 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♠	
Pass		

Let's change both of the above hands a little.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ Q J 8 3	
♥ 6 4	♥ A 7 3	
♦ K Q	♦ A 10 6	
♣ A K 3	♣ 7 5 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♦	
4♠	5♥	
6♠	Pass	

It is somewhat unusual to make a control-showing bid past the game level but in this auction responder can infer that opener is worried about the heart suit. Responder can also feel confident that 5♠ is a safe contract so bids 5♥ to show her heart control. While opener cannot be positive this is the ♥A rather than the ♥K, he can rationalize that even if it is the ♥K he can hold his heart losers to one if the ♥A is held by his LHO. So he presses on to the small slam. By the way, some players agree to show only first-round controls past the game level.

Here is another variation on this deal.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ Q J 8 3	
♥ K Q J 2	♥ 8 7 3	
♦ K Q 5	♦ A J 6	
♣ –	♣ K 5 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♦	
4♥	5♣	
5♦	5♠	
6♠	Pass	

Opener has only 18 HCP, but after responder gives him a limit raise he can see that a small slam is very likely if responder has either red ace. Even a grand slam is possible if she has both red aces. Blackwood will not do him any good because if responder shows only one ace he won't know if it is one that he needs or the worthless ♣A. Even if she has two aces he won't know which two.

Since he has a club void he can start a control-showing sequence by bidding 4♣. Opener is encouraged by responder's 4♦ bid. Although it could be a diamond void, that is unlikely; experienced partnerships may have had a way to show that earlier in the auction. Opener can elicit more information from responder by making the further control-showing bid of 4♥.

While it is not common to show controls beyond the game level, responder can infer that opener still wants to know more about her hand. Since there is no space below the game level, he must be willing to have her show something at the 5 level. She does not know that opener's 4♣ bid was showing a void; in fact, she probably thinks it is the ♣A. At any rate that is the cheapest control she can show so she continues with the 5♣ bid.

Opener is not quite willing to give up yet so makes one more attempt to find out about the ♥A by bidding 5♦. When responder denies a heart control by bidding 5♠, opener settles for the small slam.

Below are two more examples on the same theme as the above example with different hands for responder. You should be able to follow the bidding from the discussion for the above example.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ 10 8 7 3	You might think that opener would consider a 7NT contract in case responder had the ♣A. But that is virtually impossible. That would give responder 12 HCP in 3 aces, which is a little too strong for a limit raise. He also wants to minimize his losses just in case the spades don't break 2-1. Note that opener knows responder does not have the ♠Q and probably not the ♠J since she has 11 HCP in the three controls she has shown.
♥ K Q J 2	♥ A 7 3	
♦ K Q 5	♦ A 6 3	
♣ -	♣ K 5 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♦	
4♥	5♣	
5♦	5♥	
7♠	Pass	

Let's look at one more variation for responder.

Opener	Responder	
♠ A K 6 5 4 2	♠ Q J 8 3	The first 2 bids by opener and responder are straightforward. When opener bids 4♥ at his third turn responder is pretty sure her ♥A is a valuable card so tells opener about it. Opener then has an easy 7♠ bid.
♥ K Q J 2	♥ A 7 3	
♦ K Q 5	♦ A 8 6	
♣ -	♣ 7 5 4	
1♠	3♠	
4♣	4♦	
4♥	5♥	
7♠	Pass	

SUMMARY

Gerber

In most notrump bidding sequences a bid of 4NT by responder is reserved for a quantitative raise, inviting opener to bid 6NT if on top of his range or else to pass. That means Blackwood is not available so responder must use Gerber instead if she wants to know how many aces/kings are held by opener. Instead of bidding 4NT to ask for aces responder can bid 4♣ under the following conditions:

- The opening bid must be 1NT, 2NT or 2♣ followed by a 2NT rebid.
- Responder must either immediately jump to 4♣ after the opening notrump bid or the 2NT rebid or first make a Stayman or Jacoby transfer bid and then bid 4♣ at her next turn.

Partner shows the number of aces held using a scheme similar to Blackwood:

- 4♦ – 0 or 4
- 4♥ – 1
- 4♠ – 2
- 4NT – 3

After hearing how many aces are held by teller, asker can either continue the process by bidding 5♣ to ask for kings (provided no aces are missing) or sign off by making any other bid.

The DOPI, DEPO and ROPI conventions can be used to handle interference in a Gerber sequence in a manner similar to that used for Blackwood.

Control Bidding

When a trump suit has been established Blackwood is useful for investigating slam potential only when the **number** of aces/kings held by partner is critical. If you need to know **which** aces/kings are held by partner it is much more effective to use a series of control-showing bids. This sequence is initiated by declarer by bidding another suit after dummy has supported a suit he bid. However, not all such bids are control-showing bids. One of two conditions must be satisfied:

1. The bid will force the partnership to the game level
2. The bid is ambiguous but the intent is clarified later in the auction

Once a control bidding sequence has been initiated the following **rules** apply:

- Controls are not shown in the trump suit
- Either first-round or second-round controls are shown, including voids and singletons

- If you have no control to be shown you bid the agreed trump suit at the game level – 4M or 5m (or lower if available)
 - This rule applies to dummy, but see exception in the second guideline below
- Declarer can jump to slam at any point in the auction
- Declarer can switch to Blackwood by bidding 4NT at any point in the auction

The additional **guidelines** shown below are also usually followed:

- If you have two or more controls in your hand you choose to show the one that can be shown most cheaply
 - Dummy should always follow this guideline
 - Declarer may violate this guideline for the purpose of preventing dummy from showing a control in which he has no interest
- You show controls only below the game level
 - There is one major exception to this guideline. If declarer shows a control in the suit that is one rank below the trump suit, responder should bid beyond game level to show another control if she has one.



CHAPTER 11

– Negative Doubles

Introduction

Requirements

Opener's Rebid

Responder's Rebid

The Reopening Double

Summary



INTRODUCTION

In *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances” it was mentioned that there are many doubles other than the takeout double that are for takeout rather than penalties. In this chapter we will consider one of these doubles, the ***negative double***. Even though the primary purpose of the negative double is to ask partner to bid an unbid suit just as for the takeout double, the setting and requirements for a negative double are different from those for a takeout double, hence the need for a different name.

♠ 7 2 You hold these cards and have just heard your partner open the bidding with 1♦. You are prepared to respond with 1♥ when you hear your RHO overcall with 1♣. Now you have a dilemma. You don't have enough strength to bid a new suit at the 2 level and can't bid 1NT without a spade stopper. You could raise partner to 2♦ but run the risk that he has only a 4-card diamond suit, or even worse a 3-card suit. Partner could even have something like a 2=1=5=5 shape and clubs is your best fit. Holding 8 HCP you would really like to compete because the deal may belong to your side, but with only the limited tools we have discussed up to this point you have no safe action to take other than pass.

Around the mid 1950's two outstanding bidding theorists, Alvin Roth and Tobias Stone, recognized this type of problem and devised a method to resolve the issue. They decided that responder would double an overcall to tell partner that she would have competed if her RHO had passed but after the overcall she lacked the strength to take that action. They initially christened this the Sputnik Double. Over time both the use of the double and its name were changed. It is now known as a negative double and we will explore its use in the remainder of this chapter.

It is important that both partners understand when a double is for penalties and when it is a negative double. The following conditions must be met for the double to be a negative double.

- The opening bid must be one of a suit
- The overcall must be in a suit
- Responder's double must immediately follow the overcall

A double in this scenario would normally be for penalties, but, when used with the opposite intent of requesting that partner bid, it becomes a convention. Just like Stayman and Jacoby Transfers, a partnership decides before they begin play whether they will use the standard or conventional meanings for these calls. Many players feel that negative doubles are even more important than Stayman or Jacoby Transfers. If you play negative doubles you give up very little because it is extremely rare that you will have the overall hand strength and trump length in the overcalled suit to significantly penalize the opponents with a penalty dou-

ble. Furthermore, as you will see later in this chapter, you may still be able to achieve that effect.

The standard agreement for the level of the overcall is that it must be at the 1 level or the 2 level. However, many partnerships agree to play it at higher levels under the rationale that the higher the overcall the less likely that responder has sufficient length and strength in the overcalled suit to want to penalize the opponents. The higher the level of the overcall the more likely that opener may pass and choose to defend, especially without a fit for responder. But the double was still made with the intent of competing offensively.

