



Two Over One

A step-by-step guide to opening, responding, and the second bid

Uncontested auctions only · five-card majors, 15–17 notrump



A bidding system is a shared vocabulary

You may not tell partner what you hold — so the two of you agree in advance what each bid means.

Every call in an auction carries information: a range of strength, a length in a suit, sometimes a question. A system is simply the dictionary the partnership has agreed to use, and both partners must be using the same one.

Your opponents are entitled to that dictionary too — agreements must be disclosed, never kept secret.



Natural bids and conventions

A natural bid means what it says. A convention means something the partnership assigned to it.

1♠ showing five spades is natural. Stayman 2♣ says nothing whatever about clubs — it asks a question about majors. Conventions buy precision by spending a bid you would rarely have needed for its natural meaning.

This deck uses several: Stayman, transfers, Bergen 3♦, Jacoby 2NT, Texas. Each is introduced where it earns its place.



Where Two Over One comes from

It is a refinement of Standard American, not a replacement for it.

Standard American grew up around five-card majors and a strong notrump. Two Over One keeps both of those intact and changes exactly one agreement — what a new suit at the two level promises.

So most of what you already know still applies. In Britain the traditional alternative is Acol, built on four-card majors and a weak notrump.



Why so many players use it

It is the most widely played system among serious tournament players in North America.

The reason is accuracy at the top end. Once game is guaranteed the partnership can bid slowly and cheaply, and that extra room is worth most on exactly the hands where mistakes cost the most — game and slam decisions.

The trade-off is that you must handle the weaker hands another way. That is the rest of this deck.



One rule defines the whole system

When responder bids a new suit at the two level, the partnership is committed to game.

After 1♠ – 2♦ you may not stop below 4♠, 5♦ or 3NT. That single promise is what the name means, and every other agreement in this deck exists to work around it.

Everything that follows is either a consequence of this rule, or a way of coping with what it takes away.



What the promise buys you

Because game is already guaranteed, nobody has to jump to show strength.

In older systems a strong hand had to leap to make sure partner did not pass — and a jump eats the room you need to describe shape. Here both hands can bid new suits cheaply, one step at a time.

The result: better games, and slam investigation that is actually possible instead of a guess at the five level.



And what it costs

You give up the Standard American two-level response on 10–11 points.

In SAYC a new suit at the two level showed about 10 or more. In 2/1 it shows 12 or more, so the 10–11 hands lose their natural home: they must now respond 1NT and show the extra strength on the next round.

That is what makes the 1NT response so busy — it absorbs the 10–11 hands on top of the weak ones.



Two conditions, and both must hold

Responder is an unpassed hand, and the opponents have stayed silent.

A player who already passed has denied opening strength, so a later two-level bid cannot promise game. And once an opponent overcalls or doubles, the agreement is off — that is competitive bidding, a separate topic.

Every auction in this deck assumes the opponents pass throughout.



First, what a fit means

Eight or more cards in one suit, counting both partners' hands together.

Thirteen cards exist in each suit, so eight between you leaves only five for the opponents — few enough that your trumps control the hand. Almost everything in this deck is machinery for finding out whether one exists.

You have a fit with three or more cards in a major, because opener promised five. In a minor you need four of your own, because the opening may be three.



Every auction is a search, in this order

A major game first · then 3NT · then a minor game last.

4♥ and 4♠ need ten tricks but give you trumps, so the opponents cannot simply cash their suit. 3NT needs only nine — the cheapest game — but you need every suit stopped. A minor game needs eleven tricks, which is a lot.

That order is behind almost every judgment call the system asks of you.



Why that order, and not some other

All three games pay the same bonus — so take the one that needs the fewest tricks you can actually make.

3NT is cheapest at nine tricks, but with no trumps a single unguarded suit can be run against you. A major game needs one more trick and gives you that protection. Eleven tricks for a minor game is a lot to ask for the same reward.

A seven-card major fit is occasionally right — when 3NT is unsafe and eleven tricks are out of reach.



Start with high card points

Ace 4 · King 3 · Queen 2 · Jack 1 — forty in the deck.

An average hand is ten. Because the deck holds forty, the partnership that holds more than half the points usually belongs in the higher contract — and roughly 25 between two hands is the usual price of a game.

Milestones worth memorizing: 25 for 3NT or a major game · 29 for a minor game · 33 for a small slam · 37 for a grand.



