

The K-Club

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A Version of Precision Played by a Dozen Bridge Players in Kingston, Ont

Paddy and I first played Precision in 1978. We started with a simplified form of Goren Precision and then, as we became comfortable with the basic system, experimented with treatments and conventions from Goren, Reese and Matchpoint Precision. As new books and articles appeared, many more treatments and conventions were tried. Some were kept intact, others modified and the rest discarded. System changes have been made as a result of suggestions by Harry Wilmshurst, Jack Cooper, Bill Cruden, Don Kersey and Rick Clarke.

A few bids in the present form of the K-Club are original, but for the most part it is a collection of published treatments and conventions. There are two major differences between the K-Club and most of the other versions of Precision.

First is the bid of 1NT, in first or second seat, showing 10 to 12 balanced. This is the pivotal bid in the Kamikaze Notrump, but that system has not caught on, so it is rare to find anyone using the 10 to 12 point range (though less rare now than when we started using this NT range in 1985 — there are, for example, Ottawa players who use the 10 to 12 NT within a Standard American framework).

Second is the use of transfer positive responses to a 1♣ opening bid — a 1♥ response shows a spade positive. All responding bids from 1♥ to 2♦ are transfer positives. These bids of one under the usual Precision positive response save a level of bidding for all suits except hearts. Details in the 1♣ chapter.

A 1♣ artificial opening bid showing 16+ HCP is the pivotal bid in Precision. The K-Club and other versions of Precision have advantages and disadvantages when compared with systems like Standard American and Two Over One which use a 2♣ opening bid for big hands. Some of those advantages and disadvantages come from that main difference; others come from specific bids within the respective systems. Some of the arguments for and against the K-Club require a detailed knowledge of the systems being compared. But a few general comments are possible.

A weakness first. The low level of the 1♣ artificial opening bid makes it easy for our opponents to make a nuisance of themselves. Clear agreements about competitive bidding are imperative. This weakness has one small virtue — we have to contend with interference so often that we are prepared and have had lots of practice. Standard bidders don't get much practice dealing with interference over their 2♣ opening bid so they are more likely to go astray when their opponents interfere.

If the opponents stay out of our auction then the low level of the 1♣ artificial opening bid gives us an extra round of bidding and this can be a huge advantage. Also, the low level of the 1♣ artificial opening bid makes it possible to use the bid for hands in the 16 to 21 HCP range which can be awkward for Standard.

Consider the following opening bid opposite three possible holdings:

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder 1</i>	<i>Responder 2</i>	<i>Responder 3</i>
♠ A Q 4 2	♠ K 9 6 5 3	♠ K 9 6 5 3	♠ K 9 6 5 3
♥ 3	♥ A 5 4 3	♥ K J 2	♥ 6 5 2
♦ A Q 6	♦ J	♦ J 7 2	♦ 9
♣ A J 9 6 5	♣ 10 8 2	♣ 8 2	♣ 8 7 3 2

The trick is to get to slam on the first and to game on the other two. K-Club bidders will do this. Standard bidders are unlikely to bid the slam on hand #1 (no guarantees, but if you have blood in your veins you want to be there) and a few of them will play hand #3 in a contract of 1♣ (most opponents will save them from this ignominy by competing in hearts).

We get to slam on hand #1 because we have the bidding room and bidding agreements to find out about specific cards. Even though we lack the high card strength for slam, we can investigate 25 HCP slams like this without going beyond game.

Asking about specific cards is a strength of this system but can also be a weakness if the opponents should happen to be listening. While detailed information about the example hand above does the defenders no good, there will be other hands where they will learn enough, before the opening lead, to find the best defence and take more tricks than anyone else defending the same hand.

The narrow range for all openings other than 1♣ is, for the most part, an advantage. Bidding is generally much more comfortable, especially when competing for part score contracts. We get into the auction on slightly weaker hands than Standard and the upper limit of 15 HCP allows opener to compete vigorously without misleading partner as to defensive strength.

Our natural 2♣ opening bid (11-15 HCP, 5+ clubs) is different than any bid in Standard and it has both advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side it gives the club suit its full due — we play more club contracts than Standard. This plus can turn into a minus, at matchpoints, if we are in a superior club contract and a bad NT or major suit contract scores better (due to inferior defense or lucky lie of cards or both). Another plus for the 2♣ opening bid is that, even though it is a constructive bid, it is also preemptive. A small minus is that, as with all preemptive bids, sometimes it is partner that is inconvenienced — occasionally we miss a good major suit partscore that is reached easily by Standard bidders. Despite the minor disadvantages, Precision players tend to regard the 2♣ opening bid as one of the best features of the system.

In organising this presentation of the K-Club, I decided to deal with limited bids first. This is partly to counter the feeling of a newcomer to Precision, that the system is all about the forcing club. In fact, most opening hands will be handled by one of the limited bids. Nevertheless, a few general comments about the 1♣ bid are in order to give a context for the discussion of limited bids.

The only requirement for a 1♣ opener is 16+ HCP. While you might be tempted to use the 1♣ bid for strong hands of fewer than 16 HCP, it is not consonant with Precision theory to do so and is seldom necessary. With a strong distributional hand that lacks 16 HCP you can usually afford to underbid on the first call and then make jumps or other strong bids on succeeding calls; one advantage to doing it this way is that partner will know that your strength is based on distribution and be less likely to make a bad double of an opponent who also has a strong distributional hand. Also, when you have a big two suiter, the opponents often have similar hands and if you open a club on a hand with fewer than 16 HCP but lots of distribution, the bidding may be at the 4-level by the time it gets back to you and describing your hand will be very awkward.

Alternatively, there will be hands that count to 16 HCP but do not seem worth a 1♣ opening because of unsupported honours—C.C. Wei, the inventor of Precision, recommends that all 16 HCP hands be opened 1♣ and I agree. Stiff honours are not as flexible as supported

ones, but it is amazing how often they turn out to be useful. Consider the following 16 point dog opposite three possible holdings:

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder 1</i>	<i>Responder 2</i>	<i>Responder 3</i>
♠ Q 7	♠ J 10 3 2	♠ A K 9 8 5 4	♠ 9 8 5
♥ K J 7 3	♥ A 5 4	♥ 2	♥ A Q 6 5 2
♦ K Q	♦ 9 7 2	♦ J 9 7 2	♦ 9 7 2
♣ K Q 9 6 5	♣ A 8 2	♣ 8 2	♣ 8 2

The 16 point hand has 3 flaws—no aces and 2 doubleton honour holdings. It is going to be difficult to bid and may be awkward to play as well; but the bidding, at least, will be easier if you open 1♣. Should you decide not to open 1♣, the alternatives would be 2♣, 1♦ (in first or second seat) or 1N (in third or fourth seat).

Opposite hand (1), 1♣ gets you to game in NT; the other bids don't. I want to be there—a diamond lead cuts your chances to less than 50% but after any other lead, prospects are good.

With hand (2), I want to be in 4♠ and am most likely to get there by opening 1♣.

With hand (3) the problem is to stay out of game. This is a difficult hand for any system but especially bad for us—a 1♣ opener is likely to lead to game (on the auction 1♣–1♦, 1♥–4♥). I don't mind being over my head on this one in return for being in game on the other two; besides, they might lead diamonds and give me a chance to set up my clubs before they discover the spade situation.

Returning to those big hands which have fewer than 16 HCP, there are some that are so strong that a 1♣ bid is warranted. We use the Goren rule for strong 2-bids: if the hand is only 1 trick short of game then open 1♣. Lesser hands are better described by making a limited bid and then a jump rebid. You seldom get passed out on big distributional hands.

♠ 6
♥ A K J 10 9 6
♦ K Q J 10 8
♣ 2

Only 14 HCP but easily worth 1♣. Since the heart suit is self-sufficient, you won't mind if preempts keep you from showing the diamond suit.

♠ 6
♥ A K J 6 4 3
♦ K Q J 6 5
♣ 2

Still a good hand but a fit is needed.
Open 1♥ and then jump in diamonds.

Occasionally you will get a balanced 15 HCP that has a wealth of 10's and 9's. I like to take these into account and do so by counting 1/3 for the 10's and 1/5 for the 9's—if the count is now over 16, and there is no major flaw in the hand, open 1♣.

♠ A K 10 9
♥ Q 10 8
♦ K J 10
♣ Q 9 8

This is better than some 17 point hands.
Open 1♣.

♠ A K
♥ Q 10 5 2
♦ K J 10 2
♣ Q 10 9

This is a good hand too but the spade suit
is flawed and the spots are not as good.
This is a borderline case. Do what feels right.

Besides 1♣, the only other opening bids for strong hands are 2NT (20-21), 3NT (24-25), 4NT (28-29) and 5NT (32-33). Note that our 2NT is different from that of standard Precision where 2NT shows 22-23 HCP. The reason for the change is that people interfere with low values over 1♣; if we open 1♣ and then jump to 2NT with the stronger hand, there is a smaller chance that they will interfere. The other advantage is that this change brings us into line with Standard American, so those of us who switch back and forth have one less difference to remember.

Limited Opening Bids

The big winners in 1♣ Forcing systems are the limited opening bids. Standard bidders must cope with openings that range from 13 to 22 points (counting distribution). Precision players tend not to count shortness until they have found a fit. Our limited openers show 11-15 HCP; we also open good 10 HCP hands and occasional 8 & 9 point hands that are two-suited or have a very long single suit. We can afford to bid on the weak hands because we start with a 5 rather than a 10 point range. In general, opposite a Precision opener, responder should have 1 point more to force to game than opposite a Standard opener. Except where noted, the bidding logic that applies to Standard also applies to Precision.

The most important exception is with jump rebids. These bids are no longer needed to show 16 to 22 point hands so they show upper range with strong distribution. Jumps in a new suit guarantee 5 or more cards in the second suit and equal or greater length in the first suit. A jump rebid in the opened suit shows extra length, at least 6 cards, and maximum point count.