REQUIREMENTS

The basic requirements for a negative double are two-fold:

Requirements for a Negative Double

- *Sufficient strength to compete*
- *Support for both unbid suits or a safe retreat*

We explore these requirements in more detail below.

Strength Requirements

Different authors suggest slightly different strength requirements. If you want to keep things simple when you first start playing negative doubles you can use the following standard:

OVERCALL	MINIMUM HCP
1 level	6
2 level	8

As you gain more experience you may want to refine the requirements as follows:

OVERCALL	MINIMUM HCP
1 level	6
2m	8
2M	9
3 ⁺ level	10

As always you need to consider the **quality** of your points and the **shape** of your hand. **Be aggressive if you**

- are short in the opponent's suit
- have at least a tolerance for opener's suit (you will have a fall-back position)

- have ideal distribution in the unbid suits
- have prime values (aces and kings)

Be cautious if

- you have length in the opponent's suit
- you are short in partner's suit
- your distribution is flawed
- your HCP are overvalued (quacks)

There is one significant point to recognize about the strength requirements:

There is no upper limit on the strength shown by a negative double.

Support for Unbid Suits or a Safe Retreat

Although some partnerships use negative doubles when an opponent overcalls an opening bid of 1NT that is not the standard and we will assume in this book that negative doubles are used only after an opening bid of one in a suit. Negative doubles also apply only when the overcall is in a suit other than the one which partner opened. So there will always be only two unbid suits.

Some players suggest that a negative double promises support for both of the unbid suits, similar to the requirements for a shotgun takeout double. That is not a strict requirement provided that the negative doubler has a safe retreat if opener bids the suit for which she lacks support. This principle is illustrated in some of the examples in this topic. **With one exception, a negative double guarantees 4-card support for all unbid Major Suits.** Here are several examples.

♠ 7 6 Your RHO overcalls 1♠ after your partner opens 1♦. You are
 ♥ A Q 8 5 3 strong enough to bid 2♥. This bid promises at least 5 cards in your
 ♦ 7 5 suit and 10 or more points. You can show your clubs later in the
 ♣ K Q 8 3 auction if you feel it is necessary. At this point it is more important
 to show your strength and your 5-card Major. Change the ♣K to
 the ♣6 and you would be just a little light for a 2♥ bid and would have to settle
 for a negative double. If your clubs and hearts were reversed you would first bid
 2♣.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♥	?

♠ 9 8 6 4 Make a negative double. **There are no strength requirements for specific suits – only for the hand as a whole.**
 ♥ 4
 ♦ K J 9 2
 ♣ A 7 3 2

♠ Q J 8 7 4 With a 5-card spade suit you should show that length by bidding 1♠.
♥ 5 4
♦ A 5
♣ J 10 3 2
When there is only one unbid Major you bid that suit with 5+ cards and make a negative double with only 4 cards.

♠ K Q 7 6 You can't bid 1♠ since that would promise a 5-card or longer suit.
♥ 6 4
♦ A 9 7 5 2
♣ 8 3
You might feel that you can't make a negative double because you have only a doubleton club. But if you double and partner chooses clubs instead of spades, you can easily correct to 2♦. You don't always need 4-card support for an unbid minor when you have tolerance or real support for opener's original minor suit.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER
1♣	1♦	?

♠ Q J 8 4 Even though you could bid 1♥, a negative double is more appropriate
♥ K Q 5 4 because you get to show both Major Suits with one call. If your black
♦ 8 5 suits were reversed a 1♥ bid would be better because you would lack
♣ J 3 2 4-card support for spades. The standard treatment for this auction is
that the double promises at least 4 cards in each Major; therefore, if
you have fewer cards in one Major and only 4 cards in the other you will bid the
4-card Major, promising only 4 cards.

♠ K Q 7 You have no problem with a 1♥ bid since you do not have both Ma-
♥ A 9 6 4 jors. However, consider this hand with the following auction.
♦ J 5 2
♣ 8 3 2

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER
1♦	2♣	?

Now your action is not so clear cut since you will be at the 2 level if you compete. You know your side has more than half the points so you hate to risk being shut out if you pass. It is probably best to go ahead and make a negative double. Sometimes you have to use a little judgment and do whatever you think will work out best.

There is actually another principle that applies to this example.

After partner's minor suit opening bid is overcalled with 2 of the other minor a negative double does not promise 4 cards in both Major Suits.

♠ QJ 8 7
♥ AJ 9 6 4
♦ Q 5 2
♣ 10

Of course, sometimes you will have both Major Suits so you have no problem making a negative double to get both suits into the auction.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER
1♥	1♠	X

This sequence deserves special attention. Here there are no unbid Major Suits. Responder may have support for both minors or one long minor suit with fewer than 10 points so she cannot bid that suit. She will **always** have fewer than 3 hearts. Here are a few examples

♠ 7 6 2

You double intending to pass if opener next bids either minor suit or rebids his hearts.

♥ 5 3

♦ Q J 9 5

♣ K Q 8 3

♠ 7 6 5

Here you will start with a negative double intending to correct opener's expected 2♣ rebid to 2♦. That will show a long diamond suit with 6 - 9 points. You will pass any other rebid by opener.

♥ 3

♦ A Q J 9 5 2

♣ 8 5 3

♠ 7 6 5

You hope to get lucky and hear a 2♣ rebid by opener after your negative double. You intend to pass but may compete further if the opponents do. If opener makes the more likely rebid of 2♦ you will show a preference by bidding 2♥. At least he will know you have some values. He will also know you have only a doubleton heart because you would have immediately raised to 2♥ instead of making the negative double if you had 3+ -card support.

♦ 5 2

♣ K J 10 8 6 5

you will show a preference by bidding 2♥. At least he will know you have some values. He will also know you have only a doubleton heart because you would have immediately raised to 2♥ instead of making the negative double if you had 3+ -card support.

OPENER'S REBID

Opener's choice of rebid after responder has made a negative double depends on many factors, but we can draw some parallels here to the takeout double. In essence responder has "bid" one or two suits without taking up any bidding space. So opener revalues his hand and makes decisions regarding GF? and G?. Since there is no upper limit on the strength of responder's hand, he will have to make some assumptions regarding her strength when making his G? decision. The lower level of the assumed range will be the minimum required for the negative double depending on the level of the overcall as outlined in the previous section. The upper level will be 11, the top of the range for a M^S G? decision by responder.

Once opener makes his G? decision he chooses a bid that reflects that decision just as if responder had made his natural bid without the intervening overcall. If he bids a suit shown by responder's negative double he is essentially raising responder. Sometimes opener will rebid his first suit or notrump. Opener has one other bid available – a cuebid, and, in rare instances, may actually pass.

For discussion purposes it is helpful to divide opener's rebid into several categories:

- A new suit
- A rebid of his original suit
- Notrump
- A cuebid
- Pass

Opener Bids a New Suit

This will be one of opener's most frequent actions. He will always choose a Major Suit if he holds at least 4 cards there. He must remember that he is really just raising responder so will choose the level of his response according to his G? decision. Quite often opener will have the option of bidding a Major Suit shown by responder at the one level. Then, just as with advancer's bid after a takeout double, it is helpful to think of responder's negative double as a bid of 0M. So if opener has 4-card support for that Major Suit he can raise responder to any level from 1 to 4, each level indicating greater interest in game.

Raise to this level	If you want to be in game if responder has as few as these points
1	12
2	10 - 11
3	8 - 9
4	6 - 7

In general, opener will rebid as follows depending on his G? decision:

G?	Bid
N	Cheaply (can pass if advancer bids)
M	Jump
Y	Game or cuebid

Note that opener's jump bid is not really a jump shift but a jump raise so is not forcing but highly invitational.

We look at several examples below for various auctions.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1♣	1♦	X	Pass
?			

In this sequence responder has promised 4 cards in each Major Suit so opener will bid as if responder had simultaneously bid 0♥ and 0♠.

♠ AJ 5 4 Although you do have 14 HCP, your ♦K is poorly placed and you have soft values in your club suit. Take a conservative route and bid just 1♠.

♥ K 6 5

♦ K 8

♣ Q J 6 3

♠ K 5 4 All of your 14 HCP are carrying their full weight and you have a 5-card suit as a bonus. If partner has about 10 points you should have enough for a reasonable play for a game contract. Make a mild invitational raise to 2♥. Change the ♠5 to the ♠Q and your hand improves significantly. Your hand is not quite strong enough for game on its own but is strong enough for a jump to 3♥. Make the additional change of the ♣3 to the ♣J and your playing strength increases sufficiently for a jump all the way to 4♥.

