

# A guide to Standard American bidding methods in contract bridge

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*I'm trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door.  
You're the one that has to walk through it. – Morpheus, The Matrix*

The theory of bidding in contract bridge can seem daunting. The ‘rules’ of bidding are easy for the beginner to forget, and easier still to misremember, since each decision in a bridge auction depends both on one’s own card holding and *all* previous bids (including pass!) One can make due by memorizing how the simpler types of auctions go, and then when things get into unfamiliar territory, applying general bidding philosophy points, such as ‘new suits are forcing,’ ‘slow shows/fast denies,’ ‘bit cautiously with a misfit, and aggressively with a fit,’ ‘when in doubt, bid 3NT,’ and of course, ‘six diamonds always makes.’ But that approach misses a crucial point. Bridge is a team game, not a free for all; our bids are not for us, they are for our partner! The main goal is to communicate to partner as much important information as we can as fast as possible, and our bids are the only words we can use. (No hand signals allowed.) We still have to know the basic bidding conventions, to make sure that we are speaking the same language as our partner. Each bid we make should be telling partner about our hand or what contract we think is best, and we must interpret partner’s bidding as his best attempt to do the same. A good bidder constantly asks himself, ‘what does partner’s hand look like?’ and uses the answer to make his next move. Over time, we develop probabilistic expectations for what partner has based on his bids, and can use that to guide us when we might otherwise be unsure. Experienced players worry less about exactly what partner does and doesn’t have, and instead try to estimate how the two hands together will fair in each possible final contract. But before we learn to see the code in the matrix, we’ve got to learn kung fu.

Contemporary bidding consists of a core natural approach - in that most bids show length in the suit bid - complemented by a dizzying array of artificial, specialized bids for certain holdings and auction types. We will focus on the former aspect in the context of the standard American system, because it applies more generally to popular contemporary bidding systems – 2/1, Precision, ACOL – and because the latter come up less often and can be learned independently. There are a number of exceptions, which are common enough and useful enough to have been accepted into natural bidding, such as the Stayman convention. The method of scoring can have a significant effect on how we bid, so we will try to make note of the differences in style where they occur.

Some standard notation: we will denote hands (for example) in the format ♠AKxx ♥QJ109x ♦Kx ♣xx, where the x’s denote sufficiently small card values, usually 8 or lower. ‘Major’ suits are hearts and spades; ‘minors’ are clubs and diamonds. A lower case ‘m’ denotes an unspecified minor suit – either clubs or diamonds – and an upper case ‘M’ denotes an unspecified major suit. When a minor or major suit has already been specified, om or oM will denote the other minor or other major, respectively. So, for example, with no interference from the opponents, the bidding sequence 1m, 1♠, 2om could be one of two possible sequences: 1♦, 1♠, 2♣, or 1♣, 1♠, 2♦.

Some common lingo: Referring to the ‘high card point’ count of a hand, or ‘hcp’ for short, we

ignore distribution points: that is, count aces as 4, kings as 3, queens as 2, and jacks as 1, add those up, and that's it. It is sometimes useful to have a more loosey-goosey metric for the strength of a hand, which we'll call 'points.' There are many variations on the definition of the 'point count' of a hand. I'll use the following criteria (subject to sudden small changes): in addition to the hcp count, add on 3 points for each void, 2 points for each singleton, and 1 for each doubleton; also, add an additional point for each card past the fifth in any suit with more than five cards in it. For example: ♠AKQ1098 ♥Jxxx ♦Ax ♣Kx is a 17 hcp hand, and a 20 point hand (one 6 card suit and two doubletons). ♠AKQJ1098765432 is a 10hcp hand, with 26 points. A final note about 'points:' I'll switch between hcp and points in the guide seemingly at randomly. Some of the differences are important, but for a first or second readthrough, the difference can be ignored. A decent rule of thumb is: opening bids and notrump bids refer to hcp, while other bids refer to points.