♠ A K	1♦	1♥ (overcall)	1NT
♥ Q 9 5	?		
♦ A J 10 9 7 4			
♣ 8 7			

Jump to 3♦. Partner will know that your diamonds are good but not solid or you would have jumped to 3NT. This hand occurred in a team game. Responder with 8 HCP and Q5 in diamonds converted to 3NT. 3NT made an overtrick despite the fact that the diamond finesse was off. Our counterparts at the other table did not find this 22 point game.

One difficulty with limited opening bids is that opener has no way of making a forcing rebid after a 1-level response.

♠ A 7	1♦	1♠
♥ A Q 10 8 5	?	
♦ K J 10 7 6 4		
♣		

This hand could have been opened 1♥ but a jump reverse is preferred because it gives a true picture of the distribution of the red suits. After the opening bid of 1♦, a jump to 3♥ shows 5 hearts and 6 diamonds, but is that enough? Opener's dilemma on his rebid is that partner, with Jxx of hearts and the K of spades, might pass 3♥. If opener wants to be sure of being in game on this hand, then he must bid game. This means that 4♥ cannot be used as a splinter. Our present agreement is that any jump to game in a major (by opener) is natural, but a double jump to the 4-level in a minor is a splinter. The auction 1♦-1♥-3♠ is the only case where opener can splinter in a major.

When responder has made a 2 over 1 response, a reverse is forcing for 1 round but can be made on a minimum. A jump shift by opener, following a 2 over 1, is forcing to game. Auctions such as 1♠-2♥-3♣, which are very strong in Standard, are forcing with us but not to game.

An important difference between Standard and K-Club is that in third seat there is no longer any need to protect partner by opening light. The first seat player is known to be weak, usually less than 10 HCP, so third seat should only bid if he has something to say. There will be an occasional weak distributional hand that third seat opens to try to shut out fourth seat, but in general third seat will have full value for his bid and partner should respond accordingly. Since we open very light in first seat, third seat can often judge that the

opponents have game and may be tempted to psyche—should the opponents ask about our third seat openers, they should be told that while we rarely psyche, this is the position in which a psyche is most likely.

In fourth seat the same logic applies. Standard players, at matchpoints, will sometimes open weak to try for a part score— especially when they have spades. We tend to open in fourth seat only those hands that standard players would open in first or second seat. When partner is known to be weak you should not give the opponents a second chance unless you have the values to compete.

When Standard players open a borderline hand in 3rd or 4th seat they tend to pass partner's response. While this is still common practice, there are now a few enlightened experts who recognise that better partscore contracts will be reached if the auction proceeds along the same lines as after a first or second seat opening. This is especially important at matchpoints and is also good practice at team play. Opener should pass partner's response only when he has psyched his opening bid (and not always then). Except where the opponents have intervened to raise the level of bidding, all bids by responder that are ordinarily forcing should still be forcing. There are many weak hands that will make a game opposite an opening bid if a fit can be found and that fit may not be found if opener passes his partner's response. Consider the following where West (with the hand on the left) opens 1♦ in third seat.

♠ K Q 8		♠ J 10 6 4
♥ A 9 4		♥ K J 10 7 3
♦ K 8 7 6 4 2		♦ A 3
♣ 7		♣ 10 5

After a 1♥ response, many Wests would pass because they have a minimum opener and are not unhappy with their heart holding. If West raises, then a game try in spades by East will get them to the good game. Change the spades to K98 and most Wests would pass 1♥, but I favour a rebid of 2♥ for two reasons, the lesser of which is that on some hands, such as this, the odds for making game are still reasonable (though in this case, bidding it would be a stretch); more important is that a pass gives the show away — the opponents will know that they have the balance of the strength.

The limited suit bids all have a maximum of 15 HCP. This means that responder does not have to bid with 6-7 HCP if he does not like any of his options. This freedom, which Standard bidders do not have, should be exercised with care because there are occasional combined holdings of 20 HCP or less which will make game. Responder should always stretch to show a fit. He should pass only those 6-7 HCP hands where he has no fit for opener's suit and no convenient bid.

1♦ Opening Bid

Many Precision systems use the 1♦ bid as a catchall. We do this only when 1NT would show 10-12 HCP. That is, in first and second seat, the 1♦ bid shows either a 13-15 NT or a real diamond bid. In third and fourth seat, 1♦ promises 4+ diamonds and an unbalanced hand. Even when playing 10-12 1NT, if the 1♦ opener rebids anything other than NT or partner's suit he is promising a diamond suit and an unbalanced hand.

A bid of 1♦ followed by a jump in a major would show a maximum hand with 5 cards in the major and a longer diamond suit. With the same distribution and a weaker hand some Precision players bid the major first and then bid diamonds twice; I much prefer to open 1♦ and then bid the major twice, showing 5 cards in the major and hence a longer diamond suit.

Showing the actual distribution may stop partner from taking a preference for the major with 2 cards in the major and 3 diamonds.

After 1♦ — 1♠, a 2♥ rebid is forcing for one round.

An opening bid of 1♦ followed by a rebid of 2♣ is frequently 5-4 in the minors with no indication as to which minor is longer. With no preference, responder tends to leave partner in clubs, but we do not have a good reason for this.

A response of 2NT to 1♦ is invitational, denies a 4-card major, and asks opener to bid 3N with a good 13 HCP.

After a 2♣ response to 1♦, opener's bids are prescribed as follows (see Marty Bergen in Bridge Today, March/April 1989, p30). With 5+ diamonds, opener rebids 2♦ (responder can now bid a four card major, so major suit fits will not get lost). With 6 solid diamonds (a one loser suit) and no major, opener can jump to 3♦. Opener's second priority is to bid a four card major; with 6 diamonds and a 5-card major, bid 2 of the major and then rebid the major. Third priority is to show a 4+ club fit. The club fit can be shown immediately, even with 5 diamonds, if the clubs are good, the diamonds weak and there is no 4-card major (this is the only case where opener would bypass a 2♦ rebid holding 5+ diamonds). A jump to 3 of a major is a splinter in support of clubs and denies a 4-card major (hence a raise to 3♣ denies a singleton).

If none of the above rebids apply then opener must have 3-3-4-3 distribution and 13-15 HCP. Bid 2NT with 13-14 HCP and 3NT with 15 HCP (knowing that a standard bidder would have opened 1NT may help responder in a close decision about where to play the hand).

There is one other conventional treatment (after a major suit response) which was suggested by Don and is unique to the K-Club. Consider left hand's options after left opens 1♦ and right responds 1♥.

♠ J 9 8 ♥ A 9 4 ♦ A K Q 8 7 2 ♣ 7		♠ K 10 6 4 ♥ K J 10 7 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ 10 5
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♠ J 9 8 ♥ A 9 4 ♦ A K Q 8 7 2 ♣ 7		♠ A 10 6 ♥ 10 8 7 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ A 9 5 3
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♠ J 9 8 ♥ A 9 4 ♦ A K Q 8 7 2 ♣ 7		♠ K 10 ♥ J 8 7 3 ♦ J 5 4 3 ♣ J 9 5
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Don calls the left hand the Bridge World Death Hand. The difficulty is that the left hand has quality heart support but, with only three, cannot jump in support. Left also has pretty good diamonds, but a jump to 3♦ probably ends the auction in the first case — and while 4♥ is not guaranteed, you want to be there. With the second you want to be in 3NT. With the third, a partscore in diamonds.

The solution is to agree that a 2NT rebid shows 3-card support for responder's major with a good diamond suit. Standard bidders need the 2NT rebid for 18-19 balanced hands but we do not.

1♥,♠ Opening Bid

Opening 1♥ or 1♠ promises 5+ cards in that suit. Once every few years you will pick up a hand which, for reasons you may not wish to explain, you feel should be opened in the 4-card major. Partner will expect you to have 5+; if you end up in a 4-2 fit, you will not upbraid partner for choosing this inappropriate moment to support with two.

We play 1NT forcing in response to a major suit opening. Max Hardy in *Two Over One Game Force* recommends that the forcing notrump response be limited to 12 HCP but does not give a reason. I have not heard a good argument for putting an upper limit on this bid so we have not done so.

An immediate raise to game tends to show a weak hand with 5-card support; with the same 5-card support and a stronger hand we tend to bid 1NT and then jump to game. The forcing 1N can also be used on hands where, after partner opens 1 of a major, you have 3 or 4-card support and enough strength that you intend to bid game. 1NT in these cases is a courtesy waiting bid which allows opener to show big distributional hands; occasionally, a slam can be bid. Also, if the opponents interfere after your jump to game, partner will be in a better position to decide whether to double or compete and you will be better placed yourself, having heard partner's response to 1NT.

When a fit has been established and a game try is in order, we use help suit game tries as described in *Two Over One Game Force*: the person inviting game bids the cheapest suit in which he needs help. Partner may sign off, jump to game or temporize by bidding the next higher suit in which he does have some help.

Two Way Game Tries

After a constructive raise, Don and I play a two way game try which allows us to use both short suit and help suit game tries. After 1♠–2♠, 3♣,♦,♥ are short suit game tries; if opener instead wishes to make a help suit game try, he bids 2N, which asks responder to bid the lowest suit in which he would accept a help suit game try. The same applies after 1♥–2♥ except that two of the bids have to be inverted to leave room to mention all the suits. If 2N were used to ask for help, it would not be possible to show spades. The solution is that instead of 2♠ showing shortness in spades, 2N shows spade shortness and 2♠ asks for help.

We play these game tries only when there has been no interference. It is possible that they would be useful in many situations but for the time being we are only using them over direct raises of a major suit opening bid. The first exception we have made is play them after 1♠–double–1N (constructive raise): 2 suit = short, 2N = help.

