

Other bids for 1♣/1♦* and 2♦*/2♥*

Playing the 2/1 Game Force Bidding System

By Neil H. Timm

More than fifty-bridge bidding systems have been created worldwide. They can be easily sorted into two categories “natural” and “artificial”. Within the natural category, Johannes Koelman discusses his “Sevenfold Classification” scheme.

Within the artificial category are strong club and diamond systems, and weak club and diamond systems. While there are others like the forcing pass and many relay systems, they have been disallowed by the ACBL, although accepted in other countries,

The most popular systems within the natural category are ACOL, Standard American, BBO Standard, and the 2/1 bidding systems.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, **Natural systems** generally use opening bids as follows:

- A bid of 1♥ or 1♠ shows at least 4 or 5 cards in the major suit, and 1♣ or 1♦ shows at least 3 or 4 cards in the minor suit. The complete hand usually contains about (11) 12-20(22) high card points. As between two major suits or between two minor suits, the bidder opens in the longer suit; with equal lengths, the higher-ranking suit is usually chosen. If the opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ promises 5 cards, the system is referred to as a "five-card major" system; otherwise, it is referred to as a "four-card major" system. The term *five-card majors* implies that an opening bid in a minor suit bid might show three card length only (for example, the hand pattern might be 4=4=2=3, so neither major suit is long enough to show with an opening bid).
- A bid of 1NT shows a balanced hand in a narrow high card points (HCP) range. The common ranges are 15-17 or 16-18 HCP ("strong notrump") and 12-14 ("weak notrump").
- A bid of 2♣ typically shows a very strong hand (22+ points).
- A bid of 2NT shows a strong balanced hand, usually 20-21 HCP.
- Opening bids of 3 of any suit are preemptive, showing a 7+card suit and 6-10 points (mostly inside the bid suit).
- The meaning of 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ varies. One common usage is that the bid shows a weak two bid, similar to a preemptive bid. Another is the strong two bids, which is natural and shows a very strong hand (too strong for a 1-level opening). Yet another usage, popular in otherwise natural systems, is to use weak two bids in the major suits, and 2♦ as Flannery: four spades and five hearts in a hand of minimum strength.

Using 10,000,000 Michael Goetze found that opening 1-level major suit bid and 1NT

bids in some 2/1 systems occur with the following frequency:

Bid	Percent - Meaning
1♥	6.5% - 11-21 HCP & 5+♥. If balanced 11-13 or 17-18 & rarely 19-21.
1♠	8.7% - 11-21 HCP & 5+♠. If balanced 11-13 or 17-18 & rarely 19-21.
1NT	6.4% - balanced 14+ to 17- with any 2-card doubleton and no singleton.

Hence playing 2/1 it is very common to open the bidding 1♣/1♦, which occurs well over 50% of the time!

When one opens 1♣/1♦, the expected length of having 4-cards are equally likely. To remove this situation some always open 1♦ with four and announce the bid of 1♣ bid as “may be short” 0-2 and non-forcing (NF) called the Short Club. Since the expected lengths for 3-7 cards when opening 1♣ are:

3 (17%) 4 (26%) 5 (38%) 6 (15%) 7 (4%)

Larry Cohen in his article “1-Of-a-Minor Opening” does not agree with the short club and recommends to almost always opening 1♣ when 3-3 in the minors since then the bid of 1♦ is more likely 4! Also see his article in the “Bridge Bulletin” February 2017, p.32.

It's actually quite likely that your 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid will be based on a suit that's longer than three cards. In general,

1♣ opening bid will be made on a 3-card suit about *16 percent* of the time and where
4 clubs – 38 percent
5 clubs – 29 percent
6 or more clubs – 17 percent

1♦ opening bid will be made on a 3-card suit about *4 percent* of the time and where
4 diamonds – 43 percent
5 diamonds – 34 percent
6 or more diamonds – 19 percent

The convenient club or short club bid first appeared in the 1930's in the Four Aces System.

Opening 1♣/1♦*

Playing Standard American most open a short 1♣ bid with 13+ HCP; however, with the 2/1 Bidding System 11/12 starting points are more likely. Common options include.

