

STRONG ONE NOTRUMP OPENING

Requirements:

- 16-18 HCP, 3-1/2+ to 4+ honor tricks
- Balanced hand
- At least five cards in the majors
- Weakest major suit doubleton Jx
- At least three suits stopped

Flaws:

- Five-card major
- Unstopped suit
- Lack of tenaces (e.g., AQ, KJ, Q10, etc.)

Do not open a badly flawed hand with 1NT. The ideal 1NT opening has 17 HCP, four honor tricks, many honor cards, good fillers (10's, 9's, 8's), tenaces in every suit, no unstopped suit, 4-3-3-3 distribution with a weak four-card minor suit: ♠AJ9 ♥KJ8 ♦Q1083 ♣AQ8.

The 16-18 HCP requirement is just a guide, because aces and kings are undervalued vs queens and jacks in the 4-3-2-1 count. Do not open 1NT with ♠KQ3 ♥QJ7 ♦J85 ♣AQJ8, despite the 16 HCP. Note that it lacks 3-1/2+ honor tricks. With 4-1/2 honor tricks, it is usually better to open one of a suit and then jump to 2NT. This hand is too good for a 1NT opening: ♠AK7 ♥A93 ♦A105 ♣QJ98.

Some 15 HCP hands qualify: ♠AQ8 ♥AJ9 ♦A108 ♣9872. This hand is too strong for a 1NT rebid. With the 3-1/2+ honor tricks, good distribution, and every suit covered, it is a 1NT opening.

A weak doubleton in a minor suit, while a flaw, may sometimes be chanced--usually with a hand that might have serious rebid problems if opened with one of a suit: ♠AJ3 ♥AQ7 ♦92 ♣AJ874. If opened 1♣, this hand has no good rebid after a one-over-one response. A major suit doubleton, however, should be no weaker than Jx. Partner should be able to count on a little support when he transfers to a major. Also, he should be able to accept a notrump contract with ♠KQ8732 ♥Q8 ♦764 ♣Q4, a hand that may not fare well in notrump if opener has two small spades.

A 5-4 hand is suit-oriented and should generally not be opened with 1NT, although tenaces in both doubletons might excuse a 1NT bid.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO ONE NOTRUMP

Opener Responder

- 1NT 2♣ - forcing Stayman (but not game-forcing)
- 2♦ - Jacoby transfer to hearts
- 2♥ - Jacoby transfer to spades
- 2♠ - transfer to clubs
- 2NT - transfer to diamonds
- 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - natural, slam try
- 3NT - signoff
- 4♣ - Gerber
- 4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts
- 4♥ - Texas transfer to spades
- 4♠ - a mild notrump raise, Boland convention applies*
- 4NT - a stronger notrump raise, Boland applies
- 5♣ - Miller convention, slam force
- 5♦ - signoff, but opener can sometimes bid 6♦ (e.g., with four aces or ♦AK)
- 5♥/5♠/5NT - meaningless
- 6 any is a signoff, not invitational

The only way to raise to 2NT is to bid 2♣ first, then 2NT.

The Boland and Miller conventions are discussed in sections 5-6 and 5-7.

Before reading the remainder of this section, read section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids.

TEXAS TRANSFER BIDS

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♦ - asks opener to bid 4♥ 4♥ - asks opener to bid 4♠

Opener has no option other than to bid game in the indicated suit. The Texas convention is used in competition, but only through 3♣ (i.e., when *both* 4♦ and 4♥ are jumps):

South	West	North
1NT	3♣	4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer
1NT	3♦	4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly 4♥/4♠ - natural game bid 4♣ - natural, not forcing (Gerber must be a jump)

Also see section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

Texas transfer followed by 4NT is Roman Key Card Blackwood (see section 6-6). This denies a short suit, so partner can correct a major suit slam bid to notrump if that looks right. Holding a short suit, either start with a strong jump takeout or start with Jacoby and follow with a splinter bid.

A Texas transfer must usually be made immediately in response to 1NT, but can also apply as a follow-up to Stayman if opener responds 2♦:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer 4♣ - Gerber 4♠ - mild slam try in notrump 4NT - stronger slam try in notrump

The 4♦ bid implies a weak 4=6, the 4♥ bid a weak 6=4, in spades-hearts. Responder would bid a forcing 2♥ or 2♠ with slam interest.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	4♦ - splinter bid, not Texas 4♣ - splinter bid, not Gerber 4♥ - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) 4NT - slam try in notrump

Texas is used in competition only through 3♣, when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be jump bids.

Note that after a 2♥ or 2♠ response to Stayman, a four-level bid in the other major is RKCB.

JACOBY TRANSFER BIDS

One advantage of transfer bids is that they enable the strong hand to become declarer, so that the opening lead will come up to her strength. Contrary to common belief, this is not the main advantage of transfer bids at the two level. More important is that transfers may be made with hands of any strength: weak, invitational, game-going, or even a slammish hand.

