

Two-Way New Minor Forcing with Wolff Modified

By Neil H Timm

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, one makes a 1-level bid with 11/12-21 points. Playing 2/1 with the strong no-trump convention, one opens 1NT with 15-17 HCP and balanced distributions (4332, 4333, or 5322 when 5-3 in the majors) or with the semi-balanced distributions (2336 long minor or 2445 no major suit length) and no void or singleton unless it is an A/K/Q per the New Open ACBL convention charts). However, if one cannot open 1NT (15-17 HCP), a one-level minor suit bid is made without a 5-card major.

The opening bidder may now have a minimum hand with 11/12-14 points, an intermediate hand with 15-17 points or a strong hand with 18+ points. And partner may have 0-5/6 points (very weak), 6-9 points (weak), 10-12 points (invitational), or 13+ points (strong-game going 2/1 hand).

Not having a 5-card major, the opening bidder will now open the bidding of one of a minor, usually a 3-card suit (the convenient minor).

Note some players may use a short club (0-2), which may be played as forcing (e.g. Montreal Relay or Walsh Club Conventions) or as non-forcing (e.g. Kennedy Club). Playing a short club, the bid of one diamond is usually of length four and does not require an alert. The **1♣ bid** must be **announced** as short if **non-forcing** and **alerted if forcing**.

Non-Forcing Responses to Minor Opening

After opening one of a minor (1♣/1♦) and partner bids a major, a re-bid of 1NT (by the opener shows a minimum or intermediate hand (11/12-14 points or 15-17 points). A new suit by responder (after opener bids 1NT) is **non-forcing**; it is only forcing over suit bids. It shows a two-suited hand which partner may pass if he prefers the second suit. A re-bid of responder's own suit is also non-forcing after 1NT, showing a 5-card major. For example:

1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♣ (non-forcing to-play)

1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♣ (non-forcing to-play)

1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♥/2♠/3♦ (non-forcing to-play)

1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♠/2♥/3♦ (non-forcing to-play)

With a minimum hand, opener will usually pass; however with 15-17 points (an intermediate hand), opener may make a reverse 2-level bid (1♣-1♥/1♠-2♦, 1♣-1♠-2♥, or 1♦-1♠-2♥) or make a jump re-bid. The bid of 2NT by opener shows 18+ points. What if responder bids 2NT over opener's 1NT bid? **It is NOT invitational, but conventional.**

1m-1M-1NT-2NT* (Conventional NOT Natural)

2NT* is a relay to 3♣, that's how you sign off in clubs, then over 3♣

Pass = Clubs

3♦ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, doubleton

3♥ = 5 of my major, 4 of partners minor, singleton/void

3♠ = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, doubleton

3NT = 4 of my major, 5 of partners minor, singleton/void

When partner opens one of a minor and responder has a 5- card major and bids 1♥/1♠, what convention does one use to invite game, or force to game, without jumping to the 3-level in the major?

There are several commonly used “club” conventions one may learn playing the 2/1 Game Force System:

(1) New Minor Forcing (NMF)

(2) Check-back Stayman

(3) Two-Way New Minor Forcing (also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman)

(4) The X-Y-Z Convention (also simply called Two-Way Checkback)

The X-Y-Z convention is more sophisticated and I will discuss it in a future “Bridge Bit”. Of course other conventions are employed to address the problem, for example in England the Crowhurst convention is popular.

While many club members may want to learn either NMF or Checkback Stayman both have severe drawbacks. The conventions DO NOT distinguish between invitational and game-forcing hands, and the NMF Convention takes up too much bidding space. So do not spend your time learning two conventions.

A convention you should learn is Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2-Way NMF is marked in RED on your Convention Card, as is New Minor Forcing Convention due to their popularity).

Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF)

Responder uses the Two-Way New Minor Forcing (2WNMF) Convention when opener bids 1NT after opening with a minor with a 5-card major. It requires at 10-12 points (game-invitational strength); otherwise responder may just rebid his major or show a second suit. The bidding sequence follows.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠

1NT 2♣*(2WNMF)

Note: This convention is not used with less than 10 points, it is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference, the only exception is if the opponents bid 1♦ over opener's bid of 1♣ or double a 1-level club bid.

