

Weak Openings

Weak Opening Options

The following methods have all been played in SCRAPE and have various merits discussed below. "Ekrens" refers to the Norwegian opening bid based on a weak hand with both Majors. "Multi" refers to a 2 opening, which may be based on a weak two in either Major. "Tartan" refers to a 2M opening based on a five-card Major suit and an unspecified Minor suit.

Style	1	2	2	2	2
1	Diamonds	Clubs	Ekrens	Weak	Weak
2	Clubs	Ekrens	Diamonds	Weak	Weak
3	Diamonds	Clubs	Weak Hearts	Ekrens	Weak
4	Diamonds	Clubs	Multi	Ekrens	Tartan

Style 1 is the most straightforward and normal. Style 2 increases the probability of finding the best Major suit strain after the Ekrens opening by allowing the 2-2 -2M auctions, and also allows for cheap Spade invitations. This comes at the cost of greatly reducing the frequency of 1 -2 auctions and so forcing 1 -1NT auctions on a wider range of hands, as well as requiring the relay over the natural 2 opening to be 2 which eliminates the natural constructive Heart bid. Experience suggests that given the light SCRAPE opening bids (which reduce the frequency of Ekrens openings), the gain cases for the Ekrens 2 are too infrequent to be worth catering for. Opener has to have a significant preference when responder has no preference in order for the 2-2 -2M-P auctions to arise and show a gain. Style 3 reduces the frequency and severity of penalties after the Ekrens opening by opening in Hearts, while reducing the effectiveness of the weak Hearts opening by restricting the number of hands that can afford to open 2 with that description. For those who like the Multi opening, Style 4 is a reasonable attempt to treat many hand types in a sound and sane manner.

The inveterate tinker will notice that other combinations are possible, including those with a Multi 2, and a "good-preempt" 2 opening in combination with an Ekrens 2 and Multi 2 .

General

Usually 15-17OP is the expectation for these openings (Usually 15-19OP in third seat) or with slightly stronger hands that are well-suited to the description. For a description of their basic requirements, see the Preliminaries (See: **Preliminaries**).

Responding to Ekrens (Weak both Majors)

Major-suit bids are not constructive and tend to be based on considerations of the Law of Total Tricks. Opener may act again only with unexpected extra distribution. After a 2 opening, 2 is available to request that opener choose his better (longer) Major suit, after which responder's re-preference to Spades or Spade raise is invitational. 2NT is a values-based inquiry, either invitational or better with a fit, or game-forcing without a known fit. 4 asks opener to bid the suit below his longer (or better if equal) suit (i.e. transfer). 4 asks opener to bid his longer (or better) suit.

In competition, doubles are penalties, 4 and 4 by responder at his first opportunity are identical to 2 -4/4 , and 4NT by responder is a Minor-suit takeout. After a double of the

opening bid, redouble denies tolerance to play in that denomination and pass shows tolerance to play that denomination (5+ where opener has opened 2♣ or 2♦). After pass or redouble, opener can act as his hand suggests, bidding 2♥ with four cards or maybe two high honours to three cards.

After 2♣ / ♠ -2NT (Ekrens)

Considerations of "minimum" or "maximum" are based on shapeliness, suit quality and honour location for Major-suit contracts and do vary with vulnerability and position. For example, in first seat at all vulnerable, KTxxx Q8xx Jx xx is a minimum hand, but in third seat at favourable vulnerability, K98xxx QTxxx x x is a maximum hand despite its 15OP.

3♣ Minimum hand, somewhat apologetic.

3♥ 4♥ 4♠, maximum hand.

3♦ 4♦ 5+, maximum hand.

3♠ 5+ 4♠, maximum hand.

3NT 5+ 5+, maximum hand.

After a 3♣ response, responder continues to force with 3♥ (see below). Any other bid after the initial 3♣ response is natural and non-forcing.

After non-3♣ responses, Major-suit bids are to play, 3NT is to play, 4♣ or 4♦ is forcing with a good 6+ suit, 4NT is RKCB for **both** Major suits (see below) others are natural.

After 2♣ / ♠ -2NT-3♣-3♦ (Ekrens)

3♥ 4♥ 4♠ (3♣ inquires for 5+♥, then 3NT denies)

3♦ 5+ 4♠

3NT 5+ 5+♠

RKCB for Both Majors

At most a hand could have two of the six key cards and one Major-suit Queen, so the most useful and frequent cases are where one key card is held. Hence:

5♣ 1 key card, 5♥ asks for Queens with step responses for 0, 1 or 2 Queens. After the 1-Queen response, 5NT asks which Queen, with 6♣=Q♣ and 6♦=Q♦.

5♥ 0 key cards, 5♣ asks for Queens with step responses for 0, 1 or 2 Queens. After the 1-Queen response, 6♣ asks which Queen, with 6♥=Q♥ and 6♦=Q♦.

5♦ 2 key cards with 0 Queens.

5♠ 2 key cards with 1 Queen, 5NT asks which Queen, with 6♣=Q♣ and 6♦=Q♦.

