

Strong Pass Relay Ever Avoiding Defending

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Preliminaries

General Approach

The system uses a strong pass with symmetric relays, transfer-style major-suit openings and two fert openings ("fertiliser" openings) of 1H and 1S. The transfer openings are opened up-the-line and may be balanced or based on a longer side suit. Thus any hand that is too weak for Pass and too strong for a weak action that has four or more hearts must open 1C. Any hand of similar strength that lacks four hearts but has four spades must open 1D. Hands with at least six clubs, fewer than four cards in each major and fewer than five cards in diamonds open 2C. Hands with at least six diamonds, fewer than four cards in each major and fewer than five cards in clubs open 2D. Hands with at least five cards in both minors open 2NT. The remaining hands are balanced without a four-card major and hands with a five-card minor and a four-card minor, which all open 1NT. The two-level openings may be adjusted to taste. With hands not strong enough for one of the previously mentioned openings, a fert opening is used. The fert of 1S shows a hand not quite sufficient to make one of the previous openings, but denying hearts. The fert of 1H shows any hand weaker than the requirements for 1S, or a hand with four or more hearts that is not quite sufficient to open 1C. A hand meeting the maximum for 1S, but which holds a heart suit, will open 1C.

All openings below 2NT have at least one response that is unlimited and which expresses some degree of game interest. This response begins a relay sequence that, if completed, establishes opener's shape and strength. The relay is the strongest action available that does not promise fit, and is typically the only non-fit action that is forcing. Other actions are typically natural, limited, and non-forcing, however some range probes, transfer sequences, mini-splinters and fit-showing jumps are used.

Opening Bids

Pass	15+ HCP.
1C	9-14 HCP balanced or 8-13 HCP unbalanced, 4+H, may be balanced, three-suited or have a longer second suit.
1D	10-14 HCP balanced or 9-13 HCP unbalanced, 4+S, 0-3H, may be balanced, three-suited or have a longer minor suit.
1H	0-7/8 HCP unbalanced/balanced with hearts, or 0-5/6 HCP unbalanced/balanced/ without hearts.
1S	7-9 HCP balanced without hearts or 10 HCP balanced with no major or 6-8 HCP unbalanced without hearts.
1NT	11-14 HCP 1-3S 1-3H 2-5D 2-5C, balanced with no major or 5-4 or 4-5 with both minors.
2C	10-14 HCP 6+C 0-3S 0-3H 0-4D.
2D	10-14 HCP 6+D 0-3S 0-3H 0-4C.
2H	4+H 4+S, weak, undisciplined.
2S	5+S, weak, undisciplined.
2NT	10-14 HCP 5+D 5+C.
3X	Normal three-level actions subject to vulnerability and positional concerns.
3NT	A four-level minor preempt.
4m	Stronger than the corresponding 4M opening.
4M	To play.

Relay Structure

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General Notes

Relayer (referred to hereafter as "R") will normally make the next highest bid ("Step 1") to ask responder (hereafter referred to as "RR") to continue describing the hand. The exception to this is 3NT which is *never* a relay. Other non–relay bids by R below game are natural and may be invitational or forcing in context. 2NT is almost never a contract after a second relay.

Responder's hand valuation after a strong opening.

After an opening Pass, responder normally gives a positive response with a hand with 19+ OP, unless that hand has substantially fewer than the number of controls normally held by a hand of that shape. R will eventually be able to ask for controls with A=2 & K=1 or A=3, K=2 & Q=1, of which there are at most 12 and 24 in a deck of cards with 40HCP. The ratio of AK and AKQ points to HCP is 0.3 and 0.6 respectively. When RR's shape is known, R will know the lengths of RR's two longest suits and can find RR's minimum HCP from the definition of OP. In other auctions RR will have a defined HCP minimum. RR's minimum number of AK or AKQ controls (RR's "base") can be deduced by multiplying the minimum HCP by the appropriate ratio (0.3 or 0.6) and *always* rounding down to the nearest integer. With a hand on or near the HCP minimum with a large amount of the HCP contributed by queens and jacks, RR may have fewer than the putative base number of controls. In such cases RR may exercise his judgement, however it would be exceptionally rare to describe a hand with a positive response that was two AKQ controls below base.

With a hand with 15–18 OP, or too few controls in a stronger hand, RR describes a *semipositive* hand. With a weaker hand yet, RR describes a full negative hand. Note that again, a hand that meets the semipositive criteria but has too few controls can be described as a full negative hand. The agreements in auctions after a negative response may be found [here](#).

Styles of relay structure

There exist at least two conflicting objectives in agreeing a relay method to play: a method should be both easily remembered and effective. Symmetric relays are the tool of choice to satisfy the former objective, however most symmetric relay structures have various technical defects. This is unsurprising – there is considerable difficulty in optimizing a method to suit just one of the objectives.

The most common defect of a symmetric relay structure occurs when RR is constrained to bid an unbid suit when holding that suit. RR must, of course, bid something, but it is usually best for RR's structure to avoid bidding suits they hold when those suits are unbid. On a related theme, it is also unsound for RR to bid notrumps when they are unbid and that is a probable final contract. The simplest remedy is to require RR to

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respond in a "transfer" scheme. This is a significant improvement, at a moderate cost in memory effort. However, any transfer mechanism is necessarily tailored to the particular bids being made. Commonly, relay structures move up or down steps according to the nature of the auction, particularly after low-level interference. Thus bids that used to be effective transfers may become natural.

In order to improve efficacy in general, we define two conditions under which the "default" relay structure is modified "on-the-fly". Applying these conditions at the table is demanding; partnerships should feel free to ignore either or both for practical play.

Conditions for relay structure modifications

- When the default relay structure would
 - ◆ require RR to show an unshown major suit
 - ◆ by using a bid in that suit,
 - ◆ when that suit was previously unbid, thenthe roles of the two major suits in the default relay structure are exchanged. Further, when the above conditions apply to a minor suit, the roles of the two minor suits are exchanged.
Note that this condition can apply to both balanced and unbalanced relay structures.
- When resolving the relative lengths of a two-suited hand, one of two cases occurs. In both cases a modification to the relay structure can occur.

1. When the form of the relay structure was

<i>Step</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
n	5+ in suit X, 4 in suit Y
n+1	5+ in suit X, 5+ in suit Y
n+2	4 in suit X, 5+ in suit Y, 0-1 in a third suit

and when step n happens to be a bid of suit X when that suit was previously unbid, then the roles of suits X and Y in the above structure are interchanged for resolving the shape of the hand.

2. When the form of the relay structure was

<i>Step</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
n	4+ in suit X, 5+ in suit Y
n+1	5+ in suit X, 4 in suit Y
n+2	some hand shape that is not two-suited with X and Y

and when step n happens to be a bid of suit Y when that suit was previously unbid, *or* when step n+1 happens to be a bid of suit X and that suit was previously unbid, then the roles of suits X and Y in the above structure are interchanged for resolving the shape of the hand.

Note that this condition could potentially be applied to any pair of suits given an appropriately level-adjusted auction.

Note the distinction drawn between when a suit is *bid* and when a suit is *shown*.

Where relevant, the first condition is applied before the second condition.

Constrained relay structures

In auctions where shape constraints exist before relays begin (e.g. after opening bids that deny various suits), or in which shape constraints evolve after interference, the structures will work in the following ways (impossible features will not be shown):

- When a suit has been shown, the following features are shown in ascending order: balanced (and/or three-suited short in a specific suit), an unshown major suit, any unshown minor suits, then single-suited.
- When a suit has not been shown, the following features are shown in ascending order: balanced, any

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unshown major suits, then any unshown minor suits.

In both cases, where three–suiters in the underlying structure are not shown "with" balanced hands, they will be shown normally, i.e. by showing both majors and then indicating three–suited status, or by a specific first relay response showing both minors and three–suited status.

Positive shape–showing relays (default)

Note that this relay structure is not used explicitly anywhere. However it is the "archetype" upon which the other structures are based, and thus has illustrative value. After the strong pass, positive and semipositive shape–showing responses are described [here](#). Relay structures used after limited suit openings are described [here](#) and [here](#).

First response

The responding scheme with an unbalanced positive hand is almost "up–the–line"; RR makes the lowest bid that describes the hand held. This structure (level adjusted) is used after Pass 1D; 1H, and any other situation where no shape constraints exist.

1H	Unbalanced, 4+S
1S	Unbalanced, 4+H, 0–3S
1NT	Unbalanced, 4+D, 0–3S, 0–3H
2C	Balanced, including a four– or five–card major
2D	Balanced, 2–3H, 2–3S
2H	Three–suited with a major suit shortage
2S	6+C, 0–2D (Low shortage)
2NT	6+C, 0–1H (Middle shortage)
3C	2236 (Even shortage)
3D	1336 (High shortage)
3H	1327
3S	1237
3NT	0337

The only exception to the "up–the–line" rule is the 2H response, which takes priority over the 1H and 1S responses.

Balanced hands

With a balanced hand, RR selects whichever of 2C or 2D is appropriate.

2C	Balanced, including a four– or five–card major
2D	Game–forcing relay
2H	Any 4432 with 4S
2S	Game–forcing relay
2NT	4432 or 4423
3C	Game–forcing relay
3D	4432
3D	4423 (with zoom)
3C	4342
3D	4243
3H	4324

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2NT			Game–forcing relay
	3C		"Even shortage"
		3D	Game–forcing relay
		3H	6322
		3S	6232
		3NT	7222
2NT			0–1 in the middle–ranking other suit
3C			A 6223 hand with the tripleton in the lowest–ranking suit
3D			6133 with high–ranking shortage

The shapes not explicitly shown in the structure can be constructed through "symmetry" – for example, all hands of 6331 pattern include a 3D bid, possibly after 2S or 2NT to specify the suit of the singleton. Other hand patterns are resolved similarly, however the hands with "even shortage" are resolved specially as indicated above.

One–suited hands (advanced)

This structure is more effective than the one given above, because it shows the more frequent shapes at two steps lower net, at the cost of two of the rarest shapes each shown one step higher (or two rarer pairs of steps left unresolved) and loss of "symmetry". Partnerships should evaluate this trade–off and choose a one–suited structure accordingly. In this system, this structure is particularly attractive because of the lower level of many of the relay auctions – full 7321 resolution below 3NT is routinely possible. Where the two 7321 shapes are compressed (see below) after the initial response showing 0–2 cards in the lowest–ranking side suits, they will be shown *below* the 7222 shape.

2S			0–2 in the lowest–ranking other suit
	2NT		Game–forcing relay
		3C	6322
		3D	6331
		3H	7222
		3S	7321 (however 7321 shapes may compress, see <u>below</u> , and if so they will <i>precede</i> 7222 in this structure)
		3NT	7231
		4C	7330
2NT			0–1 in the middle–ranking other suit, or 6232
	3C		Game–forcing relay
		3D	6232
		3H	6313
		3S	7312 (however 7321 shapes may compress, see <u>below</u>)
		3NT	7213
		4C	7303
3C			6223
3D			6133 with high–ranking shortage
3H			7132 with high–ranking shortage
3S			7123 with high–ranking shortage
3NT			7033 with high–ranking shortage

The "balanced" hands are always shown first. 7222 is arbitrarily included in the low–shortage structure, and a step higher than 6331 because of its lower frequency.

Two-suited hands

With a two-suited hand, RR shows his first suit up-the-line as listed in the positive responses. RR then shows the second suit and resolves their relative length. A bid of 2D always shows at least four cards in the higher-ranking suit and at least five cards in the lower-ranking suit (always clubs, in fact). However a bid of 2H shows precisely four cards in the lower-ranking suit and at least five in the higher-ranking suit. Hands with two suits of at least five cards always start with two bids at or below 2D, and then a bid of 2S.

With both majors, RR continues with 1NT over the 1S relay to the first response. With a major and diamonds, RR continues with 2C (transferring to diamonds!). With any suit and clubs, RR shows the first suit and then bids according to the above scheme – 2D with at least five clubs, 2H with exactly four clubs.

Thus the structure below applies after showing a second suit with 1NT, 2C, 2D or 2H.

2D	<u>Three-suited</u> with both majors
2H	5+ in the higher-ranking suit, 4 in the lower-ranking suit (a "reverser" bid)
2S	5+ 5+ in the two suits (<u>step in</u>)
2NT	0–1 in the lower-ranking other suit
3C	A 5422 pattern
3D	5431 with higher-ranking shortage
3H	6421 with higher-ranking shortage
4C	7411

Again the the structure is "symmetric" – all 6421 shapes will include a 3H bid, after clarifying the relative length of the suits and the shortages with previous actions. The 5–5 substructure is also symmetric internally. Note that the 7411 shape is shown "asymmetrically". The only reasonable alternative is to treat it with 5422 as "even shortage", which is grossly inefficient because it costs a step on the greatly more frequent 5422 shapes.

Showing 5+ 5+ hands

(step out) Game-forcing relay after showing 5+ 5+ in the two suits

3C	0–1 in the lower-ranking other suit
3D	A (65)11 pattern (even shortage)
3H	5521 with higher-ranking shortage
3S	5530 with higher-ranking shortage
3NT	(65)20 with higher-ranking shortage

Three-suited hands

With a three-suited hand with a minor shortage, RR simply shows both major suits and then uses the "empty" 2D bid to describe his holdings. With a major shortage, RR simply responds 2H. Then after the subsequent relay, RR bids as described.

- Step 1 Low shortage (0–1)
- Step 2 1444 (high shortage)
- Step 3 0544 (high shortage)
- Step 4 0454 (high shortage)
- Step 5 0445 (high shortage)

After showing a low-ranking shortage, RR shows his exact shape by using the step responses as above, beginning at 4441.

Control asking relays

After the shape is shown, the next relay asks for controls. R has a choice of three asks: Step 1 asks for AKQ controls, Step 2 asks for AK controls and Step 3 asks for aces (Gerber!) subject to the usual stricture that 3NT and game-level bids above Step 1 are not relay asks. Also, the use of 4D as an end signal supersedes the use of that bid as an AK control ask or ace ask.

