

DEFENSES TO ONE NO TRUMP OPENING BIDS

I have emphasized that communication between partners is the hallmark of successful competitive bidding. Left undisturbed, using the no-trump structure to arrive at the optimum contract is a thing of beauty since it enables you to communicate with partner without interference.

I have said before that necessity is the mother of invention. Here, to successfully compete with opponents' structure, experts have devised defensive conventions intended to disrupt opponents' communications and prevent them or make it more difficult for them to reach their optimum contracts by taking away bidding space or preventing them from accurately exchanging information.

There are many conventions used by experts to disrupt opponents' no trump communications structure.

To name a few:

DON'T – Disturbing opponents' no trump.

Landy

Hamilton a/k/a/ Cappeletti

Meckwell

Woolsey (Multi-Landy)

Astro

Brozel

I am going to teach a few of these conventions. You can play whichever you and your partner agree upon. Bear in mind, that most conventions are intended for interfering against strong no trump bidding: 14-16 or 15 -17, while others are used against weak no trump (10-12, 12-14 and sometimes weaker). The reason for using conventions geared to defend specifically against weak no trump is that one of the options is to double the opponents weak no trump bid for penalty, while it is rare to hold a hand where you would double opponents strong no trump opening for penalty. You will notice on your convention cards that there is a space for describing your anti-no trump conventions used against both strong and weak no trump hands.

In this part of the bridge world, there are very few partnerships that open weak no trump. In all of Stuart and Vero Beach, I can think of only three or four partnerships that do so. Of course, it would be better to use the defense convention against weak no trump for interfering with their communication, but it may be too difficult to have to memorize two different

conventions, one of which is more effective against weak no trump bidding but is rarely used. Personally, I have two conventions on my card, Meckwell against strong no trump and Cappelletti or Hamilton against weak no trumps. Also, I have noticed that half of the players use DON'T and half use Meckwell. Therefore, I will teach DON'T, Meckwell and Cappelletti/Hamilton. You and your partner should decide between yourselves, which conventions to use against opponents' no trump.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF DON'T, RESPONSES AND INTERFERENCE.

I am willing to bet that half of probably play some form of DONT against no-trump. But I am also willing to bet that of those who play DON'T, 90% of you are not aware of the full spectrum of bids and circumstances which form a part of that convention. Nevertheless, I will teach you the full system and you can judge whether you want to play it as a defense to 1 no trump opening bids. Personally, I find the full DON'T structure complicated with a lot to remember, so I don't use it. Instead I recommend you use Meckwell against strong no-trump.

The DONT convention (Disturbing Opponents No Trump) was invented by pro Marty Bergen. It is essentially used to interfere with opponents no trump bidding but it may also be used as an offensive tool when the defenders find a fit and enough points to bid game or compete for for a partial score. If opener bids 1 no trump and his partner has zero points, that means that opponents have 24-25 points between them, which should be enough to bid game. Moreover, since one hand is known to have 15-17 points while his partner has none, defenders have the advantage of knowing where all the outstanding point cards are which makes it easier to play the hand.

Here are the defensive DON'T bids following opponent's one no trump opener:

Double: Promises any single suited hand with 6 or more cards in the suit. The strength required for a double depends on the vulnerability and position. As always, the DON'T bidder should be aware of the vulnerability, treading lightly when vulnerable, since he could be doubled and go for a large penalty while bidding more freely when not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents. So, in direct or pass out seat, double should show a hand with a minimum of 8 points and a good suit, with a concentration of values in the long suit. With favorable vulnerability, not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, you can double with fewer points, but I do recommend that most of your points should be in your long suit.

Bear in mind, that when you double opponent's no trump opener, your partner is required to bid 2 clubs. If your long suit is clubs, you will pass 2 clubs. Otherwise you will bid your long suit, and partner should pass that bid.

For example, when vulnerable:

S. 10 5 2
H K J 10 9 4 3
D A J 3
C 5

Double intending to bid 2 hearts at your next turn. You have 9 points and a good heart suit, with 3 of the top 5 honors. Similarly, you could have:

S. 10 5 2
H. K Q 9 8 4 2
D 6
C K 6 3

Here you have 8 points and 2 of the top 3 honors in hearts, so you can double, intending to bid 2 hearts at your next turn.

Bidding 2 clubs, 2 diamonds or 2 hearts over one no trump shows a two-suited hand, with that suit and a higher suit.