- 1) Phony 1♣* Bid
- 2) Kennedy Club Method
- 3) Montreal Relay Convention
- 4) Walsh Club Convention
- 5) Modified Walsh Transfers

Phony 1♣* Bid

The "Phony 1♣" bid is really not part of 2/1; however, I have seen it used as follows. The bids of 1♦/1♥/1♠ ALWAYS show a 5-card suit and 11/12 points and natural bids so that 1♣* is always short, phony and **forcing**. **The 1♣* must be alerted and NOT announced as may be short and NF.** Yes it should be alerted (*=alerted) and not just announced.

Kennedy Club Method

The Kennedy 1♣ (may be short is ANNOUNCED and NOT ALERTED) and is used to find a 5-card major since the standard response in 2/1 to the 1♣ bid is to show a 4+card major immediately, a forcing response.

Bid Responder - Meaning

- 1♣ 1♥/1♠ -Shows a 5-card suit & no alert is needed.
 - 1♣ 1♦* artificial, denies 5-card major but promises on 4-card-major
 - 1♣ 1NT* denies a 5/4 card major
- *=Alert

Note – Some pairs use the Kennedy 1♣/1♦* method by including the Short or Phony 1♦* bid as follows.

Bid Responder - Meaning

- 1♣/1♦* 1♥/1♠ - Shows a 5-card suit & no alert is needed.
 - 1♣ 1♦* artificial, denies 5-card major but promises on 4-card-major
 - 1♣/1♦* 1NT* denies a 5/4 card major
- *=Alert

The club bid remains announced, but the diamond bid must be alerted.

The Montreal Relay Convention introduced by Eric Kokish and Modified by Neil Timm, following the Phony Club, is often confused with the Kennedy Club Method.

Montreal Relay Convention

Open 1♣* with 11-19 HCP or **Double** if bid was stolen (overcall)

HCP	Responses	Follow-up Bids
5/6-9 Points	1♦ 5+♦ 1♥ 5+♥ 1♠ 5+♠ 1 NT* No 5-card Major	Opener's Rebid 2♣ Forcing Re-Bid 6+Card Suit or Bid 4-Card Suit or Bid 3-card Suit with A or K
10-12 Points	2♣* 5♥ 2♦* 5♠ 2♥ 6+♥ 2♠ 6+♠ 2NT No 5-card Major	3♣ Forcing, Next Level Bids 1 st Level Higher 10 Points 2 nd Level Higher 11 Points 3 rd Level Higher 12 Points
13+ Points	3♣* 5♥ 3♦* 5♠ 3♥ 6+♥ 3♠ 6+♠ 3NT No 5-card Major	4♣ Forcing, Next Level Bids 13-14 - 4♦ 15-16 - 4♥ 17-18 - 4♠ 19+ - 5NT

Note: With one or two 4 card majors, one may bid 2NT with 13+ Points so that partner may bid their 4 card Major Suit if Available. With no 4 Card Major bid 3NT. With a larger hand one bids 4NT Blackwood (not RKCB since there is NO agreed suit). *= Alert since forcing (not an announcement). Not the case with Kennedy Club.

Playing the Montreal Relay Convention, the opening bid of 1♦* ensures 4+diamonds called the Montreal Relay 1♦* Method. An alternative is to play the Walsh Club Convention.

Walsh Club Convention

When opening 1♣, the "standard" first priority is to bid the major to show 6+ HCP; however, playing the Walsh Club Convention you do not show your **four card major**, but instead when holding a hand with 13+ points (a game-forcing hand) and diamonds (at least two), your bid is 1♦* (alert and explained as may be short and forcing for one round). This asks the opener to bid 1NT* (alert since you may have a 4-card major) with a minimum hand, 11-12 HCP; with 13+ points opener bids his 4-card major (hearts or spades). With a 3-3-3-4/3-3-2-5 hands and 13+ point's opener bid is 2♣, which denies a 4-card major. In summary, opener bids: 2♣ (3334/3325) or 1♥ (with 4 hearts or if 4-4 in the majors) or 1♠ (with 4 spades) over 1♦* to show 13+ points. With 3-3-5-2 or 3-3-4-3, opener would bid 2♦ to deny a 4-card major.

