

INTERMEDIATE BRIDGE

TUTORIAL NOTES

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1 DUPLICATE BRIDGE

There are a number of formats for competitive bridge – the most common being Duplicate, Teams and Rubber.

We will be playing **DUPLICATE bridge for Match Points**.

In Duplicate, using set hands which move from table to table, North-South **PLAY** against East- West, but they **SCORE** against all the other North-Souths in the room (and East Wests **SCORE** against East Wests)

Thus it does not matter if one side feels that they are getting ‘bad cards’ or not getting hands to play – because you are **scoring** against the players with the **same** cards, it depends entirely on what you can do with those cards compared with the others in the room sitting in the same direction.

The ‘winner’ of each hand is the pair with the highest positive score or the least negative score – depending on the direction you are playing – the **MARGIN** is irrelevant when playing for match points. (you get no more match points if you win by 10 or 1000). An alternate scoring method is IMP or Butler scoring – in this format the actual margin does matter and is critical.

Scoring at the table

Per Trick score (more than 6) :

No Trumps 30 (+10)

Spades and Hearts 30

Diamonds and Clubs 20

Bonuses	Not Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Making Contract < Game	50	50
Making Game Contract	300	500
Making Small Slam	500	750
Making Grand Slam	1000	1500

Penalties

Not making contract / trick 50 100

(much more when doubled)

From this table it is clear that there are huge bonuses applied when Games and Slams are bid and made.

The Goal in Match Point Duplicate Bridge is to gain a higher score compared with those playing in the same direction – this will normally mean bidding games or slams where possible and preferring no trump contracts over major suit contracts, with minor suit contracts the poorest scoring.

When bidding :

Think with every hand: **Could we have GAME?**

Could we have SLAM? - if the answer is 'yes', try to bid it.

When playing (or defending): EVERY trick counts – your side has to make every possible trick it can. Even if you are only at the 2 level, some-one making 9 tricks beats everyone making 8.

How strong is your hand?

Count your high card points (HCP)

Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1 (so more than 10 is more than your share)

You need to take advantage of your strength by bidding whenever you can.

Almost always open the bidding with 12 hcp and always with 11 hcp and a 5 card major.

4 card suits are bid 'up the line' according to suit rank – so C > D > H > S

5+ card suits are bid 'down the line' – so the higher ranked suit then the lower ranked

You	S	4 3	Partner S	Q J 7 6
	H	Q J 10 2	H	6 4
	D	J 9 8	D	K Q 7 6
	C	A K J 10	C	8 7 6

bidding : 1 C > 1 D > 1 H > 1 S then 1 NT and pass

You	S	Q J 10 4 3	Partner S	7 6
	H	Q J 10 4 2	H	K 6 4
	D	Q J	D	K Q 7 6
	C	A	C	Q 7 6 2

bidding : 1 S > 2 C > 2 H > 2 NT > 3H - shows that you have 5 spades and 5 hearts

Now here there is a dilemma - you have opening points, you can't open a major with less than 5 cards and you have no 4 card minor!

In this situation you need to open the longer minor (even with only 3 cards – the 'better' i.e. longer, minor)

You	S	J 8 4 3	Partner S	Q J 7 6
	H	Q J 10 2	H	6 4

D J 9 8
C A K J

D K Q 7 6
C 8 7 6

bidding : 1 C > 1 D > 1 H > 1 S > 2S - you have found your 4:4 major fit! – probably pass.

When you have found a fit in a suit which will be trumps, the hand becomes stronger if you have shortages in outside suits – you may get the chance to trump losers in that outside suit.

This increases the strength of your hand and you can add additional points to your HCP tally – **‘distribution points’**.

Add 1 point for a doubleton (2 card outside suit)
3 points for a singleton
5 points for a void

26 ‘Total Points’ (HCP + Distribution points) should be enough to bid game in a major and 28 game in a minor.

Remember – you can’t add distribution until a fit in a trump suit has been found.

2 OPENING AT THE 1 LEVEL / BIDDING AS A LANGUAGE

When first learning bridge, the ‘Rule of 20’ is often provided as a guide as to when you are strong enough to open a hand (Rule of 20: Sum of high card points + length of longest 2 suits should equal 20+)

With increasing proficiency, players will open hands which are weaker than this – most if the total is 19+ - the World Bridge Federation advises 18.

When opening the bidding in a suit you should know what the possibilities for your next bid are – your first bid does not define the strength of your hand.

(opening in No Trumps immediately defines your hand – it is balanced and there is a definite point range – e.g. 1NT = balanced hand and 15-17 HCP)

Standard American has a definite advantage because if the bidding is opened in a suit at the 1 level, there is always an option for opener to rebid 1NT if the hand is ‘minimum’ – hence you are not pushed higher than the 1 level if your combined hands are weak.

My suggestion is that:

A If you have a 5 card suit almost always open with 11 HCP – ALWAYS if it is a MAJOR.

B With 12 HCP always open holding a 4 card suit – If the only 4 card suits are MAJORS this is the time when you open the ‘BETTER MINOR’ or ‘SHORT CLUB’ (partnership agreement)/

Responder’s responses to 1 of a MINOR opening – e.g. ‘1 Diamond’:

a Less than 6 HCP – Pass

b 6-9 HCP

– **bid a 4+ card major at the 1 level** if the opening bid was a minor (e.g. 1D > 1H – says “I have at least 4 hearts and at least 6 HCP”)

S J 7 2 H Q J 3 2 D K 3 2 C 4 3 2 ‘1 Heart’

- **with 4 card support and no major** – support opener at the 2 level (e.g. 1D > 2D – says “I have 4 diamonds, I don’t have 4 hearts or 4 spades and I am WEAK” – (this is the WEAKEST possible bid short of Pass)

S J 7 2 H Q 3 2 D K J 3 2 C 4 3 2 ‘2 Diamonds’

- **with no 4 card major and no support for partner bid 1NT** – says ‘Partner I am weak, I don’t have 4 hearts, spades or diamonds and I have 6- 9 high card points.’

S J 2 H Q 3 2 D 3 2 C K J 7 4 3 2 ‘1 No Trump’ note : in this example responder is too weak to bid 2 clubs

10+ HCP – you are now strong enough

- to bid a new suit at the 2 level

S A 3 2 H J 19 7 D 7 2 C A Q 9 3 2 ‘2 Clubs’ or

-repeat your 5+ card suit at the 2 level

S A 3 2 H Q 10 7 3 2 D 7 2 C A Q 3 ‘1 D > 1 H > 1 S > 2 H’ or

-Jump in opener's suit

S A 3 2 H 7 D Q 9 8 7 3 2 C A Q 3 '3 Diamonds'

-Bid 2 NT (10 -12 hcp) or 3 NT (13-15 hcp)

with balanced hands and no 4 card major

S A 3 2 H 9 7 D Q 9 8 7 C A Q 3 2 '2 No Trump'

S A 3 2 H Q 7 D Q 9 8 7 C A Q 3 2 '3 No Trump'

- NOTE without 10 HCP you should not respond in a new suit at the 2 level (exception is weak jump response – subject of another session)

OPENERS REBID

With less than 15 HCP (if had 15+ points probably would have opened 1NT)

Options e.g. 1 D > 1 H ?

-Support responders MAJOR if have 4 cards in that suit - at the 2 level.

S A 3 H J 10 9 7 D Q 9 8 7 3 C A Q '1D > ! H > 2 H' (don't repeat 5 card diamond suit)

-Rebid your suit at the lowest level with 6 cards

S A 3 2 H 9 7 D Q 9 8 7 3 2 C A Q '1D > ! H > 2 D' (to rebid your minor at the 2 level requires a 6 card suit)

-Bid 1 NT (don't rebid a 5 card suit at the 2 level)

S A 3 2 H 9 7 D Q 9 8 7 3 C A Q 2 '1D > 1 H > 1 NT'

With 16+ HCP make a strong bid

- Jump in your suit

S K 3 H Q J 8 D A K Q J 9 7 C J 9 '1D > 1 H > 3D'

-Jump in No Trumps (18-19)

S K 3 H Q J 8 D K Q J 9 8 C A Q 9 '1D > 1 H > 2 NT'

-Reverse Bid (16+) – say to 1 D > 1 S > ?

S K 3 H Q J 9 7 D A K Q J 9 C J 6 '1D > 1 S > 2 H'

*Note a **NEW suit of higher rank than your opening suit** can't be introduced at the 2 level unless you have 16+HCP (this is called a 'reverse bid' and will be the subject of a future session – the concept is a bit difficult to master at first)

Responder's responses to 1 of a MAJOR opening – e.g. '1 Heart': here opener is promising at least 5 cards in their suit and 11 + hcp.

Responder's first obligation is to SUPPORT Opener if possible!

OPTIONS to e.g. 1 H opening

Less than 6 HCP

-Pass

S K 10 8 9 2 H J 9 D 10 7 6 2 C J 6 'Pass'

6 -9 HCP

-With 3+ card support, raise to 2 of the major

S K J 10 7 3 H Q J 7 D 3 2 C J 6 4 '2 Hearts' (your spades may become useful!)

-Bid your own suit at the 1 level

S K J 10 7 3 H Q J D 7 3 2 C J 4 3 '1 Spade' denies 3 hearts

-Bid 1 No Trump

S K 3 H Q 3 D 3 2 C K J 7 4 3 2 '1 No Trump' – denies 4 spades and 3 hearts

10-12 HCP

-With 3+ card support 'invite' by bidding 3 of major

S K J 10 7 3 H Q J 3 D 3 2 C A 4 3 '3 Hearts' - opener will pass if minimum or bid game with 14+ hcp

-Without support, you are strong enough to make 2 bids of your own

S K J 7 2 H Q 3 D K J 3 2 C J 3 2 '1 Spade, then 2 Diamonds or 2 NT – depending on opener's rebid)

-Bid a new suit at the 2 level

S K J 3 H Q 3 D K J 9 3 2 C J 4 3 '2 Diamonds'

-Bid 2 No Trumps

S K J 3 H Q 3 D K 5 3 2 C K 7 4 3 '2 No Trumps'

13 + HCP

Now we know GAME seems CERTAIN – SLAM may be possible – depending on our combined holding.

One of us needs to find out more exactly how strong partner is and the shape of their hand - one of us needs to "limit" our hand so that partner can decide the final contract.

Our bidding must proceed slowly, using forcing bids, not stopping until at least game is reached – this will be the subject of subsequent topics.

REVERSE BIDS

It is OK to bid 1H > 1S > 2C with less than 16 HCP – it is **not a reverse as clubs are lower ranking than hearts** – this bid sequence says “I have 5 hearts and 11+HCP”, Responder : “*I have at least 4 spades, at least 6 HCP and I don't have 3 or more hearts to support you,*” Opener replies, “Partner, I don't have 4 spades, but I do have 4 clubs as well as my 5 hearts.” It also says “Responder, If you are weak with less than 10 HCP you have to choose between hearts and clubs – you can't bid something else.”

It is NOT OK to say bid 1D > 1S > 2H -with less than 16 hcp this **IS a REVERSE BID** because hearts are higher ranking than diamonds. – a Reverse requires 16+ HCP by opener.

In this situation (say opener has 5 diamonds and 4 hearts (and less than 4 spades), **Opener must rebid 1NT** (not rebid diamonds) – Opener is saying “Responder, I have 5 diamonds, I don't have 4 spades to support your spades and I am not strong enough to make a reverse bid”

(It would be OK to bid 1D > 1S >2C – as is not a reverse)

WEAK JUMP SHIFT RESPONSES to 1 Level Opening

Sometimes responder has a long suit, but not enough points to respond at the 1 level to their partners opening – say you hold this hand to openers '1 D' opening

S 10 3 H Q J 9 8 7 6 D J 2 C 10 7 6

You don't really want to pass – the option is a 'Weak Jump Response' you bid '**2 hearts**'.

This requires a 6+ card suit and 3-6 hcp – it is a 'limit bid' which opener will normally pass unless they are very strong or have a fit with your suit and wish to compete with the opponents. Note – the bid must be a **jump** in a new suit.

BIDDING IS A LANGUAGE – (I imagine I am actually talking to my partner.)

You tell them –

What you have got – gradually building a picture with every bid,

What you haven't got - and partner tells you what they have or have not got

(This also includes responding to what your partner has told you e.g. I have or haven't got support for YOUR bid)

As early as possible it is good to tell one another how many points you have – “**LIMITING YOUR HAND**”

ACCURATE BIDDING IS A CRITICAL ASPECT OF BRIDGE.

BIDDING SYSTEMS DO NOT HAVE TO BE COMPLEX but THEY MUST BE ACCURATE.

YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TRUST YOUR PARTNERS BIDDING (and vice versa) IF YOU ARE TO END UP IN THE CORRECT CONTRACTS.

(The cards you lead and play in defence is ALSO a LANGUAGE – for future sessions)

3 OPENING BALANCED HANDS

A balanced hand has no more than 1 doubleton. (It may have a 5 card suit)

Balanced hands are the beginning of No Trump sequences – Opener quickly defines the strength and shape of their hand, and it will be **up to responder** to determine the final contract (because opener does not have the same definition of responder's hand)

When to open a balanced hand:

With a 5 card suit - 11 HCP

With only 4 card suits - 12 HCP

So, for opener:

*1 of a suit	REBID 1NT	= 11-14 hcp	(11- 15 if using 16-18 1NT)
1 NT		= 15 -17 hcp	(16 -18 – using 15 to 17 means opening
1 NT	36% more often than 16 -18)		
*1 of a suit	REBID 2NT	= 18 – 19 hcp	
2 NT		= 20 – 22 hcp	
2 Clubs!	REBID 2NT	= 23 – 24 hcp	
2 Clubs!	REBID 3NT	= 25 + hcp	

Note – if you open 1 of a suit and responder bids a MAJOR, you must support that major with 4 cards, rather than rebid NT – if your rebid was to be 1NT, support them at the 2 level. If your rebid was to be 2NT, jump to the 3 level in their suit.

RESPONDING TO 1 NT openings

When **Not Vulnerable**, seek to bid game with a combined **25 hcp.**

Vulnerable **26 hcp**

Hence if opener opens 1 NT and you have **less than 8 hcp**, game is probably out of reach and you must aim to end the bidding at the lowest safe level.

