

Landy – a useful defence to 1NT

The trouble with the opponents opening 1NT is that if you want to bid it has to be at the 2-level. That's fine if you have a decent 5-card suit (or longer), but if you haven't you'll often find yourself having to pass, even with an opening hand.

The Landy convention offers a partial solution to this problem: it allows you to tell partner that you have **both majors** – at least 5-4 (or 4-5), and because partner has a choice of two suits, you don't have to worry too much about suit quality. You'll need a few points, of course – anything from 8/9 points up will do. Here are a few possibilities:

♠ QJ97	♠ KJ873	♠ A10763	♠ AK64
♥ A10752	♥ A862	♥ K10752	♥ AK1075
♦ 6	♦ Q8	♦ 6	♦ J64
♣ KQ9	♣ J3	♣ Q9	♣ 9

None of these major holdings (except the ♥ AK1075 in the 4th hand) are good enough quality for an ordinary 2-level overcall, but because partner can choose **either** hearts **or** spades, the risk is much smaller. Note that these hands have various point-counts ranging from 9 to 15 points. *

How does it work? You bid 2♣ (which partner has to **alert**, as it's not a natural bid)

It promises at least 5-4 in the MAJORS and at least 8 points.

RESPONDING to 2♣

With a weaker hand

Now let's move to partner's seat. For the moment, assume that you've got a weakish hand – say, 0-9 points.

If you have 4 of a major, simply bid it. End of auction.

With fewer (say, 3-2, 3-3 or 2-2) bid 2♦. This asks partner to bid his 5-card suit (or if they're 5-5, the better one). She does so. End of auction.

If you are even worse off (say 3-1), grit your teeth and bid your 3-card major.

With a stronger hand

If you're stronger and think you might have game, bid 2NT. This is the stronger 'query' response and in some ways is similar to Ogust (which is played opposite a weak 2 opening). The responses are very logical and therefore easy to work out on the spot. They show:

- whether the Landy bidder is MINIMUM or MAXIMUM (say 12+ points)
- whether spades or hearts is the longer (or, in the case of 5-5, the better) suit.

So the 4 responses to the 2NT enquiry are as follows, the first two being MIN, the next two MAX:

- 3♣ I'm MINIMUM with longer HEARTS
- 3♦ I'm MINIMUM with longer SPADES
- 3♥ I'm MAXIMUM with longer HEARTS
- 3♠ I'm MAXIMUM with longer SPADES

If you've got enough for game, bid it. If not, stop at the 3 level.

And that's it!

Chris Jones

22 July 2023

* With 16+ it's probably better to double for penalties.