

Bergen Raises

This is a scheme of major-suit raises designed to get the partnership quickly to the three level or higher whenever there are nine or more combined trumps. It was developed by Marty Bergen, a well-known expert, based on Marty's experiences in partnership with Larry Cohen — which also resulted in Larry's books on *The Law of Total Tricks*. The most common variation of *Bergen raises* in response to an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ is the following:

Bergen Raises

- A raise of opener's suit to the two level shows 6 to 9 points and precisely three-card support.
- A raise of opener's suit to the three level is weak — preemptive — showing 0 to 6 points and four-card or longer support.
- A jump to 3♣ is artificial (conventional) and shows four-card or longer support with 7 to 10 points.
- A jump to 3♦ is artificial (conventional) and shows four-card or longer support with 11 or 12 points — a limit raise.
- A jump to the three level in the other major is artificial (conventional) and shows a game-forcing raise with shortness — a singleton or a void — in one of the side suits. Opener may ask where the shortness is by making the next cheapest bid.
- A jump to 3NT shows a balanced hand with precisely three-card support, game-going strength, and stoppers in all of the unbid suits. Opener may pass, bid the major suit to game, or look for slam.

For example, consider the following hands for South after the auction has started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	Pass	?

♠ K J 7 3
 ♥ 7 6
 ♦ J 10 6 5
 ♣ 9 7 3

perhaps a game contract.

♠ Q J 8 4
 ♥ A 8
 ♦ 9 6 3
 ♣ J 8 7 4

♠ K 9 7 4
 ♥ A J 10 8
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ Q J 5

♠ Q 9 7 3
 ♥ A Q 8
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K 8 6 4 2

Jump to 3♠. A jump to 3♠ is a preemptive raise showing 0 to 6 points and four-card support. The idea is to make it difficult for the opponents to get into the auction. If North–South can't make 3♠, presumably the opponents can make at least a partscore, and per-

haps a game contract.

Jump to 3♣. With 8 high-card points and four-card support for opener, South would make the artificial response of 3♣. With a minimum hand, opener can rebid 3♠. With a medium-strength hand, opener can jump to 4♠.

Jump to 3♦. This shows four-card support and the strength for a limit raise. North can return to 3♠ to reject the invitation or jump to 4♠ to accept the invitation. This is similar to 1♠–3♠ when the partnership plays limit raises — opener passes or bids 4♠.

Jump to 3♥. A jump to 3♥, the other major suit, shows a forcing raise with shortness — a singleton or a void — in a side suit. Opener can simply rebid 4♠ with no interest in slam. With slam interest, opener makes the next cheapest bid, 3♠, to ask about the shortness. South would now bid 4♦ to show the singleton, and North could evaluate the hand accordingly.

Cappelletti (or Hamilton)

This convention uses the following scheme over the opponent's 1NT:

- Double is for penalty.
- 2♣ shows a one-suited hand.
- 2♦ shows hearts and spades.
- 2♥ shows hearts and a minor suit.
- 2♠ shows spades and a minor suit.

For example, suppose West holds the following hands after a 1NT opening bid by South when playing Cappelletti:

a) ♠ 8 3	b) ♠ K Q 8 7	c) ♠ A J 9 8 5
♥ K 7 5	♥ A J 10 8 5	♥ 8 6
♦ A Q J 9 8 3	♦ 10 9 3	♦ K Q 8 7 3
♣ 9 2	♣ 5	♣ 7

With the first hand, West would bid 2♣, showing a one-suited hand. East would be expected to bid 2♦, unless holding a long club suit. West would now pass, to confirm diamonds as the suit.

With the second hand, West would bid 2♦, showing hearts and spades.

With the third hand, West would bid 2♠, showing spades and a minor. With no support for spades, East could bid 2NT, and West would now bid 3♦.

DONT

DONT (Disturb Opponent's Notrump) was devised by Marty Bergen.

- Double shows a one-suited hand, usually not spades.
- 2♣ shows clubs and another suit.
- 2♦ shows diamonds and a major suit.
- 2♥ shows hearts and spades.
- 2♠ shows spades.

Using DONT, suppose West holds the following hands after South's opening bid of 1NT:

a) ♠ 8 3	b) ♠ K Q 8 7	c) ♠ A J 9 8 5
♥ K 7 5	♥ A J 10 8 5	♥ 8 6
♦ A Q J 9 8 3	♦ 10 9 3	♦ K Q 8 7 3
♣ 9 2	♣ 5	♣ 7

With the first hand, West would double 1NT. East can bid 2♣ to play in West's suit and West would then bid 2♦.

With the second hand, West would bid 2♥, showing hearts and spades.

With the third hand, West would bid 2♦, showing diamonds and a major. With no support for diamonds, East could bid 2♥, looking for West's major suit and West would then bid 2♠.

Flannery

Consider the following hand:

♠ A Q 7 4
 ♥ K 9 5 4 3
 ♦ K 8 5
 ♣ 6

Playing standard methods, this hand would be opened 1♥. That could leave opener with a difficult choice of rebid if, for example, responder bids 1NT. With an unbalanced hand, opener doesn't want to pass and leave responder playing in 1NT, but any other option

could get the partnership into more trouble. Opener's hearts are too weak to rebid. A rebid of 2♠ would be a reverse, forcing for one round (see Chapter 6), and since responder didn't bid 1♠, it's unlikely the partnership has an eight-card fit in that suit. A rebid of 2♦ on a three-card suit is also unappetizing, although partner could have length in that suit. Opener would have a similar rebid problem if responder bid 2♣, rather than 1NT.

To avoid this predicament, William Flannery suggested using an opening bid of 2♦, known as the *Flannery 2♦* bid, to show 11 to 15 points with exactly four spades and five hearts. Responder then bids as follows:

- 2♥ or 2♠ is a sign-off in a major suit.
- 2NT is artificial (conventional) and forcing. It asks opener to further describe the hand as follows:
 - 3♣ or 3♦ shows three cards in the suit.
 - 3♥ shows a minimum (11 to 13) with two cards in each minor.
 - 3♠ shows a maximum (14 or 15) with two cards in each minor.
 - 3NT shows a maximum with a doubleton honor in both minors.
 - 4♣ or 4♦ shows four cards in the suit (and a void in the other minor).
- 3♣ or 3♦ asks opener to bid 3NT with one of the top three honors in that suit.
- 3♥ or 3♠ is invitational in the major suit.
- 3NT, 4♥, and 4♠ are sign-offs.
- 4♣ asks opener to bid 4♥ (transfer) and 4♦ asks opener to bid 4♠ (transfer).

For example, consider the following hands for responder after partner opens with a Flannery 2♦:

♠ J 8 3
♥ J 10 2
♦ Q J 7 4
♣ Q 8 7

Respond 2♥. This is a sign-off bid in one of opener's suits. The partnership will be playing in an eight-card fit.

♠ K 10 8 3 2
♥ Q 8
♦ Q 9 3
♣ A J 5

Respond 4♠ (or 4♦, or 2NT). The partnership should have a chance for a game contract playing in the nine-card fit. A response of 4♦ would be a transfer to 4♠, allowing the contract to be played from partner's side. Responder could also start with 2NT to find out more about opener's hand — although a slam is unlikely.

