

# **explaining notrump bidding**

**- the Scanian way**

**- part one - The 2NT system -  
- part two - The 1NT system -**

**A book by Mats Nilslund**

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## FOREWORD

The notrump bidding in our methods was presented in my book '5-card majors', but when I look back at it, I notice that some parts of that book are a lot of bidding tables and not much text. Here I want to elaborate more about some of those parts. If you already have the mentioned book, don't worry, our system is not static! We find ways to improve it all the time. I will try to make our methods more appealing by a more thorough description and more examples of how they work.

My idea is to present my thoughts in a series of booklets and taken together the parts will become the full book. To begin with, I am thinking of three parts. If this is the first part, I will simply add the next chapter to the following edition.

Within that concept, I include these three domains, in reverse order of strength:

- 20+ HCP - the two notrump system
- 15-17 HCP - the one notrump system
- (11)-14 HCP - the checkback system

These three domains are not connected or interdependent in any way. If you like, you can adopt one, two, or all of them. Or, take one at a time. That probably means that you don't have to change anything else in your system. In my '5-card major' system, we can also use the two notrump system with 18-19 HCP.

Following the advice of a friend, I will begin with the description of the system we use after 2NT whether it is an opening or a rebid. And since we squeeze in most of the possible hands into that system, it gets crowded. But also more efficient!

I am a little scientific when it comes to designing bidding schemes, and therefore concerned about the small details. Perhaps you think that tiny details don't matter much, but I think they do. I will include many examples of the bidding and try to explain the reasons behind our design.

This will be the seventh book in the series. The first one was published more than thirty years ago: 'No-trump bidding the Scanian Way'. If I remember it correctly, the embryo of that notrump system was a joint effort by our team in the middle of the '80s, Björn Fallenius and Magnus Lindqvist; Anders Wirgren and myself.

Much has changed from those times. It is time for an update!

Mats Nilsland

## INTRODUCTION

The styles of using notrump bids can differ enormously. Look at what a notrump opening bid can include in modern bridge, depending on whom you are asking:

- a five-card major
- a semi-balanced hand, like 5422 (even with five in a major) or 6322
- a singleton honor (or perhaps even a small singleton)
- an unguarded doubleton, or maybe even two of them

If you allow all or many of these variations, it can be to your disadvantage. The notrump systems do not often provide methods to reveal those details. I don't like the overuse of notrump bids, however, the trend is moving in that direction.

Maybe it is just the old testosterone issue; be a man, bid notrumps, and show you want to play the hand! I think there is another reason: probably many of the non-standard notrump overcalls and opening bids are made because the bidder doesn't trust the hand could be bid in a better way in their system framework.

With that said, tactical notrump bids usually work fine. The notrump bid shows the general strength of the hand, and that is a good start. Most of the time responder will not care whether you have this or that type of hand; he will either pass or get us to game in a simple way. If the wrong game was reached, or the slam wasn't bid, they can hope that the expert at the other table made the same decision.

What matters for my choice to open or overcall with a notrump bid, and not having a 'perfect' hand, is the tactical position. Knowledge about opponents' or partner's strength and distribution can change the landscape. We strive to design the rest of our system so we can choose whether to describe our hand with a notrump bid or not. When we have a five-card major or a semi-balanced hand, we value to be able to choose between different paths. These factors are the most important ones:

- we have a weak doubleton (that is xx in a suit)
- we have a suit-oriented hand (in the eyes of the beholder)

There are two reasons why a weak doubleton is bad for a notrump opening. One is that we can get to play 3NT from the wrong hand, and the other is that we perhaps shouldn't play 3NT at all.

As many systems don't cater to the opportunity to choose, you may have to open 1NT more often than we do, whether you think it is the best bid or not. However, that doesn't matter for our notrump methods; it is only a matter of the frequency for a notrump opening having a five-card major or a semi-balanced hand.

When we open 1NT or 2NT in first or second position, we hope to find a game or a slam, and the chances for having at least game are good. Then, in my opinion, we shouldn't have hands that our partner cannot visualize. When we know, because of the auction, that slam is out of the picture, and game is less probable, we have a completely different tactical situation.

♠ KQ   ♥ Ax   ♦ A9xxx   ♣ AKxx

This hand has many values in the short suits, and therefore, is suitable for a 2NT bid. We may not be able to show our distribution, but other bids are not any better.

When we have a strong hand, as when we have 20 HCP or more, statistically, we do not often have a weak doubleton, and even when we have one, we may not always have an alternative way to bid our hand. Let us, though, look at a few hands where we have an option:

♠ xx   ♥ Ax   ♦ AKJ10x   ♣ AKxx

I think everybody understands that there are possible drawbacks with the notrump opening if we have the above hand. Nevertheless, if we choose to open 2NT with this hand, we will perhaps make 3NT when we would go down if we spilled too much information to the opponents by showing our hand. On the other hand, we perhaps will not find a minor suit slam when we can make it, and we sometimes will go down in 3NT when we could have made game in a minor.

Even so, nine out of ten good players will open this hand with 2NT, showing 20-21 HCP. Are they all wrong? Probably not, but I don't agree with them. Some years ago, partner usually passed over our opening bid in a suit with less than 6 HCP but, nowadays, he often will find a bid with less than that. As we can probably get to game when we open 1♦, why do most players prefer 2NT?

Perhaps they don't trust their methods after a suit opening to give a better result? Other reasons can be to have an inconspicuous auction, not to reveal the weakness in spades, or they don't want competitive bids in the majors? Is the plan to more often cause damage to the opponents than to partner? I think such a tactic can work, but I would prefer to use it when the opponents have the cards.

When we have the strength to bid game, according to the 'balance of strength' theory, we are the stronger side. That means we should gain from the sum of all the information that comes from the auction. It isn't always true on every board, but we shouldn't fear opponents' overcalls when we are strong. We should welcome interventions if we know how to handle them and draw the right conclusions.

Perhaps you noticed that the last hand only had 19 HCP? That's just the upgrade phenomena, a standard procedure among experts and hogs.

Here is another hand:

♠ Jx   ♥ Ax   ♦ AKQ10xx   ♣ AKx

Despite having 'only' 21 HCP, this hand will be considered as a 22-24 notrump opening by many. Remove the spade Jack, and it won't matter much, they may still upgrade. The playing strength is there, and you can almost make 3NT on your own.

In our system, we have an option to open this hand with a two-bid, and then jump to 3NT. That shows nine tricks with a long minor. However, that is far from perfect when we lack a stopper, because we alert the opponents. They will perhaps find an unusual lead, like laying down an Ace to look at dummy.

I don't disagree with the valuation itself on the above hand; we do have the tricks in a notrump contract to justify the missing HCPs. The problem is that you have a partner. Let's look at a similar hand:

♠ Qx   ♥ Kx   ♦ AKQJxx   ♣ AQx

This hand has less offensive values in a suit contract. Not as many quick tricks, but it is still possible to upgrade. Say we open with 2NT and partner has 5-5 in the majors, perhaps this hand:

♠ K9xxx   ♥ Q10xxx   ♦ x   ♣ Kx

Holding this collection opposite a 22-24 notrump hand gives any partner vibes for a major suit slam. I guess you don't have a way to show 5-5 in the majors below the 3NT level? In the worst case, you will play at the five-level. Even if you succeed in stopping in a major suit game, it may be the wrong game. Perhaps it will make, but it can easily go down too. So why risk getting there?

In our methods, the 2NT opening bid shows 22-24 HCP. In the examples ahead, though, I always give the opener 20-21 HCP to make it easy to compare different auctions and responder's various hands. Therefore, when I say '2NT opening', I refer to an auction where opener has shown the balanced 20-21 HCP with an opening or (as in our methods) a rebid. Besides that, I also don't know the strength of the 2NT opening in your system, perhaps 20-21 is perfect for you!

This book explains how we use our 2NT system. It is the first part in the series, and while you read it, I will continue working on the next one, the 1NT system.

### ***Team Scania after earning a bronze medal in the world championships***

In the middle of the '80s, the Scania region was a strong factor in Swedish bridge. In 1986, Björn Fallenius, Magnus Lindkvist, Anders Wirgren, and I went to Miami to play the Rosenblum Cup.



from the left: Anders, me, P-D Lindeberg, Magnus and Björn.

Anyway, we started the tournament by being knocked out in the first round. Each team that lost a match for the first time was left to continue in a Swiss tournament, which consequently grew for each round. We never got back to the knockout, but we did well in the Swiss, and, already before the last round, we had an impregnable lead. In the final match, our team then beat Edgar Kaplan's team by 60-0. That is something to remember, but sadly I don't remember any boards from the match. I am sure that Anders would have remembered quite a few if he was still alive.

I was the only one of us who had any real experience from playing in international tournaments, as I had represented Sweden a few times. However, the year after, Björn and Magnus won the European Championships for Sweden in Åbo 1987.

Anders and Magnus worked as bridge writers. Anders with 'Scania Bridgekonsult' and Magnus took over 'Bridgetidningen'. Björn, just a few years thereafter, moved to New York to be a professional bridge player, got married to Kathy, and together they took over the Cavendish Bridge Club.



## OUR SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

Allow me first to tell you a little about the system my partner and I play, to give you a picture of the premises we have to live with. In our system, we open 2♣ with 18-19 balanced HCP. Holding precisely that strength, though, we usually prefer to open with a five-card major when we have one. When we have 20 HCP or more, a five-card major holding, as well as some 5422 hands, are more frequent as some of those hands are difficult to bid in an alternative way.

Here is a short summary of our opening bids:

1mi	3+ and only completely balanced with (11)12-14 HCP
1Ma	5+ and optional to open 1Ma or treat as balanced with 15-19 HCP
1NT	15-17 HCP, balanced
2NT	22-24 HCP, balanced
2♣	18-21 HCP, balanced, or game-forcing with clubs, hearts or spades
2♦	Multi, almost every time a weak two in a major, but can be: 25+ HCP, balanced, or game-forcing with diamonds

We use transfers after our 1♣ opening, and sometimes have a choice of rebidding 1NT or accepting the transfer by bidding responder's major suit at the one-level. We use our checkback method, the so-called 'transfer checkback', in either case, but we don't use it when opener instead rebids a new suit at the one-level. That is, however, of little importance for this first part of the book, so let us move on.

### *Our different paths to 2NT*

After our 2♣ opening bid we have two ways to arrive at 2NT:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2NT	

With 20-21 HCP, we rebid 2NT, but with 18-19 HCP, we bid 2♥:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠
2NT	

In our system, opener's 2♥ is a two-way bid, either game-forcing with hearts or as here a balanced hand with 18-19 HCP. This means we can use our 2NT system more often than others. That fact is probably not an advantage, but the beauty of it is that we don't have these hands when we open with one of the minors.

There is a danger with this sequence. We don't want responder to be declarer more than necessary. Therefore responder can bid 3♦ over 2♥ to show a balanced hand with four spades. Opener can bid 3♥ with the game-forcing hand with hearts while he with balanced hands can bid 3NT or be declarer in spades with support.

An important rule in our system: Even if a major suit is bid (on our way to 2NT) we still use transfers as after a 2NT opening bid. We don't change the 2NT system because we perhaps have started the bidding: 2♣-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 2NT.

If responder has 0-5 HCP and a five-card major, he bids his major over 2♣. Opener will then pass with 18-19 HCP but may make an invitation with 20-21 HCP.

♠ AQx	♠ Kxxxx
♥ AQxx	♥ Jx
♦ AK	♦ xxx
♣ Qxxx	♣ xxx
2♣	2♠
2NT	3NT

Opener has a very nice support hand, but as responder can be extremely weak, he shouldn't get too excited. Opener can bid 2NT or raise to 3♠. Both these bids show support; without a fit opener should pass. Responder can sign-off in a minor too:

♠ Jxx	♥ xx	♦ Jxxxxx	♣ xx
2♣		2NT	
3♣		3♦	

The 2NT response shows an extremely weak hand with a minor while three-level bids are transfer with semi-weak hands. After 2NT, opener is obliged to bid 3♣ as pass/correct with the 18-21 HCP notrump hand. Our agreement not to bid 2♦ with the weakest hands with a five-card major has consequences. When responder later shows a five-card major in the 2NT system, we can regard that as game-forcing. That solution is not perfect, but we think game and slam bidding is more important than to be able to stop in exactly three of a major. With 22-24 HCP, we open with 2NT, with more, we start with a Multi 2♦.

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥/♠
2NT	

Opener's 2NT rebid shows 25 HCP or more. We want to get into the system, and if opener in some rare cases has 28 or more, he has to try to show that later.

## THE 2NT SYSTEM

Most of the time, notrump-bidding is very simple. Responder passes, raises to 3NT, or looks for a 4-4 or 5-3 fit in a major. That means that even when we have a smart system for the other 10 percent of the hands, we will not use those methods very often. We must consider if it is worth the effort from our partnership. We think so.

One way to remember our many unusual bidding sequences can be much practice. Unfortunately, that is still a problem if you don't know how to design special practice deals. Our way to make the system a little easier to remember is to use some recurrent modules in the bidding. That means we have less to memorize, and that we get to use these bidding sequences more often.

When designing the framework for 2NT, our strategy is to use what little bidding space we have in the best way, even if that means more complexity. We want to make the opener declarer when we can; with stronger hands, it is even more important than when we open 1NT.

In my partnership, when we look at how we treat weaknesses in the hand, it does not affect the system bids very much, but I want to give you the picture anyway.

This is what we are supposed to do when we open in the first or second position:

- for 2NT, we only exceptionally have a singleton honor, and we try to avoid the bid with suit-oriented semi-balanced hands if we have an alternative way to bid our hand
- for 1NT, we try to avoid having two or more flaws. These are the things we consider as flaws: a small doubleton, 5422, and also a five-card major

However, it is up to the bidder to evaluate if he is to treat a strong hand with a singleton honor or semi-balanced distribution as balanced. We can't expect always to have the perfect bid for each hand or the perfect hand for the bid we make!

For you to use our 2NT methods, does it matter what system you play? I don't think so. You may use our 2NT bidding or the parts you like about it in any way you want. One advice, though, since our slam bidding is rather complex and integrated into our system, be sure you and your partner understand how it works!

To make it easier for me, opener has 20-21 HCP in all of the following examples, and then it will also be easier for you to compare the different auctions. When we use Blackwood we always have a trump suit, and thus five Aces. I may sometimes call them keycards, other times Aces, but it the same thing.

### ***Slam bidding in the 2NT system***

There are many ways to construct smart bidding methods. I like it when the auction is interactive; when opener and responder can have a conversation. One player says: 'I have this, what do you think about that?' His partner can return the ball with a message, and so on. I think such a framework works better, compared with when one of the players asks the other one all the question, and then decide.

When we don't start the real investigation until the three-level, the problem is that we have a limited space below the game level. Even so, we should try to establish communication between the two players before decisions have to be made.

If we have an eight-card fit in a major, we don't have any problems. We use RKCB like everyone else. It is much more complex when the minors are involved or when we are at the four-level and yet have to find a fit. That is what I want to discuss.

When we make a slam try in a new suit at the four-level, bidding 4NT is *always* a natural or negative response. That is a common rule for most systems, with a bad fit opener says no to slam directly over a slam try.

I believe that using cue-bids from opener is not often very important. The strong hand often has a control in all the suits. For responder, however, a cue-bid can be a nice way to show more of his hand.

However, in a notrump auction, it is always responder who makes the initial slam try. Opener, although limited to begin with, can perhaps show a good hand before that, but it is his partner who decides to make a slam invitation or not. That is why it is so important that opener doesn't have a hand that his partner cannot visualize.

After the slam try, opener can re-evaluate his hand depending on the exact meaning of responder's slam try. Has he shown one suit or two? Is he limited or not?

These are the messages opener can send back in our framework, even if not all of them are always available:

- I am negative, no acceptable support or fitting honors
- I am not interested but prefer to play the game in your minor and not 4NT
- I am semi-positive, I don't have support, but my honors are not misplaced
- I might be interested, tell me more about your hand
- I have support, but I cannot advance on my own, do you have extras?
- I have support and a great hand, I show my number of Aces directly

Well, as you can imagine, I have a lot to prove here. Let's get started!

## 2NT - the first responses

When we open 2NT, we are often close to slam, but always short of bidding space. On the other hand, we don't have to bother about looking for the best part-score. Our bidding is most of the time directed to find out if we have a fit in major, but we also must have a way to find a minor fit, especially when responder has slam ambitions.

As mentioned, we usually try not to go via the 2NT system with semi-balanced hands. I don't like those distributions for 1NT, and I like them even less for 2NT. There is sometimes not enough space to find out about 5422 or 6322 after 2NT. The risk that would come from including those distributions is that we don't find the right game or miss a slam. If partner is a passed hand, the risk is smaller.

We have, though, recently made improvements in the 2NT system, to be able to also reveal opener's 5422 distribution in the slam bidding. We sometimes have no better way to bid those hands than to show them with 2NT.

Most 2NT systems that I know of use Stayman and transfers at the three-level. Usually, the difference between them is how you treat hands with both majors, and the continued bidding after the Stayman 3♣ response.

Here is a summary of the responses to 2NT:

3♣	Stayman
3♦	at least five hearts, and may also have four spades
3♥	at least five spades but not four hearts
3♠	both minors (at least 5-4) and often a slam try
3NT	natural, to play
4♣/♦	* a Lissabon slam try, one-suited with ♥/♠
4♥/♠	* a Lissabon slam try, one-suited with ♣/♦
4N	a natural invitation
5♠	an invitation to 6N, asks for any five-card suit

\* The 'Lissabon convention' is used a lot in the 2NT system, meaning that we can use substitute bids as follows:

<i>clubs = hearts</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>hearts = clubs</i>
<i>diamonds = spades</i>		<i>spades = diamonds</i>

To be able to cope with hands where the opener has a five-card major, we use what is called Puppet Stayman (some call it American Stayman). There is a variation called 'Muppet' Stayman that we like a lot, and thus have adopted and made efforts to improve!

**2NT-3C - Muppet Stayman**

The difference between the two is how opener responds to 3♣. In Puppet Stayman, opener's 3NT denies both four- or five-card majors. In Muppet Stayman, the bids 3NT and 3♥ are exchanged; 3NT shows five hearts and 3♥ a hand without majors.

Here is a summary of opener's rebids in Muppet Stayman:

2NT-3♣

3♦ at least one four-card major  
 3♥ no major  
 3♠ five spades  
 3NT five hearts

We think it is quite logical to use 3♣ with a lot of different hands. That maximizes the use of the little bidding space we have after 2NT. We need to fit into the system both game and slam hands.

Here is what responder can have in mind when he bids 3♣:

- he wants to find out if we have a fit in a major
- he has five spades and four hearts or 5-5 in the majors
- he has a four-card major and a four-card or longer minor
- he has 4-4 (\* or 5-4) in the minors and slam ambitions

\* With 5431 responder has a choice. He can bid 3♠ over 2NT to show 5-4 in the minors, or he can take the 3♣ road, to also be able to find a 5-3 fit in a major.

**2NT-3C; 3S - opener has five spades**

We don't need a major to bid 3♣. One obvious reason is that we sometimes only want to check if opener has a five-card major.

Like with the next hand:

♠ Qxx ♥ xx ♦ Axxx ♣ Jxxx

If opener shows five spades, we raise. If not, we rebid 3NT.

2NT  
 3♠

3♣  
 ?

Opener has five spades. If responder wants to make a slam try in spades, he bids 4♥. Responder cannot use four of a minor as a cue-bid because we need those bids to be a natural slam try. But we can cue-bid after the slam try if we need to, as we do in the next example auction:

	♠ AQJxx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ QJx	♥ Kx
	♦ AK	♦ Jxxx
	♣ Axx	♣ KJx
	2NT	3♣
(five spades)	3♠	4♥ (slam try with support)
(cue-bid)	5♣	5♥ (cue-bid)
	6♠	

These are responder's different bids where opener has five spades:

2NT-3♣; 3♠ (five spades)

3NT natural, to play  
 4♣/♦ a natural slam try with at least a five-card suit  
 4♥ a slam try in spades  
 4♠ to play  
 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

Here is an example where responder wants to make a natural slam try in his minor:

	♠ xx	♥ Qxx	♦ KQxxx	♣ Axx
	2NT		3♣	
(five spades)	3♠		4♦	(slam try with diamonds)

When I have this hand as responder, I need opener to know about my diamond suit. Since I don't have a spade fit, a slam probably will not be good unless partner has a diamond fit. Over my natural slam try, he can bid a negative 4NT or accept with a cue-bid. This is a possible layout:

♠ AQJxx	♠ xx
♥ Ax	♥ Qxx
♦ Axx	♦ KQxxx
♣ KQx	♣ Axx

With these hands, we would probably end up in the good diamond slam even if we don't always make it.

**2NT-3C; 3NT - opener has five hearts**

Because of the exchanged 'Muppet' responses to 3♣, opener doesn't bid 3♥ when he has five hearts. Instead, it looks like this:

2NT	3♣
3NT	?

Since hearts now is not an actual bid suit by opener, we have to complicate things somewhat. As a general rule, throughout our system, *when possible*, we want to get opener as the declarer in *four of major*. Sometimes that will not really matter for the play, but another reason is: it makes it easier to remember the system.

Say we have forgotten all about responder's continued bidding after 3NT in this situation. It happens all the time! What to do? One method is trying to visualize precisely that page in the system description, but that isn't easy.

While we ponder over what the different bids mean, we suddenly realize, oh, of course, 4♦ is a transfer. Then the other bids suddenly become logical: we need a bid to be a slam try in hearts, and we also need to be able to make a slam invitation with a five-card minor. Opener has no four-card minor, so we don't have to bother about those hands.

Just like it was magic, now we can see the whole picture:

2NT-3♣; 3NT (five hearts)

4♣	a slam try in hearts
4♦	a transfer to 4♥
4♥	a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five clubs
4♠	a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five diamonds
4NT	a natural invitation to 6NT

As already discussed in the slam-bidding chapter:

When we make a slam try in a new suit at the four-level, the bid of 4NT is natural, refusing the slam invitation. However, when we have found an eight-card fit in a major *before or with* the slam try, 4NT is Roman Keycard Blackwood.

When opener is confronted with a slam try his first reaction is not always yes or no but also sometimes maybe! We think it is important to have this option too!

In a few situations, we can use something called 'last-train' to say maybe.



Making a last-train bid means we perhaps want to check if partner's slam try was serious or just a mild invitation. It can also be a bid to use when we don't want to be negative, but don't have enough extra values to bid more.

When responder has support for hearts and wants to make a slam try, he usually starts by bidding 4♣ to show his intentions:

	♠ AQx	♠ xx
	♥ AQ10xx	♥ KJx
	♦ AK	♦ Qxxx
	♣ Qxx	♣ AJxx
	2NT	3♣
(five hearts)	3NT	4♣ (slam try in hearts)
(last-train or cue)	4♦	5♣ (cue-bid)
	6♥	

As my partner and I usually think alike in the bidding, I believe opener can bid 4♦ as a last-train bid. In this case, it doesn't matter much as we also have a diamond control. Alternatively, opener can bid 4NT, as Blackwood, or cue-bid. Without interest, opener can sign-off by bidding 4♥.

In the above auction, responder now could have shown limited values by bidding 4♥. With this hand, he thinks we have a slam if opener has a spade control, so he starts with a cue-bid. Responder has two Aces, so he doesn't prioritize asking for Aces as opener will seldom accept the slam invitation with only one Ace.

That latter observation is something you have to consider in these situations. When you have around 20 HCP, you are expected to have something like 2-4 keycards out of five. With only one, you are definitely short of them, but also with two keycards, you have to be careful not to end up at the five-level unnecessarily. You can hope that partner, with many keycards, will continue when you hold back.

When responder, after 3NT, transfer by bidding 4♦, the auction so far is:

2NT	3♣
3NT	4♦
4♥	?

Very often responder will now pass, but I just want to tell you what it means if he doesn't. If he continues with 4NT, that bid is Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB). Responder wants to ensure that opener plays the hand whatever the level may be. That is why he doesn't bid 4♣ and risks that opener will never bid hearts.

If responder raises to 5♥ after the transfer, he can have this hand:

♠ Ax ♥ xxx ♦ Kxxx ♣ AJxx

He has values to bid a slam but poor support. Any slam will depend on opener having a good heart suit. Bidding 5♥ shows Jxx or worse in hearts. We use this kind of a five major bid in other situations too.

There can be one more reason not to go the usual way with slam ambitions:

	♠ AQx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ AQ10xx	♥ Kxxx
	♦ AK	♦ Qxxxx
	♣ Qxx	♣ --
	2NT	3♣
(five hearts)	3NT	4♦ (transfer)
(completed)	4♥	5♣ (club void)
(nice surprise!)	7♥	

If we start with 4♣, then showing a void is not possible below slam-level. We can only do that with a jump to the six-level on partner's Blackwood, or as a jump cue-bid. That is the reason for our method here: If we transfer to 4♥ and then bid a new suit, it shows a void. Here, the club void was all opener needed to know.

### ***Responder invites a minor suit slam***

When responder has a five-card minor, we use the Lissabon convention after 3NT:

	♠ AQx	♠ xxx
	♥ AK10xx	♥ Qx
	♦ AK	♦ QJx
	♣ 10xx	♣ AJxxx
	2NT	3♣
(five hearts)	3NT	4♥ (five clubs, slam try)
(club support)	4♠	4NT (limited hand)
	pass	

Opener has a nice hand but very poor support and thus decided to bid 4♠ as last-train to see partner's reaction, but when responder showed a limited hand opener passed. If opener wants to decline the invitation, he bids 4NT, and if he accepts, he makes a five-level bid to show Aces (keycards) with Roman Keycard Blackwood. We will soon continue with the system discussion, but now it is time for a break.

### ***What is a cue-bid?***

That is a silly question, as everyone knows what a cue-bid is; it is a bid that shows a control, Ace, King, singleton, or a void. Is that the whole truth? I don't think so!

The bidding after a strong opening, like 2NT, often leads only to game in real life, but most of the auctions that are being discussed in the book are slam related. Slam sequences are difficult to handle, yet extremely important, especially in a team game. We like to bid a slam when we have one.

But let us get back to the cue-bid. As I see it, the first cue-bid is often an invitation to slam. Is this the same for a splinter bid? No, not really. The difference is that the cue-bid shows values and: 'hey partner, I have got a really good hand here. If your hand is good too, why not bid a slam?' A splinter bid can be different. It says more: 'I have got a short suit, and *if* your hand is fitting, I may have a good hand for you.' In that sense, I think a cue-bid is inviting a slam while a splinter bid is more like asking partner if he, in the light of the splinter bid, can invite to slam.

Well, that is, of course, not the whole story. We also have to look at the bid in the *context* of the auction. It matters who makes the cue-bid or the splinter bid. Not who as in you or me, but as in opener and responder. Here, when we discuss the 2NT system, opener can never make a slam try at all. As long as he doesn't know responder's strength, the only thing it means if opener makes a cue-bid is that he has a good hand, *should* responder be interested in a slam. So in the context of the 2NT system, responder is the only one who can make a slam try.

It is the same thing when we discuss slam bidding in other situations. We have to consider both the player's minimum and maximum strength to understand what a cue-bid really means. And that goes for splinter bids too. Sometimes a cue-bid is the only way to show that you have support and just too many values to bid a game. It may even happen that you have to do so without a control. That is our problem at the table.

This is the essence here: we must know which bid is the first bid in our auction that really invites a slam!

Let's say we have agreed on spades as trumps, and my unlimited partner bids four clubs as a slam-invitational cue-bid. What should we do? I believe many players think it is obligatory to make a cue-bid if they can in this situation, but I don't agree. Our first priority is to tell partner if we accept the invitation or not.

This is me

Partner

4♣

?

If I have promised a hand within a certain range, like 11-16 HCP, it can be better to reject the invitation when I have a minimum, even if I have a control to show. This seems to be a problem also for expert players. We can see them trying to solve it, for example, with such treatments as serious and non-serious slam tries.

However, for me, it is logical that when partner's cue-bid is a slam try, and I also cue-bid, it says: 'I accept the challenge, let's check if we have got what it takes, control in all the suits, enough Aces and trump honors, and good enough trumps.'

Spades are trumps, and partner's cue-bid is a slam try. I accept with a cue-bid.

This is me	Partner
	4♣
4♦/♥	4♠

Now, what is this? Is partner trying to take back his slam try? I don't think so. Instead, I think that he lacks control in the other red suit. Here, again, the context is important. Is our partner's hand limited or not? Perhaps four clubs was a splinter bid or just showed a good raise of spades. If so, four spades now can be a natural bid, saying: partner, I have limited values.

There is a difference in the auction tempo if an actual slam try has both been made *and* accepted. When that happens, we shouldn't stop in game except when we lack something vital. One exception can be:

This is me	Partner
	4♣
4♦	4♥
4♠	

It seems we have all the controls we need in the other suits. What is then four spades? Because I bid it, I should know! Perhaps, when I bid four diamonds, I already planned this bidding? As I took the risk that partner would go directly to Blackwood over my cue-bid, I am accepting to go further. The thing is, though, that both partner and I know this is a possible sequence, so both players can take advantage of it.

My reason for bidding four spades over 4♥ can be that my hand has a weakness. Perhaps my trumps are poor, or my hand has some other distressing flaw. Maybe I accepted only because I knew this option would be open. My partner may think similarly when bidding four hearts: he wants to give me one more chance to back out. Now you know what a cue-bid is from my window. Let us go back to the 2NT system, and we can have a serious talk about non-serious slam tries later.

**2NT-3C; 3D - opener has one or two four-card majors**

In the original version of Puppet Stayman, responder bids the major he doesn't have over opener's 3♦ to get opener as declarer. We have similar methods, but, as the modern variation is, 3♥ *asks* if opener has spades but doesn't promise spades.

Many different hands are included in 3♣ in our system, and, to save bidding space, the rebids over 3♦ looks like this:

2NT-3♣; 3♦ (one or two four-card majors)

3♥	either four spades or a slam try in one or both minors
3♠	four hearts, can have a longer minor
3NT	natural, to play
4♣/♦	both majors, at least 4-4, will soon be explained
4Ma	not currently used

Opener can have both majors when he bids 3♦. When responder has both majors, though, he must bid at the four-level after 3♦. That means that when responder bids 3♥ or 3♠, he has only one major, and if the bid is 3♥, perhaps no major at all.

**2NT-3C; 3D-3H - responder has four spades, or not!**

The logic here is that responder is not allowed to bid 3♥ unless he has either four spades *or* a minor suit slam try. He can have slam ambitions with *both* four spades and a four- or five-card minor. These are the distributions that responder can have when he doesn't have four spades:

4-4 in the minors

5-4 in the minors (alternatively responder can bid 3♠ over 2NT, see below)

one five-card minor

Responder can have one of these two very good hands:

♠ x   ♥ Qxx   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AQxxx

or

♠ xx   ♥ Jx   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AQJxx

We can bid 3♠ over 2NT to show 5-5 or 5-4 in the minors with both these hands. The first hand has three hearts, which means we can have a 5-3 fit in hearts. I think we should respond 3♣ with the first hand, and show interest for a slam later when we know if opener has five hearts or not. But, as I said, it is optional and which path we take may depend on strength and suit quality.

With the two distributions, 3-3-3-4 and 3-3-4-3, we have decided that we don't bid 3♥ to make a minor suit slam try. Instead, we can bid a natural 4NT over 3♦.

The following auction is probably the most frequent one.

♠ Ax	♠ J10xx
♥ KJxx	♥ Axx
♦ AKJx	♦ Qx
♣ KQx	♣ 10xxx

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥
3NT	pass

Opener has hearts, responder has spades, and we will play 3NT. Opener only has two choices after 3♥. Either he has four spades, and then he bids them, or he has to bid 3NT. Those are the only options allowed.

### **2NT-3C; 3D-3H; 3S - opener has four spades**

When opener bids 3♠ he shows the suit. He can have hearts too, holding 4-4 in the majors, but when responder uses the 3♥ relay, he isn't interested in hearts.

Let's first examine what happens when responder has spade support.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥
3♠	

Responder has two options with support, either to raise or make a slam try with 4♥.

	♠ AKJx	♠ Qxxx
	♥ Kx	♥ Axx
	♦ AKJx	♦ xx
	♣ Qxx	♣ AJxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♥ (slam try in spades)

Opener will accept the slam try, and regardless of whether he bids Blackwood or cue-bids 5♦ we will bid the good slam.

***Responder invites a minor suit slam***

Before we start looking at the methods where responder makes a slam try in one or both minors, allow me to explain our rules for minor suit slam bidding.

When we begin with Stayman, and eventually make a slam try, very often both players have balanced hands. That is why we want to be able to choose between 4NT and five in a minor if we decide not to go for slam.

These are the rules used when responder makes a minor suit slam try after starting with *Muppet Stayman*:

- from both hands, the 4NT bid is always natural, and shows no support, or a limited hand when we have a fit in a minor
- *five-level bids* are responses to RKCB, except for five in our suit. That bid is natural and is therefore excluded from the step responses (see below)
- we always make room to allow opener to show a five-card minor

These are the bids when a minor is the trump suit (with Aces I mean keycards!)

5mi	(our minor, the trump suit) is a negative bid
5Omi	(the other minor) shows 1 or 4 Aces
5♥	0 or 3 Aces
5♠	2 Aces with the trump Queen
5NT	2 Aces without the Queen

These rules are not perfect for every situation, but they help to avoid silly mistakes. When we ask for the trump Queen at the five-level, 5NT denies the Queen.

As you will soon see, responder's continued bids with slam ambitions are different depending on whether opener bids 3NT or 3♠ over 3♥. Let's first look at what we do if opener has four spades, and thus bids 3♠:

***Responder's 3NT shows both minors***

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠ (four spades)

3NT	* slam try with 4-4 (or 5-4) in the minors (forcing to at least 4NT)
4♣/♦	slam try with a five-card minor
4♥	slam try in spades
4♠	to play

\* This is a change from the methods presented in the '5-card majors' book. We have exchanged the meaning of 3NT and 4♥ to allow opener to show a 5422 hand when responder has a minor suit slam try.

If responder decided to bid 3♣ over 2NT with 5-4 in the minors, he has to choose between showing 4-4 with 3NT or bid his longest minor suit. We try not to use 3NT as an artificial bid more than necessary, but as responder either has spades or a slam try we can never stop in 3NT after 3♠ in this auction.

Here is an example of the 3NT bid:

	♠ AKxx		♠ 10x
	♥ Kx		♥ Axx
	♦ AKJx		♦ Qxxx
	♣ Qxx		♣ AJxx
	2NT		3♣
(at least one major)	3♦		3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠		3NT (slam try, both minors)
(four diamonds)	4♦		4♥ (cue-bid)
(five-level bid=3Aces)	5♥		6♦ (to play)

Opener has good values in the minors, and shows Aces over 4♥, which leads to the slam. He could have bid 4♠, as a last-train bid, or 4NT to show that he doubts that we have a slam. Here is a hand where he would consider bidding 4NT:

♠ AKxx ♥ KQ ♦ Kxxx ♣ KQx

After responder's 3NT, opener dutifully told his partner that he had four diamonds. However, after responder's cue-bid, opener wants to say that his hand doesn't look good for slam. When we both are balanced without five-card suits, we often want to play 4NT instead of the minor at the five-level.

Here is a summary of opener's rebids after 3NT:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-3NT (4-4 or perhaps 5-4 in the minors)

4♣/♦ a four-card minor  
 4♥/♠ a five-card minor, Lissabon  
 4NT 4333 or very bad slam cards

Opener can have a five-card minor, and then can use the Lissabon bids to show his distribution to partner. With the following hand, opener can bid 4♠ over 3NT:

♠ AKxx ♥ Kx ♦ AQxxx ♣ KJ

Now armed with the knowledge of opener's distribution and the 5-4 fit in trumps, responder can better evaluate the possibility of slam.



***Responder has a five-card minor***

Here are a few examples where responder has a five-card minor:

	♠ K10xx	♠ Qx
	♥ AK	♥ xxx
	♦ AKxx	♦ Qxx
	♣ KJx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♣ (slam try, five clubs)
(cue-bid, accept)	4♥	

Responder makes a slam try, showing five clubs. Opener now has two negative bids; he can bid 4NT or raise to 5♣. In this example, opener has a very good hand and wants to accept the slam try. He cue-bids 4♥ here. Why not 4♦? The reason is that we use the 4♦ bid differently, as in the next hand:

	♠ K10xx	♠ Qx
	♥ AK	♥ xxx
	♦ AKxxx	♦ Qxx
	♣ Kx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♣ (slam try, five clubs)
(five diamonds)	4♦	6♦

Opener can show five diamonds, and we find the best slam. Here is a summary of opener's rebids when responder shows five clubs:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-4♣ (five clubs)

4♦	five diamonds (4252)
4♥/♠	accepts clubs, but not good enough to push ahead with five-level bids
4NT	negative
5♣	negative with support
5X	responses in steps to RKCB with clubs

When we also can cue-bid 4♥, the 4♠ cue-bid denies a heart control. If only one cue-bid is available, though, we prefer to use that bid as a last-train bid. That gives us one more chance to stop in 4NT. If we bid 4♠ after the cue-bid 4♥, the reason can be that we *don't* have a spade control. If partner has one, he can move forward.

