

The background of the entire cover is a close-up, slightly blurred image of playing cards. A green card is at the top, and below it, a blue band contains the title. The bottom half of the cover shows a green card with a large black letter 'A' and a black club symbol. The text is white and centered.

Daniel Neill

STANDARD MODERN PRECISION

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Second Edition

An Honors eBook from Master Point Press

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction to the Second Edition..... | 1 |
| Preface | 3 |
| Part 1: Getting to Know Standard Modern Precision | 11 |
| 1♣ Opening – 16+ HCP (or 17+ balanced) | 13 |
| Negative 1♦ response to a 1♣ opening | 15 |
| 1♥ minimum game forcing response to a 1♣ opening | 36 |
| 12+ HCP (extras) responses to a 1♣ opening | 45 |
| Passed hand positives | 45 |
| Handling interference over 1♣ | 46 |
| 1♦ Opening – 2+ Diamonds, Good 10 to 15 HCP | 55 |
| Responding to 1♦ | 56 |
| Handling interference over 1♦ | 67 |
| 1♥ and 1♠ Openings – 5+ Cards, Good 10 to 15 HCP | 69 |
| 1NT Opening – Balanced, 14-16 HCP | 70 |
| 2♣ Opening – 6+ Clubs, Good 10 to 15 HCP | 74 |
| 2♦ Opening – 4414/4405/3415/4315, Good 10 to HCP | 81 |
| Weak 2♥ and 2♠ Openings | 90 |
| 2NT and Higher Openings..... | 90 |
| Conclusion – Part 1 | 91 |
| Part 2: Gaining the Winning Advantage with the Full System | 92 |
| Constructive Auctions | 95 |
| Kickback Roman Keycard Blackwood..... | 95 |
| Serious 3NT/Last Train | 99 |
| The Implied Cue-bid..... | 103 |
| XYZ Two-Way checkback Stayman | 109 |
| Opening weak twos on five-card suits..... | 118 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 1NT 15-17 in 3 rd seat vulnerable, and all 4 th seat..... | 124 |
| Opening 2NT with 19-20 HCP when 1NT is 14-16 HCP..... | 124 |
| Taking full advantage of limited openers..... | 125 |
| 2/1 auctions | 134 |
| Competitive Auctions | 136 |
| Continuations after a semipositive (6-7) double | 137 |
| A limited opener has license to compete..... | 140 |
| 1♦ opener's second call in competition..... | 141 |
| Responding to 1♦ in competition – a closer look..... | 143 |
| How responder can continue competing after a 1♦ opening | 145 |
| Handling 2-suited or random interference over our 1♣ opening | 147 |
| Negative free bids at the 2-level | 150 |
| Transfers after 1♦-(2♣) and 1♦-(3♣) | 153 |
| Two-way actions in competition..... | 155 |
| Defending against SMP | 157 |
| Conclusion - Part 2..... | 159 |
| Part 3: Optional Gadgets in SMP..... | 160 |
| 1♥ response to 1♣ denying 5+ spades | 161 |
| 1♣-1NT showing 5+ hearts, 12+ HCP | 163 |
| SMP Jacoby 2NT | 166 |
| Shortness exchange after major suit flag | 169 |
| 2♠ nonforcing response to 1♥ | 172 |
| 1♦-1M-2♣-2oM shape relays | 173 |
| Three nifty (re)doubles by the 1♦ opener..... | 175 |
| Transfer advances after double of 1 of a major suit opening or overcall | 178 |
| Transfers after 1♦-(X) | 180 |
| Transfer rebids after transfer responses to 1NT | 181 |
| Conclusion – Part 3..... | 182 |

Afterword 183

Acknowledgements 184

**Appendix A – Configuring Bridge Base Online to Practice Standard
Modern Precision..... 185**

Appendix B – Learning by Watching on Vugraph..... 195

Appendix C – ACBL Convention Card..... 200

Appendix D – Cheat Sheet and Index..... 201

Introduction to the Second Edition

This book was originally published privately a few years ago as two e-books: Standard Modern Precision: Getting from Here to There and Standard Modern Precision: Advanced Topics. Appearances of the SMP framework used in the bidding challenges in the Bridge World and ACBL bulletin are testimonies to its popularity.

This edition incorporates valuable feedback from an increasing number of SMP practitioners. Many additional practical examples and quizzes with clear explanations and instructions will enhance the reader's learning experience.

Bridge Base Online's Vugraph and Partnership Bidding Room are godsend for any student of the game. We can practice hundreds of hands from the comfort of our home with anyone across the hall or across the world. I provide instructions to configure this valuable tool to practice specific areas of focus as you progress through this book. Besides learning to review your hands, I provide guidance on who to watch live when possible and to research hands played by expert partnerships using SMP framework. What a great time to learn a strong club system!

As an aid to filling out your convention card I have included a sample ACBL convention card for your reference.

Finally, I have combined both original books into one with three sections. Part 1 has plenty for anyone wanting to enhance their game by learning this system. Part 2 covers Advanced Topics and Part 3 covers gadgets used by professional partnerships using the SMP framework.

For Molly Kindley
For being herself, my love,
And a great bridge student

Preface

Have you ever wanted to find out more about Precision but were afraid to ask, or judged the gap too wide to cross? Or have you learned a variant of Precision and found that nobody else plays it or that it has too many problems? This book is for you. The theme of this book is how to get from SAYC or 2/1 to a modern Precision framework based on what you already know, and with good explanations of the new bids. The system you will learn is played by lots of top players, and a growing number of tournament players.

This is the standard Precision of the future.

What makes this book different from all other books on Precision?

I can answer this by describing my own experience with learning the system. I first read about the classic C.C. Wei Precision as described in Goren's New Bridge Complete. It was an anecdotal description of the opening bids and the basic responses. *It seemed so foreign* when the rest of the hundreds of pages of the book was dedicated to a classical American bidding system, where men were men and the more you bid the more you had.

Fast forward to my graduation to playing in local club games or sectionals. Occasionally I would come across a pair playing a strong club. But they did not win that much more than other comparably-experienced pairs, and it was noticeable that they would get some wild results, through no apparent effort of my own, and they would start arguing with each other. Plus, no local power players I knew chose to play a strong club. *It didn't seem like a winning system.*

As a self-admitted systems geek, I would still inquire about such systems and sometimes find that there wasn't much detail. It seemed every strong club pair would use a different flavor, or ones they devised from scratch. Who (besides that pair) would know the system if I wanted to play it? *The systems didn't seem completely-written or widely-played.*

Fast forward again to travelling to tournaments. After becoming a bridge teacher and occasional partner-for-hire, I knew I had to observe the best in the world (using online vugraph or bridge magazines) to make sure I was learning what the winning players used so I could play their systems to achieve my best results. It turns out that professionals *did* play a strong club at the national level with some frequency.

For most of the 1990's and early 2000's there was still no clear consensus among top American players at ACBL Nationals on a top system – 2/1 Game Force was common along with a variety of home brew strong club systems in use (Hamman-Soloway, Rodwell-Meckstroth, Ekeblad-Rubin, Woolsey-Stewart), and when two pros were forced into a new partnership on a team, “hastily-filled-out convention card” was as good as anything else to win events.

But as professional bridge exploded and the general level of quality in bidding rose (especially with the Law of Total Tricks [LOTT] and the influx of European players to U.S. tournaments), sponsored teams needed all pairs to play good methods, even the client-pro pair. At some point, a version of Hamman-Soloway-Rodwell strong club, greatly simplified, was given to clients who gave it to pros who gave it to other clients and so forth until it became the *lingua franca*. Pros who found themselves paired regularly would adopt it for convenience, and many American junior pairs have chosen the system as their favorite.

This book is a description of that *widely-used* (in the American tournament world) strong club system, *played by world-class professionals* that is *clearly superior* to standard bidding and is *well-documented* and *well-developed* but not too complicated to learn and remember with practice, with *lots of examples* to illustrate.

That is what makes this book different from other books before it. I call this system **Standard Modern Precision** (or, **SMP**).

Why play Standard Modern Precision?

In case you are not quite convinced that you should attempt to learn an expert system, I promise it is worth it. Here's why:

- a) It is fun to open the light openings – rather than pass.
- b) It is what a good percentage of the top players play – that can't be bad!
- c) You do not need to wear protective gear to use it, unlike a chainsaw (joke).
- d) It will improve your understanding of bridge concepts that apply to any bridge system.
- e) SMP is allowed in all ACBL games – you do not have to pre-alert it.
- f) This book has a helpful cheat sheet in Appendix D so you can quickly start an auction and look up how to continue.
- g) ...It is **effective!**

Why Precision is effective – light, limited openings

Precision is a more effective system because of the **light, limited openings**. Why is that?

Light openings are frequent

The following chart¹ lists the probability of picking up a hand with a certain number of HCP:

| HCP Count in One Hand (n) | Cumulative Percentage Probability (n or more HCP) | Individual Percentage Probability (of exactly n HCP) |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| 18 | 4.09 | 1.61 |
| 17 | 6.45 | 2.36 |
| 16 | 9.76 | 3.31 |
| 15 | 14.18 | 4.42 |
| 14 | 19.88 | 5.69 |
| 13 | 26.79 | 6.91 |
| 12 | 34.82 | 8.03 |
| 11 | 43.76 | 8.94 |
| 10 | 53.17 | 9.41 |
| 9 | 62.52 | 9.36 |
| 8 | 71.42 | 8.89 |

Precision gets to open about 9% more hands than in 2/1 by reducing the minimum HCP requirements to a good 10 HCP, which the chart shows to be the highest frequency count. Opening a couple more times a session on average is fun! But there is more to this...

Opening causes more problems for the opponents than passing

It's just a fact of bridge life that the opener has the advantage. Books are written (you are reading one) entirely based on the fact that *we* have opened

¹ https://www.bridgehands.com/P/Probability_HCP.htm

the auction, not the opponents. Taking the opponents out of their preparation is a tactic that applies to any game. It's a fun way to play the game.

Here's a simple case:

2017 Open USBC, Final, Segment 5/8

| | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|---------|-------------|
| Board 1 | | ♠ A Q 7 3 | | |
| North Deals | | ♥ Q 9 6 3 | | |
| None Vul | | ♦ K 8 7 | | |
| | | ♣ 5 3 | | |
| ♠ 10 8 | | | | ♠ K J 5 |
| ♥ J 7 4 | | | | ♥ A K 8 5 |
| ♦ Q J 10 9 4 | | | | ♦ A 6 5 3 2 |
| ♣ 10 8 7 | | | | ♣ J |
| | | ♠ 9 6 4 2 | | |
| | | ♥ 10 2 | | |
| | | ♦ — | | |
| | | ♣ A K Q 9 6 4 2 | | |
| West | North | East | South | |
| Weinstein | Greco | Levin | Hampson | |
| | 1 ♦* | 1 ♥ | 2 ♣ | |
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 NT | |
| All pass | | | | |

At this table, North playing SMP could open with a balanced 11 HCP hand. East's cheap overcall did not present many problems. South could push the auction cooperatively to find game.

8

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

♠ A Q 7 3

♥ Q 9 6 3

♦ K 8 7

♣ 5 3

♠ 10 8

♥ J 7 4

♦ O J 10 9 4

♣ 10 8 7

♠ K J 5

♥ AK85

♦ A 6 5 3 2

♣ J

♠ 9 6 4 2

♥ 10 2

◆ _____

♣ A K Q 9 6 4 2

West

North

East

South

Diamond Katz

Platnick Nickell

Pass

1 ♣*

3 ♣

Pass

Pass

X

Pass

3 ♦

All pass

Playing typical 2/1 style, North had to pass the 11-count. It is well-known that you should take liberties when partner is a passed hand, not to mention over a strong club opening, so South chose to preempt and North could not imagine there was a game. East's reopening takeout double found a 9-card fit. 11 IMPs to the strong club team.

The ranges are narrower, less guesswork

While light openings harass, the range helps reach a reasonable contract more often, especially in competition.

Not counting the rare 22+ HCP hands, in 2/1, opener passes with 0-11(-) HCP (a 12½-HCP range) and opens 1 of a suit with 11(+)-21 HCP (a 10½-HCP range).

In a strong club, opener passes with 0-10(-) HCP (an 11½-HCP range), opens 1 of a suit with 10(+)-15 HCP (a 5-HCP range), and opens 1♣ with 16 to 21 HCP (a 6-HCP range).

The passed hands ranges are about the same between the two systems, but the other two ranges defined by the initial call in Precision are half the size as in 2/1.

Therefore it is easier to guess how strong opener is, which is important in the modern competitive game. We will discuss how to take advantage of this to the maximum in Part 2 of this book, but common sense says that if partner opens with 10(+)-15 HCP, you should be able to determine what to do more often after, say, 1♥-(4♦)-? than in 2/1 which shows 11-21 HCP, since opener will never have so many HCP that they will feel pressured to punish you by overbidding.

Organization of this Book

Part 1 introduces you to the system and assumes you have played SAYC or 2/1 Game Force but never a strong club. If you have played Precision before you will find several differences from your variant but will not find it difficult to adjust. You should practice the system as described in Part 1 until it feels very natural before proceeding to Part 2. There are several examples and quizzes for illustration but it is imperative to practice with your partner.

Part 2 ensures that you will be playing the system to your distinct advantage over the field by filling in a lot of the blanks left by the earlier section of the book. You may even look ahead to this Part while practicing Part 1 if you have a question on a yet-unexplained area of the system.

Part 3 is for the scientists, professionals and daredevils who enjoy practicing with a regular partner and want to optimize their results in many types of auctions at a considerable memory cost.

Appendix A describes how to use Bridge Base Online to learn the system with your partner by setting up SMP openings in a bidding room.

Appendix B explains how to discover vugraph records with SMP and learn from replaying them.

Appendix C contains a sample convention card to guide you when filling out your own cards for this system.

Appendix D is a cheat sheet to let you quickly decide what to open and respond, with page numbers in the book to find the follow-ups – use this when practicing or as an index reference

A note about notation:

- Bids in parentheses, like 1♠-(2♥)-3♣ are opponents' bids. Otherwise it is assumed the opponents are passing.
- Hand shape is in ♠-♥-♦-♣ order, so 4234 shows 4 spades, 2 hearts, 3 diamonds and 4 clubs. If order does not matter, (4441).

Part 1:
Getting to Know Standard Modern Precision

Standard Modern Precision Opening Bids

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1♣ | 16+ HCP (or 17+ HCP balanced), artificial, any shape, forcing |
| 1♦ | Natural good 10 to 15 HCP, or 11-13 NT – denies a 5-card major unless has 6 diamonds, may be as short as 2 cards |
| 1♥, 1♠ | 5+ cards, good 10 to 15 HCP |
| 1NT | 14-16 HCP, includes 5M(332) or 5m(422) |
| 2♣ | 6+ cards, good 10 to 15 HCP, not forcing, may have a side 4- or 5-card suit |
| 2♦ | Good 10 to 15 HCP, 4414/4405/4315/3415 exactly (short diamonds) |
| 2♥, 2♠ | Normal weak two, 6 to bad 10 HCP |
| 2NT | 20-21 HCP balanced |
| 3 of a suit | Preempt, 7 cards (in a minor, occasionally 6 cards, since 2♣ and 2♦ are unavailable for preempts) |
| 3NT | Gambling |
| 4 of a suit | Preempt, 8 cards |

1♣ Opening – 16+ HCP (or 17+ balanced)

The definition of a 1♣ opening could be stated as: “wants to be in game opposite a random 8 HCP”. Therefore you may upgrade a 15-HCP hand with good distribution and suits.

The strong 1♣ opening is the weakness of Precision, ironically. Your object is to survive competition and get to a reasonable contract – not to outbid everyone else.

The way to develop the auction with a strong hand is to show shape as soon as possible. That way, responder knows what opener actually has. Remember, 1♣ could be *any* shape. Quite a menagerie to sift through. The system will provide all the necessary ways to do so without overstepping the limit of the two hands.

Ready for a quiz?

Quiz:

What do you open?

♠AQxx ♥Kxxx ♦AKx ♣Qx

1♣. 17-19 or 22+ balanced opens 1♣.
With 14-16 open 1NT.

♠KQJxx ♥AQxx ♦Axx ♣x

1♣. 16 HCP unbalanced fits the definition of 1♣. Notice that the hand has a singleton club. This is because the 1♣ opening is completely artificial.

♠Ax ♥x ♦KQxx ♣AKQxxx

1♣. This strong hand actually has clubs! But responder should still keep in mind opener could have *zero* clubs. Your job is to reveal the clubs later.

♠Kxx ♥AQxx ♦Qxx ♣KQx

1NT. This hand has 16 HCP, true, but 1♣ would require at least 17 HCP if balanced.

♠KQxxx ♥AJx ♦AKx ♣Kx

2NT. This balanced hand is well clear of the 17 HCP requirement, but it fits into the 2NT opening. The 5-card major will never stop you from opening or rebidding some number of notrump, if the hand is balanced. You would open this 2NT in a standard system as well – there is lots of overlap in openings in SMP and standard.

♠AQJx ♥AKQxxx ♦KQxx ♣—

1♣. Before you would open this juggernaut with a strong 2♣. Now you open just as artificially with 1♣.

♠KQJxx ♥Kxx ♦x ♣Axxx

1♠. Just like in standard. Not strong enough for 1♣ (16+ HCP).

♠AKQxxx ♥x ♦Axxx ♣Qx

1♣. This hand has just 15 HCP, but the trick-taking potential and loser count upgrade this to a 1♣ opening. Does a random 8 HCP opposite this hand make a game (in spades most likely)? Yes.

Negative 1♦ response to a 1♣ opening

The 1♦ response indicates that game might not be possible. 0-7 HCP, any distribution. This is the ice to the fire of 1♣.

Opener's rebids after a 1♦ response

We still do not know anything about *either* hand's shape. What's trumps? How high do we go?

At this point, it's time for opener to start the ball rolling to investigate a suit fit.

Rebidding with balanced hands

The first opportunity for opener to describe her hand is actually a nice time to look again. Is the hand balanced? If so, we should rebid some number of notrump.

| Opener | Responder | |
|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1♣ | 1♦ | |
| 1NT | | = 17-19 HCP |
| (Open 2NT) | | = 20-21 HCP |
| 2NT | | = 22-24 HCP |
| 3NT | | = 25-27 HCP |

After a 1NT rebid, talk about easy, responder simply bids as if opener has *opened* 1NT. Stayman, Transfers. The whole thing. Just bear in mind you need only 6 HCP to invite game.

After a 2NT rebid, same idea: respond as over a 2NT opening.

25-27 HCP balanced rebids 3NT. Optionally, you can play Kokish to give yourself tighter HCP ranges ($1♣-1♦-2♥ = 5+♥$ or big balanced hands) if you play Kokish over a 2♣ opening already in 2/1.

Rebidding with unbalanced hands

OK so the hand does not fit the bill for a notrump rebid. It either has a singleton, void, or a 6-card suit. Or maybe it's just 5422 that does not look like a notrump hand. How do you kick off bidding suits?

Majors First, Always (MAFIA)

With an unbalanced hand with a 4+ card major, opener's first obligation is to rebid 1 of the major, *forcing for one round*. This includes hands where the primary suit is a minor.

What is a **primary suit**? A primary suit is the longest suit (5+ cards) in the hand. The general rule in bridge we all come to follow is: bid your primary suit first, then your secondary suit. With two 5-card suits, start with the highest. This is nothing new.

But why majors first, even if the major is not the longest suit?

Do we not make a takeout double with a 4-card major and a 5-card minor sometimes, or bypass a longer diamond suit in response to a standard 1♣ opening? The majors are what bridge is all about. Therefore with unbalanced hands we rebid the major first over 1♣-1♦, even if it is just 4 cards.

With a game forcing hand and a 5+ card major, opener jumps to 2♥ or 2♠. Opener may continue as over a standard 2♣-2♦-2♥/2♠ sequence, including "cheaper minor 2nd negative" if you like. In the unlikely event opener wants to set the suit as trumps, opener jumps to 3 of the major instead.

With a game forcing hand and a 4-card major and 5+ card minor, opener starts with 1♥ or 1♠ and then jump rebids 3 of the minor.

But what of this freak hand?

♠AKJ10xxxx ♥— ♦AQxx ♣x

This was opened 1♣ because it was simply too full of tricks to open a nonforcing 1♠ but too strong to open 4♠. Now opener can indicate the minimum but high-trick hand by jump rebidding 4♠ after 1♣-1♦.

With all other unbalanced hands with a major, opener rebids just 1 of the major, forcing for one round.

Ready for a quiz?

Quiz:

| You | Responder |
|-----|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♦ |
| ? | |

What is your rebid with the following 1♣ opening hands?

♠AQxxx ♥Kxx ♦x ♣AKJx

1♠. Begin to show shape starting with a major, MAFIA style. Over 1NT by responder you will rebid 2♣ to give partner a choice of suits (or possibly responder might introduce a long red suit).

♠KQxx ♥xx ♦AQxx ♣KQJ

1NT. 17-19 HCP. It is more important to show the balanced nature of the hand than to rebid the 4-card spade suit. Now responder bids as if responding to an opening 1NT.

♠Kxx ♥x ♦AKx ♣KQJxxx

2♣. 6+ cards, and no 4-card major. Sometimes 5 clubs – 4 diamonds.

♠x ♥AQxx ♦AK ♣KQxxxx

1♥. With a major and a minor, you always start with the major. Plan to rebid 2♣ over responder's 1♠ or 1NT rebid.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ♠AQxx ♥AQx ♦KQJ ♣AJx | 2NT. 22-24 HCP balanced. Responder continues as if responding to a 2NT opening. |
| ♠AKxxx ♥AKx ♦x ♣AKQx | 2♠. Game forcing with 5+ spades. Very much like a standard 2♣-2♦-2♠ rebid. |
| ♠Q10xx ♥AKQx ♦x ♣KQxx | 1♥. If responder has a 4-card major, you will find out shortly. |
| ♠A ♥KJ10 ♦Axxxx ♣AQxx | 1NT. If you rebid 2♦, responder knows you are 16-21 HCP with possibly 7 diamonds, but if you treat the hand as balanced you are more precise with 17-19 HCP and balanced. The singleton honor might be sufficient support if responder transfers to spades. |
| ♠AQx ♥x ♦AKJxxx ♣AQx | 2♦. You aren't quite strong enough to game force, but if responder can muster a rebid, you will continue towards game. |
| ♠AKJ ♥x ♦AKJxxx ♣AQJ | 3♦. This is the stronger, game forcing, version of the previous hand. Responder cannot pass 3♦. |

Continuations after opener's rebid of one of a major

This major suit bid is forcing for one round. The reason is that opener might have another important suit to show, and we don't want to play in a 4-1 or 4-2 major fit. Also, opener might have a *very* strong hand, so needs responder to bid one more time so she can get the hand's true strength across.

Opener Responder

| | |
|----|----|
| 1♣ | 1♦ |
| 1♥ | ? |

Responder's Rebid

1♠ = 4+ spades, denies 4+ hearts, 0-7 HCP, forcing.

1NT = 0-5 HCP without 4+ card support or 4+ spades, not forcing – the “double negative”

Opener's Follow-ups

1NT = 1444 likely, not forcing
 2♣/♦ = 4+ cards, could be 5-4+ either way, not forcing
 2♥ = 6+ cards
 2♠ = 3-card raise 16-19 HCP, or 4-card raise 16-17 HCP
 2NT = 21-22 HCP, likely 0-1 spades
 3♣/♦ = 4 hearts, 5 clubs/diamonds, game forcing
 3♥ = long good suit, invite
 3♠ = 3-card raise 20-21 HCP, or 4-card raise 18-19 HCP
 3NT/4♥ = to play, slam unlikely
 4♣/♦ = 4+ spades, 20+ HCP, splinter

Pass = typically 44(14), best guess
 2♣/♦ = 4+ cards, could be 5-4+ either way, not forcing
 2♥ = 6+ cards, usually
 2♠ = 5+ hearts – 4 spades, 21+ HCP, treat like reverse in standard
 2NT = invite, 22-23 HCP, NF
 3♣/♦ = 4 hearts -5+ clubs/diamonds, game forcing
 3♥ = long good suit, invite
 3NT/4♥ = to play, slam unlikely

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
|--------|-----------|

1♣

1♦

1♥

?

Responder's Rebid

2♣ = "good hand, no fit" – 6-7 HCP without 3 or more hearts or 4 or more spades (over 1♠, denies 5 or more hearts), forcing

2♦ = 3-card fit, (may have 5 hearts over 1♠) – 5-7 HCP, forcing

2♥ (over 1♠) = 6-7 HCP, 5 or more hearts, denies 3 or more spades

Single raise to 2M = 4-5 trumps, and 0-4 HCP, not forcing

Opener's Follow-ups

2♦ = minimum, artificial, asks responder to show doubleton support or other major

2♥ (after 1♠) = minimum, natural, 5+ spades - 4+ hearts

Rebid major = 6+ cards, nonforcing

2♠ (after 1♥) = reverse, forcing, 21+

2NT = game forcing, waiting bid

3♣/♦ = 4+ hearts - 6+ clubs/diamonds, game forcing

Rebid 3 of major = sets suit as trumps

Rebid major = sign-off, usually 4 cards

3 of major = invite, 5+ cards

Other major = natural, 4+ cards

2NT = artificial game force

3♣/♦ = 4M-6+ clubs/diamonds, game forcing

3NT = to play

Use your normal 1M-2M raise structure.

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♦ |
| 1♥ | ? |

Responder's Rebid

2NT = mini-splinter, 4 trumps, 5-7 HCP unbalanced, this is quite a good 1♦ bid in support of partner!

Jump shift = 4-6 HCP, great 6+ card suit, all HCP in this suit, not forcing

Double raise to 3M = 4 trumps, balanced, 5-7 HCP, invitational

Double Jump Shift = 5+ trumps, 6-7 HCP, singleton or void in the suit – the splinter of splinters

Opener's Follow-ups

3, 4 of major = sign-off
 3♣ = asks responder to bid her singleton or void, game forcing

Ready for another quiz?

Quiz:

| Opener | You |
|--------|-----|
| 1♣ | 1♦ |
| 1♠ | ? |

What is your second call with the following hands that responded 1♦ the previous round?

♠xxxx ♥Kxxx ♦xx ♣xxx

2♠. Good news – there is an 8-card major fit (though you don't have a great hand).
1♠ was forcing, so you cannot pass.

♠Kxx ♥x ♦QJxx ♣xxxxx

2♦. 3-card fit, max hand – you have a good 1♦ response and mild support for opener's major. Remember, opener might have just 4 cards in the major, in which case it is good to stay low. If opener rebids 2♠ you will pass - if opener has 4 spades, at least she has an unbalanced hand so you may be able to crossruff. If opener has 5 spades, no problem at all.

♠Kx ♥Qxxx ♦Qxxx ♣xxx

2♣. No-fit maximum. Again you have a good 1♦ response, but this time do not have a guarantee that spades will be playable. If opener rebids 2♥, raise to 3♥. If opener rebids 2♠ (showing 6), offer 3♠. If opener rebids 2♦ (an artificial waiting bid), bid 2♠ to show the doubleton support (a safe 5-2 fit, unless opener has just 4 and runs from 2♠, when you will scramble to a minor as needed).

♠Axxxx ♥x ♦xxx ♣Qxxx

4♥. Your hand now has a 9+ card fit and a singleton so you can force to game. By super-splintering, you tell opener about the heart shortness so the partnership might be able to get to a slam if that improves her hand.

♠x ♥AJ10xxxx ♦xx ♣xxx

3♥. You have a good 1♦ response, with a long decent heart suit. Jumping should communicate the playing strength this hand affords.

♠xx ♥Axxxx ♦xx ♣Qxxx

2♥. You could rebid 2♣, no-fit maximum, but would lose the possibility of finding a 5-3 heart fit safely at the 2-level that way. This “mini 2/1” requires a good 1♦ response.

♠xxx ♥xxxx ♦xxx ♣xxx

1NT. The double-negative. You have a bad 1♦ response (understatement) without 4 spades but are forced to do something. You cannot pass 1♠ (opener could have a game forcing hand with 4 spades and a longer minor). So 1NT it is.

The following Real Deal illustrates the slow, forcing approach even with a very strong hand:

2016 Spingold, Quarterfinal, Segment 4/4

Board 26

East Deals

Both Vul

♠ Q 9 8 7

♥ J

♦ 4 3

♣ J 10 7 5 4 3

♠ J 5 3 2

♥ Q 10 8 7 6

♦ 10

♣ Q 8 2

W

N

S

E

♠ A 6 4

♥ 9 4 3

♦ J 9 6 5 2

♣ 9 6

♠ K 10

♥ A K 5 2

♦ A K Q 8 7

♣ A K

| West | North | East | South |
|----------|----------|------|------------------|
| Moss | Bathurst | Grue | J. Lall |
| | | Pass | 1 ♣* |
| Pass | 1 ♦* | Pass | 1 ♥* |
| Pass | 1 ♠ | Pass | 3 ♦ ¹ |
| Pass | 3 NT | Pass | 4 NT |
| All pass | | | |

1. 4+ hearts, 5+ diamonds, GF

Down 1 — NS -100

North-South were playing SMP so South’s 1♥ rebid was forcing and 3♦ was game forcing with 4 hearts and longer diamonds (with 5 hearts he would have started 1♣-1♦-2♥). Shape off the chest, he could then follow with a quantitative 4NT to communicate the monstrous strength. North’s hand never improved and 4NT was unfortunately one too high.

However, in the other room:

Board 26
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 5 3 2
♥ Q 10 8 7 6
♦ 10
♣ Q 8 2

♠ Q 9 8 7
♥ J
♦ 4 3
♣ J 10 7 5 4 3

N

W

S

E

♠ A 6 4
♥ 9 4 3
♦ J 9 6 5 2
♣ 9 6

♠ K 10
♥ A K 5 2
♦ A K Q 8 7
♣ A K

| West | North | East | South |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>Hampson</i> | <i>Fleisher</i> | <i>Greco</i> | <i>Martel</i> |
| | | Pass | 2 ♣ |
| Pass | 2 ♦ | Pass | 3 NT |
| Pass | 4 ♣ | Pass | 4 ♥ |
| Pass | 4 NT | Pass | 6 ♦ |
| X | All pass | | |

Lead: ♠ A
Down 2 — NS -500

South opened a standard 2♣ and both sides felt they had left something unsaid after the 3NT call. West found an amazing double which struck oil. 9 IMPs to the strong club team.

26

1. 6-7 HCP, less than 3 ♠

Playing SMP, over 1♠ East would have rebid 2♦ with 3 spades or 2♥ with 5+ hearts. West had as much as he needed to know and, rather than give away information, simply jumped to 3NT. North-South had few clues about the hidden hand's distribution.

In the following example responder shows 3-card support for opener's 4-card major but a minor suit becomes trumps, in slam!

2016 Open USBC, Final, Segment 3/8

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

♠ 9 4

♥ 7 2

♦ J 10 6

♣ A 10 9 8 7 4

♠ Q 8 7

♥ Q 9 6

♦ K 9 8 4 3

♣ 6 2

W

N

S

E

♠ A 6 3 2

♥ A K J 10 3

♦ A Q 7 2

♣ —

♠ K J 10 5

♥ 8 5 4

♦ 5

♣ K Q J 5 3

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>Greco</i> | <i>Moss</i> | <i>Hampson</i> | <i>Grue</i> |
| | | 1 ♣* | Pass |
| 1 ♦* | Pass | 1 ♥* | Pass |
| 2 ♦ ¹ | Pass | 2 ♠ | Pass |
| 3 ♦ | Pass | 4 ♦ | Pass |
| 5 NT | Pass | 6 ♦ | All pass |

1. 3 ♥ with 6-7 HCP

East was able to look for a 4-4 spade fit (just like in the other room after a 2/1 1♥-2♥), but in this room, the SMP partnership had not yet agreed hearts, and so West could bid his 5-card diamond suit. At that point, East could flag diamonds as trumps and West offered a choice of slams. The other room rested in 4♥, a 12-IMP swing to the strong club team.

