



THE BIDDING TOOLKIT

Weak can be strong — part 2

The weak two-bid is typically a six-card suit in the 5–11 high-card point range. It has two purposes — constructive and obstructive.

By making a weak two-bid, you are describing your hand (constructive). This gives partner information to help him decide how high to bid and what suit to compete in. It can also help partner know what to lead if you defend.

A second purpose of a weak two is to interfere with the opponents' bidding (obstructive). Because you are making them come in at a higher level, the weak two-bid can present awkward problems that may leave them guessing.

How can partner know?

Not vulnerable, you may open 2♥ with this,

♠87 ♥KQ10743 ♦J76 ♣53.

This hand is in range (6 HCP) with a good suit — a classic weak two.

What about this hand?

♠87 ♥KQ10743 ♦KJ6 ♣53

This is also a hand you'd want to open with a weak two. It has 9 HCP and a good suit.

Notice the difference though. The second hand has the ♦KJ instead of low cards and therefore is much stronger. How is partner supposed to know on which end of the 5 to 11 HCP range your hand falls? There are several methods that address this.

2NT: Show a feature

Responder's 2NT bid may be used to ask opener about "side" features.

You show a feature when you have more than a minimum but rebid your suit with a minimum. With the first hand above, in response to 2NT you would bid 3♥, "I have a minimum."

With the second hand above, you would bid 3♦ after the 2NT inquiry. This says you like your hand and you have a feature in diamonds. A feature is a high card, not shortness.

Here's an example. You open 2♠ with:

♠AQJ743 ♥87 ♦63 ♣K53.

Your partner inquires with 2NT. You should rebid 3♣. You have the top of your bid and you have a feature (the ♣K) to show.

Now consider this hand:

♠QJ7432 ♥87 ♦63 ♣K53.

Over the 2NT inquiry, you should rebid 3♠. Do not rebid 3♣. Yes, you have a feature, but to show it, you should have more than a minimum.

3NT says you have a solid suit that you can run in 3NT. An example is:

♠87 ♥AKQJ74 ♦74 ♣743.

2NT: Ogust

After the 2NT bid, the weak two-bidder responds as follows:

- 3♣ = minimum strength, poor suit
- 3♦ = minimum strength, good suit
- 3♥ = maximum strength, poor suit
- 3♠ = maximum strength, good suit
- 3NT = solid suit.

What is defined as a good suit? Having two of the top three honors

would qualify. ♥A Q 10 7 4 3 would be a good suit. ♥Q J 7 5 4 3 would be a bad suit (in the context of a weak two-bid). You and your partner should discuss hands that fall in between and decide how to answer in response to the 2NT inquiry.

2NT: "Easy" Ogust

One problem with Ogust is that sometimes it is hard to define what is a good suit or a good hand. Some hands fall in between. A third method is simple and helps with this issue — you respond by saying how well you like your hand, on a scale of one to four, without reference to suit quality.

- 3♣ = a minimum
- 3♦ = more than a minimum
- 3♥ = your hand is a 3 on a scale of 1 to 4
- 3♠ = maximum
- 3NT = a solid suit

When you show a feature over 2NT, as described above, you often make the defense easier. Easy Ogust keeps the opponents in the dark regarding where your side strength is.

Here's an example. You open 2♦ with:

♠87 ♥K6 ♦KQ10743 ♣J108.

Over the 2NT ask, playing "Easy" Ogust you can rebid 3♠. You are at the top of your bid. If partner bids game, the opponents may make a favorable lead for your side, since you didn't tell them anything about your hand other than the fact that you like it.

There are other methods of responding to weak two-bids, but these are three of the common ones. □