

Wspólny Język 2005 (Polish Standard)

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Introduction

The WJ bidding system is earning increasingly greater popularity throughout the world. Surprising it has happened in times when Polish pairs are not so dominant in international competition as they were in the not so distant past. WJ has gained a following thanks to internet bridge. Polish bridge players wishing to take advantage of this form of the game or foreign competitions (as well as partners), should learn the bidding system known abroad as the “Polish Club”. The world’s top players are already familiar with the Polish system. The many-time American champion Jill Meyers in the widely-distributed magazine “ACBL Bulletin” when polled on the most useful bridge convention, offered not Blackwood or splinters, but “Polish Two-suiters” – 2♥ and 2♠ openings to show 5-5 hands, the “natural” version of the Wilkosz convention adopted by Polish internationals (due to conventional restrictions).

WJ05 has ambitions to become popular and accepted outside of Poland. Treatments not sanctioned in international tournaments (such as the Wilkosz 2♦ opening) or undesirable for natural bidders (such as e.g. the complicated definition of the WJ2000 1♦ opening) have been swapped out for methods easier to adopt (“Polish Two-suiters” and the 4-crd 1♦ opening, respectively).

Some prior weaknesses have been eliminated in WJ05 which until now nobody has seriously fought to change, such as the space-wasting 1♣-3N (when opener doesn’t have the 12-14 hand).

A bidding system cannot stay the same forever. Some treatments just have not stood the test of time. Virtually no top Polish pair plays classic odwrotka (4-4-5-5) or Namyats (4♣ opening transferring to ♥, 4♦ to ♠). This cannot be a coincidence – so we have followed in their footsteps. Important conventions have become favored by almost the whole bridge world, like RKC 1430 and Exclusion Blackwood. Why hold out against these?

In the WJ05 text, I have managed to correct certain errata which had crept into WJ2000, brought to my attention by helpful readers.

Unlike versions WJ95 and WJ2000, there was no bidding poll in advance of publication this time. I am mainly interested in meeting the above-mentioned goals without making a revolution in well-accepted and functional methods.

Bridge Terms

[a mixture of common terms, and others described eventually in the main text]

The Main Differences Between WJ05 and WJ2000

Openings

1♦ opening - 4+ cards

The WJ2000 1♦ was opened with either 5+ cards, or 4+ cards if 3-suited or with 5 clubs. The 2005 version promotes a simpler definition. It shows 4+ cards (like in the original WJ95). I think there are several good reasons for this change:

1. With the previous agreement responder didn’t know whether he could raise partner with 3 diamonds for fear of standing opposite a bad 4 cards. As a result he had to assume a conservative stance, assuming that opener may have 4 cards and raise only with 4 cards himself.

2. One could say that a 1♦ opening always has 5+ cards (like 1♥ and 1♠) – but then unbalanced hands with 4 diamonds would not be biddable.
3. Thanks to the 4-crd 1♦ opening, we lessen the ambiguity of the 1♣ opening.
4. Playing this version is easy to understand for new WJ-players; beginners won't be forced to learn a complicated opening definition, and foreign bridge players see something nearer to what they are used to.

2♦ opening – Multi (weak with ♥ or ♠)

We bid a fond farewell to good old Wilkosz. For some time we have fought abroad – to no avail; Wilkosz is not allowed in foreign tournaments and as a result all Polish pairs playing outside of Poland or on the Internet have retired this convention. They use “Polish Two-suiters”: 2♥ (hearts + another), and 2♠ (spades + a minor). However, 2♦ is used as “mini-Multi”: weak with either hearts or spades. To me, this has a lot of merit: avoiding guessing-games in Wilkosz (playing 2♦ with a 3-crd trump fit), the ability to quickly preempt the opponents after a 2-suited opening (e.g. 2♥-[Pass]-4♥), as well as allowing the strong hand to declare opposite a weak two in a major (4♥ with a long heart suit is better played by the other hand – the one with the short hearts, made possible by Multi).

2♥, 2♠ openings

As revealed above, the meanings of the openings have changed – 2♥ shows a 5-5 2-suiter with hearts and another suit (even ♠), and 2♠ shows a 2-suiter with spades and a minor. Wilkosz split between two bids.

4♣, 4♦ openings

We see the retirement of South African Texas (Namyats). 4♣ and 4♦ are put to very good use as natural preempts. Generally opener is sure the hand is too weak and/or unbalanced for 3N (all the more so opposite a passed hand).

Responses

Responses to 1♣

The most important change in this system are the ranges of 1N and 2N responses. WJ05 plays the 2N response as forcing to game (12+) with no 4-crd major or 5-crd minor. The 1N response fills the role as a light invitation, 9(8)-11. Instead, hands with 8 or less HCP and no 4-crd major respond 1♦. Advantages:

1. A 3N response preempts the auction when opener has an unbalanced ♣ hand (15+) or the strong club. In this version, that response is gone – replaced by 2N, saving a whole level of bidding space.
2. We can still find game with 11(10) opposite 14. 1♣ opener with 14, over a 1N response, rebids 2N invitational. So we don't have to stretch a 14 to open 1N (in the 2000 version, the tendency was to open a light 1N, so as not to miss a good contract with 14 opposite 11).
3. The strong club (18+ any distribution) now declares 3N when responder has 7-8 HCP and no major. Hindering the defense and preventing opening leader from leading through strength. Proceeding to play 3N by the other hand tends to attain still another positive gain. Let's look at

1♣	1♦	and	1♣	1N
1N	3N		3N	

In the first case, note the enemy has not interfered at the 1-level (over 1♣), while in the second case, they (if desired) would have to intervene at the 2-level (over 1N). It is very likely the player who passed over 1♣ is not the threat to have the 5-card suit.

Opponents may object that by bidding 1♦ with 7-8 HCP (no longer 1N), we enable the player on the left to indicate a lead against NT. Yes, but this overcall may only serve to warn us against playing 3N without a stopper in the suit.

4. It's difficult to catch the opening side doubled when opener has a weak NT and responder has a negative. Many smart-alecks (myself included) over an opponent's vulnerable WJ2000 1♣ opening are prone to passing with strong balanced hands, and waiting until the auction reaches 1N. The unopposed auction: 1♣-1♦-1♥-1N-Pass, could be doubled since the sequence showed a balanced 17-20 HCP. In WJ05, however, this shows 17-22 HCP and a penalty double is a risky gamble.
5. One meaning is no longer contained within the 1♦ response: 16+ balanced, with which we instead bid 2N now. This is replaced with a different component: 12+ with no major, but not suited for declaring NT (like a weak doubleton major). This switch allows the proper hand to declare NT, and no longer must NT always be played by the balanced hand, when its honor distribution is wrong for playing NT.

Responses to 1♦, 1♥, 1♠

Over 1♦, 1N and 2N show 7-10 and 11-12 HCP. The 3N response to 1♦ has its place (1♦ is totally natural) so there is no reason to give it up. With an unsuitable hand for declaring NT, we just respond a natural, forcing 2♦.

Over an opening 1♥ or 1♠, 2N shows an invitational raise (previously in WJ2000 it showed an invitational or better raise). The basic idea is to quickly distinguish whether game or slam is the goal. In the first case it's usually not good to exchange much information, as it helps the opponents' defense too much. Contracts should be bid chiefly on power (honors and distribution). In the slam zone, without precise information you don't (often) have the tools to reach the proper contract. Tactical strategy (concealing information from the enemy) in a slam search is not as useful because defense against higher contracts is easier (e.g. defending a NT slam requires just finding two Aces together – taking 7 tricks against a 1-level contract requires a great deal of effort.)

Since success in slams depends as much on distribution as good card play, shortness-showing bids have been expanded in use. WJ05 distinguishes 2 types of splinters over a 1♥ and 1♠ opening: weak (3♠ over 1♥, 3N over 1♠) with 9-12 HCP, and strong, 13-16 HCP – shown “naturally”. Thanks to this we don't miss slams when a strong opener is opposite a hand with relatively low strength but side shortness.

2N response to a 2♣ opening

A scheme over a 2♣ opening is proposed which is earning wide popularity, that frankly is difficult to resist. It's based on the observation that it's very rare for a natural 2N response to come along over an opening 2♣. More often with an invite, we have either a 4-crd major (so a 2♦ asking bid is preferred), or a club fit – so we can raise partner's clubs. The new meaning of a 2N response is: “Partner, bid 3♣.” It is 2 possible hands: preemptive with clubs, or a GF 2-suiter without clubs. Besides the tactical aspect (preempts the opponents) there's a sound constructive advantage: 5-5 hands are tough to sort out over a 2♣ opening.

Thanks to this agreement, we gain lots of room: for example we don't have to worry about how to bid strong 1-suiters. We ask with 2♦, and subsequently bid our suit. This always shows a 1-suited hand, since 2-suiters are shown via 2N. As a consequence, immediate 3♥, 3♠ responses lose their reason for being forcing and can be changed to invitational.

Changes in Later Rounds of Bidding

Bubrotka

We've grown accustomed to trusty odwrotka: 4-4, 5-5 - yet it appears that most leading Polish pairs have concluded that it is not the optimal solution. We have as such a new treatment, called *Bubrotka* after its proponent (and author?) Stasia "Bubu" Gołębiowski, which has been popular recently.

Let me just mention that there are several other substitutes for odwrotka "on the market" (in addition to bubrotka we supply an alternative gadget for regular partnerships – nicknamed *odwyrka*) – all are designed to quickly revert to natural bidding.

Continuations over a 1N opening

WJ2000 featured a relay system ("relay Stayman"), but relay bidding hasn't stood the test of time. Probably this is because:

- intricate bidding "trees" are generally a source of expensive mistakes,
- relay bidding makes it impossible to show values in any particular suit,
- relays aren't fun – it is a memory drain, and it doesn't allow responder to use his judgement.

In WJ05 Stayman is limited to just the initial 2♣ response. After that, it's all natural.

Slam bidding

In WJ05, the Blackwood responses are different. 5♣ shows 1 or 4 keycards, 5♦ 0 or 3. The chapter on slam bidding explains the reasons for this change.

A new convention is *Exclusion Blackwood* (popular abroad for years now) – asking for Aces outside of a void suit.

After a 1♦ opening and 2♣, 2♦ responses

Changes result from the 4-crd 1♦ opening. It is necessary therefore in later bidding to sort out all the extra situations when opener has 4 cards, from when he has 5.

Gadgets

We risk adding a few gadgets to the non-competitive auction. I'll call them by the last name of the players who invented them (*Trybully transfers*, *Wesolowski texas*), or developed them (*Gawrys fourth suit forcing*). In selecting the gadgets I applied the following criterium: maximum gain with minimum memory load.

Handling Interference

After a 1M opening and enemy overcall, a jump-raise to the 3-level is preemptive; a cue-bid shows an invitational raise, and 2N shows a GF raise (at least 4-crd support). A natural 2N would instead first double and then bid 2N on the next round.

The invitational-or-better cue-bid was not retained for two reasons. The first is discussed in the section on opening 1♥, 1♠: the theory that game auctions should exchange the least possible information, and slam auctions should communicate as much as possible. The other reason is that it makes life tough with its double-meaning (either invite to game, or forcing), which may result in bad decisions (particularly the ambiguity applying to a most useful agreement – the forcing pass).

Overcalls

Among the new things in this phase of the bidding, the reader can expect a suggested defense to the 2♦ opening (Multi or Wilkosz) and a defense to the weak NT.

Some treatments found in this book are continued untouched from WJ2000. However I've tried to make the booklet an interesting lecture even for those who have already read WJ2000 such as lots of new examples and notably more of the author's advice on how to use WJ in practice.

The Non-Competitive Auction

Summary of Opening Bids

Opening	Meaning	Notes
1♣	1) 12-14 balanced 2) 15+, ♣ 3) 18+, any hand	1) don't have to open all 12's 2) hands too strong for a precision 2♣ opening 3) even GF hands
1♦	12-17, 4+ cards	includes 4♦-5♣ 12-14 HCP
1♥, 1♠	11-17, 5+ cards	
1NT	15-17	
2♣	Precision	(11)12-14(15) 6♣ or 5♣-4M
2♦	6-11, Multi	like a weak 2 in either major
2♥	6-11, 5♥ + 5 other	
2♠	6-11, 5♠ + 5 other	
2N	6-11, minors (5-5)	
3 suit	preempt	7-card suit
3N	<i>gambling</i>	solid 7-crd minor, nothing else
4♣, 4♦	natural	

The non-competitive auction is described in order of opening bids – except for the 1♣ opening which is discussed at the very end.

The 1♦ Opening

1♦ shows at least 4 diamonds (one could decide to open 1♣ with a weak 4-crd diamond suit and a balanced hand), 12-17 HCP. [*the agreement of which minor to open with (2-3)-4♦-4♣ cannot be deduced from the text or any examples – DJN*]

We open 1♦ with 4♦-5♣, 12-14 HCP. This has an effect on other openings. With 15+ HCP and 5+♣ we open 1♣ and rebid clubs (but we can still have 4♦), and with weak unbalanced club hands we open 2♣ - but this denies the variant with 4 diamonds and 5 clubs.

With balanced 15-17 hands with 4-5 diamonds we open 1N, so this variant is excluded from the 1♦ opening.

1♥, 1♠ responses

The 1♥ and 1♠ responses to 1♦ are natural. They show in principle 7+ HCP and 4+ cards. Of course it can be a bit light (but we don't recommend this over a 1♣ opening), such as for example responding 1♠ on KJT5432 and out (over any rebid by opener, just rebid 2♠ non-forcing), or responding light with a diamond fit (we can hinder the enemy auction, and still get out in diamonds). Avoid "saving" partner with short diamonds and a weak hand – better to pass and worst-case play in a bad fit than to get doubled later after stopping too high.

Continuations over a 1M response

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
1N

Opener's rebid shows a balanced hand without 4-crds support, nor 4♠ in the case of a 1♥ response. It doesn't specify diamond length – can be 4 or 5.

If responder is vitally interested in the length of opener's diamonds, then he must go the round-a-bout way using Magister (discussed later), e.g.

1♦ 1♥
1N 2♣
2♦ 2N
3♦

2♦ shows a minimum opener without 3♥. 3♦ shows 5 diamonds.

Note:

1♦ 1♥
1♠ 2♣

is not Magister, but fourth-suit forcing. Continuations revolve around showing or denying a stopper in the 4th suit (clubs) as well as information on the number of diamonds:

2♦ = 5♦, minimum
2♥ = 3♥ (only 4♦, or 5♦ and a minimum)
2♠ = 5♦, maximum
2N = 4♦, ♣ stopper (at worst xxx)
3♣ = 4♣
3♥ = 4351 good opening

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
2♣

These sequences show 5♦-4♣ 12-17 HCP, or 4♦-5♣ with 12-14 HCP. For more info on the minor distribution, responder can go through the fourth suit. Then opener shows 4♦-5♣ with a 3♣ bid. Other responses imply 5+ diamonds. If responder is too weak to bid 4th suit, then there is some guesswork, e.g.

1♦ 1♥
2♣ 2♦
Pass

This could be a 6-crds fit. If responder has 3♣, 2♦ and a weak hand, he doesn't know whether to play 2♣ or 2♦ (however after 1♥-1♠-2♣-? it's best to returning to 2♥ with 3 clubs and 2 hearts – a 7-crds fit is guaranteed).

Note:

With a 12-15 HCP 3-suiter with short spades, opener rebids 1N over a 1♠ response (if you rebid 2♣, the hearts are very often lost forever).

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
2♦

This bid shows 12-14, and if the response was 1♥ it promises 6 diamonds. Over a 1♠ response, though, this could also be 5♦-4♥, if opener doesn't want to declare NT with an inappropriate hand. Now if responder bids the other major (e.g. 1♦-1♥-2♦-2♠), it is **forcing** and needs not promise 5-4 majors (see "Third suit forcing").

Gawrys Third-suit – for regular partnerships only

I'm introducing here a useful gadget (received from Stanów Zjednoczonych), which has been taught by Piotr Gawryś.

The convention applies to just one sequence:

1♦ 1♠
2♣ ?

2♥ = transfer to 2♠
2♠ = natural, constructive

This is the whole convention, however readers deserve some explanations.

This convention has two goals:

- to distinguish weak spade hands, with which we want to just play 2♠ and no higher, from invitational hands, still not sure of game if there is a misfit,
- to transpose painlessly into natural bidding with strong hands.

1) With about 10 HCP and at least 5 spades we bid 2♠. First, partner can without fear proceed with his suit or NT with a misfit for spades, since the combined strength is not a threat; secondly, we don't have to invite game via 3♠, which may go down in a misfit. 2♠ therefore plays a role as a non-forcing but invitational bid..

Examples:

- a) ♠ KJ5432 ♥ AJ2 ♦ 3 ♣ Q32 – without the convention we would have bid 3♠; now 2♠
 b) ♠ KQT54 ♥ J32 ♦ Q2 ♣ QT2 – with the convention, no problems (2♠). without it?...

2) With a weak hand and long spades we rebid 2♥.

Examples:

- a) ♠ KJT432 ♥ 543 ♦ -- ♣ J432
 b) ♠ QJT9876 ♥ 32 ♦ 32 ♣ 32

Over this bid, partner is required to rebid 2♠, over which we will pass.

3) With all GF hands we rebid 2♥. Partner bids 2♠, and then we continue to bid naturally, without fear of partner passing:

1♦ 1♠
 2♣ 2♥
 2♠

- 2N = forcing (an earlier 2N would have been invitational) – can have 4 hearts
 3♣ = forcing, natural
 3♦ = forcing (an earlier 3♦ would have been invitational)
 3♥ = forcing, 5-5 (an earlier 3♥ would have been invitational)
 3♠ = forcing with spades (an earlier 3♠ would have been invitational with a very good suit)

Opener's reverse

By a reverse rebid we are talking about one of the following two sequences:

1♦ 1♥
 2♠

or

1♦ 1♠
 2♥

This bid shows 15+ HCP, and with the first of these sequences we practically guarantee 6 diamonds. A reverse is not game-forcing. Responder has 2 non-forcing bids: 3♦, and rebidding his major cheaply. Both show that the first response was at the very bottom. Rebidding the major at the 3-level is forcing (continuations are slam-oriented), but so is 2N:

1♦ 1♠
 2♥ 2N

Opener shows a third suit (3+ cards) if he has one, rebids diamonds with 6, or bids NT.

Raising responder

Raising the major response promises 4 cards in the suit. We play the 1♦ opening as promising only 4 cards, creating the need for further additional agreements to accommodate the extra shapes. This treatment seems natural enough:

1♦ 1♥
 2♥ 2N (forcing, see major suit raises)
 ?

- 3♥, 3N = balanced, just 4 diamonds (min, max respectively)
 The rest of the bids thus have 5 diamonds:
 3♣ = 5♦, 3♣
 3♦ = 5♦-4-2-2
 3♠ = 5♦, 3♠
 4 new suit = splinter, 4441

Let's assume we have opened 1♦ with ♠ QJ96 ♥ K ♦ KJT2 ♣ QT32 (you don't absolutely have to open it). Partner shows spades, which we raise, and we are asked to describe our hand with 2N. What do we bid?

3♠! We have opened the bidding, since we counted the King of hearts as 3 HCP. However we can't now still show heart shortness (via 4♥ now), since that would mean the singleton King had double its value: in HCP and distribution.

With extra HCP or distribution, we jump-raise partner. Jumping to the 4-level shows a hand weak in honors but very distributional. With a GF 4-crd raise, but no shortness, we rebid 4♦.

Examples:

- ♠ J432 ♥ KQ ♦ QJ432 ♣ AQ – 2♠ despite 15 HCP,
 ♠ K432 ♥ 32 ♦ AK32 ♣ A32 – 2♠,
 ♠ K432 ♥ 32 ♦ AK432 ♣ A2 – 3♠; upgrade for 5 good diamonds,
 ♠ KQ32 ♥ A32 ♦ AT932 ♣ 2 – 3♠; even ♠ Axxxx and out has real game chances,
 ♠ K432 ♥ A32 ♦ AJT432 ♣ -- - 4♠; “all or nothing”,

♠ KQ32 ♥ A32 ♦ AQ5432 ♣ -- - 4♣; GF, showing club shortness, since slam may depend on it,
♠ AQ32 ♥ 32 ♦ AKQ32 ♣ K2 - 4♦; GF but no shortness.

After a jump-raise to the 3-level, the next step asks for shortness:

1♦ 1♠
3♠ 3N (asks for shortness [4♠ = no shortness])

1♦ 1♥
3♥ 3♠ (asks for shortness [3N = ♠ shortness])

Other sequences

1♦ 1♥
1♠(2♣) 2♦

2♦ is a weak preference between the two suits shown by partner. It shows a minimum response (~ 7 HCP) and simply shows a preference for diamonds over partner's second suit.

1♦ 1♥
1♠(2♣) 3♦

Responder's bid is an encouraging preference for opener's diamonds. It shows an invitational (~11 HCP) hand, but is non-forcing! If responder wants to force with a fit for diamonds, he should precede a diamond bid with a conventional fourth-suit bid (see 'Fourth-suit forcing') – in this case 2♣ (2♠).

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
2N

This sequence promises 15-17 HCP, unsuitable for an opening 1N. Opener most likely has 6 diamonds.

Responder has just one non-forcing rebid: 3♦. Repeating the major here is forcing.

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
3♣

This sequence promises 15-17 HCP and (as like other jump-shift rebids) confirms 5-5 distribution. The one non-forcing bid available to responder is a preference to 3♦.

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
3♦

In addition to 15-17 HCP, this bid shows a good 6-card diamond suit (with a weak suit a 2N rebid is best). All bids by responder are forcing.

Suggestion for regular partnerships. One problem is finding a 5-3 major fit in situations when opener has a maximum opening with 6 diamonds (the Bridge World death hand). Responder with less than 8 HCP would surely like to rebid his suit, but over a high rebid (2N or 3♦), he has reason to fear going past 3♦. We therefore suggest this remedy:

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
2N

2N here shows 15-17, 6♦ without 3-card support (over this, the only sign-off for responder is a non-forcing 3♦). While:

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
3♦

shows 15-17, 6♦, and 3-card support. Any non-pass by responder is GF.

1♦ 1♥(1♠)
3N

Gambling. A solid diamond suit and at least 1 side stopper. For instance:

♠ 2 ♥ A2 ♦ AKQ5432 ♣ JT3

It is very essential that this bid promise a solid diamond suit.

1N response

The 1N response shows a balanced (7)8-10(11) HCP with no major. With unbalanced hands we have alternative responses to a 1♦ opening in the form of 2♦ and 3♦ (see later).

Continuations over a 1N response

Further bidding is natural. Opener's 3♣ rebid is a one-round force, but the bidding can still stop in 3♦. Opener's 3♦ rebid is invitational to 3N, but non-forcing (with 17 HCP and 6 diamonds we have to bid something else).

2♣ response

The 2♣ response is absolutely natural and shows at least 5 clubs (rarely, 4 cards) and is GF, or 6+ clubs invitational (9-11). With this second variant of the response we plan to repeat clubs on the next round.

The requirement to hold 5 clubs (unlike a 2♣ response over 1♥ or 1♠ openings) comes as a result of the wide selection of other forcing responses at responder's disposal over the 1♦ opening (1♥, 1♠, 2♦).

Continuations run similar to after a 2♣ response to a 1♣ opening (but different from a 2♣ response to a 1M opening).

The 2♦ rebid shows 5+♦ with any strength (12-17). Therefore it is forcing.

2♥, 2♠, and 2N rebids are all natural with exactly 4(!) diamonds. Logically this must show 12-14 HCP since otherwise the hand would open 1N.

Bids at the 3-level are classical: 3♣ shows extras (usually 5♦-4♣, sometimes 3♣); typical hand: ♠ A2 ♥ A2 ♦ A5432 ♣ KQ32, but even the same hand with small club instead of the King, or: ♠ 2 ♥ AQ2 ♦ A65432 ♣ KJ2.

3♥ and 3♠ are splinters with 4+ clubs.

3N shows 15-17 444-1♣. Over this, rebids set the suit directly above (4♣ sets diamonds, 4♦ hearts, 4♥ spades, and 4♠ clubs); the latter of which is also RKC for ♣.

1♦ 2♣
2♦ 3♦

is forcing. With invitational hands with clubs and diamonds we respond 1♦-2♦.

2♦ response

The 2♦ response is forcing for one round. It shows 4+ diamonds, no major, and 10+ HCP.

Continuations over a 2♦ response

Further bidding is natural by opener and seminatural by responder (stopper-showing). This agreement springs from the fact that responder's 2♦ bid has already described his distribution thoroughly (no 4-crd major, usually not 5 clubs), whilst opener can still have many different distributions. Depending on how responder's honors fit with his distribution, opener may set the contract at an appropriate level. The general principle is:

If responder ever bids 3♦ he wants to stop at that contract. 2N by responder is forcing (which can be used to find out how many diamonds opener has).

1♦ 2♦
2♥ 2N
?
3N = 4 diamonds, 12-14
Other bids thus show 5+ diamonds:
3♣, 3♠ = 3 cards
3♦, 3♥ = 5422 (min, max)
4-level new suits = splinters, maximum, 4441

Examples:

1♦ 2♦
2♥ 3♥
4♥ Pass

Opener shows 4 hearts. Responder raises with 3(!), also showing that his hand does not have a stopper in either black suit (otherwise he should bid that suit, showing 3 cards). Opener suggests the moysian.

1♦ 2♦
2N 3♦
Pass

Opener's 2N shows a minimum balanced hand. Responder also hasn't much, so he signs off in a partial.

1♦ 2♦
3♦ 3♥
3♠ 3N

Opener's 3♦ shows a weak opening with 5 diamonds. Responder decides to try for game. 3♥ shows a stopper. Opener shows his ♠ stopper and 3N is reached.

2♥, 2♠, 3♣ responses

See 'Jump-shift Responses'.

2N, 3N responses

The 2N (11-12) and 3N (13-15) responses show balanced hands without a major. Responder should feel obliged to have a stopper in both major suits (because a lead is coming soon in a major). Without one of those stoppers, responder should bid 2♦ (or 2♣). Later bidding (if any), is natural.

3♦ response

3♦ is preemptive, showing 5 (if NV) to 9 HCP and at least 4 diamonds. Opener bids further (natural) only with exceptionally interesting hands.

3♥, 3♠, 4♣ responses

Splinters. Over 3♥, 3♠ it's still possible to play 3N.

4♦ response

Preemptive-tactical. Opener nearly always passes.

The 1♥ Opening

This opening shows 12-17 HCP and 5+ hearts.

With 5M-6m it is the Polish style to open the major. Some natural systems abroad open the minor first. I propose the following compromise:

We open in the minor when 2 conditions are fulfilled:

1. the minor is stronger than the major, and
2. the hand is strong enough (if not in HCP, then in playing strength) to warrant rebidding the major twice (the first time as a reverse).

Examples:

- ♠ A ♥ QJ932 ♦ AQJT32 ♣ 2 – open 1♦ - very strong, diamonds better than hearts
- ♠ -- ♥ KJT32 ♦ AKJT76 ♣ 32 – open 1♦ - only 12 HCP, but lots of tricks; no problem showing hearts at the 4-level
- ♠ 2 ♥ AKQJ2 ♦ AJ5432 ♣ Q – open 1♥ - the hearts are better than the diamonds
- ♠ K ♥ AJ432 ♦ AJ5432 ♣ K – open 1♥ - despite 16 HCP the hand is weak offensively – too weak to reverse twice after opening 1♦

In the WJ2000 write-up, I didn't recommend opening 1N with a 5-crd major. This philosophy appears to be against the current trend – opening in the 5-crd major is being seen increasingly more often.

In light of this, let's try to hint at when it may be worth opening 1N with a 5-crd major:

- when the major suit is weak: ♠ KQ2 ♥ 65432 ♦ AQT ♣ AJ.
- when you have tenaces in the side suits: ♠ QT ♥ QJ432 ♦ AQ ♣ KJ9 (as a rule it's better to play NT from the side with honors in short suits, like doubleton Queens).
- when you have 3 cards in the other major: this particularly applies to the 1♠ opening: ♠ JT432 ♥ KJ5 ♦ AT2 ♣ AQ. There are three reasons for this: after a 1N opening if partner transfers to a major it is played from the correct side, it gives a better chance of finding a fit in the other major, and it clarifies the combined HCP when responder has a semipositive hand, like the strength for a 1N response to a 1♠ opening. Let's assume that opener has a strong hand with 5 spades and 3 hearts, and responder has 7 (8) HCP, 5 hearts, and 2 spades. Over a 1♠ opening the auction proceeds:

1♠ 1N
 2N 3♥ forcing or not? – that is the question;

or

1♠ 1N
 3N ? to show the hearts or not? - that is the question.

While over a 1N opening:

1N 2♦
 2♥ Pass or 2N

or

1N 2♦
 3♥ 4♥

Continuations over a 1♥ opening

The theme which shapes the response structure over each of the suit openings is that the higher the suit opened, the less space there is to respond at the 1-level.

The number of possible distributions in a 1N response swells with the increasing rank of the opening suit. Over a 1♣ opening we have the ability to bid semipositive hands with a minor via a 1♦ response, while over a 1♦ opening we can't do this, but we can still respond 2♦ or 3♦. Over a major opening, however, the semipositive hands with a minor – even unbalanced – are “packed” into the 1N response.

Over a 1♠ opening we also have to throw semipositive hands with hearts into this “catchall” 1N.

These space constraints similarly overload the 2♣ response. Over a 1♣ opening the response promises 5 clubs, and over a 1♦ opening – it can happen to be 4 cards sometimes.... but over a 1M opening it includes all strong hands with no other 5-crd suit and in the extreme case can be bid with a mere doubleton club.

