A note before beginning:
If you see something that has not been explained fully or you find unclear, or have any other comments/suggestions (or find typos), please contact me.

Some Notation:
I may use some of the below bridge notation in these notes:
* – alertable bid
GF – Game Forcing
HCP – High Card Points
m – minor suit
M – major suit
s/o – sign-off
X – any suit
6-4-2-1 – Hand shape with a 6 card suit, a 4 card suit, a doubleton, and a singleton
6=4=2=1 – Exact hand shape with 6 spades, 4 hearts, 2 diamonds, and 1 club
RHO - Right hand opponent
LHO - Left hand opponent
When I list a hand, the suits are in descending rank (♠♥♦♣)

Opening Overview

With 12 or more points, you usually should open the bidding. Also open the bidding when you have an exceptionally long suit. Below are the appropriate bids based on hand type, and in future sections we will examine how the auctions will proceed after each of these openings.

1♣: 12 - 21, 3+ clubs
1♦: 12 - 21, 3+ diamonds (almost always 4, except for 4=4=3=2)
1♥: 12 - 21, 5+ hearts
1♠: 12 - 21, 5+ spades
1NT: 15 - 17, balanced (no more than one doubleton, no singletons)
2♣: 22+, any shape
2♦, 2♥, 2♠: 5 - 10, 6 card suit
2NT: 20 - 21, balanced
3X, 4X – Preemptive, long suit
No Trump Auctions

One No Trump

When your partner has opened 1NT, he limits his hand very precisely to exactly 15 to 17 high card points. This information usually allows you accurately place the final contract quickly after just a round or two of bidding. Thus, it is important to only open 1 NT to when you have exactly 15 to 17 points not only so your partner can accurately place the contract on the current hand, but also so he trusts you when you open in the future!

Can I have a 5 card major and open 1NT?

Whether you open 1NT with a 5 card major is a matter of personal style and partnership agreement, but for us we judge based on each hand. My guiding philosophy is to do it when my major suit is weak, and thus my hand looks like it would play better at no trump. With AKQ109 of spades, I would open a spade since my hand is more suit oriented.

Raising

Knowing that your partner has 15 - 17, you immediately know whether you have a game going hand, an invititational hand, or a hand too weak to even invite. With a balanced hand and at least invitational values, you with often just raise in no trumps. Since 25 points is the target to be in game, if you have 10 - 15 points you can just bid 3 NT. With 8 - 9, you are invitational, and can bid 2 NT. With only 0 - 7, if you have no long suit you must pass, as there is no good chance of making a game.

Examples: what do you do over your Partner’s 1 NT opening?

A 9 7 Q 6 K 10 5 2 Q J 3 2

Bid 3NT. Your side has at least 27 points, so game is a good place to be.

4 2 A K 7 8 7 6 5 8 5 3 2

Pass. Even with your partners hand you can only count up to 24, which is usually not enough to make three when both hands are balanced.

8 5 K 10 2 10 9 5 A Q 10 9 8

Bid 3NT. Even though you only have 9 high card points, you have a strong five card suit in clubs and good intermediates. If your partner has one of the missing club honors, which he probably does, 3NT will probably make.
Bid 2NT. Again, you have 9 points, but now your high cards are in your short suits and you have no five card suit, so you are invitational.

Stayman

Just because your partner opened 1 NT doesn’t mean he couldn’t have a four card major suit. And if you have a 4 cards in that major as well, it’s probably better to play in that suit then in no trump. Thus, if you have at least an invitational hand (8+ points) and a 4 card major, you can bid 2♣ to inquire if you have a major suit fit. This is artificial and says nothing about clubs. If your partner has a 4 card major he with bid it, and if not he will bid 2♦.

When he bids your major suit you can raise to either 3 or 4 depending on whether you are invitational or game forcing (just as in the previous section). Otherwise, you bid 2 NT or 3 NT, again depending on your strength. This is why you must be at least of invitational strength to bid stayman, as if you to not have a major suit fit you will be forced to 2 NT, which you will probably not make if you have fewer than 8 points.

Examples: what do you do over your Partner’s 1 NT opening?

K 9 8 7  Q 7 4 3  A 4  K 4 3

Bid 2♣. If he bids 2♦, you don’t have a major suit fit, but you are still strong enough to bid game, so you’ll bid 3 NT. If he bids a major suit, raise that suit to 4.

K 9 8 7  Q 7 4 3  J 4  9 4 3

Pass. You have 4 cards in both majors, but are too weak to bid stayman.

K 9 8 7  Q 7 4  J 4 3 2  Q 4

Bid 2♣. If he rebids 2♠, invite with 3♠. When he bids either 2♦ or 2♥, bid 2NT, which is still invitational.

Jacoby Transfers

Stayman is all well and good when you have a 4 card major, but what if you have an even longer major suit? If you bid stayman with a 5 card major, you may not know if you partner has the 3 card support you’d like until the hand is being played. Thus, if you have a 5 card major suit you must make a transfer bid, where you bid the suit below your suit at the two level. For example, if you have 5 hearts, you bid 2♣*. Then you partner is forced to bid the next step (which is your suit), in this case 2♥. Note that this bid can be made
with as few as 0 high card points.

This transfer accomplishes two purposes. It allows the hand with more high cards to remain concealed during the play, making things more difficult for the defense. Also, it lets responder bid again, clarifying the contents of his hand. As the opener could have as few as two card support, the responder should only raise their own suit when they have 6 or more. Otherwise, they can either bid no trump or they can bid a second 5 card suit if they have it. What level you bid your suit or no trump at is again determined by the strength of your hand.

