

**explaining**  
**notrump bidding**  
**- the Scanian way**  
**- part one - The 2NT system -**

**A book by Mats Nilslund**

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## FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mats Nilsland

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

♠ KQ   ♥ Ax   ♦ A9xxx   ♣ AKxx

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

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

♠ xx   ♥ Ax   ♦ AKJ10x   ♣ AKxx

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

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

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

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

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

Here is another hand:

♠ Jx   ♥ Ax   ♦ AKQ10xx   ♣ AKx

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

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

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

♠ Qx   ♥ Kx   ♦ AKQJxx   ♣ AQx

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

♠ K9xxx   ♥ Q10xxx   ♦ x   ♣ Kx

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



## OUR SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

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

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

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

### *Our different paths to 2NT*

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

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2NT	

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

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠
2NT	

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥/♠
2NT	

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

## THE 2NT SYSTEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2NT - the first responses

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

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

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

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

Here is a summary of the responses to 2NT:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like with the next hand:

♠ Qxx ♥ xx ♦ Axxx ♣ Jxxx

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

2NT  
 3♠

3♣  
 ?

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♠ (five spades)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT	3♣
3NT	?

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3NT (five hearts)

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

As already discussed in the slam-bidding chapter:

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT	3♣
3NT	4♦
4♥	?

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

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

♠ Ax   ♥ xxx   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AJxx

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is me

Partner

4♣

?

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

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

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

This is me	Partner
	4♣
4♦/♥	4♠

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

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

This is me	Partner
	4♣
4♦	4♥
4♠	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Responder can have one of these two very good hands:

♠ x   ♥ Qxx   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AQxxx

or

♠ xx   ♥ Jx   ♦ Kxxx   ♣ AQJxx

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

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

The following auction is probably the most frequent one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥
3♠	

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

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

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

***Our slam rules in the 2NT (and 1NT) system***

Before we start looking at the methods where responder makes a slam try in one or both minors, allow me to explain our rules for minor suit slam bidding. When we begin with Stayman, and eventually make a slam try, very often both players have balanced hands. That is why we want to be able to choose between 4NT and five in a minor if we decide not to go for slam. Our rules are complicated, and have to be so to cover both the 1NT and the 2NT system.

***Cue-bids and Last-train bids***

In notrump bidding we only sometimes have bidding room to use cue-bids and then usually only at the four-level in one of the majors. We can use cue-bids or last-train bids to accept a slam try or to confirm having support.

When we can cue-bid 4♥ and instead bid 4♠ we ask for a heart control. When we bid 4♠ over 4♥ we ask for a spade control but don't deny it. When only 4♠ is available to show support it doesn't say anything about spades.

***Natural or limited 4NT bids***

As long as we have not found an eight-card fit, 4NT is a negative and/or a limited bid. 4NT is negative when responder makes a slam try showing a six-card suit.

After a negative 4NT, partner can continue with a *five-level bid* as described below

***Optional Blackwood (non-serious Roman Keycard Blackwood)***

When we have found a fit, 4NT is either a slam try or confirming having control if partner asks for it. Even if 4NT is a limited slam try and not completely forcing, opener seldom passes. The responses to optional Blackwood are the same as the direct five-level bids below. The 4NT bidder always has the alternative to show his keycards directly by what we call five-level bids which is a more optimistic bid.

***Five-level bids (showing keycards, trump suit excluded)***

Bidding five in our minor suit is always negative, either denies a control or in other cases shows limited values. The other five-level bids show a number of keycards and are used when we have decided to bid slam if we have enough keycards:

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

After the response, the next bid except for the trump suit asks for the Queen of trumps with 5NT as a negative response. All other bids except for the trump suit but including 5NT are confirming that we have all keycards. If responder makes them, they invite grand slam.



Here is an example where opener can make a cue-bid to accept the slam try:

	2NT	3♣	
(five spades)	3♠	4♦	(slam try with diamonds)
(cue-bid)	4♥/♠		

Opener shows diamond support but doesn't need to have a very good hand as the alternative is to raise to 5♦, which is a negative bid showing support but a lack of keycards. Bidding 4NT over 4♦ is also negative but doesn't show the support.

The general idea with all of our slam rules is to enhance the cooperation in slam auctions. When opener, as above, makes a cue-bid responder now, depending on his strength, controls, and trump suit quality has *three* options:

- limit his hand by a suggestion to sign-off in trumps
- bid optional Blackwood as a slam try
- bid a five-level bid to proceed towards slam

Optional Blackwood means that 4NT *invites* slam, and the partner can still decline the slam try by bidding trumps at the five-level or even pass. His responses to 4NT are exactly the same as the direct five-level bids (see the last page).

