OMNIBUS TWO NOTRUMP RESPONSE

There are various conventional 2NT responses to an opening bid of one in a suit (e.g., Jacoby 2NT) that require responder to bid something else with a normal 13-15 HCP notrump hand. The Omnibus 2NT response retains the valuable standard meaning of 2NT while adding two hand types that are hard to describe in standard bidding:

1) A 16-20 high-card point (HCP) notrump type hand. A 3NT response to a major with 16-18 HCP crowds the bidding too much, and may be useful for showing a different sort of hand (e.g., a game-forcing major suit raise). With 19-20 HCP standard practice is to respond 2NT, then bid 4NT (or a five-card suit) over 3NT. Such hands are included in Omnibus, so the 2NT response is expanded to include notrump hands of 13-20 HCP (maybe a good-looking 12).

2) A balanced hand with four-card or better support for opener that is too strong for a mere game-forcing raise. When partner opens 1♥, how do you describe a hand such as ♠K983 ♥AJ97 ♦K32 ♣AQ? A jump to 2♠ is highly questionable--neither the hand nor the suit is good enough for that action. If you respond 1♠, partner's two-level rebid leaves you without a clear-cut continuation.

The range of the Omnibus suit raise is 16-18 points (count 1 point for a doubleton), too good for a standard forcing raise and too weak for a strong jump response in a new suit (or perhaps lacking a good suit for that purpose). For an Omnibus minor suit raise, responder must have at least five-card support, stoppers in the unbid suits, and no major suit. A similar hand with four-card support is treated as a type 1) hand, not as type 2).

Omnibus also enables opener to show a 4-4-4-1 hand opposite a 2NT response. In standard bidding opener has no way of showing a three-suited hand after a 2NT response without going past 3NT, which could be the right contract. Not showing all three suits can result in missing a better contract than 3NT when a 4-4 fit goes undiscovered.

A 2NT response by a passed hand is a natural bid showing 11-12 HCP, and of course is not forcing.

A 2NT jump response to a 1♣ or 1♦ opening in competition by an unpassed hand has to be non-forcing with 11-12 HCP, just like the response by a passed hand. The reason is that such hands are difficult to show otherwise. A jump to 3NT must therefore show 13-15 HCP. The Stoplight Convention (Section 4-12) applies to the 2NT jump response, just as it applies to the 2NT jump response by a passed hand. Omnibus **does** apply after a 1♠ overcall of 1♥ opening, but of course a spade stopper is required with a type 1) hand.

Opener's Rebid

After an Omnibus 2NT response, opener rebids as follows:

> 3♣ - A Stayman-like rebid showing interest in a major suit contract, or a good hand--at least a queen better than a minimum opening. This rebid lets responder show a major (or support for opener's major), and provides maximum bidding space for responder to show a strong hand when opener has extras.

3♦ - A 4-4-4-1 hand of any strength with a singleton in the expected place:

Opening Bid	Expected Singleton
1♠	Clubs
1♥	Spades
1♦	Hearts
1♣	Diamonds

If opener has a 4-4-4-1 hand with the singleton in other than the expected place, he bids 3♣ (to check for a major), not 3♦. He won't be able to describe the hand exactly in this case.

3♥ - a normal 3♣ rebid, minimum hand, probably unbalanced

3♠ - a normal 3♦ rebid, minimum hand, probably unbalanced

3NT - normal notrump raise, minimum hand

4♣ - Gerber, asking for aces

4♦ - "Autosplinter," singleton diamond, long strong holding in the suit opened.

4NT - Natural, 18-19 HCP (Boland applies, see Section 5-6)

5♣ - The Miller convention (Section 5-7)

Game jumps - A minimum hand with one or two long suits:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4♥/4♠ - minimum opening bid	

When the opening bid is 1♣, 1♦, or 1♥, opener can alternatively invite a notrump slam by bidding 4♠ instead of 4NT. This artificial notrump raise implies that opener's suit needs a good fit to be useful for slam (e.g., his five-card suit is headed by only one of the top three honors). Responder usually signs off at 4NT with a poor fit and only 13-14 HCP.

