

REBIDS BY OPENER

After a One-Over-One Suit Response

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥

A 1NT rebid by opener shows 13-15 HCP, balanced hand (a singleton honor in responder's suit is sometimes acceptable).

A hand that has opened a three-card suit with a minimum hand that cannot raise the one-over-one response must rebid 1NT. After opening 1♣ with ♠AQ87 ♥983 ♦J76 ♣AQ9 opener rebids 1NT after a 1♦ or 1♥ response. A 1♠ rebid could result in a non-forcing 3♣ jump preference by responder, which opener would have to pass. Rebidding 1NT avoids this embarrassing situation, because a 3♣ rebid by responder is forcing after a 1NT rebid (see section 4-9, Checkback Stayman by Responder).

Should you raise partner or rebid 1NT when holding adequate trump support for his suit? With a weak 4-3-3-3 hand the 1NT rebid is preferable. With 15 HCP, however, the raise should be given if the suit is a major, since a raise is more forward-going than a 1NT rebid. Partner might give up on game over 1NT, but try for game after a raise. Always prefer a 1NT rebid when the response is 1♦.

Raise partner's heart response or rebid 1♠? With adequate trump support for hearts and a near-minimum the raise is usually preferable. One reason is that a jump preference would have to be passed, even with heart support:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♣

A 3♥ bid by opener at this point is an acceptance of the game try, forcing, since the 3♣ raise is only invitational. It's better to raise a 1♥ response with ♠AJ76 ♥K83 ♦54 ♣AJ54. If opener does bid 1♠ over 1♥ with a minimum and three hearts, as he would with ♠AJ76 ♥983 ♦54 ♣AK54, then he must pass a jump preference of 3♣ and hope that clubs is a better spot than hearts.

A simple rebid in a new suit is non-forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1♠/2♣ - not forcing	

A reverse is forcing if responder's suit is five cards or longer. It requires a good hand (at least 16 HCP), of course, since responder must go to the three level if she prefers the first suit, but it does not promise another bid if responder makes a discouraging or merely invitational rebid. See section 4-3, Rebids by Responder, for a discussion of bidding sequences after a reverse.

A jump rebid of 2NT shows 19-20 HCP, but a good suit counts for a point or two. It is not forcing, and Stoplight (section 4-12) applies. Responder passes only with a hand she is ashamed of, one that is not suitable for Stoplight.

A jump rebid of 3NT shows too much for a 2NT rebid, either in playing strength or HCP. It denies adequate trump support for responder's suit, because we open 2NT with 21 HCP and something in every suit.

Jump raises and jump rebids in the same suit are invitational, not forcing. Again, responder usually bids again if not ashamed of the original response, especially after a jump raise.

Jumps in a new suit are forcing to game.

See also section 4-7, The Double Jump Rebid in a Minor.

After a 1NT Response

Opener	Responder
1 any	1NT

-- Except for reverses, a 2♠, 2♥, or 2♦ rebid is weak.

-- Reverses by opener are strong but not forcing.

-- With an invitational hand, opener raises to 2NT or bids 2♣ (Checkback Stayman, see section 4-8) and then invites.

-- All jump rebids by opener are forcing to game.

-- Gerber is not used (4♣ is a splinter rebid, see section 4-4).

After a Single Raise

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♣

1♠	2♠
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Opener's bid of a new suit is forcing after a raise, but a rebid of 2NT is not forcing. Responder can pass 2NT with only three-card trump support for a major, a balanced hand, and a minimum. She may pass 2NT with four-card support for a minor and a minimum if her hand is suited to a notrump contract. When opener rebids 2NT a new suit by responder is not forcing, weak, with a long suit. When opener rebids in a new suit, responder's new suit bid is forcing and may only show a stopper for notrump.

A 1-2-3 sequence is invitational in a major, preemptive in a minor.

For actions when opener's RHO bids, see Section 9-2, Competitive Doubles.

After a 2NT Response

Opener	Responder
1 any	2NT

See section 3-9, Omnibus, or if responder is a passed hand, section 3-17, Responses by a Passed Hand, and section 4-12, Stoplight.

After a Strong Jump Takeout Response

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♦/2♥/2♠

Opener usually raises immediately with J10x or better in responder's suit. Don't raise immediately with three small, even with a singleton or void outside. Bid something else instead, then raise strongly. Such a delayed raise, even a jump, tends to deny the trump holding required for an immediate raise, which means that it is usually based on small cards. If the immediate single raise would be a game bid, however, you can bid something else before raising--even with good trump support:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥
4♣	4♠
5♥/6♥	

Responder realizes that opener could have better than xxx in hearts, since opener obviously had too much strength for a raise to 4♥, which could end the auction.

Opener should avoid rebidding in a new suit that lacks the ace or king. With a singleton in responder's suit and a very weak opening, a notrump bid may be preferred when there is no good suit rebid to make. A 3NT rebid after a three-level jump says, "Bad hand!" Avoid this bid if you have anything extra, because it is not forcing.

See section 3-17, Responses by a Passed Hand, for rebids following a jump takeout by a passed hand.

After a Two-Over-One Response

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣/2♦/2♥

A 2NT rebid shows extra values, about 15-16 HCP.

A 3NT rebid shows too much for a 2NT rebid.

A jump rebid in the same suit is highly invitational and seldom passed..

Reverses are forcing, but do not promise another bid in all circumstances. See section 4-3, Rebids by Responder.

A jump reverse is a splinter bid, as is a double jump in a new suit or a single jump to four of a new minor. See section 4-4, Splinter Rebids by Opener.

A new suit at the three level is forcing, and promises another bid even if responder merely rebids his suit:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
3♣	3♦ - forcing

A raise of partner's minor response is not forcing. It does show extra values, but two of the top three honors or four-card support counts as "extra values" in a pinch.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
3♣	

Opener has ♠KJ543 ♥42 ♦K32 ♣AQ2. If the response had been 2♦, he would have rebid just 2♠ with this minimum hand. See section 7-6, Marvelous Two Diamonds, for a partial solution to this problem.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
3♦	

Opener is usually strong, but could have a minimum 4-3-4-2 hand: ♠AK76 ♥A63 ♦J952 ♣82.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♦
3♦	

Opener will often have to make this bid with a minimum hand and 4-4 in the red suits. Responder should tend to bid conservatively until opener confirms a good hand.

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣
3♣	

Opener will usually have extra values, but that may consist of merely a four-card club holding.

The raise of a 2♥ response to 3♥ does not imply extra values, with which opener should bid 4♥. This is one case where a jump raise may not be all that strong. In order to make the jump raise less wide-range, the following convention ("Valentine") is recommended:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
3♥	- minimum or near-minimum hand
4♥	- an extra king or queen (15-16 HCP?)
4♦	- an extra ace (17-18 HCP?)
4♣	- an extra ace and king (19-20 HCP?)

This conventional raise strategy replaces the seldom-used splinter rebid. The 4-3-2-1 count is not a good measure for such raises, since minor suit unsupported queens and jacks may not be useful.

If responder is a passed hand, then a raise of any two-over-one response definitely shows extra values, without which opener could just pass.

A jump raise of a minor suit response is forcing to game:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
4♣	

If responder bids 4NT after this raise, he just wants to play there; he is not asking for aces. He might have a hand such as ♠3 ♥J1098 ♦QJ97 ♣AQ97, a little too good for a 1NT response.

After a Business Double

South	West	North
1♠	2♣/2♦/2♥	Dbl

See section 3-20, Business Doubles of Simple Overcalls.

After a Pass

When opener's partner passes an overcall, opener should not reopen with a double unless he is prepared for any action responder might take, including a pass.

We do not automatically reopen, but it is very unusual to sell out to a one-level overcall, especially at matchpoint scoring. The key is to look at the length in the opposing suit. With four cards, it becomes very unlikely that partner has passed much of a hand, so a sellout becomes more attractive.

Opposite a passing partner, it is unwise to make a free bid without extra values when partner has another chance to act:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	Pass	2♦
2♠			

Bidding 2♠ with a minimum hand and five spades is very dangerous, although one might bid 2♠ with six good spades and nothing extra when not vulnerable. Bidding 2♥ with a 5-5 hand is almost automatic at matchpoint scoring, however, even with a minimum.

A second-round bid of 1NT after LHO's overcall is passed around may sound like a merely balancing bid, but it shows a hand too strong for a 1NT opening.

REBIDS BY THIRD OR FOURTH-SEAT OPENER

After a New Suit Response

Opener can pass a response in a new suit, except for a 1♦ response to a 1♣, which is forcing. He will not pass with a singleton in responder's suit, so a rebid does not promise a full opening bid.

After a 1♥ response to 1♣ or 1♦, opener may sometimes rebid 1♠ with a doubleton heart, even when the opening was a little light.

With a full opening and a convenient rebid, it is usually better not to pass partner's response, even when game is unlikely. After opening 1♣ with ♠754 ♥AQ6 ♦K103 ♣A1084 in third seat, go ahead and rebid 1NT if partner says 1♠. This does not show extra values. After a 1♥ response you would pass, since you have heart support and game is unlikely. With a fourth heart you would raise 1♥ to 2♥, not so much with the thought of game as to shut out the opponents. A raise is encouraging, however, so you need some excuse for the raise: extra strength, four trumps, or ruffing values.

Opener should usually rebid with a 14 HCP hand, both to shut out the opponents and to keep the lines open to a possible game. A 14 HCP hand is sometimes passed, however. After opening 1♠ with ♠KQJ5 ♥862 ♦AJ6 ♣QJ2, you can pass any two-over-one response because game is unlikely.

It follows that any raise of a two-over-one response by a passed hand definitely shows extra values, and the rebid of 2NT is seldom shaded.

After a 2NT Response

See section 4-4, Splinter Rebids by Opener, and Section 4-12, Stoplight.

After a Jump Takeout Response

See section 3-17, Responses by a Passed Hand.

REBIDS BY RESPONDER

See section 4-5 for a discussion of splinter rebids.

Opener Has Rebid 1NT

A 2♣ rebid by responder is artificial, forcing. See section 4-9, Checkback Stayman by Responder.

Reverses by an unpassed hand are forcing for one round, but either partner can pass a discouraging bid on the next round:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♠ - forcing
2NT/3♣/3♥	- not forcing
3♦/3♠	- forcing
4♠	- good spades, good hand, heart fit

Responder may not pass a bid of the fourth suit (diamonds, above), or a raise of his suit. Responder's ruffing values in a 4-4 fit would automatically turn an invitational hand into a game-going hand. If opener makes an "unnecessary" jump raise to game in spades, he is implying very good spades, good clubs, and probably a heart fit. With high cards in the bid suits, he is probably weak in diamonds: ♠KQ32 ♥J94 ♦632 ♣AK6 Yes, the 1NT rebid is correct. A three-card club opener must rebid 1NT if he doesn't raise a one-level response. Responder can picture just this sort of hand for opener, since the only reason for not rebidding 1♠ with good spades is a 4-3-3-3 hand.

If responder raises opener after reversing, that is forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♠
2NT	3♣ - forcing
	3♥ - not forcing (implying 4=6 in spades-hearts)

With only invitational strength for a club raise, responder must bid 2♣ (Checkback Stayman) over 1NT, then 2♠, and then make the invitation after bidding 2♠. If opener had rebid 2♣ instead of 1NT, responder's raise would also be forcing. He must therefore just bid 3♣ instead of 2♠ with a hand such as ♠A1054 ♥KJ763 ♦5 ♣Q86

Any other bid at the two level is weak, even in a new suit:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♣ - Checkback Stayman
	2♦/2♥/2♠ - are weak bids

The 2♥ preference denies adequate trump support for hearts, promises five spades and usually includes a minor suit singleton. Opener can go back to spades with three spades and four hearts. With a good heart

raise, or only four spades, responder must not use this sequence. He must either raise hearts immediately or pass 1NT.

All jumps to three in a suit by an unpassed hand are forcing. To invite game, bid 2♣ (Checkback Stayman), then make the invitation.

A raise of 1NT to 2NT shows 11-12 HCP, counting a good suit as a point, and upgrading any honor(s) in opener's suit.

Opener Has Rebid 2NT (Non-Jump)

-- Opener's 2NT rebid after a two-over-one response is not forcing. If responder rebids his suit, that is a warning that his suit will not run unless opener has a fit (and that he had a weakish two-over-one response). Any other suit rebid by responder is forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2NT	3♦ - weak, long non-solid suit
	3♣/3♥/3♠/4♦ - forcing
	4♣ - Gerber
	4♥ - splinter, long diamonds, slam interest
	4♠ - strong spades, slam interest
	4NT - natural, invitational

See section 4-5, Splinter Bids by Responder. The 4♠ bid implies good diamonds and spades, with weakness in clubs and hearts. The 4♥ bid implies a hand that was not quite good enough for a 3♦ response on the first round: ♠Q2 ♥7 ♦KQJ7642 ♣A65. Opener signs off with 4NT when holding secondary strength in hearts

-- When opener bids 2NT after a raise, responder can pass with a minimum hand and a tolerance for notrump, or can raise to 3NT. With four-card support for opener's major he will generally sign off at the three level with a minimum hand, or bid game with a maximum. With four-card support for opener's minor, he may choose to remain in notrump with a balanced hand, either passing 2NT or raising to 3NT. A new suit at the three level is a weak signoff, usually showing six cards if it's a minor, five cards if the suit is hearts.

When opener rebids 2NT after a spade raise, a jump to 4♥ is natural, not a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
2NT	Pass - weak raise, three spades
	3♣/3♦ - weak raise, three spades, 5 or 6-card suit
	3♥ - weak raise, three spades, 5 or 6 hearts
	3♠ - weak raise, four spades
	3NT - good raise, three spades
	4♥ - good raise, three spades, 5 or 6 hearts

A simple raise hand would hardly have strength for splinter bid over the 2NT rebid. Note that after raising, new suits by responder are not forcing.

Opener Has Jumped to 2NT

Responder should not pass unless he is ashamed of his first response and thinks 2NT is the safest spot. See Stoplight, section 4-12.

4NT is a natural raise, Boland (section 5-6) applies.

A jump to 5♣ is the Miller convention (section 5-7).

A jump rebid in a new suit other than clubs or spades is a splinter bid. See section 4-5, Splinter Rebids by Responder.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
2NT	4♥ - splinter bid
	4♣ - Gerber
	4♠ - mild notrump invitation
	4NT - stronger notrump slam try

The 4♠ notrump slam try implies that responder needs a good three-card fit (Qxx or better) in his diamond suit to make it useful for a notrump slam. Otherwise responder would bid 4NT to try for slam.

Opener Has Jumped to 3NT

4NT is a natural raise, Boland (section 5-6) applies.

A jump to 5♣ is the Miller convention (section 5-7).

Responder has a weak hand in this auction:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3NT	4♥

This is the weak hand previously described: ♠Q8743 ♥986 ♦3 ♣K853. With a hand that was too good for a 2♥ raise, responder must find another bid at this point because slam would be possible. If opener has an unlikely 2=4=4=3 hand, he must pass or bid 4♠. The 4♥ bid is not forcing, of course, nor is this 4♥ bid:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
3NT	4♥ - natural, not Super Gerber
	4♦ - natural
	4♣ - Gerber

Although 4♥ is not forcing, responder should have a hand at least as good as ♠AJ763 ♥K9873 ♦42 ♣3, because opener is allowed to bid higher with a good fit. With a weaker hand, responder should just pass 3NT and hope for the best. This auction is an exception to the general rules that (1) a bid of the lowest unbid suit other than clubs is Super Gerber (see section 6-10), and (2) a non-jump 4♣ bid is natural.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
3NT	4♣/4♥ - natural
	4♦ - Super Gerber
	4♠ - artificial notrump raise
	4NT - notrump raise

The 4♠ notrump raise implies that responder's hearts need a good fit to be useful for slam (e.g., five cards to only one of the top four honors). This may help opener in deciding whether to go past 4NT.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
3NT	4♣/4♦ - natural, forcing
	4♥ - natural, weak, long suit
	4♠ - super Gerber

Super Gerber takes preference over the artificial 4♠ notrump raise.

Opener Has Raised

A return to opener's first suit is forcing for one round, unless the raise was made over a double:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♠	3♣ - forcing, game try at least

Don't make a 1♥ or 1♠ response with a weak major and a limit raise sort of hand. Just respond 3♣ originally or you may find yourself in a bad 4-3 spade contract. Also see section 3-15, Two-For-One Responses. In one bid they describe a hand with a four-card major and a limit raise for opener's minor.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣ - not forcing, invitational	

The 3♣ bid does not indicate a spade psych, only that North has a four-card spade suit. North has a good hand, but not a game-going hand in view of the failure to redouble. South can pass with three spades and nothing extra. North could show this hand in one bid if using 2-for-1 responses.

