

## THE TWO CLUB OPENING

An opening 2♣ bid is artificial, showing a strong two bid sort of hand or a notrump hand of 23 HCP or more.

The 2♣ opening promises at least four defensive tricks. Open 1♠ (or 4♦, if playing NAMYATS) with ♠KQJ98632 ♥AKQ ♦4 ♣3. If you open 2♣ and partner doubles a high level preemptive bid by an opponent, perhaps thinking you have better defense, you won't know whether to pass or bid. Besides, 1♠ is not going to be passed out.

A hand with four losers in quick tricks should not open 2♣ if there is another potential loser and the hand may not play in a major. With ♠QJ1092 ♥KQ ♦AKQ3 ♣A4 open 1♠, even at matchpoints. There are four quick losers, the fourth diamond may be a loser, and if partner insists on a diamond contract you could go down in game even if he has an ace.

When the opening is based on a minor suit, opener should have no more than three losers unless the hand is likely to take nine tricks at notrump. Open 1♣ with ♠A532 ♥ void ♦KJ ♣AKQ9764, a hand that has too many losers for a 2♣ opening and is unlikely to play in notrump. But with ♠42 ♥A5 ♦A4 ♣AKQ7653 there is a good chance that the hand will make 3NT opposite a bust, so a 2♣ opening is okay. Don't open 3NT with that spade weakness and no holding such as Kx in a red suit to protect.

### Control Responses

Counting a king as one control, an ace as two controls, we use the following scheme for showing controls.

- 2♦ - 0 or 1 (king) control
- 2♥ - 1 ace or two kings (2 controls)
- 2♠ - AK in the same suit
- 2NT - AK in different suits, or three kings
- 3♣ - 4 controls (2 aces, or 1 ace and 2 kings)
- 3♦ - 5 controls or more
- 3NT - 4 kings (once in a lifetime)

After the initial response, bidding proceeds naturally, except that opener's rebid of 2♥ over 2♦ is the Kokish Relay (see below). The partnership may optionally use a jump rebid in a suit by opener to locate controls (see below).

### Higher Responses in a Suit

-- 3♥ or 3♠ shows a seven-card suit headed by the ace or king, or both, with or without the queen, and no ace or king outside. Opener can determine the exact nature of the suit by using Roman Key Card Blackwood.

-- A jump to the four level in any suit shows a solid suit headed by AKQJ, at least six long. AKQ10 is okay with seven cards. It denies an outside ace or king, and requires a balanced hand (i.e., 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2 distribution). A passed hand may make this jump with a semi-solid (KQJ10, AQJ10) six-card suit. KQJ9 or AQJ9 is okay with seven cards (i.e., a fairly guaranteed one-loser suit).

Opener takes charge. A 4NT or other game bid by opener is a natural signoff, since he knows responder's hand exactly. For instance, after a 4♠ response by an unpassed hand he would bid 4NT with ♠3 ♥KQJ ♦AKQJ987 ♣KQ in a matchpoint game. He would have to pass 4♠ if responder is a passed hand, since the spade suit is not solid in that case.

### Rebids by Opener

With a suit-based opening, opener rebids in his main suit, bidding the higher ranking suit first when holding two suits of equal length. With a notrump type hand, he rebids the minimum number of notrump with 23-24 HCP. After a 2♦ response, opener bids 2♥ (Kokish Relay) with a 25+ HCP notrump hand. After a 2♠ response, opener bids 2NT. There is no need to jump with 25+, since this rebid is forcing.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2NT - 23-24 HCP, not forcing	
2♥ - Kokish Relay, 25+ HCP notrump hand or a heart suit	
3NT - a signoff, usually based on a long solid minor	

The 2♥ relay forces responder to bid 2♠ as a mark-time bid. If opener then bids 2NT, showing 25+ HCP, that is forcing. If he bids 3♥, that constitutes a "rebid" of the heart suit, and responder may pass with a completely worthless hand. If he bids three of any other suit (forcing), he is showing a second suit with hearts the primary suit.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ - forced by the Kokish Convention
3♣/3♦/3♠ - hearts and a second suit	
3♥ - a "rebid" of the heart suit, not quite forcing	

Opener has a balanced hand, no singleton or void, if he would open Marvin 2♥ (strong with hearts or weak with spades) with an unbalanced hand. See section 6-3, Marvin Two Hearts. Similarly:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT
3♥	

Opener must have a 5-4-2-2 hand if an unbalanced hand is opened with 2♦ (weak with hearts or strong with spades) when the primary suit is spades. See section 6-2, Marvin Two Diamonds. If a

2♦ opening is being used for some other purpose, however, then opener could have an unbalanced hand in this auction.

