

LANDY DEFENCE TO OPPONENTS' 1NT OPENING

The Landy defence to a 1NT opening was developed by an American (Connecticut), Alvin Landy, in the 1940s. In its basic form, it is still probably the most commonly used defence at club level, but even many higher level players fail to appreciate the full potential of the convention.

The basic 'standard' approach is well defined, but beyond that level, the continuations are very much open to individual interpretation, and the notes below build on that basic level.

(These notes are based on an opponent's weak 1NT opening, but the same principles apply after a strong 1NT, with a slight adjustment to the overcaller's point range – I suggest a 2-point increase)

WHAT IS LANDY?

When the opponents open 1NT, a Landy 2♣ overcall focusses on the major suit holdings, allowing all other simple overcalls to be treated as natural (so 2♦, 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ overcalls are natural). It can be used in both the immediate overcall seat, or in the balancing 4th seat.

REQUIREMENTS

Strength

The overcall should be bid on 9-14 points, or possibly 8 points with extra distribution (say 6/5). Some 15-point hands unsuitable for a penalty double also qualify. (Against a strong 1NT the overcall should be 11–15 points).

IMPORTANT - The majority of points should be in both major suits.

Shape

The primary shape should be 5/4.

If 6/4, the point range should be fairly constructive, 12-15 points, otherwise with 9-11 points a simple 6-card overcall is preferred.

If 4/4, Landy should only be considered with 12-15 points, and neither side vulnerable. Even then this can cause problems when overcaller subsequently attempts to define his hand – best avoided.

The combination of Shape and Strength is best appreciated if the 'Losing Trick' approach is adopted. Landy should only be used on hands with 7 or less losers.

(Throughout the following notes, in order to clearly distinguish the actions of the overcaller and the responder, these will be shown as different colours – **Overcaller**, **Responder**)

Examples of suitable (and unsuitable hands) for the Landy 2♣ overcaller are:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ KQ982
♥ A10854
♦ A74
♣ - | b) | ♠ KJ94
♥ KQ763
♦ A87
♣ 6 | c) | ♠ KQJ652
♥ AQ96
♦ 106
♣ 7 | d) | ♠ A965
♥ KQ8652
♦ 106
♣ 7 | e) | ♠ AJ872
♥ AQ94
♦ 53
♣ 92 |
| f) | ♠ Q7542
♥ KQJ9
♦ Q4
♣ Q6 | g) | ♠ AQJ4
♥ KQJ4
♦ 1086
♣ 73 | h) | ♠ AQ42
♥ AQ96
♦ 74
♣ 985 | i) | ♠ Q742
♥ K8653
♦ AQ
♣ K8 | | |

- a) 2♣ - 5 losers.
- b) 2♣ - 6 losers.
- c) 2♣ - 5 losers - 6/4 and a 'constructive hand'
- d) 2♥ - 6 losers - 6/4 but not strong enough for 2♣. Prefer a 2♥ overcall.
- e) 2♣ - 7 losers.
- f) pass - 7½ losers – poor 5-card suit – but many players will bid 2♣.
- g) pass/2♣ - 7 losers. Only bid 2♣ if neither side vulnerable.
- h) pass - 7 losers, but poor quality suits, so even at love all, still pass.
- i) pass/2♥ - 6½ losers, not suitable for 2♣ - too many points in the minors.

COMBINED HAND POTENTIAL

The **overcaller** should consider his hand as either weak (9-11 pts.) or strong (12-14 pts.).

The **responder** should consider his hand as either weak (0-10 pts.), intermediate (11-12 pts.), or strong (13+ pts.). Moreover if 2/1 or a poor 3/1 (no honour) in the majors – **deduct two points when evaluating the hand.**

Only '**strong-intermediate**', or '**strong-strong**' combinations should aim for game.

RESPONDER 0-10 pts. (after overcaller's 2♣)

This is the most common and simplest situation to handle. In many cases it's all the average club player concerns himself with. There are only three responses from responder:

- With equal length majors, **bid 2♦**. Overcaller then bids his **longer major (if 5/5 choose the better major)**, and **responder will then 'pass'**
- With unequal length majors, **responder simply bids the longer one** (even with 2/1), which **overcaller will pass** (...unless)
- With a good 6/7-card club suit and no interest in the majors (infrequent), '**pass**'.