Responder's Rebids

1) Opener has rebid 3♣, showing interest in a major suit contract, or a good hand, or both:

Opener	Responder
1 any	2NT
3♣	

With a 13-15 HCP notrump hand, responder:

-- shows an unbid major if he has one;

-- shows three-card support for opener's major (Jxx or better);

-- bids 3♥ with both;

-- bids 3NT with neither.

With a 16-18 HCP notrump hand, responder bids 3♦ over 3♣. Opposite a major opening, responder usually has 4-3-3-3 distribution, but could be 4-4-3-2 with both minor suits and a strong doubleton in opener's major. Opposite a minor opening, responder usually has 4-4-3-2 distribution with both minors (respond 3NT with 4-3-3-3), or 5-3-3-2 with a doubleton in opener's minor and five cards in the other minor.

Opener can now bid an invitational 4NT (or 4♠) with a balanced 15-16 HCP hand, make some other move toward slam, or bid slam. His rebid of the lowest unbid suit other than clubs (i.e., 4♦ or 4♥) is Super Gerber (see Section 6-10). Rebids of 3♥, 3♠, or 4♣ are natural:

Opener	Responder
1♦	2NT
3♣	3♦ - notrump hand, 16-18 HCP
3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural	
4♥ - Super Gerber	
4♠ - invitational, weakish diamonds	
4NT - invitational, diamond fit unimportant	

With a 19-20 HCP notrump hand, responder rebids 4NT unless he has a major. If so, he bids three of the major now, to be followed by 4NT on the next round if opener bids 3NT.

With an Omnibus raise (16-18 points) for opener's major, responder bids at the four level, showing his strength at the same time. When judging the quality of the hand, responder considers the quality of the trump support as well as his overall strength. Number of controls (aces and kings) is also important. If in doubt, downgrade a hand with poorish trump support (e.g., Q432) or few controls.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	4♣ - minimum hand
	4♦ - fair hand
	4♥ - good hand
	4♠ - maximum hand

There is less room when the suit is hearts, so:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT
3♣	4♣ - minimum hand
	4♦ - middling hand
	4♥ - fine hand

4NT by either partner is then Roman Key Card Blackwood (Section 6-6).

Minor suit Omnibus raises (showing at least five-card support) are similar, except that 4NT by either partner is natural (responder must have all suits stopped):

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	2NT
3♣	4♣ - minimum hand
	4♦ - fair hand
	4♥ - good hand
	4♠ - excellent hand

These artificial four-level raise clarifications apply only after a 3♣ rebid by opener. There is no point to them if opener has a minimum, since Omnibus raises are limited to 18 points.

Opener must rebid 3♣ with a non-minimum hand, even with a second suit to show. He can show the other suit later if he wants to:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	3NT
4♣/4♦/4♥	

Opener is showing a second suit in a non-minimum hand. He probably has slam hopes despite responder's known maximum of 15 HCP (Responder would have bid 3♦ or 4NT with a stronger notrump hand). If the side suit is hearts, it will be at least five cards long, since responder has denied holding four hearts. The 4♥ bid is non-forcing but mildly invitational, since opener would have bid 4♥ over 2NT with a minimum hand.

2) Opener has rebid 3♦, showing a 4-4-4-1 hand with the "normal" singleton. Responder now takes charge. He can ask for HCP by bidding 3♥:

Opener	Responder
1 any	2NT
3♦	3♥ asks for range of HCP
	3NT is a signoff

The 3NT bid implies no four-card fit with any of opener's suits or too much strength in opener's short suit.

After a 3♥ bid, asking for range, opener bids one step (3♠) with 12 HCP or less, two steps (3NT) with 13-14, 4♣ with 15-16, etc. When showing HCP, do not count a singleton king, queen, or jack, and count a singleton ace as 3 HCP, not 4.

