



Modern Blue Team Club by Martin Johnson October 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Opening Bid of One Club [*](#)

Responses [](#)*

Responses in competition [*](#)

Rebids after 1♣ -1♦ [*](#)

Rebids after 1♣ -1♥ or 1♣ -1♠ [*](#)

Rebids after 1♣ -1NT [*](#)

Rebids after 1♣ -2♣ or 2♦ [*](#)

Splinter Bids by responder [*](#)

Use of 4NT by opener [*](#)

Use of 4NT by responder [*](#)

Precision Style responses [](#)*

The One Diamond Opening [*](#)

After 1♦ -1M-1NT - TWO WAY NEW MINOR [](#)*

Alternative Approach [](#)*

Opening bids of 1♥ or 1♠ [*](#)

RESPONDING TO 15-17 HCP 1NT [*](#)

Followups after Stayman [*](#)

Followups to Transfers [*](#)

Competitive auctions after 1NT opening [*](#)

Opening bid of 2 clubs [*](#)

After 2♣ -2♦ -2M [](#)*

After 2♣ -2♦ -2♥ -2♠ [](#)*

After 2♣ -2♦ -2♠ -2NT [](#)*

Additional relays [*](#)

OPTIONAL TWO BIDS [*](#)

Multi 2 diamond (optional) [*](#)

Showing the 3 suited 2♦ [*](#)

Tony Two Diamond (optional) [*](#)

Two Suited Two Bids (optional) [*](#)

Weak Two Bids (optional) [*](#)

Two No trump opening (recommended) [](#)*

SLAM BIDDING TOOLS [*](#)

Grand Slam Force [*](#)

Blackwood and Roman Key Card Blackwood [*](#)

Cue bidding [*](#)

COMPETITIVE BIDDING [*](#)

Versus opponents no trump openings [*](#)

Versus opponents weak two bids [*](#)

Michaels Cue Bid [*](#)

Balancing Bids [*](#)

DOUBLES [*](#)

Negative Doubles [*](#)

Game try Doubles [*](#)

Support Doubles [*](#)

Doubles of Weak Two Bids and Lebensohl [*](#)

Four Level Doubles [*](#)

Competition over our 1NT opening [*](#)

Versus Hamilton, Cappelletti and DON'T [*](#)

Competition over Stayman [*](#)

Versus Michaels [*](#)

Defense to opponents strong one club [*](#)

LEBENSOHL [*](#)

ONE AND TWO NO TRUMP OVERCALLS [*](#)

TOTAL TRICKS [*](#)

BERGEN RAISES [*](#)

LOSING TRICK COUNT EVALUATION [*](#)

[Cover Cards \[*\]\(#\)](#)

[Michaels Cue Bid \[*\]\(#\)](#)

VERY SIMPLE BRIDGE NUMBERS [*](#)

[Restricted Choice \[*\]\(#\)](#)

[Some interesting 1♣ openers \[*\]\(#\)](#)

Modern Blue Team club uses an opening bid of 1♣ for strong hands (17+ HCP unbalanced, or 18+ balanced), card majors, a Precision style 2♣ opening, a 1NT opening with 15-17 HCP and no five card major, and a 1♦ opening promising 2+ cards in the suit. Responses to 1♣ are made showing controls (Ace=2, King=1), but with specialized responses to show solid suits and hands with constructive values and fewer than 3 controls. Within that general framework there is scope for a lot of individual preferences. There is no fixed systemic meaning for opening bids of 2♦ or higher, I offer a number of possible treatments, not all permissible at all ACBL events.

One level openings other than 1♣ start at 12 HCP if balanced, 10-11 HCP hands are usually opened with 5-4 or better shape and one and a half quick tricks. Very light openings are permitted only with 2 aces.

Although not essential to the system, the use of specialized responses to a 1 diamond or 1 of a major opening are highly recommended. Among the special treatments are two suited jump responses and two way new minor after a 1♦ opening, as well as an invitational minor two suiter response of 3♣ to a major suit opening.

The Opening Bid of One Club

A one club opening shows an unbalanced hand of 17+ HCP, or a balanced hand of 18+ HCP.

Responses

Negative

1♦ - usually 0-5 HCP, could be 6-7 HCP with three plus jacks. Openers rebid of 1♥ is forcing, may be hearts or balanced 23+ HCP. Openers rebid of 1♠ is semi-forcing, may be canapé

Semi Positive - (6+ HCP, lacking an ace and a king)

1♥ - forcing to 2NT, to game if a suit is raised directly, to usually an ace and a queen or two kings

2♥ - a six or seven card unspecified suit at least Q109xxx, denies an ace and a queen or two kings, but promises 6-8 HCP. Opener relays with 2S, then responder transfers to his suit. The auction may die if opener accepts the transfer.

2NT through 3♥ - transfer to next suit, 6 to 9, similar to 2♥ except promises an ace and a queen (in long suit) or KJ10 in long suit and side king. Bidding is forced to 3NT or higher; responder shows singleton or rebids 3NT after acceptance of transfer.

An important addition of the new semi-positive bids is the transfer aspect, and in many cases

Opener hand is a complete mystery to the defense.

Positive Responses (by controls, game forcing)

1♠ - an ace and a king

1NT - two aces or three kings

2♣ - an ace and two kings, or 4 kings

2♦ - 5 + controls, either player can use 4NT KCB to clarify controls

Solid Suit Response

2♠ - an unspecified solid 6+ suit, no side ace or king. Opener may request suit with 2NT, bid responder's suit, or bid very strong suit of his own. After responder or opener has bid the solid suit, responder shows a singleton next.

Responses in competition

In general, pass is negative, double is a semi-positive hand, other responses are in steps, and the cheapest available bid shows an ace and a king.

After 1♣ - double, pass is 0-5, redouble is 6-8, and 1H is game forcing but lacking three controls.

After 4 level competition, double is negative, pass is semi-positive and forces opener to bid or double. Pass then bid suggests more points and a weaker suit than an immediate direct bid.

After 2 or 3 level competition, new suits (2H or higher) and no trump bids are natural and forcing. Double shows semi-positive values (usually 6+ useful points) and promises a rebid, it is not game forcing if no fit is found. Opener may cue bid to create a game force.

If the overcall is natural, a cue bid is game force with a control (shortness or high card) in opponent's suit. If the overcall is ambiguous or two suited, 2♥ or 2♠ are limited (4-6 HCP) with 6 card suit, transfer responses of 2NT through 3♥ still apply if made as a jump.

Rebids after 1♣ -1♦

With a balanced hand, opener rebids 1NT(18-20), 2NT(21-22) or 1♥ (23+).

With an unbalanced hand containing no major opener usually rebids 2♣ or 2♦ (longer minor), but may rebid 4♣ or 4♦ with 56 or 65 in minors and 10 tricks.

With an unbalanced hand containing a four+ card major, opener rebids either 1♥ (forcing, hearts or 23+ balanced) or 1♠ (semi-forcing). With 4-5 or 5-4 in majors rebid the four card major and if not supported canapé into the 5 card major.

With a three suited hand (4-4-4-1), you have a choice of rebids. With a singleton king or ace and 18-20 HCP a 1NT rebid is probably best, with exactly 4144 shape rebid 1♠ and then 2♣ if not raised. With 1444 rebid 1♥ and then 2♣ if not raised. With 21+ HCP you can make the specialized rebid of 2♥. With exactly 4405 opener rebids 3♣, then over 3♦ relay shows pattern.

With a game forcing hand single suited hand opener rebids 1H with hearts, 2♠ with spades, 3m with minor one suiter.

1♠ - 4+ suit, may have longer minor, unbalanced, limited. Responder continues

P - rare, fewer than 4 spades, 0-2 HCP, no five card suit

2♠ - weak, 4 trumps

3♠ - useful values, 4 trumps

1NT - 3-6 HCP, 2 or 3 spades

New suit - fewer than 2 spades, 5+ suit, may be broke

4x - splinter, with Qxxx or better trumps

1NT - 18-20, no 5 card major. Responder uses Stayman, transfers, Minor suit Stayman, 2NT forces 3♣, and 3 level jumps are invitational one suiters (3M as 5-5 two suiters is not logical since responder can not have a hand worth a game force in a major, so these rebids show 6 card suit headed by two top honors KQxxxx, transfer followed by 3M shows 6 card suit but denies two top honors)..

