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# **BridgeBidding**

***Release 1.0a***

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## **PRELIMINARIES**

### **1.1 How I Came To Write This Book**

Upon retirement in 2005, I began playing bridge online. The players were no longer using the Goren system of bidding that I had read about as a child. Although I had played a small amount of party bridge as an adult I had avoided bridge after seeing the cream of my class of mathematicians at U.C. Berkeley flunk out when they played bridge at the Student Union all day. So then, about to retire, I found myself with only a bare-bones document on OKBridge to explain this mysterious “Standard American Yellow Card” (SAYC) and the more advanced extension of it, “Two Over One Game Force”, not to mention the seemingly endless collection of conventions, bids that did not mean what they appeared to mean.

I set out to remedy the situation for myself. I soon realized others were in the same boat, especially people in other countries for whom bridge books were expensive. So I made it my goal to provide an Open Source book that helps a bridge player get from intermediate to advanced. I have constantly revised my set of explanations as my own understanding has grown. This book

puts all my efforts in one volume again.

The first part of this book presents the Two Over One Game Force (2/1) system that is popular in North America. The more basic Standard American Yellow Card (SAYC) is subsumed in that system, since when responder is a passed hand 2/1 reverts to SAYC's rules.

Few people play even basic SAYC as written. There are many aspects of bidding, including the vital areas of competing for part scores and making game tries, that are not explicitly in the systems at all. In cases where the standard is sometimes or often ignored, I'll try to point that out.

Until we get to the Advanced chapters, I will not present many alternative ways of doing things. I didn't like, when I was learning, books that said I could do this or that, when I had no basis in experience to make an informed choice.

The *Resources* (page 302) chapter lists other sources of information.

## **1.2 How to Use This Book**

You can use this book for initial learning, or as a reference. For that reason it has an index. It frustrates me no end that most bridge books do not. There is also a glossary of bridge terms. In electronic manifestations of this book, there are many operable links in the text. What this book lacks is the kind of things that are in good books written by professionals: extensive examples, and quizzes. I list some of my favorite sources in *Resources* (page 302).

More recently I have taken lessons from Marc Smith, and the

purchased the video lessons of Marty Bergen, Rob Barrington and Gavin Wolpert. I am definitely a #Gavinista. Barrington and Wolpert have five years of free once-a-week lessons on YouTube.

Bridge has three big topics: bidding, declarer play, and defense. An expert friend who has read my bidding notes commented that the defensive part of your notes ought to be as big as the bidding section. Indeed, your side is on defense half of the time. Few of us measure up – for some reason, learning another convention that comes up twice a year is more compelling than the basics of carding that happens on every hand.

While I want to present the major conventions so you will know what your opponents are up to, do not take this as advice to master them, rather than spending equal time on the other two-thirds of bridge.

Here's a guide to what follows. First we cover 2/1's key bids, competitive bidding, and basic slam bidding. The 2/1 part of the system really has two parts: the two-over-one and 1N-forcing bids and their followups; and this set of expected conventions:

- *Reverse Drury* (page 58),
- *Fourth Suit Forcing* (page 48),
- *New Minor Forcing* (page 45),
- *Inverted Minors* (page 43), and
- *Roman Keycard Blackwood* (page 178).

There is no real connection between 2/1 and this set of conventions except that most players of 2/1 also play those conventions. As you are learning you'll need to tell potential partners which of these conventions you haven't mastered yet. Fourth Suit Forc-

ing and New Minor Forcing are so close in spirit that you should learn them at the same time. Roman Keycard Blackwood is likely to be high on the want list from your partner.

**Warning:** Do not agree to play a convention unless you have a solid knowledge of it, including not just the initial bids but the followups, including what to do if the opponents interfere. Everyone fails to recognize that a bid is conventional now and then, both when they make it and when partner makes it, but each such error cancels out a year's worth of benefits from playing it.

I believe that new players should learn 2/1 from the beginning, adding in the conventions just mentioned ASAP. You have to learn the SAYC meanings as well, since they apply when opener is a passed hand or there is interference. That's the approach we're taking here.

## 1.3 Casual Partners

Even a person with the most dedicated partner plays with someone else once in a while; this is especially true online. Therefore, you have to learn two things: your system, and the system you can count on a stranger to know. For casual face-to-face play, an intermediate pair who agrees on SAYC or 2/1 still needs to fill in some details as they fill out the card.

I like to be in a position to say, "Let's play your card"; armed with this book, you'll know what most of their stuff means already. My philosophy is that this way, at most one person is confused: me.

Many online sites have a definition somewhere of one or more systems that you can expect people to use there – but frankly not many people bother to read them.

If you are learning to play using robots online, be sure to check what the robot thinks bids mean. None of the various robots play vanilla systems.

## 1.4 Contributing

I encourage others to help me build a community resource by furnishing corrections and additions. The source for the book is written in “reStructuredText” and uses a system called “Sphinx” to render the book into web pages, e-books and PDF files.

Sphinx is the standard system used to document computer programs written in the popular Python computer language, so it is heavily used, is free, and has the advantage that the source is a simple, readable text file with a very natural markup system. When viewing the documents in a web browser, there is a link that will show you the original markup text for that page. (Tell your browser to use the UTF-8 encoding to see the suit symbols.)

Send corrections by indicating section and nearby content, rather than by page number, as the latter depends on the rendering device.

You can contribute additions such as examples and quizzes for chapters by sending a plain text file. Extra points for using reStructuredText markup. Use Bridge Books in the subject and mail to me at [pfdubois@gmail.com](mailto:pfdubois@gmail.com).

## 1.5 Acknowledgments

Thank you to my long-time teacher, Mike Moss, who taught me almost everything I know. I have also received help from teachers and expert players including Howard Schutzman, Oliver Clarke, Alex Martelli, and Jim and Pat Leary; and encouragement from my fellow learners and partners, especially David Silberman, Julia Beatty, Ally Whiteneck, and John Engstrom.

## 1.6 About The Author

I am a retired mathematician and computational scientist. I founded the first successful system for computational steering in 1984, which has become the main way scientific computation is done now. My professional biography is available, along with this book, at [pfdubois.com](http://pfdubois.com).



## NOTATION AND NOMENCLATURE

In the beginning there was a Dealer. The Dealer gets the first chance to *call*, and sits in the first chair. When in turn each person makes a call, the first one to make a call other than Pass is called the opener. A call other than a Pass is a *bid*.

*LHO* means “left hand opponent”, that is, the person bidding and playing after the opener. *LHO*’s partner is *RHO*, the “right hand opponent”. The partner of the opening bidder is called the *responder*. If the opener’s bid is overcalled, that bidder is the “overcaller” or *intervenor*, and his partner is the *advancer*.

The terms “first seat” through “fourth seat” refer to position with respect to the Dealer. Thus “opening in third seat” means opening the bidding after two preceding passes.

In writing bids, we write a level number from 1 to 7, followed by either a suit symbol or:

- M meaning a major, either hearts or spades
- m meaning a minor, either diamonds or clubs
- W meaning the “other” major after one has been mentioned

- w meaning the “other” minor after one has been mentioned

It might help to remember the W and w if you think of these letters upside down.

Bids by a partnership without interference are separated by spaces or a dash, as in 1N - 2♥ - 2♠ or just 1N 2♥ 2♠. If a bid is alertable, it is followed by an exclamation point and a suggested explanation, as in

1N - 3♥!(both majors, game force)

where the suggested alert is either in parentheses, or immediately follows, or has just been explained. When opponents intervene, their bids are shown in parentheses, as in

1♦ (2♥) 2♠ - 4♠

which shows a 2♥ overcall of an opening 1♦, followed by a bid of 2♠ by the responder, and the opener going to game with 4♠.

The adjectives “weak”, “competitive”, “invitational” (abbreviated *inv*), and “game-forcing” (abbreviated *gf*), are descriptions of hand strength. We use these descriptions often rather than point counts so that they make sense in varied contexts. We say “Responder is competitive” as a shorthand for, “Responder’s hand has competitive strength”, i.e., good enough to cause trouble but not good enough to invite game.

In showing hand shapes, hyphens (or mere conjunction) show shapes without assuming precise suit order, as in 4-3-3-3 or 4333 meaning a flat hand, the four cards being in an arbitrary suit. Equal signs show an exact spades = hearts = diamonds = clubs count, as in 4=4=4=1, showing a singleton club. Parenthesis show an exact order outside them and an arbitrary order within, such as (45)22 meaning 4=5=2=2 or 5=4=2=2.

A *good suit* is a 5+ card suit with 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5 (but some say not QJT).

Since it is boring to repeatedly have to say “shows four or more spades” and the like, we will say “four spades” to mean this, and “exactly four spades” when we mean that. When we say someone is 5-4 in two suits, we mean either five of the first and four or five of the other, or vice-versa, unless we are explicit about which one is the longer. Note that it is rare to treat a 6-4 hand the same way you would treat a 5-4 hand, so when we say 5-4 we do not mean longer than 5; but when we just say “5 cards” in some suit, it could be longer.

When we speak of a *control bid* we refer to a bid of a side suit to show features in that suit that prevent fast losers. These bids used to be called *cue bid* but the term is easily confused with bids in the opponent’s suit, which are called “cue bids”, so we use the modern term. Control bids are explained in the chapter on *Slam Bidding* (page 177).

“Controls” as a noun usually refers to Aces and Kings. When a number of controls is referred to, we are counting Aces as two and Kings as one, so that “a hand with four controls” would include hands with two Aces, or an Ace and two Kings.

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## CHAPTER THREE

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### HAND EVALUATION

I know, you want to get on with the bidding. But wait! Bidding is a little language for exchanging information with your partner about your hand: its strength, its shape, its stoppers in other suits. You can't tell your partner anything without first knowing what you want to say.

Learning this is the work of a lifetime. Further, this judgment must change with every step of the auction; our ♠KJ75 becomes decidedly less valuable when the opponent to our left bids spades, The same holding became decidedly more valuable when partner bids or supports spades.

Since we have to have some estimate of strength to even begin to play bridge, we must adopt simple methods that beginners can learn and then refine our methods as we progress.

## 3.1 Our First Estimate

The basic “high card points” (*HCP*) of a hand is found by adding up points for each Ace (4), King (3), Queen (2), and Jack (1). This means a deck has 40 points, and an average hand is 10 points.

The number of points in a hand with adjustments for suit lengths or other factors is called its *points*. Thus if we say a hand has 10 points, that total may include some adjustments such as adding points for length or deductions for doubleton honors; but if we say a hand has 10 HCP then we mean that many points attributable to honor cards.

If counting HCP is all you do, it isn’t that bad for most hands. We will now describe a number of adjustments that you should make, but on a lot of hands the adjustments cancel each other out and the basic HCP count is a pretty good evaluation of the hand. If you use the “Rule of 20” that we will describe shortly and the basic count, if you’ll get most hands right.

We need to correct for badly placed honors. Subtract one point from stiff Kings or “bad doubletons” (a doubleton which has a Queen or Jack but not the Ace) such as Qx, KJ, and KQ. If partner bids the suit, remove this correction. Subtract one for each singleton K, Q, or J. Subtract one for no Aces, and add one for three or four.

If HCP is all we do, then we are claiming that these hands all have the same value, 13 HCP:

- ♠AQ7 ♥K54 ♦K32 ♣J432
- ♠AQT ♥KT9 ♦KT9 ♣JT98
- ♠AKQJT987 ♥- ♦KT987 ♣-

- ♠A32 ♥K54 ♦KQJ ♣5432
- ♠QJ ♥QJ ♦QJ2 ♣KJ7654

Clearly we need to account for distribution, intermediate cards such as 10's and 9's, and the way our honors are grouped together or scattered. The third hand will take eight tricks in spades for sure; the last one might well take very few tricks.

Add points for length: add one point for every card in a suit in excess of four. Subtract one point for a *flat* (4-3-3-3) hand.

If you get a very distributional hand, such as a 6-5-1-1, be very aggressive; such hands will take a lot of tricks. “Six-five, come alive” is wise advice.

A “good” or “upgradeable” hand for a given point count is one with the honors concentrated and / or touching, and with more than its expected share of 9's and 10's, with Aces and Kings more than Queens and Jacks. A “bad” or “downgradeable” hand is the opposite. .

## **Adjusting to the Auction**

As the auction continues, revalue your hand. Discount the values in suits bid on your left, and discount bad holdings such as QJ doubleton in suits bid by the opponents. But don't discount such things in suits your partner bids.

“When you and your partner find a *fit* of at least 8 cards, stop and smell the roses”, says my teacher, Mike Moss. It is crucial to take a moment to re-evaluate your hand. There are two parts to this process.

First, add points for shortness. Count 1 for a doubleton, 3 for a singleton, and 5 for a void. (If you are the original opener and

have supported partner's suit, count a void as one point for each trump you have).

Alas, you will frequently find you have a *misfit*, and your evaluation of the hand must decline unless you have such a strong suit you are able to make it the trump suit on your own. When you have a misfit, your HCP alone should be considered.

Now, let me admit that every single statement in the last four paragraphs is sometimes wrong. That's why it takes a lifetime to evaluate hands correctly. There are always hands that refuse to play by the rules.

## **Losing Trick Count**

Secondly, when a *fit* has been found, and only then, make a *Losing Trick Count* (LTC). A full exposition of LTC is in "The Modern Losing Trick Count", by Ron Klinger. Here is a simplified (albeit less accurate) version.

<p><b>Warning:</b> LTC is used <i>only</i> when you have found a fit.</p>
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In each suit count a loser for each Ace, King, or Queen you do not have, up to the number of cards you hold in that suit. A stiff King is one loser and a doubleton Queen is two losers. The maximum number of losers per suit is the smaller of three and the suit's length.

Add a loser if the hand has no aces. A Queen without another honor is 2.5 losers.

Example: ♠AQ8 ♥Q8 ♦KJ32 ♣AQJ3 has 1 + 2 + 2 + 1 or six losers.

Take your number of losers, add those of your partner's hand, and subtract from 24 to get an estimate of the number of tricks you should take with your agreed-upon trump suit.

Unfortunately you can't say, "Partner, how many losers?", so you have to infer this from the bidding: an opening hand is about 7, a limit raise is 8, a simple raise is 9. A two-club opener is about 4. The hands in-between are 5 or 6.

Thus if you open one spade, and partner raises you to two spades, you want to be in game if you have five losers:  $5 + 9$  is 14, and  $24 - 14 = 10$ . If you have six losers, you might want to seek more information with something like a *help-suit* game try, because you should be safe at the three level.

Use your adjusted point count together with your LTC to decide on game and slam tries. Often the LTC reveals that a hand is better or worse than it first appeared, such as an opening hand with an LTC of six or eight. When in doubt, go on with a known nine-card fit, but hold back with only eight.

Conversely, when you have a misfit, you usually want to stop as soon as you can. However, it is often true that 3N is the right place if you have the points for game. Most of the time you want to be in game if you have the points for it.

One final note: two hands of approximately equal value play better than two hands with much different strengths. In other words, 12 opposite 13 will usually play better than 20 opposite 5, because you will have less entry problems.



## **3.2 Bergen Method**

Marty Bergen has invented a more elaborate method in his book, “Better Slam Bidding”. His long series of articles in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin are comprehensive. I urge you to consult his lessons as there are many fine points to cover.

The initial “starting points” for Bergen are determined by a five-step process:

1. Calculate the Work Count, or “Formal HCP”. The Work Count underestimates Aces and 10s, and overvalues Queens and Jacks (“quacks”).
2. Add 1 for every card over 4 in a suit
3. Add 1 for each “good” suit, a 4-card suit containing three of the five honors.
4. Adjust for the following features:
  - -1 for a questionable honor in a short suit, such as a stiff King, or a doubleton honor lacking the Ace. Thus, subtract one for KQ, Qx, Jx, etc.
  - -1 if you have 3 “quacks”; subtract 2 if you have six.
  - -1 if the hand has no Ace.
  - +1 if the hand has three Aces.
  - +1 if 5-5 or better
  - +3 if you have a void – the theory being that you are going to have a fit.
5. Classify the hand as upgradable or downgradeable.

A hand is upgradable if:

- It has 10s, 9s, or 8s – these intermediate cards make a big difference. A normal expectation is one of each.
- A good shape, such as 5422 or 6331, rather than 5332 or 6322.
- The honors are in your long suits, or together, rather than in separate suits, or in short suits. An AK doubleton will not help to set up other tricks compared to AKx, AKxx, or AKxxx.

A hand is downgradable if it has a poor shape such as 4333, or 5332.

When you have a close decision, use the upgradable or downgradable factors to help make the decision.

As the auction proceeds, and a fit is found, adjust your hand as follows.

If you are going to be the dummy, add 1 for each doubleton, 2 for a singleton (but 3 if you have four or more trumps), and add up to five points for a void, but no more than you have trumps).

If you are going to be the declarer,

- Add 2 for a singleton, 4 for a void, and exactly 1 point if you have two or more doubletons. Do not add anything for a single doubleton.
- Add one point for each trump after five.
- Add one point for a side suit with 4+ cards.

If you believe from your own count and that promised by partner that the partnership has 33 or more points, you should explore for slam; below 33, forget it.

Finally, when it becomes clear the hand is a misfit, count formal HCP only.

## 3.3 Examples

Let's look at a comparison of the basic and Bergen models.

- ♠AQ7 ♥K54 ♦K32 ♣J432

This hand has 13HCP - 1 for a flat hand = 12 HCP in either system. The hand has the honors in different suits, which is not a plus.

- ♠AT942 ♥KJ832 ♦ void ♣AKQ

This hand has 19 points, 17 HCP plus 2 for length in the basic system.

In the Bergen system we add 2 for length and 3 for the void and 1 for the 5-5 shape, for a total of 23 points. Clubs has three honors, but it doesn't get the "good suit" bonus because it doesn't have four cards.

- ♠AT942 ♥KQJ4 ♦ void ♣AKT7

This hand has 17 HCP, plus one for length in the basic system. In the Bergen system we add 2 for the 2 "good suits", hearts and clubs, and 3 for the void, for a total of 23 points.

- ♠QJ ♥QJ ♦QJ2 ♣KJ7654

This hand has 13 HCP, minus two for bad doubletons, plus two for the six card suit, or 13 points. In the Bergen system we have seven Queens and Jacks, and no Aces or tens, so

our adjustment is -2. The Bergen method would not open this hand 1♣

One cannot emphasize enough the need to revalue continuously as the auction proceeds.

Assuming a fit has been found, the losing trick counts here are 8, 3, 2, and 8, respectively.

There are several other hand evaluation methods. In the end, it takes judgment, not a mechanical adherence to points.

## **ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING**

It is hard to know where to put this information since it mentions two concepts that are used with bids not yet discussed. It is necessary to know this very early. Come back and use this as a reference as you learn more.

### **4.1 Alert!**

An alert is a procedure required when someone makes a bid that does not show the “expected length or strength” that it appears to mean. Such bids are shown in my books with an exclamation mark after them.

Some bids that would appear to need an alert do not because they have become so common that they are no longer “unexpected” meanings. In some cases the ACBL has decided the alert is helping the offense by reminding partner of the special meaning more than it is helping the defense. The most famous of these is Stayman: 1N - 2♣ would seem to require an alert because it does not show clubs. But by now, “everybody” knows that.

It is better to alert if you aren't sure. Opponents will help you learn when it is not necessary.

Say "Alert" and show the Alert card, promptly, when your partner makes an alertable bid. Do NOT explain the bid unless asked. When asked, give the explanation. Tell what the bid means ("a limit raise") rather than the convention name ("Reverse Drury"). Do not explain until asked.

When playing online, you alert your OWN bids. Partner cannot see the explanation so there is no harm to alerting anything unnecessarily.

It is unfair to your opponents not to give a clear explanation. If you aren't sure, say your best recollection without any hemming and hawing. If you do not think you have an explicit agreement with your partner, say "No explanation". If you're wrong, you're wrong.

If your partner explains your bid incorrectly, or failed to alert, you have to tell the opponents that, but only at the right time:

- If your side declares, call the director at the end of the auction.
- If you are on defense, do it after the hand is over – to do it earlier is to help your own side's defense and not allowed.
- Absolutely NEVER correct what your partner just said. It is a terrible case of unauthorized information. Don't do it by making a big face, either. It amounts to cheating. Some expter tournaments use screens so that people can't see their partner for this reason.

You do have to volunteer this information. You might say to the opponents, for example, "There was a failure to alert my 2N bid. It showed a game-forcing spade raise"; or, "My partner's

explanation of my 2N bid was not correct. We do not play it that way over an overcall.”

If your partner explains your agreement correctly but you didn’t bid it that way, whether mistakenly or on purpose, you need not and must not say anything. An upset opponent may call the Director or press you about it, and your answer is, “My partner explained our agreement correctly.”

If you deviate from your agreement frequently, it creates an illegal implicit understanding; if you forget now and then, or very rarely do something odd because you want to, it is ok. The test is that your partner should be no more likely to guess that you’re not following the agreement than your opponents are.

Read the ACBL’s documents for more information. When playing in other jurisdictions you will have to learn their procedures.

Some advice: when an opponent alerts a bid, or makes a bid you do not understand, it is good strategy not to ask for an explanation until the end of the auction or at some point when it might affect your bid. You’re only helping them remember or discover a misunderstanding. They aren’t supposed to profit from the latter but they often do and directors have a horrible time with such cases. I call this, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”, because a consequence of asking is telling their partner, not just you. When you do ask, ask the partner of the person who made the bid.

If on defense, and your partner has the opening lead, you should wait until he places his lead on the table face down and says, “Questions, partner?” My favorite answer is, of course, “Why are you leading? It isn’t your lead.” That’s why he puts it face down, to save penalties if he’s leading out of turn.

## 4.2 Announcing

A very limited number of bids are “announced” rather than alerted. An announcement is basically an alert where you explain it without asking. It is therefore confined to cases where your partner will not benefit from the explanation because there is less chance it helps your partner. The cases are:

- Announce the range of your partner’s 1N opener (e.g., “Fifteen to Seventeen”). You do not announce the range of a 1N rebid. A pair playing a weak NT will open a suit and then rebid a strong NT, but they alert rather than announce.
- On Jacoby transfers to a major, announce the suit partner has shown (e.g., “spades”). Note that 1N - 2S as the Minor Relay is alerted. It is a relay not a transfer.
- When 1N is forcing, partner announces “forcing”.



## OPENING THE BIDDING

### 5.1 What Hands To Open

Open all hands with 13 or more HCP, almost all hands with 12, and any hand with an Ace in one suit and an AK in another.

Hands with more extreme distributions can open with less points. Use the *Rule of 20*: Add your HCP and the lengths of your longest two suits; if the total is 20 or more, consider opening the hand if you have at least 10 HCP.

However, I suggest you do not open using the rule of 20 when your two suits are the minors. Why? Because opening the bidding is a two-edged sword. When you bid, the requirements for your opponent to bid over you are less than for them to open the bidding. When you open one of a minor, the opponents can mention either major cheaply. Conversely, opening 1♠ makes life tough on them, and so you can shade your 1h♠ requirements.

In third seat, chances are greatly increased that your LHO will open. Bergen says one estimate is to subtract your points from 24, and that's the average number LHO will have. Therefore your incentive to bid to at least show your partner what to lead

goes up in third seat, and so does your incentive to *preempt* (opening a weak hand at the two or three level). You may open “light” (perhaps as few as 10 HCP with a major suit).

In fourth seat, use “Pearson Points”: add your HCP and your number of spades. If you have 15 or more, open. Always open with 13 HCP.

There are always other considerations to ponder as well, such as seat and vulnerability. Generally, second seat and vulnerable are good times to be somewhat careful.

In the *ACBL* it is not legal to open one of a suit with a hand containing less than 8 HCP unless it fulfills the “Rule of 17”. In a limited game using the “Basic” chart this is the “Rule of 19”. However, be very reluctant to open one of a suit with less than 10 HCP. Your opponents are more likely to compete than usual, and your partner may end up doubling them because he thinks you have a better hand than you do.

The opening bids are:

- Opening 1N to show *balanced* (and sometimes *semi-balanced*) hands of 15 to 17 HCP.
- Opening 2N to show *balanced* (and sometimes *semi-balanced*) hands of 20 to 21 HCP.
- Opening one of a suit to show an unbalanced hand or a balanced one with too few HCP to open 1N, and up to 21 HCP.
- Opening 2♣ (artificial) to show a very strong hand (22+ HCP balanced or somewhat less with a long, strong suit). Forcing!

The opening bids from 2♦ through 5♦ are *preemptive*. Do not

make them with weak hands even though you have the correct length. Note that you and your partner must agree on how strong your suit is. One suggested agreement is that a preempt promise at least a Queen in the suit if non-vulnerable, or a good suit (two of top three honors or three of the top five, excluding QJT) if vulnerable. In third seat you can stretch a bit. Be careful not to preempt with too good a holding; many 10 HCP hands are too good for that.

- $2\heartsuit$ ,  $2\spadesuit$ ,  $2\clubsuit$  show a usually six-card suit and 5-10 HCP.
- $3\clubsuit$ ,  $3\heartsuit$ ,  $3\spadesuit$ ,  $3\clubsuit$  show a usually seven-card suit and 5-10 HCP. Sometimes  $3\clubsuit$  is bid with six good clubs, since the  $2\clubsuit$  bid can't be used.
- Opening four of a major shows an eight-card suit. Usually we don't do that in a minor since it tends to push them to bid a major game out of desperation. Instead use five of the minor. These are weak bids – don't make them with good hands.

The next few chapters will give details on these bids and their sequelae.

## 5.2 Choosing An Opening Bid

The rules are simple and depend only on your strength and shape. Choose the first bid in the following list that applies:

- If a preempt is appropriate, make it.
- Open 1N or 2N or  $2\clubsuit$  if you can.
- Open the longest five-card or longer suit at the one-level. If you have two of them that are the same length, open the

higher ranked (e.g. spades if you have spades and clubs).

- Open 1♦ if you have four diamonds and four or less clubs.
- Open 1♦ if your shape is 4=4=3=2.
- Open 1♣.

Sometimes you may want to open minimal hands with four diamonds and five clubs by bidding 1♦ to avoid *reverse* problems with your second bid. It is never wrong to open 1♣ though – this is a choice depending on the exact hand.

## 5.3 Opening in 4th Seat

Pearson Points: To find your Pearson Points, add your HCP to the number of spades you hold. If this number is 15 or more, open the bidding. The idea is that getting into a part-score battle when your opponents are likely to have the spade suit is probably changing their score from zero if you pass it out to some positive number.

Larry Cohen has this take on it: CRIFS (Cohen’s Rule In Fourth Seat): If you have a borderline situation (10-12 HCP), evaluate your opponents! If you are playing one of the better pairs, pass.

In fourth (“passout”) seat it makes no sense to preempt. You can “keep them out of it” with a pass. So the range of a “weak two” becomes 10-14 HCP.

Openings<> at the three- or four-level are likewise not weak.

## **PLANNING THE AUCTION**

Before making any bid we should note our position, vulnerability, and classify our hand. We sometimes have to anticipate our next bid in choosing the current one.

### **6.1 Note Your Seat!**

You must always check your position and vulnerability. If you have not previously passed (“an unpassed hand”), there are slightly different rules than if you are. Some rules for passed hands are sometimes labeled “BPH” (By Passed Hand). vulnerability factors in less than you think, but it is important in preemptive bidding and other competitive situations.

### **6.2 Classifying Your Hand**

The key is to know whether your hand is weak, competitive, invitational, game-going, or has slam-interest, and to constantly

re-evaluate it as the auction proceeds. You make an initial assessment of this and then modify it as the auction gives you more information.

- Weak: under 6 points
- Competitive: 6-10 points. Also called “minimal”.
- Invitational: 10-12 points. Also called “limit”.
- Game-going: 13+ points
- Slam interest: When we either have 33 points between us, or have found a suit fit and are not too far below that.

Deciding what to do with 10 points is where a lot of the agony happens.

Our goal is to bid to the best *strain* and *level* for our combined hands. To be at the two-level it would be nice if we had at least more points than they do. After all, we’re contracting to make 8 out of 13 tricks, which is 62% of the tricks. While being able to name the strain will help, having less than 50% of the points could be a problem.

For a game at 3NT we need at least 25 points; for the four-level in a suit, 26 points. For a minor game 29 points. The six level usually needs 33 total points, and the seven level 37 points. When we are in a suit contract, these figures include points that are gained due to distribution and support. In a misfit, HCP may be all that matters.

## 6.3 Is This Forcing?

As we begin our study, some advice: the key to bidding is understanding passing! The most two common mistakes are:

- Bidding when you should have passed, and
- Passing when you were required to bid.

So, pay great attention in studying to know which bids are forcing to game, forcing for one round, or not forcing. If your partner makes a bid you don't understand, don't just pass in confusion. Rethink the sequence so far to see if you've misinterpreted something – not an easy task, as the brain tends to take us down little rat-holes. Was there a conventional bid you missed? If still confused do something, something as obvious as possible. The GOAT, Bob Hamman, said: when in doubt bid three no-trump.

When partner makes a forcing bid you must notice their message and respond if that message is compelling enough, but if they bid before you get that chance, you're "off the hook".

One rule is ironclad: a new suit bid by an unpassed *responder* is forcing for one round; that is, the opener must respond to it IF the opponents are silent. The opposite is true when a passed hand bids – almost nothing they do is forcing except some doubles and artificial bids.

## 6.4 The Captain Concept

The *Captain* of a hand means the partner who becomes in charge of guiding the partnership to a good spot to play. When one player has shown the strength and nature of his hand (generally called limiting his hand, because it refers to having shown limits

on the hand's strength), the other partner becomes Captain. For example, after a no-trump opener, opener's strength is known to within three points, and the responder is the Captain.

When partner is Captain, go to your cabin, look out the porthole, and enjoy the view. Your partner may go to game or tell you to stop; obey the Captain. Otherwise, just answer his questions or show something new about your hand if his bid was forcing. The Captain may put control back into your hands by making an invitational, non-forcing bid.

During the auction, both as opener and as responder, we need to plan our path forward. There is a concept called a reverse that is crucial, so we have to discuss that before we get specific.

## **6.5 Reverses by Opener**

Imagine an auction that begins  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 2\heartsuit$ . As we will see, if responder has six to a bad ten HCP, they can only bid once, except to make a final choice of suits if necessary. For example, after  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 2\heartsuit$ , responder with such a hand must choose between diamonds, hearts, or his own spades. If he only has four spades, he has to choose one of opener's suits.

But if responder cannot agree to hearts, his bid of  $3\Diamond$  may be too high. The partnership might have less than half the points between them, yet we're promising to take 9 of the 13 tricks. For this to be safe, opener would need around seventeen points.

Compare this to  $1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit$ . Now if responder has to prefer hearts to clubs, a  $2\heartsuit$  bid is comfortable. Opener with a big hand might bid again, but at least they know we have a minimum.

So what caused the problem? It was that opener's first suit was



lower ranked than his second. Therefore the opener needs a very good hand to do that.

A *reverse* by opener is a rebid that meets two tests:

1. Opener's rebid is in a suit higher than his original suit,  
AND
2. Opener's rebid is a level higher than responder's bid.

A reverse shows about 17-18 points and an unbalanced hand with more cards in the first suit than in the second. A reverse is absolutely forcing for one round unless opponents interfere, but not forcing to game. We can take length points into account. A few shapely hands with 15-16 hands qualify as well.

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**Note:** The second bid suit is always shorter and higher-ranked than the first bid suit. Opener cannot “reverse” from one four-card suit into another.

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Example: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥. Hearts is higher than diamonds, and the 2♥ bid is up a level. Opener has more at least as many diamonds as hearts (typically 5-4).

There is one important exception. If responder has made a two-level bid he has shown at least 10 points, so if responder has to preference to 3♥, there is no problem – we're already known to have around 23 points. Therefore, we do not consider a 2-level continuation a reverse. For example, Pass - 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥. The 2♣ bid shows 10+ points.

When you have a five-card suit and a higher four-card suit, you have to open the five-card suit, but on your rebid you cannot show your four-card suit unless you have the values.

For example, with five diamonds and four hearts, if the auction goes  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 2\heartsuit$ , opener has reversed. Lacking that many points, opener may have to bid an imperfect  $1N$  or repeat diamonds instead.

With 4 diamonds and 5 clubs, such as  $\spadesuit 92 \heartsuit Q9 \diamond AQJ5 \clubsuit KQT43$ , we have a similar dilemma but without the risk of hiding a major. If we open this hand  $1\clubsuit$ , and partner answers with a major or notrump, we have a problem. So some people will open this hand  $1\Diamond$  instead. Others will bite the bullet, open  $1\clubsuit$ , and rebid  $2\clubsuit$  if they have to, even though that suggests you might have a six card suit.

Obviously the quality of the two suits will influence the decision, unless you just always open  $1\clubsuit$ .

## What If Opener Is Stronger?

Since a reverse is forcing one round, you can sometimes use it when nothing else is available to keep the auction going. But in general, if your hand is 19+ points, and you have a good suit, you might think of jumping a level in a new suit. This is called a *jump-shift*.

If the opponents have competed, a jump-shift is weak unless the context gives it another meaning. For example,  $1\heartsuit - (2\clubsuit) - 3\Diamond$  is a weak jump-shift, where the responder has a preemptive diamond hand and can't support hearts. But  $1\heartsuit - 3\Diamond$  is a jump-shift whose meaning is either a strong 19+ hand with good diamonds or a weak diamond preemptive hand.

Partnerships must decide on a meaning for a *jump-shift* when there is no competition. The standard meaning is a strong bid (19+ points) but this meaning is less useful than it was before

2/1 was invented. I think most pairs play weak jump-shifts so I will assume that. See *All About Jump-Shifts* (page 174).

## **Responding To Opener's Reverse**

If opener has reversed, as responder you must bid unless your RHO takes you off the hook by interfering. If you have a good 8 points or more, you'll want to get to game.

So the problem is what to do with a minimal hand. If you bid opener's first suit, it is a simple preference with a minimal hand. If you repeat your own major suit, you're showing five cards and a minimum.

Optionally, 2N!(relay) is a conventional bid telling your partner that you may have a minimal hand. It asks opener to rebid his first suit; then you will pass or correct to your suit. This convention is called Ingberman 2N or Lebensohl Over Reverses. Your partner should say "alert" (which is why I used the exclamation point).

Any bid other than a suit preference or 2N is game forcing when using this convention.

Downey and Pomer's book *Standard Bidding With SAYC* has a long section on reverses with a lot of examples.

## **6.6 Reverses By Responder**

When responder reverses, it is just a game-forcing natural bid. For example, 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♦ is a game-forcing reverse, since diamonds are a higher suit than clubs. Again, the same principal

is at work; an opener who wanted to prefer clubs is now forced up a level compared to bidding diamonds first and clubs second.

Note that 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ does not count as a reverse; we're not up a level. But bidding 2♠, not 1♠, is a jump shift and game forcing. For this reason it is best to treat this 1♠ bid as forcing.

Sometimes a responder reverse is the fourth suit bid and therefore unlikely to find a fit with partner, so most play it as a conventional bid that is one-round or game-forcing but not showing that suit, asking partner to bid notrump with a stopper in the fourth suit. See *Fourth Suit Forcing* (page 48).

## RESPONDING TO MINOR OPENINGS

Our partner has opened 1♣ or 1♦. If we mean either we can write “1m”. Partner could have a three-card suit but most of the time it is four or five cards. For diamonds, only 5% of the time do we have only a three card suit.

So where are we going? If we don't have 25 points or more, we want to stop in the cheapest suitable contract we can find. If we have game strength, we hope to find a 4-4 fit for a major, if possible, but more often our game, if we have one, is 3NT. If they compete we might find a suit is unstopped. In that case we may stop at 4 of a minor or press on to 5 of a minor, or even sometimes settle for a 4-3 fit in a major.

In a possible slam exploration, the point at which we go past 3N is a point of no return, and we should be thinking of the alternative to 3N as six of our minor. Especially playing matchpoints, bidding five of a minor when a 3N contract is making is a recipe for a bottom score.

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**Note:** When an unpassed responder bids a new suit at the lowest level he can, it is always forcing for one round. Raises aren't

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forcing, nor are notrump responses.

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## 7.1 Responding To One Of A Minor

Before choosing a response, remember to take note of your seat, the vulnerability, and do a classification of your hand. See *Planning The Auction* (page 26).

### Responding With A Weak Hand

With a weak hand just pass. If there has been interference from your RHO, and you have five of partner's minor, you can bid a weak 3m as a *preemptive* raise.

### Responding With A Competitive Hand

With a competitive (6-10 point) hand bid the first of these bids that applies.

- Show a major: bid a four-card or longer major. If you have hearts and spades of equal length, bid a heart.
- Raise partner: 2m shows five or more cards in m. Sometimes bid with four good diamonds, and a maximum, but not with four clubs.
- Show a diamond suit: 1♦ shows four or more diamonds.
- Otherwise bid 1N. If partner opened 1♦ you can't bid 2♣.

You cannot pass with six or more points. Bidding 1N does not promise a balanced hand or any particular stoppers. It simply denies the other bids, and denies an invitational hand.

With a competitive hand you are only going to get one shot at saying you have a major, so you prefer to mention that first. Here's an example:

♠A4  
♥9876  
♦KQ762  
♣97

Partner opens 1♣. You bid 1♥. (If you had four spades as well, you'd still bid hearts, up the line.) The problem is that you can't bid 1♦ and then try to show hearts later; that would be a responder *reverse* and show a game-forcing hand.

## Responding With An Invitational Hand

With a good 10 to 12 points, showing a major suit remains your priority. You'll show your strength and leave it up to partner.

Here are the priorities:

- Show a major.
- Raise partner: 3m is a *limit raise*, with 5+ in m.
- Show a diamond suit.
- Invite in clubs: 1♦ - 3♣ is invitational with six clubs. As a passed hand, or if there is interference, you can bid just 2♣. These bids are not forcing.
- Otherwise bid 2N.

## Responding With A Game-Going Hand

See the discussion of weak jump shifts in *All About Jump-Shifts* (page 174). Unless we are playing strong jump-shifts, there is no game-forcing minor raise. To force to game, responder has to keep making bids that cannot be passed short of game, which in practice means bidding new suits or going past 3N.

The *Inverted Minors* (page 43) convention helps alleviate this problem. Inverted Minors is one of the *expected conventions with 2/1* (page 3).

