

STANDARD BIDDING WITH SAYC



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Dedications

To the memory of my father, Alex 'Lefty' Pomer, who taught me the love of bridge, basketball and most of all, family.

Ellen

And to the memory of Joyce Downey, a wonderful partner at the table and an even better partner away from the table.

Ned



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Introduction

So, what is SAYC and why are we writing a book about it?

SAYC was developed during the mid-1980s to attract more players to duplicate bridge by providing simple bidding and basic conventions. Its creators felt the need for an easy-to-use system because the trends in Standard American toward five-card majors, limit bids, non-forcing jumps and weak twos had evolved into an array of other systems that the average player could not easily access. Among many, these systems included:

- Precision and other forcing club systems.
- Kaplan-Scheinwold with weak notrumps and other gadgets.
- Roth-Stone from the early fifties with the forcing notrump — a cornerstone of the Eastern and Western Scientific systems, which were both precursors to the Two Over One system.
- Some disruptive methods of bidding such as forcing passes. These were fondly called 'Ferts,' the short form for fertilizer, and utilized weak openings of 0-7 HCP (high card points) while passing with what we would consider to be a normal opening hand.

According to Charles MacCracken, Manager of the ACBL Tournament Department during the 1980s and now a National Tournament Director, SAYC came out of the WBF World Championships in Miami in 1986. At the time, the Board of Directors had been wrestling with conflicts between the convention experimenters and those who wanted to maintain the status quo. "The problem of too many conventions," he said, "has been around since the 60s, and is probably still with us."

In March 1987 at the St. Louis North American Bridge Championships, the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), in keeping with the European 'No Fear' games, where nothing much beyond Stayman and Blackwood were used, introduced a standardized convention card printed on yellow stock. Thus, the Standard American Yellow Card.

But SAYC never really took hold and was approaching an early death by the 1990s. Then came the explosion of personal computers and with it, online bridge. SAYC was born again! The Bridge Pro Tour, a series of competitions with monetary prizes held at various locations in the United States, uses the Standard American Yellow Card exclusively. In this way, the organizers have brought the most widely used system online to a 'live event.'

So it's the new millennium. You've just logged onto one of many bridge sites and have found a table where there's an empty chair. With best bridge etiquette, you ask if you can join prior to taking a seat. You 'sit' and your partner, hailing from Afghanistan or Borneo or the Philippines, types into the chat box, 'Sayc, pard?' You have just been asked to commit yourself to the most popular online bidding system around — albeit a simplified version, as most of the folks in your shoes have only a vague idea of what SAYC truly entails.

While notes on SAYC are available from various sources, there has not been an authoritative book to guide you through this system. Our aim is to describe SAYC as it is today, your user-friendly system of choice. However, this proved not to be as straightforward as you might imagine. Even in areas where you would think the system would be well-defined, there is room for discussion: after all, there is a limit to how many of your agreements will fit on a two-page convention card. In putting the book together, we consulted a number of bridge authorities, including Ron Klinger and Marty Bergen, to come up with an expert consensus on what SAYC really is. We have also included a number of treatments and conventions that are either almost universally played with SAYC (like Roman Keycard and Capelletti), or that fit well with it if you so choose.

We hope that, after reading this book, the next time someone says to you, 'SAYC, pard?' you will have a much clearer idea of what you have just agreed to play.

Enjoy, and always remember that the fate of nations is not determined at the bridge table.

(Note: Throughout this text, any bid that currently requires an alert to the opponents in an ACBL event will be indicated by appending an * to the bid. Different rules apply in different jurisdictions, and if you are playing online — where there is no chance of giving partner unauthorized information — it is best to alert if you are not sure.)



CHAPTER 1: NOTRUMP OPENINGS

Notrump is the most descriptive opening bid in the game. It provides partner with specific information in terms of HCP and distribution. Since notrump bids limit opener's hand to a specific point range, responder now becomes captain of the auction. This is a bridge dynamic we will see time and time again: once you limit your hand, partner is, at least for the moment, in charge.

The 1NT Opening Bid

In SAYC, an opening bid of 1NT shows a balanced hand and a range of 15-17 HCP. In answer to any of you who also feel that an opening bid in notrump should guarantee stoppers in every suit, hogwash. If you wait for the perfect hand, you will not be opening notrump nearly as often as you should. Remember, you do have a partner. Where you have your weak doubleton, he may have you covered. Also remember that just because you have opened notrump does not mean your side will play in notrump. If you end up playing a suit contract, that so-called useless doubleton may come in very handy. Even if you do play in notrump without a suit covered — and it happens to all of us — your opponents may be kind enough not to lead the suit, or it may block or split 4-4. One final advantage: the 1NT opening makes it much more difficult for the opponents to overcall.

Finally, do not be afraid to open 1NT with a five-card major. This is a contentious area of bridge for many. Traditional views oppose opening 1NT when you have a five-card major.

The "no five-card major" approach developed from a rich literature, including the text *Bridge for Beginners*, written in the early 1950s by the British duo Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener. Their material was based on Acol, the predominant system used in England to this day. Mollo and Gardner wrote that "on balanced hands — no five-card major and no singleton — open notrump." This position was supported by Albert Morehead, the *New York Times'* first bridge editor and a former president of the ACBL.

Opposing views abound, however. In *Bid Better, Much Better* Ron Klinger argues for the advantages of allowing the 1NT opener to have a five-card major, an approach that had actually been espoused for decades. In *Charles Goren Settles The Bridge Arguments* (1974), Goren says that "there is nothing wrong with opening 1NT with a five-card suit... the five-card suit could even be a major." Then there is Marty Bergen. In *Points Schmoins!* he states in bold type: "Always open 1NT — even with a five-card major" and goes on to say that there are absolutely no exceptions. "Do not be distracted by a five-card major."

The original booklet that accompanied the SAYC card stated, "notrump openings show a balanced hand and can be made with a five-card major or minor suit."

There is one other consideration that some take into account, and that is the presence of a side three-card major suit. With only two cards in the second major, some are reluctant to open notrump for fear of being transferred into a seven-card fit when the partnership also holds eight cards in the other major.

Bill Root espouses a middle-of-the-road approach. In *Commonsense Bidding*, he says it is often right to open 1NT with a five-card major, especially a five-card heart suit, in order to avoid rebidding problems. But with a very strong five-card major and/or a worthless doubleton (i.e. one not headed by an honor), then it is usually best to bid the five-card major. He provides hands, distinguishing when he would open 1NT versus the major suit.

♠ K 2
♥ K 9 8 7 3
♦ A Q 8
♣ K Q 4

In spite of the five-card major, Root recommends opening with 1NT. If you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, what then? To rebid 1NT at this stage would certainly not do justice to this 17-HCP hand, and making a skip jump to 2NT would show 18-19 HCP.

♠ A K Q 9 5
 ♥ A 10 3
 ♦ K J 2
 ♣ 9 7

On the other hand, with a very nice five-card spade suit and a useless club doubleton, Root advocates opening 1♠. Fine, but now when partner bids 1NT you will be forced into a rebid of either 2NT or 3NT. Given the sure tricks that are available, the former could be an underbid. The latter is probably an overbid. In any event, you are right back where you started with your lovely five-card suit and useless doubleton, and find yourself wondering, "Why didn't I open 1NT in the first place?" You have a similar problem if partner bids 2♦. You are forced to bid 3NT and you still don't know if the clubs are stopped.

Let's look at some examples:

Hand 1

♠ A 6 5
 ♥ K Q 2
 ♦ 5 3
 ♣ A Q J 9 7

Hand 2

♠ A K 5
 ♥ Q 9 8 3 2
 ♦ J 2
 ♣ A Q J

Hand 3

♠ A 5
 ♥ A K Q 8 6
 ♦ Q 10 8
 ♣ 10 7 4

Hand 1: Don't let those poor diamonds stop you from opening 1NT. If partner has the count for game, wouldn't you rather play in notrump, where you need only nine tricks, than in a minor suit where you need eleven?

Hand 2: Open 1NT. The heart suit is weak and the hand is at the top of the range. If you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠ you are stuck. Partner will not expect such a strong hand if you rebid 1NT, and a jump to 2NT is a slight overbid.

Hand 3: Many experts, including Bill Root, would vote for 1♥. You are at the bottom of the range and the heart suit is your main feature. Those in the Bergen camp are merrily bidding 1NT. We suggest that you experiment a little and see what works best for you.

Hand 4

♠ A 6 5
 ♥ K 8
 ♦ Q 3 2
 ♣ A J 7 6 3

Hand 5

♠ A 10
 ♥ A Q 9
 ♦ 10 9 8
 ♣ A K 10 9 2

Hand 4: The current trend of adding distributional points for length rather than shortness —— an approach we heartily approve of —— has created an interesting situation. Some now take a 14 HCP hand, add a point when holding a five-card suit, and happily open 1NT. We recommend that you take only HCP holdings into account when opening notrump. We would open 1♣ here.

Hand 5: The flip side of the issue, however, is not a problem, but rather a matter of style and judgment. This example hand is very rich in controls —— aces and kings. If you choose to consider this hand as too strong for a 1NT opening call, then by all means select 1♣. Nobody ever said you have to open 1NT with a balanced 17. Typically a 17-HCP hand with a meaty five-card minor is worthy of a 1♣ or 1♦ opener. You can plan to jump to 2NT over partner's response.



SUMMARY

Notrump opening bids are made with balanced hands and may include a five-card suit, major or minor.

- Holding less than 15 HCP, balanced with no five-card major, open one of a minor, planning to rebid 1NT.
- 1NT = 15-17 HCP.
- Holding 18-19 HCP, balanced with no five-card major, open one of a minor, planning to rebid with a jump to 2NT.

Higher-level notrump opening bids are made with balanced hands and may include a five-card suit, major or minor.

- 2NT = 20-21 HCP, balanced.
- Holding 22-24 HCP, balanced, open 2♣ and rebid 2NT.
- 3NT = 25-27 HCP, balanced.
- Holding 28-29 HCP, balanced, open 2♣ and rebid 3NT.
- Holding 30-31 HCP, balanced, open 2♣ and rebid 4NT.



CHAPTER 2: RESPONDING TO 1NT

Before responding, it is always appropriate to consider what you are trying to accomplish. Since a notrump game is *typically* made when the partnership holds 25+ HCP, we tend to settle for a partscore when holding less than 8 HCP, to invite to game with 8-9 HCP and to seek out the optimum game contract with 10-15. Holding more, slam is a definite possibility. Why do we *typically* require more than 15 HCP for responder to look for slam? Say partner opens 1NT with 17 HCP. If both hands are flat, you will need about 33 HCP for slam, thus $17 + 16 = 33$ HCP. But take a look at these two hands:

Partner	You
♠ 8 7 3	♠ A 9 6
♥ J 9	♥ A K Q 10 8 7
♦ A K Q 8 3	♦ J 10
♣ A 9 8	♣ 10 6

There may be a total of only 28 HCP, but thirteen tricks are available after any opening lead. Sometimes we forget that bridge is a game of taking *tricks*!

Rules are fine, but they needn't be treated like the Ten Commandments. For example, flat hands do not offer the trick potential of unbalanced hands, and should be downgraded by a point. Accordingly, if partner opens 1NT and you have a flat 8-count, we recommend a pass. On the other hand, there are many holdings of less than 10 HCP that should alert you to push hard for game or even bid it. In fact, we suggest that as responder to 1NT you should add extra points for long suits as follows: for a five-card suit, add one point; for a six-card holding, add three points and for a seven-card suit add five. Partner opens 1NT and you hold the two hands shown:

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ K J 10 7 4 2	♠ Q 9 3
♥ J 9 8	♥ K 6 5
♦ 9	♦ J 8 4 3
♣ K 7 4	♣ Q 8 7

Hand 1: While you have only 8 HCP, you know you will be playing in spades and a holding like this is much too powerful to be treated as invitational. Get your partnership to game.

Hand 2: Your shape is flat and your points are scattered. In the long run, in spite of your 8 HCP, you do best to pass.

2 ♣ — SIMPLE (NON-FORCING) STAYMAN

Stayman is one of the most widely known conventions among bridge players of all levels. It was officially 'introduced' in the June 1945 edition of *The Bridge World* magazine when Sam Stayman, a U.S. financial manager, bridge author and professional player — the ACBL's Life Master #48 — wrote about a convention invented by his partner, George Rapee. Designed to uncover 4-4 major suit fits, it subsequently became known as the Stayman convention. When partner opens 1NT, the response of 2♣ is reserved for Stayman. In its simplest form, it works like this:

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

Partner opens 1NT. With all of the hands shown above, your proper bid is 2♣, which asks partner a very simple question: "Do you hold a four-card major suit?"

Partner's responses are equally simple:

- A rebid of 2♦ says, "Sorry partner, I do not have a four-card major."
- A rebid of 2♥ says, "I have four (or perhaps five) hearts."
- A rebid of 2♠ says, "I have four (or perhaps five) spades."

These are the only answers allowed. When the convention was originally presented, if the 1NT bidder was fortunate enough to hold four cards in both majors, then he was expected to bid the spades first. Today, the heart suit is bid first.

Hand 3: If partner rebids 2♦, bid 3NT. If he rebids 2♠, raise to 4♠. If he rebids 2♥, bid 3NT. Since you guarantee at least one four-card major, he will know that it must be spades. If he also holds four spades, he will remove 3NT to 4♠.

Hand 4: If partner rebids 2♦, bid 2NT. If he rebids 2♠, raise to 3♠. If he rebids 2♥, raise to 3♥. Take note that whenever responder makes an invitational bid, captaincy changes. In each of the indicated auctions, responder — who will normally hold at least 8 HCP — limits his holding to 8-9 HCP and turns the decision-making process over to opener. Such is the nature of bridge — just as the value of our hands change throughout an auction, so too does captaincy change.

Hand 5: If partner rebids 2♦, bid 3NT. If he rebids 2♥, bid 4♥. If he rebids 2♠, bid 3NT.

Stayman is also used for all hands with invitational or greater values that include five cards in one major and four cards in the other:

Hand 6
♠ Q 10 7 3 2
♥ K 6 5 2
♦ A J
♣ 10 9

Hand 7
♠ J 10 7 3
♥ Q J 6 5 2
♦ A
♣ 8 3 2

Hand 8
♠ K 10 7 3
♥ Q J 6 5 2
♦ A 7
♣ 8 2

Again, all three hands respond 2♣ to opener's bid of 1NT.

Hand 6: If partner rebids 2♦, bid 3♠. The jump forces partner to game and shows five spades and four hearts. With three-card spade support partner will raise to 4♠. Without it, partner will bid 3NT. If partner rebids 2♥, forget the spade suit and raise to 4♥. If partner rebids 2♠, nirvana has been achieved and you certainly don't need us to tell you what to do now.

Hand 7: If opener rebids 2♦, bid 2♥. Opener now has five choices:

- With a minimum 1NT and three hearts, he will pass.
- With a minimum and two hearts, he will bid 2NT.
- With an invitational 1NT hand — a good 15 to 16 and three hearts — he will bid 3♥. Given the distributional nature of this holding, if opener responds with a 3♥ bid, you are well advised to upgrade your hand and bid game.
- With a maximum 1NT opener and three hearts, he will bid 4♥.
- With a maximum 1NT and two hearts he will bid 3NT.

Hand 8: Similar to Hand 6. If partner rebids 2♦, bid 3♥. The jump forces partner to game and shows five hearts and four spades. With three-card heart support partner will raise to 4♥. Without it, partner will bid 3NT.

Stayman as an escape route

The concept of captaincy comes to life with this interesting application of Stayman to certain hands that many bridge players routinely pass — you know, the kind the computer keeps dealing you while your opponents get to bid all the games and slams. Defense may be interesting, but how many times can you ask yourself to pass?

Hand 9
 ♠ 8 7 3 2
 ♥ 7 6 5 2
 ♦ 8 7 5 3
 ♣ 9

Hand 10
 ♠ Q 7 3 2
 ♥ 6 5 2
 ♦ J 8 7 4 2
 ♣ 2

Hand 11
 ♠ J 6 5
 ♥ Q 7 3 2
 ♦ 10 9 6 7 2
 ♣ 8

On each of the hands above — and many more like them — if partner opens 1NT and is allowed to play there, partner will definitely not have a good time. In fact, the expected result will be down three tricks. Instead of allowing partner to struggle through an impossible contract, try the following:

With all three hands, respond 2♣. Partner will think that you have a ‘normal’ collection for Stayman and will bid accordingly. You, however, will pass any bid partner comes up with. With one weird exception, you will always land in a seven-card fit, or better. If you don’t think a two-level contract in diamonds, hearts or spades is superior to 1NT then we have an exercise for you. Create any 1NT opener you like, place any of these hands opposite and then randomly deal the remainder to the opponents. Play the hand once in 1NT, then again in whatever contract results from the use of Stayman. More often than not, the difference will be several tricks in favor of using 2♣.

Did you conjure up the weird exception? There is always the slim chance that the two hands will look like this:

Partner	You
♠ Q 3 2	♠ 8 7 6 5
♥ A Q 4	♥ 8 7 3 2
♦ A 5	♦ 9 6 7 2
♣ A 10 4 3 2	♣ 8

The partnership will now land in a six-card fit with diamonds as trumps. Is this horrible? Maybe, but 1NT is no better, and may, in fact, be worse. With luck, 2♦ will be down two while 1NT goes down three or four. Besides, your partner is a sympathetic soul and the odds of getting these two hands is so low that he will no doubt commiserate fully.

Incidentally, you cannot employ this bid if your partner is mistakenly prone to responding 2NT to your Stayman call when holding a maximum and no four-card major. 2NT is *not* an approved response to Stayman. It is also unnecessary. If you, as captain, wish to invite game, you will do so.

Stayman has been employed in this fashion for as long as we can remember and it has been an accepted part of the convention since the 1950s. Since the ensuing pass is a unilateral action by the captain, partner’s cooperation is immaterial.

2♦ and 2♥ — BASIC JACOBY TRANSFER BIDS

Every so often someone comes up with a truly great idea. Introduced to North American players by world champion player Oswald Jacoby in 1956, Jacoby Transfers were already being used in the Scandinavian countries as early as 1953. Olle Willner, a Swedish writer and expert player, is credited with its invention. Jacoby Transfers are an integral part of SAYC. Among other advantages, they guarantee that the stronger hand ends up as declarer and that the opening lead comes ‘up to’ the strength rather than through it. They offer a tremendous expansion of bidding options. They also provide a perfect way to saddle partner with the contract.

Weak hands

Hand 12
 ♠ Q 6 5
 ♥ Q 10 8 4 3 2
 ♦ 10
 ♣ J 8 3

Hand 13
 ♠ K Q 7 6 5
 ♥ 10 8 4 3
 ♦ 7
 ♣ 9 8 3

Hand 12: In the old days, when partner opened 1NT in a Standard American auction, responder signed off in 2♥ and became the declarer. Playing Jacoby Transfers, responder instead bids 2♦*. This is a conventional bid that says absolutely nothing about diamonds. Instead, it shows the suit directly above — hearts. Opener will almost always bid 2♥ — see p. 12 for the exception — and responder will pass. The identical contract has been reached, but opener has become the declarer.

Hand 13: It would be nice if you could find out if partner holds four hearts and still stop at the two-level. Unfortunately, with a weak 5-4 you cannot afford to go through Stayman. Instead, bid 2♦*, transferring partner to the five-card major, and pass.

Hand 14
 ♠ 9 7 6 5 2
 ♥ K 10 8 4 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ 8 3

Hand 15
 ♠ 6 5
 ♥ J 3 2
 ♦ Q 10 6 5 3 2
 ♣ J 9

Hand 14: You wish you knew which major suit partner is long in, but you don't have time to find out. Transfer to your better major, hearts, and then pass.

Hand 15: Jacoby Transfers are used only when responding to notrump and holding at least five or more cards in a major suit. A 2♦* bid transfers the opener to 2♥ and a 2♥* bid transfers the opener to 2♠. Obviously, we have just given up any chance of reaching a natural contract of 2♦ — just as we gave up the 2♣ contract when we adopted Stayman. Thus, we can no longer sign off in 2♦ — partner would take this bid as a transfer to 2♥. Instead, we must pass, or get the partnership to 3♦. We will show you how to do this a bit later in this chapter.

Invitational Hands

With stronger hands, transfer bids are even more useful.

Hand 16
 ♠ K J 8 6 5
 ♥ K 3 2
 ♦ 5 3 2
 ♣ J 9

Hand 17
 ♠ Q J 7 6 5
 ♥ K J 8 3 2
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ 9

Hand 18
 ♠ 6 5
 ♥ K J 9 8 3 2
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ J 9 7

Hand 16: Start with a transfer to 2♠ and rebid 2NT. Partner now has a choice of four contracts: 2NT, 3♠, 3NT and 4♠. Very convenient!

Hand 17: All hands containing 5-5 or better in the majors employ transfers. Most SAYC notes in this regard are either inconsistent or unclear. With invitational values, the best of several options seems to be that responder transfer to 2♥ and then bid 2♠. In the event that partner likes spades, he can pass, invite or raise to game. Preferring hearts, he can correct to 3♥ or bid the heart game.

Hand 18: Transfer partner to hearts and then raise to the three-level. Invitational with a six-card major.

Game-forcing hands

Hand 19
 ♠ K J 8 6 5
 ♥ K 3 2
 ♦ 5 3 2
 ♣ A 9

Hand 20
 ♠ Q 10 7 6 5
 ♥ K J 8 3 2
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ A

Hand 19: Bid 2♥*. When partner bids 2♠, bid 3NT, offering a choice of game contracts. With a spade fit, partner will now bid 4♠. This is a typical transfer auction with game-forcing values and a five-card major.

Hand 20: This time you will transfer to the higher-ranking suit, spades, then rebid in hearts. If you have no interest in slam, rebid 4♥. Partner either passes or corrects to 4♠. With slam interest, bid 3♥. This is forcing. Partner can now show strong support for spades with a 3♠ preference — allowing room for control-bidding below game — or show support for hearts. Note the difference between this auction and the 5-5 invitational auction presented earlier. The game-forcing auction returns the bidding to opener at the three-level. The invitational auction returns the bidding to opener at the two-level.

Hand 21
 ♠ J 7 6
 ♥ K J 9 8 3 2
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ 9 7

Hand 22
 ♠ K J 10 7 6
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A Q 9 8 2
 ♣ 9 7

Hand 21: You have no interest in any contract other than the heart game. Bid 2♦* then raise to 4♥. While not strictly part of SAYC, you will find many players who like to use Texas transfers with this kind of hand: 1NT-4♦* transfers to hearts, and 1NT-4♥* transfers to spades. After Texas, a 4NT rebid is ace-asking (i.e. 1NT-4♦*, 4♥-4NT). Contrast this sequence with 1NT-2♦*, 2♥*-4NT which is quantitative, inviting to slam in either hearts (showing a 5-card suit) or notrump. If you use Texas transfers, you can also play 1NT-2♦*, 2♥-4♥ as a mild slam try.

Hand 22: Transfer partner to spades and then bid 3♦. The new suit is natural and forcing.

Super-acceptance

You
 ♠ J 8 6 5
 ♥ A Q 9 4
 ♦ A Q 5
 ♣ A 9

Responder
 ♠ 10 9 7
 ♥ K 10 8 3 2
 ♦ K 7 3 2
 ♣ 7

You open 1NT. Responder bids 2♦*, intending to pass when you bid 2♥. You, however, hold a very special hand — a maximum for the original bid combined with four-card support for partner's heart suit. Instead of a simple 2♥ call, you can now bid 3♥. Responder reconsiders and raises to game. This is a very common method for showing a maximum range 1NT and at least four trumps.

2♠ — LONG WEAK MINORS

With transfer bids in use the response of 2♠ to 1NT no longer carries its original meaning and is free for other work.

Hand 23
 ♠ 5 4 3
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J 10 9 8 7 6 5

Hand 24
 ♠ 5 4 3
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ Q 10 8 7 5 4 2
 ♣ 5

The two hands above, and many more like them, are worthless in 1NT but extremely powerful when the appropriate minor is named as the trump suit. In SAYC the call of 2♠* is employed as a 'puppet' bid. The 1NT opener is required to bid 3♣. Partner will pass or correct to 3♦. Note that this auction must be alerted.

Hand 23: When partner opens 1NT, bid 2♠*. When partner rebids 3♣ you will pass.

Hand 24: Start the same way. Then, when opener rebids 3♣, correct to 3♦. This is a signoff and partner must pass.

2NT — INVITATIONAL

This bid means exactly what it says — pleasant surprise, huh?

Hand 25
 ♠ J 4 3
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ A J 4
 ♣ Q 10 9 8 7

Hand 26
 ♠ A 5
 ♥ J 3 2
 ♦ K J 9 5
 ♣ 10 7 3 2

Hand 27
 ♠ Q 5 2
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ Q 10 8 7
 ♣ 9 5 2

All three hands are balanced in the 8-9 HCP range. In response to 1NT, Hands 25 and 26 will bid 2NT, invitational. Hand 27, however, is flat. When holding a flat (4333) hand opposite a notrump opener, we recommend deducting 1 point and then deciding what bid would be appropriate. In this case, pass.

3♣, 3♦, 3♥ and 3♠

Here much depends on whether the three-level bid is made in a major or a minor. In SAYC, a bid of 3♣ or 3♦ is ‘game invitational,’ typically to 3NT. The bid promises a six-card or longer suit. While it is best that the suit contain two of the top three honors, this is not stated directly in any literature regarding SAYC. However, if you agree to this, when partner, who opened 1NT, holds the missing high honor, any honor third (e.g. J63) or four of the minor suit, he can continue to 3NT with reasonable confidence that the long suit can be set up and run. This also assumes the 1NT bidder has the other suits covered.

Hand 28

♠ 4 3
♥ 7 5
♦ 9 8 4
♣ A Q 10 9 4 2

Hand 29

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 8 6
♦ K Q 9 8 7 5 2
♣ 8

Hand 30

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 8 6
♦ A K 9 8 7 5 2
♣ 8

Thus, Hand 28 bids 3♣* and Hand 29 bids 3♦*. Also note the lack of a side entry to these hands. If you had one, you would simply bid 3NT directly and take your chances.

Hand 30: When holding a seven-card suit headed by the AK combination, we recommend a jump to 3NT. After all, the combined hands have at least nine cards in the diamond suit and partner needs very little to roll the required number of tricks.

A bid of 3♥ or 3♠ shows a six-card suit, or longer, and interest in slam.

Hand 31

♠ K Q J 7 4 3
♥ A 2
♦ J 8 5
♣ K 7

Hand 32

♠ A 10 8
♥ K Q 10 6 5 2
♦ 5
♣ K Q 9

Hand 31: respond 3♠ to opener’s 1NT.

Hand 32: respond 3♥.

Since the responses of 3♣ and 3♦ are invitational to game only, we need a method for forcing to game, slam invitational, when holding five-plus cards in a minor suit. The SAYC card and various SAYC notes currently available either fail to address this issue or are, to some degree, unclear. However, we have found some good advice in Bill Root’s *Commonsense Bidding*: “When your partner uses Stayman and then rebids a minor at the three-level, his bid is forcing to game and he may be looking for slam. Your next bid will help him decide which game or slam to play.” The original SAYC booklet and at least two sets of SAYC notes appear to agree with this approach.

Opener

♠ A Q 3
♥ A J 10 3
♦ A Q 5 3
♣ 9 2

Hand 33

♠ J 8
♥ K 5 2
♦ K 2
♣ A K 8 7 4 3

Hand 34

♠ 7 6
♥ K Q 2
♦ K J 10 9 7 6
♣ A 3

Hand 33: The key is to begin with a response of 2♣, which the opening 1NT bidder assumes to be Stayman. He will bid 2♥ and you now rebid 3♣, showing the actual hand. Opener has little interest in a club slam and signs off in 3NT. Incidentally, opener should be aware that this auction does not guarantee a major suit as well. Accordingly, in the event that opener is 4-4 in the majors, he may not insist on a major suit game.

Hand 34: Respond 2♣ to a 1NT opening and rebid 3♦ when partner responds 2♥. Any rational auction from this point forward should get the partnership to 6♦ or 6NT. (Slam bidding will be discussed in Chapter 19.)

4♣ — GERBER

The response of 4♣ to a 1NT opening bid is Gerber, ace-asking. (See Chapter 19.)

4NT — INVITATIONAL

A direct raise of 1NT to 4NT is quantitative (invitational to slam); it is not ace asking! If opener has 17 HCP, he bids 6NT. With less, he passes. However, with 16 HCP and a five-card suit, 6NT should be a good bet. Another sensible arrangement is to pass with 15, bid 5NT with 16 and 6NT with 17.

RESPONSES TO HIGHER-LEVEL NOTRUMP OPENINGS

All of the systems discussed above and in previous chapters are also in place over higher-level notrump openings. For example:

Opener	Responder	
2NT	3♣	Stayman
Opener	Responder	
2NT	3♦*	Transfer to hearts
Opener	Responder	
2NT	3♥*	Transfer to spades
Opener	Responder	
2NT	4♣	Gerber

As over 1NT, you can play Texas transfers as well as Jacoby. If you do, then 2NT-4♦*, 4♥-4NT is ace-asking, while 2NT-3♦*, 3♥-4NT is quantitative. Notice also the sequence 2NT-3♦*, 3♥-4♥ which is a mild slam try with six hearts. If your partnership is showing a balanced 25-27 with an opening bid of 3NT, then 4♣ is Stayman, 4♦* is a transfer to hearts, 4♥* is a transfer to spades and 4NT is quantitative.

HANDLING INTERFERENCE

Many who have witnessed the evolution of bridge over recent decades note that it is increasingly a bidder's game. Consequently, you should not expect your opponents to sit back and let you bid comfortably to your partscores and games. When the opponents interfere with a notrump auction, some partnerships like to use 'stolen' bids. Others prefer Lebensohl. Let's see what SAYC has to offer.

When the opponents double partner's notrump opening, all systems (conventions) are on. For example:

West	North	East	South
1NT	dbl	2♣ ¹	?
West	North	East	South
1NT	dbl	2♦* ²	?

1. 2♣ is still Stayman.
2. 2♦ is still a transfer to hearts.

While supported by most sources of SAYC notes, this particular treatment —transfer bids being on over an intervening double — is actually a bit controversial. Some players feel that transfers should be on only if the double is conventional — as it is in DONT, where it shows a one-suited hand. Thus, transfers would be off if the double was for penalty. Almost everyone seems to agree that Stayman is on regardless. While we prefer the "systems on" approach, this is clearly an area that should be discussed with any regular partner.

Additionally, the opponent's double makes it possible for responder to escape to the contracts of 2♣ and 2♦. This is accomplished through the use of the redouble, which forces partner to bid 2♣ if LHO passes.