(note: Responder should add an EXTRA point to their HCP total if they have a 5 card suit)

With Less than 8 points

Possible bids

1 Pass

2 With a 5 card MAJOR – ALWAYS TRANSFER (another session) and **then Pass.**

3 You are too weak to use Stayman

With 8 -10 HCP you have enough for game if opener is maximum in their point range – you need to **INVITE**

Possible bids

1 Use **Stayman if you have a 4 card major** to try and find a Major fit – if you find one, then support that major at the 3 level – opener will decide to bid game if they are in the high end of their point range, or pass if not.

2 **Transfer to a Major with a 5 card suit**, and then **bid 2 NT with 5 of the Major or 3 of the Major with 6** - opener will decide to pass if minimum point range or bid game (in 4 of the major with 3+ card support or 3 NT with 2)

3 Bid **2 NT** – without a 4 or 5 card major – opener will then bid 3 NT if maximum or pass.

With 11+ HCP – game is certain (point wise)

1 Use **Stayman if you have a 4 card major** to try and find a Major fit – if you find one, then support that major at the 4 level - if no major fit bid 3NT.

2 **Transfer to a Major with a 5 card suit**, and then **bid 3 NT** - opener will pass with only 2 card support or bid 4 of the major with 3+ card support.

3 Bid **3 NT** – without a 4 or 5 card major.

With 6 cards in a Major and 10 + hcp bid 4 of the Major immediately (you must have a fit as opener promises at least 2 if they open NT) – you will have additional distribution values being unbalanced.

With 14 + HCP SLAM may be a possibility – the subject of a future session.

4 OPENING STRONG HANDS – the 2 CLUB OPENING

Strong hands are bid in various ways – **balanced strong hands** have been addressed in the No Trump session – summarised below:

*1 of a suit	REBID 1 NT	= 11-14 hcp
1 NT		= 15 – 17 hcp
*1 of a suit	REBID 2NT	= 18 – 19 hcp
2 NT		= 20 – 22 hcp
2 Clubs!	REBID 2NT	= 23 – 24 hcp
2 Clubs!	REBID 3NT	= 25 + hcp

Strong unbalanced hands can be shown in a number of ways, including:

- 1 Reverse bidding** (e.g. open 1D and rebid **2H** = 16 + hcp)
- 2 Introducing a new suit at the 3 level** e.g. 1H > P > 2D > P > **3C** = 16 + hcp
- 3 Jump shift** e.g. 1H > P > 1S > P > **3D** = 19 + hcp

The 2 CLUB! OPENING

Opening 2 Clubs can show

1 Balanced hand with 23+ hcp (opener will then rebid NT) **or**

2 Unbalanced hand with 8 ½ + playing tricks

2 Clubs! Is a GAME FORCE bid (it is **not** a bid which says 19+ hcp)

It is often the first bid in a slam bidding sequence.

After their 2 Club opening, Opener needs to know if they are exploring slam or just game.

There are many response systems to do this – point counts, control counts, bidding a suit etc. – these systems often have the disadvantage of using up a lot of bidding space. In essence, Opener needs to know whether Responder is ‘weak’ or ‘strong’.

‘**Weak**’ = <7 hcp and less than 2 controls (an ace = 2 controls, a King = 1 control)

‘**Strong**’ = 7+ hcp and 2+ controls

I suggest a simple system to distinguish between the two, with responses:

2 D! = weak, less than 7 hcp and less than 2 controls, or

2 H! = strong i.e. 7+hcp and 2+ controls. (opener will be thinking slam!)

It will now be up to Opener to tell you about their hand and work out the contract – REMEMBER, you must keep bidding UNTIL you have REACHED GAME.

Opener is balanced – after your response they will bid NT – at the lowest level (2 NT) = 23-25 hcp – a jump (3 NT) = 26+hcp. After their NT bid you can use Stayman, Transfers, bid a new suit etc. – depending on the shape of your hand. the ONLY time you can pass their 2NT rebid is if you have 0 points – even with only 1 point you should bid.

Opener is unbalanced – after your response **they will bid their longest suit** – you will either support this suit or bid your longest suit if you can't support opener – and keep bidding until you find a fit in game in a suit or No Trumps.

If **opener JUMPS in their long suit** e.g. **2C! > 2D > 3H** – they have **SET THIS SUIT** as trumps (it will be long and strong – at least 6 or 7 cards). When this happens, you respond by bidding the next suit you can win the first round of that suit in (CUE BID) – i.e. a suit with an ace or a void – which is less than game in the set suit. If you have no suit you can CUE – simply sign off in game.

If opener wants to explore slam, they will next initiate Gerber or Roman Key Card Blackwood – depending on whether the contract is a suit or no trumps

5 WEAK TWO's

When you hold a long suit – say 6 or more cards – even if you are weak in high card points – there is some protection for you if that suit is trumps. Further, if you are weak, your opponents may well be strong, and if you are able to enter the auction at a higher level, you will deprive them of bidding space and make it more difficult for them to find their optimum contract.

“Pre-emptive” opening bids can be made at the 2,3,4 and even 5 level.

Weak opening bids at the 2 level – “WEAK TWO's”

Openings of 2D, 2H and 2S show 6 card suits (exactly 6 cards) and 6 – 9 hcp. The suit should have at least 2 or 3 of the top 5 honours in that suit. 10 hcp is usually too strong for a weak 2, especially if it is a major - 2D with 6 -10 hcp is probably OK. (there is no weak 2 Clubs – this bid is taken for your strong game force opening).

S K J 10 8 5 4 **H 4** D A 9 3 C 9 8 2 would be an excellent 2 S opening hand, but

S Q 7 6 4 3 2 **H 6 5** D K 6 4 C J 3 is too weak to open 2 S.

RESPONDING to partner's WEAK 2 OPENING.

- Opener has described their hand – it will be Responder who will determine the final contract.

1 If there is no hope of making game (less than 14 points including distribution) – **PASS**. Even with a singleton or void in openers suit, trying to find a better suit is often fraught with hazard – particularly if you must bid at the 3 level.

2 Game is probable (16 + points with at least 2 card support) **BID GAME**

3 Game is possible (14 – 16 points with at least 2 card support) **BID 2NT!** – asking opener to tell you more about their hand – to help you decide

Openers RESPONSE to this 2 NT enquiry :

- with a **MINIMUM** hand (6 or 7 hcp) bid 3 of their suit (says ‘I am weak’)
- with **MAXIMUM** (8 to 10 hcp) either bid a suit with a shortage (singleton or void) or one with an outside Ace or King.

Responder will then decide the final contract (usually signing off at the 3 level, or bidding game)

Special Situation : after a weak 2 opening, if responder has 4+ card support, even if relatively weak, immediately raise to the 4 level – hoping to disrupt the opponents, who must surely have game in another suit.

6 PRE-EMPTS

As with weak twos, having a long trump suit gives protection and yields a lot of tricks.

The Law of Total Tricks suggests that it is safe to bid to the level of your combined trump holding. Hence if you have a 7 card suit, the remaining 6 cards in the suit, divided equally (2 each), will mean that you have a 9 card trump holding – safe to bid to the 3 level. If you have 8 cards the remaining 5 cards will mean the other players will have 1.7 cards each – almost a 10 card trump fit – safe to bid to the 4 level.

So, with a suitable pre-empt hand and a **7 card suit – open at the 3 level**. With an **8 card suit, open at the 4 level**.

A pre-empt hand should have most of its strength in the long suit, with little else outside and have 6 – 9 hcp.

A hand like this would be an excellent pre-empt bid of 3 Spades:

S K Q J 10 8 7 6 H 8 D K 9 C 10 7 5

A useful guide is to count the number of tricks you can make in your hand. (count your trump suit as 7 (or 8) **minus** one each for the A and K of trumps if missing – and **add 1** for each outside ace and $\frac{1}{2}$ for each outside K – and more for any other obvious trick.

To pre-empt you need:

6 tricks in your hand if NOT VULNERABLE

7 tricks if VULNERABLE.

(note: if pre-empting an 8 card suit, these trick requirements increase by 1.)

Examples

A	S K Q J 10 8 7 6	H 8	D K 9	C 10 7 5	6½ tricks (6 S + ½ D)
B	S K Q 10 9 8 7 6	H 8	D A 9	C 10 7 5	7 tricks (6 S + 1 D)
C	S Q J 10 8 7 6 2	H 8	D K Q	C 10 7 5	6 tricks (5 S + 1 D)

PARTNERS RESPONSE:

Partner will count the quick tricks they think they will win in their hand - counting 1 for each trump honour, 1 for each outside Ace and $\frac{1}{2}$ for each outside King etc

Depending on vulnerability, they will add their tricks to openers promised 6 or 7.

If the number adds to game, they will bid game straight away. If not, they will PASS.

Whatever partner or the opponents do the PRE-EMPTER will NOT BID AGAIN!

Pre-empting at the correct level tells partner (and your opponents) EVERYTHING there is to know about your hand – it is up to partner to determine the final contract.

It is often easier to make 3 NT with a long minor suit than 5 of a minor. After a pre-empt in a minor, with a suitable hand, partner may wish to bid 3 NT. With less than 3 cards in openers suit this can be very risky. Opener is unlikely to have outside entries to their hand – if responder has only 2 cards in the pre-empt suit, opponents may well be able to hold up the Ace or well-placed King of the long suit so that declarer in no trumps cannot gain entry to dummy to cash that long suit. This is very unlikely to happen holding 3 of the long suit, when 3 NT may be an attractive contract.

Examples – partner opens 3 S – not vulnerable with hand A

You hold

A **S A 2 H A K 2 D Q J 8 C K 7 6** - you have 4 probable tricks – A S (1), A K H(2), Q J D (½) K C (½) 6+4 = 10

Bid 4 Spades

B Vulnerable

S A 2 H A K 2 D Q J 8 C 9 7 6 - you have 3 probable tricks – A S (1), A K H(2)
7+3 = 10

Bid 4 Spades

C Not vulnerable

S A 2 H A K 2 D J 8 C J 9 7 6 - you have 3 probable tricks – A S (1), A K H(2)
6+3 = 9

Pass

Note – it is critical that you pre-empt to the maximum level immediately (and then cease bidding) - you should not bid 2S holding 7 cards (and have a ‘bit each way’) or bid 3S with 8 cards.

7 STAYMAN CONVENTION

In general, it is safer to play in a major trump contract with a 4 : 4 fit than to play in no trumps where you may have a suit without adequate stoppers.

Stayman is a convention to try and discover a 4 : 4 major fit after a no trump opening.

Requirements : you as responder must have

- at least one four card major (with a 5 card major you transfer)
- at least 8 hcp

Stayman is initiated by responder bidding '2 Clubs' after a 1 NT opening (it is not alertable).

Responses by opener (the only options):

2 Diamonds! = no 4 card major

2 Hearts = 4 hearts (may also have 4 spades)

2 Spades = 4 spades (but not 4 hearts)

After this responder will:

- 'invite' with 8 – 10 hcp, or
- bid game with 11+ hcp

So, **after a 2 diamond response** to Stayman (denying a 4 card major)

Responder will bid:

2 NT with 8-10 hcp and opener will raise to 3 NT if maximum in their 15-17 hcp range, or
3 NT with 11+ hcp

After a **2 heart response**,

- with a 4 : 4 heart fit, bid 3 hearts if uncertain if have points for game (as can now count distribution), or bid 4 hearts if have the points for game.
- with 4 spades (but not 4 hearts), bid 2 spades if that is your major – opener will support spades holding 4 of them or bid 2NT if they are minimum, or 3 NT if maximum – you will then pass with 8-10 hcp after a 2 NT bid by opener or bid 3 NT with 11+ hcp.

After a 2 spade response

- with a 4:4 spade fit bid 3 spades if uncertain if have points for game (as you can now count distribution) or bid 4 spades if have the points for game.
- (after 2 spades opener with less than maximum points will bid 3 spades if a fit is found or 2 NT with no fit
- with maximum points they will bid 4 spades with a fit or 3NT

It is clear that to use Stayman you need enough points to be able to make 2 NT if opener has only 15 or 16 hcp – hence the requirement for responder to have at least 8 hcp.

8 TRANSFERS

Transfers are a scheme of artificial responses to no trump openings (either 1 NT or 2 NT).

Transfers can be 'transfers' to a major (or a minor) – we will concentrate on transfers to majors.

When your partner opens 1 or 2 NT they are promising a minimum of 2 cards in any suit. If you have a 5 card major you know that between you there is definitely at least a 5:2 fit if that suit is trumps. Particularly if you are weak, it is safer to play in 2 of a major with that trump fit, than to play in 1 NT (this is even more so for systems such as ACOL which open with a weak NT).

Transfers are also useful in that they can be used to describe responders shape and strength.

In general, if responder has a 5 card major over a NT opening they should ALWAYS transfer.

Transferring – Opener 1 NT - then you:

2D! (alert) – says 'I have at least 5 Hearts' – opener MUST respond **2 HEARTS!** (alert) – even with only 2 hearts

2H! (alert) – says 'I have at least 5 Spades' – you MUST respond **2 SPADES!** (alert)

"After this first transfer, I will tell opener more about my hand"

Using 2D! as the example - I will:

PASS – says 'I am **weak** (less than 8 hcp with 15-17 NT) – we will play in 2H'.

2 NT – 'invitational' - 'I have 8 or 9 points' – opener will pass (if **minimum** in point range and 2 hearts) or bid 3H (minimum in range and 3 hearts)

If opener is **maximum** in their range they will bid 3NT with 2 card support or 4 H with 3+ support.

3 NT - we have game -10+ hcp – opener will pass 3 NT with 2 hearts or bid 4 H with 3 card support.

Transfers can also be used to show a '2 suited hand' – provided you have enough points for game.

e.g. 1NT 2H!
 2 S! 3D would say 'partner, I have 5 spades and at least 4 diamonds – we have enough for game select the best contract'.

If you have a 6 card major, you will want that to be the trump suit (as you have at least 8 cards between you) so you will initially transfer to the major and then Pass if weak, rebid 3 of the major invitational, or 4 of the major with enough for game.

Transfers can also be made to a minor – usually if you are very weak and have a 6 card minor – however, playing a strong 1 NT opening, it is often better to pass 1NT in this

instance.

2S! is a transfer to a minor – opener will bid 3 Clubs!, which you would Pass (if you have clubs) or ‘correct’ to 3 Diamonds (if you have diamonds) – which opener must pass.