1♠ response

A problem which is worth dissecting at this point is: whether with 3 hearts and 4(5) spades to respond 1♠ or 2♥.

I suggest: *Respond 1♠ only when you can afford to rebid 3♥ on the next round.*

Examples:

1♥ 1♠
2♣ 3♥

Responder shows an invitational hand (9-11) with at least 4 spades and 3 hearts.

1♥ 1♠
2♣ 2♥

Responder is making a weak preference with a doubleton. With 3 hearts and 7-9 HCP you shouldn't be bidding spades on the first round, but raising partner's hearts.

It is worth showing one difference from 1♦ opening auctions:

1♥ 1♠
3♣ 3♥

Forcing. But it doesn't promise a full heart fit yet. It may be necessary to play 3N or 4♠.

The following sequence is the same as after a 1♦ opening:

1♥ 1♠
3♠ 3N = asking for shortness

Forcing 2N over opener's rebid of the opening major

After a one-over-one (1N over 1♠, or 1♠/1N over 1♥) response and rebidding the opening major, a 2N rebid by responder is forcing for one round (forcing to 3 of the opened major).

1♥ 1♠
2♥ 2N = inquiry

2N shows a strong hand, game-forcing or invitational (~10-11). The downside of this agreement is the inability to stop in 2N (at least we'll play 3 of the major), however the gain is greater: you may check whether it's best to play in a suit or in NT, sometimes you can find game in responder's suit with a 7-card fit (over a 1♠ response), and you can learn more information for slam.

Continuations:

- 3♣, 3♦ = singleton club (diamond), possibly 3 spades, but can also be 6-4 with a side minor, or 7 hearts
- 3♥ = minimum opener, no singleton minor, denies 3♠ - partner may pass
- 3♠ = 3 spades, no singleton - partner may pass
- 3N = maximum opener, no singleton minor, denies 3♠

If the auction starts out:

1♥ 1♠
2♥ ?

then we can bid 2N with:

- a) ♠ AJ432 ♥ J ♦ A432 ♣ A32. If partner raises spades, play 4♠, if not, go for 4♥ (in NT our minor stoppers are too weak).
- b) ♠ KJT6 ♥ Q2 ♦ AJ8 ♣ Q932. You don't have to rush to make a decision whether to play 4♥ or 3N. If partner shows a short minor then you will play 4♥, otherwise you can bid 3N.
- c) ♠ QJ32 ♥ J2 ♦ AT32 ♣ K932. You may have game - if partner makes a maximum response. However opposite a weak hand you have to stop in a partial. Bid 2N with the idea of passing 3♥ or 3N. Over 3♣ you can bid a non-forcing 3♥. And over 3♦ (jackpot!), 4♥.
- d) ♠ AJT32 ♥ KJ2 ♦ A2 ♣ KJ2. We want to play some number of hearts, but bidding 3♥ would just be invitational to game. We bid 2N - to find out a bit more. On the next round we will show slam aspirations via a cue-bid (3♥ would be non-forcing, 4♥ would be a sign-off).

1N response

Responder's strength is even wider than over a 1♦ opening (7-11). 1N denies 4 spades or a heart fit. As said before, it doesn't at all promise a balanced hand.

Example 1N hand types:

- 1) ♠ KJ2 ♥ 2 ♥ A5432 ♣ K432. If we bid 2♦, then over a 2♥ rebid, we would be left up a creek (2N and 3♣ would be forcing bids).
- 2) ♠ 32 ♥ 2 ♦ KJT32 ♣ KQ432. It's tempting to show one of the suits, but how will we know to stop in a partial?
- 3) ♠ 5432 ♥ 2 ♦ 2 ♣ KQJT432. If we respond 1♠ and partner rebids 2♦ or 2♥ (beautiful!), we will not be able to convince him that it's better to play in clubs and stay low (3♣ will be a fourth or third suit, a forcing bid). A 2♣ response (planning a non-forcing 3♣ rebid on the next round) gives us a chance to play in the correct partial, but also risks bidding on.

The best chance to stay at a low level is a 1N response. If partner doesn't pass, then showing clubs on the subsequent round says that we want to play clubs and it would be good to stop now.

For regular partnerships: Many systems with a wider opening strength range than WJ use the agreement that 1N can have a weak (3-7 HCP) hand with a fit for opener's suit. Such hands are called mini-raises. You may also introduce this agreement into the WJ system. This yields two gains: first, a simple raise becomes a little stronger, and second, the response has tactical value. Often this preempts the enemy auction. Playing this convention, the auction:

1♥ 1N
2♣ 2♥

can mean two things. Responder has either a weak (3-7) raise, or a semipositive (7-10) hand with a doubleton heart.

Continuations after a 1N response

The 1N response (over a 1M opening) often is made reluctantly as a temporizing bid, and doesn't sincerely show the desire to play in NT. So opener should help by bidding again only if he has something interesting to say.

But opener has nothing to add with a 5332 minimum (12-14). A pass is appropriate. With stronger balanced hands he bids 2N.

Having a side 4-crd suit opener should show it.

1♥ 1N
2♦

does not precisely define strength – just what a 1♥ promised: 12-17.

A jump in a new suit shows 15-17 and 5 cards in the new suit:

1♥ 1N
3♣ 5♥, 5♣

A problem arises with hands with 5 hearts and 4 spades. Bidding 2♠ is a reverse, since the second-bid suit is higher than the preceding, showing a strong hand for the auction to date (and therefore 15-17 HCP). With a weaker hand, the choices are:

- pass 1N (partner indeed does not have 4 spades - I would recommend this with your average 5422),
- rebid hearts, if the 5-crd suit is good, e.g. ♠ QJT2 ♥ AKQ32 ♦ 32 ♣ 32,
- bid a 3-crd minor if it is good, e.g. ♠ KQ32 ♥ A5432 ♦ KQ2 ♣ 2.

Forcing 2N over opener's rebid of the opening major

The convention you may remember after a 1♠ response to 1♥ is also useful over a 1N response.

1♥ 1N
2♥ 2N
?

- 3♣, 3♦ = shows shortness
- 3♥ = weak, no singleton minor
- 3♠ = singleton spade, GF
- 3N = max, no singleton

Two-over-one responses (2♣, 2♦)

A two-over-one response is a new suit at the 2-level without jumping. We play that bidding a new suit – other than clubs – at the 2-level shows a 5-crd suit. It's because of this that 2♣ can be a preparatory bid – with no real suit.

We bid 2♣ over 1♥, for example, with 3-2-4-4 shape.

Over a 1♠ opening, we bid 2♣ with 2-4-4-3 shape. We are trying to surmise whether partner has a 4-crd red suit (and we can't bid 2♦ or 2♥ because that would show 5 cards).

It is now somewhat difficult to interpret a 2♣ response with accuracy due to the change of the meaning of a 2N response, which at present shows a limit raise of opener's major, from the preceding role (in WJ2000) as a game-forcing raise. Now this hand, which in WJ2000 was bid with 2N, starts low with 2♣. The advantage is increasing the bidding room available, at the expense of the natural meaning of 2♣. This might even be a doubleton (with a major raise to be shown later).

The strength of a 2-over-1 response is specified by the definition: *Game-forcing unless suit rebid.*

In other words: if we have 6 cards in the bid suit, good enough to rebid, then we can hold a hand which is not game-forcing (e.g. ~10-11 HCP). Otherwise we should have 12+ HCP.

Continuations over a two-over-one response

A club raise (after a 2♣ response) by opener shows 4 clubs. A diamond raise (after a 2♦ response) can be a tripleton honor. Raising responder's suit guarantees extras, and is game-forcing.

Rebidding the opened suit (1♥-2♣-2♥) shows a minimum opening (12-14) and says nothing about the number of hearts, just 5+ cards.

A jump-shift in a new suit below the opening suit (e.g. 1♥-2♣-3♦) shows a maximum 5-5. A jump-shift in a new suit above the opening suit (e.g. 1♥-2♣-3♠) is a splinter (see 'Slam Bidding').

If 6-4 with the opened suit and cheaply-rebiddable side suit (e.g. opener is 6♥-4♦ after a 2♣ response) opener repeats his opening suit with a weak hand (immediately showing his strength) and announces the 4-crd suit first with a promising hand.

Note! The auction:

1♥ 2♣(2♦)
2♥ 3♥

is forcing, slamish, and shows that the original minor is 5+ cards. Opener refers to the 'Slam bidding' section.

How do you bid a strong hand, with a fit for opener's suit, and no suit of your own? Best to begin with 2♣ and go through *forcing 2N* (see 'forcing 2N' section). For example:

1♥	2♣
2♥	2N
3♣	3♥

Opener shows 5431 distribution (singleton spade), and responder sets hearts strongly. By the way, this is how to warn partner that 2♣ was not natural.

2♥ response

6-10 HCP, 3+♥.

Recall from the discussion of the 1N response, that regular partnerships may agree this is a stronger raise (8-10 HCP), if the 1N response includes the mini-raise.

Despite the description, "at least 3 cards", opener should not expect more. With 4 (or more trumps), responder has a suite of other bids available (2N, 3♥, 4♥).

An interesting problem is the definition of the boundaries between the responses of Pass and 2♥, as well as between 2♥ and 2N (limit raise). Examples:

- 1) ♠ QJ2 ♥ 432 ♦ Q32 ♣ Q432. The hand has 3 hearts, 4333 distribution, and no controls (Aces or Kings). It holds practically no chance for game. I suggest passing (unless the mini-raise is played – then respond 1N).
- 2) ♠ 432 ♥ KT2 ♦ 65432 ♣ K2. Despite having just 6 HCP, I recommend 2♥. A completely inconspicuous hand, like: ♠ 54 ♥ AQJ92 ♦ 7 ♣ AT432 yields an excellent (almost cold) game.

Let's remark on a certain peculiarity: with a fit in partner's suit honors are more useful in short suits than long suit. When we have the (at first glance better) hand: ♠ 432 ♥ KT2 ♦ K5432 ♣ 32 it's quite difficult to draw up hands for partner that allow game (when the opponents pass, the chance that we have a double-fit – in this case hearts-diamonds – is minimal).

- 3) ♠ Q32 ♥ KQJ ♦ Q32 ♣ J432. With this hand, despite 11 HCP you wouldn't invite, but bid 2♥. Such great strength in hearts is overkill in that suit, while there are no controls outside trumps.
- 4) ♠ 32 ♥ KJ32 ♦ KQT32 ♣ 32. Just 9 HCP but it's worth at least an invite to game. In the system we don't have the ability to raise and show our side suit with less than a game-forcing hand. We wouldn't decide to force to game here because we have too much strength in partner's likely shortness. Change the diamonds to something like AJT32, then we would have to force to game since they play decently opposite shortness.
- 5) ♠ 2 ♥ K432 ♦ Q5432 ♣ 432. Not 2♥; we have to choose between a preemptive 3♥ or even an invitational 2N (choice depends on vulnerability).

Continuations after a 2♥ response

The most common and effective rebids by opener are pass or 4♥. However, if opener wants to invite game he can do so in several ways –

- a) Directly:
1♥ 2♥
3♥

This is a power invite. Responder bids game with a maximum 2♥ response. (Many pairs play this as preemptive, not invitational.)

- b) Artificially – bidding a help-suit game try. A help-suit is an "airy" suit of at least 3 cards. KJxx, Axx. Certainly not KQJx, because its already "helping itself". What do we do over a help-suit game try? The best help is a doubleton honor, the worst, three small. In the middle is a worthless doubleton or tripleton honor.
- c) Waiting – via 2N (see '2N after a major raise').

2♠, 3♣, 3♦ Responses

See 'Jump-shift responses'.

2N Response

In WJ2000 this bid showed a limit raise or better. This agreement was the one which drew the most criticism. To quickly distinguish the limit hand from the game forcing and slamish hands we have changed the meaning of the 2N response. In WJ05 it shows purely a limit raise.

Even though it is more defined, it still contains many hand-types: minimum, maximum, 3-crd support, 4-crd support, balanced or unbalanced. We have to remember that the jump raise (3♥) is *strictly* preemptive, destructive, and to no degree encourages bidding game. As a result, even a rather distributional hand is suited to respond 2N (if it appears too strong to preempt). We'll call such weakish hands (or at least bids made with such hands) *preempt-invites*.

Continuing the auction, opener bids simply: 3♥ with an uninteresting hand, and 4♥ - with an interesting hand. Or he can make a help-suit game try.

I suggest introducing an asking bid: 3♣. Responses would be:

- 3♥ (returning to trumps) = a preempt-invite. Ex. ♠ 432 ♥ K432 ♦ Q5432 ♣ 2 (which already has done its preemptive job – especially NV), ♠ 2 ♥ Q432 ♦ JT432 ♣ K32, or the occasional somewhat stronger hand with a 3-crd fit and shortness, e.g. ♠ 2 ♥ KT2 ♦ AJ432 ♣ 5432,
- 4♥ = "to play" – a pretty good unbalanced hand, e.g. ♠ Q2 ♥ QJ32 ♦ K2 ♣ QJ865 or even ♠ 2 ♥ KT2 ♦ KJ432 ♣ QT32,
- 3♦ = minimum balanced raise, e.g. ♠ JT2 ♥ KQ32 ♦ K32 ♣ T32,
- 3N = maximum balanced raise, e.g. ♠ QJ2 ♥ QT2 ♦ KT2 ♣ KT32,
- 3♠ (other major) = maximum invite with a good 4-crd fit, at least 3 controls (good for slam), e.g. ♠ A432 ♥ K432 ♦ T92 ♣ K2.

3♥ Response

The 3♥ response is preemptive. As a rule this agreement follows the Law of total tricks: "If we have 9+ trumps, it pays to bid to the 3-level. If we go down, it's very likely the opponents had some contract making their way."

The jump raise promises 4-crd support without much defense – as a rule with no sure defensive trick. This response can in particular facilitate the decision of partner who,

knowing of the good fit and few defensive values, may push the opponents around at a high level.

In respect of the fact that this bid often precedes a competitive auction (at the end of which the enemy may double) – let’s talk tactics: the quality of the preempt depends to some degree on the vulnerability.

At favorable vulnerability we will preempt with just practically nothing, like ♠ 2 ♥ J432 ♦ 5432 ♣ 5432 or ♠ 32 ♥ QJ32 ♦ J432 ♣ 432.

At equal vulnerability, opener can expect ♠ 2 ♥ K432 ♦ 5432 ♣ 5432 or ♠ 32 ♥ K432 ♦ Q32 ♣ 5432.

Preempting at unfavorable vulnerability, however, you need “something”: ♠ 32 ♥ QT32 ♦ K5432 ♣ 32 or ♠ 32 ♥ JT432 ♦ A32 ♣ 432.

The strength of the 3♥ bid is tied in with the strength of the 2N response, which as a preempt-invite means: I have a little more than a preempt **at this vulnerability**.

If despite responder’s preempt, opener perceives a chance of slam, on the next round, opener bids a singleton or void.

Weak and strong splinters

The splinter is the most effective gadget for slam bidding. This is because we more often have the opportunity to bid and make slam based on ruffing power rather than on strength. This is why the splinter is strengthening its value on the market of slam conventions – the latest is the “weak variety”, a.k.a. the *mini-splinter*, which is earning great popularity.

Experienced players have learned that when nothing is wasted opposite a splinter, slams can be made with a combined strength of just 26+ HCP, about 28 HCP on average. Let’s assume the average strength of a 12-17 opener is 14 HCP. In this case the average strength of a splinter should be oscillating around about 13-14 HCP. In practice, we extend the range to 12-15 HCP (depending on distribution and number of controls). Broadening this range further would hurt partner’s ability to do the right thing.

Let’s assume, however, that partner opens 1♥ and we have ♠ A432 ♥ QJ32 ♦ 2 ♣ K432. Partner might have this 16 HCP hand: ♠ K5 ♥ AKT87 ♦ 543 ♣ AQ5. Slam is excellent. But if we respond 4♦ and partner gets something like: ♠ Q5 ♥ AKT98 ♦ A43 ♣ Q65, it will be difficult to keep from going to slam, and even 5♥ is dangerous.

To prevent these situations we distinguish two kinds of splinters: weak, with (8)9-12 HCP, and strong, (12)13-16 HCP.

1♥ 3♠ = weak splinter; unknown shortness

Opener can satisfy his curiosity by asking with 3N for responder to show his shortness as naturally as possible (4♥ = ♠ shortness).

1♥ 4♣, 4♦ = strong splinter in ♣, ♦

1♥ 3N = strong splinter in ♠, since 3♠ is devoted to the weaker splinters.

A common requirement of both varieties of splinter is that they promise **4-crd support** for opener’s suit. Continuations over splinters are handled in the chapter ‘Slam Bidding’.

Responses to a third seat opening

2♣ by a passed hand is Drury (see ‘Drury’).

2♦ (and 2♥ over 1♠) by a passed hand can be weaker than normal, 8+ HCP, but if light then promises a good suit and denies a fit for opener’s suit.

3♣ and 3♦ responses show 9-11 HCP and a good 6+-crd suit without a fit for partner.

Magister is off by a passed hand.

The 1♠ Opening

Just like a 1♥ opening in both requirements and bidding structure. With 5-5 majors, we open 1♠.

The only bid that must be discussed because it doesn’t occur over 1♥ is a 2♥ response to 1♠.

2♥ response

Meaning: 9+ HCP and 6+♥, or 11+ HCP and 5+♥.

The 2♥ response is allowed to be slightly weaker than a two-over-one in a minor suit. This results from, first, the fact that fewer HCP are needed for a heart game than for a minor game, and second, the better score we can get in a heart partial than in NT at matchpoints. Yet, before deciding on a 2♥ response we have to consider the following dangers:

- if we have a bare minimum (9 HCP), is our heart suit good enough that over a 2♠ rebid we will be able to rebid hearts at the 3-level?
- if we respond 2♥ with a minimum (11 HCP), will we be able to know what to do over a 2♠ rebid?

Continuations over a 2♥ response

1♠ 2♥
3♥ minimum opening, 3 hearts, non-forcing

1♠ 2♥
4♥ better opening, 3-4 hearts

With a stronger hand and heart support, opener has the following alternatives:

- splinter with a 4-crd heart fit,

- b) 2N with a balanced hand (and 4♥ on the next round),
- c) bidding a minor, and then 4♥ on the next round: 5♠, 3♥, 4-crd minor.

Weak and strong splinters

1♠ 3N = weak splinters (4♣ asks which shortness – 4♠ = club shortness)

1♠ 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = strong splinters

Opening 1NT

A 1N opening shows 15-17 balanced. There is no need to “stretch” to open 1N with a good-looking 14 instead of opening 1♣, since the 1N response to 1♣ (9-11) allows inviting to game with 14.

Balanced distribution includes any 5-crd suit, if it's 5332. If our 5-crd suit is a minor, we have practically no alternative to opening 1N. If we have a balanced hand with a 5-crd major, then we may make a choice between opening 1N and 1M.

The factors that determine when to open 1N were largely discussed in the section on the 1♥ opening. We'll review some example hands which may be opened 1N despite a 5-crd major:

- ♠ KQ2 ♥ 65432 ♦ AJT ♣ AJ - weak 5-crd major,
- ♠ QT ♥ QJ432 ♦ AQ ♣ KJ9 – tenaces in the side suits,
- ♠ JT432 ♥ KJ5 ♦ AT2 ♣ AQ – 3 cards in the other major.

Sometimes it's worth opening 1N with 5-4 distribution (5-crd minor, not major), when we have honors in the short suits:

- ♠ AQ ♥ KT ♦ QJ32 ♣ KJ432
- ♠ AJ ♥ Q432 ♦ AJ432 ♣ KJ

With the above hands it's better to grab declarership with a 1N bid (we have useful honors in our short suits).

You may judge to open 1N with a 6-crd minor, e.g.: ♠ AQ ♥ QT ♦ J98754 ♣ AKJ.

Continuations after an opening 1N

In WJ05 we have shelved relay Stayman. After the 2♣ response, the auction proceeds naturally. This is because choice of contract is often better decided based not on distribution, but on honor location. A natural auction is easier and isn't so taxing on memory. Further, non-standard opening 1N distributions are not covered by the relay system (and as said before, it is sometimes worth making such deviations).

2♣ Stayman

Stayman is bid with one of the following intended goals:

- a) to find a major fit,
- b) to reach a partial in a suit, but never NT,
- c) to find the best game,
- d) investigating slam.

There are three responses to Stayman:

- 2♦ = no major
- 2♥ = 4♥ (maybe 4♠)
- 2♠ = 4♠ (denies 4♥)

Further bidding is natural. Two-level rebids by responder are NF, while three-level rebids are GF (except invitational by a passed hand).

1N 2♣
2♦ ?

- 2♥ = NF with 4-5♥. Opener chooses between hearts and spades. Over 2♠, responder either passes (if he has spades), or corrects to a minor.
- 3♣ = natural, forcing (invitational by a passed hand)

1N 2♣
2♥ ?

- 2♠ = NF with 4♠
- 3N = promises 4♠
- 3♣ = natural, forcing (invitational by a passed hand)

1N 2♣
2♠ ?

- 3♦ = natural, forcing (invitational by a passed hand)

Trybuła transfers

After a 2M response to Stayman, we use *Trybuła transfers* (Prof. Stanisław Trybuła – eminent mathematician and bridge expert from [Wrocław](#) – see *Encyklopedia Brydża*, pg. 796^[1]): *rebidding the suit immediately below opener's major at the 3-level is forcing, setting the major as trumps.*

1N 2♣
2♥ 3♦ = strong, agrees hearts

1N 2♣
2♠ 3♥ = strong, agrees spades

Trybuła transfers perfectly accomplish two goals:

- 1) allowing reaching 3N even with a 4-4 major fit. Thanks to this, we don't have to decide whether it's worth it to bid Stayman over partner's 1N opener holding 4333. Now it's always worth it!
- 2) setting slam interest early.

Continuations after a Trybuła transfer (following a structure suggested by Leszka Wesołowski):

- 1) 3 of the agreed major = pretty good hand
- 2) 3N = good hand for 3N, NF
- 3) 4 of the agreed major = bad hand for NT, but a bad trump suit too
- 4) new suit = natural side suit, source of tricks

2♦, 2♥ Transfers

2♦ and 2♥ are transfers, promising at least 5 cards in the next higher suit (i.e. 2♦ shows 5+ hearts, 2♥ shows 5+ spades), any distribution.

After transfers, further bidding is illustrated by the sequences below:

1N 2♥
2♠ = most hands

1N 2♥
2N = opener shows a very good hand with a good spade fit, but guaranteeing good play in NT. After this, 3♥ by responder is either a retransfer to spades or natural, and any further bidding over 3♠ reveals the natural variant (and so 4♥ is a possible final contract).

1N 2♥
3♠ = maximum 1N opener, excellent fit. In this case, spades is clearly set as trumps. Further bids by responder (other than 4♠) are slammish:
3N = slam-try, no shortness
4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = slam splinter

After a transfer, a new suit at the 3-level is GF.

1N 2♥
2♠ 3♣ (3♦, 3♥)
3♠ = opener has slam interest (4♠ would have been weak)

It's important to remember that after:

1N 2♥
2♠ 2N = invitational, 7-9 HCP

responder need not be balanced. But:

1N 2♥
2♠ 3♠ = invitational, 7-9 HCP

does not promise 100% of the time 6♠: ♠ KQJ65 ♥ 6 ♦ J986 ♣ JT5.

Bidding with both majors

- 4-4 majors – with a weak hand (even very weak), respond 2♣ and pass 2M or bid 2♥ over 2♦
- 5-4 majors –
 - With a weak hand (0-6 HCP): if the 5-crd suit is good, transfer to it (and pass), while if the 4-crd suit is good, show both majors with 2♣ (and then bid 2♥ over 2♦).
 - With an invite hand
 - 5♥-4♠ - transfer to hearts, then rebid 2♠; forcing for one round (8[7] HCP at least), but not to game,
 - 5♠-4♥ - bid 2♣; over 2♦, rebid 2♠ as invitational (7-9) (remember that GF hands transfer to spades and then bid hearts later).

This way we solve a system hole in WJ2000: bidding invitational hands with 5-4 majors.

For Regular partnerships Only

1N 2♣
2♦ 3♥(3♠)

Game-forcing with 4 cards in the bid major, and 5 in the other [a.k.a. 'Smolen']. This allows transferring declarership back to opener if he has 3-crd support for the other major. Note this means that the sequence

1N 2♦
2♥ 2♠

loses its forcing variant, leaving only the invitational meaning (therefore opener with ordinary hand may pass this bid, avoiding raising the level unnecessarily).

Because the treatment is totally new, you may at this point want to remember that in WJ2000 this sequence showed shortness with 4 cards in the other major, and a 5-card minor.

- 5-5 majors –
 - with a weak hand bid 2♣ (and then 2♥ over a 2♦ response)
 - with a strong hand we use *Wesołowski transfers*: we transfer first to hearts!
1N 2♦
2♥ 2♠
2N 3♠ = 5 spades

In this way, at the 3-level you can sort out 5-5 hands (if you start with spades, you can't confirm 5 hearts without actually bidding to 4♥). [Smolen implies 2♠ is non-forcing so discuss with your partner if you play both treatments. – DJN]

We can now both choose the best contract (even 3N) and set a suit for slam.

Other responses to 1N

2♠ - Transfer to clubs

In WJ05 a 2N response is natural. Therefore as a result, a 2♠ response shows just a club one-suiter (not dual-meaning).

1N 2♠
?
2N = good club support (3 cards to a top honor, at least), and a good opening,
3♣ = all other hands.

On the following round, responder can show shortness, e.g.

1N 2♠
2N(3♣) 3♥ = short hearts

If responder has a second suit besides clubs, then he instead starts with Stayman 2♣ and later (if needed) naturally bids his hand.

1N 2♠
2N 3N = natural; "If you have a maximum with a good club fit, we're gambling 3N. Had you bid 3♣, we would have played there."

1N 2♠
3♣ 3N = invite to slam, with clubs; "Your discouraging response doesn't scare me. I can't bid anything else because I don't have any shortness. 3N is to play, but I was just checking to make sure we weren't missing a club slam."

2N – Invite to 3N

The double-meaning 2♠ (invite to 3N or club 1-suiter) is no longer used. First, it makes it more difficult to bid clubs, and second, it gives the enemy more of a chance to make a lead-directing double (or non-double... a negative inference).

3♣ - Transfer to diamonds, weak or strong (GF)

Opener must bid 3♦. A weak responder just passes, while a GF hand bids shortness or 3N as mild slam invite with diamonds.

3♦ - Invite with diamonds

The 3♣ bid is never exactly an invite to game: it's either weak or game-forcing. So with an invitational hand (e.g. ♠ JT2 ♥ 432 ♦ KQT432 ♣ Q), we bid 3♦. Opener with good diamond support and a good hand bids 3N, and otherwise passes.

3♥, 3♠ - 5431 convention

These responses show hands with 5-4+ in the minors, and a short major. The convention gets its name from the most common of the distributions it describes: 5-4-3-1. However, other patterns are included (5521, 5530, 6421, 6430). The strength must be game-forcing to warrant the jump (you can't stop below game, and you can make a slam try).

So the bids individually show:

3♥ = short hearts, at least 5-4 in the minors
3♠ = short spades, at least 5-4 in the minors

Continuations:

1N 3♥ = short hearts without 4 spades
?

3♠ = 4 good (or any 5) spades, suggests playing in a 7-card fit,
3N = "I want to play 3N - I have serious stoppage in hearts",
4♣ = sets clubs,
4♦ = sets diamonds,
4♥ = 4+ 4+ minors, maximum hand, nothing wasted in hearts,
4N = 4+ 4+ minors, wrong hearts for 3N, but not strong enough for 4♥.

Gerber 1430

In response to an opening 1N, 4♣ is Gerber, asking just for Aces (no King of trumps). Responses are just like Blackwood:

- 4♦ = 1 or 4 aces
- 4♥ = 0 or 3 aces
- 4♠ = 2 aces, 0 kings
- 4N = 2 aces, 1 king
- etc...

After the response, bids are to play, except 4N, which asks for kings (0, 1, 2, ...).

Texas transfers (4♦, 4♥)

Just like transfers at the 2-level, they show the next-higher suit:

- 1N 4♦ = transfer to hearts
- 1N 4♥ = transfer to spades

We bid Texas with a 6+crd suit in order to play 4♥ or 4♠ from opener's hand.

There are three goals of this convention:

- 1) Preempting the enemy – it could contain a weak distributional hand: ♠ 2 ♥ JT95432 ♦ T987 ♣ 2

1N 4♦

“We might make 4♥, and if not, we may have preempted them out of their game.”

- 2) Distinguishing game hands from slammish hands:

1N 2♦
2♥ 4♥

“I have 6+ trumps, just like with Texas, but there's some chance of slam (about 13-14 HCP).”

- 3) Distinguishing a quantitative 4N from an RKC 4N:

1N 2♦
2♥ 4N = Invite. “5 hearts, about 15 HCP. Over to you.”

1N 4♦
4♥ 4N = RKC. “Surprise, partner! You were thinking I was weak, but I have such a rock-crusher that I just need to check on your keycards in hearts.”

2♣ Opening

2♣ shows 11-14(15) HCP with 5+♣ and a 4-crd major, or just 6+♣. The attentive reader may remember from the description of the 1♣ opening that with some hands fulfilling the 2♣ opening criteria, one must choose a 1♣ opening instead.

2♦ response – relay

The 2♦ response shows at least an invitational hand. Bidding 2♦ followed by 3♣ shows a positive hand (10-11 HCP) with a club fit (saying nothing about a 4-crd major, since you can't immediately raise to 3♣).

2♦ followed by a suit bid is GF with that suit.

Alternatively responder can ask further questions (with any GF hand).