Long suits are worth more than their honors

Add one point for every card beyond four in a suit.

A five-card suit scores one extra, a six-card suit two. Length wins tricks late in the hand once the opponents have no cards left in the suit — small cards in a long suit become winners, and nothing in the high-card count notices that.

These length points count for every opening decision, including which notrump range you land in.



A short queen or jack is worth less

Subtract one point from any suit that is a singleton or doubleton and contains a queen or a jack.

A queen wins a trick by being led up to while a higher card is captured — that needs small cards alongside it. A bare queen usually just falls under the ace and king. Aces and kings are not reduced: they win on their own.

The deduction is once per SUIT, not once per card.



An ace or king beside it cancels the penalty

K-Q, A-Q, A-J and K-J doubletons are NOT docked a point.

These are not weak holdings. The top card wins a trick outright, and the lower honor travels behind it rather than falling under something bigger — so neither card is wasted, and there is nothing to deduct.

Docked: Q-x, J-x, a singleton queen, a singleton jack — and Q-J. • Not docked: A-Q, A-J, K-Q, K-J.

The test is whether a higher honor sits in the SAME short suit.



Why Q-J doubleton only loses one point

Q-J is three high card points, minus one, so it is worth two.

Q-J is the one honor pair that IS docked, because neither card beats the ace and king you are missing. But they do protect each other, so it costs one point, not two — docking both would charge twice for a single weakness.

One suit, one deduction. ♦QJ is worth two; ♦Q alone and ♦J alone in different suits cost a point each.



Three hands, counted out

High card points, plus length, minus short honors — the adjusted count every rule in this deck refers to.

LENGTH PAYS

♠ AQ763

♥ K4

♦ Q82

♣ J95

12 HCP + 1 for the fifth spade

13 points

ONE SHORT HONOR

♠ AK632

♥ QJ

♦ K1074

♣ 85

13 HCP + 1 for length - 1 for ♥QJ

13 points

TWO SHORT HONORS

♠ AKQ54

♥ Q2

♦ J6

♣ K983

15 HCP + 1 for length - 1 (♥Q) - 1 (♦J)

14 points

Two different suits, so two separate deductions — unlike Q-J sitting together.



Once you find a fit, count differently

With trumps agreed, the supporting hand counts shortness: void 5, singleton 3, doubleton 1.

Shortness is only worth anything when you have trumps to ruff with. A singleton opposite a good trump fit means you can ruff that suit twice; the same singleton in a notrump contract is just a suit the opponents will run.

That is why you wait for the fit before counting it — the value does not exist until the trump suit does.



The one place the penalty is waived

A short queen or jack keeps its full value in the suit PARTNER bid — and nowhere else.

Opposite partner's length, a bare queen is working: partner has the small cards it needs. In any other suit it is still the same weak holding, whether you are counting length or shortness.

Partner's suit is the only exception. Finding a fit changes how you count the rest of the hand, not this.



Twelve points always opens

With 12 or more adjusted points, open. No judgment required.

The threshold is deliberately low. Describing your hand early is worth more than waiting for a perfect one — partner cannot find the right contract with information you never gave them.

Eleven opens too — unless the shape is flat

Exactly 11 adjusted points opens, unless your shape is 4-3-3-3.

4-3-3-3 is the flattest shape there is: no ruffing value, no long suit to develop, no second suit to name. Every other 11-point hand has something going for it. That one has nothing but its points.

♠KQ74 ♥J42 ♦Q85 ♣K93 — *eleven points, and a pass.*



Ten or fewer? Let the shape decide

The Rule of 20 — add your HCP to the lengths of your two longest suits. Reach 20 and you open.

A weak hand is only worth opening when its shape earns it. Two long suits give you places to make tricks and a way to compete; a flat ten-count gives you neither.

The same ten points, two different answers

Both hands hold exactly 10 high card points. Only one has the shape to justify a bid.

TWO-SUITER

♠ KQ1082

♥ —

♦ AJ964

♣ 732

10 HCP + 5 spades + 5 diamonds = 20

Open 1♠

ONE-SUITER

♠ KQ842

♥ K96

♦ Q102

♣ 94

10 HCP + 5 spades + 3 hearts = 18

Pass

Ten points is not the question. What the ten points are attached to is the question.



