



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(516) Responding to 2NT Opening Bids with the Majors

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Level: 4 of 10

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General

When partner opens 2NT, our response structure is similar to when partner opens 1NT, just moved one level higher. 3♣ is Stayman, asking partner if they have a 4-card Major. Our Jacoby transfer responses now occur at the 3-level and our Texas Transfers still occur at the 4-level. But there are complexities that occur because the auction started with 2NT instead of 1NT. One of the major differences is that when we open 2NT, the second-round bids that we use to show a second suit no longer occur at the 3-level, but they are pushed up to the 4-level. This means that many natural shape-showing bids now take us beyond our favorite contract of 3NT. Thus, we must be more conservative about showing our second suit. We are much more likely to just search for a Major suit fit using Stayman or transfers, and if we do not find one, then we just settle for rebidding 3NT.

Responding to 2NT Fundamentals

After a 2NT opening bid here are Responder's options:

2NT ___?

- 3♣ Stayman – Including Smolen auctions
- 3♦* Transfer to ♥
- 3♥* Transfer to ♠
- 3♠* Minor Suit Slam Try
- 3NT To Play
- 4♣ Gerber
- 4♦* Texas Transfer to ♥
- 4♥* Texas Transfer to ♠
- 4♠* Quantitative with 4-4 minors
- 4NT Quantitative



Start Going Beyond 3NT

Let's look at the auctions that do take us beyond 3NT in more detail. But before we go into these details let's clarify a common mix-up for many partnerships – Gerber over 2NT. Since we cannot show ♣ naturally at the 3-level (like we can when partner opens 1NT), 4♣ on the second round of bidding is needed as a natural bid. 4♣ is only Gerber over 2NT when we jump directly to it.

Example 1

2NT 3♣
3♥ 4♣

This is a slam try with 5+♣ and an unbalanced hand. We also should have a 4-card ♠ suit on this auction (since we bid Stayman first).

Example 2

2NT 3♥*
3♠ 4m

5+ card ♠, 4+card minor. This shows an unbalanced hand and is usually a slam try. Responder would generally just bid 3NT (even with a 5-5 hand) with a minimum hand that is not at all interested in slam.

2♣ Opening Bid Auctions

These auctions are similar to 2NT opening bid auctions – we play “Systems On”.

2♣ 2♦* (Game Force)
2NT

2♣ 2♥* (Bust)
2NT

We play both auctions exactly like when Opener starts with an opening bid of 2NT (with the only difference being that Opener shows 22-24 points). That means Responder uses Stayman and transfer bids just as they would after a 2NT opening bid.



Hands with Both Majors

When we have length in both Major suits then we have auctions available to show these types of hands.

Hands with 5-5 in the Majors

Example 3

2NT 3♥*
3♠ 4♥

This auction shows 5-5 in the Majors and offers a choice of games.

Example 4

2NT 3♦*
3♥ 3♠

This auction shows 5-5 in the Majors and enough values to be interested in slam.

Hands with 5/4 in the Majors

When we have 5/4 in the majors, we can use Smolen, even without jumping.

Example 5

2NT 3♣
3♦ 3♥*

This is a game forcing bid and shows a 5-card ♠ suit and a 4-card ♥ suit.

Example 6

2NT 3♣
3♦ 3♠*

This is a game forcing bid and shows a 5-card ♥ suit and a 4-card ♠ suit.

Conclusion

When partner opens the bidding with 2NT they have eaten up much of our valuable bidding space that could have been used to search for a Major fit or to explore for slam. Responder is faced with only one level of bidding below 3NT to try to accomplish both goals of exploring a Major suit fit and keeping 3NT as an option. Trying to accomplish these goals can lead to some difficult and complicated bidding options for Responder. Knowing that is the case can help Opener empathize with Responder's problems and be helpful in trying to get to the best final contract.