Responder's priorities are:

- Show a major.
- Show a diamond suit, usually 5+ cards.
- Bid 2♣ over 1♦. This game-forcing bid shows five clubs. (You can't be a passed hand).
- 1m - 3N shows 13-15 HCP and a semi-balanced hand with no four-card major.

Note that "Raise partner" isn't in the list. As the auction progresses you must make bids partner cannot pass short of game.

With no major suit fit you're headed for 3N unless the opponents' bidding makes it clear that they have a suit and we do not have it stopped. Do not worry about stoppers in suits they didn't bid.

If you cannot get to 3N you may need to stop in 4m. Going to 5m has to usually include a lot of trumps and some shape.

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**Note:** Bypassing a diamond suit to show a major is a style of bidding called *Walsh*. With less than game-forcing holdings

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one bypasses even five diamonds over partner's 1♣ to show the major.

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## Looking For Slam

Bidding minor slams is awkward. Until you have agreed on a suit, 4N is not *Blackwood* (page 177) (an Ace-asking bid). Jumping to five of the minor is not inviting to slam, it is just shutting down with a distributional hand. All you can do is bid as if you seek only game, and then keep going if you're positive a slam is likely. Going past 3N is crossing the Rubicon.

## 7.2 Opener's Rebid

If opener rebids 1N he promises a balanced hand. Never rebid 1N with a singleton or void. This is very different than responder's 1N which is a "catch-all" merely showing that responder does not have a four-card suit to bid.

It is opener's turn to classify his hand (after revaluing it considering partner's response):

- up to 14 is a "minimum" hand; we don't have a game if partner has limited his hand to less than invitational.
- 15 - 17 is *game try* territory. We *might* have a game. More about that later.
- 18 - 19 is almost enough for game even if responder has a minimum. We are anxious to show this by rebidding 2N if possible.
- 20-21 is game forcing. We might even be in a slam hunt.

If the bidding has gone  $1m - 1\heartsuit$ , and we cannot support hearts, but we have four spades, we must bid  $1\spadesuit$ . Do not skip over  $1\spadesuit$  when you have four; responder could have four hearts and four spades. This should be treated as forcing unless partner is a passed hand.

It takes 17+ HCP to raise partner's major to the 3 level. With more than that, you can bid game. Or, you can show shortness on the way to game by splintering. A *splinter* is a triple jump and shows shortness. For example,  $1\diamond - 1\spadesuit - 4\clubsuit!$  would show support for spades and shortness in clubs, with some slam interest. A splinter says, "I could have bid game even without this nifty shortness".

Otherwise, an opener with a balanced hand and 12-14 points will rebid 1N over responder's one of a suit bid.

With 18-19 he rebids 2N. Note that the 2N rebid does not deny any major you may skip over:

- $1\diamond - 1\heartsuit - 2N$  does not deny having four spades
- $1\diamond - 1\spadesuit - 2N$  does not deny having four hearts

An opener's jump-shift, such as  $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuit - 3\heartsuit$ , is a powerful hand, 19+, with good suits. This is very rare after a minor opening. Jump-shifts by opener are never weak because, hey, he opened, he's not weak.

If responder has bid a major and we have four of them, or three of them and either a singleton or no other good bid, we can raise. Mike Lawrence gives this example:

♠ 52  
♥ QJ9  
♦ AJ763

(continues on next page)

(continued from previous page)

♣ KQ4

After 1♦ - 1♥, he recommends 2♥. If you bid 1N expect a spade lead and your goose may be well done. That diamond suit does not merit a rebid.

With an unbalanced hand opener can show a second suit, but a reverse requires 17+. The most frequent case is 1♦ - 1x - 2♣, showing four diamonds and more diamonds than clubs, and an unbalanced hand.

Rebidding one's minor at the 2 level shows a minimum opener and a six-card suit usually. A jump rebid of 1m - 3m is 15-17.

The *New Minor Forcing* (page 45) convention helps find 3-5 and 4-4 fits in such situations.

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**Note:** The system we use after *opening a notrump* (page 103) does not apply after we *rebid* 1N and likewise the system *after we \*open\* 2N* (page 130) does not apply after a 2N *rebid*. Those systems do apply when we *overcall* in notrump.

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## After A Game-forcing Two Over One

We're look for 3N. Opener's rebids are:

- 2♦ (catchall) shows 5 diamonds, any strength, does not deny a four-card major. Have six diamonds if possible.
- 2♥ or 2♠ shows a 4-card major, denies five cards unless suit is rebid on next round to show a 5-6 hand. Because

we are in a game-forcing auction, this is not a *reverse*, so does not require extra strength.

- 3♣ raises clubs.
- 2N shows stoppers in both majors, does not deny a four-card major. This is not an invitational bid; the auction is game forcing. We're just going slow to give responder more space to describe their hand.
- 3N shows 18-19 balanced, stoppers.

## 7.3 Subsequent Bidding

If responder has bid a major, and opener does not have four cards in it, there might still be a 3-5 major fit. Or, there might be a four-four fit in the other major, for example when responder has five spades and four hearts but opener has two spades and four hearts.

Two *expected conventions* (page 3) that solve the problem of detecting such fits are covered in the next chapter, *Basic Checkback* (page 234): New Minor Forcing and Fourth Suit Forcing.

## 7.4 Interference

A minor is so easy to overcall, it happens a lot, so we must be prepared. Responder's bids over the overcall mean what they would have meant, except that the limit raise or better is shown with a *cue bid*. That's a bid of *their* suit, such as 1♣ - (1♥) - 2♥. That has the same meaning as 1♣ - 3♣.

A cue bid at the three level after partner's 1m opener is over-called is *Western Cue* (page 160), asking partner to bid 3N with a stopper in their suit. A Western Cue bid says, "We have the points for game, partner, but I do not have a stopper. I probably have something to help though."

Worst case is they have a nine-card fit in a major suit. Without two good stoppers 3N will be a very poor contract.

## 7.5 Inverted Minors

Inverted Minors is listed as one of the *expected conventions* (page 3) for a 2/1 player but you can not play it without a lot of harm.

Inverted minors reverse the meanings of the raises of a minor, so that the 1m - 2m raise is strong and the 1m - 3m raise is weak (preemptive). Inverted Minors require partnership agreement.

The requirements to raise from 1m to 2m!(inverted) are:

- 10+ points
- 5+ cards in the minor, or four really good ones if it is diamonds.
- No four card major

The 2m bid must be alerted. It is forcing for one round. In competition, 2m reverts to its standard meaning. If 3m is a jump, as in 1♦ - (1♥) - 3♦, it is weak.

After a strong raise, the partners bid stoppers up-the-line. While some do not look to confirm a stopper in the other minor, we do. The first party that knows we have stoppers bids 2N, or a responder with a game-forcing hand can go directly to 3N. "He

who knows, goes”, as Marty Bergen says. If 3N or 6m is not possible we will head for 5m. Stopping in 4m is possible but if 3N makes expect a score of 0%.

Some experts prefer to use 3m as a “mixed” raise, showing 7-10 HCP, so that an opener with 18-19 points can bid 3N, as their expert opponents blow by a 3m preempt as if it were not there.

## BASIC CHECKBACK

Minor openings often lead to the following scenario: responder bids a major, and opener rebids 1N or a third suit. Responder who has a five-card major would like to ask the opener whether opener has three-card support; and when responder might hold four cards in the other major, he'd like to know if opener also has four.

The “Check Back” bids are conventional bids that ask those questions. Because of the bidding room they consume, they usually require invitational to game-forcing hands, but can also be used sometimes for escaping to a minor.

### 8.1 New Minor Forcing

When a 1N or 2N rebid has been made over a major suit call by the responder, any bid of an *unbid* minor (hence, a *new* minor) is NMF. It is forcing for one round and is at least invitational. Over 2N it is of course game forcing.

NMF is usually made holding five cards in a major that has been bid at the one level, hoping for a 5-3 fit in the suit. It also can be

bid holding four cards in the “other major”.

Here are examples:

- $1\Diamond - 1\Heart - 1N - 2\clubsuit!(NMF)$

Responder holding five hearts wants to know if we have a 5-3 fit. Note opener does not have four spades in this auction, so NMF would not be used to find a spade fit.

- $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\Diamond!(NMF)$

Responder holding five spades and possibly four hearts would again like to check for a fit. Responder bypassed  $1\Heart$  originally, so he either does not have four hearts or he bypassed them because he had five spades.

- $1\Heart - 1\spadesuit - 2N - 3\clubsuit!(NMF)$

Responder holding five spades would like to check for a fit.

**Warning:** I think the NMF bid over a 2N jump rebid is one of the hardest conventional bids to recognize at the table.

Responding to New Minor Forcing, in order of priority, opener:

- Shows four of the other major by bidding it. For example,  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit!(NMF) - 2\Heart$
- Shows three in partner’s major and a maximum (14 points) by jump bidding it. For example,  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit!(NMF) - 3\spadesuit$
- Shows three in partner’s major but no maximum by bidding it. For example,  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit!(NMF) - 2\spadesuit$ .



- Repeats his minor or bids the “new” minor naturally.
- Bids 2N to show no fit but a maximum. Game forcing.

Note that we bid the other major rather than show 3-card support at first. If there is a double 5-3 and 4-4 fit, we want the suit with the 4-4 to be trump, hoping to set up the other for discards as a side suit. Check with partner, some want to always show the 5-3 fit immediately.

Sometimes it takes longer to tell the story but the story gets told. Compare these continuations after  $1\Diamond - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit!$ (NMF). The responder has bid spades:

- $2\heartsuit$ (opener has 4 hearts)- $2\spadesuit$ (has five spades)- $4\spadesuit$ (has 3 spades and accepts invite)
- $2\spadesuit$ (opener has 4 hearts)- $4\heartsuit$ (me too)
- $2\spadesuit$ (opener has 3 spades, minimum, denies four hearts)
- $3\spadesuit$ (opener has 3 spades, and 14 points, denies four hearts)

When no fit is found:

- $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\Diamond!$ (NMF) -  $3\clubsuit$ (no 3 spades or 4 hearts, minimum)
- $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\Diamond!$ (NMF) -  $2N$ (no 3 spades or 4 hearts, maximum)

When opener shows a maximum, it is game forcing, because responder invited by bidding NMF.

The two-way version of NMF, *Two-Way NMF* (page 235), also known as “Two Way Checkback Stayman” is, as Marty Bergen titled his lesson on the subject, “Infinitely Better and Easier” than NMF. Very few non-experts play it however. This is just

one of those historical oddities where everyone got taught the wrong thing solely because it has one less conventional bid in it.

## 8.2 Fourth Suit Forcing

Bidding the fourth suit may describe your hand, but it is unlikely to find a fit with partner. For example,

1♦ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥

While it is possible opener has four hearts, it isn't too likely given that he already has at least 8 cards in the minors. Fourth Suit Forcing gives you a way to bid a hand where you need a forcing bid but don't have a natural one. For example, suppose responder has, in the auction 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♣ - ?:

♠KQJ86 ♥- ♦A93 ♣KJT82

With 14 points, responder must drive the auction to game. But alas,

- 2♦ will be passed
- 2♠ could be passed
- 2N could be passed (besides being frightening)
- 3♣ could be passed
- 3♦ could be passed
- 3♠ sets spades as trump, so we'd need six of them
- 3N could be very, very wrong.

But 2♥!(forcing, artificial), called Forth Suit Forcing or FSF, forces the auction to game (or four of a minor). Everyone can slow down, and responder's next bid will further explain his

hand. Note that Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF) almost always implies that the suit responder bid first is five cards long; opener assumes so.

Arbitrarily, the auction  $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit$  is considered natural, not fourth-suit forcing. You must bid  $2\spadesuit$ ! (forcing, artificial) instead to force to game in this case.

The FSF bid says nothing about the fourth suit. You could have a void in it. So if you want to show a real suit, you have to bid it again on your next turn.

Some play FSF as forcing only for one round; ask a new partner and check the appropriate box in the bottom right of your convention card. Better yet, talk them out of it. Knowing an auction is game-forcing is so powerful.

## **FSF In A Game-Forcing Auction**

When we are already in a game-forcing auction, there is no need for FSF. In that case Grant and Rodwell in *2 Over 1 Game Force* recommend that a bid of the fourth suit in a 2/1 auction mean either:

- Responder doesn't know what else to bid, or
- Responder has a genuinely two-suited hand.

Responder's next bid will clarify the situation.

## FSF Responses

After FSF, opener further describes his hand, and tries to give responder information on two important fronts:

- As with New Minor Forcing, opener will try to show 3-card support.
- Lacking support, we want to show a stopper in the fourth suit if we have one by bidding notrump at a level appropriate to our strength.

Example:

1♦ - 1♠  
 2♣ - 2♥!(forcing, says nothing about hearts)

Holding 3 spades, we bid 2S. Otherwise, we bid 2N with a heart stopper.

With opener lacking a heart stopper or 3 spades, the auction might go:

1♦ - 1♠  
 2♣ - 2♥!(forcing, says nothing about hearts)  
 3♣ - 3♦  
 4♦

Here responder's bid of 3♦ showed a two-suited hand in a way that could not be passed since a game force was in effect. Had the responder had an invitational hand with spades and diamonds, he would just bid 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 3♦.

Opener knows that since he denied a heart stopper, when responder did not bid 3N, that game is not possible, so goes on to 4♦ to

await responder's decision about 5♦. Good defenders will know to lead the fourth suit if you try to sneak through in 3N.

## RESPONDING TO MAJOR OPENINGS

Your first job is to classify your hand. Please review *Classifying Your Hand* (page 27) to classify your hand as weak, competitive, invitational, game-going, or slam interest.

If you have support for partner's major, be sure to revalue your hand and do a *losing trick count*. Sometimes HCP aren't the whole story. An 11 HCP hand, especially one with four trump, or a hand with an LTC of 7, may be appropriate for treating as game-going.

Since opening five-card majors is the central idea of the bidding system, there is a focus on finding eight or more card major fits. There is also an effort to distinguish nine-card fits from eight-card fits, as nine-card fits are much easier to play.

### 9.1 Two Over One Game Force

If you are *not a passed hand*, and there is *no interference*, and your partner opened a *suit other than clubs*, then...

OK, wait, before I tell you, that was the hard part. When you

start playing 2/1 you are going to be getting mixed up because you apply these rules in the wrong context. When you see what looks like a 2/1 bid you have to stop and ask “What has happened so far?”.

Ready? Here we go again.

If you are *not a passed hand*, and there is *no interference*, and your partner opened a *suit other than clubs*, then a two-level response in a new suit is forcing to game or four of a minor. There are six possible sequences:

- 1♦ - 2♣
- 1♥ - 2♣ or 2♦
- 1♠ - 2♣, 2♦, or 2♥

All of these sequences show four card or longer suits with the exception of 1♠ – 2♥, which shows five hearts. Jump bids like 1♦ – 2♠ are not 2/1 bids.

The auction 1♦ - 2♣ is special and was treated separately in the chapter on minor openings.

Along with 2/1 we must play *1N Forcing* (page 59). This means that:

- As a passed hand, or if there is competition, everything is standard, as we discuss next in *Standard Responses* (page 54).
- Over a 1♣ opening, everything (including 1N) is standard.
- Over a 1♦ opening, 2♣ is game forcing, 3♣ is invitational, and everything else (including 1N) is standard.
- The game-forcing response of 2♣ or 2♦ can be as little as three cards, such as when responder is 3=4=3=3, in order

to be sure  $1\spadesuit - 2\heartsuit$  is five cards.

- $1\heartsuit - 2\clubsuit/\diamond$  does not deny spades.
- $1M - 2\clubsuit/\diamond/\heartsuit$  does not deny 3-card support for M. A direct raise, on the other hand, promises four trump.
- You do not always make a two-over-one bid with game-forcing values. Other choices include Jacoby 2N, inverted minors over  $1\diamond$ , and bids of  $1\heartsuit$  or  $1\spadesuit$  when available.

## 9.2 Standard Responses

Here are the replies to a one of a major opening when 2/1 does *not* apply. Either we are a passed hand or our RHO has bid or doubled. When we are a passed hand, we must be cautious in case partner opened light. People playing the older “Standard American” (SAYC) system just use these rules all the time.

### Weak Hands

If you have less than 6 HCP you can pass. If you have four trump with 5 points or an Ace, it is probably worth giving partner a simple raise. Do not try to rescue partner if you have a stiff or void in his suit. If you do, he may just bid it again. Worst case, you’re only at the one level and your partner has five trump.

If you happen to have five or more of your partner’s major, bid 4M. This is, contrary to appearances, a weak bid. We may have only half the deck but in our suit we have at least ten of them. If we don’t make, at least we kept them out of finding their fit. Such a bid is called a *preemptive* raise.

If playing *Weak Jump Shifts* (page 174) one might be made here.



## Competitive Hands

If you have six to a bad ten HCP, you must bid. Even if you have a void in partner's suit, you must bid. Your partner could have an unbalanced hand with 21 points.

There are three possible bids with a competitive hand: 2M, 1♠, and 1N:

- With three or more of your partner's suit M, you make a simple raise to 2M. Support with support! Otherwise,
- Over 1♥, bid 1♠ if you have four spades.
- Bid 1N. This says you do not have 3-card support for partner's suit (and in the case of 1♥-1N, you don't have four spades).

None of these bids is forcing. Almost nothing a passed hand can do is forcing, except a *cue bid* if the opponents compete.

With a competitive hand, you can't bid at the two-level. That requires a good 10 HCP.

Important: 1M - 1N does not say you have a balanced hand. If we made such a requirement, and your partner opens 1♥, suppose we have this hand:

♠K92 ♥2 ♦Q8763 ♣Q952

We would be stuck. Let's see why:

- We absolutely cannot pass with those 7 HCP.
- We can't raise hearts.
- We don't have four spades.

- We don't have enough for a 2-level reply, which rules out 2♦ or 2♣.
- The only bid left is 1N.

Our hand is not balanced, so if 1N had to be balanced, we would have no bid.

Don't confuse a notrump RESPONSE such as 1♥ - 1N, with a notrump REBID such as 1x - 1y - 1N made by the opener on his second bid. When an opener bids notrump on his second bid it *does* promise a balanced hand. The responder who bids 1N on his first bid does not.

A competitive hand gets one bid, unless opener forces another out of you or gives you a choice of parking places. So if your partner bids his suit again, you pass.

## Invitational Hands

If your hand is invitational (after revaluing it if you have a fit):

- With three or more of your partner's suit M, we raise. To show our better values, we bid 3M rather than 2M. This invitational raise is also called a *limit raise* because in so doing you limit your strength to this narrow range. Otherwise,
- Over 1♥, bid 1♠ if you have four spades. Otherwise,
- With a decent five-card minor bid 2m. Otherwise,
- Bid 2N with a balanced hand.

Again, none of these bids is forcing.

## Game-Going Hands

Once in a while a hand that passed but was just shy of opening finds their hand revalues to a game-going hand when partner opens a major, particularly when we have four of their major. Bid game with 4M.

## Responding Over Interference

If opponents overcall, bidding their suit (a *cue bid*) shows a limit raise. If you have a weak hand with four in your partner's major, and a jump to 3M is available, that is a preemptive bid.

You might also make a *takeout* double, showing the other major and a rebid. Takeout and other kinds of doubles are covered in *All About Doubles* (page 87).

If opponents double, you just bid normally. If you have 10 HCP and less than four cards in M, you redouble. See *Going For Blood* (page 93) for what happens next.

Examples:

1♥ (2♣) 3♣ is a limit raise or better in  
↪ hearts.

1♥ (2♣) X is a takeout double.

1♥ (X) XX is the "going for blood" double, 10+  
↪ HCP and less than four hearts.

## Reverse Drury

Reverse Drury is one of the *expected conventions* (page 3) for a 2/1 player. Reverse Drury requires partnership agreement.

When 1M is opened in third or fourth seat, it may be light. Reverse Drury lets responder show a limit raise without getting too high by bidding 2♣! as a limit raise rather than 3M. Reverse Drury does not apply over interference. For example, 1♥ - (1♠) - 2♣ shows 10 HCP with a club suit.

Note that the natural 2♣ bid is no longer available, so a responder might have to bid 3♣ over 1M to show 10 points with a club suit and no support for the major.

When responder is a passed hand, and there is no competition, 2♣! is the limit raise, while 3M!(weak) would be weak and preemptive with four trump. The opener rebids:

- 2M Opener's hand was substandard. Responder passes. We're not at 3M, where we would have been without this convention.
- 2♦! (Opener had an honest opener).
- 3M! (Opener has 14 points).

In the usual convention, 2♦, 2M, and 3M are the only possible responses. However, we extend the convention somewhat to allow the opener to in effect make a game try. When opener bids a suit other than 2M, opener is making a *help-suit game try* (page 65), and has a full opener. Responder may now bid game or stop at 3M.

Note: the "Reverse" in "Reverse Drury" is historical; when the convention was first suggested, the 2♦ response and the 2M response were swapped.

Add Reverse Drury to your partnership as soon as you feel you both can recognize it. You'll have to regret the times someone misses it. Also played by many is the two-way version, in which 2♣! is a three-card limit raise and 2♦! is a four or more card limit raise.

## 9.3 Responding As An Unpassed Hand

This system, Two Over One Game Force, slows the auction down on game-going hands. This makes for better slam bidding because neither partner needs to jump just to keep the auction alive. In fact, once the game force is established, the slower you go, the more powerful a hand you are showing.

The changes are all for invitational or better hands with no competition. Weak and competitive hands are treated as before.

1. The range of the 1N response becomes 6-12 instead of 6-10. Opener will announce “forcing” and he must make another bid. See *1N Forcing* (page 59) for continuations.
2. 2N is a conventional bid showing a four-card game-forcing raise. See *Jacoby 2NT* (page 61) for continuations.
3. A bid of 2♥ over 1♠ promises five hearts and is game-forcing. It therefore requires an opening hand rather than just 10 points.
4. A bid of 2m over 1M promises four in the minor and is game-forcing. It therefore requires an opening hand rather than just 10 points.
5. A bid of 2♣ over 1♦, although not the subject of this chapter, also changes to be game forcing. It therefore requires

an opening hand rather than just 10 points.

What follows is further discussion of these eight changes, six 2/1 bids, the forcing 1N bid, and the 2N strong raise.

By the way, we no longer bid 1♠ over 1♥ with a game forcing hand; we make a 2m game forcing bid. The reason is, we are no longer worried about reversing.

## Game-Going Hands

When we make the 2N or 2/1 bids, we must make sure we bid game. You must not make a bid your partner can pass. “Bidding game” is a misnomer; you can stop in four of a minor even though that is not a game. However, this phrase is common bridge terminology so we will use it.

One rule you’ll have on your side is that if responder bids a new suit, and has never passed, it is 100% forcing a round. That means sometimes you bid suits as short as 3 cards.

Suppose, for example, your partner opens 1♠, and your shape is 3=4=2=4 with 13 HCP. You have a dilemma:

- 2♠ shows 6-10 HCP, so you’re too strong for that.
- 3♠ shows 10-12 HCP, and again you’re too strong.
- 4♠ shows 5 trump and a weak hand – again, not appropriate.
- 2♥ is possible only if you have five hearts. You don’t.
- 1N is forcing, but while you can use it with a three-card raise in an emergency, followed by a 4M bid, it really implied at most 12 points. We hate to lie.

- 2N! is a conventional bid called *Jacoby 2NT* (page 61) that is game-forcing and promises 4 trump.
- 3N gets to the wrong game. Partner will never guess you have support. 3N shows 13-15 HCP and usually exactly two cards in M.

Therefore, you will bid 2♣; this is forcing because it is a new suit by an unpassed hand. You'll tell partner about the support on your next bid by bidding spades.

Had your shape been 3=4=3=3 you'd be bidding a three-card suit. That's ok; it is forcing. You're sure to get another bid.

## **Jacoby 2NT**

In response to a major opening, and in the absence of any interference, a bid of 2N is called *Jacoby 2NT*. It is alerted as a game-forcing raise with four or more trump.

As you gain experience see *When Not To Bid J2NT* (page 68) for some guidelines on when not to use this bid.

2N can still be used as a limit raise or better if opponents interfere with a double. See *Jordan 2NT* (page 70).

## **Responding to Jacoby 2NT**

Opener responds to J2NT by revaluing his hand in light of the fit. We call this new value "declarer points". Then with a balanced hand,

- 1M - 2N! - 4M Less than 15 declarer points
- 1M - 2N! - 3N 15-17 declarer points, balanced

- 1M - 2N! - 3M 18+ declarer points.

Note the theme – the slower you go, the more you have. This is often termed, *slow shows*. With a big hand, go as slow as you can but no slower; you must never make a bid your partner can pass short of game.

With an unbalanced hand,

- 1M - 2N! - 3♣/♦/♥/♠ stiff or void in the bid suit.
- 1M - 2N! - 4a, a very good second 5-card suit, and no more than 13 HCP.

Note the “slow shows” nature of the balanced bids. If you have a choice between showing a second five card suit or a stiff, show the second suit if it is a good suit and you are at a minimum. However, if you have a void, show the void.

After the opener replies to J2N, a non-jump bid in a side suit is a control bid, which are discussed in more detail in the chapter on *slam bidding* (page 183).

## 9.4 Jordan 2NT

If the opener’s LHO makes a takeout double of a major, 2N! shows a limit raise or better with four trump.

1M - (X) - 2N!(four-card limit raise or better)

This bid is called Jordon 2NT (who popularized it in America) or Truscott 2NT (who invented it in 1954) or Dormer 2NT (who popularized it in Europe).

This shows four trump as in Jacoby 2NT; with 3 card support, one redoubles. My recommended partnership agreement for in-



intermediates is to make a Jordan 2N bid with 3-card support also – the redouble sequences are rather advanced. Jordan over the takeout double gets the support message in early so partner can revalue their hand, and prevents a low-level response by the advancer.

One of the principles we will use is that jumps in competition are weak. A notable exception is replying to your partner's takeout double. Until we get to all that, just note that a bid of 3M here is a preemptive four-card raise.

## 9.5 Summary of Responses To 1M

Table 1: Responses to 1M Opener

Shape / Strength	Competitive 5+ - 10-	Invitational 10 - 12	Game Force 13+
Have Sup- port BPH	2M 2M	3M 3M or 2♣(d)	J2NT, 2/1 4M
No Support BPH	1♠ or 1N	1N(f) 2x or 2N	2/1 N/A

Notes:

- BPH = By Passed Hand
- Invitational raises are also called limit raises.
- (d) BPH limit raise becomes 2♣ *Reverse Drury* (page 58) when learned.
- Weak hands below six HCP just pass, or bid 4M if they have four trump.

- 1N(f) is forcing by an unpassed hand. Announced.
- Bidding a new suit at the two level must be 5+ hearts or 3+ in a minor.
- Jacoby 2NT shows four trump; with just three, force to game first with a 2/1 bid.
- If 1M was doubled, Jordan 2N shows a limit raise or better.

## 9.6 When Do You Bypass A Major?

After a 1♥ opener, holding four spades, do you always bid 1♠? No. With game-forcing values and a five-card minor as well as four spades, bid the five-card minor at the two level to force to game. To make this work, we agree that a 2♠ rebid by the opener is not a reverse. Thus, if we have a 4-4 spade fit, we will find it.

If you do bid 1♠ over 1♥ holding five spades, opener may rebid 1N or 2N. If they do, you can use *New Minor Forcing* (page 45) with invitational or better values to find a 5-3 fit.

Many people have trouble recognizing NMF in auctions with a 2N rebid:

1♦ 1♠  
2N 3♣!(New Minor Forcing)

When you do decide to respond 1♠ with game-forcing values, it is ok; just be sure that your subsequent bids cannot be passed. *NMF* (page 45) and *Fourth-Suit Forcing* (page 48) are important tools here.

The auction 1♠ – 1N! - (2♦ or 2♥) – 3♣ is to play, although with a specially suitable hand opener may make another call.

With a flattish 13-15, but relatively weak holdings in the 4-card suit(s), 1N(forcing) followed by 3N is sometimes appropriate to avoid partner getting too excited.

## **9.7 Help Suit Game Tries**

After a major trump suit is agreed upon at the two level, any bid between that and three of the trump suit is a “Help-Suit Game Try”. This bid is not alertable.

Partner accepts the invitation to game by bidding game. Partner declines the invitation by bidding three of the major.

The standard is that the help-suit bidder shows 3 cards or more in the suit. If you and your partner agree, you could reduce this to 2 cards; in that case the bid is alertable (“could be just two cards”).

Partner should bid game if he has “help” in the suit bid and is not near minimum. “Help” is defined as any one of:

- An Ace, King, stiff, or void
- Five cards in the suit
- A maximum
- With no help, and a near maximum, partner may bid a suit below three of the major to show “help” in that suit, but no help in the suit mentioned.

With a minimum, partner just pretends he has no help.

It is very important that the responder to the help-suit game try just answer the question asked, and not try to second guess the opener’s holding. Opener with more than one suit of concern

below trump may ask about the lowest, relying on partner to show help in another suit if the decision for game is not clear-cut.

Example: After 1♠ – 2♠, opener bids 3♦ asking for help in diamonds.

If responder has ♠KJ75 ♥93 ♦K832 ♣J74 he bids 4♠ since he has 8 points and the King of diamonds. If the ♦K and ♣7 are interchanged, he bids 3♠. However, if the ♦K is instead in hearts, he could bid 3♥ to indicate help in hearts but none in diamonds. Without the ♣J, at 7 points he would be near a minimum and should probably sign off at 3♠ even holding the ♦K. Change the hand to ♠KQ65 ♥93 ♦Q832 ♣Q74 and at 9 points responder should bid game.

If agreement at 2♠ is reached through some sequence such as 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♠, an opener's bid of 3♣ would again be a help-suit game try.

So what meaning then should we give to 1M - 2M - 3M? The simple interpretation is that this invites partner to bid game if on the top of his 2M bid. However, one can also play it, and I do, as a sort of trump-suit game try – asking partner for help in the trump suit, perhaps holding a hand with the strength mostly outside the trump suit.

There are other “game-try” schemes available, discussed in *Improved Major Contracts* (page 245).

## 9.8 Too Good To Raise

The most frequent error beginners make after a major opening is to raise to game because they have an opening hand. That's understandable; you do need to reach game for sure. But the problem is you may be underestimating the opener's hand and missing a slam.

Say partner has opened 1♥ in first seat, and you have ♠AJ5 ♥KQ8 ♦72 ♣AT983.

You have a dilemma. Your hand revalues to about 16 points – one for the doubleton and one for the extra club. You cannot bid:

- 1♠ – you'd be lying, because you do not have four spades
- 1N – forcing, but conceals your extra values.
- 3♥ – too small, not forcing so partner might pass
- 4♥ – too big, this is a shutout showing a weak hand and five trumps.

The just-right Goldilocks response is 2♣; your next bid will be 4♥. Note that you could bid 1N(forcing) with a minimal hand with three hearts, bidding 4♥ next. However, with the extras in this hand, 2♣ is right.

Note what happens if the bidding goes 1♥ - 4♥. Opener holding ♠K9 ♥AJT742 ♦AK9 ♣K2 is going to think that the partnership has at most 25 points and is not going to explore for a slam that actually has excellent chances.

With some hands, such as ♠AJ5 ♥KQ83 ♦97 ♣AT92, you might even be bidding a four-card suit. That's ok; your bid is a new suit, so it is forcing and you'll be able to clarify on your next bid. This is also an object lesson on why a new suit by

an unforced hand is forcing; sometimes responder must make something up to keep the bidding going. Don't be tempted to pass 2♣ because you have bid with a minimal opener and have clubs. It is, however, important not to bid 2♥ over 1♠ unless you have five of them.

Note that if you are a passed hand, your hand might have just become game forcing due to the fit. Still, you don't just bid 4♥ right away. You bid 2♣!(reverse Drury), showing a limit raise. If partner then bids 2♥, you can then raise to 4♥, telling your story beautifully – I had a near-opening hand, but now that you bid hearts, I have enough for game with my distribution.

## 9.9 When Not To Bid J2NT

J2NT is not always appropriate even with an opening hand. Here are some situations where you do not bid J2NT. In all these situations do not bid 4M either!

- You only have three trump.
- You have a stiff or a void and 13-16 points; use a *splinter* bid.
- You have a hand that you would not have opened but which has upgraded to be game forcing due to distribution. Do you have a *splinter* bid? If not:
  - A forcing 1N followed by a jump to 4M is often appropriate.
  - If 1N is not forcing, find another bid, even 2m with a three card minor. Just do something forcing! Then bid game on your second bid.

In general, J2NT is not a bid that is merely trying to get to game; that's a given. The strength of the bid is in searching for slam.

## **9.10 Interference Over Major Openings**

Over an overcall, new suit bids show what they would have without the overcall – but you may not be able to make the bid you wanted to make because it would now be at the two level and you don't have 10 points. When this happens consider whether a *negative double* (page 97) is appropriate. A negative double shows 4 cards in the unbid major(s), or, after 1♥ (1♠), at least one minor.

To support after an overcall,

- Raise to 2 with 5-9 and 3+ cards.
- Most hands with Axxx are also worth a raise to 2, especially in spades.
- Cue-bid the overcalled suit to make a limit raise or better.
- A jump cue bid is a power raise with four trump, equivalent to J2NT.
- A jump raise is preemptive in nature.
- A jump to 4 of the major shows a weak hand and 5+ trump.
- 2N becomes an invitational bid with a balanced hand.

Thus, 1♠ – 3♠ would have meant a limit raise, but 1♠ (2♣) 3♠ shows a weak hand with at least four trump. Having nine trump between the hands should be relatively safe at the three level.

In this case, 1♠ (2♣) 3♣ is the limit raise. This lets opener sign off at 3♠ if he does not want to accept the invitation.

Examples:

- 1♥ (1♠) 2♠! limit raise+ in hearts
- 1♥ (2♦) 2♥ 5-9, at least three hearts
- 1♥ (2♦) 3♥ weak hand, 4+ hearts
- 1♥ (1♠) 3♥ weak hand, 4+ hearts
- 1♥ (1♠) 4♥ weak hand, 5+ hearts
- 1♥ (X) 2N! Limit raise or better, 3+ hearts. Forcing for one round.
- 1♥ (1♠) 2N Invitational, balanced hand. This bid can be passed.
- 1♥ (2♦) 4♦ is an opening hand with four hearts, game forcing.
- 1♥ (2♠) presents a quandary because the 3♠ cue-bid would force opener to game. If you have a suitable hand you might be able to make a negative double and come back to 3♥ to compete. A plain 3♥ is invitational. Lacking the strength to bid 3♥, all you can do is pass; opener with extras should reopen with a double or new suit or, if single-suited, bid 3♥.

To support after a double with a limit raise or better, we have a modified version of *Jacoby 2NT* (page 61), called *Jordan 2NT*:

- 1M (X) 2N! shows four trump and a limit raise or better. I suggest that intermediates also make this bid with just three trump.
- More advanced players can redouble, the so-called *Going For Blood* (page 93) redouble. Since that bid is forcing to



2M, we cannot let them play a contract less than that, so you will have another chance to show your support.

My reason for recommending Jacoby 2NT with only three-card support to intermediate players is that the blood auctions are, well, bloody hard.

## 9.11 What's My Limit Raise?

To avoid confusion in the heat of battle, realize this: in any situation there is one and only one bid that shows a limit raise (or better). First, stop and revalue your hand in light of the fit, and then choose your raise. This chart shows what to do to make a limit raise:

Table 2: Major Suit Limit Raises

	Unpassed Hand	Passed Hand
No competition	3M	2♣!(reverse Drury)
They doubled	2N!(Jacoby)	2N (with 4) or cue
They overcalled	cue bid	cue bid

The bids that show at least a limit raise are artificial (rows two and three); this ensures that you will get to bid again, in case you have a game-forcing hand. (Even if a passed hand, your hand may have gotten better).

So, ask yourself, “What’s my limit raise?”. If you get that right, everything else will be easy.

There is a problem when they make a high-level overcall, in that your cue bid might force to game when you do not have the requisite values. The most frequent case is 1♥ (2♠); at this point

3♠ might as well be 4♥. If you can't decide, double and if necessary bid hearts later. Or you can bid 3♥ and let partner decide if he has enough extra to bid game.

A cue bid that is forcing to game is still appropriate some times:

- 1♥ (2♠) 4♥ is a weak hand with five hearts
- 1♥ (2♠) 3♠ is a game force showing an opening hand or better.

Expert note: some experts place such emphasis on 3-card vs. 4-card support that they also bid 2N over an overcall to show four-card support

## CONTINUING MAJOR AUCTIONS

This chapter discusses continuations after the responder's bid, in particular when 1N is forcing or a 2/1 game forcing bid has occurred.

### 10.1 Opener's Rebid

Opener's second bid is called his "rebid".

#### After 1M - 2M

If we have opened 1M, and hear a simple raise from partner, we pass unless we see the possibility for 4M to make. There are no extra points for bidding 3M, so going past 2M means we think we might have around 26 points between us. We can either bid 4M immediately, which ends the auction; or we can pass; or we can ask partner's opinion by making a game try. For intermediates I recommend playing *Help Suit Game Tries* (page 65), in the next chapter.

## After One Heart - One Spade

The 1♠ response is not limited and therefore opener must bid. Be aware that 1♠ does not deny 3 hearts; responder's next bid of 3♥ or 4♥ shows 3-card support.

- 1N shows a minimum opener and a balanced hand.
- 2♥ shows a minimum opener (12-14) and six hearts.
- 2N shows 18-19 balanced.
- 2m shows a second suit and a hand not suitable to bid at the 3 level or to reverse.
- 3♥ is invitational and shows six hearts (15-17).
- 4♥ shows 19+.
- With four spades, we usually bid 2♠. This is not forcing. Bidding 2♠ has debatable requirements. I like it to show four spades or three spades and an outside singleton or void. Experts may bid 2♠ regardless with three spades.
- With four spades and 15-17 points bid 3♠. With more bid 4♠ or a *splinter*.

## After 1M - 1N

The 1N bid is forcing unless there was interference or responder is a passed hand. Note that 1N does not promise a balanced hand, and in particular responder might not have any cards in M. If 1N is not forcing, passing becomes an additional option.

Opener's rebid over a forcing 1N response is as follows.

- 2M shows 12-15, and a **six** card suit, not forcing.

- 3M rebid shows 15-17, and a **six** card suit, not forcing.
- Any reverse is 17+, natural, forcing one round.
- 2N 18-19 HCP, balanced, not forcing.
- A jump shift is 19+, usually natural, game forcing.
- If none of the above applies, bid the longest side suit up the line, but always rebid hearts when holding four hearts and five spades.