A major opening promises five cards

1♥ or 1♠ shows five or more cards in the suit, and opening values.

This is the "five-card majors" agreement, and it is what makes the rest work: because opener promised five, responder can raise immediately holding only three. In a four-card-major system that raise would be a guess.



Two five-card suits: open the higher one

With 5-5, the higher-ranking suit is opened first — and the reason is about your NEXT bid, not this one.

5-5 IN THE MAJORS

♠ AQ863

♥ KJ975

♦ K4

♣ 2

Open the higher, then rebid hearts cheaply below it

Open 1♠

THE SAME HAND OPENED 1♥

♠ AQ863

♥ KJ975

♦ K4

♣ 2

Now showing spades means bidding above your first suit — a reverse, promising 16+

Avoid

Open the higher suit and both suits are showable on any strength. With 6-5, open the longer suit first.



A minor opening may be short

1♣ or 1♦ shows opening values and denies a five-card major — the suit itself can be three cards.

With a balanced hand outside the 1NT range you still have to open something, and the majors are reserved for five. So the minor becomes a placeholder that says "I have an opening hand" more than "I have this suit".

Longer minor first • with 4-4 open 1♦ • with 3-3 open 1♣ — the famous "short club".

This is why 1♣ can be three cards while 1♥ never can.



1NT shows 15–17 and a balanced hand

Balanced means no singleton and no void — nothing shorter than a doubleton anywhere.

One bid that pins down both strength and shape is enormously valuable: responder becomes the captain immediately and can place the contract. That accuracy is why the range is kept narrow.



A long suit does not stop a hand being balanced

4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2 — and also 5-4-2-2, 6-3-2-2, 7-2-2-2.

Only a SHORT suit unbalances a hand, because a singleton or void is what makes notrump dangerous. A six-card suit alongside three doubletons is still perfectly playable in notrump.

A hand with a singleton is unbalanced however friendly the rest of it looks.



The length point moves you up a notch

A fifth card in any suit adds a point — and on a balanced hand that point decides which rung you are on.

14 HCP with a five-card suit is 15, so it opens 1NT. 17 HCP with a five-card suit is 18, so it opens a suit and jumps in notrump instead. The extra card is worth the extra step.

A five-card major is no obstacle to 1NT when the count lands in 15–17.



Two shapes that decline 1NT anyway

Both are balanced and in range. Both open a suit — because a suit worth naming is worth naming.

SIX-CARD MAJOR

♠ K3
♥ AQ9764
♦ KJ3
♣ 86

Six hearts is a trump suit, and the major fit is the first thing to look for

Open 1♥

5-4-2-2

♠ AQ1074
♥ K4
♦ QJ85
♣ A6

Two biddable suits — open the five-card one and show the four next

Open 1♠

Every other balanced hand in range opens 1NT — including a six-card MINOR, where there is no major to hunt for.

The complete balanced ladder

Only one rung opens 1NT. Every other balanced hand opens a suit and announces its range on the rebid.

Points	Open	Then rebid	Example
11-14	one of a suit	cheapest notrump	1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT
15-17	1NT	—	the whole hand in one bid
18-19	one of a suit	JUMP in notrump	1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT
20-21	2NT	—	directly
22+	2♣	notrump cheaply	artificial and forcing

Learn this ladder as one picture — the rebid is what tells partner which rung you were on.

2♣ is artificial, and forcing

22 or more balanced, or a hand worth about nine playing tricks. It says nothing about clubs.

Some hands are too strong to risk being passed. 2♣ guarantees another turn: responder may not pass it. The standard reply is 2♦, a waiting bid made on anything with nothing special to say.

There is no weak 2♣ — that bid is reserved for this.



Weak twos buy space, not contracts

2♦, 2♥ or 2♠: 5–10 points with a good six-card suit — a hand NOT worth an opening bid.

The purpose is to consume bidding room and make the opponents guess. You are not expecting to make it; you are expecting them to get it wrong at a level they never chose.

3-level preempts show a seven-card suit; four-level, eight. The weaker your defense and the longer your suit, the higher you go.



Do not count length in the suit you are preempting

The bid already announces the length — counting it again pays for the same card twice.

♠AQ9863 ♥K4 ♦952 ♣74 looks like 11 points with the length. For this purpose it is 9, so it is a weak 2♠ and not a one-level opening. Judge the 5–10 range on high cards plus length in your OTHER suits.