2m - usually 6 card suit, 2♦ may be 5-5 in minors

2♥ - 3 suited, 21+ HCP, may have 5 card minor. Responder rebids

2♠ - 4+ spades, no game interest. Opener may pass, raise, bid 2NT or 3m with singleton or void spade

2NT - asks opener to bid singleton, or 3NT with exactly 4450 pattern.

If Multi 2D includes 21+ three suiter, then 2♥ is 5♠, 4♥, 17-20 HCP.

2♠ - forcing, either spades and another suit (5-5), limited, or game force in spades,

Responder bids 2NT to ask second suit, opener rebids in spades with one suited game force.

2NT - 21-22 HCP, may have 5 card major. Responder uses Stayman, transfers, MSS

3♣ - 5+ clubs, 2 or 3 suited, strong. Responder continues

3M - reasonable 5 card suit

3NT - diamond stoppers, no major, no singleton

3♦ - relay, then

3M - second suit

3NT - diamonds second suit, limited

4x - suit below void in 4405 hand

3♦ - 5+ diamonds, game force, ask responder to bid a major stopper

3M - currently not used

1♥ - forcing, either

1. hearts and second suit (usually longer), rebid second suit
2. 5 hearts, 18 -20, rebid 1NT
3. balanced 23+ HCP, rebid 2NT or 3NT
4. 6 hearts 18-21 rebid 2♥
5. strong 2C opening, rebid suit (2♠ or higher)

Responder rebids 1♠ on most hands, but 1NT->2♥ , are transfers, =
six plus suit to king or queen.

Rebids after 1♣ -1♥ or 1♣ -1♠

All auctions are natural, canapé is not used.

1NT - 18-22 HCP, balanced or semi-balanced.

Rebids 2♣ Stayman, transfers, minor suit Stayman, 3X is 6 card suit to two top honors

2NT - 23+ HCP, responses similar to after 1NT rebid.

Jumps are splinter bids by either player after partners suit bid. A semi-solid suit may be shown by responder by bidding a suit, and then jump rebidding in same suit.

After a 1♥ response , if opener rebid 2 of a minor he creates a force to at least 3NT. Responder can use a 2NT rebid as a waiting action, possibly followed by a stopper showing bid on his third bid. With a minimum hand opener must rebid 1♠ or 1NT. (which does not guarantee a balanced hand, 4441,5422, 6m331 or 6m322 are permissible as long as there is no small singleton). After 1NT a subsequent 2NT rebid by either player is not forcing. Off shape hands will refuse to accept a Jacoby transfer to a singleton, making a natural rebid instead such as 2NT or 3m(5+ suit). Since the hand is limited responder may pass these irregular rebids.

Rebids after 1♣ -1NT

2♣ - **modern Step Stayman**, responder rebids

2M - 5+ suit

2♦ - unspecified 4 card major or diamonds.

Opener relays with 2♥, then 2♠ = hearts, 2NT = spades, 3♣ = both majors 3♦ = diamonds

2NT - no major or 5 card minor

3♣ - good 5+ suit

3x - splinter with 6+ clubs

3♣ - long clubs, no interest in majors

2NT - 21+ HCP

2x - one or two suiter, no 4 card major

Rebids after 1♣ - 2♣ or 2♦

2NT - 18+ balanced, Stayman, transfers, minor suit Stayman

Others - natural, unbalanced

Splinter Bids by responder

A splinter bid does not guarantee extra values. If opener rebids 4 of the agreed major, responder may continue with a void in splinter suit and some extra values (4NT would show at least one side queen)

Use of 4NT by opener

If no suit is agreed, a non jump 4NT is natural and not progressive (but a raise of 3NT is invitational).

If a suit is agreed, or as a jump over a natural bid, 4NT is RKC if the exact controls are not known (after 1♦, 1♥ double or 2♦ response), or queen asking if the exact controls are known (1♠, 1NT or 2♣ response). Responses to a queen ask are:

5 of agreed suit - no queen 6 of agreed suit - queen of trumps

5 of suit below agreed suit - queen of suit others - 2 queens

Use of 4NT by responder

If no suit is agreed, 4NT by responder is invitational, generally showing two extra queens.

If a suit is agreed, 4NT by responder is RKC after an initial response of 2♦ (5+ controls). After other responses 4NT shows extra values, which may include the trump queen, side queens, a void (after a splinter) or two side doubletons.

Game raise of major

Where responder has both a single and a game raise of a major available (e.g. 1♣ -1♠ -2♥ -3♥ or 4♥), the game raise denies a side queen or good 4 card support.

Precision Style responses

Natural precision responses have advantages over control responses in that responder's shape is well defined, and there are no issues of which bids are forcing. The lack of control information means using natural responses you will need to use key card Blackwood by opener and responder. Here are the simple responses

1♦ - Negative 0-7 HCP, opener rebids

1♥ (hearts or 23+ balanced), 1♠ (possible canapé), 1NT=18-20, 2NT=21-22, 2m limited, 2♥ (21+, 3 suited), other suit jumps strong and natural.

1M/2m - 8+ HCP, 5+ suit, Game force. Single raise by opener is TAB, jump to 2NT is CAB

1NT - 8+ HCP balanced, Game force. Opener's 2♣ rebid is Stayman

2♠ - 8+HCP, game force, 4441, Opener's 2NT asks singleton

2♥ - one suited 5-7 with decent suit but lacking AQ or KK. Opener's 2S requests transfer rebid to suit. Not game forcing

2NT through 3♥ - game forcing transfer one suiter with AQ or KK

TAB (Trump asking bid) - 1♣ -1M-2M or 1♣ -2m-3m

First step - no top honor Second step - five to one honor

Third step - six to one honor

Fourth step - two top honors Fifth step - three top honors

CAB(Control asking bid) - 1♣ -1M - 2NT or after TAB with cheapest of 3M/4C

First step - less than two kings or AQ Second step - two kings or AQ

Third step - AK Fourth step - AA or three kings

Fifth step - Ace and two kings or four kings Sixth step - 5+ controls

The One Diamond Opening

A 1♦ opening shows 11-16 HCP, either

- 1) 6+ diamonds, rebid diamonds, minimum is 10 HCP with two quick tricks
- 2) balanced 12-14, rebid no trump or raise major response with 4 card support
- 3) 4 diamonds and 5 clubs, rebid 2♣ or 3♣
- 4) 5+ diamonds and 4+ major, usually rebid major

Responses to 1♦

1M - four + suit, 6+ HCP. Opener rebids

2M- 4 card support

3M - 4 card support, max hand, unbalanced, 3NT requests singleton

Single jump new suit - max, usually 4-6

Double jump new suit - splinter raises

2♦ and 3♦ - natural

2NT - 15-16 with good six-card diamond suit, side stoppers

1NT - balanced 6-10 HCP. Opener rebids naturally, a reverse shows at least 4-5 in major and diamonds but is not forcing.

2♣ - 10+ HCP, no major unless game going, opener rebids

2M - 4+ suit, with 5+ diamonds

2NT - balanced 12-14, no four card major

2♦ - usually long diamonds, may be balanced with 4 card major

3♣ - unbalanced, 4+ clubs, forcing to 3NT or higher

3♦ - 14-16, solid or semi-solid suit with ace

3M - splinter, 4 card club support

2♦ - 10+ HCP, with usually 5+ diamonds, no major, opener rebids

2NT - 2 card diamond suit, balanced

2M - at least three diamonds, stopper or suit

3♣ - 5 clubs, only 2 diamonds, not forcing

2♥ - invitational 5-5 in majors

2♠ - invitational 5-5 with spades and second suit, 2NT asks suit

2NT - invitational 5-5 in minors

3♣ - invitational with 4 diamonds, 6 clubs

3♦ - semi preempt, 6+ diamonds

3M - preemptive

Higher - undefined, assumed to be natural

Invitational jump responses show about 10 to a bad 13 HCP.

A 2♦ response and 3♣ rebid is not forcing, probably 4-5 in minors.

A 2♣ response and 3♦ rebid is forcing.

After 1♦ -1M-1NT - TWO WAY NEW MINOR

Opener may rebid 1NT with any balanced pattern, or some semi-balanced hands after a 1♠ response. He may have as few as two diamonds (with 5 clubs), so it is not safe for responder to raise diamonds. Hence we play two way new minor forcing. A rebid of 2♣ requests opener to bid 2♦ with 3+ diamonds, (after

which responder may pass with 4 or more diamonds), or to make a natural rebid. All continuations by responder are invitational and natural. except passing openers rebid

A rebid of 2♦ is game forcing, major length is unspecified, opener shows 3 card major support if possible, a 3♣ or 3♦ rebid shows a 5 card suit, 2♥ (OM) shows 4, 2♠ (OM) shows stopper, 2NT is neutral without support. To show the equivalent of a strong jump shift in a major, responder must rebid 2♦ on his second turn, then rebid his major twice, or once then cue bid after 3NT by opener.

