

Strong Diamond Notes

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1 Overview

This is the strong diamond system played by Noble Shore and Mike Gill. It features light openings and many exact-shape showing sequences. The strengths of the system are getting to light major games and minor slams and prematurely disrupting the auction when it's the opponents' hand.

The opening structure is as follows:

1♣	11-15 hcp, balanced, 3-suited, or minors
1♦	16+ hcp, any shape
1♥ ♠	8-15 hcp, 5+ cards, 7-loser or better
1NT	10-12 if 1st/2nd NV, else 14-16, balanced
2♣	10-15 hcp, 6+ cards, possibly lighter than Standard 1♣
2♦	11-15 hcp, 6+ cards, values for Standard 1♦ opening
2♥ ♠	4-10 hcp, weak two, can be 5 cards 1st/3rd NV
2NT	6-10 hcp (8-11 vul), 5-5 or better in the minors
3♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	natural preemptive openings
3NT	unspecified 4-minor preempt
4♣	sound 4♥ preempt
4♦	sound 4♠ preempt
4♥ ♠	natural preemptive openings
4NT	normal 5-minor preempt
5♣ ♦	sound preempts

2 Definitions and Notation

When referring to hand shapes, notation written in such forms as 4414, 4351, and 0373 refers to exact patterns with the order of the numbers corresponding to the rank of suits, highest to lowest. Parenthesized shapes such as (1345), (2236), or (5332) refer to all shapes generated by the permutation of the numbers within the parentheses. Shapes may be partially parenthesized, such as 13(45); this refers hands with exactly 1345 and 1354 shapes. Shapes may also contain x's; this does not refer to a specific unknown number but rather means that any non-negative integer is an acceptable value in the hand shape. Thus the legal xx55 shapes are (12)55 and (03)55. Finally, shapes may be written with +’s or -’s after numbers. This means that any integer greater than (or less than) or equal to the noted integer is a legal value in that spot. Thus the legal xx5+5+ shapes are (12)55, (03)55, 11(56), (02)(56), (01)66, and 00(67), and legal 3-3-3+3+ shapes are any hand with at most 3 cards in each major and at least 3 cards in each minor.

- A *balanced* hand is (4333), (4432), (5332), (24)(25), or 22(45). Thus a balanced hand contains no singletons, voids, 6-card or longer suits, and at most two doubletons, except that with a 5-card major the hand must be (5332).
- An *unbalanced* hand is any hand that is not balanced.
- A *3-suited* hand is (1444), (1345), or (0445), except those patterns that contain 5-card majors.
- A hand with *the minors* or *both minors* refers to an xx5+5+ hand.
- *Shortness* refers to a singleton or void, not a doubleton.
- A *fragment* is a 3-card suit, typically in a pattern with shortness elsewhere.

A *replacement scheme* is one where suited bids correspond to showing something in that particular suit, and the cheapest NT bid “replaces” the meaning of the highest suited bid in an attempt to save space. Other bids may be used to replace the highest suited bid of the other bids in question are impossible responses to the question asked, such as bidding the agreed trump suit to show the location of a side singleton known to exist.

3 Major Suit Openings

Major suit openings at the one level promise five cards in the bid suit. We will treat most (5332) hands with a five card major as balanced, and open in the corresponding notrump range (1♣, 1♦, 1NT) instead of one of a major. It follows that the major suit openers usually promise either a six card major or a four card (or longer) side suit. The point range for major suit openers is 8-15 hcp, but we only open 7-loser or better hands. Thus we wont open some hands that otherwise fit the hcp and shape requirements. We also dont open hands with a 6-card major and no 4-card or longer side suit unless we would also open the hand using Standard methods; thus 8-10 hcp one-suited hands must either pass or open with a weak-two bid.

The (5332) hands that qualify for a major opening must be comfortable with bidding game if partner has most 12+ hcp hands and must be comfortable either passing the semi-forcing NT or lying about some suit length by one card. This means that these hands are typically 12-13 hcp and have strength concentrated in the major and one other suit. The discussions below assume that opener does not have (5332) shape; read section 3.5 to learn about bidding with these hands.

3.1 Semi-Forcing Notrump Response

Over the major opening we play a notrump which usually has a range of 8-11 and does not promise a balanced hand. This bid denies support for opener; in general we believe in supporting with support! Opener will always have a natural (4+) rebid available, so he usually does not pass the 1NT response. Occasionally we will make a 1NT response with less than 8 points holding a misfit for opener's first bid suit, but we must pass at our second call. Any second bid by responder after the 1NT response shows at least 8 hcp and is natural. Rebidding opener's suit at the lowest level is typically a doubleton with 8-10 points. Thus we should not make a 1NT response on less than 8 hcp unless we have tolerance for every other suit.

We play some non-Standard sequences. After 1♥-1♠, opener has the additional option to rebid 1NT. Since opener will not usually hold a balanced hand, this sequence is used to show 3-card spade support. Additionally, responder can show a weak jump shift (0-7 hcp) in spades by initially responding 1NT and then continuing with 2♠. This isn't guaranteed to work since 1NT is not forcing, but chances are that opener will hold 6+ hearts or a minor and take a second bid.

Opener may choose to jump after the 1NT response. This shows a very distributional hand, typically six cards in the original major and five in the second suit. The jump is not forcing but it does show near-maximum values, at least a standard opener with 6-5 shape. Typically these hands have 4-5 losers and we will bid game if a fit exists. A jump in opener's suit promises seven cards, and also promises a non-minimum by inference. If opener rebids his first suit this promises a "real" opening hand (at least a good 11 points) because of

the failure to open with a weak two (or three) bid. We also play a conventional bid of 2NT after the 1NT response. This is not needed to show a balanced raise since opener cannot be balanced. Instead it shows a maximum opener with five cards in the original major and a *six card minor*. Responder can bid 3♣ or 3♦ (pass or correct) or 3♥ as a forcing ask for opener's minor suit (3♠ shows clubs, 3NT shows diamonds). After this ask, the auction is considered forced to game, and if responder fails to immediately bid 3NT (or pass opener's 3NT bid) then opener's minor will be considered the agreed suit. Additionally, opener may reverse into spades after 1♥-1NT; this is similar to a jump shift (promises 11+ HCP) and shows five or more spades, six or more hearts.

3.2 Two-Over-One

Two-over-one responses in a new suit show 12 or more hcp and at least four cards in the bid suit (2♥ shows 5+), but this is *not* forcing to game since opener could potentially be light. Opener typically makes a natural rebid. As in Standard systems, opener's rebid of two of his major shows a minimum hand without an available natural suit bid. However, we don't need a 2NT bid to show a balanced hand, since such hands do not open one of a major. We use 2NT to show *six* or more cards in the original major and full opening values. So a rebid of opener's suit normally shows five cards in his major and four cards in a suit which would otherwise have to be bid at the three level.

We play a few additional conventional treatments. After a major suit opener and 2♦ response, if opener has a poor hand with a fit for diamonds, he should not bid 3♦ (which is forcing). Rebidding two of his original major here is undesirable since partner will assume opener has clubs and may pass. Instead we use 3♣ as a two-way bid. This shows either a full opening hand with a club suit or a bad opener with a diamond fit. Responder bids 3♦ on any hand unwilling to force game opposite a possible 9-count with a fit for diamonds, at which point opener passes with the bad hand with diamonds and bids on with the club suit (typically bidding the fourth suit or 3NT depending on stoppers). If responder wants to force game no matter what, he bids anything past 3♦ (basically natural).

After the auction 1♠-2♥-2♠, it is not clear what opener's minor is. Of course responder can make a variety of nonforcing bids (pass, 3♣, 3♥) but sometimes he wants to bid game and needs to know opener's minor. The 3♦ call is forcing and requests opener's minor. Opener bids 3♥ if he has clubs and 3♠ if he has diamonds.

If a major suit is agreed (for example 1♠-2♥-3♥) then we are always forced to game, based on losing trick count. At this point we play serious/nonserious slam tries as described in section 9.1

The following actions by opener set up a game force:

- 2NT, showing six cards in the original major and a full opener
- Raising responder's suit to the three level

- Bidding a new suit naturally at the three level (except 3♣ over 2♦)
- Jumping in a new suit (splinter supporting responder)
- Jumping in the original major, setting the suit and showing extras

The following actions by responder set up a game force:

- Rebidding opener's first suit at the three level
- Bidding the fourth suit
- Jumping in a new suit (splinter supporting opener's second suit)
- Bidding a new suit 3♦ or above

The following are ways a 2/1 auction could potentially stop below game:

- Responder rebids two of opener's first suit (doubleton, 12-14 hcp, NF)
- Responder rebids 2NT (13-14 points, invitational, NF)
- Opener rebids 2-major (not forcing, responder can pass)
- Responder bids 3♣ over opener's 2-major rebid (pass/correct)
- Responder rebids his first suit in a non-GF sequence
- Opener bids 3♣ over 2♦, and responder bids 3♦

3.3 Raises

There are a number of ways to raise opener's major. A single raise is much as in Standard bidding, promising about 6-10 points and 8-9 losers. On occasion a nine-loser eleven-count will make a single raise. We make single raises with three or four card support. After a single raise, we play two-way (Kokish) game tries. The minimum bid asks partner "in what suit would you accept a help-suit try" while other bids are short-suit game tries. A raise to three (1♥-2♥-3♥) is preemptive, showing an extra trump and not a serious try for game.

A direct raise to three or four of opener's major is weak, based on the law of total tricks. This shows a bad hand in terms of hcp. The double raise should be a 9-loser hand, and the triple raise should typically be an 8-loser hand or better.

Distributional limit raises (typically 7-loser hands with 9-12 HCP) and game forces make the minimum jump bid. This is 2NT over the 1♠ opening and 2♠ over the 1♥ opening. Opener then shows his range via steps. The minimum step shows a hand that would not open in Standard bidding (not necessarily a bad hand); all other steps are forcing to game. The second step shows a 7-loser or 6-loser hand that would also open in Standard bidding, and the third step

shows a 5-loser hand or better. Opener's fourth step forces a cue, fifth step is keycard, and higher bids are void-showing slam tries.

If opener makes the first step response, responder can sign off in game or show shortness (note that signing off in a partscore is not an option). Showing shortness generally involves bidding the short suit, with a replacement scheme (1♠-2NT-3♣-3♠ shows club shortness since clubs are unavailable below the game level). This shortness showing bid is a game or slam try (except the club shortness bid in the above auction which is specifically a game try since it can be passed). If responder has a balancedish hand with slam interest despite opener's subminimum hand, he can show a serious slam try (see section 9.1). Bids above that are void-showing slam tries except for whichever suit that could not have been shown earlier for fear of opener passing 3 of the agreed major (clubs after spades opened, spades after hearts opened).

If opener makes the second or third step response, then the minimum bid by responder (1♠-2NT-3♦-3♥ or 1♠-2NT-3♥-3♠) is artificial and shows an unspecified void (opener relays to ask, replacement scheme). Opposite the second step, responder has the option to bid 3 of the trump suit which forces a cuebid (it's like serious) and the option to bid keycard, which is 1-over-3 of the trump suit. Opposite the third step, responder cannot "steal" captaincy of the auction from opener so only has the option to show an unspecified void (first step, which is three of the trump suit), the balanced game force (1-over-3, again, like serious), or a singleton somewhere (replacement scheme above those bids).