And never preempt holding a four-card major on the side — partner may be hunting exactly that fit.

Responder counts in two stages

Length until you know you have a fit — shortness once opener's suit is going to be your trumps.

Until a fit is found you might well end in notrump, where a singleton is a liability rather than an asset. Only when the trump suit is settled does shortness start earning its keep.

One extra wrinkle: deduct for short honors, EXCEPT in partner's suit. A short queen in the suit partner bid is working, so it keeps its value.



The three bands responder works in

Below about 5, pass · 5–11 is limited · 12 or more forces to game.

Every rule that follows is a refinement of those three. Before applying any of them, check whether you have a fit — three cards in a major, four in a minor — because that decides which count you use.

The bands are totals in adjusted points, which is why a shapely 8-count and a flat 11-count can bid quite differently.

With FOUR trumps, the full ladder

Counting shortness — void 5, singleton 3, doubleton 1 — outside the trump suit.

Points	Bid	What it says
up to 8, mostly shape	4♥ / 4♠	Preemptive, not an invitation
5-6	1NT	Too weak to raise — sign off next
7-8	2♥ / 2♠	Constructive raise
9-10	3♥ / 3♠	Mixed raise
11-12	3♦	BERGEN limit raise — artificial
13 or more	2NT	Jacoby — game forcing

Bergen 3♦ is not diamonds, and it is the same bid over either major.

With exactly THREE, a shorter ladder

The mixed raise, Bergen 3 ♦ and Jacoby 2NT all promise four trumps — so none of them is available here.

Points	Bid	What it says
0-4	Pass	Not enough to speak
5-6	1NT	Sign off in opener's suit next
7-9	2♥ / 2♠	Constructive raise
10-11	1NT	Too good to raise, not yet a game force
12 or more	two of a suit	The game force

The three-trump raise is one point WIDER — it runs to 9, because with four trumps 9 becomes the mixed raise.



Nine points, and the trump length decides

Partner opens 1 ♠. Both hands hold nine points counting shortness. They make different bids.

FOUR TRUMPS

♠ K872

♥ K32

♦ Q642

♣ 95

Four trumps unlocks the mixed raise

Bid 3 ♠

THREE TRUMPS

♠ K87

♥ K32

♦ Q6542

♣ 95

No mixed raise available — the constructive raise stretches to 9

Bid 2 ♠

Count your trumps before you count anything else — it decides which ladder you are even on.



The jump to game is often the **WEAKEST** bid

Partner opens 1♠. One of these is a slam try. The other is barely a hand.

SHAPE, NOT HONORS

♠ K8752

♥ 9

♦ 98642

♣ 95

Three high card points and eleven cards in two suits

Bid 4♠ at once

THE SAME POINTS AS HONORS

♠ K872

♥ Q32

♦ J642

♣ 95

Flat, and worth a constructive raise — nothing more

Bid 2♠

The preemptive 4♠ is up to 8 points held as five trumps, or under six HCP with a singleton. Bid it before the opponents find their fit.



The semi-forcing 1NT does the heavy lifting

5–11 points with nothing better to say — and it does NOT deny support.

Two of a suit would promise game, so every ordinary hand funnels through here: 5–6 with a fit planning to sign off, 6–11 without one, and 10–11 with three trumps that is too good to raise.

Semi-forcing: opener normally bids again, but may PASS with a balanced minimum.



A new suit at the one level is forcing — but not to game

1♥ – 1♠ shows four or more spades. Opener must bid again; the pair can still stop in a partscore.

One-level bids are cheap, so they are kept unlimited and natural. Bypass a FOUR-card spade suit only with game values and a real two-level suit to bid — with five spades, always bid 1♠.

Holding five spades over 1♥, bid 1♠ even with heart support: the bid is forcing, so nothing is lost.



Every two-level response promises five cards — except one

12 or more points and a five-card suit. The exception is 2♣ over a major, which may be two cards.

2♣ is the catch-all: with game values and no five-card suit to name, you still have to force to game somehow. It is a statement of strength first and a suit second.

Over 1♠: 2♥ with five hearts, 2♦ with five diamonds, 2♣ with none of the above.



Here the **ORDER** is the rule

Work down the list and make the first bid that fits.

A minor opening may be three cards, so responder's job is to find a major fit or the right level of notrump. More than anywhere else in the system, two bids can both be "true" and only one is right.