Continuations after opener's rebid of two of a minor

With a 6+ card minor, or perhaps 5-4+ minors, and no 4-card major, opener rebids 2 of the long minor with less than a game force, and 3 of the long minor with a game force.

This is a wide range to split into just two – therefore opener might treat these hands as notrump to take advantage of the tighter HCP ranges. The hand must be suitable: no singleton/void, or perhaps a singleton Ace or King,

After 2 of a minor, responder passes with 0-5(-) HCP. With 6-7, or maybe 5 with potential, responder should rebid to keep open the possibility of game. Opener may have up to 21 HCP. Opener cannot have a 4-card major (else would have rebid 1-of-the-major), so responder's 2M rebid promises 5 or more cards. A jump shift, as always, shows a good long suit with about 4-6 HCP, all of the HCP in the suit.

Quiz time (no surprise by now).

Quiz:

| Opener | You |
|--------|-----|
| 1♣ | 1♦ |
| 2♣ | ? |

What is your second call with the following hands when opener shows a real club suit?

♠Q10xx ♥Kxxx ♦Qxx ♣xx 2NT. Opener does not have a 4-card major. If opener had 4 spades – 5 clubs, e.g., she would have rebid 1♠ to begin with – majors first always (MAFIA).

♠xx ♥A10xxx ♦xxx ♣Qxx 2♥. Opener might have 3-card support in hearts or 18-20 HCP, so you should introduce your 5-card major. This is not forcing, but opener will run with a singleton heart and then you can return to clubs.

♠xx ♥xxx ♦Axxxxx ♣xx Pass. You are too weak to bid on as you don't want to encourage opener to overbid without a good fit somewhere.

♠KJ10xxxx ♥x ♦Jxx ♣xx 3♠. Possible game in spades based on a good 7-card suit.

When 4th seat interferes over 1♣-(Pass)-1♦

Often the 4th seat feels compelled to chime in. This will sometimes be as benign as a 1-level overcall, but sometimes it will be a jump overcall. We need to be able to handle any of these.

The main theme of handling interference after 1♣-1♦ is, *bid as if the opponents have opened the auction*. Opener is known to have 16 or more HCP, however, unlike a normal overcall. With a *very* good hand (21 or more HCP), start with a double and follow up with a natural bid, just like in standard you would double with 17 or more HCP and then bid your suit.

The 1NT rebid does not promise extra strength, as a 1NT overcall might over the opponent's opening – it just shows 17-19 HCP with a stopper. With the next-higher strength of balanced hands, 22-23 HCP, double first and then rebid NT.

The cue-bid is a Michaels cue-bid, and a jump to 2NT is Unusual, 5-5 in the lower two unbid suits. The shape is what is important, not the strength.

There is one glaring exception to the rule of pretending the opponents opened: the weak jump overcall. If the opponents opened and we jump overcall, it shows a long suit and a weak hand. But, when we open 1♣, responder might not believe us if we show a weak hand (if she does, please revisit the opening section of this book). The jump “overcall” by the strong club bidder instead shows a long suit but a strong hand, invitational based on tricks. They are preempting us, and there are no preempts against preempts².

² When the opponents open a preempt, our side rates to have the majority of the HCP. To use jump overcalls over opponents' preempts to show weak hands is low-probability and better-utilized as showing a better hand than a simple overcall. Charles Goren would be proud.

Let's see an example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (Pass) | 1♦ | (1♠) |
| ? | | | |

Opener pretends that East opened 1♠. Therefore:

Pass = nothing to say, maybe balanced 17-19 with no stopper; but it could be a trap pass with spade stack (responder does not have to reopen, but should strain to do so – double is takeout)

X = takeout double (may contain any hand with 21+ HCP, just as a normal takeout double may be any 17+ HCP)

1NT = 17-19, as normal, with a stopper in spades

2♣/2♦/2♥ = normal “overcalls” – 5+ cards, about 16-20 HCP, not forcing

2♠ = Michaels cue-bid, 5 hearts and a 5-card minor

2NT = Unusual 2NT, 5 diamonds and 5 clubs (the two lowest unbid suits)

3♣/3♦/3♥ = natural, strong invitational hand with long suit and lots of tricks, not forcing

3NT = to play, could be a long running minor and a stopper in the opponent's suit

If opener doubles and then bids a new suit, it shows 21+ HCP (or 22-23 NT if a notrump rebid). If opener has a stack in 4th seat's suit (those opponents love to throw in flaky overcalls) and wants to try for a nice penalty, she can pass and responder can reopen with a takeout double hopefully.

After a 2-level overcall, it is much the same:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (Pass) | 1♦ | (2♦) |
| ? | | | |

Pass = 17-19 HCP balanced, or trap pass (hoping for responder to reopen with a takeout double)

X = takeout double

2♥/2♠/3♣ = normal “overcall” – try not to have a bad suit at this level

2NT = 22-23 HCP (as if they opened a weak two and we bid 2NT naturally, but we are stronger)

3♦ = Michaels cue-bid, 5-5 majors

3♥/3♠ = strong invitational hands with long suits and lots of tricks, not forcing

3NT = to play, with a long running minor and stopper in their suit

After all these bids, responder acts as if opener has overcalled, but is expected to invite with 5-7 HCP. For instance, over opener’s takeout double, it is better for responder to jump with 5-7 HCP than make a simple response (you may also use lebensohl by responder when advancing the double as if we doubled their opening weak two bid). But, if opener makes a simple “overcall”, responder can pass with 0-4 HCP.

If the 4th seat doubles 1♦, we just ignore it. And they thought it would faze us.³

³ You will find that most defenders’ partnerships will have no discussed agreement on what the double of 1♦ meant! For that reason, I suggest ignoring the double, but if you wish, you may add meanings to previously unavailable calls: opener’s pass is balanced minimum with no diamond stopper, and opener’s redouble is takeout of diamonds.

Quiz:

| You | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|-----|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (Pass) | 1♦ | (1♥) |
| ? | | | |

What is your second call with the following hands?

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| ♠AQxx ♥xx ♦AQ10x ♣KQx | Double. Takeout. Pretend they opened 1♥. Initially you were going to rebid 1NT over the 1♦ response, but the overcall has given you the opportunity to make an even more descriptive call, in preparation for left-hand opponent's heart raise. |
| ♠K10x ♥KQx ♦AKQxx ♣Qx | 1NT. Even though opener pretends the opponents opened, your HCP range is in the context of a 1♣ opening, so 17-19 HCP, not 15-18 HCP. |
| ♠AJ10xx ♥K ♦AQx ♣QJxx | 1♠. A simple overcall, showing 5 or more spades. Responder is not forced to bid. You have a pretty minimal hand (the ♥K looks sickly now) but the 1-level is safe enough. |
| ♠K10xxx ♥x ♦AQ ♣AKQ10x | 2♥. Michaels cue-bid showing 5 spades and a 5-card minor. |
| ♠KQ ♥Axx ♦KQJxxxx ♣A | 3♦. Lots of tricks with a long suit, inviting responder to push to game. |

♠AKx ♥AJ10x ♦AQx ♣KJx

Double. You would have normally jump rebid 2NT, but now that they “opened” that would have been Unusual 2NT. Rebid notrump, however, on the next round.

♠Kx ♥xxx ♦KQxx ♣AKQx

Pass. It’s not fun to put the green card on the table after announcing a strong hand but responder should be able to tell roughly what you have since you did not double, bid a suit, or bid 1NT.

♠Ax ♥KQ108xx ♦AQx ♣Kx

Pass. Your right-hand opponent will win no prizes for suit quality. You will get a sizeable penalty if responder doubles for takeout, especially as it is not clear your side has a game. If by some chance responder is completely broke and passes it out (rare), it’s better to defend a heart contract than play anywhere else.

The following is a typical sequence after 4th seat interference over the negative 1♦ response:

2016 Open USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 2/8

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Board 23 | ♠ K 2 | |
| South Deals | ♥ A J | |
| Both Vul | ♦ K 7 | |
| | ♣ A Q J 10 8 4 3 | |
| ♠ A 9 8 6 5 | <div>W<div>N</div>E<div>S</div></div> | ♠ J 10 3 |
| ♥ Q 8 6 3 | | ♥ K 7 4 |
| ♦ Q 6 2 | | ♦ J 10 8 5 |
| ♣ K | | ♣ 7 5 2 |
| | ♠ Q 7 4 | |
| | ♥ 10 9 5 2 | |
| | ♦ A 9 4 3 | |
| | ♣ 9 6 | |

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Zia</i> | <i>Platnick</i> | <i>Kamil</i> | <i>Diamond</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1 ♣* | Pass | 1 ♦* |
| Dbl ¹ | 2 ♣ | 2 ♥ | Dbl ¹ |
| Pass | 3 NT | All pass | |

- 1. Hearts and spades (Mathe convention)
- 2. 5-7 HCP

Made 5 — NS +660

2♣ by North was not forcing, natural. Over East’s 2♥, South chose to double rather than bid 2NT to keep all options open. Already limited to 0-7 HCP, it was critical to do something, not just pass, which would be 0-4/5 HCP. North had an easy 3NT leap. At the other table, West, playing SMP, opened 1♠ and North chose to bid 2♣ rather than double because of the worry about encouraging a leap response in hearts, and South could never muster anything but pass. 11 IMPs to the strong club team.

1♥ minimum game forcing response to a 1♣ opening

Responder will often be fortunate enough to have enough to force to game over a 1♣ opening by virtue of having 8+ HCP. These hands are split into two ranges: 8-11 HCP (minimum game force) and 12+ HCP (extras).

The 8-11 HCP hands all respond 1♥. Just like a 1♦ response, this is purely a “step response”, saying nothing about distribution. If responder has just 7 HCP but an Ace and King, or good shape (5-5, or a void, or a good 6-card suit), she may upgrade to a 1♥ response.

This is great news for our side! But the primary goal tends to be game only. If opener has a minimum hand (16-19 HCP) and responder has a minimum hand (8-11 HCP), then the maximum total HCP is 30 HCP. Without a special fit or distribution, there is no slam. Nevertheless, the auction may reveal the conditions to be right to swing for the fences.

Continuations after 1♣-1♥

Have you ever been in a game force at the 1-level before? The development of the 1♣-1♥ auction is very similar to that of a 2/1 game forcing auction that is common to many partnerships. The auction cannot stop below game.

The major goal is to find a major fit (isn't it always?), else play 3NT. Sometimes, we will decide to play 5 of a minor but it is generally better to play in 3NT if it's a close decision.

It may seem that no further explanation is required, but there is a strategy to follow.

With a balanced hand, opener should rebid 1NT (with 17-19 or game force), or 2NT (with 22-24). Now responder can use normal continuations as if opener had opened 1NT or 2NT respectively. Easy! If opener rebids 1NT with a game forcing balanced hand, opener should bid normally until the fit is found, and then make an unusual call like a cue-bid that would be impossible by a limited hand.

If opener is unbalanced, opener rebids the most natural primary suit. With a 5-card major, opener rebids the major (1♠ with spades, 2♥ with hearts). With

no 5-card major, opener bids a 6-card minor (possibly 5-4 in the minors). With two 5-card suits, opener bids the higher one, and then the lower one on the following round. With a 5-card suit and a 4-card suit, opener rebids the 5-card suit first, and then the 4-card suit. That should sound familiar to anyone who has played SAYC or 2/1.

Responder also begins with a primary suit, just like opener.

The *moment* someone knows there is an 8+card major fit, they raise the major to set the suit as trumps. The goal has been reached. For example, if opener rebids a primary heart suit over 1♣-1♥, and responder has 3 or more hearts, she can raise the hearts. Or, if responder bids a primary major over opener’s rebid, and opener has 3 or more of the suit, *opener* can raise the major, setting the suit as trumps. Sometimes it takes a few rounds:

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ♠ AJxxx | ♠ xx | 1♣ | 1♥ |
| ♥ Q10xx | ♥ Axxx | 1♠ | 2♣ |
| ♦ AK | ♦ xx | 2♥ | 3♥ |
| ♣ Ax | ♣ KQJxx | 4♥ | Pass |

Opener starts with a strong club, and responder indicates a minimum game force (8-11 HCP). Opener shows 5 or more spades, her primary suit. Responder does not have 3 spades, so rebids a primary suit of 5 or more clubs. Opener has a secondary suit of 4 or more hearts so rebids 2♥ next. Responder assumes this is just 4 cards until further notice, but has 4 of her own, and raises to 3♥. Hearts is now trumps! The very least the partnership can finally reach is 4♥. Spades cannot be trumps. Clubs cannot be trumps.

Communicating to your partner what the trump suit will be in a game forcing auction is called a *flag*. At this point, the focus of the auction is level, not strain. The expert method of communicating slam interest is the *control cue-bid*.

In the above auction, over 3♥, opener can cue-bid an Ace, King, singleton, or void (a.k.a. a *control*) to show slam interest, or just sign off in 4♥ immediately with 16-18 HCP. Were hearts not automatically trumps with the 3♥ call, the partnership might have a misunderstanding about what this cue-bid means.

Fits can come in the form of a 6-2 distribution as well.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ♠ Kxx | ♠ Qxx | 1♣ | 1♥ |
| ♥ KQ | ♥ A10xxxx | 2♣ | 2♥ |
| ♦ Kx | ♦ Axx | 2NT | 3♥ |
| ♣ AQJxxx | ♣ x | 4♥ | Pass |

Here, responder first shows a primary suit of hearts with 2♥ (remember, the 1♥ call was completely artificial and did not begin to show any suit). Opener has no 4-card spade suit to mention, so rebids 2NT. Responder has an extra card in hearts so rebids 3♥. Opener has 2 and so raises 3♥ to 4♥.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ♠ A | ♠ Qxxx | 1♣ | 1♥ |
| ♥ Q10xx | ♥ xx | 2♦ | 3♦ |
| ♦ AK9xxx | ♦ Qxx | 3♥ | 3♠ |
| ♣ Kx | ♣ Axxx | 3NT | Pass |

Opener shows 5+ diamonds, and responder has a fit and no 5-card major so raises. Opener has a 4-card major (hearts) so bids 3♥, and responder has 4 spades and bids 3♠⁴. Opener cannot see slam so signs off in 3NT.

⁴ This is an example of a positive auction that can get high very quickly, mostly due to the 3♦ call. See Part 3 for an idea how to avoid this loss of space after 1♣-1♥-2♦.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ♠ KQJxxxx | ♠ x | 1♣ | 1♥ |
| ♥ J | ♥ AQxxx | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| ♦ AQ | ♦ KJxx | 2♠ | 3♦ |
| ♣ Kxx | ♣ xxx | 3♠ | 4♠ |
| | | Pass | |

Opener bids spades 3 times, promising in turn 5, 6, and 7 cards. Responder shows 5 hearts and 4+ diamonds, but over 3♠ is confident spades is the best strain, especially with such weak clubs.

Splinters after 1♣-1♥

A jump shift shows a splinter (singleton or void) with support (4 or more cards) for partner's last bid suit, just as many play in 2/1.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ♠ AKxxxx | ♠ xx | 1♣ | 1♥ |
| ♥ KQxx | ♥ AJxxxx | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| ♦ KQ | ♦ xxx | 4♣* | 4♥ |
| ♣ x | ♣ Kx | Pass | |

Opener shows 5+ spades, responder 5+ hearts. Opener has an extra spade but has a heart fit and the first responsibility is to tell partner of the 8+card major fit. Opener can raise to 3♥ to set hearts as trumps but the splinter is more descriptive. Responder has an extra trump but the King of clubs can be downgraded opposite opener's singleton or void in clubs, so she signs off.

Waiting 2NT

In non-fit auctions, I recommend “waiting 2NT” to imply a hand that has no side 5-card suit, no great 7-card suit, and no great support for partner’s minor. By separating the “normal” (via 2NT) from the “freak” (rebid 3-level) you can better communicate the shape of the hand.

Let’s see how it works:

| Opener | Responder |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♦ | 2♥ |
| ? | |

1♥ showed 8-11 HCP, 2♦ showed 5+ diamonds, and 2♥ showed 5+ hearts.

Opener needs something special to go past 2NT, so the following are opener’s choices now:

2♠ = 4 or more spades (shorter than diamonds), denies 3+ hearts

2NT = waiting, may have 4 clubs, denies 3+ hearts

3♣ = 5+ diamonds, 5+ clubs, denies 3+ hearts

3♦ = 7+ diamonds (or perhaps 6 very good ones), denies 3+ hearts

3♥ = heart flag, hearts is now trumps

3♠/4♣ = splinter for hearts, 4+ trumps

4♥ = very bad raise, slam unlikely even if responder has 11 HCP (the max for 1♥) and a singleton or void

Opener’s jump rebids over 1♣-1♥

For the most part, opener does not jump immediately after a 1♥ response (other than in notrump), to save room. Two types of hands would jump.

Opener’s (4441) Hands

One difficult hand to show is a (4441) hand since there is no primary suit and it is not balanced. While it could make sense to treat these as balanced, if responder knew which suit the singleton was, it could allow the partnership to get to a good slam.

If opener jumps to the cheapest jump shift, 2♠, this shows a (4441) hand.

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♠ | |

Responder asks for the singleton with 2NT. After opener names the singleton, responder can set the suit at the 3-level or use the 4♣/4♦/RKC puppet structure described in the 2♦ opening section (later) to determine which suit will be trumps and make a slam try.

Opener’s natural jump rebids

All other immediate jump shifts in a suit are natural and show a self-sufficient suit and slam interest.

| Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 3♣/♦/♥/♠ | |

These jump shifts set the suit as trumps and demand cue-bids (responder must bid an Ace, King, singleton, or void).

Example 1♣-1♥ Auctions

Example #1

| Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|
| ♠ AQxxx | ♠ xx |
| ♥ 10 | ♥ KQxxxx |
| ♦ KQJx | ♦ xx |
| ♣ Axx | ♣ K10x |

¹ 16+

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more spades

⁴ 5 or more hearts

| Opener | Responder |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| 1♠ ³ | 2♥ ⁴ |
| 2NT ⁵ | 3♥ ⁶ |
| 3NT ⁷ | Pass |

⁵ bypasses 2♠, so just 5 spades, waiting

⁶ 6 or more hearts, tends to deny a side minor

⁷ requests to play 3NT despite responder's 6 hearts

Example #2

| Opener | Responder |
|-----------|-----------|
| ♠ 10x | ♠ Qxx |
| ♥ AQxx | ♥ Kxxx |
| ♦ A | ♦ QJx |
| ♣ AQ10xxx | ♣ xxx |

¹ 16+

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more clubs, wrong for a notrump rebid

| Opener | Responder |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| 2♣ ³ | 2NT ⁴ |
| 3♥ ⁵ | 4♥ ⁶ |
| Pass | |

⁴ denies any side 5+ card suit, more descriptive than a club raise

⁵ four hearts

⁶ 4-4 fit

Example #3

| Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|
| ♠ AQJxxx | ♠ Kxx |
| ♥ Kx | ♥ A10xxx |
| ♦ Axx | ♦ xxx |
| ♣ AQ | ♣ Kx |

| Opener | Responder |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| 1♠ ³ | 2♠ ⁴ |
| 3♣ ⁵ | 3♥ ⁶ |
| 3♠ ⁷ | 4♣ ⁸ |
| 4♥ ⁹ | 4NT ¹⁰ |
| 5♣ ¹¹ | 5♦ ¹² |
| 5♥ ¹³ | 5NT ¹⁴ |
| 6♣ ¹⁵ | 6♠ ¹⁶ |
| Pass | |

¹ 16+ HCP

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more spades

⁴ showing the 8-card major fit immediately

⁵ cue-bid – despite responder having at most 11 HCP, the 9-card fit means slam is in the picture

⁶ cue-bid – denying a diamond cue-bid

⁷ showing good spades – confirming a diamond control (else there are two diamond losers)

⁸ cue-bid

⁹ cue-bid – denying a 2nd diamond control (like KQ or AK)

¹⁰ RKC - if opener did not want to be in slam opposite 4 controls and 10 HCP, she would have signed off long ago

¹¹ 0 or 3 keycards

¹² asks for the Queen of trumps

¹³ shows the Queen of trumps and ♥K

¹⁴ implies all keycards held, asks for any more help

¹⁵ something extra in clubs

¹⁶ not quite enough

In a standard system we might have a problem if opener opens 1♠ - it's possible that this good slam will be missed if responder bids a forcing 1NT or raises to 2♠.

Example #4

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| ♠ xx | ♠ AKxxxx | 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| ♥ AQJ | ♥ x | 2♦ ³ | 2♠ ⁴ |
| ♦ AQxxxx | ♦ xx | 2NT ⁵ | 3♠ ⁶ |
| ♣ Ax | ♣ xxxx | 4♠ ⁷ | Pass |

¹ 16+ HCP

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more diamonds, wrong for a 1NT rebid

⁴ 5 or more spades

⁵ waiting

⁶ the clubs are not worth bidding at this point, rebidding spades confirms 6 or more

⁷ now there is an 8-card major fit – we show it!

Responder's hand is worth at least 8 HCP in playing value, therefore the positive 1♥ response.

Example #5

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| ♠ KQJ | ♠ Axxxx | 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| ♥ Axxxx | ♥ x | 1NT ³ | 2♥ ⁴ |
| ♦ AQ | ♦ KJxx | 2♠ ⁵ | 3NT ⁶ |
| ♣ Qxx | ♣ xxx | 4♠ ⁷ | Pass |

¹ 16+ HCP

² 8-11 HCP

³ 1NT shows 17-19 (or 25+) balanced

⁴ transfer! Systems on – just as if opener had opened 1NT

⁵ accepts transfer

⁶ choice of game opposite a 17-19 NT

⁷ spade preference

12+ HCP (extras) responses to a 1♣ opening

The vision with 12+ HCP is not just game, but slam, unless both sides are minimum and there is no good fit. Just as responder may choose to bid 1♥ with 7 HCP and good trick potential, so may responder upgrade 11 HCP to an “extras” response.

The responses are natural with one exception:

1♠ = 12+ HCP, 5+ spades

1NT = 12+ HCP, balanced (use Stayman but no transfers)

2♣ = 12+ HCP, 5+ clubs

2♦ = 12+ HCP, 5+ diamonds

2♥ = 12+ HCP, 5+ hearts

2♠ = 12+ HCP, any (4441) - 2NT asks for the singleton, followed by
4♣/4♦/RKC – see section on 2♦ opening)

The auction proceeds exactly as over a 1♥ response, but with the benefit of knowing responder has 12 or more HCP.

Passed hand positives

A passed hand in SMP is limited to maximum 10 HCP. Therefore there is no need to split responder's range into 8-11/12+. The passed hand positives are

1♥ = 8-10 HCP, 5+ hearts

1♠ = 8-10 HCP, 5+ spades

1NT = 8-10 HCP, balanced

2♣ = 8-10 HCP, 5+ clubs

2♦ = 8-10 HCP, 5+ diamonds

2♠ = 8-10 HCP, any 4441 (2NT asks for singleton like 1♣-1♥-2♠)

Handling interference over 1♣

If the opponents bid immediately over 1♣, it uncovers the weakness of SMP. The opponents have already named a suit, but we don't know what our suits are. We have problems showing our suits as the opponents squeeze all the oxygen out of our bidding space.

However, with the following agreements, the damage is limited, and we may just be able to extract our pound of flesh if they have stepped out of line.

Generally, the most important rule in competition is to bid your shape quickly with game forcing hands. While we lose the 8-11/12+ HCP distinction to aid in slam auctions, the 0-7 HCP negative range is split into 0-5 and 6-7 to improve game bidding.

After 2nd seat doubles

Pass shows a bad hand, 0-5 HCP. Presumably, 4th seat will bid a suit, as the 2nd seat double usually does not mean “clubs”. Opener *pretends that the opponents have opened*. Opener's suits are natural “overcalls” and nonforcing, doubles are takeout (or any 23+ HCP hand), cue-bid is Michaels, and jump to 2NT is Unusual. Responder can bid later with 4-5 HCP or a fit for opener.

Redouble by responder shows any hand with 6-7 HCP, game-invite strength. Responder promises she will bid at least one more time to describe her hand. Doubles of the opponents' suits are still takeout, as they should be until we find a fit or establish a game force.

Non-jump suit bids (and 1NT) all show 8+ HCP, and are game forcing. A suit is responder's primary suit. The auction develops just like over a 1♣-1♥ auction except responder is not limited to 8-11 HCP. After 1NT by responder, there is Stayman, but no transfers, to avoid making the weaker hand declarer. Doubles are now penalty by either opener or responder.

A jump shift by responder is 5-7 HCP with a 6- (at the 2-level) or 7-card (at the 3-level) suit with all the HCP in the suit.

After 2nd seat bids a suit at the 1- or 2-level

The same general rules apply as after 2nd seat's double above.

Pass is 0-5 HCP, any hand. But it could instead contain a nasty trap for the overcaller with 5 or more cards in their suit (with sure defensive tricks, and unlimited strength) and is preparing to pass a reopening takeout double by opener. However, opener proceeds as if responder has the weak option, the most likely scenario, and if 4th seat bids, bids as if overcalling in sandwich seat after their "opening" and response.

Double is 6-7 HCP with any shape. Just as above over 2nd seat's double, opener can be sure that responder will bid one more time at least. One wrinkle: if the overcall was at the 2-level, the double may also be a balanced game forcing hand without a stopper in their suit (in which case, responder follows with a cue-bid later to reveal the strong hand).

A non-jump new suit is 8+ HCP and 5+ cards. The auction develops naturally but the partnership is forced to game. Doubles are penalty.

A notrump bid by responder is game forcing, but shows a stopper in their suit and a balanced hand. Stayman is on but not transfers. Doubles are penalty.

A 2-level cue-bid of the opponent's suit, if available, shows a game forcing balanced hand without a stopper in their suit.

A jump shift is 5-7 HCP with a long suit and all of the hand's strength in the suit.

Finally, a 3-level cue-bid of the opponent's suit shows a game forcing 3-suited hand, short in their suit. 4♣/4♦/RKC (described in the 2♦ opening section) may be used.

Ready for a quiz?

Quiz:

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 1♣ | (1♥) | ? |

What is your call after the 2nd seat overcall?

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| ♠xx ♥xxx ♦xx ♣AKJxxx | 2♣. A new suit is game forcing (8+ HCP) and 5 or more cards. Opener bids a primary suit if possible and the auction continues naturally. |
| ♠xxx ♥Kxxx ♦AQxx ♣xx | 1NT. Notrump is game forcing with a stopper. If opener bids 2♠ you will raise to 3♠ since that shows 5 or more spades and you have 3. |
| ♠AQxxx ♥xx ♦xx ♣xxxx | Double. 6-7 HCP. You plan on rebidding spades, your primary suit, on the next round. |
| ♠Kxx ♥xx ♦xxxx ♣xxxx | Pass. The double-negative. Opener proceeds with caution. If opener bids spades, diamonds, or clubs, however, you are prepared to raise in competition. |
| ♠xx ♥KQJ9x ♦xxx ♣xxx | Pass. You could double (6-7 HCP), but you plan to trap the opponents for a hefty penalty (if opener reopens with a double). |
| ♠xxx ♥xx ♦AQJx ♣Kxxx | 2♥. Balanced game force with no stopper in hearts. |
| ♠Kxxx ♥x ♦AQxx ♣xxxx | 3♥. Three-suited, short in their suit, game forcing. |
| ♠KQxxxx ♥x ♦xxx ♣xxx | 2♠. Long good suit, not enough to force to game. |

After 2nd seat bids a suit at the 3- or 4-level

This high-level overcall over our strong club often requires good guessing on our part.

Now, a double by responder simply indicates enough for game but no primary suit to bid below 3NT. Since we are guessing, 7 HCP is usually good enough to double with. Opener can bid a primary suit, pass the double for penalty, or try 3NT.

If responder bids a suit, that is game forcing with a primary suit.

With 0-6 (or a bad 7) HCP, responder must pass the overcall. Opener can double for takeout, bid a suit, or any other agreed defense against a preempt. Opener can even pass – the strong club does not set a forcing pass just as a 15-17 NT opening should not scare the opponents into silence.

Another quiz:

Quiz:

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 1♣ | (3♦) | ? |

What does responder do over the 2nd seat overcall? (How dare they interfere...)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| ♠AQxxx ♥x ♦xx ♣Kxxxx | 3♣. A new suit is game forcing. You are a little apprehensive over the possibility opener will rebid 4♥ now, but that's why the opponents preempt. |
| ♠Axx ♥xxxx ♦KJx ♣xxx | 3NT. You may miss the heart fit, but cannot pass. If you double (game forcing), opener might question the strength of your stopper if you bid 3NT later (or worse, opener could bid 4♣, taking you beyond 3NT). |

♠xxx ♥Axxx ♦xx ♣KJxx

Double. At the 3-level and higher, double is game forcing with no good bid. This time, you have no stopper so invite opener to bid 3NT with a stopper, or bid a 5-card major (which you will raise to game).

♠Kxxx ♥QJxx ♦xxx ♣xx

Pass. You cannot double since that is game forcing. However, if opener bids a major you will raise to game and if she makes a takeout double... you will cue-bid 4♦ to give opener the choice of major.

♠xx ♥xxx ♦KQ9xx ♣xxx

Pass. This time you will pass if opener reopens with a double. Maybe the opponents will think twice next time.

You may find yourself in a variety of odd situations. The following Real Deal is a good illustration:

2016 Spingold, Quarterfinal, Segment 1/4

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 2

♥ K Q J 10 7

♦ 8 4 3


♣ 9 5 3 2

♠ Q J 8 5

♥ 9 4 2

♦ Q J 10 9 7 5

♣ _____



♠ 10 9 7

♥ A 8 6 5

♦ K 6

♣ J 10 7 4

♠ A K 6 4 3

♥ 3

♦ A 2

♣ A K Q 8 6

West

North

East

South

Moss

Greco

Grue

Hampson

Pass

Pass

1 ♣*

3 ♦

3 ♥ 1

Pass

3 ♠

Pass

4 ♥

All pass

1. 5+ hearts, game force

Lead: ♦ K

Made 4 — NS +620

3♦ with just a six-card suit? With a void, nice suit and favorable vulnerability, it makes a lot of sense. North found a game forcing 3♥ call with just 6 HCP, judging it a better lie than pass (0-6/7 HCP). South rebid 3♠, and North followed up on his original plan: to portray a 6-card heart suit!

As amazing a final strain hearts was, it made, and furthermore at the other table North-South got to 6♣ down on a diamond lead. 13 IMPS to the strong club team when the smoke cleared.

Sometimes, you get to be the hero with the weakest hand at the table.

2016 Open USBC, Round of 16, Segment 8/8

Board 25

North Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A Q 3

♥ A K J 4

♦ K 10 5 2

♣ J 3

♠ 7 4

♥ 9 6 3 2

♦ A 8

♣ K 10 9 7 6

W

N

E

S

♠ K 6

♥ 10 8

♦ Q J 7 3

♣ A Q 8 5 4

♠ J 10 9 8 5 2

♥ Q 7 5

♦ 9 6 4

♣ 2

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Harris</i> | <i>Passell</i> | <i>Morgan</i> | <i>Compton</i> |
| | 1 ♣* | 1 ♦ ¹ | Pass ² |
| 2 ♥ ³ | Pass | 3 ♣ | 3 ♠ |
| 5 ♣ | X | All pass | |

- 1. Majors or minors (CRASH convention)
- 2. 0-5 HCP, any shape
- 3. Pass/Correct

Lead: ♠ J
Down 2 — EW -500

South showed 0-5 HCP with the initial pass, and so after all the action, lo and behold he came back in with the solo shot of 3♠! While the 5♣-X -500 sacrifice was not a disaster for East-West at IMPs if 4♠ made, it actually can go down on a diamond switch on defense.

