

The Weak Two Openings

What Are Weak Twos?

A weak two is an opening bid of two of a suit that shows less than a normal opening hand and a six card suit. Weak twos apply in diamonds, hearts and spades but not clubs. The 2♣ opening shows a strong hand.

Why Do We Open a Weak Two?

The primary aim of a weak two opening is to disrupt the opponent's bidding. After all, if we have a weak hand, it is likely that they have a strong hand. That being the case, it is a good idea to take away their bidding space.

Another advantage of a weak two is that it gives partner a good idea of the shape of your hand. If your side ends up defending, partner will most likely be able to find a good lead.

What is Needed to Open a Weak Two?

The basic rules are:

- Six to ten high card points
- A six card suit containing (a) at least one of the top three honours and (b) at least two honours in total. Partner can bid and play with the knowledge that you have a decent suit.
- No void. This is a help to partner when responding to the weak two opening.
- The hand does not have a side four card major. So, a 2♠ opening would not have four hearts; a 2♥ opening would not have four spades; a 2♦ opening would have neither four hearts nor four spades. This rule is sometimes irksome but it is important. Without it, you can easily miss game in the other major.

Some of these rules (especially the last two) are a bit contentious and some partnerships choose not to follow them. As we will see later, there are circumstances where some of the rules can be relaxed.

Vulnerability

With all weak opening bids, vulnerability is an important consideration. After a rash weak two opening, your opponent may double and you may end up with a score of minus 800 or minus 1100. Your partner will not be well pleased!

The losing trick count is a good guide about whether or not to bid a weak two.

- If you are vulnerable and the opponents are not (**unfavourable** vulnerability), you should have no more than seven losers.
- If the vulnerability is equal, you want no more than eight losers.
- If you are not vulnerable and the opponents are (**favourable** vulnerability), you should have no more than nine losers.

This last case leads to a relaxation in the point count (it may be less than six) and suit quality (less and inferior honours).

Some examples.

Your Hand
♠ K Q 9 6 4 2
♥ A 3
♦ T 5 2
♣ 7 4

A decent six-card suit and eight hcp. Seven losers. Open 2♠ at any vulnerability.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ K 9 7 5 4 2
♦ 5 2
♣ 9 8 4

At unfavourable or equal vulnerability, resist the temptation to bid. Pass because of the poor quality heart suit.

At favourable vulnerability, with eight losers, it is fine to open 2♥.

Your Hand
♠ J 9 4
♥ -
♦ A Q T 9 3 2
♣ J 5 4 2

Pass because of the void in hearts.

Your Hand
♠ A J 6 2
♥ K J 7 5 4 2
♦ 5 2
♣ 4

Pass. A bid of 2♥ here, would jeopardise a possible game in spades.

Your Hand
♠ A 9 2
♥ J T 9 5 4 2
♦ 5 3 2
♣ 4

Nine losers. Despite the poor hearts and despite having only 5 hcp, this is a good 2♥ opening at favourable vulnerability. At other vulnerabilities, pass.

Responding to the Weak Two

For the time being, we will assume that your opponent will pass after the weak two opening. (Later we will look at what happens when your opponent bids or doubles.)

With Support for Partner's Suit

Given that partner has a six card suit, two cards are sufficient for support. Partner has also shown 7 to 8 and in rare cases, 9 losers.

- With two card support and 8 or more losers, pass.
- With three card support and 8 or more losers (remember, one less loser for the extra trump), raise to the three level. A pre-emptive bid.
- With four card support and 8 or more losers, raise to the four level. Pre-emptive.

With 7 or less losers, investigate game by bidding 2NT. This is an artificial bid. It is forcing and should be alerted.

After the 2NT bid, opener bids as follows:

- With 8 or 9 losers, bid 3 of the suit.
- With 7 losers and a king or an ace in an outside suit, bid that suit.
- With 7 losers and no outside ace, bid 3NT. This is artificial and should be alerted.

Armed with this extra information, responder should be able to pick the final contract.

Examples

<p>♠ A J T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q T 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East should pass. South undoubtedly has a big hand but will have a hard time, starting at the three level.</p>	<p>♠ 9 5 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ J 9 7 ♣ A 9 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ A J T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q T 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East should raise to 3♠. This is a pre-emptive bid, taking away the opponent's bidding space. South has to start at the four level.</p>	<p>♠ 9 6 5 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ J 7 ♣ A 9 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ A J T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q T 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East should raise to 4♠. This is another pre-emptive bid. South has a big hand but will find it very hard to come into the auction.</p>	<p>♠ 9 6 5 3 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ 7 ♣ A 9 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ A J T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q T 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>Again, West opens 2♠. With seven losers, East bids 2NT. West has eight losers and should bid 3♠. This will be the final contract.</p>	<p>♠ K 5 ♥ A 4 2 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ A 9 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ A J T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q T 2 ♣ K 4</p>	<p>Again, West opens 2♠. With seven losers, East bids 2NT. West also has seven losers and bids 3♣ to show that king. East bids 4♠.</p>	<p>♠ K 5 ♥ A 4 2 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ A 9 6 3 2</p>

With No Support for Partner's Suit

With a singleton or void in partner's suit, responder has a difficult time. Partner has a maximum of 10 hcp, so responder needs 15 or 16 at least to even think about game. With less than that, it is usually best to pass.

