

Common Room Bidding Conventions

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Opening Bids

Opening Balanced Hands; Notrump Bids

Balanced hands are 4 3 3 3, or 4 4 3 2, or 5 3 3 2 distribution.

- 12–14pts. Open a 5 card suit or your best minor. Rebid 1NT if it is available at your next bid.
- 15–17pts. Open 1NT. This should promise stoppers in at least 3 suits.
- 18–19pts. Open a 5 card suit or your best minor. Rebid 2NT. If there was an intervening 2-level bid then 2NT no longer promises 18–19 points, so you must jump to 3NT.
- 20–21pts. Open 2NT.
- 22–24pts. Open 2♣. Rebid 2NT.
- 25+pts. Open 2♣. Rebid 3NT.

An opening of 3NT is a gambling bid with a 7+ card minor suit, AKQxxxx or better, and no outside strength.

Opening Unbalanced Hands; Suit Bids

Always open your longest suit first (unless it's a 4 card major). With two 5 card suits, open the higher one first.

- 1♥, 1♠ Shows a 12+ highcard point hand with 5+ cards in the bid suit.
- 1♣, 1♦ Shows a 12+ highcard point hand with either 4+ cards in the bid suit, or 3+ in the bid suit and a 4 card major. In the latter case bid the longer minor. With 3 3 bid 1♣. With 4 4 bid 1♦.

Rule of 20: In deciding whether to open a suit at the one or two level use this guide. Add the lengths of your two longest suits to your highcard points. If this totals 20+ then you have enough strength to open at the 1 level. Otherwise you may consider a weak opening if you have a long suit.

- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ Weak preempts showing a 6–10 point hand with 6+ cards in the bid suit.
- 2♣ Reserved for all strong hands. Usually shows 21+ points but with a solid 5+ card suit and 9+ playing tricks in hand the point count may be reduced.
- 3Suit Extremely weak preempt showing 7+ cards in the bid suit and 3–9 points. Strength outside the bid suit is not desirable, and particularly an outside Ace should persuade you to find a stronger bid.
- 4♣, 4♦ On the weak side of a 3X bid, but with 8+ cards in the bid suit, or 7 4 shape.
- 4♥, 4♠ Either a shutout like 4♣ or 4♦, or in third chair a strong suited hand which is unlikely to go any further given partner's initial pass.

Responding to 1 of a Major suit

Support of 1♥ (or 1♠)

Responses shown are over a 1♥ opening. Over 1♠ substitute ♠ bids, and note that 3♥ becomes the **jump-shift** and 4♥ becomes the **splinter**.

- 2♥ With 6–9 points and 3+ card trump support.
- 3♥ With 10–12 points and 3+ card trump support. Game invitation.
- 4♥ Game closeout with less than 10 highcard points and 4+ card trump support.
- 2NT **Jacoby 2NT** shows 13+ points and 4+ card trump support. This bid is game-forcing.
- 3♠, 4♣, 4♦ A double jump in a new suit is a **splinter** showing 13+ points, 4+ card trump support, and a singleton or void. Bid the suit in which you are singleton or void.

Other Bids After 1♥ (or 1♠)

When responding in a new suit, you should usually bid your longest suit first. Four card suits should be bid up the line. (With a weak hand over 1♥ you may be forced to bid a 4 card spade suit even if you have a 5 card minor.)

- 1-over-1 A new suit at the 1-level shows 6+ points and a 4+ card suit.
- 2-over-1 A new suit at the 2-level shows 10+ points and a 4+ card suit (except 2♥ over 1♠ shows 5+ cards).
- 1NT Shows 6–9 points without support.
- 2♠, 3♣, 3♦ A jump in a new suit is a **Jump-shift** and shows 18+ points and a good 5+ card suit unless your hand has been previously limited by a pass. A passed hand may jump-shift to show a weak hand with a 6+ card suit.
- 3NT Balanced hand with 15–16 points and a doubleton in partner's suit.

Responding to 1 of a minor suit

Support of 1♣ (or 1♦)

Conventions are according to **Inverted Minors**. Responses shown are over a 1♣ opening. Over 1♦ substitute ♦ bids, and note that 3♣ becomes the **jump-shift**.