Opener Has Changed Suits Minimally

-- When the original response was 1NT, a new suit by responder is a signoff if the suit is lower ranking than opener's first suit:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♦	2♥/3♣ - signoff, long suit

If the new suit bid is higher ranking than opener's first suit, the bid shows strength in the suit and a raise of opener's second suit:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♦	2♠ - good spade strength, good diamonds

Responder has values to raise opener's second suit. The 2♠ bid may change opener's mind about playing notrump.

Also see section 4-8, Checkback Stayman by Opener.

-- When the original response was a suit response and opener's rebid is a new suit at the one level, or a lower ranking suit at the two level (not a reverse), responder's rebid of the same suit is a weak signoff even after a two-over-one response:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♥	3♦ - weak, not encouraging

A jump preference is invitational, not forcing, even by a two-over-one responder:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♥	3♠ - invitational, not forcing

A 2♠ bid would be a preference, not a raise, equivalent to passing 2♥. Accordingly, the 3♠ bid is simply a raise, not forcing. If responder has three-card support and wants to force in spades, he must bid 3♣ (Fourth Suit Artificial, see section 4-10) and then raise. With four-card support he must jump to 4♠, a sequence that implies 5-4-2-2 with strength concentrated in the two suits: ♠KQ42 ♥95 ♦AQJ76 ♣32. With scattered strength responder would raise spades immediately instead of bidding 2♦.

As said before, a simple preference in a major denies adequate trump support:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♥	2♠ - weak preference

The 2♠ preference is equivalent to passing 2♥ when hearts are preferred but cannot be raised. Responder has ♠J3 ♥4 ♦Q1087 ♣AJ7632. With adequate trump support for spades and a weak hand, the response is 2♠, not 2♣. With an invitational hand, the rebid is 3♠, not 2♠. A bid of the fourth suit is Fourth Suit Artificial (section 4-10).

A raise of opener's second suit from one to two shows 7-10 points, counting distribution. Pass with less. A jump to three is invitational:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	2♠ - 7 to 10 points
	3♠ - invitational, 11-12 points

-- When the original response was a raise, opener's new suit bid is forcing. Responder is expected to clarify his raise in some way. If the raised suit is a major, bidding something else tends to show an original three-card raise. Responder must not go beyond three of the raised suit without extra values:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
3♣	3♦/3♥ - five or six cards, minimum spade raise, not forcing
	3♠ - signoff, weak
	3NT - good raise, red strength
	4♠ - good raise

In this case responder can feel free to jump to 4♠ with only three-card support, since opener must have five spades in view of the club rebid.. The 3NT bid is unlikely, perhaps based on a hand like ♠Q87 ♥QJ108 ♦QJ108 ♣J2. Splinter rebids by responder are discussed in section 4-5.

Opener Has Rebid a Suit Minimally

Responder's rebid of the same suit is a weak signoff at matchpoint scoring. In a IMP match it is better to pass a hopeless hand than to "rescue" partner, so responder's rebid of the same suit is mildly encouraging. ("Mildly," since a jump rebid in the same suit is not forcing.)

A reverse by responder is forcing unless she is a passed hand. Other new suit rebids are also forcing by an unpassed hand, except for 2♥:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♣	2♦ - forcing
	2♥ - not forcing

At matchpoint scoring the 2♥ bid might be a stretch. At IMP scoring it has to be regarded as invitational, so responder must pass 2♣ with a weak 5-5 in the majors.

If responder raises opener's suit to the three level after reversing, that is not quite forcing if opener has failed to support one of responder's suits:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
2♦	2♠
2NT	3♦ - semi-forcing - ♠AJ76 ♥KJ532 ♦Q76 ♣4
	4♦ - forcing

However:

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♣	3♦ - forcing, in view of the two-over-one response

Opener Has Jumped in the Same Suit

A jump rebid in the same suit is not forcing, even after a two-over-one response. Responder bids again, however, unless she is ashamed of her first bid and is short in opener's suit.

If responder does not pass this jump, the partnership is usually committed to game, although responder might pass a third bid in the same suit:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
3♣	3♠ - forcing!
4♣	Pass is permitted

Responder has ♠KJ976 ♥5432 ♦Q87 ♣6 and elects to pass 4♣. He rightly bid 3♠ after his legitimate 1♠ response, because opener could have spade support. When this doesn't eventuate, he gives up.

Opener Has Reversed

-- After a 1NT response, reverses are not forcing, nor do they promise another bid, and responder's preference bid of opener's first suit is weak. "A preference is not a raise," as is a 2NT bid, which is not forcing. However, a raise of opener's second suit is forcing and shows four-card support. With a weak hand responder can pass instead of raising.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1NT
2♥	2NT/3♣ - not forcing, weak
	2♠ - maximum, spades stopped but not diamonds
	3♦ - maximum, diamonds stopped but not spades
	3♥ - forcing (pass 2♥ with four hearts and a very weak hand)
	3NT - maximum, spades and diamonds stopped

-- After a one-over-one response, reverses are forcing only when responder has bid a five-card or longer suit. Opener can pass responder's discouraging rebid of 2NT or return to opener's first suit, both of which show weakness and deny five cards in the original response suit. Having responded 1♠ to 1♣ with 5-5 in the majors, responder must rebid 2♠, not 2♥ (which would deny five spades), when opener reverses with 2♦. A later bid in the fourth suit, hearts in this case, shows five cards in the suit.

A bid of the fourth suit denies five cards in the major and shows a good raise of opener's first suit. Simply bidding opener's first suit is therefore a weak signoff, as is a 2NT bid. However, a delayed bid in the fourth suit after showing five cards in the major shows five cards in that suit.

A raise of reverser's second suit is forcing, showing four-card support.

Responder's jump rebid in the same suit is forcing to game, showing a fairly solid six-card or longer suit. Opener might raise with a singleton honor if he has no better bid.

There are four possible reverse bids after a 1/1 response in a suit.

(1)	Opener	Responder
	1♣	1♠
	2♦	2♥ - good club raise, denies five spades
		2♠ - five spades
		2NT/3♣ - weak, not invitational, not forcing
		3♦ - forcing, 4+ card support (pass with a very weak hand)
		3NT - 8-10 HCP
		4NT - 11+ HCP

If opener rebids 3♣ after responder shows a good club raise, he has a minimum reverse and responder can pass. With more than a minimum he should find another bid. Responder, of course, can continue the bidding if he thinks game or slam is promising, and opener's response to 2♥ will help in that effort.

(2)	Opener	Responder
	1♣	1♥
	2♦	2♠ - good club raise, denies five hearts
		2NT/3♣ - weak, not invitational, not forcing
		3♦ - forcing
		3♥ - forcing

Lacking five cards in hearts and with no support for either of opener's suits, responder must have four spades when he bids 2NT. If opener has a little something in spades, maybe just a high singleton honor, notrump should be a good contract.

(3)	Opener	Responder
	1♣	1♠
	2♥	3♦ - good club raise, denies five spades

Since this means getting past 3♣, a "good raise" should be a little stronger and an immediate club preference may not be extremely weak.

(4)	Opener	Responder
	1♦	1♠
	2♥	3♣ - good diamond raise, denies five spades

Suppose responder, having rebid his suit, doesn't pass opener's third bid. Usually his next bid promises nothing extra:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♦	2♥ - five or more hearts
2♠	2NT/3♣ are both weak, not forcing
	3♦ is weak but promises four cards
	3♥ - long hearts, weak hand, not forcing
	3♠ asks opener to bid 3NT

The weak bids are not forcing. Opener's 2♠ bid implies a 3-1-4-5 shape with perhaps Axx in spades (wanting responder to bid notrump in case he has the queen or jack). Responder raises spades instead of bidding notrump when he likes notrump but has no desire to play the hand (e.g., with J109 in spades).

If opener has shown three-card support for responder's proclaimed five-card suit, then responder's bid in any other suit or notrump is forcing:

-- After a two-over-one response, reverses are forcing, but may not be as strong as a reverse following a one-over-one response. Opener will not pass responder's, 2NT rebid, rebid of his suit, or raise of opener's second suit, but may pass a preference for his first suit if it is diamonds. As always, a bid of the fourth suit shows a good raise of opener's first suit. Responder must rebid his suit if it has five cards or more.

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣
2♥	2♠ - good diamond raise (fourth suit), only four clubs
	2NT - forcing
	3♣ - forcing, five or more clubs
	3♦ - weak preference, not forcing
	3♥ - forcing
	3♠ - spade suit, forcing
	4♣ - forcing

The 3♦ bid is a weak preference, despite the two-over-one response: ♠843 ♥5 ♦J83 ♣AQJ976.

A heart preference in the following auction is forcing, however.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣/2♦
2♠	3♥ - forcing
	4♥ - good hearts, good minor, maybe a spade honor

With a weak hand responder presumably would have raised hearts on the first round, so both heart rebids imply a hand that was too good for that action.

Opener Has Escalated

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
3♣ - forcing	

A new suit at the three level is not only forcing, but promises another bid if responder makes a minimum call (such as 3♠ or 3♦, in this auction). This is called an “escalation” because opener has gone to the three level. If the response was one-over-one, however, and the three-level bid arises because of an opposing bid, the new suit is forcing only if it is a reverse:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♥
3♣ - not forcing			

South needs a fairly good hand to bid at the three level, but may have bid only 2♣ if East had passed. It is not treated as an escalation. Accordingly, a 3♠ bid by North at this point could be passed.

A reverse at the three level calls for the usual reverse understandings:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
3♦ - forcing			

Presumably South would have reversed over the 1♠ bid, so the usual reverse understandings apply. North must bid 3♠ (forcing) with five or more, without which 4♣ is a weak preference, 3♥ (fourth suit) is a good club raise, and 4♦ is forcing (since responder could pass with four and a very weak hand).

Opener Has Made a Jump Shift

A jump shift (jump in a new suit) by opener is forcing to game.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠/1NT
3♦ - game-forcing	

A 3♥ bid by responder may be a mark-time bid with aa

Opener Has Raised a Strong Jump Takeout

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♣
4♣	4♠

The 4♠ bid is not quite forcing. Responder has an absolute minimum for the jump takeout, or she would have found some other call. Her hand: ♠AQJ ♥K6 ♦976 ♣AQ983 Opener can pass with a minimum hand such as ♠K10876 ♥54 ♦AK ♣J1074. If the K♦ and J♣ were interchanged, however, she would have enough

of a fit to cue bid 5♦, whereupon responder can bid 6♣ (both to protect the king of hearts from the opening lead and to suggest a safer slam).

Opener Has Passed

When opener has passed over an intervening bid, a new suit bid at the one level is not forcing:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♦	1♥
Pass	Pass	1♠	- not forcing

This is also true at the two level if responder has not reversed:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
Pass	Pass	2♥	- not forcing
		3♥	- one-round force

After the jump rebid, if opener can only bid 3♠ or 4♣, responder might pass.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	2♦
Pass	Pass	2♠	- one-round force (reverse)

SPLINTER REBIDS BY OPENER

A double jump rebid in a new suit, and certain "unnecessary" single jumps in a new suit, are splinter bids. Splinter bids can only be made at the three or four level. Similar bids at the five level are asking bids, as are bids one level higher than a splinter bid. See section 6-5 for a discussion of asking bids and responses.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
3♥/3♠	- splinter bid
4♥/4♠	- asking bid

After a New Suit Response

If the response to an opening bid was in a new suit, the requirements for a splinter bid are:

- Strong trump support for partner's suit, usually Qxxx or better
- More than just game-going strength--a little extra
- A singleton in the splinter suit, preferably not an ace, not a void
- Strength in the unbid suit, at least a queen

Lacking any of these requirements, it is usually better to avoid splintering.

Since reverses are forcing on a two-over-one responder, a jump reverse is "unnecessary" and is therefore a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
3♠	- splinter

A new suit at the three level is also forcing on a two-over-one bidder, so a jump to the four level is a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
4♥	- splinter, not a two-suited hand

Although the remaining unbid suit is usually three cards long in a 5-4-3-1 hand, it could be a doubleton in a 6-4-2-1 hand. A 4-4-4-1 shape is generally inadvisable, because there could be a good contract in the unbid four-card suit. It may be better to make a forcing bid in that suit, then raise

partner. By including a jump somewhere along the line, you promise a singleton or void in the fourth suit:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
3♣	3♦
4♠ - four spades, short hearts	

A splinter bid is a mild slam try at least, not just a game-going hand. With barely enough for game, or weak trumps, don't make a splinter bid. The alternative will usually be a normal forcing new suit bid followed by a jump to game. The same is true if the short suit is a void. Splinter bids based on voids are undesirable because partner will regard an ace in that suit as an asset when it is practically worthless. You can splinter with a void, however, if the hand is strong enough to follow with a 4NT bid (Exclusion Blackwood--see section 6-6)

Splinter bids are used in competition, but then do not require more than mere game-going strength. With the opponents bidding, it is important to get the hand described before a preemptive raise shuts out communication. A lower bid in the splinter suit must be forcing if the higher bid is to be recognized as a splinter bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	2♥
4♣ - natural, because 3♣ is not forcing			

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
3♥ - normal jump shift (2♥ not forcing)			
4♦/4♥ - splinter			

A splinter bid in an opposing suit must be a single jump; a non-jump is just a cue bid and a double jump is an asking bid. Splintering in the remaining unbid suit (4♥, in the last sequence) tends to deny first or second round control of the opposing suit.

When responder is known to have at least a good five-card suit, it is possible to make the splinter bid with only three-card support. Opener's hand should be very powerful, and this splinter is usually made only because the opponents are crowding the bidding:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	2♠	Pass
4♥ - splinter			

South has ♠KJ3 ♥A ♦AKJ763 ♣52. This splinter warns partner of at least two club losers, so North won't try for slam with ♠A109876 ♥K32 ♦Q4 ♣64, but would do so (via Roman Key Card Blackwood) with one less club.

Instead of playing 4♣ and 4♦ rebids after a 2♥ response to a 1♠ opening as splinter bids, the Valentine convention is preferable:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
3♥	- minimum hand
4♥	- extra king or queen
4♦	- heart raise, extra ace
4♣	- heart raise, extra ace and king

With 3♥ not forcing, Valentine is necessary to avoid too wide a range for a 4♥ jump raise.

After a 1NT Response

If the response to the opening bid 1NT, a double jump to four in a new suit is a splinter bid showing a super hand. Gerber is not used after a 1NT response (or rebid).

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
4♣/4♦/4♥	- splinter, slam try

Opener has a hand like: ♠AQJ8742 ♥6 ♦AQ8 ♣A3. This splinter must be a double jump (or a single jump cue bid):

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♦
4♣	- natural (3♣ not forcing here)		
4♦/4♥	- splinter, slam try		

The 4♥ splinter bid denies first or second round control of diamonds: ♠AKQ10876 ♥9 ♦76 ♣AQ3
With five controls, this hand is too good for a NAMYATS 4♦ opening (see section 7-4).

After a 2NT Response

A jump to 4♦ is the only splinter bid used after an Omnibus 2NT Response. See section 3-10, Omnibus.

After a 2NT response by a passed hand (which is not Omnibus), a jump to the four level in a new suit is a splinter bid, except for a Gerber ask:

Opener	Responder
--	Pass
1♠	2NT
4♣	- Gerber
4♦/4♥	- splinter bid, long/strong spades

See section 4-12, Stoplight, for other rebids following a non-forcing jump to 2NT.

After a Single Raise

A new suit by opener is forcing after a single raise, so an "unnecessary" jump is a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♣
3♥ - splinter	(2♥ forcing)

Opener has ♠AQ6 ♥5 ♦KJ7 ♣AK8743. If responder has something like ♠6 ♥J93 ♦AQ652 ♣9652, a slam is almost a laydown.