2♣ Opening Bid

There is some question as to whether this bid is alertable. We alert as a courtesy because standard players do not expect 2♣ bids to be natural. It shows 5+ clubs with a 4-card major or 6+ clubs with no major. Some Precision systems allow the 2♣ opener to have a 5-card major. The drawback is that responder needs more to bid after a 2♣ opening bid than after a 1-level opening bid, and when opener has 5-6 distribution a game can often be made with very little from responder; on part-score hands, the 2♣ bid may prevent the partnership from finding their major suit fit—an important consideration at matchpoints. Consider what would happen on the three hands below if your partner opened the club-heart two suiter with a bid of 2♣:

With hand (1) you will pass 2♣ and if your LHO does not have the right hand for a balancing bid, you will miss your heart game. With hand (2) you would usually take a bid but if you needed a swing you might decide to pass and await developments instead of bidding the odds-on slam. Hand (3) is an argument for the 2♣ bid, not because you would sooner be in 2♣ than in 2♥ but because a 1♥ opening bid will get you to 3♥ or 4♥ and you are better off in 2♣. This third hand won't come up often enough to balance the missed opportunities on the others.

Recall that with 6 diamonds and a 5-card major you open 1♦. In that case you can afford to describe your distribution accurately because if you have a major suit fit you will almost always find it. The 2♣ opener, on the other hand, preempts partner as well as the opposition. We do not open 2♣ with a 5-card major.

A response of 2♥/♠ is constructive but not forcing. Opener will usually pass or rebid clubs, but with a fit can invite or bid game. When the bidding has gone 2♣–2♥ and opener can't stand hearts, he should show a 4-card spade suit on the way to 3♣. We play these major suit responses a little weaker than standard Precision (which insists that the 2♥,♠ response show invitational values) in order to compete more effectively on partscore hands.

A 2N response is invitational. A raise to 3♣ is preemptive. A jump to 3♦ shows a good diamond suit and is invitational. Major suit jump shifts are also invitational but the suit doesn't have to be as good–QJ9xx would do. Double jump shifts show a hand that is playable only in the named suit; a new suit by opener is a cuebid. We played double jump shifts as splinters until we realized that opener would not be able to investigate slam, by cue-bidding, without bypassing 5♣; we no longer play splinters after a 2♣ opener. A jump to 4♣ is invitational.

The most common response to 2♣ is 2♦ (artificial) showing invitational values (or better) and asking for a 4-card major.

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder 1</i>	<i>Responder 2</i>	<i>Responder 3</i>
♠ 7	♠ 8 6 3 2	♠ A 3 2	♠ Q 8 5 2
♥ K J 9 3 2	♥ A 5 4	♥ Q 7 6 4	♥ 10 8 4
♦ 5	♦ 9 7 2	♦ A 9 7 2	♦ K J 7 2
♣ A K 9 6 5 3	♣ Q 8 2	♣ 8 2	♣ 8 2

2♣	2♦:	2♥,♠	4-card major
		2N	2 suits stopped; 3♦ asks which suit is not stopped
		3♣	Only one suit stopped; 3♦ asks for stopper
		3♦	5-card suit or 4-card suit & a maximum
		3♥,♠	4-card major and a superb maximum
		3N	Running 6+ club suit

After 2♦ and one of the above bids by opener, a second bid by responder of 3♥,♠ shows a 5+ card suit and is forcing. 2♦ followed by 4♥,♠ shows a good suit but allows opener a little more latitude than would an immediate jump to 4♥,♠.

The one exception to the rule that the 2♦ response shows invitational values occurs at matchpoints when responder has a weak hand with a major suit and a club fit. Responder can bid 2♦, intending to sign off in 3♣ if opener does not bid responder's major.

2♦ Opening Bid

2♦ shows a hand that is 4-4-1-5 less 1 card from any of the four suits (see table below for all the possible distributions). Responses of 2♥, 2♠ and 3♣ are to play. 3♥, 3♠ and 4♣ are invitational. 3♦ shows a diamond suit with invitational strength—opener can pass or bid 3N. 2N shows at least invitational values and asks for exact distribution.

2♦	2N:	3♣	3-4-1-5	3♦ asks for minimum or maximum
		3♦	4-3-1-5	3♥ is to play (unless opener max)
		3♥	4-4-1-4	and a minimum
		3♠	4-4-1-4	and a maximum
		3N	4-4-1-4,	a maximum with A or K of diamonds
		4♣	4-4-0-5	and a minimum
		4♦	4-4-0-5	and a maximum

Don and I play that after a 2N ask, responder has a choice of Roman Keycard bids as follows: 4♣–RKC for clubs, 4♦–RKC for hearts, 4N–RKC for spades. Immediate bids of 4♦ and 4N are also RKC for hearts and spades.

2♥ Flannery

An opening bid of 2♥ is Flannery with exactly the same meaning as the 2♦ Flannery bid.

Interference Over Limited Opening Bids

When the opponents interfere over 1♦, 1♥, 1♠ or 2♣ then special conventional bids are off and bidding reverts to standard. After a double, redoubles show 11+ HCP, new suits at the 1-level are forcing and at the 2-level are to play (jumps preemptive). After a suit overcall, double is negative up to 3♠, new suits are forcing (note that this applies to the 2♣ opening as well as the 1-level bids).

After a direct double of 1♥ or 1♠, 1N is a constructive raise and 2N is a limit raise. After a double of 1♦ or 2♣, 2N is a limit raise based on distribution — responder will usually redouble with good HCP hands.

We started to play support doubles in 1994 and I still forget them from time to time. The concept is easy enough — double an interfering bid with 3-card support and raise with 4-card support. Remembering to use them is the problem. Our agreement, at present, is that they apply only when we have opened the bidding and responded with one of a major; the double (or redouble) refers to the major bid by responder and is a support double only when a simple raise would not go beyond 2 of the major.

If the opponents interfere over the 2♦ opening bid, double is for penalties. If after 2♦–2N, RHO bids 3♦, then pass shows the 3♣ response, double shows the 3♦ response and all others are bid as though there was no interference. If after 2♦–2N, RHO bids any suit other than diamonds we leave the penalty option open by allowing only two bids: double shows maximum length in that suit and pass shows minimum length.

After a double of a Flannery 2♥ bid, 2N is still asking.

No Trump Bids

No trump bids fall into 3 broad categories:

- those which guarantee a balanced hand and a specific point range
- those which suggest a final contract without making any guarantees about distribution and/or point count
- artificial bids like the unusual or forcing no trump.

This section covers the first category. It includes opening no trump bids, no trump responses to 1♣ and no trump rebids after 1♣–1♦ and 1♦–1major (the latter applies only when 1NT would be 10-12 HCP, that is, in first or second seat). When I refer to a limited no trump bid, I am referring to this category and not to such bids as 1♥–2♦, 2NT which limit the hand but do not guarantee balanced distribution; or 1♣–1♥, 1NT which suggests playing in NT without limiting the hand or promising balanced distribution.

Limited no trump hands may contain a 5-card minor but not a 5-card major (the one exception is a 5-card heart suit on the auction 1♥–1♠, 1NT). A general rule applying to all limited NT bids is that 2♣ (or a higher sufficient club bid over higher NT bids) is always Stayman. Some of these Stayman bids are standard, but many of them have special responses which will be covered individually.

Our first departure from Goren Precision was to expand the opening 1N range from 13-15 to 12-15 HCP. This broader range introduces some guesswork when responder has an invitational hand. Against this are two advantages. The lesser of the two is that you get to open 1NT more often and gain a preemptive advantage whenever the opponents would like to get in the auction. The main advantage is that the 1♦ bid now shows diamonds and an unbalanced hand. This puts responder in a better position to handle interference and also, knowing that opener is unbalanced, responder can often figure out opener's exact distribution. **Do not open 1♦ in 3rd or 4th seat on 11 HCP balanced hands.** There is not enough advantage in opening an 11 HCP balanced hand in third seat with a bid of 1♦ to give up knowing that opener has diamonds and is unbalanced.

When playing the 12-15 no trump, one of the most common sequences is 1♦–1major, 1NT. This is not a limited no trump bid. It practically guarantees shortness (usually a singleton) in partner's major; this is not by special agreement — it just follows from the fact that opener is known to be unbalanced and would not be bidding NT with shortness in an unbid suit and therefore must be short in responder's suit. Responder, with this knowledge, will not be tempted to rebid a 5-card suit and may even abandon a 6-card suit.

The most recent change in our no trump structure is the 10-12 point 1NT (in first and second seat). We do this at any vulnerability. In third and fourth seat 1NT is 12-15 and the above discussion of the 1♦ bid still applies; but when 1NT is 10-12, 1♦ can be as short as two. When Jack Cooper first suggested the 10-12 1NT I was reluctant, not because of the danger, but because I did not want to give up the honest diamond bid. The 10-12 NT has turned out to be effective, not only for its preemptive value and its negative implications when partner passes, but on constructive auctions as well, so I am a convert. We play the 10-12 range in first and second seat only — once partner has passed he probably has fewer than 10 HCP so our opponents, knowing that we have a maximum of 21 HCP between us, could agree to double automatically and they would come out ahead most of the time.

When we first started playing the 10-12 NT we did it only at matchpoints. Then we started doing it non-vulnerable at teams and we now do it at any vulnerability at teams. We

do get caught from time to time, so it seems certain that we will eventually lose an important match because of going for numbers. But it hasn't happened yet, in the 15 years that we have been using the 10-12 NT at teams. In the meantime, we have won more than one important match because of that bid.

Many weak-no-trump players will pass their partner's 1NT only when they have enough playing strength to give partner a play for the contract. With very weak hands they escape to a suit using Stayman, transfers or some method of getting to 3 of a minor. We don't believe in running until the opponents start chasing so a pass does not guarantee anything; though Stayman and transfers may still be used on weak hands. We used to play that an immediate bid of 3 of a minor was invitational (asking partner to bid 3N with one of the top 3 honours) and Stayman followed by 3 of a minor was forcing, but we have begun to play 4-suit transfers so 3♣ and 3♦ show weak and strong minor two suiters. Paddy and I play that a transfer to a major followed by 3 of a minor is a Canape bid showing 4 in the major, 5+ in the minor and almost enough points to invite game.