Texas Transfers

Texas transfers are an extension of Jacoby transfers, but at the 4 level. When your hand is game forcing, but based on distribution rather than high card strength, you can instead transfer at the 4 level (e.g. 1NT - 4♦ - 4♥). This is more commonly done when the suit you are transferring to is long and makes up your playing strength. The other subtlety to note is that after making a Texas transfer a continuation of 4NT is Roman Keycard Blackwood, while after a Jacoby transfer 4NT is a quantitative invite (see slam bidding).

Examples: what do you do over your Partner’s 1 NT opening?

A J 8 7 6 4 Q 7 2 K 9 3 10

Bid 2♥, transferring to spades. Your partner will complete the transfer, bidding 2♠. As you know you have enough points for game and he has to at least 2 spades for you, bid 4♠.

A Q 8 7 6 Q 7 2 K 9 3 10 4

Bid 2♥, transferring to spades. Your partner will complete the transfer, bidding 2♠. You don’t know if your partner has 3 spades, so bid 3 NT, as you definitely want to be in game. In this auction your partner bids 4♠ over 3NT, as he has 3 spades and you know you have 5 of them from your transfer.

A 9 8 Q 9 8 7 2 K 9 3 10 4

Just as the last hand, with a 5 card major you want to transfer and then bid no trump. This time you transfer with 2♦ and rebid 2 NT over your partener’s 2♥, as you have merely an invitational hand. With his 17 points but only 2 hearts, you partners chooses 3NT as the correct game to be in.

A Q J 8 7 6 4 8 7 2 10 9 3  --

Bid 4♥, a Texas transfer to 4♠. You are game forcing based on your distribution and strong 7 card suit.
Do bid 2♣, but pass after your partner completes the transfer. Yes, he may only have 2 hearts. But in 1 NT your hand is pretty much worthless, while in 2 hearts it may do some good. Definitely don’t bid on after 2♥, as your partner will think you have much more than you actually do.

As a note, transfers are not technically alertable but they are *announcable*. This means that when your partner makes a transfer bid, you say “transfer”. Not too painful.

Minor Suit Relay
What if you have a long minor suit instead of a long major? If you hand is at least invitational, it is often best to ignore the suit and bid some number of no trumps, as making a minor suit game requires 2 tricks more than making game in no trump. However, if you are very weak with at least 6 cards in a minor, it may be better to play in three of your minor than 1 no trump. To do this, bid 2♠ over 1 NT. This forces your partner to bid 3♣, which you pass if clubs is your suit, or bid 3♦ if you in fact have diamonds. Opener should not bid over 3♦, as using this 2♠ relay shows a weak hand.

Examples: what do you do over your Partner’s 1 NT opening?

- 4 2  J 3 2  Q 9 7 6 4 3 2  7
  Bid 2♠, relaying to 3♣, and then bid 3♦ over 3♣.

- 4 2  J 3 2  7 2  Q 9 7 6 4 3  7
  The same, but with your suit moved. Bid 2♠, and then pass the forced 3♣ response.

- A 2  J 3 2  K 2  Q 9 7 6 4 3  7
  Now you are far to strong to bid the relay. Just bid 3 NT, which you expect to make all day with your 10 HCP and 6 card suit. Even though you know you must have at least an 8 card fit in clubs, 3 NT is almost always a better contract in this case than 5♣.

Note: This agreement makes finding minor suit slams quite difficult. If this concerns you consider adding 4-way transfers to your bidding systems. If this concerns you greatly, consider playing a different bidding system, such as Precision, as both Standard American and Two Over One are not good at bidding minor suit slams.

Slam Bidding
Your partner opens 1 NT, and you have a monster hand yourself. What can you do to investigate slam? Below is a list of possibilities.
Quantitative Invites
Remembering that slam in no trump needs about 33 for a small slam and 37 for a grand slam, you can bid:

4 NT: Invitational to 6 NT. You have 16 - 17 yourself, and want partner to bid the small slam with the top half of his range.
5 NT: Invitational to 7 NT. You have 20 - 21, and partner to bid the grand slam with the top of his range. Otherwise he will sign off in 6 NT.
6 NT: To play. You have 18 - 19, and know where you want to be.

Gerber
If you only care about the number of Aces your partner has, you can bid 4♣, which is Gerber and says nothing about clubs. Responses to Gerber are purely artificial and increase the number of aces held by opener by one with each step:

4♦: 0 or 4 aces
4♥: 1 ace
4♠: 2 aces
4NT: 3 aces

You can also bid stayman or transfer and then bid other suits or make splinter bids – see the following sections for material on slam tries.

3 Level responses to 1NT
You will notice that the above systems for responding to 1NT to do not use any of the 3 level suit bids. As these systems are adequate for most scenarios, some partnerships do not utilize those bids as part of their agreements. For those who are more new to 2/1, I would recommend playing all 3 level responses as showing a 6 card or longer suit and are game forcing. Later, we will include 4-way transfers, puppet stayman, and the 3 level minor slam tries.

2NT Auctions
When your partner opens 2NT, not only is his hand better than when he opens 1NT, he limits his hand even better, to 20-21 points. Thus we use many of the same bids as over 1NT. 3♣ is stayman. 3♦ and 3♥are transfers to hearts and spades respectively and 3NT is to play. 3♠ should be some sort of minor suit slam try. 4NT is again a quantitative invite to 6NT, but this time made with 12 points.

When the Opponents Interfere
When the opponents bid over your side’s 1NT opening, you may not have space for the
conventions listed above. Thus, you need a way of clearly showing weak, invitational, and game forcing hands.

Doubles

Doubling an opponent’s overcall of your partner’s 1NT opening is almost always for penalties. The primary exception is when the overcall is 2♣. In this specific case all of the normal systems are on, and double is now stayman (since 2♣ is not available). Systems are also on after a double of the 1NT opening.

