

## WEAK NOTRUMP - FOURTH SEAT ONLY

With a marginal fourth seat opening such as ♠93 ♥AJ76 ♦Q103 ♣KJ87 in a matchpoint game, you figure that your side is a slight favorite to make a plus score if you can stop at a low level. If you open 1♣, however, you could be in trouble if partner jumps to 2NT. Or suppose someone bids spades. If it's partner, you must either pass or rebid 1NT. If you pass, she may have only four spades. If you rebid 1NT, she may raise. If either opponent bids spades, you may get outbid. Finally, if you open a standard weak notrump (12-14 HCP) partner may try for game. What to do? In deciding, consider the following:

- 1) Game chances are practically nil.
- 2) Neither opponent could open, even in third seat, so their hands (and suits) are limited.
- 3) In view of 2), partner is unlikely to have a bad hand.
- 4) A 1NT opening prevents a one-level overcall.
- 5) The danger of being outbid is lessened if fourth hand has four spades.
- 6) The main goal with a marginal hand in this position is to get a plus score of any sort, not to achieve the optimum result.
- 7) You do not want to get as high as 2NT or three of a suit with such hands.

Putting all these considerations together leads to the idea that a 1NT opening in fourth seat should be treated differently from other positions. The following describes such an approach:

At matchpoint scoring only, a fourth seat opening 1NT bid shows 11-13 HCP, balanced. It tends to deny a spade suit, with which a suit opening is preferable. With the highest ranking suit there is less need for a preemptive 1NT opening that risks shutting out your own major. With four very weak spades in a 4-3-3-3 hand, the 1NT opening is acceptable.

Game will rarely be reached voluntarily--the 1NT opening gives up on game unless partner has passed an unusual hand.

### Responses

No Stayman, no transfers. Any two-level response is a signoff, but 2♣ or 2♦ (Alertable) shows hearts too (unless you're prepared to bid again if opener bids 2♥). With spades and a minor you pass 1NT, since opener is not supposed to have spades. Be quicker to bid 2♥ with five hearts than to bid 2♠ with five spades--opener will sometimes have four hearts. A 2NT response is unusual, even in competition, asking for opener's longer minor. With equal length, opener bids 3♣.

### When There is Competition

If the opponents come in, opener cannot count on a minor suit responder to have four hearts:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	2♠	?

East should not bid 3♥ over 2♠ when he has four hearts, for West may not have a heart suit. A solution for this is to have East bid 2NT, an impossible bid, when he has both four hearts and good support for partner's minor. West can't do the same if 2♠ comes around, because a 2NT reopening would show six diamonds and four clubs.

Negative doubles apply in all situations in which the 1NT bidder's partner has not yet bid or doubled, even in a balancing situation--except that the 1NT bidder can double his right hand opponent for business:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
2♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl - takeout

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	2♣	Dbl - penalty

But if 2♣ is passed around to West, a double would be for takeout

After any kind of double--penalty, negative, takeout--any further double by either partner is for business:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
2♣	Dbl	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl - penalty		

After the opening side has bid a suit, any double is for business:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	2♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl - penalty	

The use of negative doubles in most situations can cause an occasional large penalty to be missed. When either partner has length in the opposing suit, he must usually pass--even in a reopening situation, when a pass closes the auction. The main goal, however, is to get a plus score. Even if they go down undoubled, the goal has been met.

When opener has shortness in the opposing suit, he must make a takeout double in the pass-out position. Suppose you have ♠32 ♥AJ97 ♦K103 ♣K974 and open a fourth seat 1NT. If LHO overcalls 2♥ and this comes around to you, just pass. A double would be for takeout, and you will probably beat the pairs who pass the hand out. If a 2♠ overcall comes around, you double for takeout. Partner may have enough in spades to pass.

If the opponents overcall conventionally (e.g., Brozel, Astro), the usual countermeasures apply. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs 1NT, and section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions.

### If You Don't Open 1NT

After opening one of a suit in fourth seat, a 1NT rebid shows 14-16 HCP; a jump rebid of 2NT shows 17-18 HCP, and a 3NT rebid shows 19 HCP or more. The jump notrump rebids can be weaker than usual because responder is unlikely to have a bad hand when the opponents are doing so much passing.

A *non-jump* 2NT or 3NT rebid is standard:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT shows 15-16 HCP, the standard bid

Opening one of a suit does **not** promise 14 HCP or more--opener may have a weak hand that is unsuitable for a notrump opening, or may have a spade suit. Only when he rebids notrump or makes some other strong call does he show a good hand.

## STRONG ONE NOTRUMP OPENING

### Requirements:

- 16-18 HCP, 3-1/2+ to 4+ honor tricks
- Balanced hand
- At least five cards in the majors
- Weakest major suit doubleton Jx
- At least three suits stopped

### Flaws:

- Five-card major
- Unstopped suit
- Lack of tenaces (e.g., AQ, KJ, Q10, etc.)

Do not open a badly flawed hand with 1NT. The ideal 1NT opening has 17 HCP, four honor tricks, many honor cards, good fillers (10's, 9's, 8's), tenaces in every suit, no unstopped suit, 4-3-3-3 distribution with a weak four-card minor suit: ♠AJ9 ♥KJ8 ♦Q1083 ♣AQ8.

The 16-18 HCP requirement is just a guide, because aces and kings are undervalued vs queens and jacks in the 4-3-2-1 count. Do not open 1NT with ♠KQ3 ♥QJ7 ♦J85 ♣AQJ8, despite the 16 HCP. Note that it lacks 3-1/2+ honor tricks. With 4-1/2 honor tricks, it is usually better to open one of a suit and then jump to 2NT. This hand is too good for a 1NT opening: ♠AK7 ♥A93 ♦A105 ♣QJ98.

Some 15 HCP hands qualify: ♠AQ8 ♥AJ9 ♦A108 ♣9872. This hand is too strong for a 1NT rebid. With the 3-1/2+ honor tricks, good distribution, and every suit covered, it is a 1NT opening.

A weak doubleton in a minor suit, while a flaw, may sometimes be chanced--usually with a hand that might have serious rebid problems if opened with one of a suit: ♠AJ3 ♥AQ7 ♦92 ♣AJ874. If opened 1♣, this hand has no good rebid after a one-over-one response. A major suit doubleton, however, should be no weaker than Jx. Partner should be able to count on a little support when he transfers to a major. Also, he should be able to accept a notrump contract with ♠KQ8732 ♥Q8 ♦764 ♣Q4, a hand that may not fare well in notrump if opener has two small spades.

A 5-4 hand is suit-oriented and should generally not be opened with 1NT, although tenaces in both doubletons might excuse a 1NT bid.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO ONE NOTRUMP

Opener Responder

- 1NT     2♣ - forcing Stayman (but not game-forcing)
- 2♦ - Jacoby transfer to hearts
- 2♥ - Jacoby transfer to spades
- 2♠ - transfer to clubs
- 2NT - transfer to diamonds
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - natural, slam try
- 3NT - signoff
- 4♣ - Gerber
- 4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts
- 4♥ - Texas transfer to spades
- 4♠ - a mild notrump raise, Boland convention applies\*
- 4NT - a stronger notrump raise, Boland applies
- 5♣ - Miller convention, slam force
- 5♦ - signoff, but opener can sometimes bid 6♦ (e.g., with four aces or ♦AK)
- 5♥/5♠/5NT - meaningless
- 6 any is a signoff, not invitational

The only way to raise to 2NT is to bid 2♣ first, then 2NT.

The Boland and Miller conventions are discussed in sections 5-6 and 5-7.

Before reading the remainder of this section, read section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids.

## TEXAS TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♦ - asks opener to bid 4♥ 4♥ - asks opener to bid 4♠

Opener has no option other than to bid game in the indicated suit. The Texas convention is used in competition, but only through 3♣ (i.e., when *both* 4♦ and 4♥ are jumps):

South	West	North
1NT	3♣	4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer
1NT	3♦	4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly 4♥/4♠ - natural game bid 4♣ - natural, not forcing (Gerber must be a jump)

Also see section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

Texas transfer followed by 4NT is Roman Key Card Blackwood (see section 6-6). This denies a short suit, so partner can correct a major suit slam bid to notrump if that looks right. Holding a short suit, either start with a strong jump takeout or start with Jacoby and follow with a splinter bid.

A Texas transfer must usually be made immediately in response to 1NT, but can also apply as a follow-up to Stayman if opener responds 2♦:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer 4♣ - Gerber 4♠ - mild slam try in notrump 4NT - stronger slam try in notrump

The 4♦ bid implies a weak 4=6, the 4♥ bid a weak 6=4, in spades-hearts. Responder would bid a forcing 2♥ or 2♠ with slam interest.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	4♦ - splinter bid, not Texas 4♣ - splinter bid, not Gerber 4♥ - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) 4NT - slam try in notrump

Texas is used in competition only through 3♣, when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be jump bids.

Note that after a 2♥ or 2♠ response to Stayman, a four-level bid in the other major is RKCB.

## JACOBY TRANSFER BIDS

One advantage of transfer bids is that they enable the strong hand to become declarer, so that the opening lead will come up to her strength. Contrary to common belief, this is not the main advantage of transfer bids at the two level. More important is that transfers may be made with hands of any strength: weak, invitational, game-going, or even a slammish hand.

