

LESSON 7

Weak Two-Bids



General Concepts

General Introduction

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GENERAL CONCEPTS

Weak Two-Bids

This lesson introduces weak two-bids. It covers opening bids of 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ and the responses to them. Strong opening bids are left until the next lesson. Although it assumes that the class is familiar with preemptive opening bids, preempts at the three level and higher are reviewed.

The Bidding

It is assumed that some of the students are familiar with weak two-bids and some come from a background of strong two-bids. Both groups should be familiar with the concept of a preemptive opening bid. Since the 2♣ opening will be discussed in the next lesson, the students will have to take it on faith that 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ can be made available for a form of preemptive opening bid.

For inexperienced players, the idea of the weak two-bid and how to respond to it should be enough. For the more experienced players, you can discuss the importance of further preemptive action by responder — before the opponents have found their best spot.

Here are the topics covered and comments on which sections you might want to include or skip.

Opening Weak Two-Bid

This introduces the idea of the weak two-bid. The focus should be on suit quality and the considerations that determine whether to open a weak two-bid.

Effectiveness of the Weak Two-Bid

This gives an example of the weak two-bid in action and shows how it can be effective in making the auction difficult for the opponents.

Responding to Weak Two-Bids

The response structure recommended here is “Raise Only Non-Force” (RONF) with 2NT asking for a feature. The more experienced players can be made aware that there are other possibilities, such as the Ogust response (see the Appendix of the student text). Basic students — especially those from a social bridge background — may be unfamiliar with the concepts behind sacrifice bidding, and you may need to walk through this carefully.

The 2NT Response

This section covers the forcing 2NT response and opener’s subsequent rebid. This will be easier for the more experienced students who can picture the possibilities once opener describes the hand. Students are familiar with the concept of playing eight-card major suit fits in 4♥ or 4♠, so they may have difficulty with the idea of playing in 3NT with a major-suit fit and stoppers in the other suits.

Handling Interference

This section can be skipped with a basic group. With a more experienced group, point out that only one set of suggested agreements is outlined. There are others. The important thing is to have agreements.

Play & Defense

The practice deals contain examples of the weak two-bid in action. With any competitive auction, there are many possible results. Let the students bid and play the deals as they see fit, then discuss the suggested auction. The variation in the actual results should indicate the type of action generated by weak two-bids.

The deals are all fairly straightforward, but do contain a couple of concepts for discussion with a more experienced group:

- Frozen suit.
- Inferences from the auction.

The second deal includes an example of handling a suit to prevent the defenders from taking all of the tricks in the suit. There is an opportunity to discuss the suit from both the declarer's and the defenders' point of view.

The third deal provides an opportunity for declarer to take an inference from the auction and go against the *eight ever, nine never* guideline. This is an important point for more experienced students. The level of the class will determine how much discussion you want to have on the effect that the auction can have on the play of the hand.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It's assumed that the students are familiar with strong opening two-bids and weak preemptive opening bids at the three level. Some will know the basics of using the weak two-bid. If that isn't the case, you may want to adjust the introduction accordingly. Otherwise, it should be something like this:

“Most hands are opened at the one level, so that the partnership has as much room as possible to search for the best contract. Opening bids at the two level have traditionally been used as strong two-bids, showing a hand too strong to open at the one level.

“Opening bids in a suit at the three level or higher are commonly used to show hands with a long suit, too weak to open at the one level. These are preemptive opening bids and, as you may have experienced, they can make life difficult for the opponents. This tactic has proven so successful that many players today prefer to use methods that allow them to preempt more frequently. We'll look at one such method in this lesson.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Opening Weak Two-Bid

Introduction

“The weak two-bid, as you might imagine, is an opening bid at the two level that shows a weak hand, rather than a strong hand. The concept of using opening two-level bids for weak hands has been around since the days of auction bridge — the forerunner of the game of contract bridge that we play today.

“Harold Vanderbilt, often credited with the invention of contract bridge while cruising aboard a ship in 1925, included *weak two-bids* as part of his Vanderbilt Club System, one of the first complete bidding systems. The modern version of this convention was popularized by Howard Schenken, considered by many people to be the best bridge player of all time.

“Let’s see how it works.”

Instructions

“The cards are sorted into suits. Give each player one suit and construct the following hand for South.

“In spades: the ace, the queen, the jack, the ten and two low cards.

“In hearts: two low cards.

“In diamonds: the jack, the ten and a low card.

“In clubs: two low cards.”

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	2 ♠	♠ A Q J 10 x x
		♥ x x
		♦ J 10 x
		♣ x x

Check that each table has the correct starting hand set up dummy style in front of South.

“**Suppose you are the dealer. Playing standard methods, what would you do?** (Pass.) You have 8 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit. 10 points aren’t enough to open the bidding 1 ♠ in first position.

“**What about an opening preemptive bid of 3 ♠?** (No seven-card suit.) An opening bid at the three level shows a weak hand, but it usually promises a seven-card suit. With only a six-card suit, it would be dangerous to open 3 ♠. The fewer spades you have, the fewer tricks you will take, and the more likely it becomes that the opponents will double you for penalties.

“However, this is a nice hand. You’d like to tell partner something about the spade suit and, at the same time, make the auction more difficult for the opponents. This is the type of hand that competitive players like to open with a weak two-bid, 2 ♠. Of course, you and your partner must have agreed to

play weak two-bids. Otherwise, your partner will expect you to have a very strong hand and will keep bidding until game or slam is reached.

“This hand is a textbook 2♠ opening bid. The first feature of this hand is a good six-card suit. Since the 2♠ opening bid shows a weak hand, the opponents will be aware of that. This gives them the option of doubling for penalties. The weaker the suit, the more likely that the opponents will have enough strength in the suit to defend and extract a substantial penalty. Also, the weaker the suit, the more difficulty you will have taking tricks. A good suit reduces the risk of being defeated by more tricks than you can afford.

“The interpretation of a ‘good’ suit varies among partnerships, but one factor to bear in mind is the vulnerability. When you are vulnerable, it’s more expensive when you go down, especially doubled. If you are vulnerable, a general guideline is that you should have three of the top five honors. Here, you have four of the top five — the ace, queen, jack and ten. This suit would be good enough for a vulnerable weak two-bid. When you are not vulnerable, your suit can be weaker.”

With a very basic class you might have to discuss the effect of vulnerability. Many students are not familiar with the scoring for penalties and how it is affected by both doubles and vulnerability. When non-vulnerable, the penalty scale for doubled undertricks goes 100, 300, 500, 800, 1100, etc. When vulnerable, the scale goes 200, 500, 800, 1100, etc. The value of game for the opponents is approximately 500 points. As a result, you can rarely afford to go down more than three tricks when non-vulnerable or two tricks when vulnerable. When the opponents are non-vulnerable and your side is vulnerable, you want to be especially careful.

“Why a six-card suit and not a seven-card suit? (A seven-card suit is opened 3♠.) With a good seven-card suit and a hand too weak to open at the one level, you usually open a preemptive bid at the three level, rather than the two level. If you have a five-card suit, it’s a little dangerous to be opening at the two level — although you’ll see an exception in a moment. For now, use the guideline that a weak two-bid shows a good six-card suit.

“The other feature of this hand is that it contains too few points to open the bidding 1♠. Depending on the books you read, you’ll see ranges such as 6 to 10, 5 to 10 or 5 to 11 for a weak two-bid. The guideline we’ll use is 5 to 10 high-card points (or a hand with fewer than 13 total points). On this hand, there are 8 high-card points, so the hand falls right into the middle of the range for a weak two-bid.

“One more point. To use 2♠ as a weak two-bid, there has to be some way to handle hands which would have been opened with a strong two-bid. You can’t open 1♠, since that’s not forcing, and you can’t open 3♠, since that is still a weak preemptive bid with a seven-card suit. When playing weak two-bids, one bid is reserved for all strong hands. The 2♣ opening bid is used to handle all strong hands of about 22 or more points.

“We’re going to look at how that works in the next lesson, but what impact do you think that has on weak two-bids? (No weak 2♣ bid.) You can only open a weak two-bid in diamonds, hearts or spades. With a weak

two-bid in clubs, you have to pass or stretch and open 3♣. It's not too much of a sacrifice for the benefit of playing weak two-bids. So, if you agree to play weak two-bids, an opening bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ shows a good six-card suit and 5 to 10 high-card points. Let's look at more examples.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace, the queen and the jack.

“In diamonds: add the king, the queen and a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	2♦	♠ 10 x x
		♥ x x
		♦ K Q J 10 x x
		♣ x x

“**What is the opening bid?** (2♦.) You have a good six-card suit and only 6 high-card points. This is a good hand for an opening bid of 2♦.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away a low card.

“In diamonds: take away the king and add a low card.

“In clubs: add the king.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	2♦	♠ 10 x
		♥ x x
		♦ Q J 10 x x x
		♣ K x x

“**What do you think about this hand?** (2♦/Pass.) This hand barely qualifies for a weak 2♦ bid. Your suit isn't great, but you do have three of the top five honors. You also have 6 high-card points. It's a judgment call. You don't have to open 2♦ if your hand falls within the range for a 2♦ opening. Some players would open 2♦ with this hand, some would choose to pass.

“**What might influence your decision?** (Vulnerability/position at the table.)