This splinter bid is used in competition, but only when the situation is quite clear. A new suit rebid over RHO's overcall is a forcing game try, so an "unnecessary" jump is a splinter bid:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	2♣	2♦
2♥/2♠	- forcing		
3♥/3♠/4♦	- splinter bids		

The 3♥ and 3♠ splinter bids tend to deny first or second round control of diamonds.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♥	2♠
3♣/3♦	- forcing, game try		
4♣/4♦	- splinter bids		

After A Limit Raise

A jump to the four level over partner's limit raise is a splinter bid, which means that the following is the only splinter possibility after a limit raise of a major:

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥
4♠	- splinter, strong slam try
5♣/5♦	- asking bid (see section 6-5)

More splinters are available after a minor suit limit raise:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♣
4♦/4♥/4♠	- splinter bids

Opener	Responder
1♦	3♦
4♥/4♠ - splinter bids	

Other Splinter Bids

Splinter bids apply after a forcing club raise, but must be a jump to the four level:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♦ - forcing club raise
4♥/4♠ - splinter	
4♦ - natural bid (non-jump)	

When opener's third bid is a jump in a new suit, the splinter is obvious:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
3♣	3♦
4♥ - splinter	

Opener has ♠A3 ♥5 ♦AKJ876 ♣AQ83. In this case it is opener's suit that is agreed. Opener cannot bid 3♠ to promise a singleton heart, because that would show three-card spade support.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♥	3♣
4♦ - splinter	

In this case opener has limited his hand with the 2♥ bid, so is free to splinter with ♠J3 ♥AK8654 ♦5 ♣KQ52.

SPLINTER REBIDS BY RESPONDER

Responder can also splinter on his second or third bid, using a double jump rebid in a new suit or an "unnecessary" single jump. The splinter shows strong slam interest and a singleton in the splinter suit. In competitive auctions responder may have mere game-going strength. Splinter bids can only be made at the three or four level. Similar bids at the five level are asking bids, described in section 6-5.

There are seven types of splinter bid by responder:

1) An "unnecessary" single jump to the three or four level (even in opener's minor) by responder after a raise by opener:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
2♥	3♠/4♣/4♦ - splinter

A 2♠, 3♣, or 3♦ bid would be forcing, so the "unnecessary" jump is a splinter. For the 4♣ bid, responder has a singleton club and slam interest: ♠A87 ♥KJ843 ♦A983 ♣4. Opener signs off in 4♥ with ♠Q2 ♥A765 ♦KJ52 ♣KQJ. With ♠K76 ♥AQ6 ♦KJ1074 ♣98 opener bids 6♦ and responder corrects to 6♥.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
3♦	4♥ - splinter

2) A jump reverse after a notrump rebid by opener:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	3♠/4♣ - splinter, diamond support
	4NT - natural raise

Gerber is not used over a 1NT rebid by either partner. A 2♠ reverse would be forcing, so the "unnecessary" jump is a splinter bid, showing great support for opener's suit. For the 3♠ splinter, responder has ♠3 ♥AQ43 ♦A9763 ♣K86. A 3♣ bid would be forcing (in accordance with the rules of Checkback Stayman--see section 4-9), but a 3♠ splinter bid describes the hand better. With five hearts responder would have responded 3♠ originally (see Section 3-8, Splinter Responses to a Minor Opening). This splinter therefore implies a four-card heart suit.

3) A jump to four in an unbid suit other than spades, or in opener's minor, when opener has rebid notrump (except that 4♣ over a 2NT bid is Gerber):

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠	1♣/1♦	1♥
1NT	4♣/4♦/4♥ - splinters	2NT	4♦ - splinter 4♣ - Gerber 4NT - notrump raise 4♠ - artificial raise

Gerber does not apply over 1NT rebids by opener or responder. Responder may be interested in slam with either suit as trumps, so opener bids the cheaper one to sign off. This splinter cannot be made in clubs if opener has rebid 2NT, because a 4♣ bid is Gerber in that case.

The 4♠ artificial notrump raise implies that responder's hearts need a good fit to be useful for a notrump slam (e.g., he has five hearts with only one of the top three honors). The usefulness of this conventional notrump raise precludes its use as a splinter bid.

4) A double jump after opener rebids his suit:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♣	3♦/3♥ is natural 4♦/4♥ - splinter

Even though a 2♦ rebid would be forcing and 2♥ not, for memory's sake we treat both bids the same. The splinters show good support for opener's suit and, as usual, slam interest.

In the following sequence, responder denies a singleton heart, which responder could have shown in a number of ways, including a splinter bid of 4♥ over 2♠. See section 4-6, Non-Jump Splinters, for another way.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♣
3NT	4♠

5) A jump in the fourth suit at the four level (not the three level):

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠ - spade suit 2♠ - Fourth Suit Artificial 3♠ - natural

The 3♠ bid has to be a natural game-forcing reverse, since 2♠ is FSA in this sequence. See section 4-10, Fourth Suit Artificial. Splinter bid examples:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣	1♠	2♥
3♦	4♥	3♣	4♦

These are splinter bids. Remember that three-level jumps in the fourth suit are not splinter bids. When a non-jump bid would be Fourth Suit Artificial, a jump has to be natural.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2♦	2♥ - FSA
	3♥ - natural
	4♥ - splinter in support of diamonds (or spades)

6) A jump in a new suit, when responder has previously made a non-forcing raise and then hears a new suit (not a notrump bid) from opener:

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♣
2♦	3♥ - splinter

Responder has a good hand and a great fit: ♠642 ♥3 ♦Q1087 ♣KQ542.

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♣
3♦	4♥

Responder has ♠J107 ♥3 ♦Q1032 ♣AQJ87. He could not show a major suit stopper, so he might as well make a splinter bid. Whether opener is merely showing a diamond stopper or has a diamond suit, this hand is well described by the splinter bid. If opener has ♠AK3 ♥98 ♦AK4 ♣K9652, he can bid the odds-on club slam. With the majors reversed, he would stop at five.

The following jump is not a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
2NT	4♥ - natural bid

Responder has a good spade raise, three spades, and five or six hearts. He must jump to 4♥ because 3♥, showing a weak three-card spade raise and five or six hearts (♠Q32 ♥K9873 ♦5 ♣9862), would not be forcing. See section 4-3, Rebids by Responder, for more on this subject. Had opener rebid 3♣ or 3♦, 4♥ would be a splinter bid, implying a good fit with opener's second suit.

7) A jump reverse by a two-over-one responder

8) A jump to four in opener's first-bid-minor after opener bids a new suit:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠	1♣	1♥
2♦	4♣	1♠	4♣

These splinters show at least four-card support for opener's second suit, plus interest in slam. Note that you can splinter in a suit bid by opener only if it is an unrebid minor, and only at the four level. To make a forcing raise of opener's minor, bid the fourth suit (Fourth Suit Artificial, section 4-10) and then raise.

NON-JUMP SPLINTERS

What is the meaning of the 4♣ bid in these auctions?

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♥
3♠	4♣

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♦	3♠
4♣	

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	3♦
3♥	4♣

Whatever the meaning, 4♣ can hardly show a suit. The natural bid with a 5-4-4-0 or 4-4-4-1 hand is 3NT, not 4♣.

Perhaps 4♣ is a vague sort of cue bid, accepting partner's suit as trump. If so, the bid implies short clubs. Let's make a definite rule that the 4♣ bid *promises* short clubs, and see if any benefit results.

There is a maxim that the bidding of three suits, including a jump, promises a singleton or void in the fourth suit. This generally accepted rule is a liability with many hands. Marshall Miles gives this example: You open 1♥ with ♠K3 ♥AKQ76 ♦72 ♣AKQ4, and the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3♠
?	

Marshall says that a raise to 4♠ would promise a singleton or void in diamonds, so he would reluctantly bid 4♣ instead. A better way to handle this situation is to say that a 4♠ bid would *deny* short diamonds, with which opener bids 4♦. This would be a non-jump splinter, showing something like: ♠K76 ♥AKQ76 ♦4 ♣AQ104.

Non-jump splinters are defined as fourth suit bids at the four or five level, when partner has bid and rebid just one suit. He may have bid notrump somewhere along the way, but his only suit bids have been in a single suit. There is just one situation in which a non-jump splinter may be made at the three level:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
3♣	3♥
3♠	

The 3♠ bid is ambiguous. Opener could have either of these two hands:

1) ♠A32 ♥7 ♦AKQ32 ♣AQJ3

2) ♠7 ♥A32 ♦AKJ32 ♣AQJ3

Opener will clarify her hand on the next round. Responder assumes for the moment that opener has short hearts, as in hand 1), and bids accordingly. *Responder* cannot make a non-jump splinter bid at the three level, because fourth suit bids by responder at that level are Fourth Suit Artificial (see section 4-10).

More examples:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥
3♠	4♣
4♠	5♠

Responder denies a singleton or void in diamonds, with which he would bid 5♦, not 5♠.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2NT	3♦
3♠	4♠

Responder does not have short hearts, which would call for a 4♥ bid.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
2♠	3♣
3NT	4♦

Responder has a singleton or void in diamonds, plus spade support. With two diamonds, she would bid 4♠.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♠	3♣
5♣	

Opener has ♠AK87 ♥AQJ32 ♦32 ♣K10. In this auction the singleton-showing bid in diamonds would be a standard (i.e., jump) splinter bid of 4♦.

The rule that the bidding of three suits, including a jump, promises a singleton or void in the fourth suit would still apply in other situations:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3NT
4♠	

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3♥
3♠	

In these auctions opener promises short diamonds, and a 4♦ bid instead of the spade raise would not show spade support and short diamonds. Responder has not bid and rebid just one suit, so the necessary conditions for a non-jump splinter are lacking.

THE DOUBLE JUMP REBID IN A MINOR

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥/1♠	1♣	1♦/1♥/1♠
4♦		4♣	

These double jump rebids in a minor, at the four level, after a one-over-one response, show:

-- Good four-card support for responder, slam interest.

-- Strength concentrated in the two suits, no secondary strength outside. Remember that splinter bids imply strength in *three* suits.

Typical hand for rebidding 4♣ after a 1♠ response to a 1♣ opening: ♠AQ83 ♥42 ♦6 ♣AKQ1083

A singleton ace in an unbid suit is okay, but usually no outside ace. The idea is that you want partner to discount secondary strength in the side suits. What you need for slam are not outside queens and jacks, and an outside king is of doubtful value.

This treatment applies to double jumps only, not to single jumps:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♥
4♦			

4♦ - does not show spade support

CHECKBACK STAYMAN BY OPENER

Have you noticed how often partner's 1NT response to your opening bid leaves you with a rebid problem? To begin with, you may want to sign off, invite game, or force to game--but there is no way to do all three. For instance, with ♠AJ6432 ♥KQ3 ♦A10 ♣AJ you must rebid 3NT or 4♠ when partner responds 1NT to your 1♠ opening. You would like to bid a forcing 3♠ to give partner a choice, but 3♠ is not forcing.

Perhaps you have a good two-suited hand: ♠AQ942 ♥AQJ76 ♦4 ♣J2. After opening 1♠ and getting a 1NT response, should you jump to 3♥ or bid a weak 2♥? You would like to make an invitational 3♥ bid, but 3♥ is forcing. A jump in a new suit might be played as invitational, but then what would you do with ♠AQ1083 ♥AQJ2 ♦A4 ♣Q8? You would have to bid 3NT, perhaps missing a better game in a major.

Good bidders will open 1♥ with ♠A103 ♥AKJ3 ♦108743 ♣4, both as a lead directing bid and to avoid the rebid problem created by a 2♣ response to a 1♦ opening (the hand is not strong enough for a 2♥ reverse). After partner's 1NT response, however, a 2♦ rebid invariably fetches a 2♥ preference from responder, who has Qx of hearts and three diamonds (figuring opener for five hearts). How can we keep this from happening? Similar problems arise with hands such as ♠AKJ3 ♥A103 ♦J9752 ♣4 or ♠AQJ3 ♥J9542 ♦3 ♣AJ5 (both are 1♠ openings) or ♠2 ♥AK109 ♦A43 ♣J5432 (a 1♥ opening).

Another problem: You open 1♠ with ♠AK8742 ♥AQ93 ♦76 ♣4, and when partner bids 1NT you rebid 2♠ or 3♠, depending on how you feel that day. If partner has four or more hearts you are probably going to play in the wrong suit. If you rebid 2♥ instead, partner is likely to pass with two spades and three hearts. She might also pass with four hearts and a weak hand, perhaps missing an easy game. You cannot rebid 3♥ over 1NT, because the hand is not strong enough for a game-forcing jump.

The remedy for all these problems, and more, is to play all jump rebids by opener after a 1NT response as forcing to game. With an invitational hand, opener rebids an artificial 2♣, which we have named Checkback Stayman (CS), then makes an invitational bid. Rebids of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ are weak, except for a reverse (two-level bid in a suit higher than the one opened), which is strong but not forcing. Opener may also rebid 2♣ with certain weak hands, seeking to find the safest landing spot. A raise of 1NT to 2NT is natural, invitational.

Warning: DO NOT USE CHECKBACK STAYMAN IF A REVERSE OR OTHER NATURAL BID WILL SUFFICE!

One advantage of CS is that you can bypass a weak four-card major suit, responding 1NT with a notrumpish hand such as ♠Q76 ♥J632 ♦K72 ♣K107 or even ♠9832 ♥10876 ♦Q2 ♣AQ10 when the opening is, say, 1♦. Such hands usually play just as well in notrump if opener's hand is also balanced, even if opener has four cards in your major. Besides, you don't want to play in a weak major suit opposite three-card support. If opener has an unbalanced hand with four cards in a major, he may be able to check back with a 2♣ rebid, or reverse with a bid of the major.

Responses to Checkback Stayman

Responder shows an unbid major or three-card support (a very strong doubleton--two of the top four honors--is equivalent to three-card support) for partner's major. With both, support partner's major; with neither, bid 2♦:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♦ - no spade support, no heart suit 2♥ - heart suit, denies three spades* 2♠ - three spades, could have hearts

* Exception: 2♥ is okay with five hearts and three spades.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦ - no heart support 2♥ - heart support, could have spades 2♠ - an impossible bid

The last 2♠ bid is impossible because responder must not bypass a four-card spade suit when lacking heart support.

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	1NT
2♣	2♦ - no four-card major 2♥ - four hearts, could have spades 2♠ - four spades, denies four hearts

In general responder must rebid 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ in response to CS. With a six-card semi-solid minor suit, however, she may bid three of the long suit. The suit must be strong enough to play opposite a singleton in opener's hand:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	3♣/3♦ - semi-solid six-card suit

Opener's Next Bid

If opener does not pass responder's answer to CS, his next bid is as follows:

-- An immediate 3♣ bid is natural, showing five or more clubs and a weak hand. Opener would have made a natural (weak) 2♣ rebid if not using CS:

Opener	Responder
1 Any	1NT
2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠
3♣	- five or more clubs, weak hand

There is one sequence, however, in which 3♣ is forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♠
3♣ is strong, trying for game	

In this auction opener must have five spades (otherwise the opening would be 1♣) and would therefore pass 2♠ with a weak hand. The 3♣ call is a trial bid, asking if responder has a hand that fits well. With a suitable hand such as ♠1032 ♥854 ♦A54 ♣KJ7, responder will now bid 4♠ because of the good fit with opener's clubs. With a poor fit responder will sign off in 3♠. Opener's hand is ♠AK954 ♥K2 ♦6 ♣AQ543.

The situation is very different when the suit is hearts:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♥
3♣ is a signoff	

In this case opener has a hand such as ♠4 ♥AKJ8 ♦A43 ♣Q8763 (with five hearts he would pass the 2♥ bid). A 1♥ opening is better than 1♣, to provide for an easy rebid opposite the expected 1♠ response. Responder will pass 3♣ or bid 3♦, knowing that opener has 1-4-3-5 distribution (with 3-4-1-5 or 2-4-2-5 the opening would be 1♣).

Another possibility for a 4-5 major-minor hand is a hand of this type: ♠AKJ3 ♥A32 ♦108763 ♣8. The correct opening bid is 1♠, and after a 1NT response opener must use CS because a 2♦ rebid promises five spades. Opener will pass a red-suit response to CS.

With nothing but long clubs and no interest in game, opener just keeps bidding clubs until responder gets the message:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1NT
2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠
3♣	Pass (forced - opener is weak)

-- An immediate bid of 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠ is invitational, not forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♦
3♦/3♥/3♠ are invitational	

The 3♥ bid shows a hand with 5-5 in the majors. With 5-4 opener would bid a forcing 2♥ instead of 3♥. If responder had bid 2♠ over 2♣, the 3♥ bid might be made with a four-card suit. Even then

the 3♥ bid is not forcing, although responder is unlikely to pass. To do so she would have a weak hand with four hearts and a poor fit: ♠873 ♥J984 ♦KJ3 ♣Q76.

-- If opener's next bid after 2♣ is 2NT, that is a game try showing clubs (as a second suit, or as a rebid of clubs if the opening was 1♣).

