

ARTIFICIAL BIDS in Easybridge By Maritha Pottenger

Most bids in bridge are “natural,” meaning that when you bid a suit, you really do have cards in that suit and are suggesting that suit as a possible trump suit. There are, however, some exceptions.

Because minor games take more points (29 as opposed to 25 or 26 HCP) to bid and make game, clubs and diamonds are more often used for artificial bids (savings spades, hearts, and no trump for mostly natural bids).

Several of the artificial bids you have learned so far are used **after your partner opens one no trump**:

2 clubs asks partner if s/he has a 4-card major (and promises either 4 hearts or 4 spades or both in your hand)

2 diamonds is a transfer and demands that partner bids 2 hearts (you guarantee at least 5 hearts in your hand)

2 hearts is a transfer and demands that partner bids 2 spades (you guarantee at least 5 spades in your hands)

4 clubs is Gerber—asking partner how many aces s/he has. (4D=0 or 4; 4H=1; 4S+2; 4NT=3 aces).

Similarly, if your **partner opens two no trump (or opens 2C and rebids 2NT)**:

3 clubs is Stayman (asking partner if s/he has a 4-card major)

3 diamonds is transfer to hearts 3 hearts is transfer to spades 4 clubs is Gerber (asking for aces)

If your **partner opens three no trump**:

4C should be Stayman—but you must agree with your partner on this—use 5C for Gerber

4D is transfer to hearts 4H is transfer to spades

Another artificial bid is when you open Two Clubs. This is strong and forcing and does not guarantee anything other than 21+ HCP OR 8-1/2 playing tricks. Partnership is committed to at least 3NT or 4 of a major. (Partner cannot pass until you reach game.) You could have ANY suit or no suit. (For example, opening 2C and then bidding 2NT as your second bid shows 22-24 HCP and a balanced hand.)

Remember, opening 2D, 2H or 2S all show a weak (less than 11 HCP) hand and a good 6-card suit. (In 3rd and 4th positions, the “good” part of the suit may not longer apply.) **When your partner opens a “weak two” bid, you can bid 2NT to ask him/her for a feature** (an Ace of King in another suit).

Another artificial bid is 4NT (and 5NT). Depending on the context, this is either quantitative or ace-asking. If your partner opens 1NT, 2NT, 2C followed by 2NT, or 3NT, then 4NT by you is **quantitative** and asks partner to pass with minimum hand and bid 6NT with a maximum hand.

If your partner opens 1NT, 2NT, 2C followed by 2NT, or 3NT, then 5NT by you is **quantitative**, and asks partner to bid 6NT with a minimum hand, and 7NT with a maximum hand.

If your partner opens a suit, or you have bid and responded several suits, a jump to 4NT is Blackwood and asks partner how many aces s/he has. After you have used Blackwood to inquire for Aces, then 5NT asks how many kings partner has. **Remember:** 4NT over an opening NT is quantitative. 4NT when any suits have been bid (other than 2C followed by 2NT) is Ace-Asking.

A double at the 1 or 2-level is usually a take-out double. That is, you are asking partner to bid. (You are not expecting to set the opponents.) At higher levels, a double will usually be intended for “business”—expecting the opponents will go down in their contract.

In the balancing seat (where your pass would be the third pass in a row and the auction would end), you can make a take-out double with only 10 HCP, asking partner to bid something and not sell out at a low level. You can also **bid 2NT**—asking partner to bid his/her **longest minor** suit. (A typical auction would be P-1S-P-2S-P-P—and you bid 2NT, asking partner to bid either 3 clubs or 3 diamonds.) You must be at least 4-4 (or 5-4 or 5-5 or more) in the two minor suits to make that bid.

The other most common use of artificial bids is in a **cue-bidding sequence** (see Cue Bidding handout).