

BIDDING CONVERSATIONS - WEEK 3
WEAK TWO OPENING BIDS AND RESPONSES

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INTRODUCTION

When you pick up your hand there is about a 65.0% chance that it will contain less than 13 declarer points and only about a 0.8% chance that it will contain 22 or more declarer or high card points.

For example, the hand on the right has 8 good high card points, 1 weak high card point, and 2 long suit distribution points for a total of 10/11 declarer points.

Because it is 65 times more likely that you will pick up a weak hand instead of a strong hand, bridge experts have developed two complimentary conventions that can be used to open some of the weak hands while preserving the ability to open all of the strong hands:

SOUTH - YOU
♠ K 6 2
♥ K Q 9 6 5 3
♦ J 8
♣ T 4

- **Weak Two Opening Bids (*Invitational*)**

Natural two bids used to open hands that have:

- ✓ At least six diamonds, hearts, or spades
- ✓ At least two of the top four honors if not vulnerable *or*
At least three of the top five honors if vulnerable
- ✓ No side four card major
- ✓ 7-12 declarer (5-10 high card) points if not vulnerable *or*
10-12 declarer (8-10 high card) points if vulnerable.

- **Strong Two Club Opening Bid (*Forcing*)**

An *artificial* 2♣ bid used to open hands that have:

- ✓ 22 or more declarer points *or* 22 or more high card points.

There are several advantages to using this combination of conventions:

- You will be able to open some of the weak hands without losing the ability to open all of the strong hands. About 3.5 percent of your hands that have 7-12 declarer points will qualify for a weak two opening bid.
- A weak two opening preempts your opponents from exchanging information using one level bids and may force them to begin at the three level if they want to enter the bidding.

WEAK TWO OPENING BIDS

The examples on the next page illustrate several opening bid scenarios.

OPEN BID EXAMPLE 1			
SOUTH - YOU			
♠ A Q T 9 7 2			
♥ 8 4			
♦ K 9 5			
♣ 6 4			
VULNERABLE			
East	South	West	North
Pass	2♠		

OPEN BID EXAMPLE 2			
SOUTH - YOU			
♠ 4 3			
♥ A K J T 9 2			
♦ 9 3			
♣ Q J 6			
South	West	North	East
1♥			

OPEN BID EXAMPLE 3			
SOUTH - YOU			
♠ J T 9 3			
♥ 8 2			
♦ A Q T 7 6 2			
♣ 5			
VULNERABLE			
East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass		

• **Open Bid Example 1**

You have 11 declarer points (9 HCP + 2 ♠ LSP) and a good six-card spade suit. This is an ideal hand for a *weak 2♠* opener regardless of vulnerability.

• **Open Bid Example 2**

You have 13 declarer points (11 HCP + 2 ♥ LSP). The high quality of the long heart suit makes up for the low quality of the club high card points. This hand should be opened **1♥** in first or second seat. Because of the quality of the heart suit, in third seat you might consider opening a *weak 2♥* instead of **1♥** to preempt your opponents.

• **Open Bid Example 3**

There are two reasons to pass. You only have 9 declarer points (7 HCP + 2 ♦ LSP) which is not quite enough to venture a *weak 2♦* when vulnerable. The hand also has a side four card major so it violates the guidelines for a *weak two* opener.

RESPONDING TO A WEAK TWO OPENING BID

Since a weak two opening bid gives the responder (and the opponents) a good description of opener's hand, the responder can evaluate the strength and shape of the partnership. Responder's choices are:

- **Make a preemptive sign-off bid** (*opener must pass*):
 - ✓ Raise opener's suit.
 - ✓ Jump to any game.
- **Make a forcing bid** (*opener must rebid*):
 - ✓ Bid a new 5+ card suit with at least two of the top four honors.
 - ✓ Bid 2NT to ask opener to bid a new suit with a *feature*. A feature is a guaranteed entry, an A or a KQ, into opener's hand.
- **Pass**