- *Vulnerability.* If you are vulnerable, you want to be more cautious. If you were doubled for penalties on this hand, you might take only three or four tricks if partner has no help. That could be a penalty of 1100 to 1400 points. Even if the opponents can make a slam, they have more to gain by doubling you if they are not vulnerable.
- *Position at the table.* Suppose you are in third position, and you are not vulnerable and the opponents are vulnerable. This isn't a bad hand to take a chance on opening 2♦. Since partner passed originally, it's very likely that your opponents can make at least a game, and perhaps a slam. Anything

you can do to disrupt their auction may get you a good result. When they are vulnerable and you are not, the opponents will be reluctant to double you. They would have to defeat you four tricks — for a penalty of 800 points — to compensate for the value of their game.

“So, the weak two-bid is another tool in your tool kit. You choose the appropriate moment to bring it out and use it.

“Change the South hand.

“In diamonds: take away the queen and two low cards.

“In clubs: add the ace, the ten and a low card.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	Pass	♠ 10 x
		♥ x x
		♦ J 10 x
		♣ A K 10 x x x

“**What would you do as dealer?** (Pass.) The hand has the appropriate requirements for a weak two-bid — a good six-card suit and 8 high-card points. But you can’t open a weak two-bid in clubs. You have to pass and hope that you can show your club suit later. Your other choice is to open 3♣. With only a six-card suit, that’s a dangerous action in first or second position. If you are not vulnerable in third position, you might risk an opening 3♣ bid and see what happens.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: add the jack and three low cards.

“In clubs: take away the ten and three low clubs.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	Pass	♠ 10 x
		♥ J x x x x x
		♦ J 10 x
		♣ A K

“**What do you bid as dealer?** (Pass.) You have a six-card suit and 9 high-card points, but your suit isn’t very good. Avoid opening a weak two-bid with a poor suit and most of your strength outside of the suit. When you have a poor suit, there’s too much risk that the opponents will be willing to defend for penalties. Also, the more strength you have outside your suit, the less likely that the opponents can make a game. Even a small penalty might be too much.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away two low cards and add the king and the ten.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	1 ♥	♠ 10 x ♥ K J 10 x x x ♦ J 10 x ♣ A K

“**What do you open?** (1 ♥.) You have a good six-card suit, but the hand is too strong for a weak two-bid. Don’t let the six-card suit steer you away from making your normal opening bid of 1 ♥.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the king and a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ace and the king.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	Pass	♠ K 10 x x ♥ K J 10 x x x ♦ J 10 x ♣ —

“**What do you bid if you have an opportunity to open the bidding?** (Pass/2 ♥.) The hand would appear to qualify for an opening bid of 2 ♥. You have a good suit and 8 high-card points.

“**What might dissuade you from opening 2 ♥?** (Spade suit; void.) As a general guideline, you should avoid opening a weak two-bid when you have a side four-card major suit or a void. Your weak two-bid may make the auction more difficult for the opponents, but it can also make the auction more difficult for your partner.

“When you open 2 ♥, partner is going to assume that you have a weak hand that is only worth something if hearts are trumps. When you have a side four-card major suit, there are other possibilities. Partner might have a singleton heart and four or five spades. Partner won’t want to bid spades because that might get the partnership into more trouble. You could go down in a partscore in hearts when you could make something — perhaps a game — with spades as trumps.”

Teachers — you might want to tell your advanced students that a more modern treatment of weak two-bids allows as a secondary suit, a weak four-card major.

“Also, a void is very powerful and makes it difficult for partner to estimate the playing strength of the combined hands. If partner has something like the ♣Q and two low clubs, partner will be expecting to lose two or three tricks in that suit opposite a normal weak two-bid. Partner won’t expect that there are no club losers on this hand.

“So, the general guideline is to avoid opening a weak two-bid when you have a side four-card major suit or a void. It’s only a guideline — you’re

free to exercise your *judgment* on any hand — but don't be surprised if you get a poor result when you ignore this advice.

“There are other situations that require judgment.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the queen.

“In hearts: take away the king, the jack, the ten and a low card.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	Pass	2 ♠ (?)

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q 10 x x
 ♥ x x
 ♦ J 10 x x
 ♣ x x

“**You are the dealer. What's your call?** (Pass.) You have a good suit, but you have only five cards in your suit. Opening a weak 2 ♠ bid would be quite risky in first or second position.

“**What if you were in third position and there were two passes to you?** (Maybe 2 ♠.) In third position, especially if you are not vulnerable, you have more latitude in opening the bidding. Just as you occasionally open light in third position, you can sometimes try opening a weak two-bid on a five-card suit. I'll not recommend that you do it too often, but it's likely to create a little action. Your alternative with this hand is to pass and leave the auction to the opponents. It all depends on how aggressive you want to be — or how much trouble you like to get into.

“**What if there were three passes to you?** (Pass.) You would rarely open a weak two-bid in fourth position. With a weak hand, passing and moving on to the next deal is best. Of course, there are always exceptions.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the ace.

“In hearts: take away a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	2 ♠

SOUTH
 ♠ A K Q 10 x x
 ♥ x
 ♦ J 10 x x
 ♣ x x

“**You are in fourth position. What call do you make if the auction goes Pass–Pass–Pass to you?** (2 ♠.) You could pass the hand out, but this is the type of hand that you might open with a weak two-bid of 2 ♠ in fourth position. With only 10 high-card points, it's unlikely that your side can make a game, but with such a good suit, you can expect to make a partscore. The trouble with opening 1 ♠ is that it allows the opponents to come into the

auction more easily. They may find a fit and push you too high. By opening 2♠, you make it difficult for the opponents to come back into the auction. At the same time, you describe the hand nicely to partner. Partner will expect a fair hand, since you could have passed the hand out.

“Notice that this hand also satisfies the Rule of 15 for borderline hands in fourth position. 10 high-card points plus six spades gives you a total of 16 — suggesting that it’s worthwhile to open the bidding.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the queen and add a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

SOUTH
 ♠ A K 10 x x x
 ♥ x
 ♦ J 10 x x
 ♣ x x

“**What call do you make in fourth position?** (Pass.) 8 high-card points plus six spades is 14. It falls a little short of the guideline. Not that you couldn’t open 2♠ with this hand in fourth position. It’s just likely that you will finish with a minus score when you could have passed the hand out. How about this hand in first, second or third position? (2♠.) It’s an ideal hand for a weak two-bid.”

Summary

“If the partnership agrees to use weak two-bids:

- An opening bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ shows a good six-card suit—usually three of the top five honors — and 5 to 10 high-card points.
- 2♣ is reserved for strong hands.
- Avoid opening a weak two-bid when you have a side four-card major suit or a void.
- Keep in mind the vulnerability and your position at the table:
- Be more cautious when you are vulnerable.
- In first or second position, stick closely to the guideline and have what partner expects.
- In third position, you can exercise your judgment, occasionally opening on a weak suit or even a good five-card suit.
- You rarely open a weak two-bid in fourth position. If you do, it shows a maximum weak two-bid — a hand where you expect to make your contract.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 1 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise One — Opening a Weak Two-bid

Your side is non-vulnerable. What call would you make with each of the following hands in first or second position? What would you call with the same hands in third or fourth position?

1) ♠ 6 5
♥ A Q J 8 7 3
♦ J 9 4
♣ 8 3

2) ♠ 5
♥ 7 6
♦ A J 10 8 7 4
♣ Q 9 6 3

3) ♠ Q 8 7 6 5 2
♥ K J 8 3
♦ Q 9
♣ 2

4) ♠ A K J 8 7 3
♥ 4
♦ K 9 4
♣ 8 6 2

5) ♠ 10 7 6
♥ K Q J 9 3 2
♦ 8 5
♣ Q 7

6) ♠ J 7
♥ 9 7 6
♦ 10 3
♣ K Q J 8 7 3

Exercise One Answer — Opening a Weak Two-Bid

- 1) 1st/2nd/3rd: 2♥. Ideal weak two-bid.
4th: Pass. Doesn't qualify under the Rule of 15.
- 2) 1st/2nd/3rd: 2♦. Ideal weak two-bid.
Some players might open 3♦ in 3rd position.
4th: Pass. Doesn't qualify under the Rule of 15.
- 3) 1st/2nd: Pass. Suit isn't good enough and there's a four-card major.
3rd: Pass or 1♠ or 2♠. The danger of getting your side into trouble is reduced once partner is a passed hand. You might open a light 1♠ or an off-center weak 2♠.
4th: Pass. Doesn't qualify under the Rule of 15 and the spades are poor.
- 4) 1st/2nd/3rd: 1♠. 11 high-card points plus 2 for the six-card suit. Some might open 2♠ in third position.
4th: 2♠ or 1♠. 1♠ is acceptable, but a sound weak two-bid in fourth position more accurately describes this hand. After partner has passed, it's unlikely your side has game, and you can make it difficult for the opponents to compete.
- 5) 1st/2nd/3rd: 2♥. Ideal weak two-bid.
4th: Pass. Doesn't qualify under the Rule of 15.
- 6) 1st/2nd/3rd: Pass. Ideal for a weak two-bid, but you can't open a weak two-bid in clubs. You might consider 3♣, despite the six-card suit.
4th: Pass.

“Notice also that you are poorly placed to step into the middle of the auction. You know nothing about your partner’s hand. North, however, has a good description of South’s hand. North is in a good position to double you for penalties if you step out of line.

“**What about making a takeout double?** (Poor support for diamonds and clubs.) A takeout double shows support for all of the unbid suits. You have good support for hearts and some support for clubs, but what if partner chooses 3♦? You may be in a 4–2 fit at the three level.”

If some students suggest bidding 3♥ if partner responds 3♦ to a takeout double, you should point out that this shows a much stronger hand — a hand too strong to overcall 3♥.