Responder with game-invitational values (10 -12 points) and a 5-card major makes the forcing bid of 2♣*. Because the club bid is artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has 3-card support for the major suit bid (with 4-card support, opener would have supported the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major.

If the opener doesn't have 3-card support, his first obligation is to show 4-cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2♦. What does this mean? The bids follow in some detail for each minor and major suit bid.

Club Opening

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - no support (4 Spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points) –(3433)
- 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2NT - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
- 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

Diamond Opening

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
- 2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣*(2WNMF)
?	

- 2♦ - no support for the major minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
- 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
- 2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)
- 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
- 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
- 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
- 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)

When one has 13+ points (game - invitational values) as responder, the 2♣* bid is replaced with the bid of 2♦* and now is game-forcing with a 5+ card major.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)

Because the bid is again artificial, it must be alerted (hence the asterisk). The bid is asking opener if he has 3-card support for the major suit bid (with 4-card support, opener would support the major). With support and minimal values, opener bids the major and with 15+ points jumps in the major. Again if opener doesn't have 3-card support, his first obligation is to show 4-cards in the other major. If he has neither of the above, he bids 2NT. The responses for the forcing sequence are similar to the non-forcing 2♣* bids.

Club Opening

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)
?	

2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - no support (4 Spades), intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)
 2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF - GF)
?	

2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2NT- no support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♣
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) (3244/2245)
 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

Diamond Opening

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♦*(2WNMF- GF)
?	

2♥ - 3-card support, minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (4333)

2NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3334)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
 3♥ - 3-card support and intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♦*(2NMF - GF)
?	

2♥ - no support (4 Hearts), minimum (11/12-14 points)
 2♠ - 3- card support (not 4 Hearts), minimum (11-12-14 points)
 2NT - no support for the major minimum (11/12-14 points)
 3♣ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (2254)
 3♦ - no support, intermediate (15+ points) 5♦
 3♥ - 4 Hearts may have 3-card support for spades, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3♠ - 3-card support without 4 Hearts, intermediate values (15+ points)
 3NT- no support, intermediate (15+ points) – (3343)

I have tried to provide all the bidding combinations, showing shape and points, when using 2WNMF, for several example hands see the 12-page pdf on the web by pasting the following link into your web browser.

www.lajollabridge.com/LJUnit/Education/2-WayNewMinorForcing.pdf

Wolff Signoff Convention Modified (WSOM)

We have reviewed the case where the opening bidder has 11/12-17 points. We now look at the Wolff Signoff Convention (WSOM) when the opener bids 2NT=18+ points. I have modified WSO to address the 5-2, 4-2, 5-3, 4-4, 6-5, 5-5, 5-6, 4-6, and 6-4 majors suit distributions.

Wolff Signoff Modified - After opener makes a strong 2NT rebid, the Wolff Signoff is a responder method normally used by responder to warn the strong opener of sub-game values; in the normal situation, the opener is instructed to pass (opener promises 2-3 cards in responders major suit when rebidding 2NT). The theory behind the convention assumes that openers 2NT rebid is restricting openers values to 18-19 HCP, thus responder is now the captain and places the contract. When used in conjunction with Major Suit Checkback, responder has the tools to force to game/slam and to signoff at the 3 level or (4 level if signing off in clubs).

Note: The WSOM convention is off by a passed hand and usually off over interference. Not playing the WSOM, but NMF, the bid of 3♣* is NMF!

We are using the WSOM convention when Opener bids a minor, it may also be used when Opener bids a major at the 1-level, or when the Opener bids 2NT over any 1-level bid by responder (e.g. 1♥-1♠-2NT, 1♦-1♥/1♠-2NT, or 1♣-1♦/1♥/1♠-2NT).