♥ K Q 8 5

♦ 4

♣ A Q 9 6 3

The ideas presented in the above examples would also apply to an auction that started

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1m	1♥	X	Pass
?			

and you had a 4-card spade suit. Responder doubled a 1-level contract and you have 4 bidding levels available in spades.

But what if you don't have a 4-card spade suit? For example:

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1♦	1♥	X	Pass
?			

♠ K 5 4 With 13 HCP plus 1 point for your fifth diamond and no spade fit the hope for game in a major suit is quite slim. Unless responder has around 12 HCP and a heart stopper 3NT also appears out of reach. You do have a second suit so bid 2♣ to show your unbalanced hand with no real game interest. Change the ♣2 to the ♣A and your hand is worth a jump to 3♣ – not forcing but strongly invitational.

♥ 8

♦ A Q 9 6 3

♣ K J 8 2

After a negative double a jump-shift by opener is highly invitational but not game forcing.

Now let's look at some auctions where the bid of a new suit at the 1 level is not possible, but all 2-level suit bids are available. This will happen whenever the overcall is 1♠.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1m	1♠	X	Pass
?			

Here responder promises at least 4 hearts and at least 6 points. If she has fewer than 10 points she may have more hearts but would not have enough strength to bid them at the 2 level. Of course, she could have 10 or more points but only a 4-card heart suit. Opener's bidding decision is very easy if he has a 4-card heart suit; for the most part he bids exactly the same way as if the overcaller had passed and responder had bid 1♥. He does have the additional option of making a cuebid as discussed in a later topic in this section.

♠ K 5 4
♥ K Q 8 5
♦ 4
♣ A Q 9 6 3

Here you opened the bidding with 1♣. You have 14 HCP and an extra point for your fifth club, but your ♠K looks poorly placed so you have no real game interest. Simply "raise" partner's "1♥" bid to 2♥.

♠ 4
♥ K J 10 5
♦ K Q 4
♣ A Q J 9 3

Now you have 16 HCP, only 2 more than in the previous example, but their quality and your playing strength has increased significantly. This hand is clearly worth a jump to 3♥. Change the ♣J to the ♣K and you would be foolish not to bid 4♥ or perhaps start with a cuebid. Slam would not be out of the question.

Of course opener will not always have a 4-card heart suit in these auctions. In those cases he will follow the same principles as if a 1-level bid were available but he did not have an appropriate 4-card Major.

♠ 4
♥ K 8 5
♦ K Q J 4
♣ A Q J 9 3

If the overcaller had passed and responder had bid 1♥ you would have made the "reverse" bid of 2♦ showing extra strength with more clubs than diamonds. In this auction you opened 1♣ and responder made a negative double after the 1♠ overcall. You can also bid 2♦ here to get across exactly the same message.

There is one more scenario to examine in this category:

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1♥	1♠	X	Pass
?			

Responder may or may not have support for both minor suits. Regardless, opener should bid either minor with 4⁺ cards. Since his opening bid was 1♥ he will not have 4 cards in both minors unless his shape is 0=5=4=4.

♠ 4 Bid 2♦ to show little game interest and a preference for diamonds.

♥ A K 10 8 5

♦ K Q J 4

♣ 9 7 3

♠ 4 Jump to 3♣ to show a good club suit and significant game interest.

♥ A K 10 8 5 This “jump-shift” is highly invitational but not game forcing.

♦ K 4

♣ A K 9 5 3

Opener Rebids His Original Suit

When opener has a balanced hand with a 5-card minor suit and 13 - 14 HCP, his rebid of choice after a 1-level suit bid by responder is 1NT rather than 2 of his minor. However, after an overcall followed by a negative double the 1NT rebid promises a stopper in the overcalled suit. If opener lacks that stopper he will often be forced to rebid his minor instead. On some hands even rebidding a strong 5-card heart suit might be the best action.

♠ 4 3 2 After you open 1♣ responder makes a negative double of a 1♥

overcall. A rebid of 2♣ certainly seems like your best bid.

♥ 9 8

♦ K Q 6

♣ A K J 5 3

♠ 8 6 3 You open the bidding 1♥ and hear partner make a negative double

of a 1♠ overcall. While your 2♥ rebid normally promises a 6-card

suit, what else would you recommend with these cards?

♦ A 4

♣ 9 5 3

Opener Bids Notrump

When opener has a balanced hand with at least one stopper in the overcalled suit and no real support for suits suggested by responder a notrump bid may be his best option. He will usually have a hand worth 13 - 14 HCP or 18 - 19 HCP; otherwise, he would have opened the bidding with 1NT or 2NT. But, there are exceptions.

♠ 8 6 After your 1♦ opening bid partner makes a negative double of a 1♥ overcall. While you could bid 2♣, responder has not promised support there and 1NT is a much more descriptive bid. Change the ♠8 to the ♠A and a jump to 2NT would be appropriate.

♠ A While this hand has 17 HCP it is unbalanced so you open 1♦ instead of 1NT. When responder doubles a 1♥ overcall a jump to 2NT is the bid most likely to get you to a game contract of 3NT.

♦ Q 9 5 3

Opener Makes a Cuebid

As always the cuebid is artificial and says nothing about his holding in the opponent's suit but serves one very useful purpose.

Opener's cuebid after a negative double is forcing to game.

There will be hands where opener has sufficient strength for a game contract but is not sure of the proper strain. There is also the possibility that opener knows the strain but has slam aspirations. For these hands, opener can make a cuebid of the overcalled suit. As usual responder is then requested to "do something that makes sense." Responder can bid notrump with a stopper in the overcalled suit, bid a suit in which she has not promised support, raise opener's suit or bid a 5-card major that could not have been bid the first time.

♠ A 5 You considered opening this hand 2♣ but decided to settle for 1♦ since you need a fair amount of help from partner to make 3NT, **♥ A** 5♣ or 5♦. (Yes, all she needs is the ♦Q for a probable 3NT contract, but it is against the odds to bet on one specific card.) Besides it would be difficult to show both minor suits after a 2♣ opening bid. So your intent was to jump-shift to 3♣ if responder bid 1M or 1NT, but your original plan was thwarted when your LHO overcalled 1♠ and partner made a negative double. Now a jump-shift to 3♣ is invitational instead of forcing so you need some other forcing bid. It is time to call on your good friend the cuebid to get you out of this dilemma. Bid 2♠ to establish a game-forcing auction and see what responder does next.

♠ K 5 You opened 1♦ intending to reverse into 2♥ after a probable 1♠ response by partner. Instead your LHO overcalled 2♣ and partner doubled. Her double promised only one 4-card Major, so you do not know for sure where you are headed, but you really want to get to game someplace. Bid 3♣ to get the ball rolling.

Opener Passes

Back in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances,” we discussed the penalty pass after partner made a takeout double. There are also times when opener can pass responder’s negative double thereby converting it into a penalty double. These opportunities are rare but do arise.

♠ A K Q J 2 You open the bidding with 1♠ hoping to reach a game contract in one of your Major Suits. But something interesting happens along the way. Your LHO bids 2♥ and your partner makes a negative double. So much for game in one of your majors! But what are your defensive prospects? You have 19 HCP and partner should have about 8 or more. That leaves only 13 for the opponents and the overcaller must have nearly all of those for his 2-level overcall. You can reasonably expect to take at least 3 heart tricks plus your 2 aces. Your spade trick may disappear if LHO is void, but he will have to use some of his trumps which may well establish more of yours as winners. It is not unreasonable to hope that partner can produce a trick or two. Overall, you can expect to defeat the contract by one or two tricks. Pass and practice your defense.

Opener Lies a Little

Thus far we have looked at hands where opener held cards which allowed him to make a reasonable decision regarding his rebid. In reality life at the bridge table is not always so comfortable. There will be times when opener is “stuck” for a bid. None of his options accurately describes his holding. At these times he may have to tell a little lie by:

- Bidding a 3-card suit
- Bidding notrump without a stopper in the overcalled suit

We discussed similar situations in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Takeout Doubles and Advances” in relation to advance’s action after partner made a takeout double. When these situations arise you just have to do the best you can with the cards you hold and hope for the best. If you end up with a bad result, write it off as one of the downsides of competitive bidding and focus on the good results you get on other deals. Here are a few examples of rainy days for opener after a negative double.