“Essentially, you are stuck. South’s 2♠ opening bid gives you no safe choice except pass. Anything else is very risky. You can see how even a mini pre-emptive opening bid, such as 2♠, can have a major effect on the auction.

“To see how dangerous a bid by West might be, leave the West hand as it is, turn the South hand face up and construct a hand in front of North.

“In spades: a low card.

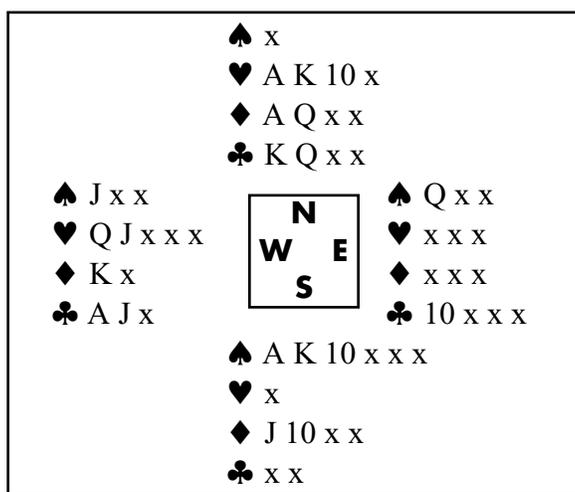
“In hearts: the ace, the king, the ten and a low card.

“In diamonds: the ace, the queen and two low cards.

“In clubs: the king, the queen and two low cards.

NORTH ♠ x ♥ A K 10 x ♦ A Q x x ♣ K Q x x	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥</td> <td>Double</td> <td></td> <td>2♠</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	3♥	Double		2♠
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
3♥	Double		2♠						

“Put the remaining cards face up in front of East.”



You will probably have to check that every table has the four hands laid out correctly. You may want to recap the cards in each hand.

“If this is the full hand, what might happen if South opens 2♠ and West overcalls 3♥?” (North might double.) North might double a 3♥ overcall. The defenders will defeat the contract at least four tricks. The penalty would be greater than any score North–South would get if left to their own devices.

“Would West do any better by making a takeout double?” (No.) East would probably bid 3♣, and that is even worse than 3♥. Whatever East–West do at this point, North is likely to double and extract a sizeable penalty.

“So, West’s safest option is to pass. The auction isn’t over yet, and East might hold a better hand and come into the auction.

“Turn the West and South hands face down. Pick up the North cards and change the East hand.

“In spades: take away a low card.

“In hearts: take away two low cards and add the king and the ten.

“In diamonds: take away a low card and add the ace.

“In clubs: add the king.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♠

EAST

♠ Q x

♥ K 10 x

♦ A x x

♣ K 10 x x x

“Put the rest of the cards face down in front of North.

“If you had an opportunity to open the bidding with the East hand, what would you do?” (1♣.) With 12 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, you have enough to open the bidding 1♣.

“Of course, your opponents aren’t going to give you the opportunity to open 1♣. On this hand, South opens the bidding 2♠ and your partner, West, passes. So does North. What do you bid now?” (Pass/Double/3♣.) You have the same options as your partner. You can pass, make a takeout double or overcall.

“What’s the problem with a takeout double?” (Three-card support for hearts and diamonds.) You have only so-so support for both hearts and diamonds. If partner picks hearts, for example, you may be in a 4–3 fit at the three level — and after South’s 2♠ opening bid, it’s more than likely that the hearts are breaking badly.

“What about overcalling 3♣?” (Dangerous.) With only a five-card suit — and not a very good one at that — it would be very dangerous to introduce it at the three level. In addition, your ♠Q is of dubious value once South opens 2♠. As you’ve just seen, even though South has a weak hand, North could still have a strong hand.

“So, what are you likely to do with this hand?” (Pass.) Passing seems like the best option. Let’s see how this works out.

“Turn all four hands face up, dummy style. The remaining cards will be the North hand.

	♠ x x										
	♥ A x x x										
	♦ Q x x x										
	♣ Q x x										
♠ J x x	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q x
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J x x x		♥ K 10 x									
♦ K x		♦ A x x									
♣ A J x		♣ K 10 x x x									
	♠ A K 10 x x x										
	♥ x										
	♦ J 10 x x										
	♣ x x										

“**South is the dealer. What does South bid?** (2♠.) South starts with a weak 2♠ bid. As we’ve just discussed, West probably passes. North will pass — we’ll talk more about responding to a weak two-bid in a moment — and East will probably pass.

“**What’s going to happen to South in the 2♠ contract?** (Eight tricks.) South will probably finish with eight tricks and make the contract. With spades breaking 3–2, South will probably lose one spade trick, two diamond tricks and two club tricks. South makes 2♠.

“**On the other hand, what would have happened if South had passed originally?** (East–West get to game.) West would open the bidding 1♥, and East would respond 2♣. East has enough strength to take the partnership to the game level in hearts, but an immediate raise would show four-card or longer support. Even if South now comes in with an overcall of 2♠, it’s too late. East knows the partnership has an eight-card heart fit and enough combined strength for game. East will get the partnership to 4♥.

“**How would East–West fare in a contract of 4♥?** (Nine/ten tricks.) West might make that contract. West has three spade losers, but the third loser can be ruffed in dummy or eventually discarded on the club suit. If the defenders lead spades, the ♠J will become a trick. There’s a sure heart loser and there’s a potential club loser. West will probably have to guess which defender holds the ♣Q in order to make the contract. Not a bad 4♥ contract. Without the 2♠ opening bid, North might even lead a club on opening lead, taking away the guess. If South does overcall 2♠, declarer is most likely to play North for the ♣Q — since South has long spades and didn’t open the bidding.”

The last point above might be lost on inexperienced players.

“So, is South’s 2♠ bid a success? (Yes.) South will make 2♠ when the opponents have a reasonable chance of making game in hearts. Even if East–West were to go down in 4♥, the penalty would be less than the score North–South receives for making 2♠.”

Summary

“You can see how the weak two-bid might be effective. It takes up just enough bidding room to make the auction difficult for the opponents. They have to start making decisions at the two or three level.”

Responding to a Weak Two-Bid

Introduction

“By its nature, the weak two-bid is primarily a defensive type of opening bid. It’s designed to make the auction awkward for the opponents, but it also gives responder a good description of opener’s hand. Let’s see how responder handles the auction.”

Instructions

“Pick up the cards in the East and West hands and sort them back into suits. Leave the North–South hands face-up on the table.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ x x</p> <p>♥ A x x x</p> <p>♦ Q x x x</p> <p>♣ Q x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Pass	2 ♠	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K 10 x x x</p> <p>♥ x</p> <p>♦ J 10 x x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH					
Pass	2 ♠					

“What is South’s opening bid? (2 ♠.)

“Assuming West passes, what does North do? (Pass.) South is showing a hand with less than the values for an opening bid. That means that responder is not interested in a game contract unless responder has more than an opening bid. Also, opener is suggesting that spades should be trumps. North usually should accept this, unless there is clearly a better spot. What this means is that responder will usually pass a weak two-bid with an average hand and no particularly good fit. Responder will simply be hoping that there’s enough combined strength to make the contract or that it won’t be defeated too badly.

“Even with an opening bid or more, responder needs to be careful.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away two low cards and add the king and the queen.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ x x</p> <p>♥ A K Q x</p> <p>♦ Q x x x</p> <p>♣ Q x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Pass	2 ♠	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K 10 x x x</p> <p>♥ x</p> <p>♦ J 10 x x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH					
Pass	2 ♠					

“Now North has an opening bid, 13 points. What should North bid when South opens 2 ♠? (Pass.) If you look at the combined hands, you can see that even a contract of 2 ♠ is in danger. There are four top losers — the ♦ A K and ♣ A K — and a likely trump loser. If the trumps break badly or the defenders manage to get a diamond ruff, the contract could be defeated. North should pass and hope for the best.

“Change the North hand.
 “In spades: take away a low card.
 “In hearts: take away the ace and add the jack.
 “In diamonds: take away a low card and add the king.
 “In clubs: add the king.

“Change the South hand.
 “In hearts: add a low card.
 “In diamonds: take away the jack.

NORTH ♠ x ♥ K Q J x ♦ K Q x x ♣ K Q x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Pass	2 ♠	SOUTH ♠ A K 10 x x x ♥ x x ♦ 10 x x ♣ x x
NORTH	SOUTH					
Pass	2 ♠					

“Now North has 16 high-card points. What should North bid when South opens 2 ♠? (Pass.) North should pass. Looking at the combined hands, 2 ♠ is the partnership’s best spot. There are three aces to lose, and even if the trump suit behaves favorably, there is at least one loser in that suit. If the trumps break unfavorably, even 2 ♠ may be difficult to make.”

Some participants may suggest bidding notrump with the North hand. Since South has spades *stopped*, they see no disadvantage to playing in notrump. They fail to see that there is no source of tricks. If there is a common sentiment for bidding, you might say something like this:

“Even a notrump contract is likely to fare badly for North–South when there is no good fit. If South’s spades can be established, it is unlikely that there will be an outside entry to reach them. If they can’t be established, North will have to produce enough tricks, and unless the defenders are careless, it’s unlikely that North can come to more than six or seven tricks. In fact, you’ll see in a moment that a 2NT response is used for something other than an attempt to play in notrump. On misfitting hands, it’s best to leave well enough alone.”

If the participants are still not convinced, have them randomly deal out the remaining cards to East–West and play the hand. Good defense is likely to defeat 3NT in almost every layout. The defenders may have to be careful not to waste their aces on “thin air” but use them to capture North’s high cards.