NOTE: if the opponents overcall the no trump opening, transfers no longer apply – it allows responder to pass if weak or bid their suits naturally if stronger.

9 ASKING FOR ACES and KINGS

With combined strong hands a slam should be considered with a combined total of 32 or 33 points between the two hands. However, high card points are not the only consideration, as shape will also be a key factor in many hands which may contain fewer high card points.

It is possible to have 32 hcp between you and partner and be missing 2 aces – making slam very unlikely.

A system needs to be used to work out how many aces and kings the defence holds.

***Different systems are needed to enquire re aces and kings if you are bidding in no trumps or a suit.**

GERBER for NO TRUMPS

When the bidding is in No Trumps, and the final contract will be in No Trumps, GERBER is the convention used to locate aces and kings.

In a no trump bidding sequence, 4 Clubs = GERBER and asks “How many aces do you have?”

There are 2 common response systems – you need to agree which you use with your partners.

Original system - **after 4 Clubs**,

4 Diamonds = 0 or 4 Aces (the person bidding 4C will be able to tell from the bidding and their hand which it is)

4 Hearts = 1 Ace

4 Spades = 2 Aces

4 NT = 3 Aces

Then, if you wish to ask how many Kings,

Bid **5 Clubs** with the same response system

5 Diamonds = 0 or 4 Kings

5 Hearts = 1 Kings

5 Spades = 2 Kings

5 NT = 3 Kings

An **alternate** response system which preserves some bidding space (and will be similar to RKCB) is:

4 Diamonds = 0 or 3 Aces (the person bidding 4C will be able to tell from the bidding and their hand which it is as there is a 12 hcp difference)

4 Hearts = 1 or 4 Aces

4 Spades = 2 Aces

Then, if you wish to ask how many Kings,

Bid **5 Clubs** with a different response system

5 Diamonds	= 0 Kings
5 Hearts	= 1 Kings
5 Spades	= 2 Kings
5 NT	= 3 Kings
6 Clubs	= 4 Kings

Depending on responses, the player initiating Gerber will determine the final contract. It is usually reasonable to bid 6 NT missing 1 ace but holding all 4 kings, or if you hold all 4 aces, but are missing 2 kings.

Gerber can't be used as an ace/king enquiring system if the bidding is in a suit – because the bidding may well have passed 4 clubs before you are able to agree on a suit e.g. 1S > 4S.

Blackwood was the convention used to ask for aces in a suit contract, where 4NT initiated the ace ask, with responses similar to Gerber.

In a suit slam, the king and queen of trumps are critical cards in making the contract. A system called Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) has largely superseded Blackwood – because it helps locate the King and Queen of trumps – I strongly urge you to abandon Blackwood and adopt RKCB.

ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD

When using RKCB the trump suit will ALREADY have been agreed before the convention is initiated.

In RKCB the trump King is counted as a 5th 'ACE' – so there are 5 Aces and only 3 outside kings!

Once a trump suit is agreed 4NT initiates RKCB – the responses:

5 C = 0 or 3 'Aces' (with at least an 11 hcp difference partner will be able to tell which from the bidding and the cards they hold in their hand)

5 D = 1 or 4 Aces

5 H = 2 Aces but NO trump Queen

5 S = 2 Aces AND the trump Queen

This information is usually enough to decide whether to play at the 5 or 6 level.

Should you discover that you hold ALL 5 key cards AND the trump queen, you may decide that you want to explore for a grand slam – in this situation **you can ask about the 3 outside kings by NEXT bidding 5 NT** (says 'Partner, we have all 5 key cards and the trump queen – tell me what outside kings you have'). In a grand slam it may be critical as to which king you have (as opposed to how many) There are special responses in RKCB to deal with this.

After the 5NT bid

With none of the 3 outside kings: bid 6 of the agreed trump suit.

With 1 outside king: bid 6 of that suit

With 2 outside kings: bid 6NT

At least initially, it is unlikely that you will need to use more than the basic responses – i.e. the outside King ask would be rarely required. There are also bids to locate the trump queen after 5C and 5D responses – again these are more advanced and unlikely to be needed (or remembered) initially.

10 FORCING BIDS - Standard American – Basics

Some bids are such that partner can choose either to bid or pass – these are **non-forcing bids**.

e.g. opener bids 1 H – responder can pass with less than 6 points, or bid with a suitable hand.

However, there are some bidding sequences where partner **MUST NOT PASS** – these are **FORCING BIDS**. Forcing bids may be forcing for one more bidding round or forcing to game.

FORCING BIDS BY OPENER

2 CLUBS ! is the only forcing bid by opener, and is usually forcing to game – responder must bid with zero points unless there is an intervening bid.

(note: other ‘conventional’ openings as used in say ‘multi 2’s’ are also forcing)

OTHER SEQUENCES BY OPENER

AFTER A REVERSE BID (showing 16+ hcp)

e.g. 1 D 1 S

2 H is forcing for 1 round. If responder is weak (less than 10 hcp) they must show PREFERENCE for diamonds or hearts – they can’t bid NT or clubs.

AFTER A JUMP SHIFT BY OPENER (16+ hcp – preferably 18+ hcp)

e.g. 1 H 1 S

3 C is forcing to GAME

[consider if responder has 6 hcp in this sequence and opener 16 or 17 – game is unlikely, but the sequence is game force!]

My preference is that a jump-shift shows 18+ hcp, in which case opener with 16 or 17 hcp would bid :

1 H 1 S

2 C and responder who is weak (<10 hcp) **MUST SHOW PREFERENCE** – i.e. a **new suit by opener is forcing for 1 round**. In this way opener with a ‘weak’ jump-shift is not forced to a non-making game – this approach requires partnership agreement.

A NEW SUIT AFTER ONE HAS BEEN AGREED

e.g. 1 H 2 H

3 C is forcing for 1 round – it usually means opener is seeking ‘help’ with clubs – ‘Have you got a shortage or a high honour?’ – if ‘yes’ bid 4 H, if ‘no’ bid 3 H.

FORCING BIDS BY RESPONDER

A NEW SUIT BY RESPONDER is **ALWAYS** forcing for 1 round - unless Opener is limited (NT bid)

e.g. 1 D 1 S is forcing

2 D 2 H is forcing for 1 round, but

1 D 1 H (forcing)

2 D 2 S is forcing to game because it is a REVERSE by responder

ARTIFICIAL BIDS BY EITHER PARTNER ARE NORMALLY FORCING

e.g. after 1 NT opening, Stayman and Transfers are forcing, or
1 NT 2 C (Stayman)
2 D! is forcing

CUE BIDS (of opponent's suits) are forcing

FORCING BIDS BY OVERCALLER

TAKE OUT DOUBLE is forcing if responder passes

e.g. 1 H X Pass **FORCING** (you) – you must bid with 0 points.
EXCEPTION – in the above scenario, where responder passes and you have length and strength in opener's suit, and some outside values, you may PASS – converting the take out double to a penalty double – e.g. if you held say K Q 10 9 6 2 in opener's suit.

FOURTH SUIT FORCING

Sometimes you are bidding and it seems fairly certain that you have the points for game but a fit can't be found and you are uncertain as to whether no trumps is an option.

e.g. you are South with :

S	K 9	N	S
H	J 3 2	the bidding	1 S
D	K 10 5		2 C
C	A K J 7 4	2 D	? you

You should have the points for game, but where?

Perhaps 3 NT, but you haven't got a heart stopper.

Perhaps 4 S if partner has 6 – how can you tell?

The **FOURTH SUIT FORCING CONVENTION** HELPS – this says that bidding the 4th suit (above the 1 level) is artificial (and alert-able) – it is normally game forcing and asks partner to further describe their hand.

PARTNER'S PRIORITY will be to

1 BID NO TRUMP with a STOPPER in the 4th suit – with a minimum hand, say 11 -12 hcp bid 2 NT, with more 3 NT.

If unable to bid NT:

2 REBID one of their suits to show an additional card in that suit

3 Show 3 card support for my suit

So, in the above hand 2 H! would be 4th suit forcing, not a heart suit.

If you held a good stopper in hearts e.g. K or A, YOU would bid NT, not use 4th suit forcing.

The use of this convention is by partnership agreement and the bid must be alerted.

It is a very useful convention.

11 GETTING INTO THE AUCTION - OVERCALLS

When the opponents have opened the bidding you may wish to enter the auction for several reasons, including:

- to show competitive strength
- to disrupt their bidding
- to provide lead direction to your partner

You can enter the auction in 3 ways:

1 OVERCALL in a suit

2 DOUBLE

3 OVERTCALL 1 No Trump

An OVERCALL in a SUIT describes YOUR hand to partner

A DOUBLE asks PARTNER to describe THEIR hand to you (or is too strong to overcall immediately)

(The LAW OF TOTAL TRICKS

When you are **competing** in an auction **it is SAFE to bid to the LENGTH of the trumps held between you and your partner**. Thus with:

8 trumps it is safe to bid to 2 level

9 to 3 level

10 to 4 level

It does not necessarily mean that you will make this number of tricks, but if you have a trump fit, so too do your opponents (subject of another session), and even if you go down, your score is still likely to be better than if you allow the opponents to play in their contract.

Furthermore, if you are **competing** in the auction you should **bid to your safe level immediately** – not giving your opponents the opportunity to explore their best contract.)

OVERCALLING in a SUIT

Requirements – **ALWAYS** at least a 5 card suit, and **NEVER** more than 15 points.

To overcall at the:

1 level 8+ hcp - with most of the points in your suit (be aggressive with a major)

2 level 11+ hcp (10 + with 6 card suit)

3 level 14+ hcp

(With 16 + HCP you are too strong for a simple suit overcall – options:

1.1 NT ≡ 16-18 hcp + stopper in opponent's suit

2 DOUBLE and then REBID your suit = 5 card suit and 16+ hcp

3 DOUBLE and then REBID No Trumps = 19 or 20 hcp and a stopper in opponent's suit)

Having made a SIMPLE OVERCALL it will be up to YOUR PARTNER to largely control the rest of your auction – you have told them about your hand.

Partners FIRST OBLIGATION is to SUPPORT your suit – absolutely if they have 3 card support.

In deciding what to bid, partner should use the LAW of TOTAL TRICKS to determine their bid – they will assume you have 5 cards and add that to their length – **they will BID ON THE LENGTH OF YOUR COMBINED TRUMPS** – the point count is largely irrelevant.

Partner's responses – with LESS than 11 hcp (weak – and most likely)

With 3 card support and less than 6 points – pass

6-10 simple raise at 2 level

11 + CUE – i.e. BID opponents suit (tells partner 'I have support and have reasonable strength – we may be able to explore further')

With 4 card support and less than 5 points – pass

5 – 10 points support by immediate bid at 3 level

11 + hcp CUE

With 5 card support Immediate support at 4 level regardless of strength

STRONG RESPONSE with at least 11 hcp and at least 3 card support:

CUE bid i.e. bid opponents first suit e.g. 1D, 1H (your partner), pass, **2D!** (you) or, 1D, 1H (your partner), 2D, **3D!** (you) are all CUE bids from you – the bid says "Partner, I agree with your suit (hearts in these examples), I have at least 3 card support and I have at least 11 high card points – we may be able to explore further, and may even have game – **TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR HAND**".

The overcaller can then describe further – examples could include :

- Bidding no trump – showing good stoppers in opponent's suit
- Bidding a second 4 card suit
- Jumping in your agreed suit with a 6 or more card suit
- Bidding your agreed suit again at the lowest level – says "I am minimum or have no other features to describe"

After this overcaller's partner will decide the final bid.

Overcaller's partner could respond in a new suit with a 6 (possibly a good 5 card suit) **card suit and the points to overcall at the relevant level** – it denies 3 card support for overcaller.

A new suit in this situation is NOT forcing, but the original over-caller must support this new suit holding 3 cards.

BEWARE overcalling in the 'sandwich' position!

i.e. 1D > pass > 1H > YOU – here you are stuck between the strong opener and their partner – if you overcall in this position opener (?declarer) will have a good idea where the strength is and is sitting ‘over’ you – your finesses are likely to fail. In the sandwich position it is often better to pass, or at least you need a stronger hand to bid. The sandwich position is even more dangerous to make a NT overcall from – either pass or double being safer.

12 TAKE OUT DOUBLES

‘Double’ for ‘take out’ is a bid to enter an auction when the opponents have opened the bidding.

Double is used when:

- you **don't have the shape** to overcall - i.e. no 5 card suit
- or you are **too strong** to overcall – i.e. 16+ hcp and you can't overcall 1 NT

(when strong with 16+ hcp:

Double and a rebid of a new suit = 16+ hcp and a 5+ card suit

Double and a rebid of No Trump = 19-20 hcp, balanced with a good stopper in opener's suit)

Requirements for take out double:

- opening points, and
- at least 3 cards in each of the unbid suits, and
- a shortage in opener's suit

Double of opener's minor suit should promise at least 4 : 4 in the majors.

“Double” says “Partner tell me about YOUR hand.”

Double is FORCING – so with no intervening bid, partner **MUST** bid – even with 0 points (see exception later)

Partner's responses to the double :

with 0 – 10 hcp bid their longest suit at the lowest possible level

with 8 -10 hcp and a 5+ card suit, JUMP in that suit

with 11+ hcp CUE bid – i.e. bid opener's suit – after this the DOUBLER will bid **their** best suit..

Having told doubler which is your suit, **they must support that suit** (or pass) unless they are strong with 16+ points, in which case the doubler will bid NT or their suit.

Exception

Say you hold a hand suit like Hearts : K J 9 7 6 – **opener is sitting on your right** and they open ‘1 heart’ – you are ‘sitting over’ them and even if they hold A Q 10 8 5 in hearts, they will make only 1 heart trick.

After the opening it is best to pass, unless you are very strong and have a second suit – if the bidding proceeds say 1 H > pass (you) > 2 H (or pass) > DOUBLE (your partner) pass > **PASS** (you).

You may pass – this converts the DOUBLE from ‘take out’ to a PENALTY - you know your partner has length in the other suits and opener is going to have a lot of trouble in hearts.

However, if **opener is sitting to your left** and you each have the same hands, it would be very unwise to convert the double to penalties as opener is sitting over your long hearts, which will negate their value.

13 NO TRUMP PLAY

When you are declarer in any contract you must always **PLAN your play BEFORE you play to the first trick!** Which hand you need to win in, whether you need to duck, etc may be critical for your contract – failure to plan at trick 1 may doom the contract.