These two metrics are supposed to measure how strong a hand is, i.e. what contracts we can expect to make with it. Keep this in mind when counting points: a common example is ♠KQJ10x ♥Axxx ♦xxx ♣K, which technically has 13 hcp and 15 points, but might be worth as little as ♠KQJ10x ♥Axxx ♦xxx ♣x, or possibly as much as ♠KQJ10x ♥Axxx ♦xxx ♣A; we say the singleton king is of 'unknown value.' Similarly, ♠KQ109 ♥KQ109 ♦Q109 ♣109 has 12 hcp, but the 10's and 9's may add significantly more to the playing value. Our point count can even change from one bid to the next: if we open one spade holding ♠KJ10xx ♥Qx ♦Kx ♣AJxx and partner responds with two clubs, the fact that we have a big club fit with partner significantly increases the power of our hand.

Often the meaning of our bids can depend on the 'seat' we are in: the first person to bid at the table is the 'first seat,' the person to his left the 'second seat,' and so on for the third and fourth seats. Opening bids from the third or fourth seat have different meaning from those in the first or second, mainly because if a third or fourth seat player is the first to bid, his partner has already passed, so he would have extra information about partner's hand. The usual bids are all the same, except there are some partner can no longer make (since he has a passed hand), so those bids take on new meaning.

When playing bridge at a club or a tournament, each hand comes with 'vulnerability:' each team is either vulnerable or not, and the scoring works differently for vulnerable teams. Simply put, being vulnerable raises the stakes: certain contracts worth more, but the opponents score more points if you fail to make your contract. One can tell which teams (if any) are vulnerable by looking at the 'board' (a tray the cards come in): the vulnerable hands will have red tape or red lettering, while the non-vulnerable hands are marked white. Playing the non-vulnerable side versus a vulnerable pair, it is common to say we are 'white on red,' or for the other pair, 'red on white,' and similarly in the other combinations. Vulnerability changes the way we bid in practice, and we will point out the most important occurrences.

A 'forcing' bid is one that requires our partner bid something other than pass. A simple example is the 2♣ opening bid, which shows any hand with 22+ points: assuming there is no interference from the other side, partner is required to keep the auction alive. Any other kind of bid is deemed 'non-forcing.' A 'signoff' bid is a bid we want partner to pass, so we can play that contract. There are special contracts that earn bonus points: the 'game' contracts are 3NT, 4♥/♠, and 5♦/♣, 'small slam' is any 6 level contract, and 'grand slam' is any 7 level contract.

We will sometimes refer to the distribution of a hand, i.e. the number of cards in each suit: the notation 5-3-3-2, for example, means the hand has 5 spades, 3 hearts, 3 diamonds, and 2 clubs. A

‘fit’ refers to a suit in which we and partner have 8 cards combined. So a 4-4 fit is a suit in which both our hand and partner’s hand have four cards. A ‘balanced hand’ is one with no voids, no singletons, and at most one doubleton, so one of the three types 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-3, or 5-3-3-2 (in any suit order). Any other hand distribution is said to be ‘unbalanced.’ Sometimes we use the word ‘strain’ to refer to one of the four suits or notrump: e.g. ‘trying to find the best strain.’ Even these definitions can be bent sometimes: for example, if we have a six card suit, and partner has only one card in that suit, we might still call it a fit, if for example we hold ♠AKQJ109 in spades; on the flipside, if we hold ♠65432 in spades, we might not always count this as a 5 card suit.

## Common bids and bidding problems

If you, reader, are a computer, then you can skip this section: the logical tree for bidding provided at the end of this document should be enough to get you through any non-competitive auction (up to a point). For all my human readers, I’ll discuss some common sequences and the thinking that goes into a typical auction. Here’s where the scoring becomes important: because game and slam contracts offer big score bonuses, it is of primary importance to decide whether game is possible or not. In a non-competitive auction, the driving line of thought is the following: Do partner and I have a fit in a major suit? Can partner and I make a game contract? This also reveals why majors are prized over minors: to make a game contract in a major suit, one only has to play at the 4 level, while to make game in a minor suit, one must play at the 5 level. Similarly, 3NT often trumps both: when we don’t have a fit for partner but have enough points for game, often we’ll gamble on being able to make 3NT. Lacking enough strength to shoot for game, our next job is to get out in as cheap of a partscore as we can, i.e. the lowest level we can stop at in a suit we are reasonably happy playing in. This is because the scoring does not reward overtricks in partscores very much: the difference between making any two partscores is usually negligible.