“Why would it be a good idea for North to pass without much consideration? (Opponents may come in.) While North is not overly enamored with the 2 ♠ contract, there’s always the possibility that the opponents may wander into the auction. North can double for penalty.

“These combined hands illustrate why it is important that the weak two-bid opener should stick fairly closely to the guidelines. If responder knows that opener has a good suit but not much outside, it’s a lot easier for responder to pass with a hand like this. If responder thinks that opener might have a

side four-card heart suit, and perhaps an ace or two outside the spade suit, it's much more tempting to bid. By keeping the weak two-bid fairly disciplined — at least in first and second positions — it's easier for responder to judge what to do.

“Since points alone are not a good guideline for when to bid after partner opens a weak two-bid, how does responder judge what to do? The best approach is for responder to picture the type of hand opener typically has for the weak two-bid and then decide how well the hands fit together. Try to think about the number of tricks your side can take, or the number of losers there are likely to be.

“To see this, turn the South cards facedown and focus on the North hand.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ x		2 ♠
♥ K Q J x	?	
♦ K Q x x		
♣ K Q x x		

“If South opens the bidding 2 ♠, what sort of hand do you visualize for opener? (Good spade suit.) You would expect opener to have a good six-card spade suit, something like ♠ A Q J x x x, ♠ K Q J x x x, or ♠ A J 10 x x x. You don't expect partner to have much outside the spade suit.

“If that's the case, how many tricks would you expect South to lose in a spade contract opposite this hand? (Four or five.) You can visualize that partner will have to lose three aces and one or two trump tricks. 4 ♠ is unlikely to be a good contract.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add the queen and a low card.

“In hearts: take away the queen and add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away the king and the queen.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH
♠ Q x x	4 ♠	2 ♠
♥ A K J x		
♦ x x		
♣ K Q x x		

“Now North is down to 15 high-card points, but what should North bid when South opens 2 ♠? (4 ♠.) You can start to envision that 4 ♠ might make opposite this hand. If partner can bring home the spade suit for no losers, there may be only two losers in diamonds and one in clubs. Even if partner's spades are ♠ A J 10 x x x, the contract is at worst on a finesse for the ♠ K.

“Turn up the South cards and see how you would fare.

NORTH ♠ Q x x ♥ A K J x ♦ x x ♣ K Q x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4 ♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	4 ♠	2 ♠	SOUTH ♠ A K 10 x x x ♥ x x ♦ 10 x x ♣ x x
NORTH	SOUTH					
4 ♠	2 ♠					

“As you may have pictured, 4♠ is a good contract. If trumps don’t behave too badly, declarer has only three diamond losers and a club loser. There are a number of ways to get rid of the third diamond loser — ruff it in dummy, discard it on an extra club winner in dummy, if West has the ♣A, or take the heart finesse. Even if South’s ♠K were the ♠J, the contract would have a chance. You’d need the spade finesse. Of course, if South didn’t have the ♠A, the contract might have no chance, but then South wouldn’t have a very good weak two-bid. Besides, South might have something like the ♦K instead, and 4♠ might still make.

“A good fit and distribution are critical to evaluating whether to bid game opposite a weak two-bid.

“Make the North hand weaker still, but improve the distribution. First turn the South cards face down, so that you have to visualize opener’s hand.

“In diamonds: take away a low card.

“In clubs: take away the king and the queen and add three low cards.

NORTH ♠ Q x x ♥ A K J x ♦ x ♣ x x x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4 ♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	4 ♠	2 ♠	
NORTH	SOUTH					
4 ♠	2 ♠					

“**What do you bid when South opens 2♠?** (4♠.) There are only 10 high-card points, but it wouldn’t be unreasonable to take a shot at 4♠. With five clubs, you can visualize that partner might be short in that suit. Also, if partner has length in diamonds, partner can probably ruff a couple of diamonds in the dummy. Turn up the combined hands and let’s see how 4♠ would fare.

NORTH ♠ Q x x ♥ A K J x ♦ x ♣ x x x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4 ♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 ♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	4 ♠	2 ♠	SOUTH ♠ A K 10 x x x ♥ x x ♦ 10 x x ♣ x x
NORTH	SOUTH					
4 ♠	2 ♠					

“4♠ isn’t a secure contract, but it has a chance. South might get away with one diamond loser and two club losers. Of course, there’s lots that could go wrong, but you can see the general idea. It’s not so much the high-card points that responder holds, as where they are located and how well the hands fit together. Aces and kings in the side suits will usually be more effective than queens and jacks. Shortness in a side suit will usually be valuable,

especially if responder has a good fit for opener's suit.

"While responder will want to raise to game when the partnership has a good chance of making the contract, there may be other times that responder may raise to the game level. Turn the South hand face down again and change the North hand.

"In spades: add a low card.

"In hearts: take away the ace and the jack and add a low card.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ Q x x x</td> <td>2 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ K x x</td> <td>4 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ x x x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ Q x x x	2 ♠	♥ K x x	4 ♠	♦ x		♣ x x x x x	
NORTH	SOUTH										
♠ Q x x x	2 ♠										
♥ K x x	4 ♠										
♦ x											
♣ x x x x x											

"Your partner, South, again opens 2 ♠. With only 5 high-card points, can you expect a contract of 4 ♠ to make? (No.) Unless you get really lucky, you can't expect partner to take 10 tricks opposite this hand.

"Why should you raise to 4 ♠ anyway? (Preemptive.) There are two reasons for jumping to game over partner's weak two-bid. One is because you expect to make the contract. The second is because you expect that the opponents can make a contract, and that whatever penalty your side suffers is likely to be less than the value of the opponents' contract.

"Turn up the South cards.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">NORTH</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♠ Q x x x</td> <td>2 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♥ K x x</td> <td>4 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♦ x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">♣ x x x x x</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	♠ Q x x x	2 ♠	♥ K x x	4 ♠	♦ x		♣ x x x x x		SOUTH
NORTH	SOUTH											
♠ Q x x x	2 ♠											
♥ K x x	4 ♠											
♦ x												
♣ x x x x x												
		♠ A K 10 x x x										
		♥ x x										
		♦ 10 x x										
		♣ x x										

"Can you make 4 ♠? (No.) South has to lose at least one heart trick, one diamond trick and two club tricks. South may have to lose two heart tricks if the ♥A is unfavorably placed.

"Although you can't make 4 ♠, what can the opponents make? (4 ♥ or more.) The opponents can probably take at least 11 tricks in a heart contract. They have at most one spade loser — since they have only three spades between them. They have at most one heart loser, and they can probably avoid that if East has the ♥A. They have all the high cards in diamonds and clubs. They could make a slam or even a grand slam if one of them is void in spades."

If the students are having any difficulty with this, have them randomly deal the East–West cards and decide what East–West can make. East–West can make a slam more often than not. With a more experienced group, you might bring up the following point.

"Suppose your side is vulnerable and the opponents are not. Should North still jump to 4 ♠? (Yes.) At worst, South is likely to be defeated two

tricks doubled for a penalty of 500 points. If that's the case, East holds the ♥A, and East–West can make a slam. If West holds the ♥A, East–West can only make a game, but now declarer will go down only one trick, for a penalty of 200 points if doubled. That's still better than letting East–West play in a comfortable game contract. Don't be deterred by the vulnerability when you have an excellent fit and good distribution."

Some students may wonder why you don't pass 2♠ with the North hand and hope to buy the contract. If East–West bid, you can always bid 4♠ later.

"With so little defense, North should bid 4♠ right away, before the opponents have an opportunity to exchange information. North should jump to 4♠, even if West doubles or overcalls over 2♠. You want to take away as much bidding room as possible from the opponents, before they have a chance to settle on their best contract. You are hoping that they will misjudge the situation. They might double for penalty and get less than the value of their game contract. They might stop in 5♥ when they can make a slam, or they might bid 6♥ and go down. By jumping to 4♠, you make them guess what to do."

If any students suggest jumping to 5♠ with the North hand, especially if they aren't vulnerable, you could congratulate them. They truly understand the importance of immediate preemptive action.

"Turn the North cards face down for a moment and look at only the South hand. Suppose you open 2♠ with the South hand, West bids 3♥ and your partner jumps to 4♠. East now bids 5♥. If you are not vulnerable, what do you do at this point? (Pass.) It's very important to understand that you should pass at this point! Partner knows all about your hand. You know nothing about partner's hand. That makes partner the captain. Partner might indeed have a weak hand. In that case, it will be up to partner to decide whether to bid more over 5♥. Partner might not want to push the opponents into a slam. Or, partner could have a strong hand and be expecting to make 4♠. Partner might be itching to double the opponents in 5♥. Once you've made your preemptive opening bid, you shouldn't bid again unless partner makes a forcing bid.

"What bids by responder are forcing? Many partnerships have the agreement that a raise is the only non-forcing bid — RONF is an acronym used for this. You have to be careful interpreting this. What it really means is that a new suit and 2NT are forcing bids in response to a weak two-bid. A raise to the three level or higher isn't forcing, and opener is expected to pass. But a jump to 3NT or game in another suit also is not forcing. It is to play. So RONF may be a bit misleading.

"Let's look at some other bids responder can make, other than passing or raising opener's suit to the game level.

"Change the North hand.

"In spades: add the ace and the king.

"In diamonds: add the king.

"In clubs: take away three low cards.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace, the king and a low card.

“In diamonds: add the ace, the queen and a low card.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x x x</p> <p>♥ K x x</p> <p>♦ K x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♠</td> <td>2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4♠</td> <td>3♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♠	2♦	4♠	3♠	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ 10 x x</p> <p>♥ x x</p> <p>♦ A Q 10 x x x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH							
2♠	2♦							
4♠	3♠							

“**What would be South’s opening bid?** (2♦.) A good six-card suit and 6 high-card points are enough to open the bidding 2♦.