Flannery 2♦ is the most popular opening bid that shows a two-suited hand. It can be used if the partnership has another method of showing a strong opening bid in diamonds. It's commonly used in conjunction with weak two-bid openings in the majors — 2♥ and 2♠ — and an artificial strong 2♣ opening. It replaces the weak 2♦ opening bid.

Four-suit Transfers

A popular method for handling minor suits following an opening bid of 1NT is *four-suit transfer bids*. This is more complex than using 2♠ to sign off in either minor, but it has some advantages. The partnership will have to decide whether the advantages outweigh the additional complexity. Four-suit transfer bids work like this:

- A response of 2♦ is a transfer to 2♥.
- A response of 2♥ is a transfer to 2♠.
- A response of 2♠ is a transfer to 3♣.
- A response of 2NT is a transfer to 3♦.

The first two responses are the standard Jacoby transfers for the major suits. The 2♠ and 2NT responses are used to show the minor suits, either when responder wants to sign off in the minor suit or when responder is interested in bigger things. These transfer bids give opener some latitude. With a minimum-strength hand and poor support for responder's minor, opener simply accepts the transfer. With extra strength and a good fit with the minor suit, opener makes the bid below the minor suit — 2NT in reply to the 2♠ transfer bid, 3♣ in reply to the 2NT transfer bid. This allows responder to still stop at the three level in the minor suit with no interest in anything else, but encourages responder to bid more with a hand of at least invitational strength.

For example:

West

♠ Q 9 5 4

♥ A K 5 4

♦ 9 3

♣ A Q 10

WEST	EAST
1NT	2NT
3♦	Pass

East

♠ 8 3

♥ 6 3

♦ K Q 10 6 5 2

♣ J 5 2

East bids 2NT as a transfer to diamonds. With a minimum-strength hand and no fit for diamonds, opener simply accepts the transfer. Responder has no reason to go any further, and the partnership rests in partscore.

West

♠ Q 9 5 4

♥ A K 5 4

♦ A 9 3

♣ A 10

WEST	EAST
1NT	2NT
3♣	3NT
Pass	

East

♠ 8 3

♥ 6 3

♦ K Q 10 6 5 2

♣ J 5 2

In this example, opener has a maximum-strength hand for the 1NT bid and a fit with responder's diamonds. Opener shows this by bidding 3♣, rather than 3♦. Responder could still sign off by bidding 3♦, but encouraged by opener's bid decides to push on to a game contract.

If 2NT is used as a transfer bid, it's no longer available as a natural invitation to game, which is a disadvantage. This can be overcome by starting all invitational hands with 2♣, Stayman, even when responder has no interest in playing in a major suit. For example:

West ♠ Q 10 4 ♥ K J 5 4 ♦ A K 3 ♣ Q 9 5	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">WEST</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">EAST</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">1NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	EAST	1NT	2♣	2♥	2NT	Pass		East ♠ J 8 3 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ Q 8 6 ♣ 10 7 4 2
WEST	EAST									
1NT	2♣									
2♥	2NT									
Pass										

After West's 1NT opening, East would like to invite game by raising to 2NT. Playing four-suit transfers, East can't bid 2NT directly since that would be a transfer to diamonds. Instead, East starts by bidding 2♣, the Stayman convention. West dutifully shows the four-card heart suit. East now rebids 2NT, showing an invitational-strength hand. With a minimum hand for the 1NT opening, West passes and the partnership rests in partscore. The sequence is ambiguous. West can't be sure whether or not East holds a four-card spade suit in addition to a hand of invitational strength. That's a small disadvantage to this method.

The partnership will need to discuss several such possible bidding sequences to ensure that there are no misunderstandings when four-suit transfers are used.

Gambling 3NT Opening

This convention is used only when the partnership has some other method for showing a strong balanced hand of 25 to 27 points — for example, when the partnership uses 2♣ as a strong artificial opening bid. This allows an opening 3NT bid to be used for other purposes.

Some partnerships like to use an opening bid of 3NT to show a hand with a “solid” seven-card or eight-card minor suit, with little strength outside the minor suit. The following hand would be opened 3NT.

♠ 6 The idea is that, if you can get the lead, you can probably take seven or eight tricks in your minor suit.
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ A K Q J 9 7 6 That's why this bid is referred to as a gambling 3NT opening bid — the opponents may be the ones who take the first nine tricks. Partner isn't expected to leave in you in 3NT without some strength in the other suits. With a weak hand, partner may bid 4♣, expecting you to pass or bid 4♦, depending on which minor suit you hold.
 ♣ 10 9 3

A popular variation of the gambling 3NT is the *Acol 3NT*. You also need a long, strong minor suit, but with stoppers — high cards — in at least two of the other three suits.

For example:

♠ A 3 You're gambling that whatever suit the opponents lead, you can win a trick and take enough tricks with your minor suit and other high cards to make the contract — even if your partner has no strength.
 ♥ K 4
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ A K J 10 8 7 3

There are many other treatments besides gambling 3NT and Acol 3NT openings — usually dependent on the solidity of the suit and the number of outside stoppers that are held. There are some, such as *Kantar 3NT*, which provide for opening 3NT with a long solid major suit.

Grand Slam Force

In the basic version of the grand slam force, a bid of 5NT asks partner to bid a grand slam with two of the top three trump honors, otherwise to bid a small slam in the agreed trump suit. Experienced partnerships prefer a more complicated set of responses, since it's sometimes important to know if partner has one of the top three honors. Unfortunately, the amount of bidding room left over 5NT to show the various combinations depends on the agreed trump suit. If the agreed trump suit is clubs, for example, then the only bid available over 5NT to deny two of the top three honors is 6♣, since any other bid would take the partnership beyond the small

slam. If the agreed trump suit is spades, however, the responses of 6♣, 6♦, 6♥, and 6♠ are all available to show various holdings that don't include two of the top three honors.

One approach for responses to 5NT is the following:

If the agreed trump suit is clubs:

- 6♣ denies two of the top three honors.
- 7♣ shows two of the top three honors.

If the agreed trump suit is diamonds:

- 6♣ shows the ♦ A or ♦ K.
- 6♦ denies the ♦ A or ♦ K.
- 7♦[†] shows two of the top three honors.

If the agreed trump suit is hearts:

- 6♣ shows the ♥ A or ♥ K
- 6♦ shows the ♥ Q.
- 6♥ shows none of the top honors.
- 7♥[†] shows two of the top three honors.

If the agreed trump suit is spades:

- 6♣ shows the ♠ A or ♠ K.
- 6♦ shows the ♠ Q.
- 6♥ shows the ♠ A or ♠ K and extra length.
- 6♠ shows none of the top honors.
- 7♠[†] shows two of the top three honors.

[†]Some partnerships always bid 7♣ when holding two of the top three honors, whatever the agreed trump suit.