Other rebids

1♦ 1M

1NT ?

2♥ (OM) - 5-5, not constructive

2M - sign off, 6 card suit

3♣ or 3♦ - 4M, 6 of minor, not constructive

3M - invitational with good suit. 2♣ then 3M is invitational with bad suit

Alternative Approach

Another way of using two way new minor is to have all invitational or weak hands start with 2 clubs. Jump rebids over 1NT are descriptive and game forcing (5-5 or good 6 card suit for rebid of the majors).

Rebidding 2♦ over 1NT initiates a relay sequence in which opener describes his exact pattern. Responder will either place the contract once openers shape is known, or can use RKC by bidding his own suit or any suit held by opener at the 3 level (majors) or 4 level (minors).

After 1♦ -1♠ -1NT-2♦ , opener rebids:

2♠ - any three spades, then 2NT relays and opener rebids

3m=5 card suit 3♥ =3424 3♠ =3442 3NT=some 4333 shape

2NT - 2344

3m - 2S, 5 card minor

2♥ - 24 in majors, then after 2♠ rebid

2NT - two small spades 3♣ - 2434 3♦ - 2443

After 1♦ -1♥ -1NT-2♦ , opener rebids

2♥ - any three hearts, then after 2♠ relay continues with

2NT - 3343 or 3334 3m - 5 card suit with 3 hearts 3♥ - 2344

2♠ - 2254 or 2245, then 2NT asks for 5 card minor

2NT - 3244, or 42 with 4 small spades if permitted

3m - 2 hearts and 5 of minor

Responder may choose not to relay on his third turn, anything else he bids shows a stopper and asks for a well stopped suit in response. Responder is likely to have a 5431 hand or near slam hand of 5422 shape.

Opening bids of 1♥ or 1♠

Always show 5+ suit, normally 11-16 HCP, fewer points with 7 card suit or 6-5 hand are permitted if the hand includes 2 quick tricks, (AQ and K in suits, two aces, or equivalent).

Responses

1♠ - normal

2M - normal 6-9 HCP, mildly constructive, help suit game tries, 2NT rebid by opener natural

1NT - semi- forcing, limited to balanced 12 HCP with at most two card support for major.

With 6-7 HCP, responder may pass 1M with a singleton in openers suit

Opener rebids

Pass - up to bad 13 HCP, 5-3-3-2 shape

2M - good six card suit

2♦ or 2♥ (OM) - 4+ suit

2♠ (OM) - 15-16 HCP, natural

2♣ - semi-forcing, 2+ clubs, then after 1♠ opening, responder continues

2♥ - 6 card suit

2♦ - request opener to bid 2♥ with 3 card suit, 2NT with 15-16, 3♣ with 5-5, 2♠ default. Then 2NT by responder invite without clubs

2NT - natural invite with 4+ clubs

2♠ - often preference on doubleton

3♣ - invite with good 5+ card support

2 of a minor - if balanced, 12+ HCP, if 6 card suit, 10+ HCP. Opener rebids

2NT (14+ HCP, 5 card major, game force),

single raise (one round force, usually 4 card support),

jump in new suit -splinter raise

simple new suit - natural,

jump in major - semi-solid or better suit,

2M - default.

Responders rebid of 2NT is forcing, 2M is forcing but limiting, new suit is natural and forcing, tends to deny interest in major suit, and rebid of minor is not forcing.

1M 2♦ 1M 2♦

2M any any any 2 bid

3♣ = weak 55, not forcing 3♦ = limited raise, not forcing

1M 2m

2x /M 3m 10-13 6+ suit, not forcing

Borson Responses (suggested)

2♠ over 1♥ / 3m - weak jumps

3M - limit raise, 4+ trumps

3♥ / 1♠ or 3♠ / 1♥ - unspecified void with 4+ trump support

3NT/1♥ - singleton splinter in spades

4 lower - singleton splinter

2♥ / 1S - game force unless responder rebids suit

2NT - Jacoby-Stenberg, 13+ HCP, 4+ support for major, game forcing. Opener shows second suit, 3NT with balanced minimum, 4m with 6331 splinter, 4M with dead minimum one suiter, 3M with extras, one suited, no singleton. Cheapest rebid is relay asking for additional length in natural fashion.

Cobalt Responses (optional)

2♥ (over 1♠) - game force, rebid of suit is slam try, opener makes natural rebid

3♣ - minor two suiter, invitational 5-5

3♦ - Bergen raise, 4 card support, 10-12 HCP

3M - Bergen raise, 4 card support, usually 7-9 HCP

2NT - major raise, either good 3 card support with 10-13 HCP, no side five card suit, or 13+ with four card support. Opener rebids

3♣ - either weak or clubs, 3♦ asks, then 3M = weak, other is residual pattern

New suit - 4 + suit, at least good 13 HCP if above 3M

3M - six card suit, maximum hand, no singleton

4x - self splinter, maximum 1M opener

A rebid of 3M by responder is not forcing, 3NT is natural, new suit is cue bid with 4+ support and slam interest.

3♥ (over 1♠) - strong game invite, very good 6 card suit

3♠ (over 1♥) - splinter raise, void or singleton

3NT (unspecified singleton splinter, 4♣ asks, rebid of M shows club splinter)

4x - Void splinter

1M - D - ?

1NT - not forcing, about 8-10 HCP

2M - not constructive, usually only 3 card support

3M - preemptive

Jump new suit - weak, decent 6 or 7 card suit

2NT - limit raise or better, usually 4 card support, rebidding is natural, opener's 3M not forcing

Double jump suit - splinter, 4 trumps, but maximum of about 11 HCP

Redouble - 10+ HCP, may have 3 card support in flat hand, but usually doubleton or less.

Forcing passes apply, opener's immediate rebid of suit is weak with good 6 card suit, new suit bid suggests limited 5-5

RESPONDING TO 15-17 HCP 1NT

A 1NT opening shows 15-17 HCP, and denies a five card major. Responses are:

2♣ - Stayman, usually with 4 card major, but not guaranteed if rebid is 3 of a minor. Opener bids 2♥ with both majors.

2♦ / 2♥ - Transfer with 5+ cards in next suit, any strength. Opener normally accepts transfer, with

maximum and 4 card support may rebid 2NT (4-3-3-3), new suit with 4-4-3-2 (weak doubleton) or jump to 3 of responders suit.

2♠ - Minor suit Stayman, at least 5-4 in minors, 9+ HCP. Opener may show a minor, or rebid 2NT with no minor. Responder continues with 3 of a minor (6-4), 3 of a major (singleton with 5-4-3-1), 3NT with 2-2-5-4 or 2-2-4-5. Opener places the contract, 4m is KCB

2NT - forces opener to bid 3♣ . Responder may pass with or correct to 3♦ with weak hand, usually 6 card minor. If responder continues with 3 of a major he shows 4-4-4-1 hand with singleton in bid major, 10+ HCP, game force.

3m - Invitational hand of 6-9 HCP with 6 card minor to (usually) two top honors (KQ, AQ or AK). Opener with fitting honor rebids 3NT or bids suit in which he needs stopper help. With no fitting honor, opener passes even if maximum.

3♥ - Invitational hand with 6-8 HCP, 5-5 in majors

3♠ - Game going hand with 5-5 in majors, 9+ HCP.

3NT - normal

4♣ - Balanced hand with 4-4 in minors, slam interest, 14+ HCP. Opener may rebid 4♦ , then 4♥ =2-3-4-4 shape, 4♠ =3-2-4-4 shape

4♦ /♥ - transfers to next suit, with game values and six card suit. Responder may continue with 4NT as Key Card Blackwood .

4♠ , 5m - not used, or to play

Followups after Stayman

After 1NT-2♣ -2♦ , responder rebids

2♥ - Trash Stayman rebid, weak hand with 4-4 or 4-5 in majors, probably a minor singleton (or 0445). Opener should pass or correct to 2S with 3-2 in majors, then responder will correct without spades

2♠ - 5 spades, at most 8 HCP, may have 4 hearts also, too weak to transfer to major and rebid 2NT. Opener may raise, pass, or possibly correct to 2NT, but not 3NT. After openers 2NT, responder can show a minor promising 5 spades and 4+ in minor, 6-9 HCP. Same shape with 5 hearts and 4+ minor transfers to 2♥ , rebids 2♠ and then 3m.