In minor suit slam sequences, we have something like 31 HCP together. Ace-King in a suit may be missing, but we are prepared to take that risk. Besides, the very strong notrump hands often contain controls in all suits.

	♠ AKJx	♠ Qxx
	♥ Jx	♥ Qxx
	♦ AKJx	♦ xx
	♣ KJx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♣ (slam try, five clubs)
(accept, cue)	4♠	4NT (no heart control)
	pass	

In this case, we are lucky to discover the missing heart control. Either player can now also bid 5♣ to play the minor suit game. Responder would surely bid 5♣ with a doubleton in hearts, opener perhaps over 4NT if he has two small hearts.

Here is another example of a slam try sequence after opener's 3♠:

	♠ AKxx	♠ Jx
	♥ AKx	♥ Qxx
	♦ Jx	♦ KQxxx
	♣ AJxx	♣ Kxx
	Opener	Responder
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♦ (slam try, five diamonds)
(negative)	4NT	

Opener rejects the invitation as he only has a doubleton in partner's suit. In this situation, opener can bid 4♥ to show five clubs. We have to remember that rule!

A summary of opener's alternatives after 4♦:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-4♦ (five diamonds)

- 4♥ five clubs (4225)
- 4♠ accepts diamonds, but not good enough for five-level bids
- 4NT negative
- 5♦ negative with support
- 5X responses in steps to RKCB with diamonds

### ***Older and perhaps wiser?***

I learned bridge from a deck of cards. A strange deck, though, as it had some numbers on the backs. As my parents were divorced, my younger sister and I spent some weekends at our dad's house. The playing cards were a part of a bridge course, and the numbers at the back were supposed to tell you who of the North, East, South, or West should be dealt that particular card in 52 different deals.

I was more into chess, but it couldn't hurt to look at this new game. A few months later, I played at the local clubs with my dad, almost once a week, during the summer. When school started again, I was to my surprise not allowed to continue playing bridge. The reason was that the club had a rule: you had to be fifteen years old to play at the evening tournaments when you had school to attend.

So I reverted to chess again, the chess club didn't have such silly rules. As I was only a mediocre chess player as a junior, I eventually found my way back to bridge, and that is why you can read this right now!

I discovered that the challenges of bridge worked well with my way of using common sense, and soon I was rather successful. Born an entrepreneur, at the age of seventeen, I published my first bridge magazine. Yes, I have done that twice! It was 1967, and the home computer wasn't even thought of, but I had a typewriter. So I bought a stencil machine and put a few younger bridge-playing friends to work, helping me.

A few years later, I got to partner Alvar Stenberg. Alvar was the leading bridge theorist in Sweden and my role model. But it is not easy to be humble when you are young and successful, and I wasn't good at it. When Alvar and I discussed what system we should play, he rooted for his system and I for mine.

We couldn't agree on either, and the compromise resulted in a new system, which we called ALMA. Nineteen years old, I qualified for the Swedish open team to play with Alvar in the European Championships in Estoril 1970. The Swedish team then was not as strong as it is today, but it was a useful experience.

When I next returned to Portugal, it was 1995 to play the European Championships in Villamoura, with Björn Fallenius. A small notice in the bulletin revealed that a player in the tournament participated in Portugal twenty-five years ago.

That was about me! Unfortunately, though, it now looks like the rerun in Portugal, to celebrate my return after fifty years, will not happen because of the corona situation, but that is life.

That was just an interlude, back to business:

**2NT-3C; 3D-3H; 3NT - opener has four hearts (and not four spades)**

Now let's look at what happens after opener's alternative bid, 3NT:

	Opener	Responder	
	2NT	3♣	
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥	(asking for spades)
(no, four hearts)	3NT	pass	

Usually, responder will now pass, but if he bids on, he has a slam try with a minor. When opener bids 3NT, we know his major was hearts, but he can also have a four- or five-card card minor. The difference now, as opener doesn't have four spades, however, is that we now can forget about having a major suit fit. Hence *all* the four-level bids from responder can be used to look for a slam in a minor.

We have three similar sequences where responder wants to make a minor suit slam try after the 3NT bid from opener. In each of these sequences, we have an identical structure for responder's four-level bids; we call these bidding continuations *modules*. The above auction is the first of the ones we discuss where we use the 'minor-suit-slam-try' module.

I will not mention the other two sequences right now. I can summarize them later.

***The minor-suit-slam-try-module***

If you don't remember this module from the '5-card major' book, your memory is correct. This method is new, and we have a reason for the change. In the 'old' system, only responder and not opener could show a five-card minor. Even if it is always responder who takes the initiative with a slam try, it is sometimes opener's long suit that can decide if we have slam or not.

I will walk you through the module as we use it here, and then give you some more examples when we get to the other sequences that are alike. When I say responder has a five-card minor, he can also have six, but we have no way to show that here.

The common condition in the sequences where we use this module is that it starts after opener's 3NT bid. These are responder's basic bids:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT (not four spades)

- 4♣ a four-card minor or 4-4 (5-4) in the minors
- 4♦ five diamonds
- 4♥ five clubs and three diamonds
- 4♠ five clubs without three diamonds
- 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

Let's start with responder's 4♣ bid, which is a slam try:

### *The four club relay with one or both minors*

Responder can have nine cards in the minors, but that is not very frequent as he has a choice to bid those hands differently. I will come back to that.

These are opener's rebids after 4♣:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT-4♣ (a four-card minor or 4-4 (5-4) in the minors)

4♦ tell me more, I have got a four-card minor.

4♥ five clubs, Lissabon, exactly 2425

4♠ five diamonds, Lissabon, exactly 2452

4NT I have a bad hand for slam, or perhaps 3-4-3-3.

Here is an example where opener bids 4♦ over responder's 4♣:

	♠ Ax	♠ Qxx
	♥ AKxx	♥ xx
	♦ AQxx	♦ KJxx
	♣ Kxx	♣ AQxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(no, four hearts)	3NT	4♣ (minor suit relay)
(at least one minor)	4♦	4♥ (four clubs)
(four diamonds)	4♠	5NT (2Aces, no trump Queen)
(we have all keycards)	6♣	6♦

Responder's 4♥ shows four clubs (Lissabon), and he can also have four diamonds. Without club support, opener bids 4♠ to show four diamonds. This time responder has diamonds too, and can now bid at the five-level to show his keycards.

With only diamonds responder would have bid 4♠, instead of 4♥. Opener's choices then are responding to Blackwood, or bidding a negative 4NT or 5♦.

We use this scheme, which is also used in similar sequences in the module:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT-4♣; 4♦-4♥ (four clubs)

4♠ shows four diamonds and denies four clubs

4NT I have club support but suggest we stop in 4NT if you don't mind

5♣ club support, but no interest for either slam or 4NT.

5X (other suits) responses in steps to RKCB with clubs

In the next example opener has a five-card minor:

	♠ AJ	♠ xxx
	♥ AKxx	♥ xx
	♦ Ax	♦ KQxx
	♣ KJ10xx	♣ AQxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(no, four hearts)	3NT	4♣ (minor suit relay)
(five clubs)	4♥	5♦ (five-level bid=1A)
(ask for club Queen)	5♥	6♣ (yes, but no ♠ King)
(then I guess)	7♣	

Over 4♥, responder could have bid 4♠ to set clubs as trumps if he wanted to give opener a chance to limit his hand by bidding 4NT or 5♣. To opener, responder's accepting five-level bid, therefore, sounded like a good fit, and that should really not include a holding of three small hearts. When responder doesn't show the King of spades, opener bids the grand slam. We have exchanged the responses when asking for the trump Queen - the negative response now is 5NT.

Responder knows that opener has exactly 2-4-2-5, and could perhaps have bid 4♠, and let opener show his four Aces, but responder has no way to find out about the heart King. Grand slam auctions are complex, even more so when a minor suit is trumps because we then have very little space at the six-level.

### ***Responder has a five-card minor***

When responder has five diamonds, he bids the suit at the four-level. With clubs he has two bids to choose from, 4♥ with three diamonds, and 4♠ with less than three.

	♠ Kx	♠ Qxx
	♥ AKxx	♥ Qxx
	♦ AK10x	♦ xx
	♣ Kxx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(no, four hearts)	3NT	4♠ (five clubs < 3 diamonds)
(five-level bids=3)	5♥	6♣

In this auction, if responder had bid 4♥ instead of 4♠ he would have promised three diamonds. Opener can then bid 4♠ with five diamonds and, in that way, set diamonds as trump suit. Then we, as always, can still stop in 4NT.

**2NT-3C; 3D-3S; - responder has four hearts**

When responder bids 3♠ over 3♦ he shows four hearts. Opener bids 3NT without support, and responder will then pass most of the time.

When opener has four hearts, he bids at the four-level:

	♠ KQ	♠ xxx
	♥ J9xx	♥ Axxx
	♦ AKJx	♦ Qx
	♣ AQx	♣ 10xxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♠ (four hearts)
(four hearts, poor suit)	4♥	pass

Here opener has a weak heart suit and, therefore, bids 4♥ as a warning to partner against proceeding to a slam. If opener has a good hand for a slam, he can bid 4♣ or occasionally 4♦.

These are opener's options after 3♠:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠

3NT not four hearts  
 4♣ the normal bid with support  
 4♦ an exceptional hand  
 4♥ a warning for slam

♠ Ax ♥ QJxx ♦ AKxx ♣ AKx

With this hand, opener has only prime values in the side suits and good support. He doesn't mind if responder plays the hand, and thus he will bid 4♦.

Opener's normal bid with support, though, is 4♣, and then responder can transfer again by bidding 4♦ to let opener play the game. We can, however, transfer to 4♥ and then bid Blackwood, ask for good trumps by raising, or show a void in another suit as we discussed in a similar auction before. Here is an example:

♠ -- ♥ Qxxx ♦ A9xxx ♣ Kxxx

As you perhaps remember from earlier examples, when opener shows heart support by bidding 4♣ over 3♠, responder now can use the 4♦ transfer, and follow up with 4♠ to show the spade void.

**2NT-3C; 3D-3S; 3NT - when responder continues the bidding**

Opener doesn't have hearts (he has four spades), and thus bids 3NT.

If responder continues the bidding, we are again in the *minor-suit-slam-try-module*.

Here are responder's bids again:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠; 3NT (not four hearts)

- 4♣ a four-card minor or 4-4 (5-4) in the minors
- 4♦ five diamonds
- 4♥ five clubs and three diamonds
- 4♠ five clubs without three diamonds
- 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

Earlier, we looked at the auction where responder bid 3♥ over 3♦, and then made a minor suit slam try after opener's 3NT rebid. In that case, responder *may* have four spades. The difference now is that opener *knows* that responder has four hearts, and responder *knows* that opener has spades.

When one of the players subsequently shows a five-card minor, he frequently has promised, by inference, a four-card major. Sometimes responder has shown a four-card major, and after that shows a four-card or longer minor. As responder doesn't always have a balanced hand, opener can't know responder's precise distribution.

If it is the opener who has promised a major, though, responder knows that opener has a 5422 distribution, or perhaps in odd cases 5431 with a singleton Ace!

	♠ KQxx	♠ xx
	♥ KJx	♥ AQxx
	♦ AQJxx	♦ xx
	♣ A	♣ KQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♠ (four hearts)
(no, four spades)	3NT	4♠ (five clubs <3 diamonds)
(negative)	4NT	pass

To bid opener's hand as balanced is not my first choice, but should it happen, the above is a possible auction.

To let all this sink in, we can take another small break:



### ***What if they double?***

It happens now and then that our opponents try to take advantage of our bidding. I am referring to situations when they double our bids for a lead in the bid suit. There are two different scenarios. One is, they double us on our road to game, to get a lead in a suit against our game contract. The other situation is that they double a cue-bid or some other artificial bid when we are heading towards a slam.

Let's say spades is our trump suit, partner cue-bids four clubs, and my right-hand opponent then doubles partner's bid. What happens then? The double doesn't mean that all our agreements are now gone. I think we still can reject the slam try when we would do so without the double. But for the sake of this discussion, let us say we are not that negative. What to do then?

We have a new situation. Before we can continue with meaningful slam bidding, we must consider how the new information affects us. The priority now is to find out what we have in clubs as there will be a club lead. Here I presume that I am declarer, and my opponent isn't just telling me what he is going to lead himself!

Most players have a simple rule here. If one of them redoubles, that shows a first-round control in the doubled suit. I don't think that really addresses the problem. The real problem is two-fold; do we have two (or more) club losers, or does the club lead set up a trick for the opponents that they then can cash when they get in?

The latter question is not something we always can answer right away as it depends on several factors. If we have the Ace of clubs, we can perhaps dispose of other club losers before they get in. We don't even know if we have to let them in yet.

So let's deal with the first question before we think about the other. Can we stand the club lead? The cue-bid promises a control; Ace, King, singleton, or void. When do I want to know which it is?

First, let's say I have two or more small clubs, which is the worst holding I can have. We could really be in trouble, and perhaps we can't even make game if we are unlucky. However, as I said before, let's assume that I am still interested in a slam. These are the possible distributions (the number of small cards can vary)

These are my clubs

♣ xx / Jx

This is partner's club holding

♣ Kx / KQx / Ax / x / void

I know that my right-hand opponent doesn't always have the Ace behind the King, but I suspect he does when he doubles. The vulnerability may matter in deciding if the double is perhaps only meant to find a sacrifice.

What I would do is to pass. The pass means that I am worried about the club lead and have no control and no honor (except for perhaps the Jack) in clubs.

In this particular situation I want *partner* to:

- redouble with a first-round control
- continue cue-bidding or whatever with King-Queen or singleton in clubs
- retreat to the trump suit with only the King

These are the ground rules. However, my partner doesn't always want to answer my question, for example, when he knows what to do. Perhaps he will take us directly to Blackwood or take some other unilateral action.

Sometimes partner has Kx(x) in clubs and has an alternative slam contract where he will play the hand. Then he can proceed as he wants and later place the contract as he pleases.

Furthermore, my partner may reluctantly have to give up the slam ambitions with the new information. That can happen when he knows that I am limited in strength and can figure out that even if he has the Ace of clubs, the club lead will hurt us too much.

Anyway, after my pass, I often get to know what type of control my partner has, and I can continue the auction according to that information.

One really annoying situation is where we stay out of slam when I have the Queen, and my partner has the king, and we have no other losers. That is what gave me the idea to use redouble, directly after the double, to show the Queen. That information can be valuable to partner, especially when he has the king. If I pass, though, my partner's redouble still shows a first-round control. So, my redouble means; don't worry partner, I have you covered!

We have discussed my negative bid in trumps, pass, and redouble. What about the other possible bids? If I, myself, have a control in the doubled suit, I can ignore the double and continue the slam bidding or for tactical reasons use pass or redouble to figure out more about partner's hand before moving on.

In total, our methods at least allow us to find out if we can have two quick losers in the suit when we want to move forward towards a slam.

Now a look at an important module in our system:

**2NT-3C; 3D - the both-majors-module**

When responder has at least four cards in both majors, he shouldn't bid at the three-level when opener promises at least one of the majors. We have a module that responder uses when we have a fit in at least one of the majors:

These are responder's alternative bids:

2NT-3♣; 3♦

- 4♣      precisely a slam invitation with both majors
- 4♦      asks for opener's major. Responder either want to play a game hand or want to proceed towards slam once he knows the trump suit

♠ KJxx    ♥ QJxx    ♦ xx    ♣ Jxx

Without slam ambitions responder bids 4♦, forcing opener to bid his major (or one of them), but responder can also use 4♦ with very strong hands when he wants to set the trumps:

♠ KJxx    ♥ QJxx    ♦ Jx    ♣ AJx

With this hand, responder is going to proceed with Roman Keycard Blackwood as soon as he finds out which major is going to be trumps.

If responder is too strong to bid game, but needs to consult partner about a possible slam, he should bid 4♣ over 3♦. That bid is asking opener to bid his major if he is interested in a slam, and otherwise 4♦. This is how it works:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-4♣

- 4♦      opener is negative to a major suit slam
- 4♥/♠    opener accepts the invitation and sets the trump (forcing)

Here s an example when opener does not accept the invitation:

	♠ Q10xx	♠ KJxx
	♥ KQ	♥ Axxx
	♦ AKJx	♦ Qx
	♣ KQx	♣ xxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	4♣      (both majors, slam try)
(negative)	4♦	4♥      (pass/correct)
	4♠	pass

Knowing that responder has both majors, opener here has too many values in the minor suits to accept a slam try. He rejects the invitation by bidding 4♦. Responder must bid the pass/correct bid 4♥, and we stop in 4♠. Responder should only use the *slam invitational bid* 4♣ bid when he has *precisely* an invitation to slam.

In the previous examples, responder had 4-4 in the majors, but he can have 5-5 or five spades and four hearts as well. Next is an example where opener accepts the invitation:

	♠ AQxx		♠ KJxxx
	♥ Kx		♥ Axxx
	♦ AKx		♦ Qx
	♣ KQxx		♣ xx
	2NT		3♣
(at least one major)	3♦		4♣ (both majors, slam try)
(accept, four spades)	4♠		5♥ (cue-bid)
	6♠		

Opener has a better hand and accepts the invitation. Whether East now should use Blackwood or as here cue-bid doesn't matter much. We will bid the good slam. As we will come back to this module a few more times, I recapitulate:

- 4♣ means we have precisely a slam invitation, and then it is up to the opener to decide if we should proceed above 4Ma
- 4♦ means we want to stop in game or we are going to bid a slam whether opener wants it or not (provided we have enough keycards for slam)

As responder I perhaps have this hand:

♠ Axxxx ♥ Axxxx ♦ - ♣ xxx

After partner's 2NT, I bid 3♣, and partner responds 3♦ showing at least one four card major. What should I do? The hand is worth a slam try. I can bid 4♣ as a slam try or 4♦ to get a preference. An idea could be to force partner to bid a major and then bid 5♦, an undefined bid in our system! As we in some situations can transfer to four of a major, and then bid a void, that could perhaps work here too:

	2NT		3♣
(at least one major)	3♦		4♦ (game or slam)

After the preference, I will try 5♦. I hope my partner understands it!

**2NT-3C; 3H - opener has no major**

The original Puppet Stayman could not handle hands with five spades and four hearts very well. If we start with 3♣, and opener responds 3NT showing no major, we can't show five spades; if we start with 3♥, a transfer to spades, we have to guess whether to continue, by bidding 4♥ with only four hearts, or not. Responder also can have 5-5 in the majors with both game and slam hands. There is no room for all this after the 3NT response. When opener has neither four nor five cards in a major, we can use the advantages of Muppet responses instead of Puppet.

In Muppet Stayman, the bidding starts:

2NT	3♣
3♥	

In our methods, we bid 3♣ over 2NT with five spades and four hearts. In principle, responder asks opener if he has hearts before showing his five spades. Look at this auction:

	♠ Axx		♠ KJxxx
	♥ Kx		♥ Jxxx
	♦ AKJx		♦ Qx
	♣ KQxx		♣ xx
	2NT		3♣
(no major)	3♥	3NT	(five spades, four hearts)
	4♠		

In this sequence, we use 3NT (and not 3♠) to show five spades, as we always try to let opener play four of a major; 3NT shows a limited hand with five spades and, by inference, also four hearts. Opener can pass, as 3NT is non-forcing.

By the way, John van Veen told me that in Netherlands 2NT-3NT is usually played as a non-forcing bid, showing five spades and four hearts. I am sure others play that way too, they then have to use Puppet Stayman to play 3NT

We use 3♠ as a transfer to 3NT, and usually, the idea then is to pass over 3NT. If we continue by bidding at the four-level, we have a minor suit slam try. Before we discuss that, let's first finalize the discussion about hands with five or more spades.

When responder doesn't want opener to pass over 3NT, he has to bid something else, and all bids, except for 3♠, show a combination of both majors.

Let's look at all of opener's rebids:

2NT-3♣; 3♥

- 3♠ transfer to 3NT, I will soon get back to the continued bidding
- 3NT NF with five spades (\* indirectly four hearts)
- 4♣/♦ at least 5-5 in the majors
- 4♥ a slam try with at least five spades
- 4♠ to play with six spades

\* All the bids here that show five or more spades indirectly also show four hearts, as responder otherwise (with only spades) would not respond 3♣ in the first place.

Responder can use the both-majors-module directly after 3♥ here, but only when he has 5-5 in the majors. When responder has five cards in both majors, we usually have a fit, but it is possible that opener has 5422 with a doubleton in both majors.

When that happens, opener often has honors in both the short suits, and that would perhaps facilitate a contract on a 5-2 fit. However, with very weak suits responder should be a little careful to advance above game-level.

### ***Responder has 5-5 in majors***

When responder has at least 5-5 in the majors, he can use the *both-majors-module* after 3♥. In the auctions that we looked at before, where opener rebid 3♦ over 3♣ we knew that opener had a four-card major, and then it was enough for responder to have at least 4-4 in the majors.

The both-majors-module is the same as we have looked at before:

2NT-3♣; 3♥

- 4♣ precisely a slam invitation
- 4♦ a game hand or a slam hand, asking for a preference between majors

♠ AQx  
♥ Kx  
♦ AKx  
♣ Axxxx

♠ KJxxx  
♥ Axxxx  
♦ J  
♣ xx

	2NT	3♣	
(no major)	3♥	4♣	(5-5 majors, slam try)
(accept, three spades)	4♠	5♦	(cue-bid)
(club control)	5♥	6♠	

In the above auction, responder decided not to try for a grand slam. Even opposite a perfect hand, as in this example, responder knows that grand slam is not laydown as opener has only three spades and very often only two hearts.

	♠ Ax	♠ KQJxx
	♥ KQx	♥ AJxxx
	♦ AKxx	♦ Q
	♣ KJxxx	♣ xx
	2NT	3♣
(no major)	3♥	4♦ (5-5 majors game/slam)
(heart preference)	4♥	4NT (RKCB)
(3 Aces)	5♦	6♥ (six is enough)

This time responder is stronger, but an Ace is missing. An interesting point here: When hearts is the trump suit, and we get the 5♦ response to Blackwood (0 or 3), what is then 5♥? Of course, partner should pass with no Aces, but the strong hands we are talking about here will never be aceless.

We use 5♥, instead of 5♠, to ask for the trump Queen. If we want to play 5♥ when partner has 3 Aces, we don't use Blackwood; that is, we don't ask without Aces!

### ***Slam try with 5-6 spades and 4 hearts***

Here is a hand where responder is stronger with only 5-4 in the majors:

	♠ KJ10xx	♥ Qxxx	♦ Jx	♣ Ax
	2NT	3♣		
(no major)	3♥	4♥		(slam try 5/6-4 majors)

This hand is worth a slam try. The way to do that over 3♥, is bidding 4♥, while 4♠ is just to play with 6-4 (a very unusual sequence - and distribution). Opener can have three spades, but he can also have only two. Therefore we use opener's 4NT as a natural negative bid over responder's slam try above:

2NT-3♣; 3♥-4♥

4♠ accepts spades as trumps, but not a very good fit  
 4NT negative without spade support  
 5X RKCB responses with support

We should be careful not to bid 4♥ with a weak five-card spade suit as opener's 4♠ doesn't promise three spades, opener can have a doubleton honor.

***The minor-suit-slam-try-module again***

As mentioned responder's 3♠ relay is a transfer to 3NT. Responder will then often pass, but uses the transfer also when he wants to make a minor suit slam try:

	2NT	3♣	
(no major)	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT		

The continuation after 3NT is the same as we covered earlier. These are the rules when responder has started with 3♣, repeated for your convenience:

- from both hands, the 4NT bid is always natural and shows no support, or a limited hand when we have a fit in a minor
- *five-level bids* are responses to RKCB, except for five in our suit. That bid is natural and is therefore excluded from the step responses
- we always make room to allow opener to show a five-card minor

These rules apply when responder makes a slam try with one or both minors. Quite often, both players have a balanced distribution, and therefore, both can bid 4NT as a natural bid. As we will discuss later, our rules are not the same when responder has a two-suited hand with a five-card major and one of the minors.

Responder knows that partner has at least seven cards in the minors, but opener doesn't know if responder has a major or not.

If opener has 5422 with length in both minors, which probably is more frequent in a notrump opening hand than other combinations of 5422, he will seldom show his long suit, but instead, find out which minor responder has:

	♠ Ax	♠ Kxx
	♥ KQ	♥ xx
	♦ AKxx	♦ Qxxx
	♣ KJxxx	♣ AQxx
	2NT	3♣
(no major)	3♥	3♠ (transfer to 3NT)
(completed)	3NT	4♣ (minor suit slam try)
(at least one minor)	4♦	4♥ (four clubs)
(five-level bids=3Aces)	5♥	6♣

In some cases, it could even be better to play in a 4-4 fit than in a 5-4. We may then be able to dispose of a loser on the fifth card in the other minor suit. However, I don't think we can solve that problem in this situation.



Let us look at the sequences again and simultaneously listen to the thoughts from Opener and Responder (in parentheses) while we study them:

2NT-3♣; 3♥-3♠; 3NT

4♣ shows a four-card minor or 4-4 (5-4) in the minors

(R: I want to make a slam try in a minor, but I may have both minors)

-- 4♦ at least one four-card minor

(O: ok tell me what you've got, we may have a fit)

4♥ four clubs or both minors

(R: ok, I have a slam try with four clubs to begin with)

4♠ four diamonds, and not four clubs

(O: no club fit, do you have diamonds too?)

4♠ four diamonds, but not four clubs

(R: I have a slam try with four diamonds but not four clubs)

-- 4♥ five clubs

(O: nice to hear you are interested in slam, I have five clubs)

4♠ support, last-train

(R: I have support, but do you have maximum as well?)

-- 4♠ five diamonds

(O: nice to hear you are interested in slam, I have five diamonds)

4♦ five diamonds

(R: I have a slam try with five diamonds)

-- 4♥ five clubs, and no diamond support

(O: no support there, but I have five clubs if you are interested)

-- 4♠ accepts diamonds, last-train

(O: I have support, but I am not sure about slam)

4♥ as we have two bids to show clubs, this shows five clubs and three diamonds

(R: I have five clubs, and three diamonds as well)

-- 4♠ sets diamonds as trumps

(O: perfect, I have five diamonds)

4♠ this also shows five clubs, but less than three diamonds

(R: I have five clubs, but no diamond support)

4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

(R: I think we should play in notrumps)

## Seriously?

Bidding good slams is just as important as avoiding bad ones. Therefore, we are often in doubt whether to move towards a slam or not when our hand is in between. As I mentioned, there are many inventions to make it easier to solve these problems. But there is also common sense.

If we ask for Aces, and as a result, find we have them all, we have learned that we should bid 5NT to tell partner. That is for sure, the right thing to do if our partner is unlimited. However, when our partner is a notrump opener, we know the strength of the opening. Then it is our task to figure out if a grand slam really is possible before we ask partner to bid it.

I have mentioned the invention of serious and non-serious bids. I think, perhaps, the non-serious slam try has to be explained. The idea is to have a bid that is only a mild slam try or even no slam ambitions at all, to allow partner to make a slam try.

The most frequent use of the serious or non-serious bids is when a major suit is agreed as trumps. Then a cue-bid is serious while 3NT is non-serious, and just leaves room for partner to make a cue-bid. If you use this convention you cannot stop in 3NT.

We don't use that convention, but don't misunderstand me, that doesn't mean I think it is a bad one. If I am right, the serious/non-serious methods will continue to evolve with new and innovative inventions. In fact, we have a similar idea; we bid 3NT as a 'natural' bid. This has not much to do with the 2NT system, but let me show an example. This is opener's hand:

♠ KQ10xx ♥ A10xx ♦ x ♣ KJx

1 ♠	2 ♦
2 ♥	3 ♥
3NT	

We don't bid 3NT to play it, but to show the general type of hand. And partner is allowed to pass. Opener's 3NT shows that his hand is not minimal, but also that he has no fit for partner's diamond suit, and he has values in clubs. That is what I mean with natural. In a way, you can say that 3NT for us is non-serious too, but that is not what we call it.

In our 2NT system, we have several situations where we can make more or less 'serious' bids. That means we often can cooperate in the auction as an alternative to one player making the decision on his own.

We use something called last-train bids. They are an alternative to going forward towards slam; also a good way to blame partner if everything goes wrong!

We also have a similar possibility in some of the sequences in the minor suit slam bidding. We often have a choice between a negative bid, showing Aces at the five-level, and a free bid in an unbid suit at the four-level to check what partner will do. Look at this hand as an example:

♠ KQx ♥ AJx ♦ Axx ♣ KQJx

Let's say we have this hand when partner makes a slam try showing five clubs. We have excellent club support, but is this a good hand? With 4333 we should always be careful, but if we bid a negative 4NT partner may place us with a hand like this:

♠ KQx ♥ AQx ♦ AKJx ♣ Jxx

Depending on the auction, we could even have a doubleton in clubs. The first hand, therefore, is a typical example where we need a middle option, a bid that neither says yes or no, but maybe.

What we should appreciate most is Aces in the side suits and Kings and Queens in partner's suits. The problem when we have a hand full of honors, as is the case with the strong hands discussed here, is that it is very unusual to have only good honors. We have to accept that. Sometimes our partner has shown two suits. When partner shows both hearts and clubs, how do we value the following hands?

♠ KQx ♥ AQx ♦ AKx ♣ Axxx

If partner has 5-5, the King-Queen of spades may be useless, but if he has only 5-4 they are not. Our hand is probably not either good nor bad. Change the hand to:

♠ Axx ♥ AQx ♦ AKx ♣ AJxx

With this hand all our honors are working, and we cannot have a much better hand. If partner has 6-5 distribution, the diamond king is useless, but we don't know that.

♠ AQJx ♥ Jxx ♦ AKQ ♣ Axx

This hand is stronger in HCPs, but is terrible in the given situation. We should try to stop the train as soon as possible.

I will come back to this subject later in this book.

**2NT-3D/H - the transfer responses**

We say that the 3♦ and 3♥ responses are transfers because they promise the next suit, but opener doesn't have to complete the transfer. In our methods, we don't intend to stop in a part-score in a major after 2NT. Therefore, as opener, we show whether we have support or not over the transfer. You will see, though, that we do it differently, depending on which major responder shows.

2NT-3♦

3♥ no support  
 3♠ heart support (the usual bid with support)  
 3NT shows support, but suggests that we play 3NT  
 4♣ super-accept

2NT-3♥

3♠ spade support  
 3NT no support  
 4♣/♦ super-accept

There is a reason for the difference between these rebids. When responder has five hearts, he can also have four spades. When responder has five spades, though, he never has four hearts. We have several alternative bids to show heart support. Let's look at a few hands where I as opener has support after responder's 3♦:

♠ Kx ♥ AKx ♦ QJxx ♣ AKxx

With this hand, I will bid 3♠ as this is a normal hand for showing support.

♠ AJ9 ♥ AKx ♦ J10xx ♣ AKx

Here I will try 3NT. We often have the same number of tricks in both 3NT and 4♥, and if that number is only nine, the notrump contract is much better!

♠ KQ10 ♥ Qxx ♦ AQ ♣ AKQxx

With this hand, I think 3NT can be a good contract. If the hearts are distributed 4-1, maybe 3NT is the only game we make, so that is my bid.

♠ Ax ♥ Qxxx ♦ AKJx ♣ AKxx

Here we have a super fit in hearts, almost only Aces and Kings in the side suits. We can have a slam even when partner doesn't have a lot of HCPs. I will bid 4♣. Over all of opener's support-showing bids, 3♠, 3NT or 4♣, responder's 4♦ is a transfer, as you already have guessed.

**2NT-3D - responder has at least five hearts**

When opener doesn't have support, he completes the transfer by bidding 3♥:

2NT	3♦
3♥	

Responder may also have four spades, and if we have a spade fit, we want opener to play the contract. You will be familiar with some of responder's rebids here as the both-majors-module has been covered already:

2NT-3♦; 3♥

- 3♠ a transfer to 3NT
- 3NT NF with five hearts and four spades
- 4♣ precisely a slam invitation with at least five hearts and four spades
- 4♦ asks for a preference to 4♥ if opener does not have four spades  
(responder wants to play game or slam in a major)
- 4♥ natural, to play (we make a slam try with six hearts directly over 2NT)
- 4NT natural invitation to slam

♠ Axxx	♠ Kxxx
♥ Qx	♥ AJxxx
♦ AKJx	♦ xx
♣ AQx	♣ xx

	2NT	3♦	
(no support)	3♥	3NT	(four spades, not forcing)
(four spades)	4♠		

Responder's 3NT doesn't show any slam ambitions, but opener can make a cue-bid instead of bidding 4♠ with a super-fit. Perhaps I have opened with a hand like this:

♠ AJxx ♥ AK ♦ AKQx ♣ xxx

I have four spades but also a very good fit in partner's second suit. If I bid 4♦ both good and bad things may happen. Our game can perhaps go down with a club lead, but if partner has a singleton club we certainly make a slam. Partner will appreciate short clubs when I deny a club control. If I bid 4♦, there can also be an unexpected upside to my bid when partner bids 4♠ with this hand:

♠ Kxxx ♥ J9xxx ♦ x ♣ Kxx

We didn't get to slam, but we got our game right-sided.

*The both-majors-module again*

When responder starts with a transfer bid, we don't use the rules for slam bidding that we talked about before. Those rules were for minor suit slam bidding, and we now are going to talk about hands where responder has both majors.

With six hearts and four spades, responder can, of course, treat the hand as a one-suited heart hand. When responder wants also to stay open to a spade contract, he can bid 4♦ to either stop in a game or continue towards a slam. That is according to the both-majors-module, where 4♦ asks opener for a preference, but here opener will only bid spades if he has four of them. Responder can bid 4♣ as precisely an invitation to slam, and asks opener to set the trumps if he accepts the invitation or else bid 4♦.

Responder can also use the module with five hearts, but then he must have a strong suit, as he knows that hearts will be played on 5-2. Here are a few examples:

	♠ Axxx		♠ KQJx
	♥ Qx		♥ AKJ10x
	♦ AKJx		♦ x
	♣ AQx		♣ xxx
	2NT		3♦
(no support)	3♥		4♦ (asks for preference)
(four spades)	4♠		4NT (RKCB)
(3 Aces)	5♦		6♥ (ask for heart Queen?)
	7♠		

There is one point about this bidding that I think is worth mentioning. Responder's 6♥ asks partner for a third-round control in hearts. As opener already has shown a doubleton, bidding 6♥ should here ask specifically for the Queen.

In the next example, as opener I have this hand:

	♠ AJx	♥ xx	♦ AKJx	♣ AQJx
	2NT		3♦	
(no support)	3♥		4♣	(slam try, 4-5/6 majors)

I have too many values in the minors and therefore must refuse the slam invitation when responder shows both majors. The way to do that is by bidding 4♦. That instructs partner to bid 4♥ as pass/correct, and I will have to pass and hope partner has either has six hearts or a fairly good five-card suit. If I wanted to accept the slam try, I would bid a major over 4♣, thereby setting that suit as trumps.

***Responder has hearts and a minor***

As we talked about already, we want opener to play a spade contract, and therefore, responder does not bid spades when he has them. Instead, logically as I see it, 3♠ denies four spades while many other bids show four spades.

	2NT	3♦	
(no support)	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	?	

After this start, responder can continue by showing a two-suited hand with hearts and a minor. Here are responder's continuations after 3NT:

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT

- 4♣ five hearts and at least four clubs, slam try or to play game with 5-5
- 4♦ five hearts and at least four diamonds, slam try
- 4♥ at least 5-5 in hearts and diamonds, limited hand

Responder's 4♣ is, in a sense, a two-way bid, as his intentions can be to play either a game or a slam in one of his suits. To believe that a minor suit game is possible, though, responder must have a decent hand. The difference between taking eleven and twelve tricks is not huge, and when responder thinks there are eleven, we may still have a slam when opener has fitting honors.

The rules for slam bidding are again different when responder has a two-suited hand with a major and a minor. Opener can bid a negative 4NT over responder's four of a minor, but if responder bids 4NT that can be Blackwood. Only opener can use the *five-level bids*. The rules for these situations are as follows:

- only opener can use the five-level bids
- five of the agreed minor is always limited, also as response to RKCB, which means, that step doesn't exist in our RKCB responses
- responder can use RKCB when opener accepts the slam invitation and shows real support, that is, when we have at least an eight-card fit in trumps

Here is a table for opener's bids after 4♣:

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣

- 4♦ a forward-going bid, we can call it a relay or a last-train bid
- 4♥ a semi-positive preference, a non-forcing bid
- 4♠ a good fit with four clubs
- 4NT a negative bid
- 5♣ shows support, but is negative

After 4♣, opener's 4♦ relay shows a positive hand, but doesn't promise four-card support in responder's minor. Responder can then show a limited hand by bidding 4♥, 4NT, or 5♣. Let me start with an example of opener's semi-positive 4♥:

If the bidding starts:

	2NT	3♦	
	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣	(hearts and clubs)
(semi-positive)	4♥		

Both hands can bid a natural 4NT in these sequences: opener directly over a minor suit slam try and responder after a semi-positive bid or a last-train bid.