Suppose a 2♥ response is a natural signoff bid. How do you invite game in hearts? Or suppose you have hearts plus a minor suit. How do you show both at a low level? Using 2♦ to show hearts, you have it both ways. With a bad hand and long hearts, you pass opener's 2♥ bid. With a stronger hand, you bid again. Your 2NT rebid shows a 5-3-3-2 hand with five hearts and invitational strength, 3NT the same but with game-going strength. A minor suit rebid is forcing, showing a two-suited hand. A raise to 3♥ is invitational, showing at least six hearts. A jump to 4♥ is slam invitational, because you would make a Texas transfer bid (4♦) in response to 1NT with no slam interest.

The result of all this is that Jacoby transfers provide many ways for responder to describe her hand after a notrump opening.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ - asks opener to bid 2♥
	2♥ - asks opener to bid 2♠

These transfer bids can be based on anything from a complete bust to a very strong hand. They show at least five cards in the indicated major. The converse is not true: Failure to use Jacoby does not deny a five-card or longer major (e.g., Stayman is frequently used with five or more spades).

Transfer bids apply over an artificial double of 1NT or artificial 2♣ overcall that does not specify a particular suit (e.g., "Hamilton" 2♣), but do not apply over a business double, a natural overcall, or a conventional call that shows one or more specific suits, e.g., a double that shows both majors.. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump, and section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions.

If opener has a super hand in support of the indicated suit, he can make a notrumper cue bid (see section 10-11), bid 2NT, or jump to three of the major:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
	2♥ - the usual bid
	2♠/3♣/3♦ - notrumper cue bid, "super accept"
	2NT - two of top three honors in hearts
	3♥ - great heart support, good hand

With a minimum notrump, opener should just accept the transfer minimally, no matter what his holding in the suit. The notrumper cue bids show four-card heart support, an outside doubleton, and a maximum notrump. The 2NT bid shows a good hand for notrump in addition to the heart honors.

Responder can bid 3NT with ♠32 ♥Q108763 ♦K2 ♣875, so opener had better have quick tricks outside and good stoppers in all suits: ♠AJ9 ♥AK5 ♦J987 ♣AJ10. The jump to 3♥ shows a fine hand in support of hearts but no outside holding suitable for a notrumper cue bid: ♠A94 ♥AK105 ♦Q3 ♣A643. Do not jump with 4-3-3-3 distribution, even with a maximum.

Opener must never go past three of the indicated major unless invited to do so, and must pass a signoff bid in three of that major after a “super accept” cue bid, as responder could be really broke: ♠983 ♥107653 ♦986 ♣92.

A new suit bid by responder at the three level is game-forcing unless the bid follows an opposing overcall, after which a double is artificial showing a probable five-carder and good values, but not enough to bid 3NT:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	3♦	3♥ - weak two-suiter, not forcing	
		3♠ - not invitational, six spades	
		4♥ - strong two-suiter	
		4♠ - slam try, six or more spades, balanced	
		4NT - notrump raise, not forcing	
		Dbl - invitational spade hand	
		Pass - weak, not forcing, probably five spades	

Normally 4♥ would be a splinter bid, but not in this auction. Use the Texas transfer with a long suit and no interest in slam, and start with Texas if you want to use Roman Key Card Blackwood.

Be sure to read section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

With two-suited hands that lack the strength to insist on game but have enough to invite, don't use a Jacoby sequence. Respond 2♣ (Stayman) with five spades and any other suit. With five hearts plus a minor suit, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention, described in the next section. With 5-4 in the majors and an invitational hand or better, use Stayman. With a weaker hand, just transfer to the five-card major and pass the response.

When responder shows the 5-3-3-2 balanced sort of hand by rebidding notrump, opener usually stays in notrump with a doubleton in the indicated suit. With three-card support he uses his judgment, often staying in notrump with a 4-3-3-3 hand and scattered strength. With four-card support he normally returns to the suit. Opener must also decide whether to bid (or try for) game:

Opener Responder

1NT 2♥

2♠ 2NT

Pass - minimum, doubleton spade or 4-3-3-3 distribution

3♠ - minimum, three or four-card spade support

3NT - maximum, doubleton spade or 4-3-3-3 distribution

4♠ - maximum, three or four-card spade support

3♣/3♦/3♥ - "Have support for you, need help in this suit," a game-try bid

If the side suit trial bid fits responder well, she may be able to bid a marginal game because of the good fit. "Need help here" means a broken suit (e.g., KJ43), not an xxx holding.

Opener Responder

1NT 2♦

2♥ 2♠ is the Unbalanced Heart Convention (UHC)

2NT shows 5-3-3-2 distribution, invitational hand

3NT shows 5-3-3-2 distribution, game-going hand

4NT shows a 5-3-3-2 hand, invitational, strong hearts, too much strength for 3NT

4♠ is an artificial notrump raise, 5-3-3-2, hearts not strong.