Inverted Raises

Some partnerships prefer to reverse the meaning of a raise of opener's minor to the two level and a jump raise to the three level. This is referred to as *inverted minor-suit raises* and works as follows:

- A raise of opener's minor to the two level shows 10 or more points and is forcing for one round.
- A jump raise of opener's minor to the three level is weak, showing fewer than 10 points.

The advantages to this approach are:

- Responder can raise preemptively to the three level with a weak hand and a good fit for opener's suit. This is more effective in keeping the opponents out of the auction than a raise to the two level. This is similar to the concept of weak jump raises over a major suit.
- When responder has a limit raise of opener's minor — 10 or more points — the partnership has more opportunity to explore for the best contract. An immediate limit raise to the three level leaves less room to explore for a contract of 3NT — a more likely contract than 5♣ or 5♦ when opener has enough to accept responder's invitation.
- With a forcing raise of opener's minor suit, responder can start with a single raise, since it's forcing for one round. Having shown support for the minor suit, responder can then keep the bidding going until game is reached. Playing limit raises with no immediate forcing raise, responder has a more difficult time showing support — often having to go through fourth suit forcing (see Chapter 6) before raising opener's minor.

Here are some examples of responding to an opening bid of 1♣ when the partnership uses inverted minor-suit raises:

♠ 9 5
 ♥ 7 6 4
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ K J 9 6 3 2

Raise to 3♣. This is a weak — preemptive — raise. Hopefully, the partnership can take eight or nine tricks with clubs as the trump suit, even if opener has a minimum-strength hand. At the same time, it will be more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction following a 3♣ bid than if you raised to only 2♣.

♠ 4 2
 ♥ K J 8
 ♦ Q 8 3
 ♣ A J 8 7 5

Raise to 2♣. This is forcing for one round and shows at least the values for a limit raise. If opener has some strength in spades, the partnership is likely to belong in a notrump contract. If not, the partnership can settle for partscore in clubs — or game if opener has extra strength. After the 2♣ response, opener can bid 2NT with a minimum-strength balanced hand suitable for notrump, or rebid 3♣ with a minimum-strength hand unsuitable for notrump. With extra strength, opener can bid a new suit to probe for the best contract.

♠ A 9 3
 ♥ 8 6
 ♦ A 4 2
 ♣ K Q J 8 6

Raise to 2♣. This would be an awkward hand playing standard methods, since there is no way to immediately show a forcing raise with club support. Responder would have to temporize with a response of 1♦, and continue to make forcing bids until game is reached. Playing inverted raises, responder starts by raising to 2♣ — showing the fit — and can then continue to game over opener's rebid.

The partnership must agree on whether this convention still applies if responder is a passed hand and whether it applies if the opponents interfere with an overcall or takeout double. The standard agreement is that it still applies when responder is a passed hand — although opener can pass since responder can no longer have a forcing raise — but raises revert to their natural meaning after an overcall or double. Some partnerships prefer to continue using the convention after a takeout double or a simple overcall.

Leaping Michaels

An extension to the Michaels cuebid can be used when the opponents open with a weak 2♥ or 2♠ bid. Since a cuebid wouldn't immediately identify the minor suit held, some players use this approach:

- A jump to 4♣ shows at least five clubs and five cards in the unbid major.
- A jump to 4♦ shows at least five diamonds and five cards in the unbid major.
- A three-level cuebid shows both minor suits.

This variation is referred to as leaping Michaels. For example, suppose the auction starts:

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♠	?	
♠	8 3	Jump to 4♣. This shows at least five clubs and five hearts. Most partnerships play this as a game-forcing bid, although some allow the 4♣ bid to be passed.		
♥	K Q J 9 4			
♦	7			
♣	A K J 6 2			

Lebensohl after NT Interference

Although the standard approach for handling interference after a 1NT opening bid is quite workable, there are more complex methods that can be used. An opponent's overcall often makes things difficult for responder. 2♣ is no longer available as Stayman and there is less bidding room left for responder to handle all of the combinations of weak, invitational, and strong hands. The *lebensohl* convention is a method for meeting some of these challenges. Playing this convention, the partnership has the following agreements when there is a direct overcall at the two level following an opening bid of 1NT:

- A double of the overcall is for penalty.

- A response in a suit at the two level shows a five-card or longer suit and is non-forcing.
- A response in a suit at the three level shows a five-card or longer suit and is forcing.
- A cuebid of the opponent's suit is "Stayman" but denies a stopper — a high card — in the opponent's suit. Opener will bid a four-card or longer major. With no four-card major, opener rebids 3NT with a stopper in the opponent's suit, otherwise bids a minor suit looking for a better spot than 3NT.
- 2NT is a transfer to 3♣ (see below).
- 3NT is a raise to game but denies a stopper in the opponent's suit. If opener also doesn't have a stopper in the opponent's suit, opener can bid a minor suit looking for a better contract than 3NT.

This 2NT response is the heart of lebensohl. It gives up the natural raise to 2NT, but as compensation responder has several possible continuations after opener rebids 3♣ in response to the transfer:

- Pass to play in partscore when responder has a weak hand with long clubs.
- Bid a new suit at the three level that is lower-ranking than the overcalled suit as a sign-off in that suit — since an immediate bid of a new suit at the three level was available as a forcing bid.
- Bid a new suit at the three level that is higher-ranking than the overcalled suit as an invitational bid in that suit — since responder could have bid the suit immediately at the two level with a weak hand or jumped to the three level with a strong hand.
- Cuebid the opponent's suit as Stayman. This also shows a stopper in the opponent's suit, since an immediate cuebid would be Stayman without a stopper.

- Bid 3NT. This shows a raise to 3NT with a stopper in the opponent's suit. Without a stopper, responder would have jumped to 3NT immediately.

Here are some examples of lebensohl in action:

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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH															
1NT	2♥	2NT	Pass															
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass															
Pass	Pass																	
♠ A K 9 3		♠ Q 2																
♥ 9 8 5		♥ J 3																
♦ K 8		♦ Q J 10 9 4 3																
♣ A J 10 4		♣ 9 7 3																

After North's overcall, East bids 2NT as the lebensohl convention to ask West to bid 3♣. After West bids 3♣, East corrects to 3♦, showing the diamond suit. This is non-forcing, allowing the partnership to play in partscore. If East had bid 3♦ directly over 2♥, it would be a forcing bid. If the partnership were not playing lebensohl, East would have no satisfactory method of competing on this hand after the overcall.

West	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">WEST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">NORTH</th> <th style="width: 25%;">EAST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>2♥</td> <td>3♥</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1NT	2♥	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass			East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH															
1NT	2♥	3♥	Pass															
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass															
Pass	Pass																	
♠ A K 9 3		♠ Q J 5 2																
♥ 9 8 5		♥ J 3																
♦ K 8		♦ Q J 10 3																
♣ A J 10 4		♣ K 7 3																

After the overcall, East cuebids the opponent's suit to find out if opener has four spades. West shows the four-card suit and East puts the partnership in game. In this sequence, East denied a stopper in hearts. With some strength in hearts, East would first bid 2NT to ask West to bid 3♣ and then cuebid 3♥.