Hand 35	Hand 36
♠ 5 4 3	♠ 3 2
♥ 5	♥ 8 6
♦ 6 3 2	♦ 10 7 5 4 3 2
♣ 9 8 7 6 5 4	♣ 9 8 2

Hand 35: Partner opens 1NT and RHO doubles. We don't want partner playing in 1NT under any circumstances, and 1NT doubled would be that much worse. Redouble. Partner bids 2♣ and you will pass. Without the double you would have been forced to go through 2♠*, getting your side to 3♣. Their double has actually improved your chances of finding a contract you can make.

Hand 36: Partner opens 1NT and RHO doubles. Redouble. Partner bids 2♣ and you will correct to 2♦.

If the opponents bid a suit, all systems are off. Double is for penalty and two-level bids are non-forcing and competitive. We simply want to play the partscore. Note that by agreement, one can sensibly play —— and we recommend —— that after

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♣	?	

a double replaces Stayman and all other systems are on. Even so, when the 2♣ call is natural, some prefer to retain the penalty double.

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♥	2♠ ¹	—

1. 2♠ is to play.

Three-level bids are forcing to game.

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♠	3♥ ¹	?

1. 3♥ is game forcing with a five-card heart suit.

A cuebid of their suit shows game strength and is used as Stayman.

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♥	3♥ ¹	?

1. 3♥ is game forcing and shows four spades.

If the opponents interfere after a conventional response, all bids carry the same meaning as they would have had there been no interference.

If Stayman is doubled, opener may:

- Make a normal rebid.
- Pass with four clubs.
- Redouble with five clubs (or four good ones).

Hand 37

♠ K Q 4 3
♥ J 5
♦ K J 8 7
♣ A Q 10

Hand 38

♠ A 6 2
♥ Q 8
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 10 8 2

Hand 39

♠ 8 6 2
♥ Q 8
♦ A K 10
♣ A K 10 8 2

Hand 37: You open 1NT, partner responds 2♣ and RHO doubles. Your bid is 2♠, the same thing you would have done without the intervening double.

Hand 38: On the same auction, this time you would pass and await developments.

Hand 39: Given the same auction, you would redouble with this hand.

If Stayman is overcalled, opener may:

- Bid a four-card major at the two-level.
- Double for penalty (with four or more cards in the opponent's suit).
- Pass.

Hand 40

♠ K Q 4 3
♥ J 5
♦ K J 8
♣ A Q 10 9

Hand 41

♠ 6 2
♥ A Q 10 8
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 10 8

Hand 42

♠ A 6 2
♥ Q 8 3
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 10 8

Hand 40: You open 1NT, partner responds 2♣ and RHO bids 2♥. Your bid is 2♠.

Hand 41: Same auction. This time you will double for what you expect to be a substantial penalty.

Hand 42: Same auction. This time you simply pass, denying a four-card major. Following the pass, responder may:

- Double (for penalty).
- Pass.
- Make a normal bid.

If a transfer is doubled, opener may:

- Redouble (showing a strong holding in the doubled suit).
- Complete the transfer (showing three-plus trumps).
- Accept the transfer at the three-level (showing four trumps and a maximum).
- Pass.

Hand 43

♠ 4 3
♥ A K 9 8 7
♦ K J 8
♣ A Q 10

Hand 44

♠ Q 6 2
♥ A 10 8
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 8 7

Hand 43: You open 1NT, partner responds 2♥* and RHO doubles. Your best action is to redouble.

Hand 44: Same auction. This time you will simply complete the transfer by bidding 2♠.

Hand 45
♠ Q 10 7 6
♥ 8 7
♦ A K J 10
♣ A K 10

Hand 46
♠ 6 2
♥ A 10 8
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K J 8 7

Hand 45: Once again you open 1NT, partner responds 2♥* and RHO doubles. Show this lovely hand by super-accepting with a jump to 3♠.

Hand 46: Same auction. You have nothing to show and should indicate that with a pass. Responder may now:

- Pass, to play.
- Redouble, to play.
- Make a normal bid.
- Signoff by bidding his major at the two-level.

If a transfer is overcalled, opener may:

- Bid three of the major (with a good supporting hand).
- Double (for penalty).
- Pass.

Hand 47
♠ A 2
♥ Q 8 6
♦ K J 8 7
♣ A Q 10 9

Hand 48
♠ A Q 10 7
♥ 8 6
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 10 8

Hand 49
♠ A 3 2
♥ Q 8
♦ A K 10 8
♣ K 10 8 2

Hand 47: You open 1NT, partner responds 2♦* and RHO bids 2♠. Your bid is 3♥.

Hand 48: Same auction. Double, for penalty.

Hand 49: Same auction. This time you must pass and see what happens next, if anything. Assuming LHO passes, partner may now:

- Re-transfer (rebid the original denomination).
- Make a normal bid.
- Double (to show strength).
- Pass.



SUMMARY

HAND EVALUATION

Responding hands containing long suits should be upgraded, as they contain more trick-taking power than flat holdings. Add one point for the fifth card in any suit longer than four cards, and at least one more for the sixth, seventh, etc.

A 2♣ response to 1NT is non-forcing Stayman —— the partnership is not committed to game. Stayman normally requires at least invitational values of 8+ HCP. However, Stayman may be used when responder is much weaker in the hope of securing a better contract. In those instances, responder is willing to pass any response by opener. Stayman is employed with all hands containing one four-card major, two four-card majors or one four-card major and one five-card major.

In response to Stayman, opener shows a four-card or longer major suit if he holds one. With four cards in both majors, opener bids hearts first. With no four-card major, opener bids 2♦.

If opener shows a fit for responder's major suit, responder bids game with suitable values, or raises to the three-level with an invitational hand. Opener can go on to game over the invitation with an appropriate hand.

When opener rebids in a major suit responder does not have, or when opener rebids 2♦:

- Holding 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors, responder bids the five-card suit at the two-level with invitational values and at the three-level with game-forcing values. Opener corrects to notrump if appropriate and will raise an invitation to game when holding suitable values.
- Holding four of the "other" major, responder bids 3NT or an invitational 2NT. If 2NT, opener will raise to game with suitable values.
- Holding five-plus cards in a minor, slam invitational, responder bids the minor at the three-level.

2♦ and 2♥ are Jacoby Transfer bids. 2♦* transfers partner to 2♥. 2♥* transfers partner to 2♠. With the exception of 5-4 major-suit holdings, transfer bids are made on all hands containing a five-card or longer major suit. When opener holds four-card support and 17 HCP he is permitted to accept the transfer by jumping to the three-level. When responder holds a long major suit, it is appropriate to transfer with no strength, planning to pass when partner accepts the transfer.

CONTINUATIONS

Except as noted below, a new suit by responder is natural and game forcing.

- Holding 5-5 in the majors: with invitational values, transfer to hearts and then rebid 2♠. With game-forcing values or better, transfer to spades and then bid hearts.
- Holding a five-card suit and invitational values, rebid 2NT. Opener will pass, correct to three of the major, bid 3NT or bid four of the major suit.
- Holding a five-card suit and game-forcing values, rebid 3NT. Opener will pass or correct to four of the major.
- Holding a six-card or longer suit, raise to the three-level when invitational and the four-level when holding game values.

A 2♣ bid followed by a three-level bid in one of the minors shows five-plus cards in the bid minor. This auction is game forcing and slam invitational.

A 2♠* bid is a 'puppet' to 3♣. Responder holds a long minor and a weak hand. Responder passes when holding clubs. Responder corrects to 3♦ when holding a long diamond suit.

A 2NT bid is invitational to 3NT.

Bids of 3♣ * and 3♦* are invitational to 3NT. Responder shows a six-card suit or longer and normally will hold two of the top three honors in the suit. Opener passes or bids 3NT depending on his holding in the minor.

Bids of 3♥ and 3♠ show a six-card suit or longer and slam interest.

A 4NT bid is a quantitative raise inviting partner to 6NT when partner opened a maximum. 4NT is also quantitative over any rebid of 1NT or 2NT by opener.

Responding to 2NT:

- 3♣ is Stayman.

- 3♦* and 3♥* are transfers.
- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4NT is quantitative and invitational.

Responding to 3NT:

- 4♣ is Stayman.
- 4♦* and 4♥* are transfers.
- 4NT is quantitative.

HANDLING INTERFERENCE

If RHO doubles partner's 1NT call, all systems are on — 2♣ is Stayman, 2♦* and 2♥* are transfers, etc. Additionally, a redouble by responder forces partner to bid 2♦, correctable to 2♦.

If RHO bids 2♣ over partner's 1NT call, all systems are off. However, by partnership agreement, double may be used as Stayman and all other systems remain on.

If RHO bids 2♦ or higher, all systems are off.

If Stayman is doubled, opener may:

- Make a normal rebid.
- Pass with four clubs.
- Redouble with five clubs (or four good ones).

If Stayman is overcalled, opener may:

- Bid a four-card major at the two-level.
- Double for penalty (with four or more cards in the opponent's suit).
- Pass.

If opener passes, responder may:

- Double (for penalty).
- Pass.
- Make a normal bid.

If a transfer is doubled, opener may:

- Pass.
- Redouble (showing a strong holding in the doubled suit).
- Complete the transfer (showing three-plus trumps).
- Accept the transfer at the three-level (showing four trumps and a maximum).

If opener passes the transfer, responder may:

- Pass, to play.
- Redouble, to play.
- Make a normal bid.
- Sign off by bidding his major at the two-level.

If a transfer is overcalled, opener may:

- Bid three of the major (with a good supporting hand).
- Double (for penalty).
- Pass.

If opener passes, responder may:

- Re-transfer (rebid the original denomination).
- Make a normal bid.
- Double (to show strength).
- Pass.



CHAPTER 3: ONE-LEVEL OPENING BIDS

The evaluation of one's hand with regard to the strength required for an opening suit bid at the one-level has a long history with varying points of view. In the system popularized by Ely Culbertson, openers were valued using Honor Tricks (now known as Quick Tricks) with combinations such as AK constituting two tricks. AKQ counted as three tricks and AKJ as two and a half. Culbertson required at least 21/2 Quick Tricks for a suit opening at the one-level.

In spite of some minor flaws, the point-count system originally devised by Bryant McCampbell, popularized by Milton Work and later adopted by Charles Goren was easier to understand than Honor Tricks and led to a major increase in the popularity of the game itself. According to the original Goren system of 1944, an ace is worth 4 points, a king is worth 3, a queen is worth 2 and a jack is worth 1 point. You deduct 1 point for an aceless hand, while adding 1 point when possessing all four aces. Distribution points are 3 points for a void, 2 for each singleton and 1 for each doubleton¹. Goren's requirements ended with: "If your hand is worth 13 points you must have two quick defensive tricks to open while all 14-point hands must be opened."

We are grateful to the likes of Culbertson and Goren. Indeed, the major aspect of the Goren method — high card points — remains a valuable tool for hand evaluation to this day. Nevertheless, bridge is a game that is constantly evolving. Let's start with some modern approaches for determining if a hand is worthy of an opening one-level suit bid.

FIRST AND SECOND SEAT OPENERS: THE RULE OF 20

In first and second seat, a useful guideline is Marty Bergen's Rule of 20.

If you do not have a 1NT opening:

- Take your high card points.
- Add the number of cards in your longest suit.
- Add the number of cards in your second longest suit.
- If the total is 20 or higher, open with one of a suit.

With regard to which suit to open, and keeping in mind that there are exceptions to all of the guidelines listed here:

- Generally speaking, the longest suit is bid first. However, SAYC is based on the five-card major approach. Thus, an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ is not made on a four-card suit.
- With equal length suits of five or six cards each, bid the higher-ranking suit first.
- Holding 4-4 in the minors, it is normal practice to open 1♦, especially when the hand also contains a singleton.
- Holding 3-3 in the minors and no five-card major, open 1♣.

Hand 1
♠ K Q 5 4
♥ A 8 7 3
♦ 6
♣ K 10 6 4

Hand 2
♠ A Q J 9 8 7
♥ —
♦ 9 7 2
♣ K 9 5 3

Hand 1: 12 HCP, 4 spades, 4 hearts = 20. Open 1♣.

Hand 2: 10 HCP, 6 spades, 4 clubs = 20. Open 1♠.

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

Hand 3: 12 HCP, 4 hearts, 3 spades = 19. Pass.

Hand 4: 11 HCP, 7 diamonds, 3 hearts = 21. Open 1♦.

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

Hand 5: 10 HCP, 5 spades, 5 hearts = 20. Open 1♠, the higher ranking of equal length suits.

Hand 6: 12 HCP, 5 diamonds, 5 clubs = 22. Open 1♦. Again, the higher ranking suit.

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

Hand 7: 12 HCP, 4 spades, 4 diamonds = 20. Open 1♦, the higher ranking of four-card minor suits.

Hand 8: 14 HCP. Open 1♣. With 3-3 in the minors and no 5-card major, open 1♣ regardless of suit quality of the minors.

DO I OPEN 1♣ or 1♦?

Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11
♠ A J 7 5	♠ A J 10 9	♠ A 4
♥ Q 8 3	♥ Q 8 7 3	♥ Q J 8
♦ A Q 5	♦ A Q 2	♦ A Q 9 8
♣ J 7 3	♣ J 8	♣ K Q 8 4

Hand 9: With 14 HCP there is no question that we are going to open the bidding with this hand. Holding 3-3 in the minors, one may be tempted to bid one's 'better minor,' here diamonds. However in SAYC, we open 1♣.

Hand 10: This is the rare distribution, 4-4-3-2, where diamonds, our longer minor, is only a three-card suit. Nonetheless, we bid it. The 1♦ opener will almost always have a four-card suit, but the 1♦ opening does not absolutely guarantee it.

Hand 11: With 4-4 in the minor suits and 18 HCP we are free to bid naturally; that is, four-card suits up the line. Open 1♣.

REFINEMENTS

1. Subtractions

- Subtract one HCP from your total for a singleton king, queen or jack (but not the ace).
- Downgrade for what Bergen calls a 'dubious doubleton':
 - king-queen
 - king-jack

- queen-jack

2. Additions

- Add one point when holding two tens, especially when they are in combination with higher honors in suits that are three or more cards in length.
- Tend to upgrade hands with a high number of aces and kings.
- Tend to downgrade hands with a high number of queens and jacks.

"The reality of bridge life is that hands with long suits and short suits have far more potential than their balanced counterparts. Give the Rule of 20 a chance."

Marty Bergen, expert bridge player, theorist and writer.

To illustrate his point about distributional hands, Bergen quotes the following engaging tale from a James Bond novel where Bond sets up the infamous 'Duke of Cumberland' deal.

North												
West		East										
♠ 6 5 4 3 2		♠ A K Q J										
♥ 10 9 8 7 2		♥ A K Q J										
♦ J 10 9		♦ A K										
♣ —		♣ K J 9										
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>					N		W		E		S	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
South												
♠ —		♠ —										
♥ —		♥ —										
♦ Q 8 7 6 5 4 3 2		♦ Q 8 7 6 5 4 3 2										
♣ A Q 10 8 4		♣ A Q 10 8 4										

South (Bond) was dealer and opened 7♣! It came around to East who doubled. South redoubled (only in fiction!). The ♦J was led and ruffed in dummy, though no other lead would have affected the outcome. At Trick 2, Bond led a trump from dummy and covered East's nine with his ten. He ruffed another diamond, removing East's last honor. Another trump finesse followed and all that remained was to pull East's trump king. Bond then led the diamond queen, capturing West's ten. All of East's high card points were useless in the face of declarer's minor suit winners!

What then do we do with the following?

Hand 12	Hand 13
♠ A K 9 7 5	♠ J 9
♥ K 8 7 3	♥ K 6
♦ Q 6 5	♦ 10 9 8 7 2
♣ 4	♣ A K J 9

Hand 12: 12 HCP, 5 spades, 4 hearts = 21. You have strength in the major suits and a solid 1♠ opener. The fact that you have length in the majors makes this hand very attractive.

Hand 13: It may be only a 12-HCP hand, but never discount the value of a long suit, in this case diamonds. Thus, 12 HCP, 5 diamonds and 4 clubs = 21. Open 1♦.

Hand 14	Hand 15
♠ —	♠ J 8
♥ A 10 8 7 6	♥ Q 7 6
♦ 9 8 7 5	♦ A J 7 6 5
♣ A K 7 5	♣ K 9 5

Hand 14: Here we see an 11-HCP hand with ♣A K and ♥A, four clubs and five hearts (11+5+4=20). Do not count distribution points for short suits — in this case, our void — until a fit is found with partner. Think about it. When was the last time you actually took a trick with a void? And what if partner insists on playing in notrump? Nonetheless, the Rule of 20 allows us to open 1♥.

Hand 15: The values are scattered and our major suits are weak. And, according to the Rule of 20, we have only 19 points. We pass.

Are these guidelines the only ones to use? Not at all. You can count your high card points and add distributional points for all long suits: one point for the fifth card, another for the sixth and so on. When using this approach, we recommend opening all hands containing 13 total points. Hands with 12 HCP should also be opened unless they contain defects such as:

- No aces.
- A flat hand, namely the totally balanced 4333 pattern.
- A singleton king, queen or jack or Qx, Jx combinations.

Whichever method (or methods) you employ, it is important to take possible rebid problems into consideration when the hand is borderline.

THIRD-SEAT OPENERS

It is permissible to open light in third seat and is not unusual to open with 10-11 HCP. However, the light opening bid should only be used when the suit you are opening is strong. Thus, unless you have a full opening bid as described for first and second seat, we have now set foot in the land of Judgment Calls, with guidelines.

Do not open a weak hand just for the sake of opening. We like Ron Klinger's way of expressing it:

Once partner has passed and you have 12 HCP or less, chances for game for your side are remote... If (your opponents) win the contract, declarer may be able to place the missing cards because of your opening bid. Better to pass in third seat unless your bid has some constructive purpose... A good test for opening light in third seat is this: Would you be happy to overcall in the suit you are opening? If yes, you are worth an opening bid in third seat. If not, do not open light.

♠ A K Q 8
♥ 7 3
♦ 9 6 3
♣ J 8 4 2

After two passes, unless you are going to open 1♠ with this hand, don't bother. Rather pass than open 1♣ ... 1♠ shows partner what to lead and forces the opponents to start bidding their suits at the two-level. 1♣ has no lead-directing value and no hindrance value either.

Two more third-seat examples:

Hand 16

♠ J 3 2
♥ Q J 8
♦ 10 8 7
♣ A K 10 9

Hand 17

♠ A J 10 9
♥ 9
♦ J 8 7 6 5
♣ K J 3

Hand 16: A 1♣ opening, in spite of its lack of preemptive value, does have merit since a club lead is welcome in the event the opponents win the auction. There is another positive consideration. When you open light in third seat, you should be willing to pass any new suit bid by partner. This hand qualifies.

Hand 17: Don't embarrass yourself by bidding with this collection. Neither of your long suits is of sufficient quality and you are not ready to pass if partner bids hearts.

FOURTH-SEAT OPENERS: RULE OF 15

A good fourth-seat guideline is the Rule of 15. (If you are finding all of these number rules confusing, the Rule of 15 is alternatively known as Cansino Count, for its inventor, the great British

player Jonathan Cansino.) Take your HCP and add the number of spades you hold. If the total is 15 or more, open. Why? Again we turn to Ron Klinger's *Guide To Better Duplicate Bridge*:

When each side has about 20 points, each side can usually make eight tricks in its trump fit. Owning the spade suit is, therefore, very important. It can mean that you can bid up to 2♠ and the opponents will have to bid to the three-level to prevent your making 2♠. Therefore, be reluctant to open with 10-12 points if short in spades but by all means open with length and strength in spades.

After three passes you hold:

Hand 18

♠ A Q J 7 5
♥ K 8 3
♦ 7 6 5
♣ 4 3

Hand 19

♠ A 10 9
♥ K J 3
♦ J 9 7 2
♣ Q 9 8

Hand 20

♠ 7 4 2
♥ 10 8
♦ K 7 5
♣ A K 10 7 5

Hand 18: You have 10 HCP and five spades ($10 + 5 = 15$). Open "light" with 1♠.

Hand 19: 11 HCP and three spades does not satisfy the Rule of 15. Opening this hand is more likely to lead to a loss than a profit. We suggest a pass.

Hand 20: Pass. Just because you hold 13 cards doesn't mean you have to take action.

[1.](#) In the words of the late Terence Reese, "Players who count points and don't take note of distribution are a menace."



SUMMARY

HAND EVALUATION

High Card Points (H CP) are based on Goren point count: ace = 4, king = 3, queen = 2, jack = 1.

Distributional points are added for every suit containing more than four cards, each card beyond four being worth 1 point.

First and Second seat borderline openers may follow the Rule of 20. Add total HCP to the number of cards in your two longest suits. If the total comes to 20 or more, open the bidding.

Third seat may open light if you can tolerate and are willing to pass any responding bid by partner. If you feel your hand would have been worthy of an overcall had RHO opened, then it is usually worthy of a light opening bid in third seat.

Fourth seat borderline openers may be based on the Rule of 15. Take your HCP and add the number of spades in your hand. If the total is 15 or more, open the bidding.

GENERAL APPROACH

Normally open the longest suit first.

Normally open the higher ranking of equal length suits five cards or longer.

Major-Suit Openings show five-card suits (or better).

Minor-Suit Openings show three-card suits (or better).

- Open the longer suit of unequal length minors.
- Open the higher ranking of equal length suits of four cards or more.
- Holding 3-3 in the minors and no 5+ major, open 1♣.
- Although a 1♦ opening is almost always based on a four-card suit, with a 4-4-3-2 pattern outside the range for a notrump opening, open 1♦ .



CHAPTER 4: RESPONDING TO ONE OF A MAJOR

While it is primarily opener's job to describe and responder's job to listen, the responder must be careful to determine the range into which the hand falls and tailor the response to a one-level bid accordingly.

- Minimum Range: 6-9/10 HCP and little interest in game unless opener is very strong.
- Invitational Range: 10/11-12 HCP and interest in game even opposite a modest opening.
- Game Forcing Range: 13-18 HCP.
- Slam Zone Range: 19+ HCP.

Why 9/10? Well, if you have a flat 10 HCP — a 4333 shape — then it should be treated as a minimum range holding. The same concept applies to the invitational range. With a good 10 HCP — preferably including four-card trump support or a side singleton — you want to encourage game. Maybe these two hands will help. Partner opens 1♠ and you hold:

Hand 1
♠ A 10 9 3
♥ 7 3
♦ A Q 9 5 2
♣ 10 9

Hand 2
♠ J 3 2
♥ K 7 6
♦ Q J 3
♣ K 5 3 2

Hand 1 offers a nine-card trump fit, a nice side suit, ruffing values and good intermediates. Hand 2 is flat. It lacks prime cards, such as aces, and the queen and jack assembly — fondly known as a 'quack' — is not a great feature when combined with scattered values. Let's give opener the mundane collection that follows. Opposite Hand 1, 4♠ should be easy and an overtrick is possible. Opposite Hand 2, 4♠ wouldn't have a chance, unless perhaps your opponents are trained seals.

Opener
♠ K Q 8 5 4
♥ 9 8 4
♦ K 10
♣ A 7 4

HCP ranges are a useful guide in determining into which category your hand falls, but when a fit is located it is equally important to look for:

- The trick-taking potential of your hand.
- A secondary fit. If you and your partner have a fit in two suits, you can typically make game on fewer HCP than would normally be expected.
- Your combined trump holding (the total cards your side holds in the suit).
- Other distributional factors, particularly when you know you will be the dummy and will be offering partner ruffing values.

The considerations outlined above determine how much extra value can be added for support points. Let's say you are dealt the hand below.

You

♠ 4
 ♥ K 10 6 5
 ♦ Q J 3
 ♣ Q 9 7 6 2

If your partner opens 1♠, you are not impressed. For starters, you have no idea whether your side will find an appropriate place to play. For that matter, with shortness in partner's first bid suit, you might be better off defending — that's assuming, of course, that the opponents are nice enough to enter the auction.

The situation is entirely different if partner opens 1♥. You know what the trump suit will be and the singleton spade could be a most valuable asset. If partner holds worthless spades, he can ruff them with the shorter trump holding, producing extra tricks. Support points (sometimes called dummy points) are a way of quantifying that warm and fuzzy feeling you get when partner opens 1♥, as opposed to 1♠. There are a number of ways to count support points. We are going to describe the one we prefer, but you don't have to use our method if you have one you like better.

Once you know that your side will be playing in a trump suit and that your hand holds the shorter trump holding, you can revalue for short suits as follows. Here are some guidelines you may find useful. When holding four or more trumps:

- Add 5 points for a void.
- Add 3 points for a singleton.
- Add 1 point for a doubleton.

When holding three trumps:

- Add 3 points for a void.
- Add 2 points for a singleton.
- Add 1 point for a doubleton.

In the process, give up any long suit points you may have counted initially. If you count extra for both long and short suits, you will find yourself overbidding. Also, do not add support points when the short suit contains possibly non-working honors. A singleton ace is worth about 6 points because the ace is working, regardless. On the other hand, a singleton queen is worth either 2 HCP (maybe) or 2-3 support points, but not both.

Let's take another look at that hand.

You

♠ 4
 ♥ K 10 6 5
 ♦ Q J 3
 ♣ Q 9 7 6 2

When partner opens 1♠, you have, at best, the original 9 playing points you started with, and perhaps less. If partner opens 1♥, you have 8 HCP plus 3 for the singleton spade for a total of 11 points. Some players will also add another point for the fourth trump.

Keeping the above in mind, when responding to one of a major suit, responder's primary duty is to support that suit *whenever your chosen system allows*.

RESPONDING WITH A MINIMUM

Minimum-range bids typically show 6-9/10 points. With less than 6, feel free to pass. If you choose to bid on insufficient values and partner holds a 20-point monster, your partnership will usually find itself in an unmakeable game. That having been said, the modern trend is to strive to respond with 5-point hands that include significant plus factors.

When you hold a minimum, your options are limited.

- Raise partner's major if you have three-card support, or more.
- Lacking sufficient length to support the major, show a new suit of four cards or longer at the one-level.
- If you cannot do either of the above, bid 1NT.

Hand 3
 ♠ A 9 5 4
 ♥ K J 5
 ♦ 6 5 2
 ♣ 10 6 4

Hand 4
 ♠ A 9 7 6
 ♥ 10 6
 ♦ K 7 3
 ♣ 9 5 3 2

Hand 3: Your partner opens 1♥. With three- or four-card support for partner's major and a weak hand, responder's first obligation is to show support. A fit has been found and there is no reason to search elsewhere. Do not bid 1♠. You have a nice, simple call of 2♥. You will have set the trump suit and limited your hand to a maximum of 10 points in support of hearts. Had your partner opened 1♠, your bid would be 2♠.

Hand 4: Partner opens 1♥. You cannot support partner's heart suit, but you do have a four-card spade suit that you can show at the one-level. Bid 1♠. Do not 'show your count' by bidding 1NT. You have a biddable suit and partner may hold four spades. Also, if anyone should be playing notrump, it is your partner. He has the stronger hand.

Hand 5
 ♠ 9 8
 ♥ K 7
 ♦ 7 5 3 2
 ♣ K Q 9 7 5

Hand 6
 ♠ K 9 8 2
 ♥ Q 7 5 3
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ 7 5 3

Hand 7
 ♠ 10 6
 ♥ A 10 8 7 4
 ♦ J 9 8
 ♣ 7 4 2

Hand 5: Partner opens 1♥. You cannot support hearts, nor do you hold four spades, and you are not strong enough to bid your clubs at the two-level. Limit your hand with a bid of 1NT. Note that the response of 1NT does not guarantee either a balanced hand or stoppers in the unbid suits.

Hand 6: If partner opens 1♥ or 1♠, raise to the two-level. Once a fit has been located you can give yourself an extra support point or two for the doubleton diamond and/or the fourth trump.

Hand 7: In spite of your 5 HCP, if partner opens 1♠, we think most good players would respond with a call of 1NT based on the decent five-card heart suit and the lovely intermediates. Many players will not pass an opening bid holding an ace, regardless of the rest of their hand. On the other hand, if partner opens 1♥, your call is a preemptive raise to 4♥. This bid is made with five-plus cards in the trump suit and a weak hand — less than 10 HCP.

RESPONDING WITH AN INVITATIONAL HAND

Invitational bids typically show 10/11-12 points. With greater strength, responder has more options. Note that a 10-point hand can be either minimum or invitational. In general, treat 10 points as minimum when there is no known trump fit, invitational when there is a known trump fit.

- Raising partner's major remains your primary duty.
- Lacking support for opener's major, show a new suit of four cards or longer. With more than one, bid the longer suit first. With 5-5 or 6-6, bid the higher-ranking suit first and with four-card suits bid the cheapest available suit.
- Holding 10 HCP, no support for partner's major and no 5-card suit of your own, bid 1NT.

Hand 8
 ♠ A 7 5 3
 ♥ K 8
 ♦ K 7 6 5
 ♣ 4 3 2

Hand 9
 ♠ J 10 9
 ♥ K J
 ♦ K J 7 3 2
 ♣ Q 9 8

Hand 8: Your partner opens 1♥. You cannot support partner's suit, but you have a very easy response of 1♠. Note that a simple one-level response in a new suit can be made with more than a minimum hand. In fact, new suits by an unpassed responder are essentially unlimited and are 100% forcing for one round.

Hand 9: Your partner opens 1♥. You cannot support partner, but you have a nice five-card diamond suit and sufficient count to bid it freely at the two-level. Bid 2♦. A new suit at the two-level shows at least five cards and an absolute minimum of 10 points (or four cards and 11+ points). This bid too is unlimited and forcing for one round.

Hand 10

♠ A 4
♥ K 10 2
♦ J 7 5 3
♣ Q J 5 4

Hand 11

♠ A 7 5 3
♥ K 8 5
♦ K 10 7 6
♣ 4 3

Hand 10: Your partner opens 1♠. You have a nice hand, but you cannot support partner and you are too strong for 1NT. Bid 2♣, planning to rebid a non-forcing 2NT unless opener shows something exciting.

Hand 11: Your partner opens 1♥. With three- or four-card support for partner's major and 10-12 points, your response is a limit raise of 3♥. If partner had opened 1♠, your bid would be 3♠. In support of hearts, this hand contains 11 points, including one for the doubleton club. In support of spades, many would consider it a 12-point hand, including one additional point for the fourth spade.

RESPONDING WITH GAME-FORCING VALUES OR BETTER

Game-forcing hands typically contain 13+ points. With hands of this strength, responder has many options and can be creative if necessary. You will also find that stronger holdings are often harder to bid than weaker ones.

Hand 12

♠ J 9 8 4
♥ 7 6
♦ A K Q 9
♣ K 8 4

Hand 13

♠ 9
♥ Q J 7 4 3
♦ Q 7 3 2
♣ 9 8 7

Hand 14

♠ K J 7
♥ K J 5
♦ K J 6 5 3
♣ 4 2

Hand 12: Partner has opened 1♥. Although you have a wonderful collection, your bid is only 1♠. When an unpassed responder bids a new suit, even if only at the one-level, it is forcing for one round, and the hand may contain anywhere from 6 to perhaps 20 or more playing points. Therefore, this seemingly mild response does not limit your strength. There is no need to rush to show your opening count, since partner must bid again. When he does, you are likely to know a great deal more about your combined assets.

