

Even More Advanced Bidding Techniques

Chapter 26

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Although the principles covered thus far in this book will allow a new player to learn the game and compete without apology in a normal game of Bridge, quite a few advanced techniques can greatly increase your competency. The bidding methods presented in this chapter are used widely by experienced players. Although they aren't absolutely necessary, and although you can play a perfectly acceptable game of Bridge without them, if you learn them and play with a partner who also plays them, you will find your abilities and enjoyment of the game substantially enhanced.

Roman Key Card Blackwood

One of the finest conventions in use is the Blackwood convention, in which you bid 4 No Trump to ask your partner how many Aces she has. For game bidding, this information is unimportant; for slam bidding, however, it's essential, because you don't want to see your opponents take the first two tricks with Aces.

Blackwood does have a drawback, which the following hand illustrates. You have the West hand and are lucky to hear your partner open with 1 Diamond. You bid 1 Spade and your partner raises to 2 Spades. Depending on what your partner has, you may be able to take as many as 13 tricks. So you ask for Aces and your partner bids 5 Diamonds, showing one. What now?

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ AQ763	♠ T842
♥ 4	♥ AKQT
♦ K2	♦ QJ83
♣ AKJT3	♣ 8

The player holding this hand bid 6 Spades and found that it was too high. The defenders took their Ace of Diamonds, and even though the Spade finesse worked, declarer lost a trick when South had the KJ9 of Spades. Bad slam.

A new version of Blackwood addresses problems like this one. It is called *Roman Key Card Blackwood*. It works like this: Instead of the 4 No Trump bid asking responder for Aces, it asks responder how many key cards he has. A *key card* is defined as any of the four Aces and the King of trumps; there are a total of five key cards. Here are the responses to 4 No Trump:

5 Clubs: shows 0 or 3 key cards

5 Diamonds: shows 1 or 4 key cards

5 Hearts: shows 2 key cards without the Queen of trumps

5 Spades: shows 2 key cards with the Queen of trumps

If your bidding hasn't established a trump suit, then the last bid suit is treated as the trump suit in responding to 4 No Trump. For example, if the bidding has gone ...

North	East	South	West
1 Spade	Pass	2 Hearts	Pass
3 Diamonds	Pass	4 No Trump	Pass

North responds as if Diamonds is trump, so the key cards are the four Aces and the King of Diamonds. If, on the other hand, you have agreed on trump, like 1 Spade–Pass–3 Spades–Pass–4 No Trump, trump is, obviously, Spades, and the key cards are the four Aces and the King of Spades.

In the previous hand in which West bid to slam and went down, East would bid 5 Diamonds, showing one key card. West would know that two key cards were missing and would stop at 5 Spades.

When responder bids 5 Hearts or 5 Spades, the 4 No Trump bidder knows about every important card, including the Queen of trumps.

When responder bids 5 Clubs or 5 Diamonds, the 4 No Trump bidder isn't sure about the Queen of trumps. If she wishes to learn more, she can do so by making the cheapest available bid that's not 5 of the trump suit:

1 Heart	3 Hearts
4 No Trump	5 Clubs
?	



BRIDGEBIT

Roman Key Card Blackwood is a good convention that isn't widely used yet. If you want to play this convention, be very sure that you have talked about it. Here's one part of the convention that you must follow: Never bid 4 No Trump unless your partner knows what suit is trump. A sensible rule to follow is that if you have a fit, that's the trump suit. If you don't yet have a fit, the trump suit for the purposes of Roman Key Card Blackwood is the last-bid suit. You don't want to ask for key cards thinking Hearts is trump and have your partner thinking Clubs is trump.

In this case, the bid that asks for the Queen of trumps is 5 Diamonds. Responder bids as follows:

- If she doesn't have the Queen of trumps, she returns to the trump suit as cheaply as possible. In this case, she would bid 5 Hearts.

- If she does have the Queen of trumps, and no other Kings, she bids 5 No Trump. Otherwise she bids 6 of the suit in which she has the King if that King is lower ranking than the trump suit. If she has the Queen of trumps and a King that is higher ranking than trump, she bids 5 No Trump and lies about having a King.

Defensive Bidding Against No Trump

When opponents open 1 No Trump, it effectively squeezes your ability to describe your hand to your partner. You could make an overcall, but you're at the 2 level and if you have a two-suited hand, you might be at the 3 or 4 level before you can mention your second suit. This is why the various *conventional bids* were devised for use when opponents open 1 No Trump. (A *conventional bid* is one that doesn't mean what it says, like when you bid 2 Clubs in response to an opening 1 No Trump bid. Your 2 Clubs bid does not show that you have Clubs, but says something completely different. It is a request for your partner to bid a four-card major suit, if she has one.)

However, you must remember the purpose of defensive conventional bids. They aren't necessarily to get you to the correct contract. They are basically to disturb the bidding of the opponents, one of whom has 40 percent of the available HCP in his hand.

When an opponent opens 1 No Trump, showing 15 to 17 HCP, your side is probably outgunned. But you shouldn't assume that you should be quiet. There are many reasons for bidding. First, you may actually be able to make something. If so, you don't want to be shut out. Second, even if you can't make a contract if you are able to make a bid, you may be able to bother your opponents' bidding enough that they misjudge the hand.



ALERT

Assuming you give a 1 No Trump opening bid a little respect, it's wise to have the policy that bidding against it is a good idea. If you let your opponents have the bidding to themselves, it's much easier for them to bid accurately. You can do a lot to inconvenience their bidding by bidding.

One obvious thing you can do is double, which usually means that you have a hand at least as good as theirs. You should not double with less than 15 HCP. Also it helps if you have a good suit to lead.

The other thing you can do is bid something if you have a good suit and distribution. Note that because the opener has promised 15 to 17 HCP, your side shouldn't be thinking of bidding games unless you find a very good fit. Take a look at the following hands after your RHO has opened 1 No Trump:

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|---------|----------|
| 1. ♠ AJT874 | 2. ♠ KQ874 | 3. ♠ AJ984 | 4. ♠ K2 | 5. ♠ QJ3 |
| ♥ 3 | ♥ K8 | ♥ 3 | ♥ A76 | ♥ K543 |
| ♦ QJ87 | ♦ QJ8 | ♦ KQT64 | ♦ AQ7 | ♦ AK |
| ♣ 43 | ♣ QJ4 | ♣ 95 | ♣ QJT86 | ♣ Q764 |

Hand 1: You don't have that much in high cards, but you have a good six-card suit and you have nice distribution. All you need from your partner is a couple of Spades and a few cards in the right places. Given that you have the ingredients for a bid, you should take the optimistic view and bid.