You have time to STOP, THINK and PLAN, then DO IT! (once you have your plan, subsequent prolonged agonising over which cards to play will distract and cause you to lose your train of thought. The cards will not change!)

Playing in no trumps is a race between declarer and defenders as to who can establish and cash their long suits first. Defenders have the initial advantage in that they get to lead first, they have the disadvantage of not being able to see each other's hands.

PLANNING by DECLARER

Immediately, BEFORE playing any card, **COUNT YOUR WINNERS OFF THE TOP.**

If you have enough winners to make your contract CASH them STRAIGHT AWAY – however, in planning your play **ENSURE** that you plan and maintain the **entries** between declarer and dummy. This often means overtaking a winning card to get to the other hand. e.g. with no other entries and A Q x in dummy and K in hand, you may have to overtake the K with the Ace to get to dummy.

If you don't have enough winners 'off the top' then you need to PROMOTE non-winning cards usually BEFORE you cash your off the top winners, and before the defenders can cash their long suit.

Strategies to PROMOTE cards include:

- ***Attacking your long suit.** Even with a suit 10 9 8 7 6 5 and dummy 4 3 2 declarer, if the outstanding cards are split evenly, playing the suit twice will lose 2 tricks, but the A K Q J will have fallen and you will have promoted 4 winners and have an entry card to cash them!
- **Promoting the 13th card in a suit** – say you have a suit divided A K 3 2 Q 5 4, if the opponents hold the outstanding 6 cards equally divided (3 : 3) the 2 is a winner, without any risk at all. As the cards are played it is obviously imperative to count how many cards each opponent plays in this suit if you are hoping to promote the 4th card – this means having a plan at trick 1, as you will have to be aware to the opponents discarding a card in this suit at another point in play.
- (With say A 4 3 2 and 7 6 5 in a suit you may win 2 tricks out of this suit if the outstanding cards are split evenly! (play 2 rounds of small cards, giving up 2 tricks, win the Ace on the 3rd round and the 4th small card becomes the second trick!)
- **Finesse** – remembering that a finesse is usually only a 50% chance of success, less risky options should be explored first. If finessing you should finesse AWAY from the danger hand. (Finessing – future topic – as will be How long to hold up with a single stopper).

DEFENCE AGAINST NO TRUMP

Your side has not bid.

Usually best to lead :

1 top of a sequence of at least 3 – say K Q J x x - lead the K

2 4th highest from your longest suit (4th highest so that your partner will know how many higher cards declarer has – Rule of 11 (a future topic). Thought needs to be given to the declaring side's bidding, but in general it is best to lead from your longest 5+ suit even if it has been bid by declarer.

***EXCEPTION – leading your Ace has a special meaning** – it tells partner to discard their HIGHEST card on your ace. Say leading from A Q J 10 9 and partner has K 2 – lead the A and partner discards K – then the suit can be 'run' without risk of being 'blocked'.

Partner has bid - lead partner's suit using **STANDARD** leads. Partner will need to pay attention to the order you play the cards in their suit as you will be telling them how many of that suit you hold (future topic). Note: don't lead the highest card in their suit – unless it is a doubleton or singleton!

14 NO TRUMP PLAY – HOLD UP – IDENTIFYING THE DANGER HAND

When planning your no trump play it is wise to assume that the opponents have a 5 card suit – this will be the case if one has overcalled. If there has been no overcall assume the lead is from a 5 card suit on your left. What you don't want to happen is for the opponent with the long suit 'to get in' and cash that suit.

Say spades are led 3 2

32

K Q J 10 9

876

A 54

Lead Spade K (assume 5)

You must not win with your Ace until exactly the 3rd round! If earlier East will win a trick in another suit and lead a spade to W and they will cash the rest of their spades.

Or, 6 4 2

642

QJ1093

A 5

K87

Lead S Q

West overtakes with the A and returns the S 5 – do you win with the K or duck? – the answer is win with the K! Why? The answer is THE RULE OF 7!

The 'Rule of 7' says that if you hold the top card in the suit where one opponent has a 5 card suit, YOU SUBTRACT THE NUMBER OF CARDS YOUR SIDE HOLDS IN THAT SUIT FROM 7 - THE ANSWER EQUALS HOW MANY TIMES YOU MUST HOLD UP PLAYING YOUR WINNING CARD.

Note: if you don't have the controlling card you will need to cash any winner when it is possible – you can't hold up.

(rationale: say you have 5 cards between yourself and dummy – one opponent has 5 which means the other has 3, if you have 6 – the other opponent only has 2)

In holding up we are trying to sever communication between our opponent's hands – and we have identified a **DANGER HAND**.

We must then stop the danger hand getting on lead – which means that all of our subsequent finesses have to be such that if they lose, they lose to the ‘safe’ hand.

(note: if the opponents have a 4:4 split, the hold-up play does not work, but equally they don't have a long suit to run)

Identifying the DANGER HAND :

32

KOJ 109

876

A 54

K 8 7 Lead Q

In these examples W is the danger hand.

However,	9 4	
A 10 8 7 6		Q 5 2
	K J 3	Lead 7 > Q, we win with the K

Now the DANGER hand is EAST! – if they get in and lead a spade through our Jack we lose 4 tricks. If West has to lead our Jack will be a winner. On this hand we finesse so that W wins.

Example – we are in 3 NT

North	
S 3 2	
H A 5 3	
D A J 10 9 8	
C K 5 4	

West	East
S K Q J 10 9	S 8 7 6
H 9 8 7	H Q J 10
D 5 4 2	D K 7 6
C 9 8	C Q J 10 7

S A 5 4	
H K 6 3 2	
D Q 3	
C A 6 3 2	

West leads Spade K – we hold up 2 rounds and W is the danger hand – we need 4 diamond tricks for the contract so we finesse by playing the D Q and letting it run, if not covered. East can win but can't get back to West – 3 NT makes!

Example – we are in 3 NT

	North	
	S 7 5	
	H A Q J	
	D A Q J 10 4	
	C 9 8 7	
West		East
S K J 8 6 4		S Q 10 9
H 9 8 5 2		H 10 6 4 3
D 5 3		D K 7 6
C K 6		C 5 4 3
	S A 3 2	
	H K 7	
	D 9 8 2	
	C A Q J 10 2	

West leads Spade 6, East plays Spade Q then Spade 9 – South holds up twice, West is the danger hand – South MUST finesse the diamonds and NEVER the clubs (only the club Ace will be a winner) - making 4 diamonds, 1 spade, 3 hearts and 1 club for the contract.

15 RULE of 7

When playing as declarer in a no trump contract, where you have a single stopper in a danger suit, how many times should you hold up before playing your high card?

Opponents leading from a 5 card suit present a bigger threat than if leading from a 4 card suit.

Say 9 7

K J 8 5 3 Q 10 4

A 6 2 Lead 5 – you need to hold up your ace

long enough **to sever communication between the defenders hands** – so that if R hand opponent subsequently wins a trick they cannot lead the danger suit back to L hand opponent to cash their long suit. You need to win the 3rd trick with the Ace – you ‘held up’ twice.

6 4 2

Q J 10 9 3 A 5

K 8 7 Lead Q, overtaken by A and 5 returned, you need to win with the K as communication is severed – you ‘held up’ once.

How do you know how many times to hold up? - the answer = the ‘Rule of 7’.

You subtract the number of cards you hold in the danger suit from 7 = the number of times you need to hold up your winning card.

So if you hold 7 cards you do not hold up, with 6 hold up once, with 5 hold up twice, with 4 hold up 3 times – etc.

Note – you should not hold up more times than is suggested by the Rule of 7, as you will allow your opponents an extra ‘tempo’ to set up another of their suits.

16 RULE of 11

Sitting in the 3rd seat, how should you play your cards when the opening lead is the 4th highest in a suit – almost always the case against a no trump contract when a small card has been led, (and you have not made a bid)?

West leads the 7

Q 8 2

7

A 10 3

North plays the 2,

what do you play?

The answer lies in the '**Rule of 11**' -which says '**subtract the value of the 4th highest card led from 11 = the number of cards higher than that card which are held by the other 3 hands**'.

So in the above example, $11 - 7 = 4$, there are 4 cards higher than 7 in the other 3 hands. You can see 2 of them in your hand and 2 in dummy, so declarer has no card higher than 7 in the suit. – you play the 10 knowing it is a certain winner! (then the A, and 3 to partners known K)

West leads the 6

A 10 4

6

Q 9 5 - using the Rule of 11,

$11-6 = 5$ – you have 2 of them and dummy has 2, so declarer has 1 card higher than the 6.

Which card could declarer have?

If it is the K, and you play the 9, it will force the K and declarer will get 2 tricks in the suit. If you had played the Q declarer will get 3, as the marked J will be finessed by then leading to the A 10.

If it is the 8 or 7, the 9 wins and declarer will get only 1 trick in the suit.

The Rule of 11 is very helpful in planning which card to play sitting in the third seat – it will not necessarily be your highest card.

Note: Just as 3rd seat can use the Rule of 11, so too can declarer – declarer uses it in exactly the same way and it tells how many cards higher than the led card the defender in 3rd seat holds.

A very useful tool which requires stopping, thinking and planning your play.

17 DECLARER'S PLAY IN A SUIT

A trump suit has the advantage over no trumps in that it gives **declarer protection against the opponent's long suit**.

On the opening lead, declarer stops, thinks and plans!

The strategy is to **COUNT THEIR LOSERS** in the hand with the longest trumps – usually declarer's.

If there are LESS losers than the tricks required to make the contract:

DRAW TRUMPS as quickly as possible and then play out the hand – effectively playing it as no trumps with the trump suit as the long suit.

If there are TOO MANY losers, then declarer must plan how to get rid of those losers – methods:

1 Discard them on DUMMY'S WINNERS in that suit.

2 ESTABLISH a LONG SUIT in DUMMY to DISCARD them on.

3* TRUMPING LOSERS IN DUMMY.

4 Getting opponents to lead into your tenace – i.e. try and make them lead to you're A-Q (with no risk - unlike a finesse).

5 You Finesse – 50% risk.

TRUMP IN DUMMY for extra tricks

A fundamental concept, but one which is difficult to understand at first, is that EXTRA TRICKS in the TRUMP suit are **ONLY OBTAINED BY TRUMPING** in the hand WHICH IS SHORTEST IN TRUMPS.

The hand long in trumps provides PROTECTION against the opponent's long suit, but gives NO extra tricks than for example if you were playing in no trumps with that as your long suit.

Hence, **SHORTAGES are useful in the hand with the SHORTER trump holding** – you may be able to trump cards in that short suit. SHORTAGES in the hand with the long trumps give no extra tricks.

Conversely, a balanced hand without shortages, in the hand with the short trumps, negates the chance of obtaining extra tricks from trumping.

18 PLAYING TRUMP CONTRACTS – When to draw trumps

Playing in a no-trump contract involves counting winners and establishing and cashing your long suit as quickly as possible.

When playing a suit contract the approach is different.

Here declarer counts their losers in the hand with the longest trumps (for the purpose of this paper we will assume this to be declarer's hand – if dummy has more trumps than declarer, declarer must 'stand on their head' and play the contract as if dummy is declarer and count the losers in that hand).

Having counted their losers declarer must work out how to get rid of enough of those losers to make the contract.

It may be that dummy has enough high card winners to cover declarer's losers and the contract can be made 'from the top'. If this is the case:

1 Draw all outstanding trumps

2 Cash the winners in the other suits, ensuring that communication is maintained between the two hands. e.g.

Contract 4 S, Lead of A, K, Q hearts

dummy	S Q 8 5 3	declarer	A K J 9 2
	H 7 6 3		8 4
	D A K Q		9 6 2
	C A 7 5		K Q 2 - lose 2 hearts, trump

the third and then draw trumps and cash the outside suit winners, making 11 tricks – quite straight forward.

Consider this hand:

dummy	S 8 6 3 2	declarer	A K Q J 5 4
	H 9 8 5		7 6 3
	D A 4 2		10 9
	C A K Q		7 6

contract 4 S, lead A, K, Q hearts – declarer counts 7 losers, 4 of which can be discarded on dummy's winners – note a diamond loser is discarded on the Q clubs – making 10 tricks.

Or,

dummy	S 3 2	declarer	A K 4
	H 5 4		K Q J 10 9 8
	D A K 7 6 5		4 3
	C 8 7 6 5		9 4

contract 4 H, lead A, K, Q clubs. Declarer counts 6 losers. The A and K diamonds eliminate two of these, leaving 4. By playing the A and K spades and then trumping the 4 of spades in dummy we get rid of a third loser, thus losing 3 tricks (2 clubs and A hearts) but making the contract with 10 tricks.

In both examples we have created an additional winner in dummy.

* There are ONLY 2 ways of creating additional tricks in a trump contract:

1 establishing a long suit in dummy on which declarer can discard losers (first example)

2 trumping losers IN DUMMY (second example)

We can see that to establish a long suit in dummy requires that suit to be longer in dummy than in declarer's hand, and

to win extra tricks by trumping in dummy requires that dummy has to be shorter in that suit than declarer.

***Note : extra tricks can NOT be made by trumping in declarer's hand** (because the card used to trump in declarer's hand will already have been counted as a winner – it can only win 1 trick!)

Managing the trump suit is critical in playing a trump contract. When both dummy and declarer have a lot of trumps e.g. dummy Q 7 6 4, declarer A K 10 9 8, declarer will normally draw trumps as soon as they win their first trick and then work on developing extra tricks. It may not be as simple when dummy is relatively short in trumps and 'extra' tricks have to be established.

Discarding losers on dummy's long suit :

987 QJ 10

65

If you play A, K spades and then

trump the 2, 2 extra tricks are established in dummy if the opponents spades split 3:3 and declarer has an entry to dummy after drawing the outstanding trumps – 2 of declarer's losers can be discarded on the 3 and 4 of spades. It may be that the entry to dummy is a trump.