The priority list, in order

1. A five-card major at the one level — outranks everything, including 2♣ and 2NT.
2. 2NT with 13–14 or 18–19 balanced — GAME FORCING. It does NOT deny a four-card major, and it comes first anyway.
3. Over 1♦, five clubs and game values — 2♣, ahead of a four-card major.
4. Over 1♣, five diamonds and 11 or more — 1♦. With fewer, the major or 1NT comes first.
5. A four-card major at the one level. With 4-4, bid hearts and keep 1♠ available.
6. Inverted raise — four-card support and 10 or more, counting length but NOT shortness.
7. Otherwise 1NT with 6 or more. Below that, pass.

The inverted single raise is the **STRONG** action, not the weak one.



The inverted raise is the STRONG bid

Four-card support and 10 or more — counting length, but NOT shortness.

Raising partner's minor is the strong, forcing action here, the opposite of what a raise usually means. Shortness is excluded on purpose: this hand is heading for notrump, and a singleton is worth nothing in 3NT.

Inverted, because the single raise is strong and the jump raise is the weak one.



What the inverted raise is actually asking

3NT if every side suit is stopped — three of the minor if one is not.

Eleven tricks for a minor-suit game is a poor target when nine tricks in notrump pays the same bonus. So the raise looks for 3NT first, and treats three of the minor as the safe place to stop when a suit is wide open.

That is why the bid is forcing: partner has to describe their stoppers rather than pass in a partscore.



The 2NT response is game forcing

13 opposite an opening bid is already 25 between the hands — so 2NT is not an invitation.

It must not be passed. This catches people out because 2NT usually IS invitational opposite a one-of-a-major opening; opposite a minor it is a commitment to game.

Two ranges use it: 13-14, and 18-19 with slam interest. With 15-17 balanced, bid a suit first and jump in notrump later.



Why 2NT outranks a four-card major

2NT pins down a balanced 13–14 or 18–19 in one bid, and still leaves the major findable.

The range has a gap on purpose: with 15–17 balanced you bid a suit first and jump in notrump later. A five-card suit rules 2NT out entirely — bid the suit.

Over 1♣ with five diamonds but fewer than 11 points, the hand is not strong enough to insist — bid the major or 1NT.



Opener has described the hand — you are the captain

Shape decides first, strength second.

Opposite a known 15–17 balanced, responder can count the partnership total and place the contract. Nobody else has better information, so nobody else should be making the decision.



Transfers are free. Stayman is not.

A transfer always has a landing place. Stayman asks a question that can strand you.

Transfer and opener bids your suit — you pass, and you are home. Bid Stayman and opener answers 2♦ denying a major, and you are at the two level with nowhere better to go. So Stayman normally needs about 8 points.

Transfers work on a Yarborough. Stayman needs values — unless your shape guarantees a landing place.



Garbage Stayman — and the hand that must not use it

Two weak shapes can bid 2♣ on nothing, because each has an answer to 2♦. A third looks identical and is a trap.

FIVE-FOUR IN THE MAJORS

♠ Q964

♥ J8752

♦ 853

♣ 5

Opener answers 2♦? Rebid 2♥, asking opener to pick their better major

2♣ is safe

4-4-4-1, SHORT CLUBS

♠ Q874

♥ J963

♦ K1042

♣ 6

Opener answers 2♦? Pass it — you hold four-card support

2♣ is safe

4-4-4-1, SHORT DIAMONDS

♠ Q874

♥ J963

♦ 6

♣ K1042

2♦ is exactly the answer this hand cannot handle

Pass instead

Check WHICH suit is short before reaching for 2♣ — the shape is the whole safety net.



With ten or more, stop inviting

Ten opposite 15–17 is 25 between the hands — the question is only WHERE to play game.

A flat ten with no major to look for simply bids 3NT. There is nothing left to ask about strength, so an invitation just tells the opponents about your hand for no gain.

3♣ is puppet Stayman: 10 or more with a THREE-card major, asking opener to name a five-card major first.



Puppet does not deny a four-card major

Both 3-3 and 4-3 in the majors use 3♣. It is hunting a 5-3 fit, not a 4-4 one.

With a four-card major but NO three-card major — 4-2 in the majors — it is a 4-4 fit you want, so bid ordinary Stayman 2♣ instead. The 2♣/3♣ choice is about strength; the 4-2 case is the one exception where shape decides.

