

# Your Convention Card

Warren Watson

Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club

Last Revised January 30, 2011

## Bidding Systems

- **Standard American**
  - A 2/1 response (new suit at the two-level) shows 10+ HCP's and always promises a rebid.
- **2/1 Game Force**
  - A 2/1 response (new suit at the two-level) shows 13+ HCP's.
  - Forcing Notrump is a valuable tool to this system. (It's the work horse of the system)

## Notrump Bids (Remember the ranges)

12-14	open a suit and rebid 1NT
	New Minor Forcing (see Other Conventional Calls)
15-17	1NT
	2♣=Stayman, 2♦ and 2♥=transfers, 4♣=Gerber, 4♦ and 4♥=transfers
18-19	open 1♣ or 1♦ and rebid 2NT
	Check Back Stayman and/or New Minor Forcing, 4♣ Gerber
20-21	2NT
	3♣=Stayman, 3♦ and 3♥=transfers, 4♣=Gerber, 4♦ and 4♥=transfers
22-24	2♣ and rebid 2NT
	3♣=Stayman, 3♦ and 3♥=transfers, 4♣=Gerber
25-27	2♣ and rebid 3NT
	4♣=Stayman, 4♦ and 4♥=transfers, 5♣=Super Gerber (5♣ asks for aces, 6♣, kings)
28-29	Dream Big!

## Notrump in Competition

- **Standard**
  - Doubles are penalty by responder.
  - Two-bids (suits at the two-level) are to play
  - Cuebid is Stayman
  - Three-bids are forcing and three of a minor may show game values without a stopper.
- **Stolen Bids**
  - Systems are on that are higher than opponent's bid
  - Double says the opponent took my bid.
  - Opponent overcalls 2♦, a double is a transfer to hearts and a cuebid is Stayman.
- **Lebensohl**
  - Good to learn someday (It's a book! Most systems are just played superficially.)
  - Based on standard methods

## Rule of 22

You and your partner need a combined 22 points to win 7 tricks which is enough either to set opponent's 1 NT or to make your own 1 NT.

## Defensive Footprint

Try not to open declarer's suits for him.

Attack the suit partner attacks or switches to. Don't switch back.

**Switches are very rare.**

But may occur when one player has no more entries to access his long suit.

One needs entries to cash one's long suit or to duck and leave the suit in partner's hand.

## Major Openings

- Usually a 5-card major
- Sometimes a 4-card major
  - Usually only in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat (lead directive).
    - You are the one who could be playing the Moysian (4-3) so if you don't like Moysians and don't want the practice, only open or overcall 5-card suits.
  - Overcalling at the one-level for lead direction.
    - the hand can't be flat

When weak, use up opponent's room  
When strong, conserve your bidding space.

### Responding to 1M

**Note:** 1M is one of a Major, 1♥ or 1♠, and 1m is one of a minor, 1♣ or 1♦

0-8      Preemptive Raise      1♠      4♠      with five card support (& a singleton especially if vul)  
You are **bidding to go down** but this is far better than their making four hearts.  
In competition or not, jumps to game are done without values. They should be weak.

### Basic:

6-9	Simple raise	1♠	2♠
10-12	Limit raise	1♠	3♠ (3+ card support)
13+	Forcing raise	Bid a new suit at the two-level then jump to game	

### Advanced:

6-9	Simple raise	1♠	2♠
10-12	Limit raise	1♠	3♠ (4 card support if forcing notrump is being used.)
13+	Forcing raise	Bid 2NT (Jacoby 2NT) or Splinter (double jump shift into a singleton)	

### More Advanced:

10-12	Limit raise	go through forcing 1 NT	
0-6	Weak	1♠	3♠
13+	Jacoby 2NT and Splinters		

### Jacoby 2NT

1♥      2NT                      or                      1♠      2NT

- Four-card support
- No singletons or voids
- 13+ high card points

Major opener's rebid

3 level = singleton

4 level = 2<sup>nd</sup> five-card suit which is an immediate source of tricks

Further rebids

Jump to major game      = minimum hand (12-14)

Bidding 3NT (not to play!) = medium hand (15-17)

Three of the major      = strong hand (18+)

Principle of Fast Arrival

With Axxx or xxxx opposite a worthless singleton, 27 HCP's are needed for slam.