AKQ and AK controls are evaluated as simple sums. With AKQ controls, an ace counts three, a king two and a queen one. With AK controls, an ace counts two and a king one. When holding a singleton honour:

- a singleton ace is counted normally in the hand's controls,
- a singleton king counts one AK control for an AK control ask and one AKQ control for an AKQ control ask, and
- a singleton queen or lower is not counted at all.

As described in the section above on hand valuation, both players can deduce RR's minimum HCP holding and thus the control base. The manner in which the number of controls is shown depends on the level of the asking bid. Asking bids of 3H and higher (obviously not 3NT) receive step responses such that Step 1 by RR shows they have a number of controls that is at most equal to the base. Step 2, 3, 4, etc. show one, two, three, etc. extra control(s) over that required for the base. When the asking bid is below 3H then the scheme "inverts" to improve efficiency. Bids of 3NT and 3S show base and base+1 controls respectively. Bids below that show increasing numbers of controls, with bids of 4C and higher showing at least base+4 and more controls. Thus when only 3H is available it shows base+2 or base+3 controls. A further relay then requires 3NT with base+2 or a higher response with base+3 (see below). When both 3H and 3D are available then they show base+2 and base+3 controls respectively. Should 3C also be available, then it shows base+4 controls and in this case, 4C and higher will show base+5 and more controls. Should any lower bids be available, then the scheme expands similarly.

The onus lies on R to ask for controls only when there are no replies that are reasonably likely to be awkward, since their next Step 1 is also a relay. An ace ask always begins at zero.

In one case above, a response is made that shows a specific range of controls. When R bids Step 1, RR zooms to Denial Cue Bidding (see below) when holding the highest number of controls. R should be prepared for this zoom by a maximum RR. This principle holds in other situations where a range of controls is known, including where a maximum can be inferred from a known HCP maximum. Such a maximum is realised when holding the maximum number of aces with the remaining HCP contributed by as many kings as possible, etc.

Zooming

When RR holds the shape that is the highest call defined in the response structure it is efficient that that response follow on to the number of controls held without requiring R to waste two steps in making a subsequent ask. How a zoom occurs depends whether RR is balanced or unbalanced and limited or unlimited.

- Any unlimited hand must zoom past 3NT if either
 - ◆ the structure shows shapes past 3NT, or
 - ◆ they are showing base+4.
- A limited balanced hand may only bid past 3NT if the preceding relay was going to resolve the hand shape into a definite pattern, even if there exists shapes that would normally be shown past 3NT or the hand holds base+4 or more. Rationale: sometimes R needs definite pattern information to choose the correct strain, but will be unwilling to explore if that risks an unsuitable contract higher than 3NT. If shape-showing truncation occurs with a 3NT bid, R may relay with 4C to complete the shape description, with a zoom with base+4 for the highest-ranking shape.
- A limited unbalanced hand never zooms past 3NT unless the structure shows shapes past 3NT.

In all cases where bids at or below 3NT are available to show a range of strengths, the conditions below apply.

- If only 3NT is available, then the strengths are shown with it as a range.

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- If only 3NT and 3S are available for showing a range of strengths, then the range is split evenly and contiguously between those two bids, with 3NT showing the upper range (and the smaller range in the case of an uneven split).
- If more than those two bids available, then the strengths are shown "decreasing" from 3NT with the lowest bid forming a range if required.

There is one case in non-level-adjusted relay auctions where shape is shown above 3NT. This occurs when a 7411 pattern is shown with 4C. In this case, bids at or above 4D show the shape that was shown with 3NT (7420) with at least base+4 AKQ controls in the normal manner described above.

In all cases where shapes are shown past 3NT, the bids past the end of the structure show at least base+4 controls stepwise, with the shape that would have been shown with a 3NT bid. Thus the shape shown with 3NT bid, rather than the highest shape, is limited to base+3. By limiting the strength held for a 3NT bid, R will continue to ask past 3NT when that is the last makeable contract less often.

Exceptions for Level-adjusted Relays

When resolving the shape of a hand known to be balanced, the structure will be similar to that used in non-level-adjusted relays, but with relevant bids swapped so that a major suit is not shown by a bid of that suit. Symmetry will be preserved, however.

When a single-suited relay structure is used up one or more steps, the 7321 and 7231 shapes are compressed into a single response and the ambiguity is not resolved.

King Parity

After shape has been resolved and an AKQ control number has been given (in response to a direct ask or a zoom), the next relay asks for "king parity". *Note* that a singleton king is not counted as a king here, consistent with the fact that it counted only one in the AKQ control number.

RR bids Step 1 or higher according to the following scheme:

<i>King Parity</i>	<i>AKQ controls</i>	<i>Action</i>
Even	2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20	Bid Step 1
Even	4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 21+	Zoom to Step 2 or higher
Odd	2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20	Zoom to Step 2 or higher
Odd	4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 21+	Bid Step 1

As can be seen by inspection, RR stops with odd number of AK controls on certain numbers of AKQ controls and does the opposite when holding an even number of AK controls. The rationales are that

- with 2 AKQ controls RR should bid Step 1 with QQ and zoom with K because that is more effective for the subsequent DCB,
- with most multiples of 3 AKQ controls, frequency analysis shows that around two hands with odd AK controls are held for every hand with even AK controls, and zooming should occur with the more frequent hand types, and
- with other numbers of AKQ controls, there is either no significant difference in the ratio of odd:even AK controls, or a distribution with more hands with even AK controls.

One (approximate) mnemonic is that RR with *odd* kings bids *Step 1* with AKQ controls that are (approximately) "*prime*" with respect to 3. RR also bids Step 1 with both predicates negated. RR bids Step 2 or higher when only one predicate is negated.

Note that this criterion is somewhat arbitrary. The objective of maximising human slam-bidding efficacy is difficult to codify. Merely ensuring a Fibonacci-like distribution of step frequencies is a fair attempt, but

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there exist many distributions of hands to steps that satisfy this constraint but which do not permit effective bidding. Moreover, some distribution that could be demonstrated to be the most effective for bidding in the abstract might well be impractical for use by a human at the table. Additional work in this area would be of interest, but of little practical value. Using some king parity style is probably more effective than not using one, and even a simple style of bidding Step 1 arbitrarily with even AK controls is probably acceptable.

Denial Cue–Bidding

(Also known as "spiral scan".)

After controls (AKQ, AK or A) and possibly king parity have been shown, "denial cue–bidding" commences. In denial cue–bidding the suits are assigned an order of priority – firstly by order of length, but if two or more lengths are equal (or have lengths that are unknown), then the higher–ranking suit is scanned first. On the first ask ("scan"), the RR is asked to look for an ace or king in the suit of highest priority. If neither of these is held then RR bids Step 1 to show this. Otherwise, RR then scans the suit of second priority, also for either the ace or the king, bidding Step 2 to deny a top honour. This process continues through all the suits, and eventually may return to the suit of highest priority (i.e. "spiralling"). When this occurs, RR is expected to look for a second top honour in the suit (if one was previously shown) or the queen (if the ace and king were previously denied). This process continues. In principle, jacks could be investigated, but such auctions are usually too high for such an ask to be useful.

A suit of a given length can only be scanned that given number of times – a singleton may only be scanned once, a doubleton twice, etc. The highest possible relay ask is 6C. If a response is made at 6C or higher, then R must be prepared to place the final contract. No relay response higher than 7C may be given. The onus is clearly on R not to make an ask when there is reasonable chance of unfortunate consequences. It is occasionally necessary to finesse a card during the bidding! (Don't tell your teammates, it spoils your image.)

Exceptions in Denial Cue–Bidding

- When scanning a suit for the last card held (e.g. the first or second respectively for a singleton and doubleton, etc.), RR stops (i.e. bids the current step) when holding the relevant honour, and spirals if the honour is *not* held. This is much superior to the normal approach, because it is more probable that the relevant honour is *not* held. It suffers only a 1 step loss relative to a DCB style that never scans a singleton, losing 2 steps only where "unexpected" information is transferred, whereas scanning a singleton normally loses 2 steps most of the time. A case can be made for not scanning singletons at all when RR has shown AK controls, but that method is not used here.
- When holding the AKQ of a suit, that suit is *denied* on the first scan. The 3 or 5 control discrepancy that is flagged by this denial is almost always apparent to R and recognisable – and it is assumed that R knows what holding RR has. Experience suggests that by the time this suit is scanned again no ambiguity remains, and both hands will know that AKQ has been shown. Thus on a second scan of this suit when holding at least four cards in the suit, the jack is investigated. Additionally and analogously, the previous exception applies to a holding of exactly four cards to the AKQ; on the second round RR stops with AKQJ and spirals with AKQx. If a three–card suit contains AKQ then there is only one scan made of this suit.
- When RR is known *by both hands* to have shown all possible aces, kings and queens, then the DCB skips directly to jacks in the first suit in the scan. This has been known to create amusing encrypted auctions when RR has 6 AKQ controls and a holding of AKQ in a suit is possible and R is missing at least 11 AKQ controls. Now after RR denies the suit in which AKQ might be held, R must ask until RR shows a card that R holds in one "version" of the auction, since the assumption that the control discrepancy will be recognisable is no longer as valid. Potential slams missing 5+ AKQ controls when R is missing at least 11 AKQ controls and has two "empty" suits are too rare for this to be damaging, however.

Key Card Asking

There exists a nontrivial set of hands where R can know at an early point of a game–forcing relay auction that normal denial cue–bidding will not be effective. Freak R hands with voids, or R hands needing only specific

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high-card gaps to be filled are most likely to employ these agreements effectively – including that set of hands that the field will bid easily with normal Roman Key Card Blackwood agreements.

Before final shape resolution, where R has only Step 1 defined as a normal relay, as described above, higher steps can be used to continue the relay, but with information transfer to RR that a certain suit will be trumps. The four suits may be set with Step 2–5 in the same kind of priority order as normal denial cue-bidding: RR's longest suits, and then higher-ranking suits first.

After controls are shown, the next ask is for the normal five "key cards", being the four aces and the trump king. RR replies Step 1 with 1 or 4 key cards, Step 2 with 0 or 3 key cards, and zooms with 2 key cards. There follows a structure similar to normal denial cue-bidding, with a priority order headed by the trump queen, then kings of side suits in the normal longest and highest-ranking priority order, then the trump jack, then queens of side suits in the normal longest and highest-ranking priority order, etc. Thus Step 3 shows 2 key cards and denies the trump queen, and Step 4 shows 2 key cards and the trump queen and denies the first king, etc.

Unlike normal denial cue-bidding, R is not constrained to ask only with subsequent bids of Step 1. R may choose to bypass cards in the scan order so as to skip asking about cards that don't matter and to inquire about cards that are important. The key card asking auction is forced to six of the trump suit or 6NT unless R receives a negative reply to the *first* asking bid he makes *after* receiving key card information. Thus auction types where R asks for key-cards, finding RR does not hold 2 key cards, and then asks for the trump queen establish a force to six of the trump suit (or 6NT) if that card is held, and establishes a force only to five of the trump suit (or 5NT) if that card is not held. Also from the above principle, an initial reply showing 2 key cards with or without the trump queen retains the five-level force only, and an initial reply that zooms past two key cards with the trump queen establishes a slam force if the first king is shown, but retains only a five-level force if that king is denied. Thus, when an auction is forced to the six-level, R may use a four- or five-level bid in the trump suit as an asking bid in the same way as the neighbouring bids.

Notwithstanding any "force" that exists in the auction, R can still contrive a sign-off by asking for a card that he holds. RR will be constrained to bid Step 1, which R may pass or use as a base for a further contrived sequence to reach the intended contract. R should recall that this force serves only to define for the partnership whether below-slam bids in the trump suit are sign-offs or asking bids.

Six of the trump suit, 6NT and all seven-level bids by R are always sign-offs.

RR may show the trump queen when he does not hold it, when holding at least *nine* trumps.

Ending relay auctions

R may end a relay auction at any time by passing a response (where appropriate!) or by bidding Step 2 or higher when that bid is at least at game level. The only exception to this is that 3NT is never a relay – even if the previous response was 3S. R must bid 4C to relay in this case.

If the final shape information has been transferred by the relay structure, and 4D is above Step 1, R has two ways to achieve a sign-off. A 4D "end signal" bid prefaces a sign-off opposite normal hands, and with a normal hand RR must bid 4H and pass any rebid by R. RR is not required to respect that intended signoff with a hand that is significantly better than that promised by the auction to this stage. Usually this would occur when holding extra controls, or an extreme shape that can only be approximately shown in the above relay structure (e.g. 8-card suits, 7-5 shapes). In the latter case, RR must use their judgement based on what they know partner knew for their signoff decision. The system permits an *unlimited* RR to bid past 4H (known as "kicking") when holding base + 4 AKQ controls. Successive bids above 4H show increasing numbers of AKQ controls. A limited RR who is kicking because of extreme shape can bid correctly – bidding the cheapest invitation that they would *reject*. An initial call by R higher than 4D is natural and invitational, and RR should evaluate his hand and particularly his trump suit. Since from the preceding, a direct 4NT by R is natural and invitational, a 4NT bid after a 4D end-signal is RKCB for RR's longest suit, or simple ace-asking if RR has shown no suit longer than four cards.

When RR has resolved or partially resolved their shape and R has selected a 3NT contract without establishing that RR has greater than minimum strength, RR should kick with base + 4 AKQ controls.

It is not mandatory to kick with a hand that meets the requirements – any of the following may indicate to RR that kicking is undesirable without substantial extra values : an early signoff before shape resolution, RR's poor shape, poor intermediates and the state of the match/event. R should be careful to sign off in tempo, particularly when slam requires substantial extras with RR, to avoid the transmission of unauthorised

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information.

