

Nebulous Relay Bid/Convention

By Neil H. Timm

In this bridge tip I review a nebulous relay bid that will lead to a new improved bidding convention. However, before I discuss the motivation for the new convention, let's review some bridge terminology like Puppet, Marionette, Transfer, Relay, and Sliding Relay Bids according to the Bridge World Bridge Dictionary.

Puppet Bid - An artificial forcing bid that instructs partner to make a pre-agreed upon forced response (almost always the cheapest available bid). The purpose of the response is to keep the bidding low and to transfer captaincy/description to their partner who knows more or needs to clarify the hand shape. A common example is Puppet Stayman which uses 3♣ as a response to the bid of 2NT.

Marionette Bid – A redefined puppet style bid where partner is expected to make a forced cheapest response most of the time, but is **also** permitted to make an alternative response when holding a specific unusual/common shape. The bid avoids the “puppet” response when the responding hand has a specific shape and so may by-pass the puppet response. A common example is Marionette Stayman (sometimes called Modified Puppet/Muppet Stayman).

Why use the Marionette Bid instead of the Puppet bid? With the Puppet Stayman responder with 5♠ and 4♥ is unable to convey this shape when partner opens NT; hence, the development of the Marionette Stayman.

Transfer Bid – A conventional response that asks partner to make a specific bid regardless of his hand shape. The purpose of the bid is to allow the strong hand to play the contract. Common examples include Jacoby Transfers, Texas Transfers, Extended Transfers, South African Transfer bids and others normally used over the bid of 1NT=15-17HCP.

Relay Bid – An artificial conventional-based bid, often the cheapest possible bid, which asks partner to describe his hand further. The relay may or may not have meaning; it functions as a stimulus requiring partners to begin showing their distribution or perhaps point count. Common examples include the Stayman, Blackwood Conventions and the Kokish Relay, among others.

In the Relay Bid the next bid is normally an artificial bid asking partner describes his hand. What if the bid is not the next bid but “slides” depending on which minor suit is opened.

Sliding Relay Bid – An artificial conventional bid that changes based upon an opener's initial bid that describes responders' hand and allows opener to explore game or slam. A commonly used example is the New Minor Forcing Convention.

In duplicate bridge, a **nebulous relay bid** is artificial or may have meaning while the **relay or sliding relay bid** is an artificial response that either asks for information or shows/provides information about a bridge hand.

As motivation for the development of the **Nebulous Relay Bid/Convention**, consider the following hand ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦AQxx ♣KQJ with 12HCP playing the 2/1 system after partner opens 1♣.

You do not have a 4-card major and without 5-cards in openers minor bid may not use the Inverted Minor (1♣-2♣=10+HCP) Convention or Criss Cross Inverted Minor Convention (2♦=10-12HCP with clubs and 1♣-2♣=13+HCP - GF).

With the poor holdings in both majors the bid of 2NT is risky. What is one to do?

When opening a minor, a strong jump shift of 2M (called Soloway Jump Shifts) show 17+HCP and take up too much bidding space and with a weak trashy hand with 5/6-card major and 2-6HCP the weak 2M bid may preempt partner. With 4-6HCP and 3-cards in the major, one bids 1♦ over 1♣ - never 1NT since now partner may bid 1NT which allow the strong hand to play the 1NT contract. The bid of 1NT by responder normally requires 8-10HCP NOT 6-9 as in Standard American.

The solution to the problem is to re-define the 2NT bid as 2♥*=old 2NT with invitational 10-12 HCP as a **Nebulous Relay Bid** which allows opener to pass with a weak 4-heart hand or bid 2♠* as a forced relay bid to 2NT*.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1♣	2♥* Nebulous Relay Bid (artificial)

Pass/2♠*	2NT* Forced Relay
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Opener Rebids

Pass

3♣ 6+clubs and Game Force (GF)

3♦ 5-diamonds and 5/6-clubs GF

3M 5-M and 5/6-clubs GF

3NT To Play

2NT To Play

3♣ 5+ clubs and to play

3x S/V in bid suit GF with 5+clubs

3NT To Play

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1♦	2♥* Nebulous Relay Bid (artificial)

Pass/2♠*	2NT* Forced Relay
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Opener Rebids

Pass

3♣ 5-4 in minors, NF

3♦ 5/6-diamonds GF

3M 5-M and 5/6-diamonds GF

3NT To Play

2NT To Play

3♣ S/V in clubs with 5+♦, Invitational NOT GF

3♦ To Play 5+♦

3M S/V in bid suit GF with 5+Diamonds

3NT To Play

Observe that the bid of 2♥* is used over either 1♣/1♦; however, I have seen the sequence 1♦-2♠ used only as a weak jump shift with too few points to bid 1♠.