### Splinters

1♥      3♠/4♣/4♦                                      1♠      4♣/4♦/4♥

- 4 card support
- singleton or void (usually not a singleton honour, A, K, or Q)
- 13+ high card points (not counting singleton honour if any)

1♥      2♠/3♣/3♦                                      1♠      3♣/3♦/3♥

- **Minisplinters** with 4cs, 10-12HCP (outside of singleton)
- Minisplinters are better than Bergen and they are both far better than a WJS at the 3 level.

"Hi partner. Guess what?"

"What?"

"I possibly found our 2<sup>nd</sup> misfit at the three-level."

## Minor Openings

### Use the better minor opening system

Opener the longer minor

with 4-4-3-2, open 1♦ (otherwise 1♦ promises 4 cards)

with 4-3-3-3, open 1♣

I would like a system where you open the minor based on lead direction, but this is not the case because the opening is based on length. **Remember this when you lead partner's minor.**

### Minor openings state:

- It's the better minor. (I recommend it over short club or Montreal Relay)
- There is no five-card major. (unless partner shows a reverse)
- There are opening points.
- The suit is good for lead direction (perhaps 45% of the time)
  - A major opening is lead directive perhaps 70% of the time.
- You need not bid with a 5-point nondistributional hand

### Not responding to a Minor Opening:

- **Flat Weak hand (0-5HCP)**
  - **One must pass with no points and even shortness in partner's minor because:**
    - chances are greater, partner will have a really good hand and will:
      - jump if you bid getting into more hot water or
      - survive a void from you if you pass at the one-level
    - partner may have length in the minor
    - opponents may and should balance
- **Weak distributional hand (0-5HCP)**
  - **WJS**
    - 1m to 2M
    - 6 card suit

When weak, one wants to jam the bidding but not at the expense of giving the opponents the optional way to harvest points (doubling you).

Example: partner opens 1♣ and you have

♠54    ♥K97652    ♦765    ♣52

You should bid 2♥ at any vulnerability.

Would 3♥ at favourable vulnerability be wrong?

Yes, you should be doubled.

### Major Holdings

Example: partner opens 1♣ and you have

♠5432    ♥KJ1097    ♦762    ♣5

Bid 1♥ and pass 1♠ if partner bids it, otherwise rebid 2♥ to play.

### Minor Raises

Any minor raise shows:

- no 4-card major (no exceptions even if the major is the four little cards: 5432)
- 5 card support

AND:

- Standard (Old School)
  - 1♦ 2♦ 6-9 points
  - 1♦ 3♦ opening points
- Standard
  - 1♦ 2♦ 6-9 points
  - 1♦ 3♦ limit raise (should be **HCP's** because you are looking for Notrump).
- With Inverted Minor Raise
  - 1♦ 2♦ 6-9 points
  - 1♦ 3♦ 0-5 points
  - 1♦ 2♦ 10+ **high** card points

### Inverted Minor Raise

North opens 1♦ and South replies 2♦ showing 10HCP or more  
10 HCP

North replies: 2NT with both majors stopped and 13 or less points  
2♥ with hearts and not spades stopped  
2♠ with spades and not hearts stopped

1♦ 2♦  
2♥

South bids 2♠ with double stopper in spades allowing partner to bid 2NT and protect his heart stopper

### Notrump replies

1♣ 1NT 8-10

1♦ 1NT 6-9

1m 2NT 10-12

1m 3NT 13-15      Note: 1M 3NT 13-15 with 2 of partner's Major

### Bidding up the line:

- Four-card suits
- four-card suits for Stayman
- Bidding stoppers looking for Notrump
- cuebidding aces

Always bid the higher ranking five-card suit first

Example: (The basis behind New Minor Forcing- see Other Conventional Calls)

East has:	♠	AJ654	W	E	
	♥	987	1♣	1♠	East skips a 4-card suit to bid a 5-card suit.
	♦	KQ43	1NT	2♦	West knows East has 5 spades and 10HCP's.
	♣	9	2♠	P	East has no more than the 10HCP he has shown so he passes.

## Strong Two (2♣)

22+ HCP or

8½ Quick Tricks (Should have a defensive punch)

A quick trick (QT) is what you can take without surrendering the lead.

♠AKQ654	♠AKQ10874	♠AKQ109874	♠AKQ9876	♠AKQ6	♠AKQ54
♥AQ2	♥AK32	♥A32	♥432	♥AJ3	♥AJ3
♦A43	♦3	♦2	♦2	♦KQJ2	♦KQJ
♣3	♣2	♣4	♣42	♣76	♣76
8½ QT	9QT	9QT	7QT	4QT	4QT
2♣	2♣	1♠	4♠ (fav vul)	2NT*	1♠/2NT**

\*Some feel that 2NT does not need to have all suits stopped because of the benefits of the effective bidding mechanism that follows an opening of 2NT. Furthermore, partner will pass 1♣ with 4-5HCP's but not 2NT.