3♣/3♦ is forcing to game, showing a second suit

3♥ is invitational, six or more hearts, balanced hand

3♠/4♣/4♦ is a splinter bid, slam try, six or more hearts

4♥ is a slam try, six or more hearts, balanced hand (use Texas if weaker)

UHC is described on page 5-2-7. The 2♠ rebid is not needed to show five hearts and four spades because Stayman is used with a hand of that sort. Over the 3♠ splinter bid, opener can bid 3NT with secondary spade strength and poor heart support. Over a splinter in clubs or diamonds, however, 4NT would be RKCB, so he must bid 4♥ with any unsuitable hand. The 4♠ rebid implies that opener needs a good fit in hearts if they are to be useful in a notrump slam. 4NT is not RKCB because responder would start with a Texas Transfer with that sort of hand.

"Strong" for a five-card suit means that it should have no more than one loser opposite a doubleton ace or king, so it must be headed by two of the top three honors or by the QJ9. A "strong" six-card suit is one that is likely to have no losers opposite a doubleton ace or king, so it must be headed by two of the top three honors. A suit headed by QJ9 is also okay, because RKCB will clarify the key-card situation.

If the hand is unbalanced, jump in the short suit after transferring. If the suit is not strong, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention if unbalanced, but start with Stayman if interested in slam and the heart suit is not strong.

A hand with five spades and six hearts presents a problem, because transferring to hearts and then bidding 2♠ is UHC, while 3♠ is a splinter bid. Instead of transferring, use Stayman. Bid 2♥ after the expected 2♦ response, then bid spades on the next round (a forcing sequence), rebidding them if necessary (also forcing).

Rebids after a Jacoby 2♥ response are similar, except that responder can show 5-5 or better in the majors, not just major-minor.

With a weak 5-5 in the majors, transfer to spades and hope for the best. There is no way to show both majors without inviting game and possibly getting too high, unless the opposition comes into the bidding and you can chance a 3♥ bid after transferring to spades (a weak competitive action in competition).

THE UNBALANCED HEART CONVENTION (UHC)

There is one sort of hand that is difficult to describe when partner opens the bidding with 1NT: an unbalanced hand of game-invitational strength with five hearts and less than four spades (e.g., ♠AQ10 ♥J8732 ♦3 ♣J842). Assuming you want to try for game, how do you proceed? Using Jacoby transfer bids you might bid 2♦ (showing hearts) and then raise partner's forced 2♥ to 3♥. Or should you bid 2NT after his 2♥ bid? Would Stayman be the answer?

Any of these routes is risky. Raising hearts could result in a 3♥ contract with Kx or worse opposite your five to the jack. Besides, that sequence shows six hearts. Opener can raise with a doubleton, putting you into game with a 5-2 trump fit. Bidding notrump after a transfer bid is supposed to show a balanced hand with a liking for notrump. Opener might pass 2NT or go to 3NT with many 4-3-3-3 hands that would play better in hearts. With Stayman, a 2♠ response by opener shuts out the heart suit (you are too weak to rebid 3♥, which is dangerous even if you play it non-forcing).

Solution: With an unbalanced heart hand use the Jacoby 2♦ response, then bid 2♠ artificially on the second round:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦ - transfer to hearts
2♥	2♠ - UHC

The 2♠ spade bid says, "Please tell me more about your hand, especially your heart holding."

Opener Responder

1NT 2♦

2♥ 2♠

2NT - no heart support, minimum hand (cheapest bid)

3♣/3♦ - heart support, minimum hand (notrumper cue bid)

3♥ - heart support, minimum

3♠/4♣/4♦ - heart support, maximum (notrumper cue bid)

3NT - maximum, no heart support

4♥ - maximum, heart support (no suit in which to make a notrumper cue bid)

Opener may count a moderate hand as a "maximum" if it contains good heart honors and outside points consisting mostly of aces. If in doubt, however, call it a minimum--let responder do any stretching.

Note that with a minimum and heart support, opener can only bid 3♥ or make a notrumper cue bid in a minor suit. Responder may sign off in 3♥ if she does not like the minor suit cue bid (i.e., with a singleton in the suit).

When opener bids 2NT over 2♠, a minimum heart "rebid" shows six hearts and an unbalanced hand, invitational. A 4♥ jump over 2NT implies that responder was looking for a slam, but was disappointed by opener's rebid. Over a notrumper cue bid, both 3♥ and 4♥ are signoffs. Over

3NT, a 4♥ bid also shows that responder was interested in slam. Opener needs good top hearts to continue, as this sequence implies a non-strong heart suit.

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

Opener will probably pass 3♥ when he has bid 2NT, showing a minimum. With a balanced hand and six hearts, responder immediately raises 2♥ to 3♥, invitationally. Why differentiate? Because UHC gives opener a chance to make a minor suit notrumper cue bid in support of hearts when he has a minimum. Responder may be able to bid game on the basis of a good. With a balanced hand, she doesn't care where opener's outside strength lies--she just wants top cards.

