

Bridge Notes – Standard American 5-Card Majors

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1. Bidding Values

High Card Points (HCP): Ace – 4, King – 3, Queen – 2, Jack – 1

Long-Suit Points (LP): Add 1 point for every card after the 4th in each long suit

Short-Suit Points (SP): Doubleton – 1 Singleton – 2, Void – 3

Dummy Points (DP): Doubleton – 1 Singleton – 3, Void – 5

Before (Suit) Trump Fit is found, or when playing in NoTrump contract:

Both Partners	Total Points = HCP + LP
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After (Suit) Trump Fit is found:

Declarer	Total Points = HCP + SP
Dummy	Total Points = HCP + DP Also, add 1 point for 4-card support and 3 points for 5-card support

NOTE: Count *either* the HCP *or* the distributional points for a short suit containing wasted honors (e.g. singleton K, Q, J or doubleton KQ, KJ, QJ), but not both.

Hand Evaluation Adjustments

PLUS FACTORS	MINUS FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly Aces and Kings (primary honors) • Holding two long suits (6-4, 5-5, 7-4, etc.) • High Cards in Long Suits • Lots of intermediates (10, 9, 8, etc.) in long suits • Length in Partner's suit(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of Jacks and Queens (secondary honors) • 4-3-3-3 distribution • Honors (except Ace) in Short Suits • No Aces and/or unsupported Jacks • Misfit hand

In-and-Out Valuation

It is better to have Aces and Kings (primary honors) in outside suits and Jacks and Queens (secondary honors) in partner's suits, than primary honors in partner's suit and secondary honors in outside suits.

Point Requirements

The combined point requirements of the partnership to make a game or slam are given below.

Game	3 No Trump	25 points
	4 of major: 4H or 4S	26 points
	5 of minor: 5C or 5D	29 points
Slam	Mini Slam: 6C, 6D, 6H, 6S, or 6NT	33 points
	Grand Slam: 7C, 7D, 7H, 7S, or 7NT	37 points

Rule of 20

You can open the bidding in 1st or 2nd place (with your normal 1-level bid) if the *sum of your HCP* and the number of cards in your *two longest suits* is equal to **20 or more**.

ADJUSTMENTS: *Subtract* 1 point for wasted honors (e.g. singleton K, Q, J or doubleton KQ, KJ, QJ) or for too many Queens and Jacks without higher honors in those suits. *Add* one point for two or more 10s, especially in suits containing honors, or if you have three or more Aces.

Rule of 15

When you have less than 13 HCP, you can open in 4th place (with your normal 1-level bid) if the *sum of your HCP* and the *number of spades* in your hand is equal to **15 or more**. With 13 or more HCP, always open.

2. Opening Bids

Unbalanced Hands

An unbalanced hand is a hand with at least one 5-card suit (or 4-4-4-1 distribution). You generally need at least 13 points to open the bidding unless your hand satisfies the Rule of 20 or the Rule of 15. Also, stretch to open a hand in 3rd seat with even 10-11 points if you have a good suit, or if you can safely pass any suit partner bids.

The rules for opening an unbalanced hand are:

0-12 points *Pre-emptive bids only*

With a weak hand containing a long suit that *cannot* be opened at the one level (even with the rule of 20), make a pre-emptive opening bid. For all weak pre-emptive bids, the suit bid must be of good quality, i.e. with 2 of the top 3, or 3 of the top 5 honors.

- With 6-card suit, open 2 of the suit.
- With 7-card suit, open 3 of the suit.
- With 8-card suit, open 4 of the suit.

With no 6-card or longer suit, pass. However, you can open in 3rd place or make an overcall with 10+ points and a good 5-card suit.

13-21 points *1-level suit opening*

Open 1 of the longest suit (1C, 1D, 1H, 1S). With two or more 5+card suits of equal length, open the higher-ranking suit first (e.g. Spades before Hearts).

22+ points *Game-forcing hand*

Open 2 Clubs. This is the *only forcing bid* by opener. This bid can also be used with a hand containing less than 22 points that is within one trick of game. This is an artificial bid that says nothing about opener's club holding.

Balanced Hands

A balanced hand is a hand with no singleton and at most one doubleton. Examples of distribution are 4-4-3-2 or 4-3-3-3. Sometimes a hand with 5 of a weak minor and a 5-3-3-2 distribution can be opened 1NT if it has the right number of points. In that case, remember to add one point for the 5-card suit.

The rules for opening a balanced hand are:

0-12 points: Pass unless your hand satisfies the Rule of 20 or the Rule of 15.

13-14 points: Open longest minor and re-bid 1NT on the next round unless supporting partner's suit.

- With equal length in the minors, bid 1D if the two suits are at least 4 cards in length.
- If the minor suits are 3-3 in length, bid 1C.

15-17 points: Open 1NT.

18-19 points: Open longest minor and Jump to 2NT on re-bid.

20-21 points: Open 2NT.

22-24 points: Open 2C and bid 2NT on re-bid.

25+ points: Open 2C and bid 3NT on re-bid.

Quick Trick Requirements

Quick Tricks: **AK** – 2, **AQ** – 1½, **A** – 1, **KQ** – 1, **Kx** – ½

The Quick Trick requirements for various opening bids are as follows:

- 1½ Quick Tricks are needed for a pre-emptive opening bid at the 2-level or higher.
- 2 Quick Tricks are needed for a one-level opening bid. Stretch to open a hand with 2½ Quick Tricks.
- 4 Quick Tricks are needed for a 2 Clubs opening bid. Always open 2C with 6 Quick Tricks.

3. Response Bids

Responses to Opening Bid of 1 of a suit

Before responding to partner's opening bid, re-evaluate your hand. If you have a fit, add dummy points to your HCP, else add length points.

0-5 points **Pass**

6-9 points **Weak Hand**

- With support for partner's suit, **raise** to the two level (e.g. 1H-**2H**). However, with 5+ trumps, bid game right away (1H-**4H**) if the hand evaluates to 13 points or more after adding points for distribution and extra trump length. This type of hand is called a **weak-freak**.
- Else, bid a **new 4+card suit** if you can do so at the **one** level (e.g. 1C-**1S**). Responder cannot bid a new suit at the two level with less than 10 points. With more than one 4+ card suit, bid up the ladder to keep the bidding low.
- Else bid **1NT**. Note that if there is an intervening bid, 1NT promises a stopper in the opponent's suit.

10-12 points **Invitational Hand**

- Bid a **new suit** at the cheapest level (**forcing for one round**). Do not support partner's suit (even with support) or bid 1NT since that shows a weak hand. You can support partner or bid 1NT on the next round.

13-16 points **Game-Going Hand**

- With support for partner's suit, **jump-raise** to the three level (e.g. 1H-**3H**). With 4-trump support and a singleton or void on the side, you can **splinter** (double jump-shift) into your short suit to invite slam. **Forcing to game**.
- Else bid a **new suit** at the cheapest level (**forcing for one round**). Responder may bid a new suit at the 1 level with 4+ cards. Bid of a new suit at the 2 level by responder always promises at least 10 points **and** 5 cards in the bid suit.
- Else, with a balanced hand and no support for partner's suit, bid **2NT**.

17+ points **Slam-Invitational Hand**

- **Jump-shift** in a new suit. This is forcing to game and **slam-invitational**.
 - Re-bid in NT next with a balanced hand
 - Re-bid your suit if you are unbalanced
 - Start cue-bidding if partner supports your suit
- With a balanced hand and no support for partner, bid **3NT**.

NOTE:

- 1) *To support partner's major suit opening, you need at least 3 cards in the suit. To support clubs you need at least 5 cards, and to support diamonds you need at least 4 cards.*
- 2) *New suit bid by responder is **forcing for one round**.*
- 3) *After an intervening overcall or take-out double, jump-shift or jump-raise by responder is **weak** and pre-emptive. To show a strong hand (10+ points), cue-bid the opponents' suit or re-double.*

Responses to Opening Bid of 3 of a suit

< 17 points Pass. However with 3+ card support and a **weak** hand, you can raise partner to continue the preempt.

17+ points

- If partner has bid a major, raise partner's suit to game (even without support).
- If partner has bid a minor, bid 3 NT with three cards in partner's suit. Else pass.

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Responses to Opening Bid of 1 NT

< 8 HCP **No long suit**

- Pass.