\*\*Furthermore, opening a Notrump with any five-card major is not recommended unless Puppet Stayman is being used.

### Responses to 2♣

- 2♦ negative (0-5)      4-5 opposite 22 is hardly negative OR
- 2♦ waiting              an automatic bid without a positive response OR
- 2♦ waiting positive.
  - 2♥      negative (0-3)      OR
  - 2♥      no aces and no kings (could be 12 points-QJQJQJQJ)
    - 2NT      positive response in hearts
- Jumps to game in partner's major is an effective way of showing very few points with a fit.
- Cheapest 3 level minor can be used as a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> negative when either 2♦ or 2♥ is not negative.

### Positive response

This is such a powerful tool yet most people seem to forget it and just bid a waiting 2♦.

Instead of bidding 2♦ waiting or 2♥ negative, one bids 2♠, 2NT (for hearts), 3♣ or 3♦.

The requirements of these very descriptive bids:

- 8 HCP's
- 5 card suit
- 2 of top the top 3 honours (AKxxx or KQxxx or AQxxx) no exceptions

### Competition

W	N	E	S
	2♣	2♠	Dbl

Double as shown above is negative (0-3HCP) and Pass is waiting

All other doubles are for penalty (misfit situations)

When opponents have a good fit, even doubles at the five-level may not be successful so low level doubles are certainly reserved for misfit situations.

## Weak Two's

2♦, 2♥, 2♠

### Purpose:

- to give lead direction.
- to take away opponent's bidding room
- to be disciplined in your description of your hand to partner
- to watch out for misfits
  - Do you really want to be in any contract where 6 of partner's 13 cards are useless to you?
  - Perfect for defense.

The weaker one is, the more likely one will defend so one's bids should be lead-directive.

### Requirements (Eddie Kantar)

- 6 cards
- 5 to 9 HCP's
- two of top five honours with the 97 or better
  - QJ10432, K109852 or better
- distributions: 6-3-2-2, 6-3-3-1 or 6-4-2-1. (no voids and no five-card suits)

### In Third Seat

- five-card suit or better (everything goes!)
- to raise a 3<sup>rd</sup> seat weak two, one must have:
  - four-card support; and
  - a side-suit singleton or two side-suit doubletons.

### Principles

- RONF
 

Raise is the Only Non Forcing bid. All other bids are forcing one round.

If opponents double or bid, new suits are no longer forcing but why bid a suit partner may be void in? If you run, opponents will clue in on to your fear.
- Say your Peace
 

You should never preempt and then raise the preempt unless partner gives a forcing bid.

If opponents bid, consider it a success that they probably have not communicated properly and absolutely do let opponents bully you into another bid. That is partner's decision.
- Law of total tricks
 

With a total of nine trump, the three-level bid is a safe competitive bid.

With a total of ten trump, the four-level bid is a safe competitive bid, etc.
- Rescue
 

Don't rescue partner, his suit should survive a void. New suits are constructive.
- Fits
 

If you and your partner have a 9 card fit, the opponents will certainly have an eight-card fit. They will also likely have distribution (your suit) and will need less than 25HCP for game.

## 2NT Forcing Response

You and Your partner need to use 2NT as either OGUST or feature-asking.

### OGUST

how is your suit partner?	2 of top 3 honours?	Max Points?
3♣	No	No
3♦	Yes	No
3♥	No	Yes
3♠	Yes	Yes
3NT	Solid	Yes

the minors are minimum points and the majors are maximum

### Feature Asking

This by far the best use of forcing 2NT (If it is played properly)

It is best for imp (team) games.

Team game pre-empts tend to be disciplined in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> seat

A minus score of 1100 pretty much ends a seven-board match.

Finding a feature will help with one's side-suit.

Partners tend to bid games based on whether honours are working and not so much invitational values.

2NT asks partner to bid:

- a side suit entry (Ace or king or QJxx) if maximum
- or 3 of the major if minimum
- or 3NT if solid.

## New Suit Forcing Response

Response to a new suit:

You open 2♥ and partner bids 2♠.