2NT - invitational, 8-9 HCP, unknown 4 card major

3m - Game force, 10+ HCP with 5+-card suit and either an unknown 4 card major, or a six card minor. The hand will usually have a singleton, so opener should not rebid 3NT without double stoppers in all suits. or may rebid a double stopped major or 3♦ if available to ask for singleton (responder rebids singleton or 3NT with diamond singleton, or jump in void with three suiter).

3M -Four or five card suit with weakness in other major, forcing to 3NT or 4m..

3NT - normal

4♣ - Gerber, with long solid minor

4NT - invitational

After 1NT - 2♣ -2♥

2♠ - 4 or 5 card suit, not forcing, but mild invite with 7-8 HCP

3♥ - invite

3♠ - Johnson convention, forcing raise of hearts with 10+ HCP, may be 3-4-3-3 willing to play 3NT if opener is also 3-4-3-3, or may be planning to cue bid next with slam interest. With some slam interest opener may cue bid on route to 4♥ .

4m - Splinter bid, with singleton in bid suit, 13+ HCP, four card heart support

2NT/3NT/3m - as after 2♦ rebid

After 1NT-2♣ -2♠

3♠ - invite

3♥ - Johnson convention, forcing raise of spades, interested in 3NT or slam. Opener rebids 3NT with 4-3-3-3, or very weak spades and all side suits well stopped, or 3♠ .

4m/4♥ - splinter bid with slam interest in spades

Followups to Transfers

After 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥

2♠ - forces opener to rebid 2NT, then responder continues

3m - usually 5-5 in hearts and minor with 6-9 HCP, possibly 5-4 with 3-1 in unbid suits and 8 or 9 HCP. Opener may pass, raise, correct to 3H or 4H, or bid 3NT with maximum and double stoppers in the unbid suits

3♥ - 4-6 in majors, about 6-8 HCP

2NT - 8-9 HCP with 5-3-3-2 shape

3m - Game force, may be interested in slam, usually 5-5 with 10+ HCP, but may be 5-4-3-1 or 5-4-2-2 with 12+ HCP.

3♥ - Invitational with 6 card major

3♠ /4m - slam try, 1-6-3-3 shape

3NT - choice of games, with usually 5-3-3-2 shape, may be 5-4-2-2 with a minor and fewer than 12 HCP. Opener usually corrects to 4H with 3 card support, but may pass with 4-3-3-3 hand and reasonable side stoppers.

4♥ - mild slam try with 6 card suit, no singleton. With no slam interest, use Texas transfer instead.

4NT - always 5-3-3-2 shape, about 14-16 HCP. Invite to slam. 4NT after Jacoby is invitational,

4NT after Texas is ace asking

After 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠

2NT/3NT/4NT/3m - as above

3♥ - 5-5 in majors, slam interest

4m/4♥ - splinter with 6-3-3-1 shape

Competitive auctions after 1NT opening

After 1NT - P - 2♣ - D (showing clubs), opener rebids a major if he has one, redoubles with 4 reasonable clubs, passes with 3 reasonable clubs, or bids 2♦ otherwise

After 1NT - P - 2♦ /♥ - D, opener accepts transfer with 3+ card support, or passes with doubleton.

Responder can redouble to force opener to accept transfer.

After 1NT - 2 bid (natural), responder bids 2 of a suit (competitive, 5+ suit), bid 3 of a suit (game going values), double with flat hand and 8-9 HCP, cue bid opponents suit (Stayman with no stopper in opponents suit), or bid 2NT (Lebensohl convention), which forces opener to bid 3♣ (responder passes or corrects to a suit as competitive bid, or cue bids suit overcalled, which is Stayman with stopper in opponent's suit. An immediate 3NT over 2 bid shows 10 + HCP, no stopper, Lebensohl then 3NT to show stopper.

After 1NT-2x, double of 2♣ is Stayman, double of 2♠ is penalty, of 2♦ or 2♥ is optional.

Opening bid of 2 clubs

Shows 11-16 HCP with 6+ clubs, or 5 clubs and 4 card major.

Responses

2M - natural, 5+ decent suit, 7-11 HCP. Opener rebids

3♦ ,M - splinter raise, game force

2NT - shows good 5+ diamonds, opener prefers minor or bids major singleton, or 2NT with max and major stoppers

3♣ - mild invite no major

2♦ - Stayman enquiry, opener rebids

2M - 4 card suit

2NT - 14-16 HCP, partial or full stoppers in at least two other suits, 6 clubs, no side suit) then responders

3♣ - to play

3♦ - asks for weakest side suit,

3NT=weak in diamonds

3M - game force, 6 card or very good 5 card suit

3♣ - 11-14 HCP, 6 clubs, no major, responder continues

3♦ asks stopper, opener bids major stopper or 3NT with no major stopper
(may have diamond stopper)

3♦ - 14-16 HCP, usually 4-6

3M - 14-16 HCP, splinter bid, 6 clubs

3NT - Solid 7+ clubs, no major singleton

4♣ - usually 8 card suit, not maximum

4♦ - splinter with 7+ clubs, maximum

4M - good 5 card suit, with 6 clubs, 14-16 HCP

After 2♣ -2♦ -2M

3♣ - mild invite and preference

3 of new suit - good 6, game force

3M - invite

3NT, 4M - to play

4♣ - RKC, clubs agreed

4x - splinter, major agreed

4NT - RKC, major agreed

2NT - over 2H (not forcing)

Step bid - relay. Game forcing if opener shows a maximum, otherwise further relay of 3♦ establishes game force.

After 2♣ -2♦ -2♥ -2♠

2NT - any minimum, then 3♣ not forcing, 3♦ asks and opener continues

3♥ - 1435 3♠ - 3415 3NT - 2425 4♣ - 46

3♣ - maximum 46. Then after 3♦ ask opener rebids in steps to show 0,1,2,3 diamonds

3♦ /♠ - max 4531, bid suit is three card fragment (singleton in cobalt)

3♥ - max 2425 without short suit values

3NT - max 2425 with short suit values

After 2♣ -2♦ -2♠ -2NT

3♣ - any minimum, then responders 3♦ asks and opener rebids

3M - 46

3OM,4♦ - three card fragment (singleton in cobalt)

3NT -4522

3♦ /3♥ - maximum three card fragment (singleton in cobalt)

3NT - maximum 2425

3♠ - maximum 46 hand

Additional relays

After openers shape is completely specified the cheapest bid skipping 3NT is CAB (control asking bid). The first step shows 0-3 controls, the fifth step 7 controls. Then a follow-up of 4NT asks for specific queens(QAB).

OPTIONAL TWO BIDS

Multi 2 diamond (optional)

An opening bid of 2♦ shows a weak two bid in either major, 6 to bad 10 HCP, decent 6 card suit, no side suit or 21-24 HCP with 4441 shape. Responses

2♥ - to play if opener has hearts

2♠ - invite if opener has hearts (opener shows feature) or to play if opener has spades

2NT - asks opener to show his suit and strength

3♣ - minimum with hearts, then 3♦ requests singleton

3♦ - minimum with spades, then 3♥ requests singleton

3♥, 3♠ - maximum (usually 9 HCP) with bid suit

3m - not forcing

3M - forcing and natural

3NT - to play, rare, usually very strong, solid minor

Showing the 3 suited 2♦

After 2♥ or 2♠ response, opener rebids 2NT with 4441 hand, then 3♣ asks singleton and opener bids singleton or 3NT with club singleton. Responders cue of singleton implies a minor fit, jump to 4NT is KCB in highest ranking of openers suits. After higher response 3NT shows 4441, 4♣ asks.

Using the multi 2♦ frees up opening bids of 2♥ or 2♠ to show limited two suiters. The strength is usually in the 6-10 HCP range not vulnerable, 8-10 vulnerable. The shape requirements may be 4 card major with longer usually 6 card minor or 5 card major with a lower 5 card suit (possibly 4 at favorable vulnerability). Single raises of major are mildly invitational, with some defense, 2NT requests second suit, opener may jump with maximum and 6-5 shape.

Tony Two Diamond (optional)

An opening bid of 2♦ shows 11-16 HCP with 5+ diamonds, 4+ clubs. This bid fits well into a big club system where a 1♦ opening normally shows ambiguous minor lengths: using the Tony 2♦ it always shows longer clubs.