When you play SMP you will never suffer for lack of excitement!

Trapping the opponents

One of the most common “customers” is the rash overcaller of the strong club. It should be your attitude to try to penalize the opponents to keep them honest, and the best way in a strong club to do that is with the trap pass.

If 2nd seat bids a suit, responder with 5 or more decent trumps should (with an eye on the vulnerability) go for a good penalty. The following is a Real Deal example of that:

2017 Open USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 6/8

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Board 20 | ♠ K 10 6 5 | | |
| West Deals | ♥ 10 3 | | |
| Both Vul | ♦ A J 9 7 6 2 | | |
| | ♣ Q | | |
| ♠ A Q J | | | ♠ 8 3 |
| ♥ K 7 5 2 | | | ♥ A 9 8 6 |
| ♦ Q | | | ♦ K 10 8 5 3 |
| ♣ A J 10 6 2 | | | ♣ 8 7 |
| | ♠ 9 7 4 2 | | |
| | ♥ Q J 4 | | |
| | ♦ 4 | | |
| | ♣ K 9 5 4 3 | | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Passell</i> | <i>J. Lall</i> | <i>Jacobus</i> | <i>Bathurst</i> |
| 1 ♣* | 2 ♦ | Pass | Pass |
| X ¹ | All pass | | |
| 1. Takeout | | | |

East knew that there may be a game score for his side, but why not go for the penalty – the opponents are vulnerable. East could not double to begin (that would have been 6-7 HCP or a game forcing balanced hand without a stopper) so passed to set the trap. West's reopening double was takeout, protecting for this very case. The result was +800 to the strong club pair on a deal where even game would have been a nice result. Of course, they did not know that the East-West pair at the other table, also playing strong club, extracted a +1600 penalty from a similar auction when an SOS redouble was taken for serious.

The idea should be to reach our best contract while also stopping to penalize the opponents should we find ourselves with a stack behind them.

Responder might have just 0-5 HCP, not a trap, which is the more common hand for the pass. In that case, responder can treat the balancing double like she would to any normal takeout double, by bidding the best side suit. She can even jump or bid 1NT with a very good hand for the pass (4-5 HCP, 5-card suit).

What if responder trap passes but 4th seat opponent bids another suit, unwittingly escaping the snare? Responder rebids with an action that clearly could never be 0-5 HCP, such as a cue-bid or bidding 2NT. This tells opener that responder has a full game force but had been hoping to penalize the 2nd seat opponent.

1 ♦ Opening – 2+ Diamonds, Good 10 to 15 HCP

“Could be short”. That is the announcement to accompany your partner’s 1 ♦ opening, the most common of all the SMP openings. How short? 2 or more cards. It will only be short however if the hand is a balanced 11-13 HCP. In this way, it is much the same as a short club playing standard or 2/1 game force. The plan with a balanced 11-13 HCP is to rebid cheaply at the 1-level, or raise responder’s major.

However it “could be long” as well. Hands with long diamonds also open 1 ♦, even 6 diamonds and a 5-card major. The plan with these hands is to rebid a 2nd suit, or diamonds if that is the only long suit held.

This ambiguous diamond length is a double-edged sword. On defense, the opponents do not know whether to attack diamonds or clubs - perhaps opener has 2 diamonds and 5 clubs and they should lead diamonds - perhaps opener has 5 diamonds and 2 clubs. In the auction, an opponent may have a natural diamond overcall but the risk of bidding diamonds is too great in case opener has a stack. But responder is in the same boat. Occasionally an 8- or even 9-card minor fit will be missed. But it is a necessary evil of the system, and in Part 2 and Part 3 of this book there are some remedies to find those minor suit fits.

When opener is 4135 or 1435 opener also starts with 1 ♦. The plan is to hope for a major fit, or else show both minor suits. We’ll come to that later.

Responding to 1♦

Responding to 1♦ is the same as responding to any convenient minor opening. How strong do you need to be to respond? While 6 HCP is normal in standard to cater to a very strong (18-21 HCP) opening hand, it is not 100% necessary in a limited opening system to respond with 6 HCP.

However, not vulnerable, or with a decent major suit, you should strain to reply with 6 HCP. In Part 2 we discuss light responses in more depth.

1 of a major response

The first charge is to bid up the line to find a major suit fit. Even if responder has a 5-card minor on the side, responder should first bid the 4-card major. Only if responder has a game forcing hand with 6 of the minor should she respond in the minor suit first holding a major. Majors are what bridge is all about.

Opener's first goal is to announce a 4-4 major suit fit, so with 11-13 HCP balanced opener raises to 2-of-the-major. With unbalanced 4-card support, opener raises to the 2-level with 10-12 HCP and 3-level with 13-15 HCP.

Should opener ever raise with 3-card support? The modern tendency is *never* to raise with 3-card support. This allows responder to proceed quickly to the final game contract without revealing their shape. Conventions like Checkback, Support Doubles, and 4th Suit Forcing can help determine if opener has 3-card support.

After a 1 of a major response and no fit, opener continues naturally, including 1♠ over a 1♥ response (never bypass the spades).

If opener does not have a biddable major, opener can rebid 1NT, 11-13 HCP. Just as over a standard opening, the 1NT rebid reveals opener to have a minimum balanced hand, never with a singleton in partner's major. Responder can use Checkback (2♣) or any other continuations you already play.

If opener has both minors, she rebids 2♣. With 6 or more diamonds and no other biddable suit, opener rebids 2♦. Continuations are natural.

Opener can reverse into a major with 14-15 HCP, 5+ diamonds and 4 cards in the major, or 6-5 shape. This is not forcing. Opener’s jump rebid to 2NT shows a balanced hand with 6 diamonds and 14-15 HCP. Opener can jump shift into clubs to show 5-5 and 13-15 HCP with decent suits. With a long good diamond suit and an average or maximum hand, opener can jump rebid 3♦. These are all not forcing.

Why are reverses and jump shift rebids by opener not forcing? When opener is limited, responder is the captain of the auction, which includes judging to pass in a playable spot when there is no game.

What if opener is 1453 or 1435 or 1444 after 1♦-1♠? This presents a problem. Opener was hoping for a heart fit, but alas, it did not materialize. Opener cannot rebid 1NT (11-13 NT) with the singleton, and to reverse requires 14-15 HCP and 5 diamonds – not always what opener has. The solution is to rebid 2♣ on all three of these hands. Responder knows opener has 8+ cards in the minors, just either minor might occasionally be 3 cards. Responder can take a preference in a minor with 3+ cards, or use 2 of the unbid major as 4th suit game force to find out more.

Quiz:

| | You | Responder |
|----------------------------|-----|---|
| | 1♦ | 1♠ |
| | ? | |
| <i>What is your rebid?</i> | | |
| ♠Axx ♥KQx ♦Axxxx ♣xx | | 1NT. A 2♠ raise requires 4 trumps. You are balanced so rebid 1NT, indicating 11-13 HCP (with more you would have opened 1NT). |
| ♠x ♥AQxx ♦KQxx ♣Qxxx | | 2♣. The 2♣ rebid promises 8+ cards in the minors – you cannot rebid 1NT as that would promise a balanced hand. |

♠x ♥AQxx ♦KJxxx ♣Kxx

2♣. Again, you cannot rebid 1NT. This time, you are introducing a 3-card suit but it is better than rebidding 2♦ – that promises 6 or more diamonds. 2♥ would be a reverse and you are just a bit too weak.

♠AQxx ♥x ♦KQJxx ♣xxx

3♠. The good unbalanced raise (the pure suits are an upgrade). Much more playing strength than a normal 11-13 NT hand, so you must push the action a little.

♠xx ♥Ax ♦AQJxxx ♣K10x

2NT. This is a 1NT opening with 6 diamonds.

♠xx ♥x ♦AQJxx ♣KQJxx

3♣. Just 13 HCP, but all the HCP in the 2 suits, so the trick potential is very good. 5-5 shape, but not forcing. After a limited opening, opener can almost never force responder to bid again since only responder has wide-range strength.

♠x ♥KQJx ♦AJ10xxx ♣Kx

2♥. A reverse, which is a maximum hand for the limited opening. Of course, responder knows you are capped at 15 so could pass if desired.

1NT response

The 1NT response is not forcing, assuming opener has 11-13 HCP. It therefore shows about 7 to a bad 11 HCP with no 4-card major. Responder may even have 5 diamonds, but since opener may have only two, there is more risk forcing the partnership to play in diamonds and 1NT is the typical response. If opener reveals an unbalanced hand, which could be as strong as 15 HCP, responder may invite to game with 2NT or a raise.

2♣ and 2♦ responses

The 2♣ and 2♦ responses to 1♦ are game forcing, or invitational with one long minor suit or both minors. It denies a 4-card major unless holding 6 or more cards in the minor and game forcing. Since 2♦ is a forcing “raise” it is **alertable**, but 2♣ is not alertable.

There are two ways to stop below game:

- a) responder responds 2 of a minor and then *immediately* rebids 3 of the same minor (11-12 HCP, invite)
- b) responder responds 2♦ and then *immediately* rebids 3♣ (11-12 HCP, invite, 9+ cards in the minors, could be 4 diamonds - 5 clubs)

Because responder rarely has a major suit, opener’s rebids of 2 of a major are artificial. The structure of opener’s rebids is:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♦ | 2♣/2♦ |
| ? | |

2♦ (over 2♣) = 5 or more diamonds, unbalanced, denies 4+ clubs

Now 3♣ or 3♦ is non forcing, and anything else is game forcing – responder can rebid 2 of a major as a semi-natural bid, confirming a game force

2♥ = 11-13 balanced, says *nothing* about hearts – could have support for responder's minor – like rebidding notrump

2♠ = puppet to 2NT, often just a way to right-side notrump

2NT = forced

3 of a minor = game forcing, slam interest

3 of a major = 6+ of the minor, exactly 4 of the major, game forcing (with just 5 of the minor, respond 1M to start)

3NT = used the 2♠ force to get opener to declare

2NT = slam interest, balanced, asks for a 4+card minor

3 of the same minor (or 2♦ followed by 3♣) = invite, nonforcing

3 of a major = 6 of the minor, 5 of the major, game forcing

3NT = prefers to declare 3NT (else use the 2♠ force above to get opener to declare)

2♠ = artificial - an undisclosed splinter for partner's minor, game forcing (never short diamonds, of course)

2NT = asks which splinter in steps (steps 1/2/3 show hi/mid/lo)

2NT/3NT = over 2♣, this shows 4441 exactly with a min/max – over 2♦ this shows 6 diamonds balanced with a min/max

3♣ = artificial - 3 cards in responder's minor, 5 cards in the other minor, and a 4-card major, game forcing (3♦ can now ask which major opener has)

3♦ = a *very* good 6+card diamond suit, game forcing

3♥/3♠ = 6 diamonds and 5 of the major, game forcing

As you can see, this is very artificial, a burden stemming from the ambiguous diamond length. Helping to minimize the memory work are the fact that the 1♦ opening is very common so these should come up with some frequency, and the responses are rather symmetric no matter which minor responder bid.

The 2♥ rebid by opener is a neat gadget that allows responder to determine who should declare notrump. With a singleton or xxx for example, responder wants opener to declare to protect the suit from opening lead, so bids 2♠ puppet, and then raise to 3NT. With Kxx and AQx in the majors responder wishes to declare herself so bids 3NT immediately.

The 2♠ puppet has two other uses: it allows responder to distinguish the game invite from slam invite hands with both minors, as well as distinguishing 6-4 from 6-5 minor-major game forcing hands.

If opener has support for responder's minor, if balanced she never directly supports the minor but instead bids 2♥ – it is important to hide unneeded information in case the contract ends in 3NT. Only if responder reveals a slammish hand later might opener reveal support in a balanced hand. The only exception is 1♦-2♦-2NT, showing 6 diamonds, balanced.

If opener has an unbalanced hand with support for responder's minor, opener can show the support immediately, either with 2♠ (unbalanced 4+ card support), or 3♣ (unbalanced 3-card support with 5 cards in the *other* minor, and a 4-card major).

By a passed hand, the 2 of a minor response is still strong but not forcing. A passed hand is limited to 10 HCP anyways, so this would show 9-10(-) HCP, 5 or more cards in the minor and no 4-card major. Opener may pass with tolerance, correct 2♣ to diamonds or notrump with short clubs, or anything else with game interest.

Quiz: 1♦-2♣ Continuations

| You | Responder |
|-----|-----------|
| 1♦ | 2♣ |
| ? | |

What is your rebid?

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ♠QJxx ♥Axxx ♦AJx ♣J10 | 2♥. This is the most common hand type for opening 1♦: 11-13 balanced. |
| ♠xxx ♥KQ ♦xxx ♣AQJxx | 2♥. If responder has an unbalanced hand with clubs, or slam interest, she might show that later. For now, play it cool and show the balanced shape. |
| ♠Axxx ♥xxx ♦AQJxx ♣x | 2♦. You don't expect to have to show the spade suit since responder can't have a 4-card major, unless also with 6+ clubs (in which case, you will find out soon). |
| ♠x ♥QJxx ♦AK10xx ♣QJx | 3♣. A special bid showing exactly 3 of responder's minor, 5 of the other, and a 4-card major. |
| ♠Q10xx ♥x ♦AJxx ♣KQxx | 2♠. Undisclosed splinter for responder's minor, 4+ card support. If responder wants to know which singleton, she will ask with 2NT and you will bid 3♦ (step 2: second-highest suit short). |
| ♠AJ9x ♥KQxx ♦Qxxx ♣x | 2NT. Over 2♣, exactly 4441 with a minimum hand. |

2♥ and 2♠ responses

The 2♥ response shows 5 spades and 4 or 5 hearts, with about 6-9 HCP. The 2♠ response shows the same shape, with invitational strength. This is a new modern gadget that is played by most top players (called *Reverse Flannery*) and the responses are **alertable**.

The reasoning of this gadget is two-fold. First, it allows responder to accurately describe a specific set of hands in one quick bid – this can preempt the opponents or get to the right contract. Second, it allows

1♦-1♠-2♣-2♥

1♦-1♠-2♦-2♥

1♦-1♥-2♣-2♠

and

1♦-1♥-2♦-2♠

to be 4th suit game forcing and artificial without giving up a way to show both majors with a limited hand.

With 5 spades and 4+ hearts and game forcing strength, respond 1♠ and then proceed to force to game as needed, finding the best fit along the way.

Reverse Flannery is also played by a passed hand, or over a double by 2nd seat.

Over a Reverse Flannery response, opener may signoff, passing or correcting to the best major suit partial, bidding 3♣ with 5-5 minors, rebidding diamonds, or jumping to a game. With game interest opener may ask with 2NT. 3♣ by responder shows a minimum 5 spades – 4 hearts, 3♦ shows a maximum 5 spades – 4 hearts, 3♥ shows a minimum 5 spades – 5 hearts, and 3♠ shows a maximum 5 spades – 5 hearts.

2NT response

The 2NT response is natural, invitational, with a balanced hand and no 4-card major. The strength is a good 11 to 12 HCP. Opener selects the final contract (3 of a minor shows both minors unbalanced, minimum hand), or bids 3 of a major with a location of strength and shortness in the other major. 4 of a major is 6 diamonds and 5 of the major.

3♣/4♣ responses

These are special 2-suited bids which show both minors suits, 6-10 HCP and no 4-card major. 3♣ shows 5-4 either way and 4♣ is at least 5-5. You must **alert** these bids.

They are notoriously annoying for the opponents, but on a very bad day we might find ourselves the victims, when opener is 3-2 in the minors. But a fit is likely as opener tends to have a 4-card minor for the 1♦ opening.

Opener may pass 3♣ or 4♣ with a club preference, or correct to diamonds at the same level with longer or better diamonds. Opener may even push to the next level (or higher) in either minor.

3♦ response

A 3♦ response is like inverted minors – it shows 6 or more diamonds, with about 5 to 10 HCP. Responder needs at least 6 diamonds since opener may have as few as two diamonds. It is **alertable**.

3♥/3♠/4♦ responses

These are natural with 7 cards in the suit and 6-9 HCP and are **alertable**.

3NT response

The 3NT response is natural with 13-16 HCP, balanced, with no 4-card major. Any continuations are game forcing and natural.

4♥/4♠ responses

These are natural and preemptive with a long suit, so an 8- or good 7-card suit. But, when opener has defined her strength, we don't need to have a long, involved auction. For example, opposite a 1NT opening in standard, 15-17 HCP, we often just leap to 3NT with balanced hands, or maybe a long minor suit, rather than ask what opener has. The same goes for SMP 11-15 openings: if we are pretty sure we know the final contract, it makes more sense to preempt our left-hand opponent and give away as little information as possible by leaping to 4 of a major, even with 10-13 HCP sometimes. Since these bids may be stronger than expected for the opponents, they are **alertable**.

Quiz:

What is your response to a 1♦ opening?

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| ♠Axxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxx ♣xxx | 1♠. Responding in a 4-card major is necessary to find a major fit. Just like in a standard system. |
| ♠Kxxx ♥x ♦AQx ♣KQxxx | 1♠. Do not respond first in the minor unless game forcing <i>and</i> 6-4 shape. Unless opener rebids 2♣, you are not interested in clubs seriously anyways. |
| ♠xx ♥AJxx ♦x ♣AKQxxx | 2♣. You plan on showing hearts later, with the added benefit of promising 6 clubs in doing so. |
| ♠x ♥xxx ♦AKxx ♣Qxxxx | 3♣. 5-4+ minors with 6-10 HCP. Perhaps you will preempt the opponents' spades. |

♠Axxxx ♥xxxx ♦Kxx ♣x

2♥. Another 2-suited bid, this time showing 5 spades and 4 or 5 hearts, about 6-10 HCP. In standard bidding, this would proceed 1♦-1♠-1NT-2♥, but this describes the shape in one bid.

♠KQx ♥Kxx ♦AJxx ♣Qxx

3NT. There is little chance of slam as opener has just 11-15 HCP without extreme shape. 99.5% of the time opener will pass, but if partner rebids a minor (forcing), you have a nice hand for pushing towards slam.

♠xxx ♥xxx ♦AKQx ♣AJx

2♦. You could respond 3NT, but there is a tricky way to get opener to declare 3NT. If opener rebids 2♥ (11-13 NT), puppet to 2NT with 2♠, and then raise to 3NT. Opener's major suit honors will be protected from the lead. Very cool.

♠xxx ♥Qxx ♦Axxxxx ♣x

3♦. Long diamonds, about 5 to 10 HCP. This fits in well with your "inverted minor" training if you have ever played that.

♠AQJxxxx ♥x ♦Kxx ♣xx

4♠. The game bid in response to a limited opening may be strong – as long as slam is very unlikely. The opponents can't be sure if you are weak or strong – if they gamble you are weak, and bid 5 of a suit, you will double to indicate a strong hand.

Handling interference over 1♦

Bids are very much the same as in standard auctions. Negative doubles are used, 2-level free bids (even 2♦ is a free bid, not a raise) are forcing for one round. After a 1 of a major overcall, a jump in clubs still shows both minors. Support (re)doubles are on, if you play those.

The key for responder is to always assume opener has 11-13 balanced until told otherwise. This way the invitational bids will have the correct strength.

Quiz:

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 1♦ | (1♠) | ? |

What is your call after the 2nd seat overcall?

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ♠xx ♥Q10xx ♦A9x ♣xxxx | Double. Negative. If you are going to bid, it's now or never, and you have support for all 3 other suits. |
| ♠xx ♥Kx ♦AQxxx ♣J10xx | 3♣. 5-4+ minors, 6-10 HCP, just as over no interference. If you bid 2♦ (forcing), you might never get the clubs into the picture and partner might play you for a better hand. |
| ♠Jx ♥AQJxxx ♦Qxxx ♣J | 2♥. Plan on rebidding 3♥ if possible, like in standard. You imagine opener has 11-13 balanced, so if she has a 3-card fit you will go to game. |
| ♠xxx ♥Ax ♦AK10xx ♣QJx | 2♦. Forcing for one round. (But see Part 2 of this book for an alternative if interested). Cue-bid later to force to game if needed. |

♠Jxx ♥Qxx ♦Qxxx ♣xxx

Pass. You can't compete with 2♦ because 1♦ was not strictly natural.

♠xxx ♥KQx ♦AQJ ♣Kxxx

2♠. This strong hand has no other good bid. You do not need 2♠ to show a good diamond raise because 2♦ would have been forcing.

♠K10x ♥Qxx ♦xx ♣KJxxx

1NT. Opener may have 4 or more clubs, missing a big fit, but showing your stopper, strength, and general shape is precise. Sometimes you can balance back in with 3♣ later if opener is silent and the opponents compete, a small gamble.

1♥ and 1♠ Openings – 5+ Cards, Good 10 to 15 HCP

The responses to these openings are whatever you would normally play in a standard system, including 1NT forcing and 2/1 game force if you wish (Bergen too!). The strength for a game force should be 13+ HCP value and a simple raise you can play just like you currently do – a constructive raise might be about 8 to a bad 11 HCP. If the opponents interfere, you may react as you would in a standard system as well – with the added benefit of knowing opener has precisely 11-15 HCP.

Opener's likely hands

As the chart of probabilities of various HCP totals in the preface revealed, opener is about 3:1 to have a good 10 to 13 HCP than 14-15 HCP (not to mention with 5332 14-15 opener starts with 1NT). Therefore, if responder is forced to guess in a competitive auction, it is best to assume opener has the former and not gamble opener is 14-15 HCP. Opener with 14-15 unbalanced will often take action in any case.

Opener's jump rebids are not forcing

Opener may jump rebid with 14-15 HCP and great shape (5-5 if another suit, good 6-card suit if rebidding the major), or reverse into spades. Just like after a 1♦ opening, these bids are not forcing. Responder knows opener's shape and strength and can place the final contract. However, if responder does anything other than pass or correct to one of opener's suits, it is game forcing.

Responder's jump to game is a wide strength range

A 4M jump raise to game **must be alerted**. This bid shows either a normal preempt, or any hand with 3-card support and enough strength for game that thinks slam is remote. This way, we get to the likely final contract and preempt the opponents. When responder doubles after the opponents choose to compete over the game raise, it indicates the power raise with 3-card support.

1NT Opening – Balanced, 14-16 HCP

Responses are whatever you normally play. As the opening is 1 HCP lighter than the normal 15-17 HCP, you need 1 more HCP for any invite or better action: invite with about 9 HCP and game force with 10 HCP or more. If your partnership style is to open 1NT heavy or light, that may play into the strength requirements.

It is important to open 1NT whenever the shape and strength dictate so, including 5-card majors or 5m-(422). Otherwise, it is very hard to show this intermediate strength range. Responder is expecting opener *not* to have 14-16 when opening 1 of a suit, so to have it would be a nasty surprise and a game may be missed.

The advantage of the 14-16 HCP range

This would be an appropriate time to point out the advantages of the 14-16 1NT over the 15-17 1NT.⁵

1. The 1 HCP weaker range means that, according to the probability chart in the Preface, it occurs about one-third more often than a 15-17 NT, and it is a preemptive and descriptive opening at the same time.
2. The opponents are more likely to have game over a weaker range, so they may have problems finding the game (or, they may guess wrong and stretch too far).

Even if you do not play SMP, the same benefits would apply so you are encouraged to adopt a 14-16 NT immediately. (Use opener's jump 2NT rebid to show 17 to a bad 19 and have a 2NT opening be a good 19 to 21).

⁵ If you wish to play a weak NT, invert the 11-13 and 14-16 meanings, so 1NT is 11-13 and opening 1 of a suit and then showing a balanced hand is 14-16 HCP. The discussion of this is not in the scope of this book, and there are some adjustments to be made to the bidding structure to cater to opener having a strong NT rather than a weak NT, including in competition. If you already have made some adjustments in 2/1 with a weak NT, those should also carry over well to SMP.

The following Real Deal is typical of a slightly weaker range – the opponents may not know whether to treat it as a strong NT or weak NT.

2017 Open USBC, Semifinal, Segment 1/8

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Board 15 | | ♠ A Q J 8 2 | |
| South Deals | | ♥ K J 8 | |
| N-S Vul | | ♦ A 4 | |
| | | ♣ 10 7 3 | |
| ♠ K 7 4 | | | ♠ 10 9 5 |
| ♥ A 10 9 6 5 | | | ♥ 4 3 2 |
| ♦ 9 6 | | | ♦ Q J 8 5 3 |
| ♣ A K 5 | | | ♣ 9 6 |
| | | | |
| | | ♠ 6 3 | |
| | | ♥ Q 7 | |
| | | ♦ K 10 7 2 | |
| | | ♣ Q J 8 4 2 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Cohen</i> | <i>Greco</i> | <i>Cohler</i> | <i>Hampson</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| 1 ♥ | 1 ♠ | Pass | 1 NT |
| Pass | 3 NT | All pass | |

Lead: ♣ A
Made 4 — NS +630

West with 14 HCP opened 1♥, as their 1NT opening range was 15-17, and North had no problem bidding 3NT, trusting the opener would be stuck on lead and the defenders’ honor location marked. In the other room, West, playing SMP, opened 1NT (14-16), and North did not play penalty doubles over that range, so missed game. 11 IMPs to the strong club team.

It is important to remember that any system will have a random bad or good day. The following example is very typical:

2016 Reisinger, Semifinal, Round 2/10

♠ 10 9 8 5 3

♥ J 8 7

♦ 8 6 3

♣ 5 3

♠ J 7 4 2

♥ 9 3

♦ K J 10 7

♣ A 6 2

W

N

E

S

♠ K 6

♥ K Q 10 4

♦ Q 9 5 2

♣ K Q 10

♠ A Q

♥ A 6 5 2

♦ A 4

♣ J 9 8 7 4

West

North

East

South

Hampson

Bertheau

Greco

Zagorin

Pass

1 NT¹

All pass

1. 14-16 HCP

Lead: ♣ 7

Made 3 — EW +150

East-West opened a 14-16 NT, and West judged (perhaps since favorable and so the range could include some 13's) to pass with 9 HCP rather than even invite. The game came home at the other table with East's 15-18 1NT rebid which convinced West to simply bash game. 6 IMPs against our protagonists. It was neither their fault nor the system's fault.

“Next hand!”

Bid notrump early, bid notrump often

The 1NT opening is so precise – in one bid, responder:

- Knows opener's strength is within a 3-HCP range (or, for 2NT, a 2-HCP range).
- Knows opener is roughly balanced.
- Has an array of bidding tools at her disposal (Stayman, Jacoby, lebensohl).

At the same time, the opponents:

- Are unable to have a complex auction.
- May automatically discount the possibility of a game, which could be cold.
- Are unable to enter the auction safely at the 1-level.

Quiz:

What should you open on the following hands?

♠Axx ♥Q10xxx ♦AK ♣Jxx 1NT. No problem here.

♠Qx ♥KJxx ♦Axxxx ♣AJ 1NT. A reverse would work but opponents have a way of interfering.

♠K ♥Axxx ♦Kxxx ♣A10xx 1NT. In the ACBL in 2017, it is GCC-legal to open 1NT with a singleton Ace, King, or Queen with (4441), (5431), (6331) shapes⁶.

♠xx ♥AQ ♦10xx ♣AKJxxx 2♣. The club suit is too good. However, if you wish to try to swing the scores, 1NT can often reap a great board.

⁶ http://www.acbl.org/clubs_page/club-administration/club-directors/rulings-faq/opening-1nt-with-a-singleton/

2♣ Opening – 6+ Clubs, Good 10 to 15 HCP

This opening is one that is hardest to remember at first, as it is totally unlike a standard 2♣ opening. Think of it just like a 1M opening – promises a primary suit of any quality with opening strength. You must **alert**.

While the 1♦ opening was ambiguous as to diamond length, the 2♣ opening announces immediately a true long club suit, which is an improvement over the standard “convenient minor” 1♣ opening, as the following Real Deal demonstrates.

2017 Open USBC, Semifinal, Segment 5/8

Board 15

South Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A K 6 5

♥ Q 8 4 2

♦ K 5 2

♣ Q 4

♠ 8 3 2

♥ —

♦ A Q 7 4

♣ A K 9 7 6 2

W

N

E

S

♠ 7

♥ A J 10 6

♦ J 9 8 6

♣ J 10 8 5

♠ Q J 10 9 4

♥ K 9 7 5 3

♦ 10 3

♣ 3

West

North

East

South

Diamond

Becker

Platnick

Kamil

2 ♣*

X

5 ♣

Pass

All pass

Lead: ♠ K

Made 5 — EW +550

East had no problem raising to 5♣ quickly, and South had to make a choice and doubled. In the other room, West's standard 1♣ opening did not entice East to even mention clubs, rather East bid 1♥ over North's takeout double, and South had no problem leaping in spades. West never got to indicate long clubs at all. 12 IMPs to the strong club team.

2♦ response

The 2♦ response is the main way responder finds out more about opener's hand. Responder should have at least some game interest.

Here are opener's rebids:

2♥ = any 4-card major

2♠ = asks for the 4-card major

2NT/3♣ = hearts/spades, 10-13 HCP

Pass/3♣ = sign off, opener had the wrong major

3♦ = slam try in clubs

3 opener's major = invite to game

3 of other major = slam try in opener's major

Games = to play

3♦/♥ = hearts/spades, 14-15 HCP, game forcing

3 of opener's suits = slam try

Games = to play

2NT/3♣ = natural invite, no interest in the major

3♦ = slam try in clubs

2♠ = a medium or maximum hand, no 4-card major

2NT = asks opener if medium or maximum (with medium rebid 3♣, with max rebid a singleton/void at the 3-level or 3NT)

3♣ = “the brakes” – responder is no longer interested in game, responder was hoping to catch a major fit, opener must pass

3♦ = slam try in clubs

3M = 5 cards exactly, game force

2NT = a maximum hand, with stoppers in both majors, no 4-card major

3♦ = slam try in clubs

3M = 5 cards exactly, game force

3♣ = “the pits” – a very minimum hand with not a great suit, no 4-card major

3♦ = slam try in clubs

3M = 5 cards exactly, game force

3♦/3♥/3♠ = a side 5-card suit (what a surprise!), game forcing.

A trick to help remember is that usually responder’s 3♦ is a club slam try, and 3♥ or 3♠ is a 5-card suit exactly.

2♥/2♠ responses

These are natural, 5 or more cards, and nonforcing so **alertable**. About 8-11 HCP. Opener may pass with tolerance or raise freely with a fit. Else opener may run to 2♠ (over 2♥), 2NT or 3♣ (7 or more clubs) without tolerance. Responder should not have a “serious” invite, but may have game interest if a fit is found.

2NT response

This is a puppet to 3♣. It is **alertable**. Most often this is simply a preemptive raise to 3♣, but sometimes it reveals a 5-5 game forcing hand. Over 3♣, responder can pass with the preemptive raise, or rebid 3♦ with 5 hearts – 5 spades game force, 3♥ with 5 hearts – 5 diamonds game force, or 3♠ with 5 spades – 5 diamonds game force. A way to remember this is “Invisible Diamonds”: bidding 3♦ *denies* diamonds and *not* bidding diamonds *shows* diamonds.

If responder has the 5-5 game force hands, opener can set the major as trumps by bidding it at the 3-level if possible, else bid the *other* major below game as a flag for responder’s major. With a fit for diamonds, opener can bid 4♦. With no fit, opener can rebid 3NT or 4♣.

