

Weak 2-Bids – A Review

By Neil H. Timm

Playing 2/1 many pairs open a hand with a weak 2-level bid (2♦/2♥/2♠) with a 6-card suit and at least 4HCP and a range not greater than 7HCP (e.g. 4/5-10 or 5/6-11). However, some may use the 55 rule which says you need at least 5HCP and a very good 5-card suit and less than 12HCP, suggested by both Marty Bergen and Mike Lawrence. There is no weak 2-level bid for clubs; hence some use 3♣ with a 6/7-card suit and 10/11 HCP.

The primary goal of the weak bid is to describe your hand to partner and to interfere with the opponents bidding. However, your decision to bid depends on vulnerability, suit quality, and seat position.

What is an acceptable hand?

Because partner is likely to have only ONE card support for your level 6-card suit opening bid, this suggests that the opponents may have 6-cards which are likely to break 4-2 so your suit should have at least 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5 honors; a suit headed by an AK/KQ/AQ or perhaps a good suit like QJ109xx or KJ10xxx, at least 2HCP). If your partner has a mere singleton in your bid suit, you can expect about 2 losers.

What about hand value? With HCP AK=7, AQ=6 or KQ=5, but including suit length you may add 2 Length points so you have 9/8/7 points, respectively. A hand like QJ109 has 3 points and **one Top honor**; however, you may add +1 point for suit quality and 2 Length points or so you have 6 points. Replacing the Q with an A/K you have 8/7 points.

These observations, with upper end point values, lead one to the often-used **Rule of 2, 3, 4** for opening hands at the 2-level.

The Rule of 2, 3, 4 helps players decide whether to make a preemptive bid based on the vulnerability.

With Unfavorable Vulnerability (you are vulnerable, opponents are not): You should be within **2 tricks** of your intended 2-level contract. For example, to open a 2-level preempt, you should have at least 6 probable tricks in your hand).

Equal Vulnerability (both sides vulnerable or both not vulnerable): You should be within **3 tricks** of your contract. For instance, opening a 2-level preempt requires about 5 probable tricks.

Favorable Vulnerability (you are not vulnerable, opponents are vulnerable): You can afford to be within **4 tricks** of your bid, meaning even 4 probable tricks may justify a 2-level preempt bid.

Do you ever open 2M with a void in the other major or with a side-suit void? **YES.**

Would you open a hand 2M if you also have another 4-card major? Yes and NO – If the HCP in the 4-card major are < than those in the 6-card suit - YES but never if the HCP in the 4-card suit are $\geq$ to those in the 6-card suit.

♠KQ10xxx ♥Jxxx ♦ xx ♣ x Open 2♠

♠QJxxxx ♥AQ10x ♦ xx ♣ x Do not Open 2♠ with the strong heart suit

Many employ weak 2M*-level bids in all seats; however, in the third and fourth seats some use it to show a hand with 11/12 HCP; now the 2M* bid is normally to play since partner has already passed. The bid requires an alert.

What about responding to the Preempt? With a fit and 15+ fit points bid 2NT (no alert). How do you evaluate your hand? You use fit/support points, not just HCP which include HCP, Suit Length, Suit Shortness, and Suit Quality with adjustments for doubleton honors.

A common practice is to use 2NT as a Feature asking bid when opening 2M. The bid is often used to ask if you have a side suit A/K if the answer is yes, bid the suit at the 3-level; if not, rebid your major at the 3-level.

Some may use the Ogust Convention instead; however, there is no “standard” agreement on this convention the step bids (3♣*/3♦*/3♥*/3♠*) may represent as Hand-Suit or Suit-Hand characteristics (bb/bg/gb/gg) there is NO STANDARD, so be careful. Discuss this convention with your partner (responses are now alerted and must be explained according to your agreement). The original Ogust Convention was developed by Harold A. Ogust from New York who used Hand-Suit combinations.

Min value Bad Hand = lower 3-card range Max value Good Hand = upper 3-point range

Bad Suit = One Top Honor

Good Suit = Have 2/3 or 3/5 Top honors

3NT=AKQ in suit.