Suppose a 2♥ response is a natural signoff bid. How do you invite game in hearts? Or suppose you have hearts plus a minor suit. How do you show both at a low level? Using 2♦ to show hearts, you have it both ways. With a bad hand and long hearts, you pass opener's 2♥ bid. With a stronger hand, you bid again. Your 2NT rebid shows a 5-3-3-2 hand with five hearts and invitational strength, 3NT the same but with game-going strength. A minor suit rebid is forcing, showing a two-suited hand. A raise to 3♥ is invitational, showing at least six hearts. A jump to 4♥ is slam invitational, because you would make a Texas transfer bid (4♦) in response to 1NT with no slam interest.

The result of all this is that Jacoby transfers provide many ways for responder to describe her hand after a notrump opening.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ - asks opener to bid 2♥
	2♥ - asks opener to bid 2♠

These transfer bids can be based on anything from a complete bust to a very strong hand. They show at least five cards in the indicated major. The converse is not true: Failure to use Jacoby does not deny a five-card or longer major (e.g., Stayman is frequently used with five or more spades).

Transfer bids apply over an artificial double of 1NT or artificial 2♣ overcall that does not specify a particular suit (e.g., "Hamilton" 2♣), but do not apply over a business double, a natural overcall, or a conventional call that shows one or more specific suits, e.g., a double that shows both majors.. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump, and section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions.

If opener has a super hand in support of the indicated suit, he can make a notrumper cue bid (see section 10-11), bid 2NT, or jump to three of the major:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
	2♥ - the usual bid
	2♠/3♣/3♦ - notrumper cue bid, "super accept"
	2NT - two of top three honors in hearts
	3♥ - great heart support, good hand

With a minimum notrump, opener should just accept the transfer minimally, no matter what his holding in the suit. The notrumper cue bids show four-card heart support, an outside doubleton, and a maximum notrump. The 2NT bid shows a good hand for notrump in addition to the heart honors.

Responder can bid 3NT with ♠32 ♥Q108763 ♦K2 ♣875, so opener had better have quick tricks outside and good stoppers in all suits: ♠AJ9 ♥AK5 ♦J987 ♣AJ10. The jump to 3♥ shows a fine hand in support of hearts but no outside holding suitable for a notrumper cue bid: ♠A94 ♥AK105 ♦Q3 ♣A643. Do not jump with 4-3-3-3 distribution, even with a maximum.

Opener must never go past three of the indicated major unless invited to do so, and must pass a signoff bid in three of that major after a “super accept” cue bid, as responder could be really broke: ♠983 ♥107653 ♦986 ♣92.

A new suit bid by responder at the three level is game-forcing unless the bid follows an opposing overcall, after which a double is artificial showing a probable five-carder and good values, but not enough to bid 3NT:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	3♦	3♥ - weak two-suiter, not forcing	
		3♠ - not invitational, six spades	
		4♥ - strong two-suiter	
		4♠ - slam try, six or more spades, balanced	
		4NT - notrump raise, not forcing	
		Dbl - invitational spade hand	
		Pass - weak, not forcing, probably five spades	

Normally 4♥ would be a splinter bid, but not in this auction. Use the Texas transfer with a long suit and no interest in slam, and start with Texas if you want to use Roman Key Card Blackwood.

Be sure to read section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

With two-suited hands that lack the strength to insist on game but have enough to invite, don't use a Jacoby sequence. Respond 2♣ (Stayman) with five spades and any other suit. With five hearts plus a minor suit, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention, described in the next section. With 5-4 in the majors and an invitational hand or better, use Stayman. With a weaker hand, just transfer to the five-card major and pass the response.

When responder shows the 5-3-3-2 balanced sort of hand by rebidding notrump, opener usually stays in notrump with a doubleton in the indicated suit. With three-card support he uses his judgment, often staying in notrump with a 4-3-3-3 hand and scattered strength. With four-card support he normally returns to the suit. Opener must also decide whether to bid (or try for) game:

Opener Responder

1NT 2♥

2♠ 2NT

Pass - minimum, doubleton spade or 4-3-3-3 distribution

3♠ - minimum, three or four-card spade support

3NT - maximum, doubleton spade or 4-3-3-3 distribution

4♠ - maximum, three or four-card spade support

3♣/3♦/3♥ - "Have support for you, need help in this suit," a game-try bid

If the side suit trial bid fits responder well, she may be able to bid a marginal game because of the good fit. "Need help here" means a broken suit (e.g., KJ43), not an xxx holding.

Opener Responder

1NT 2♦

2♥ 2♠ is the Unbalanced Heart Convention (UHC)

2NT shows 5-3-3-2 distribution, invitational hand

3NT shows 5-3-3-2 distribution, game-going hand

4NT shows a 5-3-3-2 hand, invitational, strong hearts, too much strength for 3NT

4♠ is an artificial notrump raise, 5-3-3-2, hearts not strong.

3♣/3♦ is forcing to game, showing a second suit

3♥ is invitational, six or more hearts, balanced hand

3♠/4♣/4♦ is a splinter bid, slam try, six or more hearts

4♥ is a slam try, six or more hearts, balanced hand (use Texas if weaker)

UHC is described on page 5-2-7. The 2♠ rebid is not needed to show five hearts and four spades because Stayman is used with a hand of that sort. Over the 3♠ splinter bid, opener can bid 3NT with secondary spade strength and poor heart support. Over a splinter in clubs or diamonds, however, 4NT would be RKCB, so he must bid 4♥ with any unsuitable hand. The 4♠ rebid implies that opener needs a good fit in hearts if they are to be useful in a notrump slam. 4NT is not RKCB because responder would start with a Texas Transfer with that sort of hand.

"Strong" for a five-card suit means that it should have no more than one loser opposite a doubleton ace or king, so it must be headed by two of the top three honors or by the QJ9. A "strong" six-card suit is one that is likely to have no losers opposite a doubleton ace or king, so it must be headed by two of the top three honors. A suit headed by QJ9 is also okay, because RKCB will clarify the key-card situation.

If the hand is unbalanced, jump in the short suit after transferring. If the suit is not strong, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention if unbalanced, but start with Stayman if interested in slam and the heart suit is not strong.

A hand with five spades and six hearts presents a problem, because transferring to hearts and then bidding 2♠ is UHC, while 3♠ is a splinter bid. Instead of transferring, use Stayman. Bid 2♥ after the expected 2♦ response, then bid spades on the next round (a forcing sequence), rebidding them if necessary (also forcing).

Rebids after a Jacoby 2♥ response are similar, except that responder can show 5-5 or better in the majors, not just major-minor.

With a weak 5-5 in the majors, transfer to spades and hope for the best. There is no way to show both majors without inviting game and possibly getting too high, unless the opposition comes into the bidding and you can chance a 3♥ bid after transferring to spades (a weak competitive action in competition).

## THE UNBALANCED HEART CONVENTION (UHC)

There is one sort of hand that is difficult to describe when partner opens the bidding with 1NT: an unbalanced hand of game-invitational strength with five hearts and less than four spades (e.g., ♠AQ10 ♥J8732 ♦3 ♣J842). Assuming you want to try for game, how do you proceed? Using Jacoby transfer bids you might bid 2♦ (showing hearts) and then raise partner's forced 2♥ to 3♥. Or should you bid 2NT after his 2♥ bid? Would Stayman be the answer?

Any of these routes is risky. Raising hearts could result in a 3♥ contract with Kx or worse opposite your five to the jack. Besides, that sequence shows six hearts. Opener can raise with a doubleton, putting you into game with a 5-2 trump fit. Bidding notrump after a transfer bid is supposed to show a balanced hand with a liking for notrump. Opener might pass 2NT or go to 3NT with many 4-3-3-3 hands that would play better in hearts. With Stayman, a 2♠ response by opener shuts out the heart suit (you are too weak to rebid 3♥, which is dangerous even if you play it non-forcing).

Solution: With an unbalanced heart hand use the Jacoby 2♦ response, then bid 2♠ artificially on the second round:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ - transfer to hearts
2♥	2♠ - UHC

The 2♠ spade bid says, "Please tell me more about your hand, especially your heart holding."

Opener Responder

1NT 2♦

2♥ 2♠

2NT - no heart support, minimum hand (cheapest bid)

3♣/3♦ - heart support, minimum hand (notrumper cue bid)

3♥ - heart support, minimum

3♠/4♣/4♦ - heart support, maximum (notrumper cue bid)

3NT - maximum, no heart support

4♥ - maximum, heart support (no suit in which to make a notrumper cue bid)

Opener may count a moderate hand as a "maximum" if it contains good heart honors and outside points consisting mostly of aces. If in doubt, however, call it a minimum--let responder do any stretching.

Note that with a minimum and heart support, opener can only bid 3♥ or make a notrumper cue bid in a minor suit. Responder may sign off in 3♥ if she does not like the minor suit cue bid (i.e., with a singleton in the suit).

When opener bids 2NT over 2♠, a minimum heart "rebid" shows six hearts and an unbalanced hand, invitational. A 4♥ jump over 2NT implies that responder was looking for a slam, but was disappointed by opener's rebid. Over a notrumper cue bid, both 3♥ and 4♥ are a signoffs. Over

3NT, a 4♥ bid also shows that responder was interested in slam. Opener needs good top hearts to continue, as this sequence implies a non-strong heart suit.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	2♠
2NT/3♣	3♥/4♥

Opener will probably pass 3♥ when he has bid 2NT, showing a minimum. With a balanced hand and six hearts, responder immediately raises 2♥ to 3♥, invitationally. Why differentiate? Because UHC gives opener a chance to make a minor suit notrumper cue bid in support of hearts when he has a minimum. Responder may be able to bid game on the basis of a good. With a balanced hand, she doesn't care where opener's outside strength lies--she just wants top cards.