This technique is explained in full in the book by many examples.

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

Let us continue with how responder can make a minor suit slam try after Muppet Stayman when opener doesn't have a five-card major.

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠ (four spades)

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

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

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

Here is an example of the 3NT bid:

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

Opener has good values in the minors, and shows Aces over 4♥, which leads to the slam. He could have bid 4♠, as a last-train bid, or 4NT as optional RKCB. Here is a hand where he can bid 4NT to show a spade control but also a limited hand:

♠ AKJx ♥ KQ ♦ Kxxx ♣ KQx

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

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

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

4♣/♦ a four-card minor

4♥/♠ a five-card minor, Lissabon

4NT 44 in the majors or 4333 or very bad slam cards

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

♠ AKxx ♥ Kx ♦ AQxxx ♣ KJ

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

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

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

	♠ K10xx	♠ Qx
	♥ AK	♥ xxx
	♦ AKxx	♦ Qxx
	♣ KJx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♣ (slam try, five clubs)
(accept, cue-bid)	4♥	4♠ (last-train)
(accept, spade control)	6♣	

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-4♣ (five clubs)

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

When we also can cue-bid 4♥, the 4♠ cue-bid denies a heart control. If only one cue-bid is available (i.e. 4♠), we prefer to use that bid as a last-train bid after which 4NT is still optional Blackwood, and then non-forcing. If we bid 4♠ after the cue-bid 4♥, the reason can often be that we *don't* have a spade control.

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

	♠ AKJx	♠ Qxx
	♥ Jx	♥ Qxx
	♦ AKJx	♦ xx
	♣ KJx	♣ AQxxx
	2NT	3♣
(at least one major)	3♦	3♥ (asking for spades)
(four spades)	3♠	4♣ (slam try, five clubs)
(accept, cue)	4♠	5♣ (no heart control)
	pass	

In this case, we are lucky to discover the missing heart control. Either player can bid 5♣ to play the minor suit game. Responder must bid 5♣ without a control in hearts as 4NT would be optional Blackwood with a heart control.

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

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

Opener rejects the invitation as he only has a doubleton in partner's suit. In this situation, opener can bid 4♥ to show five clubs while 4♠ shows diamond support.

A summary of opener's alternatives after 4♦:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠-4♦ (five diamonds)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That was just an interlude, back to business:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT (not four spades)

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

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

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

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

These are opener's rebids after 4♣:

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

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

4♥ five clubs, Lissabon, exactly 2425

4♠ five diamonds, Lissabon, exactly 2452

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4♠ shows four diamonds and denies four clubs

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These are opener's options after 3♠:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠

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

♠ Ax ♥ QJxx ♦ AKxx ♣ AKx

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

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

♠ -- ♥ Qxxx ♦ A9xxx ♣ Kxxx

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

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

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

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

Here are responder's bids again:

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠; 3NT (not four hearts)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These are my clubs

♣ xx / Jx

This is partner's club holding

♣ Kx / KQx / Ax / x / void

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

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

In this particular situation I want *partner* to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now a look at an important module in our system:

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

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

These are responder's alternative bids:

2NT-3♣; 3♦

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

♠ KJxx    ♥ QJxx    ♦ xx    ♣ Jxx

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

♠ KJxx    ♥ QJxx    ♦ Jx    ♣ AJx

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♦-4♣

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As responder I perhaps have this hand:

♠ Axxxx ♥ Axxxx ♦ - ♣ xxx

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

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

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



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

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

In Muppet Stayman, the bidding starts:

2NT	3♣
3♥	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♥

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♥

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

♠ AQx  
♥ Kx  
♦ AKx  
♣ Axxxx

♠ KJxxx  
♥ Axxxx  
♦ J  
♣ xx

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♣; 3♥-4♥

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

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

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

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

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

The continuation after 3NT is the same as we covered earlier. This is a summary of the most important slam rules, see page 24a for the best explanation, repeated for your convenience:

- cue-bids and last-train bids are often used to establish a fit
- the 4NT bid is natural when we have not agreed upon a fit
- the 4NT bid is non-forcing optional Blackwood when we have a fit
- the voluntary five-level bids have the same meaning as responses to optional Blackwood. The trump suit is always excluded from the step responses

These rules apply when responder makes a slam try with one or both minors. Quite often, both players have a balanced distribution, and therefore, both can bid 4NT as a non-forcing bid. That doesn't mean partner has to pass over any 4NT bid, and if he wants to proceed, he can use the five-level responses.