- 2♣ With 10+ points and 4+ card support. (Forcing to 2NT level)
- 2NT With 6–9 points and 5+ card support.
- 3♣ With 0–6 points and 5+ card support.

Other Bids After 1♣ (or 1♦)

As usual, bid your longest suit first. Generally 4 card suits should be bid up the line, however with a weak hand it is preferable to show a 4 card major even if you must skip a 4 card diamond suit to bid it.

- 1♦ Shows 6+ points and 4+ diamonds. Denies a 4 card major.
- 1♥, 1♠ Shows 6+ points and a 4+ card suit.
- 1NT Shows 6–9 points without support or 1-level suit response.
- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ **Jump-shift** showing 18+ points and a good 5+ card suit unless you have previously passed in which case it shows a weak 6+ card suit.
- 3NT Balanced 15–16 point hand. With more than 3 cards in partner's suit bid strong support instead.

Rebids after Jacoby 2NT

Jacoby 2NT Shows game-forcing support of major suit. Rebids now describe the opener's shape. Assume the auction has gone:

1♥ — 2NT —
?

3♣, 3♦, 3♠ Are **splinters** showing a singleton or void in the bid suit.

4♣, 4♦, 4♠ Shows a second 5+ card suit. Note that with 5 spades and 5 hearts you should have opened 1♠ in the first place so 4♠ here shows 6 hearts and 5 spades.

3NT Shows 5 cards in your suit, no singletons or voids, and invites slam.

3♥ Shows 6–7 cards in your suit, no singletons or voids, and invites slam.

4♥ Signs off in game.

Responding to a Weak 2♦ (or 2♥, 2♠) Opening

3♦ With 3 card support and a weak hand.

4♦ With 4 card support and a weak hand. Over 2♥ or 2♠ you may also raise to 4 with strong enough 2+ card support to make game.

2♥, 2♠, 3♣ Natural, nonforcing bids showing a 6+ card suit in which you would rather play.

2NT Inquiry bid asking for more details about the weak 2 hand. Opener's rebids are:

Rebid original suit, for example 3♦, with 6–8 points.

Bid 3 of a new suit to show an outside A or K and 8+ points.

Bid 3NT with no outside strength, but at least AKQ in the preempt suit.

Responding to a 1NT Opening

Remember not to count points for shortness when raising in notrump.

2NT Balanced hand with 9 points. This is game invitational. Partner passes with a bare minimum and otherwise bids 3NT.

3NT Balanced hand with 10–15 points.

2♣ **Stayman** shows a 4 card major, 8+ points, and a desire to play in suit. Bid also with 4 4 or 5 4 in the majors.

2♦, 2♥ **Jacoby transfer** shows a 5 card major in the suit above your bid. Bid also with 5 5 in the majors. For more information see the section on **Jacoby transfers**.

3♣, 3♦ Shows a weak 6+ card minor suit and an aversion to playing in notrump. Partner can, and usually should pass this bid. Exception: With good 3 card support of the minor, partner may correct to 3NT.

4NT Balanced hand with 16–17 points. Quantitative Slam invitation. Partner bids 6NT with a maximum and passes otherwise.

5NT Balanced hand with 20–21 points. Quantitative Grand Slam invitation. Partner bids 7NT with a maximum and 6NT with a minimum.

6NT Balanced hand with 18–19 points. Slam should be on.

7NT Balanced hand with 22+ points. In your dreams, ... maybe.

Bidding After Stayman

The **Stayman** bid is searching for a 4 4 major suit fit. Responses indicate major suit lengths.

- 2♦ Opener denies a 4 card major suit. You may reply 2♥ or 2♠ to show 5 4 shape in the majors, otherwise 2NT or 3NT.
- 2♥ Opener shows a 4+ card heart suit. With hearts you may raise to 3♥ or 4♥. Without you may reply 2♠, 2NT or 3NT. All three bids show 4 spades implicitly, but 2♠ shows a stronger aversion to notrump.
- 2♠ Opener shows a 4+ card spade suit and denies 4 hearts. With spades you may raise to 3♠ or 4♠, otherwise return to 2NT or 3NT.

Jacoby Transfers

The **Jacoby transfer** is a clever way to allow your partner to declare your suit. Your partner opened 1NT and probably has the stronger hand. There is some advantage to having that hand concealed during the play so the opponents must guess where it's strength lies. Here's how it works:

After your partner has opened 1NT.