In response to the 2♦ relay, opener shows his distribution:

- 2♥ = 4 hearts,
- 2♠ = 4 spades,
- 2N = 6 clubs, good for declaring NT,
- 3♣ = 6 clubs, good hand for being dummy at 3N (3♦ asks for shortness [3N = none, 4♣ = ♦]),
- 3♦ = 6 clubs, 4♦, max,
- 3♥, 3♠ = 6 clubs, weak 5-crd major, e.g. ♠ 3 ♥ Q5432 ♦ 2 ♣ AKQJ32,
- 3N = solid clubs, max.

Responder may continue with the cheapest step as a further relay (e.g. 2♠ over 2♥, 2N over 2♠), over which opener bids:

- if the bidding has shown 5+-4 distribution, show any side 3-crd suit,
- rebid clubs if 6 cards have not yet been promised (then 3♦ asks for shortness),
- if 6-4 distribution has been shown, bid shortness.

Examples:

a) 2♣ 2♦
2♥ 2♠
3♦, 3♠ = 3-crd fragment

b) 2♣ 2♦
2♠ 2N

3♣ 3♦
3♥ = short hearts

Any other bid than the cheap asking bid is natural, and – if introducing a new suit – forcing.

Particular attention should be drawn to a certain set of sequences:

2♣ 2♦
2♥ 2N

is natural and non-forcing (the next relay would have been 2♠). But:

2♣ 2♦
2♠ 2N = relay

Therefore invitational hands over a 2♠ rebid have no good bid (3♣ is the only escape).

2♥, 2♠ responses

These responses are natural, non-forcing, with 5+ cards (6-11 HCP).

Opener raises partner with a 4-crd fit, and passes or raises with 3 cards (use judgement).

With no fit you may start a scramble. Opener may proceed to 3♣ with a good 6-crd suit (or 2♠, if he cannot pass 2♥). With short spades (over 2♠) and 5 clubs he can risk 2N, but only with a good hand – with a weak one he must pass ("what does a horse care if his wagon overturns?").

2N response

Over 2♣, the most difficult hands to bid are strong 2-suiters: you can't start by bidding a new suit cheaply, since the 2♥ and 2♠ responses are non-forcing; on the other hand you can't go through 2♦ given that the first natural suit rebid would have to be at the 3-level. The problem is solved by an increasingly more popular artificial meaning of 2N. This bid shows a sign-off in clubs, or a strong (GF) 2-suiter without clubs. Opener is forced to rebid 3♣, and responder either passes (0-8 raise), or shows the 2-suiter Wilkosz-style:

3♦ = diamonds-hearts,
3♥ = hearts-spades,
3♠ = spades-diamonds.

Once a 2-suiter is shown, the auction is game-forcing. The advantages of this agreement are:

- 1) the ability to show 2-suiters,
- 2) limiting the 2♦ relay meanings – if we bid 2♦, and then our suit, it is known we have a 1-suited hand,
- 3) the ability to distinguish weak and invitational club raises.

Other responses

3♣ is not a preempt, but a limit raise (9-11 HCP).

Since we have removed 2-suiters from the 2♦ response, a strong 1-suited heart or spade hands bid 2♦ and then bids their suit.

Given this, the immediate jump to 3♦, 3♥ and 3♠ show **invitational** 1-suiters with a good suit (one that would bid 1♣-1♥-1N-3♥).

Over enemy interference

New suits are non-forcing at the 2-level and forcing at the 3-level. Double is negative. Opener with 4 good cards in the bid suit can pass.

2♦ Opening – Multi

WJ05 sees a change from WJ2000 in the meaning of the 2♦ opening. We have a hand which “formerly” we would have opened 2♥ or 2♠ - 6-11 HCP with a decent suit.

We use a very good response structure written up by Sławomir Zawiślak in the April 2004 issue of “Brydz” magazine. Here we paraphrase that agreement – with just one essential change.

Responder's bids should have one of the following goals:

- 1) stopping at as low a level as possible if there is no fit (when the 6-crd suit hits your shortness) – even with strong hands,
- 2) playing from responder's hand when responder has some strength,
- 3) reaching a contract quickly (without ceremonial exploring), when responder has support, and this is easy to see is true when responder has good support for both majors; in these situations it's best to bid game quickly to make it impossible for the enemy to find out if they have a good sacrifice – or have a game, or even have the balance of the HCP,
- 4) hiding the overall distribution from the enemy with weak hands – as long as we get to play in opener's suit.

2♥, 2♠ responses

These responses mean: “pass, if I have bid your suit”. Note: as a rule you bid 2♥ with weaker hearts than spades, and vice versa.

With ♠ KJ2 ♥ 32 ♦ QJ32 ♣ Q432, despite the fact that our spades are better than our hearts, we respond 2♥ - so that we can stop in 2♥ when partner has hearts. If he has spades, he corrects to 2♠, and we pass in pleasant surprise.

With ♠ 2 ♥ KT32 ♦ KQ32 ♣ AQ32, we bid 2♠! If partner has 6 spades, we can't safely play higher than 2♠ - so partner in that case passes 2♠. If however opener has 6 hearts, he will be bidding further, and we then would shoot for game in hearts.

Over a 2♥ response opener has no free choice: with the weak two in hearts he **must** pass, and with the weak two in spades he **must** say 2♠ (if he has the desire to take

another bid, it means he chose the wrong opening bid). This restraint is required, as the anemic 2♥ response suggests a misfit.

Over a 2♠ response opener **must** pass if he has 6 spades. Perhaps partner has a void in spades and it's a huge misfit. But if opener has hearts, then over the 2♠ response he can "grow wings". He can bid 2N (max opening with hearts) or 3♣, 3♦ (semi-natural, max opening with hearts and a side holding in clubs or diamonds, respectively). With a minimum heart hand, opener returns immediately to 3♥.

The 2♥ and 2♠ bids can also contain a 1-suited invitational hand. For example we pick up ♠ 2 ♥ AQJT32 ♦ KQT2 ♣ Q2, and partner opens 2♦. We bid 2♥, partner corrects to 2♠, and we rebid hearts. Partner can pass or take the push to four.

The same rule holds with spades. Holding a good 6-crds spade suit we bid 2♠. Partner initially expects that we are suggesting pushing to 3♥. He shows the type of heart hand he has, and we repeat spades over this. Partner can pass or bid game in spades.

2N response

The 2♦ opening often consists of a good suit and few honors elsewhere. Because of this it is most often right to play a contract from responder's hand – its wealth of side cards is better situated to withstand the opening lead when it is declaring. And therefore, the structure is designed to arrange the auction so that the stronger hand ends up declaring. For example, with ♠ AQ4 ♥ K432 ♦ KQJ74 ♣ 3 we want to play game even opposite a minimum opener. However, independent of whether partner has spades or hearts, we prefer to play from our hand, because a lead in the other major we withstand better from a declaring position.

We make a 2N response commonly with strong hands to measure the chance of making game or slam. 2N fills the role of asking for the variant of opening. Opener's rebids:

- 3♣ = maximum opening. Over this 3♦ asks for the suit with the request to show it in flipped order: 3♥ shows therefore spades, and 3♠ - hearts. Thus:
2♦ 2N
3♣ 3♦
3♠ = max with hearts (hearts are set as trumps)
- 3♦ = minimum with hearts. 3♥ now to play.
- 3♥ = minimum with spades. 3♠ again to play.

But 2N may be bid as a tactical psyche (not uncommon opposite a standard weak two as well), a weak hand with the goal of obscuring the strength to the enemy, e.g. at favorable vulnerability with: ♠ KJ ♥ 432 ♦ 5432 ♣ J432.

Since 2N may be a psyche, it's better to play that a 3♣ response is strong while 3♦, 3♥ - weak. Over the auction:

2♦ 2N
3♦ 3♥ (to play)

the enemy doesn't know whether it was a psyche asking bid, or simply that the response discouraged him. (The other way: 3♣ = weak opening, 3♦, 3♠ = strong, does not allow this measure of safety.)

Over a 3♣ rebid, we play FLISZ, a twist on the "pass-or-correct" idea. (FLISZ stands for *Szurig Forcing Invite* – introduced by the author of the WJ2000 Wilkosz continuations).

2♦ 2N
3♣ ?
3♥ = pass with hearts, bid with spades (probably the 2N ask was a psyche),
3♠ = pass with spades, bid with hearts

3♣ response

3♣ is a strong artificial bid – when responder wants to bid his own suit, and not ask for opener's suit. Over the 3♣ response opener is forced to bid 3♦, and responder shows his suit naturally: 3♥, 3♠, 4♣, 4♦ (3N can show a solid minor). This is forcing.

3♦ response

3♦ shows an invitational hand with a fit in both majors. It's best to bid this when we fear that instead 2N would lead to conventional responses the enemy could double for the lead (or a good sacrifice).

Over a 3♦ response opener bids 3♥ (3♠) with a minimum and 4♣ (4♦) with a maximum and hearts (spades) – in order not to immediately become declarer. Over a positive response we still have the ability to choose whether to declare or not.

3♥ response

A tactical meaning: "pass with hearts, bid 3♠ with spades". Usually this is bid with a weak hand with support for both majors and the goal of preempting the enemy.

3♠ response

FLISZ ("pass with hearts, proceed with spades").

4♣, 4♦ responses

Wants to play in partner's suit at the 4-level from our hand (4♣) or partner's hand (4♦). Over 4♣, opener transfers to his suit (e.g. 4♥ = "I have spades") and over 4♦, he bids his suit naturally.

We bid 4♦ when there is some reason to want to pass declarership to partner or when we fear a double (e.g. for the lead) of 4♣.

4♥, 4♠ responses

Natural – with our own suit!

Handling interference

Over enemy interference, doubles are penalty, and new suits are “pass or correct”.

2♦	(2♠)	X	= penalty
2♦	(3♣)	3♥	= fishing for partner’s suit; pass with hearts, else bid further
2♦	(3♣)	4♣	= prepares a sign-off in our own suit [since 4M would be p/c]

2♥, 2♠ Openings

The 2♥ and 2♠ openings show a sub-opening strength (6-11), 5 of the bid suit and a side 5-crd suit: in the case of 2♥ it can be any side suit, while with 2♠ the second suit must be a minor.

Continuations should be primarily tactical. With a 4-crd fit for opener’s suit I recommend a direct leap to the 4-level (of course vulnerability plays a non-trivial role). This auction can have offensive character (to make), or preemptive, and does not create a forcing-pass situation; and if the enemy comes into the auction responder is “boss of the partnership”.

2♠ response (over 2♥)

2♠ = “pass with spades, or bid your minor suit”.

2N response

The 2N response asks for the side 5-crd suit. Over a 2♥ opening, opener shows spades with a 3♥ bid.

Later bidding follows the rules: set minors naturally, majors – with a cue-bid.

2♥	2N	
3♦	4♦	= strong (slammish), setting diamonds as trumps.
2♥	2N	
3♦	3♠	= strong (slammish), setting hearts as trumps and showing a cue.
2♥	2N	
3♦	3♥	= invitational and non-forcing – perhaps only a doubleton heart.
2♥	2N	
3♥	3♠	= strong, sets spades as trumps.

Other responses

Other responses: 3♣, 3♦, 3♥ over 2♠, and 3♠ over 2♥ are natural (6+ cards) and forcing for one round.

Handling interference

Over enemy intervention, doubles are penalty, and new suits are “pass or correct”.

2♥	(2♠)	X	= penalty,
2♥	(3♣)	3♦	= for a suit; pass with diamonds, else proceed further,
2♥	(3♣)	4♣	= to show our own suit naturally on the next round.

2N Opening

The opening shows 6-11 HCP and at least 5-5 in the minors.

Continuations

Further bidding is natural. Responder usually bids his better minor at an “adequate” level. Responses in a minor at the 4-level are preemptive if non-vulnerable and preempt-invitational vulnerable (so when red, opener can bid game if more distributional than 5-5).

The artificial response is 3♥ - asking for distribution. In reply, opener bids his longest major (3♠ doubleton spade, 3N doubleton heart, 4♥ tripleton heart, 4♠ tripleton spade) or bids a 6-crd minor (4♣, 4♦).

3-level Openings

These are natural. Vulnerable it promises a 7-crd suit, while non-vulnerable a 3-of-a-minor opening can contain only 6 cards. The strength requirements depend on the scoring method and partnership agreements. In the absence of any special agreement we suggest you assume the default of the 4-3-2-2 method. It means you bid a contract based on the maximum the hand guarantees going down: 4 tricks if we are at favorable vul, 3 tricks if both non-vulnerable, and 2 tricks if we are vulnerable.

Continuations over a 3-level opening

Raising partner to the 4-level is tactical in nature, e.g.:

3♥	4♥	= “I might want to make this, but I might be trying to scare the enemy from bidding”,
3♣	4♣	= furthering the preempt (“Don’t bid higher if the enemy doesn’t come in”).

Showing a new major suit (3♥, 3♠, 4♥, 4♠) is natural. Bidding a new minor suit is semi-natural: 3♦ (over an opening 3♣) is a forcing waiting bid, while 4♣ and 4♦ (if new suits) are cue-bids.

3N Opening – gambling

Solid 7-crd minor, with nothing else.

Continuations over a 3N opening

4♣ and 5♣ responses are to find partner's suit – partner passes with clubs or corrects with diamonds. 4♥ and 4♠ are natural.

4♦ is artificial, asking for shortness. Opener bids his short major, or rebids NT with shortness in the other minor. 5♣, 5♦ show no shortness (7222).

Note: Over a double of 3N, pass by responder accepts playing in 3N-X.

4♣, 4♦ Openings - natural

“South African Texas” (4♣ for hearts, 4♦ for spades) is no longer included in the system. These openings are better-used as natural, preemptive. As a rule (even more so in third seat), these openings are devoted to hands so unbalanced that 3N has little chance of success.

4♥, 4♠ Openings

Opener's strength and trump length depends on scoring method and partnership agreements. In the absence of anything else, we suggest the 4-3-2-2 rule.

Continuations

Subsequent bids by responder are cue-bids (even 4♠ over a 4♥ opening). This principle applies also in the situations when the enemy enters the auction.

Opening 1♣

The WJ 1♣ opening has 3 possible meanings:

- preparatory: 12-14 HCP, no 5-crd major, not 6+♣, not 5♣-4M,
- natural: 15-17 HCP unbalanced with clubs,
- strong: 18+ HCP, any distribution.

Preparatory variant

With this variant of the opening it is 12-14 HCP balanced – no 5-crd suit unless clubs, but only then with flat distribution (5332). With 5 clubs and 4 diamonds we open 1♦, and with 6 clubs or 5 clubs and a 4-crd major we open 2♣.

If we open the bidding with 1♣ holding 5 clubs, then we should not on the next round make a point to rebid the clubs (“hey, I have extra clubs”) because it would appear to show variant (b) of the opening – natural, and hence showing a stronger hand.

The definitions of the openings don't substitute for hand evaluation. How do you hit off the auction with ♠ K4 ♥ AJ ♦ 8542 ♣ AJT65? The “systemic” 1♦ opening could be put in the category of a psyche bid. Since we don't like to joke around, we open 1♣, and over partner's major response we rebid 1N.

Opening 1♣ with the preparatory variant as a rule denies 6+ clubs (which would open 2♣). However with a weak 6-crd suit we don't have to open 2♣. We may opt to open 1♣ and later treat the hand as balanced with 5 clubs. So if we open 1♣ with ♠ KJ3 ♥ Q5 ♦ AT ♣ J86542, then over partner's 1♥ response we rebid 1N. But now if partner continues the auction, we will show 5 clubs (which afterwards in the declaring phase will be revealed to be 6, but every partner likes good surprises).

Opening 2♣ - with the variant with 5♣ and a 4-crd major – turns out not to be so good (particularly at matchpoints), when the club suit is weak. In light of this, with ♠ K3 ♥ QJ97 ♦ AQ ♣ T9765 we open 1♣. After a 1♥ response we raise partner (2♥) or after a 1♠ response we rebid 1N.

Straying from the system like this requires caution in planning the auction ahead. If we open 1♣ with 5 clubs and 4 spades and the auction proceeds as follows:

1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N (2N)

we don't want to proceed to show clubs, since this would show distribution such as we have, but a stronger opening, and would be forcing.

To sum up: if we open 1♣, then over a 1-level response we don't want to show clubs with the 12-14 HCP variant.

I don't recommend opening 2♣ (Precision) with both 4-crd majors. Practice shows it's better to open 1♣, and bid as if we have 4414 distribution.

Natural variant

We use the opening 1♣ with 15-17 HCP club-based hands which are not suited for opening 1N.

Which hands are “suited” and “not-suited” for an opening 1N is left to the realm of a player's intuition. Despite this we'll try to quantify some concrete rules for which hands with 15-17 HCP qualify for a 1♣ opening. We know already that having 5 clubs with 5332 distribution is no hindrance to opening 1N. So therefore what hands are not suited for opening 1N?

- we have 6+ clubs, e.g. : ♠ J5 ♥ K54 ♦ A5 ♣ AKJ654,
- we have 5 clubs and a side 4-crd major, e.g. : ♠ AQJ5 ♥ 75 ♦ K4 ♣ KQJ87 or: ♠ A3 ♥ A2 ♦ QJT6 ♣ AJT65,
- we have 5 clubs with 5332 distribution, but we want to pass declarership of NT to partner. This case may arise then when partner plays better than we (never!) or when we have honors concentrated in two suits, e.g. : ♠ 32 ♥ 432 ♦ AKJ ♣ AKJT9.

We are positive though that nobody esteeming themselves as an expert declarer would not allow himself to remember to open 1N with these types of hands:

- ♠ AQ4 ♥ KJ ♦ AJ ♣ J95432 – the hand has 6 clubs, but they are weak, and the strong side stoppers scream for grabbing NT from this hand. If partner has for example ♠ 32 ♥ A32 ♦ T32 ♣ KQ3, then we welcome with great pleasure a lead in any suit if we play NT from the hand holding 6 clubs,
- ♠ QJ32 ♥ AQ ♦ AJ ♣ Q5432 – the long suits are weak and the short suit stoppers are tenaced,
- ♠ Q5 ♥ KJ ♦ AT32 ♣ KQT32 – with 2-2-(5-4) experts prefer to open 1N assuming there are honors in the doubletons. Why tell the opponents too many suits if we will most probably play in a NT contract anyways?

Strong variant

The strong variant of the 1♣ opening distinguishes WJ from the mass of other bidding systems. The key to good operation of this system is therefore handling its unique opening variant.

We begin with the definition of strengths and weaknesses of the strong club variant.

Strengths:

- 1) The ability to exactly define the total combined HCP of both hands. This feat is accomplished by narrowing the strength of the other openings. Thanks to the 1♣ opening we can break the remaining 1-level suit openings into two narrow ranges: weak (12-14) and strong (15-17). In a system without this opening it is necessary to handle three wide strengths: 12-15, 16-18, 19-22.
- 2) The ability to find game when one of the hands is strong, and the other very weak.
- 3) The ability to obtain exact information about the weak hand by saving a level when opening the strong hand. This applies to the particular situation in which the strong hand has balanced distribution and the weak hand – unbalanced.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Vulnerability to enemy preemption.
- 2) Leaving the enemy room in the auction.
- 3) Ambiguity of the 1♣ bid.

It would be useful to convert the above arguments “for” and “against” into some practical rules which are worth taking into consideration before making the decision: “To open, or not to open, a strong club?”

How do you take advantage of the strengths of the 1♣ opening?

In order to reap the benefits of (1) and (2) we open a strong club with those hands that may make game with just a little help from partner. Formulated:

Assume that partner has a balanced hand. Then if we choose an opening other than 1♣, and partner passes, then can we be missing game?

If the answer to this is in the affirmative, we are obligated to open 1♣.

With the hands below, we open 1♣:

- 1) ♠ AKJ32 ♥ K2 ♦ QJ32 ♣ A3 – we have 18 HCP, and thus it easily fulfills the requirements of this opening;
- 2) ♠ AKT5432 ♥ A32 ♦ KJ3 ♣ -- - merely 15 HCP, but needs very little from partner (doubleton spade and an honor in hearts or diamonds would enable making game);
- 3) ♠ 32 ♥ AKQ432 ♦ AQJ2 ♣ 2 – 16 HCP but one good honor (diamond King) secures 10 tricks in a heart contract;
- 4) ♠ AKJT2 ♥ AQT2 ♦ K32 ♣ 3 – holding lots of cards in the majors (9 or more), we can open a strong club with fewer HCP (good 16+). The reasons are:
 - the two majors represent two chances to bid the lowest possible suit games,
 - if we open with 1 of a major, and partner passes with 5-crd support for the other major, then our enemy surely won't save us by reopening the bidding (with shortness in the unbid major one has to be very skeptical to consider balancing),
 - with 5♠-4♥, in the noncompetitive auction 1♠-1N-?, a jump in a new suit (e.g. 3♥) shows 5 hearts; so with 4 hearts we must instead bid only 2♥, which could prematurely end the auction,
 - holding the majors we have less of a concern over being preempted by the opponents (this point will be touched on again when discussing how to avoid losses due to the weaknesses of the strong club opening).

I propose one more guideline:

I have a 5-4 or 6-4 hand. Then if I choose an opening other than 1♣, partner bids 1N, I bid another suit without jumping, and partner passes, could we have missed game?

If the answer to this is in the affirmative, it's better to open 1♣.

The biggest advantage the strong club enjoys (whether in the WJ system or in others, e.g. Precision) over other systems arises in situations when a strong balanced hand encounters a distributional weak hand. In most natural systems this occurs after an opening 2N. Let's say for example that responder has 9 HCP with 5M-4m distribution (M = Major, m = minor). Jacoby transfer, which partner obediently accepts. Now what? Go past 3N, or not? And what to do holding the reverse holding? Say we hold 5 diamonds and 4 hearts. Over an opening 2N (20-21), we ask with 3♣, and partner bids 3♠. We've run down a blind alley.

Playing Polish, by the time the 3-level is reached, responder has always managed to show both suits and positive strength (7+ HCP, since 6 or less is a negative over a 1♣ opening).

Recently has appeared a strange practice of incorporating the strong 2N into WJ. Lord no! This is like buying a cannon for a battle and cutting off the barrels.

Managing the weakness of the strong club

If the rules of bridge dictated that there were only uncontested auctions, that two partners bid together undisturbed, then all systems would be based on figuring out the total strength in fine detail (certain not just WJ, but Precision and some generic artificial systems). The chief deficiency of a system based on artificial openings however is sensitivity to enemy interference – and WJ is no exception. The rule below allows a certain degree of protection against the weaknesses:

A hand is most suited for a strong 1♣ opening when it would be difficult for enemy interference to prevent transmitting information about our hand.

With ♠ AKT5432 ♥ A32 ♦ KJ3 ♣ -- we won't have any problems over enemy interference, since we can always rebid spades. We should be a little nervous

with ♠ -- ♥ AKT5432 ♦ A32 ♣ KJ3. Opening 1♣ (despite everything I espouse) we should expect in a moment to be fighting alone against an enemy spade preempt (and hearts has to be introduced a level above spades). Holding the following hand: ♠ -- ♥ A32 ♦ AKT5432 ♣ KJ3 the opponents threaten to bid either hearts or spades – is it better to begin the auction by opening 1♦? For the same reason I don't recommend opening a strong club with 2-suiters in the minors. ♠ 32 ♥ 2 ♦ AKQ32 ♣ AKJT2 is strong, however I will be opening 1♦, in order to subsequently show the second suit (with the majors the opponents always leap off the starting block quickly – we are not left behind after 1♦)

Holding 6 spades, 4 diamonds, and the formal strength, we would plan on opening 1♣ (after the enemy jumps at our throat, shutting our eyes and bidding spades), and with this same hand but 6 diamonds and 4 spades we would open 1♦ (if the enemy bids hearts, then over a diamond opener we would show spades, while over a club opening we would not have known what to do).

The above principle is an argument for opening a strong club with strong balanced hands. This hand type is not especially vulnerable to enemy interference (just double and take the money).

How do you show the strong club variant?

The straightforward method of revealing this club variant is jumping in a new suit (1♣-1♥-2♠) or jumping to 2N (1♣-1♥-2N... strong club with a balanced hand but less than 3 hearts).

Jumping in a new suit, however, is not necessary to distinguish the strong club hands.

1♣ 1♥
1♠

is forcing in WJ. It initially shows the 12-14 hands with 4 spades, but responder does not want to pass this bid since opener's hand may include the other opening hand types, including the strong club:

a) 1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N
3N
Opener has a strong balanced hand with 4 spades.

b) 1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N
2♠
Opener has a strong hand with 5+ spades.

c) 1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N
2♣
4 spades, 5+ clubs, 15+ HCP; the bid is forcing for one round.

d) 1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N
3♦
Strong club with 5 spades and 5 diamonds.

e) 1♣ 1♥
1♠ 1N
3♣
Strong club with 5 spades and 5 clubs.

After a positive response to a 1♣ opening (anything but 1♦) and confirmation of a strong club, the auction is game-forcing.

Thus the auction:

1♣ 1♥
2♠

shows something better than a strong club and 5 spades: opener has a strong club with (6+) very good spades.

Responder at the same time may not pass in the sequence:

1♣ 1♥
2♣

Opener is showing 15+ HCP (see 'How to show the medium club variant'). If therefore opener chooses the sequence:

1♣ 1♥
3♣

it means that he wants to express a strong club (18+ HCP) with a very good 6+-crd club suit.

We can also communicate a strong club via an "uneconomical" major suit bid, e.g.:

1♣ 1N
2♥(2♠)

Responder's 1N response excludes holding a 4-crd major, hence opener's major suit bid should show 5 (after the first round of this auction you don't seek a fit in a suit in which there is no chance of having 8+ cards total between the two hands), and at the same time strong club strength. Similarly:

1♣ 1♠
2♥

Responder's 1♠ bypasses (and thus initially denies) the 4-crd heart suit. Opener's 2♥ rebid hence shows a strong club with 5+ hearts.

After opener shows a strong club with a 5-crd major, responder with 3-crd support may raise opener in 4 ways:

- 1) Bid game – this is the weakest raise, strongly discouraging slam.
- 2) Bid 2N, and on the next round bid game in partner's suit. This sequence shows a pretty good hand (within the frame of the current auction), 3-crd support, and no ruffing potential.
- 3) Raise to the 3-level – a very encouraging raise for the context. So besides a fit it should promise ruffing values in the form of a side doubleton.
- 4) Show a fit with side shortness via a splinter.

Other methods used for showing a strong club are Odwrotka, Bubrotka, or Odwyrka (see '1♣ opening – Odwrotka'). These conventions opener uses with 18+ HCP and a 3-crd fit for responder's suit.

How do you show the middle variant of the 1♣ opening (15-17)?

Opener shows the middle variant by bidding clubs without jumping, e.g.:

1♣ 1♥(1♠, 1N)
2♣

Opener's bid shows 15+ HCP and is forcing! Here, opener may therefore have 18+ HCP. Particularly over a 1♠ response, opener may not allow himself to jump in clubs when he has 4 hearts on the side.

With 15+ HCP, 5 clubs and 4 spades, over a 1♥ response (or 1♦) opener begins with the spades:

1♣	1♥	or	1♣	1♥
1♠	1N		1♠	2♥
2♣			3♣	

In both cases opener is showing a hand with 15+ HCP, 4 spades, and 5+ clubs. Responder does not want to pass at this point.

NOTE: Showing clubs over enemy interference also shows at least the medium (15-17) strength of the 1♣ opening.

1♣ (1♥) 1♠ (Pass)
?

Bidding clubs shows 15+ HCP.

The same reasoning holds when responder makes a negative double, e.g.:

1♣ (1♠) X (Pass)
?

This rule applies up to the 2-level:

1♣ (2♥) X (Pass)
?

We remark that all the above sequences opener's room for maneuvering is very limited. If he doesn't have a heart stopper and the card gods didn't bestow a lot of HCP (11-14), then he has nothing to bid. Showing clubs indicates a strong hand, and showing diamonds is even a stronger hand (odwrotka over partner's 1M response, or a strong club with diamonds in all other situations).

The solution to these problems is at first glance quite sad-looking. Opener must bid NT at the lowest level even without a stopper in the enemy suit. However despite appearances disaster doesn't threaten. Responder, when he wants to play 3N, and hasn't the enemy suit stopped, must check back on whether opener has a stopper.

What's more, this agreement has unforeseen advantages. Let's assume that the heart suit is distributed:

	AQx	
KT9xx		xxx
	Jx	

A NT contract is best played by the hand which doesn't have the stopper. Similarly: Kxx (dummy) Qx (declarer), Axx – Qx, Kxx – Jx, or AQx – Tx.

How do you show the weak club variant (12-14)?

If opener shows neither the strong nor medium club variants, it means he has a 12-14 HCP hand with balanced distribution.

Remember: with the weak variant we should not show long clubs at the first opportunity.

This rule does not apply when partner forces to game:

1♣ 2♦(2♥, 2♠)
3♣ = 5 clubs, 12+ HCP

1♦ response

In WJ 2005 the 1♦ response has 3 possible meanings:

- 0-8 HCP (if 7-8 then no 4-crd major),
- 9-11 HCP, unbalanced, no 4-crd major,
- 12-15 HCP, balanced, no 4-crd major, wrong honor structure for declaring NT.

The negative variant

We bid 1♦ with all “negative” hands. The upper limit of a “negative” is 6 HCP with a 4-crd major and 8 HCP without. On the next round, responder normally passes a 1-level bid by partner with 0-4 HCP and continues bidding with 5+ HCP.