In addition, we play 1♥-2NT and 1♠-3♣ as balanced limit raises (7-8 losers). While we could express such a raise using a forcing notrump, this tends to have poor results if the opponents enter the auction. Opener's next bids are steps: the first shows the other major, the second shows a Standard opener that would not accept the limit raise, and the third shows a submin opener. So for example after 1♥-2NT we have:

3♣		4+ in other major (spades)
3♦		Standard opening, not accepting limit raise
3♥		worse than a Standard opening
3♠		keycard in heart
3NT		spade cue, serious slam try
4♣		club cue, serious slam try
4♦		diamond cue, serious slam try
4♥		to play

We don't play serious/nonserious in these auctions since responder is limited; instead we gain the ability to ask for keycards (and followup honors) one level lower.

Responder can sometimes show the balanced limit raise with a 7-loser hand that would force game in Standard bidding. If he does, he should bid game after hearing that opener has the Standard opener that is not accepting the "limit raise". After opener shows the other major, responder can bid game or sign off in either major.

It is also possible to make a game forcing raise by making a two-over-one bid first and raising opener's suit (to the *three level*) at the second turn. This shows a powerful, 5+ card side suit and a game forcing hand.

3.4 (5332) Shape

Occasionally we may open $1\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit$ holding (5332) shape. If we get any non-minimum response or raise from partner, we will not have any bidding problems. Otherwise, we will have issues bidding our hand. If responder makes a 2/1 response showing 12+ hcp, we may either rebid 3NT to show our shape (only with 12+ hcp) or lie about some suit length. If responder bids 1NT naturally, we can pass 1NT with 11-13 / bad 14 hcp, and if responder bids $1\spadesuit$, opener will be able to rebid 1NT with 35(32) shape. With 2533, we will have to lie about some suit length. We really try not to open $1\heartsuit$ with 2533 shape since it is such a problem for our methods.

3.5 Weak Jumps

Other than the special raising sequences mentioned above, jump responses to one-major to the 3-level are weak jump shifts. These have the wide range of 0-7 hcp (any hand too weak for 3NT). The weak jump promises at least a six-card suit. The suit quality and point requirements are imprecise and vary depending on vulnerability. Opener will almost always pass the weak jump, although a raise is possible with a good fit for responder (this is mostly a law of total tricks bid) and opener can make other bids holding extreme shape (typically a void in responder's suit and either a seven card first suit or 6-5 in two suits).

3.6 Fit Jumps

1-major - 4-minor is a fit jump in our methods, even without competition. This is similar to a direct raise to 4-major (low hcp, trumps), but it may show fewer trumps and it also shows 5+ cards in the side suit mentioned. If the opponents compete, opener should continue bidding holding a good double fit and lack of honors in short suits.

3.7 Interference After Major Opening

If the opponents double our major suit opening, we essentially ignore the double. The 1NT bid is still semi-forcing, $1\spadesuit$ still acts as a forcing notrump. We have the additional option of redouble, which shows good values (12 or more hcp) with no fit for opener (intent to penalize later bids). All jump shifts become fit-showing, except the lowest two jumps which remain our normal raises. Unlike in Standard methods, a double of a suit contract after our side has redoubled is still for *takeout*. However the redouble creates a one-round forcing auction where a pass by responder suggests that opener double (which is normally converted to penalty).

If the opponents overcall naturally, we play negative doubles. A negative double always shows at least four cards in the unbid major suit. We will make negative doubles holding more cards in the unbid major if too weak to bid it directly. If both majors have been bid, then the negative double tends to show both minors. However, it is possible to make a negative double here holding diamonds only (correcting partner's club bid to diamonds). The point range for a negative double varies, but is usually 8+ hcp. A jump raise of opener is preemptive, usually 9 losers. A jump in a new suit is fit-showing; this shows the offensive strength to raise to the appropriate level in opener's major, along with length and strength in the bid suit. A cuebid shows a limit raise or better in support of opener's suit. Opener can rebid his major to show a minimum, bid an intervening suit as a game try. In all auctions where the opponents have ever made a call other than pass and we have bid and raised opener's first major suit, the bid above three of the agreed major is a serious slamtry, and all other bids are fit-showing (replacement scheme). Opener may or may not have slam interest if he makes one of the fit-showing bids.

3.8 Interference After the Response

In general, we play double is takeout. This applies even if three suits have been bid (two by our side, one by theirs) or if our last bid was notrump. A takeout double by opener after a forcing notrump typically shows interest in the highest unbid suit. For example, in the auction (1♠-p-1NT-2♣-X), the double is takeout of clubs and indicates four hearts. Opener may or may not have support for diamonds (he can correct a 2♦ bid to hearts or spades).

If the opponents interfere after a single raise, then bids of new suits below three of the agreed major are game tries. Three of the agreed major is just competing. If at least one bid is available for a game try, then double is penalty (we do not make takeout doubles when we have an agreed fit). Otherwise double is the game try (maximal double).

If the opponents interfere after the forcing raise or the balanced limit raise, then we use our normal defense to interference of step systems also documented in chapter 9. If they double, redouble is penalty, pass suggests redoubling for penalty, and all other bids are as if the double had not occurred. If they take up one step, double is penalty, pass replaces the first step, and the rest of the system is on. If they take up two steps, double replaces the first step, pass replaces the second step, and the rest of the system is on. If they take up more room than that, the system is off and doubles are penalty (when a fit is agreed).

4 Notrump Systems

The one notrump opening shows 10-12 hcp balanced if in first or second seat NV, or 14-16 hcp balanced otherwise. These bids include hands with five-card majors (5332) if in the required point range; in fact such hands will *always* open 1NT as they cannot open the major suit. Hands with (2245) type shape will also open 1NT if not holding a five-card major. These hands also have no other opening bid available. Semi-balanced hands with six card minors 22(36)/(23)(26) normally open two of the minor, but may open 1NT depending upon the location of values.

Our notrump systems are based on the Keri system defined by Ron Klinger, with various modifications (we hope improvements) by Charlie Garrod. We call this method Keri-Garrod. The basic responses are:

2♣	forces 2♦; signoff in ♦, most invitations, or some GFs
2♦	transfer to ♥, signoff, GF, or a few invitations
2♥	transfer to ♠, signoff, GF, or single-suited inv (6+♠)
2♠	asks if opener is min or max; often a balanced invitation
2NT	transfer to 3♣, signoff or GF
3♣	shows 4+♣, 0-1♦, 3-4 cards in each major, GF
3♦	shows 4+♦, 0-1♣, 3-4 cards in each major, GF
3♥	shows 4♥, 0-1♠, 3+ cards in each minor, GF
3♠	shows 4♠, 0-1♥, 3+ cards in each minor, GF
3NT	to play
4♣ ♦	transfers to hearts and spades, respectively
4♥ ♠	signoff, no slam interest

The first response is usually the same as in “Standard” notrump systems although the follow-up sequences (especially after 2♣) tend to be different. The main change is that almost all invitational hands with some interest in a suit contract go through 2♣; we very rarely make a transfer bid on a hand which wants to invite game. We will also occasionally transfer into a four-card major, especially on shapely game-going hands.

4.1 Bidding after 1NT-2♣

The 2♣ bid forces opener to bid 2♦. If the auction is unobstructed, opener will always bid 2♦. Responder now describes the nature of his hand as follows:

Pass	diamond signoff
2♥	4-5 hearts, invitational, not forcing
2♠	4-5 spades, invitational, not forcing
2NT	game force, usually balanced
3♣ ♦	six card minor, invitational
3♥	5+♦, 3♥, 0-1♠; game forcing
3♠	5+♦, 3♠, 0-1♥; game forcing
3NT	2254, mild slam interest
4♣	1264, game force
4♦	2164, game force
4♥	0265 or 0274, game force
4♠	2065 or 2074, game force
4NT	balanced slam invitation, 5 diamonds

After responder rebids 2♥ or 2♠, opener is permitted to pass with a minimum and 3-4 card support. Opener's actions after 2♥ are:

Pass	3-4 card fit, minimum hand
2♠	4+♠, denies 4+♥, forcing one round
2NT	minimum hand with 2♥
3♣	max hand with 2♥
3♦	max hand with 3♥
3♥	minimum with 4♥, and prime values
3NT	3433 maximum, choice of games
4♥	maximum hand with 4♥, not 4333

It is possible for us to stop short of game when opener shows a maximum, as we tend to invite on some distributional hands where the high-card total will be less than 25. In most cases any three-level continuation by responder will be nonforcing. If opener bids 3♦ (showing 3-card support) then the other major (here 3♠) can be used as a checkback, asking if opener is 4333 (opener bids 3NT if so, otherwise four-major).

Opener's continuations after a 2♠ invitation are similar, except that 3♥ by opener shows *five* hearts and a maximum hand. Responder checks back with 3♠ if he has five spades and no heart fit.

If responder bids 3♣ or 3♦ to invite with a six-card suit, opener can pass, bid 3NT, or cuebid a stopper if worried about stoppers.

If responder bids 2NT, opener's continuations are:

3♣	not (4333), no 5-card major
3♦	any (4333) shape
3♥	shows <i>five</i> hearts
3♠	53(32) shape
3NT	5233 shape

If opener bids 3♣, then 3♦ is Stayman and major suit bids show five cards. After Stayman, if opener bids a major responder can bid the other major as a

slam try in opener's major. If responder instead retreats to 3NT, opener may bid 4♠ holding both majors or 4♥ as a "transfer" to 4♠. If opener bids 3♦, then major suit bids by responder ask for a raise if opener holds four card support. If opener bids 3♥, then 3♠ shows five spades and looks for a spade game.

If responder jumps to 3♥ or 3♠, opener's continuations follow our general rules for bidding over splinters, described in section 4.5

4.2 Bidding after 1NT-2♦ or 1NT-2♥

Most of the time, opener will accept the transfer. With four-card support and a hand filled with quick tricks and trump honors, we will super-accept. A bid of 2NT shows two top trump honors and quick tricks; bidding a suit other than accepting the transfer shows the lowest quick trick in a hand with one top trump honor. A bid by responder directly under the agreed major after any of these is a re-transfer (relay) to three of the agreed major. Accepting the transfer directly at the three level normally shows 5-card support. The one exception to the above is a 2♠ superaccept of a heart transfer. This is a special bid that shows 4+ spades and 3 hearts (and a superaccept of both suits). If responder has transferred with 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors,

After 1NT-2♥-2♠, responder's continuations are as follows:

Pass		spade signoff
2NT		game force with 4+♣ and 4+♠, not balanced
3♣		game force with 4♦ and 5+♠
3♦		game force with 5+♦ and 4+♠ (6+♦ if only 4♠)
3♥		game force with 5+♠ and 4+♥
3♠		invitational to game with 6+♠
3NT		balanced with 5♠, pass/correct, usually 5233
4♣ ♦ ♥		splinter with 6+♠
4♠		mild slam try with 6+♠

Notice that the only invite is the single-suited spade hand. All other invitational hands with spades will go through 2♣. If responder bids 3♦, then opener's next call is:

3♥		<i>three</i> spades, checkback for a fit
3♠		sets spades as trump
3NT		strength in the unbid suits (♥, ♣), suggests a contract
4♣		cuebid in support of diamonds
4♦		sets diamonds, usually weak in clubs or hearts
4♥		cuebid in support of diamonds
4♠		4♠, but a very poor hand for slam

After the checkback, responder bids 3♠ or 4♠ with five spades. Otherwise he bids 3NT with no particular slam interest (opener should pull with weakness in one of the unbid suits) or bids past 3NT as a slam try.