Lebensohl

The cornerstone of the Lebensohl convention is that after 1NT - 2♥(RHO) (for example, could be 2♦ or 2♠ as well), a bid of 2NT* by responder is a relay to 3♣. This means that opener is then required to bid 3♣* and then responder will further describe her hand.

The other important artificial bid is a cue bid of opponents’ suit is stayman and is game forcing since you are already at the 3 level without a known fit. If the opponents have shown a major suit, then it shows exactly 4 cards in the other major.

How Strong are You?
By bidding the relay and then bidding a suit at the 3 level, responder is showing a weaker hand than a direct 3 level bid would show. If there are three possible ways to show a suit, including using the relay, then those ways are weak, invitational, and strong. In the above example, after 1NT - 2♥ - ?:

2♣: weak
2NT* - P - 3♣* - 3♣: invitational
3♣: game forcing

If only two possible ways exist, as with diamonds and clubs in this case, then the relay is weak and the direct bid is game forcing. You don’t have the room to invite.

Do You Have a Stopper?

The other use of Lebensohl is to differentiate hands with and without a stopper in the overcalled suit. The mnemonic to remember here is “direct denies”. If you bid 3NT directly over the overcall you have game going values but no stopper, whereas if you bid 2NT* to relay to 3♣* and then bid 3NT you promise a stopper. This also holds for a stayman bid – a direct stayman bid denies a stopper, while a delayed stayman bid promises one.

Lebensohl is not easy, so here are some examples. What do you do after 1NT - 2♥(RHO)?
Bid 2♠, as you are weak with spades.

Bid 3♠, game forcing.

Bid 2NT*. Your partner will continue with 3♣* and you will bid stayman with 3♥, showing 4 spades and game going values with a heart stopper.

Bid 2NT*. Your partner will complete the relay with 3♣, which you will pass, being weak with long clubs.

If you are already enamored with Lebensohl, you probably went through the motions of bidding the relay and then 3NT to show heart stoppage. However, with hearts this good I would double 2♥ and collect a hefty penalty.
Major Suit Auctions

When your side opens the bidding with a major suit opener’s hand is not precisely defined, as he could have anywhere from 12 to 21 points, with many different possible shapes. All that is known is that he has opening strength and a 5 card suit, and your side needs to use the auction to figure out both where to play and how high to be. Before delving into specific auctions, let’s examine two integral mechanisms to the Two-Over-One system.

Two Over One Game Forcing

Obviously, this is the bid for which the system is named, and the major difference between Two-Over-One and Standard American. A two over one bid is where opener opens a suit at the one level and responder makes a non-jump response at the two level, e.g. 1♥ - 2♦. In Standard American the 2♦ response promises 10+ points and is at least invitational to game. In Two-Over-One, however, this bid shows at least an opening hand in its own right and is forcing to game. This removes any more uncertainty in the auction about getting too high and allows you to bid your strong hands more slowly, more accurately bidding your games and slams.

The Forcing NT

Since a two over one bid is game forcing, how to you respond if you have an invitational hand? The key is that a 1 NT response to a major suit opening is forcing for one round. The forcing NT can be bid with a wide range of hands, from a minimal response to a very good invitational hand. It usually denies 3 card support for opener’s major so opener can only rebid his suit with six of them. I’ll cover forcing NT auctions in a section below.

Major Suit Raises

The most straightforward auctions occur when the responder has at least 3 card support for opener’s suit, and thus immediately knows there is a fit. Responder then needs to inform her partner of the fit, along with conveying information about the strength of her hand and the quantity of support.

Constructive Raise

A constructive or minimal raise is made with 3 to 4 trumps and 6 to 9 points. Just as in Standard American, this is a simple raise to the two level. If partner has more than a minimum opener they can either bid game with a maximum or make an invitational bid. A raise by opener to the three level (i.e. the auction began 1♥ - 2♥ - 3♥) is just a general invite, which you should accept with 8 to 9, as partner likely has around 16-17. Opener can also make a game try in a side suit: if he has a medium opener, around 16-17, and a side suit containing something like Kxxx or Qjx he can bid that suit. You already know
that you are going to play in your original major suit fit, but you partner wants to find out if you have honors to go with his in that suit. With queen-third or better you should accept game as long as your hand as a whole isn’t a flat minimum.

Invitational Raise – Jump Raise
If your hand is just below opening strength but you have support for your partner, you want to make an invitational raise so that you reach game in all cases except when he has a bare minimum. After your invitational jump raise to the three level, partner can pass with a minimal opener of 12-13 or bid game with more. If he has a big hand and slam interest he can cue bid a control or bid Blackwood. See the section on slam bidding for more.

Jacoby 2NT

The 2NT response to a major suit opening is a game forcing response, showing 12+ points and 4 card trump support with no singleton or void. Opener now describes his hand more fully. Three level bids of the other suits show a singleton or void in the suit, while a four level bid of another suit shows an outside five card suit. With a usual minimal opener of 12-15 points and no shortness he immediately bids game. This leaves more room for the stronger hands to explore slam. With 16+ and no singleton he rebids the trump suit at the three level. The only exception to this is with 16-18 points and 5-3-3-2 shape, when he bids 3NT. All continuations after this are normal slam bidding.

Splinter Bids

These bids show a similar hand to that shown by the Jacoby 2NT, but now with a singleton or void. Thus, with 12+ points and 4 card trump support you now make a double jump shift in your short suit. With no slam interest partner with sign off in 4 of your major. With slam interest he can cue bid a control or bid Blackwood, although Blackwood is less advisable in case your shortness is a void, and you don’t need as many keycards if you have the right ones.