The last rule can mean bidding a short minor suit. For example, after 1♠ - 1N(forcing),

♠KQJT7 ♥KJT ♦A83 ♣74

responder has to bid 2♦; and after 1♥ - 1N(forcing),

♠AQJT ♥KJT85 ♦Q4 ♣74

has to bid 2♣. Neither hand may rebid the major, which requires six cards. The second hand does not have enough points for reversing into spades. The 1N bid denied four spades.

Since 2♣ or 2♦ can be two or three cards, responder wishing to sign off should make a preference back to the major with two card support, even with four card support in the minor.

Because you can bid a short suit, rebidding your original suit shows six cards. This is in contrast to your rebid after a two over one bid, in which it does not show six cards.

## **How Short Is That Minor?**

Responder must be very careful to remember that opener may be rebidding a 3-card diamond or club suit, or even a two-card club suit with a 4=5=2=2 shape. But how likely is this?

With 3-3 in the minors opener will bid clubs, so the bid of 2♣ is more likely short than 2♦. With a 5=4=x=x hand, opener will open spades and rebid hearts, but with 4=5=x=x, and not enough points to reverse into spades, opener must bid a short minor. Therefore the minor is more likely to be short after an opening 1♥ than after an opening 1♠.

- 1♥ – 1N – 2♣ is the most likely to be short;
- 1♥ – 1N – 2♦ and
- 1♠ – 1N – 2♣ are less likely to be short; and
- 1♠ – 1N – 2♦ is least likely to be short.

Responder can be comfortable passing the minor with five in the suit. Responder should prefer back to the major with a doubleton otherwise.

The entire probability of having to bid a short minor is lowered by always opening 1N with a five-card major.

## **Responder's Second Bid**

Note that responder's first bid limited his hand to a maximum of 12 points.

If opener has rebid his major, e.g. 1♠ – 1N(forcing) - 2♠, then responder's bids are:

- pass with 6-9 HCP

- raise with 10-12 support points, and 2 or 3 trumps; this is not forcing
- 2N 10-12 HCP, less than two trump, not forcing. This bid does not promise stops or a NT shape.
- 3 of a new suit, 10-12, very good 6+ suit, invitational.

If opener has rebid a minor,

- pass with 6-9 HCP, usually 5+ in the minor, less than 2 of the opener's major
- bid 2M with 6-10 HCP, exactly 2 of opener's major, not forcing.
- A new suit at the two level is 6-9 HCP, usually 5+ in bid suit, 2 of the major, not forcing.
- 2N is 10-12 HCP, fewer than 3 of the major, not forcing. Does not promise stops or NT shape.
- Jump shift is 10-12, very good 6+ card suit, not forcing.
- Jump raise the major to 3M is 10-12 points, 3 trumps.
- Raise the minor is 10-12 points, usually 5+ in the suit.
- Sometimes responder jumps to game with a hand that got better when opener rebid. For example, 1♠ – 1N(forcing) - 2♥ – 4♥.

After a jump shift by opener, e.g. 1♠ – 1N(forcing) - 3♣,

- responder usually prefers back to opener's major with 2 card support, or bids 3N with stoppers, even when holding good four card support in the minor. (We are in a game-forcing option, so we can conserve bidding space while showing the 2-card support.)

- With 3 card support in the major and 10-12 support, responder jumps to game in the major.

The auction 1♠ – 1N! – (2♦ or 2♥) – 3♣ is to play, although with a specially suitable hand opener may make another call.

With a flattish 13-15, but relatively weak holdings in the 4-card suit(s), 1N(forcing) followed by 3N is sometimes appropriate to avoid partner getting too excited.

## **After A Limit Raise**

After 1M – 3M, opener generally passes, bids 4M, or starts exploring for slam.

## **10.2 Two Over One and 1N Forcing**

As a passed hand, a responder can raise an opening bid of 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ to the two level with 10 or more points and a suitable suit. When responder is an unpassed hand, we change that, so that these bids are game forcing, thus requiring around 13 points. This leaves a gap: what is responder to do with 10-12 HCP hands if he has no one-level response? He can no longer bid a suit at the two level.

The answer has to be separated into cases: bids over one of a major, and bids over one diamond.

1. Over a major, the responder will bid 1♠ or 1N with such hands, forcing for one round. Most bids of 1N will still mean what they used to mean, a hand of 6 to a bad 10 points with no suitable one-level suit bid. However, some



bids of 1N will be a stronger type of hand. It will be the responder's second bid which shows which is the case. The opener acts as if the bid was 6-10 until proven otherwise, except that he cannot pass.

The 1N response to a major can also be used when responder holds a 3-card limit raise. Responder will jump in the major on his next bid to show this. In this way, opener knows that a normal limit raise is a four card raise.

2. Over 1♦, lacking a major, but having limit raise values, the situation is simple: if responder has 4 or more diamonds, bid a limit raise in diamonds. (2♦!, the inverted minor limit raise, if playing that). Lacking that, responder has 4 or more clubs but lacks the values to force game with 2♣, so responder bids 2N. The 1N bid is used only for 6-10 point hands, and is not forcing.

The next two sections give the details on our two new bids.

## **Opener's rebids after 1N Forcing**

The opener has opened 1M and responder has responded 1N(forcing). Next, opener's rebid is as follows.

- Simple rebid shows 12-15, and a **six** card suit, not forcing.
- Jump rebid shows 15-17, a very good **six** card suit, not forcing.
- Any reverse is 17+, natural, forcing one round.
- 2N 18-19 HCP, balanced, not forcing.
- A jump shift is 19+, usually natural, game forcing.

- If none of the above applies, bid the longest side suit up the line, but always rebid hearts when holding four hearts and five spades.

The last rule can mean bidding a short minor suit. For example, after 1♠ - 1N(forcing),

♠KQJT7 ♥KJT ♦A83 ♣74

responder has to bid 2♦; and after 1♥ - 1N(forcing),

♠AQJT ♥KJT85 ♦Q4 ♣74

has to bid 2♣. Neither hand may rebid the major, which requires six cards. The second hand does not have enough points for reversing into spades. The 1N bid denied four spades.

Since 2♣ or 2♦ can be two or three cards, responder wishing to sign off should make a preference back to the major with two card support, even with four card support in the minor.

Because you can bid a short suit, rebidding your original suit shows six cards. This is in contrast to your rebid after a two over one bid, in which it does not show six cards.

## **How Short Is That Minor?**

Responder must be very careful to remember that opener may be rebidding a 3-card diamond or club suit, or even a two-card club suit with a 4=5=2=2 shape. But how likely is this?

With 3-3 in the minors opener will bid clubs, so the bid of 2♣ is more likely short than 2♦. With a 5=4=x=x hand, opener will open spades and rebid hearts, but with 4=5=x=x, and not enough points to reverse into spades, opener must bid a short

minor. Therefore the minor is more likely to be short after an opening  $1\heartsuit$  than after an opening  $1\spadesuit$ .

- $1\heartsuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit$  is the most likely to be short;
- $1\heartsuit - 1N - 2\diamondsuit$  and
- $1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\clubsuit$  are less likely to be short; and
- $1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\diamondsuit$  is least likely to be short.

Responder can be comfortable passing the minor with five in the suit. Responder should prefer back to the major with a doubleton otherwise.

The entire probability of having to bid a short minor is lowered by always opening  $1N$  with a five-card major.

## **Responder's Second Bid**

Note that responder's first bid limited his hand to a maximum of 12 points.

If opener has rebid his major, e.g.  $1\spadesuit - 1N(\text{forcing}) - 2\spadesuit$ , then responder's bids are:

- pass with 6-9 HCP
- raise with 10-12 support points, and 2 or 3 trumps; this is not forcing
- $2N$  10-12 HCP, less than two trump, not forcing. This bid does not promise stops or a NT shape.
- 3 of a new suit, 10-12, very good 6+ suit, invitational.

If opener has rebid a minor,

- pass with 6-9 HCP, usually 5+ in the minor, less than 2 of the opener's major
- bid 2M with 6-10 HCP, exactly 2 of opener's major, not forcing.
- A new suit at the two level is 6-9 HCP, usually 5+ in bid suit, 2 of the major, not forcing.
- 2N is 10-12 HCP, fewer than 3 of the major, not forcing. Does not promise stops or NT shape.
- Jump shift is 10-12, very good 6+ card suit, not forcing.
- Jump raise the major to 3M is 10-12 points, 3 trumps.
- Raise the minor is 10-12 points, usually 5+ in the suit.
- Sometimes responder jumps to game with a hand that got better when opener rebid. For example, 1♠ – 1N(forcing) - 2♥ – 4♥.

After a jump shift by opener, e.g. 1♠ – 1N(forcing) - 3♣,

- responder usually prefers back to opener's major with 2 card support, or bids 3N with stoppers, even when holding good four card support in the minor. (We are in a game-forcing option, so we can conserve bidding space while showing the 2-card support.)
- With 3 card support in the major and 10-12 support, responder jumps to game in the major.

## **10.3 Opener's Rebids After 1M - 2x**

Once we have made a 2/1 game-forcing bid, if the opponents interfere we either will bid game or double them for penalty. In such a situation if one partner passes the other is forced to double or bid on.

There are two styles of Two Over One. You are forced to choose whether: \* (A) Rebidding 2M promises a six-card suit; or, \* (B) Rebidding at the three-level promises extras.

(A) and (B) cannot both be true. Consider a 5=2=2=4 opener with 12 HCP. Say he opens 1♠ and hears responder say 2♦. He has neither six spades nor enough points to bid 3♣.

I'm going to teach what at the moment is the trend, (A). When I first started to write the predecessors to this book, it was decidedly (B), as popularized by Hardy. There are also divisions about whether 1♦ - 2♣ is a game-force; Lawrence, for example, says no. But this book will say yes.

The opener's rebids after the game-forcing bid are:

- Simple rebid of 2M shows 12-14 HCP and a six-card suit.
- Jump rebid to 3M shows extra values, say 15-17 HCP, and a 6-card solid suit. This sets trumps. Responder's new suit bids are control bids. E.g., 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♠ - 4♦; 4♦ here is a control bid in diamonds, denying a control in clubs.
- A new suit at the two level is natural, 4 cards, any strength. Note that the new suit can be higher-ranking without showing extra values, i.e. reverses are off. So, for example, 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠ shows five hearts and four spades, but not extra values.
- A new suit at the 3 level but not a jump: natural, 4+ cards,

no extra values. This bid will necessarily be in a minor suit. If you don't have extras, consider also 2N if balanced / semi-balanced with stoppers.

- A jump-shift to the 3 level is a strong 5-5 with most of the strength in the suits.
- A jump-shift to the 4 level is a splinter in support of responder.
- 2N shows 12-14 or 18-19 balanced, stoppers in unbid suits. With 18-19 make a slam try if responder signs off to show the bigger hand. Responder assumes 12-14 initially.
- 3N is 15-17 balanced (only possible if you had decided to open a balanced hand in a five-card major.)
- 1♠ – 2♥ – 3♥ shows 3 card support, any strength. Not raising hearts denies 3-card heart support. Denies a hand that can splinter or jump raise.
- Single raise of minor shows support. Example: 1♠ – 2♣ – 3♣. You need at least four clubs.

A principle of 2/1 is “slow shows”, also called the *principle of fast arrival*. The stronger your hand, the slower you go. Arriving at game quickly says you've shown your values already. For example:

1♠ – 2♣ – 2♠ – 4♠

Responder has raised opener to game directly. This shows minimal values for game.

1♠ – 2♣ – 2N – 3♠ or 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♠ – 3♠

Responder has raised spades slowly. He has extras and has slam interest. In both cases responder has just three spades, as he

would have bid Jacoby 2N on his first bid otherwise. Opener should now bid controls.

Fast arrival should apply only in situations where opener is a minimum, having rebid 2N or catchall rebid of his suit. If opener could be stronger, we don't want to use up space by jumping; so when we do jump, as in 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥ – 4♠, it is to paint a picture of our hand as having two suits with our values concentrated in the suits and denying outside controls (A/K/singleton/void).

## **Responder's Rebids**

- 2N shows 12-14 or 18-19 balanced, stoppers in unbid suits. With 18-19 make a slam try if opener signs off to show the bigger hand. Opener assumes 12-14 initially.
- A jump to 3N shows 15-17, stoppers, could be unbalanced if no fit.
- Rebid responder's suit shows natural, 5/6+ cards. The game force is still on.
- New suit is natural, 4+ cards. However if a fit has been established this is a control-bid.
- If opener has bid 2 of a lower-ranking suit, responder has 3 raises available for opener's first suit. Fast arrival does not apply because opener is unlimited. For example:
  - 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥ – 2♠ (no extras)
  - 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥ – 3♠ (slam interest)
  - 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥ – 4♠ (picture bid) Two-suited, values concentrated in the suits, no outside controls.

- A jump in a new suit shows a singleton or void in that suit and support for opener's last bid major suit. Thus:

– 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♠ – 4♦!

– 1♠ – 2♣ – 2N – 4♦!

– 1♠ – 2♣ – 3♣ – 4♦!

All show a splinter in diamonds in support of spades.



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### BASIC DOUBLES

Negative doubles and takeout doubles are really crucial parts of competitive bidding. Even though they are so basic, there are a frightening number of players who do not use them correctly. Study this chapter carefully and return often.

The phrase *takeout double* is used to describe a bid that asks partner to bid rather than pass. By contrast a *penalty double*, also called a *business double*, means a double made with the intent to make the opponents play the doubled contract, planning to set them. In between is a *cooperative double*, which wags call “Partner Do Something”.

A *negative double* is used to tell partner about your hand after his opening bid has been overcalled.

Any double can of course be “left in” by passing, converting it to penalty, and any double can be taken out. But, most of the time you should respect your partner’s intent. Your judgment must be used. For example, in responding to a penalty double, the weaker you are (relative to what your partner should expect in that situation), the more likely you should *pull* the double.

We will cover here:

- *Takeout Doubles* (page 88),
- *Going For Blood Redouble* (page 93) of their takeout double,
- *Negative Doubles* (page 97), which require
- *Reopening Doubles* (page 99), to protect a partner who passed because they bid his suit; and
- *SOS Redoubles* (page 100) to save us when we need saving.
- *Lead-Directing Doubles* (page 101) are doubles meant to suggest a lead to partner when you expect he will be the opening leader.
- *Equal-Level Conversion Doubles* (page 96) are takeout doubles that have an off-shape with diamonds but without enough clubs.

The chapter *Special Doubles* (page 190) covers even more kinds of doubles than the ones in this chapter.

## 11.1 Takeout Doubles

When opponents open a suit, an immediate double is for takeout up to a chosen limit, say four hearts. To say that “double is takeout through 4♥” means that (4♥) X is for takeout, while (4♠) X is penalty-oriented. The standard limit is 2♠. Other popular limits are 3♠, 4♦, 4♥, and 4♠. Modern practice favors at least a 3♠ limit.

A takeout double shows an opening hand, short in their suit, with support for all the other suits. However, it is also used for two

sorts of special strong hands, with the doubler bidding again on his next turn. To be precise, a takeout double shows:

- A strong one-suited hand (16+ with a six card suit, 19+ with a five card suit); OR
- A balanced hand too strong (19+) to overcall 1N or lacking stoppers; OR
- A normal takeout double: - A hand you would open - At most a doubleton in their suit - At least Jxx in the unbid suits - Usually cards in the unbid major, or at least 4-3 if both are unbid.

The day you don't follow these rules you'll get an auction like (1♠) X (Pass) 3♣ and notice too late that you only have two clubs or you're at the three level with 10 points and your partner doesn't have any at all.

A takeout double of a two-level bid shows a good solid opener, say 14-15 points, and the takeout double of a three-level bid requires 16+ points.

In competition, your partner's double is takeout if:

- They bid a suit below game and below our takeout double limit; AND
- Our side has only passed up to now

## Responding To A Takeout Double

Note that in a balancing situation, such as (1♠) P (Pass) X, the balancer has "borrowed a King" and partner should subtract 3 points in choosing a response.

If RHO bids, you are no longer “on the hook” and do not have to bid. Otherwise, you usually reserve a pass for a big trump stack and some significant strength, especially at the one level. Remember, RHO may have passed because he knew you had to bid, not because he’s completely broke.

Although there is the possibility that your partner has a big hand, your initial response is to the normal takeout double.

To respond in a suit:

- With zero to about 8 points, bid your best suit as cheaply as possible. Put emphasis on responding in the major partner has promised if choices are otherwise equal.
- With a decent 9 - 11, you must jump-bid your suit.
- With 12+, you can bid game with a five-card major; otherwise, cue bid their suit.

You may count distributional values for suit bids – in effect, partner already bid the suit and you are supporting it.

You can pass a takeout double converting it to penalty, but be careful – the quality as well as the number of your trumps matter. Your partner should lead a trump if he has one.

To reply in no-trump you must have values; with a weaker hand pick a suit. For a no-trump response, you’ll usually have four of their suit and not have a four card major.

- 1N requires 8-10 HCP and a stopper in their suit.
- 2N requires 1.5 stoppers in their suit and 11-12 points; and
- 3N requires 13 or more HCP and 1.5 stoppers in their suit.

## **Are You Cheap?**

How do I say this? Are you cheap? Do you clip coupons and look for bargains? Did your mother make getting a good deal the goal of your life?

If so, you may be subject to Cheapness in Bridge. Besides constantly complaining about card fees, I mean. Cheapness seems to show up most strongly in responding to takeout doubles. Cheapness refuses to jump-bid in reply, concluding that it is a “waste” or that “we might get too high”. After all, they opened, this thinking goes, so we couldn’t possibly have a game. When we jump, and end up being too high, which will of course happen, an even more steely resolve toward Cheapness sets in.

You must tell partner the truth. Your side might have a game, or you might have enough to prevent opener from coming back in to the auction. Did you ever open a hand with 10 HCP using the rule of 20? Maybe they did! You and your partner may have 30 HCP between you! And if you’re that way, I suspect you’re playing your lowest card on defense rather than signaling, you just can’t bear to unblock, and you never underlead a King. To be a good player, you must resist Cheapness.

## **Doubling With A Strong Hand**

With a very powerful hand you can double and then bid again, and need not have the shapes we just described. However, you need to know what you will do if partner gets enthusiastic. For example, over one heart you double with 18 points but no spades at all. Partner may respond 3♠ or even 4♠. It won’t happen every day but it will happen. You’re going to need a plan. A cue bid is a way to show you have a good hand, but if you do it

immediately it is Michaels.

If your partner makes a takeout double and then bids again (including another double or redouble), you must mentally cancel your expectations of his hand shape; he has just told you his suit or that he's balanced, and that he has the requisite points. The notion that he has support for the other suits is now null and void.

## **Rebids By The Doubler**

Unless advancer jumps, the intervenor (the person making the takeout double) may not bid again unless they have 17 or more points. Raising partner's suit also requires 17 or more support points.

Why? Consider (1♠) X (P) 2♥; (Pass).

Advancer may have NO points at all and has at most 8 points. To raise to 3♥ with any safety requires a big hand, and there is no point in taking the risk unless the total number of points between the hands may be in reach of game.

After (1♠) X (P) 3♥; (Pass) the advancer has shown 9-11 HCP, so it would still take extras to raise to game.

## **11.2 When They Make A Takeout Double**

After partner opens one of a suit, and RHO makes a takeout double, we basically respond the same way as if the double had never happened. If playing 2/1, the forcing 1N and 2/1 bids are off, so replies are standard bids. However there are two special bids to show a 10+ point hand.

- A bid of 2N is a four-card limit raise of partner's major suit. (*Jordan* (page 70).)
- A redouble shows 10+ points; it denies four cards in partner's suit. If we have three-card support for a major we'll show that later. We make this bid with some interest in penalizing the opponents. This is called "going for blood".
- Replying one of a suit is forcing for one round.
- Replying two of a suit is not forcing. The idea is that we could have redoubled with 10+ points, or raised partner, so the two-level bid is at most 9 HCP. We don't have a game.
- Raising partner to the three level is a weak, preemptive bid.

Note I recommend intermediates play *Jordan* as requiring only three-card support since the redouble auctions are challenging.

## Going For Blood

After 1s (X) XX, the auction is forcing to two of opener's major. Our side has the majority of the points and if they don't have a fit, they are in trouble. You can make this bid even if you are a passed hand. If you don't think you have the kind of hand that will do well on defense but could answer on the one-level, or raise, do that. Remember the one-level bid is forcing.

1♥ (X) XX (P)  
?

Pass. They aren't going to play 1♥ XX. They are in trouble. Advancer didn't have a suit to name. They have no fit and we

have most of the points.

1♥ (X) XX 2♦  
?

Opener should usually pass or double for penalty if the advancer makes a bid. To double for penalty, it is important to have four trumps. We don't want to be doubling if they have a nine-card fit. We can rest assured partner will pull the double if they have a void in their suit.

If you can't double for penalty you often pass. If you bid you're letting you're letting them off the hook. However, if the opener has a six card suit with minimal values and no interest in penalizing the opponents, he can rebid the suit. With a better hand, he can pass first and pull partner's double to show a better hand. With a still-better hand, say 15+ HCP, opener might jump-rebid to 3♥.

1♥ (X) XX 1♠  
P P 2♥

With an invitational hand, responder can bid two of a major with three-card support. Note that we have been able to show a 3-card limit raise at the two-level. The take-out double raises the threat of a 4-1 trump break, so staying low is important.

Otherwise, remember that we are in an auction that is forcing to two of opener's suit.

1♥ (X) XX 1♠  
P (P) ??

The redouble made the auction forcing to two of opener's suit, so you cannot pass. The opener cannot double 1♠ for penalty



so is giving us a chance. Now is the chance to show opener if you have a penalty double. Generally you will want four trump to do this. Otherwise you make a natural bid. The opponent's takeout double has allowed us to stay low. For example, 1N now will have a forcing auction that might have landed us in 2N.

Note that a bid like 2♣ here is forcing – we have not yet reached 2♥. Bids like that can help us sort out the best place to play.

1♠ (X) XX (2♥)
P P ?

We cannot pass. We have promised partner we would compete to 2♠. With a hand like xx Jxx AQxx KJxx we can just bid 2♠.

These auctions are a little trickier in matchpoints, where setting them might not be enough. Pay attention to the vulnerability. Getting a 200 for setting them one doubled vulnerable is going to beat any part score, but 100 might not be enough.

## **Doubling A Preemptive Opener**

To make a takeout double of a preemptive opener requires the right shape and the right number of points. Whatever you do, you won't always be right.

Generally, use ESP - Expect Seven Points. That's a conservative estimate of how many your partner will have, on average. So over two spades, to be safe at the three level you need about 23 - 7 or 16 points. Cheat it a little and call it a good opening hand. To bid over a three-level preempt you want to be closer to 17 or more.

Why ESP? Given that a preempt might average 8 points, if you have 16-18, that leaves 14-16 for the other two partners; that is,

around 7-8 for your partner.

When they open a weak two and partner doubles, you answer in more or less the same way as a takeout double. Generally, if you have about the expected number of points, you will not jump in your reply; with many more you will. Because you may jump on good news, woe be the doubler who did not have the right shape, because surely you will have the “wrong” suit.

To reply in no-trump you would be wise to have two stoppers.

There is a dilemma when your suit is lower-ranking than the preempt suit. Consider:

(2♠) X (Pass)

Suppose you have a weak hand with six diamonds. Then you want to bid 3♦ and have your partner pass. However, if you have the same diamonds but a game-forcing hand, you want to bid 3♦ as game forcing.

Since one bid can’t have two meanings, you must agree what a 3♦ bid will mean. Because of the relative frequency, the only choice is the weaker meaning.

The *Lebensohl* (page 193) convention solves this problem, but is quite difficult for most intermediates. A simplified version is given in that chapter to meet this need.

## **11.3 Equal-Level Conversion Doubles**

This convention (ELCD) widens the range of hands that can make takeout doubles over one of a major. Most experts use this convention, according to Larry Cohen. Be sure to agree with

your partner on it. On an ACBL convention card you check the box under Special Doubles that says “Min Offshape T/O”.

Suppose they open a major, say a heart, and you have ♠KQ82 ♥92 ♦AQ962 ♣Q7.

Without ELCD, you cannot double here to try to show your four spades. You’d have to just bid 2♦ and risk losing the spade suit.

ELCD says that you can double here and then bid diamonds if your partner bids clubs, to show 4 of the other major and 5+ diamonds but *no extra strength*.

The downside is that with an 18-point hand with diamonds, you can no longer bid diamonds over clubs because partner won’t think you have the big hand. You’d have to bid 3♦.

## 11.4 Negative doubles

A negative double is a double after we open a suit and they overcall with a bid up to our negative double limit. The standard limit is 2♠ although you can use 3♠, 4♦, 4♥, or 4♠, by partnership agreement. As with takeout doubles, modern practice favors at least a 3♠ limit. It helps reduce confusion if you make the negative and takeout double limit the same.

Agreeing to “negative doubles through 2♠” means that 1♥ (2♠) X is negative but 1♠ (3♣) X is penalty-oriented.

Generally the focus is on finding a fit to your major suit. However, you also need to be prepared for your partner to bid the other unbid suit.

Point-wise, a negative double at the one level requires six points. At the two or three level this rises to 8 to 10 points. If vulnerable,

these requirements edge upwards a couple of points.

More importantly, to make a negative double, you have to have the right shape:

- The auction 1♣ (1♦) X promises 4-4 in the majors. You can bid 1♥ or 1♠ instead with 4 cards, so there is no reason to double when 4-3, and if you have a five card suit(s) you bid the (higher-ranking) five card suit.
- The auction 1♣/♦ (1♥) X promises exactly 4 spades; with more you bid the suit.
- The auction 1♣/♦ (1♠) X promises exactly 4 hearts; with more you bid the suit.
- The auction 1♥ (1♠) X promises one minor and a decent rebid. For example:

1♥ (1♠)      X      (P)  
 2♣ (P )    2♥

Here responder has a diamond suit and two hearts, and can stand to go back to hearts if opener cannot support his diamonds.

- A negative double of a bid at the two level promises at least one unbid major and a rebid. It does not promise both unbid suits.

At the two level, you sometimes want to show a five card major but do not have the requisite 10 points. You can use a negative double. For example, after 1♠ (2♦), holding ♠64 ♥KQ954 ♦KT54 ♣98, you do not have enough points to bid 2♥, but you do have enough for a negative double.

If you have the requisite points, bid a five-card suit directly rather

than make a negative double. Example:  $1\Diamond (1\heartsuit) 1\spadesuit$  shows five or more spades, and  $1\Diamond (1\heartsuit) X$  shows exactly four spades. But  $1\Diamond (1\spadesuit) X$  is simply at least four hearts, but could be more, because  $2\heartsuit$  would have required 10 points, not merely the five hearts.

If opener has a trump stack he could consider passing, especially non-vulnerable vs. vulnerable. However, the negative double is of unlimited strength so use caution.

## Reopening With A Double

Part of negative doubles is protecting your partner after you open and there is an overcall. What if your partner only has the suit they just bid? He cannot double for penalty – a double would be negative.

**Warning:** As responder, doubling because you have a juicy holding in the overcalled suit is a very common error. Your partner cannot pass it, because you just made a negative double!

Here is a hand where responder cannot double after  $1\Diamond (1\spadesuit)$ :

$\spadesuit KQ983 \heartsuit A32 \diamond 87 \clubsuit J84$

The correct solution is to pass, and for the opener to know that if the overcall is passed around to him, and he is short in the overcalled suit, to reopen with a double. This allows the responder to pass again and make it a penalty double. For example, in this case the bidding might go:

$1\Diamond (1\spadesuit) P (P)$

### X ( P ) P

converting to a penalty double. Responder without such a holding bids his four card suits up the line.

Opener has some discretion here; if he opened light, for example, and his partner was a passed hand, he need not double.

Suppose you open 1N, and LHO bids a suit, say 2♠. If the next two players pass, a double by opener is also a takeout double.

By contrast, if LHO and partner pass, and RHO bids a suit, a double is penalty-oriented. The difference is in the position of the overcaller; one is over you, while you are over the other. Of course, penalty-oriented doubles give partner a choice, so depending on the strength of his hand and vulnerability he may wish to escape to his best suit. The paradox is that the weaker he is, the more urgent it is for him not to pass.

## 11.5 SOS Redoubles

If they double our opening suit bid and try to pass it out, a redouble is a takeout. Partner should bid their best suit. The reasoning is, especially at matchpoints, if you could make a doubled contract it is likely a top already – there is no point trying for a higher score with a redouble, so this bid is available as distress call. This is also called an *SOS Redouble*.

Contrast this with the case that we open, the next player doubles, and the responder redoubles. This shows 10+ points and suggests no fit. The opponents may be in severe trouble.

## 11.6 Lead-Directing Doubles

They are bidding away and you are going to end up on defense. Wouldn't it be nice to tell your partner what to lead? Sometimes you can!

Principle: Any double of an artificial bid is lead-directing.

Example: Your LHO opens 1N, and your RHO bids 2♥, announced as a transfer to spades. If you want hearts lead, double the artificial 2♥. Naturally, you do this at your own peril – the opponents may leave your double in if they have hearts. So do have a good shape or some strength to go with your heart suit. The lower the level of their bid, the more careful you must be.

In fact, failure to double for the lead may cause your partner to infer that you may not want a heart lead.

A very important opportunity for a lead-directing double is when opponents are making artificial replies to Ace-asking bids. If the reply is the suit you want led, you double to tell partner about this.

When your partner doubles their slam contract, this demands an “unusual” lead from you; if nothing else presents itself from the bidding, lead the suit the dummy bid first. Generally, you double a slam because you believe you will set it if and only if you get this lead. Since you will get a good score just by setting it, and a really horrible score if you double it and are wrong, you usually only double a slam for the lead. Of course, if you have an Ace to lead against 7NT, be my guest.

When your partner doubles their final contract less than a slam, a trump lead is expected, although you might refrain if it would cost you a natural trick.

**Warning:** Rookie error, but I do it all the time: I'm so proud of my good suit that when my RHO bids it artificially, I double for the lead, only to discover afterwards that it is my lead. Oh well, at least I reminded myself what to lead, but I also told the declarer.



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## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### OPENING NOTRUMP

When a hand is eligible to open in notrump, we are anxious to do so. As we will see, we will have an entire system devoted to bidding such hands that almost always gets us, if we are not disturbed, to a good contract.

When do you open a hand in notrump? The hand must have:

- A HCP strength in a specific range:
  - 15-17 to open 1N
  - 20-21 to open 2N
  - 25-27 to open 3N
- A shape that is *balanced*, 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2. Note that that means no voids, no singletons, and at most one doubleton.

What about hands with the right shape but wrong strength? You'll handle 12-14 point hands with no five-card major by opening a minor and bidding notrump on the second round. For 18-19 point hands you'll open a suit, and jump in notrump on the second round. And for stronger hands, you'll start with 2♣, the strong opening.

Conversely, there are hands that have the right number of points but with the points scattered among all the suits. As you get more experience, you may find some hands you want to open in notrump despite not being really balanced. These so-called *semi-balanced* hands have two doubletons.

- A 5-4-2-2 hand, as long as one of the doubletons is Kx or better.
- A 6-3-2-2 hand if the long suit is a good minor and both doubletons are Kx or better.

When you open in notrump, you have told your partner your strength within 3 points, and that you have a balanced shape. This means your partner is actually best placed to decide where you are going, because he knows his own hand and a lot about yours, while you know nothing of his yet. For now at least, he's the *Captain*.

The responder is going to reply using an extremely well-defined structure, the “system”, which has a high probability of getting you to a good contract. This system is so useful that we try to use it whenever we can:

1. After we open 1N;
2. After we make a notrump overcall of the opponent's opening suit bid;
3. After we open a strong 2♣ and rebid notrump.
4. When we open 2N or higher in no-trump.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to explaining the “system”. You'll notice it is a very long chapter, because there is a lot to it.

Should you open 1N with a five-card major? Yes. There are a few hands where the major is where 9 or 10 of the points are that

you might open 1M, but you'll always struggle to get partner to believe your strength.

## **12.1 About The HCP Range For 1N**

When you are more experienced you'll likely find yourself wanting to upgrade some 14 point hands that contain a good five-card suit and open them 1N. Likewise, you will not open a 17 HCP hand that has such a suit, preferring to open the suit and rebid 2N. When overcalling the opponents, be careful about 15 HCP hands – you'll need a five-card or longer suit anyway, and bidding that suit may be preferable.

These decisions involve that more mature hand evaluation sense that I discussed. Such factors as honors together, good intermediates, and for overcalls, the strength of your holding in their suit, all become factors.

## **12.2 How To Choose A Response To 1N**

Assume your partner has opened 1N – we'll modify things a bit later for those other three cases. You, as responder, should:

- Classify the strength of your hand (weak, competitive, invitational, game forcing, or slam interest). Opposite a 15-17 1N bid, 8 or 9 HCP is invitational, while with 10 HCP you must force to game – you can't make a bid that opener can pass short of game.
- See if you have a four-card, five-card, or longer major(s). These are each treated differently. We also have special rules when 5-4 in the majors.

- In hands with no majors, note if the hand has a six-card minor. Do not try to show a five-card minor.

Generally, a hand whose principal feature is a long minor wants to be in 3N if it is strong enough, unless it is a strong hand that might want to be in a minor slam. This is especially true playing matchpoints.

## **Responding With No Major Suit Or Long Minor**

In responding to your partner's 1N opener, if you determine that there is nothing of interest in your hand, meaning no major suit or long minor, your actions are determined by your point count alone:

- With a hand less than 8 HCP, pass.
- With an invitational hand (8-9 HCP) bid 2N.
- With a game-going hand (10-15 HCP), bid 3N.
- With a slam invitational hand (16+-17 HCP) bid 4N.
- Once a year, you'll have enough for an immediate 6N or 7N.

4N is a *quantitative* raise. Responder has enough for 6N if the opener is on the top of his bid, a good 16 or 17. Subtracting from 33, we see that this means responder has 16 or 17. If responder is SURE that the partnership has 33 points, this bid is not appropriate.

There are times a bid of 4N is asking your partner about Aces, but not here. A bid of 4N is also *quantitative* after 2N or 3N openers, or after the opener rebids 1N after a suit opening, or bids 2N after a strong 2♣ opening.

- With 18-19 HCP, bid 6N.
- With 20-21 HCP, Grand Slam Force with 5N. The opener should reply 6N or 7N.
- With 22 or more HCP, give your partner a thrill with a bid of 7N.

You can ask for Aces with 4♣ (*Gerber* (page 182)) in lieu of the direct slam bids, if you are worried about having fast losers in a suit.

The 5N bid as Grand Slam Force is the standard but it has been all but replaced by *5N Pick-A-Slam* (page 268). Whichever you play it applies to a 5N bid over a quantitative 4N bid.

## Responding With A Major Suit Or Long Minor

When your hand does have a major suit or a six-card minor suit, you'll begin with one of the techniques discussed later in this chapter (*Stayman* (page 108), *transfers to majors* (page 111), or *Minor Relay* (page 117)). These all force your partner to reply in a certain way.

After he replies, if you bid 4N when it is your next turn, that's *quantitative*, not Ace-asking. If he bid a suit because you made him do it, it doesn't mean you have agreed on a suit. You may have found a fit but he doesn't know about it yet.

Principal: Whenever 4N is :term:`quantitative`,  
→ 4♣ (:ref:`Gerber <Gerber>`) is  
Ace-asking.

With no other agreement, responses of 4♦, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, 5♦ are natural, to play, with at least a six-card suit; but see *Texas*

*Transfers* (page 116) as an option for getting to 4♥ or 4♠.

We'll now start digging into those special cases where responder has a four-card or longer major, or a six-card or longer minor.

## 12.3 Stayman Convention

After a 1N opener, 2♣ is an artificial bid called *Stayman*, asking the opener to say if he does or does not have a four (or five) card major. There are two circumstances in which you can bid 2♣:

1. You have a four card major, your hand is not *flat*, and it has at least invitational values.
2. You have a weak hand with a stiff or void in clubs, and intend to pass whatever response you get. Ideally you have a shape like 4=4=5=0 or 4=4=4=1.

If you have a four card major and a longer minor, and you are at least invitational, use Stayman.

The goal of Stayman is to discover if we have a major fit, and at the same time to decide if we have a game or not. We first answer the question about the fit, and then the question about the game.

Note that there are *optional* conventions, explained below, for bidding:

- *weak hands 4-4 in the majors that cannot pass any reply* (page 114).
- *hands that are 5-4 in the majors* (page 115).

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**Note:** Stayman 2♣ is not alerted, because it has become com-

mon practice.

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### 1. Opener Reveals His Major Holdings

After 1N - 2♣, opener *must* choose one of three bids: 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠.

- 2♦ no four-card major.
- 2♥ 4+ hearts, and maybe 4 spades.
- 2♠ 4+ spades, but denies 4 hearts.

**Warning:** Opener must bid 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠, never anything else. Note that if opener has four hearts and four spades, he bids 2♥.

### 2. Responder Indicates Strength and Fit

- If responder has bid Stayman with that weak hand short in clubs, he passes. Otherwise he indicates whether a fit has been found, and whether his hand is invitational only, or actually game forcing, or has slam interest.
- If a fit has been found, responder tells opener the good news: he raises the major suit to the 3-level to invite game, or the four level to play. Isn't this a simple game?

What if responder has a very powerful hand, and a fit is found? Bidding game will rule out slam. We need a “power raise” bid, showing a hand with slam interest while at the same time confirming the fit. The solution is that three of the other major (3W)

shows a power raise (usually 18+ HCP). It is a game force, of course.

For example: 1N - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥!(power raise). Now opener should start *control bidding*. (Control bidding will be discussed later).

- Responder bids no-trump to show no fit; how many notrump shows responder's strength:
  - 2N no fit, with an invitational hand.
  - 3N no fit, but enough points for game.
  - Three level bids in a new suit are game forcing and may show interest in a slam.
  - 4N is a *quantitative raise* (page 106) denying a fit.
  - 4♣ is plain Gerber.

Note that having checked for a fit, you have not agreed to a suit yet. So, a sequence like 1N - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4N is still a *quantitative raise*; and 4♣ instead is still asking for Aces with *Gerber* (page 182) and agreeing to the suit.