Examples (showing the 'North/South' hands, after West opens 1NT):

j)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	k)	♠ QJ862 ♥ AQJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J9	l)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	m)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	n)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 74 ♣ J9
	♠ 973 ♥ 986 ♦ A953 ♣ Q82		♠ 973 ♥ 986 ♦ A953 ♣ Q82		♠ 97 ♥ 986 ♦ A953 ♣ Q832		♠ 974 ♥ 95 ♦ A953 ♣ Q832		♠ 97 ♥ 8 ♦ A9853 ♣ Q8743
o)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 74 ♣ J9	p)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 74 ♣ J9	q)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 74 ♣ J9				
	♠ 9 ♥ 98 ♦ A9853 ♣ Q8742		♠ 97 ♥ 8 ♦ A953 ♣ Q87432		♠ 97 ♥ 84 ♦ A95 ♣ Q87432				

- j) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - pass – equal length majors.
- k) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♥ – pass – equal length majors, and North bids his better 5-card major.
- l) 2♣ – 2♥ - pass – the 5-2 spade fit would probably be better, but cannot find at the 2-level.
- m) 2♣ – 2♠ - pass.

- n) 2♣ – 2♠ – pass – at least there’s a 5-2 fit.....
- o) 2♣ – 2♥ – pass - ... the worst hand possible – 5/5 in the minors - make the best of a bad fit.
- p) 2♣ - pass – 6-card club suit, no interest in the majors
- q) 2♣ – 2♦ - 2♠ – pass - despite the poor 6-card suit, he is virtually guaranteed a 5-2 major fit.

RESPONDER 11-12 pts. (after overcaller’s 2♣)

Club players may not be aware of the different requirements from the responder in this intermediate point range. **Responder** needs to convey both his point-count and shape, whereby **overcaller** can bid game on his stronger (12-14 hand), but stop short with his weaker (9-11) hand.

There are only two types of bid available to responder:

3♣/3♦ – fairly rare, but show a good 6/7-card minor with no major interest (2/1 or less).

2♦ – the usual initial response in this point range – **it does not necessarily show equal length majors**, as is the case with a weaker responder hand.

overcaller now bids his 5-card major (as is the case with a weak response from partner)

- **responder then raises with 3 or 4-card support** (the usual situation), or
- **responder bids the ‘other major’ with 4-cards**, otherwise
- **responder bids 2NT.....**

r)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	s)	♠ AK852 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ K96	t)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ J ♣ 1096	u)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ J ♣ K96	v)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ J ♣ 1076
	♠ Q74 ♥ A98 ♦ A953 ♣ Q83		♠ Q74 ♥ A98 ♦ A953 ♣ Q83		♠ Q74 ♥ A9 ♦ A9532 ♣ Q83		♠ Q74 ♥ A9 ♦ A9532 ♣ Q83		♠ Q7 ♥ A964 ♦ A95 ♣ Q832

r) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 3♠ – pass. **Equal** length majors, with intermediate values, **responder raises** overcaller’s 5-card major. Overcaller with a minimum **passes**.

s) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 3♠ – 4♠. ...whereas overcaller with the stronger hand now **bids game**.

t) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 3♠ – pass. **Unequal** length majors, but with intermediate values, responder still **bids 2♦**. Overcaller **bids his 5-card major**, and when the 5-3 fit is established, **responder raises**, which overcaller **passes**.

u) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 3♠ – 4♠. ...whereas overcaller with the stronger hand now **bids game**.

v) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 3♥ – pass. Similar to (t), but with no 5/3 spade fit, responder can **bid his 4-card heart suit**, which overcaller with a weak hand will **pass**.

w)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ K96	x)	♠ AK852 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	y)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	z)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ K96	aa)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 84 ♣ 76
	♠ Q7 ♥ A964 ♦ A95 ♣ Q832		♠ 974 ♥ 9 ♦ AQ985 ♣ AQ53		♠ Q74 ♥ 9 ♦ A9532 ♣ AQ53		♠ Q74 ♥ 9 ♦ A9532 ♣ AJ83		♠ 7 ♥ K98 ♦ Q95 ♣ AQJ432

w) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 3♥ – 4♥. whereas overcaller with a stronger hand can now bid the **heart game**.

x) 2♣ – 2♠ – pass. Despite 12 hcp., with the poor 3/1 majors, responder should subtract 2 points – **weak category**, simple **preference to the 3-card spade suit**.

y) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 3♠ – pass Responder’s spade suit is somewhat better, - a more genuine 12 pts., so responder **bids 2♦**, and then **raises partners spade suit**.

z) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 3♠ – 4♠ As (y), but overcaller with a better hand can now **raise to game**.

aa) 2♣ – 3♣ – pass A good minor suit, but you may be missing a 5/3 heart fit – a close call

If the responder is unable to raise overcaller’s 5-card suit, nor does he have a 4-card ‘other major’, **he must now bid 2NT**.