Hand 13: When partner opens 1♥, you have a very special hand and the opportunity to raise directly to 4♥. Note that this bid does not show an opening hand. Rather, it shows a relatively weak hand, 9 HCP maximum, with great distribution and a minimum of five-card support for hearts.

Hand 14: When partner opens 1♥, you know your side belongs in game, at least. Do not jump to 4♥. Partner will think you have a weak, distributional holding similar to that shown in Hand 2. With a better than average hand, he will pass and slam will be missed. And don't you just hate it when that happens? Start with a forcing bid of 2♦ and jump in hearts at your next call.

Jacoby 2NT

Hand 15

♠ A 10 4 2
♥ K 10 8
♦ A 7 5
♣ Q J 5

Hand 15: Partner opens 1♠ and we have the appropriate hand for the conventional response of 2NT*. This call is known as the Jacoby 2NT and is employed in response to a major-suit opening,

with no intervening bids by the opponents. Jacoby 2NT shows an opening hand or better, and four-plus cards in support of partner's major.

Opener's rebids following a Jacoby 2NT raise

Let's look at opener's rebids.

- An immediate jump to game* shows a balanced minimum (14 HCP or less) with no singleton, void or second five-card suit.
- 3NT* shows a balanced hand in the 15-17 HCP range with slam interest, no singleton, void or second five-card suit. Opener is probably 5422 else he would have opened 1NT.
- A rebid of opener's major at the three-level* shows 18+ HCP and slam interest.
- A three-level bid in a side suit* shows a singleton or void in the suit bid.
- A four-level bid in a side suit* shows a second five-card suit.

As one would expect, there are other treatments when responding to a Jacoby 2NT. The version outlined above is the traditional one.

If opener holds a second five-card suit, he must also hold a void or singleton. When given a choice between showing one's void or singleton versus a second five-card suit, ask yourself whether that five-card suit is worthy of bidding. If it is not, show your singleton or void. Note the following two hands:

Hand 16
 ♠ A K J 10 9
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A Q J 10 9
 ♣ 8 7

Hand 17
 ♠ A K Q J 8
 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q 9 7 6 3
 ♣ A Q

Hand 16: Your second five-card suit is almost solid. Accordingly, a jump to 4♦* is recommended.

Hand 17: The poor texture of the diamond suit offers little of interest. This time, your primary feature is the singleton heart. Bid 3♥*.

Here are some more hands to look at:

Hand 18
 ♠ A 7 5
 ♥ K Q 10 8 3
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ J 3 2

Hand 19
 ♠ A 7 5
 ♥ K Q 10 8 3
 ♦ K J 7 2
 ♣ 2

Hand 20
 ♠ A 5
 ♥ K Q 10 8 5 3
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ A J 2

Hand 18: You open 1♥ and partner bids 2NT*. Holding a balanced minimum — which means no distributional features — bid 4♥*. This is a good example of The Principle of Fast Arrival in action. By jumping to game and not making any use of the lower levels of bidding that were available, you deny any interest in slam. Remember, partner's bid of 2NT* was game forcing.

Hand 19: Same auction. When you hold a singleton or a void, you show it by bidding the suit at the lowest possible level. Your bid is 3♣*.

Hand 20: Same auction. Holding a six-card suit and a great hand you are most certainly interested in slam. Your rebid is 3♦*. Note that once a game-forcing auction has been established, the stronger the hand, the more slowly we try to proceed, leaving room for slam exploration below game. Compare this with the auction for Hand 18.

Hand 21
 ♠ A 7 5 4
 ♥ K Q 10 8 3
 ♦ K J
 ♣ K 3

Hand 22
 ♠ K 9
 ♥ A J 9 7 3
 ♦ K Q J 7 2
 ♣ 8

Hand 21: Same auction. You hold a balanced medium of 15-17 HCP. With this collection, rebid an artificial 3NT*, asking partner to initiate a control-bidding sequence.

Hand 22: Same auction. When you hold a side five-card suit, you have a choice. You can bid the singleton (see above) or, when the side suit is strong, show the suit by jumping one level. Your bid here is 4♦*. A bid of only 3♦* would show a diamond singleton or void.

RESPONDER'S REBIDS

Responder will have many options after hearing opener's response. Primary among these are:

- Passing a game rebid by opener.
- Attempting to sign off in game (opener will rarely disagree).
- Initiating an ace-asking sequence (see Chapter 19.)
- Initiating a control-bidding sequence (see Chapter 19.)

Slam zone bids by responder

Hand 23
♠ A K J
♥ K Q 3
♦ 6 5
♣ A K J 9 5

Hand 24
♠ K Q J
♥ A 3 2
♦ A K J 7 6
♣ A Q

Hand 23: Your partner opens 1♠. Begin with a jump shift to 3♣, followed by a spade raise. The jump shift is game forcing, slam invitational.

Hand 24: In response to 1♠, an initial jump shift to 3♦ is suggested, again followed by support for spades, though with this much strength it would be hard to quarrel with an immediate jump to 4NT, Blackwood (see Chapter 19).



SUMMARY

Responder tailors his first bid based on the strength of his hand:

- Minimum Range = 6-9/10 points.
- Invitational Range = 10/11-12 points.
- Game Forcing Range = 13+ points
- Slam Zone = 19+ points

New suits by unpassed responding hands are forcing.

HAND EVALUATION

With a fit for partner's major suit, responder should revalue his holding. Add support points for shortness in side suits, unless they contain possibly non-working honors. When adding support points for shortness, do not also include extra value for side-suit length.

WITH A MINIMUM HAND (6-9/10 POINTS)

- Raise partner's major with three-card support or better.
- Lacking appropriate support for the major, bid a new suit, four cards or longer at the one-level.
- If you cannot do either of the above, bid 1NT, non-forcing.
- A jump raise of opener's suit to the four-level shows five trumps and less than 10 points. This is preemptive.

WITH AN INVITATIONAL HAND (GOOD 10 TO BAD 12)

- Raising partner's major suit remains your primary duty. A jump raise to the three-level is a limit raise, showing three- or four-card support. Note that a 10-point hand may be treated as invitational when containing a fourth trump and good intermediate cards — i.e. tens and nines. An outside five-card minor suit would also enhance the holding.
- Lacking sufficient trump support for a limit raise, show a new suit of four cards or longer at the one-level.
- If unable to do either of the above, a two-level response in a minor shows four-plus cards. A 2♥ response to a 1♠ opening shows five-plus cards.

WITH GAME-FORCING VALUES OR MORE

- A 2NT* response is a game-forcing raise (Jacoby 2NT) showing four-plus trumps and 13+ points. Opener is asked to clarify his distribution and assist responder in evaluating the partnership's prospects for slam.
- New suits, even at the one-level, are forcing when made by a responding unpassed hand in a non-competitive auction. With less than 19 points and lacking four-card support for partner, temporize by bidding a new suit, four cards or longer.
- A jump shift shows a suit of at least five cards and 19+ points.
- A 3NT response shows 15-17 points and a balanced hand.

JACOBY 2NT

When responder jumps to 2NT* after an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠, the trump suit has been established and opener is asked for further information regarding his hand. His rebids are as follows:

- A three-level bid in a new suit shows a singleton or a void in the bid suit.
- A four-level bid in a new suit shows a side suit of five-plus cards.
- A rebid of the agreed suit or 3NT denies a side singleton or void, and further limits opener's strength as follows:
- A rebid of four of the agreed suit by opener shows a minimum hand and, in accordance with the principle of fast arrival, is an attempt to sign off in game.

- A rebid of 3NT by opener shows 15-17 points.
- A rebid of the agreed suit by opener at the three-level shows 18+.

Responder may now:

- Pass a game rebid by opener.
- Attempt to sign off in game.
- Bid Blackwood.
- Initiate a control-showing sequence if still interested in pursuing a slam.



CHAPTER 5: RESPONDING TO ONE OF A MINOR

As previously discussed, a 1♦ opener suggests a suit of at least four cards, since 1♣ is preferred on hands where a three-card minor suit must be opened. The exception is a hand with 4-4-3-2 shape, which should be opened 1♦. Responses and later bidding generally follow the same principles as responses to one of a major. Bidding at the one-level is ‘up-the-line’ in principle. In other words, if you have no suit with five or more cards to show, bid the *first available* (i.e. cheapest) four-card suit. We advise against upgrading for support points. In the first place, the final contract may well be in notrump. In the second place, when you ‘support’ partner’s minor suit you often have more trumps than he does, and ruffing in the long trump hand rarely produces extra tricks.

RESPONDING WITH A MINIMUM

Once again, minimum range bids typically show 6-9/10 points. With less than 6 playing points, pass. Assuming that you are able to respond:

- Show a new suit of four cards or longer at the one-level.
- Raise partner’s minor if you have adequate support and no four-card major.
- If you can do neither of the above, bid 1NT.

Hand 1
♠ A 9 5 4
♥ K J 5
♦ 6 5 2
♣ 10 6 4

Hand 2
♠ A 9 7
♥ 10 8 6
♦ K 7 2
♣ 9 5 3 2

Hand 3
♠ 9 8 7
♥ K 7
♦ 7 5 3
♣ K Q 9 7 5

Hand 1: Partner opens 1♣ or 1♦. Do not ‘show your count’ by bidding 1NT. Show your four-card major by bidding 1♠. Playing five-card majors, partner may well have a four-card spade suit that could not be opened. As with the major-suit auctions, the new suit is forcing and does not limit your hand.

Hand 2: Partner opens 1♣ or 1♦. Holding 6-10 HCP and no four-card major, bid 1NT. You have now limited your hand to a maximum of 10 HCP. As partner can easily hold a three-card club suit, do not raise to 2♣. Your 1NT bid does not promise stoppers in the unbid suits; rather, you are showing your HCP range and denying a four-card major. The 1NT response to 1♣ often shows a 3-3-3-4 pattern. It denies a major, and with four diamonds you could respond 1♦ rather than take the notrump contract away from the stronger hand.

Hand 3: If partner opens 1♦, bid 1NT. You are balanced and not strong enough for a call of 2♣. If partner opens 1♣, raise to 2♣.

Up the line?

As responder we are usually taught to bid our four-card suits up the line. Thus, assume partner opens 1♣:

Hand 4

♠ K 9 7 5
♥ 10 8
♦ K J 7 6
♣ 8 6 3

Hand 5

♠ K 10 9 5
♥ 8 4
♦ K J 7 5 2
♣ 9 8

Hand 6

♠ K Q J 4
♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ 6 5 2
♣ 4 2

Hand 4: With this hand, you would respond 1♦. There are, however, two schools of thought here. SAYC stipulates that responder bid up the line, including diamonds before hearts even when holding 6 HCP. However, many SAYC players today, ourselves included, feel that because bidding has become increasingly aggressive, it is vital to get the major suits into the auction as quickly as possible. Such players would hardly give the diamond suit a glance before responding 1♠. On the other hand, there are advanced SAYC players who will bid 1♦ as it allows the stronger hand to be declarer if a major-suit fit is found (1♣-1♦; 1♠-2♠ versus 1♣-1♠; 2♠) while still permitting the partnership to locate a spade (or heart) fit after a 1♦ response. This approach also enables you to find a diamond fit when opener has five or six clubs and four diamonds, but is too weak to reverse. (The reverse is covered in Chapter 7.)

Hand 5: Similarly, many would bypass even this diamond suit in favor of a 1♠ bid in spite of the fact that this is not standard SAYC. One advantage of this treatment is that if LHO has a heart suit, it will have to be introduced at the two-level. The diamond lovers, however, will not bypass this suit and will again argue that if partner can't bid a major suit over 1♦, then nothing is lost! Did we say argue? Argue about bridge? Perish the thought!

Hand 6: It is even more important that you bid your four-card majors up the line and that you do not bypass the ratty-looking heart suit. Let's put it up against two typical opening bids and see what can happen:

West

♠ 9 8
♥ A K 9 7
♦ J 10 9
♣ A Q 8 7

East

♠ K Q J 4
♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 6 4 2

West opens 1♣. If East bypasses the hearts —— denying a four-card suit —— then West will be forced into a rebid of 1NT and the partnership will miss the eight-card heart fit. Note that nothing is lost if you bid the hearts first.

West

♠ 10 9 7 3
♥ K 7
♦ A 10 9
♣ A Q 8 7

East

♠ K Q J 4
♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ 6 4 2

Once again, West opens 1♣. East responds 1♥. West rebids 1♠ and the partnership once again finds the eight-card fit.

RESPONDING WITH AN INVITATIONAL HAND

- Showing a new suit, preferably a major, remains your primary duty.
- Supporting the minor is fine, but...
- If your partnership has hopes for game, that game will almost invariably be in 3NT.

As before, a 10 HCP hand can be either minimum or invitational.

Hand 7

♠ A 7 5 3
♥ K 8 3
♦ K J 6 5
♣ 4 3

Hand 8

♠ A 4 2
♥ K 10 8
♦ J 7 5 3
♣ Q J 5

Hand 9

♠ J 5 3
♥ J 7
♦ K J 6 3
♣ A 6 4 3

Hand 7: Your partner opens 1♦. Bid 1♠. You won't know what direction the rest of the auction will take until you hear more from partner.

Hand 8: If partner opens 1♦, this is a difficult hand to bid using standard methods. A 3♦ limit raise can be based on four diamonds, but it is best to have five or more. Given the fact that the hand is flat, the best solution may be to deduct one point for lack of shape and bid 1NT. The 1NT response to an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦ denies a four-card major suit and shows 6-10 HCP.

Hand 9: If your partner opens 1♣, bid 1♦. The hand lacks major-suit stoppers and if we are headed for notrump we'd like partner to play it. Nonetheless, if partner opens 1♦, we recommend 1NT. Your only alternative is 2♦.

Hand 10

♠ J 7
♥ K 8 3
♦ K 7 6
♣ K J 9 5 3

Hand 10: Your partner opens 1♣. You have a good holding for a limit raise, this time in clubs. Because opener may have only three clubs, your 3♣ bid promises a minimum of five clubs (together with the good 10-12 HCP). If partner opens 1♦, bid 2♣.

Note that the terms 'limit raise' and 'invitational' are often interchangeable in this context, as both show 10-12 HCP. Again, in limiting your hand — a 3♣ response to a 1♣ opener, for example — you show a specific HCP range and appropriate trump support. You have handed partner the captain's hat.

RESPONDING WITH GAME-FORCING VALUES

Hand 11

♠ K 7 5
♥ K J 3
♦ K J 6 5
♣ Q 7 3

Hand 12

♠ A Q
♥ A Q J 7 4
♦ J 7 3 2
♣ 9 8

Hand 13

♠ A 4 2
♥ K 10 8 7
♦ A 7 5
♣ Q J 5

Hand 11: Partner opens either 1♣ or 1♦. In standard SAYC, respond 2NT. This response shows 13-15 HCP and normally denies a four-card major.

Note: some choose to respond 2NT with 11-12 HCP. Those who have adopted this treatment will, with this hand, respond 3NT, showing 13-15 and denying a four-card major. Again, because this approach is not standard SAYC, it becomes a partnership agreement and must be alerted. According to SAYC guidelines

Opener
1♣ or 1♦

Responder
3NT

promises exactly 16-17 HCP.

Hand 12 and Hand 13: Partner has opened either 1♣ or 1♦. Bid 1♥. This should be getting simple by now. New suits by unpassed responding hands are still forcing for one round.

SLAM ZONE BIDS BY RESPONDER

Hand 14

♠ A K J 7 5
♥ A 8
♦ K 7 6
♣ A J 3

Hand 15

♠ A K Q 10 9
♥ —
♦ Q J 7 2
♣ A 10 9 8

Hand 16

♠ K 2
♥ A K Q 9 8 7
♦ 3
♣ K 9 8 5

Hand 14: Partner opens 1♦ and this hand is worth a classic strong jump shift to 2♠. This bid typically shows 19+ HCP. It is game forcing and slam invitational.

Hand 15: Partner opens 1♦. The five-card solid suit and lovely four-card fit with partner warrant a jump shift to 2♠.

Hand 16: Partner opens 1♣. The solid six-card heart suit, accompanied by four-card support for partner's clubs, makes a jump shift to 2♥ permissible.



SUMMARY

HAND EVALUATION

When responding to a minor suit opening, do not upgrade for support points. The final contract may be in notrump.

WITH A MINIMUM HAND

- Bid a new suit, four cards or longer, at the one-level. With more than one four-card suit, bid up the line. Note: with a hand suitable for only one bid, many players will bypass a four-card diamond suit in order to get a major suit into the auction as quickly as possible.
- Raise partner's minor with adequate support.
- If you cannot do either of the above, bid 1NT, non-forcing.
- As always, five-card suits are normally bid from the top down (higher ranking first).

WITH AN INVITATIONAL HAND

- Showing a new suit, preferably a major, remains your primary duty.
- Raising partner's minor is fine, but ...
- If your partnership has hopes for game, that game will almost invariably be 3NT.
- A jump raise to the three-level is a limit raise, showing appropriate length in the minor.

WITH GAME-FORCING VALUES OR MORE

- Showing a new suit, preferably a major, remains your primary duty. New suits at the one-level show four or more cards and 6-18 points.
- A jump to 2NT shows 13-15 HCP and a balanced hand. The bid normally denies a four-card major suit.
- A jump to 3NT shows 16-17 HCP and a balanced hand. The bid denies a four-card major suit.
- A jump shift usually shows 19+ points and a suit of at least five cards.



CHAPTER 6: OPENER'S REBID

Opener's goal on most hands is to convey an accurate description of shape and strength, often in two bids or less. This is not always easy.

MINIMUM REBIDS BY OPENER

Each of the three hands below opens the bidding 1♣ and receives a 1♥ response from an unpassed partner. Partner's bid is, therefore, forcing for one round. Opener's job is to continue the description of general shape and strength. Since each of these hands is a minimum opener, his rebid will also be a minimum one.

Hand 1

♠ A 9 8 7
♥ 9 7 6 5
♦ A J
♣ K Q 8

Hand 2

♠ A 9 8 7
♥ 9 7 6
♦ A J
♣ K Q 8 7

Hand 3

♠ A 9 8
♥ 9 7 6
♦ A J
♣ K Q 8 7 5

Hand 1: Your side has located an eight-card major suit fit. Do not bother to show your spade suit. Show the fit and the minimum with a simple raise to 2♥.

Hand 2: Since responder will show four-card majors up the line, partner could still own a four-card spade suit. If you fail to mention spades now, the suit will almost certainly be lost forever. Bid 1♠.

Hand 3: Rebid 1NT, a good description of your balanced minimum. As is true with an opening bid in notrump, the 1NT rebid does not guarantee stoppers in all of the unbid suits. Do not rebid your clubs, in spite of the fact that you never guaranteed more than three. A club rebid implies a more distributional hand and should include a six-card club suit. A raise to 2♠ is not recommended on this holding. Partner has promised no more than four cards in the suit. While not mandatory, four-card support is highly desirable.

Both of the hands below open the bidding 1♥. Partner responds 1♠.

Hand 4

♠ A 9 8
♥ A K J 7 5 3
♦ 10 4
♣ 8 6

Hand 5

♠ K 8
♥ A K J 7 5
♦ J 6
♣ Q J 8 7

Hand 4: A simple minimum rebid of 2♥ is appropriate, showing the six-card one-suiter.

Hand 5: You have a two-suited hand and an easy rebid of 2♣.

INVITATIONAL REBIDS

Invitational rebids are made on hands that hold a good 16 to 18 points. A good 16 is typically made up of first-round controls — aces and kings — and distributional hands that typically have more ruffing values.

Hand 6

♠ A K 7 5 4
♥ Q 6 3
♦ A K 10 4 2
♣ —

Hand 7

♠ K Q 5 4 2
♥ K 6 4
♦ A J 6
♣ K 3

Hand 8

♠ K J 4 3 2
♥ K J 7
♦ K Q 5
♣ A 2

Suppose you open 1♠ and partner raises to 2♠. Hand 6 has more primary values and should be upgraded to a game-going hand. Hands 7 and 8 are clearly invitational; you might have chosen to open them 1NT instead.

Hand 9

♠ A 9
♥ A Q 7 6 5
♦ A 9 7
♣ K 9 8

Hand 10

♠ A 9
♥ A J 7 6 5 4
♦ A 3
♣ K 7 3

Hand 9: The doubleton spade convinced you to open 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. Your natural rebid is 2NT. You want to play game if partner holds the top end of the simple raise. If you held four diamonds instead of three, your bid here might well be 3♦. This would not be an offer of diamonds as trumps. Rather, it would be an invitation to the heart game, simultaneously showing a feature where help from partner would be useful —— a ‘Help-suit Game Try’.

Hand 10: On the same auction as Hand 9 (1♥-2♥), your rebid is now a simple ‘mom & pop’ invitation of 3♥, showing six or more cards in the suit. Knowing you are one-suited will be helpful to partner in evaluating your prospects for game.

Hand 11

♠ A 9
♥ K Q 7 4
♦ A J 8 4 3
♣ K 7

Hand 12

♠ A 9 8 7
♥ 9
♦ A J 10 4
♣ K Q 8 7

Hand 11: You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. Your rebid is 2♥. This is a classic reverse, showing 17+ HCP and a two-suited hand containing a diamond suit longer than the heart suit. A reverse, as we shall see in the next chapter, guarantees invitational values but may be employed with more.

Hand 12: You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. This hand has just improved a ton from the original 14 HCP. With ruffing values, the singleton heart can be upgraded from a value of zero to the equivalent of second-round control, a king. We now give it three support points and the hand revalues to 17. Instead of 2♠, you should now invite partner to game with a raise to 3♠.

Hand 13

♠ A Q 10 9 8
♥ 7 4
♦ 3
♣ K Q J 8 7

Hand 14

♠ A 10 9 8 7
♥ A 8
♦ A J 10
♣ K Q 8

Hand 15

♠ K Q 6 3 2
♥ A 8
♦ K 4
♣ K J 8 6

Hand 13: You open 1♠ and partner responds 2♥, showing at least 10 HCP and five-plus hearts. You are not strong enough to rebid 3♣. In this situation, a new suit at the three-level would be forcing to game. In spite of the fact that it is normally wrong to rebid five-card suits, this situation provides one of the rare exceptions. You have no choice but to bid 2♠.

Hand 14: You are too strong to open 1NT and select 1♠ instead. Partner responds 1NT, showing 6-9/10 HCP. You should rebid an

invitational 2NT. Partner, who is now captain, will accept the invitation with 8 HCP or more, declining with less.

Hand 15: You open 1♠ and partner responds 2♠. You can invite game with a bid of 3♣. Knowing you have strength in clubs may assist partner in making his decision.

GAME-FORCING REBIDS BY OPENER

Hand 16

♠ A 9 8 7
♥ A 4
♦ A J 9 8
♣ K Q 9

Hand 17

♠ A K 8 7
♥ K 4
♦ A K 8 7 5
♣ K 7

Hand 18

♠ A 9 8 7 6
♥ K 8 7
♦ A J 10
♣ K Q

Hand 16: You open 1♦ and partner bids 1♠. Your rebid is 4♠. The hand revalues to 19 points, including one for the doubleton ace of hearts. The 4♠ bid is not a signoff. If partner has a decent hand, he is free to investigate slam.

Note: do not count both long-suit points and support points in the same hand. Before a trump fit has been found, use HCP plus length points. After a trump fit has been located, revalue for support points (or 'ruffing' points), giving up any long-suit points. Sometimes this will result in the same total. As usual, deduct 1 point from your total for a singleton K, Q or J.

Hand 17: You open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥. Your rebid is 2♠, a classic game-forcing jump shift that usually shows 19-21 HCP.

Hand 18: You decide your hand is too good to open 1NT and instead you open 1♠. Partner responds 2♥. Partner's bid is not yet limited. All we know is that it shows a decent 10+ HCP and five or more hearts. You now raise to game with three-card support and game-going values. Your 4♥ bid need not terminate the auction. It simply says that you are willing to play game opposite any minimum hand he might have for his original call. If partner has more, we are sure you will be the first to know.

Hand 19

♠ A 9
♥ A K J 9 8 4
♦ A J 9
♣ K 5

Hand 20

♠ A 9 8
♥ K Q
♦ A K 8 7
♣ K 7 6 5

Hand 21

♠ A 9 6
♥ 8 7
♦ A K Q J 9 4
♣ K 4

Hand 19: You open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT. While there is no guarantee that partner holds trump support, it is reasonably certain that the bridge gods dislike a coward. 4♥ would seem to be the best description. Cross your fingers and pray.

Hand 20: You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♥. Your rebid is 2NT, showing a balanced 18-19 HCP.

Hand 21: Again you open 1♦ and the response is 1♥. It's not unreasonable to expect at least one spade trick, one or more heart tricks, six diamond tricks and, if you get a club lead, one more trick in that suit. Your choices are a gambling 3NT or a conservative and non-forcing 3♦. We like 3NT.

REBIDDING AFTER A LIMIT RAISE

Hand 22

♠ A Q 9 8 2
♥ K 10 5
♦ Q 8 6
♣ Q 6

Hand 23

♠ A Q 9 8 2
♥ K 10 5
♦ K J 8 6
♣ 6

Hand 24

♠ A K Q J 8
♥ K 10 5
♦ Q 8 6
♣ 9 8

On each of these hands you opened 1♠ and received a 3♠ limit raise response from partner. It is time to decide. To bid or not to bid? We offer the following as a guideline. Look at your hand and answer two simple questions: a) is my hand balanced? b) is my hand a minimum? By definition, in a five-card major system, a balanced hand will have 5332 distribution. We define a minimum in this context as anywhere from 12 to a bad 14 points. If the answer to both questions is yes, then pass. If not, bid game.

Hand 22: Pass.

Hand 23: Bid 4♠. It may look scary, but unbalanced holdings have an amazing way of producing extra tricks. We have followed this guideline with some very ugly minimums with surprising — and gratifying — results.

Hand 24: Bid 4♠. It is balanced, but not minimum.

Several thoughts:

- When evaluating your hand, HCP are important, but so is the trick-taking potential. Some hands that contain only 15 HCP opposite a minimum-range response may very well have enough tricks for game. Look for long running suits for notrump and highly distributional hands for suit contracts.
- Have we mentioned that bidding strong hands is much more difficult than bidding weak ones? If not, we have now.
- One of the biggest advantages long standing partnerships enjoy is that they have seen some of these difficult hands before and have reached an agreement as to what certain auctions will show. If you have a regular partnership, any agreement is better than no agreement at all.



SUMMARY

With a Minimum Hand

Opener may:

- Rebid notrump at the cheapest level.
- Raise responder's suit at the cheapest level. Four-card support for a major suit is highly desirable, but not mandatory.
- Show a second suit, four cards or longer, lower ranking than the first.
- Rebid the original suit at the cheapest level possible. This is rarely done with less than six cards in the suit.

WITH A MEDIUM OPENER (GOOD 16 TO 18 POINTS)

Opener may:

- Jump raise partner's suit or jump rebid his own suit.
- Reverse in a new, higher-ranking suit (if the first suit is longer than the second). (See next chapter.)
- Show a new suit without reversing (note the wide range of 12-18 points for this action).

WITH A MAXIMUM OPENER (19-21 POINTS)

Opener will:

- Reverse. (See next chapter.)
- Jump rebid in notrump, usually showing 18-19 points.
- Double jump raise partner's suit.
- Double jump rebid his own suit.
- Jump shift into a second suit four cards or longer.



CHAPTER 7: REVERSES

Be advised that reverses are not an optional extra. Nor do only advanced players use them. Reverses are, quite simply, a fundamental part of bridge. Because reverses show strong, shapely hands — with potential for a large loss if a bidding misunderstanding occurs — it is especially important that partners agree on the meaning of bids that follow a reverse.

OPENER'S REVERSE BIDS

A reverse by opener is a non-jump rebid at the two-level in a new suit that is higher ranking than opener's original suit. A reverse shows a hand worth about 17 or more playing points, usually with five or more cards in the original suit and four or more cards in the new suit.

Example:

You	Partner
1♣	1♠
2♥	

A reverse is absolutely forcing for one round, unless the opponents intervene.

The reverse is a bidding tool. In learning to use it you will be well ahead of many average players, as well as some who consider themselves much better than that. Let's begin with a simple situation. As dealer, you hold the following hand:

You
♠ Q 5
♥ K Q 6 3 2
♦ A J 10 4 2
♣ J

This is a standard, run-of-the-mill minimum opener with two five-card suits. All bridge players learn early on that they should open the bidding with 1♥, the higher-ranking suit. The plan is to show the second suit at the next turn:

You	Partner
1♥	1♠
2♦	

Essentially, what you have done is offered your partner a choice of trump suits. Holding a weak hand, he can either return you to your first suit by bidding 2♥ or he can pass 2♦. If we give him the following collection, he will be delighted to pass.

Partner
♠ J 9 6 3
♥ 5
♦ K Q 6 5
♣ 10 8 3 2

The point is that you have shown both suits and you have kept the auction at a relatively low level. Now try bidding the suits the other way around and see what happens.

You

1♦
2♥

Partner

1♠

You have shown both suits, but what if partner simply can't stand to play in hearts? If we give him the same rotten hand he had earlier, he is going to have a nasty headache.

Partner

♠ J 9 6 3
♥ 5
♦ K Q 6 5
♣ 10 8 3 2

Now he must bid 3♦. He should be certain of an eight-card fit, or better, but notice what has occurred. In both cases the partnership is playing in a diamond contract; with the second auction, however, we need to take an extra trick. Whenever opener bids two suits in such a way that the auction will reach the three-level if partner prefers the first-bid suit, opener has reversed. Since winning an extra trick usually requires extra points, we might be all right if our combined strength were greater. And that is the key to understanding what kind of hand justifies a reverse.

If bidding the higher-ranking suit first is the normal approach, then bidding the lower-ranking suit first is the reverse of the normal approach. It is absolutely fine to bid your suits in reverse order but when you do, you must have more than a minimum range opener — generally 17 playing points or better. And if you have the appropriate hand, the reverse is a wonderful tool for describing certain distributions. For example, let's change that first holding a little.

You

♠ J
♥ K Q J 3
♦ A K J 10 4
♣ Q 7 5

This is a minimum hand for a reverse. You can't open 1♥ and you can't open 1NT. So, you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♠ — in case you haven't noticed, partners always seem to bid the suit you don't have. A rebid in notrump will not describe the hand very well, so you bid 2♥. Since this is a reverse, you have shown both the shape and the strength. And since the reverse is forcing for one round, partner must bid. He cannot pass your reverse — unless of course your left-hand opponent says something other than pass. That, and only that, will release him from the obligation to keep the auction alive.

Note that you could not use this auction if the hand was weaker:

You

♠ J
♥ K Q 6 3
♦ A Q J 4 2
♣ Q 7 5

You still open 1♦, but when partner bids 1♠ you must settle for a rebid of 2♦. You would like to show the hearts, but the strength of the hand — or rather the lack thereof — will not allow it.