Responses

2M - mildly constructive, 5+ suit

3♣ - preference

3♦ , 4♣ - invite

4♦ - preemptive

3M - invitational, 6 card suit

4M - to play

4NT - RKC, diamonds agreed

2NT - relay for shape and size

Opener rebids

3♣ - any minimum, then after 3♦ relay

3M- singleton

3NT - 2254

4♣ - 55 in minors

4♦ - 64 in minors

3♦ - maximum 64

3M - maximum, singleton in suit

3NT - maximum 2254

4♣ - maximum 55

Two Suited Two Bids (optional)

In conjunction with the multi 2♦ , opening bids of 2♥ or 2♠ show two suited hands with the bid suit and a second suit. Minimum values are 5 of bid suit and side 4 if not vulnerable, with 6-10 HCP, at unfavorable vulnerability hand normally 5-5 with 8-11 HCP. Major suit should be QJxxx or better, KJ10xx if vulnerable. Hands of 6-5 or freakier shape are permitted with minimum count. A 2♥ opening tends to deny three spades, is forbidden with Kxx or better. Responses are

New suits are not forcing, suggest a singleton in openers first suit.

Single raise shows fit, and bid is not purely preemptive, opener is permitted to bid on with maximum tricks

2NT - forcing, 12+ HCP, asks for openers second suit, subsequent new suit is forcing by responder and subsequent 3M is highly invitational. Opener may jump in second suit (usually 6 card suit, but 2♠ opener and jump to 4H is 6-5 shape). After 2♥ - 2NT, 3♠ rebid is maximum with singleton or void in spades, opener may continue with 4♣ (pass or correct) or 4♦ (raise or correct)

After 2M- Double

Redouble - to play or penalize opponents, asks double of runout with 3+ suit

2NT - usually weak, forces opener to show second suit at minimum level

New suits - not forcing

Pass then double = penalty

After 2M - Bid

New suit - Competitive, but with good suit and opening hand, opener is permitted to raise

3M - competitive with 3 or 4 trumps

4M - either weak or strong. If opener is freaky he must double to invite takeout

3NT - to play

Weak Two Bids (optional)

In conjunction with a big club system, weak two bids are quite light (5-10 NV, 7-10 VUL), with normally fewer than 2 quick tricks, if 6-4 fewer than 1.5 quick tricks. A 2♠ opening should always be a decent six card suit, but a 2♥ opening is permitted on a 5 card suit, with a side 4 card minor. Standard responses with RONF, 2NT for feature, 3♣ for singleton are used over a 2♠ opening.

Over a 2♥ opening,

2♠ - not forcing, 6 card suit, or good 5, opener may pass or raise (3 card support with singleton)

3m - similar to 2♠

2NT - asks for size or second suit, then

3m - 4 card suit, 5 hearts

3♥ - minimum, 6 hearts

3♠ - maximum, 6 hearts, unspecified singleton

3NT - maximum, no singleton

4m - 6-5 shape

Two No trump opening (recommended)

This bid is not required to show any balanced hand, since all 18+ hands are shown with the 1♣ opening. There are various possible meanings

- 1) Shows a hand of 10-14 HCP, at least 5-5 in minors, responder places contract
- 2) A weak preempt in an unspecified suit (less than KQJ in long suit, responder bids 3♣ to force pass or showing of suit (not always permitted in all events)
- 3) A hand of moderate opening strength with 4 diamonds and 6+ clubs (a problem for a 2♣ opener)

Preemptive openings (3♣ and higher)

If 2NT is used as a weak preempt, 3 level preempts should show 2 of the top honors. Solid suit hands are normally opened with a one bid. With 2NT as a weak preempt, NAMYATS is played at 4 level (4m is good preempt, up to 2 aces, 4M denies a side ace.

SLAM BIDDING TOOLS

Grand Slam Force

A jump to 5NT (not preceded by 4NT) is known as the Grand Slam Force (or Josephine after Josephine Culbertson), making it perhaps the oldest convention still played. It asks for the number of top cards in the trump suit, much as does Roman Key Card Blackwood. The big difference is that the asker may have a

void, so using 4NT won't help. For example, holding ♠ AQ10xx ♥ KJx ♦ KQJxx ♣ --- after the auction 1♥ -1♠ -2NT-3♦ -3♠, the king of spades is more useful than the ace of clubs. If you bid 4NT and here 5♣ (three key cards), there will be no way of telling whether opener has spade king and the red aces (grand slam good) or three aces (grand slam doubtful).

The original responses to the GSF where to bid 7 with two top honors or to signoff at six of the agreed suit with fewer top honors. Played that way the GSF is not a very useful convention (see the above hand). For example, holding ♠ xxxx ♥ AKQJxx ♦ Axx ♣ --, after 1♣ -1♠ -P, there will be thirteen tricks for the taking if partner has AKxxx or AKQxx in spades, but bidding seven off the ace of trumps when partner has KQJxx is not a good idea. The proper treatment (which is not standard) is to bid 7 only with three top honors or the AK with extra length. In this case since the agreed suit is spades there is plenty of room for responder to show almost any spade holding. If the agreed suit were clubs, any bid beyond 6C would commit the partnership to a grand slam (assuming the asker has a void), so would need to sh

7 of agreed suit - 3 top honors, or AK with extra length

6NT - 2 top honors (if a minor agreed, otherwise not used)

6♣ - worst possible holding, may be up to two top honors without the jack if clubs is agreed suit

6♦ - one top honor (if spades agreed shows the queen or king and minimum length)

6♥ - K or A with extra length or the jack

6♠ - two top honors

Essentially these responses come down to responding in steps to show 0123 top honors except that responder may rebid 6C the agreed suit with up to KQxxx).

In the above scheme, the response of 6♥ would have allowed me holding ♠ AQ10xx ♥ KJx ♦ KQJxx ♣ - to bid to 7♠ with reasonable confidence. I recently held ♠ AQ8xxx ♥ xxx ♦ xx ♣ AK, and using the Precision Club, the bidding went 1♣ -1♠ -2♦ -2♠ -3♠ -4♣ -4♦ -5♣ -5♥. Partner has shown 16 HCP with long diamonds, the red aces and some kind of spades support. Seven

The general expert rule is that in a cue bidding sequence that has gone past 4NT, a bid of 5NT denies the ability to make a further cue bid but invites a grand slam. In the above auction I could bid 5NT, which would tell about my spades by inference.

Blackwood and Roman Key Card Blackwood

Both Blackwood and Roman Key Card Blackwood are used. For Roman Key card Blackwood to apply (0314 variety) there must be either an explicitly agreed major suit, or the bid must immediately follow a

Tony 2♦ (agreed suit is diamonds), Precision 2♣ (agreed suit is clubs) or a Stayman response in a major. In all other cases where 4NT is ace asking, ordinary Blackwood is used. At IMP scoring, a continuation of 5NT promises all the aces or key cards and invites seven with a source of tricks, or asks for kings following Blackwood or specific kings following RKC. 4NT is natural following simple acceptance of a transfer.

After 5♣ /♦ response, cheapest non trump suit bid asks for trump queen. Responder makes minimum rebid in trump suit without the queen, then 5NT asks for bulk kings. With the trump queen responders bids his cheapest side king (5NT=king of suit opener asked for queens with) or bids 6 of agreed suit with no side king.

After 5♣ /♦ response, non queen ask and non trump suit 5 level bid is a transfer to 5NT to play.

After response to RKC, 5NT continuation asks for specific kings. Responder shows his cheapest side king or bids 6 of agreed suit with no side king or 7 of agreed suit with a source of tricks.

Cue bidding

Cue bidding is Italian style, cheapest control (ace, king or singleton) is shown. Where possible, voids are shown with a jump cue bid. Any bid below 3NT should be treated as a no trump try rather than a cue bid, but may be reinterpreted as a cue bid after a second cue bid. When only one suit has been bid, opener when initiating cue bidding will often make his first cue bid in a long side suit or fragment, where fitting top cards would do the most good. If he subsequently cue bids a suit he has bypassed, this help suit cue bid interpretation definitely applies. A repeat cue bid promises the AK or AQ, a cue bid passed 5 of the agreed suit always shows the ace in a suit not previously cue bid.

A jump to 5 of a major is a slam invite, asking for a control in a single uncued side suit or the opponents suit. If neither of these apply, it asks for suitable values including probably good trumps (secondary trumps if fit is 4-4).

