

Defending Against the Weak Two Openings (2)

The 2NT Overcall

If you have a balanced hand **and** 16-18 high card points **and** a good stopper in the opponent's suit, you can overcall 2NT. This is slightly stronger than a 1NT opening (15-17).

Responding to the overcall, partner can use 3♣ as Stayman while 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers to hearts and spades respectively.

Examples

<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 7 5 2 ♣ T 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2NT.</p> <p>With just six points and no interest in spades, East should pass.</p>	<p>♠ 9 5 3 ♥ T 2 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A J 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 7 5 2 ♣ T 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2NT.</p> <p>With ten points and no interest in spades, East can raise to 3NT.</p>	<p>♠ A 9 3 ♥ T 2 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A J 6 3 2</p>
<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 7 5 2 ♣ T 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2NT.</p> <p>East has only six points this time but there is a five card spade suit. East bids 3♥, west accepts the transfer with 3♠ and East passes.</p>	<p>♠ J T 9 5 3 ♥ T 2 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A 6 3</p>
<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 7 5 2 ♣ T 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2NT.</p> <p>Now, East has nine points – enough for game. East bids 3♥, west accepts the transfer with 3♠ and East bids 3NT. West corrects to 4♠.</p>	<p>♠ A T 9 5 3 ♥ T 2 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A 6 3</p>
<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 7 5 2 ♣ T 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2NT.</p> <p>East has six spades in this example. East bids 3♥, West accepts the transfer with 3♠ and East goes straight to 4♠.</p>	<p>♠ A T 9 5 3 2 ♥ T 2 ♦ J 6 ♣ A 6 3</p>

Doubling After a Weak Two Opening

The double is much like the take out double after your opponent opens with one of a suit. There are two variations:

- 1) The standard double. An opening hand (12 hcp or more) with shortage (two or less cards) in the opponent's suit and tolerance (three or more cards) in each of the other suits.

- 2) The strong double. A hand with five losers or less (usually 16 hcp or more) that is unsuitable for a 2NT overcall.

So, how does partner know which variation you have? With the standard double, you will pass any non-forcing bid by partner. With the strong double, you will bid again.

The Standard Double

More needs to be said about “tolerance”. If the opponent's weak two was a major, the double guarantees four cards in the other major. If the opponent's weak two was 2♦, the double promises at least 4-3 in the majors.

Some examples.

Let's say your right hand opponent opened 2♥.

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

Thirteen high card points. Seven losers. Shortage in hearts. Tolerance for the other suits. Four spades. A standard double.

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

The ♠J has become the ♦J. Now it is risky to double because partner is likely to bid a four card spade suit. Pass and hope partner can overcall or double.

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

Now the jack has been shifted to the club suit. Overcall 3♣ rather than doubling. Perhaps partner will be able to bid no trumps.

Your right hand opponent has opened 2♦.

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

This is fine for a standard double because the majors are 4-3.

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

With only two hearts, pass and hope partner can do something.

In the Pass Out Seat

Suppose your left hand opponent opened 2♥. and the next two players passed. If you pass, it will be the end of the auction so you are in what is known as the **pass out seat**.

As we have seen, sometimes your partner has an opening hand but no suitable bid. To allow for this, the requirements for both overcalls and doubles are reduced in the pass out seat. Reduce all point count requirements by three.

Some examples.

Let's say your left hand opponent opened 2♥ and this was passed around to you.

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

Even with only ten hcp, this is suitable for a double.

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

Again, only ten hcp but enough for a 3♣ overcall in the pass out seat.

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

Thirteen hcp are enough for a 2NT overcall in the pass out seat.

The Strong Double

This is the equivalent of the so called "Power Double" used after opponent's opening of one of a suit.

Some examples.

Once more, right hand opponent opened 2♥.

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

18 hcp and five losers. Double even with just three spades.

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

16 hcp this time and five losers. This is too strong for an overcall. Double first. Most likely your partner will bid diamonds. Now you can start showing your suits.

Your Hand
♠ A Q 2
♥ K J 3
♦ A J 2
♣ K Q T 4

With 20 hcp, double first and then bid no trumps.

Responding to Partner's Take Out Double

Your options are:

- (a) Bid your suit, jumping to show extra strength.
- (b) Bid no trumps, again jumping to show extra strength.
- (c) Bid the opponent's suit to show either (i) game values but with no clear-cut choice of game or (ii) interest in slam.
- (d) Pass but only if you are absolutely certain the opponents will go down. Even then, you will usually get a better result by bidding - probably no trumps.