< 8 HCP **5+ card suit**

- With a 5+ card major, transfer to your suit (2D→2H, 2H→2S) and then pass.
- If you have an *extremely* weak hand (less than 5 points) with at least 6 Clubs or Diamonds, bid 2S to transfer to 3C. If Clubs is your suit, pass. If Diamonds is your suit, bid 3D. Partner must then pass. With 6 or more points, do *not* transfer to a minor.

8+ HCP **No 4 or 5-card major - Balanced Hand (*)**

When you have no 5-card major, with either a balanced hand or a long minor:

- **8-9** points: Bid 2 NT to *invite game*.
Opener will pass with min (15-16) and bid 3 NT with max (17 points).
- **10-14** points: Bid 3 NT. Opener must pass.
- **15-16** points: Bid 4 NT to *invite mini-slam*.
Opener will pass with min (15-16) and bid 6 NT with max (17 points).
- **17-18** points: Bid 6 NT. Opener must pass.
- **19-20** points: Bid 5 NT to *invite grand slam*.
Opener will bid 6NT with min (15-16) and 7 NT with max (17 points).
- **21+** points: Bid 7 NT.

8+ HCP **4-card major (or 5-4 in the majors) – Stayman Convention**

- Bid 2 Clubs asking partner to bid a 4-card major if he has one.
- If opener has a 4-card major he must bid it, else he bids 2 Diamonds to deny a major.
- If opener bids your major, invite game in that major with 8-9 points and jump to game in that major with 10-14 points. With more than 15 points, explore slam.
- If opener bids the other major and you don't have a fit, or if he bids 2 Diamonds, you now show your points by bidding NT as with a balanced hand above (*).
- Opener now corrects to the appropriate level of NT as above (*).
- With 5-4 in the majors, responder starts with Stayman 2C. If opener bids a major, raise it to the 3-level (8-9 points) or to game (10+ points). If opener denies a 4-card major, bid your 5-card major at the 2-level (8-9 points) or 3-level (10+ points). Opener will raise the 5-card major with 3-card support, else bid 3NT.

8+ HCP **5-card major – Jacoby Transfer**

- Responder transfers to his 5-card major by bidding the suit just below it. So 2D is a transfer to Hearts and 2H is a transfer to Spades. Opener must announce the transfer by saying “*transfer*”.
- Opener *must* accept the transfer by bidding the suit shown by responder (2D→2H, 2H→2S), even when he is short in that suit. With maximum hand (17+ points) and 4 trumps, opener can jump to 3 Hearts or Spades: this is called a “*Super Accept*”.
- Responder now shows his points by bidding NT as with a balanced hand above (*).
- If opener has actual (3-card) support for responder's major, he will correct to 3 or 4 of the major depending on whether he has a minimum or maximum.
- If opener has no support for responder's major, he will correct to the appropriate level of NT as in the case above (*).

8+ HCP **6+ card major**

- **8-9** points: Transfer to your major suit (2D→2H, 2H→2S), and then re-bid 3 of the suit to invite game. Opener passes with a minimum (15-16) and bids game with a maximum (17+ points).
- **10+** points: Transfer to your major suit (2D→2H, 2H→2S), and then bid game. With 15+ points, transfer and then explore slam.

NOTE: Responses to 2 NT are similar, except that responses are one level higher and only 5 points are needed to respond.

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4. Opener's Re-bids

After a 1-level suit opening, a 1NT response from partner is a limit bid (6-9 points), so you are allowed to pass with a minimum. However, you should give preference to a new 4-card suit or re-bid a 6-card suit if possible. Partner is then allowed to pass or give preference. However, a new suit bid by un-passed responder is *forcing*.

The possible re-bids after a 1-level suit opening and a suit response are as follows:

- 13-15 points** **Minimum Hand:** *Minimum re-bid shows minimum hand*
- With support for partner's suit (4 cards), *raise* partner's suit one level. **Limit Bid.**
 - With no support for partner's suit but a 6-card suit, *re-bid* it at lowest level. **Limit Bid.**
 - Else, bid a new suit if you can do so at the *one* level. You **cannot** bid a new suit at the *two* level, since that promises 16+ points.
 - Else, re-bid **1NT** with a balanced hand. **Limit Bid.**
- 16-18 points** **Invitational Hand**
- With support for partner's suit (4 cards), *jump-raise* partner's suit (e.g. 1H-1S-3S).
 - With no support for partner's suit but a 6-card suit, *jump re-bid* it (e.g. 1H-1S-3H).
 - Else, bid a new suit (with at least 4 cards) at the cheapest level.
 - Else, re-bid **2NT** with a balanced hand. Should be closer to 18 HCP for this bid.
- 19-21 points** **Maximum Hand**
- With support for partner's suit (4 cards), *raise* partner's suit *to game* (e.g. 1C-1H-4H). With more than 10 points, partner can explore slam.
 - With a balanced hand and no support for partner's suit, *bid 3NT* (e.g. 1H-1S-3NT).
 - With no support for partner's suit and an unbalanced hand, *jump-shift* to a new suit (e.g. 1C-1H-2S). **Forcing to game.**

NOTE:

- 1) *If you know where game is, bid it. Don't pass the buck back to partner especially if he has made a limit bid. If you are not sure, invite game by raising one level or bidding a new suit. If partner's bid is not limited, you should usually keep the bidding open.*
- 2) *With a 6-4 distribution in your two longest suits, open the 6-card suit and then bid the 4-card suit before re-bidding the 6-card suit (unless you have a minimum hand).*

5. Balancing

After an auction like *1 of a suit – Pass – Pass*, you may need to reopen the bidding in the pass-out seat. You need at least **8 points** to balance. The bidding here is the same as in 1st or 2nd seat, except you mentally **add 3 points** to your HCP.

- **Minimum suit bid** (1D-Pass-Pass-1H): Shows **8-14 points**, usually a **5+card suit**. A two-level (non-jump) suit bid promises 10+ points.
- **A jump in a new suit** (1H-Pass-Pass-2S): Shows **13-16 points** and a **strong 6+card suit**. In the balancing seat, a jump overcall is intermediate and *invitational*.
- **Double:** For takeout, showing **10+ points with shortness** in the opponent's suit. A takeout double can also be used to start the description of a better hand (**15+ points**) that was too strong to balance with a simple suit bid or 1NT. After partner responds to your double, you can show the stronger hand by re-bidding 1NT (to show 15-18 pts.) or freely bidding a new suit (to show 15+ points and a 5+ card suit).
- **1NT** (1D-Pass-Pass-1NT): About **10-14 points with stoppers** (or moderate length) in the opponent's suit. With 15-18 points, start with a double, and re-bid 1NT.
- **Jump to 2NT** (1S-Pass-Pass-2NT): This shows a **balanced hand with 19-21 points**. If playing Unusual 2NT, this shows length in the two lower un-bid suits.
- **Cue-bid of opponent's suit** (1H-Pass-Pass-2H): This shows a strong (22+ points), game-forcing hand. If playing Michael's cue-bids, this shows a two-suited hand.

Responses

Since you add 3 points when balancing, you **subtract 3 points** from your HCP when responding to a bid made in the pass-out seat. Therefore responder needs at least 8 points to respond to partner's minimum suit bid, and 10-11 points to respond to partner's 1NT bid. To make a jump-bid in response to a double you need 12+ points.

6. Competitive Bidding

Requirements for Take-out Doubles & Overcalls

After an opponent has opened the bidding with a one-level *suit* bid, you can compete with an overcall or take-out double as follows. Note that a double of opponent's 1NT opening is *always* for penalty (shows 15-18 points). However, a double of a 1NT response (e.g. 1H-Pass-1NT-**Dbl**) is a takeout double for the un-bid suits.

Unbalanced or Semi-balanced Hand

0-9 points: Pass. However, you can make a jump overcall with a 6+card suit (see below).

10-16 points:

- **Overcall:** With a good 5-card or longer suit (see suit quality test below) you can make a (non-jump) overcall in that suit. 2-level overcall needs stronger (near opening) hand. Relax point requirements by 2 points when non-vulnerable.

Suit Quality Test for overcalls: Length of the suit plus the number of honors in the suit should be greater than or equal to the level of overcall. Count the 10 as an honor only when accompanied by higher honors.