To review – Partner opens 1♥. Here is a list of your available raises:

- 2♥: 6-9, 3-4 hearts, constructive
- 2NT*: 12+, 4+ hearts, no singleton, GF (Jacoby 2NT)
- 3♥: 10-11, 3+ hearts, invitational
- 3♠*: 12+, 4+ hearts, 0-1 spades, GF (Splinter)
- 4♣*: 12+, 4+ hearts, 0-1 clubs, GF (Splinter)
- 4♦*: 12+, 4+ hearts, 0-1 diamonds, GF (Splinter)

With an opener of your own and 3 card support make a two over one game force and show your support at the next opportunity.
Two Over One Auctions

Making a Two Over One Response

When do you make a two-over-one response to your partner’s opening bid? Well, you
need about an opening hand of your own to force to game, and you need a suit to bid at the
two level. If you want to respond 2 hearts to 1 spade, you need a 5 card suit, while 4 cards
for a minor will suffice. If you have a game forcing hand and can’t make a two-over-one
bid, don’t panic! A new suit at the 1 level is always forcing for a round, and there are other
ways to make a low-level game force (see 4th suit forcing below).

When you open at the one level and your partner makes a two-over-one response, your
side cannot stop below a game contract. Your partner must be able to trust you never to
pass below a game contract! (This means no stopping in 4m even). After the two-over-
one force has been set up there are some general guidelines that you can use to describe
your hand.

Opener’s Rebids

When your partner makes a two-over-one response, the first thing to be aware of is you
have plenty of time. You are forced to game, so if you need to you can take your time
getting there. Who knows, there might be a slam in the offing.

The primary feature of our hand that we show first to our partner, and the secondary
feature is strength. Thus, a rebid of our major suit usually shows 6+ cards, and a new suit
has 4 cards. No Trump bids have the balanced shape – 2NT shows 12-14 or 18+ points,
while 3NT shows 15-17. The basis of this split range of 2NT is that with a minimal hand
you want time to explore, and with the super-large hand you can push forward after your
partner attempts to sign off in game opposite your assumed minimum. A jump rebid of
your major is a “picture bid” showing a very good 6+ card suit and a better than minimal
opening hand. You can also support your partner’s suit, but to bid a new suit at the 3 level
(as in the auction 1♥ - 2♦ - 3♣) you need a better than minimal opener. This causes the
opener to be stuck for a rebid in a fair number of cases. For example, you hold:

A   KQxxx Jxx Axxx

You don’t have a sixth hearth, you aren’t balanced enough for 1NT, you can’t raise partner
and you can’t bid your clubs. Here you have no choice to make as small a lie as you can
and bid 2♥. Partner will be aware that even though you usually have 6, you may not
always.

Principle of Fast Arrival
The Principle of Fast Arrival is one of the more abused bidding concepts in modern bridge. The Principle states that a jump to game in a game forcing auction shows a minimal hand (consider what that hand has already promised). This can be a good tool to use, but only when you are not eating up necessary bidding room. When your partner has suggested a minimal hand of his own, making slam very unlikely, and there is no further information that is useful for you, go ahead and bid your game. But otherwise be wary of consuming the very bidding room you created by bidding two-over-one! I could give some examples here, but the “best” way to learn this one is to rashly jump to game and find out your partner has a 19 count; They won’t be particularly pleased.

Forcing NT Auctions

A 1NT by an unpassed hand to 1M is forcing for one round. This is not the case if the 1NT responder passed initially, as a two-over-one bid can no longer be game forcing and instead shows an invitational hand with ~10-11 HCP. Do not confuse the forcing NT (5-11) with the non-forcing NT (6-9).

Strong Rebids

2NT

Rebidding 2NT shows a balanced hand shape and 18-19 points, falling in between our NT opening ranges. Nothing much to see here.

Jump Rebid

A jump rebid of your suit shows an excellent 6+ card suit and 16-18 points. It is not forcing but is highly invitational. Do not make this bid if you must be in game. Any further bid by responder is game forcing, so the only way to stop below game is a pass of the jump rebid.

Jump Shift

A jump shift into a new suit (e.g. 1♥ - 1NT - 3♣) is game forcing, shows 4 cards in the new suit, and contains at least as many cards in the first suit as the second. Since this is game forcing it must only be made on a hand with a great deal of playing strength, usually a hand that is worth 19+ points. Bidding after the jump shift is natural with the knowledge that a game force is on. The only pitfall to be aware of is this hand type which I recently held at bridge club:

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Ax  AKQJ10x  Qx  KQx
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Being just too weak to open 2♣, I began with 1♥. After getting a 1♥ response I needed to
make a small lie – I jump shifted to 3♣. I could not jump rebid 3♥ as that would not be forcing, and my hand must be in game. Thus, I decided on the normal call of 3♣, choosing to lie about a minor suit. 3♣ is much better than rebidding a pessimistic and space consuming 4♥, removing all chance of finding slam. After reading this your partner will know that you may have conjure up a jump shift to game force, but of course only when necessary.

Reverse

A reverse by opener is bidding a high ranking suit at the 2 level than she opened at the 1 level after a initial response that did not promise any more than a minimal response. This occurs more frequently over minor suit openings, but they work the same. The only reverse after a major suit opening is 1♥ - 1NT - 2♠. Reversing accelerates the auction since responder would now have to bid at the 3 level if he likes hearts more than spades. Thus, reverses promise 17+ points and a longer first suit than second suit, with at least 5-4 in those suits.