### Types of auctions

#### **Simple suit raises**

These are auctions that begin with 1M by opener and 2/3/4M by responder (with no interference from the opponents), or 1m, 2/3/4m. Once responder raises opener’s suit, they have found a suit fit, so the only thing left to decide is if they have enough strength for game. Since 25 points between the pair is our standard for game (read 27 for minor game), opener judges his strength relative to what responder has shown, and passes with no chance of game, makes an invitational bid (e.g. in the auction 1♠, 2♠, 3♠, the last bid would be invitational to 4♠) with a possibility of game, and bids game if he knows his pair has 25 (resp. 27) or more points between them.

In some situations, other bids can be used as invitational: for example, in the sequence 1♠, 2♠, a bid of 3 of a different suit shows strength in that suit, and may help responder better judge the playing strength of his hand. For example, say opener holds ♠AKQ10x ♥AK109 ♦xx ♣xx, and responder has ♠Jxx ♥109876 ♦Axx ♣Qx, so the bidding starts 1♠, 2♠. When opener makes a rebid of 3♥, responder is happy that he has heart length: he might expect some extra tricks to come from that suit, so he might reasonably bid 4♠. If responder doesn’t like hearts, he just bids 3♠. Note that the 3♥ bid may also show slam interest.

We have noted that 3NT is often better than 5m: more on this later. Note that in the auction

1♦, 2♦, opener might think it will be better to play in 3NT than in 5♦: thus a bid of 2NT would be invitational, showing more interest in notrump than in a diamond game; a bid of 3♦ would be invitational in either game, asking responder to choose whichever game he prefers (or pass).

### Discovering a major fit at the 1 level

Our bidding system gives the bidders as many chances as possible to find a 4-4 major fit. We are thinking of auctions that begin like one of the following: 1m, 1M, or 1♦, 1♥, 1♠, or 1♣, 1♦, 1M, or the space-saving auction 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, 1♠. By not opening a major suit, opener has denied having a 5 card major (except in some very rare extreme cases, such as a hand with 7 clubs and 5 spades). So we set about looking for a fit for his four card major (if he has one). Responder presents his major suits, usually bidding the longer suits first: so if responder holds ♠Axxxx ♥KQxx ♦xx ♣xx, over opener's 1♣ opening, responder should bid 1♠, skipping 1♥, so that if responder has a chance to bid it later, opener will know he is 4-4 at least in the majors, with longer spades than hearts. If his majors are the same length, responder should bid them up the line, i.e. bid the lower one first. When a fit is found, i.e. one bidder has introduced a suit and the other has raised it, we revert to the same rules as over suit raises (the previous auction type): further raises or new suits are invitational to game. Note that in the example above, responder may never get a chance to bid his 4 card ♥ suit, if say the auction goes 1♣, 1♠, 1NT; responder should pass, holding only 9 points. With the same distribution and 10+ points, it would be okay to bid 2♥ over 1NT, showing 4 hearts; note that this also gives opener the chance to bid 2♠, showing 'secondary support,' i.e. exactly 3 spades, in hope of finding a 5-3 spade fit. (Again, more on this later.)

In the author's experience, a typical auction ends in 1NT: opener often has a balanced 12-14 hand, responder with a balanced 6-9 point hand with a 4 card major, and the auction goes 1m, 1M, 1NT or 1m, 1M, 1♠, 1NT. It is important to be comfortable playing in 1NT, because this bidding system often lands there. (This in contrast to the other widely used bidding system, 2/1, which is often pushed past the 1NT contract by employing a forcing 1NT response.) The contract can be difficult and unlike other levels of notrump, in large part because we often bid there with around or even less than half the total points in the deck. But it can also be very rewarding: often 1NT will make overtricks while pairs in two level suited contracts have gone down.