- **Take-out Double:** Make a *take-out double* if you cannot make an overcall, and your hand meets these requirements:

- *Opening strength* (13+ points including *Dummy Points*),
- At least **3 cards in each un-bid suit**, and
- *Shortness* in the opponent's suit (no longer than a doubleton)

The perfect distribution for a takeout double is 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 with the singleton or void in the opponents' suit. 4-4-3-2, 5-4-3-1, 5-3-3-2 are also acceptable.

17-21 points: Start with a *take-out double*, and bid your long suit on the next round. This shows a hand too strong to make a simple overcall.

22+ points: *Cue-bid* the opponents' suit (example 1S-2S). This shows an extremely strong game-forcing hand that you would normally open with a 2C bid. **Forcing to game.**

Balanced Hand With a Stopper

0-11 points Pass.

12-14 points: Make a *take-out* double if your hand meets the above requirements for a take-out double, else *pass*.

15-18 points: Make a **1 NT overcall** (Promises Stopper). Partner can now use Stayman or Jacoby Transfers.

19-21 points: Start with a *take-out double* and *re-bid NT*. (Promises Stopper)

22+ points: Start with a *take-out double* and *jump in NT*. (Promises Stopper)
You can also start with a *cue-bid* of the opponents' suit to **force game**.

NOTE: If you have an opening or near-opening hand, but your hand does not meet the requirements for a takeout double, a suit overcall or a NT overcall, you may need to pass on the first round and hope partner can re-open the bidding with a take-out double or overcall.

Jump Overcalls

A jump overcall is a pre-emptive bid showing a long suit of good quality (i.e. with 2 of the top 3, or 3 of the top 5 honors) and 6-10 points, mostly *in* the suit bid. The level of the overcall depends on the length of the suit:

- 2-level jump overcall (e.g. 1C-2H) shows a 6-card suit.
- 3-level jump overcall (e.g. 1C-3H or 1S-3H) shows a 7-card suit.
- 4-level jump overcall (e.g. 1C-4H or 1S-4H) shows an 8-card suit.

The requirements and responses for these bids are the same as those for pre-emptive 2 and 3-level opening bids.

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Responses to Take-Out Double

A take-out double is always *forcing for one round* and asks partner to bid his longest suit. Responses are:

Unbalanced Hand

0-9 points: Bid longest suit as cheaply as possible, even if it is a 4-card suit. You may even need to bid a 3-card suit on occasion if your longest suit happens to be the opponents' suit.

10-12 points: Jump-bid best suit. *Invitational*.

13+ points:

- If you have at least 5 cards in an un-bid major, *jump to game* in that major since partner must have at least 3 cards in the suit.
- If your long suit is minor, *bid 3 NT* with stoppers in the opponents' suit, else bid game in the minor.
- With two long un-bid suits or no 5-card suit, *cue-bid* opponents' suit (e.g. 1H-Dbl-Pass-2H) to get preference from partner. This is *forcing to game*.

Balanced Hand

< 6 points: Bid your longest suit as cheaply as possible. You are too weak to bid NT.

6-9 points: Bid 1 NT with stoppers in the opponents suit.

10-12 points: Bid 2 NT with stoppers in the opponents suit. *Invitational*.

13+ points: Bid 3 NT with stoppers in the opponents suit.

Free Bid:

After RHO bids a suit (or NT) or raises LHO's suit over partner's double, any bid is a *free bid* (since you are not *required* to bid any more) showing 6+ points including distribution. However, if RHO re-doubles, any bid is weak.

Double:

A double after the opponents have *bid and raised* a suit is a *responsive double*. This shows support for all the un-bid suits and asks partner to choose a suit.

Example: 1H-Dbl-2H-Dbl shows support for Clubs, Diamonds & Spades.

Pass:

By passing you are converting a take-out double to a penalty double. To do this, you must have a strong hand with 5+ cards in the opponents' suit, and at least 3 sure tricks in that suit.

Re-bids by Take-out Doubler

After a 1-level suit response by partner to a takeout double, possible re-bids are:

12-15 points: **Minimum hand** - Since partner could have 0 points and has a max of 8 points, pass.

16-18 points: **Intermediate hand** - Raise partner to invite game when partner has 8 or more points.

19+ points: **Maximum hand** - Jump-raise partner to invite game when partner has 6 or more points.

Responses after Intervening Take-Out Double

After an opponent makes an intervening take-out double over partner's one-level suit opening bid, your possible responses are:

0-5 points: Pass.

6-9 points:

- With support for partner's suit, raise it to the level of the law of total tricks. So bids of 1H-Dbl-3H or 1H-Dbl-4H are pre-emptive showing long trumps.
- Else, bid your best suit as cheaply as possible at the one level. You are too weak to make a (non-jump) bid of a new suit at the 2-level, since that shows 10+ points.
- A jump-shift in a new suit shows a long (6+card) suit and a weak hand (6-9 points). *Note:* A double jump-shift is still a splinter bid.

10+ points: *Re-double* to show strength. *Any* other response shows less than 10 points. With support for partner, start with a re-double and raise partner's suit on the next round.

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Responses to Overcall

0-7 points: Pass. However, you can raise partner with as little as 6 points.

With Support for Partner's Suit

6-9 points: Raise partner's suit to the level of your combined trumps (Law of Total Tricks), i.e. with 3 trumps raise to the two level, with 4 trumps raise to the three level, etc.

10+ points: *Cue-bid* the opponents' suit. This shows a limit raise or better, i.e. at least 3 trumps and 10+ points. Do *not* cue-bid without support. *Invitational*.

Partner will re-bid his suit with a minimum (8-12), invite (jump re-bid) with an opening hand (13-15), and bid game with a maximum (16+ points). If partner's suit is a *minor*, consider instead bidding **2NT** with adequate stoppers in the opponents' suit.

Without Support for Partner's Suit and Good 5-card Side Suit

8+ points: Bid new side suit. *Forcing for one round* (unless passed hand). Both partners now bid naturally to find the right level.

Without Support for Partner's Suit, Balanced hand with stoppers in opponents' suit

The bidding is the same as after partner opens; just need 2 more points.

8-11 points: Bid 1 NT.

12-14 points: Bid 2 NT. *Invitational*.

15+ points: Bid 3 NT. With no stoppers, cue-bid to show game-forcing hand with no fit.

Responsive Double

A double after opponents have *bid and raised* a suit (and partner has overcalled) is a responsive double showing tolerance for partner's suit, and support for the un-bid suits with some values to compete.

Example: 1D-1S-2D-**Dbl** shows 2+ spades, and 4+ cards each in Clubs and Hearts.

Responses after Intervening Overcall

After an opponent makes an intervening (suit) overcall over partner's one-level suit opening bid, your possible responses are as follows.

0-5 points: Pass.

6-9 points:

- With support for partner's suit, raise it to the level of the law of total tricks. So bids of 1H-1S-**3H** or 1H-1S-**4H** are pre-emptive showing long trumps.
- Else, bid your best suit as cheaply as possible at the *one* level. You are too weak to bid a new suit at the 2-level, since that shows 10+ points. You can however make a negative double (e.g. 1C-1S-**Dbl**) to show an un-bid major.
- With no suit of your own and stopper(s) in the opponent's suit, bid 1NT.

10+ points:

- With support for partner's suit, *cue-bid* the opponents' overcalled suit. Note that a simple raise or jump-raise would show less than 10 points.
- With no support for partner's suit, you can bid a new suit at the cheapest level. Note that a non-jump bid of a new suit at the 2-level shows 10+ points and a 5+card suit.
- With a balanced hand and stopper(s) in the opponent's suit, bid 2NT with 10-12 points and 3NT with 13+ points.
- A jump-shift in a new suit still shows a strong hand (17+ points) though this is rare after an overcall. A double jump-shift is still a splinter, as is a jump cue-bid.

NOTE: Over an intervening *NT* overcall, a double is for *penalty* and promises 10+ points.

Bridge Notes – Standard American 5-Card Majors

Support Doubles

The support double is a double used by *opener* after partner makes a suit response and the next player interferes. The support double is *not* penalty-oriented, but shows exactly **3-card support** for partner and unlimited strength. A direct *raise*, consequently, shows **4-card support**, while any other action denies support. If the opponents' interference is in the form of a double, a redouble by opener can be used to show 3-card support.