♠ A 9 5 You opened 1♦ and responder doubled a 2♣ overcall. You do not have a 4-card Major, a 5-card diamond suit or a club stopper, and you certainly can’t pass. Your best choice is to bid 2♥. While you certainly prefer to play in a Golden Fit, a 4-3 fit is far from the worst combination a partnership ever held. At least you have a good 3-card Major. Of course, partner may have only 3 hearts with a 4-card spade suit.

♠ A J 10 You opened 1♣ and responder doubled a 1♥ overcall. You really don't want to rebid that anemic club suit do you? Bid 1♠.

♥ 8 7

♦ A Q J

♣ J 6 5 4 3

♠ 9 7 5 After you open 1♦ responder doubles a 1♠ overcall. A rebid of 2♣ looks like your best option here. Just hope responder's shape isn't 4=4=2=3 and you end up playing in a 3-3 fit. While being forced to bid a 3-card Major is not uncommon, sometimes you will even have to bid a 3-card minor.

♠ J 10 5 You opened 1♣ and responder doubled a 1♠ overcall. Bid 1NT and hope partner has the spade queen doubleton or better. No other option looks better.

♥ 6 5 4

♦ A K 3

♣ A Q 10 2

Summary of Opener's Strong Bids

While there is not universal agreement regarding the following understandings, they are the ones chosen herein.

- A cuebid is game forcing
- All jumps below game are invitationals
- Jumps to game are weaker than a cuebid
- A reverse to 2♦ after opening 1♣ is forcing for one round
- A higher-level reverse in diamonds after opening 1♣ is forcing to game

When Advancer Bids or Redoubles

The bottom line here is that opener is off the hook and no longer has any obligation to bid if advancer bids or redoubles. Sometimes this will rescue him from the awkward situations discussed in the previous topic; if so, he may simply pass. But advancer's action should not prevent opener from bidding when he has decent values, even though he may have to bid at a higher level. Opener should be guided by the Law of Total Tricks in these competitive auctions.

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1♦	1♥	X	2♥
?			

♠ K 5 There is no reason for opener to venture to the 3 level with barely an opening hand. He will be glad to pass and leave further action up to responder.

♥ 6 5 4

♦ A K J 3

♣ Q 10 6 2

♠ K Q 9 7

♥ 6 5 4

♦ A K J 3

♣ 6 2

With a known Golden Fit in spades opener should be glad to follow the “Law” and compete to 2♠ even though he has no extra strength.

RESPONDER'S REBID

Responder's guideline for rebidding is perhaps most easily described by comparing the two auctions shown below.

OPENER OVERCALLER RESPONDER ADVANCER

1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
Rebid _{O1}	Pass	Rebid _{R1}	

OPENER OVERCALLER RESPONDER ADVANCER

1♦	1♠	X	Pass
Rebid _{O2}	Pass	Rebid _{R2}	

In the second auction responder's double says “Partner, I would have bid 1♥ if overcaller had passed, but I don't have the values to bid 2♥.”

In many cases opener will choose the same rebid for both auctions and it will have the same meaning in both auctions. For example, opener might bid 2♥, 3♥, 1NT, 2NT, 2♣, 2♦ or 3♦, to name a few possibilities. In these cases responder should choose the same rebid in both auctions.

Sometimes opener will choose a bid that has a different meaning for the two cases such as a jump shift – 3♣ in this example. In the first auction this bid is game forcing while in the second auction it is highly invitational. Now responder may choose a rebid for the second auction that is different from the rebid she would have chosen for the first auction.

Of course, there is always the possibility that opener will make a cuebid after the negative double – 2♠ in the above example. This is an artificial game-forcing bid so responder should bid something that “makes sense” and await further action by opener.

The bottom line here is the same as that used throughout this book. Responder makes a GF? decision, revalues her hand, makes a G? decision, interprets opener's bid and then chooses her rebid accordingly.

There will be times when responder decides G? = Y but the strain is not clear. So what should she do? You may have already figured it out; call on her good friend the cuebid!

Here are a few examples, by no means exhaustive but representative:

OPENER OVERCALLER RESPONDER ADVANCER

1♦	1♠	X	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

♠ 9 7 6 5

♥ K 6 5 4

♦ 3

♣ A J 6 2

This is your lucky day. You got out of what was likely a bad contract into what should be a good one. Don't disturb anything; pass.

♠ 9 7 6 5

♥ K 6 5 4

♦ A J 6 2

♣ 2

You certainly prefer diamonds to clubs and don't have any game interest. Bid 2♦.

♠ K Q 5

♥ Q 6 5 4

♦ 6 2

♣ A 8 6 2

You were hoping to find a Golden Fit in hearts but that didn't happen. You have almost enough for game and the required spade stoppers to consider notrump. Bid 2NT to invite opener to bid game there.

♠ 6 5

♥ K 6 5 4

♦ A J 6 2

♣ Q J 8

You have the same strength as in the previous example but lack the spade stopper required to bid notrump. Jump to 3♦ to show your strength and diamond support, hoping opener has a spade stopper and can bid 3NT.

♠ 6 5 2

♥ K 6 5 4

♦ J 6

♣ A Q J 8

This hand is similar to the previous one. Raise opener to 3♣, clearly an invitation for him to bid 3NT if he has a spade stopper.

♠ 7 6 5

♥ K Q 9 8 5 4

♦ 6 2

♣ Q 2

You were not quite strong enough to bid 2♥ after the 1♠ overcall but you certainly think that is the best spot, so bid it now. Partner should be able to deduce your holding (long hearts and fewer than 10 points) from the bidding. Why else would you bid hearts now but not at your first opportunity?

♠ 6 5

♥ K Q 5 4

♦ A J 6 2

♣ A J 8

With 15 HCP you really think you should be in a game contract but you are not sure where. You must make a forcing bid and the only one available is a cuebid, 2♠. Opener will have several options available at his next turn: 3NT with a spade stopper, 3♥ with good 3-card heart support (AJx) and a likely 1=3=5=4 pattern, 3♣ to show probable x=x=5=5 distribution, 3♦ to show something like x=x=5=4 shape. You will then have a good idea what to do at your next turn.

There is one more type of auction we need to address:

OPENER OVERCALLER RESPONDER ADVANCER

1♣

1♥

X

2♥

Pass

Pass

?

♠ K Q 6 5 You would have been willing to compete to the 2 level in spades if there had been a Golden Fit. But opener denied holding 4 spades with his pass and you have no desire to go any higher without a good fit, so you will pass.

♠ K Q 6 5 Can you deduce that opener has at least 4 clubs in this auction? He doesn't have 4 spades or he would have bid 2♠. He doesn't have 4 hearts because the opponents have shown at least 8 and you have 2. If he did not have at least 4 clubs he would have had at least 4 diamonds and opened 1♦ instead of 1♣. So you have a Golden Fit (maybe even 9 cards) in clubs and you don't want to sell out to the opponents at their comfortable spot of 2♥. Bid 3♣.

♠ Q 10 6 5 You are relatively confident that this deal "belongs" to your side but have no idea what to do. You are not strong enough for a game-forcing cuebid and don't really have a bid to make; notrump would be risky with only one probable stopper when the opponents have shown a heart fit. There is another way you can compete – double.

This can hardly be for penalties at this low level when the opponents have shown a fit. Rather it is another example of a double that is for takeout, but not a takeout double because it is a different scenario. Opener might possibly pass and convert it into a penalty double but is more likely to bid something and you will probably pass his bid.

THE REOPENING DOUBLE

Suppose an auction has proceeded as follows:

OPENER	OVERCALLER	RESPONDER	ADVANCER
1♣	1♥	Pass	Pass
?			

As the opening bidder you hold:

♠ K 8 6 5 Do you really want to sell out to overcaller's 1♥ bid? Where do you think the points are in this hand? If advancer had significant values she would have taken some sort of action other than pass. Overcaller can't be extremely powerful or he would have started with a takeout (rifle) double. Who has all of the other hearts? Advancer does not have a heart fit for overcaller or she would probably have raised constructively or preemptively. Overcaller probably does not have a lot of hearts or he would have made a jump overcall. Did it occur to you that maybe responder has some strength and heart length? If so, she would have liked to have doubled for penalties but could not because you are playing negative doubles and you would have bid if she doubled.

