Strong Club Relay system

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Chapter 1

Preliminaries

1.1 General Approach

The system uses a strong club with symmetric relays and transfer-style one-level openings. These transfer openings are opened up-the-line and may be balanced or based on a longer side suit. Thus any hand that is too weak for $1\clubsuit$ and too strong for a weak action that has four or more hearts must open $1\diamondsuit$. Any hand of similar strength that lacks four hearts but has four spades must open $1\heartsuit$. Any similarly strong unbalanced hand with at least four diamonds and no major suit of four cards will open $1\spadesuit$ (this includes long-diamonds hands and unbalanced hands with both minors). The remaining hands are those with at least six clubs and no side suit which open $1\spadesuit$. A balanced hand without a four-card major opens $1\text{NT}$. The remaining two-level openings may be adjusted to taste.

All openings below $2\text{NT}$ have at least one response that is unlimited and which expresses some degree of game interest. This response begins a relay sequence that, if completed, establishes opener’s shape and strength. The relay is the strongest action available that does not promise fit, and is typically the only non-fit action that is forcing. Other actions are typically natural, limited, and non-forcing, however some range probes, transfer sequences, mini-splinters and fit-showing jumps are used.

1.2 Opening Bids

$1\spadesuit$ 15+HCP.

$1\diamondsuit$ 10-14HCP $4^+\heartsuit$, may be balanced, three-suited or have a longer minor suit.

$1\heartsuit$ 10-14HCP $4^+\spadesuit$, $0-3\heartsuit$, may be balanced, three-suited or have a longer second suit.

$1\clubsuit$ 10-14HCP $4^+\diamondsuit$, $0-3\clubsuit$, $0-3\heartsuit$, unbalanced, may have a longer club suit.
1NT  (11)12-14HCP balanced, no major suit.
2♣  10-14HCP 6+♣, 0-3♠, 0-3♥, 0-3♦.
2♦  5+M 5+m, less than opening values.
2♥  4+♥ 4+♠, weak, discipline according to vulnerability.
2♠  5+♠, less than opening values.
2NT  5+♦ 5+♣, weak, discipline according to vulnerability.
3X  Normal three-level actions subject to vulnerability and positional concerns.
3NT  A good four-level major preempt.
4m  Normal four-level actions subject to vulnerability and positional concerns.
4M  To play.
Chapter 2

Relay Structure

2.1 Relay Structure Table of Contents

- Responder’s Hand Valuation
- Positive shape-showing relays
- Balanced hands
- One-suited hands
- Two-suited hands
- Three-suited hands
- Control Asking
- Zooming
- Exceptions for Level-adjusted Relays
- Denial Cue-Bidding
- Ending Relay Auctions

2.2 General Notes

Relayer (referred to hereafter as “R”) will normally make the next highest bid (“Step 1”) to ask responder (hereafter referred to as “RR”) to continue describing the hand. The exception to this is 3NT which is never a relay. Other non-relay bids by R below game are natural and may be invitational or forcing in context. 2NT is almost never a contract after a second relay.

When showing shortages, RR shows shortages in suits of low-middle-high rank with bids in ascending order, and in similar fashion when showing lengths (in some structures) RR shows them in suits of high-middle-low rank with bids in ascending order. The guiding principle is that lower bids show more cards in higher-ranking suits.
2.3 Responder’s hand valuation after a strong opening.

After an opening 1♣, responder normally gives a positive response with a hand with 9+HCP balanced, 8+HCP unbalanced. However a responding hand that has substantially fewer than the number of controls normally held by a hand of that shape will downgrade. R will eventually be able to ask for controls with A=2 & K=1 or A=3, K=2 & Q=1, of which there are at most 12 and 24 in a deck with 40 HCP. The ratio of AK and AKQ points to HCP is 0.3 and 0.6 respectively. RR’s minimum number of AK or AKQ controls (RR’s “base”) can be deduced by multiplying the minimum HCP by the appropriate ratio (0.3 or 0.6) and always rounding down to the nearest integer. With a hand on or near the HCP minimum with a large fraction of the HCP contributed by queens and jacks, RR may have fewer than the putative base number of controls. In such cases RR may exercise his judgement, however it would be exceptionally rare to describe a hand with a positive response that was two AKQ controls below base.

With a hand with 5-7(8)HCP, or too few controls in a stronger hand, RR describes a semipositive hand. With a weaker hand yet, RR describes a full negative hand. Note that again, a hand that meets the semipositive criteria but has too few controls can be described as a full negative hand.

2.4 Positive shape-showing relays

First response

The responding scheme with an unbalanced positive hand is almost “up-the-line”; RR makes the lowest bid that describes the hand held.

1♦ Unbalanced, 4♦
1♣ Unbalanced, 4♣, 0-3♣
1NT Unbalanced, 4NT, 0-3NT
2♣ Balanced, including a four- or five-card major.
2♦ Balanced, 2-3♦, 2-3♣
2♥ Three-suited with a major suit shortage.
2♠ 6♦, 0-2♦ (Low shortage).
2NT 6 ♦, 0-1♥ (Middle shortage).
3♣ 2236 or 2227 (Even shortage).
3♦ 1336 (High shortage).
3♥ 1327.
3♠ 1237.
3NT 0337.

The only exception to the “up-the-line” rule is the 2♥ response, which takes priority over the 1♥ and 1♣ responses.
Chapter 2. Relay Structure  

2.4 Positive shape-showing relays

Balanced hands

With a balanced hand, RR selects whichever of 2♣ or 2♦ is appropriate.

2♣  Balanced, including a four- or five-card major. (continuations page 5)

2♦  Balanced, 2-3♥, 2-3♠ (continuations page 6)

Balanced hands with a major suit

Back

2♦  Game-forcing relay.

2♥  Any 4-4-3-2 with 4♠ (continuations page 5)

2♠  Any 4-4-3-2 with 4♥ and 2-3♠

2NT  Game-forcing relay.

3♣  3=4=4=2.

3♦  2=4=4=3.

3♥  3=4=2=4.

3♠  2=4=3=4 (with zoom).

2NT  Any 5-3-3-2 with 5♠

3♣  Game-forcing relay.

3♦  5=3=3=2.

3♥  5=3=2=3.

3♠  5=2=3=3 (with zoom).

3♠  4=3=3=3 or 3=4=3=3.

3♥  Game-forcing relay.

3♦  4=3=3=3.

3♠  3=4=3=3 (with zoom).

3♥  3=5=3=2.

3♦  3=5=2=3.

3♠  2=5=3=3 (with zoom).

This relay structure avoids RR bidding a four-card major that they hold, and is symmetric in the 5-card major holdings.

After showing 4-4-3-2 with 4♠ Back

2♣  Game-forcing relay.

2NT  4-4-3-2 also with 4♥

3♣  Game-forcing relay.

3♦  4=4=3=2.

3♥  4=4=2=3 (with zoom).

3♠  4=3=4=2.

3♦  4=2=4=3.

3♥  4=3=2=4.
2.4 Positive shape-showing relays

[After showing 4-4-3-2 with 4♠]

3♠ 4=2=3=4 (with zoom).

Balanced hands with no major suit Back

2♥ Game-forcing relay.
2♠ Any 5-3-3-2 with 5♦
2NT Game-forcing relay.
3♠ 3=3=5=2.
3♦ 3=2=5=3.
3♥ 2=3=5=3 (with zoom).
2NT Any 5-3-3-2 with 5♣
3♠ Game-forcing relay.
3♦ 3=3=2=5.
3♥ 3=2=3=5.
3♥ 2=3=3=5 (with zoom).
3♠ 3=2=4=4.
3♦ 2=3=4=4.
3♥ 3=3=4=3.
3♠ 3=3=3=4 (with zoom).

One-suited hands

With a one-suited hand of at least six cards, RR shows that suit and then rebids at 2♠ or higher to describe the residual short suits.

2♣ 0-2 in the lowest-ranking other suit. (continuations page 7)
2NT 0-1 in the middle-ranking other suit.
3♠ “Even shortage”.
3♥ Game-forcing relay.
3♥ 6223.
3♠ 7222.
3♦ 6133 with high-ranking shortage.
3♥ 7132 with high-ranking shortage.
3♠ 7123 with high-ranking shortage.
3NT 7033 with high-ranking shortage.

The shapes not explicitly shown in the structure can be constructed through “symmetry” - for example, all hands of 6331 pattern include a 3♥ bid, possibly after 2♠ or 2NT to specify the suit of the singleton. Other hand patterns are resolved similarly.
Chapter 2. Relay Structure 2.4 Positive shape-showing relays

One-suited hands—2♣ Back

2NT

3♣ Game-forcing relay.

“Even shortage”.

3♦ Game-forcing relay.

3♥ 6322.

3♠ 6232.