“**Assuming West passes, what does North respond?** (2♠.) A new suit by responder below the level of game is forcing, so North can bid 2♠.

“**What would South bid next?** (3♠.) South has already shown a six-card diamond suit. North’s 2♠ bid is forcing and shows five or more spades. South can show support for spades by raising to the three level. Now it’s up to North.

“**What will North do?** (4♠/Pass.) It’s a close decision, but North, having found a fit in spades and having a fit with partner’s diamond suit, will probably continue to game.

“**Is 4♠ a good contract?** (Yes.) 4♠ may not make if East has the ♥A and West gets the lead, but it’s a good contract. Unless spades break 4–0, at worst it’s 50%. If East leads anything except a club, it’s almost certain to make.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away two low cards.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x x x</p> <p>♥ K x x</p> <p>♦ K x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♠</td> <td>2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♦</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♠	2♦	Pass	3♦	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ 10</p> <p>♥ x x</p> <p>♦ A Q 10 x x x</p> <p>♣ x x x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH							
2♠	2♦							
Pass	3♦							

“**How would the auction go this time, with South as the dealer?** (2♦–2♠–3♦–Pass.) South would still open with a weak 2♦, and North would make a forcing response of 2♠. Without support for North’s suit and with a minimum hand for the weak two-bid, South would go back to 3♦. Now North will probably pass and settle for partscore in diamonds. 3♦ is a reasonable contract and should make. Game in spades is not a good spot. It might make, but it would require a lucky lie in the heart suit, a 3–3 division in the spade suit and probably a favorable diamond division.

“Without a fit for North’s suit but with a maximum weak two-bid, South could do something other than rebid the original suit. On this hand, for ex-

ample, if South held the ♣K, South might bid 3♣ over the 2♠ response, showing something in clubs and more than a minimum.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In hearts: take away two low cards and add the queen.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x x x x</p> <p>♥ K Q</p> <p>♦ K x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♠</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♦ Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	4♠	2♦ Pass	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ 10</p> <p>♥ x x</p> <p>♦ A Q 10 x x x</p> <p>♣ x x x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH					
4♠	2♦ Pass					

“**How might the auction go with these two hands?** (2♦–4♠–Pass.) South starts with 2♦ and now it’s up to North. North doesn’t really need any support in the spade suit. North can visualize making a game in spades with as little as the ♦A in the South hand — seven spade tricks, a heart trick and two diamond tricks. North should simply jump to 4♠. If North jumps to a game contract, South has nothing further to say. South has already described the hand, and North isn’t asking for any further information. South must respect North’s captaincy.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the king and two low cards.

“In hearts: add a low card.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

“In clubs: add the king.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ A Q x x</p> <p>♥ K Q x</p> <p>♦ K x x</p> <p>♣ K x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">3NT</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♦ Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	3NT	2♦ Pass	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ 10</p> <p>♥ x x</p> <p>♦ A Q 10 x x x</p> <p>♣ x x x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH					
3NT	2♦ Pass					

“**What would North bid with this hand if South opened 2♦?** (3NT.)

North can visualize taking six diamond tricks opposite a good six-card suit in the South hand. Combined with the other high cards, the partnership should have a reasonable play for 3NT. North should jump to 3NT, and South should pass, respecting partner’s decision. 3NT is a good contract. If East leads a spade, it is almost sure to make. If East leads anything else, North still has a good chance for nine tricks. 5♦ might make, but 3NT should be easier.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the ace.

“In hearts: take away the king and add a low card.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH ♠ Q x x ♥ Q x x ♦ K x x ♣ K x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3 ♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 ♦ Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	3 ♦	2 ♦ Pass	SOUTH ♠ 10 ♥ x x ♦ A Q 10 x x x ♣ x x x x
NORTH	SOUTH					
3 ♦	2 ♦ Pass					

“How would North handle this hand after a 2♦ opening by South? (Pass/3♦.) With 10 high-card points, North could simply pass and hope South makes 2♦. East–West have at least half the high cards or more and are likely to compete. They probably have a fit in at least one major suit, if not both. To make it more difficult for them, North can raise to 3♦. East might have been willing to come in at the two level, but may not be so eager to come in at the three level. Also, if the opponents do come into the auction, they now have less room to maneuver. They may bid too much or too little.

“If North does raise to 3♦ and East enters the auction, perhaps with an overcall of 3♠, what should South do? (Pass.) North’s raise is not forcing and it’s not even invitational. North is the captain, and it is generally up to North to decide how high to compete. By raising to 3♦, North may be laying a trap for East–West, hoping they will come into the auction and be defeated. By bidding, South takes away one of North’s options.”

Summary

“After a weak two-bid:

- The partnership usually plays a response structure termed RONF — Raise is the Only Non-Force. On the surface, this implies that the only non-forcing bids by responder are a raise of opener’s suit. In practice, it’s a little more complex. A jump to game by responder is also not forcing. It’s a sign-off and opener is expected to pass. Also, a raise isn’t just non-forcing. It’s not invitational. Opener is expected to pass, since responder is the captain. Responder could have either a strong hand or a weak hand when raising opener’s suit. The opponents should be guessing what to do, not opener.
- A new suit by responder below the game level is forcing. With a fit — usually three-card support but perhaps a doubleton honor — responder should raise. Without a fit, responder rebids the original suit with a minimum and bids something else — a new suit or notrump — with a maximum.

“A response of 2NT is forcing also, and we’ll deal with that next.”

The 2NT Response

Introduction

“There are times when responder needs more information from opener to determine the best contract. Responder may need to know whether opener has a minimum or a maximum for the weak two-bid, or whether opener has some additional feature in the hand. Most partnerships use a 2NT response as an artificial bid, asking for a further description of the weak two-bid.

“In response to the artificial 2NT bid, opener simply rebids the suit with a minimum of 5 to 8 points. With a maximum for the weak two-bid — 9 to 11 points — opener bids another suit to show a feature — usually an ace or a king. With no outside feature, opener can rebid 3NT to show a maximum.

“Let’s see how this works.”

Instructions

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add the ace.

“In hearts: add the king.

“In diamonds: take away a low card and add the jack.

“In clubs: take away the king and a low card.

NORTH ♠ A Q x x ♥ K Q x x ♦ K J x ♣ x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>3♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH		2♦	2NT	3♦	Pass		SOUTH ♠ 10 ♥ x x ♦ A Q 10 x x x ♣ x x x x
NORTH	SOUTH									
	2♦									
2NT	3♦									
Pass										

“When South opens 2♦, North could pass and play in partscore, but has enough strength to be interested in a game. To get more information, what does North respond? (2NT.) The 2NT response is artificial and forcing, asking for a further description of the South hand.

“What would South bid with this hand? (3♦.) With only 6 high-card points, South has a minimum-strength hand for the weak two-bid. South shows this by rebidding 3♦.

“What does North bid now? (Pass.) North has shown some interest, but with nothing extra in the South hand, North settles for partscore.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the king and add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away the jack.

“In clubs: add a low card.

“Change the South hand.

“In clubs: take away a low card and add the king.

NORTH ♠ A Q x x ♥ A Q x x ♦ K x ♣ x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>3♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2NT	2♦	3NT	3♣		Pass	SOUTH ♠ 10 ♥ x x ♦ A Q 10 x x x ♣ K x x x
NORTH	SOUTH									
2NT	2♦									
3NT	3♣									
	Pass									

“**How would the auction proceed?** (2♦–2NT–3♣–3NT–Pass.) South starts with 2♦, and North bids 2NT to inquire about South’s weak two-bid. With a maximum, South bids 3♣, showing a feature outside the diamond suit. Now North would probably try for the nine-trick contract of 3NT. North is no longer worried that the defenders can immediately take enough club tricks to defeat the contract.”

With an experienced class, you can discuss the term feature. Some partnerships treat an outside ace or king as a feature; other partnerships show any potential stopper in this situation such as Q–J–x, Q–10–x or J–10–x–x.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away the king and add a low card.

“In clubs: take away a low card and add the ace.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In diamonds: take away a low card and add the king.

“In clubs: take away the king.

NORTH ♠ A Q x x ♥ A Q x x ♦ x x ♣ A x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2NT	2♦	Pass	3NT	SOUTH ♠ 10 x ♥ x x ♦ A K Q 10 x x ♣ x x x
NORTH	SOUTH							
2NT	2♦							
Pass	3NT							

“**What would happen with these two hands, starting with South?** (2♦–2NT–3NT–Pass.) With 9 high-card points and a good suit, South opens 2♦. North has 16 high-card points and is interested in game if South has a maximum, so North asks with 2NT. With a maximum-strength weak two-bid but no outside feature, South bids 3NT, and that is where the contract rests. North–South should have no trouble taking nine tricks if diamonds behave nicely.”

Summary

“A 2NT response to a weak two-bid is artificial and forcing. It asks for a further description of opener’s hand:

- With a minimum hand of 5 to 8 points, opener rebids the suit at the three level.
- With a maximum hand of 9 to 11 points, opener rebids a new suit to show a feature — such as an ace or a king — or rebids 3NT with no outside feature.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercises 2, 3 & 4 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Two — Responding to a Weak Two-bid

Your side is non-vulnerable. Partner opens the bidding 2♦, and the next player passes. What do you respond with the following hands?

