

NEW SOUTH WALES SYSTEM

by Edgar Kaplan

I BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

This system, which is used by many of Australia's top partnerships, is essentially a modernized, souped-up version of "Vienna." Opening bids of 1 \diamond , 1 \heartsuit or 1 \clubsuit guarantee five-card or longer suits. The 1 \spadesuit opening takes up the slack -- it covers: (1) all balanced opening bids too weak, or just too strong, for the 15-18 1 NT opening; (2) all 4-4-4-1 openings of any strength; (3) unbalanced opening bids with clubs the principal suit. Although 1 \spadesuit is forcing, it is not a "Big Club." The strong opening is 2 \spadesuit (2 \diamond is for powerful balanced hands; 2 \heartsuit and 2 \clubsuit are weak two's; 2 NT is a fairly strong minor two-suiter).

Although there are quite a few artificial openings (most of them following the four artificial openings -- 1 \spadesuit , 2 \spadesuit , 2 \diamond , 2 NT), the system is basically natural. Suit bids show length, and in the normal manner: longer suit first; the higher of two long suits first; four-card suits up-the-line. The general style is "minimum forcing." That is, the only limit bids are simple raises or rebids and notrump bids; new suits are unlimited, forcing, usually promising extra values; most jumps are forcing, unlimited; jump shifts are asking-bids.

For slam bidding, the system relies primarily on Culbertson Asking-Bids, which can often be used at very low levels in the form of new suits after trump agreement or unnecessary jumps (agreeing the last suit). In most auctions, a jump raise to one under game is stronger than a raise or jump to game, so as to leave room for asking-bids. In addition, there are step responses to show aces when agreeing partner's suit, and trump asking-bids. All these devices are treated under Slam Bidding. In the text, an asterisk followed by a letter (*b) is a reference to the appropriate item in the Slam section.

"New South Wales" was devised originally by one group of Australian experts -- Longhurst, Makai, Schaufelberger, Verne, Williams -- and has been modified and modernized into its present form by another group -- Cummings, Howard, Klinger, Seres, Smilde.

II OPENING BIDS OF THE SYSTEM

A. Balanced Hands

12-14 pts.: 1 ♣
 15-18 pts.: 1 NT
 19-20 pts.: 1 ♣
 21-23 pts.: 2 ♦
 24 pts. up: 2 ♣

(All 4-3-3-3 and 4-4-3-2 patterns are treated as balanced, regardless of honor location. 5-3-3-2 is treated as balanced for a 1 NT opening when the five-card suit is a minor; and it is treated as balanced for a 2 ♦ opening regardless of the suit. With 5-3-3-2, add 1 point to the high-card count, but not to reach minimum for a 1 NT opening.)

B. Unbalanced Hands

Game-forcing: 2 ♣ - game opposite Yarborough.
 Preemptive: 2 ♥, 2 ♠ - weak two, 6-10 points, six-card suit.
 3 ♣ up - rule of 2 and 3, solid minor vulnerable.
 Normal Strength (11-23): 1 ♣, 1 ♦, 1 ♥, 1 ♠ - 5 cards or more, longer (or higher of equals) suit.
 1 ♣ - any 4-4-4-1 pattern, 12 to 34 points.
 2 NT - ♣-♦ two-suiter, 5 or more cards in each, 15 points or more.

OPENING	SHOWS
1 ♣	balanced 12 to 14, 19 to 20, or 4-4-4-1 12-up, or long clubs 12 to 23; forcing.
1 ♦	long diamonds, 11 to 23; if 5-3-3-2, 12 to 14 or 18 to 19; if 5 clubs also, 11 to 14.
1 ♥, 1 ♠	long major, 11 to 23; if 5-3-3-2, 12 to 19.
1 NT	balanced, 15 to 18; usually no 5-card major.
2 ♣	balanced 24-up; unbalanced game force.
2 ♦	balanced 21 to 23; if 5-3-3-2, 20 to 22.
2 ♥, 2 ♠	6-card major, 6 to 10.
2 NT	minor two-suiter, 15 to 23; forcing.
3 ♣ up	preempt

III THE 1 ♠ OPENING

(Opener has one of three patterns: long clubs, which I will abbreviate "C," for Clubs; balanced distribution, abbreviated "B," for Balanced; any 4-4-4-1 distribution of any strength, which I will abbreviate "A," for convenience or, if you prefer, for Any. Thus, if there is a notation "C, 12-14" next to a rebid by opener, that rebid shows long clubs and 12 to 14 points.)