1♣ 1♦
1♥(1♠) 1N

Now the 1N bid shows 5-8 HCP (in WJ2000 this bid showed 5-6(7) HCP). If opener has the preparatory club, then nothing has changed, since he must pass (and only the opponents are not certain whether they must balance with a double). Opener may start the auction just the same way with a strong club. As soon as the negative hand doesn't jump rebid, then slam hasn't a prayer, and game is the only goal.

1♣ 1♦
1♥ 1N (5-8)
2♥ ?

The auction is not game-forcing. 3♥ now would be invitational, and 4♥ stronger.

NOTE: 2N in this sequence is forcing (5-8 HCP). This treatment is necessary (even with limited 5-6 HCP you should play this) to retain the ability to probe the best game: it could be 4♥ with 7 trumps, or even 3N with 8 hearts, e.g.:

1♣ 1♦
1♥ 1N
2♥ 2N
3♥ 3N

“I have a doubleton heart, as I haven't shown a second suit. Can you stand to play NT?”

2N must also be forcing to 3♥ in the sequence:

1♣ 1♦
2♥ 2N

A problem may arise with 15-17 and clubs. We propose the following agreement:

1♣ 1♦
1♥(1♠) 1N
2♣ ?

Opener is showing 15+ HCP with a 4-crd major and 5 clubs. This response is **forcing for one round** (opener may have a strong hand - difficult to show, e.g. 5431 distribution). Responder has a choice of non-forcing natural bids: 2N and 3♣ with 5-6 HCP, while the remaining choices show maximums (2♦, 2♥, 2♠), which are semi-natural (showing a suit or stopper), and show a maximum negative (7-8 HCP).

The semipositive variant

The semipositive variant of the 1♦ response we reserve for unbalanced distributions with a minor, with strength too weak to guarantee game opposite a weak opening club. The 2♣, 2♦ responses force to game so even with 11 HCP we are also forced to apply the “semipositive” variant of the 1♦ response (unless we have a good 6-crd minor and 9-11 HCP; with that we respond in the suit at the 3-level). In the later auction responder has the following chances to indicate the semipositive 1♦:

- jump in a minor suit, e.g.:

1♣ 1♦
1♥ 3♣

Responder's bid shows 9-11 HCP with less-than-great 6 clubs (with a good 6-crd suit responder bids 3♣ on the first round of the auction).

- bid 2♠ over a 1♥ rebid:

1♣ 1♦
1♥ 2♠

The above artificial sequence shows 5-4+ in the minors, and 9-11 HCP.

- bid a minor suit without jumping, e.g.

1♣ 1♦
1♠ 2♣

Responder has 5-11 HCP and 5+ clubs. This broad strength range doesn't lead to any special problems. Frankly, opener with the weak variant passes, and with a strong hand bids further.

The strong variant

The sequence in WJ which has led to the most spectacular problem is: 1♣-3N. The 3N response is used in the system for all balanced hands without a 4-crd major and 13-16 HCP and has two major faults:

- it preempts the auction, when opener doesn't have the weak opening variant,
- it doesn't provide a choice of which hand will declare NT.

The first we try to eliminate with the wide strength range of the 2N response (see '2N response').

The other we eliminate with the aid of the 1♦ response.

How would we bid these hands?

- a) ♠ 32 ♥ 432 ♦ KQJT ♣ AKJ3
- b) ♠ AK2 ♥ 32 ♦ KJ97 ♣ QT76
- c) ♠ A32 ♥ A32 ♦ A432 ♣ K32

In example (a) we know that a lead in either major nearly certainly would be less perilous if we arranged the contract to be played from partner's hand.

In example (b) we don't want to declare since we fear a killing lead in hearts.

In example (c) we have stoppers in all the suits, but experience shows a lead in any of them is better-handled if partner declared. Let's say partner has: ♠ Q42 ♥ KJ2 ♦ QT ♣ AJ654. The lead in each suit will be easily defended from his hand. More generally: If we have an Ace or King with two low cards, then usually the lead in this suit will be better handled if partner declares.

The only recourse provided in WJ2000 was to bid 3N with these types of hands. Now we have another option: 1♦.

In the preceding version of WJ the strong variant of the 1♦ response showed a hand with 16+ HCP. Now with the strong NT hand we respond 2N. The strong 1♦ variant is a narrow (12)13-15(16) HCP range.

Continuations over a 1♦ response

1N, 2N rebids

Opener's 1N and 2N rebids show balanced hands with 18-20(21) and 21-23(24) respectively. Responder utilizes the same methods as over a 1N opener (see '1N opening'). Let's remember here that the bidding methods over an opening 1N have been naturalized in WJ05, so the same modifications pertain to these sequences.

1♣	1♦
1N	?

2♣ is Stayman, 2♦ and 2♥ are transfers to the majors, and the remaining bids have the same meanings as over an opening 1N, but the strength is defined by the first 1♦ response.

1♣	1♦
2N	?

- 3♣ = Stayman,
- 3♦, 3♥ = transfers,
- 3♠ = 5-4 in the minors,
- 4♣, 4♦ = natural responses (not transfers!), 6+ cards.

1♣	1♦
2N	3♣
3♦	3♥ (3♠)

Responder is showing a 5-crd suit with 4 cards in the other major.

1♥, 1♠ rebids

With 12-14, opener **may not** rebid 1N (since this bid shows the strong NT). Opener bids his cheapest 4-crd major, and if he hasn't one, then his cheapest 3-crd major. Responder must take under advisement that the suit might be a "convenient" 3-crd suit and doesn't jump-raise partner.

Opener starts with a 4-crd major even with 5 clubs and 15-17 HCP. With 18+ it's best to rebid 2♣ instead.

It's possible to rebid 1M even with the strong club variant. Only in the case where if responder has less than 5 HCP and passes then we can't have missed a cold game.

Over opener's 1♥ or 1♠ rebid (1♣-1♦-1♥) a jump to 3 of the other major means: "bid 3N, partner, I don't want to play it from my hand". And by no means do we panic that we don't have some suit stopped. Opener's weak 1♣ hand promises a balanced hand (1♦ is 4 cards), so if we have a stopper it should be played from the other side (and sometimes the enemy does not hit on the lead). If on the other hand opener does not have the weak variant, then this is already a completely different pair of boots - of course he doesn't bid 3N here, but something else. E.g.

1♣	1♦
1♠	3♥ = bid 3N.

2♣ rebid

Over a 2♣ rebid, jumps to 3♥ and 3♠ show the strong 1♦ variant and better-stopped major.

1♣	1♦
2♣	3♥ = "I have 12-16 HCP; my heart stopper is better than my spade stopper (if any)."

2♦ rebid

Opener's 2♦ is an artificial bid, showing that opener's hand is good enough to guarantee game (the auction cannot stop below game).

NOTE: The 2♦ rebid denies 5+-5+ distribution.

Later bidding is conducted naturally, except for responder's 2♥ rebid, which means: "I don't have a suit to show, and am too weak to bid NT" or: "I have hearts, but not so many I can jump to 3♥". With ♠ QT432 (even with no other honor in the hand) or ♠ QT5432 he must show his suit instead of a negative 2♥. With a 6-crd major to two honors, he must jump to the 3-level. Let's assume the auction begins:

1♣ 1♦
2♦ ?

How should we bid with each of the following hands?

- a) ♠ QT532 ♥ 432 ♦ 32 ♣ 432 – 2♠
- b) ♠ 432 ♥ 32 ♦ 432 ♣ QJ432 – 3♣
- c) ♠ 32 ♥ QT432 ♦ 432 ♣ 432 – 2♥ (later rebid hearts)
- d) ♠ J32 ♥ J2 ♦ 5432 ♣ 5432 – 2♥ (negative)
- e) ♠ J32 ♥ K2 ♦ JT32 ♣ Q432 – 2N
- f) ♠ 2 ♥ KJT432 ♦ 432 ♣ 432 – 3♥

Of course after a 2N rebid:

1♣ 1♦
2♦ 2N

opener bids naturally (e.g. 3♣ shows a club suit).

After the following auction:

1♣ 1♦
2♦ 2♥

opener shows his suits, and with a balanced hand rebids 2N. This bid promises at least 24 HCP and is game-forcing ("even if partner has zero, we can't stop short").

Over

1♣ 1♦
2♦ 2♥
2N ?

the auction proceeds exactly as it would have over:

1♣ 1♦
2N

Other 2-level bids, and 3-level minor rebids

The remaining rebids at the 2-level (over a negative 1♦) are natural and show a strong club with at least 5 cards in the suit bid. Same thing holds for a bid of a minor at the 3-level.

Two-suited jumps

Two-suited game-forcing hands we handle with a simple (although tremendous) jump. The reasoning is the following: if in trying to complete our distribution after beginning with 2♦, then it would take the same level to show both suits anyways. And in adding this unambiguous bid, we remove from 2♦ the most difficult hands to show – long two-suiters.

1♣ 1♦
?

- 3♥ = 5-5 with hearts (and a minor or spades)
- 3♠ = 5-5 with spades (and a minor)
- 4♣ = 5-5 in the minors

Continuations:

- Over 3♥
 - 3N = asks for the second suit (4♥ shows hearts and spades)
 - 3♠ = preference for spades over hearts. Opener bids his minor suit (naturally), or 3N meaning: "I have hearts and spades, do you have some cue-bid to show?"
 - 4♣, 4♦ = cue-bids agreeing hearts
- Over 3♠
 - 3N = asks for the minor
 - 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = cue-bids for spades
- Over 4♣
 - 4♦ = sets diamonds
 - 4♥, 4♠ = cue-bids for clubs

"Super jumps" do not apply in situations where the enemy enters the bidding:

1♣ (Pass) 1♦ (1♠)
?

3♥ = very strong club, with hearts

2♠ = 2-suiter with hearts

Jump to 3N

Gambling to take 9 tricks with the aid of a “running” minor (usually a solid 6+-card minor).

1♥, 1♠ responses

The 1♥ and 1♠ responses show 7+ HCP (no upper limit) and at least 4 cards in the bid suit. With both 4-crd majors we respond 1♥ (following the general rule that 4-crd suits are introduced up the line), with 5 spades and 4 hearts we bid 1♠, and with 5+ cards in each major we respond 1♠ (following the general rule that with 2 five-card suits we bid the higher one first).

Holding a 4-crd major and a 5-crd minor we first show the major with less-than-GF strength (up to 11 HCP), but with 12+ HCP we bid the 5-crd minor first at the 2-level.

Continuations over the 1♥, 1♠ responses

1♣ 1♥
1♠

Opener's 1♠ bid is forcing. He bids this with the preparatory variant (12-14), with the strong club and 4 spades, with the strong club and 5 spades (later rebidding spades), as well as with hands of 5 clubs and 4 spades and 15+ HCP (later bidding clubs).

Modifying the Magister convention

The Magister convention (discussed in another chapter) requires modification for the sequences:

1♣ 1♥
1♠ 2♣

since opener may still have a strong club. Here are the extra suggested bids (2♦, 2♥, 2♠, 2N have the same meanings as normal Magister):

3♣ = 5 clubs, 4 spades, 15+ HCP,

3♦ = 5 diamonds, 4 spades, 18+ HCP,

3♥ = 5 spades, 3 hearts, 18+ HCP,

3♠ = 5 spades, 0-2 hearts, 18+ HCP,

3N = 4 spades, 18+ HCP (denying 3 hearts, since odwrotka was not used first).

Bubrotka

Odwrotka [the fit-reverse] is one of the most valuable bids of Polish Standard. The reason for this is not the distributional responses, but because it lets us set a major suit at a lower level than in other systems. Another advantage springs from the negative inference: if partner has a strong club with balanced distribution, and doesn't use odwrotka, then he doesn't have 3 cards in responder's suit.

The problem with odwrotka is the artificial responses. Because many top pairs have changed the continuations, I'm making them a bit more natural. Introduced here is a very popular deviation from odwrotka which is called *Bubrotka* after its propagator, Stanisław „Bubu” Gołębiowski.

1♣ 1♥(1♠)
2♦ ?

2♥ = 4-crds, weak (7-10)

2♠ = 4-crds, strong (11+)

2N = 5+ cards, strong (11+)

3♣ = 4-crd major, and 5 clubs (9-11 HCP)

3♦ = 4-crd major, and 5 diamonds (9-11 HCP)

3♥ = 5 cards, weak, unbalanced

3♠ = 5 cards, weak, balanced (5332)

3N = 6+ cards, weak

4-bids = 6+ cards, splinter, 7-10 HCP

The idea is that the higher the response, the more precise the information.

Further bidding over Bubrotka is natural. Examples:

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♥
2♠ = 4 spades

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♥
2N = denies 4 spades

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♠
2N 3♠ = 4 spades; this is the way to find 4 spades

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♠

3♣(3♦, 3♥) = natural, 5-crd suit

1♣ 1♠
2♦ 2♥
3♣(3♦, 3♥) = natural, 5-crd suit

1♣ 1♠
2♦ 3♠
3N = natural, choice of game despite the 8-crd fit

The exception to natural bidding is the auction over the 3♥ response. The 3♥ response indicates that the final strain should not be NT. Continuations are thus:

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 3♥
?
3♠ = asks for shortness @ rebidding the major denies shortness
3N = asks for a side 4-crd suit @ 4♥ shows spades if hearts was the original major

Additional agreements:

1♣ 1♥(1♠)
2♦ 2♥[2♠] = respectively: weak[strong] with 4-cards
2N 3♥[3♠] = (rebidding the original major) = both 4-crd minors (4441)

Bidding 2N by opener may show a desire to look for a minor fit. Holding both 4-crd minors, there's a way to show this hand in one bid.

Odwyrtka – for regular partnerships only

This is one of the agreements proposed as an alternative to standard. These treatments may be added to a regular partnership's arsenal. The author of the convention is Leszek Wesolowski, who named it stepless-odwrotka. I propose the term 'odwyrtka' as an abbreviation.

It's a similar idea, but I'm not including it in the standard section because it still isn't properly tested.

1♣ 1♥(1♠)
?
2♦ = odwyrtka – strong club without a 4-crd fit and without a good suit to bid
2N = strong club with a 4-crd fit for responder's suit

The advantage of this agreement is making all continuations natural.

Another advantage is the ability to bid flexible shapes more easily over a major response. Especially hands with diamonds and a side 4-crd suit, e.g.:

• ♠ K2 ♥ 32 ♦ AKJ32 ♣ AKQ2
1♣ 1♠
?

• ♠ K2 ♥ AKQ2 ♦ AKJ32 ♣ 32
1♣ 1♠
?

Thanks to odwyrtka we may now bid 2♦ and await further developments.

Leszek Wesolowski offers some examples of odwyrtka:

West	East
♠ K2	♠ A543
♥ A2	♥ K543
♦ AKJT2	♦ 3
♣ AKT2	♣ QJ43

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♠
2N 3♣

East shows exactly 4 hearts (not rebidding them), 4 spades and 4 clubs. ... Later arriving at a club slam is a formality.

West	East
♠ AQJ2	♠ K654
♥ KQ2	♥ A6543
♦ A32	♦ 4
♣ AQ3	♣ K54

1♣ 1♥
2♦ 2♥ (5 hearts)
2♠ 4♦ (splinter with 4 spades)

... and already we are well on our way to a grand in spades.

West	East
♠ AKQ2	♠ JT43
♥ A32	♥ K54
♦ Q32	♦ 4
♣ KJ2	♣ AQ543
1♣	1♠
2N	3♣
3♠	4♦

East shows 4 spades, 5 clubs, and short diamonds.

Raising the major suit

1♣	1♥(1♠)
2♥(2♠)	

Raising the major response promises 4 cards in that suit. Continuations are just like after a 1M opening and a simple raise (see '1♥ opening'). Responder may use the '2N After a Major Raise' convention.

Other sequences over 1♥, 1♠ responses

1♣	1♥(1♠)
1♠(1N)	2♦

Responder's 2♦ bid shows 7-10 HCP, at least 5 diamonds, and a hand not suited for playing in NT. Opener usually passes, or with special values can try 2N.

1♣	1♥(1♠)
2♣	

The 2♣ rebid promises a hand with 15+ HCP. It is not game-forcing. Responder has three non-forcing bids available: rebidding the major, 2N and 3♣.

1♣	1♥(1♠)
2♣	2♦

Responder's 2♦ bid is artificial and game-forcing. Responder can bid this with any hand with which he would like to guarantee game. Further bidding is natural.

1♣	1♥(1♠)
2N	

Opener is showing an 18-23 HCP hand without 3-crd support for responder's major. Even a singleton is allowed in responder's suit (e.g. 5 diamonds and 4 hearts over responder's 1♠, unless you are playing odwyrka). Continuations are natural. Responder only rebids his suit immediately with 6 or a very good 5.

1♣	1♥(1♠)
3♣(3♦)	

The above auction practically guarantees 6 cards in the bid suit and 18+ HCP.

1♣	1♥
3N	

Opener is trying to take 9 tricks based on a long club suit. For example, it might be bid with: ♠ K32 ♥ 32 ♦ K2 ♣ AKQ432 or ♠ A2 ♥ 2 ♦ Q32 ♣ AKQ5432.

1N response

Responder's 1N response shows 9-11 HCP with no 4-crd major or shortness. This may include a 5-crd minor (even the occasional 5-4 minors hand).

Continuations over the 1N response

1♣	1N
2♣	

This sequence is natural, forcing, promising a good 15 HCP and **is forcing to game**. This is a change from the treatment in WJ2000 and another advantage of upping the strength range of the 1N response. Continuations are as natural as possible. Of course bidding a major by responder has seminatural meaning – showing an honor (or honors) in the suit, and not a 4-crd suit, since responder already denied a 4-crd major.

1♣	1N
2♦	

Opener has a strong club with at least 4 diamonds. Nobody can pass below game. Further bidding is semi-natural (as over 1♣-1N-2♣). Responder with a 4-crd diamond fit can show the better major or raise diamonds to the 3-level if the majors are of equal quality.

1♣	1N
2♥(2♠)	

Opener has at least 5 cards in the bid suit, a strong club, and the auction is game-forcing. As you remember, the sequence

1♣ 1N
2♥ 3♥

promises not just a fit but also a ruffing source (any doubleton).

New in WJ05:

1♣ 1N
2N = natural, invitational

In the previous version we didn't have the option of inviting with 14 HCP, because of the threat of going down two. Now this risk is minimal.

1♣ 1N
3♣(3♦)

Good 6 cards in the bid suit, strong club, game-forcing.

1♣ 1N
3♥(3♠)

Sets the major as trumps. Demands partner show his cheapest cue (Ace or King).

For advanced pairs: In the above sequence, regular partnerships may utilize the same structure as over a 1♦ response. E.g.

1♣ 1N
3♥

Game-forcing with 5-5 hearts and another suit.

2♣, 2♦ responses

The 2♣ and 2♦ responses are game-forcing and show at least 5 cards in the bid suit. The minimum strength of these responses is 12 HCP.

Having a 5-crd minor doesn't mean responder has to show the suit: ♠ K32 ♥ QJ2 ♦ AQ ♣ J5432 favors a NT response, since the club suit is bad, and all suits are stopped. We bid a forcing 2N. With ♠ QJ32 ♥ KJ ♦ Q5432 ♣ KJ we bid 1♠. Chances for game appear to be in spades or NT. For 5D - partner with the weak variant doesn't have 4 diamonds – we need too much extra.

Continuations over 2♣, 2♦ responses

Opener shows a 4-crd major (hearts, if both). With a strong club opener doesn't jump, since the auction is game-forcing. Raising responder's suit promises a 4-crd fit and no 4-crd major – it doesn't have to have extras. Responder rebidding his suit is forcing, e.g.:

1♣ 2♦
2♥ 3♦

Opener may not pass. The agreement is that invitational minor hands respond 3♣ or 3♦ immediately, or first go through 1♦.

2♥, 2♠ responses

Strong hand, very good suit, slam interest.

2N response

The 2N response shows a balanced 12+ HCP hand with no 4-crd major or (as a rule) 5-crd minor. This bid is game-forcing. Responder's hand should be well-suited for declaring NT from that side (else this hand should start with 1♦). Some example 2N responses:

- ♠ AQ2 ♥ KT ♦ QT98 ♣ JT32. Bare minimum 2N response.
- ♠ AQ ♥ KQT ♦ KJ98 ♣ AQT2. This very good hand holds slam interest – for sure we will not stop in 3N, but at the moment we'll like to hear what partner has to say.
- ♠ Q2 ♥ AJ ♦ QJ432 ♣ QJ32. You may be asking yourself: why am I suggesting bidding NT when we have a 5-crd suit and one of the major-suit stoppers is a doubleton Queen? This hand is off so many top tricks, that a 5-of-a-minor contract opposite a weak variant of NT hasn't a prayer, and experience teaches it's often better to play NT from the hand with a half-stopper in the form of a doubleton Queen (it shows a distinct advantage when partner has something like a tripleton Ace, or tripleton King for that matter).

Over the 2N response opener always rebids 3N with the weak variant.

This agreement really pays off when opener has the strong variant of the 1♣ opening (we have more space to set a suit) or the 15+ ♣ variant, when we can find out below the level of 3N whether there is no reasonable alternative to NT, get more information about combined strength, and set a suit to transition easily into slam bidding.

Say we pick up this huge hand: ♠ KJ32 ♥ A432 ♦ -- ♣ AKT32.

We open 1♣, and partner (playing WJ2000) responds 3N. We can't pass, can we? If we pass, we might go down in 3N (if partner has diamonds no better than Qxxx) when we have a grand in clubs (e.g. ♠ A4 ♥ KQ2 ♦ Q432 ♣ QJ98). Yet if we do bid further, partner may have: ♠ A54 ♥ Q65 ♦ AQ32 ♣ QJ4 and who knows where we'll land or if we'll make it.

In WJ05 now, over responder's 2N we bid 3♣. If partner bids 3♦ (natural, good 4 cards) then our bid should be 3N, any hopes of slam flying out the window. If on the other hand he bids 3♥ or 3♠ then we may view our hand very optimistically.

Let's assume now that we have: ♠ J ♥ A32 ♦ KQ32 ♣ AQT32. After a 3N response (WJ2000, again) we have to make a good guess, but over a 2N response (in WJ05) we may bid 3♣ and listen: over partner's 3♦ we are near slam – we'd bid 4♠ as a splinter for diamonds, while over 3♥ (heart values) we already know we are playing 5♣, so we may dare to "cross the Rubicon" (bypass 3N), and over 3♠ (spade values) we stop in the natural place (3N).

Say we have opened a strong club with 5 spades and 4 clubs, and partner bids 3N (WJ2000). Which suit do we show? Anything could be right (or wrong).

Now we can bid in comfort:

1♣	2N	
3♠	?	

3N = "I don't have a fit, or I don't want to show it",
 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = "I have a spade fit, and this is my cheapest cue",
 4♠ = "I have 3 spades but you are well-advised to stay quiet".

Similarly:

1♣	2N	
3♥	?	

4♥ = "class dismissed",
 3♠, 4♣, 4♦ = cue for hearts,
 3N = "I don't have a fit so far".

Let's assume we are playing WJ2000 and we get: ♠ AJ2 ♥ QJ2 ♦ Q932 ♣ QJ2. Partner opens 1♣ and we don't mind bidding 3N, as we really would like to declare this one. All of a sudden we hear 4♠. This bid is forcing, so we don't want to pass. What to do: Do we hide the fit (4N), raise partner (5♠), or even just pass?

In WJ05 we don't have to worry. We respond 2N and over 3♠ we bid 4♠.

Of course with: ♠ KJ3 ♥ K3 ♦ A432 ♣ QJ32 there's no reason to make a negative bid. Over the same above sequence we bid 4♦ showing a spade fit, good hand, diamond cue, and no club cue (we bypassed the suit).

NOTE: 3N in this sequence is forcing, since we haven't finished showing suits. For example,

1♣	2N	
3♥(3♠)	3N	= forcing

It is true, once every hundred years we will go down in 4N with 30 HCP.

1♣	2N	
3♠	3N	
?		

4N = "Out of necessity. I must bid, even though by no means do I want to, but now we can stop."
 4♣ = "Spades didn't turn you on, how about clubs?"

The forcing 3N bid may become a very important instrument. Let's say that as responder we pick up: ♠ Q53 ♥ A32 ♦ K32 ♣ AJT2.

1♣	2N	
3♠	?	

I propose bidding 3N first! If partner has 4 clubs, e.g. ♠ AKJ32 ♥ 54 ♦ A4 ♣ KQ98 there may be a cold club grand, and only a small slam in spades.

We have: ♠ J32 ♥ AT ♦ KQT2 ♣ QJT2.

1♣	2N	
3♠	?	

Again one can start with 3N. In the case partner's hand is: ♠ A8765 ♥ KQ2 ♦ AJ98 ♣ A or ♠ A8765 ♥ KQ2 ♦ A ♣ AK98. In both cases a small slam in a minor is icy cold while there's absolutely no way to make slam in spades.

We remark that the forcing 3N bid in these examples are correct only because our spade fit is not a revelation, and the minors are very solid.

3♣, 3♦ responses

These are non-forcing bids showing a good 6-crd suit. By a good suit we mean that this suit opposite one top honor in partner's hand has a very good chance of running. The suit should therefore include two top honors (AK, AQ, KQ) or any two honors and the Ten (AJT, KJT).

Continuations over a 3♣ or 3♦ response

The chief goal of any further bidding is determining stoppers for 3N. Opener's bids at the 3-level are therefore best treated as *en passant* (described later in its own section).

Of course opener with the strong club variant also shows his real suit at the 3-level. I propose the following treatment for handling this double-meaning: further bidding occurs under the assumption that the bids are stoppers (as prescribed by *en passant*), but responder is required to raise partner to the 4-level when he has 3-crd support (if the bid was a natural 5-crd suit, then it has succeeded in finding a trump suit, and if it was *en passant* then the final contract can be 5 of the minor or a Moysian in the major).

3♥, 3♠ responses

These responses show 7-crds to two top honors in the suit bid, and nothing on the side. Partner with 3 “bare” Aces (with one in our suit) has the perfect info to wager 3N and can make this contract with only 17 HCP, ... unless we have “taken liberties”, e.g. we just have the “lesser marriage” (Queen and Jack) - here we are left several short.

3N response

This response does not exist. Period.

Conventions for the Uncontested Auction

Jump-shift responses

Bidding a new suit with a jump shows a game-forcing hand with a **very good suit**, and slam interest. It's best to treat a very good suit as at least 2 of the top 3 honors. The convention could alternatively be a 5-crd suit but with 4-crd support for partner's suit.

The jump-shift as a rule shows a 1-suited hand (a side 4-crd suit is okay when the jump-shift suit is notably better than the 4-crd suit).

Examples:

1♣	2♥
1♦	2♥
1♥	2♠
1♠	3♣

Note: 2♦, 3♣, 3♦ responses to a 1♣ opening are not included in this convention and have other meanings.

Why do we jump in a suit?

Why jump-shift if a simple new suit would have been forcing? These bids may accomplish the following goals:

- Setting trumps,
- Bidding slam by counting tricks,
- Showing strong hands without having to bid past the level of game,
- Determination of the degree of fit.

Setting trumps

We use this convention when we want to start a slam investigation with our strong suit as trumps, in particular as a precursor to asking for Aces. It is necessary to mention that with slam interest we use the key-card asking convention (see ‘RKC 1430’) which requires setting trumps before bidding the sacramental 4N. If trumps are not *explicitly* agreed, it asks for Aces using the last-bid suit as trumps.

Let's assume, then, we pick up a hand so strong that over partner's opening all we need to find slam is the number of partner's Aces, e.g.: ♠ 2 ♥ K2 ♦ AKQJT32 ♣ KQ2 over partner's 1♠ opening. We may not simply bid 4N, as partner would then count the King of spades as a keycard – completely unnecessary from our point of view. In this situation Ace-asking must be preceded by a 3♦ bid.

“Auto-agreeing” a suit may be suitable if we need the fifth key-card to be the king of our suit. For example with: ♠ K2 ♥ 2 ♦ AQJ5432 ♣ AQ2 over partner's 1♠ opening we would also bid 3♦ before using Blackwood. This would require a key-card ask response to consider the King of diamonds, which is essential.

Assume that over partner's 1♥ opening we pick up this not-so-humble collection: ♠ AKQJ542 ♥ KQ2 ♦ 432 ♣ --. We bid 2♠, and partner rebids 3♦ (showing a good suit or diamond values). This is excellent news, since it eases our concern about losing two quick tricks in diamonds. To bid a grand slam it's enough to find out if partner has both red Aces. How can you find out? WJ05 has a tool for this situation: Voidwood (see ‘Slam Bidding’). We bid 5♣, asking for keycards outside of clubs with spades as trumps. If partner shows two keycards then we will play grand slam.

We can also make use of this bidding gadget with hands like: ♠ AQJT432 ♥ K32 ♦ K32 ♣ --.

1♥	2♠
3♦	?

Again we bid 5♣, but we are also interested in the spade King. If partner has three keycards outside of clubs, we bid grand slam, two – we play small slam – one – we stop in five – zero – we find a new partner.

Blackwood and Voidwood assumes the jump-shift suit is trumps (not any of opener's suits). E.g.:

1♠	3♦
3♥	?

4N is asking for keycards with diamonds as trumps. In order to agree a different suit as trumps, responder must raise opener's spades (here, 3♠) or hearts (rare: a side 4-crd heart suit with our 6-crd diamond suit) via 4♥ or 4♣ (cue-bid).

Repeating the jump-shift suit sets that suit as trumps.

After an initial sequence of:

1♦	2♠
3♣	3♠

The spade suit is set as trumps. At this moment a cue-bid of 4♣ by opener is in support of spades, and not trying to display 6-5 distribution. If responder were possibly

interested in raising a minor suit of partner's, he would bid on the second round a "waiting" 3♥ bid, and not 3♠.