Two-suited hands

With a two-suited hand, RR shows his first suit up-the-line as listed in the positive responses. RR then shows the second suit and resolves their relative length. A bid of 2♦ always shows at least four cards in the higher-ranking suit and at least five cards in the lower-ranking suit (always ♠, in fact). However, a bid of 2♥ shows precisely four cards in the lower-ranking suit and at least five in the higher-ranking suit. This appears to contradict the general principle of making low-ranking bids with more cards in high-ranking suits. That principle is superseded by one where the bid at the level of 2♥ (level-adjusted as appropriate) always shows that the higher-ranking suit is longer. Hands with two suits of at least five cards always start with two bids at or below 2♦, and then a bid of 2♠.

With both majors, RR continues with 1NT over the 1♠ relay to the first response. With a major and diamonds, RR continues with 2♣ (transferring to diamonds!). With any suit and ♠, RR shows the first suit and then bids according to the above scheme—2♦ with 5+ ♣, 2♥ with 4♣.

Thus the structure below applies after showing a second suit with 1NT, 2♠, 2♦ or 2♥.

2♦ Three-suited with both majors.

2♥ 5+ in the higher-ranking suit, 4 in the lower-ranking suit (a “high-ranking longer suit” bid).

2♠ 5+ 5+ in the two suits. (continuations page 8)

2NT 0-1 in the lower-ranking other suit.

3♣ A 5422 pattern.

3♥ 5431 with higher-ranking shortage.

3♦ 6421 with higher-ranking shortage.

3♠ 6430 with higher-ranking shortage.

3NT 7411 with base through base+3 AKQ controls.

4♣ 7402 with higher-ranking shortage with base through base+2 AKQ controls.
[Two-suited hands]

4♦+ 7411 with at least base+3 AKQ controls.

Again the the structure is “symmetric” - all 6421 patterns will include a 3♣ bid, after clarifying the relative length of the suits and the shortages with previous actions. The 5-5 substructure is also symmetric internally. Note that the 7411 shape is shown “asymmetrically”, in that it is shown directly in the above structure, but the symmetric one that includes the 2NT shortage-showing bid does not include a duplicate 7411 pattern! The only reasonable alternative is to treat 7411 with 5422 as “even shortage”, which is grossly inefficient because it costs a step on the greatly more frequent 5422 patterns. In this case, both 3NT and 4♣+ show the relevant 7420-type pattern.

Showing 5+ 5+ hands

2NT Game-forcing relay.

3♠ 0-1 in the lower-ranking other suit.
3♦ A (65)11 pattern (even shortage).
3♥ 6511 pattern.
3♣ 5611 pattern with zoom.
3♥ 5521 with higher-ranking shortage.
3♠ 5530 with higher-ranking shortage.
3NT 6520 with higher-ranking shortage and base through base+3 AKQ controls.
4♥ 5620 with higher-ranking shortage.
4♦+ 6520 with higher-ranking shortage and base+4 or more AKQ controls.

Three-suited hands

With a three-suited hand with a minor shortage, RR simply shows both major suits and then uses the “empty” 2♦ bid to describe his holding. With a major shortage, RR simply responds 2♥. Then after the subsequent relay, RR bids as described.

Step 1 Low shortage (0-1).
Step 2 1444 (high shortage).
Step 3 0544 (high shortage).
Step 4 0454 (high shortage).
Step 5 0445 (high shortage).

After showing a low-ranking shortage, RR shows his exact shape by using the step responses as above, beginning at 4441.
2.5 Control asking relays

After the shape is shown, the next relay asks for controls. R has a choice of three asks: Step 1 asks for AKQ controls, Step 2 asks for AK controls and Step 3 asks for aces (Gerber!) subject to the usual stricture that 3NT and game-level bids above Step 1 are not relay asks. Also, the use of 4♦ as an end signal supersedes the use of that bid as an AK control ask or ace ask.

AKQ and AK controls are evaluated as simple sums. With AKQ controls, an ace counts three, a king two and a queen one. With AK controls, an ace counts two and a king one. When holding a singleton honour:

- a singleton ace is counted normally in the hand’s controls,
- a singleton king counts one AK control for an AK control ask and one AKQ control for an AKQ control ask, and
- a singleton queen or lower is not counted at all.

When bunching ranges of controls, the lowest bid contains the bunched range.

The onus lies on R to ask for controls only when there are no replies that are reasonably likely to be awkward, since their next (non-3NT) Step 1 is also a relay. An ace ask always begins at zero.

In several situations, including where RR has shown a range of AKQ controls, or is limited by the HCP requirement for the auction, it will be efficient to continue on to the next phase of bidding when holding the maximum number of controls. Specifically, when R bids Step 1, RR zooms to Denial Cue-Bidding when holding the highest number of controls. R should be prepared for this zoom by a maximum RR. Such a control maximum is realised when holding the maximum number of aces with the remaining HCP contributed by as many kings as possible, etc.

2.6 Zooming

When RR holds the pattern that is the highest call defined in the response structure it is efficient that that response follow on to the number of controls held without requiring R to waste two steps in making a subsequent ask. A limited hand may never bypass 3NT when zooming to controls or DCB. An unlimited hand may doso only when showing base+4 AKQ controls. A direct control strength ask always gets up-the-line responses. When zooming, we give inverted-style response. The possiblerange of AKQ controls (which may be constrained by HCP maximums) is divided between the available bids at and below 3NT in as even a way as possible, giving extra strengths to lower bids when needed. R may inquire in the usual manner for resolutions of these subranges, with 3NT not a relay ask and RR zooming to DCB from the highest control strength. When more bids exist than distinct strengths to show, those strengths are shown up-the-line. Balanced hands do not show shape above 3NT unless R’s asking bid was known to be getting final shape resolution in all cases, and R may continue
2.7 Exceptions for Level-adjusted Relays (omitted currently)  Chapter 2. Relay Structure

to relay with 4♣ in such cases to finish shape resolution.

2.7 Exceptions for Level-adjusted Relays (omitted currently)

When resolving the shape of a hand known to be balanced, the structure will be similar to that used in non-level-adjusted relays, but with relevant bids swapped so that a major suit is not shown by a bid of that suit. Symmetry will be preserved, however.

When level shifting shapes from structures that have patterns with voids, the split over 3♠ and 3NT is preserved. A single shape is moved to cover both of these bids.

8-card suits are omitted from auctions shifted up levels.

2.8 Spiral Scan

After controls (AKQ, AK or A) have been shown, “denial cue-bidding” commences. In denial cue-bidding the suits are assigned an order of priority - firstly by order of length, but if two or more lengths are equal (or have lengths that are unknown), then the higher-ranking suit is scanned first.

On the first ask (“scan”), the RR is asked to look for an ace or king in the suit of highest priority. If neither of these is held then RR bids Step 1 to show this. Otherwise, RR then scans the suit of second priority, also for either the ace or the king, bidding Step 2 to deny a top honour. This process continues through all the suits, and eventually may return to the suit of highest priority (i.e. “spiralling”). When this occurs, RR is expected to look for a second top honour (of the top three) in the suit (if one was previously shown) or the queen (if the ace and king were previously denied). This process continues. In principle, jacks could be investigated, but such auctions are usually too high for such an ask to be useful. A suit of a given length can only be scanned that number of times - a singleton may only be scanned once, a doubleton twice, etc.

2.8.1 Exceptions in Denial Cue-Bidding

- When scanning a suit for the last card held (e.g. the first or second respectively for a singleton and doubleton, etc.), RR stops (i.e. bids the current step) when holding the relevant honour, and spirals if the honour is not held. This is much superior to the normal approach, because it is more probable that the relevant honour is not held. It suffers only a 1 step loss relative to a DCB style that never scans a singleton, losing 2 steps only where “unexpected” information is transferred, whereas scanning a singleton normally loses 2 steps most of the time. A case can be made for not scanning singletons at all when RR has shown AK controls, but that method is not used here.
• When holding the AKQ of a suit, that suit is **denied** on the first scan. The 3 or 5 control discrepancy that is flagged by this denial is almost always apparent to R and recognisable - and it is assumed that R knows what holding RR has. Experience suggests that by the time this suit is scanned again no ambiguity remains, and both hands will know that AKQ has been shown. Thus on a second scan of this suit when holding at least four cards in the suit, the jack is investigated.

Additionally and analogously, the previous exception applies to a holding of exactly four cards to the AKQ; on the second round RR stops with AKQJ and spirals with AKQx. If a three-card suit contains AKQ then there is only one scan made of this suit.

• When RR is known by both hands to have shown all possible aces, kings and queens, then the DCB skips directly to jacks in the first suit in the scan. This has been known to create amusing encrypted auctions when RR has 6 AKQ controls and a holding of AKQ in a suit is possible and R is missing at least 11 AKQ controls. Now after RR denies the suit in which AKQ might be held, R must ask until RR shows a card that R holds in one “version” of the auction, since the assumption that the control discrepancy will be recognisable is no longer as valid. Potential slams missing 5+ AKQ controls when R is missing at least 11 AKQ controls and has two “empty” suits are too rare for this to be damaging, however.