Responses to 1 ♠ (forcing)

- 1 ♠: artificial, negative, any 0 to 7 points but see 4 ♥, 4 ♠.
- 1 ♥, 1 ♠: natural, forcing though limited, 7 to 11; normally 4 cards or more but could be 3 cards with no 4-card major or 5-card minor.
- 1 NT: conventional game force, 12 points up, no long strong suit, any distribution.
- 2 ♠, 2 ♠: natural, nonforcing, 7 to 11, long suit and no major.
- 2 ♥, 2 ♠
3 ♠, 3 ♠: natural, game-forcing, long suit with 2 of 3 top honors.
- 2 NT: artificial, forcing, ♠-♠ two-suiter (at least 5-4), 7 to 12 points, no strength in majors.
- 3 ♥, 3 ♠
3 NT: 16 to 18 points, 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2, the lower major (3 ♥, 3 ♠) or no major (3 NT).
- 4 ♥, 4 ♠
5 ♠, 5 ♠: natural, negative, long suit and freakish distribution.
- BY A PASSED HAND: no response is forcing. 1 NT, 2 ♥, 2 ♠, 3 ♠ and 3 ♠ show maximum passes. 3 ♥ and 3 ♠ are now preemptive.

1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass After 1 ♠-1 ♠ (negative, normally no game)
?

OPENER

SHOWS

- 1 ♥, 1 ♠: "A, 12-18" or "B, 12-14" or "C, 12-18" - normally a 4-card suit, but could be 3 cards if B.
- 1 NT: "B, 19-20." Subsequent development is as to 1 NT opening (q.v.).
- 2 ♠: "C, 12-18," natural.
- 2 ♠: "A, 22 up," game-forcing, artificial. Responder must bid 2 ♥, and opener now bids his singleton (2 NT=♥). Natural bids follow.
- 2 ♥, 2 ♠: "A, 19-22" or "C, 19-22" - natural, lowest 4-card major. Responder may pass, but any action is natural and game-forcing (except 3 ♠ over 2 ♠, a preference).

1 ♠ Pass 1 ♣ Pass continued
?

OPENER SHOWS

2 NT: "C, 17-22," at least 9 cards in minors (normally ♠ 5-♦ 4, or ♠ 6-♦ 4, could be ♠ 6-♦ 3; not true two-suiter since then 2 NT opening), forcing. Subsequent bidding is natural.

3 ♣: "C, 19-22," at least 6 clubs. Nonforcing, but game force if responder acts.

1 ♠ Pass 1 ♥ Pass After 1 ♠-1 ♥, 1 ♠ (semi-positive 7 to 11 points, forcing)
?

OPENER SHOWS

(2 ♥) single raise: "A, B or C, 12-14," normally 4-card support, discouraging. Responder may try for game in a side suit in which he needs help. Responder's 2 NT is progressive, but suggests a 3-card major.

(3 ♥) jump raise: 4-card support, game force, slam chances ("A, 17 up" or "B, 19-20" or "C, 17 up"). New suit by responder is asking *a; 3 NT is trump-ask *b.

(4 ♥) game raise: 4-card support, no slam chances ("A, 15-17" or "C, 15-17").

2 ♠: "C, 12-14," nonforcing, discouraging.

3 ♠: "C, 18 up," 6-card suit, game force.

(2 ♦) new suit: 4-card suit, forcing. 1 ♠ to 1 ♥ can be any strength, but 2-level bids show 15-16 points or more ("A, 16-up" or "C, 15-up") and are forcing to 2 NT.

(3 ♦) jump shift: asking-bid *a.

(3 ♣) double jump shift: natural, weak 6-5 (long clubs).

1 NT: discouraging; normally, "B, 12-14" but possibly "A, 12-15" (1-4-4-4 over 1 ♠) or "C, 15." No rebid by responder is forcing; 2 NT and jumps are invitational.

2 NT: game-forcing, normally "B, 19-20," but could be "C, 17-up" with 6-3-2-2 or, conceivably, 5-4-2-2 pattern. Development is natural.

3 NT: gambling, long solid clubs, shortness in major.

1 ♠ Pass 2 ♣ Pass After 1 ♠-2 ♣, 2 ♦ (semi-positive, 7 to 11 points, nonforcing)
?

OPENER

SHOWS

Pass:

minimum.

(3 ♣) single raise

mildly progressive, nonforcing ("A, 13-15" or "B, 14" or "C, 14-16"). If responder now bids a major, it is a singleton or void.

(4 ♣) jump raise:

game force, slam chances ("A, 16-up" or "B, 19-20" or "C, 17-up"), requests asking-bid.

2 ♥, 2 ♠:

natural, forcing, asks 3-card raise. Failing this, responder bids 2 NT with other major stopped, or rebids his suit without the stopper.

(3 ♥) jump shift:

asking-bid.

2 NT:

game force, tolerance for responder's minor. Responder bids 3 NT or rebids minor with minimum. With unbalanced maximum, responder may bid a singleton or void.

3 NT:

conclusive.

1 ♠ Pass ?

2 NT Pass

After 1 ♠-2 NT (semi-positive, 9 cards at least in minors, no major stoppers, forcing)

OPENER

SHOWS

3 ♣, 3 ♦:

Discouraging preference, nonforcing. Responder may continue by bidding shorter major.