UHC is useful for two-suited as well as one-suited hands:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	2♠
2NT	3♣/3♦ - not forcing

Responder is showing a second suit and invitational strength. Opener will probably pass with his minimum hand and lack of heart support, but he could bid on with a good fitting hand. With game-going strength responder uses the standard Jacoby sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♣/3♦ - forcing

What if responder has an unbalanced hand with five or more spades? No problem here, since opener's response to Stayman cannot shut out the spade suit. After opener's 2♦ or 2♥ response, responder can bid 2♠, forcing, and then show a second suit on the next round, not forcing, if opener bids 2NT.

If the next hand bids over opener's 2♥ rebid, UHC does not apply:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	3♣/3♦	3♠	- natural, spade strength, not a suit

A UHC spade bid must be made at the same level as the transfer.

## MINOR SUIT TRANSFER BIDS

There is no reason that transfer bids cannot be extended to show the minor suits after a 1NT opening: A 2♠ response shows clubs and a 2NT response shows diamonds. How do you raise 1NT to 2NT? Just bid 2♣, Stayman, then bid 2NT. Minor suit transfers apply whenever Jacoby transfers do, as specified in the discussion of Jacoby transfers.

### The 2♠ Response

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs

Note that minor suit transfers have an added dimension: There is room for a bid between the transfer response and the transfer suit. After the 2♠ response, opener can bid 2NT or 3♣ without going past the transfer suit. Which should she bid? It depends on her hand, especially her club fit. If she would accept an invitation to game based on a long broken club suit, she bids 3♣. If not, she bids 2NT. For instance, responder could have ♠J2 ♥32 ♦Q87 ♣A98763. He needs a fine club fit and quick tricks outside in order to produce game in notrump.

The 2NT response to the 2♠ transfer does not necessarily show a minimum notrump opening. Opener can have a maximum, but a poor fit in clubs. Nor does the 3♣ response show a maximum notrump. Opener could have something like ♠AQ2 ♥K107 ♦A76 ♣K543, a hand that will produce game opposite six clubs to the ace with a finesse at worst.

With a bad hand, responder will pass opener's 3♣ bid, or correct a 2NT bid to 3♣, which opener must pass. With an invitational club hand, responder will bid 3♣ over 2NT (since opener would decline an invitation), and will probably bid 3NT over 3♣.

Suppose responder has a strong hand, with clubs plus another suit or a notrump shape (5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2). Responder can force to game with anything but a 3♣ rebid:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT	3♣ is a signoff
	3♦/3♥/3♠ is natural, forcing to game
	3NT is a signoff (in view of the non-acceptance)
	4♣ - forcing
	4♦/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, independent club suit
	4NT - notrump slam try, denies a short suit

If opener had rebid 3♣, showing club support, 4NT would become Roman Key Card Blackwood.

The splinter bids show a singleton in the splinter suit, very strong clubs, and a slammish hand. Opener signs off in notrump when holding duplication (secondary strength) in the splinter suit. If

opener shows support for responder's minor and responder splinters, he is saying in effect, "Bid slam if the splinter fits your hand, but bid 4NT if you have wasted values in the splinter suit."

Transferring to a minor and then bidding a major implies a hand that was too strong to use a Stayman sequence (a 3♣ or 3♦ rebid is not forcing in a Stayman auction).

Either minor could be longer (e.g., 5=4, 4=5) when responder shows both minors this way, so opener should be slow to raise either minor without four-card support. Responder may not be greatly interested in slam, since he has not gone past 3NT. Possibly he is afraid that 3NT might fail because of weakness in one or both majors. Suppose responder has ♠Q83 ♥6 ♦AK93 ♣J9762. He responds 2♠, transfer to clubs, and then bids 3♦ next. If opener has just one major stopped, he should bid it. With both majors stopped, he usually bids 3NT:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠
2NT/3♣	3♦
3♥/3♠	- showing a suit stopped
3NT	- both majors stopped

### The 2NT Response

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds

After a 2NT diamond transfer, opener bids 3♦ to show a diamond fit, otherwise bids 3♣. The 2NT response is also used with a weak two-suiter in the minors. Whether opener rebids 3♣ or 3♦, responder passes, probably reaching the right spot. A "new suit" bid by responder is forcing to game, showing a second suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	3♥/3♠ - forcing, suit-showing
	4♣/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, independent diamond suit
	4NT - natural over 3♣, RKCB over 3♦
	5♣/5♦ - asking bid

When opener shows support, 4NT is RKCB.

## FORCING STAYMAN

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ - asks opener to bid a major
2♦	- no four-card major
2♥/2♠	- four-card major, denies the other
2NT	- two four-card majors, minimum hand
3♣	- two four-card majors, maximum hand
3♦/3♥/3♠	- five-card suit, maximum hand

The 2♣ response is not a telling bid, it is an asking bid: "Do you have a four-card major?" Responder may not have four cards in either major. He may be just kidding the opposition, or he may be planning a raise to 2NT, which requires a bid of 2♣ first (an immediate 2NT response is a transfer to diamonds). All responses other than 2♦ are Alertable.

The 2♦ response does not absolutely deny four cards in a major. Opener may elect to suppress a very weak major with a maximum hand and double stoppers in the other suits. Similarly, he may bid 2♥ or 2♠ when holding four weak cards in the other major, usually with a maximum hand and double stoppers in the minor suits.

Opener cannot bid 3♣ to show five clubs and a maximum, because responder could have a very weak hand with the plan of passing opener's response to Stayman: ♠10852 ♥J875 ♦Q8642 ♣ void. We therefore use this bid to show both majors and a maximum notrump. If responder now bids three of a major, opener must pass because responder could have that bust hand. After a 2NT or 3♣ response, responder can bid 3♦ to ask for opener's better major.

### When Opener Bids 2♦

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥/2♠ - asks if opener has support for the suit (forcing)
	2NT - natural invitational raise (only way to raise NT)
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational, usually passed (4=6 hand with a major)
	3♥/3♠ - Smolen, four of the suit bid, five or six cards in the other major
	3NT - signoff
	4♣ - Gerber
	4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts (4=6 in the majors)
	4♥ - Texas transfer to spades (6=4 in the majors)
	4♠ - mild notrump slam try (see Boland, section 6-10)
	4NT - strong notrump slam try (see Boland, section 6-10)

The 2♥ and 2♠ rebids do not *show* anything. They merely ask if opener has trump support for the suit named. Responder probably has a five-card suit, but may have a weak doubleton, just trying to confuse the opposition. These bids must be alerted: "That is an asking bid, and I am not allowed to

bid higher than the three level at this point." A 3NT bid by responder after he bids a major should therefore also be alerted by opener ("I must pass"). Note that Smolen may be used with 6-4 in the majors, a good idea when holding a weak doubleton. If opener doesn't raise the longer suit, responder could force him to do so with a transfer bid, but that's an easily forgotten agreement.

When responder bids a new major on the second round, opener gives information concerning support for that suit and general strength:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥? (Alert: "She is asking about hearts, not telling.")
2♠/3♣/3♦	- notrumper cue bid, heart support, minimum hand
2NT	- minimum hand, no heart support
3NT	- maximum hand, no heart support
3♥	- heart support, maximum hand
3♠	- notrumper cue bid, heart support, maximum hand
3NT	- maximum hand, no heart support

All the suit bids by opener must be Alerted. Opener cannot go beyond 3♦ with a minimum hand, nor can he go beyond 3NT on his own. And once responder bids 3NT, the auction is over; opener must pass. Why? Because responder may have nothing in hearts! She was only asking about heart support, not *telling* anything.

Note that the only notrumper cue bid available with a maximum hand and trump support is 3♠. Bid 3♥ when the spade holding is not right for a notrumper cue bid.

The bidding after responder rebids 2♠ is similar:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠? (Alert: "She is asking about spades, not telling.")
2NT	- minimum hand, no spade support
3♣/3♦/3♥	- notrumper cue bid, spade support, minimum hand
3♠	- spade support, maximum hand
3NT	- maximum hand, no spade support

In this case there is no suit available for opener to make a notrumper cue bid with a maximum and support. Note that whichever major responder bids, opener's raise shows a maximum hand and support for the suit.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♣	3♦/3♥ - natural, forcing to 3♠
	3♠ - signoff
	3NT - must be passed
	4♠ - accepting the game try

Opener's 3♣ was a notrumper cue bid, showing spade support and a minimum hand.

The auctions that might occur when responder rebids 2♥ and opener does not show support need elaboration:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2NT	3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠

The minor suit bids imply a good 4=5=4=0 or 4=5=0=4 hand, and are forcing. Stopping at 3♣ or 3♦ is a bit unrealistic, and there is no other way to show such a hand. With a 5-5 hand responder would have used UHC instead of Stayman. The 3♥ bid implies an invitational hand with 4=6 in the majors.. The 3♠ bid is forcing, implying six hearts and five spades.

### When Opener Bids a Major

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠ - asking about spade support (see above)
	2NT/3♥ - invitational raise, natural
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational (4=6 hand with four spades)
	3♠/4♣/4♦ - splinter bid, heart support, slam try
	3NT - signoff
	4♥ - signoff, no slam interest
	4♠ - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)
	4NT - slam try in notrump, Boland applies

With a weak 4-6 major-minor hand, just transfer to the minor and forget Stayman. Such hands usually do not play well in a 4-4 fit vs a 6-2 or 6-3 fit, so there is little risk in the possible loss of a major suit contract.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	2NT/3♠ - invitational raise, natural
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational (4=6 hand with four hearts)
	3♥ - forcing
	3NT - signoff
	4♣/4♦ - splinter bid, spade support, slam try
	4♠ - signoff, no slam interest
	4♥ - RKCB
	4NT - slam try in notrump, Boland applies

Repeating: When opener responds in a major, four of the other major is RKCB.