You

♠ Q J 5
♥ 8
♦ A J 10 4
♣ A K Q 6 4

Partner

♠ K 10 8
♥ A 6 5 4 3
♦ 9 2
♣ 9 8 2

This one is simple if you know how to reverse. Open 1♣. When partner responds with 1♥ you can rebid 2♦ in comfort.

Do we count distribution? Certainly. There are 15 HCP hands that may be worthy of a reverse:

Hand 1

♠ A J 3
♥ K 9 7 3
♦ A K J 7 2
♣ 2

Hand 2

♠ A K 10 3 2
♥ A K J 7 6 2
♦ 8
♣ 10

Hand 3

♠ K J 9
♥ A K 10 7
♦ K J 10 9 6
♣ A

Hand 1: You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. With the singleton club and very adequate support for partner's suit, this hand surely qualifies for a reverse into 2♥.

Hand 2: With two singletons and, importantly, all of your strength in the major suits, go for the 1♥ opening bid and proudly bid 2♠ over partner's 1NT response. Even if partner holds

♠ Q 8 7 ♥ Q 8 ♦ A 10 9 5 ♣ 9 8 3 2

he might remain optimistic enough to value the ♦A as a gem and your hearts as a solid source of tricks. If he bids 4♠, he will be a hero.

Hand 3: After a 1♦ opening and a 1NT response by partner, some might choose a jump shift to 3♥. However, a reverse bid is forcing for at least one round and opener can clarify his strength at the next turn. The sole advantage of reversing here rather than jump shifting is that a reverse takes up less bidding space, giving more room to explore the possibility of slam.

Should we reverse with ... ?

Hand 4

♠ Q
♥ A Q J 6 4 2
♦ A K J 9 4
♣ 2

Hand 5

♠ A K 4
♥ J 10 7
♦ K Q 7
♣ A Q 9 7

Hand 6

♠ 9 8 7
♥ A
♦ A Q J
♣ A Q 10 5 4 2

Hand 4: Absolutely not! This hand is easy to bid naturally. When you add distribution points to the 17 in high cards, the hand is easily worth a jump shift and should be bid as follows:

You

1♥
3♦

Partner

1♠

Where things go from here depends on partner's holding. But in the meantime, you have conveyed a good initial picture — game-forcing values and hearts longer than or, rarely, equal to the diamonds.

Hand 5: Open 1♣ and plan to rebid with a jump to 2NT. While there is no question that this is a lovely collection, it is not appropriate to reverse with a flat hand. You could open 1♣ and reverse into any of the other suits — your first suit would be longer than your second — but you would be promising more shape.

Hand 6: Reverses are often made on 6-5 hands and 6-4 hands but sometimes the second suit has only three cards, especially if it is diamonds. You open 1♣ and partner responds either 1♥ or 1♠. What else can you temporize with other than 2♦? You don't want to raise partner in spades with three small, and a rebid of 3♣ simply doesn't do the hand justice. If partner raises your diamonds, you can show delayed support with a call of 3♠.

Another type of reverse

Take a look at the following auction — there are three others that are similar:

You	Partner
1♥	
2♠	2♣

So, since partner has promised you 10+, is your rebid a reverse, or does it simply show a spade suit, promising nothing extra? Since there seemed to be some disagreement here, we canvassed a group of experts. All but one agreed that the 2♠ call should show the normal values for a reverse, and that it would place the partnership in a game-forcing auction. However, several felt that since the normal values for a reverse constituted 17+ points, perhaps 15+ would be sufficient under these special circumstances. The key point is that you have committed your side to game, at the very least.

RESPONDER'S REBIDS AFTER THE REVERSE

Over the years, there have been many different methods introduced for responder's rebid after a reverse. We will show you a modern approach.

Responding with minimum values

When you hold less than about 8 HCP and game does not look promising, you have very few choices. Passing is not one of them, since all agree that reverses are forcing for one round.

- In certain auctions where you have responded with 1NT, you can take a simple preference back to opener's original suit. (Note: a current trend requires both opener and responder to make one more bid following a reverse. For those adopting this method, even this simple preference bid would be forcing to game.)
- You can rebid a five-card major.
- Lacking a five-card major, you can bid a conventional 2NT. This bid is totally artificial.

Hand 7
 ♠ J 10 3
 ♥ Q 8 3
 ♦ Q J 7
 ♣ J 9 3 2

The bidding proceeds:

Partner	You
1♣	1NT
2♦	?

If you and your partner have agreed that simple preference bids are non-forcing, then you could bid 3♣. If you are playing a more modern approach, your only choice is 2NT*. This artificial bid, now commonly known as "Lebensohl after Opener's Reverse" was invented by college professor J. Monroe Ingberman (1935-1985), a contributing editor of the *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge* (OEB) and the *ACBL Bulletin*. Some still refer to it as **Ingberman 2NT**.

The 2NT call warns partner that you may be on a minimum and asks opener to rebid his first suit. The plan is that you will pass or correct to his second suit, ending the auction. In this case, you plan to pass.

Hand 8
 ♠ A Q 9 8 5
 ♥ 10 8
 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ 8 7 6 3

Hand 8: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♥. Your only choice is 2♠. We know it is not a good idea to make a habit of rebidding five-card suits, but what's a person to do in a situation like this?

What does opener do next after partner rebids his major? Root and Pavlicek suggest these sequences:

Opener
♠ 5
♥ K J 8
♦ A K 7 2
♣ K Q J 6 2

Opener
1♣
2♦
2NT

Responder
1♠
2♠

2NT is natural with a stopper in the unbid suit.

Opener
♠ 8
♥ K 9
♦ K Q 7 2
♣ A K J 7 6 2

Opener
1♣
2♦
3♣

Responder
1♠
2♠

Three of the original minor shows six cards or more in the minor.

Opener
♠ K 7 5
♥ J
♦ A K 7 2
♣ A Q J 7 6

Opener
1♣
2♦
3♠

Responder
1♠
2♠

Three of responder's major shows three cards in that suit. Obviously, responder should now take another look at his hand. Having found three-card support, prospects for game may well have increased significantly.

Hand 9
♠ A Q 9 8
♥ 10 8 6
♦ 8
♣ 8 7 6 3 2

Hand 9: Once again partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♥. Now bid 2NT. Once again, you are asking partner to rebid his first suit. If he complies, this action is non-forcing and you will correct to 3♥.

However, since one can reverse with 19+ HCP, partner is not bound to comply. Assuming he holds extra strength, he can bid on in notrump, or jump to game in one of his suits or even bid a third suit — if 5440 or, perhaps, 4441. For example, partner holds:

Partner
♠ J 7
♥ A K Q J 7
♦ A K J 9 7 4
♣ —

Partner
1♦
2♥
?

You
1♠
2NT

With a holding such as this, partner is not about to be left below game. He will bid 4♥, telling you about the huge hand and the extreme shape.

Responding to the reverse with more than minimum values

All other rebids by responder show about 8 or more HCP and, as partner has shown a 17-count or better, are game forcing. Such bids are natural. For example:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1NT
2♦	2♥/2♠

is game forcing, showing a stopper in the bid major.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1NT
2♥	3NT

is to play.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♦	3♠

is game forcing with 6+ spades.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♥	4♦

is game forcing/slam invitational with no desire to play 3NT. If you play Ingberman 2NT, then a 3♦ bid agrees diamonds and creates a game-forcing auction.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♦	2♥*

is game forcing, artificial and alertable, asking partner to bid notrump with a heart stopper.

COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS

Reverses are on in competition:

Opener	Opp.	Responder	Opp.
1♦	pass	1♠	2♣
2♥			

The 2♥ call is a reverse.

REVERSES BY RESPONDER

Fear not, for we are in easy territory. When a responder reverses at the two-level he is simply showing an opening hand or better. Example:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♣	2♠

Responder has more hearts than spades and is forcing to game.

MINOR SUIT OPENINGS (REVISITED)

Having established the requirements for a reverse, it seems worthwhile to take a look at a hand that gives everybody fits:

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

There are two ways to bid this hand and neither is entirely satisfactory. You can open the bidding 1♣. You just know that partner will bid 1♥. When he does, you can rebid 2♣ or 1NT. Unfortunately, the minor-suit rebid should show six cards or more in the suit. And with respect to 1NT, we try to avoid bidding notrump with a singleton in partner's suit. What you cannot do is rebid 2♦. It looks right, and it sounds innocent enough, but it is a reverse. Before you know it, you will land in 3NT going down three or more.

Alternatively, you can open the bidding with 1♦. Now, when partner responds with 1♥, you have an easy rebid of 2♣. Admittedly, you have implied that your diamonds are longer than your clubs, or that you are holding five of each. Do all good players follow this approach? Not at all. During the preparation of this book we canvassed a group of world-ranked experts and gave them the following hands:

Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand 12	Hand 13
♠ 6 5	♠ A Q	♠ 6	♠ K 7 6
♥ 7 2	♥ K 4	♥ Q 8 7	♥ 7
♦ A Q 9 8	♦ A 8 7 5	♦ A Q 7 2	♦ A J 8 7
♣ K Q J 7 4	♣ 10 7 6 4 2	♣ K Q 8 5 3	♣ K Q 9 4 3

Most said they would normally open 1♣, making an exception for those hands with bad clubs and good diamonds. Kit Woolsey may have summed it up best when he wrote, "I would (almost) always open 1♣ and worry about which lie to tell later. You know, sometimes, the opponents don't stay silent, and if the bidding gets competitive, I am much better placed if I started with my longer suit."

With respect to the rebid, the field was split. Some preferred a call of 1NT, saving the 2♣ rebid to show a 6-card suit. Within this group there were also several opinions in favor of raising partner's major-suit response on any decent three-card holding as representing the least of available evils.

A FINAL THOUGHT ON REVERSES

We close this chapter with a few wise words from Marty Bergen: "Even experts sometimes find themselves on shaky ground after a reverse. Opening 2NT with:

♠ A Q
♥ K Q J 5
♦ K J 7 6 5
♣ K J

...in order to avoid a reverse auction after 1♦ by you, 1♠ by partner, definitely does not make you a coward in my book."



SUMMARY

A reverse by opener is a non-jump rebid at the two-level in a new suit that is higher ranking than opener's original suit. A reverse shows a hand worth about 17 or more playing points, usually with five or more cards in the original suit and four or more cards in the new suit. A reverse is absolutely forcing for one round, unless the opponents intervene.

Responder rebids with weak hands. Since pass is not an option, unless the opponents intervene, responder has three choices:

He can rebid a five-card major. If he does so, opener's continuations are:

- 2NT is natural with a stopper in the unbid suit.
- Three of the original minor shows six cards or more in the minor.
- Three of responder's major shows three cards in that suit.

He can bid a conventional 2NT, in which case opener's continuations are:

- A rebid of the original suit is non-forcing.
- All other calls are game forcing.

In certain auctions where he responded with 1NT, he can take a simple preference back to opener's original suit, though some consider this action game forcing.

All rebids by responder other than those set forth above show about 8 or more HCP and are game forcing. Such bids are natural, except for the bid of the fourth suit.

Reverses are on in competition.

When a responder reverses at the two-level he is simply showing an opening hand or better.



CHAPTER 8: SUBSEQUENT BIDDING BY RESPONDER

If opener has made two well-designed bids, responder will know quite a lot about partner's hand. It will now be time to decide whether to sign off in game or partscore, invite further bidding or force the auction higher and obtain further information from opener.

REBIDS WITH WEAK HANDS

With weak holdings, responder can sign off with a pass, a bid of 1NT or a minimum level rebid in a previously mentioned suit:

Hand 1

♠ A 5 4
♥ K 10 5 4
♦ 6 5 2
♣ 10 6 4

Hand 2

♠ A 9
♥ 10 9 8 6
♦ 9 7 2
♣ K 9 5 3

Hand 3

♠ 9 8
♥ K 9 8 7 4 3
♦ K 5 3
♣ 7 5

Hand 1: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. You have found the appropriate contract. Pass.

Hand 2: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. You now rebid 1NT, showing 6-9 points and no fit for opener's suits. While you fully expect your bid to be the last for your side, opener is allowed to bid on with a strong hand.

Hand 3: Partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT. You now sign off with 2♥. If it seems strange to take a second bid with only 6 HCP, think how much fun partner would have playing 1NT holding, say:

♠ K 7 6
♥ Q 10
♦ Q J 2
♣ A 9 8 4 3

Not a pretty picture, is it?

Hand 4

♠ J 9 8 4
♥ 7 6
♦ Q 9
♣ K 8 7 5 4

Hand 5

♠ A 5 4 3
♥ 8
♦ K 5 3 2
♣ J 10 6 4

Hand 6

♠ J 10 9 4 3
♥ K 9
♦ 9 7 3 2
♣ K 9

Hand 4: Partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT. You now sign off with 2♣.

Hand 5: Partner opens 1♥. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. This has to be a better spot than 2♥, so you pass.

Hand 6: Partner opens 1♥. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. Bid 2♥, returning to partner's first suit to show heart preference and 6-9 points. Do not pass. Partner has at least five hearts, but may have only four clubs. Do not bid 2♦, which would be forcing. Do not bid 2NT.

Weak hands should be played in a suit contract whenever possible. Finally, do not bid 2♠. We know you didn't guarantee a five-card suit with your first bid, but partner might not have any spades at all. "Get out of Dodge" while you can.

INVITATIONAL REBIDS

Responder can invite game with a rebid of 2NT, a jump rebid in his original suit or a raise of opener's second suit to the three-level:

Hand 7
 ♠ A 7 5 4
 ♥ K 10
 ♦ 6 5 2
 ♣ K J 6 4

Hand 8
 ♠ J 9
 ♥ K Q J 9 8 6
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ K 9 5

Hand 9
 ♠ Q 8 7 6 2
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ K J 6 5
 ♣ Q 5

Hand 7: Partner opens 1♥. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♦. You now invite, by bidding 2NT.

Hand 8: Partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. You invite with 3♥.

Hand 9: Partner opens 1♥. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♦. You now invite with 3♦. This is not a jump, but since you could have passed, the raise *must* be invitational.

FORCING REBIDS

Unless responder's first call was 1NT, the bid of a new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing for one round. Of course, notrump is not a suit, and such rebids are not forcing. If the new suit is the fourth suit, it may be artificial. (Fourth suit forcing is covered in detail in the next chapter.)

Hand 10
 ♠ 7
 ♥ K Q 10 9 7
 ♦ K 10
 ♣ K J 6 4 2

Hand 11
 ♠ A 8 7 6 5
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ 10 4 2
 ♣ Q J 4

Hand 12
 ♠ 9
 ♥ Q J 7 4 3 2
 ♦ 8 6
 ♣ K 8 7 3

Hand 10: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. Your 2♣* rebid is forcing for one round. If partner holds three hearts, he should now show delayed support with a bid of 2♥.

Hand 11: Partner opens 1♥. You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♦. Try 2NT now, invitational. If partner has three-card spade support, he can still show it.

Hand 12: Partner opens 1♠ and you respond 1NT. Partner rebids 2♦. Your 2♥ bid is now not forcing, because of your initial 1NT response. The expectation for a new suit rebid by a 1NT responder is a 6-card suit and 5-9 HCP.

GAME-FORCING REBIDS

Responder can also avail himself of two game-forcing rebids, the reverse and the jump shift.

Hand 13
 ♠ K Q 7 4
 ♥ K Q 10 9 7
 ♦ 10
 ♣ K J 6

Hand 14
 ♠ —
 ♥ K Q 10 9 7
 ♦ K Q J 8 7
 ♣ K 5 4

Hand 13: Partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT. You are strong enough for a responder reverse — game forcing — of 2♠.

Hand 14: Partner opened 1♣. You responded 1♥ and partner rebid 1NT. Your 3♦ rebid is a jump shift and game forcing.

GAME SIGNOFFS

Responder can sign off in game with second-round bids of any game contract —— 3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ and 5♦.

Hand 15

♠ K J 9
♥ K Q 10 9
♦ J 10
♣ K J 6 4

Hand 16

♠ Q 10 9 8
♥ K Q 10 8
♦ K Q 4 3
♣ 2

Hand 17

♠ 6 5
♥ A K 9 5
♦ A Q 10 7 4 3
♣ 3

Hand 15: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT. You have all of the information you need to place the contract with a signoff of 3NT.

Hand 16: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. An eight-card major fit has been located and your holding just went up a notch or two. There is no time like the present to tell partner about this lovely hand with a jump to 4♠. If opener has extra strength, he is allowed to bid on.

Hand 17: Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT. We suppose you could fool around a bit, but 5♦ looks like the right spot. Might as well get it over with.

RESPONDER REBIDS IN 2 OVER 1 AUCTIONS

A two over one response —— opener bids 1♠ and you respond 2♣, for example —— is not game forcing in SAYC and can be made with a four-card suit and as little as 11 HCP (or 10 HCP and a five-card suit). Accordingly, with rare exceptions, responder rebids follow the same general guidelines as outlined above. However, unless opener rebids game, the responder in a two over one auction always promises another bid. The reason lies in the fact that opener could easily hold a 17- or 18-HCP hand that he cannot show.

Hand 18

♠ K 9
♥ A 9
♦ 9 8 6 3
♣ K J 6 4 3

Hand 19

♠ 7
♥ K 10 8
♦ K 7 4
♣ K J 10 4 3 2

Hand 20

♠ 5
♥ 7 6 3
♦ K Q 7 5
♣ A Q 6 4 3

Hand 18: Partner opens 1♠. You respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♥. A rebid of 2♠ simply takes a non-forcing preference.

Hand 19: Again, partner opens 1♠. You respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♥. A rebid of 3♣ is simply invitational.

Hand 20: Partner opens 1♠. You respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♦. You can now raise to 3♦, non-forcing.

On these hands, however, you want to create a forcing auction:

Hand 21

♠ K 9 7
♥ 10
♦ A 8 7 4
♣ K J 6 4 3

Hand 22

♠ A Q
♥ Q 10 7
♦ J 8 5
♣ A J 4 3 2

Hand 23

♠ 6 5
♥ K 9 7 5
♦ K 3
♣ K J 6 4 3

Hand 21: Partner opens 1♠. Since you may not use Jacoby 2NT or a splinter bid with only three-card support, you temporize with a bid of 2♣. When partner rebids 2♥, your jump to 3♠ becomes game forcing. You could, of course, jump to 4♠. And on some auctions, for example,

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
3♦	?

that will be your only option. In keeping with the Principle of Fast Arrival (see p. 40), however, the jump to 3♦ on Hand 21 leaves room for slam investigation below game.

Hand 22: The auction begins as before (1♠-2♣; 2♥). This time your rebid is 3♦, forcing and often artificial, as here. You wish to be in game, but you are uncertain as to which game contract will be correct. If partner is 5-5 or 6-5 in the majors, you belong in a major. If not — and partner has a diamond stopper — you belong in 3NT. We need more information. As you will see in the next chapter, bidding the fourth suit is the way in which this information can be obtained.

Hand 23: This time the auction will begin differently. Partner opens 1♠; you respond 2♣ and partner rebids 2♦. Since you promised partner a second bid, opener's 2♦ bid is forcing. You can limit your holding with minimum rebids of 2♠, 2NT, 3♣ or 3♦. In this case, rebid 2NT.



SUMMARY

Following opener's rebid, responder will decide if he wishes to:

- Sign off in a partscore.
- Invite to game.
- Sign off in a game contract.
- Force to game and receive more information regarding opener's hand.
- Investigate and or bid slam, etc.

Bids available for signing off in a partscore:

- Pass.
- 1NT.
- A two-level bid in a previously mentioned suit.

Invitational Bids:

- 2NT.
- A three-level bid in a previously mentioned suit.

Forcing Bids:

- Unless responder's first call was 1NT, any new suit will be forcing for one round.
- A second-round jump raise of partner's major-suit opening bid is usually a game force.
- A reverse or jump shift into a new suit is forcing to game.
- A bid of the fourth suit at the two-level or higher is forcing for one round and may be artificial.
(See next Chapter.)

Note: if responder has initiated a two over one auction, e.g.

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣

then responder promises a second bid unless opener's rebid is at game level. Following opener's rebid, responder may limit his hand with a minimum rebid in notrump or in a previously mentioned suit.



CHAPTER 9: FOURTH SUIT FORCING

Fourth suit forcing (FSF) is the conventional call of the only unbid suit at the two-level or higher, usually at responder's second turn to bid. This convention provides a very useful tool for both giving and obtaining information in situations where no other action seems appropriate.

Our discussion of this convention will, in keeping with SAYC guidelines, employ it as a one-round force. However, many like to use FSF to create a game force. If you are one of these, then prior partnership agreement on this point is mandatory. Let's look at some hands where fourth suit forcing is useful.

Hand 1

♠ A K 9 7
♥ A 8
♦ 7 4 2
♣ Q 10 7 2

Hand 1: Partner opens 1♥ and you respond 1♠. Partner rebids 2♣. What is your correct bid? Since you must find a forcing call, a raise to 3♣ is clearly inadequate. You cannot raise hearts at this point — also not forcing — and you are not wild about declaring notrump from your side without a diamond stopper. The only choice left is to bid 2♦*.

For many, bidding a suit they don't actually have is a truly difficult concept. The key is this: if you really had diamonds, you'd probably be bidding some number of notrump at this point. Since you are not bidding notrump, you probably don't have diamonds.

Hand 2

♠ K Q J 7 3 2
♥ A 8
♦ K 9
♣ 10 7 3

Hand 3

♠ A J 10 7 5
♥ 7 3 2
♦ Q 8
♣ K 10 2

Hand 2: Partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. What now? You need to establish a force. A bid of 3♠ would be invitational and a bid of 4♠ would be a signoff, possibly missing a slam. Temporize with a bid of 2♥*. Note that the fourth suit says nothing about hearts. You are using it to keep the bidding open. With luck, partner can now show what is called 'delayed support' for spades; that is, a three-card suit. If he can't, a subsequent spade bid by you will disclose the six-bagger.

Hand 3: Partner opens 1♦, you respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. It is your turn to call. You have enough to invite a game, but which game? The solution is FSF, and a bid of 2♥*. If partner holds three spades, he will bid 2♠ and you can raise to the three-level. If partner has a heart stopper he will bid notrump now. If he rebids clubs, your high cards are well placed and you can raise him to 4♣.

Hand 4

♠ A Q J 7 2
♥ Q 8
♦ K 9 7
♣ J 7 3

Hand 5

♠ 7 3 2
♥ A K 2
♦ A 9 8 3
♣ K 9 2

Hand 4: Again, partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. What now? You'd like to be in game, but 3NT could be in trouble off the top. You'd also like to find out if partner happens to have three spades. A bid of 2♥* should lead your side to the most logical contract. If partner raises spades, you can bid the spade game; if he bids 2NT, take him to three. If he rebids a minor, you can raise, allowing for the possibility of playing that suit at the four-level.

Hand 5: Partner opens 1♣. You respond 1♦ and partner rebids 1♥. It is your turn to call. You are in a truly difficult situation. You have enough to force to game; you have no clear-cut call and you really would prefer not to bid notrump from your side. Since a bid of 1♠ would be natural — and forcing for one round — the FSF bid in this auction is 2♠*. Partner should read this as an attempt to find 3NT *if he has spades stopped*. Note that if you had spades covered, you would already be bidding notrump from your side.

OPENER'S REBIDS AFTER FSF

- If responder's first suit was a major, opener will now show delayed three-card support for that major.
- Opener will bid notrump with at least one stopper in the fourth suit, particularly if responder's first-bid suit is a minor.
- If opener has neither of the above, then he is expected to do something intelligent (i.e. make the most descriptive call possible) and let you take it from there. He is allowed to raise the fourth suit — but never beyond 3NT — showing four cards in the suit. If necessary, he can rebid a five-card suit.

Some examples:

Hand 6 (You)

♠ 8 2
♥ K Q 9 7 4
♦ 8 3
♣ A K 8 3

Partner

♠ A K 9 7
♥ A 8
♦ 7 4 2
♣ Q 10 7 2

With the above hand you open 1♥. Partner bids 1♠. You rebid 2♣ and partner bids 2♦*, FSF. You can't give delayed spade support, nor can you rebid your clubs or bid notrump. The only realistic call you can make with this hand is 2♥. With Ax in support, partner will probably raise to 4♥ — as good a place as any, unless you get a truly unfortunate trump split.

Hand 7 (You)

♠ 6
♥ Q J 7 2
♦ K 7
♣ A Q J 7 5 4

Hand 8 (You)

♠ A Q
♥ Q J 6 4
♦ J 10 7
♣ A 6 4 3

Partner

♠ 9 8 7
♥ A K 3
♦ A 9 8 3
♣ K 9 2

With either hand, you open 1♣, partner responds 1♦, you rebid 1♥ and partner bids 2♠*, FSF.

Hand 7: Bid 3♣. A fine club slam might be reached.

Hand 8: Bid 3NT and the contract will be declared from the proper side.

Hand 9 (You)	Partner
♠ A Q 7 2	♠ K 5
♥ K J 6	♥ 9 2
♦ 8 4	♦ A K 9 7 2
♣ K 7 3 2	♣ A J 10 6

You	Partner
1♣	1♦ ¹
1♠ ²	2♥ ^{*3}
2NT ⁴	3NT ⁵

1. Better than a jump to 2♦ — bid slowly — and 2NT is awful with no heart stopper.
2. Show your shape. Partner could have four spades in addition to four-plus diamonds.
3. Fourth suit forcing and asking for a stopper.
4. Showing a heart stopper and a minimum opening.
5. 3NT is a better spot than 5♣, particularly at matchpoints.

FSF can be used in a large variety of situations. The most common are:

- When looking for a stopper for a notrump contract.
- When looking for delayed three-card trump support.

Without FSF we are forced to gamble on game when we are uncertain of the correct strain. With it, the partnership can consult and cooperate. How often have you seen a pair playing in a 3NT contract doomed from the start because neither player held a stopper in a suit?

When playing this convention it must be realized that there are some hands where one would like to bid the remaining suit naturally, but should not. Take the following:

♠ Q J 9 4 3
 ♥ K 8 7 4
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ J 5

Partner opens 1♦. You respond 1♠; partner rebids 2♣ and you must find a call. 2♥ would be forcing, so that's out, and you are left with a simple preference call of 2♦, or a 2♠ rebid on a weakish five-card suit. We favor 2♦. If partner holds three spades, we expect he will correct to 2♠.



SUMMARY

A bid of the fourth suit at the two-level or higher is forcing for one round and may be artificial. By partnership agreement, this bid may be forcing to game.

In response to a fourth suit forcing bid opener will:

- Return responder's first suit with three-card support (jump raise with extra values).
- Rebid his own second suit at the cheapest level (weak hand). A jump rebid shows extra values.
- Rebid his own first suit at the cheapest level (weak hand). A jump rebid shows extra values.
- Bid notrump to show a stopper in the fourth suit.
- Raise the fourth suit (with four cards).



CHAPTER 10: PREEMPTION

Preemptive bids are defensive bids. The object is to make life as difficult as possible for opponents who presumably hold the majority of the HCP. By 'stealing' several levels of bidding, you are forcing the opponents to guess at high levels. Simultaneously, you are telling your partner that, in your opinion, the best place to play the hand is in your suit.

Keep in mind that most preempts are a gamble. You are betting that if the opponents choose to defend, whether they have doubled you or not, they will score less than if they had bid to their optimum contract.

A preempt is a double-edged sword. Sometimes the opposition will misjudge. At other times you will create disasters for yourself. If you are vulnerable and they are not, then scores like -500 or -800 — when 450 is their limit — will not look pretty and can be killers in team games. And in a pairs event, down one doubled for -200 when there is only a partial available for both sides is a likely bottom. Additionally, you may open only to find out that it is your partner who holds the majority of HCP and that your bid has now made life difficult for your own side. Factors to be considered when preempting include:

- Suit Strength: most of your points should be in your suit, thus decreasing both your defensive potential and the danger of a large penalty. Obviously, the more disciplined you are, the more partner will be able to rely on your holding when responding.
- Suit Length: the longer the suit, the higher the level of preempt available to you.
- Suit Texture: the better the texture, the better your chances that the preempt will fulfill its purpose. If you are the unluckiest of bridge players, the ace is always sitting over your king, finesse never work, left hand opponent always has four or five trumps and partner usually has a void or singleton in your suit. If this sounds familiar, note the difference between these two suits: QJ109873 versus AQ85432. If the suit breaks badly, you will lose two tricks with the first holding and three tricks or more with the second, in spite of the fact that the second holding is 'richer' by 3 HCP.

Good-textured suits include:

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

Poor-textured suits include:

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

Note that the length of the suit is not relevant when judging its texture. What matters is the number of 'holes.'

- Shape: the more distributional your hand, the better.
- Vulnerability: when you are vulnerable and the opponents are not, be that much more disciplined. The penalty, if things turn out poorly, will be hefty.
- Position at the table: it is often said that the best position is in third seat. You cannot preempt partner, who is a passed hand. And LHO, who may have the best hand at the table, will be deprived of two or three levels of bidding. The next-best position is as dealer. Admittedly partner may have a strong holding. On the other hand, there are two opponents and only one partner, so the odds are two to one that the hand belongs to them. Preempts in second seat are

less attractive and should be based on very sound values. Preempts in fourth position should never be made — who are you preempting?

- Preempting partner: as noted above, beware of the first- or second-seat preempt when your hand contains three or more cards in a side major.

You	Partner
♠ 7 5 3	♠ 9 8 4 2
♥ Q 9 5	♥ A J 10 8 2
♦ —	♦ A 9
♣ A J 9 7 5 3 2	♣ K 8

If you open the bidding with a 3♣ preempt, partner will pass and a likely 4♥ game will be missed.

2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ — THE WEAK TWO

Except for 2♣, two-level openings are natural and weak in SAYC. The requirements for a weak two seem to vary from region to region and from player to player. SAYC identifies them as follows:

- A six-card suit. On rare occasions a weak two may be made on a very good five-card holding. It is also possible to make the bid with a seven-card suit of such poor quality that the player is unwilling to open at the three-level.
- Decent cards in the suit. SAYC specifies, and many players prefer, a disciplined approach — specifically two of the top three honors. Some allow a holding of three of the top five, while others play ‘fast and loose.’
- A hand too weak to open at the one-level, usually 5-11 HCP. Note, however, that when you are holding 11 high and a six-card suit you have a Rule of 20 opener and may miss game with a preempt.
- No void. Partner may well have values there.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠ K Q 10 9 3 2	♠ A K 10 9 5	♠ A Q J 8 7 4
♥ 8 3	♥ 5 3	♥ Q 8
♦ Q 7 6 5	♦ J 10 8	♦ K 9
♣ 4	♣ Q 9 8	♣ Q 8 3

Hand 1: A typical 2♠ opener in any seat but fourth.