WEAK TWO BIDDING CONVERSATIONS

PLAYER	BIDDING
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Opener Opens the bidding:

2♦	Promises at least six cards with no side four-card major, 7-12 declarer points with two of top four honors if not vulnerable or 10-12 declarer points with three of top five honors if vulnerable.
2♥	
2♠	

Responder

2NT	Artificial, forcing. Promises at least an opening hand.
Raise Open	Sign-off. Promises support in opener's suit. Usually a preemptive raise. <i>Directs opener to pass.</i>
New Suit	Forcing. Promises a strong hand with a good a five card or longer suit.
3NT	Sign off. <i>Directs opener to pass.</i>
Game Bid	Sign-off. Promises a strong hand with a good six card or longer suit. <i>Directs opener to pass.</i>

Opener If responder bid a new suit (forcing):

Raise Resp	Promises three card support or a doubleton with an honor in responder's bid suit.
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If responder bid **2NT** (forcing) or a new suit (forcing):

Rebid Open	Indicates a minimum opening (5-7 HCP) with or without a feature in a side suit. ¹
New Suit	Indicates a maximum opening (8-10 HCP) and a feature in the suit (the A or KQ).
3NT	Indicates a maximum opening (8-10 HCP) and no feature in a side suit.

Responder Passes, sets final contract or explores for slam.

¹ Some partnerships prefer that an opener with a feature always rebids the feature suit regardless of the strength of the hand. Opener rebids the original suit only if the weak hand does not have a feature.

When opener makes a weak two opening bid, opener fully describes the shape and strength of their hand. Unless partner makes a forcing response, opener should not make another bid.

EXAMPLE 1: ASK FOR FEATURE - DISCOURAGE GAME							
WEST		West	North	East	South	EAST	
♠ 9 8		2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass	♠ A K 6 5	
♥ Q J T 9 6 4		3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	♥ A 5	
♦ 9 2						♦ K T 7 5	
♣ K 9 6						♣ 8 4 3	

- **West:** Has 8 declarer points (6 HCP + 2 ♥ LSP) and six hearts with three of the top five honors in a solid sequence. Because the partnership is not vulnerable, West opens a *weak 2♥*.
- **East:** Has 14 high card points which gives the partnership 21-26 (14+7 to 14+12) total points so a game is possible. East responds an *artificial 2NT* to force West to refine the description of the hand.
- **West:** Rebids *3♥* to describe a hand with only 7-9 (5-7 HCP) declarer points and no interest in game.
- **East:** Now knows the partnership only has 22-24 (15+7 to 15+9) total points which is not enough to risk a game.

EXAMPLE 2: ASK FOR FEATURE - ENCOURAGE GAME							
WEST		South	West	North	East	EAST	
♠ K Q T 9 4 2		Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT	♠ J 8	
♥ A 5 4		Pass	3♥	Pass	4♠	♥ K Q 7 3	
♦ T 7		Pass	Pass	Pass		♦ A 9 4 2	
♣ 9 5						♣ A 7 3	

- **West:** Has 11 declarer points (9 HCP + 2 ♠ LSP) and opens a *weak 2♠* to describe a hand with 7-12 declarer points (not vulnerable) and at least six spades with two of the top four honors.
- **East:** Counting the ♠J in partner's suit, East has 14 high card points which gives the partnership 21-26 (14+7 to 14+12) total points so a game is possible. East responds an *artificial 2NT* to force West to refine the description of the hand.
- **West:** Rebids *3♥* to describe a hand with 10-12 (8-10 HCP) declarer points and a feature in hearts.
- **East:** Now knows the partnership has 24-26 (14+10 to 14+12) total points, an eight card spade fit, and shortness in other suits. East has the ♥K, so West's feature must be the ♥A. Since most of West's points must be in spades and hearts, it is unlikely that West has any honors in diamonds or clubs which makes a no trump contract risky. East bids the ♠4 game instead of 3NT.