You would really like to take some action but what are you to do? You might be thinking of bidding 1♠, but, if responder had a 4-card spade suit don't you think she would have doubled the 1♥ overcall? So you might be thinking CUEBID, but this isn't quite the time for that. If you make that call you would be showing a significantly stronger hand. You do have another call available – double. Since you opened 1♣ you can hardly intend this double to be for penalties, especially with the overcaller sitting behind you. This ***reopening double*** is another example of a double that is for takeout but not a takeout double because of the different setting. The name of this double comes from the fact that if you pass the auction is over. You originally opened the bidding and your double reopens the auction for another round. You really want responder to bid something so that overcaller doesn't get to play in his 1♥ contract. Normally responder will make some bid – maybe raise your clubs or bid diamonds. But suppose she has the following hand.

♠ A 7 4 She was drooling at the prospect of defending 1♥ doubled but
 ♠ K J 10 9 3 2 held her composure and resisted doubling because she knew that
 ♦ K 3 if she did you would bid something, probably spades, and then she
 ♣ 7 6 would not know what to do next. She had confidence in her partner knowing that he had to be short in hearts and was very likely to make a reopening double if she passed and advancer also passed. Her pass is known in the bridge world as a ***trap pass***. She is laying a trap for overcaller. She hopes her partner doubles at his turn and when he does she will gladly pass at her second turn thereby converting his reopening double to a penalty double.

In an auction like the above where opener's bid is overcalled and that is passed back to opener he should make every effort to reopen the bidding and not sell out to a cheap bid by the opponents. The reopening double should be reserved for hands where he is short in the overcalled suit – one or two cards are ideal. We will not go into details of his possible actions in this book, but in addition to the double they include the bid of a new suit or notrump or a rebid of his original suit. As my favorite bridge maxim states – do something that makes sense! **JUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WILL BE TIMES WHEN PASS IS THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES SENSE.**

Note that the reopening double is akin to a balancing action discussed in Chapter 1 – “Balancing.”

SUMMARY

When opener's bid is overcalled with a suit bid through the level of 2♠ a partnership can agree that a double by responder is intended for takeout not penalties. This double is called a negative double and is a convention that is so widely used today that it is considered part of standard bridge similar to the takeout double. Partnerships can agree to play doubles through higher levels also as negative rather than penalty.

Requirements

A negative double shows enough strength to compete and usually at least 4 cards in the unbid Major Suits.

The standard agreement for minimum strength is

- 6 HCP after a 1-level overcall
- 8 HCP after a 2-level overcall

Some partnerships require 9 HCP after an overcall of 2M. Those partnerships who agree to higher-level negative doubles require a minimum of 10 HCP for those levels.

There is no upper limit on the strength shown by a negative double.

Suit Requirements:

- When a 1♣ opening bid is overcalled with 1♦, a negative double promises 4 cards in each Major Suit.
- After a 1♥ overcall, a negative double shows exactly 4 spades while a bid of 1♠ shows 5⁺.
- After any overcall, a non-jump bid of a new suit at the 2 level by responder is a “five and dime” bid showing a 5⁺-card suit and 10⁺ points.
- When opener starts with a bid of either minor suit and there is a 2-level overcall in the other minor suit, a negative double promises 4 cards in only one of the Major Suits.
- After an overcall of 1♠ or 2M, a negative double promises 4⁺ cards in the other Major Suit

Opener's Rebid

When opener knows which Major Suit(s) are held by responder, he can “raise” her suit to an appropriate level if he has a fit. The higher his bid the more interest he has in a game contract.

Without a fit for responder, opener can rebid his suit, bid another suit, make a notrump bid, or make a cuebid.

All jump raises and jump rebids below game are invitational. A jump-shift in a suit not promised by responder is also invitational. The only game-forcing bid is a cuebid.

In rare instances opener will have a strong hand and a trump stack in the overcalled suit. **Opener may then elect to pass and convert the negative double into a penalty double.**

Sometimes opener will be faced with the dilemma of not having any bid available to accurately describe his hand. He may then have to choose the least damaging lie when deciding on his rebid. This usually involves bidding a 3-card suit or bidding notrump without a stopper in the opponent's suit.

If advancer competes in the auction, opener is free to pass but should bid if he has something positive to say.

Responder's Rebid

The key to responder's rebid is understanding opener's rebid, reevaluating her hand in terms of GFMS?/GFms?/GF? and then choosing a bid that leads to a reasonable contract.

If advancer competes and opener passes, responder should strive to compete if she knows there is a Golden Fit in some suit.

The Reopening Double

When opener's bid is overcalled and that bid is passed back to opener he should strive to keep the bidding open. When he is short in the overcalled suit, he should be especially aware that responder may have laid a trap for overcaller because she was holding a trump stack behind him and had significant defensive values. In these cases he should strive to reopen with a double so that responder has an opportunity to pass and convert the double into a penalty double.

If opener has 3^+ cards in the overcalled suit, he should strive to make some other bid but may have to settle for a pass and defend as best he can.



CHAPTER 12

– Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth
Chair - Part 1

Opening the Bidding in Third Chair

Summary



In Chapter 7 – “Preemptive Opening Bids and Overcalls” it was mentioned that the requirements for preemptive opening bids in third and fourth chair are different from those in first and second chair. In *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 1 – “Bidding Objectives” it was also suggested that the requirements for opening the bidding with one of a suit in third or fourth chair were also different from those for opening in first or second chair. The requirements for the opening bids of 1NT, 2NT and 2♦ are the same regardless of position.

In this chapter we will look at the changes to the requirements for opening the bidding with 1 of a suit in third chair and the associated responses and rebids. We defer the consideration of preemptive opening bids in third chair and all opening bids in fourth chair to the next chapter.

OPENING THE BIDDING IN THIRD CHAIR

When you are in third seat and hear both your partner and your RHO pass, you know that neither of those two players has an opening hand. You must now reconsider your offensive and defensive prospects.

Opening with One of a Suit

Certainly if your hand is somewhat stronger than the minimum required for an opening bid in first or second chair, partner may have sufficient strength to produce a game contract. But if you lack extra values your game prospects are quite dim. While it is true that if you and partner have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit her hand might increase in value as dummy (due to shortness in one or two side suits), that increase may be partially offset by a decrease in value due to long suits. Remember that you never count points for both long and short suits. Still, her hand pattern could be something like 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 and she would gain significant value if she had a fit for your suit. So whenever you have a hand which you would have opened in first or second seat you will make the same opening bid in third chair.

But suppose you have only 10 - 12 points. Now it is very unlikely that you can make a game contract. But if partner also has about 10 - 12 points your side will have the majority of the strength and can probably make a partscore contract. If you were to pass, your LHO may also pass and you will have missed out on a scoring opportunity. Even worse, your LHO may open the bidding and the opponents may end up playing the deal as declarer and dummy making a partscore of their own when your side could have outbid them if you had not passed at your turn. Sometimes it is difficult to compete after the opponents open the bidding even though you have moderate strength with no long suit to overcall and not the right shape for a takeout double.

It is standard practice to reduce the requirements for an opening bid in third position so that you do not miss out on possible partscore contracts when you and partner might have the majority of the strength. A third seat opening bid made with fewer points than required for a first or second seat opening bid is referred

to as a ***light opening bid***. So just how light can you be to open in third seat? This is somewhat of a partnership agreement, but a minimum of 10 total points is quite common and is used here.

An opening bid in third seat may be made with as few as 10 total points.

Are you concerned that the bidding by your side may get too high when you open light in third seat? There is one principle that helps to prevent this. Since responder passed initially her strength is limited so she cannot have a strong hand. Therefore,

The bid of a new suit by responder is not forcing if she passed initially.

This means that when you have opened light in third seat you are free to pass a new-suit response by partner if you think that is a reasonable contract. However, if you did not make a light opening bid you should make the same rebid you would have if you had opened in first or second seat. In the next topic you will discover another method used to keep the level of the contract low after a light third-seat opening bid.

Most light third-seat opening bids will be in a Major Suit. The only time to open light in third seat with a minor suit is when you are willing to pass any response by partner. While we normally require at least a 5-card suit for a 1M opening bid, this requirement is also relaxed for a **light** third-seat opening bid.

*A **light** opening bid of 1M in third seat may be made with a **strong** 4-card suit.*

This is done for two reasons:

- It helps to get the partnership into the right contract
- It is lead-directing for responder if the opponents should get the contract with opener's LHO declarer

When you open light in third seat you intend to pass any nonforcing bid by responder. You will make your normal rebid if you meet the requirements for an opening bid in first or second position. Responder's forcing bid is discussed in the next topic but for the discussion of the examples given below it will be helpful if you know that it is used only when she has support for your suit after you open 1M.