Hand 2: In first or second seat you would pass. In third seat, however, you have choices. It may well be that your fourth-seat opponent is blessed with the vast majority of HCP. If so, a sensible bid by you will put pressure on your opponents to find their right spot. With this holding you may do well to bid 2♠. Yes, you have 10 HCP and might bid 1♠, but 2♠ will be more difficult for your opponents to deal with. You may also find a good sacrifice against their heart partial or game, or push them too high. Finally, since partner could not open, your own chances at a game are slim.

Hand 3: In first, second or third seat you will open 1♠. In fourth seat, however, you might open 2♠. Since there is no point in preempting in fourth seat, this bid is reserved for minimum range six-card openers, typically 12-14 HCP. Since many players simply bid out the hand ‘normally’ by opening 1♠ and rebidding 2♠, this treatment, as with so many in bridge, requires partnership discussion and agreement.

Responding to the Weak Two opener

It is important to establish that once you have made a preemptive bid, partner is now captain. You have limited your hand and described its shape as best you can. You will only take another bid if partner forces you to do so. Even when partner does require you to rebid, it will ultimately be partner who places the contract. There are four general categories of responses to the weak two:

- A direct raise by partner.
- A new suit bid by partner.
- An artificial bid of 2NT.
- A bid of 3NT.

The Direct Raise

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about preempting is that a raise by partner is not an invitation. If you open 2♥ and partner raises to 3♥ or 4♥, do not get excited. Do not bid. Partner probably has something in your suit, and if he bids 4♥ you might actually make it. On the other hand, he might simply be 'extending your preempt' and making life even more difficult for your opponents. For a raise to 3♥, partner could easily hold:

♠ K 5 3
♥ 7 3 2
♦ A 5
♣ 7 6 5 3 2

Unfortunately, some players feel that they have the right to treat a raise as invitational. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

A New Suit By Partner

A basic rule of bidding is that a new suit by an unpassed partner is forcing for one round. If you are playing Raise is Only Non-Force methods (RONF) as most do, this applies to the weak two-bid as well. The new suit by partner shows a holding of at least five cards. Opener should raise with three-card support or a doubleton honor.

Holding the following hands, you open 2♥ and partner —— an unpassed hand —— bids 2♠.

Hand 4

♠ 9 8 6
♥ A Q 10 9 8 4
♦ Q J 2
♣ 9

Hand 5

♠ 2
♥ A Q 10 9 8 4
♦ Q 10 8 2
♣ Q 9

Hand 6

♠ 8 2
♥ A Q 10 9 8 4
♦ 9 8 2
♣ 7 4

Hand 4: With three-card support, raise to 3♠.

Hand 5: With a maximum, but no support in partner's suit, you typically re-bid a second suit or 2NT. With this collection you would bid 3♦.

Hand 6: With no fit for partner and a minimum, simply rebid your original suit: 3♥.

The 2NT Response

The 2NT response to an opening weak two-bid is artificial, asking partner to tell you more about his hand. The bid, by partnership agreement, could also apply if the opponents intervene with a double or a suit bid at the two-level.

Hand 7

♠ 9 8
♥ A K 10 9 8 4
♦ 9 8 2
♣ 10 9

Hand 8

♠ 8 2
♥ A Q 10 9 8 4
♦ K 10 2
♣ 10 9

Hand 9

♠ J 2
♥ K Q J 9 8 4
♦ Q 10 2
♣ J 9

The hands above all open a weak 2♥, with partner responding 2NT. There are several systems that utilize this forcing response. In the most common version —— and the one that is standard to SAYC —— 2NT asks partner for a 'feature.' A feature is defined as an outside ace or protected king or queen.

Hand 7: If opener holds a minimum hand (5-8 HCP) he will have no feature so he simply rebids the original suit. On this hand your rebid is 3♥.

When you hold a maximum for the original weak two, it is handled as follows:

Hand 8: If opener has a feature, he bids the suit that contains it, in this case, 3♦.

Hand 9: Again 3♦ is the correct bid — responder will decide where the hand is going from here.

The 3NT Response

When you open with a weak two and partner bids 3NT, his bid is to play.

Three-level preempts

A three-level preempt ideally shows a decent seven-card suit, including two out of the three top honors or three out of the five top honors. The original SAYC notes specified a range of 5-11 HCP. However, times change and bidding has become increasingly more aggressive. Today, we strongly suspect that a vast majority of bridge players limits the top end of a three-level preempt to 9 HCP, or perhaps a bad 10. Even with due consideration for vulnerability and position, suit quality in preempts also often leaves much to be desired!

All of the factors outlined previously for weak two-bids apply equally to higher-level preempts. Just because you have a seven-card suit does not mean you have an automatic three-level opener. Let's try a few hands.

Hand 10

♠ A J 10 7 6 5 3
♥ Q J 10
♦ 10
♣ J 4

Hand 11

♠ 5
♥ K Q 10 9 8 5 2
♦ 8 5
♣ J 6 4

Hand 12

♠ 7
♥ K J 10
♦ 6 5
♣ A 9 7 6 4 3 2

Hand 10: On the plus side, you have a long suit with good texture. On the minus side is the Q J 10 of hearts, good support for a possible heart contract, the defensive ♠A and a reasonable hand for a possible notrump contract. In first or second seat, one can easily argue that there are too many minuses for a 3♠ opening. We recommend that you pass. If partner cannot open the bidding, you can introduce your spades at your next turn. Holding the 'boss' suit, you are not likely to be out of this auction. In third seat, bid 3♠.

Hand 11: Lovely suit texture. Open 3♥. If partner has three hearts, he will extend your preempt with a raise and deprive your opponents of even more bidding space.

Hand 12: Pass. You have good defensive values, a poorly textured suit, too many points outside clubs and excellent support for a possible heart contract.

Hand 13

♠ 7
♥ 9 8
♦ A K J 9 8 5 2
♣ J 9 7

Hand 14

♠ 9
♥ 6 2
♦ 10 9 8 7
♣ A K Q 9 8 5

Hand 15

♠ A 10 9 8 6 5 4
♥ 9 8 4 2
♦ 5
♣ A

Hand 13: This is a textbook 3♦ opening at any vulnerability and in any position except fourth.

Hand 14: An exception to the normal guidelines. You can't bid a weak 2♣ since the 2♣ opening is reserved for all strong hands. If not vulnerable, open 3♣ in any position except fourth. You have excellent suit texture and no outside defense. When preempting in a minor suit, especially in clubs, a good six-card suit is acceptable.

Hand 15: Pass. Your two aces and the four-card heart suit argue against a preempt.

Hand 16

♠ 4
♥ K Q J 10 8 7 2
♦ Q 10 6
♣ J 4

Hand 17

♠ K 10 8 7 6 5 4
♥ A 9 2
♦ 5
♣ J 7

Hand 16: Open 3♥. This is a classic holding with perfect texture.

Hand 17: Pass. The trump suit is badly textured. Even worse, unless you are in third seat, partner might hold five hearts and an opening hand.

Responses to preempts

Responses to three-level preempts are as follows:

- All raises are defensive and should be passed.
- If the preempt is in a minor suit, 3♥ and 3♦ are forcing to game in the major or to 3NT. They promise a six-card suit.
- 3NT is to play.
- 4NT is Blackwood with the preempt suit as trumps.
- 5NT is Grand Slam Force. (See Chapter 19.)

Partner opens 3♣. What do you do with the following hands?

Hand 18
 ♠ K J 7 6 4 3 2
 ♥ A 9 8 5
 ♦ K 5
 ♣ —

Hand 19
 ♠ A
 ♥ 9 7 3 2
 ♦ J 10 9 5
 ♣ K J 7 4

Hand 20
 ♠ A K J 10 7 4
 ♥ K 8 4
 ♦ A 7
 ♣ Q 4

Hand 18: Pass. Sure, 3♠ could be the better contract. But there is no way to get there as 3♠ is forcing to game.

Hand 19: Based on the partnership's combined trump fit of 11 cards, jump to 5♣. You cannot cause too much harm and you may not be able to defeat even 6♦, let alone 4♠!

Hand 20: Bid 3♠, forcing to game. If partner has two spades he should raise you to 4♠. Otherwise, he will have to risk 3NT, in which case you hope that he has some help in hearts.

After a 3♠ opening from partner, you hold:

Hand 21
 ♠ A K 5
 ♥ A 3
 ♦ A 9 5
 ♣ 10 9 8 4 2

Hand 22
 ♠ 9 8 3
 ♥ 8 2
 ♦ A 8 7 6 4 3
 ♣ K 4

Hand 23
 ♠ —
 ♥ A K Q
 ♦ A 8 6 5 2
 ♣ A 9 4 3 2

Hand 24
 ♠ K 8 3
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ A K Q 10 6
 ♣ 8 6 4

Hand 21: Bid 3NT. You can count on seven spade tricks plus two aces, and your club length gives you protection in that suit. A 4♠ contract may have only nine tricks.

Hand 22: With only one defensive trick and a combined holding of ten trumps, raise preemptively to 4♠.

Hand 23: Raise to 4♠. Partner is supposed to be two or three tricks short of making his opening bid, and you can supply five.

Hand 24: Bid 4NT. If partner shows an ace, bid 6♠ and pray.

Four-level openings

The requirements for four-level openings are similar to those for three-level openings. Since you are one level higher, you need extra length, preferably an eight-card suit, or fewer losers.

Hand 25
 ♠ A J 10 8 7 4 3 2
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 10 3

Hand 26
 ♠ K Q 10 9 8 6 4 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ K 10 5
 ♣ 3

Hand 27
 ♠ 4
 ♥ A K Q 10 8 6 4
 ♦ 9 8 7 3
 ♣ 8

Hand 25: This collection should be opened 4♠.

Hand 26: Much too strong. Open 1♠.

Hand 27: You only have a seven-card suit, but with any luck you have no losers there either. Open 4♥.

Preempting is an area of bidding that has been generally neglected in bridge literature, especially with respect to responses and defenses to preempts. For further discussion on this topic we recommend Preempts from A to Z by Ron Andersen and Sabine Zenkel.



SUMMARY

THE WEAK 2♦ /2♥ /2♠

Criteria:

- 5-10/11 HCP
- Typically six cards of reasonable quality in the suit bid.
- No voids. Partner is likely to hold values in your void and, more importantly, will underestimate your playing strength.
- No outside four-card major as you may miss a 4-4 major suit fit.

A weak two may also be bid with a seven-card suit of poor quality and occasionally with a five-card suit — normally this action will be taken in third position. Note that the high end of the range is precautionary in that some 11 HCP hands can be too strong for a weak two. This is particularly important if partner is an unpassed hand.

Responses:

- A raise of opener's suit is to play and is often preemptive.
- A new suit by responder shows at least five cards and is forcing for one round (RONF — Raise Only Non-Forcing). Opener should raise a new major suit with three-card support or a doubleton honor. With no fit for responder's suit, opener rebids his own suit with a minimum. With a maximum he will name a new suit or bid notrump.
- 2NT is forcing even if right-hand opponent overcalls in a suit at the two-level. Opener will rebid his suit with a minimum since he will have nothing significant outside his own suit. Opener bids a new suit to show a feature — an outside ace or protected king or queen with a maximum. Lacking such a feature, he raises to 3NT with a maximum, allowing partner to place the contract; with a minimum, he rebids his suit.
- A response of 3NT is to play.

HIGHER-LEVEL PREEMPTS

Three-level preempts are normally made on a seven-card holding and a hand that is too weak to open at the one-level. New suits by responder below game are forcing.

Responses:

- A raise of opener's suit is to play and is often preemptive.
- A response of 3NT is to play.
- 4NT is Blackwood.
- 5NT is a Grand Slam Force.
- If the opening preempt was a minor suit, then three of a major is forcing to either game in the major suit or 3NT.

Four-level preempts are usually made with hands similar to those for a three-level preempt, but which contain an eight-card suit instead of a seven-card suit.



CHAPTER 11: THE STRONG 2♣ OPENING

In SAYC, all strong hands (22+ HCP or the playing equivalent) are opened 2♣, with the intention to show the real suit, or lack thereof, with the rebid.

Hand 1
♠ A Q J
♥ A K
♦ A J 5
♣ Q J 8 4 2

Hand 2
♠ K 8 3
♥ A K Q 5 4 3
♦ A K
♣ K 4

Hand 1: Open 2♣. Your intended rebid is 2NT, showing 22-24 HCP and a balanced hand.

Hand 2: Open 2♣. Your plan is to bid hearts at your next opportunity.

Hand 3
♠ A K Q 10 6
♥ 4 3
♦ A K J 7
♣ A K

Hand 4
♠ A K Q 10 9 8 5 4 3 2
♥ 2
♦ A 4
♣ —

Hand 3: Open 2♣. You will show the spades with the rebid.

Hand 4: Most players we know would open 2♣, though there seems to be at least a touch of controversy involved. The hand does not contain 22+ HCP, but it can take eleven tricks with no help from partner. (Those players who employ the 2♣ bid to show this kind of hand only require a reasonable expectation of taking nine tricks — more tricks, incidentally, than any of the preceding three hands in the set are likely to provide.) The controversy arose from an online tournament ruling in 2000 where the director adjusted the scores of all pairs who chose to open a similar collection with a strong 2♣. Perhaps by the time this book finds its way into print, agreement here will be universal.

RESPONDING TO A 2♣ OPENER

Partnerships can employ several methods when responding to the 2♣ opener. SAYC uses 2♦ Waiting.

- 2♥/2♠/3♣ and 3♦ are natural. These bids promise a suit of five-plus cards and, usually, two of the top three honors.
- 2NT shows 8+ HCP with no biddable five-card suit.
- All other hands bid 2♦, artificial and ‘waiting.’ The 2♦ response includes all hands below 8 HCP that cannot show a biddable five-card suit.

Partner opens 2♣ and you hold each of the following:

Hand 5
♠ K Q 7 6 4 2
♥ K 8 4
♦ 9 7 5
♣ 4

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

Hand 7
♠ A Q 6
♥ Q 7 3 2
♦ Q 10 8 7
♣ 6 4

Hand 8
♠ K J 9 8
♥ 7 5 6 2
♦ 8 4
♣ 8 6 4

Hand 5: Respond 2♠.

Hand 6: Respond 3♦.

Hand 7: Respond 2NT.

Hand 8: Respond 2♦, ‘waiting.’

OPENER’S REBIDS

If responder has made a positive bid — anything other than 2♦ — then rebids by opener are natural and the partnership is committed to game at the very least.

If responder has bid 2♦:

- A suit rebid by opener is natural and forcing to the three-level in a major or the four-level in a minor.
- A jump rebid in a suit shows a self-supporting holding in that suit and is game forcing.
- A rebid of 2NT shows 22-24 HCP and a balanced hand. This rebid is not forcing. All systems that would normally be in place over a 2NT opener remain in effect. For example, 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦* and 3♥* are transfers, etc.
- A rebid of 3NT can be used to show a balanced hand of 25-27 HCP. This treatment is not currently a part of SAYC, but is becoming increasingly commonplace. We feel this is an area where SAYC should be modified, as it costs nothing to use this approach and frees up the 3NT opening bid for other work, such as the increasingly popular Gambling 3NT.

While there is no mention of this in the original SAYC notes, a fair number of responders employ what is known as the “second negative.” Most commonly, this is the cheapest minor. Thus, in an auction that goes

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	

a 3♣ bid by responder shows no support and a very bad hand, typically less than 4 HCP. Another popular alternative is to use an immediate 2♥ response for the same purpose. If you do this, then 2♦ becomes game forcing, and an immediate 2NT response is used to show a positive response with a good heart suit. This is another area that requires partnership agreement.

Four sample auctions are provided below:

Opener	Responder
♠ A K Q 10 9	♠ 6 5 3
♥ A 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ A K	♦ 9 8 4
♣ K 8 7 6	♣ Q J 9 5
2♣ ¹	2♦ ²
2♣ ³	4♣ ⁴

1. Strong and artificial.
2. Waiting.
3. Natural.
4. No slam interest.

Opener	Responder
♠ A J 3	♠ K Q 6 5 2
♥ A K Q 10 2	♥ 5 3
♦ A K	♦ 9 8 4
♣ K 9 4	♣ Q J 7
2♣ ¹	2♠ ²
4NT ³	5♣ ⁴
6♠	

1. Strong and artificial.
2. Natural and positive.
3. Blackwood.
4. No ace.

Opener	Responder
♠ A 9 7 4	♠ K Q 6 5
♥ A K Q	♥ 7 2
♦ A K	♦ 7 6 4
♣ K 8 4 2	♣ J 10 6 5
2♣ ¹	2♦ ²
2NT ³	3♣ ⁴
3♠ ⁵	4♠

1. Strong and artificial.
2. Waiting.
3. 22-24.
4. Stayman.
5. Four spades.

Opener	Responder
♠ A K Q J 10 6	♠ 8 2
♥ A K 4	♥ 10 8 6 3
♦ A J 3	♦ 9 5 2
♣ 6	♣ 10 9 5 4
2♣ ¹	2♦ ²
2♠	3♣ ³
3♠	pass ⁴

1. Strong and artificial.
2. Waiting.
3. Second negative.
4. With a sigh of relief.



SUMMARY

A 2♣ opening bid shows 22+ HCP, or the playing equivalent.

Responses:

- 2♦ is artificial and “waiting.” The bid simply indicates a hand not suited to any of the positive responses set forth below.
- 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ and 3♦ are natural and game forcing. These bids promise a suit of five-plus cards and, usually, two of the top three honors.
- 2NT shows a holding of 8+ HCP with no biddable five-card suit.

Opener’s Rebids:

- A rebid in a suit at the lowest level available is natural and almost always shows a suit of five or more cards. This bid is forcing to the three-level in a major suit or the four-level in a minor suit.
- A jump rebid in a suit shows a self-supporting holding in that suit and is game forcing.
- A rebid of 2NT over a 2♦ response is not forcing and shows 22-24 HCP. After a 2NT rebid all systems are on: 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦* and 3♥* are transfers, etc.



CHAPTER 12: OVERCALLS

Overcalls are a part of bridge regardless of what system you play. SAYC did not invent overcalls nor does the system veer far from any good text on this topic. In this chapter we will provide a brief review of overcalls in general. In the next chapter we will provide you with basic guidelines and information on the conventional overcalls that SAYC incorporates, specifically Michaels and the Unusual Notrump.

There are many reasons why one would overcall:

- You have a good hand/and or suit and the contract may belong to your side.
- You want to tell your partner what to lead.
- You want to harass the opponents by pushing them higher than they want to go or by making it harder for them to find their best contract by using up some of their bidding space.
- You want to find a profitable sacrifice if the opponents reach their optimum contract.

ONE-LEVEL OVERCALLS

In SAYC, a one-level overcall shows 8-16+ HCP, typically accompanied by a decent five-card suit. Be prepared to take more liberties when not vulnerable versus vulnerable. Also remember that if partner is on lead, he is highly likely to lead the suit you have bid. If you have room to bid at the one-level, it is permissible to overcall with a four-card suit but only if the suit is very strong and the hand is a maximum. If overcalling with a four-card suit is not to your liking, don't do it. But don't be surprised if your partner or opponents do.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠ 9 7 5	♠ 10 9	♠ 9 8 5 4 2
♥ K Q J 8 3	♥ K J 7 4 3	♥ K 10 8
♦ A Q J	♦ 8 7 2	♦ 5 3
♣ Q 3	♣ 10 9 8	♣ A K 10

Hand 1: Your RHO opens 1♣. You have 15 HCP and a lovely five-card heart suit. Bid 1♥. If you were thinking of a takeout double, don't. The shape is wrong and you don't want a partner who might hold 4-4 in the majors picking the trump suit. (The takeout double is covered in Chapter 17.)

Hand 2: RHO opens 1♣. You have a five-card suit but you are too weak to overcall. Simply pass.

Hand 3: Once again RHO opens 1♥. In spite of your 10 HCP, a 1♠ overcall is not a good idea. If your side ends up defending, you certainly do not want partner leading spades. With all your high cards outside the spade suit, it is best to pass and hope they are working for you on defense.

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

Hand 4: Weaker than Hand 3, but your spades have body and you would welcome a spade lead from partner if the opponents declare. Besides, you will be making life that much more difficult for LHO — always a positive factor. Bid 1♠ over any one-level suit opening.

Hand 5: A thing of beauty and a joy forever, but if RHO opens 1♥, do not overcall 1♠. Remember, overcalls limit your holding to roughly 16 HCP —— occasionally a point or two more —— and this hand is simply too good for this action. The solution is to start with a double. Partner thinks this is a takeout double, of course, and will respond accordingly. At your next turn, you will bid your spades. A double followed by a bid of your own suit shows hands that are too good for a normal overcall and typically advertises 17+ HCP. (See Chapter 17.)

Hand 6: If RHO opens 1♣, do not double. In spite of your excellent holding, simply overcall 1♥. If you double first, you may have to overbid drastically later. For example:

West	North	East	South
1♣	dbl	1♠	pass
3♠	?		

You certainly would not want to bid 4♥ at this stage. Overcall first and show your extra values later, possibly with a cuebid of the opponents' suit.

TWO-LEVEL OVERCALLS

A two-level overcall typically shows 10-16+ HCP and a decent suit of at least five cards. If the overcall is made on lesser values, you should hold a substantial suit or excellent distribution —— two five-card suits, for example.

But, as William Root states in *Commonsense Bidding*, "be cautious about overcalling with doubtful hands when you have length in the enemy suit, because the opponent behind you is likely to be short in that suit and, therefore, more apt to double you." An example Root gives is as follows:

You hold: ♠ Q J 10 2 ♥ A Q 9 5 3 ♦ 7 6 ♣ K 8

RHO opens 1♠. What do you do?

Root suggests: "If you bid 2♥ there is a good chance that you will get doubled, because you have four cards in the spade suit, so you should pass, vulnerable or not. If you exchange the clubs and spades so that you have ♠ K 8 and ♣ Q J 10 2, you should venture a 2♥ bid if you are not vulnerable, but a pass is still recommended if you are vulnerable."

Hand 7	Hand 8
♠ 9 7 5	♠ 9
♥ K Q J 8 7 3	♥ A Q 10 9 5
♦ A 8	♦ 8
♣ 5 3	♣ K Q 8 7 6 5

Hand 7: RHO opens 1♠. You have great trick-taking potential. Overcall 2♥.

Hand 8: If RHO opens 1♠, your highly distributional holding offsets the lack of HCP. Such hands typically have greater trick-taking potential. Also, if you bid one suit and an opponent doubles, you can then bid the other. We agree that it would be unfortunate if partner did not have tolerance for one of your suits. The small risk is worth the benefits that accrue the rest of the time. Bid 2♥ and mention the clubs at your next turn if the auction permits.

A DIRECT OVERCALL OF 1NT shows a balanced hand of 15-18 HCP with at least one stopper in the opponent's suit. In SAYC, Stayman remains in effect but transfers are off. However, many players (the authors included) play that all systems normally in use when responding to a notrump opener also apply when responding to a notrump overcall. Be sure to discuss this with any regular partner.

RESPONDING TO OVERCALLS

There are different theories about responding to overcalls. Seagram and Smith in *25 Ways To Compete In The Bidding* ask, 'How do you decide how high to raise partner? Easy —— you just count trumps! The more you have, the higher you raise.' This is a Law of Total Tricks approach to responding to overcalls. William Root gives much stricter guidelines.

In SAYC, some bids will carry the same messages as they would have had the overcall been an opening bid. For example:

- A simple raise is competitive, showing support and 6-9/10 points.

- A jump to game is to play.

However, some messages have changed:

- New suits are forcing by an unpassed hand and deny a fit for the overcall.
- Also, keep in mind that the overcalling hand is limited by the fact that he didn't begin with a double. Accordingly, you are not forced to respond simply because you hold a few points.

Since the opponents have opened, we have an additional option: the cuebid of their suit. In the original version of SAYC, the cuebid of the enemy suit in response to an overcall was a general, nonspecific force to game. In other words, the overcaller didn't know exactly *why* partner was forcing to game, just that he *was* forcing to game.

We seriously doubt that many still employ the cuebid in this fashion, and while we have made a conscious effort to avoid mentioning non-SAYC treatments as much as possible, the following has gained such popularity that we feel compelled to include it here.

When supporting partner's overcall:

- The simple raise remains competitive, but
- A jump bid in support of partner's suit is preemptive, and
- The cuebid of the enemy suit is used to show a limit raise, or better, in partner's suit.

On the three hands below, LHO opens 1♣ and partner overcalls 1♥, passed to you.

Hand 9

♠ J 5
♥ K 10 8 7
♦ Q 8 4 3
♣ J 6 3

Hand 10

♠ K Q 5
♥ A 10 8 7
♦ Q 8 4 3
♣ 6 3

Hand 11

♠ K Q 5
♥ K J 7 5
♦ Q 8 7 6
♣ K 7

Hand 9: Bid 3♥. A jump in this sequence should have less to do with HCP and more to do with your lovely four-card trump support. With one fewer heart you would simply make a competitive and natural raise to 2♥.

Hand 10: If the jump raise of an overcall is preemptive, with this collection you will respond to the overcall with a cuebid of 2♣. Partner will either rebid the agreed-upon suit at the lowest level — with a minimum — or jump to game if he has the appropriate values. The side benefit of this treatment should not be overlooked. Following a 1♣ opening and a 1♥ overcall by partner, in traditional auctions you would raise to 3♥. If partner has overcalled on minimum HCP, you might well be overextended. Instead, when you now bid 2♣, partner can sign off in 2♥, saving a level.

Hand 11: Again, start with 2♣. If partner tries to sign off in 2♥ you will now raise to the three-level, showing your extra values.

PREEMPTIVE JUMP OVERCALLS

A jump overcall is preemptive and shows the same hand shape and values as would an opening preempt at the same level. On each of the hands below, RHO has opened 1♦.

Hand 12

♠ 5
♥ K Q 10 8 7 4
♦ K 4 3
♣ J 6 3

Hand 13

♠ 6 5
♥ A Q 10 8 7 6 4
♦ Q 8 4
♣ 6

Hand 14

♠ Q 5
♥ A Q 10 8 7 6 4 2
♦ —
♣ 8 7 4

Hand 12: Bid 2♥.

Hand 13: Bid 3♥.

Hand 14: Bid 4♥.



SUMMARY

Suit overcalls show 8-16+ points.

- At the one-level, a major-suit overcall may be made on a four-card holding of exceptional quality; however, overcalls naturally show five-plus cards.
- A two-level overcall typically shows 10-16+ HCP and a suit of at least five cards. If the overcall is made on lesser values, you should hold a substantial suit or excellent distribution.
- A direct overcall of 1NT shows 15-18 HCP and a balanced hand containing at least one stopper in opener's suit.

Responses:

In general, one responds to a one-level overcall in a suit as if it were an opening bid.

- A simple raise shows 6-10/11 points and three-plus trumps.
- A jump raise shows 6-10 points and four-plus trumps.
- A raise to game is to play.
- New suits are forcing by an unpassed hand and deny a fit with partner.
- A cuebid of opener's suit shows a limit raise, or better, in partner's suit.

When responding to an overcall of 1NT, Stayman is in effect but, officially, transfers are not. Be advised, however, that many play all systems on.

A direct jump overcall is preemptive and shows the same shape and values as would an opening bid at the same level.



CHAPTER 13: MICHAELS AND THE UNUSUAL NOTRUMP

DIRECT CUEBIDS (MICHAELS)

A cuebid when the opponents have bid two suits is natural in the bid suit. A direct cuebid when the opponents have bid only one suit is known as **Michaels**. If the opening bid is one of a minor suit, then the cuebid will show 5-5 or better in the majors and trick-taking potential. If the opening bid is one of a major, the cuebid will show 5-5 or better in the other major and an unspecified minor suit. When you cuebid their major suit you are potentially forcing the auction to the three-level. Accordingly, you should hold a slightly stronger hand. Michaels was introduced in 1959 and was invented by the late Mike Michaels, writer, lecturer and frequent collaborator with Charles Goren.

Bids of this type are informative in providing partner, and your opponents, with the layout of your hand and have a number of major payoffs, including disrupting the opponents' bidding, battling for partscores and taking strategic sacrifices. No doubt they also have an obstructive aspect.

So how many HCP do you need to make this kind of bid? The question is repeatedly asked and there is no right answer. Rather, within the context of the vulnerability, you look at the trick-taking potential of the hand: 9 HCP can be delicious, or worthy of nothing more than a pass. In the two examples that follow, your opponent has opened 1♣.

Hand 1

♠ J 10 4 3 2
♥ 10 8 7 5 3
♦ J
♣ A K

Hand 2

♠ Q 10 9 8 4
♥ A Q J 9 7
♦ 7 5 4
♣ —

Hand 1: Pass. You have the right shape, but look where the HCP are located. This is a defensive hand.

Hand 2: With your strength nicely concentrated in the majors, this hand is clearly worthy of a 2♣ Michaels cuebid. The same would be true if RHO had opened 1♦. Your bid would then be 2♦.

By partnership agreement, you may choose to play what is referred to by many as 'mini-maxi Michaels.' In this method, the Michaels cuebidder either has a very weak or a very strong hand. With a middle-range holding, he makes a simple overcall and hopes to introduce the second suit later. The method allows for more accurate hand evaluation by the cuebidder's partner in a competitive auction.

While the original SAYC notes make no reference to point ranges, we recommend the mini-maxi approach. Show the very strong hands by making a Michaels cuebid followed by a second, non-forced, call. Given this approach, what would you bid with the following hands?

Hand 3

♠ A K 10 9 5
♥ 9
♦ K Q
♣ A J 9 4 3

Hand 4

♠ Q 10 9 8 6 5
♥ K J 10 8 7
♦ 3
♣ 5

Hand 5

♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ J
♦ Q 4
♣ Q 9 8 6 3

Hand 6

♠ 5
♥ A Q 10 8 6
♦ Q J 10 8 7 6
♣ 4

Hand 3: When RHO opens 1♥, you start with a Michaels cuebid of 2♥. If partner bids 2♠, your raise to 3♠ will alert him to the fact that you have about 17-20 HCP.

Hand 4: RHO opens 1♣. Bid 2♣, Michaels, showing your major two-suiter. If opener had bid 1♦, your bid would have been 2♦. While this hand contains only 6 HCP, the 6-5 distribution with all honors in the major suits makes it totally appropriate for a Michaels bid.

Hand 5: RHO opens 1♥. Bid 1♠ and hope to be able to show clubs later. Your scattered values and weak clubs make the hand unsuitable for a ‘mini’ Michaels.

Hand 6: RHO opens 1♠. Bid 2♠, showing hearts and one of the minors. If partner holds a club suit but has tolerance for diamonds or hearts, partner can bid 3♣. You will pull to 3♦. If partner likes diamonds he can then pass. If he prefers hearts, he will pull again.

On hands 7 and 8, RHO opens 1♣ or 1♦.

Hand 7
 ♠ A Q 9 8 6
 ♥ K Q 10 8 7
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 6

Hand 8
 ♠ K Q 10 8 7
 ♥ K Q 10 8 7
 ♦ Q 4
 ♣ A

Hand 7: Simply overcall 1♠, planning to bid the hearts at your next turn.