The highest possible relay ask is 5NT. If a response is made at 5NT or higher, then R must be prepared to place the final contract. No relay response higher than 7♣ may be given.

The onus is clearly on R not to make an ask when there is reasonable chance of unfortunate consequences. It is occasionally necessary to finesse a card during the bidding! (Don’t tell your teammates, it spoils your image.)

### 2.9 Ending relay auctions

R may end a relay auction at any time by passing a response (where appropriate!) or by bidding Step 2 or higher when that bid is at least at game level. One exception to this is that 3NT is never a relay - even if the previous response was 3♠. R must bid 4♣ to relay in this case.

The other exception is that if the final shape information has been transferred by the relay structure (and control strength either shown or not), and 4♦ is above Step 1, R has two ways to achieve a sign-off. A 4♦ “end signal” bid prefaces a sign-off opposite normal hands, and with a normal hand RR must bid 4♥ and pass any rebid by R. RR is not required to respect that intended signoff with a hand that is significantly better than that promised by the auction to this stage. Usually this would occur when holding extra controls, or an extreme shape that can only be approximately shown in the above relay structure (e.g. 8-card suits, 7-5 patterns). In the latter case, RR must use their judgement based on what
they know partner knew for their signoff decision. The system permits an unlimited RR to bid past $4\diamond$ (known as “kicking”) when holding base+4 AKQ controls. Successive bids above $4\diamond$ show increasing numbers of AKQ controls. A limited RR may only kick with a hand with extreme shape, and they do so by bidding correctly - bidding the cheapest invitation that they would reject.

An initial call by R higher than $4\diamond$ is natural and invitational, and RR should evaluate his hand and particularly his trump suit. Since from the preceding, a direct 4NT by R is natural and invitational, a 4NT bid after a $4\diamond$ end-signal is RKCB for RR’s longest suit, or simple ace-asking if RR has shown no suit longer than four cards.

When RR has resolved or partially resolved their shape and R has selected a 3NT contract without establishing that RR has greater than minimum strength, RR should kick with base + 4 AKQ controls regardless of limited/unlimited status.

When R has named a final contract of $4\diamond$ or higher before shape resolution, they are normally concerned by rightsiding a contract on a misfitting and/or minimum hand. An unlimited RR may kick, and does so stepwise showing base+4 AKQ controls.

It is not mandatory to kick with a hand that meets the requirements - any of the following may indicate to RR that kicking is undesirable without substantial extra values: an early signoff before shape resolution, RR’s poor shape, poor intermediates and the state of the match/event. R should be careful to sign off in tempo, particularly when slam requires substantial extras with RR, to avoid the transmission of unauthorised information.

Rarely, R can choose to employ a below-slam jump in a denomination as an invitational action. RR should use their judgement in the context of the hand type they have shown. RR should be aware that R normally could have anticipated finding out about useful aces and kings and/or high-priority queens, and so should normally focus on other queens and relevant jacks. R will normally not anticipate “fast” losers, and, for example, could be seeking internal trump or side-suit solidity to make slam playable. A jump to 5NT when 4NT was also a jump is forcing to 6NT, and shows interest in a grand slam.
Chapter 3

1♣–1♦ Artificial Game Force

3.1 General

An alternate bidding style over the strong 1♣ opening has also been implemented. It features a “real” game-forcing 1♦ response, a double-negative 1♠ response and largely natural responses on semipositive hands. The “strong” 1♦ response initiates a true game force and demands relay responses from the 1♣ opener. Theoretically it may be inferior to have the “strong” 1♣ hand being described, but in practice in the slam zone the responder is often nearly as strong as the 1♣ opener. The gain cases come from clearer development of auctions that should end in partscore or game depending on the degree of fit. Both hands are free to use judgement in non-forcing auctions, including passing non-natural bids where appropriate. This structure is only for use in first and second seat after a pass by the direct-seat opponent. Methods for dealing with interference by the fourth-seat opponent are described below, however the semipositive responses create a one-round force, with penalty doubles and redoubles available.

3.2 Responses to 1♣

After 1♣

Responder shows a game-forcing hand with 1♦, a negative hand with 1♠ and any hand of intermediate strength with another bid that partly describes the shape.

1♦ Game force, 10+ HCP. Continuations exactly as page 3 with opener’s AKQ base 9 and AK base 4.
3.2 Responses to 1♣

After 1♣

1♦
Semipositive, 6-9HCP, 4+♠ any shape.

1♠
Game invitational or better relay.

1NT
Balanced, or three-suited short hearts. (continuations page 16)

2♣
Two-suited with ♦ and ♦ (symmetric continuations)

2♦
Two-suited with ♦ and ♦ (symmetric continuations)

2♥
4+♠ 5+♣ two-suited (symmetric continuations)

2♠
5+♠ 4♣ two-suited (symmetric continuations)

2NT+
One-suited with 6+ (symmetric continuations)

1NT
Natural, minimum, non-forcing (with a balanced hand with extras, plan to relay once with 1♠ and then invite with 2NT).

2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠
Natural, minimum, non-forcing.

2NT
Unspecified mini-splinter showing at least four-card support for opener’s suit, 0-1 in some side suit and values that suggest game is possible opposite a suitable hand. Partner bids Step 1 to find the shortage if this information may help find a game. The shortage is then bid naturally, bidding trumps when a natural bid is unavailable.

3♣/3♦/3♥
Fit-showing jumps, showing 6+ in the suit bid, 3-card support for partner’s suit and interest in playing game.

3♠
4-5 card support (depending on shape), not constructive.

1♠
Negative, 0-5HCP, any shape.

1NT
Natural, non-forcing, maximum of 20 HCP. Since a natural 2♠ is not available, some hands that would have liked to make such a bid will compromise with 1NT.

2♠
Artificial game force, continuations page 17

2♦/2♥/2♠/3♠
Natural, non-forcing.

2NT
20-22HCP balanced, with Puppet Stayman and normal transfers.

1NT
Semipositive, 6-9HCP, balanced without spades.

2♠
Game-forcing relay.

2♦
Balanced with 4-5♥ (continuations page 16)

2♥+
Balanced with no major suit (continuations page 5).
Chapter 3. 1♣ – 1♦ Artificial Game Force

3.2 Responses to 1♣

[After 1♣]

2♦  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, two-suited with ♦ and a minor.

2♦  Game-forcing relay.

2♣  Two-suited with ♣ and ♦ (symmetric continuations)

2♠  Three-suited with short spades (symmetric continuations)

2NT+ Two-suited with ♠ and ♦ (symmetric continuations)

2♥  Natural, non-forcing.

2♠  Natural, non-forcing.

2NT Natural, non-forcing, responder bids a 5-card minor suit with a minimum, and 3♠/3NT with 5+♠/♢ and a maximum, and 3♢ with at least 6 hearts and game interest.

3♠/3♢ Natural, non-forcing.

3♢ Natural, invitational.

3♣ Natural, serious invitation.

games To play.

2♦  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, two-suited with both minors, or one-suited with diamonds.

2♥  Game-forcing relay.

2♠  One-suited with 6+♢ (symmetric continuations)

2NT+ Two-suited with ♣ and ♠ (symmetric continuations)

2♣/2NT/3♠/3♢/3♡ Natural, non-forcing.

3♠ Natural, serious invitation.

games To play.

2♥  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, one-suited with hearts.

2♠  Game-forcing relay.

2NT/3♠/3♢/3♡ Natural, non-forcing.

3♠ Natural, invitational.

games To play.

2♠  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, one-suited with clubs, 0-1♢ or any 223/222 residual shape. (continuations page 17)

2NT  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, one-suited with clubs, 0-1♡.

3♠/3♡/3♣ Natural, non-forcing.

3♢  Game-forcing relay for remainder of normal one-suited structure

games To play.
3.2 Responses to 1♠

[After 1♠]

3♣  Semipositive, 6-9HCP, one-suited with clubs, 0-1♥.

3♦  Game-forcing relay for remainder of normal one-suited structure.

3♥/3♠  Natural, non-forcing.

games  To play.

After 1♠–1♥–1♠–1NT Back

2♠  Game-forcing relay.

2♦  3-suited with short hearts (symmetric continuations)

2♥  5♠ (332).

2♠  Game-forcing relay.

2NT  5=3=3=2.

3♣  5=3=2=3.

3♦+  5=2=3=3.

2♠  Balanced with both majors

2NT  Game-forcing relay.

3♣  4=4=3=2.

3♦+  4=4=2=3.

2NT  Balanced with spades and diamonds

3♣  Game-forcing relay.

3♦  4=3=4=2.

3♦+  4=2=4=3.

3♥  4=3=2=4.

3♥+  4=2=3=4.

After 1♠–1NT–2♠–2♦ Back

2♥  Game-forcing relay.

2♠  5♥ (332).