This is forcing and you need to bid the following:

- 3♠ with 3 card support and a minimum
- 4♠ with 3 card support and a maximum
- 4♠ with 4 card support and a singleton
- 3♥ with 2 or fewer spades and a minimum
- a stopper on the way to 3♥ with a maximum and 2 or fewer spades

**More to consider:**

- Watch for misfits
  - Always better to defend with a misfit
  - With a singleton in partner's suit and without a long suit of your own, you need 16+ HCP's to even sniff for game.
- Hard and Soft Values:
  - Soft values such as queens and jacks in partner's side suits are useless unless on defense.
  - Hard values (aces and kings) in support of a partner that pre-empted are very important.
- Opening leads:
  - If partner pre-empts and makes an opening lead of a suit other than his own, it could be and probably is a singleton.
  - If partner pre-empted, lead your long suit especially if you have a trump control. For example with AQJ432, cash the Ace and play the queen etc.

- The Captain

Example:	W	N	E	S
	2♠	3♥	4♠	5♥
	??			

East is the captain, and he can be a better captain if West remains disciplined. West made his 2♠ bid, telling his partner all about his hand, and must not bid any more (unless East bids a suit other than spades). Only East knows if the 4♠ bid was made based on values or to further the pre-empt.

- Count the Queens and Jacks
  - When two sides are fighting for supremacy with their long suits and the points seem to be divided evenly, the side with the most queens and jacks outside either potential trump suit will likely lose.
- Sacrifices need:
  - good trump fit (9+ cards)
  - opponents to have at least one good fit.
  - a singleton or void
  - a good second suit
  - length in opponent's suit (then partner is short)



## Alternative Uses for 2♦

A weak 2♦ is competed over so easily that people tend to use it for other things. I think a weak 2♦ actually helps the opponents find a major-suit fit and a major-suit game. Here are some examples:

### Flannery

- 5♥'s and 4♠'s
- 11-15 HCP's
- If partner bids 1♠ over partner's 1♥, it shows 5 spades if the partnership is using Flannery.
- I am not a fan of this bid because it can be bid naturally and easily.
  - If partner opens 1♥, one can and should show four spades, if one has them, by bidding 1♠.

### Roman

- If there is any bid that is hard to bid and shows a powerful distribution, it is this one.
- 4-4-4-1 (any singleton)
- 5-4-4-0 (five –card minor)
- any point range
  - 11-15 HCP's (mini Roman)

### Intermediate diamonds

- Six diamonds
- 11-15 HCP
- Ogust and RONF
- Pre-emptive with some meat to it.

### Mexican 2♦

- 18-19 Notrump hand
- Must use all the gadgets including Puppet Stayman to offset (which it does nicely) the point below.
- Is not a good bid if partner has 0-5 HCP's and a flat hand.
  - If one opens 1m to rebid 2NT, partner may pass and opponents balance
  - If they don't balance, you are in 1m and not in the middle of nowhere
- People, and wrongly so, like Mexican diamonds because they are afraid of partner passing them in a minor. I say let them! Would you rather be in 1♣ with nothing in dummy or 2NT with nothing in dummy?
- If one's partner does not have enough points to bid over 1♣ or 1♦:
  - game is not possible opposite 18-19. ---> Yes, open a minor with a suit unstopped!
  - however, game is possible opposite 20-21. ---> Yes, open 2NT with an unstopped suit!

### Multi 2♦

- By far the best use of 2♦ (the others are not even close.)
- However, it is illegal except at Midchart and Superchart events (Flight A national events).
- 2♦ shows one of the following hands (there are variations of course)
  - a weak two in hearts or spades
  - a strong balanced hand
  - a 17-24 point 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 hand
- Opponents often have difficulty bidding over it. 2♦ could be weak or it could be very strong.

## Other Conventional Calls

### Western Cuebid

- It asks partner to bid notrump with a stopper in the cuebid suit.

Cuebids often mean “do something partner”

- show delayed support
- bidding a second suit
- show a stopper
- show an ace

### Fourth Suit forcing

- An old man of San Antone told me “heck, when is the fourth suit not forcing?”

### Weak Jump Shift (WJS)

- 2♥ or 2♠ over 1♣ or 1♦ (2M over 1m)
  - Alertable when there is no competition
  - Shows 0-5HCP's.
  - Uses up opponent's room.
  - Warning partner to STAY OUT of the auction.
    - even with 19 points.
    - It is a misfit hand
    - One certainly does not want to be at the three level with a misfit, but this WJS is very useful as a warning to partner and it is at the two-level.
- 1♦      3♣
  - pre-empting with a minor makes the partnership too high
  - pass and come in later
  - more useful to show a limit raise in diamonds
  - 1♣      2♦      just allows opponents to find a major suit so it is better as a limit raise in clubs.
- 1♥      2♠
  - What are you afraid of? Your side has the majors.
  - Pass. Let the opponents find their minor and push them up.
  - Don't you want to defend with a misfit in hearts and probably in spades?
  - This is better to be used as a mini-splinter when your side has a good fit.