No Trump Ranges

The no trump structure for opener is as follows:

10-12	1NT	26-27	1♣-1♦, 3NT
13-15	1♦-1major, 1NT	28-29	4NT
16-19	1♣-1♦, 1NT	30-31	1♣-1♦, 4NT
20-21	2NT	32-33	5NT
22-23	1♣-1♦, 2NT	34-35	1♣-1♦, 5NT
24-25	3NT		

Balanced hands above 26 HCP come up so seldom that by the first occurrence the above table will have faded completely from memory. The pattern is that from the 2NT=20-21, the count goes up in 2-point increments and the immediate NT bid is always weaker than the delayed bid (as it is in all sequences up to that point). Note that if an opening bid of 3NT were a gambling 3NT then all of the other bids would move down to fill the gap.

Transfers are used after every no trump bid in the above table except 1♦-1major, 1N. For 1♣-1♦, 3N (and for all higher no trump bids) a club bid is Stayman; diamond and heart bids are transfers, a spade bid is Blackwood and NT is quantitative. For these high level NT openers, Stayman followed by NT is to play, but a transfer followed by 4N is RKC; there is no room at this level to do everything – these two arbitrary rules leave open the most important options.

It has become more or less standard for the no trump bidder to jump in response to a transfer to show a maximum with a four card fit. We do this with our weak no trump even though responder may have nothing. It is not as dangerous as it might seem because when we have a 9+ card fit, our opponents will also have a fit and when they have the strength to set us they can probably do better by declaring. The reason for the jump is that responder will occasionally have a hand that is almost good enough for an invitation; when he finds out that opener has a maximum and a fit, he can bid game.

We go one step further on these hands: when opener has a hand on which he would jump in response to a transfer, he can instead make another more descriptive bid to help responder decide whether to bid game. For example, with a maximum, four card support, and a concentration of values in clubs he would instead bid 3♣. This might also allow responder to opt for 3NT instead of the suit game that he was headed for. There is one exception to the rule that opener is showing four card support on these auctions: a 2NT response to the transfer shows a maximum with good three card support and good spot cards.

If responder repeats the transfer suit, he is telling opener to take the transfer and the bidding will stop there unless responder then takes another bid (which would be a cue-bid, trying for slam). Note the difference between this and the competitive situation where the notrump bidder has passed an interfering bid on his right; a rebid of the transfer suit is now showing a second suit – it is important to be able to do this because opener does not appear to like the first suit. In the present situation, opener has said that he is very happy with responder's suit so there is less reason for showing a second suit.

Over 1NT, and over 1♣-1♦, 1NT, we now play four suit transfers.

When transfers were invented many years ago, the main reason was to have the lead coming up to the strong hand and to keep that hand concealed. A 10-12 NT would not qualify for transfers if that were the only benefit. However, the auctions for inviting game where you want to give a choice between a major and no trump are easier to handle with transfers than with other methods.

1♦-1major, 1NT

“Stayman After a One No Trump Rebid” is an excellent treatment that has not gained wide-spread acceptance. It was invented for use with a strong NT but works well with any NT range. See *Kantar's Bridge Conventions* for a complete description. It occurs for us on the auction 1♦-1major, 1NTt-2♣ (we also use it for the special case 1♥-1♠, 1NT); using the 2♣ checkback is the only way to create a forcing sequence so it is used by responder on strong hands, if he cannot jump directly to game, and on some invitational hands. The opener shows, in order of priority, 4 cards in the other major, 3-card support for the bid major, a 5-card minor and a maximum. After a 2♦ denial by opener, 2 of the major or 2NT by responder are invitational; all other bids below game are forcing.

When playing this checkback Stayman convention, all natural bids after the 1NT rebid are either to play or are invitational.

1♦	1♥	2♦	Weak hand with diamonds and hearts
1NT:		2♥	Sign off
		2♠	Invitational with longer hearts than spades
		2NT	Invitational, only 4 hearts
		3♣,♦	A second 5-card suit with invitational values
		3♥	Invitational with at least 6 hearts
1♦	1♠	2♦,♥	Weak two suiter
1NT:		2♠	Sign off
			All other responses as above

In the above scheme there is no meaning for double jumps after 1♦-1major, 1NT or for jumps after 1♦-1major, 1NT-2♣, any bid. We have not been playing the special bids that Kantar suggests for these unused sequences because they come up so seldom that one forgets in the interim.

1♣-1♦, 1NT

After 1♣-1♦, 1NT showing 16-19 HCP, 2♣ asks opener to narrow his range and to show a major if he has one.

1♣	1♦	2♦	16-17, no major
1NT	2♣:	2♥	16-17, 4 hearts (may also have 4 spades)
		2♠	16-17, 4 spades
		2NT	18 HCP, no major
		3♣	18-19, 4-card major(s); 3♦ asks which major
		3♦	19 HCP, no major
		3♥,♠	18-19, 5 clubs, diamonds respectively

1♣-2NT(3NT)

The only other limited no trump bids are the NT responses to 1♣ (or the 1♠ response when playing transfer responses to 1♣). The ranges, as originally proposed by C. C. Wei: 1♣-1NT shows 8-10 HCP (note, however, that with transfer positives we bid 1♠ with this hand); 1♣-2NT shows 11-13, or 16+ and 1♣-3NT shows 14-15 HCP.

After 1♣-3NT, it is customary to play 4♣ as Stayman and all other bids as natural. The difficulty with this is that 4♥,♠ are game bids and therefore not forcing so it is impossible to set the trump suit and then cue bid or ask for aces. We play transfers here to allow opener to show a major and then take another bid (so 4♠ is ace asking). This is the only case where transfers are on after a NT bid by responder. After a transfer, 4NT is RKC. A new suit, following a transfer, is a cue-bid. A transfer followed by 5NT is not Grand Slam Force and not invitational; it offers responder a choice of slams. On the other hand, Stayman followed by 4NT is to play; all it says is that responder chose the wrong major.

Interference

When the opponents bid a suit, natural or artificial, over an opening 1NT or 1♣-1♦, 1NT then suit bids are natural, a cue bid is Stayman and 2NT is Lebensohl. An immediate jump to 3NT or an immediate cue bid denies a stopper; 2NT followed by 3NT or a cue bid shows a stopper. 2-level bids are to play, 3-level bids are forcing, and 2NT followed by a 3-level bid is invitational if that suit could have been bid at the 2-level and otherwise is to play. Paddy and I play that when an opponent jumps to the 3-level over 1NT, double is negative.

When the opponents double a 10-12 1NT or a 12-15 1NT, we run for cover using Brozel escapes: redouble shows a long suit and asks partner to bid 2♣; 2♣,♦,♥,♠ are Brozel-like 2-suited bids with at least 4-4 in the suits shown; pass is made with the expectation that partner will redouble and is therefore alertable. A pass will be made on weak 3-suited or balanced hands and on most strong hands. An immediate Brozel escape of 2♠ shows four spades and a longer minor with enough values to play at the 3-level if that should be necessary; with longer spades we just redouble and then bid 2♠.

This defence takes care of most hands that you will hold when there is an immediate double of partner's opening bid of 1NT. Occasionally you will hold a good, unbalanced hand where you would like to invite game and where the chances of a lucrative penalty are small. An immediate jump to the 3-level shows the same two suits that a 2-level Brozel bid would show, but with invitational values (based in good part on distribution). A redouble followed by a jump to the 3-level shows length in that suit with invitational values (in other words, the same distribution as the 2-level rebid but with a better hand). A pass followed by a jump (after the opponents bid a suit) is forcing and shows a good hand where you had hoped either to play in 1N redoubled or to double your opponents, but they have escaped to your short suit so you wish to bid on to game.

After an opening 1NT (or 1♣-1♦, 1NT), it is customary for opener to leave further action up to partner. We have found that at matchpoints there are two situations where it is worth chancing a double of an interference bid. The first is where LHO overcalls at the 2-

level and it is passed around to the 1NT opener. A balancing double is for takeout and shows a maximum with a weak doubleton in LHO's suit. The second occurs when there are two passes following the 1NT bid and RHO backs in with a 2-level bid. A direct double (by the NT opener) is now for penalties and shows a maximum count with a good 4-card holding in RHO's suit. Either of these bids could backfire but we have had good results with them. The only problem is keeping straight which is takeout and which penalties. The general rule is the same as for interference over our 1♣ opener: direct doubles are for penalties and balancing doubles for takeout.

Preempts

There was a time when I recommended preempting on any excuse. Part of the reason for this (aside from a love of bidding) was the discovery that the opponents are seldom able to double for penalties, even when it would be very profitable to do so. More recently I have become aware that for every time that the preempt turns a profit there is another time where the opponents are goaded into bidding a 20 HCP game that makes because they have no values in your suit and one of them is short. In addition, first and second seat preempts have a way of making partner uncomfortable almost as often as the opponents.

My preempts have become more disciplined – not necessarily stronger, just more closely defined. Except for an occasional flight of fancy which table presence says has to be right, I recommend that 3-level preempts show a substantial suit (may be just 6 cards) and very little else. In particular, the preemptor will not have a void, an outside Ace or a 4-card major (Don does not agree, so his preempts are not to be trusted in this respect). Little attention is paid to vulnerability except in the first half of a team game – we are generally more conservative in team games but if you are down at the half, a weak preempt may create a necessary swing.

2♠ Opening Bid

The spade suit should have 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 honours. Opener may have an outside Ace but should not have a void or a 4-card heart suit. New suits are forcing, 2N asks for a singleton and 3♣ asks for a feature.