EXAMPLE 3: PREEMPTIVE RAISE OF OPENER'S SUIT									
WEST			West	North	East	South	EAST		
♠ A Q T 9 7 6			2♠ Pass 3♠ Pass				♠ K 5 2		
♥ Q J 8			Pass Pass				♥ K 9 6		
♦ T 5							♦ K 8 2		
♣ J 6							♣ T 9 7 2		

- **West:** Has 11 good declarer points (9 HCP + 2 ♠ LSP) and opens a *weak 2♠* to describe a hand with 7-12 declarer points (not vulnerable) and at least six spades with two of the top four honors.
- **East:** Has 9 dummy points (9 HCP) which gives the partnership 16-21 (9+7 to 9+12) total points and a nine-card spade fit. This is not enough to risk a game in spades. But opponents probably have 23 HCP and could have as many a 26 HCP. So East applies the *Law of Total Tricks* to the nine-card spade fit and makes a *preemptive raise* to 3♠ to prevent opponents from bidding a suit at the three level.
- **South:** Without the 3♠ preempt, South would have overcalled 3♦.
- **West:** Since a preemptive raise is a sign-off bid, West passes.

EXAMPLE 4: ASK FOR FEATURE - ENCOURAGE GAME									
WEST			South	West	North	East	EAST		
♠ 8 5			Pass 2♥ Pass 2NT				♠ Q J T 9		
♥ K J T 9 7 3			Pass 3♦ Pass 3NT				♥ A		
♦ K Q 4			Pass Pass Pass				♦ A T 3		
♣ J 7							♣ K Q T 8 6		
VULNERABLE							VULNERABLE		

- **West:** Has 11 declarer points (9 HCP + 2 ♥ LSP) and opens a *weak 2♥* to describe a hand with 10-12 declarer points (vulnerable) and at least six hearts with three of the top five honors (vulnerable).
- **East:** Has 16 high card points with stoppers in all four suits. Because the partnership is vulnerable, East knows that partner has 10-12 declarer points which should include 8-10 high card points. This means the partnership has 24-26 (16+8 to 16+10) total high card points and if there is some other way to get to West's hand, a no trump game is a definite possibility. East responds an *artificial 2NT* to force West to refine the hand's description.
- **West:** Rebids 3♦ to describe a hand with 10-12 declarer points and diamond *feature*.
- **East:** Has the ♦A, which means West's feature must be the ♦KQ. Since there is an excellent chance that East will be able to use a diamond to get to the dummy and run the long hearts, East bids the 3NT game.

COMPETITIVE RESPONSES

Because a weak two opener obviously has a weak hand, an opponent will often enter the auction with a *takeout double* or an *overcall*.

If the weak two opening is doubled, all of responder's choice are the same as they would be without the double. But responder can also redouble for penalty if responder thinks the partnership can set opponent's contract.

If the weak two opening is overcalled, responder can still make the normal responses if there is room to do so. But responder can also double for penalty if responder thinks the partnership can set opponent's contract. Responder can also show a strong hand with an interest in slam by *cue bidding* opponent's suit.

COMPETITIVE EXAMPLE 1
Normal Response

SOUTH - YOU

♠ K Q 2
♥ 8 7
♦ A K 5
♣ Q J 7 5 2

North	East	South	West
2♥	Dbl	2NT	

COMPETITIVE EXAMPLE 2
Preemptive Raise

SOUTH - YOU

♠ 7 6
♥ 7 6 5 4
♦ A K 9
♣ J T 9 4

North	East	South	West
2♥	2♠	4♥	

COMPETITIVE EXAMPLE 3
Double for Penalty

SOUTH - YOU

♠ K J T
♥ K J T 9 8
♦ 4
♣ A T 9 8

North	East	South	West
2♦	2♥	Dbl	

• **Competitive Example 2**

You can apply the *Law of Total Tricks* to the ten-card fit and preempt opponents who might have as many as 27 HCP.

