

Sandwich NT/2NT, Hess Cue Bids, Takeout Doubles, and Overcalls

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On the Ocala Web site, I presented a proposed 2/1 Convention Card that included within the section **Other Conventional Calls**, the conventions Sandwich NT/2NT and Hess Cue Bids. When suggesting the convention card, it is essential that one play conventions that “blend” together. In this “Bridge Bit”, I show how the Sandwich 1NT/2NT, Hess Cue bids, Takeout Doubles and Overcalls may be used to show the size and shape of your hand to your partner.

Sandwich NT/2NT

The bid of 1NT is usually made in the fourth seat after your partner has passed and the opponents have bid two suits at the one level. It must be alerted and shows 5-5 or better in the unbid suits and less than a full opener. You are usually willing to play at the 2-level (8 losers nonvulnerable, 7 losers vulnerable).

With the same distribution (5-5 or better) and 16+ high card point, bid 2NT (also called a Roman Jump Overcall). Now you are willing to play at the 3-level.

Example 1: 1♦/pass/1♥/1NT with KJxxx/x/xx/QJxxx (♠/♥/♦/♣)

Suppose instead of the hand in the Example 1, we have the hand, Example 2: KQxxx/K/xx/AKJxx. Now one would bid 2NT.

When one is 4-4 in the two unbid suits or 5-4 in the unbid suit, the sandwich NT bids are replaced by a Takeout Double or a Hess Cue Bid.

Takeout Double

The takeout double has more hcp and less shape. For example 1, the distribution may be: (KQxx/x/xx/AKJx), more than an opening hand when partner is forced to bid at the 3-level, and the opponents have bid hearts and diamonds. But, if forced to bid at only the 2-level, the doubler has only an opening hand and supports the suits not bid with at least 4 cards.

Hess Cue Bids (sometimes called High/Lo bids)

When the opponents have bid two different suits, then a cue bid of the higher ranking suit shows 5 cards in the higher unbid suit and four cards in the lower unbid suit. A cue bid of the lower bid suit shows five cards in the lower bid suit and four cards in the higher unbid suit. This bid is used instead of the 2NT bid to show shape and extra values.

Overcalls

The above bids have been used to represent shape and values. In general, the shapelier the hand, the lighter the values can be. Thus, an overcall of an unbid suit at the 2-level will show length in the suit with little value. As in the case of the sandwich NT bid, if the bid is made at the 2-level one must again have perhaps 8 losers nonvulnerable and 7 losers vulnerable. A 3-level bid requires extra values.

Alternatively, one may use power doubles to show 16+ hands and use 1NT as the takeout bid with 10-15 HCP. The power double is usually only for the majors and is forcing for one round, a double followed by the bid of a minor shows a 5-card minor and a 4-card major and is not forcing. It is called an Equal Level Conversion (ELC) double.

Some Examples:

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| 1♦/pass/1♥/1NT | shows Clubs and Spades with 5-5 shape, but not strength. |
| 1♦/pass/1♥/double | shows Clubs and Spades with 4-4 shape and opening values. |
| Pass/1♣/pass 1♠/1NT | shows Diamonds and Hearts with 5-5 shape, but not strength. |
| Pass/1♠/pass/2♣/2NT | shows Diamonds and Hearts with 5-5 shape and 16+hcps. |
| Pass/1♠/pass/2♣/2♠ | shows Hearts and Diamonds with 5-4 shape and 16+hcps. |
| Pass/1♠/pass/2♣/3♣ | shows Diamonds and Hearts with 5-4 shape and 16+hcps. |

Final Note:

In the sequence 1♣ pass 1♠ pass / pass 1NT, the 1NT bid is not Sandwich but a balancing notrump bid; it shows some values (10-14/15) and you do not want the opponents to play at the 1-level. For this notump bid, systems are usually played as OFF. Partner may pass with stoppers or bid a suit with at least 4 cards since you may be in a 4-3 fit at the 2-level.