4 ♣, 4 ♦:

game force, slam chances. Responder must bid major singleton or void if he has one.

5 ♣, 5 ♦:

conclusive.

3 NT:

both majors stopped.

3 ♥, 3 ♠:

asking-bid *a, with clubs provisionally assumed as trumps.

1 ♠ Pass 1 NT Pass After 1 ♠-1 NT (game force, any distribution
 ? --but note other options: responder
 does not have requirements for 2 ♡,
 2 ♠. 3 ♣, 3 ♢, 3 ♡, 3 ♠, 3 NT)

OPENER

SHOWS

2 ♣

"C, 12-23." Responder may now bid --

3 ♣: club support (no major; offers choice of games).

jump shift: asking-bid, clubs trumps.

4 ♣: club fit, great strength, requests that opener ask.

2 ♠, 2 ♡, 2 ♢: genuine suit, 4 cards or more (suits shown in normal order). Opener, with any 12-15 points, must rebid 2 NT (or, with 4-card support and side singleton, jump raise). With 16-up, opener shows a side suit, raises responder with 4 cards, rebids 3 ♣ or jumps to 3 NT.

2 NT: balanced hand. Opener, with 12-15 points and any pattern, must rebid 3 NT. With more, he rebids in a side suit or, with none, 3 ♣ (over this 3 ♣, responder's 3 ♢ is a relay: opener bids 3 NT with 5-3-3-2, his shorter or lower major with 6 or more clubs).

2 ♠, 2 ♡,
2 ♢:

"A, 16-up" or "B, 19-20," not 4-3-3-3 -- natural, the cheaper or cheapest 4-card suit. If responder now bids a suit, it must be a 5-carder. Otherwise, responder bids 2 NT, and opener shows another suit (3 NT=♣; 3 ♣ is always 4-4-4-1 including clubs).

2 NT:

"B, 12-14." Responder may now bid --

any game: closes the auction.

3 ♣: asks opener to bid 4-card suits up-the-line (3 NT=only ♣). If responder bids a new suit over the reply, opener bids a second suit at the 3-level, bids 3 NT to deny one, or shows a fit with responder by ace-steps *c starting with 4 ♣.

3 ♠, 3 ♡, 3 ♢: natural, 5-carders. Opener denies support with a suit at the 3-level or 3 NT. He shows support by ace-steps *c starting at 4 ♣.

3 ♣, 3 ♢,
3 ♡, 3 ♠:

"A, 12-15" - the suit is opener's singleton. Responder can now sign off in any game contract, or bid a new suit under game, to which opener will respond in ace-steps *c.

3 NT:

"B, 19-20" with 4-3-3-3 shape. Responder may now bid 4 ♣ to find the 4-card suit (opener answers 4 NT with clubs).

1 ♠ Pass 2 ♥ Pass After 1 ♠--2 ♥, 2 ♠ (natural game-force, at
 ? least 5 cards including 2 of 3 top
 honors; with weaker suit, the 1 NT
 response is available)

OPENER SHOWS

2 NT: poorer support than Q-x or x-x-x.

3 ♠: doubleton honor.

3 ♠: tripleton honor.

raise: three small.

other major: four to an honor.

3 NT: four small.

4 ♠: "C, 19-up," no support.

Over 2 NT, responder may rebid his suit to ask for lesser support, or bid a new suit to ask for 4-card support there (opener supports with ace-steps *c starting at 4 ♠); or jump in a new suit to ask *a (but 4 ♥ after 2 ♠ is natural, 5-5); or jump-rebid in a solid suit.

Over rebids showing support, responder may relinquish control with a simple rebid or 3 NT. He may sign off at game (but opener, virtually unlimited, may continue). Or, he may make an asking-bid *a in a new suit.

1 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass After 1 ♠--3 ♠, 3 ♠ (natural game-force, likely
 ? 6-card suit including 2 of top 3
 honors)

OPENER SHOWS

3 NT: poorer support than Q-x or x-x-x, not a huge hand, nonforcing.

(3 ♥, 3 ♠ ace-steps *c showing support.
 4 ♠, 4 ♠)
 First 4 steps:

(4 ♥) poor support, huge hand.
 5th step:

When opener has shown support, responder's 3 NT is a trump-ask *b. Other development is as after the jump in major.

1 ♠ Pass 3♥ Pass After 1 ♠-3♥, 3♦, 3 NT (16-18 points, 4-3-3-3
? or 4-4-3-2; the response is in the
lower 4-card major if one is held)

OPENER

SHOWS

3♦: natural. Responder denies 4 spades with 3 NT, affirms with
ace-steps *c.

3 NT: signoff.

4♠: natural, asks for 3-card support. 4 NT denies, ace-steps affirm.

4♥: natural, asks for 4-card support. 4 NT denies, ace-steps affirm.

major raise: signoff.