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♠ A K 9 3		♠ 6 5 2																
♥ 9 8 5		♥ J 3																
♦ K 8		♦ A Q J 3																
♣ A J 10 4		♣ K Q 7 3																

East's jump to 3NT shows the values to go to game but denies a stopper in the opponent's suit. West also doesn't have a stopper and looks for a better spot by showing the club suit. East puts the partnership in game in the minor suit. The partnership avoids playing in 3NT, where the opponents are likely to take enough heart tricks to defeat the contract.

Lebensohl with Weak Twos

The use of 2NT as a transfer to 3♣ when an opponent has overcalled partner's opening 1NT bid is the lebensohl convention. A variation of this convention is sometimes used when responding to partner's takeout double after the opponent's have opened a weak two-bid. Consider the following hands for West after the auction has started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♠	Double	Pass

?

a)	♠ J 4 2	b)	♠ 10 8 5
	♥ J 8 7 3		♥ Q J 6 3
	♦ 10 8 3		♦ K 9
	♣ J 6 4		♣ Q 9 8 4

Using standard methods, West would bid 3♥ with both hands. On the first hand, West hopes partner won't bid any more, since West is unlikely to make even 3♥ unless East has an extremely strong hand.

With the second hand, West would be happy if East continued to game with a little extra strength, since West has almost enough to immediately jump to game in response to East's double of 2♠. Unfortunately, East won't know which of these hands West holds, so East may bid too much or too little.

To resolve this, some partnerships use the lebensohl convention in this situation. A response of 2NT is artificial, asking opener to bid 3♣. Responder can now pass or bid 3♦ or 3♥ to show a weak hand. By inference, an im-

mediate bid of a new suit at the three level by responder shows a hand with some values, inviting opener to continue to game with a little extra.

The use of the lebensohl convention requires some discussion by the partnership before using it, since there are a number of possible variations.

Mathe

When the opponents use an artificial $1\clubsuit$ as their strong opening bid — for example, a Precision club — many players like to use an artificial defense which allows them to compete with two-suited hands. One of the most popular is Mathe, named after Lew Mathe, a world champion and former ACBL president:

- Double shows both major suits.
- $1NT$ shows both minor suits.

All other bids are natural. For example, suppose North opens the bidding $1\clubsuit$, which is alerted as being artificial and showing a strong hand, and East holds the following hands:

a)	♠ Q J 10 8 6	b)	♠ 8
	♥ K Q 9 7 5		♥ 7 3
	♦ 8		♦ Q J 10 8 6
	♣ 7 3		♣ K Q 9 7 5

Playing Mathe, East could double with the first hand to show both major suits.

With the second hand, East could bid $1NT$, showing both minor suits.

Maximal Double

Consider both of the following hands for West after the auction has started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♠	2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥
?			

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|----|----------------|
| a) | ♠ A K J 8 4 | b) | ♠ K Q 10 8 6 3 |
| | ♥ 6 3 | | ♥ 6 3 |
| | ♦ A Q 7 2 | | ♦ A 7 2 |
| | ♣ K 5 | | ♣ K 5 |

With the first hand, West has a medium-strength hand and would like to invite partner to bid game with the upper range for a raise to 2 ♠. Without the interference from the opponents, West would have invited game by freely raising to 3 ♠, or bidding a new suit as a game try. With the second hand, West has a minimum-strength hand but would like to compete to 3 ♠ without having partner treat it as a game invitation. The opponents' bidding, however, has left only 3 ♠ available for both types of hand.

In this situation, some partnerships use a double to show the first type of hand — extra strength and game-invitational. This is referred to as a maximal double. East can retreat to 3 ♠ with a minimum raise, jump to 4 ♠ with a maximum raise, or pass the double with a good hand for defending 3 ♥. Using this convention, an immediate 3 ♠ bid by West would show the second type of hand — a competitive, but non-invitational, raise.

The partnership needs to agree on exactly when this convention is used. The standard agreement is that a maximal double is used only when no bidding room has been left by the opponents to make any other form of game try. Using this agreement, a double by West would be for penalty in the above auction if the opponents were competing either in clubs or diamonds, since there would still be room available for West to

bid something other than 3♠ with an invitational-strength hand.

Some partnerships also use this convention after their side has over-called.

For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	Double	Pass
?			

With this agreement, East's double would be a game try, rather than a penalty double. With no interest in game, East could compete by bidding 3♠ immediately.

Michaels Cuebid

The Michaels cuebid — brainchild of the late Mike Michaels — allows a player to describe a two-suited hand in one bid in competitive auctions. It is typically reserved for hands with a 5–5 (or longer) pattern.

When a player bids a suit which has originally been called by the opponents, that player has made a cuebid. A Michaels cuebid is almost always used in the direct position, i.e., immediately after an opponent has made her bid. For example if your right-hand opponent opened 1♣ and you bid 2♣, your 2♣ call would be a cuebid. Further, if you and your partner agree to play Michaels cuebids, your 2♣ call would have a specific meaning.

Major two-suiters

Let's say you hold a hand with two five-card majors such as

♠AKQ43 ♥AKJ62 ♦6 ♣J7

or

♠KQ643 ♥J10764 ♦A4 ♣8.

If your RHO opens 1♣, the Michaels cuebid allows you to describe these hands nicely. Bid 2♣ with either to tell your partner you have a major two-suiter. If your opponent had opened 11 instead, you would have bid 21 to give the same message.

Playing Michaels cuebids, the auctions

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♣	2♣		

and

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	2♦		

show a major two-suiter. Put another way, a direct cuebid of an opponent's opening bid of one-of-a-minor shows the majors, 5–5 or longer.

An important question, however, is how strong a hand does the Michaels cuebid promise? This is a matter of partnership style, but many expert partnerships prefer that Michaels be used to show either a weak hand (say, 6 to 11 points) or a strong hand (a good 16 or more high-card points). Hands with intermediate strength should simply overcall at the one level, with the hope that the second suit can be shown later in the auction. Why do this? It's to give partner some indication of our strength and involve him in the decision process as to how high we compete.

Major-minor two-suiters

Michaels can also be used to show certain major-minor two-suiters after an enemy 1♥ or 1♠ opening. The auctions

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♥	2♥		

and

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♠	2♠		

show five or more cards in the other major and an unspecified five-

card minor. The strength requirements are the same as for minor-suit cuebids.

After a 1♥ opening, bid 2♥ with

♠A Q 7 6 5 ♥8 ♦K J 10 7 3 ♣10 4.

This tells partner you have five spades and a five-card minor. What if partner doesn't have a fit for spades and wants to know what your minor is? He bids 2NT (conventional) to say, "Bid your minor." You can then bid 3♦.

Minor-suit Stayman

Instead of using the 2♠ response to 1NT as a transfer to 3♣ — allowing responder to sign off in either minor suit — partnerships using Jacoby transfer bids sometimes prefer to use the 2♠ response as an inquiry about opener's minor suits. Opener rebids 2NT with no four-card or longer minor suit, rebids 3♣ or 3♦ with one four-card minor suit, and rebids the longer major — 3♥ or 3♠ — with four cards in both minor suits. The 2♠ response can also be used when responder holds a five-card or longer minor suit and is interested in slam.