1) ♠ K J 9 7 4
♥ K Q 8 3
♦ 6 4
♣ K J

2) ♠ A K J 8 4 2
♥ 10 2
♦ Q 3
♣ A Q 7

3) ♠ A J 10
♥ A Q 2
♦ K 9 8
♣ Q 10 8 5

4) ♠ A K 6
♥ 9 6 4
♦ Q 8 3
♣ K J 5 4

5) ♠ J 7 4
♥ Q 2
♦ Q J 2
♣ Q 10 7 5 2

6) ♠ 3
♥ 10 8 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 3
♣ K 6 3

Exercise Two Answer — Responding to a Weak Two-Bid

- 1) Pass. Game is unlikely, and bidding may get your side into trouble.
- 2) 2♠. This is forcing. A spade game is reasonable if partner has a fit; if not, there may be game in notrump or diamonds.
- 3) 3NT. You should be able to take nine tricks.
- 4) 2NT. This is artificial (conventional) and forcing.
- 5) 3♦. The hand probably belongs to the opponents, but raising to the three level will make it more difficult for them to enter the auction.
- 6) 5♦. This is preemptive. You have little defense outside of diamonds.

Exercise Three — More Responses to a Weak Two-bid

Both sides are vulnerable. Partner opens the bidding 2♠, and the next player passes. What do you respond with the following hands?

1) ♠ Q 10 7 2
♥ 9 3
♦ K 10 7 5 2
♣ 6 3

2) ♠ —
♥ A K Q 10 8 7 4
♦ A Q J
♣ J 6 3

3) ♠ Q 8
♥ A Q J 2
♦ 9 5 3
♣ K Q 6 2

4) ♠ J 5
♥ Q 9 3
♦ K 6 5 3
♣ A Q 8 4

5) ♠ Q 6 2
♥ 9 8 2
♦ K Q 8 5
♣ Q 9 2

6) ♠ 7
♥ A K J 8 3
♦ A K 9 6 3
♣ K 6

Exercise Three Answer— More Responses to a Weak Two-bid

- 1) 4♠. Raise to game as quickly as possible to try to keep the opponents from their best contract. It's likely they can make at least a game if not a slam.
- 2) 4♥. This tells partner you want to play game in hearts and aren't interested in spades. Partner is expected to pass.
- 3) 2NT. Game is possible if partner has a maximum. If not, you can stop in 3♠.
- 4) Pass. Game is unlikely for your side, and you have good defense if the opponents come into the auction. Hopefully, you have enough for partner to make the 2♠ contract.
- 5) 3♠. The opponents should be able to make something, and your raise may make it more difficult for them to find their best spot. A jump to 4♠ could be too much if the opponents choose to double for penalty.
- 6) 3♥. This is forcing. You may make game in hearts, if partner has a heart fit, or game in diamonds or notrump without a heart fit. Even 4♠ may make if partner has a very good spade suit.

Exercise Four — Opener's Rebid

As West, what do you rebid with each of the following hands after the auction starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
?			

1) ♠ J 3
♥ K Q 10 8 7 5
♦ 8 4
♣ 10 8 3

2) ♠ J
♥ K J 10 9 6 5
♦ 9 7 3
♣ A 10 4

3) ♠ 7 3
♥ A K Q 9 7 5
♦ J 9 4
♣ 8 2

Exercise Four Answer— Opener's Rebid

- 1) 3♥. Partner's 2NT is forcing, and the rebid of your suit shows a minimum-strength weak two-bid.
- 2) 3♣. This shows a feature in clubs and more than a minimum for the weak two-bid.
- 3) 3NT. This shows a maximum weak two-bid with no side feature.

Handling Interference

Introduction

“Since the weak two-bid doesn’t promise much strength, the opponents will come into the auction frequently. If the weak two-bid is doubled for takeout, all responder’s choices remain the same. A new suit is still forcing, and 2NT asks for a further description of opener’s hand. Responder also can redouble, if interested in doubling the opponents for penalties.

“If there is an overcall, responder can make the normal response, if there is room available. Responder also has the option of doubling for penalties or cuebidding the opponent’s suit to show interest in going beyond game.

“Let’s see how all of this works.”

Instructions

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the ace and the queen and add the jack.

“In hearts: take away the queen and add a low card.

“In diamonds: take away a low card.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: add the king, the queen, the jack and a low card.

“In diamonds: take away the ace, the queen and a low card.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

NORTH ♠ J x x ♥ A x x x ♦ x ♣ A x x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♠</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♥</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♥</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	2♠	4♥		2♥	SOUTH ♠ 10 x ♥ K Q J x x x ♦ K 10 x ♣ x x
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH							
2♠	4♥		2♥							

“Turn the South hand face down for the moment.

“**Suppose you hold the North hand and you hear partner, South, open the bidding 2♥. Before you can bid anything, West overcalls 2♠. What do you bid now?** (3♥/4♥/Pass.) Visualize partner’s hand. Partner has a good heart suit and not much strength outside of hearts. You probably can take six heart tricks and the ♣A. If partner has some length in diamonds, partner can probably ruff one or two diamonds in dummy. Partner should be able to take eight or nine tricks in a heart contract.

“**What about the opponents in a spade contract?** (Ten or more tricks.) It’s

unlikely that partner has much in spades, so your side won't get any tricks in that suit. You have four hearts and partner has six, leaving three for the opponents. If the opponents' hearts divide 2–1, you'll get a heart trick. If they divide 3–0, you won't get any heart tricks. You should get a trick with the ♣A, but you won't get any more tricks unless partner comes up with something. It's quite likely the opponents can make game in spades.

“Your best bid at this point, therefore, is probably a jump to 4♥. You don't expect to go down too badly, even if the opponents double. If they do double, the penalty is likely to be less than the value of the game they can make. They may not even double the 4♥ contract, being afraid that you have a stronger hand. If they bid, they may misjudge the situation and get too high. At worst, they'll reach their normal contract of 4♠, and you will have lost nothing.”

With an experienced class, you could discuss other options, such as a tactical underbid of 3♥ — hoping the opponents will stop in 3♠ — or an immediate jump to 5♥ — hoping the opponents will misjudge what to do. For a basic class, stick with the normal action.

“Let's see what happens if you jump to 4♥ and East chooses to double that contract, rather than bid 4♠. Turn the South hand face up.

NORTH ♠ J x x ♥ A x x x ♦ x ♣ A x x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Double</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♥ Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	2♠	4♥	Double	2♥ Pass	Pass	Pass			SOUTH ♠ 10 x ♥ K Q J x x x ♦ K 10 x ♣ x x
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
2♠	4♥	Double	2♥ Pass											
Pass	Pass													

“**How will partner fare in 4♥ doubled?** (Down one.) Partner will lose two spades, one diamond and one club. Partner's other diamond losers can be ruffed in dummy if necessary. Down one doubled.

“**Is that a bad result?** (No.) Look at the tricks you are likely to take against a spade contract. You have at most one heart trick. You have a club trick for sure and maybe a trick with partner's ♦K. East–West should have no difficulty making 4♠.”

If the class has difficulty visualizing the East–West possibilities, have the students randomly divide the remaining cards between East and West to see what East and West can make.

“Your jump to 4♥ makes the auction much more difficult for East–West to judge exactly what to do. If East bids 4♠, rather than doubling, West might decide to bid more. If the opponents get to the five level, they could go down. Such is the nature of preemptive bids — it makes the auction quite exciting, and the results can be unpredictable.

“**Would it make any difference if West had doubled 2♥ instead of overcalling 2♠?** (No.) North should jump to 4♥, hoping the opponents will guess incorrectly about what to do.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card.

“In diamonds: add the queen.

“In clubs: take away a low card and add the king.

NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH
♠ J x x				2♥	♠ 10 x
♥ A x x	2♠	2NT	Pass	3♦	♥ K Q J x x x
♦ Q x	Pass	4♥			♦ K 10 x
♣ A K x x x					♣ x x

“**South is the dealer and opens 2♥. West overcalls 2♠. What does North do?** (2NT/3♥/3♣/4♥.) North has a number of options. North could simply raise to 3♥ and give up on the possibility of game. North could jump to 4♥ and hope the partnership can make game or that any penalty for being defeated is less than the value of the opponents’ contract. Or North can take a more middle-of-the-road approach and bid 2NT, asking for a further description of partner’s hand.

“**If North does bid 2NT, what will South say?** (3♦.) With a maximum, South will show a diamond feature. This will probably encourage North to take the partnership to game. If South had shown a minimum, North would settle for 3♥. The partnership also might get to game if North were to bid 3♣, forcing, over the 2♠ overcall. South doesn’t have support for clubs, but with a maximum hand can bid 3♦, showing a feature. North could put the partnership in 4♥.

“In competitive auctions, it’s difficult to be very accurate in the bidding. You have to do the best you can. There are many turns that the auction may take.

“**Suppose South opens 2♥, and West doubles for takeout. North can bid 2NT asking for a further description of opener’s hand. What if East now bids 3♣? What does South do?** (3♦.) South still has room to show a feature.

“**What if East bids 3♦?** (Double.) South can show something in diamonds by doubling the 3♦ bid. North can decide whether to defend or bid on.

“**What if East bids 3♠?** (Pass/4♥.) South doesn’t have to bid but might choose to bid anyway. South has close to a maximum, and partner is showing interest in reaching game with the 2NT response.

“And so it goes. Change the North hand.
 “In spades: add the king.
 “In hearts: take away the ace and a low card.
 “In diamonds: add the ace.