4♥, 4♦: when unbid, asking bid *a with partner's major (or, if 3 NT,
clubs) as trumps.

4 NT: Blackwood.

After Interference Over 1 ♠

One-level overcall: new-suit bids (1♥ through 2♦) retain their meanings.
1 NT is still a game force, but it promises a stopper; the cue-bid is the game
force without a stopper. Double is for penalties, except over 1♦ (then,
double is negative: typically, a natural, free 1 NT response over 1♦).

Two-club overcall: 2 NT is natural, nonforcing; 3♠ is game force; new
suits are forcing for one round; double is for penalties.

Jump overcall: notrump is natural, nonforcing. New suits are one-round
forces, but a club bid is a nonforcing "raise." Cue-bid is a game-forcing
takeout. Double is penalties.

Double: redouble is the only strong bid (but not game-forcing). New suits
are nonforcing, and 1 NT shows club support, 7-10 points.

IV The 1 ♠, 1 ♥ or 1 ♦ Opening

(These openings are limited only by the failure to force to game with 2 ♣; they will be kept open on 3-4 points. Opener promises at least 5 cards in his suit, and denies equal length in a higher-ranking suit. The auctions following 1 ♦ differ slightly from those following the major openings because the response of 1 NT is not forcing in answer to 1 ♦, as it is to 1 ♥ or 1 ♠.)

Responses to 1 ♠, 1 ♥, 1 ♦

RESPONDER	SHOWS
Pass:	0 to 2, 3 points.
One-over-one:	normally 7 points or more (may be less to 1 ♠), forcing.
Two-over-one:	10 points or more, forcing.
Jump shift:	asking-bid *a.
1 NT:	4 to 9 points, nonforcing to 1 ♠ but forcing to 1 ♥ or 1 ♦ (if responder later proves to hold a suit he could have bid at the one-level, he has 4 to 6 points).
2 NT:	12 to 14 points, balanced, game force. May hold 4-card major.
3 NT:	15 to 17, balanced, at least Q-x in opener's suit.
Simple raise:	4-9 points to 1 ♠, 4-7 to 1 ♥, 1 ♦ (with 8-9, delayed raise--1 NT first).
Jump raise:	game force, slam chances in major. Suggests that opener ask.
Game raise:	strong trumps and distribution. To major, 4 ♣=1 ace; 4 ♦=2 aces; 4 major=0 aces.

By a passed hand, most bids retain their meaning but are, of course, limited. Jump shifts show maximum passes; in a minor to a major opening, they show 3-card support (and two in a minor tends to deny it).

1 ♥ Pass 1 ♦ Pass After one-over-one
?

OPENER SHOWS

- (2 ♥) simple rebid: 6 cards, 12 to 15, discouraging.
- (3 ♥, 4 ♥) jump rebid: game force; if opener double-jumps to game, that is weaker.
- (2 ♦) simple raise: 3-card or 4-card support, nonforcing, 12 to 15.
- (3 ♦, 4 ♦) jump raise: game force, 4-card support, slam interest, double-jump to game is weaker.

1 ♠ Pass 1 ♣ Pass continued
?

OPENER

SHOWS

(2 ♠) new suit: forcing, ambiguous at one-level but 16 points up at two-level.
(3 ♠) jump shift: asking-bid *a.
1 NT: 12 to 15, artificial, forcing, any pattern with only 5-card suit. Now responder may --

support opener: nonforcing at two-level; jump to three forcing; double-jump to four weaker.

rebid his suit: simple rebid nonforcing, jump rebid unlimited, game rebid weaker.

bid a new suit: nonforcing at two-level, game force (5-5) at three-level.

raise to 2 NT: game force. When opener has side 4-card suit, he bids it if higher-ranking, or rebids his first suit if second is lower-ranking. When opener has side 5-card suit, he bids it. With 5-3-3-2, opener supports responder's suit with 3 cards, raises to 3 NT with 2 cards.

2 NT: 17 points up, game force.

3 NT: gambling.

1 ♠ Pass 2 ♣ Pass After two-over-one
?

OPENER

SHOWS

(2 ♠) simple rebid: 12 to 14 points, nonforcing, could have side suit. Now, responder can force with a new suit, a jump rebid or with 2 NT. A raise is invitational.
(3 ♠, 4 ♠) jump rebid: game force, simple jump stronger than double-jump to game.
(3 ♠, 4 ♠) raise: in minors, nonforcing, while jump raise is very strong; in hearts, simple raise forcing, while jump to four is weaker.
(2 ♠) new suit: game force, 15 points or more.
(3 ♠) jump shift: asking-bid *a.
2 NT: game force, 15 points or more, probably 5-3-3-2.
3 NT: gambling.

1 ♡ Pass 1 NT Pass After 1 NT
?

OPENER

SHOWS

(2 ♡) simple rebid: signoff.

(3 ♡) jump rebid: highly invitational but nonforcing.