UHC is useful for two-suited as well as one-suited hands:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	2♠
2NT	3♣/3♦ - not forcing

Responder is showing a second suit and invitational strength. Opener will probably pass with his minimum hand and lack of heart support, but he could bid on with a good fitting hand. With game-going strength responder uses the standard Jacoby sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♣/3♦ - forcing

What if responder has an unbalanced hand with five or more spades? No problem here, since opener's response to Stayman cannot shut out the spade suit. After opener's 2♦ or 2♥ response, responder can bid 2♠, forcing, and then show a second suit on the next round, not forcing, if opener bids 2NT.

If the next hand bids over opener's 2♥ rebid, UHC does not apply:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	3♣/3♦	3♠	- natural, spade strength, not a suit

A UHC spade bid must be made at the same level as the transfer.

MINOR SUIT TRANSFER BIDS

There is no reason that transfer bids cannot be extended to show the minor suits after a 1NT opening: A 2♠ response shows clubs and a 2NT response shows diamonds. How do you raise 1NT to 2NT? Just bid 2♣, Stayman, then bid 2NT. Minor suit transfers apply whenever Jacoby transfers do, as specified in the discussion of Jacoby transfers.

The 2♠ Response

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs

Note that minor suit transfers have an added dimension: There is room for a bid between the transfer response and the transfer suit. After the 2♠ response, opener can bid 2NT or 3♣ without going past the transfer suit. Which should she bid? It depends on her hand, especially her club fit. If she would accept an invitation to game based on a long broken club suit, she bids 3♣. If not, she bids 2NT. For instance, responder could have ♠J2 ♥32 ♦Q87 ♣A98763. He needs a fine club fit and quick tricks outside in order to produce game in notrump.

The 2NT response to the 2♠ transfer does not necessarily show a minimum notrump opening. Opener can have a maximum, but a poor fit in clubs. Nor does the 3♣ response show a maximum notrump. Opener could have something like ♠AQ2 ♥K107 ♦A76 ♣K543, a hand that will produce game opposite six clubs to the ace with a finesse at worst.

With a bad hand, responder will pass opener's 3♣ bid, or correct a 2NT bid to 3♣, which opener must pass. With an invitational club hand, responder will bid 3♣ over 2NT (since opener would decline an invitation), and will probably bid 3NT over 3♣.

Suppose responder has a strong hand, with clubs plus another suit or a notrump shape (5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2). Responder can force to game with anything but a 3♣ rebid:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT	3♣ is a signoff
	3♦/3♥/3♠ is natural, forcing to game
	3NT is a signoff (in view of the non-acceptance)
	4♣ - forcing
	4♦/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, independent club suit
	4NT - notrump slam try, denies a short suit

If opener had rebid 3♣, showing club support, 4NT would become Roman Key Card Blackwood.

The splinter bids show a singleton in the splinter suit, very strong clubs, and a slammish hand. Opener signs off in notrump when holding duplication (secondary strength) in the splinter suit. If

opener shows support for responder's minor and responder splinters, he is saying in effect, "Bid slam if the splinter fits your hand, but bid 4NT if you have wasted values in the splinter suit."

Transferring to a minor and then bidding a major implies a hand that was too strong to use a Stayman sequence (a 3♣ or 3♦ rebid is not forcing in a Stayman auction).

Either minor could be longer (e.g., 5=4, 4=5) when responder shows both minors this way, so opener should be slow to raise either minor without four-card support. Responder may not be greatly interested in slam, since he has not gone past 3NT. Possibly he is afraid that 3NT might fail because of weakness in one or both majors. Suppose responder has ♠Q83 ♥6 ♦AK93 ♣J9762. He responds 2♠, transfer to clubs, and then bids 3♦ next. If opener has just one major stopped, he should bid it. With both majors stopped, he usually bids 3NT:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠
2NT/3♣	3♦
3♥/3♠	- showing a suit stopped
3NT	- both majors stopped

The 2NT Response

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds

After a 2NT diamond transfer, opener bids 3♦ to show a diamond fit, otherwise bids 3♣. The 2NT response is also used with a weak two-suiter in the minors. Whether opener rebids 3♣ or 3♦, responder passes, probably reaching the right spot. A "new suit" bid by responder is forcing to game, showing a second suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	3♥/3♠ - forcing, suit-showing
	4♣/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, independent diamond suit
	4NT - natural over 3♣, RKCB over 3♦
	5♣/5♦ - asking bid

When opener shows support, 4NT is RKCB.

FORCING STAYMAN

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣ - asks opener to bid a major
2♦	- no four-card major
2♥/2♠	- four-card major, denies the other
2NT	- two four-card majors, minimum hand
3♣	- two four-card majors, maximum hand
3♦/3♥/3♠	- five-card suit, maximum hand

The 2♣ response is not a telling bid, it is an asking bid: "Do you have a four-card major?" Responder may not have four cards in either major. He may be just kidding the opposition, or he may be planning a raise to 2NT, which requires a bid of 2♣ first (an immediate 2NT response is a transfer to diamonds). All responses other than 2♦ are Alertable.