NORTH ♠ K J x x ♥ x ♦ A Q x ♣ A K x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">WEST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">EAST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Double</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	2♠	Double		2♥	SOUTH ♠ 10 x ♥ K Q J x x x ♦ K 10 x ♣ x x
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH							
2♠	Double		2♥							

“**Suppose South opens with a weak 2♥ bid, and West overcalls 2♠. What does North bid?** (Double/3NT.) This time, it looks as though the opponents have wandered into trouble. North should double them for penalties. Even opposite a minimum weak two-bid, the partnership can probably extract a large penalty from 2♠ doubled.”

For more experienced students, you might want to clarify that North’s double in this situation is for penalty — not a negative double — since North already knows what partner’s hand looks like.

You might skip the next statement if the students are unfamiliar with the redouble. Redoubles are discussed in *More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*.

“**What if West doubled for takeout?** (Redouble.) North can redouble, showing interest in defending for penalties. Whatever East–West bid next, North plans to double for penalty. If East bids diamonds, South would be happy to get in on the action and double that suit, before North has a chance.”

Summary

“If the opponents interfere over the weak two-bid, nothing has changed:

- A new suit by responder below the level of game is still forcing.
- 2NT, if it is available, still asks for a further description of opener’s hand.
- Raises of opener’s suit can be based on either weakness or strength — neither opener nor the opponents know which type of hand responder holds.
- With no fit with opener’s suit, responder can double an overcall for penalties with a good defensive hand.
- Over a takeout double, responder can redouble with a strong hand and interest in defending for penalties.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercises 5 & 6 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Five — Opener's Second Bid

You hold the following hand as West:

♠ K Q 10 9 6 4
 ♥ J 8 3
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ 7 4

What is your next bid in each of the following auctions?

- | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1) | WEST
2♠
? | NORTH
Pass | EAST
3♠ | SOUTH
Pass |
| 2) | WEST
2♠
? | NORTH
Pass | EAST
3♥ | SOUTH
Pass |
| 3) | WEST
2♠
? | NORTH
Double | EAST
2NT | SOUTH
3♦ |
| 4) | WEST
2♠
? | NORTH
Pass | EAST
3NT | SOUTH
Pass |
| 5) | WEST
2♠
? | NORTH
3♣ | EAST
4♠ | SOUTH
5♣ |

Exercise Five Answer— Opener's Second Bid

- 1) Pass. Partner's raise isn't invitational. You've already described your hand with the weak two-bid.
- 2) 4♥. A new suit by responder is forcing. Raise to show support.
- 3) Pass. You would have rebid 3♠ to show a minimum if South had passed, but the 3♦ bid gives you the option of passing to show nothing extra.
- 4) Pass. Partner has heard your descriptive opening bid and decided that 3NT is the best contract for your side. Partner hasn't promised a fit for spades.
- 5) Pass. Partner is the captain. Partner's 4♠ bid may have been made with a weak hand or a strong hand. Pass, and leave any further decision to partner.

Exercise Six — Higher-Level Openings

What is your opening call with each of the following hands?

1) ♠ 6
♥ A K J 9 8 5 3
♦ J 7 4
♣ 9 3

2) ♠ A Q J 9 7 6 4 3
♥ 3
♦ 9 4
♣ J 8

3) ♠ —
♥ 7 2
♦ K Q J 9 8 7 5 4 3
♣ 10 8

Exercise Six Answer— Higher-Level Openings

- 1) 3♥. With a seven-card suit, open a preemptive (weak) bid at the three level.
- 2) 4♠. An eight-card suit can be opened at the four level.
- 3) 5♦. With a weak hand but a good nine-card minor suit, you can open at the five level ... to make things interesting!

NOTE: Sample Deals Review the instructions on page 44.

SAMPLE DEALS – LESSON 7

Guidelines for Teachers: The deals in this lesson contain examples of the weak two-bid in action. With any competitive auction, there are many possible results. Let the students bid and play the deals as they see fit, then discuss the suggested auction. The variation in the actual results should indicate the type of action generated by weak two-bids. The deals are all fairly straightforward, but do contain a couple of concepts for discussion with a more experienced group (frozen suit and inferences from the auction).

Bid and Play – Deal 1: The Classic Weak Two-Bid

Guidelines for Teachers: On this first deal, East has a perfect weak two bid hand. That makes it difficult for North-South to get in the auction and many won't.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where we can see a perfect example of a weak two bid.”

Instructions

“North is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.

(E-Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 1 — Dealer, North)

Dealer: North	♠ A 2		
Vul: None	♥ 8 5 2		
	♦ A J 6 4		
	♣ J 10 4 2		
♠ K Q 6 5 4		♠ 8 3	
♥ J		♥ K Q 10 9 6 3	
♦ 8 5 2		♦ K 7	
♣ K Q 7 5		♣ 9 6 3	
	♠ J 10 9 7		
	♥ A 7 4		
	♦ Q 10 9 3		
	♣ A 8		

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

“After North’s pass, East has a perfect hand for a weak two-bid. The opening bid of 2♥ shows a good six-card suit and not enough values for an opening bid at the one level. South’s hand is unsuitable for either an overcall or a takeout double. West doesn’t care much for partner’s choice of trump suit but should not attempt to “improve” the contract. West’s hand is unsuitable for notrump, and a response in a new suit would be forcing, likely getting the partnership too high. West should pass, hoping partner can make eight tricks in a contract of 2♥, or that the opponents will enter the auction. North has the values for a balancing bid, but neither a takeout double nor an overcall is attractive. North passes, leaving East as declarer in 2♥.

“North–South can make at least eight tricks in diamonds, and even a contract of 3♦ down one would be a good result. East’s weak two-bid makes it difficult for North–South to get into the auction. If they do, West will get off to the best lead of the ♥J.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 2♥ by East, let’s review the play and defense.

“South is on lead and should choose the ♠J, top of a sequence.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer has a spade loser, a heart loser, two diamond losers and two club losers. East should plan to draw trumps and then try finesses in both diamonds and clubs. East can lead twice toward dummy’s ♣K and ♣Q, hoping that South has the ♣A. East also can lead a low diamond from dummy toward the ♦K, hoping North has the ♦A.

“There’s not much difficulty on the actual deal, since both the ♣A and the ♦A are favorably placed for declarer. The defenders can probably get a club ruff (see below), but East should finish with at least eight tricks.”

Suggested Defense

“On the layout of the cards, there’s nothing the defenders can do to prevent East from making a contract of 2♥. The best they can do is get a club ruff and prevent declarer from making an overtrick. This isn’t easy. With the spade sequence to lead from, South is unlikely to start by leading the ♣A, hoping to get a ruff. On the lead of the ♠J, North will win the first trick with the ♠A but is unlikely to lead back a club. Unless one of the defenders switches to clubs before East can drive out the ♥A and draw trumps, declarer will take nine tricks.

“If North–South find a way into the auction and play in a diamond partscore, East–West can probably take five tricks after the lead of the ♥J — one spade, two hearts, one diamond and one club. If South plays in a notrump contract and West leads the ♥J, East must be careful to overtake this with the ♥Q and continue leading hearts. If East doesn’t overtake and South holds up the ♥A, East–West won’t be able to establish their heart winners while East still has a potential entry with the ♦K.”

Bid and Play — Deal 2: The Descriptive Weak Two-Bid

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal includes an example of how declarer can freeze a suit to prevent the defenders from taking all of the tricks in the suit (frozen suit). There is an opportunity to discuss the suit from both the declarer's and the defenders' point of view.

Introduction

“Let's play a deal where the contract could be in jeopardy if declarer doesn't handle the opening lead carefully.”

Instructions

“East is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 2 — Dealer, East)

Dealer: East		♠ A K 7 4												
Vul: N-S		♥ 10 6 2												
		♦ K 5												
		♣ K Q 10 4												
♠ Q 10 9 5			<table border="1" style="margin: auto; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ J 6 2
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ A 8					♥ Q J 9 7 3									
♦ J 6 2					♦ 9 4									
♣ J 9 7 3					♣ A 8 2									
		♠ 8 3												
		♥ K 5 4												
		♦ A Q 10 8 7 3												
		♣ 6 5												

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let's review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“With only a five-card heart suit, East does not have the right type of hand for a weak two-bid in first position. South, however, has an ideal hand for opening 2♦ — a good six-card suit and 9 high-card points. With a balanced hand, 15 high-card points and an honor in partner’s suit, North has interest in reaching a game contract after hearing South’s opening bid of 2♦. Without any strength in hearts, it would be dangerous for North to insist on a contract of 3NT, especially since South could have as few as 6 points. Instead, North asks for more information by making the artificial response of 2NT.

“With close to a maximum for the weak two-bid, South shows a side feature in hearts. This is all North needs to know to put the partnership in a contract of 3NT. Opposite good diamonds and a feature in hearts, North expects to have a play for nine tricks. South respects North’s decision.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3NT by North, let’s review the play and defense.

“East is on lead. Although South has shown some values in hearts, that suit still looks best for the defense. Presumably, North has some strength in clubs and spades for the 3NT bid. South would start with the ♥Q, top of a broken sequence.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer has two sure winners in spades and three in diamonds. If the missing diamonds divide 3–2 or the ♦J appears on the first round, declarer will get three more tricks from that suit. Declarer can promote a ninth trick in clubs and may get a trick from the heart suit.

“North has one hurdle to overcome, the opening heart lead. North wants to make sure that the defenders don’t take four or five heart tricks and defeat the contract. There’s no danger if East holds the ♥A, since the ♥K will then be a trick. There is a danger if West holds the ♥A. To decide whether to play the ♥K on the first trick, North needs to look carefully at the layout of the suit. East’s lead of the ♥Q implies that East also holds the ♥J. East could be leading from a holding such as ♥A Q J x or ♥Q J 9 x.