Responding to 2♥ Multi

Major suit responses at the two- and three-levels are correctable, showing tolerance to play in the contract named if opener holds the suit responder has bid, or higher if opener corrects. A 2♣ or 2♦ response may be based on a hand that intends to 2NT is a values-based enquiry. 3♣ and 3♦ are natural, non-forcing but constructive. A bid of 4♣ asks opener to bid the suit below his Major (i.e. transfer) whereas 4♥ asks opener to bid their suit.

In competition, doubles are penalties, 4 \heartsuit and 4 \spadesuit by responder at his first opportunity are identical to 2 \heartsuit -4 \heartsuit /4 \spadesuit , and 4NT by responder is a Minor-suit takeout. After a double of the opening bid, redouble denies tolerance to play in that denomination and pass shows tolerance to play that denomination. After pass or redouble, opener can act as his hand suggests.

After 2 \heartsuit -2NT (Multi)

Opener responds 3 \heartsuit or 3 \spadesuit with a good Heart or Spade weak two respectively, and three of his suit otherwise. After a 3 \heartsuit or 3 \spadesuit response:

Responding to Weak Hearts

Heart-suit bids are not constructive and tend to be based on considerations of the Law of Total Tricks. Opener may act again only with unexpected extra distribution. 2NT is a constructive inquiry, either invitational or better with a fit, or game-forcing without a known fit. 2 \heartsuit , 3 \heartsuit and 3 \spadesuit are natural and non-forcing, however they are constructive and are expecting a raise by opener with a fit. 3 \heartsuit , 4 \heartsuit and 4 \spadesuit are splinters with slam interest.

In competition, doubles are generally penalties, and 4NT by responder is RKCB for Hearts.

If the opening bid of 2 \heartsuit is doubled, then redouble denies tolerance for Hearts and asks opener to consider all three alternate suit denominations, but 2NT asks opener to choose his preferred Minor suit. New suit bids remain non-forcing and constructive. Similarly if the opening bid was 2 \spadesuit showing Hearts then redouble denies Diamond tolerance in a hand with no clear bid; trap hands are not precluded!

If the opening bid is overcalled, then double is for penalties, 2NT (if available) is an invitation in Hearts, new suits and jumps in new suits are fit-showing. Jumps to four of the other Major are to play. Cuebids show strong raises to game.

If the opponents overcall 3 \heartsuit , then double by responder can have two meanings, depending on what is shown by the cuebid. If 3 \heartsuit requests a stopper for a running-trick 3NT or shows general strength then responder's double is lead-directing with at least one of the top three honours to at least two cards. If 3 \heartsuit shows a two-suited hand, or has an unknown meaning, then double shows an offensive raise to 4 \heartsuit and suggests a five-level sacrifice. Note the corresponding structure for 2 \heartsuit is slightly different.

Responding to Weak Spades

Spade-suit bids are not constructive and tend to be based on considerations of the Law of Total Tricks. Opener may act again only with unexpected extra distribution. 2NT is a constructive inquiry, either invitational or better with a fit, or game-forcing without a known fit. 3 \heartsuit , 3 \spadesuit and 3 \clubsuit are natural and non-forcing. 4 \heartsuit , 4 \spadesuit and 4 \clubsuit are splinters with slam interest.

In competition, doubles are generally penalties, and 4NT by responder is RKCB for Spades.

If the opening bid of 2 \spadesuit is doubled, then redouble denies tolerance for Spades and asks opener to consider all three alternate suit denominations, but 2NT asks opener to choose his preferred Minor suit. New suit bids remain non-forcing and constructive.

If the opening bid of 2 is overcalled, then double is for penalties, new suits and jumps in new suits are fit-showing. Jumps to four of the other Major are to play. Cuebids show strong raises to game.

If the opponents overcall 3, then double by responder can have two meanings, depending on what is shown by the cuebid. If 3 requests a stopper for a running-trick 3NT or shows general strength or is undiscussed, then responder's double is lead-directing with at least one of the top three honours to at least two cards. If 3 shows a two-suited hand, or has an unknown meaning, then double shows an offensive raise to 4 and suggests a five-level sacrifice. Note the corresponding structure for 2 is slightly different.

After 2 -2NT or 2 -2NT (Weak Major)

- 3□/3 Shows any hand with at least four cards in the suit bid. Responder may issue an invitation to 4M by reverting to 3M, force to game in the unbid suits by bidding them, choose a game to play, set the Minor suit for slam purposes by raising it to the four-level, or bid 4NT RKCB for opener's Major.
- 3M Shows any hand with 5332 distribution. New suits are natural and game-forcing, game bids are to play and 4NT is RKCB for opener's Major.
- 3OM Shows a hand with a 6-card suit, but not good enough for a 3NT response. New suits are natural and game-forcing, game bids are to play and 4NT is RKCB for opener's Major.
- 3NT Good 6-card suit headed by three out of four top honours. Responder's 4-level suits are natural and game-forcing, 4NT is not defined.

Responding to 2NT Minors

Minor-suit bids are not constructive and tend to be based on considerations of the Law of Total Tricks. Major-suit bids are forcing, looking for doubleton support (3NT denies). 4 and 4 are RKCB for **Clubs** and **Diamonds** respectively (hands that want to play 4 or 4 start with 3 or 3 respectively). 4NT asks for opener's better Minor.