2NT  Game-forcing relay.

3♣  3=5=3=2.

3♦  3=5=2=3.

3♦+  2=5=3=3.

2NT  Balanced with ♥ and ♦

3♣  Game-forcing relay.

3♦  3=4=4=2.

3♦+  2=4=4=3.

3♠  3=4=2=4.
Chapter 3. 1♣–1♦ Artificial Game Force

3.3 Very strong hands

[After 1♣–1NT–2♣ 2♦]

3♣ 2=4=3=4.
3♢+ 3=4=3=3.

After 1♣–2♠ Back

2NT Game-forcing relay.

3♣ (322)6 and 2227 shapes.

3♢ Game-forcing relay.

3♢ 3226.
3♣ 2326.
3NT 2236.
4♣ 2227.

3♢ Remainder of normal one-suited structure

3♣/3♢/3♭/3♠ Natural, non-forcing.

To play.

3.3 Very strong hands opposite very weak hands

After 1♣–1♣–2♠

2♢ Third negative 0-2(3)HCP any shape.

2♡ Natural not forcing.

2♣ Natural, not forcing.

2NT Game-forcing balanced (Puppet Stayman and game-forcing transfers).

3X Natural game forcing.

2♡ 4M and 5+ m (neither suit specified).

2♣ Game-forcing relay.

2NT 4♣ 5♢
3♣ 4♣ 5♢ ♣
3♢ 4♢ 5♢ ♣
3♡ 4♡ 5♡ ♣

Low-ranking bids promise high-ranking suits, consistent with remainder of the system.

2♣ Shows a hand describable with Puppet Stayman and transfers (all balanced, all long-major hands, both minors) and guarantees a rebid after any non-game bid by opener, who is not constrained to bid 2NT.

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3.4 Competitive Bidding

The primary motivation for using the 1♣ response to the 15+HCP opening is to prepare the auction for competition by fourth hand. This occurs frequently when responder has a semipositive hand, and so a responder who has shown some shape information allows the strong opener a good chance at a successful auction.

After the game-forcing 1♦ response, normal relay interference agreements apply.

After a semipositive response, opener’s pass is non-forcing and double by either hand is for takeout.

After the negative 1♠, both hands have takeout doubles of natural bids, and the general Rubensohl agreements apply.

[After 1♣–1♠ 2♥]

2NT Three-suited hand.
3♦ Game-forcing relay.
3♦ Three-suited with short clubs.
3♥ Three-suited with short diamonds.
3♠ Three-suited with short hearts.
3NT Three-suited with short spades.
3X Shows a single-suiter of (usually) at least 7 cards.
Chapter 4

Interference over the strong 1♣ opening

4.1 Interference at the one-level after 1♣

Pass is used as a full positive, double as a negative, and bids as naturalish semipositives. This allows us to extract full mileage from injudicious interference, while getting in one descriptive bid early when the deal is likely to be only a partscore. The agreements are sufficiently general to deal with natural, transfer, multi-way or psychic overcalls. Relay-response semipositives are no longer used - relay bidding is most effective for game or slam hands needing to transfer specific shape and/or control information, however once competition has begun before any shape description has occurred, the priority with semipositive hands should shift to insure that competing for the partscore and exploring game are done effectively.
4.1 Interference at the one-level after 1♣

Chapter 4. Interference over 1♣

After 1♣–(X/1Y)

P 8+HCP.

(P) ??

X Game-forcing relay, 2+Y, happy for a penalty pass based on responder’s length in Y, which is assumed to take place on all hands with 5+Y, and these steps are simply omitted from the following structure.

Step 1 Game-forcing relay, unwilling to defend.

bids Natural, F1, minimum, tendency for shortage in Y.

2NT+ Game-forcing Rubensohl.

(1Z) To play, or correctable.

P Game-forcing relay, 2+Z, happy for a penalty X based on responder’s length in Z, which is assumed to take place on all hands with 5+Z, and these steps are simply omitted from the following structure.

X Penalty, but RR may pull, giving relay responses, but omitting steps that show 4+Z.

Step 1 Game-forcing relay, unwilling to defend.

bids Natural, F1, minimum, tendency for shortage in Z.

(2Z) To play, or correctable.

P Forcing, usually either a strong notrump or a takeout shape.

X Penalty, but RR may pull.

2NT Natural, including stopper in , if that bid was natural.

3Z Some forcing hand.

bids Natural, F1.

(2Y) A raise.

P Forcing, usually a strong notrump or trap pass (and responder has a takeout double and Rubensohl available, and after responder’s takeout double, opener has Lebensohl available).

X Takeout (and responder’s bids are Rubensohl, as if responding to a strong takeout double).

2Z Natural, F1.

2NT+ Rubensohl.
Chapter 4. Interference over 1♣

4.1 Interference at the one-level after 1♣

[After 1♣ (X/1Y)]

XX/X

0-4HCP, any shape.

(P)

To play.

P

Penalties.

1NT

15-18 HCP.

2NT

22-24 HCP.

2Y

Game-forcing.

2Z/3♠

Natural, non-forcing.

3Z

Natural, invitational.

(2Y)

Some raise.

P

Nothing to say.

X

Takeout.

2NT

Natural, 19-21.

bids

Natural.

1♦/2♠

Semi-positive, shape-suitable takeout of their suit.

(2Y)

Some raise.

X

Responsive, i.e. takeout.

bids

Lebensohl.

(2Z)

To play, or correctable.

X

Penalty.

2NT

Natural, including stopper in Y.

suit

Natural, non-forcing.

3Z

Some forcing hand.

1NT

Semi-positive, 5-7HCP natural.

2NT+

Invitational or better Rubensohl, tending to be short in Y, and creating a force in competition.

2Y

Semi-positive, 5-7HCP 5♣ (where 2♣ was used for takeout).

others

Semi-positive, 5-7HCP natural.

After 1♠–(1NT) (showing minors)

P

Weak.

X

Penalty interest.

2♥/2♦

Takeout with emphasis on ♥/♠ respectively.

2♥/2♠

Natural, non-forcing.

3♥/3♠

Natural, good suit, GF.

If the opponents interfere with some other 1NT call, responder’s double indicates penalty interest and activates action doubles, bids are natural (no Rubensohl; two-level bids are
limited, three-level bids are forcing) and pass is negative. A bid of their anchor suit is for takeout.

After 1♣–(2Y) (TWERB)

- **P** Weak.
- **X** Penalty interest.
- **2NT+** Rubensohl, unsuited for X.

This is a general agreement for these sorts of bids where 2Y does not possibly include Y and **does not promise 4+ cards in a known suit**

After 1♠–(2Y)

- **2Z** Natural, non-forcing.
- **2NT+** Rubensohl.

## 4.2 Interference at the two-level after 1♣

Double by either hand is takeout-oriented. Bids by either hand at the two level are natural and limited. Bids at 2NT or higher either directly or after a takeout double are Rubensohl. There are many kinds of auctions beginning with a strong 1♣ that will leave the auction at the two level with relays not having begun and neither hand having shown shape. In most such auctions, direct Rubensohl and Rubensohl after partner’s takeout double applies to both hands. However a hand that has already passed when Rubensohl was available has Lebensohl available in response to a takeout double made by their partner. When the auction is at the two level after relays have begun, see below.

## 4.3 High-level interference after 1♣

Double of suit bids that show (or could have) the suit bid is takeout through all levels, and bids are natural (except 4NT 2-suited takeout). Double of notrump bids indicates penalty interest of whatever the notrump bidder showed and activates penalty doubles. Double of bids that deny the suit bid indicates penalty interest and activates penalty doubles, and bids are natural (except 4NT 2-suited takeout).

## 4.4 Interference in Relay Auctions

Relays have begun any time the unlimited hand makes a call that is for relay (game-forcing or invitational or better), or when a positive response is made to a 1♣ opening. We differentiate three cases of interference: that at or below 1♠, higher interference that causes a loss of at most three steps in the subsequent relay structure, and higher interference that does cause
4.5 Rubensohl

Rubensohl is a convention similar to Lebensohl that utilises all the bids from 2NT through 3♠ in a transfer sense in order to give great flexibility to hand description in contested auctions. When Rubensohl is available, two level bids are natural and limited. Other bids are:

- **2NT** Transfer to clubs
- **3♣** Transfer to diamonds
- **3♦** Transfer to hearts
- **3♥** Transfer to spades
- **3♠** No major suit, no stopper for notrump, at least game values.
- **3NT** No major suit, appropriate stopper, game values.
- **4X** Natural

The following principles apply:

- The bid that would transfer into the opponents' suit is not needed naturally, and is used artificially to show a hand with at least game values and at least one four-card major. Such a hand may also have a stopper for notrump, and natural bidding continues to seek the best game contract.

