

RESPONDING TO 1 MAJOR

When you know that you have an 8 card (or more) fit with partners major it is normally correct to play in that suit – a notable exception might be when it is more likely to nine tricks in 3NT rather than the ten required for a major game. Generally however you will want to agree the major suit and to do so you and partner need to understand the relative combined strength of both your hands so you both know whether:-

- you are in game contract, or
- a part score, or
- potential slam, or
- need further information

It cannot be over emphasised that you MUST have a disciplined understanding that you and partner both follow. If you do not, partner will be on a guess and you will NEVER be consistent in your bidding. The principles surrounding agreement of partners major are fundamental and possibly amongst the most important you should follow. Below I recommend one approach. Whatever approach you adopt consistency, discipline and comprehensiveness of responses are paramount.

	Your partner has opened 1♥		Your partner has opened 1♠
Response	Meaning	Response	Meaning
1NT	3 or less support, no 4 card spades, 6-10/11hcp	1NT	Less than 3 spades, 5-10/11hcp
2♥	4 card support. 5-8 hcp, poor hand	2♠	5-8hcp 3+ card support *
3♥	4 card support, 9-11, more pre-emptive in style	3♠	4 card support, 9-11, more pre-emptive in style
2N	See later	2N	See later
3♠/4♣/4♦	Splinter, 4 card support, good shape and hcp's for at least game, maybe more.	3♥/4♣/4♦	Splinter, 4 card support, good shape and hcp's for at least game, maybe more

* if responder has three card support it is better to bid 2♠ than give a 1NT response. Partner must be aware!

When VUL ensure you have at least 6 points before you respond and if opps interfere when you are VUL give min raise to 2 level with 7-9 points; 3 level with 10-11 else pass (partner will X with a strong hand.)

JACOBY 2NT RESPONSE (there are many variations of the continuances – there are two suggestions made here)

- on an unpassed hand shows 4 card+ support and Game Forcing.
- On a passed hand shows a good raise to 3+ level (4+ card support) and probably 11 hcp's or excellent 10hcp.

IMPORTANT: The Jacoby 2NT bid agrees the major even where opps intervene!! It is never natural.

NOTE: responses are alertable as is the 2NT bid.

After 1M - 2NT what should opener rebid?

Suggestion 1 (you can play others!)

opener describes his hand following similar principles to OGUST (adjusted for higher point count of course!)

- With normal hand 12 – 15 opener bids 3♣ showing poor suit (less than 2 of Top Hons from AKQ)(min points /min honours)
- With normal hand 12 – 15 opener bids 3♦ showing good suit (2 or more TH)(min / max)
- With excellent 15 or 16+ opener bids 3♥ showing poor suit (max / min)
- With excellent 15 or 16+ opener bids 3♠ showing good suit. (max / max)

After this exchange of information it should be clear if game or more is 'on'. Cue bids or 4NT can follow if appropriate.

Example:

<p>♠ KJ95 ♥ AJT ♦ KQ95 ♣ K4</p> <p>♠ 7 ♥ Q32 ♦ 743 ♣ AQ7653</p> <p>♠ 843 ♥ 954 ♦ JT2 ♣ JT82</p> <p>♠ AQT62 ♥ K876 ♦ A86 ♣ 9</p>	<p>Dealer S</p> <p>1♠ – 2♣ – 2NT – P 3♦ (min points / max hons) – P – 3♥ (cue bid) – P 4♣ (cue) – P – 4♦ – P 6♠</p>
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Suggestion 2 (you can play others!)

A minimum response of 3 of the major is exactly what it says – unless the 2NT bidder has a really strong hand the contract is likely to end at 4M

Any other bid is a cue bid (eg 3♦) and shows a strong hand (16+) and shows lowest first or second round control. The 2NT bidder can now decide whether to continue the cue bidding sequence showing controls (up to 4M level or beyond) but either player can bid game if no other cue bidding or if it is clear no slam is possible. RKCB can be used if appropriate – remember cue bidding other suits tells you nothing about the trump suit!