3♣/3♦/3♥ responses

These responses show 6 or more cards in the next higher suit, and are invitational or better (and **alertable**). Opener can decline the invite by completing the transfer (even with a singleton), or accept the invite by bidding higher naturally. Over the sign off, if responder bids again it is game forcing.

3♠ response

This special bid shows 6 spades and 4 hearts, game force (**alertable**). A very difficult hand to show otherwise.

4♣ response

This is a normal preemptive raise with at least 3, usually 4 trumps, and about 5-9 HCP. The idea is to use the Law of Total Tricks to make it hard for the opponents to bid. Opener with exceptional distribution may increase the preempt and rebid 5♣ (or higher). It is **alertable**.

Game bids

Any immediate game bid is to play. Just like over 1♦ or 1M, it could be a strong hand that thinks there is no slam since opener is just 11-15 HCP, so it is **alertable**.

Quiz

What is your response to a 2♣ opening?

♠AQJxx ♥x ♦xxxx ♣Qxx

2♣. You have a club fit, but may as well chance that opener has spade support along the way. It would be too risky to respond 2♦, as you would never be able to show 5 spades without forcing to game. If opener cannot stand spades, you will go back to clubs.

♠AQJxxx ♥xx ♦KQx ♣xx

3♥. This “1-under” bid shows an invitational or better hand with 6 or more spades. If opener rebids 3♠ (declining, possibly a singleton), you will pass.

♠AQx ♥Kxx ♦Qxxx ♣Axx

3NT. You have a club fit, but that means the suit will probably run at notrump. Going for an 11-trick club game would be too risky with this flat hand.

♠xxx ♥Kxxxx ♦xx ♣Kxx

2NT. You are worth only one bid, but your heart suit is too flimsy and hand too weak for a 2♥ response. 2NT puppets to 3♣ and there it will play, preempting the opponents.

♠AQxx ♥Kx ♦Kxxx ♣xxx

2♦. You would like to find out if opener has 4 spades. If she bids 2♥, you will ask for which major. If she bids 2♠ or 2NT, you will chance 3NT. If she rebids 3♣ (a horrible minimum) you will pass.

♠xx ♥AKJ10xxx ♦x ♣xxx

4♥. The 9-card club fit just adds to the chance the opponents have a massive spade fit. Your best hope is to preempt and pray they do not find the spades (or diamonds). If they bid 4♠, you will compete to 5♣.

♠AQx ♥x ♦KQxx ♣Axxxx

2♦. You plan to rebid 3♦ later (a club slam try) and find out more about opener's hand.

♠Kx ♥AQJxx ♦Kxxxx ♣Q

2NT. This time, after opener's forced 3♣ bid, you will rebid 3♥ to show 5 hearts - 5 diamonds, game forcing. If opener is broke in spades, you may find an excellent game in another suit, even without a big fit. If opener has a heart fit and average or better hand, she will bid 3♠ over 3♥. With a spade card and no heart fit she will rebid 3NT. With long clubs and not much on the side she will rebid 4♣. With a doubleton heart honor and weak spades, or a fit and a very bad hand, she will rebid 4♥. And with something like 3136 with no spade stopper, or 4 diamonds, she will rebid 4♦.

Handling interference over 2♣

There is nothing unusual about competitive auctions after a 2♣ opening. Over an opponent's double, systems are on, but redouble indicates 10+ HCP with a defensive hand, and activates penalty doubles. After an overcall, responder can make a negative double, bid a new suit at the 2-level (forcing one round), compete in clubs, bid a new suit at the 3-level (game forcing), cue-bid with a good club raise, or sign off in game.

Quiz:

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 2♣ | (2♠) | ? |

What is your call after the overcall?

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ♠xxx ♥KQxx ♦Axxx ♣xx | Double. Negative. You would like to compete and want to hear more from opener. Opener may even bid game in hearts with a 4-card fit. |
| ♠Axx ♥xxxx ♦xxx ♣Qxx | 3♣. Competitive raise. You could double but there is more to gain with this weak hand by supporting opener and suggesting a club lead against 3NT, or maybe a sacrifice if she desires. |
| ♠KJ10xx ♥Kx ♦Qxxx ♣xx | Pass. Hopefully opener will reopen with a takeout double, and life will be good. |
| ♠AQx ♥xxx ♦J10xx ♣Kxx | 3NT. If you trust the opponents to lead spades, this would be a great gamble, even double-game-swing. You hope your club holding will solidify partner's suit to run. |

2 ♦ Opening – 4414/4405/3415/4315, Good 10 to 15 HCP

This is how SMP handles the hands that fit nowhere else: no 5-card major, too short in diamonds to open 1♦, not notrump shape, fewer than 6 clubs, too weak for 1♣. It is **alertable**. A short way to describe your shape is, “4-4-1-5 minus one card”. If you have ever played Mini-Roman, you will be right at home with this opening.

Such a precise opening is a common win for SMP, as in the following Real Deal:

2017 Open USBC, Semifinal, Segment 4/8

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Board 27 | | ♠ A 9 8 5 | |
| South Deals | | ♥ K J 10 9 | |
| None Vul | | ♦ 8 | |
| | | ♣ Q 10 9 7 | |
| ♠ Q 10 | | | ♠ K 7 4 |
| ♥ 6 3 2 | | | ♥ A 7 5 4 |
| ♦ A K 3 2 | | | ♦ Q J 9 7 5 |
| ♣ J 8 6 3 | | | ♣ 2 |
| | | ♠ J 6 3 2 | |
| | | ♥ Q 8 | |
| | | ♦ 10 6 4 | |
| | | ♣ A K 5 4 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Bathurst</i> | <i>Lee</i> | <i>J. Lall</i> | <i>Dwyer</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1 ♣ | X | XX |
| Pass | Pass | 1 ♦ | 2 ♣ |
| 3 ♣ | Pass | 3 ♦ | All pass |

In this room, North opened a convenient 1♣, and the slow pace of the auction allowed the “natural” best level to be reached, +110 for East-West. The side with the 9-card fit won the auction.

In the other room:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Board 27 | | ♠ A 9 8 5 | |
| South Deals | | ♥ K J 10 9 | |
| None Vul | | ♦ 8 | |
| | | ♣ Q 10 9 7 | |
| ♠ Q 10 | | | ♠ K 7 4 |
| ♥ 6 3 2 | | | ♥ A 7 5 4 |
| ♦ A K 3 2 | | | ♦ Q J 9 7 5 |
| ♣ J 8 6 3 | | | ♣ 2 |
| | | | |
| | | ♠ J 6 3 2 | |
| | | ♥ Q 8 | |
| | | ♦ 10 6 4 | |
| | | ♣ A K 5 4 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Kamil</i> | <i>Greco</i> | <i>Becker</i> | <i>Hampson</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 2♦* | Pass | 2 NT* |
| Pass | 3♣* | All pass | |

The SMP 2♦ opening gave East no easy options. 2NT was an artificial invitational asking bid and 3♣ showed a minimum. South would be in a good position to do the right thing, even double, if East balanced over 3♣. North wrapped up the club partial for 6 IMPs to the SMP team.

Responding to the 2♦ opening

Responder knows approximately what opener has and can bid 2♥, 2♠, or 3♣ to sign off. Opener must pass, except over the 2♥ response: with exactly 4315 opener must remove 2♥ to 2♠. This solves the problem of playing in a 3-3 fit when a 4-3 fit is available, if responder is, say 3343 or 3352 shape. Occasionally, responder will then pull opener's 2♠ to yet another contract (a 5-3 club fit, e.g.).

3♦ is invitational with a long, good diamond suit.

3 of a major is a mixed raise, 5 trumps and about 7 to 9 HCP. Opener is free to raise with 4 cards and a maximum.

If responder knows the final game contract, she jumps immediately to game.

If more information is required, including most game invites, responder may use a 2NT inquiry.

Responses to 2NT are:

3♣ = any minimum hand (now anything but 3♦ is a sign off)

- 3♦ = asks for a *three*-card major
 - 3♥/3♠ = 4315 or 3415 respectively
 - 3NT = 4-4 majors

3♦ = maximum, 4-4 majors, game forcing (3M sets suit for cues)

3♥/3♠ = maximum, *three*-card major (4315 or 3415 respectively)

The reason that we show the three-card major, and not the four-card major, is that we want opener to be dummy to hide responder's hand, which is still unknown. The 4-card major is more likely to be trumps, so leaving that for responder to bid increases the chances responder will declare. Also it allows a last chance to stop short of game in a 5-3 fit when responder was hoping for a 5-4 fit (responder passes 3M, never reluctantly forced to correct to the 4-level when the 3-level is high enough).

4♣/4♦/RKC

There is a special problem of how responder can check on keycards for slam after the 2NT response and subsequent relays. Roman Keycard Blackwood depends on both players understanding what the trump suit is. But, if responder is doing all the asking, opener never truly knows what the trump suit is.

Because of this, after relays discover opener's shape and strength, there is a now-standard gadget that responder uses called **4♣/4♦/RKC**:

4♣ = puppet to 4♦, and then responder will make a natural slam try (4♥, 4♠, 4NT, 5♣) – opener may accept or decline – 4NT over 4 of a major would be RKC

4♦ = puppet to 4♥, and then responder will pass or sign off – opener may not bid further after the sign off

4♥ = RKC for *clubs* (step 1 = 0 or 3 keycards, step 2 = 1 or 4, etc.)

4♠ = RKC for *hearts* (step 1 = 0 or 3 keycards, step 2 = 1 or 4, etc.)

4NT = RKC for *spades*

Note: The special convention only occurs after opener has revealed **both** strength **and** shape in a relay sequence.

The structure is also recommended after 1♣-1♥-2♠ and 1♣-2♠ (artificial showing some [4441] shape). In fact, anywhere in your system that reveals one player's distribution exactly to be 5440/5431/4441, the structure works exquisitely.⁷

⁷ Optionally, you may play that after 2♦-2NT-3♣-3♦, 3NT is 4414 and 4♣ is 4405. With the same idea, 2♦-2NT-3♦ is 4414 and 3NT 4405. Over a 4♣, you may use 4♦ as the end-signal and 4♥/4♠/4NT as RKC for ♣/♥/♠ respectively, a special case modification of the general 4♣/4♦/RKC structure described here.

Example #1

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| ♠ KQJx | ♠ Axx |
| ♥ Axxx | ♥ Kx |
| ♦ x | ♦ Axx |
| ♣ Jxxx | ♣ AQxxx |

| Opener | Responder |
|------------------|------------------|
| 2♦ ¹ | 2NT ² |
| 3♣ ³ | 3♦ ⁴ |
| 3NT ⁵ | 4♥ ⁶ |
| 4NT ⁷ | 6♣ |
| Pass | |

¹ 10(+)-15 HCP, short diamonds

² artificial ask

³ minimum

⁴ artificial ask

⁵ 4414 or 4405

⁶ RKC for ♣

⁷ 1 or 4 keycards

Example #2

| Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|
| ♠ AQx | ♠ KJx |
| ♥ Kxxx | ♥ Axxx |
| ♦ x | ♦ Qxxx |
| ♣ KQxxx | ♣ J10 |

| Opener | Responder |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 2♦ ¹ | 2NT ² |
| 3♠ ³ | 4♦ ⁴ |
| 4♥ ⁵ | Pass |

¹ 10(+)-15 HCP, short diamonds

² artificial ask

³ 3415, maximum

⁴ end-signal, preparing sign off

⁵ forced

Example #3

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| ♠ KJxx | ♠ Axxxx | 2♦ ¹ | 2NT ² |
| ♥ Kxx | ♥ Ax | 3♥ ³ | 4♣ ⁴ |
| ♦ x | ♦ Axx | 4♦ ⁵ | 4♠ ⁶ |
| ♣ AKxxx | ♣ Qxx | 4NT ⁷ | 5♣ |
| | | 5♦ | 5♠ |
| | | 6♠ | Pass |

¹ 10(+)-15 HCP, short diamonds

² artificial ask

³ 4315, maximum

⁴ puppet to 4♦, prepares nonforcing slam try

⁵ forced

⁶ nonforcing slam try in spades, asking for a slam-oriented hand

⁷ RKC for spades...

Example #4

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|
| ♠ Axx | ♠ Qxxx | 2♦ ¹ | 2NT ² |
| ♥ KQxx | ♥ Axx | 3♠ ³ | 3NT ⁴ |
| ♦ x | ♦ AJx | Pass | |
| ♣ KQxxx | ♣ Axx | | |

¹ 10(+)-15 HCP, short diamonds

² artificial ask

³ 3415, maximum

⁴ to play, was hoping opener had 4 spades

Handling interference over 2♦

Doubles are all penalty. 2NT, if available, is still the asking bid. Responder may bid one of opener's 3 suits cheaply to play there, or jump as a mixed raise.

If the opponents double 2♦, responder may ask for the better major with a redouble, or pass the double to request opener also pass – responder has long diamonds and wishes to play there doubled. Otherwise, all bids are as normal.

Quiz:

How would you respond to a 2♦ opening?

♠AQxx ♥xx ♦Kxxx ♣xxx 2♠. You may be in a 7-card fit, with a side 8-card club fit. But there is no way to safely determine which opener has – if you gamble 3♣ you could be in a possible 4-3 fit at the 3-level, which is even worse. Hopefully, even if opener has 3 spades, you can ruff a few diamonds.

♠Kxx ♥Kxx ♦Axxx ♣xxx 2♥. It's possible the partnership has 24-25 HCP, but you have no sure fit, and the opponents will attack diamonds. Your only way to find out opener's strength is 2NT, which would take you too high without a fit if opener is minimum. If opener has 4 spades and 3 hearts, she should "correct" 2♥ to 2♠, to at least get to a better contract.

♠xx ♥xxx ♦AQxx ♣Kxxx 3♣. This time you have 3 hearts, but *know* you have an 8 (or 9) card club fit, so clubs is where you should play.

♠Kx ♥xx ♦KQxxxx ♣xxx ~~Pass~~. Correction: have your smartphone ready to snap a pic of opener's facial expression, then pass. Nothing looks good, but diamonds is the best option, and should be painless at the 2-level.

♠AQxx ♥Kxx ♦AJxx ♣xx 2NT. You want to know if opener has 3 or 4 spades. If she has 4 you will play in 4 spades (whether opener is minimum or maximum), and if she has 3 you will play in 3NT.

♠AJxxx ♥Kx ♦xxx ♣Kxx 4♠. You have an assured 8+card spade fit, double-fit with clubs and nothing wasted opposite opener's singleton diamond. It is not necessary to find out more with 2NT.

♠Qx ♥A10xxx ♦Jxx ♣Jxx 3♥. A mixed raise. The opponents have a diamond partial so this way they will find it difficult to come back in, whereas if you bid 2♥ only, not only might opener correct to 2♠ with 4315 shape (causing you to correct back to 3♥), but it would allow the opponents a palatable 3♦ overcall or balance. On a good day, partner will have 4 hearts and a maximum and raise to game.

Quiz:

| Opener | You |
|--------|-----|
| 2♦ | 2NT |
| 3♥ | ? |

How would you continue after opener shows a 4315 maximum?

♠AJx ♥Qxxxx ♦Jxx ♣Ax 4♣. Preparing a nonforcing slam try in a hearts. You know opener has a maximum (good 13 to 15) but need a true tip-top maximum to try for slam. ♠KQxx ♥AKx ♦x ♣K10xxx would be an excellent slam, but a random lesser maximum like ♠Kxxx ♥AJx ♦x ♣KQ9xx is pretty bad, and even the 5-level may not make after RKC reveals insufficient keycards.

♠Jxx ♥AJxx ♦AQx ♣xxx 3NT. Your 2NT ask was looking to find both opener's strength and shape. The good news is that opener showed a maximum, avoiding a guess over what suit to sign off in after a 3♣ rebid (minimum). The bad news is, she did not have 4 hearts, so 3NT is the final contract.

♠AKxx ♥AJx ♦10xx ♣Jxx 4♦. End-signal. You want to sign off in 4♠ but cannot bid it just now, which would be an artificial RKC ask in hearts(!). Instead, use the 4♦ end-signal gadget to puppet to 4♥, and then bid 4♠ to play.

♠KQx ♥Kx ♦Qxxx ♣KQxx 4♥. RKC for clubs. With a 9-card fit, singleton (opener's), and fitting major suit honors, it's not a surprise there may be a 28-30 HCP slam. You don't need to enlist opener's opinion (the 4♣ puppet to a nonforcing slam try), you simply want to know if there are enough keycards for slam. It's barely possible there are two Aces missing, so may as well check.

Advanced notice: the first time you use this, partner will pass 4♥, trust me...

Weak 2♥ and 2♠ Openings

These are just like normal – they will never have more than a bad 10 HCP however. Due to the light openings of SMP, the weak twos truly are weak! You are welcome to use whatever alternative methods (Flannery 2♥, Dutch Twos e.g.) you wish instead.

2NT and Higher Openings

2NT is 20-21 and may have a 5-card major. Use whatever responses you currently play.

Any higher opening is just as you normally play.

Conclusion – Part 1

OK, exhale. This was a lot to take in, especially if you have never played a strong club before.

However, I have left much of your convention card up to you. Responses to 1M, 1NT or 2NT, and preempts; not to mention defensive bidding and carding. These are all independent of SMP so I do not want to include them in the system book. In this way, you can use the system “out of the box” much more quickly. Only the bids I have described are inherently part of the system.

What’s next?

Now is the time to practice. See Appendix A about using a Bridge Base Online partnership bidding table. Use the bidding system reference in Appendix D to quickly look up what to bid.

Is your partner on the same page? Have they read this far? Do you even have a partner for this system yet?

After practicing, hit the tables (online or live) and play until you feel at ease with opening and responding, knowing what to do if the opponents interfere and what bids to alert or announce.

But wait, you say. You and your partner have played the system for several months and your hotel rooms are booked for the next year of tournaments. You want to get the rest of the unanswered questions about the system out of the way so you can dominate.

Well then, onward!

Part 2:
Gaining the Winning Advantage
with the Full System

In Part 1 I tried to ease 2/1 and SAYC players into SMP using what they already know and learn only necessary treatments. It was unavoidably complex - I did not want to describe a version of strong club *that no top player actually played or recommended*. At the same time, it is not nearly as complex as the full system notes of regular long-time partnerships.

With only Part 1 information, you can already hold your own in any game and have fun opening a lot. If you become comfortable with the early part of SMP auctions without much thought, there is a lot more fun and advantage to be learned in Part 2: safely asking for keycards without going past 5 of trumps, taking advantage of the limited openings, fine-tuning that keeps the system running smoothly in choppy conditions (competition), extra detail for many constructive situations, and some expert tournament treatments to have ready at one's side. You can even use most of these treatments in your 2/1 Game Force or SAYC framework if you choose not to play SMP.

Once you start playing a limited opening system **well**, bridge gets to be even more exciting and enjoyable. Except for your opponents...

Review of the Opening Bids in SMP

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1♣ | 16+ HCP (or 17+ HCP balanced), artificial, any shape, forcing |
| 1♦ | Natural good 10 to 15 HCP, or 11-13 NT – denies 5-card major unless has 6 diamonds |
| 1♥, 1♠ | 5+ cards, good 10 to 15 HCP |
| 1NT | 14-16 HCP, includes 5M(332) or 5m(422) as well |
| 2♣ | 6+ cards, good 10 to 15 HCP, not forcing, may have a side 4+ card suit |
| 2♦ | Good 10 to 15 HCP, 4414/4405/4315/3415 exactly (short diamonds) |
| 2♥, 2♠ | Normal weak two, 6 to bad 10 HCP |
| 2NT | 20-21 HCP balanced |
| 3 of a suit | Preempt, 7 cards (in a minor, occasionally 6 cards, since 2♣ and 2♦ are unavailable for preempts) |
| 3NT | Gambling |
| 4 of a suit | Preempt, 8 cards |

Constructive Auctions

We begin with adjuncts that solve common problems. Learning these will boost your scores over time and are not outrageously difficult to remember.

Kickback Roman Keycard Blackwood

When asked at a regional several years ago in Dayton, OH what was the most important convention he ever played (that is not standard), Jeff Meckstroth replied, “Kickback Roman Keycard Blackwood”.

From almost day one of learning bridge, you have been taught that 4NT is Ace-asking. But, then you learned that the King of trumps and Queen of trumps were valuable and switched over to RKC. Kickback is a final improvement on keycard-asking.

In RKC, 4NT is the asking bid, no matter which suit is trumps. In Kickback RKC, 1 above 4 of the trump suit (e.g. 4♦ if clubs is trumps) is the asking bid. The advantage is clear: now there is all the room in the world to find out the number of keycards and the Queen of trump *without going past trumps at the 5-level*.

E.g. if diamonds are trumps:

Without Kickback:

4NT = RKC, then

- 5♣ = 0 or 3 keycards
 - Now we cannot ask for the Queen without going past 5♦.
- 5♦ = 1 or 4 keycards
 - (the same)
- 5♥ = 2 keycards, no trump Queen
 - This may or may not be safe to play 6♦ now, but 6♦ we will play.
- 5♠ = 2 keycards with the trump Queen
 - “Good answer, partner! I knew I could count on you.”

With Kickback (diamonds are trumps):

4♥ = RKC, then

- 4♠ = 0 or 3 keycards
 - Now 4NT asks for the Queen, and we do not go past 5♦ without the Queen. *Better!*
- 4NT = 1 or 4 keycards
 - Now 5♣ asks for the Queen, and 5♦ denies the Queen, either way, it's at a safe level. *Better!*
- 5♣ = 2 keycards, no Queen of trumps
 - We don't have to go past 5♦ if this was not enough for slam. *Better!*
- 5♦ = 2 keycards, with the Queen of trumps
 - On the rare chance we asked with 0 keycards, we could even stop here in 5♦. *Better!*

That's basically it. The follow-up ask for Kings may be 5 of the Kickback suit (in the above example, 5♥ would ask for Kings because diamonds is trumps [1 step beyond 5 of trumps]).

Is it Kickback?

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 2♦ |
| 3♦ | 4♥ |

Very simple, but is 4♥ Kickback? Or to play?

The answer is that **if a 4-level jump bid could be construed as Kickback, and there is any way to bid that suit naturally and forcing below game, then it is Kickback.**

So in the above example, 4♥ is Kickback because responder has a way to set hearts below game (3♥ over 3♦). This means that Fast Arrival (using a jump to game as weak) is not always possible, but Serious 3NT and Last Train (see later in Part 2) are available after setting the major as trumps at the 3-level.

Pick your battles

What if nobody has had a chance to agree on a fit yet?

Example

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 2♦ |
| 2♥ | 3♦ |
| 3♥ | 4♦ |
| ? | |

Is 4♥ to play? A ride home after the game may depend on the answer.

The answer is that if there is a “battle” between two suits, then if it sounds natural, it is natural. The cheapest “impossible” suit is Kickback for the lower suit.

In the above example:

- 4♥ = to play
- 4♠ = Kickback for diamonds (the lower possible trump suit)
- 4NT = Kickback for hearts (the higher possible trump suit)

The return of the quantitative 4NT

If 4NT is no longer the RKC asking bid, what is 4NT? The answer is that it is often quantitative with no fit.

Example

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 2♦ |
| 4♥ | 4NT |

This is now an invite to 6NT without a heart fit (use 4♠ as Kickback for hearts). Sometimes in the search for a fit, nobody knows how strong both sides are, and quantitative 4NT is handy.

Discuss amongst yourselves

It would be worth your time to go through as many situations as possible with your partner and agree what is Kickback and what is not Kickback, if there is ambiguity. But I promise the effort will be well worth it.

Here are some examples (bids in parentheses are opponents' bids):

- a. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-2\heartsuit-3\heartsuit-4\spadesuit$ = Kickback RKC for hearts
- b. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-3\diamond-3\heartsuit-4\heartsuit$ = sign-off – responder chose hearts as trumps with the $3\heartsuit$ call
- c. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-3\diamond-3\heartsuit-4\diamond$ = cue-bid for hearts
- d. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-3\diamond-4\clubsuit-4\heartsuit$ = Kickback RKC for diamonds – $4\clubsuit$ was a cue-bid for diamonds, and if responder had a heart fit she would have rebid $3\heartsuit$ over $3\diamond$
- e. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-2\heartsuit-2NT-3NT-4\heartsuit$ = to play, if responder wanted to set diamonds as trumps she would not have rebid $2NT$ over $2\heartsuit$
- f. $1\spadesuit-2\heartsuit-3\heartsuit-3\spadesuit-4\spadesuit$ = to play – responder chose spades as trumps with the $3\spadesuit$ call
- g. $1\diamond-2\clubsuit-3\heartsuit-4\spadesuit$ = Kickback RKC for hearts ($3\heartsuit$ showed 6 diamonds -5 hearts)
- h. $(3\diamond)-3\heartsuit-3\spadesuit-4\spadesuit$ = to play
- i. $(3\diamond)-3\heartsuit-4\heartsuit-4\spadesuit$ = Kickback RKC for the agreed suit – hearts
- j. $(3\diamond)-3\heartsuit-4\spadesuit$ = to play (since responder could bid $4\diamond$ over $3\heartsuit$ to flag hearts)
- k. $1\diamond-4\heartsuit$ = to play, this is part of the standard system – to prepare Kickback for diamonds start with a $2\diamond$ response
- l. $1\heartsuit-2\diamond-4\clubsuit$ (splinter)- $4\heartsuit$ = to play – responder can agree on diamonds with $4\diamond$
- m. $1\heartsuit-4\spadesuit$, or $1\heartsuit$ -(bid)- $4\spadesuit$ = to play – responder has ways to set hearts as trumps (Jacoby $2NT$ or a cue-bid, respectively)
- n. $1\spadesuit-2\diamond-3\clubsuit-4NT$ = quantitative – responder can bid $4\clubsuit$ or $4\diamond$ (Kickback) for clubs, $3\diamond$ to keep diamonds in focus, or $3\spadesuit$ to set spades as trumps – $4NT$ invites slam with no likely fit

Serious 3NT/Last Train

I consider this sibling pair of conventions to be one of the main improvements in constructive bidding in the last few decades.

When a major is agreed at the 3-level or below in a game forcing auction, it is generally because one of the partners has not limited their hand and so slam is not yet ruled out. Traditionally, the only gadgets are the cue-bid and Fast Arrival. Sign off in game quickly with a bad hand, or cue-bid an Ace or first round control (or perhaps a second round control if playing “mixed cues”) with a good hand.

Having only two ranges (good/bad) often does not provide precise enough a description for partner to make a good decision. Also, a player may have a good hand but no control to cue-bid, or too bad a hand to cue-bid potentially useful controls.

3NT is not going to be the final contract very often⁸. A simple understanding is when a major suit is trumps and slam is not yet ruled out, **3NT is not natural, but rather a waiting bid that shows a good hand in context: “Serious” 3NT**. It says nothing about control of any suit.

The corollary is that *if you bypass 3NT, you deny a good hand in context*.

What is a “good hand”? Draw the line where you may, but a simple rule would be to say that a good hand is one in the top 50% of hands on the auction to date.

Serious 3NT is accompanied by **Last Train** (after “Last Train to Clarksville” by The Monkees). This is the bid of *one under 4 of the major*. If spades is trumps, 4♥ is Last Train. It *also shows a good hand in context, and nothing about the cue-bid suit*. Using both you can refine the strength of the partnership’s combined holdings to a narrow range, like using the lenses and magnification knob on a microscope.

⁸ The exception would be after shape has been shown to be balanced by both hands, or if 3NT is a jump. (e.g. 1♠-2♠-3NT, or 1♣-1♥-1♠-2♠-2NT-3NT)

The typical situation:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 2♣ |
| 2♥ | 3♥ |
| ? | |

- 3♠ = cue-bid, does not say whether serious or not – the obligation is to show a spade control first
- 3NT = Serious 3NT (13-15 value in this case since 1♥ was a good 10 to 15 HCP) – denies a spade cue
- 4♣ = cue-bid, non-serious hand (good 10 to 12 HCP) – denies a spade cue, minimum but not the pits
- 4♦ = Last Train, non-serious hand (good 10 to 12 HCP) – no spade or club cue, says nothing about diamonds, minimum but not the pits
- 4♥ = **the worst hand**, 10-11 HCP, no extra distribution, bad honor location, bad slam cards (think ♠QJx ♥KJxxxx ♦QJx ♣x)

Serious 3NT and Last Train may occur in the same auction and control of the unbid suit comes into focus:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 2♦ |
| 2♥ | 3♥ |
| 3NT* | ? |

- 4♣ = cue-bid, still interested in slam, implies spade control since opener denied one bypassing 3♠:
 - 4♦ = Last Train – shows a solid serious hand, but not good enough to go on
 - 4♥ = sign-off attempt – a serious hand but just barely
 - 4NT = RKC for hearts – maximum, the club control helped

- 4♦ = Last Train, no club cue-bid, implies spade control, invites opener to bid on with a club control
 - 4♥ = no club control
 - 4NT = club control, RKC
- 4♥ = sign-off - this strongly implies there are two fast spade losers (opener did not cue-bid spades) – even if opener is a super-max, she should pass

Lackwood

How do we know for sure about a control in the Last Train suit if it says nothing about control of that suit? The suit may have already been cue-bid at the 3-level, in which case, there is no problem.

We use **Lackwood** (in conjunction with Kickback RKC) to find out about a control in the Last Train suit. If 1 step beyond the trump suit is Kickback, then 2 steps beyond the trump suit is Lackwood - RKC but denying a control in the Last Train suit.

- If clubs is trumps, 4♦ is Kickback, 4♥ is Lackwood
- If diamonds is trumps, 4♥ is Kickback, 4♠ is Lackwood
- If hearts is trumps, 4♠ is Kickback, 4NT is Lackwood
- If spades is trumps, 4NT is Kickback, 5♣ is Lackwood

Note: A **jump** to a suit above Kickback is still Exclusion RKC (i.e. Voidwood) if you play that convention.

To Lackwood, responder bids normal 0314 steps except that responder always bids trumps without control of the Last Train suit, and skips the trump suit with control of the Last Train suit.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| [Hidden] | ♠ KJ | 1♥ | 2♦ |
| | ♥ AQxx | 2NT | 3♥ |
| | ♦ QJxxx | 4♣ | ? |
| | ♣ AQ | | |

Responder flags hearts as trumps with 3♥ and opener cue-bids 4♣, denying a spade control (bypassing 3♠), and denying a serious hand (bypassing 3NT), but also promises more than a horrible minimum (did not sign off in 4♥).

Responder has the spade control and with the 9-card fit wants to go to slam if there are enough keycards. But nobody has cue-bid diamonds. Responder can ask for diamond control with 4NT (the bid just beyond Kickback 4♠).

Opener rebids:

- 5♣ = 0 or 3 keycards for hearts, promises a diamond control
- 5♦ = 1 or 4 keycards for hearts, promises a diamond control
- 5♥ = no diamond control, says nothing about keycards
- 5♠ = 2 keycards for hearts without the trump Queen, promises a diamond control, *skipping the normal step of 5♥, reserved for all hands without a diamond control*
- 5NT = 2 keycards for hearts with the trump Queen, promises a diamond control

The Implied Cue-bid

The following is an example from the 1♣-1♥ auctions earlier. But both hands have been made a little stronger.

Example

| Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|
| ♠ Qx | ♠ AKxxxx |
| ♥ AQJ | ♥ x |
| ♦ AQxxxx | ♦ KJ |
| ♣ Ax | ♣ xxxx |

The recommended auction earlier got to 4♠, but the same logic guiding each bid in that instance would also get to 4♠ on these stronger hands, missing a good slam.

The following principle takes effect in *non-fit auctions* and is now standard among all top partnerships around the world.

Principle:

Before a fit is agreed, bidding a suit that is *unreasonable* as a possible trump suit at the level of 3♦ or higher implies a fit with partner's last bid suit. This is known as an "Implied Cue-bid".