3-Level Opening Bids

Position at the table is the most important factor in determining which hands to preempt with. In first seat, the odds are two to one that if someone has a big hand it will be one of the opponents. In second seat, the odds are even that it will be partner. In third seat you know that partner has less than 11 HCP and probably less than 10 HCP so you have maximum freedom.

Second seat preempts should be the most rigidly defined since the chances are greatest that partner will have a good hand and will have to decide whether to make a move. The suit should have 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the 5 honours, preferably with good spots. Ideally, the preemptor will have nothing outside and will definitely not have an outside Ace, void or 4-card major (Don does not follow these guidelines).

First seat preempts may still preempt partner so the rules for second seat apply here as well, but there would be some excuse for bending the rules slightly if it felt right. In particular, one might preempt with a weaker suit or more values outside; my own choice with outside values is to make a weak opening rather than a preempt.

In third seat anything goes but I still do not like preempting with outside Aces because partner may take a phantom save**. Also, a weak opening may be more effective than a preempt in keeping the opponents out of game.

Fourth seat preempts are good opening bids that are based on distribution rather than high cards.

**Don argues: “Actually, I think this is one of the virtues of undisciplined preempts. Sacrificing after preempting is an admission that your preempt didn't work, so I don't want to encourage my partner to sacrifice after the opponents have stopped. I'd rather defend,

hoping they have missed their best spot; if we are to defend it is surely best not to define our hands too strictly.”

Ken replies: “Saves are not always profitable, but many of those that are profitable occur when a defender has a long suit; if my preempt ‘fails’ and the opponents get to their best spot, I like my partner to be in a good position to judge whether to sacrifice or defend.”

As a partnership, Don and I have had good results from his undisciplined preempts; we have also had good results on constructive auctions where knowing that my preempt was disciplined allowed Don to make the right decision. So the jury is still out on this matter.

Gambling 3NT

We no longer use this bid, but when we did, it was as follows: 3NT shows a solid minor and may have an outside stopper (but not an Ace). If 3NT is doubled then opener should pass with an outside honour and redouble with nothing outside. A redouble by responder asks opener to bid his suit. Responder may also pull 3NT by bidding the minor he knows opener to have if he wants the lead coming up to his hand.

4-Level Opening Bids

A bid of 4♥,♠ is much more constructive than a 3-level preempt. Opener will often have outside values and be just one or two tricks short of game when vulnerable. Opener will not be open to debate on the trump suit so a new suit by responder is a cue-bid.

4♣ and 4♦ follow the guidelines for 3-level preempts but with an extra card in the minor.

5♣,♦ Opening Bids

Like the 4♥,♠ preempts, a bid of 5♣,♦ shows a hand that is just one or two tricks short of game and will usually have outside values.

The Forcing Club

1♦ Negative

The 1♦ response to 1♣ shows 0-7 points or an impossible negative (unless you play the unusual positive). The impossible negative is used for a hand which has 8+ HCP, a singleton and 4 cards in each of the other suits. To show this hand, respond 1♦ and then jump in the singleton on your next turn to call; if the 1♣ opener bids your singleton then jump in no trump.

Major Suit Rebid

After the 1♦ negative response, a rebid by opener of 1 of a major showed a 5+ suit in C.C. Wei's original system but most versions of Precision now play that it could be a 4-card suit. We follow the Wei/Radin methods with a few exceptions. The general approach is that if opener bids a major and then a minor, he has a Canape holding with 4 of the major and a longer minor (a jump in the minor shows two 5+ suits and is forcing). If opener bids a major and then NT or the other major, he tends to have a 5+ major.

After 1♣-1♦-1♥/♠, responder can pass with 0-1 points but must bid with 2 or more HCP.

1♣	1♦	Pass	0-1 HCP
1♥ :	1♠		4+ spades, 0-7 HCP
	1N		2-5 HCP (may not be balanced)
	2♣		6-7 HCP, fewer than 3 hearts (does not promise clubs)
	2♦		6-7 support points, 3 hearts (does not promise diamonds)
	2♥		3+ hearts, 1-5 support points
	2♠, N, 3♣, ♦		Impossible negative
	3♥		4+ hearts, 6-7 support points
	3♠, 4♣, 4♦		Splinter, 6-7 HCP
	4♥		4+ hearts, 8+ support points
1♣	1♦	Pass	0-1 HCP
1♠ :	1N		2-5 HCP (may not be balanced)
	2♣		6-7 HCP, fewer than 3 spades (does not promise clubs)
	2♦		6-7 support points, 3 spades (does not promise diamonds)
	2♥		5+ suit, 6-7 HCP
	2♠		3+ spades, 1-5 support points
	2N, 3♣, ♦, ♥		Impossible negative
	3♠		4+ spades, 6-7 support points
	4♣, ♦, ♥		Splinter, 6-7 HCP
	4♠		4+ spades, 8+ support points

The 1N and 2♣ bids can have any distribution not covered by other responses in the same range. This means that the 2♣ bidder will have seven or more cards in the minors; if he has length in one of the minors, it could be either one. Note that responder does not count distribution unless supporting partner's major.

Having the 2♦ rebid show 3-card support for the major with 6-7 support points is a recent addition to the system. Before we did this, the club opener would run into difficulties with some 5-card major hands. In particular, the sequence 1♣-1♦, 1major-2♣ was a problem for opener when he had values for game but was not sure where to play. Consider the following hand:

♠ A K Q 9 8	
♥ A 6 3	
♦ 5 3	
♣ A K 7	

Opener wants to be in game but should it be in spades, clubs or notrump? A bid here of 3N tends to show the 5-card spade suit and offer notrump as an alternative but gives no hint of the club support or the diamond weakness. Our solution, at that time, was to make a bid of the other major forcing for one round. The given auction would go 1♣-1♦, 1♠-2♣, 2♥.

My present inclination is that after 1♣-1♦, 1♠-2♣, we should retain the bid of 2♥ as a forcing bid along the lines of a fourth suit forcing bid. Responder's priorities are as follows: (1) Show 4-card heart support; (2) Bid 5+ minor; (3) Bid notrump with balanced hand and at least a Jack in ♣, ♦ and ♥; (4) Show 2-card spade support.

1N Rebid

This shows 16-19 balanced and bidding proceeds as for a strong 1NT opener, with one exception: the Stayman 2♣ response also asks opener to narrow the range. The responses are given in the No Trump section. If responder has an impossible negative, he can take control by bidding Stayman or jump to the 3-level to show the singleton.

There is an optional way to bid a hand with 18-19 balanced and a 4-card major. When we started bidding canapé 4-card majors, partner alerted that if we just had 4, we would have a longer minor. Then we realised we could use the bid for 4-1-4-4 hands. So we changed the alert explanation to "may" have a longer minor. This opens the door for bidding the major (with 18-19 balanced and a 4-card major).

We have an unusual situation at this point. You can make this bid without prior discussion with partner because his/her responses are automatic: after 1♣-1♦-1♥/♠, 1NT shows 2-5 HCP, no support; 2C shows 6-7 HCP, no support; 2D shows 6-7 HCP, 3-card support; a simple raise shows 3+-card support with 2-5 support points; a jump raise to the 3 level shows 4+-card support with 6-7 support points.

None of partner's responses will embarrass you. You pass the two weakest responses and bid game (or invite with 2NT) opposite the rest.

Usually you get to the same contract using either way of handling 18-19 balanced with 4-card major. The main advantage of bidding the major comes with hands like this:

<p>♠ A 8 6 4 ♥ A 6 5 ♦ A J 10 ♣ A Q 6</p>		<p>♠ K 9 7 5 ♥ 7 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ J 9 7 5 3</p>
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If I open 1♣ and rebid 1NT you will probably pass. But if I rebid 1S, you will revalue and bid 3S. I will bid game. My feeling is that any time you have a play for slam (even if it is not odds on) you should be embarrassed to be playing in a part score.

One more hand type (for responder):

<p>♠ A 8 6 4 ♥ A 6 5 ♦ A J 10 ♣ A Q 6</p>		<p>♠ K 9 7 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 10 8 7 5 3</p>
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If I rebid 1NT, you may pass rather than chase rainbows (game is unlikely and 2 NT may be too high). If, instead, I rebid 1♠, we get to 3NT. No guarantees but I'll take my chances.

The same approach could be used for some of the hands which qualify for a 2NT opening bid:

<p>♠ A K 6 4 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A K 10 5 ♣ A Q 6</p>		<p>♠ 9 7 5 ♥ 10 9 7 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 10 7 5 3</p>
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Should I decide to open 1♣ and rebid 1♠ (instead of opening 2NT), partner will pass. If the opponents also pass, 1♠ will be more fun to play than 2NT. If partner has some values and bids accordingly, you will either invite or jump to game.

When partner has game going values, either way of bidding will get you there. The advantage to this method comes on partscore hands where you have a fit in the major.

<p>♠ A K 6 4 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A K 10 5 ♣ A Q 6</p>		<p>♠ Q 9 7 5 ♥ 10 9 7 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 10 7 5 3</p>
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After 1♣-1♦-1♠, partner will raise to 2♠ (could be a 3-card suit), I'll invite with 2NT, and partner will sign off in 3♠; this will almost always play one or two tricks better than 2NT.

One further point on these big hands. Standard bidders routinely open 2NT with a 5-card major because a 20 point hand is one of those in-between-hands that can otherwise prove awkward for Standard to bid. Because of the informative responses after 1♣-1♦-1♥/♠, we don't face the same problems as Standard so there is little to be said in defense of such bids other than the occasional benefit that accrues from having an undisclosed weapon.

Two of a Minor Rebid (after 1♣–1♦)

A minor suit rebid shows 5+ in length and tends to deny a 4-card major. Responder should bid with 6-7 HCP: suit bids tend to show 5+ in length.