The 2♦ response does not absolutely deny four cards in a major. Opener may elect to suppress a very weak major with a maximum hand and double stoppers in the other suits. Similarly, he may bid 2♥ or 2♠ when holding four weak cards in the other major, usually with a maximum hand and double stoppers in the minor suits.

Opener cannot bid 3♣ to show five clubs and a maximum, because responder could have a very weak hand with the plan of passing opener's response to Stayman: ♠10852 ♥J875 ♦Q8642 ♣ void
We therefore use this bid to show both majors and a maximum notrump. If responder now bids three of a major, opener must pass because responder could have that bust hand. After a 2NT or 3♣ response, responder can bid 3♦ to ask for opener's better major.

When Opener Bids 2♦

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥/2♠ - asks if opener has support for the suit (forcing)
	2NT - natural invitational raise (only way to raise NT)
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational, usually passed (4=6 hand with a major)
	3♥/3♠ - Smolen, four of the suit bid, five or six cards in the other major
	3NT - signoff
	4♣ - Gerber
	4♦ - Texas transfer to hearts (4=6 in the majors)
	4♥ - Texas transfer to spades (6=4 in the majors)
	4♠ - mild notrump slam try (see Boland, section 6-10)
	4NT - strong notrump slam try (see Boland, section 6-10)

The 2♥ and 2♠ rebids do not *show* anything. They merely ask if opener has trump support for the suit named. Responder probably has a five-card suit, but may have a weak doubleton, just trying to confuse the opposition. These bids must be alerted: "That is an asking bid, and I am not allowed to

bid higher than the three level at this point." A 3NT bid by responder after he bids a major should therefore also be alerted by opener ("I must pass"). Note that Smolen may be used with 6-4 in the majors, a good idea when holding a weak doubleton. If opener doesn't raise the longer suit, responder could force him to do so with a transfer bid, but that's an easily forgotten agreement.

When responder bids a new major on the second round, opener gives information concerning support for that suit and general strength:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥? (Alert: "She is asking about hearts, not telling.")
2♠/3♣/3♦	- notrumper cue bid, heart support, minimum hand
2NT	- minimum hand, no heart support
3NT	- maximum hand, no heart support
3♥	- heart support, maximum hand
3♠	- notrumper cue bid, heart support, maximum hand
3NT	- maximum hand, no heart support

All the suit bids by opener must be Alerted. Opener cannot go beyond 3♦ with a minimum hand, nor can he go beyond 3NT on his own. And once responder bids 3NT, the auction is over; opener must pass. Why? Because responder may have nothing in hearts! She was only asking about heart support, not *telling* anything.

Note that the only notrumper cue bid available with a maximum hand and trump support is 3♠. Bid 3♥ when the spade holding is not right for a notrumper cue bid.

The bidding after responder rebids 2♠ is similar:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠? (Alert: "She is asking about spades, not telling.")
2NT	- minimum hand, no spade support
3♣/3♦/3♥	- notrumper cue bid, spade support, minimum hand
3♠	- spade support, maximum hand
3NT	- maximum hand, no spade support

In this case there is no suit available for opener to make a notrumper cue bid with a maximum and support. Note that whichever major responder bids, opener's raise shows a maximum hand and support for the suit.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♣	3♦/3♥ - natural, forcing to 3♠
	3♠ - signoff
	3NT - must be passed
	4♠ - accepting the game try

Opener's 3♣ was a notrumper cue bid, showing spade support and a minimum hand.

The auctions that might occur when responder rebids 2♥ and opener does not show support need elaboration:

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

The minor suit bids imply a good 4=5=4=0 or 4=5=0=4 hand, and are forcing. Stopping at 3♣ or 3♦ is a bit unrealistic, and there is no other way to show such a hand. With a 5-5 hand responder would have used UHC instead of Stayman. The 3♥ bid implies an invitational hand with 4=6 in the majors.. The 3♠ bid is forcing, implying six hearts and five spades.

When Opener Bids a Major

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠ - asking about spade support (see above)
	2NT/3♥ - invitational raise, natural
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational (4=6 hand with four spades)
	3♠/4♣/4♦ - splinter bid, heart support, slam try
	3NT - signoff
	4♥ - signoff, no slam interest
	4♠ - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)
	4NT - slam try in notrump, Boland applies

With a weak 4-6 major-minor hand, just transfer to the minor and forget Stayman. Such hands usually do not play well in a 4-4 fit vs a 6-2 or 6-3 fit, so there is little risk in the possible loss of a major suit contract.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	2NT/3♠ - invitational raise, natural
	3♣/3♦ - natural, mildly invitational (4=6 hand with four hearts)
	3♥ - forcing
	3NT - signoff
	4♣/4♦ - splinter bid, spade support, slam try
	4♠ - signoff, no slam interest
	4♥ - RKCB
	4NT - slam try in notrump, Boland applies

Repeating: When opener responds in a major, four of the other major is RKCB.