### When Opener Shows Both Majors

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2NT/3♣	3♦ - transfer to hearts, possibly a weak 4=4=4=1 or 4=4=5=0 hand 3♥ - transfer to spades, also possibly weak (spades better than hearts) 3NT - signoff 4♣ - meaningless at present 4♦ - transfer to hearts, possibly a prelude to 4NT Key Card Blackwood 4♥ - transfer to spades, possibly a prelude to 4NT Key Card Blackwood 4NT - natural, invitational (for RKCB, transfer first to establish the trump suit)

When responder transfers at the three level and raises to four or bids a new suit, that shows slam interest Responder should transfer at the four level with no slam interest, just as Jacoby followed by a raise to game shows slam interest and Texas denies slam interest. (Unless, of course, responder intends to use Blackwood after a four-level transfer.)

### When Opener Shows a Five-card Suit

The jumps to three of a suit in response to Stayman show a maximum hand and a five-card suit. Responder's bid in a new suit denies trump support for opener, but shows slam interest.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♦	3♥/3♠ - natural, five or more, opener bids 3NT with poor support 3NT - signoff 4♣ - natural. With poor support opener bids 4♦ (strong suit) or a natural 4NT 4♦ - raise, forcing 4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, diamond support 4NT - RKCB (since opener's strength is closely known)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♥	3♠/4♣/4♦ - natural, opener usually bids notrump with poor support 3NT - signoff 4♥ - signoff 4♠ - splinter bid 4NT - RKCB

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♠	3NT - signoff 4♣/4♦/4♥ - natural, opener bids 4♠ (strong suit) or a natural 4NT with poor support 4♠ - signoff 4NT - RKCB

## Two-Suited Hands

Stayman is used with two-suited hands of invitational strength when one of the suits is spades:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠ - forcing, asking about spades
2NT	3♣/3♦/3♥ - not forcing

Opener will probably pass, in view of his announced minimum opening and lack of spade support. He might raise a heart bid, however, with a good fit in both suits: ♠AQ ♥KQ2 ♦A873 ♣J542

With a two-suited invitational hand that includes hearts but not spades, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention.

Even when opener has indicated support for a major, responder can still show a second suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♠	4♣/4♦ - second suit, perhaps a four-carder, forcing 4♥ - five-card suit, forcing 4NT - RKCB, because a suit has been agreed

## More on One-Suited Hands

Use Stayman with invitational strength, five or more spades, and an unbalanced hand, even if not two-suited:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠
2NT	Pass with ♠K9873 ♥2 ♦9632 ♣AJ2
3♠	with ♠Q87632 ♥4 ♦853 ♣KJ7 (invitational)
3♣	with ♠Q8753 ♥82 ♦9 ♣AJ984 (invitational)

The "invitations" will probably not be accepted, in view of opener's minimum hand. Opener may bid on with a good fit, however. The Stayman sequence gives opener a chance to make a notrump cue bid in support of spades, which may permit a game bid on the basis of a good fit. It is also the only way to bid two suits without forcing to game, since a second suit bid after using Jacoby is game-forcing.

When a Stayman responder insists on game in a major suit that has not been supported, and responder has shown the other major, it is obvious he had slam in mind.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠
2NT	4♠

Responder has long spade suit, and the hand is unbalanced. With a balanced hand, bid 3♠ over 2♥ with a weak suit. With strong spades, responder would have started with 3♠ (if unbalanced) or Jacoby 2♥ (if balanced) to show slam interest. With no slam in mind, he would have used Texas.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥
3NT	4♥ - weakish suit, slam interest

Responder could not bid 4♥ over 2♠, because that is RKCB for spades. Using Stayman to arrive at the heart game implies a balanced hand, since UHC or an original 3♥ response is available for unbalanced hands with hearts .

When opener has responded 2♦, the bidding goes this way with such hands:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
2NT	4♠

Opener's 2NT bid showed a minimum and no support, so responder just bids game, despite his original slam interest. With a weak 6=4 in the majors, responder would use Texas over 2♦, bidding 4♦ with six hearts, 4♥ with six spades, or with a stronger hand would use Smolen, jumping in the four-card suit.

If responder's suit is hearts, the same logic applies:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2NT	4♥

Also see section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

## THE JUMP TAKEOUT RESPONSE

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - slam try

The jump takeout shows a good suit of at least five cards, probably an unbalanced hand, and slam interest. With a side suit that lacks a control, it may be better to start with Jacoby in order to get opener to play the hand. The jump is not a slam try in competition:

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♦/3♥/3♠

If the 2♣ bid is natural, the jump is invitational at matchpoint scoring, forcing at IMP scoring. A cue bid is used for game-forcing Stayman. If the 2♣ bid is artificial and does not show a specific suit, then the jump takeout is strong (“Systems on”). It is also strong over an artificial double that shows no specific suit. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

After a jump takeout opener rebids 3NT if he lacks adequate trump support for responder's suit. He need not fear missing a slam by bidding 3NT with a maximum, because responder will bid again if all she needs is a maximum opposite.

With trump support, opener's action is different for majors and minors. If the suit is a major, opener raises with a minimum, makes a notrumper cue bid or jump raise with a maximum:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♥ - slam try
	3♠/4♣/4♦ - notrumper cue bid, heart support, maximum hand
	3NT - lacks heart support, may be minimum or maximum
	4♥ - heart support, minimum hand
	4NT - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)
	5♥/6♥ - extra good hearts and extra good hand, good controls

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♠ - slam try
	3NT - lacks spade support, may be minimum or maximum
	4♣/4♦/4♥ - notrumper cue bid, spade support, maximum
	4♠ - spade support, minimum hand
	4NT - RKCB
	5♠/6♠ - extra good spades and extra good hand, good controls

Notice that opener's action is opposite of that taken when a Stayman or UHC bidder shows a major suit. In that case opener makes a notrumper cue bid with a minimum, not with a maximum, when he has support. Responder can therefore choose the sequence that is appropriate for the strength of his major suit slam try, using the jump takeout with a minimum hand for slam, Stayman or UHC with better hands. If responder's next bid is 4♣, that is natural. No Gerber after a jump takeout.

Jumps in a minor suit are treated differently: Raises are stronger than a three-level notrumper cue bid, which at the three level may be on a minimum (but four-level cue bids are strong):

Opener Responder

1NT 3♦ - slam try

3♥/3♠ - notrumper cue bid in support of diamonds, may be minimum

3NT - denies diamond support, may be minimum or maximum

4♣ - notrumper cue bid in support of diamonds, maximum hand

4♦ - diamond support, good hand

4NT - RKCB

The bidding is similar after a jump takeout of 3♣. The reason that a four-level bid shows a maximum is, of course, that game in notrump has been bypassed. With a minimum and support, opener must make a three-level notrumper cue bid, even when lacking an appropriate suit for that action. Hand evaluation must include a consideration of fit and side suit controls, not just HCP.

If responder bids notrump after hearing a notrumper cue bid in support of a minor, he probably has a singleton or void in that suit--the hand does not fit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♦
4♣	4NT - short clubs, signoff

Otherwise, 4NT by responder is Roman Key Card Blackwood (section 6-6), even if opener rebids 3NT. If responder wants to invite game with a 4NT bid, he must start with a transfer instead of a jump takeout. A 4NT bid by opener is RKCB unless he has bid 3NT, then 4NT, an obvious signoff.

A notrump bidder is allowed only one notrumper cue bid per auction. Any further cue bid shows an ace. See section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids.

The degree of fit is important after responder shows two suits. With ♠Q3 ♥A54 ♦AK76 ♣K1087, opener rebids 3NT when responder jumps to 3♠. If responder then bids 4♣, this minimum hand becomes a maximum. A jump to 6♣ is quite in order. With KQ of hearts instead of the ace (more points, but less fit), opener would just sign off with a 4NT bid over 4♣.

Opener should bid aggressively with many controls and a ruffing value. With ♠A3 ♥KJ7 ♦A10987 ♣A103 she should try for slam when responder makes a jump takeout of 3♥, even though it is a minimum notrump opening. A raise to 5♥ is about right. Conversely, secondary strength in side suits should be downgraded.

Strong jump takeouts by a passed hand are necessarily less invitational to slam than those by an unpassed hand. In a minor suit they tend to suggest that a minor suit game might be safer than a notrump game.

## SLAM TRIES WITH LONG SUITS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a hand that has a six or seven-card suit. A jump takeout response is one way, but other ways are available. A summary follows. All of the sequences that follow show that responder has interest in slam.

### Major Suit Slam Tries

-- With a balanced hand, use Jacoby and jump to four of the suit. This promises a strong suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦/2♥
2♥/2♠	4♥/4♠ - balanced, strong suit

-- With a balanced hand and a heart suit that is not strong, start with Stayman and insist on a heart game without jumping unnecessarily. This gives opener a chance to show heart support:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2NT	4♥ (because 3♥ is not forcing)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥ (because 4♥ would be a splinter bid)
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced hand, hearts not strong

-- With an unbalanced hand and a spade suit, strong or not, start with Stayman and bid 2♠. If the suit isn't strong, opener's next bid will show if he has support:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠
2NT	4♠ (because 3♠ is not forcing)

-- With an unbalanced hand and a heart suit, strong or not, use UHC:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	2♠ - UHC
2NT	4♥ - unbalanced hand

Again: If the suit is not strong, opener's reply to UHC will show if he has support.

