

WEAK TWO-BIDS

The purposes of the weak two-bid are:

- to describe the hand in a single bid,
- to make the bidding difficult for the opposition, and
- to avoid the need for light openings in any position.

Over a two-bid the opponents must find their best contract in a limited and unfamiliar auction. The purposes of bidding are to find your best contract and to hinder the opponents in finding theirs.

These are the requirements for a **Bailey Two-Bid**:

- Five or six cards (as weak as Q-x-x-x-x) in the bid suit.
- Two or three cards in each unbid major.
- One to four cards in each unbid minor.
- No more than nine cards in the two longest suits.
- 8-10 HCP if nine cards are held in the two longest suits, and 9-11 HCP if eight cards are held in the two longest suits.

These requirements allow only five distributions: 5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2, 6-3-3-1, 5-4-2-2, and 5-4-3-1. These distributions are shown in the five examples of weak two-bids:

♠ Kxx	♠ xx	♠ Jx	♠ Jxx	♠ Axx
♥ Qxxxx	♥ KQJ10xx	♥ KQ10xx	♥ AJxxx	♥ Q10xxxx
♦ Axx	♦ Axx	♦ Qxxx	♦ Kxxx	♦ KJx
♣ xx	♣ xx	♣ xx	♣ x	♣ x

The suit can be weak as in the first example, or strong as in the second example. The remaining examples show more typical suits. The five to the queen rule is tricky. Is six small better than Q-x-x-x-x? This rule was chosen so partner could confidently lead from a king high suit.

The point count rule could be stated:

To open a two-bid with 5-3-3-2 distribution requires 9-11 HCP all other allowed distributions require only 8-10 HCP.

The point count rules of Chapter 2 are used. Because of flaws, 8-10 may sometimes include 11 HCP and 9-11 may sometimes include 12 HCP. There is no gap between a two-bid and a one-bid.

The requirements are chosen so that weak two-bids arise frequently (1.3 times per session) and so that partner can intelligently decide between passing, improving the contract, inviting game, competing, bidding game, and doubling the opponents. Major suit length is more restricted than minor suit length because responder is more apt to want to improve to a major, and because the opponents are more apt to compete in a major. Knowing that opener has two or three cards in the majors, responder can judge the offense (or defense) at a major suit contract.

We reserve the right not to open a hand that qualifies as a weak two-bid. Not vulnerable, I open everything that qualifies. Vulnerable, I am using judgment which means that two-bids are made approximately on the following: hands with a six-card suit, hands with a strong five-card suit, hands at the top of the point count range; or I do not choose to be conservative at the current score situation (behind in a team match or soft results in a pair game), or the opponents are harmless. We do it on most hands that qualify.

You ask about deviating in third seat? I hate that question. You should not deviate until you master the fundamentals. The only deviation I believe in is a side four-card major in third and fourth seat. In third seat, I might open J-10-x-x-x or x-x-x-x-x. I would not be too bothered with 8 points in a 5-3-3-2 hand. You could follow me forever and I won't ever have a seven-card suit, 10 cards in two suits, a void, or a singleton in an unbid major. Fourth seat weak two-bids are reasonable. One would expect length in the majors and a near maximum count.

Weak two-bids have a suit count of 11-14 (15) suit points. Thus, over two-of-a-major, responder should invite game with 12 suit points and bid game with 14 suit points. The notrump count of a weak two-bid is 9-12. A computer study convinced me that it is right to pound into game with 15 notrump points.

The responses are:

- Suit takeouts are non-forcing but contract improving.
- Non-competitive raises are invitational.
- Jump takeouts force game.
- Over 2♦, 2 NT is to play.
- Over a major, 2 NT is forcing. Opener shows his longest minor. If responder rebids, then a game force is created, and responder is uncertain as to the final contract. The only exception is a competitive raise of the minor suit response.
- The redouble is undefined.
- Over weak two-bids (and three-bids), 4 NT is always Blackwood.

Responder is captain. Opener has described his hand and leaves future decisions to partner. Contrast this with other two-bids where responder's actions are restricted to keep the partnership out of trouble. From the requirements for the weak two-bid and by looking at his hand, responder should be able to evaluate the offense of both partnerships. He has the freedom to place the contract. It is up to him to see that the best result is achieved from the bid. Both partners must favor the use of weak two-bids. If one partner is opposed, he will not use the best judgment over his partner's two-bid, and he will fail to open two-bids when his partner could use good judgment.

Evaluation of responder's support:

- Three or more cards is good support. Don't raise without three-card support.
- Two cards is tolerable support. Don't raise. There may be a better spot.
- With one-card support, there may be a better spot. Without a five-card major or a long minor, you accept partner's suit.
- With a void, correct.