A repeat inquiry is possible by bidding the cheapest non-game suit bid on the next round, asking for further clarification: first step is lower value, second step higher value, of the two-point range previously shown:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT
3♦	3♥ - asks for HCP range
4♣	4♦ - asks for clarification
4♥ - 15 HCP	
4♠ - 16 HCP	

The 3♦ rebid shows a 4-4-4-1 hand with the "normal" singleton (in spades). The third-step response to the range inquiry shows 15-16 HCP after an appropriate deduction for any high card in spades. The 4♦ bid asks whether opener has 15 or 16 HCP.

A combined holding of 29 HCP (excluding king, queen, or jack of opener's short suit) is enough for a small slam, 32 for a grand slam.

3) Opener has rebid 3♥ or 3♠ with a minimum hand:

Opener	Responder
1 any	2NT
3♥/3♠	

A 3♥ rebid shows clubs, and a 3♠ rebid shows diamonds. If the opening was in a different suit, these bids imply that the original suit is at least five cards long.

-- When the opening was in a major, responder raises the major with three-card or better support, whether holding a notrump hand or a big Omnibus raise:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT
3♥/3♠	4♥

The 4♥ bid is ambiguous, in that responder could have an Omnibus raise with four trumps, or any sort of notrump hand with three trumps. Opener won't care what type of hand responder has, because he is going to pass 4♥ with his announced minimum hand (He must rebid 3♣ with extra values).

With a notrump hand that lacks three-card support for opener's major, responder can rebid 3NT or (fearful of 3NT or in search of a slam) probe further:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♥	3♠ - three spades, notrump hand
	4♠ - Omnibus raise
	4♣ - normal club raise
	4♦/4♥ - Notrumper Cue Bid (see Section 10-11)
	4NT - 19-20 HCP notrump hand

The 3♥ rebid shows clubs and a probable lack of interest in notrump. Responder's non-jump suit rebids are ambiguous as to strength, but they all may be made with a normal 2NT type hand. Opener assumes

responder has a 13-15 HCP notrump hand, and bids accordingly. With an Omnibus raise, responder (barring a great fit with the second suit) merely puts the hand in the spade game, knowing there is probably no slam in view of opener's minimum hand. The Notrumper Cue Bid may be in support of spades or clubs (opener assumes spades for now).

If responder has a 16-18 HCP notrump hand with no good fit in either of opener's suits, he will probably sign off in 3NT. In other cases he will just set the contract in a suit, since he knows opener's hand rather closely. With 19-20 HCP he bids 4NT (natural) if he can't see an obvious suit slam.

Sometimes responder can make a trial bid at the three level:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT
3♥	3♠

The 3♠ bid shows spade strength, club support, and probable diamond weakness: ♠KQ10 ♥Q3 ♦10432 ♣AQ76.

-- When the opening bid was in a minor, opener is either showing both minors or "rebidding" a minor:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥ - diamonds and clubs			

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥ - rebiddable clubs			

Both sequences show a minimum opening, so North now bids an appropriate game (or slam) or raises to the four level (forcing). A four-level raise at this point could be based on a 13-15 HCP notrump hand if responder is nervous about a weakly stopped unbid suit. (Opener's rebid implies a dislike of notrump.) Opener may want to cue bid after this raise, in case responder has a big Omnibus raise and a great fit.
4) Opener has rebid 3NT, showing a minimum balanced hand with no special interest in a major suit contract.

Responder can pass with a notrump hand of up to 18 HCP; a raise to 4NT shows 19-20 HCP. With a strong major raise sort of hand, responder will just bid four of opener's major. A four-level new suit bid by responder therefore shows a 5-3-3-2 (doubleton in opener's suit) hand with 19-20 HCP:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2NT
3NT	4♣/4♦/4♠ - 19-20 HCP, 5-3-3-2
	4NT - 19-20 HCP, no 5-card suit

5) Opener has jumped to game. Responder passes or otherwise sets the contract, remembering that opener has a minimum.