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

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

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

In some cases, it could even be better to play in a 4-4 fit than in a 5-4. We may then be able to dispose of a loser on the fifth card in the other minor suit.

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

2NT-3♣; 3♥-3♠; 3NT

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

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

-- 4♦ at least one four-card minor

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

4♥ four clubs or both minors

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

4♠ four diamonds, and not four clubs

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

4♠ four diamonds, but not four clubs

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

-- 4♥ five clubs

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

4♠ support, last-train

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

-- 4♠ five diamonds

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

4♦ five diamonds

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

-- 4♥ five clubs, and no diamond support

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

-- 4♠ accepts diamonds, last-train

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

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

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

-- 4♠ sets diamonds as trumps

(O: perfect, I have five diamonds)

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

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

4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

(R: I think we should play in notrumps)

## Seriously?

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

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

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

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

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

♠ KQ10xx ♥ A10xx ♦ x ♣ KJx

1 ♠	2 ♦
2 ♥	3 ♥
3NT	

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

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

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

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

♠ KQx ♥ AJx ♦ Axx ♣ KQJx

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

♠ KQx ♥ AQx ♦ AKJx ♣ Jxx

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

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

♠ KQx ♥ AJx ♦ AKx ♣ Axxx

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

♠ Axx ♥ AJx ♦ AKx ♣ AJxx

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

♠ AQJx ♥ Jxx ♦ AKQ ♣ Axx

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♦

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

2NT-3♥

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

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

♠ Kx ♥ AKx ♦ QJxx ♣ AKxx

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

♠ AJ9 ♥ AKx ♦ J10xx ♣ AKx

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

♠ KQ10 ♥ Qxx ♦ AQ ♣ AKQxx

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

♠ Ax ♥ Qxxx ♦ AKJx ♣ AKxx

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



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

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

2NT	3♦
3♥	

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

2NT-3♦; 3♥

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

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

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

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

♠ AJxx ♥ AK ♦ AKQx ♣ xxx

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

♠ Kxxx ♥ J9xxx ♦ x ♣ Kxx

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

*The both-majors-module again*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT

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

The rules for slam bidding are not much different when responder has a two-suited hand with a major and a minor. Opener can bid a negative 4NT over responder's four of a minor. Opener can use the *five-level bids*, cue bids or last-train to show support for responder's minor.

One difference however, is that opener will not so often pass when responder uses 4NT as optional Blackwood. Opener doesn't know if responder has 5-5 or an even better distribution in his suits. Responder can show the degree of slam interest and either bid five in the minor without slam interest or 4NT or a five-level bid depending on how sure he is of slam.

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

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

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣

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

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

If the bidding starts:

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

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

Opener can bid 4♥ with a hand like this:

♠ KQxx ♥ Kx ♦ AKxx ♣ AQx

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

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

♠ x ♥ AQ10xx ♦ xx ♣ KJ9xx

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

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

Opener shows a hand too good for a negative 4NT by bidding 4♥. When opener bids either the 4♦ relay or as here the semi-positive preference, we don't know if we have a trump suit, but if we have one, we presume that it is clubs. Here is what responder can do over the 4♦ relay:

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣; 4♦

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If opener directly over 4♣ accepts the slam try by bidding 4♠, he shows four-card support in clubs. In that case, responder's 4NT now is optional Blackwood and not natural. As an alternative, opener can raise 4♣ to 5♣ with a minimum hand and not suitable slam cards.

Let's change the hands again:

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

Responder can bid 4♠ with 5-5 to confirm that we have a real trump suit. Maybe we will find a grand slam, but we certainly will bid at least six.

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

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

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

	♠ Axx		♠ x	
	♥ Qx		♥ AJ10xx	
	♦ AKJx		♦ x	
	♣ AKxx		♣ Jxxxxx	
	2NT	3♦		
	3♥	3♠		(transfer to 3NT)
	3NT	4♣		(hearts and clubs)
(accept, club support)	4♠	4NT		(some slam interest)
(accept and 4 Aces)	5♦	5♠		(we have all keycards)
(I have something)	5NT	6♣		

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

♠ AKJx   ♥ xx   ♦ AKx   ♣ AJxx

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

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

Here are opener's rebids again:

2NT-3♥

3♠ spade support

3NT no support

4♣/♦ super-accept

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Responder's bids after 3 spades*

Here are responder's bids after 3♠:

2NT-3♥; 3♠

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

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

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

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

♠ KJ10xx ♥ Axx ♦ Qxxx ♣ x

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

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

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

*Opener has no spade support*

2NT-3♥; 3NT

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

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

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

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

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

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

2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣

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

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

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

2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣; 4♦

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

Here is an example where responder has spades and clubs:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are some example hands responder can have:

♠ x   ♥ x   ♦ Qxxxxx   ♣ Kxxxx

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

♠ x   ♥ xx   ♦ AQxxx   ♣ Kxxxx

This hand qualifies for a slam try.