If you respond 2♦ partner automatically rebids 2♥. (Super accept 3♥ with a 5 card suit.)

If you respond 2♥ Partner automatically rebids 2♠. (Super accept 3♠ with a 5 card suit.)

When the bid comes back to you, your bid indicates your strength and shape. Assume the auction has gone:

1NT	—	2♦	—
2♥	—	?	

- pass With a weak hand preferring a suit contract.
- 2NT With a 5 card major to invite game. Partner has the option to pass or correct to 3♥, 3NT, or 4♥.
- 3♥ With a 6+ card major to invite game. Partner may pass or correct to 4♥.
- 3NT With a 5 card major to force game. Partner may pass, correct to 4♥, or investigate slam possibilities.
- 4♥ With a 6+ card major to force game. Partner may pass or investigate slam.
- 3♣, 3♦ Show a 4+ card minor suit in addition to the 5 card major.
- 3♠, 4♣, 4♦ Are **splinters** showing a singleton or void in the bid suit and a 6+ card major.
- 2♠ Shows 5 spades and 5 hearts or better and invitational strength.

Over a 2♥ transfer to 2♠, responses are identical with ♠ substituted for ♥, except the two heart replies, so after:

1NT	—	2♥	—
2♠	—	?	

- 3♥ Shows 5 hearts and 5 spades or better and game-forcing strength.
- 4♥ **Splinter** showing 6+ spades and a heart singleton or void.

Responding to a 2NT Opening

Responses are similar to those after a 1NT opening except that since 20–21 have been shown, point ranges may be lowered by 5. Thus 3NT may be called with 5–10 points. A bid of 3♣ is **Stayman**, while 3♦ and 3♥ are **Jacoby transfers**.

Overcalls

Overcalls After 1 of a Suit

- 1-over-1 Shows a good 5+ card suit and 9–17 points.
- 2-over-1 A simple overcall at the 2-level, like 2♦ over 1♥, shows a good 5+ card suit and 12–17 point.
- 1NT Shows a balanced 15–17 point 1NT opening hand and guarantees a stopper in the opponent's suit. Partner responds as though you opened 1NT and may use **Stayman** and **Jacoby transfers**.
- jump A jump overcall, like 2♦ over 1♣, or 3♦ over 1♥, shows a 6+ card suit and 6–10 points, like a weak 2 opening.
- double Is not for penalties; it is meant to induce partner to bid. There are three situations in which you double:

- 1) A standard takeout double shows 12+ points and support for all three unbid suits. (Ideally 4 4 4 1 shape.) Partner is expected to bid one of these suits, especially with few points; jump responses show 10+ points.
- 2) Double also with a strong 5+ card suit and 17+ points. When partner bids, respond with your suit. If partner bids your suit, cue bid the opponent's suit to show a strong, suited double. For example,

1♦	X	—	1♠	and	1♦	X	—	1♥
—	2♥				—	2♦		

both show 17+ point overcalls in heart.

- 3) Double also with a balanced 18+ point hand. When partner bids, respond in notrump.

Two Suited Overcalls

- cue bid Overcalling the opponents' suit is a **Michael's cue bid**. Since you are unlikely to want to play in the suit opponents opened this bid is used as a 5–9 or 15+ point, two suited takeout:

After 1♣ (or 1♦), an overcall of 2♣ (or 2♦) shows 5 5 shape in hearts and spades.

After 1♥ (or 1♠), an overcall of 2♥ (or 2♠) shows 5 5 shape in the unbid major and an undisclosed minor. Partner may respond 2NT to ask which minor.

After a 5–9 point Michael's bid you should not bid again except to answer a 2NT suit ask. Any further bids will indicate a strong hand.

- 2NT It is extremely rare that you would want to bid 2NT after the opponents have opened, so the **Unusual 2NT** bid is reserved to show 5 5 shape in the two lowest unbid suits and either 5–9 or 15+ points. (With the rare 18+ point balanced hand you double and bid notrump next round.) Any further rebids will indicate a strong hand.