Hand 2: You have more points, but you have a balanced hand with only a five-card suit. It's much wiser to pass with hands like this one. Remember this: If your partner has a few points, you may be able to set 1 No Trump. If your partner doesn't have a few points or if she has bad Spades, you could be in trouble in a 2 Spades contract.

Hand 3: This hand is different. If you're thinking that you would like to bid with this hand, you're right. You have only 10 points, but they're all in your two suits. Also, you have good spot cards as well. But which suit should you bid? See the discussion in the section "Hamilton, Cappelletti Pottage," later in this chapter.

Hand 4: This is the kind of hand that should double. You have 16 points, but equally as important, you have a fine opening lead. It's true that if your partner is broke, your opponents will make 1 No Trump doubled; if your partner has a few points, however, you'll do well. Don't take the view that when they open 1 No Trump, you should automatically retire from the bidding.

Hand 5: This hand has 15 HCP, but it has no good suit to lead. No rule says you have to bid when you have 15 or 16 HCP. With poor-quality points and with no useful 10 spots, you should pass and wait for a different battle.

If you decide to bid a suit against a strong No Trump or if you decide to make one of the bids that shows two suits, high card points aren't nearly as important as the quality of your suits. If you have two five-card suits with 8 HCP in your two suits and perhaps a 10 spot, too, it's fine to go ahead and bid. But if you have, for instance, 11 HCP but only 5 of them in your two suits, it's more dangerous to bid. In like fashion, if you have only one suit to bid, you need at least QJ9854. You should avoid bidding with suits like Q87543 or K97432 unless you have additional useful points elsewhere.

Let's go back to the third hand. It is the most frequent kind of hand you'll have for bidding against a strong 1 No Trump opening bid:

♠ AJ984
♥ 3
♦ KQT64
♣ 95

If you bid 2 Spades, you'll be okay if your partner has Spades; if she has one Spade and three or four Diamonds, however, Diamonds will be your best suit by far. Likewise, if you bid 2 Diamonds, you might find your partner with bad Diamonds and good Spades. How can you ensure getting to the right suit?

I'm going to teach you the two most commonly used conventional defenses against No Trump, although there are others.

Landy

The oldest convention in use against an opening 1 No Trump bid is Landy. It works very simply. When your RHO bids 1 No Trump (or if your LHO bids 1 No Trump, which is passed to you), you bid as follows:

- **Double.** You have a penalty hand, usually with a nice 15 points or better.
- **2 Clubs.** You have both major suits, Spades and Hearts, usually five of each. This way you show both of your suits at once and, because they're the majors, they're the two most important suits to show. This can be exciting because the 2 Clubs bidder may bid this way with no Clubs at all. Like all conventions, however, it's important that your partnership remember them. Remember that you need 8 or more good HCP in your suits if you are going to make this bid.

- **2 Diamonds.** You have a good Diamond suit, almost surely six or more, and the expectation that you can take six or more tricks. You must have a good suit. Keep in mind that your partner might have a singleton. Suits like KT7642 won't be good trump suits if your partner has no support.

The bids 2 Hearts and 2 Spades say essentially the same thing: You have a nice six-card suit and likely good shape, such as you have on Hand 1 in the previous example.



BRIDGEBIT

Landy is named after its creator, Alvin Landy (1905–1967), who received his law degree from Western Reserve University in 1927 and served in World War II. He was Life Master #24 in the American Contract Bridge League.

In all of these cases, your partner should pass unless she has something obvious to say. If she has support and unexpected distribution and some points, she can raise. Normally she passes.

Landy is a fine convention, but it has one drawback: It allows you to show both major suits, but it's not so good when you have two other suits. This is where the scientists of the world got busy and developed Hamilton, Cappelletti, and Pottage.

Hamilton, Cappelletti, and Pottage

Here are the rules for Hamilton:

- **Double.** You have a 1 No Trump opening hand (15 to 18 HCP), and your opponents bid it before you could.
- **2 Clubs.** You have a one-suited hand and your suit is at least six cards in length. The suit is undefined; the 2 Clubs bid is a convention and says nothing about Clubs. If your partner wants to know which suit you have, she bids 2 Diamonds. As always, if you are making a bid that shows one suit or two suits, you have good suits.
- **2 Diamonds.** You are 5–5 in the major suits (Hearts and Spades). This bid is a convention and says nothing about Diamonds.
- **2 Hearts.** You have a five-card Heart suit and five cards in an undesignated minor.
- **2 Spades.** You have a five-card Spade suit and five cards in an undesignated minor.



BRIDGEBIT

This convention has three names because, serendipitously, three different players invented it at the same time. In California, Fred Hamilton came up with the idea. On the East Coast, it was Michael Cappelletti. In Europe, it was Julian Pottage. For our purposes here, we refer to it simply as *Hamilton*.

Responding to Partner's Hamilton Bid

If, over opponents' opening one no trump bid, your partner bid ...