Non-forcing bids over Opener's 2NT bid

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – (Pass/3NT/4M) – Sign-off Bids (5-7 Points)

For example

Pass with ♠74 ♥K108743 ♦ J432 ♣7 or ♠AJ72 ♥863♦106 ♣876

3NT with ♠J743 ♥ K986 ♦ Q72 ♣J105

4♠ with ♠AJ1062 ♥J65 ♦1086 ♣7

With a huge hand opener may use Gerber or RKCB to investigate slam.

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣* (WSOM – 8-12 Points)

The artificial 3♣* bid shows a weak hand, generally with at least five cards in responder's bid major (may be 6-4 or 5-5). With three-card support for the major, opener bids that suit at the three-level. Without three-card support, opener is required to rebid 3♦*, artificial (only 2-card support for the bid major). All of responder's subsequent bids over 3♦* are natural signoffs. **Major must have 5+cards – Never 4 (with 4 bid 3♦'s)**. I have used the to club bid to show more distributional hands with less points. The three-diamond bid is used with flatter hands, less distribution.

After 1♣/1♦-1M

2NT – 3♣*

3♦*

Sign-Off Pass 3♦ with diamonds or bid 4♣ with clubs or 4♥/4♠ spades with 6.
Over the 4-level major suit bid, opener may use RKCB with a huge hand

3M To play in responders bid 5/6-card major (responder bids same major)

3OM 6-4 in majors (6M and 4OM)

3NT 5-5 in the majors (responder bid 1♠)

4NT Quantitative (assumes 18-19 range)

Game forcing or slam invitational bids over 2NT (3♦/3♥/3♠) 13+ Points

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♥/1♠
2NT	3♦*(game force)
	3M = 6-cards in bid major and 4-cards in other (6-4)
	3OM = 6-cards in bid major and 5-cards in other major (6-5)
	3NT = to play
	4♣/4♦ - Minorwood for bid minor
	4NT - Quantitative

The bid of 3♦* by Responder is also asking Opener if he has 3-card support for the bid major or 4-card fit for the UNBID major. He shows a fit by bidding 3M. This is a major suit checkback bid, it promises **4/5-cards in the bid major, flatter and more points.**

Lets look at the bids.

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♥ (4♥/5♥ and may have 4♠)
2NT	3♦*
3♥ =	3- card support for bid major may have 4 spades Responder may bid 3♠ if he has 4 spades (4-4 fit better than 5-3)
3♠ =	no support for hearts, has 4 spades
3NT =	no support for hearts and not 4 spades – to play

Notice that responder is 4-4 or 4-5 in the majors or has only 5 hearts.

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1♠ (5♠ and may have 4♥)
2NT	3♦*
3♥ =	4 hearts, may have 3-spades Responder will bid 4♥ with 4 hearts; otherwise, he will bid 3♠
3♠ =	3-card support for bid major and denies 4 hearts
3NT =	no support for hearts and not 4 spades – to play

Notice that responder is 5-4 in the majors or has only 5 spades.

Examples (opponents passing):

1♣/1♦-1♥-2NT-pass (responder has 0-7 points)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♥ (responder showing 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♠ (responder 4-6 in majors) and [3NT, responder is 5-5 in majors]

1♦-1♥-2NT-3♣-3♦ (responder may pass with diamonds and showing 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3♥ (opener has 3 hearts and may have 4 spades)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♦-3♠ (opener has 3 spades and denies 6 hearts)

1m-1♠-2NT-3♣-3♦-3♥ (responder 6-4 in spades and hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♦-3NT (opener denies a fit not 3 hearts or 4 spades)

1m-1♥-2NT-3NT (to play)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♥ (responder has 4 spades and 6 hearts)

1m-1♥-2NT-3♠ (responder 5 spades and 6 hearts)

The Two-way NMF Convention with the Wolff Signoff convention allows one to differentiate between invitational and forcing responses and to immediately agree on trumps. Responder is able to show their partner a double fit and show a particular singleton in order to avoid playing 3NT incorrectly and to find a potential slam. There is very little downside to this convention and it is more effective than the perhaps more “popular” New Minor Forcing (NMF) or Check-back Stayman Conventions.

For more on this topic see Eric Rodwell (2017) “Bidding Topics”, Baron Barclay, pp 21-42.