Also note that the specific sequence 1N - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ is a bit strange. If responder did not like hearts, he had to have spades or he would not have bid Stayman. So responder should be bidding an appropriate level of notrump to show his strength. We will come up with a meaning for this sequence later.

### 3. Opener's Third Bid

If opener has both majors he first bids 2♥. If responder bids 2N in reply, then there is no heart fit, but there is a spade fit. Opener should bid spades at the three-level to



decline the invitation, and at the four-level to accept it. If responder has bid 3N, opener can switch to 4♠.

## 12.4 Major Transfers

So much for hands with four card majors – but what if you have a five-card major? You may have a fit if opener has three in your suit.

Rather than bid our major suit in response to 1N, we bid the suit below it, so that the strong hand then bids the suit first and becomes the declarer if we have a fit in that suit. This is called a *transfer*, also known as a Jacoby transfer. Opener announces “transfer”. This is worth about three-fourths of a trick on average compared to letting the responder be the declarer. That’s huge!

- 1N – 2♦ is a transfer to hearts.
  - 2♥ Opener completes (“accepts”) the transfer. Opener might have two cards in the suit, so no fit has been found yet.
  - 3♥ Opener has 4+ hearts and a maximum 1N bid (*super-accept*)
- 1N – 2♥ is a transfer to spades.
  - 2♠ completes the transfer.
  - 3♠ Opener has 4+ spades and a maximum 1N bid (*super-accept*).

Unlike Stayman, your strength is not an issue. A poor hand containing one five-card or longer major, even if it has zero points, must transfer to that suit, since responder’s hand will be worth

something with that suit as trumps and little or nothing otherwise.

Note that the weaker your hand is, the more important it is to transfer – to make something out of nothing. Transfer to spades even if your spade holding is ♠65432. Or, not to put too fine a point on it, *especially* if your spade holding is ♠65432.

**Warning:** Opener must remember that responder has not promised anything yet except five cards in the target suit – not even ONE high-card point.

If you ever find yourself arguing to yourself that your partner *probably* has some points because he transferred, you’ve fallen in love with your hand again, and you know these affairs end badly.

After a transfer to 2M is accepted, responder bids:

- Pass with less than invitational values.
- 2N invitational. Opener can pass, bid 3N, or bid 3M or 4M with 3-card support.
- 3m a second suit, absolutely game forcing, usually with at least mild slam interest.
- 3M invitational, 6+ cards in the major. Now we have an 8-card fit for sure. Opener must revalue his hand, but he may then choose to pass.
- 3N to play, opener can correct to 4M with 3 trumps.
- 4M to play, 6+ cards in the major.
- 4♣ Gerber

- 4N *quantitative*.

**Warning:** Bidding 4N after a major transfer is perilous with unknown partners. The standard says 4N is quantitative. Less experienced players sometimes think it is Ace-asking by mistake. It isn't; no agreement on a suit has occurred.

After a super accept, the responder decides on whether to pass or bid game or try for slam. He knows a great deal about opener's hand.

What about transferring to one major and then bidding the other? That has to be 5-5 or better in the majors since with 5-4 we start with Stayman. We discuss those sequences in the *three-level replies* (page 118) section later in this chapter.

## Interference

We'll talk about auctions like 1N (2♠) later. But one thing to know right now is that you don't just transfer on the three level, as in 1N (2♠) 3♦ – not a transfer to hearts. I know, you have a friend that plays it that way. Get a new friend.

If opener's RHO doubles or overcalls Stayman or transfer bid, responder will take the lead in punishing them since only responder knows how many points he has. Neither Stayman nor a transfer promised anything.

Doubles of artificial bids such as Stayman and transfer bids are always asking for that suit to be led. This is called a *lead-directing* bid.

To avoid overload for newer learners, I've left details for later, but it is part of the Stayman and transfer conventions:

- Doubling Stayman is covered in *When Stayman is Doubled* (page 125).
- Doubling a transfer is covered in *When Our Transfer is Doubled* (page 124).
- For overcalls opener generally passes. A redouble asks for the transfer again, but a double of an overcall is for penalty.

## Garbage Stayman

The term *Garbage Stayman* is often mistakenly used. A standard part of Stayman is that you can bid 2♣ with a weak hand having a club shortage and four-card or better support in the other suits. You're willing to pass any reply, including 2♦. Your hand may be garbage, but you're not bidding Garbage Stayman.

Garbage Stayman refers to an agreement about bidding weak hands that are 4-4 in the majors. The idea is that you can bid Stayman even if you are not willing to pass a 2♦ reply. Playing Garbage Stayman, you now rebid 2♥!(weak, 4-4 in majors) and opener passes or corrects to 2♠.

The sequence that changes is:

1N - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥!(weak hand 4-4 in majors)

I recommend playing Garbage Stayman. There is a more complicated version I am not mentioning, so check with partner.

## 12.5 When Responder Is 5-4 In The Majors

If you have five in one major and exactly four in the other, some special bids are available. You should not add these to your repertoire until you are very comfortable with both transfers and Stayman.

Since I recommend Garbage Stayman, let's assume we're playing that, and the standard Minor Relay which we learn later. Here is one scheme to try to find either a 4-4 or 5-3 fit:

- If your hand is weak transfer to the five-card suit and pass. This gives your partner no chance to go wrong. But use judgement: with a terrible five-card suit you might try Garbage Stayman.
- If your hand has five spades and four hearts, invitational or better, bid 2♣ Stayman, and then:
  - If opener shows a major, just raise it. Example: 1N - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♥ invitational; 1N - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♥ with a game-forcing hand.
  - If opener answered 2♦, you may still have a 5-3 fit. Bid 2♠ to invite; 3♠ to force to game.
- If your hand has four spades and five hearts, invitational or better, a similar scheme does not work. The problem arises after 1N - 2♣ - 2♦, because to bid 2♥ is *Garbage Stayman* (page 114); opener might pass. And you can't bid 3♥ if you do not have a game-forcing hand; you're already too high for an invitational hand if partner doesn't have hearts.

So, with an invitational hand 4=5 in the majors, you have

to transfer to hearts and then bid 2♠.

- With a game-forcing hand, use Stayman and if opener bids 2♦, bid 3♥. See note below.

Partners must be on their toes not to pass the game-forcing bids.

## 12.6 Texas Transfers

Texas Transfers are not standard, but are so common you must be sure you agree on this with your partner. Check the boxes on your convention cards.

If you have a six-card major and a minimum game forcing hand, you can use a Texas Transfer:

- 1N - 4♦ transfer to hearts (6+, GF)
- 1N - 4♥ transfer to spades (6+, GF)

Texas Transfers are on over interference. The name Texas for Americans implies “big”: big hats, big toast, big meat, big suit.

You don’t use Texas if:

- you have an invitational hand; instead you would transfer and then raise to 3M.
- with mild slam interest; instead transfer and then bid 4M. This sequence shows you must have a six-card suit because you are willing to play 4M even if opener has only two trump. But, you didn’t get to 4M fast with Texas – so the motto, “slow shows” applies; you must have extras. But it is only mild extras; if you have strong slam interest, make a forcing bid such as a 3-level bid of a new suit. That is game forcing, so you’ll get another bid.

## 12.7 Minor Relay

The 2♠!(long minor) response to 1N forces opener to bid 3♣!(forced), which responder can pass or correct to 3♦, to play.

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**Note:** It is incorrect to call 2♠ a “minor suit transfer”. Technically, a transfer is a bid asking partner to bid a suit that you hold for certain; a *relay* is asking partner to bid a certain suit (usually but not always the next *strain* up) but that suit isn’t necessarily the suit you have; you are going to reveal that later.

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Opener alerts 2♠, and partner should alert the 3♣ reply because the opener doesn’t necessarily have clubs. Since it is an alert, not an announcement, you do not say “relay to clubs” unless asked.

The Minor Relay is not for five-card minors, and not for invitational or better hands or hands that have a four-card major. Minor relays are to be used only in the case of 6 card suits, and usually only with weak hands. A long suit is very powerful opposite a 1N opener, so weak means not close to invitational.

### Minor Slam Tries

A Minor Relay can be used as the start of a slam try in a minor. You must have a belief that a minor slam is likely, because otherwise 3N is your goal.

- 1N - 2♠! - 3♣! – 3♥! slam try in clubs.
- 1N - 2♠! - 3♣! – 3♠! slam try in diamonds.

You would never be bidding a major after a Minor Relay, because you would have used a transfer to that major in the first place.

Therefore, these bids are clearly artificial. The lower bid (hearts) corresponds to a slam try in the lower minor (clubs), and the higher bid (spades) to the higher minor (diamonds).

## 12.8 Three-Level Suit Responses

The standard is that 3-level bids over 1N are natural, showing 6+ cards in the suit, with invitational values. However, there are about as many schemes for the bids from 3♣ to 3♠ as there are bridge players. In *Advanced One Notrump Structure* (page 253) I will give you a complete scheme for the bids from 2♠ to 3♠ that replaces the Minor Relay and these three-level natural bids with something more useful.

## 12.9 Recommended 1N Structure for Intermediates

Here is what I recommend for intermediates. You'll need partnership agreement.

- Play the major transfers and Texas transfers, and *Minor Relay* (page 117).
- Play the natural 1N - 3x bids as invitational.
- With a game-going hand with a minor, use Stayman followed by 3m if you have a four-card major. If not, just bid 3N or with a very shapely hand use the Minor Relay slam try.

Do not try to get to five of a minor; the basic decision is whether to go past 3N or not. Once you go past 3N, you're going to really



hope you can bid the slam because 5m is usually a bad outcome (especially in matchpoints) if 3N is making. The minor relay slam try has the virtue of letting opener call it off with 3N or 5m depending on his hand; or he can control-bid or ask for Aces.

**Warning:** A great many players, some with considerable experience, are misinformed about sequences like 1N - 2♣ - 2M - 4N and 1N - 2T(transfer) - 2M - 4N. These are all quantitative. Direct skeptics to any good book or professional web page on 2/1. Do not let an allegedly more experienced partner bully you on this.

After opener answers Stayman with a major, bidding three of the other major is a power raise. Partners should commence control-bidding for a possible slam. Example:

1N - 2♣ 2♥ - 3♠! (game forcing heart raise)  
4♦!(have diamond control but not a club control)

See the chapters on *Slam Bidding* (page 177) and *Advanced Slam Bidding* (page 266) for the subject of control-bidding.

## 12.10 Between 1N and 2N

If you have 18 or more points, do not open 1N, even if your partner is a passed hand. It isn't going to take much to get you to game, so you don't want to lie about your strength by limiting it to 17 HCP. A seventeen with a great five card suit should also be treated this way.

- With a balanced 18-19 points, open a suit and then rebid 2N. This does not deny any major that has been skipped

over. For example,

- $1\Diamond - 1\Heart - 2N$  shows 18-19 balanced but does not deny holding four spades. The convention *New Minor Forcing* (page 45) helps sort out whether the  $1\Heart$  bidder here has four or five hearts. It is worth learning.
- Opening one of a suit and then rebidding 1N when partner passes shows 18-19 points. After the 1N bid, the bids that follow are natural, not the “systems on” bids.

For example, suppose opener has an 18 point balanced hand with the Ace of Spades, and responder has a 5 point hand with diamonds such as:

♠98 ♥J42 ♦KJT93 ♣974

The bidding begins:

1♣ (1♠) P (P)

1N ( P) 2♦

Systems are off. The bid of 2♦ would be to play, not a transfer to hearts.

## 12.11 Smolen

Smolen is an optional convention, but quite common for advanced intermediates. When partner opens 1N and we have a hand that is 5 - 4 in the majors, game forcing, we begin with Stayman. If opener replies 2♦, denying a four-card major, we now bid the four-card suit, *at the three level*; this is a *puppet* that lets the opener declare the 5-3 fit if he has 3 of the long suit.

## 12.12 Summary Charts

These charts are for the standard 15-17 HCP 1N opener.

Table 1: Balanced Openings

HCP	Bid	Systems On
15-17	1N	Yes
18-19	1m then 2N	NMF
20-21	2N	Yes
22-24	2C then 2N	Yes
25-27	2C then 3N	Yes
28-30	2C then 4N	Yes

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**Note:** Using the 2♣ opener first, 3N and 4N can be used for other things. In the absence of an agreement, though, 3N is 25-27 and 4N is 28-30.

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### Summary of Notrump Raises

The point ranges given here are for a 15-17 1N bid. Over a weak 1N or a 2N opener, make the corresponding adjustment. All these responses deny a four card major and show a balanced hand.

- 1N - 2N invitational, 8-9 points
- 1N - 3N to play, 10-15 points
- 1N - 4♣ Gerber, asking for aces.

- 1N - 4N quantitative; this shows a balanced hand with a good 16-17 points. Opener bids 6N with a good 16 or 17. Note that 33 points is often not enough for 6N, without a source of tricks.
- 1N - 6N to play, 18-19
- 1N - 5N asks for 6N or 7N, 20-21.
- 1N - 7N to play 22+

### Summary of Responses to 1N

The columns are the responder's strength; the rows are his hand shape. In the cells, two bids separated by a plus sign mean, first bid is the reply to 1N, second bid is your next bid.

Slam bids often depend on exactly what you are playing such as Texas Transfers, etc. So we just show the first bid and then a question mark. We assume Garbage Stayman.

Table 2: Responses to 1N Opener

Shape / Strength	Weak 0-7	Invitational 8-9	Game 10-15	Slam? 16+
Balanced	Pass	2N	3N	4->7N
4-card major	Pass	2♣ + invite	2♣ + game	2♣ first
5-card major	T + pass	T + 2N	T + 3N	T + ?
5-4 majors	Garbage	See section	2♣ then 3M	2♣ - 2♦ - 2M
4441 or 4450	2♣ + pass	2♣ + invite	2♣ + game	2♣ + ?
6-card major	T + pass	T + 3M	T + 4M	T + ?
w/Texas	T + pass	T + 3M	Texas	T + 4M
6+ minor	R	3m	2♣ then 3m	R then major

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Notes:

- T means *transfer* (page 111) to the long(er) major M.
- R is *Minor Relay* (page 117) and its slam try followup.
- “+ something” means what you bid next, depending on opener’s rebid.

## 12.13 Dealing With Interference Over 1N

The no-trump structure is highly evolved and generally gets you to the right place – so much so, that your opponents will be anxious to get in your way so that you can't use it. Ron Klinger lamented, "Nobody leaves anyone alone any more." In a later *section* (page 161) we'll learn some of these evil schemes; meantime, here are the basics of how to deal with interference after you've opened 1N.

The treatments for interference with major transfers and Stayman are a standard part of those conventions. Note that in either case responder has promised absolutely no points, so generally responder controls the action.

### When a major transfer is doubled or overcalled

A double of an artificial bid is lead-directing. So, opener's RHO may double to show that he wants a lead of the (artificial) suit that responder just bid. Opener can take advantage to tell responder if he has three or more of responder's suit. A decided minority of intermediates know the correct bids here.

Let T be the suit of the transfer bid, and let M be the target suit of the transfer. For example, in 1N - 2♦(transfer), T is diamonds, M is hearts.

After 1N - 2T (X):

- Pass: Opener has 2 cards in M. M is not agreed trump. Subsequently, if the next player passes, a XX by responder transfers again to M.
- 2M: Agrees M as trump, shows 3+ cards in M.

- 3M: Agrees M as trump, shows 4+ cards in M, and a maximum opener.
- XX: Opener has the transfer suit, willing to play in 2T redoubled. Opener should have a positively scary holding in T.

An overcall of a transfer leaves the opener in a bit of a bind because the act of transferring in itself only shows a five card suit; responder could have zero points. So, opener only bids with a great holding in the overcalled suit, or holding a maximum.

Thus after 1N - 2T (2Z):

- Pass: waiting to hear from partner. Responder can double to show points.
- X: penalty oriented, a great Z suit.
- Completing the transfer shows a maximum with four-card support.

Note the theme again: 4N is quantitative any time we have not affirmatively agreed on a suit.

The responder is still *Captain*, and we're waiting to hear his opinion.

### When Stayman is doubled or overcalled

When Stayman is doubled, opener will answer only if he has a club stopper. Otherwise he passes it around to the responder, who can redouble to ask for Stayman again, or pass for penalty.

When Stayman is overcalled, opener should usually pass and let responder decide to double for penalty or not. I say this on general principles, I've never seen it discussed.

## **Stolen Bids**

After an overcall of our 1N opener, the standard treatment is that all bids are natural.

Another system, popular with intermediates, is called “stolen bids”. I think it is correct to mention it here, even though I don’t like it, as so many of your intermediate partners will think it is standard.

- 1N (2a) X! means the same as if responder had bid the overcalled suit, up to 2♠. In other words, a double means, “He stole my bid!”. In particular a double of (2♣) is Stayman.
- Any bid above the overcall has an unchanged meaning. However, bidding NT promises a stopper in the overcalled suit. Example: 1N (2♦) 2♥!(transfer to spades).
- The three level bids don’t have their special meanings; if a jump, it is a weak bid in the suit, such as 1N - (2♦) - 3♥(preemptive, hearts).

Unfortunately, I’m not sure this is really better than playing everything natural. You’re giving up the chance of a penalty double. Also, when the opponents know this is what you play, as they will at your club, or if they look at your card, they can get away with murder interfering with you, knowing you can’t double them.

The right answer is some form of the Lebensohl convention, which is quite advanced. You’re lucky to find a partner who knows it. People who say they know it and don’t really are legion at the advanced-intermediate level.



## Run For Your Life

You also need a system, called a “runout”, when your 1N opener gets doubled for penalty. You’ve played 1N with a *yarborough* dummy before? You don’t want to go there. Here’s the simplest way out.

After 1N (X) or 1N (Pass) Pass (X) Pass (Pass), responder has the following choices:

- Pass if you are willing to play 1N doubled (typically a balanced hand with at least competitive values).
- XX is a relay to clubs, pass or correct. If responder is weak, we’ll be better off in any suit fit. If opener has just two clubs he could bid diamonds instead; assuming he did not open with two doubletons, he has at least three of each of the other suits.

If their double does not show strength, but rather is something like a double for a single-suited hand, responder with a strong hand may pass and wait for the suit to be shown, or just bid normally. Generally delayed action, when you could have taken immediate action, shows strength.

There is also a school of thought that says to play your runout even if the double is conventional; if responder’s hand is not strong, the other opponent’s may be. This is especially tenable with the more elaborate runout schemes.

If responder initially passes, and the opponents bid a suit or suits, responder’s double is penalty-oriented.

For a wide variety of advanced runout schemes see *Advanced Runouts* (page 280).

## Unusual 2N interference

1N (2N) is a very effective bid showing 5-5 in the minors. Against it, use the *General Defense to Two-Suited Bids* (page 169).

As the defender, you do not bid (1N) - 2N to show you have a notrump opener too – you double for penalty. That's why 2N is free to have a special meaning.

## Three-Level Interference

- 1N (3a) 3N to play, suit stopped
- 1N (3a) 4M to play
- 1N (3a) X takeout double or penalty, partnership agreement.
- 1N (3a) 3y is game forcing

## 12.14 What Partner May Want

Partners may come with their own ideas. Here are some that you could agree to play in good conscience:

- 3♣ and 3♦ as showing 5-5 in the minors (invitational and game-forcing respectively).
- 3♥ and 3♠ showing 5-5 in the majors, similarly. See note below.
- 1N - 3♣ as a game forcing bid asking if you have a five-card major. There are two forms of this, *Five Card Stayman* (page 254), preferred, and *Puppet Stayman*

(page 207), a convention normally played over 2N. Actually, Five Card Stayman is what you want to play.

- *Stolen Bids* (page 126). This is ok, but a dead end. Learn *Lebensohl* (page 193) eventually.
- *Alternate Advanced Runouts* (page 280).

Note that you don't really need special bids for 5-5 in the majors:

- With a sub-invitational hand, transfer to your best suit and then pass.
- With an invitational hand, transfer to hearts and then bid 2♠.
- With a game-forcing hand transfer to spades and then bid 4♥.
- With slam interest, transfer to spades and then bid 3♥.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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### THE 2N OPENING FAMILY

#### 13.1 What Hands Are Included?

Opening 2N shows a balanced hand with 20-21 points. The hand may contain a five card major. Experts will often open a 5-4-2-2 hand with 2N, and certainly a 5-3-3-2. As with opening 1N, opening 2N nails down opener's strength to a small range, and responder becomes *Captain* of the hand.

With 22-24 points, a balanced 2♣ opener rebids 2N; respond to that 2N bid *exactly* as if the opener had opened 2N except that he has a few more points. We refer to these agreements as the 2N opening family.

A hand that is 1=4=4=4 can be opened 2N with a singleton ♠K, but not an ♠A. If you open it 1♦ you'd have a choice over partner's expected spade bid of jump shifting to 3♣, losing the hearts, or reversing into hearts without longer diamonds than hearts, which is not permitted. Opening 2N may be the least evil.

## 13.2 Responses

Unlike the situation over 1N, there is no room for many conventions; in particular, there is no escape sequence to get out in a minor. Otherwise:

- Pass with less than game-going values (5 HCP or perhaps an Ace)
- 3♣ is Stayman. What variant is a choice, see below.
- 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers.
- 3♠ is up for discussion; see below.
- 4♣ is *Gerber* (page 182).
- 4♦ and 4♥ are *Texas Transfers* (page 116).
- 4N is quantitative, asking opener to bid 6N with a hand with good trick-taking ability.
- 6N means you are sure we have 33 HCP but not 37 HCP.
- 7N means you're having a good day.

Some play 3♣ as *Puppet Stayman* (page 207). Unfortunately you can't play both *Smolen* (page 120) and *Puppet* because of the different meanings of a 3♦ reply by opener. Expert opinion favors plain Stayman with *Smolen* or a more complicated version of *Puppet*, according to Gavin Wolpert. Most ordinary players play *Puppet Stayman*, or just ordinary Stayman without *Smolen*. You can do fine with just ordinary Stayman.

As a general rule, when responding with a hand with a five-card major, we transfer to it and then show the other suit when game forcing. With 5=5 in the majors, a transfer to spades and then bidding hearts is offering opener a choice of 4♥ or 4♠, while

transferring to hearts and then bidding spades is more interested in slam.

As with the 1N opener, holding 5-4 in the majors, responder can bid 3♣ and if opener replies 3♦, puppet the four-card major suit (*Smolen* (page 120)). Or, partners can agree to use Puppet Stayman.

## **Notes on 3 Spades**

Some intermediates play that 3♠ is a relay to 4♣, analogous to the minor relay 2♠ over 1N, intending to get out in a minor. This is a bad idea over 2N; pick between pass and 3N.

Any agreement about 3♠ suffers from the problem that opener's RHO can double for a spade lead, possibly sinking the ship. We really have to be serious about a possible minor slam before risking this.

A common agreement is "Minor Suit Stayman", showing both minor suits. Experts do not play this. Again, if you might make 3N you should bid it.

Experts make 3♠ a relay to 3N, followed by responder showing a minor as a slam try.

See *Advanced 2N Bidding* (page 224) for a full expert system.

I have no section on dealing with interference over a 2N opener because doing so is almost never advisable. As a general rule, responder as Captain would deal with it.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### THE STRONG TWO CLUB OPENER

An opening bid of two clubs is the strongest possible opening bid, showing 22 or more points if the hand is balanced. If the hand is not balanced, but rather has a long solid major suit, you can open it two clubs if it has at least 8 ½ tricks in it and at least 16-18 HCP. It is too misleading to partner to open a weaker hand with two clubs no matter how shapely. For a minor you'd want to have more like 9 ½ - 10 tricks.

You also need at least 4 quick-tricks. Here's how you count quick-tricks, up to 2 per suit:

- AK = 2 quick tricks
- A = 1 quick trick
- KQ = 1 quick trick
- AQ = 1 1/2 quick tricks
- Kx = 1/2 quick trick

A typical opening bid has two quick-tricks.

There are many two-suited hands with which you should not open 2♣ with 22 HCP. 2♣ uses up a lot of bidding room and

makes it hard to show both suits. Bergen gives these examples:

- ♠AKxxx ♥KQ ♦3 ♣KQJxx has 4 quick-tricks. But looking ahead, after 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠, suppose partner bids a red suit. You cannot show the clubs without going to the four level.
- ♠AKxxx ♥KQJxx ♦3 ♣KQ has the same strength but it is ok to open 2♣ because you can get the hearts in at the 3 level.

The responses are:

- 2♦ is purely artificial, indicating that none of the other following bids apply. Responder really tells you nothing about his hand when he bids 2♦, except that he probably does not have 8 HCP and a good five-card major. People call this 2♦ “waiting”.

If you have a very bad hand you bid 2♦ first and on your second bid bid 3♣, called the “second negative” or “double negative”. If opener has rebid 3♦ so that you cannot bid 3♣, bid 3♥ as “artificial, double negative”. Be sure partner knows this. (I was obliged to explain double negative; it is standard. I hate this method. Some feel it is better not to have a second negative at all.)

- 2♥, 2♠ show at least 8 HCP and a *good* five card suit. Game forcing.
- 3♣, 3♦ show at least 8 HCP and a *good* six card suit. Game forcing.

Be very reluctant to bid 3♦; sometimes you need to show your club suit immediately with 3♣ because to do so on your second bid would show a weak hand. Knowing that your second bid may have to be 3♦ is a reason to resist



bidding 2♣. Gavin Wolpert calls 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ “the worst auction in bridge”.

- 2N should not be bid. Traditional teaching is that 2N shows 8 HCP and a balanced hand, but it is not a good idea. Just bid 2♦. After that make sure you get to game. I’d write it on your convention card: Never 2N.

Opener rebids 2N with a balanced 22-24, 3N with 25-27, and so on.

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**Note:** When opener rebids 2N after opening 2♣ the auction proceeds exactly as if he had opened 2N, except that his hand is stronger.

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**Warning:** A 2♦ reply is not alerted or announced any more, no matter what it means. Do not assume you know. If you’re not going to bid, ask after the auction is over.

It should be noted that while responder may pass a 2N rebid with a bad hand, all the suit bids by opener are unlimited and completely forcing. Holding:

♠234 ♥234 ♦2345 ♣234

and hearing partner rebid 2♠, you must bid. Bid 4♠ and pray.

Alternate schemes for responding to 2♣ are described in *Advanced Responses To Two Club Openers* (page 274).

## 14.1 Interference

If your 2♣ opener is interfered with by the opener's LHO, responder's actions are quite unintuitive:

- Pass is forcing and shows values (no alert is required);
- Double shows a weak hand.

To interfere with your opponent's 2♣ opener, the simplest idea is *Mathe* (page 205): double shows both majors and 2N is *Unusual 2N* (page 159).

## 14.2 No Need For Opening 3N

The standard SAYC meaning of a 3N opener is a 25-27 point hand, but this bid is redundant. You can open 2♣ first and then bid 3N to show that. Therefore you might agree to use a 3N opening for something else, such as *Gambling 3N Opening* (page 141).

It doesn't happen a lot, but the 4N rebid means 28-30, etc. If you open 2♣ and the auction goes 2♣ - 2♦ - 4N, your partner will stare at you like a deer caught in the headlights. You aren't asking for keycards in diamonds, of course; that was an artificial suit.

Stayman and transfers would be on if 3N is the strong, balanced opener.

## PREEMPTIVE OPENING BIDS

A *preemptive* or *preempt* bid is one designed to make the opponents miserable even though you have a poor hand, by using up the room they have to maneuver. The opening preempts are those bids above 2♣.

<p><b>Warning:</b> Be aware that many pairs play 2♦ to mean minimal three-suited openers or other hand types; this must be alerted. See <i>Two Diamonds Conventions</i> (page 215).</p>
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### 15.1 Two-Level Preempts

Opening bids (or jump overcalls if playing *Weak Jump Shifts* (page 174)) of 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ are weak bids, showing a six card suit with 5-10 points, with 10 being rare. If we are vulnerable, the suit must be a good one, that is, two of the top three honors or three of the top five, not counting QJT. Not vulnerable, the bid promises at least a Queen and a six-card suit.

**Warning:** Some opponents will preempt on complete air. The rules are complicated. The most common error is not preempting with too little, but with too much.

In first or second seat, the hand should not contain an outside four-card major, or even a good three-card major holding. Or so our fathers believed. We don't all believe that any more, but I recommend sticking to those rules as an intermediate.

Opinion differs here. There are many very good players who preempt with less than these requirements. However sticking to the requirements has some positive payoffs in finding 3N games and in playing defense when they bid over it.

In third seat it is often advisable to open at the two level with a six-card suit if you have even up to 14 HCP. You have a hand that is going to open 1x and rebid 2x So getting in their way is a good idea.

These bids have an entirely different meaning in fourth seat. There is no reason to preempt in fourth seat. A two-level bid in fourth seat shows a hand that would have opened at the one level and then rebid the suit at the two level, typically six cards and 12-14 points. Likewise, higher bids show progressively more powerful hands.

## Responses

A raise from the two level to the three level is purely preemptive and relies on the idea that a nine card fit is relatively safe at the three level. It does not require a lot of points, but it does require three trump.

Excepting a raise, other bids by responder are forcing. The 2N bid is a conventional bid that asks the opener to bid a suit in which he holds an outside Ace or King, or else to rebid his suit. Knowing that the opener has an outside entry may permit responder to go to game. This 2N bid is called “feature-asking”. There are other schemes for 2N but they must be alerted.

Generally a bid other than a raise is going to show a hand of 16 points or so. Also, be prepared for opener to simply rebid his suit. He could quite well have nothing else to say.

One test used to decide whether to raise a 2M preempt to the four level is the “Rule of 17”: add the HCP to the number of trumps held, and go to game if the total is 17 or more. It is best to use your brain, however, and imagine how the particular cards you hold will play opposite your partner’s. This is a situation in which it is nice to be confident partner followed the rules about suit quality.

## **15.2 Three-Level Preempts**

Three-level opening bids are similar to two-level preempts, except they show a seven card suit or six good clubs. To compete over such a preempt requires more than a minimum opening hand.

Three-level openings in fourth seat are not preemptive. They show a hand that would open at the one level and rebid at the three level, typically a six card suit and 17-19 points.

An advanced idea for pursuing slam after partner preempts is *Preempt Keycard* (page 271).

## 15.3 Four-Level Preempts

Four-level opening bids are preemptive, showing usually an 8-card suit or better. The bid is not strong, and partner must be cautious about going on. Other than that the treatment is similar to the three-level preempt.

Again, in 4th seat this is a powerful bid, showing 20 points or more. If it really is so great a hand that you are afraid of being left short of game by a partner with almost nothing, it is likely a candidate for a 2♣ opener.

See *Bidding Distributional Hands* (page 142) for more thoughts.

## 15.4 Ogust

Ogust is an alternative set of responses to a 2N inquiry after partner opens a weak two. After 2x - 2N!(hand inquiry):

- 3♣ Opener has a bad suit and a minimal hand (towards the 5 end rather than the 10)
- 3♦ Opener has a good suit but a bad hand.
- 3♥ Opener has a bad suit but a good hand.
- 3♠ Opener has a good suit and a good hand.

## 15.5 Gambling 3N

Since one can open 2♣ and rebid 3N with a balanced 25-27 point hand, there is no need to open 3N to show this kind of hand. The (non-standard) Gambling 3N convention uses this bid to show a hand with ALL of these properties:

- A solid minor with at least 7 cards.
- No four-card major
- No Ace or King outside the long minor

These restrictions are to talk you out of missing a slam and to help partner precisely visualize his chances for a 3N contract. If partner does think 3N will make, he passes. That means he has stoppers in the other suits, because he is under no illusions that you can help. If not, he bids 4♣ and you correct to diamonds if necessary.

This bid does not come up very often of course, but neither does the one it replaces. It will lead to rather spectacular failures if you and your partner are not on the same precise wavelength.

## DEALING WITH DISTRIBUTIONAL HANDS

Having learned the basic bidding rules, you'll be confronted with hands that just do not seem to fit. Often these are hands that are *distributional*, that is, they have one or two long suits. For example, you might pick up a hand that is 1=1=8=3, or 1=1=5=6. These hands can be difficult because they have a longer suit that is of lower rank than the upper suit, or because they are often worth more than their HCP would suggest – and then suddenly you find a misfit with your partner and the value drops sharply.

### 16.1 Hands With One Long Suit

Here are a few examples and how you might approach them. Let's say you are in first chair and pick up this hand:

• ♠5 ♥6 ♦AKQ98752 ♣932

We could imagine opening this 3♦, 4♦, or even 5♦, trying to keep the opponents out of the auction. However, there is another person you are keeping out of the auction, your partner. This



hand will take 8 tricks all by itself. It just takes very little to make a game and not that much to make a slam. In short, the hand is just worth a lot more than 9 HCP. Open this a diamond, and keep making minimal diamond replies, and let your partner participate.

This is the kind of hand that the convention Gambling 3NT was designed to handle. However, change it to  $\diamond AKJT9852$  and it won't qualify for Gambling even if you're playing that convention.

You don't need to panic that  $1\diamond$  will pass out. If your partner has less than six points, your opponents have 25 and probably a spade or heart fit. They are not going to pass. Worst case, you end up with a diamond part-score.

With a really poor 8-card suit and little outside, you can consider treating it as a seven-card holding and open  $3\diamond$ .

Remember that if you are in fourth seat, bids other than  $1\diamond$  are NOT weak. Still, if you would open the hand you can open it  $2\diamond$ , which says you have a hand that would open one of a suit and then rebid it at the two level. (At least, that's the way I play it; not everybody does).

The *Namyats* (page 214) convention is designed to help you distinguish between opening  $4\heartsuit$  or  $4\spadesuit$  as a preempt or with a better hand with an 8-card suit. As a side effect it has a 3N opening to show a minor preempt.

When your partner is a passed hand, things change. Preempting then does not risk making a game as much.

## **16.2 Two-Suited Hands**

Two-suited hands are not hard to bid except in two cases. If the longer suit is the lower-ranked one, and you are not strong enough to reverse, it is a problem. For example, you have a 13 point hand with four diamonds and five clubs. If you open a club, and your partner responds with a major, what do you do next? You can't bid diamonds, you are not strong enough.

If the longer suit is higher-ranked than the shorter, you just bid normally. Of course if you are strong you have to do something like jump to be sure your partner will not pass.

The second difficult case is that you have a strong two-suited hand and are tempted to open 2♣. It can be quite difficult to show both suits before getting too high. Especially with both minors, the auction 2♣ - 2♦ - 3m gets you to a very awkward place. The professional Gavin Wolpert calls 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ the worst auction in bridge. So, opening 2♣ with say 22 HCP is not required. If your partner really has nothing and passes your opening bid, you probably are not missing a game anyway. But certainly with hands even better than that, you might have to open 2♣.

With shapes like 1=1=5=6 and 2=2=4=5, you have the option with a minimal hand to open the diamond suit. This “distorts” your shape; you will never convince your partner of your true shape after that. But for an intermediate player, opening the 4=5 hand that way is taught by many teachers, so that you can rebid clubs. Rebidding clubs without six of them is generally to be avoided. If you open clubs and rebid diamonds twice your partner will know you are 5=6 in the minors. Likewise with other 6=5 hands where the six is lower-ranked than the five.

## Six-Four Hands

When six-four, you of course open the six, and with a minimal opener you have to rebid the six if it is lower-ranking. Otherwise, you have a choice: bid the six twice and then the four, or the six, then the four, then the six. The latter has the advantage of showing your partner both suits, and more of your cards, earlier and is recommended for good hands as long as you watch out for the rule on reverses.

If it really bothers you to bid minimal hands with four spades and five hearts, look into the 2♦ *Flannery* (page 216) convention.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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### COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Methods of dealing with competition are woven throughout the other bidding topics. This chapter contains notes on an assortment of special topics.

In an established partnership, you can develop a style – be it aggressive, conservative, insane cowboy, you name it. It is important to realize that it isn't so much that a given style is right or wrong, but that you bid as a partnership knowing what that style is. If you overcall very lightly, for example, your partner must be more conservative with replies to those overcalls.

Here are general principles to guide you:

1. Do not bid your same values twice.

For example, you open 1♥, LHO overcalls 1♠, your partner bids 2♥, and RHO raises to 2♠. Do you now compete to 3♥?

Ask yourself, “Do I have something more to tell my partner?” If your hand was an ordinary 13 point opening hand, you have shown those values already. Pass. Only go on if you have extras.

If LHO now passes, your partner can use the same principal – he has promised you six points and three hearts, but if he really has nine points or has four hearts, then he hasn't told you everything, so he can consider bidding 3♥ or doubling 2♠.

Another way to look at this is that thirteen plus nine should be about right for the three level, all the more so with four trumps. Vulnerable, with only three trumps, a double might get you to the dreaded -200.

2. Another guideline is the “Law of Total Tricks”, which says that with a fit, the total number of tricks available in the hand is the sum of the lengths of the trump holdings. For example, in a competitive auction where they have shown an 8 card spade fit and we have a 9 card heart fit, there are 17 Tricks available. So if they can make 8 tricks in spades, we will be able to make 9 Tricks in hearts.

In particular just remember that with 4 trump in support you're not going to get too burned at the three level.

3. Extreme shapes call for extreme measures. Read Marty Bergen's famous book, “Points Schmoints”. If you have a double fit, or you have a 6 - 5 hand, get really aggressive. “Six-Five, Come Alive” they say.
4. To *balance* (page 148) is to bid in the *passout seat*, such as when your LHO opens followed by two passes or when the opponents are about to be able to play a major at the two level. As a simple guideline, bid as though you had one more King in your hand, and your partner in reply will bid as though he had one less. Be sure to balance properly and you'll be a valued partner.
5. A passed hand is not always a poor hand. If your partner

passed after LHO opened, it may be that he did not have enough to overcall. It may also be that he did have enough, but didn't have a long enough suit, or his suit is the one LHO bid. That's completely different from your partner passing in the first seat. It helps to say in your mind, "Partner has a hand that could not bid over that opener." That's not the same at all as "Partner has less than an opener." We'll see this at work in the section on reopening with a double.

6. Realize when you are "off the hook". Your partner makes a takeout double, but your RHO bids over it. Or, your partner makes an *Unusual 2N* (page 159) bid but RHO intervenes. You're off the hook! You do not have to bid unless you have a worthwhile thing to say. When you do make such a "free" bid, your partner will infer that you have some reason to bid; when you bid because you have to, he cannot make such an inference.
7. Don't be cheap. If your partner makes a takeout double, and you bid the lowest thing you can, you're saying you don't have 8 good points. Just because it is a competitive auction doesn't mean to always go low.