The logic is: you need at least two ways to raise partner to show the difference between a bad or good hand for the auction to date.

To explain, here is the full auction with the modified hands repeated from above:

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| ♠ Qx | ♠ AKxxxx | 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| ♥ AQJ | ♥ x | 2♦ ³ | 2♠ ⁴ |
| ♦ AQxxxx | ♦ KJ | 2NT ⁵ | 3♠ ⁶ |
| ♣ Ax | ♣ xxxx | 4♣ ⁷ | 4♦ ⁸ |
| | | 4♥ ⁹ | 4NT ¹⁰ |
| | | 5♣ | 5♦ |
| | | 5NT | 6♦ |
| | | 7♠ | Pass |

¹ 16+ HCP

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more diamonds

⁴ 5 or more spades

⁵ waiting – better to show the general nature of the hand than take up space with 3♦

⁶ the clubs are not worth bidding at this point, rebidding spades confirms 6 or more

⁷ Implied Cue-bid for spades

⁸ cue-bid for spades

⁹ Last Train

¹⁰ RKC 0314

After 3♠, opener can take stock. On strength alone, 19 HCP opposite 8-11 HCP in an 8-card fit is not overwhelming odds for slam. But responder has not described her shape or honor location yet. What if responder has the ♦K? That would brighten the outlook for slam significantly. Opener also has very good slam cards (3 Aces and the trump Queen). Opener should at least entertain the possibility of slam. But how?

Opener cannot use Serious 3NT because spades have not been agreed as trumps yet. 3NT would be needed for most hands without a fit.

Should opener gamble 4NT RKC? 4NT would be quantitative with no fit, also needed because opener is unlimited.

This is the great importance of the Implied Cue-bid. When opener rebid 2NT, she denied a 5-card club suit (see ‘Waiting 2NT’ in Part 1).

Technically, 4♣ **could** be a 4-card suit, but in that case, why go past the likely best contract of 3NT? Responder could have even introduced clubs over 2NT but chose not to. Being highly unlikely to be a trump suit, clubs becomes available as an Implied Cue-bid for responder's last bid suit (spades), and the solution to the problem.

Responder is now forced to cue-bid controls, as opener is unlimited. While a control may be a singleton or void (as is the modern expert style), when partner has bid the suit naturally, it is best to only cue-bid an honor. Responder cue-bids the ♦K and opener's hand has just been upgraded.

There is still the question of how good *responder's* hand really is. Up until this point, responder could still just be playing along with 8-9 HCP and a bunch of quacks.

Thankfully, opener can now use Last Train (discussed in an earlier section) with a 4♥ call, saying nothing about heart control. Responder knows that opener would like to proceed towards slam with at least any true maximum (else opener would have bid 4♠ over 3♠). But cue-bidding **and** Last Train, when all other suits have been cue-bid, says something stronger: *any medium or maximum hand will do*.

Responder is happy to oblige with the true maximum and 6-4 shape. Note that responder is not upgrading at this point due to the ♦K because partner is already taking that into account. Last Train asked for any additional undisclosed values.

After discovering opener has all the missing keycards, the trump Queen, and no side Kings, responder makes a try for grand, asking (in their methods) for something extra in diamonds, and opener has the goods so jumps to a grand slam.

Example

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ♠ Ax | ♠ KQxx | 1♥ | 2♦ ¹ |
| ♥ AKJ10xxx | ♥ Qx | 3♥ ² | 3♠ ³ |
| ♦ Qx | ♦ AKJxx | 4♦ ⁴ | 4♥ ⁵ |
| ♣ xx | ♣ xx | Pass | |

¹ game forcing, 5+ diamonds

² long good heart suit, denies interest in other suits

³ Implied Cue-bid for hearts

⁴ Last Train, no club cue
⁵ to play

The 3♥ call means that spades and clubs are out of serious consideration as possible trump suits (else, would opener not have bid just 2♠ or 3♣). Even diamonds is unlikely to be trumps. This frees those suits to be Implied Cue-bids for hearts. Here, opener bypasses 4♣ in the cue-bidding sequence, so responder knows neither side has clubs controlled, and signs off.

Over 3♥, had responder no slam interest, she could immediately bid 3NT or 4♥ to sign off. A jump to 4NT would be quantitative with no fit. A jump to 4♠ would be Voidwood for hearts.

Implied Cue-bid for a minor

We also see this with a minor suit fit but below 3NT because, especially at matchpoints, going past 3NT when it is wrong is a score-killer. It is a delicate business to agree on a minor suit, because so much space in bridge is devoted to finding a major suit fit (think: Stayman, checkback, 4th Suit Forcing). Sometimes the Implied Cue-bid for a minor can be more of a choice of game that turns into a slam try. Here are some examples of agreeing on a minor suit with an Implied Cue-bid.

Example #1

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|
| ♠ Qxx | ♠ AKx | 1♣ ¹ | 1♥ ² |
| ♥ AK | ♥ xxx | 2♣ ³ | 2NT ⁴ |
| ♦ Ax | ♦ Kxxx | 3♣ ⁵ | 3♦ ⁶ |
| ♣ AQ10xxx | ♣ xxx | 3♥ ⁷ | 3♠ ⁷ |
| | | 3NT | 4♦ ⁷ |
| | | 4NT | 5♦ |
| | | 6♣ | Pass |

¹ 16+ HCP

² 8-11 HCP

³ 5 or more clubs (not 5332)

⁴ more descriptive than 3♣, no 5-card suit

⁵ 6 or more clubs, clearly some interest in a contract other than 3NT

⁶ Implied Cue-bid for clubs.

⁷ cue-bid

Over 3♣, responder has many options available. Clearly, there may still be a 4-4 major-suit fit so 3♥ and 3♠ must be natural⁹. 3NT also would be natural, though imply a 3343 shape (else would have rebid 2♦ over 2♣ with 5 diamonds, or 3♣ over 2♣ with 4 clubs). 4♣ would be the best hand possible for the auction to date (maybe Hxx support, 11 HCP, good controls). But there are many “in-between” hands responder could have with something like 8-9 HCP and good controls or trumps, or 10-11 HCP and bad controls or trumps. 3♦ becomes available as an Implied Cue-bid to show this, even without a diamond control.

Opener does not have enough to go past 3NT unilaterally just yet but wants to find out if responder has a very good “in-between” hand so cue-bids 3♥. Responder cue-bids spades and later diamonds.

⁹ You may choose to play that 3♣ denies a 4-card major (rebid 3M with 6♣-4M).

The Implied Cue-bid happens as often after suit openings as strong club openings, since the development of game forcing auctions is so similar.

Example #2

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| ♠ AJ10xx | ♠ Kx | 1♠ | 2♦ |
| ♥ Ax | ♥ Qxxx | 2NT ¹ | 3♦ |
| ♦ Axx | ♦ QJ10xxx | 3♥ ² | 3♠ ³ |
| ♣ 10xx | ♣ A | 4♦ | 5♦ |
| | | Pass | |

¹ *does not promise all side suits stopped in the style chosen by this pair*

² *Implied Cue-bid for diamonds.*

³ *responder is interested in whether opener is truly notrump-oriented or not*

Opener’s 2NT bypasses the hearts which denies 4 cards in hearts. Therefore over 3♦, 3♥ is available as an Implied Cue-bid for diamonds, a cooperative hand with a fit, but unwilling to go past 3NT just yet.

Over 3♠ if opener had something like ♠QJ10xx ♥Ax ♦xxx ♣KJx she would rebid 3NT rather than cue-bid at the 4-level because, while having real diamond support, the hand otherwise is not that great for slam and both side suits are truly stopped.

Or, if opener had ♠AQ10xx ♥xx ♦AKx ♣ 10xx, she could try 4♠ over 3♠ offering to play in a 5-2 game, worried about too many quick losers in 5♦.

On the actual hand opener has good controls, a diamond honor, no club stopper, and not the most amazing spade suit so 4♦ is very reasonable. Responder can see diamonds is better than notrump and spades might not be strong enough for a 5-2 game so signs off in 5♦.

XYZ Two-Way checkback Stayman

In Part 1 I mentioned that you can still use whatever checkback system you would like to play after a $1\spadesuit$ openings, or a $1\heartsuit$ - $1\spadesuit$ -1NT sequence. The problem with simple checkback like New Minor Forcing is that the stress is only on finding an 8-card major suit fit, and nothing about minor suits or slam investigations.

Now that you are playing a superior system, it makes sense to play superior methods. I would like to present my “best” recommendation, **XYZ Two-Way checkback Stayman**, which adds a second checkback bid. One is used for invite hands, one for game forcing hands. It is called XYZ because it applies after any 3 bids at the 1-level after a suit opening. If you already play this system, you should use your own version as the following one is likely not much different.

Setting a low game force allows you to treat these hands as easily as a 2/1 auction or positive response to a strong club.

It is probably one of the most useful and easy conventions to add to your arsenal, and *most* top and expert partnerships use it. This makes it quite portable for adding to your various convention cards (there is even a built-in check box on the current ACBL convention card for this convention).

Note: checkback is not used after a strong $1\clubsuit$ opening.

Take the following auctions:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------------------|---------------|
| $1\spadesuit$ | $1\heartsuit$ |
| $1\spadesuit$ /1NT | |

| Opener | Responder |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| $1\spadesuit$ / $1\heartsuit$ | $1\spadesuit$ |
| 1NT | |

Responder now can rebid:

- 2♣ = artificial invite (or sign-off in 2♦, opener must bid 2♦)
- 2♦ = artificial game forcing checkback
- 2♥ = to play
- 2♠ = natural (if new suit, a game forcing reverse)
- 2NT = natural, denies 5 cards in the initial major suit response
- 3 in a new lower suit (including 3♦) = 5-5 slam interest, good suits
- 3 of original major = 6+ great cards, slam interest (now 3NT is to play but anything else is a cue for the major)
- Double jump shift = splinter for the last natural suit

Quiz:

| Opener | You |
|--------|-----|
| 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 1NT | ? |

What is your rebid?

♠Ax ♥AQxxx ♦xxx ♣J10x

2♣. You plan on rebidding 2♥ over opener's forced 2♦ as a mild game invite with 5 or a bad 6 hearts. 1NT promised a balanced hand so you have at least a 5-2 heart fit. The 1NT rebid was 11-13 HCP, so opener really needs a max and probably 3 hearts to make this worth going past 2♥. Most of the time opener will pass 2♥ which should be an ok contract.

♠AQxx ♥KQxx ♦Jxx ♣xx

2NT. In SMP, the 1NT rebid denies four spades, so there is no use checking back for them. 12 HCP is the typical invite opposite 11-13 HCP opener has shown.

♠xx ♥Jxxx ♦AQxxx ♣xx

2♣. You will pass opener's forced 2♦ rebid to play there. Opener has denied four spades or four hearts, so it is very likely there is a good diamond fit. Regardless, 5-4 is a suit-oriented shape.

♠AQJ ♥K10xxx ♦Q10x ♣xx

2♣. Rebid 2NT over the forced 2♦ call to show a solid invite to 3NT with five hearts.

♠xxx ♥AKJx ♦AKxx ♣KQ

2♦. Game force checkback. You intend to invite to slam but if opener has 4 or 5 diamonds you might be better off in 6♦ than 6NT if she is minimum.

♠x ♥AKJxx ♦AKJxx ♣xx

3♦. 5+ hearts, 5+ diamonds, good suits, slam interest. Opener can upgrade the ♥Q or ♦Q, and consider black Aces as helpful for slam.

♠Axx ♥KQJ9xx ♦AQJ ♣x

4♣. Auto-splinter for hearts. Perhaps opener has nothing wasted in clubs.

After the 2♣ puppet rebid

After the 2♣ bid, opener must bid 2♦, as responder might have a sign-off with long diamonds. After this, responder can rebid:

Pass = 5 or more diamonds with no game interest

2 of the original major = *mild* invite with 5 cards or a bad 6 – opener really needs a good 3-card and maximum to bid more – opener should pass with most hands¹⁰

2 of opener's major (after 1♦-1♥-1♠) = *mild* invite with a 4-card fit

2NT = solid invite with 5 cards in the original major, opener can place the final contract

3 of a minor = invitational with just 4 cards in the original major and 6+ cards in the minor, nonforcing; this is mostly fishing to run a minor suit for 3NT – with a power invite and 6-4 shape, best to force to game

3 of the original major = invite with a reasonable 6+ card suit (note that if responder had jump rebid the major initially it would have been slam-seeking, so she must go through 2♣ to invite)

3 of opener's major (after 1♦-1♥-1♠) = solid invite with a 4-card fit

3NT = special “choice of game” 5(332) – opener is free to pass even with 3-card support in a 3(433)

¹⁰ The bid of 2 of an unbid major is not needed as natural: 1♦-2♣ is 5 spades and 4 hearts invite, and 1♦-1♥-1NT denies 4 spades. You may leave a meaning for this bid unassigned or choose some hand type for it to describe.

After the 2♦ game forcing checkback bid

Responder's most useful rebid is 2♦, indicating the partnership must go to game, but not yet indicating anything about her hand. In this way, the end goal is known, and so there is a lot of freedom to bid naturally without fear of being dropped in a partial.

Opener continues by bidding naturally and efficiently. Every bid denies the ability to make a cheaper call. For example, after:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 1♠ | 2♦ |
| ? | |

- 2♥ = 3-card heart support, any shape, any strength
 - 2♠ = sets spades as trumps (cue-bidding now)
 - 2NT = denies interest in any major, asks for a 4-card minor, slam interest
 - 3♣/♦ = denies interest in any major, shows 5 cards in the minor, slam interest
 - 3♥ = sets hearts as trumps (cue-bidding now)
 - 3♠/4♣/4♦ = splinter for hearts
 - 4♥ = to play, no slam interest
- 2♠ = 5 diamonds, 4 spades, *denies 3 hearts*
- 2NT = 3-suited or balanced, *denies 3 hearts or 5 spades or 6 diamonds*
- 3♣ = 4135
- 3♦ = 6+ diamonds, 4 spades, *denies 3 hearts*
- 3♠ = 6 diamonds, 5 spades

After a 1NT rebid, opener has fewer shape possibilities, so the above structure with a few modifications is recommended:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♦ | 1♥/♠ |
| 1NT | 2♦ |
| ? | |

- 2♥ = if responder bid 1♥, 3 hearts; if responder bid 1♠, shows 4 hearts (may still have 3 spades, to save room)
- 2♠ = if responder bid 1♥, this can be a special hand (since 1NT denied 4 spades), like 3244 exactly; if responder bid 1♠, this shows 3 spades without 4 hearts
- 2NT = some 4432/4333 without a 4-card major or 3-crds support
- 3♣/3♦ = 5♣/5♦ with a doubleton in responder's major

The key thing to remember is that no matter what opener rebids, *trumps are not yet set, even if opener rebid responder's major*. **It is responder's duty to point the partnership towards the trump suit.** Thus, if opener shows 3 hearts in the above example, responder must first pause to flag hearts as trumps before cue-bidding. If responder is not interested in hearts, responder must bid something else to draw attention away from hearts.

Quiz:

| Opener | You |
|--------|---------|
| 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 1NT | 2♦ (GF) |
| 2♥ | ? |

What is your rebid after opener shows 3-card support?

- ♠A ♥Kxxx ♦Axx ♣KQJxx 3♣. Announcing hearts will *not* be trumps. Instead you are showing 5+ clubs and slam interest.
- ♠Kxx ♥KQxxxx ♦Kx ♣AK 3♥. Flag for hearts. Cue-bidding may commence. Were you to attempt to cue-bid immediately over 2♥, opener would be confused because those would be natural bids *denying* heart interest.
- ♠xxx ♥AKJx ♦AKxx ♣KQ 2NT. This is a hand from the previous quiz. You are interested in whether opener has 4 or more diamonds. If opener bids 3♣ you will rebid 3♦ (in case she is 2344), and if opener rebids 3♦ you will rebid 3♥ as an Implied Cue-bid for diamonds.
- ♠x ♥QJ9xx ♦AKx ♣AKxx 3♠. Splinter for hearts. This is more precise than a simple 3♥. Cue-bids follow.

Passed hand checkback

By a passed hand, it makes no sense to play a game forcing checkback: not only is responder already limited to maximum 10 HCP, but opener may be opening light in 3rd or 4th seat. Therefore you can use just the 2♣ component of the checkback structure, while responder's 2♦ may be something like 5 of the major and 4 diamonds, no game interest.

Checkback in competition

When the opponents are bidding suits, it becomes more complex. First of all, you may be playing support doubles, or responder may have already indicated 5 cards in the suit (e.g. 1♦-[1♥]-1♠ as 5+ spades). Second, if the opponents have bid a suit, it is not likely you will ever bid that suit naturally, so it becomes available as an artificial bid itself. Finally, the opponents may have taken up too much room for checkback. **Therefore, when the opponents have bid any suit, all checkback is *off*.**

When the opponents double, however, all bids remain viable. I recommend you keep everything *on* whether it is 2nd seat or 4th seat that doubles... as long as they have not bid a *suit*.

Quiz

| Opener | Opponent | You | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1♥ | (Pass) |
| 1♠ | (2♣) | ? | |

What is your rebid?

♠Axx ♥9xxx ♦Axxx ♣Qx

Double. With this hand you just want to not let the opponents play 2♣. If opener rebids 2♥, rebid 2♠, as your spade quality is likely better than hearts. Sometimes opener will even pass with good clubs (e.g. 4234).

♠x ♥Kxxx ♦KQxxx ♣xxx

2♦. To play. While this is a “new suit” since 1♦ did not promise diamonds, in competitive auctions it is more important to show shape quickly rather than require a strong hand to bid. This also makes no sense as checkback since 2♣ took away the ability to play the full system.

♠Jxx ♥AKxxxx ♦Kxx ♣x

3♥. Invite, just what it sounds like. Without a full structure, you revert to pretty natural bidding.

♠Kxx ♥Kxxxx ♦xx ♣AQx

Double. You have a classic checkback hand, but do not have the methods anymore to do so after the 2♣ overcall. Double however works well, as you can raise 2♥ to 3♥ or correct 2♦ to 2NT (invite).

Opening weak twos on five-card suits

A treatment that most SMP partnerships use is opening 2♥ or 2♠ on *five or six cards*. It says nothing about side suits¹¹. You do not alert this opening bid, but do record on your convention card the fact that it may 5 cards.

Introducing shapes with 5-card suits into the weak two pool expands the probability of opening the hand significantly. The increased frequency of preemption makes life hard for the opponents, and, as if I had to say it again, makes the system more fun.

Of critical importance however is that you have discussed and practiced this style with your partner. If partner expects six cards every time and you have five, you may have some explaining to do after playing slam in a 5-2 fit.

And this is not to say that *every* hand with a 5-card major and 6-10 HCP opens a weak two. Judgement is always required.

Features that are amenable to a 5-card weak two are:

- A good suit
- Reasonable distribution
- Not Vulnerable
- Swinging the action
- 1st seat or 3rd seat

Warning signs which may point to not opening a 5-card weak two are:

- A bad suit
- Mild distribution (5332 is almost impossible)
- Vulnerable
- Playing down-the-middle, ahead in the match
- 2nd seat

¹¹ Since a 5M(332) hand, or 5M-4oM hand tend not to open a weak two, in fact most hands that preempt with a 5-card major will have a 4+ card minor... it is just not usually possible to communicate which minor that may be.

The following Real Deal demonstrates what can easily happen when the suit is weak:

2016 World Bridge Games, Open Teams, RR 13

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| Board 6 | | ♠ K 10 9 6 4 | |
| East Deals | | ♥ A 5 | |
| E-W Vul | | ♦ 7 | |
| | | ♣ K 7 6 5 3 | |
| ♠ 2 | | | ♠ A J 7 3 |
| ♥ K Q J 10 3 | | | ♥ 9 |
| ♦ A Q | | | ♦ 10 9 8 5 3 |
| ♣ A 10 9 8 2 | | | ♣ Q J 4 |
| | | | |
| | | ♠ Q 8 5 | |
| | | ♥ 8 7 6 4 2 | |
| | | ♦ K J 6 4 2 | |
| | | ♣ — | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Greco</i> | | <i>Hampson</i> | |
| | | Pass | 2 ♥* |
| Pass | Pass | X | All pass |
| Lead: ♥ K | | | |
| Down 4 — NS -800 | | | |

Although South's opening did promise a side minor suit, it does not change the fact that it is asking for trouble to have such a bad opening suit!

Here are some examples of 1st seat favorable five-card weak twos

- ♠ KJxxx ♥ x ♦ QJxx xxx
- ♠ xx ♥ AKxxx ♦ xx xxxx

But this would be the most aggressive 5-card preempt in **2nd seat vulnerable**.

- a. ♠ AQ10xx ♥ x ♦ K10xx xxx
- b. ♠ KQJ10x ♥ xxx ♦ x ♣ Qxxx

Inquiring about the length of the preempt suit

It is not enough to open a 5-card suit however, you must also have the ability to ask opener how many cards they really have. How else to distinguish between a final strain of the major or notrump (or stopping in 3M)?

Here is the proposed structure:

2NT = asking

- 3♣ = 5 cards
 - 3♦ = asks
 - 3♥ = minimum
 - 3♠ = maximum *without* 3 cards in the other major
 - 3NT = maximum *with* 3 cards in the other major
 - 3 of the major is a sign-off – apparently responder was interested in 6 cards only
- 3♦ = 6 cards, minimum hand
 - 3 of the other major = exactly 5 cards, forcing
 - 3 of opener's major = sign off
- 3♥ = 6 cards, medium hand
- 3♠ = 6 cards, maximum hand, *without* 3 cards in the other major
- 3NT = 6 cards, maximum hand, *with* 3 cards in the other major

Over all these responses, if responder bids 4♣ it is a general slam try with hearts as trumps, and 4♦ is a general slam try with spades as trumps (no matter which major opener has). This leaves open one free step for those who use Last Train.

Raising a 5/6-card preempt

The weak two will have done most of the damage. The opponents, if they have slam, will not find it. But if you raise a non-vulnerable preempt, *assume it is 5 cards*. That way you will never be outbidding the level the Law of Total Tricks allows.

Still, it is a good idea to try raise with honor-third support, just so opener will be sure to lead the suit against 3NT should the opponents end up there.

3-level openings with 6 cards

If a weak two could be 5 cards, could a weak 3-bid be 6 cards? For sure. We already play 3-level minor preempts showing 6+ cards (since we have no weak 2♣ or 2♦ openings available in SMP). Why not majors? Especially at favorable or 3rd seat Not Vulnerable, a 3-level opening could be 6 cards.

At fav, 1st seat:

- a. ♠KQJxxx ♥xxx ♦x ♣Qxx – open 3♠, not 2♠. Responder would expect a 5-card suit at fav in 1st seat for a 2♠ opening, or 6 cards with a balanced hand.
- b. ♠xx ♥AQ10xxx ♦x ♣xxxx – open 3♥.

The same considerations (suit quality, seat, vulnerability, etc.) for opening a weak two with 5 cards applies to opening a 3-level preempt with 6 cards.

If a 2-level preempt is difficult for the opponents to handle, a 3-level preempt can be downright impossible:

2016 Open USBC, Final, Segment 2/8

Board 27

South Deals

None Vul

♠ K J 9 4 3

♥ 6 3 2

♦ Q 7 6

♣ J 10

♠ A 10 8 7 6 5

♥ J

♦ 10 8

♣ A 7 6 3

W

N

E

S

♠ Q

♥ A Q 8

♦ A J 9 5 4 2

♣ Q 4 2

♠ 2

♥ K 10 9 7 5 4

♦ K 3

♣ K 9 8 5

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Platnick</i> | <i>Fleisher</i> | <i>Diamond</i> | <i>Martel</i> |
| | | | 2♦ ¹ |
| 2♠ | Pass | 3NT | All pass |

1. Mini-Multi: weak two in a major

Lead: ♥ 9

Made 3 — EW +400

In the Open room, South’s 2-level Multi 2♦ allowed East to jump to 3NT to express the strength of the hand, and West, with a very weak overcall passed and it made.

In the Closed room, South, playing 5/6-card weak twos, opened 3♥ with just six cards because of the vulnerability and shape of the hand.

Board 27

South Deals

None Vul

♠ K J 9 4 3

♥ 6 3 2

♦ Q 7 6

♣ J 10

♠ A 10 8 7 6 5

♥ J

♦ 10 8

♣ A 7 6 3

W

N

E

S

♠ Q

♥ A Q 8

♦ A J 9 5 4 2

♣ Q 4 2

♠ 2

♥ K 10 9 7 5 4

♦ K 3

♣ K 9 8 5

West

Moss

North

J. Lall

East

Grue

South

Bathurst

3 ♠

Pass

4 ♦

Pass

5 ♦

All pass

Lead: ♠ 2

Down 2 — EW -100

West, for better or worse, chose to stick his neck out with a 3♠ overcall on 9 HCP. East, sensing 3NT would be an underbid opposite a 3-level overcall, chose to advance with 4♦ (forcing), and West was stuck, eventually choosing 5♦, which had too many challenges. 11 IMPs to the 6-card 3♥ opening.

1NT 15-17 in 3rd seat vulnerable, and all 4th seat

Because a passed hand is at most a bad 10 HCP, our average strength as a passed hand is less than one in SAYC or 2/1, which could have up to a bad 11 HCP. Opening 14-16 NT in 3rd/4th seat can get dangerous. If we are doubled for penalty, then the dummy will look worse on average than in standard, not to mention opener's range being 1 HCP lighter. Furthermore, the chance that we will have a game force as a passed hand opposite a 14-16 NT is much smaller. It almost makes game forcing 1NT response sequences useless.

The standard method most top players use is to open 1NT 14-16 in 1st/2nd seat (when responder is not limited), and 3rd seat NV (just to make it hard for the opponents) but 15-17 in 3rd seat vulnerable and always in 4th seat.

The adjustments required to handle this are easy. Opening 1 of a suit and rebidding 1NT shows 11-14 HCP instead of 11-13. Opening 1♣ and rebidding 1NT shows 18-19 HCP.

Opening 2NT with 19-20 HCP when 1NT is 14-16 HCP

Because of the preemptive and descriptive quality of *any* notrump opening (2-5 cards in every suit, narrow strength range, accurate Stayman and transfer response structure) it is becoming popular to open 2NT more frequently by lightening the range from 20-21 to 19-20 whenever the 1NT opening is 14-16 HCP. While it may make slam bidding more difficult and occasionally gets in trouble, it makes up for it by right-siding the contract, avoiding interference, and tightening the ranges of all more common weaker balanced hands.

The adjustments are simply that a 1♣-1♦-1NT sequence shows 17-18 range (narrower, so easier to handle) and that 1♣-1♦-2NT shows 21-23(-) HCP (a half-point wider than before, but it is rarer than 1NT or 2NT so the gain is worth the small loss).

If you combine the conditional 19-20 2NT with conditional 15-17 1NT, then the notrump ladder in 1st/2nd/3rdNV is 11-13/14-16/17-18/19-20/21-23(-), while the ladder in 3rdV/4th is: 11-14/15-17/18-19/20-21/22-23.

Taking full advantage of limited openers

This is the most fun part of a strong club system. As mentioned in the Preface, you get to open more often and guess less in the subsequent auction than with 2/1.

Concept: “less than invitational”

In a standard wide-range opening system, it is critical to try to pass with 0-5 HCP and bid once with 6-10 HCP. To overbid is to court disaster any time opener had opened with 16+ HCP. Over time, bidding theory has encouraged responder to take calculated chances and when in doubt: bid.

Limited openings remove those shackles as opener never has the surprise monster hand (would have opened 1♣). Therefore, responder can choose any moment to make a bid *that opener is expected to pass*. Depending on vulnerability or state of the match, it could be anywhere from 0 to 10 HCP. This strength is called “less than invitational”.

Therefore, any bid by responder in Part 1 that is defined as 6-10 HCP should be described most correctly as “less than invitational”. If responder wants to bid with 0-5 HCP, that is her choice, but it is a tactical decision.

Responding light

In SMP, responder knows that a suit opener can have at most 15 HCP. With more, opener would open 1♣ (or 1NT or 2NT). But then responder takes a look at her own hand and sees a weak hand and starts thinking: *“If I’m weak, and opener is limited, the opponents might have game.... MUST have game... or SLAM...”*

SAYC or 2/1 players may have a similar revelation when partner is a passed hand, and thus limited to at most 11 HCP. For that reason, it is normal to *open light in 3rd seat* to make life difficult for the opponents or direct a lead.

This light-bulb moment occurs *way more often* for SMP players since *every* opening is very limited. So we can *respond light* similarly, to harass the opponents or direct a lead.

It is important that you do not respond light *all* the time, else it will become a hidden partnership agreement.

Quiz

Partner opens 1♦ Not Vul 1st seat – What is your call?

♠QJ10xxx ♥x ♦Jxx ♣xxx 1♠. Plan on rebidding 2♠ later. The trick count is enough to provide safety, and as you have just 4 HCP, the opponents are marked for the majority of the HCP so pushing them around might keep them from their best contract. Favorable, you may even choose to respond 3♠ (weak jump), part of the “less than invitational” concept.

♠Kxx ♥Jxxx ♦xx ♣xxxx Pass. The hand is too weak, you have no lead-direct or trick source. A likely scenario is opener rebidding 1NT. In that case the opponents will often reopen with a double that is left in for a big penalty. If the diamond shortness worries you, you might scramble if doubled later, but why be that pessimistic? The opponents most of the time will balance and end up reaching their own contract, and you will be safe.

♠Kxx ♥x ♦xxxxxx ♣xxx 3♦. The jump-raise promises “less than invitational” strength. Not Vulnerable, you should be able to survive. Your opponents won’t have much room to work with.

The following example is typical of what defenders of SMP must deal with.

2017 Open USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 1/8

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Board 15 | ♠ A 8 2 | |
| South Deals | ♥ Q J 9 4 | |
| N-S Vul | ♦ K 10 9 3 | |
| | ♣ A 7 | |
| ♠ 4 | | ♠ J 10 9 6 |
| ♥ A K 6 3 | | ♥ 10 2 |
| ♦ J 7 4 2 | | ♦ 8 5 |
| ♣ K Q 10 5 | | ♣ J 9 8 4 2 |
| | ♠ K Q 7 5 3 | |
| | ♥ 8 7 5 | |
| | ♦ A Q 6 | |
| | ♣ 6 3 | |

| West | North | East | South |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
| <i>Diamond Grainger</i> | <i>Platnick</i> | | <i>Compton</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| 1 ♦* | Pass | 1 ♠ | Pass |
| 2 ♣ ¹ | All pass | | |

1. either minor could be longer

Lead: ♣ A

Made 2 — EW +90

At favorable, East decided to respond with a “solid” 4-card spade suit, and North-South missed their game. In the other room, South, playing SMP, could open 1♠ to begin with, so it was never a problem getting to 4♠. West’s defense was not perfect (gave East a heart ruff with a natural spade trick) and the game made. 12 IMPs to the strong club team.

Opening with 9-10 HCP

In Part 1, I wanted to treat HCPs as a static unambiguous measure for the purposes of learning the system. But we cannot ignore that the Bergen Rule of 20 has had the effect of lowering the minimum HCP for opening across the world. The Bergen Rule of 20, in 2/1, states that if our hand's two longest suits and HCP add to 20 or more, we should open the hand. Shape rules.

Since standard requires 12 HCP, nominally, to open, and SMP requires 11, then it makes sense to use adjust the Rule of 20 to the Rule of 19 for SMP, but still open (4333) 11-counts. This means any (5431) or (6331) 10-count would qualify to open.