When Opener Shows Both Majors

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2NT/3♣	3♦ - transfer to hearts, possibly a weak 4=4=4=1 or 4=4=5=0 hand 3♥ - transfer to spades, also possibly weak (spades better than hearts) 3NT - signoff 4♣ - meaningless at present 4♦ - transfer to hearts, possibly a prelude to 4NT Key Card Blackwood 4♥ - transfer to spades, possibly a prelude to 4NT Key Card Blackwood 4NT - natural, invitational (for RKCB, transfer first to establish the trump suit)

When responder transfers at the three level and raises to four or bids a new suit, that shows slam interest Responder should transfer at the four level with no slam interest, just as Jacoby followed by a raise to game shows slam interest and Texas denies slam interest. (Unless, of course, responder intends to use Blackwood after a four-level transfer.)

When Opener Shows a Five-card Suit

The jumps to three of a suit in response to Stayman show a maximum hand and a five-card suit. Responder's bid in a new suit denies trump support for opener, but shows slam interest.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♦	3♥/3♠ - natural, five or more, opener bids 3NT with poor support 3NT - signoff 4♣ - natural. With poor support opener bids 4♦ (strong suit) or a natural 4NT 4♦ - raise, forcing 4♥/4♠ - splinter bid, diamond support 4NT - RKCB (since opener's strength is closely known)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♥	3♠/4♣/4♦ - natural, opener usually bids notrump with poor support 3NT - signoff 4♥ - signoff 4♠ - splinter bid 4NT - RKCB

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
3♠	3NT - signoff 4♣/4♦/4♥ - natural, opener bids 4♠ (strong suit) or a natural 4NT with poor support 4♠ - signoff 4NT - RKCB

Two-Suited Hands

Stayman is used with two-suited hands of invitational strength when one of the suits is spades:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠ - forcing, asking about spades
2NT	3♣/3♦/3♥ - not forcing

Opener will probably pass, in view of his announced minimum opening and lack of spade support. He might raise a heart bid, however, with a good fit in both suits: ♠AQ ♥KQ2 ♦A873 ♣J542

With a two-suited invitational hand that includes hearts but not spades, use the Unbalanced Heart Convention.

Even when opener has indicated support for a major, responder can still show a second suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♠	4♣/4♦ - second suit, perhaps a four-carder, forcing 4♥ - five-card suit, forcing 4NT - RKCB, because a suit has been agreed

More on One-Suited Hands

Use Stayman with invitational strength, five or more spades, and an unbalanced hand, even if not two-suited:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠
2NT	Pass with ♠K9873 ♥2 ♦9632 ♣AJ2
3♠	with ♠Q87632 ♥4 ♦853 ♣KJ7 (invitational)
3♣	with ♠Q8753 ♥82 ♦9 ♣AJ984 (invitational)

The "invitations" will probably not be accepted, in view of opener's minimum hand. Opener may bid on with a good fit, however. The Stayman sequence gives opener a chance to make a notrumper cue bid in support of spades, which may permit a game bid on the basis of a good fit. It is also the only way to bid two suits without forcing to game, since a second suit bid after using Jacoby is game-forcing.

When a Stayman responder insists on game in a major suit that has not been supported, and responder has shown the other major, it is obvious he had slam in mind.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠
2NT	4♠

Responder has long spade suit, and the hand is unbalanced. With a balanced hand, bid 3♠ over 2♥ with a weak suit. With strong spades, responder would have started with 3♠ (if unbalanced) or Jacoby 2♥ (if balanced) to show slam interest. With no slam in mind, he would have used Texas.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥
3NT	4♥ - weakish suit, slam interest

Responder could not bid 4♥ over 2♠, because that is RKCB for spades. Using Stayman to arrive at the heart game implies a balanced hand, since UHC or an original 3♥ response is available for unbalanced hands with hearts .

When opener has responded 2♦, the bidding goes this way with such hands:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
2NT	4♠

Opener's 2NT bid showed a minimum and no support, so responder just bids game, despite his original slam interest. With a weak 6=4 in the majors, responder would use Texas over 2♦, bidding 4♦ with six hearts, 4♥ with six spades, or with a stronger hand would use Smolen, jumping in the four-card suit.

If responder's suit is hearts, the same logic applies:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2NT	4♥

Also see section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

THE JUMP TAKEOUT RESPONSE

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - slam try

The jump takeout shows a good suit of at least five cards, probably an unbalanced hand, and slam interest. With a side suit that lacks a control, it may be better to start with Jacoby in order to get opener to play the hand. The jump is not a slam try in competition:

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♦/3♥/3♠

If the 2♣ bid is natural, the jump is invitational at matchpoint scoring, forcing at IMP scoring. A cue bid is used for game-forcing Stayman. If the 2♣ bid is artificial and does not show a specific suit, then the jump takeout is strong (“Systems on”). It is also strong over an artificial double that shows no specific suit. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs Strong Notrump.