- **2 Clubs.** If your RHO passes, you are expected to bid 2 Diamonds, asking your partner to show her suit. If she has Diamonds, she passes 2 Diamonds (or raises them if she has a terrific hand). Otherwise, she bids her suit if it's passed to her. You can pass 2 Clubs if you have wonderful Clubs and you can bid 2 of a major if you have a very good suit of your own, but 2 Diamonds is bid almost all of the time. If your RHO bids over 2 Clubs, you do not have to do anything. Since your RHO bid, you no longer have the obligation to keep the bidding open so that your partner can bid her long suit; she may bid it when the bidding gets back around to her. If you have a clear bid, go ahead and bid, but do so only because you have a good hand, not because you feel you have to bid.
- **2 Diamonds.** You know that your partner is showing the major suits. Normally you bid 2 of your better major. Ideally you will have three or four cards, but now and then you have to bid a major with only two cards. You may jump in a major if you have 10 nice support points; and if you have 13 or so points with a good fit, you should bid a game.
- **2 Hearts.** Your partner has Hearts and one of the minors. If you have two or more Hearts, passing is usually best. If you have lesser Hearts, you can find out which minor your partner has by bidding 2 No Trump. This asks your partner to bid her minor suit. In the event that you have Heart support and at least 10 support points, raise to 3. If you have 13 or more with a fit, go to game.
- **2 Spades.** Your partner has Spades and one of the minor suits. You respond to 2 Spades exactly as you would respond to 2 Hearts, above.
- **Double.** You usually pass and hope to set them, even if you have a poor hand. If you have a hand with distribution and you really are unhappy defending, you can bid as if your partner had opened 1 No Trump. A 2 Clubs bid by you would ask for a major suit, a 2 Diamonds or 2 Hearts bid by you would be a transfer to Hearts or Spades, assuming you are playing Jacoby Transfer.

Quiz

Here are four hands. They open 1 No Trump and your partner makes one of the following bids. What do you do?

2 Clubs
2 Diamonds
2 Hearts
2 Spades
Double

1. ♠ Q9875
♥ J83
♦ 8
♣ A874

2. ♠ 4
♥ 84
♦ K87
♣ QJ87653

3. ♠ A87
♥ JT87
♦ Q532
♣ Q6

4. ♠ AQT876
♥ 74
♦ 8
♣ Q832

If she bids 2 Clubs, showing an unknown long suit ...

Hand 1: 2 Diamonds. If she has Diamonds, she will pass and you will be declarer. Not lovely, but because your partner has six or more Diamonds, 2 Diamonds is likely to be an okay spot.

Hand 2: Pass. You know that Clubs is your best suit. Pass it out.

Hand 3: 2 Diamonds, asking for partner's suit. Whichever it is will be fine.

Hand 4: 2 Spades. You can, if you have a terrific suit, show it instead of bidding 2 Diamonds, which your partner might pass.

If she bids 2 Diamonds, showing both majors ...

Hand 1: 3 Spades (or even 4 Spades if you feel optimistic). You have lovely Spades, nice points, and excellent distribution.

Hand 2: 2 Hearts and hope you are not doubled.

Hand 3: 2 Hearts. You almost have enough to bid 3 Hearts.

Hand 4: 4 Spades. Your partner has both majors and you have a terrific hand for Spades.

If she bids 2 Hearts, showing a Heart suit and one of the minor suits ...

Hand 1: Pass. Almost worth a raise.

Hand 2: Pass. Your partner has five Hearts. This will be an okay spot. If you're doubled, you can retreat to 3 Clubs.

Hand 3: Pass, but no real fault if you judged to bid 3.

Hand 4: 2 Spades. You know Spades is a fair spot. If you choose to pass 2 Hearts, that is not terrible.

If she bids 2 Spades, showing a Spade suit and one of the minor suits ...

Hand 1: 4 Spades. What a nice partner you have.

Hand 2: 2 No Trump. Your partner will bid her minor, which you are sure is Diamonds.

Hand 3: Pass. If your partner has Diamonds, you might prefer to play there, but with 3 Spades you know you are in a nice contract.

Hand 4: 4 Spades.

If she doubles, showing an opening 1 No Trump hand or better ...

Hand 1: Pass. You should trounce 1 No Trump doubled. If you want to get to Spades, bid 2 Hearts, a transfer to Spades.

Hand 2: 3 Clubs. 2 Clubs is Stayman. 3 Clubs is natural.

Hand 3: Pass and expect to get rich. (If you have 2 points instead of 9, you should pass with this distribution. Setting 1 No Trump doubled is more likely than you finding a good place for your pair to play the hand as declarer.)

Hand 4: 2 Hearts, transferring to Spades, and then raise to game.

New Minor Forcing

Your partner opens with one of a minor suit and you bid a major. Your partner rebids 1 No Trump. What do you bid with this hand?

♠ KJ874
♥ 87
♦ AJ8
♣ QT4

2 Spades is too weak a bid, and you shouldn't rebid a five-card suit. Opener will pass it most of the time, and that might cause you to miss a game, or be playing in a 5-2 fit.

3 Spades is too strong a bid. If your partner has a minimum with only two Spades, you could be too high.

A good solution is called *New Minor Forcing* (NMF). It works this way.

If your partner rebids 1 No Trump, and you have a five-card major with invitational values, you can bid 2 of the unbid minor suit. If the bidding started with 1 Heart–Pass–1 Spade, you have to use 2 Clubs as your asking bid.

Your bid promises at least invitational values (10 HCP and a five-card major), and leaves it open that you have more. Your main intent with the NMF bid is to find out whether your partner has a fit for your major.

If your partner has three-card support, she bids 2 of your major with a minimum and 3 of your major with a maximum. If she doesn't have a fit, she shows 4 of the other major if she has it. If she cannot bid a major, she bids 2 No Trump with a minimum and 3 No Trump with a maximum.

Quiz

Now you're ready to take the following quiz.

West	North	East	South
1 Diamond	Pass	1 Spade	Pass
1 No Trump	Pass	?	

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. ♠ QJ874
♥ 32
♦ QJ7
♣ KJ8 | 2. ♠ AQ874
♥ Q73
♦ 73
♣ K73 | 3. ♠ KT874
♥ AK
♦ K873
♣ 98 | 4. ♠ J9874
♥ T9764
♦ A3
♣ 9 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

Hand 1: Pass. You have a balanced hand with too few points to worry about game. It's quite acceptable to forget about the Spades.

Hand 2: 2 Clubs, New Minor Forcing (NMF). You have enough points to invite game. If your partner bids 2 Spades, you know she has a minimum opening with three Spades; if she bids 3 Spades, you know she has a maximum opening with three Spades. You will go to game if she shows a maximum. If she bids 2 Diamonds, denying a major holding, or 2 Hearts, showing four Hearts but denying three Spades, you will bid 2 No Trump. She can go on to 3 No Trump with a maximum.

Hand 3: 2 Clubs, NMF. You have game points but want to check whether 4 Spades is the right game or 3 No Trump.