(2 ♠) new suit: nonforcing, no extra values unless reverse (then 16 points or more). Minor may be 3 cards after major opening.

(3 ♦) jump shift: natural, game force.

2 NT: 16-18 points after major, balanced but could be 5-4-2-2. After 1 ♦, more likely 18-19, but could be weaker if 5-4-2-2 or 6-3-2-2.

3 NT: 19 points up after major; gambling after 1 ♦.

Other Sequences

After 2 NT response (1 ♡-Pass-2 NT-Pass), opener's new suit shows unbalance, not extras. Opener's rebid of first suit gets ace-step responses *c with support, 3 NT without. Jump shift is asking-bid.

After simple raise, new suit is long-suit game try (natural, forcing, after 1 ♦-2 ♦).

After jump raise, new suit is asking-bid *a.

After Interference

Overcall:

free 1 NT: nonforcing, and opener's new suit is forcing.

double: penalties; if 1 NT or 2 NT (unusual) overcall, only strong action.

cue-bid: asking-bid *a; jump-cue is void plus fit, 8 to 11.

all other bids are unchanged in meaning.

Takeout double:

redouble: 10 points or more, only unlimited action.

1 NT: 7 to 10 points, fit for opener.

raises: preemptive, all levels.

new suit: weak misfit; jump shift preemptive.

pass: 0 to 9 points.

V The 1 NT Opening

(1 NT promises 15 to 18 points, balanced distribution, normally no 5-card major but could be 5 hearts with 16 points; and not 18 points if 5-3-3-2.)

Responses

- Pass: 0 to 7 balanced.
- 2 ♣: Stayman, normally 7 points up, but could be weak.
- 2 ♦: forces opener to rebid 2 ♠, and then pass responder's 2 ♣, 3 ♣ or 3 ♦--thus, usually a "prelude to signoff." But could be specialized strong bid if responder rebids 2 NT, 3 NT, or suit from 3 ♠ up.
- 2 ♠, 2 ♣: natural, nonforcing but invitational, 5-card suit, 5-6 points.
- 2 NT: natural, 8-9 points.
- 3 ♣, 3 ♦
3 ♠, 3 ♣: natural, game-forcing, slam interest. Opener bids 3 NT without support, and shows support by ace-steps *c.
- 3 NT: conclusive.
- 4 ♣, 4 ♦: transfers (♣=♠, ♦=♠); weaker than direct bid.
- 4 ♠, 4 ♣: 7 trump winners, nothing on side. Opener may bid on if maximum.
- 4 NT: Blackwood.
- 5 ♣, 5 ♦: conclusive.
- 1 NT Pass 2 ♣ Pass After 2 ♣, Stayman
?
- OPENER SHOWS
- 2 ♦ 15-16 points, both majors. Now, responder's 2-level bids are signoffs; his 3-level bids are forcing and get ace-step answers; 4 ♣, 4 ♦ are transfers and 4 ♠, 4 ♣ are to play.
- 2 ♠, 2 ♣: 15-16 points, that major. Now, responder may: sign off at 2 NT, 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ (opener may bid over 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ with good fit); or force with a simple raise or with the other major, and get ace-step responses; or pass; or bid game.
- 2 NT: 15-16 points, no major. Now, responder may: sign off in 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ (opener may continue with good fit); or force with 3 ♠ or 3 ♣ (opener, with 3-card support, gives ace-step answers); or bid game; or pass.

1 NT Pass 2 ♣ Pass continued
?

OPENER SHOWS

3 ♣ 17-18 points, no major. Now, responder may: sign off at 3 ♠ (he used Stayman on a bad hand); or force with 3 ♥, 3 ♠, 4 ♣, 4 ♠ (ace-step if fit, notrump otherwise); or sign off in game.

3 ♠: 17-18 points, both majors. Game bids are signoffs, and 3 ♥ and 3 ♠ get ace-steps.

3 ♥. 3 ♠: 17-18 points, that major. Responder may sign off in game, or bid 3 ♠, 4 ♣ or 4 ♠ asking for ace-steps with support.

1 NT Pass 2 ♠ Pass After 2 ♠ (forcing opener to rebid 2 ♥)
2 ♥ Pass ?

RESPONDER'S
REBID

SHOWS

Pass, 2 ♠ absolute signoff in the suit.
3 ♣, 3 ♠:

2 NT: asks opener to bid suits up-the-line (often 5-card minor plus 4-card major and slam interest). Suits that responder shows at 3-level are assumed to be 4 cards, at 4-level to be 5-cards. Opener supports, if he can, by ace-steps.

3 ♥, 3 ♠ slam try, suit that needs no support. Opener answers by cue-
4 ♣, 4 ♠: bidding his cheapest ace (the only cue-bidding sequence in the system).