If responder's second bid is $3\clubsuit$, opener can bid $3\spadesuit$ to set spades as trump. Other options include 3NT (with no spade fit and strength in the unbid suits) or $3\diamondsuit$ as an asking bid. After the $3\diamondsuit$ ask we have:

$3\heartsuit$	high shortage; typically 5143 shape
$3\spadesuit$	low shortage; typically 5341 shape
3NT	equal shortage, 5242 shape
$4\clubsuit$	5242 slam try; very strong hand

If responder bids 2NT to show clubs and spades, then opener can bid $3\clubsuit$ as an asking bid, or $3\spadesuit$ to set spades as trumps, or 3NT with cards in the unbid suits. After the $3\clubsuit$ ask we have:

$3\diamondsuit$	$5+\clubsuit$ and $4+\spadesuit$, symmetric with direct $3\diamondsuit$ sequences
$3\heartsuit$	high shortage; typically 5134
$3\spadesuit$	low shortage; typically 5314
3NT	equal shortage, 5224
$4\clubsuit$	5224 slam try; very strong hand

If responder transfers to hearts initially instead of spades, most of the continuations are similar. We have:

Pass	heart signoff
$2\spadesuit$	nonforcing invite; $4+\heartsuit$, at least as many \spadesuit as \heartsuit but typically $5\spadesuit$
2NT	game force with $4+\clubsuit$ and $4+\heartsuit$, not balanced
$3\clubsuit$	game force with $4\diamondsuit$ and $5+\heartsuit$
$3\diamondsuit$	game force with $5+\diamondsuit$ and $4+\heartsuit$
$3\heartsuit$	invite with $6+\heartsuit$
$3\spadesuit$	game force with $4+\spadesuit$ and $5+\heartsuit$
3NT	balanced with $5\heartsuit$, pass or correct, usually 2533
$4\clubsuit \diamondsuit$	splinter with $6+\heartsuit$
$4\heartsuit$	mild slam try with $6+\heartsuit$

The sequences after these bids are mostly identical to after the spade transfer. Note that after $3\diamondsuit$, we still have $3\heartsuit$ asking for a fit and $3\spadesuit$ showing a fit (even though the suit is actually hearts). After the transfer to hearts and then $2\spadesuit$ bid opener's calls are:

Pass	$3+\spadesuit$ and minimum hand
2NT	$2\spadesuit$ and $2-3\heartsuit$, minimum
$3\clubsuit$	minimum hand but $4\heartsuit$ and prime values
$3\diamondsuit$	shows $3\spadesuit$, less than $4\heartsuit$, and maximum hand
$3\heartsuit$	$4\heartsuit$ and minimum values, signoff
$3\spadesuit$	minimum hand but $4\spadesuit$ and prime values
3NT	maximum hand with no fit for either major
$4\heartsuit \spadesuit$	maximum with 4 cards in the bid suit

4.3 Bidding after 1NT-2♠

The 2♠ bid asks whether opener is maximum or minimum. With a minimum hand opener bids 2NT; otherwise he bids 3♣. Suit bids by responder at this point are single-suited slam tries. Notrump bids are natural and 4NT is quantitative. A suit bid sets the suit and is a “serious” slam try; opener should normally cuebid an ace. If responder’s hand is already limited at the 2♠ ask, opener may bid 3♥ or 3♠ to show 5 cards in that major. He cannot do this when responder is unlimited as responder may have a slam try in a lower-ranking suit.

4.4 Bidding after 1NT-2NT

The 2NT bid transfers to clubs, and opener will always bid 3♣ absent competition. Responder’s continuations are:

Pass	club signoff
3♦	5+♦ and 5+♣, game forcing
3♥	3♥, 0-1♠, and 5+♣, game forcing
3♠	3♠, 0-1♥, and 5+♣, game forcing
3NT	2245, mild slam interest
4♣	1246, game force
4♦	2146, game force
4♥	0256 or 0247, game force
4♠	2056 or 2047, game force
4NT	balanced slam invitation, 5 clubs

Continuations are basically natural and follow the general rules about bidding over splinters.

4.5 Bidding after Splinters

There are many different splinter sequences in our NT methods. The most straightforward are the direct splinter bids, which always show three-suited hands. There are also indirect splinter sequences after minor suit transfers (typically showing major suit shortage without four cards in the other major). After such a splinter bid, we have the following general rules:

- If opener bids the short suit, he denies wasted hcp
- If responder bids the short suit, he shows a void there
- If opener bypasses the short suit, he shows wasted values (this is nonforcing)
- If opener bids 3NT (and has not bid the short suit) he suggests a contract
- If responder bids 3NT, opener can only pass with stoppers in short suit
- If opener bids the short suit *at the 4-level* he knows the best fit

- New suit bids at the 3-level do not deny stoppers in the splinter suit
- If opener bypasses 3NT without a known fit, he denies strength in short suit
- New suit bids below 3NT are forcing, looking for a fit
- In general opener describes suits and wastage; responder picks the level

4.6 Doubling our 1NT for penalty

Most doubles of our weak notrump opening are penalty oriented. We play Suction-style runouts, with the goal of finding the best contract and putting the strong hand on lead. Responder's calls after 1NT-X are:

Pass		any 2+ places to play (often (2344)), or ♣ signoff
XX		values; desire to play 1NTXX
2♣		signoff in ♠, or weak hand with both majors
2♦		signoff in ♥, or 5-5 in the black suits
2♥		signoff in ♠, or very shapely in the minors
2♠		preempt in ♣, or very shapely in the red suits
2NT		preempt with extreme shape in two suits of the same shape
3♣		preempt in diamonds or very shapely in the majors

All higher bids (except 3NT) are also Suction, following the established pattern. In general opener accepts the transfer to the next higher suit, after which responder can correct to show the two-suited options. With great fits for all possible holdings in responder's hand, opener may make any higher bid as pass or correct.

After the redouble, if the opponents run to a suit, the first double by our side is takeout. Subsequent doubles by our side are penalty.

After a pass, opener normally bids 2♣ with a club preference if responder has clubs and another suit. This normally shows three or more clubs. If opener prefers all other suits to clubs, he redoubles. Opener may optionally bid a good five-card suit if he has one. So opener's calls are:

XX		only 2♣, implies 3+ in other suits♦
2♣		normally 3+♣, but might be 2 with <i>two</i> doubletons
2♦ ♥ ♠		very good five card suit

After 2♣ by opener, responder can pass or bid 2♦ to show diamonds and a major (typically 4-4). After XX, responder can bid 2♣ to sign off in clubs, or bid any other suit to play. Redoubles in these sorts of runout auctions are always for rescue.

4.7 Interference over 1NT

If the opponents bid $2\clubsuit$ or make an artificial double of the 1NT, we play systems on (ignoring the opposing bidding). All doubles of any NT bid weaker than 14-16 are considered penalty doubles, regardless of what the opponents say, so we play Suction runouts over that.

If the opponents bid $2\diamond$ or higher naturally, we play Rubensohl transfers and negative doubles. Two-level suit bids are natural signoff. 2NT thru $3\heartsuit$ are transfers to the next higher suit. These can be any strength and must be accepted. The exception is a transfer into a suit which could have been bid at the two level; such a transfer shows at least invitational values and opener should bid more than the minimum step with a good hand. A $3\spadesuit$ response when Rubensohl is on is like a negative double where responder cannot tolerate a pass.

A transfer into the opponents' suit is a stopper ask. Accepting the transfer shows specifically half a stopper (Qx or Jxx or Qxx or the like). Bidding 3NT shows a full stopper. Other bids are natural and deny as much as a half stopper. Responder can also transfer and then cue as a stopper ask, or takeout double and then cue. A voluntary bid of 3NT by responder always guarantees a stopper.

South African transfers ($4\clubsuit$ and $4\diamond$) are still on over enemy interference up to $3\clubsuit$. If the opponents bid $3\diamond$ or higher, these are just natural bids. $4\heartsuit$ and $4\spadesuit$ by responder in any auction are to play if they are not in the opponents' suit.

4.8 Systems over natural 2NT

In some sequences, we will make a natural bid of 2NT showing a balanced hand in some range. Our 2NT opening is artificial for minors, but natural 2NT bids can occur as overcalls or in some sequences after a $1\diamond$ opening.

$3\clubsuit$	Muppet Stayman
$3\diamond\heartsuit$	transfers to the majors
$3\spadesuit$	relay to 3NT
3NT	to play
$4\clubsuit$	both minors, 5-5 or better
$4\diamond$	transfer to hearts
$4\heartsuit$	transfer to spades
$4\spadesuit$	slamtry, 22(45)

We use slightly nonstandard responses to $3\clubsuit$. Opener bids $3\diamond$ with a four-card major but not 5-card major, bids $3\heartsuit$ with no major at all, $3\spadesuit$ with five spades and 3NT with five hearts. This allows responder to check back with $3\spadesuit$ over $3\heartsuit$ if he is 5-4 in the majors (with 4-5 in the majors we transfer to hearts then bid spades).

Responder relays to 3NT to show a single-suited minor slamtry, a signoff in 4 of a major (where he wants to declare), a (23)44 slamtry, or an apology. Thus responder's bids are:

pass		to play 3NT, apologizing for a previous hand
4♣	◇	slamtry in bid suit
4♥	♠	to play
4NT		(23)44 slamtry

5 1♣ Opening

The 1♣ opening is a catch-all bid, showing any hand which is in the 11-15 hcp range but unsuited for a 1-Major, 1NT, or 2-minor opening. The types are:

- A balanced hand unsuitable for 1NT but too weak for 1♦ opening
- Any 11-15 3-suited hand
- Any 12-15 minors hand

The balanced hand shows 13-15 hcp if in first or second seat nonvulnerable or 11-13 hcp otherwise. Note that the 1♣ opening could include a five card major, but only if the hand is balanced. Also, the 1♣ opening could be short in clubs (3-suited with as few as zero clubs, or a balanced hand with as few as two). We try not to open 1♣ with bad 11-counts: those with a singleton king, queen, or jack or bad balanced hands. The responses to 1♣ are mostly in an asking style, trying to get more information about partner's hand. They are:

Pass	less than six points, at least five clubs
1♦	6-13 hcp with any distribution
1♥ ♠	4+ card suit, less than invitational opposite 1NT rebid
1NT	game force with any distribution (usually 14+ hcp)
2♣	0-5 hcp, no 4+ card major, no strong minor preference
2♦	weak, 5+ diamonds
2♥	weak, 6+ hearts
2♠	weak, 6+ spades
2NT	very weak, transfer to clubs
3♣	very weak, transfer to diamonds
3♦	very weak, transfer to hearts
3♥	very weak, transfer to spades

Most hands will respond at the one-level. The 1NT bid sets up a game forcing sequence. With a weaker hand, responder normally bids either 1♦ or 1-Major. 1♦ basically asks opener which hand he holds. Opener will rebid 1NT with the balanced hand (at which point 1NT systems are on) or rebid a suit with the 3-suited hand. Responder will often hold a hand with a 4-card major that would have to pass after 1♣-1♦-1NT. This sort of hand should respond 1-Major instead of 1♦ so that a possible major fit can be found. With a 5-card or longer major, responder can always transfer into it and pass if opener rebids 1NT, so he can choose whether to respond 1♦ or in his major.