### Other ways to find major fits; how and when to stop looking for one

When responder holds 6-9 points, often 4-4 major fits will go undiscovered; the previous panel gives one example, and there a few similar cases. Because we treat new suits as forcing in general, pushing to the 2-level to search for a major fit can be dangerous with only a minimum hand. Thus, if opener makes a minimum rebid after responder bids a major suit, and responder is holding a minimum hand, i.e. 6-9 points, it is usually best to pass. We're thinking of auctions such as 1m, 1M, 1NT/2m; 1♥, 1♠, 1NT, or 1M, 1♠, 1NT, 2M; and where responder holds 6-9 points and 5-3-3-2, 4-4-4-1, 4-3-3-3, or 4-4-3-2 distribution. When responder has a more unbalanced hand, it can be better to rebid: perhaps the most common example is a weak hand with a six card major, such as ♠AKQxxx ♥xxx ♦xx ♣xx, and the auction goes 1m, 1♠, 1NT. Now it is probably better for responder to rebid 2♠, a signoff bid, showing six spades and a minimum hand, showing a preference to play in 2♠ over 1NT. Two-suited or three-suited hand shapes such as 5-5-2-1 or 5-4-4-0 also often qualify for a retreat from notrump, either back to opener's suit with 6-7hcp, or a forcing new suit bid with the upper end of a weak hand, i.e. 8-9. For example: responder holds ♠Axxxx ♥xxxx ♦Qxxx ♣\_, and the auction goes 1♦, 1♠, 1NT. Responder should bid 2♦ in this case, a move called 'retreating from notrump.' With a few more points, e.g. ♠AKxxx ♥xxxx ♦Qxxx ♣\_,

responder could lie slightly by making a forcing call of  $2\heartsuit$  with less than 10 points, giving opener a second chance to find a major fit.

With a 10+ point hand, however, it is advisable to continue looking for a major fit, and there are a few ways to do so. A convention in common use is ‘new minor forcing:’ suppose we hold  $\spadesuit AJ109x \heartsuit Kxx \diamond Qxx \clubsuit xx$ . Over opener’s  $1\diamond$  bid, we duly bid  $1\spadesuit$ , and opener responds 1NT. We don’t have six spades, so bidding  $2\spadesuit$  would be a bad move; we could bid 2NT, to invite to game in 3NT. But opener may have 3 spades: how can we discover the 5-3 fit? A  $2\clubsuit$  bid by responder in this sequence would, by our general practices, show 4+  $\clubsuit$ ’s and 10+ points, and be a forcing bid. By convention, we allow responder to bid  $2\clubsuit$  in this case, even without length in clubs, but just as a forcing bid, giving opener the option show secondary support, i.e. bid  $2\spadesuit$  if he has 3 spades. Opener should keep in mind that the  $2\clubsuit$  bid does not promise 5 spades: it shows 10+ points, and either 4+ clubs or 5+ spades (or both).

The principle of new minor forcing applies in general: any time responder has shown a major suit M, if responder bids a previously unbid minor, opener has a chance to show secondary support in M. So in any sequence of the form 1m, 1M, 1NT, 2om, the last bid is a new minor forcing bid. In the auction  $1\diamond, 1\heartsuit, 2NT, 3\clubsuit$ , the last bid can also be taken as a new minor forcing bid, asking opener to bid  $3\spadesuit$  if he has 3 spades. A few things to keep in mind with this system: it is only the *new* minor that can be used, so  $2\diamond$  in the sequence  $1\diamond, 1\spadesuit, 1NT, 2\diamond$  is *not* new minor forcing, since opener has already bid that minor. (Here  $2\diamond$  just shows a weak hand with spades and diamonds, and responder would rather play in  $2\diamond$  than in 1NT.) The convention may still be useful even if it doesn’t find a 5-3 fit: say responder is 4-4-4-1 with  $\spadesuit AKQJ \heartsuit xxx \diamond xxx \clubsuit x$ , and the auction goes  $1\clubsuit, 1\spadesuit, 1NT$ . Now we would rather bid  $2\diamond$  than 2NT; we don’t have a fifth heart, but we have 4 diamonds. If opener rebids 2NT, we might have to sit in that contract; but if he rebids  $2\spadesuit$ , we might judge that spades is a better strain than notrump, even with a 4-3 fit, and decide to play there. [Note: this is not the universal treatment of new minor forcing: for some, the new minor bid must show a five card major suit.]