A bid of a new suit is forcing unless you are a passed hand or the opponents have doubled. If either of these is true and you have a weak hand you can bid a new suit if:

- You have a void in partner's suit and you have a six card suit of your own
- You have a seven card or longer suit

With 16 or more hcp, bid a five card suit, use the 2NT inquiry as described above or bid 3NT.

Examples

<p>♠ A Q T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ T 6 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East should pass as a bid of 3♣ would be forcing. South is almost certain to bid. If the opponents double, then 3♣ is a reasonable bid. It is not forcing. It is just a safer contract.</p>	<p>♠ - ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ J 8 7 5 ♣ A T 9 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ A Q T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ T 6 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East should bid 4♥, to play.</p>	<p>♠ 3 ♥ A Q J 9 5 4 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ A Q 3</p>
<p>♠ A Q T 7 4 2 ♥ T 6 5 ♦ T 6 2 ♣ 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East, with 16 hcp bids 3♥, forcing. With heart support, West bids game. The contract will need a good play and a bit of luck to make.</p>	<p>♠ 3 ♥ A Q J 9 2 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ A Q 9 2</p>
<p>♠ A Q T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ T 6 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East can make the 2NT inquiry. When West shows a minimum hand by bidding 3♠, East should pass. West has no entries to help establish the spade suit for a 3NT contract.</p>	<p>♠ 3 ♥ A Q T 2 ♦ K Q 8 5 ♣ A Q 9 2</p>
<p>♠ A Q T 7 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A T 2 ♣ 7 4</p>	<p>After West opens 2♠, East can try the 2NT inquiry. West bids 3♦ to show a maximum hand with a top diamond, East can choose either 3NT or 4♠. Both have good chances but require some luck to make.</p>	<p>♠ 3 ♥ A Q T 2 ♦ K Q 8 5 ♣ A Q 9 2</p>

Example 1

	North	
	♠ 4 2 ♥ A Q 8 7 5 4 ♦ Q 8 4 ♣ 7 5	
West		East
♠ K J 7 5 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ A K T		♠ Q T 6 ♥ J ♦ K 9 6 3 2 ♣ Q J 8 6
	South	
	♠ A 9 8 ♥ T 9 6 2 ♦ J T ♣ 9 4 3 2	

West North East South
 ? 2♥ Pass 4♥

If South passes, East-West will surely find their 4♠ contract.

After South bids 4♥, it is a brave West that will bid 4♠. If West doubles instead, the likely contract will be 5♦ which should go down.

In 4♥, North will lose a spade, two diamonds and two clubs. So, down two.

If West is playing in spades, there are eleven tricks to be made. The losing diamond disappears on the fourth of East's clubs.

Example 2

	North	
	♠ A 7 4 ♥ K 7 5 ♦ A K 6 3 ♣ Q 9 5	
West		East
♠ Q J 9 6 ♥ - ♦ Q J T 7 5 4 ♣ K J 2		♠ 5 3 ♥ A Q 9 6 4 3 ♦ 2 ♣ T 7 6 3
	South	
	♠ K T 8 2 ♥ J T 8 2 ♦ 9 8 ♣ A 8 4	

West North East South
 Pass ? 2♥ Pass

While West knows that East has at least one diamond, nine tricks in diamonds will be as tough as eight tricks in hearts. So it is better to pass the 2♥.

However, if North or South doubles, it would be sensible for West to retreat to 3♦.

As it happens, North will probably bid 2NT and the final contract will be 3NT.

Knowing that North has the ♥K, East should resist a heart lead. Then 3NT is likely to go down.

Example 3

	North	
	♠ A T 6 5 ♥ J 2 ♦ K T 6 ♣ K Q J 7	
West		East
♠ K Q 4 ♥ 7 5 4 ♦ J 9 8 3 ♣ A 3 2		♠ J 9 8 7 ♥ A 9 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ T 8 5 4
	South	
	♠ 3 2 ♥ K Q T 8 6 3 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ 9 6	

West	North	East	South
			2♥ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass	

West leads the ♠K.

1. Weak two
2. Inquiry with 7 losers
3. 7 losers and A or K of diamonds
4. Enough for game

Declarer should have no trouble with this. Draw trumps and the set up the club suit to discard a losing diamond. Be careful to win the first diamond trick with the ace as dummy's king may be needed as an entry to the winning clubs.

Example 4

	North	
	♠ T 8 5 ♥ K J 7 ♦ J 8 7 6 4 ♣ 7 2	
West		East
♠ 7 ♥ A T 8 5 4 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ 9 6 5 3		♠ A Q J 9 2 ♥ 3 ♦ K T 9 ♣ K Q J T
	South	
	♠ K 6 4 3 ♥ Q 9 6 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ A 8 4	

West	North	East	South
2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass
3♦ ⁽³⁾	Pass	3NT ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

1. Weak two
2. Inquiry
3. Strong with D feature
4. OK. Game

West	North	East	South
2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♠ ⁽²⁾	Pass
3♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass	5♣ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

1. Weak two
2. Forcing
3. Second suit
4. OK. Game

Two ways of bidding this. Surprisingly, the minor suit game gives the better score.

3NT can be held to nine tricks because declarer has insufficient entries to establish and use the heart suit.

Declarer can make twelve tricks in clubs. The trick is to ruff two hearts before drawing the last trump.