- Bids above the transfer into the opponents' suit and below 3♠ are still transfers, but show a hand that has at least five cards in the suit shown and have at least invitational values, since that suit can also be shown in a non-invitational sense at the two-level. Natural bidding continues, with the other hand required to break the transfer with a hand that accepts the invitation.

- Other transfers are natural but a simple acceptance of the transfer can be passed in appropriate contexts.

- After a major suit is shown (but not necessarily agreed), suit bids are control bids (except when the other major is still a possible contract) and notrump bids are to play, RKCB, Grand Slam Force or choice of contract.

- After a minor suit is shown (but not necessarily agreed), suit bids are natural except where a natural bid cannot be useful.

- Unless defined, all bids are natural. Where an undefined bid cannot be natural, it is a control bid agreeing the last bid suit.

When the opponents have show two (or more) suits, Rubensohl still applies. The transfer into the opponents' lower-ranking suit plays the role of the Stayman-substitute, and the transfer into their higher-ranking suit is undefined. Bids of their suits show stoppers where appropriate.
Chapter 5

Major-oriented one-level openings

5.1 General

This system uses a MAFIA (MAjors FIrst Always) approach to describing hands too weak for a strong opening and too strong for a weak opening. All such hands with a major suit will open 1♦ or 1♥; all hands with hearts will open 1♦ and those with spades (and not hearts) will open 1♥. These opening bids may be showing their longest suit, or could have a longer side suit, or be balanced. The limited nature of these hands often makes it very easy for responder to determine that the opening side has little (or no) play for game, and responder will take an action that is a suggestion of a final contract.

Continuations follow the same general principles after the 1♦ and 1♥ openings; the cheapest step begins game-invitational relays, most other low-level steps are natural and tend to suggest final contracts, a few jump bids show fit but are not forward-going, a few jump bids show fit for the shown suit and are invitational, and some jumps in notrump show fit, at least invitational strength and undisclosed shortage.

After the initial relay and the subsequent descriptive rebid by opener, responder can continue to bid Step 1 for game-forcing relay in all but one case. Relayer’s cheapest new suit bids and non-game raises are natural and invitational. After the initial responses showing balanced or three-suited hands, various game-choice relays are available to deal with the frequently-occurring probes for 5-3 or 4-4 major suit fits without disclosing information not relevant to the selection of the final contract.

5.2 Design Objectives

The following objectives were met in the design of the structure:
• The use of symmetric relay structures for game-forcing auctions
• The rapid communication of the nature of the auction - game-forcing, invitational or strain-seeking.
• The adoption of elements of SCRAPE where appropriate

5.3 Responding to the 1♦ opening

After 1♦
Opener shows 4+ any shape, 10-14HCP.

1♥ Game invitational or better relay. (continuations page 26)
1♠ Forcing for one round, showing:
  • any balanced or semi-balanced hand with 3-4♠ and no interest in game or ♥ (may not hold 3♣ and 3♥) (pass next), OR
  • 4♠ 5+ m with no interest in game or ♥ (rebid 2m where possible), OR
  • 6+♠ with low game interest (rebid 2♠)
(continuations page 28)

1NT Exactly 5♠, non-forcing. Opener may revert to 2♠ with support, or correct to a biddable unbid suit of at least five cards, or to any six card suit, subject to his judgement. With 5♠ 3♥, responder should raise.
(continuations page 28)

2♠/2♦ Natural, non-forcing, showing a suit of at least five cards. Opener is expected to pass without a good reason to bid, normally a concealed suit of at least five cards, or a good six card opening suit, or a good fit and playing strength. A 2NT rebid by opener shows primary fit and maximum values. When opener rebids without showing fit, there is a fair tendency to deny tolerance. Opener may conceal tolerance any time his holding suggests an advantage in doing so.
5.3 Responding to the $1\heartsuit$ opening

[After $1\heartsuit$]

2♦
Natural, non-forcing, 3-4 card support. This is a wide-ranging response which strongly discourages further action from opener. Responder is simply trying to pre-balance the opponents to the three-level in a way that makes it difficult for the opponents to judge the assets of the partnership. Opener may not try for game with a balanced hand. Opener must re-raise to the three- or four-level with six or seven trumps, and this is not constructive. New suit bids show a side suit of at least five cards, and 2NT shows at least five trumps, and both kinds of action show excellent maximum unbalanced opening hands. A jump in a new suit shows a hand whose strength is above the notional maximum and which preferred not to open with a strong $1\clubsuit$ while holding freak canape-style shape; such a jump may be passed only with a terrible hand lacking fit. A double by responder is penalty-oriented. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder (specifically at the 2/3-level, it will normally show 5♥ and a singleton in their suit).

2♠/3♠/3♦
Non-forcing fit-showing jumps, showing 6+ in the suit bid, 3+ support for opener’s suit and interest in playing game.

2NT
4+♥, any limit raise, or GF (13-15 HCP) with a singleton. (continuations page 29)

3♥
4-5 card support (depending on shape), not constructive. A subsequent double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

3♠
5+♥, GF (13-15 HCP) and a minor suit void. (continuations page 29)

3NT
5+♥, GF (13-15 HCP) and a spade void.

Games
To play. Doubles by both hands are for penalty.

4m
Fit-showing raise to 4♥, preparing for competition by fourth hand. X by opener is for penalty, X by responder shows additional defensive values.

4♥
To play, could be weak. Double by responder is for penalty. A subsequent double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

After $1\heartsuit$–$1\heartsuit$ Back

1♠
Balanced, or 3-suited with short ♠ (continuations page 27)

1NT
Two-suited with ♠ and ♥ (symmetric continuations)

2♠
Two-suited with ♦ and ♥ (symmetric continuations)

2♦
4+♥, 5+♠ two-suited (symmetric continuations)
[After 1♦–1♥–1♠]

2♣ 5♦, 4♠, two-suited (symmetric continuations)
2♠ One-suited with 6♦ (symmetric continuations)

After 1♦–1♥–1♠ Back

1NT Natural, invitational (exception to Step 1-for-relay rule)
2♦ Game-forcing relay. (continuations page 27)
2♣/2♥/3♠ Natural, invitational.
2♠ Natural, invitational 5♦, 5♣
2NT Three-suited with short ♠, declining the invitation.
3♠ Three-suited with short ♠, accepting the invitation.
3NT Accepting with 2♠
4♠ Accepting with 3-4♠
2NT Choice of games relay, shows 3♦, may have 4-5♠
3♦ Shows only 4♦
3♥ Shows 4♠
3♠ Shows 5♠
3NT Shows 0-3♠
3♥ Shows 5♥
3NT 3=4=3=3 with scattered values.
3♦ Choice of games relay, shows 4-5♠ 2♦
3♥ 0-2♠
3♠ 3♠
3NT To play, rare, normally with 2♠
4♠ To play, shows 4♠
3♥ Natural, invitational 4♥, notrump-oriented, probably
3=4=3=3.
3♠ Forcing, showing desire to play 4♠ opposite 1-4♠
3NT Three-suiter with 0♠
4♠ Any other hand.
Games To play.

2NT as the main choice-of-games relay means R always declares notrump, and 3♦ as the ♠-focussed ask permits the side to choose who declares notrump in some auctions.

After 1◊–1♥–1♠–2♣ Back

2♣ 3-suited with short ♠ (symmetric continuations)
5.3 Responding to the 1♦ opening

Chapter 5. Major-oriented one-level openings

[After 1♦–1♥–1♠–2♠]

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<tr>
<td>2♥</td>
<td>Balanced, 5-3-3-2 with 5♥</td>
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<td>2♠</td>
<td>Game-forcing relay.</td>
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<td>2NT</td>
<td>3=5=3=2.</td>
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<td>3♠</td>
<td>3=5=2=3.</td>
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<td>3♦+</td>
<td>2=5=3=3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>Balanced, 4-4-3-2 with ♠ and ♥</td>
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<td>2NT</td>
<td>Game-forcing relay.</td>
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<td>3♠</td>
<td>4=4=3=2.</td>
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<td>3♦+</td>
<td>4=4=2=3.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2NT</td>
<td>Balanced, 4-4-3-2 with ♦ and ♣</td>
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<td>3♠</td>
<td>Game-forcing relay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♦</td>
<td>3=4=4=2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♦+</td>
<td>2=4=4=3.</td>
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After 1♦–1♠ Back

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<tr>
<td>1NT</td>
<td>Balanced or semibalanced without 4♠, 6♥ or a biddable 5m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♠/2♦</td>
<td>Biddable 5+m, 4♠♥</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♥</td>
<td>6+♥</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>4♠</td>
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<tr>
<td>2NT</td>
<td>Maximum 5+♠, forcing for one round.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♠/3♦</td>
<td>Maximum 3♠ 4♥ 6m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♦</td>
<td>Maximum 4♠ 6+♥</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♠</td>
<td>Maximum 6+♠</td>
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After 1♦–1NT Back

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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Choice of contract.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♠/2♦</td>
<td>5+♠/♥, any strength.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♥</td>
<td>6+♥, any strength.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>3-4♠, no game interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2NT</td>
<td>3+♠, game interest and minor-suit shortage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♠/3♦</td>
<td>AntiSPL, showing cheapest suit in which a shortage would be unwelcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3♠</td>
<td>Declining the invitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4♠</td>
<td>Accepting the invitation.</td>
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Chapter 5. Major-oriented one-level openings

5.4 Responding to the 1♥ opening

[After 1♦–1NT]

\[3♣/3♦/3♥\] 3♠ game interest, antiSPL, denying own shortage, showing cheapest suit in which a shortage would be unwelcome.

\[3♥??\] ??

\[3♠\] 3♦ game interest opposite any shortage, denying own shortage.