2 Clubs

2 clubs promises clubs and a higher suit. It could be diamonds, hearts or spades. The requirements for bidding 2 clubs is at least 5-4 or 4-5 in your two suits. Again, you should have 8 or more points and a concentration of values in your two suits. With more distribution, you can bid with fewer points, since your distribution lends itself to more trick-taking power. For example:

S 10 5 2
H K J 10 3
D 6
C K Q 6 4 2

This hand is perfect for a 2 club DON'T bid. You have 9 points, 4-5 distribution in your two suits and a concentration of values in your long suits.

S 10 8 7 2
H K 4 3
D 6
C A J 6 5 4

Here you have 8 points with 4-5 distribution. However, your spade suit is bad and you do not have a concentration of values in your long suits (king is in the heart suit). I would not bid 2 clubs vulnerable with this hand, but I would if not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents.

S K 10 7 6 2
H 2
D 5
C K 10 6 5 4 2

Here, you have only 6 points, but instead of 4-5, 5-4 or 5-5 distribution, you have 5-6 distribution and a concentration of points in your two long suits. The added distribution means added trick taking power. I would bid 2 clubs with this hand at any vulnerability because your playing strength is stronger.

2 diamonds

The requirements for bidding 2 diamonds are the same as for bidding 2 clubs. It promises two suits, diamonds and either hearts or spades.

2 hearts

Again, the requirements here are the same as for 2 clubs or 2 diamonds, except that you are promising only hearts and spades.

2 spades

This bid usually promises a 6-card spade suit and is weaker than if you first doubled and then bid 2 spades which shows a better hand and a better suit. NOTE: With a 6-card major and a 4 card major, you should treat it as a one-suited hand. If you bid 2 hearts, showing hearts and spades, partner could pass you in 2 hearts with 2-2-5-4 distribution, playing in a 4-2 fit instead of a 6-2 fit. So, with a 6-4 in spades and hearts, bid your six-card spade suit instead of 2 hearts, showing hearts and spades. With 5-5 or -5 in the majors, you can bid 2 hearts, showing both suits.

NOTE: Bidding 2 spades directly shows a 6+ card spade suit which is weaker than first doubling to show a single suited hand and then bidding spades. Your partner should be aware of the difference and act accordingly depending on what you bid.

For example:

With Spades:	A J 10 5 4 2
Hearts	K Q 10
Diamonds	7 5
Clubs	6 3

Double, followed by 2 spades. You have 10 points with a concentration of values in two suits, which bodes for greater playing strength.

With Spades	A J 10 5 4 2
Hearts	K 10 2
Diamonds	7 5
Clubs	6 3

Bid 2 spades if vulnerable. You have only 8 points. Double followed by 2 spades if not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents.

Responses to partner's double of 1 no trump

When partner doubles one no trump he is showing an unknown 6+ card suit. Your choices are:

2 clubs is a relay, telling partner to, pass with club or, if not, to bid his 6+ card suit.

Example:

Spades:	10 6 4
Hearts	Q J 3 2
Diamonds	8 4
Clubs	K 10 5 2

Partner has shown 1 6+ card suit and likely 8 or more points. Bid 2 clubs relay, telling partner to pass if his suit is clubs or if not to bid his suit.

2 diamonds promises 6+ diamonds and is non-forcing. Similarly, a 2 heart or 2 spade response to your double shows a good 6 card suit. Note, to bypass the 2 club relay after partner doubles, you must have a good 6+ card suit of your own.

Example:

Spades 4 3
Hearts 10 7 2
Diamonds K Q J 6 5 4
Clubs 8 5

After partner bid 2 clubs showing a 6 card suit, bid 3 diamonds, showing your own 6-card suit. Your bid is non-forcing. Partner may pass or bid his own 6 card suit.

Example:

Partner's hand is:

Spades 10
Hearts K J 10 3 4 3 2
Diamonds A 10 3 2
Clubs: 5 3

After partner overcalls 2 clubs intending to bid 2 hearts at his next turn, and you bid 2 diamonds, he should pass with diamond support as you may have 0 or 1 heart.

Responses to partner's 2 club overcall of one no trump (showing clubs and a higher suit)

Pass with 3 or more clubs and fewer than 8 points

2 diamonds – denies club support. 2 club bidder to pass or correct.