No three-card major and no four? There is no major fit to find — bid 3NT.



One counting change opposite notrump

Count high cards and length only — no short-honor deduction.

That deduction is about a suit contract, where an unguarded queen falls under a ruff. In notrump a J-10 doubleton is a real half-stopper. Docking it would turn a game-forcing ten-count into a nine-point invitation.



Decide your strength first, then your shape

Weak, up to 7 · invitational, 8–9 · game forcing, 10 or more.

Opener has already described the hand, so responder knows the partnership total. Settle which of the three bands you are in, and only then ask what your shape wants to do about it.

The next three slides are that question answered, one band at a time.



Up to 7 points — get out cheaply

No game is coming. The aim is simply to land somewhere better than 1NT, or to pass.

Your shape	Bid	Then
Five- or six-card major	2♦ / 2♥	Transfer, then pass
Six diamonds / six clubs	2NT / 2♠	Transfer, then pass
5-4 in the majors	2♣	GARBAGE — over 2♦ bid 2♥, opener picks a major
4-4-4-1, short CLUBS	2♣	GARBAGE — pass a 2♦ answer
Anything else	Pass	Stayman needs values; transfers do not

Never bid garbage Stayman 4-4-4-1 short in DIAMONDS — 2♦ is the one answer it cannot handle.



8–9 points — ask, do not decide

Enough that game is possible opposite a maximum, not enough to insist on it.

Your shape	Bid	Then
Six-card major	4♦ / 4♥	TEXAS — 8 is already game values here
Five-card major	2♦ / 2♥	Transfer, then 2NT to invite
A four-card major	2♣	Stayman — the invitational route
No four-card major	2♠	The balanced game try

Eight is the floor for Stayman: answer 2♦ and you must have somewhere to go.



10 or more — the only question is WHERE

Ten opposite 15–17 is 25 between the hands. Nothing left to invite, so stop inviting.

Your shape	Bid	Why that one
Six-card major	4♦ / 4♥	Texas — the fit is already known
Five-card major	2♦ / 2♥	Transfer, then 3NT and let opener choose
A three-card major (3-3 or 4-3)	3♣	PUPPET — hunting opener's FIVE-card major
A four-card major, no three-card	2♣	Stayman — it is a 4-4 fit you want, not a 5-3
No major to find	3NT	Just bid it

The 2♣ / 3♣ choice is about strength; within game-forcing values it is about which fit you are hunting.

Opposite 20–21, almost everything is a game

The same tools one level higher — but Stayman now comes AHEAD of the transfer.

Six-card major Texas — 4♦ for hearts, 4♥ for spades.

A four-card major 3♣ Stayman — bid it even alongside a five-card major, so both the 4-4 and the 5-3 fit stay findable. Skip it on 4-3-3-3.

Five-card major Transfer with 3♦ or 3♥.

3♠ Minor-suit slam try: 10+ with a six-card minor or both minors, no four-card major.

4 or more 3NT. Below that, pass — even 20–21 needs something opposite.

With 20 or more of your own, the partnership holds the deck: bid 7NT.



The second bid is where strength finally appears

Minimum 12–15 · invitational 16–18 · maximum 19–21.

The opening bid showed a suit and a broad range. The rebid narrows it: cheapest bid for a minimum, one level higher for invitational, a jump or a game force for a maximum.



Rebidding your suit promises a sixth card

You already promised five with a major — repeating it promises one more.

With exactly five and nothing else to say, rebid notrump or bid a three-card minor instead. Rebidding a five-card suit is one of the most common beginner errors, and it leaves partner playing a 5-2 fit.

1 ♠ – 1NT – 2 ♠ shows six spades and a minimum. Jump to 3 ♠ for the same suit with 16–18.



Raising partner promises four-card support

Opener knows responder may hold only four cards — so opener needs four to raise.

Responder's one-level suit promised only four. If opener raises with three, the pair can easily land in a seven-card fit while a better contract goes unfound.

A single raise is a minimum, a jump raise invitational, and raising to game shows the values for it.

A reverse shows extra strength — by forcing partner higher

A rebid in a HIGHER-ranking suit than you opened. It shows at least 16 HCP.