3 NT: game-going ♣-♠ two-suiter (5 at least in each). Opener may: pass; give preference with 4 ♣, 4 ♠; or look for slam with 4 ♥ or 4 ♠, inquiring about losers in that suit (with 2 losers, 5 ♣; with 1 loser, 4 NT; with 0 losers, raise); or Blackwood with 4 NT.

After Interference

Overcall:

double: penalties (optional by opener).

simple suit bid: natural, competitive (even 2 ♠ over 2 ♣ overcall).

2 NT: invitational.

cue-bid: force, suggests opener bid a major.

jump: force, gets ace-steps with support; otherwise 3 NT with stopper or cue-bid without. 4 ♣, 4 ♠ are jumps, not transfers.

After (NT) Interference continued

Double:

redouble: only strong bid.

all suit bids: natural, but 4 ♣, 4 ♦ still transfers.

Double of 2 ♣, Stayman

pass: minimum, no major, no club stopper. With stopper, answers 2 NT as normal.

redouble: maximum, no major, has club stopper. Without stopper, answers 3 ♣ as normal.

VI The 2 ♥, 2 ♠ Openings

(Weak two-bids, 6-card suit, 6 to 10 points)

Raise is preemptive; game bid is conclusive. New suit is forcing, asks for support. 2 NT forces opener to rebid 3 ♣ and pass a new-suit bid; if responder then rebids three of opener's suit, this is a game invitation.

VII The 2 NT Opening

(A ♣-♦ two-suiter, at least 5 cards in each, 15 points or more--limited only by failure to open 2 ♣; if 1 ♣ or 1 ♦ opener shows up with minor two-suiter, he was too weak for 2 NT.)

Responses

- 3 ♣, 3 ♦: weak preference. Opener is asked to pass, but may make a weak try for game with a raise to four, or a strong try by bidding his shorter major.
- 4 ♣, 4 ♦: strong preference, nonforcing. Opener is invited to go on to game.
- 3 ♥, 3 ♠: game-forcing preference (♥=♣, ♠=♦). Opener now shows a minimum by bidding the indicated minor, or shows extra values by bidding 3 NT. Any other simple bid is an asking-bid *a; a jump in a major shows a void.
- 3 NT: natural, stoppers in majors.

VIII The 2 ♠ Opening

(The strong 2 ♠ opening is never shaded. With a balanced hand, the minimum is 24 points. With an unbalanced hand, the test is whether game is likely opposite a 4-3-3-3 bust.)

Responses to 2 ♠ (step responses showing controls--A=2, K=1)

RESPONSE	SHOWS
2 ♦:	0-1 or 5 or more controls.
2 ♥:	one ace.
2 ♠:	two kings.
2 NT:	three kings.
3 ♠:	one ace, one king.
3 ♦:	4 controls.
3 ♥, 3 ♠ 4 ♠, 4 ♦:	natural, king-queen-sixth or longer, no outside ace or king. Opener may: sign off in notrump; or bid his suit; or, he can jump in a suit to ask for a singleton there; or jump in notrump to ask for extra length or side queens.

Development

With a balanced hand, opener rebids cheaply in notrump, forcing except over 2 ♦ (here, opener must rebid 3 NT with 26-up). Now, responder may: sign off by raising notrump; or bid clubs to ask for majors (♦=both, NT=neither); or bid a 5-card suit (here, a new suit by opener is an asking-bid *a, while a raise is forcing--unless the response was 2 ♦--and asks for suit quality by steps: the first step shows 0-1 points in the suit, the second step 2 points, etc.).

With an unbalanced hand, opener bids his suit or suits in normal order. Responder must raise with 3 cards; otherwise, he bids a 5-card suit or notrump. If he bids a new suit and opener raises, this asks for suit-quality steps above.

Opener can bid 4 NT directly over the control-showing response to ask responder to identify his controls (with two aces or kings, the cheaper first; with an ace and a king, the ace first).

IX The 2 \diamond Opening

(2 \diamond shows a balanced hand of 21 to 23 points, or 20 to 22 if the pattern is 5-3-3-2. All 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 hands of appropriate strength must be opened 2 \diamond .)

Responses

- 2 \heartsuit : artificial, asks opener's pattern. Probably searching for 4-4 fit. Opener answers--
- 2 \diamond : 5-3-3-2 shape. Now, 2 NT tells opener to bid his long suit.
- 2 NT: 4-3-3-3 shape. Now, 3 \clubsuit asks for the long suit (3 NT= \clubsuit).
- 3 \clubsuit , 3 \diamond , 3 \heartsuit , 3 NT: 4-4-3-2, cheaper 4-card suit (3 NT= \clubsuit - \diamond). Now, relay asks for other suit (3 NT=relay suit).
- 2 \diamond : artificial, forces opener to rebid 2 NT and pass at his next turn. Used to play notrump from the right side, or to sign off at the three-level.
- 2 NT: artificial, asks opener to bid 4-card suit in which he has 2 of 3 top honors, or to jump in a good 5-card suit. Used to avoid slam in weak suit.
- 3 \clubsuit , 3 \diamond
3 \heartsuit , 3 \spadesuit : natural, long strong suit. Opener bids 3 NT without support as good as Q-J, Q-x-x, or x-x-x-x. With support, he gives ace-steps *c. If responder's long suit is weak, he will bid 2 \heartsuit first and then show his suit.
- game: conclusive.
- 4 \clubsuit , 4 \diamond : transfers to 4 \heartsuit , 4 \spadesuit .