Two of a Major, Three of a Minor Rebid

Strong and forcing to game. A jump to three of a minor is equivalent in strength to a Standard 2♣ opening bid but the majors are different. A jump to two of a major shows a hand that is one trick stronger than a Standard 2♣ opener. Standard bidders open 2♣ when they are 1 trick short of game but there is no need for us to do that because after 1♣–1♦, 1major partner will bid with 2 or more points and will raise with zero points if he has a 4 card fit. Hence, the jump to 2 of a major should only be made when all that is needed from responder is 2 or 3 card support.

Three of a Major, Four of a Minor Rebid

4-4-4-1 shape, 24+ HCP, singleton in suit bid.

Positive Responses to 1♣

A positive response is made on all hands of 8+ HCP. It is forcing to game on suit auctions and can stop in 2N only on an auction that begins 1♣–1♠ (showing 8-10 balanced). Making all other positives forcing-to-game means that you will sometimes find yourself in a 24 HCP game that has no play. This will happen once or twice a year and is a small price to pay for the freedom that you gain on those hands where you want to make weak sounding bids in order to show suit length or to offer partner a choice between a suit and NT.

Don and I started with the suit positive only 98% forcing to game and then carefully delineated those sequences in which one could stop below game. But the rules that we set up were confusing and the first time that it came up, we miscommunicated and played a good diamond slam in 4♦. We decided to scrap those rules and make the suit positive 100% forcing to game.

Some systems have increased by 1 HCP the count required for either the 1♣ opener or the positive response in order to be able to force to game in comfort. This expands the range for the limited or negative bids by 1 HCP which affects a hundred hands for every one of ours that turns out badly. The 24 HCP hand combinations (where the 8 HCP hand qualifies for a suit positive) that do not make game just do not occur often enough to change the system in order to allow for them. Besides, overbidding is unjustly rewarded almost often enough to make up for that small flaw in the system. Over the past 10 years, we have played in 24 HCP minor suit games that had no play once or twice a year — not often enough to justify a system change.

When the auction begins 1♣–1♠ (showing 8-10 balanced), then 2NT is invitational whether it is bid immediately or after a Stayman sequence. If, however, there is a Stayman sequence followed by a raise of the shown major, that raise is forcing – with 24 HCP and a 4-4 fit, there will usually be a play for game. The raise will therefore be a slam try. On the auction 1♣–1♠–2 of a suit, 2NT is just a waiting bid and is forcing.

Generally speaking, the ACBL allows artificial and step responses to artificial forcing opening bids. This allows for more creativity than in most other areas of the system. This freedom extends only as far as the first response to the 1♣ opening bid so relays and shape

showing sequences may not be allowed unless they proceed along natural lines. One of our first departures from Goren Precision was to experiment with transfer responses for positive responses to 1♣, (ie. the first five bids beyond 1♦). This makes opener the declarer more often (I now believe this is not as much of an advantage as it once seemed) and it saves space on raises of all but the heart positive. It became a permanent part of the K-Club. The disadvantages are: (1) the opponents can double the artificial response for a lead; (2) Italian style asking bids become a little awkward — we have not tried to incorporate them into the system.

Playing transfer responses, you bid one under the standard Precision response, starting at 1♥ to show a spade positive. One of the biggest gains is that with minor suit positives, a trump ask can start at the 2-level. Notrump is included in the transfers so that 1♠ shows 8-10 balanced and 1NT shows clubs, and so on up to 2♦ showing hearts. After a 1♠ response, 1NT by opener shows an interest in playing in notrump but says nothing about range and does not even guarantee a balanced hand. If responder has a major he must now bid 2♣ as a Stayman inquiry and bidding proceeds naturally.

When responder makes a transfer response, opener can take the transfer which then becomes an asking bid in that suit or he can bid his own suit in which case all ensuing bids are natural. If opener doesn't ask and responder has a 6-card suit and wants to rebid it, he does so by bidding the actual suit on his second turn to bid.

If opener has a balanced minimum with support for the suit shown by partner's transfer response, he may wish to show a fit without getting into an asking sequence. He can do this in two ways: (1) He can accept the transfer and then make a simple rebid of the suit, passing control over to responder in case he wants to make a move towards slam; (2) He can jump to the 3-level in partner's suit to show a minimum balanced supporting hand with no Aces; no trump will be a possible contract. In the specific case of the 1♥ transfer response there is a third possibility—opener can jump immediately to 2♠ to pass control over to responder.

Asking Bids

The asking bids proposed originally by C.C. Wei are initiated immediately after responder's positive – opener takes the transfer to ask about responder's suit. The (temporary) assumption is that responder's suit will be the trump suit so this is called a trump ask. There are rare cases where opener will make a trump ask without intending to play in that suit, but this should be the exception, not the rule. In general, opener will have a fit for responder's suit and extra values when making a trump ask

After asking about trumps, opener can go on to ask for controls in specific suits. For many bridge players, asking bids are one of the main attractions of Precision because it is possible to obtain information available no other way. Nevertheless, asking bids come up so seldom that they should be considered a minor attraction. And they are not without hazards. One is that the information divulged is sometimes of more use to the defense. Another is that when they are improperly used they can get you into trouble.

Since asking bids come up so seldom, it is tempting to trot them out just to give them some exercise. Asking bids should not be used unless it is going to be possible to find out everything and still stop in the best contract. Asking can lead to confusion if the asker is not sure of the trump suit when the asks are initiated. The worst sin, because it affects partnership harmony, is to initiate an asking sequence and then quit before all of the relevant information is in—all asking bids are slam tries and when an asking sequence is aborted, the message should be that slam is not possible even if responder has undivulged values. If responder is not a passed hand then her hand is unlimited. If she has side aces or voids which make slam possible then she will be as annoyed as if you had passed a forcing bid.

Trump Ask

After a transfer positive showing a suit, taking the transfer asks about the length of the suit and the number of honours. The responses are:

1st Step	None of the top 3 honours, unspecified length
2nd Step	5-card suit, 1 of the top 3 honours
3rd Step	5-card suit, 2 of the top 3 honours
4th Step	6+ suit, 1 of the top 3 honours
5th Step	6+ suit, 2 of the top 3 honours
6th Step	All 3 top honours, unspecified length

These steps follow the mnemonic 012123 where 0 and 3 show number of top honours and say nothing about suit length; the first 1,2 shows a 5-card suit; the second 1,2 shows a 6+ suit.

Suit Control

After a Trump Ask, a bid in any other suit asks for honours or distributional control in that suit.

1st Step	Jxx or worse
2nd Step	Qx(x) or xx
3rd Step	K(x) or x
4th Step	A(x) or void
5th Step	AK or AQ

An aid in making the response is to remember that the step is equal to the point count of the corresponding honour.

A rebid of the suit asks whether it is control by distribution or honours. Since the desired response will almost always be honours, the first step shows distribution and the second shows an honour. The third step shows an additional honour which responder thinks might be useful.

When to Ask

Experience is the only real guide to when you should accept a transfer positive. Some specific pointers:

- Remember that you are taking control of the auction by initiating an asking sequence. You should only do this if it is likely that partner's forced responses will give you the information you need to select the final contract.
- Remember that it is very difficult to find a fit in another suit once you accept the transfer. In practice, this means that you will almost always have *a fit for partner's suit* or occasionally *a self-sufficient suit of your own* when you accept the transfer. With no fit, it will usually be better to bid your own suit (or notrump with a balanced hand). From this point, bidding will be natural.
- Remember too that if partner has not passed then partner's hand is *unlimited*. If you begin an asking sequence, it becomes very difficult for partner to show extra values. What this means in practice is that you will usually have *extra strength* when you ask. If you have a fit for partner but a minimum, it may be better to jump in partner's suit, establishing the fit and letting partner decide whether to try for slam.
- Remember that since partner's hand is unlimited, and since you are taking control, you have an obligation to follow through, once you start to ask. It can happen that you realize

part way through an asking sequence that you will not be able to discover everything you need to know. So you quit. Partner, meanwhile has extra values. Partner must assume that you quit because you discovered a fatal flaw, so extra values not enquired about are of no use. If partner's extra values are sufficient for slam, then you screwed up.

- Finally, remember that asking bids are for *slam-bidding*. Don't initiate an asking sequence on what looks like an ordinary game hand.

Refusing to Answer

Occasionally responder will refuse to answer an asking bid by jumping beyond the range of the normal responses. A jump in the same suit shows a long solid suit and denies outside values. A jump in a new suit shows a second suit of 5+ and denies values in the short suits.

Interference During an Asking Sequence

If the opponents interfere, asking bids are off. Unless an asking bid has already been made. In that case, when the opponents interfere (below the 4-level) over an ask, pass is step 1 and bids start at step 2. A double or redouble says "Let's forget the asking bids and penalize instead".

Interference over 1♣

If the opponents did not interfere then the forcing club would be much superior to other methods. Many duplicate players have discovered this and interfere on hands that they would judge insufficient for a 1 level overcall of a Standard opening. Unless you are prepared, the 1♣ opening becomes the weakest part of the system.

It is important that you be able to penalize the overcaller when it is profitable; otherwise the opponents will interfere at will. The first step in this direction is to have clearcut understandings about doubles. Unless otherwise specified, direct doubles are for penalties and balancing doubles are for takeout. Thus after 1♣-pass-1♦-1♠, double is penalties; but after 1♣-1♠-pass-pass, double is takeout. There are a number of exceptions to this rule for responder, but the only one for opener is on the auction 1♣-1 natural suit-pass-2 or 3 of same suit; double is now takeout and shows extra values. Note that this does not apply if the overcaller has made a two suited bid and RHO raises one of them. The reason is that overcaller will frequently do this with only 4-card suits and occasionally with 4-3 in those suits; furthermore, where overcaller's partner is forced to take a preference (or a transfer), it doesn't mean that they have support.