Opener can bid 4♥ with a hand like this:

♠ KQxx ♥ Kx ♦ AKxx ♣ AQx

Bidding 4♥ very often shows Kx or Ax in hearts, which is a good holding for both a minor suit slam and for 4♥ if responder should pass. Responder will usually pass when he doesn't have any slam ambitions. There is no guarantee that opener has at least *three* clubs.

With the above hand, opener knows that the Ace of spades is probably missing, but his other honors are reasonably good. A slam will depend on how good responder's suits are, perhaps he has:

♠ x ♥ AQ10xx ♦ xx ♣ KJ9xx

A small slam in clubs has more than a fifty percent chance to make. The risk with bidding 5♣ as a cue-bid, though, is that partner will think you have 6-5 with a weaker hand, and therefore responder should bid 4♠. The continuation will perhaps be this:

	2NT	3♦	
	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣	(hearts and clubs)
(semi-positive)	4♥	4♠	(slam ambitions)
	6♣		

When opener bids the 4♦ relay, we don't know if we have a trump suit, but if we have one, we presume that it is clubs. Here is what responder can do over the 4♦ relay:



2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣; 4♦

- 4♥ shows a limited hand with at least 5-5 in hearts and clubs  
 4♠ sets clubs as trumps, responder wants to move on  
 4NT a limited hand, invites slam with only 5-4 in hearts and clubs  
 5♣ also limited, but responder doesn't want to play the game in hearts

Let's look at some more examples of how this works:

	♠ Axxx	♠ xx
	♥ Qx	♥ AJ10xx
	♦ AKJx	♦ x
	♣ AQJ	♣ Kxxxx
	2NT	3♦
	3♥	3♠ (transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣ (hearts and clubs)
(last-train/relay)	4♦	4♥ (limited with 5-5)
(still interested)	4♠	6♣ (ok, I accept)

Say we change responder's hand to these cards after 4♦:

	♠ xx	♥ AK10xx	♦ xx	♣ Kxxx
	2NT		3♦	
	3♥		3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT		4♣	(hearts and clubs)
(last-train/relay)	4♦			

Responder has a better hand, but only 5-4 in his suits. As 4♦ doesn't promise club support, we don't even have a trump suit. Opener rates to have precisely two hearts and three clubs, but some fitting honors in my long suits. What should we do? We can't bid 4♥ since that shows a limited hand with 5-5 distribution. As we have no fit we can bid 4NT a natural invitational bid. By the way, bidding 5NT would ask opener to pick-a-slam with the options 6♣, 6♥, and 6NT.

As I have already said, when opener bids the last-train 4♦ bid, both my partner and I know that *if* we are moving towards a slam, that slam will be in clubs (the minor). The minor also becomes the trump suit if we ask for, or show, the number of Aces.

If opener accepts the slam try by bidding 4♠, he shows four-card support in clubs. In that case, responder's 4NT is Blackwood and not natural. That is a difference from when responder makes a slam try with the minors after Muppet Stayman. Here responder can use Blackwood when we have an eight-card fit in a minor.

Let's change the hands again:

♠ Axxx		♠ xx	
♥ Qx		♥ AK10xx	
♦ AKJx		♦ x	
♣ AQJ		♣ Kxxxx	
	2NT	3♦	
	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣	(hearts and clubs)
(last-train/relay)	4♦	?	

Responder can bid 4♠ to confirm that we have a real trump suit. Maybe we will find a grand slam, but we certainly will bid at least six.

With the next hand, responder intends to rebid 4♥ over opener's last-train bid 4♦:

♠ xx	♥ AJ10xx	♦ x	♣ K10xxx	
	2NT	3♦		
	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)	
	3NT	4♣	(hearts and clubs)	
(accepting clubs)	4♠			

The value of responder's hand is increasing when he learns that opener has four-card support in clubs. When we have shown a two-suiter with a major, our slam rules say we can follow up with a cue-bid or with 4NT as RKCB if we have found a trump suit. That suits responder fine here, and he will probably try 4NT.

In the next example, responder is weak with good distribution.

♠ Axx		♠ x	
♥ Qx		♥ AJ10xx	
♦ AKJx		♦ x	
♣ AKxx		♣ Jxxxxx	
	2NT	3♦	
	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣	(hearts and clubs)
(accept, club support)	4♠	5♥	(cue-bid, the ♥A)
(grand slam try)	5♠	6♣	

Opener has a perfect fit for clubs, and responder has a nice distribution.

Let's look at an example where responder has diamonds. As you may remember, 4♦ is always a slam try. Does that make things easier? Sadly, I cannot say it always does. The difference is that opener now has less space for his rebids.

	♠ AJxx		♠ Qx
	♥ Qx		♥ AJ10xx
	♦ AKxx		♦ QJxx
	♣ AKx		♣ xx
	2NT	3♦	
(no support)	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♦	(slam try 4-5 diamonds)

After responder's four of a minor, opener has natural support and also a heart honor. He can bid 4♠, but also show Aces directly over 4♦. One problem here is that the diamond contract will be played from the wrong hand. As 6NT isn't better, we will have to hope that one of the two missing kings is in place or that the opponents don't find a spade lead.

Although, that's not the only problem, opener can also have a good hand with only three diamonds. He has no last train bid in this situation. What can he do? One option is to allow opener to bid 4♠ with both three and four diamonds, but I don't think that solves the problem, it just passes it to responder. Instead, we can use the same method as we do over 4♣, but use it more freely.

	♠ AJxx		♠ Qx
	♥ Qx		♥ AJ10xx
	♦ AKx		♦ QJxx
	♣ AKxx		♣ xx
	2NT	3♦	
(no heart support)	3♥	3♠	(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♦	(slam try 4-5 diamonds)
(semi-positive)	4♥		

Opener can use the semi-positive bid with a hand like the one above. Responder knows we have no eight-card trump fit, but also that opener has a decent holding in both his suits. He can bid 6NT in this auction. Should his heart suit be of poor quality, he may have to resort to 4NT as invitational. And finally, if opener has:

♠ AKJx ♥ xx ♦ AKx ♣ AJxx

With only three diamonds and no heart fit, opener has to bid 4N over 4♦.

**2NT-3H - responder has at least five spades**

Here are opener's rebids again:

2NT-3♥

3♠ spade support

3NT no support

4♣/♦ super-accept

Opener's four of a minor are super-accept bids, and that is all we have agreed on about them. We use re-transfer after 3NT, but not after the super-fit bids.

Compared to when responder shows hearts, opener has no way here to suggest that we play 3NT when we have 5-3 in spades. Therefore, responder should be able to bid a natural 3NT after 3♠.

♠ Axx		♠ KJxxx	
♥ Qxx		♥ 10xx	
♦ AKJ		♦ Qx	
♣ AQxx		♣ Jxx	
	2NT	3♥	
(spade support)	3♠	3NT	(suggests we play 3NT)
	pass		

I believe we often will do better in 3NT when opener has a 4333 distribution. As responder I think we should propose 3NT with all 5332 hands where we have an honor in the short suit. If responder wants to make a slam try after 3♠, he can cue-bid a control, also in hearts as we don't need to use re-transfer after partner's 3♠.

♠ AJx		♠ KQxxx	
♥ AKx		♥ 10xx	
♦ AKQxx		♦ xx	
♣ xx		♣ Axx	
	2NT	3♥	
(super fit, cue)	4♦	4♥	(club control)
(RKCB)	4NT	5♠	(two Aces plus Queen)
(grand slam try)	5NT	6♠	(not much extra)

Opener's 4♦ denies a club control, or perhaps wants to ask about precisely that. In this case, when opener has 'denied' control in clubs, we have decided that partner's next cue-bid, here 4♥, shows a club control but nothing about hearts.

*Responder's bids after 3 spades*

Here are responder's bids after 3♠:

2NT-3♥; 3♠

3NT suggests playing 3NT  
 4♣ slam try, perhaps short clubs  
 4♦/4♥ shortage  
 4♠ to play

We don't need any re-transfer as opener already has bid spades.

	♠ Axx		♠ KJ10xx
	♥ Kxx		♥ Axx
	♦ AKx		♦ Qx
	♣ AQxx		♣ xxx
	2NT		3♥
(spade support)	3♠	4♣	(slam try in our suit)
(cue-bid)	4♦	4♥	(cue-bid)
(limited somehow)	4♠	pass	(limited too)

Responder's 4♣ is a general slam try. He probably has no singleton in diamonds or hearts, but he still may have short clubs. Opener is positive to slam, and cue-bids, but then bids 4♠. If he could cue-bid clubs below game-level, it would deny a club control, but here it is not that clear. As opener has accepted the slam try once, responder will probably not pass with a club control, and that suits opener fine. Responder's hand could have been:

♠ KJ10xx ♥ Axx ♦ Qxxx ♣ x

With a singleton in clubs, I think he will find at least one more bid.

In the 2NT system, the need for singleton-showing bids is not extremely important. The strong hand seldom has xxx or Axx opposite partner's singleton, and there are often possibilities to set up tricks in other suits. Perhaps it is also favorable to get the lead in the short suit, and that will seldom happen when you reveal it.

As you can imagine from all these examples, in slam bidding, it is not possible to solve all problems. Even if the bidding is cooperative, we cannot expect that our partner thinks the same way as we do, at least not all the time. Having good rules helps, but in real life, the situations that come up are often beyond the rules.

*Opener has no spade support*

2NT-3♥; 3NT

- 4♣ five spades and at least four clubs, slam try or at least 5-5
- 4♦ five spades and at least four diamonds, slam try
- 4♥ re-transfer
- 4♠ 5-5 or better in spades and diamonds, limited hand
- 5♣/5♦ natural, to play (we show a void by re-transfer, and then bidding the suit)

The rebids from responder are, except for the re-transfer, very similar to what we discussed after the transfer to hearts. The difference is that responder doesn't have to go via the transfer to 3NT, but can show his second suit directly.

Here is an example of the limited four of the major, showing spades and diamonds:

	♠ Ax	♠ KJ10xx
	♥ Kxx	♥ xx
	♦ AJxx	♦ Kxxxx
	♣ AKJx	♣ x
(no spade support)	2NT	3♥
	3NT	4♠ (5-5 spades-diamonds)
	5♦	

Opener has the final decision after responder's limited bid. In this case, he prefers to play diamonds. We would also have a spade contract played from the wrong hand here, which makes the decision to play diamonds easier.

When responder bids the two-way 4♣ here, to show spades and clubs, we have a similar situation as when responder had hearts and clubs:

2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣

- 4♦ a forward-going bid, we can call it relay or a last-train bid
- 4♥ a good fit with four clubs
- 4♠ a semi-positive preference, a non-forcing bid
- 4NT a negative bid
- 5♣ shows support, but is negative

When responder has spades, we have some extra space, because now the 4♥ bid is below 4♠. That is important also when opener relays with 4♦ as we then have more bidding space for the continued bidding.

Here is a summary of responder's bids after 4♦ from opener:

2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣; 4♦

- 4♥ setting clubs as trumps  
 4♠ a limited hand with at least 5-5 in spades and clubs  
 4NT a limited hand, slam invitational with only 5-4 in spades and clubs  
 5♣ also limited, but responder doesn't want to play the game in spades

Here is an example where responder has spades and clubs:

	♠ Ax		♠ KJ10xx
	♥ Kxx		♥ Ax
	♦ AJxx		♦ x
	♣ AKJx		♣ Q10xxx
	2NT		3♥
(no spade support)	3NT		4♣ (spades and clubs)
(accept in clubs)	4♥		

If opener instead bids 4♦, responder can set clubs as trumps with 4♥:

	♠ Ax		♠ KJ10xx
	♥ Kxxx		♥ Ax
	♦ AJxx		♦ x
	♣ AKJ		♣ Q10xxx
	2NT		3♥
(no spade support)	3NT		4♣ (spades and clubs)
(relay, last-train)	4♦		4♥ (slam ambitions)

Opener is not negative to slam. With only three clubs, he can bid the relay to find out more. Responder has five clubs and a good hand; he can bid 4♥ to set clubs.

In the next hand responder has only 5-4 in his suits:

	♠ KJ10xx	♥ Ax	♦ Qxxx	♣ xx
	2NT		3♥	
(no spade support)	3NT		4♦ (spades and diamonds)	
(accept, support)	4♥			

Opener shows support for diamonds. Responder's diamond suit isn't very good, and he wants to limit his hand. Since we have found a trump suit, 4NT is now Blackwood. However, in this auction, responder already has made a slam try, and can bid 4♠ to limit his hand because the accepting 4♥ bid was below the major.

**2NT-3S - responder has at least 5-4 in the minors**

When responder bids 3♠ over 2NT he can have one of these hands:

- 5-5 or better in the minors with slam ambitions, or looking for the possibility to play a game in one of the minors instead of 3NT
- 5-4 in the minors and interest in a slam

Here are some example hands responder can have:

♠ x   ♥ x   ♦ Qxxxxx   ♣ Kxxxx

We don't know if 3NT will make or if perhaps a minor suit game is better. The best thing to do is to ask opener for help deciding.

♠ x   ♥ xx   ♦ AQxxx   ♣ Kxxxx

This hand qualifies for a slam try.

♠ xx   ♥ xx   ♦ AQJx   ♣ Kxxxx

Only 5-4 but still a slam is not far away if opener has a fit in one of our suits.

As we discussed earlier, if we have a three-card major, we have the option to bid 3♣ as Muppet Stayman first to investigate if opener has five cards in our three-card suit before introducing our minors. Opener's rebids after 3♠ are these:

2NT-3♠

3NT	not so interested in minors, and good stoppers in majors
4♣/♦	at least four cards, not very bad for a minor suit game or slam
4♥/♠	a three-card minor, Lissabon with good honors for a minor suit slam
4NT	3-3 in the minors with fitting honors in the minors

Here is an example of the Lissabon bids:

♠ AKxx	♠ x
♥ Axxx	♥ xx
♦ AKx	♦ Q10xxx
♣ Kx	♣ AQxxx
(nice hand 3♦ and 2♣)	
2NT	3♠ (both minors)
4♠	6♦ (then I bid slam)



***Opener bids 3NT***

When opener bids 3NT, he often has no four-card minor. If responder bids again, he either is interested in a slam or has a wild distribution:

2NT-3♠; 3NT

- 4♣      slam try with six clubs or a good five-card suit
- 4♦      slam try, as above with diamonds
- 4♥      slam try with 5-5 in the minors
- 4♠      slam try with 6-5 in the minors (1-1-5-6 or 1-1-6-5)
- 4NT     please, bid your longest or best minor at the five-level
- 5♣/♦   to play

The 4♠ bid should contain a top honor in both suits while 4NT is weaker. We have no sophisticated methods after these bids. Over responder's four-level bids, opener can repeat notrumps to show that he still is not interested.

I think that for responder to show a major suit shortage is pointless after opener's 3NT. Responder already knows that opener has many values, and almost certainly a control, in both majors. Opener's rebids after 4♥:

2NT-3♠; 3NT-4♥

- 4♠      club preference
- 4NT     don't you understand a no!?
- 5X      responses to RKCB with diamonds as trumps (5♦ negative)

Over 4♠ responder can limit his hand by bidding 5♣, while 4NT here will have to be Blackwood from the distributional hand.

Here is an example:

	♠ AKJx		♠ x
	♥ AQxx		♥ xx
	♦ A9x		♦ KQxxx
	♣ Kx		♣ AJ10xx
		2NT	3♠      (both minors)
(no interest)		3NT	4♥      (a good 5-5)
(five-level bids=3A)		5♥	5NT     (grand slam try)
(club king)		6♣	6♦

Opener did not have much interest in the beginning, but when responder persisted, he had to accept diamonds as trumps and show his three keycards.

**2NT-4C/D - responder has a slam try in a major**

I don't think much explanation is needed here. Responder has a one-suited hand with at least a six-card major. If opener has a good hand or good support, he can bid, 4♦ over 4♣, and 4♥ over 4♦ as a relay (or last-train) bid.

2NT-4♣/♦

relay      opener is not negative, but he may pass if responder bids his major  
 4♥/♠      responder's suit is the negative bid  
 4NT      RKCB  
 other      cue-bids  
 5♥/♠      ask for good trumps (opener has xx as support but a very good hand)

This is definitely a hand where opener cannot just reject the slam try in hearts, he will have to try 5♥ over 4♣.

♠ AKxx    ♥ xx    ♦ AKx    ♣ AKxx

With 20 HCP or more it is very difficult to evaluate the hand as opener when partner makes a slam try with a long suit. As opener we almost always have both good and bad features.

We have therefore decided that opener looks at his trump holding first, and then checks the rest of the hand. With acceptable trump support and at least two Aces, opener should use the relay bid. Responder then has the option to limit his hand by bidding four of the major. Once responder has made a slam try, it is seldom that important to play the game from opener's hand; we should make our contract anyway.

♠ AQ    ♥ QJx    ♦ KQJx    ♣ KQJx

Opener must reject the invitation. If responder has three Aces out of five he will know the reason and bid again.

Here is another example:

♠ AKQx  
 ♥ xx  
 ♦ AJx  
 ♣ AQx

♠ x  
 ♥ KJ9xxx  
 ♦ KQx  
 ♣ Jx

(poor support)	2NT	4♣	(slam try in hearts)
	4♥	pass	

**2NT-4H/S - responder has a slam try in a minor**

The Lissabon convention again, 4♥ shows clubs and 4♠ shows diamonds

Here, we again have to deal with minor suit slam tries. Opener can always make a negative bid either with 4NT or by bidding responder's minor at the five-level. We have to use the same five-level bids here (responses without the question) here if opener accepts the invitation. However, after 4♥, opener has a last-train option too:

2NT-4♥

4♠ last-train, accept of clubs but we still can stop in 4NT

4NT/5♣ negative

5X response RKCB

2NT-4♠

4NT/5♦ negative

5X response to RKCB

Here is an example

	♠ AKQx	♠ xx
	♥ AQx	♥ xxx
	♦ A9x	♦ Qx
	♣ Jxx	♣ AQ10xxx
(last-train)	2NT	4♥ (slam try in clubs)
	4♠	4NT

Responder has a limited hand, and as he is rather balanced, he suggests 4NT. Let us look at some other hands that responder can have in the same auction:

♠ xxx ♥ x ♦ xx ♣ KQxxxxx

With less strength but more clubs, probably this is a 5♣ bid after 4♠.

♠ xxx ♥ x ♦ Jx ♣ AKxxxxx

This hand is good enough to show Aces. If we want 4NT to be natural, then the five-level bids, except for 5♣, show the number of Aces. I have to discuss this with my partner. A system never ends ...

**2NT system - a summary of responses and continuations.**

The two *modules* used are presented after the sequences.

2NT-responses

3♣	Muppet Stayman
3♦	at least five hearts, and may also have four spades
3♥	at least five spades but not four hearts
3♠	both minors (at least 5-4) and often a slam try
3NT	natural, to play
4♣/♦	a Lissabon slam try, one-suited with ♥/♠
4♥/♠	a Lissabon slam try, one-suited with ♣/♦
4N	a natural invitation
5♠	an invitation to 6N, asks for any five-card suit

Muppet Stayman auctions

## 2NT-3♣

3♦	at least one four-card major
3♥	no major
3♠	five spades
3NT	five hearts

## 2NT-3♣; 3♦ (at least one four-card major)

3♥	asking relay, either four spades or the minor-suit-slam-try-module
3♠	four hearts, can have a longer minor
3NT	natural, to play
4♣/♦	the both-majors module with at least 4-4 in the majors
4Ma	not currently used

## 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥ (relay, asking for spades)

3♠	four spades
3NT	not four spades

## 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠ (four spades)

3NT	slam try with 4-4 (or 5-4) in the minors (forcing to at least 4NT)
4♣/♦	slam try with a five-card minor
4♥	slam try in spades
4♠	to play

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-3NT (4-4 or perhaps 5-4 in the minors)

4♣/♦ a four-card minor  
 4♥/♠ a five-card minor, Lissabon  
 4NT 4333 or very bad slam cards.

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠ (four hearts)

3NT not four hearts, responder can use the minor-suit-slam-try-module  
 4♣ the normal bid with heart support  
 4♦ an exceptional hand  
 4♥ a warning for slam, often because of poor trump-quality

After 3♠-4♣:

4♦ transfer to 4♥ (a new suit from responder then shows a void)

2NT-3♣; 3♥ (no major)

3♠ transfer to 3NT, responder can then use the minor-suit-slam-try-module  
 3NT NF with five spades (\* and by inference four hearts)  
 4♣/♦ at least 5-5 in the majors, the both-majors-module  
 4♥ a slam try with at least five spades  
 4♠ to play with six spades

2NT-3♣; 3♥-4♥ (five spade or more, slam try)

4♠ accepts spades as trumps, but not a very good fit  
 4NT negative without support  
 5X RKCB responses with support

2NT-3♣; 3♠ (five spades)

3NT natural, to play  
 4♣/♦ a natural slam try with at least a five-card suit  
 4♥ a slam try in spades  
 4♠ to play  
 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

2NT-3♣; 3NT (five hearts)

4♣ a slam try in hearts  
 4♦ a transfer to 4♥  
 4♥ a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five clubs  
 4♠ a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five diamonds  
 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

The transfer responses

2NT-3♦ (five hearts)

3♥ no support

3♠ heart support (the usual bid with support)

3NT shows support, but suggests that we play 3NT

4♣ super-accept

2NT-3♦; 3♥ (no support)

3♠ a transfer to 3NT

3NT NF with five hearts and four spades

4♣ precisely a slam invitation with at least five hearts and four spades

4♦ asks for a preference to 4♥ if opener does not have four spades  
(responder wants to play game or slam in a major)

4♥ natural, to play (we make a slam try with 4mi directly over 2NT)

4NT natural invitation to slam

4♠/5mi void in the bid suit

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT (must bid)

4♣ five hearts and at least four clubs, slam try or perhaps weaker with 5-5

4♦ five hearts and at least four diamonds, slam try

4♥ at least 5-5 in hearts and diamonds, limited hand

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣ (hearts and clubs)

4♦ a forward-going bid

4♥ a semi-positive preference, a non-forcing bid

4♠ a very good fit in the minor

4NT a negative bid

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣; 4♦ (relay)

4♥ limited with 5-5

4♠ sets clubs as trumps

4NT slam invitation with only 5-4 in hearts and clubs

2NT-3♥ (five spades)

3♠ spade support

3NT no support

4♣/♦ super-accept

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT (no support)

- 4♣ five spades and at least four clubs, slam try or perhaps weaker with 5-5
- 4♦ five spades and at least four diamonds, slam try
- 4♥ a re-transfer
- 4♠ at least 5-5 in spades and diamonds, limited hand

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣ (spades and clubs)

- 4♦ a forward-going bid
- 4♥ a very good fit in clubs
- 4♠ a semi-positive preference, a non-forcing bid
- 4NT a negative bid

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣; 4♦ (relay)

- 4♥ sets clubs as trumps
- 4♠ limited with 5-5 in spades and clubs
- 4NT slam invitation with only 5-4 in spades and clubs

Other responses

## 2NT-3♠ (both minors)

- 3NT not so interested in minors, and good stoppers in majors
- 4♣/♦ at least four cards, not very bad for a minor suit game or slam
- 4♥/♠ a three-card minor, Lissabon with good honors for a minor suit slam
- 4NT 3-3 in the minors with fitting honors in the minors

## 2NT-4♣/♦ (one-suited major, slam try)

- relay accept of slam try, but may pass over 4Ma
- 4♥/♠ responder's suit is the negative bid
- 4NT RKCB
- other cue-bids
- 5♥/♠ asks for good trumps (opener has xx as support but a good hand)

## 2NT-4♥ (one-suited clubs, slam try)

- 4♠ accept of clubs but we still can stop in 4NT
- 4NT/5♣ negative
- 5X response to RKCB

## 2NT-4♠ (one-suited diamonds, slam try)

- 4NT/5♦ negative
- 5X response to RKCB

The both-majors-module:

- 2NT-3♣; 3♦ (the both-majors-module, at least 4-4)  
 2NT-3♣; 3♥ (the both-majors-module, at least 5-5)  
 2NT-3♦; 3♥ (the both-majors-module, at least 4-5)  
 4♣ precisely a slam invitation with both majors  
 4♦ asks for opener's major with a game hand, or wants to proceed against slam after knowing the trump suit

## After 4♣

- 4♦ opener is negative to a major suit slam  
 4♥/♠ opener accepts the invitation and sets the trump (forcing)

The minor-suit-slam-try-module:

- 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT  
 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠; 3NT  
 2NT-3♣; 3♥-3♠; 3NT (for all continued bidding sequences after 3NT, see below)  
 4♣ a four-card minor or 4-4 (5-4) in the minors  
 4♦ five diamonds  
 4♥ five clubs and three diamonds  
 4♠ five clubs without three diamonds  
 4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

## After 3NT-4♣ (a four-card minor or 4-4 or 5-4 in the minors)

- 4♦ tell me more, I have a four-card minor.  
 4♥ five clubs, Lissabon  
 4♠ five diamonds, Lissabon  
 4NT I have a bad hand for slam, or perhaps 3-4-3-3.

## After 3NT-4♣; 4♦ (relay with interest)

- 4♥ four clubs, perhaps 4-4 in minors  
 4♠ four diamonds, Lissabon

## After 3NT-4♣; 4♦-4♥ (four club, perhaps also four diamonds)

- 4♠ shows four diamonds and denies four clubs  
 4NT I have club support but suggest we stop in 4NT if you don't mind  
 5♣ I have club support, but I am negative  
 5X responses to RKCB with club



After 3NT-4♦ (five diamonds)

- 4♥ five clubs (4225)
- 4♠ accepts diamonds, but not good enough for five-level bids
- 4NT negative
- 5♦ I have diamond support, but I am negative
- 5x responses to RKCB with diamonds as trumps

After 3NT-4♥ (five clubs and three diamonds)

- 4♠ five diamonds, sets diamonds as trumps
- 4NT negative
- 5♣ I have club support, but I am negative
- 5x responses to RKCB with clubs as trumps

After 3NT-4♠ (five clubs and less than three diamonds)

- 4NT negative
- 5♣ I have club support, but I am negative
- 5x responses to RKCB with clubs as trumps

### ***Slam bidding, summary***

General rule: 5mi always to play when trumps

#### ***Minor suit slam tries (one or both minors)***

- 4NT is always natural from both from opener and responder
- The 'five-level bids' from both hands are bids are Ace-showing bids

These are our Ace-showing 'five-level bids' (also as response to Roman Keycard Blackwood) when the trump suit is one of the minors:

- 5mi (our minor, the trump suit) is a negative bid
- 5Omi (the other minor) shows 1 or 4 Aces,
- 5♥ 0 or 3 Aces
- 5♠ 2 Aces with the trump Queen
- 5NT 2 Aces without the Queen

Last-train bids below game level and accept bids doesn't change these rules. Also, when we ask for the trump Queen at the five-level, 5NT is the negative response.

#### ***Slam tries with two suited major-minor hands when minor is trumps***

- Opener can use 'five-level bids' when he wants the minor suit as trumps.
- Responder's 4NT is Roman Keycard Blackwood over an accepting bid, when we know that we have an eight-card fit, but natural and limited after a last-train bid or a semi-positive bid from opener where we don't yet have a trump suit.

## INTRODUCTION TO 1NT

Which is the most important opening bid in your system? I believe many players would answer 1NT to that question. In fact, we build the rest of our system around the intervals for the notrump opening bids. In our system, we play 15-17 notrump, and therefore we sort of automatically categorize other balanced hands as weaker or stronger than our 1NT opening.

I don't know about you, but there are two things of importance for me regarding every system and convention I choose to play; they should be fun to use, and I want to believe we gain from using it. When I don't get that feeling about a certain convention, I could just as well be without it. We play better bridge when we don't have any negative thoughts about our methods. My partner and I constantly make small changes to our system and add agreements where we don't yet have any. The reason for that is simply that we want to like our methods!

When I describe some parts of our methods in these books, I want you to like them too. However, there is something important to take into consideration; when we change our system, it is a small change for us. For you to adopt our methods would be a huge undertaking, and a decision you would need to make as a partnership. I don't aspire to make you change your system; I want to make you think, compare this with what you play, and perhaps by doing so you can make your own methods more efficient.

Compared to the 2NT system, we get to use our 1NT system more often. In the 2NT system, we didn't bother with part-scores or invitations to game, both of which are essential parts of what we must consider after our 1NT opening bid. When we open 1NT, we will play a part-score more often than a slam but when playing a team game slams are more important. What does that mean in practice?

Overall, I think the difference in frequency makes part-scores equally important, and when playing matchpoints there is no comparison, part-scores are much more important. In a team game however, it is vital to get a plus score, but whether it is 120 or 140 doesn't matter much.

So this is my point: We don't have to find the *best* part-score as long as we find one we can make! We can afford to lose an IMP or two on part-score hands if that means we can get those IMPs back with interest on other boards.

Anyway, let's first talk about part-scores. When we, as responder, have a five-card major, we can transfer to that major and then pass. That is something all players do. We have a little more than a sixty percent chance that our partner has three or more cards in our suit, and even if he has only two, the suit contract often gives us the extra trick we need compared to playing 1NT.

Say we have this hand as responder:

♠ 10xxxx ♥ Jxx ♦ Qxx ♣ Qx

It's tempting to pass over 1NT because of the weak spade suit. If partner has only two spades, statistically pass is indeed the right choice, as it would sometimes be difficult to draw trumps even if the spades are 3-3. Therefore, the opponents will often be able to generate an extra trump trick with a ruff.

However, if I pass and partner has three spades, I would lose more than I would have gained by passing when he has a doubleton. That makes it clear to prefer the suit contract, and we will gain in the long run.

If we consider statistics, we have on average approximately 8 HCP when partner opens with 1NT. Some hands with 8 HCP are good enough for a game invitation or even to bid a game, some are not, depending on the middle-cards, what major suit holdings we have, or perhaps if we have a nice five-card minor.

When we have a five-card major and also four cards in the other major, we have a problem in our notrump system. Let us say we hold this hand:

♠ QJxxx ♥ Qxxx ♦ xx ♣ xx

Should we bid Stayman or transfer to 2♠? We seldom miss a game by making a transfer, but using Stayman would be better if partner has hearts. If we could bid 2♣, and follow up by bidding 2♠ to play if partner bids 2♦, we have a better chance to find our best fit. Anyway, in our system, we can't do that because the two-level rebids from responder show a better hand:

♠ Q10x  
♥ Kx  
♦ KQxx  
♣ AQxx

♠ KJxxx  
♥ Axxx  
♦ xx  
♣ xx

1NT  
2♦  
4♠

2♣  
2♠ (five spades, invitational)

With responder's eight-count, we can have a game whatever major partner has, but when he doesn't have one, even 2♠ can be in danger. Opener can have this hand:

♠ xx ♥ Qxx ♦ AKxx ♣ AQxx

Not even 2♠ is safe if the opponents' Kings are placed behind our Queens.

As I said earlier, in a team game, our first priority should be to get a plus score. That's something to only hope for when we are very weak, but we should at least be able not to go down when we stop in a part-score holding invitational hands.

With the next hand, we have to transfer to 2♠ and forget about hearts.

♠ Kxxxx ♥ Qxxx ♦ xx ♣ xx

We may or may not make 2♠, and if partner has a perfect hand, we may even make four. If we bid 2♥ as a transfer partner can show maximum hands with four spades. If partner has a fitting hand with five hearts we will look foolish playing spades:

♠ Ax ♥ KJxxx ♦ Axx ♣ Axx

If our partner has this hand, 4♥ will make. However, the frequency of that is very low, and furthermore, we can choose to open such a hand with 1♥ instead of 1NT.

What I suggest here is to be able to stop at the two-level with an invitational hand when opener has no fit. If we have to bid at the three-level to make an invitation, there is another point to consider; we are more inclined to accept an invitation when we already are at the three-level, compared to when we can stop at the two-level. That is also a point worth thinking about!

With strength for a game-invitation, we should adhere to the following principles:

- we want to maximize the chance of finding a game in a major suit
- we want to have a plus score when we don't bid a game

As I mentioned, with many hands, we need about 9 HCP to invite game after 1NT. With both majors, however, we can be more optimistic:

♠ QJxx ♥ AJxx ♦ xxx ♣ xx

We have a balanced hand and only 8 HCP, but with 4-4 in the majors this hand qualifies for Stayman. If partner has a major we raise, and if not, we can try 2NT.

♠ QJxx ♥ Qxxx ♦ xxx ♣ xx

This hand is weaker, but we have slightly more than a fifty percent chance to find a major suit fit via Stayman. Nevertheless, if we bid 2♣ we are asking for trouble; what do we do over 2♦?

A popular alternative is to use 'Garbage Stayman,' where 2♥ after 2♦ shows a weak hand with 4-4 in the majors looking for a 4-3 fit in a major.

The auction then starts:

1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

Using that style, opener should pass with three hearts and make a preference to 2♠ if he has two hearts and three spades. If opener, though, has 5422 without a three-card major, we will probably be playing in a 4-2 fit.

We use responder's 2♥ in this auction in a different way. For us, responder shows some interest in game when he doesn't pass over 2♦, although we must consider that he perhaps was interested *only if* opener possessed a four-card major! In our system, bidding 2♥ after 2♦ shows five hearts, four spades, and 7-9 HCP. I think a minimum hand for bidding 2♥ could be a hand like this:

♠ QJxx ♥ KJxxx ♦ x ♣ Jxx

After 2♥, opener shouldn't bid 2♠ holding three spades and two hearts. Therefore, if opener wants to be really scientific, he can bid 2♠ as a relay to find out more. I will tell you more about that later.

In our system, bidding 2♣ and rebidding a major at the two-level is an invitation to game. As responder, when we rebid 2♥, we show have five hearts and four spades. The reason is, if we bid this way with only hearts, we may become trapped, and can't show our heart suit if opener responds 2♠. On the other hand, the rebid of 2♠ says nothing about hearts as we always can rebid 2♠ when we don't find a fit. We know that responder can be slightly weaker with both five spades and four hearts.

After 1NT, we have a lot of bidding space below game-level and good possibilities to investigate if we want to. It is always risky to reveal something about our hands, however investigating a 4-4 fit in a major is with the odds. The experts though, don't agree on which methods are the best. In 'Puppet Stayman,' it is responder who shows his four-card majors, and that hand later becomes the dummy. That can perhaps make the lead and the defence more difficult as opener's hand often is concealed. When using the standard method and opener responds 2♦ to Stayman, the opponents don't know responder's major, or if he even has one. There can be ups and downs whichever method we use.

As a general principle in bidding, the best we can do is to tell partner only what he must know for the moment. You know the expression 'on a need to know basis'. When responder makes a game invitation with a five-card major, opener may want to ask for more information. However, when responder is first to bid his major, he will play the hand in a major suit game. Opener's curiosity may then give away information about declarer's hand to the opponents.

In some cases opener thinks it is worth the risk. Look at the following hand:

♠ QJx ♥ KQ10 ♦ A10x ♣ A9xx

1NT	2♣	
2♦	2♠	(five spades, invitational)
?		

Responder has around 8-9 HCP, perhaps less with both majors, but we don't know that. We have average strength and good spade support, and therefore, shouldn't pass. Let's look at our game prospects with some of responder's possible hands:

♠ AKxxx ♥ xx ♦ Qxx ♣ xxx

With a club lead 4♠ looks hopeless, with other leads we have a chance.

♠ AKxxx ♥ xxx ♦ Qxx ♣ xx

With only two clubs in responder's hand, the chances have improved, but still, making a game is not easy. With both hands above, 3NT is a better contract, but if responder has a singleton in a minor or 5422 it is probably better to play the game in spades. So, is it possible to know whether to bid 3NT or 4♠? Perhaps it is!

Opener can bid 3♣ to ask for more information: partner, do you have a singleton? We respond by a new special scheme which in this situation gives these responses:

3♦	* a singleton in the other major
3♥	no singleton (5332 or 5422)
3♠	a singleton in clubs
3NT	a singleton in diamonds

\* as an optional feature we can also bid with a doubleton

We call these responses the '3-no-1-2 scheme,' and use it in several situations. We will discuss this auction, as well as the others, further in the following chapters. When you read this book, remember that you can simplify our methods in many of the proposed sequences. We at times get entangled in complicated continuations just because we can, and there is not always much to gain with such behaviour.