Look for a reason to bid, not a reason to pass.

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

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### BALANCING

Mike Lawrence has a wonderful book about balancing, “All About Balancing”. Learning to balance is very important, especially at matchpoints.

Balancing refers to making a bid when passing would end the auction. The situations vary as to whether one or both opponents have bid, which suit they bid (or notrump), and the shape of your own hand. The key point is that how many HCP you have is not as important as it usually is, because in these situations your partner and you may have half the points or nearly so.

#### 18.1 Balancing In Fourth Seat

Your LHO opens a suit, and after two passes, it is up to you. The opener’s partner has nothing, but your partner may have a variety of hands. He has a hand that could not overcall but he could even have a good opening hand that had no suitable bid.

As a general rule, you bid as if you had 3 more points in your hand (called “borrowing a King from partner”) and when partner replies, he will reply as if he had 3 points less.

To balance with 1N you should have 11/12 - 14 HCP and definitely a stopper in opener's suit. Above 14 actual HCP you usually double first, in the same way that you would double rather than make a direct overcall if you had 17 HCP.

For example, after LHO opens 1♥ and it is passed to you, holding:

♠ KQ82 ♥92 ♦KQ96 ♣J72

you can double because you have at least three cards in the other suits and could open the hand easily if it had another King. Your partner with 10 HCP would NOT jump in reply, as he would if you were directly after the opener, because he owes you that King.

But, with:

♠ KQ82 ♥92 ♦KQ96 ♣J7

you cannot double, because you really won't like it when partner bids clubs. You have a five card suit so you can bid 2♦. (There is a convention called *Equal Level Conversion Doubles* (page 96), designed for exactly this situation, but it is a partnership agreement and requires experience to recognize).

With:

♠ KQT82 ♥9 ♦KQ96 ♣J72

on the other hand, bid 1♠; it is important to show that five-card spade suit. If you make a takeout double, you're denying five cards in an unbid major.

With partnership agreement, 2 of the opener's suit is Michaels. 2N is Unusual 2N, showing the lowest two unbid suits, perhaps only 5-4 in the suits if you have some decent points. Two-suited



bids allow you to get in there more often, but require more experience.

## **Balancing after (1N) P (P)**

You have to be more careful than when overcalling 1N because the big hand is to your left. We play our chosen defense to 1N in *passout seat* as well as direct seat; ask your partner about doing this or just bidding natural suits.

## **18.2 Balancing When Both Opponents Have Bid**

Balancing in auctions in which both opponents have limited their hand so that their side appears to have roughly half the deck, say 18 - 22 HCP, is important. Consider these auctions:

(1M) P (2M) P – they stop at 2M  
(P) ?

(1m) P (1N) P – they stop after a 1N response  
(P) ?

(1m) P (1y) P – they stop after a 1N rebid  
(1N) P (P) ?

Balancing in *passout seat* has been previously *covered* (page 149). It differs from these situations in that the opener has not limited his hand as much. Likewise, an opening bid of 1N that is passed out can leave your side with as few as 15-16

HCP. By contrast, the auctions above indicate a deck that is more evenly divided with a tentative contract that will often make.

The 1M - 2M auction is especially important. If your opponents have a major fit and have made no effort to go to game, then the deck is about evenly divided. If you pass, you will usually get a very poor score, especially at matchpoints. It is worth considerable risk to compete. They have a fit, so we have a fit. Let's find it.

If they have stopped with a suit preference, that's different: 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♥ does not show that the opponents have an 8-card heart fit, just that responder prefers hearts to clubs. He might have something like ♠KT83 ♥98 ♦KJT32 ♣92. This means your side might not have a fit either, so bidding over them is much more dangerous.

The third auction tells you your side has about half the points, so again you try to get into the auction, but it is more difficult.

Balance when:

- Opponents have found an eight card fit and stop at the 2-level.
- Opponents attempt to play 1N after a one-of-a-minor opening.
- You are in the passout seat and not-vulnerable at IMPS or at any vulnerability at matchpoints.
- You are vulnerable at IMPS and have perfect distribution.

Your opponents have 18-22 HCP, so you and your partner have 18 - 22 HCP. Therefore YOUR HCP ARE RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT. Whatever you do not have, your partner does have. Your shape and suit quality ARE important. The more

flexible you are, the better. A one-suited balance is the least flexible and the most dangerous.

Be liberal about balancing in matchpoints. You likely have a bad board if you pass. If you turn that bad board into a top once in a while, it will more than overcome losing a little more a few times.

At IMPs, be more discrete when vulnerable as there is no gain if you go down one. Always have a perfect distribution for your action.

Besides competing, learning to balance helps your partnership avoid competing in ways that are more likely to get you into trouble, such as ill-judged takeout doubles, two-level suit overcalls in live auctions, and overcalling weak four-card suits. Partner can pass such hands if they can trust you to balance.

### 18.3 What Is The Goal?

Getting them to bid one more is the goal. Getting the contract isn't. At one more, you stand an extra chance of setting them that you otherwise did not have. And after all, if they are in three hearts making three, they get the same score as if they are in two hearts making three.

If they do bid one more, we pass. Our work is done. No more bidding. No penalty doubles.

Always try to balance and respond as flexibly as possible. Convince your opponents that you have found and they may bid on.

## 18.4 How Do I Balance?

Your distribution is the key to your choice of balancing action, and to responding when your partner balances. Agreeing on a convention for two-suited bids is important.

We will discuss some specific auctions below. However, there are some general guidelines:

- Double only with at least three cards in all the unbid suits.
- Bid a one-suited hand (5+ cards at the one- or two-level, 6+ cards at the three-level), in any of the auctions, if the suit is good.

## 18.5 Balancing When They Stop At Two

Your opponents have bid 1M - 2M, passed to you in balancing seat. If you pass, odds are that you're getting a bad board, especially in matchpoints or non-vul at IMPs. Do something! But what?

- Double is for takeout, with three-card or longer support for all unbid suits. Partner should bid their best suit. But, by partnership agreement, it is good to be more flexible if you can. Partner with two four-card or longer suits can reply 2N! (two places to play), and we then bid up-the-line until a fit is found.
- Balancing with 2N! shows two places to play; this will be four-card support for two unbid suits. Partners bid up the line to find the fit.

Special exception: After they bid 1♥ - 2♥, 2N! shows

both minors, while 2♠ shows four spades. If you had five good spades you would have overcalled at the one-level. In response to 2♠, partner can bid 2N!(minors) with fewer than three spades and both minors; bid your best suit if you are one-suited in a minor.

- After 1m - 2m (not inverted), or 1m - 1N - 2m, double shows three or more in both majors, although 4-4 or better is preferable.

## 18.6 Balancing A Notrump

The auctions:

(1m)-P-(1N)-P-(P)-?  
(1m)-P-(1y)-P-(1N)-P-(P)-?

are opportunities to balance. They have opened a minor and stopped at 1N.

After 1♦- 1N, the responder has clubs of some sort, and after 1♣- 1N, the responder may have by-passed four diamonds. Be aware.

It is unlikely you want double to be penalty so treat a double as takeout for the suit they mentioned.

Again: the goal is to get them to bid again. Act confidently. When they fall for it, quit. Glare at your partner if they don't quit too.

## **COMPETITIVE TOOLS**

This chapter discusses the basic tools of competition, and some special situations.

### **19.1 Overcalls**

The range for an overcall is 8-16 points. People tend to remember the 8 and forget the 16. The first rule to remember is that if you have a good 17 or more points, you must double first and then bid again. Your partner will think it is a takeout double at first, but when you bid again partner must cancel his expectations as to your shape. If you don't double first, partner will assume you have 8-16 and may pass your overcall despite having enough for game opposite your strong holding. There is one exception to this rule, which is that with a big two-suited hand an overcall, or Michael's, or Unusual 2N, may work better than a double.

On the bottom end, a one-level overcall can be much more relaxed than a two-level overcall. An overcall is above all a request

for your partner to lead your suit, so the first requirement is a suit you want led.

Classify your hand as to whether it is a good hand (near or above opening values), and whether or not you have good suit. For a more dangerous case such as a two-level overcall, especially vulnerable, you need a good hand and a good suit. For less dangerous cases, you need one or the other. In both cases, you should want the suit led if your partner becomes the opening leader.

One case that requires special caution is overcalling a minor at the two level. Your reward is not high and your risk is, especially vulnerable. It is really best to have a good six-card suit.

Mike Lawrence's "Complete Book of Overcalls" has a complete discussion. He emphasizes understanding the safety of various overcalls. For example, after an auction that begins (1♣)-P-(2♣), bidding is strongly encouraged, because RHO does not have diamonds, hearts, or spades, and has limited values; whereas after (1♥) – P – (2♥), clubs and diamonds are not safe – either opponent may have them.

Responding to an overcall, a bid of a new suit is not forcing, but shows some values.

## **19.2 Weak Jump Overcalls**

A jump overcall such as (1♥) 2♠ is essentially like an opening weak two or three bid. A good suit is needed. As with a preempt, after you make this bid you should almost never bid again.

Some times you have a hand that could have opened with a weak preempt but you did not for some reason, such as having an outside four-card major in first or second seat. If you passed at first

you can bid later once it becomes clear your partner is not being preempted by your bid.

## 19.3 Michaels Cue Bid

An immediate or balancing cue bid of a suit opener is shows a distributional hand with 5-5 or better shape, with the suits being both majors when the opponents bid a minor, and the unbid major and a minor if the opponents bid a major.

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**Note:** Cue bids are in general not alertable – in fact,  $1\clubsuit - (2\clubsuit)$  is only alerted if it is *natural*. However, it is not necessarily Michaels either. If opponents make such a bid, be sure to ask what they mean by it, if only at the end of the auction. This is one case when silence does not mean standard.

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Advancer can bid  $2N!$  asking for the minor. Except in unusual circumstances, advancer must choose between partner's two suits.

The Michaels bid does not show anything more than a prudent overcall but is unlimited.

Without partnership agreement,  $(1x) P (1y) 2x$  is not Michaels but natural; this is especially possible after  $1\clubsuit$  or  $1\diamondsuit$ .

Over an opening  $2\spadesuit$ , a bid of  $3\spadesuit$  should be *Western Cue* (page 160), asking partner to bid  $3N$  with a spade stopper. There isn't enough room for Michaels.

Some partners agree to use Michaels only with minimal or maximum hands – see *Minimax* (page 160).



A question arises when the Michaels bid shows a major and an unknown suit, and the responder makes a bid, but advancer has no support for the major. E.g., (1♥) 2♥ (3♦) ?. Typically responder's 3♦ bid shows a weak hand with diamonds, if opponents are playing unusual vs. unusual, but many intermediate pairs will lack agreements. With values but lacking spade support here, and ideally holding at least two diamonds, advancer should double, asking for the second suit or a penalty pass.

Without values, of course, you are off the hook and can pass.

An advanced agreement is that the 2N reply asking for the second suit shows a good hand, while 3♣ asks for the second suit. A bid like 3♣ is a “pass or correct” bid; the Michaels bidder will pass if his second suit is clubs.

## 19.4 Unusual 2N

Unusual 2N is a direct or balancing 2N bid after a 1-level opening. It shows a hand of unstated strength that is at least 5-5 in the lowest two unbid suits. Advancer should choose the best of these two suits, except in remarkable circumstances.

Unusual 2N is not alertable. Some partners agree to use Unusual 2N only with weak or strong hands, see *Minimax* (page 160).

It is also possible to recognize other “impossible” no-trump bids as unusual. For example,

(1♣) - (1♠) 2N

would show 5-5 in the red suits. Logically, nobody has a big enough hand to bid no-trump at the two level here. 2N specifically shows the 5-5 shape, while a double would be takeout but presumably not that good a shape.

Another possible agreement: if they preempt four of something, 4N is unusual notrump, asking advancer to pick his best of the two lowest unbid suits. Double is takeout through four hearts or four spades. Others play 4N as a two-suited takeout.

## **19.5 Minimax Style**

Minimax is an optional style of bidding Michaels and Unusual 2N. If you are playing minimax, it means you use these bids only with a maximum or a minimum; with a medium hand you bid the higher-ranked suit, hoping to show the other later.

When playing minimax, advancer will assume the weaker hand until his partner bids again to show the good hand.

The minimum would be an adequate overcall but less than an opener, while a maximum would be more than 15 points.

Minimax allows more certainty in responses to two-suited bids, at the price of not being able to make those bids as often.

## **19.6 Western Cue**

When we are in a contested auction a (usually) three-level cue-bid of the opponent's suit denies a stopper in their suit(s) and asks partner to bid 3N if they have a stopper. For example:

1♦ (1♥) 1♠ - 2♣ - 3♥!(asking for heart stopper)

Responder is asking opener to bid 3N if he has a stopper in hearts. Quite often the Western Cue bidder has some help in their, such as a half-stopper, but does not feel secure bidding 3N on their own.

## 19.7 Competing With Their 1N

The main thing is not to just sit there and say nothing whenever an opponent opens 1N. Your opponents are driving a highly-tuned sports car when they get their 1N thing going. They are going to get to the right place unless you bother them.

The reason that there are all these conventions I'm about to mention is that the main thing you need is a good shape. 5332 and 4333 hands need not apply. Usually the single-suited bids are a good five or six cards and the other two-suited bids are 5-4 at least; generally, 5-4 instead of 5-5 requires a stronger hand. Some systems will tolerate 4-4 in the majors only, plus good strength. Suit texture and length matter more than HCP.

By partnership agreement you can play these in only the direct seat or also play them in fourth seat; but in fourth seat you need great shape or extra strength because the 1N bidder is behind you.

We assume here for the moment it is a 15-17 1N opener. See below for comments about dealing with weaker notrump openings.

(1N) - 2N is always "unusual 2N" showing 5-5 in the minors. No cheating on length here!

The two most popular conventions are called D.O.N.T. (Disturbing the Opponent's No Trump) and Cappelletti, also known as Hamilton. Each of these has an advanced version meant to make it usable in more cases. Cappelletti has the advantage of preserving a penalty-double; D.O.N.T. allows one to interfere more often; each convention will be better on some hands and worse on the other.

## **Natural**

You can just bid naturally over 1N; a double will show a hand as good as the one your 1N bidder has. You'll want a decent six-card suit, or a great five-card suit, and around 10 points.

What if you are the partner of someone who overcalls a 1N opener and you do not like their suit, not one little bit? Do you rescue them? Probably not. If he doesn't like your suit he may go back to his.

## **D.O.N.T.**

D.O.N.T stands for Disturbing Opponents' No Trump, and is another idea from the fertile mind of Marty Bergen. The emphasis is on getting in there even if, on rare occasion, we miss a game.

The one-suited bids require at least a good five-card suit, and 8 – 10 points or better. Be aggressive only with good suits, good shape. The two-suited bids require at least 5-4 in either order.

- X! A hand with one long suit.
- Response: 2♣! Forced; then the doubler passes or corrects.
- 2♣! Clubs and a higher suit
- 2♦! Diamonds and a higher suit
- 2♥ Shows long hearts and spades
- 2♠ Shows long spades; it is a weaker hand than doubling and correcting to spades
- 2N Shows both minors 5-5

In response to 2♣ and 2♦, pass unless you have shortness, or bid the next higher suit, or on rare occasion, a good long suit of your own.

Exampe: Suppose the bidding goes (1N) 2♦!(Diamonds and a higher suit)

- With ♠KQ86 ♥Q8 ♦98 ♣98764 you would bid 2♥, because your hearts and spades are better than your diamonds.
- With ♠K ♥KQ865 ♦98 ♣98764 you would pass 2♦. You'd like to bid hearts but you don't want to land in a five-card spade fit.
- With ♠KQJ9852 ♥6 ♦98 ♣984 you just bid 2♠, which is to play.

A slightly more advanced version of D.O.N.T. is *Meckwell* (page 261).

## **Cappelletti (Hamilton)**

In this scheme, which is perhaps the most common non-natural set of responses to a 1N opener, the double is left as penalty-oriented, at the cost of requiring us to go to the three level to show clubs. Against a weak 1N opener, this is the most popular scheme. *intervenor* bids:

- X penalty-oriented (an equal or better hand to the one shown by the opener)
- 2♣!(long unknown suit)

With a good six-card club suit, advancer may pass. Or, advancer bids 2♦!(relay to clubs), pass or correct to 2♥,

2♠, or 3♣.

- 2♦!(hearts and spades)

Advancer normally bids his best major, pass or correct.

- 2♥(hearts and a minor) or 2♠(spades and a minor)

Advancer bids 2N to ask for the minor.

- 2N(5-5 in the minors) is Unusual 2N.

The two suited bids are nominally 5-5, but depending on strength and vulnerability, can be made with a good 5-4. Advancer can depart from the relay by bidding their own suit – this must be a really good suit, and it should not happen very often.

A slightly more advanced version of Cappelletti is *Modified Cappelletti* (page 262).

## **Against A Weak 1N**

The “common wisdom” is that Cappelletti is better against a weak 1N, but the truth is perhaps not so simple. Anyone playing a weak 1N will have a sophisticated set of agreements called a “runout”, meant to get them out of notrump into a suit fit, where it won’t be so easy to set them by much, and the hoped-for profits may not materialize.

It is probably better for an intermediate to play just one of these systems well against any type of notrump, than to play different ones depending on circumstances. The edge you get from any convention is small; and the loss from a mixup is big. The real solution in my opinion is to lower one’s standards, for example bidding with two good four-card suits or a five-card “long” suit.

And yes, you may end up in trouble, just as can happen against the strong version.

Be careful, however, against a weak 1N; the partner of the 1N opener is more likely to have a good hand than when a strong 1N is opened.

## **19.8 Competing After They Bid Two Suits**

After (1x) - P - (1y), a double is for takeout and shows the other two suits; the suits are at least 5-4 and you have an opening hand.

The Sandwich 1N convention is a bid of 1N rather than double, showing the other two suits but less than an opening hand:

(1x) - P - (1y) - 1N!(other two suits, less than opener)

## **19.9 Bidding in Passout Seat**

There are no preempts in *passout seat*. 2♣ is still strong. But 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ show a six card suit, 12-15. Three level bids are 16-19. Four level bids are 20+. To open Nx is to say that you would have rebid this whatever the response to 1x; you are just making both bids at once.

If this situation does not apply, then you may “borrow a King” – that is, bid as if you had 3 more points than you do. Partner in responding should bid as if he had three less than he really has. In particular this means that with more than about 14 points you should double and bid again.

However, a good guideline is not to open “light” (that is, on a “borrow”) if you do not have at least one four-card major. A player who could not open a major may be able to overcall, and their side will end up with a major contract and a small part-score when you could have held them to zero by passing the hand out. Having something in spades in particular is an important consideration.

Use the “rule of 15”: number of HCP + number of spades must be 15 or more to open “light”.

## **19.10 When Natural Bids Are Ambiguous**

There are some situations where natural bidding does not have a good solution. Here are two, that have much the same cause and solution.

### **Responding To A Double Of A Preempt**

Suppose LHO has opened with a preemptive bid and your partner has made a takeout double, and RHO has passed, such as (2♥) - X - (P) - ?. You have one of these two hands:

- (A) ♠83 ♥98 ♦KJT864 ♣97
- (B) ♠KQ ♥87 ♦AQJ964 ♣Q7

Clearly, (A) wants to end up at 3♦, because the hand is not worth anything except in diamonds. (B) must look for a game.

So which of these two hands is shown by bidding 3♦? Absent some agreement, 3♦ has to show hand (A). But (B) is



one of many hands that want to go to game unsettled as to notrump stoppers or a suit agreement. As things stand, in standard bidding, we must resort to things like cue bids or just taking chances.

Make this simple agreement with your partner: a response of 2N!(relay) asks partner to bid 3♣!(forced). You are showing a long suit. This may or may not be a weak hand. Then 2N!(relay) - 3♣!(forced) - 3♦(to play) shows (A), while an immediate 3♦ is a game force with a hand like (B).

Note that the natural meaning of 2N is lost.

When you are an advanced player learn *Lebensohl* (page 193), the full version of this relay system.

## Responding To Partner's Reverse

Suppose partner reverses: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥. This is forcing, so you have to bid. Again, consider these two hands:

- (C) ♠KT9832 ♥K98 ♦T86 ♣9
- (D) ♠KQJ984 ♥K95 ♦T63 ♣A6

Hand (C) had to bid, with six points. But now what would it mean to bid 2♠? And if that means something like (A), what bid should be made with hand (D) so that we get to some game? Again, it seems like 2♠ had better mean a weak hand, and an offer to play there. And with (B), we get to start guessing.

Our 2N! agreement to the rescue again: 2N!(relay) - 3♣(forced) - 3♠(to play) shows (C), while a direct 2♠ is forcing a round and shows 5+ spades. After the relay, bidding one of partner's two suits is showing a suit preference with a weak hand.

In this context 2N! is called Ingberman and it is a use of the Lebensohl principle. If the opener has extra values they may choose to break the relay.

The full solution is covered in the chapter on *Lebensohl* (page 193). However, you can play the 2N! relay discussed in the above two cases without playing full Lebensohl.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

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### GENERAL DEFENSE TO TWO-SUITED BIDS

We can use the following defense to whatever two-suited overcall our opponents make over our one-of-a-suit opening. The following method is called the “lower-lower” version of “Unusual vs. Unusual”.

The name comes from the Unusual 2N convention; in that convention a jump overcall of 2N has an unusual meaning – rather than showing a strong hand, it shows the lower two unbid suits. What is unusual about this general defense to that and other two-suited overcalls is that with certain hands we bid one or the other of the suits they have implied holding; such a bid is called an implied cue bid.

Be aware that when an opponent makes a two-suited overcall, if we do have a fit, the trump break may be poor. Length in your partner’s suit is important. Be conservative with only an 8-card fit. The same factors face your opponents, so your eagerness to defend should be correspondingly higher.

If we do double their final contract, lead a trump.

## 20.1 Their Two Suits are Known

If they make an overcall that shows two **specific** suits (not one suit and an unknown second suit), there are two possible cue bids available, and two other suits.

- Call the two suits implied by their bid “theirs” and the other two “ours”.
- Among their two suits, the suit of theirs which would be cheapest to bid next is called the “lower” suit and the other one the “higher” suit. Usually but not always the “lower” is the lower-ranked suit.

We set up a correspondence between the implied cue bids and our two suits:

- A cue bid of the lower of their suits shows length in the lower of our two suits.
- A cue bid of the higher of their suits shows length in the higher of our two suits.

When you have support for partner’s suit:

- A simple raise of partner shows trump support and 7-10 support points.
- The implied cue bid corresponding to partner’s suit is a limit raise or better.
- A raise to game in partner’s suit is, as usual, long trumps and good playing strength with less than limit raise values.
- A jump cue-bid is a splinter, slam try in partner’s suit.

When you do not have support for partner:

- A free bid of the “other” suit is competitive and non-forcing. Typically this hand might look like a weak two opener in the other suit, 7-10 points.
- The cue bid of the “other” suit shows 5+ cards and game-forcing values.
- A double shows you have a penalty double of at least one of their suits, and another bid. Typically this is 9-10+ points. Assuming advancer bids, partner should usually pass to give you the option of making a penalty double.
- 3N is to play, showing stoppers in both their suits.

Pass if you cannot make one of these bids.

Opener’s rebids are generally natural. A cue bid of one of their suits asks for a stopper in that suit and implies one in the other suit.

## 20.2 Only One Suit Is Known

If the second suit is not known, such as a 1♥ (2♥) Michaels bid, things are more complicated.

- The one available cue bid is a limit raise or better in partner’s suit. Example: 1♥ (2♥) 2♠ = limit raise+ in hearts.
- A raise to the 3-level is a constructive raise (7-10 points). Larry Cohen recommends that this shows 3-card support for a major, or 4-card support for a minor. Non-forcing. A jump raise to the 4-level is weak and preemptive, showing 4+ card support. Non-forcing.
- A jump cue-bid is a splinter and a slam try. 1♥ (2♥) 3♠ = short spades, support, slam try.

- A no-trump response is used to show 10+ HCP points without support, with stoppers in the other three suits.
- A double shows you have a penalty double of one of their suits, the known one or one of the others, typically 7+ HCP, often a balanced hand.
- All other bids are not forcing.
- Pass can be just waiting but it is usually weak.

The meaning of the responder's rebids after an initial double and pass by opener are as follows. Example:

1♥	2♥	X	2♠
P	P	?	

- Double is for penalty
- New suit is 5+ cards, game forcing.
- 3N is game strength with a stopper.
- Bidding overcaller's suit is *Western Cue* (page 160), forcing to game and denying a stopper in the suit and asking partner to bid 3N if he holds one.

In an auction like:

1♥	2♥	X	2N!
P	3♦	?	

we now know both suits. Bidding 3♠ is *Western Cue* showing a stopper in spades but denying one in diamonds. Double is for penalty.

## 20.3 Summary for Defending Unusual 2N

The implicit cue-bid of the suit corresponding to partner's suit is limit raise or better; of the "4th suit", game forcing. Actually bidding partner's suit is just competitive, and the "4th suit" is a preemptive bid.

Example: 1♥ (2N). "Our suits" are hearts and spades, theirs are clubs and diamonds. The lowest of theirs, clubs, corresponds to the lowest of ours, hearts.

- X shows a penalty double of at least one of the minors
- 3♥ (partner's major) is a competitive raise
- 3♠ (the other major) is a preemptive bid
- 3♣ is limit raise or better for hearts
- 3♦ is a game force with spades

Example: 1♣ (2N). "Our" suits are clubs and spades, theirs are diamonds and hearts. the lowest of theirs, diamonds, corresponds to the lowest of ours, clubs.

- X shows a penalty double of diamonds or hearts or both
- 3♣ is a competitive raise of clubs
- 3♠ is a preemptive bid
- 3♦ is a limit raise or better of clubs
- 3♥ is a GF bid of spades

## ALL ABOUT JUMP-SHIFTS

A *jump-shift* is a jump bid of a new suit. For example  $1\heartsuit - 3\clubsuit$  is a jump-shift because a bid of  $3\clubsuit$  is a jump over  $1\heartsuit$ . In understanding the meaning of such a bid we must recognize the situation. Specifically,

- Is the bid by the opener or the responder?
- If by responder, has responder previously passed or not?
- Has there been competition?
- Does the bid have a conventional meaning?

### 21.1 Weak Jump-Shifts

If there has been competition between the opener and the responder, a jump shift is preemptive. It is also possible to agree that any jump shift that has no other conventional meaning is weak, even without competition (“Weak Jump-Shifts”). In the body of this book, we assume that weak jump-shifts not in competition is our agreement. If it isn’t a strong bid, it must be alerted.



For example:

1. 1♣ - (1♦) - 2♥ shows a hand with weak values, not interested in game, with six hearts. No alert is required.
2. 1♥ - (X) - 3♣ shows a hand with weak values, not interested in game, with six clubs. No alert is required.
3. 1♣ - 2♠ is preemptive, alert it.
4. 1♥ - 3♣ is preemptive, alert it.

With some conventions a jump-shift could also be a conventional bid, such as a Bergen raise.

Now let's consider the auction with no interference.

## 21.2 Strong Jump-Shifts

A jump-shift shows, in standard bidding, a 19+ HCP hand. Since slam is in the air, the bidder is not worried about getting too high, he's worried about getting in an awkward situation where partner might pass.

For example, after a 1♠ opener, responder 19+ HCP with 3 spades, and five decent diamonds, cannot bid Jacoby 2N, cannot bid any number of spades without risking a pass, and should not just fly into 6♠ for fear of being too high or too low. After bidding 2♦, which as a new suit is at least forcing, say opener bids 3♦. Now what?

Unless it is forcing in your system, 3♠ might look like suit preference. Even in Two Over One, 3♠ shows some slam interest but there are a lot of hands that could pose a problem if opener replies 4♠. For example:

Kxx xx AKQJx AQx

Asking for Aces with a worthless doubleton won't resolve the heart situation. Opener could hold hands as different as:

AJxxx KJ xxx KJx or

AQJxx Ax xxxx Kx

Using a strong jump-shift,  $1\heartsuit - 3\diamond - 3N - 4\spadesuit$  leaves the decision to go on to the opener, where it should be, because it is the opener's hand that is most unknown. In the case of the second hand, knowing there are the points for slam, and partner has show a decent five card diamond suit, spade support, and 19+ HCP, the opener can proceed beyond  $4\spadesuit$  with some confidence.

When the responder is a passed hand, the strong jump-shift shows that the hand has now gotten better so that we should be close to game. The weak version attempts to stop the auction at a low spot.

That's the old-fashioned Goren jump-shift. However, you don't often have such a powerhouse. Most of the time when you do, forcing bids can get you where you want to go. Thus the utility of the jump-shift came into question.

Good players remain divided on the issue: weak? strong? or something else? It is up to you and your partner.

Some jump shifts, by the way, are a little hard to spot, particularly  $1\heartsuit - 2\spadesuit$ . Feel sorry for your partner when he goofs.

See *Soloway Jump-Shifts* (page 240) for a strong but not so strong alternative.

## SLAM BIDDING

### 22.1 Blackwood

Blackwood is one of the oldest conventions, and has now been supplanted by the *Roman Keycard* (page 178) version. The same cautions discussed below for RKC also apply to plain Blackwood. It is a tool for avoiding bad slams, not for finding slams.

A bid of 4N, when it is not quantitative, asks how many Aces partner has. The responses are 5♣ for none or 4, 5♦ for one, 5♥ for two, 5♠ for three. Following this, if our side has all four Aces, a bid of 5N asks how many Kings partner has, using the same scheme.

For example:

1♠ - 2♥

3♥ - 4N (Blackwood)

5♥(2 aces) - 6♥ (missing an Ace, stop at six)

## 22.2 Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKC)

In a suit auction, 4N is almost always Roman Keycard Blackwood, which has largely supplanted plain Blackwood. If you are a beginner you can play basic Blackwood but you should learn RKC early on.

The responses are based on their being five *keycards*, which are the four Aces and the King of trump. If trump has not been agreed to, 4N implicitly agrees (at least for the purposes of responding) to the last bid suit. So, for example, 1♥ – 1♠ – 4N is RKC for spades. The bidder in some circumstances may be intending to end up in some other (higher) suit or notrump but for now responder answers as if the last bid suit is trump, which it very likely is.

Responses (1430) are:

- 5♣ One keycard or four keycards
- 5♦ Zero keycards or three keycards
- 5♥ Two or five keycards but no trump Queen
- 5♠ Two or five keycards and the trump Queen.

This can also be bid with two or five keycards and enough trump to guarantee a 10 card fit, even if you do not have the Queen.

- 5N Shows zero or two keycards and a useful void.
- 6 of any suit below the trump suit shows 1 or 3 keycards with a useful void in the bid suit.
- 6 of the trump suit shows 1 or 3 controls and a useful void in a higher suit.

A void is not useful in a suit your partner bid.

The bids shown are the “1430” response. Switch the meanings of 5♣ and 5♦ and it is the “0314” response. Both schemes have their merits but 1430 allows the important “Queen ask” more often when it might matter.

## **When 4N is NOT Ace-Asking**

A bid of 4N is not always RKC or Blackwood. Here are the exceptions:

- A direct jump to 4N over 1N or 2N, or after a 2N rebid following a 2♣ opener, is quantitative..
- After a 1N opener and transfer to a major, 4N is quantitative.
- After a 1x opener, a direct 4N is plain Blackwood. Responder has a self-sufficient trump suit and just needs to ask for aces.

Many pairs play various conventions in which RKC is invoked with some other bid. Most notably, some pairs agree that after an opening of 1m – 2m!(strong), a later jump by either partner to 4m is RKC for m. (Minorwood)

## **When Not To Bid RKC**

It is generally useless to bid RKC if you are missing two key-cards and have a worthless doubleton (less than Kx or Ax). The problem is that you learn nothing if partner replies, “One key-card”. You may or may not have two fast losers. In general it is necessary to think ahead and make sure you can take yes for an

answer. Learning partner has two keycards but you don't want to be in a club slam is an unpleasant experience.

When hearts are trump, if partner has two keycards and the trump queen, he will bid 5♠; will you be too high?

When diamonds are trump, if partner has two keys and that isn't enough, you're in trouble.

When clubs are trump, playing 1430, if you aren't going to be able to say yes to zero or three keys, do not bid RKC.

When clubs are trump, playing 0314, if you aren't going to be able to say yes to one key, do not bid RKC.

The purpose of RKC is to keep you out of bad slams, not to find chancy ones. Use control-bidding to find a custom-fit slam.

## **What To Do After A 14 or 03 Response**

After your partner answers 14 or 03, and if you need it to be the higher number, bid five of trumps. If your partner has 4 or 3 respectively, they bid the slam.

## **The Queen Ask**

If the next suit above the RKC response is below trumps, it is possible to bid that suit to ask for the trump Queen. Responder bids 5 of the trump suit to deny the trump queen, or else bids six of an outside suit below trumps in which he has a King, or 5N to show no outside King below trumps. Bidding six of trumps shows an outside King in a suit above trumps.

## Asking For Kings

Asking for Kings promises that the partners hold all five key-cards. To ask for Kings, the RKC bidder bids 5N. Responder bids the number of Kings *not counting the trump King*, using 6♣ is none, 6♦ is 1, and so on.

An alternate by agreement, called “Specific Kings”, is to show your lowest King by bidding that suit if it is below trump. If it is impossible to show a king because it is above 6 of your trump suit, you should either make an impossible bid (e.g., show a king you have denied earlier in the auction) or just bid 6 of your suit.

Responder has the right to just bid the grand slam if he can tell he has “the right stuff”.

Both the Queen Ask and the King Ask responses have variations so make sure you and your partner agree, or just stick to the basics or ordinary Blackwood.

## Dealing With Interference

Rarely, your Ace-asking bid may be interfered with. If the opponents overcall 4N in a suit, you can use a convention called DOPI, which stands for “double zero, pass one”. That allows you to give these more negative bids cheaply. In both cases the first available suit becomes your corresponding next higher-level response. It is easiest to be consistent. For example, playing RKC 1430, with diamonds as trump, after 4N - (5♥),

- Double is one or 4 keycards;
- Pass is zero or 3 keycards;
- 5♠ is two keycards, no Q♦;

- 4N is two keycards with the Q $\diamond$ , or a known 10 diamonds.

Similarly, after a 4N - (X), ROPI stands for “redouble zero, pass one”.

Note that when the opponent doubles your response to an Ace-asking bid, such as 4N - (pass) - 5 $\diamond$  - (X), this is normally lead-directing, not penalty, because it is a double of an artificial bid.

## 22.3 Gerber

When no suit has been agreed upon, and we have bid notrump, 4 $\clubsuit$  is the Gerber Convention, asking for Aces. This is true even if the bidder has bid clubs. The replies are:

- 4 $\diamond$  No Aces or Four Aces
- 4 $\heartsuit$  One Ace
- 4 $\spadesuit$  Two Aces
- 4N Three Aces

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**Note:** The standard is that 4 $\clubsuit$  is Gerber only when it is a jump over 1N or 2N. You and your partner might agree on other circumstances. Insane people have been known to play “Always Gerber”.

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A good agreement for “Is that Gerber?” is to ask if 4N is Ace- or Keycard-asking. If it is not, then 4 $\clubsuit$  is Gerber. If it is, 4 $\clubsuit$  is not Gerber. There is no point to having two bids that mean almost the same thing.



## 22.4 Control Bidding

Control bids are slam tries, bid for the purpose of understanding where the partnership may have issues preventing a slam or RKC bid. For purposes of this discussion, we assume that a major suit has been agreed trump in a game-forcing auction. While control bids can be used with minors and with Two Over One, you will have to agree on what three-level bids show controls. In a minor one is more often looking for 3N.

A control bid, formerly called a cue bid when referring to slam tries, is a bid that shows the ability to prevent two fast losers in a suit, such as holding an Ace or a void. Most control bids are at the four level or higher. Control-bids are not jump bids. That piece of knowledge helps you avoid confusing splinters and control-bids.

- Aces and voids are called first-round controls.
- Kings and singletons are second-round controls.

The standard method of bidding controls is to only bid first round controls, unless we are already known to possess a first round control in that suit, in which case bidding the suit shows a second round control. (See *Italian Control Bidding* (page 266) for a better method in which control bids show first- or second-round controls).

- The first control bid in a side suit shows a first round control (Ace or void) in the suit bid, and *denies a control in any bypassed suit*. Controls are bid up the line, in other words.
- If your partner skips over a suit or suits, continuing to control-bid promises a control in the skipped suit(s).

Nothing stops you from cue bidding below the game level and then asking for Aces. For example,  $1\heartsuit - 3\heartsuit - 4\diamondsuit - 4N$ . Here, the  $4\diamondsuit$  bid showed a first-round control in diamonds and denied holding one in clubs.  $4N$  is RKC, but the bidder is aware of the possible issue in clubs. Instead of  $4N$ , a bid of  $5\clubsuit$  would show that control and deny one in spades. Indeed, suppose responder had xx in diamonds. Normally he could not bid  $4N$  – but knowing diamonds are not going to produce two fast losers,  $4N$  may become possible.

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## CHAPTER TWENTYTHREE

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### CONVENTIONS

The word “convention” in bridge refers to a bid, or a series of bids, which have an artificial meaning; that is, the bid does not mean what it would literally appear to mean.

You should know that when a convention giveth, it taketh away something else. For example, bidding Stayman 2♣ in response to partner’s 1N opener makes it easier to find major suit fits. But, you cannot ever play 2♣ as a contract after partner opens 1N. In this case the tradeoff is worth it.

#### 23.1 Burn This Chapter

An expert pair came to our bridge club after a layoff of 30 years. During that layoff a great deal of the bidding that we discuss in this book was invented. They used very few conventional bids. They were, of course, doomed, right?

Strange thing is, they won the first week. And the second. And most of the weeks since then. Their discussions after a board are more often about defense, not bidding. They have since caught up on bidding methods, but they don’t have the same intense

focus on them that the rest of us seem to have. When shown these notes, they remarked that our notes on defense should be as big as our notes on bidding.

There are books about defense, but they must be outnumbered 20 to 1 or more. Defense is hard work; conventions are fun and some people seem to think they are getting an “edge” using them and are as excited to add a new one as someone going to a Black Friday sale.

Every time you and your partner have a misunderstanding using a convention, you will likely get a bottom board. The advantage you get from the convention may be at most a few percentage points, in a situation that doesn’t come up very often. If you blow that convention just once, it may take a year of correct usages to get back to break even. Many of the conventions simply do not occur very often, so it can’t be a big loss not to use them.