When the Opponents Intervene

Omnibus applies in competition, but only when the 2NT bid is a jump over a 1♠ overcall of a 1♥ opening bid. It does not apply to a 2NT bid made over an opposing two-level overcall, or a jump to 2NT after a minor suit opening, which are non-forcing responses showing 11-12 HCP and at least one stopper in the opposing suit. It does not apply over a double, when a jump to 2NT has a different meaning (see section 3-19, Bidding Over a Double).

When an opponent doubles an artificial bid, a redouble shows a stopper in the suit doubled:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Dbl	Rdbl	

The redouble shows a heart stopper and denies spade support. A 3NT bid implies a double stopper and no spade support. A pass denies both spade support and a heart stop: ♠Q3 ♥9432 ♦AQ108 ♣KJ9. With spade support North usually bids 3♠ regardless of his heart holding, since South must have five spades and notrump is not likely to be the best strain.

Advantages of Omnibus

-- A 16-18 HCP notrump responding hand can be shown at a low level (3♦) when slam is a possibility (i.e., opener rebids 3♣).

-- The opponents will often be in the dark defending 3NT, not knowing declarer's strength very closely when he could have from 12 to 20 HCP. They may well go to bed with an ace or other winner(s).

-- Some suit contracts normally played from opener's side may be played from the notrumper's side, making the opening lead come up to his side-suit strength.

-- Opener's 4-4-4-1 hands will often get quickly described, and the eventual contract will be an accurate one.

-- Extra strong raises will be shown with greater precision.

-- The 3NT response can be used for hands other than the 16-18 HCP 4-3-3-3 notrump hands (e.g., as an artificial strong major suit raise with 13-15 points).

-- Responder can feel free to bid 2NT with four cards in an unbid major and a notrumpish hand (♠AJ3 ♥Q874 ♦KJ4 ♣K108), because opener can easily check (via 3♣) for a major suit. If there is no check, the opening lead will often be in that suit. Besides providing a good picture of responder's hand, the 2NT response gets any notrump contract played from the right side (the hand with tenaces).

-- Opponents may be inhibited from overcalling when it would pay them to do so, out of fear that the 2NT bidder might have a powerful notrump hand.

One-Over-One or 2NT?

Responder sometimes has a hand that is suitable for a 2NT response but includes a four-card major that could be shown at the one level. Some say that a 2NT response denies a major, but with a hand like ♠KJ9 ♥Q984 ♦J76 ♣AQ10 it is correct to bid 2NT over a 1♦ opening:

-- The hearts are weak.

-- Opener is unlikely to have hearts, having opened 1♦.

-- 2NT describes the hand perfectly.

-- If opener has four hearts he will probably bid 3♣, so a superior heart contract is unlikely to be lost.

-- If opener has four weak hearts in a balanced hand and doesn't bother with 3♣, notrump may be better anyway.

-- Notrump should be played from responder's side, because of the tenaces.

-- The opponents may lead hearts if they are not bid.

-- The 4-3-3-3 distribution suggests a notrump contract.

On the other hand, with ♠KQ32 ♥A65 ♦7643 ♣A7, a 2NT response to 1♣ would be wrong:

-- The spade suit is strong and should not be suppressed.

-- Opener quite possibly has four spades, and may not bid 3♣ to ask for a major if his hand is balanced.

-- The hand may well play better in a suit, with the doubleton and lack of secondary strength.

-- Diamonds are not stopped.

-- There are no tenaces to be led up to, so partner should play any notrump contract.

Between these two extremes lies a great variety of hands with which one must judge whether to show a major or make the good descriptive bid of 2NT.

QUIZ

You open 1♥ with each of the following hands, and partner responds with Omnibus 2NT. What is your rebid?