What I think you can learn from our system are the benefits from cooperating in the bidding. Most of the bids we make gives partner vital information, and the more we find out, the closer we get to a good decision. I am confident that this is the best approach when we look for a slam, while bidding game often works better without too much investigation. As always, with bridge - we never know for sure!

## THE 1NT SYSTEM

A simple way to divide responder's hands into different categories would be by his HCP count. This is obviously very basic:

- 0-7 HCP                      we should play a part-score
- 7-9 HCP                     we will often invite to game
- 9-14 HCP                    we should find our best game
- 14 HCP or more            we perhaps have a slam

The point count is only one factor here, as the distribution, middle-cards, and other factors in hand evaluation sometimes mean that your hand is worth more, or even less than the nominal count in HCPs. The intervals overlap because the HCP count is only one of several factors we consider when evaluating our hand.

Apart from standard sequences where responder signs-off, bids a notrump game, or uses Stayman and then bids a game, the one thing most notrump systems have in common is that it is responder who describes his distribution to the opener.

We also use that approach, but we prioritize being able to cooperate in the bidding. Our system design gives us many possibilities to involve our partner. When we have a choice of bids, we can bid what we think we can make, but we also can ask partner for help and exchange more information.

Before we discuss more, here is a summary of our responses to 1NT:

### *The one notrump system - responses*

- 2♣                      Stayman, not promising a major
- 2♦/♥                  transfer, at least a five-card major
- 2♠                     at least six clubs, either weak or at least invitational
- 2N                     at least six diamonds, either weak or at least invitational
- 3♣                     5-5 (5-4) in the minors, tactical bid with 6-8 HCP
- 3♦/♥                  a two-way bid with either
  - a) a slam try with transfer to a six-card major, and no void
  - b) game-forcing, singleton in the suit transferred to and 5-4 or 4-5 in the minors (always 5431 distribution)
- 3♠                     5-5 in the minors, forcing to game perhaps with slam ambitions
- 3NT                    to play
- 4♣/♦                  a transfer to 4♥/♠

The risk of opponents intervening over a 1NT opening is much higher compared to a 2NT opening. I will, therefore, in this book include a description of the methods we use when the opponents interfere after our opening.



**1NT-2C: Old-fashioned Stayman**

Since we use normal Stayman and not Puppet Stayman, we can't right away find out whether opener has four or five cards in his major. We think responder only needs to know if he has three-card support, in which case he can investigate. There is a modern variation to use 3♣ as Puppet Stayman when responder only has game ambitions, but we don't use that.

We use a somewhat old-fashioned structure of rebids over 2♣, since as opener we show both majors directly. The best part of that is knowing that opener doesn't also have spades when his response is 2♥.

We have to bid 2♣ also without a major if we want to invite game in notrumps; we have no other way to show that hand. When we bid 2♣ without a major, we give the opponents unnecessary information about opener's hand. However, if you play that 2♣ always promises a major, that is also vital information. If opener shows one major and it is known that responder has the other, that can help the defence too.

Before changing to this method, we used the 2♠ response to 1NT as a two-way bid; to either show six clubs, or to invite 3NT without a major. The opening lead then would almost always be in a major. As we play it now, responder bids Stayman when he doesn't have a major, and therefore we risk that opener gives away information that is useless to responder. On the other hand, our opponents will know less about dummy's holding in the majors. That probably evens things out.

Using normal Stayman responses, opener bids 2♥ when holding both majors. We don't promise four spades with 3NT here, as is the case in many systems:

1NT	2♣
2♥	3NT

There are other problems that we avoid with our methods. Say the bidding starts:

1NT	2♣
2♥	3♦

If both opener and responder can have four spades in this auction, we must cater to that in the continued bidding; for example, opener's 3♥ shows five hearts, and 3♠ then shows 4-4 in the majors. With all other hands opener must decide whether to bid 3NT, or to bid something above 3NT. Opener has no way to say *maybe* to partner's diamonds. He has no way to say: I am not sure what to do.

In our methods, opener can't have four spades when he bids 2♥, and therefore, we can use opener's rebids over 3♦ in another fashion.



These are opener's rebids after Stayman in our 1NT system:

2♦	no major
2♥	four or five hearts, not 4 spades
2♠	four or five spades, not 4 hearts
2NT	4-4 in the majors, minimum
3♣	4-4 in the majors, maximum

As in the 2NT system, we try to use the bidding space economically which means that we use the Stayman response on many different hands. There are similarities between the two methods, so if you have read the book about our 2NT system, it will be easier to understand and learn our system after 1NT.

Responder usually starts by bidding Stayman when he has both majors. The only exception is when he has precisely an invitational hand with 5-5 in the majors; we then transfer to spades and rebid 3♥.

### **1NT-2C; 2D**

I have already told you a little about responder's rebids in a major at the two-level: we think it is important that responder can use Stayman when he has both majors and a marginal invitational hand. Responder needs more strength in HCP to invite game with only one four-card major or no major at all.

Let me summarize responder's rebids after 2♦ before we go ahead:

1NT-2♣; 2♦

2♥	invitational with five hearts, from 7 HCP, indirectly showing four spades
2♠	invitational with five spades, may also have four hearts, from 7 HCP
2NT	invitational, doesn't promise a major
3♣	a game-forcing relay with interest in a minor-suit slam
3♦	a game-forcing bid with a shortage in a major
3♥	game-forcing with four hearts and at least five spades (Smolen)
3♠	game-forcing with four spades and at least five hearts (Smolen)
4♣	precisely a slam try with 5-5 in the majors
4♦	game or slam going with 5-5 in majors, asks for a preference
4N	an invitation to 6NT
5♠	responder wants to bid 6NT and asks for any 5-card suit

You may recognize some of these bids from the 2NT system as we here use the same module, bidding four of a minor with 5-5 in the majors.

Now, it is time for a break before we continue to discuss responder's rebids.

***A tribute to Anders Wirgren***

*Picture from Sydsvenska Dagbladet where Anders was bridge columnist*

If it was not for Anders Wirgren there would never have been any Scanian Way Bridge books. Anders was a great analyst, my friend, my bridge partner for some years, and my editor. Above all he was a very fine man.

You don't need to take my word for it. I have assembled some thoughts about Anders Wirgren from others here. Some have written directly to me, some I have pinched from Bridgewinners' site in the hope that no one minds.

***Joseph Silver:***

Canada played Sweden in the semi finals of the Bermuda Bowl in China 1995. The match was 96 boards. Anders and I were screen mates for 48 of them. We both liked to talk so for the 48 boards we played against each other we chatted each other up on almost every hand. At the end of the match (which Canada won) Anders came up to me, congratulated me on our win, adding (with a smile on his face) that he made a mistake in talking to me during the match and silence would have been a better choice on his part. P.S. I also played 16 boards against you Mats but you were not as much fun to play against as was Anders (much too serious).

***Avon Wilsmore***

I never met Anders, but his help with my book on the Blue Team was greatly appreciated. His analytical skills were truly exceptional and he was courteous and cheerful at all times, over many emails.

***Mike Lawrence***

I learned with regret of Anders' passing. We met online a long time ago over a BBO table and from there I discovered a modest and fascinating person and excellent player. We combined to write a book which could never have been done without his research, insights, and patience. That was fifteen years ago. It feels like fifteen weeks. We shared thoughts and hands and little things that we both enjoyed. He was special. I miss him.

***Leonard Helfgott***

Aside from immensely enjoying his series of Bridge World articles and his anti-LOTT book with Mike Lawrence 'I Fought the Law of Total Tricks.' I had the great pleasure of corresponding with him last March. After adding a suggestion to one of his Bridge World hands, I mentioned that his articles reminded me of Geza Ottlik's 'The Way It Is' Bridge World series from 1970's.

His response was as follows: 'Hi Len, Thank you so much for your kind words. I was in the late twenties when I first read Adventures in Card Play. I loved it. I remember lending it to a former partner, Swedish internationalist Bjorn Axelson, who returned it sometime later with the words 'Nice book, but not of much practical use.' I thought he had a point, and in my own writing I have usually tried to focus on ways of thinking/playing which can be applied most of the times.'

***Bob Jones:***

It's about 30 years ago, so it might have been a different Anders, but I played an 8-board round robin match against him (Anders somebody, but I think it was Wirgren) in the Rosenblum Teams in Geneva in 1990. We met again at the Cavendish Invitational in New York 2 or 3 years later. He remembered every single board from our match, which he went over with me in some detail. He had to remind me of most of them.

***Charles Brenner***

Anders' recent series of articles in The Bridge World on handling trumps were absolutely classics, reminiscent of Geza Ottlik in analytic precision and clarity but more practical. I thought several times of mentioning them in this forum to see who else was equally impressed. I'm really sorry I didn't while he was still alive. I never met him but did have a brief email exchange in which I was asked to answer some routine math question about bridge and was surprised that he needed help for it. In reply he denied being mathematical. He was wrong about that, as especially proven by the article in his series that introduced the concept of 'tickets.'

***David Libchaber:***

I met Anders face to face for the first and last time in 2000 at the World Bridge Olympiad. I was the general manager for e-bridge, one of the first online bridge sites and we were the first to vugraph live bridge games. Our idea was to have bridge writers write little blurbs about every hand and put them online shortly after they were played.

I didn't know the writers, and I am introduced to this tall gentleman named Anders who really appears to be in the wrong location. He seems airy, not sure of how the technology works, and is baffled by the Americans checking the stock market every five minutes (remember this is taking place as the stock market crash is starting its run).

I showed Anders where he will work etc. and meet with him the following day to talk about the speed of his writing, the style etc. I don't know anything about him, look at one of his write ups and I am very impressed by the clarity of explanation - I am not a very good bridge player - but like every other player think myself better than I am.

Then on the second board, I notice a mistake so I tell him. He very kindly starts asking me questions about my line of play, and starts showing me - WHILE NEVER MAKING ME FEEL LIKE A MORON - that I was wrong. Suddenly I start sensing that I am not sitting across a granola bridge writer but rather a very very fine player who's ego is very well hidden. So far he hasn't told me anything about his playing career. Through chit chat and dinners over these ten days, I came to realize who he was. The cherry on the cake is when very casually, he mentioned that he had won the Cavendish pairs, as if that was something he did every other week.

When I came back to NY, he sent me two books, Scanian raises and another one. A really really genuinely nice man. I learned something from him that summer. I was 34, a young father. He was older with three daughters I believe. His lack of self importance struck me. As I write these lines, I am still impressed. If I ever won the Cavendish among many other titles, people would know.

***Roy Hughes***

Anders and I corresponded a number of times on bridge and other matters. He was a terrific analyst. Shortly after the publication of my book 'Card by Card', on which I had worked diligently and with which I was quite pleased, I got a long e-mail from Anders. It was with a sinking feeling that I opened it, to discover a thorough analysis of a dozen or so deals that I hadn't got quite right. I will miss him.

**1NT-2C; 2D-2H**

Responder's 2♥ rebid shows 7-9 HCP with five hearts and four spades.

1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

Responder can have this hand for his bid:

♠ Q10xx ♥ AJ10xx ♦ x ♣ xxx

If he is a little stronger in HCP, as with the next hand, he still has to rebid 2♥ if he doesn't want to make a game-forcing bid.

♠ Q9xx ♥ AJxxx ♦ Qx ♣ xx

Opener will often pass with a doubleton heart and he will occasionally also pass with three hearts as he knows much about responder's distribution. Let us say opener has this hand:

♠ xxx ♥ AJx ♦ KQxx ♣ AQx

This is definitely not the worst hand we can have. The ugliest part of it is the three small spades. If we raise hearts, though, we will perhaps get a trump lead since the opponent on lead may think we have a doubleton in spades. That is, of course, if he doesn't have the Queen of hearts. I think it is a close call between pass and a bid.

This is an example of an average hand for responder:

♠ KJxx ♥ K10xxx ♦ x ♣ Jxx

It is perhaps not a fifty percent game, but not much less.

On occasion, responder can have 5-5 in the majors with a hand that is too weak to invite at the three-level by starting with a transfer bid. For example, this hand:

♠ QJxxx ♥ Kxxxx ♦ x ♣ xx

The normal way to show an invitational hand with 5-5 in majors is by transferring to 2♠, and follow up with 3♥. This hand is too weak for that, but if partner has a four-card major, it is worth an invite. The best we can do is to use Stayman, and when our partner, as expected, has no major, try bidding 2♥. If partner passes, there is not much we can do about it, but if he bids again, we can occasionally show this hand later on.

Let me summarize opener's rebids after 2♥:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♥

- 2♠ a relay bid with support, opener wants to know more
- 2NT inviting 3NT, opener wants to play in notrumps
- 3♣/♦ a six-card suit, a very unusual bid, though
- 3♥/4♥ natural raises
- 3NT opener believes he can make it

We don't need many of these bids. Usually, opener will pass or raise hearts, but we have another possibility here; since opener never has a reason to show preference for spades, we can use 2♠ as a relay or asking bid.

The point of using a relay bid instead of a natural bid is that the bid doesn't present any information to the opponents. Instead it asks for information.

Here is a summary of responder's bids after 2♠:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♥; 2♠ (relay with support)

- 2NT a minimum, most hands
- 3mi a minimum with 5431 and an honor in the three-card suit
- 3♥ a weak hand (5-6 HCP) with 5-5 in the majors
- 4♥ accepting the game-try

Unfortunately, it is responder who will play the game in hearts if we get there. Before I realized that, I had come up with the smart idea that responder should always show his distribution if he had 5431 and a minimum. Perhaps that would help us bid a tough game when we have a good fit, that is, when opener hasn't got wasted honors in responder's short suit.

If we look at an example where responder bids out his suit distribution over 2♠, we see that such a method can backfire:

♠ Ax	♠ Qxxx
♥ Qxx	♥ AJ9xx
♦ AJxx	♦ xxx
♣ KQxx	♣ x
1N	2♣
2♦	2♥
2♠	3♦
3♥	pass

Opener's hand is not too bad, and he has three hearts. He can, of course, raise to 3♥ but I think 4♥ is an overbid when responder can have as little as 7 HCP.

Here we can put my idea to test and bid 2♠. With a maximum hand responder can bid 4♥ but with a minimum, he can show his distribution if he wants to. Let's say he did, and we then stopped in 3♥ because the club shortness didn't suit opener at all. We now have told the opponents too much. They may attack in diamonds after this bidding, and after a diamond lead, we will often go down already in 3♥.

I have decided we can still use this treatment, but as responder is the one who will play the heart contract, he should only bid out his distribution when he has values in diamonds, his three-card suit.

♠ Ax	♠ 10xxx
♥ Qxx	♥ AJ9xx
♦ AJxx	♦ Qxx
♣ KQxx	♣ x

Not perfect, but at least much better. Opener will still not bid game since his club honors are completely misplaced opposite partner's shortness. If the opening leader has the King of diamonds, we have a good chance of making 3♥.

If we change opener's hand a little, he can use the information better:

♠ Ax	♠ 10xxx
♥ Kxx	♥ AJ9xx
♦ KJxx	♦ Qxx
♣ AJxx	♣ x

With these hands, opener will value the information and leap to game in hearts. However with most hands, opener will not go into this kind of auction. Bidding 2♠ as a relay is an additional option, and it is there if we need it.

Responder can also have this hand when he bids 2♥:

♠ K10xxx	♥ Q10xxx	♦ x	♣ xx
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With 5-5 in the majors, game is close if opener has a good fit in the majors but otherwise we don't want to play at the three-level. If partner continues with the 2♠ relay bid, we can show this hand by bidding 3♥.

If opener has three spades and only two hearts we will not play our best part-score if opener passes over 2♥. If opener bids 2NT, which invites to 3NT, responder can bid his spades with 5-5, but remember that opener still can have 2-2 in the majors.

**1NT-2C; 2D-2S**

In our methods, Stayman followed by 2♠ is the only way in for responder to invite game with five spades. Responder often has 8 or 9 HCP, but he may be weaker if he also has four hearts.

♠ AQxxx ♥ J9xx ♦ xx ♣ xx

This is an example of a minimum hand for bidding Stayman and following up by bidding 2♠. If opener has a four-card major, we can raise. If he has spades, we may even raise to game but there is nothing wrong with just an invitation.

What should we do over partner's 1NT with a hand like this?

♠ Q10xxx ♥ xx ♦ xx ♣ Axxx

A game is not out of the question, but this hand is too weak for an invite, and we must transfer to 2♠. Holding a good hand with support in spades, opener can bid more than 2♠. With the hand above, we probably want to be in game only if partner has both a maximum and good support.

♠ K10xxx ♥ xx ♦ x ♣ A10xxx

When responder has two good five-card suits, game is closer. Should we start with a transfer bid or Stayman? The hand is worth an invitation, and therefore, we should bid 2♣. If partner has four spades we can raise to game, if he responds 2♦ or 2♥, we can bid 2♠.

If opener has only two spades, he will pass with a minimum and bid 2NT if he has a maximum. If opener doesn't have a fit, playing in notrumps is not responder's first choice. He can bid a natural 3♣, suggesting we play there. In a team game, we want a plus score, and most of the time 3♣ will be better than 2NT or 3♠.

With some hands opener wants to bid 3NT directly over 2♠.

♠ xx ♥ AQx ♦ KQJxx ♣ A10x

Opener has 16 HCP and a good diamond suit. I am not saying opener shouldn't bid 3NT, but already 2NT shows a maximum! The next hand has even more HCPs:

♠ Qx ♥ Axx ♦ AKxxx ♣ A10x

Opener wants to bid game, but what game? He has five diamonds but with this hand, he should investigate more with 3♣ before deciding to play in notrumps.



Here is a short summary of opener's rebids after 2♠:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠

pass	a minimum, often two spades
2NT	a maximum, usually without support
3♣	a relay with maximum, asks for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
3♠/4♠	natural raises

Other rebids are natural, but they are not explicitly defined in the system.

Opener's relay bid, 3♣, doesn't promise any support but opener often has at least a fitting honor in spades. Here are the responses to the relay:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♣ (relay, asking: responses according to the *3-no-1-2 scheme*)

3♦	a singleton in the other major (* or some hands with a doubleton)
3♥	no singleton (5332 or 5422)
3♠	a singleton in clubs
3NT	a singleton in diamonds

\* We have several reasons for making 3♦ an ambiguous bid. The risk for damage from telling the opponents about weak hearts is not alarming. Opener has denied four hearts, and when responder has two, we have to anticipate receiving a heart lead if we stop in 3NT even if we don't tell them anything.

Our idea is this. When we don't have a good stopper in hearts, we sometimes can find a better contract. In modern bridge we often open 1NT with 5-4 in the minors, and if we have 2-2 in hearts we very often should prefer a suit contract. Also when responder has a good five-card suit, and opener has an honor, a major suit game in a 5-2 fit may be the only game we can make.

We use this convention also in some game-forcing situations. The difference is that when we are stronger, we may have more alternative contracts if we are not going to play 3NT. We more often can play a game in a 5-2 fit in responder's suit and we more often can make a five-level contract in a minor.

When responder has invited game our alternatives are more limited as a game in a minor is further away unless opener has a very good hand. Therefore, responder shouldn't show a doubleton in the other major on all hands where he can:

♠ Kxxxx ♥ Jx ♦ QJx ♣ Qxx

With a weak spade suit in a balanced hand, showing weak hearts is not meaningful. The odds for finding another, and better game are too small.

If you don't wish to use our additional feature; showing a doubleton in hearts, you can simplify if you wish. Opener's rebids over 3♦ in our method are:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♣-3♦ (a singleton or a doubleton)

- 3♥ asking for more information, not a good heart stopper
- 3♠ asks partner to bid 3NT with a doubleton or a singleton honor in hearts
- 3NT to play, opener can handle the lead
- 4♣/♦ a good hand with 5-4 in the minors
- 4♠ to play

To bid 3♣ with 5-4 in the minors and a good hand can be rewarding as responder quite often has a four-card minor. As we have seen earlier, he can even have 5-5.

While we are at it, let's look at responder's rebids after the asking bid 3♥:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♣-3♦; 3♥ (asking for more information)

- 3♠ a doubleton
- 3NT shows four clubs, at least, and a singleton in hearts
- 4♣ shows four diamonds, at least, and a singleton in hearts
- 4♠ shows good spades and gives up on 3NT

When opener bids 3♥ he says: 'Partner, I don't want to play 3NT if you have two small hearts.' If he does he would bid 3♠ instead of 3♥!

Perhaps you can figure out the meaning of opener's 3NT in the following auction?

	1NT	2♣	
	2♦	2♠	(five spades, invitational)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♦	(one or two hearts)
(asking again)	3♥	3♠	(two hearts)
	3NT	pass	

I think responder shouldn't pass over 3NT unless he has some help in hearts. Say that responder has Jx; that would for sure help if opener has Qxx or A10x.

If we have the next two hands the bidding could start the same way. We would then end up playing 4♣. This is not much to brag about but 3NT is not better. With weak spades responder can bid this way to avoid a bad 3NT when he has 5422:

♠ Qx	♠ Kxxxx
♥ Qxx	♥ xx
♦ AKxx	♦ Qx
♣ AQxx	♣ K10xx

When opener shows doubts about 3NT by bidding 3♥, responder can go directly to 4♠ if he has a good suit. With this hand a spade game should be makeable:

♠ KJ10xx ♥ xx ♦ Kxx ♣ J10x

Here is example where opener has a fitting hand opposite short or weak hearts.

	♠ Qx	♠ Kxxxx
	♥ Ax	♥ xx
	♦ AK9xx	♦ Qxxx
	♣ Axxx	♣ Kx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	2♠ (five spades, invitational)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♦ (weak/short hearts)
(5-4 in the minors)	4♦	5♦

When opener decides to use the relay, he assumes the captain's role, but we still can cooperate in the further bidding. When we show shortness in a minor, opener often knows that responder has the other minor. However, in this specific situation that is not always the case since responder can have five spades and four hearts! When responder is short in the other major, we never know the distribution in the minors but opener's asking bid 3♥ can then locate the longer minor.

After asking with 3♣, opener usually suggests a contract. If he needs help, he can bid responder's short suit to get assistance. His motive is perhaps to find out the quality of responder's major, as one option is to play that suit on a 5-2 fit.

Without a short suit, responder bids 3♥ over opener's 3♣ relay:

	1NT	2♣
	2♦	2♠ (five spades, invitational)
(asking)	3♣	3♥ (no singleton)

Responder has 5332 or 5422 distribution, or perhaps a singleton honor if he prefers to treat the hand as a balanced. If opener still is unsure about game, or what game, he can bid 3♠ to give responder the final say. When responder then passes, he probably has both majors and a minimum and hoped to find opener with a four-card major. Otherwise he can bid 4♠, or alternatively 3NT, which is probably the contract opener is interested in.

As I said before, we use this convention in many sequences and we will discuss it again in coming chapters. When we are in a game-forcing auction there are some differences, but I will tell you about them when we get there.

**1NT-2C; 2D-2NT**

We take a risk by using Stayman without a major instead of using 2NT as a natural bid. Our left-hand-opponent may double or get in with a lead-directing bid. We usually don't worry about that, because when they do, they also take a risk.

If opener bids a minor after 2NT, he suspects a suit contract is better. In that case, opener must be prepared to play game because responder can have 4-4 in the majors and no interest in the minors.

♠ Jx ♥ Ax ♦ KJxx ♣ AKxxx

With this hand, bidding 3♣ is an alternative to 3NT. If responder is weak in either of the majors, we may go down in 3NT.

Some notrump systems have a method to show hands with a short major directly over 1NT. They use the jump to three of a major to show 4441, or perhaps 5431, with a singleton in a major. With an invitational hand, though, that is not an option.

♠ Kxxx ♥ x ♦ Axxx ♣ Q10xx

If partner has four spades, we will bid game in spades but if partner shows four or five hearts, our hand is not very good. After Stayman and a 2♥ response, we should be content with 2NT. Whether we then play 2NT or 3NT, we can at least hope that opponents don't find a heart lead, if that would be the best for them.

When opener bids 2♦ over our 2♣, we know that the opponents have at least nine hearts, and we also know we have a fit in one of the minors. Nevertheless, if we bid 2NT, partner doesn't know that. With the hand above, though, there is an option in our system. After opener's 2♦, we show a hand with shortage in one of the majors by bidding 3♦. That means we have to upgrade the hand since we risk playing in 3NT if opener has a minimum. On the other hand, we may find a game in a minor when opener has fitting honors. We can also stop at the four-level in a minor.

♠ Qx	♠ Kxxx
♥ Axx	♥ x
♦ KQxxx	♦ Axxx
♣ KJx	♣ Q10xx
1NT	2♣
2♦	3♦

Opener can bid 3♥ to ask for the short suit but he has other options. I will soon get back to tell more but now we have another time-out, leading to the next chapter.

## ***About sharing tasks***

I have been told that Winnie the Pooh once said something like: 'If you don't know where you are going, there is no reason to hurry as you still don't know when you arrive.' I think he was talking about our system.

I believe that we play our best bridge when the conventions we use are fun to play and we think we gain from playing them. However, one of my new friends, Peder Fredrikson, commented on that: 'and easy to remember, but I suppose you don't care about that!' I must admit Peder, that is not our first priority.

When Björn and I made a come-back as a partnership, we started with an idea of the general concept. We both had some preferences, and when we had put them together, we only had to fill the blank spaces.

About making changes in the system, we both have a problem. I constantly look for new ideas, but I don't always think them through before presenting them. So, rule number zero in our partnership is: I can suggest whatever I want, and Björn decides if we will use it. It is like sharing candy with your little sister; you can let her divide all of it into two piles as long as you get to choose which one to take.

When responder starts by bidding Stayman, we still have to be able to manage the hands where we don't find a fit in a major. What I am thinking about here is when responder has a good hand but doesn't want to bid 3NT after opener's response, at least not right away. Responder can have an unbalanced hand where other contracts may be better, or he can be interested in a minor suit slam.

In our notrump system, we started out with completely natural three-level rebids. Whether opener had a major or not, responder could bid a minor at the three-level as natural and game-forcing. It's simple but it usually works fine.

1NT	2♣
2♥	3♦

Responder often has five diamonds, but he can also have only four. Perhaps he has slam ambitions, is worried about spades, or hopes that opener can rebid hearts. In fact, we still play natural three-level bids in both of the minors when opener shows a major over Stayman.

When opener bids 2♦ over Stayman, it is another story. Responder may still want to bid a minor to find a fit. We now more often have a good fit in a minor suit as opener has at least one four-card minor. Perhaps we can find out if we have a slam in a minor without having to play at the five-level if we want to stop. We also want to avoid 3NT when we both have a weakness in the same major.

We started by using the natural three-level minors, but we didn't think it solved all our problems. Say the auction starts:

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♣/♦	(natural bids)

After 2♦ in the auction above, we use a jump to three of a major as the Smolen convention where we can bid 3♥ to show 5-4 in the majors, and 3♠ to show 4-5. Therefore, we could only elaborate on the bids 3♣ and 3♦ from responder.

A problem with using natural three-level bids in the minors is that opener doesn't know responder's ambitions. Is responder worried about 3NT, or does he want to make a slam try? Should opener now show support, or should he examine his stoppers in the major suits? We then decided to prioritize not missing good slams.

We kept 3♦ as natural with a five-card suit, and used 3♣ as minor suit Stayman:

1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣

I thought we found a smart way for opener's rebids:

3♦	both minors
3♥	five diamonds
3♠	five clubs
3NT	4333 hands

We decided to reverse opener's Lissabon bids in this particular bidding sequence to give responder a chance to show five clubs by bidding 3♠ over 3♥. After 3♦, showing both minors, responder could suggest a trump suit by using the normal Lissabon bids, 3♥ for clubs, and 3♠ for diamonds.

Our bids at the three-level in a forcing auction have several purposes; one of them is to find out whether to play 3NT or not and another one is to use the three-level bids as a platform for slam bidding.

The slam bidding worked but we lost something else; what if responder isn't sure about playing 3NT? Let us say responder has this hand:

♠ x   ♥ Q10x   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AQJxx

After opener's 2♦, we can perhaps have a minor suit slam. Besides that, we often should play the game in one of the minors. We had to address that problem, and we came up with an idea that could perhaps be useful.

After 1NT, we use a transfer to a major at the *three-level* to show a six-card major and slam ambitions. Our new idea is to make the transfer jump a two-way bid:

1NT	3♥
3♠	3NT

We now use the three-level transfer to show either six cards or a singleton! With the 3NT rebid, responder shows a singleton in spades, and a hand like the one above; three cards in the other major and 5-4 or 4-5 in the minors. As the bid isn't forcing, responder has a game-going hand, but not a serious slam try.

If we have a bad fit and both hands have a minimum, we can now stop at the four-level in a minor. We take a risk by showing shortness. If opener has Qxx in that major, we should avoid 3NT, but perhaps the opponents wouldn't have led that suit if we instead had raised to 3NT? Very often, however they would have.

The compensation for sometimes losing out for having talked too much is that, with a good fit, we can find a good game or even a slam in a minor:

♠ Axx ♥ Kxx ♦ AQxx ♣ Kxx	♠ x ♥ Q10x ♦ Kxxx ♣ AQJxx	
(a good fit)	1NT 3♠ 4♠ 6♦	3♥ 3NT (1-3-4-5 or 1-3-5-4) 6♣

Responder is limited when bidding 3NT, but with a perfect fit we can have a slam. This treatment then gave me another idea. Why shouldn't we also be able to show a short major after opener's 2♦ response to Stayman? Instead of using both 3♣ and 3♦ as minor suit slam tries, we should be able to handle those hands with only one bid. We can do that in our 2NT system when we start at 4♣, so we certainly should be able to do it when we start a whole level lower.

My idea was to use 3♦ as showing a singleton in one of the majors, while 3♣ then becomes the starting point for the hands where responder wants to make a slam try.

I presented the idea to Björn and we now have a better but also more complicated system. Our three-level bids now can serve all the purposes; we can find the good slams and once in a while avoid the bad ones. We can find alternative contracts to 3NT if we want to investigate that, or we can just bid a game like everyone else, and hope for the best.



*The simplified version of responder's three of a minor*

Here I will explain the basics of our three-level bids in the minors. We try to use all the available bidding space when we think it adds to our methods. However if you want to play our system, it is a good idea to start with a simplified version.

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♣	(minor suit slam try)

Responder's 3♣ shows slam ambitions and asks for opener's distribution. These are the standard rebids from opener:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣ (slam try with one or two minors)

- 3♦ shows 44 or 54 in the minors
- 3♥ shows five clubs (Lissabon)
- 3♠ shows five diamonds (Lissabon)
- 3NT very often 4333, in odd cases no interest at all in a minor suit slam

After 3♦, responder can set a minor as trumps by bidding it at the four-level or bid 3♥ as a relay to ask for more information. These are opener's rebids after 3♥:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3♦-3♥ (relay, asking)

- 3♠ 4-4 in the minors
- 3NT five clubs and four diamonds
- 4♣ five diamonds and four clubs

If opener bids 3♠, responder's 3NT is non-forcing, showing that he needs opener to have extra values or fitting honors to continue. Next, we have this sequence:

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♦	(singleton in a major)

By bidding 3♦ responder shows a shortage in one of the majors. He can have 4441 or 5431, in both cases with four cards in the other major. If opener doesn't care, he bids 3NT, and if he wants to know the short suit, he bids 3♥ to ask for it:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦; 3♥ (relay, asking: which short suit)

- 3♠ short spades
- 3NT short hearts, limited hand (up to 14-15 HCP)
- 4♣/♦ 15 HCP or more, a five-card minor and short hearts
- 4♥ 15 HCP or more with precisely 4-1-4-4

That is what you need in order to try it out. That is also where we started.



***Looking for game or slam in a minor***

What strength does responder need to make a slam try when partner opens 1NT? In my opinion, he should have about 14 HCP; perhaps 13 HCP is enough with nice honors or nine cards in two suits. We can still stop in 3NT, 4NT or five of a minor.

In our 1NT system, we don't look to stop in precisely five of a minor. It happens that on our road to 3NT, we want to find out whether we have a weak suit between us, and if so, go for the minor suit game. Sometimes we then stretch to a game in a minor, but usually we keep open to bid a slam with a good fit as the difference between game and slam is just one trick.

If opener shows a major over Stayman we use natural rebids in the minors at the three-level. In that case, we may even have three possible trump suits if opener has five cards in his major. If we decide to play in opener's major we use RKCB as everyone else, and the rules we will look at here apply only to the minors.

When opener bids 2♦ in response to Stayman, responder's slam tries starts with bidding 3♣. Both of our hands are then quite often balanced or semi-balanced as responder has the alternative to rebid 3♦ to show a singleton in one of the majors, and see how opener reacts to that information.

In the 2NT system, we don't have as much bidding space, and we don't prioritize showing singletons in responder's hand to find the best game. Our bidding after 2NT is more directed towards finding a slam when we have one, and when we only bid game we will often have to choose the most convenient game contract.

After 1NT, we use the bids at the three-level to find the best game, and while we do, opener also tries to give responder an idea of whether a slam is possible or not. We don't know if responder is interested in a slam, but he can be. Even when he is, we sometimes can stop in 3NT. For example, most hands with 4333 distribution are generally bad for slam, whether it is responder or opener who has it. Therefore, to exclude those hands, responder shouldn't make a slam try with 4333, holding a marginal hand, and opener should decline the invitation with 4333.

What will often work is using common sense and the ability to evaluate your hand. We hope to get a better result from a conversation between partners, and we thus try to start the cooperation at the three-level.

Initially, opener doesn't always know if responder's goal is just to avoid playing in 3NT or if it is a minor suit game or slam. If we show details about our hands, and then end up in 3NT, we have given the opponents unnecessary information. Our methods are based on having a choice, and a good reason for choosing to tell everybody more about our hand is if partner has told us he wants some help.

We need tools to work with to be able to bid good slams and to avoid the bad ones. In some auctions we have different ways of bidding depending only on the suit quality. That is a new idea but we think it is important already early in the bidding to find out if the suit we intend to play is good enough for a slam.

After the 3♣ slam try, opener, as well as responder, can have both minors or only one minor. As we start at a low level, we should be able to set the trump suit with a bid of four of a minor allowing us to cue-bid at the four-level in the majors.

When we worked with the design of this auction, two problems arose. When we have a fit in two suits, how will we find out about top honors in *both* suits? Once upon a time, I tried something like Blackwood with six keycards but I can't say it was a success. And then, should we have two trump Queens as well? There are other smart inventions but I don't think they will work for us. I will soon return to that subject, and tell you how we have 'solved' the problem.

These are the rules we have agreed upon when we have a minor suit as trumps:

- bidding 4NT is negative or a natural bid from both hands if we haven't found an eight-card fit, or as a response to a four of a minor slam try bid or raise
- when one of us has cue-bid a major, we can't bid 4NT as a negative bid
- we use optional Roman Keycard Blackwood, meaning that five in our minor is negative and excluded from the steps
- We also can use the 'five-level bids' as an alternative to optional Blackwood

That means: when we have cue-bid a major, we no longer can stop in 4NT.

Compared to the 2NT system, we have an additional feature here as we can choose to either ask for, or to show Aces! If we have a good hand we show them, if not, we bid 4NT as optional RKCB. These are the responses to optional Blackwood, and the five-level bids we use when we choose to *show* Aces instead of *asking*.

5mi	(our minor, the trump suit) is a negative bid
5Omi	(the other minor) shows 1 or 4 Aces (keycards)
5♥	0 or 3 Aces
5♠	2 Aces with the trump Queen
5NT	2 Aces without the Queen

The bids 5♠ and 5NT are exchanged in case we have to stop in 5NT. As you have noticed, we also use another feature from the 2NT system, the Lissabon bids. They are not used in the same fashion because we often can start at a lower level.

**1NT-2C; 2D-3C**

When opener doesn't have a major he must have at least seven cards in the minors. If responder has a slam try with one or both minors, the chances are good that we have a fit. As already mentioned, the way we use responder's three of a minor in this auction is not the same as if opener shows a major over Stayman. Responder's minor suit slam try after 2♦ starts with an all-inclusive 3♣ bid:

1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣

Responder can have one of these distributions:

- a four-card major and a four-card or longer minor
- a hand with 4-4 or 5-4 in the minors
- a five-card minor (5332) or perhaps a weak six-card suit

The 3♣ bid doesn't promise anything about clubs. Responder can have clubs, or both minors but also only diamonds. 3♣ is an artificial bid, saying: partner, I am interested in a minor suit slam. To bid 3♣ responder needs at least 14 HCP with a balanced hand, and a fraction less if his hand is unbalanced or semi-balanced.

These are opener's possible rebids after 3♣:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣ (slam try with one or two minors)

- 3♦ shows 44 or 54 in the minors
- 3♥ shows five clubs (Lissabon)
- 3♠ shows five diamonds (Lissabon)
- 3NT very often 4333, in odd cases no interest at all in a minor suit slam
- 4♣ shows five clubs, three honors out of four in the suit
- 4♦ shows five diamonds, three honors out of four in the suit, no club fit

After opener's 3♥, responder can show five diamonds by bidding 3♠.