Bidding a slam by counting tricks

Let's assume that partner opens the bidding 1♥ and we have this hand: ♠ AQJT2 ♥ KQ2 ♦ A2 ♣ 432. If partner has the King of spades and two Aces you can see 12 tricks. If partner has a sixth heart to boot then it's easy to add up to thirteen. You can very easily find all this out. Just bid 2♠, followed by 4♥. Partner with the King of spades and two Aces cannot quietly pass, as he can very easily count up the tricks.

Let's remember here that a jump-shift suit can be a 5-crd suit only when there is also a good fit for opener's suit.

Showing strong hands without going past game

Partner opens 1♥, and we have: ♠ AQ ♥ 2 ♦ A32 ♣ AQT5432.

Our hand looks quite powerful, but if partner has a misfit for clubs, then we can't run the suit. Thanks to our special convention, we don't have to stress too much. We bid 3♣, and over any bid by partner we rebid 3N. With a club honor (King or Jack) and pretty good controls, partner should strongly consider not letting the auction die in 3N.

Ascertaining the degree of fit

Sometimes along with a good 6-crd suit we get a 4-crd suit on the side – but one so weak that the suit isn't likely to be trumps. It's important to be able to show this suit when partner has support for it.

Partner opens 1♥, and we have: ♠ AKJT32 ♥ 2 ♦ A432 ♣ A2.

We respond 2♠, and partner bids 2N. With a 3♦ bid, we now indicate the side 4-crd suit. Partner with ♠ 54 ♥ AK543 ♦ KQ5 ♣ J43 bids an encouraging 3♠, and with ♠ 54 ♥ AK543 ♦ J65 ♣ KQ3 – a regressive 3N.

Continuations after a jump-shift response

Further bidding is essentially natural. Opener's cheapest NT rebid is the weakest bid – insinuating no fit for partner's primary suit and cards not suitable for slam. Rebidding his original opening suit should promise a good 6 cards. Showing a side suit has only semi-natural meaning. This is either showing a good 4-crd suit, or "values"... a concentration of strength. Examples:

We have opened 1♥, and partner responds 3♣.

- ♠ QJ2 ♥ QJ432 ♦ KQ32 ♣ 2 – we bid a negative 3N,
- ♠ AQ ♥ QJ432 ♦ Q9432 ♣ 2 – again 3N – diamonds are too weak to show over a jump-shift,
- ♠ K2 ♥ KJ432 ♦ AJ92 ♣ 32 – we bid 3♦; Aces and Kings hold possibilities for slam,
- ♠ K2 ♥ AJ432 ♦ KQ32 ♣ Q2 – 4♣; slam is practically guaranteed.

Let's move to the other side of the table. Partner opens 1♥, we jump to 3♣, and we hear a careful 3♦ rebid.

- ♠ 32 ♥ A2 ♦ Q32 ♣ AKQJ32 – we bid 3♥, showing a doubleton honor in hearts. If partner bids 3N then we probably don't have any reason to go higher,
- ♠ A2 ♥ A2 ♦ Q32 ♣ AKQJ32 – we bid 3♥, but over 3N, we continue on our path towards slam (via a 4♣ bid),
- ♠ 32 ♥ A32 ♦ Q2 ♣ AKQJ32 – we don't bid 3♥, but 4♥; this sequence describes our hand very accurately.

Fourth-suit Forcing

Fourth-suit forcing is a bid in the only unbid suit at the cheapest level. For example:

- a) 1♦ 1♥
1♠ 2♣
- b) 1♥ 1♠
2♣ 2♦
- c) 1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2♥
- d) 1♠ 2♦
2♥ 3♣

Bidding the fourth suit is not natural – just the opposite, it shows (initially) weakness in the suit.

We have to distinguish two categories of fourth-suit forcing: over a one-over-one response (when the first response is at the 1-level) and over a two-over-one response (when the first response is at the 2-level). The first category is demonstrated by cases (a) and (b) above, and the second by (c) and (d).

Fourth-suit forcing over a one-over-one is at least invitational to game. In later bidding, only responder (the fourth-suit bidder) may pass below game.

Fourth-suit forcing over a two-over-one is game-forcing.

Fourth-suit – denying a stopper

It can happen that despite bidding 3 suits, nobody has support so good that they can set a trump suit. And it can be that despite setting a suit (usually a minor) the most attractive game appears to be NT. In both cases the player who bids NT should have the stopper in the unbid suit.

What do you do when you don't have this stopper? Do you just rule out NT, or do you shrug and hope partner has the stopper? And if partner has a stopper, what do you do in order to get him to declare a NT contract?

The solution to this dilemma is fourth-suit forcing.

Let's look at just one sequence:

- 1♠ 2♦

2♥ ?

Let's say that as responder we have 2 spades (we don't have a spade raise), 3 hearts (right now we have one too few hearts to raise), 5 diamonds (we cannot rebid them), and 3 bad clubs, but with game-forcing strength. We wouldn't want to bid NT immediately since it would require a better suit when partner has nothing in clubs, or even if he did, it would wrongside it if he had something like AQ or Kx.

We bid fourth-suit 3♣, and partner can bid 3N with a club stopper.

Fourth-suit – to obtain more information about partner's hand

1♦ 1♥
1♠ 2♣

Responder wants to learn why more about partner's hand below game level. Opener now transmits even more information about his distribution and strength (see '1♦ opening'). If for example he shows a minimum opening with one of: 2♦, 2♥, or 2N, then responder can pass. This shows that the idea was to just invite to game.

If however responder continues bidding opener is obliged to cooperate (examples below). As soon as responder doesn't pass over a negative bid it means he intended to force to game.

In the sequence:

1♦ 1♥
2♣

opener may hold 5 diamonds and 4 clubs or the reverse (if only 12-14 HCP). Responder bids 4th suit to sort out opener's real distribution.

1♦ 1♥
2♣ 2♠
?

Opener with 5 clubs rebids clubs. All other bids promise 5 diamonds.

In the aforementioned sequence 4th suit is not forcing to game. Responder may bid this with 10-12 HCP with the intention of passing a negative response.

1♥ 1♠
2♣ 2♦
?

In this sequence the weak bids are 2♥ and 2♠ - responder may pass over these.

Fourth suit – to set up a force with a raise for partner's suit

Over a response at the one-level a jump-raise of opener's suit is invitational, e.g.:

a) 1♦ 1♠
2♣ 3♦
b) 1♥ 1♠
2♣ 3♥
c) 1♦ 1♥
1♠ 3♠

In each of the above sequences, responder's bid is invitational to game.

To set partner's suit in a forcing way you may also take advantage of fourth-suit forcing. In example (a) bidding 2♥ and later raising diamonds at any level (as cheaply as possible) would show a game-force, just as would preceding a raise to game in hearts (spades) in sequences (b) and (c) with fourth-suit (respectively, 2♦ and 2♣).

Fourth Suit – forcing the auction with a one-suiter

In sequences:

a) 1♥ 1♠
2♣ 3♠
b) 1♦ 1♥
1♠ 3♥
c) 1♠ 2♦
2♥ 3♦

responder's final bid is invitational to game. In order to show a 6-crdr suit without worrying about partner passing you have to bid fourth-suit forcing before rebidding your suit (or 'forcing 2N' after a one-over-one).

Gawrys after 1♦-1♠-2♣

In that exact sequence:

1♦ 1♠
2♣ 2♥

we proposed the 2♥ bid be a modified fourth-suit forcing (see '1♦ Opening') for regular partnerships. Normally this is standard fourth-suit forcing, and rebidding the suit on the next round reveals it was natural.

1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥
2N	3♥

Responder is showing a 5-5 in the majors, non-forcing. With this same distribution and a stronger hand, responder bids 3♥ immediately over the 2♣ rebid.

Fourth-suit forcing – a question of level

Remember that in the introduction to fourth-suit forcing, we said it forces to game after a two-over-one but is only invitational after a one-over-one.

There is one important additional different: **Fourth-suit after a two-over-one always denies a stopper.**

Let's look at the sequences:

a)	1♦	1♥
	1♠	2♣
b)	1♠	2♦
	2♥	3♣

In sequence (a) responder has no other way of forcing the auction besides bidding 2♣ - 1N and 2N would be non-forcing. 2♣ therefore says nothing about whether clubs are stopped.

In sequence (b) responder has a forcing 2N available (see 'Forcing 2N'). With this in mind, a 3♣ bid categorically denies a club stopper.

Continuations over fourth-suit forcing

We may formulate the following simple rules for responding to fourth-suit forcing:

- Jumping shows extra strength.
- Opener must show 3-crd support for responder's suit if he has it.
- With 5-5 distribution, opener rebids his second suit.
- With 5-4 distribution without 3-crd support, opener bids:
 - 2N – minimum opener with at least a half-stopper (Qx) in the fourth suit,
 - his first suit – minimum opener without a half-stopper in the fourth suit,
 - 3N – maximum opener with a stopper in the fourth suit,
 - 3 of the fourth suit – maximum opener without a stopper in the fourth suit,

From the above rules spring the following consequences:

- There's no way to initially distinguish 6-4 from 5-4 distribution.
- With 1-4-4-4 distribution after a 1♦ opener and 1♠ response, it's necessary to rebid 1N, since over a 2♣ rebid it would be really difficult to find hearts (e.g. if partner bid 2♥ we wouldn't be able to show 4 hearts as 3♥ would show a max without a heart stopper).

Third-suit Forcing

By 'third-suit' we mean responder's new-suit bid when only two suits have been shown in the auction. E.g.:

a)	1♥	2♦
	2♥	2♠
b)	1♦	1♠
	2♦	2♥
c)	1♣	2♦
	2♥	2♠
d)	1♠	2♦
	2♠	3♣

Sequence c) is also an example of third-suit as we don't treat the 1♣ bid as having shown a suit.

A third-suit bid has one of two meanings:

- 1) natural – showing 4 cards in the suit bid, or
- 2) semi-natural – showing a stopper in the suit, and not in the fourth suit

When do we use third-suit forcing?

Primarily at the time when we still haven't found a fit yet. The third-suit may prove to be the best fit. At the same time we use third-suit to communicate stoppers for NT. The reason for using this convention may also be to show values for slam-investigation. Third suit is a forcing bid.

Third-suit at the two-level

In reaction to third-suit at the two-level opener should heed the following rules:

- 1) Bidding NT shows a stopper in the only unbid suit. So:

a)	1♥	2♦
	2♥	2♠

 a 2N bid shows a club stopper.
- 2) With 4 cards in the third suit, without a stopper in the unbid suit we raise the third suit to the 3-level:

a)	1♦	1♠
	2♦	2♥

- 3♥ = "I have 4 hearts, and no club stopper."
 b) 1♣ 2♦
 2♥ 2♠ = "I have 4 spades, but no club stopper."
 3♠

Raising the third suit says nothing about extra values in the context of the auction.

- 3) With 4 cards in the third suit and a stopper in the unbid suit opener bids 3N.

- a) 1♦ 1♠
 2♦ 2♥ = "I have 4 hearts, and a club stopper."
 3N
 b) 1♣ 2♦ = "I have 4 spades, and a club stopper."
 2♥ 2♠
 3N

Thanks to these gadgets (changed from WJ2000) a problem previously unsolvable is squelched: How to address both possible meanings of the third suit (natural or showing a stopper)?

In WJ2000 we always raised the third-suit with 4-crd support in case the suit was real, and if the third suit was seminatural partner would remove to 3N. But this agreement led to the wrong person declaring NT.

Other bids over third-suit forcing are as natural as possible. Opener rebids his suit if it is suitably long and good, shows 3-crd support for responder's original suit, if he has it, or bids NT with a pretty good stopper in the unbid suit.

Third-suit at the three-level

If third-suit forcing is bid at the 3-level, then opener raises it to the 4-level when:

- a) he has 4 cards in the suit, and
 b) he does not have a stopper in the unbid suit.

Now, even if partner's bid was semi-natural, then playing 3N doesn't even make sense any more without a stopper in the fourth suit.

Instead, bidding the unbid suit generally means that we don't have a 3-crd fit for partner's first suit, our suit is not rebiddable, and we are not totally sure we can play NT.

Example of third-suit forcing

After the initial auction:

- 1♥ 2♦
 2♥ 3♣
 ?

we have:

- a) ♠ 32 ♥ AK432 ♦ Q2 ♣ K432 – 4♣: 4 clubs, no spade stopper,
 b) ♠ A32 ♥ KQ432 ♦ Q ♣ Q432 – 3♠: able to play in NT (despite having 4 clubs); asking for a half-stopper in spades,
 c) ♠ J32 ♥ AJ432 ♦ Q2 ♣ KQ2 – 3♠: able to play in NT; asks for a half-stopper in spades (there's no other good bid).

Forcing 2N

Forcing 2N pertains to another bid by responder which forces to game. In WJ05 Forcing 2N is used when the first response was at the two-level (two-over-one) as well as over a reverse.

True, 2N is also forcing over a response at the 1-level and opener's rebid of the opening major (see '1♥' and '1♠' openings), but this bid we don't consider 'Forcing 2N' since it isn't game-forcing (only to three of partner's suit).

Remember that in the following two sequences, 2N forces to 3♥ (or 3♠) – opener shows shortness (or a spade fit after a 1♠ response).

- a) 1♥ 1♠(1N)
 2♥ 2N
 b) 1♠ 1N
 2♠ 2N

It's the following types of sequences where 2N is officially 'Forcing 2N'.

- a) 1♥ 2♣
 2♦ 2N
 b) 1♠ 2♣
 2♦ 2N
 c) 1♠ 2♥
 2♠ 2N

In each case responder's first bid was at the 2-level.

2N is forcing also after opener's reverse – obviously this pertains to the 1♦ opening.

- 1♦ 1♠
 2♥ 2N

or

1♦ 1♥
 2♠ 2N

2N is **not forcing** in all other one-over-one sequences, e.g.:

- a) 1♣-1♠-1N-2N
- b) 1♦-1♥-1♠-2N
- c) 1♦-1♠-2♦-2N
- d) 1♦-1♥-2♣-2N
- e) 1♣-1♥-2♣-2N

In the above sequences 2N is a normal invite to 3N. (In WJ2000 2N was forcing in sequences c) and d), but these didn't stand the test of time)

When do we use Forcing 2N?

The goal of this convention is above all else to find the best game. At the same time we also use Forcing 2N when slam is on the horizon. Bidding 2N we must take into account that the final contract may be 3N. Therefore when planning to make this bid (and not *third-* or *fourth-*suit), we should – in the case when 3N is one of the possible options – have a stopper(s) in any unbid suit(s).

If we are deciding to play in a suit regardless of later bids (e.g. we have a fit for partner or our own self-sufficient suit), then we may bid 2N even without the unbid suit(s) stopped, in order to elicit more info about partner's hand.

For example, after the initial auction:

1♥ 2♣
 2♥

the following hand-types warrant using Forcing 2N:

- a) ♠ K32 ♥ J2 ♦ A32 ♣ AJT32. Partner may hold only 5 hearts (see '1♥ opening'). We are finding out whether it's better to play in hearts or NT. If partner bids hearts again (saying he has six) we will not persist in trying to declare.
- b) ♠ AQ2 ♥ J2 ♦ KJ2 ♣ AKJ32. Hopefully we are going to slam, but first we have to find out where we are going to play it. 2N sets the stage for being able to find a fit (with 3♣ or 3♥ now).
- c) ♠ K2 ♥ KQ2 ♦ A432 ♣ AJ32. We have decided to play hearts, but we don't know at what level. Partner may hold: ♠ A543 ♥ AJT98 ♦ 65 ♣ K4, with which a grand is on a hook for the Queen of clubs. Of course partner could have: ♠ A3 ♥ AJT98 ♦ 8765 ♣ K4 and we can't even be sure of making 5♥.

By bidding 2N we can drag out more detail about partner's hand. If he bids 3♠ (showing 4 cards in this suit) we will be a step nearer to slam since we foresee two potential ruffs in our hand.

If partner doesn't manage to show a side 4-crd suit or a club fit, he'll bid 3N. Correcting this contract to 4♥ we will have transmitted the following information: "I have a heart fit and a maximum for playing in hearts. Bidding 2N was a slammish action." Partner with some extras (e.g. ♠ A43 ♥ AT987 ♦ K65 ♣ K4) should move toward slam.

However in order to prevent any possible misunderstanding, let's look at this sequence:

1♥ 2♣
 2♥ 2N
 3♥ 4♥

4♥ in the above sequence says nothing in the way of wanting to play slam. It simply shows that opposite a 6-crd heart suit, responder thinks 4♥ is better than 3N.

- d) ♠ 32 ♥ KJ2 ♦ AK32 ♣ AQJ2. With this hand we can also bid 2N despite not having a spade stopper. This is because we won't be playing 3N (we have beautiful heart support), and are interested in finding out more.
- e) ♠ AJ2 ♥ 2 ♦ AQ2 ♣ AQ8432. Our club suit isn't good enough to have jump-shifted on the first round. We may not bid 3♣, as that is non-forcing (10-11 with clubs). The convenient bid is Forcing 2N. If partner shows a 3-crd club fit then we will steer the rudder towards slam, and if not, then we will pull in the sails.

Continuations over Forcing 2N

Further bidding is natural. Let's discuss two types of auctions.

Opener has rebid his suit after a two-over-one response

We'll take the following case:

1♥ 2♣
 2♥ 2N

Responser's bids:

- 3♣ = club fit, weaker than an immediate raise on the previous round,
- 3♦ = 6 hearts, 4 diamonds, minimum
- 3♥ = 6 hearts
- 3♠ = 5 hearts, 4 spades, weaker than 2♠ on the previous round
- 3N = 5332

It's up to the individual how to handle a 6-crd suit with a fit for partner (factors such as suit quality may be considered).

Opener has bid a second suit

Opener repeats the second suit with 5-5 distribution, the first suit with 6-4 distribution, a tripleton with 5431 distribution, or 3N with 5422. Opener may indicate extra strength with a jump.

1♥	2♣
2♦	2N
3♥	

Opener is showing extras with 6-4 distribution. With a minimum hand (11-13) opener first bids 2♥ (non-forcing) and on the next round (if he gets a chance) shows diamonds.

Note: Forcing 2N should not be confused with '2N after a Major fit' (see next).

2N after a Major Fit

When one player bids a major suit, and the other raises to the two-level it makes little sense to play 2N (if we open 1♠, partner bids 2♠, and we have the desire to stop in 2N, it means we should have opened 1N and not 1♠). The 2N bid in this situation plays a role as a forcing asking bid (as opposed to bidding a new suit which shows what we have).

2N with only game interest

Over a 1♥ (1♠) opening and raise, 2N has the goal of sorting out whether there is enough strength for game, and if so, which one. Opener commonly has a balanced hand (since he didn't bid a new suit).

1♠	2♠	
2N	3♠	= "I barely have my 2♠ bid."
1♠	2♠	
2N	3N	= Pretty good hand with no ruffing potential. "Can we play 3N?"
1♠	2♠	
2N	4♠	= "Glad you didn't pass 2♠."
1♠	2♠	
2N	3♣	= "I have pretty good clubs. Over to you."
?		
	3♠	= "That didn't do it."
	4♠	= "Great!"
	3N	= "As you have clubs, 3N is the best chance for game."

If one of the players is a passed hand, the auction isn't too different, e.g.:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
Pass	1♣
1♥	2♥
2N	?

East should not pass. He can bid 3♥, 4♥, 3N, or show side values.

2N with unlimited hands

When responder is an unpassed hand, and his suit is raised, 2N may be bid as a preparatory slam action.

1♣ (1♦, 1♥)	1♠
2♠	2N

Opener may show a minimum opener with 3♠, in which case responder may pass. (Over a 1♦ opening the responses are described in detail in the '1♦ Opening' chapter).

If however opener bids something other than 3♠, the auction is forcing to game, e.g.:

1♣(1♦)	1♠
2♠	2N
3♣	3♠

In the above sequence, 3♠ is forcing, requesting cue-bids.

Magister

The Magister convention (sometimes a.k.a. 'Pro') is an artificial asking 2♣ used by responder after showing a major on the first round of the auction. Examples:

a)	1♣	1♥
	1N	2♣
b)	1♣	1♥
	1♠	2♣
c)	1♥	1♠
	1N	2♣

Note:

1♦ 1♥
1♠ 2♣

is not Magister, but fourth-suit forcing – the main issue is confirming a club stopper (see ‘1♦ Opening’).

Sign-off in clubs

Rebidding clubs on the next round shows a sign-off (“partner, pass”), e.g.:

1♣ 1♠
1N 2♣
2♠ 3♣

Responder has few HCP (7-10) and 5(6) clubs. He wants to play 3♣.

Invitational strength

We may use the Magister convention with 10-12 HCP and 5 cards in the major. Here our goal is to figure out whether we have game chances, and if so, then whether to play in our suit or NT (with the same strength but not 5 cards the convention is not needed, and a natural 2N invite bid will work).

Game-forcing

Also any hand with which we want to force to game qualifies for Magister. The convention facilitates determining the best game, while at the same time allowing slam investigation.

Continuations

As a rule, opener has 4 possible responses to Magister:

- 1) 2♦ = minimum (12-13) without 3-crd support for responder’s major
- 2) 2 of responder’s major, e.g.

1♦ 1♥
1N 2♣
2♥

or

1♦ 1♠
1N 2♣
2♠

This bid shows a minimum opener (12-13) with 3-crd support for responder’s suit.

- 3) 2 of the other major, e.g.

1♦ 1♥
1N 2♣
2♠

This shows a maximum opener (13-14) with 3-crd support.

- 4) 2N = maximum (13-14) without a fit.

The criterium according to which we qualify our hand as a “minimum” or “maximum” hand is whether opposite a semipositive variant using Magister (10-12 with a 5-crd major) we want to be in game.

Rebidding the major, e.g.

1♣ 1♥
1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2♥

implies the 10-12 variant and (at least) 5 cards. Opener may continue to 2N with shortness in responder’s suit or as a tactical bid (at matchpoints).

2N after Magister in a sequence like:

1♦ 1♠
1N 2♣
2♥ 2N

is forcing! (with the 10-12 variant we would have bid 2♠).

Other bids are natural and forcing (except 3♣).

Example Magister auctions:

1♦ 1♠
1N 2♣
2♦ 2♠
Pass

Playing a 7-crd spade fit with 22-24 HCP. Opener has no reason to remove to 2N.

1♣ 1♥

1 ♠	2 ♣
2 ♥	2N
3N	Pass

Reaching 3N despite the 8-crd heart fit. Responder knows that opener has 4333 with 4 spades (he would have had to have shown a side 4-crd suit with a 4432) and sets the best contract (it might be the only makable game).

1 ♣	1 ♠
1N	2 ♣
2N	3 ♥
4 ♦...	

No success in finding a spade fit. Responder tries to find a heart fit and strikes gold. Opener shows a heart fit, and a diamond cue-bid in the process. Besides information on the heart fit partner knows about the doubleton spade, maximum opening, no club cue, and diamond cue. He should have an easy decision on whether to go to slam or not.

Note 1: As a consequence of using Magister it's very important to play a jump by responder in a new suit as guaranteeing at least 5-5 distribution:

1 ♣	1 ♠
1N	3 ♥

responder shows a game-forcing hand with at least 5-5 in spades and hearts. With a strong hand but just 4 hearts it's necessary to first go through Magister 2♣, and then at the next chance introduce hearts.

Note 2: Responses to Magister are extended to the 3-level after a 1♣ opening (see '1♣ Opening').

En Passant

En Passant bids are used in situations where trumps have already been agreed. This bid shows a suit in which the bidder holds a stopper. The goal is to determine whether it's better to play in NT or a suit, e.g.:

1 ♦	2 ♦
2 ♥	3 ♣

The 2♦ bid is forcing for one round (10+ HCP, see '1♦ Opening'). Opener shows a 4-crd heart suit naturally (over a 2♦ response, 2-of-a-major is natural), and responder bids 3♣, showing possession of a club stopper. Bypassing spades communicates the lack of a stopper in that suit. If opener doesn't have one either, then 3N goes out the window.

1 ♣	1N
2 ♦	2 ♥
2 ♠	2N
3N	Pass

Opener shows a strong club with at least 4 diamonds. Responder's 2♥ bid is en passant, since the preceding 1N bid denied a 4-crd major. 2♠ by opener shows a spade stopper and implies worry about clubs (the only suit in which nobody has shown a stopper). Responder holds the club stopper, and so positions himself to declare.

An 'en passant'ish' bid may hold a natural meaning:

West	East
1 ♣	1N
2 ♦	3 ♦
3 ♥	3N
4 ♣...	

When a diamond fit has successfully been found, one would think that 3♥ would be en passant, with the goal of finding stopper for 3N. But as soon as West removes 3N, East must rethink his evaluation of the 3♥ bid – it was natural, showing a side (4-crd) suit in order to search for slam.

Note: En passant is not used when the enemy has bid. Here bidding the enemy suit (or one of them) does not show a stopper, but asks for a stopper (see 'Western cue').

Drury

In modern bridge, third-seat openers (after two passes) have a lower minimum HCP requirement. Sometimes in fourth-seat as well (particularly in the majors).

In these situations bidding 2N as an invitational hand (even more so if just 3 cards) may lead to going down at the 3-level. In order to avoid this unpleasant eventuality, we use the Drury convention.

Drury is the name of an artificial 2♣ response to partner's third- or fourth-seat 1♥ or 1♠ opening. This bid guarantees a 3+-crd fit and at least a good 9 HCP.

We even use this convention opposite partner's 1M overcall! In this case, the above condition about being a passed hand is not required.

Continuations over Drury

The 1M opener has the following bids at his disposal:

2♦ = a little better than an immediate 2M negative rebid.

rebid the major = sub-minimum opening – no desire to go any higher.

new suit = help suit game try.

(In WJ2000, the 2♦ and 2M rebids held reverse meanings, but "everyone else" plays the above agreement – so why fight it?)

Slam Bidding

The treatments included in this chapter differ from those adopted in WJ2000. The most significant change is reversing the first two response to Blackwood. At the same time, we introduce Exclusionary Blackwood (a.k.a. Voidwood). Preceding these additional slam conventions is a short introduction to the types of slams. It has as a goal showing suitable slam conventions for individual kinds of slams.

Types of Slams

One can distinguish several fundamental types of slams:

- those based on strong hands,
- those based on strong hands and ruffing values,
- those based on lots of tricks in just two suits,
- those based on shortness,
- those based on “freak” distribution.

Strong hands

In order to make slam (in NT) without a fit (not even a “working” one, being a source of tricks) we usually need no less than 33-34 HCP (36-37 to for grand).

With a trump fit, but with no particularly great ruffing potential, minimum strength for slam is about 32 HCP (35 for grand).

This is the type of slam easiest to bid – just count up the HCP (and possibly wheel out Blackwood). Unfortunately, slams based on raw power alone are the least frequent.

Strong hands with ruffing potential

Let’s say we pick up: ♠ K2 ♥ KQ2 ♦ A432 ♣ A432 (resembling hands we held in the discussion on Forcing 2N).

Assume we know partner has 5 hearts and a minimum opener. Let’s give him AJT98 hearts, with the Ace of spades, and a minor King.

- If partner has 4 spades, such as: ♠ A543 ♥ AJT98 ♦ K5 ♣ 65, then thanks to two ruffs in dummy, small slam is icy cold.
- If partner has 3 spades, e.g.: ♠ A43 ♥ AJT98 ♦ K5 ♣ 765, then slam has no chance, but 11 tricks is certain.
- If partner has a doubleton spade, but 4 cards in a minor, e.g.: ♠ A3 ♥ AJT98 ♦ K765 ♣ 65, then slam is impossible, 5♥ has a chance of making (on a 3-2 diamond break), but 11 tricks is not cold.
- If partner has 2533 distribution, like ♠ A3 ♥ AJT98 ♦ K65 ♣ 765 then after a club lead we can’t even dream of making 5.

These examples show that for slam-bidding with strong hands and ruffing potential, partner should describe the distribution of his hand even when a fit has already been found.

Another lesson culled from this example is that slam bidding begins in the early rounds of the auction (when partners are showing their suits), and not just the normal high level we associate with it.

Slams based on strong hands with ruffing values require about 30 HCP between the hands (above we set in place slam with 28 HCP, but that does not occur too often).

These types of slams occur significantly more frequently than the first kind discussed. Thus they require more precision in bidding – for bidding slam responder must have in his arsenal some way (e.g. Forcing 2N) – to learn about 4 spades, ask for Aces (needing two), and ask for Kings (needing one).

Tricks in two suits

A clear example of this type of slam is:

North: ♠ A32 ♥ AJT98 ♦ K32 ♣ 32
South: ♠ 54 ♥ KQ2 ♦ AQJT9 ♣ A54

As you can see, slam is cold in diamonds, hearts, or NT, since there are two Aces plus 5 tricks in each red suits (12 in all). Often however one of the suits requires some ruffs, e.g.

North: ♠ 432 ♥ AKQJT2 ♦ K2 ♣ 32
South: ♠ A65 ♥ 43 ♦ AQ543 ♣ A65

With the above hands slam generally makes if diamonds break no worse than 4-2. In that case the fifth diamond provides a discard (it doesn’t take a genius to figure out that with this hand the best slam is in hearts).

The average honor strength necessary for making this type of slam is 28 HCP. These slams occur more often than those discussed prior, but they require even more accurate bidding methods. In the above hands the key to the hand is the King of diamonds. If North has, instead of the King of diamonds, another King (e.g. in clubs), then slam’s percentage falls drastic (100% to 50% in the first example, and 84% to 18% in the second). In bidding this type of slam we must use ‘cue-bids’ which allows us to show Aces or Kings in suits.