Hand 4: 2 Hearts. This is a rare situation. This is just about the only auction where responder can bid a new suit that doesn't force opener to bid again. This auction occurs when your partner rebids 1 No Trump and you are able to show Spades and then Hearts. You are allowed to bid 1 Spade and then 2 Hearts when you have five Spades and four or five Hearts and less than 10 HCP.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Often, players are tempted to use NMF with less than invitational hands. Don't succumb to this temptation, because by making a NMF bid you are promising your partner specific values. If you make it without them, you don't know what your partner is going to do. She might have a big hand and take you to a game or slam, relying on your bid, when you don't belong there.

If your partner has opened 1 Club instead of 1 Diamond, the NMF bid would be Diamonds rather than Clubs. That's why it's called "new" minor. You bid the unbid minor suit to show your hand. However, if the bidding goes 1 Club–1 Diamond–1 No Trump, the NMF bid is 2 Clubs, even though your partner has bid it.

Two-over-One System

In Standard American, which is what this book teaches, if you have a five-card suit and 10 points and your partner has opened the bidding with 1 of a suit, you may bid your suit at the 2 level. In such event, when responder bids a new suit, opener is required to bid again. It's forcing for one round.

A very popular system that's used by a majority of tournament players is called the Two-over-One system. In this system, when a player makes a Two-over-One response such as 1 Diamond–Pass–2 Clubs, she promises enough points that the partnership can make a game. Because of this, all subsequent bidding is game forcing, even if it sounds weak.

Take this auction:

West	East
1 Spade	2 Clubs
2 Diamonds	2 Spades

East responds with 2 Clubs and then gives a preference to Spades. In standard bidding, this sequence shows at least 10 points with Spades support. It is invitational. In Two-over-One bidding, the rebid of 2 Spades shows that in addition to the values of an opening bid promised by the initial response of 2 Clubs, it also shows Spade support. Although in Standard American this could be passed by opener, in Two-over-One, all bids after the initial Two-over-One response are forcing to game, so the opener must bid again.

The advantage to this is that there is no need for jumping around in the bidding. Instead, you can use the bidding space to find the best fit and then determine whether to play in 3 No Trump or in a suit or in a slam. If someone does jump, it's not because that player has extra points but because that player has some important distributional feature to show.

If you play the Two-over-One system, however, if your partner opens the bidding at the 1 level and you make a nonjump response at the 2 level, such as 1 Diamond–Pass–2 Clubs, your partner (opener) must keep the bidding open until one of you has bid game. Because this is a game-forcing bid, this can obviously cause a lot of bidding problems. Suppose that your partner opens 1 Spade and you hold the following:

♠ 53
♥ KQ97
♦ 94
♣ AJT53

That's not a bad hand. But you can't bid 2 Clubs because that would force your partner to bid to game and, if your partner has a minimum opener, you probably can't make game. You can't pass and you can't bid 2 Clubs and you can't bid 2 Spades because (1) you're too strong for such a weak bid, and (2) you don't have three Spades, which this response promises. What to do?

The answer is a bid that was created for the Two-over-One system, Forcing No Trump.

The Forcing 1 No Trump Response

To resolve the problem just discussed, you can play that a 1 No Trump response to an opening bid of one of a Major is forcing for one round, and one round only. The idea is that because you can't go to the 2 level with 10 or 11 points, you have to have a waiting bid that allows you to show your points on the next round.

If you have 6 to 11 points and your partner opens with a major suit bid that doesn't allow you to make a response at the 1 level, you bid 1 No Trump. This is forcing for one round. That is, your partner must make another bid. In an ordinary Standard American auction, a 1 No Trump response is generally an invitation to pass because it's describing the hand. If you've opened a minimum, your partner's response of 1 No Trump is telling you that you probably don't have game, and you may pass, and often do.

If you're playing Forcing No Trump, however, if your partner opened and you bid 1 No Trump, your partner, the opening bidder, must say "forcing" to tell opponents that your partner is required to bid again. Look at the following hands for examples of hands where you would bid 1 No Trump Forcing after your partner opens 1 Spade:

1. ♠ J4	2. ♠ 3	3. ♠ 8	4. ♠ 7	5. ♠ 2
♥ A984	♥ KQ984	♥ 873	♥ QJ74	♥ 7653
♦ K873	♦ 876	♦ AJ873	♦ 9	♦ 8732
♣ J84	♣ Q872	♣ K874	♣ KJ98763	♣ AQ84

In standard American, a 1 No Trump response to a major usually shows a 6 to 9 point hand. In Two-over-One bidding, however, the 1 No Trump response can show invitational hands, too.

How Does Opener Bid After a Forcing 1 No Trump Response?

Opener follows a set of rules. If she has a strong or invitational hand, she makes the same rebid she would make in standard bidding. It's when she has minimum hands that her bidding can take a couple of odd twists:

- If opener has a six-card major, she rebids it.
- If opener started with 1 Spade and happens to have four Hearts, she bids 2 Hearts.

- If opener has six Spades and four Hearts, she bids her stronger major.
- If opener has a four- or five-card minor, she bids it.
- If opener has a balanced hand without a six-card suit and without a four-card suit, she bids her lower three-card minor. Responder knows that opener may have to bid a three-card minor, so she will treat this suit gingerly.

Once in a blue moon, opener has four Spades and five Hearts and two in each minor. When she opens 1 Heart and you respond with a Forcing One No Trump, she should not then bid 2 Spades, because your bypass of Spades to bid One No Trump denies a four card spade suit. She then has little choice but bid a brave 2 Clubs, even though she only has two of them, and hope that nothing bad happens.

If opener has a good balanced hand, she bids 2 No Trump with 18 to 19 HCP. If she has a little less, she bids according to the list above and later can bid 2 No Trump when she has 17 HCP.

Quiz

Find out if you can solve the following challenge; what is your rebid as Opener?

South	West	North	East
1 Spade	Pass	1 No Trump	Pass
?			

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. ♠ QT9874 | 2. ♠ AKQ84 | 3. ♠ KQJ84 | 4. ♠ AJ743 | 5. ♠ J8763 |
| ♥ 3 | ♥ J874 | ♥ KQ | ♥ K3 | ♥ AQ |
| ♦ KQ8 | ♦ K3 | ♦ AJ8 | ♦ AQ82 | ♦ AQ8 |
| ♣ AJ4 | ♣ 73 | ♣ K84 | ♣ T8 | ♣ 873 |

Hand 1: 2 Spades, showing a six-card suit and a minimum hand.