AK 432

87 QJ 109

65

If the spades split 4:2, then 2 of dummy's spades will have to be trumped to establish only 1 extra long suit trick, and 2 entries to dummy will be required – it may be that high trumps will be required as entries. In this example there are 4 entries to dummy – A, K spades and A, 9 trumps – the full hand :

	A K 4 3 2
contract 4H	A 9 3
lead A,K d, Q c	Q 3
	9 5 4
8 7	Q J 10 9
4	7 6 5
A K 6 5 4 2	10 7 3
Q J 10 6	K 7 2
6 5	
K Q J 10 8 2	
J 8	
A 8 3	

Play : win the A clubs at trick 3. Play A K spades then trump 2 S, trumping high (at least the 8 – as you will need a small heart to play to dummy later! Then a heart to the A, then trump another spade (high). Now draw the remaining trumps making sure to win the 3rd round with the 9 in dummy! Now the last spade has been established as a winner, which is now

cashed, discarding a club from hand – now losers have been reduced to 3 and the contract is made - it is only possible to make the contract by establishing the spade suit on which a club loser can be discarded.

NOTE:

When establishing a long suit in dummy this suit must be established BEFORE drawing trumps if high trumps are required as entries to dummy.

You must also COUNT 1 : the number of outstanding trumps

2 : the number of cards outstanding in the suit you are establishing

Trumping in dummy

If declarer has a side suit which is shorter in dummy than in their hand they may be able to win **extra** tricks by trumping losers in this suit in dummy.

	3 2
contract 4H	5 4
lead A,K, Q clubs	A K 7 6 5
	8 7 6 5
	Q 10 6 5 J 9 8 7
	3 2 A 7 6
	J 9 8 Q 10 2
	A K Q J 10 3 2
	A K 4
	K Q J 10 9 8
	4 3
	9 4

Declarer has 6 losers – 2 of which are discarded on A, K diamonds – leaving 4 - So declarer trumps the 3rd club, plays the A and K of spades and then trumps the 4 in dummy. After this, trumps are drawn and side suit winners cashed – making 10 tricks. Note – the spade must be trumped BEFORE drawing trumps. If declarer leads a heart before doing this, the opponents will win the A hearts and return a heart, removing declarer's extra trick in dummy and the contract will fail. Similarly, if the opponents switched to a trump after winning the A and K of clubs, the contract will fail.

So, when a loser must be trumped in dummy, and dummy is short in trumps, the ruff must be taken BEFORE drawing trumps

[Defenders can make use of these principles as well – if they see that declarer may be planning to trump losers in dummy, or will need high trumps as entries to dummy when it looks as if they will try and establish a long suit in dummy, lead trumps at every opportunity)

	A 4
contract 4H	K 7 6
lead K C	10 8 7 6 5
	7 6 5

K Q 3

Q J 10 9 8 3

2

A 9 4 In this hand there are 6 losers, 2 can be

covered by the heart K and the spade A – leaving 4. We have noted that we can't establish suits or trump shortages when the number of cards in dummy and declarer's hands are the same. In this example, by playing the A then K and Q of spades, a club can be discarded from dummy on the queen – we have **created** a shortage in dummy and can trump a losing club from declarer's hand, making the contract. Note, again this procedure in the spade suit must be completed BEFORE drawing trumps.

19 DEFENCE AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

When playing in a suit contract declarer has essentially only 2 ways of making extra tricks:

1. Trumping losers in dummy (or at least in the hand with the shorter trumps)
2. Establishing a long suit in dummy on which losers can be discarded.

Defending suit contracts in Duplicate Pairs is difficult as you not only have to try and defeat the contract, but also not give away extra tricks (because the margin is critical – one trick can be the difference between a bottom or top board).

For the vast majority of the time when defending a suit contract you have only one aim: **not to give away tricks to declarer.**

Defence can be quite dull and very passive, but has to be very disciplined.

The secret to successful defence is largely determined by the shape of dummy.

If dummy is fairly balanced do not give away tricks to declarer by taking risks – lead the safest cards at all times.

If dummy has trumps and a shortage in a side suit, declarer is likely to try and ruff losers in that short side suit in dummy – to counter this lead trumps at every opportunity.

If dummy has a long side suit declarer will try and draw trumps and establish dummy's long suit on which they can discard their losers – to counter this you need to cash your winning tricks as quickly as possible or take out declarer's entries to dummy. This is the one situation in which you need to be aggressive as defenders.

'FORCING DEFENCE'

If declarer does not have a long suit in dummy to establish, and especially if you hold 4 trumps, the safest strategy is to make declarer trump in his own hand. You need to lead and keep leading your longest suit, forcing him to trump in his own hand – it may be that if you have 4 trumps you can gain control of trumps! (remember, declarer gains no extra tricks by trumping in the hand with the long trumps).

Example – opponents have bid to 4 Spades – you hold

S A 8 7 6 **H 8 6** D K J 5 3 2 C J 2 - your strategy should be to lead the 3 of diamonds, and continue diamonds at every opportunity – hoping that declarer is short in diamonds and has to ruff – in this way you may establish 2 spade tricks yourself.

'PASSIVE DEFENCE'

When dummy is balanced your prime goal is not to give away tricks. DO NOT break open NEW SUITS! - you risk giving away tricks to declarer - play passively and safely.

In this example

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

whichever side breaks open this

suit concedes a trick to the opponents. If E W open it, N S must win 1 trick. If NS opens the suit, they get no tricks.

ATTACKING DEFENCE

Probably the least common situation occurs **when dummy has a long strong side suit**.

Declarer will be drawing trumps and setting up dummy's side suit on which to discard losers. In this situation you need to cash your winners as quickly as possible by using attacking leads of the unbid suits (with the associated risk).

example : opponents bid hearts and diamonds ending in 4 H.

Q 6 4	
4 3 2	
A K Q 9 6	
6 5	
K J 10	A 8 5 3
A 5	7 6
8 5 4 3	10 2
10 9 8 7	Q J 4 3 2
9 7 2	
K Q J 10 9 8	
J 7	
A K	You make the safe opening lead of the

Club 10 (promises the 9), and see dummy with its long strong diamonds. As soon as you get on lead again (with the A hearts) you have to take the risk and attack spades, your only hope is that partner has the A spades – so you play the J of spades – on this hand making 3 spades and a heart to defeat the contract.

Safe Passive Leads

- Partners suit if they have bid – using standard leads. NOT your highest card in their suit unless you have a doubleton or touching honours e.g. Q J 2 (the queen promises the Jack)
- a trump from 2 or 3 small trumps
- top of a sequence e.g. K Q J, J 10 9
- a suit declarer will have to trump in their own hand i.e. your long suit – using standard leads.

Lead Trumps when:

- The opponents have bid only 1 suit e.g. 1 H > 2 H > 4 H
- You suspect declarer is short on points for their contract e.g. 1 H > 2 H > 3 H > 4 H
- When dummy is balanced

Don't Lead Trumps if:

- You have a singleton trump (partner may have 4)
- You have 4 trumps.

Don't lead a singleton if you hold 4 trumps.

Never lead a doubleton unless

- It is partners suit
- You are drawing trumps (doubleton is trump suit)

Aggressive attacking leads – when dummy has a long strong suit:

- singleton
- low from a suit headed by an honour e.g. K 8 5 3, Q 10 4 3, K J 4 3 2 - lead the 3 in each case.

In defence it is important to remember the bidding to build up a picture of the opponents hands and their likely shape to try and direct you to the correct approach to the defence, and then reassess the situation when dummy is laid down.

20 WHICH CARD TO LEAD - Defenders

Defence is the most difficult aspect of Bridge – it would be considerably easier if you could see partner's hand!

However just as there is a language in bidding, so too is there a 'language" in defence – you talk to your partner with the cards you play. You can give them an idea of the cards you have and also the ones you don't have. Your partner will try and tell you about their hand by the cards they play in response.

Language means that you have to have rules.

First rule – **ALWAYS OVER LEAD Honours** – this means that if you say lead a Queen you **ALWAYS** have the Jack and **NEVER** have the King (note 10 is an honour when leading)

(Exceptions to over lead Honours – with AK doubleton, lead K then A! – if this happens partner will know this isn't over leading honours so 'must be a doubleton'.)

Second Rule – use **STANDARD LEADS**

4th highest from an honour e.g. K 9 7 3 K 9 7 3 2

3rd highest from 3 headed by honour e.g. K 9 7

MUD (middle > up > down) from 3 without honour e.g. 9 7 3 i.e. 7 then 9 then 3

2nd highest from 4 without honour e.g. 9 7 3 2 (if lead top, partner will think you have a doubleton with next round) - *next trick play the highest.*

Doubleton - high then low e.g. 9 7

An Honour promises card below it and denies the card above it.

AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT

Deciding which **suit** to lead is difficult - see topic 18.

ALMOST ALWAYS:

Lead PARTNER's SUIT using STANDARD LEADS (an exception may be if say you had A K Q in another suit, you may lead the ace (partner will know you have the K) to see what dummy holds – and then deciding next course of action).

Do NOT lead the highest card you have in partner's suit unless it is a supported honour e.g. Q J 3 – the only exceptions being a doubleton or perhaps an unsupported Ace.

NEVER lead an unsupported Ace in your suit

Try not to lead away from an unsupported A or K (esp A) – find another suit

Try NEVER to lead a DOUBLETON unless it is Partner's suit (if you lead an unusual card and partner is wondering 'Could this be a singleton or is it a doubleton?' – it will be a singleton, because partner knows you don't lead doubletons) – **or it is A K**

NEVER LEAD A SINGLETON TRUMP your partner may well have 3 or 4 trumps and you will be ‘killing their trumps’

DON’T LEAD A SINGLETON if you have 4 trumps of your own – they will be wasted trumping (*lead your longest suit, hoping to make declarer trump in their hand*)

LEADING AGAINST NO TRUMPS

Goal is to try and establish and run your long suit before declarer can establish and run theirs.

Option 1

Lead partner’s suit (if you know it) **using STANDARD leads** – using standard leads partner should be able to work out what cards you may have and possibly how many – so if you lead say the 3 of partners suit you are probably promising an honour in that suit etc

Option 2

Lead a SEQUENCE from a suit with at least 3 touching honours and at least 4 cards. This is an attacking lead because you force out declarer’s high cards while establishing your suit. Lead the top card from a **true sequence** – this promises the 2 lower cards and denies a higher one.

e.g. K Q J 7, A K Q 7 5 (see special note), J 10 9 8 2

Lead the top card from a **broken sequence** – where you have the top 2 cards and are missing only one in the ‘sequence’

e.g. K Q 10 9, Q J 9 8 2. You are still promising the card below and denying a higher one. Lead the top card from an **internal sequence** – still promising the card below it, but you may hold a higher non touching honour.

e.g. K J 10 9, A J 10 9 2, Q 10 9 8 2

(Exception: if you had a long suit headed by the ace but missing 1 honour e.g. A Q J 10 9 3 you lead the ACE – this says to partner ‘DISCARD YOUR HIGHEST CARD NOW’ – what you are hoping is that partner has the K and you will then be able to ‘run’ the suit without the risk of partner blocking it.

Option 3

Lead the 4th highest card from YOUR longest suit.

Note – even if the opponents have indicated that they have a stopper in your or partner’s long suit, it is usually best to still attack that suit immediately.

21 BASIC SIGNALS in DEFENCE

Defence would be a lot easier if you could see partners hand – as declarer can see dummy.

‘Signalling’ is an attempt to communicate between defenders by the careful play of the cards they hold.

There are signalling conventions to:

- Indicate whether you ‘like’ a particular suit = ATTITUDE
- Indicate how many cards you hold in a suit = COUNT
- Indicate which suit your partner can get back to your hand with
- Show suit preference

In the remainder of this paper, South is declarer and your side is defending – partner is West and you are East.

ATTITUDE - ‘Do I like this suit?’

There are 2 options for this convention :

- ‘high to encourage’ or
- ‘low to encourage’ - Most people now play **LOW to ENCOURAGE** because it preserves a higher card which may be important in the play.

When partner (W) leads an honour in a suit, you ENCOURAGE the continuation of that suit by playing your lowest card – if you have nothing to offer in that suit, play the highest card you can afford.

Sometimes you will have little choice if you don’t hold suitable cards, and the signal may be hard to interpret. It may be clearer after the second trick in that suit is played.

e.g. 10 6 2
 Leads Q K 8 7 3 the 3 encourages – partner can see it is low

 10 6 5
 Leads Q 4 3 2 you play the 4 – partner may not be able to tell whether this is high or low, but on the next round when you play the 2, the 4 was obviously high to discourage!

Or A 7 5
 Leads 6 Q 4 3 2 Partner presumably has an honour,
Declarer plays the A – you play the 2 to encourage – saying you too have an honour.

SPECIAL SITUATION

Partner leads an Ace (promising the King) – the discard of the Queen PROMISES that you can win the next trick – either the Q is a singleton, or you have the J as well!

A K x x

Q J x

A Q x

Partner leads the A you play the Q! partner will then lead x to your J (NOT play the K) – hoping that you will be able to work out that he/she wants you to switch to the suit in which his A Q is sitting over Declarer's K.

An excellent example of using attitude signals – contract 2 S

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

Partner leads J hearts, covered by the A. While you have excellent hearts, you desperately want partner to play clubs through dummy, so play the 8 Hearts! – discouraging hearts. When partner gets the lead – you want them to work out that you want clubs! When you win with a club you don't cash your top hearts but lead the 2 back to partners 10 (which they promised when they led the J) so that they can lead another club. – defenders get 2 spade tricks, 1 heart, 2 clubs and 1 diamond – taking the contract off 1!

COUNT

Sometimes partner will be more interested in how many cards you hold in a suit, rather than their quality. This will normally be the case when they are leading honours from a sequence, or when declarer is trying to set up a long suit in dummy and does not have outside entries.

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

Partner leads the A – looking at dummy it is obvious to him that you have no high cards in the suit – 'attitude' is not helpful – what is important is for him/her to know is **how many cards you have in the suit**.

Again, there are 2 COUNT conventions used :

'Natural' Count where a high then low card = an EVEN number OR

'Reverse' Count where a LOW then HIGHER card = EVEN number, while HIGH then LOWER = ODD number of cards.

In the above example you would play the 2 (it will have to be an even number – or singleton) – partner will have to try and work out whether you have 2 or 4 – probably by

recalling the bidding. (You have to learn to remember the bidding by the opponents for these clues). If partner gets it correct, they will not continue with the K as they will have worked out that it will be trumped.

Whenever partner leads a K, from a sequence, you normally give COUNT in preference to attitude. (When they lead an Ace – give ATTITUDE)

Also give COUNT when declarer is trying to set up a long suit in dummy and there is no outside entry.