**Help Suit Game try**

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	2♠
P	3♣		

North is inviting to game, but has two or three immediate losers in clubs.

South now bids:

- Game
  - 0 or 1 loser in clubs
  - 2 losers in clubs and a maximum point count (8 or 9)
- 3♠
  - 2 losers in clubs and a minimum
- Counter Trial Suit (bridgeguys.com)
  - 3 losers in clubs and a maximum
  - bids a second suit with good values below 3♥

**New Minor Forcing****Example 1:**

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♦

**Example 2:**

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	1NT	P	2♣

The new minor (diamonds in the first example and clubs in the second example) asks for a further description of North's hand.

North bids the other major if he has it

North has already skipped spades in the second example.

South has a natural bid of 2♥ to show he is 5-4 in the majors  
then North bids partner's major if he has three in it.

## The Left Side of the Convention Card

### Notrump Overcalls

#### in direct seat:

15-18

systems on

**Note:** 2NT over opponent's weak two is just 15-18 and two stoppers  
It is never weak over opponent's weak bid.  
It is always strong over opponent's weak bid.

#### in balancing seat:

11-14

systems on (makes it simple although usually bids are natural over a balancing notrump)

#### Unusual:

either: a jump to 2NT or  
cheapest notrump by a passed hand (it is probably best to avoid this one)

W	N	E	S
1♣	2NT		

shows 5-5 in the two lower unbid suits (hearts and diamonds in the above example)  
never with five in opponent's bid suit, never with 5-4

As soon as partner wonders what he is getting from partner with regard to a bid, the bid  
becomes much less effective.

either 0-10 or 16+ HCP's (mini-maxi)

#### Sandwich Notrump

- when opponents have bid two suits, 1 NT shows 5-5 in the other suits
- 0-10 HCP's
- alertable when the bid is made by an unpassed hand.

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	1♥	1NT

- opponents are showing 18 points so 1NT is not a good place to play so it makes sense for 1 NT here to be conventional.

## Defense Versus Notrump

The large number of defensive systems against 1 NT certainly gives one a good idea on how often 1 NT should be opened. It is such a valuable and descriptive bid, that the resulting contracts are often good ones.

*The message is that one has to open 1 NT whenever they can.*

Here is a partial list of defensive systems against 1 NT:

DONT	Hamilton	Hello	Astro	Landy
Crash	Cappelletti	Bergen	Brozel	etc, etc.

### Natural

The suit you bid is the suit you have.

### Transfers

Bid the suit below the suit you have (2♠ for ♣'s)  
This puts the strong hand (the 1 NT opener) on lead.  
For its simplicity, this system is a gem.

### Cappelletti

good against weak notrumps because of the penalty double  
not so good against strong notrumps because minor-holding hands must go to the three-level (ouch!)

Dbl	15-18 HCP's- Systems are on as if the doubler had opened 1 NT
♣	single-suited hand
♦	the majors.
♥	hearts and a minor (2NT asks)
♠	spades and a minor (2NT asks)
2NT	the minors

### DONT (Disturb Opponent's Notrump)

I think it actually disturbs the opponents the least unless you have a long spade suit, but it is a very safe system.

Dbl	a single suited hand (partner bids 2♣ to ensure the bidding stays open and partner can pass or bid his suit.) 2♠ after making the double is stronger than bidding 2♠ directly.
♣	clubs and a higher suit. (Partner bids 2♦ asking for the higher suit)
♦	diamonds and a higher suit.
♥	hearts and spades.
♠	weak spades (to show a stronger spades go through the double)
2NT	5-5 in the minors showing stronger suits than bidding 2♣
3 bids	use the rule of 123 but you don't know they have game yet so double and see what happens. pre-empts are less effective when opponent has already described his hand really well (1 NT) Just getting in the way at the two-level can be effective enough.

### Direct Seat

I like the above systems in direct seat.

In the pass-out seat:      Bids are natural  
Double is 10-12 asking partner to leave it in with a good lead and 11+ points.