Hand 2: 2 Hearts, showing four Hearts. Don't worry that your Spades are so good and your Hearts so bad.

Hand 3: 2 No Trump. You promise 18 to 19 HCP, so you don't have to worry that this is too conservative. You have exactly what you promise.

Hand 4: 2 Diamonds. You don't have a six-card suit or a four-card Hearts suit, so you bid your four-card minor.

Hand 5: 2 Clubs. Don't bid 2 Diamonds. Yes, the Clubs are bad and the Diamonds good, but bidding Clubs leaves the partnership more room to bid. If you bid 2 Clubs, you can always get to Diamonds if your partner wants to bid them. If you bid 2 Diamonds and your partner has good Clubs, she has to go to the 3 level.

After opener makes her rebid, responder continues with her second bid, which describes what she really has. Responder can pass opener's rebid, but most of the time she finds a second bid. Here's an auction with some examples of how responder bids on the second round with the minimum hands shown above in which you responded with a forcing 1 No Trump.

South	West	North	East
1 Spade	Pass	1 No Trump	Pass
2 Diamonds	Pass	?	

- | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1. ♠ J4 | 2. ♠ 3 | 3. ♠ 8 | 4. ♠ 7 | 5. ♠ 2 |
| ♥ A984 | ♥ KQ984 | ♥ 873 | ♥ QJ74 | ♥ 7653 |
| ♦ K873 | ♦ 876 | ♦ AJ873 | ♦ 9 | ♦ 8732 |
| ♣ J84 | ♣ Q872 | ♣ K874 | ♣ KJ98763 | ♣ AQ84 |

Hand 1: 2 Spades. Give a preference to Spades. You didn't raise the first time, so your partner will expect only two.

Hand 2: 2 Hearts. You can show a good suit at the 2 level without implying extra points. Your 1 No Trump bid suggested you had less than an opening, or game-forcing, bid.

Hand 3: 3 Diamonds. With 8 to 10 points and five cards in your partner's minor suit, you can raise. Be aware that she may have only three Diamonds.

Hand 4: 3 Clubs. You hate partner's suits and you have a good one of your own. You do not promise a good hand, just a long suit.

Hand 5: Pass. You have nowhere to go, and you do have four Diamonds. If you're lucky, partner has four, too.

Some Problem Hands

Here are some problem hands of a different sort: when the forcing 1 No Trump bidder has an invitational hand, a situation that occurs about one hand in five.

South	West	North	East
1 Heart	Pass	1 No Trump	Pass
2 Clubs	Pass	?	

- | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|
| 1. ♠ 83 | 2. ♠ K84 | 3. ♠ K83 |
| ♥ AJ8 | ♥ 3 | ♥ 87 |
| ♦ 873 | ♦ AQT976 | ♦ AJ874 |
| ♣ KQ873 | ♣ J87 | ♣ QJ7 |

Hand 1: 3 Hearts. You have a hand worth a limit raise in Hearts, but you only have three-card support. You show a three-card limit raise by bidding 1 No Trump and jumping to 3 of your partner's major. It is important that you don't bid 3 Hearts with this hand on the first round, because your partner would expect a fourth trump. Don't be distracted by your Club support.

Hand 2: 3 Diamonds. You aren't strong enough to bid 2 Diamonds originally, so start with 1 No Trump, forcing. Partner bid 2 Clubs, and that leaves you room to bid 2 Diamonds or 3 Diamonds. With a maximum hand and with a six-card suit, you can jump to show this hand.

Hand 3: 2 No Trump. You promise around 11 HCP with stoppers. This is an invitational bid.

Finally, what if Partner opens a major suit in third or fourth seat, when her partner has already passed? Is a 1 No Trump response forcing? Some people play that it's semi-forcing. Logically, there's no such thing as "semi-forcing." It's either forcing or it's not forcing. Just as you can't be a little bit pregnant, your 1 No Trump bid can't be maybe forcing, maybe not. Either agree that it's forcing even by a passed hand, or that it's not forcing by a passed hand. I play that it's not forcing by a passed hand.

Reverse Drury

The requirements for bidding Reverse Drury by the responder to Partner's third seat opening bid of one of a major are:

- At least 10 HCP.
- At least 3 card support in Partner's major suit opening bid.

The point of using Reverse Drury is to allow Opener to play the hand in the lowest contract possible if she opened light (less than 13 HCP). With her first rebid, she tells responder if she opened with full opening values or light. She does that by rebidding her suit if she opened light, and by bidding a new suit if she had a full opener. Rebidding her suit does not promise six cards. Also, bidding a new suit to show a full opener is conventional, and doesn't promise anything more than three cards in the suit. Players have known for a long time that it's wise to open very aggressively in third seat. As a matter of fact, it's not uncommon to open 1 Spade on a hand like this one:

♠ KQ875
♥ A74
♦ 984
♣ JT

Bidding 1 Spade makes life tougher for the opponents, and it may help you on defense, but it comes with a downside. If your partner has a maximum-passed hand, she may start jumping around, getting you too high. Often, as responder, you will have a hand worth 10 or 11 points in support of your partner's suit. You might like to jump to 3 of the major, but if she has a weak or subminimum opening bid, you may go down. One way to handle this situation is the Reverse Drury.

Reverse Drury is a way to show your good hands when your partner opens one of a major in third or fourth seat by bidding 2 Clubs. It's a conventional bid that tells your partner that you have a maximum-passed hand with at least three-card support in her suit.

Take a look at the following hands and try to decide when you might be able to employ Reverse Drury:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1 Spade	Pass	?	

1. ♠ KJ84
♥ Q83
♦ Q983
♣ J3

2. ♠ J72
♥ AK983
♦ K6
♣ 732

3. ♠ JT754
♥ 3
♦ AJ84
♣ QT8

4. ♠ 974
♥ 64
♦ AJ43
♣ KQ97

Hand 1: 2 Spades. Make your normal bid. You need 10 good support points for a Drury bid.