Opener has two ways to show a hand with a five-card minor. He can bid at the three-level or go directly to the four-level to show a good suit. Information about a strong suit is often more important than showing a maximum or a minimum.

The ordinary suit in this context is from Jxxxx at worst to AKxxx at best, while a good suit is KQJxx or better (three honors out of four). If partner has a doubleton-honor or three-card support, we can play slam in the good suit without having to worry about the trump suit quality. As I soon will show you, such a strong suit can also be a source of tricks in a notrump contract or with another suit as trumps.

When opener bids at the four-level, he can still limit his hand with his next bid. Let us look at a few hands after the following auction:

	1NT	2♣	
	2♦	3♣	(minor suit slam try)
(five good clubs)	4♣	4♠	(sets clubs, cue-bid)
	?		

In this auction, responder's 4♦ over 4♣ would show five diamonds, while four of a major is a cue-bid. Responder's message is crystal clear; he has support but no heart control. Let's look at some hands that opener can have in this situation:

♠ Kxx ♥ Jx ♦ KJx ♣ AKJxx

With this hand, opener must bid 5♣. If we change opener's hand, he perhaps has:

♠ Qx ♥ KQx ♦ Jxx ♣ AKJxx

Opener has 16 HCP and good clubs, but his honors in the side suits don't look so good for a slam. Here opener wants to bid 4NT as a natural bid, but after the cue-bid, we can no longer afford that luxury. Responder's hand is not yet limited and even if opener doesn't like the slam potential of his hand, he has to bid 4NT as optional Blackwood when he has the heart control his partner is looking for.

A third example:

♠ Qx ♥ Axx ♦ Kxx ♣ AKJxx

Opener has the same strength but this hand is more suitable for going forward, and he also has three keycards. It is time to use the five-level bids instead of asking responder for assistance. Opener should bid 5♥. The three examples above show how opener can show different degrees of slam interest.

When opener shows a strong diamond suit by bidding 4♦ over 3♣, he makes it impossible for responder to show five clubs. That is something we should consider:

♠ A10x ♥ AJx ♦ KQJ10x ♣ xx

If we have this hand as opener, we can bid 4♦ over 3♣. We don't care much whether responder can show his clubs or not. If we instead have the next hand we should be more considerate:

♠ Axx ♥ xx ♦ AKJxx ♣ KJx

With this hand, we show our diamonds by bidding 3♠. If responder bids 3NT, we can rebid our suit, and if he shows five clubs by bidding 4♣, we can cue-bid 4♠.

Opener's distribution is well defined; he has 5332 with five diamonds. He has denied a major, and now he also says he has less than four cards in the other minor. Let us look at a few hands where it makes a difference to show a good suit:

	♠ Axx	♠ Kxx
	♥ Ax	♥ Jxx
	♦ Qxx	♦ AK10xx
	♣ KQJ10x	♣ Ax
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(a good club suit)	4♣	4♦ (five diamonds)
(diamond fit, cue-bid)	4♥	5♥ (3 keycards)
(we have all keycards)	5NT	7♦

Knowing about both the diamond fit and an excellent club suit makes it easy for responder to bid the grand slam. Opener can't invite grand slam but as he doesn't know responder's ambitions, he bids 5NT confirming that we have all the keycards and the Queen of trumps while 5♠ would show the same without the Queen.

In the next example, we have the opposite situation; as opener did not bid 4♦, responder assumes that the diamond suit probably is not good enough to bid at the four-level, and therefore suggests that we stop in game:

	♠ Kxx	♠ AQxx
	♥ Ax	♥ Qxx
	♦ AJxxx	♦ 10x
	♣ Kxx	♣ AQJx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(five diamonds)	3♠	3NT

When one of us makes a bid that sounds negative, that is informative to partner but doesn't mean he must pass. Opener is limited and should listen to partner's advice, while responder is unlimited and will frequently move on even if his partner can't do so. As mentioned, opener could have rebid his diamonds if he had a very good suit and a club fit, but he doesn't have to do so with a minimum hand.

As mentioned before, opener must bid 3NT over 3♣ when he has the boring 4333 distribution but that doesn't mean responder always will pass.

The auction then starts:

	1NT	2♣	
	2♦	3♣	(minor suit slam try)
(very often 4333)	3NT		

Opener is obliged to bid 3NT with 4333. Perhaps he can bid 4NT if he had chosen to downgrade a hand with 18 HCP when he opened. If responder, who is unlimited, still wants to play or investigate a slam, we don't have to play it in notrumps. See how Lissabon comes in when responder bids again after 3NT:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣-3NT (3-3-3-4 or 3-3-4-3)

- 4♣/♦ shows a five-card suit
- 4♥ shows four clubs (Lissabon), may also have four diamonds
- 4♠ shows four diamonds (Lissabon), not four clubs

Over responder's bids in a minor, showing a five-card suit, opener can cue-bid, but with only small cards in partner's suit or a bad hand, he can bid a negative 4NT.

To find a 4-4 fit in a minor can be rewarding, even when opener has 4333:

	♠ AQx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ Axx	♥ Jx
	♦ Q10xx	♦ AKxx
	♣ KJx	♣ AQx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(very often 4333)	3NT	4♠ (four diamonds)
(accept, 2A + Queen)	5♠	6♦

Now let us look at the most interesting part of the minor-suit slam try. Opener quite often has length in both minors when he doesn't have a four-card major. Then he rebids 3♦ over responder's 3♣. In that case, we have a fit in one or both of the minors and we will examine the slam possibilities further.

After 3♦ responder has these options:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3♦ (opener shows 4-4 or perhaps even 5-4/4-5 in the minors)

- 3♥ relay, asking bid
- 3♠ shows four clubs, but a weak suit (Qxxx or worse)
- 3NT shows four diamonds, but a weak suit (non-forcing), limited strength
- 4♣/♦ sets the suit as trumps and shows a five-card suit

Responder will usually bid 3♥ as a relay. With just one four-card minor responder wants to know if opener has four or five, but when responder has a five-card minor he bids it at the four-level.

If responder has both minors, though, he wants to find the 4-4 fit. When we have a fit in two suits, and it comes to playing slam, it can be better to play in the 4-4 fit even if we have a 5-4 fit in the other suit.

Our bids, other than 3♥, are designed for special purposes; 3♠ and 3NT to avoid a marginal slam with bad trumps. Here is an exception where we use bids in steps instead of Lissabon. As the 3♥ bid is already taken as a relay, we have to use the next two bids as the steps, the nearest bid, 3♠, for the lower suit, clubs, and the next higher bid, 3NT, for diamonds. It is the same principle, just different bids!

Responder's four level-bids, 4♣ and 4♦, both show a five-card suit. I will explain why that is important. Let's look at some hands again. Once in a while the knowledge of a nine-card fit can influence our decision. Other times we can even find a 5-5 fit, and then we don't need to have the Queen of trumps:

	♠ Ax	♠ KJxx
	♥ Kx	♥ Ax
	♦ KJxxx	♦ A10xxx
	♣ KQxx	♣ AJ
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors)	3♦	4♦ (five diamonds)
(2 Aces + ♦ Queen)	5♠	5NT (grand slam try)
	7♦	

Over 4♦ opener's normal accepting bid will be a cue-bid but with controls in both majors and *five* trumps, he chooses to show keycards directly after 4♦. Knowledge about our 5-5 fit in diamonds allows opener to claim holding the trump Queen.

In the next hand, we can stop low in 3NT:

	♠ Ax	♠ KJxx
	♥ Kxx	♥ Ax
	♦ Kxxx	♦ Qxxx
	♣ KQxx	♣ AJx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors)	3♦	3NT (diamonds, weak suit)



Responder has a good hand and is quite interested in a diamond suit slam when he learns that opener has both minors. Irrespective of whether we should play slam in diamonds or clubs, it is of importance that opener's diamond suit is good. With marginal strength for slam responder can bid 3NT to show a poor diamond suit. He needs opener to have good diamonds to proceed towards a slam. That was not the case here and since opener also had a minimum hand, he decided to pass.

Let us get back to the main track, which is when responder continues with the 3♥ relay bid to ask for more information, and we can have a fit in both minors.

After opener's 3♦, showing both minors, our first idea was for responder to set the trump suit by bidding three of a major as a Lissabon bid. In the next phase, we thought we could do it just by bidding our minor at the four-level. However, we decided not to do any of that. Responder often needs to find out about opener's exact distribution in the minors. Therefore, we use 3♥ as a relay bid.

Before we look at bidding sequences, there is an important issue to consider; quite often, we should play in our 4-4 fit instead of our 5-4 fit. With the hands below, we can make 6♣ if the clubs are 3-2 but 6♦ is hopeless.

♠ Qx	♠ Kxx
♥ Ax	♥ Qx
♦ KQxxx	♦ AJxx
♣ KJ10x	♣ AQxx

When we have a fit in two suits, we have a keycard problem as we can't have two trump suits simultaneously for ace-asking purposes. Looking at the hands above, there is an advantage if we can find a way to set clubs as trumps. If we are off an Ace and the Queen of clubs, we should not bid slam. If the Queen of diamonds is missing, we perhaps can manage without it since we have nine cards in the suit. Now, let us look at how opener responds to the relay bid 3♥:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3♦-3♥ (relay, asking)

3♠	4-4 in the minors
3NT	five clubs and four diamonds, forcing
4♣	five diamonds and four clubs

If opener has a very weak five-card suit, he may show the hand as 4-4. Opener's other bids, 3NT and 4♣ are similar to the 'Lissabon convention' as the lower bid of two shows longer clubs and the higher bid longer diamonds. The reason is this; if opener must bid 4♦ to show five diamonds and four clubs, we can't set either suit as trump without losing the possibility of cue-bidding. As it is now, we can.



When opener bids 3NT over 3♥ to show five clubs and four diamonds, he expects responder to bid on and set a trump suit with four of a minor; 4♣ will set clubs, and 4♦ or a cue-bid sets diamonds as trumps. When opener instead bids 4♣ and shows four clubs and five diamonds, we use 4♦ to set that suit, while cue-bids in majors set clubs as trumps. I hope you find that logical too.

We don't want to get to slam with these hands:

	♠ Kx	♠ QJxx
	♥ AK	♥ xx
	♦ Qxxx	♦ AJxx
	♣ K10xxx	♣ AQx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors 44 or 54)	3♦	3♥ (asking)
(five clubs)	3NT	4♦ (slam try in diamonds)
(values in majors)	4NT	pass

As responder's 4♦ still is only slam invitational, opener can bid 4NT as a natural bid. Opener's hand with 5-4 in the minors is very honor-heavy in the short suits. Therefore, he warns responder by bidding 4NT and not a cue-bid. Perhaps you now understand why I said; we don't use any fancy six Keycard Blackwood, *but* our system leaves room for common sense, hand evaluation and cooperation between opener and responder.

In the previous hand, responder had a fit for both minors. When we have one 4-4 fit and one 5-3 or 5-4 fit, it is very seldom wrong to play in the 4-4 fit. As in the next example:

	♠ Qx	♠ Kxx
	♥ Ax	♥ Qx
	♦ KQxxx	♦ AJxx
	♣ KQ10x	♣ AJxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors 44 or 54)	3♦	3♥ (asking)
(five diamonds, 4 clubs)	4♣	4♠ (cue-bid, sets clubs)
(optional RKCB)	4NT	5NT (2 Aces, no Queen)
	6♣	

Playing in the 5-4 in diamonds cannot be better, but it can be worse.

We can seldom stop in 3NT when responder has started with a minor suit slam try, but this is one situation where we can:

	♠ Qx	♠ KJx
	♥ AKx	♥ xx
	♦ Kxxx	♦ Axxx
	♣ KJxx	♣ AQxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors)	3♦	3♥ (asking)
(4-4 in minors)	3♠	3NT (limited ambitions)
	pass	

When opener shows 4-4 in the minors by bidding 3♠ responder can limit his slam ambitions with 3NT. Responder has nothing extra for his slam try and when we have a mirror-distribution in the minors, the obvious risk is that we don't have enough tricks for a slam. Opener could bid once more if he wants to, but his hand is average so he should follow responder's advice.

Another danger when we have a fit in two suits is that it may be difficult to manage if either suit is badly distributed, especially if we happen to choose it as trump suit. In that case, perhaps we will not even make a game.

If we change responder's distribution a little, you can see the difference. With these two hands we want to play a club slam:

	♠ Qx	♠ KJxx
	♥ AKx	♥ xxx
	♦ Kxxx	♦ Ax
	♣ KJxx	♣ AQxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♣ (minor suit slam try)
(both minors)	3♦	3♥ (asking)
(4-4 in the minors)	3♠	4♣ (sets clubs as trumps)
(cue-bid)	4♦	4♠ (cue-bid)
(optional RKCB)	4NT	5♠ (2 Aces plus Queen)
	6♣	

Responder has exactly the same hand in strength as in the last example, but a more fitting distribution. He can now be more optimistic and bid 4♣ to set the trump suit. Opener has no reason to decline the invitation, his hand is rather normal for his bids, and he has nothing to be ashamed of.

**1NT-2C; 2D-3D**

Say we have this hand as responder after partner's 1NT:

♠ x ♥ QJxx ♦ KJxx ♣ Axxx

When responder has 4441 we use Stayman. If we then find a 4-4 fit in hearts, it is obviously great. If partner responds 2♠ to Stayman, I believe we should very often play 3NT, and we have perhaps scared away our opponent from leading spades. Also notable, if we compare 4441 and 5431, the latter distribution has a little more playing strength.

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♦	(a singleton in a major)

After opener's 2♦, responder wants to investigate more; it doesn't feel right to just bid 3NT with the hand above. The odds are overwhelming for getting a spade lead, and we have no idea what honors opener has in spades, but we know he has only two or three spades. Therefore we use responder's 3♦ rebid to tell opener about a singleton in one of the majors. We then give the opponents some information too, but as I said, they probably will lead spades no matter what we do.

For a 3♦ bid here responder usually has either precisely 4441 or a four-card major with a five-card minor. When we have a singleton in one of the majors and any 5-4 in the minors, we can show that distribution by a three-level transfer over 1NT. However, as we then show that hand by rebidding 3NT, they show limited hands.

With slam ambitions responder can bid 3♦ with 5-4 in the minors and a singleton in a major, but if he rather wants to know opener's distribution in the minor suits, he can instead initiate the slam auction by bidding 3♣ over 2♦. We like to have a choice of paths. The difference between making five or six in a minor is only one trick, so when responder thinks we can make five, we perhaps can make a slam with a perfect fit, and maybe only four if we have a really bad fit.

These are opener's different rebids over 3♦:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦ (a singleton in a major)

3♥	asking, wants to know the suit
3♠	good honors for both 3NT and a minor suit contract
3NT	not interested at all, acceptable stoppers in both majors
4♣/♦	five-card minor, and no interest in 3NT, forcing

Responder doesn't show his short suit right away, and opener has to ask for it if he wants to know. Let us look at some hands that opener can have in this situation:

♠ AQx ♥ KQ10 ♦ Kxxx ♣ J10x

When responder bids 3♦, opener should bid 3NT. He has no interest in knowing about partner's short suit, even if the opponents often find the right lead they don't always do. Opener has to do the same with the next hand:

♠ KJx	♠ Q10xx
♥ K9x	♥ x
♦ Axx	♦ KQxxx
♣ KJxx	♣ Axx

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♦	(a singleton in a major)
3NT	pass	

As you can see, 3NT isn't a good contract, but it is difficult to know if anything else is better. What I am trying to say here is that we don't always try to avoid 3NT. When we have a stopper in both majors, we expect that 3NT is very often the normal contract if our partner doesn't want to bid on and invite to slam. However, holding Qxx or worse in one of the majors, we think that opener should not bid 3NT. Here are the responses to opener's relay bid, 3♥:

1N-2♣; 2♦-3♦; 3♥ (asking bid)

3♠	short spades
3NT	short hearts, less than 15 HCP, non-forcing
4♣/♦	a five-card minor, short hearts, 15 HCP or more
4♥	4441, short hearts, 15 HCP or more

Even if 3♦ is thought of as game-forcing, we don't always bid game.

♠ KJx	♠ Q10xx
♥ Qxx	♥ x
♦ AQx	♦ Kxxx
♣ K9xx	♣ A10xx

	1NT	2♣	
	2♦	3♦	(a singleton in a major)
(asks: which suit)	3♥	3NT	(hearts, no slam try)
(cannot bid more)	4♣	pass	

When opener learns about the shortage in hearts, he no longer wants to play 3NT. With a minimum he has to bid 4♣. Responder has a minimum too, and we will play there. If responder has only three clubs, and thus five diamonds, he should bid 4♦.

We have a rule to cover this and other situations where we perhaps can stop in four of a minor: when we ask for a singleton and responder has promised at least *eight* cards in the minors, we don't have to bid game. The reason is that opener then has information enough to evaluate his hand and make a suggestion. When opener has asked for the short suit, he has these options to continue:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦; 3♥-3♠/NT (short spades/hearts)

- 3NT (or pass) suggest we play 3NT
- 4♣/♦ non-forcing, often minimum
- 4♥/♠ Lissabon bids, a good hand, at least four clubs or diamonds respectively
- 4NT 4-4 in the minors, but minimum
- 5♣/♦ a five-card suit but not promising good slam cards

We have decided not play in a possible 4-3 fit in a major here, as we then need the opponents to have 3-3 in the suit. Here are some examples of the Lissabon bids:

	♠ Jxx	♠ x
	♥ KQx	♥ Axxx
	♦ Kx	♦ AJxxx
	♣ AQxxx	♣ KJx
	1NT	2♣
(asks: which suit)	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(good hand, four clubs)	3♥	3♠ (short spades)
(five clubs)	4♥	4♠ (five diamonds)
	5♣	6♣

Opener's 4♥ is a Lissabon bid and shows a good hand with four or five clubs. As in similar situations, bidding 4♠ over 4♥ then shows the other minor.

Let us say that responder has only three diamonds but five clubs and opener shows diamonds with the Lissabon bid 4♠; what should he do?

	♠ KJx	♠ Q9xx
	♥ J9x	♥ x
	♦ KQxx	♦ Axx
	♣ AQx	♣ KJxxx
	1NT	2♣
(asks: which suit)	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(good hand, diamonds)	3♥	3NT (short hearts, limited)
	4♠	5♣ (five clubs)

Opener has a good fit and almost all his HCPs are working, but he has no five-card minor and doesn't know in which minor to play. If he bids only 4♦, responder can pass, so he bids 4♠ that shows diamonds. We always have an eight-card fit here. If opener has five diamonds and only two clubs, he will correct to a diamond game.

When opener bypasses 3NT in these situations, we never want to stop in 4NT.

	♠ Jxx	♠ x
	♥ KJx	♥ Axxx
	♦ KQx	♦ AJxx
	♣ AQxx	♣ KJxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(asks: which suit)	3♥	3♠ (short spades)
(good hand, four clubs)	4♥	4NT (optional RKCB)
(accept, 1 Ace)	5♦	6♣

We usually don't appreciate having 4333 but in this case it is much better if opener has 4333 compared to having mirror distribution in the minors. Now, say opener has this hand when responder bids 3♦:

♠ Qxx ♥ AQx ♦ AJxxx ♣ Kx

Opener should bid 3♥. If responder has a singleton in spades it seems better to play the game in diamonds and, if not, 3NT will probably make.

♠ Qxx ♥ Qxx ♦ AKxxx ♣ AJ

Opener isn't at all interested in 3NT. He bids 4♦ to show five diamonds over 3♦. That is not a negative bid because it means that he has most of his strength in the minor suits. We can only stop in four of a minor *after* asking for the short suit.

	♠ Axx	♠ K10xx
	♥ Jxx	♥ x
	♦ AQJxx	♦ Kxxx
	♣ Kx	♣ AQxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(five diamonds)	4♦	4♥ (cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♠	?

I think in this auction we can bid 6♦, which has really good chances to make.

Opener can bid four of minor also with Aces as stoppers in both majors:

1NT	2♣	
2♦	3♦	(a singleton in a major)

♠ AJx ♥ Axx ♦ AJxxx ♣ Kx

Opener can stop both majors but this hand is clearly worth more in a suit contract. When opener doesn't ask for the shortage, but instead bids 3♠ or a four-level bid, we often have a good fit. Next is an example of when opener bids 3♠ over 3♦:

	♠ AJx	♠ Q10xx
	♥ A10x	♥ x
	♦ Axx	♦ KQxxx
	♣ QJxx	♣ Axx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(good honors)	3♠	5♦ (no slam interest)

Opener's 3♠ shows a hand with stoppers in both majors but a hand that is also good for a minor suit contract. With a better hand, responder can invite to slam by bidding 4♦ to set the trump suit.

Over 3♠, responder can bid 3NT and hope for the best, or as above, bid the game in his minor. Should he have 4441, he can bid 4NT to ask opener to bid his four-card suit. One last example on the same theme:

	♠ AJx	♠ K10xx
	♥ Axx	♥ x
	♦ Axx	♦ K10x
	♣ QJxx	♣ AKxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	3♦ (a singleton in a major)
(good honors)	3♠	4♣ (shows clubs)
(cue-bid)	4♥	6♣

Opener again bids 3♠ but responder now has a much better hand and bids 4♣ to investigate slam. Opener will not cue-bid a King in hearts here; he should, in fact, not have a King in any of the majors when he bids 3♠! We have no clear rules for this situation after 4♣, but it seems logical that opener now can bid 4♦ with four diamonds, and responder will then know that opener has exactly 3-3-4-3.

## ***My way and the The Scanian Way***

My favourite bridge book is not a bridge book, but 'Confessions of an Addict,' written by Victor Mollo and published in 1966. One sentence from the book is this: 'I have never doubted that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing to excess.' That was something I really agreed with, or perhaps I learned it from the book. I soon realized that bridge was worth doing to the excess.

Only a few years into my career as a bridge player, I started to write about bridge. As my engagement and writings seemed to be appreciated, at least by some, I started a Bridge magazine in the late '60s and kept it running as long as I had time for it. I started another sometime in the '80s, but after four years, I had to prioritize other things. I probably still owe people money for the issues they didn't get!

I felt honored when the Swedish Bridge Federation asked me to write the book: 'System och konventioner.' Years later, I learned that some critical voices were raised that I presented too many of my own ideas in it. And that was probably true!

Around 1977 I 'decided' that Culbertson and Acol were a little outdated, as no one played them in the way that was originally meant. I wanted to do something about it, and thus proposed to a number of Swedish experts the idea of creating a new 'Swedish standard system.' I was enthusiastic and called the project: 'the modern standard exploring club,' and for about a year, once or twice a month, I sent all these people bidding problems around standard methods. Our ambition was to describe the current standard at that time. In Sweden, the standard then was four-card majors and many still play that.

The result was published in 1978 in the 'Modern Standard' book. I don't know how it is possible, but about 85 000 copies of that book have been sold over the years. After all, I don't think we ever have had more than about 30 000 players! I was told that once in an interview, Jesper Parnevik, a Swedish golf professional living in Florida if you didn't know, was asked among other questions; what was his most recently read book: It was my Modern Standard.

However, I only wrote the first edition of many. Anders Wirgren, together with Magnus Lindkvist, took over as I had my other business to work with, and Anders made some very good revisions of the book for every new edition. In the '90s, we started to publish books in English. I believe the first one was 'Major suit raises', and the second was the 'Notrump bidding.' At the time, I played on the Swedish Open team with Björn Fallenius. In 1995 we published 'Strong Club', a system that Björn and I designed when we were no longer allowed to play the *Minimajor* system in international team tournaments. The last book of the series then was 'Absolute doubles,' which is, in my opinion, the best from that time.



If it was not for Anders Wirgren, I would not be the author of any books at all. The way it went with those books was that I first presented the ideas to Anders, and then wrote a manuscript in my primitive school-English. Anders was a pleasant, hard-working, elegant and patient editor. As a team we could, therefore, eventually produce readable books. As you know, Anders passed away last year, and I know that many bridge players miss him much as well as all he did for our game.

If I remember it correctly, Europe had only 3 or 4 places in the Bermuda Bowl in the '90s, but Sweden managed to make it almost every time. In 1991 we played Iceland in the semi-finals and found that they had a secret weapon. Early in the match, we doubled them in 1NT to collect 1100. But they just smiled and kept smiling throughout the match. I am not surprised they beat us and went on to win the final. There is simply no defence against that.

My memories from those years are a little blurred, but my wife, Lena, sometimes tells me stories. When we played the European Championships 1995 in Vilamoura, Portugal, Lena was watching on vugraph. She had our system book at hand, and we had a long and complicated relay bidding sequence, ending in a good slam. Peo Sundelin, who was commenting in the Rama, asked Lena to explain the bidding. She explained all the bids from the book. Björn was asking for my distribution, and so on. Afterwards she proudly told me about it. The only problem was that it was I who had been asking the questions from the other hand, while Björn just answered them. It is nice when a system can work both ways!

Another anecdote from the same tournament: In the last match, we played against Poland and only the winning team from that match would advance to the 1995 Bermuda Bowl in Beijing. The match was very close, and in one of the last boards, I had to underlead an Ace to beat a Polish slam. Lena told the audience beforehand that I would find it, and I did. So we went to Bermuda Bowl also that time.

After playing on the Swedish team in the '90s, I had to take a break from bridge, to do other things. Björn continued having great success, though, including winning gold medals in pairs with Peter Fredin and nationals in the US with Roy Welland.

During the years Björn Fallenius and I played, we were runners-up in the European Championships more than once, and we also managed to reach the semi-finals in Bermuda Bowl and the Open World Championships many times, but I still have to wait to be a champion. Perhaps it is now too late, but it is also too early to give up!

Björn and I now have resumed our good partnership. Only once, as far as I can remember, we had a big disagreement about a bidding sequence. Björn invented a 5NT bid as pick-a-slam bid, and I passed! At the time, we both thought we were right, but I think now we have realized that we both were wrong!

**1NT-2C; 2D - Responder has both majors**

When responder has a game-forcing hand with 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors, he uses the following rebids after opener's 2♦:

1NT-2♣; 2♦

- 3♥ game-forcing with four hearts and at least five spades (Smolen)
- 3♠ game-forcing with four spades and at least five hearts (Smolen)
- 4♣ precisely a slam try with 5-5 in the majors
- 4♦ game or slam going with 5-5 in majors, asks for a preference

Three of a major is the 'Smolen convention,' which I am sure most of you are familiar with. Responder shows five or more cards in the *unbid* major:

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♥ (game-forcing with four hearts and at least five *spades*)

- 3♠ support, opener can bid 4♠ with a minimum and 4333
- 3NT no spade support (4♥ re-transfer)
- 4♣/♦ cue with maximum and support. (4♥ also now a re-transfer)

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♠ (game-forcing with four spades and at least five *hearts*)

- 3NT no heart support (4♦ re-transfer)
- 4♣ maximum with heart support (4♦ also now a re-transfer)
- 4♥ support and minimum or 4333

When responder has 6-4 distribution, he can continue bidding after 3NT. He can make opener declarer with a re-transfer, and if he bids something else, that is a slam try. As in the 2NT system, responder can show a void in one of the unbid suits by a re-transfer to the long suit followed by a bid in a new suit.

Responder's jump to the four-level in a minor after 2♦ shows, at least, 5-5 in the majors. We use the same 'both-majors-module' as we do in the 2NT system, and which we discussed in detail there. Therefore I only make a brief presentation here:

- 4♣ is a slam try. If opener is negative to slam, he bids 4♦, which forces responder to bid 4♥ as pass/correct. If opener wants to accept the invitation, he bids the trump suit. Responder will then not pass
- 4♦ asks for a preference. Responder either wants to be in a game contract or to set the trump before bidding 4NT as Roman Key Card Blackwood

Both of these bids are used to show at least 5-5 distribution in the majors. We don't know for sure if opener has a three-card major, but we usually would have an honor in each major if we open 1NT with 5422 and doubleton in both majors.

Just a few examples of the method in this situation:

	♠ AKx	♠ Qxxxx
	♥ Jx	♥ AKxxx
	♦ AQxx	♦ x
	♣ Qxxx	♣ xx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	4♦ (5-5 majors, game/slam)
(preference)	4♠	pass

Responder's 4♦ forces opener to make a preference between the majors. In that way, we can set the trump at the four-level if responder has a very strong hand and just wants to ask for keycards, as in the next example hand:

♠ KJxxx ♥ AKJ10x ♦ Kx ♣ x

He can bid 4♦, and then continue with Roman Keycard Blackwood.

If responder has a hand in-between, such as too much for game and not enough to move forward to slam on his own, he can invite to slam:

♠ KJxxx ♥ AKJxx ♦ x ♣ Jx

With this hand, we need to ask partner for help. We bid 4♣ and await his reaction. If opener declines the invitation, he bids 4♦. Then we have to bid 4♥, and opener will pass or correct to 4♠. If opener accepts the invitation, he will set one of the majors as trumps by bidding it. Then we can ask for Aces or alternatively cue-bid 5♦ to be sure that opener has a club control if we bid slam. In the next example, responder needs opener to have a good fit in order to bid slam:

	♠ Qx	♠ AJxxx
	♥ J10x	♥ AKxxx
	♦ AQJx	♦ x
	♣ KQxx	♣ xx
	1NT	2♣
	2♦	4♣ (5-5 majors, slam try)
(decline)	4♦	4♥ (pass/correct)
	pass	

Knowing about 5-5 in majors makes it easier for opener to evaluate his hand. Holding lots of low honors in the minors is not good. When opener rejects the invitation, responder has to bid 4♥, where after opener passes or corrects to spades.

**1NT-2C; 2H**

I know what you are thinking. So far, we have only covered *one* of several rebids to *one* of many responses to one notrump! That took some time, but I hope the rest of our system is a little less complicated.

Opener's 2♥ (and 2♠) shows four or five cards in the bid suit and denies four cards in the other major. As we don't always open 1NT with a five-card major, most of the time opener has only four. There are some differences depending on which of the majors opener bids, but let's deal with 2♥ first.

This is a summary of responder's rebids:

1NT-2♣; 2♥

2♠	invitational with five spades
2NT	invitational, either with four spades or no major at all
3♣	game-forcing with four or more clubs
3♦	game-forcing with four or more diamonds
3♥	invitational
3♠	a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three hearts
4♣/♦	a singleton or void with heart support

Some of responder's bids need very little discussion and no further explanation:

Responder's 2NT doesn't promise the other major. If opener accepts the invitation, he can rebid a five-card major. When responder makes an invitational raise of the major, opener with maximum and 4333 can bid 3NT to suggest we play there.

After 2♥, responder's 2♠ is invitational, as after 2♦. We now know that responder doesn't have both majors and more often than not has a solid invitation based on HCP. Opener's rebids after 2♠ are basically the same as if opener had bid 2♦:

1NT-2♣; 2♥-2♠ (invitational with five spades)

pass	minimum, often two spades
2NT	maximum, usually without support
3♣	a relay with maximum, asks for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
3♥	maximum with five hearts and an honor doubleton in spades.
3/4♠	natural raises

A difference from when responder bids 2♠ after a 2♦ response is that responder doesn't have to worry about a heart stopper, and hence doesn't show a doubleton in that suit if opener bids 3♣. Much of the continued bidding is otherwise precisely the same. If you want to, you can go back and look at that again.

**1NT-2C; 2H-3C/D**

When opener has a major and responder bids a minor suit at the three-level, we have two, or perhaps even three, possible trump suits. Therefore, we use a more natural approach compared to when opener didn't have a four-card major.

When comparing our methods here to standard notrump systems there are a few things of importance. As you know by now, we don't always open 1NT with a hand including a five-card major. Therefore, that hand is not as frequent for us.

As will be discussed later, we use the direct bid in the other major at the three-level to specifically ask opener if he has five cards in his major; we don't have to bid a minor to find out about that. Over 2♥, 3♠ asks opener: do you have five hearts?

In our methods, opener has denied four cards in the other major. Hence we don't have to bother about a possible 4-4 fit in spades after opener's 2♥. Responder already knows that opener has two or three cards in the unbid major.

Finally, we can bid a minor at the three-level with only a four-card suit when we have slam ambitions. This allows us to find a 4-4 fit in a minor and to play a slam in that suit as an alternative to playing 6NT.

Responder should always have a reason to bid a minor instead of bidding 3NT, and having slam ambitions is a good reason. If not that, he has some other reason, such as weakness in a suit or an unbalanced distribution. Let us look at a few hands:

1NT	2♣
2♥	3♣

♠ QJxx   ♥ Q10x   ♦ x   ♣ AKxxx

With this hand, responder can see several possible alternative contracts. If opener is short or weak in diamonds we should for sure avoid playing 3NT. With help from partner responder hopes to find out more and thus starts by bidding his long suit.

1NT	2♣
2♥	3♦

♠ xx   ♥ Qx   ♦ A10xxx   ♣ AKxx

This is another hand where responder has a good reason to investigate more. We still have a chance to find a slam if we have a good fit in one of the minors and even if we don't, we perhaps should play the game in a suit contract because of the weak spade holding.

As I said, opener should keep in mind that responder has a *reason* to show a minor suit. If opener has support and well placed honors, he can raise partner's minor. Responder must be prepared for that. What about opener's bids at the three-level?

Here are some general principles we use after responder's natural three of a minor:

- Opener's 3NT promises stoppers in both the unbid suits
- After 3♣, we can make natural and semi-natural bids at the three-level
- After 3♦, we can almost do that too, I will explain when we get there

By the term semi-natural, I mean 'almost natural', for example, a good stopper in a three-card suit. However, we don't bid semi-natural bids just because we can. We have a motive when we do, and that helps us to understand the bids.

### 1NT-2C; 2H-3C

We have more bidding space after 3♣ than after 3♦ but 3♣ also includes hands with 4-4 in the minors. Let's begin by how we interpret opener's options after 3♣.

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♣

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 3♦  | four diamonds, or semi-natural with weakness in spades       |
| 3♥  | five hearts, usually values in spades, perhaps weak diamonds |
| 3♠  | semi-natural, stopper in spades, weakness in diamonds        |
| 3NT | natural, stoppers in both the unbid suits                    |

Opener doesn't know why responder bid 3♣; is it to find a slam, or is he worried about 3NT? Even if opener is not sure what responder wants, his foremost duty is to assist his partner! To use the available bids economically, we have decided that opener's 3♦ bid doesn't deny five hearts as responder still can bid 3♥ with three.

Let's start by looking at a few hands where opener has only four hearts:

♠ Kxx ♥ AKxx ♦ QJx ♣ Qxx

With the hand above opener can't be of much help. He doesn't have club support, and neither does he have four diamonds nor five hearts. Bidding 3NT is the only logical alternative. The next hand is different:

♠ KQx ♥ AKxx ♦ xxx ♣ QJx

As we can't have four spades in this auction, we can bid a semi-natural 3♠. The only reason for showing values in spades is *weak diamonds*. Inferentially opener will then also have fitting honors in partner's suit.

♠ Qxx ♥ AKxx ♦ KQxx ♣ Qx

Opener has four good diamonds, and there is no reason not to bid them. If opener has the next hand, though, he has to use his imagination:

♠ xxx ♥ AKxx ♦ KQx ♣ QJx

Opener has no spade stopper and his partner can have two small, or even worse, a singleton spade. Opener should bid 3♦, which *either* is completely natural or semi-natural with diamond values and *weakness* in spades. The purpose of these bids is not only to avoid playing 3NT without a stopper. We also want to give responder help to judge how our hands fit for a possible slam. If he has a short suit opposite our strength we should probably not bid a marginal slam, but when the shortage happens to be in opener's weak suit, responder can be really optimistic.

After 3♦, responder still has plenty of room as we can see here:

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♣; 3♦

3♥	often three-card support but perhaps a top honor in a doubleton
3♠	fourth-suit, asking for a spade stopper
3NT	a limited hand with a stopper in spades
4♣	five clubs, slam try and promises a spade control
4♦	precisely 4-1-4-4 with slam ambitions and a spade control

4NT is natural over 4♦ and we can use Lissabon to show a good hand with a four-card minor as we are not interested in playing in a 4-3 fit in responder's major.

If opener has five cards in his major he has three possible bids to choose from. He can bid 3NT and would often do so with bad clubs and good stoppers in the other suits. The other two options can both be exemplified with this hand:

♠ Jx ♥ AKxxx ♦ KQx ♣ KJx

It may seem obvious to rebid hearts, and perhaps do the same thing if we exchange the holdings in diamonds and spades. Most of time it will not matter much but if our partner has two small cards in one of those suits, it will.

If we always bid 3♥ with five hearts it will be impossible to investigate in which suit responder is weak. Let us say that responder has a spade stopper. Should he then bid 3♠ to show the stopper or should he bid 3NT? We can decide on one or the other. What about a diamond stopper and nothing in spades? It may seem like we can handle that with 3♠ and 3NT, but we can't. The trap is that 3NT cannot have the opposite meaning as responder may have a stopper in both suits.