Opener	Responder
1 any	1NT
2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠
2NT shows clubs, invitational hand	

Opener cannot bid 3♣ with an invitational hand, because 3♣ is a weak bid. If his opening was 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠, he has a strong two-suiter with clubs as the second suit, and is inviting game. Responder pretends to have heard an invitational 3♣ bid (a 3♣ jump after the 1NT response would have been forcing) and acts accordingly. If she would have passed an invitational 3♣ bid, she now bids 3♣, which opener passes. She might pass 2NT, at her own risk, with a weak hand and strength in the "unbid" suits.

If the opening was 1♣, opener has a long club suit in a hand of invitational strength. It is usually best not to pass 2NT, because opener could have a very unbalanced hand. If 3NT cannot be made, 3♣ is probably a better contract than 2NT. Besides, with a liking for notrump opener might have raised 1NT to 2NT instead of using CS.

If the opening was 1♦, opener has at least 5-4 in the minors.

If the opening was 1♥, opener has at least 5-4 in hearts and clubs. When hearts have been supported, the reason for bidding 2NT is to help responder evaluate her hand in deciding whether to accept the game invitation or not. When a club fit is not important, opener should just bid 3♥ over 2♥ to invite game.

If the opening was 1♠, opener has at least 5-4 in spades and clubs. When spades have been supported, the 2NT bid definitely shows four clubs because (as discussed before) opener would bid a forcing 3♣ to invite game with a 5-5 hand. Here too, opener should just bid 3♠ over 2♠ to invite game when a club fit is not important.

A *delayed* bid of 2NT, however, does not show clubs. It is a normal invitation to game in notrump:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ (forced)
2NT is natural, not club-showing	

Opener has ♠AK32 ♥AK76 ♦76 ♣QJ3 and bids 2♣ to check for a heart fit. Having found none, he must bid 2♥ (forcing) as a stepping stone to an invitational 2NT bid. He could not bid 2NT

immediately over 2♦, because that would show clubs. Responder's 2♠ bid is forced, even with a singleton spade. She has previously denied spade support with the 2♦ bid.

-- If opener's next bid after CS is a new suit at the two level (as above) that is usually a one round force. Opener has invitational strength or better. Let's discuss the above auction first:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	is forcing

Opener has only four hearts, since he would bid 3♥ with five (over 1NT to force to game, over 2♦ to invite game). Responder has denied holding four hearts, so opener can only be bidding 2♥ on the way to describing her hand. Responder must bid 2♠ at this point (the 2♦ bid denied spade support). Opener may have 5-4-0-4, 5-4-4-0, 4-4-4-1, etc. If so, he will bid his minor next (not forcing). He might have a weak hand with six spades and four hearts, using the 2♥ bid as a device to get to a 2♠ contract (2♠ over 2♦ would show five spades, not six, as explained later). Or he might have: ♠AJ976 ♥KQ108 ♦AJ ♣Q9, planning to follow with an invitational 2NT bid. He could not bid 2NT over 2♦, because that would show clubs, remember?

Responder must usually just make the cheapest call when a major suit opener bids the other major at the two level in a CS sequence. There is no need to jump to 3NT with a maximum 1NT response, because opener will always bid again if he is interested in game. If the new suit is spades, responder may be in a position to raise instead of bidding 2NT:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♥
2♠	?

Responder could have four spades (a weak suit, of course), since she must show heart support as a first priority. If she does have spades, she raises to 3♠ or 4♠, according to her strength. Otherwise she just bids 2NT, allowing opener to continue showing his hand.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT - forced

Responder has denied having four spades or three hearts. Opener is bidding 2♠ on the way to showing his obviously good hand, which may have a distribution of 4-5-4-0, 4-5-0-4, or 4-6 in the majors. Responder bids 2NT to allow opener to continue his hand description.

When a minor suit opener bids a new major after using CS, responder can sometimes give more information. She must never bypass opener's first suit, however:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ - good spade strength 2NT - non-committal 3♣ - four clubs, maximum hand 3♦ - not permitted

The 2♠ bid, which shows good spade strength but not necessarily a maximum hand, may enable opener to invite game with a 2NT bid (or even bid 3NT) when he was planning some other bid: ♠J ♥AK42 ♦AK ♣K108732 The 3♣ bid could lead to a slam if opener has the same hand.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ - good spade strength 2NT - non-committal 3♣/3♦ - four or more, maximum (3♣ denies four diamonds)

Opener	Responder
1♦	1NT
2♣	2♦/2♥
2♠	2NT - non-committal 3♣/3♦ - four or more, maximum (3♣ denies four diamonds)

What if a light 1♣ opener is 5-5 in the black suits? This is not a rare occurrence, since 1♣ is the right opening with a weak to moderate hand and weakish spades. The answer, unfortunately, is that we must have an exception: A 2♠ rebid by a 1♣ opener who has used CS shows five spades and is neither forcing nor particularly invitational. This means that opener cannot show a four-card spade suit at this point and must choose some other sequence (e.g, a reverse) with a good hand.

-- If opener's next bid after 2♣ is a rebid of his major suit at the two level, he shows five cards in the suit, plus four clubs, and a weak hand:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	five hearts, four clubs, weak hand

Opener could not bid 2NT to show clubs, because that requires a hand of game-invitational strength, and he needs five clubs to bid 2♣, then 3♣. Responder may pass, prefer clubs, or correct to 2NT

More About Two-Suiters

A 1♠ opening followed by a 2♥ rebid after a 1NT response is never based on a holding of more spades than hearts. Opener either has equal length or the hearts are longer (e.g., ♠AKJ3 ♥J10863 ♦KJ2 ♣5):

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♥	

Responder passes 2♥ with equal length in both majors. If responder's majors were reversed, with more spades than hearts, 6-4 or 5-4, opener could have used CS. If the response to CS is a disappointing 2♦, opener bids 2♥ to force a 2♠ bid:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ is forced

This won't work very well if responder has a singleton spade and three hearts, but that doesn't happen very often.

Do not use CS with a 4-6 holding in spades-hearts and no interest in game. Just rebid the hearts. Remember that CS followed by a rebid of the opened major shows just five cards in the suit (plus four clubs).

A 1♥ opening followed by a rebid of 2♦ denies five hearts:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♦ - denies five hearts	

Opener has a hand such as ♠3 ♥KQ108 ♦J7652 ♣AQJ. With five hearts opener can safely use CS after the 1NT response, since responder cannot bid 2♠. As discussed previously, a 1NT response to 1♥ must not be made when holding four spades and no heart support. When opener has ♠A4 ♥Q10832 ♦KQ764 ♣3, the bidding will go:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦/2♥
Pass	

Opener might even bid like this with five hearts and four diamonds, although this is a little risky, since responder could have a 3-2-2-6 hand. It might be better to pass 1NT or rebid 2♥. With six hearts and five diamonds, opener should forget diamonds and rebid 2♥ with a weak opening.

Now look at the spade-diamond situation. With five spades and four or five diamonds, opener (after opening 1♠ and getting a 1NT response) should usually rebid 2♦ with no interest in game. In this

case responder prefers spades with equal length in both suits (opener will never have longer diamonds). Use of CS with a hand such as ♠AJ875 ♥3 ♦KJ62 ♣K53 would lead to trouble if responder bids 2♥. When opener has three hearts, however, in a 5-3-4-1 hand, CS may be chanced (with the plan of passing any response). That is one reason why responder, holding three spades and four hearts, must bid 2♠ in response to CS.

With a hand like ♠AKJ2 ♥A103 ♦J9762 ♣5, the correct opening is 1♠, to provide for a comfortable rebid if the response is 1NT or 2♣. The hand is not strong enough to open 1♦ and reverse with 2♠, and the diamonds are too weak to rebid. With a 1♠ opening, opener can use CS after a 1NT response, then pass responder's next bid. That is why we permit a 2♥ response to CS when responder has three spades and five hearts (♠543 ♥J8752 ♦Q103 ♣AQ).

If opener has chosen to start with 1♦ holding a hand such as ♠KQ3 ♥4 ♦AKJ2 ♣97543, CS is fairly safe. Opener will pass a 2♠ bid, and otherwise will rebid 3♣, which shows five clubs. Responder should prefer clubs with equal length in the minors.

When opener has five diamonds and four clubs (♠KQJ ♥4 ♦97543 ♣AKJ2), she might pass 1NT. If she chooses to use CS, the plan is to pass 2♦ or 2♠, and to (probably) force a 2NT contract (by bidding 2♠) if responder bids 2♥. If responder then bids a minor (showing at least four) instead of 2NT, that's okay too! With six diamonds and five clubs opener has the choice of rebidding 2♦ after a 1NT response, or treating the two suits as if they were of equal length by bidding 2♣, then 3♣ (with the small risk of playing a 5-3 club fit instead of a 6-3 diamond fit). Don't worry much about this, because the opponents will surely be in the bidding when opener has a weak hand with both minors opposite a 1NT response.

Some Final Points

When opener jumps to 3NT after using CS, despite being supported in his major, he must have four cards in the other major:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
2♣	2♠
3NT	

Opener's jump to 3NT denies a five-card spade holding, so the only reason for using CS must have been the possession of four hearts. If responder has a heart suit in addition to the spade support shown, she may now bid 4♥.

Hands of 4-4-4-1 shape may present problems. With a weak hand 1NT must usually be passed, although it is no crime to open 1♠ and rebid 2♥ with ♠AK87 ♥AQ103 ♦8762 ♣3. Responder should not take a "false preference" with two spades and three hearts, because this sequence denies a 5-4 holding in the majors (as previously discussed). CS should not be used because responder will bid 2♠ with three spades and four hearts.

CS does not usually work well with 4-4-4-1 hands of invitational strength. Just raise 1NT to 2NT and hope responder has enough to continue, whereupon she will show an unbid major. With a game-going hand CS can always be used safely when it is needed.

CS is not used with 5-3-3-2 or 4-4-3-2 hands of mere invitational strength. With a five-card major in a 5-3-3-2 hand, there is usually no way to raise to 2NT after using CS. Just raise 1NT to 2NT, after which partner may be able to show support for the major. If partner didn't raise the major opening with three-card support he must be balanced, so the hand is likely to play just as well in notrump. Here too, using CS is okay with a game-going hand.

CS does not apply when responder's 1NT call is a rebid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♠	1NT
2♣ - natural,	not CS
3♣/3♦ - invitational,	not forcing

CS does not apply after a 1NT response to an overcall:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣ - natural bid		

When the Opponents Intervene

CS applies when the 1NT response comes over an opposing bid:

North	East	South	West
1♦	1♥	1NT	Pass
		2♣ is CS	

All further bids by either partner retain the usual meanings, except that a natural bid in an opposing suit can show either four cards or a strong three. For instance, a 2♥ response by South would show four hearts with at least one honor or three good hearts (e.g., KJx), and would not deny four cards in spades.

CS does not apply if the 1NT bid is doubled, however. The bidding reverts to standard bidding in that case.

If there is an opposing bid following the 2♣ bid that initiates CS, all doubles are for business and all bids are natural:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	2♥
		Dbl - business	

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl - business			
2NT - natural, not club-invitational			
3♣ - may not be weak			

When an Artificial Bid Gets Doubled

When an opponent doubles an artificial bid, including the CS 2♣ bid, any elaborate scheme for always showing stopper(s) or lack of stopper in the doubled suit would get in the way of CS bidding sequences, so we just use common sense. Immediate bids continue the CS sequence, while reopening bids revert to natural bidding.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Dbl	Pass - can support a club contract	
2♦ - normal response, poor clubs			
2♥/2♠ - says nothing about clubs			
Rdbl - good clubs, good hand			

The pass or redouble denies hearts or three spades. "Good clubs" means club strength, at least a double stopper, not necessarily with four-card length. The 2♥ and 2♠ bids do not deny good clubs, however (but 2♦ does).

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Dbl
Pass - playable diamonds			
2♥/2♠/2NT/3♣ - normal CS rebids			
Rdbl - good diamonds, good hand			

The normal rebids say nothing about diamonds. North could have good diamonds and just not want to complicate things by passing or redoubling.

If the double of an artificial bid gets passed around, a redouble suggests that the doubled contract may be playable, and may be the highest scoring (or only) game. Partner can pass if he agrees. Otherwise the bidding proceeds naturally, with no artificial bids:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Rdbl - to play	
2♥/2♠/2NT/3♣ - natural			
3♥/3♠ - invitational			

When a Natural Bid Gets Doubled

When a natural bid is doubled, a redouble is to play, a pass is suggestion (not a command) that the contract may be playable; and a bid just ignores the double, continuing the CS sequence. Partner can do what he wants after a pass: redouble (to play) or continue with natural bidding.



Summary

After a 1NT response to an opening bid:

All three-level jump rebids by opener are forcing to game.

2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ is weak (reverses excepted).

To invite game, opener bids 2♣ (artificial), then invites.

2♣ followed by 3♣ is a weak signoff, so

2♣ followed by 2NT is a game try club bid.

Responder's action after CS:

Show three-card support for opener's major suit.

Lacking that, show an unbid major.

Lacking either of these, bid 2♦.

If opener does not pass responder's answer to CS, his next bid is as follows:

3♣ is natural, weak (unless spades have been supported).

3♦, 3♥, or 3♠ is invitational.

2NT shows clubs, invitational strength.

A new suit at the two level is forcing.

Rebid of a major is weak, shows four clubs too.

A spade opening followed by a 2♥ rebid never has longer spades, with which CS is used.

A heart opening followed by a 2♦ rebid never has longer hearts, with which CS is used.

A spade opening followed by a 2♦ rebid promises five spades, without which a weak opener must pass 1NT (or bid 2♣ with 4=3=5=1).

A diamond opening followed by 2♣, then 3♣, seldom has longer diamonds, with which opener must rebid 2♦ if he doesn't want to treat the two suits as equal in length.

When opener bids a new suit at the two level, that is a one-round force unless the opening was 1♣ and the new suit is spades (which shows 5-5 in the black suits). When the bid is forcing, responder generally makes the next higher ranking bid. If a minor suit opener bids a new major, however, a maximum responder has other options.

What do you give up with CS? Answer: You cannot stop in 2♣ after a 1NT response when both hands are weak. And when was the last time you were able to do that? The opponents may well sell out for 2♣ after such an auction, but are likely to be in the bidding before that point is reached. Remember that it is better to raise a minor suit opening with a very weak hand rather than bid a four-card major.

CHECKBACK STAYMAN BY RESPONDER

Eddie Kantar has pointed out the unplayability of standard bidding after a 1NT rebid by opener:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT?	

Responder may now want to sign off, invite game, or force to game with a suit bid. There are only two levels of bidding available for the three actions, however, and three into two won't go. Kantar's answer was to make all jump rebids by responder invitational. With stronger hands he bids an artificial 2♣ and then makes his forcing bid. Unfortunately he can't sign off in clubs.

Others remedy that drawback by using the lowest unbid minor ("New Minor Forcing") for the artificial bid, permitting responder to sign off in opener's minor suit. He can no longer sign off in the unbid minor, however. Presumably this is a lesser evil. But what if there is no unbid minor?

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1NT?	

How can responder make a signoff bid in clubs, an invitational bid in clubs, or a forcing bid in clubs, with only two bids to choose from (2♣ and 3♣)? The same problem arises if responder wants to rebid in diamonds. How to sign off, invite, or force in diamonds?

The use of three-level jumps as invitational has other weaknesses. Suppose the auction goes: 1♣-1♠; 1NT-3♣, with 3♣ invitational, and opener holds ♠Q32 ♥AJ5 ♦K84 ♣K732. What now? Bid 3♠ and find responder with a weak four-card suit? Besides, 3♠ is forcing, accepting the game invitation. No, opener must pass and perhaps miss a 5-3 spade fit. His problem is worse with a 3-4-3-3 hand. If responder uses "New Minor Forcing" (bidding 2♦ artificially) with five spades and invitational strength, she can't then make an invitational club bid (a 3♣ bid following NMF is forcing to game) if opener lacks spade support. A poor notrump contract may result.

Another situation: You have ♦K983 ♥Q1086 ♦KQJ4 ♣8 and respond 1♥ to partner's 1♦ opening. After his 1NT rebid you invite with 3♦. He now bids 3NT with ♠AJ10 ♥K7 ♦A7632 ♣Q75 and has no play, down two. How could he tell that five diamonds would be a better contract? You might have held ♠8 ♥Q1086 ♦KQJ4 ♣K983, and notrump is the right spot. There ought to be a way to describe these three-suited hands more accurately.