If opener bids 1NT* over partner's bid of 1♦* it shows an 11-12 point hand. Responder next bids his 4-card major and without a major bids 2♣ with 3-3-3-4/3-3-2-5 shape; or, if responder is 3-3-4-3 or 3-3-5-2 bids 2♦. This asks the opener to bid 2NT.

With a major fit you will play in the major and if not usually play in NT. The primary advantage of the convention is that you now have a game-forcing bid over the bid of 1♣, just like 2♣ clubs is a game-forcing bid over 1♦ playing 2/1 game force systems.

Suppose opener has this hand ♠A872 ♥AK4 ♦83 ♣J1065; and playing the Walsh Club Convention, suppose the auction goes: 1♣-1♦*(alert). Opener will bid 1NT* to show a minimal hand. If partner bids 2♥ you may pass (partner must bid 3♥ to force game in hearts). If partner bids 2♠ you may raise the bid to show a fit. If partner bids 2♣ he is denying a 4-card major. You may bid 3♣ to show a fit. Since partner now knows that you have 11-12 HCP, partner will set the contract.

Holding ♠AK87 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K106 opener would bid 1♥ over 1♦* to show 13+ points and four cards in the major. If partner has a 4-card heart suit he will raise your bid, if he has spades and not hearts he will bid 1♠ and bid 1NT without four spades. This allows you to play in a major or NT game.

As responder holding ♠AJ875 ♥AK43 ♦83 ♣K10, you would bid 1♠ over the bid of 1♣. This now shows a 5-card major. If partner next bids 2♠ showing a 4-card fit, you must bid 3♠ to show 13+ points. If partner bids 2♥, with less than 13 points, bid only 2♠.

When holding a 5-card major, over the bid of 1♣, if you bid the major: 1♥/1♠; this shows 6+ HCP. After, partner's bids of say 2♣/2♦, to show 13+ HCP you must bid at the 3-level of the major suit bid. If partner supports your major suit bid, again invite by bidding at the 3-level. Instead of bidding at the one level with a 5+ card major with 13+ points, some may bid 1♦*. If partner does not bid 1NT, but your major you know immediately that you have game and a fit in the major suit bid. If partner does not support your major, but bids the other major you again know that he has more than 11-12 HCP and a 4-card major. If he bids 2NT he is showing 13+ points and you probably have a game in NT.

What happens when they interfere? The convention is OFF. Over a double, a redouble shows 10+ HCP; bidding at the two levels also shows 10+ HCP and a 5-card suit unless you play negative free bids or crisscross with flip-flop!

How does the Walsh Club Convention affect the inverted minor raise playing crisscross? Clearly, 1♦-2♦* applies as and so does 1♦-3♣*; both deny a 4-card major. With clubs, 1♣-2♣* denies a 4-card major with 13+ dummy points and clubs; and 1♣-2♦ shows 10-12 with clubs. 1♣-1♦*- now shows 13+ points with a 4-card major or perhaps diamonds/clubs.

You may also play the convention if you do not play crisscross where now and inverted minor bid promises only 10+ dummy points; however, 1♣-1♦*- still shows 13+ points with a 4-card major or perhaps diamonds/clubs. *= Alert

Let's assume you are playing the 2/1 Game Force System with a strong 15-17 NT and of course 5-card majors.

You open 1♥/1♠ and partner supports your major at the 2-level.

Modified Walsh Transfers

Let's assume you are playing the 2/1 Game Force System with a strong 15-17 NT and of course 5-card majors. Playing 1 - over -1 bids, with no interference, what is your "standard" agreed re-bid if you hold 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand?

Because most 2/1 players agree that the opening bid of 2NT shows a balanced hand and 20-21 HCP, the "standard" re-bid by the opening bidder is the JUMP bid of 2NT. Yes, partner must now bid at the 3-level taking up valuable bidding space.

How can we solve this problem and also ensure that the opener plays ALL major suit contracts and not make a jump bid over partner's 1-level response? Simple!