5.1 Bidding After 1♣-1♦

After 1♣-1♦, opener bids 1NT with the balanced hand. With a three suiter holding at least one four card major, he bids the suit below his shortness. Holding a (13)(45) or (03)55 hand, opener bids two of his fragment major. Holding both minors, opener bids 2NT. The full set of rebids is:

1♥		short spades, four hearts
1♠		short clubs, four-five diamonds
1NT		balanced hand
2♣		short diamonds, four-five clubs
2♦		short hearts, four spades
2♥		13(45) or 0355
2♠		31(45) or 3055
2NT		5-5 or longer minors, no 3-card or longer major

After the 1NT rebid, we play our notrump systems described in section 4.

After any of opener's 3-suited bids, responder may make any minimum-level bid in one of opener's suits (including pass) to play, jump in one of opener's suits to invite game, jump in opener's short suit to play, or bid opener's short suit at the cheapest level to ask for opener's exact shape. After this ask, opener's rebids are:

- With (1345) shape, bid the longer suit of the other rank from the shortness
- With (1444) shape, make the cheapest other bid
- With (0445) shape, make the second-cheapest other bid

For example, 1♣-1♦-1♥-1♠-2♦: The 1♥ bid shows a 3-suiter with spade shortness and 4 hearts, and 1♠ asks for exact shape. The 2♦ bid shows 5 diamonds, implying 1453 shape exactly. In 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♣, opener would bid 2♦ with 4441 shape, 2♥ with 3451 shape, 2♠ with 4351 shape, and 2NT with 4450 shape. However, in 1♣-1♦-2♣-2♦, opener's 2NT bid shows 4414 shape and his 3♣ bid shows 4405 shape. Finally, we treat 1♣-1♦-2♥ and 1♣-1♦-2♠ as if opener had already shown his exact shape. In fact, in our system we can never find out which is the 5-card minor in any auction when opener shows a (13)(45) shape. Thus responder's bid of opener's shortness starts the control-asking relay (described below and in section 9.9).

After discovering exact shape, responder may again bid one of opener's suits naturally. A suit bid at the 2-level is to play; 2NT or a 3-level bid is invitational. A jump in opener's short suit is still to play. If responder has suddenly discovered slam interest (rare but it can happen on especially well-fitting hands) he can bid the short suit *again*.

The second short suit bid starts a relay sequence, hereafter called the "control-asking relay". Opener makes the minimum call to show minimum hcp and otherwise shows number of controls by steps starting from four (ace is two controls, king is one). If opener shows a minimum, then the minimum call relays for controls (the first step is 0-2). Once controls are shown, the minimum step starts denial cuebids. Any non-minimum all by responder is signoff, although we are forced to game, so occasionally a sub-game non-minimal call can be used to force a cue or give choice of games. This relay scheme (starting with the second short-suit bid) is common to many sequences in the system; it is documented in detail in section 9.9

5.2 Bidding After $1\clubsuit-1\heartsuit$, $1\clubsuit-1\spadesuit$

The $1\heartsuit$ and $1\spadesuit$ responses to $1\clubsuit$ basically start a runout sequence. Game is often out of reach, as responder claims that he cannot invite after a 1NT rebid. However, opener's NT range is often 11-13, and responder can hold a hand that wants to go to game opposite a 14-15 hand or shapely minimum. Opener's basic options are to pass with 3-card support (or maybe 4 and a very bad minimum), rebid 1NT with a balanced hand and a doubleton in responder's major (or maybe certain 4333 hands), bid a new suit with a 3-suiter short in responder's suit (or maybe $1\clubsuit-1\heartsuit-2\clubsuit$ with 22(45)), or raise with 4-card support. Opener has an additional option: the maximum raise. The bid directly below 2 of responder's major is not needed as a natural bid, since that would imply that opener is short in responder's major and does not have 4+ cards in either other suit. This bid shows a very good raise of responder's major. When given the choice between showing the maximum raise on only 3-card support and showing spades naturally with a $1\spadesuit$ bid, opener should show his spades. Opener may also rebid 2NT to show a very maximal minors hand or any suited bid above 2 of responder's major to show a super-maximal raise with 4-card support and a void in the named suit.

If opener's balanced hand would be 13-15, opener always passes the 1-major response holding 3-card support, even with a maximum and outside shortness. Opener only shows the maximum raise holding a very good balanced hand (6-loser) with 4-card support or a maximum 3-suiter with 4-card support. With other 4-card supporting hands, opener just raises responder's suit to the 2-level. However, if opener's balanced hand would be 11-13, he must not pass the 1-major response holding 14-15 with 3-card support. This is because responder only denies an invitation opposite the 11-13 balanced hand; a 14-15 unbalanced hand is much better. Holding a maximum 3-suiter with 3 or 4-card support in this situation, opener shows the maximum raise. No balanced hand is good enough for the maximum raise in this situation, since such hands are limited to 13 hcp. Such hands and minimum 3-suiters with 4-card support just make a single raise. Minimum 3-suiters with 3-card support still pass the response. After either raise, Kokish gametries are on. Note that serious/nonserious is off though; the partnership's values are limited. Thus 3NT in these auctions should be taken as an offer to play (less cards in the major fit than expected).

5.3 Bidding After $1\clubsuit-1\text{NT}$

After the 1NT response to $1\clubsuit$, the idea is to make responder's hand the declarer, as it is typically stronger as well as less described. We also want to be able to bid as accurately as if we had originally responded $1\diamondsuit$. Opener will hold the balanced hand most frequently by far, so he bids $2\clubsuit$ with that so we have maximal space. Other bids show the 3-suited and minors hands. The full set of opener's rebids is:

2♣	balanced hand
2♦	short spades, 4 hearts
2♥	short hearts, 4 spades
2♠	short diamonds
2NT	short clubs
3♣	13(45) or 0355 shape
3♦	31(45) or 3055 shape
3♥	1255 shape or 02(56) shape
3♠	2155 shape or 20(56) shape
3NT	11(56) shape

Opener shows shortness highest-to-lowest using the 2♦ thru 2NT bids. This method causes opener to become declarer least frequently given any subsequent auction while making the order fairly easy to remember.

After the 2♣ rebid, we pretend that the auction has begun 1NT-2♣-2♦ for the purposes of any of responder's initial rebids from 2♥ thru 3♠, inclusive. Higher bids are the same as direct responses to 1NT without going thru 2♣ Keri. If responder needs to use the range ask, club transfer, or direct splinter, he can bid 2♦ to "unroll" the auction back to the initial response to 1NT (opener must bid 2♥). At this point responder's bidding is opposite the bidding without the unroll: bids thru 3♠ are as if they were direct responses to 1NT and bids 3NT and above are as if the auction had started with the 2♣ Keri relay. Thus, responder's options after 1♣-1NT-2♣ are:

2♦	relay to 2♥, "unrolling" the auction back to 1NT-?
2♥	4-5 hearts, asking opener's hcp and number of hearts
2♠	4-5 spades, asking opener's hcp and number of spades
2NT	game force, normally balanced
3♣ ♦	6+ cards in suit
3♥	1-35+x shape
3♠	31-5+x shape
3NT	to play, not the same as 1NT-2♣-2♦-3NT
4♣ ♦	South African Transfers
4♥ ♠	to play

After 1♣-1NT-2♣-2♦-2♥:

2♠	size ask, also starts one-suited slam tries
2NT	Transfer to clubs
3♣	3+3+1-4+ shape
3♦	3+3+4+1- shape
3♥	1-43+3+ shape
3♠	41-3+3+ shape
3NT	2254 slamtry
4♣	1264 shape
4♦	2164 shape
4♥	0274 or 0265 shape
4♠	2074 or 2065 shape

Continuations in all these “NT system” auctions are the same as normal.

Opener sometimes shows something other than a balanced hand after a 1NT response. If this rarity actually happens, responder’s cheapest step asks for exact shape. Continuations in these auctions mirror those that start with $1\clubsuit-1\diamond$ and an exact shape ask, with the following exception:

- If opener has shown minor shortness, responder asks exact shape, and at least one major is unbid, then opener’s major suit bids are reversed. Thus a spade bid shows 34(15) and a heart bid shows 43(15) shape. This is the case so we do not wrong-side an eventual major-suit contract.

Of course, responder may bid the cheapest step after opener’s response to the exact-shape inquiry to start control-asking relays as described earlier and detailed in section 9.9

After $1\clubsuit-1NT-3\clubsuit$ or $1\clubsuit-1NT-3\diamond$, the cheapest step asks for shape and hcp. The minimum bid by opener shows the unusual shape: the (03)55 hand. Higher bids show the (13)(45) shape and are as if opener was responding to the control-asking relay. Additionally, after $1\clubsuit-1NT-3\heartsuit$, $1\clubsuit-1NT-3\spadesuit$, and $1\clubsuit-1NT-3NT$, the cheapest step (except 3NT) starts the control-asking relay. We cannot ever find out exact shape when opener rebids $3\heartsuit$ or above.

5.4 Interference after the $1\clubsuit$ Bid

If the opponents double the $1\clubsuit$ opening, redouble shows 10+ hcp (may be a bit lighter if opener’s balanced range is 13-15) and all other bids (including 1NT) are negative, showing about 5-10 hcp and 5+ cards in the suit. The hands should be very shapely if 5-6 hcp, very balanced if 10 hcp. Hands are typically worth about 8-9. After a $1\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit$ negative free bid, the auction proceeds as if no interference has occurred (unless opener’s RHO now feels the need to jump in). After the redouble (and a pass by the next player), opener may bid $1\diamond$ to show the short-in-hearts 3-suiter and all other bids are as if no interference has occurred.

If the opponents bid at the one or two level in direct seat after the $1\clubsuit$ opening, then double becomes the positive response. The double shows 10+ hcp at the one or two level (might be a bit lighter at the one-level opposite a possible 13-15 balanced hand). This double shows only values, it is neither takeout nor penalty. All other bids, including 1NT, are negative free bids as described above. There are NO systems after the negative free 1NT response in competition. If the auction is still at the one-level by the time it gets to opener, he still shows his shortness by bidding the suit below or bids 1NT showing the balanced hand, which does *not* promise a stopper. Facing higher-level interference, 3-level or higher doubles become takeout and high-level bids become natural and game forcing. Doubling a natural 1NT overcall here is penalty oriented and will usually be passed, though the values described remain the same. Opener is of course free to pass other doubles with a good holding in the opponents’ suit.

The one exception to the above is when we are NV and responder is a passed hand. Here it is rare for responder to hold 10+ hcp, so we play negative doubles in this position at all levels.

