

SUIT BIDDING

PART 3

Inverted Minors

Inverted Minors in response to a minor suit opening by partner is a popular treatment or convention. It is used by responder to communicate a hand with no 4-card major.

The rationale behind using inverted minors is that you show a strong hand at the 2 level, creating more bidding room and make a preemptive bid at the 3-level when game is highly unlikely unless opener has a hand with 18+ points and good clubs.

If partner opens one club, your possible responses are:

1 diamond – 4 or more diamonds, 6 plus points. Unlimited strength. Does not deny a major suit if bidding up the line. Forcing for at least 1 round.

1 heart or 1 spade – 4 or more hearts or spades, 6 plus points. Unlimited strength. Forcing for at least one round.

1 no trump – 6-9 points. Denies a 4-card major. May have a 4 card minor. I would probably bypass 1 diamond to bid 1 no trump, which is a more descriptive limited hand.

2 clubs – denies a 4-card major, should have 5+ clubs and 10+ points, but may be higher. It is forcing for one round. With a better hand, responder can clarify his strength after opener replies.

2-no trump – denies a 4-card major. Promises 10-11 or 12 points (invitational) opener may pass with a minimum hand.

3 clubs shows a weak hand with 0-6 points and usually 5 clubs, sometimes 6, but keep an eye on vulnerability.

3 no trump – 13-15 balanced denying a 4-card major.

Opener's rebids after a single raise of his 1-club opening.

2 d usually shows a 4-card suit and suggests an unbalanced hand with more clubs than diamonds (e.g. 2-2-4-5) This is not a reverse following a single raise of opener's minor.

2h or 2 sp usually shows a concentration of values showing a stopper. It does not promise a 4-card suit since inverted minors deny a 4-card major. It is a constructive bid leading to a possible no-trump contract if there are game values, since 5 clubs requires 27-29 points while 3 no trump requires only 25 points.

2 nt – shows a balanced hand with 12-14 points.

3 clubs promises 5 clubs, but is not forcing.

3 diamonds is natural and forcing

3 no trump shows a balance 18-19 points

Opener's rebids after single raise of his 1 d opening bid.

2h or 2 sp shows a 3+ card suit with a concentration of values

2 no trump shows a balanced 12-14

3 clubs is natural, forcing – probably with 5 clubs

3 no trump shows a balanced 18-19

Responding to partner's opening 1 club/diamond bid in competition

Inverted minors are off in competition.

Raise one level with weak 4-card support

Jump raise with weak 5+ card support

Cuebid opponent's suit to show a limit raise or better in partner's suit.

If RHO doubles, bid 2 notrump to show a limit raise or better (Jordan)

NOTE: With inverted minors, there is a gap with 8-9 points, since single raise shows 10+ points and a double raise shows 0-6 points. It is suggested that with 8 or 9 points responder should lie and bid 1 no trump.

Spiral a/k/a Rodwell Game Try a/k/a 3344 Convention

This is one of my favorite conventions. It allows the partnership to easily discover 4-4 or 4-3 major suit fits with minimum or maximum hands. It is similar to

Ogus Responses after a weak 2 and 2 no trump by using step responses. I whole heartedly endorse this convention and urge you to add it to your bridge tool kit. Here's how it works.

After opener bid 1 or a minor and partner responds 1 or a minor, opener may respond 2 of the major either with 4 card support or with 3 card support. However, and this is key, to respond with 2 of the major with 3 card support, he must also have a ruffing value – a void, a singleton, or a doubleton in am side suit. (the ruffing value potentially enables opener to make up for the lack of having 4-card support for partner's suit by being able to ruff a loser in a side suit, which enhances the value of his hand by on trick.

Thus after 1 club – 1 heart, opener should be rebid 2 hearts with 4 card support or with 3 card support and a ruffing value in a side suit.

Bear in mind, at this point opener knows nothing about responder's hand except that he has at least 6 points and at least 4 hearts. However, responder is now in control of the auction and embarks upon an expedition to learn more about opener's hand.

With less than an invitational hand (10-11, responder passes 2 hearts as there is no likely game since opener did not jump over 1 heart.

With an invitational hand (10-11) or better, responder may now ask opener to further describe his hand, by bidding 2 no trump. These are the possible responses from opener:

3 clubs – I have only 3 hearts and a minimum hand (12-13)

3 diamonds -I have only 3 hearts and a maximum hand (14-15)

3 hearts – I have 4 hearts and minimum hand (12-13)

3 spades = I have 4 hearts and maximum hand (14-15)

Armed with this information, responder can place the contract by bidding 3 hearts to play, 3 no trump or 4 hearts.

