

This is a “standard” type system, based upon the simple premise that the balance of power is all important in bidding. Most hands belong to* the side that holds it, 21 points or more combined. If we do not enter the bidding with 10 points we risk being shut out on a hand which is rightfully ours. Holding 10 points, a little less if they are “good” points, open the bidding. Make an overcall or a take-out double too but devalue points held in the opponents’ suit. If we wait until we hold more, it will often make partner’s decision whether or not to get involved an impossible one. It is much safer to make this announcement early than later. It is too late after the hand has been scored up. The common, losing gambit, “come in later” is not used. The one- and two-levels are safe and there for the taking, we try make use of them first. It is extremely rare to get a bad score playing in a fit at the two-level, doubled or not. Low-level bidding follows the principle, show longer suits first. When the possibility of slam arises, accurate suit-length information is essential. Residual suit length follows automatically Relay continuation can be incorporated, but even without the system is designed for good slam bidding.

*On perfect bidding and play, the hand belongs to the side which must get the plus score. This is what we mean when we say after noting from the score-card that we have just been robbed, “This was our hand partner.” It is not uncommon that the hand belongs to the pair with fewer than 20 points combined. If you don’t get into the bidding at all you certainly won’t find these. A related term is “bidding par” which means, effectively, the best that the side that does not own the hand can do in the face of perfect opposition bidding. To achieve this may require a sacrifice.

Get into the bidding with all 10 point hands. Suits headed by A or K, count one extra point for each card over four. Open any hand containing AA, AKQ or KKK. Aces and kings are vital to low point count games. If a hand is not worth an opening bid it is not worth an overcall, and vice-versa.

Double on balanced hands, and three-suiters short in the opponents’ suit, containing 10 points outside the bid suit. Double also holding 5431, long minor, but not with other shapes. Do not double just to show a good hand, without the shape requirement.

Overcall showing a five-card or longer suit, on hands containing 10 points outside the bid suit. The only exception to the five-card suit rule is a good four-card suit, biddable at the one-level, with a singleton in an unbid suit.

No invitations. Do not invite game opposite a limited hand, a 1NT opening, rebid or a simple major raise. With invitational values, pass. Only good things can happen! After a simple raise, bids in a new denomination are game forcing. It may be a slam try or it may be a search for a better game contract. A re-raise is pre-emptive.

Positive double. Whatever our opening bid or overcall, double or redouble, by an unpassed hand, of an opponent’s bid over it, is positive. To one-of-any-suit it shows any 12+ points, over 1D/H/S it includes the 10-12 point three-card raise. New suits are NF and deny primary support for a major. After a positive double has been made, doubles are penalty and passes are forcing. By a passed hand it shows 6-9 points with

no clear bid and support for both unbid suits. A similar style applies after an opening bid, a new suit response, and intervention. Game going hands are bid via double, other bids are non-forcing. The support double is not used.

Two over one unconditional Game Force but no traditional gadgetry, 1NT response is natural, not forcing. Two over one by a passed hand shows a five card suit 6-9 points, no primary support for opener's suit. Two over one is not forcing over intervention or by a passed hand.

Recommended treatment in response to 1NT

1NT is 15-17 throughout, including in the balancing seat, 4333, 4432 and 5332 where the five-card suit is a minor.

- 2C is Simple Stayman.
- 2D Gladiator, puppet to 2H for a weak take-out.
- Direct 2H/S is constructive, not forcing.
- 2NT shows a 5+5+ two suiter, diamonds and a major or both majors, just short of game forcing values. 3C over 2NT creates a game force, other replies are correctable.
- 3C shows a similar hand with clubs and a major. 3D is game force, 3H/S correctable.

If the Stayman bidder bids again, a game force has been created.

Over 1NT-2C; 2D-2H

- 2S clubs only, 3334 or 2335 etc.
- 2NT diamonds only 3343 or 2353 etc.
- 3C 3244
- 3D 2344 minimum controls, 0-3.