Overcalls After a Weak 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ Preempt

Overcalling after a weak 2 preempt is similar to overcalling 1 of a suit, but any bid you make will force the contract up to the 2 or 3 level, so all bids must promise more strength than over a 1 level opening. Fortunately the weak opening increases the likelihood that you have the additional strength. Double is for takeout, asking your partner to pick a suit. **Michael's cue bids** are available at the 3 level, but 2NT is natural, showing an opening notrump hand. To overcall notrump you **MUST** have a stopper or two in the opponent's suit.

Overcalls After 3 and 4 Level Preempts

Without going into much detail, the philosophy of overcalling remains more or less the same. To bid you must be prepared to play a high contract and that means strength. Double is still for takeout rather than penalties. Suit bids show good suits. **Michael's cue bids** are necessarily game forcing over a 3 level preempt. Bidding 3NT shows a desire to play 3NT. Over 4 level preempts some players double for a three suited takeout and bid 4NT for a strongly two suited hand, but partnership agreements will vary.

Overcalling After 1NT

Conventions are according to the Disrupt Opponent's NoTrump (DONT) paradigm.

- 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ Two suited overcalls showing 5 4 shape or better in the bid suit and a higher ranking suit. Around 10–15 points.
- 2♠ Normal overcall showing a good 5+ card spade suit, since there is no higher suit it could show. Also around 10–15 points.
- double Not for penalties, but showing a single suited overcall. You may indicate the suit at your next bid if there is enough bidding room left. Not surprisingly around 10–15 points.

Bidding Over Interference

Supporting Partner's Suit

Whenever partner has bid a suit and the opponents have interfered you have two ways of supporting partner's suit. You may raise your partner's suit naturally or you may cue the opponents' suit. All natural raises are understood to be weak competitive bids while all cue bids are understood to be limit raises or better. For example if the bidding has gone

1♥ 1♠ ?

you have the following trump raises available:

- 2♥ With 3 hearts and 5–9 points
- 3♥ With 4 hearts and 5–9 points
- 4♥ With 5 hearts and 0–9 points
- 2♠ Game invitational with 3+ hearts and 10–12 points
- 3♠ Game forcing with 3 hearts and 13+ points
- 2NT Since the interference was at the 1 level the **Jacoby 2NT** convention should still be on, showing 4+ hearts and 13+ points.

Precise meanings will vary depending on partner's suit and opponents' interference. Two further examples illustrate.

After the sequence 1♣ 1♥ ?

here is a sampling of the possible trump raises:

- 2♣ With 4 clubs and 5–9 points
- 3♣ With 5 clubs and 5–9 points
- 2♥ With 4+ clubs and 10–12 points
- 3♥ With 4+ clubs and 13+ points

And after the bidding 1♠ 2♥ ?

You have these trump bids with which to work:

- $n♠$ With $n + 1$ spades and 5–9 points (For $n \geq 4$ 0–9 points suffice.)
- 3♥ Game invitational with 3+ spades and 10–12 points
- 4♥ Game forcing with 3+ spades and 13+ points

In this case the 2NT bid reverts to being natural.

Notrump Responses After Suit Interference

When available the 1NT response still means 6–10 points and a balanced hand but guarantees a stopper in the opponents' bid suit.

When the interference is at the 2 level the 2NT response is an invitation to 3NT, requiring a sure stopper in the opponents' bid suit.

A response of 3NT is always to play.

New Suits and Negative Doubles

After your partner and right hand opponent have both bid suits a double is not for penalties. Instead it shows a holding in one of the two unbid suits. This is known as a **negative double** since it denies support for your partner's suit. If there is a unique unbid major then most of the time a **negative double** shows a holding in that major, which begs the question: What is the difference between a negative double and a bid in the unbid major? A direct bid should show a five card holding. Here is a case by case analysis:

1♣	1♥	?	With 6+ points, double to show 4 spades and bid 1♠ to show 5+spades.
1♣	1♠	?	Bid 2♥ with 5+ hearts and 10+ points. Otherwise double with 6+ points and 4+ hearts.
1♥	2♣	?	Bid 2♠ with 5+ spades and 10+ points. Otherwise double with 6+ points and 4+ spades.
1♠	2♣	?	Bid 2♥ with 5+ hearts and 10+ points. Otherwise double with 6+ points and 4+ hearts.

One other special case exists. It is the following auction:

1♣	1♦	?	Double shows 4 4 or better in the majors and 6+ points. Bids of 1♥ or 1♠ show a 4+ card suit and tend to deny the other major.
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