Another: Partner opens 1♣ and you say 1♠ with ♠A97542 ♥K983 ♦7 ♣85. When he rebids 1NT you must sign off with 2♠, but he could easily have four hearts: ♠Q ♥A1075 ♦KJ5 ♣KJ432. A heart contract is better, but how do you get there? A 2♥ rebid shows a weak 5-5 in the majors, maybe 6-5, or even 5-4, but not 6-4.

More: You respond 1♠ to a 1♣ opening, holding ♠AJ75 ♥62 ♦863 ♣KQJ2. When partner rebids 1NT, should you bid 3♣ or 2NT? If he has a minimum 2NT might be better, especially if he has only three clubs. If only we could invite game *and* show club support without going past the two level.

One more: You have ♠AJ7632 ♥A2 ♦A76 ♣Q9 and respond 1♠ after partner opens 1♣. When he rebids 1NT, how do you indicate slam interest? Wouldn't it be nice if 3♠ were forcing? Then partner could use Blackwood with ♠K85 ♥K76 ♦K52 ♣AJ102, and a 4♠ rebid by responder would imply no interest in slam: ♠J976432 ♥A2 ♦A7 ♣93

Try this approach as a solution to most such problems:

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦/1♥	1♦/1♥/1♠
1NT	3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - forcing
	2♦/2♥/2♠ - weak (except for reverses)
	2♣ - Checkback Stayman

A 2♣ rebid is Checkback Stayman (CS), forcing and artificial. It usually shows a game try sort of hand, about 11 high card points (HCP). As we shall see, CS may also be used with some weaker or stronger hands. It's most common uses are (1) to find out if opener has support for responder's major, (2) to find out if opener has an unbid four-card major, and (3) to discriminate between game-going and game-invitational hands.

Warning: DO NOT USE CHECKBACK STAYMAN IF A REVERSE OR OTHER NATURAL BID WILL ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE YOUR HAND!

Partner will assume you do not have a good natural call when you use CS, and will therefore exclude certain holdings when he tries to picture your hand. Suppose you have ♠43 ♥KJ97 ♦AQ1083 ♣J4. After answering 1♦ to partner's 1♣ opening, your next call when he rebids 1NT is 2♥--a good descriptive forcing (but not to game) reverse, implying five diamonds and four hearts. CS would be unnecessary and incorrect.

If you have reversing values and support for partner's suit when he rebids 1NT, you can reverse and then raise or use CS, reverse, and then raise. Which? The former if you want to force, the latter if you want to invite. CS is not "adequate" with game-going values.

One advantage of playing CS is that opener can bypass a four-card major suit, e.g., rebidding 1NT after opening 1♣ with a 4-3-3-3 hand such as ♠Q1076 ♥J103 ♦AJ9 ♣AQ8 and receiving a red suit response. Even if a 4-4 fit is missed, such hands often play just as well in notrump if responder is also balanced. If she is unbalanced, she may be able to use CS to "check back" for spades. Besides, you don't want responder to make a club preference with a hand such as ♠842 ♥A987 ♦32 ♣K973, as she would after a 1♠ rebid. Nor do you want her competing to 3♣, or jumping to 3♣ invitational, with four-card support.

RULE: After opening 1♣, a new suit bid at the one level implies more than three clubs. If you can't stand bypassing a strong four-card major, just open the bidding with it (although you may have to rebid it with a minimum hand).

RULE: With a very weak hand responder should raise opener's minor rather than bid a new four-card suit. The raise is both descriptive and preemptive, shutting out a one-level overcall. It may enable opener to compete to the three level, something responder could not do.

RULE: Responder should not use CB with a 5-3-3-2 hand, even with five cards in a major. Just raise notrump. Similarly, do not use CB with a 4-3-3-3 hand (i.e., four spades and three-card support for partner's hearts).

RULE: Opener should not bypass a four-card spade suit when the response is 1♥ and he has a doubleton heart. It's okay to do this only with a 4=3=3=3 hand.

Further advice:

With a strong four-card suit and a weak next-lower five-card suit, respond in the four-carder when not strong enough to reverse. Respond 1♠ to 1♣ or 1♦ with ♠AKJx ♥J9xxx ♦xx ♣xx, then rebid 2H if opener bids 1NT and hope opener doesn't prefer spades. With ♠J9xx ♥AKxxx ♦xx ♣xx, respond 1♥ and pass a 1NT rebid, even with a singleton in opener's minor. With three cards in his minor you can use CS.

What does responder have in this auction?

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♥

Answer: A weak hand with five spades and three weak hearts, unbalanced: ♠Q8743 ♥986 ♦3 ♣K853. With four spades or better hearts, responder should bid 2♥ instead of 1♠.

Responder should generally not use CB with a 4-4-3-2 hand, even when holding an unbid major. If one of the suits is partner's and the strength is concentrated in the partnership's two suits, using CB is okay. Despite the balanced hand, inviting game by showing a raise for partner may be safer than raising notrump with zilch in the two unbid suits.

Responses to Checkback Stayman

Now, how do you respond to CS? In one of just three ways:

- Show three-card support for a major that responder has bid.
- Lacking that, show an unbid major or rebid a five-card heart suit (Not spades? No. How can you rebid 1NT after opening 1♠?).
- Otherwise bid 2♦.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♥	- four hearts, denies three spades
2♠	- spade support, may have four hearts
2♦	- denies spade support or four hearts

While opener may bypass a weak four-card major to rebid 1NT, even with 4-4-3-2 distribution, he must not bypass four spades over a 1♥ response unless he has three hearts, even with very weak spades. The reason is that a 2♠ response to CS might interfere with responder's plans.

Responder's Next Bid

If responder does not pass opener's response to CS, her next bid has one of the following meanings:

-- A bid of 3♣ is a signoff:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦	1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣	any	3♣

Opener usually passes, but in the first auction he could now bid 3♦ with something like ♠A43 ♥K76 ♦9862 ♣AQ5. In the second auction responder has a weak hand, maybe 4-6 in the black suits, and opener must pass.

-- A 2NT bid, artificial, shows clubs and a game-invitational hand:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥	1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2NT	2♦/2♥/2♠	2NT

In both cases responder is showing clubs and a game-invitational hand, probably unbalanced. If opener bids 3♣, declining the invitation, responder will pass. If opener bids anything else, he is accepting the game try. Occasionally opener will pass the 2NT bid, with a minimum hand and strength in the "unbid" suits.

The 2NT bid is invitational in clubs when made immediately after the 2♣ call, but:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2♠	2NT is a natural bid

(I'll explain this auction later.)

-- A bid of 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠ is invitational, not forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	3♦/3♥/3♠ are all invitational

Look at this sequence:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♥	3♦

The 3♦ bid is invitational and denies five hearts. Opener must not go back to hearts unless he has a good hand and wants to be in game. With five hearts responder must bid 3♥ instead of 3♦ for her game try. The principle is this:

WHEN OPENER SHOWS SUPPORT FOR RESPONDER'S MAJOR, RESPONDER'S BID OF ANOTHER SUIT OR NOTRUMP DENIES FIVE CARDS IN THE MAJOR.

-- A heart raise at the two level is invitational, implying three-card support:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

Responder has J10x or better in hearts. With four hearts she would usually invite with a 3♥ bid, but 2♥ may be preferred when the hand is marginal for a game invitation. Opener must pass 2♥ with a minimum hand, perhaps playing a 4-3 fit. With more than a minimum he can bid 2♠, 2NT, or 3♥ (all invitational); 3♣, 3♦, or 3♠ (all forcing); 3NT; or 4♥. Of course the spade raises show only good doubleton support, since opener has denied holding three spades.

-- A new suit at the two level is forcing. There are three basic situations:

1) A 1♦ responder bids a major after using CS. Let's start with 2♠:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠ - forcing
2NT	3♣/3♦ - invitational

Opener has denied holding a major, so responder can only be bidding 2♠ on the way to describing her hand. She may have 4=1=4=4 or 4=1=6=2, for instance. Opener must bid 2NT, forcing, as a mark-time bid, letting responder get on with the bidding.

When the 1♦ responder bids 2♥ after using CS, opener bids 2♠ with a double spade stopper, otherwise 2NT:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥
2♠ shows a double stopper	
2NT otherwise (forcing)	

Opener's 2♦ bid denied four hearts or four spades. His 2♠ bid shows good strength in spades, without which he must bid 2NT. Responder might have ♠J ♥A1097 ♦KJ8752 ♣Q9. When opener bids 2♠ over 2♥, responder can bid 2NT (instead of 3♦) to invite game.

2) A 1♠ responder bids 2♥ after using CS:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

The 2♥ bid shows four hearts only, since responder would jump to 3♥ (invitational) with five. Opener must now bid 2♠. His 2♦ response denied a holding of four hearts or three spades, so responder must only be trying to describe her hand fully. Perhaps she has a weak hand with six spades and four hearts, using the 2♥ bid as a device to get back to spades (2♠ over 2♦ would show five spades, not six). She might have ♠AJ874 ♥K652 ♦J9 ♣Q8, planning to bid a natural and invitational 2NT after the forced 2♠ bid. She could not bid 2NT over 2♦ because that would show clubs, remember?

3) A 1♥ responder bids 2♠ after using CS. This is the only time that opener is allowed to show the quality of his hand after a two-level suit rebid by responder:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♦/2♥	2♠

When opener bids 2♥ he could have four spades, since he must show heart support as a first priority. If so, he can now raise spades (jumping with a maximum). Otherwise, or if he bid 2♦, he now bids 2NT with a minimum, which responder may pass, or something at the three level (perhaps 3NT) with a good hand.

Since a reverse would be preferable with a 5-4 hand, this sequence tends to show 4-4 in the majors. Responder usually can't do the same sort of thing after responding 1♠ with 4-4 majors (opener must bid 2♠ with three, leaving responder with no good bid with an invitationl hand unless she has four cards in opener's suit. That is one reason why 1♥ is the preferred response to a minor opening when holding both majors. If the opening is 1♦, responder can be quicker to bypass a weak heart suit with 4-4 majors (with opener unlikely to have hearts), but must not use CS. Also, if responder has a game-going hand, there is no problem:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠
2NT	3♣ - invitational
	3NT - implies four hearts (else why CS?)

When a responder who uses CS bids two suits, then bids notrump or raises opener, she is making a game try. When she bids all three suits other than the one opened, she is forcing to game:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠	1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥	2♦	2♠
2♠	2NT/3♣	2NT	3♦

The 1♠ responder has only invited game with her last bid, so opener passes with a minimum. The 1♥ responder, who has also bid spades and diamonds, has made a game force, perhaps with a 4-5-4-0 hand (but could be 4-4-4-1). The 3♦ bid is natural, not "Fourth Suit Artificial," a convention that does not apply in CS sequences.

-- A rebid of a major suit at the two level shows a weak hand and a five-card suit, with trump support for opener's minor, or a minor suit on the side, or both:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠

With nothing but six spades and a weak hand, responder would have bid 2♠ over 1NT. With six spades and four hearts, she would have bid 2♥ over 2♦, forcing opener to bid 2♠. The 2♠ bid therefore shows five spades, and opener can pass with a good doubleton (J10 or better) in spades. Otherwise he must bid 2NT with two or three clubs (at least three, in this case), and 3♣ with four or more. Responder will then place the contract in either clubs or diamonds. Occasionally it will be impossible for opener to have fewer than four clubs:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♠

Opener has denied holding four hearts or three spades, so he has eight cards in the minors and could hardly have opened a three-card club suit. In this situation a 2NT bid would show four clubs and a 3♣ bid would show five. There is one other such case:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

Responder has five hearts and a weak hand, with diamonds or clubs in reserve. With a weak 4=6 in the majors, responder must bid 2♥, not 2♣, over 1NT. Again, opener must have at least four clubs, so a 2NT bid would show four, a 3♣ bid five. What would a 2♠ bid by opener mean at this point? "I have three strong spades and the minimum number of clubs--four." Responder can then bid 2NT with ♠10 ♥J9872 ♦AJ87 ♣Q65. Opener will not take the 2NT bid as invitational, since the 2♥ bid denies interest in game. Opener's hand: ♠KQ9 ♥65 ♦KQ83 ♣KJ72

If opener has ♠A32 ♥65 ♦KQ83 ♣KJ72, he bids 2NT over 2♥, showing four clubs. Then responder, knowing opener is 4-4 in the minor suits, would place the contract by bidding 3♦. Finally, if the 8♦ were the 8♣, opener would bid 3♣ over 2♥ and responder would pass.

In the following auction responder has ♠Q9873 ♥7 ♦K108 ♣A965:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♥	2♠
3♣	Pass

Opener must have a hand like: ♠K ♥Q863 ♦AQJ7 ♣K1032, since his 3♣ bid shows four clubs. Responder therefore passes.

This procedure of bidding 2NT or 3♣ (sometimes 2♠) to indicate the number of clubs held applies only when responder has shown a weak hand by rebidding her major after using CS.

A jump to 3NT after opener shows support for responder's major suit implies four cards in the other major or (if the opening was 1♥) support for opener's hearts:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♠	3NT

Responder must have four hearts, so opener can bid 4♥ if he has a heart suit.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♠	3NT

Responder must have three-card heart support to be using CS, since she apparently has only four spades: ♠KQ73 ♥Q103 ♦AK4 ♣542. Opener can now bid 4♥ with a hand such as ♠J54 ♥KJ762 ♦QJ5 ♣AJ.

With CS opener can bypass a four-card major with a notrumpish hand. After opening 1♣ with ♠A754 ♥KJ8 ♦932 ♣KQ4, he can rebid 1NT after a 1♦ or 1♥ response. If responder has an unbalanced hand with four spades she will usually be able to check back with a 2♣ bid, or reverse into spades. With ♠J632 ♥AQ

♦KQJ6 ♣J86, she has no need to check for spades with such a beautiful hand for notrump. She will raise to 3NT, avoiding the bad spade game that most partnerships will find.

Opener should not bypass a four-card spade suit after a 1♥ response unless he has three hearts. There are many weak hands with which responder, holding five hearts and a singleton, will use CS. She is counting on a 2♦ or 2♥ bid from opener, and 2♠ would get the bidding too high. Knowing that opener must bid 2♥ over CS with three hearts and four spades, her assumption is a safe one.

If you must rebid 1NT after a 1♥ response, holding four spades and a doubleton heart, make sure the doubleton is very strong: ♠5432 ♥KJ ♦AQJ ♣K1098. Then you can bid 2♥ if responder rebids 2♣. Don't bid 2♦, which denies four spades.

After responding 1♥ to 1♦ with ♠9 ♥A10763 ♦Q975 ♣J32, do not bid 2♦ when opener rebids 1NT. A 2♦ preference denies five hearts, with which a 2♣ bid is safe (opener will bid 2♦ or 2♥, not 2♠). With three hearts opener no longer has to guess whether to pass a 2♦ preference or show the heart support.

Suppose responder to a 1♥ opening has a weak hand with spades and diamonds:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♦

A slight problem here is that responder, lacking the strength for an original 2♦ response, could have six diamonds and only four spades. If opener has 3-3 in those suits he will prefer spades, so responder may have to go on to 3♦, which opener must pass. Could responder have a weak hand with 4-5 in spades-diamonds? No. With such a hand responder should just pass 1NT. If responder is 4-5 in spades-diamonds, her distribution will be 4-2-5-2 or 4-1-5-3, suitable for a 1NT contract.

CS applies when 1NT is opener's third bid. There is only one such sequence:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠ (natural)
1NT	2♣ is CS

All subsequent bids have the same meaning as previously described. A 2♥ bid by opener would show five hearts, which is not impossible, or a strong four: ♠KJ ♥97632 ♦Q3 ♣AKJ3 or ♠J5 ♥AK105 ♦876 ♣A653. Responder can now raise hearts with three-card support.

The 2NT bid to show clubs is often useful with a 4-4-4-1 hand. Partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♥ with ♠Q ♥KQ52 ♦K652 ♣Q987, and he rebids 1NT. Your CS call now fetches a 2♦ bid. The best move now is not a 3♦ raise, the natural inclination, but 2NT (showing clubs). Partner will assume you have a two-suited hand with hearts and clubs, and will usually bid 3NT or 3♣. If he bids 3♣, you bid 3♦, completing the picture of your hand. He might pass 2NT, but that's all right--he must have good spades to do so. If he happens to bid 3♦ over 2NT (showing five diamonds and accepting the game try), you will raise. He must have a good hand with weak spades, so five diamonds should be playable. He might have ♠643 ♦A4 ♦AJ432 ♣AJ3.