In many cases, R attempts to sign off after resolving shape only. After making their final shape-showing response, RR will plan their reply to an AKQ control ask. If the R attempts to sign off, the RR will know that the R has judged that it would not be safe to play in this denomination one level higher if RR had the number of controls that would have been shown by a response one step below the attempted signoff. Usually, this "damage level" will be base + 3 or lower. Rarely, R may attempt to sign off when the damage level was base + 4 or higher. In this case, RR must have at least one more AKQ control than the damage level in order to bid on.

Rarely, R can choose to employ a below-slam jump in a denomination as an invitational action. RR should use their judgement in the context of the hand type they have shown. RR should be aware that R normally could have anticipated finding out about useful aces and kings and/or high-priority queens, and so should normally focus on other queens and relevant jacks. R will normally not anticipate "fast" losers, and, for example, could be seeking internal trump or side-suit solidity to make slam playable. A jump to 5NT when 4NT was also a jump is forcing to 6NT, and shows interest in a grand slam.

Forcing Pass

General

The forcing pass is necessarily a key aspect of SPREAD. Frequent use is made of symmetric relays at a variety of level adjustments with respect to standard SCRAPE. An appreciation of the design of the structure is helpful when recalling the meanings of bids at the table.

Design Objectives

The following objectives were met in the design of the structure:

- Extensive use of symmetric relay structures
- Balanced hands receive description of unbalanced hands – thus flexible captaincy
- Strong parallelism of structures for describing an unbalanced opener or responder
- Freedom of strong passer to demand description from partner
- Immediate definition of positive, semipositive and negative responding hands
- Adoption of elements of SCRAPE where appropriate
- Preservation of a near-constant level of relay response level adjustment within broad categories of responding hand strengths

Symmetric relays are a well-known and effective tool for constructive auctions that may need specific details of shape and honour location for slam purposes. They are much more effective if the hand receiving shape information has length opposite shown shortages. The simplest way to increase effectiveness in this area is to have a balanced hand receive shape description from an unbalanced hand, where such a choice exists. If a primary fit is found then the honour strength opposite any shortages is known for slam purposes (as in standard "splinter" methods). If a primary fit is not found, the honour strength opposite any shortages is again known for selecting the best strain. When referring to the two hands in a relay auction, the standard abbreviations of "R" for Relayer and "RR" for Relay Responder will be used.

In the structure below, all unbalanced shapes are shown one level lower than in normal symmetric methods. This is largely caused by the lower rank of the strong opening, but the ability to combine the flexible captaincy with preservation of constant level-shift is a bonus. Balanced hands are shown, on average, nearly two levels lower than in SCRAPE.

Notwithstanding the above, there exist freak hands that might wish to insist on a positive responder revealing their shape, and this can also occur.

Experience with SCRAPE has suggested that an approach that separates full negatives from semipositive and positive hands is fruitful in stopping partscore hands at low levels, while retaining a reasonable invitational structure. Alternate approaches that give immediate shape description of semipositive hands would show gains when the fourth hand contests the auction (e.g. swap the roles of the 1D response below with all of the 1H and 1S+ responses and use the SCRAPE direct semipositive responses to the strong pass) but require some loss of parallelism between opener's and responder's unbalanced shape-showing, some loss of constant level-shifting and the use of some awkward semipositive relay structures.

For those making the transition from SCRAPE and related symmetric methods, the re-use of some structures will prove efficient. Indubitably, using a consistent degree of level adjustment in positive relay auctions will lead to more effective bidding in practice.

In a strong 1C style the auction need never be concerned with right-siding club contracts, for the declarer of clubs is already fixed. However in a relay auction after a strong pass there exist several cases where relevant minor suit(s) are unbid and it is appropriate to use a 1NT response to show a two-suiter with clubs, so as to maximise the right-siding of club and diamond contracts. This contradicts the SCRAPE style of making low-ranking bids with more cards in high-ranking suits, but does so consistently and for a clear objective. The two conditions for "on-the-fly" modification of relay structures discussed [here](#) are used, both in the design of the normal structure, and in any level-adjustment after interference.

Other 1NT relay responses show hands with major-suit holdings. This is advantageous, as it would be preferable to respond 1NT with hands that are less likely to end declaring notrump contracts. In the balanced

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structure, 1NT shows both majors or a 5-card major. In an unbalanced hand, 1NT shows both majors, with neither major suit having yet been bid.

Responding to the opening strong pass

After Pass

All hands with 15+ HCP

1C		Positive 19+ OP, either balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0-3S, or unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C
	1D	Balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0-3S, or unbalanced intending to force responder to show shape
	1H	Positive 19+ OP, balanced
	1S	Balanced, or unbalanced intending to force responder to show shape (continuations here)
	1NT	2-suited with H and C (symmetric continuations)
	2C	2-suited with 4+H and 5+D (symmetric continuations)
	2D	2-suited with 5+H and 4D (symmetric continuations)
	2H+	1-suited with 6+H (symmetric continuations)
	1S	Positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with both minors (2- or 3-suited)
	1NT	Game-forcing relay
	2C	3-suited with both minors (symmetric continuations)
	2D+	Positive 19+ OP, 2-suited with D and C (symmetric continuations)
	1NT	Positive 19+ OP, 2-suited with H and C (symmetric continuations)
	2C	Positive 19+ OP, 2-suited with 4+H and 5+D (symmetric continuations)
	2D	Positive 19+ OP, 2-suited with 5+H and 4D (symmetric continuations)
	2H+	Positive 19+ OP, 1-suited with 6+H (symmetric continuations)
	1H	Unbalanced 4+S 0-3H
	1S	Game-forcing relay
	1NT	2-suited with S and C (symmetric continuations)
	2C	2-suited with 4+S and 5+D (symmetric continuations)
	2D	2-suited with 5+S and 4D (symmetric continuations)
	2H+	1-suited with 6+S (symmetric continuations)
	1S	Unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C
	1NT	Game-forcing relay
	2C	3-suited with both minors (symmetric continuations)
	2D+	2-suited with D and C (symmetric continuations) Note that the second condition for relay structure modification applies here.
	1NT	2-suited with S and H (symmetric continuations)
	2C	1-suited with 6+D (symmetric continuations)
	2D	3-suited with both majors (symmetric continuations)
	2H+	1-suited with 6+C (symmetric continuations)

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1D		Any semipositive 15–18 OP
	1H	Relay, either GF or intermediate balanced (then SCRAPE shape–showing adjusted up one level)
	1S	Unbalanced 4+H (note the application of the <u>first condition</u> for relay structure modification)
	1NT	Unbalanced 4+S 0–3H
	2C	Unbalanced 4+D 0–3S 0–3H
	2D	Balanced with a 4– or 5–card major (<u>First condition</u> will apply to RR's lowest rebid)
	2H	Balanced with no major (<u>First condition</u> will apply to RR's second lowest rebid)
	2S	3–suited with both minors (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2NT+	1–suited with 6+C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	1S	Unbalanced, 4+S, possible canape, rarely passed
	1NT	Minimum balanced or near–balanced; then Stayman and four–suit transfers (or anything by agreement)
	2C	Unbalanced, 5+C, normally 0–3S, non–forcing
	2D	Unbalanced, 5+D, normally 0–3S, non–forcing
	2H	Unbalanced, 5+H, normally 0–3S, non–forcing
1H		Positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with 4+S 0–3H
	1S	Game–forcing relay
	1NT	2–suited with S and C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2C	2–suited with 4+S and 5+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2D	2–suited with 5+S and 4D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2H+	1–suited with 6+S (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
1S		Negative 7–14OP
	1NT	Balanced or near–balanced or unbalanced with clubs; then two–level suit bids natural and non–forcing
	2C	Game force (<u>continuations here</u>)
	2D	Unbalanced 5+D
	2H	Unbalanced 5+H
	2S	Unbalanced 5+S
1NT		Positive 19+ OP, 2–suited with S and H (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2C		Positive 19+ OP, 1–suited with 6+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2D		Positive 19+ OP, 3–suited with both majors (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2H+		Positive 19+ OP, 1–suited with 6+C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)

Responding to the opening strong pass (expanded version)

After Pass

All hands with 15+ HCP

1C

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- Positive 19+ OP, either balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0–3S, or unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C [\(step in\)](#)
- 1D Any semipositive 15–18 OP [\(step in\)](#)
- 1H Positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with 4+S 0–3H [\(step in\)](#)
- 1S Negative 7–14OP [\(step in\)](#)
- 1NT Positive 19+ OP, 2–suited with S and H [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2C Positive 19+ OP, 1–suited with 6+D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2D Positive 19+ OP, 3–suited with both majors [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2H+ Positive 19+ OP, 1–suited with 6+C [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)

After Pass 1C

[\(step out\)](#) Positive 19+ OP, either balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0–3S, or unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C

- 1D Balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0–3S, or unbalanced intending to force responder to show shape [\(step in\)](#)
- 1H Unbalanced 4+S 0–3H [\(step in\)](#)
- 1S Unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C [\(step in\)](#)
- 1NT 2–suited with S and H [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2C 1–suited with 6+D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2D 3–suited with both majors [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2H+ 1–suited with 6+C [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)

After Pass 1C; 1D

[\(step out\)](#) Balanced (including any 5332), or unbalanced with 4+H and 0–3S, or unbalanced intending to force responder to show shape

- 1H Positive 19+ OP, balanced [\(step in\)](#)
- 1S Positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with both minors (2– or 3–suited) [\(step in\)](#)
- 1NT Positive 19+ OP, 2–suited with H and C [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2C Positive 19+ OP, 2–suited with 4+H and 5+D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2D Positive 19+ OP, 2–suited with 5+H and 4D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2H+ Positive 19+ OP, 1–suited with 6+H [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)

After Pass 1C; 1D 1H

[\(step out\)](#) Positive 19+ OP, balanced

- 1S Balanced, or unbalanced intending to force responder to show shape [\(continuations here\)](#)
- 1NT 2–suited with H and C [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2C 2–suited with 4+H and 5+D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2D 2–suited with 5+H and 4D [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)
- 2H+ 1–suited with 6+H [\(symmetric continuations\)](#)

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After Pass 1C; 1D 1S; 1NT

(step out) Game-forcing relay after showing positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with both minors (2- or 3-suited)

2C	3-suited with both minors <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>
2D+	Positive 19+ OP, 2-suited with D and C <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>

After Pass 1C; 1H 1S

(step out) Game-forcing relay after showing unbalanced 4+S 0-3H

1NT	2-suited with S and C <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>
2C	2-suited with 4+S and 5+D <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>
2D	2-suited with 5+S and 4D <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>
2H+	1-suited with 6+S <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>

After Pass 1C; 1S 1NT

(step out) Game-forcing relay after showing unbalanced with 4+D and 4+C

2C	3-suited with both minors <u>(symmetric continuations)</u>
2D+	2-suited with D and C <u>(symmetric continuations)</u> Note that the <u>second condition</u> for relay structure modification applies here.

After Pass 1D

(step out) Any semipositive 15-18 OP

1H	Relay, either GF or intermediate balanced (then SCRAPE shape-showing adjusted up one level) <u>(step in)</u>
1S	Unbalanced, 4+S, possible canape, rarely passed
1NT	Minimum balanced or near-balanced; then Stayman and four-suit transfers (or anything by agreement)
2C	Unbalanced, 5+C, normally 0-3S, non-forcing
2D	Unbalanced, 5+D, normally 0-3S, non-forcing
2H	Unbalanced, 5+H, normally 0-3S, non-forcing

After Pass 1D; 1H

(step out)

Relay after any semipositive 15-18 OP

1S	Unbalanced 4+H (note the application of the <u>first condition</u> for relay structure modification)
1NT	Unbalanced 4+S 0-3H
2C	Unbalanced 4+D 0-3S 0-3H

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2D	Balanced with a 4- or 5-card major (<u>First condition</u> will apply to RR's lowest rebid)
2H	Balanced with no major (<u>First condition</u> will apply to RR's second lowest rebid)
2S	3-suited with both minors (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2NT+	1-suited with 6+C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)

After Pass 1H

(step out) Game-forcing relay after showing positive 19+ OP, unbalanced with 4+S 0-3H

1NT	2-suited with S and C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2C	2-suited with 4+S and 5+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2D	2-suited with 5+S and 4D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2H+	1-suited with 6+S (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)

After Pass 1S

(step out) Negative 7-14OP

1NT	Balanced or near-balanced or unbalanced with clubs; then two-level suit bids natural and non-forcing
2C	Game force (<u>continuations here</u>)
2D	Unbalanced 5+D
2H	Unbalanced 5+H
2S	Unbalanced 5+S

Balanced Hands

There exist two situations in which unconstrained balanced hands need to show shape. One is when the hand is already known to be balanced, and the other is when balanced hands are part of a larger scheme of shape-showing. In the latter case two bids are used when initiating shape-showing, directly revealing the presence or absence of any major suit. This structure can be used to resolve shape when a balanced hand is already known (Step 1 shows the lower frequency no-major hand, with higher steps running on to the hands with major suits). However when a balanced hand is shown (after Pass 1C; 1D 1H; 1S), Step 1 is 1NT, which is an undesirable bid for a balanced positive hand lacking a major suit that is probably opposite a balanced hand! The solution that conserves memory effort is to omit 1NT and use 2C with no major and run on to higher bids with majors. However a more space-efficient approach is to use 1NT with those hands that are least likely to later declare notrumps (those with 5-card majors and both 4-card majors), and as few of those hands as is consistent with efficient use of bidding space. One can then obtain a structure with space-efficiency near the theoretical maximum. Partnerships should choose the approach most suited to them.

Structure for known balanced hands

Ordinarily in efficient symmetric relay structures the lowest relay response carries around as many hand shapes as all of the shapes shown at or above the third lowest response, or just over a third of all shapes to be shown. This is because an efficient structure has a Fibonacci-like decay of number of hands shown by increasing levels of response. However after the SPREAD; auction Pass 1C; 1D 1H; 1S there are almost always two facing balanced hands. Shape showing now begins with responder forced to show shape. Showing more than a third of all shapes with 1NT would lead to a significant frequency of 3NT being declared by the relay responder whose shape is known. To attenuate this phenomenon,

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- the structure below reduces the frequency of 1NT significantly (the sequence of number of hand shapes with respect to level is 8–8–4–3–2–1–1–1, reduced from the Fibonacci ideal of 13–8–5–3–2–1–1–1), and
- those shapes shown with 1NT are those with 5–card majors or both 4–card majors, which are likely to end in 4S or 4H contracts, rather than 3NT.

