

When the Bidding Starts with 2, 3, 4 or 5 of a Suit

2C: Monster hand: 22+ points or 9+ expected tricks

Responder's first bid:

2D: At least an Ace or a King or 4+ HCP. Forcing to game ($22 + 3-4 = 25-26$).

2H: No Ace, no King, less than 4 high card points. (Partner, I have nothing.)

2S, 3C, 3D, 3H: Positive response, 8+ points & good 5-card major or good 6-card minor.

Responder should avoid bidding NT to avoid wrong-siding a final NT contract.

Opener's 2nd bid:

2NT: 22-23 HCP. Responder can use Stayman & transfers to search for a major suit fit.

3NT: 24+ HCP. Responder can transfer to a 6+ card major, but should not use Stayman.

Suit bids: Natural, 5+ card suit.

If responder bid 2H: Opener can jump to game if game looks likely in their hand alone.

General pre-empt considerations

Weak hand: A preempt shows a weak hand. With 12+ points, open 1 of your suit.

Bid only once: Bid as high as you are willing to go on your first bid. Then do not bid again unless forced to do so by partner.

New suit forcing: After you preempt, a new suit by partner should be treated as forcing. Raise partner's suit with support. Return to your own suit without support.

Down 2: The preempt contract is frequently down 2 tricks. But this is less costly than letting the opponents make a game. Partner can raise with (a) 3+ tricks expecting the higher contract to make or (b) a weak hand that warrants increasing the preempt.

Vulnerability: Best to preempt (and/or increase a preempt) at favourable or equal vulnerability. Vulnerable doubled down 2 is -500, more than their non-vulnerable game.

2D, 2H, 2S: 6 card suit; 5-11 points non-vul; 9-11 vul

Responder with 0-15 points: Increase the preempt according to how many trump cards you have. (Examples: Raise 2D to 3D with 3 diamond cards. Raise 2S to 4S with 4 spade cards.)

Opener: Pass. Responder is increasing the preempt, not making an invitation.

Responder with 16+ points and a good suit: Bid your suit.

Opener: Raise responder's suit with support. Re-bid your original suit without support for responder. Do not pass. Responder is looking for the best game.

Responder with 16+ points and no suit: Bid 2NT, artificial, asking if opener is min or max.

Opener: If minimum (5-8), rebid the original suit. If maximum (9-11), bid another suit where you have an Ace or King (a feature). If maximum with AKQ in the original suit, bid 3NT. (Note: $16+9 = 25$, enough for game.)

3C, 3D: 7 card suit; 5-11 points non-vul; 9-11 vul

Partner can raise to 4, 5 or 6: (a) If partner has enough tricks to make the higher contract. (b) If the higher preempt is cheaper than letting opponents make game or slam.

Partner can bid 3NT with stoppers in the other suits and an entry to the preempt hand to run the long suit. With AKx in the preempt suit, there is a good expectation of 7 tricks in the long suit. With AK doubleton in the long suit, you can expect only 2 tricks in the long suit. You cannot count on an entry to the weak hand outside of the long suit. Having 18-20 points will likely NOT be enough if you cannot make use of the long suit.

2 of the top 3: Some partnerships agree not to preempt in 1st or 2nd seat without 2 of the top 3 cards in the long suit. This allows partner to judge more accurately if 3NT will make. In 3rd or 4th seat, partner has already passed and should not be bidding 3NT.

3H, 3S: 7 card suit; 5-11 points non-vul; 9-11 vul

Partner should raise to 4 with 2 Aces & a King: Aces are a quick trick. Kings are a quick trick half the time. Need quick tricks, not slow trick Queens & Jacks. Partner can raise to 6 or 7 with AAK and enough other sure tricks to make the contract.

Do not bid 3NT. It will be better to play in the long major suit than in NT.

4C, 4D, 4H, 4S: 8 card suit; 5-11 points non-vul; 9-11 vul

Partner: Follow the same guidelines as above. Raise a minor to 5 (game) if you have AAK. Raise to slam if you have enough tricks for slam to have a reasonable chance. Bid 5 of a minor over the opponents' 4 of a major as a sacrifice if you expect they will make game.

5C, 5D: 9 card suit; 5-11 points non-vul; 9-11 vul

Same guidelines as above.

Blackwood (4NT) & Gerber (4C) – Ask about Aces & Kings

4NT: Bidding 4NT after a suit has been agreed says "Partner, how many Aces do you have?"

Partner answers: 5C: 0 or 4 Aces. 5D: 1 Ace. 5H: 2 Aces. 5S: 3 Aces.

5NT: Bidding 5NT after the answer to 4NT says "Partner, how many Kings do you have?"

Partner answers: 6C: 0 or 4 Kings. 6D: 1 King. 6H: 2 Kings. 6S: 3 Kings.

4C: Bidding 4C over partner's NT bid says "Partner, how many Aces do you have?"

Partner answers: 4D: 0 or 4 Aces. 4H: 1 Ace. 4S: 2 Aces. 4N: 3 Aces.

5C: Bidding 5C after the answer to 4C says "Partner, how many Kings do you have?"

Partner answers: 5D: 0 or 4 Kings. 5H: 1 King. 5S: 2 Kings. 5N: 3 Kings.

Why 4C over NT? So that the "asker" can stop at 4NT when too many Aces are missing.

Who asks? When? When one of the partners can "see" 30+ combined points, that partner asks. This is often the responder rather than the opener.