TRIAL BIDS

On a sequence of 1M – 2M from partner and you know you can make 3M and are close to game:- A trial bid in another suit asks for help ie "can you stop more than 2 tricks in this suit?" If you can bid 4M. Examples:

Bidding has gone 1♠ – 2♠ and opener holds the hand below

<p>♠ A J 9 6 4 ♥ K J ♦ 10 9 7 A ♣ A Q 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3♦</p>	<p>♠ A K 9 7 5 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K Q 8 5 B ♣ 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3♥</p>
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Hand **A**: bid 3♦ - asks for help in Diamonds. If you can help bid 4♠ else 3♠

Hand **B**: 3♥ asks for help in Hearts, etc

PUPPET & MUPPET STAYMAN

Opening 2NT may describe your flattish excellent hand but:-

1. It takes up a lot of bidding space
2. It is quite likely it may include a five card major
3. It is also quite possible it includes one or both four card majors
4. It is one of the biggest killers of enabling partnerships to bid minor suit slams

We can minimise these problems by using puppet or muppet stayman. These conventions are also designed to ensure 4-4 and 5-3 fits are found and conceal the strong hand from opps prying eyes!

PUPPET VARIATION:

So, partner opens 2NT and you respond 3♣ asking opener for 4 or 5 card majors. Opener's reply is as follows:-

A) 3♦ = no 5 card major, but has either 4♥ and / or 4♠.

The 3♣ bidder then shows his major suit holding as follows: -

- 3♥ shows 4♠
- 3♠ shows 4♥
- 3NT shows no 4 card major, and is to play * note 1
- 4♣ shows both majors and interest in slam
- 4♦ shows both majors and no slam interest

Note 1: The 3♣ bidder may have gone this route because he may have a 3 card major and very distributional hand with singleton / weak doubleton etc and was hoping to find a 5-3 major suit fit

B) 3♥/♠ 5 card suit.

C) 3NT no 4 or 5 card major.

Note 3: Some players of strong no trump systems who might open 1NT with a 5CM also use puppet stayman over 1NT where 2♣ asks if opener has a 5 card major etc etc etc. Those 5CM players who would never open 1NT with a 5CM use 2♣ to ask only about 4 card majors.

After 2NT opening other continuations by **responder** are:-

- 3♦ transfer to ♥
- 3♥ transfer to ♠
- 3♠ transfer to 3NT or to indicate the start of a minor slam auction
- 3NT shows at least five ♠ and at least four ♥

MUPPET VARIATION (there are others)

3♣ asks partner to describe their hand

3♦ shows at least one 4 card major. If Responder was looking for a 4 - 4 fit they now bid the major they do not have or bid 4♦ to tell partner to pick the major. (note: Responder could also have bid 3♣ to give Opener the chance to show a 5 card major)

3♥ denies a 4 or 5 card major – responder now bids 3NT to SHOW five spades and 3♠ when he does NOT have five spades

3♠ shows 5 spades.

3NT shows 5 hearts. Responder bids 4♦ to transfer to hearts if that is where they want to play.

Why does this version of Puppet Stayman reverse the meaning of the 3♥ and 3NT bids:

When Opener bids 3♥ to deny a 4 or 5 card major it gives Responder the room to show 5 spades and always right sides the contract. Responder would bid like this with 5 spades and 4 hearts or 5 spades and 3 hearts. (therefore leaving free the bid of 3♠ over 2NT for any other use)

The Rule of 11

This rule enables a defender to determine declarer's high card holding when partner has led 4th best and dummy comes into view: -

♠ K1074
♥ 654
♦ Q973
♣ KJ

S is declarer in 3NT and leads the ♠6. ♠4 is played from dummy which card do you play?

N	♠ Q92
W	♥ J832
E	♦ AJ62
S	♣ 109

If partner leads 4th highest then the rule of 11 applies. You subtract the pips of partner's card from 11 and the number left is the number of cards that are out higher than partner's card. Since you can see your cards and dummy's you can calculate the number of higher cards that declarer has.

So in this case with the 6 led that leaves 5 higher cards out. You have 2 of them and dummy has 3. Therefore declarer has none and you can play the deuce.

Partner has led the ♠6 from ♠AJ86. The two unknown ♠'s are the ♠5 and ♠3 which either partner or declarer may hold.

ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD

A slam convention for SUIT contracts that is superior to Blackwood. Its principles are simple – there are 5 key cards, the 4 Aces plus the K of trumps.

When to use it?