Lebensohl over Reverses

Reverses are very nearly game forcing. In fact, any suit rebid after a reverse is natural a game forcing. The only way for responder to attempt to stop short of game with a bare minimum response is to use a variant of the Lebensohl convention introduced earlier for dealing with interference over a 1NT opening. Again, 2NT is a relay to 3♣, after which responder will attempt to place the contract. Obviously, with a super maximum opener can bid game anyway, and responder will know he has described his weak hand. 2NT in this case is always a weak bid, as opposed to before when it had various meanings.

Minimal rebids

Unfortunately, you do not usually have one of these strong hands when your partner makes a forcing NT bid. Your minimal bids consist of rebidding your major suit with 6 cards, or bidding your longer minor, clubs if they are of equal length. If you opened spades, you can also rebid 2♥ with 4 hearts. This means you will often be bidding a 3 card minor suit, and there is a hand shape where you may have only 2 cards in the suit (4=5=2=2)! But responder knows this and will usually preference back to 2M with two card support for your suit even if he has 3 cards for your minor.

Weak Jump Shifts

An immediate jump shift by responder to a major suit opening shows a weak hand with a long suit -- 3-6 points, mostly in your suit, and at least six cards. The purpose behind this bid is twofold. First, to interfere with the opponents' bidding since the points are likely split evenly between them and you. Second, to quickly and precisely describe your hand to your partner so that he knows not to investigate game without a maximal opening.
Minor Suit Openings

Major Suit Responses

After partner opens a minor suit your first priority is to bid a four card or longer major suit, remembering that this does not limit the strength of your hand or necessarily deny support for opener's suit. Opener can then raise with support. Support here is classified as Qxx or better, even though responder may only have 4 cards in the suit. 2M often plays better than 1NT when you have a good major suit to play in, and it is also good to find 5-3 fits. If responder has only 4 cards and wants to invite game, he must do so by bidding 2NT to show the more balanced hand. Inviting by bidding 3M would promise a fifth trump.

Rebids by Opener

Rebids by opener are similar to those described above for major suit openings. 1 NT is 12-14, 2NT is 18-19. Jump rebids, jump shifts, and reverses are all on.

Because of these strong bids, one hand type to take careful note of is 2=2=4=5 with minimal strength. If you naively open 1♣ you will be stuck for a rebid over 1M or 1N, since 2♦ would be a reverse. We systemically open this hand 1♦, and 1♦ - 1X - 2♣ shows at least 5-4 in the minors but could be longer clubs.

Gadgets

New Minor Forcing

New minor forcing is a great convention because its name actually conveys information about the meaning of the bid. It is the bid by responder of an unbid minor suit after having bid a major suit at the one level and is forcing for one round. It shows at least an invitational hand, usually with an extra card in the previously bid major. It essentially asks opener to better describe his major suit holdings, showing either card support or 4 cards in the unbid major (if it is hearts). NMF says nothing about the minor suit being bid:

1♣ 1♠ Promises 6+ points, 4+ spades
1NT 2♣* Now has 10+ points, 5+ spades (and possibly 4 hearts)

Opener can now bid spades to show 3 little spades, 2♥ to show 4 hearts (in case responder is 5-4 in spades and hearts), 2♦ or 2NT to reject game, and 3NT to accept game. 3♠ would accept game in spades. Make sure to accept game when your partner bids NMF if you have a game going hand! If you forget that the bid is invitational you may get passed out in 2NT when your side has 25+ points. This convention allows the partnership to find their 5-3 major suits fits with the longer holding being in the responding hand.
Even though not mentioned previously since it mainly occurs after a minor suit opening, this bid would also be available after 1♥ – 1♠ – 1NT; 2♣ would be NMF.

Fourth Suit Forcing

After your side has named three suits, a bid of the fourth suit is now artificial and is forcing to game. This is very useful to show game forcing values while still at a low level. Be careful not to accidentally bid 4th suit forcing when you are only invitational and thought it was NMF.

Minor Suit Raises

When raising your partner's minor suit opening it is important to remember that your partner can have as few as three trumps.

Weak Jump Raise

If you have a weak hand but many cards in your partner's suit it is advisable to make a jump raise of the suit in order to prevent your opponents from finding a major suit fit. Your partner will know you have a weak hand and will not continue the bidding unless they have a big hand. Since your partner can have only three cards in his suit you need at least five card support to make this bid with 6-9 points.

Strong Single Raise

Conversely, if you have an invitational or better hand with at least four card support for partner's suit you can make a single raise to two. This is the only forcing raise and begins a search for 3NT. Both you and opener now bid stoppers up the line to see if 3NT is feasible. If your hand is merely invitational you show this by bidding 2NT after making your single raise.

NT Responses

NT replies to a minor suit opening deny a four card major and show a balanced hand. What level you reply at is just based on the strength of your hand. With a weak hand of 6-10 points bid 1NT, with 11-12 invite with 2NT, and with 13-15 bid 3NT. With an very unbalanced hand or a long suit opener may remove either the 1NT or 2NT responses to a suit at the three level, but it is not advisable to bid over the 3NT response unless you have slam interest.

Two Over One – Mostly Game Forcing
A two over one response to a minor obviously only occurs when the bidding goes 1♦ – 2♣. The important difference between this and a two over one response to a major suit opening is that this is not game forcing if responder rebids clubs at his first opportunity. For example, in the auction 1♦ – 2♣ – 2NT – 3♣, responder has show only an invitational hand with five or more clubs. This allows responder to invite with an unbalanced hand with clubs, since she cannot respond 2NT. This is the only circumstance in which a two over one response may not be game forcing.

Weak Jump Shifts

As over major suits jump shift responses to minor suit openings are weak: 3-6 points with a six card suit.