3♣*=Bad/Min Hand-Bad Suit (bb)

3♦*=Bad/Min Hand-Good Suit (bg)

3♥*=Good/Max Hand-Bad Suit (gb)

3♠*=Good/Max Hand-Good Suit (gg)

If a partnership uses the 55 Rule then one often employs the Modified Ogust Convention. Now the responses show Suit Length – Hand Strength

3♣*=5-card suit, Max/Good hand

3♦*=5-card suit, Min/Bad hand

3♥*=6-card suit, Max/Good hand

3♠*=6-card suit, Max/Good hand

For the 55 Rule, observe that now 3♣* show a Strong/Maximum Good Hand and now 3♦* becomes an asking bid about the SUIT.

Responses are: 3♥* = 1 Top Honor 3♠* = 2 Top Honors 3NT = 3 Top honors

With slam interest after a 2M opening bid, do not use 4NT but instead use the bid of 4♣ or Kantar's Weak Roman Keycard bid. The responses are to 4♣ are:

- 4♦ first step, 0 keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Q
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Q
- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Q
- 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Q

The only step in which the Queen is unknown is the first step. Now the next step of 4♥ becomes the Queen ask where 4♠= No and 4NT=yes. If one bypasses the Queen ask bid of 4♥ or bids instead 5♣/5♦/5♥/5♠ the bid is the Specific Suit Ask (SSA) – do You have the A/K in the bid suit if No bid 6♥/6♠ if yes bid 6NT.

The bid of 4♣ is never Gerber or Expert Gerber using weak 2-bids. Kantar's 4♣ bid is also used over weak 3-level bids again using the scheme 0, 1 w/o Q, 1 w Q, 2 w/o Q, 2 w Q or the string (0, 1, 1, 2, 2) which make it easy to remember.

Another popular option for Weak 2-bids used **by many experts** allows for minimum or maximum hand strength with 5/6 card suits that depend on Vulnerability; it extends the old 55 Rule proposed the early 1980's. It was developed by Daniel Williamsburg and appeared in the April 1997 "Bridge World" magazine, but restricts suit types.

Type	Non-vulnerable	Vulnerable
A	5-cards, bad suit	5-cards, good suit
B	5-cards, good suit	5-cards, good suit
C	6-cards, bad suit	6-cards, good suit

Once again uses 2NT is the asking bid and the responses are called the Two-Step Ogust Convention.

3♣* = Bad/Min Hand – showing hand strength as weak/poor

Responder may (1) bid a part score or game, (2) bid a new suit at the 3-level or (3) over a 3♣* bid use 3♦* as an asking bid to show now both length and strength: 3♥ = Type A, 3♠ = Type B, and 3NT= Type C.

The other responses to the 2NT bid are:

- 3♦* = Good/Max Hand with Type A
- 3♥* = Good/Max Hand with Type B
- 3♠* = Good/Max Hand with Type C

When responding to the weak 2♦* bid one normally does not use 2NT to ask for a feature or hand structure, the goal is to try to get to 3NT not to a game in diamonds. The responses are:

Pass No game interest
2♠/2♥ 16+HCP with 5-card suit asking for 3-card support
2NT Forcing with 16+HCP or 13+HCP with 2-card support
3♣ 16+HCP with 5-card suit asking for 3-card support
3♦ 16+HCP with 2-card support, invitational to game no slam interest
3NT 16+HCP and all suit stopped – hopes that partner has an outside entry
4♣ Kantar's Weak Keycard bid with diamonds agreed suit and slam interest
4♦ Invitational to game
5♦ Game with no slam interest

Examples of hands for making the 2-level bids in the first two seats 2♦/2♥/2♠

♠982 ♥7 ♦KQ10842 ♣K75

♠96 ♥AQ9832 ♦KJ53 ♣7

♠AKJ753 ♥98 ♦J104 ♣85

Follow the link below for a short acbl lesson on Weak 2-bids

[C14_Online_Answer_Key.pdf](#)