The details depend on whether or not you are able to bid your suit at the two level. For example, after the opponent's 2♥, you can bid spades at the two level but not clubs or diamonds. If the opponent opens 2♠, you will be forced to make a suit response at the three level.

If you can bid your suit at the two level, the table of responses is:

Two of your suit	0-9 points
Three of your suit	10-12 points
Four of your suit	13+ points
2NT	10-12 hcp
3NT	13+ hcp

If you are forced to bid your suit at the three level, the table is squashed a little:

Three of your suit	0-10 points
Four of your suit	11+ points
2NT	10-12 hcp
3NT	13+ hcp

As can be seen, the minimum response has quite a wide range of points. This can make it difficult to find the optimum contract. To resolve this, many people use a sophisticated system called Lebensohl but that is a subject for another time.

Examples

<p>♠ K J 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A T 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West doubles. East bids 2♠ and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ 9 5 3 2 ♥ T 4 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A 6 7 2</p>
<p>♠ K J 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A T 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West doubles. East jumps to 3♠ (9 hcp plus one shortage point) and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ Q 5 3 2 ♥ T 4 2 ♦ K 7 ♣ A 6 7 2</p>
<p>♠ K Q 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West doubles. East bids 2♠. West has the strong variation (5 losers) and bids 3♠ but East (10 losers) passes.</p>	<p>♠ 9 5 3 2 ♥ T 4 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A 6 7 2</p>

<p>♠ K Q 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♥ and West doubles. East bids 2♠. West has the strong variation (5 losers) and bids 3♠. East (9 losers) bids game.</p>	<p>♠ A 5 3 2 ♥ T 4 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♠ and West doubles. East bids 3♥ and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 2 ♥ K T 4 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♠ and West doubles. East bids 4♥ and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 2 ♥ K T 4 2 ♦ K 7 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♠ and West doubles. East bids 2NT (10-12 hcp) and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ A J 2 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♠ and West doubles. East bids 3NT (13+ hcp) and West passes.</p>	<p>♠ A J 2 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ A J 4 ♥ K J 9 ♦ A Q 5 2 ♣ K Q 4</p>	<p>South opens 2♠ and West doubles. East bids 3♥ and West bids 3NT (19+ hcp). Sometimes this will come unstuck because East has promised 0 to 10 hcp).</p>	<p>♠ 8 2 ♥ Q 8 4 2 ♦ T 7 4 ♣ A 7 6 2</p>

Example 1

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

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

- 16 to 18 hcp with a diamond stopper
- Transfer to spades
- Accept the transfer
- Five spades but not six
- Three card spade support

Declarer needs to take two heart winners and trump a heart before drawing trumps. Then the contract will be safe. Even though the club finesses fail, there are just two club losers and one diamond loser.

Example 2

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

West	North	East	South
		2♠	Double ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽³⁾
Pass			

- Standard double with 13 hcp
- Diamonds are the only four card suit
- Pass shows the standard double. Anything else would promise a five loser hand

Playing a trump contract with a 4-3 fit is always tricky. In this case, it is important not to draw all of the trumps before working on the side suits. Otherwise, when the lead is lost, the defence will make loads of spade tricks.

Since East is a weak hand with long spades, it is likely that West will have the ♦Q. Take the ♦A and then lead the jack. If West covers, win with the king. Return to dummy with a club finesse and lead diamonds once more. Win with the eight and now work on the hearts.

Example 3

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

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

1. Too strong for an overcall with just four losers
2. Hearts are not good enough to bid no trumps
3. Showing five spades and five or less losers
4. Support with nine losers

It is easier for declarer this time although the bad trump break is a small problem. Ruff the second heart and start drawing trumps. When the bad break is discovered, take two diamond winners and ruff a diamond in dummy. Next, start working on clubs. South will take their ace and send back another heart. Ruff this and start cashing diamond and club winners. At some stage, north will ruff but that is the last trick for the defence.

Example 4

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

West	North	East	South
2♠	Dble ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	5♦ ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	6♥ ⁽⁵⁾	All Pass	

1. A five loser hand
2. Jump with four hearts and 11+ HCP
3. Roman key card
4. 1 or 4 key cards
5. Not enough bidding space to ask about the trump queen

The defence will take the ace of spades and after that, declarer has an easy twelve tricks.