Examples: 1D-Pass-1H-1S-**Dbl** shows exactly 3 hearts, as does 1D-Pass-1H-**Dbl-ReDouble**

1C-1D-1H-2D-**2H** shows exactly 4 hearts.

1H-Pass-1S-2C-**2H** shows 6+ hearts, and denies spade support.

Support doubles are on through all competition up to and including a bid of 2H by RHO.

Defending against Pre-empts and Weak-Twos

After an opponent has made a pre-emptive opening bid, you need at least an opening hand to make any bid. Your choices are as follows:

- **Double** (for takeout) with an opening hand (13+ points) and at least 4 cards in the un-bid majors. Partner may pass with some length in preemptor's suit if he has no major-suit fit with your hand.
- **Overcall** (without jumping, e.g. 3H-3S) with a good, long suit. The longer the suit, the fewer points are required to overcall. The higher the level of the overcall, the stronger the hand needed. At the two level, opening strength (13+ points) is enough. At higher levels you need 16+ points.
- Overcall **2NT** over a weak-two bid with stoppers in preemptor's suit and a balanced 15-18 point hand.
- Try **3NT** over a 3-level pre-empt with two stoppers in preemptor's suit and 16+ points.
- **DO NOT preempt over a preempt.** After a preemptive bid, all jumps are strong.

7. The Law of Total Tricks

This law is only to be used for *competitive bidding*, i.e. when your side has less than 26 combined points, and you are competing for a part-score contract or sacrifice. The Law of Total Tricks states that ***you are safe in bidding up to the level of your combined trumps***. For example, with 8 combined trumps, you can safely bid to the two level; with 9 trumps you can bid to the three level; and with 10 you are safe bidding to the four level.

The corollary to this is that ***you should bid till the opponents have passed the safe level of their contract***. You should almost never let your opponents play in a 2-level suit contract when they have a fit. Even if you don't always make your contract, you will do better than if you had allowed your opponents to play in their part-score contract. However, be wary of bidding on when you have length and/or strength in the opponents suit.

8. Weak-2 Bids

Opening Weak 2s

The requirements to open a hand with a 2D, 2H or 2S bid are as follows:

- **Six-card suit of good quality:** i.e. a suit with two of the top three, or three of the top five honors. In general, most of the points must be *in* the suit bid. Another way of expressing this is that the hand must have at least *1½ Quick Tricks*, mostly *in* the suit bid.
- Not enough to open the hand at the one level (even with Rule of 20). Usually **6-10 points**.
- Avoid preempting with a 4-card major on the side, unless it is very weak.

If hand fulfils the rule of 20, you should open at the one level instead. Note that a bid of 2C is **always** strong, and usually shows 22+ points. So you cannot make a weak-2 bid if your long suit is clubs.

Responses to Weak-2 Bids

Pass: When you don't have a fit for opener, and don't have the points to try for game.

Raise partner's suit: With support for opener's long suit, raise him to the level of the law of total tricks. So with 3 trumps, raise to the 3 level, and with 4 raise to the 4 level even with a weak hand. With 3+ trumps and a good opening hand, or 2+ trumps with a very good hand (16+ points), raise opener to game.

All raises by responder are to play; opener is **not allowed** to bid again. For example 2H-P-**3H** is not invitational. Responder is merely continuing the preempt with three trumps; opener **must** pass.

Bid a new suit: If you have 13+ points and a good 5+ card suit of your own. This bid is **forcing for one round**. Opener must raise this new suit if he has support, else re-bid his long suit. Responder must have tolerance (2+ cards) for opener's suit, since opener will re-bid his suit with no support for responder's suit.

Bid 2NT: If you have a strong hand, and need a key card in a certain suit to bid game or slam (in a suit or NT), bid 2NT to ask opener for a **feature**. This bid is **forcing for one round**. With an Ace or King in a side suit, opener will bid that suit. With no feature, opener re-bids his long suit. With a maximum, opener can jump to game in his long suit even without a feature on the side. With a long running minor suit, opener bids 3NT. This 2NT bid need **not** be alerted.

Ogust 2 NT Response

Playing **Ogust**, a 2NT response to a weak-2 opening bid asks the weak-2 bidder to further describe his strength and the number of top honors in the long suit (A, K, Q **only**). This is an extremely useful convention that allows the partnership to use weak-2 bids with suits of poor quality (that you would usually pass on) without misleading partner in situations where partner has a strong hand.

Responses to Ogust 2NT are shown below with their meanings:

3 Clubs	Minimum hand (8 or less points), 1 top honor
3 Diamonds	Minimum hand (8 or less points), 2 top honors
3 Hearts	Maximum hand (9+ points), 1 top honor
3 Spades	Maximum hand (9+ points), 2 top honors
3 NoTrump	Maximum hand (9+ points), 3 top honors

Memory Aid: "Minors are minimum, 1-2-1-2-3" where the numbers refer to the top honors held for each of the 5 possible replies.

NOTE: The Ogust 2NT bid need not be alerted. However the **responses must be alerted!**

9. Two Clubs Strong & Artificial Opening

When playing Weak-2s, all strong game-going hands must be opened with a 2 Clubs bid. The requirements to open a hand with a 2C bid are as follows:

Balanced Hand

You can open a balanced hand with a 2C bid if it contains 22 or more points (including long-suit points). Opener's re-bid describes the strength of the hand. Re-bid 2NT with 22-24 points, and 3NT with stronger hands. Responder can use Stayman and Jacoby Transfers over a 2NT or 3NT re-bid by opener, just like after a 2NT opening.

Unbalanced Hand

In general, you can open an unbalanced hand with 2C any time you are *within one trick of game* in your hand alone. To open an unbalanced hand with a 2C bid, it should have at least **4 Quick Tricks**, and at least **9 playing tricks** (i.e. no more than **4 losers**). When counting losers in a long suit, only consider the first three cards of a suit. So the maximum number of losers in a suit is three, which means a suit headed by the AKQ has no losers. *Always* open 2C with 6 Quick Tricks.

Quick Tricks: AK – 2, AQ – 1½, A – 1, KQ – 1, Kx – ½

Example: ♠AKQT983 ♥5 ♦74 ♣AK6

This hand has 4 Quick Tricks (AK of Spades and AK of Clubs). It also has 4 losers (one in Hearts, 2 in Diamonds, and one in Clubs), and therefore 9 playing tricks (13 tricks – 4 losers). So this hand qualifies for a 2 Clubs opening bid despite having only 16 HCP. Notice that you have game in Spades virtually in your own hand; all you need from partner is one trick.

Responses to Strong 2C Bid

The 2C bid is always *forcing for two rounds*, which means responder must allow opener to bid at least two more times after the opening 2C bid. It is also usually forcing to game unless responder has a very weak hand. Opener's re-bid is used to describe the shape of his hand, and further describe his strength. Responder's bid depends on his range of points.

0-7 points:

- Start with a **2D waiting bid**. This says only that responder has less than 8 points.
 - **Opener's Re-Bid:** Opener will now bid his real suit, or some level of NT. *Do not pass*. Opener's first re-bid can be passed *only* if it is a 2NT or 3NT re-bid *and* you have an extremely weak hand (0-3 points) with no trick. This is because this all other re-bids by opener are un-limited in strength; hence responder must keep the bidding open.
 - **Responder's Re-bid:**
 - **0-3 points:** With a very weak hand and support, raise opener's (major) suit to game if your hand can provide at least one trick. This is a sign-off bid: opener must pass. With no support for opener's suit, bid the cheaper minor (usually 3C) to show a horrible hand. This is called a *cheaper minor second-negative* bid (must be *alerted!*). Opener will now place the contract, usually at the 3-level unless he has an extremely strong hand.
- NOTE:* If opener's re-bid is 2NT, 3C is Stayman, *not* a second-negative. Responder does not need a second-negative after a 2NT re-bid by opener, since he is allowed to pass with a very weak hand.
- **4-7 points:** With a stronger hand and support, raise opener's suit one level to invite. With no support for partner, bid your own suit or bid 2NT with a balanced hand.
 - Natural bidding from here on to find a fit and level.

8+ points:

- Make your *natural bid* of 2H, 2S, 2NT, 3C or 3D (anything except 2D) depending on your hand. This is a positive bid and shows slam interest.
- Both partners now bid to find a fit and level.