## Over Opp's T/O Double

W	N	E	S
1♠	Dbl	??	

Jumps	are weak.
New suit	at the two-level is no longer 10 points. (Rdbl takes care of 10+ points.) It is just a good suit.
Rdbl	shows 10+HCP's and implies no fit. Any double after there has been a redouble by the partnership is penalty.
2NT	Limit plus (10+ HCP) in partner's suit to get a natural 2NT, redouble first.

## Versus Opening Preempts, Double is

W	N	E	S
4♥	Dbl		takeout (4♥ or lower opening pre-empt)
4♠	Dbl		penalty
4♣	4NT		three suited takeout showing 4 hearts.

## Special Doubles

### Takeout Double

Need three card or better support in all unbid suits

Rule of 2

The difference in length of your unbid suits cannot be two.

i.e. Do not double with an unbid five-card and an unbid three-card suit.

### Negative Double

4 cards in the unbid major(s)

usually 4 in the unbid minors

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	Dbl	6-9 HCP
1♦	2♠	Dbl	10-12 HCP
1♦	3♠	Dbl	13+ HCP

**Responsive Double**

A.	W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	2♦	Dbl

South's double shows a hand with values but lacking direction (no four card major)

If South had a four-card major, he would just bid it.

B.	W	N	E	S
	1♦	1♠	2♦	Dbl

South's double shows a hand with values and four hearts.

**Penalty Doubles**

- All low level doubles are usually takeout
- They can be converted to penalty
- If a player wants to penalize opponents at a low level, he passes and hopes partner can reopen with a double
- Are best when:
  - opponent's have a misfit (you have their trump)
  - you have a misfit with partner's suit
  - you have controls in their trump
  - you have aces and kings and not queens and jacks

**Maximal Double**

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
Dbl			

A game try- If game is not there for us, let them play doubled.

**Support Double**

By the opener only

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
2♦	Dbl		

partner, I have 3 spades.

**Card Showing Doubles**

Your double at a low level promises values, but could have any shape.

I don't see the use of these doubles- shape is important.

## Simple Overcalls

1 level: 8 to 17 points

some chose 15, but it's better to overcall hearts with 16 or 17 than to be shut out of the bidding.

One usually doubles to show 16+

Responses: New suit: Nonforcing constructive  
You are proposing a better place to play but you have values in case partner wants to go on. The last thing you expect is partner to return to his suit. (Flip flop)

Your first obligation in competitive auctions is often to show partner you have support for his suit.

Jump raise is weak

**Cuebid is forcing**

Does not imply a fit at first. It just asks partner a question.

"Are you a full opener?" No (partner rebids his suit)  
Yes, partner bids anything else then a simple rebid of his suit.

Example:

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♠	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	

No, North does not have a full opener

Whatever South bids is to play if he chooses not to pass.

## Jump Overcall

Weak

These are the same as opening a weak two

Ogust, Ronf

Vulnerable jump overcall should be 8 to 10 points

I like Jump Overcalls and Weak Two's to have two ranges:

not vulnerable:	5-9 HCP's	(5-7 and 8-9)
vulnerable:	8-11 HCP's	(8-9 and 10-11)



## Opening Pre-empts

The value of the Rule of 1,2,3 became apparent with a partner who did not use it. At first, I did not understand why we kept getting these large phone numbers as bridge scores (1-800 numbers are not free in bridge—they come with being doubled into a bottom board). The reason was simple, my partner never calculated the number of losers associated with her hand.

### One has to use the Rule of 1,2,3!

#### One's seat is important

In first seat, there is a 33% chance you will pre-empt your partner.

In second seat, there is a 50% chance you will pre-empt your partner.

In third seat, you will pre-empt the opponent only.

2<sup>nd</sup> seat pre-empts are the most disciplined while third seat pre-empts are the least disciplined.

#### A Common Rule of Thumb

With a weak hand and six cards, pre-empt at the two-level, with seven cards at the three-level and with eight cards at the four-level. Three-level pre-empts in clubs may be six cards (six plus a singleton is best) because 2♣ is not a weak two.

However, this rule of thumb is not necessarily correct because, yes, the level of one's pre-empt depends on the length, but it also depends on one's losers and the vulnerabilities. So if you do not count losers and do not pay strict enough attention to vulnerabilities, then at least use the rule of thumb.

It is an approximation that is absolutely better than nothing, but be prepared for partner asking, "Why did we go down for 800?" and certainly be prepared to moderate this rule with experience.