We can open even lighter hands if our distribution, intermediates, and honor location are conducive. Limited openings means that we can take *even more chances* in opening. Stretching a 5½-HCP range (10[+]-15) a couple points invokes much less risk than stretching a wide (12-21) HCP range. SMP has a lot more “give”.

Quiz

Both Vul, 1st seat – What is your call?

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| ♠KQJxx ♥xx ♦Axx ♣xxx | 1♠. All HCP are working and it directs a lead. |
| ♠x ♥AJxxxx ♦KJxx ♣xx | 1♥. It might be too dangerous to open 2♥, and besides it meets the Rule of 19. |
| ♠KQxx ♥Qxx ♦Kxxxx ♣x | Pass. No Aces or intermediates, and the ♥Q is suspect. 1♦ is not a natural call so it does not help partner to bid them. |

The following Real Deal demonstrates how difficult it is to play against light openers.

2016 World Bridge Games, Open Teams, RR 3

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Board 11 | | ♠ K J 7 4 | |
| South Deals | | ♥ J 9 7 3 | |
| None Vul | | ♦ K 8 | |
| | | ♣ Q 7 6 | |
| ♠ A 9 6 5 | <div>W<div>N</div>E<div>S</div></div> | ♠ 10 3 2 | |
| ♥ 6 5 4 | | ♥ K 8 2 | |
| ♦ Q 10 9 4 3 | | ♦ A J 6 5 | |
| ♣ A | | ♣ K 9 2 | |
| | | ♠ Q 8 | |
| | | ♥ A Q 10 | |
| | | ♦ 7 2 | |
| | | ♣ J 10 8 5 4 3 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Diamond G Herrera Platnick</i> | | <i>P Herrera</i> | |
| | | | Pass |
| 1 ♦* | Pass | 1 NT | All pass |
| Lead: ♣ J | | | |
| Made 5 — EW +210 | | | |

In the Open room, West, playing SMP, opened a 10-count. East had a maximum 1NT response and it ended there.

In the Closed room:

Board 11

South Deals

None Vul

♠ A 9 6 5

♥ 6 5 4

♦ Q 10 9 4 3

♣ A

♠ K J 7 4

♥ J 9 7 3

♦ K 8

♣ Q 7 6

♠ 10 3 2

♥ K 8 2

♦ A J 6 5

♣ K 9 2

♠ Q 8

♥ A Q 10

♦ 7 2

♣ J 10 8 5 4 3

West

North

East

South

Reygadas J. Lall

Rosenberg Bathurst

Pass

1 ♦*

Pass

Pass

All pass

2 ♣

Lead: ♥ 6

Made 3 — NS +110

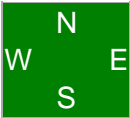
West could not open so light, and North, also playing SMP, opened in 3rd seat with 10 HCP. The light opening combined with the short 1♦ combined to freeze out East-West. Over 2♣, West did not have a good heart holding and had too many of North’s opening “suit” so passed on the second round as well. East’s shape did not improve on the auction either so North-South were allowed to play at the 2-level in their 9-card fit. 6 IMPs to the strong club team.

3rd Seat

We come to the portion of the book where the faint of heart should look away. If you pick up a weak hand in 3rd seat, playing SMP, responder never has 11, and not very often 10. This allows you to open in 3rd seat even lighter than in standard.

Just as mentioned when responding light, do not always open this light in 3rd seat, else it becomes a hidden agreement.

2015 Cavendish, Qualifying, Round 3/7

| | | | |
|--|-------|---|-------------|
| Board 2 | | ♠ A K 9 3 | |
| East Deals | | ♥ A J 2 | |
| N-S Vul | | ♦ A J 9 6 | |
| | | ♣ A 5 | |
| ♠ 10 | |  | ♠ Q 7 5 |
| ♥ Q 9 8 5 | | | ♥ 7 4 3 |
| ♦ Q 8 7 5 4 | | | ♦ K 10 |
| ♣ 10 6 4 | | | ♣ J 8 7 3 2 |
| | | ♠ J 8 6 4 2 | |
| | | ♥ K 10 6 | |
| | | ♦ 3 2 | |
| | | ♣ K Q 9 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Diamond van den Bos Platnick van Lankveld</i> | | | |
| | | Pass | Pass |
| 1 ♥ | X | 2 ♥ | 3 ♠ |
| Pass | 6 ♠ | All pass | |
| Lead: ♦ 5 | | | |
| Down 1 — NS -100 | | | |

East-West were playing SMP, so West, favorable 3rd seat, considered the opponents *must* have game, given East had at most a bad 10 HCP, so threw in a very light opening. North-South ended up guessing and got to a slam they did not want to be in (the other table stopped in 4 after North's 2NT opening). A 13-IMP swing to the SMP team.

It is not that a standard pair could not try the same thing, it's just that the standard passed hand has a significant number of 10-11 HCP hands which would have already opened in SMP, but which in standard will roar back into the auction and overbid if opener is light. At the same time, the stronger passed hands in standard lower the chance the opponents have a game. Overall the risk/reward ratio is higher to act light opposite a passed hand in standard than in SMP.

Passed hand bidding

In SMP, we open many 10- and all 11-HCP hands. For this reason, the passed hand must remember to be *more aggressive than in standard* when the opportunity later presents itself on the second round of bidding.

- A cue-bid/Drury limit raise can be just 9-10 HCP.
- A constructive raise can be 6-8 HCP.
- A free bid at the 2-level can be just 6-9 with a good suit.
- A free 3-level bid should be impossible – I recommend using all 3-level (or higher) bids as natural *but promising a 4-card fit for opener's suit* (a fit-showing bid, jump or no) – if you had such a long suit and good hand as to bid at the 3-level and risk getting doubled, you would have preempted the auction on the first round... but you didn't.
- A negative double at any level does not promise a great hand, just distribution.

Quiz #1

| You | Opponent | Partner | Opponent |
|------|----------|---------|----------|
| Pass | (1♦) | 1♥ | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

After passing initially, what is your second round action?

♠Kxx ♥Axx ♦Q10xx ♣xxx 2♦. Cue-bid. With any 11 HCP you would have opened. You have 9. That's pretty darn good for a passed hand, so show it.

♠xx ♥xx ♦Axx ♣KJ9xxx 2♣. You are a King or Queen from an opening bid, so a free 2-level bid is ok.

♠xxxx ♥Axx ♦xx ♣Jxxx 2♥. If you were a max passed hand you would have cue-bid 2♦, so this is more of a wide-range competitive raise.

Quiz #2

| You | Opponent | Partner | Opponent |
|------|----------|---------|----------|
| Pass | (Pass) | Pass | (1♦) |
| ? | | | |

After passing initially, what is your second round action?

♠xxx ♥QJ10xx ♦Kxxx ♣x 1♥. You are a passed hand so 6 HCP is about average. You want a heart lead, and perhaps partner can disrupt the opponents' auction a little in hearts.

♠Axxx ♥Kxxx ♦x ♣Qxxx Double. While partner has less than 11 HCP, there is no reason you cannot push the opponents a level higher than they wish to be.

2/1 auctions

In Part 1 I discussed in depth the 1♦-2♣ and 1♦-2♦ auctions. I did not discuss the two-over-one responses to a major suit opening, as the similarities between 5-card major systems are so strong that you can play a SAYC-like response or a 2/1 GF – like response and all the principles translate well to SMP.

I am taking this opportunity to stress the importance of specific agreements in either situation. SAYC is already defined, but there are still multiple ways to play 2/1 Game Force.

For this reason, I will present two simple common ways to approach 2/1 that top players use.

2/1 Game Forcing Unless Suit Rebid

The typical example is:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♠ | 2♣ |
| ? | |

- 2♦/2♥ = 4+ cards, natural – if responder rebids 3♣ it is nonforcing
- 2♠ = 5+ cards, denies a 4-card red suit, but may be too weak to bid anything higher – if responder rebids 3♣ it is nonforcing
- 2NT = natural, any 5♠-(332) hand, but promises enough for game even if responder has an invite hand with 6+ clubs
- 3♣ = game forcing, 4+ clubs
- 3♦/♥ = splinter for clubs, max hand, 4+ clubs
- 3♠ = game forcing, great 6+ card spade suit

Opener requires sufficient strength (13+) to guarantee game in order to rebid anything above 2 of the major. Author and world champion Mike Lawrence recommends this style.

2/1 Game Forcing – Natural rebids

In this style, more common than the first, a 2/1 bid is 100% game forcing, even if responder rebids her suit. An example:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♠ | 2♦ |
| ? | |

- 2♥ = 4+ cards, natural
- 2♠ = promises 6+ cards
- 2NT = 5(332), or maybe 5♠-4♣, does not promise a good hand
- 3♣ = 5♠-5♣, does not promise a good hand
- 3♦ = good fit for diamonds, does not promise a good hand
- 3♥/4♣ = splinter for diamonds, solid hand
- 3♠ = great 6-card suit, does not promise extras

The advantage of this style is that bids are generally what they seem. Responder knows much about opener's *shape* immediately. A good source for more information about this style is 2 Over 1 Game Force by Audrey Grant and Eric Rodwell.

Whichever style you play, you should agree with your partner and discuss completely.

Competitive Auctions

Undoubtedly you have by now read the basic rules of handling interference in Part 1 and played the system for a good number of hands until these situations arose. Sometimes, it was all that you needed to compete effectively.

But many times situations arise that produce impossible guesses and you guess (rightly or wrongly), and either move on or put together some impromptu agreements that make sense.

To that end, the following sections on developments in competitive auctions should provide you some relief and guidance.

There is also more to learn about taking advantage of the limited opening range that is an extension of what you have already learned in uncontested auctions.

I will introduce some conventions which may apply to any system, not just SMP, because they are so popular at the top level that you should consider them valuable additions to your SMP convention card. You may have seen them written up elsewhere, but I consider that if you are reading this section at all, you should be playing them and so I will demonstrate them in the context of SMP.

Finally, I discuss how to defend against a pair playing SMP.

Continuations after a semipositive (6-7) double

At the 1-level

Very little was said in Part 1 of how to continue after, say:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (1♥) | X | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

Double shows 6-7 HCP with any distribution.

The theory of primary suits continues here. If opener has a 5+ card suit they should bid it. Let's look at the above example continuations in particular:

- Pass = heart stack, the penalty is more attractive than a game
- 1♠ = *four* or more cards, forcing for one round – only at the 1-level could the suit be 4 cards – now responder can bid a primary suit, bid notrump with a stopper, raise with 3- to 4-card support, or cue-bid with none of the above
- 1NT = 17-18, not forcing, promises a stopper (this is why 1♠ can be 4 cards, in case opener is stuck without a stopper or 5-card suit) – *systems are on* – Stayman, transfers, etc.
- 2♣/2♦ = *five* or more cards, forcing for one round – responder can bid a primary suit, 2NT with a stopper, raise (nonforcing) with support, or cue-bid with none of the above
- 2♥ = general game force, may rebid own 5+card suit later
- 2NT = game forcing with about 19+ HCP – use Stayman and transfers here
- 2♠/3♣/3♦ = game forcing with a good 6+ card suit

Quiz: Opener's rebid after a semipositive double

| You | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|-----|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (1♠) | X | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

What is your call?

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ♠KJx ♥QJxx ♦AKxx ♣Kx | 1NT. Not forcing (so, 17-18 HCP). Responder's double was not a negative double, just showing any hand with 6-7 HCP, so you would not want to rebid 2♥ as that would show 5+ hearts. |
| ♠AJx ♥KQx ♦Ax ♣AKJxx | 2NT. Game forcing balanced with a stopper. |
| ♠Kxx ♥AKJxxx ♦KQ ♣xx | 2♥. Forcing for one round. You plan on rebidding 3♥ later (not forcing) |
| ♠xx ♥AKxx ♦KQJ10 ♣KQJ | 2♠. General game force, no side 5-card suit or stopper. |
| ♠x ♥AKx ♦AKx ♣AJ10xxx | 2♣. Forcing for one round. Partner's next bid will allow you to do the right thing (cue-bid spades to force to game, raise 2♥ to 4♥, or raise 2NT to 3NT). |

At the 2-level

After:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (2♥) | X | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

We are a level higher than before, which gives us less space for maneuvering. Also, the double at the 2-level has two meanings: 6-7 HCP or a balanced game force without a stopper in the opponents' suit.

For better or for worse, we still treat opener's suit rebids (5+ cards) as forcing for one round. It might get us too high into a 22/23 HCP game sometimes, but it buys us the time we need to scramble to the best strain. Opener's 2NT is still not forcing.

What if opener has no 5-card suit and no stopper but is not strong enough to force to game? Opener must in that case choose to cue-bid (an overbid) or bid a good 4-card suit (forcing one round). You may choose to agree that opener's 2NT does not require a stopper and so if responder chooses to move towards game (with the balanced game force without a stopper) she must inquire with a cue-bid subsequently.

Responder continues after opener's forcing suit rebid as follows:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♣ | (2♥) | X | (Pass) |
| 2♠ | (Pass) | ? | |

- 2NT = 6-7 HCP, heart stopper, not forcing
- 3♣/3♦ = 6-7 HCP, primary suit, not forcing
- 3♥ = balanced game force without a stopper or spade fit
- 3♠ = 6-7 HCP with 3 spades
- 4♣/4♦/4♥ = 6-7 HCP with 4 spades and splinter in the bid suit
- 4♠ = 6-7 HCP with 4 spades (the 9-card fit is enough for game even if we have only 22-23 HCP)

A limited opener has license to compete

Since a suit opener is limited to 10(+)-15 HCP, her competitive rebids at most levels require no more than average strength and good shape. Certainly, opener can compete 3-over-2 with any known 8-card fit without promising anything special. Opener should even compete at the 4-level or higher if the shape is quite good.

Quiz #1

| You | Opponent | Partner | Opponent |
|-----|----------|---------|----------|
| 1♦ | (1♠) | X | (2♠) |
| ? | | | |

What is your second round action?

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ♠Ax ♥QJxx ♦J10xx ♣Kxx | 3♥. Don't let them steal this one. The LOTT will protect you. |
| ♠AJx ♥Kxx ♦Axx ♣xxxx | Pass. Without a fit, 2NT would be dangerous. If partner has extras or shape, she will do the talking. (See later where 2NT is better used as inviting competition in a minor suit). |
| ♠KQxx ♥Ax ♦Axx ♣xxxx | Double. Partner is welcome to pass. |
| ♠Qx ♥Ax ♦KJxxxx ♣Qxx | 3♦. A likely fit. |
| ♠x ♥KQxx ♦A10xxx ♣AJx | 4♥. Originally, a jump raise of a 1♥ response. Now, it is better to overbid a little since 2♥ may be a minimum balanced hand. |

Quiz #2

| You | Opponent | Partner | Opponent |
|-----|----------|---------|----------|
| 1♥ | (2♠) | X | (4♠) |
| ? | | | |

What is your second round action?

♠-- ♥KQxxx ♦xxx ♣AQ10xx 5♣. Partner would never play you for something like this if you pass.

♠xxx ♥AKJxxxx ♦Ax ♣x 5♥. While partner has short spades, that may have been the only reason she doubled earlier and will pass if you don't bid now.

1♦ opener's second call in competition

In Part 1 we discussed simple constructive auctions, including the 1♦ opener's 2nd round rebid. However, when there has been an overcall there are some more situations to define.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|------------|----------|
| 1♦ | (1♥) | 1♠ [5+crd] | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

- 1NT = 11-13 HCP, does *not* promise a stopper (we have lots of room to check on stoppers later) and denies 3 spades (since 1♠ promised 5 spades); may be 13(54)/14(53)/1444
- 2♣ = 5+-4+ minors, or 1444/1453/1435 if 14-15 (too strong for 1NT rebid)
- 2♦ = still 6+ diamonds (with 5 diamonds – [332] rebid 1NT)
- 2♥ = maximum unbalanced 3-card spade raise, or 11-13 4-card balanced raise (“2-and-a-half spades”)
- 2♠ = minimum 3-card spade raise
- 3♠ = maximum unbalanced 4-card spade raise

Over 4th seat interference, opener has the support double available.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1♥ | (1♠) |
| ? | | | |

- Pass = 11-13 balanced with doubleton heart and no spade stopper
- X = support double, 3-card support for hearts
- 1NT = 11-13 balanced with doubleton heart, promises spade stopper
- 2♣ = 5+-4+ minors (could be 4 diamonds – 5 clubs)
- 2♦ = 6+ diamonds
- 2♥ = 4-card raise, as normal

Over a 1NT response, it is very likely we have a minor suit fit so there is a structure to find one.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1NT | (2♥/2♠) |
| ? | | | |

- X = suggests penalty, 4 good trumps behind overcaller
- 2NT = “willing to hear a minor from responder” – typically 2344 shape with a solid hand – remember that an opener is unlikely to have enough strength to invite to 3NT so 2NT is better used as artificial; responder may pass this out with a very flat hand, else bid a 4(5)-card minor
- 3♣ = 5+-4+ minors, does not promise a good hand
- 3♦ = 6+ diamonds, does not promise a good hand

Opener’s reopening double is takeout, catering to responder’s penalty pass of their overcall.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (1♥/2♥/3♥) | Pass | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

- X = takeout

Responding to 1♦ in competition – a closer look

In the Part 1 of this book, it was left to the reader to work out the natural continuations for themselves. The typical best practice agreements are laid out below.

Over a takeout double:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (X) | ? |

- XX = 11+ HCP notrump hand, typically
- 1♥/1♠ = normal, 4+ cards, forcing
- 1NT = 7-10 HCP, normal
- 2♣/2♦ = to play, 5+ cards (remember, opener could have only 2 diamonds)
- 2♥/2♠ = normal 5 spades - 4/5 hearts as if there were no double
- 2NT = 5+ diamonds, limit or better (like Jordan or Truscott)
- 3♣ = still both minors as normal, less than invitational
- 3♦ = 6+ diamonds, less than invitational

Over a 1-level overcall:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (1♠) | ? |

- X = negative, promises 4 hearts
- 1NT = same range as if no overcall, promises a spade stopper
- 2♣/2♦/2♥ = forcing one round, 5+ cards (but see Negative Free Bids, later in Part 2, as an option)
- 2♠ = general game force, without 4 hearts or a 5-card minor or good spade stopper
- 2NT = invite
- 3♣ = *both minors, less than invitational* – too valuable a tool to give up
- 3♦ = 6+ diamonds, less than invitational

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1♦ | (2♦ natural) | ? |

- X = negative
- 2♥/2♠ = forcing one round, 5+ cards
- 2NT = natural invite with diamond stopper
- 3♣ = game forcing, 5+ cards
- 3♦ = asks for a stopper for 3NT

Over an opponent's Michaels cue-bid¹²:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1♦ | (2♦ Michaels) | ? |

- X = good defensive hand, interest in penalizing opponent in 2 of a major
- 2♥/2♠ = artificial, however you would normally defend against a Michaels cue-bid, such as "Unusual vs Unusual"
- 2NT = invite

Over a 2-level jump overcall:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1♦ | (2♠) | ? |

- X = negative
- 2NT = invite, with spade stopper
- 3♣/3♦/3♥ = natural game forcing, 5+ cards
- 3♠ = asks for a stopper for 3NT

¹² You will find that many defending pairs will not have a firm agreement on this cue-bid's meaning. I recommend the "always ask the opponents" mindset – in doing so, you get you and your partner on the same wavelength, and if you were misinformed of their true agreement, the director should be able to restore equity.

How responder can continue competing after a 1♦ opening

We have looked at responder’s first bid in competition, and opener’s first rebid in competition. Here we will look at *responder’s first rebid in competition*.

1♦ may be just 2 cards, which means that we are almost equally likely to want to be in clubs as diamonds, compared to SAYC or 2/1 where opener’s 1♦ means we are safer in diamonds than clubs. This is a quandary for responder.

For this reason responder’s general strategy if opener passes on the 2nd round, is **more flexible** than in standard, to give room for opener to finally describe her hand:

- 2NT = scrambling takeout, generally for opener’s best minor
- X = good hand (with 2+ cards in the opponents’ suit)
- Bids = to play
- Cue-bid = good hand (with singleton or void in their suit)

A typical example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1♠ | (2♥) |
| Pass | (Pass) | ? | |

- X = 11+ HCP, 2+ hearts, requests that opener bid naturally but push towards game with 13+ HCP; responder’s next bid of 3♥ can confirm a game force
- 2♠ = to play
- 2NT = scramble for opener’s best minor, 4144 ideally but sometimes 42(43), this tends to deny 11+ HCP; opener may pass only with a very good heart stopper or no 4-card minor
- 3♣/3♦ = to play, 5+ cards, just 4 spades usually
- 3♥ = game force, singleton or void in hearts
- 3♠ = invitational, good 6+ card suit

In this way we can always scramble to our best fit without suffering in silence guessing opener’s best minor, yet stay low when we have no game interest.

If opener has made a *support double* then we are in a different universe:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1♠ | (2♣) |
| X (supp.) | (Pass) | ? | |

- 2♦/2♠ = to play/scramble
- 2♥ = looking for a 4-4 heart fit, forcing one round
- 2NT = invite, denies 5 spades
- 3♣ = general game force
- 3♦/3♥ = game forcing
- 3♠ = invite with 5+ spades

But if opener *has shown which suit(s) she has*, we are in yet a 3rd universe:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | 1♥ | (1♠) |
| 2♣/♦ | (2♠) | ? | |

- X = 11+ HCP, good hand, no fit for a minor, 2+ spades (as above)
- 2NT = lebensohl, sign-off somewhere, forces 3♣
- 3♣/♦/♥ = natural and invitational
- 3♠ = short spades, general game force

The rule over the nebulous diamond in competition is that *if opener has not distinguished minor suit(s), responder’s 2NT is scramble. If opener has identified one or both minors, responder’s 2NT is lebensohl.*

Handling 2-suited or random interference over our 1♣ opening

In Part 1 of this book, I only examined the common interference over our 1♣ opening: a natural overcall.

Defenders have learned to overcall *more often* against 1♣ since, it's true, interference over 1♣ is the bane of a strong club system. The best way to overcall even more often is to introduce artificiality: 2-suited overcalls, even random/unknown suits.

A great simple example is **CRASH**:

- X = 2 suits of the same **C**olor
- 1♦ = 2 suits of the same **R**ank
- 1NT = 2 non-touching suits (♣-♥ or ♦-♠, same **S**Hape)
- Else = natural

All 2-suited combinations are covered with the structure, yet the identification of these suits is not disclosed until later. Not only are there 2 possible suits for 4th seat to compete in, *but opener and responder don't know yet which they are*.

The main recommendation in SMP is to ignore 2-suited or random overcalls¹³. Even if the two suits were designated by the overcall. By ignoring the 2-suited interference you never have to worry about not being able to show a suit, and have partner not know whether it is natural or a cue-bid.

¹³ Transfer overcalls (e.g. [2♦] showing 6+♥ and nothing about other suits) are best treated as normal, except we can now cue-bid cheaply when we could not before, so double is no longer dual-meaning, it always shows 6-7 HCP. This actually helps us.

Thus, bids are just as if the overcall was natural, except that a cue-bid is natural. Pass still shows 0-5 HCP. Double still shows 6-7 HCP. This may not be the most penalty-seeking strategy but at least we get to a reasonable contract, which may even be in their “suit”. Not getting derailed means the opponents’ strategy failed. Let’s see this idea in action.

Quiz #1

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 1♣ | (1♦*) | ? |

* Spades and another suit

What is your call?

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ♠Axxxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxx ♣xx | 1♠. Game forcing, 5+ cards. The overcaller may have just 4 cards in spades, so you may easily have a spade fit. |
| ♠xxx ♥Q10xx ♦KQx ♣Qxx | 1NT. Establish a game force and begin the investigation for the best fit. If opener bids 2♠, that is natural! If opener bids 2♣ Stayman, you may find a 4-4 heart fit. If it is determined there is no spade fit, then a later spade bid like 3♠ may ask for the stopper. |
| ♠xx ♥AQxx ♦Kxxxx ♣Kx | 2♦. This is not a cue-bid since 1♦ said nothing about diamonds, but even if it were a 2-suiter with diamonds, it would still be natural since you ignore two-suited overcalls. |

Quiz #2

| Opener | Opponent | You |
|--------|----------|-----|
| 1♣ | (2♣*) | ? |

* Diamonds, or both majors

What is your call?

♠xxxx ♥AQxx ♦x ♣Kxxx

Double. A 2-level double is either 6-7 or a general game force. The plan is to raise 2 of a major to 4 if opener bids it, and 3NT if opener bids 2♦. If opener bids 2NT follow with 3♣ Stayman. You cannot bid 3♦ as a 3-suiter with short diamonds since you do not know if the opponents have diamonds or not. In fact, you ignore their “suits”.

♠xx ♥Axx ♦KQxxxx ♣xx

2♦. A normal game forcing hand with a 5+ card suit. You suspect the opponents have the majors since you are so long in diamonds. If you were to pass and hope they have diamonds, you might find yourself in a quandary, trying to convey a game force after having passed. Better to just bid 2♦ and get to the best contract with as much information as possible. It's still possible they will bid more and then you can start doubling when necessary.

Negative free bids at the 2-level

In standard bridge, a free bid (that is, a bid in a new suit by responder or advancer [partner of overcaller] when not forced to bid) at the 2-level is forcing for one round, showing a good hand but not necessarily game forcing. The idea, like a SAYC 2-level response to a 1-level opening, is to reveal the full strength on the next round.

But responder's hands are more likely to be average than forcing, especially when the opponents bid. Many hands simply are worth one call and one call only. If opener/overcaller wants to take it further, it is up to her. Also, the opponents are not always kind enough to pass a forcing free bid, and opener/overcaller is left guessing how strong the free bidder really is.

In the vein of “describe your hand quickly, and then get out”, many tournament players have taken up **negative free bids**, and while it is not a part of SMP, it is too valuable and common a tool not to mention it here. This is not the same meaning of “negative” as in “negative double”. In this case, it means that a free bid by responder (at the 2-level in a new suit after a 2nd seat overcall) is not forcing anymore, but merely a constructive hand with a 5+ card suit.

How do we force the auction then with our own suit? Double first, and then bid your suit later.

One of the dangers of doubling first with your own side suit is that if you do not have the unbid major(s), there is a small risk opener/overcaller may leap in one of those suits. Jump shifts you may choose to play weak, but the negative free bid now overlaps a bit with that set of hands. It may be more helpful to reserve jump shifts to help quickly show a game forcing hand with a long good suit to avoid some of that risk of the double.

There is no longer any way to just invite in a new suit – those hands must either go low (negative free bid) or high (game force), or sometimes invite in notrump (2NT immediate, or double followed by 2NT). The gain of describing more frequent hands more than offsets the loss of one small range of HCP.

Example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|---|----------|-----------|
| 1♥ | (1♠) | ? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1NT = natural• 2♣ = negative free bid, 5+ clubs, up to a bad invite hand, nonforcing• 2♦ = negative free bid, 5+ diamonds, up to a bad invite hand, non-forcing• 2♥ = normal raise• 2♠ = normal cue-bid• 2NT = natural• 3♣ = game forcing, nice 6+ card suit• 3♦ = game forcing, nice 6+ card suit | | |

Example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♥ | (1♠) | X | (Pass) |
| 2♦ | (Pass) | ? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2♥ = preference, doubleton• 2♠ = general game force• 2NT = natural invite• 3♣ = 5+ clubs, <i>game forcing</i>, but not such a good suit as an immediate jump to 3♣ would have been earlier• 3♦/3♥ = natural invite | | | |

How weak can a negative free bid be? “Less than a good invite” Generally, vulnerability will determine how weak it could be. However, with limited openings, you may decide to bid even weaker in order to mess up the opponents when they have game... just don’t blame me if your partner overbids.

At the 3-level, a new *non-jump* suit is game forcing.

Example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♥ | (2♦) | ? |

- X = negative, with 4 spades, OR a game forcing hand with 5 or an average 6 spades
- 2♥ = normal raise
- 2♠ = 5+ spades, nonforcing, up to a bad invite
- 2NT = natural invite
- 3♣ = 5+ clubs, *game forcing since a non-jump at the 3-level*
- 3♦ = normal cue-bid
- 3♥ = normal (preemptive) raise
- 3♠ = game forcing with a good 6+ card spade suit (with a bad suit double instead)

And there is one more consideration: a 1♦ opening. Remember that diamonds was not a real suit, so a 2♦ call in competition is still a negative free bid. However, a jump to 3 of a minor still has our special meanings.

Example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (1♠) | ? |

- X = negative, either 4 hearts or a game forcing hand with a side suit
- 1NT = natural
- 2♣/2♦/2♥ = negative free bid, not forcing
- 2♠ = general game force
- 2NT = natural
- 3♣ = *both minors, less than invitational (as before)*
- 3♦ = *6+ diamonds, less than invitational (as before)*
- 3♥ = 6+ good hearts, game forcing

Transfers after 1♦-(2♣) and 1♦-(3♣)

In competition, responder should assume the 1♦ opener has 11-13 balanced, for that is the most common hand type held (even 3+ diamonds unbalanced with 11-13 is not too far different). Therefore, just as transfers are played opposite a 1NT opening, transfers may be played opposite a 1♦ opening after a *club* overcall.

At the 2-level:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (2♣) | ? |

- X = negative, as normal, but it could be a bit off-shape, like 4342
- 2♦ = 5+ hearts, competitive or better strength
- 2♥ = 5+ spades, competitive or better strength
- 2♠ = 5+ diamonds, invite or better
- 2NT = invite with club stopper
- 3♣ = balanced hand, asks for a club stopper
- 3♦ = preemptive, 6+ diamonds
- 3♥/♠ = however you normally play (weak, invite, game force)

At the 3-level:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (3♣) | ? |

- X = negative
- 3♦ = 5+ hearts, invite or better
- 3♥ = 5+ spades, invite or better
- 3♠ = game force, 5+ diamonds
- 3NT = to play, with club stopper

By a passed hand, it does not matter so much to transfer as the strength is limited anyway, so recommended is to just play natural negative free bids.

While the transfer, when accepted, is often just left to play there in responder’s suit (declared by opener because of the transfer), the following Real Deal demonstrates how to conduct the transfer auction with a strong hand:

2017 Spingold, Round of 64, Segment 3/4

Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 9 6 5 3

♥ J 5 3 2

♦ Q 4

♣ 9 7 6

♠ A Q 10 8 7

♥ K 8

♦ K 10 8

♣ A 10 3

W

N

E

S

♠ 4 2

♥ A Q 7 6

♦ J 9 6 5 3 2

♣ K

♠ K J

♥ 10 9 4

♦ A 7

♣ Q J 8 5 4 2

| West | North | East | South |
|--------------------------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>Meckstroth J H Li</i> | | <i>Rodwell</i> | <i>J P Hu</i> |
| | | 1 ♦* | 2 ♣ |
| 2 ♥ ¹ | Pass | 2 ♠ | Pass |
| 3 ♣ | Pass | 3 ♦ | Pass |
| 3 NT | All pass | | |

- 5+ spades, competitive or better

East was too weak to do anything but hope to play in 2♠ if West was competitive, but West wanted to force to game so cue-bid 3♣. East could now reveal the long diamonds, and deny 3♠ at the same time, so West signed off in 3NT.

Two-way actions in competition

We got a taste of this in Part 1 with the 1M-4M raise, which could be very wide-range, whether a preempt 5-card fit or a power 3-card fit. Competitive auctions offer a wealth of opportunity for actions. The idea is the same, that opener has defined her hand somewhat, so we can take a reasonable stab at a final contract which may be a good save, or make, or push the opponents too high when they guess wrongly to compete.