K Q 10 8 3	
6 4	A 9 5

J 7 2

You need to know when to take your A –

it MUST be when declarer leads their LAST card in that suit – how can you tell? – Your partner has to be alert and give Count. When declarer first leads say the 2, partner must play the 4, then the 6 = even number – you will know declarer has 3 cards and will take your Ace on the 3rd round.

However if partner held 7 6 4 and declarer J 2, on the first round partner will play the 7 and then the 4 = an ODD number – so Declarer can only have 2 cards and you take the Ace on the second round – Declarer can never get to dummy again!

SUIT PREFERENCE ON FIRST DISCARD

When Declarer or your Partner is ‘running’ a suit and you can’t follow, you use **your 1st discard to show your suit preference**.

Again there are different conventions, the easiest being : **Low to Encourage - High to Discourage that suit.**

Sometimes you may not be able to afford to discard a card in your best suit, so you will need to discourage a different suit – a negative rather than a positive signal.

*Be careful not to signal such that Declarer is ‘tipped off’ in a finesse situation e.g. if dummy holds A Q 10 and you hold 8 3 2, don’t signal that this suit is weak from your point of view.

You and partner have to be very vigilant in defence, looking for signals – whether the first card they play is encouraging, and particularly whether they play low - high or high - low giving count. Also be on the look out for their first discard and work out what it means – you are allowed to stop and think about the cards played at the time – don’t rush! You too have to think about each card you play – should you be giving count, showing preference etc.

It is wise to pre-plan which card you are going to play as early in the hand as you possibly can – don’t wait until that trick has commenced.

22 THE FINESSE

"The essence of every finesse is HOPE!" Mollo.

"The hope that the missing card is where you want it to be – under a card above it."

A 'finesse' is an attempt to win a trick with a card that is not a certain winner - typically by playing it as the third card in a trick hoping that the card which could beat it is held in the hand which has already played.

The finesse can be the basis of some of the most complex plays in bridge.

Generally, there is a 50% chance of success with a finesse, but these odds can be improved by listening to the bidding and noting the play of the cards to that point. (e.g. an opponent who has bid is likely to have the hand with more high card points, or the opponents may have signalled during play)

The Simple Finesse

A Q

3 2 Play the 2 to the Queen hoping LHO has

the King (and so win 2 tricks).

* The principle is to lead LOW to SPLIT HONOURS.

The finesse takes many other forms.

Lead Towards Honours

K Q J 2

5 4 3 Play the 3 to the King (hoping LHO has A),
return to hand, play 4 to the Queen (if Ace was not played),
return to hand play 5 to the Jack.

If LHO has A, you win 3 tricks. If at any stage you lay down an honour and one opponent has 4 cards in the suit, you win only 2 tricks. If LHO has A 10 x x, by always playing low to the honours you get 3 tricks.

Rule: 'Never lead a high card when a small one will do'

Common Finesse situation :

We need to make 2 tricks from:

Q 3 2

A 5 4 Play Ace first (drops a singleton King), then 4 to the Queen, hoping LHO has K = 2 tricks, if not, that is the breaks!

We need to make 2 tricks from:

Q 3

A 5 4 Play 4 to the Queen first, - the only hope of 2 tricks is LHO having K, you must do this *before* playing the Ace.

Never lead an unsupported honour.

A 4 2

Q J 10 Lead Q and let it run, if not covered, then, J etc. – if LHO has the K you win 3 tricks.

A Q x

J x x

Lead x to the Q – do NOT lead

the J intending to let it 'run' – if LHO has the K and covers, you will only get 1 trick, leading x guarantees 2 tricks and 3 if LHO has K doubleton. If you held J 10 then you would lead the J, as the 10 would be 'promoted'

Ruffing Finesse (only applies to suit contracts)

	S A Q J 10
	H Q 9 6 3
	D 8 7 4
Lead 4 hearts	C A 3
	S 7
	H A K J 10 5
	D K 5 3
	C 9 7 4 2
	Contract 4 hearts, lead say 4 H. – you have 4 potential losing tricks – 3 diamonds and a club. RHO is danger hand as they could lead through the K diamonds.

Play – win the first trick and draw trumps. You can't afford to try the spade finesse, because if it loses you will lose that trick, and 3 diamonds – down 1.

However, if you play spade 7 to the Ace and then lead the Queen, if RHO covers, trump and then use the S J and 10 to pitch 2 losers from your hand later on, making the contract. If RHO does not cover, let the Q run and allow the non-danger hand to win – you pitch the 3 D – you are getting rid of 'a loser on a loser' – now the Q and J of spades can be used to discard losers, and if LHO leads a diamond, the K is a certain trick – you make your contract. This is an example of a ruffing finesse.

Complex finesse situations:

* When finessing with TWO high honours missing – assume that those honours are 'split' between the two opposition hands. ('Split Honours')

We have A J 9
6 5 3 and need to win 2 tricks – the K Q and 10 are missing. The only hope of making 2 tricks is that LHO holds the 10 and either K or Q and that R hand opponents holds the other picture card.

The Play : the finesse against the 10 MUST BE TAKEN FIRST, so play the 3 to the 9, unless covered – if not covered we hope that RHO wins with the K or Q (if they win with the 10 we are doomed to just 1 trick). Then back to hand and 5 to the J, unless covered, hoping LHO has the other of K/Q and the 10. If it all works we get 2 tricks!

When having a double finesse situation like this you ALWAYS have to take the lower ranked finesse first! – it requires courage!

(in this example if the first finesse had been to the J and it loses, then the opponent's 10 will be promoted, making your 9 useless – you will only get 1 trick.)

23 SECOND HAND PLAY (based on E Kantar 'Introduction to Defenders Play')

Second hand play is difficult – because you have to think! Fortunately, there are some rules to help – most of the time.

There are 2 situations

A When the lead is from dummy and you can't see the hand playing after you i.e.

	Dummy (lead)
West	You
	Declarer

B When the lead is from the hidden hand and you can see dummy.

	Dummy
You	East
	Declarer (lead) - it is easier to decide how to play in this position.

We will assume declarer is South and we are playing in no trumps

SITUATION A – lead is towards the closed hand (South) and you are West

Consider: Q 9 2

K 10 6 (you) - if dummy leads the 2 you normally play the 6 (low), if dummy leads the Q, you should cover with the K – 'cover an honour with an honour' (*realising 10 is an honour*).

This is the basic rule for 2nd hand play in situation A – '**2nd hand plays low, but covers an honour with an honour**'.

Why is this the rule? – consider the hand

	Q 9 2 (on lead)
J 8 7 3	K 10 6
	A 5 4

If dummy plays the 2 : if you play the 6, the A wins and the Q 9 will fall to the finesse = 1 declarer trick

if you play the K, the A and Q both win = 2 declarer tricks
if you play the 10, the A wins and a finesse to the Q 9 gives 1 more trick = 2 declarer tricks

But what if East had the A and not declarer?

	Q 9 2 (on lead)
A 8 7 3	K 10 6
	J 5 4

If dummy plays the 2 : if you play the 6, East's A beats the J and the Q 9 will fall to the K 10 finesse = 0 declarer tricks

if you play the K it wins as does the A but dummy's Q wins = 1 declarer trick
if you play the 10, the J forces the A and a finesse to the Q 9 gives 1

declarer trick

So **2nd hand playing low from a small card lead from Dummy is the correct play.**

What happens if Declarer leads an honour?

Q 3 (on lead)

9 8 7 5 4

K 10 6

A J 4

If Dummy leads the Q : if you play low, declarer lets Q win and finesse to the A J = 3 tricks

if you cover with the K, declarer wins the A and J = 2 tricks (you

'promote' the rest of the suit)

OR

Q 3 (on lead)

10 8 7

K 5 4

A J 9 6 2

If Dummy leads the Q : if you play low, declarer lets Q win and finesse to the A J = 5 tricks

if you cover with the K, declarer wins the A and J = 2 immediate tricks (you promote East's 10 for the 3rd trick)

if partner does not have the 10 to three, you are doomed to lose 5 tricks anyhow.

'Cover an honour with an honour' seems straight forward and works.

But what if dummy has more than one touching honour?

Q J 9 (on lead)

10 8 7 6

K 3 2

A 5 4

If Dummy leads the Q : if you cover with the K , declarer wins A and finesse to the Q 9 = 3 tricks

if you play the 2 to trick 1 and then cover the J, declarer wins the Q and the A , but partners 10 wins the 3rd tick= 2 tricks

if partner does not have the 10 to three, you are doomed to lose 3 tricks anyhow.

SUMMARY OF 2nd HAND PLAY WHEN DUMMY IS ON YOUR RIGHT.

1 Play low if dummy leads low

2 Cover an honour with an honour unless dummy has touching honours, when you cover the LAST equal honour

3 If you have 3 touching honours (e.g. Q J 10 3) play your lowest touching honour immediately. (with only 2 touching honours play low.)

However these rules are guides – you still have to THINK.

Say you are considering defence against a suit contract – *which has similar principles, but requires more thought and a lot of thought about the auction* – and declarer has bid showing at least a 6 card trump suit.

J 5 4 (on lead)

K 5 4
A 7 6 (you) J 10 9 8
Q 3 2 (on lead) (if you take the A, declarer gets 2 tricks)

What if declarer leads an honour? - you can see all of dummy's cards.

A Q 10 9
K 7 6 2 (you)
J (on lead) - there is no reason at all to cover the J – play low
clarer has only 2 cards and can finesse twice for 3 tricks – your K will eventually
end all is lost.

A Q 9
K 4 3 (you)
J (on lead) - this time you MUST cover – hoping that partner has the 10 (to three) – allowing declarer only 2 tricks

A Q 9
K 4 3 (you) 10 7 5 2
J 8 6 (on lead)

BUT what if

A 5 2
K 4 3 (you) 10 8 7 6
Q J 9 (on lead) - declarer leads the Q - if you cover the Q
the A and the J 9 finesse = 3 tricks
- if you play the 3, but
the J on the next trick, declarer gets only 2 tricks.

So: If Declarer leads an honour towards dummy, AND you cannot see the honour immediately below it assume Declarer is leading from touching honours and cover the SECOND honour. This is the same principle as in section A, regarding covering honours.

SUMMARY OF SECOND HAND PLAY WHEN DUMMY IS ON YOUR LEFT.

1 If Declarer leads low to broken honours (e.g. K J 3, Q 10 3 2) 2nd hand plays low – even if they can win the trick

2 Don't force honours out of dummy if dummy has higher cards than yours – play low.

e.g. A Q 9 (dummy)

K J 4 2 (you) play the 2
3

3 If Declarer plays the Q or J towards a higher honour in dummy don't cover unless the card immediately beneath the lead card is visible.

i.e. A 5 3 (dummy)

K 7 5 (you) play the 5 – you can't see the J
Q

But

A J 3 (dummy)

K 7 5 (you)

because you can see the J.

play the K – you must cover

Q

24 THE NEGATIVE DOUBLE (Sputnik Double)

In pairs bridge there is a focus on finding major suit fits. The Negative Double is a tool to help find a major fit, or to compete in the bidding at the two level with insufficient high card strength to make a bid in a new suit.

After partner has opened and your right hand opponent has overcalled, 'Double' by you is a **Negative Double**.

What does it mean? (*In each sequence below the first bid is your opening partner and the next an overcall by right hand opponent*)

1 Club 1 Diamond Double

Here you are promising 4 4 in the majors and at least 6 hcp. If you had a 5 card major you would have bid it rather than double. In this way opener knows the lengths of your majors.

1 Minor 1 Heart Double

Promises 4 spades, 6 + hcp and probably 4 cards in the other minor (but not necessarily).

With 5 spades you would have bid 1 spade.

1 Heart 2 Clubs Double

Denies 3 heart support, promises 4 or 5 spades and 6 -9 hcp (possibly 4 diamonds as well) – here you are too weak to introduce a new suit of your own at the 2 level, but can give useful information to your partner. With 10 or 11+ hcp you would show your suit at the 2 level.

1 Spade 2 Clubs Double

Again denies 3 spades, and promises 4 or 5 hearts and 6-9 hcp

1 Heart 1 Spade Double

In this sequence, where both majors have been bid, you are promising at least 4 4 in the minors, 6 + hcp, and denying 3 hearts.

The Negative Double is a very useful tool.

25 OVERCALLING A STRONG NO TRUMP OPENING - incl LANDY CONVENTION

When the opponents have opened a strong 1 NT (15 or 16 to 17 or 18 HCP), you require either a very strong hand, or one with very useful shape to compete in the auction.

If you have a strong hand, and opener has 15+ points, then neither of your partners will have many points, and during the play of the hand you will both be trapped having to lead away from the strength of your own hand.

The person whose strong opponent is sitting to their right will be advantaged in that leads will come 'through' the strong hand.

How to compete over a strong 1 NT opening?

1 Double – this shows a hand with at least as many HCP as the opener's maximum. So, if opener has a 1NT opening of 15-17 hcp, your double promises at least 17 hcp. In this situation it is probably better to defend and hope to take opener down – this is particularly the case if they are sitting to your left as opener will be 'playing through' you.

2 Bidding a suit – this requires a hand with a lot of shape (long suit/s and shortages) and opening points – at least 11 or 12. The more shape, the less points required.

In this situation one could just overcall your suit, but many hands are strong because they have length in 2 suits. There are many conventions to help to solve this situation.

The simplest is probably **the Landy Convention**.

The bids competing over 1NT are:

Double – balanced with at least as many hcp as opener's maximum

2 Clubs! – showing both majors, normally at least 5 / 5, but it could be 5 / 4 if the 4 card suit is very strong

2 Diamonds, 2 Hearts and 2 Spades are single suited hands, probably 6 card suits containing at least 2 honours

2 No Trump! - both minors, both long suits at least 5 / 5 with most of the points in these suits.

(When playing against opponents using a weak no trump opening (e.g. Acol with 12-14 hcp), competing much more aggressively will be more likely rewarded.)

Over a strong 1 NT opening this hand would not be a good one to double with – because whenever you win a trick you will be forced to lead back into opener's strength.

S A Q 5 2 H K J 8 2 D K J 6 C K 3,

however, the following hand would be safer to double with because after each trick won you can safely lead a club, hopefully eventually establishing a trick or two in that suit

S K J 3 H A Q 6 D A Q C 9 7 5 4 2

A good hand to overcall a Landy 2 Clubs! would be

S A Q 10 8 7 H K Q J 3 2 D - C J 10 9

Or 2 Hearts

S 9 H K Q J 7 6 3 D Q J 3 2 C K 2

26 The BASIC LOSING TRICK COUNT

The Losing Trick Count is an additional or alternate method to determining how many tricks you expect to make in a **suit contract once a trump fit has been agreed**.

