
*** TWO CLUBS ***

Two Clubs is your strongest opening bid. You can only make it if you're strong enough to make game on your own, without partner's help - WITH ONE EXCEPTION.

It may be based on POINTS, but is mostly based on PLAYING TRICKS.

It is FORCING TO GAME - WITH ONE <<<EXCEPTION>>>

So think of 2C as the GAME FORCE opening.

Open 2C if you have...

Game in hand: You can make 3NT, 4H, 4S, 5C or 5D with no help from partner

OR

A balanced hand with 23+ points

You tell partner which type of 2C hand you have with your second bid.

Why not just bid game?

Because an opening bid of 4H, 4S, 5C, or 5D is a pre-empt; a long suit and not much else.

3NT is usually reserved for a strong-ish (16-21) hand with a long minor suit and stops in 3 or 4 suits.

By opening 2C, you leave room to find out if you can bid a slam.

Responding to 2C

You must respond and keep bidding to game - WITH ONE EXCEPTION

2D = 0-6 points, NEGATIVE; slam is unlikely

2H/S = 7+ points, 5+ trumps; slam is likely

2NT = 7-10 points, no 5-card suit; slam is likely

3C/D = 7+ points, 5+ trumps; slam is likely

3NT = 10-12 points; slam is almost certain

Note that a NEGATIVE response merely denies a slam, you must still bid to game. All the other bids are POSITIVE. Responder's suit responses are UNLIMITED; NT responses indicate the point range.

Opener's rebid - after a NEGATIVE (2D) response

2H/S = 5+ trumps; slam is unlikely

2NT = 23-24 points balanced <<<THIS IS THE EXCEPTION>>>

3C/D = 5+ trumps; slam is unlikely

3NT = 25-27 points balanced

4NT = 28-30 points, balanced

NOTE: After the sequence 2C 2D 2NT, responder can PASS if they have 0-1 points!

Rebids after a POSITIVE response

Are natural!

Opener should bid their suit at the lowest level, there's no need to jump as bidding can't stop before game. They may use Blackwood if they see a slam and only care about aces, or start cue bidding once a suit is agreed (raised by partner). With enough points they may even bid the slam straight off. Bidding game denies slam and is a sign-off.

Opener's suit rebids are UNLIMITED; NT rebids indicate the point range.

You must bid to Game

Remember, after a 2C opening you must keep bidding until game is reached, UNLESS the bidding went 2C 2D 2NT, indicating opener has 23-24 points - responder can then pass with 0-1 points; simple arithmetic really.

If responder made a positive response (say 2C 2H 2NT) you both know you have enough point for game (23-24 + 7+); the 2NT response no longer means you can pass before reaching game.

Bidding to Slam

With balanced hands (NT bids), add up the points to decide.

With unbalanced hands, it's more about length and fit. With the 2C opener guaranteeing 10 or 11 tricks, responder only needs a trick or two to convert that game to a slam.

Use Blackwood or cue bids if worried about controls.

EXAMPLES

(Spades Hearts Diamonds Clubs)

AKJ QJT_x KQ AQT_x = 2C...2NT (23 points, balanced)

AKQT_{xx} KQJT_x x A = 2C...2S (19 points, 10 tricks in Spades)

A - KQJ_x AKQJ_{xxxx} = 2C...3C (20 points, 11 tricks in Clubs)

KJT_{xx} AQ_{xxx} - AKJ = 1H...2S (18 points, 5-6 tricks in Spades or Hearts) REVERSE

xx AKJ_{xxxx} AK_x x = 2H (15 points, 8-9 tricks in Hearts) STRONG TWO

x AQJ_{xxxx} xxx xx = 4H (7 points, 6-7 tricks in Hearts) PRE-EMPT

MIND THE GAP

Now, this is depressing. If you play STRONG TWOS (8 playing tricks) then they plug the gap between a normal one-of-a-suit opening (11-19 points) and the 2C opening (23+ points or 10-11 playing tricks).

If you play WEAK TWOS, what do you bid if you're too strong for a one-of-a-suit opening and too weak for a 2C opening? NFB really messes this up, their advice is something like this:

A: Overstate the strength of your hand and open it as 2C

B: Understate the strength of your hand and open it with one-of-a-suit

Option A risks ending up in unmakeable contracts. Option B risks missing game or maybe even slam.

I offer a slightly more sane third option:

C: If you can, open with 2NT (20-22 points) - even if your hand really isn't balanced.

Whatever strategy you adopt, agree it with partner and announce/alert it to the opposition.

IS THERE A BETTER SOLUTION?

The solution I've found is to use BENJI ACOL. This uses 2C to bid a STRONG TWO (8 tricks) and 2D as the GAME FORCE opening (10-11 tricks) instead of 2C. This lets you use 2H and 2S opening bids for WEAK TWOS.

It's a kind of magic! Don't be scared. (I'll explain BENJI fully at a later date, if you want.)

Please tell me if you find a better solution.