10. Third-Hand Bidding

Stretch to open a hand after two passes in 3rd seat with even 10-11 points if you have a good suit, or if you can safely pass any suit partner bids. This will make it more difficult for the opponents to describe their hand, and suggest a good lead to partner. Also, you may buy the contract in the case where the points are evenly distributed. You are usually safe in opening light since partner is a passed hand and won't get overboard.

In 3rd seat, you can also occasionally open a weak-two bid with a good five-card suit if you have less than 10 points. Partner can then use Ogust 2NT with a maximum passed hand to find out the quality of your suit. It is also OK to make a pre-emptive bid of 3C with 6 very good clubs since a bid of 2C is strong.

Responses by Passed Hand

A passed hand usually has an upper limit of 13 points including distribution. Since partner may have opened light in 3rd seat, he is entitled to pass any bid by a passed hand, except for a jump-shift in a new suit, which is forcing for one round. Possible responses to partner's one-level suit bid are:

With Support for Partner's Suit

6-9 points: Raise partner to level of the law of total tricks. So bids of P-P-1H-P-3H or P-P-1H-P-4H are pre-emptive showing long trumps and a weak hand.

10+ points: *Two-Way Reverse Drury* (Bergen Drury): This allows you to show a limit raise of partner's major without getting too high when partner has opened light:

- **2 Clubs** shows exactly 3-card trump support and 10+ points.
- **2 Diamonds** shows at least 4-card trump support and 10+ points.

Both these bids ask opener to further describe his hand.

NOTE: Drury only applies over a *major* suit bid by partner. Over any other opening bid by partner, all bids are natural.

Without Support for Partner's Suit, Unbalanced Hand

6-12 points: Bid a new suit at cheapest level. This is *not* forcing. Partner may pass. You are merely saying you prefer this suit to partner's suit. To force partner to bid again, you must jump-shift into a new suit. Even this is only forcing for one round.

Without Support for Partner's Suit, Balanced hand

6-12 points: Bid 1 NT. Partner may pass with a balanced hand or re-bid his long suit.

Opener's Re-bids over Drury 2C or 2D

Opener's re-bid over 2C or 2D shows whether or not he has a "full" opening bid. The convention used is called *Two-Way Reverse Drury*, and uses the re-bid of the opener's major to show a minimum or sub-minimum hand. A re-bid of game in the opener's major is to play, while any other bid is natural showing at least an opening hand. The possible re-bids are:

- **2 of Opener's Major** (e.g. 1S-2C-2S): Sign-off bid showing a minimum or sub-minimum opening hand. The Drury bidder can now pass safely at the 2-level.
- **4 of Opener's Major** (e.g. 1S-2C-4S): Any hand that wants to play game *only* opposite 10 supporting points. Opener will usually choose this bid unless he wants to try for a slam.
- **Any other new suit** (1S-2C-2H, or 1S-2C-3C): Game try. This shows extra values with a second suit.
- **Double jump in a new suit** (1S-2C-4C, 4D or 4H): Splinter, showing a slam try with singleton or void in the new suit.S
- **2NT:** A strong NoTrump opener (15-17 points). If the Drury bidder is also balanced, 3NT may be a better spot.
- **3NT:** Balanced, 18+ points. If Drury bidder is also balanced, he may pass.

11. Negative Doubles

After a 1-level *suit* opening by partner and an intervening *suit* overcall, a double in 3rd place is called a *negative double*. This is a sort of take-out double by responder *promising* length in the un-bid major(s). This is usually done with a weak hand (6-9 points), but may be occasionally done with a stronger hand to show shape before placing the contract. Note that responder's double after a NT overcall is *always* for penalty.

Examples:

- 1D – 1S – Dbl:** Double promises 4+ Hearts and possibly 4 or more clubs.
- 1H – 1S – Dbl:** Double here promises at least 4 cards in *both minors*. This is the *only* case where a negative double promises length in any minor.
- 1D – 1H – Dbl:** Since a 1S bid is still possible here with a weak hand, double shows exactly 4 Spades (and possibly 4+ Diamonds), whereas a 1S bid shows 5+ Spades.
- 1C – 1D – Dbl:** Since a 1H or 1S bid is still possible here with a weak hand, double shows exactly 4 Hearts *and* 4 Spades, whereas a 1H or 1S bid shows 5+ cards in the suit.
- 1D – 2C – Dbl:** Double promises at least one 4+ card major.

Negative doubles are “*on*” if the opponent makes a suit overcall through the level of 3S. Beyond that level, all doubles are for penalty. The higher the level of the intervening overcall, the more strength responder needs to make a negative double since opener is forced to bid again. The points needed for a negative double over various intervening overcalls are:

1-level overcall: 6+ HCP, 2-level overcall: 8+ HCP, 3 or 4-level overcall: 10+ HCP

Since a double in 3rd place after an intervening overcall is now negative instead of penalty (when playing negative doubles), with length in opponents' suit, responder must pass (or bid some number of NT). Opener will usually reopen with a take-out double. Responder can now choose to pass to convert this to a penalty double.

12. Trial Bids

A game try or a trial bid is a new suit bid by opener after a single raise of a *major*, e.g. 1S - 2S. There are two kinds of game tries: those showing length and weakness in a side suit, and those showing shortness in a side suit. To make a trial bid, opener must have an invitational hand, i.e. 16-18 points.

Long-Suit Game Try: This type of game try shows a long weak suit and helps responder judge how well the hands fit. The suit must be at least 3 cards long and have at most one of the top three honors (e.g. 732 or A954). Responder signs off in 3S or 4S, depending on his hand. After hearing a trial bid responder re-evaluates his hand. The fewer tricks he will lose in the trial suit, the better, so good holdings include singletons, voids, or suits with honors. Bad holdings are long suits with few honors. If responder has a weak holding in the trial suit, such as 942, and is less than maximum for his bid he signs off in 3S. If he is at an absolute maximum for his 2S bid, 9 good points, he bids 4S regardless of his holding in the trial suit.

Short-Suit Game Try: This type of game try shows a singleton or void in the suit bid and helps responder judge how well the hands fit.

Two-Way Game Try: This is a method of combining Short-Suit and Long-Suit Game Tries. After a single raise of a major, opener bids a new suit to initiate a long-suit game try. To initiate a short-suit game try, opener bids 2NT. Responder must now bid 3C as a relay after which opener bids his short suit. A re-bid of the trump suit shows shortness in Clubs.

13. Slam Bidding

Blackwood Convention

- After suit (non-NT) opening, a *jump bid* to **4 NT** is Blackwood asking for number of Aces.
- Responses show number of Aces:

5 C: 0 or 4 Aces	5 D: 1 Ace	5 H: 2 Aces	5 S: 3 Aces
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Additional optional responses used by partnership understanding:

5 NT: 2 Aces + A Void	6 of a suit (below trumps): 1 ace + A Void in the suit bid	6 of the trump suit: 1 ace + A Void in a higher-ranking suit
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- The Blackwood bidder now has the following choices:
 - He can bid a new (un-bid) suit at the five-level, asking responder to bid 5 NT himself. This is used when responder has bid past the trump suit and the partnership is off two aces - the Blackwood bidder hopes to make 11 tricks in No Trump.
 - He can bid a new suit at the six-level, asking responder to bid seven of the trump suit if he has two of the top three honors in trumps.
 - He can bid 5 NT to ask for the number of Kings.

- Responses to **5 NT** show number of Kings:

6 C: 0 or 4 Kings	6 D: 1 King	6 H: 2 Kings	6 S: 3 Kings
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- The Blackwood bidder can bid the trump suit at any point to end the bidding. Partner *must* pass.

*NOTE: When also playing Gerber, a response jump bid of 4NT over 1NT is **not** Blackwood. Instead it is a quantitative slam-try showing 15-16 points. Opener bids 6NT with a maximum and passes with a minimum.*

Gerber Convention

- After opening of 1NT or 2NT, a *jump bid* to **4 Clubs** is Gerber asking for number of Aces
- Responses show number of Aces as follows:

4 D: 0 or 4 Aces	4 H: 1 Ace	4 S: 2 Aces	4 NT: 3 Aces
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- Re-bid of **5 Clubs** by Gerber bidder asks for number of Kings.