- When cue bidding will not give you the answers you need
- When trumps are agreed
- After a cue bid sequence, trumps already agreed, where you need info about the key cards

So, after 4NT RKCB what are the responses? I play 3014 (you can play 1430 where the ♣ and ♦ responses are reversed) where:-

5♣ = 0 or 3 key cards

5♦ = 1 or 4 key cards

5♥ = 2 key cards WITHOUT the Q trumps

5♠ = 2 key cards PLUS the Q trumps

After the 5♣ or 5♦ response it sometimes happens that partner will want to know if you hold the Q trumps ie is the trump suit solid? Partner finds this out by bidding the lowest non trump suit. You bid 6 of the trump suit if you hold the Q trumps and 5 if not. Eg trumps are **spades**

4NT - 5♦

5♥ (do you have Q spades?) - 5♠ = NO ; 6♠ = YES

hearts are trumps:

4NT - 5♣

5♦ (do you have Q trumps?) - 5♥ = NO ; 6♥ = YES

This is known as the "Queen Ask". It is NOT often used but may be useful. It is included here as it forms part of the RKCB convention. Do not ask for Q if a negative response pushes you above 6 of the trump suit!!!!

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Similarly, rarely used, after 4NT responses (eg 4NT - 5♣/♦/♥/♠) a bid of 5NT asks for Kings. There are lots of conventions as to what 5NT then means. Some reply with the number of Kings held EXCLUDING the K of trumps (it has already been included in your reply to 4NT)

6♣ = 0 (excluding K trumps)

6♦ = 1 king (excluding K trumps)

6♥ = 2 kings (excluding K trumps)

6♠ = 3 kings (excluding K trumps)

Others respond to 5NT by bidding lowest ranking non trump king.

There are many conventions for the 5NT follow up – it is only used rarely and always for a GRAND SLAM try. You must NEVER bid 5NT unless you KNOW your side holds ALL FIVE key cards.

REMEMBER – SLAM CONVENTIONS AND CUE BIDDING POTENTIAL SLAMS ARE TO KEEP YOU OUT OF BAD SLAMS NOT TO GET YOU INTO THEM!!!

TWO SUITED OVERCALLS

There are many conventions: 4 are shown here:-

NOTE: whether against suit or against 1NT openings 2 suited overcalls should always show **at least** 5 / 4 in the two suits and preferably at least 5 / 5.

1. MICHAELS.

OPPs OPEN	WE BID	MEANING
1♣	2♣	BOTH majors (forcing)
1♦	2♦	BOTH majors (forcing)
1♥	2♥	♠ and a minor (forcing) (partner bids 2NT to ask which minor)
1♠	2♠	♥ and a minor (forcing) (partner bids 2NT to ask which minor)

2NT over any opps opening 1 level bid shows 2 lowest suits.

There are a large number of variations in Ghestem bids all of which show basically the same things but use different suits to show them – two are illustrated here:

2. GHESTEM (CRO) (Colour, Rank, Odd)

If opponents open 1♣ then

2♣ = ♦ & ♥ (C)

2NT = ♥ & ♠ (R)

3♣ = ♦ & ♠ (O)

If opponents open 1♦ then

2♦ = ♣ & ♠

2NT = ♠ & ♥

3♣ = ♥ & ♣

If opponents open 1♥ then

2♥ = ♣ & ♠

2NT = ♣ & ♦

3♣ = ♦ & ♠

If opponents open 1♠ then

2♠ = ♦ & ♥

2NT = ♣ & ♦

3♣ = ♣ & ♥

3. GHESTEM (ELH) (Extremes, Lowest, Highest)

If opponents open 1♣ then

2♣ = ♦ & ♠ (E)

2NT = ♦ & ♥ (L)

2♦ = ♥ & ♠ (H)

If opponents open 1♦ then

2♦ = ♣ & ♠ (E)

2NT = ♣ & ♥ (L)

3♣ = ♥ & ♠ (H)

If opponents open 1♥ then

2♥ = ♣ & ♠

2NT = ♣ & ♦

3♣ = ♦ & ♠

If opponents open 1♠ then

2♠ = ♣ & ♥

2NT = ♣ & ♦

3♣ = ♦ & ♥

4. MULTI-LANDY:- Over opps 1NT (note: Capelletti convention reverses the ♣ and ♦ responses)

OPPs OPEN WE BID

MEANING

1NT 2♣

BOTH majors (forcing)

1NT 2♦

(Forcing) partner has a single suited M hand (6+ cards). Bid 2♥ as a relay which can be passed or corrected eg 1NT – 2♦ - P - 2♥ now can be passed or corrected to 2♠

1NT 2♥

Non forcing – partner may pass. Shows ♥ and a minor; partner bids 2NT to ask which minor

1NT 2♠

Non forcing – partner may pass. Shows ♠ and a minor; partner bids 2NT to ask which minor

1NT 2NT

(Forcing) – shows both minors