Hand 8: Cuebid opener’s suit. If partner bids 2♥, you will now raise to 3♥. With a ‘normal’ Michaels holding you wouldn’t think of bidding a second time unless forced, for example, by partner’s 2NT response. Thus, when you do bid again — voluntarily — you show a very strong hand instead of the weak one partner was expecting. Partner could, of course, have nothing. Therefore, if he actually holds a trick or so he should raise to game.

If the opponents have bid only one suit, and partner has not bid, and it is our first chance to bid the opponent’s suit, then the cuebid is still Michaels. Cuebids of opening preempts are also Michaels.

Hand 9
 ♠ A K 8 6 5
 ♥ Q J 10 4 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 8 6

Hand 10
 ♠ Q J 10 8 7 5
 ♥ K J 10 6 5
 ♦ 5 4
 ♣ —

Hand 11
 ♠ A K 10 6 5 3
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ Q J 9 7 2

Hand 9: LHO opens 1♦; partner passes and RHO bids 1NT. A 2♦ bid by you would be Michaels, showing the majors. The opponents have only bid one suit.

Hand 10: LHO opens either 1♣ or 1♦. Partner and RHO both pass. If you now cuebid opener’s suit, it will be Michaels.

Hand 11: RHO opens 2♥. You have an easy 3♥ cuebid, showing spades and a minor.

Responses to Michaels

- A preference bid.
- A jump preference (usually preemptive).
- A cuebid of opener’s suit, which is a game or slam try.
- A new suit, non-forcing.
- 2NT. When the cuebid is in a major suit, this asks partner to name his minor suit. 3NT, to play.
- 4♣ serves the same purpose as 2NT in competitive auctions when 2NT is no longer available. 4NT serves the same purpose as 2NT in competitive auctions when 2NT and 4♣ are no longer available.

THE UNUSUAL NOTRUMP

When RHO opens and you *jump* directly to 2NT, this bid is ‘unusual.’ Originally designed to show length in both minor suits, most now employ the Unusual Notrump — devised by Alvin Roth in 1948 — to show the two lower-ranking unbid suits. However you play it, your point count and shape should follow the same guidelines as the Michaels cuebid. Your suits should be 5-5 or better.

Like Michaels, you will normally have a hand that is weaker than an opening bid. Also like Michaels, you can play 'mini-maxi' to show either very weak or very strong hands. An advantage of Michaels and the Unusual Notrump is that the bids allow you to show both of your suits with one call, thereby 'unloading' the hand onto your unsuspecting partner. What the heck, partner can handle it.

Hand 12
 ♠ 8 6
 ♥ K Q 10 8 7
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q J 9 8 6 4

Hand 13
 ♠ 8 7
 ♥ —
 ♦ K Q 10 8 7 5
 ♣ A J 9 8 6

Hand 14
 ♠ 5
 ♥ K Q 10 8 6
 ♦ Q J 10 8 7 6
 ♣ 4

Hand 12: If RHO opens 1♦, bid 2NT. Partner will choose between hearts and clubs.

Hand 13: If RHO opens either 1♥ or 1♠, bid 2NT.

Hand 14: If RHO opens 1♣, bid 2NT. Over anything else, pass and hope to be able to come in later.

Intermediate HCP hands and very strong hands are treated in the same fashion as was outlined in the section on Michaels. With intermediate hands, start with a normal overcall, planning to rebid the second suit. With strong hands, start with an unusual 2NT and bid again after partner takes his choice of suits.

Hand 15
 ♠ 8 6
 ♥ K Q J 10 8
 ♦ A
 ♣ A Q J 9 8

Hand 16
 ♠ A
 ♥ 4
 ♦ A K Q 10 8
 ♣ A Q 10 9 8 7

Hand 15: If RHO opens 1♦, bid 2NT. After partner picks the suit, raise one level.

Hand 16: If RHO opens either 1♥ or 1♠, bid 4NT. This highly unusual jump tells partner to pick the minor-suit game. In the unlikely event that he can provide a trick, he will pick the minor-suit slam instead.

The bid of 2NT over a 2♣ opener is also 'unusual.' Since the 2♣ call is totally artificial, the 2NT overcall shows both minors. However, the bid of 2NT over a weak two-bid shows the equivalent of a strong notrump opener.

IN THE BALANCING SEAT

A cuebid in the balancing seat is still Michaels.

♠ K 10 9 8 4
 ♥ Q J 8 7 5
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 2

If LHO opens one diamond, passed to you, bid 2♦. This will tell partner the situation will one simple call.

However, a jump to 2NT in the balancing seat is not Unusual Notrump.

Oppt.	Partner	Oppt.	You
1♦	pass	pass	2NT

This shows a balanced 19-21 HCP.



SUMMARY

A direct cuebid when the opponents have bid only one suit is Michaels. If the bid suit is a minor, the cuebid shows 5-5 or better in the major suits. If the bid suit is a major, the cuebid shows 5-5 or better in the other major and an unspecified minor. The bid is made with either a weak hand or a very strong hand, in which case the bidder plans to take further action. With a two-suited intermediate hand, make a simple overcall. Cuebids over opening preempts are also Michaels, as is a 'balancing' cuebid.

Responses to Michaels:

- A preference bid.
- A jump preference (usually preemptive).
- A cuebid of opener's suit, which is a game or slam try.
- A new suit, non-forcing.
- 2NT. When the cuebid is in a major suit, this asks partner to name his minor suit. 3NT, to play.
- 4♣ serves the same purpose as 2NT in competitive auctions when 2NT is no longer available. 4NT serves the same purpose as 2NT in competitive auctions when 2NT and 4♦ are no longer available.

A cuebid when the opponents have bid two suits is natural. In other words, you have length in the suit you just bid.

A direct jump overcall of 2NT is the "Unusual Notrump" showing 5-5 or better in the two lowest-ranking unbid suits. Values are the same as for a Michaels cuebid (see above). A bid of 2NT over a 2♣ opener is also 'unusual,' but over a weak two-bid, 2NT shows the equivalent of a strong notrump opener.

A jump to 2NT in balancing seat is not Unusual, but shows a hand that would have opened 2NT.

Responses to Unusual Notrump:

- A preference bid.
- A jump preference (usually preemptive).
- A cuebid of opener's suit, which is a game or slam try.
- A new suit, non-forcing.
- 3NT, to play.
- 4NT, Blackwood.



CHAPTER 14: OVERCALLING THEIR 1NT OPENINGS

When the opponents open 1NT, it is dangerous to enter the auction. However, you should be reluctant to concede the contract without a struggle if you have some playing strength. SAYC does not officially include the many available conventions for competing after a 1NT opening bid, but that does not mean they are never used. One of the simplest, and perhaps the most popular with SAYC players, is Cappelletti.

CAPPELLETTI

The same system is also known as Hamilton and, in the UK, as Pottage. In any event, when the opponents open 1NT, the overcaller bids as follows:

- Double shows an equivalent hand. In other words, the overcaller was about to open 1NT himself.
- 2♣ shows a one-suited hand — for now, the suit is unknown.
- 2♦ shows both major suits.
- 2♥ shows hearts and an unnamed minor.
- 2♠ shows spades and an unnamed minor.
- 2NT shows both minor suits.
- Overcalls at the three-level are natural.

In general, all of these, except the double, suggest a holding of less than 15 HCP and reasonable shape. With more, the overcaller might well begin with a double. ‘Reasonable’ in this context is a matter of partnership style. The conservative — or sound — approach would require decent strength, a suit of at least six cards for the 2♣ overcall and 5-5 in the appropriate suits for any of the two-suit overcalls. An aggressive partnership might well bid 2♣ on any hand that would have opened with a weak two. Similarly, they might overcall 2♦ holding 4-4 in the majors and 2♥/2♠ holding four cards in the major and five in the minor.

By partnership agreement, Cappelletti may be used in the balancing seat, as well as in the direct seat.

RHO deals and opens 1NT

Hand 1
♠ A Q J 7 6 4
♥ 3
♦ K 9 7
♣ Q 5 2

Hand 2
♠ K Q 6 3 2
♥ A Q 10 7 5
♦ 8 6
♣ 3

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

Hand 1: Bid 2♣. As we will see in a minute, partner’s normal response will be 2♦, after which you can bid the spades.

Hand 2: Bid 2♦, showing both major suits in one call.

Hand 3: Bid 2♥, showing hearts and an unspecified minor suit.

Hand 4
 ♠ A Q J 8 4
 ♥ 6 4 2
 ♦ K Q 10 7 3
 ♣ —

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

Hand 6
 ♠ 5
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ Q 9 7
 ♣ A K J 10 7 4 2

Hand 4: Bid 2♠, showing spades and a minor.

Hand 5: Bid 2NT, showing both minor suits in one call.

Hand 6: You could bid 2♣; but since you will end up in 3♣ eventually, why give them time to find a suit? An immediate call of 3♣, natural, will make life all that more difficult for the opponents.

Responses to a Cappelletti overcall

When partner doubles, you may leave the double in for penalty when holding reasonable values, but should ‘pull’ the double to a suit contract if you are weak.

When partner overcalls 2♣, showing a one-suited hand, your normal bid will be 2♦, allowing him to name his suit. However, holding at least six good clubs, you are permitted to pass. It is also permissible to bid 2♥ or 2♠ when holding a strong five-card suit. Finally, you may bid 2NT if you are blessed with 11+ HCP and reasonable support for all four suits.

When partner overcalls 2♦, showing both majors:

- You may pass with six or more good diamonds.
- 2♥ or 2♠ is a simple preference bid.
- 2NT asks partner to bid his better minor.
- 3♣ requires six or more good clubs.
- 3♥/3♠ is invitational to game with at least four cards in the suit.

When partner overcalls 2♥ or 2♠, showing the bid major and an unspecified minor suit:

- Pass is to play, of course.
- A raise shows 7-10 points.
- A new suit is natural and non-forcing.
- 2NT asks for partner’s minor. If responder follows with a raise to three of the major, responder is inviting game in the major and should hold 10-12 points.

After this auction:

Opener	Partner	Responder	You
1NT	2♣	dbl	?

a redouble promises 7+ HCP as well as support for any suit partner might have, and invites partner to compete to the three-level.

LHO opens 1NT; partner overcalls 2♣ and RHO passes:

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

Hand 8
 ♠ Q 6 3 2
 ♥ J 9 8 4
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ 8 6 5

Hand 9
 ♠ 5 3
 ♥ A Q J 10 6 5
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ 8 4 2

Hand 7: Feel free to pass. If you are new to the convention as a partnership, we suspect partner will think you forgot what you were playing!

Hand 8: Bid 2♦. Partner will name his suit at his next turn. In the event he holds long diamonds, we expect he will pass. If so, you may end up declaring in 2♦. Lucky you.

Hand 9: Bid 2♥. This shows a good suit of five-plus cards. If partner has some support, you might get to a game you can make.

LHO opens 1NT; partner overcalls 2♦ and RHO passes:

Hand 10

♠ 8 4
♥ 4 2
♦ A Q J 10 7 3
♣ 8 7 2

Hand 11

♠ 8 7 3
♥ 4
♦ J 10 6 2
♣ Q 10 6 4 3

Hand 12

♠ A 3
♥ Q J 6 5
♦ Q J 7
♣ 9 7 4 2

Hand 10: Feel free to pass. It's as good a spot as any.

Hand 11: Bid 2♠, to play. You prefer spades to hearts.

Hand 12: Bid 3♥, invitational to game.

Hand 13

♠ —
♥ 4
♦ Q J 10 7 3 2
♣ 10 7 6 4 3 2

Hand 14

♠ 7 3
♥ 4
♦ 10 6 2
♣ A K Q 10 6 4 3

Hand 13: Bid 2NT, asking partner to name his better minor suit.

Hand 14: Bid 3♣, to play.

LHO opens 1NT; partner overcalls 2♥ and RHO passes:

Hand 15

♠ 8 4 2
♥ 7 4 2
♦ 10 7 3
♣ Q 8 7 2

Hand 16

♠ 9 6 5
♥ 4
♦ 10 9 6 2
♣ Q 10 6 4 3

Hand 17

♠ 8 3
♥ Q 10 6 5
♦ Q J 7
♣ A 7 4 2

Hand 15: Pass, and try to think happy thoughts.

Hand 16: Bid 2NT, asking partner to bid his minor.

Hand 17: Bid 3♥, invitational. At least some of your minor-suit cards are bound to be useful.

Hand 18

♠ K Q 10 9 8 4 3
♥ 4 2
♦ 7 2
♣ 7 6

Hand 19

♠ 7 3
♥ K 10 4 3
♦ 10 6 2
♣ A K 4 3

Hand 18: Bid 2♠, natural and non-forcing.

Hand 19: Bid 2NT. When partner shows his minor, rebid 3♥, invitational to game.

In all of the above examples, RHO passed partner's overcall. If RHO bids and your hand is worthless, you may, of course, pass. However, with appropriate support for one or more of partner's suit(s) you should have a good feeling for the partnership's ability to compete further.



SUMMARY

When the opponents open 1NT, the Cappelletti convention is as follows:

- Double shows an equivalent hand. In other words, the overcaller was about to open 1NT himself.
- 2♣ shows a one-suited hand — for now, the suit is unknown.
- 2♦ shows both major suits.
- 2♥ shows hearts and an unnamed minor.
- 2♠ shows spades and an unnamed minor.
- 2NT shows both minor suits.
- Overcalls at the three-level are natural.



CHAPTER 15: DOUBLES AND REDOUBLES

Double is clearly the most versatile word in the game of bridge. Originally employed to penalize overly aggressive opponents — a meaning it still carries from time to time — its uses have expanded dramatically as the game has evolved. Relatively common doubles include the following:

- The Penalty Double
- The Takeout Double
- The Negative Double
- The Balancing Double
- The Reopening Double
- The Optional Double
- The Responsive Double
- The Support Double
- The Maximal Double
- The Lead-Directing Double
- The Lightner Slam Double

There are also a couple of loose variations such as:

- Card-Showing Doubles and
- "Do Something Intelligent" Doubles

If you are going to employ the last one, we suggest you be certain that you have an intelligent partner.

All in all, it's enough to give anyone a headache. How to tell them all apart? What do they all mean? Well, we're going to give it a shot. The good news is that some of the more esoteric uses for the double are not a part of SAYC and will not be dealt with in this text.

SAYC incorporates the penalty double, the takeout double and the negative double. Additionally, lead-directing doubles, balancing doubles and reopening doubles are just part of everyday bridge. The negative double will be covered in Chapter 16. The reopening double will be covered in Chapter 17, and the balancing double will be covered in Chapter 18. Being familiar with the use of these six doubles is essential to playing SAYC.

THE PENALTY DOUBLE

Doubles of opening bids of 4♠ and higher show values and are often left in for penalties. Doubles of all game contracts are for penalty, though some carry secondary, lead-directing messages. The double of an opening bid of 1NT is also, in SAYC, penalty oriented, showing a hand of equal shape and strength. In other words, it shows that if RHO hadn't opened 1NT, you were intending to. As we saw in the previous chapter, partner should pull the double with a weak hand, but should leave the double in with any reasonable count. In case you haven't noticed, 1NT is extremely difficult to make when dummy is weak. Some of the most rewarding penalty doubles in the game are those of 1NT contracts.

You hold the hands below and the auction goes 1NT by LHO, double by partner, pass to you.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4
♠ Q 8 7 5	♠ Q J 9 8 7 4	♠ J 10 9	♠ 4 3 2
♥ 8 6 3	♥ 5 3	♥ 8 6	♥ Q 9 8 4 3
♦ K Q 4	♦ 8 7 2	♦ 8 7	♦ 5
♣ 10 9 8	♣ J 7	♣ J 10 9 8 7 2	♣ 7 6 4 3

Hand 1: Pass. Declarer is going to have no fun at all.

Hand 2: Bid 2♠. This is the same contract you would want to be in if partner had opened 1NT. Essentially, he did.

Hand 3: Bid 2♣. This is not Stayman, in spite of the fact that partner has a 1NT opener. The best news is that you get to play one level lower than would be the case if he had actually opened 1NT.

Hand 4: Bid 2♥. Partner was hoping for something else, but it wouldn't surprise us too much if you actually make this. Remember, you know where most of the high cards are located.

Additionally, doubles of lower-level contracts can be, and often are, for penalty. The question now becomes one of *context*. It might be easiest to put it this way: when the double is not intended in some other way, it is for penalty. Clear as mud, right? Oh well, on we go.

THE TAKEOUT DOUBLE

The takeout double is exactly what its name implies. Partner is not expected to leave it in place for penalty. Instead, partner is expected to 'take it out' by making a bid of some kind. The typical takeout double shows:

- Shortness in the suit(s) bid by the opponents.
- Reasonable support for the unbid suits.
- Roughly the equivalent of an opening hand. The better the shape, the less is needed in terms of high card points.

Holding each of the four hands below, your RHO opens 1♥.

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

Hand 5: You should double, for takeout. You hold a classic collection for this call, 13 HCP and shortness in the bid suit. Since you also have wonderful support for any suit partner cares to name, you want partner to pick the trump suit.

Hand 6: Again, you should double. You have fewer high cards, but even better shape. You have only 10 HCP, but given the assumption that partner will bid clubs, diamonds or spades, you can add as many as five support points for the heart void — more than enough to get involved. It is true that partner might have hearts and elect to take your double out to a notrump contract or, even worse, decide to defend one heart doubled. In either case, you are in trouble. This is definitely not what you wanted to hear. Sorry about that. No risk, no reward.

Hand 7: Pass. You have plenty of strength, but the shape is wrong. You are *not* short in the opponent's suit. This is important. When partner knows you have shortness in the opponent's suit, he is in a much better position to evaluate the playing strength of his hand opposite your takeout double. You also do not have reasonable support for all of the unbid suits. Since partners never seem to bid what you want them to, you can be certain that yours will want to play in spades — not a pleasant prospect. You don't have a suit you can overcall at the two-level, so sit back, relax and prepare to defend.

Hand 8: Pass, and try to do it smoothly. You have 14 HCP, but your best suit is their suit. You hope that partner will double somewhere along the line. If so, you will be happy to pass, converting that double — whatever its intended purpose — to penalty.

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

Hand 9: LHO opens 1♣; partner passes and RHO bids 1♦. You can now show both of the unbid suits with a takeout double.

Hand 10: When RHO opens 1♥, prefer to overcall with 1♠ rather than doubling. A simple overcall shows 8-16+ HCP. If partner does not raise, perhaps you will be able to get back into the auction with diamonds or a balancing double.

Doubling to show strong holdings

Another use for the takeout double involves hands that are too strong for a simple overcall — typically 17+ HCP. However, when holding strong hands, judgment must often be exercised when choosing between an overcall and a double.

Hand 11

♠ A K 8 7 5
♥ 8
♦ A K 9 6
♣ A 8 7

Hand 12

♠ A Q 8 6
♥ K J 7
♦ A J 6
♣ K J 7

Hand 13

♠ A Q J 7 6
♥ 5
♦ A K 10 8 6
♣ K 2

Hand 11: RHO opens 1♥. You should double. With 18 HCP in aces and kings you are too strong for a mere overcall. Over partner's weak response — 1♠, 1NT, 2♣ or 2♦ — you will now bid 2♠. You will do the same if opener's partner bids and your partner passes. Principle: a double followed by a suit bid shows 17+ HCP.

Hand 12: RHO opens at the one-level in any suit. Again, double. You are too strong to overcall 1NT, which would show 15-18 HCP. With 19+ HCP you should start with a double, planning a notrump rebid.

Hand 13: RHO opens 1♣. Despite your 17 HCP, start with an overcall of 1♠. Strong two-suited hands are difficult to show if you begin with a double. If partner is weak, you may be too high by the time you finish describing your shape.

Responding to a takeout double

If partner has made a takeout double and there is no intervening bid by RHO, you must bid, no matter how weak you are. You may pass only if (a) there is an intervening bid or (b) you hold length in the opposition suit *and* enough strength that you expect to exact a heavy penalty. Before taking advantage of (b), beware: it is difficult to set a one-level suit contract.

This being the case, it should go without saying that it is important for the player making the takeout double to have either good shape, support for all unbid suits, or a solid hand with sufficient strength to weather the coming storm.

Responding with no intervening bid

With a weak hand, bid your longest suit at the cheapest level available. If you hold four or more cards in the opponent's suit, you may be forced to bid a three-card suit. With two four-card suits, prefer a major to a minor.

Holding each of the hands below, LHO opens 1♠, partner doubles and RHO passes:

Hand 14

♠ J 8 4 3
♥ 8 6
♦ 8 7 6
♣ 10 8 7 4

Hand 15

♠ 9 8 6
♥ K J 7 6
♦ A J 6 4
♣ J 7

Hand 16

♠ Q 10 6 5
♥ K 7 4
♦ Q J 2
♣ J 8 6

Hand 14: It may not seem right, but you have no choice but to bid 2♣. You are far too weak to allow the opponents to play the contract of 1♠ doubled! They will make with several overtricks. We don't expect you to be overjoyed at the prospect of playing 2♣, but on average you will only go down one or two, which could be a good score. If partner has 13 HCP, then your side has 14, and that means that the opponents will have probably missed a game. There is also the distinct possibility that LHO will save the day by bidding 2♠.

Hand 15: With a decent 10-12 HCP and a four or five-card suit, jump the bidding. With this hand, your call is 3♥.

Hand 16: With 6-10 points and a stopper in the opponents' suit, bid 1NT. With a weaker hand, like Hand 14, you would not consider this course — notrump would indeed be a disaster. Keep in mind that notrump is not a desirable contract with an opening hand to your left and partner short in their long suit. Accordingly, a bid in this strain should be made only when you have a decent hand or no other rational choice.

This time, LHO opens 1♦, partner doubles, RHO passes and you hold:

Hand 17

♠ A Q 4 3
♥ A J 10 8
♦ 7 6
♣ K 8 7

Hand 18

♠ Q 8
♥ K 7 6
♦ A J 6 4
♣ J 7 8 3

Hand 19

♠ A Q 10 6 5
♥ K 7
♦ J 3 2
♣ Q 8 6

Hand 17: With 13+ HCP and good support for both majors, bid 2♦. The cuebid of the opponents suit in response to a takeout double (in principle and clarified later if not) says, "Partner, we have game wherever you like. You pick."

Hand 18: With 11-12 HCP, no four-card major and a reasonable double stopper in their suit, bid 2NT. With 13-16, bid 3NT.

Hand 19: Bid 4♠. Unless partner is lying through his teeth, this should be one of the easier contracts you will ever play. If partner is lying about the spade support, he should hold 17+ HCP and a reasonably self-sufficient suit. If partner corrects, we'd be tempted to go to six in partner's suit.

Responding with an intervening bid

When the opponents intervene over partner's takeout double, you are no longer forced to bid. With nothing, feel free to pass. Keep in mind, however, that partner has promised the rough equivalent of an opening hand and support for all unbid suits. Accordingly, you should compete with any hand with sufficient HCP and/or when you have good distribution. On all of the following hands LHO opens 1♦, partner doubles and RHO bids 1♥.

Hand 20

♠ A K 8 6 3
♥ 6
♦ 8 7 6
♣ 10 8 7 4

Hand 21

♠ Q 9 8 6
♥ K 7
♦ 7 6 4 2
♣ A 7 3

Hand 22

♠ K 10 6 5
♥ A 7
♦ 2
♣ A Q 8 6 4 2

Hand 20: Bid 3♠, even with your 7 HCP. Remember, partner's double of 1♦ is most likely promising four spades, and you have five. Get in there with your nine-card trump fit and don't make it easy for the opponents to find their heart game.

Hand 21: Compete with a bid of 1♣. The Law of Total Tricks should protect you nicely. With more, for example 10-12 HCP, jump to 2♣.

Hand 22: With 12+ HCP, cuebid the opponent's suit — in this case, either one. You do not know which game to play, and slam is possible. Let's hear more from partner.

As always, high card points are not always the most important factor. In the following auction you are South:

West

3♥

North

dbl

East

1♥
4♥

South

pass
?

You

♠	K Q 9 8 6
♥	9 8 4 3
♦	Q 4 2
♣	3

The opponents are known to have an eight- or nine-card fit in hearts. You weren't wild about an initial overcall of 1♠, but partner is now promising four or more spades and he invited you into the auction at the three-level. He is very likely to have a void in hearts. Particularly at favorable vulnerability, bid 4♠. When your side has a known fit in the 'boss' suit, it is almost always right to bid 4♠ over an opposing 4♥.

WHEN THE OPPONENTS MAKE A TAKEOUT DOUBLE

An opposing takeout double changes some of responder's bids. Most notably, the options are expanded by the availability of the redouble.

- A redouble shows a good hand of 10+ HCP and tends to deny a fit in opener's suit.
- A raise over the double shows the same hand as a raise without the double.
- A jump raise, which would have shown a limit raise of 10-12 HCP, now becomes preemptive with four-card support.
- A jump raise to game shows five-plus cards in support and a weak hand. In other words, it shows the same holding you would have needed to make this bid without the double.
- A bid of 2NT shows a limit raise in opener's suit. This conventional bid is part of SAYC and goes by the name of Jordan (see p. 123). When partner has opened a minor, this bid typically promises five-card support and 10+ HCP.
- A new suit at the one-level is forcing.
- A new suit at the two-level is invitational with five-plus cards in the bid suit.
- A jump shift is preemptive.

On each of the sample hands that follow, partner has opened 1♥ and RHO has doubled.

Hand 23

♠	K J 7 6
♥	6
♦	K J 7 6 5
♣	A 8 7

Hand 24

♠	K 8 6
♥	Q 3 2
♦	10 9 8 6 2
♣	J 3

Hand 23: Redouble. This bid shows 10+ HCP and tends to deny a heart fit. If you do have a fit and cannot bid the hand any other way, then you can start with a redouble and show the fit later. Most redoubles will look a lot like this and will be penalty oriented. In other words, you are advising your partner that the hand belongs to your side and that the opponents should not be allowed to play any contract undoubled. If your side cannot envision doubling them for an adequate penalty, then you should be declaring the hand.

Hand 24: Bid 2♥. It is what you would have done without the double and it is what you should do now. Knowing your side has a fit will help partner in deciding how high to compete.

Hand 25

♠	A
♥	J 7 4 3 2
♦	Q J 6
♣	9 8 7 4

Hand 26

♠	J 8 6
♥	3 2
♦	K Q 10 6 3 2
♣	Q 3

Hand 27

♠	K Q 7 4
♥	8 7
♦	A 6 5
♣	9 8 6 4

Hand 25: Bid 4♥. With any luck you can keep them out of 4♠.

Hand 26: Bid 3♦. The jump is preemptive and normally shows a six-card holding and less than 10 HCP.

Hand 27: Bid 1♠. We don't know where we might be going, but at least we bid spades before they did. This auction often ends at 1NT or 2♥.

JORDAN

According to the *OEB*, the 2NT bid in this context is popularly known as Jordan — after the U.S. expert Robert Jordan — but was in fact developed by Alan Truscott prior to moving to New York in the early 1960s. The bid was first described by Truscott in *The Bridge World* in 1954.

The bid of 2NT has no natural meaning after a double because with a strong balanced hand, one would redouble. The *OEB* states that “most experienced players (use the bid of 2NT) to show a hand that would have made a limit jump raise to 3 of opener’s suit if there had been no double.”

Many confuse Jordan with Jacoby 2NT. Jordan is used only over an intervening double and shows a limit raise or better. Jacoby 2NT shows opening count or better and is employed on hands where RHO passes. (See Chapter 4.)

Hand 28

♠ 5
♥ Q 8 6 5
♦ Q J 9 6
♣ K 7 4 3

Hand 29

♠ 5
♥ 10 9 8 7
♦ A 6 5 3
♣ Q 8 6 4

Once again, partner opens 1♥ and RHO doubles.

Hand 28: In support of hearts, this hand is worthy of a limit raise. Bid 2NT.

Hand 29: A natural corollary of Jordan is that the jump raise can now be used preemptively. Bid 3♥. Tell partner about the four-card support and jam the auction a bit in the process. You will not bid again unless partner forces you to.

LEAD-DIRECTING DOUBLES

This is a pretty easy concept. It is not so much a part of SAYC as it is a part of fundamental bridge, so we won’t belabor the topic. Doubles of artificial bids are lead-directing.

Hand 30

♠ 6 3
♥ A K J 9 8 7
♦ 8 7 6
♣ 7 4

Hand 31

♠ Q 9 8 6
♥ 9 7
♦ 9 5
♣ A K Q 8 3

Hand 32

♠ 6 5 3 2
♥ A 7
♦ —
♣ 10 9 8 6 5 4 2

Hand 30: LHO opens 1NT. Partner passes and RHO bids a 2♥ Jacoby Transfer. I don’t know about you, but we want a heart lead regardless of the final contract. If you double, you will get it.

Hand 31: This time it goes 1NT by LHO, pass by partner, 2♣ by RHO. The Stayman call is artificial, and once again a double is in order. If nothing else, partner will thank you for making his life easy on opening lead.

Hand 32: The auction proceeds as follows with you as South:

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	3♥	pass
4NT	pass	5♦	?

Assuming you want a diamond lead, now is the time to ensure that partner finds it. Double the artificial response to Blackwood.

REDOUBLES take on different meanings in different auctions. In general, the redouble:

- Is to play if your side is at the four-level or higher.
- Is to play if the opponents double an artificial bid by your side, e.g.,

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♦*	dbl
re dbl			

Shows a good hand if the opponent's double was for takeout, e.g.

West	North	East	South
1♠	dbl	re dbl	

Is for SOS when your side is doubled for penalty at the three-level or lower.

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♠	dbl	re dbl

South likely has a spade void and is of the view that anything will play better than 2♠ doubled.



SUMMARY

Doubles of suit bids are for takeout over opening partscore bids and are for penalty over opening bids at the game level or higher.

Responses to takeout doubles are:

- Any minimum bid (0-9 points).
- 1NT shows 6-10 points, balanced, with a stopper in the opponent's suit.
- A jump response is non-forcing and shows 10-12 points.
- 2NT shows 10-12 points, balanced, with a stopper in opponent's suit.
- A cuebid response to a takeout double is forcing, normally showing an opening hand and support for any suit partner may choose.
- 3NT is to play (13-16 points).
- A double jump is preemptive.
- Pass (rare) shows a hand with at least five decent cards in the opponent's suit combined with sufficient strength to make setting a one-level contract an attractive prospect.

Rebids by the takeout doubler after a minimum response:

- Pass (16 points or less).
- Raise (17-18 points and four-card support or better).
- Jump raise (19-21 points and four-card support or better).
- New suit (17-20 points and a five-card suit or better).
- Jump in a new suit (six-card, self-sufficient suit and a strong hand).
- 1NT shows 18-19 points.
- 2NT shows 19-21 points if a non-jump, 21-22 points if a jump.
- 3NT shows 9 tricks.
- A cuebid shows 21+ points with slam interest.