After a jump takeout opener rebids 3NT if he lacks adequate trump support for responder's suit. He need not fear missing a slam by bidding 3NT with a maximum, because responder will bid again if all she needs is a maximum opposite.

With trump support, opener's action is different for majors and minors. If the suit is a major, opener raises with a minimum, makes a notrumper cue bid or jump raise with a maximum:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♥ - slam try
	3♠/4♣/4♦ - notrumper cue bid, heart support, maximum hand
	3NT - lacks heart support, may be minimum or maximum
	4♥ - heart support, minimum hand
	4NT - Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)
	5♥/6♥ - extra good hearts and extra good hand, good controls

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♠ - slam try
	3NT - lacks spade support, may be minimum or maximum
	4♣/4♦/4♥ - notrumper cue bid, spade support, maximum
	4♠ - spade support, minimum hand
	4NT - RKCB
	5♠/6♠ - extra good spades and extra good hand, good controls

Notice that opener's action is opposite of that taken when a Stayman or UHC bidder shows a major suit. In that case opener makes a notrumper cue bid with a minimum, not with a maximum, when he has support. Responder can therefore choose the sequence that is appropriate for the strength of his major suit slam try, using the jump takeout with a minimum hand for slam, Stayman or UHC with better hands. If responder's next bid is 4♣, that is natural. No Gerber after a jump takeout.

Jumps in a minor suit are treated differently: Raises are stronger than a three-level notrumper cue bid, which at the three level may be on a minimum (but four-level cue bids are strong):

Opener Responder

1NT 3♦ - slam try

3♥/3♠ - notrumper cue bid in support of diamonds, may be minimum

3NT - denies diamond support, may be minimum or maximum

4♣ - notrumper cue bid in support of diamonds, maximum hand

4♦ - diamond support, good hand

4NT - RKCB

The bidding is similar after a jump takeout of 3♣. The reason that a four-level bid shows a maximum is, of course, that game in notrump has been bypassed. With a minimum and support, opener must make a three-level notrumper cue bid, even when lacking an appropriate suit for that action. Hand evaluation must include a consideration of fit and side suit controls, not just HCP.

If responder bids notrump after hearing a notrumper cue bid in support of a minor, he probably has a singleton or void in that suit--the hand does not fit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♦
4♣	4NT - short clubs, signoff

Otherwise, 4NT by responder is Roman Key Card Blackwood (section 6-6), even if opener rebids 3NT. If responder wants to invite game with a 4NT bid, he must start with a transfer instead of a jump takeout. A 4NT bid by opener is RKCB unless he has bid 3NT, then 4NT, an obvious signoff.

A notrump bidder is allowed only one notrumper cue bid per auction. Any further cue bid shows an ace. See section 10-11, Notrumper Cue Bids.

The degree of fit is important after responder shows two suits. With ♠Q3 ♥A54 ♦AK76 ♣K1087, opener rebids 3NT when responder jumps to 3♠. If responder then bids 4♣, this minimum hand becomes a maximum. A jump to 6♣ is quite in order. With KQ of hearts instead of the ace (more points, but less fit), opener would just sign off with a 4NT bid over 4♣.

Opener should bid aggressively with many controls and a ruffing value. With ♠A3 ♥KJ7 ♦A10987 ♣A103 she should try for slam when responder makes a jump takeout of 3♥, even though it is a minimum notrump opening. A raise to 5♥ is about right. Conversely, secondary strength in side suits should be downgraded.

Strong jump takeouts by a passed hand are necessarily less invitational to slam than those by an unpassed hand. In a minor suit they tend to suggest that a minor suit game might be safer than a notrump game.

SLAM TRIES WITH LONG SUITS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a hand that has a six or seven-card suit. A jump takeout response is one way, but other ways are available. A summary follows. All of the sequences that follow show that responder has interest in slam.

Major Suit Slam Tries

-- With a balanced hand, use Jacoby and jump to four of the suit. This promises a strong suit:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦/2♥
2♥/2♠	4♥/4♠ - balanced, strong suit

-- With a balanced hand and a heart suit that is not strong, start with Stayman and insist on a heart game without jumping unnecessarily. This gives opener a chance to show heart support:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2NT	4♥ (because 3♥ is not forcing)

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥ (because 4♥ would be a splinter bid)
3NT	4♥ - unbalanced hand, hearts not strong

-- With an unbalanced hand and a spade suit, strong or not, start with Stayman and bid 2♠. If the suit isn't strong, opener's next bid will show if he has support:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠
2NT	4♠ (because 3♠ is not forcing)

-- With an unbalanced hand and a heart suit, strong or not, use UHC:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	2♠ - UHC
2NT	4♥ - unbalanced hand

Again: If the suit is not strong, opener's reply to UHC will show if he has support.