Jump bids (or cuebids) by responder in all of these auctions are transfers to the next higher suit; they show about the same playing strength as a negative free bid (and more shape). If both $2\spadesuit$ and 2NT are available in this structure, $2\spadesuit$ shows a transfer to clubs and 2NT shows both minors. If just 2NT is available, the clubs hand takes precedence over the both minors hand.

If the opponents make an artificial bid below 2NT, then double retains its “values” meaning. If the opponents make an artificial bid 2NT or above which does not show the bid suit (most frequently 2NT for either minors or reds) then double indicates interest in penalizing (pass then double later is takeout).

5.5 Interference after the Response

What if the opponents interfere after the response to $1\clubsuit$? If the opponents have doubled a major suit response, we ignore the double except that redouble shows a maximum with 3-card support, a hand that would normally pass or make the maximum raise. This means that we play “support passes” in these auctions; pass still shows 3-card support. If the opponents overcall after the major suit response, we play support doubles (typically containing shortness in opponents’ suit but not always) and natural bidding. If the opponents interfere with the game-forcing 1NT response, we play our defense to step systems. If the interference is too high for that, we defend naturally; see section 10 on doubles.

The interesting case is interference after a response of $1\diamond$. In addition, this section applies with interference after the $1\clubsuit$ bid, a double or redouble by responder, and then interference after the double or redouble (for example $1\clubsuit$ -($1\spadesuit$)-X-($2\spadesuit$)). This section applies as long as the interference is $2\spadesuit$ or below; otherwise we bid naturally with doubles being takeout below $4\spadesuit$.

Opener can bid notrump at the cheapest level with a balanced hand and a stopper. If opener has a three suiter short in the right-hand opponent’s suit, he should make his second bid as if he has already shown shortness and has been asked his exact shape. However, in this case a cuebid of the opposing suit shows a void, and bidding the opposite major (assuming opponents bid $1\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit$) shows (13)(45) shape with 3 cards in the opposite major and shortness in the opponents major. Opener cannot make his normal second bid of notrump at the lowest level (this would show a balanced hand), so double replaces this bid. Opener can jump in notrump to show minors. The remaining hand types will generally pass. So after $1\clubsuit$ -pass- $1\diamond$ - $1\spadesuit$ we have:

1NT		balanced hand, spade stopper
2♣		1435 shape
2♦		1453 shape
2♥		1354 or 1345
2♠		spade void, 0445 or 0454
2NT		minors
pass		balanced with no stopper or three suiter not short in spade

If responder cues the opponents' suit after this rebid, since opener's exact shape is known this cuebid starts control-asking relays. In a 1♣-1NT auction, the cheapest step starts control-asking relays as normal.

Opener need not bid 2NT to show the balanced hand if 1NT is no longer available. Opener should only do that if he feels that it is safe. This is usually true only if he has a maximum balanced hand and responder has doubled or redoubled. If the opponents have come in at the 2-level directly over 1♦, 2NT is not a safe bid and should usually be passed. Responder should be aware of this possibility.

Responder will frequently reopen after the pass. His reopening bids are natural, and his reopening double is takeout and should be responded to naturally.

6 Two-Minor Openings

Two-level minors openings show six or more cards in the bid suit. Typically the point range is 10-15 hcp. These openings frequently contain a four-card major, but they should not contain a 5-card major. The $2\heartsuit$ opening should be a hand that would also open $1\heartsuit$ in Standard methods, but the $2\clubsuit$ opening may be a bit lighter.

After a $2\clubsuit$ opening:

$2\heartsuit$	asking bid, shows inv+ hcp
$2\heartsuit$	5+ hearts, inv or worse
$2\spadesuit$	5+ spades, inv or worse
2NT	raise, either constructive or GF values, <i>denies a limit raise</i>
$3\clubsuit$	weak raise
$3\heartsuit\spadesuit$	6+ in suit, game force
3NT	to play
$4\clubsuit$	weak raise
$4\heartsuit$	keycard in clubs
$4\heartsuit\spadesuit$	to play

Bidding is natural after all 3-level or higher responses. After a $2\heartsuit$ response, opener bids a 4-card major if he has one, else bids 2NT (game force) with a maximum or $3\clubsuit$ with a minimum. Similarly, after a $2\heartsuit$ or $2\spadesuit$ response opener can pass with a minimum and a doubleton or 3 small in support, or rebid 2NT or $3\clubsuit$ to show hcp. The 2NT rebid here is non-GF since responder may have a very bad hand. In non-GF sequences, responder may make a non-forcing rebid of 2NT or $3\clubsuit$; all other bids are game-forcing. Responder may rebid a major suit bid naturally at the 3-level after opener shows max or min; this is game forcing if responder's initial bid was $2\heartsuit$ but invitational if he responded in a major. A rebid of $3\heartsuit$ in all cases asks opener for stoppers; opener shows them in a replacement scheme. If opener rebids 2NT, $3\clubsuit$ by responder is to play if he initially responded $2\heartsuit$ or $2\spadesuit$ (did not promise inv hcp), but it is a slam try in clubs if he initially responded $2\heartsuit$ (promised inv+ hcp). Opener may also raise responder's major (NF) or bid a new suit above $3\clubsuit$. The latter shows a stopper and a very powerful hand in tricks, looking for 3NT. After $2\clubsuit$ -2NT, opener bids $3\clubsuit$ unless he has the powerful hand just described, after which responder will pass with a constructive raise or bid a first round control with a game forcing raise. Responder could also bid Kickback or jump in a new suit with a void at his second call in these auctions.

The responses to 2♦ are very similar:

2♥ ♠		4+ in suit, inv+ hcp or shape
2NT		const+ raise
3♣		artificial game force, stopper-asking
3♦		weak raise
3♥ ♠		6+ in suit, game force
3NT		to play
4♣		keycard in diamonds
4♦		weak raise
4♥ ♠		to play, note that 4♥ is <i>not keycard</i>

Since a 2♦ response is no longer available to check for 4-4 fits, we must use the 2♥ and 2♠ responses to handle both inv-hcp hands and inv-shapely hands. Opener's rebids are similar to those in 2♣ auctions; 2NT shows a maximum and is forcing, 3♦ shows a minimum. All higher bids by opener show raises of some variety (3NT not needed as natural since 2NT is forcing). A 3♣ rebid by opener shows 3-card support for the major, any strength; higher bids show 4-card support. A single raise by opener shows 4-card support and a minimum; this is non-forcing. The next cheapest bid over the raise shows 4-card support and a maximum. Higher bids in new suits (replacement) are game-forcing splinters, normally showing some (14)62 or (24)61 shape. A 4♦ rebid is similar to the same rebid in Standard; it shows running diamonds, a maximum, and support.

After responder shows a major and opener shows 2-card or worse support, a rebid of responder's initial major is invitational and a bid of the other major is natural. If opener had instead shown 3-card support, the previously-bid major is still invitational but the other major (2♦-2♠-3♣-3♥ or 2♦-2♥-3♣-3♠) becomes an artificial slam try in the now-agreed major. It is clearly not needed as a natural bid, for that would imply a fit in the first major. After 2♦-2♥-2NT or 2♦-2♠-2NT, responder may bid 3♦ to ask for stoppers (just like in 2♣ auctions), or bid 3♣ as a relay to 3♦. This is either a signoff in 3♦ (this is what responder does with the invitation based on shape) or the start of a slam try in diamonds. If it is a slam try, responder's next bid shows first-round control, and 3NT suggests a mild slam try. After 2♦-2NT, opener bids 3♣ with a maximum, 3♦ with a minimum, (fast arrival) and above 3♦ with a powerful hand. This means that limit raises can go through 2NT in 2♦ auctions. New suits after 2♦-2NT-3♣ are stopper-showing (looking for 3NT) or they may be slam tries. New suits after 2♦-2NT-3♦ are slam tries, since responder could have bid 3♣ initially to ask for stoppers (similar to 2♣ auctions). Jumps after a 2♦ opening are similar to after a 2♣ opening; 3♥ and 3♠ show 6+ and are GF, 3NT, 4♥ and 4♠ are to play, and 4♦ is a weak raise. 4♣ is keycard in diamonds. Note that to respond 2♥ or 2♠, responder must have either an invitational hand in terms of hcp or in terms of shape if a fit is found; he cannot make this bid on a bad hand since opener will bid to game by himself in some cases. In fact, opener should make no special allowances for responder having a non-invitational hcp hand. He bids his hand just the way he would in the old methods. If responder is a bit light, it is his problem.

If the opponents interfere, we play system on over double, negative doubles, weak jumps to four of the minor. Cuebid is a strong raise and jump cuebid shows a void in the enemy suit.

7 Preempts

Our openings of $2\heartsuit$ and above are preemptive. Natural suited preempts vary widely in strength based on vulnerability and seating. We are very aggressive at favorable vulnerability in first and third positions, especially at the 2-level; we may open on as little as Qxxxxx and out or a balanced 5-count. We are very conservative at unfavorable; we will only preempt more than 2 tricks off our bid if it's a rock solid suit. Our preempts at other vulnerabilities and seatings are more normal. The 2NT preempt shows both minors (at least 5-5) and a weak hand; this is essentially the "unusual 2NT" bid. The hcp range is around 5-10 not vulnerable, 8-11 vulnerable. In response to the 2NT opening, $3\clubsuit$ and $3\diamondsuit$ are to play, $3\heartsuit$ and $3\spadesuit$ start forcing auctions with clubs and diamonds, respectively, and any other bid is natural ($4\clubsuit$ and $4\diamondsuit$ are weak, 4NT is invitational). 3-level openings are similar to weak twos with regards to the vulnerability, but they are more consistent in overall hand strength and will not be as comical at favorable as our first position weak twos. The 3NT and 4NT openings show an unspecified normal 4 or 5-level minor-suit preempt, respectively. These bids say nothing specific about suit quality. Likewise, the $4\heartsuit$ and $4\spadesuit$ openings show normal preempts at that level for the vulnerability and seating. $4\clubsuit$ and $4\diamondsuit$ show hearts and spades, respectively. They are both offensively stronger hands than direct $4\heartsuit$ and $4\spadesuit$ openings. Likewise, $5\clubsuit$ and $5\diamondsuit$ are natural, but they are both offensively stronger than a 4NT opening.

We play a modified form of BOGUST after 1st and 2nd seat weak two openings. The cheapest step is the asking bid after either a $2\heartsuit$ or $2\spadesuit$ opening. A 2NT response to $2\heartsuit$ shows 5+ spades and is one-round forcing. In the method below, a "good" suit is defined as a holding with 2 of the top 3 honors or AJT, and a "good" hand means maximum hcp. Responses to the asking bids are:

step 1	shows a non-minimum hand in some aspect
step 2	shows an embarrassingly weak hand (the 'bogus' hand)
step 3	shows a bad hand with a bad suit
step 4	shows a bad hand with a good suit
step 5	shows a suit headed by the AKQ

The minimum bid by responder after the first step asks for the nature of preemptor's hand. Then bids by preemptor are:

step 1	shows a shapely hand with minimum hcp, wants to play game opposite a good fit only
step 2	shows a good hand with a bad suit
step 3	shows a good hand with a good suit

We play new minor responses to weak twos as non-forcing, new majors as forcing. To show a force with a minor suit, responder makes the asking bid and then bids a new minor above 3 of opener's major. Direct bids of $4\clubsuit$ and $4\diamondsuit$ are fit-showing.