“The ♥10 in North’s hand is a critical card. As long as East holds the ♥J, North can secure the contract by playing *low* on the first trick. East’s ♥Q may win the first trick, but now the defenders are helpless. If East continues with the ♥J, declarer can cover with dummy’s ♥K. The ♥10 will become a trick if West wins the ♥A. If East continues with a low heart, declarer plays low from dummy and will win the trick with the ♥10, unless West plays the ♥A. If West does play the ♥A on the second trick, South’s ♥K is a winner.

“By playing a low heart from dummy on the first trick, declarer effectively freezes the suit. If the defenders lead the suit a second time, declarer is sure to get a heart trick. If the defenders lead anything else, declarer can establish a club trick to make the contract. There are many such positions where the suit is frozen for one side or the other or both. Whichever side leads the suit will lose a trick.

“Look at what happens if declarer plays the ♥K on the first trick, hoping East has the ♥A. West wins and returns a heart, trapping North’s ♥10. The defenders take the first five heart tricks and the ♣A to defeat the contract two tricks.

“If declarer negotiates the heart suit correctly, the only remaining challenge is the diamond suit. When the defenders’ diamonds divide 3–2, six tricks roll home in the suit, and declarer makes the contract.”

Suggested Defense

“If East starts with the ♥Q, the defenders can defeat the contract, if dummy’s ♥K is played on the first trick. If declarer plays a low heart from dummy on the first trick, there’s nothing the defenders can do. If the ♥Q wins the first trick, East’s best continuation is the ♥J, hoping that West holds the ♥10 or that North started with a doubleton ♥10.

“Interestingly enough, if declarer does duck the first heart, West’s best play is to overtake with the ♥A and return a heart. That gives declarer a trick with the ♥K, but establishes the heart suit for the defense. Declarer can’t afford to let East win a trick with the ♣A and is restricted to nine tricks. If West doesn’t overtake the first heart and East continues with a small heart, declarer most likely will make ten tricks — getting a heart trick and having time to establish a club trick.

“It’s interesting to speculate what might happen if East leads a low heart rather than the ♥Q. Declarer should play low from dummy and not risk everything by playing the ♥K on the first trick. Then declarer will make the contract. If declarer plays the ♥K on the first trick, the defenders can defeat the contract two tricks.”

“This is the perfect time for South to open a weak two-bid. North–South are not vulnerable, and with a good suit, South is unlikely to get into much trouble even if doubled for penalties.

“West has the right hand for a takeout double — a hand worth an opening bid or more with support for all of the unbid suits. Now it’s up to North. Although partner has been doubled at the two level, the double wasn’t for penalties. If North passes, East–West will probably bid to their best contract. With three-card support for partner’s suit, North should raise to the three level. North–South should have a nine-card fit, making it difficult for the opponents to double for penalty, and the raise will make it awkward for East–West to find their best spot.

“Had North passed, East would be able to comfortably respond 3♥ to the takeout double, and East–West would end up in their best contract. After the 3♠ bid, East has a tough decision. East has some high cards, but not really enough to bid 4♥ and not enough to double 3♠. East’s best choice is probably to pass and hope to defeat the contract. If East passes, that should end the auction. West doesn’t have enough to compete any further.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 3♠ by South, let’s review the play and defense.

“West has a difficult choice of opening leads. Anything could be right. It’s usually best to avoid leading a singleton trump when there’s no expectation that declarer will be ruffing losers in dummy. Instead, West should pick an unbid suit. The ♥A is quite reasonable. South has shown a weak hand and is unlikely to hold the ♥K. West will have a better idea of what to do next after seeing the dummy.”

Suggested Play

“South has a potential spade loser, a heart loser, two diamond losers and two club losers. A diamond loser can be ruffed in dummy or the ♦10 might drop, so declarer’s main concern should be the trump suit.

“Declarer has a choice between playing the ♠A and ♠K, hoping the ♠Q will fall, or taking a finesse. The standard guideline in this situation is eight ever, nine never, indicating that with nine or more cards, you *never* finesse. This is a guideline, however, not a rule. Declarer also should be guided by the auction. West’s takeout double showing support for all of the unbid suits indicates that West is probably short in spades. Declarer should take this into account before deciding what to do in spades.

“Suppose the defenders lead the ♥A and another heart, which is ruffed by South. Before playing any trumps, declarer should lead diamonds next to drive out the ♦A. This will allow declarer to ruff a diamond loser even if the missing trumps divide badly. Suppose the defenders take their club

winners after winning the ♦ A, and declarer regains the lead. Now it's time for the trump suit. Declarer plays a low spade to dummy's ♠ K and leads a low spade back toward the South hand. East follows on the second round with a low spade, and South is at the crossroads. Follow the guideline or take the finesse based on the inference from the auction?

“As can be seen from the actual layout, South can make the contract by finessing. Is that the *right* play? In this situation, there is no right or wrong. That's what makes the game interesting. Going down one trick in a contract of 3 ♠ is no disaster. Making 3 ♠ will be an excellent result. South still may be pondering.”

Suggested Defense

“The defenders should avoid giving declarer any help. If the defenders lead spades, they will solve declarer's problem in that suit. Meanwhile, they should be careful to collect the tricks to which they are entitled — one heart, one diamond and two clubs. Then they'll have to sit back and see if declarer gives them a second diamond trick or a spade trick.

“If East–West bid to a heart contract, they are unlikely to take 10 tricks, even if they guess how to play the club suit. North–South should get at least one spade trick, one heart trick and two diamond tricks, maybe more. If East–West get pushed to 4 ♥, they are likely to get a poor result if they go down two tricks (or get doubled and go down one trick). Vulnerable undertricks can be expensive.”

Bid and Play — Deal 4: Preempting the Opponents

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal allows the opening bidder to make a weak two-bid that partner can jump to game and put pressure on the opponents to get into the auction. Some North players will sit for South's double and some will be tempted to bid 4♠.

Introduction

“Let's play a deal where the weak two-bid helps to jam the auction and makes life difficult for the partnership holding most of the strength.”

Instructions

“West is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Play out the final contract when you have completed the auction.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 4 — Dealer, West)

Dealer: West		♠ K 5 3 2										
Vul: Both		♥ 8										
		♦ K 5 4 3										
		♣ K 10 4 3										
♠ 10		<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 8 6 4
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		♦ A J 8 6										
		♣ A Q J 7										

Suggested Bidding

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let's review the bidding first and agree on a final contract.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	4♥	Double
Pass	Pass (?)	Pass	

“West has an ideal hand for an opening weak two-bid in first position. North doesn't have enough strength to enter the auction at this point, so East has

an opportunity to make the auction more difficult for North–South. With a weak hand but good support for partner’s suit, East should raise to the game level. East doesn’t expect partner to make a contract of 4♥, but with little or no defensive strength, East suspects the opponents can make a game or slam.

“East’s bid creates a challenge for South. Holding 21 high-card points, South didn’t anticipate that the auction would be at the four level before getting an opportunity to bid. With too much to pass, South has to double and hope for the best. After West’s pass, it’s now North that has a tough decision. Partner’s double shows a good hand, but South is unlikely to hold a lot of strength in hearts. North–South can probably get a better score by bidding and making a game contract, than by defeating the opponents’ contract one or two tricks. With only four cards in each of the unbid suits, North’s safest action probably is to pass and hope to get enough of a penalty to compensate for any North–South contract. Still, many North’s would be tempted to bid 4♠ — and now South might push higher.

“If East–West were not in the bidding, North–South would probably find a reasonable contract through some auction such as:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“South would open 2NT showing a balanced hand of 20 or 21 points. North would use the Stayman convention to check for a major-suit fit and then settle for game in notrump. If West leads a heart, South will make at least 10 tricks. North–South can make a contract of 5♣ or 5♦ — losing only one heart and one diamond.

“East–West’s bidding makes it very difficult for North–South to reach a makeable contract. If North bids and the partnership winds up in their 4–3 spade fit, they will fare poorly when the trumps break 5–1. Even if North–South do manage to find a minor-suit fit, they may get too high, reaching a slam contract.”

Suggested Opening Lead

“Now that we have agreed on a contract of 4♥ doubled by West, let’s review the play and defense.

“If North–South decide to defend, North’s best lead is probably a trump. When North–South have most of the strength, it’s a good idea to lead trumps to try to prevent declarer from ruffing losers. On the actual hand, it won’t make much difference. North could lead a low card in any suit, and the defense should make the same number of tricks.”

Suggested Play

“West has a spade loser, a heart loser, three diamond losers and three club losers. In a doubled contract, West can’t afford to be defeated too many tricks, or the penalty will be larger than any score the opponents could make in their best contract. West should plan to ruff a diamond loser and a club loser in dummy. West should plan to take a finesse in the trump suit, hoping to trap South’s ♥K.

“If the defenders don’t lead a trump initially, West should give up two tricks in one of the minor suits, planning to ruff the third round in the dummy. West can take the trump finesse next and eventually ruff another loser in dummy. Playing carefully, West should finish with one spade loser, no heart losers, two diamond losers and two club losers. Down two.

“Since both partnerships are vulnerable, East–West will lose 500 points for being defeated two tricks doubled in a contract of 4♥. This is less than the value of a vulnerable game for North–South in 3NT, 5♣ or 5♦. East–West might do even better than this if North–South get to a spade contract or get too high in another denomination.”

Suggested Defense

“Although a trump lead is usually best against this type of auction, it won’t do the defense much good on this hand. The defenders are only entitled to five tricks. If declarer doesn’t take the heart finesse, the defenders may get a sixth trick, giving them a penalty of 800 points, but that’s unlikely.”