Experience will also concur with loser count, that flatish hands make poor pre-empts and sacrifices.

#### The Rule of Thumb for the Rule of 1,2,3

Do not be afraid. It is quite simple.

Assuming partner has nothing, you do not want to give opponents more than they can get for their game if you are doubled and down. You can obviously be down more if they have slam, but the Rule of 1,2,3 is based on game.

- What can they get for a game, say 3 NT making four?

Not vulnerable: 430

Vulnerable: 630

- What do you give up doubled and down?

Not vulnerable:	down 2 x	300	< 600 and < 400
	down 3 x	500	< 600 but > 400
Vulnerable:	down 1 x	200	< 600 and < 400
	down 2 x	500	< 600 but > 400

- Favourable Vulnerability      They are vulnerable and we are not vulnerable
- Equal Vulnerability      Both vulnerable or both not vulnerable
- Unfavourable Vulnerability      They are not vulnerable and we are vulnerable  
"We are hot and they are not."

## Rule of 1,2,3

- 1      At unfavourable vulnerability, you can go down one doubled.
- 2      At equal vulnerability, you can go down two doubled.
- 3      At favourable vulnerability, you can go down three doubled.

## Counting Losers

This can be useful for 9-card fits and slam too.

*The Modern Losing Trick Count* by Ron Klinger is an excellent book.

Each suit has at most three losers

xxxx, xxx      3 losers

Take away one loser for each honour (A, K or Q) present

except	K	1 loser
	Qx	2 losers

## Raising Partner's Pre-empt

If partner is down three (favourable vulnerability), you need 4 cover cards (Ace and Kings and Queen of trump) to raise him one level. Remember that queens and jacks are not at all useful opposite a pre-empt.

**Example:**

♠KQJ10532    ♥2    ♦QJ4    ♣62

This has six losers so, with nothing from partner:

2♠ is down 1

3♠ is down 2

4♠ is down 3

Rule of 1:	Unfavourable Vulnerability	-Can be down <b>1</b> doubled so open 2♠
Rule of 2:	Equal Vulnerability	-Can be down <b>2</b> doubled so open 3♠
Rule of 3:	Favourable Vulnerability	-Can be down 3 doubled so open 4♠

**Rule of 2,3,4**

This is similar to the rule of 1,2,3 except you assume partner has a trick.

However, I find that whenever this rule is most critical, partner not only has nothing, he has poor trump support so there may be an unaccounted-for trump loser as well.

I don't like the rule of 2,3,4 at all. (Splitter! Is there a Monty Python sketch here?)

Rule of 2:	Unfavourable Vulnerability	-Can be down <b>2</b> doubled so open 3♠
Rule of 3:	Equal Vulnerability	-Can be down <b>3</b> doubled so open 4♠
Rule of 4:	Favourable Vulnerability	-Can be down 4 doubled so open 5♠

## Direct Cuebid

This is similar to the unusual notrump because:

it shows a 5-5 hand

it is mini-maxi

Can either be Michaels or Top and Other

Michaels

W	N	E	S	
	1m	2m		shows 5-5 in the majors
	1M	2M		shows 5 in the other major and one of the minors (2NT asks)

This seems to be used more widely used than Top/Other.

Top/Other

This is good complement to unusual while Michaels is not.

With top/other and unusual (two lower unbid), all 5-5 combinations can be bid

W	N	E	S	
	1m	2m		shows 5 spades and 5 in another suit. (2NT asks)
	1M	2M		shows 5 in the other major and one of the minors (2NT asks)

## Slam Conventions

Do not use Blackwood

Missing one ace, you could get to slam missing the ace, king and queen of trump.

Use Roman Keycard Blackwood

The keycards are the four aces and the keycard king

The keycard king is:

the king of trump or

the king in the last natural suit before 4NT

not considered a king for the king ask (5NT)

There are 0314 or 1430

0314

4NT	5♣	0 or 3 keycards
	5♦	1 or 4 keycards
	5♥	2 or 5 keycards without the queen of trump
	5♠	2 or 5 keycards with the queen of trump

1430

4NT	5♣	1 or 4 keycards
	5♦	0 or 3 keycards
	5♥	2 or 5 keycards without the queen of trump
	5♠	2 or 5 keycards with the queen of trump

1430 gives more room for the queen ask after a 1 or 4 response

The queen ask:

W	N	E	S	
	1♠	P	2NT	
P	3♦	P	4NT	
P	5♣	P	5♦	Do you have the queen of trump?
P	5♥			No
	5♠			Yes

A more complicated system answers yes by showing the number of kings.