1) ♠AJ97 ♥AQ873 ♦J ♣987
2) ♠653 ♥AJ542 ♦AQ87 ♣2
3) ♠3 ♥AK874 ♦KQ3 ♣8762
4) ♠KJ3 ♥Q8743 ♦A4 ♣K96
5) ♠A98 ♥KQ1098 ♦AJ4 ♣65
6) ♠3 ♥AQ98 ♦AJ98 ♣A874
7) ♠4 ♥AKJ873 ♦Q84 ♣864
8) ♠J873 ♥AK74 ♦AQ93 ♣10
9) ♠A43 ♥AK10874 ♦3 ♣K83
10) ♠8 ♥KJ972 ♦AQ4 ♣AK83

Answers

1) 3♣ - The 2NT response does not deny four spades, and if responder has heart support he can now show it. With both, he will bid 3♥, whereupon you can show the spades. If he rebids 3NT over 3♣, denying both spades and heart support, you will pass.

2) 3♠ - Showing diamonds, implying five or more hearts, denying a good hand.

3) 3♣ - To give responder a chance to show heart support. The clubs are too weak to show.

4) 3NT - This hand should play well in notrump, even if responder has heart support.

5) 3♣ - You may want to play in notrump even if responder has three hearts, but this hand is a little too strong for a 3NT rebid. The good suit counts for a point.

6) 3♦ - Showing a 4-4-4-1 hand with a singleton in the expected place, spades.

7) 4♥ - Minimum hand, good long suit.

8) 3♣ - The singleton is not in the expected place. If responder has four spades you will play in that suit, but you may miss a good diamond contract. You correctly opened 1♥ because the spades are so weak.

9) 3♣ - The automatic rebid with a good hand that is not of 4-4-4-1 shape.

10) 3♣ - Too good to rebid 3♥, showing a club suit but denying a good hand. You will probably bid clubs on the next round.

You open 1♦ with each of the following hands, and partner responds with Omnibus 2NT. What is your rebid?

1) ♠AJ97 ♥J ♦AQ873 ♣987
2) ♠653 ♥2 ♦AJ542 ♣AQ87
3) ♠3 ♥KQ ♦AK8742 ♣8762
4) ♠9432 ♥AK ♥QJ74 ♣K96
5) ♠8 ♥K8732 ♦AK8742 ♣2
6) ♠AQ98 ♥5 ♦AJ98 ♣A874
7) ♠4 ♥3 ♦AJ8742 ♣KJ1076
8) ♠5 ♥J873 ♦AQ93 ♣AQ76
9) ♠A43 ♥3 ♦AK10874 ♣K83
10) ♠8 ♥AQ4 ♦KJ972 ♣AK83
11) ♠K10874 ♥6 ♦AQ10654 ♣7

Answers

1) 3♣ - The 2NT response does not deny four spades, and 3♣ does not promise extra values.

2) 3♥ - Showing clubs, implying five or more diamonds, denying a good hand.

3) 3♥ - "Rebidding" the diamonds. The clubs are too weak to show. It's better not to bid 3NT with that singleton spade.

4) 3NT - This hand should play well in notrump, even if responder has four spades.

5) 4♥ - Showing a two-suited hand, minimum opening.

6) 3♦ - Showing a 4-4-4-1 hand with a singleton in the expected place, hearts.

7) 5♣ - Minimum two-suited hand, unwilling to risk notrump.

8) 3♣ - The singleton is not in the expected place. If responder has four hearts you will play in that suit, but you may miss a good club contract. You correctly opened 1♦ because the hearts are so weak.

9) 3♣ - The automatic rebid with a good hand that is not of 4-4-4-1 shape.

10) 3♣ - Too good to rebid 3♥, showing a club suit but denying a good hand. You will probably bid clubs on the next round.

11) 3♣ - A jump to 4♠ is a conventional notrump raise, so you must bid 3♣, then 3♠, then 4♠ (or 4♠ immediately, if responder rebids 3NT).