Minor Suit Slam Tries

-- With balanced hands, transfer to the minor and then bid 4NT (or 3NT if opener's rebid disappoints) if opener denies good support. If he shows support by accepting the transfer, then 4NT is RKCB.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	4NT - natural over 2NT, RKCB over 3♣

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	4NT - natural over 3♣, RKCB over 3♦

The natural 4NT bids deny a short suit.

-- With unbalanced hands transfer to the minor and then make a splinter bid if opener's rebid does not discourage slam ideas:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	4♦/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣/3♦	4♣/4♥/4♠ - splinter bid

It will just have to be remembered that the other artificial uses for 4♠ (RKCB or mild notrump slam try) do not apply after a minor suit transfer. If RKCB is a must, start with a strong jump takeout response. Then, if opener shows support, 4NT is RKCB.

SLAM TRIES WITH TWO-SUITED HANDS

As shown throughout these pages, there are many ways to make a slam try with a two-suited hand. A summary follows:

With Both Majors

When holding 5-5 or better in the majors, choose a Jacoby sequence with a marginal slam try hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥
2♠	3♥ - forcing

With a maximum hand and a fit in both majors, opener can now make a notrumper cue bid of 4♣ or 4♦. Responder may be able to bid slam with this information.

Another approach, also good with a marginal hand for slam, is to jump to 3♠ over 1NT, then bid 4♥. Prefer this sequence when the spades are quite strong.

With a stronger hand, prefer a Stayman sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♦	3♥

The 3♥ bid is forcing, since opener has shown spade support with the 3♦ notrumper cue bid. Now responder may be able to get to slam even when opener has a minimum, if the hands fit well.

With a Major and a Minor

Use a Jacoby sequence:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥
2♠	3♣ - forcing

With a major and a minor, starting with a 3♥/3♠ bid means bidding the minor suit at the four level, so the slam interest should be strong in case opener can't support the major. Opener can sign off in 4NT, however, when responder bids the minor

With Both Minors

When the two suits are minors, a transfer sequence is preferable with a marginal slam try hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♠ - transfer to clubs
2NT/3♣	3♦ - forcing

Since this is the only way to show both minors without going past 3NT, there is no way for opener to tell whether the suits are of equal length or, if unequal, which suit is longer. However:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2NT - transfer to diamonds
3♣	4♣ - club suit too
4NT	- signoff, strong in the majors

Here the clubs cannot be longer than the diamonds. Since this sequence bypasses 3NT, responder needs a pretty good hand. Another way to show this sort of hand:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♦ - strong hand with diamonds
3NT	4♣ - club suit too
4NT	- signoff, strong in majors

You choose the second sequence when it is important to find about a third suit fit. With ♠Q32 ♥6 ♦AKJ65 ♣KQ65, you will rebid 3NT if opener makes a notrumper cue bid in hearts, and 4♣ if he rebids 3♠ or 3NT. The notrumper cue bid in spades could get you to a good slam opposite 16 HCP (give opener ♠KJ5 ♥AJ8 ♦Q1097 ♣AJ10), or keep you out of a doubtful slam (reverse your majors) even when opener fits your suits.

With a strong hand and longer clubs than diamonds, responder can bid this way:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♣ - strong hand with clubs
3NT	4♦ - second suit (shorter)
4NT	- signoff, strong in the majors

SUMMARY OF BIDDING APPROACHES AFTER 1NT

Major suit bust	Bid Jacoby 2♦ or 2♥
Club bust	Bid 2♠, then bid 3♣ if opener bids 2NT
Diamond bust	Bid 2NT, then bid 3♦ if opener bids 3♣
Weak 5-5 in the minors	Bid 2NT, pass opener's response
Weak 5-5 in the majors	Bid 2♥ and pass opener's 2♠ bid
<u>Invitational Hands:</u>	
Long clubs	Bid 2♠, then 3♣ over 2NT, 3NT over 3♣
Long diamonds	Bid 2NT, then 3♦ over 3♣, 3NT over 3♦
Balanced, 5-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then 2NT
Balanced, 6-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then raise to the three level
Unbalanced, 5-6 hearts	Bid 2♦, then 2♠ (UHC)
Unbalanced, 5-6 spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠
Two-suiter with spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠, then the second suit
Two suiter, hearts and a minor	Bid UHC, then bid the minor
<u>Game-Going Hands</u> (not much interest in slam)	
Both minors	Bid 2♠ to show clubs, then bid 3♦
Both majors	Bid 2♥, then 3♥
Major/minor, 5-5	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then the minor
Balanced, 5-card major	Bid 2♦ or 2♥, then 3NT
Unbalanced, 5 hearts	Bid 2♦, then 2♠ (UHC)
Unbalanced, 5 spades	Bid 2♣, then 2♠
One long major	Bid Texas 4♦ or 4♥