Direct doubles of 1NT are penalty-oriented and are made with a hand that is roughly the same shape and strength as that of the opener. After a pass by RHO, responder should:

- Pass with any decent holding.
- Pull the double to a suit at the two-level when holding a weak distributional hand.
- A jump response (rare) shows a good distributional hand with 8+ points, invitational to game.

If RHO bids over the double then responder to the double may:

- Pass.
- Double for penalty.
- Cuebid (for takeout).
- Bid normally

If RHO makes a takeout double of partner's suit bid:

- Suit bids at the one-level are forcing for one round.
- Suit bids at the two-level are not forcing and usually show six cards and less than 10 points.
- A jump raise is preemptive.
- 2NT shows a limit raise or better in opener's suit (Jordan). If in response to a minor, it shows adequate trump support and denies a four-card major. In response to a major, it shows three-plus trumps.
- Redouble shows 10+ points and tends to deny a fit with opener.
- A jump shift is preemptive.

Doubles of artificial bids are lead-directing.

Redoubles take on different meanings in different auctions. In general, the redouble:

- Is to play if your side is at the four-level or higher.
- Is to play if the opponents double an artificial bid by your side, e.g.

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♦*	dbl
redbl			

- Shows a good hand if the opponent's double was for takeout, e.g.

West	North	East	South
1♠	dbl	redbl	

- Is for SOS when your side is doubled for penalty at the three-level or lower.



CHAPTER 16: The NEGATIVE DOUBLE

In the early days of bridge, a responder's double of an overcall was for penalties. The modern trend is to use **negative doubles** instead. Without negative doubles, many hands are difficult to describe after opposition interference:

Hand 1
♠ A 8 6 3
♥ K Q 7 3
♦ 8 7 6
♣ 7 4

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

Hand 1: Partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 2♣. Had RHO passed, you would have bid 1♥. However, the 2♣ overcall gives you problems. The hand is unsuitable for a two-level bid and would, using traditional methods, be forced to pass. If partner has a four-card major and 13 HCP, he too will have to pass. If your side has any chance at all of bringing home a two-level contract in one of the other suits, then allowing your opponents to play in a contract of 2♣ —— usually making —— would be a crime.

Hand 2: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Again, your side may have a good partscore contract available in one of the other suits. If you pass, and partner has a hand that is not suitable for a reopening bid of some kind, then these possible contracts will be lost.

In competitive situations we want to:

- Find our fit as quickly as possible.
- Do everything we can to prevent the opponents from stealing a cheap low-level contract.

The negative double is the tool for accomplishing this. If partner has opened the bidding and the next player overcalls, a double by you is a negative double. The bid says, "Partner, I have values in the unbid suit(s) —— with emphasis on the unbid major(s) —— but my hand is not strong enough, and/or my suit(s) are not long enough to bid normally." In other words, a negative double is simply a takeout double by the responder.

Marty Bergen provides the following comparison in his book *Negative Doubles*.

Negative Double	Takeout Double
Partner opened.	An opponent opened.
The double is made by the responder.	The double is made by the side overcalling.
Overcaller's suit is doubled.	Opener's suit is doubled.
6+ HCP are needed at the one-level, more at higher levels.	11+ HCP are needed at the one-level, more at higher levels.
Emphasis is on the unbid major(s).	All unbid suits are promised.
You do not have to be short in the opponent's suit.	You must be short in the opponent's suit.
A negative double followed by a bid in a new suit is weak.	A takeout double followed by a bid in a new suit is strong.

Negative doubles are an essential tool because:

- They cater to many more hand types than penalty doubles.
- They occur more frequently than penalty doubles.
- They provide a very effective way in which to compete.

- You can still extract penalties by passing with length in their suit and waiting for partner to make a reopening double which you will then pass.

WHAT DO THEY PROMISE?

In terms of strength, the negative double promises 6+ HCP if RHO has overcalled at the one-level, 8/9+ if RHO has overcalled at the two-level and 10+ if RHO has overcalled at the three-level or above. While a negative double will usually be made with 7-9 HCP, there is no upper limit. With respect to specific holdings, some still profess that a negative double promises 4-4 or better in the unbid suits. However, negative doubles need not show both suits. Most of the time (although there are a few exceptions) they do promise at least two places to play, either the two unbid suits, or the unbid major and opener's minor.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♠	dbl

South is guaranteeing four-plus hearts, but not necessarily diamonds.

West	North	East	South
	1♣/1♦	1♥	dbl

When spades is the only unbid major, the double promises precisely four spades. A 1♠ call instead of the double would show five-plus spades.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	1♥/1♠

When both majors are unbid, bidding one of them at the one-level shows four-plus cards in the bid suit and denies four-plus cards in the other. Thus:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	dbl

This is the only auction in which the double promises four-plus cards in *both* majors.

West	North	East	South
	1♦	2♣	dbl

The double promises at least one four-card major, but not necessarily both. A bid of 2♥ or 2♠ instead of the double would show five-plus cards in the suit and at least 10 HCP. If South has only one of the majors, he also has diamonds or the strength and stoppers for 2NT.

As you can see, when responder chooses to bid a new suit instead of making a negative double, this action promises five-plus cards in the bid suit in all auctions except those that begin

Opener	Opp.	Responder	Opp.
1♣	1♦	?	

Up to what level?

According to SAYC, negative doubles are played through 2♠. By partnership agreement, however, many — the authors included — play them through 3♠. Some play them through even higher levels. The higher the level, the stronger the hand must be, though the strength may be distributional.

Hand 3

♠ 6 3
♥ K 8 7 5
♦ K 6 4
♣ 9 8 7 2

Hand 4

♠ A 8 6 4
♥ J 5 3
♦ J 9 8 6
♣ 7 3

Hand 5

♠ K Q 7 5
♥ 9 8 4
♦ Q 9 6 5
♣ 6 4

Hand 6

♠ K J 10 8 6 5
♥ K Q 6 5
♦ A 3
♣ 4

Hand 3: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Double. This is a minimum holding for the negative double.

Hand 4: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 2♥. Pass. In spite of the four-card spade suit, you are not strong enough to take action. Give RHO full marks for having succeeded in preempting you.

Hand 5: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♥. Double. Do not bid 1♠; when playing negative doubles, that call would, in this auction, show five-plus spades.

Hand 6: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Pass. You cannot double for penalty, since the double would be negative. It is unlikely that LHO will have a call, so 1♠ will be passed to partner, who should strain to reopen the auction with a double. When he does, you can quietly pass. Laughing hysterically at this point would be bad form.

Negative doubles can be used to show strong hands

Whereas negative doubles are primarily employed in situations where both sides are fighting for the partscore or where one side is aiming to push their opponents higher, a negative double followed by a jump, a cuebid or a notrump bid is used to show game invitational values (or more).

Hand 7

♠ A Q 6 4
♥ —
♦ K 9 8 6 4
♣ K J 5 2

Hand 8

♠ K 9 6 3
♥ A Q 10 7
♦ 8 6
♣ K J 3

Hand 9

♠ Q 8 7 5
♥ A J 7 4
♦ 10 9
♣ K J 4

Hand 7: Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 2♥. Double. You have a wonderful hand. If partner's values are all outside the heart suit, it's even better. Begin with a negative double and over partner's bid of 2♠, 3♣ or 3♦, cuebid 3♥ to show slam interest.

Hand 8: Partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 2♣. Remember, partner has opened the bidding. Start with a negative double. If partner bids a major, leap to four of the major. If partner bids 2♦, bid 3NT.

Hand 9: Partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 2♣. Double. If partner bids 2♥ or 2♠, raise to the three-level, invitational. If he rebids 2♦, bid 2NT, also invitational.

RESPONDING TO A NEGATIVE DOUBLE

Partner has shown a hand worthy of competition and has asked you to choose one of the other suits or to rebid your own. Remember that partner does not necessarily guarantee both unbid suits.

In the following examples, you open 1♦. LHO overcalls 1♠. Partner doubles and RHO passes. It is now your bid.

Hand 10

♠ K 7 6
♥ A 5 4
♦ A Q 8 6 4
♣ J 5

Hand 11

♠ 8 7
♥ K 5
♦ K Q J 9 7
♣ K J 4 3

Hand 12

♠ K J 6
♥ 8 7 4
♦ K Q 8 7
♣ A 9 4

Hand 10: Bid 2♦ at IMP scoring, where you want the safest contract. Matchpoint players may choose 1NT knowing there is potential danger if RHO gains the lead.

Hand 11: Start with 2♣ and see where it leads. You may land in a notrump contract.

Hand 12: Bid 1NT. It's a minimum, but you have adequate stoppers in spades.

Hand 13

♠ A J 6
♥ K 5
♦ A Q J 9 3
♣ K J 6

Hand 14

♠ 5
♥ A Q 7 6
♦ K Q J 9 7
♣ A Q 6

Hand 15

♠ Q 7
♥ A Q 7 6
♦ K J 9 7
♣ J 4 3

Hand 13: Bid 3NT. Partner has at least 6 HCP and you have 19.

Hand 14: Bid 2♠. You have a great hand but are not sure where to go. You are guaranteeing a heart fit or a strong hand with support for clubs and diamonds.

Hand 15: Bid 2♥.

Two examples:

West

♠ A 8
♥ K J 9 7
♦ A Q 8 7 6
♣ 6 2

East

♠ 7 5 3
♥ Q 8 6 5 3
♦ J 9
♣ K Q 8

West

1♦
2♥

North

1♠

East

dbl pass

South

Without negative doubles, North-South might well steal the hand in spades for a good score. In this auction, however, if North bids 2♠, East can compete to 3♥ and take comfort from the fact that partner will not think he has a great hand, since he did not bid a direct 2♥ at his first opportunity.

West

♠ K 10 3 2
♥ A Q
♦ 8 6 3
♣ A 8 6 4

East

♠ Q J 7 4
♥ K J 7 4
♦ 5 2
♣ J 9 7

West

1♣
2♠

North

1♦

East

dbl 2♦

South

A classic negative double. If East were to bid 1♥ instead, the spade fit could get lost. You don't want the opponents to steal a 2♦ contract, do you?



SUMMARY

Negative doubles are employed in SAYC through 2♠, though some play them through 3♠, or even higher. In general, negative doubles show values in the unbid suits — most particularly the majors — and insufficient strength and/or length to bid naturally.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	dbl	

- Shows 4-4 or better in the major suits.

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	dbl	

- Shows four spades. A bid of 1♠ instead promises a five-card suit.

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	dbl	

- Shows four-plus hearts.

Responses:

- Minimum rebids show less than 16 points and are non-forcing.
- Jump rebids show a good 16-18 points and are non-forcing.
- A cuebid of the opponent's suit shows 19+ points and is game forcing.
- A pass, albeit rare, is for penalty.



CHAPTER 17: The REOPENING DOUBLE

The reopening double is exactly what its name implies. Let's say that you dealt yourself the following:

You
♠ A K 6 3
♥ A K 5 3
♦ K 10 7 2
♣ 2

You open 1♦. LHO overcalls 2♣ and partner and RHO pass. Since you are not about to allow the opponents to play unmolested in 2♣, you now reopen the bidding with a double. If it looks a lot like a takeout double, that's because it is a lot like a takeout double. The only difference is that this double is made by the opener, in the passout seat. What happens now depends a great deal on partner's hand. He could have all sorts of combinations:

Partner 1
♠ 8 7 5 4 2
♥ 10 4
♦ 6 4 3
♣ 8 6 5

Partner 2
♠ 8 7
♥ 10 4
♦ Q 9 8 6 3
♣ 8 7 4 3

Partner 3
♠ 4 2
♥ Q 2
♦ 8 4 3
♣ A Q 10 7 5 3

With the first hand, he will bid 2♠. At the very least, you will force the opponents to the three-level if they want to play on offense. With the second hand, he will bid 2♦ and, again, you will be forcing the opponents to a higher level. And if partner happens to hold the third hand, he will be singing your praises for a long time to come. Before he does, of course, he will convert your takeout double to a penalty double by the simple act of passing.

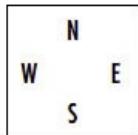
This type of situation comes up much more frequently than most bridge players realize. The reopening double should be made on many hands that look much different from the classic example shown above.

Perhaps a few examples from actual play will be helpful:

Dealer: East
Neither vul.

North
♠ A J 9 3
♥ K 9
♦ A Q 5 4 2
♣ 9 4

West
♠ K 7 6 5 2
♥ A 4 2
♦ 9 3
♣ A K 6



East
♠ Q 10
♥ 8 6 3
♦ K J 8 7 6
♣ Q J 3

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

In real life, with neither side vulnerable, the auction proceeded:

West	North	East	South
		pass	pass
1♠	2♦	pass	pass
2♠	all pass		

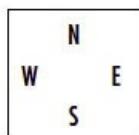
Two spades went down one. North has a perfectly reasonable overcall and East is stuck without a bid. Since East-West were playing negative doubles, a penalty double at this point in the proceedings was not, as they say, in the cards. What? You don't like the 2♠ rebid? Good, neither do we. But this kind of thing happens all the time. Had West simply reopened with a double, East-West would probably have set 2♦ a couple of tricks and generated a lovely result.

How about one that's a bit harder:

Dealer: North
Neither vul.

North
♠ Q 2
♥ 7 6
♦ 7 6 5 2
♣ J 10 9 8 7

West
♠ 7
♥ A K J 5 3
♦ K 10 9 4
♣ 6 4 3

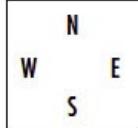


East
♠ A J 6 5 4 3
♥ 2
♦ Q J 3
♣ K Q 5

South
♠ K 10 9 8
♥ Q 10 9 8 4
♦ A 8
♣ A 2

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♠	2♥
pass	pass	?	

East must now decide whether to rebid the spades or protect his partner. Remember, just because partner has not bid does not mean that he lacks defensive values. You should strain to protect your partner with a reopening double whenever possible. This hand also highlights the danger involved when you overcall holding length in opener's suit. In this case, West is likely to be short in spades, increasing the possibility that he holds heart length.

North			
Dealer: South N-S vul.			
West ♠ A K J 5 3 ♥ A 10 9 3 ♦ 5 ♣ Q 9 3			East ♠ 10 2 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ A Q J 7 4 ♣ K 10 6
			
South ♠ 7 6 4 ♥ J 5 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ J 8 7 5 4			
West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	pass	pass
?			

We suppose you could bid 2♥, but what's the rush? Try the double and see what partner has to say. In this case, East can't pass quickly enough. In general, opener should reopen with a double whenever he would be happy if partner decides to leave it in for penalty. Usually, for the double, opener will be holding a singleton or doubleton in the overcalled suit. With three or more, the tendency is to pass. With a void, the tendency is to bid.



SUMMARY

When playing negative doubles, partner is no longer in a position to double an overcall for penalties. Accordingly, when two passes follow an overcall, opener should strain to reopen with a double when holding one or two cards in the suit of the overcall.



CHAPTER 18: BALANCING

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	pass	?

Some of the toughest decisions in bridge confront players in this kind of position. If South passes, the auction is over and West will play the contract of 1♥. If South bids, he will be ‘balancing,’ or in Europe, ‘protecting.’ Balancing truly can be more of an art form than a science. While SAYC does not provide guidelines for balancing, it is an integral part of bridge.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is that South may balance with considerably less strength than would be required for a direct overcall or takeout double. Provided the auction is right, a good rule of thumb is to overbid by 3 points in passout seat.

When the opponents stop bidding at a low level — especially when they find a good trump suit — you should consider backing into the auction even if you were not strong enough to take any direct action before. There are three aims:

- To find a likely contract of your own.
- To drive the opposition one level higher so you have a better chance to defeat them.
- To protect partner, who, in spite of a good hand, may have been unable to take action over the opening call.

In general, balancing bids mean much the same as their direct-seat counterparts, but can be lighter.

- A balancing bid of 1NT shows 12-14 points.
- Balancing with a jump in a suit shows opening count.
- A balancing double is for takeout.
- A balancing double followed by a minimum notrump bid shows 15-18 points.
- A balancing jump to 2NT shows 19-21 points.
- A balancing cuebid is Michaels.

Balancing Overcalls

When a low-level contract is passed to you, remember two things: 1) The opponents have shown no interest in game and 2) Partner may have a good hand but was unable to take earlier action. Bids you make are based, in part, on partner’s presumed values as well as your own.

Hand 1

♠ 9
♥ A J 10 8 7 2
♦ J 8 5
♣ 9 7 4

Hand 2

♠ J 6 5
♥ A K 10 8 7 2
♦ K Q 5
♣ 9

Hand 3

♠ 8 6
♥ J 10 8 7 4
♦ A 7 4
♣ K J 8

Hand 1: LHO opens 1♠, passed to you. If you were in the direct seat, you would be forced to pass. In the passout seat, you can add 3 HCP to your lovely distributional holding and balance with a call of 2♥. Obviously, partner will need to take all of this into account and must be aware that your hand will often be weaker than normal for your action.

Hand 2: LHO opens 1♣, passed to you. This collection is too strong for an overcall of 1♥. Bid 2♥ instead. A jump overcall in the balancing seat is not a weak bid. Rather, it shows a hand in the normal opening-bid range, usually containing six-plus cards in the bid suit.

Hand 3: RHO opens 1♦. You pass. LHO raises to 2♦, passed to you. You can now balance with 2♥. The safest time for this type of action is when the opponents have found a fit and do not make a game try. They have only about 20 points between them, so partner should have about 10. As they didn't bid hearts, the chances of finding partner with heart support are reasonable. Finally, we don't want to sell out at the two-level, especially in a minor.

Hand 4
 ♠ Q J 8 7 4
 ♥ 4 3
 ♦ K 7 4
 ♣ Q 9 8

Hand 5
 ♠ K Q 10 8 7
 ♥ 4 3
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ Q J 9 8

Hand 6
 ♠ 9 8 7
 ♥ Q J 7
 ♦ K 9 7 4
 ♣ K 9 8

Hand 4: RHO opens 1♥. You pass. LHO raises to 2♥ and this bid is passed to you. You weren't strong enough to overcall with 1♠ immediately, but now it is correct to balance with 2♠. The opponents have shown no interest in game, so they have at most 23 HCP and might have as few as 19 or 20. Partner, therefore, is marked with some values, perhaps as much as an opening bid. With a defensively oriented hand containing scattered points (especially points in the opponents' suit) but lacking tricks, he might choose to pass the 2♥ call. It is, in fact, safer to bid 2♠ now than it would have been to overcall at your first turn. You may drive the opponents to 3♥, where your chances for a plus score will be greater. If they let you play 2♠, you may well make it. Even if they let you play 2♠ and you go down, your result might well be an improvement over their making 2♥.

Hand 5: LHO opens 1♥. Partner and RHO pass. Partner should have some count and some spade support, and we certainly don't want to let them play 1♥. Bid 1♠.

Hand 6: RHO opens 1♥. You pass. LHO raises to 2♥ and this is passed to you. This time you must pass. You have more than enough points to balance, but your shape is unattractive and your points are the wrong ones. The ♥Q and ♥J will be worthless to your side if you declare. Since you possess those cards, your chances of finding partner with some values that will be useful are decreased. It is too dangerous to balance.

Balancing in notrump

Typically, our notrump range is 15-17 HCP, a range that is used when opening the bidding. When making a direct 1NT overcall, the range is normally 15-18 HCP. A *balancing* notrump, however — after borrowing 3 HCP — shows 12-14.

You
 ♠ K Q 6
 ♥ K 10 8
 ♦ K J 4
 ♣ J 10 4 3

LHO opens 1♠, which is passed around to you. You would never dream of opening 1NT or making a direct notrump overcall with this hand. But, as a balancing hand, 1NT is appropriate. Remember, partner may have any number of hands with which he could not, for one reason or another, bid directly over 1♠. Unlike its direct-seat counterpart, the balancing jump to 2NT shows 19-21 points and is not Unusual, though some play it that way by partnership agreement.

Balancing doubles

Balancing doubles, like their direct counterparts, are for takeout. As with overcalls, they require less strength.

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

Hand 8
 ♠ A 10 6
 ♥ A 9 4
 ♦ 7 3
 ♣ Q 10 7 5 2

Hand 9
 ♠ A 10 8 4
 ♥ 8 4
 ♦ Q 10 8 7
 ♣ K 10 6

Hand 10
 ♠ Q 8 6 3
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ A J 7 6
 ♣ K 8 7

Hand 7: LHO opens 1♣, passed to you. In the passout seat, with both majors covered, tolerance for diamonds and 10 HCP, you have a clear balancing double. Note that you might well have chosen to pass had RHO opened the bidding. In the balancing seat, you may take liberties.

Hand 8: LHO opens 1♦, passed to you. Again, while you would never contemplate doubling over a direct 1♦ bid, in the balancing seat you don't have much choice. RHO is weak, and partner could have a lovely hand while unable to take action in the direct seat.

Hand 9: RHO opens 1♥. You pass. LHO raises to 2♥ and this is passed to you. You should now balance with a double. This double is for takeout, in spite of the fact that you passed at your first opportunity. When the opponents stop low and you balance with a double, your double is not for penalties.

Hand 10: LHO opens 1♥, and partner and RHO pass. Double. With shortage in the opponent's suit and 10+ HCP, a double is always the best option as it gives partner the opportunity to pass with length and strength in the opposition suit. If this is, in fact, the case, partner will have to decide whether or not a sufficient penalty can be exacted from a one-level contract. Vulnerability may be a key factor here.

With most strong hands, begin with a double. If you do not, partner will have no way of knowing that your action is based on solid values.

Hand 11
♠ A Q J 9 3
♥ 7 2
♦ 8 4
♣ A K Q 5

Hand 12
♠ A J 7
♥ K Q 4
♦ Q J 10 7
♣ K 9 2

Hand 11: Again, LHO opens 1♥, passed to you. In the direct seat, you would simply overcall 1♠. But when you add 3 HCP, you are now looking at a hand that is too strong for a simple overcall. You are also too strong to bid 2♠. Start with a double. You intend to bid your long suit at your next opportunity.

Hand 12: LHO opens 1♥, passed to you. You would like to bid 1NT, but the hand is too strong to do that in the balancing seat. The answer is to start with a double, intending a notrump bid at your next turn, showing a hand in the normal 1NT range.

Michaels in the balancing seat

Like its direct-seat counterpart, the cuebid is Michaels (see page 107).

Hand 13
♠ 9
♥ K 10 9 8 5 4
♦ A
♣ Q J 8 7 5

Hand 13: If LHO opens 1♠, passed to you, bid 2♠. Doubling risks partner passing for penalty. If he does, things could get messy.

Remember that 2NT in this auction is not Unusual, but shows a balanced 19-21 HCP.

When not to balance

We have already seen a couple of times when it may be wrong to balance:

- When you have a strong holding in the opponents' suit.
- When you fear they may find a better suit if you balance.
- When you have values in their suit that will be wasted if your side declares the hand.

Another situation is when the opponents stop low, but the auction suggests they do not have a fit. In that case, the deal may be a misfit all the way around, and a balancing action could well save the opponents.

Hand 14
 ♠ Q 8 6 5
 ♥ K Q 6 5
 ♦ Q J 9 6
 ♣ 4

Hand 15
 ♠ 9 8
 ♥ A 4 3
 ♦ 10 9 6 5 2
 ♣ J 8 7

Hand 14: LHO opens 1♥, passed to you. Pass! If partner couldn't take any action over 1♥, it's hard to conceive of a good contract for your side. The most likely scenario is that opener has a very nice hand. Reopening here runs the risk of your opponents finding a better spot, or your side getting into trouble. Defend. It might be fun.

Hand 15: LHO opens 1♣, passed to you. Pass. Even after you add 3 HCP, you do not have the strength to contemplate any balancing action. Here you have a clear, smooth pass — the hardest bid in bridge!

RESPONDING TO PARTNER'S BALANCING SEAT ACTION

When your partner overcalls or doubles in the balancing seat, remember that he is consistently overbidding by 3 HCP. Thus as responder to such a bid, you must underbid by about 3 HCP.

Responding to a balancing overcall

In the following auction:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	1♣	pass

Hand 16
 ♠ Q 10 7 5
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K 9 5
 ♣ K 8 3

Hand 17
 ♠ K 8 7
 ♥ A 10 9 5
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ Q 9 7 3

Hand 18
 ♠ K 8 4 3
 ♥ A 4
 ♦ K 3 2
 ♣ Q J 6 2

Hand 16: Bid ♠. We suggest a range of 7-11 HCP for a single raise. This hand represents a maximum.

Hand 17: Again, bid 2♠. This is a decent holding for the call.

Hand 18: Bid 3♠. The double raise of a balancing overcall shows a 12-14 count.

Responding to a balancing suit bid by bidding notrump shows the following ranges:

- 1NT shows 9-12 points.
- 2NT shows 12-14.
- 3NT shows 15+.

All of these bids should have a decent control of the opponent's suit and tolerance for partner's suit.

As always, if you suspect a misfit auction, get out as quickly as possible.

Responding to a balancing double

The two hands below begin with the following auction:

West	North	East	South
pass	dbl	1♦	pass

Hand 19

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

Hand 20

- ♠ K 6
- ♥ K 10 4
- ♦ A Q 10 4 3
- ♣ 6 4 3

Hand 19: We suggest a bid of 2♠. A jump to the two-level should show 10-12 points. Holding anything less, be content with 1♠.

Hand 20: Every bridge player's dream come true. You couldn't double the opening call, but you are delighted to pass partner's balancing double and take the sure plus.

Responding to a balancing 1NT

Since the 1NT bid shows 12-14 HCP, you will need at least 11 HCP to invite game. The general consensus is that the systems normally in place when responding to a 1NT opening or direct 1NT overcall should remain on when responding to a balancing bid of 1NT. Some play 'systems off' as a partnership agreement. However, playing 'systems on' avoids the problems that arise from having to learn two different methods.

As an example of why balancing can be critically important, we offer a deal that came up recently in a club game:

North			
Dealer: West		♠ A Q 10 5 3	
Both vul.		♥ Q 10 8	
West	♦ 8	♣ A J 10 8	
South			
♠ K J 9 8 6 2		N	
♥ 6 3		W E	
♦ 10 7 3 2		S	
♣ K			
East			
♠ 4		♠ 4	
♥ A J 7 4		♥ A J 7 4	
♦ Q 9 6 5 4		♦ Q 9 6 5 4	
♣ Q 3 2		♣ Q 3 2	
West			
2♠	North	East	South
	pass	pass	?

Whatever one may think of the opening 2♠ bid, the fact of the matter is that an amazing number of players would take this action, and did. Yet only two players in the South seat balanced with a double. Perfect defense can set the contract of 2♠ by four tricks. Setting it three tricks is a walk in the park. If you double, you net 800-1100. Passing gets you, at best, 400 — less than you would have scored in 3NT or 5♣ if West had never opened and your side had bid to game unmolested. The choice, of course, is yours.



SUMMARY

Balancing bids —— those made in the passout seat —— mean much the same as their direct-seat counterparts, but can be lighter.

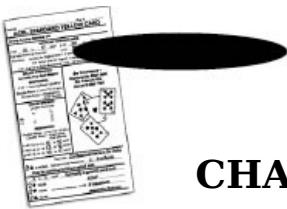
- A balancing bid of 1NT shows 12-14 points.
- Balancing with a jump in a suit shows opening count.
- A balancing double is for takeout.
- A balancing double followed by a minimum rebid in notrump shows 15-18 points.
- A balancing jump to 2NT shows 19-21 points.
- A balancing cuebid is Michaels.

When responding to a balancing suit bid by partner, remember that he is already bidding some of your values for you:

- A single raise shows 7-11 HCP.
- A jump raise shows 12-14 HCP.
- 1NT shows 9-12 HCP.
- 2NT shows 12-14 HCP.
- 3NT shows 15+ HCP.

When partner balances with a double, a jump response in a suit shows 10-12 HCP.

When responding to a balancing 1NT, remember that partner is showing 12-14 HCP; all systems are on unless otherwise agreed.



CHAPTER 19: SLAM BIDDING

There is a special pleasure in slams, and the successes are remembered long after the failed attempts are forgotten. To make a slam you not only need sufficient tricks, you must also have a way to prevent the opponents from setting you off the top. For this purpose you need controls, which usually means aces and kings. Voids can be very useful as well, so long as partner does not have concentration of values in your short suit!

The importance of a fit

With a trump fit, you can usually take more tricks than you can in notrump. You should, therefore, play slam in a suit whenever possible, reserving the notrump slams for those moments when there is no fit, both hands are balanced or when you can "count" the necessary number of tricks.

There is another consideration. While notrump slams usually require power — 32+ HCP for a small slam and 37 HCP for a grand slam being the generally recommended minimums — suit slams can often be made on less, sometimes much less. In fact, while it is unlikely that you will find a way to bid it, a grand slam in a trump contract can be made on as little as 5 HCP. You don't believe us?

North	
♠	5 4 3 2
♥	4 3 2
♦	—
♣	A 10 8 4 3 2
West	
♠	9 8 7 6
♥	A K Q J 10
♦	A K Q
♣	K
East	
♠	A K Q J 10
♥	9 8 7 6 5
♦	J 10
♣	Q
South	
♠	—
♥	—
♦	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
♣	J 9 7 6 5

We loaded the East-West hands in spades and hearts, but the fact of the matter is that so long as each opponent holds at least one card in each of the major suits — and the minor suit cards are as shown — nothing can prevent North-South from taking thirteen tricks with clubs as trumps.

THE SLAM TOOLBOX

Before we go any further, we need to review some of the tools that are available to the slam bidder.

Blackwood

The Blackwood convention was invented in 1933 by Easley Blackwood, a former insurance manager who served as ACBL Executive Secretary from 1968 to 1971. A member of the ACBL Hall of Fame, he oversaw Blackwood Enterprises, a company which ran a bridge club and hosted bridge cruises.

In May of 1935, Blackwood sent his idea for the 4NT ace-asking convention to Albert H. Morehead, editor of *The Bridge World*. Here is part of the response Blackwood received:

While the suggestion is a good one, the four no-trump bid will remain informative rather than an interrogative bid, and our subscribers are too prone to accept anything printed in *The Bridge World* as a recommended change in the Culbertson system.

In Culbertson's 1938 printing of *The Gold Book*, he admitted that the convention had "a number of sturdy adherents" and *The Bridge World* finally published a more complete account of the convention in September 1938. By 1949 Culbertson gave up trying to keep the Blackwood convention out of his system and said that, "when a pair announced it was playing the Culbertson System, it should be assumed that the Blackwood Convention was being played."

Easley Blackwood made nothing from his creation. However, Richard Fry, an expert player and ACBL Hall of Fame member, commented that, "If Blackwood had a nickel for every time it was misused, he'd be a multi-millionaire ..."

Roman Keycard Blackwood

In the modern game, Blackwood has been universally supplanted by Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKB), in which the king of trumps is counted as a fifth ace.