2♣ Auctions

When you open 2♣ you have a big hand and are nearly game forcing. As long as partner can muster at least 4 points to go with your 22+, game will be a good bet. The main concept to remember in these auctions is that the 2♣ opener's hand is the interesting one and should be given bidding room to be described.

Thus, most hands responding to 2♣ begin with 2♦, which is a catch all “waiting bid”. It doesn't deny having a long suit or points, but it allows opener to show his hand first. Responder should only bid a suit (either 2 of a major or 3 of a minor) when the suit is quite good -- at least five cards long and containing two of the top three honors. For responder to show a non game forcing hand, one with fewer than 4 points, he first bids 2♦ and then bids the cheaper minor available over the opener's suit rebid. This is a called the “second negative”.

After the 2♦ waiting bid opener can now begin to describe his hand. Balanced hands can bid 2NT with 22-24 and 3NT with 25-26. Note that the 2NT rebid is the ONLY rebid that can be passed by responder. If responder does not wish to pass 2NT I would advise playing Jacoby transfers and puppet stayman over it as over a 2NT opening. Opener can also bid suits naturally, usually promising five cards unless he has a gigantic hand.

Examples – You open 2♣ and partner waits with 2♦. How do you continue?

A K 3 K Q J A Q 9 3 K J 8

Bid 2NT with 23 balanced points. Partner's continuation of 3♣ is not a second negative as he could pass 2NT with a negative response. It is instead puppet stayman, so you bid 3NT showing no four card major.
Bid 2♥. You don't need to bid more since this is forcing. Your partner bids 3♣, showing fewer than 4 points, but you bid game in hearts, undeterred with your three loser hand.

**Slam Bidding**

Slam bidding is not easy. There are many conventions that can be used to find the right path, but here I’ve included two integral techniques to find good slam contracts.

Roman Keycard Blackwood

One major factor as to whether to be in slam or not is how many aces your side has. It’s not great to be in a slam missing two aces, unless of course one of your hands has a void. Thus Blackwood was invented, where a bid of 4NT was an ace-ask, requiring partner to name the number of aces in her hand. As you would also like to avoid slams which require a possible finesse of the king of trumps, a improved version of Blackwood called Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKC) exists. In this version there are five keycards: the four aces and the king of trump. As sometimes you want to know about the queen of trump as well, the responses to RKC are:

- 5♣: 0 or 3 keycards
- 5♦: 1 or 4 keycards
- 5♥: 2 keycards without the trump queen
- 5♠: 2 keycards with the trump queen

Note that as some these responses may pass your suit at the five level, you have to be prepared to go to six with any such response.

If the keycard bidder continues with 5NT over the response, he is not asking for number of kings but for the bid of the cheapest suit containing a king cheaper than the trump suit. If the asker cares about a specific king in a suit of higher rank he can bid that suit to inquire. This may be useful if he has something like AQJxx of a side suit and wants to know if he can set up the suit.:

Say hearts is the agreed suit –
- 5NT (king ask) 6♣ (club king)
- 6♦ (asks for diamond king) 7♥(has the diamond king too)

With no outside king responder bids six of the trump suit.

If there is an intervening step at the five level between the RKC response and the trump suit that bid becomes a trump queen ask:
(With hearts still as the agreed suit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4NT (RKC)</th>
<th>5♣ (0 or 3 keycards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5♦ (Queen ask)</td>
<td>6♥ (has the heart queen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With both the heart queen and an outside king responder bids the suit with the king in case the RKC bidder is interested in a grand slam.

Please note that 4NT is RKC in all auctions except where one hand has showed a NT distribution and no suit fit has been found. If no suit fit as been found but neither partner has shown a NT hand then 4NT is RKC for the last bid suit.

Ace-King Cue Bids

It is not always enough to know that your side has all but one keycard to bid a small slam. What if you are missing the AK in a suit and you lose the first to tricks off the top? Thus it is often important to exchange information with your partner about which suits you have either the ace or the king in to prevent this from happening. If you have agreed a suit at the three level and have slam interest, bid the cheapest ace or king you can, partner will then oblige you by doing the same. In this way you can find out if you have controls in all the suits. Cue bidding is especially valuable in auctions where one partner has shortness, when Blackwood is not as useful, say after partner makes a splinter bid. However, cue bidding and Blackwood should not be thought of as exclusive. If you have the bidding room you can find out you have controls in all of the suits, and then bid RKC since you don’t know how many of your partner’s controls were aces. I would suggest not cue bidding voids as controls until a higher level, as it often leads to partner picturing your hand incorrectly. However, once you get up to the five level, your partner needs to know you’re not losing tricks in that suit.

Weak Openings

Before talking about specific openings there are some general ideas to keep in mind when opening weak. The idea is to preempt your opponents; if you have enough to open at the one level, don’t preempt yourself. Also, you should be less likely to preempt in 2nd seat, as you are just as likely to find your partner with points as LHO. Furthermore, it’s usually bad to open weak with an outside 4-card major unless your partner is a passed hand, you don’t want to miss a major suit game.

After you open a weak bid, it is very important to remember that you’ve already said everything you have to say. So unless your partner makes a forcing bid you should not be saying anything else!
Weak Twos (2♦, 2♥, 2♠)

Opening Requirements

What do you need to open a weak 2? Obviously you need a six card suit that isn’t clubs and a hand that isn’t strong enough to open at the one level. You also don’t want to have a completely bust hand, so the general guideline is 5-10 HCP. However, how weak you want your hand and suit to be greatly depends on the vulnerability. Not vulnerable, I don’t care much about the quality of my suit; I’m pretty happy to preempt with a six card suit headed only by the queen or jack if my hand has about 6 HCP total. But vulnerable I want my suit to actually have good honor structure: 3 of the top 5 honors, and just the QJ10xxx is not quite enough. This prevents you from getting into too much trouble, but still allows you to pushy when not vulnerable. If you and your partner do incorporate this standard I’d strongly advise not shading the requirements, as he may take a stab at 3NT when he thinks his Kxx in your suit will let your suit run.