Here are some examples of light opening bids in third position.

- ♠ K 9 8 Open with 1♦ and pass any response by partner. Responder does
 ♥ Q 9 4 not have a forcing bid after an opening bid of 1m in third seat.
 ♦ Q 6 3
 ♣ A 9 6 4
- ♠ K J 10 6 2 Open the bidding with 1♠. You are prepared for any response by
 ♥ 8 5 partner.
 ♦ K 5 2
 ♣ K 9 6
- ♠ K 6 4 This is about as light as you want to be for a third-seat opening bid
 ♥ Q J 8 4 2 of 1♥.
 ♦ K 5 2
 ♣ 7 5
- ♠ A K J 10 Here is an example of a 1♠ opening bid with only a 4-card suit.
 ♥ 10 9 4 You can pass any nonforcing response by partner and would much
 ♦ K 6 3 rather have partner lead a spade than a club if she has the opening
 ♣ 7 5 3 lead.

Responding to a Third-Seat Opening Bid of One in a Suit

No special considerations need be taken when partner opens with 1m in third seat. It is true that on rare occasion he will have opened light so that if you give him a limit raise to 3m you may get too high and receive a poor result. But most of the time you will make your natural bid of a new suit at the 1 level, 1NT, a simple raise to 2m, or perhaps a bid of 2♣ after a 1♦ opening bid. If partner has made a light opening bid he will be prepared to pass all of these responses and you should be in a reasonable contract.

The situation is different if partner has opened with 1M in third chair. There will not be a problem if your hand is such that all you want to do is give him a simple raise. But suppose you have a hand with 10 - 12 points and at least 3-card support for his Major Suit. Now if you have 4-card support and give him a jump raise to 3M you may well be in over your head if he also has only 10 - 12 points. If you have only 3-card support you would normally first bid a new suit (forcing) and then jump to 3M at your next turn. After the third-seat opening bid your bid of a new suit is no longer forcing so you cannot be sure you will get another chance to bid if you follow that route. If you do partner may pass and you will end up in an inferior contract.

Douglas Drury came up with a convention to circumvent this problem. Over a period of time there have been a few modifications to his original ideas and the method most commonly used today is called **Reverse Drury** and works as follows.

- After a third-seat opening bid of 1M, a 2♣ bid by responder is artificial and forcing, showing at least 3-card support for opener's Major Suit and 10⁺ points.
- Opener **assumes** responder has only 10 - 12 points and makes a G? = Y, N or M decision.
- Opener rebids 2M if G? = N.
 - If responder has only 10 - 12 points (G? = N) she passes at her next turn.
 - If responder has a hand which revalued to 13 - 14 points (G? = M) she raises to 3M at her next turn.
 - Opener revises his G? decision and then passes if G? = N or goes on to 4M if G? = Y at his subsequent turn.
 - If responder has a hand which revalued to 15⁺ points (G? = Y) she raises to 4M at her next turn.
- If opener's G? decision is M he makes some descriptive bid other than 2M below the game level. He may bid a new suit, 2NT or 3M.
 - Responder again revalues her hand. Maybe she has a fit with a second suit bid by opener which increases the value of her hand or has wasted values in that suit which decreases the value of her hand. After revaluing her hand she makes a G? = Y or N decision and signs off at 2M or 3M if G? = N but bids 4M if G? = Y.
- If opener's G? decision is Y he usually bids 4M but could make some other bid in a move toward slam with a really strong hand.

Just as with any convention, changing the meaning of a bid for an artificial purpose gives up the use of that bid for its natural meaning. So when using Reverse Drury you must remember that you will have to find some other bid to make if you are responder with a long club suit and 10 - 12 points after partner opens 1M in third seat. Most players use a jump to 3♣ for this purpose, leaning more toward an 11 - 12 point holding. Unless you have a really long suit, a 1NT bid can be used with only 10 points.

While you lose the natural use for the 2♣ response you gain an additional inferential advantage when responder does not bid 2♣ after a third-seat 1M opening bid; responder does not have 3⁺-card support for opener with 10⁺ points.

Here are the standard agreements if opener's LHO interferes:

- After a double 2♣ is still Reverse Drury; 1M – X – 2♣
- After an overcall 2♣ is still Reverse Drury if that bid is available; 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ or 1M – 1NT – 2♣
- After a 2♣ overcall double is Reverse Drury; 1M – 2♣ – X
- Reverse Drury is “off” after an overcall higher than 2♣; 1M – 2♦; 1♠ – 2♥

Let's look at a few auctions using Reverse Drury.

West	North	East	South	East
♠K42	Pass	1♥	Pass	♠Q83
♥J876	Pass	2♥	Pass	♥KQ6109
♦AK3	Pass	Pass		♣A98
♣742				

West has a nice hand but not quite an opening bid. East has a reasonable light third-seat 1♥ opening bid. West uses Reverse Drury and the partnership stops at 2♥ which should be successful losing 2 tricks in each black suit and one heart trick. If West had jumped to 3♥ to show a normal limit raise the contract would have been too high. Reverse Drury allowed them to stop at a makeable contract when East opened light in third seat. If East had passed it is probable that South would also have passed since N-S have only 18 HCP between them. E-W would have missed out on a nice partscore contract.

If South had doubled or overcalled 1♠, West would still have bid 2♣ and the bidding would most likely have proceeded the same way because North would probably have passed. If South had overcalled 2♣ West would have doubled and again East would have bid 2♥, probably ending the auction.

West	North	East	South	East
♠A42	Pass	1♥	Pass	♠K84
♥J876	Pass	3♥	Pass	♥KQ61095
♦AK3	4♥	Pass	Pass	♣A9
♣842				

Although some players might open the West hand in first seat, upgrading their hand because of the excellent high card holding, others would pass. After East opens in third seat with a full opening bid West employs Reverse Drury to find out about the quality of East's opening bid. East is not quite strong enough to drive to game on his own but shows his game interest by making a jump rebid in his 6-card suit. That is all West needs to carry on to game which should make, losing only one trick in each suit except diamonds where there are no losers.

West	North	East	South	East
♠642	Pass	1♠	Pass	♠A K Q 5
♥86	Pass	2♠	Pass	♥1093
♦AK53	Pass	Pass		♦876
♣K532				♣Q84

In third seat East has several good reasons to make a light opening bid of 1♠ with his 4-card suit:

- It has the preemptive value of taking away the entire 1 level of opening suit bids from South
- It will get his partner off to the right opening lead if his side ends up defending and South is declarer
- It may lead to a reasonable spade partscore contract for his side
- His hand will provide a decent dummy if West chooses to bid 1NT or any new suit at the 2 level

West has a nice supporting hand for East with good prospects for a game contract if East has a full opening bid so uses Reverse Drury to inquire about the quality of East's opening bid. When East denies any interest in game West is content to pass. While 2♠ is not an ironclad contract with the possibility of losing 1 spade trick, 2 heart tricks, 1 diamond trick and 2 club tricks, there are several chances one of those losers may go away; spades may break 3-3, diamonds may break 3-3 providing an extra winner for a discard or the defenders may falter and give you 2 club tricks. Of course, it could be worse if the defenders find the devastating opening lead of a trump and continue leading trumps when you give up 2 heart tricks in an attempt to ruff a heart loser in dummy. You then may be set 2 tricks if nothing else works out.

Let's change West's hand in the above deal a little and see how well things could work out.

West	West	North	East	South	East
♠ 7 6 4 2	Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass	♠ A K Q 5
♥ 6	2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass	♥ 10 9 3
♦ A K 5 3	3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass	♦ 8 7 6
♣ K J 3 2	Pass	Pass	Pass		♣ Q 8 4

West initially values her hand as worth 11 points, but after East opens with 1♠ she adds 3 points for her singleton heart bringing her up to 14 points. If East had opened in first or second seat she would conclude G? = Y and start off with a natural 2♣ bid planning to jump to game at her next turn. But since East opened in third seat she is not quite sure if a game contract is there so starts with 2♣ as Reverse Drury. When East denies game interest she shows her extra strength by bidding 3♠. Now East can go on to 4♠, a solid game contract with only one loser in each of the side suits.

Here is another hand with a light third-seat opening bid where Reverse Drury is not used but a reasonable contract is reached.