An opening bid of 1♣ announces 16 points so when RHO interferes, there is no need to say it again. After a bid by RHO, a bid by opener shows extra values or a good suit or an unusual hand (a two suiter). Except where agreed, once there has been interference, conventions and limited point ranges are no longer in force. Thus, after 1♣-pass-1♦-1♠, 1NT is no longer 16-19 balanced. It now shows 18+ and tends to be balanced. With 16-17 opener would pass. Opener probably does not have 20-21 because he could have opened 2NT but he could have a 20 point 4-2-5-2 hand.

The toughest interfering bid to cope with is the jump overcall. Opener has said nothing about distribution and there may not be enough bidding room left to show the hand. The jump overcall is also the most dangerous for the opponents because responder can penalize with lower values than opposite a standard opener. Our methods for coping with direct overcalls of 1NT or higher are simple. Double tends to show 6-7 HCP and tends to be balanced (more on

this "tends" business in a moment), a cuebid is a strong takeout (at least 3-card support for the other suits and 8+ HCP) and all other bids are natural positives. With 6-7 HCP unbalanced, responder will have to decide whether to make a positive call, or pass and bid on his next turn.

Opener will often leave the double in because, with 16-17 HCP, a game is unlikely opposite 6-7 HCP; responder should, therefore, always have at least 2 cards in overcaller's suit even if not quite as balanced as promised. When the responder doubles, he expects opener to bid as though the double shows exactly 6-7 balanced. In particular, when opener is deciding whether he should leave the double in, he must assume 6-7 HCP, and no more, from responder. If responder actually has more, this will usually be to the good, but it may depend on vulnerability (if we have game values, the potential penalty should be worth more; but if the decision is close, I prefer to go with the double for advertising purposes – Stay out of our auctions!).

So, while the double shows 6-7 HCP, there will be an occasional responding hand of 8+ HCP where a double is okay. Responder may choose to double with a balanced 8+ hand that has no stopper, cuebidding later to show the strength. Responder can also double on any 8+ hand where he hopes partner will leave the double in for penalties. With a clearcut penalty double, however, responder's best bet is a pass; opener should reopen with a takeout double unless he has a hand with which he would not leave in a penalty double.

1-level natural overcalls are not a serious problem but they can be a nuisance because they interfere with the asking bids. We have tried a number of approaches, the simplest of which is to use the above scheme (double shows 6-7 HCP and all bids positive) at all levels and this is recommended for anyone who is just starting or plays the system infrequently.

The method proposed in the Goren book is to take advantage of the extra bids available—pass and double—to show 3 ranges: 0-4, 5-8 and 9+. We simplified Goren slightly so that all bids show 5-8 HCP. Pass with 0-4 or a good hand with their suit. With 9+ HCP, double and then bid descriptively at next opportunity. The double must also be used for 5-8 point balanced hands that have no stopper so bidding after the double must be done with care. No matter what opener rebids, a new suit bid by responder, after making a double, will show 9+; with 5-8 balanced, responder can only raise or pass. With 9+ balanced, no stopper, responder must double and then cuebid (an immediate cuebid is a three suited takeout).

If the 1-level overcall is artificial (or two suited) then we give up the semi-positives: double shows a positive (8+ HCP) in the named suit, all bids are positives and pass is 0-7 HCP. Note that 1N shows 8-10 balanced and does not promise stoppers in the named suit or other implied suits.

For the most part we would prefer that the opponents stay out of our 1♣ auctions, but there is an exception. A double of the 1♣ bid gives us two extra bids and takes up no room so the double is a gift (no matter what it means). Pass is 0-5 HCP, redouble is 6-7 HCP and 1♦ is a transfer to hearts (and a positive).

Forcing bids and passes by 1♣ opener

When responder has shown a negative or semi-positive, the usual way for the 1♣ opener to force is to jump or cuebid. There are situations, however, where a pass or a low-level bid by the 1♣ opener is forcing.

If, when the opponents interfere over 1♣, opener bids a suit at the one level (or passes a one-level bid by the opponents) responder must take action with 2+ HCP (ie. always, when

responder has shown a semipositive, and usually, when responder has shown 0-7 HCP). If the auction is at the 2-level, responder must take action with 7+ HCP and with most 6 HCP hands and with weaker hands with a fit. When the opponents push opener to the 3-level, responder is not forced.

Competitive Bidding

There are three reasons for getting into the auction when the opponents have opened the bidding. Foremost is to win the auction, either because the hand belongs to your side or because you have a good save. Secondly, you may want to set up the defence by making lead directing bids or doubles. The third reason for bidding is to get in the way of the opponents; jump overcalls and bids over 1♣ and 2♣ forcing tend to be of this sort.

Most of the rules governing competitive bidding are directed towards winning the auction. It has to be this way because when the hand belongs to us as defenders we must be able to bid accurately. But we sometimes bend the rules for constructive bidding in order to direct the defense or get in the way of the opponents. In particular, in order to direct the lead, we may overcall on hands that would usually be considered too weak.

We support partner's suit on very slim values to let him know that a fit has been found; this sometimes has constructive value but in general it is a fairly safe way to make life difficult for the opponents; also, knowing that partner will show support on very weak hands warns overcaller not to compete a second time on medium strength hands.

Our styles for competitive bidding differ somewhat at match points and team play. At match points the main consideration is not the danger of the bid but how often it works to advantage. A bid that gains 10 to 200 points three times for every time it loses 1100 points may be worthwhile at match points but will lose matches at team play. We pay little attention to vulnerability at match points; a bid which gives the opponents a tough decision will be hard for them to handle whether you are vulnerable or not. This is especially true at low levels where the opponents can not be sure that doubling will be successful.

Suit Overcalls

There is a general dictum that overcalled suits should be of good quality. This is because good suits get doubled less often than ratty ones and because partner may lead the suit if you defend. It follows that the weaker your hand, the better your suit should be because the odds increase that you will be defending. It also follows that with a good hand where you hope to buy the contract, it is not so important to have a good suit; in this case you are bidding to find a fit, not to direct the lead. We tend to overcall weaker than most players but the weaker the hand, the better the suit. The main consideration with weak overcalls is the lead directing value of the bid—low level bids are doubled so seldom that danger is not a prime consideration, especially at match points.

With an overcall range that is very wide we need an artificial aid to achieve a reasonable degree of accuracy. We have given up the natural meaning for 2NT in order to have a limit raise. Not all K-Club players like this bid. A cue bid can also be used to mean the same thing but that also has its problems.

Assuming you use the 2NT bid, then in any auction where partner makes an overcall, an immediate 2N response, whether it is a jump or not, is a limit raise — this applies only to overcalls made after an opponent has made a one-level opening bid in a suit (ie. not after the opponents open with a NT bid or a weak two). An immediate raise from 1 to 2 or even from 2 to 3 shows a fit and little more. A jump raise shows just under a limit raise. A cue-bid says nothing about partner's suit, but a cue-bid followed by a raise shows a full opening bid in support of the overcalled suit.

A new suit in response to an overcall is constructive but not forcing. When the overcall is in a major then a new suit shows either 2 card support or a suit that responder can comfortably rebid when overcaller returns to his suit; since this will usually take the bidding

too high for hands that don't fit, the new suit more often shows support (except with Don who does not accept this rule). When the overcall is in a minor, a major suit bid might be made on a four card suit. The overcaller should treat the major as a five card suit because there will seldom be bidding room to find out and it will be five more often than four.

If responder to an overcall wishes to bid 2NT naturally, he is barred from doing so by our conventional agreement that 2NT shows a limit raise for the overcalled suit. The hand that is right for a natural 2NT does not occur as often as the limit raise but when it does, responder will have to make up a bid such as a new suit, a cue-bid, a jump to 3N or pass. A pass is usually the best choice because, with everybody playing negative doubles, opener is under considerable pressure to reopen, giving you a chance to bid 2NT on the second time around. The pass must be made smoothly to avoid putting pressure on partner to bid honourably and to avoid letting your opponents know that this might be the time for an unusual action.

A difficulty that arises with weak overcalls is that when the opponents get too high, responder will not know whether he can double for penalties or not. This fact will let the opponents off the hook once in a while, but if they have gotten too high it will often be a good board without doubling. The time that can really cost is when the opponents are taking a save and responder cannot judge whether that is the case or not. For this reason our overcalls are not completely undisciplined. In general they promise one trick less on defence than standard overcalls. What this boils down to is that a 1-level overcall will usually show 9 HCP but may be a King less if the suit is good; a 2-level overcall shows 12 points but may be a King less if the suit is good. Furthermore, a 1-level overcall may be made on a 4-card suit if that suit contains 3 of the top 4, or 4 of the top 6 cards and an opening bid. Responder should bid as though the overcall showed a 5-card suit.

Jump Overcalls

Preemptive jumps follow the same principles as preemptive opening bids. A jump overcall tends to deny defense and is made to get in the way of the opponents; it also suggests a possible sacrifice when the vulnerability is favorable.

Competing Over an Opening Preempt

When the opponents open with a preempt, all bidding is now constructive. Overcalls at the 2 or 3-level show sound opening bids—about a King better than our usual opener. New suits by advancer (partner of the overcaller), below game, are forcing.

When forced to bid 3N or a suit at the 4-level, overcaller will assume that partner has a balanced 6-8 HCP and bid accordingly.

No Trump Overcalls

Our 1NT overcall range at matchpoints is 12-15 HCP (except for Don and Jock who prefer the usual boring 15-18 HCP). All new suits by advancer are natural; a cue-bid asks for a 4-card major. When LHO doubles, bids by advancer are natural, redouble asks for suits up the line and pass shows indecision (note — this is different than after an opening 1N). When advancer passes, you are free to sit for the double. If LHO bids a suit then Lebensohl is on.

Bids of 3NT (whether jump or just sufficient) are always to play until the 3NT-bidder redoubles.

Takeout Doubles

Our responses to takeout doubles follow Kaplan's recommendations: a sufficient bid shows 0-8 support points; a jump shows 9-11 support points; a cue-bid shows 12+. A double or triple jump shows the same count as a single jump but with a self supporting suit. A no trump response shows 8-10 HCP if it is just sufficient and 11+ if it is a jump response.