If opener rebids 2NT, either immediately or after a 2♥ relay, the bidding proceeds in accordance with section 5-4, Two Notrump Opening, which is completely applicable to this 2NT rebid.

### Jump Rebid in a Suit by Opener (Optional)

After a control response at the two level, a jump rebid in a suit by opener is conventional, asking for details about responder's controls (if any). The jump is based on a solid suit headed by AKQ or KQJ, possibly even QJ10. The jump is ambiguous, showing one of two suits. With spades or diamonds (pointed suits), opener jumps in the cheaper suit. With hearts or clubs (rounded suits), opener also jumps in the cheaper suit. Thereafter, when opener bids one of the two possible suits, or notrump, the auction is over.

After the jump, responder starts revealing his high cards. A follow-up bid by opener in a known non-suit is a further "query" concerning responder's hand. Queries can be repeated (space permitting) many times to ask for further information. A bid in the ranking denomination is a negative response to a query. If notrump is not the ranking denomination, a notrump response shows a positive response in the ranking suit. Examples follow.

— After a 2♦ response (0 or 1 control), opener jumps to 3♥ with a heart *or* a club suit. With a spade *or* a diamond suit he jumps to 3♠. Over 3♥, responder bids 3♠ with no king, 3NT with the spade king, or bids a king suit at the four level with a different king. Over 3♠ responder bids 3NT with no king, otherwise bids the suit with the king.

When responder has shown a king, a query by opener asks for the number of additional tricks, if any, that responder has in the king suit, assuming opener's ace is played first. For instance, KQx is one additional trick, KQJx is two, etc. Lacking the x, count one trick less because opener is likely to have only Ax in the suit.

Additional tricks are shown by step bidding, first step is zero, second step 1, etc., including both suits and notrump.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
3♠	4♣ - king of clubs
4♥?	4♠ - no additional trick in clubs
	4NT - one additional trick ( KQx)
	5♣ - two additional tricks ( KQJx)
	5♦ - three additional tricks (KQJ9x)
	5♥ - four or more additional (KQ10xxx or better)

The 3♠ rebid showed a hand with solid spades or solid clubs. When opener bids one of those suits, or bids notrump, the auction is over. To inquire further, opener must skip over either of those suits.

— After a 2♥ response (two controls, an ace or two kings), opener jumps to 3♠ with spades *or* diamonds, and jumps to 4♣ with clubs *or* hearts. Responder bids the ranking denomination (notrump over 3♠, 4♦ over 4♣) with no ace. Otherwise he bids the suit with the ace, but with an ace in the ranking suit he bids notrump. Ergo, with the diamond ace he bids 4NT over 4♣, since 4♦ would deny an ace..

When responder has shown an ace, opener's query asks how many extra tricks the suit will provide, assuming Kx in opener's hand. The step responses show none (Ax or AQ), one (AQx), two (AQJx), etc.)

When responder has denied an ace, opener's query asks where the two kings are. Responder shows the kings using the CRaSh method, bidding the ranking denomination (i.e., including notrump) with kings of the same Color, next step with kings of the same Rank (major or minor), and the third step with kings of the same SHape (spades-diamonds or hearts-clubs). If opener has a king, the location of responder's kings is instantly known. If he doesn't have a king it will take two queries to find responder's kings, the first asking for the cheaper king, and the second asking for the other king.

— After a 2♠ response (AK in the same suit), responder bids the suit when opener jumps in diamonds (diamonds or hearts) or clubs (hearts or clubs). A query then asks for additional tricks in the suit. The step responses show none (no queen), one (AKQ), two (AKQJ), etc.

— After a 2NT response (ace and king in separate suits, or three kings), opener jumps in diamonds or clubs and responder bids the ranking denomination with no ace, and bids notrump with an ace in the ranking suit. A query then asks for the location of the king. If responder denies an ace, holding three kings, a query asks for the suit lacking a king. Further queries TBD.

— After a 3♣ response (two aces or an ace and two kings), opener jumps in diamonds or hearts and responder bids the ranking suit to deny the kings. With kings, responder bids the suit with the ace, bidding notrump with the ace of the ranking suit. A query then asks for the location of the kings using the CRaSH method. After kings are denied, a query asks for the location of the two aces using the CRaSH method. Further queries TBD.

— After a 3♦ response (two aces and a king or one ace and three kings), responder bids the ranking denomination to signify two aces. With one ace she bids the suit with the ace, bidding notrump to show the ace of the ranking denomination. A query then asks for the suit lacking a king (opener having no king). After two aces are shown by a bid in the ranking denomination, opener's query asks for the location of the two aces (shown with the CRaSH method) and a further query asks for the location of the king.