Hand 2: 2 Clubs. This is the Drury bid. It says nothing about Clubs. It says you have better than a normal raise, typically a good 10 points and up. Don't bid 2 Hearts. Your partner can pass a Two-over-One bid when you are a passed hand.

Hand 3: 3 Spades. The jump raise is still the limit, but it promises at least four card trump support and a singleton. If you don't have a singleton, your hand is somewhat balanced and is better handled by using Drury.

Hand 4: 2 Clubs, Drury. You do have three trumps and you have 11 HCP along with a doubleton.

When opener rebids after your partner's Drury bid:

- **2 Diamonds.** Opener says she has a full opening bid and is interested in game if responder has a good Drury hand. It is possible that opener has a very big hand and is waiting to see what responder does next. Opener may have real Diamonds, but she may just want to see what responder thinks.
- **2 of the major.** In this case, 2 Spades. If opener rebids her major, it shows a weak hand and denies any possibility of game. Responder should pass.

Opener can bid other things besides 2 Diamonds or 2 of the major. Other bids confirm a full opening bid, too. I show you how in the following hands:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1 Spade	Pass	2 Clubs	Pass
?			
<p>1. ♠ AKJ87 ♥ 87 ♦ Q87 ♣ 873</p>	<p>2. ♠ Q9874 ♥ 3 ♦ AKT8 ♣ KT5</p>	<p>3. ♠ J9874 ♥ AK ♦ 92 ♣ AQ84</p>	<p>4. ♠ KJ98743 ♥ 2 ♦ AK7 ♣ AQ</p>
<p>5. ♠ QJ874 ♥ KQJ ♦ KQ9 ♣ AJ</p>	<p>6. ♠ KJ763 ♥ KQ ♦ Q98 ♣ QT4</p>		

Hand 1: 2 Spades. You have less than an opening bid and want your partner to pass. When opener rebids the major, responder always passes no matter how good his passed hand happens to be.

Hand 2: 2 Diamonds. Counting distribution, you have better than a minimum. You are willing to go to game if your partner has a maximum hand. If your partner has a minimum Drury hand, she will bid 2 Spades and you will pass.

Hand 3: 4 Spades. Counting distribution, you have around 16 points and your partner has 10 or more with Spades support. Bid game. Don't bother bidding Clubs. Why tell the opponents something you prefer they don't know?

Hand 4: 4 No Trump. Ask for Aces and bid a slam if Partner has one or two Aces. You have about 22 HCP now that Spades have been supported.

Hand 5: 4 Spades. Just bid a game. You have a big hand, but East has a maximum of 11 points. When you know game is worth bidding and when you know there is no slam, don't waste time making bids that you don't have to make.

Hand 6: 2 Spades. This is a 13-HCP hand, but it's balanced and minimum and it has poor-quality points (Queens and Jacks).



BRIDGEBIT

Doug Drury invented this convention because his partner, Eric Murray, kept opening light in third seat and kept going down a lot. Drury designed this method to cater to Murray's excesses. Originally the opening bidder bid 2 Diamonds to show a weak hand and 2 of the major to show a full opening bid. Then, as always happens, players got their hands on the convention and they dabbled with it and eventually switched the bids so that opener's 2 of a major shows a weak hand and 2 Diamonds shows a good hand. This is sensible because it gives the partnership more bidding room. Reverse Drury is now the most common version.

If you have a hand with Clubs and no support for your partner's major, you cannot bid 2 Clubs because that would promise support for her major. Bid 1 No Trump and hope for a sane result. Conventions all come with benefits, but they all have the occasional drawbacks, too.

If your partner uses Drury after you open 1 of a major in third or fourth seat and you have a full opening bid or more, it is usually best to bid 2 Diamonds because it tells the opponents very little about your hand. Bid another suit instead of 2 Diamonds if you see a reason to do so, but for the most part bidding 2 Diamonds is wise.

If your partner opens a major in third or fourth seat and the next player doubles or overcalls 1 Spade, you should continue to use Drury. The rule is that 2 Clubs is the *only* Drury bid. Note that if your RHO overcalls 1 No Trump, the Drury bid doesn't exist. It works only if your RHO passes, overcalls 1 Spade, or makes a takeout double.

Two-Suited Hands

You will definitely want to learn and use two very special conventions: the Unusual No Trump overcall and the Michaels Cue bid. These two conventions have a lot in common, but they also have enough differences that you will want to study them separately.



BRIDGEBIT

The Unusual No Trump was invented by Alvin Roth, a name that is synonymous with Bridge theory.

Unusual No Trump

In its basic form, the Unusual No Trump bid works like this: Your RHO opens with 1 Heart or 1 Spade and you have a hand with 5-5 in the minors. Something like this:

♠ 3
♥ 43
♦ AQ987
♣ KQJ63



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

When your opponents open with 1 of a suit, there is almost no chance that you will have an opening 2 No Trump bid. It is wise to use 2 No Trump for something else, and the Unusual No Trump is ideal. If you ever do have 21 HCP and they open, you can make a takeout double and bid strong later.

If you have the Unusual No Trump bid available, you can bid 2 No Trump, which tells your partner that you have at least five cards in both minors. Because their side has an opening bid, it is unlikely that your side will be able to make many games; if your partner likes one of your suits, however, you may be able to raise the bidding fast enough that their bidding gets off track. It is also possible that you can bid 5 of a minor expecting to go down but not down so much that it's a disaster. If they can make 4 Spades, vulnerable, for example, it's profitable for you to go down only 300 in 5 Clubs doubled not vulnerable. This is known as *sacrificing*.

After many years of using this convention, players learned that it is useful to change the definition slightly. Instead of saying that 2 No Trump shows the minors, the best definition is to say that it shows the lower two unbid suits. If they open a major, 2 No Trump shows the minors; if they open, say, 1 Diamond, however, the 2 No Trump bid would show the two lower unbid suits, which are Hearts and Clubs. Used this way, you will get many additional opportunities to use this convention.

What Do You Need for an Unusual No Trump Bid?