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Versus opponents no trump openings

Double of weak no trump - 14+HCP, other actions have limited count

Double of strong no trump - largely penalty, based on running suit, partner must pass if balanced, unless broke, 2C asks suit, other bids show 6+ suit, weak, 3 jumps are invitational

Asptro defense - 2♣ =hearts and another suit, 2♦ = spades and another, anchor suit is 4+, minimum 9 cards in two suits, usually 11+ HCP. Double of 10-13 or 12-14 NT shows 15+ HCP, advancer must be unbalanced with a good suit and weak hand to take out. Double of a strong no trump is strictly penalty

with a good lead. 3 level major overcalls are intermediate, 2 level overcalls are 9-16 HCP.

Versus opponents weak two bids

2NT overcall - 15-18 HCP, two way Stayman (3♣ and 3x all suit Stayman), 3m forcing, 3M invitational with 5+ suit

Double - takeout, then 2NT response=9-12 with or without stopper, 3m usually 5 card suit, limited to 8 HCP.

Jump overcall - intermediate, 7+ tricks, 15-18 HCP, good 6+ suit

Cue Bid - strong (18+HCP), not Michaels, may be based on strong two suiter or running minor suit, asks for stopper in opponents suit or natural bid

4♦ over 2♦ - Super Michaels, both majors

Michaels Cue Bid

After a one level opening, Michaels promises 5-5. After 1m-p-1M, 2m is Michaels, 2M is natural with good hand. Over a weak two bid in diamonds or hearts, a jump cue to 4 level is leaping Michaels. After 1♠-P-2♠,

A bid of 2NT is Michaels, showing hearts and a minor (then 3♣ ask minor).

Balancing Bids

After 1x - P - P - ?

1NT - 11-15, Stayman 2♣ only, other cue bids are natural

Jump in suit - Intermediate, 14-17 HCP, good six card suit

Any bid - promises 8+ HCP, at least one sure defensive trick

Reopening Bids

After 1x - overcall - P - P, a reopening double promises 13+ HCP. Responder must bid directly with game going values.

DOUBLES

Negative Doubles

A negative double promises 4+ cards in the unbid suit, with the exception of 1♦ -1♥ -D, which promises minors and denies 4 spades. Negative doubles are not used after 2 level or higher openings including a Precision 2♣ or Tony 2♦. After a 1 level opening and 2 level overcall, double shows high card values with at least two cards in the suit overcalled. Opener will usually pass if balanced.

Game try Doubles

When both sides have a fit (e.g. 1♥ -2♦ -2♥ -3♦), double is a game try showing a hand maximum both offensively and defensively, 3♥ in example auction is purely competitive. This general meaning applies to all doubles through the 3 level where the opponents have a fit.

Support Doubles

After 1♦ -P-1M- 2 level bid or double, support doubles and redoubles are used.

When the opponents double a forcing artificial bid

A general principle should apply to openers rebids in sequences like 1♠ -2♥ -3♥ (game invite or better in spades)-D. Redouble shows a good high card hand and sets up forcing passes. A new suit implies slam interest, normally 5-5, and invites cue bidding. A rebid of 4♠ is good offensively but weak defensively, a rebid of 3♠ is forward going with a good distributional hand, and pass shows a bad opener.

When the opponents double a cue bid

When the opponents double a cue bid, redouble = second round control, usually a singleton, pass is forward going, and a return to agreed suit is weak.

Doubles of Weak Two Bids and Lebensohl

A double of a weak two bid can not always guarantee support for unbid minors. With the appropriate strength double 2♠ with 2452 shape (a later diamond rebid may have but does not guarantee extra values). With 2425 shape you should have slightly better than a minimum to double. We use reverse Lebensohl in response (3 level bids show reasonable suits with no game interest, 2NT is used with hands of 9+ HCP, with or without a stopper in spades. Opener continues by rebidding his cheapest minor (not forcing) or 3♥ with 5. If opener wishes to insist on game he must either jump or cue bid 3♠ (asks for 3NT with a sure spade stopper). If opener rebids 3 of a minor 3♥ by advancer is invitational, 3♠ creates a game force and asks for a stopper, 3♦ or a raise of the minor is not forcing. A do

After 2♠ -D-3♠ , advancer's double is perhaps best described as cooperative/responsive. It promises 8+ HCP with usually 2 or 3 spades. Opener is invited to bid a five card suit, bid 3 no trump with a stopper and a little extra, or to pass with a minimum shape double including at least 2 spades. With a singleton spade advancer must bid a suit unless his points are all primary, with little outside spades he must either pass or bid 3NT naturally, Similar principles apply to 2♥ -D-3♥ -D.

After 2M-2NT-P, 3♣ is Stayman , other bids are forcing.

Four Level Doubles

In general, all doubles at the four level or higher are pure penalty doubles. Where no force on the doubler's side applies, they will often include secondary trump tricks. When one or both sides have a fit, a double merely implies that the contract is almost certain to go down and that the doubler has no strong concealed support. A pull of a penalty double should generally imply a highly distributional hand with excellent prospects to make the contract bid. It is not used to show a hand weaker than expected defensively. If you deliberately overbid or misbid your hand, you should pull a double only with a freak shape or the assurance of a ten card fit.

When the opponents are sacrificing

Consider an auction like 1♦ -2♠ -3♥ -4♠ , with only your side vulnerable. It is useful to have forcing passes apply to this auction, allowing for better definition of free bids and double. Perhaps the best way to handle this situation is in terms of total tricks. We assume responders hand has one spade (two if opener has a singleton) and 5 hearts. Opener bids:

Double - hand has 18 or fewer total tricks

Pass - hand has 19 total tricks (implies 4 card heart support)

Bid - hand has 20+ total tricks (guarantees singleton or void in spades)

Competition over our 1NT opening

Versus Hamilton, Cappelletti and DON'T

1NT D (one suiter) ?

Stayman and transfers,

Redouble =7+HCP, usually 3 cards in all suits. Later double is 100% penalty, double by opener after redouble is 3+ trumps, decent defensive values.

Pass then double is penalty

If responder passes opener may double 2C relay with maximum hand and no weak doubleton

1NT 2♣ - (one suiter) ?

Double = 7+ HCP, usually 3+ cards in all suits, at least two clubs, asks for double of runout

2♦, 2♥, 2♠ = natural, competitive

2NT = minors

Pass then double is takeout, doubleton in suit doubled

1NT 2♦ (Majors) ?

Double = 7+ HCP, 3+ in both majors

Pass then double = penalty

1NT 2♣ or 2♦ (suit and higher) ?

Double = Penalty, 3+ of suit

Pass and double runout = Penalty, 4+ of suit

2M= competitive, could be good 4 card suit with doubleton in other major, singleton in minor bid

Competition over Stayman

After 1NT-P-2♣, if the opponents overcall at the two level, opener shows a major if possible at the two level, passes with three or more cards in the suit overcalled (responder may reopen with double with 2+ cards in opponents suit), or doubles negatively with a doubleton in the overcaller's suit and willingness to play in any of the other suits.

Versus Michaels

After 1♦-2♦, double is negative with minor values and 7 HCP, 2♥ is one suited competitive, 2♠ is game force, 3♣/♦ are weak, 2NT is forcing and natural.

Defense to opponents strong one club

One possible defense to a strong 1 club opening is DON'T

Double - reasonable one suiter(probably an opening hand)

1♦ - diamonds and a major

1♥ - majors

1♠ - spades and clubs

1NT - minors

2 bids - weak jumps, one suited

Reopening versus a preempt

Suppose the bidding goes P - P - 3x or 4x - P - P -? Partner is likely to have a reasonable hand and dummy will rarely come down with enough to make the contract. A protective double is thus the indicated action on many hands, and need not imply great support for unbid suits. After a 4♦ opening you might have as little as ♠ Q10x ♥ Axx ♦ 10x ♣ KQ10xx. Partner should usually pass, and should bid a major only with a good five card suit. This use of the double is far more likely than for example an 8 count with 4405 shape. We define a protective double as promising 3 card support for all unbid suits.

Defense to Flannery

Versus Flannery 2♦, Double=Strong nt, 2♥=takeout of hearts, 2NT=minors, 2♠/3m=natural

Versus Flannery 2♥, double=takeout, 2NT=15-18 with transfers

Defense to Unusual No Trump (Unusual vs Unusual)

After 1M-2NT, 3m is 10+ HCP with hearts/spades respectively, either 3+ support, or 5+ suit.