## The Basics

What follows is a (close to) complete logical tree for bidding up to the game level without interference from the opponents. Each indentation level has the possible options for one of the two bidders; so for example, the first branch below could represent the auction  $1\clubsuit$ ,  $1\spadesuit$ , 1NT, AP, with the opponents always passing, and where AP means ‘all pass,’ i.e. 4 passes in a row. We will use a star \* to denote any forcing bid; any non-forcing bid always has pass as a possible response. Pass is the correct response if none of the other options fit the hand in question. I’ll occasionally put in parentheticals beside some of the bids to indicate the common name of that bid, or some other small note about it. Note that the sequences over  $1\clubsuit$  and  $1\diamondsuit$  are almost identical, as are those over the  $1\heartsuit$  and  $1\spadesuit$ ; a small number of bids are available in one situation and not the other, and a few other bids change meaning slightly. We include both tables for completeness.

### 1 level minor openings

→ $1\clubsuit$ : 12+hcp, 3+  $\clubsuit$ ’s.

→ $1\diamondsuit^*$ : 6+ points, 4+ $\diamondsuit$ ’s.

→1M\*: 4 cards in M.

→1NT: 12-14hcp, no 4 card M.

→ $2\clubsuit$ : 12-15 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M.

→ $2\diamondsuit$ : 12-15 points, 4+ $\diamondsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M. (Single raise)

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand. (Jump in NT)

→ $3\clubsuit$ : 16-18 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M. (Jump rebid)

→ $3\diamondsuit$ : 16-18 points, 4+ $\diamondsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M. (Double raise)

→3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the majors. (Signoff)

→ $1\heartsuit^*$ : 6+ points, 4+ $\heartsuit$ ’s.

→ $1\spadesuit^*$ : 4 $\spadesuit$ ’s.

→1NT: 12-14hcp, no 4 card M.

→ $2\clubsuit$ : 12-15 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M.

→ $2\diamondsuit^*$ : 16-19 points, 4+ $\diamondsuit$ ’s, unbalanced hand, no 4 card M. (Reverse)

→ $2\heartsuit$ : 12-15 points, 4 $\heartsuit$ ’s. (Single raise)

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand. (Jump in NT)

→ $3\clubsuit$ : 16-18 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M.

→ $3\heartsuit$ : 16-18 points, 4 $\heartsuit$ ’s. (Double raise)

→3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)

→ $4\heartsuit$ : 18-19 points, 4 $\heartsuit$ ’s. (Signoff)

→ $1\spadesuit^*$ : 6+ points, 4 $\spadesuit$ ’s.

→1NT: 12-14hcp, no 4 card  $\spadesuit$ ’s.

→ $2\clubsuit$ : 12-15 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 $\spadesuit$ ’s.

→ $2\diamondsuit/\heartsuit^*$ : 16-19 points, 4+cards in suit bid, unbalanced hand, no 4 $\spadesuit$ ’s. (Reverse)

→ $2\spadesuit$ : 12-15 points, 4 $\heartsuit$ ’s. (Single raise)

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand. (Jump in NT)

→ $3\clubsuit$ : 16-18 points, 6+ $\clubsuit$ ’s, no 4 card M.

→ $3\spadesuit$ : 16-18 points, 4 $\heartsuit$ ’s. (Double raise)

→3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)

→ $4\spadesuit$ : 18-19 points, 4 $\spadesuit$ ’s. (Signoff)

→1NT: 6-9hcp, no 4 card M.