Use caution. Many players, armed with a new convention, go off to war with it and immediately abuse it to the point that it doesn't work. You can get other viewpoints, but here are the basic minimum requirements:

- **When you're not vulnerable.** Not less than 9 HCP, and if at the bottom of your range, you must have good suits. You can have any upper range of points, but this is the minimum.
- **When you're vulnerable.** Generally, not less than 12 HCP; if both of your suits are good; however, you can do it with 11 HCP.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

The Unusual No Trump bid is usually used after their side opens with 1 of a suit. You can use it after the opponents have bid two suits, too. Say they have opened 1 Diamond and responded with 1 Spade. If you have a hand with five Hearts and five Clubs, the two unbid suits, you can bid 2 No Trump here, too.

You *must* have five cards of the lower two unbid suits to use Unusual No Trump. Many players abuse the bid by using it when they're 5-4 in the two lower unbid suits. Don't succumb to the temptation to use Unusual No Trump with only four cards in one of the suits.

Keep in mind that if you make an Unusual No Trump bid, you will be pushing your partnership to at least the 3 level. If your partner doesn't like your suits, the last word on this from the opponents may be "Double." Further, if you make an Unusual No Trump bid and the opponents play the hand, they will know of your distribution and will be able to use this knowledge to play the hand very well.

Look closely at the following example; no one is vulnerable:

RHO	You
1 Spade	?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. ♠ 83
♥ 3
♦ QJ984
♣ AQJ53 | 2. ♠ J
♥ K3
♦ Q8763
♣ AJ652 | 3. ♠ 8
♥ 9
♦ AKJ74
♣ KJT974 | 4. ♠ A72
♥ --
♦ AQJ87
♣ KQJT6 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|

Hand 1: 2 No Trump. You have a minimum hand but you have good minor suits. If vulnerable, this is a Pass. Having 5–5 in the minors is not, of itself, an excuse to be bidding.

Hand 2: Pass. You have poor-quality suits. Remember, if you bid with this hand, your partner will be declaring at least the 3 level. If she has a poor hand with no fit for you, someone may double and it will be costly.

Hand 3: 2 No Trump. 5–5 is necessary, but 6–5 is nicer.

Hand 4: 2 No Trump. Your hand is good enough that you intend to bid again.



ALERT

Don't fall into the trap of making an Unusual No Trump bid and then bidding again when you don't have extra values. You need about 15 useful points to bid 2 No Trump and then to consider bidding again. Of course, if your partner shows enthusiasm, you can bid again with less.

How Does Responder Bid?

When your partner makes an unusual 2 No Trump bid, it is very important that responder bids what his hand is worth. Here are the basic rules:

- **Rule 1.** If you don't have a fit, make a minimum bid unless you have a huge hand.
- **Rule 2.** If you do have a good fit, you should be willing to do more than make a minimum bid in one of your partner's suits. If you have 10 or more points with a nice fit, you can jump to the 4 level, or you can make a free bid if your RHO has bid something in the meantime. If you have a fit and 14 or so points, you can bid a game. Note that trying to count points isn't a perfect solution here because most of the time you're not trying to make a contract. Often you're simply trying to frustrate your opponents.

All of these themes will come up in the following example, where no one is vulnerable:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1 Spade	2 No Trump	Pass	?
1. ♠ QT76 ♥ KJ7653 ♦ 2 ♣ T5	2. ♠ AJ874 ♥ 975 ♦ Q87 ♣ 84	3. ♠ T764 ♥ AJ5 ♦ K986 ♣ J7	4. ♠ Q8763 ♥ 2 ♦ K4 ♣ Q9874

Hand 1: 3 Clubs. Remember this awful hand. If you bid 2 No Trump and your partner bids 3 Clubs, she might have a stinker like this one. If you keep on bidding and she has this hand, there will be trouble. Note that you don't bid 3 Hearts. That would show a better suit and a better hand.

Hand 2: 3 Diamonds. This isn't a bad hand. You would like a fourth trump, but this is, relatively speaking, an okay hand. It isn't good enough to bid at the 4 level, but it's good enough that if your partner goes to the 4 level you will be safe.

Hand 3: 4 Diamonds. This is a nice hand. Your bid of 4 Diamonds shows some honest values. Your partner can bid 5 if she wishes. If East had bid 3 of a major, you would have been happy to bid 4 Diamonds.

Hand 4: 5 Clubs. This is a super hand. You have the King of Diamonds and five Clubs. It's not hard to imagine what five Clubs will make.



ALERT

The Unusual No Trump has many applications other than the basic one of showing the two lower unbid suits when bid over an opening bid. As you learn more about this important convention, you will discover that you can use it on far more hands than shown here.

The Michaels Cue Bid

The Michaels Cue bid is a relative of the Unusual No Trump. You use it when an opponent opens with 1 of a minor suit. If you have 5-5 in the majors, you can cue-bid 2 of opener's minor, which states that you have the major suits. The major suits are the powerhouses of Bridge, and when you have both of them you can often win the bidding. This can be done by reaching a makeable contract or by causing your opponents to misjudge what they can make. Because you have the major suits and therefore the important suits, the Michaels Cue bid is much more important than the Unusual No Trump.

The requirements for a Michaels Cue bid are about the same as for the Unusual No Trump:

- **If you're not vulnerable.** At least 5-5 in the majors and 8 HCP with the points in your suits
- **If you're vulnerable.** At least 5-5 in the majors and 10 useful HCP

The big deal, if you are going to get good results from this convention, is that responder bids what her hand is worth. Many fine Michaels Cue bids go to waste because the partner doesn't bid enough.



ALERT

It is important that the responder to a Michaels Cue bid knows to bid a lot when she has a good hand. If responder fails to bid when she should, the Michaels Cue bidder will not know when her side should be going higher or when it should get out of the auction. In a good partnership, the Michaels bidder knows that when her partner shows no interest, it is likely that she has a bad hand.

So what would you do with the bid in the following example? Again, no one is vulnerable.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You	
1 Club	2 Clubs	Pass	?	
1. ♠ 32 ♥ 94 ♦ JT974 ♣ KQJ9	2. ♠ Q84 ♥ 82 ♦ AJ984 ♣ 743	3. ♠ QJ93 ♥ A4 ♦ Q9653 ♣ 84	4. ♠ AJ87 ♥ 2 ♦ AT874 ♣ JT4	5. ♠ 43 ♥ AQ7 ♦ 983 ♣ AJ764

Hand 1: 2 Hearts. Always, when you have equal length in your partner's majors, bid Hearts. The one thing you shouldn't do is bid 2 No Trump. Forget about playing in No Trump and try to get to a low and undoubled contract when you have a dog like this.