West

♠ A 2
♥ 8 6
♦ K Q 7 6 5 3
♣ 8 4 2

East

♠ 8 7 4
♥ 10 Q 10 5
♣ A Q

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

The interior quality of West's diamond suit is not quite good enough for an opening weak two-bid but after East's third-seat opening bid West is strong enough to bid 2♦. Since East opened a little light in third seat he is pretty confident there is not a game contract so can pass partner's response. 2♦ should be a successful contract, maybe even making an overtrick or two, but the only reasonable attempt at a game contract of 3NT would likely be doomed to failure with an opening spade lead.

SUMMARY

Opening the Bidding in Third Chair

The following general principles apply to an opening bid in third or fourth chair.

The requirements for an opening bid of 1NT, 2NT and 2♦ do not change.

A light opening bid is one made in a suit at the one level with 10 - 12 points.

It is permissible to make a light opening bid in third or fourth chair.

The bid of a new suit by responder is not forcing if she passed initially.

*If opener has not made a light opening bid in third or fourth chair
he should treat the bid of a new suit by responder as forcing.*

*If opener does not pass the bid of a new suit by responder, he promises
the values of at least an opening bid in first or second chair.*

Most of the time when you make a light opening bid in third chair, it will be in a Major Suit. If you do open light in third chair in a minor suit you should be prepared to pass any response by partner.

*A **light** opening bid of 1M in third seat
may be made with a **strong** 4-card suit.*

*The Reverse Drury convention can be used by responder to
find out if opener has made a light opening bid of 1M.*

The Reverse Drury Convention

- A 2♦ bid by responder is artificial showing at least 3-card support for opener's Major Suit and 10 or more points.
- Opener **assumes** responder has only 10 - 12 points and makes a G? = Y, N or M decision.
- Opener rebids 2M if G? = N.

- If responder has only 10 - 12 points ($G? = N$) she passes at her next turn.
- If responder has a hand which revalued to 13 - 14 points ($G? = M$) she raises to 3M at her next turn.
 - Opener revises his $G?$ decision and then passes if $G? = N$ or goes on to 4M if $G? = Y$ at his subsequent turn.
- If responder has a hand which revalued to 15 or more points ($G? = Y$) she raises to 4M at her next turn.
- If opener's $G?$ decision is M he makes some descriptive bid other than 2M below the game level. He may bid a new suit, 2NT or 3M.
 - Responder again revalues her hand (if she has a secondary fit with a second suit bid by opener which increases the value of her hand even further or has wasted values in that suit which decreases the value of her hand) and makes a $G? = Y$ or N decision. She signs off at 3M if $G? = N$ and bids 4M if $G? = Y$.
- If opener's $G?$ decision is Y he usually bids 4M but could make some other bid in a move toward slam with a really strong hand.

These are the standard agreements if opener's LHO interferes:

- After a double 2♣ is still Reverse Drury; 1M – X – 2♣
- After an overcall 2♣ is still Reverse Drury if that bid is available; 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ or 1M – 1NT – 2♣
- After a 2♣ overcall double is Reverse Drury; 1M – 2♣ – X
- Reverse Drury is “off” after an overcall higher than 2♣; 1M – 2♦; 1♠ – 2♥



CHAPTER 13

– Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth
Chair - Part 2

Opening the Bidding in Third Chair
(Concluded)

Opening the Bidding in Fourth Chair

Summary



OPENING THE BIDDING IN THIRD CHAIR (Concluded)

Weak Two-Bids in Third Chair

The requirements for a weak two-bid opening in third chair are significantly different from those for a first or second chair opening.

When both your partner and your RHO have passed and you have less than an opening 1-level bid, it is very likely that your LHO has an opening hand and very unlikely that your side can make a game contract. Now you want to be very aggressive with your preemptive opening bids. It is common practice to relax the requirements for the suit quality and length depending somewhat on the vulnerability. Opening with a weak two-bid holding a good 5-card suit when the vulnerability is favorable or a moderate 7-card suit when the vulnerability is unfavorable is quite acceptable, especially if you want to encourage partner to lead that suit if your side ends up on defense.

♠ 9 7 5 Open the bidding with 2♦ in third seat with this hand. The opponents will probably outbid you in a Major suit and you would like partner to lead a diamond.
♥ 8 3
♦ A K 10 9 3
♣ J 9 8

♠ K J 10 9 7 Unless the vulnerability is unfavorable, open with 2♠ in third seat. You want to make it difficult for your LHO to bid hearts.
♥ 7
♦ Q J 10 6 You have some extra safety with your diamond suit.
♣ 10 9 2

♠ A K 9 7 5 4 3 The length and strength of your spade suit should give you reasonable safety even if the vulnerability is unfavorable. Open 2♠ under those conditions; otherwise open with 3♠.
♥ 8 5
♦ J 6
♣ 7 6

Of course, while you will open with a weak two-bid with some hands in third seat that you would not in first or second chair, any hand that you would have opened with a weak two-bid in first or second seat is also acceptable for a weak two-bid opening in third chair.

A slight modification to responses is also recommended after a weak two-bid in third seat. A new suit by responder is no longer forcing but corrective. Responder may have a long suit of her own that was not quite appropriate for a first or second seat preemptive opening bid and feels that would be a better contract.

Higher-Level Preemptive Bids in Third Chair

As in many areas of bridge, different experts have different opinions on how the requirements for a higher-level preemptive opening bid change when in third seat compared to first chair. I'm going to lean toward the side that says "not very much." That will make it much easier on the beginning player, reducing the

memorization work required in their early bridge endeavors. So any hand that is worth a high-level preemptive opening bid in first chair is also acceptable in third chair. Here are a couple of examples of hands that would not be opened with a 3-level preempt in first chair but would be in third seat.

♠ K Q J 8 7 6 Normally you do not like to preempt with a void, but you think the opponents have a partscore or more in hearts and would like to make it difficult for them to decide whether they should compete and if so to what level. With equal or favorable vulnerability an opening bid of 3♠ in third position should make life very difficult for them. The quality of your 6-card suit should give you some safety.

♠ 6 Under favorable vulnerability an opening bid of 3♦ in third chair should make it difficult for the opponents to decide how high to bid if they have a spade fit. Although you usually shy away from a preemptive opening bid when you hold a side 4-card Major suit, opposite a passed hand you don't think a game for your side in 4♥ is very likely. Since the opponents could outbid you in spades (even if you do have a heart fit with partner), do the best you can to get in the way of your opponents.

Note that the 3-level preemptive bids in these two examples were made with only 6-card suits. That is one of the changes from first-chair preemptive bids where a 7-card suit is standard. **Don't make a habit of this practice – do so only when you have something significant to gain.**

Although there are some systemic methods of responding to high-level preemptive opening bids in third seat, the beginning player is probably better off using her judgment and the Law of Total Tricks in a competitive auction. As you gain more experience and become comfortable with the basics of preemptive bids you can expand your partnership agreements.

OPENING THE BIDDING IN FOURTH CHAIR

When you are in the fourth seat and have heard three passes by the other players there is no reason to open the bidding unless you expect to get a positive score by doing so. It is senseless to open the bidding if you think you have little chance of winning the bidding contest or of being defeated if you do. You will be better off to just pass, take the null score (both sides receive a score of zero) and move on to the next deal. In this section we will discuss a few changes to the guidelines for opening the bidding in the fourth position.

Opening with One of a Suit

For the most part you will open any hand in fourth seat that you would have opened in the first or second chair, but there are a few exceptions. Whenever you have barely enough values for an opening bid **and are short in spades**, it is best

to pass. If you do open the bidding, there is a good chance the opponents have a spade fit and will find it. Now they can outbid you at the same level in the battle for a partscore contract and they will quite likely make their contract. After the hand is over you will wish you had just passed.

Fortunately, there is a very simple guideline for deciding whether to open the bidding based on your **Pierson Points** named after Don Pierson who introduced the concept:

Pierson Points

The sum of your HCP and the number of spades you hold

We can now state the **Rule of 15**:

Rule of 15

Open the bidding with one of a suit in fourth chair only if you have at least 15 Pierson Points.

This is a guideline rather than a hard and fast rule. Feel free to pass if you have 15 Pierson Points but have a poor suit or the quality of your points is below par, especially if you are short in spades. This guideline can lead to some interesting decisions as illustrated in the next two examples.

♠ Q 9 8 4 This hand is worth only 11 points and would be passed in any of the first three positions. But in fourth chair you have 15 Pierson Points so could open with 1♣.