- 2♣: 12-15 points, 6+♣'s.
  - 2♦/♥/♠\*: 16-19 points, 4+ cards in the suit bid. (Reverse)
  - 2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.
  - 3NT: Shows a long running minor and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)
  - 2♣: 6-9 points, 5+♣'s, no other 4 card suit.
  - 2♦/♥/♠\*: 16+ points, 4+ cards in the suit bid. (Second suit)
  - 2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.
  - 3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)
  - 2♦/♥/♠\*: 17+ points, 5+ cards in that suit. (Strong jump shift; very rare!)
  - 2NT: 10-11hcp, no 4 card M. (Invitational)
  - 3NT: 15+hcp. (Signoff)
  - 3♣: 10-11hcp, 5+♣'s, no 4 card M. (Invitational)
  - 3NT: 15+hcp. (Signoff)
  - 4♣: 15-16 points. (Invitational to 5♣)
  - 5♣: 17+ points. (Signoff)
  - 3NT: 12-15hcp, no 4 card M. (Signoff)
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- 1♦: 12+hcp, 3+♦'s.
- 1♥\*: 6+ points, 4+♥'s.
- 1♠\*: 4♠'s.
- 1NT: 12-14hcp, no 4 card M.
- 2♣\*: 4+♣'s, no 4 card M. (Second suit)
- 2♦: 12-15 points, 6+♦'s, no 4 card M.
- 2♥: 12-15 points, 4♥'s. (Single raise)
- 2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand. (Jump in NT)
- 3♦: 16-18 points, 6+♦'s, no 4 card M.
- 3♥: 16-18 points, 4♥'s. (Double raise)
- 3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)
- 4♥: 18-19 points, 4♥'s. (Signoff)
- 1NT: 6-9hcp, no 4 card M.
- 2♣\*: 4+♣'s, no 4 card M. (Second suit)
- 2♦: 12-15 points, 6+♦'s.
- 2♥/♠\*: 16-19 points, 4+ cards in the suit bid. (Reverse)
- 2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.
- 3NT: Shows a long running minor and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)
- 2♣\*: 10+ points, 5+♣'s, no 4 card M.
- 2♦: 12-15 points, 6+♦'s.
- 2♥/♠\*: 4+ cards in the suit bid. (Second suit)
- 2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.
- 3NT: Shows a long running minor suit and stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)
- 2♦: 6-9 points, 5+♦'s, no 4 card M. (Single raise)
- 2♥/2♠/3♣\*: 17+ points, 5+ cards in that suit. (Strong jump shift; very rare!)
- 2NT: 10-11hcp, no 4 card M. (Invitational to 3NT)
- 3NT: 15+hcp. (Signoff)

→3♦: 10-11hcp, 5+♣'s, no 4 card M. (Invitational)

→3NT: 15+hcp. (Signoff)

→4♦: 15-16 points. (Invitational to 5♦)

→5♦: 17+ points. (Signoff)

→3NT: 12-15hcp, no 4 card M. (Signoff)

## 1 level major openings

→1♥: 12+hcp, 5+♥'s.

→1♠\*: 6+ points, 4+♠'s.

→1NT: 12-14hcp, no 4♠'s.

→2m\*: 4+ cards in suit bid. (Second suit)

→2♥: 12-15 points, 6+♥'s.

→2♠: 12-15 points, 4♥'s. (Single raise)

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand. (Jump in NT)

→3♥: 16-18 points, 6+♥'s.

→3♠: 16-18 points, 4♠'s.

→3NT: Long running suit, stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)

→4♠: 18-19 points, 4♠'s. (Signoff)

→1NT: 6-9hcp, no 4 card ♠'s, no 3 card ♥'s.

→2m\*: 4+ cards in suit bid. (Second suit)

→2♥: 12-15 points, 6+♥'s.

→2♠: 16-19 points, 4+♠'s, unbalanced hand. (Reverse)

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.

→3NT: Long running suit, stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)

→2♣\*: 10+ points, 4+♣'s, no 4 card ♠'s, no 3 card ♥'s.

→2♦\*: 4+♦'s. (Second suit)

→2♥: 12-15 points, 6+♥'s.

→2♠: 16-19 points, 4+♠'s, unbalanced hand. (Reverse)

→2NT: 12-14, balanced hand. (Invitational to 3NT)

→3♣: 12-14 points, 4+♣'s. (Invitational)

→4♣: 15-16 points, 4+♣'s. (Invitational to 5♣)

→2♦\*: 10+ points, 4+♦'s, no 4 card ♠'s, no 3 card ♥'s.