P	5♣	P	5♦	Do you have the queen of trump?
P	5♥			No
	5♠			Yes, but no kings
	5NT			Yes, with 1 king
	6♣			Yes, with 2 kings
	6♦			Yes, with 3 kings

A further complicated system answers yes by showing specific kings.

P	5♣	P	5♦	Do you have the queen of trump?
P	5♥			No
	5♠			Yes, but no kings
				bid kings up the line:
	5NT			Yes, with king ♥ and perhaps king ♣ and king ♦
	6♣			Yes, with king ♣ and perhaps the king ♦
	6♦			Yes, with king ♦ and without the king ♣ and king ♥
				If one skips a king they do not have it

5NT (asking for kings) promises:

all of the keycards and the Queen of trump.

5NT asks for either:

number of kings (I recommend)

lowest ranking king.

Gerber

4♣

asks for aces

DONT (directly over notrump)

5♣ over 2♣ --- 2♦ --- 3NT

5♣

must be used right after 4♣

asks for number of kings

does not promise all of the aces because one can still signoff in 5NT

♦ = 0 or 4      ♥ = 1      ♠ = 2      NT = 3

Keycard Gerber

used after Stayman or 2-level transfers

0 or 3

1 or 4

2 wo q

2 w q

Competition

DOP1

Double with 0 Aces or keycards

Pass with 1 Ace or keycard

Next Suit up with 2 Aces or keycards

ROP1

Redouble with 0 Aces or keycards

Pass with 1 Ace or keycard

Next Suit up with 2 aces or keycards

## Leads

Top of a sequence usually three cards.

Against a trump suit, a two-card sequence may be right.

QJxx and KQxx leads have inherent risk

QJxx declarer may be able to win the queen and finesse the jack

KQxx dummy may have the jack and declarer may have the ace.

KQ10x to avoid the Bath coup, partner must signal negative attitude without the jack or the ace. Definitely throw out the jack from Jx.

Fourth Best

Rule of 11

If a player leads his fourth best diamond and it is the 5, there are six (11-5) cards higher than it in the remaining hands.

If you can see the 2,3 and 4, then that player can only have four cards in the suit.

Top of nothing safe lead in a slam

Doubletons

almost never, unless you have trump stoppers or it is in partner's suit

Singleton

never in 3 NT unless you have zero entries.

not always in a trump suit. Can partner have trump control or the ace?

## Defensive Carding

I don't use o/e (odd/even) or lavinthal because:

I figure out the hand myself

I never have the right card that's small or large enough.

I don't want my partner or myself using the o/e signal and stop thinking.

Attitude signals:

	Standard	UDCA
low card:	I do not like it	I like it
high card:	I like it	I do not like it

I use UDCA (upside down count and attitude) which is very effective.

Attitude signals are important when telling partner you want a suit continued or not.

Attitude signals are also important with discards.

First discard (in standard) should be:

Almost always a small card in a suit you do not like. (Not even Jxx)

A high (non honour) card in a suit that is completely urgent to attack.

When a high card occurs in this fashion, partner must take note.

"I do not need you to have something in the suit."

If the second discard is large, it (a lone honour) needs something from you.

Count signals:

	Standard	UDCA
low card:	odd count	even count
high card:	even count	odd count

Count signals are very important when:

Declarer is playing a long suit and the defense has a stopper

When you want to cash out a long suit.

When you play the Ace King looking to see if partner can get a ruff (high-low)

Suit Preference:

When there is a singleton in the dummy in partner's led suit.

When you know partner is ruffing.

low card:	switch to or play the lower ranking suit
high card:	switch to or play the higher ranking suit

## Final Note on Discipline

Remember that a bidding system cannot handle every situation, but if you modify the system on-the-fly (like bidding 1NT with 18 points or 2NT with 19 HCP's), partner will become unsure of what system he has. Stay rigidly to your system, and your partner will be able to bid and play effectively within that system. Discipline increases your matchpoint gain very effectively.

Examples:

- Do not open 1NT, 2NT, or Mexican routinely with a five-card major, if you do not use Puppet Stayman.
- Do not open undisciplined pre-empts in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> seats.
  - in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat, anything goes (almost).
- You cannot expect opponents to describe their hands (through their bidding) accurately to you but you can expect your partner to do so.

*Acknowledgement: Thanks to my partners for their input especially Hubert Hunchak.*