Over 1NT-2C; 2H-2S or 1NT-2C; 2S-2NT

- 2NT (when possible) four spades
- 3C four clubs
- 3D four diamonds
- 3H 3433 or 4333 minimum controls, 0-3 controls.

Suit openings. Balanced hands outside the range for 1NT, 10-14 points or 18-19 points, are opened 1C. Unless precisely 4441, 1D will show five and if balanced will be 5332. One of a major shows a five-card suit in first or second seat. A good four-card major may be opened in third or fourth seat. Open the higher ranking of two five-card or longer suits and the lowest ranking suit with a three-suiter.

The 2C opening is made on all 20+ point hands except 20-22 points balanced which is opened 2NT. After 2C or 2NT is opened, it is assumed to be our hand, so passes are forcing and doubles for penalty. A 2NT rebid is forcing. 3C is Stayman and 3D/H transfers after 2NT, 2C-2NT and 2C-2D; 2NT.

2D/H/S weak two. A good five- or six-card suit with an ace or king outside at most. Many hands that are opened with a weak two in other styles are opened with a one-bid here. 2NT or double of intervention, is GF other bids NNF, fit-denying over a major.

Avoid the 3-level lacking nine trumps. Distinguish between a 6-9 point three-card raise and a 10-12 point three-card raise at the two-level. Use the positive double, the 2C range-ask, see below, or the cue-raise of an overcall to show the stronger raise. In response to 1C, 1NT shows the 6-9 point four-card raise, 2C the 10-12 point four-card raise.

Jump-raise. Always 4+ card support, 0-9 points, no singleton or void.

Jump raise to four. Always contains a singleton or void, 0-9 points and 0-2 controls. Over 1D, four cards in a major is denied.

2NT response, always a 10-12 point, eight-loser balanced raise to three with an extra trump (to opening one-bids and to simple overcalls and over two-level opposition bidding). Over an opening 1C this bid shows 5+ clubs and is unlimited in strength.

2NT is always forcing in an ongoing auction and invites logical continuation. Fourth suit is often natural, or it may be the beginning of a slam try in one of opener's suits. Opener treats it as a stopper-ask. A new minor is natural although at times it may be convenient to bid a three-card suit. Opener's rebid in a lower-ranking minor is not forcing, a jump rebid promises 5+5+ and is forcing. With a game-going 5+4 shape, opener uses a forcing 2NT. When responder takes out a 1NT rebid into a lower-ranking suit, it is natural and not forcing, it promises 5+ in the first suit and 4+ in the other. It may be quite strong but not strong enough to guarantee game. With good, fitting, cards opener should give strong preference. After a one over one and opener's reverse, 2NT creates a game force, other minimum continuations are not forcing.

Opener's rebids. In uncontested auctions, a new suit at the three-level whether a jump or not shows 5+5+ distribution, game forcing, a jump in opener's own suit promises 6+ and three-card support for partner. A jump rebid of 3NT shows a very good suit and poor support, as does a jump to game in opener's own suit. A 2NT rebid after one over one is game forcing and denies extreme shape. A 2NT rebid over a two-level new suit response is unlimited within the range of 10-19 points. To narrow the range, see "Valuable Gadgets," below.

Splinter raises. Mini-splinters (single jumps or direct cue-bid) show singleton and 3 or 4 controls. Splinters (double jumps or jump cue-bid) void and three controls, 3NT (4C asks for shortage) void and four controls. Over 1H, 3S and 3NT are swapped. Raising responder's one-over-one, minis are 6 or 7 maxis are 5+ controls.

Cue-raise, to an overcall, shows the 10-12 point three-card raise. Of necessity the cue-raise may include any hand which is an absolute game force. (So don't leap to game with your five-card suit, responder promises another bid. Only a return to opener's suit can be passed, confirming the cue-raise.) Opener rebids normally, repeating his suit to show six. With a balanced hand and no stopper, overcaller must bid a three-card suit.