1♦ – 1♠ – 2♥ makes partner go to the three level to get back to your first suit. That costs room, so you must have the values to pay for it. 1♦ – 1♥ – 2♣ is NOT a reverse: partner can still bid 2♦.

Reverses do not apply after a 2/1 game force — with game already certain, a higher second suit is simply natural.

A jump shift is not a reverse — it is stronger

A jump shift skips a level. A reverse does not.

Over $1\spadesuit - 1\heartsuit$ the cheapest spade bid is $1\spadesuit$, so $2\spadesuit$ skips a level: that is a JUMP SHIFT, 19+ and game forcing. A reverse only bids a higher-ranking suit at the next available level, and shows 16+.

$1\spadesuit - 1\clubsuit - 2\heartsuit$ is the reverse. $1\spadesuit - 1\heartsuit - 2\clubsuit$ is the jump shift. Both force partner higher; the jump shift costs a whole level more.

After a semi-forcing 1NT, opener may pass

With a balanced minimum — no six-card major, no useful second suit — passing is right.

Responder has shown 6–11 with no fit. Opposite a flat 12–14 that is not going anywhere, and 1NT is a sensible place to play. This is the one option a fully forcing 1NT would take away.

Otherwise: rebid the major with six, bid a genuine second suit, or bid a three-card minor when passing is wrong but you have nothing natural to say.

The semi-forcing notrump keeps it low

Semi-forcing means opener is expected to bid again — but is allowed to pass. Here is when passing is right.

OPENER

♠ AQ763

♥ K4

♦ Q82

♣ J95

12 HCP, 13 with the fifth spade

RESPONDER

♠ 4

♥ QJ97

♦ K1063

♣ Q842

8 points, no spade support

1♠

Opener A classic 5-3-3-2 minimum: 12 HCP plus 1 for the fifth spade. Balanced, but 13 is below the 15–17 notrump range, so open the suit.

1NT

Responder One spade, so no fit. Eight points is far short of the 12 a two-level bid would promise, and there is no suit biddable at the one level. 1NT is the only call left.

Pass

Opener Now the exception earns its keep. Opener has a flat minimum, only five spades and no second suit — nothing to add. A FORCING 1NT would oblige a rebid on this hand and land the pair higher.

They play 1NT with 21 combined points — too few for game, and exactly where this deal belongs.



A game force explores slowly

OPENER

♠ KQ1085

♥ A6

♦ KJ4

♣ A73

17 HCP, 18 with the fifth spade

RESPONDER

♠ A4

♥ K52

♦ AQ1096

♣ K84

16 HCP, 17 with the fifth diamond

1♠

Opener Balanced but too strong for 1NT at 18.

2♦

Responder Game forcing, with the five-card suit every two-level response but 2♣ promises.

2NT

Opener Only five spades, so no suit rebid. Cheap, balanced — and unpassable, because game is already agreed.

3NT+

Responder Counting 35 combined points, with room to raise or start investigating slam.

Nobody had to jump, and every bid carried information — the whole point of the system.



The five mistakes beginners actually make

Two-level with 10 That promises game — 12 or more. With 10–11 and no fit, respond 1NT and show the strength next turn.

Rebidding five cards A suit rebid promises six. With five and nothing else, rebid notrump or bid a three-card minor.

Raising on three Raising responder promises FOUR-card support — partner may hold only four.

Counting shortness early A singleton is worth nothing until you know you have trumps. Count length until the fit is found.

Passing a forcing bid A new suit by responder, a 2♣ opening, and anything below game in a game-forcing auction all demand another bid.

The 1NT response is the one exception — semi-forcing, so opener may pass it.

Two Over One on one card

TWO OF A SUIT = GAME

unpassed hand, uncontested auction — the pair may not stop short

1NT IS SEMI-FORCING

5–11 with nothing better to bid; opener may pass with a balanced minimum

STRENGTH BEFORE SHAPE

2♣ over a major can be two cards; it forces game first and names a suit second

THREE TRUMPS OR FOUR

only four unlock the mixed raise, Bergen 3♦ and Jacoby 2NT

COUNT TWICE

length until you find a fit, shortness afterwards — and never both at once

LOOK FOR A MAJOR FIRST

major game, then 3NT, then a minor — a six-card major outranks 1NT

Practice: play a deal at bridge.jmariada.org with 2/1 as your system.

Ask the Learn Bridge chat anything about this material.