Games “To play”

The following hand is a prime example:

2017 Senior USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 1/6

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Board 2 | | ♠ Q 5 4 3 | |
| East Deals | | ♥ Q | |
| N-S Vul | | ♦ A Q J 9 | |
| | | ♣ A 9 7 4 | |
| ♠ 10 9 | | <div>W<div>N</div>E<div>S</div></div> | ♠ K J 7 |
| ♥ 7 | | | ♥ K 9 5 3 |
| ♦ 7 6 3 | | | ♦ K 10 8 5 2 |
| ♣ K Q 10 8 6 5 3 | | | ♣ J |
| | | ♠ A 8 6 2 | |
| | | ♥ A J 10 8 6 4 2 | |
| | | ♦ 4 | |
| | | ♣ 2 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Passell</i> | <i>Casen</i> | <i>Jacobus</i> | <i>Krekorian</i> |
| | | 1 ♦* | 4 ♥ |
| 5 ♣ | 5 ♥ | All pass | |

Down 1 — NS -100

In a standard system, West's 5♣ call over 4♥ is risky. Opener may have 16-21 HCP and feel pressure to push to slam in this uninformative auction.

Which of the following hands does responder have?

- a. The competitive: ♠ x ♥ xx ♦ Kxx ♣ KJ10xxxx
- b. The rock: ♠ x ♥ Kx ♦ AQx ♣ AQxxxxx
- c. Something in-between

Because of this, on the actual hand, West would have to pass (a competitive hand) in a standard system and North-South would be allowed to play 4♥ and probably make.

In a limited opening system, hand (a) can take a non-vulnerable stab at 5♣. It's not just that opener is limited so she would not raise to slam, it's that the opponents must have a decent chance at making 4♠. It's not perfect; opener occasionally will double them in 5♠ and they will make, and we would be forced to double as well as pass would be forcing, but in most other scenarios, we are probably getting a good score.

Hand (b) can also bid 5♣, and frankly would not mind if opener had an amazing hand and raised to six. If the opponents push to 5♠ we can make a forcing pass to encourage opener to try for slam.

Everything in between will bid 5♣ and later just double the opponents in 5♥.

Another situation was mentioned in the 1♦ opening section of Part 1: the 4♥ or 4♠ response to a 1♦ opening. These calls, while preemptive, may be quite strong, as long as slam is unlikely. If 4th seat reckons to double or bid, opener assumes responder is weak. Responder doubles later to show general strength and passes with the true preempt.

Defending against SMP

I recognize that you may not come across a strong club at your local club much, but eventually it will happen, perhaps first online, but also perhaps at a sectional or regional that draws a wider variety of players. In the U.S. it is going to be more and more an SMP system.

What is there to learn about defending against SMP?

I mentioned earlier that it is important to overcall a strong club frequently to take advantage of the weakness: that the opening side does not know anything about their shape yet. Also, defending against Precision-specific openings like 1♦, 14-16 NT, 2♣, and 2♦ requires at least a few agreements.

But the most valuable lesson about learning to defend against SMP is how to prepare for that eventuality while playing the system yourself. If you know what the opponents' game plan is, you can review or even put down in writing how to handle those specific methods (the practical benefit, whether admitted or not, of a special defense is to put the opening side on uncertain ground, which leads to their inevitable mistakes and bad scores).

Defending the strong 1♣

A simple very common convention is **Mathe**:

- X = majors
- 1NT = minors (like Unusual 1NT)
- Any suit bid = natural
- The above applies after (1♣)-Pass-(1♦)-? in 4th seat as well

CRASH was mentioned earlier and that is a good one too, but there are so many. Do some research online and pick your favorite. It is important to play *some* 2-suited system to increase the frequency of your overcalls. In particular, discuss how to show clubs!

Keep in mind that if you are vulnerable, the opponents would love to trap pass and penalize you. But if you do not try to harass a strong club opening, you are losing IMPs in the long run.

Defending the nebulous 1♦

Against 1♦ (“may be short”), it is simplest to treat it as a normal standard opening. With a constructive hand with long diamonds, pass and rebid diamonds at the cheapest level later.

But there are some options you may discuss with your partner:

- You may treat (1♦)-2♦ as natural, and use 2♥ as the “Michaels” bid – in this case, use 3♦ as “Super-Michaels” – one that is so strong as to worry that 2♥ would be passed; however, a 2♦ advance to an overcall is still a cue-bid (there is no way to show diamonds in this case).
- A 1NT overcall over 1♦ does not promise a diamond stopper – they did not promise diamonds, so why should we?
- A takeout double of 1♦ could be made with either short diamonds or short clubs, and even balanced hands of 12-14 HCP. To wait around for short diamonds when they do not promise diamonds would be a pity.

Defending the 14-16 NT

I recommend using a penalty double, even though the hand could have 16 HCP (see the Real Deal in Part 1 section on opening 1NT for illustration why). The reason is that even though the range is 14-16, many players will throw in a good 13. Also, the chances of our game go up significantly with the weaker range, and without a way to distinguish the good and bad overcalls, it’s a blind guess whether to go to game or not.

With that in mind, the Multi-Landy convention fits the bill:

- X = 14+ HCP
- 2♣ = both majors, about 10-14 HCP
- 2♦ = one 6+ card major, about 10-13 HCP (2♥/2♠ are pass/correct for the major, 2NT is game interest in the major)
- 2♥/2♠ = 5-card suit and a 4+ card minor on the side, about 10-13 HCP
- 3♣/3♦ = natural, constructive, good suits, about 10-13 HCP

If you already use Cappelletti, that contains a penalty double so you could use that convention instead. If you play DONT (where there is no penalty double), be aware that the opponents can see your convention card and will try to open 1NT with more hands and you will miss more games.

Defending the natural Precision 2♣

Defending against a natural 2♣ opening is easy – treat it just as you would a weak two bid. If you use lebensohl over a takeout double of a weak two, use here as well.

Defending the Precision 2♦

Defending the 2♦ “three-suiter with short diamonds” opening is much like defending a Mini-Roman opening, except we know what suit they are short in.

- Double shows about 13-15 HCP balanced or semi-balanced, or any very strong hand (bid your own suit or notrump later).
- 2NT shows 16-18 HCP.
- All overcalls are natural, but make sure they are solid and never pushing it¹⁴, since the suits will tend to break badly and 3rd seat knows what opener has, making it easier to defend.
- When defending, lead trumps at every opportunity, a standard tactic against 3-suiters that works very well.

Conclusion - Part 2

After merging the science of Part 2 to the framework of Part 1, you will be playing high-octane bridge: having more fun (5-card weak twos, opening light, responding tactically), harassing the opponents, stopping at game more accurately in slam auctions, getting to more slams when it is right, and having risk-free keycard auctions. That’s my kind of system!

¹⁴ You may choose to play 3♣ as a “good 3♦ bid”, 16+ HCP, as opener often has 5 clubs. This leaves the 3♦ overcall as limited to about 11-15 HCP.

Part 3:

Optional Gadgets in SMP

Sometimes in partnership bidding system administration you must make a choice between adding another layer and sticking with what you have. I am a scientist at heart, so I favor using such complexity – after all, conventions take the guesswork out of auctions. But at the same time, one mistake can ruin your score, and finding a partner as dedicated to remembering an extremely complex system (and forgetting the mistakes) as you is not easy.

The following treatments, which are completely optional, have been developed by the pros over the years and are to be used at your convenience and whim with your favorite partner. Even if you do not play them immediately, they are worth keeping in mind for the future.

1♥response to 1♣denying 5+ spades

In Part 1, it was explained that all 8-11 HCP hands respond 1♥ to 1♣, so that 1♠ and higher promise 12+ HCP. This is indeed the hallmark of SMP vs the “old guard” systems that respond naturally with 8+ HCP or maybe controls in steps.

One problem with this framework is that if responder has 5+ spades, the auction will tend to escalate quickly before too much shape is known:

| Opener | Responder |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♣/♦/♥ | 2♠ |
| ? | |

We have yet to sort out whether opener and responder are 1-suited or 2-suited, balanced or freak-shaped.

A compromise that many top players have begun to use and is for 1♣-1♥ to deny 5+ spades, and 1♣-1♠ be wide-ranging 8+ HCP. The advantage to this adjustment is that it makes several other sequences better.

Here are examples that demonstrate possible ways to utilize the new space available with this optional treatment:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♣ | ? |

- 2♦ = waiting, like a notrump or Stayman bid, artificial
- 2♥ = 5+ hearts, primary suit
- 2♠ = 5+ diamonds, primary suit, artificial (since it is impossible to have 5 spades)
- 2NT = good hand for declaring notrump

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♦ | ? |

- 2♥ = 5+ hearts, primary suit
- 2♠ = waiting, artificial, not good for declaring NT
- 2NT = good for declaring NT
- 3♣ = 5+ clubs (usually 6, else bid 2♠), primary suit

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♣ | 1♥ |
| 2♥ | ? |

- 2♠ = waiting, artificial, may have 4 spades
- 2NT = good hand for declaring NT
- 3♣/3♦ = 5+ cards (usually 6, else bid 2♠), primary suit

1♣-1NT showing 5+ hearts, 12+ HCP

In Part 1, for ease of learning 1♣-2♥ is the way to show all hands with 12+ HCP where hearts is the primary suit (or higher of 5-5). But this launches the partnership quickly to the 3-level and makes sorting out minor suit fits difficult.

It's a theme of modern systems that majors come first, such as the MAFIA style of opener's rebids after 1♣-1♦. A rearrangement that you may find better is used by several top pairs:

- 1♣-1NT = 5+ hearts, 12+ HCP
- 1♣-2♥ = balanced, 14+ HCP
- 1♣-2NT = balanced, 12-13 HCP (use Stayman, not transfers)

In this way, opener can rebid 1♣-1NT-2♣/♦ to show 5+ clubs or diamonds, rather than 1♣-2♥-3♣/♦, saving a whole level.

After 1♣-2♥ (balanced, 14+ HCP), opener may use 2NT to show 5+♥ and 3♣ as Stayman). Continuations are natural, and any 3NT call is not forcing.

In the following example, an SMP pair uses this treatment:

2016 Open USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 2/8

Board 30

East Deals
None Vul

♠ J 8 7 5 4 3

♥ A 8 7

♦ 7 6 4

♣ K

♠ A Q 9

♥ K Q 9 3 2

♦ 8

♣ A 7 3 2



♠ K 6

♥ 6

♦ A K Q J 2

♣ Q J 10 9 6

♠ 10 2

♥ J 10 5 4

♦ 10 9 5 3

♣ 8 5 4

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Bathhurst</i> | <i>Cohler</i> | <i>J. Lall</i> | <i>Cohen</i> |

1 ♣*

Pass

1 NT¹

Pass

2 ♦

Pass

2 NT

Pass

3 ♣

Pass

4 ♦²

Pass

4 ♥³

Pass

5 ♣

All pass

1. 5+ hearts, 12+ HCP

2. Kickback RKC ♣


3. 1 or 4 keycards

Lead: ♣ 4

Made 7 — EW +440

With traditional SMP, the auction would begin 1♣-2♥-3♦ and now West would be under some pressure to bid 4NT to show a stronger hand than just 12 HCP. Whether he bid 3NT or 4NT, East would be under pressure to decide whether to play in clubs or NT. Finally, in all the scenarios, it might be difficult to ask keycards since a trump suit was never set.

In fact, that happened in the other room on a standard auction:

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------|----------------|
| Board 30 | | ♠ J 8 7 5 4 3 | |
| East Deals | | ♥ A 8 7 | |
| None Vul | | ♦ 7 6 4 | |
| | | ♣ K | |
| ♠ A Q 9 |  | ♠ K 6 | |
| ♥ K Q 9 3 2 | | ♥ 6 | |
| ♦ 8 | | ♦ A K Q J 2 | |
| ♣ A 7 3 2 | | ♣ Q J 10 9 6 | |
| | | ♠ 10 2 | |
| | | ♥ J 10 5 4 | |
| | | ♦ 10 9 5 3 | |
| | | ♣ 8 5 4 | |
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Zia</i> | <i>Platnick</i> | <i>Kamil</i> | <i>Diamond</i> |
| | | 1 ♦ | Pass |
| 1 ♥ | 1 ♠ | 2 ♣ | Pass |
| 2 ♠ | Pass | 3 ♣ | Pass |
| 3 NT | Pass | 4 NT | Pass |
| 6 ♣ | All pass | | |

Lead: ♠ 10

Down 1 — EW -50

East felt the pressure here too, choosing to rebid 2♣ rather than 3♣ (one of the advantages of SMP is showing the strong hand immediately with a 1♣ opening). West reasonably gave up on slam after the 2♣ rebid (East could have had 11 HCP, and it seemed the ♠K was offside). East made up for the heavy 2♣ call by raising to 4NT but at that point, there was no agreement on how to ask keycards for clubs.

SMP Jacoby 2NT

In SAYC or most 2/1 partnerships a 2NT response to 1♥ or 1♠ is Jacoby 2NT, which shows 4 trump support, a balanced hand, and game forcing strength. Opener rebids a new suit at the 3-level to indicate a singleton (or void, depending on agreement), but what of *responder*? Responder must nearly always be balanced. Unbalanced hands? Relegated to an immediate splinter which takes up a lot of room and doesn't reveal anything of opener's strength, or maybe a 2/1, which lets the opponents in to the auction more easily and gives away information.

Another problem in standard bidding is that the invite in a major suit is usually at the 3-level, and as such the invite must be narrow-range to allow opener to make the right decision.

SMP answers both issues with an all-purpose 4+ cards limit or better 2NT raise, *which may be unbalanced*. Letting either partner show shortness at a low level is the key to this fun modification. Shortness is shown in steps:

- Step 1 = the higher (♠ > ♥ > ♦ > ♣) side suit
- Step 2 = the middle side suit
- Step 3 = the lower side suit

E.g. if hearts is trumps,

- Step 1 = short spades
- Step 2 = short diamonds
- Step 3 = short clubs

Note: Only one partner can show shortness – as soon as someone shows shortness, cue-bidding commences.

Here is the structure:

1♥ 2NT*

- 3♣ = any hand that would accept any limit raise – game forcing
 - 3♦ = original game force, balanced, requests opener show shortness
 - 3♥ = no shortness (step 1)
 - 3♠/3NT/4♣ = singleton in the high/middle/low side suit (cue-bidding now or sign off)
 - 3♥/♠/NT = singleton/void in the high/middle/low side suits
 - 4♥ = original limit raise, slam is impossible
- 3♦ = artificial counter-try, about 13 HCP balanced or 12 HCP unbalanced
 - 3♥ (the original opened suit) = declines – was a bad limit raise
 - 3♠ = balanced hand, slam try (step 2) – asks for shortness
 - Step 1 = no shortness
 - Step 2/3/4 = high/middle/low shortness
 - 3NT/4♣/4♦ = unbalanced hand slam try, singleton (or void) in the high/middle/low side suit
 - 4♥ = knows enough to know slam is impossible
- 3♥ (opener's major) = double-negative, 11-12 balanced, or 10-11 HCP unbalanced with just 5 trumps
 - 3♠ = balanced hand, slam try (step 1) – cue-bidding may commence – responder must be very strong since opener has showed a true garbage hand
 - 3NT/4♣/4♦ = unbalanced hand slam try, singleton (or void) in the high/middle/low side suits – cue-bidding now or sign off
 - 4♥ = still wants to bid game despite opener's warning
- 3♠/3NT/4♣ = void in the high/middle/low side suits, any strength
 - Continuations are normal cue-bids, but responder should sign off with no slam interest

A bonus to using 2NT with unbalanced hands is that what used to be a splinter is now more specific, showing a void with limited strength:

1♥ 3♠/4♣/4♦ = 4+ trumps, void in bid suit, 10-12 HCP

And of course:

1♥ 3♥ = weak or mixed, wide range (game is unlikely)

1♠ 4♥ = to play (not a splinter)

The recommended use of the jump shift is

1M 3-lower = invite based on a long good suit, not power, not forcing

rather than Bergen, because the 4-card limit raise is included in the SMP Jacoby 2NT response, and the mixed raise may be included in the jump raise.

Example #1

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|---------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| ♠ AQxxx | ♠ Kxxx | 1♠ | 2NT ¹ |
| ♥ x | ♥ Ax | 3♣ ² | 3♦ ³ |
| ♦ Ax | ♦ Kxxx | 3♠ ⁴ | 4♣ ⁵ |
| ♣ Kxxxx | ♣ Axx | 4♦ ⁶ | 4♥ ⁷ |
| | | 4NT ⁸ | 5♣ ⁹ |
| | | 5NT ¹⁰ | 6♦ ¹¹ |
| | | 6♥ ¹² | 6♠ ¹³ |
| | | Pass | |

¹ limit+ 4+ card raise

² accepts game

³ balanced game force

⁴ step 2: “high” shortness (hearts)

⁵ cue, still interested

⁶ cue

⁷ Ace, since opener has a singleton or void in hearts

⁸ RKC

⁹ three key cards

¹⁰ all key cards held

¹¹ one King outside of trumps

¹² general grand try

¹³ nothing extra

Example #2

| Opener | Responder | Opener | Responder |
|----------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|
| ♠ Kx | ♠ Qxx | 1♥ | 2NT ¹ |
| ♥ KQJxxx | ♥ Axxx | 3♦ ² | 3♥ ³ |
| ♦ Qxx | ♦ Kx | Pass | |
| ♣ xx | ♣ Jxxx | | |

¹ limit+ 4+ card raise

² not the worst, but minimum

³ bad limit raise

Shortness exchange after major suit flag

SMP Jacoby 2NT introduced the shortness exchange. Wouldn't it be great to use it after *every* game forcing major fit situation? It does not seem possible as most of the time the level is already too high to provide room for extensive shortness-showing and cue-bidding.

Providing a way to flag the major at a low level relies on existing opportunities and some new methods to allow a shortness exchange to work.

Situations where shortness exchange is used

A. Two-level major suit agreement (game forcing)

- 1♣-1♥-1♠-2♠ (spades is trumps)
- 1♣-1♠-2♠ (spades is trumps)
- 1♣-1N (5+ hearts, 12+ HCP, as described in this chapter)-2♥ (hearts is trumps)
- 1♥-2♣-2♦-2♥ (hearts is trumps)

B. Cheapest unbid minor as flag for last bid major in GF auction (new)

This new approach provides a flag by swapping the meanings of the cheapest unbid minor and 3 of the major.

Examples:

- 1♥-2♦-2♥-
 - 3♣ = flag for hearts (cheapest unbid minor)
 - 3♥ = 5♦-5♣ (what a natural 3♣ rebid would have been)
- 1♣-1♠-2♣-2♠-
 - 3♦ = flag for spades (cheapest unbid minor)
 - 3♠ = 6♣-5♦ (what a natural 3♦ rebid would have been)
- 1♠-2♦-2♥-
 - 2♠ = flag for spades (if it is possible to raise at the 2-level, it is a natural flag)
 - 3♣ = flag for hearts (cheapest unbid minor)
 - 3♥ = 5♦-5♣ (or 4th suit, depending what 3♣ would have shown)
- 1♥-2♣-2♠-
 - 3♦ = flag for spades (the most useful swap)
 - 3♥ = flag for hearts
 - 3♠ = 6♣-5♦ (or 4th suit, depending on what 3♦ would have shown)

All other bids in the above situations are unchanged. You should review several auctions with your co-conspirator to make sure they make sense.

Steps to show shortness

Once the major suit is flagged, shortness is shown thusly:

- Step 1 = no singleton or void, now it is partner's turn to show shortness
 - Step 1 = no singleton or void either, now normal cue-bidding
 - Step 2/3/4 = high/middle/low singleton or void
- Step 2/3/4 = high/middle/low singleton or void
 - Cue-bidding now, partner does not show singleton or void, to save room

As with the SMP Jacoby 2NT described earlier, once one partner shows shortness, cue-bidding commences.

Example

| Opener | Responder |
|-----------|-----------|
| ♠ KQ10xxx | ♠ Axx |
| ♥ Axx | ♥ xx |
| ♦ Ax | ♦ Kxx |
| ♣ xx | ♣ AKQxx |

| Opener | Responder |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1♠ | 2♣ ¹ |
| 2♠ ² | 3♦ ³ |
| 3♥ ⁴ | 3♠ ⁵ |
| 3NT ⁶ | 4♣ ⁷ |
| 4♦ ⁷ | 5♣ ⁸ |
| 5♦ ⁹ | 5♥ ¹⁰ |
| 5NT ¹¹ | 7♠ ¹² |
| Pass | |

¹ game force

² 6+ spades

³ spade flag, begins shortness
exchange (better use of other minor)

⁴ step 1 = no shortness

⁵ step 1 = no shortness, either

⁶ Serious 3NT

⁷ cue-bid

⁸ Lackwood, no heart control

⁹ 0 or 3 keys, with heart control

¹⁰ asks for trump Queen

¹¹ trump Queen, no side Kings

¹² responder could look for 7NT if
opener has 7 spades or a side Queen
by further cue-bidding if desired

2♠ nonforcing response to 1♥

A common treatment in SMP is to use 1♥-2♠ as natural, less than invitational (up to a bad 11 HCP) with 6 or more spades. In other words, exactly the hands responder would normally bid 1♠ then 2♠ on. It is **alertable**. This frees up the 2♠ bid as an artificial game force (like 4th suit forcing) in the following sequences¹⁵:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 1♠ |
| 2♦/♥ | 2♠ |

Otherwise, responder would need to bid 3 of an unbid minor as the game force. That leaves little space for exploring strain and level. Also, opener would not be sure whether the suit was natural or not.

Opener rebids descriptively over 2♠. Opener can rebid 2NT with reasonable holdings in the unbid suit(s). Responder may now set one of opener's suits as trumps at the 3-level in a game force, to set up cue-bidding.

2♠ guarantees 5 or more spades: with only 4 spades and a game force responder should use 2/1 game force rather than 1♠. Thus, opener can always agree on spades by raising 2♠ to 3♠.

Note: The following sequence is still a sign off, with exactly 5 spades.

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♥ | 1♠ |
| 1NT | 2♠ |

¹⁵ After 1♥-1♠-2♠, 2♦ is used instead of 2♠ to save room, or you may choose to use 2♠ as the game force with that auction as well and utilize 2♦ as a puppet to 2♥ to unlock various hands (such as a mild invite with 6 spades: rebid 2♠ after partner's forced 2♥). Research the "BART" convention online for ideas.

1♦-1M-2♣-2oM shape relays

Auctions which begin 1♦-1M-2♣-2oM (4th Suit Game Force) can be hairy, particularly 1♦-1♠-2♣ in which opener may have a variety of shapes.

Top SMP pairs have added relays which avoids a lot of guessing. The 4♣/4♦/RKC convention described in the opening 2♦ section is used to sort out trumps and keycards.

Case 1

| Opener | Responder |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 2♣ | 2♠ |
| ? | |

2NT = 3 spades – 1 heart exactly, 9 cards in the minors, with spade stopper

3♣ = relay with minor suit(s) interest

3♦/♥ = 5 clubs/diamonds (3M = general slam try, and
4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♦ = 6+ great hearts (3♥ = heart flag, 3NT = to play)

3♠ = 6♥-5♠, sets spades as trumps

3♣ = 3 hearts (but note: hearts is not trumps yet for sure)

3♦ = relay (3♥/♠/NT = longer clubs/diamonds/5-5, followed by
4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♥ = heart flag

3♦ = 5-5 minors without 3 hearts (3♠ = asks spade stopper, else 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♥ = 3145 without spade stopper (3♠ asks half-stop, 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♠ = 3154 without spade stopper (4♣/4♦/RKC)

Case 2

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 1♦ | 1♠ |
| 2♣ | 2♥ |
| ? | |

2♠ = 2-way: either 3-card spade raise, or 8 cards in the minors with 4 hearts

2NT = relay, artificial

3♣ = 4 hearts, with 8 cards in the minors exactly

3♦ = relay (steps: 1435/1453/1444 then 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♥ = heart flag

3♠/♥ = 31(54) longer ♣/♦ (3♠ = spade flag, 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♠/NT = 3055, min/max (4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♣ = 6+ great spades (3♠ = sets spades, with singleton, 4m = cue with 3 spades)

2NT = 3 hearts – 1 spade exactly, 9 cards in the minors, with heart stopper

3♣ = relay with minor suit(s) interest

3♦/♥ = 5 clubs/diamonds (3M general slam try, and 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♦ = 6+ great spades (3♠ = spade flag, 3NT = to play, 4♠ = sign off)

3♥ = heart flag

3♣ = 5-5 minors without 3 spades (3♥ = 4th suit, 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♦/♥ = 1345/1354, no heart stopper (3♥ = heart flag, 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♠/NT = 0445/0454 (4♣/4♦/RKC)

Three nifty (re)doubles by the 1♦ opener

There are some rare situations that come up where the nebulous 1♦ opener can (re)double to show a specific hand.

SOS redouble

If responder passes a 1♦ opening and the opponents double, opener can redouble as SOS

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (X) | Pass | (Pass) |
| XX | | | |

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | Pass | (X) |
| XX | | | |

Opener is showing typically xx/Hx/xxx in diamonds and is trying to suggest responder choose to run rather than stay.

, A Real Deal example:

2016 Open USBC, Quarterfinal, Segment 8/8

Board 23

South Deals

Both Vul

♠ K 10 7

♥ J 9 8

♦ 6 2

♣ A K 10 7 3

♠ 6 4 2

♥ 10 3

♦ Q J 10 8 7

♣ J 6 4

W

N

E

S

♠ A 9 5

♥ A K 6 4

♦ A K 9 5 3

♣ 2

♠ Q J 8 3

♥ Q 7 5 2

♦ 4

♣ Q 9 8 5

| West | North | East | South |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>Zia</i> | <i>Bathurst</i> | <i>Kamil</i> | <i>J. Lall</i> |
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1 ♦* | X | Pass |
| Pass | XX | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | Pass | X | All pass |

Lead: ♦ Q
Made 1 — NS +160

West clearly is thrilled to find a use for his hand and passes the takeout double, and North plays the odds by redoubling SOS. South got the memo and avoided playing in a 2-1 fit.

Double of a cue-bid of diamonds

If 4th seat cue-bids diamonds, South can double to show a decent diamond suit.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (1♠) | Pass | (2♦) |
| ? | | | |

- Pass = most hands
- X = KJ10xxx or better in diamonds, something to be proud of

Double of a 1NT overcall

It is impossible for a limited opener to have a penalty double of a 1NT overcall if responder has passed. Thus, it shows a maximum unbalanced hand with diamonds and both majors:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (1NT) | Pass | (Pass) |
| ? | | | |

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♦ | (Pass) | Pass | (1NT) |
| ? | | | |

- X = maximum, 4351/3451/4450/4441 shapes

Transfer advances after double of 1 of a major suit opening or overcall

This treatment is not specific to SMP, but it is becoming so common that I would be remiss not to mention it.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♥ | (X) | ? |

- Pass = may contain a typical natural 1NT response
- XX = good hand, as normal
- 1♠ = normal, natural, forcing
- 1NT = shows clubs, either a real suit, possibly wanting to play 2♣, *or* a raise to 2♥ with a very good lead-direct in clubs (will remove 2♣ back to 2♥ to show this one)
- 2♣ = shows diamonds, either a real suit, or lead-directing raise to 2♥
- 2♦ = transfer to our major, shows a normal constructive raise
- 2♥ = preemptive raise of the major, less than a constructive raise
- 2♠ and above = the same as you would normally play over a double

Transfers begin at 1NT, and if a transfer is to a lower suit than was opened, it is a *suit or lead-directing raise*. These are **alertable**. When would you want to lead-direct with support for opener, rather than raise immediately? In the above example, with ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦AKx ♣xxxx you do not want to play at too-high a level, unless opener has an interesting hand, so 2♣ would show either your own diamond suit without support, or this sort of hand.

A transfer to our suit is a constructive raise, and raising our suit directly is a weak raise. You may use these in conjunction with Bergen to distinguish 3- and 4-card raises if desired.

If 4th seat bids over the transfer, opener may double to request responder clarify which hand they have (rebidding NT or a suit to show that the transfer was to a natural suit, rebidding the major to show that it was a lead-directing raise).

.Example:

| Opener | Opponent | Responder | Opponent |
|--------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1♥ | (X) | 1NT* | (2♠) |
| ? | | | |

- Pass = neutral, but tends to deny club tolerance or great shape
- X = “please reveal what you have” – will have club tolerance in case responder has a weak hand with six clubs
 - 3♥ = was single raise with a club lead (and so bad trumps)
 - anything else = descriptive with a real club suit, denies 3+ hearts
- anything else = natural but a good hand with good shape – is prepared for responder to have the “wrong” hand

This can also be played over our 1 of a major OVERCALL as well. There are a couple differences but it is mostly the same.

Example:

| Opponent | Overcaller | Opponent | Advancer |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| (1♦) | 1♠ | (X) | ? |

- XX = a normal 1NT bid, so not promising a huge hand – tends to have a doubleton in support
- 1NT = transfer to clubs, either suit or lead-direct (like before)
- 2♣ = *transfer to their opening suit*, which is like a cue-bid
- 2♦ = transfer to hearts, either suit or lead-direct, not a cue-bid
- 2♥ = transfer to our suit, a normal constructive raise (not as strong as a transfer to their suit)
- 2♠ = weak raise
- 2NT and higher = as normally played over a double

Transfers after 1♦-(X)

Transfers may also be extended to the 1♦ opening, though it is more of a way to just get the doubler on lead and also to determine length of major suit fit without checkback. This can be played by a passed hand as well.

| Opener | Opponent | Responder |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1♦ | (X) | ? |

- Pass = usually just weak
- XX = 4+ hearts (now, 1♥ = 3-card support, 2♥ = 4-card support, anything, else denies 3 or more hearts)
- 1♥ = 4+ spades (similar to above, but for spades)
- 1♠ = balanced with no 4-card major, 7+ HCP
- 1NT = 5+ clubs, competitive or better
- 2♣ = 5+ diamonds, invite or better
- 2♦ = 5 diamonds, to play
- Else = as normal if no double

We do lose the strength-showing redouble, but in practice, this rarely nets a penalty and the above structure allows responder to show all the normal strength ranges as if there were no double. This sort of strong hand could transfer to notrump and then invite or raise to game (or just bid 2NT or 3NT directly to declare).

You should discuss with partner whether your checkback system is still on. There is less reason to use checkback if the transfer already revealed whether opener has 3-card support or not.

Transfer rebids after transfer responses to 1NT

This is a standard treatment used by most top pairs today. I would like to present the typical structure.

1NT-?

- 2♣ = Stayman, or invite with exactly 5 spades (rebid 2♠ over 2♦/♥)
 - Smolen is used with 5-4 majors
- 2♦ = 5+ hearts, transfer
 - 2♥ = accepts transfer
 - 2♠ = invite to 3NT with exactly 5 hearts
 - 2N = 4+ clubs, game force
 - 3♣ = 4+ diamonds, game force
 - 3♦ = 6+ hearts, invite to game or slam
 - 3♥ = 6 hearts – 5 spades
 - 3♠ = 5 hearts, unbalanced, choice of game (3NT/4♥)
 - 3NT = 5 hearts -(332), opener is free to pass even with 3 hearts
- 2♥ = 5+ spades, transfer
 - 2♠ = accepts transfer
 - 2NT = 4+ clubs, game force
 - 3♣ = 4+ diamonds, game force
 - 3♦ = 6 spades, 5 hearts
 - 3♥ = 6+ spades, invite to game or slam
 - 3♠ = 5 spades, unbalanced, choice of game (3NT/4♠)
 - 3NT = 5 spades - (332), opener is free to pass even with 3 spades
- 2♠ = asks min/max, or sign off in clubs
 - 2NT = min (Pass = was invite to 3NT, 3♣ = to play)
 - 3♣ = max (Pass = to play, 3NT = to play)
- 2NT+ = your favorite structure, but have a 5-5 majors GF method

After the second transfer to the minor, opener bids in steps:

- Step 1 (the minor) = no major fit, some interest in the minor
 - Bid semi-naturally, rebid major with 6, side suit with fragment
- Step 2 = major fit, good for slam, cue-bidding commences
- Step 3 = major fit, bad for slam, cue-bidding commences
- 3NT = no major fit, very good stops in the two other suits

Advantages:

- Ability to invite in spades but get out in 2♠, rather than 2NT or 3♠
- Opener declares minor suit slams more often
- Not having to use a revealing Stayman sequence to invite to 3NT
- Better choice-of-game decisions with a 5-3 major fit
- More space to investigate minor slams below 3NT

Conclusion – Part 3

These optional treatments provide food for thought, at the very least. If you read this section and see very little advantage in some of these treatments, I won't argue - you are probably right. It depends what kind of margins you are willing to gain for more memory work.