How does it work?

The formula:

Count Your Losers, **ADD** Partners Losers, **SUBTRACT TOTAL from 24** = Number of Tricks your Partnership **EXPECTS TO WIN**.

The outcome is normally accurate if 50% of finesses work and suits break normally. The winning percentage is superior to using total high card points.

LTC does not apply to no trump contracts

HOW TO COUNT YOUR LOSERS.

Count losers in ONLY the top 3 cards in each suit (so maximum losers in a hand is 12 or 24 between you and partner) - so holding a minimum of:

3 cards in a suit A K Q each count as a winner

2 cards in a suit A K each count as a winner

1 card in a suit A counts as a winner

A K 6 4	K Q 9 3	J 3	4 3 2	7 losers	(13 hcp)
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A K 6 4	K Q 9 3	A 9	4 3 2	6 losers	(16 hcp)
---------	---------	-----	-------	----------	----------

A K 6 4	K Q 9 3	A 9	K 3 2	5 losers	(19 hcp)
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It is clear that **as the points in a hand increase, so the number of losers decrease**.

A K 6 2	K Q 9 3	J 3	4 3 2	7 losers	(13 hcp)
---------	---------	-----	-------	----------	----------

A K 6 4 2	K Q 9 3	J 3	4 2	6 losers	(13 hcp)
-----------	---------	-----	-----	----------	----------

A K 6 4 2	K Q 9 3 2	J 3	4	5 losers	(13 hcp)
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A K 6 5 4 2	K Q 9 3 2	J 3		4 losers	(13 hcp)
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And **as the hand becomes more unbalanced, so the number of losers decrease**.

Compare the following 2 hands :

a Axxx Axx Axx Axx 8 losers

b Qxxx Qxx Qxx Qxx 8 losers : hand a is clearly superior to hand b.

You may choose to **ADJUST** the LTC to compensate for this : a simple method is to add an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ a loser for each Queen you hold in excess of each Ace – so in the above example you would add 2 losers to hand b – this gives an ‘adjusted LTC’.

Counting **your** losers is simple – **how can you tell what partners LTC is?** – this is no more difficult than gauging their high card points.

Your starting assumption is that : a **MINIMUM OPENING HAND = 7 LOSERS**.

A **minimum response** e.g. 1 H > 2H (6-9 hcp) = **9 LOSERS**. From this starting point adjust your calculation depending on partners strength as shown from subsequent bids (remember that you can’t use LTC until you know that you have a trump fit). A guide:

opener points	expected losers
---------------	-----------------

12-14	sound minimum	7
15-18	strong, incl strong 1 NT	6
19-21	Very strong	4-5
22+	Game force	≤ 3
Weak 2	Weak Opening	8 (note already at a higher opening)
Reverse		≤ 5
3 Level Pre-empts	Not Vul	7
	Vuln	6
Minimum Overcall at 1 level		8

Examples of potential value:

a. You hold: S K 8 5 2 **H** A J 6 4 **D** K Q 8 7 4 C - - (13 hcp)

Partner opens 1 club, you bid 1 diamond and partner bids 1 Spade – you have established a trump fit and implemented your LTC – partner has shown no more than a minimum hand = 7 losers and you have 5 losers! $(24 - 7 - 5 = 12)$. Can you expect to make 6 spades? Using hcp you should bid to 4 spades. Partners hand: S Q J 9 4 3 **H** void **D** A 10 9 C A 10 8 6 5 – 11 hcp (he equally could have opened 1 S)

Between you there are 24 hcp - but 6 Spades is unbeatable!

b. You are South : West opens 1 D, partner overcalls 1 S, East bids 2 D, you hold:

S K 6 5 4 3 **H** A 2 **D** 10 C A K Q 5 2 – you have a trump fit, 16 hcp and 4 losers! – a simple overcall by partner can be assumed to be 8 losers - $24 - (8+4) = 12$ – can you make 6 spades despite the opponents opening?

Partners hand: S A Q 9 8 7 **H** 9 6 4 **D** Q 6 4 C 10 9 - 8 hcp, and 8 losers. 24 hcp between you.

6 spades is unbeatable – losing just 1 diamond trick.

This is a brief overview of the Basic Losing Trick Count – Ron Klinger has an excellent book on the subject ‘Bidding to Win at Bridge – The Modern Losing Trick Count’.

But even this very basic summary is an adequate addition to bidding games and slams for those wishing to advance their bidding skills.

27 MULTI TWO's (and Precision) – an overview

Weak long suited hands have pre-emptive value, but 2 level pre-empts (Weak 2's) tend to be of limited pre-emptive value.

MULTI 2's is a system of conventional bids which increase the value and options of opening at the 2 level - each 2 level opening has a multiple meaning – hence ‘Multi 2’s’.

There are a number of variations on the theme – I will outline a commonly used system. Initially responder will not know which option opener has, and hence will need to use specified responses to find out.

2 CLUBS! is already being used as a ‘Multi 2’ – it is game forcing and can be:

23+ hcp – balanced or

8 ½ + playing tricks

Responder finds out by (in our system) bidding:

2 Diamonds! If weak (0-7 hcp and < 2 controls) or

2 Hearts! is ‘strong’ (8+ hcp and 2+ controls)

2 DIAMONDS! can be:

A ‘Weak 2’ in either major (6-10 hcp and an exactly 6 card suit) or

20 -22 hcp balanced (the old 2 NT opening)

Responder finds out which by bidding:

2 NT! If strong (15+ hcp) or

2 H! if ‘weak’ – less than 15 hcp

2 HEARTS! can be used in 2 different ways. The more recent way shows:

5 + Hearts and 4 + Spades and 5-10 hcp: the alternate way shows

5 + Hearts and 5 + of another suit and 5-10 hcp

Responder (in either system) will have:

A STRONG response – 2 NT! (15+ hcp) or

An alternate bid (or pass) if weaker

2 SPADES! is:

5 + Spades and 5 + of a Minor and 5-10 hcp:

Responder will have:

A STRONG response – 2 NT! (15+ hcp) or

An alternate bid (or pass) if weaker

2 NO TRUMPS! is:

5 + Clubs and 5 + Diamonds and 5-10 hcp:

Responder will have:

A STRONG response – 3H! (15+ hcp) or

An alternate bid (or pass) if weaker – choosing between the minors or bidding 3 spades with a 6+ card suit.

Multi 2's are very useful, fairly easy to play with a bit of practice, and a lot of fun.

How do opponents deal with these bidding systems? The answer, overcall or double if at all possible, to interfere with their bidding sequence.

Note : A more detailed description of Multi 2's is the last Appendix

Another system which some opponents may play is '**PRECISION**'.

In Precision **ALL hands with 16+ hcp are opened 1 CLUB**. (so, any other opening is never more than 15 hcp)

Responder if weak (< 8 hcp) bids 1 Diamond! With more than that they will bid a suit or no trumps.

Subsequent bidding will define each parties hand.

Precision is a very effective system if the bidding sequences are allowed to proceed unchecked. Opponents should try and interfere by overcalling or doubling at every opportunity even if they are rather weak.

28 SUMMARY SHEET: No Trump Openings, Gerber, RKCB

ROMAN KEYCARD – for suit contract initiated by 4NT (remember K trumps = an ‘Ace’)

5 Clubs = 0 or 3 Aces
5 Diamonds = 1 or 4 Aces
5 Heart = 2 Aces but NO trump Queen
5 Spades = 2 Aces AND the trump Queen

GERBER – for No Trump Contract – initiated by 4 Clubs responses after a NT bid:

4 Diamonds = 0 or 4 Aces
4 Hearts = 1 Ace
4 Spades = 2 Aces
4 NT = 3 Aces

Then 5 Clubs asks for Kings – same responses

OR (similar to RKCB)

4 Diamonds = 0 or 3 Aces
4 Hearts = 1 or 4 Aces
4 Spades = 2 Aces

Then, if you wish to ask how many Kings,

Bid 5 Clubs with a different response system

5 Diamonds = 0 Kings
5 Hearts = 1 Kings
5 Spades = 2 Kings
5 NT = 3 Kings
6 Clubs = 4 Kings

NO TRUMP OPENINGS

*1 of a suit	REBID 1NT	= 11-14 hcp	(11- 15 if using 16-18 1NT)
1 NT		= 15 -17 hcp	
*1 of a suit	REBID 2NT	= 18 – 19 hcp	
2 NT		= 20 – 22 hcp	
2 Clubs!	REBID 2NT	= 23 – 24 hcp	
2 Clubs!	REBID 3NT	= 25 + hcp	

AFTER YOU HAVE TRANSFERRED - using hearts as example:

1 No Trump > 2 Diamonds! > 2 Hearts! THEN:

WITH 5 CARD HEART SUIT and

Less than 8 hcp PASS

8 or 9 hcp (INVITE) **2 No Trumps** - if opener is MINIMUM (15 hcp) they PASS with 2 hearts

OR bid 3 HEARTS with 3+ hearts

if opener is MAXIMUM – 16 -17 they bid 3NT with 2 hearts

OR bid GAME (4 H) with 3+ hearts

10 + hcp (= GAME) **3 No Trumps** Opener will PASS with 2 hearts

OR bid 4 hearts with 3+ support

WITH 6 CARD HEART SUIT and

Less than 8 hcp PASS

8 or 9 hcp (INVITE) **3 Hearts** if opener is MINIMUM (15 hcp) they PASS

if opener is MAXIMUM (16 -17) they bid 4 Hearts

10 + hcp (= GAME) **4 Hearts**

29 WHEN TO ALERT - SUMMARY (from Gold Coast Convention Notes)

PRE-ALERTS

List your unusual or complex treatments in the pre-alerts section of the system card e.g.
RCO 2s, Bergen raises, unusual carding e.g. low from doubleton

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announce the number of clubs in a 1 club opening and the HCP range of a 1 NT opening.
Those playing a strong club system need to announce 1 club as "Strong 16+"

ALERTS DURING THE AUCTION

Alert by circling partner's call and saying "Alert", but don't offer an explanation unless asked
(then aim to be concise, yet complete)

DON'T ALERT

Any double or redouble
Any call beyond 3NT (except a conventional opening bid)
A bid of a suit bid or shown by an opponent
Any 2 club response to a 1 NT opening bid in an uncontested auction (e.g. Stayman)
Any jump raise in an auction

DO ALERT

All other conventional calls (e.g. transfers, 2H = 'hearts and a minor' etc)
Unusual natural bids – including weak jump shift responses, pre-emptive jump raises,
inverted minors, negative free bids, transfer accepts which deny four trumps etc.

At the end of the auction, the declaring side should mark any unusual bids which weren't
alerted at the time. Do this with a plus (+) sign.

IF PARTNER MUCKS UP

DECLARER or DUMMY: If partner fails to alert or provides a wrong or misleading
explanation, you should wait until the end of the auction before calling the Director and
correcting.

DEFENDERS: wait until the end of the hand before calling the Director.

30 DUPLICATE BRIDGE LAWS P Greenwood (Conduct, Etiquette from TTGBC document)

The Laws are designed to define correct procedure and to provide an adequate remedy when there is a departure from correct procedure.

They are primarily designed not as a punishment for irregularities, but rather for the rectification of situations where non-offenders may otherwise be damaged.

Players should be ready to accept, gracefully, any rectification or adjusted score awarded by the Director.

CONDUCT and ETIQUETTE

PROPER ATTITUDE

- A player should maintain a courteous attitude at all times.
- A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.
- Every player should follow uniform and correct procedure in calling and playing.

ETIQUETTE

As a matter of courtesy, a player should refrain from:

- Paying insufficient attention to the game.
- Making gratuitous comments during the auction and play.
- Detaching a card before it is their turn to play.
- Prolonging play unnecessarily (e.g. when they are in a position to claim all remaining tricks) for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.
- Summoning and addressing the Director in a manner discourteous to him/her or to other contestants.

BRIDGE ETHICS

- Always maintain a courteous attitude to other players and the Director.
- Always call the Director when an irregularity occurs
- Do not show satisfaction or displeasure at a lead, play, bid, double or any other call which partner makes.
- Always make bids and play in a uniform manner, without special emphasis which could give partner information about the hand.
- Do not look to see where in their hand another player pulls a card from.
- Do not hesitate, either in bidding or play, in order to deceive the opponents.

- Do not prepare to lead or play to a trick before the previous trick is completed.
- Do not play early
- Do not draw inference from any hesitation partner has made, or any emphasis in bid or play by partner.
- Always 'claim' to speed up play if you are certain that all remaining tricks are yours, or that there is no doubt at all about how many more tricks each side is going to make.

NOTE:

- It is NOT your duty to call attention to your own breach of the law, e.g. a revoke by you or your partner.

31 MULTI 2's in More Detail

2 D! Opening and Responses

- has the following possible meanings:

- (1) A weak two opening in hearts (6-10 hcp).
- (2) A weak two opening in spades (6-10 hcp), or
- (3) A strong balanced hand, 20-22 hcp

Responses:

- (1) 2♥ -asks opener to pass with a weak two in hearts, bid 2♠ with spades, or rebid 2NT with the strong balanced hand
- (2) 2♠ - responder likes hearts (4+ Hearts), doesn't like spades. Opener should pass with a spade suit, otherwise bid 3♥ with hearts, or 2NT with a strong balanced hand
- (3) 2NT – strong inquiry (15+ hcp), asking opener which suit is held, and whether maximum or minimum, as follows:
3♣ - upper range with hearts (9-10 hcp)
3♦ - upper range with spades (9-10 hcp)
3♥ - lower range with hearts (6-8 hcp)
3♠ - lower range with spades (6-8 hcp)
3NT – strong balanced hand, 20-22 hcp
- (4) 3♥,- pre-emptive, opener to pass or correct (would have 4 of both majors)

Note: If opener rebids No Trumps, showing the 20-22 point balanced hand, then further bidding is the same as for a 1NT opening, i.e. 3 C Stayman, 3D and 3H Transfers

2♥! Opening shows less than opening values (5-10 hcp), with 5+ hearts and 5+ another suit

. Responses:

1. 3♣ & 3♦ to play
2. 2♠ **weak (<15 hcp) enquiry** opener will pass with spades or correct to their other suit
3. **2NT – STRONG enquiry** 15+ hcp
Responses to 2NT strong enquiry
3♣ - second suit is clubs
3♦ - second suit is diamonds
3♥ - 5 card hearts, 5+ spades minimum (5-8 hcp)
3 S - upper range (9-10), 5 + card spade 5+ hearts

2 **♠!** Opening and Responses

Shows a two suiter, spades and a minor, 5+/5+, 6-10 HCP, spades Q 10 or better.