Responding to the take-out double of an opening suit-bid. 2NT promises at least half a stopper and asks about doubler's shape. The cue-bid denies a stopper and asks for one as first priority. Both are game-forcing. Doubler's cue-bid, in reply, shows the three-suiter.

Re-opening. Responder must be free to pass in tempo over intervention, very strong hands with good defence. Opener must re-open except when holding three or more cards in the opponent's suit and a minimum hand. Only a re-opening bid in NT promises extra strength. Double is the bid of choice when opener would welcome a penalty pass.

Balancing. 1NT, 15-17 points, double, 10+ points, and most other actions are unchanged. A jump overcall is strong.

Contested auctions. Double is take-out until a denomination has been agreed. NT is agreed when partner passes or raises it. When partner takes out your NT bid to a suit, that suit is notionally agreed. 1C-1NT agrees clubs. When pass is forcing, following a positive double, a redouble, a 2C or a 2NT opener, double is penalty.

Don over opponents' NT. Over NT opening bids or responses, at all levels, all meanings, double shows both majors and C/D shows that suit plus a major. Major suit overcalls deny four cards in another suit. Minimum clubs is the strong response to double. After a double of 1NT and a 2C, game-forcing, response, a rebid in clubs shows 4414, in diamonds 4441, in hearts 5+ hearts and 4 spades, spades 5+ spades and 4 hearts, NT 5+5+ majors, over further intervention pass shows the denomination below and double shows the last bid.

Two suited overcalls, 5+5+, when both majors, 4+4+ but not 4432.

Over 1H/S

- Cue bid Both minors.
- 2NT Diamonds and the other major
- 3C Clubs and the other major.

Over 1D

- 2D Both majors
- 2NT Spades and clubs
- 3C Hearts and clubs (C=H)

Over 1C

- 2D Both majors
- 2NT Diamonds and a major
- 3C Clubs and a major

Leads, signals and discards. In all three cases, play high from even, lowest from odd. First discard is a count-card in a suit you do not want led. Present count. Suit preference is used only when giving partner a ruff or when partner knows the parity.

4NT and 5NT. Five-ace Blackwood, the fifth ace is the trump king. Jorj replies 5C=0 or 4, 5D=1, 5H=2 without key queen, 5S=3, 5NT 5 with key queen. No agreed suit,

no Blackwood. The cheapest non-sign-off asks for key queen, the next cheapest asks for kings. A queen-ask above the level of five of the agreed suit promises that all five key cards are held. A king ask promises all five and the key queen. A direct 5NT asks for top trump honours, 0123. A 4NT opening asks for specific aces, 5NT=♣A, 6C=2A.

Valuable gadgets.

Modified Wolff 3C sign-off. It is important to be able to rescue a 1C opener when holding a weak hand (3-5 points) and no fit (0-2 clubs). After a probable 2NT rebid responder bids 3C. Opener shows three-card support, without, bids 3D. Responder's rebid of his own suit or a lower ranking one is now non-forcing. A rebid in a higher-ranking suit by responder shows 4-4 when via 3C, otherwise 5+4, in his bid suits, game forcing.

2C range-ask in response to a first or second seat 1D, 1H or 1S bid. Opener replies 2D with all 10-14 point hands, and bids naturally, game-forcing, on the others. Responder's minimum return to opener's suit shows the 10-12 point three-card raise, the other major or 2H when the opening bid was 1D is a game-force relay. Other bids are natural and game-forcing. 2NT shows four cards in the relay suit with long clubs.

3C range-ask after two-over-one 2D or 2H and a 2NT rebid. 2NT is the system rebid on all balanced hands, 5332 shapes, and 5422, 5431 and 5440 shapes with four cards in a suit lower ranking than responder's suit. In reply to 3C the steps are, four cards in clubs, 10-12 points, 13-14 points, 15-17 points, 18-19 points.

2NT and double are constantly used to create a game force instead of the space-wasteful cue-bid. These bids are used to distinguish a game-going action from a competitive one. Where a cue bid is used it has a specific meaning.