Here is the first example of two, to explain why we need to address this problem:

	♠ KQx	♠ AJxx
	♥ AKxxx	♥ Jx
	♦ xx	♦ xx
	♣ QJx	♣ AKxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♣ (at least four clubs)
(five hearts)	3♥	3♠ (values, weak diamonds)
(no stopper there)	4♣	5♣

After 3♥, diamonds is still an unbid suit, and therefore, the 3♠ bid is a natural or a semi-natural bid instead of as before a fourth-suit bid. To show you my thought process here, let me change both hands a little but keep the auction up to 3♥:

	♠ xx	♠ xx
	♥ AKxxx	♥ Jx
	♦ KQx	♦ AJxx
	♣ QJx	♣ AKxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♣ (at least four clubs)
(five hearts)	3♥	?

If opener bids 3♥ also with this hand, we will end up in 3NT as responder now will have to bid 3NT over 3♥. It doesn't help if we change the meaning of responder's 3♠ to always *ask* for a stopper. Then we will instead play 3NT with the hand in the previous example, where we didn't have a diamond stopper.

As we want to be able to avoid 3NT in both deals, opener should bid 3♦ with five hearts when he has good diamonds and weak spades. In practice, that means that when opener bids 3♥, he often has some values in spades while he may or may not have anything in diamonds.

When opener shows five hearts by bidding 3♥, responder can ask for a diamond stopper by bidding a *semi-natural* 3♠. However, if opener bids 3♦ we consider diamonds to be a bid suit, which means that responder's 3♠ now is a *fourth-suit* bid. These are the indirect clues from opener's bids and rebids:

- when we bid 3♥, responder can ask for a diamond stopper by bidding 3♠
- If we bid 3♦ with a spade stopper (3NT over 3♠), we have four diamonds

These conclusions are perhaps not obvious, but I hope you understand them.



**1NT-2C; 2H-3D**

When responder bids 3♦, instead of 3♣, opener has only two remaining three-level bids to choose from if he doesn't want to bid 3NT. Let's see how we handle that.

1NT	2♣	
2♥	3♦	(at least four diamonds)

If responder is only interested in either 3NT or game in opener's major, instead of 3♦, he should bid 3♠ directly over 2♥ which asks for five hearts. If responder bids 3♦ with three hearts, he has a reason to show his diamond suit. If not interested in a slam, he has an unbalanced hand or a weak doubleton in one of the unbid suits.

With a fair diamond support opener should raise or make a four-level cue-bid, and we can still stop in 4NT after the raise. Without support opener should prioritize showing weakness in an unbid suit if he has one. We think that is more important than to be able to show five cards in our major. Opener's rebids at the three-level:

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♦

3♥	a club stopper, either with five hearts or four hearts and <i>weak spades</i>
3♠	<i>weak clubs</i> , four or five hearts
3NT	stoppers in both the unbid suits

The above means that we can bid 3♥ with this hand:

♠ Kx ♥ AKxxx ♦ Qxx ♣ Axx

However, we don't show five hearts. We also have to bid 3♥ with the next hand:

♠ xx ♥ AKxx ♦ Qxx ♣ AQJx

Our 3♥ just shows that we have something in clubs. Let's see how that works:

	♠ xx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ AKxx	♥ Qx
	♦ Qxx	♦ AK10xx
	♣ AQJx	♣ xx
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♦ (at least four diamonds)
(semi-natural)	3♥	3NT

Opener's 3♥ shows a club stopper with four or five hearts. If opener has only four hearts then he has weak spades. Whichever it is, responder is not very interested.

In the next example, responder hesitates to bid 3NT as he has no spade stopper:

	♠ xx	♠ xx
	♥ AKxx	♥ Jx
	♦ Qxx	♦ AKJxx
	♣ AQJx	♣ Kxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♦ (at least four diamonds)
(a stopper in clubs)	3♥	3♠ ('fourth-suit')
(no spade stopper)	4♦	5♦

Opener's 3♥ shows values in clubs. Therefore, responder's 3♠ is fourth-suit even if clubs are not actually a bid suit. Without a stopper opener can alternatively bid 4♥ with a decent five-card suit. If opener bids 4♣ over 3♠ it is not a natural bid. Opener shows five hearts, three diamonds, and a good hand. Opener does not deny a spade control and a diamond slam is still possible.

If opener can bid 3NT over 3♠ he has a stopper in spades. If you follow my logic that means he must have five hearts as he otherwise would have bid 3NT directly over 3♦. However, opener can also elect to not show his fifth heart at all. With the next hand, opener bids 3NT over 3♦ as he has good stoppers and no diamond fit.

♠ KQ10 ♥ Q10xxx ♦ Jx ♣ AK9

When opener bids 3♥ and shows a club stopper he doesn't deny a spade stopper but when opener instead bids 3♠ over 3♦, he has values in spades and definitely weak clubs. That information helps us to find this good slam:

	♠ AQx	♠ KJxx
	♥ AKxx	♥ Q10x
	♦ Qxx	♦ AKJxx
	♣ Jxx	♣ x
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♦ (at least four diamonds)
(weak clubs)	3♠	4♣ (an ambiguous bid)
(not five hearts)	4♦	4♠ (cue-bid, sets diamonds)
(2 Aces plus Queen)	5♠	6♦

Responder's 4♣ can be a natural bid after 3♦. Why not here? Opener has shown weak clubs, and thus, a club contract is out of the picture. Responder can use the bid to show that he has several options, and opener can then bid 4♥ with five hearts. Four-level bids like this and in fourth-suit are in general positive signals.

**1NT-2C; 2H - responder has support**

To begin with, I give you a short summary of the possible bids with support:

1NT-2♣; 2♥

3♥          invitational

3♠          a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three hearts

4♣/♦      a singleton or void with heart support

As we don't play any kind of Puppet Stayman, we don't know whether opener has four or five hearts. We often choose to open with our major suit if we have both a five-card major and a weak doubleton, and therefore, responder often will bid 3NT when he has 4333 distribution with three-card support.

Some of responder's bids above require further comments:

1NT	2♣	
2♥	3♠	(two-way)

What responder knows about opener's distribution, except for the heart suit, is that he has two or three spades. With 4-4 in the majors, opener would have bid 2NT or 3♣ over 2♣ and therefore opener now has two or three spades.

Responder wants to know more if he is holding a hand like this after 2♥:

♠ xx    ♥ KJx    ♦ Kxxx    ♣ Axxx

As responder has a weak doubleton in spades he will definitely bid 3♠. If we have 5-3 in hearts, we will find it. Sometimes opener can guess, and perhaps decide to play a game in the 4-3 fit, as in this auction.

♠ Jx	♠ xx
♥ AQ9x	♥ KJx
♦ Qxx	♦ KJxx
♣ AQxx	♣ Kxxx

  

1NT	2♣
2♥	3♠      (two-way)
4♥	

The 4♥ contract is not perfect but much better than 3NT. Responder will believe that opener has five hearts, but so will the opponents. This time it was a good guess, but it can, however, be a bad guess another time.

If responder has this hand for his 3♠ bid, 3NT would have been better:

♠ Kxxx ♥ KJx ♦ KJxx ♣ xx

When responder has a slam try with real support, he also starts by bidding 3♠. If opener has five cards in his major, knowing they have nine trumps between them can be vital. These are opener's rebids after 3♠:

1NT-2♣; 2♥; 3♠

3NT the normal bid with four hearts

4♣/♦ cue-bid with five hearts

4♥ five hearts and minimum

As we saw from the previous example, opener can bid 4♥ with four cards but that is then a deviation from the system, and we do not often do that.

After 3NT responder will continue with a cue-bid to show the slam try.

	♠ Axx	♠ Kx
	♥ AQ9x	♥ KJxx
	♦ 10x	♦ AQxx
	♣ AQxx	♣ Kxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♥	3♠ (two-way)
(not five hearts)	3NT	4♣ (four hearts, cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♠	4NT (RKCB in hearts)
(0 or 3 Aces)	5♦	6♥

With four keycards opener accepts the slam try by cue-bidding spades. Responder doesn't think we can have a grand slam. If he did, he would have bid 5♥ over 5♦ to ask for the trump Queen. We have agreed that we can only pass over 5♥ with zero keycards, and to avoid Blackwood without any keycards at all.

Responder jumps to the four-level to show support and singleton or void in the suit.

1NT	2♣
2♥	4♣/♦ (splinter bids)

For us there is a difference between these two bids. After 4♣, opener can make a last-train bid with 4♦ to say: I am not negative, but not very convinced either. After 4♦, opener can't do that, so when responder bids 4♦ he says: 'We need a really good fit to move towards slam.'

**1NT-2C; 2S**

Responder's rebids, and much of the continued bidding after 2♠, are in principle, the same as if opener had bid 2♥. Here is a summary of responder's bids:

1NT-2♣; 2♠

- 2NT      invitational, either with four hearts or no major at all
- 3♣      game-forcing with four or more clubs
- 3♦      game-forcing with four or more diamonds
- 3♥      a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three spades
- 3♠      invitational
- 4♣/♦/♥ a singleton or a void with spade support

**1NT-2C; 2S-3C**

Without support, and with a reason not to sign-off by bidding 3NT, opener bids his suits and features up-the-line. These are opener's rebids after 3♣:

1NT-2♣; 2♠-3♣

- 3♦      four diamonds, or semi-natural with weakness in hearts
- 3♥      semi-natural with weakness in diamonds
- 3♠      five spades, no obvious weakness
- 3NT    natural, stoppers in unbid suits

To describe our methods after responder's three of a minor, I could use words like feeling and common sense. Bids that sound natural can be exactly that, or they can be semi-natural. As you already have noticed, we can also often draw conclusions from our partner's choice of bidding path. In the next hand, responder has a choice:

	1NT	2♣	
	2♠	3♣	(at least four clubs)
(suit or values)	3♦	?	

♠ QJx   ♥ Jx   ♦ AJxx   ♣ AKxx

As we regard semi-natural bids as a *bid suit*, responder can bid 3♥ as *fourth-suit*, but with this hand, 3♠ is a more natural bid. If opener has only three diamonds, he is weak in hearts and will not bid 3NT. Let us say responder instead has this hand:

♠ Qx   ♥ Qx   ♦ AJxx   ♣ AKJxx

Responder can raise diamonds to make a slam try, but he shouldn't do that. Instead he should bid 3♥ as fourth-suit. Let us look at both hands:

	♠ AKxx	♠ Qx
	♥ Jxx	♥ Qx
	♦ KQx	♦ AJxx
	♣ Q10x	♣ AKJxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♠	3♣ (at least four clubs)
(suit or values)	3♦	3♥ (fourth-suit)
(no stopper, last-train)	3♠	3NT (semi-stopper)

As responder bids 3♥ and not 3♠, he will not have three-card spades, and therefore, there is no point for opener to 3♠ bid just to show five spades. As we can see in the auction above, the 3♠ bid is however not useless. When responder bids fourth-suit and then 3NT, we can find out about the combined heart stopper.

There is another point with this auction. There is no reason to bid a slam when we both lack a heart control. It is, though, not obvious to raise diamonds even with a heart control, as we can learn from the next example:

	♠ AKxx	♠ xx
	♥ KJx	♥ Ax
	♦ Qxxx	♦ AKxx
	♣ Qx	♣ AJxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♠	3♣ (at least four clubs)
(suit or values)	3♦	3♥ (fourth-suit)
(a heart stopper)	3NT	4♦ (slam try in diamonds)
(negative)	4NT	6♦

Opener's 3♦ could have been semi-natural with three diamonds and *weak hearts*. Responder can then bid 3♥ as fourth-suit to find out which it is; if opener, as here, can bid 3NT he logically has four diamonds. If opener instead has:

♠ AKJx ♥ xxx ♦ QJx ♣ KQx

Without a heart stopper, opener can rebid 3♠ or perhaps make a preference to 4♣ since he has nothing at all in hearts. In the latter case, responder still can bid 4♦ as a natural slam try or cue-bid to invite to a club slam. As I mentioned, responder can also raise 3♦ directly to 4♦ with a hand like this:

♠ x ♥ AQxx ♦ KJxx ♣ AQxx

Holding 4441 is a possible hand, and it is nice to have a way to show it.

If opener has five spades, he will have to retreat to 4NT, but he can also have this:

♠ AQxx ♥ xx ♦ AQx ♣ Kxxx

Holding a minimum, opener can bid 5♣ or with just a little better hand alternatively bid the Lissabon 4♥ to keep open for a slam.

One last example of finding the right slam:

	♠ AKxx	♠ Qx
	♥ Kxx	♥ xx
	♦ QJx	♦ AKxx
	♣ QJx	♣ AKxxx
	1NT	2♣
	2♠	3♣ (at least four clubs)
(natural with stoppers)	3NT	4♣ (five clubs, slam try)
(accept, cue-bid)	4♥	4♠ (ambiguous bid)
(optional RKCB)	4NT	5♥ (accept, and 3 keycards)
	6NT	

Responder makes a slam try with 4♣. Since opener already has limited his hand with 3NT, he accepts with a cue-bid. However, opener should be allowed to bid 4♦ as a natural bid. Bidding 4♠ over a 4♥ cue-bid doesn't always show a control, and with both Ace and King in spades, opener can imagine responder's problem.

As the cue-bidding has started in the above auction, 4NT is optional Blackwood, and opener bids 6NT to protect his King of hearts as a suit contract doesn't seem to be much better when he has 4333.

### 1NT-2C; 2S-3D

When responder bids 3♦, we have less bidding space than we have after 3♣, but we also know more already. Responder doesn't have 4-4 in the minors and he more often has five diamonds. As opener we prioritize to indicate a weakness before showing a rebiddable suit; 3♥ shows a stopper, and four or five spades and if only four spades also weakness in clubs. Here are opener's three-level rebids:

1NT-2♣; 2♠-3♦

3♥ semi-natural, either with five spades or four spades with weak clubs  
 3♠ weak hearts, four or five spades  
 3NT limited hand, stopper in unbid suits

Bidding at the four-level shows diamond support.

Whether opener has four or five cards in his major will not always be revealed in the bidding. Sometimes it will, inferentially. Let us say opener has bid 3♥:

♠ KJxxx ♥ AJx ♦ Ax ♣ Qxx

If responder makes the ambiguous bid 3♠, and we can rebid 3NT, thereby showing a club stopper, we show five spades. At least in theory, as with stoppers in both clubs and hearts, and only four spades, we often would rebid 3NT over 3♦.

To avoid 3NT when responder is short in clubs, opener can bid 3♥ with only four spades, instead of 3NT, when he has weak clubs, as in this example:

	1NT	2♣	
	2♠	3♦	(at least four diamonds)
(semi-natural)	3♥	3♠	(an ambiguous bid)
	4♦		

♠ KJxx ♥ AQx ♦ AJx ♣ Jxx

If responder bids 3♠, he has either three-card support in spades or weak clubs, or both. With the hand above, opener should still not bid 3NT, and has to make a preference to 4♦. Here is an example where opener has a better hand:

	♠ AJ10xx	♠ Kx	
	♥ AQx	♥ Kxxx	
	♦ Kxx	♦ AJ10xx	
	♣ Jx	♣ xx	
	1NT	2♣	
	2♠	3♦	(at least four diamonds)
(semi-natural)	3♥	3♠	(an ambiguous bid)
(fourth-suit)	4♣	4♠	(no slam ambitions)

When we bid a fourth-suit bid at the three-level it can be a good hand but also a cry for help and say: what shall we do? However, when we bid a fourth-suit bid at the four-level it shows that we have several *good* options. When opener, in the auction above, after 3♠ bids fourth-suit by bidding 4♣ the logical explanation is that he has five spades and three diamonds.

If opener doesn't bid 3NT, but makes a suit-bid at the three-level, one reason can also be that he still hopes we can have slam. If opener bids 3♠ instead of 3♥ he can still have either four or five spades, but in both cases he has a *weakness* in hearts. With the following hand, he can bid 3♠, and follow up with 4♣ to show that we still have several options. We can play in diamonds or spades.



♠ AKxxx ♥ xx ♦ KQx ♣ Axx

When opener bids at the three-level, he isn't obliged to pass if responder bids 3NT. Partner's 3♦ isn't necessarily a slam try, but it shows strength enough to have five in minor as an alternative option. Opener can bid 3♠, planning to bid once more.

When opener bids 3♠ over 3♦, he can also have four spades and weak hearts:

♠ KQxx ♥ xx ♦ AJx ♣ AQxx

With the next hand opener wants to bid 3NT but also has support:

♠ Axxx ♥ AQ ♦ J9xx ♣ KJx

Opener has support but most of his honors are outside of partner's suits. If Opener makes a three level bid, he indicates a hand that he doesn't have. If he bids a semi-natural 3♥ and then rebids 3NT, responder will think he has five spades and if he rebids 4♦ it sounds like weak clubs. Opener must choose between 3NT and raising diamonds. If he bids 3NT, responder can continue with natural slam invitational bids; bidding 4♣ shows 5-4 and a rebid of the suit shows five diamonds.

Because we have limited space at the three-level, opener very often raises with a good four-card support in diamonds. If he raises to 4♦ it shows a normal hand, and with a good hand opener can raise via a cue-bid:

	♠ AK10x	♠ Qxx
	♥ Qx	♥ Kxx
	♦ QJxx	♦ AKxxx
	♣ Axx	♣ Kx
	1NT	2♣
	2♠	3♦ (at least four diamonds)
(support, cue-bid)	4♣	4♥ (cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♠	5NT (2 Aces, no Queen)
	6♦	

When opener has good diamond support and likes his hand, he can cue-bid 4♣. Responder has not yet promised any slam ambitions, so opener should not bypass 3NT without support. Therefore, 4♣ is not a natural bid. The rest of the bidding is a suggestion as there may be different roads to the slam. I know that all of this is very theoretical. In practical play, we would perhaps bid 6♦ as quickly as we can and hope for the wrong lead. But, that is my whole idea with this presentation; to show you the alternatives to guessing.

**1NT-2C; 2S - responder has support**

Here is a summary of the rebids from responder that shows support:

1NT-2♣; 2♠

3♥ a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three spades

3♠ invitational

4♣/♦/♥ a singleton or a void with spade support

When we have the following hands, we have a problem:

♠ AK10x	♠ QJxx
♥ K10x	♥ Qxx
♦ Qxx	♦ J9x
♣ AJx	♣ Kxx
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♠

Both opener and responder know they have a 4333 hand, but they don't know that partner has that too. As responder we can perhaps forget about our major when we have 4333 and strength for game, but if we decide to invite we must bid Stayman and thus we will find our spade fit, even if we may wish we didn't.

Here no game is good, but 3NT is slightly better than 4♠. Opener can bid 3NT, and responder would happily accept by a pass.

However, both hands having 4333 with the same four-card suit is very infrequent. Opener could as well have had less HCP but a better distribution, as in the next hand, where 4♠ would be better than 3NT:

♠ Kxxx ♥ K10x ♦ Ax ♣ AQxx

Opener's rebids after 3♥ are:

1NT-2♣; 2♠; 3♥

3♠ four good spades and some weak suit (often hearts)

3NT the normal bid with four spades

4♣/♦/♥ cue-bid with five spades

4♠ five spades, but a warning for slam

Some sound advice: When you suggest to play in a 4-3 fit, that will usually work best when your side has the Ace in the trump suit.

**Opener has both majors**

When opener shows both majors, he bids 2NT with a minimum hand and 3♣ when he has a maximum. We can still stop in a part-score also after 3♣ if responder has bid Stayman with a weak hand and 4-4-4-1, but that doesn't happen very often.

These are responder's rebids after 2NT:

1NT-2♣; 2NT

3♣ a slam try with five clubs  
 3♦/♥ transfer  
 3♠ a slam try with five diamonds

When opener shows a maximum the only difference is that responder has to bid 4♣ to show a slam try in clubs. After the transfer is completed responder can pass, raise or make a slam try. 3NT is a general slam try and new suits show shortage.

	♠ AQxx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ Kxxx	♥ Jx
	♦ Kx	♦ AJx
	♣ Kxx	♣ AQxx
	1NT	2♣
(4-4 in majors, min.)	2NT	3♥ (transfer)
(completed)	3♠	3NT (a balanced slam try)
(cue-bid)	4♣	4♦ (cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♥	4♠ (not much extra)
	pass	

None of us has the extra values to motivate going further. When responder bids 3NT here, he usually has a balanced hand but we don't have to show a high singleton honor, and thus responder can have a singleton honor."

In the next hand responder has an interesting hand but we have a bad fit:

	♠ AQxx	♠ Kxxx
	♥ KJxx	♥ x
	♦ Qx	♦ AJxxx
	♣ K10x	♣ Axx
	1NT	2♣
(4-4 in majors, min.)	2NT	3♥ (transfer)
(completed)	3♠	4♥ (short hearts)
(no good fit)	4♠	pass

***We transfer to a major***

We have some principles that apply to the transfer responses, and I have assembled them here so we can look at them before we go into the detailed sequences.

When we have found a 5-3 or 6-2 fit in a major, we can still stop in 3NT in a few sequences. Let us look at some auctions where we can play the game in notrumps:

1NT	2♦
2♥	3NT

Here responder has hearts, but it is exactly the same with spades. Opener is allowed to pass with support. Responder has the alternative to bid 2NT instead of 3NT if he doesn't want to play 3NT with a 5-3 fit. The normal hand for responder to have in the auction above is 5332 with an honor in the shortest suit.

1NT	2♦
2NT	

Opener's 2NT shows support but says he wants to play in notrumps. Responder can raise to 3NT if he likes notrumps. If not, he can re-transfer by bidding 3♦. If he does, and then bids 3NT, it is not to play but a slam try inviting opener to cue-bid.

Here opener suggests playing 3NT and usually has an honor in hearts.

1NT	2♦	
2♥	3♥	(six hearts, invitational)
3NT		

When responder rebids 2NT instead of 3NT he says: 'Partner, if you have support I want to play the game in my suit and not 3NT.' However, we can still stop in 3NT in some sequences and we will discuss them soon. This is an example:

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(heart support)	3♦	3NT	(limited slam try)

Responder's 3NT means he has a good hand but not a good suit. If opener has bad support quality, we should not play a slam in the suit, and opener can even pass.

When responder starts with a two-level transfer and then makes a game-forcing bid, we *can't* stop at the four-level in a minor. That is consistent with our rule that four of minor is non-forcing only when responder has promised at least eight cards in the minors - and he can't make that promise after the transfer.

The above means that when opener doesn't have a fit in the major, and we look for alternative game or slam contracts, opener can support partner suit or bid a minor of his own at the four-level without risking that responder will then pass. There will be many examples of situations where we use this principle. When responder has precisely a game-invitational with a five-card major, though, we can stop at the four-level in a minor. Another important rule is when we look for a minor suit slam we can never cue-bid responder's major at the four-level as bidding four of that major is always a *non-forcing* bid.

When responder has a game-forcing hand and at least 5-4 in a major and a minor he has a choice between rebidding 2NT and bidding his minor at the three-level. These rules can give you an idea of how we think as responder:

- with slam ambitions and about 14 HCP or more we must bid our minor
- with 5-5 or better distribution we always show our minor
- with 5431 we can bid the four-card minor or show the short suit via 2NT
- with 5422 we either bid a good minor or else 2NT
- we don't have any special continuation to handle hands with 6-4.

After 2NT we use the *transfer & 2NT module*. The 2NT bid is just game-forcing, but perhaps also comes with slam ambitions if responder has 5332. As responder didn't rebid 3NT, he has alternative contracts in sight if he has 5332.

When we already have set a major as trumps, responder showing a singleton is obviously a slam try. It shows a hand where we can make a slam if opener has a good fit in our short suit. If the short suit is just below our trump suit there is no 'last-train' bid available to say *maybe* and opener must have a good fit or much extra to make a bid above our trump suit. However, responder's 2NT is always limited when unbalanced, and bids showing shortage are mild invites to a slam.

We sometimes use the term *a super-fit bid*. What is that? In our interpretation, a super-fit is when you look at your hand and count your HCP like this:

- all the HCPs we have in partner's bid suit(s)
- all the HCPs we have in Aces or the combination Ace-King in the same suit

When we reach around 15 HCP in the above calculations, we have a super-fit. Let us look at an example and say partner has shown hearts:

♠ AKx   ♥ Jxx   ♦ Axxxx   ♣ Ax

Ace-King of spades, two more Aces, and the Jack in partner's suit is well and truly a super-fit.

A *picture bid* is a little similar, but we then count the total HCPs in our own suit as well as in partner's suit. Say we have this hand when partner has shown five hearts:

♠ xx ♥ KQx ♦ Axx ♣ AQJxx

If we can bid clubs as a picture bid, we tell partner that we have a super fit if he likes clubs. If partner has a club honor, he will appreciate that information; if he has a singleton in clubs, he knows that the fit is less good.

We don't use the transfer if responder has precisely an invitational hand with five spades, but we do so when he has five hearts. Another fact to remember is that we don't have precisely four cards in the other major when we transfer.

Even if responder intends to pass when the transfer is completed we still can have game if opener has a good hand with a fit and responder has some values too. Thus, opener can show good hands with a fit over the transfer. With the next hand opener should bid 3♥ when responder has transferred to hearts.

♠ Ax ♥ Kxxx ♦ AJxx ♣ AJx

Having only three hearts doesn't stop us from showing maximum by bidding 3♥:

♠ Ax ♥ Kxx ♦ AKxxx ♣ Kxx

This hand will also do fine for 3♥. Telling the opponents how many trumps we have is of no use to us. If responder has close to invitational values he will raise. We also have a way to show minimum hands with good support, but we usually just complete the transfer with minimum hands.

In notrump-bidding, we consider playing 3NT, instead of a major, also with a 5-3 fit. Take a look at this opening hand when partner transfers to hearts:

♠ KQ10 ♥ Qxxx ♦ A10x ♣ AQx

Opposite an invitational hand, even with four hearts, we probably should play the game in notrumps. Opener can bid 2NT as an invitation to 3NT. If responder can raise to game, the chances for nine tricks in notrumps often are better than ten in the major. If partner doesn't accept the invitation, he can transfer again to stop in 3♥. Also with the next hand, I think 2NT is the best alternative to 2♥:

♠ J10xx ♥ KQx ♦ AJ9 ♣ AQx

It is often easier to take nine tricks in notrumps than to take ten in hearts. We use the same rebids, in principle, whether we transfer to hearts or spades.

**1NT-2D**

To begin with, here is a short summary of opener's rebids after 2♦:

## 1NT-2♦

- 2♥ the normal bid
- 2♠ good heart support but not maximum, not mandatory
- 2NT maximum, shows support but looking for 3NT
- 3♣/♦ natural, but unusual
- 3♥ maximum with support

If responder doesn't pass, his different rebids are:

## 1NT-2♦; 2♥

- 2♠ artificial, showing precisely an invitational hand with five hearts
- 2NT game-forcing with five hearts
- 3♣/♦ game-forcing with at least 5-4
- 3♥ invitational with six hearts
- 3♠ a slam try in hearts, void in spades
- 3NT non-forcing, and often, but not always, 5332
- 4♣/♦ a slam try in hearts, void in the bid minor
- 4♥ to play

I will start by discussing the bidding when the major is hearts and then continue with spades. There are only a few differences but perhaps you will not get the full picture until you have studied the example auctions provided for each of them.

However, first this: we show an invitational hand with five hearts by bidding 2♠ after the transfer, obviously meaning that we can't stop in 2♥ if opener is negative.

♠ x ♥ K10xxx ♦ xxx ♣ Axxx

This hand is not strong enough to force us beyond the level of 2♥. As responder can't show invitational strength at a convenient level, he must transfer to hearts and then pass if opener doesn't show a maximum with a fit. If we add a Queen, or perhaps only the Jack of hearts we have an enough to bid 2♠ and invite game. Also worth noting: when responder transfers to 2♥ and then rebids with the artificial and invitational 2♠, he denies four spades. With the next hand responder bids Stayman:

♠ Axxx ♥ K10xxx ♦ xxx ♣ x

With both majors responder instead can make an invite via Stayman. If opener then bids 2♦, responder can bid an invitational 2♥, and we can stop at the two-level.

**1NT-2D; 2H-2S**

When responder shows the invitational hand by bidding 2♠, opener's rebids are:

1NT-2♦; 2♥-2♠ (artificial, an invitational hand with five hearts)

2NT      minimum without support, perhaps 4333 though  
 3♣      relay, asking for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)  
 3♦/♠    natural with maximum and a five-card suit  
 3♥      minimum with support  
 3NT      maximum without support  
 4♥      maximum with support

Compared to when responder makes a game try with spades, opener now can't pass and the 2NT bid is negative instead of a maximum. After opener's 2NT responder can bid once more if he doesn't want to stop in 2NT. This is an example where responder bids again:

	♠ AJxx	♠ x
	♥ Jx	♥ Axxxx
	♦ KQxx	♦ xx
	♣ Axx	♣ KJxxx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	2♠ (five hearts, invitational)
(no support, minimum)	2NT	3♣ (natural, often 5-5)
	pass	

As opener can't bid 2NT with a maximum, he more often uses the 3♣ relay in this situation. The continued bidding after 3♣ is the same as when responder has spades but with the majors reversed. I will therefore not discuss that method again but here is an example just to remind you:

	♠ Kxx	♠ Jxx
	♥ Kx	♥ AJxxx
	♦ Axx	♦ x
	♣ AQ10xx	♣ Kxxx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	2♠ (five hearts, invitational)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3NT (short diamonds)
	5♣	

Here opener cannot make a natural club bid after 2♠, but when responder shows shortage in diamonds we find what looks to be the best game.



**1NT-2D; 2H-2NT**

Responder's 2NT is a game-forcing bid, but when should we use it?

♠ K9x ♥ KQxxx ♦ Qx ♣ Jxx

With this hand, I think responder should bid 3NT instead. If opener decides to pass with support that will probably be for the best. In my opinion, the decisive detail in responder's hand is that he has an honor in his short suit. Say opener has:

♠ AQx ♥ Axx ♦ K10x ♣ Kxxx

We will often make 4♥, but 3NT can make also when the hearts are distributed 4-1. To find 3NT when we have 5-3 in a major can be important, but we seldom know with a guarantee that 3NT is a better contract, so we shouldn't overdo it. When responder decides to bid 2NT, he says that he doesn't think we should play 3NT if opener has support. Responder can have this hand:

♠ xx ♥ KQxxx ♦ Axx ♣ Jxx

We don't know that 3NT is wrong, but as far as we can see, it often *can* be wrong. The same with the next hand; we think a game in hearts on 5-3 is better.

♠ Jx ♥ AQxxx ♦ xx ♣ Kxxx

When responder has a game-forcing hand with five hearts and a four-card minor, he has two options: He can bid 2NT or he can bid a minor suit. If responder has 5-5 he wants to show his minor but with 5-4 he looks at suit quality and ambitions.

Depending on responder's strength, we want to maximize our chances to find the right game when we have several possible games to choose from. We also want to find slam when we can make one. Finding a 4-4 fit in a minor is often decisive for slam but not that often important for game. Let us look at some hands:

♠ x ♥ AQJxx ♦ xxx ♣ KQxx

With this hand it looks obvious for responder to rebid 3♣. He has the HCP strength concentrated to hearts and clubs. With the next hand it is more logical to bid 2NT as our strength is not concentrated in two suits only:

♠ x ♥ AQJxx ♦ Kxx ♣ Qxxx

A difference between the two paths is that after 2NT opener can ask for a shortage. When responder has honors in both side suits, showing the shortage is a good idea.

## ***The transfer & 2NT module***

Using 2NT in the fashion we do is a new idea. We have practiced a lot to find weak spots and improvements. The result is that the continued bidding after 2NT now is a *module*, and exactly the same bids are used when responder transfers to spades.

I have chosen to present all the continued bidding after 2NT at the same time, as there is no difference between the two sequences other than the major suit. All the bids at the three-level are artificial; the only difference is when we bid four of our major. Just to clarify: when I write '4Ma' in a bidding table, I refer to responder's major.

Let us look at what types of hands responder can have for 2NT:

- a balanced or semi-balanced hand that we don't just want to show with 3NT and the strength is unlimited
- a 5431 or 5422 hand where we don't want to bid the minor directly but we usually don't have strength to invite a slam

Responder usually has less than 13 HCP if he has a four card minor. Responder then doesn't intend to invite a slam but we can get interested in looking for slam if we discover a good fit or if opener has a good hand with a five-card suit.

Opener's rebids are in steps, the same bids whichever major responder has:

Opener's rebids after 2NT

3♣	relay bid, asking (responses: the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
3♦	support in responder's suit
3♥	shows a doubleton with two honors in partner's suit
3♠	five cards in the other major
3NT	natural, no fit, not interested to know about a possible singleton
4♣/♦	super-fit, a picture bid with support
4Ma	(responder's major) shows xxxx as support and 4333

The two most important bids after 2NT are the 3♣ relay and the support-showing 3♦. As responder didn't bid a minor directly after the transfer, his values usually are not concentrated to only two suits. If he has a singleton he has honors in all the other suits.

When opener has support in responder's major he has a choice between bidding either 3♦ or 3♣. Opener doesn't deny support in responder's major when using the 3♣ relay. The difference is that 3♣ specifically asks for shortage while, if we show our support by bidding 3♦, responder will only show shortage with slam ambitions.

*Opener rebids 3 Clubs*

We usually show trump support if we have it, but say that opener has this hand:

♠ QJ9x ♥ Axx ♦ AKx ♣ J9x

1NT	2♦	
2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)

If responder has a singleton in spades we probably should play 3NT instead, so we can bid 3♣ also with support if we have a reason. Let us take a look at what can happen after the 3♣ relay. First, here are the responses:

2NT; 3♣ (relay bid, asking)

3♦	a singleton (or some hands with a doubleton) in the other major
3♥	5332 any strength, 5422 limited, or a weak six-card suit, slam ambitions
3♠	short clubs (four diamonds)
3NT	short diamonds (four clubs)

We have already looked at this method when responder showed an invitational hand. The difference here is that we are in a game-forcing situation, and can't even stop in four of a minor. The idea of also showing a doubleton in the other major is to avoid 3NT when we have a better contract. To use it with a doubleton, responder should therefore have a good major suit or strength for a game in a minor.

A difference from when responder has a game-invitation: Responder never has 5-5 and with a singleton in one of the minors, he always has four cards in the other minor because he never has four cards in the other major. Also important is that we never show a doubleton with slam interest. Let me show you a few hands:

1NT	2♦	
2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
3♣	3♦	

♠ xx ♥ AQJxx ♦ Qxx ♣ Kxx

With a good game hand, responder wants to be sure we don't play 3NT without a spade stopper, or with too weak a stopper, when we can make game in hearts

♠ Jx ♥ AQxxx ♦ Qx ♣ J9xx

With this hand the heart suit is not very good and we seldom make 5♣. Responder should bid 3♥. If we don't believe we can make any other game it is of less use to show the distribution. That will only help the opponents with the lead.

Let's look at some hands where responder can show a singleton directly over 3♣:

	♠ Axxx	♠ KJx
	♥ Kx	♥ Axxxx
	♦ KQJx	♦ Axxx
	♣ Qxx	♣ x
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♠ (short clubs)
(four diamonds)	4♦	4♠ (cue-bid)

Opener bids 4♦ to suggest playing a diamond contract. When responder is short in a minor, he always has four cards in the other minor. This time responder has nice honors and makes a slam try with a spade cue-bid. However, opener's hand is not good enough to accept. In my opinion, he should bid 5♦. If he is very optimistic, he can bid 4NT as optional Blackwood. Responder is limited to about 12 HCP when he bids 2NT with a 5431 hand and therefore a slam is highly improbable.

With the next hand opener has a reason to bid 3♣ even if he has heart support:

♠ Kxx ♥ Axx ♦ A9x ♣ KJ10x

If responder has shortage in clubs it seems better to play the game in notrumps. You don't have to agree on that, but it is my experience. However if responder has any other singleton than in clubs, opener's hand is really good for a suit contract. If responder shows short or weak spades, we bid 4♥, but if he has short diamonds we can even hope for a club slam as responder also has four clubs.

	♠ Kxx	♠ Qxx
	♥ Axx	♥ KQJxx
	♦ A9x	♦ x
	♣ KJ10x	♣ Qxxx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3NT (short diamonds)
(support in both suits)	4♦	4♥ (to play)

Opener can bid a natural 4♣ over 3NT but if we only should play a game we want to play 4♥ and not 5♣. We have to remember that responder might have no slam interest at all. The 4♦ bid shows a good hand for both clubs and hearts. This time responder is far too weak to be interested in a club slam and bids 4♥, but give him the Ace of spades instead of the Queen and 6♣ is a good contract.

There is a risk, though, that comes from telling the opponents all of this. They can find leads they would never find with less information. We have to consider that when we are looking for slam with marginal values.