For example:

West
 ♠ K Q 7 2
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ A J 7 3
 ♣ J 4

WEST	EAST
1NT	2♠
3♦	4♦
4♥	4NT
5♥	6♦

East
 ♠ A 8
 ♥ 9 5
 ♦ K Q 10 4
 ♣ A Q 9 6 3

Partnerships that use Jacoby transfers in response to 2NT sometimes use a response of 3♠ in a similar fashion.

Namyats

To distinguish between a weak four-level preempt in a major suit and a stronger preempt, some players use a convention commonly known as *Namyats*. Playing this convention, an opening bid of 4♣ shows a strong

preempt in hearts — typically about eight or nine playing tricks — and an opening bid of 4♦ shows a strong preempt in spades. As a corollary, opening bids of 4♥ and 4♠ show weaker hands. After the 4♣ or 4♦ opening, responder usually signs off in the appropriate major suit, but with interest in a slam contract, responder can bid the next higher suit. For example, consider the following hands for opener:

♠ 3
♥ A Q J 8 7 6 4 3
♦ 9 3
♣ 7 4

This hand is a standard preemptive opening bid of 4♥. Opener has an eight-card suit and the bid is primarily defensive in nature. It is unlikely that there is a slam unless responder has a very strong hand.

♠ 3
♥ A K Q 10 8 7 5 3
♦ K 8 3
♣ 5

Playing Namyats, this hand would be opened 4♣. Opener has a hand likely to take eight or nine tricks with little help from partner. Responder wouldn't need too much for the partnership to make a slam.

With no interest in going beyond game, responder will bid 4♥ as a sign-off. With interest in slam, responder can start by bidding 4♦. How the auction continues from that point depends on the partnership methods.

Namyats was devised by the English partnership of Terence Reese and Jeremy Flint, but it was introduced to North America by Sam Stayman. Since Stayman already had one convention named after him, this convention bears his name spelt backwards.

To use this convention, the partnership gives up the natural opening preempts of 4♣ and 4♦ showing a weak hand with a long minor suit. To compensate for this, some partnerships use an opening bid of 3NT as a weak preempt in either minor suit. Balanced hands of 25 to 27 points are opened with an artificial 2♣.

Negative Doubles after 1NT

When an opponent overcalls directly over an opening 1NT bid, some partnerships prefer to use a double for takeout — negative — rather than penalty. It shows enough strength to compete and tends to show four cards

in any unbid major suit. For example:

West	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Double</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1NT	2♥	Double	Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
1NT	2♥	Double	Pass											
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass											
♠ Q J 9 3				♠ K 10 8 2										
♥ A 10 5				♥ 7 2										
♦ A J 6 2				♦ Q 8 3										
♣ K 8				♣ Q 9 6 2										

This is similar to the use of the negative double after an opening bid of one in a suit which is discussed in *More Commonly Used Conventions*. Some partnerships, especially those that use the lebensohl convention, use negative doubles only after an overcall at the three level, leaving the double of a two-level overcall for penalty.

Negative Free Bids

This treatment came about to address a problem familiar to many players. Suppose you hold

♠ 10 4 ♥ K 7 6 5 4 3 ♦ J 4 ♣ K 7 6.

Your partner opens 1♦ and the next player overcalls 1♠. You want to mention your heart suit, but if you bid 2♥, you are showing at least 10 high-card points. You don't want to undermine your partner's confidence in your bidding, so your only practical option is to make a negative double.

In standard bidding, a negative double followed by a suit bid shows length in that suit but not enough strength to have bid directly.

The problem occurs when your left-hand opponent raises to 2♠ and the bidding comes back to you. Now you are stuck. Your heart suit is not robust, so you are taking a real chance by bidding at the three level. You could end up doubled and down two or three — or even more. Further, your holding in the suit partner opened doesn't lend itself to a raise there, either.

All in all, you've been severely discomfited by a simple 1♠ overcall.

What can you do about it?

If you and your partner agree to play negative free bids, you are in a good position with this hand. You simply bid 2♥, showing 5–10 HCP (or even a “soft” 11), usually a six-card suit (you can do it with a very good five-card suit). This bid is not forcing, but it *is* an Alert. If partner has opened a major, your free bid in a new suit denies support for that major — you will have a maximum of two cards in partner’s opening major suit.

Well, you might ask, suppose you have this hand:

♠K 10 ♥A Q J 7 6 ♦K 5 4 ♣J 10 9

and the bidding goes 1♦ by partner, 1♠ by RHO? If you bid 2♥ now, partner will probably pass because your bid is not forcing. You will have missed game. Ouch!

The negative free bid treatment has this covered as well. With any hand of game-forcing strength, you double first and then bid your suit. This shows a hand good enough to insist on game and a suit of at least five cards.

With hands of invitational strength — in between the non-forcing free bid and the game-forcing hands — employ the jump shift. Example: 1♦ – 1♠ – 3♥ shows at least a six-card suit in a hand good enough to invite game, for example

♠6 3 ♥K J 9 7 6 5 ♦A Q 4 ♣8 5.

The better the suit, the lower the required HCP. For example, in the same auction, 3♥ might be bid on

♠6 5 ♥K Q J 10 8 6 4 ♦K J ♣7 4.

Any invitational bid in this system should be based on a single-suited hand — and remember, if partner opened one of a major the invitational jump denies as many as three cards in opener’s suit.

When you double an opponent’s overcall, the opener should Alert because, although opener will respond as though you have a normal

negative double, the opponents are entitled to know that you may have anything but a traditional negative double.

To review:

When partner opens at the one level and the next player bids:

- Any non-jump bid between 2♣ and 3♦ is non-forcing. This is an Alert.
- Any bid of 3♥ or higher is as normal. That is, if your partner opens 1♠ and the next player bids 3♦, you have no negative free bid available to you.
- A negative free bid typically shows a hand with 5–10 HCP and a six-card (or very good five-card) suit.
- You will have no more than two cards in support of opener’s major suit.
- Bids at the one level are as normal — *i.e.*, 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠. This is forcing, just as if there had been no 1♥ bid.
- Jump shifts are invitational and show suits at least six cards in length.
- A negative double followed by a suit bid is forcing to game and shows at least a five-card suit.
- If you raise partner’s negative free bid, you are showing 16–18 HCP and a fit for responder’s suit. With more HCP or playing strength, you can jump to game with a fit.

In responding to a negative free bid, particularly when partner has hit your singleton, be careful about “saving” partner, even with a long suit of your own unless it is particularly robust. Say you open 1♥ with

♠2 ♥A J 5 4 3 2 ♦A J 4 ♣Q 7 6

and hear 2♣ on your left, followed by partner’s non-forcing 2♠ and another pass.

Before you “rescue” partner by bidding 3♥, consider how that contract will play if partner puts down

♠Q J 10 8 7 6 ♥8 ♦Q 9 7 6 ♣K 5

That long spade suit in dummy will be useless to you, and your six-card suit is flimsy. As a trump suit, partner's spades will take plenty of tricks.