Bids of 3M are natural and weaker than 10 HCP, double is penalty

LEBENSOHL

The Lebensohl convention is used when the opponents compete over a 1NT opening with a two level

natural overcall, for example after 1NT-2♥ , responder can bid

2♠ - natural, competitive, five card suit or good four

3 of new suit - game force, five + card suit, could have slam interest

4♥ ,4♠ - to play, usually good six card suit, but limited high cards

3♥ - game force, 4 card spade suit, no heart stopper

3NT - game values but denies 4 spades or much help in hearts

Double - primarily penalty, a flat hand with at least 3 hearts and 22+ combined HCP if not strong trumps

2NT - Lebensohl, forces opener to bid 3♣ , then responder continues

Pass or 3♦ - to play, good 5+ suit, other values limited

3♥ - shows 4 spades and help in hearts, usually a balanced hand

3NT - denies four spades, promises a heart stopper

The above method is known as slow shows, since the direct cue bid or direct 3NT bid deny a stopper in the opponents suit (opener will pull with no stopper, sometimes with single stopper and secondary side cards. The slower auctions where responder first uses Lebensohl then cue bids or bids no trump promise a stopper in the opponents suit (the cue bid offers a choice of 3NT or 4♠), the delayed 3NT bid should be passed.

ONE AND TWO NO TRUMP OVERCALLS

In general, it is possible to use the same methods over a 1NT overcall as you would after a 1NT opening, transfers, Stayman, etc. However there are certain responses that do not make sense or would be little used after a 1NT overcall of a major suit opening. If the opening bid was 1 spade, you can play a bid of 2 spades by advancer as minor suit Stayman, but what about a transfer response of 2 hearts. To retain the normal meaning (5 card spade suit) is of course possible, but it is much less likely that you will hold 5 spades when opener is known to have 5. One possible treatment is to force the overcaller to always accept this transfer. If advancer passes he will have spades, perhaps ♠ Q109xx ♥ x ♦ Jxxx ♣ Qxx. If advancer continues after the transfer to spades, he would show a different type of hand, probably a strong one suiter like § = Stayman for unbid suit, then 3 of major denies four of other major, promises good stopper, 3♦ denies either major or good stopper

3♦ =transfer to hearts, weak or strong

3♥ =invitational, 5 or 6 spades

3♠ =minors, opener cannot rebid 3NT without double spade stopper

After a weak two heart bid and 2NT overcall

3♣ =stayman

3♦ =diamonds or minors, forcing

3♥ =transfer to spades, weak or strong

3♠ =invitational

TOTAL TRICKS

A useful rule in competitive auctions is the law of total tricks:

The number of tricks that East-West can make on a bridge hand when added to the number of tricks North-South can make is equal to the sum of the number of trumps each side has in their best fit.

For example, East-West have 9 spades, North-South have 9 hearts, then the total tricks on the hand is 18. If NS make 10 tricks in hearts then EW can most likely make 8 tricks in spades (10+8=18, same as total trumps). If NS make 9 tricks, then EW will also make 9.

The law of total tricks is not strictly a law (it does not work on every hand) but more of a guide. On normal hands it is often correct, because finesses that work for one side lose for the other side, so the total tricks the two sides can make stays the same.

A secondary rule derived from total tricks is:

The safety level for how high to bid in a competitive auction (your bid will be a make or a good save) is equal to the total trumps your side has on a hand.

For example, if your partner shows 5 spades, if you have 5 card support you can safely bid to the four level (declaring for 10 tricks, the same as your trumps), if you have only 4 trumps, the safety level is the three level.

BERGEN RAISES

Bergen raises are a method of raising major suit openings in a five card major suit system which were developed using the law of total tricks.

Single raise - 3 card support, 7-9 HCP

Double raise - 4 card support, preemptive, less than 7 HCP

Triple raise - 5 card support, about 7-9 HCP

3C - 4 card support, 7-9 HCP

3D - 4 card support, 10-12 HCP

forcing 1NT then 3 level raise - 10-12 HCP with three trumps

In most competitive auctions direct jump raises to the three or four level are total trick raises, base on good trump support and otherwise limited values. To show a strong raise you must cue bid first. Keep in mind that vulnerability is important, at unfavorable vulnerability bid one less than total tricks with a very flat hand or secondary cards in the opponent's suit. At favorable vulnerability you may want to bid one more than the total tricks might suggest.

In a 2 or 3 level balancing auction where your side has already bid a suit, a reopening double shows a generally balanced hand with two or three cards in the opponent's suit. Partner may convert these doubles if he determines that the total tricks are likely to be 14 (neither side has more than a 7 card fit). If a double is an option then a bid of a suit suggests either sound values, a singleton or small doubleton in the opponents suit. Holding ♠ xxx ♥ xxx ♦ AJxx ♣ KQx after 1♦ -P-2♦ -2♥ -P-P, total tricks suggests a reopening double rather than a 3♣ bid.

LOSING TRICK COUNT EVALUATION

Losing trick count is an aggressive method of hand evaluation which is useful for distributional hands, especially after an eight card or longer fit is established. The basic method:

1. Each suit has a maximum of 3 losers
2. For three or longer suits, count one loser for each of the ace, king and queen that is not held
3. For doubletons, count one loser for each of the ace and king that is not held
4. For singletons, count one loser if the ace is missing
5. For voids, count no losers

In the above method Qxx and Axx are both 2 losers, but these holding are hardly equal. To adjust for this disparity, add ½ a loser for each queen not balanced by an ace, subtract ½ a loser for each ace not balanced by a queen.

Typical loser counts in a big club system

Suit opening - 5 to 8 losers

Strong No trump opener - 7 losers

Strong One club opening - usually 5 or fewer

Precision Two Club opener - 4 to 6 losers

Two over one response - 8 or fewer losers

One level overcall - 9 or fewer losers

Cover Cards

Cover cards are winners that can cover possible losers in the other hand. Each ace is a cover card, each king is counted as a cover card also unless partner is known to be short. Also count a cover card for the queen at least three long in a suit partner has bid. Short suits outside the trump suit also count as cover cards. A doubleton is $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cover card, a singleton is 1 to 2 cover cards, a void is 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 cover cards. Note the value of short suit cover cards is highly variable, generally count the minimum cover cards if partner is strong (there are few losers to cover), near the maximum if partner is weak. Where possible, show short suit cover cards with splinter bids or void jumps, then the other hand adjusts his losers according to whether there are wasted cards in the short suit.

Some typical cover card values

Single raise of a major - 2 to 3 cover cards

Jump raise, Two over one 3 to 4 cover cards

Game forcing hand - 4+ cover cards

When one player has been raised, he should calculate his losing count and subtract the cover cards partner has shown to get the total losers in the hand. For example, you have a six loser hand as open and responder has shown invitational to game values (3+ cover cards). The combined hand will have $6-3=3$ losers, which indicates a ten trick contract is reasonable. If the hand is marginal you should still be aggressive if vulnerable atimps or are assured of a 9 card fit.

Michaels Cue Bid

The Michaels cue bid was invented by Mike Michaels, an American player. Over an opponents one level opening, a direct cue bid was originally a light takeout double showing length in all the unbid suits. The convention evolved quickly until today it is played as a two-suited bid. Over an opening bid in a minor, 2 of the minor promises at least 5-4 in the majors, strength varies with vulnerability and may be as little as 8 high card points. In this regard it is similar to an opening bid of 2 hearts in your methods. Over a major suit opening, the direct cue bid promises at least 5-5 in the other major and an unspecified minor. If the advancer (overcaller's partner) has a fit for one of the known suits he bids the limit of his hand in that suit. Over a Michaels in a major he responds 2NT (or 3NT if the cheapest bid) to ask overcaller to name his minor suit. If advancer bids a suit of his own, he will usually have a good six-card suit. Over a Michaels cue bid of two of a minor, advancer can bid 2

Michaels cue bids are often played after 1m-P-1NT also. Advancers 2m is a weak takeout into the majors, double shows a three suited takeout with opening strength or better. After 1m-P-1M, there is no universal agreement on how to play Michaels. Some people play 2m as natural, 2M as a 5-5 takeout to the unbid suits. I prefer to play 2m as Michaels and 2M as natural.

Michaels cue bids are sometimes played over an opponent's weak two bid opening. After 2♦, 3♦ is a strong takeout with 5-5 in the majors. Over 2M, 3M is a strong takeout with 5-5 in the other major and a minor. The latter treatment is not universal, some people play 3M as an unspecified strong hand, inviting advancer to bid 3NT with a stopper in the major (overcaller probably has a long running minor and about 8 fast winners). If you play 3M this way, you might consider Leaping Michaels, where a jump to 4 of a minor shows 5-5 in that suit and the other minor, with 8+ playing tricks.