After a takeout double of a Weak Two (in either direct or balancing seat), 2NT is Lebensohl (relay to 3♣). Immediate suit responses at the 3-level show 8+ points; 2NT followed by a 3-level bid is weak unless that suit could have been bid at the 2-level. In the case where a suit can be bid at the 2-level, a jump shows 11+ and 2NT followed by the suit at the 3-level shows 8-10 points. When the doubler refuses to take the relay to 3♣, he shows extra values but not necessarily more than 4 cards in the bid suit.

Competing Over a NT Opener

We use Cansino over 1NT openers with a small modification suggested by Harry Wilmshurst (over 2N, we use Brozel). The pivotal bid in Cansino is 2♣ showing clubs and support for 2 other suits; as described by Reese, the 2♣ bid could be made with a 3-card club suit but Harry suggested that we make it promise 4 and that has worked out very well — responder is generally in a better position to judge whether to leave it in clubs or look for a better fit.

When advancer has 3 clubs and two 4-card suits he can comfortably bid the lower of the two, knowing that a fit will be found in one of them. If he has 3 clubs and only one longer suit he will tend to leave it in clubs. A bid by advancer should be interpreted as the lower of 2 suits that he is willing to play in; on such auctions advancer might even bid a 3-card suit. Thus with a one suited hand, advancer will often pass the 2♣ bid if he can, rather than bid his long suit only to have it pulled; but there are some exceptions. An immediate 2♠ response shows long spades and is to play. If advancer is long in hearts and has 3 spades, she can bid 2♥, hoping to play there but willing to play in spades. Finally, she can bid a long red suit if she is willing to go to the 3-level either by returning to clubs or by rebidding the long suit. With a good hand, advancer can make a forcing jump in a suit or bid an invitational 2NT. The possible responses to 2NT would be: pass, raise to 3NT, or 3♣ saying "Partner, I'm weak. Pick your spot."

When the 2♣ bid is doubled, SOS-redouble is available for finding a better fit so a new suit is now to play.

When the opponents open 1NT strong, there is very little chance of game so a Cansino bid is just competing for the partscore; there is no need for forcing bids or any lower limit on point count. We play the same way at matchpoints over the 12-14 HCP NT because the chance of game is still small, but we play it as a constructive bid at teams for reasons of safety and because it is more important to get to game. Over the 10-12 HCP NT, there is a reasonable chance of game so we play that any direct Cansino bid shows opening values (and a new suit, over the natural major suit bids, is forcing).

The meaning of the double is different over weak and strong no trumps and some of the other bids change accordingly. The reason for the difference is that it is unlikely that one would want to double a strong no trump for penalties, so the double can be given a more useful meaning.

Strong NT	Double	Either both minors or both majors.
	2♣	Clubs and support for 2 other suits.
	2♦	Diamonds and support for hearts and spades.
	2♥,♠	Natural.
	2NT	Hearts and a minor.
	3♣	Clubs and spades
Weak NT	Double	13+ HCP; usually balanced.
	2♣	Clubs and support for 2 other suits.
	2♦	Both majors.
	2♥,♠	Natural.
	2NT	Both minors.
	3♦	Diamonds and spades

In response to a Cansino bid, 2NT is natural and invitational; and any jump below game is forcing.

Wonder Bids over 1♣ and 2♣ Forcing

Soon after starting to play Precision, we discovered that interfering bids, especially at the 2-level, put us at a disadvantage. It didn't take very long to realize that we ought to be returning the favour — Standard 2♣ openers would also have trouble handling interference. The problem, for them, in both cases is that the club opener says nothing about distribution so if there is interference, opener may have trouble telling all below the level of 3NT. Thus we jump over 1♣ and 2♣ forcing whenever possible; we have also played a variety of conventions that allow one to bid on hands that would normally be considered too weak and have settled on Wonder Bids.

Wonder Bids are a modified form of Exclusion Bids. The bid of a suit over 1♣ or 2♣ Forcing, is either natural or it is short and shows at least 3-card support for the other 3 suits. A Wonder Bid shows a suit of length 0-2 or 5+. If LHO passes or doubles, partner will pass with 0-2 (expecting you to be long); he will usually pass with 5+ as well (expecting you to be short but having nothing better to bid). With 3 or 4 cards in your suit, partner will bid his best of the remaining suits. You either pass or return to your long suit (and the known fit). There is one case where with 5+, in the suit that you bid, partner will not pass — if he has 4+ in a second suit he may bid the second suit knowing that you have a modest fit for that suit or a big fit for the first suit. Likewise, if partner jumps in a new suit, he promises both suits — he's just being exuberant.

With two suits, bid them naturally: when partner hears the first suit he will wonder if it is real, but when you bid the second, he will know that both are real. If you are short and are doubled, when it is your turn to bid again, redouble asks partner to choose one of the other suits (note that you can't bid a new suit yourself because that would show a 2-suiter).

If LHO bids over your Wonder Bid, partner will usually remain silent. If he does bid a new suit, he promises support for the suit that you bid. One of the main advantages of Wonder Bids is that if the opponents proceed with their own auction, they may not be able to figure out your distribution until late in the play of the hand. Note that Wonder Bids are made at the same level as the club opener, with the exception of the club bid which must be made at the next level. All jump overcalls are natural.

There are two responses to a Wonder Bid not covered above—a raise and NT. A raise shows a good 6-card suit; 1N shows 5 cards in the wonder suit and a balanced hand.

We also play Mathe over 1♣ and 2♣ forcing. Double shows the majors and tends to be constructive because double has no interference value; NT shows the minors and is not necessarily constructive.

Balancing Bids

Bids in the balancing seat do not follow any of the rules for overcalls. The balancer has a fairly good idea of how much strength is in partner's hand and bids accordingly. There are two situations where it is usually right to balance even when very weak: (1) There are two passes after the opening bid; (2) The opponents find a fit and stop at the 2-level.

Slam Bidding

On hands where it is possible to use asking bids, slams can be bid with a high degree of accuracy. For most of the other hands with slam potential, we lean heavily on a variety of ace asking bids (we may give denial cue bidding a try but have not done so yet).

Roman Key Card Blackwood

This latest development in Ace asking bids is superior to anything that we had before. It cures a problem with ordinary Blackwood and with cue bidding too—it allows one to find out about the Ace, King and Queen of trump. 4NT is always RKC unless 4♣ would be Gerber (on limited NT auctions). The trump suit, for purposes of RKC, is always the last naturally bid (or implied, as in the case of transfers) suit, unless another suit has been explicitly agreed upon. The key cards are the 4 Aces and the King of trump.

4N	5♣	0 or 3 key cards
	5♦	1 or 4 key cards
	5♥	2 or 5 key cards without the Queen of trump
	5♠	2 or 5 key cards plus the Queen of trump

After the 5 of a minor responses, the cheapest suit which cannot be trumps asks for the queen of trumps; rebidding the key suit at the cheapest level denies the queen, jumping in the key suit shows the queen and denies any side king, bidding a side suit shows the queen and the king of the bid suit, and bidding notrump shows the queen and two side kings.

Gerber

A problem that causes as much grief for established partnerships as it does for casual partnerships is knowing when 4♣ is Gerber. “Over NT” does not quite answer: Is it only over opening no trumps or does it also apply over a later no trump bid? If there has been an opening no trump, does it apply if there have been intervening bids such as Stayman or transfers? If it applies over delayed no trump bids, does that no trump bid have to be natural (as opposed to Forcing 1NT or Dormer 2NT)?

Our rule is that anytime there has been an opening, or delayed, limited 1N or 2N bid (any NT bid where 2♣ or 3♣ would be Stayman) and clubs have not been bid naturally then 4♣ is Gerber.

Roman Key Card Gerber

After a no trump bid followed by a transfer to a major, 4♣ is Roman Key Card Gerber.

We also play that a raise to 4 of a minor is Roman Key Card in that suit. In some cases this will mean giving up the invitational bid but what we gain is the ability to check for Key Cards on those numerous hands where using 4N would get us too high.

The general rule is that whenever 4+ cards in a minor have been bid explicitly or implicitly, then a raise to 4 of that minor, by partner, is Roman Key Card Gerber. There are, however, some exceptions and adjuncts.

(1) If a player has made a sign-off bid and later shows a preference for partner's minor at the 4-level, that is not an ask for aces. Thus after 1♥–2♣, 2♥–3♦, 4♣ is just a preference.

(2) If the auction has been competitive and 4 of a minor is bid over a 3-level bid by the opponents, it is not Roman Key Card.

(3) A strong jump shift in clubs or diamonds followed by 4 of the same suit is Roman Key Card. Also, after 1♦–2♦, if responder then jumps to 4♦, that is Roman Key Card, even though opener could be short.

(4) If there is an artificial strength showing bid available on the way to 4 of a minor, then immediate jumps to 4 of the minor are invitational (or preemptive) and the delayed bids of 4 of the minor are Roman Key Card.

- (a1) 2♣ 4♣ Invitational
- (a2) 2♣ 2♦
- ... 4♣ Roman Key Card

Roman Key Card Exclusion Blackwood

After a splinter, if the splinterer bids Blackwood rather than cuebidding, do not show the ace of the splinter suit.

Strong Jump Shifts

A jump shift in response to a 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid is a slam try and the contract will be played in either opener's or responder's suit (occasionally in NT). Opener bids according to the following priorities: 1. Rebid a suit that is 5+ with 2 of the top 3 honours. 2. Support responder's suit with Qxx or better. 3. Bid a concentration of values. 4. When all else fails, bid NT.

If responder now bids either of the two named suits, that sets trump. New suits are cuebids in support of the opening suit (if neither suit has been supported).

Strong jump shifts are becoming very old fashioned and most K-Clubbers now play weak jump shifts.