When responder transfers and rebids 2NT, opener can directly show a five-card suit in the other major by bidding the artificial 3♠, but if he has a five-card minor he has to start with the 3♣ relay if he wants to get his suit into the picture.

1NT	2♥	
2♠	2NT	(game-forcing)
3♣	?	
♠ Ax ♥ Jxx ♦ K9x ♣ AKJxx		

If responder doesn't have any short suit, and bids 3♥, we can bid 4♣ to show our nice club suit. That also promises a top honor in spades. We are so far just looking for the right game. If responder wants to make a slam try with support in clubs, he can cue-bid one of the unbid suits.

If responder shows shortage in clubs, we can bid 3NT but if partner has a singleton in diamonds or short (weak) hearts, we again can bid 4♣. That is just a natural bid, and so is 4♠ if responder rebids his suit. With a good club fit responder can make a slam try. If he bids 4♥ after showing weak hearts, he now promises a singleton.

Let us now see what we do to sort out things when responder shows shortage or just weakness in the other major by responding 3♦ over 3♣.

2NT; 3♣-3♦ (a singleton or a doubleton in the other major)

3♥	tell me more, I am interested in something but not so much 3NT
3♠	partner, bid 3NT if you have a doubleton (or a singleton honor)
3NT	don't like any of that
4♣/♦	5-4 in the minors and not too bad values
4Ma	prefer a game in the major

Even if responder doesn't promise a singleton in the other major it gives opener a hint about how to proceed. For opener to bid 3NT now, he has to have a reasonably good stopper in the suit. Let us look at some examples:

The auction again has started:

	1NT	2♥	
	2♠	2NT	(game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♦	(weak/short hearts)

♠ Ax ♥ Jxxx ♦ K9x ♣ AKJx

As responder now can have a singleton in hearts, opener can't bid 3NT with any confidence. However, if responder has two small hearts or perhaps Qx we should probably play 3NT. Opener can bid the special bid 3♠ which asks responder to bid 3NT with two hearts and something else with a singleton.

If responder then bids 4♦, we have to play 4♠ but if he has four clubs playing 5♣ is an alternative. We can perhaps ask partner for assistance by bidding 4♥ over 4♣ and hope he rebids spades with a good suit.

When opener isn't very interested in 3NT he often uses the relay bid, 3♥ to ask for more information. The responses show how that works:

2NT; 3♣-3♦; 3♥ (asking about the unbid major)

3♠ shows a doubleton in the suit  
 3NT shows four clubs and 5431  
 4♣/♦ shows four diamonds and 5431  
 4Ma shows 5332 and a good suit

Opener's 3♥ doesn't deny a stopper but he probably has only a single stopper to look for another game. Opener says he doesn't want to play 3NT if responder has two small cards in the unbid major. That is why responder with 5332 often goes for a game in the major. If the major is hearts, he will certainly bid 4♥ with this hand:

♠ xx ♥ QJ108x ♦ KJx ♣ Axx

With the next hand our agreement is also nice to have:

	♠ A10x	♠ Jx	
	♥ Jx	♥ AQxxx	
	♦ KJxx	♦ Qx	
	♣ AKxx	♣ Qxxx	
	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♦	(weak/short spades)
(tell me more)	3♥	3♠	(a doubleton)
(pass with help)	3NT	pass	

Opener has to decide what to do after 3♦. He can bid 3♠ to play 3NT if responder has two spades. By bidding 3♥ we will play a minor suit part-score if responder has two small spades, but in 3NT when responder has a spade honor.

It may seem ridiculous to show a doubleton especially when having a small honor in the suit, and I admit to being the master of absurd-looking ideas. If you don't like it, you can use 3♦ only with a singleton and adjust the responses to 3♥.

One reason for us wanting to try out our idea is that we can. We don't need these bids for anything else. However, I have other excuses too as I also think there can be tactical advantages. When we both are weak in the unbid major it will not come as a surprise to us if the opponents lead the suit against 3NT, even if we never gave them any information about whether responder has two or three cards in the suit.

As we have seen in the examples, we can still play 3NT if we have a combined stopper like Qxx to Jx, or double stopper like A10x to Jx.

There is one argument left. If we knew that opener always has at least five cards in the two majors, this idea would never occur to me but opening with 1NT with 5422 is not unusual in these days. Here we can avoid playing 3NT:

	♠ Axx	♠ xx
	♥ Jx	♥ AQxxx
	♦ KJxx	♦ Qx
	♣ AKxx	♣ Qxxx
	1NT	2♦
(relay, asking)	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(tell me more)	3♣	3♦ (weak/short spades)
(four clubs)	3♥	3♠ (doubleton in spades)
	4♣	5♣

Let's also look at an example where responder has a better hand:

	♠ Axx	♠ x
	♥ Kx	♥ AQxxx
	♦ K109x	♦ Axxx
	♣ AKxx	♣ Qxx
	1NT	2♦
(relay, asking)	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(tell me more)	3♣	3♦ (weak/short spades)
(a maximum fit)	3♥	4♣ (1-5-4-3)
	4♠	6♦

When opener finds out that responder has a singleton in spades, his hand is really good. He can bid 4♦ to give responder a chance to rebid hearts, but he thinks his hand is just too good not to make a move towards a diamond slam.

Both opener and responder are limited when responder has a four-card minor. We have around 25-29 HCP between us and shouldn't bid a slam unless we have a fantastic fit. In the example above opener's 4♠ bypasses 4♥, and is then directed to the minor suit game indicating a really good maximum. Even so, responder can't accept a slam try without having a maximum.

Both opener and responder have to consider that they cannot cue-bid responder's major, as bidding that suit is never a forcing bid. Here is a similar auction:

	1NT	2♥	
	2♠	2NT	(game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♦	(weak/short hearts)
(tell me more)	3♥	3NT	(5-1-3-4)
	♠ Qx	♠ Kxxxx	
	♥ Axx	♥ x	
	♦ KJ9x	♦ Axx	
	♣ AJxx	♣ KQxx	

Opener has a good fit but only minimum. The Queen of spade is a fitting card but not perfect for a minor suit contract. The difference in the auction, compared to the last one, is that the majors are reversed and that means that if opener now bids 4♥ we can still stop in 4♠. What should opener do after 3NT?

He can bid a natural 4♣, perhaps 4♥ to show a good fit, or try 4♠ to show the semi-support. The disadvantage with bidding 4♠ is that it doesn't show the club fit. I think it is better to bid 4♥ and hope that responder rebids a good spade suit.

If responder is interested in a club slam, as I think he should be here, he should not bid it directly but instead use optional RKCB to give opener the last word. When we move towards slam with a 4-4 fit in a minor, we use optional Blackwood.

### ***Responder has no singleton***

When responder doesn't have any shortness his usual reaction is to bid 3♥ over 3♣. He can have a top honor singleton, as we prefer to not show that as shortage. He usually has game hand with 5332 or 5422, but sometimes a stronger hand where he wants to investigate slam. Once in a while he can also have a weak six-card major:

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♥	(no singleton)
	♠ Ax ♥ K98xxx ♦ Ax ♣ KJx		



Responder can make a slam try holding a six-card major with a three-level transfer directly over 1NT but with this hand he will then have to worry about the quality of the trump suit. If opener has Qx, we should not be in a heart slam but if he has a better doubleton perhaps we should. By downgrading the suit and beginning by showing the hand as 5332 responder is better placed.

Opener's rebids prioritize showing the holding in responder's suit:

2NT; 3♣-3♥ (5332 any strength, 5422 limited, or a six-card major with a bad suit)

3♠ the normal bid with three-card support, or Kx/Ax, in partner's suit  
 3NT not much help in partner's suit, at best Qx  
 4♣/♦ a five-card minor also having Kx or Ax in partner's suit  
 4Ma acceptable support but a boring minimum

Before we continue I want to say something about the 4333 distribution. Having 4333 as opener is usually bad, but if we have a fit in two suits, like a 5-3 fit in major and a 4-4 fit in a minor, the 4333 can be useful too. In this auction, however we know that responder has no second suit, and thus 4333 is generally a handicap.

Even if we have four-card support, we know that with 4333 opposite 5332 we can have many losers, and seldom will be able to dispose of them. Although sometimes with nine trumps we can endplay one of the opponents. Anyway, we often bid four of our major as opener in this situation when holding 4333 and not a very good hand for slam purposes in the form of top honors. If you think about it from a theoretical point of view, I believe the value of Jacks and even Queens is often less than nominal when we know we have 3-3 or 3-2 in a side-suit.

Back to the rebids. When opener bids 3♠ he can pass if responder bids 3NT, but he will only do that with either a doubleton honor or with three small. With a better three-card support opener must bid again.

Let us look at some examples:

	♠ KQ9	♠ xx
	♥ xxx	♥ A9xxx
	♦ AJ	♦ Kxx
	♣ KQxxx	♣ AJx
	1NT	2♦
(relay, asking)	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(support or Kx/Ax)	3♣	3♥ (no shortage)
	3♠	3NT (non-forcing)
	pass	

Opener can't show his minor when he has three hearts, unless directly over 2NT as a picture bid. After 3NT he is allowed to pass with three small hearts, and with the clubs as a possible source of tricks he elects to do so. He is however not in any way obliged to pass with three small hearts.

If we look at responder's hand above, he could have chosen to show the weakness in spades by bidding 3♦ over 3♣. With this hand, though, playing 4♥ on a 5-2 fit seems not to be a good alternative as the hearts are weak. One thing for responder to remember in our methods is that opener can show a good doubleton with two honors directly over 2NT by bidding 3♥.

If opener has Jxx or better support, he should be a little cautious to pass over 3NT in this auction as responder still can have slam ambitions. Opener can cue-bid with a good hand, or bid 4♥ with a minimum or with weak support. However, with good trumps responder can cue-bid himself when opener rebids 3♠ or 3NT:

	♠ Kxx	♠ Jx
	♥ Kx	♥ AQJxx
	♦ KQx	♦ Axx
	♣ A10xxx	♣ Kxx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♥ (no shortage)
(support or Kx/Ax)	3♠	4♣ (cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♦	4♥ (a limited slam try)
	pass	

If opener had better clubs, say he has the Queen in clubs instead of the Queen of diamonds, he could have bid 4♣ over 3♥. That shows five clubs and Kx or Ax in partner's major. Then we would easily make a slam. As it is now, we think opener's clubs are too weak for that bid.

When responder bids 3♥ he will usually often have a game hand without any slam ambitions at all. Therefore, we also take a risk by bidding 4♣, as we bypass 3NT and therefore often we will end in 4♥ on a 5-2 fit. As always, we have a choice, and we hope we make the right one more often than not. Responder can have a problem here. Say the bidding has started:

	1NT	2♥
	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
(relay, asking)	3♣	3♥ (no shortage)
(support or Kx/Ax)	3♠	?

Responder can have this hand:

♠ AQxxx ♥ xx ♦ KQx ♣ AJx

Responder has 16 HCP and he doesn't want to stop in 3NT unless perhaps he knew that opener had three small spades. But if he bids 3NT opener also passes with Kx in spades. What can he do? He can continue with a cue-bid but that will give opener the impression that the spade suit is good enough for slam whether opener has good support or not.

Responder has to improvise, and with this hand he can bid a natural 4NT. Opener can still pass with a minimum but if he bids on he can make a response to RKCB. If we are lucky, opener, with a maximum, can jump to slam in a minor:

♠ xxx	♠ AQxxx
♥ AQx	♥ xx
♦ AJ	♦ KQx
♣ KQxxx	♣ AJx

With these hands a spade slam is not hopeless but the club slam is better.

### *Opener shows support*

Now let us move along by looking at our methods when opener shows his support directly after 2NT:

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(heart support)	3♦		

When the bidding starts in this way, we usually will not play 3NT but it still is possible. When opener bids 3♦ he doesn't promise any special hand. Perhaps with some hands he will prefer to bid 3♣ but we don't have any rules that we must choose the one or the other bid. Let us look at responder's rebids after 3♦:

2NT; 3♦ (support)

3♥	a singleton in spades
3♠	slam try without shortness, we can't stop in 3NT
3NT	slam try without shortness, and needs help in trumps, non-forcing
4♣/♦	a singleton in the bid suit
4Ma	to play, no slam ambitions

Responder can make a mild slam try by showing a shortage. We know it is not a very serious slam try since responder is limited to around 13 HCP.

This is a case where we can play 3NT:

	♠ KQ9x	♠ x
	♥ Qxx	♥ AKxxx
	♦ Kxx	♦ QJx
	♣ Axx	♣ Q10xx
	1NT	2♦
(support)	2♥	2NT (game-forcing)
	3♦	3♥ (singleton spade)
	3NT	pass

When we have a fit, showing a short suit is a slam try. As responder is limited if he has 5431 it is a mild slam try seeking a good fit in the short suit.

When responder has a short minor, we know the exact distribution of his hand because responder never has four cards in the other major. When responder instead has shortage in a major he can have four cards in either minor with three cards in the other. Most of the time it doesn't matter to opener:

	♠ Qxx	♠ AKJxx
	♥ Kxx	♥ x
	♦ AQxx	♦ KJx
	♣ Axx	♣ Jxxx
	1NT	2♥
(support)	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
	3♦	3♥ (short hearts)
	4♠	

Responder has 13 HCP, but as the clubs are weak he decides to go for 2NT and see what happens. He then makes a mild slam try by showing the heart shortage but opener is not interested. If he was, he should try to find out if we have a 4-4 fit in a minor. After 3♥ opener can ask for responder's distribution:

2NT; 3♦-3♥ (a singleton in spades)

3♠ relay, asking  
 3NT suggests we play 3NT  
 4♣/♦ a five-card minor  
 4Ma to play, no slam ambitions

After 3♠, responder shows his minor in steps: 3NT shows four clubs and 4♣ shows four diamonds. The advantage is: opener can set the suit at the four-level.

Here we find a slam that is very good:

	♠ Qxx	♠ AKxxx
	♥ Axx	♥ x
	♦ AQJx	♦ K10xx
	♣ Kxx	♣ Qxx
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
(support)	3♦	3♥ (singleton hearts)
(relay, asking)	3♠	4♣ (four diamonds)
(diamond support)	4♦	4♥ (good hand)
	6♦	

We don't look for a grand slam since our strength is limited. If responder makes a mutiny by bidding 4♠, and does not reveal his minor, he was hoping that opener had a five-card minor.

When responder has shortage in a minor we know his distribution:

	♠ Qxx	♠ AKxxx
	♥ Axx	♥ Kxx
	♦ Axx	♦ x
	♣ AKxx	♣ Qxxx
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
(support)	3♦	4♦ (singleton diamonds)

Opener has a fantastic hand for a club contract but how can he show it? If the minors were reversed he could have bid 4♦ to set the trumps, but here that is not possible. He can perhaps bid 4♥ as a cue-bid, but as that is a bid below the major suit game, I am not sure that would set clubs as trumps. However if he bids 4NT or makes a direct five-level bid, clubs will for sure be trumps. It would be amazing to be able to bid 7♣ with these hands, but I am not completely sure how to get there.

If responder has 5332 he can have slam ambitions. He can then choose between bidding 3♠ or 3NT. When he bids 3NT, showing that his trump suit needs help, opener can pass with a bad trump holding. Usually, however he will just convert to game in the major. Often it doesn't matter much since responder now is strong, but perhaps we will tend to pass with the worst possible trump holdings as a suit game can go down with the trumps 4-1, or even worse, 5-0.

Let me just repeat responder's options when he hasn't got a short suit:

2NT; 3♦ (support)

3♠ slam try without shortness, we can't stop in 3NT

3NT slam try without shortness and needs help in trumps, non-forcing

You may find it strange that we bother with keeping open for playing 3NT when responder's 2NT says: 'I want to play my suit if you have support.' However, this is only responder's preliminary point of view. Opener also has a say in the matter:

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(heart support)	3♦	3NT	(slam try, needs help)
	?		

♠ KQ10x ♥ Jxx ♦ KJx ♣ AQx

With this hand there is no point in bidding 3♣ asking for a singleton as no shortage will make you happy. However when we bid 3♦ to show our support, and partner by bidding 3NT says he needs help in trumps, we can pass and play 3NT. If opener has a better fit he can cue-bid, and with less interest just suggest we play 4♥.

When responder bids 3♠ he has slam ambitions and often a better suit. Opener then has a few options:

2NT; 3♦-3♠ (slam try in our suit)

3NT normal bid, seldom 4333.

4♣/♦ a nice five-card minor, we may have a double fit

4Ma a minimum or more often most hands with 4333.

♠ QJxx	♠ AKxxx
♥ AJx	♥ Kxx
♦ KJx	♦ Qx
♣ Axx	♣ QJx

	1NT	2♥	
	2♠	2NT	(game-forcing)
(support)	3♦	3♠	(slam try, ok suit)

Opener has 16 HCP and four spades. That may be just too good to bid 4♠ over 3♠ but opener should definitely be careful. If he bids 3NT, he can perhaps bid 4♠ at his next turn. As you can see a slam is not a good prospect here. Let's give opener a few alternative hands:

♠ QJxx ♥ AQx ♦ Kxx ♣ A10x

With only one Jack the slam in on a finesse, but only because of the ten of clubs.

♠ QJx ♥ AQxx ♦ Kxxx ♣ Ax

Only three trumps now but some extra chances, and if we add a ten or two the slam is even good. So my advice still is; beware of 4333 and too many Jacks!

We have one more way for opener to show support. If opener has a nice hand with both support and a good minor suit, he can jump to the four-level as a picture bid directly over 2NT, as with this hand:

♠ xxx ♥ KQx ♦ AQJxx ♣ Ax

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(picture bid)	4♦		

We can make a slam on marginal values if responder has a hand like this:

♠ x ♥ AJxxx ♦ Kxxx ♣ QJx

A diamond slam is good even if responder has three diamonds and four clubs.

### *Other rebids from opener*

The 3♥ rebid from opener shows some special hands that we don't have so often.

	1NT	2♦	
	2♥	2NT	(game-forcing)
(two honors)	3♥		

Opener promises a doubleton with two honors (the Jack included) in partner's suit:

♠ Axx ♥ KQ ♦ K10xx ♣ Axxx

When opener has two top honors in a doubleton and is not interested in a specific short suit in responder's hand opener can bid 3♥. Opener can also have a hand with five cards in a minor and two honors in partner's suit:

♠ Axx ♥ KJ ♦ AKxxx ♣ Qxx

The normal continuation is very simple here; responder can bid 3♠ if he wants to ask, and then opener bids 3NT without the five-card suit. Without any interest in more information he can just bid 3NT or a game in the major.

These are responder's options:

2NT; 3♥ (two honors in a doubleton)

3♠ relay, asking

3NT to play

4♣/♦ a mild slam try with a singleton

4Ma to play

When responder bids 3♠ to ask, opener will bid 3NT with most hands but can show a reasonably good five-card minor when he has that.

Here is an example where the delicate information really helps.

	♠ KQ	♠ AJxxx
	♥ Axx	♥ KQx
	♦ Axxx	♦ Kx
	♣ Kxxx	♣ QJx
	1NT	2♥
(special hands)	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
(HH in spades)	3♥	3♠ (tell me more)
	3NT	

Knowledge about five spade tricks will help us bid 6NT with confidence.

Finally, opener's 3♠ shows five cards in the unbid major. If opener has support too, though, he shouldn't show a weak major. He has to judge what he thinks is best, and if responder bids 3NT after 3♠, opener can, of course, show his support.

	♠ Kxx	♠ AQxxx
	♥ AQJxx	♥ Kx
	♦ Ax	♦ xxx
	♣ Qxx	♣ AJx
	1NT	2♥
(five hearts)	2♠	2NT (game-forcing)
(cue-bid)	3♠	3NT (natural)
	4♦	

Over 3♠, responder can show support with a cue-bid, which can be a singleton or not, but with the hand above he has to suggest 3NT. However when opener can continue with a cue-bid, showing spade support and a diamond control, responder has a perfect hand and if opener had the King of clubs we may bid a grand slam.



**1NT-2D; 2H-3C/D**

Responder shows at least 5-4 in his suits. There are several possible final contracts in sight. We can play a game or a slam in one of responder's two suits but also stop in 3NT when opener doesn't have a fit. If responder has 5-4 in his suits, he will often have much of his HCP strength in his long suits as with many other hands he will bid 2NT. However, if responder has 5-5 or has about 14 HCP or more he usually will show his minor without looking so much at the suit quality.

Let us look at opener's rebids before we continue:

1NT-2♦; 2♥-3♣ (five hearts and at least four clubs)

- 3♦ a semi-natural bid
- 3♥ heart support
- 3♠ a semi-natural bid
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support, and not too bad a hand
- 4♦ a good fit in both responder's suits
- 4♥ heart support, not a good fit

I will tell you more about all these rebids as we go. Let us start with the easy ones. With some hands opener has no interest whatsoever.

1NT	2♦
2♥	3♣

♠ KQ10x ♥ xx ♦ KQJx ♣ Axx

With this hand, opener can't even imagine a hand of responder's where 3NT will be wrong. Of course, a hand for 3NT doesn't always look like this, but the message is that opener is uninterested in a suit contract even if responder should have 5-5. Opener can have a reason to be negative also with support:

♠ KQx ♥ Kxx ♦ AQJx ♣ xxx

Opener has good support, but the three small clubs isn't a good fit. However, he shouldn't deny support, but bid 4♥ to show a minimum and a bad fit.

♠ xx ♥ KQx ♦ AJx ♣ AQxx

With this hand, opener can bid 4♦, the unbid minor at the four-level. That shows a very good fit and support in both of responder's suits as we then often will play the minor if we bid a slam. Opener can have only two cards in hearts if it is two honors in a doubleton. Responder may sign-off in 4♥ or cue-bid with slam interest.

When opener shows heart support by bidding 3♥, responder's 3NT is a forcing bid while a new suit shows a singleton. It can be only a mild slam try, looking for a good honor fit. Finally, with 5-5 responder will usually rebid his suit to show the extra playing strength. With no interest in slam, responder, of course, raises to 4♥.

When opener bids a new suit at the three-level, he has doubts. He doesn't have any support in responder's major, and he is not convinced that we should play 3NT.

	♠ Qxx	♠ xx
	♥ Kx	♥ AQJxx
	♦ KQJxx	♦ xx
	♣ Axx	♣ KQxx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	3♣ (five hearts, four clubs)
(semi-natural)	3♦	3♥ (good hearts)
	4♥	

Opener's 3♦ is semi-natural, and probably often natural but doesn't promise a real suit. That doesn't matter, though, as we will not play in any of opener's suits very often after this auction. The message from opener is: I have values in diamonds, and my hand is not suitable for just bidding 3NT. The continued bidding is natural, and we try to find our way to a playable game or slam.

	♠ Qxx	♠ x
	♥ Kx	♥ AQ10xx
	♦ AKxxx	♦ xx
	♣ AJx	♣ KQ10xx
	1NT	2♦
	2♥	3♣ (five hearts, four clubs)
(semi-natural)	3♦	4♣ (5-5 in hearts and clubs)
(sets clubs, cue-bid)	4♦	4NT (optional RKCB)
(2 Aces, no Queen)	5NT	6♣

Responder has 5-5 and can rebid the clubs. Opener has a nice fit for clubs and can cue-bid diamonds. Responder didn't have slam in mind from the start, but when opener bids 4♦ his hand looks really good. He knows from the 3♦ bid that opener has weak spades, and that makes the odds good for a slam if opener can make a positive response to the slam invitational, optional Roman Keycard Blackwood.

I will give you more examples of these sequences later on, where responder has transferred to spades.

When responder's suit is diamonds, we only have one unbid suit at the three-level. That makes it impossible to use semi-natural bids in the same style as after 3♣. We had to decide how to solve that problem in our system design. This is what we have decided to do after 3♦:

1NT-2♦; 2♥-3♦ (five hearts and at least four diamonds)

3♥	an ambiguous bid, as I will explain soon
3♠	artificial, promises heart support
3NT	natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
4♣	a good fit in both responder's suits
4♦	diamond support and not too bad
4♥	hearts support, and not a good fit

We have reversed opener's bids 3♥ and 3♠ here. The reason is that we want to give responder an extra last-train bid after 3♥. The idea of the ambiguous bid is to give opener a chance not to bid 3NT without a stopper in both the unbid suits:

♠ xxx ♥ Kx ♦ AQx ♣ AQxxx

After responder's 3♦ opener can bid 3♥ with weakness in one of the unbid suits. When he has that, he often has both fitting honor(s) in diamonds and a honor in hearts. The idea with the bid is to tell partner that we don't mind if he rebids his minor with 5-5 and that we don't have a hand where 3NT looks best.

I think we should go for 3♥ also with the next hand, despite holding stoppers in the black suits. We don't say no to 3NT by bidding 3♥, we just say we have options.

♠ Q10xx ♥ Kx ♦ AQx ♣ Axxx

If partner rebids 3NT, he has a limited hand with 5-4, and lets opener take the final decision. However, if partner want to propose playing hearts in a 5-2 fit, he can bid the last-train bid 3♠. If he does, opener should bid 4♥ or 4♣ as a cue-bid. Opener can also have this hand when he bids 3♥ over 3♦:

♠ KQxx ♥ xx ♦ AJxx ♣ AQx

We have diamond support, and just bidding 3NT would say we have a bad fit. In a way, we do, but then we also have support. If responder bids 3♠ over 3♥, we can bid 3NT to show that our 3♥ was caused by diamond support. Partner can have:

♠ xx ♥ AKxxx ♦ KQxxx ♣ x

If we just bid 3NT over 3♦, responder will probably pass.

**1NT-2H - transfer to spades**

The short summary of opener's rebids after 2♥:

1NT-2♥

- 2♠ the normal bid
- 2NT maximum, shows support but looking for 3NT
- 3♣/♦ natural, but unusual
- 3♥ good spade support but not maximum
- 3♠ maximum with support

We use practically the same principles as in the last chapter for opener's rebids. Opener can show different hands with support as we already discussed. In most cases, though, opener completes the transfer, and responder's rebids then are:

1NT-2♥; 2♠

- 2NT game-forcing with five spades
- 3♣/♦ game-forcing with at least 5-4
- 3♥ invitational with 5-5 in the majors
- 3♠ invitational with six spades
- 3NT non-forcing, often, but not always, 5332
- 4♣/♦/♥ slam try in spades, void in the bid suit
- 4♠ to play

The only new bid here is 3♥, showing 5-5 in the majors. That does not need much further discussion. Responder should have a decent hand to invite as opener also can have 5422 with 2-2 in the majors. With a weaker 5-5 in the majors responder goes through Stayman.

Responder's jump in a new suit shows a void. When we have a six-card major and slam interest, we usually start by transferring at the three-level, but the exception is when we want to show a void, as with this hand:

♠ AQJxxx ♥ Qxx ♦ -- ♣ KJxx

It can occasionally be better to play in clubs, but bidding more scientifically with this hand would be difficult. By showing our void we have a good chance both to bid a slam and to avoid it when partner has the wrong values.

When responder rebids 2NT we use the *transfer & 2NT module* that is described in the previous chapter. I will now continue with more examples of the continued bidding when responder bids a minor suit at the three-level. Also in that case, the main difference from when the major suit was hearts is the color of the major suit.

**1NT-2H; 2S-3C/D**

Just as when responder has hearts, he can make a game-forcing bid in a minor with two good suits. There is no difference in principle. Opener's rebids here are:

1NT-2♥; 2♠-3♣ (five spades and at least four clubs)

- 3♦ a semi-natural bid
- 3♥ a semi-natural bid
- 3♠ spade support
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support and not too bad a hand
- 4♦/♥ a good fit in both suits, like a super fit
- 4♠ spade support and not a good fit

When responder bids a minor, we frequently need to have a 4-4 fit in the minor to make a slam on a good fit. Opener should however, show his support in spades as his first priority. Sometimes he can show support for both suits with a super-fit bid, but we don't often do that without all the right honors. When opener shows support for spades, responder can show a singleton in an unbid suit, but we usually don't do that with a high honor. An example of our rebids when opener shows support:

1NT-2♥; 2♠-3♣; 3♠

- 3NT a slam try, often without a singleton (can have a top honor singleton)
- 4♣ shows 5-5 in the suits
- 4♦/♥ a singleton in the bid suit, can be a mild slam try, looking for a good fit
- 4♠ no slam ambitions
- 5♦/♥ a void and a very good hand with at least 5-5 in spades and clubs

Here is an example where opener has spade support.

	♠ Kxx	♠ AQ10xx
	♥ AKxx	♥ xxx
	♦ Qxx	♦ x
	♣ Axx	♣ KQ10x
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	3♣ (spades and clubs)
(spade support)	3♠	4♦ (short diamonds)
(cue-bid)	4♥	4♠ (limited hand)

Without slam ambitions, responder raises to game over 3♠. With this hand, responder decides to show his shortage in diamonds. Opener has a good fit, and accepts with a cue-bid, but when responder then bids 4♠, he must give up.

Look at the difference if we repaint a small red card to a club in opener's hand; it would have been better if opener also had four clubs when he has three spades:

♠ Kxx ♥ AKxx ♦ Qx ♣ Axxx

The distribution 4-3-2-4 with the same honors would also work as we then can make a slam in clubs but not in spades. If responder has 5-5, we will more often make a slam in either suit, and we also try to cater to that by responder's rebids. Responder is allowed to show shortage or bid 3NT as a mild slam try, and if so he will return to 4♠ by his next bid. We have no rule about it, but I believe it is better to show a 5-5 when you have that, compared to showing your shortage.

When responder has the diamond suit, opener's rebids are

1NT-2♥; 2♠-3♦ (five spades and at least four diamonds)

- 3♥ an ambiguous bid
- 3♠ spade support
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support in both suits, at least three top honors in the two suits
- 4♦ diamond support and not too bad
- 4♥ as 4♣ without a club control
- 4♠ spade support, and not a good fit

Opener's 3♥ is ambiguous as it is the only undesignated bid at the three-level. We can't know what opener's intentions are. Does he have a stopper in hearts, and no stopper in clubs or perhaps the other way around? Or does he just have support for diamonds, but a hand not good enough for a raise? I don't have the answer to that question. Responder has to guess, and can temporize with 3♠ to see what happens. Here is an example:

	♠ 10x	♠ AKJxx
	♥ KQx	♥ Jx
	♦ AJxx	♦ KQxx
	♣ AJx	♣ xx
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	3♦ (spades and diamonds)
(ambiguous)	3♥	3♠ (good spades)
	3NT	

Let's analyze the auction so far. When opener does not bid 3NT over 3♦, he has a reason. What if responder bids 3NT over 3♥? Then I guess he has a minimum hand with 5422, and lets opener decide the rest.

As opener's 3♥ is ambiguous and responder with the hand above doesn't know what to do, he tries to get more information by bidding 3♠. That shows a good suit but perhaps responder has to bid it with extra values in some form, but not 5-5. In the auction above, opener now bids 3NT - what is that?

Opener should avoid 3NT whatever stopper he lacks among the two unbid suits, as responder seldom has any good stopper in his short suits. Therefore, when opener rebids 3NT, the reason for bidding 3♥ must be that he has diamond support. If opener didn't have stoppers in both hearts and clubs, he simply had to find another bid over 3♠.

Responder doesn't show any slam ambitions by bidding a minor at the three-level, but when he is only interested in game he usually has a good suit and his values in the two bid suits. As we have limited the 2NT rebid to around 13 HCP, responder once in a while has to bid a minor without a good suit. Here responder has 15 HCP:

	♠ 10x	♠ AQJxx
	♥ KQx	♥ Ax
	♦ AJxx	♦ Qxxx
	♣ AJx	♣ Qx
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	3♦ (spades and diamonds)
(support)	4♦	?

Opener has a good hand with support but he can't cue-bid 4♣ as that would show support in both of the suits. If responder bids 4♠ over 4♦, he shows that he wants to play only a game and suggests a good suit as an alternative to playing 5♦.

We have, in fact, decided that both hands can still suggest stopping in the major suit game. If we change opener's hand, it can look like this:

	♠ Kx	♠ AQJxx
	♥ xxx	♥ Ax
	♦ AKJx	♦ Qxxx
	♣ AJxx	♣ Qx
	1NT	2♥
	2♠	3♦ (spades and diamonds)
(support)	4♦	4♥ (cue, last-train)
(3 Aces)	5♥	6♦

As said, opener can suggest playing 4♠ also after 4♥, but, as responder now invites to a slam, opener has great values and happily accepts the invitation.

### ***No trouble after double***

It happens now and then that our opponents dare to double a bid by responder in the notrump bidding. Most of the time, their double is lead-directing. It is too late to wish they hadn't, and the best we can do is to use the information and the extra bids (pass and redouble) they give us if we can. Say we have opened with 1NT, and when our partner bids 2♣ as Stayman, the next opponent doubles. Our hand is:

♠ AKx   ♥ Qxx   ♦ AQxx   ♣ Jxx

The club holding is somewhat irritating. I wish partner had bid 3NT right away. So, what should we do? It is important to have an agreement to cope with situations like this because they are quite common. We can perhaps make 3NT, but we don't know that. We have agreed that opener should pass without a club stopper, and if we have a club stopper, we bid as without the double. With a good club suit, we as opener can redouble to suggest we play that contract.

With the hand above, I have to pass. What should my partner do now? Say he has an invitational hand with five spades. He can redouble to get back in the system, and then the Stayman auction continues almost as without the double. Should he redouble or bid 2♠ directly? Usually, he will redouble, but when his hand has weakened because of the double, as the next hand, he can bid his suit.

♠ Q10xxx   ♥ Ax   ♦ 10xx   ♣ Kxx

The King of clubs is now of dubious value. With this hand, responder should bid 2♠ as a warning to his partner, and not continue the Stayman auction.

When opener passes, and responder redoubles the auction proceeds as without the opponent's double. If responder has a game-forcing hand and has something in clubs, he may want to play the hand if we find a fit in a major suit. Therefore we also use 2♦ a question for majors.

1NT	pass	2♣	Dble
pass	pass	2♦	
?			

The difference now is that opener with one major should bid the *other* major while 2NT denies a major and 3♣ shows both majors.

We can both use 3♣ as a cue-bid of the opponent's suit. Even if opener shows a major, responder can still use the cue-bid in clubs to look for more information. Although the opponent hasn't actually bid clubs, he has shown a club suit by his double. One reason to bid 3♣, can be to ask for a partial stopper.



Responder's hand can be this:

♠ Q10xx ♥ Kx ♦ KJxx ♣ Qxx

If opener has Jxx, he can bid 3NT. With only Jx he has to be more careful and bid something else at the three-level to wait and see if responder perhaps next bids 3NT with Qxx. It is a cooperative task to solve these situations, but it can be done. One last detail: if responder has bid 2♣ with 4-4-4-1 intending to pass over a two-level response, he can redouble and pass over the response.

### *They double our transfers*

When the opponents double 2♣, we know already that responder most of the time has an invitational hand or better. When they double our transfer to a major, we don't know if responder has any values. Therefore we also have to expect more competition from the opponents after their double of a transfer.

When opener doesn't want to declare the hand, though, he can pass with support if he has a minimum, while redouble shows a fair hand with support. Opener doesn't deny a stopper but just says he doesn't want to play the hand. Bidding responder's major doesn't promise support, but it shows that we have something in the doubled suit; we can stand a lead in the suit. Let me show a few examples:

1NT	pass	2♦	Dble
?			

♠ Qxx ♥ Kx ♦ K10x ♣ AK9xx

With this hand, we can bid 2♥ as we don't mind the diamond lead. It doesn't say anything about our hearts, but if we have both nice support and a good diamond holding, we often will bid 2NT or 3♥, as our hand then has increased in value.

♠ Ax ♥ Kxx ♦ Axx ♣ AJ9xx

We can redouble and show support; we don't need to declare the hand, it can even be better if responder is declarer. We prioritize showing something about our holding in the opponent's suit instead of looking only at the degree of support.

All of this means that we have no immediate way to show that we want to redouble for business when they double our transfer. If opener passes, responder can bid his major to play the hand, or make any other bid to continue the auction according to the system as if opener had completed the transfer. Finally, responder can redouble, repeating the transfer, but also allowing opener to pass with a good diamond suit.

**1NT-2S/NT**

To play transfers to the majors and the minors is what we call 'four-suit transfers', and we use that too. The responses 2♠ and 2NT show a six-card minor. I think we play the transfers to the minors much like everyone else. Responder's intention can be one of these:

- to stop in the minor at the three-level
- to invite to 3NT
- to show a singleton with a game-forcing hand
- to make a slam try in the minor

Responder can, theoretically, transfer with a five-card minor if he thinks playing at the three-level in his suit is better than playing 1NT. That is very unusual, but if responder has this hand, it can perhaps pay off.

♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ J10xx ♣ QJ10xx

A more normal hand looks like this:

♠ xx ♥ Jxx ♦ Qx ♣ Q10xxxx

With this hand, it looks better to play 3♣ than 1NT. Responder bids 2♠, and can then either rebid 3♣ or pass if opener bids 3♣. Opener has two choices: he can bid responder's suit if he accepts the invitation, or decline the invitation by making the nearest bid.

1NT-2♠

2NT            negative, often no club fit  
3♣            accept of a possible invitation to 3NT

Opener looks more at his club fit than the strength in HCP. Responder can have:

♠ xx ♥ Jxx ♦ Qx ♣ KQ9xxx

This is a typical hand where responder wants to invite to play in 3NT by showing the club suit. He needs opener to have a club fit to make 3NT a good contract. If he has a much better suit, like the next hand, he should bid 3NT right away:

♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ xxx ♣ AKJxxx

We don't need a club fit, just a little bit of luck.

After the transfer, responder's rebids are:

1NT-2♠; 2NT/3♣

pass/3♣	sign-off in clubs
3X	singleton in the bid suit, to find the right game or slam
4♣	slam try, often without a singleton
4X	void in the bid suit

Here is an example hand:

	♠ AJx		♠ Kxx
	♥ Qxx		♥ x
	♦ KQxx		♦ Axx
	♣ Kxx		♣ QJxxxx
	1NT		2♠
(accepting invitation)	3♣		3♥ (singleton in hearts)
(no stopper, minimum)	4♣		5♣

Opener decided to 'accept' the possible invitation because of the nice club fit – even with only 15 HCP. Responder then revealed a singleton in hearts, and opener wasn't that happy anymore. The heart-stopper was dubious, and the strength still a minimum.

He had to bid 4♣, which now is non-forcing. The reason is that we have a trump suit already before responder shows his shortage. It is better to make four of a minor than to go down in 3NT. On occasion it would have been better not to reveal the shortness, but we don't know that beforehand. In the long run, I think it gains.

Responder, though, had some extras here and raised to game.

	♠ Ax		♠ KQx
	♥ Kxxxx		♥ --
	♦ KQJ		♦ Axx
	♣ Qx		♣ KJxxxxx
	1NT		2♠
(no accept)	2NT		4♥ (void in hearts)
(cue-bid)	4♠		6♣

Opener can't accept an invitation to 3NT to begin with. When responder shows a void, opener's hand could be worse, so he now can venture a cue-bid in spades. As opener was negative in the first place, responder just bids the small slam.

There is not much difference when responder has diamonds. Opener bids partner's suit to accept a game-invitation, and 3♣ if he doesn't.

In responder's rebids, however, there is a small difference:

1NT-2NT; 3♣/3♦

pass/3♦	sign-off in diamonds
3♥/♠	singleton in the bid suit, to find the right game or slam
4♣	slam try, singleton in clubs
4♦	slam try, often without a singleton
4♥/♠	void in the bid suit
5♣	void in clubs

Since responder has to bypass 3NT to show short clubs, bidding 4♣ is a slam try:

	♠ Axx	♠ KQx
	♥ KJ9x	♥ x
	♦ KQ	♦ AJ10xxx
	♣ Kxxx	♣ AQx
	1NT	2NT
(accept)	3♦	3♥ (singleton in hearts)
(good stopper)	3NT	4♣ (cue-bid)
(cue-bid)	4♠	4NT (optional RKCB)
(2 Aces + Queen)	5♠	6♦

Opener decided to accept the invitation to 3NT as his diamond honors should be helpful. When responder then showed shortage in hearts, 3NT was a very natural bid. Here, responder was too strong to pass over 3NT. Learning that opener had a stopper in hearts didn't make his hand better, but it was good enough already.

Opener can have something like AKJx in hearts instead, so responder has to be a little careful. The cue-bid 4♣ is a slam try, and in principle, the same bid as 4♦ but with a club control. Responder can never show a second suit here. As with the 4♦ slam try, opener can bid a negative 4NT over 4♣. He should probably do so with many hands where most of the strength is in hearts.

In this example, opener's hearts are bad, but all the other honors look good. He has three important cards for his partner: two top honors in diamonds and one Ace. The club King also should be valuable. Hence, opener cue-bids spades, and responder could ask for Aces. Opener should not cue-bid the King of hearts when responder is short. If he bids 4♥ he has the Ace, or perhaps not even that if he only wants to find out if responder has a spade control.

**1NT-3C**

Responder has 5-4 or when vulnerable often 5-5 in the minors and 6-8 HCPs. Our primary goal with 3♣ is not to find a game, even if that does happen occasionally, but we use it as a tactical bid.

When opener has a fit, the opponents will often also have a fit but we don't want to keep them out. Instead, we hope that they will decide to come into the bidding and go down. The ideal hand for responder is to have some defensive strength:

♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ A10xxx ♣ K10xx

If the opponents decide to enter, responder can double to show some defensive values, and hopefully, opener then can make the right decision.

As responder we can also have:

♠ xx ♥ x ♦ QJxxx ♣ QJ10xx

It will not happen very often that the opponents will come into the auction, but they will often feel worried that we have preempted them.

Although our first priority is that 3♣ is not invitational, it often happens that opener can invite to a minor suit game or even bid it himself:

♠ Axx	♠ x
♥ Ax	♥ xxx
♦ KQxxx	♦ Axxx
♣ Kxx	♣ QJxxx
1NT	3♣
5♦	

**1NT-3D/H**

Making the three-level transfers a two-way bid is a new idea. When responder makes these bids he has either:

- a slam try with six cards, or more, in the suit we transfer to, and no void or
- a singleton in the major he transfers to, and three cards in the other, with 5-4 or 4-5 in the minors, and therefore we can stop in four of a minor

If responder is an unpassed hand, we presume that partner has the one-suited hand when making our rebid. If we start by looking at the 3♦ bid, opener's rebids are:

## 1NT-3♦

- 3♥ the normal bid, promising better than xx in partner's suit  
 3NT a warning bid, shows xx in partner's suit  
 4♥ a very good hand, but still xx in partner's suit

This is the continuation after 3♥:

## 1NT-3♦; 3♥

- 3NT 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5 distribution, no slam ambitions  
 3♠ a general slam try  
 4♣/♦ a singleton in the bid suit, can be a mild slam try  
 4♥ a very mild slam try, asking for a super-fit

When responder shows 5431 with 3NT, opener bids what he thinks he can make. If he has a very good fit he can bid responder's short suit, but here he just bids game.

♠ AJx	♠ Qxx
♥ Kxx	♥ x
♦ KQxxx	♦ AJxxx
♣ Kx	♣ QJ10x
1NT	3♦
3♥	3NT (3-1-4-5 or 3-1-5-4)
5♦	

Here an example where opener has an excellent fit in hearts:

♠ KJxx	♠ Qxx
♥ Axx	♥ x
♦ KQxx	♦ AJxx
♣ Kx	♣ AJ10xx
1NT	3♦
3♥	3NT (3-1-4-5 or 3-1-5-4)
4♥	

Even if responder's 3NT is limited, we can bid a slam if opener has a very good fit and responder a maximum. Here responder can bid 5NT and say: bid your minor.

When responder has a one-suited slam try in hearts, he can show a singleton in one of the minors. That bid asks opener for a good fit. Bidding 3♠ is a general slam try. Opener can cue-bid, and should, if he doesn't have a good reason not to. As we now can't play 3NT, we also use 3NT as a cue-bid. Here are opener's options:

1NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠ (general slam try)

3NT cue-bid in spades

4♣/♦ cue-bids

4♥ minimum, bad honors for slam

Here are a few examples of the continued bidding:

	♠ AJx	♠ xx
	♥ Kxx	♥ AQJxxx
	♦ KQxxx	♦ Ax
	♣ Kx	♣ Qxx
	1NT	3♦
	3♥	3♠ (a general slam try)
(spade control)	3NT	4♦ (cue-bid)
(RKCB)	4NT	5♠ (2 Aces plus Queen)
	6♥	

Here is an example of the more limited slam try.

	♠ AJx	♠ Qxx
	♥ Kxx	♥ AQJxxx
	♦ KQxxx	♦ x
	♣ Kx	♣ Qxx
	1NT	3♦
	3♥	4♦ (short diamonds)
(no, thank you)	4♥	

When the major is spades, opener's rebids are similar:

1NT-3♥

3♠ the normal bid

3NT a warning, shows xx in partner's suit

4♠ a very good hand, but still xx in partner's suit

In this sequence, however responder must bid 4♣ to show the general slam try:

1NT-3♥-3♠

3NT the distribution 1-3-5-4 or 1-3-4-5, no slam ambitions

4♣ general slam try

4♦/♥ singleton in the bid suit, can be a mild slam try

4♠ a mild slam try, looking for a super-fit

## 1NT-3♠

Responder has at least 5-5 in the minors and a game-forcing hand:

- 3NT      no special fit
- 4♣/♦    a nice hand for a minor suit contract
- 4♥/♠    a Lissabon bid with only 3-2 in minors, but a super-fit in honors
- 4NT      shows 3-3 in the minors, but a good fit in honors

If opener bids at the four-level responder bids game if he has no slam ambitions or lacks keycards. Bidding a major is a cue-bid and 4NT is optional Blackwood while a jump in a major shows a void.

## 1NT-3♠; 3NT

- 4♣      a slam try with 5-5
- 4♦      a slam try with 6-5 without a void, opener's 4♥/♠ is positive, Lissabon
- 4♥/♠    a void in the bid suit
- 4NT      bid a minor

## 1NT-3♠; 3NT-4♣

- 4♦      asking for shortness
- 4♥/♠    support according to Lissabon

Here is an example:

	♠ AJx	♠ x
	♥ KQxx	♥ xx
	♦ Kxx	♦ AQ10xx
	♣ Kxx	♣ AQJ10x
	1NT	3♠
	3NT	4♣ (5-5, slam try)
(asking)	4♦	4♠ (shortage)
(bid your best suit)	5NT	6♣

Opener can suggest playing 4NT after 4♠ if the singleton doesn't fit his hand.

## 1NT-4♣/♦

Responder just wants to play a game in major. These transfers are also used when the opponents overcall at the two-level. Opener's alternative to bidding a game in partner's suit is to make the relay bid with a super-fit.



### ***The opponents interfere after 1NT***

When the opponents enter the bidding after our notrump opening, there are two possibilities. Either they use constructive methods or they don't. If we play against good opponents, they will usually not play conventions that are designed just to be able to bid as often as possible, but our methods have to be designed to deal with both very weak and more constructive overcalls.

There are certainly many notrump defences around, and we don't want to design a counter-defence to each one of them. Therefore, we have agreed on a number of general rules to cover as many situations as possible.

### ***Our doubles***

Let me start with our doubles. Responder's first double shows values, and a double doesn't promise a rebid. After the first double, either one of us can double again for takeout, but our third double is always a penalty double. And now the exceptions: if the opponent's bid shows a two-suited hand or is a pre-emptive jump, only our first double is for takeout while further doubles are for business. Also, the third double is more ambiguous if the opponents raise their partner's suit or make a jump bid.

In case we want to ask for a stopper in the opponent's suit, we double first, and then either make a cue-bid of their suit or double again. If their overcall shows two suits, for example, both majors, responder's cue-bid shows a stopper in the bid suit and at least invitational values. The idea is that opener must have a stopper in the other suit to bid notrumps.

### ***Our transfer responses***

The next rule concerns bids from 2NT and up. We use all the bids from 2NT and up to 3♥ as transfer bids. There are many other methods designed to differentiate between invitational and competitive hands, but we prefer to show our suit directly.

Therefore, as we play, responder's ambitions with the transfer can vary, and they are not invitational in terms of HCPs. If partner wants to try 3NT, he must have a fit. Say our right-hand opponent comes in with 2♥ and we have:

♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ Jxx ♣ KJ10xxx

With this hand we can bid 2NT to show clubs. We have a competitive hand only, but we want to show the good suit. The next hand is a little better, and we are closer to 3NT but we still bid 2NT.

♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ Jxx ♣ AQ9xxx

We can't differentiate between these two hands and have to hope partner can make a good guess. The opponents don't know our hand, and we can perhaps make 3NT with the weaker hand if we are lucky or they misdefend.

In a competitive auction, we don't always have a good way to describe our hand. We say that our transfers show at least a *mild* invitation to game, and when we transfer to a minor, that game is 3NT. Opener can accept the invitation only if he has both a stopper and a good fit in responder's suit.

If we started with a transfer to a minor, and after that rebid our suit at the four-level in a competitive situation that is non-forcing. After the transfer, if we cue-bid the opponent's suit at the three-level, it is asking for a stopper, but it is a slam try if it's above 3NT.

A transfer to a major is invitational if we can bid the suit at the two-level, if not the transfer has the same meaning as the transfer to a minor. That means that a transfer to 3♥ after a spade overcall, compared to the same bid after an overcall with a minor, can be weaker as it is the only way to show hearts. If we double 2♠, instead, intending to rebid hearts, a spade raise can make that impossible.

If we transfer to the opponent's suit, that bid is game-forcing and shows a shortage in the opponent's suit. Bidding 3♠ over an overcall in a major shows both minors.

When we start with a transfer, we can, of course, also have stronger hands. If we bid again, a new suit below game level is forcing while a rebid of the suit is not.

### ***They double 1NT***

When the opponents double with some artificial meaning, we can redouble to show strength. As we want to know which suit(s) the doubler has, opener often passes over the redouble. Once we have made a strength-showing redouble, we can make one takeout double after that, and then all following doubles are penalty doubles.

If responder decides to make a direct bid after the opponent's artificial double, we follow our system.

### ***They overcall, but don't show anything***

If they overcall with a bid that doesn't promise a specific suit, we have some rules for that too. Perhaps they play 2♦ as a multi-suited bid or 2♣ as a one-suited hand with any suit. Our problem then is that we perhaps can't find out which suit(s) they have. If we double to smoke them out, one of us must have length in the suit we double or they may play that contract. We often have to forego punishing them, but we can use the information from the overcall.

If they overcall with an ambiguous 2♣, we use double as Stayman, while other bids show the same as they do in our system without the interference. Opener can, of course, make a penalty pass with clubs, and if he does, we can also double them when they run to another suit. If the overcall is a higher multi-colored bid, we use double as takeout and values.

In all cases, when we have not found out which suit the opponent has, we play all 2NT bids as forcing. By doing so, we are able to exchange more information, and we may bid semi-natural bids to find out if we have a stopper in the unknown suit.

### ***They overcall 2NT or higher***

Then there are the higher overcalls. If the opponents intervene with high overcalls, our general rules don't work, and we have to look at the specific overcall to decide how to best design our methods. Our doubles still show values, but at this level already our second double is a penalty double.

#### 1NT-(2NT) (minors)

- 3♣ Stayman, game-forcing if responder bids again
- 3♦/♥ transfer, at least invitational
- 4♣/♦ shortage, both majors slam try

#### 1NT-(3♣)

- 3♦/♥ transfer, at least invitational
- 3♠ diamonds
- 4♣ both majors slam try
- 4♦ both majors

#### 1NT-(3♦)

- 3♥/♠ game-forcing with the *other* major
- 4♣ both majors slam try
- 4♦ both majors

#### 1NT-(3♥)

- 4♥ transfer

#### 1NT-(3♠)

- 4♣ hearts
- 4♦ hearts+diamonds
- 4♥ hearts+clubs, non-forcing
- 4♠ minors
- 4NT hearts+clubs strong

*A short summary of the 1NT system*Responses to 1NT

2♣	Stayman, not promising a major, may be weakish with 4-4-4-1
2♦/♥	transfer, at least a five-card major
2♠	six clubs, either weak or at least invitational
2N	six diamonds, either weak or at least invitational
3♣	5-5 (5-4/4-5) in the minors, tactical bid with 6-8 HCP
3♦/♥	a two-way bid with either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a slam try with transfer, a six-card major and no void or</li> <li>b) game-forcing, singleton in the major and 5-4 or 4-5 in the minors</li> </ul>
3♠	5-5 in the minors, forcing to game and perhaps slam ambitions
3NT	to play
4♣/♦	a transfer to 4♥/♠

Stayman

We don't use Stayman with 4-4 in majors unless either:

- a) we are going to pass over opener's rebid or
- b) we have at least around 8 HCP

## 1NT-2♣

2♦	no major
2♥	four or five hearts, not four spades
2♠	four or five spades, not four hearts
2N	4-4 in the majors, minimum
3♣	4-4 in the majors, maximum

## 1NT-2♣; 2♦

2♥	invitational, five hearts, 7+ HCP, indirectly showing four spades
2♠	invitational, five spades, 7+ HCP if we also have four hearts
2NT	invitational, doesn't promise a major
3♣	game-forcing relay with interest in a minor-suit slam
3♦	* game-forcing with shortage in a major
3♥	game-forcing with four hearts and at least five spades (Smolen)
3♠	game-forcing with four spades and at least five hearts (Smolen)
4♣	precisely a slam try with 5-5 in the majors
4♦	game or slam going with 5-5 in majors, asks for a preference
4N	invitation to 6NT
5♠	wants to bid 6NT, asks for any 5-card suit

\* we can occasionally stop in four of a minor

Responder's rebids 2Ma

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♥ (invitational, five hearts and four spades, from 7 HCP)

2♠ relay with support, wants to know more

2NT invites 3NT, wants to play notrumps

3♣/♦ 6-card suit, unusual though

3/4♥ natural raises

3NT opener believes he can make it

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♥; 2♠ (relay with support)

2NT minimum, most hands

3♣/♦ minimum, but descriptive with 5431 and an honor in the three-card suit

3♥ minimum with 5-5 in the majors (5-6 HCP)

4♥ accept of game-try

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠ (invitational with 5 spades, from 7 HCP if also 4 hearts)

pass minimum, often two spades

2NT maximum, usually without support

3♣ maximum, a relay asking for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)

3/4♠ natural raises

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 2NT (maximum, usually without support)

3♣/♦ non-forcing with 5-5

3♥ five spades and four hearts (nothing in minors, good spades)

3♠ six spades and four hearts, needs fit, unusual bid

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♣ (relay, asking, responses: the 3-no-1-2 scheme)

3♦ a singleton, or some hands with a doubleton, in hearts

3♥ no shortage

3♠ short clubs

3NT short diamonds

When responder shows a singleton, we can stop in four in a minor.

1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♣-3♥ (no shortage)

3♠ last-train, wants to play either 3NT or 4♠

Responder can choose from 3NT, 3♠, or 4♠. Opener probably wants him to bid 3NT with 5332 with an honor in the short suit

Responder bids 3Clubs

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣ (slam try with one or two minors)

- 3♦ shows 44 or 54 in the minors
- 3♥ shows five clubs (Lissabon), now responder's 3♠ indicates five diamonds
- 3♠ \* shows five diamonds (Lissabon)
- 3NT very often 4333, occasionally no interest at all in a minor suit slam
- 4♣ shows five clubs with three honors out of four in the suit
- 4♦ \* shows five diamonds with three honors out of four, no club fit

\* Opener's 3♠ can be a strong suit if he also has a club fit. Usually opener then will rebid the suit if responder bids 3NT.

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣-3♦ (shows 4-4 or 5-4/4-5 in the minors)

- 3♥ relay, asking bid
- 3♠ shows four clubs, but a weak suit (Qxxx or worse)
- 3NT shows four diamonds, but a weak suit (non-forcing)
- 4♣/♦ sets the suit as trumps and shows a five-card suit

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3♦-3♥ (asking bid)

- 3♠ 4-4 in the minors, opener can pass over 3NT
- 3NT five clubs and four diamonds (forcing)
- 4♣ five diamonds and four clubs

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3♥/♠ (a five card minor, Lissabon)

- 3♠ shows five diamonds
- 3NT limited
- 4Omi (other minor) natural slam try

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♣; 3NT (usually 4333)

- 4♣/♦ five-card minor
- 4♥/♠ Lissabon with 4-4 (or 5-4 in minors to play in opener's four-card minor) over 4♥, opener's 4♠ shows four diamonds.

Bidding 4NT is negative as long as no one has made a cue-bid

General rules in these auctions:

- Bidding 4♦ over 4♣ is a natural bid while four of a major always is a cue-bid
- 4NT is natural if we haven't made a cue-bid, otherwise optional RKCB
- Direct five-level bids after a cue-bid show a better hand than optional RKCB

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦ (a singleton in a major)

3♥ asking bid

3♠ good hand for both 3NT and a minor suit contract, but no five-card minor

3NT not interested at all

4♣/♦ five-card minor, and no interest in 3NT

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦; 3♥ (asking bid)

3♠ short spades

3NT short hearts <15 HCP

4♣/♦ five-card minors, short hearts 15+

4♥ 4441, short hearts 15+

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♦; 3♥-3♠/NT (short spades/hearts)

3NT (or pass) suggesting to play 3NT

4♣/♦ non-forcing

4♥/♠ Lissabon (good fit)

4NT pick a minor (OK fit)

5♣/♦ natural (OK fit)

Opener's four of a minor is non-forcing. Opener can show a better hand with a Lissabon bid, a jump to 5♣/♦ (five-card suit), or 4NT (pick a minor)

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♥ (Smolen, game-forcing with four hearts and at least five spades)

3♠ support, opener can bid 4♠ with a minimum or 4333

3NT natural, responder can cue-bid with six spades and slam interest

4X cue-bid with spade support and super maximum

1NT-2♣; 2♦-3♠ (Smolen, game-forcing with four spades and at least hearts)

3NT natural, responder can cue-bid with six hearts and slam interest

4♣ maximum with heart support (4♦ now transfer)

4♥ normal bid with support and minimum

1NT-2♣; 2♦-4♣ (precisely a slam try with 5-5 in the majors)

4♦ negative, responder bids 4♥, opener passes or bids 4♠

4♥/♠ accept, sets the trump suit – forcing

1NT-2♣; 2♦-4♦ (GF or slam going with 5-5 in majors, asks for a preference)

4♥/♠ a preference, 4NT is now Roman Key-Card Blackwood 1430

- 2♠      invitational with five spades
- 2NT     invitational, either with four spades or no major at all
- 3♣      game-forcing with four or more clubs, unbalanced or a slam try
- 3♦      game-forcing with four or more diamonds, unbalanced or a slam try
- 3♥      invitational
- 3♠      a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three hearts
- 4♣/♦    a singleton or void with heart support

1NT-2♣; 2♥-2♠ (invitational with five spades)

- pass     minimum, often two spades
- 2NT     maximum, usually without support
- 3♣      maximum, relay bid, asking for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
- 3♥      maximum with five hearts and an honor doubleton in spades.
- 3/4♠    natural raises

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♣ (at least four clubs)

- 3♦      natural or semi-natural, can have five hearts
- 3♥      five hearts, values in spades, maybe weak diamonds
- 3♠      semi-natural, four hearts and weak diamonds
- 3NT     limited hand, stopper in unbid suits

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♣; 3♦ (semi-natural)

- 3♥      semi-natural, often a three card support, a least Hx
- 3♠      fourth suit, asking for stopper
- 3NT     limited hand, stopper in spades
- 4♣/♦    five clubs/4-1-4-4, in both cases with a spade control

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♦ (at least four diamonds)

- 3♥      five hearts with a club stopper or four hearts and weak spades
- 3♠      semi-natural, weak clubs, four or five hearts
- 3NT     limited hand, stopper in unbid suits

1NT-2♣; 2♥

- 3♥      invitational
- 3♠      a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three hearts
- 4♣/♦    a singleton or a void with heart support

1NT-2♣; 2♥-3♠ (slam try or three-card support)

- 3NT     four hearts
- 4♣/♦    cue-bid, five hearts
- 4♥      five hearts, minimum or occasionally four good hearts with a weak suit



- 2NT      invitational, either with four hearts or no major at all  
 3♣      game-forcing with four or more clubs, unbalanced or a slam try  
 3♦      game-forcing with four or more diamonds, unbalanced or a slam try  
 3♥      a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three spades  
 3♠      invitational  
 4♣/♦/♥   a singleton or void with spade support

1NT-2♣; 2♠-3♣ (at least four clubs)

- 3♦      four diamonds, or semi-natural with weakness in hearts  
 3♥      semi-natural with weakness in diamonds  
 3♠      five spades, no weakness  
 3NT      natural, stoppers in unbid suits

1NT-2♣; 2♠-3♣; 3♦ (semi-natural)

- 3♥      fourth-suit  
 3♠      semi-natural, often a three card support, a least Hx  
 3NT      limited hand, stopper in hearts  
 4♣/♦      five clubs/1-4-4-4, in both cases with a heart control

1NT-2♣; 2♠-3♦ (at least four diamonds)

- 3♥      semi-natural, either with five spades or four spades with weak clubs  
 3♠      semi-natural, either with five spades or four spades with weak hearts  
 3NT      limited hand, stopper in unbid suits

1NT-2♣; 2♠

- 3♥      a two-way bid, either a slam try with support or exactly three hearts  
 3♠      invitational  
 4♣/♦/♥   a singleton or a void with spade support

1NT-2♣; 2♠; 3♥ (slam try or three spades)

- 3♠      five spades, minimum, or occasionally four good spades  
 3NT      the normal bid with four spades  
 4♣/♦/♥   cue-bid with five spades  
 4♠      five spades, but not a good hand for slam

1NT-2♣; 2NT/3♣ (minimum/maximum, 4-4 in majors)

- 3♣      a slam try with five clubs (we have to bid 4♣ over 3♣)  
 3♦/♥      transfer, after that 3NT is a general slam try, new suit shortage.  
 3♠      a slam try with five diamonds

1NT-2♦ (five hearts, re-transfer is used when needed)

- 2♥ the normal bid
- 2♠ good heart support but not maximum, not mandatory
- 2NT maximum, shows support but looking for 3NT
- 3♣/♦ natural, but unusual
- 3♥ maximum with support

1NT-2♦; 2NT (maximum, looking for 3NT)

- 3♦ re-transfer (to play 3/4♥ or make a slam try)
- jump void

1NT-2♦; 2♥

- 2♠ artificial, an invitational hand with five hearts
- 2NT game-forcing with 5332, 5422 or 5431 with any singleton
- 3♣/♦ game-forcing with at least 5-4 (5-5, 6-4, 6-5, etc.)
- 3♥ invitational with six hearts
- 3♠ slam try in hearts, void in spades
- 3NT non-forcing, often, but not always, 5332
- 4♣/♦ slam try in hearts, void in the bid minor
- 4♥ to play

1NT-2♦; 2♥-2♠ (artificial, an invitational hand with five hearts)

- 2NT minimum without support, perhaps 4333 though
- 3♣ relay, asking for shortness (the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
- 3♦/♠ natural with maximum and a five-card suit
- 3♥ minimum with support
- 3NT maximum without support
- 4♥ maximum with support

1NT-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 3♣ (relay, asking: the 3-no-1-2 scheme)

- 3♦ a singleton, or some hands with a doubleton, in spades
- 3♥ no shortage
- 3♠ short clubs
- 3NT short diamonds

When responder shows a singleton we can stop in four of a minor.

1NT-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 3♣-3♥ (no shortness)

- 3♠ last-train, 3NT or game in hearts

1NT-2♦; 2♥-2NT (game-forcing with five hearts, we can't stop in 4♣/♦)

Opener's rebids after 2NT

- 3♣ relay bid, asking (responses: the 3-no-1-2 scheme)
- 3♦ support in responder's suit
- 3♥ some special hands with two honors in partner's suit
- 3♠ five card in the other major
- 3NT natural, no fit, not interested to know about a possible singleton
- 4♣/♦ super-fit, a picture bid with support
- 4Ma (responder's major) shows xxxx as support and 4333

2NT; 3♣ (relay bid, asking)

- 3♦ a singleton, or some hands with a doubleton, in the other major
- 3♥ any 5332, a limited 5422, or perhaps a weak six-card suit
- 3♠ short clubs (four diamonds)
- 3NT short diamonds (four clubs)

2NT; 3♣-3♦ (a singleton or a doubleton in the other major)

- 3♥ tell me more, I am interested in something but not so much 3NT
- 3♠ partner, just bid 3NT if you have a doubleton
- 3NT don't like any of that
- 4♣/♦ the five-card suit with 5-4 in the minors
- 4Ma prefer a game in the major

2NT; 3♣-3♦; 3♥ (asking about the short suit)

- 3♠ doubleton in the other major
- 3NT four clubs, here always 3-4 in the minors
- 4♣ four diamonds, here always 4-3 in the minors
- 4Ma 5332 and we probably need to play my suit

2NT; 3♣-3♥ (any 5332, limited 5422, or six hearts with a bad suit)

- 3♠ the normal bid with three-card support, or Kx/Ax, in partner's suit
- 3NT not much help in partner's suit, at best Qx
- 4♣/♦ a five-card minor also having Kx or Ax in partner's suit
- 4Ma acceptable support but a boring minimum

2NT; 3♣-3♠/NT (a singleton in clubs/diamonds)

- 4mi support
- 4Omi support in both suits
- 4Ma to play

2NT; 3♦ (support)

- 3♥ a singleton in the other major
- 3♠ slam try without shortness, we can't stop in 3NT
- 3NT slam try without shortness, and needs help in trumps, non-forcing
- 4♣/♦ a singleton in the bid suit
- 4Ma to play, no slam ambitions

2NT; 3♦-3♥ (a singleton in the other major)

- 3♠ relay, asking
- 3NT suggests we play 3NT
- 4♣/♦ a five-card minor
- 4Ma to play, no slam ambitions

2NT; 3♦-3♥; 3♠ (relay, asking)

- 3NT four clubs
- 4♣ four diamonds
- 4Ma was looking for a five-card minor

2NT; 3♦-3♠ (slam try in our suit)

- 3NT normal bid, seldom 4333.
- 4♣/♦ a nice five-card minor, we may have a double fit
- 4Ma a minimum, or more often most hand with 4333.

2NT-3♥ (two honors in a doubleton)

- 3♠ relay, asking
- 3NT to play
- 4♣/♦ a mild slam try with a singleton
- 4Ma to play

1NT-2♦; 2♥-3♣ (five hearts and at least four clubs)

- 3♦ a semi-natural bid
- 3♥ heart support
- 3♠ a semi-natural bid
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support, and not too bad a hand
- 4♦ support in both suits (3 top honors+ in the two suits)
- 4♥ hearts support, not a good fit

When opener bids 3♥: 3NT is forcing and a new suit shows shortness while a rebid of the minor shows 5-5. All these bids show some interest in a slam.

1NT-2♦; 2♥-3♦ (five hearts and at least four diamonds)

- 3♥ an ambiguous bid
  - a) diamond support, minimum
  - b) Hx in hearts, three-card fit in diamonds
- 3♠ artificial with support
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support in both suits (3 top honors+ in the two suits)
- 4♦ diamond support and not too bad hand
- 4♥ hearts support, and not a good fit

1NT-2♦; 2♥-3♦; 3♥ (ambiguous) - 3♠ (good hearts)

- 3NT type xx in hearts, four diamonds
- 4♥/cue Hx in hearts
- 4♦ Hx in hearts + four diamonds

## 1NT-2♥

- 2♠ the normal bid
- 2NT maximum, shows support but looking for 3NT
- 3♣/♦ natural, but unusual
- 3♥ good spade support but not maximum
- 3♠ maximum with support

## 1NT-2♥; 2NT (maximum, looking for 3NT)

- 3♥ re-transfer (to play 3/4♠ or make a slam try)
- jump void as over 2♠

## 1NT-2♥; 2♠

- 2NT game-forcing with 5332, 5422 or 5431 with any singleton
- 3♣/♦ game-forcing with at least 5-4 (5-5, 6-4, 6-5, etc.)
- 3♥ invitational with 5-5 in the majors
- 3♠ invitational with six spades
- 3NT non-forcing, often, but not always, 5332
- 4♣/♦/♥ slam try in spades, void in the bid suit
- 4♠ to play

## 1NT-2♥; 2♠-3♣ (five spades and at least four clubs)

- 3♦ a semi-natural bid
- 3♥ a semi-natural bid
- 3♠ spade support
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ support, and not too bad a hand
- 4♦/♥ a good fit in both responder's suits
- 4♠ spade support, and not a good fit

## 1NT-2♥; 2♠-3♦ (five spades and at least four diamonds)

- 3♥ an ambiguous bid (Hx in spades or four diamonds)
- 3♠ spade support
- 3NT natural, not a good fit in responder's suits
- 4♣ a good fit in both responder's suits
- 4♦ diamond support and not too bad
- 4♥ a good fit in both responder's suits
- 4♠ spade support, and not a good fit

When opener bids 3♠ after responder's three of a minor: 3NT is forcing and a new suit shows shortness while a rebid of the minor shows 5-5. All these bids show some interest in a slam.

1NT-2♠/NT (six clubs/diamonds)

1 step      does not accept

3♣/♦      (responder's minor) accept of a possible invitation

1NT-2♠; 2NT or 3♣

3♣      (or pass) to play

3♦/♥/♠      game-forcing or slam try, six-card minor and shortness in the bid suit

3NT      to play

4♣      slam try (4NT negative)

jump      void

1NT-2NT; 3♣ or 3♦

3♦      (or pass) to play

3♥/♠      game-forcing or slam try, six-card minor and shortness in the bid suit

3NT      to play

4♣      shortness, slam try (4NT negative)

4♦      slam try (4NT negative)

jump      void

1NT-3♣ (tactical bid with both minors, 6-8 HCP, 5-5 if vulnerable)

pass/3♦      normal preference bids

3♥/♠      values, or 5-card suit, forcing

other      natural

1NT-3♦ (transfer slam try, six-card hearts or singleton heart, both minors)

- 3♥ normal bid
- 3NT slam warning, weak hearts
- 4♥ xx in hearts but a super-fit

1NT-3♦; 3♥

- 3NT non-forcing, singleton, 3-1-4-5 or 3-1-5-4 (we can stop in 4mi)
- 3♠ general slam try in hearts, after which 3NT is a cue-bid in spades
- 4♣/♦ slam try in hearts, can be a mild slam try
- 4♥ a mild slam try, looking for a good fit

1NT-3♥ (transfer slam try, six-card spades or singleton spade, both minors)

- 3♠ normal bid
- 3NT slam warning, weak spades
- 4♠ xx in spades but a super-fit

1NT-3♥; 3♠

- 3NT non-forcing, singleton, 3-1-4-5 or 3-1-5-4 (we can stop in 4mi)
- 4♣ slam try in spades, a general slam try
- 4♦/♥ slam try in spades, can be a mild slam try
- 4♠ a mild slam try, looking for a good fit

1NT-3♠

- 3NT no special fit
- 4♣/♦ a nice hand for a minor suit contract
- 4♥/♠ a Lissabon bid with only 3-2 in minors, but a super-fit in honors
- 4NT shows 3-3 in the minors, but a good fit in honors

1NT-3♠; 3NT

- 4♣ a slam try with 5-5
- 4♦ a slam try with 6-5 without a void
- 4♥/♠ void in the bid suit
- 4NT bid a minor

1NT-3♠; 3NT-4♣ (a slam try with 5-5)

- 4♦ asking for the short major, we can stop in 4NT
- 4♥/♠ support, Lissabon (also used over 4♦)

1NT-4♣/♦

- relay interested in slam, super-fit



## FOREWORD (to 1NT book only)

This book is the second one in the series where I explain how our notrump bidding works. In the first part, I presented our 2NT system, and with this part I continue according to my plan with the 1NT system.

The notrump bidding in our methods was originally presented in my book '5-card majors - the Scanian way', but as we are constantly trying to improve our system a lot has happened since that book was published.

Our 1NT opening shows 15-17 HCP. There are many differences when we open at the one-level compared to the stronger notrump hands. After 1NT we have to cater to both invitational and sign-off bids, which we didn't have any room for after the 2NT opening bid. We also have to be prepared for the opponents to compete after 1NT while they more often keep quiet when we open 2NT. Therefore, I have also in this part included a brief description of how we deal with interference.

The point of all my books is to tell you how my partner and I reason when we work to design our methods. We are concerned with many small details, but we don't add functionality just because we can. We have criteria for doing so, and the most important factor is that the bids we add or change must be logical to us.

Therefore, our system is easier to remember for us, but perhaps more difficult for you to learn it. I have named this series of books *explaining* notrump bidding. My ambition is to explain why our bids in a given situation have their actual meaning. I don't think you can expect to play our system with real success if you don't understand the thoughts behind the design.

I have a few principles that I always return to. The first, and perhaps also the most important, is that I like to have a choice of bids whenever I can. I think that we should be able to use our judgment as often as possible. Secondly, I believe that cooperation in the auction enhances our chances to find the right spot. When I have a choice, I try to give partner information instead of taking a unilateral decision.

This is the eight book in the series. I appreciate the help I have got from my friends with editing the book. Peder Fredrikson for always being there, Wayne Burrows for illuminating my thoughts, Cecilia Billiet for accuracy and authenticity, and some other helping hands without naming them all for just finding my mistakes.

A special thanks to Olof Bergström for both his relentless superintending and for giving me some great ideas that led to improvements in the current system

Mats Nilsland