On the other hand, suppose you hold this hand in the same auction:

♠K 9 2 ♥A K 5 4 3 ♦K 10 8 4 ♣8.

After partner's negative free bid of 2♠, you would be justified in raising to 3♠.

New Minor Forcing

After a 1NT rebid by opener, a new suit by responder isn't forcing unless it's a jump shift or a reverse, both of which commit the partnership to the game level. This can prove awkward when responder needs to get further information from opener without committing the partnership to a game contract. To get around this difficulty, some partnerships treat the bid of a new minor suit by responder as forcing, while the bid of an old minor suit — one previously bid by the partnership — remains non forcing. For example, consider the following hands for responder after the auction starts:

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
	1NT	Pass	?	
♠ A K 9 7 3				
♥ A 4 3				
♦ 7 3				
♣ Q 10 6				

Responder could raise to 3NT, but the partnership might miss a 5–3 major-suit fit in spades if opener has three-card support. A rebid of 2♠, however, would be a sign-off, and a rebid of 3♠ would only be invitational and would tend to show at least a six-card suit. Playing new minor forcing, responder can bid 2♦ — the unbid minor suit — to get more information from opener. If opener bids 2♠, showing three-card support, responder can take the partnership to 4♠. Otherwise, responder can put the partnership in 3NT.

♠ A J 9 7 4 Responder has an invitational-strength hand, and
 ♥ K J 6 5 the partnership could have an eight-card fit in either
 ♦ Q 3 hearts or spades. Using new minor forcing, responder
 ♣ 8 4 bids 2♦. If opener bids 2♥, showing a four-card
 heart suit, responder can raise invitational to 3♥.

If opener rebids 2♠, showing three-card spade support, responder can raise to 3♠. If opener rebids 2NT, showing a minimum-strength hand without four hearts or three spades, responder can pass. With a maximum-strength hand for the 1NT rebid, opener can jump to 3NT without a four-card heart suit or three-card spade support.

♠ K 9 7 5 3 Responder can return to 2♣. Since that's a minor
 ♥ J 3 suit previously bid by the partnership, it's not a forc-
 ♦ 5 ing bid.
 ♣ Q 10 8 7 5

♠ A Q 8 6 A bid of 2♣ at this point would be a sign-off, and
 ♥ 6 a jump to 3♣ would be invitational. Responder can
 ♦ K 7 3 bid 2♦, new minor forcing, intending to bid 3♣ at
 ♣ K J 10 6 2 the next opportunity. That would create a forcing se-
 quence — with an invitational hand, responder would
 have jumped to 3♣ on the previous round.

This convention can be used after a 2NT rebid by opener (see also checkback Stayman and Wolff sign-off).

Ogust

Instead of showing a feature with a maximum hand after a forcing 2NT response to a weak two-bid, some partnerships prefer a rebid that describes both the strength of the hand and the quality of the suit. The following rebid structure was developed by Harold Ogust, an expert international player:

- 3♣ shows a minimum-strength hand (5 to 8) and a poor suit.
- 3♦ shows a minimum-strength hand but a good suit.
- 3♥ shows a maximum-strength hand (9 to 11) but a poor suit.
- 3♠ shows a maximum-strength hand and a good suit.

Here are some examples of opener's rebid when playing Ogust responses after the auction starts:

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
	?			
♠ 8 2 ♥ Q J 9 7 6 4 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ 6 4				Rebid 3♣. This shows a hand with minimum strength for a weak two-bid and a suit of relatively poor quality.
♠ 2 ♥ K Q J 10 8 4 ♦ 10 8 3 ♣ 9 6 5				Rebid 3♦. The hand is of minimum strength but the heart suit is very good.
♠ 9 4 ♥ K 10 9 6 5 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ A J 5				Rebid 3♥. This rebid shows a hand in the upper range of the strength for a weak two-bid but with a relatively poor suit.
♠ 8 3 2 ♥ A Q J 8 7 4 ♦ 8 4 ♣ K 3				Rebid 3♠. This shows both a good hand and a good suit.

Ogust responses are quite useful if the partnership plays undisciplined weak two-bids, where the suit quality could vary considerably. They are less useful if opener always promises a good suit — two of the top three honors, or three of the top five.

Puppet Stayman

This is a variation of Stayman that allows responder to ask if opener holds a five-card major, in addition to inquiring about four-card majors. With no five-card major, opener responds 2♦. Responder then rebids:

- 2♥ to show a four-card spade suit.
- 2♠ to show a four-card heart suit
- 2NT to show four hearts and four spades with invitational strength.
- 3NT to show four hearts and four spades with game-going strength.

Opener now determines whether the partnership has an eight-card major suit fit and places the contract. An advantage of puppet Stayman is that opener's distribution tends to remain concealed, making it more difficult for the defenders. Puppet Stayman is useful for those partnerships concerned about 'losing' the five-card major when they open 1NT with a balanced 5-3-3-2 hand. The responses are somewhat complex, and many partnerships use this variation only in response to 2NT, because there is more room to explore using standard methods after 1NT.

Responsive Double

When West makes a takeout double and North raises South's opening bid, a double by East is treated as a penalty double in standard methods. West's takeout double already asked East to pick the trump suit, so there doesn't appear to be much sense in having East's double also be for takeout. Nonetheless, since North-South have presumably found a fit, it's not often that East would want to double for penalty. As a result, some partnerships prefer to use the double for takeout in this situation. This is known as a responsive double.

For example:

West	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	East
♠ K J 8 3				1 ♦	♠ Q 6 4 2
♥ K 8 5	Double	2 ♦	Double	Pass	♥ Q 7 4 2
♦ 5 2	2 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	♦ J 3
♣ A J 6 3					♣ K 10 2

After West's takeout double, North raises partner's suit to the two level. East has enough to compete, but doesn't want to guess which suit to bid. Instead, East makes a responsive double. This acts like a takeout double, asking West to pick a suit. When West bids 2♠, East can pass in the knowledge that the partnership has found its eight-card fit. If the partnership weren't using responsive doubles, East might have chosen to bid 2♥ and the partnership would have wound up in a seven-card fit.

Like the negative double, the partnership needs to agree on the level through which the responsive double applies. A common agreement is that a double is responsive if responder raises opener's suit anywhere up to and including the level of 4♦.

The partnership also needs to discuss all of the situations in which responsive doubles are used and what they promise in each situation. Most partnerships would also use them when the opening bid is a weak two-bid and responder raises after a takeout double. Some partnerships use them after partner has made an overcall and responder raises opener's suit.

For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♦	1 ♠	3 ♦	Double
Pass	?		

Playing responsive doubles in this situation, South would be promising support for hearts and clubs — probably with some tolerance for spades as well, in case North doesn't like either of South's suits. If the partnership doesn't use the convention in this manner, South's double would be for penalty.