Shortness

Slams based on shortness have yielded (and require) the most advanced gadgets. This is because this type of slam is the most common. The goal of the auction is to find out whether one partner’s shortness is wasted opposite the honors of the other.

Let’s assume that we have set trumps and we have learned that partner has a void in a side suit. We have in this suit:

AKQ,
xxx.

In both cases we get exactly the same number of tricks, but in the second case slam requires 9 HCP less.

For bidding slams based on shortness (singleton or void) we need special methods to show the shortness. These are the ‘splinter’, ‘mini-splinter’, and ‘shortness-cuebid without a jump’.

In a slam auction, when one of the hands contains a void, we have two more conventions available: ‘Exclusion Blackwood’ and ‘6 of a short suit’.

When bidding slams based on shortness it ordinarily requires 27 HCP outside of a singleton. A similar number outside a void may be sufficient for slam.

Freak distribution

Slams based on freak distribution – few points, great number of trumps, and unbalanced distribution in both hands, one cannot bid scientifically – and these same conditions means that both sides are going to be in the auction. Here the basic question is: how high do we compete? (the premium for a slam is of secondary importance, since the enemy as a rule has a cheap sacrifice). The convention which is most valuable to answering the question: “How high do we bid?” is the fit-showing jump, discussed in the section: ‘1♥ opening’.

When slam is not cold

In order to make slam, it’s necessary to have the chance to take 12 tricks. While this is a requirement, it’s not the only thing.

Slam won’t be good, if two Aces are missing (or an Ace and the King of trumps). In this case it’s advisable to use Blackwood.

Indeed, we can’t make slam when a certain side suit is off two quick losers (the Ace and King), and we don’t have shortness in the suit. Cue-bids are made for this situation.

Roman Keycard Blackwood – 1430

Roman Keycard Blackwood asks for number of keycards – the four Aces and the King of trumps. By trumps we mean the agreed suit or (if a suit has not been set) the last bid suit. Examples:

- a) 1♦ 1♥
3♥ 4N
- b) 1♠ 4N
- c) 1♥ 1♠
3♦ 4N

In example a) the agreed suit is hearts, in b) spades (the only bid suit), and in c) diamonds (the last bid suit).

RKC 1430 (this number is easy to remember since it’s the score for a vulnerable major-suit small slam) means: the first step shows 1 or 4 keycards, the second – 3 or 0 (or, if you wish, 0 or 3).

In the major version of Blackwood (as described in WJ2000) the first step (5♣) shows 0 or 3 keycards. Note, however, that when clubs is trumps the “semipositive” response of 5♦ overshoots a possible contract of 5♣ (certainly the 5♣ response – zero keycards – occurs very rarely). Many pairs have switched the responses then when clubs are trumps. This leads however to inevitable memory lapses. Some clever guy then came up with the idea that since reversing the responses is beneficial when clubs are trumps, and for the other suits it makes no difference (since over both 5♣ and 5♦ you can play in trumps at the 5-level), then it’s best to reverse the 5♣ and 5♦ responses for the other trump suits as well.

The idea works so often and is so commonly used that I can integrate it into WJ05.

When isn’t 4N Blackwood?

A 4N bid is not Blackwood when:

- 1) Raising a NT bid – here 4N is invitational to slam. Examples:
1N 4N
“Do you have a maximum opener?”

- 1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2N
3N 4N

“I don’t have a fit for your suits, but play me for about 19 HCP. Do we have enough for slam?”

- 1♣ 2N
4N

“I have a strong club: 18-19 HCP. But slam is still bad if you don’t have some extras.”

- 2) One of the players bids 3N and the other partner makes a slam try in a minor. This try is not accepted (the first player returns to NT):

- 1♠ 2♥
3♣ 3N
4♣ 4N

- 3) 1N transfer
accept 4N
(see ‘1N Opening’)

When is 4N Blackwood?

In all other cases, 4N is Blackwood.

Responses

- 5♣ = 1 or 4 keycards,
- 5♦ = 0 or 3 keycards,
- 5♥ = 2 or 5 keycards with no King,
- 5♠ = 2 or 5 keycards with one King,
- 5N = 2 or 5 keycards with two Kings,
- 6-bids = partnership agreement.

If responding 5♣ or 5♦ with three (four) keycards, and partner bids 5 of the agreed trump suit, then you have to then raise to the 6-level.

For regular partnerships only: In my experience and observation, the agreements of the top pairs seem to indicate that after asking for Aces, rather than asking for Kings it's better to check on the Queen of trumps. For instance, with spades agreed:

3N 5♦ (0 or 3)
5♥ = "Do you have the Queen of trumps?"

I am not pushing this into WJ05 since I think that one key change (reversing the Blackwood responses) in the system at a time is enough.

Exclusion Blackwood

When we are searching for slam and we have a void somewhere, then Blackwood is not of much use.

Let's say we pick up this gift from the card gods : ♠ AKQ432 ♥ AKQ432 ♦ 2 ♣ --.

Let's assume that in the preceding auction partner has set spades as trumps. How do we find out for sure if partner has the Ace of diamonds? Blackwood does no good, if partner shows just one Ace.

The answer to this situation is Exclusion Blackwood.

After suit agreement, a jump in a new suit to the 5-level, or 4♠ when hearts is trumps, is Exclusion Blackwood – showing a void in the bid suit and asking for number of keycards not including the Ace of the bid suit.

A key restriction is: before this bid, trumps must unambiguously have been set (in order not to risk a misunderstanding).

Examples:

1♣ 1N
2♠ 3♠
5♦

Diamond void, Exclusion Blackwood.

1♥ 2♣
2♦ 3♥
4♠

Spade void, Exclusion Blackwood.

The responses are the same as over RKC 1430: the first step = 1 or 4 keycards, the second step = 0 or 3, etc.

As a warning, let's look at this sequences:

1♠ 2♦
3♠ 5♣

The 3♠ bid, though showing good spades, does not demand this suit be trumps. Spades are not set as trumps – 5♣ is a natural bid.

Hoyt (King-ask)

Asking for Kings occurs over one of two responses to Blackwood: 5♣ or 5♦ (with the other responses the number of Kings is known). The King-ask is the cheapest suit above the Blackwood response that is not the trump suit.

Responses

Steps: step 1 = zero Kings, step 2 = one King, step 3 = two Kings, step 4 = three Kings. E.g.

Hearts are trumps.

a) 4N 5♣ (1 or 4)
5♦ = asks for Kings
5♥ = 0 Kings
5♠ = 1 King
5N = 2 Kings
6♣ = 3 Kings

b) 4N 5♦ (0 or 3)
?

5♠ = asks for Kings

5N – RKC 1430

It may occur that after a lively competitive auction (or after zealous cue-bidding) momentum has carried us to the 5-level. Now 4N is impossible to bid, unless you can go back in time.

In these situations the Ace-ask is 5N.

a) 1♣ (4♠) 5♥ (Pass)

5N

Asking for keycards with hearts as trumps.

b) 1♣ 1N
 2♠ 4♠
 5♣ 5♦
 5N

Asking for keycards for spades.

For opener the key was responder's diamond cue (partner guarantees a diamond control). and now the only info needed for grand slam is the number of keycards in partner's hand. Opener may have: ♠ AKQ432 ♥ A ♦ AQ432 ♣ 2.

To summarize: 5N is Blackwood only when one couldn't bid Blackwood at a lower level.

5N – Grand Slam Force

If 5N is not Blackwood – then it is 'Grand Slam Force'.

5N may be Grand Slam Force if:

a) Blackwood has been bid, e.g.

...
 4N (RKC) 5♦
 5N

b) 4N has not been bid (when 5N is a jump):

1♣ 1N
 2♥ 3♥
 5N = Grand Slam Force

1♣ 1N
 2♥ 3♥
 4♣ 4♠
 5N = Grand Slam Force

Responses

- 6♣ = 0 top honors in trumps,
- 6♦ = 1 top honor in trumps,
- 6♥ = 2 top honors,
- 7 in trump suit = all 3 top honors.

Trump-Invite

A trump-invite is a jump to the 5-level in a major trump suit. This bid means: "Partner, pass with weak trumps, and bid 6 with good trumps."

When it's the top trumps (Ace, King, and Queen) we need, we bid 5N.

It remains to be explained the definition of "good" trumps. We play that good trumps includes two top honors (Ace, King, or Queen). Two suggested exceptions to the rule:

a) One of the partners has shown a good 6-crd suit. Here a good suit means 3 of the top 4 honors. Here's an example:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
1♠	2♦
3♠	5♠

North bids 3♠ showing a good 6+-crd suit (with a weaker suit he should bid something else, like 2N). South bids 5♠ showing that he doesn't have any spade honors nor a 3-crd fit. To be encouraged, North must hold at least 3 trump honors – otherwise slam is not a good bet.

b) The "invitee" has shown a negative hand (0-5 HCP). Here the trump invite can be accepted with one trump honor. Example:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
	1♣
1♦	2♥
2♠	5♠

North shows a negative hand. South nevertheless wants him to bid slam with one top trump. Probably South has one of the following types of trump support: AT32, AJ2, KJ32, QJ32.

Cue-bids

A cue-bid is used to inform partner of slam interest as well as first- or second-round control in the bid suit.

Honor and shortness cue-bids

A cue-bid in a suit in which we hold the Ace or King is an honor cue-bid. One in which we have a singleton or void is called a shortness cue-bid.

First- and second-round cue-bids

A cue-bid of an Ace or void is a first-round cue, while a cue of a King or singleton is a second-round cue-bid.

How do you know if a bid is a cue-bid?

A cue-bid is a bid at the 4-level or higher (or 3♠ in the case hearts is trumps) if trumps have been set, or if this bid cannot logically be a natural bid. In the latter case, it sets the last-bid suit as trumps. Here are some examples:

1♠ 2♦

2♥ 3♠
4♣

The 3♠ bid sets spades. 4♣ is a cue-bid.

1♣ 1N
2♥ 3♥
3♠

Hearts is set with 3♥. 3♠ is a cue-bid.

1♠ 2♣
3♠ 4♦

Opener's 3♠ denies 4 diamonds (with 6 spades, 4 diamonds, and a strong hand, he should first rebid 2♦). Thus the 4♦ bid is not looking for a fit, and so is a cue-bid setting spades as trumps (spades are the last-bid suit).

1♠ 2♦
3♠ 4♣

The 4♣ bid is ambiguous. Opener initially assumes it is a cue-bid for spades. However if responder rebids clubs on the next round (5♣ or 6♣) then it means that he has a long 2-suiter in the minors and opener must respect that.

When is it not a cue-bid?

No cue-bid (except 3♠ if hearts are trumps) is at the 3-level.

a) West East
1♣ 1♠
2♦ 2N
3♦

Over West's bubrotka bid, East shows a strong hand with 5 trumps. West reveals a 5-crds diamond suit. We might be able to bid a slam based on running tricks in two long suits.

b) 1♠ 2♠
3♦

3♦ is a help-suit try, with game being the highest possible goal.

c) 1♣ 1♠
2♠ 3♦

Again 3♦ is just a help-suit try. The difference from case b) is that responder here is unlimited – slam can't be ruled out (with good diamond support opener may consider offering a cue-bid in case responder has slam interest).

If a minor has been set as trumps, then a 3-level bid is **still not a cue-bid**. This bid has a natural or semi-natural meaning – showing a stopper (see 'En Passant'). The priority is figuring out whether 3N is safe. Let's look at the following sequences:

a) West East
1♣ 1N
2♦ 3♦
3♥ 3N

Pass

b) West East
1♣ 1N
2♦ 3♦
3♥ 3N

4♣ 4♥
4♠

In both cases West's 2♦ bid shows a strong club with at least 4 diamonds and East with 3♦ shows a 4-crds fit. Next West shows (semi-)natural hearts. In example a) East has stoppers in spades and clubs so he bids 3N. Here West is content with the chances at NT.

In example b) West doesn't let the auction die at 3N – this shows distinct slam interest. The 3♥ bid was not en passant, and therefore was natural. West would really like to know whether he has any heart losers (e.g. he could hold hearts such as A432 or KJ32).

Why do we use cue-bids?

Confirming controls in all suits

For finding stoppers we use the principle of **cue-bidding up the line**. This means showing the cheapest stopper independent of the quality of control (first- or second-round), for example the sequence:

West East
1♠ 2♣
2♥ 3♠
4♣ 4♦
4♠

The 3♠ bid sets spades and starts cue-bids. West shows a club control, East a diamond control. West's 4♠ bid shows that he doesn't have a heart control. If East doesn't have a control in this suit either, he should pass.

Sometimes we are forced to make a cue-bid at the 5-level.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♣	1N
2♥	4♥
4♠	?

Despite the double-negative discouragement from partner, West continues on. 4♠ is a cue-bid. The expectation: a cue-bid in a minor. If East has an Ace or King of clubs or diamonds, then he should show it (when he has a cue-bid in both minors, then he should start with the cheapest: 5♣ - but in that case why did he discourage with 4♥?).

Showing slam interest

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♦
2♥	3♠
4♣	

East suggests to partner playing slam based on tricks in two suits: spades and diamonds. West has interest, but doesn't feel so strongly about it that he can go past game. West shows his slam intentions with the aid of a 4♣ cue-bid. A typical West hand: ♠ KJ932 ♥ K432 ♦ J2 ♣ AJ. If West had a strong opinion on slam chances then he would be able to bid 4♠ ("I really don't want to play slam.") or 4N ("it's decided that only in every case sorting out keycards").

Let's look at this sequence:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♣
2♠	3♠
4♠	

The first response (2♣) may be preparatory but in that case East would try to extract more information via a 2N rebid (see 'Forcing 2N'). The 3♠ bid is thus forcing and shows that 2♣ was naturally showing a suit. Similar to the preceding example, East proposes slam based on tricks in two long suits. It is not likely that West hasn't a cue-bid (he opened the bidding!), but with the 4♠ bid he wants to show a hand with absolutely no slam interest.

Setting trumps in a way that doesn't burn up bidding space

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♦
2♥	2N
3♥	4♣

East now knows that his partner (besides 5 spades) has 5 hearts as well. This information is very good news from his hand's perspective and he wants to suggest slam. If he wanted to set partner's spades, then he could do this in comfort with a convenient 3♠ bid. But how to set hearts, since 4♥ would suggest playing there?

East may strongly raise hearts with the aid of a 4♣ cue-bid.

When is cue-bidding over partner's cue-bid obligatory?

Showing a first- or second-round control is required **below game in response to partner's cue-bid**.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♣
2♥	2N
3♥	4♣
?	

If West has a diamond cue-bid, then he must show it no matter whether he likes his hand or not. If partner wants to inquire about any extra values, then he will bid 4♥ ("We have controls in all suits, but it's not certain whether we should go on.")

Note: The exception to the rule of the obligatory "responsive cue-bid" is the auction over a splinter (see 'Splinters').

In a slam investigation, it's also obligatory to show an honor in partner's suit:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
1♠	2♣
2♥	3♠

Partner is not setting spades at once, nor is he trying to investigate our hand with the help of a forcing 2N. In this way he is showing a hand with which we may make slam based on a solid side source of tricks. If we have only the Ace or King of clubs, we have a responsibility to help partner, showing the honor with a cue-bid (here: 4♣).

Must a cue-bid in partner's suit be an honor?

A cue-bid must be an honor if it is bid in partner's known 5+-crd suit:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♦

East promises 5 diamonds. Later in the auction, if West wants to cue-bid in diamonds, then this should be an honor cue-bid.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♣

The 2♣ bid may be contrived (see '1♥ Opening' and '1♠ Opening'). If later East never confirms that clubs are natural, then a cue-bid by West may just be a shortness cue-bid. If East "naturalizes" clubs, then a cue-bid by West should show an honor.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♥	1♠
3♠	4♥

4♥ is an honor cue-bid.

Playing that a cue-bid in partner's 5+ crd suit is an honor cue-bid is designed to find those slams based on running two long suits.

For contrast, let's look at the sequence:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♥	

In this sequence, 3♠ by East is an invitation to game, and West has a strong club or a freak club-spade hand. The 4♥ cue-bid does not have to be an honor, since the 1♥ response did not promise 5 cards.

Splinter

A splinter bid is an artificial jump to the 3- or 4-level. It shows shortness in the bid suit and agrees the last-bid suit as trumps.

The term "artificial jump" is explained with:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♥	2♦
3♠	

In order to show a strong hand with 5 hearts and 4 spades, West does not have to jump to the 3-level. A 2♠ bid (reverse) would show a maximum opener (15-17). 3♠ in this situation is a non-natural jump – showing shortness in spades and 4-crds diamond support.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♦	1♠
4♣	

West would not jump to this level to show a strong diamond-club hand – 3♣ would be enough. 4♣ is therefore a splinter with a 4-crds spade fit.

But, as further illustration (and as a warning) let's look at this sequence:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♦	1♠
1N	3♥

East is showing a strong 5-5 hand with spades and hearts.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	2♣
3♦	

West is showing a strong (15-17) 5-5 hand in spades and diamonds.

We can deduce from above: *A jump-bid in a new suit at the 3-level is a splinter if it is higher than that player's original suit.*

Other sequences at the 3-level may show a splinter:

1♦	1♠
3♥	

1♣	2♦
3♥	

Each 3♥ is a splinter. With a strong club and hearts opener bids a simple 2♥. Responder at that point doesn't know whether it's a strong club, but he can't pass. (He'll learn about it soon enough if partner rebids hearts.)

What distributions may employ a splinter?

It's always been that a splinter must have 4-crds support for partner's suit. To this rule we can specify the following exceptions with which a splinter may include a 3-crds fit as well:

- 1) Partner shows a 6-crds suit, e.g.

West	East
1♣	2♠
4♦	

East's 2♠ bid shows a very good 6-cr'd suit. West with short diamonds makes a splinter even with 3-cr'd support.

2) Partner reveals a hand that force to game by itself:

West	East
1♣	1♦
2♦	2♥
2♠	4♣

West shows an 'Acol' spade hand, and East a double-negative or a negative with hearts. 4♣ is a splinter for spades with at least 3-cr'd support.

3) A delayed splinter:

West	East
1♠	2♣
2♠	4♦

East had the option of splintering immediately. He didn't do this, since he didn't have 4-cr'd support for spades (he has 3 cards). First East is taking the time to show 5 clubs (simple arithmetic says that if he has 3-cr'd support and a singleton diamond, clubs must be 5 cards).

Continuations over a splinter

We will concentrate on one particular case throughout this section – the sequence 1♠-4♣.

After a splinter we have to categorize our hand depending on how well it fits with partner's shortness. We may distinguish five types of hands:

a) **Hopeless.** Minimum opener, weak trumps, and inappropriate honors (King, Queen, Jack) in partner's short suit, and few cards to ruff. This may be a hand like: ♠ J5432 ♥ Q432 ♦ AJ ♣ KJ. With this hand we bid a negative 4♣, even if 4♣ is doubled by RHO.

b) **Weak.** Bad honors in partner's short suit, but one of the other "hopeless" requirements (minimum opener, weak trumps, few cards to ruff) is not fulfilled. Examples of this hand:

- ♠ QJ432 ♥ QJ32 ♦ AJ ♣ KJ (15 HCP),
- ♠ KQ432 ♥ Q432 ♦ K2 ♣ K2 (good trumps),
- ♠ J5432 ♥ Q2 ♦ AJ ♣ KJ32 (lots of clubs to ruff).

All of the hands hold some chance of slam, but in order not to tempt fate, we have to respond with a negative 4♣. However if the friendly opponents give you the chance to distinguish the weak hand from the hopeless hand with a thoughtless double of partner's bid, then we can grab this opportunity. With a 4♣ sign-off over a double of a splinter, we specify a hopeless hand, while passing shows at least a weak hand. Passing, and then signing off on the next round narrows our range to weak, exactly.

c) **Semipositive.** Hands offering a chance of slam if partner is in the upper half of the range promised for the splinter and all suits are controlled. With the semipositive hand we cue-bid below game over partner's splinter. Examples:

- ♠ KJ432 ♥ J2 ♦ K32 ♣ A32. We bid 4♦. If partner has: ♠ Q765 ♥ AK43 ♦ AQ54 ♣ 4, then we play slam, and with any less it makes no sense to push.
- ♠ KJ432 ♥ K32 ♦ J2 ♣ A32. We bid 4♥ and consent to any verdict partner delivers.

d) **Positive.** Hands that give a chance of slam if all suits are controlled, even if partner has a minimum splinter. With positive hands we intend to push beyond game. Thus we have several possible bids:

- 1) If we have a cue-bid to show below game, then we make it, and later proceed past game.
 - ♠ KJ432 ♥ AK2 ♦ K32 ♣ 32. We bid 4♦, and over partner's 4♣ we continue with 5♥ ("Partner, it doesn't matter that you weren't very confident with your splinter – the Queen of trumps would be suitable, as would AQJx diamonds, or a doubleton in some red suit").
 - ♠ AKQ32 ♥ KJ2 ♦ 32 ♣ 432. After showing a heart cue and after the expected 4♣, we take another step: 5♠, informing partner that we have excellent trumps, but no diamond control, no second heart control, and no Ace of clubs.
 - ♠ AQ432 ♥ AK32 ♦ J2 ♣ 32. We bid 4♥, and over 4♣ - 5♥, promising that slam simply depends on a diamond control (although something in hearts would be useful).
 - ♠ AQ432 ♥ KQ2 ♦ 432 ♣ A2. We first show a diamond control, and over the expected 4♣ we show the Ace of clubs (we don't show a King opposite a singleton) with a 5♣ bid. Partner knows we have a hole in diamonds.
- 2) We don't have a cue below game – here we have to cue above game. Let's assume for a change that the first round of the bidding was the following: 1♠-4♦. With ♠ AQ432 ♥ J2 ♦ 432 ♣ AK2 we bid 5♣, showing a positive hand, club control, and no heart control.
- 3) We raise the splinter suit if we have the Ace and we cannot make a cue-bid below game. In our original example: 1♠-4♣, we bid this with e.g.: ♠ AQ432 ♥ Q2 ♦ Q2 ♣ A432.
- 4) We bid five of the opened suit with very good trumps, if we have control in no side suit, nor the Ace of the splinter suit. This we bid with e.g.: ♠ AKQ32 ♥ QJ2 ♦ Q2 ♣ 432.
- 5) We find out the number of Aces. This is the simplest way to continue over a splinter and we should always consider this as one of the first options. For example, with: ♠ QJ432 ♥ KQ2 ♦ K2 ♣ A32 small slam needs 3 of the 5 keycards and immediately we ask. While with: ♠ A65432 ♥ KQ2 ♦ 2 ♣ A32 we are satisfied with just 2 keycards.

e) **Slam-forcing.** This hand would only be those with which we don't have to ascertain controls in the side suits, e.g.: ♠ KQ432 ♥ KQ2 ♦ A ♣ 5432. Sometimes we may guarantee slam without stoppers in all side suits. With ♠ AQ432 ♥ AKQ2 ♦ Q2 ♣ 32 we can be sure of slam despite no diamond control – partner must have "something" for his splinter.

With slam-forcing hands we skip immediately to Blackwood. If lacking exactly one keycard, and we don't have an Ace in the short suit, then we can use the convention '6 of a splinter'.

'6 of a splinter'

This convention asks for a void in the splinter suit. It's simply raising a splinter suit to the 6-level. There are just 2 responses: grand slam in trumps = "I have a void", small slam = "I don't have a void."

How strong is a splinter?

The strength of a splinter depends exactly on partner's maximum strength. If there is any question, try this algorithm: if trumps are set and one of the partners has shortness, then slam is certain when outside the short suit the partnership has 29-30 HCP, and percentage when 27-28 HCP, and can possibly make with a longer side suit and fitting honors with 25-26 HCP. For various classes of bids, splinter strengths are as follows:

- a) over a 1-level opening in a suit : 12-16 HCP,
- b) over a 1N opening: 11-14 HCP,
- c) over our opening at the 1-level and partner's 1-level response in a suit: 15-17 HCP,
- d) over our opening at the 1-level and partner's 2-level response in a suit: 12-16 HCP.

From this we can see that splinters cannot be made with too much strength – partner may sign-off over a splinter with hands that can still make slam.

Minisplinters in WJ05

In WJ05 we introduce the minisplinter:
 1♥ - 3♠ = minisplinter; any shortness,
 1♠ - 3N = minisplinter; any shortness.

A minisplinter we bid with less strength or fewer tricks than a usual splinter, (8)9-11(12) HCP.

This forces:

1♥ 3N

to show a normal splinter (12-16) with short spades.

Opener may satisfy his interest by asking for the short suit:

a) 1♥ 3♠
 3N ?
 4♣, 4♦ = shortness
 4♥ = short spades

b) 1♠ 3N
 4♣ ?
 4♦, 4♥ = shortness
 4♠ = short clubs

In about 8 cases out of 10 the best bid over a minisplinter is returning to trumps. Let's analyze the situation for the beginning auction 1♠-3N (minisplinter).

- 1) ♠ AQJ32 ♥ KQJ ♦ QJ ♣ J32. Even if partner has a minisplinter in clubs, then for slam we need the King of spades, Ace of hearts, and Ace-King of diamonds. Partner cannot hold this hand. We bid 4♠. If partner bids 4♣ immediately over the 1♠ opening, then we at least have to offer a 4♥ cue-bid.
- 2) ♠ AKJT3 ♥ Q2 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ Q2. It seems that partner has shortness in hearts or clubs. This is just guessing. Opposite a singleton heart, for six we need the Queen of spades, Ace of diamonds, and Ace-King of clubs. We don't even have to ask. To contrast – over a strong 4♥ splinter for sure we won't sign off in 4♠.
- 3) ♠ KQT32 ♥ 5432 ♦ AQ ♣ A2. Ask!! Opposite a singleton heart we are playing slam since the Ace of spades and King of diamonds is enough for six.
- 4) ♠ QJ5432 ♥ – ♦ AQ2 ♣ A432. If partner has a singleton club then slam is close enough to touch. You don't want to let this one slip by.
- 5) ♠ K65432 ♥ A ♦ 2 ♣ A5432. If partner has a singleton club (and everything suggests this) then slam is cold. If partner responds to an Ace ask showing two, then we can consider grand.

Note: I don't recommend that 1♥-3♠ be a minisplinter in spades with little defense, since it may give the opponents the chance to discover a spade fit (it's better to judge to bid a tactical 4♥).

Auto-splinter

An auto-splinter is the name for a splinter whose bidder is setting not his partner's suit, but his own. This situation arises exclusively when partner has not shown any suit.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1N	2♥
2♠	4♣

East is setting trumps – spades, and showing short clubs (if he wanted to play clubs, he would have done so with a 3♣ rebid).

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♣	1♥
1N	3♠

West has not shown any suit (1♣ is not natural). 3♠ is an auto-splinter setting hearts. However:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♦	1♥
1N	3♠

West has shown a diamond suit. The 3♠ splinter sets partner's suit.

To sum up: the splinter for partner's suit takes precedence over an auto-splinter.

Note that the rules distinguishing the auto-splinter from a natural bid are exactly the same as in the example of the splinter. Take the auction:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♣	1♠
1N	3♥

is not an auto-splinter, but showing 5-5 distribution with spades and hearts, since a 3♥ bid is below the level of the suit shown prior by East (i.e. spades).

The rules for bidding after an auto-splinter are the same as over a normal splinter.

Enemy Interference in Slam Auctions

Over Blackwood

If the enemy dares interfere in our Blackwood auction, then we use the same step-based method as if there were no overcall (first step = 1 keycard), except we no longer compress two meanings into one: one or four, and zero or three:

- Pass = 1 keycard,
- Double = 0 keycards,
- Step 1 = 2 keycards,
- Step 2 = 3 keycards, etc.

Therefore if over Blackwood the enemy steps in with 5♦, then 5♥ shows 2 keycards, 5♠ 3 keycards, and 5N 4 keycards.

The reason why we don't treat this the same as the responses: 0 or 3 (1 or 4), is that partner might not guess correctly which of the cases we have. (In an uncontested auction this threat doesn't exist – if asker is not sure then he assumes the pessimistic version and responder pushes to slam with the optimistic version.)

Vs. double of a Blackwood response

Redouble = penalty (“Please be serious”).

Other bids = as if no double (we don't foresee a ‘pass’ response).

Vs. double of a cue-bid

If the enemy doubles partner's cue-bid:

- redouble = Ace of this suit,
- cue-bid = a holding in the doubled suit that prevents a theoretical Kx(x)(x) in partner's hand from being picked up on opening lead (shortness or the Queen)
- pass = asks about quality of cue-bid, usually showing fast losers; over this, cue-bidder's calls:
 - redouble = Ace (except if the cue was a splinter) or void (especially when the cue was a splinter),
 - cue-bid = 2nd round control (singleton or King-Queen),
 - returning to trumps = King without the Queen.

Handling Enemy Interference

Vs. Takeout Double

Here the discussion extends to situations when partner has just opened, and an opponent intervenes with a double.

General rules

The treatments adopted in WJ05 differ slightly from those of WJ2000.

- Over an enemy double of our opening, responses at the 1-level are forcing, at the 2-level, non-forcing.
 - 1♥ (X) 2♣
6-10 with good clubs. “Can we buy it in a partial?”
 - 1♥ (X) 1♠
“Spades, but I may have a good hand. You can't pass yet.”
 - 1♣ (X) 2♣
“I have clubs, but little else. We can try to compete.”
- Over an enemy double of our opening, jump-shifts in a new suit are fit-showing.
 - 1♥ (X) 3♣
3♣ promises a heart fit (at least 3 cards) and a good club suit. The goal is to figure out whether to out compete the opponents' 3-level bid.
 - 1♥ (X) 4♣
4♣ shows a heart fit – at least 4 cards – and a club suit. Here the goal is to prepare for 4-level competition.