In all sequences in which opener shows support, he does so by ace-steps.

X Defensive Bidding

Takeout Double

Strongly major-oriented (double of a major guarantees 4 cards in other; double of minor guarantees at least 4-3 in majors). Simple response weak (may be 3-card major), jump response nonforcing, cue-bid only game force.

Overcall

Variable at one-level, good suit at two-level. Cue-bid response is general force, game interest. 2 NT response forcing. Limit jump raise, new suits nonforcing.

Jump Overcall

Strong, may be two-suiter. New suit in response forcing.

Cue-Bid

Game force (except 1 ♠-2 ♠, which is natural; 2 NT is the "cue-bid" over 1 ♠). However, when opponents have bid two suits, cue-bid shows weak two-suiter in missing suits, shortness in suit bid (double shows the same suits but more high cards).

Notrump Overcalls

1 NT is 15-18, 2 NT is unusual, 3 NT is gambling.

Over 1 NT

Double is for penalties. 2 ♠ is takeout, primarily for majors (responder's only force is 2 NT). Overcalls are distributional, jump overcalls are strong. 2 NT is game-going "cue-bid."

Over Preempts

Weak 2's: Double is for penalties in direct position, for majors in reopening seat. 3 ♠ is for takeout in either position (not major oriented in 4th seat).

Three-bids: Double is penalties in both positions, and the cheaper minor is for takeout.

Four-bids: Double is for penalties, and 4 NT is for takeout (may be two-suiter).

Balancing

Simple overcall denies opening bid. Jump overcall is intermediate. 1 NT shows 9 to 12. 2 NT shows 17 to 20. Double followed by notrump shows 13 to 16.

XI Slam Bidding

There are almost no control-showing cue-bids in the system. A bid that sounds like a cue-bid (1 ♠--3 ♠, 4 ♠) is a Culbertson Asking-Bid; if it sounds like an advance cue-bid (1 NT--3 ♠, 4 ♠), it is likely to be a step response showing the number of aces. Odd-sounding notrump bids (1 ♥--3 ♥, 3 NT), and notrump bids after asking are trump-asks. These three devices carry most of the load, but Blackwood and the Grand Slam Force are available also.

(A) Asking-Bids

A bid is an "asking-bid" if it is: (1) a jump shift over a legitimate suit bid, where a simple shift would be forcing (1 ♥--2 ♠, but not by a passed hand --1 ♠ would be nonforcing--; and not over 1 ♠--not a real suit); or (2) a new suit after a firm trump agreement (1 ♠--1 ♠, 3 ♠--4 ♠); or (3) the cue-bid by opener or responder of overcaller's suit, after a real suit has been bid (1 ♥--1 ♠--2 ♠, but not 1 NT--2 ♠--3 ♠). If no trump suit has been explicitly agreed, the asking-bid generally fixes partner's last bid as trumps.

Unbalanced hands are most suitable to do the asking, while balanced hands should tend to make a strong raise and then reply to asking-bids. An unbalanced hand will often ask in the long side suit.

The response to an asking-bid shows: (a) whether or not responder has a first- or second-round control in the asked suit, and (b) what aces he holds. The negative response is always the minimum bid in the agreed trump suit; any other response is positive. For the table below, assume that the auction has been 1 ♥--3 ♥, 3 ♠ -- that is, hearts are trumps, and the ask is in spades.

RESPONSE	SHOWS
4 ♥:	<u>signoff in trumps</u> . No control in spades; or second-round spade control but no ace.
4 ♠:	<u>raise of ask suit</u> . Ace or void in spades, no other ace.
4 ♣:	<u>new suit</u> . King, singleton or void in spades plus the club ace (and no other).
5 ♥:	<u>jump in trumps</u> . King, singleton or void in spades plus the trump ace (and no other).
3 NT:	<u>minimum notrump</u> . King of spades plus two other aces, or ace of spades plus one other ace.
4 NT:	<u>jump in notrump</u> . King or singleton spade plus three other aces, or ace of spades plus two other aces.
5 ♠:	<u>jump in new suit</u> . Singleton spade plus two other aces, of which diamonds is the cheaper.
5 ♣:	<u>jump in ask suit</u> . Void in spades plus two aces.
5 NT:	<u>double-jump in notrump</u> . Four aces.
6 ♥:	<u>double-jump in trumps</u> . Void in spades plus three aces.