- Responses show number of Kings as follows:

5 D: 0 or 4 Kings	5 H: 1 King	5 S: 2 Kings	5 NT: 3 Kings
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- Gerber bidder can place contract after a response to 4C or 5C by bidding NT at the appropriate level.

DOPI - Double with 0 Aces, Pass with 1

DOPI allows a response to **Blackwood** or **Gerber** over opponent's interference. For example, after 1S (Partner) -3S (You) - 4NT (Partner) - 5D (by RHO), the possible DOPI responses are:

Double	Shows 0 Aces
Pass	Shows 1 Ace
Next available bid above opponent's suit, 5H	Shows 2 Aces
2 nd available bid above opponent's suit, 5S	Shows 3 Aces
3 rd available bid above opponent's suit, 5NT	Shows 4 Aces

Grand Slam Force (GSF)

After a trump suit has been agreed on, a bid of **5 NoTrump** without the preceding 4NT (Blackwood) bid is a **Grand Slam Force**. With 2 of the 3 top trump honors (i.e. A, K, Q), responder bids 7 of the agreed trump suit. With any other holding, responder bids 6 of the agreed trump suit.

Bridge Notes – Standard American 5-Card Majors

Splinter Bids

The splinter is a *double jump-shift*, i.e. a double jump in a new suit (e.g. 1S-4D), after a *major* suit bid by partner. The splinter bid shows a *singleton or void* in the new suit, guarantees at least *four cards* in partner's major suit, and invites slam. The singleton shown should not be an Ace or King. A splinter by responder promises 13-15 points including distribution. Opener can also use the splinter bid (e.g. 1C-1S-4H) to show a *maximum* hand with a void or singleton in the bid suit. A splinter by opener promises 19-20 points. In general, the number of points required to splinter is equal to 26 minus the number of points promised by partner.

Control-Showing Cue-Bids

After a suit has been agreed on, a new suit by either opener or responder is a slam try (control-showing cue-bid) and is at least *forcing to game*. **Example:** 1S-3S-4C is a control-showing cue bid. It asks partner to cooperate by also showing controls in the un-bid suits.

Rules for **control-showing cue-bids**:

- 1) Never pass a **control-showing cue-bid**.
- 2) With two controls, it is usually better to first bid the cheapest one, i.e. one that keeps the bidding lower.
- 3) Show Aces and Voids (1st round controls) before Kings and singletons (2nd round controls). An exception is to bid a 2nd round control in an un-bid suit before cueing 1st round control in a suit that has been shown or denied. Avoid bidding a singleton or void in a suit bid naturally by your partner.
- 4) Returning to the agreed trump suit (below game if possible) discourages a slam try. A bid above the game level by partner is a strong slam try and you should return him to the agreed trump suit - any other bid would show acceptance of the slam and possible grand slam aspirations.
- 5) If a **control-showing bid** is doubled by an opponent (for lead direction), **redouble** shows 2nd round control of that suit. A pass encourages partner (versus a return to agreed trump suit to discourage).
- 6) **Control-showing bids** above five of the trump suit are a try for seven.
- 7) If either partner is able to judge the correct final contract he should bid it as soon as possible.
- 8) The partnership is committed to playing in the agreed trump suit once a **control-showing bid** is made.
- 9) You can also bid 4NT (Blackwood) after you hear partner cue-bid the suit that you were looking for.

Example: ♠AKJ74 ♥Void ♦943 ♣AKQ103

You open 1S and partner bids 3S. You want to bid 6S if partner has control of diamonds, but you can't get this information with Blackwood (if you bid 4NT and partner answers one ace, you won't know whether it's in hearts or diamonds). To locate the diamond ace, you must instead start a cue-bidding sequence with 4C. If partner cue-bids 4D, you'll know he has the diamond ace and you can bid 6S.

If partner instead cue-bids 4H, it tells you he has the heart ace but not the diamond ace (since he will cue-bid his cheapest ace). You can now sign off in 4S if you are no longer interested in a slam, but this hand is strong enough to continue. A 5C cue-bid by you shows a second-round club control and asks partner to tell you more. Since partner's 4H cue-bid already denied the diamond ace, he can now cue-bid 5D to show you a second-round control (the king or a singleton). If he bids 5D, you'll bid 6S. If he bids 5H (showing second-round control of hearts but not diamonds), you'll sign off in 5S. If he bids 5S (showing neither control), you'll pass.

When to Use Blackwood or Gerber vs. Cue-Bidding

Do not use Blackwood or Gerber without a first or second round control in every suit. Also, you should not use it if partner's answer would not help you decide whether or not to bid a slam.

You should only use Blackwood or Gerber when:

- You have already found a good trump fit (or agreed on no-trump).
- You know you have the overall strength for a slam.
- Your hand has first or second-round controls in all *un-bid* suits (aces, kings or singletons).

DO NOT use Blackwood or Gerber if:

- You have a void. Partner's possible Ace or King will be wasted in this suit
- You have a worthless doubleton (xx, Qx, Jx) in an un-bid suit.
- You need to know if partner has control of a *specific* suit. To get this information, use a cue-bidding sequence instead.

14. Major-Suit Limit Raises & Jacoby 2NT

Limit Raises

The old-fashioned way to raise opener's major is to raise to the two level with 3-card support and 6-9 points, and to the 3-level with 3-card support and 13-16 points. With 10-12 points, you bid a new suit first and then raise one level on your next bid. However for slam bidding, having a nine-card or longer fit is more likely to produce the extra tricks. Also when you have four-card support, your ruffing values are working even better. A trump lead can no longer hurt you. So more advanced players change their stronger responses to discriminate between having 3 or 4+ card support. This means a *limit raise*, the raise of the major to three, is game invitational showing at least *four trumps* and *10-12 points*. So with only three-card support, you bid a new suit first and then jump raise on your next bid (See table below). All points in this discussion include distribution.

Jacoby 2NT

With game going values or better and four-card trump support, we use a special convention called the Jacoby 2NT. The bid of *2NT in response to partner's opening bid of one of a major shows at least 4 trump and 13+ points in support*. The Jacoby 2NT bid and the responses to Jacoby 2NT must be *alerted!*

The table below shows the different responses to one of a major:

Point Range	Category	Number of trumps	Action to take
6-9	Minimum	3	Raise to 2 (limit bid)
6-9	Minimum	4+ (usually 5)	Raise to 4 (pre-emptive)
10-12	Medium	3	New suit, then jump raise to 3
10-12	Medium	4+	Raise to 3 (limit raise)
13-16	Maximum	3	New suit, then jump raise to 4
13-16	Maximum	4+	Jacoby 2NT
17+	Slam Zone	3	Strong jump-shift in new suit, then raise
17+	Slam Zone	4+	Jacoby 2NT

Opener's Responses to Jacoby 2NT

After a Jacoby 2NT bid from partner, opener further describes his hand. After 1♠- 2NT:

Response	Meaning
3♣, 4♦, 4♥ (3 of side suit)	Singleton or Void in Clubs, Diamonds or Hearts
4♣, 4♦, 4♥ (4 of side suit)	Strong Side suit of 5+ Clubs, Diamonds or Hearts
3♠ (3 of trump suit)	Semi-balanced hand with good trumps (2 of top 3), and good hand (15+ points)
3 No Trump	Semi-balanced hand with bad trumps, good hand (15+ points)
4♠ (4 of trump suit)	Slam Negative, semi-balanced minimum hand (12+ to bad 15)

Responder's Re-bid

With a minimum and no interest based on Opener's response to Jacoby 2NT, Responder can now jump to game in the agreed suit. All other bids show at least some slam interest. Responder's new suit bids are now cue bids looking for slam. Responder can also use 4NT (Blackwood) to ask for Aces.

15. Michaels Cuebids & Unusual NoTrump

The **Michaels Cuebid** and **Unusual NoTrump** are overcalls used after an opponent's opening suit bid that let you show two suits with one bid. The convention you use depends on which suit the opponent opens and which suits you have. Both these conventions need to be *alerted!*

Michaels Cuebid

This is a direct cuebid of the opponent's opened suit (1C by RHO, 2C by you) to show at least 5-card length in two other suits. One of your suits is always a major, but the exact two you promise depend on the opening bid:

- Over a **minor-suit opening**, a Michaels Cuebid (1C-2C or 1D-2D) shows **both majors**.
- Over a **major-suit opening**, a Michaels Cuebid (1H-2H or 1S-2S) shows **the OTHER major and an unspecified minor**.

