

ACOL STRONG 2'S

'Strong two' bids have largely been superseded by 'weak two' bids (either Benjaminised, Multi, or Lucas variations), but many average club players still prefer the traditional method, and these are also best taught to beginners. However after only limited experience, players should consider changing to the weaker variety.

Acol strong two bids should show hands of 'power and quality'. Hence the following basic criteria for these openings

1. At least eight playing tricks with the designated suit as trumps (with 9 ½ playing tricks, more consideration should be given to opening 2♣).
2. At least a six card suit. (Many players would open with two five card suits and sufficient playing strength. I would prefer to open these hands with 2♣ if possible).
3. Defensive strength in addition to playing strength. This is best measured by the 'Quick Trick' count (A = 1; AK = 2; K = ½; KQ = 1; AQ = 1½). The hand should contain a minimum of 4 Quick Tricks (and preferably 4½).
4. The bids are 100% forcing for one round, and as far as three of the first suit.

(Note – 1. The same criteria apply when opening 2♣ (or 2♦) in Benjaminised Acol (reverse)).

2. No mention of points – although the eight tricks and the QT count should indicate that there should be a minimum of 16 points).

Exercises:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) ♠ AKQ1053
♥ A5
♦ KQJ
♣ 52 | b) ♠ AKQ8432
♥ 3
♦ AQ3
♣ A8 | c) ♠ AQJ97653
♥ A6
♦ 43
♣ 10 | d) ♠ 7
♥ AKJ
♦ AKQ864
♣ AJ |
| e) ♠ AKQ863
♥ AK62
♦ A9
♣ 5 | f) ♠ AKQ743
♥ AQ2
♦ Q7
♣ 74 | g) ♠ AKQJ973
♥ 4
♦ AK
♣ A76 | h) ♠ AKQJ973
♥ 4
♦ AK
♣ K76 |

- a) 2♠ - meets all the requirements.
- b) 2♠ – slightly better than 2♣ with only 4½ QTs, Even over a negative 2NT response, jump to 4♠.
- c) 4♠ – the hand possesses 8 playing tricks but lacks defensive strength (only 2 ½ QTs).
- d) 2♦ – forcing for one round. Better than 2♣, in that it enables the main feature of the hand to be described more accurately, rather than 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦, which indicates the length but not necessarily the same strength in the diamond suit. If the diamond suit had been a major, 2♣ is a possibility, since ten tricks are virtually guaranteed.
- e) 2♠ – borderline, but slightly preferable to 2♣ since game is not guaranteed despite 5QTs. Over 2♠ - 2NT (negative), 3♥ is still forcing, but if partner now bids 3♠ this can be passed. Replace a small heart with the queen, and the hand should now be opened with 2♣.
- f) 1♠ – over any non-spade response from partner rebid 3♠ (forcing if partner had bid at the two level, but only highly invitational over 1NT). The hand is not quite up to strength in defensive values for a 2♠ opening (only 3½ QTs).
- g) 2♣ – ten tricks almost guaranteed.

h) 2♠ – similar to g), but the K♣ instead of the A♣ demotes the hand from 5QTs to 4½ QTs (similar to hand b)).

Responses:

- a) 0-6 points with no support for opener's suit, bid 2NT.
- b) A single raise shows trump support and at least one ace or void. **This bid is stronger than a direct jump to game, and is game forcing.**
- c) A double raise (i.e. jump to game over a major), shows trump support and about 6+ points. It should deny an ace (but not always possible).
- d) A change of suit shows lack of support for opener, a good (5+card) suit and at least 1½ QTs.
- e) A jump to 3NT shows a fairly balanced hand 7-10 points, with two cards in opener's suit

Exercises:

- in response to partner's opening 2♥ bid:

a)	♠ J752 ♥ 107 ♦ J87 ♣ 8654	b)	♠ K3 ♥ J973 ♦ 108543 ♣ 63	c)	♠ 7 ♥ Q82 ♦ AJ643 ♣ K1064	d)	♠ K83 ♥ 10753 ♦ Q8 ♣ K954
e)	♠ AJ974 ♥ 8 ♦ 10832 ♣ K85	f)	♠ AQ10962 ♥ 63 ♦ 754 ♣ 62	g)	♠ K106 ♥ 74 ♦ QJ73 ♣ K763		

- a) 2NT - (negative 0-6 points)
- b) 2NT - despite the heart support; you will get the chance to bid again and show the hearts.
- c) 3♥ - forward going bid showing an ace.
- d) 4♥ - a shut-out bid
- e) 2♠ - a reasonable spade suit and 1½ QTs.
- f) 2♠ - despite only 6 points, the good six card suit and 1½ QTs make this worth a positive.
- g) 3NT - 9 points balanced.

(Note – some partnerships play 'Herbert Negative' responses, but these are for players with more experience).

Opener's Rebids

- after a negative 2NT

- a) – repeating the suit suggests a six card suit and little extra
- b) – bidding a lower suit at the three level asks for preference. This should be forcing to at least three of the opening suit.
- c) – a jump in a lower ranking suit shows a good five card suit and asks for preference at the game level.

- after a positive response

- a) – if partner raises to three of opener's suit, opener's raise to four limits the hand to eight playing tricks. Any other suit bid is a cue bid with slam interest.
- b) – if partner changes the suit, a single raise agrees the suit, and leaves room for slam investigation with extra values.