Roman Key Card Blackwood

This version of Blackwood assumes that there are five key cards: the four aces and the king of the trump suit. It also takes into consideration another critical card, the queen of the trump suit. The most popular variation uses the following responses to 4NT:

- 5♣ Zero or three key cards
- 5♦ One or four key cards
- 5♥ Two key cards without the queen of the trump suit
- 5♠ Two key cards with the queen of the trump suit

Here is an example:

West	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">5♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">7♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass	7♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH															
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass															
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass															
7♠	Pass	Pass	Pass															
♠ A 10 8 6 3				♠ K Q 9 4														
♥ A K				♥ Q 8 3														
♦ 2				♦ A 8 6 3														
♣ A K Q 6 3				♣ 8 2														

Using Roman Key Card Blackwood, East's response to West's bid of 4NT shows two key cards — the ♠K and the ♦A — along with the ♠Q. That's all West needs to know to bid the grand slam.

Some partnerships reverse the meaning of the first two responses. Most partnerships also have agreements on how to ask for the queen of trump after a response of 5♣ or 5♦, and on the meaning of a subsequent bid of 5NT — usually asking for specific kings. It's important that the partnership is clear on the agreed trump suit before using Roman Key Card Blackwood. Since there are several variations of this convention, the partnership should be careful to discuss it in some detail before using it.

Smolen

Holding a game-going hand with both a four-card major and a five-card or longer major, responder usually starts with the Stayman convention. If opener rebids 2♦, responder then jumps to the three level in the longer major, asking opener to choose between the major and 3NT. This has the disadvantage that responder will become declarer if opener holds three cards in the major suit and raises to game. The *Smolen* convention ensures that opener is always the declarer. After the 2♣ response and 2♦ rebid, responder jumps to the three level in the four-card major suit, showing five or more cards in the other major. For example:

West ♠ A 8 6 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A Q 7 4 2 ♣ K 9 4	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	EAST	1NT	2♣	2♦	3♥	4♠	Pass	East ♠ Q J 9 7 2 ♥ A K 9 4 ♦ 5 ♣ 8 6 5
WEST	EAST									
1NT	2♣									
2♦	3♥									
4♠	Pass									

Soloway Jump Shifts

Paul Soloway, a well-known bridge expert and former member of the Dallas Aces, puts a tight limit on the types of hands that responder may jump shift. This is referred to as the *Soloway jump shift*. A jump shift into a new suit shows a hand worth 17 or 18 points and one of three types of hand:

- A strong one-suiter, which is shown by rebidding the suit at responder's next opportunity.
- A balanced hand, which is shown by rebidding in notrump at responder's next opportunity.
- A hand with support for opener's suit, which is shown by raising opener's suit at responder's next opportunity or by bidding a new suit to imply shortness in the unbid suit.

Splinters

A splinter bid, or *splinter raise*, is similar to Jacoby 2NT in that it is used by responder to show a forcing raise after an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠. Instead of asking about opener's shortness, however, a splinter bid shows responder's shortness as follows:

- In response to an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠, a double jump in a new suit shows a singleton or void in that suit, four-card or longer support for opener's major, and 13 to 16 dummy points.

It's then up to opener to decide whether to stop at the game level in the agreed major suit, or try for a slam contract. Some partnerships allow responder to make a splinter bid with more than 16 points, in which case responder will bid again even if opener shows no interest in slam. Here is an example of an auction involving a splinter bid:

West	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">WEST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">NORTH</th> <th style="width: 25%;">EAST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♦</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
1♠	Pass	4♦	Pass											
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass											
♠ A Q 9 8 3 2				♠ K 10 7 4										
♥ Q 8				♥ K J 7 3										
♦ K J 2				♦ 3										
♣ 8 4				♣ A 9 5 2										

East's hand is worth a forcing raise in response to West's opening bid — 11 high-card points plus 3 dummy points for the singleton. East's double jump to 4♦ is a splinter bid — a non-jump response of 2♦ would be natural, showing diamonds, and a single jump response of 3♦ would be a jump shift, showing a strong hand. 4♦ shows diamond shortness and a fit for opener's suit. West has wasted high cards in diamonds opposite East's announced shortness, so there's no reason to move beyond the game level. West signs off in the agreed trump suit, and East has nothing further to say. If opener's hand is changed slightly, a slam contract becomes more probable:

West					East
♠ A Q 9 8 3 2	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ K 10 7 4
♥ A Q	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♦	Pass	♥ K J 7 3
♦ 8 7 2	4 ♥	Pass	5 ♣	Pass	♦ 3
♣ 8 4	6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	♣ A 9 5 2

West has no more strength than in the previous example, but the hand appreciates considerably in value when East shows a forcing raise with shortness in the diamond suit. West cuebids the ♥ A to show some slam interest and bids to the excellent slam contract when East cooperates by cuebidding the ♣ A.

Most partnerships continue to use splinter bids after a takeout double. After an overcall, splinter bids — like Jacoby 2NT — are usually considered to be “off,” but some partnerships prefer to continue to use them.

A splinter bid may be used in response to a minor suit in a similar fashion as in responding a major suit:

- In response to an opening bid of 1 ♣ or 1 ♦, a double jump in a new suit shows a singleton or void in that suit, support for opener’s minor, and at least game-going values.

In reply to the splinter bid, opener decides whether to play game in notrump, to play game in the minor suit or to try for a slam contract.

For example:

West					East
♠ K Q 10 8	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ 5
♥ Q 8 4	1 ♦	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	♥ A 7 6
♦ K 9 6 4	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass	♦ A Q 10 8 7 3
♣ K 6					♣ Q 7 5

In response to West’s opening bid, East’s hand is worth a forcing raise — 12 high-card points plus 3 dummy points for the singleton spade. Playing standard methods, with no immediate forcing raise, East would have to manufacture a forcing response of 2 ♣, intending to show diamond

support later. Playing splinter bids, East can make a double jump to 3♠, showing diamond support and shortness in spades. With a lot of strength in spades, opener elects to play in 3NT. Having described the hand, responder has nothing further to say.

West	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">5♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1♦	Pass	3♠	Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass	East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
1♦	Pass	3♠	Pass											
5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass											
♠ J 7 4				♠ 5										
♥ K Q 9 4				♥ A 7 6										
♦ K J 6 4				♦ A Q 10 8 7 3										
♣ K 6				♣ Q 7 5										

After East shows a singleton spade, West knows that 3NT won't be a good spot. With a minimum-strength hand for the opening bid, West settles for a game contract in the minor suit.

West	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4♣</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">5♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">6♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1♦	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass	Pass	East
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH																			
1♦	Pass	3♠	Pass																			
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass																			
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass																			
6♦	Pass	Pass	Pass																			
♠ A 9 7 2				♠ 5																		
♥ 8 3				♥ A 7 6																		
♦ K 9 6 4				♦ A Q 10 8 7 3																		
♣ A K 4				♣ Q 7 5																		

Opposite East's diamond fit and singleton spade, West's hand holds excellent slam potential, since there will be no losers in the spade suit. West cuebids to show strength in clubs and East cooperates by cuebidding the ♥ A. West checks for aces using the Blackwood convention. When East shows two aces, West bids to the excellent slam contract.