NOTE: This system was originally invented by Eric Rodwell to search for a possible game. However, I have used it to explore for slam as well. Consider a hand with 18+ points and a 4-card heart suit, after 1 club – 1 heart – 2 hearts, you want to be in 6 hearts with a 4-4 fit and a maximum, but not with a minimum. You can use this convention to find our. Similarly, if opener shows 3-card heart

support and a minimum, you want to be in 3 no trump, but with a maximum. 6-no trump.

There is advance bidding available when using spiral to ask, when opener shows a ruffing value, which is the short suit. But for now, we will bypass that.

Strong 2 club bid

The 2-club opener is artificial and is used to show unlimited strength with at least 22 points or 8 ½ tricks and is considered game forcing unless it is limited by subsequent bidding. 2 cl is not alterable even though it is artificial since it is commonly used to describe an strong game forcing hand with unknow distribution.

There are numerous bids available to responders after a 2-club opening:

Step Responses. Some pairs play step responses, using step bidding to describe the number of controls – aces are 2 steps and kings one step in responder's hand. I do not advocate using step responses since they often take up bidding room and wrong-side the play of the hand. (Ideally, any contract is best played by the stronger hand even though the trump suit may be partner's long suit.

2 heart bust. Some players use a 2-heart response to 2 clubs to shows a bust hand with 0-4 points. I am strongly opposed to the use of 2 hearts as a negative hand with 0-4 point response for two reasons. First, opener may have game in his hand in hearts with one or more tenaces (A-Q) to protect. If responder winds up playing 4 hearts from the wrong hand, it could put the contract in jeopardy, Secondly, it takes up precious bidding room.

2 Diamond Waiting. It is much better to use an artificial 2 diamond waiting bid, giving opener the opportunity to name his suit. You can then show a second negative (0-4) points by bidding your cheapest minor (artificial). Opener will know what to do.

Some pairs play a waiting bid with 0-7 points and then a second negative with 0-4. The second negative will almost always be 3 clubs, unless opener rebids clubs, in which case the second negative will be 3 diamonds. Of course if opener rebids My preference, which has worked well for me through the years, is to use a waiting bid with any hand after partner opens 2 clubs, except a hand with a 5-card suit (usually a major suit) containing at least 2 or the top 3 honors

and texture or intermediates, suggesting it as a trump suit. Otherwise, a waiting bid enables opener to better describe his hand or bid with more informed knowledge given your response.

Note: Even with a good 5-card major suit, it is often better to bid 2 diamonds waiting and await a description of opener's hand. If Opener rebids a suit, responder can rebid his good 5 Card suit, since they are in game-forcing auction. If opener rebids 2 no trump, showing 22-24 balanced, responder can now transfer to his 5-card suit and then bid no-trump giving opener the option of placing the contract.

Bear this in mind as well. Remember we talked about the no-trump structure and how no-trump is used after a 2 club opener to describe a balanced hand with 22-24, 25-27 or 28-30, but first bidding 2 clubs followed by 2 nt, 3 nt or 4 nt. These are exquisite sequences used to describe powerful no trump hands and convey information to partner as to whether, with his point count, opposite opener's hand which is an open book, he should pass or pursue slam.

The downside of using 2 diamonds as a waiting bid and 3 diamonds as a second negative is that opener may have a long strong diamond suit which he is unable to bid. The solution to that conundrum, is not to open 2 clubs with a long strong diamond suit, since there is no easy way for responder to show a second negative.

Conversely, it is rarely right for opener to bid a strong 2 clubs bid with long clubs or diamonds unless he is prepared to play 3 no trump opposite a double negative bid by responder.

Systems on

Just as systems (stayman, smolen and transfers) are on over 1 no trump and 2 no trump openers, so are they on after 2 clubs – 2 diamonds – 2 no trump.

The downside of playing systems on is that after 2 clubs- 2 diamonds – 3 no trump (showing a balanced 25-27), responder cannot effectively use stayman, since there may not be an 8-card major suit fit and you have bypassed 3 no trump.

A recently deceased Canadian pro named Eric Kokish developed a bidding system, aptly called Kokish, which resolves that problem. It involves using a series of relays to describe a no trump hand with 20-21. 22-24 or 25+ at the 2

level, which allows for systems on following a 2 nt bid with 25+. It is a very effective tool and is now used by most top players. That being said, since you have lived without the Kokish system for your entire bridge career, you can continue to do so. Kokish is an advanced bidding convention. Since I am teaching a lot of new things, you don't need to be burdened with this new convention, unless you want to, in which case, I will review it for you. But it is a lot to remember.