Be sure to have a good experience base before adding conventions – nothing can erode your partnership and your own confidence faster than a lot of blown conventional calls. Only play conventions you are both solid on. Do not play a convention someone offers to teach you in the last few minutes before a game.

Almost the worst thing to do is learn a convention’s opening bids but be unclear on the followups. Learn the whole convention or don’t play it. And your partner has to have done the same.

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**Note:** Better work on your defense first! You’re on defense half the time!

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## **23.2 The Core Conventions**

I'm not an expert, and I'm sure experts value things differently than I do. But for what it is worth, here's my opinion on what conventions you need to know.

- These have been assumed to be part of the 2/1 system:
- *Jacoby 2NT* (page 61),
- *Gerber* (page 182) (at least as jump bids over 1N or 2N);
- *Blackwood* (page 177),
- *Stayman* (page 108),
- *Major Transfers* (page 111) (a.k.a. Jacoby transfers),
- *Minor Relay* (page 117),
- *Negative Doubles* (page 97),
- *Michaels* (page 158),
- *Unusual 2NT* (page 159).
- *Help Suit Game Tries* (page 65),
- *Reverse Drury* (page 58), and
- *Western Cue* (page 160).

Also part of the *expected conventions for 2/1* (page 3) are:

- *Fourth Suit Forcing* (page 48), and
- *New Minor Forcing* (page 45), as well as
- *Inverted Minors* (page 43), and
- *Roman Keycard Blackwood* (page 178).

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**Note:** New Minor Forcing (NMF) and Fourth Suit Forcing (4SF) should be learned together, as they are very similar.

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And doubtless by the time you have learned all that, you'll have incorporated:

- *Texas Transfers* (page 116), and
- A defense to 1N openings; the easiest to learn is *Disturbing The Opponent's Notrump (D.O.N.T.)* (page 162). The other most popular defense is *Cappelletti* (page 163), which you should know as well, if only because so many opponents will play it.

Other 1N defenses are in the chapter *Advanced Notrump Defenses* (page 260).

## 23.3 Improving Your 1N Structure

Three conventions that use the *puppet* concept are:

- *Five-Card Stayman* (page 254) (1N - 3♣!),
- *Smolen* (page 120) (1N - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3M), and
- *Puppet Stayman* (page 207).

Of these, Five-Card Stayman is the best improvement to the basic 1N system that you can make, and adding it does not affect the rest of your structure.

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**Note:** *Puppet Stayman* (page 207) over 2N and Five-Card Stayman over 1N are very similar and some prefer to just play them

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the same. The latter is superior at concealing the opener's four-card holdings.

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You can expert-level the rest of your 1N system with four-way transfers and improved 1N - 3M splinters in the chapter *Advanced One Notrump Structure* (page 253).

## **23.4 More Advanced Concepts**

The most important thing to learn as an advanced player is *Lebensohl* (page 193), for dealing with interference to our 1N, when partner doubles a 2-level preempt, and when partner reverses.

You will have learned basic control-bidding but should get to *Italian Control Bidding* (page 266) and consider other ideas in *Advanced Slam Bidding* (page 266).

Two-Way New Minor Forcing, a.k.a. Two-Way Checkback Stayman is actually better than New Minor Forcing and arguably easier to play. But, you have to learn NMF anyway because it has become the de-facto standard for 2/1 players.

Many conventions have more advanced variations or alternatives, as explained in later chapters. Included are an expanded discussion of Bergen Raises and popular defenses to 1N openers, advanced runouts, etc.

Some books on conventions are listed in the Resources chapter.

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## CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

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### SPECIAL DOUBLES

These three special doubles have their own area on your convention card. Be sure to mark it appropriately. You have to decide at what level the double stops being conventional and turns to penalty. The usual agreement is conventional through 2♠.

#### 24.1 Support Doubles and Redoubles

Some times opponents interfere after the responder has shown a new suit, and the opener does not know if this is a four-card or five-card suit. Support Doubles give us a way to show exactly 3 card support. If RHO makes a takeout double, we can use Redouble for the same purpose. For example:

- 1♦ (P) 1♥ (1♠) X! Shows 3 hearts exactly.
- 1♣ (P) 1♠ (2♦) X! Shows 3 spades exactly.
- 1♣ (P) 1♠ (X) XX! Shows 3 spades exactly.

With four or more in partner's suit, opener raises.



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**Note:** Only the opener can make a support double. When you first start to play support doubles, you will see them behind every tree. Realizing that only the opener makes this bid helped me sort them out.

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## 24.2 Responsive Doubles

When partner makes a takeout double of an opener and RHO raises his partner, a double shows scattered values with at least 6 points and interest in locating a fit.

- If the opponents are bidding a minor suit, a responsive double asks partner to pick a major suit. We know partner has at least 4-3 in the majors so with equally good majors ourselves we want partner to choose.
- If the opponents are bidding a major suit, a responsive double requests partner to choose a minor suit, because if we had the other major we would bid it as partner has promised it with his takeout double.

**Warning:** If the opponents bid two *different* suits, a double is not a responsive double. The opponents have to have *raised*.

Examples

- (1♠) X (2♠) X! Has both minors, partner to choose.
- (1♦) X (2♦) X! Has both majors, partner to choose.

## 24.3 Maximal Doubles

If intervener overcalls our major, partner makes a simple raise, and the advancer raises his partner, the opener has a dilemma if their suit is one below our suit. For example, 1♠ - (2♥) - 2♠ - (3♥) - ? or 1♥ - (2♦) - 2♥ - (3♦) - ?.

If opener now bids 3M, is he inviting or just competing? A “maximal double” means that we agree opener doubles to show the invitational hand, while just bidding the suit to compete.

Note that if we cue-bid here there is no room to stop in 3M. If their suit was not the one just under ours (or “the maximal suit”) we’d have room to bid the suit below ours as a convention to invite. There is some controversy on this point. Partners should agree if the double is a maximal double, hence a limit raise or better in that case, or is penalty. I personally like to keep it uniform and have the double be the invite, not the mysterious other suit.

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## CHAPTER TWENTYFIVE

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### LEBENSOHL

The Lebensohl idea is perhaps the key idea of advanced bidding. This idea is applicable in a wide variety of competitive situations, but most begin by learning it as a way of dealing with interference over a 1N opener. It can also be used after partner doubles a 2-level preempt or when opponents interfere over a 2♣ opener, or after an opener's reverse, and in other competitive situations. We will begin with the defense to 1N overcalls, and cover the other situations later.

What these seemingly different situations have in common is that a bidder has to differentiate different hand types but is running out of room to do so at a reasonable level. While frequently the word Lebensohl is used to refer to a bid of 2N, that's really a misuse. Rather, 2N as Lebensohl is the signature bid of an idea.

A variant, Transfer Lebensohl, is becoming popular among experts. A lesson on it is available from Gavin Wolpert at [wolpert-bridge.com](http://wolpert-bridge.com).

In this chapter we use the terms weak, competitive, invitational, and game forcing to describe hand strength. For a 15-17 point notrump, these are 0-5, 6-7, 8-9, and 10+ respectively. Shape

may of course contribute to your classification – a five card suit is always a plus.

## **25.1 Lebensohl After We Open 1N**

Since life will usually be easy for us after we open 1N, opponents are motivated to interfere. That uses up the room we need to decide our *strain* and level. Lebensohl gives up one natural reply in order to effectively double the remaining space.

### **Introduction**

Suppose we open 1N and this is overcalled at the two-level. Natural bids have a marked weakness when responder has a suit lower than the overcalled suit. For example, suppose responder has a good club suit and enough values that he wishes to compete for a part-score. Consider this bidding sequence:

1N (2♥) 3♣

Responder has shown opener his club suit but not his strength. With just this one bid, we cannot distinguish whether responder has a competitive, invitational, or game-forcing hand. This is a matter upon which the partnership must agree. If it is game forcing, opener does not know yet if responder has a heart stopper if we want to end up at 3N.

On the other hand, life is easier if responder's suit is above the overcall, say spades here. Then 2♠ is available as a bid. Assuming we take that to be competitive, we still have an ambiguity in the 3♠ bid: is it invitational or game forcing? And what about stoppers in their suit?

Assume the bidding has begun 1N (2x), where x is diamonds, hearts, or spades.

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**Note:** After 1N (2♣), Lebensohl has a potential complication, so we will assume a double is Stayman, and that otherwise systems are “on”, so 2♦ is a transfer, etc. See below if their 2♣ is artificial.

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Responder now must distinguish both what kind of hand he has, and if interested in 3N, whether or not he has a stopper in the opponent’s suit.

### The 2N Relay

The signature bid in Lebensohl is 2N!(relay). This is an artificial bid over the overcall, and demands that opener bid 3♣!(forced). This 2N bid says nothing about responder’s suit, and does not show or deny that he has a suit or a four-card major. It is what he does next that shows that.

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**Note:** Do not fall into the trap of calling this bid by itself “Lebensohl”. Lebensohl is the entire system described in this chapter. This bid is its signature, but it isn’t the only thing to know.

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The presence or absence of the relay is used to show strength and clarify the stopper situation.

- If responder can bid his suit at the two-level, it is to play.
- If responder bids his suit at the three-level after a relay, it

is weaker than if he bids it immediately.

- If responder bids the opponent's suit after a relay, he has game-forcing values and a stopper. This is referred to as "slow shows".
- If responder bids the opponent's suit directly, he has game-forcing values but no stopper. This is referred to as "fast denies".
- If responder bids 3N after a relay, he has a stopper. Slow shows.
- If responder bids 3N immediately, he does not have a stopper. Fast denies.

When the responder's suit is above the overcall, there are three possible bids: the two-level bid is competitive; the slow three-level bid is invitational; and the fast three-level bid is game-forcing.

- 1N (2♦) 2♥ is to play
- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣! - 3♥ is invitational
- 1N (2♦) 3♥ is game-forcing.

When the two-level bid is not possible, we have no invitational bid. Using the relay is to play, a direct three-level bid is game-forcing.

- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣ - 3N is to play, diamonds are stopped – slow shows.
- 1N (2♦) 3N wants to play 3N but does not have a diamond stopper. Opener will pass if he has one, or start suggesting suits up the line.

## Stayman

The slow and fast cue bids are used for game-forcing Stayman, which show or deny a stopper. Note that regular Stayman is invitational or better; in the Lebensohl context we just don't have the room to make an invitational Stayman. Again, slow shows.

- 1N (2♦) 3♦ is GF Stayman, but denies a diamond stopper.
- 1N (2♦) 2N! - 3♣! - 3♦ is GF Stayman and promises a diamond stopper.

After this the Stayman dance is modified in obvious ways. For example, in these auctions, opener lacking a four-card major will have to bid:

- 3N if he has no four-card major and either has a diamond stopper or was promised one by responder, or
- 4♣ to show responder that we lack a major fit or a diamond stopper.

## About Doubles

Lebensohl per se does not say what a double of the overcall means. Two choices are:

- A double is penalty-oriented, or,
- A double initially shows competitive values and while takeout-oriented it promises 2 (or more cards) in their suit. This allows opener to pass for penalty if appropriate. Responder may bid again with a stronger hand.

A reopening double by opener of an overcall in fourth seat is for takeout.

## Lebensohl's Weaknesses

Lebensohl has two weaknesses in this situation.

First, it is not possible to invite in a suit below the overcall because only two bids, “slow” and “fast” are available.

Second, if the RHO of the opener bids, opener does not yet know responder's suit. For example:

1N (2♦) 2N!(relay) (3♦)

Now opener does not know what suit, if any, responder holds. If it is hearts or spades, responder has invitational strength. If it is clubs, responder is simply trying to compete; or, it is possible responder is game-forcing and intended his next bid to be a cue bid showing a major with a stopper in diamonds. The 2N bid has left opener with little useful information.

I believe it is not possible to solve both of these problems simultaneously. Lebensohl has variants that emphasize one or the other of these two facets, but none of them solve both problems completely.

## Lebensohl Summary

Here are the available bids after we open 1N and they overcall two of a suit. Some bids require more detailed explanation in the following sections. Let O be the their suit (either the suit they bid naturally or one they showed artificially.)

Here are the bids after 1N (2O) or 1N (P) P (2O) P (P)

- A double initially shows competitive values and while takeout-oriented it promises 2 or more in their suit. This



allows opener to pass if appropriate. Responder may bid again with a stronger hand. Or,

- (Alternative) A double is penalty-oriented.

In either case:

- A double by opener of an overcall in fourth seat is for take-out.
- 2 level suit bids are to play. Example: 1N (2♥) 2♠ is to play. These bids show a five or more card suit.
- 2N!(relay) starts a “slow” sequence; opener must bid 3♣. A subsequent 3N is to play; a cuebid of 3O is game-forcing Stayman; 3 of a suit below O is to play; and 3 of a suit above O is game forcing.
- 3 of a suit other than O is game forcing.
- 3O is Stayman but denies a stopper in O.
- 3N is to play, and denies any unbid major or a stopper.
- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4♦! and 4♥! are Texas Transfers to hearts and spades, showing six card suits and values for game only. With a strong hand and a six-card major game-force at the three level first.
- 4♠! (rare) invites opener to pick a minor game.
- 4N is invitational to 6N and of course promises a stopper.

## Artificial Overcalls

If an overcall shows a definite suit plus an unspecified suit, bid as if the specified suit were overcalled unless and until the second suit becomes specified.

If they have shown two definite suits, proceed as normal except that both of the opponents suits are available as cue bids. In that case,

- A slow 3N promises stops in both suits.
- A fast 3N denies stops in both suits.
- A cue bid therefore shows a stop in that suit but at most a half-stop in the other.

When we speak of the overcalled suit or suits, we mean the ones the bid *meant*, not the artificial one actually bid. For example, 1N (2N) shows the minors, so a response of 3♦ would show a stop in diamonds, no stop in clubs, and game-going values.

## Three-level Overcalls

Over three-level overcalls:

- A double is for takeout, showing support for the other three suits.
- Bids at the three level are natural, one-round forcing, and
- 3N, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, and 5♦ are to play.

If the overcall is in a minor, a cue bid is Stayman, or may show slam interest lacking a four-card major.

- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4♥ – 4N (to play)

- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4N(no major) - Pass
- 1N (3♦) 4♦ – 4? – 5♣ (slam interest in clubs)

## 25.2 Answering Takeout Doubles Of Weak Two Bids

When an opponent opens a weak two bid, and we double it, that shows a decent opening hand with shortness in their suit. The double is for takeout. But we run into a familiar dilemma. Consider an auction that begins (2♥) X (P) ? where the advancer holds a very weak hand with six diamonds. Advancer definitely wants to bid three diamonds and have that be that.

But if he has a much stronger hand with diamonds that wants to go to game, then he wishes he could ask partner whether he has hearts stopped.

The solution is to realize that (2♥) X (P) ? is not that different from 1N (2♥) ?. We can just play Lebensohl. The doubler can refuse a 2N – 3♣ relay to show a hand with slam interest.

## 25.3 When They Overcall Our Two Club Opener

The auction 2♣ (2♥) is similar to 1N (2♥). We have the same dilemma of wanting to compete but not wanting to confuse partner as to our hand strength. Lebensohl can be used in these situations. If opponents play 2♣ (X) as showing the majors we would treat that as a two-suited bid in hearts and spades.

## 25.4 Lebensohl Over Reverses

Imagine this headache: partner opens 1♣, you bid 1♠ with a minimal four-card holding, and partner reverses with 2♥. This is forcing for one round. What to do? If you had five spades you could just bid 2♠. But let's say you don't, but you do prefer clubs or have five diamonds you by-passed in order to show your four-card major.

If you just bid 3♣ as a preference, that's ok – until the next time when you have a better hand and can't bid 3♣ because the partnership has decided it is weak. Hmm. This sounds familiar – it is the same dichotomy as 1N (2♥) 3♣ – what does it mean? And the dilemma has the same solution – Lebensohl.

So, for example, a direct bid of 3♣ over 2♥ is game-forcing. A “slow” trip to 3♣ via 2N, shows you want to stop there.

## 25.5 Simplified Lebensohl

If you do not feel comfortable with full Lebensohl, use this simpler version of it. It covers most responder hand types.

The opposition has bid a suit 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ over our 2♣!(11-15, six clubs) opener.

- Double is penalty-oriented with at least two cards in their suit.
- Two-level suit bids are to play
- Three-level suit bids are game forcing
- 2N! is a relay to 3♣!(forced), pass or correct. If responder corrects to a suit he could have bid at the two-level, it is

invitational; otherwise, to play.

- 3N is to play with a stopper.
- A cue bid is game-forcing Stayman. Opener should show a major if he has one.

When you've been bitten enough times by the holes in the simplification, you can learn the rest of it.

You can get super-simplified by just remembering the 2-level is to play, and 2N is a relay to 3♣, pass or correct. Ordinary bridge logic should kick in from there.

## **25.6 Good - Bad 2N**

..index:: Good-Bad 2N

This Lebensohl variant is explained most fully in Larry Cohen's "To Bid Or Not To Bid" and in Marty Bergen's "Better Bidding With Bergen".

In a competitive auction, it is your turn to bid and RHO has just bid 2x, whether as a raise of his partner or a new suit, after your partner doubled or made an overcall. For example, let's suppose the auction went (1♥) - 1♠ - (2♥). Suppose you have a good diamond suit but no spade support. Then what does your 3♦ bid show? Most of the time of course you're just trying to compete but other times you have a extras and partner may wish to go higher knowing that.

Enter the Good - Bad 2N, created by Larry Cohen in his book "To Bid Or Not To Bid". Whenever we are in a competitive suit auction and our RHO has made a 2-level bid, 2N! is a relay to

3♣, pass or correct. Bidding directly on the three level shows extras.

Take for example this auction:

(1♠) 2♦ (2♠) ?

Without an agreement, a 3♦ bid here is hard to read. With Good - Bad 2N, 3♦ might be a good four-card diamond suit with 9 points, while 2N!(relay) - 3♣!(forced) - 3♦ might be only six points and partner will know not to compete further.

This convention also applies when you opened:

1♥(you) (2♣) Pass (2♠)

If you have a two-suiter in hearts and diamonds, you want to distinguish 3♦ giving partner a choice vs. 3♦ showing something like an 18-point 5-5 hand.

You must draw inferences when partner does not use the relay when he could have.

With some experience, you can use the Good - Bad distinction in many other competitive auctions. According to “Better Bidding With Bergen”, it is important that this convention be off in situations such as:

- where 2N is clearly Unusual 2N
- when either side has opened 1N
- when the opponents opened a strong 1♣!.
- when the opponents have made a penalty double
- when we have already found a fit
- when we are already in a game-forcing auction.

## INTERESTING GADGETS

This chapter describes a variety of interesting conventions you might see, or wish to adopt. Many of these “gadgets” outside the standard ones have one or more variants. If something here sparks your interest, you may wish to do further research.

<p><b>Warning:</b> Many of these ideas are incompatible with each other</p>
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### 26.1 Mathe Defense To A Big Club

After a strong  $1\clubsuit$  opener, Mathe is the simplest commonly-used defense. In the simplest version, double is the majors,  $1N$  is the minors, and suits are natural. A slight improvement is:

- Double shows the majors
- $1\diamond$  is a transfer to hearts
- $1\heartsuit$  is a transfer to spades
- $1N$  shows the minors

- 2♣ shows clubs
- 2♦ shows diamonds

The added transfers force the big hand to lead.

Some also use this defense over a standard strong 2♣ opening.

## 26.2 Lead-directing Raise Over Partner's Preempt

When partner opens a weak two-level bid, you generally want to raise to the three level if you have three-card support and a few values, in order to be as obstructive as possible. This is called reinforcing the preempt.

However, it often happens that the auction goes something like:

2♥ - (3♦) - 3♥(you) - 3N

Now your partner is on lead and unless he has a great suit he's leading into stoppers. Meantime you're sitting there with the Ace of spades. If only partner knew to lead spades so you could return a heart.

We change the agreement about what a new suit by you means; it shows a lead-directing raise. Partner is authorized to correct to 3♥ for you if necessary. So in this case you bid 2♠!(heart raise, lead-directing). You also might do this for example if you had three hearts and ♠KQ52. 2N remains feature-asking but can also be used to keep the bidding open for your next bid when you really do have a good hand.

You can optionally vary this system as follows:



Over interference of a double or a two-level bid after our two-level preempt:

- Double (redouble) is a runout. Opener bids the next suit up, pass or correct.
- 2N! is *Ogust* (page 140).
- New suits are a lead-directing raise, not forcing.

You may wish to research the “McCabe Adjunct” for more variations.

## 26.3 Puppet Stayman

Over 2N or 2♣ followed by 2N, bid 3♣!(asking for a four- or five-card major) if you have a 3-card or 4-card major. Puppet Stayman is game forcing because, lacking a major, the opener will reply 3N. The 3♣ bid need not be alerted, but the responses must be alerted.

Responses are:

- 3♦!(No five card major, one or two 4 card majors)
  - 3♥! Responder has four SPADES <– major you do NOT have!
  - 3♠! Responder has four HEARTS <– major you do NOT have!
  - 3N! Responder does not have a four card major
  - 4♦! Responder has both 4 card majors. Opener has choice of games.
- 3M!(five cards)

- Responder normally chooses between 3N or 4M.
- Responder with slam interest and 3+ card fit in M can bid the other major as a power raise of M.
- 4♣ is natural with long clubs.
- 4♦ is natural with long diamonds.
- 4N is quantitative (M is not agreed as our suit)
- Suit bids at the five level are splinters.
- 3N!(Opener has no four or five card majors)

The name “Puppet” comes from the 3♥ and 3♠ rebids after a 3♦ response, in which the responder bids the major he DOESN’T have, so that the strong hand becomes the declarer. He’s pulling the opener’s strings.

The point of this structure is that the strong hand declares all the hands with a major fit, whether 5-3, 4-4, or 3-5.

Puppet Stayman is incompatible with .

Five-card Stayman is an easier and better alternative to playing 1N - 3♣ as Puppet Stayman but it isn’t a big deal to play Puppet over both 1N - 3♣ and 2N - 3♣ to reduce your memory load.

Choosing Puppet Stayman over 2N means you cannot play *Smolen* (page 120) over 2N because the sequence 2N - 3♣ - 3♦ cannot mean two things at the same time. But you can and should play Five-Card Stayman and Smolen over 1N.

## 26.4 Modern Super Accept

After a transfer to a major, accepting the transfer shows less than four trump. With four trump:

- Jump accepting shows a minimal hand with four trump.
- 2N shows a maximum hand but no weak doubleton.
- All the suit bids between 2M and 3M show a maximum hand with four trump and a doubleton in the bid suit.

Examples:

1N    2♦

3♣

Opener has four hearts, maximum hand, xx in \_  
↪ clubs.

1N    2♦

2N

Opener has four hearts, maximum hand, no \_  
↪ worthless doubleton

Responder can re-transfer using the transfer suit at a minimal level, e.g.:

1N    2♦

3♦    4♦

Opener has four hearts, a maximum, and xx in diamonds; responder asks opener to bid 4♥.

## 26.5 Showing Both Majors in Stayman

Having 4-4 majors and a maximal 1N opener, opener bids 3♣ as a response to Stayman. Responder then transfers to their suit (or best suit).

1N 2♣ 3♣!(max, 4-4 majors) 3♦!(transfer) 3♥

1N 2♣ 3♣!(max, 4-4 majors) 3♥!(transfer) 3♠

After this, responder can pass, bid the game, or explore for slam as appropriate.

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**Note:** Stayman with a poor hand short in clubs is no longer available.

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## 26.6 South African Texas

South African Texas is similar to Texas: 4♣ transfers to 4♥, 4♦ transfers to 4♠. This leaves 4♥ and 4♠ as natural and to play. Why have two ways to end up in the same place? Responder can choose to be the declarer if he has the kind of hand that would be better having the lead come into it in the side suits.

### Muppet Stayman

Muppet Stayman is a modification of Puppet Stayman apparently introduced by the Italian pair Augustin Madala- Noberto Bocchi. Muppet Stayman interchanges the 3♥ and 3N responses so that 5-3 fits can be found in either major.

2N - 3♣ (or 1N - 3♣ by partnership agreement):

- 3♦! (Opener has no five card major, has one or more 4 card majors)
  - 3♥! Responder has four SPADES <– major you do NOT have!
  - 3♠! Responder has four HEARTS <– major you do NOT have!
  - 3N! Responder does not have a four card major
  - 4♦! Responder has BOTH 4 card majors. Opener has choice of games.
- 3♥! Opener has no four or five card major. Responder can now bid 3♠ if he has five spades and 3 or 4 hearts, or 3N otherwise. (See below for an alternative.)
- 3♠! Opener has five spades.
- 3N! Opener has five hearts.

Note that if responder has five spades and 2 or fewer hearts he will transfer rather than use Stayman; so by reversing the meanings of 3♥ and 3N, we are leaving open the chance to find an 8-card fit in hearts or spades.

Option: After a 3♥ response, you can again “puppet” by having 3♠! relay to 3N while 3N! shows five spades.

## 26.7 Minor Suit Stayman

1N - 2♠!(minor suit Stayman) shows 4-4 or better in the minors and at least invitational values. It denies a four-card major.

2N - 3♠!(minor suit Stayman) can also be played with game-forcing values.

## 26.8 Sons Of Texas

Playing Texas Transfers opens up some other possibilities. Here are two of them.

### 1. Delayed Texas Transfers

As an additional option if playing Texas Transfers, delayed Texas offers a way to show hands that are 6-4 in the majors.

Bidding 2♣ first, then 4♦ or 4♥ over a 2♦ response, is called “delayed Texas”. It explicitly shows six of the suit to which you transfer, and four of the other suit.

- 1N 2♣ 2♦ 4♥! – six spades, four hearts. Opener with 2 spades and 4 hearts should pass. Otherwise bid 4♠.
- 1N 2♣ 2♦ 4♦! – four spades, six hearts. Opener with 2 hearts and four spades should bid 4♠. Otherwise, bid 4♥.

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**Note:** This convention is incompatible with the advanced 2N structure.

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### 1. Four Spades Quantitative Minors

Playing Texas Transfers, the sequence 1N - 4♠ has no meaning. With partnership agreement, this means a hand that has the points for a quantitative raise to 4N, but is 5-4 or better in the minors. Opener can choose between 4N or 5♣ to play, or six of a minor.

## 26.9 Montreal Relays

This was invented by someone who went crazy trying to tell if responder has four or five of his major over a 1♣ opening. Responder does not bid a four-card major; instead, he bids an artificial 1♦. Responses of 1♥ or 1♠ show five card suits. A responder with 5 hearts and 5 spades bids 1♥.

A response of 1♦ shows enough values to respond but is otherwise artificial. Opener's rebids after 1♣ - 1♦!(artificial, no five-card major):

- 1♥ promises 4 hearts, does not deny 4 spades
- 1♠ promises 4 spades, denies 4 hearts
- 1N denies a four-card major, denies six clubs
- 2♣ shows six clubs
- 2N is 17-18 balanced (as usual).
- 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ are normal reverses.

Some play this convention with additional 3-level splinter conventions. It is off in competition.

## 26.10 Namyats

Namyats is Stayman spelled backwards. Apparently this amazing fact is supposed to help you remember what it means. Doesn't work for me, but maybe it does for you. Samuel Stayman didn't invent either Stayman or Namyats!

An opening bid of 4♣ is a strong hand with an 8-card heart suit. Likewise, 4♦ is a strong hand in spades. This leaves opening the majors at the 4-level as weak bids with no slam interest. Generally the distinction is that you use Namyats with a hand with no more than five losers.

If the responder wishes the opener to become the declarer, or has slam interest, he can temporize with the intervening suit, e.g.

- 4♦!(transfer to 4♠) - 4♥!(transfer to 4♠).

To accept the Namyats transfer is a sign-off.

An opening bid of 3N! shows a hand that would have preempted in 4♣ or 4♦; partner usually bids 4♣! pass or correct.

There are more complicated agreements about follow-ups, but that's the basics.



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## CHAPTER TWENTYSEVEN

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### TWO DIAMOND CONVENTIONS

The weak 2♦ opener doesn't get much respect these days – the chances that you'll end up playing it are not that great, since either opponent with a good holding in a major suit is able to get in relatively cheaply. Therefore, the bid has been co-opted to handle various other problems, particularly awkwardly-shaped hands.

Note that Precision has its own two-diamond opener showing a 4441 hand 11-15 HCP with a stiff diamond. There are many other two-diamond bids in different systems. Some of them are strong.

<p><b>Warning:</b> Moral: when you hear a 2♦! opener alerted, you have no idea what it means.</p>
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The so-called Multi-2♦ is a particular headache – it is not allowed in most ACBL tournaments, but you can encounter it on-line.

It is also worth saying that if 2♦ isn't strong or Flannery or a Roman of some sort, or you see any other bid that seems to mean

too many things at once, you might want to call the director to inquire about it. Twice I've caught people playing an illegal convention this way.

## **27.1 Flannery 2♦**

The Flannery 2♦!(5 hearts, four spades, 11 to 15 HCP) opener covers a hand with five hearts and four spades and values insufficient to reverse on the second bid. Obviously, you lose the ability to make a weak 2♦ opener.

If you open 1♥ then responder will assume you do not hold four spades, and in particular 1♥ - 1♠ shows five spades.

The responses are:

- Pass can be made with a six card diamond suit and less than 10 HCP.
- 2♥ and 2♠ are to play.
- 3♥ and 3♠ are invitational.
- 4♥ and 4♠ are to play.
- 3N is to play.
- 2N! inquires about opener's minor suits. The bid is one-round forcing. Responses are:
  - 3♣ shows a 4=5=1=3 shape.
  - 3♦ shows a 4=5=3=1 shape.
  - 3♥ shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, minimum.
  - 3♠ shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, maximum.

- 3N shows a 4=5=2=2 shape, both minors stopped.
- 4♣ shows a 4=5=0=4 shape.
- 4♦ shows a 4=5=4=0 shape.

A sequence such as 2♦!-2N!-3♦!-3M would be invitational, not forcing.

There are also these special bids:

- 3♣ shows at least six clubs, to play.
- 3♦ shows at least six diamonds, invitational
- 4♣ and 4♦ are transfers to 4♥ and 4♠ respectively.

These transfers are the power raises, giving responder a chance to start slam bidding. Opener will complete the transfer with a minimum, or bid the intermediate suit with a maximum. These bids are made with slam interest, with responder able to bid RKC with 4N next.

## 27.2 Mini-Roman

A mini-Roman 2♦ opener is a 4441 or 4405 hand, 11-15 HCP. The most frequent agreement seems to be that the bid promises 4 spades – the 1=4=4=4 hand being handled by opening a diamond; but that is not universal.

Lacking invitational values, the responder will suggest a place to play, bidding up-the-line; only rarely will responder pass with a long diamond suit.

With invitational values or better, responder bids 2N! asking opener to bid his short suit. This is forcing; responder next

places the contract in game or makes an invitational bid in a suit.

The mini-Roman is part of a family of Roman  $2\Diamond$  bids which chiefly differ as to strength. A Precision player's  $2\Diamond$  opener means explicitly a diamond shortage but NOT a  $4=4=1=4$  shape necessarily.

## **27.3 Mexican Two Diamonds**

Opening  $2\Diamond$  shows a balanced 18 to 19 HCP. Responder bids  $2\heartsuit!$  to deny values for game, so opener places the contract, usually at 2N. Otherwise responder relays with  $2\spadesuit!$  to 2N, and systems are on. Typically this convention is played with a weak notrump system.

Much more complicated versions exist. Be sure to ask for an explanation if on defense.

## **27.4 Other Meanings**

$2\Diamond$  openers were strong in the days of Goren, but that was superseded by the use of  $2\clubsuit$  as the sole strong opener.

If you are facing a pair playing a strong  $1\clubsuit$  system, such as Precision, a  $2\Diamond$  opening will be either an intermediate (11-15 HCP) bid short in diamonds with no four-card major, or it can be a strong bid. A responder bid of 2N! shows a strong hand, and inquires about the opener's shape.

Defending against such systems, it is important to discuss beforehand what  $3\Diamond$  means and what double means (penalty, or

takeout, or lead-directing?). Generally a double of an artificial bid would be lead-directing unless you agree otherwise.

The “could be short” meaning “as few as two” announcement of a 2♦ bid is your warning to check their card. Some Precision pairs do not even promise two diamonds, and they should alert that not just announce it.

Multi Two Diamonds, a two diamond opener showing a pre-empt in an unknown major, is now legal in ACBL Open+ Chart Events (typically, 2-session Regionals and NABCs). You may encounter it, or its full monster sister that might also be a strong 4441 or NT hand, online or in other jurisdictions.

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## CHAPTER TWENTYEIGHT

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### TWO-SUITED BIDS

There are many systems of two-suited competitive bids. We learned about Unusual 2N and Michaels Cue Bid already. There are also the myriad two-suited bids for interfering with a 1NT opener. The defense to any such bid is explained in the *General Defense To Two-Suited Bids* (page 169).

Some two-suited bids show only one of the two suits at first and promise the existence of another, so the defense has slightly different approaches for those.

Here are other two-suited overcalls. There are still more approaches out there.

#### 28.1 Sandwich 1N

After (1x) - P - (1y), a double is for takeout and shows the other two suits; the suits are at least 5-4 and you have an opening hand.

The Sandwich 1N convention is a bid of 1N rather than double, showing the other two suits but less than an opening hand:

(1x) - P - (1y) - 1N!(other two suits, less than opener)

## 28.2 Extended Michaels

Extended Michaels changes the meaning of the Michaels cue bid over a minor, promising spades and another suit (which could be hearts, but no longer definitely is hearts).

Note that 2♣ over the opponents 1♣ is not alerted (in general, cue bids are not alerted) but must be alerted if their 1♣ was announced as “could be short” and your cue bid is not natural. I recommend always playing the cue bid as Michaels. You can bid 3♣ if you really mean clubs.

As before, 2N asks for the other suit. However, it is also possible to bid the cheapest of the possible other suits as “pass or correct”. Therefore, 2N can be reserved to show constructive values, or to start game tries, using “pass or correct” with weak hands.

Here’s an example. (1♦) 2♦ shows spades and either hearts or clubs. So:

- (1♦) 2♦ - 2♥ I do not like spades. I have 3 hearts. If hearts isn’t your other suit, bid your minor.
- (1♦) 2♦ - 2N!(Asks for the other suit, constructive)

Asking for the other suit with 2N and then going back to spades is a game try:

- (1♣) 2♣ - 2N - 3♦ - 3♠ is a game try in spades.

“Super” pass and correct bids can be made if a fit is certain and the hand is weak, as preemptive:

- (1♣) 2♣ - 3♦!(support for diamonds and hearts, weak)

Using Extended Michaels and U2NT together, we cover all the bases:

RHO	You	Bid
1♣	♦&♥	2N (two lowest unbid)
1♣	♦&♠	2♣ (spades and another)
1♣	♥&♠	2♣ (spades and another)
1♦	♣&♥	2N (two lowest unbid)
1♦	♣&♠	2♦ (spades and another)
1♦	♥&♠	2♦ (spades and another)
1♥	♣&♦	2N (two lowest unbid)
1♥	♣&♠	2♥ (spades and another)
1♥	♦&♠	2♥ (spades and another)
1♠	♣&♦	2N (two lowest unbid)
1♠	♣&♥	2♠ (hearts and another)
1♠	♦&♥	2♠ (hearts and another)

## 28.3 Top and Bottom Cue Bid

Top and Bottom is another replacement for Michael's Cue Bid. The cue bid shows the highest and lowest unbid suits. For example, 1♥ - (2♥) shows spades and clubs. Knowing both suits right away can be helpful, but you can't use it as often.

However, most users of Top and Bottom use it as part of a constellation of conventions following Hardy:

- Using the cue bid when the lower suit is at least 5+ cards,



and the upper suit 4+ cards, or equal length but substantially weaker. Otherwise one overcalls the upper suit of 5+ cards.

- Adding “Bottom and Bottom”: (1♦) - 3♣! shows 5+ clubs, 4+ hearts, and (1♣) - 2♦! shows 5+ diamonds and 4+ hearts. Hardy later changed his approach so that (1♣) - 2♥! shows this hand. Others suggest 2N!.
- Adding Equal Level Conversion takeout doubles. If one doubles and then rebids at the same level as the response, it does not show extras. This allows takeout doubles that are 4-5 in the top unbid suits.

After a Top and Bottom Cue Bid, if advancer bids his own suit it is a self-sufficient suit with a desire to play there. If after advancer bids, bidding or raising the upper suit shows a strong hand.

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## CHAPTER TWENTYNINE

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### ADVANCED 2N AUCTIONS

When partner opens 2N, or opens 2♣ and rebids 2N, the following is an expert structure for accommodating a variety of hand types.

Advanced players can be more nuanced about which hands they open 2N. Sometimes you have a choice of opening one of a suit and then reversing, or opening 2N, or opening 2♣ planning to rebid 2N. The decisive point may be whether or not your suits are better if led into or not. Having the “big hand declare” is not an ironclad rule. And, a 21 point hand with a five-card suit may be “too big”. Imagine how the auction and play may go before choosing.

Minor suits tend to gravitate towards NT contracts. Gavin Wolpert gives this example of a hand too strong to open 1♣ and rebid 3♣:

♠K3  
♥AQ2  
♦Q3  
♣AKJ632

Wolpert suggests opening this 2N and then deal with it. On the other hand, a six card minor hand can be too strong for opening 2N. Wolpert suggests a range of 17+ to 19 to open 2N with a six card minor.

## 29.1 Basic Responses

Unlike the situation over 1N, there is no room for many conventions; in particular, there is no escape sequence to get out in a minor. After a 2N opening, or 2N rebid over 2♣:

- Pass with less than game-going values.
- 3♣ is Stayman. Over a 3♦ reply use *Smolen* (page 120) when 5-4 in the majors. An alternative choice is to play this as *Puppet Stayman* (page 207) .
- 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers.
- 3♠ is a minor suit slam try; opener must bid 3N relay. Followups below.
- 3N to play
- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4♦ and 4♥ are Texas transfers.
- 4N is quantitative, asking opener to bid 6N with a hand with good trick-taking ability.
- 6N means you are sure we have 33 HCP but not 37 HCP.
- 7N means you're having a good day.