### Minor Suit Slam Tries

-- With balanced hands, transfer to the minor and then bid 4NT (or 3NT if opener's rebid disappoints) if opener denies good support. If he shows support by accepting the transfer, then 4NT is RKCB.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	4NT - natural over 2NT, RKCB over 3♣

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	4NT - natural over 3♣, RKCB over 3♦

The natural 4NT bids deny a short suit.

-- With unbalanced hands transfer to the minor and then make a splinter bid if opener's rebid does not discourage slam ideas:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	4♦/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	4♣/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid

It will just have to be remembered that the other artificial uses for 4♠ (RKCB or mild notrump slam try) do not apply after a minor suit transfer. If RKCB is a must, start with a strong jump takeout response. Then, if opener shows support, 4NT is RKCB.

## SLAM TRIES WITH TWO-SUITED HANDS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a two-suited hand. A summary follows:

### With Both Majors

When holding 5-5 or better in the majors, choose a Jacoby sequence with a marginal slam try hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥
2♠	3♥ - forcing

With a maximum hand and a fit in both majors, opener can now make a notrumper cue bid of 4♣ or 4♦. Responder may be able to bid slam with this information.

Another approach, also good with a marginal hand for slam, is to jump to 3♠ over 1NT, then bid 4♥. Prefer this sequence when the spades are quite strong.

With a stronger hand, prefer a Stayman sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♦	3♥

The 3♥ bid is forcing, since opener has shown spade support with the 3♦ notrumper cue bid. Now responder may be able to get to slam even when opener has a minimum, if the hands fit well.

### With a Major and a Minor

Use a Jacoby sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥
2♠	3♣ - forcing

With a major and a minor, starting with a 3♥/3♠ bid means bidding the minor suit at the four level, so the slam interest should be strong in case opener can't support the major. Opener can sign off in 4NT, however, when responder bids the minor

### With Both Minors

When the two suits are minors, a transfer sequence is preferable with a marginal slam try hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	3♦ - forcing

Since this is the only way to show both minors without going past 3NT, there is no way for opener to tell whether the suits are of equal length or, if unequal, which suit is longer. However:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣	4♣ - club suit too
4NT	- signoff, strong in the majors

Here the clubs cannot be longer than the diamonds. Since this sequence bypasses 3NT, responder needs a pretty good hand. Another way to show this sort of hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♦ - strong hand with diamonds
3NT	4♣ - club suit too
4NT	- signoff, strong in majors

You choose the second sequence when it is important to find about a third suit fit. With ♠Q32 ♥6 ♦AKJ65 ♣KQ65, you will rebid 3NT if opener makes a notrumper cue bid in hearts, and 4♣ if he rebids 3♠ or 3NT. The notrumper cue bid in spades could get you to a good slam opposite 16 HCP (give opener ♠KJ5 ♥AJ8 ♦Q1097 ♣AJ10), or keep you out of a doubtful slam (reverse your majors) even when opener fits your suits.

With a strong hand and longer clubs than diamonds, responder can bid this way:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♣ - strong hand with clubs
3NT	4♦ - second suit (shorter)
4NT	- signoff, strong in the majors

## SUMMARY OF BIDDING APPROACHES AFTER 1NT

Major suit bust	Bid Jacoby 2♦ or 2♥
Club bust	Bid 2♠, then bid 3♣ if opener bids 2NT
Diamond bust	Bid 2NT, then bid 3♦ if opener bids 3♣
Weak 5-5 in the minors	Bid 2NT, pass opener's response
Weak 5-5 in the majors	Bid 2♥ and pass opener's 2♠ bid
<u>Invitational Hands:</u>	
Long clubs	Bid 2♠, then 3♣ over 2NT, 3NT over 3♣
Long diamonds	Bid 2NT, then 3♦ over 3♣, 3NT over 3♦
Balanced, 5-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then 2NT
Balanced, 6-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then raise to the three level
Unbalanced, 5-6 hearts	Bid 2♦, then 2♠ (UHC)
Unbalanced, 5-6 spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠
Two-suiter with spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠, then the second suit
Two suiter, hearts and a minor	Bid UHC, then bid the minor
<u>Game-Going Hands</u> (not much interest in slam)	
Both minors	Bid 2♠ to show clubs, then bid 3♦
Both majors	Bid 2♥, then 3♥
Major/minor, 5-5	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then the minor
Balanced, 5-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then 3NT
Unbalanced, 5 hearts	Bid 2♦, then 2♠ (UHC)
Unbalanced, 5 spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠
One long major	Bid Texas 4♦ or 4♥

## WHEN THE OPPONENTS INTERVENE VS STRONG NOTRUMP

### When an Opponent Makes a Natural Overcall

This includes a natural overcall that shows in addition another unspecified suit. If the natural overcall shows another specific suit, the defense is different. See section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions.

-- A double by responder is for business:

South	West	North
1NT	2♥	Dbl - business double

-- A *direct* double by opener is also for business:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♥
Dbl - business double, good hearts			

-- A *balancing* double by either partner is takeout by opener, business by responder:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl - business double	
2♥/2♠ - four-card suit, pass or correct			

When balancing with a four-card suit, responder promises four cards in the next higher suit. This means responder must not pass 1NT with a five-card major.

All other doubles by either partner are for business.

-- A non-jump 4♣ response is natural, not Gerber or Stayman:

South	West	North
1NT	3♥	4♣ - natural, not quite forcing
4♥ - probably meant as Stayman, but maybe a void		

-- Jacoby transfer bids do not apply, but Texas transfers apply after an overcall of 3♣ or lower (i.e., when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be a jump):

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠ - natural 4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer 4♣ - Gerber

South	West	North
1NT	3♦	4♥/4♠ - natural 4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly

-- The cue bid replaces Stayman, and is forcing to game:

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♣ - asks for a major
1NT	2♦	3♦ - asks for a major
1NT	2♥	3♥ - asks for spades
1NT	2♠	3♠ - asks for hearts

In the first auction opener bids 3♦ with neither major, 3NT with both and a minimum, 4♣ with both and a maximum. In the second auction opener bids 3NT with neither major, 4♦ with both. (Remember that 3♣ is a natural bid unless the overcall was in clubs.) The cue bid may not be meant as Stayman when responder has a big hand with first round control of the opposing suit. If that is so, she will make it clear in the later bidding:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♠ - slam try, club void or ace	

Obviously North was not bidding 3♣ to find a major suit fit.

-- Simple free bids are not forcing, and are not even invitational at matchpoint scoring. With an invitational hand responder must generally bid 2NT at matchpoints, even with a suit-oriented hand. If space permits a jump, however, the invitation can be made that way (but major suit jumps are forcing at IMP scoring):

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♦/3♥/3♠ - invitational

When the overcall is at the three level, a 3♥ or 3♠ response is invitational at IMP scoring but not at matchpoints. A non-jump 4♣ response is natural, not Gerber or Stayman. Over 3♣, a 3♦ response is used for Stayman.

South	West	North
1NT	3♣	3♦ - Stayman
		3♥/3♠ - not forcing
		4♣ - Probably Stayman
		4♦/4♥ - Texas Transfer

If the overcall is 3♦ or higher, Texas does not apply, and a cue bid must be used for Stayman.

When responder raises to 2NT over an overcall, opener should show a major on his way to 3NT. A new minor suit rebid shows a maximum hand, five-card suit, and no stopper in the opposing suit.

### When an Opponent Makes an Artificial Overcall

-- If the overcall shows two suits section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions, applies.

-- An artificial overcall that shows one specific suit other than the one named (e.g., a transfer overcall) is handled by using the specified suit for Stayman. All other responses have the same meaning as over a natural overcall (see above).

-- If a 2♣ overcall shows a one-suited hand with an unspecified suit ("Hamilton"), a double replaces Stayman and all bids have the same meaning as if the overcall had not occurred. Since 2♣ is forcing, you can pass with a good hand if hopeful of doubling for business on the next round:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	Pass	2♦ - forced bid
Pass	Pass	Dbl	- business
			2♥/2♠ - four-card suit, weak

West's pass of 2♦ indicates that his suit is diamonds. If North has a good hand, he must either double 2♦ for business or make a strong bid like 2NT or a jump. A minimum reopening bid in a suit is not invitational. It tends to show a four-card suit because a five-carder would have been shown by a transfer earlier. It also implies support for the next higher suit if opener is short in responder's suit.

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	Pass	2♦ - forced bid
Pass	2♥	Dbl	- business
			2♠ - four-card suit

North has ♠KJ32 ♥76 ♦1032 ♣QJ54. South can bid 3♣ with a doubleton spade and a club suit.

### When 1NT is Doubled

-- If the double is natural, not conventional, you can redouble with as little as 6 HCP. Opener must be told of the 6 HCP or more so he can double an opposing bid more easily.

Suit responses over the double are weak at the two level, invitational at the three level. All suit bids at the two or three level are natural, no Jacoby, no Stayman. Responses at the four level retain their normal conventional meanings.

South	West	North	
1NT	Dbl	2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠	- natural, weak
		3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠	- natural, invitational

The jumps show a hand that is distributionally strong but weak in high cards, considering the failure to redouble.

A 2NT response is artificial, implying a two-suited hand. Opener assumes that responder has a weak hand with both minors (unusual notrump), but if responder does not pass opener's minor suit bid then her next suit bid shows a strong (distributional) hand and is forcing:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	

North has a two-suited hand, distributionally strong. The 2NT response is the only way to make sure she gets a chance to show both suits.