Use of the unusual no trump and Michaels allows description of most two suited hands directly over an opening bid. It is common to play Michaels as either weak (8-11 HCP) or strong (9+ tricks), where the cue bidder will raise the suit his partner picks.

The only serious contender to Michaels is top and bottom cue bids. These bids also show two suiters in the higher and lower ranking of the unbid suits, typically at least 4-5 with opening strength or better. Opportunities for this type of cue bid are less frequent than Michaels, and many players today would overcall 1 club with 1 spade on ♠ AQxx ♥ x ♦ KQJxx ♣ xxx, the type of hand for which top and bottom cue bids were designed.

Minimum Michael's hands

1♣ -2♣ favorable vult ♠ Qxxxx ♥ AQxx ♦ xx ♣ xx

Unfavorable ♠ Qxxxx ♥ AQxxx ♦ xx ♣ x

1♠ -2♠ unfavorable ♠ x ♥ QJ9xx ♦ AQ10xx ♣ xx

VERY SIMPLE BRIDGE NUMBERS

On many hands there will be a choice of lines of play which will depend on how various suits divide. At the end of this article are the actual numbers, but there is a handy rule which will help if you can not remember the numbers.

1. If there are an even number of cards missing in a suit (2,4,6) the chances that the suit breaks evenly are less than 50%, the most likely divisions are the first uneven divisions (2-0,3-1,or 4-2)
2. If there are an odd number of cards missing in a suit (3,5,7) the most likely division of the suit is the most even one (2-1,3-2 or 4-3).

So when ever possible avoid playing for exactly equal splits in suit, (1-1,2-2,or 3-3).

Restricted Choice

Suppose you hold one of the following in the opponents trump suit

1. singleton jack
2. singleton queen
3. queen and jack doubleton

These three holdings occur almost equally often. When declarer plays the ace, you must play the ace in case one, and can choose to play the jack in case three(we will say that the choice is the queen 50% of the time and the jack 50% of the time). Therefore when the ace drops your jack, it is more likely you started with it alone than as part of the queen-jack pair. Similarly if you play the queen it is more likely you started with it alone than have played it from the queen-jack. In cases one or two you have no choice of play, we use the term "restricted choice".

So when you hold A10xx facing K9xxx in trumps and lead low towards the ace and your left hand opponent plays the queen or jack, it is correct to finesse the nine on the second round of the suit, playing the opponent for the holding one or two where there is no choice in his play.

Clues from other suits

We all know that on some hands it is possible to work out the distribution of one suit from the observed way that other suits break. Often the bidding or the opening lead will give clues as to how one suit is breaking which will help in playing another suit. Suppose for example a player has opened with a weak two bid in hearts promising a six card suit, which means his partner has two cards in the suit. You have to guess the location of a queen in another suit. Before you knew anything about the hand the odds were 50-50 for either player to hold the queen, but now the odds are 11 to 7 that the weak two bidders partner has

the queen you are looking for. To work this out, subtracting from 13 the 6 heart cards leaves the opener with 7 unknown cards, one of which may be the queen. His partner has two hearts, hence 11 unknown cards.

The exact numbers in the above example are not as important as the principle, when a player is known to be long in a suit, play his partner for any missing cards. Exceptions can occur to this rule when the player with the length has also shown the stronger hand.

Suit Breaks

Your combined length (hand and dummy) is

11 cards - 2-0=52% 1-1=48%

10 cards - 2-1=78% 3-0=22%

9 cards - 3-1=50% 2-2=40% 4-0=10%

8 cards - 3-2=68% 4-1=28% 5-0=4%

7 cards - 4-2=48% 3-3=36% 5-1=14% 6-0=2%

If there are an odd number of cards missing, the suit will usually split as evenly as possible, but if there are an even number of cards missing, the even split (1-1,2-2,3-3) is always the second most likely case and less than 50%

Some interesting 1C openers

1) ♠ Axx	Kxx	1 ♣	1 ♦
♥ AKQx	J97	1 ♥	1 ♠
♦ AKQxx	9xx	3 ♦	3 ♥ (three)
♣ x	xxxx	3 ♠	5 ♦ (4 ♦ would show no useful card)

P

2) ♠ AKJx	10xxx	1 ♣	1 ♦
♥ AKJx	xxx	2 ♥	2 ♠(weak)
♦ -	Kxx	4 ♠	P

♣ AQxxx 109x

3) ♠ AK	Q109xx	1♣	1♦
♥ AQxxx	Jxx	2NT	3♥ (transfer)
♦ Axx	9xxx	3♠	3NT
♣ Axx	K	4♥ (2-5 in majors)	P

4) ♠ AK10x	Jxx	1♣	1♠
♥ AQJx	K10x	1NT	2NT
♦ Q	K10xxx	3♣	3♦
♣ AQJx	K10	3NT	P

5) ♠ AQx	9xx	1♣	2♣
♥ AQ	K10xxx	2NT	3♦
♦ 109xx	AKxxx	3♥	4♦
♣ AKJx	----	5NT	6♦

5NT asks three top diamonds (actually for Q)

6) ♠ AK10xx	Jxxx	1♣	1♠
♥ A10xx	QJxx	2♠	4♦
♦ AK	--	4♠	5♣
♣ xx	AKxxx	5♦	5♥
		6♠	p

An interesting problem in cue bidding after a splinter. Opener knows his ♦ K is not particularly useful so does not cue bid 4♥ even though he has adequate controls for slam. Responder might have continued with 4NT (general try with usually two extra queens) but chose 5♣ instead. At that point opener has a choice to bid 5♦ or 5♥. At the time I felt 5♥ would ask responder to continue with the heart queen, opener having AKxx or more likely AJxx in hearts. My choice of 5♦ has to imply some kind of heart control since, with

♠ AKQxxx ♥ xx ♦ AKJx ♣ x I would bid 5♠

7) ♠AKx	Q10xxx	1♣	1♦
♥--	Kxx	3♦	3♠
♦AKQxx	9x	4♣	5♣
♣KQJxx	xxx	6♣	p

Does 4♣ show a 5-5 hand, it probably should. Does 3♠ show a suit or a stopper, that is less clear.

8) ♠AKxxx	QJxx	1♣	1♦
♥AJ10xx	Kx	1♠	3♠ (4 card support)
♦---	109xx	4♣	4♥
♣AKQ	xxx	5♦	5♥ (queen or doubleton)
		5NT	6♦ (trump queen)
		7♠	

9) ♠AKxx	x	1♣	1♦
♥KJ9xx	Ax	1♠	2♦
♦--	xxxxx	2♥	3♣ (5-5)
♣AKQ9	Jxxxx	5♣	5♥
		6♣	

10) ♠AKQ9x	xxx	1♣	1♦
♥xx	Q9x	2♠	2NT
♦A	10x	3♣	4♠ (5♣ atimps)
♣AKxxx	QJxxx		

Showing how to reach top spot at imps or matchpoints.

11) ♠KJxx	9	1♣	1♦
♥AKQx	xx	1NT	3♦
♦A	QJxxxx	P	
♣A109x	Qxxx		

Three suiters are tough, opener devalues hand with 1NT rebid, 3♦ invites with good six card suit.

12) ♠Q	xxxxxx	1♣	1♦
♥Q	109xx	4♣	4♦
♦AKQJx	xxx		
♣AQJxxx	x		

Illustration of the 4♣ rebid

13) ♠Ax	xxxx	1♣	1♦
♥Qx	10xx	3NT	P
♦AJ	xxxx		
♣AKQ10xx	xx		

3NT seems the practical rebid, especially in light of the lack of competitive bidding.

14) ♠AQJ	xxxx	1♣	1♦
♥AKJ	10xx	2♣	2♦
♦x	AJ97	3NT	P
♣KQJ10xx	xx		

It is unusual to rebid 2♣ with a hand this strong but the only alternative is 3♣, which makes it more difficult to reach a major suit game, and could get the partnership too high opposite a bust.

15) ♠AK10x	Q9xxxx	1♣	1♦
♥---	QJ109xx	2♥	2NT
♦AKxxx	x	3♥	3♠ (forcing)
♣AKxx	x	4♥ (void)	4NT
		5♣	7♠

16) ♠AQ	xx	1♣	1♦
♥AJx	109xxx	2♦	P
♦KQJ109xx	xx		
♣K	J10xxx		

17) ♠AKQJ
♥----
♦AJxx
♣AKQxx

8432
Axx
8x
J9xx

1♣
2♥
3♥
4♥
5♣

1♦
2NT
3♠
4♠
6♣

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