CS is not normally used with 4-4-3-2 hands, but there are exceptions:

-- With two strong four-card suits, one of which is partner's suit, and little strength outside, CS may be preferable to a notrump raise: ♠KQJ3 ♥87 ♦AJ102 ♣943. Partner opens 1♦ and you respond 1♠. After his 1NT rebid you can bid 2♣, intending to follow with a diamond raise. This course is safer than a raise of 1NT to 2NT.

-- CS can be used with a 4-4-3-2 hand of invitational strength if it includes good three-card support for opener's hearts (J10x or better) or if the two four-card suits are majors and the original response is 1♥. CS doesn't work if the response is 1♠, so responder must just raise to 2NT in that case.

-- When responder is strong enough for game opposite a minimum, she can use CS to check for an unbid major, even with 4-4-3-2 distribution: ♠AQ104 ♥972 ♦AKJ10 ♣J3. Partner opens 1♣, you say 1♦, and he rebids 1NT. It is permissible to bid 2♣, just in case opener has bypassed a four-card spade suit. If opener does not bid 2♠, you jump to 3NT. With a weaker hand, however (♠AQ103 ♥854 ♦KJ82 ♣75), a 1♦ responder to a 1♣ opening can only raise 1NT to 2NT, because CS doesn't work. That is one reason for bidding 1♠ instead of 1♦ with this sort of hand.

CS is not generally used with a 4-4-4-1 hand when the singleton is in opener's suit, unless responder has a game-going hand or has responded 1♥ with both majors. Otherwise CS either wouldn't work or would serve no purpose.

An invitational hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution should just raise notrump, even with a five-card major. Partner opens 1♦ and you respond 1♥ with ♠A3 ♥Q10964 ♦Q76 ♣K83. After his 1NT rebid you should raise to 2NT rather than bid 2♣. You have a balanced hand, partner has not raised hearts, so respect his judgment and raise notrump. Besides, he can bid 3♥ over 2NT if he wants to. If you use CS and opener bids 2♦, you cannot raise to 2NT (since a 2NT bid now would show clubs). With a game-going hand the 2♣ bid is safe, but it is usually better to just raise notrump with 5-3-3-2 hands.

I said earlier that responder should not use CS "if a reverse or other natural bid will suffice." There are some situations where a reverse won't "suffice." Suppose you have ♠A1093 ♥KJ873 ♦Q96 ♣4 and partner opens 1♦, you say 1♥, and he rebids 1NT. What now? Reverse with a 2♠ bid or use CS? Answer: Bid 2♣ with this sort of hand, planning to show spades next, then follow with an invitational diamond raise if partner doesn't fit one of the majors. With a game-going hand (add a queen) you can bid 2♠ over 1NT, reversing, then raise diamonds. You can treat this as a forcing sequence if you don't already, because CS is available for invitational strength hands. The reverse sequence does not "suffice" to show both invitational and game-going hands of this type.

When a passed hand jumps to the three level after opener's 1NT rebid, opener may choose to pass the supposed force if the jump is a raise of his suit or a jump in the same suit:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

North opened with ♠86 ♥10964 ♦KQ4 ♣AQJ3. Naturally the 3♣ bid shows a great hand despite the original pass, since an invitational (CS) sequence is available. South's hand: ♠AK75 ♥4 ♦875 ♣K9874. Perhaps North should keep going with a 3♦ bid, getting the partnership to a mediocre 5♣ game.

When the jump is in a new suit, however, opener may not pass:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♥ - forcing			

If opener can only bid 3♠ (poor hand, poor fit) now, responder may pass. Opener can raise hearts with only three trumps, since responder must have at least 5-5, probably better, in the majors. "Probably better" because responder could use a CS sequence to invite game with 5-5 in the majors.

When the Opponents Intervene with a Bid

CS is used even when the opening bid is overcalled or doubled at the one level:

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♥/Dbl	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣ is CS	

All further bids by either partner retain the usual meanings, except that a natural bid in an opposing suit can show either four cards or a strong three. For instance, after the heart overcall, a 2♥ response by North would show four hearts with at least one honor or three good hearts (e.g., KJx), (while denying three-card spade support).

CS does not apply if the 1NT bid is doubled, however. The bidding reverts to standard bidding in that case:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Dbl	2♣ - signoff	

If there is an opposing bid following the 2♣ bid that initiates CS, all doubles are for business, and all bids are natural:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	2♥	Dbl - business	

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl - business	
2NT - natural			
3♣ - may not be weak			

When an Artificial Bid Gets Doubled

When an opponent doubles an artificial bid, including the CS 2♣ bid, any elaborate scheme for always showing stopper(s) or lack of stopper in the doubled suit would get in the way of CS bidding sequences, so we just use common sense. Immediate bids continue the CS sequence, while reopening bids revert to natural bidding.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Dbl
Pass - prefers clubs to spades, club strength			
2♦ - conventional response, poor clubs			
2♥/2♠ - says nothing about clubs			
Rdbl - good clubs, good hand			

The pass or redouble tends to deny five hearts or three spades. "Good clubs" means club strength, at least a double stopper, not necessarily with four-card length. The 2♥ and 2♠ bids do not deny good clubs, however (but 2♦ does).

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Dbl	Pass - playable diamonds	
Rdbl - good diamonds, good hand			
2♥/2♠/2NT/3♣ - normal rebids			

The normal rebids say nothing about diamonds. North could have good diamonds and just not want to complicate things by passing or redoubling.

If the double of an artificial bid gets passed around, a redouble suggests that the doubled contract may be playable, and may be the highest scoring (or only) game. Partner can pass if he agrees. Otherwise the bidding proceeds naturally, with no artificial bids:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Rdbl - to play	
2♦/2♥/2♠/2NT - natural			
3♦/3♥/3♠ - invitational			

When a Natural Bid Gets Doubled

When a natural bid is doubled, a redouble is to play, a pass is a suggestion (not a command) that the contract may be playable, and a bid just ignores the double, continuing the CS sequence. Partner can do what he wants after a pass: redouble (to play) or continue with natural bidding.

Summary

After a 1NT rebid by opener:

All three-level suit jumps by responder are forcing.
 Any two-level suit bid other than 2♣ or a reverse is weak.
 To invite game, responder first bids 2♣ (artificial).
 2♣ followed by 3♣ is a weak signoff, so:
 2♣ followed by 2NT is a game-try club bid.

Opener's action after CS:

Show three-card support for responder's major suit.
 Lacking that, rebid a five-card suit or show an unbid major.
 Lacking either of these, bid 2♦.

When opener shows support for responder's major, responder's next bid of a minor suit or notrump denies five cards in the major.

If responder's next bid after CS is a new suit at the two level, that is a force.

When using CS, if responder shows two suits and then bids notrump or raises opener's suit, she is making a game try. When she bids all three suits other than the one opened, she is forcing to game.

After CS, responder's rebid of her major at the two level shows a five-card suit and a weak hand. Responder must have support for opener's minor, or a minor suit on the side, or both. Opener can pass with a good doubleton in responder's major. Otherwise, he bids 2NT or 3♣, depending on how many clubs he has. Over 2♥ he can bid 2♠ with three strong spades, perhaps leading to a 2NT contract.

When opener shows support for responder's major after CS, responder's jump to 3NT implies four cards in an unbid major, or adequate trump support for opener's hearts.

After a 1NT rebid, a reverse by responder is forcing, and a subsequent raise of opener's suit is also forcing. Use CS with an invitational hand.



FOURTH SUIT ARTIFICIAL

When opener rebids in a new suit, responder often has a problem:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	?

To begin with, a responder who now wants to raise clubs should be able to sign off, invite game, or make a forcing bid in clubs. Standard bidding does not permit all three. In the auction above, responder might have one of these hands:

- 1) ♠3 ♥KJ872 ♦965 ♣J976
- 2) ♠3 ♥AJ872 ♦965 ♣KQ97
- 3) ♠3 ♥AKJ87 ♦965 ♣KQ97

With hand 1) responder bids 2♣, expecting opener to pass or bid 2♥. With 2), responder wants to bid more than 2♣, but is a 3♣ bid forcing or merely invitational? Let's say it's invitational, as most experts play, so 3♣ is the right bid. But what about hand 3)? Now we would like to play 3♣ as forcing. If we do, then we would have to bid 2♣ with hand 2), but surely it's not right that a weak bid should have such a wide range of strength. And if 3♣ is not forcing, then what?

Another sequence:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	?

Responder might have one of these hands:

- 1) ♠AQ875 ♥765 ♦Q32 ♣AQ
- 2) ♠AJ872 ♥765 ♦K2 ♣K76
- 3) ♠AJ9872 ♥7 ♦432 ♣AK7

With 1) responder has no call, unless he plays 3♦ as forcing. If so, what does he do with Kx in clubs instead of AQ? A weak preference of 2♦ would be inadequate. With hand 2) responder wants to invite game, but how? Raising a secondary suit with Kxx is misleading. Besides, 2NT might be the spot if opener has a minimum hand. With 3) responder wants to be in game, but where? Opener might have a little something in spades, but responder can hardly bid 4♠ without some investigating. A 3♠ bid is not forcing, is it? If it is, what does responder do without the club king? Bid just 2♠?

Another:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♦	?

Responder has ♠643 ♥K2 ♦K87 ♣AKJ73. Now what? Without some understanding about fourth suit bids, a 2♠ call may only be postponing the problem. Suppose opener bids 2NT over 2♠ (and what does that bid require?). Should responder raise to 3NT?

Fourth Suit Artificial (FSA), popularly called Fourth Suit Forcing, can handle all these situations, and more, provided that the partnership has an agreement about the requirements for bidding the fourth suit, and about the meanings of subsequent bids by both partners.

FSA is defined as a bid of the fourth suit at the two or three level by responder, when neither partner has previously jumped in a new suit or bid notrump. Higher level fourth suit bids are either real suits, or cue bids, or whatever, and the following is not a conventional fourth suit bid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠

The 1♠ bid is natural. Although it may be based on some three-card holding, opener will assume that 1♠ shows a suit. This is standard procedure. To make up for this, the following is a conventional fourth suit bid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	2♠

The 2♠ bid is FSA, not a regular jump shift, and not a splinter bid in support of hearts (use 3♠ for this). Why not use 1♠ as FSA? Because it is too valuable as a natural bid, and the seldom used 2♠ bid can be used instead.

FSA does not apply when either partner has made a jump in a new suit (except for the last sequence above):

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♠	3♦

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♠
3♣	3♥

These fourth suit bids are natural, showing some high card strength if not a real suit. However:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	3♣
3♦	3♠

The 3♠ bid is FSA, since the jump to 3♣ was not in a new suit.

FSA does not apply when the opponents have bid, but does apply when an opponent has made a takeout double and received no response:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	1♥	Pass/dbl
1♠	Pass	2♦ is FSA	

FSA does not apply in Checkback Stayman sequences:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♣ - Checkback Stayman
2♦	2♠
2NT	3♦ - natural, 4-5-4-0 or 4-4-4-1, not forcing

With FSA a jump preference by responder, or a jump rebid in the same suit, is invitational (as most people play):

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♣

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♥

Neither sequence is forcing. If responder has too strong a hand for these non-forcing rebids, he must choose some other call. The alternative will often be FSA.

After FSA, a 4NT bid by either partner is natural unless a major suit fit has been definitely (not tentatively or implicitly) agreed.

WARNING: DO NOT USE FSA IF AN ADEQUATE NATURAL BID IS AVAILABLE!

Two-Level Fourth Suit Bids

Fourth suit bids at the two level are at least game tries, but responder could have game-going strength or more. The fourth suit bidder may have any holding in the fourth suit, from a singleton to a real suit (no voids, please).

Kings and queens are better when led up to, not through, so avoid bidding the fourth suit bid with a holding like Kx or Qxx. Look for another bid, probably notrump. A doubleton queen is sometimes acceptable, since a notrump bid with Qx in the only unbid suit is somewhat risky. Axx is a common holding for FSA, with the hope that partner will bid notrump with Qx.

Opener's response to FSA is to continue showing his hand, giving priority to supporting partner's major suit with a very strong doubleton (two of the top four honors) or any three cards. He need not have the fourth suit stopped for a 2NT bid; three small cards, Qx, or even a singleton facecard will do in a pinch. Responder will not raise to 3NT without Jxx, xxxx, or better in the suit. Yes, xxx opposite xxx may be good enough, but we can't do everything. Sometimes responder can tell that opener has at least three cards in the suit, and then it's okay to raise with xxx (example later).

Opener makes the call that best describes his hand, not just his holding in the fourth suit. He may bid notrump with certain holdings in the fourth suit, or he may raise the fourth suit, but his first duty is to describe his hand. If some other bid does a better job, he chooses that bid.

Suppose the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥
?	

If opener has ♠A ♥K3 ♦QJ765 ♣QJ832, he bids 3♣, not 2NT, because 3♣ gives a better picture of the hand.

In trying to show his hand, opener may choose to rebid a strong four-card minor suit:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥

With ♠32 ♥76 ♦A10765 ♣AKJ8, opener should now bid 3♣, not 3♦. With AKJ85 of diamonds and A1076 of clubs, he should bid 3♦. Responder must remember that a rebid of the second suit may not be five cards long, although such a rebid does imply that the first suit has at least five cards.

Responder can pass any minimum bid, so opener must not be bashful with a good hand. If he raises the fourth suit bid, or jumps, he shows a good hand and game must be reached:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣
2♦/2♥/2♠/2NT are all non-forcing	
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ are all forcing to game	

Let's examine the meaning of all these bids:

2♦ implies long diamonds, no heart support, probably Jx or worse in clubs, and a minimum hand.

2♥ is usually based on three-card support, but could be a very strong doubleton (KJ, AQ, etc.)

2♠ may not be a five-card suit. Assume a strong four-card suit in a 4=5 hand.

2NT implies a tolerance for notrump, in this case probably at least xxx in clubs (with all that room at the two level to bid something else), and a minimum hand.

3♣ is a good hand with no suitable bid, game-forcing. Denies much in clubs.

3♦ is a good hand with a good diamond suit.

3♥ may not have much in high cards if the shape is 4=3=5=1, because the hands probably fit very well. However, opener does not promise a singleton club.

3♠ is a good hand with six diamonds and five spades, or possibly four very strong spades in a 5-4 or 6-4 hand.

3NT is a good hand with clubs stopped, Qxx or better. It may be chanced with a stiff king.

A raise of the fourth suit is necessary when opener has a good hand but no way to show it conveniently. Perhaps he doesn't want to bypass 3NT with a four-level jump. While the following auction may be difficult, the extra strength will probably provide safety.

If the fourth suit bidder bids again after a minimum rebid by opener, opener must also bid again if game has not been reached and a limit bid has not been made. The limit bids are: any bid by a passed hand, a rebid of the fourth suit, a notrump bid, or a direct raise of opener's last bid:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣
2♠	?

If responder is a passed hand, no bid at this point is forcing. Otherwise:

2NT is invitational, not forcing.

3♣ is not forcing, showing a real suit and an opening bid (but bad fit). To force, bid 3♣ instead of 2♣.

3♦ is forcing (not a direct raise).

3♥ is forcing (but not if opener had bid 2♥).

3♠ is not forcing, showing good three-card support.

A rebid of the fourth suit shows that it is a real suit. Since this bid is made in the face of a possible misfit, each partner having a two-suited hand, it requires a hand of approximately opening bid strength. With less, or with fitting cards in partner's suits, bid notrump instead of using FSA. With more, jump in the fourth suit instead of using FSA. Example:

Opener	Responder
♠AQJ3	♠72
♥5	♥AQ1043
♦KQ973	♦2
♣743	♣AQ952

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣
2♦	3♣
Pass	

Responder would have bid a forcing 3♣ over 1♠ with a better hand, and 1NT over 1♠ with a weaker hand. Opener is happy to pass 3♣ with his bad fit. With a better fit (♠Q1087 ♥K ♦AQ973 ♣J87), he could bid 3NT.

When opener rebids a major at the three level, a rebid of the fourth suit by responder is defined as a slam try in the rebid major:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♥	3♣
3♠	4♣ - slam try in spades

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♦	2♠
3♥	3♠ - slam try in hearts

In either case responder would normally bid notrump rather than show a biddable fourth suit, so this fourth suit rebid is more useful as a device to imply a hand that is too good for a mere raise to game in opener's rebid major. The principle does not apply if opener's rebid suit is a minor (diamonds, spades).