We remark that the fit-showing jump may even be made at the 2-level:

- 1♦ (X) 2♥
2♥ shows 5 hearts, a diamond fit, and is forcing to 3♦.
- 1♥ (X) 2♠
5 spades, heart fit, forcing to 3♥.

We still haven't mentioned jump-shifts over a 1♣ opening. I suggest: 9-11 with a 5+-crd suit.

- Over a 1-major opening and enemy double, jumps to 4♥ and 4♠ (partner's suit) are 100% preemptive. Over this, all passes are non-forcing.

Instead, the 3N bid is conventional. It shows a raise to 4♥ (4♠), but is stronger than an immediate 4♥ (4♠) and sets up a forcing pass if the enemy out-bids us.

- Vs. an enemy double of our 1N opening, we ignore the double (a change from WJ2000). “Systems on.” The whole world plays this – that's one argument – so there's at least something going for it. But aside from that, transferring declarership to responder's hand [with a natural bid] cannot be good – even more so in competition.

- Over an enemy double of our 1♣ opening - 1♦ is a natural, non-forcing bid without any minimum strength:

- 1♣ (Pass) 1♦ (X)
1N
= 18-20 NT

Redouble

A redouble shows a hand with 10+ HCP. The goals are both to catch the enemy doubled, and to find the best contract.

We may redouble with or without a fit for opener's suit. In the former case we should reveal our support to partner on the next round.

- 1♠ (X) XX 2♥
Pass Pass ?

2♠ shows about 10 HCP and a doubleton spade (with no serious interest in doubling 2♥ for penalty), and 3♠ shows about 10 HCP with exactly 3 spades.

Bidding over a redouble

Opener's immediate bid *below 2 of the opening suit* over fourth-seat's bid shows a minimum opening:

- a) 1♠ (X) XX 2♣
2♦ Pass ?

- b) 1♠ (X) XX 2♣
Pass Pass X Pass
2♦

In both the above sequences opener is showing he is not happy defending 2♣-X – it may be either good distribution (5-5) or shortness in clubs. In sequence b) opener is showing a stronger(!) hand.

Other situations concern when the auction has risen past the level of 2 of opener's suit, e.g.:

- 1♠ (X) XX (2♥)
3♣ Pass ?

Opener's bids indicate a good hand – he went above the safety level: 2♠, which may well have been the last makable contract, provided that opener had a minimum opening and responder a minimum redouble.

Let's add that a new suit by responder over a redouble is forcing for one round:

- 1♠ (X) XX 2♥
Pass Pass 3♣

3♣ is forcing (with a weaker hand it's better to respond initially on the preceding round with 2♣).

Raises over a double of 1♥, 1♠

Over the auction:

- 1♥ (X) ?

there are several possible ways to raise partner. We remember some from before. Let's discuss all of them:

- raising partner's suit (2♥) = weak bid (4-7 HCP depending on the vulnerability), 3-crd support,
- jump-raising partner (3♥, 4♥) = preemptive with at least 4 trumps,
- 1N = 7-9(10) HCP with **exactly** 3-crd support,
- 2N = preempt-invite (better than a preempt) or invitational; 4-crd support,
- XX = 10+ HCP, may contain 3-crd support, balanced,
- single- or double-jump shift = fit-showing jump.

As in WJ2000 we suggest pointedly distinguishing raises with 3 cards from raises with 4 cards. This information is key to making the decision whether to compete over an enemy contract.

Final note: with a 4-crd fit, we have a choice: 2N or 3 of partner's suit.

Vs. an Overcall in a Suit

Free-bids in a new suit

A new suit is forcing at the 1- and 3-level and non-forcing at the 2-level.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1♦	1♥	1♠	

In the above sequence South has at least 4 spades and asks partner to continue the auction. South may hold the strength and distribution of a 1♠ response without an intervening 1♥ overcall.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1♥	1♠	3♣	

This sequence must not be mistaken for a fit-showing jump, which we play only over an enemy takeout double. Here South has no way to show a strong hand with a redouble, so he jumps to force partner to bid. South shows 12+ HCP (the bid is game-forcing) with a good club suit.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1♠	2♥	3♣	

Theoretically, South's hand should not differ much from the previous example. It still shows clubs and is forcing. But in practice it very often isn't the same. The enemy

stole bidding space and we no longer can choose between 2♣ and 3♣. Because of this, 3♣ may be semi-natural. Opener may not pass, but must take into account that a real possibility of a weak misfit. Assume partner opens 1♠, RHO bids 2♥, and we have: ♠ J2 ♥ 32 ♦ 32 ♣ AQJT432. Theoretically we are too weak to force to game with 3♣, but despite this we simply have no choice – with a good 7-crd suit we don't want to be silent.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1♥	2♣	2♦	

South's bid is non-forcing. It shows 7-11 HCP and a pretty good diamond suit. Partner should continue bidding with a good fit or strong hand. He may also try to correct to the best contract, if he can't stand diamonds.

In a 'Brydz' bidding contest experts polled unanimously chose in the sequence 1♥-(2♣)-? a 2♦ bid with this hand: ♠ KT7 ♥ -- ♦ KQJ983 ♣ J865. I believe however that even without the diamond King, they would have chosen the exact same bid.

Based on the above, it appears to reveal a certain gap: how to show our suit when it is not so strong as to be able to jump in it, but the strength of the hand warrants forcing the auction? The solution to this problem is in the section 'Negative doubles'.

Jump-raises

A jump-raise in partner's suit to the 3-level is preemptive.

a)	1♦	(1♠)	3♦
b)	1♠	(2♥)	3♠

In both sequences the 3-level bid is preemptive and shows a weak hand with 4-crd support for partner. It wouldn't be far off to say that we bid as if the enemy had not overcalled (the difference is that I don't recommend a preempt with a stack in the enemy suit).

Strong raises

Over 1♥, 1♠ openings

Practice shows that over interference it is necessary to show positive hands with support for partner's suit. The main argument rests on the contrast between the informative style of slam bidding and non-informative game-bidding. I suggest the agreements illustrated here:

1♠ (2♣) ?

2N = game-forcing raise (at least 4 cards), unbalanced,
 3♣ = invitational raise or "semi-forcing" with a 3-crd fit

Distinguishing types of raises achieves one more goal – determining the chances of playing 3N. Several times it happens that the enemy overcall warns us of an impending ruff by 4th seat and so we decide to play 3N despite the major fit. In these situations NT is best played by opener's hand in order to avoid a possible lead through an honor into the overcaller. If we have a raise and we can play NT, we cue-bid. We bid 2N instead here when we are convinced that the final contract *cannot* be 3N (to avoid playing NT from the wrong hand).

Later bidding:

- Over a 2N bid the auction is forcing to game. If the enemy bids past our game, then pass is forcing. If the opponents are silent, opener may sign off (4♠) with a hopeless hand, and with a positive hand shows a side suit or shortness (splinter). Opener may also bid the enemy suit (here: 3♣) to show worry about the suit (e.g. Qxx or Kxx).
- Over a cue-bid (here: 3♣) opener has a choice of bids:
 3♠ = minimum opening,
 3N = accepts the invite, suggests 3N,
 4♠ = maximum opening,
 Other bids = some atypical, distributional hand

In standard, 3♣ shows an invitational hand. But I encourage the choice of this bid with an uninteresting hand that can force to game with support for partner's suit in situations when:

- 1) we don't want partner to compete too high over the opponents – we want to double if the enemy outbids us, or
- 2) we want partner to forget any thoughts of slam, or also
- 3) our hand opposite a good opening and good stoppers in the enemy suit partner can play 3N.

(Of course partner bids as if we have a limit raise, but over his negative response we plan on bidding game.)

If an opponent asks the meaning of the 3♣ cue-bid, then please explain: forcing raise; invitational to game or a minimum GF (to discourage slam).

Later in the auction we are only forced to the 3-level in opener's suit. Higher than this level, our passes are not forcing.

Over an opening 1♦

A little difficulty appears over a 1♦ opening. It doesn't seem reasonable to deprive the 2N bid of its natural meaning over this opening. In this situation it's necessary to have these agreements:

1♦ (1♠) ?

2♠ = invitational or better raise; forcing to 3♦,
 2N = natural; invite to 3N.

LHO overcalls over 1♣

Versus 2nd-hand interference, 2N and 3N are natural.

1♣ (1♠) ?

2N = natural invite to 3N

3N = to play

3♠ = "bid 3N"

As is clear, a jump-cue in the enemy suit has a special meaning. Clearly this cannot be a splinter, since no suit has been "bid". We bid this when we want to play 3N, but we want it to be played from partner's hand. The lead is better-handled from partner's side when we have these types of holdings in the overcaller's suit:

- K32 (partner may have Q4)
- A32 (partner may have KJ or Q2)
- Q32 (partner may have K4)
- AQ2 (partner may have J4 or T4)

RHO overcalls over 1♣

Let's analyze the situations when fourth-seat overcalls now. Let's assume first that partner has responded 1♦:

1♣ (Pass) 1♦ (1♥)
?

With a preparatory club we pass (pass could also be a strong club with the enemy bidding our best suit [see 'Trap Pass']). Other bids:

1♠ = 5(!) spades, strong club,
X = 15+ takeout, with the natural midi-club, or 18+, or any GF hand,
1N = 18-20 balanced, hearts stopped,
2♣ = as if no overcall,
2♦ = 18+, 5+♦, NF,
2♥ = 5♠-5 other, 18+.

If partner responded in a major, and the enemy intervenes, then a double has a special meaning:

1♣ (Pass) 1♥ (2♦)
?

Double is two-way:

- 1) support double = 3-crd support, pretty good preparatory club (see 'Support Double'),
- 2) "I have a strong club, but I can't say anything else"; therefore we might choose to double for example with a strong club and no stopper in the enemy suit, or also with the natural (15+) version with 4 spades.

In the above sequence, 3♦ (cue-bid) specifically shows a strong club with 4-crd support for partner.

To keep it simple I suggest that even over enemy interference we use Bubrotka 2♦ (if it is available).

2N and a negative double

The negative double is described in depth in its own section. But here it is necessary to mention that the double may still include the meaning: "natural invite to 3N". For example:

1♠ (2♣) X Pass
2♥ Pass ?

2N = natural; "I would have said 2N immediately, but system prevented me from bidding this."

Vs. enemy interference over an opening 1N

I propose the following agreements.

Summary: bids are natural and forcing at the 3-level and non-forcing at the 2-level.

Double of an artificial bid shows cards and sets up a force for one round.

Double of a natural bid is negative and shows competitive values.

2N over a major suit = Lebensohl (see 'Defensive Bidding').

4♦ = Texas for hearts, 4♥ = Texas for spades (provided that the overcall is at the 3-level).

Special cases:

- over X = systems on (as if no double).
- over 2♣ (2♦) showing both majors: X = cards, 2♥/2♠ = asks for stopper.
- over 2♣ (2♦) natural, X is negative, 2♥/2♠ = natural non-forcing.
- over 2♥ (2♠) X is negative, competing for a partial, 2N = Lebensohl.
- over a 3-level preempt, double is negative; bids at the 4-level are natural (except for a cue-bid); 4♦ over 3♦ = both majors 5-5.

Vs. overcalls over our 2-level openings

After a 2♣ opening and an overcall, new suits are non-forcing at the 2-level and forcing at the 3-level. 2N is natural, double is negative.

Over a 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ opening and an overcall, double is penalty. New suits are pass-or-correct: “pass if you have this suit, bid on if you don’t.”

Double for length – is it still played?

A double for length is a particular type of negative double which is used when partner may or may not hold extreme length in the enemy suit. In WJ2000 this convention was used in the sequence:

2♦ (2♠) X

2♦ would have been Wilkosz, and double said: “Partner, pass if you have spades.”

In WJ05 there is no Wilkosz (but Multi), and so no double for length. In the above sequence, double is penalty.

And what about a double over a Precision opening?

2♣ (2♠) X

Double is negative (to find a heart fit), but we should avoid it with shortness in the enemy suit, because opener may (but not necessarily) pass, if he has 4 cards in the suit.

Vs. overcalls of 2N and higher openings.

Doubles are penalty.

Reopening the auction

We are talking about the situations in which we have opened the bidding, the enemy overcalls in a suit, and partner and RHO pass.

- Double is balancing, showing shortness (at most a doubleton in the doubled suit). It does not show extras if the enemy suit does not exceed the level of 2 of opener’s suit. Let’s look at the sequences:
 - a) 1♥ (2♣) Pass (Pass)
 - X
 - b) 1♥ (2♠) Pass (Pass)
 - X

In sequence a) double does not indicate extra HCP (one can still stop in 2♥). In sequence b) double promises extras (since the enemy overcall is higher than 2♥) – here the reopening double is not obligatory.

In partner’s position, he must take this agreement into account in deciding whether to trap-pass or not.

- Bidding NT shows extra HCP:
 - a) 1♥ (1♠) Pass (Pass)
 - IN
 - b) 1♣ (1♠) Pass (Pass)
 - IN

In sequence a) opener shows 15-17 HCP and in sequence b) it represents a strong club (18-21 HCP) – in both cases it shows a balanced hand with a stopper in the enemy suit.

The Contested Auction

This section deals with the rest of the competitive bids which are “conventions”.

Negative Double

We use the negative double over partner’s 1-level opening and 2nd-hand’s overcall up to 4♦. The goal of the negative double is to find a fit in an unbid suit.

A basic requirement (the name gives it away) is that the negative double denies a fit for partner’s suit.

Finding out whether we can play in a previously unbid suit

The original (by now outmoded) version of the negative double was limited to this in its application. By making a negative double we were required to have at least 4 cards in both outstanding suits. This version of the negative double is used in WJ05 in just one sequence:

North East South
1♣ 1♦ X

South must have two 4-crd majors. Also allowed is 5 hearts and 4 spades:

1♣ (1♦) X Pass
IN Pass 2♥

South shows 5 hearts and 4 spades, non-forcing (the same maneuver cannot be made with 5 spades – with 5 spades and 4 hearts we give up a double over a 1♦ overcall and bid 1♠ instead).

In the sequence:

North East South
1♥ 1♠ X

it is probably enough that South has 4 cards in both minors. But double in this sequence may have other meanings at the same time: South may not have a good bid, with no fit for partner and no good suit.

Showing an unbid 4-crd major

If a major suit has been shown in the preceding auction, then a double has the goal of discovering a fit in the other major. The classic example is the Sputnik double:

1♦ (1♠) X

Double shows 4 hearts, however it says nothing about clubs.

Reviewing the sequences:

1♣ (2♥) X

Double promises 4 spades (2N would be natural).

1♣ (2♠) X

Double promises 4 hearts (2N would be natural).

1♦ (2♥/2♠) X

No different: double shows 4 cards in the other major.

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♥	2♣	X

“Until further notice” North treats his partner’s bid as searching for a spade fit. If therefore he is lucky enough to have four spades, then he shows them no matter how strong he is, even though it is a suit higher than his first suit. The auction though may take an odd turn:

1♥	(2♣)	X	(Pass)
2♠	(Pass)	2N	

This “un-does” South’s message about having 4 spades. The explanation of the auction can be found later.

In WJ05 the double does not promise (even denies possession of) the other major in this one unique situation:

1♣/1♦ (1♥) X

Double in this sequence shows no 4+-crd spade suit, and no heart stopper. Four spades we show naturally with 1♠.

Forcing the auction with a 5+-crd suit

In WJ a new suit at the 2-level without a jump over an enemy overcall is non-forcing, e.g.:

- a) 1♣/1♦ (1♠) 2♥
- b) 1♥ (2♣) 2♠

In both cases responder’s bid shows at least 5 cards in an unbid suit but also a non-forcing hand (7-10 HCP). Then what do you do when you want to show your own 5-crd suit but also to be sure partner will not pass?

There are two ways:

- 1) jump-shift (3♥ in sequence [a] or 3♠ in sequence [b]); of course this bid should show a 6-crd suit or a 5-crd suit good enough to play opposite even a doubleton,
- 2) negative double; bidding a major after making a negative double shows a 5-crd suit unsuitable for a jump-shift, and 11+ HCP.

Examples:

- a) 1♣/1♦ (1♠) X (Pass)
- 1N (Pass) 2♥
- b) 1♥ (2♣) X (Pass)
- 2♥ (Pass) 2♠

In each case the major-suit bid after the double is forcing for one round with a 5+-crd suit. Partner knows we aren’t showing just a 4-crd suit since his sequence denied possession of 4 cards in that major – in sequence a) with 4 hearts partner must bid hearts, and similarly in sequence b) opener should bid spades holding 4 cards – no matter how strong or weak the opening was.

The same thing is introduced in the sequence below:

1♥	(1♠)	X	(Pass)
1N	(Pass)	2♣	

Responder’s bid is forcing but the bidding can stop below game.

Double with a natural 2N

In WJ05 2N over a 1M opening has a special meaning (game-forcing raise in the major). We cannot bid 2N in the classical sense anymore. With an invite to 3N we start with a double.

1♥ (1♠) X (Pass)

2♣ (Pass) 2N

Immediately bidding 2N shows a game-forcing heart raise. 2N preceded by a double shows a natural invite to 3N.

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♣	X	Pass
3♠	Pass	3N	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South wants to invite to 3N, and North picks up a strong hand with 5 hearts and 4 spades. He doesn't just bid 2♠, since (as mentioned earlier) this bid does not promise extras. Well, in the end, the right place is reached.

Support Double

We use the support double after our 1-level opening, responder's 1-over-1 in a major, and fourth-seat's overcall at a level below two of partner's suit. This double shows exactly 3-card support and an offensive hand.

- a) 1♦ (Pass) 1♥ (1♠)
X
"I have exactly three hearts."
- b) 1♦ (Pass) 1♠ (2♥)
"3 spades."
- c) 1♥ (Pass) 1♠ (2♦)
X
"3 spades."

The definition employed the term "offensive hand". The phrase may best be described via this question: "Do you want partner to compete over the enemy's bid with a 5-card suit?"

If yes, then make a support double.

Let's assume the auction went as in example a) above and we are in opener's chair:

- ♠ 32 ♥ KJ2 ♦ AQJ32 ♣ K32. We have a good 14 HCP – if partner has 5 hearts, we want him to compete even to the 3-level.
- ♠ 2 ♥ K32 ♦ KQ432 ♣ AT32. Here too a double is suggested. Just 12 HCP, but if partner bids 3♥ over their 2♠, then we would certainly not be unhappy.
- ♠ QJ2 ♥ Q32 ♦ AQ32 ♣ QJ2. With 14 HCP, the hand is a solid opener – but it's not one that wishes to provoke partner into competing over the enemy via a support double. Let them play in their spades, if they want to.
- ♠ KQT2 ♥ 432 ♦ AQJ3 ♣ J2. To make a support double with this hand would be a nightmare of a bid – we pass. Over a double, partner would compete with short spades, and we absolutely don't want this (it might even be necessary to play 1♠-X – when partner keeps the bidding alive with a double).

Note 1: Using a support double limits the ability to penalize a frivolous overcall. But it isn't impossible. With a penalty-double hand, we pass, counting on partner to balance with a double.

Note 2: If you recall in the discussion of the 1♣ opening, it is indispensable to extend the support double agreements to the auctions after a 1♣ opener. This support double shows either the 3-card support described just above, or one of the strong club variants with no good bid.

Western Cue-bid

The Western cue is a bid in the enemy suit to find out if partner has a stopper in that suit or not. In response, partner bids NT if he has a stopper in the appropriate suit.

Remember that in an uncontested auction we are generally *showing* stoppers, and not asking for one (see 'En Passant').

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠			

If the opponents had not entered the auction, 3♠ would have been showing a spade stopper (by inference denying a diamond stopper). After the spade overcall, 3♠ is *asking* for a stopper in the suit.

If the answer to the question is "Yes", (in this case: East has a spade stopper), then partner bids NT; otherwise he returns to the best fit available.

This convention's main goal is to right-side the contract from the side with the stopper. The same thing applies when the opponents show a 2-suited hand:

1N (2♦) ?

Say 2♦ shows both majors. We need to find out if 3N is playable (e.g. we have a good minor suit) and we have neither major stopped. En Passant could lead to problems (since we have no stopper to show) – the cue-bid comes to the rescue. If we have neither suit stopped then we ask for a stopper in the lowest suit first. The example sequence then would play out:

- a) 2♥ (cheapest cue) = "Partner do you have a heart stopper, because I don't." If opener does not have hearts stopped then he bids some suit of his own (as here it's known now that neither partner has hearts stopped). If he has both suits stopped, he bids NT, and if he stops only hearts then he fires back with an efficient: 2♠ = "I have hearts stopped, but not spades. Can you help?"
- b) 2♠ (higher cue) = "Partner can you stop spades, since I can't. However I have hearts stopped."

If the Western cue is doubled

If the opponents double a Western cue, we have an opportunity to determine much better our holding in that suit:

- Bidding NT shows a stopper, but not just an Ace,
- Redouble shows the Ace, but interest in playing in a suit,
- Bidding a suit shows shortness in the enemy suit,
- Pass shows at least 2 cards in the enemy suit.

Pass allows us to find two half-stoppers opposite each other (by half-stopper we mean doubleton Queen or tripleton Jack). Holding a half-stopper we pass the double (showing at this point just 2+ cards), and partner with a half-stopper redoubles. If we have a half-stopper as well, we bid 3N, else we run naturally to our fit (or show an unshown fit or tolerance).

Defensive Bidding

General Rules

- 1) A 1-level overcall shows a 5+ crd suit and 8-16 HCP.
- 2) A simple 2-level overcall shows at least a good 5-crd suit and 11-17 HCP.
- 3) A 1N overcall, as well as a 2N overcall of a 2-level opening, shows a classic 15+-18 range (so a bit stronger than an opening NT) with a stopper in the enemy suit.
- 4) Jump-overcalls are preemptive – the offensive strength depends on the vulnerability.
- 5) A double of an opening bid is either takeout, or explanatory (preparing a strong rebid).
- 6) A simple cue-bid is a Michaels cue-bid (see ‘Defensive Bidding Conventions’).
- 7) A jump cue-bid asks for a stopper, or a 1-suited game-force.

1-level Overcalls

We play that a 1-level overcall in a suit requires 8+ HCP and a 5+ crd suit. Not-vulnerable in 3rd- or 4th-seat this overcall may even be weaker. If we plan on overcalling in an aggressive style, then we must answer the question of how to show this additional very weak range possibility.

Pros:

- the ability to tell partner what to lead,
- to discover a good sacrifice (which sometimes makes),
- to disturb the enemy auction.

Cons:

- the possibility of getting doubled,
- revealing the distribution if they win the auction,
- getting partner off to the wrong lead (when the overcall suit is weak).

Making the decision whether to overcall or not to overcall, we should take the above points into consideration.

Let’s proceed to the other side of the table. We respond to partner’s overcall according to the following rules:

- After a 1-level overcall, a simple new suit is non-forcing, no matter whether at the 1- or 2-level. Overcall can pass if he had a weak overcall.
- After a 2-level overcall, a new suit is forcing for one round.
- A new suit at the 1-level should show a 5-crd suit or good 4-crd suit (unlike responding to an opening, we don’t show a weak 4-crd suit). Overcaller may raise this suit with 3-crd support (over an opening bid, raiser must have 4-crd support).
- A jump-shift in a new suit is natural and forcing.
- A 1N bid shows 9-12 HCP – thus it is stronger than a 1N response to an opening bid. 2N shows 13-15 HCP without a fit. 3N is “to play”. NT advances promise a stopper in the opponents’ suit(s).
- A cue-bid shows a strong hand without support for overcaller or a stopper for NT.
- Opposite a major-suit overcall, with support and 10+ HCP we bid 2♣, another application of Drury (see ‘Defensive Bidding Conventions’). A jump-raise is preemptive.

2-level Overcalls, Non-Jump

A 2-level overcall should be solid, with at least about 11 HCP and a 6-crd suit or 13 HCP with 5 cards, and promises a good suit, especially when vulnerable.

Over this overcall, a new suit is forcing for one round, and a cue-bid asks for a stopper.

1N Overcall

We play a 1N overcall as classic: 15(+)-18 HCP with balanced distribution and a stopper.

There are differences between a 1N opening and a 1N overcall:

- a) the strength of the overcall is about a point stronger compared to the opening,
- b) the overcall has to have a particular stopper (their suit),
- c) the overcall explicitly allows some off-center shapes – possibly 5-4 distribution, or a 6-crd minor,
- d) with a hand that fulfills the criteria for an *opening* NT, we must bid 1N. With an *overcall*, we always have alternatives: pass and double.

Reflecting again on the 1N overcall we must cover the topic of the stopper in the enemy suit. The best type of stopper is a slow stopper like QT32, QJ32, KT92 where a low number of HCP in the suit practically ensures two stoppers. The worst stopper from the point of view of overcalling 1N is the Ace with low cards. Here we may refrain from overcalling 1N since probably it’s better to be playing in a suit instead, and if NT is actually played, it’s usually best played from partner’s hand.

Let’s assume an opponent opens 1♥ non-vulnerable, and we are vulnerable. How would you bid these hands?

- ♠ Q2 ♥ KJ9 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ AT32. We overcall 1N. If they try to attack us in hearts, then we play on diamonds. If they play spades, then they probably had a partial in spades available.
- ♠ KJ32 ♥ A2 ♦ A32 ♣ A432. Yes 16 HCP, but no, I wouldn’t bid 1N. The hand is best-used for play in a suit contract, and the heart stopper is as bad as possible. Better to double, and be able to stop in 1♠ if partner has zilch.
- ♠ Q32 ♥ K5 ♦ AKJ432 ♣ Q2. A 2♦ bid doesn’t quite value the hand for what it truly is. 1N is suggested.
- ♠ K32 ♥ KJT2 ♦ K ♣ AQJ32. When the opponents are non-vulnerable, and we vulnerable, then you don’t want to leave much to guessing. Instead of a trap-pass, I suggest 1N. Our hearts suggest that it’s better to play in NT and the fact that we hold a singleton must not dissuade us of this.
- ♠ AK32 ♥ KT ♦ Q2 ♣ KJ432. This hand is on the edge. We can double, which stresses the spade suit, or we can bid 1N (which describes the overall distribution). We would not want to overcall 2♣.
- ♠ AK32 ♥ K32 ♦ KJ2 ♣ AQ2. It would be good to consider a 1N overcall. The dreaded “pancake”. Even worse would be a “cowardly” double.

Further bidding after a 1N overcall is the same as over a 1N opening. The exception is if the enemy doubles. Over a double, partner of the 1N overcaller runs naturally to his suit or makes an SOS redouble, showing a weak hand with multiple places to play.

(1♠) 1N (X) ?

2♣, 2♦, 2♥ show a weak 1-suited hand, and redouble shows the ability to play in at least 2 suits.

(1♥) 1N (X) XX
(Pass) 2♣ (X) 2♦

“I have 5 diamonds and 4 spades.”

(1♥) 1N (X) XX
(Pass) 2♣ (X) XX

“I have diamonds and spades, either equal length or spades longer.”

The above rules also apply over a 2N overcall of a 2-level opening. Continuations over this overcall are analogous to bidding over a 1N overcall (3♣ Stayman, 3♦ and 3♥ transfers).

Re-opening NT

A 1N in the balancing position has a somewhat different meaning. Let’s imagine that both partners pick up hands with about 12-13 HCP unsuited for a takeout double (e.g. one has a doubleton in the other major, and the other 3 cards in this suit but 4 cards in the enemy suit). It may happen then here that the opponents may win the bidding despite having hardly any strength. And this might not compensate for a making game or partial (which can be very important at Matchpoints).

Hence we have the following agreements:

- A balancing NT shows 12-15 HCP and does not promise a stopper in the opponent’s suit – but it does deny shortness in the opened suit (with shortness we double).
- 2N in the balancing position – over an opening at the 1-level – shows 19-21 HCP and a stopper in their suit.
- With 16-18 HCP, we double and later bid NT at the cheapest possible level.

Examples:

- (1♦) Pass (Pass) 1N
12-15, a stopper in diamonds is not needed
- (1♦) Pass (Pass) X
(Pass) 1♥ (Pass) 1N
16-18 with a diamond stopper
- (1♦) Pass (Pass) 2N
19-21 with a diamond stopper

After a 2-level opening, a balancing 2N may be a little bit weaker than in second seat: 14-17 HCP. Stayman and Jacoby are available after this.

Jump-overcalls

Jump-overcalls show a one-suited hand with a long suit.

(1♦) 2♠

6 spades, 6-11 HCP.

This overcall is thus different from an opening (which in WJ05 shows a 2-suiter). A jump overcall – especially if vulnerable – should promise a good suit.

Double

A double over the opponent’s 1- or 2-level opening has two meanings:

- *Takeout* – opening strength hand with no suit to bid,
- *Explanatory* – a hand too strong to make a simple overcall, so 17+ HCP.

Takeout double

The idea of the takeout double is to find a fit in one of our suits. So the fewer the cards held in the opening suit, the better (which would mean more cards in the other suits, increasing the chance of some fit). The better the distribution in the side suits, the weaker we can be to double. For example, if the opponent opens 1 heart, then with 4144 (singleton heart) we may double with 12 HCP (occasionally 11), and with 4333 distribution we need to seriously reconsider before doubling even with 13 HCP.

When considering a takeout double, we normally think of the classic definition of at least 3 cards in each side suit. In reality this condition is difficult to fulfill, so we are forced to compromise: a take-out double should promise at least 3 cards in each unbid major and at least 2 cards in each unbid minor. (The emphasis is on the majors since over an enemy opening our side rarely has enough HCP to play 3N, and often the real chance of game is in a major with fewer HCP and good distribution.) To make a takeout double over an artificial 1♣ or 1♦ opening (e.g. 1♣ WJ or 1♦ Precision), we should have at least 3 cards each in hearts and spades and 2 in diamonds and clubs. Double of a natural 1♦ opening promises 3-crd support for the majors and at least a doubleton club. In order to double 1♥ we should have at least 3 spades and no shortness in the minors. Similarly, to double 1♠ we require at least 3 hearts and no shortness in clubs or diamonds.