## 29.2 Stayman Auctions

Bidding Stayman promises a four-card major. Stayman auctions are normal, including responder bidding the “other major” as a power raise if opener bids a suit. Thus, the possibly confusing 2N - 3♣ - 3♠ - 4♥! is a slam try raise of spades.

After 2N - 3♣ - 3♦, bidding 3 of a major is a *Smolen* (page 120) puppet showing four in the major and five of the other major, leaving opener to agree to a 3-5 fit or to bid 3N. A responder with a six-card major can correct to 4M. Again, Puppet Stayman is an alternative, but you can't do both Puppet and Smolen.

Continuing without a fit is rather natural. To continue past 3N should be seeking a minor slam. With such a hand, a four-card major and a six-card minor, we can bid 4m next after finding no fit with our four-card major.

With the auction 2N - 3♣ - 3♥, there is still a possible spade fit. Responder can bid similarly to when his hand is 5-5 as covered *below* (page 229).

- When responder has shown spades and clubs, and opener has interest:
  - 4♦ is a flag bid showing a good hand with four spades.
  - 4♥ is a flag bid showing a good hand for clubs.
  - 4♠, 4N, and 5♣ are to play.
- When responder has shown spades and diamonds, and opener has interest:
  - 4♥ is a flag bid showing a good hand with four spades.

- 5♣ is a flag bid showing a good hand for diamonds.
- 4♠, 4N, and 5♦ are to play.

You can also treat the case of four hearts and a minor the same way as the 5-5 case below, remembering that there is no possibility of a major fit after 2N - 3♣ - 3♦ or 3♠.

## Optional Improvement

If we Stayman with four of a major and six of a minor, when opener denies our major it leaves room for the following experts-only maneuver.

After 2N - 3♣ - 3♦ or 3♠, a slammish responder with four hearts and a six-card club suit bids 4♣. Then Opener bids:

- 4♦ keycard for clubs
- 4♥ control in diamonds (“impossible major”, no heart fit)
- 4♠ control in spades
- 4N to play
- 5♣ to play

Likewise, for hearts and diamonds, after 2N - 3♣ - 3♦ or 3♠:

- 4♥ is keycard for diamonds
- 4♠ is a control in hearts
- 4N is to play
- 5♣ is a flag bid showing a good hand for diamonds
- 5♦ is to play.

With four spades instead, after a 3♦ reply to Stayman, we likewise can use one-over keycard with spades showing a control in the keycard suit and other bids showing controls or being to play.

## **29.3 Responses With 5-5 Hands**

There are six possible combinations of suits for a responder if holding a two-suited hand. With both majors we absolutely want to end up in a major. With a major and a minor, we want to end up in the major as a first priority. With both minors, we only want to play in one of them if a slam is likely.

In all cases getting to five of a minor may be inferior to playing 3N.

### **Both Majors**

With 5-5 in the majors, and a hand only interested in game, transfer to 3♠ and then bid 4♥. Opener bids his longest major; or usually spades if his majors are the same length, in order to make the strong hand declare.

To show at least mild slam interest, transfer to 3♥ and then bid 3♠. Then opener bids:

- 3N shows 2-2 in the majors and is to play.
- 4♣ is a flag bid showing a good hand for hearts.
- 4♦ is a flag bid showing a good hand for spades.
- 4♥ shows a “bad” hand with a heart fit.
- 4♠ shows a “bad” hand with a spade fit.

A “bad” hand is one that has wasted values in the form of minor suit kings and queens.

In choosing between two equal majors, opener might take into account whether he has minor suit values that need protection from the lead and choose which hand should be the declarer.

Suppose opener has opened 2N and shown a good hand for a given major, in response to responder showing slam interest with a flag bid. Responder may still sign off at 4M; the message to the opener is that they should bid slam only with a perfect hand for the situation.

This sequence is in the same spirit as transferring to a major over 1N and then bidding it at the four level – the idea being that since you could have done a Texas transfer, going “slow” is a mild slam try.

## **A Major And A Minor**

With a five-card major and a four-card or longer minor, we begin with transferring to the major. We must be very careful about going beyond 3N. Therefore our second bid might be 3N. Because of this, after a transfer and a bid of 3N, an opener with a 3-card or better fit for the responder’s major must correct to 4M, even with a perfectly flat hand. This situation is different than such an auction over 1N, where the responder has room to show the second suit without passing 3N.

If the responder bids his minor at the 4-level then, such as 2N - 3♣ - 3♠ - 4♣, he has a hand at least 5-4 with very good values in the two suits. It doesn’t promise five of the second suit; it might be point-rich. Then:

- Bidding one of the two suits is to play with a fit, and

- Bidding 4N is to play with no fit.
- Bidding the cheapest other suit shows a good hand for the major, and
- Bidding the more expensive other suit shows a good hand for the minor.

Just to be clear here are the specifics, but the above principles should obviate the need to memorize:

- When responder has shown spades and clubs, and opener has interest:
  - 4♦ is a flag bid showing a good hand for spades.
  - 4♥ is a flag bid showing a good hand for clubs.
  - 4♠, 4N, and 5♣ are to play.
- When responder has shown spades and diamonds, and opener has interest:
  - 4♥ is a flag bid showing a good hand for spades.
  - 5♣ is a flag bid showing a good hand for diamonds.
  - 4♠, 4N, and 5♦ are to play.
- When responder has shown hearts and clubs, and opener has interest:
  - 4♦ is a flag bid showing a good hand for hearts.
  - 4♠ is a flag bid showing a good hand for clubs.
  - 4♥, 4N, and 5♣ are to play.
- When responder has shown hearts and diamonds, and opener has interest:



- 4♠ is a flag bid showing a good hand for hearts.
- 5♣ is a flag bid showing a good hand for diamonds
- 4♥, 4N, and 5♦ are to play.

Note that the 5-5 in the majors responses were really the same pattern with the obvious correspondence for the flag bids being cheapest (clubs) for the cheapest major, hearts, and expensive (diamonds) for the more expensive major, spades.

## **29.4 Responding With One Or Both Minors**

With no minor suit slam interest, just bid 3N. With just mild minor suit slam interest, bid 3N. You have to be seriously slammish to bid 3♠!. There is no “minor escape” with a weak hand.

With minor suit slam interest, bid 2N - 3♠! as a relay to 3N. Responder then bids the “other minor” or a short major to show both minors. Note the puppet.

After 2N - 3♠! - 3N!:

- 4♣ = six+ diamonds, slam try.
- 4♦ = six+ clubs, slam try.
- 4♥ = both minors, heart splinter.
- 4♠ = both minors, spade splinter.
- 4N = quantitative, both minors.

Details follow.

**Warning:** After 2N - 3♠!, 4N is never keycard, it is a sign-off.

## **When Partner Shows One Minor**

After responder bids the other minor with 4w, opener can bid the next step to show a poor hand for slam in responder's minor ("reject"). Otherwise, opener bids key-card responses using the steps commencing with the second step. Use whatever version of keycard you usually use. This procedure is called "optional keycard".

Due to a lack of room, for clubs opener should "reject" with two keycards without the Q saving the 5♣ bid to mean "Two with the Queen". Thus playing 1430:

- After 2N - 3♠!(relay) - 3N - 4♦!(clubs),
  - With a poor hand for a diamond slam, or two keycards without the Q, opener bids 4♥;
  - With one or four keycards, opener bids 4♠;
  - With zero or three keycards, opener bids 4N;
  - With two keycards and the Q♣, opener bids 5♣.
- After 2N - 3♠!(relay) - 3N - 4♣!(diamonds),
  - With a poor hand for a diamond slam, opener bids 4♦;
  - With one or four keycards, opener bids 4♥;
  - With zero or three keycards, opener bids 4♠;
  - With two keycards but no Q♦, opener bids 4N;

- With two keycards and the  $Q\heartsuit$ , opener bids  $5\clubsuit$ .

Of course, the usual understanding applies: if opener knows we have 10 trumps, he may treat that hand as “with the Q”.

If Opener rejects the slam try, responder usually goes back to 4N to play. However, responder can bid the next step to ask for keycards anyway.

## **When Partner Has Both Minors**

If responder has both minors, they generally just bid 3N. The only reason to deal with the complications and uncertainty of a slam try in this situation is if the need is clear-cut. Do not make aggressive tries for slam.

To try for slam with both minors, relay  $3\spadesuit$  to 3N and then bid the short major. Note the similarity to the situation over 1N openings.

Opener’s 4N,  $5\clubsuit$ , or  $5\diamondsuit$  are then to play, or opener may just bid a minor slam.

A small gadget: when the shortness is in hearts,  $2N - 3\spadesuit - 3N - 4\heartsuit$ !(0 or 1 hearts, 5-5 minors), then a  $4\spadesuit$  bid shows opener’s slam interest, and responder bids 4N. Opener now shows the suit of interest. Responder has to decide about the slam.

## **ADVANCED CHECKBACK**

The Checkback Family is New Minor Forcing (NMF), Fourth Suit Forcing, and XYZ. NMF has a variant, Two-Way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF). The first two conventions were covered previously; TWNMF and XYZ are described in detail in this chapter.

Two-way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF), also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman, distinguishes invitational vs. game-forcing hands by using both  $2\clubsuit$  and  $2\diamondsuit$  as artificial and is universally used amongst experts instead of NMF.

XYZ extends the idea of TWNMF to the case of the opener's rebid being one of a suit, and is so-named because the auction has begun  $1x - 1y - 1z$ . Since it is identical to TWNMF if "z" is no-trump, the two conventions are played together. In this approach, it is still possible to have a fourth-suit auction such as  $1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit - 2\diamondsuit!$ .

## 30.1 Two-Way New Minor Forcing

Two-way New Minor Forcing (TWNMF), also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman, applies after a 1N rebid by opener after responder bids a major. Responder distinguishes invitational vs. game-forcing hands with his first rebid.

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**Note:** Some also play TWNMF after auctions that begin 1♣ - 1♦; I do not, to avoid confusion with the Walsh style. Likewise, some do not play it after 1♥ - 1♠ - 1N.

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TWNMF is off by a passed hand. TWNMF is off after interference.

### Bids In The 1N Rebid Context

After 1m 1M 1N, 2M is to play showing 5 cards; playing in even a 2-5 fit is usually better than playing in 1N. After 1m - 1♥ - 1N a bid of 2♠ shows a hand 4-4 in the majors with minimal values.

### Invitational Hands

We bid 2♣!(artificial) with invitational hands containing five of our major or four of the other major. Opener must rebid 2♦!(forced). The bid can be explained as “invitational with five of our major or four of the other major, or a weak hand with diamonds”.

After 1m - 1M - 1N, a weak hand with five cards in M should rebid 2M, to play.

Then, in the case of 1m - 1♠ - 1N - 2♣!(artificial) - 2♦!(forced), responder bids:

- Pass - signoff in 2♦.
- 2♥- Invitational with 5 spades and 4 hearts.
- 2♠- Mildly invitational with 5+ spades.
- 2NT - Invitational, with 4-card support for opener's minor. This allows opener to sign off in 3 of the minor if he wishes.
- 3♣- Invitational with 4 spades and clubs.
- 3♦- Invitational with 4 spades and diamonds.
- 3♥- Invitational with 5-5 in the majors.
- 3♠- Invitational with 6 spades.

If responder's suit had been hearts, make the corresponding changes:

- Pass - signoff in 2♦.
- 2♥- Mildly invitational with 5+ hearts
- 2♠- Invitational with 5 hearts and four spades
- 2NT- Invitational with four-card support for opener's minor.
- 3♣- Invitational with 4 hearts and clubs
- 3♦- Invitational with 4 hearts and diamonds
- 3♥- Invitational with 6 hearts

If responder does not have support for opener's minor, and no interest in pursuing a major fit, he raises 1N to 2N and does not

use TWNMF. In the sequences above, the 3m bids show either support for the 1m opener or a decent suit and invitational values.

## **Game-Forcing Hands**

The responses for 2♦! are easier; we are not stopping short of game and use a slow-shows approach to slam. Opener should not jump. Priorities for opener remain as in NMF:

- With four of the other major, bid 2W
- With 3-card support for M, opener should bid 2M. However, with a flat hand and the points mostly not in M, consider 2N.

## **Weak Hands**

If you have a weak hand and bypassed a five-card diamond suit to bid a four-card major, you can bid the 2♣!(relay) and pass the obligatory 2♦!(forced).

With 5 or more in M, bid 2M to drop dead. With five spades and four hearts, bid 2H showing your shape; opener can pass or correct. It should do better than 1N.

Finally, we have the problem of a weak hand with clubs. A bid of 3♣ over 1N is weak and to play. (With a better hand we'd go through the 2♣ or 2♦ bids first and then bid 3♣).

## Responder Jump-Rebids

After the 1N rebid, a direct bid of 3M shows a slammish hand with a good suit. We could go through 2♦! first if we were just game-forcing. A jump to 3♦, such as 1♦ - 1♥ - 1N - 3♦ is slammish in diamonds. But a jump to 3♣ is weak, as noted above.

Optionally, you can make 3♣ a slam try and show the weak hand in clubs by bidding:

1N   2N!(relay to 3♣)  
 3♣!(forced)   Pass

This is possible since a plain balanced invite begins with the 2♣ relay so the direct 2N is an unused bid. The problem is that the 2N bid may be error-prone. Not you, of course, but your partner may have trouble recognizing it.

## 30.2 XYZ

XYZ is a convention that applies when the first three bids are on the one level, and responder has an invitational or better hand. The name comes from writing this as 1X - 1Y - 1Z. The Z can be notrump.

Essentially we extend the ideas of TWNMF to auctions where the opener's rebid is 1♠ as well as 1N.

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**Note:** As with TWNMF, XYZ is off in competition or by a passed hand.

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Everything from TWNMF applies, with these additions:

- After  $1\clubsuit - 1\diamond - 1\heartsuit$ , either  $1\spadesuit$  or  $1N$  is natural;  $2\diamond!$  is the game force.
- If opener has freak distribution, he can break the  $2\clubsuit!$  relay, such as:

$1\diamond - 1\heartsuit$   
 $1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit(\text{relay to } 2\diamond)$   
 $2\spadesuit$

indicating diamonds and spades, diamonds longer than the spades.

- Fourth suit forcing to game is replaced by the  $2\diamond!$  bid, which might not be the actual fourth suit, as in  $1\diamond - 1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\diamond!(GF)$ .

## **ADVANCED JUMP-SHIFTS**

### **31.1 Soloway Jump-Shifts**

When your partner opens a suit and you have a hand that wants to invite slam, and which features a good suit with or without support for opener's suit, it is sometimes very difficult to avoid getting in a situation in which your partner can pass the bid you need to show the nature of your hand.

The Soloway jump-shift (SJS) is meant to make it easier to explore for slam without getting too high, leaving other techniques for the really powerful hands where forcing bids will be safe.

The SJS shows one of these types of hands:

1. A strong (17+) hand with one long, strong suit containing at least two of the top three honors.
2. A balanced slam-invitational hand (17- bad 19) with a good suit. After the jump-shift, you'll bid 3N to show the balanced hand.
3. A slam-try or better hand (16+) with a good suit and length in opener's suit. After the jump-shift, then show

the support on your next bid.

4. An intermediate hand (13-16) with a long *solid* major suit and good controls. You'll bid your suit at the four level on your second turn. Don't make the bid with two quick losers in an unbid suit. (Perhaps you might omit this one until you have more experience. I know my partner got confused the first time I used it. The temptation is to assume that juicy jump-shift is one of the stronger hands.)

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**Note:** The SJS commits us to play in one of three strains: opener's suit, our suit, or no-trump!

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When in doubt, the SJS is best for hands where you need to describe your hand to the opener and let partner make the decision about slam, rather than where you need to know about the opener. You need a good suit, slam-try strength, and a good rebid (such as raising partner).

If you think about that idea, you'll also see when *not* to make the jump-shift:

- A two- or three-suited hand (unless one is the opener's and yours is good).
- A one-suited hand with a bad suit.
- A very strong balanced hand.

In these cases, you are not able to narrow down the choice of trump suit or no-trump in time if you use up too much bidding room with a jump-shift. Karen Walker gives this example for a very strong hand that came up at a sectional:

♠AKQ84 ♥A98 ♦A8 ♣A54

The use of a traditional jump-shift resulted in the auction 1♦-2♠ - 3♥. Responder was now stuck: 3N isn't strong enough, and could be passed. You can't rebid spades or raise diamonds or hearts, and you don't know if diamonds or hearts are running. Change one of the Aces to a 10 or J and the 3N rebid would describe your hand perfectly.

After the SJS, the opener rebids. The main points to remember are that responder has at least a good five-card suit, is making a slam invite, does not have a good 19 points, and could have as few as 13-16. He doesn't have a second suit unless it is your suit – so you don't show another four-card suit but rather tell partner where your honors are.

- A raise of responder's suit promises one of the top three honors and at least doubleton support; that is, Qx or better. A failure to raise responder's suit denies such support.
- A rebid of your suit shows extra length with good honor strength. If you have length in responder's suit but no honor, you can come back to it next time.
- A new suit shows concentrated honors but not necessarily length. (Remember, we are NOT going to play in that suit – it's yours, mine, or no-trump.)
- Notrump rebids show balance minimums with stoppers in both unbid suits. Walker shows this instructive case: Suppose opener holds ♠8 ♥KJ64 ♦KQ75 ♣AT3 after 1♦ - 2♠! (Soloway). Shouldn't opener bid 3♥? No – because responder does not have a heart suit! Partner will not have a second suit unless it is yours. For this hand, you respond 2N - nothing extra in your suit, no Qx or better in spades,

minimal points.

Finally, it is time for responder to make his second bid:

- 2N or 3N is the 17- bad 19 balanced hand with a strong five-card suit.
- The jump to four of your major suit jump-shift is the intermediate (13-16) hand with a long solid suit and good controls.
- A simple rebid of your suit is a long, solid suit with more HCP.
- Raising opener's suit shows 4+ if it is a minor, 3+ for a major, and tends to deny an outside singleton; the latter because:
- A new suit is a splinter in support of partner.
- Now or later, RKC is for the jump-shift suit unless you've raised the opener before it.

## **31.2 Fit-Showing Jump Shifts**

Suppose you're a passed hand and your partner opens. SAYC defines a jump-shift by responder as showing a good hand with a good suit – a hand you nearly opened; you're doing the jump to emphasize to partner that game is nigh. For example, after a P - 1♣, you might bid 2♠ with ♠KQJxx ♥Axx ♦Jxx ♣xx. However, this may be too high if partner is a bit light. And, if you have support for partner's major, you have reverse Drury as a tool. So many good players retask the passed-hand jump-shift as a "Fit-showing Jump Shift". You'll note that the ideas are

similar to the ‘fit for you with a good side-suit’ case in Soloway Jump-Shifts.

The bid has four requirements:

1. A good five-card suit.
2. 4+ support for partner. When it is a terrific 3-card holding in partner’s major, you have Drury, so use it. (Some allow the fit-showing jump shift in this case.)
3. Maximum HCP (10-12).
4. Good distribution, usually a singleton.

Opener in responding must remember he’s just been raised! Consider the bid virtually forcing. What counts are your holdings in the two suits that have been mentioned, not so much HCP per se.

- You can pass have weak support for partner and have opened without love in your heart.
- Rebidding your suit is to play; partner must pass.
- A jump to game (1♣ - 2♠ - 4♠) is a sign off.
- A jump to 3N is to play, showing good stoppers in the unbid suits and no slam interest.
- Raising partner’s major is showing slam interest, asking for a cue-bid.
- A new suit is a cue bid for slam in opener’s suit.
- A jump in a new suit (1♣ - 2♥ - 4♦) is a cue bid for the major; or, preferably, use a minimum no-trump bid to ask partner for his singleton. Yes, 1♥ - 3♦ - 3N is asking for the singleton, not bidding to play.

## ADVANCED MAJOR AUCTIONS

This chapter highlights advanced treatments of major openings and their related conventions, and the case of opener raising responder's major.

### 32.1 Two-Way Reverse Drury

Two-way Reverse Drury is a partnership modification of *Reverse Drury* (page 58). In Reverse Drury, we bid  $2\clubsuit!$  as a passed hand to show a limit raise or better of opener's major. In Two-Way, we bid  $2\diamondsuit!$  to show a limit raise with four or more trump, and reserve  $2\clubsuit!$  to show a limit raise with exactly three card support.

### 32.2 Bergen Raises

Bergen Raises are an option; again, some people do not play them because of the difficulty of recognizing them, or thinking something is Bergen when it isn't. Do not try them until you are experienced in the standard raise structure.

The emphasis is on distinguishing three-card from four-card limit raises. A four card raise has a great deal more potential for game than a three-card raise.

With 4+ cards,

- 1M - 2M 6-10 HCP with 3 cards in M; or a good five, particularly Axxx in trumps.
- 1M – 3M! 2-6 preemptive, 4 card raise
- 1M – 3♣! 7-10 constructive 4 card raise
- 1M – 3♦! 10-12 limit 4 card raise
- 1M - 1N forcing is forcing for one round, may have 10-12 and 3 trump.
- 1M – 2N! 13+ game forcing 4-card raise. (Jacoby 2N)
- 1M - 3N 12-15 points, 3 spades, very balanced.

If responder has 3 trumps and 10-12 points, he bids 3M the next chance he gets.

The following part is optional: a bid of 3 of the other major shows game-forcing values, four trump, and a singleton or void somewhere. If opener rebids the next available step, responder shows the suit by making step rebids:

- 1♥ - 3♠!(gf raise, stiff or void somewhere) - 3N!(asking where)

Responses are 4♣! clubs, 4♦ diamonds, 4♥ hearts

- 1♠ - 3♥!(gf raise, stiff or void somewhere) - 3N!(asking where)

Responses are 3N! clubs, 4♣ diamonds, 4♦ hearts



Note the collision here with the normal splinter or jump shift meaning.

## **When Is It Not Bergen?**

Bergen raises are off:

- if responder is a passed hand;
- if there is an overcall or double

Rationale: If there is a double, 2N! is a Jordan raise so you wouldn't need 3♦ for this. After an overcall, you have cue bids.

Reverse Bergen interchanges the meanings of 3♣ and 3♦.

## **32.3 Constructive Raises**

Constructive raises require 8 to 10 HCP and four card support for the raise to 2M. With only a good 5 to 7 HCP, or 3 cards, we bid 1N forcing for one round, (or 1♠ over 1♥), and then sign off with 2M on our next bid.

The idea is to prevent partner from making a game try unless we might say yes. In return for safer and more appropriate game tries, we cannot stop at 1N by the responder. Therefore, constructive raises are least disruptive when used only when 1N is already forcing, such as in 2/1 by unpassed hands. Or, you have to play 1N as “semi-forcing”, announce it, and have your opponents laugh and ask, “What does that mean?”. (Larry Cohen says it means, “Forcing”!)

## **32.4 Kokish Game Tries**

After an auction beginning 1M - 2M, Kokish game tries are an alternative to Help Suit Game Tries, combining that with the ability to show shortness instead. The first step up is an inquiry, while other suits show shortness.

After 1♥ - 2♥:

- 2♠! asks in what suit responder would accept a game try; 2N by responder meaning spades. Responder just bids 3♥ if there isn't one.
- 3♣! / 3♦! / 2N!(spades) is a game try that shows shortness.
- 3♥ is a game try needing trump honors.

After 1♠ - 2♠, the idea is the same:

- 2N! asks in what suit responder would accept a game try.
- 3♣! / 3♦! / 3♥! is a game try showing shortness.
- 3♠ is a game try needing trump honors.

In responding to a bid showing shortness, the responder should judge based on his values and whether or not any of them are wasted opposite the short suit.

Variation: always use 2N! as the inquiry bid.

## 32.5 Raising Responder's Major

When opener opens a minor, and responder shows a major, when can opener raise that suit?

Usually one wants four cards in the major, because the responder has only shown four. However, sometimes opener will raise on three cards to an honor, provided he has a stiff or void. For example, holding ♠K32 ♥8 ♦KJ83 ♣AQ965 we will open 1♣. If partner replies 1♠, we can raise to 2♠ rather than rebid our five-card club suit. Especially at matchpoints, we'd hate to find out later that responder had five spades. And in this case, we don't have enough to reverse into diamonds.

However, how should responder proceed to make a game try? Is there a way to know more about that raise? Eric Rodwell developed a game try convention for this situation, which simplified is called Spiral. It is a spiritual cousin of Ogust.

There are different versions, of course, but here is one for us mortals.

After hearing 1m - 1M - 2M, responder can bid 2N! to ask about the nature of opener's raise. The next steps represent:

1. 3 card raise, minimal (11-13)
2. 3 card raise, maximal (14-15)
3. 4 card raise, minimal
4. 4 card raise, maximal

These bids are all alertable, of course.

In addition, bids at the four level below trump are splinters with four-card support, any strength. With more than 15, opener should bid game.

In our example, the bidding would go 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♠ - 2N!(inquiry); 3♣!(min, 3 spades). This allows responder to stop at 3♠ if needed.

Had the suit been hearts, the auction would start 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♥ - 2N!.

Variation: over hearts, use 2♠ as the inquiry.

## **32.6 A Better System After J2NT**

The standard scheme of responses to Jacoby 2N (1M - 2N!(4 trump, opening hand)) has problems. When either opener or responder make a jump to game, showing no slam interest, their partner with extras is stuck – it may be right to go on, or it may be bad, and it is most often just a guess. Another complaint is that the standard answers gives away shape information even when it turns out nobody has slam interest at all.

For the “standard expert idea” see Larry Cohen’s web pages. Here is a simpler version of the same idea for established intermediate to advanced partnerships:

Consider an extra King or so as “extras”, or a hand with great playing strength.

After 1M - 2N!(game forcing, 4+ card support), opener bids:

- 3♣!(minimal opener) to show a minimal hand. Any other bid shows extras.
- 3♦! extras without shortness
- 3♥! extras with club shortness
- 3♠! extras with diamond shortness

- 3N! extras with shortness in the “other major”
- 4M shows the worst imaginable opener, always 5332.
- Other four-level suit bids show a great second five-card suit. These bids tend to not show extra HCP, just the great shape.

After a reply showing extras responder should cue-bid if above minimum.

If the opener does not have extras, the responder may have extras and still have slam interest. After 1M - 2N! - 3♣!, responder can bid 3♦! to inquire about shortness, and the same 3♥!, 3♠!, and 3N! responses show shortness. With no shortness, opener cue bids at the 4-level below game if possible.

The shortness bids are easy to remember, since they are “steps up the line” through the two minors to the other major.

Note: Since a 5332 with 15-17 HCP would be opened 1N, the 3♦! reply to 2N! is usually 5422, or it is 18+ HCP.

## **32.7 Serious 3NT**

If we have agreement on a 8-card or better major fit at the three level, there are three bids available to continue to game: bid game, bid 3N as an artificial bid, or make a control-showing bid.

With the Serious 3NT convention, 3NT is a serious slam try, while the control-showing bid is mild interest in slam, and just bidding game shows no slam interest. But it isn't a simple agreement, because when is 3N just to play?

See Larry Cohen's discussion at *Serious 3N* <<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/serious-3nt>> for his thoughts on this expert-level convention. Of course, bridge players being bridge players, there is also Non-Serious 3N.

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## CHAPTER THIRTYTHREE

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### ADVANCED ONE NOTRUMP STRUCTURE

What follows is a description of a complete system for the 1N suite of bids. Bids we keep from the standard methods include Jacoby Transfers, Texas Transfers, Stayman, and Garbage Stayman. You can add Smolen if you do not play that already.

To this we add 1N - 3♣!(Five-card Stayman), new meanings for 1N - 3♦ / 3♥ / 3♠, and an expert version of Four-Way Transfers. Note that the Four-Way Transfers presented here preserve the property that 2♣ Stayman guarantees a four-card major.

Recall this terminology is:

- A bid is called a *puppet* if it is a bid of a major suit that actually shows the other major suit. The motivation is to get the other hand to declare.
- A *transfer* bid asks partner to bid a suit that you definitely hold, while a *relay* bid asks partner to bid a suit that you may or may not hold, with you planning to bid again.

The following topics are in the recommended order for adding them to your agreements. Five-card Stayman should be learned

early as it helps us open 1N with a five-card major without missing a 5-3 major fit.

### **33.1 1N - 3♣ Five-Card Stayman**

The bid 1N - 3♣!(has a three-card major) is a game forcing bid that promises a major suit that is *exactly* three-cards long. You can have 0 to 4 cards in the other major as well. (You would transfer with five or more.)

Opener replies 3♥ or 3♠ if he has a five-card major. Otherwise he bids 3♦!(no five-card major). Then responder continues:

- 3N with no four-card major; or,
- Bids the three-card major, showing four in the other major M (a puppet).

Opener now places the contract in 3N, 4M, or makes a control bid in support of M.

You should adopt this convention if nothing else in this chapter. This convention ensures lets you open 1N with a five-card major with no fear of missing a major fit. Since 1N has a narrow range, bidding over a 1N opener is much more precise than opening 1M with its huge 12-21 range.

Hands that are predominantly both minor suits should prefer to use one of the three-level bids described in the next session if they have the right shape.

A weak or invitational hand with six clubs is handled in *Four-Way Transfers* (page 256).



Some refer to this bid as Puppet Stayman, but strictly speaking that is a different convention over a 2N opener. Puppet Stayman came first and has the “puppet” maneuver in common with this convention, hence the naming problem.

## 33.2 Three-Level Replies To 1N

Assuming we play 1N - 3♣ as Five-Card Stayman, game forcing, here is my recommended structure for the remaining bids at the three-level. These are all game forcing. See *Four-Way Transfers* (page 256) for handling weak or invitational hands.

After 1N, with a game forcing hand,

- 3♣ is Five-Card Stayman (promises a 3-card major)
- 3♦ is a five-five or better hand in the minors.
- 3♥ is a “splinter” showing exactly 3 spades and 1 heart, with (54) in the minors. Alert this as “3=1=(54)”
- 3♠ is a “splinter” showing exactly 1 spade and 3 hearts. Alert this as “1=3=(54)”

The notation (54) means 4=5 or 5=4.

The three minor suit bids alert opener to the dangers of playing 3N without stoppers in the major suits. The splinter bids also show us any 5-3 major fit that is available. Opener can bid 3N if possible or bid his best minor. The question of whether or not to go to 5m is up to the responder since opener’s range is defined. Just avoiding a 3N that others will be going down in may be a good result.

## 33.3 Four-Way Transfers

Four-way transfers are an excellent 1N structure enhancement. This version, in which 2♠ is “range ask or clubs”, lets us guarantee that 2♣ Stayman promises a four-card major as before, eliminating the awkward “may or may not contain a four-card major” alert of the 2N responder rebid when using the more common spades -> clubs and 2N -> diamonds method.

**Warning:** You cannot pick up a casual partner and just say “Four-way transfers?”. There are too many versions of it. Play the ordinary minor relay with strangers, unless they answer the question “Four-way with range ask?” with something better than a blank stare.

### Derivation

We start with the basic idea and we will evolve it into our agreements. First step is that instead of using 2♠ to transfer to a weak six-card minor, we use two bids for those hands:

- 2♠ transfers to 3♣ (not the final definition!)
- 2N transfers to 3♦

Now agree that opener, instead of completing the transfer regardless, only completes it with a hand that would accept an invite to 3N; either a 16-17 point hand or holding Qx or better in the target minor. He bids the suit “in between” to show neither:

- 1N - 2♠!(♣s) - 2N!(min hand)
- 1N - 2♠!(♣s) - 3♣!(max hand or ♣Qx or better)

and:

- 1N - 2N!( $\diamond$ s) - 3 $\clubsuit$ !(min hand)
- 1N - 2N!( $\diamond$ s) - 3 $\diamond$ !(max hand or  $\diamond$ Qx)

We realize we have no way to just make an invitational bid in notrump, because 1N - 2N doesn't mean that any more. No problem! We change the alerts!

- 1N - 2 $\spadesuit$ !(range ask or  $\clubsuit$ s) - 2N!(min hand)
- 1N - 2 $\spadesuit$ !(range ask or  $\clubsuit$ s) - 3 $\clubsuit$ !(max hand)

Now we bid 1N - 2 $\spadesuit$ !(range ask or  $\clubsuit$ s) with any hand that we would have before plus any hand that would be a traditional 2N invitation lacking a four-card major.

The opener views the 2 $\spadesuit$  bid as asking, "Would you accept a 2N invite?" and bids 2N if the answer is no, and 3 $\clubsuit$  if the answer is yes. After he says no, responder can pass or bid 3 $\clubsuit$ . After he says yes, responder can pass or bid on.

After an affirmative bid by opener of 3 $\clubsuit$  or 3 $\diamond$ , respectively, responder should bid a stiff or void in a suit if they have one, on their way to 3N. This says,

"We have the values for 3N, but I have the long minor, and I'm worried they are going to lead this shortness I have. Please bid 3N, or bid 4m if you can't handle my short suit."

And finally, what Gavin Wolpert calls "Free Cheddar" - a solution to the weak 5-5 in the minors hand:

- 1N - 2N!( $\diamond$ s) - 3 $\clubsuit$ (min) - Pass (!)
- 1N - 2N!( $\diamond$ s) - 3 $\diamond$ (max) - Pass (!)

Note how the responder is the Captain throughout.

## Summary of Four-Way Transfers

In addition to the two major transfers, we have two minor transfers; for clubs.

- 1N - 2♠!(range ask or ♣s) - 2N!(min hand) - Pass to play 2N - 3♣ to play 3♣
- 1N - 2♠!(range ask or ♣s) - 3♣!(max hand) - Pass to play 3♣ - 3N to play, no stiff or void - 3♦!, 3♥!, 3♠! splinter concern for 3N

and for diamonds:

- 1N - 2N!(♦s) - 3♣!(min hand) - 3♦ to play. - Pass to play 3♣ when 5-5 in minors.
- 1N - 2N!(♦s) - 3♦!(max hand or ♦Qx) - Pass to play 3♦ - 3N to play, no stiff or void in a major - 3M! splinter concern for 3N

It is best to add this agreement: after a positive reply, a bid by responder to the suit above the minor at the four level is now RKC. Examples:

- 1N - 2♠!(range ask or ♣s) 3♣(max) - 4♦!(RKC for clubs)
- 1N - 2N!(♦s) 3♦(max) - 4♥!(RKC for diamonds)

## 33.4 When Major Transfer is Doubled

Frequently a transfer is doubled for the lead. A full set of agreements about how opener replies is needed.

After 1N-(P)-2T-(X):

- P = 2 card support for the major.
- XX = Willingness to play in Transferring Suit for penalty.
- 2M = 3 card support for the major.

By partnership agreement, you can add:

- 2N = Max with 4 Support and No Weak Doubleton
- 3M = Min with 4 Support
- other between 2M and 3M = Max with 4 Support and Weak Doubleton in bid suit

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## CHAPTER THIRTYFOUR

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### ADVANCED NOTRUMP DEFENSES

This section explains some more defenses after your opponents open or overcall 1N. Some can also be used in balancing a passing-out 1N.

Two-suited hands are often more powerful than their HCP count alone would indicate. We've already learned the basic Unusual 2N and Michael's Cuebid. For interfering with their 1N opening, we have Cappelletti and D.O.N.T. .

In all these methods, the two-suited bids promise at least 5-4 in the suits. Vulnerability should be considered. Any bid which may force to the three level requires extra points or shape, comparatively.

In case you want to get creative and invent your own, a note on ACBL regulations:

- X or 2♣ can show 0 specified suits. In that sense they are privileged. It is ok if 2♣ shows an unspecified suit or 2♣ shows clubs and a higher suit or X shows an unspecified suit.
- 2♦ can show “a one-suited hand with an unspecified major suit”, or any specific suit with an unknown or known

companion such as “both majors” or “diamonds and a higher suit.”

- Other bids must show at least one definite suit. E.g., 2♥ can be hearts and a minor, or hearts and a four card minor, but not any major and a minor.

When our 1N opener is doubled for penalty, some variation on the 1N defense you’ve chosen can be an easy to remember *Runout*. See in particular *Advanced Runouts* (page 280).

## 34.1 Landy

Landy is simple: 2♣ shows both majors, at least 5-4. According to the Bridge Guys website, Landy can claim to be the very first conventional method. Many variations have evolved with respect to the replies by advancer, but for a simple agreement, the advancer just chooses his best major, or (rarely) bids a minor suit with very poor majors but a good long minor. *Woolsey* (page 263) below is an up-gunned Landy.

## 34.2 Meckwell

In this modification of D.O.N.T., the double works harder in order to make 2♥ and 2♠ natural. After opponents open 1N, either in direct seat, or after two passes by partnership agreement,

- X! Long minor or both majors  
Response: 2♣!(relay); then the doubler passes, corrects to 2♦, or bids 2♥ to show both majors.
- 2♣! Clubs and a major suit

- 2♦! Diamonds and a major suit
- 2♥ Shows long hearts
- 2♠ Shows long spades
- 2N Shows both minors

You may enjoy combining Meckwell with the *Meckwell Escapes* (page 282) runout.

### **34.3 Modified Cappelletti**

In this modified or “modern” Cappelletti, the 2♣ bid works harder in order to make 2♥ and 2♠ natural. After opponents open 1N, either in direct seat, or after two passes by partnership agreement,

- X Equal hand, penalty-oriented
- 2♣! Diamonds or, a minor and a major.

Advancer bids 2♦!(relay), and intervenor then passes or bids his major. Advancer can then ask for the minor with 2N! (good hand) or 3♣! (pass or correct).

- 2♦! Both majors
- 2♥ Shows long hearts
- 2♠ Shows long spades
- 2N Shows both minors
- 3♣ Long clubs



## **34.4 Bloomen**

Bloomen is related to Cappelletti. All 2-level suit bids are natural long suits. A double is a relay to 2♣, and then intervenor bids one of the Capp two-suited bids: 2♦ for both majors, or 2M for a major and a minor. As usual, 2N asks for the minor. Doubling and then bidding a suit at the three level is a strong six-carder, while bidding directly at the three level a normal preempt.

## **34.5 Woolsey**

Woolsey is sometimes called Multi-Landy. After a 1N opening or overcall:

- X Shows an equal hand, penalty-oriented
- 2♣! Shows both majors, as in Landy.
- 2♦! Shows a single-suited hand in an unspecified major suit. Advancer relays with 2♥!(forced), pass or correct.
- 2♥! Shows long hearts and an unspecified four-card minor. 2N asks for the minor.
- 2♠! Shows long spades and an unspecified four-card minor. 2N asks for the minor.
- 2N Shows both minors.