Responses

By bidding a weak two opener has described his hand reasonably well, so responder should know whether the hand belongs to her side or the opponents. Raises of the suit are preemptive and weak, not invitational in any way. For example, if you have a hand with four spades and only 6 points you would want to jump to 4♠ over a 2♠ opening by your partner. New suits are non-forcing constructive, showing a long suit with around 9 or so points.

The only forcing response is 2NT, showing a big hand that has game interest even opposite a weak opening. This is a conventional bid asking the opener to describe his hand based on the quality of his suit and the overall strength of his hand:

3♣: Bad hand, bad suit
3♦: Bad hand, good suit
3♥: Good hand, bad suit
3♠: Good hand, good suit

After learning this information the responder should be able to place the contract.

Higher level preempts

To preempt at the 3 or 4 level you want a seven or eight card suit respectively. Again, when vulnerable you want your suit to be of pretty good quality, but as your suit gets longer it matters less how much strength you have outside. Give me a hand with eight spades headed by the KQJ and I will open 4♠ every time with no strength outside. If you have too much strength outside you may need to open at the one level or risk missing a
slam!

Unlike responses to weak twos, new suit responses to 3 and 4 level openings are forcing for at least a round, as it's too uncommon for responder to have an eight card suit of her own that she knows is better than partner’s suit. A new suit would show a strong hand and forward-going interest.

**Competitive Bidding**

**Raising in Competition**

You do not want your partnership to get confused about the strengths of your hands just because the opponents are also in the auction. Thus it is important to remember which bids are strong, which bids are weak, and which are merely competitive. The basic tenet to keep in mind is that with a weak hand you would like to take up bidding room from the competition, while with a strong hand you want to save bidding room for your own side to investigate game and possibly slam.

Thus, jump raises in competition are always weak with extra trump support. Since you no longer can make a jump raise to invite game, you invitational bid is now a cue bid of opponents’ suit. To repeat: the strong bid in competition is bidding your opponents’ suit, showing an invitational or better hand. If you don’t have extra length and just a minimal raise, you can still make a simple raise to show a fit and a desire to compete.

Examples: Your partner opens 1♥ and RHO overcalls 1♠. What do you bid?

![Card Image]

Bid 2♥, as you’ve got a minimal raise with 3 card support. This is the same as if there had not been an overcall by the opponents.

![Card Image]

Bid 2♠. Turning the heart jack into the heart ace makes your hand become invitational. Cue bid your opponents suit to show an invitational or better hand.

![Card Image]

Bid 2♠. Now you’ve got a monster opposite your partner’s opener. 2♠ doesn’t limit your hand, shows heart support, and forces your partner to bid again, so it is the place to start.

![Card Image]

Bid 3♥. With a weak hand and four card support, jump to 3♥. This puts the pressure on
the opponents – they might not know whether they should be in 3♣, 4♣, or defending against 3♥, and now they don’t have the time to find out.

7  A 9 6 3 2
9 7 4
9 8 6 5

Bid 4♥. Like the previous hand but with an extra trump and a singleton in opponents’ suit. Jump to four not because you think you are going to make it but because it removes the other side’s bidding room.

Note that these same principles apply when an opponent has opened the bidding and your partner has overcalled in a suit.

When the Opponents have Opened

Overcalls

At the One Level

If you have a five card suit you can introduce at the one level over your opponent’s opening it is usually a good idea to do so, even with quite a weak suit. You are unlikely to get doubled at the one level and you can possibly find a fit with your partner to either play in a low level partial or in a game if he has a real hand. Thus you should overcall at the one level with most hands containing a five card suit and 8 to 17 HCP.

At the two level

Things change when you overcall at the two level. Now you not only want at least 11 HCP but you should have a reasonable suit. Reasonable means good honor structure, such as the ace and the queen, or more than the minimal five cards in the suit. A good way to think about it is that your two level overcalls should be lead directing – you don’t really want your partner to lead diamonds if all you have in the suit is the king. The only mitigating factor is if your hand is quite strong overall – the stronger your hand the weaker the quality of your suit can be.

Higher level Overcalls

Have better suits and more points. No, really, if you are getting in at the 3 or 4 level, have a good suit, usually six cards or a very good five cards, and 15+ points.

In the Balancing Seat

Balancing position means that a pass by you would end the auction. When you have the opportunity to balance at the one level you almost always do so, as your opponents probably do not have many more points than your partnership. For example, if the bidding goes 1♦ - P - P to you, you know RHO has fewer than 6 points, so you can double or
overcall with weaker hands and weaker suits. You should still always have a minimum of five cards for your overcalls.

Jump Overcalls

As you might imagine, you want to make a jump overcall when you have a long suit and are quite weak, as you know the opponents have points. Making a jump overcall at the two level is similar to opening a weak two, although with 4-8 points instead of 5-10, as with 9+ points you can now just overcall at the one level. High level jumps require longer suits, usually an extra trump for each extra level.

Multi-Suited Bids

Takeout Doubles

Making a takeout double at the one level usually shows an opening hand with support for all the unbid suits and shortness in opener’s suit. However, if you have a NT or one suited hand that is too strong to make an immediate overcall you have to make a takeout double and then bid again. Thus if you have a minimal takeout double, don’t bid again if your partner makes a minimal response!