Perhaps it is when a partnership has played for several tournaments and enjoy the game together that they require something fresh and different to try out, and to put back down if it is not easy to remember. Or maybe after a difficult hand, a glance back at this book for reference finds you wishing you had had a particular gadget available and you make a note to add it.

Whether out of musing or necessity, whether playing SMP or some other system, add one of the modifications and if you find it easy to remember, keep it.

Afterword

With this system I have won the 2012 Red Ribbon pairs with a student, reached the National final match of GNT-B, the semi-finals of GNT-A twice, and I have no doubt the system made the difference.

But my partners and I also had a lot of experience together – we played good bridge and got over our mistakes quickly.

I like to think we practiced so much because the system was fun to play, and played so well because we practiced so much.

If you are interested in learning more about what kind of strange and beautifully complicated systems exist out there, but which are not that commonly seen, visit my web page: <http://www.bridgewithdan.com>

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Richard Pavlicek Bridge Writing Style Guide

<http://www.rpbridge.net/7z69.htm> for tips on writing about bridge.

Bridge Base Online <http://www.bridgebase.com/> as source of vugraph records for this material and for the bridge software to watch, learn, teach, play and practice.

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Readers of the initial SMP documents on my website for emailing questions about the system and other comments that gave me ideas for this book.

Appendix A – Configuring Bridge Base Online to Practice Standard Modern Precision

It is critical to practice SMP before using it in a real tournament, and BBO has the wonderful capacity to deal hands of any type you wish, both for partner and yourself. It is recommended to have a headset/earbuds/speakerphone available to talk about hands as they come up.

Following is a set of instructions on how to configure the *web* client (note that the old *Windows* client will likely soon be unsupported or discontinued).

The BBO web client: <http://www.bridgebase.com/client/client.php> should work in any popular browser like Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari and Firefox. There is a BBO app for tablets/phones but you will have to modify my instructions for yourself for those platforms, for they likely do not have all the features as the full web client.

How to Open a Teaching Room

A teaching room gives the host complete control over who can see which hands, and what deals are loaded. In addition, the host can sit in one or more seats to control the play or bidding of that seat. The teaching room is best for most BBO practice and for programming hands, *except* when practicing with partner and you do not want to see partner's hand.

1. Log into BBO web.
2. Click **Practice....Start a Teaching Table**.

START A TEACHING TABLE

Teach with the aid of teaching tools.

3. Click **Start Table**.

How to Open a Partnership Bidding Table

This type of table is when you have already programmed deal types (see below) and are ready to practice with your partner. It is actually a teaching table with certain abilities disabled (unable to see others' cards, unable to sit in multiple seats). Each partner should have the system book available to

review while practicing, and it is even better to be on the phone or Skype, with earbuds/speakerphone/headset, so you can discuss bidding problems as they arise.

- 1. Log into BBO web.
- 2. Click **Practice...Start a Bidding Table**

START A BIDDING TABLE

Practice with the aid of special tools.

- 3. Reserve seats for yourself and partner, and click **Start Table**

Start New Table

Form of scoring

☐ Duplicate IMPs

☐ Duplicate MPs

☐ Total points

☐ Teaching

☒ Bidding

Description (optional)

Practice Bidding Standard Modern Precision

Opponents' bidding

☒ Pass throughout

☐ Controlled by host

Privacy options

☒ Allow kibitzers

☒ Allow kibitzers to chat with players

☐ Permission required to kibitz

☐ Permission required to play

☒ Invisible

☐ Exclude new members

☐ Minimum computer rating

Uncheck if you prefer privacy

Do you want others to be able to find your table?

Reserve seats (optional)

North

partner

South

you

East

West

Deal source

Start Table

Close

How to Configure the Deals to Practice

It is easier to practice only one part of the system at a time.

1. Once you have created the Teaching or Bidding table, click **Deal Source**
2. On the General tab you can select who should deal

Deal source [X]

Use random deals Use saved deals

General North South East West Advanced

Dealer

☐ North ☒ South
☐ East ☐ West

North-South HCP

Min 0 Max 40

- It is recommended to select only North or South as dealer.
 - For most situations, it is unnecessary to set North-South (combined) HCP, except when practicing:
 - Slam bidding (set minimum to about 30 HCP)
 - Game bidding (set minimum to about 24 HCP)
 - Defending (set maximum to 18 HCP and allow Robots to bid the East-West hands)
 - It is not recommended to edit the East or West hands, unless you want to practice handling a specific overcall
 - for example, we open 1♣ and the opponents overcall 1♠ - in that case you would want to give the seat to the left of the dealer 5 or more spades and perhaps 8 or more HCP – then use a Teaching table to sit in that seat and bid 1♠ over the 1♣ opening
3. Whichever seat you designated as dealer, click on that tab (North or South):

Deal source [X]

Use random deals Use saved deals

General North South East West Advanced

Possible hand types

| # | Show | Delete |
|---|------|--------|
| 1 | Show | Delete |

New hand type Delete All

Hand type 1

♠ 0 13
♥ 0 13
♦ 0 13
♣ 0 13
HCP 0 37
Odds 100.00%

- Fill out opener's shape constraints¹⁶. Add multiple hand types (click "New hand type") to program a bid that is not easy to describe.
- Go to the responder's tab (if North was opener, then responder is South)
 - Fill out responder's shape constraints
 - Go the Advanced tab

Deal source [X]

Use random deals Use saved deals

General North South East West Advanced

☒ Randomly rotate generated deals 180 degrees
☐ Use this input for the Dealer program:

- Check **Randomly rotate generated deals 180 degrees** so that you and your partner get the equal amount of practice as both opener and responder for the constructed deal types
- Click **Close**
 - Click **Redeal** a few times, inspecting each deal to confirm the hands are what you wanted to practice. To adjust a constraint, click **Deal Source** again.

¹⁶ See the next section for specific numbers to type in for these shapes to practice Standard Modern Precision

How to Practice a Specific Opening Bid

Opening Bid Suit and HCP Constraints

| | |
|----|---|
| 1♣ | Hand type 1: HCP 17 to 37 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• omitting 16 avoids lots of 1NT openings• if a 2NT opening comes up, you may click “Redeal” to skip it – if you are interested you can figure out how to specify all 17-19, all 22+, and all unbalanced 20-21, thereby excluding 20-21 balanced |
| 1♦ | Hand type 1: HCP 11-13, ♠ 2-4, ♥ 2-4, ♦ 2-5, ♣ 2-5 Hand type 2: HCP 11-15, ♠ 0-1, ♥ 3-4, ♦ 3-5, ♣ 3-5 Hand type 3: HCP 11-15, ♠ 3-4, ♥ 0-1, ♦ 3-5, ♣ 3-5 Hand type 4: HCP 11-15, ♠ 3-4, ♥ 3-4, ♦ 3-5, ♣ 0-1 Hand type 5: HCP 11-15, ♦ 6-13 Hand type 6: HCP 11-15, ♦ 5-13, ♣ 5-5 (exactly 5 clubs ¹⁷) |
| 1♥ | Hand type 1: HCP 11-13, ♠ 2-4, ♥ 5-5, ♦ 2-4, ♣ 2-4 Hand type 2: HCP 11-15, ♥ 6-13 Hand type 3: HCP 11-15, ♠ 0-1, ♥ 5-5, ♦ 0-5, ♣ 0-5 Hand type 4: HCP 11-15, ♠ 0-4, ♥ 5-5, ♦ 0-1, ♣ 0-5 Hand type 5: HCP 11-15, ♠ 0-4, ♥ 5-5, ♦ 0-5, ♣ 0-1 |

¹⁷ To deal an exact number of cards in a particular suit, the min and max numbers are the same. For example, to deal 4 spades exactly, the minimum is 4 and the maximum is 4.

- 1♠ Hand type 1: HCP 11-13, ♠ 5-5, ♥ 2-3, ♦ 2-4, ♣ 2-4
 Hand type 2: HCP 11-15, ♠ 6-13
 Hand type 3: HCP 11-15, ♠ 5-5, ♥ 0-1, ♦ 0-5, ♣ 0-5
 Hand type 4: HCP 11-15, ♠ 5-5, ♥ 0-5, ♦ 0-1, ♣ 0-5
 Hand type 5: HCP 11-15, ♠ 5-5, ♥ 0-5, ♦ 0-1, ♣ 0-5
- 1NT Hand type 1: HCP 14-16, ♠ 2-5, ♥ 2-5, ♦ 2-5, ♣ 2-5
 Increase the HCP range to 20-21 for 2NT opening
- 2♣ Hand type 1: HCP 11-15, ♣ 6-13
- 2♦ Hand type 1: HCP 11-15, ♠ 3-4, ♥ 3-4, ♦ 0-1, ♣ 4-5

Responses to Opening Bids

Generally, you can get enough benefit just from setting responder's strength and keeping responder's shape random.

But responder's hand can be constrained if careful, e.g. 1♥ response to 1♦ might be:

Hand type 1: HCP 6-37, ♠ 0-4, ♥ 4-13, ♦ 0-13, ♣ 0-13

Hand type 2: HCP 6-37, ♠ 5-5, ♥ 6-13

But in this case 4♥-6minor game force would respond 2 of a minor first, so it's up to you if you want to cater to every possible situation with the constraints

Sample Practice Schedule for the Bidding Room

The following is a thorough schedule for practice in the BBO bidding room to cover most of the system. If you and your partner are often too busy to practice, spread the schedule out over a few weeks, which gives you time to study.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Before anything | In your current system, switch to a 14-16 HCP 1NT opening. This will get you used responding to the different 1NT range while not taking you away from your regular system. Jump rebid 2NT with 17 to a bad 19 HCP, and open 2NT with a good 19 to 21 HCP. |
| Day 1 | Each partner practices by themselves: HCP 11-37 for dealer, and just decide what to open. Check the answers against the book, and don't worry about responses. It really aids partnership practice if both partners can quickly open the bidding. |
| Day 2 | This day begins practice with partner. Practice responses to 1♦, the most common opening. Give dealer a 1♦ opening and responder HCP 6-37, and make the correct response, but no deeper into the auction. Practice until the responses are easy. You should find this is similar to a SAYC auction. |

| | |
|-------|--|
| Day 3 | <p>Still on 1♦, practice the special 2♣ and 2♦ responses and the structure. Give dealer a 1♦ opening and responder</p> <p>Type 1: HCP 13-37, ♠ 0-3, ♥ 0-3</p> <p>Type 2: HCP 10-11, ♦ 6-13</p> <p>Type 3: HCP 10-11, ♣ 6-13</p> <p>Type 4: HCP 10-11, ♦ 5-13, ♣ 4-13</p> <p>Type 5: HCP 10-11, ♦ 4-4, ♣ 5-13</p> |
| Day 4 | Practice 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ responses to 1♦ |
| Day 5 | Practice all responses to 1♥, 1♠ openings. These openings are the same as standard, but limited, and so it is good to practicing using that knowledge as responder (1M-4M as 3-fit 13-15 HCP for example). But remember that a limited opener can be split into at least 3 ranges, for slam purposes. |
| Day 6 | Practice all responses to 1NT opening. There is no difference between standard and SMP, just possibly a 1 HCP difference. Responder needs to be 1 HCP stronger than standard to invite to game, bid game, or invite slam. |
| Day 7 | Practice all responses to 2♣ opening. Be sure to include some practice with responder's HCP set to 14-37. |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Day 8 | Practice all responses to a 2♦ opening. For part of the session set responder's HCP to 6-13. Then set responder's HCP to 14-37 and practice the 4♣/4♦/RKC structure of signing off or inviting slam or bidding RKC in a suit. Make sure to practice signing off with 4♦, as 4♥ or 4♠ bids are often not sign-offs but RKC in clubs or hearts. |
| Day 9 | Finally it's time to practice the strong club. Let dealer have a 1♣ opening and responder have a 1♦ response (HCP: 0-7). Be sure to include a set where opener's range is 20-37 to develop judgement on when opener should force to game. |
| Day 10, Day 11 | 1♥ responses to 1♣ opening. It is worth an extra day of practice on this common but novel area of bidding. Include a session where opener is any 4441: (♠ 1-1, ♥ 4-4, ♦ 4-4, ♣ 4-4 for hand type 1, and repeat 3 more times for each singleton), to practice 1♣-1♥-2♠. |
| Day 12 | All the 12+ HCP responses to 1♣. Most of this will be similar to 1♣-1♥ but be sure to also include a set on 1♣-2♠ (any 4441 12+). |
| Day 13, 14 | All the openings have been covered, but it's time to deal with interference. This time, give 2 nd seat an overcall in a specific suit, let the Robots play East-West, and give dealer a 1♦ opening. Make sure to figure out which of responder's bids are forcing. Rotate the suits that 2 nd seat overcalls in. See what kinds of decisions opener must make in competition. |

| | |
|--------|--|
| Day 15 | Practice handling 2 nd seat interference over a 1♣ opening. Again give 2 nd seat specific suit overcalls with Robots playing East-West. Responder must be able to handle a natural overcall. There is no way to make the robots bid 2-suited overcalls like CRASH or Mathe, but those are important so you would use a Teaching table and sit West, South, and East, partner sitting North, and make the opponents show their 2 suits. |
| Day 16 | This is a repeat of day 9, but give the 4 th seat robot some natural overcalls. The auction would go 1♣-(Pass)-1♦-(bid). |
| Day 17 | Practice 1♣-(Pass)-1♥-(bid) |

Appendix B – Learning by Watching on Vugraph

Vugraph records online are a treat for those learning SMP. They are movies of the bridge hands, sometimes with commentary, with every bid and play in both rooms. If you are lucky, you can catch the events live on vugraph, but it is just as good to replay them, for learning purposes.

The objective of this section is to describe how to research vugraph records and what to pay attention to so that you can speed your adoption of SMP. It may be just what you need to feel more comfortable with the system. It is no substitute for real practice however!

Avoid resulting

When reviewing vugraph hands of top players using SMP, pay attention to their good and bad results. Most have nothing to do with the system played, but are just a result of good play, mistakes, competitive judgement. You know... bridge!

The takeaway is that you should also use the same filter on your own results, and it is not always clear at the table. Only post-session analysis of your results can reveal whether it was your system, or the opponents, or you, or luck.

Rated R bids

Top players can produce some unpredictable calls, but there is always calculation and experience, even table feel, behind them. I recommend watching the experts and copying what they do – but remember that these actions may be percentage-based, even psychological, and so proceed with caution and pay attention also to the fact they are the exception rather than the rule.

Unwritten rules

It is difficult to describe a complete bidding system, with all the rounds of bidding. It is impossible to describe a complete *competitive* bidding system, and not worth the effort – you cannot control what the opponents' bids mean.

Voluminous attempts exist, and you are encouraged to document as much as you find you can remember, but most system notes categorize competitive auctions into ‘types’. For example – “We open 1♣ and they overcall 1 of a suit”.

Your vugraph research will reveal how top players use system but also judgement for all sorts of situations that only a strong club pair would find themselves in. The best way to integrate these judgement calls into your partnership is to discuss them. Send a link to the hand record to your partner. Put an extra note in your system write-up. It may not seem worth it, but over time these understandings will become second nature and you will find yourself on the same wavelength with your partner more often.

The whole is more than the sum of its parts

Above all, whether you know it or not at the time, clicking through the auctions of strong club experts is teaching you what it “feels like” to play SMP. The more hands you review, the more your expectations will align closer to reality and your live experiences will be more comfortable.

Partnerships to watch

While so many regular partnerships on the NABC and USBF scene play an SMP variant, the following pairs consistently make the final rounds of tournaments and will return the most search results for tournaments the world over.

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Passell-(anyone) | Greco-Hampson |
| Diamond-Platnick | J. Lall-(anyone) |
| Meckstroth-Rodwell (totally different 1♣ response structure) | Grue-(anyone) |

Instructions for how to research vugraph records

Recent Vugraph hands for one player

1. Use your internet browser to navigate to
 - http://www.bridgebase.com/vugraph_archives/vugraph_archives.php
2. Type the name of one player in the search field and press **Search**:

You can access [recent matches](#) (the default) or [all matches](#) (slow), or use the search box below.

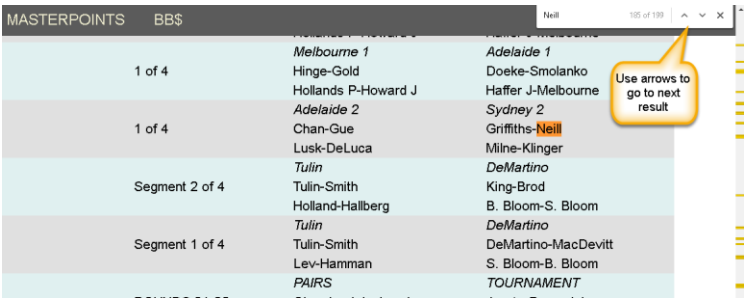
Search

3. A filtered list of recent sessions with that player is displayed.
4. Click **View** to the left of the date to open the movie of that table session.

All Vugraph hands for one player

1. Use your internet browser to navigate to http://www.bridgebase.com/vugraph_archives/vugraph_archives.php?command=all
2. Wait about 30-60 seconds for the page to finish loading.
3. A list of all vugraph records is displayed (it goes back several years).
4. Press **Ctrl-F** which should open a search box in your browser.
5. In the search box, type the name of the player.
6. Search arrows allow you to traverse all the records for that player (each browser's exact instructions are a bit different)

Example: Chrome browser, search on Neill (not me, but Bruce Neill of Australia)



| MASTERPOINTS | BBS | Neill | 105 of 109 |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1 of 4 | Melbourne 1 | Adelaide 1 | |
| | Hinge-Gold | Doeke-Smolanko | |
| | Hollands P-Howard J | Haffer J-Melbourne | |
| 1 of 4 | Adelaide 2 | Sydney 2 | |
| | Chan-Gue | Griffiths-Neill | |
| | Lusk-DeLuca | Milne-Klinger | |
| Segment 2 of 4 | Tulin | DeMartino | |
| | Tulin-Smith | King-Brod | |
| | Holland-Hallberg | B. Bloom-S. Bloom | |
| Segment 1 of 4 | Tulin | DeMartino | |
| | Tulin-Smith | DeMartino-MacDevitt | |
| | Lev-Hamman | S. Bloom-B. Bloom | |
| | PAIRS | TOURNAMENT | |

7. Click **View** to the left of the date to open the hand record for that table session.

The long history of the strong club

<http://www.sarantakos.com/bridge/vugraph.html> - old vugraph files

<http://www.bridgedailybulletins.nl/index.php/bridge-bulletins> - old bulletins

These sites are not recommended for most learning SMP, because it is not searchable by player and in fact goes so far back in time that most SMP principles were not yet developed.

However, to anyone interested in famous players, older bridge systems, or reliving world championships, the above sites are a real treat. There is a lot of strong club, five-card major systems by American players as well. It is helpful to see how far bidding theory has come.

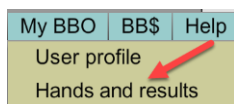
The real star of the show – you!

Review your *own* hand records. You learn the most from your own bridge sessions by looking at them the next day so you can review them more objectively. Identify situations where mistakes were made or understandings were weak and discuss with your partner. At the beginning of your SMP career you will find lots of material to go over.

Instructions for how to view your *own* hands

Method 1: Inside the BBO web client

1. Log into the Bridge Base Online Web Client.
2. Go to the top of the window to My BBO, and select Hands and Results.



3. Click either Recent Hands or Recent Tournaments.
4. Click on any of your hands on the left. The full deal movie is displayed on the right.

Method 2: BBO MyHands web site

1. Use your internet browser to navigate to:
<http://www.bridgebase.com/myhands/index.php>
2. Log in with your BBO username and password.
3. Look up hands for the past month for your own username (or any other)

[Click here for results of recent tournaments](#)

Get hands played by a user between two dates

*Enter username:

Enter the start date: 2017 ▾ - Aug ▾ - 01 ▾

Interval to retrieve: day(s) ▾ 2 ▾

Interval direction: ☒ Backward ☐ Forward

Show summaries every: Don't show ▾ ▾

Logged in as djneill [Logout](#)

* denotes required field

4. Click 'Get hands' to display a list of links to the hand records.

Appendix C – ACBL Convention Card

Model convention card for playing the Part 1 of Standard Modern Precision.
You may add treatments from Part 2 or Part 3 when you get to them.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| SPECIAL DOUBLES After Overcall: Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♦ Responsive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♦ Maximal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support: Dbl. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 2♥ Redbl. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Card-showing <input type="checkbox"/> Min. Offshape T/O <input type="checkbox"/> | | NOTRUMP OVERCALLS Direct: 15 to 18 Systems on <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Balancing: 11 to 14 Jump to 2NT: Minors <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Lowest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | | NAMES | | | |
| SIMPLE OVERCALL 1 level _____ to _____ HCP (usually) often 4 cards <input type="checkbox"/> very light style <input type="checkbox"/> Responses New Suit: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> N/Const <input type="checkbox"/> NF <input type="checkbox"/> Jump Raise: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> | | DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP vs: strong weak 2♣ DONT CAPP 2♦ _____ 2♥ _____ 2♠ _____ Dbl: _____ Other: _____ | | GENERAL APPROACH Standard Modern Precision Two Over One: Game Forcing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid <input type="checkbox"/> VERY LIGHT: Openings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3rd Hand <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overcalls <input type="checkbox"/> Preempts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FORCING OPENING: 1♣ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2♣ <input type="checkbox"/> Natural 2 Bids <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| JUMP OVERCALL Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> | | OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE New Suit Forcing: 1 level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 level <input type="checkbox"/> Jump Shift: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Redouble implies no fit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak Majors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Minors <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS 1NT 14 to 16 2♣ Puppet Stayman 3♦ 5+♦+ invit+ 3♥ 4144 game force 3♠ 1444 game force 5-card Major common <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System on over X, 2♣ 2♠ Stayman <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Puppet <input type="checkbox"/> 2♦ Transfer to ♥ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4♦, 4♥ Transfer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forcing Stayman <input type="checkbox"/> Smolen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2♥ Transfer to ♠ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lebenschi (fast denies) 2♠ 6+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leb. Double <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2NT 6+♦ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | 2NT 20 to 21 Puppet Stayman <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer Responses: Jacoby <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Texas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3♠ minor suit stayman 3NT _____ to _____ Conventional NT Openings 3N = solid m, no side A/K | |
| OPENING PREEMPTS Sound Light Very Light 3/4-bids <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Conv./Resp. _____ | | VS Opening Preempts Double Is Takeout <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru 4♥ Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. Takeout: _____ Lebenschi 2NT Response <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | MAJOR OPENING Expected Min. Length 4 5 1st/2nd <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd/4th <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RESPONSES Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conv. Raise: 2NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3NT <input type="checkbox"/> Splitter <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ 1NT: Forcing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Semi-forcing <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> to _____ 3NT: _____ to _____ Drury <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reverse <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Way <input type="checkbox"/> Fit <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | MINOR OPENING Expected Min. Length 4 3 0-2 Conv. 1♣ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1♦ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1♦ RESPONSES Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forcing Raise: J/S in other minor <input type="checkbox"/> Single raise <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ Frequently bypass 4+♦ <input type="checkbox"/> 1NT/1♣ _____ to _____ 2NT Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11+ to 13- 3NT: 13+ to 16 Other: 2♥/2♠/3♠ = 2-suiters | |
| DIRECT CUEBID OVER: Minor Major Natural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong T/O <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Michaels <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | SLAM CONVENTIONS Gerber <input type="checkbox"/> 4NT: Blackwood <input type="checkbox"/> RKC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1430 <input type="checkbox"/> vs Interference: DOPI <input type="checkbox"/> DEPO <input type="checkbox"/> Level: _____ ROPI <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | |
| LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold) versus Suits versus Notrump ⓧ x A K x T 9 x A K J x A Q J x K Q x K J T x A J T 9 A T 9 x Q J x K T 9 x K Q J x K Q T 9 J T 9 Q T 9 x Q J T x Q T 9 x K Q T 9 J T 9 x T 9 x x | | DEFENSIVE CARDING vs SUITS vs NT Standard: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Except <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Upside-Down: count <input type="checkbox"/> attitude <input type="checkbox"/> FIRST DISCARD Lavinthal <input type="checkbox"/> Odd/Even <input type="checkbox"/> Smith Echo <input type="checkbox"/> Trump Suit Pref. <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Echo <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | |
| LENGTH LEADS: 4th Best vs SUITS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd/5th Best vs SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/> Attitude vs NT <input type="checkbox"/> Primary signal to partner's leads Attitude <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Count <input type="checkbox"/> Suit preference <input type="checkbox"/> | | OTHER CARDING Smith Echo <input type="checkbox"/> Trump Suit Pref. <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Echo <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | |
| SPECIAL CARDING <input type="checkbox"/> | | PLEASE ASK | | | | | |
| DESCRIBE 2♣ 10+ to 15 HCP Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2♦ Resp: Neg <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting <input type="checkbox"/> may have side suit 2♦ 10+ to 15 HCP Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3-suiters short ♦ 2♥ 5 to 10- HCP usually 6 cards Natural: Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/> 2♠ 5 to 10- HCP usually 6 cards Natural: Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER CONV. CALLS: New Minor Forcing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Way NMFC <input type="checkbox"/> Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not in Comp. <input type="checkbox"/> 4th Suit Forcing: 1 Rd. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Games <input type="checkbox"/> 1♣-1♦ = 0-7, 1♠-1♥ = 8-11, else = 12+ | | | | | | | |
| RESPONSES/REBIDS 2♦ = relay, 2M = non-forcing 2N/3♦/3♠/3♥ = transfers 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/> 2NT Force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | | | |

(Image courtesy of the ACBL)

Appendix D – Cheat Sheet and Index

Use this reference for practicing the system. Details for complete follow-ups are indicated by their page number. Suit symbols can stand for the bid or number of cards (e.g. 5♣-5♦ = 5 clubs and 5 diamonds) based on context, for brevity.

How to decide what to open

The following rules will get you going when starting to learn SMP. As usual, when you pick up your hand, count the HCP and note the distribution.

- With 0 to a bad 10 HCP, you will pass unless you decide to preempt or are in 3rd seat. Some things never change.
- If you have 16+ HCP (17+ if balanced) you will open 1♣, strong and artificial. Congratulations!
 - Well, with 20-21 balanced, open 2NT.
- With a good 10 to 15 HCP
 - If balanced and maximum (14-16), open 1NT, even with a 5-card major.
 - If balanced and minimum (11-13), open a 1 of a suit (1M with 5-card major, else convenient 1♦)
 - With a 6+card suit, open 1 of the suit (2♣ if clubs).
 - With an unbalanced hand with a 5-card major, open a major.
 - With other unbalanced hands with 3+ diamonds, open 1♦.
 - With other unbalanced hands with 0 or 1 diamond, open 2♦.

1♣ Opening Responses

1♦ = 0-7 HCP, any shape (see page 15)

1♥ = 8-11 HCP, any shape (see page 36)

1♠ = 12+ HCP, 5+♠

1NT = 12+ HCP, balanced, no 5-card suit

2♣ = 12+ HCP, 5+♣

2♦ = 12+ HCP, 5+♦

2♥ = 12+ HCP, 5+♥

2♠ = 12+ HCP, any (4441) (2NT asks for singleton, then see page 84)

By a Passed Hand

- 1♥/1♠/2♣/2♦ = 5+ cards, 8-10 HCP, game forcing
- 1NT = balanced, 8-10 HCP, game forcing
- 2♠ = (4441) 8-10, game forcing

Handling Interference

- At 1- or 2-level, Pass = 0-5, X = 6-7, others natural GF
- At 3+ level, Pass = 0-6, X = 7+ GF, others natural GF
- 2-level cue = GF balanced no stopper, 3-level cue = 3-suiter GF
- If responder is 0-7, pretend the opponents opened, doubles are takeout

1♦ Opening Responses

1♥/1♠ = natural, 4+ cards, F1 (see page 56)

1NT = 7+-11(-) HCP, balanced, no 4M, occasionally 6 clubs

2♣ = 4+ cards, GF unless suit rebid, no 4+ card major unless 6-4+ (see page 59)

2♦ = 4+ cards, GF unless 3♣/3♦ rebid, no 4+ card major unless 6-4+ (see page 59)

2♥ = 5♠-4/5♥, less than invitational (see page 63)

2♠ = 5♠-4/5♥, invite (see page 63)

2NT = 11(+)-12 HCP, balanced, invite, no 4M

3♣ = 5-4 minors at least, either could be longer, less than invitational

3♦ = 6+♦, less than invitational

3♥/3♠ = weak jump shift

3NT = 13-16 HCP, balanced, no 4M

4♣ = 5+♣-5+♦, less than invitational

4♥/4♠/5♣ = to play, wide-range (see page xx)

Handling Interference:

- Treat mostly like a standard 1♦ opening after interference
- Jumps to 3♣, 3♦ retain their meaning as above
- Responder bidding diamonds is not a raise but a new suit

2♣ Opening Responses

2♦ = invite or better inquiry, artificial (see page 75)

2♥/2♠ = constructive, 5+ cards, NF (see page 76)

2NT = puppet to 3♣, either to play or some 5-5 GF (see page 77)

3♣/3♦/3♥ = 6+ cards in the next higher suit, invite or better (see page 77)

3♠ = 6♠-4♥ GF

4♣/5♣ = preemptive/to play

Games = to play

Handling Interference:

- Negative/takeout doubles by opener and responder
- 2NT = invite
- 3♣ = to play

2♦ Opening Responses

2♥ = to play (opener corrects to 2♠ with 4315 exactly)

2♠ = to play

2NT = strong inquiry, artificial (see pages 83-84, remember 4♣/4♦/RKC)

3♣ = to play, 4+♣

3♦ = invite, long diamonds, NF

3♥/3♠/4♣ = mixed raise, 5+ cards

Games = to play

Handling Interference:

- X = penalty
- 2NT = normal asking bid

PLAY THE SYSTEM NATIONAL CHAMPIONS PLAY

Over the last 20 years a consensus bidding system among American national champions has been chosen and is now the *lingua franca* for hundreds among the pro circuit, top junior players and strong tournament players. This book will introduce you to the system, called Standard Modern Precision (or SMP), with lots of examples, quizzes and real-life hands bid by actual world champions.

Part 1 covers the basics, and provides a working knowledge of the system so you can start playing and winning right away. A partnership may choose to continue on to Part 2 (The Full System) or Part 3 (Optional Gadgets). Also included are step-by-step instructions for setting up hands to practice on Bridge Base Online and a cheat sheet for reference when bidding.

It's time to start winning with the high-octane system that more tournament players are using, just like the pros.



DANIEL NEILL has been helping bridge students reach their potential for 15 years through his website www.bridgewithdan.com. When not competing nationally, he provides insight into experts' thoughts as a popular vugraph commentator on Bridge Base Online. His interest in showcasing unique or complex bidding styles has led to a library of over 80 systems and treatments, serving as a valuable resource to both students and seasoned players alike.