Following this ‘**delayed 2NT**’, overcaller’s responses are no longer ‘standard’, but my suggested approach is:

overcaller ‘passes’ with a weak 5/4/3/1 hand
overcaller bids 3♣ with any other 5/4 hand
overcaller bids 3♦ with any 5/5 hand
overcaller repeats his first bid major, with a 6-card suit.

bb)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	cc)	♠ AK852 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ K96	dd)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 4 ♣ J96	ee)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ973 ♦ 4 ♣ K7	ff)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ973 ♦ 4 ♣ 97
	♠ 9 ♥ A104 ♦ A9542 ♣ A853		♠ 9 ♥ A104 ♦ A9542 ♣ A853		♠ 9 ♥ A9 ♦ A9532 ♣ A8543		♠ J ♥ 842 ♦ KQ952 ♣ AQ84		♠ 9 ♥ A84 ♦ K952 ♣ A8543

bb) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 2NT – pass
 No major support, no ‘other major’, so **responder bids 2NT**.
 Overcaller with a weak 5/4/3/1 can now **pass**.

cc) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 2NT – 3♣ – 3♥ – pass
 Overcaller with a better hand than (bb) now bids **3♣**,
 and responder settles for the **3♥** contract on a 4/3 fit.

dd) 2♣ – 2♥ – pass
 A similar hand in strength to (cc), but the 2/1 major fit requires a 2-point hcp reduction, now giving a 10-point ‘weak’ hand, so just a **longer major preference**.

ee) 2♣ – 2♥ – pass
 ... and similiary with a poor 3/1 in the majors, a 10-point ‘weak’ hand

ff) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ – 2NT – 3♦ – 3♥ – pass
 With 5/5, after **responder’s 2NT**, overcaller **bids 3♦**, allowing responder to decide the best fit – **hearts** (helped by ‘knowing’ that overcaller’s points are be in the majors). Overcaller with a ‘weak’ hand **passes**.

gg)	♠ AK862 ♥ QJ973 ♦ 4 ♣ K9	hh)	♠ AK852 ♥ QJ973 ♦ 4 ♣ K9	ii)	♠ AK8762 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 6 ♣ 97	jj)	♠ AK8762 ♥ QJ73 ♦ 6 ♣ 97
	♠ 9 ♥ A84 ♦ K952 ♣ A8543		♠ 9 ♥ A8 ♦ AQ752 ♣ A9643		♠ 9 ♥ A94 ♦ A9532 ♣ A853		♠ 9 ♥ A984 ♦ A954 ♣ A853

gg) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 2NT – 3♦ – 3♥ - 4♥

... but now overcaller with a ‘strong’ hand **bids game**.

hh) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 2NT – 3♦ – 3♥ - 3NT

The 2/1 major holding requires **responder to deduct 2-points**, but this still leaves him with an intermediate hand (12 pts.). Knowing that partner is 5/5 in the majors, and with good minors, **3NT** is probably a better choice than **4♥** (but a close decision).

ii) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 2NT – 3♠ – 4♠

Overcaller must not rush directly to 4♠. Responder knows that overcaller has a 6-card suit (and together with a 4-card heart suit, will have ruffing potential). Not ideal with a singleton support, but where else to go other than **4♠**.

jj) 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠ - 2NT – 3♠ – 4♥

... whereas there is a much better alternative of **4♥**.

RESPONDER 13+ pts. (after overcaller’s 2♣)

A fairly rare response, but basically the same actions as a ‘delayed’ 2NT (11-12 pts.), except that over the 2NT, the overcaller cannot pass with a ‘weak’ 5/4 hand. He should bid 3♣ and let responder control the hand.

RESPONDER’S ACTION OVER OPPONENT’S DOUBLE OF 2♣

The only affect on responder’s actions are:

- **pass** if you would bid 2♦ without the dbl
- **bid 2♦** with good 6-card diamond suit
- **rdbl** with a good 6-card club suit and values

RESPONDER’S ACTION IF OPPONENT BIDS 2♦ OVER 2♣

- **pass** if you would bid 2♦ without the interference
- **dbl** with diamonds (penalty)