(A) Asking-Bids continued

Summary: Without control in the asked suit or without an ace, sign off in trumps. With control and one ace: bid the suit of the ace, jumping if it is trumps. With two aces and control: bid notrump, but if the control is a singleton, with two outside aces jump in the cheaper; and if the control is a void, jump in the ask suit. With three aces and control, jump in notrump; but if the control is a void, double-jump in trumps. With four aces, double-jump in notrump.

Note: When responder is limited to below opening-bid strength (he passed originally, for instance), there are two modifications: with second-round spade control and no ace, he bids notrump instead of signing off; with the ace of spades plus another ace, or king of spades plus two other aces, he jumps in notrump instead of bidding the minimum notrump. When the opening is 2 ♠, responder always gives these "weak-hand" replies.

Over any reply, a "subsequent ask" may be made in another suit. If the reply was negative, the responses to the new ask are identical to those above. However, if the reply was positive the asker is assumed to know the location of first-round controls, and so to be asking about second-round controls. The responses: without second-round control in the asked suit, sign off in trumps; with that second-round control and no other, bid notrump; with that second-round control plus other or others, bid the suit of the cheaper; with a void in the asked suit, raise the ask.

Note: The king of trumps is never an "other" second-round control. It is shown only in answer to trump-asks.

A "subsequent ask" in the same suit, a "repeat ask," inquires: about second-round control in the asked suit when first-round control (and no other ace) has been promised; about third-round control when specifically second-round has been promised; and it asks partner to clarify his aces when he has shown two or three.

(B) Trump-Asks

The ace of trumps is shown in response to normal asking-bids, but the king and queen of trumps are never so shown. Any notrump bid after firm suit agreement, or after previously making an asking-bid, is a trump-ask. Again, the negative response is a minimum return to the trump suit. The positive responses are by steps, skipping over trumps.

(B) Trump-Asks continued

1 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass
 3 NT Pass ?

BID	STEP	SHOWS
4 ♣	1	queen of trumps
4 ♦	2	king of trumps
4 ♠	3	king of trumps plus an undisclosed trump
4 NT	4	king-queen of trumps
5 ♣	5	king-queen of trumps plus an undisclosed trump
4 ♠	signoff	no king or queen of trumps

(C) Ace-Steps

In most game-forcing auctions in which one partner is going to support the other, he does so by showing how many aces he holds in Blackwood-like steps. When he is known to have support (say, he has shown both majors in answer to Stayman, and partner then bids 3 ♠), the steps start with the next higher bid; when support is unknown, the steps skip over notrump, the denial; usually the steps start at 4 ♣, reserving all three-level bids for denial of support.

STEP	SHOWS
1:	0 or 4 aces
2:	1 ace
3:	2 aces
4:	3 aces

When the supporter is known to be too weak to hold four aces (when he has shown a balanced 12-14, for instance): step 1 is 0 or 3 aces, step 2 is one ace, step 3 is 2 aces.

When the responder to an asking bid has previously shown aces by steps, he shows kings to the asking-bid, much as to a "subsequent ask."

When a bid of 4 NT immediately follows an ace-step response that shows 1, 2 or 3 aces, it asks for identification of aces: with 1, bid its suit; with 3, bid the suit of the missing ace; with 2, bid the cheaper ace and show the other over partner's relay.

(D) Grand Slam Force

Although in certain notrump auctions the jump to 5 NT is quantitative, most jumps to 5 NT ask partner to bid seven in the agreed suit (or last-bid suit) holding 2 of the 3 top trump honors, or to sign off in trumps otherwise. Replies under six of the trump suit are used to show one-honor holdings with extra length.

(E) Blackwood

The bid of 4 NT can have many different meanings in the system, but it is never quantitative. If it is not a response to an asking-bid, or a trump-ask, or a request for ace-identification, or an ace-step, or a denial of support, or a bid that shows clubs, or a signoff, then there is a fighting chance that it is Blackwood.

Responses are standard, except that the inquiry for kings is 5 NT or the lowest unbid suit, whichever is cheaper. Kings are then shown by steps (1st step=0, 2nd step=1...5th step=4).

EXAMPLES

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ Ax	♠ xx	♠ Axx	♠ x
♥ xxx	♥ Ax	♥ AKQ	♥ Jxxxxx
♦ AJxxxx	♦ Kxxx	♦ Axxx	♦ KQx
♣ Kx	♣ AQJ10x	♣ Axx	♣ KQx
Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦ ^a	3♣ ^b	2♦ ^a	3♥ ^b
3NT ^c	5NT ^d	3♦ ^c	3NT ^d
6♣ ^e	7NT	4NT ^e	7NT

- a. 5 cards or more
- b. asking-bid in clubs, diamonds trumps
- c. two aces plus club king
- d. grand slam force
- e. one honor, a sixth diamond

- a. 21-23, balanced
- b. forcing, asks for support
- c. 1 step; support plus 0 or 4 aces
- d. trump-ask
- e. 4 steps; king-queen