• **Competitive Example 3**

Your partnership has a excellent chance to defeat a 2♥ contract.

WEAK TWO OVERCALLS

The first contract bid by your partnership after one of your opponents has opened the bidding is a competitive bid called an **overcall**. An overcall at the cheapest possible level is a **simple overcall** and an overcall that skips a level is a **jump overcall**.

SIMPLE SUIT OVERCALLS

The requirements for a simple suit overcall are:

- ✓ A good five-card or longer suit.
- ✓ 9-17 declarer points for a one-level overcall
11-17 declarer points for a two-level overcall.

WEAK JUMP OVERCALLS

Partnerships that adopt the **Weak Two / Strong Two Club** convention pair usually treat an overcall that skips one level as a **Weak Jump Overcall**. A weak jump overcall to the two level shows a hand similar to a hand that would have been opened with a weak two bid.

Consider the example on the right. You have 9 declarer points and a six-card suit with three of the top four honors. You could make a simple overcall of **1♠** to describe a hand with 9-17 declarer points and a five-card or longer spade suit.

But a weak jump overcall of **2♠** describes a hand with 7-12 declarer points and at least six spades with two of the top four honors. There are two advantages to the jump overcall:

- ✓ It provides a more precise description of the hand.
- ✓ It takes more bidding room away from your opponents.

The hand on the right has 12 declarer points and a six-card heart suit but it only has one honor in hearts and most of the strength is outside the heart suit. Although the heart suit is not a "good" five-card suit, the sixth card upgrades the value of the suit. A simple overcall of **1♥** is a better description of this hand than a weak jump overcall of **2♥**.

SOUTH - YOU			
♠	K Q J 9 6 5		
♥	8 4		
♦	4		
♣	J 9 6 2		
East	South	West	North
1♦	2♠		

SOUTH - YOU			
♠	Q J 5		
♥	A 9 8 6 5 2		
♦	K 4		
♣	7 5		
East	South	West	North
1♣	1♥		

See the ***Defender Play, Week 1 Lecture*** document for a description and examples of simple overcall competitive bids.

REFINING WEAK TWO OPENING BIDS

OPENING IN THIRD SEAT

You must be disciplined when you make a weak two opening bid in first or second seat because your partner has not yet passed. Your partner might have a strong hand and will expect you to have the strength and shape implied by your opening bid.

If you are opening in the third seat your partner's pass has limited the strength to less than 13 declarer points and your partnership has little or no chance to make a game. Since opponents have the majority of the high card points, you can relax the requirements for a weak two opening to interfere with opponents finding their best contract.

Consider the example on the right. You only have 7 declarer points and only one of the top four honors. In first or second seat, you should pass. But in third seat, you know your partnership has at most 17 high card points and your opponents have at least 23 high card points. If you open a weak **2♠**, your opponents must begin bidding at the three level which will make it difficult for them to find their best contract.

SOUTH - YOU	
♠	Q T 7 5 3 2
♥	6
♦	K 7 3
♣	T 5 4

OPENING A WEAK THREE CLUBS

Consider the example on the right. You have 11 declarer points and six good clubs. Because a **2♣** opening bid describes a strong hand with 22+ points, you can not open with **2♣**. As we will see next week, opening the bidding at the three level is preemptive and implies at least seven cards in the suit. But when you have 10-12 declarer points (8-10 high card points) and a good six card club suit, you should, by partnership agreement, open the hand at **3♣**.

SOUTH - YOU	
♠	8 7
♥	K T 9
♦	9 8
♣	K Q J 9 7 5

This hand should be able to take five tricks in clubs and there is a 50% chance that the ♥K will take a trick. As we will see next week when we look at preemptive opening bids, you can overbid by three tricks if you are not vulnerable (or you have equal vulnerability).

Five and one-half tricks plus a three trick overbid is almost nine tricks. So **3♣** is a reasonable opening bid, especially when your partner understands that you might be closer to a weak two opening than a preemptive three opening.