Most partnerships continue to use splinter bids after a takeout double but not after an overcall — although some partnerships continue to use them in all competitive situations. The partnership can also use splinter bids in other bidding sequences to show support for partner's suit and shortness in the bid suit.

Support Doubles

When there is an overcall on opener's right after partner has responded in a suit, some partnerships like to use a double by opener to show exactly three-card support for responder's suit. This is called a support double.

For example, consider the following hands after the auction starts like this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	1 ♠
?			

♠ Q 5 2
♥ 10 7 3
♦ A K J 6 3
♣ K 5

East could have a four-card suit to respond 1 ♥, so raising on three-card support might get the partnership to a poor contract. Rebidding 1NT or 2 ♦, however, might result in missing a heart fit if partner has five or more. For example, North might bid 2 ♠ and East might not have enough to bid higher without knowing there is some support for hearts. Using support doubles, West would double with this hand. With five or more hearts, East would now know there is a fit and could compete effectively. With only four hearts, East could pick another contract, perhaps diamonds or notrump.

♠ Q 5
♥ 10 7 3 2
♦ A K J 6 3
♣ K 5

With four-card support, West would raise to 2 ♥ right away. Holding a four-card suit, East would know the partnership had an eight-card fit and could compete to the appropriate level.

♠ Q 5 2
♥ 10 7
♦ A K J 6 3
♣ K 5 2

With two or fewer hearts, West does something other than raise or double. West can pass, bid notrump, or rebid diamonds. Whatever West chooses to do, East will now know that partner doesn't have support for hearts.

Use of support doubles requires a lot of discussion by the partnership. Both partners must be clear on the level through which they apply and the exact circumstances in which they are used.

For example, if South had made a takeout double in the above auction, some partnerships would treat a redouble as showing three-card support for hearts.

Texas Transfers

Texas transfers are similar to Jacoby transfers for the major suits but are used at a higher level. They are commonly used in response to both a 1NT opening bid or a 2NT opening bid as follows:

- A response of 4♦ is a transfer to 4♥.
- A response of 4♥ is a transfer to 4♠.

For example:

West ♠ K 9 ♥ A 9 7 5 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ A J 8 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">EAST</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">1NT</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♠</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	EAST	1NT	4♥	4♠	Pass	East ♠ A J 10 8 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ K Q 4
WEST	EAST							
1NT	4♥							
4♠	Pass							

Since responder can essentially accomplish the same thing by using a Jacoby transfer bid and then raising to the game level, this convention may appear unnecessary. Nonetheless, Texas transfers can be used in conjunction with Jacoby transfers by experienced partnerships to distinguish between sign-off bids and slam invitations. Typically, responder would use a Texas transfer to stop at the game level in the major suit. With some interest in going beyond game, responder would start with a Jacoby transfer and then jump to game. Such distinctions are not for the casual partnership.

Two-way Stayman

In this variation of the Stayman convention, a response of 2♣ is similar to non-forcing Stayman. It doesn't commit the partnership to the game level. A response of 2♦ is also Stayman — initially asking opener to bid a four-card or longer major suit — but commits the partnership to the game level. Any subsequent bids below the game level are forcing. Consider the following hands for responder after an opening bid of 1NT:

1)	♠ J 3	2)	♠ A 3
	♥ K J 8 2		♥ K J 8 2
	♦ 9 7 5		♦ 9 7 5
	♣ K 10 5 2		♣ A K J 2

With the first hand, responder bids 2♣ as non-forcing Stayman. If opener bids 2♦ or 2♠, responder rebids 2NT as a non-forcing bid, inviting opener to game. If opener bids 2♥, responder raises to 3♥ as an invitation. With the second hand, responder bids 2♦ as forcing Stayman. If opener bids 2♠, responder can rebid 2NT as a forcing bid. Opener has to bid again and can mention a four-card club suit, perhaps leading to a slam in clubs. If opener bids 2♥, responder raises to 3♥ as a forcing bid, initiating a slam investigation.

























Unusual vs Unusual

When an opponent makes a two-suited overcall, such as Michaels or unusual notrump, it takes away some of the bidding room. To compensate, some partnerships use the following approach, commonly referred to as unusual over unusual:

- Double is penalty-oriented, showing interest in defending against the opponents' eventual contract.
- A raise of partner's suit is at the cheapest available level is invitational, not forcing.
- A bid of the suit not shown by partner or by the opponent's bid is invitational, not forcing.

- A cuebid of the lower-ranking of the suits shown by the opponent's bid shows the lower-ranking of the other two suits and is forcing for one round.
- A cuebid of the higher-ranking of the suits shown by the opponent's bid shows the higher-ranking of the other two suits and is forcing for one round.

This is more easily explained with some sample hands after the auction begins as follows and East holds these hands:

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 	2 	?	
 Q J 8 3				Double. North's Michaels cuebid shows both major suits. Double shows that East would like to defend for penalty when the North–South partnership finds a resting place.
 K 10 9 5				
 8 3				
 A 7 4				
 8 5				Raise to 3  . A raise of partner's suit to the cheapest available level is competitive. It doesn't show much more than a raise to the two level.
 J 4				
 K J 9 7 2				
 A 8 3 2				
 9 2				Bid 3  . A bid of the suit that hasn't been shown by partner or the opponent's cuebid is simply competitive. 3  here would be non-forcing.
 7 5 2				
 Q 7				
 A Q J 8 7 5				
 A 8 3				Cuebid 2  . A cuebid of the lower-ranking of the suits shown by the opponent — hearts in this situation — shows the lower-ranking of the other two suits — clubs and diamonds — and is forcing for one round. Since 3  would be non-forcing, East cuebids 2  to show a strong hand with clubs.
 7 5				
 J 9 4				
 A K J 8 3				

♠ 9 4 Cuebid 2♠. A cuebid of the higher-ranking of the
 ♥ A 8 4 suits shown by the opponent's bid — spades in this
 ♦ A Q J 8 6 auction — shows the higher-ranking of the other two
 ♣ K 7 3 suits. In this case, it shows strong support for partner's
 minor suit and a hand of at least invitational strength.

An immediate raise to 3♦ would be competitive.

Since there are variations of this approach that can be used, the partnership should discuss the convention beforehand.

Wolff Sign-off

After a jump rebid to 2NT by opener, any bid by responder is forcing using standard methods. To allow responder to stop in the best partscore, some partnerships use the *Wolff sign-off* convention:

- After a jump rebid of 2NT by opener, a response of 3♣ asks opener to bid responder's first suit at the three level with three-card support, otherwise to bid 3♦.

This convention was developed by Bobby Wolff, a many-time world champion from Dallas, Texas. Here is an example after the auction has started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	?	

♠ J 3 Rather than pass 2NT to stop in partscore, responder
 ♥ Q J 8 4 3 can bid 3♣ if the partnership uses the Wolff sign-
 ♦ Q 10 6 2 off. Opener will bid 3♥ with three-card support for
 ♣ 6 2 responder's suit, or 3♦ without three-card support.
 In either case, responder can now pass, leaving the
 partnership in its best fit.