The resulting structure is very effective. Right–siding the declaration is no longer a concern, as all suits have been bid, but for consistency with other structures, the hands with 4M and 4m are shown with bids below the major suit. The average level at which the structure shows strength is minutely over 3D; 7 shapes show at 3C and 3H, 13 at 3D and 1 at 3S. The average would be 3D but for the accepted inefficiency in one structure noted below.

Using the "normal" relay structures to show all balanced hands in the context of a known balanced hand is inefficient in one of two ways. If 1NT is used to show balanced hands without majors then the bidding structure is an acceptable 10–6–4–3–2–1–1–1 but notrumps will be declared by a revealed hand very frequently. If 1NT is bypassed then the structure becomes 0–10–6–4–3–2–1–1–1 which compares poorly with the alternative described below.

After Pass 1C; 1D 1H; 1S

Both hands balanced, or opener is demanding responder's shape

1NT					Any 5332 with 5S or any 5332 with 5H or 4S and 4H
	2C				Game–forcing relay
		2D			Any 5332 with 5S
			2H		Game–forcing relay
				2S	5332
				2NT	5323
				3C+	5233 (with zoom)
		2H			4S and 4H
			2S		Game–forcing relay
				2NT	4432
				3C+	4423 (with zoom)
		2S			3532
		2NT			3523
		3C+			2533 (with zoom)
2C					4S and 4m or any 4333
	2D				Game–forcing relay
		2H			Any 4333
			2S		Game–forcing relay
				2NT	4333
				3C	3433
				3D	3343
				3H+	3334 (with zoom)
		2S			4342
		2NT			4243
		3C			4324
		3D+			4234

This structure is inefficient compared with the optimal 3–2–1–1–1 distribution of shapes, however there is no way of achieving such a resolution without imposing a

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memory challenge. This structure shows strength at a net of one step higher than the ideal structure (over eight shapes), made up of one shape shown one step lower and one shape shown two steps higher.

2D		4H and 4m
	2H	Game–forcing relay
	2S	3442
	2NT	2443
	3C	3424
	3D+	2434 (with zoom)
2H		5D(332)
	2S	Game–forcing relay
	2NT	3352
	3C	3253
	3D+	2533 (with zoom)
2S		4D and 4C
	2NT	Game–forcing relay
	3C	3244
	3D+	2344 (with zoom)
2NT		3325
3C		3235
3D+		2335

Relays with a very strong hand opposite a very weak hand

After Pass 1S; 2C

2D		Third negative 0–2(3)HCP any shape
	2H	Natural not forcing
	2S	Natural, not forcing
	2NT	23+ balanced (Puppet Stayman and transfers)
	3X	Natural game forcing
2H		4M and 5+m (neither suit specified)
	2S	Game–forcing relay
	2NT	4S 5+D
	3C	4S 5+C
	3D	4H 5+D
	3H	4H 5+C
		Low–ranking bids promise high–ranking suits, consistent with remainder of the system.
2S		Shows a hand describable with <u>Puppet Stayman</u> and transfers (all balanced, all long–major hands, both minors) and guarantees a rebid after any non–game bid by opener, who is not constrained to bid 2NT.
2NT		Three–suited hand
	3C	Game–forcing relay
	3D	Three–suited with short clubs
	3H	Three–suited with short diamonds
	3S	Three–suited with short hearts

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3NT Three-suited with short spades
3X Shows a single-suiter of (usually) at least 7 cards.

Interference over the strong Pass opening

Interference at the one-level after Pass

Pass is used as a full positive, double as a negative, and bids as naturalish semipositives. This allows us to extract full mileage from injudicious interference, while getting in one descriptive bid early when the deal is likely to be only a partscore. The agreements are sufficiently general to deal with natural, transfer, multi-way or psychic overcalls. Relay-respose semipositives are no longer used – relay bidding is most effective for game or slam hands needing to transfer specific information, however once competitino has begun before any shape description has ocured, the priority with semipositive hands should shift to insure competing the partscore and exploring game are done effectively.

After the positive pass, in any auction, double by the hand under the presumed length is "action" style – indicating desire to penalise the interference if the other hand isn't unsuitable and has some appropriate trump holding. A double over the presumed length is close to a classical penalty action. If the level of the auction is sufficiently low (maximum loss of three steps) then both hands have a (level-adjusted) relay available as the cheapest bid, or higher bids as relay steps. Such *elective* relay shape-showing omits steps that show suits (but not fragments) that would have been able to make or accept a below-the-length action double. Thus the opponents' suit(s) may never be shown in *elective* relay shape-showing. A hand holding their suit must make a forcing pass, make a penalty or action double, or commit to relay asking. After a relay ask, the shapes RR may hold are any consistent with their previous auction and the relay structure will reflect this.

If the opponents have bid a denomination that they show, then the elective relay shape-showing agreement works fairly simply. However if the opponents have bid another denomination (e.g. a transfer overcall) then double shows an action double of the suit they have bid (as the presumed length in the suit is with the partner of the transfer overcaller), pass is noncommittal and elective shape-showing omits both the suit of the overcall and the suit of the bid used to show it. If the opponents have not yet shown a specific suit (e.g. a nonspecific two-suiter or other multi-way bid) then double of the suit bid is still for penalty or action according to which opponent holds the presumed length, and relay shape-showing omits only that suit. Subsequently, if the level of the interference is too high for relays then action/penalty doubles and natural bidding apply. When the auction is at the two level and our side has not shown any shape (aside from any implied by doubles or passes), natural bidding is understood to include Rubensohl. If the opponents run from an action or penalty double, the same above agreements are still in force in the new situation. When a hand is unable to make or accept a double or to make a waiting pass, then the above agreements apply, with (level-adjusted) relays available in auctions sufficiently low.

After the initial negative-showing double, doubles by both hands are takeout and bidding is natural (Rubensohl where appropriate).

If the opponents interfere with 1NT, responder's double indicates penalty interest and activates action doubles, bids are natural (no Rubensohl; two-level bids are limited, three-level bids are forcing) and pass is negative.

Example Auctions over Pass

After Pass – 1H – Pass – Pass

Dbl	Action (including most hands with 4+H)
Pass	
Pass	Accepting with suitable hand and trump holding, e.g. Jx or better
1S	Game-forcing relay
1NT	4+S 0–3H (note heart step omitted)
2C	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.
1S	Relay (tends to deny four hearts)
1NT	4+S 0–3H (note heart step omitted)
2C	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.

After Pass – 1S – Pass – 2S

Pass Takeout/Waiting (relays broken)
 Dbl Action
 2NT+ Rubensohl, etc.

After Pass – 1D – Pass – 3D

Pass Takeout/Waiting (relays broken)
 Dbl Action
 3H Natural and forcing

After Pass – 1H – Pass – 1S

Pass	Takeout/Waiting
Dbl	Penalty
Pass	
Pass	Accepting
1NT	Relay (extreme measure)
2C	4+H 0–3S (note spade step omitted)
2D	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.
2H	
Pass	Takeout/Waiting
Dbl	Penalty
1NT	Relay
2C	4+S unsuited for penalty
2D	4+H 0–3S
2H	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.

After Pass – 1H – Pass – Pass

Dbl Action (including most hands with 4+H)
 1S Relay
 1NT 4+S 0–3H (note heart step omitted)
 2C 4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.

After Pass – 1C! – Pass – 1D (1C TWERB, showing D or majors)

Pass	Takeout/Waiting
1H	Majors
Pass	Takeout/Waiting
Dbl	Penalty
1S	Relay
1NT	4+S 0–3H
2C	4+H 0–3S
2D	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.
Dbl	Action (including most hands with 4+D)
1H	Majors
Pass	Takeout/Waiting
Dbl	Penalty

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	1S	Relay
	1NT	4+S
	2C	4+H 0–3S
	2D	4+D 0–3S 0–3H, etc.
1H		Relay
Pass		
	1S	4+S
	1NT	4+H 0–3S, etc.
1S		4+S 0–3D
1NT		4+H 0–3S 0–3D
2C		balanced with 4–5 card major, etc.

After Pass – 1NT

Pass	Unsuitable for penalty, activates action doubles
Dbl	Penalty interest, activates action doubles
2C	Natural, limited

Interference at the two-level after Pass

Double by either hand is takeout-oriented. Bids by either hand at the two level are natural and limited. Bids at 2NT or higher either directly or after a takeout double are Rubensohl. There are many kinds of auctions beginning with strong pass that will leave the auction at the two level with relays not having begun and neither hand having shown shape. In all such auctions, direct Rubensohl and Rubensohl after partner's takeout double applies to both hands. When the auction is at the two level after relays have begun, see below.

Interference above the two-level after Pass

Double of suit bids that show (or could have) the suit bid is takeout through all levels, and bids are natural (except 4NT 2–suited takeout). Double of notrump bids indicates penalty interest of whatever the notrump bidder showed and activates penalty doubles. Double of bids that deny the suit bid indicates penalty interest and activates penalty doubles, and bids are natural (except 4NT 2–suited takeout).

Interference in Relay Auctions

Relays have begun any time the unlimited hand makes a call that is for relay (game-forcing or invitational or better), or when a positive response is made to a Pass opening or when a semipositive response is demanded (e.g. Pass 1D 1H). We differentiate three cases of interference: that at or below 1S, higher interference that causes a loss of at most three steps in the subsequent relay structure, and higher interference that does cause a greater loss.

Interference at or below 1S is treated using agreements similar to that described above for one-level interference over the strong pass. Both hands have action/penalty doubles available with relay asking and showing following in the usual manner, except in no case can a hand whose strength is limited demand shape from an unlimited hand. Also, a hand that has already denied a holding sufficient to make a penalty or action double may double to show their maximum possible holding, e.g. honour-third. Relay shape-showing is done in the context of the previous auction, with simple deletion of steps that show hands that can no longer be held because of constraints from not having attempted to penalise the opponents.

After interference above 1S, R's double and redouble in both direct and pass-out seats are for penalty. If the interference (by either opponent) is such that RR may bid steps that are at most three steps above normal, then level-adjusted relays are used. Note that RR will have a double (or redouble) or both a double and a pass (or a redouble and a pass) available as a relay step, depending on the position of the interference. If the interference raises the steps more than three steps, then both R and RR may double for penalty. If the relay-breaking interference occurs at the two-level then both hands have Rubensohl available, both directly and after a

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penalty double by partner. If the relay-breaking interference was at 2NT or higher, then both hands bid naturally in the context of the preceding auction.

Example Auctions with Interference during Relays

After Pass – Pass – 1C

1S			Natural
	Pass		Waiting
		Pass	
		Dbl	Action double of spades, including all hands with 4+S (in context of the 1C response, must be balanced)
		Pass	
		Pass	Enough trump help, e.g. honour–doubleton or three small
		1NT	Game–forcing relay
		2C	4+H 0–3S
		2D	4+D 0–3S 0–3H
		2H	Balanced 4–5H 2–3S
		2S	Balanced no major
		2NT	Three–suited short spades, etc.
		1NT	Game–forcing relay
		2C	Balanced 2–3S (Note: 2D is now just a game–forcing relay)
		2D	Both minors (2– or 3–suited)
		2H	Two–suited with hearts and clubs
		2S	Two–suited with 4+H 5+D
		2NT	Two–suited with 5+H 4D
		3C+	One–suited with 6+H, etc.
	Dbl		Penalty of spades
		Pass	
		1NT	Game–forcing relay (rare action) – normal relay structure used, despite the inefficiency
		2C	Balanced 2S (extremely rare)
		2D	Both minors
		2H	Balanced 4–5H 2–3S
		2S	Balanced no major
		2NT+	Three–suited short spades, etc.
	1NT		Game–forcing relay
	2C		4+H 0–3S
	2D		4+D 0–3S 0–3H
	2H		Balanced 4–5H 2–3S
	2S		Balanced no major
	2NT		Three–suited short spades, etc.
1H			TWERB (spades or both red suits)
	Pass		Waiting
		Pass	

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	Dbl		Penalty double of hearts
		Pass	
		Pass	OK
		1S	Game–forcing relay (rare – full relay structure used)
		1NT	4+S 0–3H
		2C	4+D 0–3S 0–3H
		2D	Balanced 4–5S 2–3H
		2H	Balanced no major
		2S	Three–suited short hearts, etc.
	1S		Game–forcing relay
	1NT		4+S
	2C		4+H 0–3S
	2D		4+D 0–3S 0–3H
	2H		Balanced with a 4–5 card major
	2S		Balanced no major
	2NT		Three–suited short major, etc.
Dbl			Action double of hearts
	Pass		
		Pass	Enough trump help, e.g. honour–doubleton or three small
		1S	Game–forcing relay (rare action) – normal relay structure used, despite the inefficiency
		1NT	4+S 0–3H
		2C	4+D 0–3S 0–3H
		2D	Balanced 4–5S 2–3H
		2H	Balanced no major
		2S	Three–suited short hearts, etc.
1S			Game–forcing relay
1NT			4+S 0–3H
2C			4+D 0–3S 0–3H
2D			Balanced 4–5S 2–3H
2H			Balanced no major
2S			Three–suited short hearts, etc.

Interference in Variable Captaincy auctions

Interference when relay captaincy is undecided requires more specialised treatment than interference in the normal fixed–captaincy relay auctions. Indeed, this complexity is the chief cost of using the method. Fortunately, complex continuations only occur frequently after non–jump interference by fourth hand after the lowest positive response by the initial responder. Further relays are available only if the resulting structure will be able to show all unbalanced hands in its structure at most *three* steps higher than the corresponding noncompetitive auction. Defensive–oriented doubles are always be available and always break further relays. Depending on the position of the intervenor, passes may or may not be descriptive in constructive or defensive senses in order to cater for the hand types possible for the two hands.