-- If the double is conventional, showing a one-suited hand, suit unspecified, a redouble promises only 6-7 HCP, but could have more. Otherwise the double is ignored and all bids retain the same meaning as if it had not occurred. All conventions are *on*: Jacoby, Texas, Gerber, Stayman, etc. With 8-9 HCP and a four-card or longer major, it may be better to make the normal response rather than redouble, to ensure that a major suit contract is not missed.

A minimum suit bid after passing, even when not reopening, is weak:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	2♦	- weak, just reopening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	2♥/2♠	- just competing

North's major is a four-carder. She would have transferred on the first round with five. The balancing bid in a major promises four cards in the next higher-ranking suit.

-- If the double shows two unspecified suits (e.g., "both majors or both minors"), use the same tactics as against a one-suited conventional double.

-- If the double shows two specific suits (e.g., both majors), the countermeasure known as "Unusual over Unusual" may be used: A bid in the higher of the opposing suits shows a good hand featuring the higher "unbid" suit, usually a six-bagger, while a bid in the lower of the opposing suits shows the lower "unbid" suit. A simple new suit bid is therefore not invitational. A redouble shows "cards," at least 6 HCP:

South	West	North
1NT	Dbl*	2♠ - diamond suit, invitational 2♥ - club suit, invitational 2NT - mildly invitational 3♣/3♦ - not invitational Rdbl - 6 HCP or more

\* majors

If South lacks support for the suit indicated "invitationally," he signs off by bidding North's suit. With a fit he bids 2NT (expressing doubt, probably with an unstopped major) or 3NT. Since the "invitational" suit bids are forcing, they may be used with stronger hands.

### When a 2♦ Response to Stayman Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Dbl		

Responder's actions are similar to opener's actions when a Stayman 2♣ bid gets doubled:

- With four diamonds headed by an honor, or better, she redoubles.
- With three diamonds to the queen or better, or four small, she passes.
- With less in diamonds, she makes her normal bid.

With 8-9 HCP and a five-card major to show, responder may choose to bid the major rather than pass or redouble. Otherwise the major could be shut out if opener bids 2NT, because responder would have to pass.

With a game-going hand or better responder can safely pass or redouble, since she can bid a five-card major at the three level (forcing) if opener bids 2NT. Opener may not pass if the double comes around, and must redouble if willing to play a 2♦ contract.

### When Responder's Major Suit Rebid Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥/2♠	Dbl

This is probably one of those occasions when North is deceptively bidding a non-suit. South should redouble with support that includes a stopper, pass with no stopper, bid 2NT or 3NT with a doubleton stopper or stoppers. If South passes, no bid by North in another denomination is forcing, so she must not make a minimum bid with a game-going hand:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Dbl
Pass	Pass	3♣/3♦ - signoffs	
		3♥ - invitational	
		3♠ - partial spade stop	
		Rdbl - to play	

South has denied a spade stopper with the pass. The 3♠ bid can't be natural, so it asks for a partial spade stopper, with which South bids 3NT. The 3♣ and 3♦ bids are signoffs. The 3♥ bid is unlikely, as what sort of hand could North have? Maybe ♠65432 ♥KQJ108 ♦Q3 ♣6.

### When A Transfer Bid Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦/2♥/2♠	Dbl

-- With a partial stopper (e.g., Qx, Jxx) or worse in the doubled suit, opener passes. Responder should play the hand, if possible, so that the doubler will be on lead. If the double gets passed around, responder can redouble to force opener to bid the indicated suit. The redouble says nothing about the opposing suit, and of course responder may be busted.

To invite game, responder can "cue bid" the doubled suit (forcing the transfer at the same time) or jump in the indicated suit. If responder merely bids the indicated suit at a minimum level, opener must pass.

-- With a single stopper or better, opener redoubles if he doesn't want to accept the transfer. He might do this with Ax(x) in the doubled suit, wanting the lead to come up to responder's hand.

-- Opener's acceptance of the transfer (with at least three-card support) is non-committal. He may have a stopper in the doubled suit.

### When a Transfer Bid Gets Overcalled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	2♠

Opener can bid only with a good support for responder's indicated suit (hearts, in this auction). Otherwise he must pass, since responder could have a bust hand. Or he can double, if he is confident of defeating the contract with little help from responder.

A second suit is not forcing if the bid follows an opposing overcall, and a double is artificial, a game try. Bidding the suit is merely competitive, not invitational:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	3♦/3♥	- weak
		Dbl	- interested in game
		3♠	- not invitational

If North were to pass with a fair but not invitational hand containing six spades, or a weakish 5-5 with which he planned to pass 2♠, South would probably have to pass also. North therefore competes with a three-level bid. With an invitational hand, or a game-going two-suiter, North must double. All the double says is, "I have at least a game-invitational hand." An invitational two-suiter is not shown via Jacoby, so a new suit bid after the double is forcing to game.

Suppose the overcall comes after a double showing a one-suited hand:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	2♥	Pass
2♠	3♣	3♦/3♥/3♠	- weak
		Dbl	- interested in game

The conventional double showing a one-suited hand is usually ignored by responder, and all bids retain the same meaning as if the double had not occurred. The 2♥ bid is therefore a transfer to spades. Any three-level bid by North in this situation is merely competitive, not invitational.

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	2♠	Dbl	Pass
2NT - minimum, poor hearts, spades stopped			
3NT - maximum, poor hearts, spades stopped			
3♥ - minimum hand, heart support			
4♥ - maximum hand, heart support			
3♣/3♦ - poor hearts, no spade stopper			
Pass - short hearts, good spades			

West's 2♣ bid was "Hamilton," showing a one-suited hand. This convention is ignored (except that a double is Stayman), so 2♦ is a transfer to hearts. The 2♠ bid reveals that West's suit is spades.

North doubles (artificially) to show a hand of game-invitational strength or better. South then bids according to his hand, as shown. If North next bids a new suit, that is forcing to game (showing a two-suiter via Jacoby is a game force), but a 3♥ bid over opener's 2NT is merely invitational.

Repeating: A transferor's double on the second round is takeout, not penalty. Bidding the indicated suit instead of doubling shows a weak hand, and opener must pass.

## TWO NOTRUMP OPENING

Requirements for an opening bid of 2NT:

- 21-22 HCP
- Balanced hand (but avoid bidding 2NT with 5-4-2-2 distribution)
- Weakest doubleton Qx

Except for adjustment of HCP figures, this entire section applies to a rebid of 2NT after a 2♣ opening, Marvin Two Diamond opening, or Marvin Two Heart opening. See section 6-1, The Two Club Opening, section 6-2, Marvin Two Diamond Opening, and section 6-3, Marvin Two Heart Opening. For application to notrump overcalls, see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO 2NT

## Opener Responder

- 2NT 3♣ - Stayman, game forcing
- 3♦ - Jacoby transfer to hearts
- 3♥ - Jacoby transfer to spades
- 3♠ - transfer to clubs
- 3NT - transfer to diamonds
- 4♣ - Gerber
- 4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts
- 4♥ - Texas transfer to spades
- 4♠ - a mild notrump raise, Boland convention applies\*
- 4NT- a stronger notrump raise, Boland applies
- 5♣ - Miller convention, slam force
- 5♦ - signoff, but opener can sometimes bid 6♦ (e.g., with four aces and ♦K)
- 5♥/5♠/5NT - Meaningless
- 6 any is a signoff, not invitational.

The Boland and Miller conventions are discussed in sections 5-6 and 5-7.

Before reading the remainder of this section, read section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids

\* Depending on the auction, a jump to 4♠ may either have this meaning or one of Roman Key Card Blackwood, natural, or a splinter bid.

Responder's actions when RHO decides to compete are about the same as those described in Section 5-2, Strong One Notrump Opening.

## TEXAS TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
2NT	4♦ - asks opener to bid 4♥ 4♥ - asks opener to bid 4♠

Opener has no option other than to bid game in the indicated suit, no matter how good his hand.

If responder continues with a 4NT bid, that is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB). See section 6-6. Unlike Texas Transfers after a 1NT opening, this sequence does not promise a short suit.

The Texas convention is used after a 3♣ overcall (when both 4♦ and 4♥ are jumps), but not after any higher overcall:

South	West	North
2NT	3♦	4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly 3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural, forcing 4♥/4♠ - strong suit, slam interest 4NT - natural raise, too strong for 3NT

If responder follows up the forcing new suit response with a 4NT bid, that is RKCB if the suit has been raised (implicitly or explicitly), natural otherwise:

South	West	North	East
2NT	3♣	3♠	Pass
4 any	Pass	4NT - RKCB	

South	West	North	East
2NT	3♦	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT - natural, invitational	

Texas is used in competition only over a double or 3♣, when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be jump bids.

## JACOBY TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦ - asks opener to bid 3♥ 3♥ - asks opener to bid 3♠

With super support for the indicated suit, opener can bid higher than the requested bid. She should have four trumps and a ruffing value to jump to the four level or make a notrumper cue bid in support of the indicated suit. With two of the top three honors in the suit, she can bid 3NT with a good hand that has fast tricks outside and no unstopped suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
	3♥ - the usual bid
	4♥ - a super-accept, including four trumps
	4♣/4♦/3♠ - same (notrumper cue bid)
	3NT - two of top three heart honors, good outside strength

The 3NT rebid requires good quick stoppers outside, because responder will pass with, say, a queen high heart suit and nothing outside.