We play the same conventional raises in response to 3rd and 4th seat weak twos as we do to 1-major openings. After a $2\heartsuit$ opening in 3rd or 4th seat,

2♠ shows the distributional limit raise and 2NT shows the balanced limit raise. This allows us to find game contracts if opener preempts a bit heavier than normal and responder has a decent fitting hand.

After 3NT or 4NT openings, any bid of clubs at *any level* is pass or correct. 4♦, if available, is keycard in opener's minor. Any bid of diamonds at any level is a request to play in the minor opener doesn't have. Other bids are natural. After 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠ preempts, new suits are natural and forcing. We play transfer responses to 3♣ preempts. Responder's bids are:

3♦		weak with 6+ hearts or GF with 5+ hearts
3♥		weak with 6+ spades or GF with 5+ spades
3♠		asks the quality of the 3♣ preempt
3NT		to play
4♣		preemptive raise
4♦		keycard in clubs
4♥ ♠		to play

Responder accepts the transfer holding 1-2 cards in partner's suit. With a void, responder bids the cheapest next step, and with 3-card or better support, responder immediately bids a high-card feature. 3♣- 3♥- 3NT - 4♣ is to play.

If responder bids 3♠, preemptor bids 3NT with a minimum and shows key-cards (1430) otherwise.

8 1♦ Opening

The 1♦ opening shows 16+ hcp, any shape, much the same as a Precision club. We tend not to have bad 16 counts for 1♦; we want to be able to force game on 8-count responding hands in general. The most common response to 1♦ is 1♥, which shows any hand with game-forcing strength (8+ points usually) and also any very weak hand (0-4 points). All other bids show the intermediate range. The full set of responses looks like:

1♥	0-4 hcp or 8+ hcp, any shape
1♠	5-8 hcp, often balanced but not necessarily so
1NT	5-7 points, 3-suited and short in a major, or both minors
2♣	6+♣, 5-7 points
2♦	6+♦, 5-7 points
2♥	5+♥, 5-7 points, not balanced
2♠	5+♠, 5-7 points, denies <i>exactly</i> 3♥, not balanced
2NT	very weak, transfer to clubs
3♣	very weak, transfer to diamonds
3♦	very weak, transfer to hearts
3♥	very weak, transfer to spades

Some hands with 8 hcp will be too weak for 1♥, and some hands with 4 hcp will be too strong. Those should make one of the other bids.

8.1 Responses Other than 1♥

After a 1♠ response, notrump systems are on. Opener can invite by bidding 2♣, can show a balanced game force, and so on. With a poor hand where 1NT will be the best contract opposite most 5-6 point responses, opener bids 1NT (usually the right decision even with 18 or a bad 19 balanced). After this, again systems are on and responder can invite! In fact responder should usually do so with 7-8 points.

After a 2♣ or 2♦ response, structures mirror what happens after a 2♣ or 2♦ opening.

After a 2♥ or 2♠ response, bidding is much like after a 1♥ or 1♠ opening, just one level higher. The minimum bid acts as a “forcing notrump” asking for a second suit. The 2NT response after 2♥ shows 5 spades. Three-over-two is forcing to game. A direct raise of the major suit to the three level is invitational. One-over-three of the major is a forcing raise; responder treats this as a serious slam try. Higher bids by opener are splinters (replacement scheme).

8.2 1♦-1♥

Opener normally makes a natural bid now. His bids carry a wide range; as long as he is not willing to be in game opposite a four-count there’s no need to distinguish between minimum and non-minimum openers. Opener’s bids are:

1♠		a three-suited hand, both minors and extra hcp, or any 21+ hcp
1NT		16-21 balanced
2♣		16-21, 6+ clubs
2♦		16-21, 6+ diamonds
2♥		16-21, 5+♥, not balanced
2♠		16-21, 5+♠, not balanced
2NT		16-18, both minors at least 5-5
3♣ +		sets the suit, requests a cuebid

Systems are on after the 1NT bid. Any invitational sequence in the notrump system becomes game-forcing here, since responder cannot hold an invitational hand. Many of these sequences are used on hands where responder is looking for slam, since these sequences generally keep the partnership low and can reveal whether opener is max or min. Of course, the exact-shape showing sequences here may be used by responder on any strength hand, whether or not responder has extras. Since there are now many ways to show various hands, responder can pick which he wants to use to optimize either the declarer or the precise information that he needs to determine the contract. For instance, we never use the balanced game force when we have any sort of extras at all unless we really want to right-side a spade contract. We also pretty much never use the transfer to hearts and bid spades sequence for the same reason unless we hold 54xx shape. We use the 2♣...2♥ sequence for the 4-5 hands since this will always uncover a fit and rightside spade contracts.

After 1♦-1♥-2♥ or 1♦-1♥-2♠, we treat the auction similarly to if 1♥ or 1♠ was opened. The cheapest step is like a forcing notrump (does not clarify hcp), 2NT over 2♥ shows 5+ spades, three-over-two is game forcing, and jumps show support. The full set of responses after 1♦-1♥-2♠ is:

2NT		artificial, forcing 1 round
3♣		two-way, 6+ clubs and GF or a maximum 0-4 raise
3♦		6+ diams or 5-5 minors, game force
3♥		6+ hearts or 5-5 hearts and a minor, game force
3♠		GF raise
3NT		GF raise, extra values, denies any ace outside of trumps (serious)
4♣ ♦ ♥		splinter raises (shows 8+ hcp)
4♠		0-4 raise

The responses after 1♦-1♥-2♥ are similar, with 3♣ being the same two-way bid and the steps over 3♥ being the same (3♠ is serious, 3NT+ show splinters). Note that in the above there are multiple ways to show a game force with no support for partner's major. We can either make a direct three-over-two bid or use the "forcing notrump" and then bid a new suit. The difference between these two is that a direct three-over-two shows either a 6-card or longer suit or 5-5 in two suits. Using the "forcing notrump" shows less extreme shape. Weak hands have four options after the 2-major rebid: pass opener's rebid, use the "forcing

notrump” and then pass opener’s next bid, raise directly to game, or use $3\clubsuit$, the “safety raise”. Any other sequence shows a game-forcing strength hand. After responder rebids $3\clubsuit$ (the safety raise), opener may bid $3\diamond$ to ask responder about his hand or make any natural rebid. Responder bids 3 of opener’s major with the safety raise, bids 3 of the other major with clubs and a doubleton or singleton A, K, or Q in opener’s major, bids 3NT with clubs, no slam interest, and no tolerance for opener’s major, and bids $4\clubsuit$ with no tolerance but slam interest as well. After responder shows clubs and tolerance, opener can bid $3\spadesuit$ to agree spades if that is his suit, but if hearts is the suit then opener must bid $4\heartsuit$ or above (keycard or cue) to agree the suit. $4\clubsuit$ in these auctions agrees clubs and $4\diamond$ is a natural diamond bid. Because opener makes a natural rebid in hearts after the two-way $3\clubsuit$ bid with 4+, we have a problem distinguishing the safety raise, a hand with spade tolerance, and a hand that wants to show a strong heart raise. We use $3\spadesuit$ by responder here to show spade tolerance, $4\spadesuit$ to show the safety raise (*NOT KEYCARD*), and the fourth suit ($4\diamond$) to show a strong raise of hearts.

After either 2-minor rebid, bidding is as if 2-minor had been opened (except that pass is the only way to show the 0-4 hand). After a 2NT rebid, $3\clubsuit$ and $3\diamond$ by responder are to play (showing the 0-4 hands), and $3\heartsuit$ is a shape ask. Then:

1. $3\spadesuit$ shows 1255 or 02(56)
2. 3NT shows 11(56)
3. $4\clubsuit$ shows 20(56)
4. $4\diamond$ and higher show 2155, control responses (see appropriate section)

Another really complex sequence is $1\diamond-1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit$. Responder’s continuations are as follows:

1NT	game forcing hand
$2\clubsuit$	0-4 hcp, not very shapely, nothing about clubs
$2\diamond$	0-4 hcp, at least 5-5 in two suits (one a major)
$2\heartsuit$	0-4 hcp, 6+ hearts
$2\spadesuit$	0-4 hcp, 6+ spades
2NT	0-4 hcp, at least 5-5 in the minors
$3\clubsuit$	0-4 hcp, 7+ clubs or 6+ <i>good</i> clubs
$3\diamond$	0-4 hcp, 7+ diamonds or 6+ <i>good</i> diamonds

After responses of $2\heartsuit$ and above, opener’s subsequent bidding is natural. New suits always show 21+ hcp and are forcing one round. Raises are invitational, typically showing either the big hand or an excellent fit (but not forcing). After a $2\diamond$ response, opener bids his better major. This is forcing for one round, and responder will either raise or bid his lowest available five-card suit if not holding the major named. After $2\clubsuit$, openers bids are:

$2\diamond$	Roman, shows a three-suited hand
Else	natural, 21+ hcp, normally forcing one round

The roman $2\heartsuit$ basically starts a scramble, although opener can still invite game on certain sequences.

8.3 $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-1NT$

Opener's first continuation here describes the nature of his hand.

$2\clubsuit$		21+ points, usually no 6+ minor
$2\heartsuit$		three-suiter short spades, 4 \heartsuit
$2\spadesuit$		three-suiter short hearts, 4 \spadesuit
$2\heartsuit$		three-suiter short diams, 4+ \clubsuit
2NT		three-suiter short clubs, 4+ \heartsuit
$3\clubsuit$		13(45) or 0355
$3\heartsuit$		31(45) or 3055
$3\spadesuit$		1255 or 02(56)
$3\heartsuit$		2155 or 20(56)
3NT		11(56)

Note that the above structure is the same as that after $1\clubsuit-1NT$, excepting the $2\clubsuit$ bid. If opener makes any of these bids other than $2\clubsuit$, the auction is exactly as if the auction had started $1\clubsuit-1NT$. Note also that the reversal of the \heartsuit and \spadesuit bids noted in section X.X (opener shows (43)(51) shape) will not occur in these auctions since both hearts and spades are previously-bid suits. Finally note that showing a three-suiter does not deny holding 21+ points; we will bid this way with any three suiter in a game forcing auction so as to find the best fit.

If opener bids $2\clubsuit$, responder usually bids $2\heartsuit$ (other bids show 6 card suits) after which opener bids:

$2\heartsuit$		5+ hearts, not balanced, 21+ points
$2\spadesuit$		5+ spades, not balanced, 21+ points
2NT		22+ balanced
$3\clubsuit$		6+ clubs, 21+ points
$3\heartsuit$		6+ diamonds, 21+ points
$3\spadesuit$		very strong, sets the suit, requests ace or king cuebid
$3\heartsuit$		very strong, sets the suit, requests ace or king cuebid

These auctions are identical to what they would mean in Standard bidding. We of course use our strong 2NT systems for the 2NT rebid. Since at least 30 hcp have been shown here, the auction is forcing to 4NT. This will allow us to find some thin 4-4 minor slams that we would otherwise have trouble finding.