If the intervention relates to a specific suit or suits (e.g. a natural bid, a transfer, an anchored unusual notrump, or a lead–directing double), or is the subject of no agreement, then the following two provisions apply:

When the Pass opener is in the direct seat over intervention, they have three actions available:

Pass

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Shows a balanced hand without decent 4+ length in their suit (or a demand ask hand), and becomes R. RR then makes an "action" double with all hands with 4+ length in their suit (which R may or may not pass, but in any case further relays are off), or gives relay responses with bids showing 4+ length in their suit *omitted* simply from the structure.

Dbl Shows 4+ length in their suit, with decent suit quality if balanced, and further relays are off.

Step 1+ Shows an unbalanced hand with 0–3 cards in their suit, and becomes RR.

When the hand that responded 1D initially is in the direct seat over intervention, they also have three actions available:

Pass Shows a balanced hand without decent 4+ length in their suit (then Pass opener's double is for penalty – breaking relays – and Step 1 is for relay (including demand ask) and Step 2+ are relay responses showing unbalanced hands with bids showing 4+ length in their suit *omitted* simply from the structure.

Dbl Shows 4+ length in their suit and interest in defending, with further relays off. A balanced hand with bad 4+ length may choose to show shape, as below.

Step 1+ Shows an unbalanced hand using the full remaining unbalanced structure, *including* any bids that show 4+ length in the opponents' suit(s).

If the intervention is unrelated to a specific suit (e.g. a TWERB– or TOXIC–style action, a wonder bid, or agreed to be a random action) then either hand may elect to pass non–descriptively (including all balanced hands and all hands more interested in defensive possibilities than description), or to show an unbalanced hand with steps beginning with Dbl (which evidently does not break relays) with no omissions from the remaining unbalanced relay structure. Once a possible contract has been named subsequently, then direct seat actions are as above. Should such a nonspecific intervention be passed by advancer, then Pass opener is arbitrarily determined to be R, and the hand that has to bid now has a penalty double (which breaks further relays), and either a Step 1 relay ask (by R) or Step 1+ relay responses (by RR).

In any auction where relays are off, Rubensohl and a defensive–oriented double are used.

Rubensohl

Rubensohl is a convention similar to Lebensohl that utilises all the bids from 2NT through 3S in a transfer sense in order to give great flexibility to hand description in contested auctions. When Rubensohl is available, two level bids are natural and limited. Other bids are:

2NT	Transfer to clubs
3C	Transfer to diamonds
3D	Transfer to hearts
3H	Transfer to spades
3S	No major suit, no stopper for notrump, at least game values.
3NT	No major suit, appropriate stopper, game values.
4X	Natural

The following principles apply:

- The bid that would transfer into the opponents' suit is not needed naturally, and is used artificially to show a hand with at least game values and at least one four–card major. Such a hand may also have a stopper for notrump, and natural bidding continues to seek the best game contract.
- Bids above the transfer into the opponents' suit and below 3S are still transfers, but show a hand that has at least five cards in the suit shown and have at least invitational values, since that suit can also be shown in a non–invitational sense at the two–level. Natural bidding continues, with the other hand required to break the transfer with a hand that accepts the invitation.
- Other transfers are natural but a simple acceptance of the transfer can be passed in appropriate contexts.
- After a major suit is shown (but not necessarily agreed), suit bids are cuebids (except when the other

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major is still a possible contract) and notrump bids are to play, RKCB 14/30, Grand Slam Force or choice of contract.

- After a minor suit is shown (but not necessarily agreed), suit bids are natural except where a natural bid cannot be useful.
- Unless defined, all bids are natural. Where an undefined bid cannot be natural, it is a cuebid agreeing the last bid suit.

Major-oriented one-level openings

General

SPREAD uses a MAFIA approach to describing hands too weak for a strong opening and too strong for a weak opening (*MA*jors *FI*rst *Al*ways). All such hands with a major suit will open 1C or 1D; all hands with spades will open 1D and those with hearts (and not spades) will open 1C. These opening bids may be opening their longest suit, or could have a longer side suit, or be balanced. The limited nature of these hands often makes it very easy for responder to determine that the opening side has little (or no) play for game, and responder will take an action that is a suggestion of a final contract.

Continuations follow the same general principles after these openings; the cheapest step begins game-forcing relays, the next step begins most invitational auctions, most other low-level steps are natural and tend to suggest final contracts, a few jump bids show fit but are not forward-going, a few jump bids show fit for the shown suit and are invitational, and some jumps in notrump show fit, at least invitational strength and undisclosed shortage.

After the game-forcing relay and the subsequent descriptive rebid by opener, responder can continue to bid Step 1 for relay in all cases. Opener's replies are structured to rightside contracts wherever possible. When opener has shown a balanced hand after a game-forcing relay (with a 1S bid in both cases), 1NT is the normal game-forcing relay, which implies interest in level or choice of strain, as 3NT is available to place the final contract and 2NT offers a choice of 4 of opener's major if they have a 5-card suit in their balanced hand, or 3NT. Opener may then choose who declares what contract. Further, a choice of games relay of 3H is available to explore a 5-3 fit in the major suit not shown by opener. Opener bids 3S to puppet the declaration of 3NT to relayer, or selects an appropriate game.

Design Objectives

The following objectives were met in the design of the structure:

- The use of symmetric relay structures for game-forcing auctions
- The immediate communication of the nature of the auction – game-forcing, invitational or strain-seeking.
- The adoption of elements of SCRAPE where appropriate
- The preservation of a near-constant level of relay response level-adjustment

Responding to 1C opening

After 1C

Opener shows 4+H any shape, 9-14 HCP balanced or 8-13 HCP unbalanced. The relay structure is effectively down one step in all sequences.

1D				Game-forcing relay	
	1H			Both majors, balanced, 2- or 3-suited	
		1S		Game-forcing relay	
			1NT	2-suited with S and H (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)	
			2C	3-suited with both majors and diamonds (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)	
			2D	Balanced with hearts and spades	
				2H	Game-forcing relay
				2S	4432

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		2NT+	4423
	2H+		3–suited with both majors and clubs (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
1S			Balanced without spades, or 3–suited with short spades
	1NT		Game–forcing relay
	2C		3–suited with short spades (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2D		5H (332)
		2H	Game–forcing relay
		2S	3532
		2NT	3523
		3C+	2533
	2H		Balanced with hearts and diamonds
		2S	Game–forcing relay
		2NT	3442
		3C+	2443
	2S		3424
	2NT		2434
	3C+		3433
	2NT		Choice of games relay, shows 3H
	3NT		To play, normally without 5H
	4H		To play, shows 5H and desire to declare
	others		To play 4H, shows 5H and no desire to declare
	3H		Choice of games relay, shows 5S
	3S		Puppet to 3NT, normally without 3S
	3NT		To play, rare, normally without 3S
	4S		To play, shows 3S
			3H is used for this auction because while spades have been bid, notrump has not and it is desirable to be able to choose which hand declares notrump.
	1NT		2–suited with H and C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2C		2–suited with 4+H and 5+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2D		2–suited with 5+H and 4D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	2H+		1–suited with 6+H (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
1H			Game–invitational or better relay
	1S		Balanced, 2– or 3–suited with both majors (but not a maximum canape) <i>forcing</i>
	1NT		Natural, invitational
	2C/2D		Natural, invitational
	2H/2S		Invitational, often 3–card support
	2NT		Natural, serious invitation
	3C/3D		Natural, serious invitation
	3H/3S		Invitational, 4–card support

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	3NT	Natural, to play (opener may correct with 64)
1NT		Minimum, balanced or 3-suited without spades
2C		Two-suited with hearts and clubs (but not a maximum canape)
2D		Two-suited with hearts and diamonds (but not a maximum canape)
2H		Long hearts but not maximum
2S		Maximum canape 5+S 4H
2NT		Maximum, balanced or 3-suited without spades
3C		Maximum canape 5+C 4H
3D		Maximum canape 5+D 4H
3H		Maximum long hearts
3S		Maximum 5+S 5+H
3NT		Maximum solid 7-card minor suit
4H		Freak long hearts
4S		Freak canape with spades

Later jumps below game by either hand are natural and show a serious invitation.

A rebid by opener showing a maximum establishes a game force unless it is passed.

The 2C and 2D responses should not be passed if a maximum 5+H 4+m hand would yield game. A preference to 2H shows 3-card support.

Opener should suppress a weak minor suit when showing a long heart hand.

1S

Forcing for one round, showing:

- any balanced or semi-balanced hand with 3-4S and no interest in game or hearts (Pass next), OR
- 4S 5+m with no interest in game or hearts (rebid 2m where possible), OR
- 6+S with low game interest (rebid 2S), OR
- 3-4S 0-1H 3-6m with at least game interest (either a true 3-suiter, 3S and both minors, or 3S and one minor; rebid 2H where possible)

	1NT	Balanced or semibalanced without 4S, 6H or a biddable 5m
	2C/2D	Biddable 5+m, 4+H
	2H	6+H
	2S	4S
	2NT	Maximum 5S
	3C/3D	Maximum 3S 4H 6m
	3H	Maximum 4S 6+H
	3S	Maximum 6+S
	1NT/2C/2D	See above
	2H	3-4S 0-1H 3-6m with at least game interest
	2S	Game-forcing relay
	2NT	3-suited short hearts (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
	3C	3S 0-1H 5+C

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	3D	Game–forcing relay
		3H 3145
		3S 3136
		3NT+ 3046
	3D	3154
	3H	3163
	3S+	3064
	others	Natural minimum
1NT		Exactly five spades, non–forcing. Opener may revert to 2S with support, or correct to a biddable unbid suit of at least five cards, or to any six card suit, subject to his judgement.
2C/2D		Natural, non–forcing, showing a suit of at least five cards. Opener is expected to pass without a good reason to bid, normally a concealed suit of at least five cards, or a good six card opening suit, or a good fit and playing strength. A 2NT rebid by opener shows primary fit and maximum values. When opener rebids without showing fit, there is a fair tendency to deny tolerance. Opener may conceal tolerance any time his holding suggests an advantage in doing so.
2H		Natural, non–forcing, 3–4 card support. This is a wide–ranging response which strongly discourages further action from opener. Responder is simply trying to pre–balance the opponents to the three–level in a way that makes it difficult for the opponents to judge the assets of the partnership. Opener must re–raise to the three– or four–level with six or seven trumps, and this is not constructive. New suit bids show a side suit of at least five cards, and 2NT shows at least five trumps, and both kinds of action show excellent maximum unbalanced opening hands. A double by responder is penalty–oriented. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.
2S		Unspecified mini–splinter showing at least four–card support for opener's suit, 0–1 in some side suit and values that suggest game is possible opposite a suitable hand. Opener bids Step 1 to find the shortage if this information may help find a game. Responder then bids his shortage naturally, bidding trumps when a natural bid is unavailable.
2NT/3C/3D		Fit–showing jumps, showing 6+ in the suit bid (spades in the case of 2NT), 3–card support for opener's suit and interest in playing game.

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3H		4–5 card support (depending on shape), not constructive. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.
Games		To play. Doubles by both hands are for penalty.
4H		To play, could be weak. Double by responder is for penalty. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

Responding to 1D opening

After 1D

Opener shows 4+S 0–3H any shape, 10–14 HCP balanced or 9–13 HCP unbalanced. The relay structure is effectively down one step in all sequences.

1H			Game–forcing relay
	1S		Balanced, or 3–suited with short hearts
		1NT	Game–forcing relay
		2C	3–suited with short hearts (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
		2D	5S (332)
		2H	Game–forcing relay
		2S	5332
		2NT	5323
		3C+	5233
		2H	Balanced with spades and diamonds
		2S	Game–forcing relay
		2NT	4342
		3C+	4243
		2S	4324
		2NT	4234
		3C+	4333
		2NT	Choice of games relay, shows 3S
		3NT	To play, normally without 5S
		4S	To play, shows 5S
		3H	Choice of games relay, shows 5H
		3S	Puppet to 3NT, normally without 3H
		3NT	To play, rare, normally without 3H
		4H	To play, shows 3H
			3H is used for this auction because while spades have been bid, notrump has not and it is desirable to be able to choose which hand declares notrump.
		1NT	2–suited with S and C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
		2C	2–suited with 4+S and 5+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
		2D	2–suited with 5+S and 4D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)

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	Unspecified mini-splinter showing at least four-card support for opener's suit, 0-1 in some side suit and values that suggest game is possible opposite a suitable hand. Opener bids Step 1 to find the shortage if this information may help find a game. Responder then bids his shortage naturally, bidding trumps when a natural bid is unavailable.
3C/3D/3H	Fit-showing jumps, showing 6+ in the suit bid, 3-card support for opener's suit and interest in playing game.
3S	4-5 card support (depending on shape), not constructive. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.
Games	To play. Doubles by both hands are for penalty.
4S	To play, could be weak. Double by responder is for penalty. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

Competitive Bidding

When the opponents compete before a relay auction has begun, relays are not used. Bids formerly used as relays are now natural and non-forcing. A redouble of either the 1C or the 1D opening tends to deny invitational values and denies tolerance for the suit bid. A redouble of the opening shows game-forcing strength, at most two spades and penalty interest. Otherwise, their double of our opening or their overcall of our shown suit is ignored.

After any raise by responder, doubles by responder are for penalties. Except where specified above, a double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder. Ordinarily after a simple raise to the two level and next-level interference, exactly five trumps and a singleton in the opponents' suit will be held for such a double. Six-card or longer trump length, or a void in the opponents' suit, should break the captaincy in such cases.

When holding three-card support for opener's suit and the opponents have overcalled, responder should prefer to make a negative double if possible, then to raise if unbalanced, then to pass if balanced, and finally to raise. An invitational three-card raise should start with a negative double. Opener is expected to rebid naturally on the assumption of a perfect 4432-shape negative double.