Hand 2: 2 Spades. Remember that your partner has 5-5 in the majors. If, by some chance, your opponents bid 3 Clubs, you can bid 3 Spades with this hand.

Hand 3: 3 Spades. A jump is invitational. It says you are interested in game. Your bid just shows around 11 support points. If RHO bid 3 Clubs, you would also bid 3 Spades.

Hand 4: 4 Spades. Counting your distribution, you have an opening bid in support of Spades. You also have four Spades and you have Aces and shape. It would be sad to bid just 2 or 3 with this fine a hand.

Hand 5: 3 Hearts, even though you have only three of them. Your partner has five, so you know this is good enough support.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to bid Michaels when appropriate, but you won't get much benefit if your partner doesn't cooperate with you.

Western Cue Bid

Some time ago a pair of good players had a hand much like this one:

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ K2	♠ 53
♥ AK974	♥ 32
♦ KJ98	♦ AQT742
♣ 96	♣ AJ4

West	North	East	South
1 Heart	1 Spade	2 Diamonds	2 Spades
3 Diamonds	Pass	4 Clubs	Pass
4 Diamonds	Pass	5 Diamonds	Pass
Pass	Pass		

East played in 5 Diamonds and went down one after a Spade lead. North took two Spades winners, and the defense later got a Club trick when the Heart suit didn't divide well.

This is a disaster for East-West because West can make 3 No Trump. There is no defense to it. How do you think the bidding should have gone? Some players think that West should bid No Trump instead of raising Diamonds, but that seems like a biased view. For all West knew, slam in Diamonds was available.

A convention is available that would have gotten West to 3 No Trump. It has many names, but the most popular is the *Western Cue bid*.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

A Western Cue bid is almost always made at the 3 level. You use it almost exclusively when your side has found a minor suit fit or one of you is known to have an exceptionally good minor suit.

The way it works is simple. The opponents have bid a suit but your side is marked with most of the HCP. If your side has found a minor suit fit, and if it's clear that your side doesn't have a major suit contract available, you can use a cue-bid of the opponents' suit to say, "I think we can make 3 No Trump if you have a stopper in their suit."

On this hand, East could have bid 3 Spades instead of 4 Clubs. West has a Spade stopper and bids 3 No Trump. West is not worried about Clubs because no one has bid them, and East rates to have something in Clubs given he has shown a good hand.

You do have to be careful about the Western Cue bid. If your side is bidding a major suit, the cue-bid is not the Western Cue bid. It applies only when your side has no major suit fit that you can play in.

Here's another example:

West
 ♠ AJ
 ♥ 74
 ♦ A3
 ♣ AKQT743

West	North	East	South
1 Club	1 Heart	1 Spade	Pass
?			

West has a super hand and wants to be in game somewhere. If East has a Heart stopper, 3 No Trump is a likely contract. West might bid 3 Clubs, but that bid is only invitational showing about 17 points and good Clubs. West has much more than that.

Here is where confusion often sets in. If West bids 2 Hearts, that bid should be interpreted by East as a cue-bid for Spades. East will not understand what is wanted of him. What West can do on this hand is to bid 2 Diamonds, which is a reverse bid (Recall from Chapter 14 that *reverse* is when opener rebids a suit at the two level that is higher ranking than the suit that she opened with at the one level.) A reverse is a forcing bid. If East raises Diamonds, for instance, West can now bid 3 Hearts, and that will be interpreted as a Western Cue bid looking for a Heart stopper.

Here is a more normal example:

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ AQ	♠ 874
♥ 87	♥ QJ92
♦ AKJ875	♦ Q942
♣ JT8	♣ A9

West	North	East	South
			1 Heart
2 Diamonds	Pass	3 Diamonds	Pass
3 Hearts	Pass	3 No Trump	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South opens 1 Heart, and West bids 2 Diamonds. West doesn't have enough to double first and so is obliged to overcall. East makes a good raise to 3 Diamonds. (Don't forget to raise your partner's overcalls when you have support. A raise does a lot of good.) West can see six likely Diamond tricks, and with South opening the bidding it is pretty sure that if a Spade finesse is needed, it will work. So West bids 3 Hearts, asking if East has a Heart stopper. He does, and he bids 3 No Trump as requested because 3 No Trump will make almost all the time. It would take extreme bad luck to go down.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

One big advantage of the Western Cue bid is that the player with the stopper is the declarer. If you have Kx or AQ or QTx of your opponents' suit, it is crucial that the opening lead come up to your hand. If you were dummy, the opening lead would come through your hand, and that could cost you the contract.

Here is another example:

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ A8	♠ K72
♥ KQ874	♥ AJ92
♦ AT3	♦ QJ962
♣ 932	♣ A

West	North	East	South
1 Heart	1 Diamond	Pass	
3 Spades	1 Spade	3 Hearts	Pass
	Pass	?	

East must not think in terms of the Western Cue bid in this auction. East and West have found a certain Hearts fit, and when you have done that, the Western Cue bid doesn't apply. West is making a cue bid for a Heart slam, and East should make a cue bid of his own with 4 Clubs. The partnership will end in 6 Hearts, which will make six or seven depending on where the King of Diamonds is.

The Least You Need to Know

- Roman Key Card Blackwood asks for five key cards—the four Aces and the King of trump.
- Hamilton and Landy allow you to describe your hand with one bid at the 2 level when opponents open 1 No Trump.
- New Minor Forcing allows responder to tell opener she has a five-card major and invitational values with her second bid.
- In the Two-over-One system, your first nonjump response at the 2 level after your partner's 1-level opening bid is game forcing.
- When your partner opens 1 of a major in third or fourth seat, a Reverse Drury bid of 2 Clubs tells your partner you have a limit raise.
- The overcalls of Michaels Cue bid and the Unusual No Trump tell your partner you have a two-suited hand.
- The Western Cue bid asks your partner whether she has a stopper in your opponents' suit.