After 1♦–2NT Back

\[3♠/3♣\] Trial bid.

\[3♥\] Limit raise, no help in the trial bid suit.

\[3♥/3NT\] GF with SPL in ♥/the other minor suit.

\[4♥\] Limit raise with help, or GF with SPL in the trial bid suit.

\[3♥\] No interest, or unsuited to a minor-suit trial bid.

\[3♥/4♥/4♦\] Maximum, 5♦, void in bid suit (slam INV opposite limit raise).

After 1♦–3♠ Back

\[3NT\] Inquiry.

\[4♥/4♦\] ♣/♦ void.

5.4 Responding to the 1♥ opening

After 1♥

Opener shows 4♦ 0-3♥ any shape, 10-14HCP.

\[1♥\] Game invitational or better relay. (continuations page 31)

\[1NT\] Natural, non-forcing. Opener may correct to an unbid suit of at least five cards, or to any six card suit, subject to his judgement.

\[2♥/2♦/2♥\] Natural, non-forcing, showing a suit of at least five cards. Opener is expected to pass without a good reason to bid, normally a concealed suit of at least five cards, or a good six card opening suit, or a good fit and playing strength. A 2♦ or 2NT rebid by opener shows primary fit and maximum values and a suit or notrump orientation, respectively. When opener rebids without showing fit, there is a fair tendency to deny tolerance. Opener may conceal tolerance any time his holding suggests an advantage in doing so.
5.4 Responding to the $1\heartsuit$ opening

After $1\heartsuit$

2♦ Natural, non-forcing, 3-4 card support. This is a wide-ranging response which strongly discourages further action from opener. Responder is simply trying to pre-balance the opponents to the three-level in a way that makes it difficult for the opponents to judge the assets of the partnership. Opener may not try for game with a balanced hand. Opener must re-raise to the three- or four-level with six or seven trumps, and this is not constructive. New suit bids show a side suit of at least five cards, and 2NT shows at least five trumps, and both kinds of action show excellent maximum unbalanced opening hands. A jump in a new suit shows a hand whose strength is above the notional maximum and which preferred not to open with a strong 1♣ while holding freak canape-style shape; such a jump may be passed only with a terrible hand lacking fit. A double by responder is penalty-oriented. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder (specifically at the 3-level, it will normally show 5♠ and a singleton in their suit).

2NT 4♦, limit raise with SPL or GF (13-15 HCP) with a singleton. In competition, responder may act again if appropriate. (continuations page 32)

3♣/3♥/3♦ Non-forcing fit-showing jumps, showing $6^+$ in the suit bid, $3^+$ support for opener’s suit and interest in playing game.

3♠ 4-5 card support (depending on shape), not constructive. A subsequent double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

3NT $5^+$, GF (13-15 HCP) and an unspecified void. (continuations page 32)

Games To play. Doubles by both hands are for penalty.

4♠ Fit-showing raise to 4♠, preparing for competition by fourth hand. X by opener is for penalty, X by responder shows additional defensive values. Note 4♥ is not a fit-showing raise.

4♠ To play, could be weak. Double by responder is for penalty. A subsequent double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.
After 1♥–1♠ Back

1NT Two-suited with diamonds, or 3-suited with short ♣ (continuations page 31)

2♥/2♠/2♠/3♥/3♣ Natural, invitational.

3♥ Forcing, showing desire to play 4♥ opposite 1-3♥
   3♠ Any hand with 5♠ 0♥
   3NT Any hand with 4♠ 0♥
   4♥ Any hand with 1-3♥

2♣ Balanced. (continuations page 31)

2♥/2♠/2NT/3♠/3♦ Natural, invitational.

3♥ Choice of games relay, shows 5♥
   3♠ 0-2♥ 5♠
   3NT To play, 0-2♥ 4♠
   4♥ To play, shows 3♥

3♠ Choice of games relay, shows 3♠

3NT To play, normally without 5♠

4♠ To play, shows 5♠

All relevant suits have been bid, so right-siding is not an issue.

2♥ 4♥, 5♥ two-suited (symmetric continuations)

2♦ 5♥, 4♥ two-suited (symmetric continuations)

2♠+ One-suited with 6+ (symmetric continuations)

After 1♥–1♠–1NT Back

2♠ Game-forcing relay.

2♥ 3-suited with short ♥ (symmetric continuations)

2♥+ Two-suited with ♦ and ♥ (symmetric continuations)

After 1♥–1♠–2♠ Back

2♥ Game-forcing relay.

2♥ Balanced, 5-3-3-2 with 5♠

2♠ Game-forcing relay.

2NT 5=3=3=2.

3♠ 5=3=2=3.

3♥+ 5=2=3=3.

2♣ Balanced, 4-4-3-2 with ♠ and ♦

2NT Game-forcing relay.

3♠ 4=3=4=2.

3♥+ 4=2=4=3.

2NT 4=3=2=4.
5.5 Competitive Bidding

Chapter 5. Major-oriented one-level openings

[After 1♥–1♠–2♥]

3♠  4=2=3=4.

3♦+  4=3=3=3.

After 1♥–2NT Back

3♠  Inquiry.

3♦/3♥/3♠  Limit raise with 0-1♦/♥/♣

3NT/4♠/4♦  GF with 0-1♥/♣/♦

3♦/3♥/4♠  Maximum, 5♦, void in bid suit (slam INV opposite limit raise).

3♥  No interest opposite any LR (opener now bids 4♠ with the GF hand-type to conceal the shortage).

After 1♥–3NT Back

4♥  Inquiry.

4♦/4♥/4♠  0♦/♥/♣

5.5 Competitive Bidding

When the opponents compete before a relay auction has begun, relays are not used. A redouble of either the 1♦ or the 1♥ opening seeks penalties, and relays are not used.

After most raises by responder, doubles by responder are for penalties. Except where specified above, a double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder. Ordinarily after a simple raise to the two level and next-level interference, exactly five trumps and a singleton in the opponents’ suit will be held for such a double. A hand with six-card or longer trump length, or a void in the opponents’ suit, should break the captaincy in such cases.

After fit-showing raises that transfer captaincy to opener, responder may X to show extra defensive values, but opener retains captaincy.

When holding three-card support for opener’s suit and the opponents have overcalled, responder should prefer to make a negative double if possible, then to raise if unbalanced, then to pass if balanced, and finally to raise. An invitational three-card raise should start with a negative double. Opener is expected to rebid naturally on the assumption of a perfect 4432-shape negative double.

The remaining discussion assumes either an overcall of the opening bid, or a pass, followed by responder’s action, followed by subsequent action from either opponent.

If a relay auction has not begun, doubles of suit bids (including the bids formerly used as relays) are negative/takeout until either hand is defined, then penalty. Hand definition occurs when a hand describes a long suit, shows a second suit, indicates balanced or semi-
balanced nature, makes a takeout or penalty double, passes a takeout double or makes a
doable of notrump bid (which shows values and some degree of penalty interest depending
on the meaning of the previous call). Passing when double would be for takeout does not
define the hand.

New suit bids by responder are non-forcing if made at the two-level, and game-forcing
if made at the three-level or higher. X-then-bid sequences derive their meanings from the
level of the suit bid in the light of the foregoing agreement.

2NT by either hand at their first opportunity to raise partner’s suit shows at least
invitational values and primary fit. A cuebid by either hand shows a game-forcing raise; in
the case of responder it shows exactly 3-card fit for opener’s suit, which allows the correct
hand to declare 3NT where no major-suit fit exists.

Jump bids in opponents’ suits are splinter actions. Jump bids in new suits are fit-
showing. In all cases, a fit-showing action shows the offensive strength for that level and
a suitable holding in the bid suit. Jumps to all suit games are natural and to play. Non-
jump suit and natural notrump bids remain non-forcing, however any passed-hand non-jump
new suits are fit-showing. Raises tend to be not constructive. Opener may continue over
raises to 2♣/2♦ as in the absence of competition. Cuebids and double-then-raise auctions
are constructive. In various esoteric auctions where fit is known and further competition
possible, jumps (and non-jumps that can’t be natural) are fit-showing to empower partner’s
further actions in competition.