Michaels replaces the old strong cuebid. If you have a very strong hand, start with a take-out double instead.

Unusual 2 NT

This convention is a direct jump to 2 NT over an opponent's opening bid (1H by RHO, 2NT by you) to show the **two lower-ranking un-bid suits**. You should have at least 5 cards in each suit for this bid. One of your suits is always a minor, but the exact two you promise depend on the opening bid:

- Over a **1C** opening, 2NT shows **diamonds and hearts**.
- Over a **1D** opening, 2NT shows **clubs and hearts**.
- Over a **1H** or **1S** opening, 2NT shows **both minors**.

Examples:

- A. RHO opens 1C or 1D and you hold: ♠KQ964 ♥KQ872 ♦52 ♣7
- B. RHO opens 1H or 1S and you hold: ♠765 ♥Void ♦K10765 ♣QJ1093
- C. RHO opens 1C or 1S and you hold: ♣4 ♥KJ872 ♦AJ10754 ♠5

Hand (A) above is perfect for a Michaels Cuebid. With (B), an Unusual 2 NT shows both suits without promising great high-card strength. And with (C), your overcall depends on which suit the opponent opened: over 1S, you would bid 2S Michaels to show the other major and a minor; over 1C, you would use the Unusual 2 NT to show the two lower un-bid suits.

Strength requirements

These two conventions are most useful with weak hands in the 0-10 HCP range, since they away bidding space from the opponents. With stronger hands, decide if you want to emphasize one suit (usually a major) with a simple overcall, or if you want to bring two suits into the picture immediately with a Michaels Cuebid or Unusual NoTrump. Vulnerability should also affect your decision. Since partner is often forced to bid at the 3-level (sometimes with only 2-card support), a *vulnerable* Michaels or Unusual 2NT should promise more playing strength.

Responding bids

Remember that partner's Michaels Cuebid or 2NT overcall is *artificial* and therefore *forcing*. If your RHO passes, you *cannot* pass. For all Unusual 2NT overcalls and most Michaels Cuebids, you'll know the exact two suits partner holds, so bid your longer one. You should almost always bid one of partner's suits; *don't* be tempted to suggest any other suit as trumps unless you have *great* length and strength in it. The *level* of your bid depends on your strength and trump support. With a weak-to-intermediate hand, bid at the lowest level available. With a stronger hand, you can jump in one of partner's suits to invite game or jump directly to game. If RHO makes an intervening bid, you should compete if you have some strength and support for one of partner's suits. Partner is promising 5-5 in his suits, so any 3-card holding is good support.

Finding partner's unknown suit

A Michaels Cuebid by partner over a 1H or 1S opening shows the other major and an unspecified minor. Since you know his major, you can bid it if you have 3-card support. If you can't support his major but have at least 3-card length in *both* minors, ask partner which minor he holds – and tell him that's your preferred trump suit – by bidding *2NT!* (must be *alerted!*). Partner will bid his long minor and you can then pass, raise or sacrifice.

16. D. O. N. T.

(Disturbing the Opponents' NoTrump / Bergen over NoTrump)

The DONT convention is based on the premise that two-suited hands occur more frequently than one-suited hands. DONT allows you to easily show two-suited as well as one-suited hands after an opponent bids 1NT, at the expense of giving up the penalty double of 1NT. Note that distribution is more important than HCP when deciding whether or not to use DONT. However when vulnerable, you should have at least 10 HCP.

When an opponent opens 1NT and you have a hand that merits action, proceed as shown below. Note that a direct suit bid shows a two-suited hand with the suit bid and another higher-ranking suit, whereas a double shows a long one-suited hand.

With a two-suited hand (5-4 or longer):

Bid the cheaper of the two suits:

- **2C!** shows Clubs and an unknown higher-ranking suit.
- **2D!** shows Diamonds and an unknown higher-ranking suit (a major).
- **2H!** shows both Major suits.

With a one-suited hand (6+ cards):

- **Double!** shows a single-suited hand with an unspecified 6-card or longer suit (good 5-carder OK when not vulnerable). Partner can bid 2 Clubs as a relay to ask for the suit. Note that this means you cannot use a penalty double after a 1NT opening. With a strong balanced hand, just pass. Partner may be able to use DONT with a distributional hand.
- **2S!** is a natural bid showing at least a 6-card or longer Spade suit. By partnership agreement a 2 Spades overcall shows a weaker holding than a Double followed by a 2 Spades re-bid.

Note: With a 7+card suit with less than 10 HCP, you can also pre-empt with a jump overcall at the 3-level instead of using DONT. However with a stronger hand, you may want to start with DONT to show your length before exploring a game.

Responses to DONT

After partner overcalls using DONT, responder tries to find the best fit for the partnership.

The possible responses are:

Over Double:

- Bid **2C!** to ask partner to bid his long suit. Partner will pass with long clubs or correct to his suit.
- If responder has a 6+card suit of his own, he may choose to bid that instead of bidding 2 Clubs. Partner can accept this (by passing) or bid his long suit in return.
- If responder has a strong balanced hand with 15+ HCP, he may choose to pass leaving in the double as a penalty double.

Over 2 Clubs or 2 Diamonds:

- Pass with 3+ cards in the suit bid by partner.
- Else, Bid your own long suit with 6+ cards in the suit.
- Else, make the next cheapest bid (*alertable*) to ask partner to bid his second suit. If this happens to be his long suit, partner can pass.

Over 2 Hearts:

- Since partner is showing both majors, choose your better major at the appropriate level.

Over 2 Spades:

- Responder will usually pass. With 2+ Spades and 15+ points, responder invites game with 3S.

With a strong hand (15+ points) and a fit, responder can invite game by bidding or raising the suit at the 3 level. Partner (DONT bidder) accepts the invitation with 10+ points, passes with less.

17. Declarer Play

General Approach

- **Plan, plan, plan:** Make a plan of play *before* playing to the first trick from the dummy.
- First **count sure winners**. In a trump contract, also **count losers** that you need to get rid of by ruffing or discarding on another long suit. Now make a plan for making the required number of tricks.
- **Analyze the opening lead** to try and read what cards either defender started out with. For example, if you are missing Ace and King of a suit, and the opening lead is not the King of that suit, then the inference is that the opening leader does not have both the Ace and King, since otherwise he would usually have led the King or Ace. So the honors may be divided or his partner may have both. Also, most people are reluctant to under-lead the Ace, especially in a suit contract.
- In trump contracts, it is usually best to **draw trumps** as soon as possible unless needed for cross-ruffing or entry to dummy. One of the first decisions for declarer is whether to draw trumps right away.
- In no-trump contracts, keep at least one **stopper** in each suit if you need to relinquish control to the defenders at any point.
- If you need to create extra tricks to make contract, first priority should be given to **establishing** your long suit, especially in NT. Finessing can be tried later for an overtrick. Finessing is usually a 50-50 chance, while establishing long suit is usually a sure thing.

Probabilities of Suit Divisions

An **even** number of cards will usually tend to divide **unevenly** (except with 2 cards).

An **odd** number of cards will usually tend to divide as **evenly** as possible.

Number of Cards Missing	Probability of Split				
	1-1	2-0	3-0	4-0	5-0
2 cards	52.0 %	48.0 %			
3 cards	78.0 %	22.0 %			
4 cards	40.7 %	49.7 %	9.6 %		
5 cards	67.8 %	28.3 %	3.9 %		
6 cards	35.5 %	48.5 %	14.5 %	1.5 %	
7 cards	62.2 %	30.5 %	6.8 %	0.5 %	

Ten Most Likely Hand Shapes

Rank	Pattern	%	Rank	Pattern	%
1 st	4-4-3-2	21.6%	2 nd	5-3-3-2	15.5%
3 rd	5-4-3-1	12.9%	4 th	5-4-2-2	10.6%
5 th	4-3-3-3	10.5%	6 th	6-3-2-2	5.6%
7 th	6-4-2-1	4.7%	8 th	6-3-3-1	3.4%
9 th	5-5-2-1	3.2%	10 th	4-4-4-1	3.0%

18. Defense

General Rules for Opening Leads

- *Plan* your defense before leading a card. Try to decide the suit to lead before deciding the card to lead. Decide whether an active defense is needed or a passive one, or a trump lead.
- Lead of a low card promises honor, high (non-honor) card denies it. Leading an honor promises the honor just under it.
- Leading a small card asks partner to return the suit when possible, leading a high card tells partner you are not interested in that suit.