### **Responder's Rebids Other Than Kokish**

--After a 2♦ response, over opener's 2♠ rebid 2NT is the "second negative." If the rebid is 3♣, 3♦ is the second negative, and if the rebid is 3♦, 3NT is the second negative. The second negatives only deny the ability to bid a new suit or to raise. They are not necessarily based on a

worthless hand, and could include a king. A five-card suit headed by the king is enough for a natural new suit bid, or perhaps a six-card suit headed by the queen.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT - second negative
	3♣/3♦/3♥ - natural

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
3♦	3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural
	3NT - second negative

When opener rebids in a suit, do not raise without adequate trump support, which in this case is Qx, xxx, or better. With trump support and a fair hand, raise a major immediately. Delayed support of opener's major suit tends to imply trump support that is less than "adequate." With trump support for minor, responder may bid a good five-card or longer suit rather than raise.

### **The Trump Ask (optional)**

After the immediate raise of a major, opener's Roman Key Card Blackwood bid of 4NT asks for key cards, as described in Section 6-6, Blackwood. However, the "queen ask" becomes a trump ask, asking for the ace, king, or queen, with five small treated as a queen. The ranking denomination (ie., including notrump) says "none of these." In that case opener's side suit bid asks about trump length, and responder's next higher suit bid says xxx, two higher, xxxx.

In response to the trump ask, responder shows the ace, king, or queen (collectively identified here as "H") by skipping over the ranking denomination to bid the next-higher. Opener's side suit bid then asks length, and responder's bid of the next higher denomination shows Hx, next Hxx, next Hxxx. In the rare case that he has AQ or KQ, the queen is treated as three small, so AQ is treated as Axxx.

Opener's rebid of 5NT is standard, saying that all key cards are held and asking for the cheapest (or most valuable) king in responder's hand.

A minor suit raise shows the same minimum support, but bidding a good five-card or longer major is preferable to raising. After an immediate raise, the trump ask after RKCB is as described above.

In the absence of an immediate raise of opener's suit, the queen ask is standard. If responder then shows a major suit queen, opener will know it's a singleton.

## Jump Rebids by Responder

If the response to 2♣ was 2♦, an immediate jump raise shows four or more trumps, no ace or king, no outside void or singleton:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	4♠

Responder has ♠Q872 ♥654 ♦98 ♣J873. The immediate jump raise warns opener not to look for anything other than good trumps.

Responder's jump in a new suit shows a one-loser suit headed by the KQ

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	4♣/4♦/4♥ - KQJ9xxx or better, no spade support.

– When the response shows two or more controls, the bidding proceeds with no jumps by responder..

## When the Opponents Intervene

If RHO overcalls a 2♣ bid with a natural bid, a double by responder shows a bust hand with length in the opposing suit. It warns partner not to go on unless he has game in his own hand. A pass is forcing. Natural bidding otherwise, with responder's jump raise to game having the usual meaning.

If RHO doubles 2♣ to show clubs, responder must pass with no club stopper, even with a good hand. This is in accordance with the general policy for action when an artificial bid gets doubled. See section 1-2-10, General Bidding Principles. Controls are not shown

South	West	North
2♣	Dbl	Pass - probably no club stopper, may be quite strong
		2♦ - single club stopper, at least one control
		2♥/2♠ - natural, single club stopper
		Rdbl - double club stopper

QJx (Qxx, Q10x, etc.) counts as a single stopper only, no matter how many cards in the suit. AJx and KJx count as double stoppers. If holding a club stopper and zero controls (e.g., ♣QJx), pass.

If RHO makes an artificial call that shows two suits, the principles of section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions, apply. In this example the double of 2♣ shows both majors:

South	West	North
2♣	Dbl	Pass - no good call available
		Rdbl - clubs stopped
		2♦/3♣ - positive suit response, natural, good suit
		2♥/2♠ - Unusual Over Unusual, showing a mediocre minor
		2NT - both majors stopped

The 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, and 3♦ bids are in accordance with the principles of section 12-7: A 2♥ bid is a positive response in clubs and a 2♠ bid is a positive response in diamonds. Both responses deny a strong suit (two of the top three honors, five or more cards). With a good suit the right response is a natural 2♦ or 3♣.

A 2♣ opener cannot make a takeout double when balancing::

South	West	North	East
2♣	2♠	Pass	Pass
		Dbl - business	
		2NT - 23-24 HCP notrump hand	
		3♣/3♦/3♥ - forcing	

North's pass does not necessarily deny a good hand, since it is forcing. She could have, for instance: ♠752 ♥AQ3 ♦K84 ♣9832. South's double of 2♠ is probably exposing a psych by West. If South later bids spades, he means it to play. If he wants to make a takeout call, he has to bid 3♠ over 2♠. With a spade game in hand, he can bid 4♠.

If the spade overcall is absolutely known not to be a psych (considering who the bidder is), and both partners know that, then a double can be played as takeout.