## Defenses to Woolsey

How should you defend against the Woolsey 2♦?

Experts concede that Woolsey is difficult to defend against, which is why there was resistance to allowing it before 2015. At the club level most players will survive pretty well with stolen bids and common sense.

One problem here is that you don't have a Stayman bid unless you agree to use 3♣.

Responder can always pass first, of course, and see what their major is. Passing first and then bidding should be stronger than immediate action. A second double should be penalty oriented.

More sophisticated defenses are based on *Lebensohl* (page 193).

## 34.6 Mohan

Mohan is designed to compete against weak 1N openers. It is recommended over a 1N opener showing an upper range of 14 or less HCP. Two suited bids can be 5-4. We lower our standards because it is as important to be finding our own games as to interfere with theirs.

The bids are:

- X shows an equal hand and is penalty oriented.
- 2♣ shows the majors; if partner does not have a preference, he bids 2♦ to let intervenor pick.
- 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, which must be accepted if responder passes.

- 2♥ is a transfer to spades, which must be accepted if responder passes.
- 2♠ shows hearts and a minor suit.
- 2N shows spades and a minor suit.
- Three of a minor is natural and constructive.
- Three of a major is preemptive.

Note why the three of a major is preemptive. The person holding this hand could have transferred to his suit and then raised to get to the same place. Not needing two bids with the same meaning, the “slow” bid of 3M is the strong one, an idea similar to *Lebensohl* (page 193).

## ADVANCED SLAM BIDDING

Slam bidding, especially in the minors, is really hard. This chapter arms you for battle.

### 35.1 Italian Control Bidding

In the Italian style, a control bid shows a first- *or* second-round control. A second-round control can be shown without a first-control having been shown in that suit. These rules are applied to interpret the bids:

- A control bid is a slam try after trump agreement in a major. It promises first- or second-round control. (Again, over minors or in 2/1 these bids also possible but agreement is needed.)
- A control bid is a non-jump bid in a game-forcing auction. Thus  $1\spadesuit - 2\spadesuit - 3\diamondsuit$  is not a control bid because we are not yet in a game forcing auction. But  $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - 3\heartsuit - 3\spadesuit!$  is a control bid because bidding on is game forcing and we have suit agreement.

- A control bid that skips a suit(s) denies a control in that suit. So 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♣ shows a club control and denies a spade control.
- As long as slam is possible, always show a control bid below the game level. Likewise, don't control bid if partner has a limited hand and slam is not possible.
- A control bid in a 5+ card side suit promises the Ace or King. For example, 1♠ - 2N! - 4♦ - 4♥ (control) - 5♦ shows the Ace or King of diamonds. Opener's suit must be a good suit or he would have bid his shortness, so being able to show possession of the Ace or King is important.
- Once you show a short suit, control-bid that suit only with a void, not a singleton Ace. An example would be a Jacoby 2N auction, with opener rebidding a stiff or void, such as 1♠ - 2N! - 3♦! (stiff or void) - 4♣ (control) - 4♦; this shows opener has a void in diamonds.
- A control bid at the five level promises first round control, because 4N is no longer available.

Bergen gives this example of a five-level control bid:

West	East
♠JT752	♠AK643
♥AK982	♥Q64
♦A4	♦87
♣2	♣AJT

The bidding is:

1♠ - 2N!

(continues on next page)

(continued from previous page)

4♥ - 5♣ (not 4N here) 5♦ - 7♠
----------------------------------

The 4♥ bid shows a five-card suit with two of the top three honors. Therefore East knows West has the AK in hearts. East makes the control-bid in clubs to give West a chance to show the Ace of diamonds; for West to immediately bid 4N would be wrong because of the worthless doubleton in diamonds. After knowing all suits are stopped, and foreseeing setting up the hearts for a diamond discard, East can see the tricks for the 26 HCP grand slam. We don't promise this will happen to you, but it shows the power of the method.

Note that quite often preliminary control bids below the level of game allow us to bid 4N where we otherwise could not, or to avoid getting to the five level when we don't belong here.

Bergen's *Better Slam Bidding* and its workbook has excellent examples.

## 35.2 Five Notrump Pick-a-slam

When we have not agreed on a suit but you determine that the partnership has the points to be in slam, a jump bid of 5N is a great alternative to just shooting out 6N. It is much, much easier to make 12 tricks in a suit, even a seven-card fit, than it is in no-trump.

In response, partner can suggest a suit to play in or bid 6N.

In particular, after an auction ending in a quantitative 4N, bidding 5N is Pick-a-slam:

(2♥) 2N (P) 4N  
(P) 5N(Pick A Slam)

Bergen's *Better Slam Bidding* and its workbook has excellent examples.

## 35.3 Redwood

Redwood is superior to *Minorwood* (page 272) in my opinion.

Redwood, or One-Over Keycard, is a *Roman Keycard* (page 178) bid for the minors, that leaves more room for responses. The bid one over an agreed minor suit at the four level asks for keycards in that minor: 4♦ for clubs, 4♥ for diamonds. The replies are 3014:

- First step, three or zero
- Second step, one or four
- Third step, two without the Queen
- Fourth step, two with the Queen

Examples:

1♦ - 2♦(inverted or not) - 4♥!(RKC for  
→diamonds) - 4N!(one or four)  
1♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 4♦! because clubs was  
→agreed  
1♠ - 2♦ - 4♥!(RKC for diamonds); implicit  
→agreement  
1♣ - 2♣ - 4♦ - 4♠ - 4N to play  
1♣ - 2♣ - 4N quantitative

The last two examples illustrate that when the one-over bid was available, to bid 4N is always a signoff or quantitative.

When there is no explicit agreement, the one-over bid is not RKC if it could be something else. For example, 1♦ - 2♣ - 4♦ is not RKC for clubs.

## 35.4 Three Spades Kickback

**..index::**

single:Kickback            pair:Kickback;for            hearts  
pair:convention;Kickback

The One-Over Keycard idea can be also used for hearts: a bid of 3♠ after an agreement on hearts is RKC. All responses are just one lower than normal. Kickback is off if either partner has bid spades naturally or bid Jacoby 2N; in the latter case the responses to J2NT take precedence.

These are kickback:

- 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♥ - 3♠!(Kickback)
- 1♥ - 2N! - 3♦!(shortness) - 3♠!(Kickback)

but not:

- 1♠ - 2♥ - 3♥ - 3♠(natural)
- 1♥ - 2N! - 3♠!(shortness)



## 35.5 Full Kickback

Redwood plus Three Spades Kickback, with 4N for spades, is Kickback.

You can extend the agreement to cover more kinds of auctions, and cases of implicit agreement on the suit, but it can get complicated. For one full treatment see “Kickback: Slam Bidding at Bridge” by Robert Munger, Master Point Press.

## 35.6 Preempt Keycard

When partner makes a three-level preempt, a bid of 4♣ over a 3M preempt, or 4♦ over a 3♣ preempt, is Preempt Keycard. The point of the convention is to ask for keycards but being able to stop in game. To make this work there is a special response set called 0-1-1-2-2, which means:

- First step no keycards
- Second step one keycard
- Third step one keycard with the Queen
- Fourth step two keycards without the Queen
- Fifth step two keycards with the Queen

Example:

3♥ - 4♣! (Preempt Keycard)  
 4♥ (one keycard) - Pass

We see that you should be willing to go to 5♥ if partner has one with the Queen or better. A more mnemonic way to say this

scale is 0 - 1 - 1.5 - 2 - 2.5.

## **35.7 Minorwood**

For a better alternative, see *Redwood* (page 269). I include this because it is widely played.

An optional convention to use with inverted minors is “Minorwood”, a jump to four of the minor after a two of a minor response. This becomes Roman Keycard Blackwood for the minor. For example,

- 1♣ – 2♣! – 4♣!(asks for keycards)
- 1♣ – 2♣! - 2♥ – 4♣!(asks for keycards)

but not in a non-jump sequence such as 1♣ – 2♣! - 2♥ – 3♦ – 4♣ in which the players simply discover they lack a spade stopper and decide to play in clubs.

Using clubs for illustration, and 1430 RKC, the responses are:

- 4♦ – 1 or 4 keycards
- 4♥ – 0 or 3 keycards
- 4♠ – 2 keycards, no trump queen
- 4N – 2 keycards, with trump queen

After a response of 14 or 30, a bid of the next higher suit asks for the trump queen.

After any response, the bid of the suit one higher than trumps (5♦ in this case) asks for Kings.

For diamonds as trumps, the responses are all one higher.

Important: a rebid of 4N is to play:

1♣ - 2♣!(10+, 5+ clubs)  
4♣!(keycards) - 4♥ (0 or 3)  
4N to play

The usual principle of RKC is used here too – if an ambiguous (03 or 14) response was made holding the higher number of key-cards, responder would now bid the slam if the asker signs off. Presumably the asker was willing to take yes for an answer.

## **ADVANCED RESPONSES TO TWO CLUB OPENERS**

When partner opens a strong 2♣ and your hand looks like a vast wasteland, the standard 2♦ (waiting) approach really wastes an opportunity to say so and requires a possibly vague second bid. Likewise, if your hand is really good but has no good five-card suit, you also can't say that until later. These two conventions do a better job on one or both of these fronts.

Another system is “steps”, a system in which responder shows his point count in steps of three HCP starting with 2♦!(0-3), 2♥(4-6), etc. This is not an advanced convention, it is a mistake.

### **36.1 Control Responses To Two Clubs**

By partnership agreement, responder shows Aces and Kings. Counting A=2 and K=1,

- 2♦! = (negative) zero or one (that is, no Aces, perhaps one King)
- 2♥! = two (one Ace or two Kings)

- 2♠! = exactly one Ace and one King
- 2N! = three Kings
- 3♣! = 4 points, 3♦! = 5 points, etc.

After 2♣ – 2♦! – 2N, responder can pass. Systems are on. If opener rebids a suit, however, responder must bid again. After 2♣ – 2♦, opener can jump to 3N if willing to be in that contract opposite a wasteland.

## **Continuations After Positive Responses**

After any positive response to 2♣, we are in a game-forcing auction. Opener with a balanced hand should bid 2N, and systems are on. Opener should not jump in no-trump immediately – give partner a chance to transfer or bid Puppet Stayman first. Since we're in a game-forcing auction, no need to rush.

After opener's rebid in a suit, responder should raise if possible; or show a good five-card suit, or bid no-trump.

The usual techniques are in play after opener bids a suit and responder raises. The problem cases arise when responder does not have support. If responder shows a suit it should be a good suit or a good four-card suit with extra points interested in slam somewhere. Otherwise a fast-arrival 3N shows no particular extras besides the control-card count already given.

Using Control Responses, the responder should generally not be pushing to explore for slam; the opener will likely already know if it is possible or not. 5N pick-a-slam should be remembered when you believe we have the points and controls but haven't found a suit.

Using 4N as RKC is not often useful with this convention. Rather, if opener rebids 4N, it is asking for the suit of the lowest control held by responder. Next, opener may bid the next step up to ask for the next lowest control, although this is rare.

## **36.2 Two Hearts Bust Response to Two Clubs**

With partnership agreement, the responses to 2♣ become:

- 2♥! shows a bad (“bust”) hand, with no Ace or King and not even two Queens.
- The other bids remain the same
- 2♦ is now game forcing.
- 2N! is available to show hearts and 8+ HCP, but one would not want to make this bid unless certain you want to play in hearts.

If the opener rebids 2N over 2♥!, the responder may pass. Systems are on, so 3♦! still asks opener to bid 3♥.

If the opener rebids 2N over any other response it cannot be passed. Systems are on.

After any suit rebid over 2♥!, the responder must bid again.

## **Parrish Relay**

The Parrish convention applies after a Two Hearts Bust response. It provides a way for opener to bid a suit and have it be non-forcing, thus stopping below game.

The Parrish Relay is a bid of 2♠!(relay), forcing responder to bid 2N. Opener's next bid is now not forcing. Note that any concern about wrong-siding notrump is not correct, because if Opener is willing to play in notrump they don't use the relay.

By contrast, after 2♥!, suit bids at the three level are forcing. So:

2♣ - 2♥!(bust)  
2N is not forcing  
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ are forcing

but

2♣ - 2♥!(bust)  
2♠!(relay) - 2N!(forced)  
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ are not forcing

## **36.3 Kokish**

Kokish applies after a 2♦ response to 2♣, whether it means waiting or negative.

A rebid of 2♥! means a hand that has five hearts, and possibly another suit; or a strong notrump hand. Responder relays with 2♠!, then opener rebids hearts, another suit, or in notrump. All of these are forcing.

Another suit shows five hearts and at least four of the suit bid. Rebidding hearts shows six hearts. Notrump shows a 25+ notrump hand.

In both cases, systems are on if notrump is rebid, and we are in a game forcing auction.

The point is that an opener with 25+ or more points does not have to jump in notrump but can use the Kokish 2H bid first so that a subsequent 2N is forcing. Also, it helps in showing two-suited very strong hands, which are often awkward to show after 2♣ openers.

## **36.4 Smith's 2♦ Waiting System**

Marc Smith uses the following system which has Kokish but no second negative. The range of the 2N opener is expanded to 20-22.

After 2♣ FG or 23-24 balanced:

- 2♦ waiting:
  - 2♥ Kokish, FG or 25+ Balanced
    - \* 2♠ most hands, all balanced hands, hands with majors, good hands
      - ^ 2N 25+ Balanced; systems on, 3N next 25-27, 4N 29-31, ... ^ 3m or 3♠ second suit with hearts ^ 3♥ 6+ hearts, not solid hearts with 9 tricks)
      - ^ 3N solid hearts exactly 9 tricks
    - \* 2N 5/5 minors and weak, no slam interest opposite a balanced 25.



^ 3m slam interest, sets suit ^ 3♥ 6+ hearts, invites a raise with a doubleton  
^ 3♠ less than 2 hearts

\* 2♠ natural FG

\* 2N 23-24 NF, systems on

– 3♣ 6+ clubs, may or may not have a four-card major.

\* 3♦ Stayman; 3M reply or 4♦ natural

\* 3M five card suit – W or 4♦ agrees major.

– 3♦ 6+ diamonds with no 4-card major

– 3M 4 card major and 5+ ♦.

– **3N shows a solid minor and exactly 9 tricks.**

**Opener may have an unstopped suit.**

Responder may remove to 5♣ pass or correct,  
or 4♣ with slam interest in opener's minor.

- 2M positive values (8+ HCP) with a good 5-card suit. Forcing to 4M or 4N. Note that 3N by opener is forcing.
- 3m positive values (8+ HCP) with a good 6-card suit. Forcing to 4N or 5m. Note that 3N by opener is forcing.

## **ADVANCED RUNOUTS**

### **37.1 Introduction to Runouts**

When partner opens 1N and your RHO doubles for penalty, and you have a weak hand, you want to help partner out of playing 1NX with power on his right. Almost any suit fit is going to be an improvement. This problem occurs more often with a Weak NT opening, but it can happen even with a strong one.

An agreement about how to get out of this dilemma is called a “runout”.

The standard runout is that double asks opener to bid his best minor. That lets you pass or correct to some 5-card suit that you have. The problem is that this is not cooperative and applies to only a fraction of the hands you might have.

This chapter shows you some better runouts. The goal is to find some 7+ card or better fit. Naturally, all of the schemes have a problem when responder’s hand is 4333. A responder who is 4333 can decide that the four-carder is a five-carder, or that one of the 3-card suits is his other four-carder.

## Use The Runout Over Conventional Doubles?

If the opponent's double does not show strength, but rather is something like D.O.N.T's double showing a single-suited hand, you have two choices:

- Ignore it – systems are “on”.
- Play your runout regardless of what kind of double it is.

The case for playing the runout is that opener's RHO might be strong and pass. Also, if it is responder who has some points, and the runout has Pass as forcing, it keeps things going.

For intermediate players, there is a more practical reason, especially when playing the weak 1N: the opponents will frequently be confused about what the double means, so that the explanation you get may be wrong. I've heard:

- “I thought we were playing natural over weak notrump!”  
– It isn't on their card, of course.
- “We switch to Cappelletti over a weak notrump.” – But the doubler forgot and is still playing D.O.N.T.
- “That was for takeout, partner!”

Or explanations when we inquire:

- “I have no idea.” – at least he's honest.
- “I presume it is penalty.” – and half the time he's right.

You can call the director after you discover misinformation, but you need to show you were damaged by the misinformation to get relief, and that is hard to think out at the table, and hard for the director.

My conclusion is that it is best to play the runout on after any double, as long as responder's Pass is forcing.

## **37.2 Meckwell Escapes**

Meckwell Escapes are similar to the Meckwell bids over interference with our 1N opener. A great combination is to play *Meckwell* (page 261) and Meckwell Escapes.

- Pass!(forcing, shows either clubs, diamonds, or both majors).

Opener bids 2♣!(forced).

Next, responder passes or bids 2♦ with 5 cards in the minor, or 2♥! shows 4-4 majors.

- 2♣ promises clubs and a higher suit, 4-4 at least.
- 2♦ promises diamonds and a higher suit, 4-4 at least.
- 2♥ and 2♠ are natural five-card suits.
- Redouble is natural, not forcing.

## **37.3 The Handy Runout**

Handy Runout is named for Howard Schutzman and Andy Stark, who developed it with encouragement from Ally Whiteneck. It works properly only when the 1N opener does not have two doubletons. Over a strong 1N you can probably afford to fudge this requirement because the strength will help you if you land in a bad fit.

## **Direct Seat Doubles**

After 1N (X), responder bids:

- Pass! – shows near-invitational or better values and a willingness to play 1N doubled.
- Redouble! – Shows a five card suit; opener bids 2♣!(relay), pass or correct.
- 2x!(pass or correct) – denies a five-card suit, shows lowest 4-card suit, beginning a relay until a 7 card fit is found.
- 3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠: Preemptive, usually a seven card suit.
- 3NT to play.
- 4♦, 4♥: Texas Transfer.

Worst case: you have a bad, flat hand. Bid the 4 card suit and hope.

Examples, assuming responder is not 4333:

- After 1N (X) - Pass! - 2♣, suppose responder is 2434 or 4432. He will bid 2♥. If opener has a heart doubleton, he must have at least three in all the other suits because he does not have two doubletons. Therefore he can bid 3♠, and if that is not responder's "other suit", responder can end the auction at 3♣.
- 1N - (X) - 2♦!, responder shows diamonds and a higher suit. If opener has only a doubleton in diamonds he will bid 2♥. Otherwise he passes. If hearts is not responder's second suit he bids his second suit, knowing opener must have three of them.

After the redouble, if RHO bids a suit, opener is off the hook if he wants to be.

If they bid after responder's pass, we will not let them play undoubled in any contract less than two spades. A pass is therefore forcing partner to double or bid on.

The first double by a partner who must bid due to a forcing pass, is for takeout. Example:

1N (X) P! 2♦  
P! (P) X

shows diamond shortness and at least 3 card support for the other suits. The takeout double does not show extras. But:

1N (X) P! (2♣)  
X (2♦) X

This second double is penalty.

If in a forcing auction, we bid a suit or 2N, it is not forcing. It is constructive and shows 10-12 HCP. If you bid a suit at the three level or cue bid the opponent's suit, it is forcing.

## **Fourth Seat Doubles**

When RHO doubles after two passes, we know responder is not invitational since he passed, but he could have up to near-invitational values.

After 1N - (P) - P - (X), opener:

- Opener should bid a five card suit if they have one. Otherwise opener should pass and let responder bid if LHO

is silent.

- Responder should bid a five card suit or redouble to start the relay, or pass if willing to sit for the double.
- If LHO bids, you are now back in your 1N overcall treatment, such as *Lebensohl* (page 193).

## **37.4 Guoba**

Thanks to David Sterling for this explanation.

A redouble starts a relay to show a 5-card suit. An immediate suit bid shows non-touching four-card suits, the suit bid and one higher. Or, responder can pass and show touching suits on his next turn, or pass a redouble for penalty.

### **Direct Seat Doubles**

After 1N - CX), responder bids:

- Pass!(not necessarily for penalty)

Opener must redouble or bid a five-card minor. If the redouble comes back to responder, he bids:

- Pass. If they bid all doubles are for penalty.
  - 2♣! shows clubs and diamonds;
  - 2♦! shows diamonds and hearts;
  - 2♥! shows hearts and spades.
- 2♣ shows clubs and a major.

Opener passes with 3+ clubs, bids 2♦ with four diamonds, or 2♥ with four hearts. Responder passes with 3 in the suit bid by opener, or bids his other suit.

- 2♦ shows diamonds and spades. Over 2♦ opener passes with more diamonds than spades, otherwise bids 2♠. With equal length he can bid either one.
- Redouble forces 2♣, and responder can pass or correct to a 5-card suit.

## **Fourth Seat Doubles**

After 1N - (P) - P - (X), opener:

- Redoubles to show a five-card minor. Responder relays to 2♣ or bids 2♦ to show 5 diamonds and not 3 clubs.
- Passes to show non-touching suits. Responder passes to play, bids 2♣ with 3+ clubs, or 2♦ otherwise. Opener bids 2♦ over 2♣ with diamonds and spades, otherwise passes. Responder can correct the 2♦ to spades.
- Bids 2♣, 2♦, or 2♥ with touching suits. Responder will choose.
- Opener passes with a flat hand. Responder passes or bids his best suit.

## **37.5 Escape From Moscow, or D.O.N.T.**

Escape from Moscow wins the prize for best name. It is one of a family of D.O.N.T - like runouts.



Descriptions of this convention differ, but the one that seems most understandable to me is that Redouble is a relay to 2♣, pass or correct showing a five-card suit. Otherwise suit bids are D.O.N.T, with 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ showing the bid suit and a higher, 4-4 at least; and 2♠ shows five spades (or maybe you're 4=3=3=3?). Like D.O.N.T., you can decide that Redouble followed by 2♠ is stronger.

An original Pass is to play, hoping to make it. I would assume we wouldn't let them play undoubled below 2♠.

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## CHAPTER THIRTYEIGHT

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### GLOSSARY

#### **2/1**

Stands for the advanced system Two Over One Game Force, or the signature meaning of a non-jump bid of two of a new suit over partner's one bid in a suit.

#### **ACBL**

The American Contract Bridge League ([acbl.org](http://acbl.org)) issues the rules that govern most tournament play in North America.

#### **advancer**

The partner of the *overcaller*.

#### **alert**

To give a required notification to the opponents. The need for an alert is shown by an exclamation point following the bid. If the opponents ask what the bid means, the proper explanation is shown following the exclamation point.

#### **announce**

To say aloud certain explanations, such as notrump ranges.

**attitude**

When signaling on defense, refers to showing if you want a suit continued or not.

**balanced**

A hand with an even distribution of suit lengths, 5-3-3-2, 4-4-3-2, or 4-3-3-3.

**balancing**

To make a bid in *passout seat* when your partner has passed. For example, (1♥) - P - (P) - 1♠ and (1♥) - P - (2♥) - P; (P) 2♠ are balancing bids.

**bid**

A bid is a *call* other than a Pass, including double or re-double.

**business double**

A synonym for *penalty double*

**bust**

A hand with very few points; no Aces or Kings, and at most one Queen.

**call**

A call is a person's choice of contribution to the auction when it is their turn. A call could be Pass. A *bid* is a call that is not a Pass.

**Captain**

Refers to the partner who knows the other's strength and shape within sufficient limits that he must decide the correct path to the final contract, after possibly gathering more information. Later, switches of leadership may occur, but generally the Captain is in charge.

**competitive**

A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, strong enough to bid but not strong enough for bidding game.

### **control bid**

A bid showing an Ace or void; or in the Italian system, first or second round control of that suit.

### **control bidding**

Control bids show first-round (Ace or void) winners in a suit, or second-round if the first round control is already known. In Italian control bids, they can also show second-round control initially.

### **controls**

Refers to the number of control points in a hand, counting an Ace as 2 and a King as 1. Also refers to a certain advanced system for responding to a 2♣ opener.

### **convention**

A bid which changes the standard meaning of that bid to serve another purpose, together with its followups.

### **cooperative double**

A double that is nominally for takeout but which seeks partner's opinion on the best action to take.

### **count**

When signaling on defense, refers to showing the current number of cards held in a suit.

### **cue bid**

A bid of a suit already bid by the opponents. Cue bid is also an older term for *control bid*.

### **current count**

When signaling on defense, refers to showing the number of cards in a suit that one holds at the moment, as opposed

to originally.

**doubleton**

A suit of exactly two cards. Called *worthless* if it does not contain an Ace or King.

**Drury**

A convention played after a major opening in third or fourth seat when the responder is a passed hand, to show a *limit raise* or better. Reverse Drury and Two-Way Reverse Drury are two variants; the original version is almost never played today.

**fast arrival**

A jump bid to reach game when a slower yet forcing bid was available. It means a hand with no independent interest in slam. Usually in the context of a 2/1 auction.

**fast denies**

The opposite of *slow shows*.

**fit**

A fit in a given suit is when we find our side has eight or more cards in it. See also *Moysian Fit*.

**flag bid**

An artificial bid that shows one of two different suits. An example is after a 1N - 2♠ minor relay convention, opener bids 3♣. If responder then bids 3 of a major it is a flag bid, 3♥ showing a slam try in clubs and 3♠ a slam try in diamonds.

**flat**

A flat hand is one with a shape of 4333. The most frequent shapes are 5332, 4432, and 4333. These hands are called balanced. They often take less tricks than you hope.

**gadgets**

A gadget is a convention that is usually applicable in a small niche bidding situation, or which is considered a minor tweak on another convention. Gadgets are often inappropriate for intermediates or casual partnerships.

**game forcing**

A hand, or bid indicating a hand, strong enough to require bidding that leads to a game or four of a minor suit. Abbreviated “gf”.

**game try**

A game try is a bid suggesting that we are close to game if partner has a suitable hand, and asks partner to decide or to show interest but not enough to bid game by themselves. There are several systems for doing this, the most popular being *help-suit* game tries.

**Garbage Stayman**

An optional convention used with Stayman to show weak hands 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors. Responder bids 2♥! after a 2♦ response to Stayman, asking opener to pass or correct to spades.

**Gerber**

A bid of 4 clubs that asks responder how many Aces he holds.

**gf**

An abbreviation of *game forcing*.

**good suit**

A “good suit” is one with 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5, but not QJ10, and usually five or more cards.

**grand**

Short for *grand slam*.

## **HCP**

High-card points. See Hand Evaluation.

## **help-suit**

A help-suit game try is a *game try* asking partner to bid game if they have help in the suit bid or a near-maximal holding for their bid. Help is defined as an Ace, King, singleton, void, or five cards in the suit.

## **intervenor**

Another word for *overcaller*.

## **inv**

An abbreviation of invitational.

## **invitational**

A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, within 2 points of being game forcing. Abbreviated *INV*.

## **jump-shift**

A bid of a new suit (a shift) one level higher than it needs to be (a jump).

## **Law of Total Tricks**

A guideline used to help determine how high to bid in a competitive auction. With a trump fit of 8 cards or more, and the *HCP* fairly evenly divided, the number of tricks the partnership can expect to win is approximately the total number of trump held by the partners.

## **lead-directing**

A bid made for the purpose of asking for a certain suit on opening lead. Any double of an artificial bid is usually lead-directing.

**leave it in**

To pass partner's *takeout double*.

**Lebensohl**

An advanced convention for disambiguating strengths of responder's hand especially after an overcall of a 1N opener.

**level**

The number of tricks in excess of six that a bid contracts for. For a bid of 3♥ the level is 3 and the *strain* is hearts.

**LHO**

Left hand opponent; the player to the left of the player

**limit raise**

An invitational-strength raise, so called because the raise limits the player's strength for partner.

**Losing Trick Count**

A way to estimate of how many tricks we'll take, once we've agreed on a fit. From a book by Ron Klinger.

**major**

Spades or hearts; frequently abbreviated M.

**minimax**

A style of making two-suited bids, in which the bid is not used for intermediate hands.

**minor**

Diamonds or clubs; frequently abbreviated m.

**Minorwood**

An ace-asking bid of four of the minor, played with inverted minors.



**misfit**

A pair of hands with no fit.

**Moysian Fit**

Having exactly seven cards in a suit between the partner's hands. This is not treated as "having a fit".

**negative double**

A double that shows strength in unbid suits is called a negative double. The most common example is partner opens a suit and is overcalled in another suit; then a double by responder is a negative double.

**overcaller**

The player that overcalled; the partner of the *advancer*. We also call him the *intervenor*.

**pass or correct**

A bid intended to either be passed or corrected to another suit. See Minor Relay for an example.

**passout seat**

A bidder about to make the third consecutive pass, ending the auction. After an opening bid and two passes, to bid in passout seat is called *balancing*.

**penalty double**

A double made with the intent of having partner pass, to collect penalties.

**preempt**

(Noun) preemptive bid

**preemptive**

Describes a bid intended to interfere in the opponents auction, usually by opening or jumping in a long suit.

**pull**

To pull a double means to bid over partner's *penalty double*.

**puppet**

A bid that forces partner to bid the opposite major, used to make the larger hand declare a contract. See *Smolen* (page 120) for example.

**quantitative**

A bid that invites partner to bid slam if on the top of his known range. In conversation, often abbreviated as *quant*.

**rattlesnake**

Describes a hand with a 4441 shape (or 5440, if the five-card suit is a minor).

**relay**

A bid which requires partner to bid a certain suit, but does not imply possession of that suit by the bidder. Compare to *transfer*.

**responder**

The partner of the opener

**responsive double**

An advanced convention used to compete after partner makes a takeout double.

**reverse**

(1) a bid in a suit higher than the suit you first bid, showing a stronger hand than you've shown so far; or (2) an adjective applied to the name of a convention indicating a variant in which two of the bids are interchanged, as in Reverse Bergen or Reverse Drury.

**RHO**

Right hand opponent; the player to the right of the player

**right-side**

A bidding maneuver designed to have the stronger hand be the declarer.

**Rubensohl**

A *transfer* version of *Lebensohl*. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

**Rule of**

Add your HCP and the lengths of your longest two suits. If that number is 20 or more your hand is said to satisfy the “Rule of 20”. The Rule of 17 and The Rule of 19 are also used in ACBL convention charts. You may see Rule of 21 or Rule of 22 in books; those are the Rule of 20 with additional requirements.

**Rule of 17**

A guideline used to help determine whether or not to raise a preemptive major bid by partner to game. The rule says to add your *HCP* and number of trumps, and bid game if the total is 17 or more.

**Rule of 20**

A hand is said to satisfy the Rule of 20 if its number of high card points plus the sum of the lengths of its two longest suits adds up to 20 or more.

**runout**

A method of escaping from a penalty double, such as a double of a 1N opener.

**Sandwich 1N**

After opponents have bid 1x - 1y, a 1N conventional bid to show the other two suits with a sub-opening hand.

**semi-balanced**

A hand with a 5-4-2-2 or 6-3-2-2 shape, the longest being a minor.

**short**

A suit is *short* if it contains 2 or fewer cards.

**singleton**

A suit containing just one card.

**slamish**

A hand, or a bid showing a hand, that possibly but not definitely might contribute to a slam.

**slow shows**

This expression is used when there are two bids that denote the same *strain*, one immediate and one through a slower mechanism; the slower of the two shows a hand that is the stronger or possesses a stopper.

**Smolen**

An artificial convention to show the five-card suit in a five-four hand.

**SOS redouble**

A redouble in the passout seat after an opening bid has been doubled for takeout or for balancing.

**splinter**

A triple-jump bid showing a stiff or a void in the suit bid and agreeing to partner's last-bid suit as trump. Examples are 1♠ - 4♥!, 1♥ - 4♣!, and the tricky one, 1♥ - 3♠!.

**Stayman**

The Stayman Convention is classically a bid of the lowest number of clubs after a notrump opening; it inquires about the opener's major suit holdings. The term is also used to

refer other bids with the same purpose.

**stiff**

Slang for *singleton*.

**strain**

Strain is a word used to avoid saying the wordy “suit or notrump”. Used in phrases such as “What strain should we play in?” or “the next higher strain”.

**super-accept**

A jump agreement in response to a *transfer*.

**support double**

An advanced convention used to show exactly 3-card support for responder’s suit.

**takeout**

A bid (most often a double) is said to be “for takeout” if partner is expected to bid rather than pass.

**takeout double**

A double that asks partner to bid, usually with an emphasis on getting partner to reveal an unbid major suit.

**tenace**

A holding that includes two cards separated by one missing one, such as AQ or KJ. Such a holding is strong if behind the missing card, but weak if the stronger card(s) are behind it. The missing card is said to be *onside* if ahead of the tenace, and *offside* otherwise.

**thirteen**

The most important number in bridge.

**transfer**

A bid which requests partner to bid a certain suit which is

held by the bidder; the intent is usually to cause partner to be the declarer if that suit is trump. Usually the suit bid is one denomination less than the suit requested, known as the *target suit*.

If partner bids the target suit as requested it is called *accepting* the transfer. If he bids it but one level higher than necessary it is called a *super-accept*; and if he bids something else it is called *breaking* the transfer.

Compare to *relay*.

### **Two Over One**

An advanced version of Standard American. Also written 2/1.

### **UDA**

Short for “upside down attitude, right-side up count”. A low card is encouraging or from an even number.

### **UDCA**

Short for “upside-down count and upside-down attitude” card signals. A low card is encouraging or from an odd number.

### **underlead**

To lead a small card from a suit containing an honor; for example to lead the 5 from K985.

### **unpassed hand**

A hand that has not yet had a chance to bid, or did have a chance but did not pass.

### **void**

A suit containing no cards.

### **W**

W is our notation for the “other” major in an auction where a major M has been bid.

**w**

w is our notation for the “other” minor in an auction where the a minor m has been bid.

**Walsh**

The style, taught in this book, where a less-than-game-forcing hand will bypass a diamond suit when replying to a 1♣ opener in favor of showing a four-card major.

**weak**

A hand, or a bid indicating a hand, too weak for any but obstructive action.

**X**

Double

**XX**

Redouble

**yarborough**

A hand containing no honors; a real *bust*.

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## CHAPTER THIRTYNINE

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### RESOURCES

Here are the sources I have found most useful on each topic.

#### 39.1 Books

1. *Standard Bidding With SAYC*, by Ned Downey and Ellen Pomer, Masterpoint Press, Toronto, 2005. This really seems to be the only printed book devoted to this purpose, beyond a little handout you can get from ACBL.
2. *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know (Second Edition)*, by Barbara Seagram and Marc Smith; with additional material by David Bird. Masterpoint Press, Toronto, 2022, and
3. *25 More Bridge Conventions You Should Know*, by Barbara Seagram and David Bird, Masterpoint Press, Toronto, are wonderfully expository with reviews and quizzes. All of the “25” series books have taught me something. One of them is on Two Over One.
4. *2 Over 1 Game Force*, by Audrey Grant and Eric Rodwell,



- Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY. 2009. I do not care for the 2/1 books by Hardy (on literary, not bridge, grounds).
5. *Points Schmoints!*, by Marty Bergen, Bergen Press, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, 1994.
  6. *Slam Bidding Made Easier*, by Marty Bergen, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, 2008. A workbook is also available. This book contains the alternative hand evaluation method that Bergen devised in full detail, also with great details about control bidding and useful slam conventions.
  7. *The Weak No-trump: How to Play It, How to Play Against It*, by Andy Stark.
  8. *Eddie Kantar Teaches Modern Bridge Defense*, by Eddie Kantar, Masterpoint Press, Toronto, 1999. This part centers on leading, card play and signalling.
  9. *Eddie Kantar Teaches Advanced Bridge Defense*, by Eddie Kantar, Masterpoint Press, Toronto, ISBN 1-894154-03-7, 1999. This part centers on strategy, counting, and technique.
  10. *Killing Defense At Bridge*, by Hugh Kelsey, Faber and Company, 1966; new editions by Cassel & Co, 1992, 1997. When I have asked expert players, many of them mention this book as the one that opened their eyes. It has a sequel, *More Killing Defense*.
  11. *Opening Leads*, by Mike Lawrence, C & T Bridge Supplies, Los Alamitas, CA, 1966. This is so comprehensive it is a challenge but well worth it. My scores improved sharply after I read it. Many of Lawrence's other writings on specialized topics, including balancing and overcalls, are similarly difficult and worthwhile.

12. *Eddie Kantar Teaches Topics in Declarer Play at Bridge*, by Eddie Kantar, Master Point Press, Toronto, 2002. There are many older such books, including ones by Dorothy Hayden Truscott and William S. Root, each of which is worth reading.
13. *Card Play Technique, or, The Art Of Being Lucky*, by Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener. B. T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1955.
14. *The Play of the Hand At Bridge*, by Louis H. Watson. I first read this at age 12, when I had nobody to play with. I probably picked it out because it was one of the biggest books in our little public branch library. First published in 1934, nowadays one reads the modernized version by Sam Fry, Jr. written in 1958. It remains one of the best.
15. *The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*, 7th Edition, Brent Manley ed., published by the American Contract Bridge League, Horn Lake, MS, 2011. Everything you ever wanted to know – and the section on how to play card combinations is to be frequently consulted after you fail in that department.

## **39.2 Online**

1. *Larry Cohen* <<http://larryco.com>>, *Robert Barrington* <<http://learnbridge.com>> and *Gavin Wolpert* <<http://wolpertbridge.com>> have articles, videos and lessons. YouTube has great content including Rob, Gavin, and Pete Hollands.
2. *Marty Bergen* <<http://martybergen.com>> has audio-visual courses in addition to books and pamphlets.

3. Online bridge sites are booming. You can play with robots or humans or a combination of the two. There is a mechanism, different on each site, for knowing what the robots believe a bid means. Some sites are:
  - BridgeBase Online (BBO) at [online.bridgebase.com](http://online.bridgebase.com) is the largest online site for playing bridge, including ACBL tournaments. The Beginner and Intermediate Lounge (BIL) and the Intermediate and Advanced Club (IAC) are groups that use BBO for instruction.
  - OKBridge,
  - IntoBridge,
  - Swan Bridge, and
  - Real Bridge.

These sites are all in a state of constant improvement and competition so I won't describe them in this static medium.

4. *Bridge Winners* <<https://bridgewinners.com>> is the premier bridge news and discussion site.
5. *ACBL.org* <<http://acbl.org>> – be a member, see your points, look up convention charts, what the convention card means, find a club or tournament. There is a really great series of explanations about how to fill out your convention card.

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