♠ xx   ♥ xx   ♦ AQJx   ♣ Kxxxx

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

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

2NT-3♠

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

Here is an example of the Lissabon bids:

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

***Opener bids 3NT***

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

2NT-3♠; 3NT

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

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

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

2NT-3♠; 3NT-4♥

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

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

Here is an example:

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

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

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

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

2NT-4♣/♦

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

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

♠ AKxx    ♥ xx    ♦ AKx    ♣ AKxx

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

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

♠ AQ    ♥ QJx    ♦ KQJx    ♣ KQJx

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

Here is another example:

♠ AKQx  
 ♥ xx  
 ♦ AJx  
 ♣ AQx

♠ x  
 ♥ KJ9xxx  
 ♦ KQx  
 ♣ Jx

(negative)

2NT  
 4♥

4♣      (slam try in hearts)  
 pass

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

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

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

2NT-4♥

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

4NT/5♣ negative

5X response RKCB

2NT-4♠

4NT/5♦ negative

5X response to RKCB

Here is an example

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

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

♠ xxx ♥ x ♦ xx ♣ KQxxxxx

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

♠ xxx ♥ x ♦ Jx ♣ AKxxxxx

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

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

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

2NT-responses

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

Muppet Stayman auctions

## 2NT-3♣

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

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

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

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

3♠	four spades
3NT	not four spades

## 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3♠ (four spades)

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



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

4♣/♦ a four-card minor

4♥/♠ a five-card minor, Lissabon

4NT 4333 or very bad slam cards.

2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♠ (four hearts)

3NT not four hearts, responder can use the minor-suit-slam-try-module

4♣ the normal bid with heart support

4♦ an exceptional hand

4♥ a warning for slam, often because of poor trump-quality

After 3♠-4♣:

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

2NT-3♣; 3♥ (no major)

3♠ transfer to 3NT, responder can then use the minor-suit-slam-try-module

3NT NF with five spades (\* and by inference four hearts)

4♣/♦ at least 5-5 in the majors, the both-majors-module

4♥ a slam try with at least five spades

4♠ to play with six spades

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

4♠ accepts spades as trumps, but not a very good fit

4NT negative without support

5X RKCB responses with support

2NT-3♣; 3♠ (five spades)

3NT natural, to play

4♣/♦ a natural slam try with at least a five-card suit

4♥ a slam try in spades

4♠ to play

4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

2NT-3♣; 3NT (five hearts)

4♣ a slam try in hearts

4♦ a transfer to 4♥

4♥ a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five clubs

4♠ a Lissabon bid, a slam try with five diamonds

4NT a natural invitation to 6NT

The transfer responses

2NT-3♦ (five hearts)

3♥ no support

3♠ heart support (the usual bid with support)

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

4♣ super-accept

2NT-3♦; 3♥ (no support)

3♠ a transfer to 3NT

3NT NF with five hearts and four spades

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

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

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

4NT natural invitation to slam

4♠/5mi void in the bid suit

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT (must bid)

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

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

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

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

4♦ a forward-going bid

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

4♠ a very good fit in the minor

4NT a negative bid

2NT-3♦; 3♥-3♠; 3NT-4♣; 4♦ (relay)

4♥ limited with 5-5

4♠ sets clubs as trumps

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

2NT-3♥ (five spades)

3♠ spade support

3NT no support

4♣/♦ super-accept

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT (no support)

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

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣ (spades and clubs)

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

## 2NT-3♥; 3NT-4♣; 4♦ (relay)

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

Other responses

## 2NT-3♠ (both minors)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The both-majors-module:

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

## After 4♣

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

The minor-suit-slam-try-module:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After 3NT-4♦ (five diamonds)

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

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

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

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

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

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

General rule: 5mi always to play when trumps

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

Summary of our slam rules:

- cue-bids and last-train bids are often used to establish a fit
- the 4NT bid is natural when we have not found a fit
- the 4NT bid is non-forcing optional Blackwood when we have a fit
- the voluntary five-level bids have the same meaning as responses to optional RCKB. The trump suit is always excluded from the step responses

When responder has a two-suited hand and perhaps 5-5 or better, opener will not so often pass over the optional Blackwood.

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

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

When we ask for the trump Queen at the five-level, 5NT is the negative response.