Example:

Spades: 10 9 8 7
Hearts Q 6 4
Diamonds K J 3 2
Clubs 10 8

You lack club support which is one of partner's 2 suits. Bid 2 diamonds. Partner can pass if diamonds is one of his suits, if it isn't, he will bid 2 hearts or 2 spades, whichever of the two suits is his other suit.

2 hearts – promises 6+ hearts and is non-forcing

Example:

Spades 10 2

Hearts K 8 5 4 3 2

Diamonds 9 8 7

Clubs 6 5

2 spades – promises 6+ spades and is non-forcing

Note: When partner overcalls 2 clubs, you should bid 2 diamonds even with 5-4 or 5-5 in the majors, since partner's 6 card suit could be diamonds. If partner bids 2 hearts or 2 spades after your 2 diamonds response, you know you have a fit.

2 no trump – artificial, forcing and alertable

After responder bids 2 no trump in response to 2 club overcall, overcaller bids:

3 clubs with a minimum

3 diamonds with diamonds and a maximum

3 hearts with hearts and a maximum

3 spades with spades and a maximum

3 clubs – preemptive non-forcing

Responses after a 2 diamond overcall

Pass to play

2 hearts- denies diamonds, asks overcaller to pass or correct to 2 spades

Example – S. Q 4 3 2, H. J 10 4, K 2, A10 8 5 (overcaller's 2 diamonds showed diamonds and a higher suit)

2 spades – promises 6+ spades – non-forcing

2 no trump – artificial and forcing- alertable.

(Example: S. A 4 3, A J 4, 10 5 2, A 10 8 5)

Overcaller's rebids after 2 no trump

3 clubs – shows clubs and an equal or shorter major

Responder signs off in 3 diamonds since 5-4 major suit fit unlikely

3 diamonds – shows diamonds with a longer major and a minimum

3 hearts – shows hearts and a maximum

3 spades – shows spades and a maximum

3 clubs – shows 6+ good clubs , non-forcing

Responses after a 2 heart overcall

Pass- to play (even with 2-2 in majors)

2 spades – to play (denies hearts)

2 no trump – artificial and forcing

Overcaller's rebids after responders 2 no trump response

3 clubs – equal length or shorter spades and a minimum

3 diamonds – diamonds and longer spades – minimum

3 hearts – equal length of shorter spades – minimum

3 spades – longer spades and a maximum

3 clubs – 6 good clubs, non-forcing

3 diamonds – 6 good diamonds, non-forcing

Responses after a 2 spade overcall

Responder usually passes since 2 spades is weakish. Bid new suit only with good 6+ card suit. (double followed by 2 spades is stronger than direct 2 spade overcall)

Pass – to play

3 clubs – good 6+ card suit, non-forcing

3 diamonds - good 6+ card suit, non forcing

3 hearts – good 6 plus card suit, non-forcing

3 spades – natural, non-forcing

DONT AFTER PARTNER DOUBLES AND RHO REDOUBLES

Double of 1 no trump shows a single suit hand.

Double followed by 2 spades, shows a better hand/spade suit than a 2 spade overcall.

If partner doubles 1 no trump and RHO redoubles – that shows values. When that happens, the relay to 2 clubs is off. Responses after 1 no trump, double, redouble:

Pass – let partner bid his suit, denies good 6 card suit

Any new suit - good 6+ card suit, non-forcing

2 no trump – artificial ask

DONT AFTER PARTNER DOUBLES 1 NO-TRUMP AND RHO BIDS A SUIT

Double – take out – asks partner to pass if that is his suit, or if not, to bid another suit

New suit – 6+ cards, non-forcing (to bid new suit at 3-level- need 7+ cards)

2 no trump – artificial, forcing, ask

DON'T AFTER PARTNER BIDS A 2-SUITER AND RHO DOUBLES

Pass – shows tolerance for overcaller's named suit

Redouble – is SOS for any other suit

2 no trump – artificial, forcing ask

DON'T AFTER PARTNER BIDS A 2-SUITER AND RHO BIDS A SUIT

Double – takeout – asks for partner's second suit

New Suit – 6+ cards, non forcing, 7+ cards at the 3 level

2 no trump – artificial, alertable ask

DONT CAN BE PLAYED OVER 2 NO TRUMP – BUTN STRENGTH AND SHAPE(AT LEAST 5-5) ARE STRICTER

DON'T RUNOUTS – If partner opens 1 no trump and is doubled, use DON'T as a runout:

Redouble shows a 1 suited hand, with relay to 2 clubs

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