→2♥: 12-15 points, 6+♥'s.

→2♠: 16-19 points, 4+♠'s, unbalanced hand. (Reverse)

→2NT: 12-14, balanced hand. (Invitational to 3NT)

→3♣\*: 4+♣'s. (Second suit)

→3♦: 12-14 points, 4+♦'s. (Invitational)

→4♦: 15-16 points, 4+♦'s. (Invitational to 5♦)

→2♥: 6-9 points, 3+♥'s. (Simple raise)

→2♠/3♣/3♦\*: 4+ cards in suit bid, 15-16 points. (Game try suit; invitational)

→3♥: 16-18 points. (Invitational to 4♥)

→2♠/3♣/3♦\*: 17+ points, 5+ cards in that suit. (Strong jump shift; very rare!)

→2NT: 12+ points, 3+♥'s (Jacoby 2NT)

→3m/3♠\*: Singleton or void in suit bid.

→3♥\*: 15+ points.

→3NT\*: Balanced, 15+ points.

→4m/4♠\*: 4+ cards in suit bid. (Side suit)

→4♥: 12-14 points.

→3♥: 10-11 points, 3+♥'s. (Invitational)

→4♥: 15+ points.

- 3NT: 12-15hcp. (Signoff)
  - 4♥: 5-11 points, 5+♥'s. (Signoff)
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→1♠: 12+hcp, 5+♥'s.

→1NT: 6-9hcp, no 3 card ♠'s.

→2♣/♦/♥\*: 4+ cards in suit bid. (Second suit)

→2♠: 12-15 points, 6+♠'s.

→2NT: 18-19hcp, balanced hand.

→3NT: Long running suit, stoppers in the other suits. (Signoff)

→2♣\*: 10+ points, 4+ ♣'s, no 3 card ♠'s.

→2♦/♥\*: 4+♦'s. (Second suit)

→2♠: 12-15 points, 6+♠'s.

→2NT: 12-14, balanced hand, no 4 card ♥'s. (Invitational to 3NT)

→3♣: 12-14 points, 4+♣'s. (Invitational)

→4♣: 15-16 points, 4+♣'s. (Invitational to 5♣)

→2♦\*: 10+ points, 4+♦'s, no 4 card ♠'s, no 3 card ♥'s.

→2♥: 4+♥'s. (Second suit)

→2♠: 12-15 points, 6+♠'s.

→2NT: 12-14, balanced hand. (Invitational to 3NT)

→3♣\*: 4+♣'s. (Second suit)

→3♦: 12-14 points, 4+♦'s. (Invitational)

→4♦: 15-16 points, 4+♦'s. (Invitational to 5♦)

→2♥\*: 10+ points, 5+♥'s, no 3 card ♠'s.

→2♠: 12-15 points, 6+♠'s.

→2NT: 12-14hcp, no 3 card ♥'s. (Invitational to 3NT.)

→3♥: 12-14 points, 3+ ♥'s. (Invitational to 4♥)

→3NT/4♥: 15+ points. (Signoff)

→2♠: 6-9 points, 3+♠'s. (Simple raise)

→3m/3♥\*: 4+ cards in suit bid, 15-16 points. (Game try suit; invitational)

→3♠: 16-18 points. (Invitational to 4♠)

→2NT: 12+ points, 3+♠'s (Jacoby 2NT)

→3m/3♥\*: Singleton or void in suit bid.

→3♠\*: 15+ points.

→3NT\*: Balanced, 15+ points.

→4m/4♥\*: 4+ cards in suit bid. (Side suit)

→4♠: 12-14 points.

→3m/3♥\*: 17+ points, 5+ cards in that suit. (Strong jump shift; very rare!)

→3♠: 10-11 points, 3+ ♥'s. (Invitational to 4♠)

→4♠: 15+ points. (Signoff)

→3NT: 12-15hcp. (Signoff)

→4♠: 5-11 points, 5+♠'s. (Signoff)

## Strong notrump openings and the 2♣ opening bid

→1NT: 15-17hcp, balanced hand.