8.4 $1\heartsuit-1NT$

Opener normally bids $2\clubsuit$ or $2\heartsuit$, which both start relay sequences much like after the $1\clubsuit$ opener. $2\clubsuit$ is non game-forcing and $2\heartsuit$ is game-forcing. The $2\heartsuit$ and $2\spadesuit$ rebids are natural, normally minimum values for a $1\heartsuit$ opener and six

or more cards, asking responder to normally pass if opener bid his singleton, or otherwise show his singleton by bidding it. After $1\heartsuit$ - $1NT$ - $2\clubsuit$,

$2\heartsuit$		short hearts, $4\spadesuit$
$2\heartsuit$		short spades, $4\heartsuit$
$2\spadesuit$		$31(45)$ or 3055
$2NT$		$13(45)$ or 0355
$3\clubsuit$		5-5 minors or better

The steps occur in the same order after the $2\heartsuit$ ask, just one step higher. Furthermore, $3\heartsuit$ in that auction shows 1255 or $02(56)$, $3\heartsuit$ shows 2155 or $20(56)$, $3\spadesuit$ shows $11(56)$. Continuations after all of these sequences are just like continuations in similar auctions. In the non-game-forcing sequences, opener can bid responder's shortness to ask exact shape, and the responses are like those in other non-game-forcing sequences. In the game-forcing sequences, the cheapest step asks exact shape (or whatever it normally asks for in similar sequences), and further cheapest steps start the control-asking relay.

8.5 Interference after $1\heartsuit$

If the opponents bid to $2\spadesuit$ or below after the strong diamond opener, then a double is an artificial game force (8+ hcp) which says nothing about the distribution of responder's hand. If the opponents double, redouble shows this 8+ hcp hand. A double if the opponents bid naturally at the three level (through $4\spadesuit$) is takeout and higher doubles are penalty (in all cases game forcing values). Bids at or above a cuebid of the opposing call are *transfers* to the next higher suit, normally suggesting a constructive (4-7ish) hand with a long suit. Opener can accept the transfer if willing to play there, or make a natural call. If both $2\spadesuit$ and $2NT$ are available in this transfer scheme, $2\spadesuit$ shows a Transfer to clubs hand and $2NT$ shows minors.

After interference (including a double), a free bid in a new suit shows 5-7 hcp and at least five cards (natural) if at the two level or below. A three level bid in a new suit is natural and game forcing.

If the opponents make some high-level (3-level or above) bid, then double is takeout. This shows game forcing values. If their bid is artificial, double just shows a game force.

8.6 Interference after the response

If the opponents bid after a response, we normally play our usual methods where double is takeout. If opener passes after a $1\heartsuit$ response and an overcall, this is not forcing when responder has the weak hand (of course with a game force responder will bid again). This pass normally suggests a balanced hand or desire to penalize.

If opener makes a takeout double, we play our methods much as if an opening bid had been doubled. So for example after $1\heartsuit$ -p- $1\heartsuit$ - $2\spadesuit$ -X, we play Lebensohl,

and after $1\spadesuit$ -(p)- $1\heartsuit$ -($1\spadesuit$)-p-(p) 1NT shows the 0-4 hand. In fact we play Lebensohl after opener's pass as well; a double by responder shows the game force and other bids are similar.

If responder makes a double or redouble showing a game force, we play penalty doubles if the opponents further interfere with the auction (passes are takeoutish). See section 10 on doubles.

9 General Agreements

9.1 Bidding After Agreeing a Major Suit

In general, if a major-suit is agreed at the 2-level, we play Kokish Game Tries. The cheapest step is a long-suit game try in any suit, and other bids are short-suit game tries in the named suit (replacement scheme). A re-raise to the 3-level is preemptive. After the generic long-suit game try, the partner of the player making the long-suit trial bids the cheapest suit for which he would accept a long-suit trial. If he would accept any suit, he makes a control-showing bid above 3-major.

In general, after a major suit is agreed the cheapest step above 3-major is a generic serious slam try. Partner must control-show an ace or void if possible (replacement scheme). Direct bids are non-serious slam tries showing first round control in the bid suit (replacement scheme). Partner may co-operate with the non-serious slam try if he so chooses.

9.2 Control Showing Sequences

We use the Standard American 'aces first' style of control-showing bids. Since we play Kickback, 4NT is a replacement control-showing bid for the Kickback suit (not the agreed suit). Thus, if hearts are trumps, 4NT is a control-showing bid in spades and 4♠ is Keycard for hearts. In a control-showing sequence, either player may bid 5NT to ask for the top 3 trump honors. Responses are steps (0, 1, 2, 3).

9.3 4-level Bidding Where no Suit is Agreed

In these situations, 4NT is to play. If there is only one possible suit that the partnership could play in, 4NT is still to play but other bids are cues in support of that one suit.

9.4 When NT Systems are On

1NT or 2NT systems are on whenever one player makes such a bid naturally and the other has not shown any suit(s). This means that systems will be on in a variety of situations where it might not seem normal. An exception of sorts to this is that systems are off after a natural limited 1NT response to a 1♣ opening in competition.

9.5 Defense to Interference of Step Systems

If we are in a step system, our artificial major raises or keycard, and the opponents interfere, we have an agreed defense. If they double, redouble is penalty, pass suggests redoubling for penalty, and all other bids are as if the double had not occurred. If they take up one step, double is penalty, pass replaces the first step, and the rest of the system is on. If they take up two steps, double replaces

the first step, pass replaces the second step, and the rest of the system is on. If they take up more room than that, the system is off and doubles are penalty (when a fit is agreed).

9.6 Defense to Doubles of Cuebids Agreeing a Major

In competitive auctions, we may cuebid the opponents' suit agreeing overcaller or opener's major. If this gets doubled, we play that rebidding the major is the weakest possible action. Pass is slightly stronger, allowing room for game tries. Direct action other than the above is stronger yet: our normal game tries are on in this situation. Redouble is a strong action and shows a control.

9.7 Doubles of Opponents' Cuebids

Similarly, our opponents may cuebid a suit that we have bid in support of their partner's bid. If we double this bid, it is lead-directing with one exception: if we have shown 5+ cards in the suit already (overcalls and, uhh, preempts count) then double is lead-inhibiting. It asks partner not to lead the suit.

9.8 Kickback

We generally use the cheapest step above 4 of the agreed suit as 1430 Keycard in the agreed suit. A 4-level bid may also be Kickback if a suit is not agreed. If we have agreed suit T and we are deciding whether 4W is Kickback, 4W is Kickback when:

- We have agreed suit T, and 4W is the cheapest step after 4T.
- There is a natural, forcing bid available in W at a lower level than 4W.

However, 4W is not Kickback when:

- Both partners have made nonforcing bids thus far in the auction.
- We agreed a minor at the 4-level (by some $4\clubsuit$ or $4\diamondsuit$ bid).

The responses to Kickback are the Standard steps:

- 1st step: 1 or 4 keycards
- 2nd step: 0 or 3 keycards
- 3rd step: 2 keycards, no trump queen
- 4th step: 2 keycards, trump queen (or 10-card fit)

The cheapest step after the 1-4 or 0-3 responses is an ask for the trump queen. Responder to Kickback bids 5 of the agreed suit without the queen, and otherwise bids his cheapest king (replacement scheme). Thus, in the following auction: ...4♠-4NT-5♣-5♦ responder bids 5♥ to show the ♥ K and ♠ Q, 5♠ to deny the ♠ Q, 5NT to show the ♦ K and ♠ Q and deny the ♥ K, 6♣ to show the ♣ K and ♠ Q and deny the ♥ K or ♦ K.

To ask for specific kings after the 1-4 or 0-3 responses, the Kickback bidder must first ask for the trump queen, even if he himself holds it, and then continue over partner's 5-agreed suit bid with 5 of the Kickback suit. If no queen ask is available, 5 of the Kickback suit is the specific king ask. If the Kickback bidder instead bypasses the trump queen ask in favor of a direct bid of 5 of the Kickback suit (or NT), he is making a CAB (see below) in that suit. If he is bidding NT, he is making a replacement-scheme CAB (see below). However, we play that this 5NT bid is natural in matchpoint events (dollar try).

If the Kickback bidder needs more information after the initial key-ask, he may bid something other than the cheapest step or 5 of the Kickback suit as a Precision-style control-asking bid (CAB) in the bid suit (replacement scheme, if applicable). The responses are:

- 1st step: no control
- 2nd step: queen or doubleton
- 3rd step: king or singleton
- 4th step: king and queen
- 5th step: something really unexpected, like an unshown void

This CAB may occur before or after a specific king-ask. Thus, in the auction ...4♥-4♠-4NT-5♣-5♥, the Kickback bidder may bid 5NT as a spade CAB, 6♣ as a club CAB, 6♦ as a diamond CAB. 5♠ would be a specific-king ask. Instead of the 5♣ bid, the Kickback bidder could have bid 5♦ as a diamond CAB, 5♠ as a spade CAB or 5NT as a club CAB. If responder to Kickback had bid 5♦ instead of 5♥ in the above auction, 5♠ would then be a spade CAB, 5NT would be a diamond CAB, and 6♣ would be a club CAB. If a CAB is repeated, the asker wants to know whether the control is high-card based or shortness-based. The first step says it is shortness-based, the second step says it is high-card based, and the third step says it is both.

9.9 Control-Asking Relays

Our final, and least frequent, slam bidding tool is the control asking relay. This generally comes up in 3-suited sequences after 1♣ or 1♦ opening. The control asking relay is replied-to with a step response. The questions, in order, are:

1. Min or Max (unless 4 or smaller HCP range already known)
2. Number of Controls

3. Aces and Kings
4. Queens
5. Jacks
6. etc.

Answers to the number of controls depend on how many HCP have already been shown.

- 19+ (max for 16+) shown: 5, 6, 7, 8,
- 16-18 (min 16+) shown: 0-3, 4, 5, 6,
- 13-15 (max 11-15) shown: 4, 5, 6, 7
- 11-13 (min 11-15) shown: 0-2, 3, 4, 5, 6
- 5-7(8) shown: 0-1, 2, 3

Denial cuebids work as follows. There is an order to the suits. Basically this is from longest suit in describers hand on down, with short suits excluded entirely. If there is a tie in length or multiple suits that are unknown in length relative to each other, then the highest suit (spades) comes first. We scan cyclically through the suits in order. The first step says 'I have nothing (or the AK) in the first suit if the scan.' The second step says 'I have something in the first suit, but nothing (or the AK) in the second suit.' And so on. Another relay picks up where the scan left off. This process loops around, so the second scan of a suit we will be showing a second card. Queens can be shown only when all the controls have been shown, or on the second pass through. If there's a third pass we can show jacks.

When making the highest response to a question, immediately answer the next question as well. This is called the ZOOM concept. Thus, if my responses to an exact-shape ask are, in order, 4441, 4450, 4351, 3451, and I have a 3451 maximum for 11-15 with 6 controls, I bid the 7th step (4th shows min, 5th shows max 4, etc.) The version of ZOOM that applies once denial cuebidding starts is called Josh's Law. This says that if you have described all your aces and kings with a bid, and partner knows you have described all your aces and kings, then you ZOOM immediately to queen-showing. Thus if I have shown 3 controls and I have a king in each of my 3 long suits, the 4th step denies the queen off my longest suit, the 5th step shows that queen but denies the second-longest suit queen, etc. However, you do not ZOOM past queens to jacks as well when partner asks for aces and kings.