Remaining 2NT bids in competition show two places to play, particularly in smouldering
2-level auctions when double would be for penalties. In any case, 2NT is never natural in
competition.

4NT in a competitive auction is RKCB whenever that is possible, and suggesting two
possible strains at the five level whenever RKCB is not a possible interpretation. An un-
necessary jump to five of opener’s suit asks for control of their suit (partner cuebids holding
first-round control, and raises holding second-round control).

When the opponents compete after a relay auction has begun, then the agreements used
are identical to those used after interference during 1♣ auction. In particular all doubles by
relayer (and opener if relays have been broken) are for penalties.

When opener makes a bid in an impossible suit when their action cannot be interpreted
as a good raise of responder’s suit, that bid shows a holding in the bid suit that is as long
as possible, and (almost always) extra length in their own suit. A double of such a suit in a
penalty situation shows a maximum-length holding with at least the A, K or Q.

5.6 Specific Competitive Auctions

Abbreviations : M = Major suit shown by opening bid, OM = Major suit not shown by
opening bid, O = Suit opened, m = minor suit.
5.6 Specific Competitive Auctions

Chapter 5. Major-oriented one-level openings

After 1♦–(X):

P  Shows at least 3+ tolerance for the suit opened, usually 0-2♥ and 0-11HCP. Could be a normal 1NT response and if so will rebid suitably.

XX  Strong, replacing relay. If fourth hand passes, opener removes with 0-2♦.

If they bid, we are in penalty mode, forcing to 2♥

1♦  0-7 HCP 3(4) cards in ♥

1♠  5+ HCP 5+♠ or good 4-card holding.

1NT/2♣  TFR

2♦  GI+ 3♥

2♥  7-11HCP 3-4♥

2♠/3♠/3♦  Fit-showing jumps showing offensive playing strength for 3♥

2NT  Invitational or better raise with 4+♥

3♠/4♠/4♦  Fit-showing raises to 4♥

After 1♥–(X):

P  Shows at least 3+ tolerance for the suit opened, usually 0-2♠ and 0-11HCP. Could be a normal 1NT response and if so will rebid suitably.

XX  Strong, replacing relay. If fourth hand passes, opener removes with 0-2♥.

If they bid, we are in penalty mode, forcing to 2♠

1♠  0-7 HCP 3(4) cards in ♠

1NT/2♠/2♦  TFR

2♦  GI+ 3♠

2♠  7-11HCP 3-4♠

2NT  Invitational or better raise with 4+♠

3♠/3♣/3♥  Fit-showing jumps showing offensive playing strength for 3♠

After 1♦–(1Y/2Y) (non-jump overcall):

X  Negative style, notionally with about a 4432 with a doubleton in their suit and at most 3-card support. Could include hands worth an invitation with only 3-card support, or game-forcing hands unsuited to any other action.

suit  Non-forcing or forcing according to level.

2M  Non-constructive raise, normally not balanced with only 3-card support.

2NT  At least invitational with 4-card or longer support.

2Y/3Y  Game-forcing with 3-card support.

3M  Competitive raise with at least four-card support.
Chapter 5. Major-oriented one-level openings

5.6 Specific Competitive Auctions

[1O–(1Y/2Y) (non-jump overcall)–]

jumps  Fit-showing, forcing to the cheapest M contract, showing at least enough offensive strength for that level and a sound defensive holding to at least four-card length in the suit bid (later double shows the defensive strength for 4M as well and allows opener to make the final decision).

3Y/4Y  Showing shortness in this suit and a raise to 4M.

4M    To play, normally denying suitability for other actions.

After 1O–(2M) (2-suiter including OM):

X       Penalty interest for at least one of their possible suits, with at least 2 cards in the other major suit. Activates penalty/action doubles for both hands.

2OM/3OM  Game-forcing raise with 3M.

2NT    Invitational or better raise with 4+ M.

3m     Fit-showing raise to 3M.

3M    Competitive, denying suitability for alternative actions.

3OM/4OM  Good raise to 4M with shortage in OM.

4m    Fit-showing offensive raise to 4M (later double shows the defensive strength for 4M as well and allows opener to make the final decision).

4M    To play, normally denying suitability for other actions.

After 1O–(2NT) (minors):

X       Penalty interest for at least one of their suits. Activates penalty/action doubles for both hands.

3m     Shows either a weak or game-forcing hand with the corresponding major (3♣ with ♦, 3♦ with ♣) in the context of the opening bid. Continuations natural.

3M    Invitational 4+ M.

3OM    Invitational, natural suit.

After 1O–(2X) (jumps):

X       Negative style, normally including possible 3-card support, or game-forcing hands lacking direction.

2NT    Invitational or better raise with 4+ M.

suits  Game-forcing.

3M    Normally at least 4-card support.

cue    Good raise to 4M.

4M    To play, normally denying a suitable alternative action.
Chapter 6

Minor-oriented openings

6.1 General

The minor suit openings are 1♠ and 2♣ showing 10-14HCP. The former opening bid shows at least four diamonds, denies a major suit, but it could hold any number of clubs. The latter opening bid shows at least six clubs and denies any other suit. The limited nature of these hands often makes it very easy for responder to determine that the opening side has little (or no) play for game, and responder will often take an action that is a suggestion of a final contract. Additionally the knowledge responder has of the opponents’ major suit fit(s) will sometimes allow him to violate agreements for tactical reasons.

After these openings, natural non-forcing bids in the other suits are used, together with a relay bid and an assortment of raises.

6.2 Responding to the 1♠ opening

After 1♠

A game-invitational or better relay, natural non-forcing new suit and notrump bids, non-invitational raises and fit-showing jumps are available.

1NT Natural, non-forcing, less than invitational strength.

P All 5-4-2-2 and any hand unsuited to the bids below.

2♣ Good 5+♠, or any 6+♠

2♦ 6+♦
[After 1♠]

2♠

Game invitational or better relay.

2♦

4+♦ 5+♠ two-suited with ♦ and ♠ (symmetric continuations)

2♥

5+♦ 4♠ two-suited with ♦ and ♠ (symmetric continuations)

2♣+

One-suited with 6+♦ (symmetric continuations)

2♦

Natural, non-forcing 3-4♦

2NT

5+♦, maximum, unbalanced (opener is not encouraged to bid this).

3♠

4+♦ (5) 6+♣, maximum, non-forcing.

3♦

6+♦

4♦

7+♦

2♥

Natural, non-forcing (5)6+♥

2NT

2♥ maximum.

3♠

4+♦ (5) 6+♣, maximum, non-forcing.

3♦

6+♦, maximum, non-forcing.

3♥

3♥ minimum.

3♣

0-1♠ 3♥ maximum.

3NT

Impossible.

4♠

0-1♠ 3♥ maximum.

4♦

Good 6+♦, 3♥ maximum, non-forcing.

4♥

3♥ maximum unwilling to splinter.

2♣

Natural, non-forcing (5)6+♣

2NT

2♣ maximum.

3♠

4+♦ (5) 6+♣, maximum, non-forcing.

3♦

6+♦, maximum, non-forcing.

3♥

3♠ minimum.

3NT

Impossible.

4♠

0-1♠ 3♠ maximum.

4♦

Good 6+♦, 3♠ maximum, non-forcing.

4♥

0-1♥ 3♠ maximum.

4♣

3♠ maximum unwilling to splinter.

2NT

At least 3+♦ 3♥♠, wanting to play in opener’s preferred minor, not invitational. Responder could hold invitational strength, as a competitive gambit, and so retains captaincy as in 1R–2M auctions.
[After 1♠]

3♠  
Natural, non-forcing 6+♠

3♢  
Good 7+♢, maximum, non-forcing.

3NT  
Solid 6+♢, maximum.

4♣  
Shapely 3♣ invitational.

4♡/4♠  
0-1♡/♠ 3♣ maximum.

5♣  
Maximum 4♣.

3♢/4♢  
Not invitational, wide-ranging.

3♡/3♣/4♠  
Invitational non-forcing fit-showing jump, 6 cards in the suit bid and 3♢.

4NT  
Both minors, requesting opener’s preferred minor.

Games  
To play.

6.3 Responding to the 2♠ opening

After 2♠

A game-invitational or better relay, natural non-forcing new suit and notrump bids, natural invitational 2NT non-invitational raises and fit-showing jumps are available.

2♢  
Game invitational or better relay.

2♡  
Minimum, one-suited with 6+♠ (symmetric continuations)

2♣+  
Maximum with 12-14HCP, one-suited with 6+♠ (symmetric continuations)

2♡  
Natural, non-forcing (5)6+♡

2NT  
2♡ maximum.

3♠  
Good 7+♠, maximum, non-forcing.

3♡  
3♡ minimum.

3♣  
0-1♣ 3♡ maximum.

3NT  
Impossible.

4♣  
Good 6+♣, 3♡ maximum, forcing.

4♢  
0-1♢ 3♡ maximum.