→2♣\*: 8+hcp, at least one 4 card M. (Stayman)

→2♦: No 4 card M.

→2NT: 8-9hcp. (Invitational)

→2M: 4+ cards in suit bid.

→2NT: 8-9hcp, 4 cards in oM.

→3M: 9 points, 4 cards in M. (Invitational to 4M)

→3NT: 10+hcp, 4 cards in oM.

→4M: 10+hcp, 4 cards in M.

→2♦/♥\*: 5+♥'s/5+♠'s. (Major transfer)

→2M: M=♥ if partner bid 2♦, M=♠ if partner bid 2♥. (Accepting the transfer)

→2NT: 8-9hcp, 5+ cards in M. (Invitational)

→3M: 8-9 points, 6+ cards in M.

→4M: 10+ points, 6+ cards in M.

→2♠/3♣\*: 5+♣'s/5+♦'s. (Minor transfer)

→3m: m=♣ if partner bid 2♠, m=♦ if partner bid 3♣. (Accepting the transfer)

→3NT: 10+ points. (Signoff, prefers to play in 5m with a fit)

→4m: 6+ cards in m, 9-10 points. (Invitational to 5m)

→5m: 6+ cards in m, 11+ points. (Signoff)

→2NT: 8-9hcp. (Invitational)

→3NT: 16-17hcp. (Signoff)

→3NT: 10+hcp. (Signoff)

- 2NT: 20-21hcp, near-balanced hand (balanced, or 5-4-2-2 shape.)
  - 3♣\*: 4+hcp, at least one 4 card M. (Stayman)
    - 3♦: no 4 card M.
    - 3NT: 4-10hcp.
    - 3M: 4+ cards in suit bid.
      - 3NT: 4-10hcp, 4 cards in oM.
      - 4M: 4-10hcp, 4 cards in M.
  - 3♦/♥\*: 5+♥'s/5+♠'s. (Major transfer)
    - 3M: M=♥ if partner bid 2♦, M=♠ if partner bid 2♥. (Accepting the transfer)
      - 3NT: 4+hcp.
      - 4M: 4+hcp, 6+ cards in M. (Signoff)
    - 3NT: 4+hcp. (Signoff)
- 2♣\*: 22+ points, any hand.
  - 2♦\*: 8 or fewer hcp. (Negative, waiting)
    - 2M: 5+ cards in that suit.
      - 3♣: 2 or fewer hcp. (Second negative)
    - 2NT: 22-24hcp, balanced hand. (Responder bids are stayman/transfers over this)
    - 3m: 4+ cards in that suit.
      - 3♦ or 3♥: 2 or fewer hcp. (Second negative; 3♦ if m=♣, 3♥ if m=♦.)
    - 3NT: 25-26hcp, balanced hand.
    - 2M or 3m: 8+hcp, 5+ cards in that suit. (Positive)
    - 2NT: 8+hcp, balanced. (Positive)
- 3NT: 27-28hcp, balanced.
- 4NT: 29-30hcp, balanced.

### Weak opening bids

→2♦/2M: 6 cards in suit bid, 6-10hcp. (Weak & preemptive)

→2NT\*: 15+hcp, balanced hand. (Feature ask: Opener responds at the 3 level by bidding the lowest side suit in which he has an ace or king, or otherwise bidding his 6 card suit.)

→3♦/3M: 3 ♦'s/3 card M. (Further preempt)

→Anything else\*: 15+ points, 5+ cards in that suit.

→4♦/4M: 4♦'s/4 card M, OR 2+ ♦/2+ M, and 17+ points.

→3m/3M: 7 cards in that suit, 6-10hcp. (Weak & preemptive: responses in new suits are forcing; bidding directly to game or slam is signoff.)

→4m: 8 cards in that suit, 6-10hcp. (Weak & preemptive: responses in new suits are forcing; bidding directly to game or slam is signoff.)

→4M: 8 cards in that suit, 6-10hcp. (Preemptive)

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