The remaining discussion assumes either an overcall of the opening bid, or a pass, followed by responder's action, followed by subsequent action from either opponent.

If a relay auction has not begun, doubles of suit bids (including the bids formerly used as relays) are negative/takeout until either hand is defined, then penalty. Hand definition occurs when a hand describes a long suit, shows a second suit, indicates balanced or semi-balanced nature, or makes a takeout double.

Passing when double would be for takeout does not define the hand. Doubles of notrump bids show values and some degree of penalty interest depending on the meaning of the bid doubled.

2NT by either hand at their first opportunity to raise partner's suit shows at least invitational values and primary fit. A cuebid by either hand shows a game-forcing raise; in the case of responder it shows exactly 3-card fit for opener's suit, which allows the correct hand to declare 3NT where no major-suit fit exists.

Jump bids in opponents' suits are splinter actions. Jump bids in new suits are fit-showing. In all cases, a fit-showing action below three of opener's major suit shows three-card fit, a good six card or longer shown suit and invitational values. Fit-showing actions above three of opener's major suit confirm primary fit for opener's major and sufficient offensive strength to contract for four of opener's major. Jumps to suit games above the cheapest game in opener's suit are natural and to play. Non-jump suit and natural notrump bids remain non-forcing, however any passed-hand non-jump new suits are fit-showing. Raises tend to be not constructive. Opener may continue over raises to 2H/2S as in the absence of competition. Cuebids and double-then-raise auctions are constructive. In various esoteric auctions where fit is known and further

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competition possible, jumps (and non-jumps that can't be natural) are fit-showing to empower partner's further actions in competition.

Remaining 2NT bids in competition show two places to play, particularly in smouldering 2-level auctions when double would be for penalties. In any case, 2NT is never natural in competition.

4NT in a competitive auction is RKCB whenever that is possible, and suggesting two possible strains at the five level whenever RKCB is not a possible interpretation. An unnecessary jump to five of opener's suit asks for control of their suit (partner cuebids holding first-round control, and raises holding second-round control).

When the opponents compete after a relay auction has begun, then the agreements used are identical to those used after interference during Pass auction. In particular all doubles by relayer (and opener if relays have been broken) are for penalties.

Specific Competitive Auctions

Abbreviations : M = Major suit shown by opening bid, OM = Major suit not shown by opening bid, O = Suit opened, m = minor suit.

<i>Auction</i>	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
1C – Dbl	P	Shows at least 3+ tolerance for the suit opened.
	Rdbl	Shows intolerance for the suit opened, denies a clearly superior descriptive action, and tends to deny invitational or better strength. A trap redouble is possible, and further doubles by responder are for penalties.
	1D	Natural, non-forcing.
1D – Dbl	1H+	Normal system on.
	P	Shows at least 3+ tolerance for the suit opened.
	Rdbl	Shows intolerance for the suit opened, denies a clearly superior descriptive action, and tends to deny invitational or better strength. A trap redouble is possible, and further doubles by responder are for penalties.
1O – 1NT	1H	Natural, non-forcing.
	1S+	Normal system on.
	Dbl	Shows penalty interest, enough strength to be assured of a majority of the high-card strength, activates penalty/action doubles, but does not create a force.
(strong, natural)	suit	Good suit, prepared for raise in competition.
	2M	Good 4-card raise, prepared for opener to compete when appropriate.
	jumps	Fit-showing, good 6-card suit with 3-card support and at least invitational values, non-forcing.
1O – overcall (non-jump)	Dbl	Negative style, notionally with about a 4432 with a doubleton in their suit and at most 3-card support. Could include hands worth an invitation with only 3-card support, or game-forcing hands unsuited to any other action.
	suit	Non-forcing.
	2M	Non-constructive raise, normally not balanced with only 3-card support.
	2NT	At least invitational with 4-card or longer support.
	cue	Game-forcing with 3-card support.
	3M	Competitive raise with at least four-card support.
	jumps	Fit-showing, good 6-card suit with 3-card support and at least invitational values, non-forcing.

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	jump cue	Strong raise to 4M.
	4M	To play, normally denying suitability for other actions.
1O – 2M	Dbl	Penalty interest for at least one of their possible suits, with at least 2 cards in the other major suit. Activates penalty/action doubles for both hands.
(2–suiter with OM)	cue of OM	Stronger general raise to at least 3M.
	2NT	Balancedish raise to 3M, unsuited for 3m or 3M bid.
	3m	Fit–showing raise to 3M.
	3M	Competitive, denying suitability for alternate actions.
	jump cue	Good raise to 4M with shortage in OM.
	4m	Fit–showing offensive raise to 4M (later double shows the defensive strength for 4M as well and allows opener to make the final decision).
	4M	To play, normally denying suitability for other actions.
1O – 2NT	Dbl	Penalty interest for at least one of their suits. Activates penalty/action doubles for both hands.
(minors)	3m	Shows an invitational or better hand with the corresponding major (C with H, D with S) in the context of the opening bid. Continuations natural.
	3M	Non–invitational raise.
	3OM	Non–forcing natural suit, a good fitting hand may raise.
1O–jumps	Dbl	Negative style, normally including possible 3–card support, or game–forcing hands lacking direction.
	suits	Non–forcing, constructive.
	3M	Normally at least 4–card support.
	cue	Good raise to 4M.
	4M	To play, normally denying a suitable alternative action.

Minor-oriented openings

General

The minor suit openings in SPREAD all occur at the two level and show 10–14 HCP. 2C shows either a one-suited hand with clubs, or a two-suited hand with at least six clubs and exactly four diamonds. The 2D opening shows either a one-suited hand with diamonds, or a two-suited hand with at least six diamonds and exactly four clubs. The remaining hands (those with at least five cards in both minor suits) open 2NT. The five-four minors hands are included in the 1NT opening. The limited nature of these hands often makes it very easy for responder to determine that the opening side has little (or no) play for game, and responder will often take an action that is a suggestion of a final contract. Additionally the knowledge responder has of the opponents' major suit fit(s) will sometimes allow him to violate agreements for tactical reasons.

After the lower openings, natural bids in both majors, a game-forcing relay, an invitational bid, a preemptive raise and a both-minors preemptive raise would all be useful, however not all of these can fit into the available space. Thus a compromise is reached: 2NT is always natural and invitational, all raises are not invitational, Step 1 is the game-forcing relay, and the cheapest major suit bids not already used are natural. This allows 3C over 3D to be a non-invitational attempt to play in 3C or 3D according to opener's hand type, which is much more useful than a natural club-showing bid.

Responding to the 2C opening

After 2C

A game-forcing relay, natural non-forcing major suit bids, an invitational notrump bid, non-invitational raises and fit-showing jumps are available.

2D	Game-forcing relay
2H	2-suited with 4D and 6+C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>) (impossible shapes are omitted from the structure)
2S+	1-suited with 6+C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2H	Natural, non-forcing (5)6+H
2S	3046
2NT	7+C with broken suit and spade and diamond honours
3C	Solid 7+C
3D	3H 3+D 0-1S
3H	3H minimum, balanced or 3S
3S	3S 3H 0-1D maximum
3NT	Impossible
4C	Solid clubs and 3H
4H	3H maximum balanced
2S	Natural, non-forcing (5)6+S
2NT	7+C with broken suit and heart and diamond honours
3C	Solid 7+C
3D	3S 3+D 0-1H
3H	3S 3H 0-1D
3S	3S minimum balanced
3NT	Impossible
4C	Solid clubs and 3S
4H	3S maximum balanced

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2NT	Natural, invitational
3C/4C	Not invitational, wide-ranging
3D/3H/3S	Fit-showing jump, 6 cards in the suit bid and 3C
4NT	Both minors, requesting a 5D response when holding four diamonds
Games	To play

Responding to the 2D opening

After 2D

A game-forcing relay, natural non-forcing major suit bids, an invitational notrump bid, non-invitational raises, a three-level minor-suit scramble and fit-showing jumps are available.

2H	Game-forcing relay
2S	2-suited with 6+D and 4C (<u>symmetric continuations</u>) (impossible shapes are omitted from the structure)
2NT+	1-suited with 6+D (<u>symmetric continuations</u>)
2S	Natural, non-forcing (5)6+S
2NT	7+D with broken suit and heart and club honours
3C	3S 3+C 0-1H
3D	Solid 7+D
3H	3S 3H 0-1C
3S	3S minimum balanced
3NT	Impossible
4D	Solid diamonds and 3S
4H	3S maximum balanced
2NT	Natural, invitational
3C	Not invitational, wide-ranging, seeking a club contract when responder has four clubs and a diamond contract otherwise
3D	Not invitational, wide-ranging
3H	Natural, non-forcing (5)6+H
3NT	Impossible
4D	Solid diamonds and 3H
4H	3H useful hand
3S/4C	Fit-showing jump, 6 cards in the suit bid and 3D
4NT	Both minors, requesting a 5C response when holding four clubs
Games	To play

Responding to the 2NT opening

3C/3D	To play
3H/3S	Natural and forcing
3NT	To play
4C/4D	Not invitational
4H	RKCB for C
4S	RKCB for D

4NT Both minors, seeking opener's better suit

Competitive Bidding

When the opponents compete before a relay auction has begun, relays are not used. A redouble of the 2C or 2D opening shows tolerance to play in the current contract and interest in penalising the opponents.

Otherwise, their double of our opening or their overcall of our shown suit is ignored.

At opener's first opportunity to double, when responder has been silent, double shows a maximum with 0–1 in the opponents' suit and 3+ in all unbid suits. All other doubles by opener are general takeout until either hand describes a long suit, shows a second suit, indicates balanced or semi-balanced nature, or makes a takeout double. Such doubles are for penalty.

After any raise, doubles of suit bids by responder are for penalties. A double by opener at his first opportunity strongly suggests bidding on but without the freak needed to break the captaincy held by responder.

Jump bids in new suits remain fit-showing, except where the suit bid at the previous level was not natural.

Thus the auction 2D – ? – 4C is natural. Non-jump suit and natural notrump bids remain non-forcing. Raises are not constructive. Bids in the opponents suit(s) are game-forcing. In various esoteric auctions where fit is known and further competition possible, jumps (and non-jumps that can't be natural) are fit-showing to empower partner's further actions in competition.

2NT bids in competition normally show two places to play, particularly in smouldering 2-level auctions when double would be for penalties. In any case, 2NT is never natural in competition. 4NT at responder's first call asks for responder's preferred minor suit in context.

Except where already defined above, 4NT in a competitive auction is RKCB whenever that is possible, and suggesting two possible strains at the five level whenever RKCB is not a possible interpretation. An unnecessary jump to five of opener's suit asks for control of their suit (partner cuebids holding first-round control, and raises holding second-round control).

When the opponents compete after a relay auction has begun, then the agreements used are identical to those used after interference during Pass auction. In particular all doubles by relayer (and opener if relays have been broken) are for penalties.

1NT Opening

General

The opening bid of 1NT promises 11–14 HCP in a hand with no four–card major, six–card minor, or two five–card minors. Clearly the responding structure has no use for Stayman. Instead responder has available transfers *two steps* below the suit shown, and a 2H game forcing relay. This relay asks for further description of opener's hand in the normal manner. After subsequent bids by opener, responder continues to bid Step 1 for relay.

Responding to 1NT

- 2C Transfer to hearts showing 5+H.
- 2D Transfer to spades showing 5+S.
- 2H Game–forcing relay
- 2S Range–probe.
- 2NT Both minors, asking opener for preference. Usually responder will play at the three level.
- 3C Natural, not constructive showing 5+C.
- 3D Natural, not constructive showing 5+D.
- 3H Natural, forcing 6+H.
- 3S Natural, forcing 6+S.
- 3NT To play.
- 4C To play (mildly invitational).
- 4D To play (mildly invitational).
- 4H To play.
- 4S To play.

Relay structures

After 1NT 2H

The off–shape possibilities require a relay structure different from those found elsewhere in the system.

2S		5D	
	2NT		Game–forcing relay
	3C		5D 4C
	3D		Game–forcing relay
		3H	3=1=5=4
		3S	2=2=5=4
		3NT+	1=3=5=4
	3D		3=3=5=2
	3H		3=2=5=3
	3S+		2=3=5=3
2NT			Balanced no 5m
	3C		Game–forcing relay
	3D		3=2=4=4
	3H		2=3=4=4
	3S		3=3=4=3

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	3NT+	3=3=3=4
3C		5C 4D
	3D	Game–forcing relay
	3H	3=1=4=5
	3S	2=2=4=5
	3NT+	1=3=4=5
3D		3=3=2=5
3H		3=2=3=5
3S+		2=3=3=5

After Transfers

Opener bids Step 1 with doubleton support and Step 2 with 3–card support. New suits by responder are natural and invitational. 2NT and 3NT are natural and non–forcing. Note that this structure permits responder to scramble out of 1NT with various atypical holdings. By transferring to spades,

- a 5S 5H hand is guaranteed to reach an eight–card fit, and
- a 4S 4H hand is guaranteed to reach a Moysian fit, and
- a 4S 5+H hand will reach either a 5–3 heart fit or a 4–3 spade Moysian fit, which might be useful on a 4=5=1=3 4=5=3=1 pattern.

By transferring to hearts,

- a 5H 5D hand is guaranteed to reach an eight–card fit, and
- a 4H 4D hand is guaranteed to reach a Moysian fit, and
- a 4H 5+D hand will reach either a 5–3 diamond fit or a 4–3 heart Moysian fit, which might be useful on a 1=4=5=3 or 3=4=5=1 pattern.

After 3H and 3S responses

Opener bids 3NT with 2M, cuebids with 3M and a suitable hand, and bids 4M with 3M and an unsuitable hand.

Competitive Bidding

When the opponents double our 1NT opening in the direct seat, we use two level bids by partner to show desire to play the contract named, or in the case of the 2C and 2D bids, desire to redouble that contract for rescue to higher–ranking strains. In effect these bids show at least five or fewer than three cards in the denomination named. We use a redouble to begin a scramble sequence with responder showing exactly 4C and another suit of at least four cards. We use pass to indicate any 4333 hand or any hand with values sufficient to play here doubled.