Opening Leads in No-Trump Contracts

- In general, lead from *longest and strongest* suit. However, when short of outside entries to your hand and no running suit, try to *establish partner's suit* instead of your own.
- First priority is to lead partner's *bid suit*. Avoid suits bid by opponents.
- Lead the *top of a sequence* of 3 or more touching cards, e.g. **K** from **KQJxx**, **A** from **AKQxx**.
- Also lead *top of broken sequence*, e.g. **Q** from **QJ9xx**.
- Lead the card below gap from suit headed by an *interior sequence*, e.g. **Q** from **AQJTx**, **Q** from **AQJx**.
- *Fourth best* from all other suits containing 4 or more cards, e.g. from **Qxxxx** or **Kxxx**.
- Also lead *fourth best* from **AKxxx** against a NT contract. Leading A or K can block the suit if partner has Qx. Leading small also knocks out declarer's stopper(s) while leaving partner with a card to return the suit.
- Lead highest from 3 or 4-card suit headed by 2 touching high cards, e.g. **J** from **JTxx** or **JTx**, **A** from **AKxx**.
- Lead low from 3-card suit containing an honor (*low from an honor*).
- High card from doubleton or 3 small cards (*top of nothing*).
- With 4 small cards, lead either top or second-best card.

Opening Leads in Trump Contracts

- First priority is to lead partner's *bid suit*. Avoid suits bid by opponents.
- Lead Ace from **AKxxx**. Lead of King followed by Ace shows doubleton.
- *Avoid* leads in a side suit containing the Ace but missing the King. If you must lead from such a suit, lead the Ace.
- Lead of a side suit singleton is a good lead, especially if you have a weak hand, which means partner has enough entries to get the lead in time to give you a ruff before trumps are drawn.
- With a natural trump trick such as with **Kx** or **Qxx** of trumps, do *not* try for ruffs.
- If either you or partner has four or more trumps, *force declarer* to ruff *in his hand* by continuing to lead long suit. This will establish trump tricks for your side. Do *not* try for ruffs in this situation.
- Lead a trump when the bidding suggests that declares will cross-ruff the hand or if he needs to ruff losers. This usually happens when declarer is low on points but long on trumps. e.g. 1S-4S contract.
- From a suit headed by a sequence of two or more touching cards, lead the *top of the sequence*, e.g. **Q** from **QJTxx** or from **QJxxx**. Also lead *top of broken sequence*, e.g. **Q** from **QJ9xx**.
- Lead the card below gap from suit headed by an *interior sequence*, e.g. **Q** from **AQJTx**, **Q** from **AQJx**.
- Lead high card from a doubleton, e.g. **10** from **10x**, **5** from **53**.
- With suits headed by one honor, lead small from 3-card suit (*low from an honor*) and *4th best* from 4+card suit.
- With 3 or 4 small cards, lead the highest card (*top of nothing*).

2nd hand: Second hand usually plays *low*. However, when an honor is led from dummy or declarer's hand, *cover* the honor with an honor, but *only* if you or partner are likely to get a trick by promoting a possible honor in either of your hands. When in doubt, cover if partner is likely to have length in the suit.

3rd hand: Third hand usually plays *high* when needed to take the trick. When playing an honor from two or more honors in sequence or near sequence, play the lower one – e.g. J from QJ or KJ, Q from KQ or AQ.

Bridge Notes – Standard American 5-Card Majors

Special Lead Situations

Gambling 3NT (e.g. 1C-3NT):

Aces, in the hope of finding declarer's weakness

6NT, 7NT, or Suit Grand Slam:

Passive lead: Top of sequence, top of nothing, or trump

Suit Mini-Slam:

Active lead: Small from Kxx, K from KQ, etc.

Special (Lead-directing) Doubles by partner:

In general:

Double of any artificial bid (such as Stayman 2C or Blackwood responses) commands lead of that suit.

Suit slams/high-level games:

Unusual lead (usually suit partner is void in). This may be the first side suit bid by dummy.

NT games/slams:

Varies with bidding (see below)

o *Neither defender has bid:*

Lead dummy's first bid suit

o *Only partner has bid:*

Lead partner's suit

o *Only you have bid:*

Lead your suit

o *Both of you have bid:*

Lead suit of the stronger hand (for entries)

o *No suits have been bid* (e.g. 1NT-3NT):

Lead your shortest major (partner might have length)

Signaling

Attitude

Show attitude when following to a suit led by partner **and** you don't need to play third-hand high:

- High-Low (or high card) is encouraging, or shows doubleton in suit contract.
- Low-High (or low card) is discouraging.

Count

Show count when following to a suit (other than trumps) led by opponents:

- High-Low (or high card) shows even number of cards in that suit.
- Low-High (or low card) shows odd number of cards in that suit.

Usage: One method is that when leading from AKx(xx), lead of the **Ace** asks for **Attitude** from partner, and leading the **King** asks for **Count**. Similarly leading Q from KQx(xx) asks for attitude and K asks for count. When attitude and count for that suit are either obvious or irrelevant, card played by third hand shows suit preference (high card = high suit, low card = low suit).

Suit Preference

Give suit preference when discarding or giving partner a ruff.

- **Ruffs:** When giving partner a ruff, leading a high card asks partner to return the higher of the two outstanding suits, and a low card asks partner to return the lower of the two outstanding suits. This allows partner to quickly get back to your hand in order to get another ruff.
- **Discards:** When discarding, **keep length** in the suit partner is discarding, and keep length with dummy's long suit. Also if declarer has shown length in a suit during the bidding or play, keep length with declarer in that suit. The card and suit discarded shows suit preference. These are the two most common methods:
 - o **Hi-Lo Discards:** Discarding **high** card **encourages** the suit discarded in. Discarding **low** card **discourages** the suit discarded in, and implies preference for one of the other suits.
 - o **Odd-Even (Roman) Discards:** This only applies on the **first** discard. An **odd** discard **encourages** the suit discarded in, while an **even** discard **discourages** that suit and shows preference for one of the remaining two suits. A **low even** discard shows preference for the **lower** of the remaining two suits. A **high even** discard shows preference for the **higher** of the remaining two suits.

The Five Lines of Defense

I. Force Declarer

Force declarer to lose control (by making him ruff) any time long trump hand can be forced early:

- Declarer has a two-suited hand
- Any time you have 4+ trumps or believe partner does
- Declarer is in a 4-3 trump contract

The Right Lead: Your partnership's strongest suit

II. Be Active

Be active (i.e. try to cash your tricks) any time your tricks can go away:

- Declarer's side suit is breaking
- Vigorous bidding by declarer's side (slam interest)
- Declarer has long running suits (e.g. Gambling 3NT)

The Right Lead: Your partnership's strongest suit

III. Be Passive

Be passive when your tricks cannot go away:

- No evidence of strong side suit for declarer
- Declarer very strong, dummy weak
- A misfit or bad split for declarer in key suits
- You have no real suit to lead against no-trump
- Defending against 6NT, 7NT or suit grand slams (against suit mini-slam, active lead is better)

The Right Lead: Top of sequence, or top of nothing

IV. Lead Trumps

Lead trumps to cut down Declarer's Ruffing Power:

- **When Declarer has a partial / total misfit**
 - Mere suit preference taken
 - Your side has trump stack (control)
 - Misfits in general
- **When Bidding suggests Dummy shortness (in a side suit)**
 - Dummy denied no-trump due to flaw
 - Dummy bid two suits and raised a third
- **When You are strong in other suits**
 - You control opponents' side suit
 - You control all other suits
 - Opponents are sacrificing

The Right Lead: A trump

V. Create Trump Tricks

- **By Ruffing Declarer's Tricks when**
 - You are short in any un-bid suit
 - You are long in opponents' side suit, bid and raised (lead the suit, partner might be void)
 - You have weak hand, no better line of defense
- **By Promoting Trump Tricks of Your Own**
 - **Trump promotion:** by forcing declarer to ruff high
 - **Trump uppercut:** by forcing declarer to over-ruff high

The Right Lead: From or to shortness