Responses

- **3C** *non forcing*, opener to pass or correct to diamonds if that is second suit
- 3 D** natural to play (6-7 + cards, opening points)
- **2NT = strong 15+ enquiry** – opener to show other suit by
With a **weak** hand (6-8) opener should bid the minor suit held
With a **stronger** hand (9-10), rebid **3H with spades and clubs** or **3S with spades and diamonds**

After 2NT **strong response**, a new suit by **responder** is natural and forcing for one round

2NT! Opening (5+ 5+ minors 6-10 hcp)

Responses

- **3 C** – to play (more clubs than diamonds)
- **3 D** – to play (more diamonds than clubs)
- **3 H** – 6+ card suit – strong 14-15 + hcp – opener to bid 4H with 2 card support, or
3 NT to play
- **3 S** – 6+ card suit – strong 14-15 + hcp – opener to bid 4S with 2 card support, or
3 NT to play

32 BERGEN RAISES

Bergen raises are a series of artificial bids **showing support for partner's opening of 1 of a major**. They provide more detail than basic standard responses.

So – over partner's '1 Heart' opening

2 Hearts	shows 3 card heart support and	6 – 9 hcp
2 Spades!	3 card support	10-12 hcp
2 No Trump!	4+ card support	15 + hcp
3 Clubs!	4 card support	6 -8 (9) hcp – 9 losers
3 Diamonds!	4 card support	(9) 10-12 hcp – 8 losers
3 Hearts!	4 card support (not bal)	3 – 5 hcp
3 Spades!	4 card support – splinter	11 -12 hcp – 7 losers
	(splinter = singleton or void in bid suit)	
3 No Trumps!	4 (or 3) card support	13 -14 hcp
4 Clubs	4 card support – splinter	11 -12 hcp 7 losers
4 Diamonds	4 card support – splinter	11 -12 hcp 7 losers

The strong response of 2 NT! has the following responses from opener

- A new suit (C, D, S = shortage in that suit – singleton or void)
- 3 Hearts is the **strongest** bid showing 14+ hcp and no shortage
- 3 No Trump = 11-13 hcp, 5 hearts and no shortage
- 4 Hearts = minimum heart opening and 6 hearts – 11-12 hcp

Note – with 9 hcp and 4 card support use the losing tick count to determine whether the bid should be 3 C! or 3 D!

Over a '1 Spade' opening subtle changes are required and marked *

*2 Spades	3 card spade support	6 -9 hcp
2 No Trump!	4+ card support	15 + hcp
3 Clubs!	4 card support	6 -8 (9) hcp
3 Diamonds!	4 card support	(9) 10 -12 hcp
*3 Hearts!	3 card support	10 -12 hcp
*3 Spades!	4 card support – not bal	3 - 5 hcp
3 No Trumps!	4 (or 3) card support	13 -14 hcp
4 Clubs, Diamonds or *Hearts	4 card support – splinters	11 -12 hcp 7 losers

The strong response of 2 NT! has the following responses from opener

- A new suit (C, D, * H = shortage in that suit – singleton or void)
- *4 Spades = minimum heart opening and no shortage – 11-13 hcp
- *3 Spades is the **strongest** bid showing 14+ hcp and no shortage

Bergen raises are very useful, but obviously require a good partnership understanding.

When combined with the losing trick count, a very interesting pattern emerges – shown below for Hearts – but the same applies for Spades

2 Hearts	shows 3 card support and	6 – 9 hcp	9 losers
S 10 3 2 H Q 9 8	D K 7 6 5 C Q 9 8 (7 hcp 9 loser)		
2 Spades!	3 card heart support	10-12 hcp	8 losers
S A 3 2 H Q 9 8	D K 7 6 5 C Q 9 8 (11 hcp 8 loser)		
2 No Trump!	4+ card support	15 + hcp	6 or less losers
S A 3 2 H Q 9 8 2	D A K 7 6 5 C K 9 (16 hcp 6 loser)		
3 Clubs!	4 card support	6 -8 hcp	9 losers
S 10 3 H Q 9 8 2	D K 7 6 5 C J 9 8 (6 hcp 9 loser)		
3 Diamonds!	4 card support	9-12 hcp	8 losers
S K 3 2 H Q 9 8 2	D K 7 6 C Q 9 8 (10 hcp 8 loser)		
3 Hearts!	4 card support (not bal)	3 – 5 hcp	9 or 10 losers
S 10 3 H Q 9 8 2	D K 7 6 5 3 C 10 9 (5 hcp 10 loser)		
3 Spades!	4 card support – splinter (splinter = singleton or void in bid suit)	11 -12 hcp	7 losers
S Q H J 9 8 2	D K Q 6 5 C K 10 9 8 (11 hcp 7 loser)		
3 No Trumps!	4 (or 3) card support	13 -14 hcp	7 losers
S Q 3 2 H Q 9 8 2	D K Q 7 6 C A 9 8 (13 hcp 7 loser)		
4 Clubs	4 card support – splinter	11 -12 hcp	7 losers
S K 10 9 8 H J 9 8 2	D K Q 6 5 C Q (11 hcp 7 loser)		
4 Diamonds	4 card support – splinter	11 -12 hcp	7 losers
S K Q 6 5 H J 9 8 2	D Q C K 10 9 8 (11 hcp 7 loser)		

This loser – Bergen raise link is almost always present and allows opener (who usually starts with 7 losers) to determine the correct contract.

Responding to the 'splinter' bids :

After a splinter, 'cue bid' your suits 'up the line' i.e. bid a suit you can win the first trick in

you have either the ace or a void – doing this until you reach the game level. With nothing to cue, just bid game straight away.

If the opponents interfere :

By:

‘doubling’ – ignore their double and continue with Bergen responses

‘bidding a suit or NT’ – abandon Bergen responses and revert to Standard ones.

Variation

When partner opens 1 of a major with a minimum opening (11-12 hcp) and you hold 3 card support and 10 -12 hcp, you will be forced to play at the 3 level, perhaps with 21 hcp between you, and failing in the contract. A variation of Bergen Raises which I have adopted is instead of the 1 Heart > 2 Spade bid (showing 10 – 12 hcp and 3 hearts) or the 1 Spade > 3 Heart bid (10-12 hcp and 3 spades), is to use:

1 Major > 2 Clubs! To show either 3 card support and 10 -12 hcp or a natural 2 club response with no support.

*After this 2 Club! response opener **must** rebid 2 of the Major! with a minimum hand (less than 13 hcp) – this does not show 6 of the major. **With better than a minimum hand partner must bid something other than 2 of the major** : a new suit, no trumps or 3 of the major. This means that opener with a minimum hand can play the contract in 2 of the major – a safer spot than the 3 level.*

In our Bergen matrix of bids 2 bids are thus freed up:

1 H > 2 S! can now be used to show 6+spades and 6-9 hcp (and no heart support), and 1 S > 3 H! can be used to show 8-10 hcp and 6+ hearts (no spade support) – the heart hcp needs to be a bit higher because the bid is now at the 3 level.

Bergen raises using this variation are shown for hearts :

So – over partner’s ‘1 Heart’ opening

2 Clubs! Shows 3 card support and 10-12 hcp OR a natural club bid and no support

2 Hearts 3 card heart support and 6 - 9 hcp

2 Spades! 6+ spades 6 - 9 hcp

2 No Trump! 4+ card support 15 + hcp

3 Clubs! 4 card support 6 -8 (9) hcp

3 Diamonds! 4 card support (9) 10-12 hcp

3 Hearts! 4 card support (not bal) 3 – 5 hcp

<i>3 Spades!</i>	<i>4 card support – splinter</i>	<i>11 -12 hcp 7 losers</i>
<i>3 No Trumps!</i>	<i>4 (or 3) card support</i>	<i>13 -14 hcp</i>
<i>4 Clubs</i>	<i>4 card support – splinter</i>	<i>11 -12 hcp 7 losers</i>
<i>4 Diamonds</i>	<i>4 card support – splinter</i>	<i>11 -12 hcp 7 losers</i>

33 MICHAEL'S CUE BID and the UNUNUSUAL 2 NO TRUMP

A hand with a lot of shape is often quite powerful, even if it is not strong in hcp.

Michael's Cue bid and the Unusual No Trump go together in describing some of these hands as an **overcall**.

Say the opponents have opened 1 spade and you have a hand something like :

S 7
H 10
D K Q J 9 7
C A 10 8 7 6 4 – a good hand in a minor, but difficult to convey the shape to your partner.

Michael's Cue bid and the Unusual 2 No Trump help solve this problem.

There are many versions of these conventions – you need to agree with your partner which one you will use.

One of the most popular is outlined below.

Requirements – 2 suits normally of at least 5 cards in unbid suits and 8 -12 or 13 hcp.

Say opener has opened 1 of any suit,

2 NT! = at least 5:5 in the **TWO LOWEST RANKED UNBID SUITS**. – this is the '**Unusual 2 NT**'.

If opener bid 1 H and you held the above hand, 2 NT! would show the above hand – clubs + diamonds, at least 5:5.

Or say they opened 1 Club and you had S 7 2 H K Q J 9 7 D K 10 8 7 6 C 10, **2 NT!** would show diamonds + hearts.

Michaels Cue bid deals with similar shaped hands, but shows the **higher ranked unbid suits**

Over an opponents opening of 1 Club, **2 C (Michael Cue)** shows 5+Spades and 5+ Hearts, over opponents 1 Diamond, **2 D (Michael Cue)** also shows both Spades and Hearts.

i.e. **Over a minor opening, 2 of the minor as an overcall shows BOTH MAJORS.**

Over a major opening, Michael's cue shows the OTHER major and an unspecified minor.

Over an opponents opening of 1 Spade, **2 S (Michael Cue)** shows 5+Hearts and 5+ of a minor,

over 1 Heart opening, **2 H (Michael Cue)** shows both spades and a minor.

(If Michael's partner wants to know which minor they will bid 3 Clubs! – which the cue bidder will pass with a club suit or correct to 3 Diamonds with diamonds)

Michael's and the Unusual No Trump are **usually reserved for weakish hands** say 8 to 13 hcp. If stronger you have room to bid twice to show your suits, or double with 16+.

Say they opened 1 Spade and you had S 7 2 H K Q J 9 7 D K 10 8 7 6 C 10, your overcall of 2 Spades would show 5+ hearts and 5+ of a minor – diamonds in this example.

After your Michaels or Unusual 2 NT overcall you have described your hand – shape and strength – to partner – the rest is up to them!.

Appendix 1

TRANSFERS TO A MINOR

Responding to a 1 NT opening with a long minor suit, it is often best to pass if you have a few points, but insufficient for game.

However, there are some hands where it will be safer to play in 3 of a minor suit (we cannot play at the 2 level because these bids have been 'stolen' for Stayman and a heart transfer).

Consider: **S J 8 6 H 10 4 3 D - C J 10 9 8 7 3 2 -** 1 NT will not make as it is unlikely that opener will have an entry to run the clubs – however 3 clubs may be possible.

Holding a long (6+) minor, and being weak, **2S!** is a **TRANSFER TO A MINOR** suit (some people use 2 NT! – but this may better be used as an 'invitational' bid). The 2S! bid does not tell opener WHICH minor.

OPENER'S RESPONSE to 1NT > 2S! is **3 CLUBS!**.

3C! is known as 'Pass or Correct' i.e. responder with the long weak minor will now PASS if their suit is clubs, or bid 3D if their suit is diamonds, in which case opener will now pass. Bidding will thus cease at either 3C or 3D.

SUPER ACCEPTING A TRANSFER TO A MAJOR

The Law of Total Tricks says that with a 9 card trump fit it is 'safe' to bid to the 3 level, The 'Law' can be used to advantage in response to a transfer to a major after a 1NT opening.

Consider the auction 1NT > 2D! (transfer to hearts) and opener holds:

S A K H Q 9 8 7 D K Q 7 C J 10 9 7

-with at least a 9 card heart fit the Law says that it is safe to be in 3H even if responder is very weak. (In this situation, if responder has, say, only 2 hcp, the opponents will have 23 hcp between them and will probably be able to make a contract of their own).

'SUPER ACCEPTING' a transfer deals with the situation where the 1NT opener holds 4 cards in the 'transfer' suit.

There are 2 additional options in responding to a transfer to a major:

- a. to deal with opener having a minimum (15 hcp) opening and
- b. to deal with opener having a maximum (16-17 hcp) opening

With **MINIMUM** (15 hcp) and 4 card support, opener will bid **3H! (if transfer was to hearts)** or **3S!** – it says 'Responder I have 4 card support in the transfer suit and 15 hcp' – Responder will PASS or bid GAME depending on their strength,

With **MAXIMUM** hcp (16 or 17) and 4 card support opener will rebid **2NT!** – says 'Responder, I have 16 or 17 hcp and 4 card support for your suit' – Responder can assess their hand and sign off at the 3 level or bid game if strong enough.

So, Opener with **S A K H Q 9 8 7 D K Q 7 C J 10 9 7** will reply to 1NT > 2D! > '**3H!**' – 'partner. I have 4 card support for hearts, but am minimum'.

Or,

Opener with **S A K H Q 9 8 7 D K Q 7 C K 10 9 7** will reply to 1NT > 2D! > '**2NT!**' – 'partner. I have 4 card support for hearts, and maximum points'.

1 NT > 2 NT INVITATIONAL

Over a 1 NT opening responder may not have the distribution to use Stayman or a Transfer, but enough points for game e.g. **S K 7 H Q 7 D Q 7 3 C K J 10 9 7** (remember add 1 point as responder for a 5 card suit) – so just respond 3NT.

However, with 8-10 hcp e.g. **S K 7 H J 7 D Q 7 3 C Q 10 9 7 2** game may be possible if opener is 'maximum' – 1NT > 2NT is '**Invitational**' – it says 'Opener bid 3 NT if you are maximum, or pass 2NT if you are minimum.