Explanatory double

The explanatory variant of the double is used for:

- 1) 19+ HCP balanced hands. Revealed by bidding NT on the next round of bidding.

	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	
a)	1♥	X	Pass	2♣	
	Pass	2N			
b)	1♦	X	Pass	1♠	
	Pass	1N			

In both sequences North is showing 19-21 HCP. With 15(+)-18 he would have bid 1N immediately instead of double on the previous round, while with 13-15(-) he'd have to pass. (Even if partner's suit does not "suit him" – if he does not hold a) 3 clubs or b) 4 spades).

Note 1: The above examples don't apply to a double of 1♣ (see 'After we double 1♣').

Note 2: 1N after reopening with a double in the passout position shows 16-18 HCP.

2) 17+ HCP unbalanced hands. These hands rebid a new suit, or raise partner.

a) (1♦) X (Pass) 1♠

(Pass) 2♥

Explanatory double with 5 hearts.

b) (1♥) X (Pass) 1♠

(Pass) 2♣

Explanatory with 5 clubs.

c) (1♥) X (Pass) 1♠

(Pass) 2♠

Explanatory with 4 spades (or a maximum take-out double with good distribution).

d) (1♥) X (Pass) 1♠

(Pass) 3♠

Strong invite to game – better than a "usual" explanatory double.

Note: The above examples don't apply to a double of 1♣.

3) Any near-GF hand. With this hand, we cue-bid the enemy suit on the next round.

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♥	X	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥		

North is showing a very strong hand. The weakest bid South can make is rebidding his suit (2♠), which does not promise extra spade length – in the extreme case, it may be a 3-crd suit. If North does not pass this response, but bids his own suit, showing that he has a very strong hand, then he is depending on partner not passing.

A heads up: with a very-strong hand and a very good suit we have an alternative to the explanatory double (see 'Jump cue-bid').

Continuations over a double

When our partner makes a double, then we must first assume it's based on the weakest variant, a takeout double with 13-14 HCP. Adding partner's assumed HCP with ours, and taking into account distribution, we bid to the level warranted by our combined strength. Of course sometimes we will hold completely hopeless hands – then we are forced to bid our longest suit at the lowest possible level, and that may be a level higher than we were hoping to be at. But there really is no good solution in these cases – unless we have a working stack in their suit.

Let's say that the opponents open 1♥, and partner doubles. Here are the possible responses:

Pass = any strength, at least 5 solid hearts (e.g. KQT92, QJT98),

1♠ = 4 spades (sometimes only 3), up to 7 HCP,

1N = 6-9 HCP with a stopper,

2♣, 2♦ = 0-9 HCP, at least 4 clubs (diamonds),

2♠ = 4+ spades, 8-10 HCP,

2N = 10-11 HCP with a stopper,

3♣, 3♦ = 9-11 HCP, 5+ clubs (diamonds),

3♠ = 9-11 HCP, 5+ spades

Note: With several hand types, partner of the doubler may hold just one 4-crd suit... in the suit doubled - but be too weak for a 1N bid (0-5 HCP). Here we bid the cheapest suit, even if just 3 cards. So:

(1♥) X (Pass) 1♠

may in the worst case show 3 cards.

Over one of the quantitative responses to a double, the normal takeout doubler usually passes.

Besides a quantitative bid partner of doubler has at his disposal a cue-bid in the enemy suit (in this case, 2♥). This bid shows 10+ HCP, unsuited for any of the quantitative bids.

After a double of 1♣

Different rules apply after we double a 1♣ opening. Our responses are similar to a normal response to our own 1♣ opening if the enemy passes. 1♦ is negative (0-6 HCP), and other suits are forcing, 7+ HCP.

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♣	X	Pass	1♥

South has 4+ hearts and 7+ HCP. Later bids are similar to as if the auction had proceeded uncontested: 1♣-1♥.

(1♣) X (Pass) 1♥

(Pass) ?

1♠ = 13+ HCP, 4 spades,

1N = 13-15 HCP, no 4-crd major,

2♦ = natural (!), explanatory with diamonds.

Responses in NT are quantitative:

(1♣) X (Pass) 1N = 8-10 HCP,

(1♣) X (Pass) 2N = invite to 3N (11-12 HCP).

Bidding over a double, when third-seat bids

If the opening bid was 1♣, and partner doubles, then we bid as if we had opened 1♣.

- a) (1♣) X (1♥) X
- b) (1♣) X (1♠) X

Double is, in a) negative (denying 4 spades), and in b) negative (showing 4 hearts).

Over other openings, double of a new suit is penalty.

- a) (1♥) X (1♠) X
- b) (1♠) X (2♣) X

In both examples, the final double is penalty (so as not to get suckered by a psychic bid).

The exception to these rules is a double over an opponent's raise – a responsive double – which shows willingness to play in at least two side suits. This double asks partner to bid his cheapest 4-crd suit.

- a) (1♥) X (2♥) X
- b) (1♠) X (3♠) X

In each case the aim is to find the best fit.

Balancing double (re-opening)

We double in the balancing seat with 9+ HCP. There are two reasons for playing it this way:

- 1) Partner may have a nice hand, 13-15 HCP, but not be suited for a takeout double.
- 2) Partner may have a trap-pass. The balancing double is wide-range, but the auction did tell everyone that third-seat didn't have enough to respond.

(1♥) Pass (Pass) X
(Pass) ?

- 1N = 7-11 with a stopper in the enemy suit,
- 2N = 12-14 with a good stopper in the enemy suit,
- 3N = to play,
- 2♥ = 13-15; "I couldn't make a takeout double",
- 2♠, 3♣, 3♦ = max passed hand with a good suit (2♠ may be 4 cards).

Double of a 2-level opening

Doubles of a 2-level openings have exactly the same meaning as over 1-level openings. Let's describe some extra nuances.

Bidding over a 2♥/2♠ opening

Over these openings and a takeout double we use Lebensohl (see 'Defensive Bidding Conventions').

Bidding over a 2♦ opening: Multi or Wilkosz

1. *Double* of an artificial 2♦ opening (Multi or Wilkosz) has the same meaning as over a natural 2♠ opening. It shows a takeout double without promising spade support (may even be short in spades), while it requires at least 3 hearts. If the condition of holding 3 hearts is not fulfilled, then with less than 15 HCP we pass and await further developments. If RHO actually has hearts, then he will pass his partner's 2♥ pass/correct response (or bid 3♥ over 2♠) – now we can make a takeout double, showing at most a doubleton heart.

Continuations:

(2♦) X (Pass) 2♥ = 4 hearts.

(2♦) X (Pass) 2♥
(Pass) ?
Pass = take-out double of spades,
2N = 18-20 NT.

(2♦) X (Pass) 2♠ = 6 spades(!) since partner may have short spades.

(2♦) X (Pass) 2♠
Pass ?
Pass = take-out double of spades,
2N = 18-20.

(2♦) X (2♥) X

Cards, without short hearts; if opener has hearts, then it may be necessary to play 2♥-X ("since you, partner, show hearts with the common variant of your double.")

(2♦) X (2♠) X

Penalty, "I have spades."; the enemy 2♠ may be showing shortness, in order to avoid a double.

(2♦) X (3♥) X

Cards; if opener has hearts, then we'll play it here (partner has promised a measure of hearts).

2. To make a take-out of hearts we must first *pass*.

(2♦) Pass (2♥) Pass
(Pass) X

Take-out double of hearts.

(2♦) Pass (3♥) Pass
(Pass) X

Same.

A problem arises when as defender we pass 2♦, since we don't have a take-out double of spades, and the opponents rest in spades:

(2♦) Pass (2♥) Pass
(2♠) ?

and

(2♦) Pass (2♠) Pass
(Pass) ?

Double = "I thought RHO had hearts. I don't have a takeout double of spades".

In other words, doubler very likely has length in spades (at least 3, and not long in hearts). Partner may pass.

3. Doubles by fourth-seat are takeout.

(2♦) Pass (2♥) X

Takeout double of hearts.

(2♦) Pass (2♠) X

Takeout double of spades.

(2♦) Pass (2♥) Pass
(2♠) Pass (Pass) X

Takeout double of spades.

Michaels Cue-bid

A Michaels cue-bid is the cheapest bid of the opening suit, e.g. (1♥)-2♥, to show a 5-5 with a major suit. Michaels is also used over a 2-level opening, like (2♥)-3♥. Continuations are discussed in the next section ('Defensive Bidding Conventions').

Jump Cue-bid

Example:

Them Us
(1♥) 3♥

A jump cue-bid has the following meanings:

- 1) asks for a stopper, with a solid minor suit,
- 2) game-forcing with some self-sufficient one-suited hand.

Let's say they open 1♥. We'd bid 3♥ with the following hands:

- a) ♠ J32 ♥ 2 ♦ A2 ♣ AKQ5432
- b) ♠ AKJT432 ♥ -- ♦ AQ2 ♣ AJT
- c) ♠ AJ ♥ 2 ♦ KQJT9432 ♣ AK

Partner first assumes variant 1), so his bid depends on whether he has a stopper or not; with a stopper he bids 3N, otherwise something else (here 4♣ is pass/correct for partner's suit). With hand a) we pass over 3N or 4♣. With hand b) over anything partner says we rebid 4♠ showing a game-forcing hand with a self-sufficient spade suit. With hand c) we rebid 5♦ (not 4♦!) which shows that we weren't interested in a stopper for 3N, but we wanted to show a game hand.

Vs. a Strong NT

The defense to 1N, which was described in WJ2000, is known on the Internet as *Jassem*. I bashfully protest, since he is not the author of the convention, but only the messenger. Unfortunately, the true author remains unknown. The convention allows showing 5-4 or 4-5 hands, and is summarized:

- X = 5+ crd minor, and a 4-crd major (either). Over this, 2♣, 2♦ and 2♥ are pass/correct to require doubler to pass holding either 4 or 5 cards in the bid suit,
- 2♣ = 1-suited hand with a 6+ crd suit (2♦ asks for the suit),

- 2♦ = 2-suited with the majors (at least 4-4); 2N asks for distribution,
- 2♥ = 5 hearts, and a 4+-crd minor,
- 2♠ = 5 spades, and a 4+-crd minor.

An overall of a 1N opening doesn't require so much in strength, as it does in distribution. The goal is usually to find a playable partial since we rarely have game over a strong NT. Thus partner's responses try to keep us at the lowest possible level.

For regular partnerships only. An alternative to the described structure is:

- X = as above (5+ minor, 4-crds major),
- 2♣ = both majors @ 2♦ asks for the better major,
- 2♦ = one long major (continuations are the same as over a Multi 2♦ opening),
- 2♥, 2♠ = as before,
- 3♣, 3♦ = natural.

The advantage here is being able to find out the best major fit thanks to the 2♦ relay. The downside is not being able to distinguish constructive and preemptive overcalls in a minor.

Vs. a Weak NT

By a weak NT we mean all ranges whose minimum is less than 14 HCP (9-12, 12-15, 13-15, but not 14-16).

We play the same structure as over a strong NT with the exception that a double is takeout, and all overcalls have constructive character – at least an opening hand.

<u>Them</u>	<u>Us</u>	<u>Them</u>	<u>Us</u>
1N	X	2 any	?

X = take-out

Pass = weak or “waiting for partner to reopen with a double” (trap-pass)

Same defense in fourth seat (after two passes).

Vs. 3-level and Higher Openings

Double of a 3-level opening is strictly takeout.

Double of a 4-level opening is very optional-takeout. Responding at the 5-level has constructive character: there should be a chance of making the bid contract (not a sacrificial bid).

Balancing

Let's summarize balancing:

- 1) A takeout double may be weak, even 9 HCP, but only with shortness in the opponent's suit. Partner of doubler factors this possibility into his decision.
- 2) A balancing 1N shows 12-15 HCP and a NT hand. Stayman and transfers apply.
- 3) 2N shows 19-21 HCP (balanced – Stayman and transfers apply).
- 4) 16-18 HCP with the same distribution we show by doubling and then bidding NT over partner's bid.
- 5) A jump-shift (even non-vulnerable) has constructive character, promising a good 6-crds suit and 11-15 HCP.

Defensive Bidding Conventions

Trap-pass

The trap-pass is a necessary offspring of the takeout double and negative double. With hands with which we'd like to punish the enemy, we are forced to pass. Partner must take into account that this pass has two possible meanings: showing either weakness, or the desire to double (sometimes we also have to pass when we have points but nothing to bid) so to figure all this out, we have to have some more agreements.

Trap-passing over an opponent's opening bid

We use the trap-pass over an opening bid with less than 16 HCP. With more we should double or overcall 1N. Given this, partner doesn't have to reopen over our pass with less than 9 HCP, therefore passing with too strong a hand may lead to the opponents playing undoubled when we have a good game.

We'll run through continuations over a trap-pass as if the opponents had opened 1♥.

	(1♥)	Pass	(Pass)
X	(Pass)	?	

Pass = trap-pass – any strength,
 2♥ = 13-16, without a trump stack. Original takeout double impossible with just 0-2 spades.

	(1♥)	Pass	(Pass)
X	(XX)	Pass	

Pass over a redouble shows the trap-pass: “I want to play 1♥-XX.”

The above sequence must not be confused with:

	(1♥)	X	(XX)
Pass			

Pass says: “I don't have a good suit to bid.”

General rule: Pass over a redouble is penalty when made by the player sitting over the doubled suit. Under the doubled suit, pass of a redouble says: "I have no suit to bid."

X (1♥) Pass (Pass)
(1♠) ?

Pass = weak,
X = trap-pass of hearts, doesn't mind playing 1♠-X,
2♥ = 13-16 HCP, too few spades for an original takeout double,
2♠ = trap-pass of hearts, cannot stand to play 1♠-X.

1♠ (1♥) Pass (Pass)
(Pass) ?

2♥ = 13-16 HCP, too few spades for an original takeout double, at most a weak stopper in hearts,
2N, 3N = 13-16 HCP, very good heart stopper.

Trap-pass over an opponent's overcall

Trap-pass we use over an enemy overcall up to two of the suit opened. Examples:

a) 1♠ (2♥) Pass
b) 1♦ (2♣) Pass

In the above examples pass may contain a trap-pass. But in:

c) 1♥ (2♠) Pass
d) 1♣ (2♥) Pass

pass is systemically always weak. Someone with strong nerves may pass with a trump-stack in the enemy suit and a strong hand in c) and d). They should however take under advisement the following:

How do you proceed over partner's trap-pass?

Unfortunately you don't want to blink nor even cough to inform partner we've made a trap-pass. Partner must try to figure this out from his own hand. We play that in the reopening position we balance with a double when we have shortness in the overcalled suit (at most a doubleton). If the overcall was not above two of our opened suit (sequences [a] and [b]), double says nothing about extra values – it's obligatory. Reopening at a higher level promises extra strength – it is no longer obligatory to double with shortness – so a trap-pass here would have been a serious gamble.

Continuations over a trap-pass after we open the bidding are similar to when they have opened, e.g. pass after a reopening double and redouble is penalty (showing a trap-pass). Similarly, in the sequence:

1♣ (1♥) Pass (Pass)
X (1♠) ?

double shows a trap-pass for hearts when we don't fear playing 1♠-X, and 2♠ shows a trap-pass for hearts when we don't want to play 1♠-X.

Drury

Drury is used in uncontested auctions as well as contested auctions. In the uncontested auction, we use Drury over our 1M opening in 3rd- or 4th-seat. In the contested auction we use this convention over a 1M overcall (whether partner is a passed hand or not).

The basic auctions are the same as the uncontested auction (see 'Conventions in the Uncontested Auction').

It's necessary to underline that the example sequence:

(1♦) 1♠ (Pass) ?

2♣ is Drury, promising a spade fit, while a cue-bid (in this case 2♦) is a general force without a fit.

Inverted Drury. For regular partnerships

An alternative to the Drury convention is reversing the meaning of the 2♣ and cue-bid – then 2♣ would be the artificial force without a fit, and cue-bid would promise a fit.

(1♥) 1♠ (Pass) ?

2♣ = forcing without a fit (the equivalent of 2♥ in classic Drury)
2♥ = raise (the equivalent of 2♣ in classic Drury)

The intended advantage to this order is that when a suit has not been agreed yet, it's best to stay as low as possible with 2♣, while when a fit has been found, less room is needed.

Michaels cue-bid

A Michaels cue-bid is the cheapest possible bid in the opponent's opened suit to show at least 5-5 distribution in two side suits.

Augmenting this convention is the Unusual 2N over a 1-level opening bid.

The Unusual 2N shows the two lowest unbid suits, while Michaels shows the remaining two possible 2-suiters.

We give here that the strength of the Michaels cue-bid, which depends on vulnerability (see later), has nothing in common with the opening 2N (which in our system always shows 6-10 HCP).

Compared to WJ2000 we strongly suggest the following amendment:

Them Us
1♣ 2♦ = both majors.

The strength required for 2♦ is the same as a Michaels cue-bid (which has no upper limit, but whose minimum is vulnerability-dependent). Omitting this sequence in the previous version of WJ was a big oversight. Sometimes after:

(1♣) 1♠ (Pass) Pass
(Pass)

it's difficult to make the contract, when 4♥ makes overtricks and there would be nobody to blame. And yet when we overcall with a major one-suiter, and we have both, we don't have to rely on the opponents to save us – without the major suit they won't be eager to reopen.

Example Michaels cue-bid auctions:

Them Us
1♣(WJ) 2N = 5-5, both minors
1♣ 2♦ = 5-5, both majors
1♦ 2N = hearts and clubs
1♦ 2♦ = spades and... (hearts or clubs)
1♥ 2N = clubs and diamonds
1♥ 2♥ = spades and a minor
1♠ 2♠ = hearts and a minor
2♥ 3♥ = spades and a minor
2♥ 2N = natural!

Which hands make a Michaels cue-bid?

The minimum strength for this bid depends on the vulnerability. It has no upper limit.

At favorable, we would overcall 2♦ over a 1♦ opening with: ♠ JT5432 ♥ JT5432 ♦ -- ♣ 2. We would make exactly the same bid with: ♠ AKQ432 ♥ AKJ5432 ♦ -- ♣ -- (of course, later delicately raising partner's choice of suit to the 6-level).

This hand is more suited for a Michaels cue-bid, the more honors and intermediates we have concentration in the two long suits.

In deciding on whether to Michaels cue-bid, we ask our self if we fear going down a lot if we don't have a great fit.

Let's say the enemy opens 1♥ and we pick up a 5-5 with spades and diamonds. At favorable vulnerability we bid 2♥ with: ♠ A5432 ♥ 2 ♦ KT932 ♣ 32. Both white a 2♥ overcall would require at least the Jack of diamonds as well, and both red we would have to have at least: ♠ AJT32 ♥ 2 ♦ KJT32 ♣ 32, but at unfavorable vulnerability we would have to have at minimum an extra Queen in one of the long suits (this doesn't mean that when we don't cue, we must be quiet – we may overcall 1♠).

The longer the suits, the weaker the Michaels cue may be.

Honors in the short suits is a negative factor when deciding whether to make a Michaels cue. The bid encourages partner to compete over the opponents at a high level, and when we have honors in the short suits, this isn't a winning strategy.

Above all, the Michaels cue-bid serves to stress the minor suit (because we have an alternatives for showing just a major). Because of this I don't recommend cue-bidding with disproportionate strength/length in the major.

The enemy opens 1♥:

- ♠ AKQ32 ♥ 2 ♦ KQ5432 ♣ 2 – 2♥.
- ♠ KQ432 ♥ -- ♦ KQJ5432 ♣ 2 – 2♥.

Despite the diamonds being the longer of the two, we don't bury the spades, since spades may win the auction at a cheaper level than diamonds.

- ♠ A65432 ♥ 2 ♦ KQJ32 ♣ 2 – 2♥.

Spades are longer, but weak; it may be necessary to play in diamonds.

- ♠ AKJT32 ♥ 2 ♦ J9432 ♣ 2 – 1♠.

We ignore the diamonds.

• ♠ KQJ5432 ♥ 2 ♦ QJ432 ♣ -- - 4♠.

“Save diamonds for another hand.”

Continuations over a Michaels cue-bid

The Michaels cue-bidder should not bid again in the auction without a positive response from partner if he doesn't have more than the required 5-5 distribution. When we have a hand strong in honors, and partner is silent, then we can let him know with a double on the next round.

Let's assume that we pick up this “Acol Two” and the enemy opens 1♥: ♠ AKJ32 ♥ 2 ♦ AKQ32 ♣ 32. We bid 2♥ at equal vulnerability and if partner has a spade fit, we're headed for game. If however the auction continues without a peep from partner, then we will double, telling partner to choose the best fit.

When we get a 6-5 hand or better (and enough strength to bid again), then we still have time to “show our horns” by rebidding our longer suit.

How does partner of the cue-bidder proceed?

We'll assume the following sequence:

(1♥) 2♥ (Pass) ?

- 2♠ = weak bid, may be a doubleton spade,
- 2N = asks for the minor, but promises some values,
- 3♣ = pass/correct (“Partner, pass with clubs.”), weak hand.

We remark at this point the major differences between a Michaels cue-bid and Polish two-suiters. Over 2♥ or 2♠ opening, the ask for the side suit is 2N, and 3♣/3♦ bids are natural. The reason is that: the strength of an opening 2-suiter is in a narrow range and partner is boss of the auction. A cue-bid overall however does not limit the strength and so it's necessary for both sides to exchange information. This demands the availability of both a weak 3♣ bid and a positive 2N.

- 3♦ = natural 1-suiter, to play,
- 3♥ = spade raise, invitational to 4♠,
- 3♠ = 4-crd raise, weak.

Lebensohl

Lebensohl has gained acceptance in the bridge community, we should therefore not ignore it. However we should treat it with a certain dose of caution, since any misunderstanding with this convention could lead to catastrophic results. With this in mind we include Lebensohl in WJ05 to be used only in precisely defined situations.

Lebensohl after our 1N opening

The first situation pertains to when we open 1N and the opponents overcall a natural 2♥ or 2♠:

1N (2♥) ?

- X = negative (usually 4 spades), with competitive strength,
- 2♠ = natural, NF,
- 3♣, 3♦ = natural, forcing,
- 3♥ = asking for a stopper, without 4 spades,
- 3♠ = forcing with spades,
- 2N = weak with our own suit, or a good hand with at least 4 spades; opener must bid 3♣.

1N (2♥) 2N (Pass)
3♣ (Pass) ?

- Pass = weak with clubs,
- 3♦ = weak with diamonds,
- 3♥ = 4 spades, denies a heart stopper, GF,
- 3♠ = 5 spades, invite
- 3N = 4 spades with a heart stopper

Lebensohl after an enemy weak 2♥, 2♠ opening and our double

The convention applies to situations where the enemy has opened with 2♥ or 2♠, and one of our side doubles (even fourth-seat, reopening).

To explain, the auction proceeds:

(2♠) X (Pass) ?

- 3♣./♦/♥ = natural, showing the longest suit with 8-11 HCP; if partner has a classic takeout double (13-15 HCP) then our contract should make,
- 3♠ = asks for a spade stopper without 4 hearts, game-forcing,
- 2N = weak hand: 0-7 HCP, or GF with 4 hearts; partner is usually forced to bid 3♣.

(2♠) X (Pass) 2N
(Pass) 3♣ (Pass) ?

- Pass = negative (0-7) with clubs the longest side suit,
- 3♦/♥ = negative with diamonds/hearts,
- 3♠ = 4 hearts, game-forcing, no spade stopper,

3N = 4 hearts, game-forcing, spade stopper.

Note that over a 2N bid – Lebensohl – doubler is allowed to decline our request to bid 3♣, and naturally bid his own suit (or 3N, or cue-bid). Here this should show so powerful a hand that even with our negative there may be a game.

Leads and Discards

In this chapter we try to establish a standard defensive carding scheme – such a standard may be invaluable for pick-up partnerships.

The most popular leading style in Poland is: **variable leads, upside-down discards, natural Lavinthal, Krakow discards, Reverse Smith echo.**

Let's try to establish whether everyone interprets these components in the same way. This chapter will lay out the set of agreements in the book "Carding Techniques" by Ryszard Kietczewski, which I strongly recommend reading.

Variable Leads

From an **honor sequence** we lead the highest card, Ace from Ace-King, King from King-Queen, and so on. Against suits we lead King from AK tight.

From an **internal sequence** we lead the highest card of the sequence, such as e.g. Jack from KJT_x, and the Ten from QT9_x.

A special sequence: **T9_x** – we lead the Nine.

By the way it is worth remembering that against **no-trumps** with a two-card sequence it's often better to lead a low card. Personally, with KQ865 I recommend leading the Six, with KQT3 I would lead the Three, and holding QT95 I would choose to lead the Five and not the Ten (against suits such taking care of the low cards in a long suit rarely is key).

With a **suit headed by an honor** we generally lead **second or fourth**: with honor-third we lead the middle card and with longer we lead fourth-best. I personally don't recommend the Ten from JT_x, where the Jack indicates an honor (just the Ten) – particularly against NT the lead of the smallest card may save a trick.

With a **worthless** suit we lead second-highest, so low from a doubleton and middle from a tripleton. If on a subsequent trick we want to tell partner how many low cards we had, then:

- if the lead was a doubleton, we have no choice – we pitch the high card,
- if the lead was from 3 cards – we pitch the lower card,
- if the lead was from 4 small – we play the higher card; if we can't afford it (the card is too high), we follow with the highest remaining spot. For example: leading the Six from 7653, at the next opportunity we play the Seven, and leading the Six from 9652 we follow on a later trick with the Five (the Nine would hurt). Partner, seeing the second card, can guess this is what we have.

Upside-down Carding

Upside-down carding involves upside-down count and upside-down attitude.

Upside-down count we play for instance when the opponents lead a suit. Following low then high shows an even number of cards, and high-low – odd. Since information on the suit's distribution may be invaluable to partner even on the first play of the suit, it's best to give a clear count signal: try to play the very highest of an odd number of cards and lowest of even. Systematically using count carding very notably helps the declarer as much as the defense, as giving a readable count signal we are limited to situations particularly, e.g., when we want to sever declarer from the dummy.

In the case of partner's lead, if in third seat we are not required to cover the card that was played, we play **upside-down attitude**: a low card encourages a continuation. But often this is expressed by count in the suit led rather than encouragement.

Here's a classic example. Spades are trumps, Ace of hearts lead.

♥ JTxx
♥ AKxx ♥ Q93
♥ xx

West leads the Ace. If East encourages a continuation, West would have continued with the King, and on the third round a low heart for a ruff, expecting a doubleton with partner. *Surprise*: no ruff, and the enemy's Jack becomes a trick. On the first trick East should contribute the Nine – marking an odd number of cards.

Experienced players resolve this apparent contradiction between qualitative and quantitative with: "I show attitude if partner needs attitude, and count when partner needs count." When it isn't known what is important for partner, the default is: **To partner's lead we give attitude at NT and count at suits.**

Lavinthal

There are many different varieties of Lavinthal signal, several of which we accept as standard. It is necessary on introduction to observe that Lavinthal involves only small cards.

Discarding an honor shows the top of a sequence, e.g. pitching a Queen shows the Jack and is not a Lavinthal signal.

Simple Lavinthal

This type of discard we play to tell partner to lead a specific suit. We can break it down to the common situations:

- in a suit contract; the board has a singleton in the suit led and we know that partner will take the trick (like the Ace, or the King when we have the Ace),
- in a suit contract; partner leads the King on the first trick, which shows he has the Ace-King tight – in this case we give Lavinthal on the second trick (since on the first trick we weren't in a position to know the whole situation),
- in a no-trump contract; partner leads the Ace but it is clear that a continuation is futile (the board has been established or near-established in the suit from the lead).

Simple Lavinthal is basically playing a low card to suggest the lower remaining suit and a high card to suggest the higher remaining suit: and never the suit played, or trumps. A middle card shows no preference (best if partner continues the lead, unless he has some better idea of how the defense should proceed).

Return Lavinthal

This carding is used when we've returned a card for partner to ruff. If we play a high card then we suggest a switch to the higher of the remaining suits (outside of trumps and the suit just ruffed).

A variety of return Lavinthal is **honor ordering**. If partner leads a suit in which we have the top honors or we expect that partner will ruff or win the third round of the suit, then we can arrange to cash our honors in a particular order to tell partner what to play next. For example, winning with the Queen, then playing the King and finally the Ace suggests values in the lower side suit, while in Ace-King-Queen order – the higher side suit. Winning the tricks in natural order: Queen, Ace, King is neutral – no preference for any particular switch.

Secondary Lavinthal

In a trump contract, the order of following to trumps suggests a preference in the remaining suits: low-high for the lower, high-low for the higher. This same signal may apply when we lead trumps.

Krakow discards

Showing out in a led suit, we get rid of a card in a worthless suit. With the size of card we signal values in the remaining suits: a high card shows the higher suit, lowest – lower.

Reverse Smith Echo

We use the Reverse Smith echo against no-trumps. In the suit led by the declarer we follow low if we liked the lead and high if we didn't. A classic example:

♠ 82

♠ AT765

West led the Six of spades. East put up the Jack, and South the King. Next declarer played a suit won by West. The defense needs to show who has the Queen of spades. If partner has it, then he needs to show it by encouraging a continuation of the lead with a low card in the suit played by declarer.

^[1] [Encyklopedia Brydża](#), ed. Bogumił Seifert and Selim Achmatowicz, PWN, 1996.