If opener bids 2NT in response to FSA, possibly with only xxx, Qx, or even a singleton king or queen in the fourth suit, responder must not raise to 3NT without at least Ax, Jxx, or xxxx in the suit. She might *pass* with less, however:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	2♦
2NT	Pass

Responder has ♠A98 ♥A7632 ♦Q2 ♣J87. If opener does not have diamonds stopped, 2NT may still be a good contract. If the jack of clubs were the king, responder would have too much to pass 2NT. She must not raise notrump with Qx in the fourth suit, however. A forcing 3♣ would be right.

When responder does not raise notrump, she doesn't necessarily deny strength in the fourth suit. She may be fishing for slam or some superior suit contract, as any suit bid over 2NT is forcing.

If opener jumps to 3NT over the fourth suit bid, he shows a good hand and a stopper in the fourth suit, so responder can pass with a weak doubleton or singleton ace, king, or queen. She may not pass with a smaller singleton in the fourth suit, and if she even thinks of doing so then she should not have used FSA. Conversely, when responder pulls a jump to 3NT back to a suit, she strongly implies a singleton in the fourth suit:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♣	2♦
3NT	4♣

Responder has ♠AJ765 ♥K3 ♦6 ♣J10832. Rather a strange fourth suit bid, but responder thought that 4♣ over 2♣ would sound too strong for this 9 HCP hand, and she wanted to find out if opener perhaps had some spade support or a strong heart suit. Opener's hand: ♠7 ♥AJ842 ♦AJ7 ♣KQ74.

Don't push to make a fourth suit bid, however. This convention is meant for hands that are difficult to bid by other means. Suppose you respond 1♠ to a 1♦ opening with ♠AK874 ♥932 ♦K86 ♣92, and partner rebids 2♣. Your correct call now is an invitational 3♦, not 2♥. Why? Because 2♥ could lead to complications--you have to look ahead. For instance, if partner's next bid over 2♥ is 3♣ you would have to bid 3♦, which is forcing. With ace of clubs instead of the jack, a jump preference to 3♦ would not suffice, and a 2♥ bid would be correct.

Here's another example of looking ahead: You have ♠K32 ♥76 ♦AQ97 ♣Q1087, and partner opens 1♣, you respond 1♦. When he rebids 1♠ it is tempting to use FSA (2♥). If partner has hearts stopped, this hand may play well in notrump. But partner may not have hearts stopped, and may have

to bid 3♦ with a hand such as ♠A1083 ♥J2 ♦K52 ♣AJ32. Too weak to bid further, you would have to play in this inferior contract. So, you must jump to 3♣ over 1♠. Again: Do not use FSA if an adequate natural bid is available.

The fourth suit bid denies four-card support for any major that opener has bid. Any later raise of such a major will be based on good three-card support. A raise to game in a secondarily bid major therefore promises good support for opener's minor suit, in case opener doesn't want to play a 4-3 trump fit:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	2♦
3NT	4♠

Responder has ♠KQ3 ♥A7652 ♦9 ♣K874. Opener passes with ♠AJ104 ♥K ♦KJ4 ♣QJ653, but bids 6♣ with ♠J765 ♥K ♦AJ5 ♣AQJ65 (playing responder for a singleton diamond). With weaker spades, responder would have bid 4♣ over 3NT, hoping to raise spades later.

Responder should be very careful about making a fourth suit bid with much more than opening bid strength. Opener will assume that responder's hand is limited to just game-going strength at most, and will jump to 3NT with as much as 18 HCP. Responder could hardly raise this to 4NT with only 15 HCP and, say, xx in the fourth suit. Opener might also have just 15 HCP, and nine tricks could be the limit of the two hands. If responder does have a very strong hand, she is on her own. Until she makes a definite slam try, not just any old jump to game, opener will figure her for no more than mere game-going strength.

FSA can be used in many ways to show hands that are otherwise difficult to bid. Opposite a 1♣ opening, you respond 1♥ with ♠AJ9 ♥KQ8765 ♦3 ♣QJ7. Opener rebids 1♠. You should now bid 2♦, planning to follow with a forcing 3♥ bid. If opener bids 3NT over 2♦, you bid 4♥, which implies a singleton diamond and strongly suggests a 3-3 holding in opener's suits (with four clubs, the usual bid over 3NT would be 4♣). It also tends to deny a stronger heart suit, with which you would bid 3♥ or 4♥ over 1♠. Opener can now bid 4♠ over 4♥ with ♠KQ76 ♥2 ♦QJ4 ♣AK1062.

If the Fourth Suit Bid Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Dbl

Opener passes with a minimum hand and nothing important to show, such as a good long suit, trump support for spades, or enough heart strength to redouble. A redouble shows Ax, Jxx, or 10xxx or better in the fourth suit, a holding that will play okay in notrump opposite Qx or singleton king. Opener cannot bid 2NT or redouble with just three small cards in the fourth suit, but he can still bid 2NT with Qx or a singleton king. Responder won't raise notrump without Qx, Jxx, 10xxx, or better

(9xxx is not good enough here). In this situation North can raise a 2NT bid to 3NT with Qx because South won't bid 2NT with three small.

If a Raise of the Fourth Suit Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Dbl		

A redouble by North shows a heart stop, probably Ax(x).

Three-Level Fourth Suit Bids

Responder's FSA bid at the three level is forcing to game. Opener need not make a precipitous leap with a good hand, unless the hand is best described that way. A 3NT bid shows at least Qx or Jxx in the fourth suit.

Responder must pull 3NT back to a suit with a weak doubleton in the fourth suit (no singletons at this level, please). Opener can rebid notrump (4NT) with safety in the fourth suit. If opener then bids the fourth suit, that is a cue bid showing the ace. In this auction, opener has A65 in diamonds, responder 32:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
3♣	3♦
3NT	4♣
4♦	4NT
Pass	

If opener had K65 in diamonds, he would just bid 4NT over 4♣.



FORCING AND NON-FORCING SITUATIONS

Responses to One of a Suit

1♣	1NT	3♠	Not forcing, but distributionally strong and invitational. Responder's hand is not suitable for a double.
1♥	P	3♥	Limit raises, invitational. See section 3-4.
1♠	P	3♠	
1♦	P	3♦	Limit raises, invitational. See section 3-5.
1♣	P	3♣	
1♣/1♦	1♠	2NT	Not forcing, as if responder were a passed hand. Bid 3NT with a stronger hand. Stoplight (section 4-12) applies. No Omnibus.
1♥	1♠	2NT	Omnibus response (section 3-10). With 11-12 HCP, bid a minor
1♦/1♥/1♠	2♣	2NT	Not forcing. Non-jump responses of 2NT are invitational, showing 11-12 HCP and stopper(s) in the opposing suit.. No Stoplight.
1♥/1♠	P/Dbl	3NT	Forcing, artificial strong raise. See section 3-11.
1♥	1♠	3NT	Forcing, artificial raise. Note the double jump. Single jumps to 3NT are natural bids.
1♥	3♠	4♣	Forcing. Non-game new suit responses by an unpassed hand are forcing.
1♠	2♣/2♦	4♥	A forcing splinter bid. See section 3-7, Splinter Responses to a Major Opening.

Rebids by Opener

1♠	P	2♦	P	
3♠				Not quite forcing. Responder can pass with a weak response and a singleton or void in spades.
1♠	P	2♦	P	Forcing, and promises another bid even if responder bids 3♦.
3♣				

1♠ P 2♥ 3♣
3♦

Also forcing, but does not promise another bid if responder bids 3♥. Here the bidding has been crowded, and opener may have planned a 2♠ rebid over a 2♥ response with something like ♠AK1074 ♥Q3 ♦AJ96 ♣42. A weaker hand should pass.

1♣ 1♦ 1♠ P
2♥

Not forcing unless responder has five or more spades. He can pass with ♠KJ32 ♥7654 ♦Q85 ♣62. See section 4-3.

1♦ P 2♣ P
2♠

Forcing. Reverses are forcing on a two-over-one bidder, and promise another bid unless responder merely rebids her suit or returns to opener's diamonds. A return to hearts, however, (e.g., 1♥=2♣=2♠=3♥) is forcing, as is a 2NT bid.

1♠ 2♣ 2♠ 3♣
3♦/3♥

Forcing, a game try. A double of 3♣ would be takeout, with perhaps little interest in game.

1♥ P 2♦ P
2NT

Not forcing, but with a long broken suit and a weak hand responder should bid 3♦ to sign off.

1♦ 2♥ 2♠ P
3♣

Forcing, even if 2♠ was by a passed hand. A 4♣ bid would have been a splinter. Does not promise another bid (nor does 2♠).

1♦ 1♥ P P
3♣

Not forcing, highly invitational

1♥ 2♦ 2NT P
3♣

Normal force, not Stoplight (2NT not a jump)

1♥ P 2♣ P
4♣

Forcing. Jump raises of a two-over-one minor suit response are forcing to game. If responder now bids 4NT, that is natural, showing a minimum hand such as ♠K83 ♥64 ♦Q1084 ♣AQ75

1♥ P 1♠ 2♦
3♣

Not forcing, but strong

1♣ P 1♠ 2♥
3♦

Forcing. Reverses at the three level are forcing, even after a one-over-one response.

1♠ 2♥ Dbl 3♣
P

A forcing pass. If the doubler is not strong enough to keep the ball rolling, she should not have doubled--no matter how many hearts she has.

1♥ Dbl Rdbl P
3♥

Not forcing, but the redoubler should pass only with a small singleton heart and a minimum redouble. Opener should bid 4♥ if able to make game opposite such a hand.

1♣ P 1♥ P
2♣ P 2♠ P
3♥

Not forcing. If opener has three small hearts and extra values, he must bid 4♥ (responder guarantees five in this sequence). A reverse by responder does not promise another bid if opener's next bid is discouraging.

1♣ P 1♦ P
1NT P 2♠ P
3♠

Forcing. Ruffing values in responder's hand ought to produce game even if opener has a minimum. A jump to 4♠ by opener would imply not only good spades but good clubs and a diamond fit. Can opener have good spades? Yes, because he is supposed to rebid 1NT with a minimum 4-3-3-3 hand: ♠KQ32 ♥1087 ♦Q32 ♣AK3. See Rebids by Opener, section 4-1.

1♣ P 1♥ P
1♠ P 3♣ P
3♥

Forcing, accepting the game try. Opener must pass 3♣ with ♠AJ97 ♥762 ♦63 ♣AQJ3. Exchange the ♥7 for the ♥Q and the 3♥ bid is okay. If this seems too aggressive, raise a 1♥ response to 2♥ instead of bidding 1♠.

1♥ P 1♠ P
2♠ P 3♣ P
3♥

Not forcing. Shows five or six hearts and only three-card spade support. To accept the game try, opener must bid something else, perhaps even 4♥.

1♣ P 1♥ P
 1NT P 2NT P
 3♥

Forcing, accepting the invitation to game and giving responder a choice of contracts. Opener no doubt has less than adequate trump support for hearts, since a good hand raises hearts immediately with J10x or better. He could have ♠A10 ♥972 ♦AQJ10 ♣K1092.

Rebids by Responder

1♣ P 1♥ P
 1♠ P 3♣/3♥

Not forcing. Bid 2♦ (Fourth Suit Artificial -see section 4-10) if stuck for a good bid with a game-going hand.

1♥ P 2♣ P
 2♦ P 3♥

Not forcing, merely a heart raise. A bid of 2♥ would be a preference, not a raise.

1♥ P 1♠ P
 1NT P 3♣

Forcing. After a 1NT rebid by opener, all three level jumps by an unpassed hand are forcing. Use Checkback Stayman (section 4-9) with an invitational hand.

1♦ P 1♥ 1♠
 P P 2♣

Not forcing. When opener refuses to make a free rebid, a non-jump new suit by responder is not forcing unless it is a reverse.

1♣ P 1♠ P
 1NT P 2♥/2♦

Not forcing. A new suit by responder after opener's 1NT rebid is weak (barring reverses), but 2♣ is Checkback Stayman.

1♣ P 1♠ P
 2♣ P 2♥

Not forcing, but invitational. May be a stretch at matchpoints, when you can't risk missing a heart contract. Forcing at IMP scoring.

1♣ P 1♠ P
 2♣ P 2♦

Forcing. Pass with no game interest.

1♣ P 1♦ P
 2♣ 2♥ 2♠

Forcing. Reverses by responder are forcing, even in competition.

1♣ P 1♠ P
 2♣ P 3♠

Not forcing. Responder's jump rebids in the same suit are not forcing unless opener has rebid 1NT or reversed (whereupon all jumps are forcing).

1♣ P 1♠ P
2♣ P 4♣

Forcing

1♦ P 1♠ P
2♣ P 2♥

Fourth Suit Artificial. See section 4-10.

1♠ P 1NT P
2NT P 3♣

Both partners have made limit bids, so how can one of them start forcing?
Responder has a long weak club suit, doesn't like notrump.

1♠ P 2♠ P
2NT P 3♥

Not forcing. With a hand like ♠Q65 ♥KQ943 ♦8 ♣6542 responder must bid 4♥, not 3♥, which he would bid without the queen of hearts. This jump to 4♥ is not useful as a splinter bid, because slam is out of the question after a single raise and mere 2NT rebid. A minor suit rebid is somewhat of a signoff, weak hand, six-card suit.

1♠ P 2♠ P
3♣ P 3♥

Forcing. Responder may not have a heart suit, and is perhaps making a trial bid with a holding such as KJx. The difference between this and the previous auction is that opener, with five spades and four clubs, is unlikely to have heart support. A 3♥ bid is therefore more valuable as strength-showing than suit-showing.

1♠ P 2♣ P
3♣ P 3♠

Forcing. Responder shows too much for an original 2♠ raise and opener shows extra values by going to the three level. The logic of the auction says that game will be bid.

1♣ P 1♠ P
3♣ P 3♠

Forcing. Whenever responder bids over a strong but non-forcing jump by opener, opener must bid again. The only way to stop short of game now is for opener to bid 4♣.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♥
3♣ P 3♠

Not forcing. Opener has a good hand, but may not have been planning a jump to 3♣ over 1♠. If he was stretching, he can pass 3♠.

1♣ P 1♦ P
2NT P 3♣

Forcing. See Stoplight, section 4-12.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♦
2NT P 3♣/3♠

Not forcing, weak signoff. Stoplight does not apply when the 2NT bid is not a jump.

- 1♣ P 1♠ P
2♦ P 4♣ Splinter bid in support of diamonds, not a club raise. Denies five spades. 3♦ would be invitational and 3♣ a weak preference, so responder must often resort to Fourth Suit Artificial (section 4-10) to keep the bidding going.
- 1♥ P 2♦ P
2NT P 3♦ Not forcing. When the 2NT bid is non-jump, a repeat of the same suit is weak, warning that responder's suit may not run at notrump. Opener needs a diamond fit to go on. Any other three level bid by responder, including 3♥, would be forcing.
- 1♦ P 1♥ P
3NT P 4♠ Forcing. This is a notrump raise, not a natural bid. Responder's hearts need a good fit to be useful for slam. A natural new-suit 4♠ bid is not available over a natural 3NT bid.
- 1♣ P 1♥ 4♦
P P 4♠ Not quite forcing. Responder probably has a 4-5-1-3 hand, so opener can run to clubs or hearts if he lacks spade support.
- 1♦ P 1♠ P
3NT P 4♥ Not forcing, but invitational. Do not rescue a 3NT bid with a very weak hand.
- 1♥ P 2♦ P
3♣ P 3♦ Forcing. When opener voluntarily goes to the level of three, he promises to bid again even if responder merely rebids her suit. Had the 3♣ been made in competition (e.g., over a 2♠ overcall) 3♦ would not be forcing.
- 1♠ P 2♣ P
2NT P 3♠ Forcing. Responder's hand is unlimited. He is probably offering a choice between 4♠ and 3NT, but he could even have slam in mind.
- 1♥ P 3♣ P
4♣ P 4♥ Not quite forcing, but opener will seldom pass with this double fit.
- 1♠ P 3♥ P
4♥ P 4♠ Forcing, since responder could presumably pass 4♥ with a minimum jump takeout.
- 1♣ P 1♠ P
2♥ P 3♥ Forcing. When a reverse into a *major* gets raised, opener must go on unless the original response was 1NT.