4♡  
3♡ maximum unwilling to splinter.
Chapter 6. Minor-oriented openings

6.4 Competitive Bidding

When the opponents compete before a relay auction has begun, we do not use relays. After a double of 1♠, pass normally shows 5+♠ (rarely 4), redouble seeks penalties, and 2♣ is weak with preference for ♣ unless opener is single-suited with ♦. Redouble of the 2♣ also seeks penalties. Other calls retain their meanings in competition. Until hand definition occurs, over 1♠ responder’s X is for takeout. Over 2♣, all doubles by responder are for penalties. Free bids of new suits are non-forcing at the two-level, and game-forcing at the three-level.

At opener’s first opportunity to double, when responder has been silent, double shows a maximum with 0-1 in the opponents’ suit and 3+ in all unbid suits. All other doubles by opener are general takeout until either hand describes a long suit, shows a second suit, indicates balanced or semi-balanced nature, or makes a takeout double. Such subsequent doubles are for penalty.

After any raise, doubles by responder of suit bids remain for penalties. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

Jump bids in new suits remain fit-showing, except where the suit bid at the previous
level was not natural. Non-jump suit and natural notrump bids remain non-forcing. Raises are not constructive. Bids in the opponents suit(s) are game-forcing. In various esoteric auctions where fit is known and further competition possible, jumps (and non-jumps that can’t be natural) are fit-showing to empower partner’s further actions in competition.

2NT bids in competition normally show two places to play, particularly in smouldering 2-level auctions when double would be for penalties. In any case, 2NT is never natural in competition. 4NT at responder’s first call asks for responder’s preferred minor suit in context.

Except where already defined above, 4NT in a competitive auction is RKCB whenever that is possible, and suggesting two possible strains at the five level whenever RKCB is not a possible interpretation. An unnecessary jump to five of opener’s suit asks for control of their suit (partner cuebids holding first-round control, and raises holding second-round control).

When the opponents compete after a relay auction has begun, then the agreements used are identical to those used after interference during 1♥ auction. In particular all doubles by relayer (and opener if relays have been broken) are for penalties.
Chapter 7

1NT Opening

7.1 Responses to 1NT

Responses to 1NT

2♣        Puppet to 2♦
2♦        Forced
P          To play.
2♥        GF relay (continuations page 6).
2♠        GF, 5+♠ (including hands with 5+♠ 5+♥ (continuations page 42).
2NT       Min GF, bal(ish).
          3♣  3=2=x=y.
          3♥  2=3=x=y.
          3♦  3=3=(34).
          3♠  3=3=(25).
3X        0-1X, 0-4♥/♠
2♦        5+♥
2♥        Almost all hands.
2♠        Artificial, GF (continuations page 42).
2NT       INV.
3m        INV, usually 55.
3♦        INV, 6+♥
3♠/4m     Splinter, 6+♥, slam INV.
2♠/2NT(=♥)/3♠ Super max, 3♥, antisplinter. Now responder bids 3♥ to retransfer (later bids are control bids), shows a splinter or bids 3♥ (forcing) to be declarer and asking for control bids.
7.2 Competitive Bidding

The opponents double 1NT for penalties
(or they don’t know what it means)

P
To play.
[The opponents double 1NT for penalties]

XX Forces 2♣

2♣ Forced.

P 5+♣ (or 0-2♣ planning a rescue redouble.

2♦ 5+♦

2♥ 5+♥

2♠ 5+♠, 0-9HCP.

2♣ 4♣ and 4-5 other.

2♦ 4♦ and 4-5M.

2♥ 4-5♥ and 4-5♠

2♠ 5-6♠, 10-12 points.

2NT Either both minors, or GF 5+/5+ two-suiter.

3m Minor suit preference.

P 4♣ and 4♦, 9+ cards in minors, less than GF.

3X GF two suiter, at least 5 cards in each suit (showing cheaper suit).

3X 6+X, less than GF.

The opponents double to show something non-penalty
...such as an unknown single suiter or other hand without a known 5+ card suit

P To play if advancer passes, **Does not create a force**

XX 12+ points, forcing to 2NT or penalties.

2♣ Puppet to 2♦, system on if responder rebids.

2♦ 5♦ (continuations page 42 except that 2NT shows 5♥ BAL).

2♥ 5♥ (continuations page 42 except that 2NT shows 5♠ BAL).

2♠ 5-6♠, unbalanced, INV.

2NT 4♣ and 4♦, 9+ cards in minors, less than INV, or GF (rebid 2+ card M)

3X 6+x, less than INV.

The opponents show clubs naturally, possibly with another unknown suit

X Penalties.

2X 5+X, 0-11 HCP.

2NT Stayman, GF (actually in practice for this 1NT opening, it’s just a stopper ask). (continuations page 44)

3♣ 6♦; INV+ or 5♦, GF.

3♦ 5♦, INV+.

3♥ 5♠, INV+.

3♠ GF, no stopper in ♠

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[The opponents show clubs naturally, possibly with another unknown suit]

4♣/4♦ Transfer to 4♥/4♣
4M To play.

The opponents show clubs naturally, possibly with another unknown suit–2NT Back

3♠ No stopper in ♠

3♦ 5=4=x=y or 4=5=x=y.
3♥ Relay.

3♣ 5=4=x=y.
3NT 4=5=x=y.
3M 4OM, 0-3M.
3NT 4=4=x=y, stopper in ♠
4♣ 4=4=x=y, no stopper in ♠
3♦+ Stopper in ♠

The opponents show diamonds naturally, possibly with another unknown suit

X Penalties.
2X 5+♣, 0-11HCP.
2NT 6+♠, to play or 5+♠, GF.
3♠ Stayman, GF - actually stopper ask.

3♦ No stopper in ♦

3M 4OM, 0-3M.
3NT 4=4=x=y, stopper in ♦
4♣ 4=4=x=y, no stopper in ♦

3M 4M, stopper in ♦

3♥ 5+♥, INV+.
3♥ 5+♠, INV+.
3♠ GF, no stopper in ♠
4♣/4♦ Transfer to 4♥/4♣
4M To play

The opponents show hearts naturally, possibly with another unknown suit

X Penalties.
2♣ 5+♠, 0-11HCP.
Chapter 7. 1NT Opening

7.2 Competitive Bidding

[The opponents show hearts naturally, possibly with another unknown suit]

2NT Minors, diamonds, - not “stuck” hand.
3m Minor suit preference.
P 4♦, 4♥, 9+ cards in the minors, 0-11HCP.
3♣ 6♥, 0-11HCP.
3♥ 4♦, 4♥, 9+ cards in the minors, GF.
3♠ 6♦, GF.
3NT GF, 0-3♠, 0-5m, no stopper in ♥ (rebid 3NT).
3♠ 6♦, 0-11HCP.
3♦ 5♠, INV+.
3♥ GF, asking for ♠ stopper.
3♣ 2♣, NF.
3NT GF, 2-3♠, stopper in ♥
3♥ 4♣, GF - now simple stopper ask.
3♠ 0-3♠, asks for a ♥ stopper.
3NT 0-3♠, ♥ stopper.
3♠ 6♦, GF.
3NT To play, stopper in ♥

The opponents show spades naturally, possibly with another unknown suit

X Penalties.
2NT Minors, diamonds - not “stuck” hand.
3m Minor suit preference.
P 4♠, 4♥, 9+ cards in the minors, 0-11HCP.
3♣ 6♥, 0-11HCP.
3♥ 4♠, 4♥, 9+ cards in the minors, GF.
3♠ 6♥, GF.
3NT GF, 0-3♠, 0-5m, no stopper in ♠ (rebid 3NT).
3♠ 6♦, 0-11HCP.
3♦ 5♥, INV+.
3♥ 2-3♥, NF.
3♠ GF, asking for ♦ stopper.
3NT GF, 2♥, stopper in ♦
3♥ 4♥, GF - now simple stopper ask.
3♠ 0-3♠, asks for a ♥ stopper.
3NT 0-3♠, ♥ stopper.
3♠ 6♦, GF.
3NT To play, stopper in ♥
The opponents show a suit artificially

P Weak or length in their suit. Subsequent bid of their possible 4-card suit at the two level is natural.

X Shows balance of power. Subsequent doubles are penalties over the length and cooperative under the length.

cuebid Takeout.

other As for a natural bid of that suit.

The opponents double 2♣

P Normal hand.

XX To play.

other As normal, 2NT inquiring mostly about ♠ stopper.

XX Penalties, good 4-5♣. Now P to play, others as without interference.

2♦ 0-3M, no ♠ stopper.

2M 3M, no ♠ stopper.

The opponents double 2♥/2♦

P 2M.

XX (2♥, 5♦) or 4♥ - not possible.

2M 3M.

other As without interference.

The opponents overcall 2♥/2♦

P Nothing to say.

X Takeout (subsequent NS is GF).

new suit Competitive.

X Penalties.

new suit 3-4M, antsplinter.