Playing 2/1 we define the bid of 1♣* **as any opening hand with any distribution and 11/12-19 HCP**; with 11HCP opener must have 2 quick tricks.

It must be alerted since the bid is **artificial and forcing** for one round. The hand may have no clubs, one club (4-4-4-1), or 3+ clubs.

With this information, responder bids are transfers at the 1-level. The bidding structure is similar to Walsh Transfers.

Opener

Responder

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1♣* | 1♦* with 4+ hearts, may have zero points |
| | 1♥* with 4+ spades, may have zero points |
| | 1♠* with 4+ diamonds, an zero points, NO 4-card major but may have 4+clubs |
| | 1NT 10-12 HCP and NO 4-card major |
| | 2♣/2♦ natural with a 5+ card bid suit and a 6-12 HCP or 5-12 HCP with an Ace |
| | 2♥/2♠ natural with a 5+card bid suit, game-forcing (GF), and 13+ HCP |
| | 2NT balanced 13-15 and NO 4-card major |
| | 3♣/3♦ natural with 6+ card suit, invitational, and 13+ HCP |
| | 3♥/3♠ natural with 6+ card suit, invitational, and 13+ HCP |

The primary advantage of the transfer bids is that the opener plays all suit contracts and with 18-19 HCP openers may bid 1NT instead of 2NT to save bidding space:

1♣*

1♥ = 11/12-14HCP <4

1NT = 18-19HCP

2x = min of 4-cards in suit bid

1♦*

1♣

1♠ = 11/12-14HCP <4

1NT = 18-19HCP

2x = min of 4-cards in suit bid

1♥*

* = Alert

Opening 2♦*/2♥*

We now turn to 2-level bids playing 2/1. Many players play weak two bids, which show 5/6-10 HCP and at least a 6-card suit with 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 high cards in the bid suit. Excluded from the 2-level bids is 2♣ playing 2/1, which is an artificial bid showing 22+ HCP, or a strong hand with 19+ HCP and 4 quick tricks and less than 4 loser using the Rule of 44.

Two-suited hands with 5-4 distribution occur about 37% of the time and 6-4 hands are more common than 5-5 hands which is important to know when interfering over 15-17 HCP NT bidders.

In general 16+ HCP hands only occur about 10% of the time. See Table 6 in the web site:

<http://www.occasionalethusiast.com/bridge-hand-probability-analysis/>

How often do you hold a weak no-trump hand?

Let's say we define a weak no-trump as 12-14 HCP with either 4333 or 4432 distribution. Summing the six cells above matching this criterion gives 6.51%.

If we also include 5332 distributions with a 5-card minor, we need to add a further 3.17 / 2 (as 5-card minors only occurs half the time), resulting in 8.10%.

How often do you hold a weak-two in a major?

Here we just need to decide what HCP range and distributions constitutes a weak-two opening bid, sum the results and divide by two (to exclude the minors). For 5-10 HCP, with 6322 or 6331 distributions, we get 2.18%.

Let's say we define an 'idealish' weak-two in a major as:

- 5-10 HCP
- 6-card major with two honors
- No void

- No second suit (4 or more cards)
- No singleton honor

The result is 1.16%

How often do you hold a strong no-trump hand?

Assuming 16-18 HCP and 4333, 4432 and 5332 (including majors) distributions, we get 3.55%.

So why worry about weak-two bids with such low frequency?

Playing 2/1 with a 5-card major, suppose you are dealt the following hand: ♠ KQ72 ♥ AJ642 ♦ KJ ♣ 54, if the bidding starts with 1♥ - 1NT (denying 4-spades or 3-hearts announced as forcing or semi-forcing as REQUIRED by the ACBL), the opener cannot rebid 2♠, since it would be a reverse showing a strong hand. The bid of 2♥ would show a six-card suit, and two of a minor would show four or at least three good cards.

Playing 1NT* as forcing does not prevent the opener from bidding a non-suit.

The Flannery 2♦* Convention (invented by William (Bill) L. Flannery) with 11-15 HCP when playing five-card majors in conjunction with the forcing 1NT bid prevents the opener from having to respond in a non-suit after 1♥ - 1NT when not strong enough to reverse.