- 1♥ P 2♣ P
2♠ P 3♥ Forcing. A return to hearts at the level of three is forcing on opener, unless the original response was 1NT. Responder must have heart support and too much for a raise of 1♥ to 2♥.
- 1♦ P 1♠ P
2♥ P 2NT Not forcing. Theoretically denies five spades, but might have five weak spades and strong clubs: ♠108765 ♥J2 ♦85 ♣AQJ9
- 1♥ P 2♣ P
2♠ P 2NT Forcing, in view of the two-over-one response and opener's reverse. If opener had rebid 2♦, 2NT would not be forcing.
- 1♦ P 1♠ P
2♥ P 3♦ Not forcing, weak signoff. Denies five spades.
- 1♦ P 2♣ P
2♥ P 3♦ Also a weak signoff, despite the two-over-one response: ♠432 ♥8 ♦Q87 ♣AQ10874. A 3♣ rebid would also be weak, and a 2♠ rebid is Fourth Suit Artificial (see section 4-10).
- 1♠ P 2♦ P
2♠ P 3♣ Forcing. New suit bids at the three level by either partner are usually forcing.
- 1♣ P 1♠ 2♥
P P 3♦ Forcing, despite opener's pass. Without enough to force, responder can double for takeout. See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles.
- 1♣ P 1♠ P
2♠ P 3♣ Forcing. After a raise by opener, a return to opener's suit is usually forcing.
- 1♣ Dbl 1♠ P
2♠ P 3♣ Not forcing, in view of the failure to redouble. Responder has psyched, possibly, but opener must not pass when holding four spades.
- 1♥ P 1♠ P
2♠ P 3♥ Forcing. If responder has ♠AK93 ♥Q87 ♦42 ♣J432 she must respond 2♣ instead of 1♠, or she may find herself in this forcing situation.
- 1♠ P 2♥ P
3♥ P 3♠ Forcing. Don't bid 2♥ with a four-card suit, spade support, and 11 points or so--or you might find yourself in this forcing sequence. With five hearts and a doubtful hand, just pass 3♥.
- 1♠ P 2♣ P
2♥ P 3♥ Not forcing: ♠2 ♥10987 ♦A65 ♣KJ873

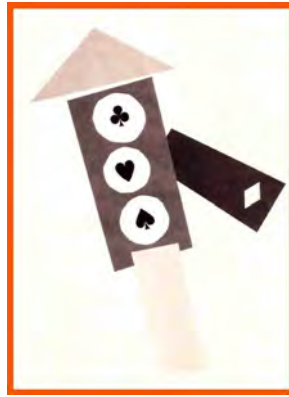
1♣ P 1♥ P
 1NT P 2♠ P
 2NT P 3♣ Forcing. After a 1NT rebid, a reverse followed by a raise is a forcing sequence. Use Checkback Stayman with an invitational hand.

1♣ P 1♥ P
 2♣ P 2♠ P
 2NT P 3♣ Not quite forcing. Responder must raise to 3NT, jump to 4♣ (promising short diamonds), or bid 3♦, with a game-going hand.

1♦ P 1♥ P
 2♣ P 2♠ P
 3♣ P 3♥ Forcing. After Fourth Suit Artificial (2♠) only a direct raise (4♣ over 3♣), a rebid of the fourth suit, or a notrump bid is non-forcing.

1♦ P 2♣ P
 2♦ P 2♠ P
 3♣ P 3♦ Forcing. Responder could presumably have passed 3♣ (or bid 3♦ over 2♦) with insufficient values to force.

1♣ P 1♥ P
 1♠ P 1NT P
 2NT P 3♣/3♥ Forcing, accepting the game try. Responder cannot say she likes notrump and then say she wants to stop in a suit. The 3♣ bid could be based on something like: ♠A9 ♥J9732 ♦J75 ♣QJ7. A 3♥ bid should be based on a good heart suit. (3♣ or 3♥ implies nervousness about diamonds).



STOPLIGHT

Have you noticed how often partner jumps to 2NT when you respond to an opening bid with a hand such as ♠K8742 ♥J9432 ♦6 ♣82? Of course you must pass, even though you know that three of a major would probably be a better contract. Having stretched to respond 1♠, you dare not bid 3♥, which is forcing. Game is unlikely, but could be made if opener has a good fit with both majors, such as ♠AQ3 ♥KQ10 ♦AK7 ♣J963. If you bid 3♥, however, partner is sure to turn up with ♠Q6 ♥K85 ♦AKQ3 ♣KQ32. Three hearts is the right spot, but you can't stop there.

Another situation: You open 1♦ with ♠AQ83 ♥K4 ♦QJ9762 ♣4 and partner responds 1♥. Your 1♠ rebid fetches a 2NT rebid from partner:

You	Partner
1♦	1♥
1♠	2NT

A 2NT rebid by responder is invitational, not forcing, for most partnerships. In this auction partner perhaps has a hand of this sort: ♠K4 ♥98732 ♦K3 ♣AJ82. Three diamonds would be much more comfortable than a notrump contract, but can you stop in 3♦? Isn't any further bid by you an acceptance of partner's game invitation?

If you do play that a 3♦ bid now would be a signoff, then you will have trouble with a hand like ♠AQ83 ♥K4 ♦AQJ872 ♣4. You must bid 3NT over 2NT, missing an easy slam if partner has the hand shown. If you decide to go slamming in diamonds, partner may turn up with an unsuitable hand: ♠J4 ♥AQ832 ♦65 ♣KJ87. For this reason, and to avoid the possibility of misunderstandings, it is common practice to play any further bid after an invitational jump to 2NT as an acceptance of the game invitation. If the game try is not to be accepted, then 2NT must be passed.

Most partnerships make one exception to this rule: After a third or fourth seat opening, a rebid of the same suit by opener is a signoff bid after a 2NT response:

Opener	Responder (a passed hand)
1♠	2NT
3♠ is a signoff	

Any other rebid by opener is forcing, and is in general an acceptance of the game try by responder. With a hand such as $\spadesuit KQ876 \heartsuit A9762 \diamond 3 \clubsuit 42$ opener should not rebid $3\heartsuit$, which is forcing. Opener would like responder to take a choice between $3\heartsuit$ and $3\spadesuit$, but how can that be done? There is, however, a small chance of making game in a major. Responder could have $\spadesuit AJ3 \heartsuit KQ8 \diamond Q87 \clubsuit 8753$. The only way to reach game is for opener to make the terrible overbid of $3\heartsuit$. Then responder is sure to have $\spadesuit J10 \heartsuit J108 \diamond AQ84 \clubsuit K953$, and the result is a defeated game contract in hearts or notrump.

What we need is a "stoplight" bid, one that says, "Stop! I'm light!" The logical call, since it is the cheapest, is a bid of $3\clubsuit$. After any non-forcing jump to 2NT, a bid of $3\clubsuit$ says, "I think we should stop below game, unless you have a terrific fit. Please bid $3\diamond$, and I'll clarify my hand--perhaps by passing!" Example:

Opener	Responder (a passed hand)
$1\spadesuit$	2NT
$3\clubsuit$ - Stoplight	

A 2NT response by a passed hand is not forcing, but opener wants to stop in three of a suit. Opener may have $\spadesuit A87632 \heartsuit KQ4 \diamond 4 \clubsuit Q32$ or $\spadesuit AQ863 \heartsuit 9 \diamond A8763 \clubsuit 42$. When responder now bids $3\diamond$, opener bids $3\spadesuit$ with the first hand and passes with the second. In this sequence responder should not bid $3\diamond$ with a preference for spades over diamonds, because opener almost always has at least five spades. With $\spadesuit J109 \heartsuit AJ5 \diamond Q92 \clubsuit KJ74$ responder bids $3\spadesuit$, not $3\diamond$. With four hearts instead of four clubs responder bids $3\heartsuit$ with the spade preference,, in case opener has spades and hearts. Another example:

Opener	Responder
$1\heartsuit$	$1\spadesuit$
2NT	$3\clubsuit$ - Stoplight

Now opener must bid $3\diamond$ with equal length in spades and diamonds, because partner could have more diamonds than spades. He could have any of these hands:

- 1) $\spadesuit J97632 \heartsuit 4 \diamond Q8 \clubsuit J642$
- 2) $\spadesuit KJ765 \heartsuit 543 \diamond J943 \clubsuit 7$
- 3) $\spadesuit A873 \heartsuit 4 \diamond J86543 \clubsuit 65$
- 4) $\spadesuit Q9742 \heartsuit 4 \diamond K10832 \clubsuit 42$

Responder wants to stop in $3\spadesuit$ with hand 1), unless opener has a fine spade fit with quick tricks outside. With hand 2) responder will bid $3\heartsuit$ if opener bids $3\diamond$, offering opener a choice between $3\heartsuit$ and $3\spadesuit$ as a final contract. With 3) responder hopes to stop in $3\diamond$. Otherwise the contract will be $4\diamond$, which figures to be better than 2NT, or $3\spadesuit$ (giving responder a chance to practice playing a 4-3 trump suit with a 6-2 suit on the side). With 4) there is a good chance that responder will end up playing $3\diamond$ with a 5-3 fit in both spades and diamonds. The difference is unimportant at rubber bridge or IMP

scoring, and stopping anywhere at the three level is likely to be a top score (or if not, a bottom score) in a matchpoint contest.

An important sequence:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥/1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣ - Stoplight	

North must have bid a five-card major, so South can show support instead of bidding 3♦. If North had only four of the major, four-card support for the minor, and a weak hand, she would have raised the opening immediately. It is incorrect to respond in the major with such a hand. If the response was 1♠, opener can bid a four-card heart suit on the way to 3♠, in case responder has hearts.

Stoplight is often useful in takeout double sequences:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣ - Stoplight

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣ - Stoplight		

West has a minimum double and an unbalanced hand that includes a good five-card suit. He thinks that the partnership should stop short of game, despite East's 11 (or so) HCP, but he doesn't like the idea of passing 2NT. East must now bid 3♦, which the doubler will either pass or correct to three of a major. A bid of a new suit instead of using Stoplight would be forcing.

The Stoplight bid is not an absolute command to play at the three level. Suppose the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
2NT	3♣ - Stoplight

Responder probably wants to stop in 3♦, but opener can bid 3NT with a great diamond fit and fast tricks outside. On the way to 3NT he can show a four-card major previously bypassed, in case responder has a 6-4 diamonds-major hand.

May the Stoplight bid ever be passed? Not usually, but I can think of three situations where it might be:

Opener	Responder (a passed hand)
1♣	2NT
3♣ - Stoplight	

Opener usually has a six or seven-card club suit with a weak hand, but could have a weak 5-5 in the black suits. Responder may pass with three clubs and a doubleton spade. Otherwise she bids her lowest-ranking non-doubleton (opener could have any 5=6 hand).

Another:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♠	2NT
3♣ - Stoplight	

Responder may now pass with four clubs, but not with three. Opener might have ♠KQ76 ♥4 ♦Q873 ♣KQJ2, planning to pass 3♦ if responder has fewer than four clubs.

Another:

Responder	Opener
Pass	1♣
2♦	3♣

Playing Two-Four-One jump responses by a passed hand (described in section 3-17, Responses by a Passed Hand), the 2♦ bid shows a 2NT response. Opener denies a major with the 3♣ bid, so he must have nothing but clubs, and responder usually passes.

But suppose responder has a better hand, and wants to be in game? How can responder show club support in a good hand without going past 3NT, since a 3♣ bid is artificial? We must find another call to show a forward-going club bid in a game-going hand. Bid 3♦ to show clubs? But then how would we show diamonds with a good hand?

Before solving this problem, let's take a look at the bids of 3♥ and 3♠ over 2NT. These bids tell something about our major suit holdings. If instead of using these bids to inform partner about our majors, we ask partner about *his* majors, we can make that inquiry with just one bid. By using one bid to serve the purpose of two bids, we gain back the bid we used for Stoplight.

The bid that asks partner about the majors should obviously be 3♦. After a non-forcing jump to 2NT, a 3♦ bid asks, "Do you have one of the following: 1) an unbid four-card major suit? 2) support for a major that I have bid? 3) a rebiddable holding in a major that you have bid? With two of these, bid 3♥; with none, bid 3NT." If partner has previously denied a four-card major (e.g., in response to a takeout double), then the 3♦ inquiry asks for a three-card major.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2NT	3♦?
3♥ - five hearts, may have spade support	
3♠ - spade support, four-card heart suit	
3NT - neither of the above	

The 3♦ inquiry is forcing to game, since Stoplight is used with weak hands.

Now we have two unused bids--3♥ and 3♠--which we can use to show a club or diamond bid in a game-going hand. After a non-forcing jump to 2NT, a 3♥ bid shows a normal forward-going 3♣ bid, and a 3♠ bid shows a normal forward-going 3♦ bid:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2NT	3♥ shows clubs
	3♠ shows diamonds

Opener now bids as if responder had made a normal forcing bid in the indicated minor suit.

The artificial nature of a 3♥ or 3♠ bid still applies when the minors have been bid previously:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
2NT	3♥/3♠

A 3♥ bid shows club support, while a 3♠ bid shows a rebiddable diamond suit. Both bids are an acceptance of opener's game invitation.

Stoplight is also used to differentiate between a slam try and a signoff in game:

1)	Opener	Responder
	1♣	1♠
	2NT	3♣ - Stoplight
	3♦	4♠
2)	Opener	Responder
	1♣	1♠
	2NT	4♠

Sequence 1) denies interest in slam, a signoff, while sequence 2) shows a desire for slam if opener's hand is suitable. The same principle applies after all invitational jumps to 2NT:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2NT	3♣ - Stoplight
3♦	4♥

Responder has at least 5-5 in the majors and little interest in slam.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2NT	3♦ - asking about majors
3♠/3NT	4♥

Since opener has denied four hearts or spade support, responder must be at least 5-5 in the majors. Since he did not use Stoplight, this sequence indicates some interest in slam. Why not jump to 4♥ over 2NT? Because that is a splinter bid, showing something like ♠AQJ10432 ♥6 ♦K76 ♣J4. See section 4-5, Splinter Rebids by Responder.

And finally, what does it mean when 3♣ is followed by 3NT? It can only show a desire to play 4♣ unless partner has a very good fit in clubs. That's *very* good, because the Stoplight bidder may have only seven clubs to the 10 in a weak hand. If he has previously bid a major, he has only four.

If an artificial bid gets doubled, the meaning of a redouble depends on whether the suit has been previously bid in a natural sense:

1) North East South West

1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Dbl
			Rdbl

2) North East South West

1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Dbl
			Rdbl

In sequence 1), where diamonds have not been bid naturally, the redouble just shows a double stopper or better in diamonds, not a desire to play in 3♦ doubled. In sequence 2) diamonds have been bid as a real suit previously, so the redouble shows good diamonds and suggests that perhaps a 3♦ contract can be made. South may use judgment in deciding whether to pass or bid on.

Stoplight is used when an opponent has bid, but remember that the 2NT bid must be a jump for Stoplight to apply:

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♦	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣ - Stoplight	

However:

North	East	South	West
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
2NT	Pass	3♣ is natural, weak	

Stoplight does not apply when the other side has made a takeout double (since a jump to 2NT over an opposing takeout double is conventional, not natural). It does apply after a jump 2NT advance of an overcall:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣ - Stoplight		
	3♦ - asks about the majors		
	3♥ - club suit		
	3♠ - diamond suit		

What should this auction show?:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥/3♠?	

Answer: Six diamonds and a five-card major, in a weak hand. Not forcing, theoretically, as opener has other ways to bid such a hand when holding game values (e.g., jump to game in the major).

Stoplight won second prize from the International Bridge Press Association for the best article on a system or convention in the year 1978. Terence Reese was one of the judges.

Business Doubles of Overcalls

When opener doubles a non-raise suit bid by RHO after partner has responded, that is a penalty double. As with all penalty doubles in competition, partner may pull the double with a hand that is unsuitable for defense, particularly when short in the doubled suit.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♣
Dbl - penalty double			

A pull of this double to 2♥ is a weak action, not forcing. Therefore we use 2NT as a conventional bid showing 5-5 in spades-hearts, too strong for a 2♥ bid and not strong enough for a forcing jump to 3♥.

The conventional meaning of 2NT applies when responder can bid the fourth suit at the two or three level

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	3♣
Dbl	Pass	3♥ - not forcing	
3NT - 5-5 in the majors, too strong for 3♥			

Had the overcall been 3♦, North would have to choose between 3♥, not forcing, and 4♥, when holding both majors, as 3NT would be natural.

Responder can also double an overcall for penalty:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	2♦	Dbl - penalty double	
2NT - natural			

In this case there is no conventional takeout of the double, and 2NT is natural. Opener can pull the double with a hand unsuited for defense, particularly when short in the doubled suit.

As with all penalty doubles, partner may prefer to bid a game if that appears to be a more profitable call than a pass.