10 Overcalls

1-level overcalls are fairly Standard, 8-16 hcp, 5+ cards in suit. New suits by advancer are non-forcing but constructive; opener generally bids again. A cuebid of opener's suit is a limit+ raise of overcaller's suit or the start of some game forcing sequence with a suit. Jump raises are weak: a raise to 3♥ or 3♠ tends to show 9 losers. We can make a jump cuebid of opener's suit if available to show an 8-loser 4-trump (mixed) raise. Jumps by advancer in new suits are fit-showing.

We tend not to overcall 4-card suits at the one-level; our further bidding assumes opener has a 5-card suit. However, we may stretch the hcp range a bit below 8 with some shape and a good suit. In general, we tend to have either a good hand or a good suit for one-level overcalls. However, there are certain auctions that merit aggressive actions, particularly when white. Noble likes to make marginal 2♣ overcalls over 1♦ openings, and marginal 1♠ overcalls over either 1♣ or 1♦ openings. Noble's 2♣ and 2♦ overcalls over 1♥ and 1♠ are very sound; they typically show a hand that would open the same bid. 2♥ over 1♠ may also be a bit of a stretch in terms of hcp; it might just be a sound 2♥ preempt rather than a hand with defense. Other overcalls aren't particularly sound or aggressive.

A direct takeout double may be based a two-suited hand with the highest 2 unbid suits, typically 452 shape in the unbid suits. An equal-level correction from advancer's bid of the lowest unbid suit to the next-lowest shows this hand.

A direct cuebid shows the highest and lowest unbid suits and a good hand. The lower-ranking suit should be longer than the higher-ranking suit. "Good hand" is extremely subjective; the hcp range is supposed to be 10+ but Noble will cuebid with good offensive hands with little defense and less than 10 hcp. The minimum shape is 4-5 in the suits, but 4-6 is a more realistic expectation. This direct cuebid of a one-suit opening is the only time we play top-and-bottom.

A balancing cuebid of a one-suit opening is Michaels just like other people play. A cuebid of a natural 2-level opening shows a hand with a running minor and asks for a stopper for 3NT. A cuebid of either opener or responder's suits in sandwich seat when the opponents have bid 2 suits is natural. A cuebid of opener's suit after a 1NT response is Michaels. A direct jump cuebid of a minor opening is natural; a direct or balancing jump cuebid of a major opening shows a long running minor and asks for a stopper for 3NT.

A direct 1NT overcall is 15+-18 over a major, 14-17- over a minor, systems on. A balancing 1NT overcall is 13+ to 17 over a major, 11-15 over a minor, systems on. A sandwich 1NT overcall is takeout for the other 2 suits, a mini-unusual NT.

Direct or balancing 2NT+ non-jump overcalls of preemptive openings are strong, typically 16-18 / bad 19 hcp; 2NT systems are on. Jump 2NT overcalls are unusual for the lowest 2 unbid suits, showing either a very good hand or a preemptive-type hand. We do not use unusual 2NT normally with hands in the 11-14 HCP range.

11 Doubles

We play that all doubles of suit partscores are for takeout/general values with some exceptions. Here are some of the exceptions.

- The auction is 4♠ or above (except for an opening 4♠).
- We have agreed a suit.
- The doubler has already shown some length in the doubled suit.
- We have already attempted to penalize a contract.
- We have opened with a weak two, preempt, or 2NT showing minors.
- We have shown a game force before the interference that was doubled.
- We previously doubled Michaels, Unusual 2NT, Capp 2♦, or any similar bid.
- (1any) - X - (non-jump new suit) - X
- The 1NT opener doubles something above 2♠ when responder has never bid.
- There is at most 1 unbid suit and no fit has been shown by either side.
(1♦-1♥-2♦-2♠-X)

We play many doubles for takeout that others play for penalties. Here are examples.

- We double 1NT showing values, opponents run to a suit, and we double.
- We open 1NT, opponents compete in 2-suit, and opener or responder doubles.
- 1♥ (♠)-(p)-1NT-(2any)-X
- Responsive doubles through 3♠.
- Snapdragon doubles through 2♥.
- Support doubles through 2♥.
- Undiscussed doubles, in general.

12 Defenses to Opponent Openings

12.1 Defense to Opponents Notrump

If our opponents open a strong (14 to 17 or better) notrump, we play the following structure:

Double		shows a major-minor two suiter
2♣		shows both majors (normally 5-4)
2♦ ♥ ♠		natural, usually six card suits
2NT		unusual for the minors
3♣		natural, fairly wide range of values

After the 2♣ call, partner can sign off in a major or bid 2♦ (asking for longer major). If the 2♣ call is doubled, then redouble is rescue (pick a major) and 2♦ becomes natural.

After the double, advancer bids the lowest suit he is willing to tolerate opposite five. The doubler then bids his five card suit (if available at the two level) or his four card suit (if not) or passes partner's bid (guaranteeing length if the suit is not 2♠). After showing the five-card suit, partner can scramble by bidding 2NT over a major suit or 2♥ over 2♦.

If the opponents bid on over the double, then a subsequent double of a natural suit is takeout, and a double of a transfer bid shows four cards in the bid suit (not the suit transferred to).

If a single suited hand is shown, a subsequent double by partner is penalty (much as if a weak two had been opened).

If our opponents open a weak notrump, we play the following methods:

X		penalty, 15+ hcp in direct seat, or lighter with a runnable minor
2♣		both majors, normally 10-15 hcp
2♦ ♥ ♠		natural, normally 10-15 hcp

A balancing double of 1NT could be as light as 12 hcp, and is just "values" asking partner to act if possible.

If partner pulls a double of weak notrump, this normally shows a weak hand unsuited to defense. A jump-pull shows shape and invites game. If the opponents run after a double of their weak notrump, the first subsequent double of a suit contract by our side is *takeout*. Later doubles as the scramble continues are penalty oriented.

12.2 Defense to Strong Club Openings

We play the Suction defense to strong 1♣ and 2♣ openings. A double shows a hand interested in game, typically 15+ HCP with some distribution. Any suit overcall at any level shows either the next higher suit or the other 2 suits (not the bid suit and not the next higher suit). Any NT overcall shows 2 non-touching

suits, either spades and diamonds or hearts and clubs. After a Suction double, bidding is natural. After any suit overcall, any suit by advancer is pass/correct and any NT bid by advancer shows interest in game.

12.3 Defense to Flannery 2♦ Opening

Double shows a diamond overcall. A 2♥ overcall is takeout for hearts. A 2♠ overcall is natural. A 2NT overcall is strong, showing 16-19- HCP. Minor overcalls are natural. 3♥ shows a running minor and asks for a stopper for 3NT.

12.4 Defense to Mini-Roman 2♦ Opening or Multi 2♦ Opening

Double shows 15+ hcp. Any overcall is natural. A 2NT overcall shows 16-19-hcp.

12.5 Defense to Ekren 2♣ or 2♦ Opening

Double shows 15+ hcp. Any overcall is natural. A 2NT overcall shows 10-13ish hcp with the minors.

12.6 Defense to Unusual 2NT Opening

Double shows 15+ hcp. Minor overcalls show sound Standard one-major openings (extra hcp values). Major overcalls show sound weak twos or minimum one-openings.

13 Leads and Carding

13.1 Leads

Against suit contracts, we play 3rd/5th leads. We lead 3rd from 5-card or longer holdings containing no honors. From known length (3+ cards), we play Rusinow leads and high from 3 small. However, this does not apply when we are leading a suit in which partner has shown 5+ cards (overcalls count), regardless of what length we have shown in the same suit. From all other holdings, we play Standard honor leads. When playing Standard leads, we lead A from AK holdings except when we hold AK doubleton or a side singleton or void (and desire to ruff). When playing Rusinow, we may lead the A or K depending on the signal we want: we give obvious shift only to the Ace but may use judgement opposite the King.

Against notrump contracts, we play 4th best and Standard honor leads. Ace asks for honor drop or upside-down count. We lead the nine from H98x.

13.2 Signals

We play upside-down attitude (low encourages). Most of the time, we give Standard suit preference when following suit to declarer and dummy's plays. At times, when it is obvious to do so, we will give upside-down count, but in general our signals are Standard suit preference. This includes Laventhal discards.

At trick one we give attitude for a side suit, not the suit led. This side suit is determined by applying the following rules in order until a suit is selected or 3 suits are eliminated.

1. The OS is never the suit led
2. The OS is never the trump suit
3. The OS is not a suit in dummy with 4 of the top 5 honors or AKQ
4. The OS is not dummy's singleton or void
5. The OS is not the sole non-trump suit shown by declarer
6. The OS is the leader's unled shown suit
7. The OS is the leader's partner's shown suit
8. The OS is a 3-card suit with 0-1 honors (applies only against suit contracts)
9. The OS is the shortest suit in dummy, if there's a tie, then:
10. The OS is the suit with the fewest number of honors, if there's a tie, then:
11. The OS is the lowest-ranking suit

The smallest card says we do not have A, K, or Q in the OS suit (encourages suit led). A non-small spot card says we do have such a holding (please shift to OS). An honor asks for an unusual shift (usually to the other side suit). Just the Queen is not enough to request the OS against a suit contract when there are none of the top 3 honors in dummy.

OS may be ignored if encouraging with a doubleton after an AK lead when there is a desire to ruff, giving count on an AK lead against a suited slam, encouraging with the Jack after a KQ lead against a suit when dummy has honor-third or 3-small, encouraging with the Jack after a KQ lead against notrump, or giving honor drop or count under an Ace or Queen (KQT9 only) lead against notrump.

14 Acknowledgements

This system's grandparent was a system called Recursive Diamond developed by Jason Woolever and Qixiang Sun at MIT in 1999. Adam Meyerson learned that system thereafter and, together with Qi, taught it to some people at Stanford (Greg Humphreys, Ted Hwa) in the early 2000's. Adam came to Carnegie Mellon in 2003 and taught it to Charlie Garrod and myself (Noble Shore). I made fun of Recursive Diamond a lot, and so for that and self-driven reasons Charlie and Adam came up with major modifications that transformed the $1\heartsuit$, $1\spadesuit$, and $1\clubsuit$ auctions so much that we started calling the improved version Mellon Diamond after Carnegie Mellon. At this point I started playing Mellon Diamond regularly with Adam and Charlie, and I started making many small contributions to the system. Shortly thereafter, I moved on to UVA and taught the system to my regular D.C. partner Mike Gill (UMCP) in 2004. I've been playing bridge very seriously this year, and I saw the need to make some improvements to Mellon Diamond. A number of those have become permanent, and thus what Mike and I play now is really a child of Mellon Diamond; it has different NT ranges, a few different continuations after $1\clubsuit$ and $1\heartsuit$, and we have our own partnership agreements in many places. This document was originally Adam and Sam Jeong's system notes; I hacked it up to make it my own. Thus much of the writing actually sounds a lot more like Adam than it sounds like me (much of it is his writing).

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