When you make a takeout double, partner is forced to respond. With 0-7 points partner bids his longest suit normally. With 8-10 balanced and stoppers in opponents’ suit, he can bid 1 NT. With 8-11 he jump bids his longest suit. And if he has an opening bid of his own he can cue bid opponents suit.

After partner’s response to your takeout double, you can only bid on if you have a big hand or partner has enough for game to be possible. All bids are natural, and a cue bid of opponents’ suit shows a hand with 20+ points.

Michaels Cue Bid

A cue bid of an opponent’s minor suit opening shows a two-suited hand with 5-5 in the majors, and either 0-11 or 17+ points. A cue bid of an opponent’s major suit opening shows a two-suited hand with 5-5 in the other major and one of the minors. The idea behind the split range of this Michaels cue bid is that with the 0-11 range you need to get your two suits in as quickly as possible, if you have the intermediate 12-17 range you can introduce your suits naturally, and with the 17+ range you will bid again over your partner’s response. Responding to a two-suited bid you usually merely preference between your partner’s suits, or with a weak hand and many cards in one of his suits you may make a weak jump to eat up bidding room.

Unusual 2NT
A jump overcall of 2NT does not show a balanced hand with 19+ points. If you have a big balanced hand and the opponents open you need to double and the bid NT. A jump to 2NT instead shows 5-5 in the two lowest unbid suits. Again, this bid is usually made with a weak hand, but if you bid again after jumping to 2NT and your partner picks a suit then you have a very strong hand. The main point of this bid is to eat up bidding room when you are weak and the opponents probably have a major suit.

**Overcalling NT**

When you overcall the opponents’ opening with NT you are saying that you have a 1 NT opening yourself (or perhaps a point more, 15-18) and at least one stopper all of the opponents’ suits. You partnership should play systems on over this overcall, meaning your partner can transfer to a major suit or bid stayman. In the balancing seat overcalling 1NT shows 11-15 points. With a balanced hand and too many points, first make a takeout double and then bid NT.

**Bidding Over Opponents’ NT**

When an opponent opens a strong 1 NT you must be careful about getting in the auction. Opener’s partner, knowing opener’s hand reasonably precisely, will have a good idea of when to double and set you more than one, which can happen even when their side is not making a game. Still, if you have a distributional hand you should show it over 1NT, as long as you are not reckless.

As you only want to bid distributional hands over 1NT, it is useful to have a system for showing one and two suited hands. The easiest such system to remember is called DONT (Disrupting Opponents NoTrump). With a six card or longer suit you double, and with a two suited hand (at least five cards in each suit) you bid the cheaper suit:

- **Double**: Unspecified six card or longer suit. This forces partner to bid 2♣ if it get passed to him, which you pass if clubs is your suit or correct to your suit.
- **2♣**: Clubs and another suit
- **2♦**: Diamonds and a major
- **2♥**: Hearts and spades
- **2♠**: Spades. If you double and then bid spades that shows a good hand. In any case where you have an unspecified suit, such as when you double or overcall with a minor suit, then the cheapest bid by your partner is artificial and asks you to bid your unknown suit. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1NT</th>
<th>Dbl*</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>2♣* (Asking for your suit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass (Has clubs)</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or
1NT
Pass
2♦ (Pass or correct)
Pass
2♠ (Has ♦ and ♠)

or

1NT
2♣* Dbl (Stayman)
Rdbl* (wants to know your 2nd suit)
2♥
3♦ (Has the minors) ?

For the future, after you are comfortable with DONT, a variation I prefer is called Inverted DONT, where all the bids above 2♣ are exchanged with the double:

Double*: Clubs or a two-suiter without clubs. Forces 2♣ as before. Suit continuations show that suit and a higher suit.
2♠*: Clubs and another suit
2♣/2♥/2♠: Natural long suits

Gadgets when Opponents Overcall or Double

Negative Doubles

When your partner opens a minor suit and the intervening opponent overcalls at the one level a double shows four cards in the unbid major and 7+ points. A double of 1♥ shows exactly four spades and an response of 1♣ in an auction like 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ now shows five. Conversely, a double of 1♠ might have five hearts if it is not strong enough to bid at the two level (10+ points). A negative double of 1♣ shows at least 4-4 in the majors, but a negative double of 2♥ in the auction 1♣ - 2♣ - Dbl shows one four card major, as bidding majors at the two level should show five.

The purpose of negative doubles is twofold. The primary reason it was invented was when you wanted to respond 1♥ to partner’s 1m opening, but RHO intervened with a 1♠ overcall. Without having the negative double available you would not have a good way of informing partner about your four card heart suit. It is also quite useful when you want to respond to your partner’s minor suit opening and have spades. Now when RHO overcalls 1♥ you can give your partner extra information! With exactly 4 spades you double, and with 5 or more you simply bid a spade as you were planning. The only thing to be careful of is not to forget about negative doubles and bid 1♠ in this situation with only 4 spades; your partner might be perturbed when you lay down a dummy that is a trump short.

Support Doubles and Redoubles

These are available to opener when responder has bid a major suit and then the opponents either overcall or double. A double/redouble here now shows exactly three card support
for responder’s suit, and a raise shows at least four. These apply through an overcall of 2♥ and should occur whenever applicable. As they are only on through 2♥, they will not force two minimal hands past the two level.

Over Opponents Takeout Double

It is important to know what bids are forcing and not when your partner has opened and an opponent doubles. Suit responses at the one level are, but at the two level they are not. With an invitational or better hand you should redouble without a fit with your partner. This keeps open the possibility of penalizing the opposition. With an invitational or better hand and trump support, you can make the conventional raise of the Jorden 2NT*, which only applies over an opponent’s takeout double.