When partner uses 4NT as an ace-asking bid, the responses are as follows:

5♣ =	0 or 3 keycards.
5♦ =	1 or 4 keycards.
5♥ =	2 or 5 keycards without the queen of agreed trump suit.
5♠ =	2 or 5 keycards with the queen of agreed trump suit.

In the event that suit agreement has not been reached, the simplest solution is to treat the last bid suit as trumps when responding to RKB. Note that this schedule of responses (known as '0314') can be replaced by a similar scheme ('1430') in which the first two responses are inverted. Make sure you know which version your partnership is playing!

You hold the following:

♠ A K 10 8
♥ K J 8 3 2
♦ K Q
♣ Q 3

You	Partner
1♥	1♠
3♠	4NT
?	

Your response is 5♥, showing two keycards — the ace and king of trumps — and denying the queen of trumps. If partner wishes to ask for kings in the side suits, he can follow up with 5NT.

You	Partner
1♥	1♠
3♠	4NT
5♥	5NT

You now respond in the same manner as normal Blackwood, with the following exception: do not show the king of trumps a second time! Therefore, with this hand, you should bid 6♥, showing the other two kings.

Now let's look at some extensions which are part of RKB 0314, and which provide even more information. The bidding goes:

You	Partner
1♣	1♠
3♠	4NT
5♦	5♥

5♦ by West shows one or four keycards, either an ace or the king of spades, but says nothing about the queen. So what is 5♥? When partner's response to 4NT is either 5♣ or 5♦, the bid of the next

higher non-trump suit asks, "Do you have the trump queen?" Lacking the queen, bid the cheapest possible level of trumps, in this case 5♠. The bid of 6♠ shows the ♠Q and the bid of anything else shows extra values as well as the ♠Q.

There are other variations in use for responding to this sequence. The one described above is, we believe, the most common; the one currently gaining the most popularity is shown below. Let's say you hold the following:

You
 ♠ K Q 4 3
 ♥ 3
 ♦ K Q J
 ♣ Q J 10 9 7

In the auction above, partner has asked for 'aces' and you have responded 5♦ to show the trump ♠K. Partner now bids 5♥ asking about the queen. Instead of bidding 6♠, you can provide additional information by bidding the cheapest suit in which you hold an outside king. In this case, you will bid 6♦. Obviously, partnership agreement is critical.

Blackwood, while undeniably useful, is much abused by less experienced players.

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

Provided the opponents do not lead a diamond, a grand slam can be made on these two hands. If they do lead a diamond, however, the best East-West can do is eleven tricks. Unfortunately, Blackwood will not uncover the fatal flaw. If East asks for keycards, he will discover that the partnership is one short, but which one is it? If partner holds the diamond ace, slam might still be a good prospect. If he doesn't, it could mean disaster. For this reason, Blackwood should not be employed when holding a worthless doubleton.

It is equally problematical to use Blackwood with a void.

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

If partner holds the ace of hearts, 7♠ is cold. (Okay, they might get a first-round club ruff, but we think you get the point). Unfortunately, when partner turns up with the wrong ace, a heart lead will hold you to eleven tricks. And Blackwood can't tell you *which* aces partner holds, only that he has two of them.

Gerber

The convention we call Gerber was first devised by Dr. William Konigsberger and Win Nye from Europe, who published it abroad in 1936. However, John Gerber of Houston, Texas introduced the European convention to North Americans in 1938, and it was named for the local. Gerber was a non-playing captain for North American teams at the Bermuda Bowl, held annually in the early sixties. He was an expert player and a member of the ACBL Hall of Fame.

Gerber, a jump to 4♣, normally used after partner has opened some number of notrump is, like Blackwood, ace asking. The response structure is also similar.

4♦	shows all of the aces or none of the aces.
4♥	shows one ace.
4♠	shows two aces.
4NT	shows three aces.

If the 4♣ bidder continues with a call of 5♣, the bid asks partner how many kings he holds. The 4♣ bid in the following auctions is Gerber. Note the last auction. While partner's first bid wasn't technically in notrump, his rebid defined a strong notrump hand; thus, all systems are on, including Gerber.

West	East
1NT	4♣
2NT	4♣
2♣	2♦
2NT	4♣

Some like to play that any jump to 4♣ is Gerber — we do not favor this one — and some have the agreement that any jump to 4♣ is Gerber if partner's first call was notrump or partner's last call was notrump. Again, if you have not discussed these issues with a regular partner, assume they are playing the simplest approach.

The responses to 5♣ are identical: 5♦ shows all the kings or none, 5♥ shows one king, etc.

West	East
♠ J 7 4 3	♠ A K Q
♥ A 9 8 7	♥ K 2
♦ A K 3	♦ 2
♣ A 5	♣ K Q J 10 9 8 7
West	East
1NT	4♣
4NT	7NT

East almost falls off his chair when West opens 1NT. Realizing that the only thing he needs is three aces — partner could have enough for the opening bid and still be missing one — he trots out Gerber. When he finds what he is looking for, he wastes no time bidding the laydown grand.

Employing Gerber, the partnership can sign off in 4NT, something that is not possible when using Blackwood.

West	East
♠ K Q J 3	♠ 2
♥ A K	♥ Q J 10 9 8 7 6
♦ A Q J 6	♦ K 2
♣ K 8 4	♣ Q J 10
West	East
2♣	2♥
2NT	4♣
4♣	4NT
pass	

A somewhat rustic auction, but if East can find the missing aces, slam should have reasonable prospects. When partner shows only two, it's time to put on the brakes.

Like Blackwood, Gerber is also heavily overused by many players and should only be employed when:

- It is sufficient to know *how many* aces partner holds rather than which ones.
- There is no risk that partner's response will carry the bidding beyond a safe level. In other words, do not ask a question if you can't stand to hear a possible response.

Handling interference

It is not often that the opponents will bid over a Blackwood ace-asking call, but it does happen. And when it does, it is nice to have a simple agreement to handle it. SAYC employs DOPI.

The acronym DOPI stands for Double with 0 (zero aces), Pass with One. If holding more than one ace, bid up the line. The next available suit will show two, the next highest will show three.

If the opponents double the 4NT call, then ROPI can be employed — Redouble with 0, Pass with One — and bid up the line with more. There is no direct reference to ROPI in the original SAYC material, so perhaps it has evolved since the system was first created.

Finally, when the interference is above the five-level in the agreed trump suit, many players employ DEPO — Double with an Even number (0, 2 or 4) and Pass with an Odd number (1 or 3).

4NT quantitative (invitational)

When long suits are not involved, notrump slams require a lot of high cards. If partner opens some number of notrump, then the jump to 4NT is *not* Blackwood. It is invitational. The question asked is a simple one: "Partner, are you at the top end of the HCP range you have already shown?" If so, partner bids 6NT, if not, partner passes.

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

West	East
1NT	4NT
6NT	pass

Finding partner with one ace won't tell East much of anything. In fact, he'd be amazed if West didn't have one. By the same token, two aces from West wouldn't mean much either without something to back them up. The best chance is a simple and effective raise to 4NT. In this case, partner is delighted to go to slam.

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

West	East
1NT	4NT
pass	

This time West is on a minimum and simply passes the invitation.

A similar auction is available in suit contracts, where a bid of five of a major suit, one above game, is a general invitation to small slam. The auction is often used when the inviting hand has concerns about the quality of partner's trump holding.

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

West	East
1♥	3♥
5♥	pass

You could ask for aces, but what have you learned? All you need from partner is big cards in the trump suit. When he doesn't have them, it's time to "get out of Dodge." By the way, if you prefer to open 2♣ on this hand, fine. The 5♥ slam try will work just as well when the time comes:

West	East
2♣	2NT
3♥	4♥
5♥	pass

The Grand Slam Force

Very occasionally you will get a hand where the only piece of information you need revolves around partner's specific holding in the trump suit.

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

West	East
1♠	?

Asking for aces won't help. East needs only the ace and king of trumps from partner to make the grand a virtual laydown. The bid for this is a jump to 5NT, the Grand Slam Force. If partner holds two of the top three trump honors, he is directed to bid 7♠. In this case, he doesn't have both and will sign off in 6♠.

CONTROL BIDS

A control bid is a bid of a new suit after a fit has been established and the partnership is committed to game. This is often referred to as cuebidding, which can make things confusing for all concerned, since the term 'cuebid' is also used to describe a call in a suit already bid by the opponents. For simplicity, we will use the term 'control bid' as per the first definition — to describe a bid of a new suit made as a slam try after a partnership has already found a fit.

Partner may not pass a control bid. Normally, a control bid will show first-round control — an ace or a void — in the bid suit and interest in slam. Partner may reply with another control bid, or may instead use Blackwood or, with lack of slam interest, return to the agreed trump suit.

Control bids are most useful when the issue is which ace(s) partner holds — as opposed to how many aces he holds. In each of the following auctions the final bid in the sequence is a control bid:

West	East
1♠	2NT*
3♠	4♦

West	East
1♠	3♠
4♣	

West	East
1♦	2♣
4♣	4♥

The principles of control bidding

- First-round controls are normally bid ahead of second-round controls. A first-round control is an ace or void while a second-round control is a king or singleton.
- Controls are bid up the line. For example, if you and partner have agreed on spades and you show the ♦A, you are denying the ♣A. If partner has shown the ♣A and you show the ♥A, you are denying the ♦A.
- A bid of game in the agreed trump suit can be passed. It says, "Partner, I have nothing more to show."

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

West	East
1♥	3♥
4♣ ¹	4♦ ²
5♦ ³	5♥ ⁴
pass	

- Slam interest, first-round control of clubs, in this case the ace; no first-round control of the spade suit.
- ♦A.
- ♦K, but no ♠K or singleton (otherwise 4♠).
- No further interest (being certain that the partnership has two quick spade losers).

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

West	East
1♥	1♠
3♦	4♦
4♥ ¹	4♠ ²
7♦ ³	

1. First-round control of hearts.
2. First-round control of spades.
3. Nicely done! A grand slam on 26 HCP and it's almost 100% cold.

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

West	East
1♠	3♠
4♣ ¹	4♠ ²
5♦ ³	5♠ ⁴
pass ⁵	

1. Club control, which East can see is a void, and slam interest.
2. No red ace.
3. Still interested, with the ♦A.
4. No ♥K.
5. Clearly, the ace and king of hearts are among the missing.

The ♣A is wasted opposite the void. Turn it into the useful ♥K and slam is great.

CHOOSING THE BEST METHOD

Blackwood and Gerber tell you *how many* aces partner holds while control bidding pinpoints *which* aces each player holds. As outlined previously, Blackwood and Gerber are not particularly useful when you hold a void or worthless doubleton. In those instances, it is much more effective to bid controls. Oh yes, one more thing. Do not use an ace-asking convention unless you are prepared to bid slam missing only one ace. If there are other flaws in the hand that would lead you to stop at the five-level when lacking an ace, find another way to investigate.

When your hand is highly distributional, you cannot always tell if partner has the right cards. If your gut feeling is that slam will make, be prepared to have a fling. You hold

♠ — ♥ 9 6 ♦ A K 9 8 7 5 ♣ K J 5 4 3

and partner opens 1♣. You might just bid 6♣ and hope for the best. Since you cannot discover whether partner holds keycards such as the queen of diamonds, take a reasonable shot. This approach may offend the purist, but it can be highly effective.



SUMMARY

When there is a good trump fit, suit slams can be made on considerably less strength than notrump slams. Notrump slams require power — generally 32+ HCP for a small slam and 37 HCP for a grand slam.

Slam bidding tools include:

Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKB). A jump to 4NT in a trump auction is ace asking, with the trump king counting as a fifth ace. Responder bids (0314 method):

- 5♣ with 0 or 3 keycards.
- 5♦ with 1 or 4 keycards.
- 5♥ with 2 keycards and no trump queen.
- 5♠ with 2 keycards and the trump queen.

If the 4NT bidder can account for all of the aces and wishes to inquire about kings, he can now bid 5NT. The response structure is the same. He can also make the cheapest non-trump-suit bid after a 5♣ or 4♦ response to enquire about the trump queen. Many players prefer to invert the first two responses, a method known as 1430.

Gerber. A jump to 4♣ when partner's first call is notrump — or by agreement when partner's last call is notrump — is ace asking. Responder bids:

- 4♦ with all of the aces or none of the aces.
- 4♥ with one ace.
- 4♠ with two aces.
- 4NT with three aces.

When the opponents interfere over Blackwood, DOPI — Double with 0, Pass with One — is employed. If 4NT is doubled then ROPI — Redouble with 0, Pass with One — may be used. When the interference is above the five-level in the agreed trump suit, many switch to DEPO — Double with an Even number and Pass with an Odd number.

A bid of one above game in the agreed strain, usually a jump, constitutes a general slam invitation. If the strain is notrump, for example,

Opener	Responder
1NT	4NT
?	

then the bid is quantitative, asking partner to bid 6NT if holding the top of his original call. If the strain is trumps, for example,

Opener	Responder
1♥	5♥
?	

then the bid often enquires about the strength of opener's trump holding, though it can be employed in other situations as well.

A control bid is a bid of a new suit after a fit has been established. Usually, the side will also be committed to game. Normally, a control bid will show first-round control — an ace or a void — in the bid suit and interest in slam. Partner may reply with another control bid, or may instead use Blackwood or, with lack of slam interest, return to the agreed trump suit. Control bids are most useful when the issue is which ace(s) does partner hold, as opposed to how many he holds.

A jump to 5NT over partner's suit bid directs partner to bid a grand slam if holding two of the top three trump honors.



CHAPTER 20: LEADS AND CARDING

LEADING AGAINST A NOTRUMP CONTRACT

SAYC specifies 'standard' leads and carding, but allows for some partnership variations within that structure. Many players, however, have never been taught what standard leads really are.

For instance, one of the first opening leads that most of us are taught is fourth best from our longest and strongest suit. Unfortunately, for some, it appears to be the only lead they remember.

The defense rarely holds enough high-card strength to defeat most notrump contracts. To make up for this lack of strength, you must develop and run a suit. The easiest suit to develop is usually the one in which your side holds the majority of the cards. Therefore, long-suit leads are a favorite against notrump contracts.

In the process of establishing the suit, you will often have to give up a trick or two. Since you intend to gain several tricks in return, you do not mind. For those of you who are financially inclined, think of the lost trick as an investment —— one that you hope will produce a positive return.

Remember, you want to lead the suit in which the partnership holds the greatest length. This means that at least some of the time you will not be leading *your* longest suit, but rather partner's longest suit. Usually, this will happen when partner has bid, indicating length.

Leading partner's suit

When partner has bid a suit, it is almost always correct to lead that suit. If you do not, and the contract makes because of your failure to do so, it is safe to say that partnership harmony will suffer. Assuming partner has bid hearts and you have chosen to lead the suit:

- ♥ J 7
Holding any doubleton, lead the high card —— in this case, the jack.
- ♥ 8 7 4
Holding three or more small cards, we prefer to lead low¹ (or fourth best). However, you will find many players who prefer to lead 'top of nothing' or MUD ('middle-up-down').
- ♥ J 10 7
With touching honors, lead the top card —— in this case, the jack.
- ♥ Q 5 4
With any unsupported honor accompanied by two or more smaller cards, lead low from an honor. In this case, lead the four. If you have four or more cards in the suit (rare), lead fourth best.

Leading your own suit

Even when you do decide to lead *your* longest suit, the card you choose will not always be your fourth best. In fact, you should only lead a low card when you can't lead something better. We will assume that you have decided to lead a heart:

- ♥ K Q J 7 4
If you hold a sequence —— three touching cards —— the normal lead is the top of the sequence. In this example, lead the king.
- ♥ K Q 10 7 4
If you hold a broken sequence —— three out of four, with the top two touching —— the normal lead is still the top of the sequence. In this example, lead the king. Many partnerships have the agreement that the lead of a queen requires partner to drop the jack if he holds it, or failing that, to give count. If you have this agreement, you could lead the queen from this holding, though it is dangerous unless you have either a six-card suit or the ♥9 in addition to the ten.
- ♥ A J 10 7 4

A related holding is the 'interior sequence' —— two or more touching cards with a detached higher-ranking card. Here, the normal lead is the top of the interior sequence, the jack.

Incidentally, when you lead from broken and interior sequences, you may very well never lead the suit again. A lot will depend on what you see in the dummy and what card your partner plays to the trick.

	North	
West	9 6 3	East
	7 2	
	South	
	A J 8	

You lead the king; dummy follows; partner plays the deuce and declarer plays the eight. Partner is warning you that he doesn't hold the jack. If he held jack doubleton, he would have discarded the jack under the king. If he held three cards to the jack, he would have encouraged with a higher card than the deuce. Similarly, if he held the ace, he would have overtaken the king and returned the suit. South must hold the ace and the jack, and you cannot afford to continue leading this suit from your side of the table.

- ♥ K 7 5 3 2

Only when you have exhausted all of the honor sequence choices above will you be leading fourth best, in this case, the ♥.

One opening-lead error that seems to pop up on a regular basis involves the holding below:

- ♥ A K 7 5 4

Once again, the correct lead is the ♥5. Unfortunately, many less experienced players lead one of the honors. This appears to result from the fear that they will never again have the opportunity to take any heart tricks at all. More often than not, the lead of an honor will result in the loss of the entire suit.

	North	
West	♥ 10 6 3	East
	♥ Q 2	
	South	
	♥ J 8 7	

If you lead the ♥5, partner will win with the queen and return the deuce. Your side can then take five heart tricks. If you lead either honor, you cannot set up the suit without losing either a trick, or the lead, or both. Even if partner does not hold a magic card, leading low —— and giving up a trick early —— will maintain communications between you and your partner. Now, no matter which of you gains the lead, your side is in position to take four heart tricks.

Leading from worthless holdings

From time to time you will have a hand that lends itself to a passive approach, as opposed to the more normal aggressive defense. For example, the auction has gone as follows:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3NT
?	

And you hold this hand:

You

♠ 7 4 3
 ♥ A J 6
 ♦ K J 9 2
 ♣ K J 5

You have 13 HCP and the opponents are in game. If we grant them roughly 26 HCP — a normal amount for the auction — then you will be fortunate to find partner holding more than one or two. In other words, you are probably defending this hand on your own. True, partner *might* hold the diamond queen, but the odds do not favor it. At times like this it is better to wait for declarer to break the suits in which you hold strength. The passive lead here is a spade, and the standard lead is the seven, top of nothing. If you held four low cards in the suit, your lead would be the same. With five small cards, lead fourth best.

The lead of the ace

It is normal for the lead of an ace against notrump to carry a special meaning: it asks partner to play any honor he has, and failing that, to give count. It would typically be led from a semi-solid suit, like AKJ1043.

LEADING AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT

When defending a suit contract, your approach is entirely different than when defending notrump. With trumps in play, you will rarely get to establish and run a long suit. Consequently, the defensive focus shifts to creating Quick Tricks. Further, you can no longer afford to underlead broken holdings such as AQ943. We do it all the time against notrump contracts, giving away an early trick in hopes of taking several tricks in the suit at a later time. If, however, you give up the same trick against a suit contract, it is usually gone forever and the opponent's trump holding will stop a later attempt to run the suit.

Leading partner's suit

As with notrump, it is almost always correct to lead a suit that partner has bid. In fact, one of the main reasons for overcalling is to tell partner what to lead. If you choose a different suit, we recommend that you have a very good reason for doing so. Assuming partner has bid hearts and you have chosen to lead the suit, the card you will pick is, in most cases, the same one you would have led had the contract been in notrump:

- ♥ Q 6
Holding any doubleton, lead the high card — in this case, the queen.
- ♥ Q 7 3
With any unsupported honor accompanied by two or more smaller cards, lead low from an honor. In this case you should lead the three. If you have four or more cards in the suit (rare), lead fourth best.
- ♥ J 10 7
With touching honors, lead the top card — in this case, the jack.
- ♥ 8 6 4
Holding three or more small cards, we prefer to lead low or fourth best (see Chapter 19's Summary). In this case, that is the four. However, if you have supported the suit, lead high from three small cards, as partner will know you do not have a doubleton.

Leading your own suit

When leading your own suit, you will frequently be leading the same card against a suit contract as you would against notrump.

- ♥ K Q J 7
Sequence leads are the same. By leading this suit you hope to promote tricks for your side. As with notrump, the standard lead is the top of the sequence.
- ♥ K Q 10 7
The same holds true for the broken sequence, where the standard lead is the top of the sequence. As before, once you see the dummy and partner's card, you will frequently be forced to abandon further leads in this suit from your side of the table.

- ♥ K J 10 7 (x)
If you choose to lead from this holding, the jack (top of the interior sequence) is standard.

There is, however, a problem with leading from a holding like our last example.

	North	
West	9 4	East
	A Q 8	
South		

The KJ combination is one of several that are known as tenaces. The word derives from a French verb meaning 'to surround.' Note how the KJ surrounds the queen on the layout above. When you lead away from a tenace, you always run the risk of giving up a trick that would not have been lost had you never led the suit in the first place. If you are defending a notrump contract and hope to establish and run a long suit, it is common practice to lead away from tenaces. If you make the same lead against 4♠, declarer gets both the ace and the queen, ruffs the third one in the dummy and you get no tricks from the suit at all.

- ♥ A 7 5 4 (x)
Against a notrump contract, we underlead aces on a regular basis. In fact, it makes wonderful sense because eventually we can gain the lead with our ace and cash our winners in the suit.

However, underleading an ace when defending a suit contract may well be the worst lead in bridge. Leading the ace is somewhat better, but not much. Watch what happens if the suit is distributed as follows:

	North	
West	K 5 4	East
	A 8 7 3	J 10 9
South		
	Q 6 2	

If you lead the ace, declarer will get two tricks in the suit. Left to his own devices, he can only take one. Grandma used to say, "Aces are made to take kings." Of course, they do a fine job of capturing queens and jacks too, but not if you lead them. If you can find another suit to lead, do it. Only if all other leads are worse should you then lay down the ace.

- ♥ K Q 5 4
When defending a suit contract, only two touching honors are required for the lead of the top card. Against notrump, lead the four. Against a suit contract, lead the king, instantly promoting a quick defensive trick.
- ♥ Q 8 6 3
This is a combination where the card led happens to be the same, but where it is chosen for a different reason. Against notrump you lead the three in an effort to set up and run the long suit. Against a trump contract, you lead the same card. This time, however, you lead low from an honor, hoping partner has some help and can assist you in promoting the queen.

Leading the ace/king combination

Under most circumstances, it makes a great deal of sense to take a couple of tricks quickly when defending a suit contract. Which card you lead when holding, for example, A K 7 (x), is totally up to you and your partner. Some lead the king, promising the ace or the queen. Others always lead the top of touching honors. SAYC does not have a default preference, but ace from ace-king is probably the 'normal' lead today.

Short-suit leads

Unless partner has bid the suit, short suits are not usually led against notrump contracts. Against suit contracts, however, a singleton lead can be quite effective. If partner can win the trick, your side may be able to generate one or more ruffing tricks. That having been said, even a singleton lead is not always appropriate.

- If you will be ruffing with natural trump tricks, you will have gained nothing.
- If you hold several trumps, it often makes more sense to force *declarer* to ruff, shortening his own trump suit and giving you control of the hand. In cases like these, it is better to lead a long suit than a short one.
- If you determine that partner has little or no strength, then it will be impossible for partner to gain the lead. In that event, another line of defense will probably be more productive.

The lead of a worthless doubleton in a suit that partner has not bid is not only ineffective most of the time, but it often allows declarer to make an otherwise impossible contract. If you do lead a doubleton, lead the top card first.

Leading (longer) worthless holdings

Occasionally you will be forced to lead from something like 8 6 4 (2). Unless partner has bid the suit, you will certainly prefer just about anything else. Sometimes, however, it will be the lesser of evils. If so, your partnership is free to choose which card will be led first from such holdings. For simplicity, if nothing else, we recommend consistency. Thus, if you lead small from three cards in partner's suit if you have not supported it, then do the same here.

Leading trumps

One of many old and treasured bridge maxims goes like this: "When in doubt, lead trumps." We wish it were that easy. There are many hands when we are in doubt but leading trumps would be wrong. Paul Soloway, one of the finest players to ever grace the game, has reportedly told new partners that he hates to guess on opening lead. Consequently, he asks them to bid whenever possible to give him guidance. If world-class experts can be that much in doubt, the rest of us probably feel lost most of the time.

A better, but less catchy phrasing might be this: trumps should be led on two occasions —

- when it is correct to do so.
- when all other leads are worse.

When might it be correct? Whenever the auction leads you to believe that declarer will be looking at a crossruff, or when it is clear that he will be ruffing losers in the dummy as part of his plan. The auction will often provide the clues you need, especially when the opponents bid two suits and then settle for a third.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3♦
all pass			

South should be short in hearts and North should be short in clubs. It would not be at all surprising if the hand played best as a crossruff. To stop this, lead trumps early and often. It may also be right to lead trumps when:

- Your side opened 1NT but the opponents bought the contract. Reducing their trump holding at every opportunity may well ensure more side-suit tricks for the notrump opener.
- There has been a competitive auction and your side has a long suit. This is especially true when it appears the opponents have a 4-4 fit. Can't you just feel them ruffing your long suit in one hand or the other?

When might all other leads be worse?

West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

You (West)

♠ 9 5 4
♥ K J 4
♦ A 7 6 3
♣ K J 2

Leading away from either KJ tenace could easily cost a trick and laying down the diamond ace will capture nothing but low cards. We also know that partner will be of little or no help. Lead a trump, sit back and hope the tricks will come to you in due course.

When leading trumps, the normal leads are:

- Low from any spot-card holding.
- Top of touching honors.
- When holding Axx or Kxx, it is often useful to lead low. The next time you gain the lead you will have a handy way to exit safely — with yet another trump. Leading from other three-card holdings containing an honor is generally unwise.

SIGNALS AND CARDING

There are three types of carding signals available to defenders:

- Attitude Signals
- Count Signals
- Suit-Preference Signals

As a general rule, these tend to be sequential in nature. In other words, attitude comes first and a count signal cannot be given unless your attitude towards the suit is already known or clearly irrelevant.

The same is true for suit-preference signals, which are normally not used unless both attitude and count are known or irrelevant. It would appear that one would rarely get to make a suit preference signal under these circumstances, but you'd be amazed at how often a suit preference opportunity can arise.

There are many good texts that cover this area. Our highest recommendation goes to *Modern Bridge Defense* and *Advanced Bridge Defense* by the prolific writer, teacher and world-ranked player, Eddie Kantar.

SAYC defaults to the following guidelines:

- When giving an attitude signal, a high card shows positive attitude and encourages partner to continue leading the suit. Conversely, a low card indicates a lack of interest in the suit and suggests that partner switch to something else.
- When giving count, a high card followed by a low card — the Hi-Lo — shows an even number of cards, normally two or four. Playing up the line, a low card followed by a higher one, shows an odd number, usually three.
- When giving a suit-preference signal, a low card asks for the lead of the lowest ranking non-trump suit; a high card asks for the lead of the highest ranking non-trump suit, and a middle card essentially says, "Partner, you are pretty much on your own here, so look at your own hand and figure out what's best."

Having said this, the reader should be aware that many experienced players do things differently, especially when it comes to carding. The most commonly employed alternative to standard carding is UDCA. UDCA is an acronym for "Upside Down Count and Attitude" and means exactly what its name implies. For example, when giving an attitude signal, a low card would be encouraging and a high card discouraging. Similarly, when giving count, a high-low signal would show an odd number of cards and low-high would show an even number.

When playing with a pick-up partner, it is very important that the partnership agree to their carding method and advise the opponents of this agreement.

¹ If partner has bid the suit and you have raised, lead the top card from three small — partner will know you do not have a doubleton.



SUMMARY

When defending a notrump contract, the standard leads in SAYC are as follows:

When leading partner's bid suit:

- With any doubleton, lead the top card.
- With three or more headed by a single honor, lead low from the honor.
- With touching honors, lead the top honor.
- With three small cards, lead high if you have supported the suit; otherwise, lead low.
- With four or more small cards, lead fourth best.

When leading your own long suit:

- With a sequence of three or more touching cards, lead top of the sequence.
- With a broken sequence — e.g. AKJxx — lead top of the sequence.
- With an interior sequence — e.g. AJ10xx — lead top of the interior sequence.
- From all other holdings lead fourth best.

When leading your own worthless holding, lead top of nothing.

When defending a suit contract, the standard leads in SAYC are as follows.

When leading partner's bid suit:

- With any doubleton, lead the top card.
- With three or more headed by a single honor, lead low from the honor.
- With touching honors, lead the top honor.
- With three small cards, lead high if you have supported the suit; otherwise, lead low.
- With four or more small cards, lead fourth best.

When leading your own suit:

- With a sequence of three or more touching cards, lead 'top of the sequence.'
- With a broken sequence — e.g. AKJxx — lead 'top of the sequence.'
- With an interior sequence — e.g. AJ10xx — finding another lead may be in your best interest. If no other choice is attractive, lead top of the interior sequence.
- With Axxx it is best to lead another suit. If you must lead the suit, then lead the ace. Do not underlead aces when defending suit contracts.
- When leading a doubleton, lead the top card.
- When leading from an unsupported honor, such as Qxxx, lead low from the honor.
- When forced to lead from three or more small cards, partnerships are free to decide which card will be led first.

When leading trumps, the normal leads are:

- Low from small cards.
- Low from Axx or Kxx.
- Top of touching honors.

CARDING

- When giving an attitude signal, a high card shows positive attitude and encourages partner to continue leading the suit. Conversely, a low card indicates a lack of interest in the suit and suggests that partner switch to something else.
- When giving count, a high card followed by a low card — the Hi-Lo — shows an even number of cards, normally two or four. Playing up the line, a low card followed next by a higher one, shows an odd number, usually three.
- When giving a suit preference signal, a low card asks for the lead of the lowest ranking non-

trump suit; a high card asks for the lead of the highest ranking non-trump suit, and a middle card essentially says, "Partner, you are pretty much on your own here."

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WHAT IS STANDARD BIDDING?



That is a hard question to answer, but the proliferation of bridge on the Internet in pickup partnerships makes it imperative that someone does so. Perhaps the most popular natural system for the hundreds of thousands of online players worldwide is the "Standard American Yellow Card", or SAYC. In this book, for the first time, SAYC is fully described and explained. This book will be an invaluable aid to anyone wanting to learn and understand SAYC, or anyone who knows only the basics and is eager to fill in the missing pieces in their repertoire.

NED DOWNEY is the owner/operator of the Maui Bridge club in Kihei, Hawaii and an ACBL accredited Star Teacher. Those who have had the pleasure of participating in his lessons on shore or aboard cruise ships are among the first to agree that the enjoyment he gets from teaching bridge is readily apparent in the classroom.



ELLEN POMER, known as "Caitlin" online, is founder of Bridge Forum International (www.bridge-forum.com), the largest online bridge school featuring prominent expert affiliates and teachers from around the world. Ellen has contributed to many online publications as well as *The Bridge Teacher* and *The Bridge Bulletin*.



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