When the opponents double our 1NT opening in the passout seat, opener must pass and responder may pass for penalties, bid a suit to play or redouble to ask for a minor–suit preference to begin any scrambling auction. After two–level interference we use penalty doubles. If the suit bid by the opponents is not or may not be a suit they hold then double shows interest in penalising at least one of the suits they might hold. If a specific minor suit has been shown by either side, 2NT is used in a Lebensohl sense. If no specific minor suit has been shown, then 2NT asks for minor–suit preference. After higher interference we use penalty doubles. Almost all undefined 2NT bids in competition show two places to play.

When the opponents compete after the game–forcing relay auction has begun, the agreements used are identical to those used after interference during other relay auctions.

Optional multi-transfer style

The double-under transfers to the majors become three-way: either

- a hand with the major suit two steps above with any strength, or
- a hand of at least game-forcing strength that is three-suited or quasi-three-suited, or
- a one-suited hand with the bid minor suit intending to show an auto-splinter.

Responder then reveals a three-suiter, makes an invitational major suit bid, shows a splinter, offers a choice of 3NT or a major suit game, or signs off in a major suit game.

The three-suited auctions achieve the effect of a stopper ask and splinter in the short suit and it is appropriate that the 1NT opener direct the auction opposite these hand types. Hereafter "three-suited" is understood to include 5-4-3-1 patterns and a three-card holding in such a pattern is deemed a suit. Such three-suited hands have an AKQ base of 7, and zoom base of 11.

4=1=4=4 and 1=4=4=4 bid their major suit immediately over 1NT and 4=0=4=5 and 0=4=5=4 bid their major suit after first bidding 2NT showing minors. All other three-suited hand shapes go via the transfers.

Specifically, 2C is bid on all hands with both major suits, and 2C/2D is bid on all hands with 5C/D, or 0-1 S/H, or 3=5/5=3 in the majors (which is all of the rest of the three-suited hands).

After 1NT 2C/2D; 2D/2H/2S

In the structure below, after 1NT 2C; 2D/2H/2S, "M" refers to hearts and "m" refers to clubs, and after 1NT 2D; 2D/2H/2S, "M" refers to spades and "m" refers to diamonds. "OM" then refers to the other major and "om" to the other minor. "M*" refers to the major for which opener has shown fit with their first rebid and "OM*" refers to the other major. A shorthand like 4=1-3-5 means a pattern with 4S, 1H, and either 5D and 3C or 3D and 5C. As above, opener rebids Step 1 holding a doubleton M and rebids Step 2 with 3-card support. Responder's next bid follows the same scheme after either initial transfer (except that 2S is only available after an initial 2C, and in those auctions responder's final shape resolution will depend on opener's stated fit for the supposed initial transfer). After responder completes showing a three-suited shape, a natural slam interest auction continues.

2S		Three-suited with both majors.
	2NT	Game-forcing relay
	3C	0-1C, not 4=4=4=1 (note symmetric structure for 0-1D below)
	3D	Game-forcing relay
	3H	5-4-3=1
	3S	Game-forcing relay
	3NT	5OM* 4M* 3D 1C
	4C	5M* 4OM* 3D 1C (bypassing 3NT only when there is a major-suit fit)
	3S	4=4=5=0
	3NT	5OM* 4M* 4D 0C
	4C	5M* 4OM* 4D 0C (bypassing 3NT only when there is a major-suit fit)
	3NT	To play, C soundly stopped
	3D	4=4-1-4
	3H	Game-forcing relay
	3S	4=4=4=1
	3NT	4=4=1=4
	3H	5-4-1=3

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		3S	Game–forcing relay
		3NT	5OM* 4M* 1D 3C
		4C	5M* 4OM* 1D 3C (bypassing 3NT only when there is a major–suit fit)
	2NT	3S	4=4=0=5
		3NT	5OM* 4M* 0D 4C
		4C	5M* 4OM* 0D 4C (bypassing 3NT only when there is a major–suit fit)
	3C		5+m (431) remainder, GF
		3D	Game–forcing relay
			5+m 1H (43) remainder (note symmetric structure for 0–1S below)
		3H	Game–forcing relay
		3S	4S 1H 5m 3om
		3NT	3S 1H 5m 4om
		3NT	To play, H soundly stopped
		3H	1om (43) in the majors
		3S	Game–forcing relay
		3NT	4OM* 3M* 5m 1om
		4C	4M* 3OM* 5m 1om (bypassing 3NT only when there is a known major–suit Moysian fit)
		3NT	To play, om soundly stopped
	3C	3S	1S 4H 5m 3om
		3NT	1S 3H 5m 4om
			short OM, GF, either 5M 1OM or 4om 0OM
	3D	3D	Game–forcing relay
		3H	5M 1OM (43) in the minors
		3S	Game–forcing relay
		3NT	5M 1OM 4D 3C
		4C	5M 1OM 3D 4C
		3NT	To play, OM soundly stopped
		3S	5M 0OM 4D 4C
		3NT	4M 0OM 5m 4om
	3D		5M 3OM (41) in the minors
		3H	Game–forcing relay
		3S	5M 3OM 4D 1C
		3NT	5M 3OM 1D 4C
	3M		Invitational normally 6–card suit (might be 5 if fit has been shown)
	3OM		Unspecified splinter with M as trumps
	Step 1		Game–forcing relay
	Step 1		0–1C
	Step 2		0–1D
	Step 3		0–1OM
	3NT		5M game values, opener is expected to bid 4M with support unless 3=3–3–4

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4C	Splinter with m as trumps, 0–1om
4D	Splinter with m as trumps, 0–1H
4OM	Splinter with m as trumps, 0–1S <i>Note 2C is followed by 4S, unlike 2D followed by 4H</i>
4M	To play

In competition, responder is assumed to have a weak major–suit hand until responder's auction is most consistent with another hand type.

Fert openings

General

Various weak openings are used in SPREAD. Two of these identify hands too weak for other opening calls, and the others include various weak actions at moderate levels. The two very weak openings ("fert" or fertiliser bids) are 1H showing 0–7/8 HCP unbalanced/balanced with hearts, or 0–5/6 HCP unbalanced/balanced/ without hearts and 1S showing 7–9 HCP balanced without hearts or 10 HCP balanced with no major or 6–8 HCP unbalanced without hearts. Over these openings, methods based on Aspro are used, together with one strong forcing action. Apart from one relay structure, continuations in uncontested and contested auctions are all natural, with all doubles for takeout and redoubles for rescue.

Responding to the 1H opening

After 1H

1S	Invitational or better relay, with Step 1 0–4HCP and higher bids level–adjusted <u>symmetric relays</u>
1NT	To play, approximately 14–17 HCP (could be based on a minor suit)
2C	Hearts and another suit 12–17 HCP
2D	Spades and a minor suit 12–17 HCP
2H	Natural, non–forcing (5)6+H 10–17 HCP
	2S/3C/3D down suit
2NT	Good heart raise
3H	Courtesy heart raise
4H	Shapely heart raise
2S	Natural, non–forcing (5)6+S 10–17 HCP
	2NT Good spade raise
	3C/3D/3H down suit
	3S Courtesy spade raise
	4S Shapely spade raise
2NT	Both minors 7–17 HCP
3C	Natural, non–forcing 6+C 7–17 HCP
3D	Natural, non–forcing 6+D 7–17 HCP
3H/3S	??
Games	To play

Responding to the 1S opening

After 1S

1NT	To play, approximately 10–15 HCP (could be based on a minor suit)
2C	Hearts and another suit 11–19 HCP or 20–22 HCP balanced
2D	Spades and a minor suit 11–19 HCP or 23–24 HCP balanced
2H	Natural, non–forcing (5)6+H 11–19 HCP
	2S/3C/3D down suit
	2NT Good heart raise

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3H	Courtesy heart raise
4H	Shapely heart raise
2S	Natural, non-forcing (5)6+S 11–19 HCP
2NT	Good spade raise
3C/3D/3H	Own suit
3S	Courtesy spade raise
4S	Shapely spade raise
2NT	Artificial and forcing with natural continuations (responder bids 3C with a balanced hand lacking a five card major)
3C	Natural, non-forcing 6+C 11–19 HCP
3D	Natural, non-forcing 6+D 11–19 HCP
3H/3S	??
Games	To play

Competitive Bidding

When the opponents compete before a relay auction has begun, then if the relay bid or the double of it is available, then that call is for relay. A redouble of any opening bid shows tolerance to play in the current contract and interest in penalising the opponents. All doubles by both hands are takeout until three suits have been shown or a penalty action has been taken. All redoubles by both hands are for rescue.

After a double of a 1H or 1S, normal system is on (i.e. Aspro), but that the relay ask after 1H is not used.

Instead 2NT is used in the same way it is used after 1S. Now 1S is available as a natural scramble. Passing the double shows at least three card length in the suit doubled and tolerance to play this contract. It does not imply strength or weakness.

Jump bids in new suits are fit-showing when that is possible, and preemptive when that is not possible.

Non-jump suit bids are natural.

2NT bids in competition normally show two places to play, particularly in smouldering 2-level auctions when double would be for penalties. In any case, 2NT is never natural in competition.

Except where already defined above, 4NT in a competitive auction is RKCB whenever that is possible, and suggesting two possible strains at the five level whenever RKCB is not a possible interpretation. An unnecessary jump to five of opener's suit asks for control of their suit (partner cuebids holding first-round control, and raises holding second-round control).

When the opponents compete after a relay auction has begun, then the agreements used are identical to those used after interference during Pass auction. In particular all doubles by relayer (and opener if relays have been broken) are for penalties.

Weak Two-level Openings

After 2H Ekrens (weak both majors)

New suit		Natural, non-forcing but constructive. Opener must act with 3+ fit, and any action implies such fit
Raises		Not constructive
2NT		Values-based inquiry (a strong response creates a game-force)
	3C	Weak
	3D	Game-force shape ask
	3H	4S 4-5H (then 3S asks and 3NT shows 4S 4H suit)
	3S	5S 4H
	3NT	5S 5H
	3H	Natural, invitational Natural, invitational
	Games	To play
	3D	Strong, 5S 5H
	3H	Strong, 5H 4S
	3S	Strong, 5S 4H
	3NT	Strong, 4S 4H
Games		To play
Suit jumps		Natural and forcing

In competition, doubles are penalties, and redouble is for rescue.

After the weak 2S opening

This opening bid shows at least five spades, fewer than four hearts, fewer than six of either minor suit and normally less than the values for a one-level spade opening.

2NT		Values-based inquiry
	3C	Any 4-5C
	3D/3H	Natural and forcing
	3S	Invitational
	3NT	To play
	4C	Sets clubs as trumps and demands control bidding
	4D/4H	Splinters agreeing clubs
	4S/5C	To play
	3D	Any 4-5D
	3H/4C	Natural and forcing
	3S	Invitational
	3NT/	To play
	4D	Sets diamonds as trumps and demands control bidding
	4H	Splinter agreeing diamonds
	4S/5D	To play
	3H	No minor, good hand, game-forcing, sets spades unless responder rebids 3NT
	3S	Shape inquiry

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	3NT	0–2C	
	4C	0–2D	
	4D	0–2H	
	3NT	To play	
	4C/4D/4H	Control bids	
	4S	To play	
3S		No minor, bad hand, does not set spades	
	3NT	To play	
	4C/4D/4H	Natural and forcing	
	4S	To play	
3C/3D/3H		Natural and non–forcing, expecting a raise with 3–card or longer fit	
3S		Not invitational	
3NT		To play	
4C/4D		Splinters	
4H/4S/5C/5D		To play	
4NT		RKC for spades	

Namyats

General

In first and second position, 4C and 4D openings show "good" four-level preempts in hearts and spades respectively. The requirements for such an opening are:

1. exactly two key cards (five aces and trump king), and
2. no more than one uncontrolled suit, and
3. a losing trick count of at most five, and
4. at most three of the nine side-suit aces, king and queens, with no side suit containing all three of these honours, and
5. a main suit at least as good as
 1. KQT9xxx or KQJxxxx or a side void, when holding a seven card main suit, or
 2. KQxxxxxx when holding at least an eight card main suit, and
6. if holding a void, opener must also hold
 1. an uncontrolled suit and a main suit of at least AKQxxxx or AKxxxxxx, or
 2. a suit lacking first- or second-round control but holding third-round control (doubleton or queen) and a weaker main suit.

A controlled suit is one in which the ace or king is held, or one in which at most one card is held.

Responding to Namyats openings

After a Namyats 4C opening

Responder may inquire with 4D when holding at least 2 key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries, or sign off in opener's suit at the four level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, "strong" holdings (void and honour combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other-major, clubs, diamonds.

4D	Inquiry, showing at least two key cards
4H	Minimum requirements
4S	Better than minimum, unspecified void
4NT	Inquiry
5C/5D/5H	Club/diamond/spade void
4NT	Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled
5C/5D/5H	Better than minimum, no void, no control in spade/club/diamond suit
5S	AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
5NT	Inquiry
6C/6D/6H	Club/diamond/spade suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5S response
5NT/6C/6D	AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a spade/club/diamond suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit
6H	AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit
4H	To play
4S/4NT/5C	Spade/diamond/club void, slam interest and at least one key card

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5D	Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else
5H	Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else

After a Namyats 4D opening

Responder may inquire with 4H when holding at least 2 key cards and some prospects of slam, or make other descriptive slam tries, or sign off in opener's suit at the four level. After the inquiry, in auctions where specific holdings are shown, "strong" holdings (void and honour combinations) are shown naturally, and uncontrolled suits are shown in the order other–major, clubs, diamonds.