The “standard” responses to 2♦*:

Bid	Meaning
Pass	6+ Diamonds
2♥	Natural, to play
2♠	Natural, to play
2NT*	Please describe the shape of your hand
3♣/3♦	6 or 7-card suit where to play ♣'s to play / ♦'s invitational
3♥/3♠	3-cards.4-cards with 10-12 dummy points and invitational
3NT	Natural, to play
4♣/4♦	Announced as transfer to 4♥/4♠
4♥/4♠	Natural, to play
4NT	Blackwood or RKCB per agreement

After 2NT* bids shape and points:

Bid	Meaning
3♣	4=5=1=3 (=implies exactly)
3♦	4=5=3=1
3♥	4=5=2=2 minimum 11-13
3♠	4=5=2=2 maximum 14-15
3NT	4=5=2=2, with stoppers in both minors
4♣/4♦	4=4=0=4 or 4==4=4=0

For a nice discussion of the Flannery Convention, see Eric Rodwell (2019), “Eric Rodwell’s Bidding Topics Book Two”, Page 43, Baron Barkley.

The primary disadvantage to Flannery is the response of 2♥, which may be passed by the opening bidder. Hence, the weak hand is playing the contract and not the strong opening bidder. For this reason and the low frequency of the weak 2♥ bid some use 2♥* as Flannery.

Other modifications to the Flannery 2♦* Convention include Modified (with alternative shape responses), Flexible (allows 5/6 hearts), Extended (5-4, 4-6 or 5-6), and the Extra-Shape (which combines Mini-Roman, 4-4-4-1 hands, with Flannery).

Other Two Diamond Conventions used within 2/1 include:

Morgan 2♦* (23-24 HCP or unbalanced hands holding a 4-card major+ any other longer suit and game-forcing values),

Mexican 2♦* (17-19 HCP without a weak doubleton except two clubs and a potential 5-card major), Karosel 2♦* (18-19 HCP, balanced distribution, no void/singleton and may have a 7-card suit),

Karosel 2♦* (18-19 HCP, a balanced hand with no void or singleton, and may contain a long suit up to 7 cards)

The Modified Jammer 2♦* bid is used with any three-suited hand (no less than 3 cards in any suit and with no more than 5 cards in any suit and with 4 spades and 5/6-10 HCP, a preemptive bid (see www.bridgewebs.com/ocala web site).

Romex 2♦* a balanced 21-22/27-28 HCP hand, an unbalance game-forcing hand with diamonds as the longest suit and at most 3 losers, any 3-suit game-forcing hand),

Schenken 2♦* (a balances 23 HCP hand or an unusual game-forcing hand with slam prospects), and the Split Roman 2♦* (any 4441 hands with 10-12 or 19-22 HCP),
And others.

A popular 2♦* System used in Europe is the Multi 2♦* System; however it is not allowed by the ACBL.

Other uses for the Two Diamond Bid include:

Erkren Two Diamonds (used in Norway when 4-4 in the majors and 3-10 HCP),

Wilozse Two Diamonds (used within the Polish Club),

Benjamin Two Diamonds (used within the ACOL system),

The Two Diamond Minimuli (a simpler version of Multi Two Diamonds),

And others.

The Napolitan 2♦* Convention is part of the Precision “Blue Team” System, a more common use of the 2♦* bid within Strong/Modified Precision systems is used to show 3-suited hands with a singleton/void in diamonds.

And finally, there are the Super Standard Strong Two of a Minor Opening, designed by the experts Mats Nilslund and Anders Wirgren, both bridge experts,

Bergen-Cohen Two-Under Preempt bids, yes Marty Bergen and Larry Cohen, both known bridge experts,

Tricolor Two Diamond relay bid used after the artificial 2♣ opener proposed by bridge expert Danny Kleinman,

Larsson’s (the Swedish champion strong Goran Larsson) 2♣*/2♦* bids (with 22-23 or 26-27/25-25 or 28-29 HCP, respectively),

Stayman Two-Club and Two-Diamond Openings (used for intermediate and strong hands and invented independently by both Sam Stayman and Albert Benjamin),

And many more, which I have not yet uncovered!