

Opening strong hands playing Benji Acol

If you play Benji Acol all strong and very strong hands are opened with either 2♣ or 2♦.

You still play "weak twos" in the majors using opening bids of 2♥ and 2♠ to show a suit of six cards long and about 6 - 10 hcp.

The really "big" hand is opened with a bid of 2♦, rather than conventional Acol, which uses 2♣ to show the "big" hand.

Hands which in conventional Acol would be opened with a "strong two" are all opened 2♣ regardless of which suit you have.

Requirements for an opening bid of 2♦:

Any hand of 23 or more points **OR** Any hand which is "game forcing", i.e. you know you will be able to make at least game if partner has a Yarborough with poor support for your suit.

Examples might be:

♠ A Q 4 2

♥ K Q 3

♦ K Q J 7

♣ A K

♠ K Q 6

♥ A K Q J

♦ A K Q J 8

♣ 7

♠ 2

♥ A K Q 10 7 4 2

♦ A

♣ K Q J 10

♠ A K Q 10 2

♥ A 3

♦ void

♣ A K J 10 8 7

Requirements for an opening bid of 2♣:

Any hand of 21 - 22 points balanced **OR** Any hand which has 8 playing tricks if a particular suit is trumps.

This is very useful on unbalanced hands which have, say, 18+ points.

Examples might be:

♠ K J 9

♥ A K 6 5

♦ A K J 8

♣ K 7

♠ 5 3

♥ A K

♦ K Q J 10 9 5

♣ K Q 4

♠ A Q J 10 8 6

♥ A 9

♦ K Q J 8

♣ 4

♠ A 6

♥ Q J 10 8 7 5 3

♦ A 9

♣ A K

What should responder reply?

Various people play different types of response to these opening bids. At present we would recommend to keep it simple, so with **ALL** hands just bid the next suit up as a "relay", whatever you hold (i.e. whether your hand is quite good or a balanced Yarborough)

So if partner opens 2♣ you should **ALWAYS** respond 2♦

And if partner opens 2♦ you should **ALWAYS** respond 2♥

(Note that both the opening bid and the reply should be alerted for the benefit of your opponents)

How should the auction develop over a 2♣ opening?

If opener has a balanced hand of 21 – 22 hcp he should bid 2NT.

This is not forcing and responder may pass. It is usual to play exactly the same things here that you play over an opening of 2NT (19 – 20 balanced) i.e. Stayman, Red Suit transfers and Gerber.

If opener has the 8 playing trick hand he just bids his suit at the lowest level. Again this is not forcing and responder may pass. However responder, if he has a reasonable hand, should not be afraid to bid it.

Where you might go wrong over a 2♣ opener

If opener bids 2♥ or 2♠ responder should try to keep the bidding open if he has some support for the suit and a few points. It does not take much to make the two extra tricks required for game. Often a side-suit King will provide another trick, and a side-suit shortage will provide a trick or so because we can take ruff(s) in the dummy.

How should the auction develop over a 2♦ opening?

If opener has a balanced hand of 23 – 24 hcp he should bid 2NT.

This is not forcing and responder may pass. It is usual to play exactly the same things here that you play over an opening of 2NT (19 – 20 balanced) i.e. Stayman, Red Suit transfers and Gerber.

NB This is the **ONLY** bid that can be passed below game level. **ALL** other bids are forcing to at least game level.

Where you might go wrong over a 2♦ opener

Opener often has such a good hand that he tends to jump the bidding after 2♦ - 2♥.

There is no need to do this. 2♦ commits the partnership to game, so generally go slowly and explore.

Responder should not be afraid to bid his suit(s). Often he has very few points, but should still show a five (or more) card suit.

Responder must **NEVER** pass below game

(unless the auction has gone 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT, or unless he wants a new partner!)