4H	Inquiry, showing at least two key cards
4S	Minimum requirements
4NT	Better than minimum, unspecified void
5C	Inquiry
5D/5H/5S	Diamond/heart/club void
5C	Better than minimum, no void, all suits controlled
5D/5H/5S	Better than minimum, no void, no control in heart/club/diamond suit
5NT	AKQxxxxx with two singletons and a KQx suit, or AKQxxxxx with one singleton and two Kx suits, or KQJxxxxx with two singletons and a AKx suit
6C	Inquiry
6D/6H/6S	Diamond/heart/club suit with KQx, Kx or AKx respectively according to the hand type held for the 5NT response
6C/6D/6H	AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQJx with two singletons, or AKQxxxx and a club/diamond/heart suit of KQx with a singleton and a Kx suit
6S	AKxxxxxxx, two singletons and a Kx suit
4S	To play
4NT/5C/5D	Heart/club/diamond void, slam interest and at least one key card
5H	Small doubleton trump, three side aces and possibly nothing else
5S	Small singleton trump, three side aces and nothing else

Competitive Bidding

Other Agreements

Carding

From honour holdings when not leading an honour, we lead third from even length, fifth from odd length. If the holding does not include an honour (ace through ten) then the highest card is also permissible. When leading an honour we use normal standard overleads (ace from ace-king) from sequences including interior sequences. However, from six-card suits including an interior sequence the third highest is normally led. The queen may be led from five or more cards headed by the KQT9 asking for unblock of the jack.

At trick one, third hand when not attempting to win the trick signals reverse attitude according to Obvious Shift principles (see below), except when the ace is led and the queen is on dummy (reverse present count) or in a cashout situation where count is important (reverse present count). Other cards on tricks 2–12 are reverse present count when not required to play a card of a specific rank. Natural high–low suit preference on rare occasions.

The Obvious Shift Principle

An attitude signal by third hand to the opening lead refers to desire for opening leader to switch to the Obvious Shift. The following rules apply:

- Negative rules:
 - ◆ The Obvious Shift cannot be the suit led.
 - ◆ The Obvious Shift is never trumps.
 - ◆ The Obvious Shift is never a suit headed by the A–K–Q or four of the top five honors.
 - ◆ The Obvious Shift in a suit contract is never dummy's singleton or void.
 - ◆ The Obvious Shift is never a natural suit shown by declarer.
- Positive rules:
 - ◆ The opening leader's shown suit is the Obvious Shift.
 - ◆ If the opening leader has not shown a suit, the leader's partner's shown suit is the Obvious Shift.
 - ◆ If both defenders have shown suits and the opening leader starts with an unshown suit, look at the suits and choose one of them by applying the rules below.
 - ◆ When the defense has shown two suits or when the defense has not shown any suits:
 - ◇ Against a suit contract, a three-card suit headed by at most one honor (A, K, Q, J, T) is the Obvious Shift.
 - ◇ Against notrump, dummy's shortest suit is the Obvious Shift (even a strong holding such as ace-king doubleton).
 - ◇ When there is no weak three-card suit, the shortest suit is the Obvious Shift. But against a suit contract, this cannot be a singleton or void.
 - ◇ When there are two equal length suits, either of which might be the Obvious Shift, look at the number of honors. The suit with fewer honors is the Obvious Shift. If the suits have an equal number of honors, the lower-ranking suit is arbitrarily deemed to be the Obvious Shift.

After strong 2NT bids

Where the partnership makes a strong natural 2NT bid, then Puppet Stayman and transfers are used.

Puppet Stayman Structure after a strong 2NT

3C	Asking for major suits
3D	At least one four-card major
3H	4S

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	3S	4H
	3NT	No four-card major
	4D	Both four-card majors
	3H	5H
	3S	5S
	3NT	No four- or five-card major
3D		5+H
	3H	3+H
	3S	2H 4-5S (then 4D is a re-transfer)
	3NT	2H 2-3S (then 4D is a re-transfer)
3H		5+S
	3S	3+S
	3NT	2S (then 4D is a re-transfer and 4H is natural 5+S 5+H)
3S		Game forcing, both minors
	3NT	Unsuited to a 5m contract
	4m	Choice of suit with extra values
	4M	Both minor suits, control bid
	4NT	Both minor suits, unable to make a control bid
	5m	Choice of suit without extra values

Crowded-auction slam tries

Where no room is available for detailed slam tries, a jump to five of an agreed or previously shown suit is a slam try needing control in the opponents suit, and a bid of five of their suit shows control in their suit and issues a general slam try for the agreed or previously shown suit.

RKCB agreements

Where a suit is agreed or implied and 4NT is a keycard ask then 5C shows 1 or 4 of the five keycards and 5D shows 0 or 3. Over each of them, the cheapest non-trump step is an ask for the trump queen. In response to that ask, step one denies the queen and other steps show specific kings naturally or deny a showable king. After the original 4NT ask, 5H and 5S both show two keycards, denying and showing respectively the queen of trumps. In all cases 5NT confirms the possession of all key cards, implies that grand slam is possible and inquires for a specific king. When the keycard asker has shown a void, the key card in that suit should not be shown. When the keycard responder has a void and two keycards they respond 5NT without the queen of trumps and bid their void naturally at the six level when holding the trump queen (6H when hearts is agreed and a spade void is held).

When hearts are agreed or implied, and both 4S and 4NT are available for investigating heart slams, Kickback is used. 4S becomes the RKCB ask and 4NT replaces 4S as (for example) a spade control bid. After the RKCB ask, 5S and 5NT swap their meanings similarly, with 5NT relating to (usually) the spade king, and 5S either serving as the king ask or denying possession of side kings. The normal step RKCB replies shift down one step.

Defence to Multi 2D

This defence applies to Wagner or Multi 2D openings, showing among other possible options, a weak two in either major

Dbl Either 19+HCP any shape, or around 11-15HCP with an unspecified 5-card major – approximately a two-level overcall. After this action, the first double by either intervenor or advancer is for takeout, unless they choose to bid instead (showing 19+ for intervenor). Further doubles are for penalty.

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- 2H Shows a strong notrump overcall. Two-level continuations are natural, with higher responses as for Puppet Stayman.
- 2S/2NT At least a sound overcall in clubs/diamonds, showing at least a sound opening bid with 6+card suit, or at least game values with a 5-card suit. Advancer may accept the transfer neutrally, or make a (forcing) natural bid.
- 3C/3D A "weak" overcall in clubs/diamonds, showing about 8–11HCP and at least 6+card suit.
- 3H/3S Strong jump overcall, not forcing, about 16–18HCP with a 6+card suit.
- 3NT To play.

Defences to openings at the two level

- **Myxo Twos** (bid showing the next suit or some possible other hands) A double at the partnership's first opportunity shows strength (16+), at the second shows a takeout action, and at the third shows a penalty interest. Bids are natural.
- **RCO Twos** (bid showing two possible mutually-exclusive two-suiters) 2NT shows a strong notrump overcall, a double shows length in the two suits that the opener might hold if opener does hold clubs and 3C shows length in the two suits that opener might hold if opener does not hold clubs.
- **Ekrens 2** (weak both majors) A double shows a desire to double and lead trumps. Bids are natural.
- **Roman 2D** (three-suited, possibly short in a known suit) Double shows great strength, further doubles are takeout. Try not to bid.
- **Precision 2C** (long clubs, possibly with a side major) Double activates Kokishohl (modification of Rubensohl; two-level bids to play, 2NT puppets a normal takeout double to 3C, then 3D is inv+ with majors and 3M is GF with that major and 1+ stoppers, 3 are transfers with inv+ values, 3S shows a game-forcing stopperless 3334 and 3NT shows club stopper(s) with no major suit interest), other bids natural.
- **Natural 2D** (long diamonds, possibly with a side suit) Double activates modified Kokishohl (as above but 2NT includes hands wanting to play 3C and 3C is natural and invitational).

Over their 1NT

Where their 1NT range includes 13HCP (or is entirely weaker) and we are not a passed hand, we treat it as weak and use Cappelletti (also known as Hamilton or Pottage) where double is strong and penalty-oriented, 2C shows a single-suited hand, 2D shows both majors (normally 5+/4+ either way but might be 4+/4+ in extremis), 2H/2S show that suit and a minor (5+/4+ either way, 2NT asks for the minor suit, 3m by advancer in competition shows their own suit) and 2NT shows a strong 2-suiter. After the double we use action doubles under their shown length and penalty doubles over their shown length. Advancer's pass over responder's forcing action that does not show values creates a force. In fourth seat we act in the same way.

Otherwise over their 1NT we use Woolsey, where double shows a hand with at least five in a minor suit and a four-card major, 2C shows both majors, 2D shows a single major suit, 2H and 2S show at least five in the bid suit and a four-card or longer minor suit, and 2NT shows either a minor two-suiter or some extreme two-suiter (rebid a new suit). After the double, 2C initially seeks to play in the minor suit, however after (1NT) Dbl 2C 2D then 2H now seeks to play in the major suit, 2D after the double seeks opener's major suit and other suits bids are natural. After 2C, then 2D asks for the longest major suit, or 2H with two four-card suits. After 2D, major suit bids at the two and three level are correctable (including in further competition), 2NT shows a strength-based inquiry (3C and 3D shows H and S respectively with non-minimum hands), 3C and 3D are natural non-forcing and constructive, 4C asks for a transfer to the major suit and 4D asks for a bid of the major suit and 4H and 4S bids are to play showing independent length in the suit bid. The bids of 3C and higher retain their meaning after further competition.

If they use Stayman or some similar inquiry, we double the artificial ask or response to show that suit, request a lead and suggest competing. If they use a transfer, we double to show a full-valued takeout hand (after this double, or a pass instead of it, a later double of the takeout suit is still for takeout). If they transfer to a major suit then the bid of their transfer suit shows exactly four cards in the other major and an unspecified longer minor (2NT asks for the minor suit).

Doubles by limited hands

Where a hand is limited by having made a weak shape–descriptive action, or opened a limited opening that has been raised, or opened a limited opening showing a 6+card suit, two suits, or a balanced hand, then at that hand's first opportunity to double the opponents, that double is *not* penalty, but rather indicating a desire to bid more in the context of the auction. This treatment recognises the relative improbability of the weak limited hand holding a good penalty double, and the relative likelihood of a partner, having made tactical raise, wanting to penalise, rather than continue bidding. Exceptionally, only with freak hands, the limited hand can elect to bid rather than make this double. This "I want to bid" double is only available on the first occasion the opponents may be going to play the most recently–named contract. Should partner's auction create a force and the limited hand is in the direct seat, then this agreement does not apply.

Raises in competition

In auctions not specifically described previously, jumps to new suits below 4H show fit for partner and the desire to express a useful honour holding with length in the suit named and the offensive strength to reach the lowest available level in the agreed suit. A jump bid in the opponents' suit shows shortage in their suit, agrees trumps and announces game values. Both fit–showing and splinter jumps normally promise at least four trumps. Such fit–showing actions create a force only when made at unfavourable vulnerability when offensive strength for game was announced. Double by a hand that made a fit–showing jump is not for penalty, but rather expresses sufficient defensive strength in context to need to act further. Their partner may bid or pass according to judgement. Double by a hand opposite a fit–showing action is for penalty. After an initial four–level overcall by partner a bid of a new suit shows (first–round) control and slam interest. A new suit introduced when that suit might have been introduced naturally on a previous occasion shows fit for partner's suit.

2NT in competition

2NT is *rarely* natural in competition. In defined situations it may be Lebensohl (including after our double of a weak two–level opening by the opponents, or equivalent), Rubensohl (including after two–level interference of our 1NT or two–level interference over our strong club or Power Double auction where we have not shown a suit), a conventional raise of an opening or overcall, a strength–based inquiry, or a natural suggestion of contract with invitational overtones (mostly after a two–level overcall or a 1NT takeout).

In other situations it is typically a mid– to late–round competitive action indicating at least two possible strains. Partner is expected to take preference between the two most logical or lowest reasonable strains, and to act accordingly if the 2NT bidder removes their preference to a new strain (showing intolerance for the preference). The availability of such actions colours the nature of late–round takeout doubles of (particularly) two of a major. Often a 2NT bid over 2S might describe a takeout double with intolerance for defence. The availability of 2NT over 2H to describe minor–oriented hands allows a takeout double to be more spade–oriented. Where double would be for penalties then no inferences apply to 2NT other than that at least two strains are possible. A hand opposite a takeout double may freely use 2NT to indicate no significant preference and to ask the takeout doubler to bid the most appropriate strain.

Passes and Redoubles

When there exists no specific contrary agreement, when the opponents double a suit shown by partner a pass is noncommittal and a redouble is for rescue in context. Likewise, when the opponents double a denomination not shown by partner, then pass shows tolerance to play in that denomination (in context) and redouble denies such tolerance. A redouble by a hand that has raised partner seeks penalties, otherwise all undefined partscore redoubles are for rescue.

4NT in competition

The follow rules apply to 4NT bids in competition:

- Where a suit has been bid and raised, and the bidder can hold slam values, 4NT is RKCB for that suit,

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else offers an alternate strain less emphatically than a bid of that suit at the five-level.

- Where the partner of the bidder has shown one suit only and where the bidder has not shown a suit, a jump to 4NT is RKCB for that suit, else if a non-jump then offers a choice of suits.
- Where the partner of the bidder has shown one suit only and where the bidder has shown another suit, 4NT asks for a choice of suits.
- Where the partner of the bidder has shown two or more suits, or shown one while possibly/certainly holding another suit, 4NT asks for a choice of suits.
- Where the partner of the bidder has not shown a suit, and the bidder has shown one suit only, then 4NT is RKCB for that suit where the previously shown partnership values admit slam as a possibility, and otherwise asking for a choice between the suit shown and another suit. A suit-choice 4NT bid will typically show a side holding that is shorter than the holding shown, and a bid of a new suit implies (nearly) equal lengths in the two suits, where possible.
- Where the partner of the bidder has not shown a suit, and the bidder has shown two or more suits, then 4NT asks for a choice of suits.
- Where neither partner has shown a suit then 4NT offers a choice of two suits.

In summary, a jump to 4NT tends to be RKCB, a non-jump tends to be offering 2 places except where defined.