Here are some generalizations (exceptions exist) to direct responder's actions:

- Take advantage of the information about suit lengths and high-card strength in both the bidding and defensive play.
- Be careful about taking saves. If you have been playing standard weak-twos, whatever that is, you will now find partner better defensively and poorer offensively. The two-bid suggests a part-score deal.
- Let the opponents play their part-score contracts undoubled. When they overcall they tend to reach either average or inferior contracts. When they try to steal a game, however, it may be advisable to double, for this helps the weak two-bidder on defense.
- Takeout a 2♦ bid with a five-card major. The major is either a seven-card or an eight-card fit.
- Don't takeout to the three-level unless you have a singleton or void in partner's suit.
- Fifteen HCP will probably produce game.
- Jump to game if you are certain where you want to play. A jump to three-of-a-major shows a five-card suit and asks partner to bid either 3 NT or 4-of-the-major.
- No strength is shown by suit takeouts. Don't respond with 2 NT over 2♦ unless there is a reasonable hope of making 2 NT.
- Three-card support and 10-13 HCP is enough for a competitive raise.
- Opener should not bid again (and will not want to) except when responder has made a strength showing bid, e.g. 2 NT or a bid after an opponent's overcall.
- Responder should rarely psyche in response, or take a premature save.

Examples

♠ KQJ10x
 ♥ Qxx
 ♦ xx
 ♣ xxx
 ?

Pass. This is not a weak two-bid. With 5-3-3-2 you need 9 HCP.

♠ xx
 ♥ QJ109xx
 ♦ KQJx
 ♣ x
 ?

Pass. You have 10 cards in two suits. Offensively, you can take seven tricks at hearts. If you open 2♥ and the opponents compete, you will want to bid 3♥. If you open 2♥, partner will misjudge both the offense and defense. He will correct to inferior contracts, miss 4♥, etc.

2♥ Pass ♠ AQxxxx
 ♥
 ♦ Kxxx
 ♣ Kxx
 ?

Bid 2♠ over 2♥. Takeouts are non-forcing and you will play 2♠ which you know to be a better contract than 2♥. If takeouts were forcing your choices would be to pass 2♥, or to bid 2♠ and then 3♠. 2♠ may be the last makeable contract for either side. You have to be able to find and then play your best contract over your own preempts.

		♠ KQxxx
		♥ x
		♦ xxx
		♣ AKxx
2♥	Pass	?

Bid 2♠ over 2♥. It is worthwhile to predict the auction at other tables. Here, if partner passed, we would open the bidding, and it could go:

Pass	1♠	
1 NT		2♣
2♠		Pass
Pass	1♠	
2♠		Pass
Pass	1♠	
2♥		2♠
Pass		
Pass	1♠	
3♠		Pass, 4♠

We guess that most of the time this deal will play in a spade part-score. We don't believe in "going with the field," but it is nice to know what they are doing. If the opponents enter any of these "other table" auctions, they are apt to be doubled.

		♠ Qxxx
		♥ Kxx
		♦ Ax
		♣ Jxxx
2♦, 2♥, 2♠	Pass	?

Pass your partner's two-bid. To raise preemptively makes the unwarranted assumption that the opponents are going to bid. If you pass, your hand remains an unknown quantity, and for this and for the ability to invite game, we give up the preemptive raise. Over the pass, the opponents can only guess about your count and distribution. If the opponents bid, raise spades or hearts to the three-level. This is a minimum competitive raise of hearts. If the opponents bid 3♠ (they can have only seven spades), you expect to set them. A part-score double on this hand, though, will lose more matchpoints than it gains. I would double 3 NT because this double helps partner on defense by announcing that the opponents have misfired.

		♠ K109xx
		♥ xx
		♦ QJx
		♣ KQx
2♠	Pass	?

Yes, it was partner who opened 2♠. Pass. A converse of a Goren rule is: "A passed hand opposite a passed hand will not produce game." Neither do you need to bid 4♠ as a save. If game makes in an experienced field you will get a zero because one partner will open 1♠ and the other will bid 4♠. If you think 4♠ should make more often than not, then run a simulation. Rarely will partner's weak two have a 50% or better play for game.

		♠ K10xx
		♥ Kx
		♦ AKxx
		♣ Jxx
2♥	Pass	?

Pass. This is a maximum pass. With one more point you would drive to game over 2♥. Because you have an opening bid, feel free to double the opponents when they come into the auction.

		♠ QJx
		♥ KQxx
		♦ AJxx
		♣ xx
2♠	Pass	?

With a full opening bid, this part-score should belong to you. It is all right to let the opponents overcall push you to the three-level. With no intervention, this hand qualifies as a spade raise (your 12 suit points plus partner's 11 suit points equals 23 suit points) - a pass of 2♠ may work out. If partner had opened 2♥, raise to 3♥. If partner had opened 2♦, pass, or raise to 3♦ to invite 3 NT.