If responder bids 3♦, then 3♠ over 3♥, that is the Unbalanced Heart Convention (UHC). UHC will be described in the next section.

When responder uses Jacoby, then raises opener's forced bid to game, she is making a slam try with a strong suit. With no slam interest, use Texas. With a non-strong suit, start with Stayman.

After a transfer to spades, no ace or key card convention is available. If that is important, start with a Texas Transfer, then bid 4NT, RKCB, or start with 4♣, Gerber. If the three-level transfer is followed by a 4NT bid, that is a natural slam try in notrump, balanced hand, and 4♣ is natural.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♥
3♠	4♠ - slam try in spades, balanced hand, strong suit 4NT - notrump slam try 4♣/4♦ - natural 4♥ - weak two-suiter

The 4♠ slam try shows a balanced hand with a long and strong trump suit. With a broken spade suit or an unbalanced hand, start with 3♣ instead of transferring. If spades become "agreed," either by a super-acceptance by opener (jump to four, or cue bid, or later preference), then 4NT is RKCB. Showing both majors this way denies any slam interest. The 4♥ bid is "pass or correct." With slam interest, start with Stayman and show both majors, giving opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid. When the transfer is to hearts, 4♠ becomes immediately available for RKCB:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	4♥ - slam try in hearts, balanced hand, strong suit 4NT - notrump slam try 4♠ - RKCB (but why not start with Texas?) 4♣/4♦ - natural

With an unbalanced hand, responder uses UHC. With a heart suit that is not strong, it's better to start with Stayman with a balanced hand, as the above 4♥ raise implies a strong suit. As with spades, 4NT after hearts are super-accepted by opener is RKCB. The reason for not using Texas as a path to RKCB might be that responder wanted to give opener a chance to super-accept.

If responder shows a minor suit after the Jacoby response, he probably has a strong 5-4-2-2 hand.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦/3♥
3♥/3♠	4♣ - probably 2=5=2=4, slam try 4♦ - probably 2=5=4=2, slam try

With an unbalanced hand responder uses UHC with hearts, Stayman with spades, to show a two-suiter when he has slam interest:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♣/4♦ - unbalanced, 5=4 or 5-5

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
3NT	4♣/4♦/4♥ - unbalanced, 5=4 or 5-5

Bidding spades and hearts this way definitely shows at least 5-5, with slam interest. Use Jacoby with 5-5 or better in the majors and no slam interest:

After showing a two-suited hand, a following RKCB uses the last bid suit (cue bids excepted) as the key suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	4♣ - natural, second suit
4♦	4NT - RKCB

It is not known whether opener's cue bid of 4♦ is in support of hearts or diamonds, but for now it is assumed to be diamonds for key-card purposes.

## UNBALANCED HEART CONVENTION

Responder uses UHC with five or more hearts and an unbalanced hand:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT - no heart support	
4♣/4♦ - notrumper cue bid, heart support	
4♥ - normal heart raise	

Opener bids 4♥ to show support when neither minor holding is suitable for a notrumper cue bid.

When opener rebids 3NT, responder may show a second suit or a six-card heart suit:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♣/4♦ - second suit, 5-4 or 5-5
	4♥ - six or more hearts, slam interest

Bidding a two-suited hand this way shows an unbalanced hand. With a 5-4-2-2 hand and slam hopes, bid the four-card minor suit immediately after opener's 3♥ bid.

The 4♥ bid needs an explanation: Responder did not raise opener's 3♥ bid to 4♥, which also shows six or more hearts, because that would show a balanced hand (and a strong suit). In this case responder has an unbalanced hand and some slam interest. The hearts may be weakish or strong, no telling. With a balanced hand, slam interest, and a weakish heart suit, he would have started with Stayman. With no interest in slam he would have started with a Texas transfer (4♦).

Using UHC instead of just raising the 3♥ response with a six-card suit gives opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid in support of hearts. A fit discovered in this way could lead to a good slam that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to bid. With a balanced hand you just raise 3♥ to 4♥ to try for slam, indicating a need for good cards anywhere rather than the need for a meshing hand.

## STAYMAN CONVENTION

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣

The 3♣ response to a 2NT opening asks opener to bid any four-card major he may possess. With both majors, opener bids 3NT; with neither, he bids 3♦. Playing minor suit transfers (section 11-2), responder may not have a major suit, since she must bid 3♣ first in order to raise to 3NT. Or a bluff Stayman might be used with two short majors. Also, with a 4-3-3-3 hand, opener may suppress a major if it is very weak and he has double stoppers in the other suits.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
	3♦ - no four-card major (probably)
	3♥/3♠ - four or five-card major
	3NT - both majors

If responder continues by showing a new major at the three level, the suit is at least five cards long:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	3♠ - five or more spades, forcing

Without support, opener bids 3NT; with support, he bids 4♠ or makes a notrump cue bid. A 4♥ bid at this point is a cue bid in support of spades, not a suit-showing bid (i.e., not a heart rebid to show five hearts or a previously suppressed heart suit).

When a 4♣ or 4♦ bid immediately follows the 3♣ Stayman bid, it's natural:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
Any	4♣/4♦ natural, forcing

This must be at least a mild slam try, since responder has gone past 3NT. A 4NT bid by opener at this point is not RKCB. If he has a fit, he should cue bid and then responder can use RKCB.

When the reply to Stayman is 3♠, no Gerber or RKCB is immediately available:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4NT - natural notrump raise
	4♣/4♦ - natural, forcing
	4♥ - natural, six or more weakish hearts, slam interest

When the reply to Stayman is 3♥, responder can use an artificial 4♠ for RKCB

When the reply to Stayman is 3♦, a jump to game shows a strong suit and some interest in slam.

Responder is probably 6-4 in the majors, but may be one-suited::

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	4♥/4♠ - strong suit, slam try

With a non-strong suit, responder would not jump to game. The artificial 4♠ notrump raise is not used in Stayman sequences following a 2NT opening.

When the reply to Stayman is 3NT, showing both majors, responder will have to play any major suit contract, because both 4♣ and 4♦ are needed as natural bids. If playing minor suit transfers, they are not so needed and can be used as transfers to let opener play the hand.

When opener shows one major and responder insists on game in the other major, he is making a slam try. In spades, this slam try implies a weakish suit or an unbalanced hand. With strong spades in a balanced hand, use Jacoby. When the suit is hearts, the Stayman approach implies a broken suit in a balanced hand. Use UHC with an unbalanced hand, strong hearts or not, and use Jacoby with strong hearts in a balanced hand.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	3♠
3NT	4♠ - unbalanced, long spades

The spade suit may be broken or fairly solid, there is no way to tell. This sequence gives opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid in support of spades.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	4♠ - balanced, long spades

This jump to 4♥ over a 3♦ reply is useful to distinguish between a balanced and an unbalanced hand. Contrary to the general principle that un-necessary jumps show suit strength, the spades are definitely not strong. Responder would use Jacoby to invite slam with a balanced hand and strong spades. Since responder is balanced, there is no need to bid 3♠ in order to give opener room to make a notrumper cue bid (which is useful only opposite an unbalanced hand). Note that splinter bids are not used in Stayman sequences following a 2NT opening.

After a Stayman bidder shows a five-card major, a second suit bid tends to be a real suit, not a cue bid.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
4♥	5♣ - showing a second suit

## 6♣

Opener has ♠K87 ♥KQ3 ♦AQ8 ♣AK84, responder ♠AQ1065 ♥864 ♦5 ♣QJ72. If opener's hearts and diamonds were reversed, he would have made his notrumper cue bid in diamonds instead of hearts, and responder would have settled for game in spades.

When responder shows both majors via Stayman, she indicates slam interest:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
3NT	4♥ - slam interest

With no interest in slam, responder shows both majors by using a Jacoby sequence. Using Stayman gives opener a chance to cue bid in support of spades, perhaps leading to a good slam based on mesh of the two hands.

## MINOR SUIT STAYMAN

A response of 3♠ to 2NT is Minor Suit Stayman, asking opener to bid a minor suit of four or more cards. Holding both minors, opener bids 4NT. With neither, he bids 3NT. He may choose to show a five-card major if he likes his minor suit holdings, but a rebid of 3NT does not deny one.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♠ - Minor Suit Stayman
	3NT - no minor suit, probably no five-card major
	4♣/4♦ - denies the other minor
	4♥/4♠ - five card suit, no minor suit
	4NT - both minors

If responder rebids four of a minor after opener's 3NT bid, or 4♦ after a 4♣ bid, that shows a suit of at least five cards. Opener can make a notrumper cue bid in a major with support for the suit, or bid 4NT without support. Responder's rebid of 4♥ or 4♠ shows a four-card suit in a hand good enough to play 4NT.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♠ - Minor Suit Stayman
3NT	4♣/4♦ - at least a five-card suit
	4♥/4♠ - four-card suit, forcing

If opener's rebid does not catch a fit with responder's hand, responder can bid 4NT as natural and merely invitational. No control or ace-asking bid is available.

For an alternative approach, see section 11-1, Minor Suit Transfers in Response to 2NT Opening.

## SLAM TRIES WITH LONG SUITS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a hand that contains a six or seven-card suit. A summary follows. First, major suits:

-- With a balanced hand and strong suit, use Jacoby and raise to game:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦/3♥
3♥/3♠	4♥/4♠

-- With a balanced hand and non-strong spades, use Stayman and then bid 4♠:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	4♠

Opener will probably pass, in view of his lack of spade support, but he might go on with a very strong doubleton spade.