♥ 7 2

♦ A 8 4

♣ A J 8 3

♠ 8 4 You would open this hand with 1♦ in any of the first three positions. But you have only 14 Pierson Points so should pass in fourth seat. If your ♥7 were the ♠7 you would have 15 Pierson Points but should probably still pass. Unless partner had a 5-card spade suit you would not have a Golden Fit in spades and the opponents would likely have a heart fit and be able to outbid any minor suit contract you might attempt.

Responding to a Fourth-Seat Opening Bid of One in a Suit

As demonstrated in the previous topic it is quite possible that you will open light in a Major Suit when you are in fourth position. Consequently it is common practice to use the same ideas when responding to an opening bid in fourth chair as used for a third-chair opening bid.

- The bid of a new suit by responder is not forcing

- The Reverse Drury convention is used by responder to check on the quality of opener's bid

Preemptive Bids in Fourth Chair

When you are in the fourth seat with a weak hand and have heard three passes by the other players the best way to preempt the opponents and keep them from finding their partscore contract is to pass! There is no reason to open the bidding unless you expect to get a positive score by doing so. It is senseless to open the bidding at the 2 level or higher when you have a weak hand and know that partner does not have an opening bid. Just pass and go on to the next deal.

Nonetheless, there are some hands where you can gain a tactical advantage by opening at the 2 level in diamonds, hearts or spades. While these bids are really not "weak" bids the bridge community has included them in the weak two-bid category because they can be made with a hand that would not have been strong enough to open the bidding in first or second chair.

Requirements for a Weak-Two-Bid Opening (fourth chair)

1. A **good** suit – usually 6 cards but could be an exceptional 5 cards or a reasonable 7 cards
2. 10 – 13 HCP
3. 2⁺ quick tricks

Here are a few examples.

♠ A K 10 9 8 4 You could open the bidding with 1♠ but a 2♠ opening bid is more descriptive and makes it harder for the opponents to find their likely heart fit.
♥ 7
♦ A J 6
♣ 10 9 2

♠ 8 This is a reasonable 2♥ bid in first, second or third positions but in fourth chair it is better to pass before the opponents find their spade fit and outbid you.
♥ A K 10 9 8 4
♦ J 8 7 6
♣ 10 9

♠ 8 You would have opened the bidding with 1♥ in any other position, but in fourth seat a 2♥ opening bid is a better choice. Make it harder for the opponents to find their spade fit if they have one.
♥ A Q 10 9 8 4
♦ K Q 6
♣ Q 10 9

♠ 8
 ♥ 9 3
 ♦ A Q J 10 9 4
 ♣ A 10 9 3

Open 2♦ in fourth seat. Yes, the opponents may outbid you in either Major Suit but there is a good chance your side has a partscore, and a game contract is not entirely out of the picture. By opening with 2♦ you somewhat reduce the chance that the opponents will be able to find their fit if they have one.

While there are some rather sophisticated methods for responding to a weak two-bid in fourth seat the following simplified adaptation of the standard responses discussed earlier should suffice for the beginning player.

- A new suit is invitational and denies a fit for opener's suit
- 2NT asks for a feature
- A single raise is invitational, not preemptive
- 3NT and all other game bids are sign-offs

A key guideline for responder is that opener's bid was very limited and descriptive. He could have passed but is trying to obtain a positive score. So be cautious when trying for a game. Overbidding and going set will not give your side a good result.

Just as with fourth-seat weak two-bids a 3-level preemptive fourth-seat opening bid does not carry a connotation of weakness but rather a long suit with good playing strength. These bids are made when you think you can make a partscore or maybe even a game contract and want to reduce the probability that the opponents can find their fit if they have one. Here are a few examples.

♠ A K J 10 8 5 2
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A 10 6
 ♣ J 10

This is a good hand for an opening bid of 3♠ in fourth seat if both sides are vulnerable. Your opponents will be hard pressed to compete in hearts if they have a fit there.

♠ 8
 ♥ A K J 10 9 6 3
 ♦ K J 9 4
 ♣ 3

At unfavorable vulnerability a 3♥ opening bid just might keep the opponents from competing in spades. Partner should be able to judge your offensive and defensive values.

♠ 8
 ♥ K 3
 ♦ J 10 4
 ♣ A K J 10 6 4 2

If neither side is vulnerable there is a good chance this deal belongs to your side. Start the bidding by opening with 3♣. There may even be a 3NT contract for your side if partner can control the pointed suits (spades and diamonds).

♠ A
 ♥ K J 10 9 6 4 3 2
 ♦ Q J 9
 ♣ 4

Open 3♥ if both sides are vulnerable. You might keep the opponents from finding their spade fit and if partner has as little as something like ♥Q and ♦K you can even make a game contract.

Guidelines for responding to a fourth-seat preempt are the same as for responding to a preemptive opening in first or second position. You need quick tricks and some semblance of a fit. Any high honor in partner's suit will be of great value.

SUMMARY

Weak Two-Bids in Third Chair

It usually pays to be a little more aggressive with preemptive bids in third seat than in first or second seat. In particular,

- When the vulnerability is favorable you can open with a weak two-bid when you hold a good 5-card suit
- When the vulnerability is unfavorable you can open with a weak two-bid when you hold a moderate 7-card suit

After a weak two-bid in third seat the bid of a new suit by responder is corrective rather than forcing.

Higher-Level Preemptive Bids in Third Chair

Normally you do not like to preempt with a void or a side 4-card Major Suit. These restrictions can occasionally be violated if you feel defensive values of the preempt outweigh the possible loss of offensive potential.

Opening the Bidding in Fourth Chair

The guideline for opening the bidding with one of a suit in fourth position is based on Pierson Points and the Rule of 15.

Pierson Points

The sum of your HCP and the number of spades you hold.

Rule of 15

Open the bidding with one of a suit in fourth chair only if you have at least 15 Pierson Points.

Preemptive Bids in Fourth Chair

When you have a weak hand the best way to keep the opponents from finding their best contract after three players have passed is to do the same thing – PASS!

A preemptive bid should be made in fourth seat only when you have high expectations of making your contract.

Requirements for a Weak-Two Opening Bid

(fourth chair)

1. A **good** suit – usually 6 cards but could be an exceptional 5 cards or a reasonable 7 cards
2. 10 – 13 HCP
3. 2⁺ quick tricks

The following guidelines are recommended for responses to a fourth-seat weak two-bid.

- A new suit is invitational and denies a fit for opener's suit
- 2NT asks for a feature
- A single raise is invitational, not preemptive
- 3NT and all other game bids are sign-offs

Three-level preemptive opening bids in fourth seat usually have the strength of an opening 1-level bid in first or second seat but have an excellent long suit of seven or sometimes eight cards. Responding to these opening bids is the same as responding to a preemptive opening bid in first or second chair; points are irrelevant, and at least a mild fit plus quick tricks or controls are needed.



INDEX OF TERMS



This index is primarily a reference to the definitions of various bridge terms introduced in this book. A few short-hand notations first introduced in *Bidding Basics* but described in the Introduction of this book are also included.

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TEXTBOOK

Are you tired of learning/teaching bridge from a cookbook? Tired of memorizing how many points you need to bid this or that? Do you have trouble determining if you have a minimum, medium or maximum hand and what you are supposed to do if it fits in a particular category? Then *Yes, No or Maybe* is what you need.

This is a series of three textbooks and companion workbooks for beginning bridge students. The series uses a logical paradigm for making bidding decisions by formulating two basic questions: ‘Do we have a fit in a major suit?’ and ‘Do we want to be in a game contract?’ All partnership bidding after an opening bid or intervention is guided by the answers (*Yes, No or Maybe*) to these questions and some fundamental bidding guidelines.

In *More Bidding Basics* the student learns about balancing, several conventions (Stayman, Jacoby transfers, negative doubles, fourth suit forcing, new minor forcing), strong opening bids, preemptive opening bids and overcalls, game tries, slam bidding (direct, Blackwood, Gerber, control bidding) and opening the bidding in third or fourth chair. The ‘Yes, No or Maybe’ philosophy is carried through into these somewhat advanced bidding scenarios. With regard to slam bidding, a new question is posed: “Do we want to be in a slam contract?”

I only wish that such a book had existed when I was starting out.

Barbara Seagram

Author of *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*



DAVID GLANDORF is a retired aerospace engineer who has been teaching bridge ‘forever’, starting with lunch-time players at work, and then professionally since 2002. He was the 2013 American Bridge Teachers’ Association Teacher of the Year. David lives in Houston with his wife, Becky.



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