		♠ Q10xxxx
		♥ x
		♦ KQx
		♣ Axx
2♥,2♦	Pass	?

Bid 2♠ over 2♥ or 2♦. The correction promises nothing and partner is expected to pass. If 2♦ is overcalled with 2♥, your bid of 2♠ is still non-forcing, but may be raised. If they compete with 3♥, I would bid 3♠.

		♠ Qxx
		♥ x
		♦ Axx
		♣ KJ10xxx
2♠,2♥	Pass	?

A maximum pass of 2♠. A clear cut 3♣ bid over 2♥. To improve the contract to the three-level, you would like to have a six-card suit.

		♠ KQxx
		♥ QJx
		♦ AQJx
		♣ xx
2♦,2♥	Pass	?

With 15 points bid 3 NT over 2♦. A second choice would be to raise 2♦ to 3♦ to invite 3 NT. Fourteen suit points is enough to bid 4♥ over 2♥.

		♠ AKJ10x
		♥ Qx
		♦ KQxx
		♣ xx
2♦	Pass	?

In principle you jump shift to 3♠ to force to game and to find five-three major fits. This five-card spade suit is adequate to play a 5-2 spade fit, so jump directly to 4♠.

		♠ AQxxx
		♥ KQJxx
		♦ Qx
		♣ K
2♦	Pass	?

Science allows the jump shift to 3♥. With three spades and two hearts, partner bids 3♠ as a check back for spades, and usually this allows the stronger hand to play 3 NT. With five spades we then raise to 4♠. We have just dummy reversed the hand.

		♠ 10xxxx
		♥ Qxxx
		♦
		♣ Jxxx
2♦	Pass	?

Fortunately, when you pick up a rag like this, partner does not open 2♦. Your action depends on the opponents and the vulnerability. Supposedly you bid 2♠ over 2♦. If the opponents forget to double 2♦, we might let partner obtain experience in a 5-0 trump fit.

What Can Go Wrong?

The types of hands responder may have for the 2 NT forcing response are:

- Five-five or longer, or even four-five in the minors, and scrambling to a better contract.
- Two-card support for partner in a game going hand.
- Five cards in the other major and a game force.
- Choice between game and slam in some suit.
- A minor-suit game force, where game in opener's major is a possibility.

Opener's response to 2 NT is to choose a minor, and that caters to:

		♠ x
		♥ xx
		♦ AJxxx
		♣ K10xxx
2♠	Pass	?

Bid 2 NT over 2♠. Partner will pick his longest minor. Over a not vulnerable 2♥, it is probably right to bid 2 NT as this forces the opponents to find spades at the three-level. Vulnerable, and over a 2♥ opening, it may be right to pass, i.e. you surrender and allow the opponents to easily find their spade fit rather than go for 200 at a minor.

		♠ x
		♥ AKxxx
		♦ K10xx
		♣ AJx
2♠		2NT
3♣		3♥

		♠ Jx
		♥ AKxxx
		♦ K10x
		♣ AJx
2♠		2NT
3♣		3♥

Partner raises with three hearts, bids 3♠ with six spades, or bids 3 NT.

		♠ AKxxx
		♥ x
		♦ K10xx
		♣ AJx
2♥		2NT
3♣		3♠

Partner raises with three spades, or bids 3 NT. You could also jump directly to 3♠. Then, with no spade fit, partner plays 3 NT. The difference between the two responses is who declares 3 NT.

	♠ AKxxx
	♥ Jx
	♦ K10x
	♣ AJx
2♥	2NT
3♣	3♥

This auction is forcing and shows exactly two hearts. If partner is on the ball, he will bid 3♠ with three spades, and we will find our 5-3 spade game. If he is sloppy, he may rebid 3 NT with three spades, and we will miss our spade fit.

	♠ K10x
	♥ Jx
	♦ AKxxx
	♣ AJx
2♥	2NT
3♣	?

Responder can bid either 3 NT or 3♥. The delayed 3 NT bid shows uncertainty about which game to play, and the only other strain that has been mentioned is hearts.

	♠ Kxxx
	♥ AK
	♦ AQxxx
	♣ Kx
2♠	2NT
3♣	4♠

Here the uncertainty is between game and slam.

I cannot recall a minor-suit game force initiated with a 2 NT response. Here is a possibility:

♠ Kxx	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ AQx
♥ Axxxx		♥ Kx
♦ Qxxx		♦ x
♣ x		♣ KQJxxxx
2♥		2NT
3♦		3♥ (or 4♣)
3♠		4♣
4♥		5♣

Once responder bid 3♥ (or 4♣) a game force was created.

A corollary to the 2 NT response is that a jump to 3 NT sets the contract, and opener can rebid his suit only if it is playable opposite a void.