-- With an unbalanced hand and non-strong suit, use Stayman and bid the suit minimally. The suit may be strong or not.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥	3♠
3NT	4♠ - unbalanced, slam try

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

Of course opener won't know immediately whether responder is interested in slam or not when he follows up Stayman with a 3♥ or 3♠ bid. He just shows his hand and waits to hear more.

-- With an unbalanced hand and heart suit, use UHC. The suit may be strong or not:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♦
3♥	3♠ - UHC
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced, slam try

In all these auctions, responder's last bid shows that he had slam in mind, as he obviously could otherwise have started with a Texas transfer.

Now for the minors:

In the absence of Minor Suit Stayman (section 11-2), either minor can be shown immediately following a 3♣ response:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦/3♥/3♠/3NT	4♣/4♦ - natural, slam interest

Opener can now bid 4NT to deny a fit, or cue bid to confirm one. If a fit is denied, 4NT by responder is natural. If confirmed, 4NT by responder is RKCB.

Responder's bid of a second suit tends to show a real suit, not a cue bid.

## HIGH-LEVEL NOTRUMP OPENINGS

### The 3NT Opening

An opening bid of 3NT is natural, based on a long solid minor plus outside stoppers, with a total of eight or nine tricks (perhaps assuming a favorable lead). A minimum: S-Q3 H-K4 D-K8 C-AKQJ872. The same hand with red aces instead of red kings would be a maximum. At least three suits must be stopped, and the weakest suit no worse than Jxx, Qx, or singleton king. Partner bids 4NT with 2-1/2 to 3 quick tricks, 6NT with 3-1/2:

Quick tricks: ace counts 1-1/2

king	1
queen	1/2
AQ	2
AK	2-1/2
AKQ	3

Opener	Responder
3NT	4♣ - Gerber
	4♦/4♥ - transfer bids
	4♠ - slam try in opener's suit

A transfer bid followed by 4NT is Roman Key Card Blackwood. The 4♠ bid says responder is interested in playing a slam in opener's suit, whichever it is. Responder might have S-AK432 H-6 D-10764 C-J83. Opener signs off in 4NT with a minimum, bids five of his minor with an unstopped suit, and bids six of his minor with a maximum and all suits stopped.

### The 4NT Opening

An opening bid of 4NT is regular Blackwood. Starting at this level gives the opposition less chance to intervene. With a notrump type hand containing ten sure tricks, start with an artificial 2♣ opening,

### The 5NT Opening

An opening of 5NT shows eleven tricks, a 4-3-3-3 hand, at least three aces, asks partner to raise one level for every ace, king, or queen in her hand. Responder can chance six of a suit with nothing but a six-card suit headed by the jack, or any seven-card suit. Opener should not "correct" back to notrump unless he has a little card to reach partner's suit. AK2 is okay, but not AKJ.

### The 6NT Opening

An opening of 6NT shows a 4-3-3-3 hand, twelve tricks, missing just one queen. Responder can bid seven with the missing queen or a six-card suit headed by the jack, or any seven-card suit. If missing just an ace or a king, start with an artificial 2♣ opening.

## THE BOLAND CONVENTION

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2NT	4NT

These and a number of similar raises to 4NT have a range of about two high card points (HCP). For instance, the 4NT bid above shows 13-14 HCP. The Boland convention is a useful tool in these situations. It goes like this:

-- With a minimum, pass.

-- With a medium holding, bid five of your lowest ranking biddable suit (Q10xx or better)--whether or not the suit has been bid before. To bypass a previously bid suit (clubs, in the auction above) shows that the suit was not "biddable." With no biddable suit to show, bid 5NT. The reason for requiring a biddable suit is to reduce the likelihood of playing a trump holding like A432 opposite J765 when more tricks could be scored in another denomination .

-- With a maximum, bid six of your lowest ranking biddable suit. With none, bid 6NT.

If the 4NT bidder wants to seek further for a suit fit, she also shows biddable suits "up-the-line."

As soon as either partner can count 33 HCP between the two hands, he/she bids six of something. Neither partner can go past 5NT until the HCP total is known to be at least 33 (perhaps counting a point for a ruffing value when a suit fit is found, or for good primary cards/controls).

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4NT	6♥

Opener has 18 or 19 HCP and responder has 15 HCP, a maximum (assuming a 13-15 HCP notrump hand). She would have passed with 13 HCP or less. Knowing that opener has at least 18 HCP (required for the 4NT bid), she bids her lowest ranking biddable suit at the six level. With only 14 HCP she would bid just 5♥, which opener could pass with a heart fit and only 18 HCP.

At match points the bidding cannot stop at five of a minor, so it is not necessary to jump to 6♣ or 6♦ when holding a maximum hand. Bidding 5♣ or 5♦ keeps the bidding lower and facilitates the showing of suits. In this case, an unnecessary jump would show a five-card suit:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT (Omnibus, section 3-10)
3♣	3NT
4NT	6♣

Opener's 3♣ rebid asks about responder's majors, and 3NT shows a doubleton spade and no heart suit. The raise to 4NT shows 18-19 HCP, since responder has 13-15. Responder no doubt has a five-card club suit in her maximum hand, since she could have bid a forcing 5♣ with only four.

An unbidable suit can be shown if the suit has been previously bypassed:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	3NT
4NT	5♦
5NT	6♣

Responder has an unbidable club suit to go with her biddable diamond suit. She would have bid clubs first, of course, if they were biddable. However:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	3♥
4NT	5♣
5NT	6♥

The 6♥ call shows a biddable suit, since hearts were never bypassed. Boland shows biddable suits up-the-line. The 3♥ bid doesn't count as a Boland bid because it could be based on any sort of suit.

At IMP scoring or in rubber bridge the bidding can stop at five of a minor:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4NT	5♣
Pass!	

Opener has ♠A10872 ♥A2 ♦AQ ♣A873. Since responder showed 13-15 HCP, he knows that she has 14 exactly. Feeling that 5♣ might be safer than 5♠ or 5NT, he passes. Responder might have ♠K3 ♥Q83 ♦K964 ♣KQJ4. Stopping at 3NT would have been best, but opener has a little too much strength for that.

Boland does not apply when opener has shown a ten-trick notrump hand by opening 2♣ and then rebidding 4NT:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
4NT	

A five-level bid by responder at this point shows a six-card suit with no ace, king, or queen, and is therefore not forcing. See section 6-1, The Two Club Opening.

When the conventional 4♠ notrump raise is applicable, with 4♠ being a weaker raise than 4NT, the range for the slam try is usually narrowed to one point:

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♠ - inviting 6NT, 15 HCP
	4NT - 16 HCP

Opener bids 4NT to sign off over 4♠. Any five-level rebid accepts the slam try and the partnership cannot stop at the five level. Actually the 4♠ bid is unlimited, because responder may continue (with Boland) if he has 17 or more HCP.

If the 4♠ slam try is accepted, bidding continues as usual:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2NT	4♠ - slam try
	4NT - minimum hand
	5♣ - biddable club suit (Q10xx or better)

## THE MILLER CONVENTION

Opener	Responder
1NT	5♣

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
3NT	5♣

These and other "out-of-the-blue" jumps to 5♣ over a notrump bid are the Miller Convention, forcing to slam and inquiring about strength. It promises a 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 hand. The Miller Convention does not apply if clubs have been bid naturally by anyone, partner or opponents.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2NT	5♣ is natural, not Miller

Miller must be a jump bid:

Opener	Responder
1NT	4NT
5♣	is part of the Boland convention (q.v.)

After a Miller 5♣ bid, partner shows his exact strength:

Opener	Responder
1NT	5♣
5♦	- minimum hand
5♥	- middling hand
5♠	- maximum hand

Responder may be able to place the contract on the basis of the response. Perhaps a 5♠ response gives a total of 35 HCP for the two hands, so responder bids 6NT instead of searching for a suit contract. If responder bids 5NT or any suit, she is looking for a suit contract. Opener bids his cheapest ranking biddable suit (Q10xx or better). Until a fit is found, each player shows biddable suits in "up-the-line" fashion. If no fit is uncovered, the partnership will play in 6NT.

The Miller bidder may also be looking for a grand slam. If she finds enough strength for seven, she must not make a non-forcing bid below that level:

Opener	Responder
2NT	5♣
5♠	5NT
6♣	7♦

Responder sees enough points for 7NT after the 5♠ reply (showing a maximum), but is willing to play in a safer suit contract if a good fit is available. The 5NT bid was forcing, but over 6♣ she must bid seven of something because a six-level bid could be passed. Opener can pass 7♦ with good four-card diamond support, without which he shows a biddable major suit if he has one. Otherwise, he bids 7NT. Remember, Miller denies a five-card or longer suit.

If a player bypasses a suit that was bid prior to the Miller bid, he shows that the suit was "unbiddable":

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
2NT	5♣ - Miller
5♦	5NT
6♠	

The 5♦ bid shows a minimum hand. Opener has a biddable spade suit, but his diamonds were weaker than Q10xx, or he would have bid 6♦ over 5NT. Opener's hand: ♠AQ32 ♥Q3 ♦Q762 ♣AKQ

If the Miller bidder names a suit previously bid by partner, she must have a biddable holding in the suit:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2NT	5♣
5♥	6♦ shows biddable diamonds

With only Qxxx or less in diamonds, responder would bid 5NT over 5♥, giving opener a chance to show that diamonds are biddable.

The reason for requiring biddable suits in these auctions is to reduce the likelihood of playing a trump suit such as A432 opposite Q765 when notrump is likely to produce more tricks.